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Storm presents opportunity

RecordMax grows in wake of tornado

JACK MAZURAK • JMAZURAK@JACKSON.GANNETT.COM • JUNE 17, 2008

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Rebounding from a tornado strike in April, Jackson-based RecordMax USA is temporarily moving part of its document storage business into the former Winn-Dixie supermarket on Old Canton Road while it builds a new facility next door.



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Technically, the 25,000-square-foot new facility in northeast Jackson will be an expansion of a planned expansion. RecordMax Chief Executive Officer Bob Lloyd, who runs the company with his brother, Ted, had blueprints in hand for a new document storage building when storms slung a tornado into a corner of an existing building on April 4.

"There were so many things to consider: rebuilding cost, insurance coverage, building efficiency, temporary warehousing, coordinating relocation of

boxes, customer communications, employee safety, security and so on," he said. "It took several days to determine the best course of action."

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RecordMax stores medical, financial and legal records and other proprietary paperwork for clients. The company uses specially made filing boxes and keeps track of individual boxes and folders with a bar code scanning system. It also delivers and picks up documents for clients.

The afternoon of the tornado, the company's immediate concern was to preserve and secure customer documents. The Lloyds employed an army of contractors, trucks, generators and security professionals for the effort. They shored up the building's crumbled corner, moved out file boxes by hand and freeze-dried wet records.

"At first it was taking our whole day. Now we're getting back to normal. It's only taking up half our day," Bob Lloyd said.

Then came long-term planning. With a new building already in the works, the storm provided a chance to rethink building layouts and functions.

Bob Lloyd said they decided to level off the damaged building to two stories and convert it from a mix of records and self-storage to entirely self-storage. On the new building, they went back to their designers and requested a 9,000-square-foot expansion.

"The new warehouse had been in the planning stages for several months. When the tornado hit and our needs changed, we just enlarged the plan and kept moving forward," Bob Lloyd said.

In the meantime, building costs went up and materials costs went up, particularly steel. When construction is complete in November, the new building will boast a media storage vault, conference area, employee offices and a lounge. Total reinvestment in the eight-acre RecordMax campus will hit nearly \$5 million.

The brothers leased 25,000 square feet of the nearby former Winn-Dixie, set up racking and are carefully moving boxes from the damaged building there. It's a necessarily painstaking process that will take another month, Ted Lloyd explained.

"Each box gets scanned, moved out by hand put on a pallet, wrapped and taken to the temporary warehouse. They're never out of our system, never unaccounted for," he said.

Mike Flannes, real estate broker at Nancy Lane Commercial Realty, which represents the owners of the former supermarket, said RecordMax took up a little less than half the building.

"It's a temporary situation so they can get their new building up and running. The Winn-Dixie building is basically 100 percent leased at this point. We represent the owners. They aren't looking to sell it; they want to just keep leasing it," Flannes said.

The remaining part, walled off from RecordMax, previously was leased by Supply Warehouse, a home furnishings company, which will open soon, Flannes said.



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In the two years since the bankrupt supermarket chain closed Winn-Dixie and SaveRite stores in the metro area, several have been repurposed. One was converted into a luxury auto dealership, Jackson Imports, which sells the Jaguar, Land Rover, Audi and Volkswagen lines. Ramey's Marketplace filled a store in Brandon, and a Courthouse Racquet & Fitness club took over one in Madison. Winn-Dixie emerged from bankruptcy in November 2006.

RecordMax won an industry award for its handling of the Katrina disaster from Professional Records & Information Services Management, an association based in North Carolina. Bob Lloyd said, thanks to preparations and dedicated employees, the whole experience gave the company a competitive edge.

"Part of what we do at RecordMax is plan recovery planning for our clients," he said. "Now that we've been through it, we feel like we're well-versed and even more well-qualified to help customers with their disaster-recovery considerations before they happen."

RecordMax expanded regionally last year, buying records facilities in Chattanooga, Tenn., New Orleans and Mobile.

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