

SURVEY OF WHEELCHAIR-MODIFIED  
UNITS IN VANCOUVER NON-MARKET  
HOUSING PROJECTS

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## Survey of Wheelchair-modified units in Vancouver non-market housing projects

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This survey focuses on a major housing resource for Vancouver's wheelchair disabled: the wheelchair-modified units in a variety of public and private non-profit rental and cooperative projects.

The survey's purpose was to establish an information base on these units, including:

- basic data on modified units - their number, location, size
- an occupant profile - the age, sex and disability type of occupants of modified units
- data on the suitability of project locations and building design for the wheelchair disabled.

Before the project was undertaken, no accurate centralized information was available on even the number of modified units which had been built, let alone data on their occupancy. Individual housing sponsors had information on their own units but no one had a comprehensive picture of where these units were and how they were being used.

The survey was therefore seen as a first step in gathering information which could help refine CMHC policies on modified housing and which could be used as a basis for further, more detailed studies on the housing needs of wheelchair users and other disabled people.

Initiated as a result of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), City and community interest in modified housing, the survey was funded by CMHC and carried out through the joint efforts of CMHC and the City of Vancouver Social Planning Department.

#### 1.2 SURVEY DESIGN AND METHOD

The survey covers self-contained, independent housing units. Bed-units in group homes and special projects which provide care as a component of their program (eg The Lower Mainland Residence for the Physically Disabled in False Creek) were excluded. The resulting universe consisted of 340 suites in 58 Vancouver non-market housing projects. The cut-off date for inclusion in the survey was approximately April of 1984. The 340 units surveyed represent the entire wheelchair-modified housing stock available in non-market projects in Vancouver as of the Spring of 1984.

The survey consisted of two parts:

Part I Project Data: building type; sponsor type; number of modified units; accessibility of neighbourhood amenities; accessibility of common areas of the building; waiting lists; vacancies; procedures for filling modified units and problems experienced in finding disabled tenants/members. A Part I was completed for each project.

Part II Occupancy Data: unit size; number of occupants; number of disabled occupants; rent paid; and age, sex and type of disability of disabled occupant(s). A Part II was completed for each modified unit.

A decision was made to limit questions to those which could be answered by the resident manager and/or the person in charge of tenant selection. Neither the time nor the manpower was available to examine the interior design of each unit or to interview individual tenants/members. The information gathered on such topics as the accessibility of neighbourhood amenities and on problems with common area design is therefore based on features which were quantifiable and easily observed rather than on the experience of disabled individuals.

#### Method

Before the survey was conducted, all non-market housing sponsors in the city were contacted by phone or letter to determine which projects had wheelchair modified units. Because the survey did not include an examination of individual unit interiors, no attempt was made to classify degrees of modification. Some of the units included in the survey have only basic modifications--wider doors and halls and grab bars--while others have very extensive--or even custom-designed--modifications.

The researcher hired to conduct the survey was not disabled but was interested in and sensitive to the components of accessible design.

The research was conducted during July and August of 1984. The researcher completed the two-part questionnaire at an interview with each project manager, after a tour of each building.

## 2.0 HIGHLIGHTS

### 2.1 General data

1. There were 340 wheelchair modified units in 58 Vancouver non-market housing projects, as of July 1984. They represent 2.6% of the total number of units available in non-market projects.
2. At least 100 additional modified units are now in the construction or planning stage. By the end of 1985 there will be approximately 14,700 non-market units in the city, about 440 (3%) of which will be wheelchair modified.
3. Of the 340 units surveyed, nearly 50% are in low-rise apartment buildings; 25% in high-rise buildings; and 25% in townhouse projects.
4. 39% of modified units are in seniors' buildings; 38% in family projects; 18% in projects special-built for the disabled and 5% in projects in low income singles and couples. Most of the growth in modified units over the past 5 years has taken place in family projects. By the end of 1985, family projects will lead other project types in provision of modified units.
5. Of the 300 units for which detailed information was available, roughly 1/3 are bachelor units, 1/3 one bedroom, and 1/3 family units. ie. 2 or 3-bedroom.

### 2.2 Occupancy data

1. 61% of disabled people occupying modified units are male; 39% female.
2. 71% of households occupying modified units are single; 14% are couples; 7% shared; 4% two parent family; and 4% one parent family.
3. Of the 308 units for which detailed information was available, 89% are occupied by a person(s) with some disability.

A breakdown of occupancies shows:

64%	using a wheelchair
16.2%	mobility impaired
8.4%	other disability
9.1%	able - bodied
2.3%	vacant at time of survey
<u>100%</u>	

It is estimated that most of the occupants with mobility impairments and a few of those with other disabilities benefit from the wheelchair modifications. A rough guess is that 80% of the people occupying modified units benefit from the modifications.

4. Public non-profit and co-op projects have a good targetting record -- over 90% of these sponsors' modified units are occupied by a person (s) with some disability. Private non-profit rental projects -- specifically seniors' and mental patients' buildings -- have a poorer record. Sponsors of mental patients' projects have never found wheelchair-users to occupy any of their 4 units. Only 64% (40 out of 62) of the modified units in private seniors' projects are occupied by a person with some disability. Seniors' buildings contain the majority of all the units occupied by able-bodied persons: 22 out of 28, or 79% of such occupancies.
5. Survey results showed that, in contrast to private rental seniors' projects, BCHMC seniors' buildings are well-targetted. Although all sponsor types report some difficulty finding wheelchair tenants/members, everyone except the private seniors' and mental patients' sponsors eventually fills most vacancies with a disabled person. It appears that, in general, private seniors' sponsors make a less rigorous search for a disabled tenant than do other sponsors.
6. 86% of households occupying modified units pay less than the standard monthly charge or lower end of market rent set for that unit.

### 2.3 Accessibility data

1. Approximately 17 projects (111 units) appear to be in 'good' locations where basic amenities such as a food store, drug store and bank are within 2 or 3 blocks and where travel to these amenities involves an elevation change of 0 to 20 feet. 14 projects (108 units) appear to be in locations where neighbourhood amenities are difficult to reach ( + 3 blocks, 40 to 90 feet elevation change). The remaining 25 projects (121 units) are in locations which fall somewhere between the 'best' and the 'worst' sites.
2. Within projects, by far the most common barrier to full wheelchair access was lack of access to other units in the building. (No access or difficult access to other units in 32 out of 56 buildings). This problem was most frequent in the townhouse form (79% of townhouse projects had other suites inaccessible) and least frequent in the low-rise apartment form (20% inaccessible).
3. Common indoor amenities were checked for three basic access features: adequate door width; a ramped sill or no sill; and adequate space for a turning circle. Most common rooms had these three features. However in 29% of the buildings which had common laundries and in 59% of the projects which had out-of-suite storage, one or more of these access features had been overlooked. The feature most frequently forgotten, overall, was the turning circle.

4. Other design flaws or barriers which occurred fairly frequently included location of a common amenity in an inaccessible area, inaccessible common outdoor space, sills between units interiors and private patios, and heavy doors/and doors in locations which lack manouvering room.
5. Improving the degree of accessibility in new projects will require reviews of both policy and regulatory issues. The problems with project location and building form require policy decisions. The design problems indicate a need for more consideration of the suitability of the site and building form in the initial planning stages, a more careful review of plans and better follow-up in the construction stages.

#### 2.4 Waiting list and tenant selection data

1. As of August 1984, there were 175 wheelchair disabled or mobility impaired people on waiting lists for 45 of the surveyed projects (data unavailable on 13 projects).
2. 6 projects had waiting lists of 10-35 people; 14 reported 1 to 5 people waiting; 25 reported no wheelchair or mobility impaired people on waiting lists.
3. Location--and ease of access to neighbourhood amenities--did not, as a single factor, appear to have much influence on the presence or absence of a waiting list. Some projects with high waiting lists are in rather isolated locations; others which are in good locations have none.
4. Projects which were special-built for the disabled (Kelly Court, Access Housing Coop, Voice of the Cerebral Palsied) and projects built by sponsors who had a specific interest in housing wheelchair-users had waiting lists of 10-35 people.
5. GVHC (the only public housing sponsor for which waiting list data was available) had wheelchair users on waiting lists for all its established projects.
6. When sponsors were asked if they had ever had difficulty finding a wheelchair tenant for a modified unit, 77% said 'yes'. Public housing sponsors reported difficulty least frequently; private non-profit rental sponsors most frequently. From a list of reasons including simple inability to find a tenant, project location, lack of subsidy etc., inability to find a tenant was by far the most frequent response.



7. Looking at actual targetting records, waiting lists and reported difficulty finding wheelchair tenants it appears that with 175 people listed there is some unmet need but that the process of matching disabled people with vacancies is difficult.

It also appears that public housing sponsors have less difficulty than co-ops (which also have a good targetting record) or private non-profit sponsors. A possible explanation is that public sponsors have a centralized contact and intake point, whereas established co-ops and private rental projects do not.

8. In summary, the waiting list data suggests that there is some unmet need, but not how much. Two measures which would help to clarify need are:
  - . a cross-check of all waiting lists to remove duplicate names and determine household sizes, disability types etc.
  - . establishment of a central registry of all modified units, to which all sponsors report vacancies and through which all applicants apply.

### 3.0 GENERAL DATA

#### 3.1 Number of modified units

There are 340 wheelchair modified suites in 58 Vancouver non-market projects. They represent 2.6% of the total number of units which were available in non-market projects in Vancouver at the time of the survey.

<u>Sponsor type</u>	<u>Total units</u>	<u>Wheelchair Modified</u>	<u>%</u>
Co-op	2,343	88	3.75
Public non-profit rental	4,948	157	3.17
Private non-profit rental	5,836	95	1.63
	<u>13,127</u>	<u>340</u>	<u>2.6%</u>

It is estimated that at least 100 additional modified units will be available by the end of 1985. Some of these units are in new co-op projects which were missed in the survey; others are in projects which are still under construction. By the end of 1985 there will be approximately 14,700 non-market units in the city, about 440 (3%) of which will be wheelchair modified.

Appendix I lists the projects surveyed; Appendix II notes projects which were missed or which were not ready for occupancy at the time of the survey.

#### 3.2 Distribution of units

Of the 340 units surveyed, nearly half are in low-rise apartment buildings. The remaining half are equally divided between townhouse developments and high-rise buildings.

The bulk of the modified units are available in either seniors projects, or in family co-op and family rental projects.

Seniors' buildings	132 units (39%)
Family projects	129 units (38%)
Projects special-built for the disabled	61 units (18%)
Projects for low income singles/couples	18 units (5%)

Appendix III details distribution of units by sponsor-type, building type and main tenant group.

It is noted that although seniors' buildings now provide more accessible units than any other project type, the growth in modified units over the past 5 years has been taking place mainly in family projects. Most of the new modified units which will be available by the end of 1985 are in family projects

A mix of unit sizes is available. Detailed information was gathered on approximately 300 of the 340 units: of these, roughly 1/3 are bachelor units, 1/3 are one bedroom units and 1/3 are "family" units (ie. two or-three bedroom units).

91% of the modified "family" units are in co-ops or in Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation projects.

Nearly 80% of the modified bachelor and one-bedroom units are in private rental projects, most of which are for seniors.

Distribution of unit sizes by sponsor type

Sponsor	Number of Projects	Bachelor	1bd	2bd	3bd	Total
Co-ops*	16	5	19	30	11	65
Private non-profit rental**	21	36	43	7	--	86
Public non-profit rental	18	65	47	35	10	157
	55	106 (34.5%)	109 (35.5%)	72 (23%)	21 (7%)	308

\* 1 project missing

\*\* 2 projects missing

#### 4.0 OCCUPANCY DATA

##### 4.1 Sex

61% of disabled people occupying all modified units are male; 39% are female. This ratio between male and female occupants is maintained in co-ops, BCHMC projects and GVHC projects. The only sponsor types with a different mix of sexes are private rental projects (mostly for seniors) where women with disabilities occupy 57% of the modified units and men 43%; and in city projects in the Downtown Eastside, where men predominate at 79% vs. 21% women.

##### 4.2 Age Ranges of disabled persons occupying modified units

The distribution of age ranges in all units is shown below:

0 - 19 years	6	( 2%)
20 - 24 years	17	( 6%)
25 - 34 years	70	(25%)
35 - 44 years	42	(15%)
45 - 54 years	29	(10%)
55 - 64 years	56	(20%)
65+	<u>62</u>	(22%)

Total number of disabled persons 282\*

\*some units are occupied by two disabled persons

As would be expected, different sponsor types house different age groups. Co-op modified units house all but one of the families with disabled children. On the other end of the age spectrum, City projects, BCHMC and private rental projects have 30 to 50% of their disabled tenants in the over-65 age group.

All sponsor types except the two City projects in the Downtown Eastside have disabled tenants in the 20 to 34 year age group. There are 24 wheelchair users under age 40 living in seniors' buildings sponsored either by BCHMC or private seniors' sponsors.

##### 4.3 Household types occupying modified units

Single occupants predominate, at 71% of all occupants.

Single	212	71%
Couple	40	14%
Shared	22	7%
Two parent family	14	4%
One parent family	13	4%
	<u>301*</u>	

\* this figure includes 28 units occupied by able-bodied persons.

#### 4.4 Targetting of modified units

Of the 308 units for which data was available, 273 (89%) are occupied by a person(s) with some disability.

The survey divided disabled people living in modified units into three categories: those using wheelchairs; those with mobility impairments (such as MS, arthritis, cerebral palsy), for whom wheelchair modifications might also be useful; and those with other disabilities.

It was found that 197 units (64%) of the total are occupied by people using wheelchairs. An additional 50 units (16.2%) are occupied by people with mobility impairments.

. using a wheelchair	197	(64.0%)
. with a mobility impairment	50	(16.2%)
. with another disability	26	( 8.4%)
	<u>273</u>	<u>(88.6%)</u>
. with no disability	28	( 9.1%)
. vacant at time of survey	7	( 2.3%)
	<u>308</u>	<u>( 100%)</u>

Since disabled individuals were not interviewed, it is impossible to say precisely how many of the "mobility impaired" people and people with "other disabilities" actually need a modified unit. Based on specific disabilities which were reported, it is estimated that most of the 50 "mobility impaired" and a few of the 26 people with "other disabilities" (heart condition, frail elderly, very short stature) benefit from modifications such as lowered counters, grab bars etc. A rough guess is that about 80% of the total number of modified units are occupied by disabled people who benefit from the wheelchair modifications.

A breakdown of unit targetting by sponsor type shows that two of the sponsor types -- co-ops and public rental -- have good targetting, but that private non-profit projects do not.

Occupancy	Public Non-profit 18 Projects Reporting		Co-op 16 Projects Reporting		Private Non-profit 21 Projects Reporting		Total
	No. of Units	% of Public Units	No. of Units	% of Co-op Units	No. of Units	% of Private Units	
Wheelchair User	110	(70%)	47	(72%)	40	(47%)	197
Mobility Impaired	29	(18%)	10	(16%)	11	(12%)	50
Other Disability	12	(8%)	2	(3%)	12	(14%)	26
	<u>151</u>	<u>96%</u>	<u>59</u>	<u>91%</u>	<u>63</u>	<u>73%</u>	<u>273</u>
Occupied by Able-bodied	0	0%	5	8%	23	27%	28
Vacant	6	4%	1	1%	0	0%	7
Total Modified Units	157		65		86		308

Coops lead in the targetting of units to wheelchair users. If mobility impaired persons are added to the totals for wheelchair occupants, coops and public housing each have an 88% targetting rate.

The only weak point is in private non-profit housing. This category includes 16 seniors' projects, 2 low-income singles and couples projects, 4 projects for mental patients and 2 projects in mixed target groups. The problem occurs in the seniors' and mental patients' buildings.

#### 4.5 Comments on targetting in seniors' and mental patients' projects

Seniors' projects provide 62 modified units; mental patients' projects provide 4 units. Interviews with sponsors suggest that wheelchair modified units are not needed in projects for mental patients. Neither Coast Foundation nor the Mental Patients Association have found anyone in their target group who uses a wheelchair. Other people who use wheelchairs have been unwilling to live in these projects.

The targetting problem in the private seniors' buildings is best illustrated by the fact that they contain the majority of the units occupied by able-bodied persons: 22 out of 28 or 79% of such occupancies. This high occupancy rate by the able-bodied may have several causes:

- a general difficulty which most sponsors experience in finding wheelchair tenants. This problem is discussed in more detail in section 6.0 but appears to relate more to the absence of any system for matching tenants with available units than it does to a lack of need/demand.
- a tendency on the part of some seniors' project sponsors to make a less rigorous search than do other sponsors, for a disabled tenant.
- a tendency on the part of a few seniors' sponsors to be very selective about the character, habits and religious orientation of new tenants.

Whatever the cause, the targetting situation in private seniors' projects stands in contrast to that in BCHMC seniors buildings, where all modified units are occupied by disabled people, 79% in wheelchairs.

#### 4.6 Other targetting data - overhousing

There are 103 modified 'family' units available in non-market projects: 72 two-bedroom units and 21 three-bedroom units.

All but one of the three-bedrooms (11 in co-ops and 10 in public rental projects) is occupied by at least three people.

Of the two-bedroom units, however, 20 of the 72 are occupied by only one person.

	Total No. 2-bd units	Two-bd units occupied by at least 2 persons	Two-bd units occupied by 1 person
Private rental	7	6 (86%)	1 (14%)
Public rental	35	28 (80%)	7 (20%)
Coop	30	18 (60%)	12 (40%)

More data would be needed on the sizes of households needing modified units in order to determine whether this targetting problem indicates a lack of need for two-bedroom units or whether the difficulty lies in finding the households to match the units.

#### 4.7 Rents/Subsidy

Data on rents for modified units was available on 293 units in 51 projects. Sponsors provided the standard monthly charge (or 'lower end of market' rent) set for each unit, together with the rent actually paid by the household.

86% of households occupying modified units pay less than the standard monthly charge or lower end of market rents. 12% pay the standard charge or lower end of market. 2% of the units in the sample were vacant.

A breakdown by sponsor type is shown below:

#### Rent/Subsidy

Sponsor	# Projects Reporting	Households paying stand- ard charges	Households subsidized	Vacant	Total units Reporting
Coop	13	11 (21%)	40 (77%)	1 (2%)	52
Private non-profit	20	16 (19%)	68 (81%)	0	84
Public non-profit	18	7 (4%)	144 (92%)	6 (4%)	157
	51	34 (12%)	252 (86%)	7 (2%)	293

It must be noted that coops, which have the lowest percentage of subsidized households, also have limited ability to provide subsidy. Coops have a subsidy pool which is divided among all low-income applicants. Once the pool has been allocated, no further tenants in need of subsidy can be housed.

In contrast, seniors' housing project tenants receive a provincial subsidy which enables rent on all units to be reduced as low as to 30% of a tenants' income.

Subsidy arrangements in the public housing sector differ among BCHMC, the City and GVHC. GVHC has a limited subsidy pool, similar to that in coops; BCHMC and City tenants qualify for subsidies to reduce rents to 30% of income. In theory, all tenants in private seniors projects and in BCHMC and City projects could be subsidized whereas all tenants in coop and GVHC projects cannot.



## 5.0 ACCESSIBILITY DATA

The survey attempted to assess three issues:

1. access to neighbourhood amenities and general suitability of the project location for wheelchair users
2. general accessibility of the building
3. accessibility of common amenities such as common rooms, laundries and out-of suite storage.

Because the survey dealt with quantifiable measures such as distance to amenities and the presence or absence of such features as ramps, sills, adequate door widths and turning circles (manoeuvring room), the data gathered in this section can give only an approximate picture of major locational and design problems.

The physical ability of disabled persons to cope with distances, grades and various design features varies considerably from individual to individual. Detailed interviews with a sample of disabled residents would be required before an accurate assessment of project accessibility could be presented.

Bearing in mind the limitations of the present survey, some general findings are offered.

### 5.1 Project locations/access to neighbourhood amenities

There are about 17 projects (30%) which have most of the basic amenities (foodstore, drug store, bank, drycleaner) within 2 or 3 blocks, and where travel to these amenities involves an elevation change of 0 to 20 feet.

These 'best' sites are found in:

. the West End	3 projects	48 units
. Strathcona and the Downtown Eastside	6 projects	22 units
. False Creek	4 projects	14 units
. scattered locations including South Cambie, Mount Pleasant and Killarney	4 projects	27 units

Total:            17 projects 111 units

Of the remaining 39 projects, about 14 (25%) have what seem to be undesirable locations, which involve travel of three or more blocks and elevation changes of 40 to 90 feet to reach most amenities.

The Champlain Heights area has 4 projects (26 units) in difficult locations. Other difficult sites are scattered throughout the City. The 14 projects with the worst locations provide a total of 108 units. The total is high because two projects which put special emphasis on providing accessible units -- Kelly Court (45 units) and Access Housing Cooperative (23 units) -- are on hilly, rather isolated sites.

The remaining 25 projects (121 units) are in locations which fall somewhere between the 'best' and 'worst' sites.

The targetting data shows that, at present, actual occupancy of units by disabled people does not appear to be any lower in projects identified as having 'bad' locations than it is in projects which have 'good' locations. The waiting list data suggests that the projects in greatest demand are those which have a combination of advantages including a sponsor group with a specific interest in housing the disabled and good project and unit design. Some of these projects have 'good' locations; others are rather isolated. It seems likely that, at present, people looking for modified units are willing to overlook locational disadvantages because of advantages in project sponsorship and design.

One very important point which this survey does not clarify but which needs to be addressed is whether there is enough modified housing available to allow any significant degree of choice or whether wheelchair users are essentially being forced to take whatever accommodation is available regardless of personal preferences or locational and design problems.

## 5.2 General accessibility of project

The survey listed a number of project features such as front door, secondary entrances, common indoor amenities, common outdoor space, other suites etc. and asked whether each of these features was accessible, difficult to access, or not accessible.

Access problems are listed below, according to frequency. Percentages are based on 56 projects, except where noted.

	<u>No. Projects</u>	
1. <u>Other Units</u>	32	57%
No access or difficult access to other units		
2. <u>Project Amenities</u>	10	18%
Project amenities such as laundry, common room etc. not accessible from all modified units		
3. <u>Vestibule Doors</u> (second set inside main doors)	7	17%
(This question applies only to low and high-rise buildings, of which there are 42. All the problems occurred in low-rise buildings)		

4. <u>Common Outdoor Space</u> Inaccessible or difficult to access	7	12%
5. <u>Main Doors Difficult</u> Lack of manoeuvring room, heavy doors, etc.	6	11%
6. <u>Difficult Ramp to Main Door</u>	5	9%
7. <u>Mail Boxes</u> Difficult to use	2	4%

Lack of access to other units was by far the most frequently occurring barrier. A breakdown by building types shows that townhouses have the worst record; low-rise apartments, the best.

	<u>Townhouse</u>	<u>Highrise</u>	<u>Lowrise</u>
Other units accessible	3 (21%)	6 (50%)	16 (53%)
Other units difficult to access	0	3 (25%)	8 (27%)
Other units not accessible	<u>11</u> (79%)	<u>3</u> (25%)	<u>6</u> (20%)
	14	12	30

The chief difficulty with the townhouse form is that there are usually stairs to other units. Even if stairs at the entrances to other units were eliminated, there are stairs within the units which limit wheelchair access to the ground floor. The higher the density of development in the townhouse form, the more difficult it is to reconcile site planning restrictions and the needs of wheelchair users.

The frequency of access problems to other suites in high- and low-rise apartments was surprising. The survey did not ask respondents to note the precise problem, but it appeared from visual inspections that in high-rise buildings the problems were either with door widths or with sills. Access problems in low-rise buildings also resulted from inadequate door widths and sills or from the lack of an elevator and, in one case, awkward exterior walkways.

The less frequently reported problems such as difficult doors, inaccessible common outdoor space, etc., are smaller design problems many of which could be resolved by more attention to the needs of the disabled in the planning and construction stages.

### 5.3 Accessibility of Common Amenities

Common rooms, laundries, out-of-suite storage and other similar common amenities were checked for three basic features:

- . adequate door width
- . a ramped sill or no sill
- . turning circle

The figures in the table below are based on those projects which have each given amenity.\*

<u>Amenity</u>	<u>No. of Projects</u>	<u>Accessible</u>	<u>One or More Barriers</u>	
Common Room	43	41 (95%)	2	(5%)
Other Amenity room	23	21 (91%)	2	(9%)
Laundry	49	35 (71%)	14	(29%)
Storage	29	12 (41%)	17	(59%)

\* GVHC family projects have no common amenities and are omitted from this table. Some of the other projects have laundries but no common room, etc.

The design feature most frequently overlooked was the turning circle.

#### 5.4 Other Design Problems

Although this survey was not intended to cover interior unit design a number of units were informally examined. Various other general design problems which had not been covered in the questions were also noted. Some of the more frequently occurring problems are noted below:

- . access to and useability of private open space.  
Sills between the unit and the private balcony or patio were noted in many projects. Two sponsors had attempted to address the problem by ramping the sill -- a measure which resulted in a substantial portion of the living room being taken up with the ramp. One project had patios which were substantially below grade and virtually unusable.
- . narrow hallways  
In a few projects the main common hallways were too narrow to allow two wheelchairs or one wheelchair and one baby buggy, for instance, to pass easily. In some cases, narrow entrance alcove to individual units combined with narrow common halls to make entrance to the unit difficult. In some cases common hallways were adequate but halls to the laundry and other common facilities were narrow.
- . doors  
many projects have doors which are difficult to open. The worst doors are generally fire doors. These may occur part way down a common hall and in the lower levels of a building between parking facilities and the elevator. Some projects had as many as three heavy doors between the parking garage and the elevator. Halls in these areas also tended to be narrow, leaving a wheelchair user capable of opening the door with little room to manoeuvre to get a good grasp on the door handle. A few projects had been fitted with automatic door openers for the main doors.

- parking  
No assessment was made of the number of wheelchair users requiring parking. However some survey respondents mentioned that disabled drivers in their projects had problems with such features as sloped parking lots and garage entrances too low for vans.
- interior design  
A number of projects had been built with standard kitchen counters or counters set at standard heights. Other problems included light switches and receptacles set too high, grab bars installed without plywood backing, bathrooms with insufficient manoeuvring room and the problem with sills to outdoor private spaces. A number of sponsors had had to correct deficiencies after the project opened.
- Two townhouse developments were found where the accessible units were on two stories, allowing the wheelchair user access to only the ground floor. These units proved difficult to fill.

### 5.5 General comments on accessibility

The information gathered on accessibility shows that there is room for improvement in the choice of project locations and in project design. The data gathered on locations suggests that only about 30% of projects are in locations which offer early access to neighbourhood amenities. The data gathered on the projects themselves indicates that lack of access to neighbouring units is the most frequently occurring barrier and that there are a number of other design problems which occur repeatedly.

Considerable progress has been made in Vancouver in providing modified units and in developing accessible design. If this progress is to continue, the next step on the part of housing sponsors, involved organizations representing the disabled, the City and CMHC is to determine which of the outstanding accessibility issues are priorities and to adopt plans of action to address them.

Areas for consideration include both policy issues and planning and regulatory issues. If accessible project locations are viewed as a priority, the strategy of concentrating modified units in projects with good locations should be considered. Addressing the problem of lack of access to other units in a project is also a policy issue because such access is not achievable in the townhouse form, which is generally the preferred housing form for families. The questions regarding building form are important because -- with the exception of a few special projects for low income people including the disabled -- most of the recently-built modified units have been in family projects.

Design problems other than lack of access to neighbouring units need to be addressed through planning strategies and improved regulatory processes.

## 6.0 WAITING LISTS, TENANT SELECTION AND PLACEMENT DATA

It is important to note that the waiting list and tenant selection data which follows applies only to the projects surveyed, not to other agencies or housing sponsors (such as the resource groups, Canadian Paraplegic Association or Handicapped Resource Centre) who keep waiting lists or make housing referrals. Neither the waiting list data nor the targetting data discussed earlier are sufficient to allow for any precise assessment of the need for additional modified units.

### 6.1 Waiting Lists

Waiting list data was available for 45 of the 58 projects. (Projects for which waiting list data was not available included BCHMC - 9 projects; the City - 2 projects; and two private sponsors).

- . As of August 1984, there were 175 people who use wheelchairs or who have mobility impairments reported on waiting lists for 45 of the surveyed projects.
- . Of the 45 projects, 6 had between 10 - 35 people waiting; 14 reported one to five people waiting; 25 reported no wheelchair or mobility impaired persons on waiting lists.
- . The 6 projects with the highest reported waiting lists were Access Coop, Sojourn Coop, Je Maintendrai (in False Creek), Voice of the Cerebral Palsied (Mount Pleasant), and two GVHC projects, Kelly Court and Heather Place.
- . A tabulation of waiting lists by sponsor type shows that the public housing sponsor (GVHC) had waiting lists for all its projects, except the newest one which had just been opened at the time of the survey. About 1/2 the coops had wheelchair or mobility impaired people waiting while only 29% of privately-sponsored projects had waiting lists.

Waiting lists by sponsor type

	<u>Public Rental</u>	<u>Coops</u>	<u>Private Rental</u>
Total number projects	7	17	21
Number with wheelchair users or mobility impaired on waiting lists	6 (86%)	8 (47%)	6 (29%)
Number with no disabled on waiting lists	1*(14%)	9*(53%)	15 (71%)
Number of disabled people waiting	54	70	51

\*One coop and one GVHC project had just been occupied at the time of the survey and had not yet started waiting lists.

6.2 General comments on waiting list data

One small group of projects which stood out were those developed by sponsors with a particular interest in housing the physically disabled. Of the six projects with the highest waiting lists, four were in this "special interest" group: Kelly Court, which was developed specifically for wheelchair users; and Access Housing Co-op, Voice of Cerebral Palsied and Sojourn Coop, all of which had sponsor groups with a strong interest in accessible housing.

Aside from these projects, no pattern in waiting lists was immediately perceptible.

The fact that some projects had high waiting lists for wheelchair-modified units while others had none came as a surprise. Almost all the projects had a general waiting list varying from 8 to 200 people. (see Appendix IV)

Both the projects which had high waiting lists and those which had none were scattered throughout the city. As a single factor, location did not appear to have much influence on the presence or absence of a waiting list. Some projects with high waiting lists were in rather isolated locations; others in good locations had no waiting lists.

Although the case for building more modified units would have been stronger if all projects had shown waiting lists, the fact that there are people waiting coupled with the fact that most existing units are properly targetted, suggests that there is some unmet need. A cross-check of all waiting lists to remove duplicated names would be one of the steps needed to determine the extent of the unmet need.

Another factor which relates to the waiting list data and which must be explored before a true picture of need can be determined is the difficulty many housing sponsors report in finding tenants for their modified units.

### 6.3 Difficulty finding tenants

When sponsors were asked if they had ever had difficulty finding a wheelchair user to occupy a modified unit, 77% said 'yes'. Public housing sponsors reported difficulty least frequently (56%); private rental sponsors most frequently (96%). When sponsors were asked to give reasons, 27 (58%) simply said that they couldn't find a tenant. From a list of possible reasons including project isolation, problems with unit design, lack of subsidy etc., this was by far the most frequent answer (Appendix V details responses).

On the surface, this difficulty with finding qualifying tenants for modified units might be taken as a demonstration of lack of need. However the differences in degree of difficulty and in the actual targetting rates among the various sponsor types suggests that at least part of the problem is that there is no easy way for sponsors to find tenants or vice versa. The survey showed that public housing sponsors reported the least frequent difficulty finding tenants. It also showed that public housing sponsors had a good targetting rate and that GVHC -- the only public housing sponsor for which waiting list data was available -- had waiting lists for all but its newest project. Two GVHC projects were among the six with the highest waiting lists.

By contrast, the only coops or private rental projects with high waiting lists were those which had been developed by sponsors with a particular interest in housing the disabled.

One of the main differences between public housing sponsors and co-op and private rental sponsors is that only public sponsors have a centralized intake and contact point. Contacting a GVHC project, for example, involves a phone call to GVHC's central office. Contacting an established co-op or private rental project is much more difficult because these projects function independently. Since not all projects have modified units, finding the ones which do adds another step to the process. Even though an informal network exists among agencies representing the disabled and sponsors who have modified units, the task of matching applicants with vacancies appears to be difficult and to require persistent effort.

The degree of difficulty sponsors experience -- and the lessening of this difficulty in cases where there is a central contact point - suggests that the idea of a central registry of all modified units and of applicants is worth exploring. Such a centralized registry -- complete with the household sizes seeking modified units -- could help to clarify the need for additional modified housing and the need for units of specific sizes, as well as helping to match tenants with units.

In summary, two steps which could be taken to clarify the question of need are:

- cross-check all waiting lists to remove duplicates and determine household sizes, disability type, ages etc.
- compile a central registry of all modified units, to which all sponsors report vacancies and through which all applicants apply.



## 7.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The survey data shows that, in general, the existing wheelchair-modified units are quite well targetted to the intended population. 89% of modified units are occupied by a person(s) with some disability and it is estimated that about 80% of all modified units house a disabled person who benefits from wheelchair modifications.

Modified units are available in a variety of buildings throughout the city and there are units for families as well as for singles and couples. However not all units and buildings are well-designed, nor are many of the projects in locations which offer good access to neighbourhood amenities. The accessibility problems revealed in the survey support a need to re-examine and fine-tune targetting policies and to improve planning and regulatory functions.

Although actual occupancy rates are good, most sponsors report having difficulty finding qualifying tenants to occupy modified suites. Sponsors who have a centralized intake point appear to have the least difficulty finding wheelchair tenants. Sponsors who function independently have more difficulty and, in the case of private seniors' project sponsors, also have the poorest targetting rates.

This survey suggests that there is a need for additional modified units but does not clarify the dimensions of the need. One step which would help to clarify the need and which should assist both sponsors and individuals seeking accommodation, is the establishment of a central registry of all modified units. A central registry would also facilitate the gathering of data on household types and sizes needing modified units, and could serve as a means of gathering feedback from users on issues such as accessibility.

APPENDIX I

August 1984

Survey of Wheelchair-Modified Housing

Projects Surveyed - 58 Projects  
Units

340

1. Coops - 17 Projects

No of Units

Connaught Coop	4
Twin Rainbows	4
Marina Coop	4
Kanata Coop	2
Kinross Creek	4
Matheson Heights	6
Arlington Grove	4
Cedar Mills	7
Tidal Flats	2
Jasmine Place	2
Lakewood	4
Penta	2
Eight Oaks	5
Sojourn	12
Mau Dan	1
Rose Garden	2
Access Housing	<u>23</u>

Coop: 88 Units

2. Public Non-Profit Rental - 18 Projects

BCHMC:	Bauer Villa	2
	Garden Villa	2
	MacLean Park Ext.	1
	Sunset Towers	20
	Steeves Manor	23
	Seven Maples	2
	Woodcroft	3
	Orchard Park	8
	Champlain Place	<u>5</u>
		66

GVHC:	Kelly Court	45
	Earle Adams	4
	Euclid Square	2
	Heather Place	5
	Habitat Village	4
	Strathearn Court	2
	Tivoli Gardens	<u>12</u>
		74

City	Roddan Lodge	10
	Antoinette Lodge	<u>7</u>

Public Non-Profit Rental

157 Units

3. Private Non-Profit Rental - 23 Projects

BCHF:	Maria Gomez	1
	Kings Daughters	1
	Alice Saunders	2
		<u>4</u>

Other		
Sponsors:	Maple Crest	12
	Royal Arch Masons	5
	Haro Park	16
	3 Links	2
	Chelsea No. 4 and 5	1
	Grandview Towers	1
	Broadway Manor	5
	Happy Manor	1
	Je Maintendrai	7
	Adanac Towers	6
	Anavets Seniors	3
	Renfrew Park	3
	Kiwanis Uptown	4
	St. Mary's	4
	Southvan Manor	5
	Clark Street Apts.	1
	China Creek	1
	Coastview	1
	Phoenix	1
	Voice of Cerebral Palsied	12
		<u>91</u>

Private Non-Profit Rental:	95 Units
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GRAND TOTAL	340 Units
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APPENDIX II

Projects Not Included in Survey (missed or under construction)

<u>Coop</u>	<u>No. of Units</u>
1. Amicae	18
2. DERA coop	10
3. Broadview	7
4. Chilean Coop	6
5. Westerdale	5
6. Creekview	6 (pod housing)
7. Flescher Coop	5
8. Northern Way	3
9. Marine Court	2
10. Paloma	2
11. Phoenix Court	2
12. Harbour Cove	5
13. David Wetherow	7
14. Kits Terrace	2
15. Pacific Heights	5
16. Helen's Court	2
17. Maple Creek	2
18. Emma G's	4
	<u>93</u>

<u>Rental</u>	<u>No. of Units</u>
1. Park Site 19	1
2. 127 Society	5
3. Mennonite Central Committee	1
4. 3 Links Plaza	2
5. Bill Hennessy Place	?
6. Fleck Building (Affordable)	2
7. Fleck Buildings (DERA)	?

APPENDIX III

Distribution of Wheelchair-Modified Units

<u>Sponsor Type</u>	<u>No. of Units</u>	<u>No. of Projects</u>
. Public non-profit rental	157 (46%)	18
. Private non-profit rental	95 (28%)	23
. Coops	88 (26%)	23
	340 Units	58 Projects
<u>Building Type</u>	<u>No. of Units</u>	<u>No. of Projects</u>
. Low-rise apartment	164 (49%)	31
. Townhouse	88 (26%)	14
. High-rise apartment	83 (25%)	12
	335 Units	57 Projects*
*One case missing.		
<u>Main Tenant Group</u>	<u>No. of Units</u>	<u>No. of Projects</u>
. Seniors	132 (39%)	24
. Families	129 (38%)	25
. Disabled	61 (18%)	6
. Low income singles	18 ( 5%)	3
	340 Units	58 Projects

## APPENDIX IV

Waiting Lists

	<u>(Project #)</u>	<u>Wheelchair or MI</u>	<u>General</u>
Coops	1. Connaught	0	30
	2. Twin Rainbows	0	40
	3. Marina	5	200
	4. Kanata	0	100
	5. Kinross	0	30
	6. Matheson Heights	1	140
	7. Arlington Grove	4	100
	8. Cedar Mills	0	100
	9. Tidal Flats	0	30
	10. Jasmine	0	-(new)
	11. Lakewood Terrace	0	75
	12. Penta	1	150
	13. 8 Oaks	1	30
	14. Sojourn	20	50
	15. Mau Dan	0	200
	16. Rose Garden	3	30
	17. Access	35	100
		<u>70</u>	<u>1,405</u>
Private non- profit rental	18. Maria Gomez	5	DES Tenant Selection Cttee
	19. Kings Daughter (BCHF)	0	500 on total BCHF list
	20. Alice Saunders (BCHF)	0	" "
	39. Maple Crest	4	200
	40. Royal Arch Seniors	5	200
	41. Haro Park Seniors	0	150
	42. 3 Links Manor Seniors	2	84
	43. Chelsea 4 and 5	0	38
	44. Grandview Towers	0	30
	45. Broadview Manor	0	25
	46. Happy Manor	0	70
	47. Je Maintreindra	20	1,600 (?)
	48. Adanac Towers	0	50
	49. Adavets Seniors	0	40
	50. Renfrew Park Manor	0	8
	51. Kiwanis Club Uptown	0	22
	52. St. Mary's Garden	no data	no data
	53. South Van Manor	no data	no data
	54. Clarke Apt.	0	120
	55. China Creek Apts.	0	0
	56. Coastview	0	0
	57. Phoenix	0	25
	58. Voice of Cerebral Palsied	15	15

GVHC

30.	Kelly Court	30	
31.	Earle Adams	4	
32.	Euclid Square	3	
33.	Heather Place	10	500 on total GVHC list
34.	Habitat Village	3	
35.	Strathearn Court	0 (new)	
36.	Tivoli Gardens	<u>4</u>	
		54	

BCHMC - keeps a centralized waiting list in which disabled applicants are not separated from other applicants

Roddan

Antoinette City-through DES Tenants Selection Committee

Difficulty filling units; procedures for selecting tenants

Sponsors were asked if they had ever had difficulty finding a wheelchair user to occupy a modified unit: 77% said 'yes'.

<u>Sponsor type</u>	<u>Reporting Difficulty</u>
Public rental	55.5%
Coops	62.5%
Private rental	95.5%

Reasons

Sponsors who reported difficulty were asked -- a list of possible reasons -- to name as many factors as they felt applied. (47 sponsors reporting)

- 27 (58%) said they couldn't find a person using a wheelchair
- 8 (17%) said the available unit was the wrong size for the applicant
- 8 (17%) said the project was perceived as too isolated
- 6 (13%) said their project had problems with unit design
- 4 ( 9%) said neighbourhood amenities were lacking or inaccessible
- 3 ( 6%) noted problems with features of the building other than the unit interiors

The remaining problems which sponsors could have named, such as lack of subsidy or the prospective tenants' inability to afford share purchase price (in co-ops), or lack of parking, were named once or not at all.

Procedures for finding tenants (47 projects responding)

- . 39 (83%) reported that they call agencies serving the disabled
- . 32 (68%) said they consult waiting lists. (It is noted here that of the 47 projects reporting on the earlier question on waiting lists, only 22 (46%) actually had wheelchair users or mobility impaired persons on their waiting lists)
- . 31 (66%) said they call other housing societies
- . 2 ( 4%) said they place ads in the paper
- . 21 (47%) said that they refer applicants to other housing sponsors if they receive applications and have no vacancy





9. Accessibility of Neighbourhood Amenities:

	Distance in blocks	Grade in degrees	Destination Accessible
	-1 (1)		Yes (1)
	-2 (2)		No (2)
	-3 (3)		
	+3 (4)		
Food Store	<input type="checkbox"/> (1)	<input type="checkbox"/> (7-8)	<input type="checkbox"/> (19)
Drycleaner	<input type="checkbox"/> (2)	<input type="checkbox"/> (9-10)	<input type="checkbox"/> (20)
Drugstore	<input type="checkbox"/> (3)	<input type="checkbox"/> (11-12)	<input type="checkbox"/> (21)
Bank	<input type="checkbox"/> (4)	<input type="checkbox"/> (13-14)	<input type="checkbox"/> (22)
School	<input type="checkbox"/> (5)	<input type="checkbox"/> (15-16)	<input type="checkbox"/> (23)
Bus stop	<input type="checkbox"/> (6)	<input type="checkbox"/> (17-18)	

10. Accessibility of Buildings

	Yes (1) No (2)	Difficult (3) Not applicable (4)
. Front entrance: At grade (no stairs)		<input type="checkbox"/> (24)
Ramp		<input type="checkbox"/> (25)
. Vestibule (second door)		<input type="checkbox"/> (26)
. Other entrance: At grade		<input type="checkbox"/> (27)
Ramp		<input type="checkbox"/> (28)
. Main doors (e.g. maneuvering room, closing devices)		<input type="checkbox"/> (29)
. Mail Boxes		<input type="checkbox"/> (30)
. Common outdoor space		<input type="checkbox"/> (31)
. Elevator to all residential floors		<input type="checkbox"/> (32)
. Elevator to parking		<input type="checkbox"/> (33)
. Parking space reserved for wheelchair units		<input type="checkbox"/> (34)
. Distance in feet from parking stall to accessible building entrance (or unit entrance)		<input type="checkbox"/> (35 - 37)
. All floors which have amenities (i.e. laundry common room) are accessible from all modified units		<input type="checkbox"/> (38)
. Other suites (i.e. door width) accessible		<input type="checkbox"/> (39)

Accessibility details

	Yes (1)	No (2)	Not applicable (3)
Common Room	<input type="checkbox"/> (40)	<input type="checkbox"/> (44)	<input type="checkbox"/> (48)
Laundry	<input type="checkbox"/> (41)	<input type="checkbox"/> (45)	<input type="checkbox"/> (49)
Out-of-suite storage	<input type="checkbox"/> (42)	<input type="checkbox"/> (46)	<input type="checkbox"/> (50)
Other amenity room	<input type="checkbox"/> (43)	<input type="checkbox"/> (47)	<input type="checkbox"/> (51)

Specify \_\_\_\_\_

Project  
Code ☐☐ (1-2)

Part II Unit and occupancy profile

Modified Unit #

☐☐ (3-4)

- . Number of bedrooms: bachelor (1) Three (4)  
                                  one (2) Four or more (5)  
                                  two (3) ☐ (3)
- . Total number of occupants ☐ (6)
- . Lower end of market rent for this unit type ☐☐☐☐ (7-10)
- . Is household income tested? ☐ (11)  
  Yes (1) No (2)
- . Rent per month ☐☐☐☐ (12-15)
- . Number of occupants with any disability  
                                  one (1) three (3)  
                                  two (2) none (4) ☐ (16)
- . Number of occupants using wheelchair ☐ (17)  
                                  one (1) three (3)  
                                  two (2) none (4)
- . Household type: Non family: single (1) ☐ (18)  
  shared (2)  
  couple (3)  
                  Family: one-parent (4)  
                                  two-parent (5)
- . Length of residence in this unit  
  Household has been here since project opened  
    Yes (1) No (2) ☐ (19)
- Household has been here:  
    less than one year (1) ☐ (20)  
    less than two years (2)  
    more than two years (3)
- . Disabled occupant profile

Disabled Occupant # 1	Disabled Occupant # 2	Disabled Occupant # 3
-----------------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------------------

Age ☐☐ (21-22) ☐☐ (25-26) ☐☐ (29-30)

Sex: Male (1) ☐ (23) ☐ (27) ☐ (31)

Female (2)

Disability:

wheelchair (1) ☐ (24) ☐ (28) ☐ (32)

mobility impaired (2)

other disability (3)