



College Point Storage Lacey, Washington

by Tammy LeRoy

Few towns can boast the scenic beauty of Lacey, Wash.—a growing, mid-sized city situated at the southern tip of Puget Sound with the magnificent Cascade Range and Mt. Rainier rising in the east. This setting, along with five freshwater lakes, over 1,000 acres of public parkland, and abutment to a National Wildlife Refuge, makes Lacey a geographical and environmental paradise. Its population in the 2010 census was 42,393, with an estimated median household income in 2011 of \$56,677. Clean air, pure water, outstanding schools, and a low crime rate have all helped to create a flourishing economy—and an excellent opportunity for self-storage.

In 2006, the partners of Whitman Village Storage LLC bought a three-acre parcel in Lacey that was ideal for a class-A self-storage facility, with managing partner Jeff Powell serving as general contractor. The site was located between a medium density commercial area and single-family housing developments. There were 6,000 homes in the three-mile trade area and no competitors within 2.5 miles. It was a near-perfect location, except for one problem: Self-storage was a prohibited use for this parcel.

“We bought the parcel with self-storage in mind,” Powell says, “but it was not zoned that way.” In 2007, the partnership approached the City of Lacey Planning Commission to support a text amendment to the municipal code that would allow the project to move forward. It was rejected. There was nothing to do but wait for the municipality to adjust to the idea. In 2009, they began the process again, going to great lengths to involve local officials in the writing of the amendment.

Ultimately, the developers and the City created a unique set of development conditions limiting self-storage development in

specific zones to a percentage of the total land use in that area. In one move, the new amendment gave the partnership a legal foundation for getting the project approved and limited the number of competing facilities that could be built within College Point Self Storage’s trade area.

The text amendment set high standards for the design and orientation of the new facility. Key aspects included:

- Pedestrian pathways from the residential neighborhood to the commercial center
- Large, heavily landscaped buffers facing residential uses
- The use of recycled materials for the foundation and building steel
- Five percent of the site dedicated to a tree tract
- Architectural design that would represent a “higher use,” meaning that office and retail would be required

Building For Success

After a three-year approval process, construction could begin. But the site itself posed new obstacles. Situated behind a retail center, it had no frontage from the arterial and College Point Self Storage would have to be made visible from 200 feet away—while still meeting the aesthetics requirements set forth in the text amendment. In addition, poor soils on the site would require significant extra work to meet minimum compaction requirements.

Architect Stephen Bourne, CEO of Seattle-based Site+Plan+Mix LLC was brought in to design the project. Bourne, who worked for Shurgard from 1997 to 2006, designed a class-A, institutional grade facility that not only met the requirements of the City but

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earned high praise from its officials. The developers presented Bourne with versions of a site plan that had been used as a draft for the project—basically a couple of two-story buildings with a few drive-up access units on the ground floor around the perimeter, and interior access units on a second floor. But Bourne didn't think the design addressed the developers' needs nor the needs of the community.

"Three acres is a pretty big parcel for us to work with—we usually don't get more than two acres these days," Bourne says. "But the site plan wouldn't have yielded the number of units they were striving to get, nor would it have given the class-A level of design we were looking for." From his perspective, the plan may have worked in a rural area but was not adequate for the retail/residential setting of this project.

"We made the change from a simple, box-on-a-box type facility to a u-shaped, fortress-type, prominent design that focused all of its energy out to the retail and was peaceful and quiet toward the residential," Bourne says. "And we used high-quality, durable materials to create a long-lifecycle project." The final product was nearly identical to the elevations presented to the City for its design review process.

The project boasts a three-story, 105-by-300-foot building surrounded on three sides by single-story, drive-up access buildings with 30-foot drive aisles. All of the buildings have split-face CMU on the first story, and the upper levels of the three-story building feature a stylish combination of architectural metal siding, CMU, and textured, insulated siding panels.

Each end of the three-story building is accented by a glass tower topped with a steeply-sloped, overhung roof. The glass towers not only add architectural flair, they help passers-by identify the building's use by displaying unit doors through the glass

on all three floors. The single-story retail and office building mimics the glass tower design with a full glass front and a steeply-sloped, Northwest style roof.

The 5,000-square-foot tree tract was planted with new trees to replace the ones lost during construction, and shrubbery and ground cover around the main building added polish to the design.

Before the project could be completed, however, the developers encountered another snag. A new state energy code was passed in 2012, putting the plans

we were showing because of the exterior product—we were able to get some R-values from that." In the end, College Point Self Storage was able to accomplish a very efficient usage of power. "That building, to date, is operating at less than 50 cents per foot in the heated building," Powell says.

Murrieta, Calif.-based Kiwi II construction provided the engineering design and also supplied and installed the light gauge and structural framing, roofing, and exterior wall panels. "This was a great project to work on," says Wayne Woolsey, principle. "The exterior has a lot of architectural detail." For installation, Kiwi II worked around the facility's popped out walls, pitched roofs, and tube frames that support the overhangs. "A lot of design work went in up front to ensure ease of construction," Woolsey adds.



used at the beginning of construction on a deferred submittal basis. The new code, which came primarily from federal sources, was not written in a clear and concise manner. Powell says the College Point Self Storage team and members of the building and planning department were learning as they went.

"We had submitted the plans with R-11 on the sides and R-36 in the ceiling area," Powell explains, but the City really wanted us to have R-24 on the sides. We had already ordered all the studs for the side cavities." At this point, the City wanted the project brought up to the new code. "We said, 'Wait—we're not going to reframe this building!'" Powell recalls.

Fortunately, with assistance from the insulation companies, the developers were able to show that they had already complied with the City's requirements. "Part of the exterior was a rigid insulation that contributed to our success," Powell says. "We had more insulation than

Interior Motives

The Pacific Northwest is known for its inclement weather, but College Point Self Storage has its customers covered—literally. The main building features a 50-by-40-foot loading area enclosed on three sides, with room for four large trucks. The covered area offers direct elevator access for upper floor storers, and two separate entries to the first-level hallways. The loading dock is brightly lit with industrial lighting for nighttime use, and one of the property's 16 security cameras is located here to provide customers with an additional feeling of safety.

The facility features two elevators, both for redundancy and for customer convenience on busy days. The placement of the side-by-side elevators was planned to ensure that customers are within 150 feet of the farthest units.

Bourne supplied the developers with a market study to determine unit mix, shopping competitors throughout the entire



market and studying the unit mixes of all of the product surrounding Lacey. He began with a target mix and then worked with the future management company to refine it. Approximately 30 percent are drive-up access units and the rest are interior units; the original concept had provided only about 20 percent exterior access. Janus International supplied white hallway partitions and unit doors, which are green in the multistory building in keeping with the facility's interior color scheme.

The 1,445-foot self-storage office and retail store reflects the project's first-class status, with 14-foot glass on three sides, hardscape flooring, 16-foot ceilings, and indirect lighting. "It's an open, light and airy space with a great view of the property," Bourne says. "There's an excellent retail display and the facility's state-of-the-art security is displayed with monitors in the office." Self-storage customers are welcomed with a 10-foot, curved laminate counter finished in wood-grain. The spacious, well-ordered retail area invites customers to browse for boxes, tape, packing materials, and nearly anything else that can make moving day easier or offer better protection for stored goods.

Bourne says they didn't integrate anything unusual into the facility's design, but focused on doing everything well. "Even though it has what might be considered a standard, centralized design, the team committed to a high quality project," Bourne says. "We didn't do anything revolutionary, but we did everything with a commitment to quality—and it shows. College Point Self Storage sets the example of how to do a class-A storage facility."

On To Operations

The finished project yielded 734 units in 82,500 rentable square feet, with climate-

controlled units in the multistory structure. The operations management company selected for the new facility was West Coast Self Storage, which manages facilities in the Pacific Northwest, including 16 in the state of Washington.

College Point Self Storage opened its doors at the end of November, 2012. The facility was brought online with a full Web-based eDOMICO software system. Glenn Hunter, president of Oakland, Calif.-based DOMICO, is pleased that this state-of-the-art project has received a Facility of the Year award. "DOMICO has been providing software for West Coast Self-Storage facilities since 2007," Hunter adds.

The response to the finished project by the City of Lacey was overwhelmingly positive and, in fact, nothing short of ecstatic. The glowing praise was summed up by the city's director of the building department, Wade Duffy:

"I (and the City of Lacey as a whole) personally consider your particular project the new standard in storage facilities in both design and functional use of space. From a visual perspective, no other storage facility in this area has ever even come close to matching your facility in esthetic appeal. Your facility is the new high water mark in storage facility design and the new standard by which all others will be measured. I congratulate you and applaud you for giving our community such a beautiful development that we can all be very proud of for many, many years!"

Praise from city officials and others is a source of pride for the facility's ownership group, which continues to build good relationships with the local community. One

way College Point Storage does this is by offering the use of the facility to volunteer and civic organizations. For example, the local Boys & Girls Club gained access to the glass tower so the children could enjoy a fabulous view of the local Fourth of July fireworks display, and the Lacey Police Department has used the site for training purposes.

The facility also provides storage in an ongoing capacity to two Cub Scouts troops, the local elementary school, and the local and state "Relay for Life" teams. The store manager donates her time to Relay for Life and other community events, including garage sales and BBQs held on the grounds as fundraisers. A dynamic Facebook page lists a variety of local events, recipes, and other posts of interest to the community.

It goes without saying that building the right project, in the right location, with the right team will result in success. In mid-October, occupancy at College Point Self Storage was at 35 percent. "We're on track with our proforma," Powell says. "As a developer, sometimes you hit a home run and sometimes you don't. This is a home run for us."

Tammy LeRoy is Editor of *Mini-Storage Messenger*.

QUICK FACTS

Facility Owner:

Whitman Village Storage LLC,
Lacey, Washington

Architect:

Stephen Bourne, Site+Plan+Mix,
Seattle, Washington

General Contractor:

Prime Development Group, Inc.

Metal Building System:

Kiwi II Construction

Interior Partitions:

Janus International

Management Software:

DOMICO

Security: DOMICO