

## **\*\*Deputation – Item 5**

Winter Mats, Vestibules & Accessibility\*\*

Good afternoon, Chair and Members of the Tenant Services Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on Item 4: Winter Mats and Accessibility.

I would like to begin by acknowledging that some improvements have been made, particularly with color contrast of mats, and that lobby and elevator areas have largely been addressed. That progress is appreciated.

However, significant accessibility and safety concerns remain at building entrances, particularly within vestibule areas, and these issues continue to place residents at risk during winter conditions.

At many entrances, there is insufficient clearance along the sides of winter mats, disrupting continuous, level flooring. This creates barriers for residents with vision loss or balance challenges.

Attempts to resolve this at the site level have shown that accessibility standards are not being applied consistently in practice. (It's not a failure to accommodate but a misunderstanding on wide scope of accessibility needs), accessibility often means something very different to staff than it does to residents with lived experience. Without a strong understanding of invisible disabilities, design and maintenance decisions that appear acceptable can become unsafe under real conditions.

Strong indication that the issue cannot be resolved at the building level alone and requires the direct involvement of the Building Standards team and R-Path.

For residents, accessibility is not theoretical. It is experienced daily, especially in winter when snow, ice, moisture, and crowding are present. Invisible disabilities—including vision loss, vestibular conditions, and sensory or balance challenges—significantly affect safe navigation.

That is why education on invisible disabilities must be embedded into Accessibility Building Standards and design processes, including the work of Building Standards and R-Path.

### **Vestibules and Winter Conditions**

Vestibule areas present a serious winter hazard. Snow is not only tracked in; it also enters through the bottom of doors and every time automatic doors open. Mats quickly become covered with snow, which then freezes. Walking on frozen, wet carpet greatly increases the risk of slips and falls.

While vestibule redesigns may help in the long term, they take time. In the meantime, residents are navigating unsafe conditions every day.

We are therefore requesting immediate interim measures, including:

- Wet and dry vacuuming of mats
- A second set of mats so one can be removed for drying

- Proper mat sizing and placement based on accessibility needs
- Weekend winter maintenance, not weekday-only responses

We are also asking TCHC to explore alternative vestibule flooring and matting systems, such as open-grid or perforated rubber mats, which allow snow and water to drain instead of freezing on the surface. These systems can also serve as tactile floor navigation, supporting residents with vision loss and balance challenges.

#### Tactile Navigation and Safety Cues

Tactile surfaces can provide important wayfinding and hazard awareness, particularly in transitional areas such as vestibules and entrance thresholds. Exploring tactile flooring elements would support residents with low vision, balance challenges, and other invisible disabilities.

#### Snow Removal and Walkway Access

Another critical accessibility issue relates to snow-removal contractors. Contractors must be clearly instructed not to create snowbanks on sidewalks and walkways. When snow is piled in pedestrian routes, it becomes extremely difficult for site staff to properly clear and maintain those paths afterward. This results in ongoing accessibility barriers and safety risks for residents.

Addressing this at the contractor level would significantly improve winter safety and reduce repeated maintenance issues.

We are also requesting high-visibility “Caution: Slippery When Wet or Icy” signage at entrances, vestibules, and stair areas as an immediate, low-cost safety measure.

#### Closing

Residents understand that this winter has brought heavy snowfall. What is difficult to accept is the slow and inconsistent response, which places residents—particularly seniors, people with disabilities, and families—at unnecessary risk. Falls have already occurred.

These are not minor inconveniences.  
They are accessibility and safety issues.

In closing, we are requesting:

- A stronger accessibility lens grounded in lived experience
- Education on invisible disabilities embedded in standards and design
- Direct involvement from Building Standards and R-Path
- Immediate interim safety measures while long-term solutions are developed

Sample images have been included as examples to explore for improvement.

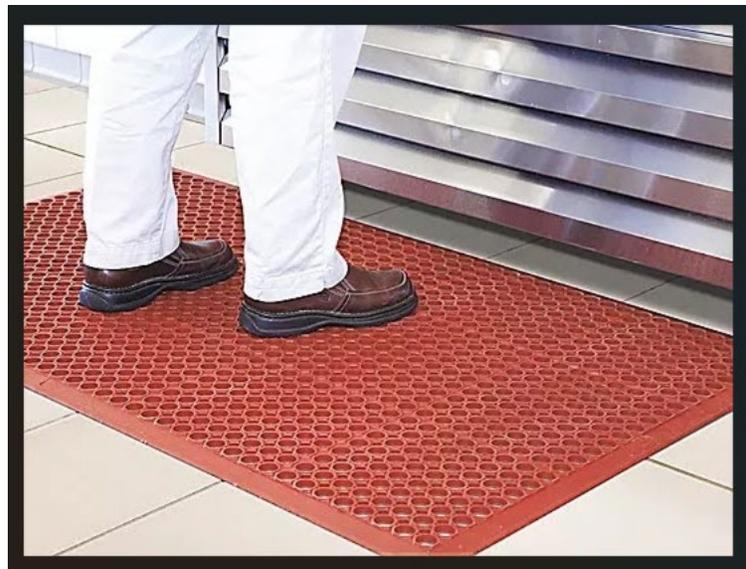
Thank you for your time and consideration.

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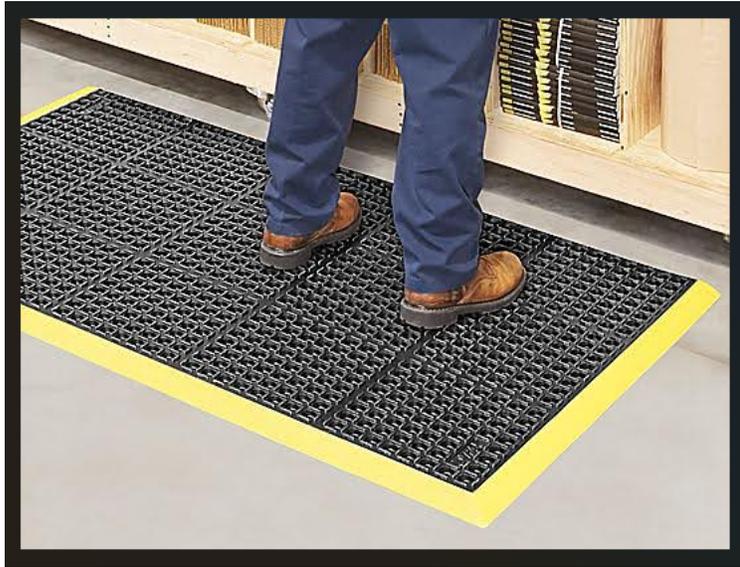
**ATTACHMENT**



**Vestibule mat with frozen snow**



**Winter entrance mat option**



**Tactile winter mat**



**Winter entrance flooring**



Caution sign