

RETAILING BY DESIGN

Completely Transforming A Facility

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Completely Transforming A Facility

LeGresley Home Building Centre in Miramichi, NB, is a family owned and operated business. It has been that way for the past three generations of the LeGresley family.

Last fall, due to tremendous growth in the business, Guy Philippe LeGresley and Marc Joseph LeGresley, the current generation of dealer/ owners, opened the doors on a state-of-the-art building, growing its business from an 1,800 square foot store to a facility with 20,000 square feet. This enabled it to expand its product selection and it also now features a drive-thru lumberyard.

Full Service

The work was carried out by CT Darnell Construction, formerly known as Sunbelt Rack. Founded in 1987, it originally served lumberyards and the then-new big box retailers. Since then, it has evolved into a full-service, licensed general contractor operating across the United States, Canada,

and the Caribbean. The company was purchased in 2008 by Travis and Clint Darnell, sons of the founders. Each brought more than 20 years of hands-on experience in all phases of company operations.

It rebranded under the CT Darnell Construction name in 2013 to emphasize that it's a full-service planner and constructor of all LBM facilities – from simple storage options to full-scale, multi-unit lumberyards and retail facilities. Like its rack systems, building design and construction go back to the company's founding 25 years ago. Nine years ago, it was incorporated in Canada, expanding its reach from its U.S. base.

"What we specialize in is helping people design their facilities and then construct the buildings and storage systems for those facilities," says Clint Darnell, the company's vice-president. These facilities are constructed with a pre-engineered element from a metal building standpoint. This approach is used on both the retail spaces and storage

buildings, as was the case with LeGresley Home Building Centre.

In this project, the facility was completely transformed. "If you look at what it used to look like and what it looks like now, there's not a single building standing on the property now from six years ago," he says.



The new facility is a pre-engineered structure with an automated Power Bin System.



The new warehouse at LaGresley Home Building Centre has cantilever racking (L-shed) on the exterior of the building.

have enclosed pressure treated and kiln-dried lumber, which people can use year round. A lot of the projects go later now. [Customers] keep us top of mind knowing that our lumber products are all enclosed and dry.”

Looking at the long term, store owners need to determine if there is the ability for future expansion. Darnell says the objective is not to get them “into a design that they’re maxed out from the first day. They have to have the ability to continue to expand for new products that come into the marketplace or for just increased volume with their business.”

And, expansion aside, Darnell says owners are not cheating themselves on square footage if “you always go a little bit bigger.”

Traffic Flow

Other areas they must consider are traffic flow and the type of customer coming through the facility. “What type of turning radiuses do you have to have for a guy in a truck versus a guy in a truck with a trailer? These things make a huge difference in the usability of the facility,” he says.

So far, in Canada, the client list includes Home Hardware, Castle Building Centres, RONA, and Federated Co-op, to name a few, but “honestly, anyone who is selling building materials in Canada is a potential customer.” ♦

Two Phases

It was built in two phases with about a two-year gap in between. The first thing built was the storage building which is basically a pre-engineered structure with automated Power Bin Systems on the inside and some overhangs and a cantilever (L-shed) on the exterior of that building. This houses the lumberyard drive-thru and houses all of the building materials. “Basically, all his dimensional lumber, treated lumber, mezzanines for all his insulation – everything is under cover in the facility.”

The second phase of the project was the new retail store. To start, it was attached onto the side of the drive-thru building and then expanded to include the existing retail store. “So, everything now flows together,” says Darnell.

The work was completed in such a way that LeGresley Home Building Centre was able to transfer and set everything up in a couple of days with minimum down time.

While CT Darnell does everything from the design to the construction, the store owner does have a lot of say in the process. “We have constant contact as we’re working through that process. We have our ideas, they have their ideas, and then you bring the two together. So, it’s always a give and take and a meshing of thoughts and methodologies,” says Darnell.

Similar Projects

For other store owners thinking of carrying out similar projects, Darnell suggests they look at a number of areas to determine the need. “I would take a hard look at the type of damage and loss of materials that are exposed to the elements; look at the man-hours that are spent daily uncovering materials and getting them ready to sell.”

Once the decision is made to start a project, they need to look at and understand their

inventory such as the frequency of turns. They need to know the products that move fastest in their marketplace so they can be in the most accessible points from a storage perspective.

Another consideration with product is storage. “If you keep your material clean, dry, and under cover, it extends your selling season,” he says. And since people in that market “know that your materials are kept properly, they are more apt to continue during the season, regardless of the weather, with their projects.”

This was the case with LeGresley. “With our climate, usually construction slows down in the winter time,” says Guy LaGresley. “Being a closed building gives us an edge on our competitors because we



The drive-thru warehouse provides cover for all materials including dimensional lumber, treated lumber, and insulation.