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"System Design"

## DESIGN STUDENTS' PROPOSALS FOR RETAIL FOOD STORE DESIGN

by:

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The idea of using a retail food facility as a design project proved to be popular with the students who maintained a high interest level throughout the semester's work. In addition, local industry sources were interested and gave generously of their time and expertise. These individuals and companies added an aura of credibility to the project in addition to technical knowledge and first-hand experience in the grocery business.

The students were initially given a "project statement" and hypothetical background information which was deliberately limited to allow each designer to pursue their own design based on research and prior knowledge and experiences (see Project Information). The problem statement read: "The interior layout (space planning) and complete interior design of a large, specialized retail food store."

The key words here turned out to be "large" and "specialized." The store was to be a one-of-a-kind, independently owned facility emphasizing quality and variety of merchandise as well as first class customer service. To accommodate this concept, a large (up to 40,000 square foot) physical plant was allowed.

As noted, the students were trained in the interior aspects of architecture. Although they had a good basic background in structures and planning, it was proposed that they utilize a flexible building system as the architectural "shell." Most of them chose to work with the Butler system as it was represented locally and offered many design options. Especially attractive to the students was the fact that great distances could be spanned by the beam trusses, thus using fewer interior columns which, in turn, created more clear floor space.

Likewise, the students were not specifically trained in site planning. They were given a real site to work with, however, which added a degree of reality and appeared to be a good location for a store of this type. The size, shape and orientation of the property made siting of the building, parking and service areas fairly obvious.

The interior designer/space planner, if working on a variety of job types, must become conversant with those qualities which make each type unique. In this instance, students found a need to research not only the mass of specialized equipment used in a food store, but the retail food business itself. Relying

on their personal experiences as shoppers left much to be desired. Local individuals affiliated with grocery industry; from equipment suppliers to store managers, proved invaluable design resources.

The class was organized into specialized information gathering groups to expedite research and allow adequate time for programming and design development. During this phase, students had a "behind the scenes" tour of a newly-opened 43,000 square foot National Store in Baton Rouge. Some students were able to visit Jamail's in Houston and one student went to St. Louis to see Dierberg's first hand. Both of these stores being conceptually similar to the given project.

It was found that current literature and research relevant to grocery design was rather limited. In addition to such standard references as the Loewy Report of 1960, the students relied heavily on trade periodicals such as Progressive Grocer and on manufacturers' catalogs. Even such sources as a national chain's operations manual were consulted. It was the responsibility of the student to assimilate all this diverse information into a program and ultimately into a finished design proposal.

Regional customs and lifestyles had an impact on design decisions. Eating and drinking are an integral part of almost any Southern Louisiana social event of two or more individuals. The selection and preparation of ingredients which go into the dishes that comprise the area's distinct cuisine is approached seriously. Grocery shopping is often viewed as an adventure. The underlying concepts of variety and quality were viewed as being extremely valid. Most students felt the Baton Rouge market was large enough and diverse enough to support a store of this kind. It was noted that the city has, in addition to the large chains, highly successful independents ranging in size from a 60,000+ square foot store utilizing the warehouse

format to very small ethnic and specialty food stores. Research tended to support the idea of basing a store's appeal on qualities other than price of goods.

Variety was an extremely important part of many designs. This was most often expressed by the use of distinct "shops" or departments within the overall scheme which specialized in a particular type of food. Such standard grocery components as produce and meat were dignified by design and designation as the "Green Grocer" and the "Butcher Shoppe." Likewise, dairy products and frozen foods were separated and made important through the shop concept. In-store bakeries and delicatessins were considered essential ingredients in this type of operation. They were often complemented by some type of restaurant or eat-in facility adjacent to the food preparation area. Liquor and beverages were given such distinctions as "Party Place" or "Wine Celler" and were made to appear festive. Dry groceries were, in most designs, relegated to the central portion of an arrangement in which they were surrounded by more specialized merchandise.

Service, the other major concept, was not overlooked. Many of the student designs provided an office or station for department managers which was visible to the customer, thus encouraging personal contact. A centralized and highly conspicuous customer service area and/or manager's office was deemed important. This was often placed in the midst of the checkout area. Other service niceties such as child care facilities, drive-through pick up areas, public restrooms and lounges and demonstration kitchens or cooking schools were also featured. One design even included a strategically located bar next to the checkout area!

Receiving, storage, preparation and employee areas were usually placed around the perimeter of the layout and made to

be as functional as possible. Most designers felt these areas were best screened from public view with the possible exception of the non-packaged meat preparation area.

Although this area of the South has a very distinct architectural heritage (as evidenced in every Baton Rouge subdivision), the student designers chose to keep the appearance of the building free of any historical (architectural) allusions. Most designs featured an exposed truss system giving the interior spaces a "high tech" look. In some designs, this idea was expanded to include custom detailed display and shelving designs. Obvious themes and artificial decor were avoided. Although most design showed a visual unity, speciality areas were given distinct, but harmonious appearances. It was almost the unanimous opinion of the class that the huge variety of product types, labels, colors, shapes and sizes presented a ready-made design element which should be utilized. Colors were chosen which complemented packaging and fresh foods. Generally these were warm hues, although such traditionally non-grocery colors as blue were successfully incorporated.

Aesthetically, there was a general aversion to manufacturer supplied display elements. It was felt that by their very nature they distracted from the store's visual impression. Many designs allowed for extra space to accommodate "specials" or featured seasonal items.

Lighting was carefully considered from several points--function, energy, and aesthetics. It was generally agreed that most stores are overlit. Student lighting layouts concentrated light on goods being displayed or services being rendered. Open areas and aisles in many instances had a lower than normal light level. Light was used to direct traffic and to attract the customer to a given point. Most lighting solutions relied heavily upon fluorescent sources with a

few designs utilizing high intensity discharge (HID) lamps. Color corrected lamps were used to illuminate such items as produce and meat where visual appeal is critical.

In an effort to generate shopper excitement and to create visual interest, a variety of floor plans which differed from the "norm" were used. Most often, a diagonal arrangement of aisles and shelves was what made the plan unique. This arrangement was usually complemented by a repetition of angles elsewhere in the store. Of prime importance, however, was that the shopper not lose a sense of direction and have some kind of visual orientation device to rely on.

What makes this design exercise interesting to the retail grocery industry is the relatively unbiased and objective approach taken by the designers. They had no design standards as might be imposed by a chain; the building system they were working with was extremely flexible; and finally, published design information on the subject was scarce and generally out of date. In light of this, many designs mesh favorably with experts' predictions of grocery design for the near future.

Although this project appears to be unique among the variety of project types normally issued to students, the experience has a broader application to other merchandising and image-making problems. These design solutions show the impact of specialized interior design training upon retail food store design.

Finally, even in light of the fact that this is an extremely dynamic area of design, a definitive source of written information would be extremely helpful--not only to students but to those professionally involved in this type of design.

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## PROJECT INFORMATION

**PROBLEM STATEMENT:** The interior layout (space plan) and complete interior design of a large, specialized retail food store.

### PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- To successfully communicate image through the interior design of a space.
- To design interior spaces that are functional and aesthetically-pleasing to the consumer and reinforce the selling/merchandizing motives of the retailer.
- To experience design within the context (and limitations) of one of the locally-available building systems.
- To research history, trends, and directions of the retail grocery business.
- To research and experience using specialized equipment and fixtures as well as appropriate architectural and decorative finish materials.
- To design graphics, signage, and displays that will complement and reinforce the total image.
- To organize and utilize the intelligence and energies of the design studio to expedite the design process (18 heads are better than one!).
- To continue to develop and refine graphic and verbal presentation skills.

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION:** A small group of local business people have formed a corporation (CCL, Inc.) for the purpose of establishing a unique retail grocery outlet in Baton Rouge. The three principals are:

James Child, 42, an aggressive but personable fellow with almost 20 years experience in the grocery business. He has worn many hats, from box boy to manager of a large supermarket.

Julia Claiborne, 58, an independently wealthy and socially very active widow with a keen business sense. Don't let her charming manners and designer clothes fool you--she's all business.

Rico Leonne, age unknown, a rather "mysterious" type who divides his time between Baton Rouge and Miami. Rico grew up in Philadelphia where his family owns a small chain of delicatessins.

How these three diverse personalities ever got together is anyone's guess, but they present a very professional and unified front. It should be noted that a local bank has tentatively committed for the business loan the corporation feels will be necessary (at this time). A survey commissioned by the corporation indicates that the local area is prime for a large retail grocery, with emphasis on quality, variety, and service. Indeed, this is the original concept: QUALITY, VARIETY, SERVICE.

It is not the intention of CCL, Inc. to compete with, but rather to complement, the large national chains represented in Baton Rouge. Price will not be the main attraction, although in many instances, the group feels they can compete with the "supers." CCL, Inc. has the option on approximately three acres near the intersection of Jefferson Highway and Lobdel Blvd. They feel this is about as centralized as they can get considering the market they hope to attract. Although they feel the exterior of the "store" must be attractive, it is everyone's belief that an attractive, well-designed interior is of utmost importance. This is why you have been approached (and contracted) to do the initial space-planning and later, the total interior design for the "store." You will be working with the engineers of whichever building company gets the job. By the way, CCL, Inc. has asked you to do some research and come up with a recommendation as to which "system" will work best (aesthetically, functionally, and economi-

cally). This is very important as the building will be large--perhaps even 40,000 square feet, or more!

Food items and food-related items and service will be emphasized (no toys, clothing, flowers, etc.). How you organize the store is up to you but the owners tend to favor the "shop" concept as originally put forth in the famous Loewy Report of 1960. To put you on the right track, the following areas or departments have been suggested:

- Grocery
- Meat (including poultry and fish)
- Produce
- Dairy
- Frozen Foods
- Wines and Liquor
- Bakery
- Candy and Tobacco
- Delicatessen
- Foreign/Ethnic Foods

Child, who by the way, will be General Manager, would like each department to have its own manager plus however many employees necessary to operate.

In addition, CCL, Inc. feels a convenient customer service area is extremely important. Other suggestions for customer-oriented facilities include restrooms, demonstration kitchen (consumer education will be emphasized), and baby-sitting service. Of course, the delivery, storage, and processing areas not seen by the public must be considered as should employee facilities.

PROCEDURE: This is a complex project which will require specific information relative to the management, operation and maintenance of a large food store as well as information and specifications on specialized equipment and fixtures. Background information on the retail food business is essential. Because the body of knowledge is so vast, it is proposed that the studio be organized into various information-gathering teams. These teams

will be responsible for the collection, dissemination, and explanation of data relative to the project. A suggested research network will be presented in class. Regardless of organization, the individual's responsibility to the studio cannot be overstated!

#### PROJECT REQUIREMENTS

##### I. "Design Narrative"

- A. Project assignment and background information
- B. Review of Information Researched including bibliography in correct academic format.
- C. Summary of Research (conclusions)
- D. Your design intent, as formulated through B and C.
- E. Written narrative and defense of your design supported by any supplemental graphic information you feel is necessary.
- F. Documentation of all materials and colors, as well as fixtures, equipment and furnishings.

Note: Part I may take any format you feel is appropriate. Bear in mind, however, that for the most part it contains supplemental or support information and that it is not intended to be presented to an "audience."

##### II. Design (Graphic) Presentation

- A. Plan(s) @ 1/8" = 1'0"
- B. Exterior elevation(s) (min. 1) @ 1/8" = 1'0"
- C. Interior sections (min. 2) @ 1/8" = 1'0"
- D. Display(s) of materials, colors, fixtures, equipment and furnishings
- E. Interior Perspectives (min. 2)
- F. Measured design drawings of any custom equipment, fixtures or furnishings included as part of your design.

G. Anything else you feel will enhance your presentation.

Note: There are no restrictions as to media or process involved in Part II.

Remember, you have been working on this project for a full semester--the presentation (both parts) should reflect this work!

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## PLANNING AND MAINTAINING AN ENERGY EFFICIENT SUPERMARKET

by:

Paul Adams  
Paul Adams and Associates  
St. Louis, Missouri

My discussion today is two-fold:

1. To give you the "energy bottom line" on supermarket refrigeration.
2. To tell you how to keep it that way.

This presentation is designed around a 20,000 sq. ft. sales area store which represents the average supermarket, U.S.A. There will be three sections:

FIRST: We will discuss the energy savings possible from cases and a refrigeration system selected for minimum energy use.

SECOND: We will cover a General Specification for New Supermarkets. A specification which, if followed to the letter, will assure that the refrigeration equipment in your store will operate in the most efficient manner.

THIRD: We will discuss an outline for a General Preventive Maintenance Schedule which, if followed to the letter, will assure you of efficiently operating equipment for the life of the store.

As I prepared this presentation, three distinct thoughts occurred to me time and again. Although they may at first appear unrelated, taken together they have shaped the material I will present here this morning. These thoughts are:

1. Independent supermarkets earn twice as much profit as chain stores do using the same kind of refrigeration equipment.
2. Retrofitting of open multideck cases with glass doors has put to bed, once and for all, the long standing myth that you can sell more product out of an open case than a closed case.
3. All of the common varieties of refrigeration systems found in supermarkets today use the same amount of energy.

These three thoughts tell me that the shrewd supermarket operator should purchase the simplest, most efficient case and compressors he can afford to maintain properly. Rather than worry