

# THE SORIANA HYPERMARKET EXPERIENCE



Soriana, the largest locally owned food retailer in Mexico, awarded five store commissions to D L English Design, a full-service multidisciplinary design firm in Pasadena, CA, that specializes in retail and hospitality environments. As an expert in bringing retail concepts to life, D L English Design worked with Soriana (a grocery brand previously perceived as discount) to create a more refined image through new store layouts, exterior and interior design, lighting, and environmental signage and décor.

The firm has completed two Premium Hypermarkets (selling everything from groceries, to electronics, to apparel) and is planning three Supermarkets PLUS (upscale food marts emphasizing fresh and gourmet items) throughout Mexico. This chain of projects began with a 79,000-square-foot sales floor Premium Hypermarket in the upscale Polanco neighborhood of Mexico City, which opened in June 2016. The second hypermarket, with a 110,000-square-foot sales floor, opened in December 2016 in the San Pedro district of Monterrey. Based on the success of its designs, D L English Design will create the Supermarket PLUS format at three

additional locations scheduled for completion in 2018. The new Soriana Premium Hypermarket experience is based on the prototype design developed by D L English Design's bilingual design team for the Polanco location in Mexico City, which draws on Mexican design traditions. That store—which is located on the first floor of a multi-use development designed by renowned Mexican architect Ricardo Legorreta, Hon. FAIA—is configured to distinguish grocery and general merchandise areas as different “boutiques” within the overall retail space. The design creates an esteemed experience for customers shopping at Soriana through inventive interiors and displays.

“It was essential to create a distinct prototype and premium-level shopping experience for a brand previously perceived as ‘discount’ without the feeling of being too expensive for its existing customer base,” says Deborah L. English, IIDA, CCID, Founder and President of D L English Design. “The goal was to successfully and effectively harness a hybrid shopping experience as a vehicle to transform and elevate the brand.” In order to fully embrace the design task at hand and to further discover ways in which to best serve the client and its





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community, D L English Design spent a considerable amount of time touring local eateries, markets, groceries, and retailers with the client. "A common thread throughout the hundreds of markets we have designed is creating relevance through purpose, story, and style—the meaningful integration of local culture into the store," continues English. "Through design, we connect the brand story with the community story. We find common ground between the core values of the brand and the community, giving a visual voice to those values inside the physical space."

The Mexico City hypermarket exhibits a new, hybrid marketplace concept that encompasses a vast selection of product types, including high-end specialty foods, conventional groceries, and general merchandise from baby clothes to ATVs. A full-scale, 5,000-square-foot food hall, named Avenida 9 for its nine food stations, stresses variety and originality in its offerings that range from pasta and crepes to a new take on Mexican crudo, along with accompanying beer and wine bars. In addition to local fare, Japanese, American, natural, and even kosher foods are offered. The concept of food preparation as theater was integrated into key departments, such as "La Fabrica de Queso," where shoppers can view the in-house cheesemaking process. In addition to the expected fresh food and groceries, the store's service departments emphasize local and fresh wares; the bakery makes goods from crusty breads to fine cakes and pastries on site, and an interactive digital sommelier offers wine tasting and beer growler refills.

"We sought to elevate our brand and bring a fresh, distinctive approach to Mexican food retail: one that successfully blends general merchandise, grocery shopping, and casual dining. We engaged D L English Design to use their experiential design expertise in food spaces as a vehicle to help push Soriana to become the best in class in the communities that we serve," says Humberto Fayad, General Director for Soriana Supermarket



and Hypermarket Segments. "Our partnership, and the resultant solutions, transformed the Soriana shopping experience, effectively capturing our vision for the Soriana brand evolution, providing a differentiated and exciting store experience for our customers. D L English Design created a space that is warm, welcoming, and approachable, while correspondingly premium, with an upmarket look and feel."

Due to the wide variety of product offerings sold by the newly conceived hypermarket, strategic space planning was a critical component of its design. Two distinct entrances were incorporated to differentiate fresh food and grocery offerings from general merchandise, such as electronics, apparel, and cosmetics, as well as the pharmacy and optometry departments, with each part of the hypermarket articulated with its own character to enhance the shopping experience and guide the customer. Soriana's design was conceived as a series of stores within stores. Through punches of bright colors, architectural thresholds, bold signage, ceilings and soffits at varying heights, and geometric patterns inspired by Mexican design traditions,

the design team distinguished grocery areas and created various interdepartmental shopping experiences throughout the hypermarket. General merchandise areas—selling electronics, apparel, health and beauty, pharmacy, home, baby, pets, toys, office, seasonal, and non-food grocery—are rendered in a more neutral palette. Strategic adjacencies between each part of the store and a wide, main aisle encircling the entire interior unify the different shopping areas within the hypermarket's large footprint.

