



A Remarkable Self-Storage Conversion: Life Storage Centers of River North, Chicago

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While retrofitting empty buildings into fully functional self-storage facilities has always been a part of the industry construction landscape, the lack of available land for new development combined with the recent availability of large existing structures has given the conversion sector new life. Developers, owners and investors are taking advantage of vacant spaces to create high-end facilities that seamlessly blend with retail, office and residential landscapes.

One such project is Life Storage Centers of River North in Chicago, which opened in August. Situated on the corner of Ohio and Orleans streets, the new facility capitalizes on its downtown locale plus its proximity to the famous Ohio Street feeder ramp on the city's west side.

This presentation showcases the conversion of a 109-year-old structure from a rundown building into a crown jewel of the Life Storage brand. Witness the transformation of the space and how both owner and builder circumvented development challenges.



Life Storage Begins Self-Storage Conversion of 109-Year-Old Chicago Building

The former headquarters of the Bowne of Chicago Co., a printing company, had been empty for more than 10 years. The 109-year-old building occupies a prime spot on the corners of Ohio and Orleans streets near the Ohio Street feeder ramp, which motorists traveling from Ohio use to enter Chicago. Life Storage purchased the building in June 2011.



Bringing the Life Storage Building Up to Code

A huge challenge for the self-storage conversion was bringing the exterior of the building up to city code. The walls were clad in predominately clay-brick masonry, with limestone used for sills and decorative banding. Although face-brick masonry was preserved on the north and west sides of the building, the brick on the south and east (pictured) sides were painted and rated unsafe per city codes. In addition, some of the wood window assemblies were deteriorated.





Replacing Brick and Windows on the Life Storage Building

The east and south sides of the building required sandblasting, and 30 percent of the brick was replaced. All the windows were replaced with new aluminum ones.



Ensuring Safety During a Self-Storage Conversion

The entire building required a seven-story scaffolding with dust protectors to ensure the safety of pedestrians during the exterior work.





Removals on the Roof During a Self-Storage Conversion

The building's demolition also included removing old water tanks and boilers from the roof.



Demolition Inside Life Storage During the Self-Storage Conversion

All of the floors, including the third floor shown in the picture, required extensive demolition work. The permit process and construction took a little over a year, with the total renovation cost of nearly \$4.4 million.





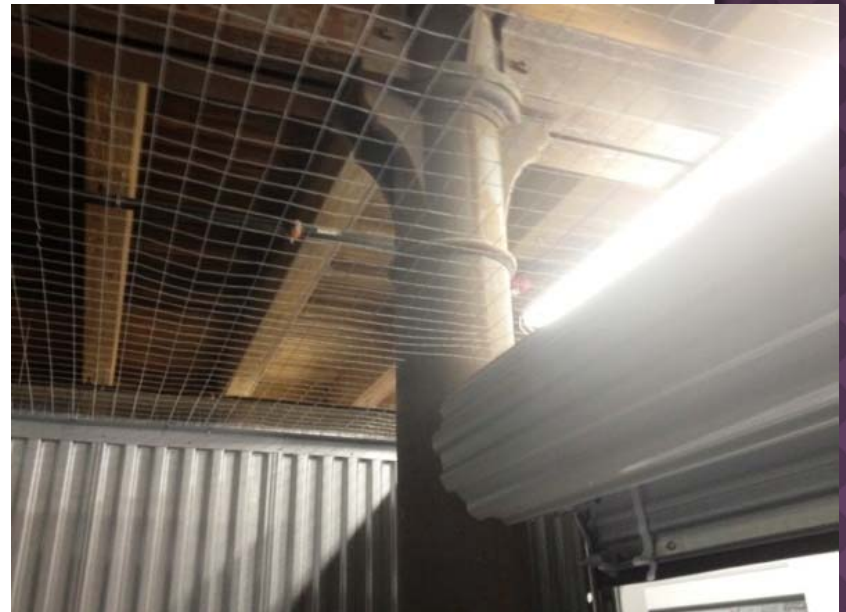
Removing Debris From the Self-Storage Conversion

Removing debris, such as this old printing machine, was challenging due to the lack of space for construction dumpsters outside the building. The dumpster was positioned on the south side of the building in an alley. All debris had to be dragged out through one side of the building and was hauled away from the site regularly.



Preserving the Historic Look Inside Life Storage Centers of River North

Some architectural columns were left inside storage units to preserve the building's historic look. The complexity of the build-around added challenge to the project.





Life Storage Centers of River North Opens Aug. 21

Life Storage Centers of River North opened on Aug. 21, 2012. The 102,837-square-foot mixed-use facility at 333 W. Ohio St. features seven stories and 636 climate-controlled units. The facility's street façade maintains the building's original integrity of the "Chicago-style" architecture.



A Modern Self-Storage Office

The front office encompass more than 3,000 feet. The front desk is strategically positioned between the existing columns, which feature laminate panels in a contemporary pattern to continue the facility's modern design. Customers are welcome to sit in the chairs to complete their transaction. The front office also features merchandise displays stocked with retail inventory such as boxes, locks, packing tapes, moving blankets, furniture covers and more. The office also includes a coffee bar and lounge area with a fireplace.





The Importance of Self-Storage Security

The panel behind the front counter integrates three flat-screen TVs displaying security-camera images captured throughout the facility as well as the facility's site map. Access to the floors are controlled by a keypad system.



Showing Off Chicago ... and Boxes at Life Storage Centers of River North

The lobby includes a panoramic painting of the Chicago skyline. Artistically stacked boxes elevate the retail aspect of the area.





The Well-Lit Hallways and Shiny Floors of Life Storage Centers of River North

Floors one through five offer varying unit sizes. All of the hallways have fluorescent lighting with motion sensors. The flooring is covered with VCT tile to minimize dust from concrete floors. The building also has a sprinkler system.

A Unique Look With Self-Storage Doors By Janus

Only Life Storage uses the distinct neon green color for its unit doors, which are manufactured by Janus International.





Working with Columns - Before
Original columns to the building needed a unique incorporation into the new design.



Working with Columns - After

Janus customized doors and wire mesh to retain the old world charm of the existing columns.



Self-Storage Loading Bays With Style

The facility features two, large indoor loading-bay areas, accessible from the public alley through overhead garage doors. The indoor loading dock encompasses roughly 3,000 square feet.



Offering Commercial Space in a Self-Storage Facility

The sixth and seventh floors are open, loft-like commercial space. The current tenant on both floors is Trunk Club Men's Outfitters. The space was remodeled to the tenant's specs while keeping the building's architecture in place. The original maple floors were restored, and the paint was sandblasted from the ceiling to expose the raw wood.





A Self-Storage Rooftop With a View

Accessible via an elevator and two staircases, the rooftop deck offers panoramic views of the city. The topside oasis encompasses 3,600 square feet of space and 4,000 square feet of deck.



Life Storage Centers of River North is 'Born'

With the renowned sculpture “Being Born” by Italian sculptor Virginio Ferrari in its backdrop, the new Life Storage Centers of River North preserves the landmark Chicago architecture of its building while capitalizing on its gateway into the city from Ohio.





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