



# A Focus on Functionality: Bridging the Gap Between Self-Storage Development and Operations

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# Introduction

- How construction decisions shape daily operations
- Operations mindset: before, during and after the build
- Developer vs. operator priorities
- Thinking like an operator *early*
- Design choices that matter: unit mix, access, upkeep and layout
- Practical lessons from real projects



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# Developer vs. Operator

- Cost-driven vs. life-cycle-driven decisions
- Facility types: single-story, multi-story, boat/RV
- Cheaper now vs. long-term operational pains (usually, but not always)
- Sprinklers vs. firewalls
- Ongoing costs: inspections, elevators and regulatory compliance
- Marketable product vs. functional product
- Access systems: lift, slide and swing gates
- Maintenance realities: gates, HVAC and other building systems
- HVAC systems
- Construction timeline vs. readiness to open

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# Small Details, Lasting Consequences

- Push back early; predesign is the cheapest time to hear “no.”
- Involve experienced operations professionals from day one.
- Evaluate facility features against local competition.
- Covered loading and unloading areas
- Unit sizing, mix and adaptability
- Office layout, doors and customer access

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# Small Details, Lasting Consequences

- Considerations for after-hours restroom access
- Signage and visibility issues
- Parking strategy, truck rentals
- Lights: area light fixtures (ALTs) vs. photocells, in-unit lighting
- Facility-wide Wi-Fi = high cost

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# Design Choices

- Integrate design and operations teams from the start.
- Unit-mix strategy: Maximize NRA while meeting market demand.
- Long-term operational considerations must be priced in.
- Space you can rent without discounts
- Access is critical but maximize NRA.
- Who are your customers?

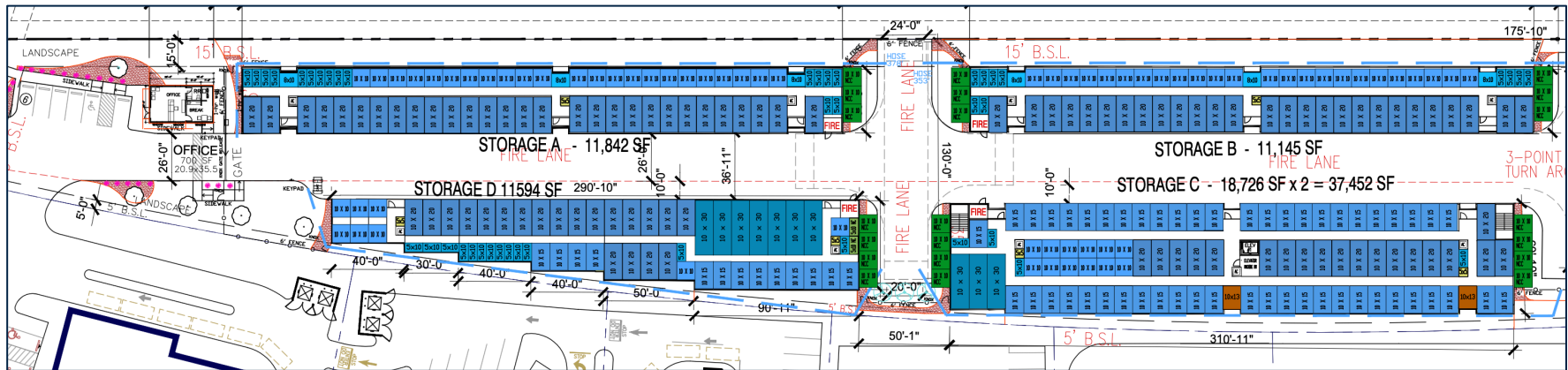


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# Design Choices

- Drive-aisle widths and circulation efficiency
- Fire protection: single vs. multiple buildings, risers and rooms
- Technology: cost vs. operational benefit
- Eave height impacts doors, conditioned space and curb appeal.



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# During Design

- High-revenue units near primary entry doors (climate-controlled)
- Coordinate landscaping near sliding and glass doors.
- Most small units go upstairs. Expect to discount these first.
- Avoid placing main entry doors too close to access gates.
- Always install bollards. If they can hit it, they will.
- Can some units be expanded or contracted?



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# During Design

- Golf cart? Plan for electrical and maintenance.
- Huge remote facility without office/restroom ... I'd reconsider.
- How will your camera systems stay cool in the summer?
- Insist on standing-seam roof and insulation strapping.
- Primary-, secondary- and emergency-access gates
- Ladders, ramps, sliding doors and cart-storage spaces
- Water well and septic access



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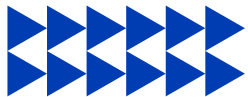






# During Design

- Elevator-cab height; ~50k maximum SF for a single elevator
- Manager unit placed near the office or a standalone space
- Cold-weather considerations: heaters, plow turnaround, etc.
- Manager apartment?
- Don't forget low-voltage conduit and future conduit
- Will you include a dumpster? Where will it go? Enclosure
- Landscaping and long-term maintenance



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# Small Details



- Detention-pond maintenance and OSSF service contracts
- Storm and sanitary lift stations must be serviced
- Elevators and fire systems must be inspected and tested annually (maintenance agreement and extinguishers)

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# Small Details

- HVAC systems must be maintained and accessible.
- Storm-box filters
- Groundwater district usage



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# Your Site and General Contractor



- Why is this important for operations?
- Soil conditions, elevation changes, space and access
- Customer experience during construction: Do you think you can increase revenue? Focus on not losing any!
- Keeping the site clean, utility interruptions, access concerns
- Nails, screws, mud, equipment and material staging

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# Your Site and General Contractor

- Communication with client and management
- Tenant relocation
- Communication between subs and onsite management (Who moved those cones?)
- The importance of hiring an experienced contractor



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# The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

- Utility issues, fire compliance and customer coordination
- Plan ahead to avoid delays.



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# Operations During Construction

- Plan with your management team. Target open date?
- Website design and lead time to get noticed (~6 months)
- Verify facility address on Google.
- Review all building systems. Develop a binder with the management company.
- Key box: labeled, manager unit, key systems must be checked
- Meter readers: Automatic or manual? Flex space?



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# Operations During Construction

- Plan for mud, check drive aisles for access issues, screws, etc.
- Move or notify customers before construction begins.
- Notify customers of concrete pours, etc., and schedule using best practices.
- Preserve access during critical phases.
- Communicate! Keep up with signage, cones, fence issues and bad actors.
- Speak up about other facility issues sooner vs. later.
- Spacious access gates. Can a mower get through?
- Ladders, ramps, sliding doors and cart-storage spaces

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# Preserve Access



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# Small Details

- Temporary office during remodel
- Caution tape around work areas



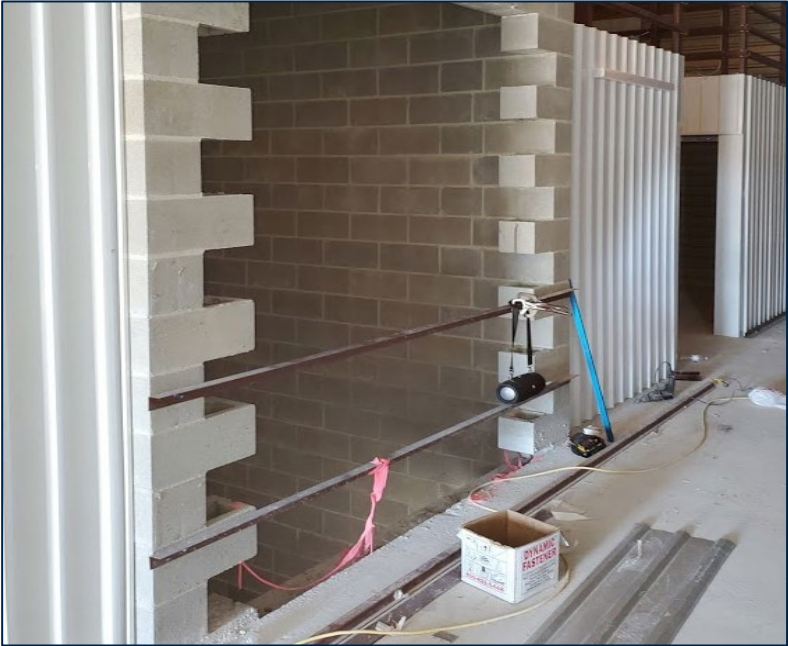
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# Small Details

## Safety and Fall Protection



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# Stories: Small Details

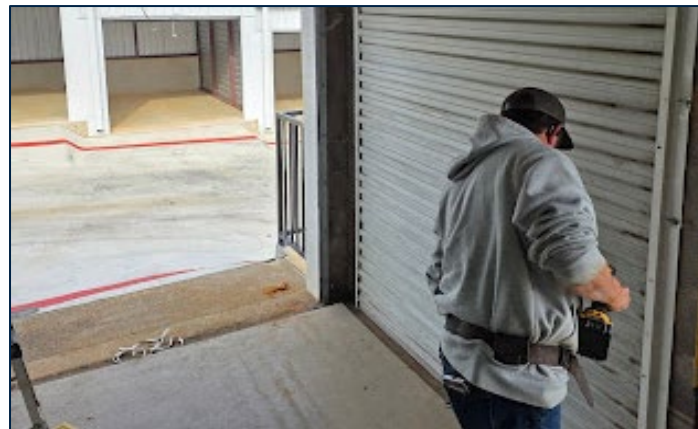
- Access
- Safety
- Customer-first mindset
- Construction cameras



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# Stories: Small Details



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# More Small Details

- Temporary fence
- Manager upkeep during construction
- Knox boxes
- Cold prep
- Well and septic
- Door sizing



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# More Small Details

- Maintenance contracts
- Light pollution
- Security access
- Fire tank
- Annual inspections
- HVAC filters
- Water-well reporting



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# Operations After Construction

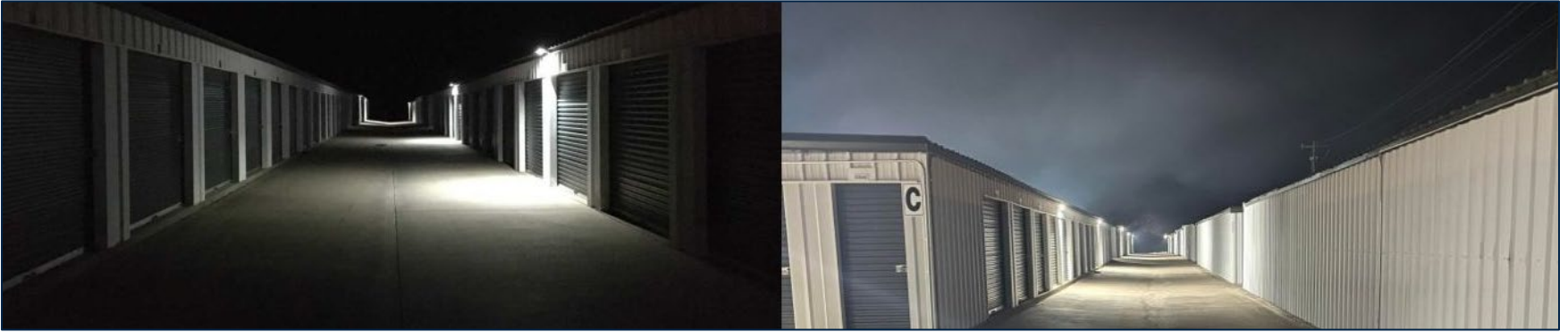
- Thermostats, lock boxes and fire panels
- Fit and finish
- Natural disasters (fire, flood, wind, hail and lightning)
- Gates and operators
- One-year warranties from subcontractors



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# Operations After Construction



- Pressure washing before re-painting; protect the top!
- Blue reusable, washable air filters
- Clean condensate drains for annual treatment.
- Change light bulbs in occupied units.
- Unit maps, restroom logos if not located in office
- Heaters in riser rooms, well houses and pipe insulation

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# The Good, the Bad and the Ugly

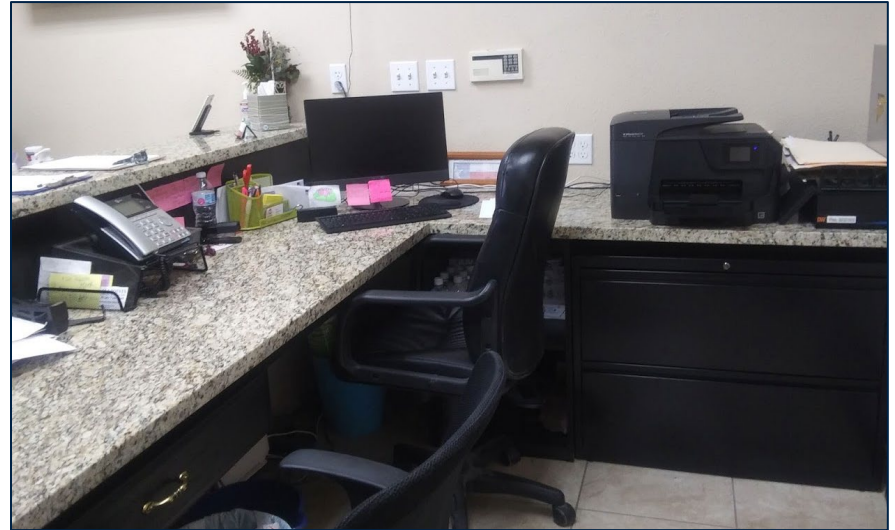


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# Day-to-Day Operations

- Office layout, parking layout
- Thermostats
- Ability to rent!



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# Day-to-Day Operations

- Firewalls and sprinklers
- Elevators
- HVAC pans
- Fire doors
- Elevator alarms



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# What Drives Operations Crazy?



- Power, signage and phone not being done three months ahead
- Inaccessible HVAC thermostats
- HVAC handlers in the ceiling or on the roof
- Unorganized unit walk-throughs and late additions
- Dead light bulbs in units
- Small cubby units and lockers

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# What Drives Operations Crazy?



- Dark hallways
- Roof leaks
- Elevator or fire-suppression issues
- Camera systems far from the office monitor (no roll-back visual)
- Inadequate light timers
- Insufficient working capital

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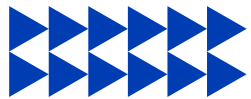


SUBMIT  
FEEDBACK!



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## JOULE



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