Outdoor Ramps, Stairs & Handrails

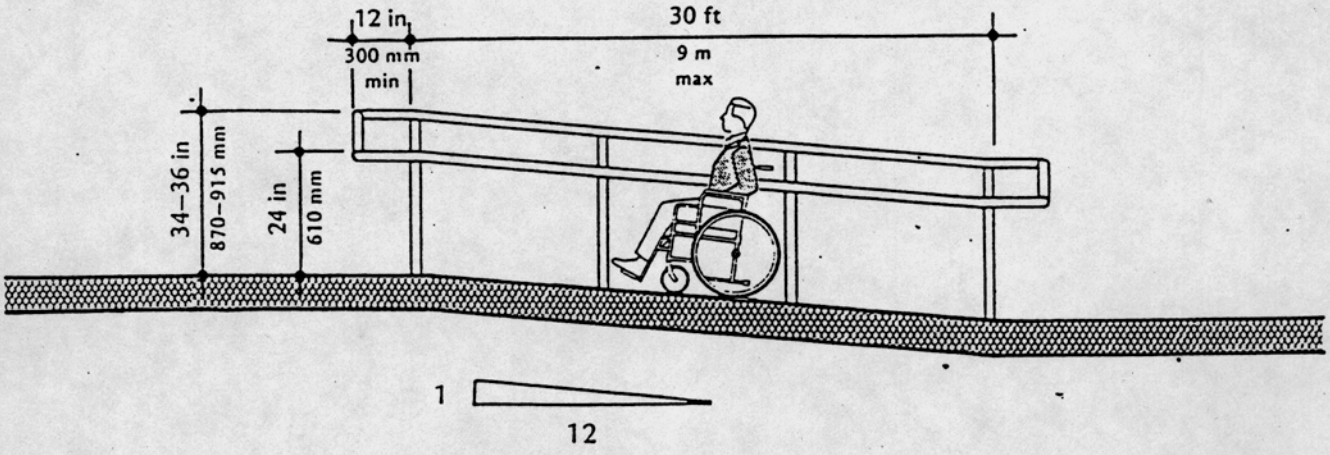
NOTE: THIS IS FOR INFORMATION USE ONLY. SPECIFIC DRAWINGS AND DETAILS MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR A PERMIT....

Almost every site design includes some changes in grade—for both reasons of design interest and physical constraint. Designers must not allow grade changes to become barriers to persons whose mobility is limited due to age or disability.

Outdoor Ramps

A ramp is any walkway surface sloped more steeply than 5% (one unit of height in twenty units of length). Ramps should be designed as alternate routes of movement for persons who have difficulty using stairs. Ramps should not, however, take the place of outdoor stairways, because some people have difficulty using ramps.

For discussion purposes, the term "ramp" does not include curb ramps. Information on curb ramps is included in the "Walkways and Curb Ramps" section.



Outdoor Ramp and Handrails

The maximum acceptable gradient for accessible ramps is 8.33% (one unit of height in twelve units of length). Thus, all ramps usable by persons in wheelchairs fall in the 5%—8.33% gradient range.

Ramp lengths should not exceed 30 feet (9m) of run without a landing. In long ramps, the landing serves as a resting place for wheelchair users.

Ramps should be at least as wide as the walkway they serve, and in no case should a ramp be narrower than 36 inches (915mm).

Handrails should be provided on both sides of ramps to aid persons using walking aids or wheelchairs. The top rail should be 34—36 inches (870—915mm) above the ramp surface. On ramps that will be used extensively by children, an intermediate rail at 24 inches (610mm) is suggested.

Ramp handrails should extend horizontally at least 12 inches (300mm) beyond the upper and lower edges of the sloping ramp surface.

See "Handrails for Outdoor Use" for further information.

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