

Success Story

Topic: Convenience Store Needs Assistance

Location: Ferry Road
New Roads, Louisiana
Point Coupee Parish

Contact: Claiborne Geneva or Alfred Ashford
B & A Quick Mart
(225) 638-3262

Outline of Need:

During the year of slow to moderate growth, gross sales including increased at unsatisfactory increases in growth. Claiborne and Geneva Ashford, (husband and wife business partners) and Alfred Ashford, brother of Claiborne Ashford have struggled many years to elevate the level of the business and renovate and expand to a level that matched or exceeded other neighborhood convenient stores in the New Roads, Louisiana area or the business would eventually close its doors. Effort began to payoff when the Ashford's begin to seek



professional assistance from the Southern University Center for Rural and Small Business Development Staff. B & A Quick Mart wanted to build a new building that included a deli, a restroom, and a washer mat. They also wanted to add new gas pumps to their facility.

How CRSBD Assisted:

The Southern University Small Business Development Center Staff designed several business plans and loan packages which was submitted and rejected by various lending institutions. Loan officers continued to find such faults as: not enough collateral or equity, or not enough clients in the area. The Ashford's and the



Staff really felt that the real reasons were age and being minorities kept them from being approved. There may have been other reasons for rejection such as conservative lending officers and just plain discrimination. However, the Ashford's did not accept defeat. They kept requesting assistance, improving their financial position, and changing the way business is executed. In their continued improvement process, marketing strategies, size, record keeping process, had to be revised. Streamlining of employees and hiring employees that could increase business efficiency must be at the top of the list. Also, restructuring and training of management and key personnel must be implemented.

Results:

Finally, a lender changed most of the lending officers. That gave the Ashford's a window of opportunities to re-submit another loan package and they were approved. The Southern University Center for Rural and Small Business Development was able to be involved in securing an architectural firm to redesigning a new building. The original building was approximately 1,200 square feet. The new building is designed to be in excess of 3,700 square feet which is almost three times as large as the original building.



The ribbon cutting ceremony was after August 1, 2005. Since opening day sales income is expected to be at a successful level of breakeven point within three to five (3-5) years. Most of the customers are repeat walk-in customers. Hopefully with the installation of the new bridge from St. Francisville to New Roads the customer base will be in excess of 15,000 customers per year.