

WOOD DECKS

Zoning and Frequently Asked Questions

Refer to the [Residential Deck Design Guide](#) on the City of Sarnia Website for more information on Deck Construction and Ontario Building Code requirements.

Note:

Wood decks vary in size and area. It is beyond the scope of this booklet to deal with every possible situation. The requirements and construction guidelines that follow are provided to assist you in designing and constructing wood decks which will comply with the regulations. If the nature of your project is different than that contained in this booklet and you are not familiar with the regulations which may be applicable, it is recommended that you obtain the services of a qualified designer.

The Sarnia Building By-law is primarily an administrative document that adopts the Ontario Building Code and related standards to provide construction requirements. Throughout this booklet the information provided is based on the minimum standards set out in the Ontario Building Code and City Zoning By-law. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of information contained in this booklet. However, in the event of a discrepancy between this booklet and the governing Act, Regulation or By-law, the Act, Regulation or By-law will take precedence.

We strongly encourage applicants to discuss their specific projects with staff in the Planning and Building Department of the City of Sarnia prior to commencement.

Updates have been made to this booklet.
This booklet contains Zoning Information and Frequently
Asked Questions.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Is a Building Permit required?

A building permit is required for the construction or replacement of a deck that is:

1. Higher than 600mm (2 ft) above average ground level, or
2. is attached to another building or structure.

Do I still need a building permit if my deck is not attached to my house?

Regardless of whether or not the deck is attached to the house or any other structure on the property, a building permit is required, as noted above.

What type of drawings need to be submitted, and what should they include?

Drawings are reviewed by City of Sarnia staff for compliance with the Zoning By-law, Ontario Building Code and Applicable Law. Ensure all required information is included on the plans.

Site Plan (must include the following information):

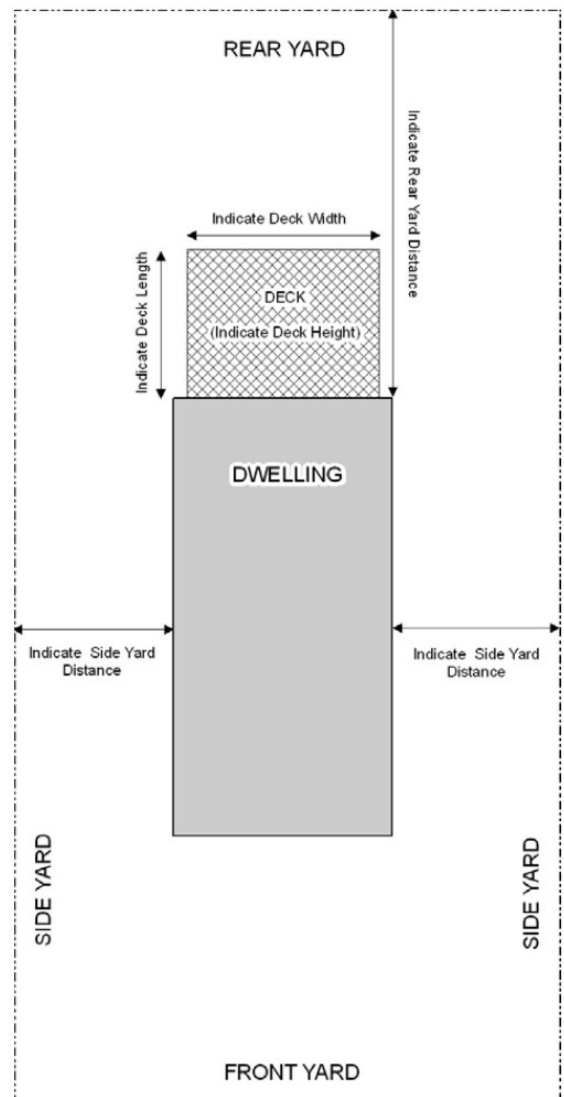
- Location of house/buildings and structures on property
- Location of property lines
- Location of proposed deck and stairs
- Setbacks (dimensions) from proposed deck to property lines and adjacent buildings/structures on the same property
- Location of any easements or right-of-ways (if applicable)
- Location of septic system (if applicable) and distance to deck

Design Drawings and Specifications (must include the following information):

- Overall size of deck
- Location, size and span of beams
- Size, span and direction of joists
- Size and spacing of foundations (ie. Concrete pier size and spacing)
- Detail of foundation/footing and connection to post
- Detail of ledger board connection to house, size and spacing of fasteners
- Detail of joist to beam connection
- Height of deck above grade
- Guard height and construction

Note: Additional information is required if constructing a roof over a deck

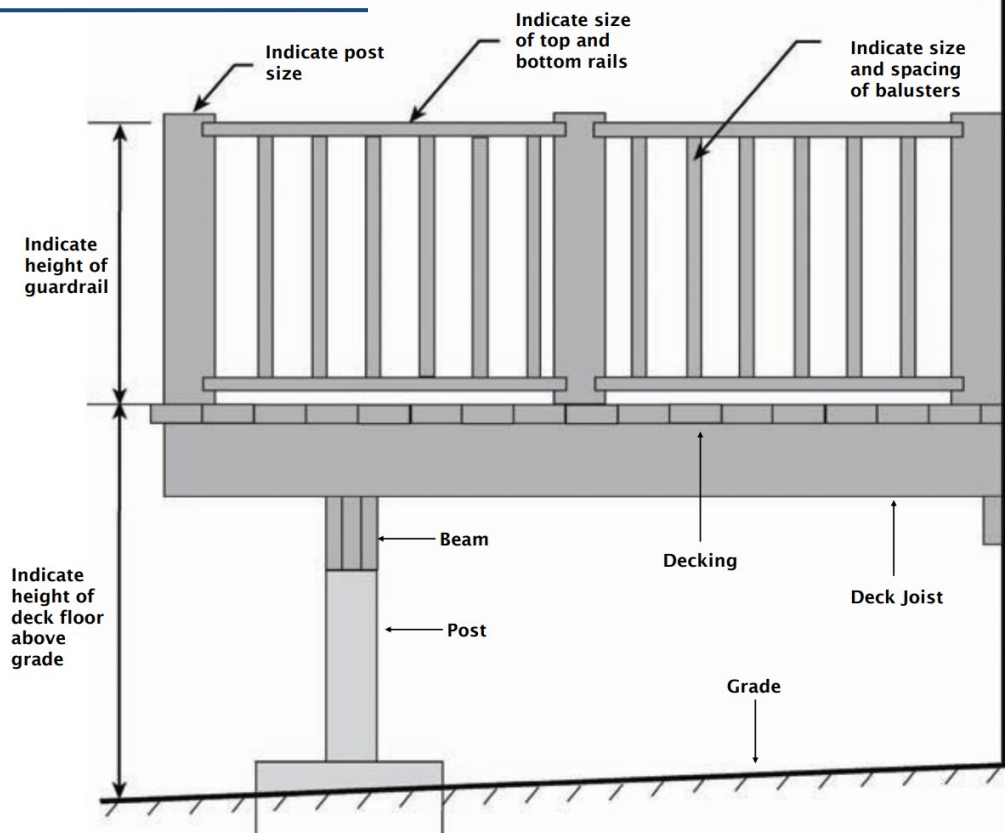
Refer to the **Residential Deck Design Guide** for more information on Deck construction and OBC requirements.



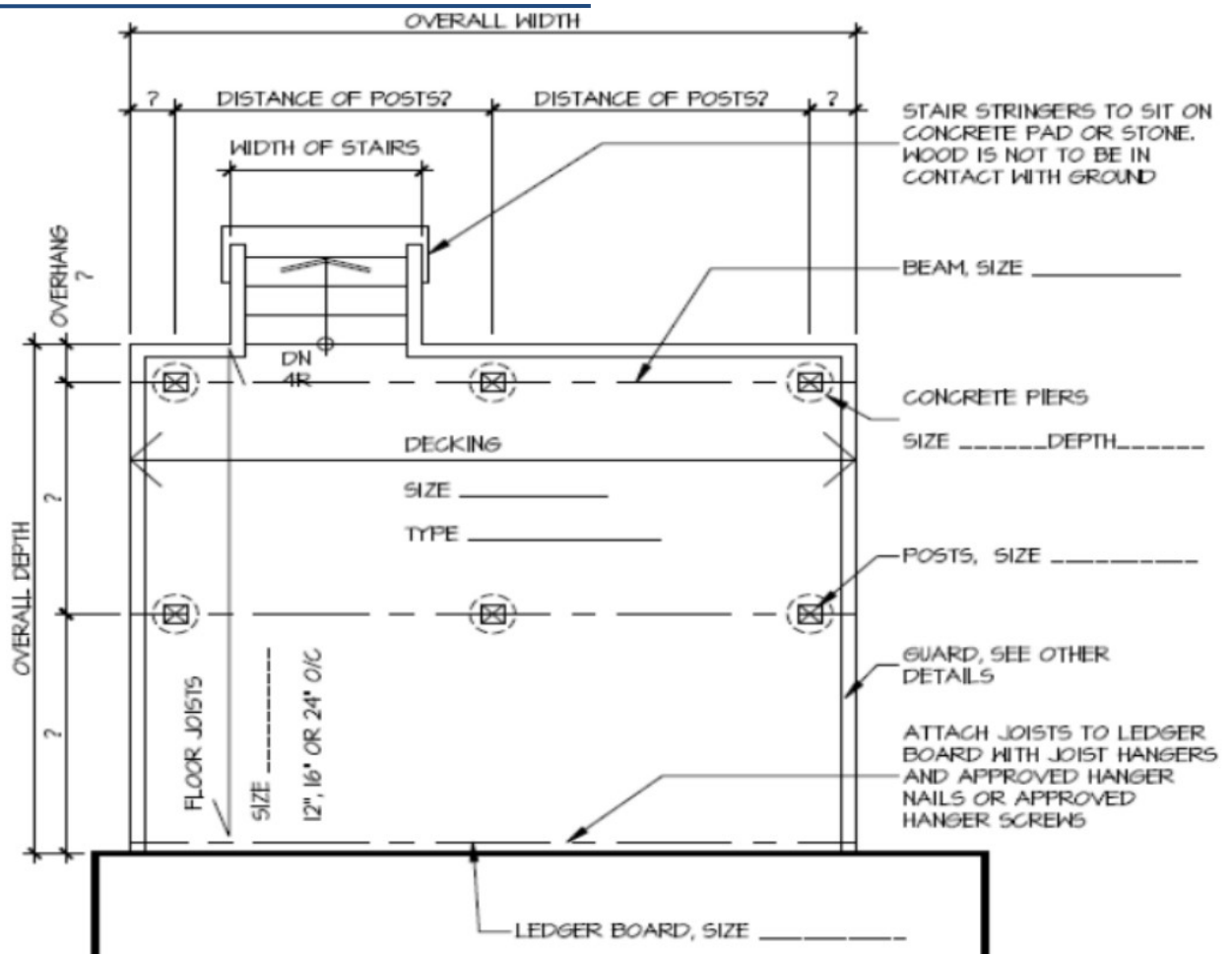
TYPICAL SITE PLAN

TYPICAL DECK ELEVATION PLAN

NOTE: Guard must be able to resist 0.75 kN (168.6 lbs) of force at any point



TYPICAL DECK CONSTRUCTION PLAN



ZONING

Decks must comply with the City of Sarnia Zoning By-law. Your site plan, and other drawings, are reviewed for compliance with the Zoning By-law at the time of permit application. Ensure your drawings show that your deck meets the requirements listed below.

Deck Location:

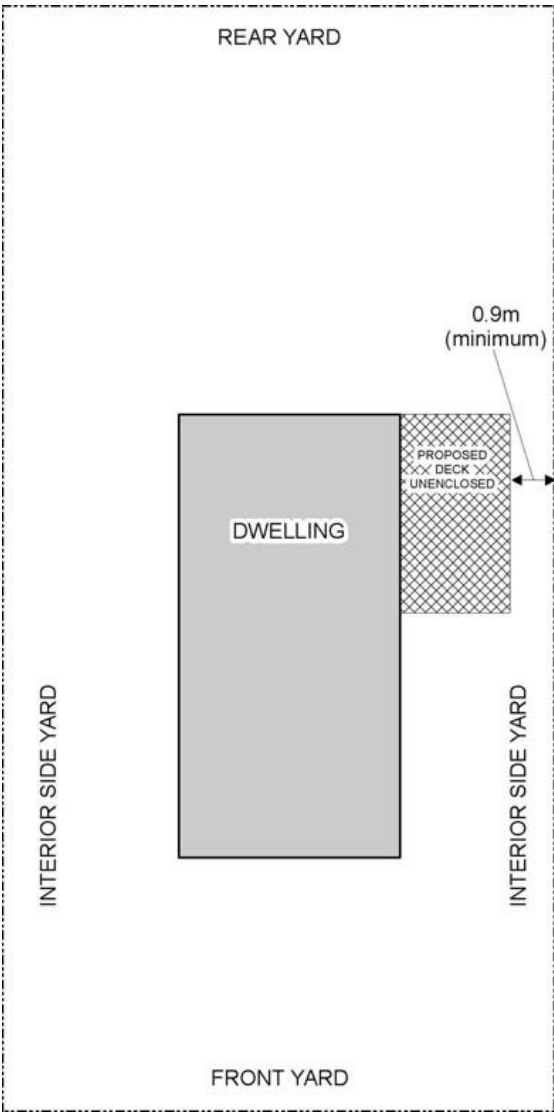


Figure 1

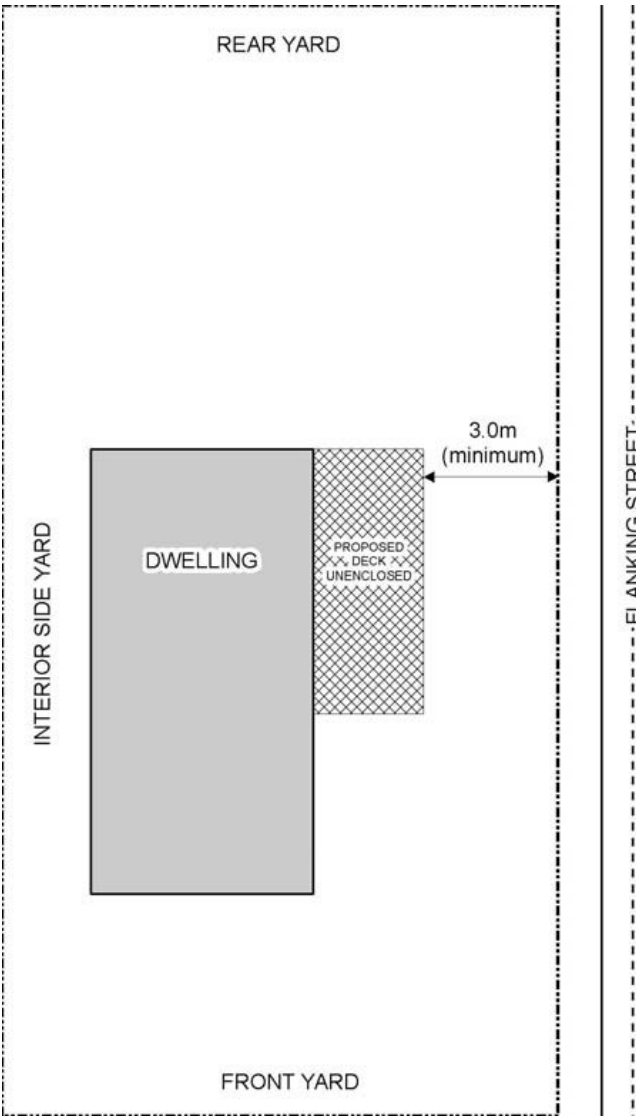


Figure 2 Corner Lot

Side Yard Deck

A deck shall be located in any yard not closer than 0.9m to the side lot line (Figure 1) except that if the side lot line abuts a flanking street the setback shall be 3m (Figure 2).

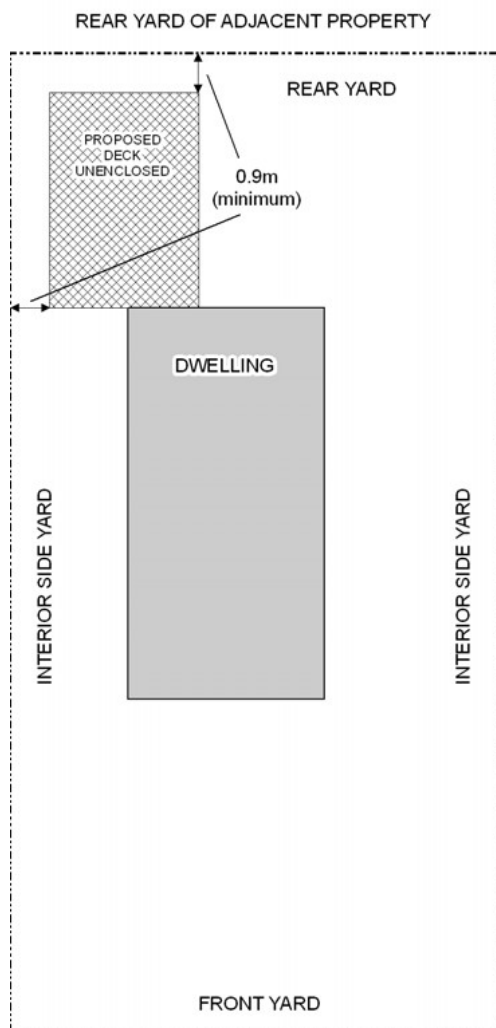


Figure 3

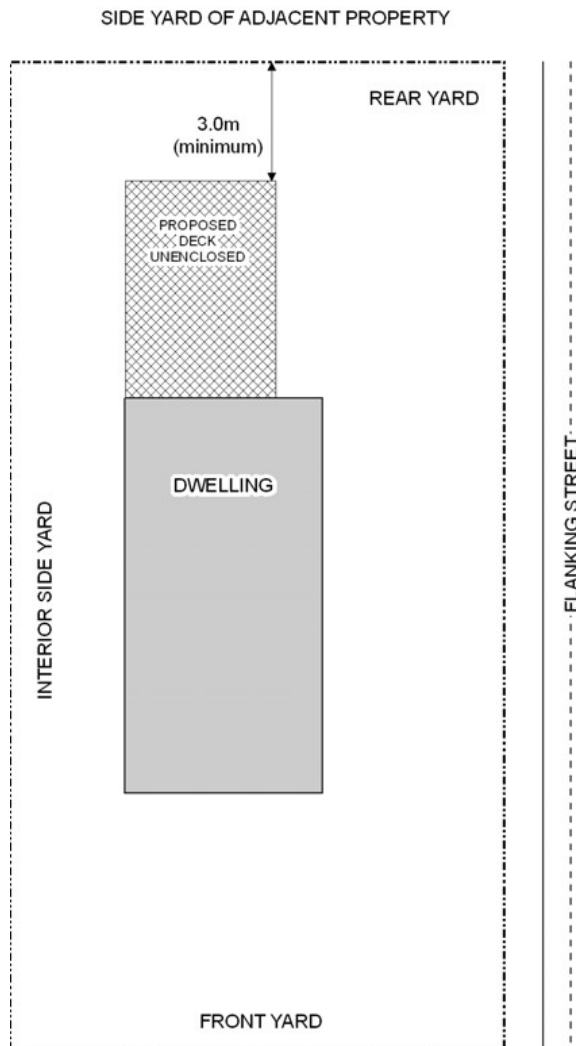


Figure 4 Corner Lot

Rear Yard Deck

A deck in any rear yard shall be located not closer than 0.9m to the rear lot line (Figure 3). except that if the rear lot line forms part of the side lot line of an adjacent property the setback shall be 3m (Figure 4).

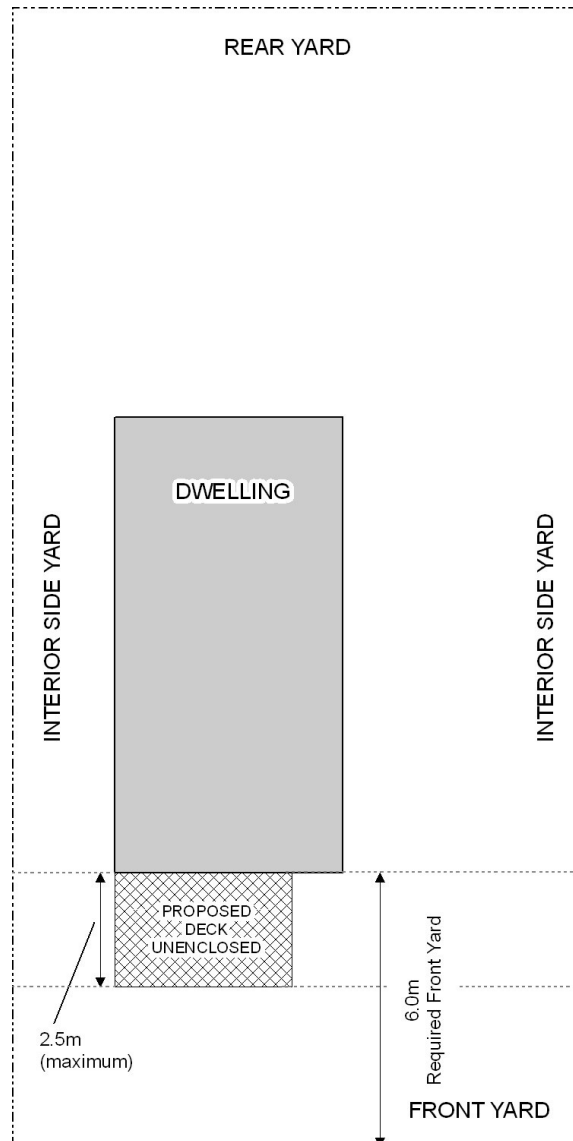


Figure 5

Front Yard Decks

A deck in any front yard shall not be permitted to project more than 2.5m into the required front yard (Figure 5).

If I cannot meet the zoning requirements, what are my alternatives?

Contact the Planning Department for options for variance.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I use deck blocks/surface pad foundations?

Deck blocks/surface pad foundations may be used ONLY when

- The deck is not attached to the house or any other structure, and
- The deck does not exceed 592 sq ft (55 sq m), and
- The distance from finished ground to the underside of the floor joists does not exceed 24" (600 mm), and
- The deck is not supporting a roof; not attached to the house; or another structure

Can I use Helical Piles/Piers?

Helical piles/piers (Screw Pile Foundations) must be noted on the plans at the time of permit submission. Helical piles/piers must have CCMC approval and a Post Conformity Report sealed by a Professional Engineer must be provided.

What is the difference between guardrails and handrails?

Guardrails are intended to prevent persons from falling off the edge of a stair or a raised floor area such as a deck. The guardrail must be able to withstand the pressure of a human body applied horizontally to it. Handrails are installed in areas where a hand grip is needed such as at a stair.

Will my deck require guardrails / handrails?

Guard / handrails are only required on decks that are more than 600mm above finished ground level.

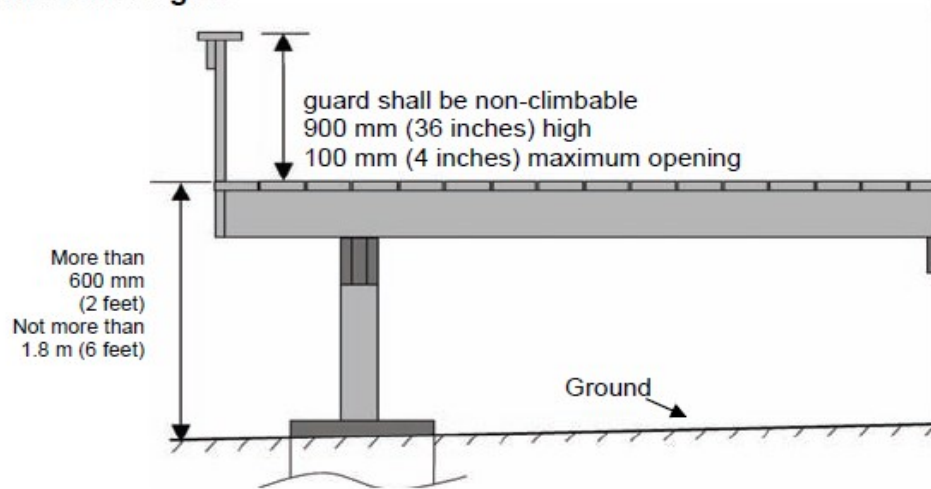
What if my deck is less than 600mm above finished ground level?

A guardrail is not required but, if one is provided, the openings through the guards have restrictions. These openings must either be less than 100mm or greater than 200mm. This is to prevent children from accidentally getting their head stuck in the guard.

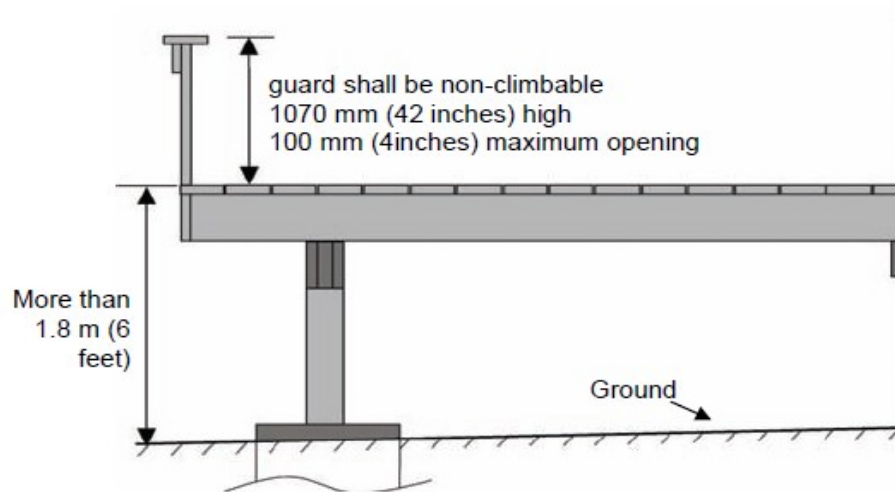
What are the construction requirements for a required guardrail?

Required guardrails shall not be less than 900mm high where the walking surface of the deck is not more than 1800mm above the finished ground level, and 1070mm high where the walking surface exceeds 1800mm. Openings in the guardrail must prevent the passage of a spherical object having a diameter of 100mm. Required guardrails shall be designed so no member attached or opening will facilitate climbing. Pre-manufactured guardrails must have CSA, ULC OR MEC approval. If you are purchasing such a system please obtain a copy of such approvals from the supplier to provide the City of Sarnia at the time of inspection.

Guardrail Height:

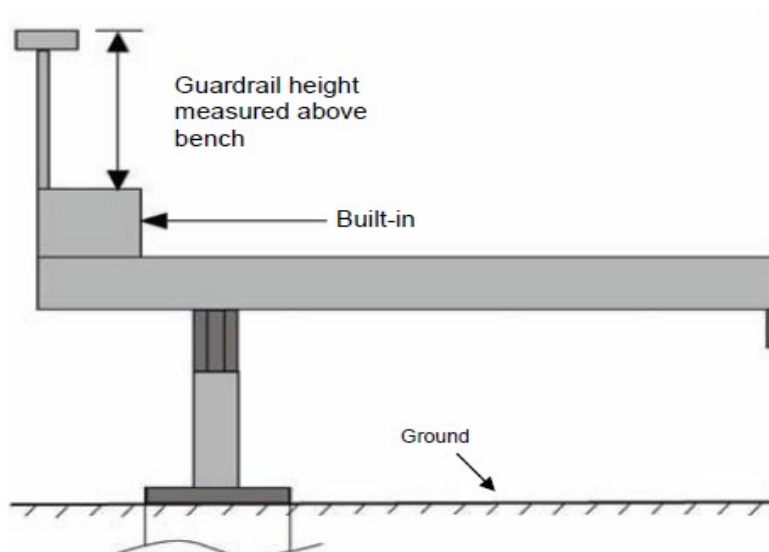


Guardrail



Can a built-in bench serve as a guardrail?

No, unless a guardrail meeting the previously described height and opening requirements is provided above the flat surface of the bench and any openings below the bench also meet the maximum opening requirements.

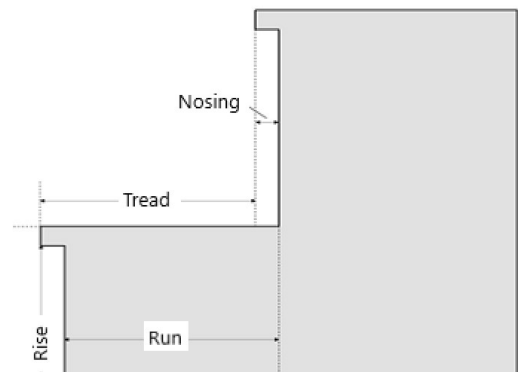


Are there requirements for stairs?

The Building Code requires the stair width to be at least 900mm and that treads and risers have uniform rise and run in any one flight with riser heights not exceeding 200mm. The Building Code also requires the minimum run of each tread to be 255mm and the maximum run to be 355mm.

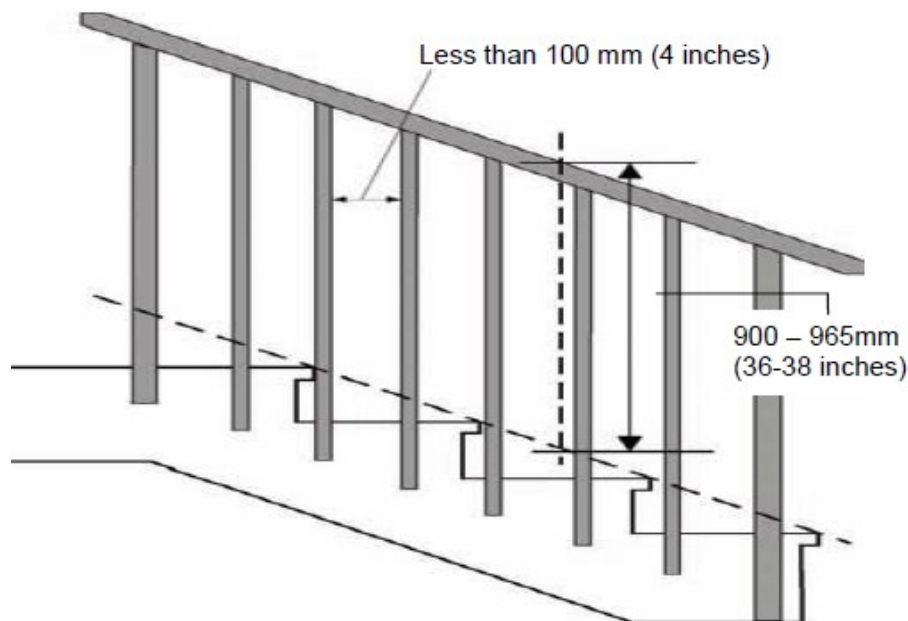
Are guardrails required for stairs?

Guards are required on stairs where there is a difference in elevation of more than 600mm to finished ground level. The height of guards for flights of steps shall be 900mm and be measured vertically from the top of the handrail to a line drawn through the leading edge of the treads served by the guard.



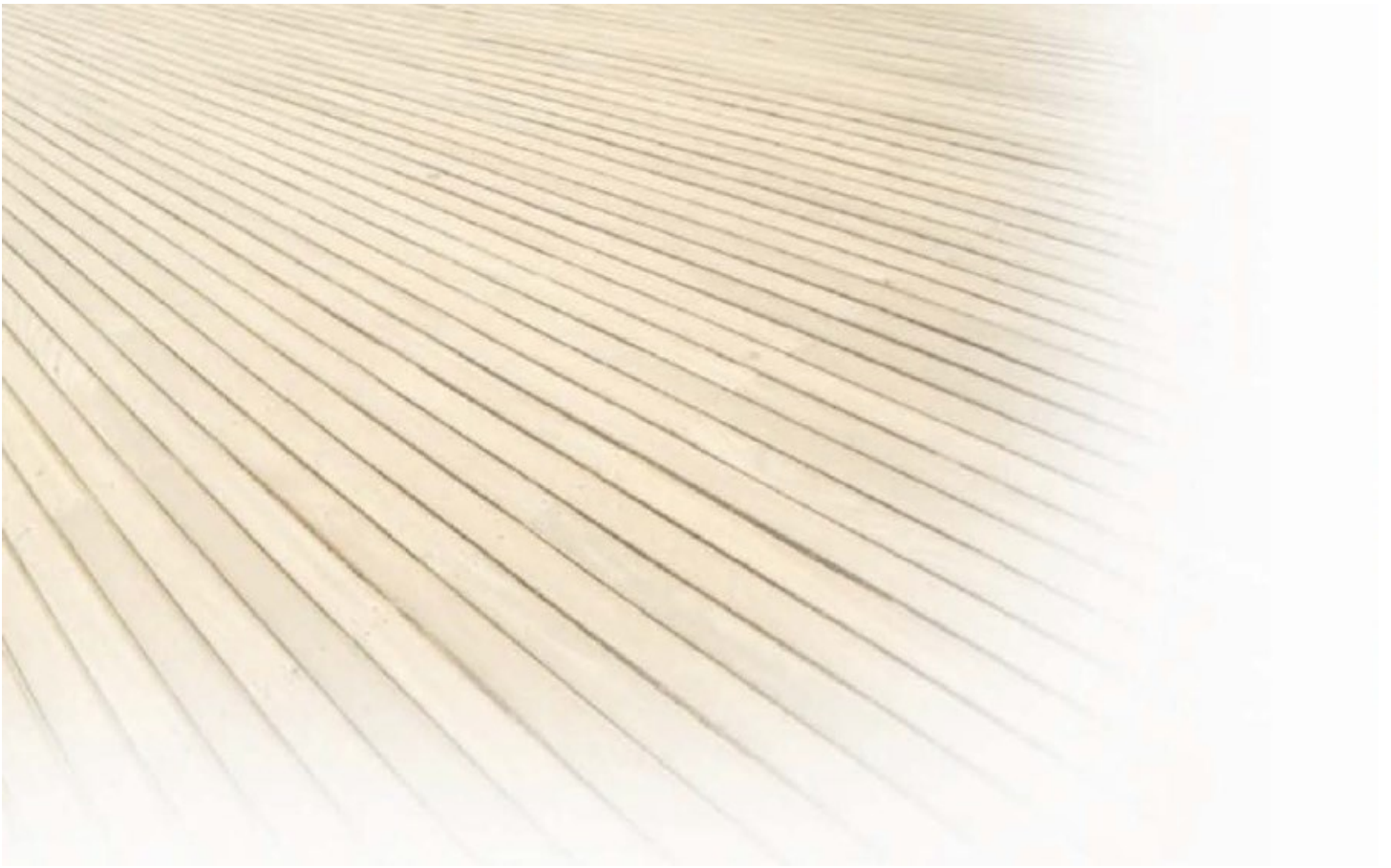
Will the stairs also require a handrail?

- The Building Code states that if any outside stair has more than three risers, a handrail is required on one side of the stair.
- The handrail is to be located between 800mm and 965mm in height measured vertically above a line drawn through the outside edges of the stair nosings.
- Stairs with 3 risers or less do not require handrails.



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NOTES



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