

# Tri-Village Self Storage Columbus, Ohio

by Erica Shatzer



Columbus, now referred to as Cbus, is the capital and largest city in Ohio with a population of more than 850,000 residents. It is the state's third largest metropolitan area, behind Cleveland and Cincinnati, and the third largest city in the Midwestern United States. Columbus also landed the number three slot in *fDi Magazine* for U.S. cities of the future.

Indeed, the power of three is irrefutable. And the downtown area's latest and greatest self-storage facility, Tri-Village Self Storage, which was named *Mini-Storage Messenger's* 2016 New Facility of the Year, is a perfect example.

The fully climate-controlled, six-story facility takes the phrase "state of the art" to a whole new level with keyless locking features and a biometric security system for the wine storage area. Moreover, despite its grand stature, Tri-Village Self Storage's upscale retail appearance enables it to seamlessly blend into the downtown area from street level. Designed to attract and accommodate the city's growing population of apartment dwellers, many of whom downsized from their suburban homes, Tri-Village offers a wide array of features, products, and services within a stylish façade of brick, glass, and blue cloth awnings.

### Small Site Challenges

Although Columbus' population is steadily increasing, the city's downtown neighborhood has limited space available for

new construction—a problematic circumstance that required meticulous planning in order for Tri-Village Self Storage to become a reality on such a compact plot of land. For starters, the parcel was located among occupied structures and three busy city streets. This made the construction of the site a complicated and complex task.

"We knew building a downtown project was going to present many challenges, from staging material to erecting the structure and underground utilities," says Joseph Beatty, vice president of Tri-Village Self Storage. "The project consists of an existing 0.282-acre surface parking lot with the building designed from property line to property line with no room for error."

Brexton LLC, the construction and management company, negotiated a lease with an adjacent neighbor for staging and storing the building materials. "In addition to the 12-month lease, we agreed to replace the entire asphalt lot and concrete approach to the lot upon completion," Beatty says, adding that this was a win-win scenario for both parties as the agreement enabled Brexton to erect a large portion of the project from the neighbor's parking lot.

The cityscape would prove to be even more troublesome when it came to permits. "The building official was ready to release our permit, but the division of public service was concerned about traffic on one of the side streets," states Beatty.



“The concern was excess vehicle weight, so they refused to release their approval without us taking core samples of the street to assure proper pavement depth. The cores ultimately provided more than sufficient depth.”

After completing the drawings, receiving approval for the loan, obtaining building permits, and planning the construction process, Brexton began the site demolition and the drilling of the jack holes for the facility’s two freight elevators. The installation of the shoring to support Long Street, Elm Street, and Young Street was to follow, but a problem surfaced when Brexton was preparing to install the shoring for the construction of the lower level.

Just when Brexton thought the site couldn’t get any tighter, the company discovered that a high-pressure gas line was five feet closer to the building than originally expected—a miscalculation that

would require the facility to be re-designed to a smaller size than planned.

As if the construction process wasn’t trying enough, the crews had to contend with inclement weather. In fact, it rained 29 of the 30 days in June—the wettest June in Central Ohio’s history. Therefore, in order to place the concrete matt foundation, Brexton removed the rainwater from the facility’s lower level by installing three temporary six-inch pumps.

What’s more, on top of the site reconstructions and the accommodations made to prevent impeding access to the nearby streets and businesses, the company and its crews were tasked with providing daily communications in regards to the progress of the project. “Along with daily activity logs, we recorded nearly 3,500 still photographs and 30 hours of drone video to communicate progress daily to the owner and lender,” says Beatty.



### Desirable Design

Once all of the logistics were in place, it was time to construct the five-star facility, which, per the request of the downtown commission, needed to have the look of an office building, with plenty of windows—a requirement that greatly contributed to Tri-Village’s eye-pleasing aesthetics.

For starters, Tri-Village used a 10-foot-by-10-foot steel structural framing system from Bradenton, Fla.-based SS-20 Building Systems, Inc., for the multi-story facility. The project required 135 tons of steel, but no hand troweling thanks to its patented design that uses columns that slide into each other. It took two weeks and a crane to erect the six-story building, which has five floors above ground and a basement level that features wine storage. “It’s a simple system,” says George O’Connor, national sales manager for SS-20 Building Systems. “It’s basically one great big erector set, and speed is its greatest aspect.”

The facility, which was shaped as a large rectangular box in order to maximize the space of the tight site, needed plenty of pizzazz to break down the scale. Therefore, Sean Boysko, architect for Columbus-based MS Consultants, utilized various materials, colors, and wall depths for the facility’s main façade. “Subtle changes with color and materials enabled us to break down the scale,” says Boysko, who adds that varied roof paraffin heights were used as well.

From the sidewalk, customers are greeted with a motif of deep red brick and dark blue canopies framing the large, storefront windows. The street view is even more dramatic, especially at night when the stairwells and hallway graphics are lit up behind the three-story glass curtain walls. “The glass curtain wall and ribbon window bring in light during the day and make the facility seem to glow at night,” Boysko says.

Upon entering the building, customers are surrounded by the glossy white walls, granite countertops, and wooden cabinets of the office area. It is bright and well organized, giving it a fresh and clean appearance. In addition to the

indoor self-service kiosk, two flat-screen TVs are mounted to the wall behind the counter to display site graphics.

The main entrance area also features a retail display stocked with all the necessities for packing and moving as well as a nearby unit with various unit sizes marked out with tape to help customers select the right size for their needs. "We also have signage in that unit for supplies," says George Harvey, facility manager. "We have a nice inventory of everything and it adds traffic to the facility."

Adjacent to the office area is the facility's pride and joy: the wine tasting room. The casual yet chic space is outfitted with ample seating, with several inviting leather armchairs and a long, rectangular table to seat 12. Two large, flat-screen TVs are mounted to one wall for those who don't wish to people watch through the street-level windows. The wine tasting room even has a kitchenette with beautiful wooden cabinetry, stylish countertops, a wine refrigerator for multiple bottles, and an appealing ceramic tile backsplash.

Speaking of wine, Tri-Village's 2,500-square-foot wine storage area is just as classy. The entryway of the basement-level wine storage is tastefully decorated with framed paintings and antique wine making tools. It features Janus International's wine storage system in the company's glossy white finish. And of course, the entire wine storage area is monitored to stay at a cool 55 degrees with 75 percent humidity to keep its tenants' collections at their best.

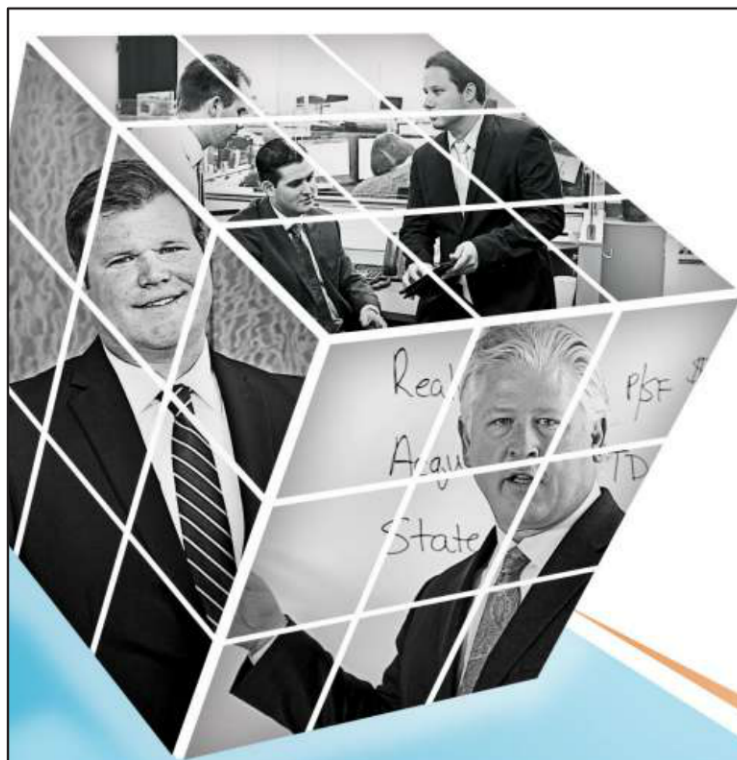
Tri-Village's wine storage lockers have swing hinged doors and are available in several sizes; there are currently a few walk-in lockers, 10 full lockers, 20 half lockers, and 30 one-third lockers. "We have 70 wine lockers now, but plan to have 240 to 250 when its finished," says Harvey. "Customers are wanting the full lockers, so we are going to be adding more full lockers to the mix."

The rest of the facility has a diverse unit mix. Tri-Village offers 27 sizes that range from 20 square feet to 600 square feet. "At first we built out half of the



facility as we were unsure of the unit mix," Harvey states. "We thought the public would need more smaller units, but we needed more larger units like 10-by-20s and 10-by-15s. Phase two was all large units; it was a good strategy." Some of those larger units have two doors but no center panels to allow customers to access the units from either door or to enable the facility to transform one larger unit into two smaller ones.

In addition, Janus International's hallway systems; diamond plate wainscoting, corner guards, and kick plates; and



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standard 650 roll-up doors were utilized throughout the facility.

### Safe And Secure

In order to offer its tenants fortress-like security, Tri-Village Self Storage opted to install the SecureGuard Electronic Lock system from Janus International and PTI Security Systems, which combines a lock, automated overlocking, and monitoring in one product. The SecurGuard Electronic Lock provides a secure interior access control to individual self-storage units from inside the door that tenants can unlock once they swipe their key fob at the keypads at any building entrance. "It's an added layer of security," says Kyle Godtel, operations manager for PTI Security Systems. "Every unit has this higher level of security that is secondary to the lock on the door."

The key fobs are also used for the freight elevators, granting tenants access to only the floors on which they have units. "This high-tech key fob system helps prevent people from accessing the wrong floor to keep all units safe and secure," says Beatty. "Once the exterior lock is removed, the units are easily accessed. Then, when a unit is closed, the electronic lock engages and the unit can be locked with an exterior lock for additional security."

Additionally, PTI Security Systems provides the site graphics for monitoring the site, which alerts the property manager of security issues through visual and/or audible alarm notifications. Tri-Village also features 32 cameras, which record video 24/7, and motion/sound lighting sensors for additional security and energy savings when the building is vacant.

As if all those high-tech features were not enough to make tenants feel that their belongings are secure, the wine storage area has an extra layer of security: A fingerprint scanner is located on the lower level to restrict access to only tenants who are storing wine.

### The Lease-Up

Filling units is a piece of cake with a facility as all-inclusive as Tri-Village Self Storage. In addition to the numerous site features, the facility offers a plethora of services. For starters, new tenants, who are renting

a 5-by-10 or larger unit, have free usage of the facility's U-Haul van. Plenty of carts and dollies are available for tenant use as well. Tri-Village also has six parking spaces for the covered loading and unloading area, free Wi-Fi access, handicapped accessible units, 27/4 access, and delivery acceptance for businesses and wine storage tenants.

The facility's website is yet another selling point, especially for the tech-savvy Millennial customers who are attracted to the urban lifestyle of Columbus' downtown area. Integrated with SiteLink's web-based management software, the website allows customers to rent units and pay their bills online. In turn, all reservations and rentals go directly into SiteLink to keep managers abreast on what tenants are entering on the website. Tenants can even sign leases through the website thanks to SiteLink's eSign tool that accepts electronic signatures and stores leases inside the software. Its feature-rich website receives rates and specials through SiteLink's software, providing the most up-to-date information to maximize rental income. Tri-Village's website utilizes SiteLink's Merchant Services for lower processing rates and reconciliation reports. Moreover, customers can easily submit tenant surveys through the website, and SiteLink lets owners text or email thank you notices to the tenants after they move out.


If those bells and whistles weren't enough to bring you through the door, Tri-Village Self Storage implemented several other attention-getting tactics. The facility hosted an invite-only wine tasting charity event for Big Brothers Big Sisters, the nationwide non-profit organization that provides mentoring services to underprivileged children. "The wine tasting charity event for Big Brothers Big Sisters was very effective," says Harvey. "About 50 people attended and we are utilizing its mailing list with thousands of contacts."

The facility's other marketing and advertising efforts included open house events, a grand opening with door prizes, an Apple Watch giveaway, local signage, a billboard, participation on aggregator websites, becoming a stop on the Columbus Downtown "walking tour", forming relationships with leasing agents

and property managers, and submitting items to be included in the Discovery District's welcome bags. And, more recently, Tri-Village has become an official Christmas gift hiding place for the holiday season; the facility is renting 5-by-5 units for a flat daily fee while accepting deliveries for the tenants and providing a gift-wrapping station for all of Santa's little helpers. To top it off, Harvey moved to downtown Columbus to become better acquainted with the area and meet more potential tenants at local venues and events such as monthly art galleries at wine bars.

### A Sunny Outlook

Since opening its doors on May 17, Tri-Village Self Storage has managed to rent 14 percent of its 845 units. The 48,148-rentable-square-foot facility has had a leisurely start, but Harvey states that its gaining traction with lease-up. As a matter of fact, Tri-Village anticipates a big boost in occupancy once the city's new apartment complexes are finished being built within the next six months.

Indeed, there's no denying that the future will be bright for this elaborate, sophisticated, state-of-the-art self-storage facility! Three cheers for Tri-Village Self Storage! 

*Erica Shatzer is the editor of Mini-Storage Messenger, Self-Storage Now!, and Self-Storage Canada.*

### QUICK FACTS

#### Facility Owner:

Long & Young Storage, LLC

#### Builder: Brexton

#### Management Company:

Brexton/TVSS

#### Architect:

ms consultants inc. / Sean Boysko

#### Roof/Door/Interior Systems:

EPDM Roof, Janus Doors, Janus Interior Hallway Systems, SS-20 Structural System

#### Security:

PTI, Janus SecureGuard, Calvin Access Controls

#### Management Software: SiteLink