



IBAT 2021 Best of Community Banking Awards **Architectural Design** Submission

Revitalizing the Hitchcock Banking Center

Creating a Bank of the Past, Present, and Future



Summary (100-200 words)

After nearly fifty years, it was time for “The Birthplace of Texas First Bank” to join the 21st century and be remodeled. Getting rid of hundreds of can lights and a 46-foot teller line, our Hitchcock banking center was redesigned to create a space where the past, present, and future all meet in service of the community. The new banking center features museum-like displays highlighting the history and accomplishments of both the community – Hitchcock, TX – and Texas First Bank, while also giving back to the community by involving them in the banking experience. New accessible teller pods allow us to offer a more 1-on-1 experience, community spotlights and boards connect us closer to those around us, and contributions from various groups within the community are interwoven into the displays and other areas around the bank. The remodel has breathed new life into the community. Families stop by to explore and reminisce on life growing up, as well as open new accounts!

Program Narrative

Hitchcock, Texas has a modest history. It started out as a whistle-stop for the Santa Fe Railway in 1873 and soon grew to be an agricultural hub for many years. During World War II, it served as home to a blimp base. Now, it stands strong with a variety of different businesses, many still based in agriculture, and the landscape is changing due to the expansion of the Houston area further and further south.

In 1961, a state-chartered bank named First State Bank of Hitchcock was designed and built. On January 3, 1962, the bank opened its doors. At the time, it had a 46-foot teller line, large rooms for bookkeeping, wood paneling, and defining can lights covering the ceiling in a giant hall.



Original scale model mockup of FSB

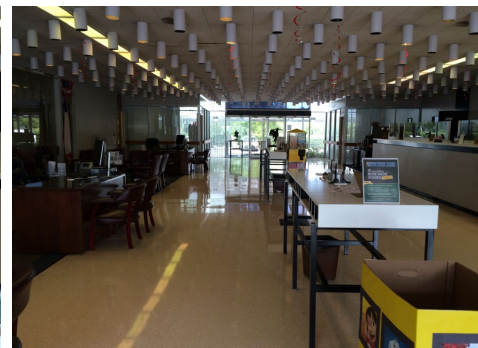


Actual bank in 1962

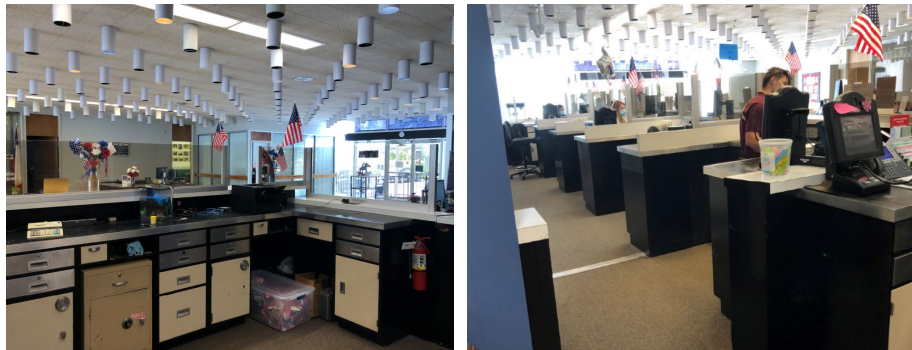


Teller line spanning Southeast wall with signature black can lights and wood paneling.

When Texas First Bank founder, Charles T. Doyle, and his fellow investors purchased the bank in 1973, it was soon remodeled. They doubled the floorplan size, adding a board room and some offices. Laminate was put over the wood paneling and the black can lights were painted white. And so it remained for the next 47 years.



White can lights in an expansive hall



The same look for nearly 50 years

With the dawn of digital banking and the growth of Texas First Bank to have its own Operations Center in its own dedicated building, a lot of space was left open and began to be misused – small desks in giant rooms and boxes everywhere. There were original appliances, and the lights were being turned on through the circuit breaker.



The bank was begging for a remodel!!

Goals

In 2020, the Board of Texas First Bank approved a remodel with the direction that it become more than a bank. It needed to become a tribute to the community that played such a pivotal role in supporting the success of the Texas First Bank. Hitchcock is, after all, “The Birthplace of Texas First Bank” - the first banking center in our portfolio of now 26 locations.

The goal of the remodel was to bring the banking experience into the 21st century, while also creating a space that highlighted the history and accomplishments of both Hitchcock and Texas First Bank, while showcasing the importance of community. We wanted to maximize the open space, update the safety of the electrical system, and design a place where people wanted to visit and where we could more efficiently serve our customers.

To create a space where the past, present, and future all meet in service of the community.

The Plan

If you have visited any Texas First Bank location, you know that history is important to us. We have no shortage of items or memorabilia on display. In Hitchcock, however, our oldest location, we had the largest collection of items and photographs.

Finding a partner to help us work through that history and set us up with a solution for the future was key. We found that partner in SLI Group. They listened to our needs, met with members of the community, and developed a floorplan to get us where we needed to be.

Once a plan was decided, it took six months to complete the renovation, from October 2020 to March 2021. During this time, the bank stayed open to serve our customers via the drive-thru lanes.

The Results

In April 2021, we hosted a grand re-opening for the bank. Quite a few people were in attendance. While we kept the exterior of the bank relatively the same as an homage to its original appearance, guests were treated to a freshly remodeled interior!



Ribbon Cutting – April 2021

Entering the bank, the can lights are now mostly gone (only above the Liberty Bell in the center of the bank), and you're greeted by a full, vibrant, museum-like display area.



On the right, you see the Howard O. Payne Award wall. This award is an annual award that Texas First Bank has given out since 1973 in honor of Howard O. Payne. Mr. Payne was a founding director of First State Bank of Hitchcock, and he started working there at the age of 78. At the time of his death in 1977, he was 94 and affectionately known as “The World’s Oldest Active Banker.” The Howard O. Payne award was created to recognize a citizen or group of citizens who have made a significant economic impact in their local community. We still present this award annually, and our new wall highlights all of the recipients.



Along this wall, you'll also see mementos from the Hitchcock Chamber of Commerce and Hitchcock ISD Education Foundation, as well as a community board. As a community bank, we, of course, have an innate sense of responsibility to support our community, but in doing their research, SLI Group learned of a deep connection between the bank, the Chamber, and the School District. The bank is and has always been a big advocate for these organizations, serving on their boards and serving as a place for them to advertise upcoming events and host events, like car washes and bake sales. So, they proposed these feature areas to highlight our partnerships, and we added a community board to get the rest of the community involved.

The community board is open to everyone, as is the banking center's brand-new digital marquee and a small meeting room off the lobby. Both the community board and marquee get used a lot by local organizations. It's a great way to connect the bank to the community and establish ourselves further as a resource partner.



Community Spotlights



New Digital Marquee!



Open for Community Use

When you look into the middle of the lobby, you see many displays, each highlighting a different part in the community's history - from the early Hitchcock settlers, the Santa Fe Railway, and Camp Wallace to Texas First Bank's brand history, tributes to past directors, and our community involvement.



Pictures from around the community



*Awards and memories from the big local fest
Good Ole Days*



Texas First Memorabilia



Important events in Texas First history



Three of these displays plus two more short displays are featured throughout the lobby



Write-ups, timelines, and interesting stories give visitors a glimpse into history



Artifacts and pictures spotlight various cultures and their contributions within Hitchcock

In the center of the lobby, amongst the displays, is a replica of the Liberty Bell. This bell was given to Mr. Payne on his 93rd birthday in honor of the Bicentennial. Mr. Payne would ring the bell at the start and close of every day. Notice the can lights were kept above this as well!



This banking center also features a kids' corner – the first of its kind in any of our banks. Along with plenty of toys, the back wall is a dry-erase coloring wall with permanent outline pictures of the area from an old coloring book the bank made. A great way to tie in history with the literal future of our community!



Across the lobby is something we are very excited about. We have new teller stations that are pod-like. Instead of the big, long teller line that had been taking over the lobby, our tellers are now able to serve a customer more one-on-one. We can open accounts right at the teller station, even allowing them to bring up a chair. And we have a meeting room for opening group and business accounts. Behind the stations is a timeline highlighting the first 50 years of TFB's history, a constant reminder of how far we've come.



Teller stations allow us to interact with the customer more personally



Lower stations are available for our elderly or disabled customers.

Finally, the Board Room, offices, and break room were also renovated. No more old appliances, mismatched furniture, and wood paneling.



Conclusion

The remodel has had a very positive effect on the city of Hitchcock.

The day of our grand re-opening was one of the busiest days the banking center had seen in a while. The event itself only lasted an hour or so, but the whole afternoon customers and community members kept bringing their families by to show off the banking center and share their memories. We learned a lot that day from our visitors, and we're still learning from people dropping in. Word of mouth of our remodel has spread like wildfire, and we're continuing to see increased foot traffic.

Not only are people coming by to look around, but business has been up. We had more accounts opened in the two weeks following the grand re-opening than the entire month before. We love that the community is stopping by to look around, ask questions, use our conference room for meetings, and more. It has strengthened our bond with the community and reminded them of how much we've been there for them, but also they've been here for us.

We are so pleased with the remodel. It truly does bring the past, present, and future together in service of the community, and we hope that you see that too!

