



More Than a Store

This year's *CSNews* Store Design Contest winners are all about the experience

It's one thing to have an attractive store that grabs the attention of motorists driving by. It's another thing to have an attractive store that delivers an in-store experience unlike anything else consumers have ever encountered at a convenience store. The winners of the 2016 *Convenience Store News* Store Design Contest achieve both — with flair.

Now in its 11th year, the awards program honors

new and rebuilt c-stores whose designs excel in areas such as branding, interior layout, use and effectiveness of signage and logos, and exterior property and landscaping. Construction or remodeling of eligible stores must have taken place between January 2015 and April 2016. Winners were selected based on innovation, creativity, and the positive impact of the design and/or remodel on the retailer's overall business.

This year's honorees, spanning six categories, are:



BEST ORIGINAL DESIGN

Winner: Kum & Go LC, Johnston, Iowa

Designer: CBX & BRR Architecture

The debut location of Kum & Go's new Marketplace store prototype boasts a brand-centric, stylish design with upscale features that benefit customers and store associates alike.

Designed to be a physical representation of Kum & Go's brand promise, "Where & Means More," ampersands appear as surprising accents throughout the Johnston, Iowa, store. This includes on door handles, hanging from the open kitchen ceiling, and even an 8-foot-tall ampersand sculpture outside the store that is a "love letter" to the city of Johnston.

Foodservice was a major focus during the design process. The expanded, open food preparation area is the centerpiece of the 6,200-square-foot store and captures guests' attention from the moment they step inside. Customers can enjoy an elevated food experience with Kum & Go's Go Fresh Market, which features new salads, made-to-order sandwiches, pastries, pizza and more. Associates face customers while preparing food in the clearly visible workspace, and a personal touch is added when they serve pizza directly to customers.

The store also has built-in open coolers and warmers, along with a roller grill that is recessed into the countertop, to decrease visual clutter. Beer aficionados can visit both the 300-square-foot beer cave, and the Growler Station that features fresh beer on tap.

With Marketplace, Kum & Go also makes a point of offering customers more than they expect from a convenience store in the form of: freshly baked bread; indoor and outdoor seating; complimentary Wi-Fi and charging stations; and an express checkout for peak times.

BEST ORIGINAL DESIGN

Honorable Mention: Parker's, Ridgeland, S.C.

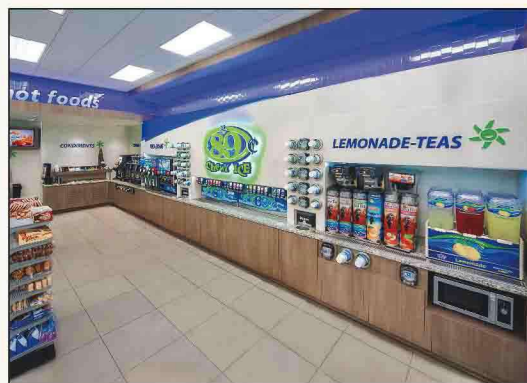
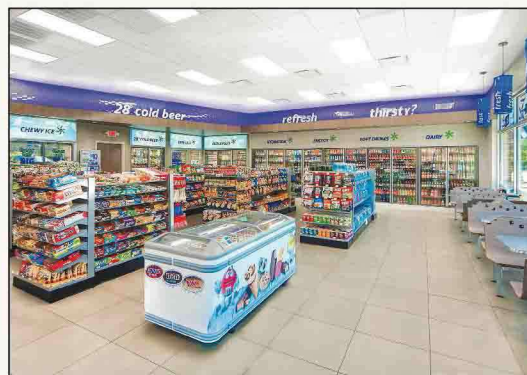
Designer: API+

The bright, fresh design of Parker's No. 55 in Ridgeland, S.C., is meant to align with the chain's new "Fast Fresh Friendly" branding campaign. The primary goal for the 4,000-square-foot prototype store was to create a unique, proprietary experience inside and out that is supported through its "design vocabulary" of architecture, materials, color palette, signage and communications.

Parker's other objectives were to enhance convenience and expedite the speed of transaction for customers at the fuel pumps, point-of-sale and drive-thru. The retailer also wanted the form and materials of its new design to be timeless rather than trendy, so as to not become quickly outdated.

Outside the store, a unique arching pylon sign was designed to convey the visual impression of speed and convenience. Inside, even more elements reinforce this impression, such as the beverage center design that reflects the exterior arch. Layout solutions were created to improve customer flow and speed of checkout. Plus, lowered soffits above reach-in beverage doors and beer coolers create organization and further efficiency for hurried shoppers.

Since its March 2016 opening, the store has become one of Parker's most successful locations. Along with continuing to capture both business and leisure traffic, the store services the boating community in nearby Callawassie Island by offering marine fuel on-site.





BEST INTERIOR DESIGN

Winner: Grab.n.Go Food Mart, Marshall, Texas

Designer: Paragon Solutions

The redesign goal for the 5,325-square-foot Grab.n.Go store in Marshall, Texas, was to create a store interior that is both impactful and vibrant. The colorful results provided exactly that.

Designers created an eye-catching theme through the store's repeated use of circles and colorful finishes of modern-day pop art. This motif complements the dark walnut wood that is intended to ground the circular clouds that float above the checkout counter.

To provide a contrasting palette, designers installed brick walls alongside "verdant green and tomato red" colors for an unexpected balance of charm and intrigue. Bright graphics and whimsical signage add to the welcoming, playful feel while providing clear guidance to customers.

Even outside the store, the strong linear elements of muted brick and horizontal metal facing work to ground the colorful offerings that await customers just inside.

BEST SKY'S THE LIMIT REMODEL

Winner: All-N-1, Campti, La.

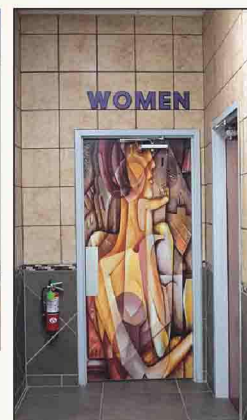
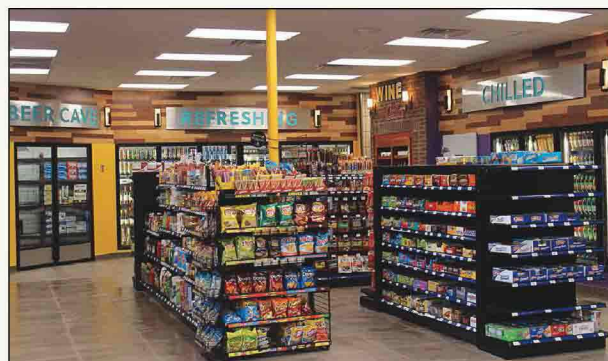
Designer: Paragon Solutions

Following its remodel, All-N-1 is not just a convenience store; it is a painting brought to life in the form of a store, according to the designer that worked with owner Glenn Moffett of Moffett Oil Co. to not only renovate the Campti, La., location, but also expand it.

The new store spans 3,806 square feet vs. the original store of 2,690 square feet. To give the new All-N-1 a vibrant Louisiana flavor with lots of personality, the redesign features bright pops of color that are complemented by wood plank finishes and industrial brushed metal signage.

The result is a store design that is "spectacular in color and movement," according to the designer Paragon Solutions. In particular, the artistic designs on the checkout counter and the bathroom doors add beauty and class to the store's interior.

Customers can feast on the décor along with the foodservice offerings at the store. The existence of a Papa John's pizza location inside was an extra challenge during the design process, as the final result had to work well with the quick-service restaurant's branding. Ultimately, All-N-1 now has a distinctive look that makes it an attractive and fun place to shop.





BEST SKY'S THE LIMIT REMODEL

Honorable Mention: Dirt Cheap, O'Fallon, Mo.

Designer: Paragon Solutions

The Basement Brand Liquor Store division of U-Gas had a well-established "Dirt Cheap" store brand, but the company didn't spare any expense when it came to planning the rebranding and refreshing of its store prototype.

The building in O'Fallon, Mo., started out with unusual origins for a retail store, as the 5,500-square-foot location originally operated as a Mexican restaurant, complete with a wraparound porch. Design firm Paragon Solutions worked with U-Gas to give Dirt Cheap a new, clean, modern look for both the interior and exterior of the building. The new prototype keeps the personality of the branding fresh, playful and fun.

Outside, the primary use of gray paired with bright red at the awnings and entrance draw attention to the eye-catching bathing-suit-wearing chicken logo of Dirt Cheap. Inside, concrete floors have an industrial shine, but touches such as Zebra wood, subway tile, neutral counters and bold black, red and white pops offset this. Signage is clear and eye-catching while adding a sense of fun at departments like the Fizzy Fizz "Oh Yeah!" fountain drink station.

The main challenge was to keep the Dirt Cheap brand's essence intact while giving its image a facelift. Along with the visual updates, the prototype introduces new features such as wine tasting, a smoke shop and a drive-thru to make this a must-visit location.

BEST MID-BUDGET REMODEL

Winner: Tang Mart, Attalla, Ala.

Designer: Paragon Solutions

When it came time to remodel his Attalla, Ala., convenience store, Jonathan Tang of IRA Phillips Inc. wanted an out-of-the-box design that embraces and celebrates his Chinese heritage. Working with Paragon Solutions, Tang and the designers created a brand, Tang Mart, which can best be described as approachable, friendly and contemporary.

The brand's "dragon" icon embossed in rich blue and lime green colors is a simple yet memorable mark that gives the store a fun personality, much like its owner.

It is hard to believe the before and after photos represent the same space, the designers said, as the remodel (plus an addition) resulted in a complete 180-degree turn from the original state and transformed this store into a much-improved customer experience.

An added bonus feature of Tang Mart is a designated pet relief/play area outside, which is still a unique amenity for a present-day convenience store.





BEST MID-BUDGET REMODEL

Honorable Mention: Lone Star Food Stores,
Van Alstyne, Texas

Designer: Paragon Solutions

Bill Douglass, the head of his family-owned business Douglass Distributing, had an 8,250-square-foot convenience store in Van Alstyne, Texas, in desperate need of remodeling. He desired a clean, contemporary design that was warm, inviting and tied into the local community.

Douglass worked with design firm Paragon Solutions and his daughter Diane McCarty to come up with a store that would make both of them proud. The interior is comprised of Texas colors — red, blue and white — with complementary neutrals and a repeated star logo.

Also inside the store, modern pale stone finishes and brushed nickel accents combine with medium-brown/dark cabinetry. Similar to glowing gems, opulent red pendant lights hang over the expansive counters. And to help cement the local community bond, a mural above the coolers is comprised of photos taken in the Van Alstyne area by Lone Star staff.

Adding even more sparkle, red glass tile with an opal sheen can be found wrapping its way around upper counters and backsplashes. During the daytime, steeped skylights perform double duty as points of interest and additional lighting.

Store amenities include a beer cave, Subway restaurant, and a Burger King restaurant with contemporary seating and ample natural light flooding the space.

BEST TRAVEL CENTER DESIGN

Winner: Kwik Stop, Peosta, Iowa

Designer: Hussmann

Looking for an innovation interior design for its new location in Pesota, Iowa, Rainbo Oil Co. reached out to design firm Hussmann to create a travel center with an emphasis on fresh store bakery and prepared foods — in a unique, yet utilitarian retail environment.

With a modest Midwest budget, the design philosophy was to “keep it simple,” while creating floor plans that are intuitive and fluid. Utilizing the interior wall structures and creating a complementary color palette, the retail and service areas were defined.

The process did come with some challenges, including creating a transaction that would accommodate essentially four entries into the store. Now achieved, the transaction provides Kwik Stop employees with the opportunity to extend greetings to their customers of both the c-store and the Fazoli’s restaurant that they also operate.

As the end result shows, the store is open enough for the customer to visualize the entire merchandising area from just about anywhere, once they step inside. The majority of the focus has been placed on the made-to-order food program.





BEST TRAVEL CENTER DESIGN

Honorable Mention: Kings Mahwah, Mahwah, N.J.

Designer: Bolla Oil Corp.

At its first site in New Jersey, Bolla Oil Corp. wanted to not only introduce the company to local customers, but to grab their attention. “We wanted to completely wow the customer base and let them know who Bolla is,” said store owner Harry Singh.

The company redeveloped the two-acre property to boast two fueling areas, both carrying the Sunoco brand, with 12 multipurpose fuel dispensers for gas and diesel, plus an additional five multipurpose fuel dispensers under a separate canopy for diesel/DEF customers only.

The site also features the 35th Bolla Market location. The 5,000-square-foot store offers a gourmet deli, full-service coffee, a 13-door cooler, luxurious bathrooms, and seating for more than 30 guests. The c-store has a second story that is used for storage, accounting activity, and office space for vendor and team meetings.

Bolla Oil was concerned its trucking business would impact traffic flow to the gas pumps and to the c-store. However, Singh said, “Fortunately, we have been able to manage the volume effectively.” Only six weeks after opening, Kings Mahwah was already exceeding gasoline, diesel and convenience store goals, he reported.

“Our goal was to become a destination for commuters, travelers and locals, and so far we have achieved this goal, but will continue to offer this luxurious experience to all our customers.” Singh added.

BEST INTERNATIONAL DESIGN

Winner: ZOOM, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Designer: Emirates National Oil Co.

Located in the lobby of the tallest building in the world, the Burj Khalifa ZOOM store in downtown Dubai is 1,250 square feet, with elegant wood finishing that elevates the brand aesthetics and complements the sophisticated décor of Burj Khalifa.

The objective was to cater to a diverse customer base made up of various demographics, including the residents of the building's 900 apartments; guests of the Armani Hotel, which is within Burj Khalifa; employees who work in the commercial offices that span the 163-floor site; and the staff operating within the tower. Another catch: The tower management wanted the design to differ from the standard ZOOM store of Emirates National Oil Co.

Foodservice plays a critical role in the Burj Khalifa ZOOM store, with customers demanding fresh and quick service on the go. A partnership with Starbucks has proven to be a hit with the tenants, and it complements the store's fresh bakery counter.

Additionally, ZOOM acquired separate storage space within the tower to carry sufficient stock to feed into the shop, as well as for direct home delivery within the tower. This helps to overcome the limitations of the smaller store footprint.

