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SuperValu's Fuel Center Focus

Retailer reimagining Albertsons gasoline sites for stronger consistency

By Steve Holtz

BOISE, Idaho -- Even as one licensee of the Albertsons retail brand is selling off its fuel centers, another has begun a reimagining of its Albertsons Express stores with the goal of continuity between sites. "SuperValu has about 130 fuel centers, and fuel is very much a part of our strategy going forward," Mark Schumacher, corporate director of fuel management and convenience operations for SuperValu, told *CSP Daily News*.

"We are just now enhancing our existing fleet of stores and continuing to grow our fuel program underneath the various banners, whether it's Jewel in Chicago or Albertsons in the West," he said. "We're also looking at our other banners. For instance, Shop 'n Save in St. Louis, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of SuperValu, has added three fuels centers in the last eight months, and No. 4 is under construction."

The Eden Prairie, Minn.-based company has so far reimaged four Albertsons Express sites in the Boise, Idaho, area, and two more are under way. Once the changes are completed in that market, the company will move on to Las Vegas.



"With the remodel project, we're just following corporate strategy, which is for our grocery stores to always be relevant to the times or to the industry," Schumacher said. "Our goal is that no grocery store will ever be older than seven years between remodels. We're now going back and trying to follow that same strategy for our convenience stores and keep them relevant to the industry."

Those changes include adopting a new, more consistent format outside the store with bolder colors and graphics.

"For the building exterior, in the past sometimes they matched the main [Albertsons grocery] store and sometimes they didn't," Schumacher said. "We're going back to make sure that the convenience store matches the main [grocery] store's building appearance, but the fuel island is set aside to provide a really bold fuel image. ... That's our goal in the future to make sure we have a consistent image in the market place with our fuel presence."

Inside, the company is applying fresh paint and installing new cabinets and countertops. A new emphasis on fresh food is also in the works.

"For the interior, we're going to a fresh color scheme with a color palate that matches our 'fresh and healthy' format in our main [grocery] stores," said Schumacher. "We're also deploying all sorts of new equipment from new fountain and frozen carbonated beverages to large open Hussmann cooler cases. [Those cases will] capitalize on our

beverages to large open Hussmann cooler cases. [Those cases will] capitalize on our delis in our main stores, which are the source the sandwiches and hoagies and wraps and salads. We're taking advantage of that main store commissary that's only 100 yards away vs. our competitors that have to have these products delivered from a third party."

While the reimage is focused on the Albertsons Express sites for now, Schumacher said any and all fuel sites under SuperValu's ownership will eventually undergo a similar change.

The project comes just as separate company Albertsons LLC is exiting the fuel business, opting instead to sell its Albertsons Express stores to Valero Energy in the West and to DBR Lease Exchange LLC in Florida, as previously reported in *CSP Daily News*.

The sales "allow Albertsons to focus on its core grocery and pharmacy business in the company's 40 remaining stores in Florida," company spokesperson Stacia Hill Levenfeld said. "Running great food and drug stores is the heart of our operation and we have made the decision to focus on our time and talent on that business moving forward."

According to Jennifer Vroman, director of public affairs for Albertsons LLC, the sale was a logical choice. "Albertsons is in the food business, and we made the decision to get out of the fuel market and keep our focus on food.

[Click here](#) to read more about the Albertsons LLC deal.