
General Sidewalk Requirements

A. Introduction

Sidewalks are an integral component of the transportation system. They provide a designated area, separated from the roadway, for pedestrians to use for both travel and recreation. Along roadways where pedestrians are present or anticipated, consideration should be given to constructing sidewalks on both sides of the road to minimize conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians.

Where sidewalks are provided, they must be constructed so they are accessible to all potential users, including those with disabilities. Design standards for pedestrian access routes are provided in [Section 12A-2](#).

B. Sidewalk and Walkway Widths

A 5 foot sidewalk is the minimum sidewalk width required for Iowa DOT projects and local projects with state or federal funding. Local jurisdictions may have minimum sidewalk width standards of 4 feet. Consideration should be given to providing minimum 5 foot sidewalks (or wider). A 5 foot sidewalk better accommodates two people walking abreast, and allows for encroachment on the sidewalk by snow, shrubbery, and grass. If sidewalks are less than 60 inches wide, a passing area at least 60 inches on all sides must be constructed a maximum of every 200 feet to comply with ADA requirements.

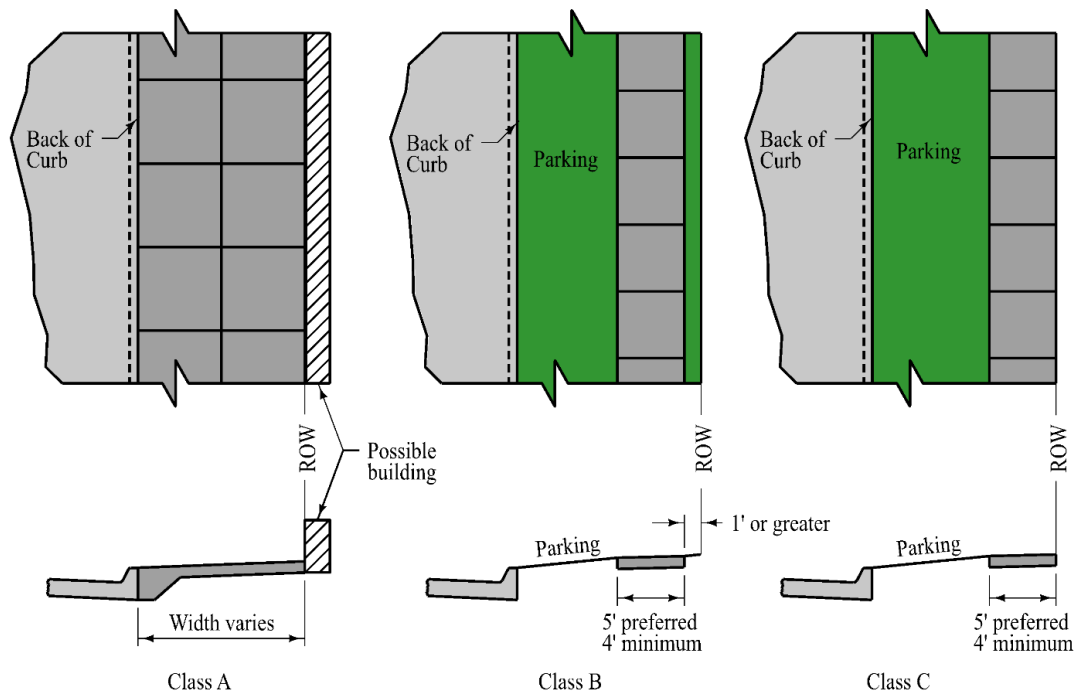
Clear sidewalk widths greater than the minimum are desirable in many locations. Along arterials not in downtown areas, sidewalk widths of 6 to 8 feet are desirable where a planting strip is provided between the sidewalk and curb, and sidewalk widths of 8 to 10 feet are desirable where the sidewalk is flush against the curb. In downtown areas, the desirable sidewalk width is 10 feet or sufficiently wide to provide the desired level of service to accommodate particular volumes, see the Highway Capacity Manual. Contact the local jurisdiction for minimum width requirements.

C. Sidewalk Classes

SUDAS identifies three classes of sidewalks, which are described below. Class B and C sidewalks provide a grass strip between the back of curb and the sidewalk, often referred to as the “parking.”

1. **Class A:** Class A sidewalks begin at the back of curb and generally extend to the right-of-way line. These types of sidewalks are typical in downtown areas. Consideration must be given to street sign location, street lighting, utilities, mailboxes, snow storage, and other potential obstacles.
2. **Class B:** Class B sidewalks are constructed with the back edge of the sidewalk 1 foot or more off of the right-of-way line.
3. **Class C:** Class C sidewalks have the back edge of the sidewalk on the right-of-way line.

Figure 12A-1.01: Classes of Sidewalk



D. Accessible Sidewalk Design

It has been common practice to place the responsibility for sidewalk ramp layout on the contractor or construction inspector. This has resulted in the sidewalk, curb ramps, driveway crossings, etc. being designed in the field, often with mixed accessibility results. As public right-of-way accessibility comes under greater scrutiny, it is increasingly important that newly constructed or altered sidewalks meet accessibility requirements. Therefore, sidewalks, curb ramps, and street crossings shall be included as part of the design process and the details of those designs shall be included in the contract documents as appropriate. Projects reviewed or let by the Iowa DOT will require use of S sheets according to the [Iowa DOT Design Manual Section 1F-18](#).

E. Construction Requirements

- 1. Sidewalk Thickness:** Sidewalks should be constructed of PCC with a minimum thickness of 4 inches. Where sidewalks cross driveways, the minimum thickness is 6 inches, or the thickness of the driveway, whichever is greater.
- 2. Obstructions:** All obstructions are to be removed or relocated except for those that are impractical to move. In new development areas, these items should never occur, but in older, established areas, they will have to be addressed. In the case where the sidewalk is shifted to avoid an obstacle, use of a minimum 2:1 taper to and from the obstruction with a straight section adjacent to the obstruction should be considered. Flatter tapers may be used if space is available and user volume is high.
- 3. Construction Tolerances:** Dimensions are subject to conventional industry tolerances except where dimensions are stated as a range, minimum, or maximum. Conventional industry tolerances include tolerances for field conditions and tolerances that may be a necessary consequence of a particular manufacturing process. Conventional industry tolerances do not apply to design work; see PROWAG R103.1. Designing features to the target values, rather than the allowable maximum or minimum, allows for appropriate construction tolerances and field adjustment during construction while maintaining compliance with PROWAG.

Chronology of Changes to Design Manual Section:

012A-001 General Sidewalk Requirements

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| 12/15/2023 | Revised
Expand discussion on sidewalk width and creates a preferred width of 5 feet and minimum of 4 feet. Emphasize that DOT projects require 5 foot wide sidewalks. Note: These changes were approved by the SUDAS Board of Directors prior to final approval of the Public Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines. |
| 9/20/2012 | Revised
Updated header to include SUDAS for joint publication. |
| 4/17/2012 | NEW
New. Replaces 11A-1 and 11A-2. |