

These Walls: Grand Bank

By: Kirby Lee Davis The Journal Record August 8, 2014 0



BIXBY – It takes careful precision to design a building for both efficiency and elbowroom. But the architecture really gets interesting when you meet expectations for a tenant named Grand.

That's when you start adding 18-foot coffered ceilings, tall glass window bays and marble countertops, as Grand Bank fashioned for its 9-year-old Bixby branch. A brass chandelier's still in the works for installation later this

year.

"We wanted to do something that would hopefully withstand the test of time," said President and Chief Executive Austin Buerge. "We wanted a building that looked like it could have been here 100 years and built to last another 100 years."

This project started more than two years ago, when the Tulsa lender ruled out another expansion of the 3,000-square-foot end-cap space leased since 2005 for that Bixby branch. Choosing a 1.2-acre spot just east of Memorial Drive, the bank hired Tulsa architect Jack Arnold to help balance classic architectural banking fixtures with modern consumer needs.

"We wanted to, in a sense, differentiate ourselves from some other bank properties that are out in this territory," Arnold said. "We wanted to do something that might remind you of the past a little bit, but didn't look real trendy."

Grand Bank decided to limit drive-thru and inside teller space, embracing instead mobile and remote deposit systems, online banking services and other electronic consumer options. At the same time, Grand Bank embraced many traditional banking elements.

"One of the things we kept bringing up were the banks we would see in small cities, where you would walk in and see the tall ceilings," Arnold said. "It would just make you feel great when you walked inside."

Cowen Construction took those designs and delivered in March a 6,954-square-foot steel, cast-stone and stucco structure, its relaxing earth tones and Mediterranean tiles accenting three soaring arches before matching glass windows. That entryway leads customers into a broad atrium both spacious and contained, its dynamic moldings accented by recessed lighting.

"There's a lot of flexibility built into this facility, so if things change and morph around inside this area and they want to do some different things in this space, they can do it," Arnold said.

Teller services extend to the left, while loan officers wait to the right. In between, customers find two waiting areas and a television stand customers may use to fill out banking slips or checks.

"We want our locations to be extremely efficient from a space planning and a cost of ownership perspective," Buerge said. "We utilized efficient space planning to keep our total square feet down while still

allowing us more room to hire additional employees and serve more customers.”

The results apparently worked. Buerge said loans and deposits grew 20 percent over the last six months at its 8200 E. 101st St. South branch, Grand’s third.

“Our goal is to have fewer locations, but have each one be high-quality, high-service and high-touch,” he said. “Each one of our locations is ran like a free-standing bank, with a market president, lenders, branch managers, personal bankers and tellers.”

Grand Bank ended up occupying 4,437 square feet of the building. It leased 2,517 square feet to J. David Jewelry, subsequently reducing the bank’s ownership costs.

“Our new free-standing building costs us less to own per year than leasing our previous smaller end-cap space,” Buerge said.

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