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CENTERPIECE

FEATURED

Texas First Bank makes Hitchcock history; Clary's site goes on market; shops, services, eateries enter the market

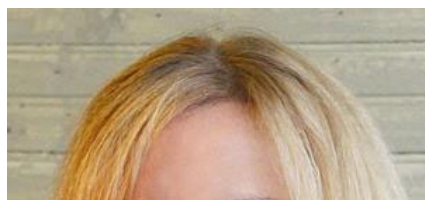
By LAURA ELDER The Daily News

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Chris Doyle, president and CEO of Texas First Bank, speaks during a grand reopening celebration in the newly renovated Texas First Bank in Hitchcock on Wednesday, April 7, 2021.

STUART VILLANUEVA/The Daily News



Bank notes: It isn't unusual for banks to spruce up their branches with fresh décor and amenities. But when **Texas First Bank** this week debuted a major



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renovation of its Hitchcock branch, 8128 state Highway 6, it unveiled not only a renewed banking center but also a museum paying tribute to the company's and the city of Hitchcock's histories.

Crews gutted the Hitchcock banking center, where Texas First Bank was born nearly 50 years ago, and rebuilt from scratch, all while the branch remained open for business, said **Chris Doyle**, president and CEO.

Timelines of Texas First Bank's history grace the walls, while cabinets display historical artifacts dating back to the company's beginning.

Charles T. Doyle founded **Texas Independent Bancshares** in 1973 with the purchase of **First State Bank of Hitchcock**, of which he sat on the board. Hitchcock history also is prominent at the banking center, including information about the **Hitchcock Naval Air Station**, a blimp base used for spotting German U-boat "wolfpacks" during World War II, according to historical accounts. The 3,000-acre base was in Hitchcock's city limits, and construction began in 1942. In 1961, Hurricane Carla damaged the structure so badly it had to be demolished a year later. Four pillars and a concrete foundation are all that remain of the hangar today.

Hitchcock is important to Texas First Bank, and the city has a rich heritage, Chris Doyle said.

"It's a pretty impressive history lesson," he said.

From that Hitchcock location, Texas First Bank has expanded from one branch with \$7 million in assets to 26 banking centers in seven counties and \$1.9

billion in assets.

Suite spot: Also debuting renovations this week were **Ami** and **Georgia Meyer Barzilay** as they officially revealed to the public the transformation of a long-vacant hotel space into nine boutique office suites in a venture called **Urban Works**, 601 Ninth Ave. N. in Texas City.

One of the newest tenants introducing herself at Thursday's ribbon-cutting was **Britany Perez**, owner of **Britany Danette Photography**, which specializes in maternity, newborn, milestone, engagement and family photography.

Britany Danette Photography joins **Mainland Insurance** as a tenant at Urban Works, which offers a communal lobby. The suites are in what was originally the **Harper Hotel**, which was on the upper floor of the 1913 structure formerly known as the **Livingston & Ellis Building**.

Urban Works offers Wi-Fi and turnkey packaging and can accommodate people traveling to Texas City for plant or refinery business needing an office from which to work.

Quick bites: More eateries are biting into the area market. **Gator's Bar & Grill** soon will open on the northeast corner of Interstate 45 and FM 517 in Dickinson. One of Dickinson's own is behind the venue.

And on the island, **The Garden**, a Thai cuisine restaurant, plans to open at 216 23rd St. in the downtown space formerly occupied by **Shrimp 'N Stuff**, which moved its downtown restaurant to 2506