



## STORAGE STORIES

### STORAGE SPACE IS A BASIC BUT IMPORTANT PART OF SUCCESSFUL CLUB DESIGN

By Hervey Lavoie

No one joins a club because it has great storage facilities. So why devote a full column on club design to such a mundane subject?

The reason is simple. Adequate, well located storage rooms hide the back-of-the-house support materials and equipment necessary to maintain clean, functional, uncluttered hallways and program areas. Great club spaces are enabled by the ability to keep maintenance equipment, supplies, towel carts, temporary furnishings and the like conveniently located but out of public view. I learned very early in 30+ years of club design experience that the operational folks who depend on right-sizing of properly located storage rooms are rarely well represented in the conceptual stages of the programming and design process, so if the designer is not making adequate space allocations for storage at that time, they often get overlooked until it's too late. Following are a collection of storage lessons learned the hard way.

**Symptoms of a problem:** When storage needs have been short changed, there is no denying the evidence. We see exit stairs with stacks of beverage inventory under the landings, corridors lined with towel carts, studios dimensionally compromised by stacks of mats and blocks encroaching on their active perimeter, pool decks cluttered with floatables and gymnasiums congested by exposed and idle equipment occupying the safety buffer space around the game lines. These are all symptoms of a problem not solved when it should have been – during the planning process.

**Less is more:** As a club design unfolds, the competition for space is intense. Studios, locker rooms and fitness floors – the stuff that sells memberships -- all clamor for more floor area. Offices, mechanical rooms and storage – the stuff that members don't care about -- get squeezed..... and rightly so, because at \$200+ per SF, a club building is an expensive place to build storage space that displaces revenue generating space. Storage space in this high-cost environment must be efficiently sized and precisely located for maximum benefit. Locker room supply closets, for example work best when contained within the perimeter of the locker room they serve. In this case, 12 SF in the right place out-performs 60 SF in the wrong place.

**The storage solution:** Our rule of thumb for new clubs is to allocate dedicated storage space in the high-cost core building equal to .75 to 1.0 percent of the gross floor area and distribute it optimally relative to the purpose served. In addition to this allocation, another .75 to 1.0 percent of gross floor area needs to be assigned for general bulk storage in "remote" low cost locations such as pre-fab out-buildings, basements, attics or off-site rented space. These remote low cost storage options are ideal for holding of

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seasonal items, bulk supplies, archival records, low frequency spare parts, etc. We have found it to be more cost effective to include a low cost metal storage out-building in the outdoor service yard than to displace valuable member program space in the core building or to build a bigger core building. This approach has also proven to be an effective solution when the pressure for internal expansion of program area results in general storage rooms being repurposed for offices or member services. In one recent project, we were contemplating options for storing a large roll of protective floor surfacing needed for a once a year public event in the gymnasium and concluded that off-site rented storage would be less expensive in the long run than enlarging the building enough so that the rolls could be stored next to the gymnasium.

**Got Junk?** The rule of thumb ratios suggested above may seem rather minimal to those not familiar with the propensity of club owners to save everything that might possibly be useful in the future. This reluctance by owners and managers to throw anything away often combines with the mysterious nature of stored items to reproduce and multiply. The result is store rooms filled to the rafters with massive accumulations of items, many of which should simply be discarded, recycled or donated for the value of the tax write-off.

**Operational guidance and fit to purpose are the keys:** The matter of intelligently planned storage facilities in and around an athletic club is greatly illuminated by the inclusion of the parties responsible for management, programming and operations at the table with the design team. In this way the specifics of each storage need can be understood and detailed accordingly to be both right- sized and right-located. The only thing worse than too little storage space is too much storage space!

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