

## VisitAbility Project Synopsis

**Project Title:** Collaborative Knowledge Building and Action for VisitAble Housing in Canadian Cities

**Funder:** Government of Canada's Social Development Partnerships Program — Disability Component

**Organization:** Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCDS)

**Project Period:** 3 years from May 1, 2013 to March 31, 2016

**Project Team:** Susan L. Hardie, Allen Mankewich, and Youn-Young Park (CCDS Staff)

### Definition of VisitAbility

VisitAbility is a movement to change home construction practices so that virtually all new homes offer a few basic accessibility features making the home easier for people with mobility difficulties to live in and visit. Although there are a few interpretations of VisitAbility, three essential features are commonly identified for VisitAble housing:

- 1) No-step entrance (at the front, back or side of the house)
- 2) Wider doorways and clear passage on the main floor
- 3) A main floor bathroom (or powder room) that can be accessed by visitors who use mobility devices

VisitAbility does NOT offer total access, but does allow people with mobility difficulties to enter a house without assistance from others, and provides access to the rooms and bathroom on the first floor.

### Goal and Objectives

This project intends to promote VisitAble housing for all people living in Canada, including seniors and persons with disabilities. The project objectives are:

- 1) To increase understanding of VisitAble housing by highlighting lived experiences and reviewing current policies and practices, impacts, barriers, and best practices;
- 2) To develop and implement strategies to promote VisitAble housing among buyers, builders, policy makers, and other stakeholders; and
- 3) To increase the awareness of VisitAble housing by highlighting the positive impacts, such as safety, social inclusion and active living of residents, inclusive community building and sustainable housing.

### Key Project Activities

Key project activities include:

- Six task forces across Canada who locally promote VisitAble housing
- Research on VisitAble housing (e.g., literature/document review, environmental scan, case study, interviews)
- Development of information material and resources on VisitAble housing (e.g., video, factsheet, brochure, display banner)
- Creation of a provincial/territorial resource list

- Online petition to promote VisitAble housing
- Webinars addressing issues related to VisitAble housing (e.g., construction, policy development)
- Awards of Excellence for VisitAble housing
- Project dissemination activities, including the VisitAbility website, VisitAbility Facebook group, and a media campaign (national and regional)

### **Task Forces in Canadian Municipalities and Communities**

The CCDS Project Team works with 6 task forces: three First Nations near Victoria ( Esquimalt First Nation, Tsartlip First Nation, Beecher Bay First Nation), BC; Richmond, BC; Edmonton, AB; Winnipeg, MB; Ottawa, ON; and Kitchener/Waterloo, ON. Each task force consists of three groups of stakeholders: 2-3 representatives consumer representatives, 3-5 representatives from the home-building industry, and 1-2 policy makers. Task forces develop strategies to promote VisitAble housing in their municipality and implement identified strategies by undertaking an awareness and promotion campaign in the municipality or community.

### **VisitAbility Website**

The VisitAbility website contains a wealth of information and resources about VisitAble housing. For more information about the project and VisitAble housing, please visit <http://VisitAbleHousingCanada.com>.