

# Visitable Housing

## Knowledge, Practices and Policies

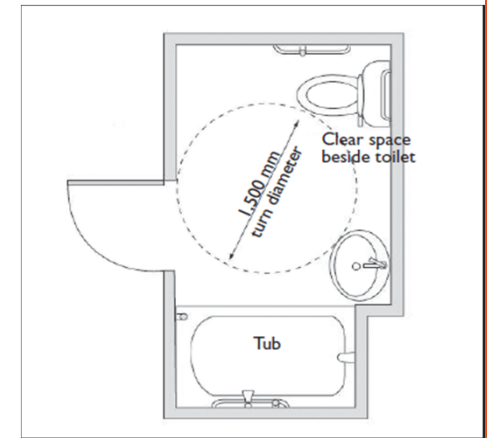
Canadian Centre on Disability Studies

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# Definition of Visitable Homes

## Three Visitability Features:

- 1) One level, no-step entrance (at the front, back or side of the house )
- 2) Wider doorways and clear passage on the main floor (minimum 32")
- 3) A wheelchair accessible bathroom on the main floor



# No Step Entrances

**Concrete Change Slides 5-8**

## Definition of Visitable Homes (cont.)

### Visitability is NOT:

- fully accessible, universal design
- applied to the upper floors or the basement

## Visitable Housing in North America

- First introduced in North America in 1986
- Eleanor Smith and a group of advocates for people with physical disabilities
- Concrete Change - An initiative to incorporate a set of basic accessibility features in every home in a housing project in Atlanta  
(<http://concretechange.org>)
- The term 'Visit-ability' which was already used in England for a similar concept

## International Trends in Visitable Housing

- USA, Australia, UK and other European countries - Much progress made in advancing Visitable housing
- Canada - Lagging behind those countries in terms of legislation, public education, and incentives

## Issues and Gaps

- Changing housing needs of residents over the lifetime of a house
- Hostile home structures to those with mobility difficulties
- Architectural barriers for visiting relatives or friends who use a wheelchair
- A lack of housing stock with basic accessibility features in Canada
- Unprepared housing industry to meet needs of the growing aging population
- Few Visitability regulations and policies in Canada

# Reasons for Visitable Housing

## People with Mobility Difficulties and Aging Population

- One in six Canadians (14.3%) having a disability
- One third of all Canadians aged 65 years or over with mobility problems
- Older adults aged 65 years and over accounting for 14.1% of the Canadian population
- Older adults more than one-fifth of the population by 2026 and one-quarter of the population by 2056





## Reasons for Visitable Housing (cont.)

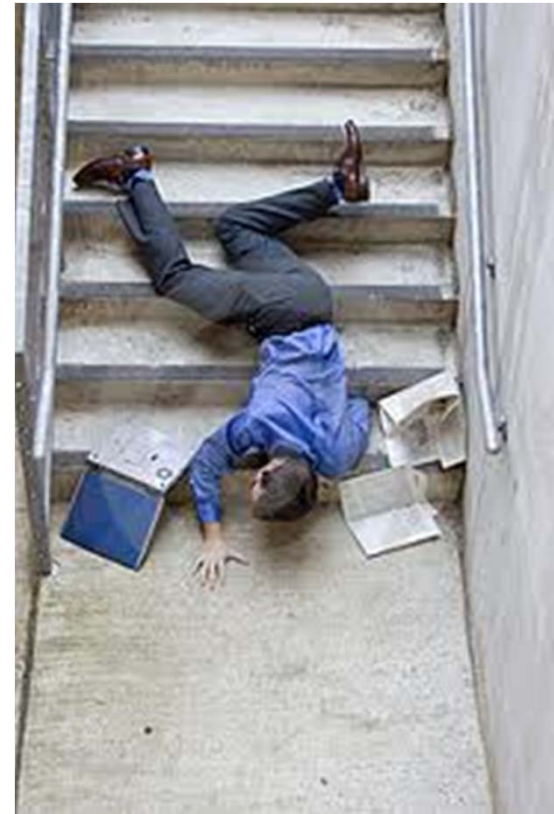
### Aging in Place

- Definition - “Creating a situation whereby older people can remain in their own familiar surroundings for longer, so delaying or possibly obviating the need to move to specific institutional residential care facilities” (Houben, 2001, p. 651)
- The vast majority of adults aged 55 or older (89%) like to age in place.
- A sense of independence and control, proximity to family, familiarity, safety and security, and being near friends
- Disabling effects of insignificant home features (e.g. stairs, doorsill) when recovering from surgery or carrying a walker
- Seniors less likely to move to an institution or care home with their homes equipped with some accessibility features

## Reasons for Visitable Housing (cont.)

### Falls and Injuries

- Over 50% of falls that older adults suffer 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.



## Costs of Visitable Housing

- When Visitability features are planned for at the outset, additional costs are minimal.
- Most of additional costs is related to creating the no step entrance, rather than interior design.

## Costs of Visitable Housing (cont.)

- Retrofits of a conventional home to make it a Visitable home costs significantly more than building a Visitable home

**Concrete Change Slides 12**

## Additional Costs Associated Visitable Housing

Additional costs related to Visitable homes vary.

- 67 Visitable homes in Atlanta - Roughly \$25
- Concrete Change - As little as \$200
- Buffalo and Rochester, NY - Less than \$1,000
- Naperville, Illinois - \$500 - \$5,000
- Bolingbrook, USA - \$2900 in average (1.5% of the total cost)
- Bridgwater neighbourhood in Winnipeg - \$0 - \$10,000
- A case study in Winnipeg, Manitoba - \$8,000 - \$12,000

## Factors That Affect Costs

- Topography – land development for no-step entrance
- Land and Utility services (e.g., sewer lines, pathways, lighting)
- Basement (e.g., window wells, depth of basement, foundation walls)
- Reduced living spaces (e.g. compensating reduced living spaces due to wider hallways and bathroom on the main level by increasing square footage of the house)

# Marketability and Advantages

**Concrete Change Slides 9-11**

## Marketability and Advantages

- Easy access to the house
- People with mobility difficulties, those with young children in strollers, those carrying large and heavy shopping items, furniture, or equipment
- Aging in place
- Community participation and social integration
- Reduced costs for home renovations at a time of mobility changes

*Aging in Place*

*Mom & Dad Want to Stay Home...  
Now What?*



## Marketability and Advantages (cont.)

- Reduced need for more costly personal care services
- Reduced risks of fall or injuries
- Prevention of premature institutionalization of older adults
- Invisible accessibility features and increased safety
- Aesthetic appeal



## Positive Impacts on the Society As a Whole

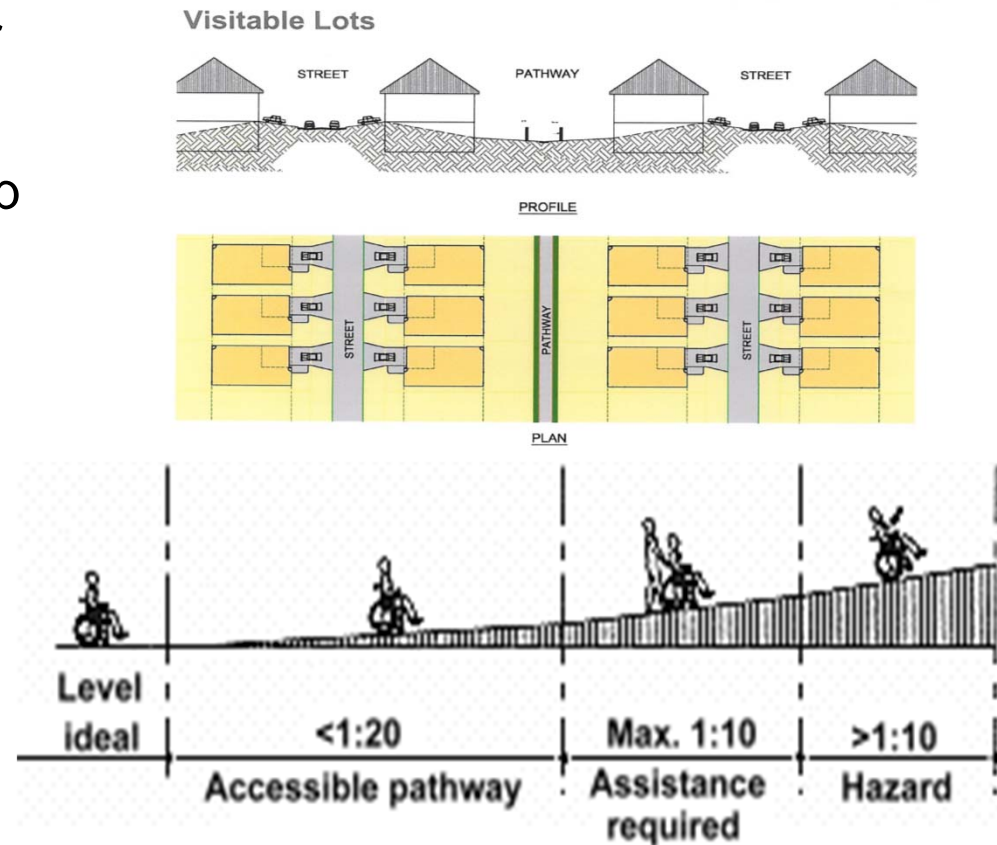
- Fewer injuries to older people and young children
- Reduced use of acute care hospitals and rehabilitation facilities
- Safer work environments for both paid and unpaid care-givers
- Less demand for home modifications, assistive equipment and paid assistance for people with mobility difficulties
- Less demand on institutional care arrangements for older people and people with a disability

## Challenges

- Affordability and costs associated with building Visitable homes
- Loss of living space due to large hallways and bathroom
- Lack of innovation within the building industry in relation to design, production techniques and marketing of accessible homes
- Lack of professional knowledge regarding accessible designs
- Attitudinal barriers by housing professionals
- Lack of support from governments
- Lack of consumer awareness
- Fast pace development in the housing industry
- Site or construction issues

# Construction and Technical Challenges

- Lot drainage plan and sewer lines
- Elevation of slope for no-step entrance
- Livable basement - window wells, depth of basement, foundation walls, etc.



## Policy Development for Visitable Housing

- Mandatory vs. voluntary
- Requirement to publicly funded housing vs. private housing
- Incentives for builders (e.g., fast tracked permit process, tax credits, subsidies, certificates)
- Incentives for housing consumers (e.g., tax credits, subsidies)
- Full vs. partial adoption of Visitable housing
- Application to only new homes vs. to new homes and major renovations
- Application to select types of dwellings (e.g., single family homes, multi-family dwellings, condos, age-restricted housing (55+), social housing)

## Recommendations to Promote Visitable Housing

- Develop policies that promote Visitable housing (e.g., National Building Code, provincial building codes, standards, ordinances, guidelines)
- Provide subsidies and support for Visitable housing
- Include Visitable housing in housing development projects
- Develop information materials on Visitable housing for public awareness
- Launch an awareness campaign on Visitable housing (e.g. seminars, website, pamphlets, design contest, show homes)
- Foster partnerships among stakeholders to promote Visitability

## Recommendations to Promote Visitable Housing

- Encourage educational institutions for housing professionals to include the concept of Visitable housing in their curriculum
- Study costs associated with building Visitable homes
- Study the feasibility of developing and maintaining a housing registry and/or labelling program to identify Visitable homes
- Develop guidelines on Visitable housing for housing professionals
- Develop Visitable home designs
- Develop a renovation action plan for public housing units for Visitability
- Encourage mortgage and insurance providers to offer discounts to those who build, purchase, or renovate Visitable/adaptable homes.

## For More Information

**Please visit:**

**<http://visitablehousingcanada.com>**

or

### **Canadian Centre on Disability Studies**

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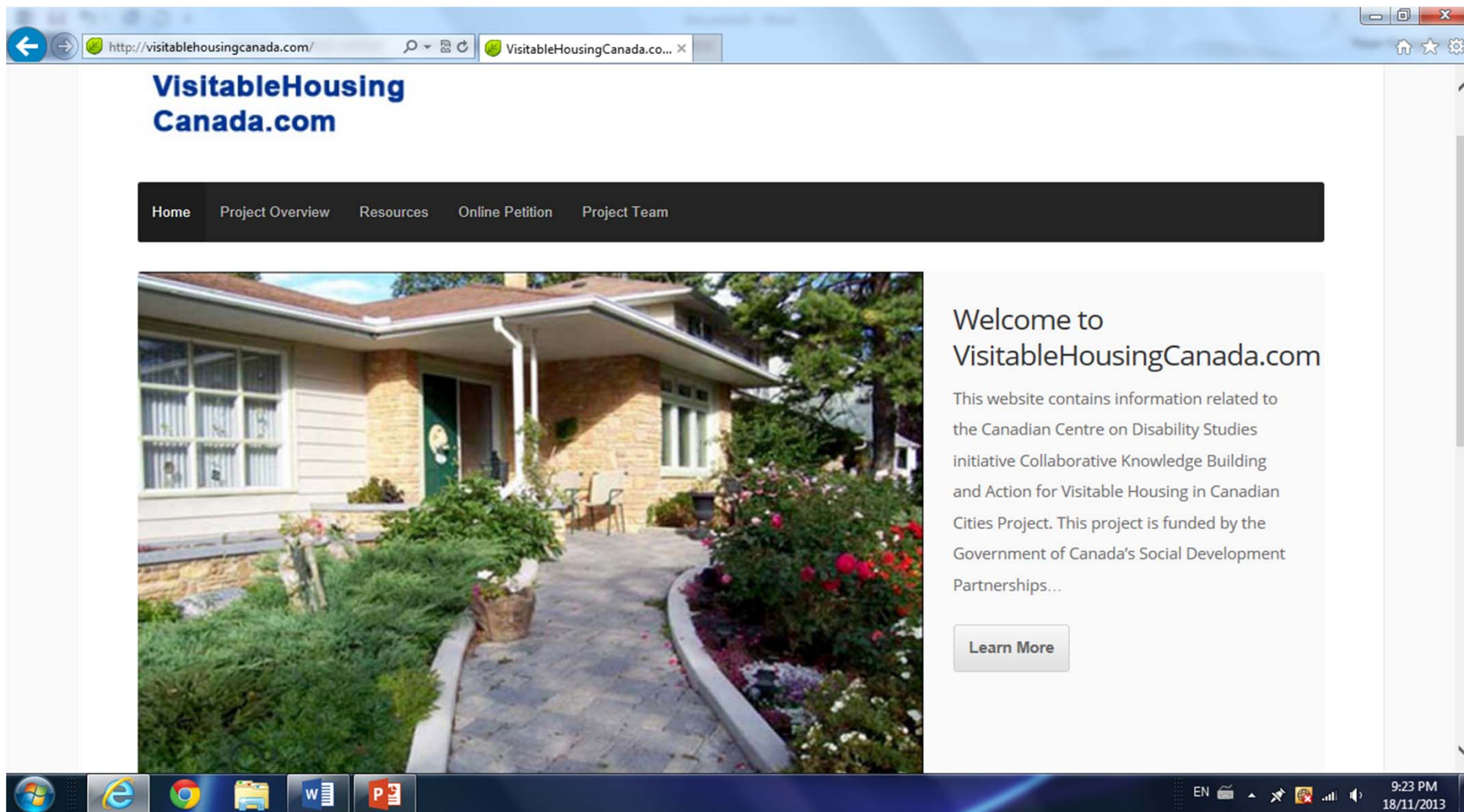
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# http://visitablehousingcanada.com



The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the homepage of VisitableHousingCanada.com. The browser's address bar shows the URL <http://visitablehousingcanada.com/>. The website's logo, "VisitableHousingCanada.com", is prominently displayed at the top left. Below the logo is a dark navigation bar with the following menu items: Home, Project Overview, Resources, Online Petition, and Project Team. The main content area features a large photograph of a single-story house with a brick and stone facade, a green door, and a paved walkway leading to the entrance. To the right of the image, the text reads: "Welcome to VisitableHousingCanada.com. This website contains information related to the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies initiative Collaborative Knowledge Building and Action for Visitable Housing in Canadian Cities Project. This project is funded by the Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships..." Below this text is a "Learn More" button. The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows icons for Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, File Explorer, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint. The system tray on the right indicates the time as 9:23 PM on 18/11/2013.

<https://www.facebook.com/visitablehousingcanada>

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying the Facebook page for 'Support Visitable Housing in Canada'. The browser's address bar shows the URL 'https://www.facebook.com/visitablehousingcanada'. The Facebook navigation bar is visible at the top, featuring the 'facebook' logo on the left and a login section on the right. The login section includes fields for 'Email or Phone' (containing 'amankewich@hotmail.com') and 'Password', along with a 'Log In' button, a 'Keep me logged in' checkbox, and a link for 'Forgot your password?'. Below the navigation bar, a white box contains the text 'Support Visitable Housing in Canada is on Facebook.' followed by 'To connect with Support Visitable Housing in Canada, sign up for Facebook today.' and two buttons: 'Sign Up' and 'Log In'. The main content area features a profile picture of a house, the page name 'Support Visitable Housing in Canada', and '61 likes'. Below this is a 'Community' section with the text 'This page will be used to promote Visitable housing in Canada and around the world.' and a 'Highlights' dropdown menu. At the bottom of the page, there are links for 'About', 'Photos', and 'Likes' (with a thumbs-up icon and the number '61'). The Windows taskbar is visible at the very bottom, showing icons for Internet Explorer, Google Chrome, File Explorer, Microsoft Word, and Microsoft PowerPoint, along with system tray icons and the date/time '9:24 PM 18/11/2013'.