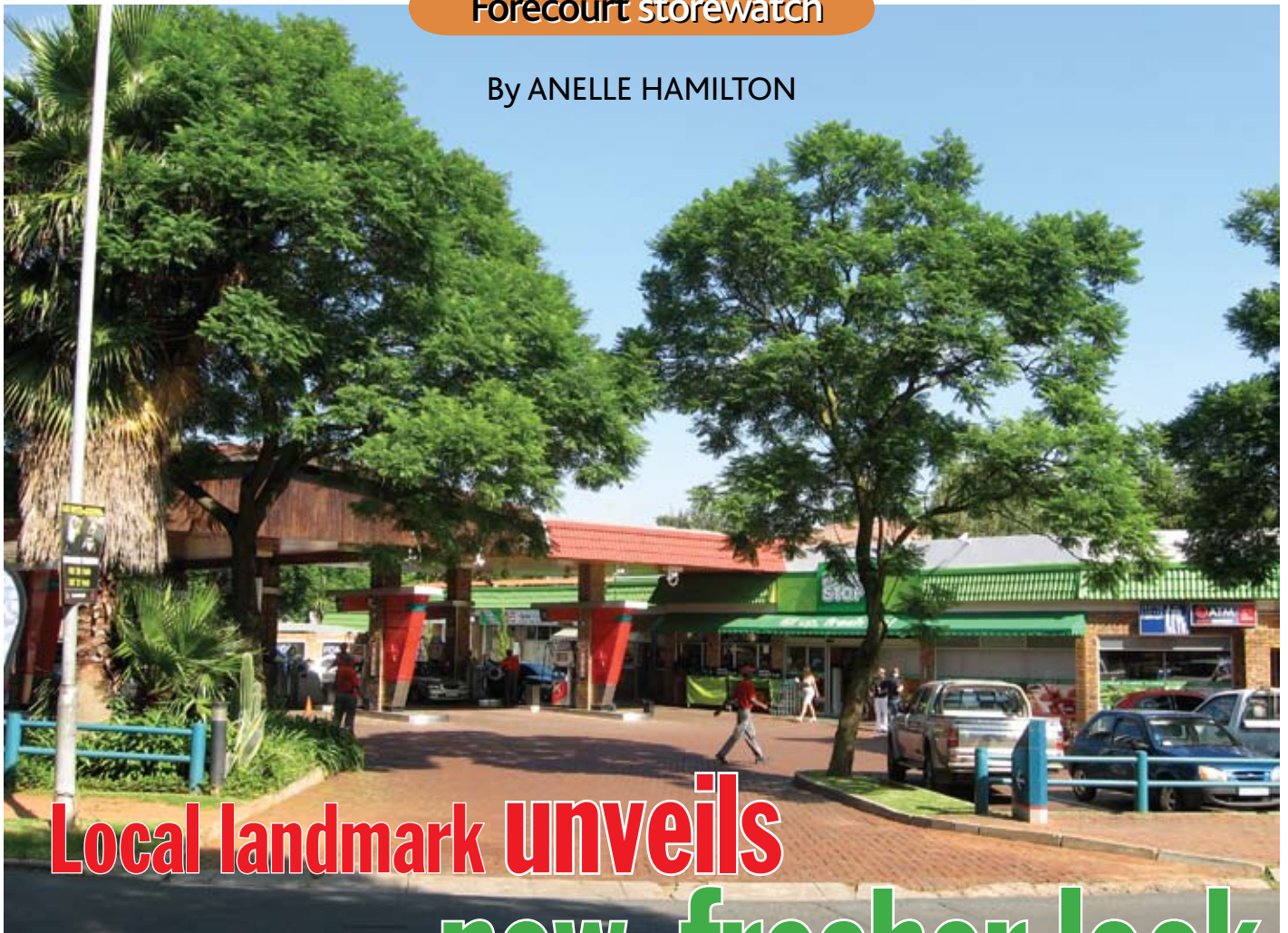


By ANELLE HAMILTON



Local landmark unveils new, fresher look

Oaklands Freshstop recently underwent a major revamp and its customers are very impressed.

Oaklands Motors is much more than just a filling station. The site has established itself as a landmark in the leafy northern suburb of Oaklands and is a popular meeting place for residents in the area. A recent major revamp has given the busy site a facelift that has proved to be a hit with its loyal clientele.

"I acquired the business in December last year and decided it needed a fresh, new look to fit into the upmarket area it operates in," says franchisee Farouck Hajat. The Caltex service station's existing StarMart convenience store was converted into a Freshstop to provide customers a fresh and modern convenience offering.

"Our site gives our customers a unique experience. Locals from the area come here to buy great coffee and meet up with friends. More than 70 000 motorists visit the site every month to fill up and 45 000 of them visits the store. "Our new offering in the Pistop Café is very popular and the fresh produce also draws shoppers in."

The idea behind the revamp was to create a mini Harrods store. "Our clients include people like Tony Leon, Nelson Mandela's daughters, and famous musicians and actors – the A list of South African talent.

The Seattle Coffee Company inside the store is one of the most popular Seattle coffee counters in South Africa!





Dog food and charcoal at the entrance of the store sells very well.



The majority of the clientele is Jewish and the Kosher grocery selection is quite extensive.

I wanted the site to reflect the ambience of the suburb it operates in so that it fits in with its sophisticated clientele. We do not have passing trade that fill up at the site, as we are not close to any highways. The customers that visit us have been living in the area for many years and we felt that the site needed to evolve with them."

In addition to the store, the CarSpa washes around 90 cars a day. A car wash costs R90 but Hajat believes it is so popular because of the good products they use and the excellent service from his staff. "The majority of our clients drive very expensive cars and they want quality products used on them. They also like to enjoy a cup of coffee and mingle with friends while waiting for their vehicles."

Coffee fix

When **Wholesale Business** visited the site the queue at the Seattle Coffee counter almost reached the door. Their sales of 550 cups a day are one of the highest volumes in the Seattle franchise. "Coffee is almost like religion to my customers and they come here for their daily fix. My customers know the staff by name and the Seattle ladies know their orders so by the time they reach the counter their drink is ready for them –just the way they like it!"

While the conversion was taking place he set up a mobile van on the forecourt to ensure that his customers do not miss out on their daily fix.

Personal touch

The site employs 90 people and Hajat retained every staff member when he took over in December 2009. "The majority of them have been working here for more than 11 years and the customers ask for them



The busy CarSpa washes around 90 cars a day.

by name. It is these personal touches that ensure that they keep coming back –some of them three or four times a day!"

He believes that hands-on management is the only way to run a successful filling station. "The manager, Charles Aphane and I are always on site to address any queries. We alternate on weekends but one of us is here 24 hours day, seven days a week. The site offers 24-hour security surveillance and the ATMs are always busy as customers feel more secure withdrawing money here than at a shopping mall. We do not really have peak times. We are always busy! On a Friday and Saturday night at three in the morning our c-store is crowded with young people who meet here after going to parties, or visiting clubs."

He says that his customers have not really been affected by the credit crunch. Although fuel sales have dipped slightly in the last 12 months the c-store has shown good growth. The average basket size is R44 and he expects this to pick up. "The Pistop

Café boosts sales and offers good value for money. The fresh produce is also doing well as we order direct from the market and our prices are very reasonable."

Catering for the Kosher market

As a c-store offers very limited shelf space operators have to maximise every square metre and be very selective in their offering. The majority of the Oaklands' clientele is Jewish and the store offers an extensive range of Kosher products. This includes meat, breads, sweets, juices and groceries. "Our business is built on mutual respect and I believe in catering for the market you operate in. We even import Israeli newspapers every week. This is the secret of running a personalised business. In the end all filling stations sell the same thing, but by offering customers something extra, you will ensure repeat business and loyalty. My motto is 'retail is detail': and a clean, well-stocked store and friendly staff is a winning recipe for success!"