

VISITABILITY

Letter To Developers

12/08/2024 | Version 1.3

The Naperville Accessible Community Task Force (ACTF) is a citizen committee formed in August 2016 to complement the efforts of Naperville's Advisory Commission on Disabilities. The mission of the ACTF is to enhance the quality of life for persons with cognitive, physical, mental, and developmental disabilities living, working, or visiting Naperville.

We are pleased that you are pursuing a development project in Naperville. The community has many excellent amenities to offer residents, businesses, and visitors, and we are proud to be nationally recognized. One of our most significant achievements is our commitment to inclusivity and accessibility to ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits the community has to offer.

Did you know, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), nationally, more than 26% of the population has some type of disability, and more than 13% have a mobility disability that affects walking or climbing stairs?¹ In Naperville's 2023 Community Survey, 11% of households reported having a member with a disability recognized by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).²

To that end, accessibility is a critical consideration for any successful project. Accessible features improve access to your development project for everyone, not just those with disabilities. This is particularly important in Naperville because of our significant senior and young family (stroller-bound) populations.

Compliance with the requirements of the ADA and the Illinois Accessibility Code is a baseline for providing accessible development. This letter encourages you to consider opportunities to look beyond minimum requirements and respect not only the letter of the law but its spirit. Visitability is an inclusive design approach integrating a few core accessibility features as a routine construction practice. Examples of visitability are:

- A zero-step entrance
- Minimum 36" widths for ground-floor doorways and 42" for hallways
- Ground floor bathroom, physically maneuverable by a person in a wheelchair with blocking added to the underlying structure to ease the future installation of grab bars³

Visitability allows a home to be visited by relatives, friends, and others who may have disabilities, accommodates short-term occupancy by people with disabilities, and facilitates additional adaptations that may be needed by an individual.

We appreciate your leadership in helping to build a more accessible and inclusive community and look forward to working with you.

Sincerely,

Naperville Accessible Community Task Force

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/disabilityandhealth/infographic-disability-impacts-all.html>

² <https://www.naperville.il.us/residents/2023-community-survey/>

³ <https://youtu.be/ezMrrShwhqc> (demonstration and explanation of best practices for blocking)



NAPERVILLE'S LAND USE MASTER PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLE #1*

Ensuring housing is diverse, responsive to community needs, and accessible to everyone.



Naperville is a community that people want to call home. Its neighborhoods provide quality housing options situated with access to attractive natural areas and open spaces.

The City's neighborhoods are distinct communities within themselves. They offer renowned amenities which support connections and interactions between residents quite uncommon in a city the size of Naperville. The uniqueness of its neighborhoods is the foundation of the strong sense of community pride and identity that both attracts new and retains lifelong residents in Naperville. Protecting and reinforcing the quality of housing is critical to supporting Naperville's neighborhoods. It is a central consideration of future policy and planning for the City.

Naperville has become increasingly diverse over the past twenty years, with the white population decreasing 20% since 1990 while all other racial groups increased. The City's housing stock needs to reflect Naperville's increasing diversity and welcome individuals from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds. This includes homes of different types, price points, styles, and densities. Increasing housing diversity will also require embracing new and emerging trends in housing, such as accessory dwelling units or microunits. These will appeal to seniors, new families, and multigenerational households while reducing the need for large developable properties as the City approaches build out. The City should emphasize housing diversity to ensure Naperville offers homes that are comfortable, affordable, and inclusive to everybody.

Housing choices should be balanced with options that ensure existing residents can remain in the community, even as their needs change over time. In particular, Naperville has an aging population, increasing the importance of homes that allow seniors to downsize and adjust their lifestyles without leaving the community.

Place Types

Guiding Principle #1 is most applicable to the Single-Family/ Duplex Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High Density Residential Place Types, as defined in Chapter 4.

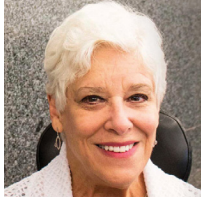
Implementation Measures

- Review existing and/or consider establishing new zoning and building codes and policies to accommodate:
- Accessory dwelling units and tiny homes in residential zoning districts
- Small lot single family development, including possible revisions to the 90% rule
- Microunits in commercial zoning districts
- Parking requirement modifications for multi-family and transit-oriented development Recommendations endorsed by City Council from the Housing Needs Assessment (2020) prepared by the Housing Advisory Commission Zoning incentives for affordable and senior housing {e.g. density bonus for affordable units/universal design, reduced masonry requirements, reduced parking requirements}
- Preservation of neighborhood character and natural areas using established standards such as maximum building coverage, density restrictions, impervious area coverage and similar approaches aimed at achieving a balance between market needs and the community vision. Redevelopment that is compatible with natural resources {e.g. stormwater improvements, wildlife habitat protection, native landscaping}.

* <https://www.naperville.il.us/businesses/development-resources/land-use-master-plan/>

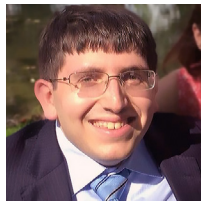
IMPACT STATEMENTS

Community Testimonials



“As a person living with a progressive disability I am excited to see the work you are doing to improve home accessibility in Naperville. I am confined to a power wheelchair and this prevents me from being able to visit friends and relatives due to all doorways having steps. I miss out on sharing holidays, celebrations and visits due to accessibility issues. Unfortunately I am not alone. According to the US Census Bureau there are currently over 42 million adults in the US living with a disability. It is time for us to address the housing issue and work with developers to ensure accessibility for all homes going forward.”

Vicki Ponzo, Naperville Resident, February, 2024



“I have used a wheelchair for almost my whole life, and when I was a kid, it was very difficult for me to go to friends’ houses to play or for birthday parties because most of their houses had steps and did not have accessible restrooms. I missed quite a few birthday parties because I couldn’t get into kids’ houses, and my friends would usually come to my house to play. It would have been nice if I could have gone to my friends’ houses more easily. I hope houses in the future will be more visitable so that kids with disabilities can do the things I missed out on when I was a kid.”

Chris Murphy, Naperville Resident, March 2024



“I cannot go into peoples houses in my power wheelchair because of stairs. I also cannot use the bathroom on my own because I can’t get my chair into the bathroom and there are no grab bars.”

Brigid Mason, Naperville Resident, March 2024



“I am a quadriplegic who wanted to move to Naperville 18 years ago, but the cost of rehabbing a home for essential accessibility was insurmountable. Instead, I built a home in Bolingbrook, where this has been the way of life since they proposed the Visitability Code amendment in 1999. I am able to visit my neighbors effortlessly and do not face the burden of asking for accommodation just to have a social life.

However, the stark contrast in accessibility became painfully evident during this Thanksgiving when my in-laws in Naperville hosted the family gathering. My inability to attend due to the presence of steps in their home left my children and husband deeply upset. Previously, family members’ were able to assist me. Now, age and injuries have made it impossible for them to continue providing the necessary support. I found myself alone at home while my family celebrated, prompting my in-laws to invest in after-market ramps to ensure my inclusion.

Consider the profound relief, freedom, and joy derived from effortlessly entering one’s own home. For many, this requires no imagination, as steps present no significant challenge. However, for those with mobility challenges, a no-step entry in all new construction homes goes beyond mere convenience. It becomes a lifeline, enabling individuals to live independently, fostering social inclusion, and eliminating the need for costly home modifications. Making this feature a standard in every new home is not merely a matter of design; it signifies a commitment to building a more inclusive, accessible, and compassionate society.”

Allaina Humphreys, Bolingbrook Resident, March 2024

CAN YOU TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

Homes In Bolingbrook and/or Naperville

Some residents have expressed concern over the idea that Visitable homes would be eye-sores or somehow “look accessible” in a way that would bring down property values. We present a challenge! which of these homes is a Visitable home?



A



B



A



B

It is hard to spot the difference.

However, this home to the right is what an accessible home currently looks like in Naperville - drawing negative feedback from neighbors and showing it's owner's vulnerability.

Some disabled residents have expressed concern that such after-market accessibility additions could make them a target for crime.



LETTER OF SUPPORT

From the Naperville Senior Task Force



February 2024

To Whom it May Concern:

The Naperville Senior Task Force (NSTF) is writing to support the Accessibility Task Force's concept of Visitability. After discussions and presentations by Mary Hamill and Vicki Ponzo, we have realized the difficulties that Persons with Disabilities have in doing a simple task like visiting their relatives and friends.

We applaud their advocacy to enhance the building codes to support such things as a zero-step entrance, minimum 36" widths for ground-floor doorways and 42" for hallways, and ground floor bathroom blocking added to the underlying structure to ease the installation of grab bars.

It is an inclusive design approach integrating a few core accessibility features as mentioned above resulting in routine construction practices. It also ensures further compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). As evidenced by surrounding communities that have had these codes in existence for many years, it has not added to the cost of building.

We encourage the City of Naperville to include this design feature in their building codes, so all members of the community feel welcomed and accommodated.

Thank you for your consideration,

The Naperville Senior Task Force

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES

Scan the QR Codes for More Information About Visitability



ACTF Website

Contains information and links to developer letter and many local resources.



Zero Step Entry Costs Affirmed

Provides Information on cost-effective methods & dispels misconceptions about the associated expenses.



All About Visitability

A large wealth of information on Visitability from the original source, visitability.org and its creator, Concrete Change, out of Atlanta, GA.



Five Ways to Plan for More Accessible Housing

At least 25% of U.S. residents will experience a disability that impacts their daily life. This details ways to prepare America's housing stock.



PDF of AIA Presentation on Visitability

This presentation is designed to educate design professionals, government officials, and advocates on visitability.



Whole Building Design Guide Visitability Info

Overview of Visitability with photos, best practices, standards and guidelines, and Universal Design education; created in 2022.



HGTV Statement

Article describing how Visitability enhances convenience for everyone, promising an exciting shift in the way we build and live in homes.



Visability FAQ

This list covers the most common misperceptions and objections about Visitability, followed by the facts.



Bolingbrook's Full Visitability Code

Full text of the Village Code of Ordinances for Visitability in new home construction.



Naperville's Building Code Amendments

Quick link to full Code Amendments on the city's website. This link is evergreen - content is always current.