

ACCELERATING ACCESSIBILITY COALITION

A Tale of Two Homes: Bridging the Gap to Deliver Accessible Homes for Everyone



C O N F O U N D
F I L M S

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Introduction

The Accelerating Accessibility Coalition (AAC) is pleased to share these complementary slides to the **A Tale of Two Homes** accessible home design video (<https://www.youtube.com/user/UrbanLandToronto>).

The video is produced by ULI (Urban Land Institute) Toronto and The Daniels Corporation in partnership with videographer Nathan Sizemore and Confound Films and collaborators StopGap Foundation and AccessNow.



Introduction

The video is funded by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) under the National Housing Strategy Demonstrations Initiative. The views expressed are the personal views of the author and CMHC accepts no responsibility for them.

Special thanks to participants Luke Anderson, Neisha Mitchell, Kate Chung, Doug Buck, and Jake Cohen, and contributors Maayan Ziv, Linda Weichel, and Megan Aird.



Introduction

This video demonstrates:

- how the vast majority of new condo or rental homes create barriers for people with disabilities and aging Canadians
- what helps make these homes more habitable and visitable and the difference it makes.



Situation

The vast majority of new condo and rental homes built in Canada don't work for a growing percentage of older people and people with disabilities.

The Building Code requires multi-unit residential builders to make **15%** of units 'barrier free' - that don't actually meet the needs of these communities.

Yet when barriers within the built environment are removed and people with disabilities can live, work, and play to their full potential, the entire community and economy benefits.

(Rick Hansen Foundation)



Market Potential

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Market Potential

More and more Canadians are looking for homes that are accessible - that include features beyond those required to meet the building code.

Proportion of Canadians 65+ and with disabilities:

As of 2022, StatsCan reports that 7.3 million or about **19%** of Canadians were 65 and older—and could reach **20%** by 2025 and **25%** by 2059.

The prevalence of people with one or more disabilities has risen – jumping from **22%** of the Canadian population aged 15 years in 2017 to **27%** by 2022 or 8 million people - roughly one fifth of Canadians.



Market Potential

25% of Torontonians aged 15 years and older had one or more disabilities that limited them in their daily activities.

(StatsCan's 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability)

Seniors aged 65 and over are more likely than other age groups to have a disability. *(StatsCan's 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability)*

47% of Canadian adults have a temporary or permanent disability or live with someone who does *(Angus Reid Institute, 2019)*



Market Potential

Proportion of Torontonians 65+ and with disabilities:

Toronto is home to over 476,000 seniors and over 570,000 people with disabilities – totaling more than 1 million people – about **a third** of Toronto's total population.

42% of Toronto seniors over 65 indicated that they had one or more disabilities.

(StatsCan's 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability)



Market Potential

Almost half a million persons with disabilities report being unable to access the aids and assistive devices they need to live independently in their homes.

Nearly a million persons report living in core housing need, that is, in housing that is unsuitable or unaffordable for their circumstances.

(StatsCan's 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability)



Market Potential

Prospective renters or buyers care about and want to see more accessibility.

An overwhelming majority of older adults (over **85%**) would prefer to age in place within their own homes and communities.
(National Research Council)

Two-thirds of Canadians are concerned about future mobility challenges

(Angus Reid Institute, 2019)

53% want Canada-wide standards for universal access

(Angus Reid Institute, 2019)



Market Potential

Prospective renters or buyers care about and want to see more accessibility.

70% say new buildings should be universally accessible

92% believe that taxpayer funded projects should be held to the highest accessibility standards

56% prefer a priority on BOTH environmental and accessibility concerns when it comes to how taxpayer money is spent

78% believe there should be a national standard of accessibility

(Angus Reid Institute Platform Inaccessibility 2021)



Market Potential

Prospective renters or buyers care about and want to see more accessibility.

86% of Canadians believe that ensuring our buildings and spaces are accessible for people with disabilities is an urgent priority

57% of Canadians rate the level of access of the buildings where they live, work and learn as fair or poor

(National Accessibility Study, Leger, 2024)



Impact on Costs

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Little to No Additional Cost for Accessibility

There are measures beyond the building code that make a home more accessible that DO NOT cost more. They just require thinking and decisions up front.

These include:

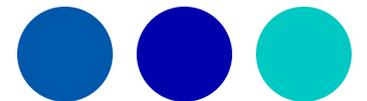
- single lever hardware or faucets
- roll-in showers
- light switch and power outlet heights
- offset plumbing under sinks
- stacked closets that can be converted into elevator shafts
- colour contrasting around doorways and between vertical and horizontal surfaces
- low-profile suite entry threshold
- lowered door viewer (peephole)



Additional Cost for Accessibility

Some measures do cost more in terms of labour or materials, such as a power door opener at entry and balcony doors, and universal kitchen appliances.

- For features that do cost more, they typically add up to **less than 1%** of the overall project budget – provided they are incorporated up front.
- A 2020 Rick Hansen Foundation (RHF) study found that the average construction cost increase to achieve RHF Accessibility Certified Gold with a score of at least 80% is estimated to be less than an additional 1% (**0.4%**) for high-rise residential or **1.8%** for affordable housing projects.



Additional Cost for Accessibility

Some measures do cost more in terms of labour or materials, such as a power door opener at entry and balcony doors, and voice-activated kitchen appliances.

A developer's sample cost estimate for a rental building shows that the costs per unit are negligibly higher to incorporate accessibility measures that go beyond the building code in 15% of the suites and interior and exterior common areas.

When these costs are spread across the building overall, the total construction costs are **0.49%** higher (based on a rental building of 302 suites where 45 (15%) are accessible beyond the building code.)



Mitigating Additional Cost for Accessibility

Designing in **adaptability** rather than full accessibility (i.e. roughed-in power door opener, blocking for grab bars, sufficient kitchen space) limits additional upfront construction costs and reduces costs at the point of sale, rental or renovation.

When measures are refined at the point of sale, the builder can either choose to absorb the cost or make it an optional charge for the buyer.



Incentives

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Incentives

As of June 2024, CMHC increased the number of points a borrower can gain for accessibility measures for rental housing under its the multi-unit mortgage loan insurance product, MLI Select (**up to 30 or 100 points**). This reduces premiums and offers longer amortization periods.

The federal \$27 billion Apartment Construction Loan Program requires **10%** of constructed units to be accessible, while the Rapid Housing Initiative requires **5%**.

Developers may better qualify and compete for public sector Requests for Proposals by showing experience in building homes that are designed with accessibility or 'aging in place' considerations and amenities.



Space Considerations

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Space Considerations

Some accessibility features reduce storage space (i.e. someone who uses a walker or wheelchair may choose to have space under kitchen and bathroom sinks / counters)

To address the loss of storage space, a builder can add space elsewhere (i.e. in kitchen island, cabinets on wheels, storage lockers, upper cabinet with pull down storage) or offer less storage.

To mitigate storage space loss, it helps to locate accessible suites in a building podium where there is a deeper floor plate and where suites tend to be larger. This closer-to-ground level location also benefits the resident.



Revenue Considerations

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Revenue Considerations

Depending on the accessibility measures included, a suite may or may not need to be larger.

- A suite that supports visual or cognitive disability and enables dexterity can be designed with no additional space requirement.
- A suite with extra space for turning radius in the front lobby and bathroom may be larger compared to a typical non-barrier free unit that is comparable otherwise.

A developer can choose to either charge more for the larger unit (keep the price per sq ft the same as a typical unit) or reduce the price per sq ft to keep the units comparable in price and more affordable.



The Bottom Line

There is a growing market for homes that are accessible beyond the building code. Additional costs for accessibility features can be negligible or dramatically lower if designed into a home up front.

Help make homes more accessible today.

Watch and share A Tale of Two Homes video (<https://www.youtube.com/user/UrbanLandToronto>).

Join the Accelerating Accessibility Coalition.

<https://toronto.uli.org/programs/the-accelerating-accessibility-coalition/>

