



Architectural Consider

by Jeff Dallenbach, Archcon Architecture

Self storage has evolved over the years from metal buildings built in a field on the outskirts of town to multi-story facilities built in urban environments. General contractor-led teams with experience in steel construction have paved the way by developing turn-key projects for their clients. This approach has proven highly successful for many of the early generation single-story facilities, but as building codes, accessibility requirements, neighborhood standards, development codes, storm water issues, and tree preservation come into play, an experienced self-storage architect and team of professional consultants is necessary. The city-review process, variance issues, international building code, accessibility code (ADA), international energy conservation code, and city amendments are complex and always changing. An experienced self-storage architect can assist in the early phases

of design to avoid potential project-ending issues.

As a project progresses, the delivery method should be decided by the developer. Options include Design Build, Design-Bid-Build, and a Hybrid Collaborative Team Concept. The collaborative team concept has proven to be highly successful by putting the appropriate parties into the development process to focus on the task that meets their strength.

The most successful projects in the design phase include: a feasibility consultant to define successful parameters, a civil engineer for site analysis, architect to maximize the site and develop the project visibility, and a general contractor with steel experience to assist in structural design and budgeting.

Developments vary from simplistic, single-story, non-conditioned metal structures to highly articulated, multi-story, climate-controlled facilities. Keep in mind

that maximizing the site area and feasibility needs still drive the design. It's essential to utilize a civil engineer and architect collaboration to develop a functioning accessible site and buildings that maximize the unit mix goals.

Visibility

No matter what type of facility you develop, one primary goal is visibility! Vertical elements, vibrant colors, differing materials, and glass can all be utilized to emphasize a facility and draw in clientele. Recent trends have included the development of facilities with a mix of differing rental options. Typical drive-up ambient units are still frequent, but climate-controlled units have become increasingly more desirable. A combination of both products is currently predominant in self-storage design. A multi-story climate-controlled building housing an office and creating a focal point, surrounded by single-



ations in Self Storage

story ambient drive-up units is a product that is prevalent in the industry. In addition to these products, some developers are expanding on their rental options by including flex offices, wine storage, and even postal facilities. These options are typically applicable only in specific markets.

Flex offices create a finished-out office with a storage unit adjacent to the office. This allows small businesses to rent office space and store products without long-term lease commitments. Other amenities in facilities with flex offices include a shared conference room, coffee bar, and vending area. A developer must also consider the additional management obligation of daily tenants when developing this type of product.

High-end

Wine storage is also becoming more prevalent in Class A facilities where the median

income of the surrounding area is high. Units range from 2.5' x 2.5' x 2.5' foot stacked to 5' x 10' foot rooms to accommodate various users. Private wine collectors and local restaurants often utilize this high-end feature. Development considerations include humidity control and a backup generator to make sure a power failure doesn't ruin thousands of dollars worth of wine!

Postal facilities within self storage draw new clientele into your facility to rent more storage. Balancing the management task of serving postal customers in relation to the storage business is essential. Additional rental products can be a huge plus, but must be reviewed in relation to market needs. If not planned properly, they may sometimes detract from the primary business of self-storage.

Following the definition of a developer's unit mix and amenities, the architect and team dives into the aesthetic design goals.

An experienced architect will review the obligations of the design for the region in which the development is occurring. Many cities, master planned developments, and highway corridors have extreme design standards and building code amendments that limit the materials and design characteristics of your facility. Energy efficiency is becoming a requirement and insulating characteristics of your building are adding to project costs more than ever. Issues of reflective roofing, roof color that relates to low heat absorption, insulation values beyond building code requirements, and more extreme mechanical system requirements all can be mandated. Standards oftentimes require 100% masonry not only on the primary façade but around the entire facility.

Design elements utilized include stucco and economical split-faced concrete masonry units (CMU) in conjunction with limited

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Left: Note the stylish handling of the gutter system. Clean lines and attention to detail make this store front attractive. **Right:** The single slope roof draws attention to this self-storage office at Mines Road Self Storage, Rancho Viejo, Laredo.


use of stone or brick to assist in meeting the masonry goals and also the developer's budget. Roofing requirements also come into play where roof slopes and materials are mandated. Canopies with sloped elements on a flat façade can meet the intent of the code in some instances thus allowing the primary roof to be maintained as a simplistic single slope element. In addition, glazing (windows) has become an issue as a percentage of the façade must be glazed. Storage doesn't lend itself to glazing, but the articulation of an office focal point with storefront glass can go a long way in meeting glazing requirements mandated in many areas. Façade delineation has also become an issue when requirements include varying heights of walls and offsetting walls to create more dynamic buildings. Again, an experienced architect can work with the local authorities to develop alternative solutions to these design challenges, thus creating a building that meets the intent of the regional design standards and is also financially feasible for the developer.

Self-storage associations like TSSA and long-term facility operators understand these ever changing complexities of our industry and can assist in directing developers to experienced self-storage team members. Putting the proper team members in their strengths is a priority. The days of designing a little stone on the office and wrap the rest of the building in metal siding are gone, but the ever evolving self-storage industry is

dynamically adapting to meet the stringent design parameters mandated by many areas. A collaborative architect-led process can help pave the way to self storage success!

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