

# around the HOUSE

## Outside Lifting

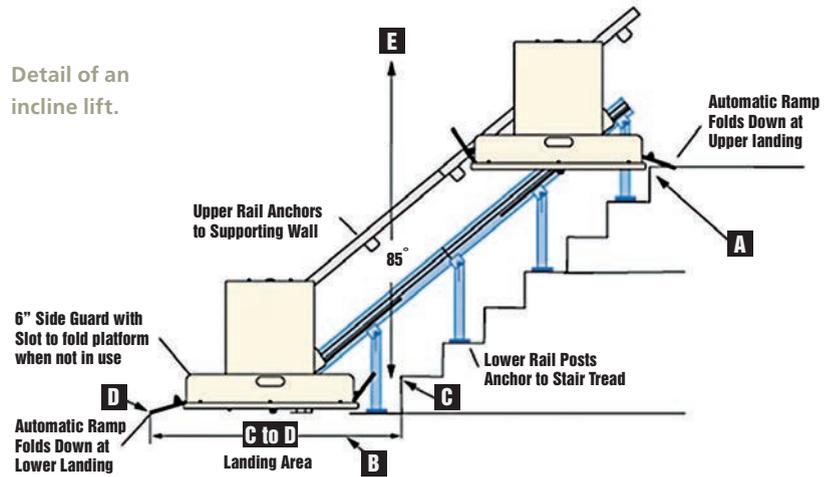
**Outdoor mechanical lifts might** work best for basic access where your home is raised above street level and located close to the street.

Urban neighborhoods with row houses or newer developments zoned with “Smart Code” zoning can also minimize usable front yard property that’s necessary for ramps or gradual sloping pathways. The rear or side yard may be a better location than the front, but in some cases this may not be possible.

## Challenging Codes

Smart Code dictates what’s called a “build-to line,” which is the home’s front facade distance from the street.

Detail of an  
incline lift.



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This type of zoning aligns home frontages for conformity. The “build-to” distance is specified and not negotiable.

If this is your zoning, contact your city planning department as to whether a lift’s structure is considered the front

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of the home, as opposed to the home's main front wall. What constitutes the actual "front" footprint can be a gray area and could be interpreted differently by jurisdictions.

There are also neighborhoods with restrictive covenants and review boards that must review designs prior to permit approval. Board members' opinions might not allow a lift in the front yard.

Recently, one of my parents has become partially paralyzed. My folks' home is a two-story colonial built in the post-World War II era, with a modest 20-by-20 foot attached garage.

We're cost-estimating front and garage options. The house's backyard isn't really an option because of a narrow hallway at the door that would require a significant remodel. So what options are there?

## Platform Lifts

Platform lifts can raise people from 4 feet to 14 feet and typically have a platform that is 3 feet, 6 inches wide by 5 feet, 6 inches deep. They're permanent and have metal side walls and a vertical rail upon which they travel.



Arriving at the top of a Bruno platform lift.

COURTESY OF BRUNO



A Bruno platform lift, shown closed at the base of the stairs.

This isn't really an option in our case, where the house floor is only 28 inches above grade.

## Outdoor Stair Lifts

Another unique idea was to use an outdoor stair lift, as we just installed one inside.

A stair lift has a seat and requires a transfer at the top and bottom into and out of a wheelchair.

The stoop is 24 inches above grade and then there's a 4-inch step up into the door threshold that needs to be negotiated.

An initial estimate for an exterior lift came in at \$8,600 for the lift and install, not counting separate construction costs to raise the stoop to have a flush threshold at the entry.

I figured that with all the additional work and new sidewalk, the cost would be at least \$15,000. For us, that's simply too much money for a lift that requires transfers.

So what other options do we have?

## Incline Lifts

Incline lifts are slick in that one simply rolls onto a flat platform.

The user, on the platform, then traverses up at the angle alongside the stairs, up to the upper landing, and simply rolls off.

When not in use, the platform mechanically folds up into a vertical position off the ground, so others won't stumble over it.

There are only a few companies that manufacture these.

These products can traverse a flight of straight stairs or even sloping terrain, as may be needed to descend to a boat dock, for example.

The clear advantage is that the user doesn't need to transfer from a wheelchair. This is a great choice for independent use. We didn't look into the cost of these. But figure the cost to probably be close to the cost of the stair lift and other work.



An incline lift, shown in folded position.

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## Hybrid Ramp-Platform Lift

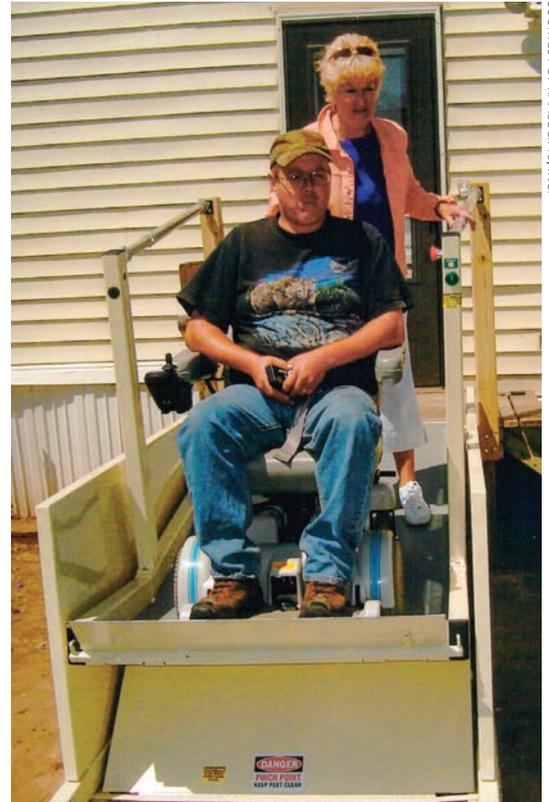
I recently discovered a combination ramp and lift.

The product by Raase Lifts, Inc., named Simplicity Wheelchair Lift Ramp is a platform that is 3 feet, 6 inches by 8 feet.

It's designed to fit existing steps or porches without major modifications. It utilizes hydraulic operation that can lift up to 2,000 pounds, and it operates with a standard 115-volt AC power outlet. The size allows two people to use it together.

It rises on one side to create a ramp, or you can roll onto it while it's flat. The platform raises to the upper landing, similar to other flat platform lifts.

It has wheels attached so it can be moved or resold back to the company. The



A man uses a ramp-platform lift by Raase Lifts, Inc.



A ramp-platform lift fits existing steps or porches.

cost for the refurbished unit we were quoted, with a warranty, is \$2,600 plus a \$400 delivery fee from Wisconsin and \$140 installation fee.

This is best for us, as it'll be protected from Iowa winters and will require the least amount of additional construction.

These are a few ways to get up into a home when you're tight on space. The products stated above are not endorsements of any kind.

For more information, visit [accessiblehealthhome.com](http://accessiblehealthhome.com). ■