

# Winnipeg VisitAbility Task Force

## Intents and Standards Guidelines for VisitAble Home Design: Summary Presentation

Winnipeg VisitAbility Task Force July 2015



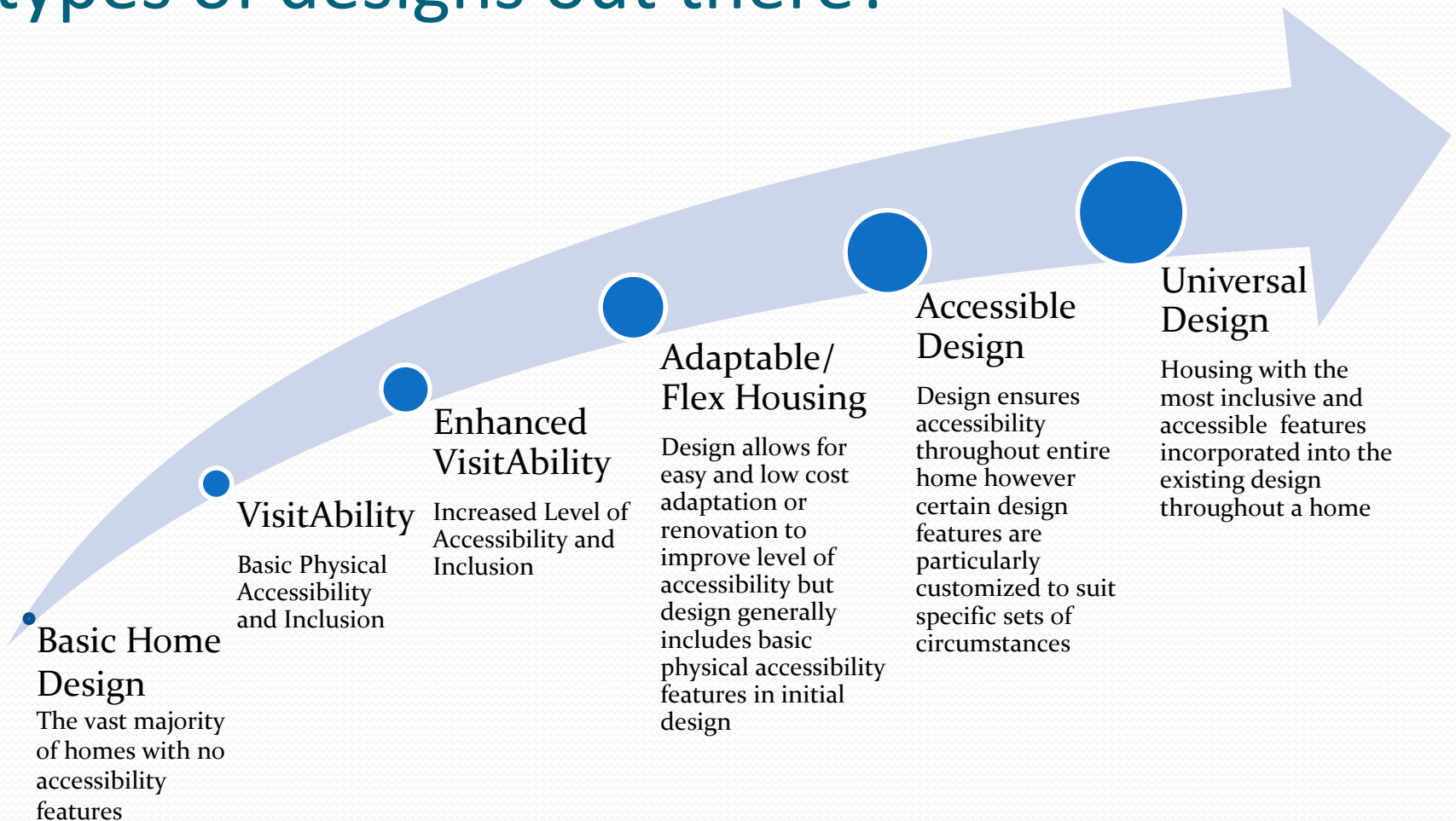
## What is VisitAbility?

- VisitAble home design, or VisitAbility, is a set of design principles meant to encourage greater inclusion in home design through the use of basic accessibility features. It is intended that a VisitAble home enables an individual, who is invited to a home for a visit, a chance to do so safely without facing physical barriers in the design of a home which would prevent this scenario.
- It is important to remember here that the word accessible does not simply mean gaining access to a particular area but also the ability to make use of an area as well. This is particularly important when we discuss washrooms in a VisitAble home.

## Who is it for?

- The level of basic accessibility presented in VisitAble design is meant to benefit as many individuals in society as possible; friends and family members of any age, parents pushing strollers, individuals using mobility aids or devices, individuals moving furniture or other large items into a home, and any individual otherwise physically encumbered for one reason or another.
- VisitAble design can also mean a home is more age-friendly for the household members themselves.
- Furthermore if an individual undergoes a temporary or a sudden permanent change in their mobility needs then a VisitAble home will still be relatively easy to return to.

# Where does VisitAbility sit in terms of other types of designs out there?



# Why is VisitAbility so important?

To name a few reasons:

- Removes barriers to friends & family members visiting
- Easy to incorporate and conceptualize
- Cost to include is very minimal if done from the onset
- Home becomes age-friendly for home owners
- Allows individuals to maintain independence and reduces likelihood of falls at the home
- Prevents individuals from separating or isolating from their community because of changes in mobility
- Easier to adapt or renovate for further increases in accessibility in the future
- Reduces some of the stresses on health care and alternative housing systems
- Allows home owners to easily return to their home in the event a sudden change to their mobility occurs
- VisitAble homes can be purchased by and sold to a wider demographic

# How is VisitAbility Achieved?

## Back to the Basics of Inclusion

1. No-Step Entry
2. Wider Doorways and Hallways on the VisitAble Floor
3. One Washroom on the VisitAble Floor
4. Overnight Space

# 1. No-Step Entry

**INTENT:** The primary intent of having a no-step entry is to allow a pathway into a dwelling that is free of barriers for any individual using a mobility aid, pushing wheeled equipment or carrying heavy loads when entering or exiting the dwelling, and to improve safety for all by minimizing the risk of tripping on any vertical rises like stairs or other obstructions.

- At least one no-step entry leading into the VisitAble home with a 5ft x 5ft (1500mm x 1500mm) level landing at the entrance.
- The no-step entry must be connected to an accessible path of travel leading from a driveway, pathway or parking area on the home property.
- Lever handles should be installed on no-step entry doors to reduce the requirement for hand strength and rotation.
- Considerations should be made in the areas of canopy protection, drainage, entrance lighting, sloping, etc.

## 2.a) Wider Doorways on VisitAble Floor in Home

**INTENT:** It is intended that the designed environment will allow freedom of movement throughout the visitable floor area for individuals to join with others in social interaction. This freedom of movement is to allow individuals, including those with mobility difficulties, to manoeuver safely while reducing the potential for surface damage to walls, doors, and door frames from accidental impacts.

- All doorways on a VisitAble floor must be 36 inches (915mm) in width at minimum.
- Doors present should have lever door handles.
- Consideration should also be made for swing clear hinges to maximize the potential width of passable space in the doorway. Pocket door setups could also be another viable option depending on the space available.



## 2.b) Wider Hallways on VisitAble Floor in Home

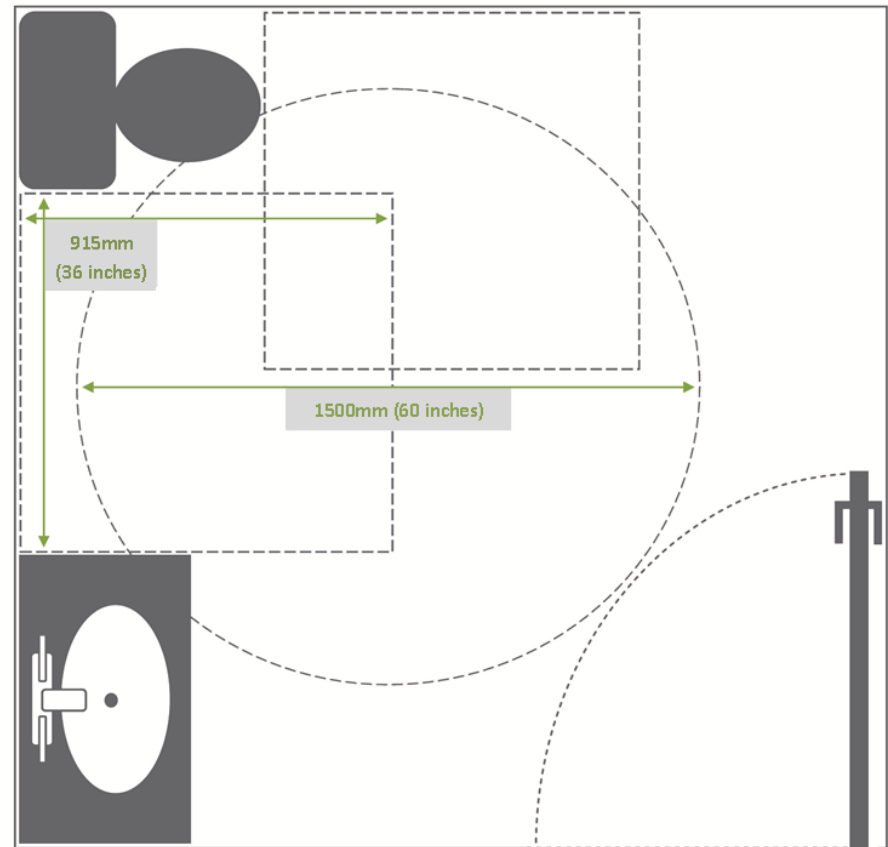
- All hallways on a VisitAble floor must be 43 inches (1100mm) in width at minimum.
- Considerations should be given for angling or rounding to provide easier freedom of movement and in the event of a dead end space, there should be room to turn around for someone using mobility aids.

### **3. One Washroom on the VisitAble Floor**

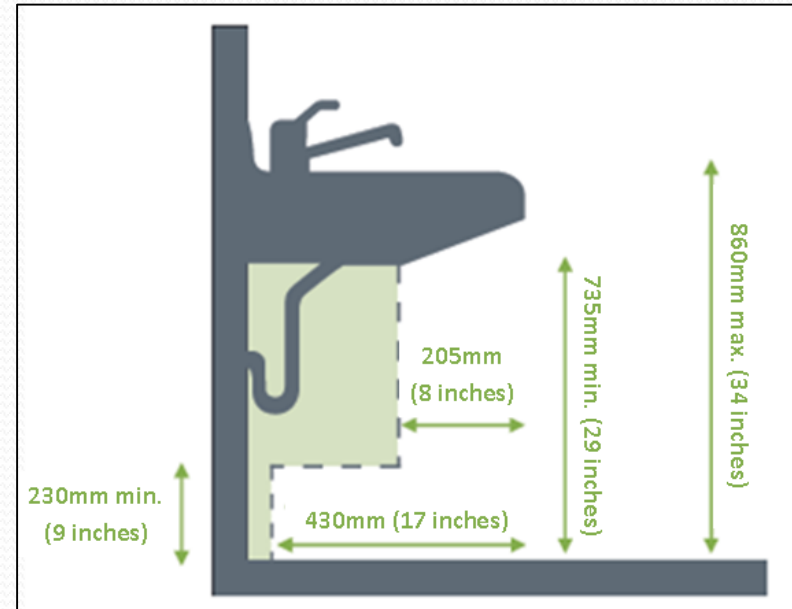
**INTENT:** Areas within washrooms in the VisitAble floor area must allow for the accommodation of individuals using basic mobility equipment such as a manual wheelchair. The intention is to provide an opportunity for an individual to manoeuvre and turn around within the washroom area safely as well as to close and open washroom doors to maintain privacy and dignity.

- A VisitAble home must have at least 1 washroom on the VisitAble floor.
- The washroom must be accessible to individuals using basic mobility equipment so that they can freely manoeuvre to open or close the washroom door behind themselves.

- There must be a minimum 60 inch (1500mm) diameter of open floor space within the washroom for an individual using mobility equipment to access a sink, vanity mirror, toilet, and grab bars where present.
- Additional minimum 36 inch (915mm) spaces must be provided beside and in front of a toilet for an individual to transfer themselves from their mobility equipment to the toilet.



- There must be a clear space provided under the vanity area for an individual to safely manoeuvre under a sink to be closer to access a sink with a lever handled faucet.
- Washroom walls must have solid wooden reinforcement between the heights of 18 (460mm) to 66 (1675mm) inches to allow for the attachment of grab bars and other fixtures.
- Grab bars should be installed behind and beside the toilet to allow an individual to transfer safely.



## Design Considerations in the Washroom

- It is recommended to have rounded edges around the sink/vanity to reduce the risk of skin abrasions or injury from accidental impacts.
- Careful thought should be made in regards to any wall accessories which may protrude out, as these could be hazards as well.
- Offset drains, single lever or hands-free faucets.
- Grab bars could also serve as towel holder bars.
- Including a shower or bathing area should be considered for a variety of reasons- (ie. visitors who stay longer, age in place friendly, better for home members with temporary injury or illness.)
- Initial toilet seat height can affect ease of transferring; simple toilet attachments can assist with raising the height.
- It is recommended to install toilets with their centreline distanced 16”-20” (400mm-500mm) away from the side wall to assist with transfer ease and grab bar proximity.
- Wall Reinforcement:
  - Plywood sheathing reinforcement recommended during build.
  - Reinforcement to the base of the wall resists piercing damage.
  - Reinforcement to heights of 72” (1830mm) allows taller grab bars.

## 4. Overnight Space

**INTENT:** To provide space to stay overnight so as to allow for fuller inclusivity. One such example is the possibility of friends or relatives who have travelled far distances to stay and visit with the owners of a dwelling for multiple days. Additionally, extreme weather events may occur suddenly and require a visitor to stay overnight to shelter from severe rain or snow storms.

This space is also to be available as an alternative accommodation for any household members who have had a change to their circumstances through the course of natural aging, illness or injury which affects their ability to access rooms on other floors within the dwelling.

- A Visitable home must have a space which can be cleared to make way for a cot, couch or bed for a guest to be able to stay overnight should they be staying for an extended period.
- The space must be in an area which can allow for it to be sectioned off by a privacy screen, curtain, or door for privacy and dignity. The space does not have to be sectioned off if the individuals do not think it necessary, but the space itself must allow the potential for privacy and dignity if chosen. This can be achieved by use of a privacy screen, curtain, door, etc.

# Overall Considerations

- If a VisitAble home owner wishes to make an additional floor VisitAble, either in the present or in the future, it is advisable to design the dwelling in such a way that considers the future installation of platform lift systems or residential elevators as well as to include consideration of the minimum doorway and hallway widths covered in section 2.
- VisitAble intents can carry on to deck or patio areas.
- Raised electrical outlets, lowered light switches and thermostats, etc....