

# Condo Living



The Bal Harbour site in Stoney Creek has residential elevators as standard in its upper level units.

## In-suite elevators' popularity going up

**Rising land costs driving demand**

**Aging population also a factor**

**How It's Built**

W.D. LIGHTHALL

Houses with a private elevator were once likely to be palatial mansions belonging to the wealthy.

Not anymore.

Increasingly, builders of low-rise condo developments are offering in-suite elevators as a standard or an upgrade.

"The biggest thing is costs are

being driven down, making it much more feasible. Elevators are no longer the luxury item they used to be," says Bob Nowack, manager of marketing with Cambridge Elevating, which supplies, installs and maintains elevators in low-rise condo and freehold housing projects.

Other factors driving the growth of private elevators in low-rise condo developments are rising land costs and an aging population.

"Because there's such a premium on land, builders are building up, not out," says Nowack.

"We have an aging population, so all those stairs become a bit of a problem. Elevators give the homeowner freedom of choice.

Their mobility in their homes is not impeded."

Cambridge recently installed in-suite elevators in Bal Harbour, a ground-level condo development by Marz Homes in the Stoney Creek area of Hamilton.

Located on the Lake Ontario shoreline, Bal Harbour looks like a series of semi-detached homes. In fact, it's actually six buildings, each holding four condo units.

"We call them terraced townhomes, where you have one (unit) above the other," says Danny Gabriele, vice-president of Marz Homes.

All units have a ground-floor entrance and each has a basement, so those upper-level units are three-storey homes.

Marz Homes built a similar-styled project, but without elevators, in the late 1990s on the shoreline in Stoney Creek.

"What we came across was although the upper units had a better view, it was hard to market them because of (all) the stairs," Gabriele says.

With the insight gained from that project, Marz included elevators as a standard in all upper-level units in Bal Harbour.

"People just loved it. Even if they're comfortable with the stairs now, they know they can live in this house basically forever. They have the elevator for complete accessibility on all three levels," says Gabriele, who adds Marz will offer in-suite elevators in its next project, located in Ancaster.

Similar to most elevators in ground-level residential buildings, the Bal Harbour elevators are powered by a hydraulic operating system.

When the floor buttons are pressed, oil is pumped into a hydraulic cylinder. The hydraulics drive a pulley system of cables, which moves the cab up and down the steel rails in the elevator shaft.

The hydraulic power unit is tucked away in the basement in an encasement that's roughly



LUCAS OLENIUK PHOTOS/TORONTO STAR

Bob Nowack, manager of marketing for Cambridge Elevating, says elevators such as this one that his company installed at Bal Harbour in Stoney Creek allow residents freedom of movement as they age.



The operating hardware of Cambridge Elevating's residential elevators.

the size of a dishwasher (some models have slightly larger encasements).

"It's all self-contained. It's very clean and very quiet and it doesn't take up much room at all," says Nowack.

The company's in-suite elevators start at about \$20,000, depending on the type and the options. The elevators in Bal Harbour add about \$25,000 to a unit's cost.

"That's not a basic model. That will get them a very nice elevator with nice options," Nowack says.

Offering in-suite elevators requires a major shift in the design of units.

Mainly, the shaft should be located so the elevator doors are in a logical place on each level of the home.

"So that's a lot of design work. You have to make sure the elevator door sits in a good spot close to the entrance," says Gabriele. "But you don't want your elevator shaft to come out in the middle of your basement and kill your rec room."

In the Bal Harbour units, "from the garage you can load your groceries into the elevator, and it comes up here by the kitchen pantry," explains Gabriele.

Precise construction work is key when building the elevator shaft, says Jamie Hamilton, marketing associate with Cambridge Elevating.

The steel beams the elevator

cab rides up and down in, called the hoistway, should be perfectly square through all the floors.

The same goes for the elevator doorframes on each level of the home.

The framework should be constructed so the alignment and clearances between the doorframes, cab and the hoistway are equal on each floor.

"It's just like anything where you have a moving part and a fixed part, you want a good consistent fit," Hamilton says.

Bal Harbour units range from \$359,000 for 1,550 square feet to more than \$500,000 for the largest units of 3,050 square feet.

Two units, both two bedrooms plus den, remain available. One is 2,300 square feet and \$589,000; the other is a 3,050-square-foot furnished model home for \$675,000.

For more information, visit [www.cambridgeelevating.com](http://www.cambridgeelevating.com) and [www.marzhomes.com](http://www.marzhomes.com).

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