

Poorly located accessible housing would mean isolation

Kate Chung's Story

When I was young, it did not occur to me that someday I might be desperately searching for accessible housing. Old people seemed to be a different breed — slow, weak, apart. I would never be like them.

How things change!

Now my husband and I are in our 80s, and for 20 years we have been searching for an accessible condo. We know that accessible housing will save us from falls, ambulance calls, ER visits, hospitalization, and expensive home care services. We're terrified of falling or having a stroke and being forced into a long-term "care" jail.

Our 50-year-old condo cannot be made accessible. We have tried to make it more accessible, but all we could do was take out a tub and install a shower. However, it has a 5-inch curb, which is a tripping hazard. And we took out the linen closet to install a stacked washer and dryer, ending my trek to the basement laundry room. The cost of all this was \$18,000. It was just lucky we had some savings.

Builders of the few existing "accessible" apartments in Toronto think we should gratefully accept whatever they are building no matter where it is, no matter how far it is from our family, medical care, public transit, parks, trees, a grocery store, or any kind of fun. The isolation would be complete. Might as well drop dead now.

Kate Chung is a past co-chair of the Accessible Housing Network.