

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

MAPLE LEAF SELF STORAGE

Vancouver, British Columbia

By Rhonda Paschal



Newly-constructed, 100,000-square-foot, Maple Leaf Self Storage in West Vancouver opened for business last August and has been turning heads ever since. As a matter of fact, the facility's developers incorporated a feature that inspires visitors to turn their heads to look up. That's because Maple Leaf Self Storage has a green roof that's not just green in color; it's green with plant life!

Attractive By Nature

Maple Leaf's green roof is comprised of several components that allow seeds and other drought-resistant perennials and grasses to grow. The growth sits atop a layered system that is comprised of a SBS membrane, drainage panels, root barrier, and growing medium. Tracy McEvoy, director of self-storage for Maple Leaf Property Management, explains that the panels act as reservoirs for the green roof. A root barrier is installed on top of the panels with the growing medium placed on top.

This growing medium, which is part of the Soprema Sopranature system, is engineered for light-weight and extensive plantings and gives the facility's roof the potential to be a lush garden that is both environmentally-friendly and visually appealing. And, according to McEvoy, there are other benefits to topping Maple Leaf's roof with this natural element. "The green roof can also act as an insulating layer," she says, "so depending on the climate, there may be additional operational savings."

Maple Leaf's green roof covers approximately 27,000 square feet and is planted with more than 37,000 sedums, or low-growing herbaceous plants. Three different varieties of sedums are arranged in a wave-like pattern across the roof, mirroring the nearby Capilano River. In addition to the green roof, lattice work offers another decorative design element on various walls of the terra-cotta-colored brick building. The lattice extends to the third story and will eventually be covered in ivy and hydrangeas.

More Than A Pretty Face

While natural beauty has been incorporated into Maple Leaf's design, the facility consists of more than good looks. It has a lot going for it, in fact, starting with the vibrant and affluent area in which the 1.2-acre site is located. Flanked on the south by a 12-story, Class A office tower and on the north by two, 23-story, high-end condominium towers, Maple Leaf sits across the street from a large regional retail hub called Park Royal Shopping Center. To the east of the facility is the Capilano River, which winds down to the Pacific Ocean.

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Photos courtesy of Maple Leaf Self Storage

QUICK FACTS

Owner: Maple Leaf Self Storage Inc.
 Architect: Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership and CTA Design Group
 Facility Size:
 100,000 gross square feet
 72,000 rentable square feet
 Number of Units: 800
 Doors: Janus International
 Roof: Soprema's Sopranature Taiga System
 Hallways/Partitions:
 Janus International
 Security and Related Software:
 Digitech International
 Management Software:
 RentPlus by Hi-Tech Smart Systems

This is the first self-storage facility in West Vancouver, an affluent community separated from Vancouver by Burrard Inlet. "Given its proximity to other high-end developments," says McEvoy, "it was important to create a development that would integrate well into the surrounding community."

The site is long and narrow. Before the decorative and design elements could be incorporated, Maple Leaf's developers had to consider the shape of the site, which made it necessary to construct a building that was long, narrow, and four stories high—a significant change from the small, single-story carwash that had occupied the site for many years.

"We knew that the building's footprint would occupy a large portion of the site, and that residents of West Vancouver were opposed to anything that had the feel of a big box development," explains McEvoy. Designing a location acceptable to the surrounding community was paramount, particularly since the project was in an area of upscale commercial and residential real estate.

To address these concerns, Musson Cattell Mackey architectural firm recommended the inclusion of a number of features such as the green roof, lattice work, brick work, and glass elements that would soften the hard edges of the structure and help it fit in with the surrounding developments. In addition to its green roof, almost

all of the mature trees on Maple Leaf's site were retained and incorporated into the landscape design, as were elements such as park benches and lamp standards on the property's perimeter.

With three competitors located within five miles of Maple Leaf, offering a variety of amenities was also necessary. Considering that the competition is 20 years old, and that some of the other self-storage sites feature older, locker-style construction, they are no match for Maple Leaf. The facility's climate-controlled units range in size from 5-by-5 to 25-by-25 and feature sprinklers and individual alarms. The well-lit facility has three, large covered loading bays, is easy to navigate, and features custom carts for customer convenience. A well-trained, professional staff provides exemplary customer service and receives pre-arranged deliveries for customers.

Creating Space

Maple Leaf Self Storage's tagline, "Creating Space," not only lends itself to the company's commitment to helping its clients create space in their lives but also the development team's own ability to squeeze the large facility into a narrow space between other structures. The biggest challenge for this project was constructing the four-story, tilt-up building between three high-rise towers and existing mature trees, which was no easy task considering the building occupied a good portion of the usable site.

"The tilt-up process occurred on a weekend and the general contractor worked closely with city officials to ensure that all the necessary safety measures were taken," explains McEvoy. A heavy duty crane with an extension capability of 350 feet was brought to the site and set up prior to the weekend. McEvoy adds, "During the tilt-up process, there were a number of road closures and a number of condo owners were asked to leave their homes temporarily so that they would not be at risk if a cable snapped. The process went smoothly and was amazing to watch."

Because Maple Leaf Self Storage is the flagship facility in the West Vancouver area, it was necessary to educate individuals involved in the planning process about the benefits of self-storage.

"There were some concerns that self-storage would generate excessive traffic

and that it would be visually unappealing," recalls McEvoy. With the expertise of architects and consultants associated with the project, everyone's concerns were addressed and Maple Leaf is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. McEvoy adds, "Now that the facility is open, planning officials and the community are seeing that self-storage is a fairly quiet use and it can be an attractive addition if designed properly."

Although this is their first facility in West Vancouver, Maple Leaf Self Storage has been serving Greater Vancouver for 20 years and currently operates eight facilities throughout the area. Maple Leaf will be developing two new facilities in Vancouver in 2006, one of which will be six stories high. Maple Leaf will also be making its mark in the Calgary, Alberta market in the fall of 2006 with the introduction of two new 180,000 square foot facilities. ■

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Photo courtesy of Maple Leaf Self Storage