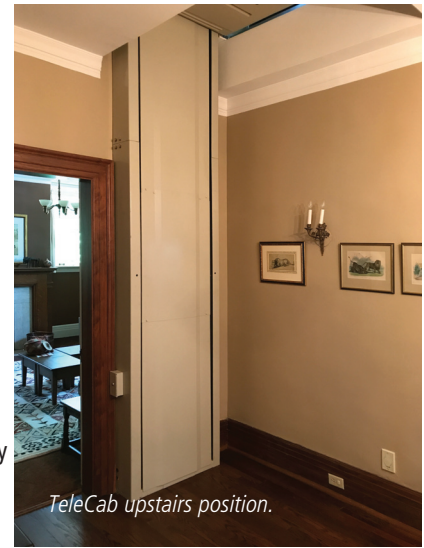


Need a Lift?

By Jeffrey Kerr

If you need wheelchair access within your home, from one floor to another, a home elevator can offer a simple solution. Personal elevators were out of reach for most people in the past. But changes in technology have brought the elevator into residential settings, including older homes that need to be retrofitted.

Vacuum elevator



TeleCab upstairs position.

I think the definition of “elevator” is changing. I used to think of all elevators being enclosed in a hoist way or shaft. This is no longer the case.

The addition of a retrofitted elevator provided both independence and accessibility for three generations of one family with whom I worked. They purchased one of the original homes built in the Upper Beaches neighbourhood of Toronto. The owner converted the house into three separate flats, removed the central staircase and connected all three levels with an elevator. The owner lived on the second floor, her mother lived on the main floor and the two daughters lived on the lower level. Each had a self-contained apartment with a separate entrance. Each member of the family maintained their independence and privacy while still being able to freely visit each other for meals or to offer assistance when needed.

Canada Elevators in Markham, a division of Versatile Accessibility, offers a full-size residential hydraulic elevator and a space saver option.

The residential elevator is a powered lift with a fully enclosed shaft and cab for raising and lowering weights from 750 lbs. to 1400 lbs. to multiple floors.

The space saver elevator, also known as a telecab, is a fully powered compartment with an enclosed cab for raising and lowering up to 500 lbs. to different floors. It is ideal where space is at a premium. It can be easily installed with minimum preparation as it has no walls or shaft. When not in use, the elevator can be sent to a different floor, allowing for use of the entire room.

My parents installed a telecab in their home. It wasn't an easy decision. It took many years of encouraging them to plan ahead so they could continue to live independently in the home they love. Looking back now, they both agree it was a great decision.

There is another residential elevator system on the market now; the Pneumatic Vacuum Elevator (PVE). Pneumatic tubes go back to the late 19th century where they were used in banks and department stores to send small packages and notes quickly from one area to another. You might remember an imagined version of the PVE in the futuristic cartoon show from the 1960's called the Jetsons. A PVE can be incorporated into new home construction and a home modification project.

PVE's are revolutionary for a number of reasons. Installation is much simpler; they can be installed anywhere in your home. No excavation or large mechanical room is needed – the elevator simply rests on the existing floor. They do not require cables, chains, pistons, or counterweights. The elevator is composed of two perfectly fitted parts that support precise atmospheric pressure above and below the cab. Basically, the lifting action occurs when pressure is reduced above the cab, causing it to rise to fill the void. To descend, a control valve slowly releases pressure, creating a cushion of air beneath the cab.



Jeffrey Kerr and TeleCab.

I've had the pleasure of working with two families who have vacuum elevators in their homes. One was in a residential home in Markham; the second was in a three story condo in Toronto. The one in Markham is capable of carrying a person in a power chair and a second person standing. The model in the Toronto condo was much smaller, designed to carry one person standing. Both elevators were part of a modification to the original space.

Elevators present a viable option to increasing accessibility for home-owners today. As Steve from Canada Elevators mentioned to me, the average person is not aware of how economical a home elevator can be. Although more costly up front than a chair glide along the stairs, an elevator is often more practical in the long term because it's suitable for everyone regardless of their age or accessibility needs.

If you are looking to move to a new house or condo, or to modify your current home, I can help you determine which elevator option is right for you.

For more info please contact: Jeffrey Kerr, Broker, Barrier Free Real Estate Specialist, RE/MAX Unique Inc. • (T) 416.424.2222

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