



Andy Ferland, Claybar Contracting, Bill Hume, with his wife Marlene and son Brandon

# Building a PLAN

WITH THE HELP OF INDUSTRY EXPERTS, A DUNDAS, ONTARIO C-GAS SITE REINVENTS ITSELF AFTER MORE THAN 50 YEARS IN BUSINESS

BY NIKKI LOCKINGTON

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The new merchandising units from McCowan Design and Manufacturing provide a cohesive layout and overall store design.

The new foodservice area is spacious, clean and co-merchandised with impulse categories.



## IN 1959, GORD AND GLORIA HUME PURCHASED THEIR FIRST SERVICE STATION BUSINESS.

It was located on the west side of Peters Corners between Highway 5 and Highway 8 in Dundas, ON. Gord operated the site under lease from the British American Oil Co. In 1971, the 3J truck stop, which had operated from the 1930s (pre-401 days), came up for sale on the east side of Peters Corners. Gord and Gloria purchased the truck stop site and contracted Gerry Van Herk of Serv-A Station to install new fuel tanks and pumps, and a new 2,500 sq. ft. station building. The new site has an existing restaurant, which they leased out, as well as more acreage.

Opening under the Supertest banner, Gord's Service Station featured a three-bay repair garage as well as a gas station and a small c-store POS-area offering. When Gord purchased the site, it had a 500-foot unrestricted entrance and exit, which provided customers with easy access to and from the site. But that all changed in the early 2000s when a series of highway upgrades made access to his busy service centre anything but easy.

At this point, Gord's son Bill and his wife Marlene had taken the reins on the business, and they knew something had to be done.

"A new plan and direction was now essential to offset the Ministry of Transportation's impact in order for the station to operate safely and successfully into the future," says Bill Hume. Here's a look at how they made that happen, with the help of Claybar Contracting, Hugh Large and Associates and McCowan Design and Manufacturing.

### Smart forecourt design

There were a number of challenges with the functionality of the original site design, both inside the c-store and outside at the forecourt. In 2010, the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) essentially removed the three unrestricted entrances into the Gord's site by adding a roundabout and a divided highway out front.

"This left us with a traffic pattern that put the restaurant customers travelling through the forecourt gas pumps and around blind corners of the buildings. It was causing numerous customer complaints and far too many 'close calls', something had to change if we were to continue," says Bill, adding

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that they began to study other sites to see which ones ran smoothly and why.

Bill and Marlene called in Claybar Contracting to advise and discovered the forecourt had to be completely redesigned to address the poor traffic flow.

It was decided that the repair bay portion of the business would be separated from the main area to remove that traffic from the forecourt. That meant building a brand new 3,500 sq. ft. service garage. But because of smart planning, "The old service garage was able to operate until January 2016, which allowed them to continue servicing their customers and minimized the disruption," explains Claybar's Andy Ferland. This repair business

portion was now going to operate as Hometown Auto Service, with Bill and Marlene's eldest son, Christopher, as the proprietor.

Once Hometown Auto Service moved into its new building, the old garage was demolished, allowing Claybar to proceed with the installation of the new retail gas bar canopy, underground tanks and petroleum piping.

Now, Gord's Shell-branded fuel offering consists of five gasoline blenders, one with diesel, and a standalone high-speed diesel dispenser, all under a new canopy and illuminated with energy efficient lighting.

### Functional c-store design

To get the most out of the 2,600 sq. ft. space inside, the Humes turned to a team assembled by Russell Large, Director of Retail Services, Ontario, with Hugh Large and Associates.

"The key element in the overall c-store experience is trust. Consumers consciously or unconsciously make a purchase based on that trust within 10 seconds of walking into the store," says Jeff Weiler, National Account Manager with McCowan Design and Manufacturing, a company that worked with the Larges to supply the store interior on the project. "To create a cohesive, trustworthy environment, a c-store needs to be modern,

clean and organized. To achieve that, a professional store layout and merchandising plan using new displays is needed."

No one knows a store's traffic patterns better than the retailer, so in this case, Russell Large worked with the retailer to determine categories that needed the most focus.

"We decided there needed to be good space allocated to large format bags of chips, so we created a 'tunnel' with the merchandising units featuring both a variety of brands, as well as a value brand option for the store's price sensitive shoppers," he explains adding that salty snacks, seeds and meat snacks categories should be located conveniently on one movable fixture located within eyesight of the cash desk for security. "Wherever possible, small expensive products should be featured close to the cash, but not too close to crowd out proper movement to and from the main point of sale," he says.

The Hume's middle son, Brandon, suggested selling coffee and muffins as an additional customer draw, so a coffee and foodservice area was built into the plan. The foodservice counters and large island were designed by Large and McCowan to allow for the best product exposure in a clean, organized environment.

Large suggests cross-merchandising

thoughtfully selected categories in close proximity to the coffee station for additional sales. "Locate cross-over merchandise, such as nutritious portable bars and pastries next to the coffee island or food stations. Give them the best exposure to category-dependent consumers," he explains.

### A team approach

The Gord's Service Centre project was a big undertaking with quite a few delays along the way, but the customer response made the investment worthwhile. That's because the Humes knew their customers and they knew what they needed to do to bring the site up to date.

"C-store operators have knowledge of their customers and competition; creating a team approach between operator, designer and supplier will maximize the return on every investment dollar spent," says McCowan's Weiler.

That has been just the case at the Gord's Service Centre. Inside and out, Gord's has been designed with the customer in mind. And, because of that ongoing customer focus, Bill and Marlene are happy to see the construction come to an end with their doors open to welcome customers again. **YCM**

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