

CONTINENTAL
GIRBAU®

The Laundrie Room

"It's a nice place to hang out,
but you won't be here for long"

By Haley Jorgensen



Vended
Laundry Profile

The Laundrie Room, a small, high-speed vended laundry on the main drag of downtown Erie, Penn., is located in the City's designated redevelopment zone. Opened in 2020, it offers a coffee shop feel, vinyl wood floors, bright colors, free WIFI, charging stations, Continental Girbau high-speed ExpressWash® and ExpressDry® laundry equipment, and walls adorning local art.

Co-owners Angela Magee and Melissa Pagliari hoped that by opening the laundry, they might benefit the community while also supporting their families.

Laundry Development

"The City of Erie is doing a great job revitalizing the city by supporting new businesses," said Magee. As such, the City provided redevelopment funds and low-interest financing to Magee and Pagliari to help with the massive renovation of a 1950s, Mid-Century Modern building. Additionally, Eric Vlahos of Advantage Equipment (Advantage), a laundry solution provider in Akron, Ohio., offered expert guidance, laundry designs, equipment and start-up support.

"Eric provided a timely quote, coached us on equipment, pulled demographics, mapped out a floor plan and provided machine specifications," said Magee. "He was a resource for every question and helped with stuff we couldn't have done on our own. We are forever grateful."

Investing in Technology

Despite the laundry's small footprint, it's big on technology — enhancing the customer experience and simplifying store management and efficiency. It harnesses security technology to manage locks, lights, entry keypads and cameras; a Card Concepts FasCard payment system allowing customers to load value onto loyalty cards using cash, credit/debit and payment apps; and Curbside, a point-of-sale system for full-service wash/dry/fold and pickup and delivery.



"These have made our lives so much easier," said Magee. "We can be anywhere and take care of problems remotely using a desktop or phone." The technologies automatically lock and unlock store doors at specific times; track full-service orders, process payments and send updates and reminders to customers; and allow Magee and Pagliari to drill down on machine operation, programs, revenue and more.



In and Out in 60 Minutes

On the equipment side, The Launderie Room offers speed, convenience and a top-quality wash in less time. It features a mix of soft-mount 40- and 60-pound capacity ExpressWash Washers, 22-pound capacity LG Commercial Washers and 30- and 45-pound capacity, double-pocket ExpressDry Dryers. The washers were less costly to install thanks to a freestanding, soft-mount design, said Magee. The soft-mount design also allows for more capacity per square foot — a critical point in a small laundry.

Moreover, high-speed washers ensure customers complete laundry in 60-minutes or less. “This saves them 45 minutes to an hour compared with our competition,” said Magee. It also increases customer rotation rates. “We don’t have a lot of machines so we need to get customers in and out quickly,” she said.

Differentiating from the Competition

This sets the laundry apart. Unlike hard-mount washers, which produce between 100 and 250 G-force extract speeds, the soft-mount ExpressWash machines generate up to 408 G-force for more moisture removal and shorter dry times. This gets customers in and out of the laundry in an hour or less and allows for more paying customers per day. It also cuts natural gas usage and utility costs.

“The decision to go with the ExpressWash Washers was a no brainer,” Magee said. “No one else has high-speed machines; they are eco-friendly and they complete laundry faster. They helped make us profitable really quickly.”

Additionally, the ExpressWash Washers offer more customer options, including an “Extra Wash,” “Extra Rinse,” and “Extra Spin.” Every time a customer chooses an “Extra,” they pay an additional 25 cents — boosting total store revenue.

Wash/Dry/Fold and Pickup and Delivery

On the full-service side, business is also booming — making up 30 percent of total revenue. “We do a lot of wash/dry/fold and actively market it to grow that side of the business,” said Magee. “We rolled it out slowly, but because our laundry is smaller, this is an area where we can grow.”

And they do it well by offering the ultimate customer convenience, pickup and delivery and allowing for unique customer requests regarding how their laundry is processed.

Marketing

Magee and Pagliari keep marketing simple by utilizing their website, social media and community events. They’ve also offered free coffee days, free dry days, free laundry days and periodic Google and Facebook ads. “We’ve found the best way to promote the laundry is by placing a flyer or coupon inside packaged wash/dry/fold orders,” said Magee. “We’ve also done reciprocal promos with other local businesses and swapped coupons. We find ways that are lower cost.”

Perception vs. Reality

Three years in and on the hunt for another laundry location, Magee and Pagliari reflect back on their perception of laundry ownership versus the reality.

“When I embarked on this journey, I thought I would spend more time on task-based admin duties,” said Magee. “I quickly realized crazy stuff happens at a laundry that no business class could possibly prepare you for.”

Pagliari agrees. “Owning a laundry is the fulfillment of a dream and it’s been satisfying to see the progress of a run-down, abandoned building transformed into a well-trafficked laundry,” she said. “The neighbors and community have embraced The Launderie Room and I am looking forward to watching it grow even more.”

To find out more about The Launderie Room, visit laundrieroom.com. To discover more about Continental Girbau laundry equipment — backed by industry-leading warranties — visit continentalgirbau.com or call 800-256-1073.