

Mobility Elevator & Lift Co.

Serving the Building Industry on a Higher Level

By Augie Bartolo

If necessity is indeed the mother of invention, then Mobility Elevator & Lift Co. has already etched a place in building industry lore. The 26-year-old firm has evolved in virtual lock-step with the needs of its customer base comprised mainly of architectural firms and builders, to

provide what has become the most prolific of all residential housing amenities — the home elevator.

Mobility has answered the call for what it terms “lifting devices,” that are in extremely high demand among many single-family developments and custom home projects,

These three residential elevators are on display in Mobility Elevator’s showroom. They are available in numerous styles and finishes from low-end, needing very little construction to luxury hand-finished oak, cherry, mirrors, brass, glass and more. All elevators, as required by code, include safety locks and phones.





A close-up look at the mechanics of a residential elevator

incline lift and one dumb waiter present clients with the most in-demand product assortment upon entry to the facility. The company's enormously successful business model, product line and operational approach have appeared in such prestigious media outlets as *New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *New Jersey Monthly* magazine and AOL's "Hot Ticket Home Items," as well as aired across America on National Public Radio (NPR).

Doug Simon, Mobility's CEO for the past 19 years, and Kamran Shushtarian, President of Mobility Elevator and a mechanical engineer, discussed with *Builder/Architect* magazine the roles that necessity, demand, functionality and affordability have played in the company's resounding success. "It's a simple matter of progression," Doug said. "Home buyers are demanding much more in the way of amenities, especially since their investment and tangible wealth has increased substantially while prices for these upgrades have retreated. Add to that the fact that people are living longer, which fuels the adult market, and you can see the explosion of growth that is just around the corner."

as well as the growing number of multifamily and mid-rise ventures targeting the age-restricted and urban redevelopment markets. The mid-rise buildings have created a robust demand for the firm's technologically advanced products, and are poised to generate a more fervent upward trend with the impending retirement of the baby boomer generation. Segments of this affluent, diverse and numerically massive demographic already bask in products from the Mobility assortment, and may well regard such devices as "standard" features in the future.

Based in West Caldwell, a central Metropolitan Area location, convenient to some of northern New Jersey's leading architectural and building firms, Mobility boasts the northeast's largest showroom of working products on display. Five elevators, 10 stair lifts, three vertical wheel chair lifts, one

Vertical Platform lifts, manufactured by Savaria Concord, are custom-built to fit any architecture or decor. This vertical platform lift combines distinction and elegance with safety and reliability.





The small commercial elevator, on display in Mobility Elevator's showroom, is perfect for buildings up to three floors. Uniquely designed to require only a 14-inch pit, it has a capacity of up to 1,400 pounds.

Kamran pointed out the lofty place that lifting devices command in the evolutionary scale of residential housing amenities. "There was a time when people who could afford them couldn't live without a spa or a Jacuzzi, a big TV room or a sophisticated sound system in their homes. Today, most of those upgrades are standard in many luxury homes and communities and even in the urban redevelopment projects. The biggest difference between our products and those is the practicality and functionality factor. Homeowners can tire of hot tubs and home theaters. Their interest in music clarity can wane. They can shower instead of soak. But elevators, stair lifts and wheelchair lifts are, and will continue to be,

timeless lifestyle necessities for much larger portions of the marketplace."

Elevators alone make up approximately 35% of Mobility's revenues, due in large part to a wider and expanding range of product applications. Multigenerational households, at which both the homeowners and their parents reside, need mobility enhancements for the elderly residents. Stair lifts are often necessary for them in today's high-end homes, where soaring staircases have become the norm. The homeowners themselves deploy elevators and dumb waiters to "transport" everything from groceries to suitcases within the home. Elevators are an obvious practical solution in mid-rise buildings.

The firm has and continues to supply such well-known builders as K. Hovnanian and Millennium Homes, both of which are dominant in their fields. K. Hovnanian is New Jersey's largest and best-known developer of adult communities under the long-established Four Seasons brand. Millennium Homes is widely recognized for its multifamily urban housing, mixed-use and commercial projects. "These fine builders are creating projects that fit perfectly with our product line," Doug said.

"They are both in the strongest areas of construction in New Jersey, which is only going to help us grow along with them."

Mobility provides ADA-compliant home elevators available in cable-driven or hydraulic systems with an optional battery backup system. Mobility's experts can easily install a variety of styles. The company offers unique products such as the hide-away elevator that travels between two floors. This unit, ideal for applications involving limited space, offers the aesthetic appeal of Plexiglas sides and requires minimal construction.

Luxury elevators can be designed with natural wood, mirrors, inlay flooring, carpeting and special lighting. An



PHOTO BY JOHN MARTINELLI/PHOTOG&MOV

One of the latest innovations in elevator design is the new pneumatic vacuum elevator, also on display in Mobility Elevator's showroom. This elevator works with electric turbines, requires no pit or separate motor room, and can be used for up to three floors and a capacity of 450 pounds.

emergency brake device, a door interlock system, and a telephone, ensure maximum safety and reliability.

Mobility employs a staff of over 50 professionals, ranging from project managers to project expeditors, installers and service technicians, to office support staff. In order to better serve the diverse requirements of architects, the company also employs two engineers and one architect. "Our archi-

tect and engineers are an invaluable team in presenting our products to designers," Kamran explained. "They can easily relate to each other and more effectively come to a successful decision on product choice, applications viability and pricing. Also, it is the home buyer, not our client, who is the end-user of our products. But we still need to provide the appropriate product to our clients who serve those home buyers. So it is extremely important to have the right people on our end who can communicate with the architects."

To more clearly illustrate the market's ravenous appetite for Mobility's products, Doug cited the company's growth history. "When the firm began operations, sales doubled every four years. Just to give you an idea of the strength of this market, we sell at least two products per day, every day of the year. Business is going up at a rate of 18% annually."

Mobility Elevator & Lift Co. is the only residential company of its kind that is a member of the State of New Jersey's Elevator Subcode Committee and Elevator Safety Inspectors Committee.

The company also services the commercial building sector with cutting-edge products, the most notable of which is the Limited Use Limited Application Elevator (LULA). This innovative elevator is designed expressly for commercial use in a maximum of three levels, Doug noted the impor-

tance of this product for its performance capabilities under the constraints posed by urban environments. "With a 1,400-pound lifting capacity, LULA is a real cost and hassle saver for builders, because it only needs a 14-inch-deep pit as opposed to a 4-foot pit required by a 2,100-capacity elevator," he said. "It has been the perfect solution for a number of projects in New York City Department stores, medical

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Mobility Elevator's corporate offices, located at 4 York Ave., West Caldwell, includes a Design Center and Showroom, staff offices and warehouse, which creates the perfect facility to provide customers with their award-winning customer service.

offices, churches and schools." Unlike competitors, Mobility offers a wide variety of finishes, colors and options that allow customization of the commercial elevator units.

Thanks to burgeoning growth opportunities and an established market share, Mobility Elevator & Lift Company will continue its reign as the premier accessibility and lift company in the New Jersey and New York area.

Mobility Elevator & Lift Co. is an authorized distributor of TK Access, Concord, Cemco, National Wheel-O-Vator, Savaria, Waupaca Elevator, Matot, Atlas, Federal, Bruno, Sterling, and Bison. All accessibility lifts are installed by

Mobility's full-time, continually trained professionals, as well as manufactured and installed in accordance with ANSI/AME standards.

Mobility Elevator & Lift Co. is headquartered at 4 York Avenue, West Caldwell, NJ. For more information, call (973) 618-9545, (800) 441-4181 or visit www.mobilityelevator.com. ■