OTTAWA CONCRETE PROS

Walkways & Paths

Concrete front and side walkways: the 1.8 m zoning width, slope, and the Access By-law where a walk meets the City sidewalk

5 Expert Answers from Concrete Pro IQ

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Q1

What is a pedestrian access under Ottawa's Access By-law?

Under the City of Ottawa's Access By-law (No. 2026-139, enacted April 8, 2026), a residential pedestrian access is a walkway access connecting private property to the street through the City's right of way. The by-law sets out when you can build one without a permit and what dimensions it must meet.

Section 18 of the Access By-law says a residential pedestrian access may be built without an access permit if it does not exceed 1.8 metres in width, is not within 0.6 metres of a fire hydrant or 1.8 metres of a vehicular access, and involves no modification to the curb or sidewalk. There is one additional condition: where the frontage is 12 metres or less and there is an existing vehicular access, a pedestrian access is not permitted unless otherwise approved by the City.

Section 20(3) also exempts resurfacing an existing access from the permit requirement, provided there are no alterations to the location or dimensions of the access or the site grading.

If the pedestrian access does not meet all of those section 18 conditions, a permit is required under section 20(1) before any construction, reconstruction, relocation or alteration begins. The 2026 fee schedule sets the access permit at $208. Where work in the right of way involves road activity, a road cut permit is also required, and the contractor doing the work must obtain that permit before work begins. The City says processing, including the road cut permit, takes six to eight weeks, so it is worth confirming timing before scheduling a pour.

A few other points from the by-law are worth knowing. The right of way is the City-owned strip that includes the roadway, shoulder, sidewalk and the boulevard beside your property. Its width varies and may be wider than you expect; the City's Landscaping Education Guide says geoOttawa shows the approximate line and that a licensed surveyor can give you the exact property boundary. In the right of way, the only hard landscaping permitted is a driveway and a walkway access. Stepping stones and loose rocks are not a permitted access in the right of way. Section 6 of the by-law places the cost of any work on an access, including curbs, culvert pipe, headwalls and steps, on the property owner.

Zoning also applies to the walkway on your private property side of the line. Zoning By-law 2026-50 caps a walkway leading to a front or exterior side lot line at 1.8 metres in width, and the cumulative width of all walkways plus driveways and parking spaces in a front or exterior side yard must not exceed 50 per cent of the lot width. Because applications deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026 must comply with both Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50, with the most restrictive provisions applying, confirm the rules for your specific lot with the City before finalising the design.

Before work starts, have in hand a written contract that sets out the full scope and price, any access permit the City has issued, and the City's Landscaping Education Guide, which a licensed hardscaping contractor is required to

give you.

Q2

How thick should a concrete front walk be in Kanata?

We found no Building Code thickness for an exterior walk: the 75 mm minimum in Ontario's 2024 Code is for floors-on-ground, and that provision applies to garage slabs and similar interior floors, not to exterior walkways. The thickness belongs in the contractor's written specification, and you should ask for it in writing before signing anything.

What the contractor specifies will depend on the base preparation, the soil conditions on your lot, whether the walk crosses a frost-susceptible soil such as clay or silt, and whether it connects to steps or a landing at the house entrance. The 2024 Ontario Building Code does require concrete for exterior flatwork to reach a compressive strength of at least 32 MPa after 28 days, and it sets a maximum water-to-cementing-materials ratio of 0.45 for exterior flatwork. We found no statement on whether they bind a walkway built without a permit, but 32 MPa is the Code standard for exterior flatwork and is worth asking for regardless.

A few City of Ottawa rules are worth knowing before work starts. The City's Hardscaping Contractor Licence, in effect since March 1, 2026, is required for any business installing a walkway on private property. The licence costs the contractor $319 for 2026 and requires commercial general liability insurance of at least $2,000,000. Ask to see the licence and check the contractor's name against the City's published list yourself. Ottawa Concrete Pros does not verify anyone's licence or insurance.

If the walkway reaches the street, the portion in the City's right of way is governed by the Access By-law (No. 2026-139). A residential pedestrian access no wider than 1.8 metres, not within 0.6 metres of a fire hydrant or 1.8 metres of a vehicular access, and requiring no curb or sidewalk modification, may be built without an access permit. If the frontage is 12 metres or less and there is an existing vehicular access, a pedestrian access is not permitted in the right of way unless otherwise approved by the City. Zoning By-laws 2008-250 and 2026-50 both apply to applications deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, with the most restrictive provisions from each governing; both by-laws limit a walkway in a front or exterior side yard to 1.8 metres in width. Confirm the rules for your lot with the City.

If the work involves digging, whoever digs must submit a locate request through Ontario Dig Authority at least five business days before breaking ground. Locates are free and required by the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012. Ask who will submit the locate request for your job.

Before you sign the contract, ask the contractor to put the proposed slab thickness, the base depth and material, and the concrete strength in writing so you have a clear specification to compare across quotes.

Q3

Can a walkway be poured in late fall in Manotick?

Pouring a concrete walkway in late fall in Manotick is possible, but the timing depends on air temperature. The 2024 Ontario Building Code sets the threshold at 5 °C: when the air temperature is below that, concrete must be kept at not less than 10 °C and not more than 25 °C while being mixed and placed, and maintained at not less than 10 °C for 72 hours after placing, with no frozen material or ice used.

If the air is below 5 °C at the pour or in the 72 hours after it, the contractor needs cold-weather protection in place. What those measures look like in practice is the contractor's call, and you should ask for a written description of what they plan to do before you agree to a fall pour date. The National Research Council's Canadian Building Digest 116 notes that freezing concrete in the plastic state usually results in permanent damage, even with a single cycle, so the protection window matters.

A few other things apply to this job regardless of season:

- Locates: whoever digs is an excavator under the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012. A locate request must be submitted through Ontario Dig Authority at least 5 business days before any ground is broken, and it is free. Ask who will submit the request.
- Hardscaping licence: the City of Ottawa requires a hardscaping contractor licence for businesses installing walkways and pathways on private property. The licence has been required since March 1, 2026. Ask to see the contractor's licence and check the City's published list yourself. Ottawa Concrete Pros does not verify anyone's licence or insurance.
- Right of way: if the walkway crosses the City right of way to meet the sidewalk, the Access By-law 2026-139 applies. A residential pedestrian access not exceeding 1.8 metres in width, not within 0.6 metres of a fire hydrant or 1.8 metres of a vehicular access, and with no modification to the curb or sidewalk, does not require an access permit under section 20(3). If your frontage is 12 metres or less and there is an existing vehicular access, a pedestrian access in the right of way is not permitted unless the City approves it.
- Zoning: both Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50 apply to applications deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, with the most restrictive provisions from both applying. Under 2026-50, a walkway leading to a front or exterior side lot line is limited to 1.8 metres in width. Confirm the rules for your lot with the City.

Ask the contractor to put the cold-weather protection plan, the concrete strength (32 MPa is the Building Code

standard for exterior flatwork), the base specification, and removal and disposal of any existing material in writing before you sign.

If you want to hear from local Ottawa concrete contractors about a fall pour in Manotick, the request form on this site sends your details to contractors listed in the Ottawa Construction Network directory.

Q4

Does Ottawa allow a concrete walkway in the right of way?

The City of Ottawa allows a concrete walkway in the right of way, but only as a pedestrian access, and only within specific limits set by the Access By-law (No. 2026-139), which the City enacted on April 8, 2026.

Under Section 18 of that by-law, a residential pedestrian access in the right of way may be built without an access permit if it meets all of the following conditions: it does not exceed 1.8 metres in width; it is not within 0.6 metres of a fire hydrant; it is not within 1.8 metres of a vehicular access; and there is no modification to the curb or sidewalk. There is one additional limit that matters on narrower lots: where the frontage is 12 metres or less and there is an existing vehicular access, a pedestrian access is not permitted in the right of way unless the City approves it otherwise.

If any of those conditions are not met, an access permit is required before work begins. Section 20(1) of the by-law states that no person shall construct, reconstruct, relocate or alter an access without first obtaining a permit. The 2026 fee for a standard access permit is $208. If the work requires any road activity, the contractor must also obtain a road cut permit before work starts, and the City says processing including the road cut permit takes six to eight weeks.

One thing worth knowing about the right of way itself: the Landscaping Education Guide notes that the size of the City right of way varies between properties and may be wider than you think. The geoOttawa mapping tool shows the approximate line, but for an exact property line you would need a licensed surveyor. The guide also states that in the right of way, the only hard landscaping allowed is a driveway and a walkway; stepping stones and other loose rocks are not a permitted access there.

On the private property side of the line, both Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50 apply to applications deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, with the most restrictive provisions from both by-laws applying. Under 2026-50, the maximum width of a walkway leading to a front or exterior side lot line is 1.8 metres, and the cumulative width of all walkways plus all driveways and parking spaces in a front or exterior side yard must not exceed 50 per cent of the lot width. Confirm the rules that apply to your specific lot with the City before work starts.

The contractor doing this work needs a City of Ottawa hardscaping contractor licence, which has been required since March 1, 2026, for businesses that install walkways and pathways on private property or alter any portion of the highway as part of adjacent hardscaping work. Before you hire anyone, ask them to show you their licence and check their name against the City's published list of licensed hardscaping contractors yourself.

Q5

Narrow lot in Hintonburg: can I add a walkway beside the driveway?

Possibly: a concrete walkway beside a driveway in Hintonburg depends on the zoning width limits and, where it meets the sidewalk, on the Access By-law's frontage rule, so check both before any work begins.

Zoning on a narrow lot

Both Zoning By-law 2008-250 and Zoning By-law 2026-50 apply to any application deemed complete on or after March 11, 2026, and the most restrictive provisions from each govern. Under 2026-50, a walkway leading to a front or exterior side lot line may not exceed 1.8 metres in width, and the cumulative width of all walkways plus all driveways and parking spaces in the front or exterior side yard must not exceed 50 per cent of the lot width. A walkway that abuts the driveway is considered part of the permitted driveway under 2026-50. Under 2008-250, a walkway is permitted in any yard if it does not exceed 1.8 metres in width and consists of hard landscaping. You will need to measure your lot width and add up the driveway plus any proposed walkway to see where you land. Confirm the rules for your specific lot with the City of Ottawa, because both by-laws apply and the more restrictive provision wins.

Soft landscaping is also affected. Under 2026-50, the front yard must meet a minimum soft landscaping percentage that depends on the yard's setback depth and your lot width. Adding hard surface beside an existing driveway reduces what is left for soft landscaping, so that calculation matters too.

If the numbers do not work, you can apply to the City's Committee of Adjustment for a minor variance. The urban fee is $3,759 total as of January 1, 2026. Whether a variance is granted is the Committee's decision.

On the right-of-way side, the City's Landscaping Education Guide notes the ROW may be wider than you expect, and geoOttawa shows the approximate line. For the exact property line, contact a licensed surveyor. In the ROW, the only hard landscaping permitted is a driveway or walkway access. Under the Access By-law 2026-139, a residential pedestrian access in the ROW may be built without a permit if it does not exceed 1.8 metres in width, is not within 0.6 metres of a fire hydrant or 1.8 metres of a vehicular access, and there is no modification to the curb or sidewalk. Where the frontage is 12 metres or less and there is an existing vehicular access, a pedestrian access is not permitted in the ROW unless otherwise approved by the City.

Before any digging, a locate request must be submitted through Ontario Dig Authority at least five business days before work starts. This is required by the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, and there is no fee.

The contractor you hire must hold a City of Ottawa Hardscaping Contractor Licence, which has been required since March 1, 2026 for walkway installation. Ask to see the licence and check the City's published list yourself.

Start with the City of Ottawa, not the contractor, because the lot-width calculation and the ROW frontage rule are the two things that will tell you whether the walkway is even permitted before you spend anything on design or quotes.

Disclaimer: This guide is provided for informational purposes only by Ottawa Concrete Pros. It does not constitute professional advice. Always consult qualified contractors and your local building authority (the City of Ottawa) before starting any concrete project, and request utility locates before anyone digs. Concrete work in Ontario must meet the 2024 Ontario Building Code (O. Reg. 163/24) where it applies. Information is current as of November 15, 2026 and may change. Visit **ottawaconcretepros.ca** for the latest answers.