

Check out this article in **Real Estate Magazine**, highlighting some of the goals of the Kitchener-Waterloo Task Force, as well as an overview of the national project.

VisitAble Housing promotes accessible homes [Front Page, Trends](#), Sep 26, 2014



VisitAble Housing is the concept of designing and building homes with accessibility features. (Photo: Canadian Centre on Disability Studies)

Being able to visit friends and neighbours is a simple pleasure, but not one that can be enjoyed by everyone. Barriers such as stairs at entrances, narrow doorways and hallways, and bathrooms on upper or lower levels can exclude people with disabilities and seniors with mobility issues. That will change if VisitAble Housing Canada has its way.

VisitAble Housing is the concept of designing and building homes with basic accessibility features on their main levels, offering conveniences for visitors of all ages and mobility. It also makes everyday living easier for its occupants through various stages of their lives.

What qualifies a house as being a VisitAble home? It has a no-step entrance at the front, back or side of the house; wider doorways and clear passage on the main floor; and a main-floor bathroom or powder room that is accessible to people who use mobility devices.

The Visitability Project is a three-year national initiative that runs until March 2016 and is partially funded by the federal government's Social Development Partnerships Program's disability component.

Its goals include increasing awareness of VisitAble Housing to buyers, builders, policy makers and other stakeholders. For example, the Kitchener-Waterloo task force, one of six teams working across the country to increase awareness, plans to develop a workshop and resource package for real estate agents about the benefits and selling features of VisitAble Housing. A checklist so agents can determine if a house they're selling is VisitAble is also in the works.

"Although VisitAble Housing was first introduced in consideration of people with physical disabilities, the concept is now widely accepted as a desirable home design for a wide range of residents," the program's website says.

VisitAble Housing features benefit all homeowners – a no-step entrance makes it easier to get strollers, large or heavy items and things such as groceries into the house. Fewer stairs will also reduce the risk of falls in the home. It also means more homeowners can age in place.

VisitAble Homes are being built in various parts of Canada, though currently in small numbers. The Bridgwater Project in Winnipeg is still in development and had a little more than 200 VisitAble Homes occupied as of 2013. Bridgwater will build more than 1,000 single-family homes by 2017. More than 25 homes have been built in Winnipeg in the last decade.

The Bridgwater project is the Manitoba government's housing development initiative. The government is also the land developer of the project, says Youn-Young Park, senior researcher and project manager of the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies in Winnipeg, which leads the national initiative.

For more information, view the video on [YouTube](#).