

DEVELOPING A
VISITABILITY HOUSING POLICY FOR
THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

BY

JOEL CASSELMAN

A Practicum
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the requirements
For the Degree of

Master of City Planning

Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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MASTER OF CITY PLANNING**

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ABSTRACT

Over the past several decades accessibility, in both public and private buildings, has become a more pressing issue, an issue brought on by the increasing proportion of persons with disabilities and the aging baby boomer generation. A very recent development in this field is that of visitability, referring to a basic level of accessibility in private homes.

This practicum explores the characteristics of visitability ordinances in jurisdictions where visitability has been adopted as policy. It compares multiple perspectives on visitability-the perspectives of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, a representative of the homebuilders' industry and the representatives Manitoba Family Services and Housing. It also explores how people with disabilities access the homes of their non-disabled peers.

A major goal of the research was to determine how a visitability ordinance could be designed and implemented in the Province of Manitoba.

The practicum begins by introducing visitability and provides an overview of the practicum, the purpose of the research and its limitations. It then details the research methods used in gathering the relevant field data. These included: a review of the literature concerning visitability; examining the origins of visitability; the reasons for its existence; how the built environment potentially discriminates against people with disabilities: how changing demographics necessitate the need for visitability; and examples of visitable homes. Next, a review was conducted of various accessibility ordinances, including existing visitability ordinances, the effects of visitability

legislation, visitability in the Canadian context, and how visitability relates to the field of planning.

Survey questionnaires were administered to disability access groups in jurisdictions where visitability ordinances have been adopted, and interviews were conducted with the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, a representative of the homebuilders' industry, and representatives of the Provincial Government. As well, there were two focus groups of people with mobility-related disabilities.

Following analysis of the data gathered, the practicum gives recommendations for introducing a visitability ordinance, including a multi-staged process that begins with the construction of prototype visitable homes and ends with incorporating visitability into the Manitoba Building Code. The practicum also outlines further directions for research in making existing housing stocks accessible, as well as ensuring accessibility in the built environment, and raising awareness of disability issues in planning and design education.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What is *visitability*?

Visitability involves a housing design where all newly built homes are built with a no-step entrance, doorways and hallways that are wide enough for a wheelchair, and a bathroom on the entry-level floor that is accessible. This minimal level of accessibility allows for a person with a disability to access a home, even if that person does not live there, and allows a non-disabled person to continue residing in a home should that person develop a disability.

Why is visitability a concern?

1. People with disabilities are a growing group in society. This is because improvements in health care allow people with disabilities to live longer lives and the proportion of seniors (who are more likely to have disabilities due to aging) in society is increasing.
2. People with disabilities often see the built environment as the most prominent obstacle in having a disability, even more so than the health or psychological aspects of having a disability.
3. Many people with disabilities and seniors want to live out their lives in the community, rather than in conventional institutions that isolate seniors and people with disabilities from society-at-large.
4. Homes accessible to people with disabilities are just as convenient for the non-disabled. For example, a wide level entrance makes it easier to move furniture into and out of a building rather than having to carry it up a flight of stairs.

5. Accidents are less likely to occur within accessible facilities, hence they save costs to the health care system.
6. While providing housing for people with disabilities has become more common over the past 20 years, it is still difficult for people with disabilities to access the homes of their non-disabled peers. This inaccessibility contributes to the institutionalization of and sense of isolation experienced by people with disabilities, and prevents them from interacting and integrating with the community-at-large.
7. It is more expensive to retrofit a non-accessible house than to have the house made accessible to begin with. Given the increasing number of people with disabilities in society and the fact that many of these consumers will want to live on their own, there will be more money spent on these retrofits-money which need not have been spent, had these homes been made accessible at the time of their construction.

In summary, having all homes made at least minimally accessible to people with disabilities will allow these individuals to access the homes of their non-disabled peers without difficulty. The level accessible entrance is not obvious or unsightly, as opposed to a ramp built onto a non-accessible home. The fact that such homes are already accessible will allow for non-disabled people to continue living in their residence should they develop a disability due to age, illness or injury. The costs of retrofitting these homes as well as the costs associated with home-based injuries are reduced as well.

Visitable housing will therefore allow for people with disabilities to integrate themselves with society-at-large, while also creating social, visual and economic sustainability for the community-at-large.

Visitability has been adopted as housing ordinance in several jurisdictions in the United States as well as all housing in the United Kingdom. At the time of this writing there is legislation proposed in the United States requiring visitability for all homes built with Federal Government Funding. At the present time there are no Canadian examples of visitability legislation. Winnipeg and Manitoba however, are in a unique position to deal with this. Winnipeg is the first city in Canada to have implemented a Universal Design Ordinance for its public facilities, in 2002. The Province of Manitoba has followed suit with similar legislation, also the first of its kind in Canada. Such policies provide an ideal foundation for an ordinance on visitability for private homes in the City of Winnipeg and/or the Province of Manitoba. Such an ordinance would also set a precedent for other jurisdictions in Canada to follow.

1.1 Overview of Practicum

This chapter provides an overview of the practicum, a statement of purpose and contributions, and the limits of the practicum.

Chapter 2 describes the research methods used to gather the field data used in this practicum. It also lists the questions asked of the human subjects who took part in this research.

Chapter 3 reviews the existing literature on accessible housing and visitability. It must be understood that visitability is a very new concept and there is little peer-reviewed literature on the subject. Much of the literature reviewed consists of government documents and Internet sources. The chapter details the origins of visitability and the reasons behind its existence. The chapter then examines how the built environment is

often the worst obstacle for people with disabilities, and how changing demographics present the need for visitability provisions.

The literature review continues in Chapter 4. This chapter provides several examples of homes built along visitable standards, followed by examples of visitability ordinances that have been adopted in other jurisdictions. The chapter continues with an evaluation of the effects of visitability. The chapter concludes by examining visitability in a Canadian context, and addressing how visitability relates to the professional planning field.

Chapter 5 highlights the results of the research undertaken for this practicum. It begins with a summary and analysis of seven questionnaires circulated to disability rights groups in jurisdictions where visitability ordinances have been adopted. It continues with a summary and analysis of an interview with the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, to understand the attitude of this committee's members towards visitability and the potential role that the committee could play in adopting a visitability ordinance. Next is a summary and analysis of an interview with a representative from the local homebuilders' industry, to understand the views of this industry towards visitability and visitability ordinances. The chapter then continues with the summary and analysis of an interview with representatives of the Province of Manitoba, to understand the role that the Manitoba Government could play in implementing visitability in Manitoba. Next is a summary and analysis of two focus groups with people with disabilities that examined how people with disabilities access the homes of their non-disabled peers and their views towards visitability. The chapter concludes with a synthesis of the research findings.

Chapter 6 builds on the results of the research in Chapter 5. It describes how visitability could be implemented in Manitoba, the stages that would be required in implementing a visitability ordinance, and the key players in such implementation. It also gives a description of what a visitability ordinance would look like.

The practicum then concludes with a conclusion, recommendations, and directions for further disability-related research.

1.2 Statement Of Purpose and Contributions

The combination of medical advances that allow person with disabilities to have longer lives and the increasing number of seniors (particularly with the aging baby boom population) account for an ever increasing number and proportion of people with disabilities in North American society. Traditionally, people with disabilities have been institutionalized and isolated from society-at-large and have only recently begun to integrate themselves.

Although research has been done into designing and building accommodation for people with disabilities, there is scant design research on strategies that allow people with disabilities to access the homes of their non-disabled peers. The present research challenges this gap in the literature. Finally, this research will also raise the consciousness of planning practitioners and property developers. They will be sensitized to the present and future accessibility needs of seniors and people with disabilities and will better understand how to successfully accommodate these needs.

The key research questions are:

- 1) What are the characteristics of visitability ordinances in jurisdictions where such ordinances have already been adopted?

- 2) What are the perspectives on visitability, from the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, the Government of Manitoba and the local development industry?
- 3) Where do people with disabilities interact with their non-disabled peers? Can they independently access the homes of these peers and, if not, how do they feel when assistance is required in accessing these homes?

A major goal of this research is to propose how a provincial visitability housing ordinance could be designed and implemented.

1.3 Limits of Practicum

This practicum is limited to examining visitability in Manitoba. It does *not* examine accessibility for those with sensory impairments (such as blindness) or cognitive disabilities (such as Alzheimer's disease or stroke-related conditions). Nor does this practicum examine issues such as properly-designed and affordable housing for people with disabilities (which is crucial given that many people with disabilities have low incomes); availability of home care for those who require it; nor convenient access to goods and services and accessibility in public transit. Such issues, although important barometers of accessibility, are beyond the scope of this research.

On a related note, although visitability represents the potential for people with disabilities to visit their non-disabled peers, and allows for non-disabled people to "age in place" with relative ease, or allows them to continue living in their homes should they develop a disability, visitability is by no means the sole solution to integrating people with disabilities into the mainstream of society. Nor can it be implemented alone. Rather, it must be implemented alongside many other forms of urban design that are

sensitive to people with disabilities. Examples of these include: dense mixed land use to allow people with disabilities to access the goods and services they require (without relying on automobiles); appropriate way-finding tools for those with visual disabilities; and sidewalks and crosswalks designed for safe and equitable use by someone with a disability. As well, people with disabilities suffer from disproportionately high rates of unemployment and poverty, something that often makes housing unaffordable. These factors (and many others) must all be considered together, with participation from the members of the disability community to make more universally accessible communities in Manitoba.

Chapter 2

Research Methods

Several research methods were used to obtain the data analyzed in this practicum. These included survey questionnaires, semi-structured interviews and focus groups, in addition to the review of the literature. (A copy of the ethics review protocol may be found in Appendix B.)

2.1 Questionnaire Surveys to jurisdictions where visitability has been adopted as ordinance.

Questionnaires were sent out to representatives of disability-rights and housing groups that have successfully lobbied for visitability ordinances in their jurisdictions. Eleanor Smith of Concrete Change and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation gave the names and contact information of these representatives to the researcher. The researcher then contacted the representatives and asked them if they wished to take part in the survey. All 10 representatives agreed.

The questionnaire included the following questions:

1. When did your jurisdiction adopt a visitability ordinance for housing?
2. What persuaded your jurisdiction to adopt a visitability ordinance?
3. What precedents did you draw on?
4. How effective has the ordinance been in facilitating visitability?
5. Does the visitability housing ordinance apply to all new housing built within your jurisdiction?

If not, what types of housing are exempted?

Why were these types of housing exempted?

6. What role did the disability community play in the implementation of the visitability ordinance?
7. What has the reaction to the ordinance been from the
 - a. disability community?
 - b. building industry?
 - c. general public?
8. How easy is the ordinance to enforce?
9. How has the ordinance affected construction methods and labour costs?
10. Were code/by-law/zoning changes required to carry this out?
11. If you were to introduce the ordinance now, what changes would you make to the ordinance, if any?
12. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to other jurisdictions who may be interested in implementing a visitability ordinance?

2.2) Semi-structured interview with the City of Winnipeg Access Advisory Committee

The next step involved a semi-structured group interview with the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. As the name suggests, this committee gives non-binding recommendations to Winnipeg City Council regarding accessibility issues. This committee was contacted through its coordinator to determine if its members wished to be interviewed about visitability. The interview was conducted as follows:

- 1) First, the Access Advisory Committee was shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994). The members of the Committee will be asked as to what they think of this design concept.
2. Has the Access Committee ever discussed the possibility of a visitable housing ordinance? If not, why not?
3. The City of Winnipeg and Province of Manitoba recently adopted a Universal Design Ordinance. Why were visitable private homes not mentioned in this

ordinance?

4. Do you feel that visitability (i.e., requiring *all* new homes to be constructed with level entrances, accessible ground floor washrooms and wide hallways) should be incorporated into the building code, even if the home is privately owned?
5. If a housing ordinance regarding accessibility visitability were to be implemented at either the city, provincial or federal level, would the committee be interested in playing an advisory or participatory role in its development and implementation?

2.3 Semi-structured interview with a representative of the homebuilders' industry

The next step involved an interview with a representative of the local homebuilders' industry. This representative was contacted through a homebuilders' organization, and was asked if he would be interested in being interviewed about visitability.

The interview proceeded as follows:

- 1) First, the participant was shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994).
- 2) The participant was then asked what he thought of this design concept. Once this opinion was noted, the participants was informed that several jurisdictions in the United States, along with the entire United Kingdom, have adopted legislation requiring all new homes to be built to visitable standards.
- 3) The participant was then asked what he thought of the possibility of making all homes in Winnipeg visitable.
- 4) If the participant was supportive of such an ordinance, he was asked what barriers would hinder the development and implementation of the ordinance. Conversely, what benefits might accompany such an ordinance? If the participant was not supportive, he would have been asked "why do you disagree with such an ordinance?"

2.4 Semi-structured interview with representatives from the Province of Manitoba

The next step involved a semi-structured group interview with representatives from the Government of Manitoba who worked in the field of housing and/or disability issues. The participants were recruited through a provincial civil servant that the researcher met while giving a presentation on visitability to the Manitoba League For Persons with Disabilities in January 2003.

The interview proceeded as follows:

- 1) First, the representatives were shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994). The members of the Committee were asked what they thought about this design concept. They were then asked the following questions.
2. Has Manitoba Housing ever discussed the possibility of a visitable housing ordinance? If not, why not?
3. The Province of Manitoba recently adopted a Universal Design Ordinance. Why were visitable private homes not mentioned in this ordinance?
4. Do you feel that visitability (i.e., requiring *all* new homes to be constructed with level entrances, accessible ground floor washrooms and wide hallways) should be implemented into the building code, even if the home is privately owned?

2.5 Focus Groups with People with Disabilities

The final step in the research involved two focus groups of people with disabilities. This area of research was one of the most important parts of the practicum. The focus group involves interviewing people in a group, and is a form of research which originated in sociology; it is now frequently used in marketing research (Morgan 1988). The practicum investigated the viability of visitability albeit not necessarily from a profitability or commercial standpoint, but rather from a social standpoint. In some sense, the study was testing the market for visitability, and thus could be studied effectively through a focus group.

Unlike individual interviews, focus groups rely on interaction within the group. That is, rather than the researcher asking extensive questions of each participant, the researcher poses questions to the group and asks them to discuss it among themselves. This interaction is the hallmark of the focus group; by listening to the responses of their fellow participants, individual participants are able to produce spontaneous responses,

thus generating data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group (Morgan 1988).

This also allows data to be generated with as little direct input from the researcher. By providing minimal input, the researcher also appears less intimidating and makes the participants feel more in control (and thus not like they are part of an “experiment”) and more at ease with the topics being discussed. This ease makes it easier for the participants to provide their views and insights. The insights generated by the participants allow the researcher to orient him or herself to a new field and generate new hypotheses (Morgan 1988). This final aspect of the focus group is a critical one, given that the practicum deals with a relatively new area of research.

All members of both groups were recruited through the Winnipeg Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC 2003). Each focus group followed the same pattern as indicated below:

1. Tell us your names and a little bit about yourselves. (*Opening Stage*)
2. When you are interacting with your non-disabled peers, where do you do it most often (your home, their homes, other locations)? (*Introductory Stage*)
3. On the occasions when you visit the homes of your non-disabled peers, are you able to access the homes by yourselves or do you require assistance? (*Transition Stage*)
4. If you do require assistance, how does it feel? (*Transition Stage*)
5. Do you ever feel that not being able to access the home of a non-disabled person has prevented you from developing a friendship and/or relationship with that individual? (*Transition Stage*)

At this point, the participants were shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994).

After the screening of the video, the members of the focus group were asked how they feel about this type of housing through the following questions.

6. In recent years, some housing agencies have developed a type of home that allows for basic wheelchair access; that is, a level entrance, wider doorways and hallways and an accessible washroom on the entrance level. How does this type of housing concept sound to you? (*Key Stage*)
7. In some jurisdictions, such as the states of Georgia and Texas, as well as the entire United Kingdom, this type of housing has been made mandatory for all new housing. How would you feel if this type of housing were to be made mandatory for the City of Winnipeg? (*Key Stage*)
8. As the questions enter their final stage, a short summary of the feedback from the other groups of participants were shared with the participants. The participants were then asked for their opinions on this feedback.
9. Additionally, participants were asked, "Do you have anything else to add that you think would be appropriate to what we have discussed here today?" (*Ending Stage*)

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 The Origins of Visitability

The term “Visitability” is a relatively new one, and its origins are uncertain. It was first used in North America in 1990 by Concrete Change, an Atlanta-based disability lobby organization that promotes basic home access. Concrete Change had been promoting this concept since 1986 referring to it as “basic home access.” Although its European origins had not yet been identified, the founder of the group, Eleanor Smith, was informed that in Europe this basic accessibility was referred to as “visitability” (Smith 2002). An on-line search of the word visitability revealed the earliest use of the word in a 1985 article from the Manchester Guardian that stated how an “Advisory Group was working with the National House Building Council... to thrash out the bare minimum requirements for visitability” (quoted in WordSpy 2003).

As the name suggests, visitability focuses on making private homes visitable, that is, having one entrance with no stairs, wide interior doors and having half or full bath facilities on the home’s main floor (Concrete Change 2002). Such a design is in contrast to the design of most homes, which have steps at every entrance and narrow interior doors, particularly those leading to the bathrooms, should those rooms even be on the home’s main floor.

The purpose of such design is two-fold: the first ensures that people with mobility disabilities are able to gain access to the homes of their non-disabled peers (hence the terms visitable and visitability); the second ensures that should a non-disabled member of a visitable home develop a disability, the members of that household may remain in their

home and not be faced with extensive and expensive renovation costs to accommodate that member's disability or be forced to sell their home and move

Unlike other forms of accessible design, visitability does not ensure *complete* accessibility for a residence. Rather, it ensures that the principal spaces in a building-the entrance, living room and washroom facilities-are accessible to a person in a wheelchair. As one person has put it, "Get in and [urinate]" (Concrete Change, 2002).

According to Concrete Change, the costs of implementing visitable features are minimal. It estimates that the cost of building a zero-step into a home at the time of its construction is \$150 (American Dollars), and this is a very generous estimate. The cost of building wider doorways (ranging from 32 to 36") is estimated to be \$50 *for the entire home*. This total (\$200) is about one third of the costs of a home's bay window. By contrast, the cost of implementing these features into an already existing home is much higher. It is estimated that the cost of adding a zero step entrance is \$1,000 and the cost of widening an existing doorway is \$700 *per doorway*. When these costs are compared, it would show that implementing visitable features after the fact is extremely costly compared to implementing them at the outset. The financial savings makes visitability economically and materially sustainable in the long run in that old materials need not be ripped out and replaced at a large cost (Concrete Change 2002).

Concrete Change also gives several real-life scenarios about how the lack of visitable features can create social problems for those with disabilities. Each of these cases could have been prevented had visitable features been included in the designs of the homes at the time of their original construction. By implementing visitable features, homeowners do not have to face such scenarios (which are often unexpected). Even if

the scenarios do not occur, visitable features do not adversely affect the residents of the home. Visitability is an economically and socially sustainable feature. For instance, a wheelchair user may visit the home of a non-disabled relative for dinner and reluctantly rely on assistance to enter the home and use the bathroom. In another example, an adolescent female wheelchair user is not invited to a friend's party because that friend has a long steep flight of stairs leading up to her house. A third scenario involves a man who develops a disability due to illness, and is trapped in his own home because the family cannot afford to put up a ramp to the home's entrance. The fourth features a non-disabled individual with a temporary disability (due to an injury) who finds it difficult to maneuver around his/her home during the recovery period (Concrete Change, 2002).

3.2 Why Visitability?

The increasing number of people with disabilities in North American society is the driving force behind visitability policies. According to the 1991 Canada Census, approximately 15% of all Canadians have some sort of disability (Statistics Canada 2001). This figure is growing at a steady rate for two reasons. The first is medical advances that allow for people with disabilities to live longer lives and that allow victims of accidents and diseases to continue living, albeit with a disability; the second and more significant reason is the increasing number of seniors in our society. As one ages one is more likely to develop a disability, and the increasing number of seniors in Canadian society means an increasing number of people with disabilities. A final factor is that many people will develop temporary disabilities due to illness or injury at some point in their lives, and may have to face the same difficulties as those with permanent disabilities. As well, non-disabled people, such as those who are pushing a stroller or

carrying a large package may face similar difficulties related to obstacles in the built environment as do people with disabilities.

Given that nearly everyone in society will face mobility-disabilities at some point in their lives, it would seem logical for the built environment to be designed with this fact in mind. This is not the case. The traditional built environment is designed for a 6-foot non-disabled male. Those who do not fit this stereotype (even if they are non-disabled) face difficulty with such an environment, a difficulty that is made even worse for those who have mobility-disabilities.

An example of how this stereotype has been applied to housing can be found in the introduction to Lanspery and Hyde's *Staying Put: Adapting the Places Instead of the People* (Lanspery and Hyde 1997). Most of the homes built during the post World War II era were built for young families with (or expecting) children. They were referred to as "Peter Pan homes" because their owners were characterized as being young families with children. As these consumers grew older, the assumption was they would move to other more suitable residences. This has not proven to be the case, as many older people (as well as people with disabilities) wish to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. A home which is built with the mobility needs of a senior or person with a disability in mind can prevent up to 30% of all moves to a nursing home, and when combined with home-care services is 40% less costly than hospitalization (Lanspery and Hyde 1997). This is another example of how visitability can lead to social and economic sustainability. Lansberry and Hyde also emphasize the importance of the built environment in relation to disability. The basic attitude is that it is not the person who has a disability, but is rather the environment is inherently disabling.

One reason why many seniors choose to remain in their present home as they age is for social reasons. In *Psychological Aspects of Staying at Home* (Fogel 1993) Barry Fogel details how many seniors treat their homes as a place of emotional attachment and not simply an economic asset. Examples of this emotional attachment include a sense of privacy, familiarity with the surrounding neighbourhood, as well as the neighbourhood's social structure and community services, and a place to entertain one's peers. These reasons are even more important for female seniors, who spend more time at home.

Fogel shows that people with cognitive impairments display more intellectual function in their homes, presumably because of the familiar environment. Even though the concept of visitable homes deals with physical accessibility, its age-friendly environment can also minimize the effects of cognitive impairments, as seniors are more likely to develop such impairments (in addition to mobility impairments) as they age.

Financial reasons may also play a role in deciding whether one wishes to age in place. According to *If You Build It, They May Not Come* (Dobkin 1993), those seniors who most likely wish to "age in place" are those with the smallest available incomes. 77% of seniors with incomes of less than \$25,000 per year wished to continue residing in their own home; for those with incomes of less than \$6,000 per year, this figure was 87%. In addition to those with lower incomes, widows were also noted as being more likely to continue residing in their current place of residence, although this may be because widows have lower incomes than retired couples. This would show that despite the fact that the senior's population as a whole commands a large portion of disposable income, there are many within this group whose income and resources are limited. The members

of this subgroup would be the least likely to move to a form of specialized housing (which is more expensive) because they are unable to afford it.

Indeed, financial considerations may be one of the reasons why many older people wish to reside in their current residence, given that the lower one's income, the more likely one wishes to continue residing in their present home. This does not necessarily imply that a lower income is a *cause* of one's desire to stay in their current residence. The financial limitations of this subgroup can also be an impediment to conducting renovations on a non-accessible home, given the high costs of such renovations.

This fact has been demonstrated in Phyllis Mutschler's (Mutschler 1997) *The Effects of Income Home Modification: Can They Afford to Stay Put?* According to Mutschler, low income seniors (many of whom are women) are less likely to be homeowners and when they do own homes, many of these homes are of low value: 95% are worth less than \$75,000 and over half are worth less than \$20,000 (1982 American dollars). Seniors with low incomes are also less likely to have good credit ratings and more likely to live in areas with discriminatory banking practices. Also, many seniors worry that modifying the home may negatively affect its resale value. This combination of low income, low home value (which limits the amount one can borrow against the home's equity) and limited credit makes it harder for people with lower incomes to obtain the financing necessary to modify their home to ensure accessibility. Seniors with the lowest incomes and home values are less likely to undertake home modifications than their higher income/home value counterparts, even when they have the same levels of disability.

Designing homes with visitable features would be extremely beneficial to people with lower incomes, as this is a group which is least likely to want to move and which would also be the least likely to have the resources to pay for the necessary renovations to allow for aging in place. Seniors with lower incomes would not have fewer worries about not being able to finance renovations through their income and/or home equity, because the renovations would already have been built in at the outset. This is another example of how visitability is economically sustainable, particularly for those seniors whose economic situation is more vulnerable than others. This does not mean that visitability would prevent the need for all renovations. Some renovations, such as a roll-in shower, or a kitchen with accessible appliances, would have to be installed after a disability has been developed.

This does not mean that visitable homes need only be built for those with lower incomes. By building all new homes with visitable features, those who wish to age in place can do so despite their limited incomes and equity, and lessen their worries about allocating their limited resources to home modification. Those with more disposable incomes will move to homes with specialized features designed to cater to their specific niche market, if this is what they desire.

3.3 The Disabling Environment

The difficulty that people with disabilities face in dealing with an environment unsuitable to their needs is considered to have the largest impact on people dealing with a disability--more so than the biological or psychological aspects associated with having a disability (Matthews and Vujakovic 1994). Such an environment often segregates people with disabilities from the non-disabled population and has been considered to be a form

of “design apartheid” (Hall and Imrie 1998). The lack of visitable homes (i.e. any homes with stairs at the entrance) is a clear example of such discrimination, as it prevents a person with a disability from accessing the home of a non-disabled peer. The lack of visitable homes is also an obstacle to allow a person to remain comfortably in their home should they develop a disability due to illness injury or age.

In some cases, this segregation was institutionalized. For example, until 1973, some municipal jurisdictions in the United States had “Ugly Laws” listed on their statutes, which forbade people who were “diseased, maimed or crippled” from being seen in public (Leibrock and Terry 1999). Such systemic segregation inhibited seniors and people with disabilities from becoming (or in the case of seniors, remaining) self-sufficient and integrating with the community around them (Rosen, Clark and Kivitz 1977).

These policies began to change during the 1970s with the Independent Living Movement. The main focus of this movement was not the disability of the “consumer” (the term for the person with the disability as opposed to “patient” or “client”) but rather the surrounding environment in which that consumer resided (DeJong 1975). One important part of this environment is that of the *built* environment.

Since the 1970s there have been several trends in the fields of design to accommodate people with disabilities in the built environment. These trends are documented in Steinfeld’s (1994) *The Concept of Universal Design*. The first of these trends was accessible design, which involved designing environments exclusively for people with disabilities. An example of this would be a ramp alongside a stairway at the entrance to a building. These designs were often included as an afterthought to an

inaccessible built environment. Such designs serve to separate people with disabilities from using the facilities which their non-disabled peers use, and seem to reinforce the systemic segregation that people with disabilities have often faced (Steinfeld 1994).

During this the period, from 1970 to 1980, a significant demographic shift occurred-one that is still occurring at present. During this decade, the number of Americans with disabilities increased by 50%. This was due in part to medical advances that enabled people with disabilities to live longer. Unlike those of previous generations, these consumers were more likely to live independently and attempt to integrate themselves into the community. This increase also occurred because of the growth of the senior population. This latter market commanded an increasing proportion of the country's disposable income and purchasing power (although this does not mean that all seniors have large portions of disposable income) (Steinfeld 1994).

These consumers were also dissatisfied with the quality of the products of "accessible design." These products were often expensive and highly technical in appearance and usage. Furthermore, the fact that these products were developed exclusively for people with disabilities made these consumers perceive them as stigmatizing.

This trend then evolved from accessible design to universal design. Universal design involves the design of products and environments that can be used by all people regardless of their age or level of ability. Through universal design, there is recognition that everyone needs more usable products and environments (Caplan 1992).

One very important aspect of universal design is the involvement of users (consumers) in the design process. Such personal contact helps the designers understand

society's changing demographics and lifestyles and will result in a better-finished product. One such example is the Marriott hotel chain's courtyard. Built with consumer input, the Marriott has have the highest occupancy rating of any hotel chain and has been widely copied (Salmen 1996).

Another important aspect of universal design is that the actual design is not obvious to the user and blends in with the built environment. This is one reason why it is difficult to understand. One such example occurred at the Montgomery Mall in Potomac Maryland. The feature was a "family washroom" which was installed alongside the accessible washrooms. This washroom allowed people of either gender to assist a child, spouse or parent of the opposite gender with their personal needs without having to leave the mall. By being designed in a way so as not to draw attention, people with disabilities may use these products in the same manner as a non-disabled individual (Salmen 1996).

Visitability could be seen as a form of universal design, as the level entrance and wider doorways that are part of a visitable home are more easily used by anyone. As with the term visitability, universal design is a relatively new term, having been coined in 1985 (Mace 1985).

There are seven basic principles of Universal Design, established by the Center for Universal Design in Raleigh, North Carolina. Each of these principles is listed below along with an example of how visitability would apply to them.

Equitable Use A person in a wheelchair may access a visitable house, even if he or she does not reside there. In addition, a visitable home can be easily used by an non-disabled individual. The level entrance allows for quicker access than climbing stairs.

Flexibility in Use Visitable homes can accommodate a wide variety of age and ability groups. Visitability allows for people to age in place and/or continue residing in their home should they develop a disability. In addition, rooms on the

main level can be converted into office space if necessary. The level entrance makes accessibility easier for people with strollers or shopping carts. Also, the level entrance, wide hallways and doors make it easier to move furniture or a stretcher if the situation arises.

Simple and Intuitive Use Knowing how to access a visitable home is no more difficult than simply walking or maneuvering a wheelchair or power scooter.

Perceptible Information The level entrance and wider doorways and hallways make the accessibility obvious, even though this may not be apparent to a non-disabled consumer.

Tolerance for Error The level entrance is safer to use than a mechanical chair lift or a sloping ramp. Also one is less likely to be injured if he or she were to slip and fall on a level entrance than one with stairs, this would be important in a climate like Winnipeg where there is snow and ice for a longer period of the year.

Low Physical Effort Accessing a visitable home requires no further effort than simply moving around, as opposed to having to climb stairs.

Size and Space for Approach and Use The wide corridors and doorways allow for a person in a wheelchair or power scooter to access the home.

3.4 Changing Demographics

A Canadian study of the increasing number of seniors and their preferred living arrangements, "*Housing Canada's Seniors in the Next 30 Years*" (Baxter and Ramlo 1999) shows that Canada's senior population (here defined as those people aged 55 and over) have always been more likely to live independently than in the typical seniors' collective dwelling-a nursing home or care facility.

As of 1996, 5.8 million of Canada's 6.1 million seniors were living independently in 3,655,000 private dwellings. Furthermore, of these private dwellings occupied by seniors, 2,393,000 were ground-oriented owner-occupied dwellings (single detached homes, duplexes and row houses) with another 235,000 being owner-occupied apartment style dwellings (dwellings in multi-unit buildings). The remaining dwellings were

ground oriented or apartment rental accommodation. The vast majority of Canada's seniors are living independently, with most of these independent dwellers living in accommodations that they themselves own (Baxter and Ramlo p ii).

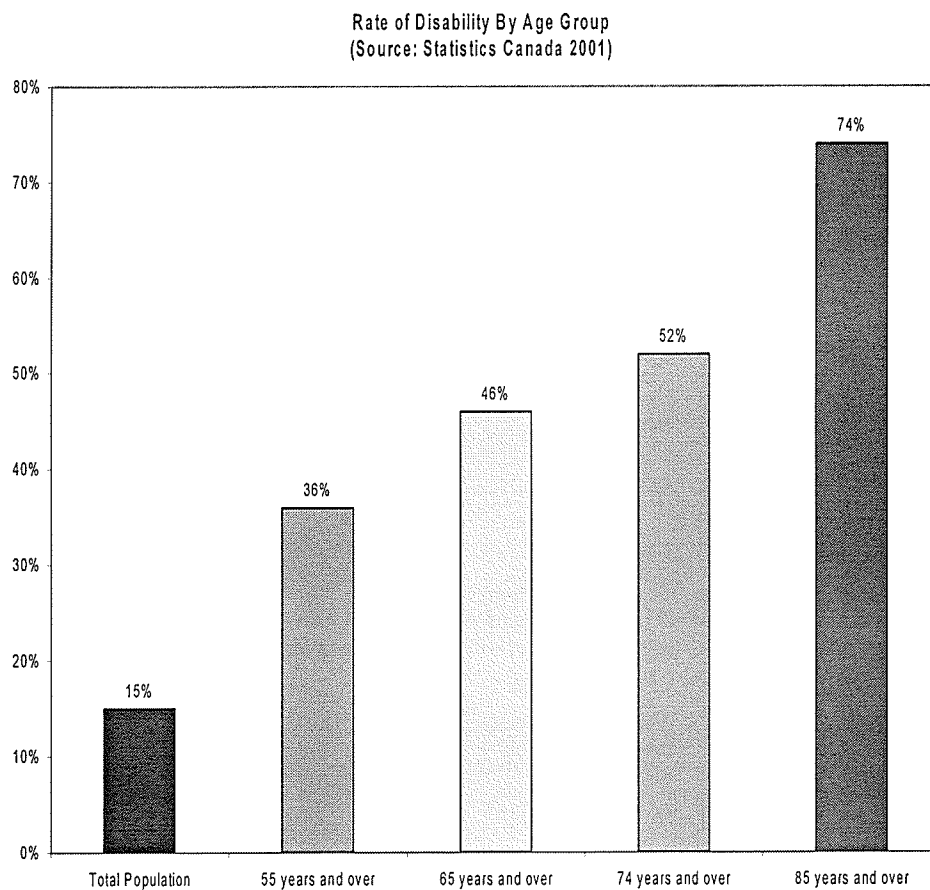
Baxter and Ramlo's study projects that from 1996 through 2026 Canada's senior population will increase from 6.1 million to 13.2 million. While this figure in itself is large, the increase in the number of seniors (117%) is much greater than the increase in the Canadian population as a whole. It is estimated that over the same period, Canada's overall population will increase from 29,698,000 to 39,522,000, an increase of 33%. This means that the seniors will become an increasingly large proportion of Canadian society, rising from 15% of the population in 1996 to 33% of the population in 2026 (Baxter and Ramlo p iii).

If it is assumed that the proportion of seniors who live independently will remain constant over this time span, then there will be a proportionate increase in the number of private owner-occupied dwellings. According to Baxter and Ramlo, the numbers of private dwellings (both apartment and ground-oriented) owned and occupied by seniors will more than double from their current number of 2,628,000 to 5,738,000. Combined with similar dwellings rented by seniors, there will be 4,317,000 additional private dwellings occupied by seniors (Baxter and Ramlo p ii). Baxter and Ramlo point out that the proportion of seniors who live in collective dwellings has been declining steadily during the period from 1981 through 1996, and if this decline continues there will seniors occupying even more private dwellings (Baxter and Ramlo p 39).

This increase in the number of seniors (in both absolute terms in relation to the Canadian population as a whole), combined with the fact that this population base will be

living independently, means that Canada's housing policies must be changed to accommodate this population shift. Given that people are more likely to develop a disability as they age (particularly when they are over the age of 55), it will be necessary to have housing which is sensitive to the needs of these consumers.

Figure 3-1:
Disability by Age Group



The preceding chart indicates the disability rate that exists among the seniors' population compared to the population as a whole. The disability rate for all age groups of seniors is considerably higher than the Canadian average; the rate also increases with age (Statistics Canada 2001).

Unlike traditional housing, visitable homes can more easily be converted into homes that are accessible to those with disabilities. Furthermore, if seniors will be living in regular neighbourhoods and wish to continue to integrate with their non-disabled neighbours, friends and relatives, it would be logical to have *all* homes built to visitable standards.

Chapter 4

Examples of Visitability

4.1 Visitable Designs

Despite the recent coining of the term “visitability”, and its even more recent acceptance by some members of the development community, the concept of having a basic level accessibility in all private homes is not a new one. An early concept of visitability can be found in *Discrimination By Design* (Weisman 1992). Weisman describes how many barrier-free environments often favour men and those that do also serve women are often small in size. She also states that accessible units with two or three bedrooms are a rarity. This shows how even environments that are designed to be accessible can discriminate by gender and overlook the fact that many people with disabilities have families. If all units (regardless of what type of family structure that unit was designed for) were designed with a minimal level of accessibility, this discrimination could be overcome (Weisman 1992).

Weisman goes on to describe how, in the future, “...all housing must be routinely designed for wheelchair accessibility.” Accessible environments are also seen as “beneficial to those using baby carriages, shopping carts and bicycles.” Both these factors show that an environment that is overall accessible can be beneficial to everyone while allowing for access for people with disabilities. Weisman also emphasizes that mobility-related disabilities will be increasing due to the aging of society and that allowing for all housing to be accessible should be the norm to address for the inevitable. That Weisman is including this factor in a work that critiques the built environment as

discriminating against women, indicates that the built environment also discriminates against those with disabilities

In *Housing for People with Disabilities* (CMHC 1996a) several classifications of accessible housing are listed. The lowest form of accessible housing is described as "Unit with Access for Visitors". As the name suggests, a person who has a mobility disability can enter this unit and several of its rooms, particularly the washroom. The unit is not designed to meet all the needs of an occupant with disabilities, but may accommodate a visitor with a mobility disability. Although this unit is not described as "visitable" it does meet the basic definition of visitability in that a person with a mobility disability may access the unit and use its basic facilities.

Nor does it mean that the idea of housing which can be adapted for future use by a person with a disability is a new one. "Lifetime Homes", described by Dodd in *Housing Options for Disabled People* are an example of visitable housing developed in the United Kingdom (Dodd 1998). The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and various British housing and disability groups developed the concept in 1994, based on discussions for developing housing to meet the needs of people with disabilities without focusing on them exclusively.

They are described as "properties built to a design which will meet the needs of an occupier throughout his or her lifetime." Their features allow everyone to access the property and can meet the needs of various age groups and ability levels, including those with temporary disabilities.

Lifetime homes can be adapted at a minimum cost to accommodate people with permanent disabilities (unlike traditionally inaccessible homes, whose adaptation is more

costly) and do not look any different from neighbouring properties. This latter factor is important as it means that there is no indication that a person with a disability resides at the property; thus, that consumer is spared the stigma that often comes with having a disability.

The criterion for Lifetime Homes is not unlike that of other visitable homes. The approach path is level or gently sloping, the main entrance does not have steps, has a wide front door and turnaround space in the front hall, doors and windows which are easy to operate, environmental control features which are easy to reach and use, a ground floor living room which can be converted into a bedroom, and a ground floor washroom and toilet facilities. Some of its features, such as a living room that can be converted into a bedroom, go beyond the definition of visitability that is given by Concrete Change. Given that Lifetime Homes developed in the United Kingdom, separately from the visitability movement in the United States, such a difference is understandable.

Habinteg Housing Association, a British-based housing agency has adapted the standards for Lifetime Homes. Dodd describes how such standards could enable homeowners to live wherever they wish and continue residing in their current homes should they develop a disability (particularly disabilities that relate to aging) with little financial and social disruption. From this it could be assumed that designing and building Lifetime Homes is economically and socially sustainable. The standards also allow for people with temporary disabilities to move around their homes without difficulty and for easy access for parents with children in [strollers]. Dodd does mention that people with disabilities can visit such homes, although it appears to be an

afterthought, and the terms visitable and visitability are not mentioned in the main body of the text, though they are mentioned in the appendix.

In addition to describing the standards for Lifetime Homes, Dodd also describes the reluctance of the building industry to build homes that measure up to these standards. Among the claims against these standards are: water egress, the increased costs in providing non-standard features and materials, the larger size required by such homes and their perceived homogeneous appearance. Dodd refutes these claims by claiming that the costs are minimal if the features and materials are incorporated into the homes during construction, that as non-standard accessible features become more standard the costs will be reduced, and that creative design can allow homes to be built to such standards and still have their individual appearance.

Indeed, the reluctance of the building industry is probably one of the major obstacles to implementing visitability. In *New Build Developments* Middle (1998) describes one such anecdote. A local housing authority was trying to achieve level access in all newly built housing and ordered a builder to build a set of new homes with level entrances. The builder did so, but, when constructing houses on an adjacent authority's land, reverted to the traditional practice of building homes with doorsteps. The homes with level entrances were built with no major difference to the costs and were found to be beneficial to people with disabilities as well as parents with small children. In spite of this, the builder was not willing to construct such properties unless actually ordered to do so. Many other builders throughout Britain have displayed the same reluctance, and have challenged local housing authorities' plans to implement level access policies

Another type of visitable housing similar to Lifetime Homes is FlexHousing, a housing concept coined by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). FlexHousing is described in *FlexHousing: The Professional's Guide* (CMHC 2000b) as “an approach to designing and building homes based on the principles of adaptability, accessibility, affordability and Healthy Housing”. As the description suggests, FlexHouses are built to adapt to the ever-changing needs of their occupants, including the onset of aging and the development of disabilities.

Examples of FlexHousing's accessible entrance features include covered, level entrances with non-slip surfaces, doors that are 865 to 910 mm wide, a threshold no higher than 19mm in height, and 1500 mm x 1500mm interior vestibule space

Inside, the hallways are wide (1200mm) and the most important housing features are found on the main floor. A bedroom on the level floor need not be a bedroom; it can easily be used as a home office or storage space if necessary. This is another example of how a visitable home fits the idea of Universal Design; a bedroom on the main floor does not have to be a bedroom but can be used for other purposes that are beneficial to the non-disabled. As is the case with Lifetime Homes, FlexHousing goes beyond visitability.

Bathrooms are located on the main floor. The bathtub is to be accessible along the full length. This allows the controls to be operated from the outside when bathing a small child or person with a disability. Its lengthwise accessibility allows for easy entrance and exit for a non-disabled user, as well as making it easier to clean. This is another example as to how an accessible feature is just as convenient to the non-disabled as those with disabilities. The bathrooms also have reinforcements along the walls,

adjacent to the toilet and bath and/or shower. These reinforcements allow for the placing (at the consumer's choice) of grab bars for a consumer in a wheelchair.

Light switches, electrical outlets and other climate control features are located at a level that can be accessed from either a standing or sitting position. For light switches, this is between 840 and 1050 mm from the floor; outlets are 450 mm from the floor while circuit breaker boxes are located 1200 mm from the floor. Light switches are of the "rocker" types that are easier to use than a conventional light switch.

Another feature (not encountered in any other literature) of FlexHousing is stacking closets on each floor one above one another. Placed this way allows for easy conversion to an elevator shaft should the necessity arise.

Even though this type of home is not described as visitable, its characteristics would allow for a person with a disability to visit and manoeuvre about the home with ease. The home is built with the idea in mind that the needs of consumers will change throughout their lifetimes. Therefore, the house is designed and built so that the home will and can be changed to accommodate these ever-changing needs. A FlexHouse is one that could be considered as socially sustainable in that a consumer would continue residing there should he or she develop a disability.

The entrance is described as one that is convenient for everyone, not just seniors or people with disabilities (children are also given as an example of those who benefit). The non-slip surfaces prevent injuries that occur on wet or icy surfaces. This would be an important issue for housing in Winnipeg, whose climate means cold and icy weather conditions for several months of the year.

A very important feature of FlexHousing is the costs of implementing accessible features during construction, rather than implementing them later on. For example, procuring and installing a wider door only costs \$10 more per door (excluding the frame) than a regular door, whereas the costs of installing such a feature after construction are \$1000 per door. For washrooms, the cost of installing reinforcements in the wall ranges from \$50 to \$90 versus \$530 to build these enforcements after construction. The cost of installing an elevator in a FlexHouse is \$8,000 versus \$20,000 for a conventional house.

This shows that if the house is designed and built with these features at the beginning, the costs of these features are minimal compared to the costs of implementing such features later on. This would indicate FlexHousing design is economically sustainable in the long run. In many ways FlexHousing (as is also the case for Lifetime Homes) goes beyond visitability in that persons with disabilities will be able to reside at such a dwelling, not just visit it. Another example of adaptable housing can be found in *Housing Choices for Canadians with Disabilities* (CMHC 1992). This example is an 11-unit project built in Deventer, the Netherlands. This project has wide doors (90 cm with a clear opening of 85 cm) no door thresholds except for a 2 cm threshold in the washroom, which is on the dwelling's ground floor. Light switches are located at a lower height, and one of the rooms can be converted into a bedroom if necessary. The stairwell is wide enough to accommodate a chairlift if necessary. Although this type of housing is not different from other forms of adaptable housing encountered so far, it is described as being "visitable" to people with disabilities. This is the oldest mention of the word visitable encountered so far in the literature.

In the Netherlands, the Dutch Federation of Housing Associations (Nationale Woningraad) has been experimenting with adaptable housing since 1985, with minimum guidelines for adaptability. It has been found that building new adaptable housing entailed minimal costs-no more than \$220 per dwelling-or were even less than ordinary dwellings. As well it was found that the cost of future adaptations was reduced by 60 to 90 percent. Also, adaptable housing is (upon initial observation) indistinguishable from ordinary housing. This would also serve to show that visitable housing is economically and visually sustainable.

Supportive Housing for Seniors (CMHC 2000c) offers a look at specialty housing for seniors as an alternative to institutionalization. It shows that older people would rather live in a residential setting of their own choice than move to a long-term health care institution, even if they required assistance in their daily routines. Even those seniors with severe health conditions prefer an independent lifestyle.

Equally important, it shows that seniors who maintain an active lifestyle "are likely to have healthier, happier and longer lives"; supportive housing is seen as a way of allowing an active lifestyle to be maintained. Visitability can play a role in this, as it will allow seniors to visit and interact with their peers, thus maintaining an active lifestyle.

An important part of supportive housing is a "supportive physical environment". Among the features of this type of environment are wide doorways with low, or no thresholds to allow for easy access; level door handles; non slip flooring; easy to reach light switches and environmental controls; and support bars (grab bars) near the toilet and bathtub.

Supportive Housing (CMHC 2000c) also points out that as people age, they are more prone to injuries from falls. Most of these injurious falls occur in the consumer's own home. One in three seniors living in their own home has a fall per year and for those ages 71 and over, these falls account for 75% of all deaths and 89% of all hospitalizations due to injury. Many of the supportive housing features, such as non-slip flooring and level entrances, are a means of preventing these injuries (and the costs associated with them).

Although visitability is not specifically mentioned as a form of supportive housing, it does have many characteristics ascribed to supportive housing. For example, seniors who cannot manage stairs can access such a home, due to its level entrance; this would allow these consumers to maintain friendships and relationships that are important to a socially active lifestyle. Many visitable features can also prevent injuries from occurring in the household. Preventing injuries is beneficial to everyone, but should be of special concern to seniors, who are more prone to injuries than the general population. Given that the cost of preventing injuries is much less than treating them, a visitable home should be seen as one that is also sustainable from a health perspective.

Zola expresses similar views in *Living at Home: The Convergence of Age and Disability* (Zola 1997). According to Zola, people in Sweden and the United States aged 65 years and over account for 75% of all deaths due to falls in these countries, despite the fact that this group accounts for only 15% of these countries' general population. Also, those aged 65 and over experience more injuries in the home than anywhere else put together; the likelihood of which increases as one ages. Up to one third of all seniors

report a fall or a tendency to fall. Zola admits that this figure may be an underestimate as the report of a fall may lead to unwanted institutionalization for a senior.

Zola further points out that falls are the most common reason for admission to nursing home or similar institution, even if no serious injury had occurred. The majority of these falls, regardless of whether or not a serious injury has occurred, occur on staircases or in washrooms; visitability features, such as a level entrance, a bedroom on the main floor and slip-proof floors in a washroom, would prevent such injuries from taking place. This would show that while visitability can be sustainable from the perspective of construction costs, its designs *prevent* injuries from taking place and are thus sustainable from a health care perspective. This would be beneficial to everyone who uses a home, in particular to seniors who are more prone to injuries.

Given that injuries (or the fear of being injured) are also a reason for many seniors leaving their present home for a nursing home or similar residential facility, living in a visitable home would reduce the chances of these consumers being injured (or their fears of being injured) and would prevent the relocation of these consumers to a nursing home or similar institution. This would be another example of "aging in place".

A hypothetical example of visitability is also found in *Feasibility of Disability Integrated, Universally Accessible, Urban Co-Housing in Winnipeg* (CMHC 1996b). This report looks at a co-housing model geared towards people with disabilities. It acknowledges that the design of the built environment is a barrier that prevents people with disabilities from integrating with their non-disabled peers and that proper design could be used to allow for integration.

The report examines the possibility of a co-housing unit in Winnipeg's Osborne Village. The project consists of 15-40 units focused around a central common house. The co-housing unit is to be designed and constructed along the principles of Universal Design. For example: all common areas and routes throughout the site are universally accessible, as are all the project's one story units; those units that have two stories have an accessible main floor with an accessible washroom as well as space for future installment of an elevator or stairlift should the need arise. The units described meet the standards for visitability in that they allow for people with disabilities to visit these units and allow a non-disabled person to continue residing there should they develop a disability.

The report is consistent with the concept that accessible features built at the outset are more cost-effective than renovating for accessibility in the future. In addition, the unit is designed to be accessible to the surrounding neighbourhood; this allows the residents with disabilities to integrate themselves into the non-disabled society. Although the report is concerned with co-housing, the aim of the project (integration of people with disabilities) cannot be overlooked and should be the main focus of visitability.

The main problem with this concept is that it concerns itself with co-housing, as opposed to independent housing. The aim of this form of housing is *community living*, as opposed to the privacy that is the focus of single-family housing. Given that the majority of Canada's seniors reside (and will continue to reside) in single-family housing, a co-housing unit such as the one described above should not be looked at as the model for visitable housing. However, there is no reason why many of the accessible features

described in this report (such as level entrances and washrooms on the main floor) should not be incorporated into single-family housing.

In addition, there is no reason why co-housing could not be used alongside visitable single-family housing. Co-housing is touted as a means of integrating people with disabilities, who have previously been institutionalized, into society (CMHC 1996b)-its community environment offering a step-up from a formally-structured institutionalized environment. This would make sense as those who have been institutionalized for long portions of their lives could have difficulty adjusting to living independently. Co-housing could thus be used as a stepping stone for people with disabilities who have been institutionalized; offering a place in between the institution and independent living in a visitable single-family housing community. As well, co-housing could be used as a rehabilitation environment for those who have developed a disability, providing a semi-structured environment to allow them to adjust to their disability. Finally, co-housing could also be used for people with disabilities (as well as their non-disabled peers) who prefer living in a community atmosphere. The preceding factors show that visitability alone is not the sole means of integrating people with disabilities into society, and must be developed alongside other disability-sensitive forms of development.

Visitability is given very thorough coverage in *Accessible Downtown Residential Communities: A Case Study of Winnipeg Manitoba* (CMHC 2000a). This research report refers to visitability alongside other forms of accessible housing (such as adaptable housing) as a means for ensuring accessibility for a person with a disability in a home of a non-disabled host, as well as accommodating the future needs of the non-disabled host.

The report offers one of the first examples of housing literature where the term “visitability” is actually used. The report’s relatively recent publication indicates that visitability is only starting to emerge in housing literature.

What is equally significant is that the report acknowledges that there are many factors other than housing that hinder accessibility for people with disabilities. Examples of these factors include: homecare, availability of goods and services, accessible transportation and affordable housing. This would show that visitability is not the sole means to ensure accessibility in the built environment, and that its effectiveness will only be ensured when it is designed alongside other features that are equally sensitive to seniors and people with disabilities.

One critical document dealing with visitability is *Accessibility and Visitability Features in Single Family Homes*, a report by the American Association of Retired Persons (Kochera 2002). This report is unique in that it focuses specifically on visitability. According to this report, 90% of people over the age of 65 would prefer to stay in their residence as long as possible, but this may be impossible given the fact that over one million households that have a resident with a disability have unmet housing needs. The report acknowledges that many policymakers focus on the finance of home modifications, in particular for low-income individuals, to ensure accessibility. The report also acknowledges that policymakers are becoming more aware that, by implementing accessible features during construction, expands housing opportunities.

What is particularly important is that the report acknowledges that over two-thirds of all new housing built in recent years is in the form of single-family homes. The report describes universal design as a means of allowing independent living, but goes beyond

visitability in describing kitchens with wider maneuvering space and accessible sinks and cabinets. The report then describes visitability as a narrower set of accessible features, adopted because of the cost concerns of the building industry. Visitability is seen as a means of allowing those with disabilities to visit the homes of others as well as allowing aging in place, but is not as comprehensive a solution to those with a wider range of needs (such as a quadriplegic). Rather, it is seen as one component in the overall field of universal design.

The report then discusses various accessibility ordinances that have been adopted in the United States since 1973, ranging from the Rehabilitation Act to the Fair Housing Amendments Act to the Americans with Disabilities Act. What is important about these pieces of legislation is that, when housing is concerned, they only apply to multi-family dwelling units and not to single-family homes. Given that most people hope to continue living in single-family homes, these ordinances will have little effect in allowing those with disabilities to visit a single-family home or to continue residing in one should a disability be developed, which is why accessible features in single family homes is crucial.

The report also discusses the visitability ordinances that have been adopted throughout the United States, and the opposition that these ordinances have encountered during their legislative process stages. In particular the building industry is opposed to visitability because of the costs, claiming that most homebuyers do not request such features. However, the report also acknowledges that visitability is just as beneficial to the non-disabled.

As has been the case with other documents on visitability, the report acknowledges that the costs of visitable features are minimal and that the space lost in a visitable home (due to the wider doorways and hallways) amounts to 5 square feet of space at rate of \$68 per square foot, which amounts to \$340 being added to the price of the entire home. The report then discusses various visitability ordinances, and examines how tax and fee incentives could be used to encourage visitability in the private sector. The report points out how the state of Georgia provides a tax credit of \$500 for new homes with visitable features, provided a resident with a disability lives at the home; it does not provide for non-disabled homebuyers who wish to have a visitable home. The state of Virginia has a tax credit program for any homeowner, but the incentive only applies to existing homes, rather than to newly-built homes.

4.2 Examples of Visitability Legislation

The relatively new emergence of visitability means that there are few jurisdictions that have adopted it as part of their housing policies

Examples of visitability ordinances are slowly beginning to appear in various jurisdictions. Many of these ordinances are in the United States. An early form of visitability began with the Fair Housing Amendment in 1988. This amendment, which took effect in 1991, requires that access features be included in all ground floor units in a dwelling with four or more units, as well as requiring access features in all units in multi-story dwellings with an elevator.

Eligible multi-family dwellings have to have at least one building entrance on an accessible route unless the terrain makes it impractical; public and common areas must be made accessible and usable by people with disabilities; all doors into and on the premises

are to be wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair; all units must have climate controls at an accessible height, reinforcements in bathroom walls to allow for grab bars, and maneuvering space within the washrooms and kitchens.

What could be called the first form of visitability legislation was passed in Florida in 1989. The ordinance calls for washrooms in all single-family homes (including duplexes, triplexes and townhouses) to be constructed at grade level with a door that has a 29-inch clear width opening (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002). Although it allows for accessibility in the home's washroom, the legislation does not call for accessibility to the home itself. To require accessibility to a home's washroom and not require accessibility to the actual home seems to go against the basic principles of visitability.

The first forms of visitability legislation were enacted at the municipal level. These were in the cities of Atlanta, Georgia and Austin, Texas. Atlanta, Georgia adopted visitability legislation for all single-family homes subsidized by city funds in 1992 (the earliest form of true visitability legislation) and Austin, Texas adopted similar legislation in 1998. Both policies applied to all new single-family homes (Austin's ordinance also covered duplexes and triplexes) that were subsidized by city funds. All homes are to have at least one no-step entrance on an accessible route with a clear width of at least 32", interior hallways on the main floor with a width of 36", interior doors with an opening of 32" (30" in Austin's case), and controls (light switches, thermostats, electric outlets) at least 15" above the floor and no higher than 48" above the floor (42" in Austin's case) (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002).

Three other municipal jurisdictions have since adopted visitability legislation over the past 3 years.

The first example is in Pima County Arizona, adopted in 2002. It is significant in that it applies to all new homes regardless of whether or not they have been subsidized with state funds. This was the first example of visitability being made compulsory in all new homes, not just those that have been subsidized. This legislation requires a zero-step doorway, wider hallways and doorways (including washroom doorways), reinforcements in the washrooms and lever handles on some of the homes' doors (the first example as well) (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002).

The remaining municipal jurisdictions are Naperville and Urbana, in the state of Illinois. Naperville's legislation (adopted in 2002) also applies to all new homes, regardless of whether or not they have been subsidized with state funds. Under this legislation homes are to have corridors at least 32" wide and reinforcements in the washrooms. There is nothing calling for accessible entrances, although this is currently pending.

Urbana's legislation (adopted in 2000) calls for all new single and multi-family homes built with city funds to be built with at least one no step entrance on an accessible route built with a non-slip surface, exterior and interior doorways at least 32" wide, corridors at least 36" wide, reinforcements in the bathrooms, and climate controls located between 15 and 48" from the floor (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002).

The first true examples of visitable housing legislation adopted at a higher level were passed in the States of Texas and Georgia in 1999 and 2000 respectively. What is

interesting is that these were the states in which visitability had been adopted by cities in each state. The fact that early examples of visitability began in cities and were then adopted statewide attests to the effectiveness of visitability. The examples also show that implementing visitability may be more effective first at a local level, then-as its successes are noted-it can advance to higher levels of government.

The requirements under each state's legislation were virtually identical: they apply to all new subsidized single-family homes (the legislation in Texas applies to duplexes and triplexes as well). The legislation calls for all visitable homes to have at least one no-step entrance; a door opening of at least 36" (32" for interior doors), 36" wide hallways on the first floor; reinforcements in the washroom, control panels located between 15" and 48" above the floor, and circuit breaker panels on the main floor (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002).

In 2001 the Minnesota State legislature passed a visitability requirement in single-family homes, duplexes, triplexes and multi-level townhomes financed by the Minnesota Housing Finance Authority. These houses are to be constructed with at least one no step entrance, 32-inch clear width opening doorways and an accessible half-bath on the main floor (MHFA 2002).

In 2002 Kansas adopted legislation that requires all homes built with state or federal subsidies to have at least one no-step entrance on an accessible route, 32" wide entrances for all door openings, 36" wide hallways, reinforcements on the bathroom walls, and reachable climate controls (National Resource Center on Supportive Housing and Home Modification 2002).

What is disturbing about the visitability legislation is that (with two exceptions) in every one of these cases the ordinance only applies to homes that have been built with federal, state, or local funds. The only state that requires all homes (subsidized or unsubsidized) to be visitable is the State of Vermont, which adopted visitability legislation in 2000. This legislation requires all new residential homes (single or multi-family) to be built with interior doors at least 32" wide, 36" wide hallways, and reinforcements in the washroom and control panels at heights compliant with the "standards set by the Vermont access board". What is interesting about this legislation is that there is nothing requiring that there be at least one no-step exterior door. According to Concrete Change, the zero step entrance was omitted (along with standards for enforceability) to give the legislation a chance of passing in Vermont's current political climate.

Although there is no legislation at the American Federal level, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has made visitability a priority and is encouraging developers and communities who have received HOPE VI grants (a program designed to transform public housing projects into diverse, stable, mixed income neighbourhoods) to ensure visitability in as many units as possible. This is accomplished by giving applicants for HUD funding a greater chance of receiving such funding should their plans include HUD's visitability standards in regular housing units (Overton 2000). The fact that HUD is including visitability in a program whose aim is to create diverse neighbourhoods shows that part of planning for diversity includes planning for those with disabilities.

Strategies for Providing Accessibility & Visitability for Hope VI and Mixed

Finance Homeownership (HUD 2000) sees visitability as a means of making American communities inclusive. The document describes how visitability allows for people with disabilities to “visit the homes” of their non-disabled peers as well as allowing the non-disabled to “age in place”. The document also describes how a visitable home can avoid the costly and unsightly renovations (such as add-on ramps) should an occupant of the home develop a disability. This is consistent with the concept that a visitable home is economically, visually and socially sustainable. Although HUD is by no means *requiring* developers and communities to build along visitable guidelines, the fact that visitability is being encouraged (through financial incentives via the HOPE VI program) is a sign of progress.

Additionally, a bill proposing visitability in all homes built with Federal Government funds has been proposed in the United States Congress (Concrete Change 2003). Entitled the “Inclusive Home Design Act”, this bill proposes that all homes built with Federal Government Funds include one no-step entrance, 32 inch doorways throughout the main floor; a washroom on the entry level floor with reinforcements, and accessible electrical and climate controls. This bill was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on June 5th 2003, and is currently being debated.

The most progressive form of visitability-related legislation is that which exists in the United Kingdom. This legislation falls under Approved Document M (Access and Facilities for Disabled People) of building regulations distributed by the Department of the Environment, Transport and Regions (UK DETR 2001).

Document M concerns itself with access to all buildings (public and private); its aim is to allow for access and usability of buildings and facilities for people with disabilities. Section 6 of Document M is concerned with accessibility to and into dwellings. Under this legislation, all new homes must have an accessible path of entry. By this it is meant that the approach to the home itself must have a slope no steeper than 1:20; although, if the local topography prevents this, a ramp is necessary. The entrance itself is to have an accessible threshold and a clear width opening of 775 mm (31").

Within the home, all doorways are to have a clear width of 750-800mm (30-32") and all corridors are to have a width of between 900 and 1200 mm (36-48") depending on the width of the doorway itself and whether the approach to the doorway is head on or not. This type of requirement is unique to the differing types of visitability legislation thus far encountered and is progressive in that it takes into account not just space for moving along a corridor, but maneuvering within a corridor to access a doorway (which can require more space).

As is the case with some other types of visitability legislation, climate controls are to be located between heights of 45 and 120 cm (3'6"-4'). The washrooms are to be located on the entrance level. What is interesting about the requirement for accessible washrooms is that (unlike other types of visitability legislation) the legislation does not call for reinforcements to allow for the installation of grab bars.

In addition to the standards already listed, Section M also deals with the materials used in the construction of the property. For example, the approach to the building is to be made with material that can accommodate a wheelchair user (i.e. no loose laid materials such as shingle or gravel). The materials used in and around a visitable home

should be just as important as other accessible features (such as a level entrance). These materials would be of the slip-proof, high traction variety that would allow a wheelchair user to maneuver about with ease. Even a non-disabled individual would find a high traction surface to be convenient. For example, a slip-proof floor in the washroom would prevent injuries from occurring; a driveway made with high traction materials would make it harder to slip in the winter months. This would be particularly important for the City of Winnipeg, whose climate means snow and ice on the ground for a fair portion of the year.

What is progressive about this legislation is that it applies to an entire federal jurisdiction, whereas other examples of visitability-related legislation encountered so far have been implemented on a municipal or state level. Given that the United Kingdom is a much more centralized nation, this is understandable. Section M is also progressive in that it combines visitability alongside other accessibility regulations, such as those concerning accessibility in apartments and public facilities. This is unlike other jurisdictions, where visitability legislation is often separate from other forms of accessibility legislation. This may be due to the fact that the United Kingdom is more centralized than other nations, making it easier to combine the varying forms of accessibility legislation. Still, it would be progressive for any future forms of visitability legislation to be combined with currently existing disability-related legislation (such as the Americans with Disabilities Act), as this would make the legislation easier to interpret and enforce.

4.3 The Effects of Visitability

In places where visitability has been implemented, the results have generally been positive. *Visitability Improves Accessibility for All* (Overton 2000) indicated that when the first visitable units were constructed, their features were actually seen as not particularly noteworthy. For example, in 1994 a 91-unit single-family housing unit designed with visitable features was built in Macon, Georgia. What is interesting about this case is that these features were not designed or built-in intentionally, but by pure coincidence. The Macon Housing Authority simply saw the features as a natural byproduct of the design; they did not realize until later on that their project was out of the ordinary.

Another example of the simplicity of visitability can be found in Peachcrest Trace, built by the DeKalb/Decatur Housing Authority (also in Georgia). 110 homes in a 156 unit-housing tract (all built without federal subsidies) were built according to visitability standards. The initiative was seen as a simple act that was "thought to be a good idea"; building the units had little impact from the development standpoint (Overton 2000).

What is also noticeable about visitable homes is that the design features are often attractive and indistinguishable from the standard non-accessible unit. This is a great contrast to the stereotypical image of accessible housing: long ramps, oversized doorways and wide hallways. These latter images are the incompatible retrofits that are built onto a traditional non-accessible home. These retrofits are also obvious indicators that this is the residence of a person with a disability, whereas a visitable home is not. The absence of these indicators would remove the stigma that is often associated with having a

disability. These factors, when combined, would show that visitability is sustainable from a visual and social viewpoint.

The costs of implementing visitable features have also been found to be negligible. When Eastlake Commons, a visitable 67-unit townhouse development in Atlanta Georgia was built, the developer estimated that the cost of providing the visitable features was no more than \$25 per home: adding the features was not seen as an issue because they were planned for at the beginning of the development. The development of Peachcrest Trace's visitable features was seen as less than \$25 per unit, although the costs were not specifically tracked. Both these costs are considerably less than Concrete Change's costs of implementing visitable features (\$200). This is in contrast to examples of retrofitting homes to allow for accessibility; in Macon County, the costs of retrofitting existing units for accessibility is \$7,500 per unit to \$15,000 for older units (Overton 2000).

Despite these positive gains, visitability is not without its opponents. As has been noted previously, the building and construction industries have constantly opposed visitability legislation. According to *Living in the Past* (Byzek 1998) the main opponent of visitability in the United States has been the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), which has also opposed the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Fair Housing Act. For example, when the visitability legislation was first debated as a bill in Georgia (it took several attempts for the bill to pass), the state's NAHB affiliate successfully opposed the legislation on the grounds that it would harm property rights; that visitability should be a consumer's not a builder's decision, the cost of a home would be increased and that the bill was "mandated legislation" (Byzek 1998). When Atlanta

was attempting to pass visitability legislation in the early 1990s, the local home builders association also attacked the proposed legislation, arguing that increasing the size of the door would require homes to be increased by up to 11% in size and increase the costs of construction by \$2,500 per unit, which would ultimately deny 15,000 to 20,000 families from being able to afford a home. The reaction of Beto Barerra, the Director of Access Living Housing Ordinance is that installing a wider doorway would simply mean cutting a larger hole in the wall, rather than increasing the actual size of the entire building, and cost no more than \$200 per home. The counter-argument from the NAHB included no figures, focusing instead on "mandates" (Byzek 1998).

When Naperville, Illinois was dealing with its visitability legislation, the local home-builders lobby opposed all parts of the legislation, and was able to eliminate the part of the legislation requiring a no-step entrance (which rendered the idea of actual accessibility pointless). Their argument was that it would be "taking away the rights of the healthy people in writing a standard for the handicapped" and that the access features would cause owners to lose control over their own homes. This is in spite of the fact that building requirements, such as electrical wiring and plumbing, have been imposed on homeowners (Byzek 1998).

When visitability legislation was first debated in Virginia, Dick Covert, the then head of the local NAHB affiliate, who was later dismissed from his position, initially supported it. Although there is no evidence to support Covert's dismissal being linked to his support of the visitability legislation, his dismissal (and the lack of support from the local affiliate) prevented Virginia's State Housing Commission from considering the legislation (Virginia still does not have any visitability legislation) (Byzek 1998). This is

an example of how far the building industry is prepared to go to prevent visitability legislation from being implemented or even considered.

This is not to say that the NAHB does not support the concept of accessible housing. Rather than visitability, the NAHB supports the construction of housing designed to cater to a specific niche market, namely, the seniors market. The NAHB even has a council that is supposed to handle the needs of the senior population. These types of housing consist of seniors' high-rises, assisted-living facilities and personal care homes. These facilities are of the segregated type and do not allow consumers using them to integrate with the surrounding community (Byzek 1998).

To its credit, the NAHB does include single-family homes with the features that allow for aging in place and visitability. However, this type of design still caters to the seniors' niche market and not to the entire housing market, contrary to the aims of visitability. In addition, these facilities are more expensive than traditional housing because they are designed to cater to a specific (albeit lucrative) market, rather than to a general population. It would follow that if visitability were to be adopted on a larger scale, it would cater to a general market and be cheaper in price. When this is combined with the fact that examples of visitability have had minimal (at the most) impacts in terms of construction costs, it would show that implementing visitability on a wide scale is less costly than if it were implemented to serve a specific niche market. This is another example of how visitability is economically sustainable (Byzek 1998).

Similar views have been expressed in the United Kingdom by the House Builders Federation, which claims that Section M will increase the cost of a home by 1000 pounds, and price first-time buyers of homes out of the market. The Rowntree

Foundation disputes this claim. Their estimates are that the cost of adding accessibility features onto a three-bedroom house during construction is no more than 200 pounds (Concrete Change 2002).

The views expressed by the Canadian building industry are practically identical to those expressed by their American and British counterparts. To their credit, they claim that visitability is good concept and that consumers should have the right to be informed about the choices of housing available to them. However, John Kenward of the Canadian Home Builders' Association is absolutely opposed to any type of visitability legislation, claiming that this type of decision should be left up to the customer (Turnbull 2002).

These examples show that, despite the benefits that visitability offers, there is still a very strong counter-lobby from the building industry; a counter-lobby which has fought visitability every step of the way and has prevented visitability legislation from passing. This counter-lobby presents the greatest opposition that visitability proponents will face in attempting to implement visitability legislation in other jurisdictions.

What is notable about the building industry's attitudes in designing homes that cater to a specific niche market, is that this may not be a profitable venture. According to *If You Build It, They May Not Come* (Dobkin 1993) housing projects designed to cater to the seniors market in the 1980s ran into severe financial difficulty. The number of seniors wishing to live in these specialized communities was smaller than usual, resulting in financial troubles that led to increased fees and/or lowered services. This may be due to the fact that although the seniors market has tremendous purchasing power as a whole, there are many within this market whose purchasing power is limited, and attempts to

build housing designed to cater to a specific niche may not prove to be as profitable as one would hope.

4.4 Visitability and the Canadian Context

Visitability legislation in Canada is lacking. This is not to say that there are no visitable residences in Canada. An example of a visitability regulation in Canada can be found in the Section 3.2 of Town of Sidney (B.C.) Zoning Bylaw. This part of the bylaw is entitled "adaptable housing." Unlike other examples of visitability legislation, this bylaw only applies to multi-family dwellings and townhouses, and even then to only 20% of all units therein. Although it is not referred to as visitable housing, the bylaw has many features that are consistent with FlexHousing and the homes built under these guidelines are considered to be more than visitable; they are closer to the standards of adaptable housing (Town of Sidney 2002).

These features include: a path of travel no less than 0.92 metres wide and a gradient no steeper than 1 in 20; doors that have a clear width opening of 0.815 metres; a threshold no higher than 13mm and lever operated handles; ample maneuvering space at the doors and inside the corridors; slip proof floor surfaces; control panels and outlets which can be accessed from a wheelchair; living areas on the main floor and closets placed one above the other to allow for the installation of an elevator or lift; and ground-floor washrooms with turning space for a wheelchair and supports that allow for the installation of grab bars. These features allow for a person with a disability to visit a house in Sidney and continue to live in such a home should they develop a disability.

A progressive zoning bylaw such as this is understandable, given Sidney's demographic scenario. Over 40% of Sidney's population is over the age of 55 (compared

to the current 20% for the Canadian population as a whole). Given this disproportionate amount of seniors, it is understandable why the Town of Sidney has taken such a progressive stance. Also, given that the demographic scenario currently playing out in Sidney will apply to all of Canada over the next 25 years, it would be practical for other jurisdictions to copy what Sidney is currently doing.

A similar bylaw can also be found in the City of North Vancouver. The City adopted a series of "adaptable housing" guidelines and requirements in 1998 (City of North Vancouver 2002). Unlike the bylaw that exists in Sidney, this bylaw applies to all new multiple-unit dwellings with common corridors. What is also unique about this bylaw is that there are several levels of adaptable housing. The first level is a mandatory one, while the other two levels are optional and are encouraged through bonuses and incentives. The idea of having several levels of accessibility is an encouraging one, as is the notion of offering incentives and bonuses for accessibility.

Under the mandatory ordinance (Level 1) basic accessible features are covered. This includes 2'8" doors, level access entrance doorways from the street and garage, 4'0" wide corridors, lever handles on doors and solid blocking in bathrooms to provide grab bars should the need arise. Level 1 also calls for other features not mentioned in other visitability policies, such as contrasting sign colors and elevator controls and wiring for a visual alarm system (which would operate a flashing signal when a fire alarm rang). These features, although not a part of what is considered to be visitability, are progressive in that they take into account other forms of disability (such as visual or hearing impairments). The Level 2 and 3 guidelines continue this progressiveness even further, examples being control switches at 3'6" height, slip-resistant flooring, shelves whose

height can be adjusted and wiring for automatic doors. These features go beyond visitability and are more into the arena of universal design.

North Vancouver's ordinance is also progressive in that it goes beyond visitability, setting standards for people with disabilities. Although it (currently) applies only to multi-unit dwellings, there is no reason why such policies could not also apply to single unit dwellings. The optional guidelines could be adopted (through incentives such as density bonuses) to create housing that, in addition to being visitable, can comfortably accommodate a person with more severe mobility or sensory impairments.

Other Canadian examples of visitability can be found in *Building Strong Communities* (B.C. Ministry of Housing 1995), a compendium of various affordable housing initiatives in the province of British Columbia, several of which include what could be classified as visitable housing scenarios.

One example is the Access Housing Co-Operative in Vancouver, designed to integrate people with disabilities into the mainstream community. The co-op is a mixture of 56 townhouses and apartments, all of which are accessible to wheelchairs. What is unique about this visitable design is that although many of the units are stacked one on top of another, the design takes advantage of the slope that surrounds the site to ensure visitability to all units. This design refutes the theory that the topography would prohibit visitability; properly done, topography could actually ensure that visitability is viable. The intent behind the design is also noteworthy; it was to integrate people with disabilities with their non-disabled peers. This aim of integration should be an important part of implementing any visitability initiative, as people with disabilities have long been

segregated from the mainstream of society, resulting in high rates of unemployment and poverty.

Another initiative is "City Club on the Park" in Burnaby. This development is a 170-unit condominium development in Burnaby. Ten of these units are under the ownership of a local Community Living Agency, who rent them out to people with disabilities at a reduced rate. These units are built to the same standards as the other units, with all units being accessible to people with disabilities. The 10 units are scattered throughout the complex, preventing any segregation from taking place.

A third example is Constance Court in Vancouver. Funded by VanCity Enterprises, a local credit union, the project consists of 34 housing units above a credit union branch. Four of the units are marketed towards people with disabilities, 14 are for seniors with the rest for single parents. All units are fully adaptable for people with disabilities. The diversity of the tenants is progressive in that it allows for seniors (who are more likely to have disabilities due to their age) as well as the non-disabled. The adaptability of the units will allow for these tenants to remain in their present domicile should they develop a disability.

A fourth example is a "convertible house" located in Richmond. As the name suggests, this is a house that can be adapted to the "changing housing needs at various stages of the life cycle". This is not unlike the Lifetime Houses or FlexHouses described previously. Unlike the other forms of visitable housing mentioned in *Building Strong Communities*, this is a single-detached house; the others were all townhouses, condominiums or apartment-style accommodations. Given that, in the future, most of

Canada's seniors will be residing in ground level accommodation, more attention must be paid to the development of such visitable housing.

At present, funding is available from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to assist homeowners with renovations to make their homes accessible. Funding is provided through the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) and the Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence Program (HASI) (CMHC 2002). Both programs are aimed at landlords and homeowners, and offer financial aid (in the form of loans) to modify existing homes to allow occupancy for people with disabilities. Under the RRAP, homeowners are eligible if their household income is below a certain level (based on the income of the surrounding area) and the value of their home is below a specific figure; thus, many people do not qualify for this financial assistance. The maximum amount available is \$18,000 for those in Southern Canada, \$21,000 in Northern Canada and \$27,000 for the Far North. Up to two thirds of this funding may be forgiven, based on the household income and the cost of the accessibility modifications.

The HASI program is aimed at those aged 65 and over, whose income is below a specific level (based on the surrounding area), and who have difficulty with daily activities brought on by aging. Up to \$2,500 in forgivable loans are available, the forgiveness being based on how long the consumer lives in the adapted unit (up to six months).

The amount of funding that is available through these programs indicate the cost of adapting a home to accommodate a person with a disability. Given that visitable features are designed and implemented at the outset, the costs are marginal. This is another example of how up-front visitability can be economical. With the increasing number and

proportion of seniors and people with disabilities in Canadian society, the demand for these programs will increase accordingly. A visitability housing ordinance would ease this, as visitable housing is already designed for accessibility.

Although the funding through these programs could conceivably cover the necessary costs of home modification, the funding is not available to all people. The program is only aimed at homeowners with disabilities, not the non-disabled who may have potential visitors with disabilities who live elsewhere (an example being a person who has an aging parent who requires a wheelchair or scooter). The limits of these programs prevent visitability. Also, the program is aimed at *adapting* homes, rather than making them accessible at the outset. Given that the development of a disability can often occur unexpectedly, these homeowners could face unnecessary inconveniences in the process of obtaining the necessary funding and modifying their home. Most importantly, the funding for these programs was originally set to expire in March of 2003, although they are still continuing as of this date. If homes were made visitable and thus accessible at the outset, the owners would not have to worry about the inconvenience of applying for the necessary funding to modify their homes. Visitability would also save the government resources in that there would not have to be so much funding to adapt these homes to make them accessible, although some funding would be required to modify homes beyond the visitable level of accessibility.

The costs of renovating a home to allow for accessibility can also be deducted from one's income tax under Revenue Canada's Disability Tax Credit (CCRA 2002). Examples of such renovation include the installation of a ramp, the enlargement of hallways or doorways, and the fees paid to an architect or contractor. As with the

CMHC's Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program , the program only applies to dwellings that have a resident with a disability, and does not allow a home to be renovated to allow for accessibility for a person with a disability who does not reside at the house. As is the case with the funding available through the CMHC, this funding also depends on a homeowner's income, so not everyone qualifies for this tax deduction.

Another ordinance, one that is unique to Winnipeg, is the City of Winnipeg's 2003 Home Renovation Tax Assistance Program. Enacted in December 2002, the program allows homeowners to deduct a maximum of \$1500 from their property taxes (\$500 per year over a consecutive five year period) for renovations costing no greater than \$10,000 to homes that were built before 1974 and have an assessed value of less than \$90,000. Renovations to accommodate a person with a disability are included in the list of eligible renovations, and there is nothing which states that a person with a disability must reside at the home (City of Winnipeg 2003). Although this tax program does allow for the conversion of a home to accommodate a person with a disability, the credits are not enough to make a non-accessible home visitable. Furthermore, the funding for such credits is limited and available on a first-come first-served basis; thus, not everyone who qualifies for the program will receive it.

What is also important about the federal programs (the ones supplied through the CMHC and CCRA) is that they both apply in an "after the fact" manner. That is, they only apply to consumers who have developed disabilities; they cannot be used beforehand. Since many disabilities often occur unexpectedly, it would make sense to prepare for them beforehand. When this is not the case, a person who develops a disability is faced with the inconvenience of living in a non-accessible home while that home is being

renovated. A visitable home can prevent this, as the main accessible features are already in place. Furthermore, if all homes were designed to be visitable, homeowners would not have to go through the procedure of claiming these expenses as a tax credit, as these expenses would not have occurred in the first place. Additionally, many persons with disabilities must leave their homes and relocate to retirement homes or care facilities due to the lack of accessibility in their current accommodation. This relocation increases their dependency; thus, visitability could be seen as a way of reducing such dependency.

This does not mean that these programs would have to be removed once a visitability ordinance is implemented. Visitability often applies to newly built housing, but not to homes already built. To create a built environment that is truly accessible, the above programs would also be needed to allow for existing non-accessible homes to be converted, should the need arise. The programs should also allow funding for accessibility for someone who does not live at the home. An example of this would be the parents of the homeowner(s). This would allow the parents to "visit" their children and grandchildren. This shows that for visitability to be effective, it must be implemented alongside other forms of accessibility initiatives, an example of which is the programs offered through the CMHC and CCRA.

Policy concerning accessibility in private housing in Canada is lacking compared to other policy regarding accessibility. Accessibility policies for Canadians with disabilities are derived from the Canadian Human Rights Act and the National and Provincial Building Codes. The Canadian Human Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability; however, such legislation is enforced through a complaint-driven process and is often done in a reactive, rather than a proactive, manner.

Rental housing, for example, is covered under Section 16 (1) of the Manitoba Human Rights Code. It forbids discrimination in rental housing with respect to “leasing” and “terms of the leasing” against several characteristics among which are “physical or mental disability or related characteristics or circumstances”; this would include a wheelchair or animal assistant. Section 11 of the code allows for preference to be given to accommodate the needs of special groups, including people with disabilities. This would include giving preference to a person with a disability in a building with accessible features such as an entrance ramp or special washroom features (Manitoba Human Rights Commission 2000).

Section 17 of the Manitoba Human Rights Code prohibits similar discrimination in the sale of private housing. However, this only applies to the actual sale of the home; an example would be refusing to sell the home to a person with a disability. The code does not apply to the provision of accessible features. Thus, while there is no legislation that would prevent a person with a disability from purchasing a home, there is no legislation that requires the provision of accessible features in a private home. If a home does not have accessible or adaptable features in the first place, there is little point in a person with a disability purchasing such a home, unless he or she had the resources with which to renovate the home to make it accessible. There are also no clauses that require a home to be accessible to allow for visitability.

Barrier Free Design is mentioned in Section 3.8 of the National Building Code (National Research Council of Canada 1995) and Section 3.7 of the Manitoba Building Code (National Research Council of Canada 1993). Each of these sections deals with accessibility guidelines for public buildings. However, at the beginning of each of these

sections there is a clause that states that the accessibility guidelines in these respective building codes do *not* apply to "houses, including semi-detached houses, duplexes, triplexes, town houses, row houses and boarding houses". This code does apply to apartment blocks in some cases. Housing is discussed in Part 9 of both Building Codes, but there is no mention of accessible features in either section.

When human rights legislation and the building codes are juxtaposed, the situation regarding accessibility and visitability does not seem optimistic. The majority of Canada's seniors are living (and will continue to live) in ground-oriented private dwellings. These dwellings are defined as single-detached houses, semi-detached houses, row houses, apartments and suites in detached houses, dwellings attached to non-residential structures, mobile houses and other moveable dwellings. These are precisely the types of homes that are exempt from the sections of both Canada and Manitoba Building Codes concerned with accessibility.

Given that over the next few decades the majority of Canada's seniors will be living in homes exempt from the Barrier Free Design sections of federal or provincial building codes, these individuals could face a quandary. Many of their homes will probably not be accessible for a person with a disability to reside in-much less one which is visitable for a person with a disability. To retrofit these buildings for accessibility would require extensive and expensive renovation, and make the appearances of these buildings unsightly. Had these homes been initially designed with visitability in mind, these problems (and reactive solutions to rectify them) need not have occurred.

The City of Winnipeg however, is in a unique position to do something about this dilemma. In Winnipeg's *Plan Winnipeg* (1993), the City acknowledges that there will be

an increasing number, in both real and proportional terms, of seniors-and with this increase-a larger portion of people with disabilities. Plan Winnipeg calls for the city to ensure full accessibility and use of public facilities “for citizens of all ages with physical and communication disabilities.” The aim of this accessibility is to accommodate all members of society through creative programming and design, while in so doing enriching the quality of the services and facilities being provided. In addition to access to public buildings and services, access to transit service and to buildings and services provided by other levels of government and the private sector, are encouraged.

In 2001, the City of Winnipeg moved beyond these statements and adopted a Universal Design Policy, becoming the first municipality in Canada to do so. Unlike the Canadian Human Rights Act or the Building Codes, the city’s Universal Design Policy is designed to be a proactive approach to dealing with the accessibility needs of people with disabilities. This policy’s goals recognize several important factors:

- The City of Winnipeg has a diverse population; no one should be excluded from participating in community life or accessing municipal services.
- Providing a general design that accommodates a wider variety of people is less costly than designs that are specific to a particular disability.
- Ensuring that new civic buildings and environments are usable by a wide variety of people
- The promotion of a city that is inclusive (City of Winnipeg 2001).

This Universal Design Ordinance was drafted and will be implemented with advisory input from the City of Winnipeg’s Access Advisory Committee, an appointed body of citizens (many of whom have varying disabilities) along with two members of the City

Council. The committee's purpose is to advise and make recommendations to the Mayor and City Council regarding accessibility issues relating to City properties. An access guide *Access: A Guide to Accessible Design for Designers, Builders, Facility Owners and Managers* (Finkel 2000) published by the Universal Design Institute, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba also serves as a reference when implementing Universal Design.

This ordinance is progressive in that it goes beyond current accessibility legislation and acknowledges that seniors and people with disabilities are entitled to access Winnipeg's municipal services. An inclusive city is also progressive in that it acknowledges that the built environment must be designed to include all people, regardless of their age or level of ability, rather than discriminating against them, as the built environment has traditionally been perceived.

The ordinance is also progressive in that it involves public participation through the City of Winnipeg Access Advisory Committee. As Salmen (1996) has noted, the most progressive forms of universal design often involve input from consumers. Winnipeg's ordinance does this through the Access Advisory Committee (albeit in an advisory capacity) offering input from a disability perspective. Because people with disabilities are aware of what constitutes accessibility, their input, if properly considered, will lead to a more progressive design.

More recently, the Province of Manitoba adopted a similar ordinance that will require new government buildings to *exceed* current building codes regarding accessibility. As is the case with the City of Winnipeg, the Province will rely on the same access guide published by the Universal Design Institute. The ordinance will apply

to all government buildings, including public schools. An example of the effectiveness of this ordinance can be found at Sisler High School, currently undergoing an expansion. This expansion includes an elevator to the school's mezzanine level. Although the cost of installing the elevator was \$100,000, the price of installing the facility after the initial construction would have been double the original amount (Kuxhaus 2002). This would demonstrate how installing visitable features in *any* building during initial construction is economically viable compared to doing so after the fact.

Another progressive government trend also notable in the Province of Manitoba is the Northern Model House (Government of Manitoba 2003). This house, located in Thompson, Manitoba is a visitable housing concept that is designed with Manitoba's Aboriginal peoples in mind. At present one prototype of this home design has been built.

Although the first two policies are concerned with accessibility in public buildings (and only government buildings), their unique existence within Canada indicate that the City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba are showing a progressive attitude towards accessibility. The third initiative is one that actually concerns itself with visitability. A jurisdiction with progressive attitudes such as these would be an ideal location to implement a visitability ordinance.

4.5 Visitability and the Planning Field

Visitability is only starting to emerge in the planning literature. In *What Difference has the ADA Made?* (Szold 2002) Szold examined the impact of the ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) 10 years after it was implemented. The article points out that some jurisdictions require the construction of accessible housing when public funds are involved, and that developments using Community Development Block Grants

(CDBG) or HOME program funds are required to comply with the ADA. However, these accessibility requirements do not apply to market rate housing.

Eleanor Smith (the founder of the Visitability movement) states that many people with disabilities share many of the same values as those who advocate "New Urbanism" (dense, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use developments with a diversity of people and/or lifestyles); for example, automobile-dependent sprawl stigmatizes people with "mobility, sensory and cognitive impairments" (Szold 2002 pp.10-15). However, New Urbanism developments are inaccessible, creating a scenario that is contradictory to the diverse intergenerational community that is supposedly the hallmark of New Urbanism.

The connection between Visitability and new Urbanism is also starting to make its way into Canadian planning literature. In *New Urbanism and Aging in Place* (Mehak 2002) Mary Mehak indicates that many New Urbanist characteristics can equally apply to those for aging in place. Examples of these are dense developments where access to goods and services can be obtained through walking rather than relying on the automobile. However, Mehak also points out that many of the houses constructed in the New Urbanist developments are not accessible, and are thus not barrier-free, much less visitable. This makes New Urbanism seem very contradictory because, if the houses in a New Urbanist development are not built to be visitable, then the development is inaccessible to people with disabilities. The lack of any barrier-free residences would mean that it is impossible to age in place in a New Urbanist development; yet visitability is a key component to "aging in place". Therefore the ideas (a diversity of different peoples and lifestyles) behind New Urbanism do not necessarily come to fruition when New Urbanism is actually implemented.

The inaccessibility referenced in both these articles cast doubt on the diversity principles touted by New Urbanism. The lack of accessible housing makes visitability impossible for people with difficulties, as well as making it impossible for seniors to age in place. Given that seniors and people with disabilities are going to be a significantly increasing portion of Canadian society over the next several decades, to exclude these groups from a form of development that is supposedly designed to include them calls certain agents of New Urbanism into question.

Theoretically, visitability could fit into the concept of New Urbanism as the basic beliefs behind the concepts are similar-that is, people of different age and ability groups can live in the same community, along with the non-disabled members of the community. The reality though, is that many New Urbanism housing developments are not accessible to people with disabilities, making visitability impossible. The planning and design professions seem unaware that people with disabilities are just as much a part of society as are women, children and people of colour. By being part of the design of a built environment that discriminates against people with disabilities, the planning and design professions could be considered to be contributing to the segregation and marginalization of people with disabilities.

To its credit, in November 2001, the Congress for the New Urbanism (an organization of planners, architects and developers who advocate, and educate governments and the general public about New Urbanist forms of development) agreed to endorse a visitability agenda that included a zero-step entrance, interior doors wide enough to accommodate a wheelchair (32 inches wide) and a half-bath (and preferably a

full bath) on the main floor. The Congress is now considering an initiative to make New Urbanist housing accessible.

Incorporating visitability legislation alongside New Urbanism has actually enacted in Southampton, New York, in December 2002 (Town of Southampton 2002). Under this legislation, all new homes built within a special “floating zone” must be built to visitable standards. These approvals are usually given to developers who wish to build denser developments and are often used to develop affordable housing and housing for seniors. Additionally, permit fees are reduced by \$300 dollars if single-family homes built in regular subdivisions are built according to visitable standards. In a statement of support regarding the visitability bylaw, the town declared support for “Traditional Neighbourhood Development” (TND), i.e. mixed-use pedestrian-oriented neighbourhoods. The statement declared that Universal Design principles must be incorporated into pedestrian oriented developments (Town of Southampton 2002a).

This claim is verified by Philip Dommer’s *Universal Design and the New Urbanism* (Dommer 2001), which argues that universal design principles must be incorporated into New Urbanist/Traditional Neighbourhood Developments; just as TND allows for the integration of different types of lifestyles (ranging from the young to the elderly) within the neighbourhood, universal design allows for the same integration within the home. Dommer argues that failing to incorporate universal design into New Urbanist forms of development will render such neighbourhoods underutilized and segregated, and may eventually be seen as short-sighted. Dommer point out that in many New Urbanist neighbourhoods, seniors and people with disabilities must drive in from homes outside the development to use the development’s shops and services, then leave

once they have done such activities. They are unable to live in the development. Such a scenario does not seem consistent with the theories behind the New Urbanism, which claims that people should access a neighbourhood's shops and services without relying on an automobile.

Although the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) has no policy on visitability, there are certain parts of the CIP's Statement of Values (Canadian Institute of Planners 1994) where visitability concerns could be seen as justified.

1. *To respect and integrate the needs of future generations.* Around the world, and in the developed world in particular, the proportion of people with disabilities is increasing. This is due to medical advances that allow people with disabilities to live longer lives and the increasing proportion of seniors in society. This means that future generations will have larger proportions of seniors and people with disabilities. It is therefore imperative to plan for this eventuality. It should be realized that the increasing proportion of seniors includes members of the planning profession (particularly those planners who are of the baby boom generation) or their parents. Visitability will allow people with disabilities to access the homes of the non-disabled peers as well as allow for aging in place.
4. *To recognize and react positively to uncertainty.* Visitable homes allow for access for people with mobility difficulties while also making access easier for the non-disabled. Also, no person is non-disabled for all of his

or her life. Everyone will have mobility difficulties at some point in their lives due to age, accident, illness or injury. These disabilities are often unexpected and hard to prepare for. A visitable home will allow for an individual to reside in their homes with minimum disruption should they have a temporary or permanent disability.

5. *To respect diversity.* Seniors and people with disabilities have always been part of human society. In the past few decades, these groups have been increasing in proportion to the rest of society. Traditionally the built environment had the effect of discriminating against them, contributing to their marginalization. There is no justification for this. With the increasing numbers of seniors and people with disabilities, this cannot be allowed to continue. Visitability is one way of ensuring that the built environment will be designed to accommodate as wide a variety of ages and levels of ability as possible.
7. *To foster public participation.* The most effective accessible environments have been designed with the involvement of persons with disabilities. Visitability ordinances have been enacted and implemented with the full participation of people with disabilities. In designing and implementing a visitability ordinance, participation from the disability community will be required. A visitability ordinance would be one way of bringing people with disabilities together with those in the planning profession.

4.6 Summary

The preceding review has indicated that people with disabilities have become increasingly visible over the past few decades and will become more so in the near future, particularly with the aging baby boom generation. The members of this latter group wish to live independently for as long as possible, often in ground level accommodation that they own themselves.

Visitability has proven itself to be a method to allow people with disabilities to "visit" their non-disabled peers and allow the non-disabled to "age in place" and/or continue to reside in their homes should they develop a disability. Building visitable features into a home during its construction is cheaper than installing accessible features into an existing home.

Visitability is slowly gaining momentum in the United States, and has been adopted at both the municipal and state level in several jurisdictions, many within the past two years. The United Kingdom has also followed suit with visitability requirements. Any negative social and economic aspects of this development have proven so far to be minimal, while allowing access for people with disabilities.

Although there are a few examples of visitable housing in Canada, visitability has not yet been adopted on as wide a scale as in the U.K. and the U.S. Sydney and North Vancouver have policies touching on visitability, but these only apply to multi-unit dwellings. The City of Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba are the first jurisdictions in Canada to have adopted more progressive accessibility guidelines for their public buildings. As well, the Province of Manitoba has undertaken an initiative on visitable housing for Aboriginal people through the Northern Model House. These factors, when

combined, show that Winnipeg and Manitoba are potentially ideal jurisdictions to implement a visitability housing ordinance.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Examining Visitability Ordinances

The first step in this research involved an examination of the experiences that other jurisdictions have had with visitability ordinances. In this part of the research, questionnaires were sent out to representatives of disability and access organizations that had lobbied for visitability in their respective jurisdictions (the names of these jurisdictions have been kept confidential). In these questionnaires the respondents were asked about their jurisdiction's visitability ordinances, the experiences they had in implementing such policies, and their recommendations for those who were planning to implement visitability. In total 10 questionnaires were sent out, 9 to potential respondents in the United States and 1 to the United Kingdom. There are no Canadian visitability ordinances. All 10 respondents had previously agreed to be participants in this survey. Of these 10 questionnaires, 7 were returned, 1 respondent found the questionnaire to be overwhelming and 2 could not be contacted. The identities of these jurisdictions have been kept confidential.

5.1.1 Summary

A summary of the technical aspects of the visitability ordinances in given in the table listed below.

Table 5-1
Visitability Policies

Jurisdiction	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Type of jurisdiction	Town Level	Town Level	Town Level	County Level	State Level	State Level	Federal Level
Type of home affected	Homes built with public funds	10% of all new housing and any housing built with public funds	All homes	All Homes	Homes built with public funds	Homes built with public funds	All homes
Entrances	No steeper than 1:12 grade	Not given	One no-step entrance on an accessible route	No steeper than 1:20 grade	One no-step entrance on an accessible route	One no-step entrance	No steeper than 1:12 grade, External doors 800 mm wide
Doorways	32" (800mm) clear width with lever handle	Not given	Clear Width of 32" (800 mm)	Clear width of 32" (800 mm) with lever handle	Clear width of 32" (800mm)	Clear Width of 32" (800 mm)	Clear Width of 30" (750 mm)
Washrooms	Reinforcements for grab bars	Not given	Reinforcements for grab bars	Reinforcements between 33 and 36" (825 to 900 mm) above floor	Reinforcements for grab bars	Washroom on main level	Entrance must be 750 mm wide
Light Switches/Climate Controls	Accessible location	Not given	Light controls no higher than 48" (1200 mm) and electrical sockets no lower than 15" (375 mm)	Light Controls no higher than 48" (1200 mm), thermostats no higher than 54" (1350 mm) and electrical sockets no lower than 15" (375 mm)	Accessible location		
Hallways			42" (1050mm) on entrance level		36" (900mm)		900 mm wide

Although there are many differences between the various jurisdictions that have adopted visitability there are also many similarities based on table 5.1.

The first similarity is that of the visitability features. Each of the policies requires a level entrance or one with an accessible ramp, wider doorways (at least 32 inches wide) and an accessible washroom on the entry-level floor. Some of the jurisdictions require other features, such as reinforcements in the walls of the washrooms, lever handles on the doors, or accessible climate controls and light switches.

Other features (though not as important as the above requirements) would include reinforcements in the washroom walls to allow for the installation of grab bars, lever handles on the doors and accessible climate controls, light switches and electrical outlets.

The second similarity is the type of housing affected by the policies. All the jurisdictions surveyed require visitability for homes that have been built with public funds, be they municipal, state or federal. Three require visitability features for all homes, whether built with or without private funds.

The reason for these differences is that it was difficult to legislate that privately built homes (be they built by the owner or by a land developer) be built according to visitable requirements, mainly because these homes were not built with public funds.

The third similarity is the implementation of these ordinances. The ordinances were implemented because of the lobbying of the disability community. They were *not* initiated by local authorities or planning agencies. In their lobbying, the disability community worked alongside seniors' rights groups and community activists.

Much of the lobbying consisted of the following:

- 1) Finding allies in the local government, civil service and local media.

- 2) Providing testimony at public hearings and meetings. This testimony described the experiences that people with disabilities face in finding housing and accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers
- 3) Writing drafts of the proposed ordinances.
- 4) Writing educational materials for the government and community at large, informing them about the benefits of visitability and countering any arguments put forth by the opponents of visitability.

One of the respondents provided a list of "successful tips" that contributed to the passage of the visitability ordinance. The most important piece of advice was the organization of the disability community in lobbying for a visitability ordinance. The respondent advised the assembly of a "core team" whose members would be in charge of the project and who could make quick decisions. This team would consist of experts in areas impacted by visitability-examples being lawyers, architects, social workers, and cost estimators. The others involved in the process would be "worker bees" that would be responsible for carrying out the decisions made by the "core team".

In some instances the disability community had previously worked with non-profit housing organizations (such as Habitat for Humanity or the Joseph Rowntree Foundation) to build examples of visitable homes. These examples serve as precedents that visitability could be accomplished at a minimum cost. Before the disability community in Manitoba begins to lobby for a visitability ordinance at the government level, it may be beneficial to make agreements with local non-profit housing agencies (Habitat for Humanity would be one such organization) to adopt visitability into their homebuilding policies and work with them to design and build homes with visitable features.

Another similarity encountered was the promotion of visitability. Many of the respondents said that they were able to promote visitability by describing how it can be convenient to as wide a portion of the population as possible, and more specifically, the population who do not have mobility-related disabilities. Examples of those were small children and their parents, people with strollers or carriages, those with temporary injuries, and caregivers. The respondent in one of the questionnaires noted that when the visitable homes were built, many non-disabled people enjoyed their openness and did not even realize that they were designed for access. Visitability was also promoted as a means of allowing people to remain in their homes as they age (and develop age related disabilities). One similarity in the promotion of visitability was demographic factors, namely, the number of people with disabilities is increasing, in part due to the overall aging of the population. Allowing people to remain in their homes as they aged was seen in some jurisdiction as a means to reduce home care costs, as seniors would not have to move to a nursing home if they developed a disability. One of the respondents also noted that the accessibility provided by visitable units was helpful to people undergoing rehabilitation, allowing these people to leave rehabilitation units sooner.

The final and possibly most significant similarity was the opposition to the ordinances. Every respondent said that the local building industry was staunchly opposed to any visitability mandate. During the period when the visitability ordinances were being proposed, the industry used its power to oppose the proposed ordinance. Most of the objections by the industry were that visitability would have a negative impact on the construction and labour costs, and the industry did not like being told what to do. An interesting aspect to note was the reaction to the ordinance after the ordinance had been

passed into law. In some jurisdictions, the industry realized its benefits and began to endorse it; others simply accepted it as another piece of legislation and moved on. There was only one instance where the industry attempted to have the mandate overturned; in this case they took the matter to the courts. A minority in the industry (both profit and non-profit) have recognized the financial and marketing benefits that visitability has to offer and endorsed it.

5.1.2 Analysis

A visitability ordinance for the Province of Manitoba would, at the bare minimum, require a home to be built with a level entrance or a suitable ramp, doorways at least 32 inches wide and a washroom on the entry-level floor. Additionally, it could include reinforcements in the washroom walls, lever handles on the doors, and accessible climate controls and light switches.

Although the most optimistic scenario would be to require that *all* new homes in Manitoba be built with visitable features, a more realistic scenario would be to require that all homes built with public funds be built with visitable features.

One such example would be the homes built under the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative (WHHI). The WHHI is a three-year partnership funded by all three levels of government. Its mandate is to address the decline in housing stock in certain Winnipeg inner city neighbourhoods, and the issue of homelessness. Over the three-year mandate, some \$26.3 million dollars has been allocated to address these issues. The WHHI acts as a one-stop shop for local community groups to obtain funding from various levels of government (Government of Manitoba 2003). One type of funding is the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). It provides money to low-

income individuals to renovate their homes to make them accessible. This program does not address visitability directly, but is similar to it and therefore there is no reason why programs such as the WHHI could not be used to realize visitability.

The governments of Manitoba and Winnipeg have expanded this initiative under the Canada-Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative (AHI), which has a total of \$50 million dollars in funding from the federal and provincial levels of government, as well as contributions from the municipal governments and the private and voluntary sectors. As is the case with the WHHI, the AHI encourages neighbourhood renewal groups to increase the amount of safe and affordable housing for low and moderate-income citizens (CMHC 2003).

The focus of the AHI is to create new rental housing and homeownership opportunities and the rehabilitation or conversion of existing housing. Through the AHI, Manitobans with moderate or low incomes will benefit from the creation of up to 2,500 new or renovated housing units, 1,700 of which will be located within Winnipeg. There is little reason why such progressive initiatives would ignore visitability, as rehabilitation of existing housing (which is only one step removed from visitability) is already part of the initiative.

This could be used as a building block to raise awareness about visitability in the community at large. Once this awareness has been raised, it may be possible to introduce legislation at later stage requiring all homes to be built with visitable features.

It could also be argued that visitable public housing is a basic human right. In one of the jurisdictions it was argued that because housing was provided with public funds then it should not discriminate against people with disabilities who are supporting such

services through their taxes. If public services are to be made available to all members of the public, it could be argued that to build housing with public funds without making this form of housing accessible discriminates against people with disabilities. Manitoba's recently adopted Universal Design ordinance could also be consistent with making publicly-funded housing accessible, given that the ordinance requires all new government properties to be made accessible.

The promotion of a visitability ordinance must come from within the disability community. Any visitability proposals in the Province of Manitoba must involve active participation from Manitoba's disability community. This means that the different disability-related organizations in the province must come together and work out a proposal for a visitability ordinance (a list of these groups can be found in Appendix 4).

The form of planning that has been described here falls into the category of Radical Planning. In *Planning in the Public Domain*, (Friedmann 1987: 301) Friedmann describes radical planning as a form of social mobilization that works for a new order of society, inspired by utopian and anarchist thought whose aim is emancipation of humanity from social repression. In relation to visitability, it could be said that the housing market, by being designed in a non-accessible manner, prevents people with disabilities from independently accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers. This inaccessibility is reinforced by the lack of laws to ensure accessibility. To rectify this scenario, change must occur, but this change must come from within the community itself.

One such organization would be the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities (MLPD). Established in 1974, the MLPD is an organization of people with

disabilities, and their supporters that promotes equal rights, full participation in society, and facilitates positive change through advocacy and public education (MLPD 2003). The MLPD has had extensive experience in dealing with accessibility issues. These issues include active involvement of the development of the City of Winnipeg's Handi-Transit service (which allows people with mobility-related disabilities to access the public transit system), the development of Manitoba's self managed attendant care program, advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities in both civil and human rights legislation, and making public buildings accessible to people with disabilities. This previous experience would make it easier for this organization to attract a range of visitability-positive allies in the local levels of government, civil service and the media. Furthermore, the MLPD currently has a housing committee that is focusing on the concept of visitable housing. Such an organization would be ideal for advocating for a visitability ordinance and working with the various levels of government in developing such an ordinance.

A second organization would be Ten Ten Sinclair Housing Inc., a Winnipeg based non-profit housing organization that promotes, supports and develops independent living opportunities for people with disabilities. The organization fulfills this mandate by (among other endeavours) participating in housing models that facilitate independent (self-directed) living for people with physical disabilities (Ten Ten 2003). This organization would be an ideal partner in the design and construction of visitable homes, as well as in the promotion of a visitability ordinance.

Another such organization would be Winnipeg's Independent Living Resource Centre (ILRC). "Independent Living" means that all people are entitled to live as

independently as possible and that people with disabilities have the right to have as much control over their lives as possible, control which the non disabled take for granted. The aim of independent living is to allow people with disabilities to integrate as fully as possible into their community. Visitability falls into the Independent Living mindset as it allows people with disabilities to access the homes of others with minimal difficulty. This allows for easy integration with their non-disabled peers and the community at large.

Although it is not completely linked to planning, the Independent Living concept is very parallel to radical planning. In *Towards Cosmopolis*, (1998) Sandercock describes how radical planning exists to empower those who have been systematically disempowered. Such a scenario describes the Independent Living Movement of which the Winnipeg ILRC is a part. The Independent Living Movement began with students with disabilities at the University of California, Berkeley in the 1960s (O'Hara 2000). Initially these students were considered "helpless medical patients" and were treated as such. During their time at Berkeley, these students experimented with radical changes in their daily lives and articulated a new philosophy that they had as much right to control over their own lives as did non-disabled people, this led to new changes in the way that students with disabilities were treated. O'Hara described how this movement paralleled other civil rights movements, such as those experienced by racial minorities, women and homosexuals. When these students graduated, they brought their self-empowerment experiences into the community and created new institutions that were run by and for people with disabilities. These institutions were the precursors of today's Independent Living Centres, of which the Winnipeg ILRC is a part.

Established in 1984, the Winnipeg ILRC encourages the self-determination and participation of all people with disabilities in the community, researches community issues and proposes models to fill in gaps that exist in disability related services, providing workshops about problem areas and stimulating public education about independent living issues ILRC (ILRC 2003).

Visitability is consistent with “filling in a gap” in disability-related services regarding housing policies. While there are already homes that are designed to allow people with disabilities to live independent lives, when the homes of their non-disabled peers remain inaccessible a “gap” exists in housing policies, a gap that can be filled by a visitability housing ordinance. The Winnipeg ILRC would thus serve as an ideal organization to promote visitability, given that visitability is consistent with their aims. The ILRC would be an excellent organization to lobby for a visitability model, and to provide workshops and seminars to educate the general public about visitability issues. The ILRC also maintains links with other disability rights groups throughout the province. The researcher used this organization to recruit participants from these groups to serve as members for the focus groups used in this project. The ILRC would therefore be an ideal organization to recruit people with disabilities to give testimonies at public hearings about visitability. These testimonies would relate the difficulties that these people have in accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers.

Any successful promotion of a visitability ordinance would have to be developed along the lines that visitability would make all homes accessible to as large a population as possible, creating convenience for everyone, not just those with disabilities. It was noted that in some cases visitable homes were designed and built before the ordinance

was adopted. If this were to be the case in Manitoba, these homes could be used as an example of showing how visitability is beneficial to all. One way of doing so would be to take a non-disabled person around a visitable home (constructed by a non-profit housing agency) and ask what they think of it. If they have not mentioned the accessibility features, they would then be informed about them. This would be an effective way of showing how visitability can allow for basic access in a manner that is not readily noticeable, whereas a ramp leading up to a home is readily noticeable.

The review of the literature and the information from the questionnaires indicated how changing demographics is one of the main reasons behind the promotion of visitability. Changing demographics could certainly be used in lobbying for a disability ordinance for Manitoba. The 2001 Census places approximately 22.5% of Winnipeg's population as being over the age of 55, a percentage that is parallel to the Canadian overall rate 22.9% over the age of 55 (Statistics Canada 2003a). By 2026 this percentage is forecast to reach 32% of the Canadian population (Statistics Canada 2003b). As Canada's population ages, so will Winnipeg's, and with this increase will come a larger proportion of people with disabilities. Visitability would be one way of ensuring that this aging population can continue to reside in their homes should they develop a disability (mainly due to aging) and access the home of a non-disabled peer.

Figure 5-1

Winnipeg Population by Age Groups 2001 (Population Total 671,274-
Winnipeg CMA)

Source: Statistics Canada 2003a

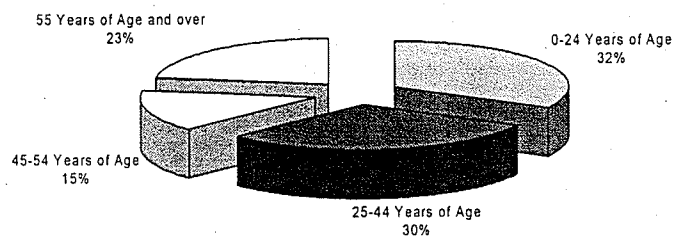


Figure 5-2

Canadian Population by Age Groups
(Total Population-2001 30,007,095)

Source: Statistics Canada 2003a

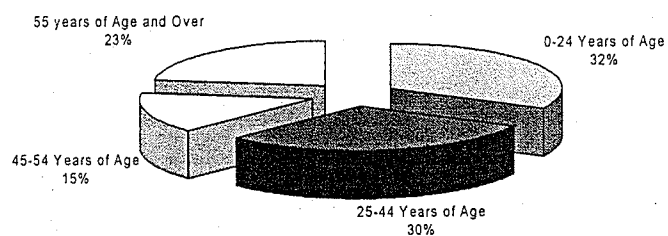
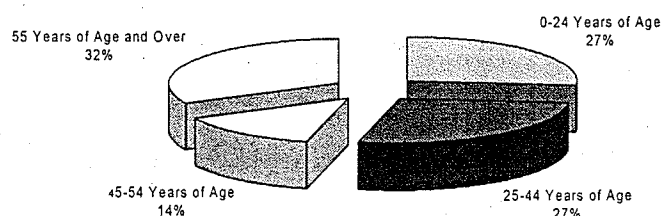


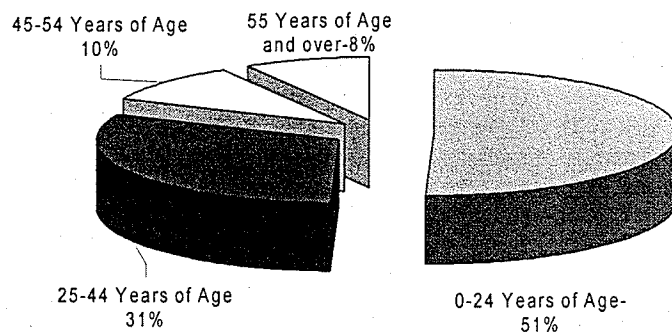
Figure 5-3
 Canadian Population By Age Group-2026
 (Projected Population 36,190,600)
 Source: Statistics Canada 2003b



At the same time, Manitoba and, in particular, Winnipeg is experiencing a unique demographic shift regarding people with disabilities. This demographic shift includes the increasing Aboriginal population. Winnipeg has the largest Aboriginal population of any city in Canada. Unlike the city's overall demographic profile (where the age groups are evenly distributed with a peak in the 30-50 age bracket) Winnipeg's Aboriginal population is much younger, with some 26% of the Aboriginal population being under the age of 10 (Statistics Canada 2003c).

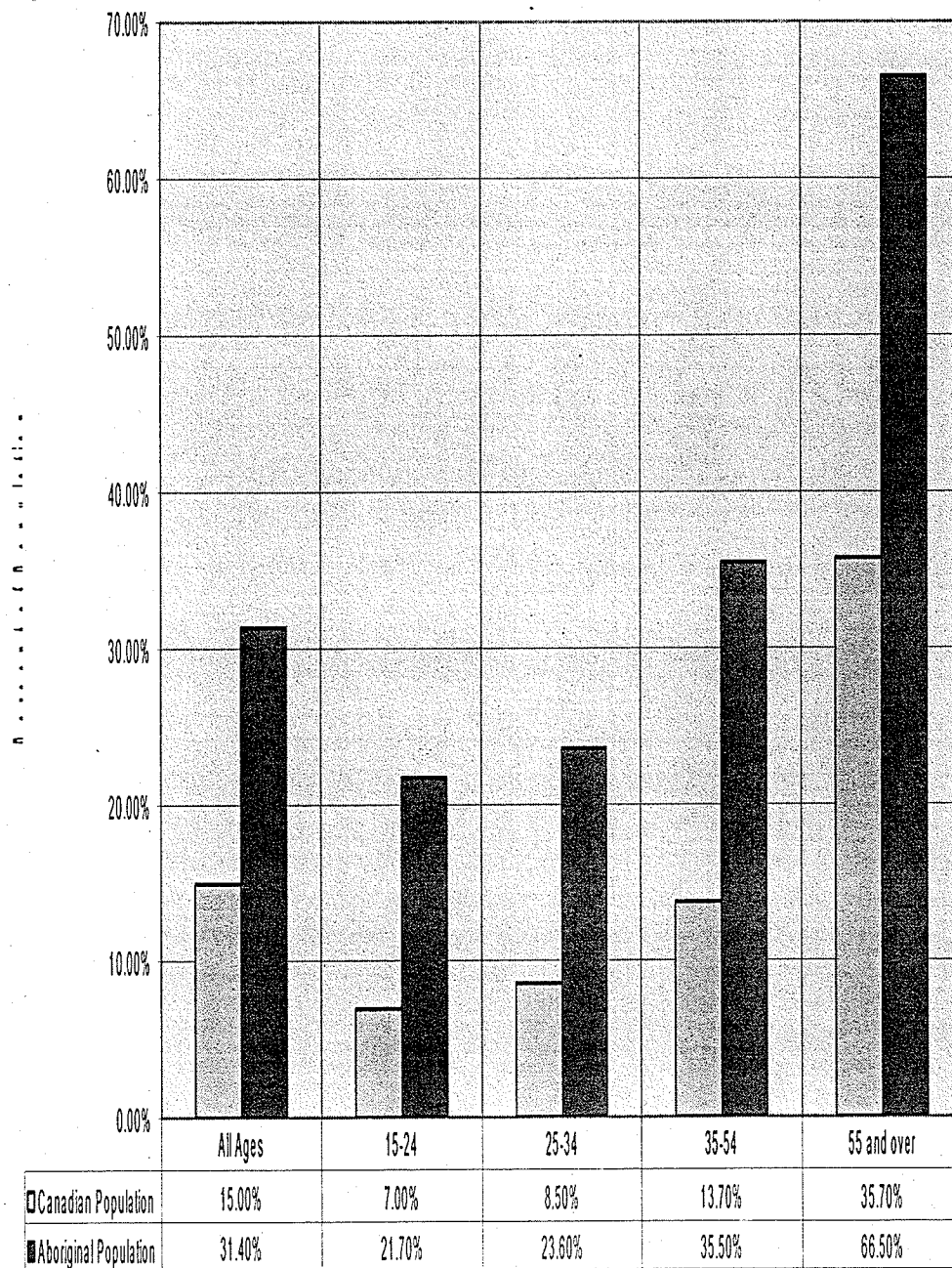
The Aboriginal population also has a fertility rate that is larger than the overall Canadian fertility rate, meaning that the Aboriginal population is increasing at a faster rate than the overall Canadian population. This higher fertility rate, combined with immigration from rural parts of Manitoba, means that the Aboriginal proportion of the overall Winnipeg population is slated to increase in the foreseeable future. In 1996 the Aboriginal population was 45,000, or approximately 8% of the population, by 2006, this figure is projected to climb to 75,000, approximately 11% of the population (Social Planning Council 2000).

Figure 5-4
 Winnipeg Aboriginal Population by Age Group
 (Population Total-55,760-Winnipeg CMA)
 (Source:Statistics Canada 2003c)



Combined with this demographic profile is a higher rate of disability among the Aboriginal population: while 15% of the Canadian population has a disability, 31% of the Aboriginal population has a disability. This difference applies among all age groups, but is especially pronounced among younger Aboriginals, with 22% of Aboriginals under the age of 24 having some form of disability versus 7% of the overall population in the under 24 age group. The reasons for these higher rates of disability are poorer economic conditions, educational levels, higher rates of accidents and violence, as well as higher rates of diabetes (Ng 1996).

Figure 5-5
Canadian-Aboriginal Disability Rates
 (Source: Ng 1996)



These factors, when put together, mean that Winnipeg will be facing an increasing number of people with disabilities, simply due to the increasing Aboriginal population. This means that there will be increasing numbers of people with disabilities (particularly Aboriginals) who will be unable to access the homes of their non-disabled peers, or who will be unable to find suitable accommodation. Also as the current young Aboriginal population emerges from childhood and enters the housing market, those with disabilities will face difficulties in finding suitable accommodation. Furthermore, Winnipeg's Aboriginal population is faced with the scenario of having substandard housing and lower levels of income and employment than the overall population. This increasing number of people with disabilities will be unable to afford to retrofit their homes to suit their disabilities.

A visitability ordinance would be a way to accommodate this demographic shift. Thus any attempt to implement a visitability ordinance in Winnipeg and the Province of Manitoba must take into account the housing needs of the Aboriginal population. Each of the surveys indicated that the disability community was responsible for the passage and implementation of the visitability ordinance in their respective jurisdictions. Because the Aboriginal population has a larger than normal rate of disability than the overall population, they would have a greater interest in a visitability ordinance. This means that any attempt to create and implement a visitability ordinance in Winnipeg or Manitoba would require the input and lobbying of the Aboriginal community.

The comment from one of the respondents about visitability benefiting rehab patients is also worth noting. Many people develop disabilities (both permanent and temporary) due to injury or illness, and undergo or are forced to undergo, rehabilitation.

A visitable home will allow such people to return to their homes earlier (and/or continue their rehabilitation through out-patient status) and reduce the costs of staying in a hospital.

Equally important is the opposition from the homebuilders' industry referenced by each of the respondents. It must be understood that any attempts to implement a visitability ordinance in Manitoba will very likely be opposed by the local homebuilders' industry. Therefore one crucial factor in attempting to implement a visitability ordinance will be developing and presenting counter-arguments to any claims put forth by the homebuilders industry. The most effective counter-claims would be to present examples of housing that has already been built and the minimal costs that have been incurred in implementing visitability policies. The minimal costs must be emphasized, as the building industry will claim that implementing visitable features will be too costly.

Another such method would be to obtain testimony from those in the homebuilders' industry that have recognized the benefits that visitability offers. Some in the industry (both profit and non-profit) have recognized the financial and marketing benefits that visitability has to offer and endorsed it.

5.2 Visitability and the City of Winnipeg

The next step in examining visitability involved a semi-structured group interview with the members of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. As the name suggests, this committee (many whom have disabilities or have family members with disabilities) provides non-binding recommendations to the Winnipeg City Council on disability-related access issues. Given that the most effective Universal Design practices have involved public participation in their design and implementation, this committee

would undoubtedly play a role in a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg, should one be implemented.

This interview explored the opinions of the AAC's members towards visitability and the potential role that the committee could play in the development of a visitable housing ordinance. For this interview, the members of the AAC were shown the aforementioned video *Building Better Neighbourhoods*, a video that describes visitability, the origins of the visitability movement in the United States and the difficulties that people with disabilities have in accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers. The members were then asked what they thought of this housing concept and the role that the AAC could play in the implementation of a visitability ordinance for Winnipeg. The interview questions may be found in Chapter 2.

5.2.1 Summary

The members of the committee were very open to the concept of visitability. Many of the members had disabilities (or immediate family with disabilities), and had difficulty accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers, particularly relatives. They felt that as with the accessible design concept, visitability was beneficial to all people, not just those with disabilities, and that the versatility that visitable homes offered was beneficial in a housing market where there is a glut in housing.

Because the AAC's mandate is limited to an advisory role in dealing with municipal buildings, they had not discussed the concept of visitability in housing, although the concept had been discussed concerning city-owned and infill housing. The committee did agree that the Universal Design Policies adopted by the City and Provincial governments could serve as a stepping-stone to a visitability ordinance.

The members indicated that they would be interested in playing a participatory role in the development of a visitability ordinance but were divided as to how such an ordinance could be implemented. Some on the committee felt that it should be mandatory; others felt it should be accomplished through educational initiatives and incentives and subdivision permits.

5.2.2 Analysis

This interview indicated a positive reaction to the concept of visitability. It showed how the inaccessibility of many private homes segregates those with disabilities, as indicated by the committee members who have disabilities (or have family members with disabilities), and cannot access the homes of their parents.

What was also notable about the interview was how visitability came across as being beneficial to a wide variety of groups, not just those with disabilities. This is consistent with the promotion of visitability.

The interview also showed that this committee's actual role in designing and implementing a visitability ordinance would be limited at best. This is because the committee's mandate is limited to municipal buildings. The committee indicated that any housing built under municipal initiatives and infill housing had been considered for visitable housing. In the questionnaires in Part I, 4 out of 7 of the visitability ordinances applied to homes that had been built with government funds. This could mean that any homes built under initiatives involving funding from one or more levels of government could be mandated to meet visitability requirements.

The interview also yielded some guidelines for adopting a visitability ordinance. As the interview indicated, some AACe members felt that visitability would be best

achieved through incentives and education. The data gleaned from the questionnaires in Section 5.1 pointed out that the only proper way to achieve visitability is through an ordinance, as opposed to voluntary initiatives. However, there is no reason as to why incentives, education and awareness could not be used as a preliminary means of developing a visitability ordinance. For example, two of the questionnaires from Section 5.1 indicated that visitable housing had already been built through organizations such as Habitat for Humanity and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. These types of housing served as examples that visitable homes were both possible and affordable. Such examples could be accomplished through homes built by community groups to show that visitability is possible in Manitoba. Once it is shown that visitability could be accomplished with minimum difficulty, it would then be possible to mandate that any new homes built under the Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative be built with visitable features.

The interview also suggested some methods of making visitability possible in market housing. Some on the committee felt that visitability should be adopted into the building code; while others felt that it should be accomplished through incentives such as lowered taxes or subdivision permits. The data gleaned from the questionnaires in Section 5.1 where visitability was mandated for market housing showed that the only way to implement visitability into market housing would be through legislation rather through incentives. To ultimately ensure that visitability would be accomplished in the field of market housing in Manitoba would require changes in legislation. To implement visitability in Manitoba would require amendments in the Manitoba Building Code. However, incentives (such as lowered taxes and subdivision permits) could be used as a

means to introduce visitability into market housing, and to educate the general public and building industry about visitability and its benefits. Once a period of time has elapsed, visitability could then be incorporated into the building code.

The interview also showed some key points that could be encountered if a visitability ordinance were to be implemented in Manitoba. One of these problems was Winnipeg's colder climate. Another problem was that of rainwater in basements. If visitability were to be implemented in homes with basements, basements would be more susceptible to flooding from heavy rainfalls. These are conditions that are part of the climate in Winnipeg and Manitoba, and a visitability ordinance would have to be designed to reflect this fact. At the same time, jurisdictions whose climate is somewhat similar to Manitoba's (Kansas, Minnesota and certain cities in Illinois) have already successfully adopted visitability ordinances.

5.3 Visitability and the Homebuilders' Industry

The next step in examining visitability involved obtaining the opinion on visitability from the perspective of the home-building industry. To obtain this opinion, a representative of the local home building industry was selected for an interview. The participant was shown the video *Building Better Neighbourhoods* (Concrete Change 1994) and then asked a few questions about visitability. The interview questions may be found in Chapter 2. It must be understood that only 1 person was interviewed, and this individual person's views may not represent the entire home building industry.

5.3.1 Summary

The representative thought that visitability was good in an ideal sense but was very concerned about visitability being made mandatory, stating that there are already

many regulations in the building industry, and that visitability regulations would generate a negative reaction.

The representative then said that there was a unique opportunity in Winnipeg in the proposed development of the Waverley West Lands (a proposed joint undertaking between the City of Winnipeg, the Provincial Government and the University of Manitoba-which owns the lands), and that there was discussion about laying out the community in a dense format. He said that this could be an opportunity for a visitable community, to introduce visitability into the private market.

The representative felt that visitability would best be accomplished through voluntary, market-driven initiatives than through tax incentives, density bonuses or outright legislation. He said that accomplishing visitability through incentives or legislation would create interesting discussion and debate and that with the current aging of the population the present could be the opportune time to begin such a dialogue. He also acknowledged that the dialogue would not be an easy one.

The representative said that many builders were traditional in their way of building; and that the industry lived and died by the market. He did acknowledge that demographic shifts could lead to changes in building practices and that demonstration projects (such as the proposed development in the Waverley West Lands) were the best way of introducing concepts such as visitability to the marketplace.

5.3.2 Analysis

The interview with the representative from the homebuilders' industry indicated an attitude that was consistent with the views expressed by the homebuilding industry in the questionnaires in Section 5.1; one that accepted visitability as an option, but that

generally opposed the idea of implementing visitability through incentives or outright legislation. The representative said that the industry was market-driven and preferred such an approach, as opposed to legislation and regulations. The representative did suggest the proposed joint government-private sector initiatives (such as the proposed Waverley West development) as an opportunity to introduce visitability to the housing market.

What this interview showed was that the building industry representative thought that visitability was good as an idea, but the industry would be opposed to having visitability being made mandatory in new construction, be it through tax incentives, density bonuses, reduced development permit costs or outright legislation (through changes to the Manitoba building code). This opposition is consistent with the reaction from the building industry as indicated in the questionnaires from Section 5.1. Unlike the information gleaned from the surveys of jurisdictions that have adopted visitability, the respondent's main concern was the idea of visitability being made a regulation, as opposed to the costs of implementing visitable features in new construction. It is quite likely that the costs of visitability (as perceived by the development industry) are the main argument against any visitability mandate, but not the main reason for the building industry representative's opposition to visitability.

What was optimistic about the interview was how the participant pointed out the possibilities surrounding the new development slated for Waverley West, how the proposals include denser housing and new design patterns (New Urbanism and Smart Growth forms of design), energy-efficient homes, and how such a development could be an opportunity to showcase visitable features in the new homes. Implementing

visitability on such a scale would be an ideal way to educate the general public and the homebuilding community about the benefits of visitability. Visitability could easily be integrated into such a feature, because denser housing and mixed use patterns would be essential for people with disabilities to move around on their own.

In May 2003 a charrette was held at the University of Manitoba to produce several design proposals for the Waverley West lands (University of Manitoba 2003a). The charrette involved members of the Faculty of Architecture, the local design community and the three levels of government. This researcher served as an assistant to the actual charrette, during which visitability was included as part of the proposed design criteria for the private homes.

There are three reasons as to why incorporating visitability alongside trends such as the New Urbanism and Smart Growth would be desirable. The first is that these trends are becoming well-known to the planning community and the general public. Including visitability as part of these trends would make it easier to introduce it to the planning community and the general public. Second, for visitability to be successful in allowing people with disabilities to interact with their community, the design of the entire community must be accessible. One way to ensure accessibility is for shops and services to be within easy walking distance. People with disabilities could then access the goods and services by travelling around the community in their wheelchair or power scooter. Additionally such a land layout would be effective for those who cannot walk long distances without resting; this is common with many seniors who are still ambulatory. A dense design and mixed land use pattern would allow for this. A third reason is that visitability itself is implicitly-if not always explicitly-an essential part of the New

Urbanism. The New Urbanism is designed to include as wide a variety of groups as possible. This should include people with various levels of ability as well as various age groups. To not incorporate visitability (as well as other disability oriented designs) into New Urbanism designs would defeat its avowed aims.

Visitability could also be integrated with energy-efficient designs without any difficulty. In fact, having the two combined is ideal since visitability and energy efficiency both work alongside cost-saving measures such as full-cost accounting and life-cycle costing. Energy efficient designs are well known to the public and implementing visitability (which is not as well known) alongside such designs would be an effective way of introducing visitability to both the general public and home-building community.

Implementing visitability into large-scale projects such as the proposed Waverley West development would therefore be an ideal way to introduce visitability into the housing market prior to implementing visitability into the Manitoba Building Code.

Despite the optimistic points that were gleaned from this interview, the attitude of the homebuilders' industry representative towards visitability, particularly as an ordinance, was a negative one. This would mean that if there were any attempt to implement a visitability ordinance in the Province of Manitoba, the homebuilders' industry would very likely be one of the more vocal opponents of such an ordinance. It would therefore be necessary for proponents of visitability to anticipate the arguments that the industry would put forth and be prepared to counter them. The main opposition that was obtained from the interview was that visitability was an additional unwelcome *regulation*.

The concerns raised about regulations are understandable. Standards for housing in Manitoba are currently regulated by the National Building Code of Canada and the National Housing Code (National Research Council 1995, National Research Council 1990) as well as the Manitoba Building Code. The Canadian Housing Code is a condensed version of the National Building Code and lists the regulations that deal with housing. The Manitoba Building Code contains provincial amendments to the National Building Code. All of these codes list comprehensive guidelines for building design and construction. Given these already comprehensive guidelines, it is understandable as to why the industry would not welcome additional regulations.

At the same time, the National Housing Code already has minimum requirements for many of the features that are affected by visitability regulations. For example, under section 9.6.3, doors are required to have a minimum width of 810 mm (32.4 inches) and under section 9.5.8 hallways are required to have a minimum width of 860 mm (34.4 inches). Visitability would not mean adding any new regulations, but simply a slight modification of the currently existing regulation. The changes required to allow for visitability would be minimal; doors would have to be at least 850 mm wide and hallways would have to be at least 900 mm wide. The area that would require the most change would be regarding the entrance to the home. This would have to be a new section, one that requires an entrance with a slope that is no higher than 1:12. Another area that would require more change would be that regarding the washroom. Section 9.5.7 of the code requiring washrooms states that there shall be an enclosed space of sufficient size to accommodate a bathtub, water closet and lavatory. This section would have to be amended (through the Manitoba Building Code) to require that the walls be fitted with

reinforcements to allow for the installation of grab bars, that the toilet be located adjacent to the wall and that the doorway to the bathroom be at least 850 mm wide (the current regulation for bathroom doors is 610 mm. This narrow width has created many problems and is one of the reasons why many people with disabilities relocate to care homes). A final area where more modification would be required is that concerning the location of electric light switches, sockets and climate controls. There are currently no regulations regarding the locations of these features, so new regulations would have to be written so that these features can be located at an accessible height on the wall.

A way to counter the argument that visitability would create more regulation would be that there are many regulations that already exist for housing, such as those related to fire safety, and that visitability would not be any different. Also, the guidelines for visitable homes are extremely simple, namely: a level entrance, wider doorways and hallways, and an accessible washroom on the entry-level floor. These guidelines are minimal compared to regulations regarding building materials, structural requirements, drainage, and fire protection.

Also, according to the questionnaires from Part I, visitability where it has been implemented, has been found to be a very marketable phenomenon and has been embraced by some in the development industry. In promoting visitability, it may be necessary to conduct a marketing campaign and survey to determine if the public really does want visitable homes. If the results of a survey indicate that the public is interested in visitability, then these results could be used to convince the homebuilding industry that the demand for visitability does exist.

One example of how accessible designs can be profitable can be found is a case study mentioned in Hall and Imrie's *Inclusive Design* (Hall and Imrie 2001, Chapter 4). This particular case study compared and contrasted two shopping centres that were built in the United Kingdom. The first shopping centre, called Bluewater, was built in Dartford. The developer of the project (who was also the owner of the property) sought at the outset to promote social inclusivity by designing for the needs of all those who visited the centre. By conducting focus groups and analyzing what people wanted, the developer produced designs that went beyond the standards set out in Britain's disability legislation (The Disability Discrimination Act or DDA). Examples of this design include: a shopmobility site (an outlet where shoppers can pick up electric scooters for use in the centre) in the main part of the centre; requiring tenants to conform to design standards beyond those set out in legislation; wider car park spaces; and gentle slopes.

The second shopping centre, Churchill Square, was built in Brighton. Unlike Bluewater, Churchill Square was built to the minimal requirements set out by the DDA, mainly for legal reasons. There was no dialogue between the developer and the disability community and the local planning authority regarding accessible features at the shopping centre. The developer of the project said that the client was concerned with an efficient layout and put those concerns ahead of the needs of people with disabilities. The management of Churchill Square felt that there was little demand for accessible design features and that people with disabilities rarely used the facilities.

The key difference between these two forms of developments lay in the attitudes of the developers. Both the developers were profit-oriented, but pursued profits in a different manner. The developer of Churchill Square (which is representative of many

developers) saw designing for the needs of people with disabilities as a cost, which translated into the loss of profits. The developer of Bluewater, saw things in the exact opposite manner, that designing and developing for the needs of people with disabilities was a *means* to profitability. The comment by the Churchill Square management that people with disabilities did not use the facilities is worth noting; if the facilities are not accessible, then it is unlikely that people with disabilities will use them, perpetuating the cycle that there is little point in designing and building accessible facilities. If accessible facilities were available, then people with disabilities would use them, indicating that there is a demand for accessible facilities in shopping centres and similar developments.

This scenario could easily be translated into designing visitable homes. The traditional attitude of the homebuilders industry is that visitability is another regulation that must be obeyed for legal reasons. A better attitude would be that designing all homes with visitable features would open these homes to a wide market. This market would include people with disabilities (permanent or temporary), their families, seniors and families with small children, in addition to the regular housing market. A product marketable to a wider market of people would be more profitable than one that is not, given that there are more potential buyers than a product designed for a specific group of people. If people with disabilities (or families who have members with disabilities) began purchasing visitable homes, then it would show that there is a demand for such housing, something that would encourage developers to build homes with visitable features.

However, this does not mean that market demand should be used in place of a visitability ordinance to promote visitability. In each of the earlier surveys from Section

5.1, ordinances were required to ensure that visitable homes were built. If such an ordinance were adopted for homes built with public funds (which is typical of most visitability ordinances) it was then shown that such homes were popular within the housing market, then more developers would realize the marketing potential that visitability has to offer, and begin building and selling such homes. However, it would take a visitability ordinance to kick-start such a series of events.

5.4 Visitability and the Province of Manitoba

The next step involved obtaining opinions about visitability from the perspective of the Province of Manitoba. To gather opinions, several representatives from the government of Manitoba (whose work is related to housing and/or disability issues) were interviewed. The individuals in question were shown the brief video about visitability (*Building Better Neighbourhoods*) and were then asked for their opinions on visitability. (The interview questions may be found in Chapter 2.)

5.4.1 Summary

There was a positive reception towards the concept of visitability. All of the participants felt that it was very practical and benefited many different groups, not just people with disabilities. The participants felt that visitability would integrate people with disabilities into the community life and in so doing strengthen the community. The participants also brought up some proposed housing developments that included features similar to visitability. These included the Northern Model House, infill housing for the inner city, and the proposed Waverley West development.

The participants felt that visitability could easily be incorporated into public housing as well as homes built by the private sector, but that doing the latter would have

to be a long-term commitment, and that awareness of visitability needed to be raised within the community at large before doing so. Some of the participants expressed concerns about Winnipeg's flat terrain and harsh winter climate as a challenge in incorporating a visitability ordinance.

5.4.2 Analysis

As was the case with the Access Advisory Committee, this interview indicated a positive reaction to visitability. The statement about how visitability could be beneficial to all groups, not just those with disabilities, is particularly encouraging. One important fact was how one of the participants said that there are many people who have mobility-related disabilities who are *not* dependent on wheelchairs, for example those who cannot manage stairs. This would show that visitability is capable of benefiting those who have a mild disability equally as well as those with severe disabilities.

Additionally, the interview indicated that visitability allows people with disabilities to take part in community life, thus strengthening the community. Another way of advocating visitability is on the basis of its strengthening the ties between neighbours and therefore bring the neighbourhood closer together. The attitudes expressed by these participants show that Manitoba Family Services and Housing would be key allies in the development and promotion of a visitability ordinance.

The interview also indicated some issues concerning Winnipeg in particular. The first such issue was Winnipeg's flat terrain and harsh winter climate. Given that many homes in Winnipeg have basements, homes built with visitable features would probably require a gently sloping ramp to allow for access to the homes' entrances. Additionally, such ramps would probably have to be built with effective traction to allow for access

when there is ice and snow. At the same time, visitability could be seen as being beneficial in Winnipeg's climate, as one of the representatives indicated by pointing out that slipping and falling on a level (or ramped surface) could not be worse than slipping on stairs.

A significant issue raised was that many people with disabilities are shut out of the housing market. Homes that are designed with visitability in mind can be used by a wider range of the population than homes that are not, and could be purchased by someone with a disability, who would then modify the rest of the home accordingly. Visitability would be one way of assuring that the housing marketplace-particularly the private/speculative housing market-would be open to those with disabilities.

Also significant were the forms of visitable housing which are already being considered by Manitoba Family Services and Housing. One of these related to the Waverley West Design Charrette described in detail in Chapter 5.3.

The second form of visitability being considered by Manitoba Family Services and Housing is an actual house called the Northern Model House. At the present, there is only one prototype built. Located in Thomson, Manitoba, the Northern Model House incorporates accessible design features into its floor plans along with a new form of design and construction known as paneled-housing technology. Paneled-housing technology is a pre-manufactured form of housing designed to allow for ease of construction, energy efficiency, strength, durability, and mould resistance. The aim of this technology is to address many of Manitoba's rural community concerns including indoor air quality and improving local health in the communities. The design also allows for employment in allowing local labour to erect the panels and supply finishing

materials and textures. The technology is also designed to allow for local training in the construction technique (Government of Manitoba 2003).

This form of housing allows for visitability, yet at the same time allows for energy efficiency, an important issue in Manitoba's colder climate. Introducing visitability alongside energy efficiency is an effective way of introducing visitability, as energy efficiency is already well-known to the general public, while visitability is not.

Additionally, the Northern Model House was designed with the input from Manitoba Metis Federation, the Northern Association of Community Councils, the Manitoba Keewatinowi Okimakanak, the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs and the Northern Urban Industrial Communities (Government of Manitoba 2003).

The involvement of Aboriginal communities in the design of this project is significant, as these communities would play a role in developing any visitability ordinance for the Province of Manitoba. As previously stated in Section 5.1, Manitoba's Aboriginal population is increasing at a faster rate than the overall Canadian population, and has a higher rate of disability than the overall population. Such a demographic subgroup would be in greater need of a visitability ordinance than the overall population. As the proper development of a visitability ordinance includes the input from the disability community, the development of a proper visitability ordinance in Manitoba would have to include the participation of Manitoba's Aboriginal population. The fact that the Northern Model House was designed with the input from the Aboriginal community can be used as a stepping-stone in including the input of the Aboriginal community in the development of a visitability ordinance.

The suggestions on how to introduce visitability into the private housing sector are also notable. One of the participants said that many housing features that people take for granted come through the building code, rather than through supply and demand. This would mean that visitability *should* simply be implemented through changes to the building code itself.

One of the participants said that before visitability is introduced to the private sector, it must first be established in the public sector, in homes that are built with public funds of any type. This would include any new homes built with funds from Manitoba Family Services and Housing, and this could be the one of the first steps in this staged process. It may also be the furthest step possible in the process. As the responses from jurisdictions that have visitability ordinances have suggested, visitability has often succeeded in the field of homes built with public funds, but not with regard to privately-built homes. This is mainly due to the lobbying of the homebuilding industry.

The comment that implementing visitability into the building code through changes in legislation, *after* educational measures to raise awareness about visitability and to change public opinion about visitability (and housing access issues in general), is equally important, and would very likely be the next step in introducing a visitability ordinance. This would be done through examples such as the proposed Waverley West development.

One of the participants said that when developers are given subdivision permits, they are required to dedicate a percentage of land to public uses. There was no reason why they could not be required to build a certain number of homes designed along visitable guidelines. The percentage of homes built along visitable design guidelines

would be small at first, but would gradually increase with time. For example in the first year 5% of all new homes built in a subdivision would have to be visitable, in the second year 10%, 15% in the third year and so on. This would be an ideal way to introduce visitability to the building industry and would have to be the next step in introducing visitability to the private sector. This would allow the building industry to become accustomed to visitable housing designs and at the same time increase the profile of visitability in the eyes of the general public. The point that any public facilities within the subdivision must also be made accessible is also one that must be taken seriously. For visitability to be truly effective, in allowing people with disabilities to integrate with their community, other buildings in the community (such as schools and shops) must be made accessible to people with disabilities.

One of the most important comments made during this interview was visitability's marketing potential. The comment was that visitability broadens the housing market by making all new homes accessible to a wider variety of ages and abilities. This is consistent with the principles of Universal Design. Therefore whenever visitability is promoted, particularly in the private sector, its marketing potential (mainly geared towards the aging baby boomers and their parents) must be advocated to help the homebuilding sector realize that visitability can be a profitable initiative.

While visitability could be accomplished in public housing within a relatively short time frame, doing the same thing in private sector housing would take longer, as several of the participants have noted. It must also be understood that mandatory visitability in homes built in the private sector (which would have to be accomplished through the building code) may never be realized.

5.5 Visitability and the Disability Community

In order to understand visitability from the perspective of people with disabilities, it was necessary to interview people with mobility-related disabilities and discover how they access the homes of their non-disabled peers. To accomplish this, two focus groups with people with disabilities were held. These focus groups took place in March 2003 at the Winnipeg Independent Living Resource Centre. The focus group questions can be found in Chapter 2. As part of the focus group, both sets of participants were asked how they where they met with their non-disabled peers, how they accessed the homes of their non-disabled peers, and how they felt when they required assistance in accessing inaccessible homes. Both groups were then shown the video *Building Better Neighbourhoods* and asked what they thought of this concept.

5.5.1 Summary

Both focus groups expressed similar problems in accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers. When they met with their peers it was often at the members' individual homes or a third location. When the members did visit a non-accessible home, they often required assistance in accessing the home and the washroom. When they did require assistance, the participants had very negative feelings, ranging from anger to degradation. None of the participants felt that the inaccessibility prevented them from developing friendship and/or relationships, although one participant said how she was unable to access her psychiatrist's home office, which forces the two to meet in a nearby restaurant.

Both focus groups were receptive to the concept of visitability and many of them felt that it should be mandatory. One of the participants said that accessing the home of a

“block parent” or neighbour in the event of an emergency was important. Additionally, the participants expressed concern over lack of knowledge of accessibility issues in the design and building trades, the costs of having to renovate existing homes to make them accessible, as well as the difficulty of finding a home that is already accessible. Many of the participants felt that visitability had selling points (a visitable home being more marketable to a wider range of buyers than a non-visitable home) and could be a competitive in a buyers’ housing market. At the time of this writing (Fall 2003) Winnipeg is experiencing something a housing boom, but it is uncertain how long this boom will last.

5.5.2 Analysis

Each of these focus groups demonstrated how the current housing infrastructure discriminates against people with disabilities. All of the participants in both focus groups have experienced some form of difficulty in accessing the home of a non-disabled peer. When meeting with their non-disabled peers, the participants were more likely than not to meet in their own homes, the homes of a family member or in third locations such as restaurants. What was notable about the group is that many of the participants had difficulty in accessing the homes of their immediate families. When family gatherings are held, they are held at the participants’ homes or at a third location such as a restaurant

The difficulty that these participants experienced is the result of an environment that is built without taking into account the needs of people with disabilities. In *Inclusive Design* (2001), Irmie argues that the exclusion of people with disabilities from the built environment is linked to the policies, practices and values of those involved in the design,

construction and development process. The values are inattentive to the users of this built environment. This view is supported by the view of Matthew and Vujakovic (1995) that the challenge faced by those with disabilities vis-à-vis the built environment is not their disabilities but decisions taken by the non-disabled for the non-disabled in the design of this environment.

Interestingly, three of the participants in the first focus group stated that they could access the home of a friend, it was because that particular friend had a disability and hence an accessible home, adding that they had many friends with disabilities. However, no one in either focus group felt that the inaccessibility of a non-disabled person's home prevented them from developing a friendship and/or relationship.

When accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers, all of the participants said that they often required assistance in some form. In some cases, assistance was difficult because many of these participants use power chairs (wheelchairs powered by electric motors rather than being operated manually) that are heavier than a manual wheelchair and therefore harder to lift up stairs and into a home. In some cases transfer to a lighter manual chair is required, and this is difficult for the participants involved. Accessing a washroom has also proven difficult.

When assistance was required, the participants related that they often felt negatively, with feelings ranging from degradation to anger. Because of their disabilities, these participants are not able to independently access the homes of their non-disabled peers. When they do require access, assistance is required, assistance that creates negative feelings for the participants. The point raised by one participant in the second focus group is an interesting one. He said that people try and help too much, and in so

doing, actually get in the way. This is a characteristic expressed by many people with disabilities. They do not *want* assistance and would like to access the homes of other people independently.

Visitability would be one way of ensuring that people are able to independently access the homes of their non-disabled peers, and thus avoid the stigma and annoyance that comes with requiring assistance.

The "Block Parent" issue raised by one of the participants during the second focus group is another notable point. Often visitability concerns itself with accessing the homes of peers, namely friends and family. However, there are also other scenarios where visitability could play a role. For example, a person with a disability may need to access the home of a complete stranger (a child needing a block parent is one example). Other examples may include schoolmates working together on a project, people meeting their neighbours, or citizen's groups holding a meeting. If private homes were accessible to people with disabilities, then these individuals could access the homes of others for the activities mentioned above, and take part in community life. This is consistent with the views raised during the interview with representatives from the Province of Manitoba who stated that visitability is a means of strengthening the community.

An important point to note was the comment made by a participant from the first focus group. She said that because her psychiatrist's home office was inaccessible, the two are forced to meet in a nearby restaurant, an issue that raises privacy concerns. This presents an issue not so far encountered in the literature concerning visitability; much of the literature encountered is concerned with accessing the homes of peers-that is the homes of family, friends and neighbours. This participant had problem accessing the

home office of a professional, creating strains on a confidential professional-client relationship. This scenario could apply easily enough to any person with a disability who is trying to access any form of home-based business in a home that is non-accessible. In an era where home-based businesses are on the rise, visitability is one method of ensuring that a home-based business is accessible to as wide a range of the population as possible. This would be particularly important if the business is of a confidential nature, such as a counsellor or lawyer.

Several of the participants described their difficulty in being able to find a home suitable for their needs. One of the participants from the first group said that whenever her family had to purchase a home they were required to retrofit the home to suit her needs-retrofits that were very expensive compared to building a new home. This is an example of how, if a home is built with at least minimal accessible features at the time of construction, later renovation costs are reduced. Others in both groups said that finding suitable homes was difficult, as many homes were not built with accessible features. One of the participants noted that it was also very costly to build a home with accessible features. If all homes were built with visitable features, then it would be possible for a potential homebuyer with a disability (or a homebuyer who has a family member with a disability, such as a parent) to purchase a home without undue difficulty; the other adjustments (such as a roll-in shower) could then be made accordingly. Visitability would be one way of ensuring that more homes on the market are available to people with disabilities, as the basic accessibility features are already in place.

Another issue that was raised is the marketing potential that visitable homes have. During both focus groups it was indicated that many people with disabilities are entering

the workforce and thus have the means to purchase their own homes, but do not necessarily have the means to renovate their homes (or to custom build such a home) to suit their disability. The current and future housing markets in Winnipeg were also raised, with the participants saying that although Winnipeg is currently in a housing boom; this situation may reverse itself, with fewer housing starts, leading to a tight market that favours buyers. If a home already featured built-in accessible features, then that home would be at an advantage when selling to a market where there is an increasing proportion of people with disabilities or with a relative with a disability, particularly a parent. The participants cited the low costs of visitability as an advantage, saying that the costs could be passed on to the buyer with little difficulty.

One very important point of concern raised in both the focus groups was the perception of a lack of knowledge of accessibility within the design professions and the building trade, as well as the general attitude of the building industry towards accessibility. This reflects the views raised by Imrie (2001) that the values (which favour the non-disabled) of the design and construction professions are linked to the comparative exclusion of people with disabilities from design process regarding many aspects of the built environment. The general belief among focus group members was that the building industry was fixed in its ways of building, and was resistant to change. This is consistent with the views expressed in the interview with the representative from the homebuilding industry. Some of the participants felt that the industry did not understand accessibility features in general, much less universal design. This attitude towards accessibility issues, as well as a lack of knowledge among the building trades could make implementing a visitability ordinance difficult, particularly if the ordinance was applied to *all* homes.

One way to overcome these obstacles would be gradually introduce a visitability ordinance, with privately-built homes being the final goal.

5.6 Summary of Research Findings

The information gleaned from the two focus groups in Section 5.5 has shown that people with disabilities have difficulty in independently accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers. In such situations, assistance is often required. When assistance is required, the affected individuals experience negative feelings. Additionally, assistance is very difficult for those who rely on power chairs and scooters (which are much heavier than a manual wheelchair).

The focus groups also showed that people with disabilities have difficulty both in finding homes that are accessible, and in modifying existing homes to make them accessible for their needs. Modifying existing homes has also proven to be very expensive.

Finally, the feedback from the participant from the first focus group who could not access her psychiatrist's home office, forcing the two to meet in an accessible public location, shows how persons with disabilities have difficulty accessing home-based businesses and services.

A visitability ordinance would be helpful in alleviating the discrimination that these participants have faced. Visitability could allow these participants to access the homes of their non-disabled peers without difficulty, obviating the negative feelings that arise when assistance is required. VISIBLE homes would also be marketable to those with disabilities (and their families), allowing these people to purchase such a home and not have to make as many modifications as they would have make to a non-visible

home (although some modifications would be required). A home-based business within a visitable home would be marketable to a wider range of the population than such a business in a non-visitable home, and would not put certain business practices (such as professional-client confidentiality) at risk.

5.7 Synthesis of Research Findings

The information from the focus groups also shows a lack of knowledge about visitability (and accessibility issues in general) among the design and building professions. This means that any implementation of a visitability ordinance would require education about visitability among the building and design professions.

The respondents in Chapter 5.1 showed that each of the visitability ordinances required a level entrance, wider doorways and hallways and an accessible washroom on the entry-level floor. A visitability ordinance would require these features. Some of the ordinances required features such as reinforcement in the bathroom walls, lever handles on doors, and accessible climate controls. Such features would be helpful, but not mandatory, in a visitability ordinance.

The respondents also indicated that visitability was required in all homes built with public funds, but only three of the jurisdictions surveyed required visitability in privately built homes. This means that a visitability ordinance might apply to homes built with public funds, but not necessarily to those built by the private sector.

Other important feedback was that visitability was promoted as being beneficial to the entire community, not just people with disabilities. The promotion of any visitability ordinance must reference it as being of benefit to the entire population.

The most important feedback from the respondents in section 5.1 was that each of the ordinances came as a result of the lobbying of the disability community in the jurisdictions surveyed, rather than having been initiated by the local authorities or their planning agencies. The disability communities were also very active in the design and implementation of these ordinances. This means that any visitability ordinance in Manitoba must come from the lobbying of the disability community, and will require the active participation of the disability community in its design and implementation.

The feedback regarding visitability from the representatives of the Access Advisory Committee and the Province of Manitoba indicated that these groups are positive towards the concept of visitability and would be allies in adopting and implementing a visitability ordinance. The representatives from the Province of Manitoba cited the proposed Waverley West Development and the Northern Model House as examples of visitability open-ness currently in the Province of Manitoba.

Both groups felt that in addition to ordinances requiring visitability, education and demonstrations should be undertaken to introduce visitability to the general public and the building community. Both groups indicated that visitability could also be accomplished through incentives such as lowered taxes and subdivision permits. This means that any proposed visitability ordinance in Manitoba should involve education, demonstrations and various incentives to encourage visitability-particularly in the private sector.

The feedback from the representative of the homebuilders' industry showed that while the industry thought that visitability was good in an idealistic sense, it would not support a visitability ordinance. All of the respondents in Section 5.1 indicated that the

homebuilding industry in each jurisdiction opposed the visitability ordinance. This means that any proposed visitability ordinance in Manitoba will very likely be met with opposition from the homebuilding industry. Those promoting visitability must be prepared to anticipate and counteract any claims put forth by the homebuilders' industry.

Ultimately, the goal should be that visitable features be made mandatory in *all* new homes. The feedback from the respondents however showed that where visitability has been adopted, it has more likely than not been required only for homes that have been built with public funds (4 of the 7 jurisdictions surveyed). This was because it was harder to legislate requirements for private homes (mainly due to the counter-lobbying of the building industry, and the fact that these homes were not built with public funds). The interview with the representatives from the Manitoba Government indicated that visitability *could* be made mandatory for all new homes (including those built with private funds) but that this would have to be a long-term goal. Awareness of visitability would need to be raised in the community, and that homebuilders would need to become more accustomed to visitable design. The interview also suggested that homes built with public funds would have to be built first as they are part of the public good.

The best way to adopt a visitability ordinance in Manitoba therefore, would be to do so through gradual stages, with the final stage being visitability mandated in all new homes.

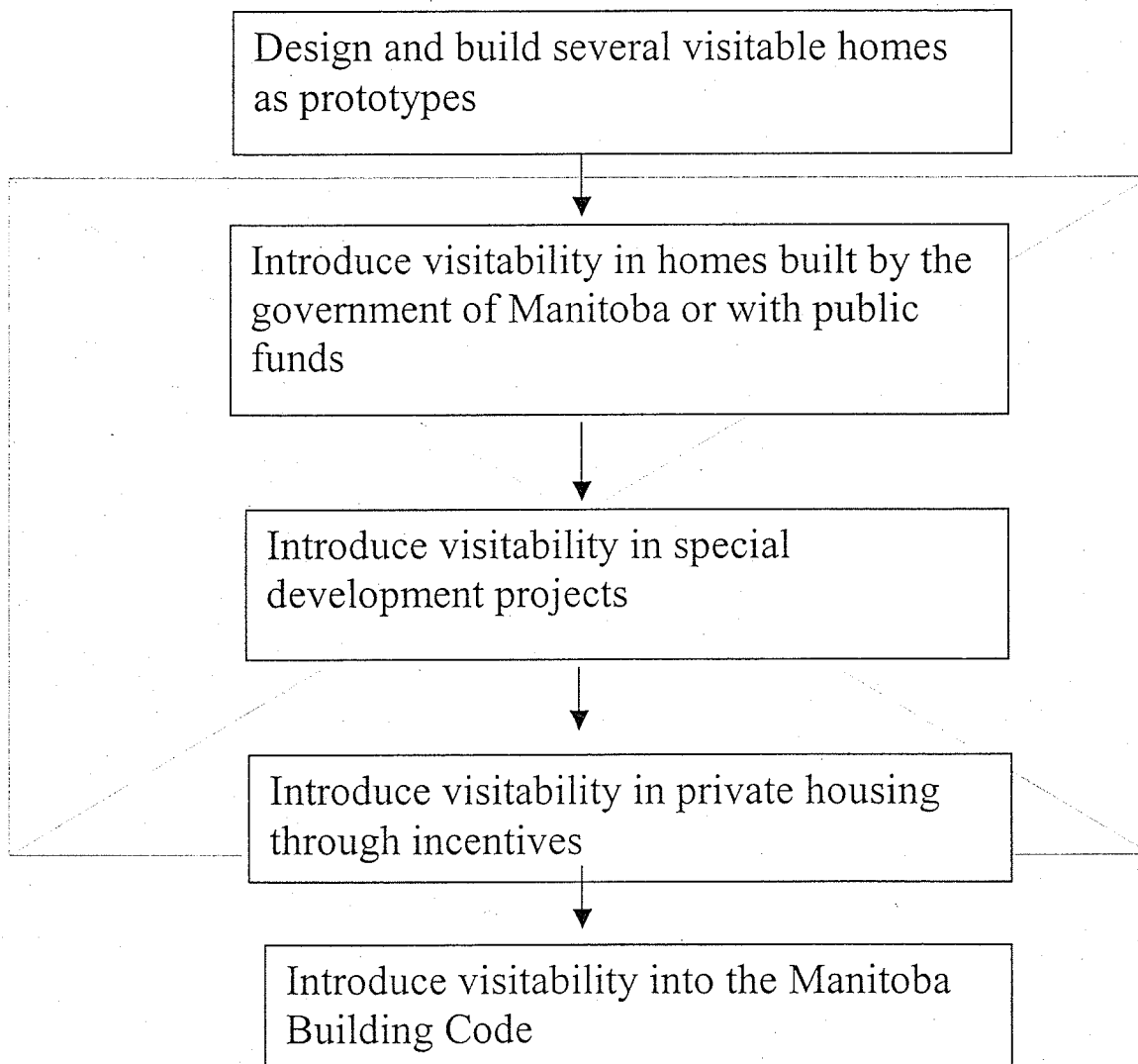
Chapter 6

Introducing A Visitability Ordinance

As explained in the synthesis from Chapter 5.6, the best way to introduce visitability to Manitoba would be through a staged process. A hypothetical process is given below; the details of each stage are explained more fully in individualized sections that follow:

Figure 6-1

Steps in Implementing a Visitability Ordinance



6.1 Design and build several prototype visitable homes

The first step would be to design and build several prototype visitable homes. Before visitability ordinances were adopted in Atlanta, Concrete Change worked with a local chapter of Habitat for Humanity to build several visitable homes as a means of demonstrating that it was possible to build such homes at a minimum cost. A similar scenario occurred in the United Kingdom, when the Joseph Rowntree Foundation built a large number of visitable homes to show that visitability was feasible and economical. Earlier this year, the researcher gave a brief presentation on visitability to a meeting of the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities (MLPD). Present at this meeting was a representative from the local branch of Habitat for Humanity who was very receptive to the concept of visitability. This suggests that the Winnipeg branch of Habitat for Humanity could serve as a partner in building visitable homes in Winnipeg.

In building these homes with visitable features, builders will learn about visitability and become more aware of accessibility issues. Education of the building professions could also be promoted through government seminars and workshops.

The same could be said for the design professions. One example of how designers and builders were unaware of accessibility issues was the Mobility Suites designed by Manitoba Housing. The attendant of one of the participants in the first focus group in Chapter 5.5 said that these suites were inaccessible to larger wheelchairs and were probably designed with the smallest manual chair in mind, not realizing that many people with disabilities rely on power chairs and scooters (which are larger and require wider entrances and turning space) to move around. In developing a visitability ordinance, it would be necessary to conduct tests to see what types of design can

accommodate the larger types of wheelchair or scooter and develop these designs accordingly.

At one time, the Universal Design Institute (UDI) at the University of Manitoba promoted accessibility issues within the design profession, through research in universal design as well as a Universal Design Course offered within the Faculty of Architecture. With the closure of the UDI by the Faculty of Architecture in March 2003, the Canadian Centre for Disability Studies (CCDS) may take responsibility for any disability-related education among the design professions, having assumed many of the responsibilities of the former UDI, including archiving the UDI's library.

The CCDS is a Winnipeg-based, consumer-directed (consumer is a term used in most disability studies to describe an individual with a disability), that is dedicated to research, education and information dissemination on disability issues. Affiliated with the University of Manitoba, the Centre promotes full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society. Included in this affiliation with the University of Manitoba is a Master's Degree in Disability Studies, as well as a similar undergraduate degree program under development with the University of Winnipeg, and the development of a television and web-based introductory course on disability studies (CCDS 2002).

If a visitability ordinance were to be adopted, the CCDS would very likely play a role in researching the technical aspects of a disability ordinance. An example would be to work with a non-profit housing organization in designing certain types of homes and then testing these homes' accessibility features to see if they are properly accessible.

An example of this partnership would involve the CCDS working with Habitat for Humanity and building a number of mock-up doorways, hallways, electrical outlets and climate controls to test them with a variety of participants with varying degrees of mobility (i.e. those in manual chairs, power chairs, scooters, pushcarts, and/or canes). These participants would be recruited from various disability-related organizations throughout the City of Winnipeg. (A list of these organizations can be found in Appendix B.) Due to the fact that Winnipeg has a significantly large Aboriginal population, a population that has greater numbers of people with disabilities than the Canadian population-at-large, it would be essential that Aboriginals with disabilities are included in the design process.

This research could be done by design students working as interns or through the University of Manitoba's Faculty of Architecture's Partner's Program. The Partner's Program serves as a liaison between students and faculty and the community, industry, design and planning professionals and alumni (University of Manitoba 2003a). This program would serve as an ideal medium to link design students to the disability community through the CCDS and Habitat for Humanity (or a similar housing organization). These students would come from the undergraduate department of Environmental Design, as well as the graduate departments of Architecture, Interior Design and Landscape Architecture. Working together with these groups and participants with disabilities, the students and faculty would help determine suitable technical aspects of a visitability ordinance. Due to the higher proportion of disabilities among the Aboriginal population, it is necessary that Aboriginals with disabilities are

included in the design process. This research would make design students more aware of accessibility issues.

6.2 Introduce visitability in homes built by the Government of Manitoba or with public funds

Once this step has been accomplished, the next step would be to introduce visitability in housing that has been built with public funds. These would include housing that has been built by Manitoba Family Services and Housing as well as housing built by non-profit organizations that receive funds through the Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative and the Manitoba Affordable Housing Initiative. This would require lobbying the governments of Winnipeg and Manitoba to adopt a visitability ordinance for the Province of Manitoba. The results from the survey in Chapter 5.1 showed that the visitability ordinances in many cases were enacted because of the strong lobbying of the disability community. Enacting a visitability ordinance in the Province of Manitoba would require the lobbying of the local disability community.

As stated in Chapter 5 (Part I), the Manitoba League for Persons with Disabilities (MLPD) has successfully lobbied for disability-related ordinances, including accessible transit, self-managed attendant care, the inclusion of people with disabilities in human rights legislation, and accessible public buildings. Currently, the MLPD has a housing committee focusing on the concept of visitable housing. This organization would be an ideal lobbyist for the development of a visitability ordinance.

The University of Manitoba could also play an advisory role in the process. Because the lobbying for a visitability ordinance comes under the field of radical planning, it would be possible for students in the Department of City Planning to work

with the disability community in the development of a proposed visitability ordinance. This could be accomplished through students working as summer interns.

This process would give City Planning students practical experience in the fields of advocacy and/or radical planning, as well as introduce them to the field of planning with people with disabilities. It must be understood that the role played by the students would be an auxiliary role. There are several reasons for this. The first reason is that the design and lobbying for a visitability ordinance would take a fairly long time, more than the four-month period generally allotted to an internship or studio course. The second and more important reason is that designing and lobbying for the ordinance would require intensive work, something that students would not have time for. As indicated in Part 1 of Chapter 3, an important part of designing and lobbying for a visitability ordinance was the organization of the disability community. One of the respondents from Chapter 5.1 recommended putting together a core team who would decide what action should be undertaken by the other members of the disability community (and their allies--which could include City Planning students).

During this process, students would work with the disability community in the following areas:

- 1) Finding allies in the local government, civil service and local media.
- 2) Providing testimony at public hearings and meetings. This testimony would describe the experiences that people with disabilities face in finding housing, rehabilitating non-accessible homes and accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers.
- 3) Drafting for the proposed ordinances.
- 4) Developing educational materials and holding public forums and workshops for the government and community-at-large, informing them about the

benefits of visitability, and countering any arguments put forth by the opponents of visitability.

It must also be understood that this may be as far as a visitability ordinance will go. The information gleaned from the jurisdictions' questionnaires found that most of the visitability ordinances applied strictly to homes built with public funds.

6.3 Introduce visitability in special development projects

After visitability has been introduced into homes built with public funds, the next step would involve introducing visitable homes to the private housing market. The first part of this step would be legislation requiring visitability in homes that are built in special development projects. An example of this would be the homes built in the proposed Waverley West Development, which was cited by the representative from the homebuilding industry and the representatives from the province of Manitoba as a means of introducing visitability to the general public. It was also indicated in the Waverley West Design Charette (University of Manitoba 2003b).

6.4 Introduce visitability in private housing through incentives such as subdivision permits and rebates

The next step would be legislation that encourages visitability in new subdivisions through requirements in subdivision permits (i.e. requiring that a certain percentage of homes be built according to visitable standards). These percentages would increase with each passing year. Alternatively, tax incentives and rebates (similar to those used in Southampton, New York) could also be used to encourage visitability.

6.5 Introduce visitability into the Manitoba Building Code

The final step in a visitability ordinance would be legislation requiring visitable features to be included in all new homes. This would be accomplished through the amendment of the Manitoba Building Code to include visitable features in all new homes.

6.6 What would the ordinance look like?

A visitability ordinance for the Province of Manitoba would be designed in full partnership with the disability community. The features of this ordinance are based on a summary of the features included in the seven visitability ordinances surveyed in Section 5.1. It would include, in descending order of importance.

1. Level entrances, or an entrance with a gradient no steeper than 1:12.
2. Accessible doorways on entry level floor with a clear width of no less than 34 inches or 850 mm (clear width is the width of the doorway when the door is opened at a 90 degree angle to the door stop).
3. Accessible washrooms on entry level floor (with a doorway with a clear width of at least 34 inches/850 mm).
4. Wider hallways (36 inches/900mm wide).
5. Reinforcements in the bathroom walls (for installation of grab bars).
6. Accessible climate controls.
7. Lever handles on doorways.

One important factor would be for the entrance to the home would to actually lead to an entry-level floor. Having a level entrance that leads to a split-level landing would make the purpose of a level entrance futile. During the first stage (where visitable homes are being designed and built by the disability community in partnership with a non profit housing group), it will be necessary to test the accessible feature with a variety of participants having varying degrees of mobility (e.g. those in manual chairs, power chairs, scooters, and those with pushcarts, and/or canes). What size works best for everyone? The same principle would apply in deciding the location of electrical outlet

and climate controls. The reinforcements, climate controls, and lever handles are not a visitability requirement, and can be used as a “bargaining chip,” i.e. something to give up if necessary, in the event of opposition to a proposed visitability ordinance. A respondent in one of the surveys from Chapter 5.1 suggested this idea.

Where possible, visitability should be promoted alongside other types of disability-positive planning and development initiatives. In the survey mentioned in Part I, one of the respondents advised that when lobbying for a visitability ordinance, the disability community should tie their issues into other important issues of local concern. One such concern would be that of urban sprawl, with its segregated land uses and automobile-dependent development. Development concepts such as New Urbanism are designed to counteract this phenomenon. Because visitability is part of New Urbanism, lobbying for a visitability ordinance could also be tied into lobbying for more developments that meet New Urbanist criteria. These include New Urbanist forms of design: dense, pedestrian-friendly mixed land use, with accessible sidewalks, crosswalks, transit system, shops and services. Additionally, visitability should be promoted alongside other progressive forms of development, such as energy efficiency as is the case with the Northern Model House in Thompson, Manitoba.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion, Recommendations and Directions for Further Research

The goal of the practicum was to determine how visitability could be introduced to Manitoba. The objectives of the practicum were to understand: the experiences in implementing visitability ordinances in jurisdictions where it has been adopted; the perspective on visitability held by the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, the Government of Manitoba and the homebuilders' industry; and how people with disabilities access the homes of their non-disabled peers.

This practicum has demonstrated the problems that people with disabilities face in accessing the homes of their non-disabled peers, the negative reaction towards visitability legislation from the homebuilders' industry, and the experiences that the disability access groups have had in implementing visitability ordinances in their respective jurisdictions. It has also demonstrated the positive reaction towards visitability from the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee and Manitoba Family Services and Housing. Based on A synthesis of these findings, a potential process for introducing visitability to Manitoba has been recommended (Chapter 6). There are however, areas of visitability-related research that this practicum has not covered.

The first area of research would be examining the actual impact that visitability has had in allowing people with disabilities to access the homes of their non-disabled peers. To accomplish this, focus groups would have to be conducted in jurisdictions where visitability ordinances are in effect. The focus groups would determine the effectiveness of existing visitability ordinances and what needs to be done to make future visitability ordinances effective.

A second area of research would be Manitoba's Aboriginal Community. One of the driving forces behind many forms of accessible design, including visitability is the increasing number of seniors in society. Manitoba and in particular, Winnipeg in a unique scenario of having a large Aboriginal population, for various reasons, this demographic subgroup is more likely to have a disability than Canadian society as a whole. More research must be done to examine the needs of the Aboriginal population regarding accessibility issues, including visitability. This would be accomplished through focus groups made up of Aboriginals with disabilities. The focus groups would determine the needs of Aboriginals with disabilities.

This does not mean that visitability is the sole method of opening the housing market to people with disabilities. More needs to be done to ensure that more homes already existing on the housing market are accessible. At present, the price of renovating existing homes to make them accessible is costly. Although there are loopholes available through CCRA and the CMHC to allow for renovating homes, these loopholes often apply to lower-income individuals, who are generally unable to afford the cost of a home. These programs should be expanded to include people of a wider income range, and to allow for conversion if the owners of the dwelling have a relative with a disability. This will allow people to renovate their homes to allow access for a relative who does not necessarily live in the home.

Additionally, more needs to be done to ensure that the entire built environment-not simply homes-is accessible to people with disabilities. Having visitable homes in a built environment that is not accessible to people with disabilities does little, if anything, to help people with disabilities integrate with their surrounding environment.

Finally, builders, designers and, in particular, planners need to become aware of disability issues and need to change their attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Planners need to realize that people with disabilities face barriers (both real and attitudinal) that prevent them from becoming productive members of society. The built environment is often the worst obstacle that people with disabilities face. This practicum has demonstrated how students in planning (as well as other fields of design) can learn more about accessibility issues (including visitability) through working with people with disabilities in the development of a visitability ordinance and the design of a visitable home. Such a method should not be the only way of teaching planning students about disability issues. Disability awareness needs to be raised during the formal stages of planning education. This could be done through workshop modules during regular planning courses, a charrette where students design a neighbourhood that is friendly to people with disabilities, or even an entire course (such as the Universal Design course offered as an elective at the University of Manitoba) where students learn about disability issues.

Another area of concern is the apparent lack of knowledge of disability issues among the practicing members of the planning profession. There is, however, a method to rectify this scenario. In a memo circulated by the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP 2003), it was noted that many professions are establishing programs of "Continuous Professional Learning" (ongoing training for practicing professionals) to ensure that these professions' members keep up their skills and knowledge with current practice and technology. The memo stated that the CIP supported such an initiative. Under this initiative, all CIP members will be required to demonstrate nine hours annually of

exposure to content in the fundamentals of planning practice and nine hours of study in key practice areas that are related to planning. Training in awareness of disability issues, which would include universal design, accessibility and visitability, would easily fall into the latter category. Design professionals who are familiar with disability and access issues could provide such training and make practicing planners more aware of the problems that people with disabilities face in an inaccessible environment. Should similar policies regarding ongoing training exist for other design professions, the members of these professions should also undertake such training.

These scenarios will create new opportunities for disability-related research. The first area of research would involve analyzing and developing policies for the conversion of existing homes to allow for basic access. As well, more research needs to be done into ensuring that the entire built environment, not just newly built homes, are accessible to people with disabilities. However, implementing the results of this research will be difficult if the planning, building and other design professions are unaware of disability issues. A critical area of research, therefore, will involve disability issues within the education of these professions. This research must examine the awareness (or lack thereof) of disability issues among these professions, as well as the attitudes that these professions have towards people with disabilities. The research must then recommend what steps need to be taken in the professional and continuing stages of planning, building and design education to ensure that future generations of these professions are more aware of disability issues.

As the planning profession becomes increasingly aware of disability issues, so too will disability issues begin to emerge within the field of planning theory. The field of

planning theory most likely to be affected by disability issues is that of radical planning. As pointed out in Chapter 5.1.2, the procedures under which the visitability ordinances were enacted apply to the theory of radical planning. This is because these ordinances were promoted by mobilizing the disability community. Nevertheless, there is a pronounced absence of discussion of disability issues in the radical planning literature.

In *Towards Cosmopolis* (Sandercock 1998), Sandercock describes how radical planners have concerned themselves with social mobilization as a means of addressing inequality around race, gender and sexual orientation. This mobilization is the same means used by the disability community to promote visitability and other accessibility-related designs that address the inequality experienced by people with disabilities. To understand how radical planning is used to address disability issues, more research needs to be done about how people with disabilities organize and mobilize themselves to address the inequalities that they face in relation to the built environment.

Sandercock describes Cosmopolis as a postmodern Utopia—a cosmopolitan metropolis characterized by diversity along racial, ethnic and sexual lines, and one that is continuous in the making. What is not described for Cosmopolis is a similar diversity along the lines of age and levels of ability. **Towards Cosmopolis** makes very little reference to seniors and persons with disabilities. Nowhere in the index of **Towards Cosmopolis** are there any references to seniors or people with disabilities, nor universal design or access issues. Yet diversity in age and levels of ability is just as pronounced as racial, ethnic, and sexual diversity, and may be even more pronounced given that everyone will go through varying levels of ability throughout their lifetimes. Furthermore, those with disabilities often face the same barriers to education,

employment and income experienced by women and racial minorities (Additionally, members of these minorities who have disabilities face even greater discrimination.) The Cosmopolis that Sandercock proposes is continuously in the making, and its nature must be redefined to include seniors and people with disabilities.

This practicum has demonstrated how a visitability ordinance could be developed within the Province of Manitoba, setting a precedent for other Canadian jurisdictions to follow. However, more research needs to be done to ensure that the remainder of the housing market, as well as the built environment in general, is also accessible to people with disabilities. Additionally, more research needs to be done to ensure that planners are more sensitive to the barriers that people with disabilities face in relation to the built environment.

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Appendix A

Ethic Review Concerns

HES Fax No. 261-0325

Protocol # _____

(Assigned by HES Admin.)

Human Subject Research Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Ft. Garry Campus)

Psychology/Sociology REB ☐Education/Nursing REB ☐
 Joint-Faculty
REB
☐

Check the appropriate REB for the Faculty or Department of the Principal Researcher. This form, attached research protocol, and all supporting documents, must be submitted **in quadruplicate** (original plus 3 copies), to the Office of Research Services, Human Ethics Secretariat, 244 Engineering Building, 474-7122.

If the research involves biomedical intervention, check the box below to facilitate referral to the BREB:

Requires Referral to Biomedical REB ☐

Project Information:

Principal Researcher(s): _____

Status of Principal Researcher(s): please check

Faculty ☐ Post-Doc ☐ Student: Graduate ☐ Undergraduate ☐ Other ☐

Specify: _____

Campus address: _____ Phone: _____ Fax: _____

Email address: _____ Quickest Means of contact: _____

Project Title: _____

Start date _____ Planned period of research (if less than one year): _____

Type of research (Please check):

Faculty Research:Self-funded ☐ Sponsored ☐**Administrative Research:**Central ☐**Student Research:**Thesis ☐ Class Project ☐

(Agency) _____

Unit-based



Course Number: _____

Signature of Principal Researcher: _____

This project is approved by department/thesis committee. The advisor has reviewed and approved the protocol.

Name of Thesis Advisor _____**Signature** _____

(Required if thesis research)

Name of Course Instructor: _____**Signature** _____

(Required if class project)

People signing assure responsibility that all procedures performed under the protocol will be conducted by individuals responsibly entitled to do so, and that any deviation from the protocol will be submitted to the REB for its approval prior to implementation. Signature of the thesis advisor/course instructor indicates that student researchers have been instructed on the principles of ethics ordinance, on the importance of adherence to the ethical conduct of the research according to the submitted protocol (and of the necessity to report any deviations from the protocol to their advisor/instructor).

Ethics Protocol Submission Form (Basic Questions about the Project)

The questions on this form are of a general nature, designed to collect pertinent information about potential problems of an ethical nature that could arise with the proposed research project. In addition to answering the questions below, the researcher is expected to append pages (and any other necessary documents) to a submission detailing the required information about the research protocol (see page 4).

1. Will the subjects in your study be **UNAWARE** that they are subjects? ☐ Yes ☐ No
2. Will information about the subjects be obtained from sources other than the subjects themselves? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. Are you and/or members of your research team in a position of power vis-a-vis the subjects? If yes, clarify the position of power and how it will be addressed. ☐ Yes ☐ No
4. Is any inducement or coercion used to obtain the subject's participation? ☐ Yes ☐ No
5. Do subjects identify themselves by name directly, or by other means that allows you or anyone else to identify data with specific subjects? If yes, indicate how confidentiality will be maintained. What precautions are to be undertaken in storing data and in its eventual destruction/disposition. ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. If subjects are identifiable by name, do you intend to recruit them for future studies? If yes, indicate why this is necessary and how you plan to recruit these subjects for future studies. ☐ Yes ☐ No
7. Could dissemination of findings compromise confidentiality? ☐ Yes ☐ No
8. Does the study involve physical or emotional stress, or the subject's expectation thereof, such as might result from conditions in the study design? ☐ Yes ☐ No

9. Is there any threat to the personal safety of subjects? _____ Yes _____ No
10. Does the study involve subjects who are not legally or practically able to give their valid consent to participate (e.g., children, or people with mental health problems and/or cognitive impairment)?
If yes, indicate how informed consent will be obtained from subjects and those authorized to speak for subjects. _____ Yes _____ No
11. Is deception involved (i.e., will subjects be intentionally misled about the purpose of the study, their own performance, or other features of the study)? _____ Yes _____ No
12. Is there a possibility that abuse of children or people in care might be discovered in the course of the study?
If yes, current laws require that certain offenses against children and people in care be reported to legal authorities. Indicate the provisions that have been made for complying with the law. _____ Yes _____ No
13. Does the study include the use of personal health information?
The Manitoba Personal Health Information Act (PHIA) outlines responsibilities of researchers to ensure safeguards that will protect personal health information. If yes, indicate provisions that will be made to comply with this Act (see document for guidance - <http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/phia/index.html>). _____ Yes _____ No

Provide additional details pertaining to any of the questions above for which you responded "yes." Attach additional pages, if necessary.

In my judgment this project involves: ☐ minimal risk
☐ more than minimal risk

(Ordinance #1406 defines "minimal risk" as follows: "... that the risks of harm anticipated in the proposed research are not greater nor more likely, considering probability and magnitude, than those ordinarily encountered in life, including those encountered during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests.")

____/____/____

dd mm yr

Signature of Principal Researcher

Ethics Protocol Submission Form

Required Information about the Research Protocol

Each application for ethics approval should include the following information and be presented in the following order, using these headings:

1. **Summary of Project:** Attach a detailed but concise (one typed page) outline of the **purpose** and **methodology** of the study describing **precisely** the procedures in which subjects will be asked to participate.
2. **Research Instruments:** Attach copies of **all** materials (e.g., questionnaires, tests, interview schedules, etc.) to be given to subjects and/or third parties.
3. **Study Subjects:** Describe the number of subjects, and how they will be recruited for this study. Are there any special characteristics of the subjects that make them especially vulnerable or require extra measures?
4. **Informed Consent:** Will consent **in writing** be obtained? If so, attach a copy of the consent form. (see guidelines on informed consent). If written consent is not to be obtained, indicate why not and the manner by which subjects' consent (verbally) or assent to participate in the study will be obtained. How will the nature of the study and subjects' participation in the study be explained to them **before** they agree to participate. How will consent be obtained from guardians of subjects from vulnerable populations? If confidential records will be consulted, indicate the nature of the records, and how subjects' consent is to be obtained. If it is essential to the research, indicate why subjects are not to be made aware of their records being consulted.
5. **Deception:** Deception refers to the deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes. If the research involves deception, the researcher must provide detailed information on the extent and nature of deception and why the research could not be conducted without it. This description must be sufficient to justify a waiver of informed consent.
6. **Feedback/Debriefing:** Describe the feedback that will be given to subjects about the research after they have completed their participation. How will the feedback be provided and by whom? If feedback will not be given, please explain why feedback is not planned. If deception is employed, debriefing is mandatory. Describe in detail the nature of the post-deception feedback, and when and how it will be given.

7. **Risks and Benefits:** Is there any risk to the subjects, or to a third party? If yes, provide a description of the risks and the counterbalancing benefits of the proposed study. Indicate the precautions taken by the researcher under these circumstances.
8. **Anonymity and Confidentiality:** Describe the procedures for preserving anonymity and confidentiality. If confidentiality is not an issue in this research, please explain why. Will confidential records be consulted? If yes, indicate what precautions will be taken to ensure subjects' confidentiality. How will the data be stored to ensure confidentiality? When will the data be destroyed?
9. **Compensation:** Will subjects be compensated for their participation? Compensation may reasonably provide subjects with assistance to defray the costs associated with study participation.

Ethics Protocol Submission Form
Review Your submission according to this:

Checklist

Principal Researcher: _____

✓	Item from the Ethics Protocol Submission Form
	All information requested on the first page completed in legible format (typed or printed).
	Signatures of the principal researcher (and faculty advisor, or course instructor if student research).
	Answers to all 13 questions on pages 2-3 of Ethics Protocol Submission form.
	Detailed information requested on page 4 of the Ethics Protocol Submission Form in the numbered order and with the headings indicated.
	Ethics Protocol Submission Form in quadruplicate (Original plus 3 copies).
	Research instruments: 4 copies of all instruments and other supplementary material to be given to subjects.
	Copy of this checklist.

1. **Summary of project:** The purpose of the proposed practicum is to develop a proposed visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg. Visitability is a housing concept in which all new housing is designed with a level entrance to the main floor of the house, wide doorways and hallways, and an accessible washroom on the main floor. The purpose of this housing is to allow people with mobility related disabilities (particularly those who rely on wheelchairs or scooters) to visit the residences of their non-disabled peers. This concept was developed in the United States and has been adopted in several American jurisdictions, as well as the United Kingdom.

There are three underlying questions that this practicum will address.

- 1) What has been the experience of visitability in other jurisdictions?
- 2) What are the opinions of the concerned groups of participants (in this case, representatives from the construction and development industry, the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, the Manitoba Government and the disability community) regarding visitability?
- 3) What would a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg look like?

The research methods for the practicum involve a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews and focus groups. In each case the questions that are asked will be straightforward opinion questions; they are not trick questions or questions designed to try and manipulate participants' responses; they are merely to explore the participant(s)' experiences, opinions and attitudes towards visitability. The participants will represent four different groups as detailed below.

The first group consists of representatives of disability and housing organizations in the United States that have lobbied for the implementation of visitability ordinances

(there are no Canadian precedents). These representatives will be given questionnaires (sent through the postal service) that will ask about their experiences and perspectives regarding the visitability policies in their jurisdictions.

The second set of participants will be representatives from the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. Several members of this committee will be asked for their perspectives on visitability and the potential role that the Committee could play if a visitability ordinance were to be implemented in the City of Winnipeg.

The third set of participants will be representatives of Manitoba Housing. These representatives will be asked about their opinions on visitability and the role that Manitoba Housing could play in the implementation of a visitability ordinance.

The fourth group of participants will be representatives from either a local private housing developer or the local builders association. These individuals will be asked about their perspectives on visitability and how the industry would react to the possibility of a visitability ordinance in Winnipeg.

The final group of participants will involve 2 focus groups, each consisting of approximately 6 members of Winnipeg's disability community. These participants will take part in a discussion about how they access the homes of their non-disabled peers and how current housing designs allow them to visit, or prevent them from visiting the homes of their non-disabled peers. From this it will be determined how residents of Winnipeg with mobility disabilities are able to access the homes of others and how the built housing environment potentially discriminates against them.

2. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

a) QUESTIONNAIRE: COMPARING VISITABILITY POLICIES

The first step in determining the characteristics of a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg involved the comparison and analysis of policies implemented elsewhere. In this case questionnaires were circulated to members of disability-rights organizations and non-governmental housing agencies in jurisdictions where visitability has been implemented as part of the local housing ordinance. These questionnaires asked representatives of the respective housing agencies about the history and experiences that the community has had with visitability, the impact that visitability has had on the built environment, the reaction to visitability from affected groups and recommendations for implementing a visitability ordinance elsewhere.

These questions were given (through regular mail) to representatives from 10 disability and housing agencies in the United States and the United Kingdom to gain their perspective on their experiences with visitability housing policies. The participants were recruited independently. Concrete Change and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation gave the researcher the names and contact information of people who had worked in implementing visitability ordinances in jurisdictions in the United States and the United Kingdom. The researcher then contacted these individuals and requested their participation.

The questionnaire consisted of the following questions:

1. When did your jurisdiction adopt a visitability ordinance for housing?
2. What persuaded your jurisdiction to adopt a visitability ordinance?
3. What precedents did you draw on?
4. How effective has the ordinance been in facilitating visitability?

5. Does the visitability housing ordinance apply to all new housing built within your jurisdiction?

If not, what types of housing are exempted?

Why were these types of housing exempted?

6. What role did the disability community play in the implementation of the visitability ordinance?

7. What has the reaction to the ordinance been from the

a. disability community?

b. building industry?

c. general public?

8. How easy is the ordinance to enforce?

9. How has the ordinance affected construction and labour costs?

How has the new ordinance affected construction methods?

10. Were code/by-law/zoning changes required to carry this out?

11. If you were to introduce the ordinance now, what changes would you make to the ordinance, if any?

12. Based on your experiences, what advice would you give to other jurisdictions who may be interested in implementing a visitability ordinance?

b) SEMISTRUCTURED INTERVIEW: VISITABILITY AND THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

The City of Winnipeg has an Access Advisory Committee whose mandate it is to advise the city on disability related issues. Given that the most effective Universal Design practices have involved public participation in their design and implementation, the Access Advisory Committee would undoubtedly play a role in a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg should one be implemented. It was necessary to interview the members of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee, to explore their opinions towards visitability and the possibility of such a ordinance for the city of Winnipeg. To obtain these opinions, the Access Advisory Committee's Coordinator was contacted and asked if the committee would be interested in being interviewed.

The following sample questions will be asked of individual members of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. This will help to understand the Committee members' perspective of visitability and the potential role that the Committee could play in the development of a visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg. The session will be recorded on audio cassette and notes will be taken, with permission. The tape will be transcribed and the original tape will be destroyed.

- 1) First, the Access Advisory Committee will be shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994). The members of the Committee will be asked as to what they think of this design concept.
2. Has the Access Committee ever discussed the possibility of a visitable housing ordinance? If not, why not?
3. The City of Winnipeg and Province of Manitoba recently adopted a Universal Design Ordinance. Why were visitable private homes not mentioned in this ordinance?
4. Do you feel that visitability (ie requiring *all* new homes to be constructed with

level entrances, accessible ground floor washrooms and wide hallways) should be implemented into the building code, even if the home is privately owned?

5. If a housing ordinance regarding accessibility visitability were to be implemented at either the city, provincial or federal level, would the committee be interested in playing an advisory or participatory role in its development and implementation?

c) SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: VISITABILITY AND THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

Regulations for buildings (both public and private) fall under provincial jurisdiction in Manitoba. In addition, the Province of Manitoba has a very active housing programme. These two factors would mean that if a visitability ordinance were to be implemented the provincial housing agency (Manitoba Family Services and Housing) would play a role in the ordinance's design and implementation. The interview will explore the opinions of the representatives and the potential role that Manitoba Family Services and Housing could play in visitability.

The following sample questions will be asked of 1-3 representatives of Manitoba Housing. This will help to understand the representatives' perspective of visitability and the potential role that Manitoba Family Services and Housing could play in the development of a visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg. The session will be recorded on audio cassette and notes will be taken, with permission. The tape will be transcribed and the original tape will be destroyed.

- 1) First, the representatives will be shown **Building Better Neighborhoods**, a short video on visitability produced by Concrete Change (Concrete Change 1994). The members of the Committee will be asked as to what they think of this design concept.
2. Has Manitoba Housing ever discussed the possibility of a visitable housing ordinance? If not, why not?
3. The Province of Manitoba recently adopted a Universal Design Ordinance. Why were visitable private homes not mentioned in this ordinance?
4. Do you feel that visitability (ie requiring *all* new homes to be constructed with level entrances, accessible ground floor washrooms and wide hallways) should be implemented into the building code, even if the home is privately owned?

d) SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW: VISITABILITY AND THE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Two of visitability's main opponents have been the property development sector and construction industry. In analyzing the viability of visitability, it would be important to understand the opinions of those who are opposed to it and the reason for their opposition.

To understand Visitability from the perspective of the development industry it will be necessary to interview a local residential property developer or a representative of the local home-builders' association, to gain insights into development perspectives on the subject.

- 1) First, the participant(s) will then be shown the short video on visitability.
- 2) The participant(s) will then be asked what they think of this design concept. Once this opinion is noted, the participants will be informed that several jurisdictions in the United States along with the entire United Kingdom have adopted legislation that makes all new homes to be built to visitable standards.
- 3) The participants will then be asked what they think of the possibility of making all homes in Winnipeg visitable.
- 4) If the participant(s) are supportive of such a ordinance, they will be asked about what barriers they think would hinder the development and implementation of the ordinance. Conversely, what benefits do they anticipate accompanying such a ordinance. If the participant(s) are not supportive, they will be asked to why they disagree with such a ordinance.

e) FOCUS GROUPS: VISITABILITY AND WINNIPEG'S DISABILITY COMMUNITY

Given that the aim of Visitability is to allow for access for consumers with mobility-related disabilities to access the homes of their able bodied friends and relatives, it is important to understand the impact that the built environment has on their disability: to what degree are they able to access other peoples' homes/dwellings and utilize their facilities as well their opinions on a non accessible environment. It is also important to understand how those who develop disabilities at some point in their lives cope with an "able-bodied" environment.

This research will consist of two focus groups consisting approximately 6 participants with mobility-related disabilities. The reason for such small sizes is to produce a greater volume of participation among the members of the group. Both focus groups will take part in discussions to determine as to how they are able to access the homes of their able bodied peers, their methods of interacting with these peers and how the built environment has affected their relationships with these peers. This will show how the built environment has impacted the lives of people with disabilities and how visitability can ease such impact.

The questions asked of these participants will move through a specific series. They will begin with the opening questions, in which the participants get acquainted with each other as well as the researcher. They will then move into the introduction stage, where they will begin discussing the actual topic. Next they will move into the transition stage, bridging the gap between the introductory and key stages. During the key stages they will offer their insight into the main focus of the study. Finally the end stage will be

reached, in which participants should feel free to provide any information which was not brought up in the focus group's main discussion (Krueger 1998).

Focus Group Questions

The following questions will be asked distributed to two groups of participants, in particular, those with mobility-related disabilities, to gain their perspectives on the built environment, how they access the residences of the able bodied and the potential for visitability to ameliorate their lives.

These questions will be asked of consumers with mobility related disabilities.

10. Tell us your names and a little bit about yourselves. (*Opening Stage*)
11. When you are interacting with your non-disabled peers, where do you do it most often (your home, their homes, other locations)? (*Introductory Stage*)
12. On the occasions when you visit the homes of your non-disabled peers, are you able to access the homes by yourselves or do you require assistance? (*Transition Stage*)
13. If you do require assistance, how does it feel? (*Transition Stage*)
14. Do you ever feel that not being able to access the home of a non-disabled person has prevented you from developing a friendship and/or relationship with that individual? (*Transition Stage*)

At this point, the participants will be shown the brief video on visitability. After the screening of the video, the focus group will be asked how they feel about this type of housing through the following questions.

15. In recent years, some housing agencies have developed a type of home that allows for basic wheelchair access; that is, a level entrance, wider doorways and hallways and an accessible washroom on the entrance level. How does this type of housing concept sound to you? (*Key Stage*)
16. In some jurisdictions, such as the states of Georgia and Texas, as well as the entire United Kingdom, this type of housing has been made mandatory for all new housing. How would you feel if this type of housing were to be made mandatory for the City of Winnipeg? (*Key Stage*)
17. As the questions enter their final stage, a short summary of the feedback from the other groups of participants will be shared with the participants. The participants will be asked for their opinions on this feedback.

18. Do you have anything else to add that you think to be appropriate to what we have discussed here today? (*Ending Stage*)

3. STUDY SUBJECTS

STEP I: COMPARING VISITABILITY POLICIES

The first step in determining the characteristics of a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg shall be to compare and analyze the results of policies implemented elsewhere. In this case questionnaires will be circulated to members of housing agencies in jurisdictions where visitability has been implemented as part of the local housing ordinance. These questionnaires will ask representatives of the respective housing agencies as to the history and experiences that the community has had with visitability, the impact that visitability has had on the built environment, the reaction to visitability and recommendations for implementing a visitability ordinance elsewhere.

There are two ways in which these interview subjects will be contacted. The first method is through Eleanor Smith at Concrete Change, the main organization that lobbies for visitability. The second method is through the visitability listserver. A message posted on this listserver (VISITABILITY-LIST@listserv.acsu.buffalo.edu) will ask representatives from housing agencies that have adopted visitability as part of their housing ordinance if they would like to be part of a study examining the effects of visitability. Interested respondents will then be sent questionnaires through the post, along with self addressed envelopes and international reply coupons (a necessity since all housing jurisdictions which have adopted visitability are in the United States) that can be used to return the questionnaires to the investigator.

These questions will be asked to representatives of 3 to 5 housing and planning agencies (all of which are in the United States of America as there are no Canadian precedents) to gain their perspective on their experiences with visitability housing policies.

STEP II: VISITABILITY AND THE CITY OF WINNIPEG

The City of Winnipeg has an Access Advisory Committee whose mandate it is to advise the city on disability related issues. Given that the most effective Universal Design practices have involved public participation in their design and implementation, the Access Advisory Committee would undoubtedly play a role in a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg should one be implemented. It would therefore be necessary to interview the members of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. The interview will determine the opinions of the Access Advisory Committee members towards visitability and the possibility of such a ordinance for the city of Winnipeg.

The Committee will be contacted through regular channels (Access Advisory Committee, City Clerk's Department, Council Building, 510 Main Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 1B9 Phone: (204) 986-8345 TTY: (204) 261-7424 Fax: (204) 275-2720 E-mail: jredmond@city.winnipeg.mb.ca) and asked if its members would like to be interviewed regarding the idea of a visitability ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

STEP III: VISITABILITY AND THE PROVINCE OF MANITOBA

Regulations for buildings (both public and private) fall under provincial jurisdiction in Manitoba. In addition, the Province of Manitoba has a very active housing programme. These two factors would mean that if a visitability ordinance were to be implemented the provincial housing agency (Manitoba Family Services and Housing) would play a role in the ordinance's design and implementation. The interview will explore the opinions of the representatives and the potential role that Manitoba Family Services and Housing could play in visitability. Notes will be taken and the entire interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.

The representatives will be contacted through normal channels (**Community Living Division** 119 - 114 Garry Street Winnipeg MB R3C 4V4 Phone: (204) 945-1634 Email: comliv@gov.mb.ca) and asked if its representative would be interested in being interviewed about visitability.

STEP IV: VISITABILITY AND THE PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

Two of visitability's main opponents have been the property development sector and construction industry. In analyzing the viability of visitability, it would be important to understand the opinions of those who are opposed to it and the reason for their opposition.

To understand Visitability from the perspective of the development industry it will be necessary to interview a local residential property developer or a representative of the local home-builders' association, to gain insights into development perspectives on the subject.

In this case, a representative of either a local housing developer or a local

builders' association will be interviewed. Notes will be taken and the entire interview will be recorded for transcription purposes. The interview will determine the attitude of the local building industry towards visitability. This will help determine the barriers that could be faced in the implementation of a visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg. The subject will be contacted through either Qualico Developments Qualico Developments (Head Office) 233-2451 (FAX: 235-0151) (Representative: Brian Hastings) or the Manitoba Home Builders Association: 1-1420 Clarence Avenue Winnipeg, Manitoba Phone (204) 925-2560.

STEP V: VISITABILITY AND WINNIPEG'S DISABILITY COMMUNITY

Given that the aim of Visitability is to allow for access for consumers with mobility-related disabilities to access the homes of their able bodied friends and relatives, it is important to understand the impact that the built environment has on their disability: to what degree are they able to access other peoples' homes/dwellings and utilize their facilities as well their opinions on a non accessible environment. It is also important to understand how those who develop disabilities at some point in their lives cope with an "able-bodied" environment.

This research will consist of two focus groups consisting of approximately 6 participants with mobility-related disabilities. The reason for such small sizes is to produce a greater volume of participation among the members of the group. Both focus groups will take part in discussions to determine as to how they are able to access the homes of their able bodied peers, their methods of interacting with these peers and how the built environment has affected their relationships with these peers. This will show

how the built environment has impacted the lives of people with disabilities and how visitability can ease such impact.

Both focus group sessions will be recorded on cassette tape and notes will be taken. The members of these focus groups will be recruited through Winnipeg based disability organizations. The preferred organization will be Ten Ten Sinclair, a Winnipeg based housing organization that promotes, supports and develops independent living for people with disabilities. The organization has on-site living arrangements for people with disabilities and also participates in the development of housing models to "facilitate independent living for people with disabilities." Included in the organization's mission statement is "a commitment to integrated community living" (Ten Ten Sinclair 2002).

Given that visitability is directly related to independent and community integrated living, this organization would be an ideal medium to recruit consumers for the proposed focus groups. The participants in question may or may not reside at Ten Ten Sinclair. Ten Ten Sinclair is located in Winnipeg's downtown, and such a location would be ideal for a focus group meeting, due to its central location and accessible environment. The latter is crucial as all the participants in both focus groups will have mobility related disabilities and are reliant on either wheelchairs or powered scooters.. The organization can be contacted at: Ten Ten Sinclair Housing Inc. 1010 Sinclair Street, Winnipeg. MB R2V 3H7 Phone: (204) 339-9268, FAX (204) 663-1016, email info@tnten.mb.ca website <http://www.tnten.mb.ca>

4. **INFORMED CONSENT:** Consent in writing will be obtained from all participants. Samples of consent forms for each group of participants are attached. The nature of the study and their participation in this study are explained on the consent forms.
5. **DECEPTION:** There will be no deliberate withholding of essential information or the provision of deliberately misleading information about the research or its purposes.
6. **FEEDBACK/DEBRIEFING:** After the participation of each group has been completed, the researcher will inform the participants of the full nature of the study and how they may be able to obtain the results of the study after all research has been completed. There will be similar information attached to the participants' consent forms.
7. **RISKS AND BENEFITS:** Risks to the participants should be minimal. The only possible risk is that the participants in the focus groups may be made painfully aware of how the built environment discriminates against them.

The participants in the latter three groups should benefit from the study, in that they will learn about visitability (a relatively new concept) and the benefits that it has for them, as well as society as a whole.

8. **ANONYMITY AND CONFIDENTIALITY:** Confidentiality will be maintained by keeping the names of the participants private. If the participants are the representatives of a specific group, the name of the group will not be left confidential. For example, the names of the Access Advisory Committee are public information, but

the responses would be given as a group, and thus the opinions of individual members will not be known.

The participants will not be obliged to answer every question on the questionnaire or in the interviews, and will be free to leave any additional comments that the questions may not have covered.

The research will be used for academic purposes exclusively. The results of this research will be restricted to the actual practicum and any academic publications that this research may produce. The feedback given from the first three groups will be shared with the focus group. Under no circumstances will the results of this research be sold or used for marketing or any other form of commercial purposes.

As previously stated, no confidential records will be consulted. All data shall remain in the possession of the researcher and when not in the researcher's possession, shall be under lock and key at the researcher's residence. When the data from the focus groups is transcribed, the participants will be identified as "Participant A, B, C..."

After the practicum is completed, all hard copies of the data will be shredded, and any audio cassette recordings will be erased. The summary of the data will remain to be used for future academic publication should the need arise.

9. **COMPENSATION:** The first set of participants (representatives of jurisdictions that have adopted visitability as part of their housing policies) will be provided with envelopes that are already labeled with the researcher's address, as well as international reply coupons (all these jurisdictions are American). This will allow the participants to return the questionnaires at no cost.

The fifth set of participants (the focus groups consisting of members of the City of Winnipeg's disability community) will be served a light snack during the time that the focus group is taking place and will be reimbursed for bus fare if necessary.

Sample Consent Form

For representatives of jurisdictions which have adopted visitability housing policies

This research is being conducted by Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, as part of a practicum in the completion of a Master's Degree in City Planning. The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Committee has approved the conduct of this research.

This particular study is being conducted in order to find out the impacts of visitability in jurisdictions where it has been adopted as part of the local and/or state housing ordinance. The information gained from this questionnaire will be compared with questionnaires distributed to jurisdictions that have also adopted visitability as part of their housing ordinance. The information gained from all questionnaires will, in turn, be used in developing a hypothetical visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

Within this questionnaire you will be asked to describe the history and impact of the visitability housing ordinance that your jurisdiction has adopted. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may choose to not answer a question without any prejudice or consequence. A self addressed, stamped envelope and an international reply coupon have been enclosed for your convenience.

Your identity will be kept confidential. This way, your name, position, jurisdiction and any other incriminating information will not be included in the final report of this study. All research data will be stored in a private and secured place until

such time as publications or other media arising from the research have come to fruition, at which time the research materials will be destroyed.

If you are interested in reading the final report, it will be available for you in autumn 2003. This work will be published as a practicum and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba. This information may also be considered for future publication within planning, housing and disability journals by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Joel Casselman at () or

Alternatively you may choose to contact Mr. Casselman's advisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca.

Thank you for giving up your time in filling out this questionnaire. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

I _____, am consenting to be interviewed by Joel Casselman MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, to understand my views on the subject of visitability.

In consenting to be interviewed, I am acknowledging that my name will be kept confidential and that my opinions will only be used for academics purposes and will not be sold or used for any marketing or other commercial related purposes.

Name of Subject

Date of Signature

Respondent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Respondent's Contact Information

Sample Consent Form

For members of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee

This research is being conducted by Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, as part of a practicum in the completion of a Master's Degree in City Planning. The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Committee has approved the conduct of this research.

This particular study is being conducted in order to find out the opinions of the members of the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee towards visitability. The information gained from this group interview will be integrated with the results from other studies in developing a hypothetical visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate analysis of the material at a later date. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

Your individual identities will be kept confidential. However, because your committee is known within the City of Winnipeg, it will not be possible to keep confidential to overall opinion that the Access Advisory Committee has towards visitability. All research data will be stored in a private and secured place until such time as publications or other media arising from the research have come to fruition, at which time the research materials will be destroyed.

If you are interested in reading the final report, it will be available for you in autumn 2003. This work will be published as a practicum and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba. This information may also be considered for future publication within planning, housing and disability journals by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Joel Casselman at () or
 _____ . Alternatively you may choose to contact Mr. Casselman's advisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca. Thank you for giving up your time in filling out this questionnaire. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

I _____, am consenting to be interviewed by Joel Casselman MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, to understand my views on the subject of visitability.

In consenting to be interviewed, I am acknowledging that my name will be kept confidential and that my opinions will only be used for academics purposes and will not be sold or used for any marketing or other commercial related purposes.

Name of Subject

Date of Signature

Respondent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Respondent's Contact Information

Sample Consent Form

For representatives of Manitoba Family Services and Housing

This research is being conducted by Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, as part of a practicum in the completion of a Master's Degree in City Planning. The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Committee has approved the conduct of this research.

This particular study is being conducted in order to find out the opinions of the representatives of Manitoba Family Services and Housing towards visitability. The information gained from this group interview will be integrated with the results from other studies in developing a hypothetical visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate analysis of the material at a later date. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

Your individual identities will be kept confidential. All research data will be stored in a private and secured place until such time as publications or other media arising from the research have come to fruition, at which time the research materials will be destroyed.

If you are interested in reading the final report, it will be available for you in autumn 2003. This work will be published as a practicum and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba. This information may

also be considered for future publication within planning, housing and disability journals by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Joel Casselman at () or
 _____. Alternatively you may choose to contact Mr. Casselman's advisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca. Thank you for giving up your time in filling out this questionnaire. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

I _____, am consenting to be interviewed by Joel Casselman MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, to understand my views on the subject of visitability.

In consenting to be interviewed, I am acknowledging that my name will be kept confidential and that my opinions will only be used for academics purposes and will not be sold or used for any marketing or other commercial related purposes.

Name of Subject

Date of Signature

Respondent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Respondent's Contact Information

Sample Consent Form

For representatives of the building and/or property development industries

This research is being conducted by Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, as part of a practicum in the completion of a Master's Degree in City Planning. The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Committee has approved the conduct of this research.

This particular study is being conducted in order to find out the opinions of the members of the building and development industry towards visitability. The information gained from this group interview will be integrated with the results from other studies in developing a hypothetical visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

Your individual identity as well as the organization of which you are a member will be kept confidential. All research data will be stored in a private and secured place until such time as publications or other media arising from the research have come to fruition, at which time the research materials will be destroyed.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate analysis of the material at a later date. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

If you are interested in reading the final report, it will be available for you in autumn 2003. This work will be published as a practicum and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba. This information may

also be considered for future publication within planning, housing and disability journals by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Joel Casselman at () or
 Alternatively you may choose to contact Mr. Casselman's
 advisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca.

Thank you for giving up your time in filling out this questionnaire. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

I _____, am consenting to be interviewed by Joel Casselman MCP
 Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of
 Manitoba, to understand my views on the subject of visitability.

In consenting to be interviewed, I am acknowledging that my name will be kept confidential and that my opinions will only be used for academics purposes and will not be sold or used for any marketing or other commercial related purposes.

Name of Subject

Date of Signature

Respondent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Respondent's Contact Information

Sample Consent Form

For members of the City of Winnipeg's disability community

This research is being conducted by Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, as part of a practicum in the completion of a Master's Degree in City Planning. The University of Manitoba's Human Ethics Committee has approved the conduct of this research.

This particular study is being conducted in order to find out the opinions of the members of the City of Winnipeg's disability community towards visitability. The information gained from this group interview will be integrated with the results from other studies in developing a hypothetical visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

Your individual identities will be kept confidential. All research data will be stored in a private and secured place until such time as publications or other media arising from the research have come to fruition, at which time the research materials will be destroyed.

With your permission, the interview will be audio recorded to facilitate analysis of the material at a later date. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary; you may choose to withdraw from this study at any time, and/or refrain from answering any questions without prejudice or consequence.

In addition, individual members are free to decline to answer any questions and are free to withdraw from the focus group if they so desire.

If you are interested in reading the final report, it will be available for you in autumn 2003. This work will be published as a practicum and will be placed in the Architecture and Fine Arts Library at the University of Manitoba. This information may also be considered for future publication within planning, housing and disability journals by the researcher.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this questionnaire, please feel free to contact the researcher, Joel Casselman at _____) or _____

Alternatively you may choose to contact Mr. Casselman's advisor, Dr. Rae Bridgman at (204) 474-7179 or bridgman@cc.umanitoba.ca. Thank you for giving up your time in filling out this questionnaire. Your responses are very valuable to this research project and are greatly appreciated.

I _____, am consenting to be interviewed by Joel Casselman MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba, to understand my views on the subject of visitability.

In consenting to be interviewed, I am acknowledging that my name will be kept confidential and that my opinions will only be used for academics purposes and will not be sold or used for any marketing or other commercial related purposes.

Name of Subject

Date of Signature

Respondent's Signature

Researcher's Signature

Respondent's Contact Information

ETHICS REVIEW CONCERNS

Towards A Visitability Housing Ordinance for the City of Winnipeg

Investigator: Joel Casselman, MCP Candidate, Department of City Planning, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba.
Supervisor: Rae Bridgman

The purpose of this research is to gain an understanding of the experiences and perspectives of various groups regarding the possibility of a visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg. Visitability is a form of housing in which all homes have a level entrance, wider doorways and hallways, and an accessible washroom on the main floor. The purpose of this form of housing is to allow basic access for a person in a wheelchair, even if that individual does not reside at the home, hence the term "visitability".

The research will be conducted entirely through questionnaires and interviews. The subjects will be from four different groups. These different groups are detailed below.

The first group will consist of representatives of 3-5 housing agencies in the United States where visitability has been implemented as ordinance (there are no Canadian precedents). These representatives will be given questionnaires (sent through the postal service) that will ask about their experiences and perspectives regarding the visitability policies in their jurisdictions.

The second participants will be representatives from the City of Winnipeg's Access Advisory Committee. The members of this committee will be asked their

perspective on visitability and the role that the committee could play if a visitability ordinance were to be implemented in the City of Winnipeg.

The third participant will be either a representative from either a local private housing developer or the local builders association. This individual will be asked about the perspective on visitability from the construction and development industry and how the industry would react to the possibility of a visitability ordinance in Winnipeg.

The final participants will be 2 focus groups, each consisting of 8 to 10 members of Winnipeg's disability community. These consumers will take part in a discussion as to how they are able to access the homes of their non-disabled peers and how the current housing designs allow them (or disallow them) to visit the homes of their non-disabled peers. From this it will be determined how residents of Winnipeg with mobility disabilities are able to access the homes of others and how the built housing environment discriminates against them due to its design features.

The benefits to the participants would be to raise awareness of the concept of visitability and its benefits among the members of the 3 latter groups. The only possible negativity of the research is that it may make participants more painfully aware of the inaccessibility of most forms of private housing.

If this organization is either unwilling or unable to serve as a medium for recruiting consumers, then the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies (CCSD) could serve as an alternate medium. As is the case with Ten Ten Sinclair, the CCSD is a Winnipeg based organization that deals with disability related issues; unlike Ten Ten Sinclair, its mandate is more broad and abstract. The CCSD is concerned with research, education and dissemination of information on disability issues and the full and equal participation of people with disabilities in all aspects of society (CCSD 2002).

Given that visitability is a disability related issue, and that it is an issue that requires research, it falls under the CCSD's concerns; the CCSD would also be an ideal medium to recruit consumers for the proposed focus groups. The CCSD is also linked to the University of Manitoba (through several faculties which are concerned with disability research and the inclusion of disability studies in the curriculum). Given that the proposed research will be conducted by a University of Manitoba student, and overseen by University of Manitoba Faculty, these links would make the CCSD an ideal medium for recruiting consumers as focus group participants. The CCSD can be contacted at; Canadian Centre on Disability Studies, 56 The Promenade, Winnipeg, MB, R3B 3H9. Phone (204) 287-8411 FAX (204) 284-5343, email: ccds@disabilitystudies.ca, website <http://www.disabilitystudies.ca>.

The purpose of each these interviews will be to determine the experiences and attitudes of interested parties towards visitability. These attitudes are crucial in determining the viability of a visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

First, the experiences which other jurisdictions that have currently implemented

visitability housing policies will be determined. This will determine the potential impact that visitability could have on the City of Winnipeg as well as aid in assessing the experiences (both positive and negative) encountered in designing and implementing a visitability ordinance.

Second, the experiences encountered by people with disabilities will assess the impact that non-accessible housing has on people with disabilities being able to visit and interact with their able bodied peers as well as the impact that developing a disability can have on one's living arrangements.

Third, the attitudes expressed by the City's Access Advisory committee towards visitability will determine the role that public participation can have on the design and implementation of a visitability ordinance.

Finally, the attitude of the property development industry will determine any possible obstacles that may be encountered in the attempts to implement a visitability housing ordinance. The results of this research will aid in determining the characteristics of a potential visitability housing ordinance for the City of Winnipeg.

APPENDIX B**STAKEHOLDER GROUPS IN A POTENTIAL VISITABILITY ORDINANCE****DISABILITY RELATED ORGANIZATIONS****Society for Manitobans with Disabilities**

825 Sherbrook St
info@smd.mb.ca
975-3010

TenTen Sinclair Housing

1010 Sinclair St.
339-9268
info@tenten.mb.ca

Disabled Peoples' International

287-8010
moira@dpi.org

Council of Canadians with Disabilities

947-0303
ccd@pcs.mb.ca

Manitoba League of Persons with Disabilities

943-6099
mlpd@shawcable.com

First Nations Disability Office

953-0310
fndafndo@lycos.com

Canadian Paraplegic Association

786-4753

winnipeg@canparaplegic.org

Cerebral Palsy Association

982-4842

cpam@autobahn.mv.ca

Fokus Housing

339-9268

dvanettinger@tenten.mb.ca

Multiple Sclerosis Society of Manitoba

943-9595

info.manitoba@mssociety.ca**Housing Related Organizations****Habitat For Humanity Winnipeg**

75 Archibald Street

Winnipeg MB R2J 0V7

Phone: 204-233-5160

Fax: 204-233-5271

North End Housing Project

40 Parr St.

Winnipeg, MB

R2W 5C3

Phone: 953-1895

Fax: 953-1896

Spence Neighbourhood Association

430 Langside Street

Winnipeg

R3E 0N4

Lazarus Housing

514 Maryland Street,

Winnipeg, Manitoba

R3G 1M5

(204) 775-4929

West Broadway Development Corporation:

640 Broadway
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Canada R3C 0X3
Phone: (204) 784-1560
Fax: (204) 779-2203

Winnipeg Housing Rehab. Corp.

104-60 Frances Street
Winnipeg, MB R3A 1B5
Phone: 949-2886
Fax: 947-9183
E-mail: sgrande@shaw.ca

Kinew Housing Corporation

201 - 424 Logan Avenue
Winnipeg, MB R3A 0R4
Phone: 956-5093
Fax: 943-0226

Westminster Housing Society

745 Westminster Avenue
Winnipeg, Manitoba
CANADA
R3G 1A5
Phone: (204) 784-1330
Fax: (204) 784-1339

Academic-Based Disability Organizations

Canadian Centre for Disability Studies

56 The Promenade
Winnipeg, Manitoba Canada R3B 3H9
Phone: (204) 287-8411 Fax: (204) 284-5343
TTY: (204) 475-6223 E-mail: ccds@disabilitystudies.ca

University of Manitoba Centre on Aging

338 Isibster Building
 Winnipeg, Manitoba
 R3T 2N2

Tel: (204) 474-8754

Fax: (204) 474-7576

E-mail: aging@umanitoba.ca

Interdisciplinary Master's Program in Disability Studies

Room 220, Education Building, University of Manitoba
 Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
 R3T 2N2

E-mail: disability_studies@umanitoba.ca

Telephone: (204) 474-7017

Partners Program

Room 200 Architecture II Building
 Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba
 Winnipeg, Manitoba
 R3T 2N2

Phone: (204) 474-6801

Fax: (204) 474-7533

E-mail: pparch@cc.umanitoba.ca

Other Potential Stakeholders**Prairie Architects, Inc. (Designers of the Northern Model House)**

200- 141 Bannatyne Avenue
 Winnipeg, Manitoba.
 R3B 0R3

Phone: (204) 956-0938

Fax: (204) 943-5597

http://www.prairiearchitects.ca

Manitoba Home Builders Association

1-1420 Clarence Avenue
 Phone (204) 925-2560

E-mail: info@homebuilders.mb.ca

http://www.homebuilders.mb.ca/

Government Departments and Agencies

Manitoba Family Services and Housing

Housing Division

201 - 280 Broadway

Winnipeg MB R3C 0V8

Phone: (204) 945-3038

Email: housing@gov.mb.ca

Winnipeg Housing and Homelessness Initiative

361 Hargrave Street,

Winnipeg, Manitoba,

R3B 2K2

Phone: (204) 984-0589

City of Winnipeg Access Advisory Committee

Council Building, 510 Main Street

Winnipeg, MB

R3B 1B9

Telephone: (204) 986-8345

<http://www.aacwinnipeg.mb.ca/>