

DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

AFFORDABLE SELF STORAGE

Bridgewater, New Jersey

By Rhonda Paschal

The owner/developer of Affordable Self Storage spared no expense when it came to building a state-of-the-art facility in the upscale community of Bridgewater, N.J. Located on the heavily-traveled Route 28, the facility fits in perfectly with nearby homes that go for \$300,000 up to a cool \$1 million. The area's major shopping mall—Bridgewater Commons—along with big name pharmaceutical companies Johnson & Johnson and Merck are also located nearby. Moreover, given the unique challenges faced during development, this facility was named as the *Mini-Storage Messenger's* 2007 Self-Storage Facility of the Year runner up in the construction category.

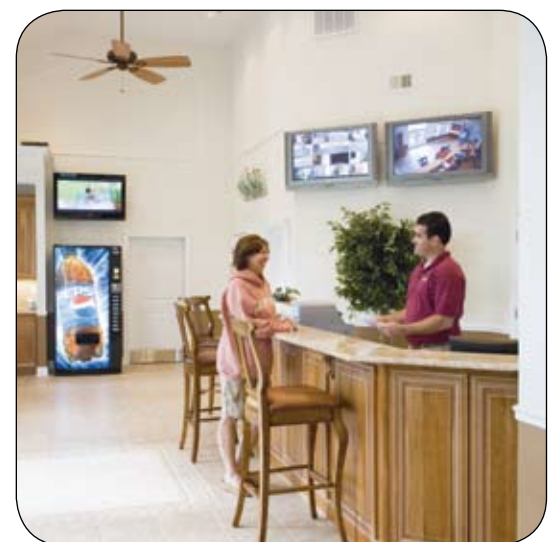
A Long Time Coming

Although no expense was spared to build the facility, it took more than four years to see the project come to fruition. The challenges started immediately with the community not wanting self-storage or any type of industrial structure on the site. The local planning and zoning board's concern was that the facility would look like a typical storage facility with unattractive doors visible to the 30,000-plus passers-by each day. The need to educate the community was in order as was a great deal of patience in dealing with those leading the charge against a self-storage facility.

Local high-end residential builder, Pizzo and Pizzo, brought its expertise in building distinctive single-family properties, townhouses, and condominiums to the table and presented its plans for a two-story self-storage facility. "Route 28 was being built up as an upscale area with numerous high-end townhouses—most of which we built—and a self-storage facility wasn't wanted," recalls Greg Hewett, project manager on the Affordable Self Storage Bridgewater location.

As is the case with many townhouses and condo developments, there isn't a lot of storage space. Residents had to travel anywhere from three to five miles to get to the nearest facility to store excess belongings. Therefore, in an effort to give the facility an upscale appearance that fit in with the surrounding area, a variety of building materials were incorporated into its design.

"The use of mixed materials came from the need to blend that residential look into a self-storage facility," says Hewett. From structural steel and wood framing to poured concrete, metal panels, brick and stucco, a mix of construction materials went into the structure. The exterior grounds were also subject to community scrutiny. "The town required us to have a landscaping plan, which underwent three different revisions. The town was very particular about the look of the facility right down to the color of the building,"



Photos courtesy of Affordable Self Storage

QUICK FACTS

Owner/Developer: Pizzo and Pizzo, Inc.
 Architect: Gordon Todd Associates
 Facility Size: 58,600 Rentable
 Square Feet
 Total Units: 605
 Doors/Interior Systems: DBCi
 Roof: MBCI Metal Building
 Components
 Building Erector: Miller Building Systems
 Management Software: SiteLink by SMD
 Security System: Automated Security

Hewett says. "The sign out front had to be changed and wasn't approved until three days before final permitting of the entire project."

Dealing With Mother Nature

On top of being bogged down by bureaucratic red tape for years, nature dealt blows to the project during construction. While the area was seeing one of the mildest winters in years, January brought frigid temperatures and snow, making concrete pours a slow process.

"We took a lot of precautions throughout the process," says Hewett. "We used thermal insulated blankets to warm the ground before pouring the concrete, and again once it was poured, so that the concrete could cure properly."

Pushing to get the project finished by its target date required savvy coordinating skills when scheduling various tradesmen at the job site. "We had several crews on the site at the same time," Hewett says. "We could easily have 40 guys on site at the same time on any given day trying to get their part of the project done."

Obviously, with that many workers on a job in cold and wet weather, there is the potential for the site to get messy, muddy, and dangerous, all of which Pizzo and Pizzo strives to minimize. "Keeping the job site clean is very important to us," says Hewett. "We believe that a clean site is a happy site."

Although making sure that every person on the job had a place to work and maintaining order posed unique challenges, Hewett gives praise where it is due. "I give all the guys credit for getting the work

done under the various conditions they had to work," he says.

Working under these conditions was no easy task when you add into the equation that the project was far along before the roof could be installed. Not only was the site exposed to the elements but so were the workers. It wasn't until the last third of the scheduled time-frame that the roof went up and the site was finally weather tight.

"This is different than when we do residential building where the project is weather tight early on in the process," Hewett says.

No Expense Spared


Affordable Self Storage in Bridgewater opened its doors for business on Labor Day of 2007 ... but not before ensuring that truly no expense was spared. With a front office that resembles an upscale hotel lobby, customers are greeted with an assortment of finely-crafted surprises upon entering Affordable Self Storage. They are first welcomed in by the knowledgeable, professional, and friendly manager, Robert Toledo.

"Inside the office, there are 20-foot ceilings, oak cabinetry, 12-by-12 imported Italian tile floors, granite counter tops, and a full coffee bar," says Toledo. "We have a lot of pharmaceutical reps who store their inventory with us, and we offer climate-controlled units and receive and sign for deliveries."

The office's fresh flowers and a golf course (not part of the facility) located behind the site add to the facility's upscale feel. And with more than 550 of the facility's units being climate-controlled, every customer can rest assured that their belongings will be kept at the right temperature despite the day's weather conditions. The facility's exterior storage spaces are drive-up units. In total, there are 605 units ranging in size from 5-by-5 to 15-by-30. In addition, the developer went the extra mile to install lights in the larger units to eliminate the cave-like feeling in the back of the spaces.

The elegant stucco facade with its stately pillars and trademark light tower beckons visitors to the facility, which is actually built into the side of a hill. Both floors are accessible without the use of

elevators, although two are available. Sixteen cameras keep watch over the well-lit facility and individually-alarmed units, motion sensors, keypad access, and a call system provide customers with additional layers of security.

After the long battle to get through the permitting process and numerous obstacles during construction, Affordable Self Storage is evidence that a storage facility can be part of an upscale neighborhood. "With this project, we successfully captured the look and feel of the high-end area of Bridgewater," says Hewett. 



Rhonda Paschal is a freelance writer based in Phoenix, Arizona, and the editor of the *Arizona Administrative Code*. She is a regular contributor to the *Mini-Storage Messenger*.



Photos courtesy of Affordable Self Storage