



Creating a vision for Inclusive Housing

When you think about your child’s future, what do you see? What do you want for their life? What do you want for yours? Do you want Friends, purpose, connection, an education, a job, a relationship, a home? These are the things most people work towards and it should be no different for people with developmental disabilities. A vision of inclusive housing comes from a vision of an inclusive life. There are some things that can help you create an inclusive life:

Building on Strengths and Gifts

All of us have strengths and gifts, whether it is a sense of humour, speaking or writing skills, organizational, technical or artistic skills, athletic ability, or the way someone brings out the best in others. Some of our strengths and gifts are obvious to everyone who we meet while others may not be obvious. Sometimes you need to get to know the person to identify their gifts. The important thing is to find those strengths and gifts and build on them – in school, at work, in all activities. Using your gifts and strengths builds both skills and confidence, personal qualities that will help you move into your future home.

Having a Socially Valued Role

We know that people who live with labels, including disability labels, can experience discrimination and something called “marginalization.” Marginalization means that they are not in the centre of communities and activities but are “at the margins” or not always invited to participate. A way to help people get invited is by supporting them to have socially valued roles. Socially valued roles are the roles our society values – employee, volunteer, friend, etc. Other socially valued roles include neighbour, tenant, and homeowner. It is important that we strive and support people to have socially valued roles in all areas of their lives.

Having a Job

There was a time when society did not believe that people with disabilities could work. Now we know that people with disabilities want to work and have the knowledge and skills to be employed. Young adults leaving high school expect to either go to college or university or to get a job. Employment not only provides a person with money to help them with their housing costs, it gives them a socially valued role, and it is the activity where many people make friends and connections. Research tells us that employment links positively with all indicators of quality of life.

Having a Network of Friends

There is a saying, “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” It means that if all you do is work, you won’t be happy. Everyone needs to have at least a few friends in their life – to do activities, share feelings, and be yourself with. A friend is also a socially valued role in which there is a mutual relationship – each friend gives and receives something from the relationship. Friends stop us from feeling isolated, act as sounding boards, and support us when we are feeling down or struggling with something. Friends aren’t paid and don’t volunteer to be your friend. They’re your friend because they like and value you. Your home is a great place to invite your friends.



Engaging in Your Community

Many people engage in activities in their community based on their interests. For example, if you are a hockey fan you and your friends might get season tickets to watch your local team. If you are interested in drama, you might join a local theatre company. If you like politics, you could join the riding association for your Member of Parliament or the Legislative Assembly. If you are into health, maybe your community association offers weekly yoga classes. The important thing is that by engaging in your community you meet people and make friends while making your community a better place for you and everyone else to live.

A Vision for Inclusive Housing

If you create a person-centred plan that considers all of these things, inclusive housing is a natural step towards creating an inclusive life. It just makes sense. Having a home supports all other aspects of your life and, like employment, links to a good quality of life.

As you begin to think about where and how you want to live, think about what is important to you about your home. Ask yourself:

1. What needs to be in my home?
2. What does the surrounding community need to have?
3. How do I want to spend my days and connect to community?
4. What supports do I need to live in the home I envision?

The **My Housing Plan** document helps you to create your vision for inclusive housing and identify the steps you need to take to make your vision a reality.