

To: Council in Committee of the Whole

From: Warren Munro, HBA, RPP, Commissioner,  
Development Services Department

Report Number: CNCL-20-67

Date of Report: May 20, 2020

Date of Meeting: May 25, 2020

Subject: Referral DS-19-167 Regarding the Construction of Accessible  
Units as Part of all Residential Development Projects

File: B-1000-0047 2020

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## **1.0 Purpose**

On September 30, 2019, the Development Services Committee referred the Fifth Report of the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee (DS-19-167) to City staff directing that the following matter be discussed with the City of Oshawa Building Industry Liaison Team (“B.I.L.T.”) for a report back to the Development Services Committee on the recommendation:

“Whereas the O.A.A.C. Built Environment Subcommittee is finding numerous site plans with only inaccessible townhouses and stacked townhouses;

Therefore the City require that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units with visitable features, including no stairs to entrances doors as well as entrance door and washroom door widths sufficient for mobility devices.”

The purpose of this Report is to respond to the above noted directive received through the Development Services Committee and make a recommendation on this matter.

Attachment 1 contains excerpts from the *Ontario Building Code Act, 1992*, S.O. 1992, c. 23 (“*Ontario Building Code Act, 1992*”), and the Ontario Building Code, 2019, relating to Municipal By-laws and current barrier-free requirements.

Attachment 2 is a summary of other municipalities’ requirements for accessible units in new residential projects.

Attachment 3 is a copy of the minutes from the October 29, 2019 B.I.L.T. meeting dealing with the above noted matter.

Attachment 4 is a copy of correspondence dated November 26, 2019 from the Durham Region Home Builders' Association ("D.R.H.B.A.").

## **2.0 Recommendation**

It is recommended to City Council that, pursuant to Report CNCL-20-67 dated May 20, 2020, Development Services staff be directed to include in future subdivision, condominium and site plan agreements, as appropriate, for new residential developments appropriate clauses that would require builders to display and promote, in model homes and sales and leasing offices, as appropriate, available accessible home features and designs for consumers and to encourage builders to construct model homes with accessible features.

## **3.0 Executive Summary**

Not applicable.

## **4.0 Input From Other Sources**

The following have been consulted in the preparation of this Report:

- City Solicitor
- Chief Building Official
- Municipality of Clarington
- Town of Whitby
- Town of Ajax
- City of Greater Sudbury
- City of Kawartha Lakes
- B.I.L.T.

The results of staff's consultation with the above-noted municipalities are contained in Attachment 2.

The results of staff's consultation with B.I.L.T. are outlined in Section 5.2 of this Report as well as in Attachments 3 and 4.

## **5.0 Analysis**

### **5.1 Ontario Building Code Act, 1992**

The *Ontario Building Code Act, 1992* is the legislative framework governing the construction, renovation and change-of-use of a building in the Province of Ontario.

The Ontario Building Code ("O.B.C") is a regulation under the *Ontario Building Code Act, 1992*. Its purpose is to establish minimum standards for building construction province-wide. The excerpt from the O.B.C. pertaining to barrier-free design requirements can be found in Attachment 1 of this Report.

Currently, the O.B.C. Division B., Section 3.8.1.1(1) states that houses, triplexes, and boarding or rooming houses with fewer than eight boarders or roomers do not need to be barrier-free (see Attachment 1). "Houses" includes single detached, semi-detached and row house/townhouse dwellings containing no more than two dwelling units. However, the O.B.C. Division B., Section 3.8.2.1(5) states that 15% of residential suites in a Group C major occupancy apartment building are required to be barrier-free. A Group C major occupancy apartment building means a building that contains residential occupancies as the main use, in an apartment style, but does not include a retirement home, long term care facility or nursing home, and also does not include any built form mentioned above under the O.B.C. Division B., Section 3.8.1.1(1).

Section 35(1) of the *Ontario Building Code Act, 1992*, states that "This Act and the building code supersede all municipal by-laws respecting the construction or demolition of buildings."

Consequently, municipalities are not permitted to require houses, triplexes, and boarding or rooming houses with fewer than eight boarders, to exceed the minimum standards established by the O.B.C. for barrier-free design or otherwise. Any municipal by-law passed by Council requiring that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units would not be able to be enforced by the Chief Building Official. It is also the opinion of the City Solicitor and the Chief Building Official that, if challenged by a building permit applicant before the Building Code Commission, the City would not be able to defend its position and may be liable for damages.

## **5.2 October 29, 2019 Building Industry Liaison Team Meeting**

Following the September 2019 motion from the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Built Environment Subcommittee on this matter (presented to the Development Services Committee on September 30, 2019 as Item DS-19-167 – see Section 1.0 of this Report), Planning staff invited B.I.L.T. members to a meeting on October 29, 2019. The agenda prepared for the meeting included Item DS-19-167 for discussion purposes.

Lisa Hart, Chair of the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee ("O.A.A.C.") made a presentation at the October 29, 2019 meeting to the B.I.L.T. team regarding the background of this item. In response to questions from home builders, Ms. Hart clarified that the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Built Environment Subcommittee is seeking to have homes built with no entrance stairs, exterior and interior doors wider than standard sizes, and an accessible washroom on the main floor/entry level.

B.I.L.T. members discussed the implications of requiring 15% of all residential projects to be barrier-free. It was determined that while they can appreciate that an aging population will inevitably increase the demand for accessible housing, significant challenges occur with the proposal.

Firstly, further details for the accessible features that would be required is needed before further discussion can continue.

Secondly, the 15% accessible unit requirement for apartment buildings under the O.B.C. is generally less challenging to meet, due to ground floor units and elevators being available

in most buildings. When applying this requirement to other forms of residential development (e.g. single detached, semi-detached and townhouse dwellings), it becomes more challenging. Two specific examples were identified, the first being that current grading practices involve directing the site drainage from the rear of the property to the front, to utilize existing stormwater infrastructure. As a result of the grade of lots sloping downward toward the front, constructing an entrance without steps is generally not possible. The second example identified is based on the fact that many three-storey townhome designs have the garage built into the home and therefore very little square footage on the ground floor remains to accommodate an accessible washroom.

During the meeting, builders and developers voiced generally the same opinion. In their experience the demand for accessible housing is far less than 15%, and the imposition of a requirement mandating that 15% of all residential units meet specific accessible criteria is unnecessary. Builders already work with purchasers requiring accessible features to be incorporated in their unit to meet their needs without the need for mandatory regulations. Further, in the event that accessible units are constructed in advance of a specific request, there is no guarantee that they will be purchased by an owner who is in need of the accessible features.

As a follow-up to meeting, staff requested that members of B.I.L.T. submit written comments regarding this matter. Comments were received from the D.R.H.B.A., Graywood Homes (SO Developments) and Midhaven Homes, and reflect the foregoing discussion.

### **5.3 Developer-Specific Barrier-Free Construction Programs**

While municipalities cannot require new residential projects to exceed the minimum standards for barrier-free units as set out in the O.B.C., some developers, at the request of purchasers, will construct the unit to be barrier-free. Costs associated with implementing barrier-free features in a unit may vary from builder to builder.

Several developers and builders have stated that while only a handful of purchasers have requested their dwelling to be constructed with accessible features, they will work with any purchaser requiring their home to be customized for accessibility. The issue raised by the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Built Environment Subcommittee regarding a perceived lack of barrier-free units may have arisen from a lack of awareness of the accessible design options that many builders offer. These programs only apply at the design and pre-construction stage and not to the re-sale market, as builders are no longer involved at that stage. However, financial assistance programs may be available such as the Registered Retirement Savings Plan Home Buyers' Plan and the Home Buyers' Tax Credit, as well as other construction grants or loans to assist eligible buyers in the re-sale market.

### **5.4 Recommendation: Implement Conditions in Planning Agreements to Promote Consumer Awareness of Developers' Accessible Construction Programs but Maintain Status Quo Pursuant to Ontario Building Code Requirements**

It is recommended that Development Services staff be directed to update the subdivision, condominium and site plan agreement templates to include standard conditions for new plans of subdivision and condominium, as well as standard conditions in new residential

site plan agreements, requiring builders to display and promote available accessible home features and designs for consumers. This will increase consumers' awareness of builder-specific barrier-free construction programs as described in Section 5.3 of this Report. Further, this may assist in addressing the perceived lack of barrier-free units being constructed in the City at a minimal cost to the City.

To complement the above-noted course of action, it is recommended that staff also encourage builders to construct model homes with accessible features to further increase consumers' awareness.

Finally, staff will ensure that when Architectural Control Guidelines are prepared for individual plans of subdivision, that the developer's, architect include a section on available accessible home features and designs for consumers to help promote awareness and to consider accessibility features in the design of models that are marketed to the consumer.

This approach is consistent with the objectives and recommendations set out in Section 3 of the City's Age-Friendly Strategy by encouraging housing leaders to promote a variety of housing options, increasing awareness of construction programs and assisting older adults with "aging in place".

If City Council wishes to adopt this approach, which is recommended by staff, then Council should adopt the recommendations contained in Section 2.0 of this Report.

## **6.0 Financial Implications**

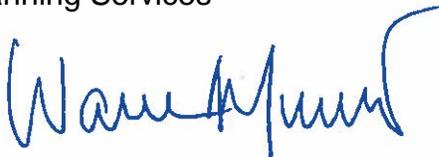
There are no financial implications associated with the Recommendation in this Report concerning this matter as the builder would be responsible to include in their sales and leasing office and on their website information for persons seeking to include accessible features in their new home.

## **7.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan**

The Recommendation advances the Social Equity and Accountable Leadership goals of the Oshawa Strategic Plan.



Tom Goodeve, M.Sc.Pl., MCIP, RPP, Director,  
Planning Services



Warren Munro, HBA, RPP, Commissioner,  
Development Services Department

## **Ontario Building Code Act, 1992**

### **Municipal by-laws**

**35** (1) This Act and the building code supersede all municipal by-laws respecting the construction or demolition of buildings. 1992, c. 23, s. 35 (1).

## **Ontario Building Code, 2019**

### **Section 3.8. Barrier-Free Design**

#### **3.8.1. General**

##### **3.8.1.1. Application**

**(1)** The requirements of this Section apply to all *buildings* except,

- (a) houses, including semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, town houses, row houses and boarding or rooming houses with fewer than 8 boarders or roomers

##### **3.8.2.1. Areas Requiring Barrier-Free Path of Travel**

**(5)** In a Group C *major occupancy* apartment *building*, not less than 15% of all *suites* of *residential occupancy* shall be provided with a *barrier-free* path of travel from the *suite* entrance door into the following rooms and spaces that shall be located at the same level as the *barrier-free* path of travel:

- (a) at least one bedroom,
- (b) at least one bathroom conforming to Sentence (6)
- (c) a kitchen or kitchen space, and
- (d) a living room or space.

**Requirements for Barrier-Free Units in New Residential Projects Other Than  
Apartment Buildings**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Response</b>
Municipality of Clarington	No response
Town of Whitby	O.B.C. sets standard, developer has prerogative to exceed
Town of Ajax	O.B.C. sets standard, developer has prerogative to exceed
City of Pickering	No response
City of Greater Sudbury	O.B.C. sets standard, developer has prerogative to exceed
City of Kawartha Lakes	O.B.C. sets standard, developer has prerogative to exceed



**Memorandum**

**Development Services Department**

November 6, 2019

File: B-1000-0042

**To:** All BILT Members

**From:** Susan Ashton, Manager  
Development and Urban Design

**Subject:** **Minutes of Meeting – BILT (Building Industry Liaison Team)  
October 29, 2019 – 2:00 p.m. – C-Wing Committee Room**

**Attendance**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| Akiva Wolfe, Initial Corporation       | Stephen Wylie, WSP/MMM Group           |
| Anna Fagyas, Medallion Corp            | Tiago Do Couto, Minto Communities      |
| Christian Huggett, Podium Developments | Mark Jacobs, Biglieri Group            |
| Christine Yee, Graywood Group          | Katrina, Holland Homes                 |
| Eddy Chan, Delpark Homes               | Ashley McInnis, City Homes             |
| Emidio DiPalo, DRHBA                   | Mitch Wiskell, Parks Services          |
| Ivano Labricciosa, OPUC                | Morgan Jones, Planning Services        |
| Jennifer Jaruczek, BILD                | Matt Bickle, Legal Services            |
| Johnathan Schickedanz, DRHBA           | Lynda Lawson, Accessibility            |
| Louise Foster, Tribute                 | Lisa Hart, Chair, OAAC                 |
| Nikolas Papapetrou, Smart Centres      | Tom Goodeve, Planning Services         |
| Robbie Larocque, Biddle & Associates   | Susan Ashton, Chair, Planning Services |
| Russel White, Fieldgate Developments   | Christine Chase, Planning Services     |
| Ryan Lavender, Schleiss                | Dan Carter, Mayor                      |
| Scott Jeffery, Jeffery Homes           | Jane Hurst, Councillor                 |
| Scott Waterhouse, Candevcon            | Rosemary McConkey, Councillor          |
| Stacey Hawkins, DRHBA                  | Rick Kerr, Councillor                  |

Overview	Action Required By
<p><b>1. Welcome and Introduction</b></p> <p>S. Ashton welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Agenda forms Attachment 1.</p> <p>S. Ashton introduced Tom Goodeve as the Director of Planning Services.</p>	
<p><b>2. Discussion and request for comments regarding Development Services Committee (D.S.C.) agenda item <a href="#">DS-19-167</a>, Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee (O.A.A.C.) Built Environment SubCommittee motion that the City begin requiring that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units</b></p> <p>L. Hart gave an overview of the issues with homes that are not accessible. 2.6 million people live with accessibility concerns. Council approved an Age-Friendly strategy.</p>	<p>BILT to provide comments by Nov 22</p>

<b>Overview</b>	<b>Action Required By</b>
<p>E. Chan stated some sites have grading that is not natural (e.g. steps to front door). It is also difficult on infill sites to accommodate density at grade.</p> <p>L. Foster asked where does this report sit right now and what is the expectation?</p> <p>S. Ashton replied that staff intends to collect information, review and formulate a plan. We are asking for comments from you.</p> <p>T. Do Couto asked what type of units is the 15% applied to?</p> <p>L. Hart stated that this is our first ask for comments. 15% is used for apartments in the OBC.</p> <p>R. White asked if there is a definition of accessibility to follow. What are you asking for?</p> <p>L. Hart replied wider door to dwelling unit, ramp to front door, accessible bathroom on ground floor.</p> <p>S. Ashton replied that we will return to BILT with results after we have reviewed your comments.</p> <p>C. Huggett stated that Podium has worked with OAAC on some of their projects. The feedback has been good. Projects around the University have been made accessible with financial help in the form of grants. Some areas are better suited to making accessible homes. 15% may be too onerous. What new forms would you like to see?</p> <p>C. Yee stated you need to define what is affordable.</p> <p>S. Waterhouse asked where is this item coming from?</p> <p>S. Ashton replied from O.A.A.C. Built Environment SubCommittee to D.S.C.</p> <p>L. Foster advised that Tribute already makes accessible units for new builds. We are working with purchasers if they have requests for accessibility. Most builders do this. Developers/Builders are out of the picture when the home is resold. It is a design challenge for townhouses because of garages, as they immediately have stairs to the front door.</p> <p>J. Schickedanz stated Engineering would have challenges such as overland flow and drainage to the front yard. They meet with buyers and design and build accessible units for them. They charge only for hard costs, not labour or design.</p>	

Overview	Action Required By
<p>L. Hart stated that there is no awareness in the community that developers/builders will create accessibility in homes when asked. Could some model homes be accessible?</p>	
<p><b>3. Proposal to change City policy to require Developers to finish parks in new developments (DS-19-200)</b></p> <p>DS-19-200 is attached as Attachment 4.</p> <p>S. Ashton stated City considering developers to build parks in new subdivisions. We would like your feedback on this item.</p> <p>S. Ashton stated that currently there are two options the City has to build a park contained in the subdivision agreement. Either: 1. Developer finishes park, or 2. Developer does grading and seeding.</p> <p>T. Do Couto stated that this is just a conversation here. Will the DC's change?</p> <p>S. Ashton replied nothing has been decided yet. Any change would apply to parks from this point forward but DC changes, if any, would not immediately impact parks for which DC's have been collected.</p> <p>T. Goodeve stated Bill 108 is the elephant in the room. Have to wait until next year for outcome.</p> <p>S. Ashton stated we have to start thinking now of different options.</p> <p>T. Do Couto stated parks could have multiple ownerships. Very premature to have this conversation. If developers build parks there is no more working with Developers and City to change options. Why has this happened? What are you trying to solve?</p> <p>S. Ashton advised that this item is a Notice of Motion that came from Council.</p> <p>C. Huggett stated that this would be double dipping. Paying for DC's plus the cost of the park.</p> <p>S. Ashton clarified that it is not double dipping. We would give you the money that was set aside to develop the park.</p> <p>R. White asked if there is a threshold when parks should be developed?</p> <p>T. Do Couto stated parks are usually developed 1 to 2 years after build out. Depends on draft approval discussions.</p> <p>L. Foster stated that the policy/procedure needs to be re-examined. Tribute does not want to build parks. Landscape plans need to be</p>	<p>BILT to provide comments by Nov 22</p>

<b>Overview</b>	<b>Action Required By</b>
<p>approved at the same time as engineering plans. Park development comes down to money and timing. Need clear procedure on LC approvals, assumption, draw downs, etc.</p> <p>S. Waterhouse asked what are the barriers that are stopping building the park now?</p> <p>S. Ashton replied shortage of staff, approval in budget within a timely manner.</p> <p>E. Chan asked what are the standards other municipalities ask for. Oshawa's challenge is public input and funding.</p> <p>R. White stated developers want the options – to build or not.</p> <p>M. Wiskel and S. Ashton explained that the type of parks being discussed range from parkettes to neighbourhood parks, typically in ranging from 0.6 hectares to around 1.8 hectares in size.</p> <p>C. Huggett stated parks could be delivered as soon as possible if there were not barriers.</p>	
<p><b>4. Sidewalk diversions around development construction projects in the Downtown (DS-19-104)</b></p> <p>DS-19-104 is attached as Attachment 5.</p> <p>S. Ashton stated road occupancy permit goes through Operations. Build sidewalk diversion in parking lane so sidewalks are uninterrupted.</p> <p>T. Do Couto asked is this for the short term? We build an asphalt ramp and fencing for longer term projects.</p> <p>Developers prefer hoarding. They all have a construction management plan to minimize impacts. They have done a “fast fence” with asphalt ramps at each end for a diversion.</p> <p>S. Ashton replied yes for the short term.</p>	<p>BILT to provide comments by Nov 22</p>
<p><b>5. Municipal Parking Study Update</b></p> <p>M. Jones gave an overview of the parking study. The study has been extended into the fall. It is nearing completion of the background information. IBI Group will present to BILT and have an open house with the general public. Once the study is completed it will be presented to CLT, Community Services Committee, Development Services Committee and Council. Once comments have been reviewed a draft recommendation report will be presented to Community Services Committee, Development Services Committee and Council. Once approved staff will then start implementing recommendations.</p>	

Overview	Action Required By
<p>S. Waterhouse would like to see parking ratio for different types of units (e.g. stacked townhouses).</p> <p>Question asked why was the study extended? Hard part will be implementing recommendations. Is there any way to accelerate? Could easier items be implemented sooner?</p> <p>M. Jones replied that the study was extended due to the substantial data request and timing of meetings.</p> <p>C. Huggett asked if there are requirements for accessible parking. Could affect site plan, more items to consider. Does the study look at creating flex spaces for accessible parking based on demand?</p> <p>M. Jones replied the study does look at different method of parking. One item is car-share. Parking garages are also in the scope of the study.</p> <p>R. Larocque asked if parkades were part of study. Perhaps rent out upper floors and leave lower floors for short-term users.</p>	
<p><b>6. Items for a Future Meeting</b></p> <p>None</p>	
<p><b>7. Adjournment</b></p> <p>The next BILT meeting will be at the call of the Chair.</p>	

Original signed by:

Susan Ashton, Manager  
Development and Urban Design

SA/cc

Attachment 1: Agenda

Attachment 2: Development Services Committee Agenda Item DS-19-167

Attachment 3: OAAC Build-In-Accessibility (hand-out)

Attachment 4: Development Services Directive Item DS-19-200

Attachment 5: Development Services Directive Item DS-19-104

**AGENDA****Building Industry Liaison Team (BILT)**

October 29, 2019

Time: 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Location: C-Wing Committee Room

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| <b>A. Welcome and Introduction</b>  | Susan Ashton |
| <b>B. Items</b>   |              |
| 1. Introduction of Tom Goodeve, Director of Planning Services   | Susan Ashton |
| 2. Discussion and request for comments regarding DSC agenda item <a href="#">DS-19-167</a> , O.A.A.C. Built Environment SubCommittee motion that the City begin requiring that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units | Susan Ashton |
| 3. Proposal to change City policy to require Developers to finish parks in new developments   | Susan Ashton |
| 4. Sidewalk diversions around development construction projects   | Susan Ashton |
| 5. Municipal Parking Study Update   | Morgan Jones |
| 6. Questions  |              |
| <b>C. Items for Future Meeting</b>  |              |
| <b>D. Adjournment</b>   |              |

Whereas the 2015 Council approved Integrated Transportation Master Plan recommends the undertaking of a study to analyze the impacts of the conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets in the downtown; and,

Whereas residents have expressed a desire for the conversion of one-way streets to two-way streets for general safety purposes, and in particular the safety of their children;

Therefore be it resolved:

That as part of the 2020 budget, staff include a study to investigate and analyse the conversion of Celina Street and Albert Street to two-way traffic operations to make these neighbourhoods more livable and pedestrian-oriented. The study should review alternatives to increase:

- Access and mobility for all modes of transportation;
- Green space and plantings; and,
- Connectivity to the downtown, the Athol Street cycle tracks and the Michael Starr Trail.”

DS-19-174 Notice of Motion – Reconversion of Streets into Two-way Thoroughfares

“That staff be directed to examine the feasibility of the reconversion of the following streets into two-way thoroughfares:

1. King and Bond Streets
2. Simcoe and Centre Streets; and,

That Regional Staff be consulted where appropriate and that the report come back to the Development Services Committee.”

## Reports from Advisory Committees

### Fifth Report of the Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee (DS-19-167)

The Oshawa Accessibility Advisory Committee respectfully reports and recommends to the Development Services Committee its Fifth Report.

1. Eighth Report of the Built Environment Subcommittee – September 2019 (OAAC-19-41)

#### Recommendation

Whereas the O.A.A.C. Built Environment Subcommittee is finding numerous site plans with only inaccessible townhouses and stacked townhouses;

Therefore the City require that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units with visitable features, including no stairs to entrances doors as well as entrance door and washroom door widths sufficient for mobility devices.



## Build-In-Accessibility!

Meeting: Tuesday, October 29, 2019  
Oshawa City Hall, 50 Centre Street South

Today, more than 2.5 million people, almost 20% of Ontario's population, have a disability. The numbers are fast approaching 1 in 5, which include more than 40% of people over age 65.



### What is being proposed

to the Building Industry Liaison Team (BILT) is to ensure that a portion of houses built in future new home development projects in Oshawa are visitable with no step entry, wider opening and doors and at least a half bath, preferably a full accessible bath on the main floor. Providing some built-ready homes with these accessible features, if properly presented, could become a **powerful marketing tool**.

### Did you know?

The AODA "Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act" is provincial legislation passed unanimously in 2005 to implement standards that achieve Accessibility with respect to goods, services, facilities, accommodation, employment, buildings, structures and premises by 2025.

95% of Ontarians understand the need to improve access for people with disabilities. Phased in changes to the AODA Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) led to enhanced accessibility standards being incorporated into the Ontario Building Code effective 2015 requiring 15% of new apartment building units be constructed with accessible visitable features.



There is a strong desire and goal for people to age in place. The aging trend is not a temporary blip but a long-term reality that has been forecast to continue; hence the need for more multi-generational accessible housing.



The new construction stage is the most logical time to make detached, links, semis & townhouse dwellings **accessible!**



The fact that the 2015 accessibility requirements apply to new apartment building dwellings and not to houses creates an imbalance, limiting people with disabilities from being part of **all** neighbourhoods.



New Oshawa streets have houses with 8, 9, even up to 15 steps to the front door.

**We encourage Oshawa builders and developers to take the first step and be Build-In-Accessibility Champions!**

**Start with a model home and see accessible dwellings sell first!**

Source: [ontario.ca/page/accessibility-499](http://ontario.ca/page/accessibility-499) o-information-businesses#section-3



## Visitability

### Universal design

People who inhabit and visit the houses we live in come in all shapes and sizes, ranging from infants to seniors, with various ever-changing abilities and skills. As we grow up, grow old and welcome new people to our homes, our housing needs change. A house that is designed and constructed to reflect the principles of universal design will be safer and more accommodating to the diverse range of ages and abilities of people who live in and visit these homes. One of the goals of universal design is to maximize the usability of environments. Designers and builders must talk to and work with as many people with disabilities as possible.

Effective accessible design and construction can only occur when we truly appreciate how persons with disabilities engage the built environment. Universal design is only a subtle shift from what is typically done; designing for greater accessibility then is not a new way of designing, simply a more focused one. By providing flexibility in the selection of design features and incorporating adaptability into home design, the life and usability of a home is extended, which promotes the concept of **aging in place**.

This concept is increasingly popular with families and individuals who choose to stay in their homes and neighbourhoods as they grow and age. Planning for individuals' changing needs and abilities allows for periodic home customization based on changing requirements and reduces the need for future costly renovations.

Planning for future needs is good practice. Principles of universal design encourage flexibility, adaptability, safety and efficiency.

### Visitable homes

Visitable housing is an approach to house design that promotes the inclusion of a basic level of accessibility into all housing, and enables everyone to get in and out of the house and be able to use a bathroom on the entrance level. The concept of "visitability" is one of the simplest and most economical approaches to universal design that can address homeowners' and community needs over time, contributing to a more flexible and sustainable built environment.

Universal design is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size and ability. "The Principles of Universal Design" are found on page 14.

**Bolded** terms throughout this fact sheet are defined in the **Glossary** on page 11.



Such an approach will not only accommodate visitors to a home who may be elderly or disabled, but it will also better accommodate the reality of changing ability that we all experience as we grow older. Visitable design is meant to benefit as many people as possible, including friends and family members, parents pushing strollers, individuals using mobility devices and individuals moving furniture or other large items into a home (see figure 1).

A visitable house incorporates three basic access features:

- A **no-step (zero-step) entry**
- All main floor interior doors (including bathrooms) feature a clear opening width of 810 mm (32 in.), but a clear space of at least 860 mm (34 in.) is better. It is highly recommended to install a 915-mm (36-in.) wide door to all rooms of a home.
- At least a **half-bath**, but preferably a **full bath** on the main floor complete with a 1,500-mm (60-in.) turning circle in the room.

Please note that the criteria for establishing housing varies from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, however, the objective is the same in all cases. The more stringent criteria is more universal, allowing for larger wheelchairs and scooters. Some jurisdictions may even suggest an accessible bedroom on the visitable floor level.

### Visitable housing in North America

The concept of visitability was first introduced in North America in 1986 by Eleanor Smith and a group of advocates for people with physical disabilities. The vision of the visitability movement was to create an inclusive community where people with mobility limitations could visit their families, friends and neighbours without barriers. Eleanor Smith is well known for the following quote: "When someone builds a home, they're not just building it for themselves—that home's going to be around for 100 years. [Accessible entrances] hurt nobody—and they help a lot of other people."



Figure 1: Visitable home complete with a no-step front entrance  
Photo by Ron Wickman



## Why visitable housing is important

One in six Canadians (14.3 per cent) have a disability, and one-third of all Canadians aged 65 years or over have mobility problems. Older adults aged 65 years and over account for 14.1 per cent of the Canadian population, and they will make up more than one-fifth of the population by 2026 and one-quarter of the population by 2056. Visitable housing responds to the increasing seniors' population and their desire to **age in place**. The vast majority of elderly persons prefer to remain in their homes as long as possible. With today's housing stock, this is virtually impossible.

Over 50 per cent of falls suffered by older adults occur in their own home. Staircases are one of the common areas within the home where falls occur. Stairs are the leading cause of serious falls among community-living elderly, accounting for about one-third of all fatal falls. A large portion of Canadian older adults are hospitalized after a fall on stairs or steps in their homes.

Single-family housing is largely unaffected by accessibility requirements. Building codes include barrier-free design requirements for public buildings, however, they do not force barrier-free requirements on single-family homes. If we build visitable housing today, the future economic benefits will be vast. Given the statistical information that we already know, what an incredible waste of resources if we build homes today, only to have them undergo unnecessary costly modifications 10 years later to make them accessible for persons with disabilities.

Typically, persons who own visitable homes live with a family member who uses a wheelchair. Other family and friends do not own visitable homes. Therefore, the owner of the visitable home usually becomes the host of others, simply because it is the only home that someone in a wheelchair can independently access. In many Canadian suburban neighbourhoods, one architectural control dictates at least three steps at the front door; it is thought that this leads to higher resale values. A special variance is required to have a no-step entrance (see figure 2). Figure 2 clearly shows that a home with a no-step level entry can look like all the other homes on the street. In no way does the visitable home stand out and look different.



Figure 2: Visitable home with a no-step level entrance beside a home with steps leading to the front door  
*Photo by Ron Wickman*



Other factors that make visitable housing important include the following:

- Visitable features easy to incorporate and conceptualize.
- Easy access to the house for friends and family visiting and people with mobility difficulties, those with young children in strollers, those carrying large and heavy shopping items, furniture or equipment.
- Housing becomes age-friendly for more homeowners.
- Community participation and social integration.
- Reduced costs for home renovations at a time of mobility changes.
- Reduced risks of fall or injuries.
- Homeowners can easily return to their home following a sudden change in mobility.
- Prevention of premature institutionalization of older adults.
- Visitable homes can be purchased by and sold to a wider demographic.
- Visitable housing needs to be beautiful and invisible so that everyone uses the home in the same way and so that the visitable features blend in with the architectural style of the home.
- Visitable features can easily be incorporated with other building innovations, such as affordable design, green architecture and energy efficiency.



Figure 3: Single-family home with visitable entrance at the side  
Photo by Ron Wickman



Figure 4: Visitable home, on left, with sloping sidewalk and no-step entrance located at the back of home  
Photo by Ron Wickman

Visitability ensures that a basic level of accessibility will be provided in all housing and it opens opportunities for participation in community life. For this to happen, visitable homes must themselves become part of the neighbourhood fabric, a commonplace addition to the catalogue of housing types that comprises our communities and an appealing choice for able-bodied consumers.

When visitability features are planned at the outset, additional costs are minimal. There are several ways in which a site may be graded depending on where the no-step entrance is located. The grade can slope between the street and the home to provide an accessible entry on any side of the home (see figure 3). The grade can slope from an alley to the house to provide a no-step entrance at the rear (see figure 4). Figure 4 shows that there is little difference between a visitable home with a no-step level entrance at the back door and a home with steps leading to the back door. A combination of front and rear grade slope can also provide no-step access to a side door from both street and/or alley.



## Design requirements

Several trends in new single-family detached housing design and construction make a well-integrated, accessible route to an entrance difficult to achieve. These include the desire for large basement windows and the trend toward long homes on shallow lots with the drainage directed either to the front or back (no split).

We should encourage lot grading plans with split drainage to reduce the grade differential between the site and finished floor. Basements should have at least one quadrant without windows to allow earthwork against the building in support of an accessible walkway and entry area. Lot size and shape and house siting on the lot should support an accessible walkway to an entrance, and the developer's engineering consultants should have a provisional accessible route in mind when laying out the lots and designing the lot grades.

While it is possible to build a **no-step entry** with standard platform framing, this usually involves bringing the exterior grade up against the rim joist to create a sloping entry. Careful flashing is needed to prevent rot. We can place the top of the floor joists at the same elevation as the top of the mudsill by adding height to the foundation wall and framing a bearing wall inside the basement perimeter. This method is only slightly more expensive, but it eliminates the need to push dirt up against the wood framing and allows the entry door to be at the same level, creating a no-step entrance (see figure 5). Please note that the construction detail identified in figure 5 is only one of several good examples of achieving a no-step entrance.

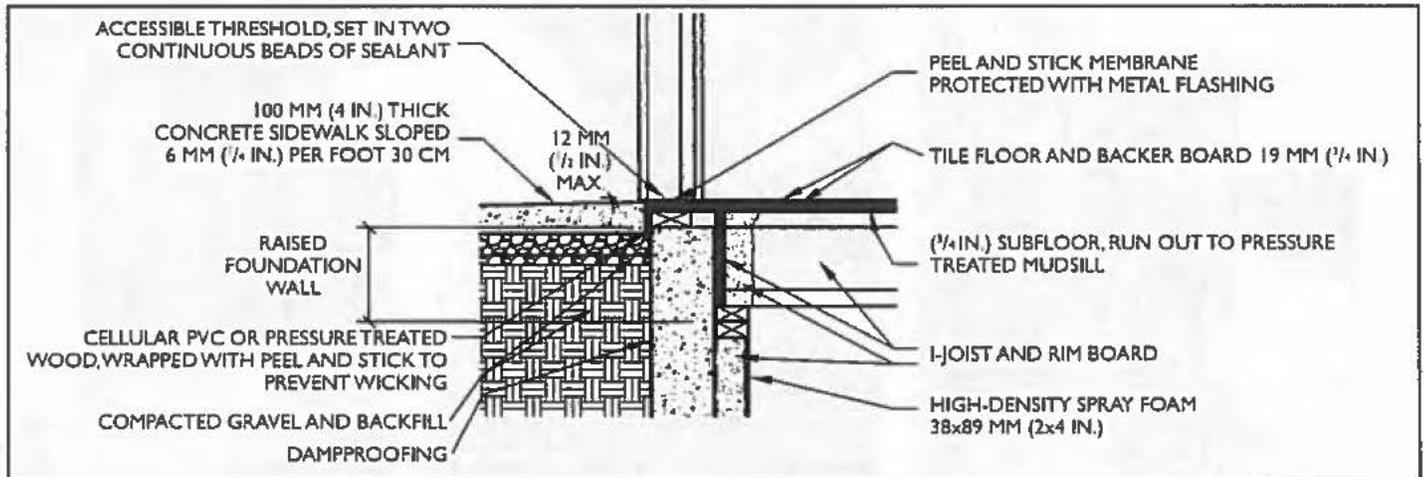


Figure 5: No-step entrance detail  
Diagram by Ron Wickman, Architect



## A no-step (zero-step) entry

The primary intent of having a no-step entry is to allow a pathway into a dwelling that is free of barriers for any individuals using a walker or wheelchair, pushing wheeled equipment or carrying heavy loads when entering or exiting the dwelling; and to improve safety for all by minimizing the risk of tripping on steps. VISIBLE homes must have at least one no-step entrance. Whenever possible, a no-step entrance should be considered for the main entry to the dwelling unit. Where this is not possible, a no-step entrance may be made at the back or side of the house, or through an attached garage. The entrance needs to be accessible from a sidewalk, a driveway, or other public route. The exterior path of travel should be at least a clear width of 915 mm (36 in.), while 1,200 mm (48 in.) is preferred. A level landing that is at least 1,500x1,500 mm (60x60 in.) should be at the entrance door (see figures 6, 7 and 8).

Other considerations include the following:

- The no-step entrance should not have a slope greater than a ratio of 1:20, unless designed as a ramp. (A running slope between 1:20 and 1:12 is considered a ramp).
- Considerations should be made in the areas of canopy protection, drainage and entrance lighting.
- The no-step entrance should have a maximum 25-mm (1/2-in.) bevelled threshold (see figure 8).



Figure 6: Entering a visible home –  
photo 1 of 3  
Photo by Ron Wickman



Figure 7: Entering a visible home –  
photo 2 of 3  
Photo by Ron Wickman



Figure 8: Entering a visible home –  
photo 3 of 3  
Photo by Ron Wickman



## Doorways

It is intended that the designed environment will allow freedom of movement throughout the visitable floor area for individuals to join with others in social interactions. This freedom of movement is to allow individuals, including those who use wheelchairs, to manoeuvre safely, while reducing the potential for surface damage to walls, doors and door frames from accidental impacts.

It is also a good idea to think about the manoeuvring space required for the door. Adequate space should be provided inside the bathroom to allow one to close the door when one is inside. Also, for doors that swing outside the bathroom, consider installing a D-type handle, 140 mm (6 in.) long, on the door so that one may pull it closed once inside. Likewise, space is required to allow one to easily open the door to exit.

Other considerations include the following:

- All doorways on a visitable floor should be 915 mm (36 in.) in width.
- A minimum 600-mm (24-in) clear space should be provided on the latch side of the door on the pull side and 300 mm (12 in) of clear space on the latch side of the door on the push side.
- Doors should have lever door handles.
- Lever door handles should be operable with one hand and not require fine finger control, tight grasping, pinching or twisting of the wrist.
- All hallways on a visitable floor should be a minimum 1,100 mm (43 in.) in width.
- Electrical rough-in on the hinge side for the option of installing a power door operator in the future should be provided.

## Bathrooms

One of the latest design trends involves the creation of spacious bathrooms that incorporate a variety of features and flexibility of use. As a result, bathrooms become more adaptable and comfortable for individuals and families. We tend to spend more time in our bathrooms, and we desire an attractive space. Builders and homebuyers recognize the positive resale value of functional and beautiful bathrooms. The concept of universal design, whose objective is to meet all users' needs, is incorporated into many bathroom features, such as bathtubs, showers, toilets, sinks, lighting and flooring. A bathroom that anticipates the needs of all the family members and visitors will become that much more valuable. See CMHC's fact sheet *Accessible Housing by Design—Bathrooms*.

Areas within bathrooms in the visitable floor area must allow for the accommodation of individuals using basic mobility equipment such as a manual wheelchair. The intention is to provide an opportunity for an individual to manoeuvre and turn around within the bathroom area safely as well as to close and open the bathroom door to maintain privacy and dignity.



When designing a bathroom for someone who uses a walker or wheelchair, you should allow a sufficient manoeuvring space of 750x1,200 mm (30x48 in.) in front of or beside all fixtures, including the bathtub, shower and storage spaces. It is especially important to consider the manoeuvring space in front of all of the controls, so that it is not necessary for someone to lean to reach them, which may result in a fall. Do not forget to also provide sufficient manoeuvring space in front of all windows and window controls (see figure 9).

A minimum manoeuvring space of 1,500x1,500 mm (60x60 in.) within the bathroom will allow for turning around and approaching the bathroom elements (see figure 10). For users of power wheelchairs or scooters the required turning circle is larger, increasing the minimum manoeuvring space to 1,800x1,800 mm (72x72 in.), depending on the size of the mobility device. Room should also be provided for people who give assistance or care in the bathroom (see figure 11).



Figure 9: Low profile door threshold  
Photo by Ron Wickman

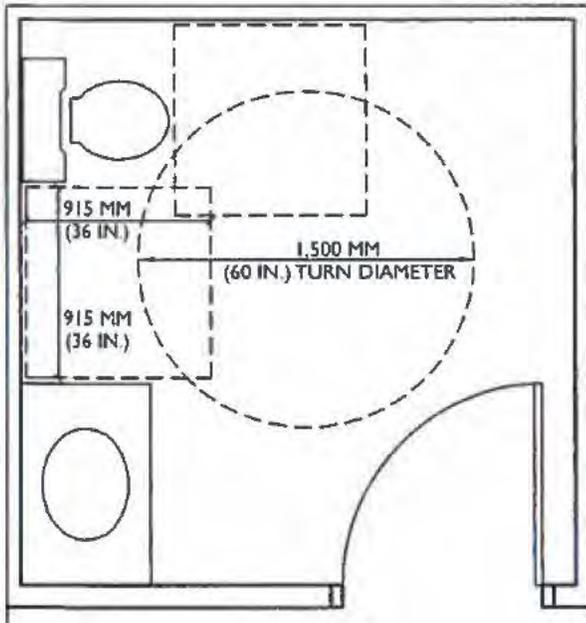


Figure 10: Bathroom layout  
Diagram by Ron Wickman, Architect



Figure 11: A toilet with sufficient transfer space adjacent  
Photo by Ron Wickman



## Vanities

The key to proper height placement of the countertop is to keep the counter to a minimum thickness. This maximizes the ability to keep the countertop low enough for those users in wheelchairs to reach into the sink; the countertop can also be high enough to allow the same users in wheelchairs to get underneath the counter (see figure 12). The front edge of the counter can also be in a contrasting colour to assist individuals with limited vision. A bar located in front of the counter could assist those individuals with balance issues standing at the sink. It is recommended to have rounded edges around the sink/vanity to reduce the risk of skin abrasions or injury from accidental impacts.

Sinks should be shallow enough to allow persons in wheelchairs to get in underneath. Also, it is important to keep the users' legs from coming into contact with exposed hot pipes. To prevent potential burns to legs, the pipes can be insulated or a protective panel can hide exposed pipes. A third option is to offset the sink pipes as far back up against the wall, where a person's legs could never come into contact with exposed pipes. See CMHC's fact sheet *Accessible Housing by Design—Bathrooms*.

## Community design

Accessible community planning encompasses the ideas of inclusion, diversity, and social and environmental sustainability for all generations. An accessible community includes access to public transportation, is a walkable community close to amenities, health, recreation and cultural facilities, and a caring, supportive, safe neighbourhood with adequate, affordable and accessible housing. VISIBLE design attempts to change home construction practices so that more new homes—not merely those custom-built for occupants who currently have disabilities—offer accessible features that make them easier for people to live in and visit.

Visitability lends itself to the opportunity for social interaction among friends, family and neighbours in the community but more importantly in each of our homes. To make visitability a norm, inclusive, sustainable approaches to community planning and the design and construction of single- and multi-family homes is required.

It is easiest to implement visitable housing when it is planned for in the neighbourhood design process. Visitability tends to be more difficult to realize in mature neighbourhoods because these areas never considered the concept in the planning stages. In new construction, added costs for visitability features are very small. This would reduce future renovation costs by thousands of dollars as accessible dwelling modifications can range from \$10,000 to over \$200,000.

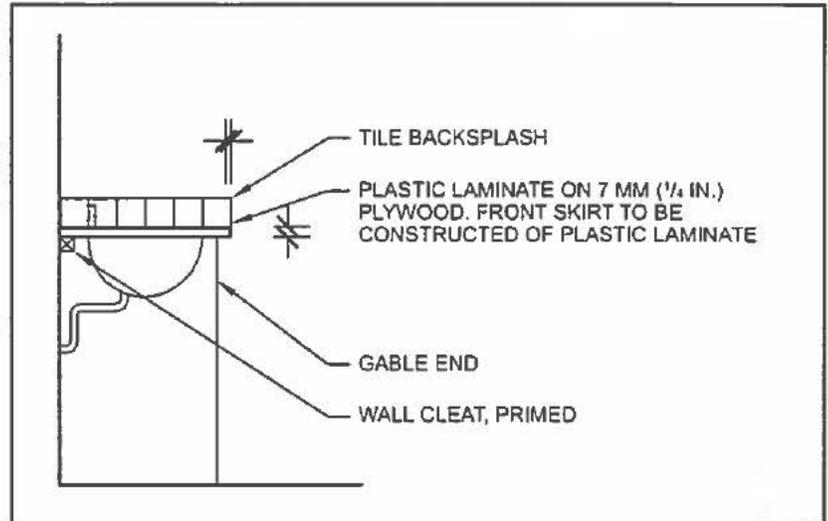


Figure 12: Section drawing through sink and counter  
Diagram by Ron Wickman, Architect



Neighbourhood plans should be designed and engineered in advance to accommodate at-grade entries. The two key features are sewer inverts made deep enough to allow for lower basements, and site grading that allows for easy no-step level entry construction. Neighbourhood plans to accommodate visitable housing would lower underground service lines to accommodate a deeper basement, slope the land so that the highest point is in the middle of the lot and maintain a greater distance between a home's front door and the sidewalk to achieve a gently sloping walkway.

The best example of progressive planning for visitable housing has been achieved in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Bridgewater project, started in 2006, is a housing development initiative involving three residential neighbourhoods and a Town Centre in the Waverly West area in South West Winnipeg. Over 1,000 visitable single-family lots have been planned into the development.

### Bridgewater project (2006-2021)

- A housing development project initiated by the Province of Manitoba (Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation).
- The first neighbourhood plan in Canada that includes a large proportion of housing to be built as visitable.
- Vision – A walkable neighbourhood with a diversity of housing.
- Key features – Visitable housing, increased green space, mature forest, sidewalks and pedestrian paths.

### Project progress

- Fastest selling neighbourhood in Winnipeg.
- Over 250 visitable homes are now occupied.
- No difference in selling rates between visitable homes and non-visitable homes in the neighbourhood.

In accessible home design, it is a good idea to consult with a health professional, such as an occupational therapist. It also helps to consult with an architect, and interior designer or another design professional who is familiar with the design of accessible residences. During the design, work with the designer and occupational therapist to determine the most positive layout for a visitable home.



## Glossary

**Aging in place:** The ability to remain in one's home safely, independently and comfortably, regardless of age, income or ability level throughout one's changing lifetime.

**Half-bath/Full bath:** A half-bath is a bathroom with only a toilet and a sink, a full bath has a toilet, a sink and a tub and/or shower.

**No-step (zero-step) entry:** An entrance into a building that is without steps or any elevation change of more than 12.5 mm (½ in.)



## Additional resources

### Books

- Barrier Free Environments Inc. *The Accessible Housing Design File*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1991.
- Behar, S., and C. Leibrock. *Beautiful Barrier-Free: A Visual Guide to Accessibility*. New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1993.
- Boyle Hillstrom, S. *Design Ideas for Bathrooms*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Creative Homeowner, 2005.
- Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access. *Inclusive Housing: A Pattern Book*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2010.
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- Jacobs, J. C. *Accessible Bathroom Design: Tearing Down the Barriers*. Suisun City, CA: JIREH Publishing Company, 2002.
- Jordan, Wendy A. *Universal Design for the Home*. Beverly, Massachusetts: Quarry Books, 2008.
- Leibrock, C., and J. E. Terry. *Beautiful Universal Design: A Visual Guide*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1999.
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- Peterson, M. J. *Universal Bathroom Planning: Design that Adapts to People*. Hackettstown, NJ: National Kitchen & Bath Association, 1996.
- Pierce, Deborah. *The Accessible Home: Designing for All Ages and Abilities*. Newtown, CT: The Taunton Press, 2012.
- Taunton Press. *Renovating a Bathroom*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 2003.
- Wickman, Ron. *Accessible Architecture—A Visit From Pops*. Winnipeg: Gemma B. Publishing, 2014.
- Wormer, A. *The Bathroom Idea Book*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 2001.



## Websites

**American Association of Retired Persons—AARP** (May 2016)

<http://search.aarp.org/everywhere?Ntt=bathroom&intcmp=DSO-SRCH-EWHERE>

**Bob Vila** (May 2016)

<http://www.bobvila.com/search?utf8=%E2%9C%93&q=accessible+solutions>

**Canadian Centre on Disability Studies** (May 2016)

<http://disabilitystudies.ca>

**Concrete Change** (May 2016)

[www.concretechange.org](http://www.concretechange.org)

**Institute for Human Centered Design** (May 2016)

<http://humancentereddesign.org/>

**IDEA Center for Inclusive Design and Environmental Access** (May 2016)

<http://idea.ap.buffalo.edu/>

[www.udeworld.com/visitability.html](http://www.udeworld.com/visitability.html)

**Home for Life** (May 2016)

<http://www.homeforlife.ca/>

**Livable Housing Australia** (May 2016)

<http://livablehousingaustralia.org.au/>

**VisitAble Housing Canada** (May 2016)

<http://visitablehousingcanada.com>



## The Principles of Universal Design

### Principle 1: Equitable use

This principle focuses on providing equitable access for everyone in an integrated and dignified manner. It implies that the design is appealing to everyone and provides an equal level of safety for all users.

### Principle 2: Flexibility in use

This principle implies that the design of the house or product has been developed considering a wide range of individual preferences and abilities throughout the life cycle of the occupants.

### Principle 3: Simple and intuitive

The layout and design of the home and devices should be easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience or cognitive ability. This principle requires that design elements be simple and work intuitively.

### Principle 4: Perceptible information

The provision of information using a combination of different modes, whether using visual, audible or tactile methods, will ensure that everyone is able to use the elements of the home safely and effectively. Principle 4 encourages the provision of information through some of our senses—sight, hearing and touch—when interacting with our home environment.

### Principle 5: Tolerance for error

This principle incorporates a tolerance for error, minimizing the potential for unintended results. This implies design considerations that include fail-safe features and gives thought to how all users may use the space or product safely.

### Principle 6: Low physical effort

This principle deals with limiting the strength, stamina and dexterity required to access spaces or use controls and products.

### Principle 7: Size and space for approach and use

This principle focuses on the amount of room needed to access space, equipment and controls. This includes designing for the appropriate size and space so that all family members and visitors can safely reach, see and operate all elements of the home.





## Partnerships with Non-Profits Help Create New Kinds of Affordable and Supportive Housing

Can housing for people with disabilities offer access to the daily care they need to stay independent, and still be affordable? A growing number of developers across Canada say it can. Now, they're investing their time, expertise and resources to prove it.

People with disabilities face unique challenges when it comes to housing. In addition to having to find a home that is both accessible and affordable, they also often require a network of support services in order to maintain their independence, privacy and dignity.

Thankfully, developers like Southwest Ontario's Nasr Nasr have begun finding new ways to help their tenants meet that challenge head-on. By partnering with a local non-profit service provider, he has been able to build accessible and affordable homes that not only meet his tenants' needs, but which offer them direct access to a true community of support – and give them a real chance at a better life.



Figure 1 Blue Haven Apartments in Amherstburg, Ontario

"Growing up, my family was always involved in trying to find ways to give back to the community," Nasr explains. "When I was twenty-four, I read an article about the urgent need for more affordable housing right here in Canada, and I

realized you could do both – build a successful business as a property developer, and still do good for other people who were in need of a helping hand."

"I ended up falling in love with affordable housing. Now, my passion for it has become a big part of both my business and my life."

### The Blue Haven Apartments

The Blue Haven Apartments in Amherstburg, Ontario are a perfect example of exactly what can happen when this kind of passion and commitment is put into action.

Developed by Nasr's company, Nasr Limited, Blue Haven features 24 one-bedroom townhomes, spread out over two buildings along a tranquil riverfront. The units are all classified as affordable rentals. A majority of them are also barrier-free and fully accessible, which means they provide safe and comfortable housing for people with a wide range of needs, incomes and physical abilities.

When Nasr first had the idea of building an affordable housing project in the Amherstburg area, he looked at close to a dozen potential properties. One of the last buildings he visited – the former Blue Haven Motel – had definitely seen better days. But as soon as Nasr laid eyes on the neglected property in early 2017, he knew it was exactly what he had been looking for.

"Whether I'm looking for a vacant lot I can build on or a building we can convert, I'm always looking for the same three things," Nasr says.

“First, it has to be centrally located close to transit, shopping, parks and other services, so people can get what they need easily, and also so that they can really feel like they’re part of the community.”

“Second, it has to be available at a price that makes sense for affordable housing, which usually means a building that needs a fair bit of work.”

“Third, I have to see opportunities for ways we make it even more affordable through the construction or renovation. That way, I can pass those savings onto my tenants over the lifetime of the building.”

### Accessible, affordable and supportive living

To keep costs at a minimum, Nasr chose finishes, surfaces and features that would last a long time, keep his monthly utility bills to a minimum, and which would require relatively little ongoing maintenance. This included things like:

- Concrete driveways and parking lots for both buildings, which last longer than asphalt and require significantly less long-term maintenance.
- High-efficiency central boiler that provides both heating and hot water for all the units at a much lower cost than a traditional heating system.
- Extra-tight building envelope with high levels of insulation throughout the apartments, to keep utility bills down and create healthier and more comfortable living environments.
- Energy- and water-efficient appliances, faucets and lighting to minimize both the ongoing electricity costs and the overall environmental footprint.
- In-floor heating to create a healthy and comfortable indoor space, while reducing energy consumption.
- Open-concept, barrier-free floorplans to lower construction costs for interior walls and provide greater accessibility for tenants with physical disabilities and their visitors.

“It’s amazing the places where you can save a lot of money in the long run for just an extra five or ten per cent investment up-front,” Nasr explains.

“Making choices like these during the construction can help keep my long-term costs down, and allow me to rent my units out for anywhere up to twenty per cent below market rates.”



Figure 2 Blue Haven Motel under renovation to affordable housing



Figure 3 Landscaped grounds around Blue Haven Apartments

### Building success through partnerships

Nasr also recommends looking for partners who can help make a project more successful.

In the case of Blue Haven, for example, because all of the units were going to be designated as affordable housing, Nasr was able to obtain substantial funding from the federal, provincial and municipal governments to help subsidize the cost of construction. He also qualified for grants from the local utility companies for installing energy-efficient appliances and lighting.

But perhaps the most important partnership was the one that Nasr formed with Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario (A.L.S.O.). A.L.S.O. is an Ontario-based non-profit group that provides services and support to help adults with physical disabilities live independently in the community.



Figure 4 Entrance to support services for apartment residence and the community

During the redevelopment, Nasr set aside one of the Blue Haven units as a permanent office and resource space for the group. In return, A.L.S.O. staff now work out of the office 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to help the tenants who have physical disabilities with everything from personal care and daily living tasks, to social recreation and counselling.

*“Whether someone needs help getting ready in the morning, or just someone to talk to in the middle of the night, A.L.S.O. is always there to help them.”*

- Nasr

“Even better, in the case of Blue Haven, they’re just a phone call or a few steps away. This way, people have access to the kind of daily help they’d normally only get from living in a long-term care or assisted living facility, but without having to give up the freedom of having an apartment of their own,” Nasr says.

In addition, the A.L.S.O. team also uses its office at Blue Haven as a hub to service the surrounding region as a whole. As a result, they are able to provide services and other benefits not just for the tenants of Blue Haven, but for the entire community around it.

“We deliver our services in what we call ‘neighbourhoods of care,’” explains A.L.S.O. Executive Director, Lynn Calder. “From our office at Blue Haven, we provide round-the-clock care to all of the building’s tenants who require it. But we can also dispatch our staff from that location to help dozens of other people throughout the region.”

“This frees up more spaces in the city’s hospitals and long-term care facilities, plus it allows us to help more people than we otherwise would have been able to. The result is a win-win for us, for our clients, and for the entire community.”



Figure 5 Support service office – A.L.S.O. (Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario)



Figure 6 Blue Haven Apartments including former garage now a support service office

## Attention to detail

The partnership with A.L.S.O. has worked out so well that Nasr is convinced initiatives like it could be replicated in communities across the province, or maybe even across the country.

Of course, that isn't to say that there haven't been some challenges along the way. According to Nasr, one of the biggest challenges he tends to face in developing affordable housing, is that it can sometimes be difficult to get people living in the community to buy into a project or share the same vision.

Because the idea of exactly what "affordable housing" is isn't always clear, many people instinctively resort to NIMBY-ism ("Not In My Back Yard") as their first, knee-jerk response.

But once the neighbours see these formerly empty, abandoned or derelict properties transformed into beautiful and vibrantly-restored parts of the community, Nasr says that the people who fought the hardest against an affordable housing project often turn into some of its biggest supporters.

"I think we all just need to give things a chance," Nasr says. "These are just people who want a nice place to live, just like anyone else."

"For our part, we try to think of every building we renovate or construct as more than just housing. It's somebody's home. Then, when people see how much we care about doing it right, and how much the tenants care about their homes, they generally come on-board."

## Meeting the needs of developers, tenants and the community

For Nasr, every project comes with its own unique challenges, and its own rewards. But the important thing is to keep finding new ways to make more affordable housing possible.

"As costs go higher, it becomes harder and harder to build housing that's both affordable and of good quality," he says. "But that's what makes it more important than ever to keep trying."

"The need for affordable housing in Canada has never been greater. There are so many good people out there who just want to have a place to live, a home they can afford, and a chance at changing their lives. As a developer, I see it as part of my job to do what I can to give them that chance."

### Find out more

Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario (A.L.S.O.):  
<http://www.alsogroup.org>

Assisted Living Southwestern Ontario YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChTkWVKBJutB-yZ8XoWQhCA/featured>

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Direction of Development Services Committee – October 21, 2019

DS-19-197 Trent University Durham Greater Toronto Area – Requesting a Seat on the Oshawa Downtown BIA Board of Directors

That Correspondence DS-19-197 from Trent University Durham Greater Toronto Area requesting a seat on the Oshawa Downtown BIA Board of Directors be referred to staff for a report.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

DS-19-199 Notice of Motion – Request for Real Estate Report

That the Commissioner, Development Services Department provide a real estate report prior to Council's annual budget deliberations containing a list of all City real estate acquisitions and dispositions, including prices paid and received during the preceding 12 month period.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

DS-19-200 Notice of Motion – Construction of New City Parks

That the Commissioner, Development Services Department draft a policy for Council to review and determine implementing that will ensure new city parks are constructed at the same time new subdivision roads are constructed in order that new residents are best served in a timely way with park amenities.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

DS-19-184 Recommended Street Name in Accordance with Street Naming Policy in Memory and Honour of the War Dead and War Veterans

That pursuant to Report DS-19-184 dated October 16, 2019 the Development Services Committee approve the addition of the name Gow to the City's Street Name Reserve List in accordance with the Council approved Street Naming Policy in Memory and Honour of the War Dead and War Veterans.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

## Direction of Development Services Committee – May 27, 2019

DS-19-104 Pedestrian Walkways around Blocked Sidewalks

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Whereas the City of Oshawa aspires to make the downtown a pedestrian-friendly environment;

That Development Services staff investigate options to have downtown developments that require a blockage of sidewalks create pedestrian walkways around the blocked sidewalk, using parking stalls or street lanes as necessary

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Referred to staff**

DS-19-90 Petition in Opposition of the Proposed Retirement Building on Ormond Drive

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That Correspondence DS-19-90 being a petition in opposition of the proposed retirement building on Ormond Drive be referred to staff for a report.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

## DS-19-102 Christine Gilmet- Request to Amend the Zoning By-law to Permit Tiny Houses

DS-19-103 Adam White- Request to Amend the Zoning By-law to Permit Tiny House Developments

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That Correspondence DS-19-102 from Christine Gilmet, dated May 20, 2019 and Correspondence DS-19-103 from Adam White dated May 21, 2019 concerning requests to amend the Zoning By-law to permit tiny house developments be referred to staff for a report.

**Attention: Development Services Department**

**Action Taken: Carried**

DS-19-95 Proposed Licence Agreement between the City of Oshawa and 9286071 Canada Association for Non-Exclusive Use of Part of the Cordova Valley Park, the Cordova Valley Park Clubhouse, Storage Shed and Adjacent Parking Lot located at 811 Glen Street

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That pursuant to Report DS-19-95 dated May 22, 2019, the Commissioner, Development Services Department be authorized to approve and execute a Licence Agreement with 9286071 Canada Association operating as "We Grow Food" for the non-exclusive use of



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November 26, 2019

Susan Ashton  
City of Oshawa  
50 Centre Street South  
Oshawa, Ontario L1H 3Z7

Re: **October 29, 2019 BILT Meeting**

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The Durham Region Home Builders' Association proudly represents over 180 member companies that are involved in the construction and renovation industry, and is the voice of the residential construction industry in Durham Region.

We would like to thank city staff for inviting us to participate in the October 29 BILT meeting, which focused on accessibility, parks and downtown sidewalks. We believe that this type of open communication is beneficial to both the city and the development industry.

The Durham Region Home Builders' Association (DRHBA) has reached out to our members about the issues presented at the BILT meeting, and we are prepared to offer the City our feedback.

**O.A.A.C. Built Environment Subcommittee Motion - 15% Accessible Units**

The O.A.A.C. has put forward a motion: "Therefore the City require that all residential projects be designed with 15% accessible units with visitable features, including no stairs to the entrances doors as well as entrance door and washroom door widths sufficient for mobility devices."

In the meeting, committee chair Lisa Hart clarified that the committee is seeking to have homes built with no entrance stairs, exterior and interior doors that are wider and an accessible washroom on the main floor/entry level.

Even with the clarification, the Durham Region Home Builders' Association believes that clearer criteria is needed before further discussion can continue. However, we will provide you with some initial feedback on the information that was provided.

While we appreciate that the population is aging and the need for accessible housing exists, creating a mandatory "15% accessibility" requirement poses some significant challenges.

The committee chair stated that the number, 15%, was pulled from the Ontario Building Code, and stated that it is the current requirement for building accessible units in apartment buildings. With ground floor units and elevators available in most high rise buildings, it is less challenging to hit this target. When the conversation turns to townhomes and single detached houses, meeting this mandatory

requirement proves to be much more difficult. For example, current grading practices (rear to front drainage) do not allow for an entrance without steps. Many stacked and three-storey townhome designs have the garage built into the home and therefore have very little square footage on the ground floor to accommodate an accessible bathroom.

It should also be noted that many builders will work with purchasers to customize their homes to suit their needs, including building in accessibility features. Therefore, the specific needs of an individual or family can currently be met without introducing mandatory regulations.

At this time, our builders and developers are not experiencing a demand for accessible housing, and feel that mandating 15% of all residential units meet a specific accessibility criteria is unnecessary.

### **Parks**

In regards to the City's proposal to change City policy to require developers to finish parks in new developments (parks and parkettes 0.6 - 1.8 hectares in size), our members have some concerns.

Currently, the park design and construction program is a collaborative effort between the City and its development industry partners. Developers and City staff work through the design process to ensure that all elements of park programming requested by the City are accommodated within the available park budget. Adjustments can then be made to the design of the park to ensure that there are sufficient funds to reimburse the developer under the Development Charge Credit program once construction is complete. Should the city make it mandatory for the developer to build the park, this collaborative atmosphere could be eliminated. In this situation, once the city provides a programming wish list to the developer, anything that falls outside of the City's DC amount collected would have to be paid for by the developer. As the park construction is directly reimbursable through Development Charge credits, we do not feel it is appropriate for the City to leave park construction solely to the Developers as the City ultimately holds the DC funds to pay for these new parks.

Furthermore, we understand through the conversation at the October 29<sup>th</sup> meeting that there may no longer be any DC credits available for parks not currently within the DC bylaw. We would request further clarification on this item.

Additionally, with the passing of Bill 108 earlier this year by the provincial government and the current process being undertaken with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to provide a regulatory framework for the new Community Benefits Charge, we feel that any change to this park construction program and Development Charge collections and credits program is pre-mature and unwarranted at this time.

### **Downtown Sidewalks**

At this time, the Durham Region Home Builders' Association does not have any members that are developing/building in the downtown, so we do not have any feedback at this time, other than to say that we are happy to work with the City to ensure that pedestrians have safe passage near construction sites.

Sincerely,



Stacey Hawkins  
Executive Officer  
Durham Region Home Builders' Association

cc:

Johnathan Schickedanz, president, DRHBA  
Tiago Do Couto, chair, GR committee, DRHBA  
Paul Ralph, city manager, City of Oshawa  
Warren Munro, commissioner of development services, City of Oshawa  
Tom Goodeve, principal planner, City of Oshawa