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EXTRA SPACE SELF STORAGE

Estero, Florida

By Jennifer LeClaire

Tucked away on Florida's West Coast, Estero has historically been a sleepy town. The city is home to about 13,000 people in a Fort Meyers suburb. Extra Space Storage chose to build its newest facility in Estero adjacent to Coconut Point, the center of focus for a 500-acre, master planned community. The property has 1.2 million square feet of retail space, office condos, and residential housing. All surrounding several acres of lakes with a boardwalk. "The location is ideal. This region had a very vibrant, robust economy for many years. The demographics are strong with plenty of high net-worth individuals and a growing population," says Clint Halverson, senior director of corporate communications at Extra Space Storage.

A Condominium Design

If it weren't for the giant Extra Space Storage sign on the exterior of the building, passers-by might think the Estero facility was a new, high-end condominium project. Extra Space wanted its self-storage facility to fit in and complement existing surrounding structures while preserving some self-storage components from the street. Perhaps more accurately, it had to because in order to make the city happy. Extra Space was also at the mercy of Simon Property Group, Inc., an S&P 500 company and the largest real estate company in the U.S., which had design control over issues like colors and adding balconies and building towers and using parapets. It took 14 different designs before everyone agreed.

In the end, Sullivan, Goulette, Wilson, Ltd., a Chicago-based architectural firm, came up with a Mediterranean revival-style architecture designed to fit gracefully with the architectural flavor of Southwest Florida. "We worked with the contractor to examine all the different kinds of building component systems available to make sure that we had the most efficient and cost-effective systems," says Mark Sullivan, principal of Sullivan, Goulette. "This facility has much more detail than the other self-storage projects we've worked on. This looks like it could be on the Amalfi Coast in some big resort with all its elevation differences and plane changes and faux windows around the building." Another unique aspect of the Estero facility is that every side of the building offers architectural details.

Building A Condo-Like Self-Storage Facility

Building a four-story facility to such strict aesthetic requirements comes with challenges under ideal circumstances, but the Estero facility was faced with additional challenges to overcome from a coordination standpoint such as multiple building setbacks, roofline variations, EIFS color sections, and the intricate details and variety of materials the project demanded.

What's more, there was limited land to stage construction of a four-story building. And Extra Space had to rely on more trades than are normally required to pull off the condo-like façade. With so many balconies, windows, doors, glazing, and other elements the design offered to soften the overall height of the structure, developers admit this was a coordination nightmare—but one they tackled.



SS20 Building Systems, Inc., a self-storage building systems manufacturer in Bradenton, Fla., provided the interior building systems. Jerry Woodward, General Manager at SS20 Building Systems, says the company's patented system is designed for multistory buildings on a 10-by-10 grid system. The system works to offer more flexibility in floor plans and speeds up the installation process by using steel tube columns that run vertically from floor to floor. Each column stacks into the column below it.

The developers chose a high-performance moisture drainage exterior insulated finish system (EFIS) called Outsulation Plus from Dryvit, Inc. that incorporates an air and water-resistant barrier. Using the system came with a learning curve for Jon Orlando, senior project manager at Oden-Hardy Construction, Inc., a construction, architecture, and land planning firm based in Bradenton, Fla.

"We set up meetings with the EFIS manufacturer and sat down with all the subcontractors to come up with a game plan," Orlando says. "This system was best for this particular facility because of the wind impact requirements. They needed something high-tech. Because space was so tight, we had to get permission from adjacent property owners to set up cranes."

Another big challenge was working with the fire departments. Since the project sits on the border of Estero and Bonita Springs, two different fire departments were involved. One of the departments wanted exit arrows and directional signs painted six inches off the floor in case customers had to crawl out of the facility. The facility was also designed with more than 80 impact-grade windows around its perimeter. Installing so many windows added time and expense to the construction. There are also brick pavers designed in a pattern in the parking area, a unique and classy extra touch.

A Security-Minded Interior

The Estero facility's interior blends aesthetics with security. The office area offers stained concrete floors with an open grid lighting plan. Essentially, it's a branded approach that's similar to every other Extra Space Storage facility across the

country. The signage, color schemes, amenities, and security monitor locations are similar. The décor is a blend of light wood with brushed steel Formica.

"Behind the counter, we use softer floorings so it's more comfortable for the manager to stand up all day," Halverson says. "Spending a little more money behind the counter has made a big difference in the attitude of our managers. Their legs aren't worn out from dealing with customers all day. For the same reasons our manager apartments are furnished a little nicer than your typical self-storage facility. That helps us attract and retain a professional manager."

U.S. Door & Building Components, headquartered in Orlando, Fla., installed several of its products in traditional and non-traditional applications at the facility. Traditional applications included roll-up doors, metal hallway systems and divider partitions, diamond plate radius hallway corners, security mesh, and liner panel.

But U.S. Door went a step beyond the traditional by creating a custom insulated metal wall separating the interior climate-controlled units and exterior non-climate-controlled units, as well as placing continuous liner panels on the interior of the building's towers that reached more than 20 feet above the roof.

From a safety standpoint, the sprinkler heads can spray across multiple units with this design instead of having to install one head for each unit. And with cost-effectiveness in mind, the insulated wall and perimeter wall liner saved Extra Space a substantial amount of money compared with traditional construction methods.

"This project is a blend of beautiful architecture and functionality, and it is important to note the synergy between multiple groups to utilize construction methods and materials to accomplish this," says Tom Long, vice president of U.S. Door & Building Components.

The state-of-the-art security system offers access control the minute customers enter the property, including keypad entry that controls the floors customers can access. Cameras offer 24-hour coverage of all key entry areas.

Extra Space uses Centershift's StoreAdvantage software at all of its facilities including the new Estero proj-

ect. StoreAdvantage self-storage management software offers a centralized database, hosted, backed-up, secured, and monitored 24/7/365. The product is Internet-based so it can be accessed from anywhere. It offers centralized mailing, real-time integration with call center partners, payment processing, and other features that aim to help operators maximize profits.

Extra Space Storage learned plenty from the Estero project. First, Halverson says, the company is more cognizant of the market and what it can bear. Extra Space is revisiting pro formas in all its markets to make sure expectations are realistic. Extra Space began building the Estero facility at the peak of the market and will remember the downsides of market cycles going forward as it slows down development.



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Photos courtesy of Extra Space Storage