

A Case Study:

Musical Buildings

Conversion Part of Major Revitalization Project

By Mary Ann Diehl and Jennifer LeClaire

Two ex-musicians have transformed an old warehouse into a state-of-the-art two story self-storage facility in the heart of Nashville's Music Row.

When the warehouse A+ Storage now calls home was built, one of its owners was touring with Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. The other was preparing for his future role as the singing voice of Winnie the Pooh. That was decades ago. Today, the duo is making melodies in Nashville's self-storage market with a warehouse conversion that has won the attention of the historic community.

Owners Tim Stone and Tommy Pierce first hooked up in "Music City" when they were both active members of the entertainment industry. Decades later, they decided to make a new sound in self-storage. They formed A+ Storage of Tennessee and have since completed nine self-storage facilities including this, the duo's first conversion project. It opened in an area known as "The Gulch" in May 2008. Once a generic, aging downtown Nashville warehouse, the facility now boasts more than 600 multi-sized climate controlled storage units and 34 rentable parking spaces. The former warehouse also includes Class A office space for A+ Storage's corporate headquarters and offers additional space for lease to the residents of the famed Music Row.



"We were looking for a conversion opportunity for quite some time when we found this warehouse in this special area," Stone says. "This property sits right next to a premier condominium development that Magic Johnson has invested in called the Terrazzo and

its right across the street from another building, the Icon, that is also getting a lot of attention. This was a miraculous opportunity."

Giving A Facelift To An Eyesore

The 41,000-square-foot warehouse was a flat brick building more than 50 years old. Two architects worked together on the project. The exterior design was initiated by Robin Hood, a principal of Crossroads Architecture. John Barrett of B3 Architecture completed the exterior design. The intent was to pick up the architectural feel of old Downtown Nashville while also giving the design a fresh look for a new era in revitalized Downtown Nashville.

For the storage system design, the developers worked with U.S. Door & Building Components. To pull off the second floor strategy, U.S. Door's Access A-Deck mezzanine system was installed. The system was chosen because it doubles the net rentable space and resulting income.



Before



After



PROJECT:

A+ Self Storage
Downtown Nashville

BUILDING OWNERS:

Tommy Pierce
Tim Stone

LOCATION:

Nashville, TN

SQUARE FEET:

73,759

COMPLETED:

Spring 2008

MANUFACTURER:

U.S. Door & Building
Components

SYSTEMS:

Model 502 Roll-Up
Doors
Mezzanine
Hallways

U.S. Door's project team helped the developers customize the system to fit their unique building design using the Virtual Design Studio that demonstrates unit mixes and expected income with a few keystrokes. The demonstrations took place over the Internet.

The mezzanine flooring system is made from Tradex®. The material is a high density, high impact subfloor with a polymer top. It is superior to plywood, can accept higher weight loads and take impacts with less chance of damage. Because Access-A-Deck flooring weighs considerably less than concrete, it allowed U.S. Door's structural components to be placed directly over the existing concrete slabs without additional footers. The system is manufactured completely from hot-dipped galvanized steel and is engineered to utilize load bearing walls and horizontal partition panels. This was an important feature for the A+ Storage conversion because of the addition of a second floor to the existing one-story warehouse.



“We handled the entire mezzanine system. We actually took their old warehouse and converted it into a two-story self-storage facility with light gauge framing and technologically advanced flooring,” says Chip Cordes, Vice President of U.S. Door. “This was a complete transformation inside and out.”

Unexpected Conversion Challenges

Of course, every conversion has its challenges. The crew encountered beams that weren't going anywhere, the insulation in the walls needed to be replaced, the wiring was old, and the ceiling had problems. In essence, the building had to be completely gutted.

From Cordes' perspective, designing a unit mix that fit the shape of the building and adhering to the height restrictions of the building's exterior corners was a hurdle demanding keen problem-solving skills. Even though A+ had an advantage with the Access-A-Deck mezzanine system, capitalizing on operational efficiencies by yielding more rentable storage without additional management or utilities costs, the fact the project was a conversion added some bumps to roll over.

“We had to design a unit mix that allowed the deeper units to run around the exterior walls so we could gain height for the hallways,” Cordes says. “We also had to make our unit mix layout with the existing column spacing that was there. There was also an issue with the structure of the support walls. We had to design around two elevator lobbies and around existing high-voltage virtual panels that were in the building. The entire layout was unique.”

A+ Storage also relied on U.S. Door's Model 502 doors. They feature an easy tensioning device, fully enclosed barrel and a 3 year warranty on materials and workmanship. The hallway system features chamfered 4" corners. The 45 degree chamfer allows cart traffic to move around corners easily and reduces damage caused by contact. The system also includes flush piers, fillers and corrugated fixed walls giving the system a very clean feel.

A+ opened its doors May 2008 after only seven months of construction. With a cutting-edge facility, and a strategic location, the future looks bright for A+.

U.S. Door & Building Components and Roll-lite Storage Systems have been a major international supplier to the self-storage industry for over 30 years. In addition to supplying roll-up doors, they offer a complete portfolio of related products including hallway and corridor systems, swing doors, lockers, EZ Access wicket doors, relocatable buildings and mezzanine systems. Products are available with factory-guaranteed installation. For more information call 407-859-6770 or go to www.usdoor.com.