



Inclusion
Canada

CREATING INCLUSIVE HOUSING

FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES
A HANDBOOK FOR DEVELOPERS AND FUNDERS

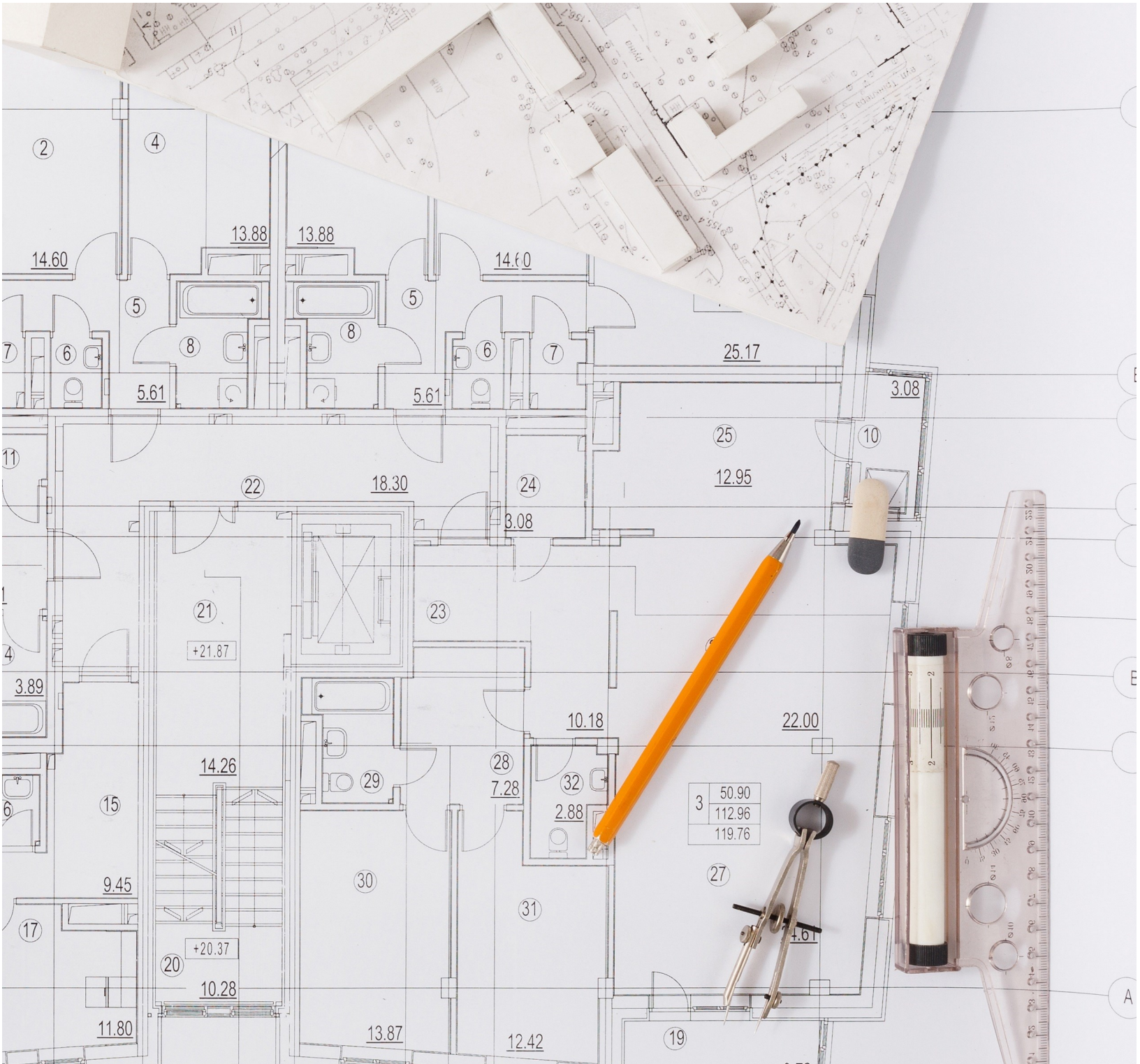


“Home is where we form our sense of self – the very stuff of our identity. We do so in close association with others. Home is also the material expression of self – a sort of scaffolding that holds us together. In our homes we see ourselves reflected back – even in the small things like a flower vase or a family picture. It is quintessentially private. And yet home is also public. Our front doors beckon others in. Outside, we engage with the community – neighbours, shopkeepers, bus drivers. They are part of who we are. Living life my way and in the community is the very essence of independent living. And home is a crucial enabler for this to happen. And home is exactly what is denied to large segments of the population.”

— **Gerard Quinn**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

“What a home means to me is choices. To come and go as you please. I’ve been told that our house is place of love and it’s a home of choice. A place where you can put the key in the door and you have full control of your life.”

— **Shane**, Self Advocate



This handbook was produced as part of My Home My Community, a national initiative of Inclusion Canada and People First of Canada.

Inclusion Canada is a national federation of 13 provincial-territorial associations and over 300 local associations working to advance the full inclusion and human rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families. Inclusion Canada is dedicated to attaining full participation in community life, ending exclusion and discrimination on the basis of intellectual disability, promoting respect for diversity, and advancing human rights to ensure equality for all Canadians. Inclusion Canada leads the way in building a more inclusive Canada for all people by strengthening families, defending rights, and transforming communities into places where everyone belongs. www.inclusioncanada.ca

People First of Canada is the national voice for people who have been labeled with an intellectual disability. We believe in the right to freedom, choice, and equality for all. We support each other to reclaim our right to be recognized as full citizens through peer support, sharing our stories, developing leadership skills, advocating for our right to choose where and with whom we live, and by ensuring that our voices are heard and respected. We work together to educate and influence communities and government to ensure that all people with an intellectual disability are fully included and supported to live as equal citizens in Canada. www.peoplefirstofcanada.ca

My Home My Community is a national partnership initiative that is opening doors to inclusive affordable housing for people with intellectual disabilities. My Home My Community is driving innovation in housing development and community supports to ensure all people with an intellectual disability have a home that offers choice and affordability, recognizes rights, addresses support needs, and fosters inclusion in the community. www.myhomemycommunity.ca

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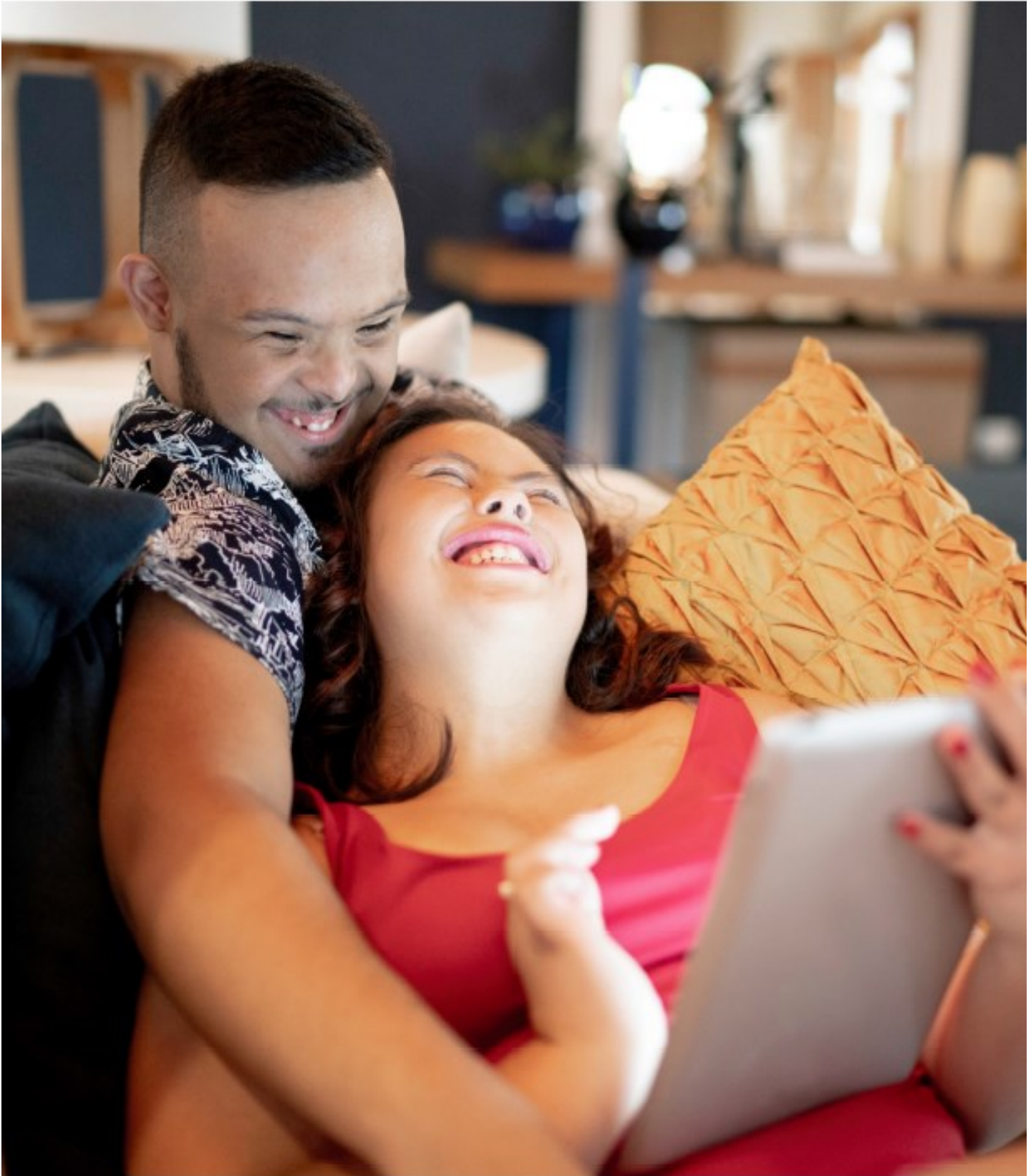
Acknowledgments

Inclusion Canada would like to acknowledge the families of people with intellectual disabilities, self-advocates, and allies who have worked tirelessly to deinstitutionalize housing and ensure all people with intellectual disabilities have a home that gives them choice, freedom, safety, and inclusion in their community. Their contributions have enabled the knowledge and foundation on which this work builds.

We would also like to commend the Government of Canada for adopting a human-rights approach to housing and continuing work to realize this commitment.

Inclusion Canada also recognizes the First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples on whose traditional land housing development takes place, and on which the work to develop this handbook was carried out. The commitment shared by many diverse Indigenous peoples to make decisions today that positively impact future generations offers important wisdom and guidance as we consider the evolution of housing for people with intellectual disabilities in Canada, and work to create more inclusive housing now, and for those who come after us.





Foreword


Home is a universal and basic human need that impacts all areas of our lives. Our homes are more than just a roof over our head — they shape who we interact with in our day-to-day lives and how we work, play, rest, and pursue what matters to us. While housing varies across the world, the meaning of home is constant. It's the place where we experience love as a child, grow and go out into the world. Eventually we create a home of our own that reflects who we are as unique individuals.

The specific characteristics of a home have an even bigger impact for people with intellectual disabilities and others who face barriers to inclusion. Ideally, our home should be our launchpad for engaging with the community around us.

Yet for too many people with intellectual disabilities, the true essence of home has been denied or negated by placing them in congregated and segregated facilities or housing, such as institutions and group homes. Places not individually chosen as a home of one's own but rather placements which create barriers to choice, freedom, and full participation in community.

People with an intellectual disability, their families, and allies have long worked to create housing options that foster inclusion and the true essence of home as housing is constructed but home is built from the heart. Inclusion Canada is pleased to share this handbook to advance the evolution of how we think about and design housing that enables and supports inclusion.

Across Canada there are people with an intellectual disability who as individuals, couples, roommates and with the support of family have found housing in which to create a home. They make decisions to own or rent; live in a condo, apartment, townhome, single family home; live near a bus stop or Light Rail Transit (LRT); live near amenities that are important to them; live downtown, in the suburbs or a small rural town; close to work or not; and safe, etc. However, this is only true for a small proportion of individuals with developmental disabilities, and it needs to be true for every person with an intellectual disability, just as we aspire for this to be true for all Canadians.



As this Guide illustrates, we need (new) partnerships between developers, their funders, Inclusion Canada and its member associations to create affordable, accessible, distributed and designated housing for individuals with disabilities that fosters inclusion and the security and belonging that comes with having a place to call your own. Housing that is integrated and distributed within housing developments available to all; not separate facilities or congregate living arrangements on the basis of individuals (someone) having an intellectual disability.

This handbook was developed as part of My Home My Community, a national initiative to improve access to inclusive, affordable housing for people with intellectual disabilities. My Home My Community is a partnership of Inclusion Canada, a national federation of 13 provincial-territorial associations and over 300 local associations working to advance the full inclusion and human rights of people with an intellectual disability and their families, and People First of Canada, the national voice for people who have been labeled with an intellectual disability. This handbook was developed through a robust process including research on the relationship between housing and inclusion; input from people with intellectual disabilities, their families, and those who support them; and input from individuals with technical subject matter expertise in policy, disability, health and housing.

While this handbook helps us take a big step forward, the guidance it offers is neither radical nor revolutionary. Rather, this guidance reflects the basic features that all of us need to experience a housing environment that promotes our autonomy and participation in the world around us — features that have the greatest impact for people with intellectual disabilities who face barriers to inclusion. When we design inclusive, affordable and accessible housing and communities, we create environments that benefit everyone.

Krista Carr

Executive Vice-President, Inclusion Canada

Introduction

PURPOSE OF THIS HANDBOOK

This handbook offers concrete guidance for developers and funders of housing projects on specific actions that can be taken to build more inclusive housing. Canada’s National Housing Strategy recognizes housing as “a cornerstone of inclusive communities.” Many of us share this recognition, as well as a desire to see more inclusive communities. Yet until now, there has been little guidance about what inclusive housing actually looks like, and how to realize this vision. This handbook addresses this gap.

Developers and funders play a critical role in the creation of inclusive housing. Decisions about things like where to build, the physical features of a building, or who is considered and involved in the design of a development can have big impacts on the day-to-day life of future residents — and how attractive a development is for renters or buyers looking for a home that will set them up to live the life they want and be included in their community. This handbook can be used interchangeably whether you are a level of government, department or agency considering a housing development request for funding or a developer in the stages of planning a housing development. Planning and funding questions are relevant in all circumstances. This guide contains useful factors and prompts to help determine if a planned or envisioned housing development would enable inclusive housing.

Many people with an intellectual disability are in search of a home they can call their own. Yet their housing options are often limited due to affordability and accessibility — thus inhibiting their inclusion and relegating them to congregation and segregated facilities and group homes. When the right design features and costs are in place, however, people with intellectual disabilities can make choices just like anyone else about where and how they will live in the community. Just as Canadians without disabilities need plumbers, cable installers or repair persons to sustain their homes and others may need access to car-pooling or childcare to work, individuals with an intellectual disability may need personal supports or assistance in their homes or to work. These needed supports, in effect, follow the person and it is no longer necessary to group people with disabilities on the basis of where the supports are located but to have the supports directed (available) to them in their own homes. These elements are neither complex nor revolutionary — we simply need to be intentional about including them. And when we do, we not only expand housing options for an underserved market — we also create housing that is more attractive, offers more stability, and provides opportunities for inclusion and richer quality of life to everyone.





This handbook provides practical advice for developers and funders on steps that can be taken to make a housing development more inclusive. Developers and funders aren't the only ones with a role to play in creating inclusive housing. Here's how your role fits in with the work of other key partners:

Developers can make decisions about a housing development's physical characteristics, location, financial model, partnerships, and design process that together promote safety, accessibility, affordability, autonomy, and opportunities for social interaction for residents.

Provincial and federal governments can provide funding and incentives that make it easier for developers to build inclusive housing that is affordable and accessible, rent subsidies for an individual with a disability, individualized support dollars to enable people to access the supports that fit their lives and the provision of land for development.

Municipalities can provide land and incentives that make it easier for developers to build inclusive housing, and shape the creation of local neighbourhoods that foster inclusion for all residents.

Non-profit organizations that provide support services to people with an intellectual disability can provide people with intellectual disabilities with the support they need to live interdependently in their own homes, participate in community, access housing subsidies, and facilitate connections that can help promote inclusion. Non-profits can also provide advice to developers and funders on what inclusive housing looks like, and how to implement it on a practical level.

Individuals with an intellectual disability and their families are experts in what works and what doesn't work when it comes to promoting inclusion through housing. They can provide important firsthand insights into the design of a development to make sure it succeeds in promoting inclusion within a specific context.

WHY INCLUSION MATTERS

Inclusion is a powerful concept that can define both how you see yourself and how others will see you, to how your life will evolve over time. Research shows when people experience inclusion, they live longer, healthier lives, with fewer mental and physical health challenges. Inclusion also impacts our access to services and basic necessities of life, our opportunities for social interaction, and our ability to spend our time doing the things we care about — components that together make up our quality of life. When people are included in society, they are able to give back and actively participate in the life of their community — whether through economic participation, volunteering, or lending a helping hand to neighbours.

Inclusion promotes health, wellbeing, and belonging — key components of what it means to thrive. Inclusion also allows us to benefit from the diverse contributions of others — contributions that we only get to experience when people with intellectual disabilities are able to fully participate in all aspects of everyday life. Inclusion happens when the lives of people with intellectual disabilities unfold no differently than those of people without disabilities — when they are immersed together with their peers without disabilities in the same pathways and experiences of life common to us all.





What is inclusive housing?

Inclusive housing is about how where you live impacts your participation in the larger community. Housing can either create or remove barriers to inclusion. If your house has a leaky roof in the kitchen, you're not likely to invite friends over for dinner. If you don't feel safe in your neighbourhood, you're less likely to go out for a walk. If you're constantly worried about having to move, you're less likely to try to put down roots in your community. Our homes are the basis from which we access schools and jobs, make personal connections to friends, family and neighbours, rest and recharge, and pursue the things that matter to us. And the characteristics of our home environment impact our ability to do these things. For people who already face barriers to inclusion, this impact is even greater.

Housing inclusivity is the degree to which a housing development is likely to either foster or hinder inclusion for its residents. Inclusive housing considers not just the building, but its location, access to services, the extent to which people who live in it have the supports they require — and the ways in which their housing situation impacts different areas of their lives. More inclusive housing makes it easier to participate in the community and do ordinary, everyday things, like having a meal delivered from your favourite restaurant, taking care of a pet, or choosing who can come over to visit you and how long they can stay. Inclusive housing is all about choice: the choice to live where you want, the choice to live with whom you want, the ability to come and go as you want, and its about having the supports that you may need follow you as an individual not being tied to the building or unit in which you live.

ELEMENTS OF INCLUSIVE HOUSING

The basic elements of inclusive housing can be thought of as the areas in which an individual person experiences day-to-day life. The decisions housing developers and funders make about a project play a role in all of these areas. These areas include:

1. **Dwelling** — the home (unit) in which someone lives.
2. **Structure** — the building that contains someone's home.
3. **Neighbourhood** — the area and community around the home, where residents do errands like grocery shopping and see familiar faces.
4. **Partnerships** — partnering with a non-profit community organization who can facilitate important considerations to help in the development and planning for inclusive housing.



How do we build inclusive housing?

This section provides practical guidance on actions that developers and funders can take within each of the four areas to make a housing development more inclusive. These actions also make a housing development more livable for all potential residents — and more attractive to potential buyers or renters.

“Home to me is where I can live in peace. When I wake up, I don’t have someone right there telling me what to do, but I come in and feel comfortable. My friend and I rented a place — it was our decision and our choice. And when we got that, it was exciting — there were tears of joy.”

— **Kory**, Self Advocate

1. DWELLING

If a person’s dwelling is not affordable, they may struggle to maintain their housing, worry about having to move, or use money for rent that they need for other things — making them less likely to try to build relationships in their community, or unable to afford certain social activities, like going to a movie for or out for dinner. Additionally, issues related to unaffordability, such as repair difficulties or the stigma associated with poor housing quality, can make someone less likely to encourage visitors and create negative health outcomes that limit their ability to be social.

A dwelling is a resident’s immediate living environment. The size, type and condition of a dwelling therefore has a significant impact on the day-to-day life of those who live in it. For example, if a person with mobility challenges lives in a dwelling that is not sufficiently physically accessible, they will have a hard time moving around in their home and leaving their home. The concept of visitable housing provides for construction that enables people with physical disabilities to visit family and friends.



Dwelling checklist:

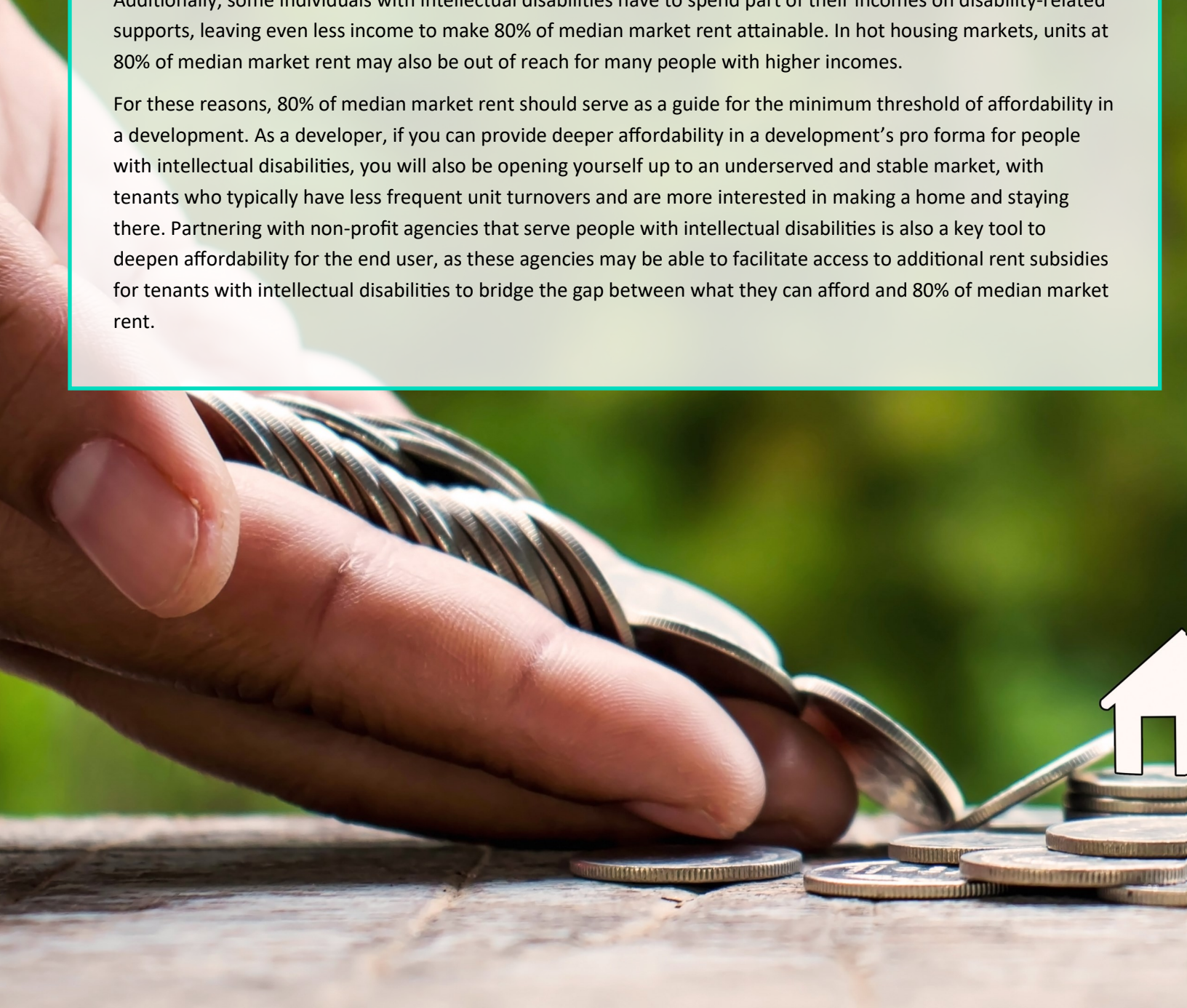
- Affordability:** All dwellings designated for people with disabilities should be affordable. This means that they should be no more than 80% of median market rents for unit type, in alignment with the National Housing Strategy’s definition of affordable housing. Additionally, since people with disabilities are more than twice as likely to live on a low-income when compared to people without disabilities, developers should look for a non-profit partner who can increase the depth of affordability for residents with disabilities by investing in the project or arranging for other sources of funding. See Partnerships later in this guide.
- Clear opening width at all main floor interior doors:** All doorways on the main floor of the dwelling should be wide enough to easily accommodate a wheelchair.
- No-step entry:** The main entrance to the dwelling should be on the same level as the area outside the unit, with no steps required to enter the dwelling.
- Main floor half-bath with turning circle:** There should be a bathroom on the main floor of the dwelling that includes a toilet and sink, and the bathroom should be large enough for someone using a wheelchair to easily enter, exit, and move within the bathroom.

In addition to the principles of universal design ([CMHC Universal Design](#)), the last three features above are part of what CMHC considers “visitable homes” — dwellings that allow people with disabilities, parents pushing strollers, and seniors or others with mobility issues to enter and exit a home as easily as everyone else, and interact inside without needing assistance. More information from CMHC on these features — and how they are becoming increasingly popular with homebuyers — can be found [here](#).

Affordability and inclusive housing

While the National Housing Strategy identifies housing affordability as being less than 80% of median market rent, what affordability means in practice varies widely for different people and communities. Because many individuals with intellectual disabilities rely on government income assistance, their incomes are typically very stable but low. Additionally, some individuals with intellectual disabilities have to spend part of their incomes on disability-related supports, leaving even less income to make 80% of median market rent attainable. In hot housing markets, units at 80% of median market rent may also be out of reach for many people with higher incomes.

For these reasons, 80% of median market rent should serve as a guide for the minimum threshold of affordability in a development. As a developer, if you can provide deeper affordability in a development's pro forma for people with intellectual disabilities, you will also be opening yourself up to an underserved and stable market, with tenants who typically have less frequent unit turnovers and are more interested in making a home and staying there. Partnering with non-profit agencies that serve people with intellectual disabilities is also a key tool to deepen affordability for the end user, as these agencies may be able to facilitate access to additional rent subsidies for tenants with intellectual disabilities to bridge the gap between what they can afford and 80% of median market rent.





“Home means to me, having my own place completely free and relaxed. And I do the things that I want to do.”

— Gail, Self Advocate

2. STRUCTURE

No matter what form your project takes: detached homes, a smaller building that contains multiple apartments, a large building, or a series of townhouses, the structure that contains someone’s home influences things like how easy and safe it is for them to move through the space immediately outside their unit and interact with neighbours in the development. If the structure has been designed to facilitate spontaneous or planned interaction among residents, residents have more opportunity for social connection. Additionally, how individual homes are organized and dispersed throughout the development can have a significant impact on inclusion for residents. If people with intellectual disabilities are clustered together in one designated area, they are more likely to experience stigmatization and marginalization, whereas if their homes are dispersed throughout the development, a resident with an intellectual disability is more likely to be seen simply as a neighbour. Promoting safety is also foundational to allowing residents to feel comfortable in the space immediately outside their home and take advantage of opportunities for social interaction.

Structure checklist:

- Dwellings designated for people with intellectual disabilities:** Designating units for people with intellectual disabilities within a project is a critical way to provide people with intellectual disabilities with more housing options and choice over where they live. At the same time, when a project provides dwellings only to people with intellectual disabilities, tenants with intellectual disabilities are effectively segregated and are more likely to experience marginalization. Structures should include a mix of dwellings designated for people with and without intellectual disabilities, and units for people without intellectual disabilities should represent the diversity of a local community, rather than housing people with intellectual disabilities exclusively alongside other people who face barriers to inclusion or have support needs (e.g., seniors).
- Congregation of dwellings:** Units for people with intellectual disabilities should not be congregated. Dwellings designated for people with intellectual disabilities should be dispersed throughout the project, rather than clustered together. This provides more opportunity for tenants with and without intellectual disabilities to interact with one another and for people with intellectual disabilities to participate in the broader life of the development they live in. It also helps to reduce stigma often associated with congregated disability-specific units. In multi-floor buildings, dwellings designated for people with intellectual disabilities should be distributed across floors. In other types of development structures, such as a townhouse development, dwellings designated for people with intellectual disabilities should be dispersed among other dwellings for people without disabilities.
- Proportions are important:** It is critical to get the proportions of the designated units right. There is no standard formula but the primary basis for proportionality (i.e., how many dwelling units in a development would be designated for people with an intellectual disability) is the proportion of people with intellectual disabilities in general. People with intellectual disabilities represent 1-2% of the population and proportions that would be substantially above these numbers within a development will unconsciously and consciously work against the principle of inclusion and erect barriers.
- Lighting plans:** Lighting is a critical component of building safety and navigation in different circumstances. Interior and exterior lighting deters criminal behaviour and provides reassurance for people with intellectual



disabilities and others who may feel vulnerable in public spaces. Proper lighting promotes the safety and comfort of all residents and makes residents more likely to take advantage of building amenities and common spaces. Safety lighting plans should be incorporated into the design of a structure. As specific lighting requirements may vary for different structures and locations, this is an opportunity to incorporate participation and input from people with intellectual disabilities and others who face barriers to inclusion who may be living in a planned development.

- **Lobby as social connection point:** Lobbies are the areas that welcome residents and guests into a building, and can offer some of the most natural opportunities for social interaction. Small, relatively inexpensive lobby features — such as a seating area where two individuals may strike up a conversation — can go a long way in promoting inclusion. If a lobby is not applicable to a development structure, consider prioritizing other forms of common space identified below, such as outdoor social gathering space.
- **Common space:** Alongside lobbies, other types of common space are important for promoting inclusion and opportunities for residents to participate in social activities and make new connections. The types of common areas included in a structure will depend on the size of the structure and other site-specific factors. However, the following types of common space have been identified as having positive impacts on inclusion, and most in demand among potential renters and homebuyers:
 - Outdoor social gathering space
 - Kitchen available for community events
 - Green space
 - Play space for children
 - Common space unlocked when not formally in use

8 Signs you may be building a group home instead of Inclusive Housing

For far too long, congregated settings have been the only housing option for people with intellectual disabilities. Over the last several decades, individuals with intellectual disabilities, their families, and allies have made crucial progress to provide people with intellectual disabilities with the same housing options as everyone else. While we've come a long way from institutions to housing options in the community, all too often people with intellectual disabilities are still segregated from the broader community in group homes. Group homes may provide people with intellectual disabilities with an adequate level of supports, although likely not ideal but also at the expense of their autonomy, choice, dignity, inclusion in the broader community and most importantly the essence of a true home we know to be essential to the human spirit. As a developer or funder, here are some things you can look out for and avoid that indicate a housing development is starting to resemble a group home rather than a truly inclusive housing situation:

1. If the building can be or is known as a home for people with intellectual disabilities: If a neighbour walking by can point and know "There's the home for...", this likely means residents are segregated and will experience marginalization, rather than being included in the community as neighbours.
2. If the building only houses people with support needs or people who are marginalized: People with intellectual disabilities should have choice over where they live, who they live with, and opportunities for social connection with other diverse people. They should not be forced to live in a building that is entirely comprised of other people with intellectual disabilities or residents with support needs (e.g., people in need of shelter).
3. If people with intellectual disabilities are congregated together within the building: Even if a building is home to diverse array of people, people with intellectual disabilities are still likely to experience segregation and marginalization if their dwellings are congregated together within the building (e.g., on



one designated floor of a building).

4. If supports cannot be separated from the housing: If people with intellectual disabilities have to live in the building in order to access supports, they do not have meaningful choice over where they live and their home environment.
5. If there is a lack of private space: People with intellectual disabilities should have their own bathroom and kitchen within their unit rather than having to share communal areas with other people with intellectual disabilities.
6. If residents are required to participate in the same daily routine: If people with intellectual disabilities living in different units are required to follow the same daily schedule of activities (e.g., all residents having to eat meals at the same time), they do not have full control and autonomy over their day-to-day lives and home environment.
7. If residents cannot control who comes and goes into their home: People with intellectual disabilities should have their own key and choice over who visits their home, including being able to invite people over – including overnight – or deny entry to someone they do not want in their home.
8. If residents cannot come and go as they please: Building features or policies that place restrictions on the movement and activities of people with Intellectual disabilities (e.g., curfew) limit autonomy and range of opportunities for social interaction.



“The first time that I got my own apartment, it was relief. Having a key to my own place and paying my own rent.”

— Valerie, Self Advocate

3. NEIGHBOURHOOD

Location is a big part of our housing choices and quality of life, and many of us look for the same things in location: Proximity to services and amenities, safety, and being able to get where we need to go with ease. A livable neighbourhood is also about our ability to actively participate and be included in the life of our community. We want our neighbourhoods to provide natural opportunities to form social connections, whether that is with our neighbours, the people we interact with in places like coffee shops or where we volunteer, or familiar faces we might see on the street. For people with intellectual disabilities and others who face barriers to inclusion, these neighbourhood characteristics have an even bigger impact on inclusion. For example, people with intellectual disabilities are more likely to be victims of crime and less likely to drive cars, so a safe neighbourhood with access to transportation is especially important for people with intellectual disabilities.

Alongside the things many of us look for in a neighbourhood, we also all have our own preferences and priorities about where we want to live. For some people, that can mean living downtown, close to a wide range of services and amenities; for others, it can mean living closer to nature in a rural area or closer to family. If some important neighbourhood characteristics are missing from your housing development (e.g., access to public transit), you can promote inclusion by building up other areas (e.g., a partnership to provide residents with access to transportation services). Participation from organization representing people with intellectual disabilities can help you identify how to plan for inclusion based on the specific neighbourhood in which you are developing housing.

Neighbourhood checklist:

- Walkability:** Living in a neighbourhood with services and amenities within walking distance is especially important for people who are unable to afford or drive a car, which often includes people with intellectual disabilities. A pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood may also be more accessible for people who use wheelchairs or have mobility challenges. These characteristics can be evaluated by the Walk Score for a housing, development (WalkScore.com). If a development has a lower walk score or is in a rural area, then more emphasis should be placed on the other elements of this checklist.
- Crime rate:** Safety is foundational to health and wellbeing for all of us. When we feel safe in our community, we are more likely to participate in it and appreciate where we live. Canadians with disabilities are almost twice as likely to be victims of violent crime and are also more likely to experience victimization by others. You can evaluate the safety of a neighbourhood based on neighbourhood crime rates and the Crime Severity Index, which identifies the relative seriousness of crime offences and tracks changes in crime severity. If a neighbourhood appears to be less safe, then more emphasis should be placed on safety elements like community organizations engaging in partnerships for inclusion and lighting plans in the neighbourhood.
- Access to public transit:** Access to public transit is a quality many of us look for in our neighbourhood, especially



if we don't own a car and need to access schools, jobs, activities or services that are not within walking distance of our home. For people with intellectual disabilities, public transit is often their only option for getting around. Public transit is also typically more affordable than owning a car, which is especially important for people with disabilities, who are more than twice as likely to live on a low-income compared to people without disabilities. Faraway transit stops or infrequent routes can make it difficult for people to get to a transit stop or their final destination. Access to public transit can be evaluated through Transit Score ratings. In rural areas without a robust transit system, you can look for availability of other public transportation options, such as ride shares, or organizations or individuals who can provide custom transportation arrangements. This is also something a non-profit partner can help with.

- **Access to accessible public transit:** Public transportation that is accessible is even more critical for people with intellectual disabilities, many of whom may have issues with mobility and require wheelchair accessibility or aids for visual or hearing impairments. You can determine whether a development is close to accessible public transportation services by doing a scan of accessible transit (e.g., Google search, calling local transit agency to inquire about accessible services available for future residents of your development). In rural areas, accessibility should be considered as you look for other publicly available transportation options or custom arrangements.
- **Organizations in the neighbourhood ready to work with housing developers and providers to facilitate community connections and access to disability-related or other supports:** Community organizations offer important opportunities for people to participate in social, recreational, and economic activities and access the services and supports they need. Community organizations play an even greater role in fostering inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities and others who may not have the same opportunities for social interaction, or who require support in order to be able to participate in the community. If these kinds of community organizations are not present in the neighbourhood your development is in, then it is especially important to build up the other checklist items across all the areas of inclusive housing.

4. PARTNERSHIPS

Partnering with a non-profit community organization that advocates for people with intellectual disabilities is a great way to create housing for people with intellectual disabilities, and a way to access municipal and federal incentives that lower the capital and time requirements for a project – increasing affordability for all future residents.

Good intentions don't always result in what we were aiming for. The same is true when it comes to designing inclusive housing. While the above guidance reflects current practices based on research and input from people with intellectual disabilities, people in their networks, and individuals with subject matter expertise, there is no one-size-fits-all design that can account for the diverse needs and preferences of people with intellectual disabilities, or the ways that the requirements of inclusive housing may need to be adapted to a specific building or location. The advocacy organizations representing people with intellectual disabilities and their families have critical firsthand insights to offer into the design of housing that succeeds in achieving inclusion for its residents. These organizations often have access to people, such as architects knowledgeable in accessibility design. Involving them can help you discover specific ways to promote inclusion, accessibility, and opportunities for social connection that take into account the uniqueness of a specific site and the people who will one day live in it. Many of these design elements, which are strengthened through ensuring housing will be inclusive, are also the qualities that make a development more attractive overall to potential renters and homebuyers.

If the site is designed and built from the ground up in partnership with an organization with a proven commitment to inclusion and track record in inclusion being realized, then individuals with intellectual disabilities will have the choice of where to live in establishing their home in community. If this is repeated across developers and developments than we will all be working toward the day when this is true for the majority of individuals with intellectual disabilities and not just a minority.

A non-profit community organization may bring solutions to figuring out the economics of the development so that designated units can be offered at substantially below market rates while the developer continues to make a profit.

A developer who is interested in developing Inclusive housing options may want to know that individuals will be supported and have the necessary support needs to live inclusively. A non-profit community organization would bring this to the partnership and would work with the individuals to ensure the proper needed individualized and inclusive supports are available.

A non-profit community organization can partner to assist in the design, to get the proportions and distribution of units right. It may also have resources or be in a better position to secure donated land, materials or trades making the financing of the project more viable and enabling units to be rented or bought at a lower cost point.

A non-profit community organization will bring the knowledge of individual lived experience to the discussion. Having the voices of people with intellectual disabilities at the table early in the design process is important. A non-profit organization will enable this communication and participation in the design and development process throughout the development with advice and feedback to the developer.

Conclusion

The actions described in this handbook are foundational steps to achieving inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. They are essential to ensuring that the housing we invest in and develops facilitates inclusion and does not erect barriers. When we plan around these elements, we also create housing and communities that are safer, more inclusive, and more attractive to everyone.

To learn more about inclusive housing, visit myhomemycommunity.ca, where you can find toolkits to support partnerships in inclusive housing, stories from people with intellectual disabilities and their families and developers about inclusive housing, video tours of real-life examples of inclusive housing, and more.



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