

Mission: Convenience

Downtown L.A.'s new Mission Market puts emphasis on the customer experience

By Danielle Romano

Los Angeles is commonly perceived as a hustling city with its sprawling trafficked freeways, but Mission Market, a convenience store concept from Progressive Convenience Inc., has set out to dispel any preconceived notions that convenience can't be found amongst the chaos.

Mission Market recently opened the chain's third location in downtown L.A., which is densely packed with offices, lofts and apartments, retail and nightlife. Situated at 544 S. Broadway St. in L.A.'s Theater District, the c-store is located in the historic Spring-Arcade Building, the only locale in the city with a pedestrian arcade span-

ning the length of an entire block.

It is with this unique positioning that Mission Market is using its Southern California roots and urban concept to draw customers from the bustling city into the 1,770-square-foot atmosphere where they can find solace, value and convenience. Mission Market's first two locations are in Fullerton (opened June 2013) and Anaheim, Calif. (opened December 2014).

"Downtown L.A. is rapidly growing and changing, and we're so excited to be a part of retooling the retail infrastructure there," Roland Foss, founder of Mission Market and president of Progressive Convenience, told *Convenience Store News*.

EMPHASIS ON MERCHANDISING

Opened in April and built over the bones of a defunct Famima c-store (the Japanese chain withdrew from the United States in October 2015), Foss drew aesthetic inspiration for Mission Market from the "merchandising perfection" of natural and organic grocer Whole Foods Market.

Aesthetically, Mission Market puts great emphasis on its merchandise. Lighting plays a key role in this strategy as it warmly spotlights the store's offerings. Mission Market's windows are also clear of any extra signage so customers and passersby can see through the store. Aisles, walkways and checkout counters likewise remain clutter-free.

To set the tone of a "market," Foss chose dark brown and burgundy colors to make Mission Market inviting and approachable to busy downtown L.A. workers and inhabitants. Countertops and cabinets are stained dark, and the floors are made of faux wood.

"[I want] a customer to come away with the feeling that this is not a typical c-store," said Foss. "We also try to position ourselves around grab-and-go food, but with the promise of a market — think wide product selection. This is the ultimate in convenience: picking up a meal or snack along with the essentials and sundries you need to tide you over until the next grocery store visit."

According to Foss, successful c-stores appeal to all



Staying true to its Southern California roots, Mission Market's third location is situated near Los Angeles' Theater District.

demographics and drive sustainable traffic through all dayparts. To accomplish this, Mission Market offers high-quality, prepackaged, grab-and-go food like salads, sandwiches, sushi, and fresh-cut fruits and vegetables.

Then, switching gears to more gourmet menu items, customers can find made-to-order salads, chicken wings, Belgian fries, fried Brussels sprouts, and hand-squeezed limeade from the store's POV Snack Shop, a partnership with local artisanal pizza joint Pizza of Venice (POV).

In the coming months, Mission Market will transition its grab-and-go business to POV as well, with the local vendor producing and packaging most, if not all, of the c-store's vendor-sourced grab-and-go products, Foss disclosed. Additionally, Pizza of Venice will begin selling its own pizza prepackaged in a take-and-bake format exclusively at Mission Market.

Foss also reports that Mission Market is in the process of finalizing a deal with an Asian fresh-food supplier to offer more than 20 SKUs of fresh, grab-and-go Asian foods like dumplings, sushi and salads. "No other c-store in L.A. will be able to touch the selection Mission Market will have in the grab-and-go category," Foss insists.

Other amenities at Mission Market include:

- A bitcoin ATM. Mission Market is the only store in Los Angeles County that allows customers to buy and sell bitcoin using U.S. currency.
- A traditional ATM;
- Bimbo bakery products;
- An "exploded" produce section with tomatoes, bagged lettuce, onions and ginger root;
- California Lottery;

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— Roland Foss, Mission Market



- EBT food and cash; and
- Prepaid telecom/debit/gift cards.

ALL ABOUT THE EXPERIENCE

Online ordering and delivery play a significant role in Mission Market's business model.

Delivery is a "tremendous" need-state, especially in the downtown L.A. market, according to Foss. That is why Mission Market offers delivery through partnerships with multiple third-party delivery apps: Postmates, Door Dash, GrubHub, and Eat 24.

More than 1,500 of the store's products are available for online ordering. Delivery is promised within one hour — at the same retail price as in-store — with no minimum order required and only a small delivery fee charged to the customer.

"Convenience stores have a unique ability to act like mini distribution centers, satisfying the needs of consumers well beyond our traditional footprint, as long as we have partners with the right logistical capabilities," Foss explained. "That's a huge value that we offer."

When asked what he wants customers to think of when they think of Mission Market, Foss told *CSNews* he hopes they perceive Mission Market as a "progressive" c-store; an improvement from the more conventional stores in the convenience channel.

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The downtown L.A. Mission Market will not be a one-off. Foss' plan is to open more Mission Markets in downtown L.A. "imminently." He is currently in talks with POV to replicate the joint concept elsewhere, if future locations meet the c-store operator's criteria. **CSN**