

# Revisiting Measuring Up The North & Visitable Housing

Presentation for the Canadian Centre on Disability Studies  
Visitable Housing Project Webinar October 7, 2015

Presented by

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Pat Harris, Spinal Cord Injury BC

# Pat Harris, BC SCI Resource Centre Manager



- Pat Harris is most currently the BC SCI Resource Centre Manager facilitating the SCI BC Peer and Information Programs
- Founding member of City of Prince George Access Advisory Committee whose mandate is to remove physical and social barriers which impede full participation of persons with disabilities in all aspects of community life.
- Encompassing the years of 2007 - 2009, Member of the Core Team that developed and implemented the Measuring Up the North Project
- MUTN (a partnership between SCI BC and the North Central Local Government Association) which engaged 41 Northern BC communities to make their communities livable, age friendly, disability friendly and universally designed

# Introducing Your Presenters



- Currently Principal Consultant with Change Weavers Consulting
- **Project Director**  
**Measuring Up the North**
- Director Universal Design Institute, Faculty of Architecture, University of Manitoba
- Director Centre for Universal Design, NC State University, Raleigh, North Carolina

# Outline

- What we did: 2007-2009
- What happened between 2009 and now?
- Lessons Learned
- Next steps

# What We Did

2007-2009

# Measuring Up the North Goal:

- A Partnership between NCLGA & Spinal Cord Injury BC
- To create livable, disability-friendly, age-friendly, universally designed, inclusive communities that are better for all citizens and visitors
- Created by the North, for the North
- **Aug 2007-Dec 2009**



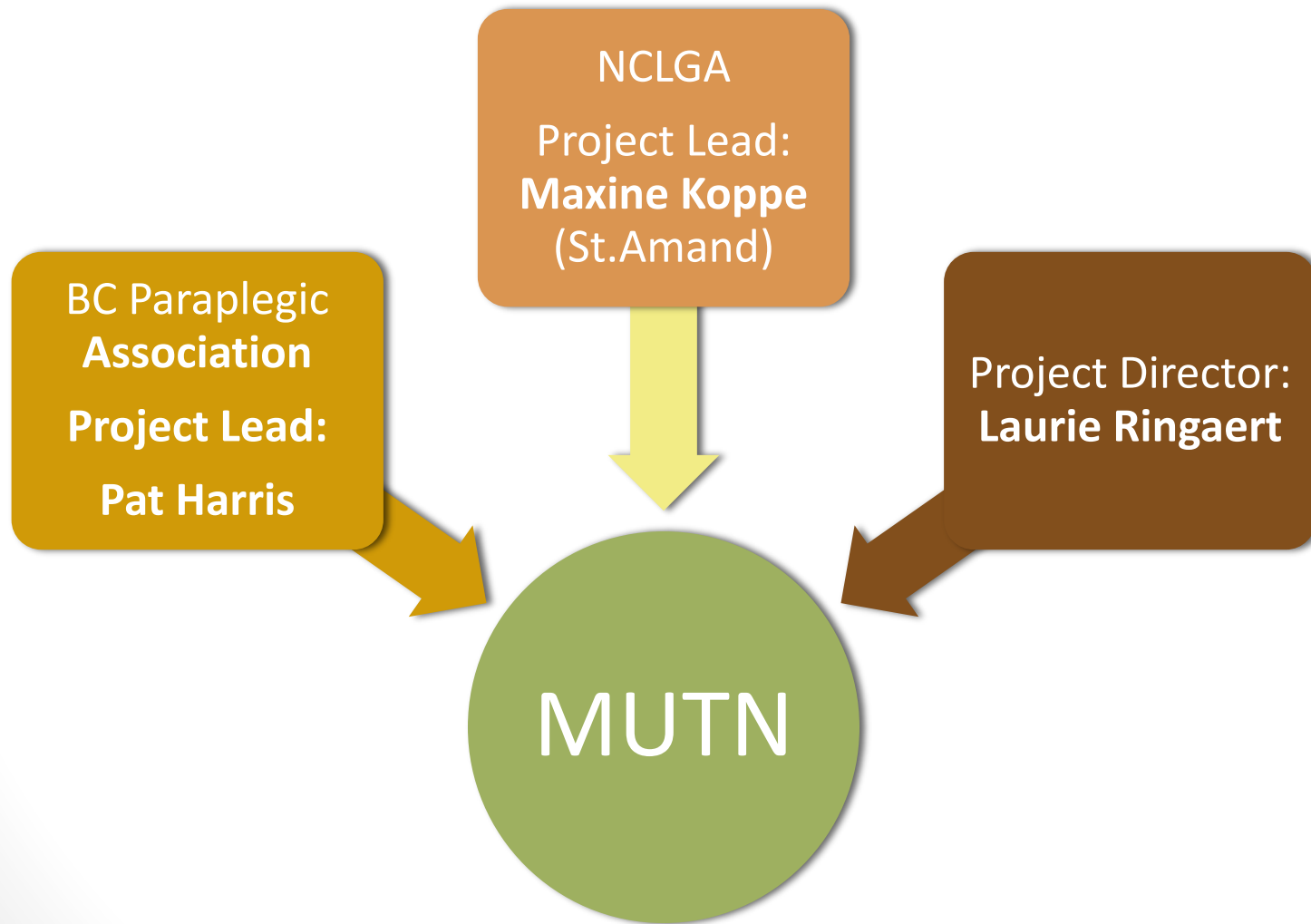
# BACKGROUND:



This Partnership  
was Critical to  
Success

- **Partners:**
  - **The North Central Municipal Association**
  - **BC Paraplegic Association**
- **Supporting Partners:**
  - BC Healthy Communities
  - 2010 Legacies Now
  - Northern Health: Healthy Community Development
  - Age-Friendly Communities: BC Ministry of Healthy Living and Sport

# Backbone Support





# 41 Participating Communities



# Community Participatory Action Approach

The project was designed to empower and build capacity in the communities.

We used a community participatory action, community development approach.

# Process

- NCMA Project Liaison
- Community Project Liaison
- Local Committee



# Process: Backbone Support

- **Backbone Support**
  - Education
  - Coaching
  - Peer Network
  - Site Visits
  - Organizational Support
  - Leadership
  - Funding from a Variety of Sources

# Our Visitable Housing Focus

# Variety of Approaches, Tools & Processes Used to Measure Up The North

- Universal Design
- Economic Development
- Measure Up Process: 2010 Legacies Now
- Age-Friendly Communities
- BC Healthy Communities
- Livable Communities
- Active Living by Design
- **Visitable Housing**
- Accessible Tourism
- Smart Growth Concepts
- Healthy Built Environment
- Sustainability Concepts
- Employment
- Other relevant concepts



# Visitability

**“makes neighborhoods  
welcoming and  
appealing to live in.”**

Eleanor Smith

Concrete Change

**This is really  
about changing  
culture**



# Our Approaches to Visitability

- **Educated the Champions**
- Engaged Home Builders
- **Encouraged change to policies at the local levels: Official Community Plans**
- Worked with Provincial Partners & Developed Planning Guide
- **Incentives proposed by NCLGA**
- Elevated success through the NCLGA Newsletter
- **Hosted a Provincial Conference in 2009 highlighting Visitable housing**





# Creating Universally Designed Healthy Sustainable Communities Conference

- **Invited Eleanor Smith:** Concrete Change: founder of Visitable Housing in North America
- **Invited Mayor Claar** of Bolingbrook, Illinois.
- **Winton Global: Local modular home builder** showcased the changes they made: tour of their plant
- **Realtor Presentation**
- **Builder**
- **Jake Pauls: stairways**
- **Visitable Housing Declaration**



# Visitability Related Tools Developed

- *“Planning for the Future: Age-Friendly and Disability-Friendly Official Community Plans” (R.Mahaffy, L.Ringaert, M.Herman, W. Yu, D.Welch, A.Miro, 2009)*
- *The Prince George VISIBLE Housing Declaration created at the 2009 MUTN Conference*

# What Happened between 2009- 2011?

# 2011 Evaluation Findings

- **Visitable and Accessible Housing** was a focus for 6/15 of the communities that answered the survey while others indicated limited resources to address this area.
- Comments Provided:
  - *Our new B.C housing project is just a step away from being completed - 10 new houses*
  - *Limited resources to do this and not a priority at present. Interesting concept though.*
  - *Through the OCP, housing policies will be provided*
  - *Some discussions around visitable percentage if not 100%*

# 2011- Achievements

- Winton Global (home builder): in 2010 made a significant step by creating a **visitable home webpage** on their website, thereby advertising the concept to potential customers.
- Prince George was the **first NCLGA** community to pass a visitable housing policies and a bylaw March 28, 2011.

# Key Challenges Expressed in 2011

- **A Need for:**
- **Backbone support that had been offered by MUTN centrally**
- **Support from the NCLGA**
- **Funding to support the efforts**

# What Has Happened Since 2011?

# Provincially - What Has Happened Since 2011?

- Province of BC have initiated a 10 year action plan entitled Accessibility 2024 – Making BC the most progressive province in Canada for people with disabilities by 2024
- Accessibility 2024 Action Plan proposes outcomes and measurements that will increase accessibility in BC
- Produce Annual Accessibility 2024 update reports outlining progress towards the 10 year outcomes and measurements
- Created an Accessibility 2024 website
- Create a Parliamentary Secretary and Accessibility Secretariat
- Adopted the Age-Friendly, Disability Friendly Planning Guide



# Provincially - What Has Happened Since 2011?

- Completed - a checklist to make existing housing more accessible
- In Progress - Introduce a measure requiring a percentage of all new homes be constructed to include adaptability requirements and continue to explore options for a registry of accessibility housing in BC
- Provincial Funding for 2016 for Age-Friendly community projects



# Provincial: Report on Official Community Plans

- Official Community Plans that reference Age friendly, Disability Friendly statements: **8 of 41** northern communities reporting key topics in an OCP that influence quality of life (transportation, housing, land use, services, urban design etc)
- **Northern Communities involved**; Prince George, Fort St John, Quesnel, Mackenzie, 100 Mile House, Terrace, Kitimat, Telkwa

# Our Quick Scan

# Locally – What has happened since 2011 (Northern BC)

## Prince George

- City of Prince currently developing a Multi-Family and Seniors Housing (adaptable housing) Incentive Program. Include multi year tax exemptions and development cost reductions
- City of Prince George produced a Visitable Housing Project report and recommendations. Produced visitable housing guidelines. Use of the guidelines voluntary.



# Tumbler Ridge: 2012

- “Encourage the **visitability** and accessibility of new housing. Ensure access for seniors and others with limited mobility in Tumbler Ridge to enable this segment of the population to live in the community with greater ease.”
- ‘Mandate achievement of **visitability guidelines** as part of District land sales for residential development”

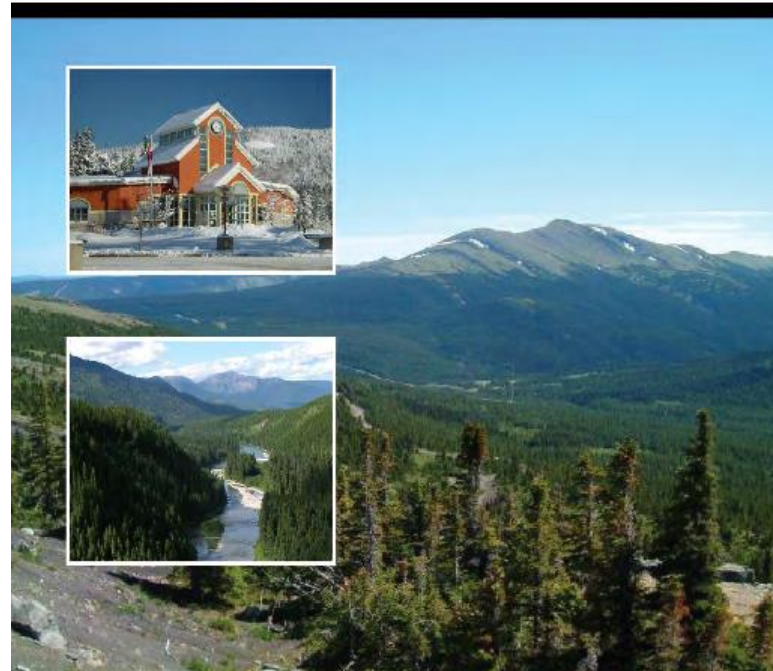
District of Tumbler Ridge



## Official Community Plan

Bylaw No. 584

July 2012



# City of Terrace: 2012

- *Access to a diverse range of safe, affordable, accessible and **visitable housing** options, both public and private, is vital to the well-being, health, independence and quality of life for the community's residents.*
- *Provision of housing that meets the needs of single adults, low income residents, older residents and persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure the housing needs of the community are met throughout the varying stages of life. (OCP Bylaw 1983-2011)*



## Housing Action Plan



### HOUSING FOR ALL

*Access to a diverse range of safe, affordable, accessible and visitable housing options, both public and private, is vital to the well-being, health, independence and quality of life for the community's residents. Provision of housing that meets the needs of single adults, low income residents, older residents and persons with disabilities is necessary to ensure the housing needs of the community are met throughout the varying stages of life. (OCP Bylaw 1983-2011)*

# City of Terrace OCP: 2015

- “Ensure new housing units are **`visitable`** through a review of bylaw regulations and provision of incentives.”



The City of Terrace  
*Official Community Plan*  
Schedule A



# Kitimat: Strategic Plan 2012

- Private home building plans should include the concept of “visitable housing”.

MEASURING UP KITIMAT

## STRATEGIC PLAN

February 2009



*Working towards a disability-friendly and age-friendly community.*





# What Progress Has been Made?

- We don't know the extent of visitable housing progress across the North
- We need to do a thorough follow-up evaluation



# What were our Successes?

- Changes were made to policies
- Changes were made to “culture”
- We are not sure as to what was built

# Lessons Learned

- Backbone Support is critical
- Funding is key
- Policy/Law is critical: need the teeth!
  - Official Community Plans
- Incentives
- Voluntary does not go far
- On going evaluation & feedback is important

# Next Steps

# For More Information

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