Gimme Shelter

Boat and RV storage demand is growing at many storage facilities.

Once upon a time, you might have noticed when a neighbor had just purchased a new boat or recreational vehicle. In fact, you couldn’t help but notice because it was usually parked in the driveway, backyard or even on the street. And you very likely said to yourself, “Why don’t they find somewhere else to park that thing?”

The good news is that—thanks to the self storage industry—more and more boat and RV owners are, indeed, finding a better place to put their objects of recreational joy. Indeed, in states like California and in coastal areas around the country, it seems that a storage facility isn’t complete unless it also offers boat and RV storage.

The other good news is that it can be a nice moneymaker for the self storage owner/operator in that there is little in the way of maintenance once it is built. But, should you be considering the move to boat and RV storage, how much space will you need? Is it worth the effort?

Caesar Wright, the president of Mako Steel, thinks it’s definitely worth the effort. He remembers all too well the days when boats and RVs were parked in neighborhoods, but with more neighborhoods not allowing that to happen anymore, self storage is the beneficiary.

“We have seen a real growth in the demand for boat and RV storage lately,” said Wright. “This is the busiest I’ve ever seen it.”

Wright knows of what he speaks, having built 300-400 boat and RV self storage setups with Mako since the early 1990s. He figures that Mako Steel averages 15-20 boat and RV projects a year, and this year it is building its largest boat and RV effort on over 20 acres of property in Spanaway, Washington.

Speaking of acreage, any owner/operator considering adding boat and RV storage should consider that they will likely need a minimum of three acres to add the service. The standard is around five acres.

That same owner needs to figure out whether adding regular self storage units to the property makes more sense than boat and RV storage. The good news is that studies indicate that people who store their boats and RVs at self storage facilities tend to do so on a longer basis than those using conventional storage.

“The turnover is far less frequent in boat and RV storage, and once the storage spaces are in place, they are very maintenance friendly,” said Wright.

Wright added that once a facility has all its planning and zoning issues in place for boat and RV storage, it usually takes six to nine months for Mako to get the project built. While enclosed parking for boats and RVs might bring in more money, canopy projects (with a roof-only structure) are easier to build. Adding electrical outlets is no big deal, with outlets of around 20 amps being the norm.

A sample look at various self storage businesses offering boat and RV storage shows that the average rental rate can run between $100 and $150 a month, depending on the size and quality of the storage space, and as high as $200 to $300 for upper-end offerings.

The good news is that boat and RV storage sells itself in that covered parking storage helps block UV rays to keep a vehicle’s body from fading and cracking. Canopies reflect infrared rays to keep temperatures in RVs lower, reducing the premature cracking of tires while also protecting a vehicle’s paint and exterior.

Given that so many communities restrict RVs and boats from being parked on the road or in driveways, offering boat and RV storage would seem logical for many self storage owner/operators. So, size up your available space; and if the math adds up, swing into action!