HOUSING ACCESSIBILITY: THE ROLE AND PERSPECTIVE OF DEVELOPERS IN PHILADELPHIA

A Thesis
Submitted to
the Temple University Graduate Board

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

By
Joshua A. Winheld
January, 2010

Thesis Approval:
Dr. Carolyn Adams, Thesis Advisor, Geography and Urban Studies
Dr. David Bartelt, Geography and Urban Studies.
Dr. Michael Dorn, Disability Studies

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on how real estate developers in Philadelphia view their responsibility to build housing units that are accessible to people living with disabilities. It relies on data collected by interviewing major developers who build several different types of housing, including high-end condominiums, university residential housing, mid-price townhouses, loft conversions, rehabilitation of historic properties, and affordable housing projects. The researcher finds that developers possess only limited knowledge about accessibility requirements. They do not regard people with disabilities as a submarket of consumers to whom they could sell their units. Interestingly, virtually all of them cited a family member or close friend with a significant disability, creating both awareness and an emotional connection to disability issues. Yet such personal connections did not necessarily prompt them to voluntarily add accessible features to their housing units.

Instead, the developers acknowledged that government regulations are the spur that can oblige them to build more accessible housing. Surprisingly, they expressed less antagonism toward such regulations than the researcher expected. In general, their view was that if such regulations force *all* developers in the greater Philadelphia market to incorporate accessible features and costs into their developments, then their individual firms will not be placed at a competitive disadvantage in the marketplace.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to Roger Marguiles and Charles Horton of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities, as well as all of the respondents, for their time and insight. Thank you to my thesis advisor, Professor Carolyn Adams, and to my other thesis committee members, Professors David Bartelt and Michael Dorn. I would also like to thank the Charlotte W. Newcombe Foundation for its financial assistance and Emma-Louise Findlater for transcribing the interviews upon which this study is based.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

> The disabled live in a transformed space...For disabled persons, the obstacles and barriers not only are multiplied, but are expanded well beyond the normal range; gutters become chasms, sidewalks and streets become treacherous paths, stairs may become impossible cliffs, distinctive sizes, shapes or colors may lose their significance (Golledge, 1993, p. 64).

Despite regulations designed to make cities in various countries more navigable and inclusive to people with disabilities, cities often remain rugged, unwelcoming frontiers for many such individuals, as this writer, who lives with a severe mobility impairment, can attest. Housing and transportation remain critical concerns for people with disabilities. If cities wish to promote their diversity and inclusiveness, they must work to create a built environment that is as safe and accessible as possible for those with disabilities.

Numerous studies have described the impact of an inaccessible built environment on people with disabilities or have offered various theories as to why the built environment is inaccessible, but few have sought to understand the perspectives of those involved in planning and designing it. This is surprising given the fact that developers' knowledge and attitudes arguably influence the designs they create. It is therefore important to ascertain whether developers need to be educated on issues relating to accessibility, such as legal requirements or the needs of people with disabilities, or whether developers must be persuaded to change their attitudes toward what is perceived as burdensome regulation. Without such an understanding, it may prove especially challenging for

lawmakers or advocates to improve the accessibility situation for those with disabilities. Thus, we interviewed a variety of housing developers working in Philadelphia to learn their opinions of accessibility regulations to which they must adhere, as well as their knowledge of the needs of, and feelings toward people with disabilities.

If there is any city in America that would have a disability-friendly atmosphere, it is Philadelphia, the birthplace of a nation that cherishes freedom and diversity. The reality is that the city, with an aging infrastructure and roughly a quarter of all residents older than 5 years of age affected by some type of disability, presents numerous accessibility concerns. Of those with a disability, 42.7 percent reported a physical disability (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). This does not include those with sensory or mental disabilities, some of whom may also have had a physical disability. Further, Philadelphia's disproportionately large population of people 65 years and older -- 14.1 percent in comparison to 12.4 percent of the U.S. population as a whole -- increases the prevalence of disability in the city (Hetzel & Smith, 2001, p. 7). Disability is therefore not a minor issue in Philadelphia, but a major concern. In terms of housing, a vast majority of rowhomes have front steps, making access difficult or impossible for those with disabilities. With 65,000 city residents with physical disabilities currently in need of "affordable, integrated accessible housing" and with 27 percent of Philadelphians with physical disabilities living below the poverty level, the need for accessible housing in Philadelphia is acute (Inglis Foundation, Retrieved October 21, 2009).

Despite the size of the city's population and its high percentage of people with disabilities, the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities (MCPD), has only two paid full-time members. The commission, which works along with all city departments, "ensures the city's compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Housing Act, and other laws governing the city's relationship with people with disabilities" (MCPD, Retrieved February 19, 2009). According to the director of the commission, "Philadelphia has come a long way" in terms of accessibility. As a result of the ADA, government buildings and programs are now accessible to people with disabilities, as are more goods and services. Yet, the city has "a long way to go," with accessible housing a chief concern (R. Margulies, personal communication, February 11, 2009). The commission's accessibility compliance specialist stressed the need to educate builders on what may seem to be common sense measures for anyone who has lived with a disabled family member, citing the example of a bedroom where one must go out into the hallway to access a bathroom on the other side of the bedroom wall. "You could just put a direct entrance to the bathroom. I mean, if you take a shower and you use a shower chair, you don't want to be rolled out of the bathroom naked in front of your family and friends" (C. Horton, personal communication, February 11, 2009).

In large part, the city government depends on the general public to report suspected violations, but in order to obtain a building permit in Philadelphia, one must provide documentation of compliance with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Uniform Construction Code, which includes accessibility requirements and is enforced by the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I). If a permit is denied, however, an

appeal for a variance may only be filed with the Pennsylvania Secretary of Labor and Industry, who reviews appeals in consultation with the Accessibility Advisory Board, which includes people with disabilities, architects, business owners, home builders, and elected officials (Pennsylvania Construction Code Act, 1999). A Philadelphia accessibility board once existed, but was disbanded when the Commonwealth's accessibility board assumed that role (R. Margulies, personal communication, February 11, 2009). It is interesting to note that Philadelphia is currently in the process of revising its zoning code, which presents an opportunity to create a more accessible city. The Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) is part of a push to standardize accessibility requirements as part of the city's new zoning code. They argue for certain universal design features (discussed below) in all new development, such as level entrances, first-floor bathrooms, and hallways/doorways wide enough for wheelchairs. They also call for increased pedestrian and transit-oriented development (PCA, 2009).

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

Before turning to our study, we must review some of the existing work on the subject of disability and the built environment. First, we examine work that focuses on specific physical aspects of the built environment. Next, we turn to some of the theoretical models that have been used to explain the inequality facing people with disabilities in the built environment, before turning to the various pieces of legislation aimed at correcting such inequality.

Disability in the Built Environment

As the above excerpt from Golledge (1993) indicates, the urban built environment presents challenges for those with disabilities that are often overlooked by the able-bodied population. Buildings may be accessible, for example, but if the areas between buildings are inaccessible, the accessibility of a particular building matters little. Even sidewalk furniture or poorly placed signs can be obstacles (Golledge, 1993; Hahn, 1986; Matthews & Vujakovic, 1995; Matthews et al., 2003; Palfreyman, 1991). Matthews and Vujakovic (1995) explained, through the use of comparative mapping, that the direct route a non-wheelchair user might take to reach a given destination could be very different from the circuitous route taken by a wheelchair user, who was limited to paved areas and dependent on curb cuts. In a subsequent project, Matthews et al. (2003) created a GIS program specifically for wheelchair users. Gilderbloom and Rosentraub (1990)

wrote that the lack of sidewalks, curb cuts, and bus shelters prevented the elderly and disabled population from using buses in Houston, even though most lived in close proximity to bus stops.

Some of the above literature falls into the category of transportation, another important focus for writers. Hahn (1986) wrote of the isolation of disabled people from their immediate neighborhoods in sprawling Los Angeles. At the time, the city lacked accessible buses and had no rapid transit system. Kitchin (1998) described the limitations imposed on disabled users of the London Underground. Clarke and George (2005) found that the elderly -- a population with its share of disabilities -- in North Carolina were more independent when they lived in more mixed land use areas, which tended to be more walkable. Aldred and Woodcock (2008), described transportation as an area of common ground for the disability and environmental movements, specifically in terms of the automobile, which "supports the creation of distances and obstacles only it can overcome" (p. 488). They also discussed the possible use of active transportation modes, such as cycling, to help some disabled people navigate the built environment.

Assuming the areas between buildings are accessible and transportation access is sufficient -- not always a safe assumption -- people with disabilities are often confronted with a whole other set of access concerns, as they shop, eat, and tend to their personal needs. A number of writers have addressed access to retail areas. McClain (2000) examined three large shopping centers in the Southwest for ADA compliance, finding compliance to be "inconsistent." Common findings included narrow aisles in individual

stores and inadequate knee space at food court tables. In their investigation of food store accessibility, McClain and Todd (1990) found that in terms of parking, curbs, ramps, and entrances, convenience stores were less accessible than grocery stores. Certainly, this is a problem in poor, urban neighborhoods where corner stores are prevalent. McClain et al. (1993) evaluated wheelchair access of both fast food and conventional restaurants in rural and urban areas. Though most restaurants were navigable inside, table height was a common problem, many lacked ramps for patrons in wheelchairs, and restroom features, such as stalls and sinks, often failed to meet ADA guidelines. Gant (2002) and Bromley, Matthews, and Thomas (2007) examined Shopmobility, a British service that allows disabled shoppers to borrow wheelchairs or scooters to help them while in town centers or malls. Kitchin (2001) explored a related issue in the provision of accessible public toilets in Ireland. Pfeiffer (1996) described the efforts of the disability community in New York City to pressure local government to reject a company's proposal to build public toilets because the company refused to build accessible toilets.

Accessible housing, a most essential need for those with disabilities, has been a key focus for several writers. Imrie (2004) pointed to a dearth of accessible dwellings and a lack of funding to adapt them. Most disabled people lived with another family member and few could afford to own homes (Imrie, 2003a, p. 387). Gilderbloom and Rosentraub (1990) wrote that despite a vacancy rate of about 20 percent in Houston, the percentage of "modified and affordable" housing units was "almost zero" (p. 275). Similarly, Hahn (1986) commented on the lack of barrier-free housing in Los Angeles. Part of the problem was that so many people with disabilities were unemployed, forcing them "to

reside in the oldest, least expensive, and least accessible housing in the Los Angeles area," placing them at greater risk in the earthquake-prone city (p. 281).

In writing about the experiences of people with disabilities in the private housing market in the U.K., Burns (2004) argued that inaccessible homes often resulted from the fact that builders based their designs on the concept of an able-bodied person (see also Heylighen, 2008; Imrie, 2003b). Though acknowledging the significance of physical barriers in housing, Harrison (2004) pointed to a need to look beyond them, as a person with a disability's "circumstances, experiences, needs and preferences determine what is most significant about a home, and the relative social, physical, and economic factors that affect living there" (p. 692). More specifically, Heywood (2004) considered the needs of disabled in the adaptation of housing, needs which included preservation of dignity and control.

Few scholars have investigated the attitudes and the knowledge possessed by developers with respect to accessible design. An exception is the geographer Rob Imrie of King's College London. With regard to the development of retail areas, Imrie (2000) compared the accessibility efforts and feelings toward accessible design of two commercial developers designing shopping centers in England, one of which reflected the typical reaction of concern about the bottom line. However, in a further study, Imrie and Hall (2001) conducted a series of interviews with English and Swedish developers, finding that while developers were not aware of the needs of people with disabilities, they were "not necessarily averse to responding to the needs of disabled people nor were they

unaware of their legal, and sometimes moral obligations" (p. 347). Imrie (2003a) surveyed builders to learn their opinion of Part M of the U.K.'s building regulations, which mandated that front entrances, first level bathrooms, doorways, hallways and corridors and switches and sockets of new homes and flats meet the needs of wheelchair users. He found that while some admitted that the code had made them aware of the needs of people with disabilities, nearly 63 percent surveyed felt the regulation was a disproportionate response to what they deemed a small problem. Builders objected most often on grounds of cost, aesthetics, or space within houses (2003a). A notable aspect of Imrie's work is that it differentiates awareness of the needs of disabled people from awareness of laws, and then distinguishes both those forms of awareness from developers' willingness to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities.

Explaining Disability in the Built Environment

As it is clear that the built environment continues to be inaccessible and therefore discriminates against people with disabilities, it is reasonable to wonder why this remains the case. Traditionally, disability was viewed as a medical -- or individual -- issue that rendered the person unable to navigate the built environment and required treatment. As a result, society was "absolved of blame and guilt" for the injustice facing people with disabilities (Kitchin, 1998). In recent decades, however, social geographers, disability scholars and others have turned to a social model, blaming societal and environmental factors; in other words, a person may have had an impairment (medical), but it was the built environment (social) that caused that person to have a disability (Bromley et al.,

2007; Imrie & Kumar, 1998; Park, Radford, & Vickers, 1998; Imrie & Wells, 1993; Hahn, 1986). According to Gleeson (1996), there was "no necessary correspondence between impairment and disability" (p. 391).

Although the social model appears to enjoy wide acceptance within the literature, there has been some debate (Gleeson, 1996; Golledge, 1996; Imrie, 1996). Golledge (1993) differentiated between disability, defined as an individual and functional limitation, and "disadvantage," a social or other external barrier to normal functioning, much like women, homeless people, or racial minorities faced. In Golledge's opinion, helping disabled people to overcome their functional limitations in the built environment rather than simply focusing on sociopolitical factors should be a goal for geographers (Park et al., 1998). Imrie (1996) criticized Golledge's approach as adhering to an "ableist" philosophy that focused on the functional limitations of people with disabilities and therefore created the assumption that they need to be taken care of. Further, Gleeson (1996) argued that Golledge's disability/disadvantage dichotomy "invokes a specific physiological identity, only to dismiss it again within a social category that cannot accommodate the singularity of disablement" (p. 389). Golledge, in his response, pointed out that his definition of disability was based on standards used by the World Health Organization and argued that his approach is practical, while Gleeson's and Imrie's approach was "intellectual, elitist, and somewhat ethereal" (Golledge, 1996, p. 404).

Materialist or Marxist interpretations have focused on industrialization and its emphasis on the production of capital, which rendered disabled people unproductive and also

meant that caregivers worked away from the home. As a result, the disabled population was placed in asylums or other institutions and therefore had little interaction with the built environment (Gleeson, 1996; Kitchin, 1998). Kitchin (1998) noted that the current shift toward deinstitutionalization of disabled people could be viewed as nothing more than "a way of saving the State capital" (p. 348). Sibley (1995) focused instead on the fear of Other, or that which was different from the majority. Other was equated to abnormal, dirty, or diseased. Thus, people with disabilities were excluded or marginalized in society. Arguing that the production of capital alone did not explain society's treatment of people with disabilities, Kitchin (1998) wrote that socially constructed "modes of thought enshrined in cultural representations and cultural myths" must also be considered (p. 345).

Feminist perspectives have also been put forward (Butler & Bowlby, 1997; Hahn, 1986; Morris, 1993). Such perspectives have contested biological modes of explanation. Butler compared the way in which women were defined by their sex (a biological assignment) with the way that people with disabilities are defined by their impairment (also a biological assignment). The comparison has been a significant one, as there are arguably strong links one can draw when explaining the treatment of people with disabilities by society. While women have traditionally been assigned domestic roles such as child care, people with disabilities have been viewed as child-like or in need of care. Both groups are part of a society that emphasizes beauty and perfection of one's body. Members of both groups must choose between hiding that which is deemed unattractive or imperfect by the rest of society and rejecting such standards by eschewing

makeup in the case of women or taking greater pride in one's body in the case of people with disabilities. Both groups have also been subjected to depersonalization and objectification by society, as women are leered at by men, while people with disabilities are shunned or subjected to stares from a morbidly fascinated public (Butler & Bowlby, 1997). As a result, society has not looked to accommodate the design needs of either group. However, Hahn (1986) acknowledged that the comparison of women and persons with disabilitieswas limited in that no other minority group, including women, faced the kind of "architectural apartheid" that confronts people with disabilities.

Legal Interventions

Before describing our study in detail, it is important to consider some of the legal interventions undertaken by the federal government with regard to accessibility in the built environment, particularly housing. The signature piece of legislation on accessibility and perhaps the most well-known has been the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). However, prior legislation has been influential as well (Pfeiffer & Finn, 1997; 1992). The Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) mandated that facilities that were federally owned, operated leased or funded must be accessible. It established the Uniform Federal Accessibility Standards (UFAS), to which federal government agencies must adhere. Any housing (such as public housing) funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development must follow the UFAS. Section 504 of the 1973 Rehabilitation Act prohibited discrimination on the basis of disability in all programs and services receiving federal funding. With regard to housing, Section 504

required that a percentage of units newly constructed or altered (and federally) funded be accessible. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 prohibited discrimination in the housing market based on disability and, as amended, established design and construction requirements. Unlike the ADA, which did not address private housing at all, the Fair Housing Act applied to multi-family dwellings, requiring all units to be accessible in structures with an elevator and ground floor units in walk-up apartments. In newly-constructed such dwellings, this included public and common areas, doors and hallways; routes into and through the unit; light switches, electrical outlets, thermostats and other environmental controls; the reinforcement of bathroom walls; and kitchens and bathrooms (Pfeiffer, 1994; Reed, 1992; Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST, Accessed February 21, 2009; Steinfeld & Levine, 2004; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2009).

Yet the ADA has been the most significant disability legislation in the U.S. Most relevant to this paper are Title II and Title III. Title II stipulated that a person with a disability "may not be discriminated against on the basis of that disability in any program, activity or service provided or made available by state and local government, or any department, agency, or instrumentality of a state or local government" (Reed, 1992). Title III stated that no individual "shall be discriminated against on the basis of disability in the full and equal enjoyment of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodations of any place of public accommodation by any person who owns, leases (or leases to), or operates a place of public accommodation" (Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 2008). ADA standards were described in the ADA

Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), with enforcement falling to the Department of Justice and the Department of Transportation. ADAAG prescribed specifications for items such as doorway width (minimum clearance of at least 32 inches), threshold height (no more than 3/4 inches), maximum slope of a ramp (1:12), width of handicapped parking spaces (at least 96 inches wide. It addressed surface type, signage, elevators, and telecommunications. The ADA never defined the term "accessible." The ADAAG, however, stated that "a site, building, facility, or portion thereof that complies with [its] guidelines" was considered to be accessible (ADA Accessibility Guidelines, 2002) . Structures already in existence were required to be made accessible by the ADA only if undergoing significant renovation, while historically significant structures were exempted if historic integrity would be compromised in order to make them accessible. Furthermore, if an "undue burden" could be demonstrated, an accommodation was not required. Pfeiffer (1994) viewed this as a strength because it was evidence that the act "carries its own cost containment process" (p. 540). While pointing out that medical care, airline transportation, and private housing were not covered by it, Reed (1992) viewed the ADA as, in the final analysis, a compromise. Though the term "accessible" appeared frequently throughout the act, it was never defined. However, anything that was not accessible was considered discriminatory.

As Pfeiffer (1994) demonstrated, claims that ADA compliance is costly -- a common argument -- are debatable. According to the Department of Justice, it cost less than one percent of total construction expenses to make newly-constructed public accommodations or commercial facilities compliant. Furthermore, there were potential economic benefits

for being accessible, as in the case of a Seattle hotel that hosted a disability conference, spending roughly $1,500 on necessary modifications, and made a profit of nearly $32,000 Pfeiffer (1994). In their study of implementation of Title II by state and local governments, Pfeiffer and Finn (1997) concluded that it was being implemented to a "satisfactory extent" (p. 753). Yet studies of Title III implementation (McClain & Todd, 1990; McClain et al., 1993; L. McClain, 2000) found that people with disabilities could not consistently count on complete ADA compliance, whether at a shopping center, restaurant, or food store. McClain (1999) developed a checklist to evaluate wheelchair accessibility of shopping malls, based on the standards set forth in the ADAAG. In terms of a psychological impact of the ADA on people with disabilities, Pfeiffer described how some such people felt more confident and empowered, determined to challenge inaccessibility in the built environment (1996).

The higher costs, unattractiveness, and "segregating" quality of architecture built to meet accessibility standards has led to the emergence of universal design, which has aimed "to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost" (Center for Universal Design, 2008a; Center for Universal Design, 2008b). Step-less entrances and accessible bathrooms were key aspects of universal design, but small, multi-story housing (including rowhomes or townhomes, common to Philadelphia) has often failed to incorporate such features because it was typically exempted from accessibility requirements or due to "misconception" on the part of builders (Young, 2006). Some advocates for disabilities, including some in Philadelphia, have pushed for a concept

called “visitability.” These advocates have argued for legislation on the local, state, and federal levels to mandate that all newly-constructed homes include at least one step-free entrance, wider doorways (at least 32 inches) and an accessible bathroom on the first floor with enough room for a wheelchair user to enter and close the door behind him or her (Concrete Change, 2008; Karp, 2001; News On TAP, 2009; Philadelphia Corporation for Aging, 2009; Steinfeld & Levine, 2004; Visitability, 2005). Such features allow people who develop physical disabilities to have basic access to live in or visit a home. Visitability initiatives have been proposed in a number of cities, including Philadelphia, and an ordinance has been in effect in Atlanta since 1992 (Concrete Change, 2008). Although some advocates have argued that visitability has not gone far enough in the direction of universal design, proponents have argued that universal design cannot be achieved overnight. With a limited selection of universally designed products and no set universal design standards, these advocates feared that pushing for universal design instead of visitability could “stifle the innovative spirit” (Steinfeld & Levine, 2004) .Finally, visitability pioneer Eleanor Smith, has contended that “visitability goes a long way toward creating livability. Many people who use a chair can make it in a house if they can just get in and get through the bathroom door” (Smith, E. quoted in Karp, 2001).

CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Much of the literature suggests that despite legislative and legal efforts, inaccessible aspects of the built environment, especially housing, have continued to negatively impact many people with disabilities, a segment of the population expected to grow as the baby-boomer generation ages and medical technology improves. People with disabilities desire to have the same opportunity as able-bodied people have to move about the built environment and participate in society to the best of their abilities.

Disability activists and researchers into disability can continue to describe and discuss the issues and needs of people with disabilities in the built environment and nearly every person who has a disability (this researcher included) can offer anecdotal evidence of a built environment that is often inaccessible and unfriendly. However, until an effort is made to fully understand the attitudes and motivation of those responsible for the planning, design, and construction of the built environment, it will be difficult for advocates to bring about a more accessible, disability-friendly built environment.

Following the example of Imrie and Hall (2001), our study aimed to describe the opinions of housing property developers in the City of Philadelphia regarding accessibility requirements (local, state, and federal) which they must follow, as well as to

gauge their knowledge of the needs of and attitudes toward people with disabilities.[1] The study addressed these main questions:

1. To what degree are Philadelphia developers aware of the laws and regulations governing accessible development?
2. To what degree are developers in Philadelphia aware of the needs of people with disabilities?
3. What attitudes do developers express about accessibility requirements?

[1] Imrie and Hall (2001) focused on commercial property developers.

CHAPTER 4
METHODOLOGY

To answer the above research questions, we conducted a series of in-person interviews with several housing developers in Philadelphia. The developers included a mixed-use developer; a townhome developer; a high-end rental housing developer; a university campus developer; and a developer focusing on historic preservation. The term "developer" was used somewhat loosely. Among the interviewees are executives, engineers, designers and advocates. As the researcher asked questions that could have elicited unpopular views of people with disabilities or the City of Philadelphia from interviewees, their identities are anonymous in this analysis. The list of interviewees was agreed upon in advance by researcher and advisor. Each of the interviewees had at least 20 years' experience in development. All had done some rehabilitation of older buildings. They had varying levels of involvement in their projects, from exclusively designing and/or building to also managing/leasing them. The researcher's advisor made initial contact with interviewees through an introductory letter (see Appendix A) that was delivered by e-mail. Prior to conducting interviews with developers, the researcher met with members of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Disabilities to gain insight into accessibility in Philadelphia.

Six housing developers were interviewed for this project. Developer number one was a high-ranking executive with a home builder that had a local, regional and national profile. His company built single-family homes, townhomes, and condominiums in under-utilized

areas, aimed at most segments of the homebuyer market, from entry-level to mid-range to active adult. We will refer to this developer the "townhome developer." Developer number two owned a local firm that builds mixed-use developments, primarily in under-served areas of the city, sometimes making use of abandoned factories and warehouses. The type of housing built by this company consisted of townhomes, apartments, and lofts, which were marketed mostly toward renters in their mid-20s to early 40s, who were typically single. We will refer to this developer as the "mixed-use developer." Developer number three was an associate of the mixed-use developer, with experience building mixed-use projects in a number of cities. We will refer to this developer as the "mixed-use developer's associate." Developer number four was a high-ranking executive with a company that had developed historically significant buildings in several cities, including Philadelphia, into high-end rental properties aimed at young professionals, often those in the medical and educational sectors. We will refer to this developer as the "apartment developer." Developer number five was an historic preservation consultant in Philadelphia; we will refer to this developer as the "historic preservation developer." Finally, developer number six was a high-ranking official at a local university's facilities department and had experience building student residences as well as other types of campus buildings. We will refer to this developer as the "university campus developer."

An open-ended question format (see Appendix B for list of interview questions) was employed to allow interview subjects the opportunity to elaborate in their responses and to allow the researcher to prompt them for elaboration. The same questions were asked

of each interviewee, although follow-up questions varied. Interviews ranged from 30 minutes to nearly two hours.

CHAPTER 5
FINDINGS

The developers' responses are organized into three main categories based on the research questions in the previous section. In keeping with the research questions, we first examine the interviewees' knowledge about accessibility requirements in Philadelphia.

Developers' Knowledge Regarding Accessibility Requirements

Developers face an increasing array of regulation, whether based on concerns such as safety, environmental impact, or style (Imrie & Street, 2009b; Imrie & Street, 2009a). However, according to Imrie and Street (2009a), little was known of the degree to which they were prepared to respond to the growing regulation of their industry by governmental authorities. To avoid the risk that government regulation seeks to prevent, they often had to self-regulate themselves, relying when possible on the aid of support staff (Imrie & Street, 2009b). Moreover, organizations in the U.S., such as the American Institute of Architects and the National Association of Homebuilders, have offered materials and courses on building codes and regulations to further the knowledge of their members.

Accessibility represents another area of regulation, but Imrie and Hall (2001) found that many developers considered accessibility a "minor consideration." The developers

interviewed here, however, seem to take the opposite view, even if only due to legal ramifications. According to the university campus developer,

> Accessibility in terms of the design process is probably the most paramount thing, not only from the design perspective, but from the licensing inspection to the permitting to the final occupancy issue. That has become the top priority in terms of building and constructing a new building.

With the exception of the rental housing developer, none of the respondents has any familiarity with the Fair Housing Act, from which the accessibility requirements are derived for multi-family dwellings. Although its requirements do not cover private housing, nearly all of the developers had a general familiarity with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and in instances where they were unsure, they had architects and/or engineers whom they could depend upon to lead them in the proper direction. Asked about his familiarity with the ADA, the historic preservation developer said,

> I would say six or seven on a scale of ten. I think I learned most of it initially, but I'm always adding to my knowledge over time, specifically with certain projects. I probably haven't heard of a lot of new twists or information but it's more of how do we make it work in this space.

Another developer explained that

> The requirements change pretty often; what I was used to with the ADA requirements five or six years ago has changed, mostly space requirements affecting the restrooms and accessibility into the building, doorways, how much room on which side of the door. But with the internet, you can get updated requirements very easily.

But the townhome developer was more cynical, arguing that

> You have ADA standards; does anybody really understand ADA standards? We know they are there, we know they can bite you from a developer's perspective. We aren't building; our product is just generally not an accessible product. We do have requirements when we do build condos to the elevators that two percent of the units or something has to be accessible. That's ADA, I believe, but I could be wrong because nobody can ever really give me a straight answer and is it two percent (we have a project which is 400 units).

However, the mixed-use developer's colleague argued that

> It's not the requirements that aren't clear. It's who is responsible for enforcing it, I think that is where it gets a little shady. Where we cross over into municipal building codes, the ADA requirements supersede everything but enforcement is the weak link. The requirements are clear.

The Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on Disabilities (MCPD) works in conjunction with the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I) on matters of accessibility in the city. Yet none of the developers had ever consulted with the MCPD, much less knew of its existence. One developer asked,

> How long have they been around?

Another developer said that

> From my end, I don't know they exist. How big is it, two people? And one's always on vacation?

But another developer, previously unaware of the existence of the MCPD said,

> I haven't built a new building in a while. But you know, if you were designing something today in Philadelphia, you would probably look for their guidelines, which I imagine that they have. There is the law, which is easy and then there are probably guidelines on top of that.

In situations where meeting ADA requirements was not possible in the case of an historic building, the historic preservation developer explained that

> As far as I understand it, you can consider alternative minimum compliance. In many cases it is fairly easy to do that. If they can't find a solution, there is a mediation group called the State Historic Preservation Office and there is an architect there who will try to mediate and come to a solution which preserves the significant character of the building and yet provides for ADA compliance. So, there are often compromises, but I'm not really sure of any cases where there has been an impasse and people haven't resolved it. My limited experience is that the process works pretty well.

Developers' Awareness of the Needs of People With Disabilities

The marginalization of people with disabilities has been said to stem from society's lack of understanding of the needs of people with disabilities, due to feelings such as fear, revulsion, misconception, and general discomfort (Butler & Bowlby, 1997; Hahn, 1986; Imrie & Wells, 1993). One might therefore imagine that housing developers, as part of society, would also lack an understanding of the needs of disabled people (Imrie & Hall, 2001). In Imrie's (2003) study, one builder admitted that he did not know what features

people with disabilities wanted. In addition, according to Imrie (2003), architects were typically trained to design with the so-called 'normal' human body in mind, using specific geographic dimensions. This does not seem to encourage architects to think in terms of the dimensions of a person in a wheelchair. With a lack of awareness, it seems unlikely that developers will design housing that accommodates people with disabilities any more than currently required by law.

Yet according to one developer in this study, the industry pays enough attention to the needs of people with disabilities simply because the law ensures that it does.

> The ADA is good and comprehensive and so they certainly pay attention to all the regulations and rules and all the laws and [developers] build to that.

The townhome developer disagreed by pointing out that knowing about laws is not the same as knowing that there are customers with disabilities who need accessible designs.

> I don't think it does because I don't think that the industry is aware of the needs and also of the market. If people were coming in and asking if we built anything that is accessible and the sales manager then came back and said, "You know, I've had three people with disabilities come in over the last month asking if our homes are accessible," then the builder would sit there and say, "Maybe there is a market here and we could capitalize on the market."

One developer admitted having insufficient knowledge of people with disabilities.

> It's like anything else, it's new and you don't know what it is. You don't know what you can and can't do and also you don't know the other person's personality, so it's like meeting any stranger. If you meet

> somebody that's different, you are going to be a little more on guard, too, whether it's a handicap or someone who is speaking a foreign language. You can be walking down the streets of Philadelphia and someone who isn't dressed well comes up and asks you something, right away you are saying, "I don't have any money." It's wrong, but it's human nature.

Others expressed a degree of comfort with people with disabilities, including one who said that

> I have a disability; you just don't know about it now. We all have our disabilities.

Another explained that

> The only time I have ever felt uncomfortable around someone with a disability was a guy I know who has Tourette's. A couple of times in public places, his Tourette's would kick in and he would blurt out things. But I mean what's the difference [with a person with a disability]? I'm sure no one looks at Stephen Hawking as someone who's missing something. He's the smartest guy in the world.

Furthermore, it stands to reason that having personally experienced a disability or spending time with a close friend or relative with a disability, whether permanent or temporary, would lead to a better understanding of the needs of people with disabilities.

As it turned out, all of the respondents had personal accounts of some kind of disability. One developer recounted how

> I understand accessibility issues more now through my [relative], who has MS. I live downtown and when we go out, I have to be careful about where we are going, how far we are going, because we usually walk from the house, how many steps to get up to the entrance and those kind of things. But that's minor I think, because it's kind of common sense when you think about it.

He went on to add that

> I had a young lady who was in a wheelchair who lived in one of our buildings as a renter and she was a friend of mine. She said to look at the back door, look at the threshold -- because we have a ramp there -- to see how high that threshold was. She said she could get over it but it was a struggle, so that was the one thing she made me think about. And then she said the ramp we had out front, we ought to instead of having it turn on this hard 90 degree angle, open that up. So that helped and it made me aware.

Another developer, who had a close relative with a mental disability, explained his relative's disability and expressed the view that society had become more tolerant of people with disabilities.

> [His disability] makes certain things more difficult, but not access. I think the general public just has more awareness. I can remember back when I was in school in the 60's. Looking back, there were clearly a number of kids that were disabled. The kids were merciless and the teachers were merciless and it's so different nowadays. My [relative] can get around anywhere and I can't remember any case where he was made fun of.

But in the case of another developer, having family members with a disability did not necessarily translate into being entirely comfortable around people with a disability.

> My [distant relative who is in a wheelchair] I have known her for 25-plus years and there are times when we are moving her, [I am wondering] am I going to hurt you, am I not going to hurt you? When [a closer relative] was paralyzed it was different because we were [so close]. But you know, you always have to make sure you aren't offending somebody, so you are always cautious.

The developers interviewed expressed an interest in learning more about the needs of people with disabilities. According to one developer,

> It can't hurt. It can only help. I think that the [disability] community should offer some kind of seminar on it and invite our community. Make us more educated on your needs and create a bridge between the communities.

Another developer suggested a hands-on approach to educating the development community.

.

> From my perspective, I would probably be interested in it and intrigued by it because, you know, it's always better to see the practical end. It's helpful to have input from somebody who understands it. If someone said they were going to offer a three or four-night course [for developers], to get in a chair and understand situations, I'd definitely be interested. I've never wheeled myself up a ramp.

Developers' Attitudes about Accessibility Requirements

As noted in the previous section, government regulation of development, not only with regard to accessibility, has been on the rise. Generally speaking, regulation has been a source of angst and frustration for developers (Imrie & Street, 2009b; Imrie & Street, 2009a). The homebuilding industry in the U.S. has opposed further governmental regulation that would require certain accessible features advocated by proponents of universal design and visitability. Citing additional costs and aesthetic concerns, the industry's preference is to let the market dictate the demand for accessible homes and features, rather than the government. Simply put, its goal is to reduce regulation (Karp, 2001). In the U.K., the homebuilding industry expressed similar resistance to accessibility measures required under Part M of that nation's building regulations. However, with time, most developers became resigned to such requirements (Imrie, 2003b).

Philadelphia as a Difficult Environment for Developers

To put accessibility requirements in Philadelphia in proper context, questions were first asked regarding the difficulties that developers generally face in building projects in the city. In general, the developers found the City of Philadelphia to be a challenging environment in which to work. In fact, some argued that building in Philadelphia had become steadily more difficult in recent years, with increased bureaucracy, additional red tape, more conditions and higher costs.

One developer commented that the drawings approved in advance and the finished project were carefully scrutinized by city employees.

> Not only do they attach more conditions, but they are more accountable for what's on the drawings because that's the most important thing, you know the guy who signs the drawings saying that you are going to put all this stuff in but then the developer would say, "Well, maybe I don't need those extra water fountains that are at that lower elevation." So then he will take them out hoping that the guy comes and he doesn't notice or it's not important to him. That doesn't happen anymore.

Another respondent described the level of regulation as unchanged but nevertheless troublesome to developers.

> It's about the same and it wasn't good to begin with. [A colleague of mine] coined a phrase and it's that in the suburbs, they know how to handle you but they don't want you; the city wants you, but they don't know how to handle you and they just won't listen. I shouldn't say that, though, because there have been times where we have negotiated a few things with them.

Another agreed, but felt the situation went beyond the city government to the nature of competing interests in a city.

> It's probably not easier but good architects and good developers know what they are going to have to do and just figure it out; it's just part of the process. There are a lot of things to comply with, but I think any city is more challenging. You have all these people around you that want to have a say in it; Philadelphia is kind of infamous for this. To get your approvals, you probably have to talk to every neighborhood group; the neighbors – you need to get them on board. So that's difficult, but the smart guys know what they need to do.

However, a fourth developer was less critical, offering praise for the city government.

> You have to separate the process from the economics and so the process, the mayor has done a good job of trying to herd the different agencies and the different departments that have to be part of the process and he's done a lot of good things there. They are also now more focused on planning and that process and trying to really get a good master plan and think about what we are building, so on that end I think it has gotten better. It's still more difficult here than most places, and there are still a lot of agencies involved. But then there's the economics of it; the cost of construction in this town is high.

He went on to add that city's unions were less responsible for the high cost of development in Philadelphia than one might think.

> People kind of jump to the unions. There is a gap between the economics of what kind of rents you can get in Philadelphia versus the cost of construction. The cost of construction is impacted by unions, but not entirely. This is a market that gets a certain rent for office/retail/apartments. You look at the cost of construction and for whatever reason that is, there is somewhat of a disconnect and there is also a significant risk.

Design Quality

One of the chief complaints within the home development industry has been that accessibility concerns affected the quality of housing designs. In a survey of British builders, Imrie (2003b) found that a majority felt that accessibility requirements in that country forced them to alter their designs at least to some degree, if not significantly. Some developers argued that there was a loss of space with which to work. Some pointed to water or termite damage as a potential drawback to level entrances. Others believed that accessible design was not aesthetically pleasing, that it looked ugly or like "handicapped housing," and would not appeal to most consumers. Advocates for

accessibility, on the other hand, have argued that this was hardly the case (Imrie, 2003b; Karp, 2001). Imrie (2003b) included several photographs of various attractive-looking accessible features -- level entrances, doorways, bathrooms. Some advocates have suggested that most people actually prefer a larger bathroom or a no-step entrance that makes it easier when carrying groceries or pushing a stroller. Others have put forth designs that included level entrances while allowing the structure to be elevated for water and termite protection. Finally, some have pointed out that poor design quality can be something of a self-fulfilling prophecy. That happened because in some cases designers work simply to meet the minimum legal requirements when more aesthetically pleasing materials are available (Concrete Change, 2008; Karp, 2001; Steinfeld & Levine, 2004).

However, the opinion that accessible housing design was not aesthetically pleasing was not echoed by any of the respondents interviewed here. Referring to two of his recent projects, the mixed-use developer said,

> I think both of these projects look great, so we achieved good style and accessibility.

All of the respondents acknowledged an impact on the creative design process by accessibility considerations, but most did not consider that impact to be an undue burden, including one developer, who said that such concerns

> change dimensions -- in bathrooms, for instance. If you are working in small spaces, it could change the dimensions because you need to have a certain radius, I think it's a five foot radius so that a wheelchair can get around. There's door

> width, bathroom accessibility, and of course elevators -- vertical transportation -- but you don't hear people gripe about it.

However, another developer found that accessibility considerations could restrict the creative design process.

> One, trying to fit [things] in sometimes, because you are restricted; two, codes that are going to handcuff you; and three, if you ever go outside that code, you're smacked.

As mentioned earlier, the concept of visitability calls for at least one level entrance in all newly-constructed homes. Some architects have been able to build homes -- including rowhomes and townhomes, which are common to Philadelphia -- with level entrances while still maintaining the required elevation to protect against water or termite damage. According to the townhome developer, to do so on a large scale, while possible, presented a challenge in that

> Residential construction is usually wood frame construction that requires the soil to be eight inches below the wood framing. Therefore, you have two different ways of handling the entrance. First, if you have a crawl space or basement, the framing for the first floor is approximately 12 inches plus the eight inches for the soil distance leaves you with three steps to get into the house. Second, if you build on a concrete slab, you only have the eight inch soil distance which leaves one step into the house. There are ways to put ramps up to the house to have a barrier free entrance. However, to do this on a large scale (several townhomes in a row) and to achieve the 1:12 requirement of the ramps, it becomes difficult and expensive even in a relatively flat area. To try to achieve this in an area that has a street that slopes, the challenge becomes even greater.

It seems clear that the amount of space with which architects have to work has an impact on the designs they create. Some in the homebuilding industry have argued that accessibility requirements limit the amount of occupiable floor space. When asked about the impact of accessibility requirements on occupiable floor space, one of the developers interviewed here explained that

> You are increasing the size of your typical unit; you are increasing the size of the bathroom. There have to be several increases.

However, in reference to a condominium building that was part of a recent project, the townhome developer said that in order to comply with ADA requirements,

> You had to shift some doorways and move some things, but it wasn't like the unit went from 1,000 square feet to 1,500 square feet -- and these were relatively small units.

In certain situations, accessibility requires creativity on the part of the designer. For one of the developers, who had rehabilitated old factories into housing, making the entrance to such buildings accessible represented the greatest obstacle due to historic or simply physical reasons.

> This is where you see the real creativity coming into play. When you are talking accessibility, it is most likely trying to come in the primary entrance, and there are always at least one or maybe two more entrances, so for example at [one of our buildings], we have a loading ramp and we put [an accessible] ramp in the loading dock and in to the lobby, but the front of the building, which has one step up and then has steps into the lobby, we didn't change that because we had this other access.

> The challenge is when you cannot significantly alter the facade or the exterior of the building. We can't alter some magnificent front marble steps or granite steps. We always work around it, to be honest with you. It's not always as convenient. If you were coming down the street, you'd want to be coming in the front door. Instead, you'd have to go down and turn around back to the loading dock and up and in, so it's not always as convenient, but it certainly works for us and ultimately it works for everybody.

Cost Considerations

Developers are businesspeople seeking to maximize profits, so it should not be surprising that a consistent theme of the housing development industry has been that accessible design adds to the cost of construction. At the same time, some within the industry have said that any additional costs related to current accessibility regulations were absorbed into the price of construction (Imrie & Hall, 2001; Imrie, 2003b; Karp, 2001). The relative inexpensiveness of a number of accessible housing features has been documented by advocates for accessible design. In new construction, advocates have contended that a no-step entrance and wider interior doors cost, at most, a few hundred dollars. A 36-inch door as opposed to a 30-inch door, for example, cost an additional four dollars. Still, it must be remembered that neither the Fair Housing Act nor the ADA required either feature in single-family detached homes or townhomes, as neither act applied to such structures (Concrete Change, 2008; Imrie & Hall, 2001; Karp, 2001; Pfeiffer, 1994; Steinfeld & Levine, 2004). As for the cost of retrofitting a project to be accessible, a 1993 study (Steven Winter Associates) found that it cost less than one percent of total construction costs to meet the provisions of the Fair Housing Act Accessibility Guidelines.

Although nearly all of the interviewees in this study made reference to cost, they all seemed to agree that most additional expenses due to accessibility requirements are simply built-in costs inherent to any project. According to one developer,

> It is more expensive; that is the case, but I don't think it is as critical anymore because people are putting that cost in.

Another developer's comment suggested that because accessibility standards were applied to all projects, no individual project was put at a comparative cost disadvantage.

> It's the nature of construction, so it doesn't cost you more money because it is a standard now. So why even entertain the fact that it has any implications of money when that is what needs to be done to get the building operational?

Naturally, the stage at which accessible features are incorporated plays a major role in terms of cost.

> The costs aren't anything big because they are built into the job -- as long as you do it on the front end.

The type of project being constructed must also be considered when looking at the cost of accessibility. According to the historic preservation developer:

> If you are doing a large condominium, let's say you are making condominiums out of an old factory building. You have a lot of space to work with, so the accessibility costs will probably be not much compared to the whole budget.

On the other hand, as the townhome developer explained,

> If you look at a street with rowhomes on it and every 18 to 20 feet you have a door that has to be accessible, it becomes difficult. If you have a building that has one entrance, then I don't think there's a big cost to that.

To deal with disproportionate costs imposed by accessibility, one of the developers suggested the creation of a government incentive program

> I would lobby the government to create tax benefits for development to go to the next level. So, at worst it would be revenue neutral and it would encourage an even higher level of accessibility.

Asking for government incentives implies that developers may not be able to charge customers a premium for accessible design. With regard to the value of accessible features, one developer felt that it would not be of interest to customers, with the exception being the active adult community.

> Even then**,** it's minimal. As long as they don't have five stairs in front of the house that they have to walk up to get in. A lot of active adult communities are built on slab so from the garage to the first floor is a four inch lip as standard so to make that accessible is relatively easy.

But the mixed-use developer felt that accessible features expanded his customer base.

> The key word is customers. Think about it: the units are larger, the bathrooms are larger. The only downside would be if your counters are much lower, that kind of thing.

Finally, the university campus developer said it was important to look at the role of lending institutions in accessible building.

> The banks have standards in terms of what they give, for example, when they do a residence hall or apartment complex, there is a certain dollar per bed, per square foot, etc. that they lend to developers. Let's say it is $52,000 per room, which is just a number out of the air. And so that doesn't account for things that may need to be modified. You then need to try to do your projections on that and it can't work. The banks, they don't care.

Regulatory Burden on Developers

As discussed earlier, developers have been burdened with a multitude of regulations, including accessibility requirements (Imrie & Street, 2009b; Imrie & Street, 2009a). The ADA, for example "puts many decisions in the hands of local officials and design engineers, who may or may not have the knowledge necessary," which has placed the burden in the hands of developers (Sexton, 2009, p. 24). Whether intentional or not, failure to comply with accessibility regulations can lead to time delays and increased costs of construction (Sexton, 2009). Furthermore, to avoid any uncertainty during the building inspection process, builders have often used tried-and-true designs they knew would pass muster, such as homes with front steps (Karp, 2001).

In Philadelphia, enforcement of accessibility regulations regarding construction falls to the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections (L & I). Asked about their dealings with the department with regard to accessibility concerns, respondents' opinions were mixed. According to one developer,

> They have been fine, they're great. Where you see L & I is not so much after you've built something -- although obviously they are there -- but it's in the design review and the building permitting. These guys know that stuff inside and out, so they are looking at plans to work through all that. It will happen before you start building and then if they see something on a site that they are concerned about they will let you know about it.

Another developer expressed a similar view.

> I give them a lot of credit for their review process before you get a permit. [On] both the city and the state issues, they are very sensitized. I would say they are more sensitized to [accessibility] issues than they would be to the electrical distribution of the building.

Others had a less than glowing assessment of the department. According to one developer,

> To go to L & I and ask a question, it is impossible to find the right person. They are all very professional, but they are just not there to assist you to move your project along. They are there to just enforce what to do. Generally, they have people down there that are knowledgeable, that have been in the business for a long time, but they are so paranoid. It's like they live within this box of rules. They have a little bit of room, and as long as they stay in that box, their pensions are safe. As soon as you step out of that box -- and this is the difference between government and my world -- if it doesn't go right, they are now exposed.

Furthermore, according the same developer, once L & I became involved in a project, making changes became complicated.

> Once they get involved, the project's designed and you are ready to go. If they throw any type of flag saying, "Whoa, time out, this is not accessible," the creativity, the time, the effort, and the cost to try and make

> the accessibility more seamless is gone. At that point, you are going to sit there and say, "What do we have to do?" and just do it the most cost effective way to get done with it to meet the code and move forward but you can't go to them [earlier] and say what we want to do. They are going to tell me to submit it as a formal document.

But another developer stressed the importance of avoiding such a situation in the first place.

> That's why you hire a qualified architect or designer to make sure that you include everything.

People With Disabilities as a Market

Housing developers build homes targeted at various segments of the homebuyer market. With the number of people requiring accessible features on the rise, it seems apparent that people with disabilities represent a growing market for developers. Asked whether the housing development industry paid enough attention to people with disabilities, the reaction was mixed. The university campus developer said,

> I worked for one guy who is one of the most prominent developers in Philadelphia and first-hand, I would say he does and he is one of the most prominent. I would say that they are providing the supply for the demand. It's a market thing.

The response from the mixed-use developer, however, revealed the importance of regulation and requirements in focusing attention on accessibility.

> Our industry has to pay attention to an awful lot of different things, so we don't pay it any less attention than we do anything else. We pay the attention to it that is required.

Interestingly, one developer even implied that the need to comply with ADA requirements actually got in the way of thinking seriously about how a disabled person was likely to use the spaces he built.

> I have an article; it says "Are your curb ramps really [ADA] compliant?" That's really so I can make sure I don't have to rip it out. I'm not thinking about [a wheelchair user] saying can he navigate this sort of thing, I'm thinking about does it meet the code and can I move on with my project?

The argument exists that the needs of people with disabilities do not warrant broad regulation of developers because people with disabilities are seen as a minority group. In Imrie and Hall (2001), for example, one developer questioned the need to impose substantial regulation on behalf of only one group. The developers interviewed here disagreed, including one who said that

> If someone said that to me, I'd say tough. It's the law. Just do it. Some people just like to whine. I've never encountered anyone like that. I think the people who are going to claim that are the types that don't like the government telling them anything. Whether it's zoning or whatever.

Another developer commented,

> I don't think [making housing accessible] is that hard to do, so I would throw it back to you, why not?

Finally, one developer argued that even if people with disabilities represented a small segment of the population,

> There are all kinds of small populations. You add them up, they are a big population.

Comparing New Construction with Historic Renovation

While new construction allows for accessible design features to be incorporated into a structure from the start, renovating a historically significant building into one that is also accessible presents a unique challenge for developers. On the one hand, many historic structures -- government buildings, museums, and buildings converted into condominiums -- must be made accessible to people with disabilities. On the other hand, however, a developer needs to ensure that the historic character of a structure, such as its façade, entrance, interior, or landscape, remain unaltered. When renovating such structures, developers must use materials that blend in with the character of the building (Jester & Park, 1993).

The developers interviewed in this study saw particular obstacles to creating a more accessible built environment in historic Philadelphia, whether housing-specific or otherwise. For one of the developers, working in a 300-year-old city with older structures posed problems.

> On new construction, I don't see any obstacles. The obstacles are in renovation projects. Back in the day, when there was absolutely no sensitivity at all, door openings were not even in the game, there was no way of getting into spaces and things like that. I think that that makes it a little bit more difficult from a developer's perspective.

Another developer agreed, emphasizing that building entrances and exits presents special challenges.

> When you are starting from scratch, it's not difficult at all; it's actually easy to meet whatever needs there are or standards or codes or things of that nature. But when you are working with an historic building and then you have to alter it, it can be a huge challenge. Not always, but it can be a huge challenge. It's really getting into the building, that's where the challenges come in, because once you are inside the building, we would tend to gut it.

The university campus developer expressed a commitment to making historic buildings accessible.

> Every building that we have that's historic that we renovated was renovated with the requirements for handicap accessibility throughout the building and regardless of what the cost is, it is done in that manner.

The historic preservation developer went even further, asking

> How accessible is the public transportation, the train stations, the curb cuts on the sidewalks? For buildings in particular, a lot of them were built in the 1800's on foundations that were raised above street level because it was the style. I know it's a real problem for churches, because a lot of the church congregations are elderly and they find that they can't go to church anymore.

The historic preservation developer suggested a systematic approach to the challenge of making an historic building accessible.

> Number one, I would determine what the significant architectural features of the building are that you don't want to mess with. Secondly, I'd do an accessibility audit -- how does it work now, what doesn't work, and what you want to achieve and you need to try and serve both of those needs -- and that's where a good professional designer would come in. You should start out with an assessment of what's significant historically and what do you want to achieve in terms of accessibility.

In an older city such as Philadelphia, restoring historic buildings into housing that is accessible may put developers in the middle of conflicts between accessibility requirements and historical requirements. One respondent explained that

> Historic buildings are different. There sometimes is conflict between the historic community and the [disability] community, so it's more difficult to make it accessible and sometimes certain portions of a historic building because they fight changing to make it accessible. It doesn't involve us as much as it involves, say, the historic commissioner and the accessibility people.

Another developer offered this approach to such a conflict between preservationists and advocates for accessibility:

> You walk away from it! I think historic requirements, themselves, sometimes handcuff you and then you put accessibility into it and depending on the nature of the building, sometimes those costs can be very high and you know you can always do those types of projects in a market that will allow it. If you are in downtown Philadelphia where you get higher rents or a higher sale price, well then you can spend more money. If you are a university or a government that has a lot of cash, you can do it but if you are a developer trying to build in a fringe area and you buy an old building that was historic, [that is much different].

Universal Design

Universal design represents an important departure from more restricted approaches to accessibility. Advocates for universal design have argued that virtually all spaces for human habitation should be constructed (or retrofitted) to be equally usable by people with and without disabilities. The rationale for universal design was not simply that people without disabilities should be willing to accommodate the needs of others, but that persons who currently lived without disabilities were very likely to acquire disabilities as they aged. Thus everyone would be better served by housing designed for all of life's stages and conditions.

Although none of the developers was entirely familiar with the concept of universal design, most seemed to have an understanding of some of its principles, when explained by the interviewer. According to the rental housing developer,

> It's really the concept of 'barrier-free.' One of the areas, for example, is not having a cabinet under a bathroom sink. So, it's really working with a design that allows you to have a nice and creative design and having it barrier-free. It's a little bit of a challenge but not that great of a challenge. It takes a little effort, a little bit more money I guess.

The mixed-use developer cited a particular project his company had built as an example of universal design.

> The original design by the architects was to depress the center part of the area with a few steps going down into it for what they thought was an aesthetic design. I changed it and that's why you have accessibility throughout that area.

But the university campus developer argued that the implementation of universal design principles could have practical limitations, such as

> the partial size and the economic impact of the construction. Because there are standards in terms of the turning radiuses and the bathrooms -- there are shower issues in terms of the bottoms of the showers that extend into the bathrooms. There are elevations in the switches and all those things that would make it difficult to be universal. Not impossible, but it would make it difficult.

The townhome developer, however, argued that if universal design were mandated on all new housing built in Philadelphia,

> You would basically stop all new construction in the city for housing or the only housing you would have would be condo building type things; you wouldn't have town houses. If it was a percentage, say two percent, you could try to work it in there.

Perhaps frustrating to advocates for people with disabilities, all of the developers expressed opposition to the zoning changes proposed by the Philadelphia Corporation for Aging (PCA) that would mandate the incorporation of visitability for all new homes constructed in the city. While none was against building a certain percentage of homes to be accessible, the idea of building every new unit with certain accessible features was unpopular.

> I'm a believer in, if you are developer in a community and you are doing a whole block and you have say 30 units, I think it's reasonable to do a certain percentage and make them accessible, but not necessarily all of them. If the disabled were really precluded from finding reasonable space, then yes, but not as long as there are enough choices.

However, in the same breath, he conceded that

> [It] makes some sense for builders and developers; people, as they get older, for different reasons are going to want easy accessibility. I think if you are building from scratch you just design with those things in mind. I don't think they cost that much more.

In terms of cost-benefit analysis**,** one developer said,

> That wouldn't make any sense because it would be unnecessary, it would be added expense and there is a design impact to all that as well. If I'm building 'for sale' housing, I have to be sure I can sell it. So, say we are building a hundred rowhomes and somebody said they wanted three built to some accessible standard. As long as I thought there was a market that I could sell those three, I don't think it would be a problem.

Developers' Moral Obligation

Access to housing is considered by many to be a basic right. Further, homeownership is a key aspect of the American Dream. In fact, an estimated 66 percent of housing in the U.S. is owned (Karp, 2001; Steinfeld & Levine, 2004). Some, including developers, have suggested that developers have a moral obligation to supply housing that was accessible to all (Imrie & Hall, 2001). By constructing homes in which residents can remain as they age and acquire disabilities, developers could help the society in which they live save funds that would be otherwise expended on the institutionalization of such residents (Concrete Change, 2008). With an aging population and with people with even severe disabilities able to live in the community thanks to advances in medicine, there has been a growing need for housing for such people to live in or to visit. Furthermore, everyone

(including housing developers) is likely to experience a disability at some point in his or her life (Center for Universal Design, 2008).

In Imrie and Hall's (2001) study, few respondents connected "disabled people's status to moral questions." However, in the present study, albeit with a much smaller sample size, all of the respondents seemed to feel some sort of moral obligation toward accessibility.

> There is an obligation to abide by the building codes. But I've made changes that made it more accessible because I thought it was a good thing to do.

One developer saw a moral obligation in some areas, but not in others.

> I think from a public common space view, you have a moral obligation, whether it's government doing it, whether it's a developer doing it. It needs to be accessible. Some people would say they want to go up to this plaza the same way anybody else can. When it comes to the structure, the structure depends on the type of structure. If it's a public building or even an office building, a shop, it should be accessible. If you are in New Hope, Pennsylvania, where you have all the quaint little shops, little homes that were converted into galleries, to tell that person you have got to be accessible is unfair. You can't put that on them. If it's in a new building, definitely, 100 percent, it should be.

Likening the situation to that of building an accessible playground, he added that

> It's a tough call because I'm not going to want to tell a kid, "Well, you can't go on that because it's going to cost another $50,000." At the same time, there is a practicality involved.

The historic preservation developer seemed to sum it up best.

I think some [developers] care and some don't, but they just do it because they have to. I have to say I don't think about [accessibility] that much, but if someone raises it as an issue, my reaction is to agree and say it isn't accessible, how can we make it happen? It's not my profession; what I am looking at is the architecture.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

While the developers interviewed here were certainly aware of accessibility requirements of the ADA and the Fair Housing Act, in most cases, they hardly demonstrated knowledge of the substance of these requirements to any particular degree. This may be due to the fact that these accessibility regulations do not apply to most types of private housing, namely single-family detached dwellings or townhomes, which are the focus of some of the developers. Most, however, were either aware of resources to which they could turn or they could rely on consultants or employees who were familiar with such requirements.

It is encouraging that all of the developers interviewed displayed some sensitivity to people with disabilities. This may be a reflection of society's growing acceptance of people with disabilities, although it is difficult to draw a conclusion from such a small sample. The fact that all had family or friends with disabilities may mean that they will understand disability not just as a legal obligation, but as something real that people experience every day of their lives. An atmosphere that makes people more aware of disabilities of all types would appear to be more likely to improve the built environment for those with disabilities.

The fact that these developers each had family members or close friends with disabilities certainly makes them aware on an emotional level of the needs of people with

disabilities. However, it is also true that their perspectives may be somewhat narrow, due to the fact that they are only familiar with one type of disability. People with many types of disabilities can be affected by housing design, such as the type of flooring in the case of a person who is blind or visual fire alarms that flash for someone with a hearing impairment.

Still, some of their responses seemed somewhat condescending. Having a person in a wheelchair enter through the garage may be a good solution in an existing structure, but one would imagine that in new construction, this might not sit well with some members of the disability community, who would argue that in a newly-built home, such a scenario should not occur. Furthermore, while a portable ramp sounds like a simple fix, it is also true that not every Philadelphian in a wheelchair can afford to purchase one.

All of the developers seemed to express a genuine interest in learning more about the needs of people with disabilities, but they also might have felt compelled to say so in the presence of someone with a disability. It is this writer's opinion that if a disability organization or a university offered a seminar for those in the housing development industry -- planners, designers, engineers, architects, and executives -- it would be moderately well-attended. As one of the developers said, "Make us more educated on your needs."

Instead of merely reviewing codes and hearing first-hand accounts from people with disabilities, giving those in the development industry the opportunity to temporarily

experience having a disability, as is done in college classes and medical schools, seems ideal. Whether such an exercise involves wearing a blindfold or using a manual wheelchair, it could give developers a sense of the uncertainties facing people with disabilities in the built environment. Certainly a few hours spent in a blindfold or in a wheelchair cannot duplicate the emotions or feelings of someone who cannot suddenly remove the blindfold or get out of the wheelchair and is aware of this. Yet, while some may debate the efficacy of such exercises, in this researcher's experience, people understand disability better when they experience it, even temporarily. It may not be perfect, but it may be the closest a person without a disability will ever come to having a disability. If a developer learns just one lesson from such an exercise and his experience makes him think twice about how a particular aspect of a project may impact someone with a disability, it would represent a degree of progress. Still, having students in a class working toward a good grade undertake such an activity is obviously much different from asking a powerful housing developer to do so.

Financial concerns with regard to accessibility continue to be an issue (and understandably so), but such concerns do not appear to be dissuading housing development in Philadelphia. The developers were resigned to such costs as, in the words of one of the developers interviewed, "part of what it takes to get a building operational." The one developer's suggestion of government program to take accessibility "to the next level" seems like a good one, but is unlikely to happen any time soon, given the current economic conditions on the city, state and federal levels.

It was interesting that sometimes it is the regulatory agencies which must reach a compromise in the case of historically significant buildings. However, the historic developer interviewed here indicated that there is a workable process in which projects can be evaluated and a compromise can be reached. Still, it is also true that the time required to go through this process could result in a financial loss for developers.

It may seem surprising that developers were less antagonistic toward accessibility regulations than one might expect them to be. However, aside from those building single-family housing (which, again, is not subject to most accessibility regulations), the regulations seem to be accepted because they affect developers across the board and they now develop buildings with such regulations already in mind. This generally reflects the same attitude expressed in the literature on the subject. It may also be of note that Philadelphia is already a highly regulated market in many ways, so accessibility regulations (which advocates for accessible design argue are relatively inexpensive) may be just another part of the cost of doing business in the city.

Much of the new construction in the city is in the form of condominiums and apartments, which can more easily be made accessible. However, it matters little unless such housing is affordable for people with disabilities. This mismatch was described by Hahn (1986), who reported that the housing stock that was affordable for Los Angeles residents with disabilities was the least accessible due to the age of the housing and type of construction. The mismatch seems likely to continue unless the disabled population is able to make strides in areas such as education and employment. One developer in the study said he

didn't see the need to build more than a percentage of accessible housing *unless* there was a shortage of housing for people with disabilities. As mentioned earlier, evidence would suggest that a shortage is precisely what exists in Philadelphia.

It is somewhat surprising that none of the developers had even heard of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities (MCPD), even though the role of the commission seems largely advisory. On the other hand, this could be an indication that the city's Department of Licenses and Inspections and beyond that, the state, is performing its duties with regard to accessibility issues. Then again, there was the one developer who wished there was somewhere he could turn for guidance on matters of accessibility. If developers were made aware of the existence of the MCPD, it seems likely that more developers would take advantage of it, and rather than simply meeting accessibility codes, they might emerge with better designs. However, if the demand on the commission increases, it will likely need better funding and a larger staff.

The fact that none of the developers interviewed would commit to more than a percentage of accessible units means that in addition to doing no more than what is required, they seem to be missing the point of universal design. With universal design, housing has features that are accessible, but is designed for all and not necessarily with any additional expense. Though a development of townhomes may be designed with front steps leading to the entrance for stylistic reasons, PCA's call for at least one level entrance does not seem unreasonable. It seems to this writer that the housing development industry could benefit from more information on universal design techniques.

It is possible that increased accessibility costs would become an anticipated cost, much like the current accessibility expenses, though with the cost of building in the city in the first place, this could also turn developers away from working in Philadelphia. But with an aging population, the need for accessible features will continue to grow in the city. The townhome developer made a valid point that some developments are aimed at a younger demographic, for whom accessible features are not a concern (except in the case of a temporary disability), but some would ask why such housing cannot be designed with one level entrance, for example. What happens when an older relative whose mobility is impaired comes to visit?

The fact that some developers see a moral obligation when it comes to public spaces but not private spaces seems to be an unfortunate result of the fact that accessibility regulations do not apply to most private housing. The impetus behind such imperfect legislation was evidently to at least guarantee that people with disabilities had access to public spaces that they would need to access to ensure their participation in society. Yet, access to housing would appear to be a vital aspect of one's full participation in society. Advocates for accessible design have also pointed to an argument by homebuilders that a private home is one's sanctuary and thus they are opposed to efforts to make certain accessibility features a requirement across the board (Concrete Change, 2008).

This study is not without its limitations. Although this researcher has lived his entire life with a disability and was well-equipped to undertake this study, his presence may have

made interviewees less than candid regarding their feelings toward those with disabilities. Also, the particular responses from interviewees that were chosen for inclusion in this paper (though parts of most responses were included) reflect the writer's personal judgment.

It should be noted that this study is skewed toward mobility impairment. A far different study could be written from the perspective of a researcher with a visual, hearing, or cognitive disability. A different study could even have been written by someone who is in a manual wheelchair, as opposed to someone in a motorized wheelchair, such as this writer. Hence, one developer's statement that he had never wheeled himself up a curb ramp was ironic in that neither has the interviewer. The interviews themselves leaned toward mobility impairment, not only because the interview questions did, but also because when the interviewer shows up in a wheelchair, it seems reasonable that the interview subjects would tend to base their responses on mobility impairment.

Furthermore, the study sample is a small group, which may limit findings. The sample did include a cross-section of various types of developers, but only one developer in each specialized area of development was interviewed. It is possible that the results of this study may not be generalizable to other American cities, as every city likely has a different cultural and regulatory climate. However, the ADA sets minimum requirements and it approves accessibility guidelines for state and local governments and the Fair Housing Act applies to all cities.

Other countries also have codes and regulations regarding accessibility, so the basic research method followed in this study could be used to study development in foreign cities. Given more time and funding, an individual or organization might consider increasing the sample size, which would allow for even greater anonymity, and perhaps adding a mail questionnaire, as Imrie and Hall (2001) did in their study.

Finally, a decision was made to exclude public housing developers because public housing is heavily funded by the federal government and must adhere to ADA regulations. A future study might focus on this topic to investigate the degree to which such housing complies with ADA regulations. Another excluded group was that of small developers, those who build or rehabilitate housing on a small scale in Philadelphia. Their experience with accessibility is likely much more limited because many ADA regulations do not apply to their projects.

It is unlikely that this study will directly remove the barriers facing people with disabilities in the built environment in Philadelphia or any other city. However, based on the literature and on the opinion of the Philadelphia Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities, it would appear that education of the actors in the development process is vital to changing the way in which the built environment is designed. The hope is that with the knowledge of developers' attitudes, a disability organization or commission may be able to educate developers better, not just about their legal obligations, but about the needs of people with disabilities. At the very least, this study will add to the literature to help future researchers.

REFERENCES CITED

ADA Accessibility Guidelines, (2002). Retrieved from http://www.access-board.gov/adaag/html/adaag.htm#4.1.3

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §12101 (2008). Retrieved from http://www.access-board.gov/about/laws/ADA.htm#Text

Aldred, R., & Woodcock, J. (2008). Transport: Challenging disabling environments. *Local Environment, 13*(6), 485-496.

Bromley, R.D.F., Matthews, D. L., & Thomas, C. J. (2007). City centre accessibility for wheelchair users: The consumer perspective and the planning implications. *Cities, 24*(3), 229-241.

Burns, N. (2004). Negotiating difference: Disabled people's experiences of housebuilders. *Housing Studies, 19*(5), 765-780.

Butler, R., & Bowlby, S. (1997). Bodies and spaces: An exploration of disabled people's experiences of public space. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 15*, 411-433.

Center for Universal Design. (2008a). *About UD.* Retrieved October 20, 2009, from http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/about_ud.htm

Center for Universal Design. (2008b). *Universal design history.* Retrieved October 20, 2009, from http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/udhistory.htm

Clarke, P., & George, L. K. (2005). The role of the built environment in the disablement process. *American Journal of Public Health, 95*(11), 1933-1939.

Concrete Change. (2008). *Concrete change - an international effort to make ALL new homes visitable.* Retrieved November 3, 2009, from http://www.concretechange.org

Fair Housing Accessibility FIRST. *Fair housing accessibility FIRST: Laws.* Retrieved February 21, 2009, from http://www.fairhousingfirst.org/resources/laws.html#top

Gant, R. (2002). Shopmobility at the millennium: ‘Enabling' access in town centres. *Journal of Transport Geography, 10*(2), 123-133.

Gilderbloom, J. I., & Rosentraub, M. S. (1990). Creating the accessible city: Proposals for providing housing and transportation for low income, elderly and disabled people. *American Journal of Economics and Sociology, 49*(3), 271-282.

Gleeson, B. J. (1996). A geography for disabled people? *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 21*(2), 387-396.

Golledge, R. G. (1993). Geography and the disabled: A survey with special reference to vision impaired and blind populations. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 18*(1), 63-85.

Golledge, R. G. (1996). A response to Gleeson and Imrie. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 21*(2), 404-411.

Hahn, H. (1986). Disability and the urban environment: A perspective on Los Angeles. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 4*, 273-288.

Harrison, M. (2004). Defining housing quality and environment: Disability, standards and social factors. *Housing Studies, 19*(5), 691-708.

Hetzel, L. & Smith, A., (2001). *The 65 Years and Over Population: 2000.* Washington, DC: U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved from http://www.census.gov/prod/2001pubs/c2kbr01-10.pdf.

Heylighen, A. (2008). Sustainable and inclusive design: A matter of knowledge? *Local Environment, 13*(6), 531-540.

Heywood, F. (2004). Understanding needs: A starting point for quality. *Housing Studies, 19*(5), 709-726.

Imrie, R., & Wells, P. (1993). Disablism, planning, and the built environment. *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy, 11*, 213-231.

Imrie, R. (2003a). Housing quality and the provision of accessible homes. *Housing Studies, 18*(3), 387.

Imrie, R. (2003b). Architects' conceptions of the human body. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space, 21*, 47-65.

Imrie, R. (1996). Ableist geographies, disablist spaces: Towards a reconstruction of Golledge's 'geography and the disabled'. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, 21*(2), 397-403.

Imrie, R. (2000). Responding to the design needs of disabled people. *Journal of Urban Design, 5*(2), 199-219.

Imrie, R. (2004). Housing quality, disability and domesticity. *Housing Studies, 19*(5), 685-690.

Imrie, R., & Hall, P. (2001). An exploration of disability and the development process. *Urban Studies, 38*(2), 333-350.

Imrie, R., & Kumar, M. (1998). Focusing on disability and access in the built environment. *Disability & Society, 13*(3), 357-374.

Imrie, R., & Street, E. (2009a). Regulating design: The practices of architecture, governance and control. *Urban Studies, 46*(12), 2507-2518.

Imrie, R., & Street, E. (2009b). Risk, regulation and the practices of architects. *Urban Studies, 46*(12), 2555-2576.

Inglis Foundation. *Inglis Housing Corporation.* Retrieved October 21, 2009, from http://www.inglis.org/community_housing.jsp.

Jester, T. C., & Park, S. C. (1993). *Preservation brief 32: Making historic properties accessible*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior. Retrieved from http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/tps/briefs/brief32.htm.

Karp, G. (June 2001). Accessible housing: In search of the dream. *New Mobility: The Magazine for Active Wheelchair Users,* Retrieved from http://www.newmobility.com/articleViewIE.cfm?id=428

Kitchin, R. (1998). 'Out of place', 'knowing one's place': Space, power and the exclusion of disabled people. *Disability & Society, 13*(3), 343-356.

Kitchin, R., & Law, R. (2001). The socio-spatial construction of (in)accessible public toilets. *Urban Studies, 38*(2), 287.

Matthews, H., Beale, L., Picton, P., & Briggs, D. (2003). *Modelling access with GIS in urban systems (MAGUS): Capturing the experiences of wheelchair users*

Matthews, H., & Vujakovic, P. (1995). Private worlds and public places: Mapping the environmental values of wheelchair users. *Environment and Planning A, 27*, 1069-1083.

Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities (MCPD). *Welcome to accessible Philadelphia.* Retrieved February 20, 2009, from http://www.phila.gov/mcpd

McClain, L., Beringer, D., Kuhnert, H., Priest, J., Wilkes, E., Wilkinson, S., et al. (1993). Restaurant wheelchair accessibility. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 47*(7), 619-623.

McClain, L., Lutz, J., Salmans, D., & Wright, S. (1999). Shopping mall wheelchair accessibility checklist based on the ADA guidelines. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care, 11*(4), 41-66.

McClain, L., & Todd, C. (1990). Food store accessibility. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 44*(6), 487-491.

McClain, L. (2000). Shopping center wheelchair accessibility: Ongoing advocacy to implement the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. *Public Health Nursing, 17*(3), 178-186.

Morris, J. (1993). Feminism and disability. *Feminist Review,* 43, 57-70.

News on TAP. (2009). *News on TAP - TAP initiatives: Forums.* Retrieved November 3, 2009, from http://www.newsontap.org/visitability.html

Palfreyman, T. (1991). Access and the space that links buildings. *Access by Design: The Journal of the Centre for Accessible Environments, 56*, 13-16.

Park, D. C., Radford, J. P., & Vickers, M. H. (1998). Disability studies in human geography. *Progress in Human Geography, 22*(2), 208-233.

Pennsylvania Construction Code Act, 35 P.S. §7210.101 (1999). Retrieved from http://www.dli.state.pa.us/landi/lib/landi/laws-regulations/bois/universalaccessibilityact.pdf

Pfeiffer, D. (1996). 'We won't go back': The ADA on the grass roots level. *Disability & Society, 11*(2), 271-284.

Pfeiffer, D., & Finn, J. (1997). The Americans with Disabilities Act: An examination of compliance by state, territorial and local governments in the USA. *Disability & Society, 12*(5), 753-773.

Pfeiffer, D. (1994). The Americans with Disabilities Act: Costly mandates or civil rights? *Disability & Society, 9*(4), 533-542.

Philadelphia Corporation for Aging. (2009). *Talking points for the zoning code Commission's public meetings.* Retrieved February 26, 2009, from http://www.pcacares.org/News_List.aspx?newsID=373L23B29J23&orgID=230Q26D15H53

Reed, K. L. (1992). History of federal legislation for persons with disabilities. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 46*(5), 397-408.

U.S. Census Bureau. (2000). *American FactFinder, 2000 census summary file 3, matrices P42, PCT26, PCT27, PCT28, PCT29, PCT30, PCT31, PCT32, and PCT33.* Retrieved February 20, 2009, from http://factfinder.census.gov

Visitability. (2005). *Visitability PA - index.* Retrieved November 3, 2009, from http://www.visitabilitypa.com

Young, L. C. (2006). *Residential rehabilitation, remodeling and universal design*. Raleigh, North Carolina: Center for Universal Design.

APPENDIX A
LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

Dear :

As a faculty member of Temple University's Department of Geography and Urban Studies, I am writing to ask if you would be willing to give about 45 minutes to an hour of your time to talk with our graduate student, Josh Winheld, who is writing a thesis about how disability issues get taken into account in development decision making and in the development process generally. This is a topic that gets very little attention from people who study urban development. And Josh is exactly the right person to add to what scholars and students now understand about how planning and development processes take account of disability issues.

Josh lives with a disability himself, and has even published a book about it called *Worth the Ride: My Journey with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy*. You can see Josh's blog at http://winheldsworld.blogspot.com. We are delighted that he is turning his considerable talent to this topic, and hope that you might be willing to spend some time helping Josh understand how disability considerations may affect your work.

We would truly appreciate your participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Professor Carolyn Adams
Department of Geography & Urban Studies
Telephone: (215) 204-1432
e-mail: carolyn.adams@temple.edu

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

At the beginning of the interview, the researcher asked general questions about the scope of each company/organization: how long they had been in business, how many housing units they had built, in which areas they specialized, what was their target markets, etc.

1. Do accessibility concerns impact the creative design process? Are the architects and designers you work with knowledgeable about accessibility?
2. How do you feel about the concept of universal design? Is universal design achievable without sacrificing creativity? Do your projects incorporate any universal design principles?
3. Are accessibility and good style compatible? Have you encountered situations when they were incompatible?
4. How would you make an historic building accessible? Is it possible to do so?
5. Is it more costly to incorporate accessible design features into projects? Does it depend on the stage of development when such features are incorporated?
6. Is accessibility important to customers? How do accessible features affect the value of a property?
7. How does accessible design impact occupiable floor space?
8. How would you characterize your familiarity with the ADA?
9. Do you feel that the ADA is clear about what is required? For example, what "readily achievable" mean? What concerns do you have about the ADA?
10. How familiar are you with the regulations of the Fair Housing Act? What concerns does it present? What accommodations are typically requested by disabled clients?
11. Although L & I hasn't always had a stellar reputation, it is charged with enforcing accessibility requirements. How helpful/difficult have they been in pointing out issues?
12. Do you think it's too late in the process by the time L & I gets involved to make changes to a project?
13. Are accessibility regulations too impractical? If so, in what way(s)?
14. Have things changed in Philadelphia, to make the city more attractive to developers? Does the city attach more conditions?
15. As you know, Philadelphia is considering changes to its zoning code. How do you feel about possible zoning changes regarding accessibility?
16. Describe your interactions (if any) with the Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities. Have they influenced design decisions in any way?
17. Have you ever felt uncomfortable around people with disabilities?
18. Do you have any personal experience with disability or chronic illness (you, a family member or friend)? What did you learn from that?
19. Would it be helpful to learn more about the needs of disabled people?
20. Some would argue, "Why do all of this for such a relatively small group?" What is your reaction?

21. Are you aware that roughly a quarter of the city's population is said to have a disability? Does/should that influence design principles?
22. Does the industry pay enough attention to disabled people -- their needs and as a market? What do you see as the biggest obstacles to making a built environment more accessible to disabled people? Do you feel a moral obligation to build properties that meet the design needs of all?