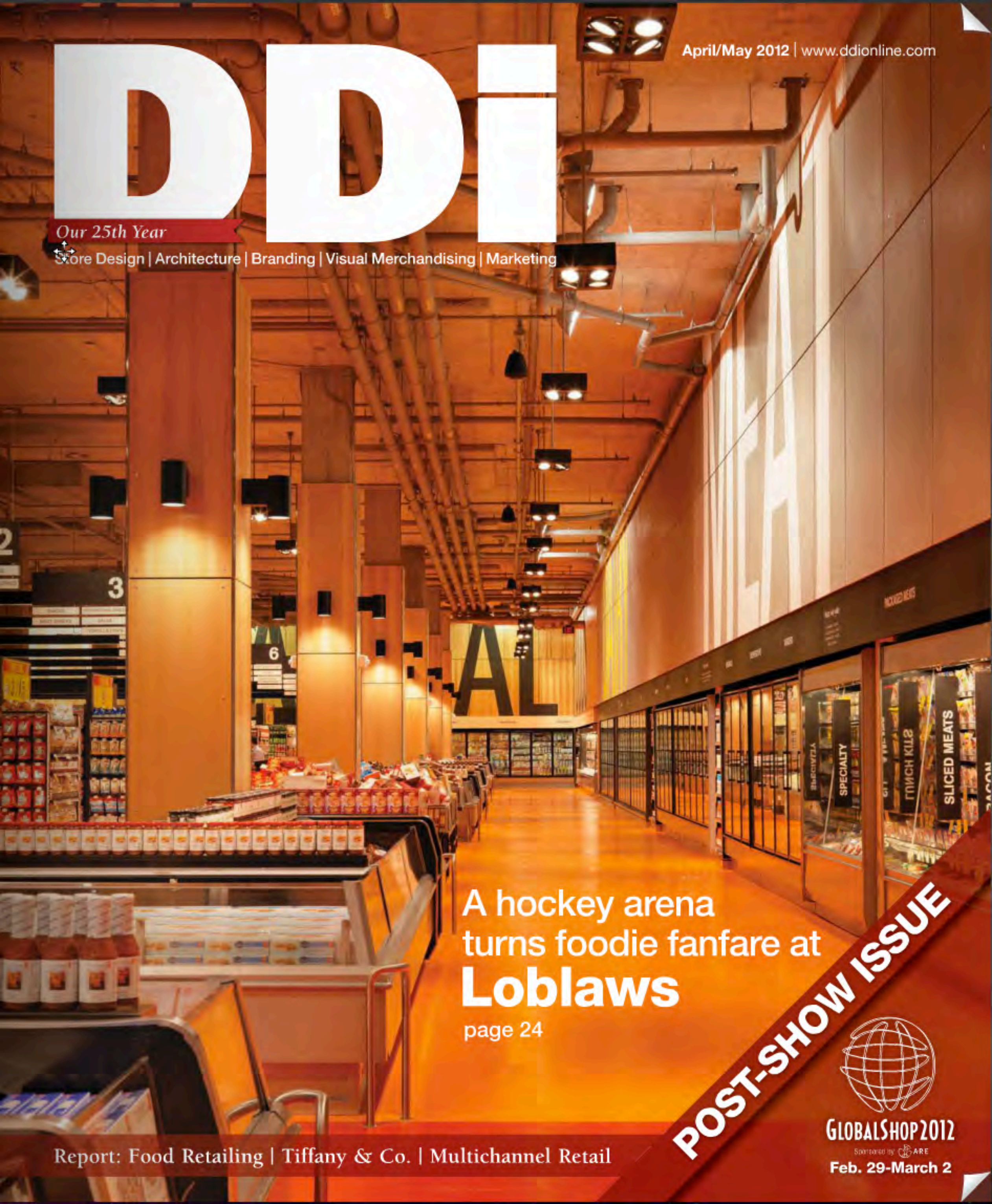


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A hockey arena turns foodie fanfare at **Loblaws**

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POST-SHOW ISSUE



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GO ALLLLL!!!





Loblaws swaps penalties for produce with an urban supermarket at Toronto's historic Maple Leaf Gardens

By Janet Groeber

At the end November, two Canadian icons shared a center stage. That's when Loblaws at Maple Leaf Gardens, pairing a vibrant, urban food shopping experience with a cherished Toronto landmark building, opened in downtown Toronto. In addition to being the home of the Toronto Maple Leafs hockey team from 1931-1999, Maple Leaf Gardens also hosted a 22-year-old Elvis Presley, Frank Sinatra and the Beatles, to name but a few touring acts.

The downtown Art Deco building, constructed by Conn Smythe in the height of the Great Depression with a budget of only \$1.5 million, has been home to some of Toronto's most historic moments. But, for more than a decade since the hockey team faced off an opponent, their original home ice building was rarely used. Today, its façade and marquee have been restored to those glory days.

The finished adaptive reuse project (in the works since late 2009) is an 85,000-sq.-ft. foodie's dream, imbuing an urban neighborhood with a first-of-its-kind supermarket. In an area experiencing a residential renaissance, the new Loblaws also features essential general merchandise, including a Joe Fresh apparel outlet on the store's second floor, making for one-stop convenience.

Features range from self-serve seafood to an 18-ft. grand wall of cheese and myriad prepared food options—all ingredients of what Loblaws calls its "theatre of food"—with an emphasis on locally sourced items.

Once inside, customers will find artistic remnants of the structure's storied past relayed in bold gestures. On the store's east entrance wall, there's a compelling 3-D blue "Maple Leaf"-shaped sculpture created from reclaimed stadium chairs. Original ice rink light fixtures illuminate the entrance, and an exposed brick wall reveals the old escalator track. Restored windows, exposed concrete walls, repainted murals and other artistic images provide further connection to the past. Customers even will find "center ice" marked in Aisle 25.

"We wanted to honor its history by integrating the stories into the total space, as opposed to segregating them in a corner," says Mark Landini, creative director of Surry Hills, New South Wales, Australia-based Landini Associates, which handled design duties. "It was important not to just create a supermarket, but rather a 'super' market, where people could meet, talk, eat and fall in love. We wanted to create a social place, a community hub, not unlike the place of entertainment that it once was. We also wanted to celebrate the building's history in a living, vibrant and integrated way."

The space references Loblaws' history by way of a vibrant red-and-orange floor inspired by the grocer's original logo. Elsewhere, historic elements have been woven into a palette of concrete, stone, timbers, stainless steel and light wood, as well as glossy black tile.

The vibrant red-and-orange floor was inspired by the grocer's original logo.

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Left: Column graphics pay homage to historic events that have taken place in Maple Leaf Gardens.

Bottom right: Artisan breads are made from scratch daily at the ACE Bakery.

Top right: The store has a fresh produce department, fishmonger, butcher and a self-serve meat counter.



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"We adopted an urban palette of materials, embraced the building's scale and used different signage treatments throughout the market hall area," Landini says. "This included departmental signage of depressed in-situ concrete, blackened steel, copper plumber's pipe, neon, glass, wood, spot-welded tin and paint on tile. We also paid homage to the history of the building through the use of the stencil font, which was once used for wayfinding in the original stadium."

The lighting plan was similarly thought out to avoid the usual bland effect found in many supermarkets. "Custom-designed light sources and fittings were developed with Loblaw's to highlight the product and signage," Landini says. "We

wanted the 'light and shade' found in nature, to help us create a slower-than-normal pace for customers shopping the store."

Venturing customers will find a fresh produce department with an emphasis on organic, a fishmonger and a butcher, as well as a self-serve meat counter, featuring cured and aged meats. There is an East-meets-West sushi bar, featuring both traditional and chef-inspired creations made as customers watch, as well as made-to-order pizza and fresh meals prepared daily by 14 in-house chefs in an open and elevated kitchen.

The store carries more than 400 varieties of cheese and employs cheese specialists. Artisan breads are made from scratch every day.



The design team adopted an urban palette of materials, using concrete, steel and timbers.

The Patisserie features a collection of hand-crafted milk chocolate, as well as a delectable array of cakes, cupcakes and other treats. A Tea Emporium in-store shop features experts who have scoured the globe for more than 10 years to curate a supreme selection of the finest teas.

The store also has a medical clinic, a pharmacy and a team devoted to wellbeing, able to answer

questions about health and diet. A 50-ft. wall of vitamins and supplements commands over the space.

"(The new store) represents Loblaw Cos.' approach to building an urban grocery store," says Andre Fortier, Loblaw's senior vice president, store concept. "We understand that the urban customer has some very unique needs and have tried to address this with our store design." For example, multiple cash registers can be found at different points in the store. "We also offer a number of grab-and-go and convenient items through our café, to address the urban shopper's need for convenience," Fortier says. "We have also noticed that in addition to providing a convenient place to enjoy the fresh hot food prepared by the on-site kitchen, the canteen area is also serving as a meeting place for the community."

The intent to create a supermarket that functions as a community hub and place of entertainment seems to be working, as customers are indeed lingering longer. "I am told that customers have demanded that free car parking be extended from one to two hours," Landini says. "I understand this is because they want to spend more time there. If this is the case, it suggests we have been in some way successful in creating an experience that is bigger and more engaging than simply shopping for food." **DDI**

To e-mail this article, visit www.ddionline.com/magazine.

project file

Loblaws at Maple Leaf Gardens

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CUSTOM REFRIGERATION

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Vaughan, Ontario, Canada

STAINLESS PREP COUNTERS

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Information in the project file is provided
by the retailer and/or design firm.



