

# UFCU branch features new design, technology

BY CHRISTOPHER MAHON  
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A new building on Brodie Lane looks more like an air traffic control tower than a bank.

But this sleek, glass structure is University Federal Credit Union's newest branch. It is not only aesthetically pleasing, but functional as well. The bank was chosen as a finalist in the 2004 Commercial Real Estate Awards in the retail category.

Antenora Architects built the 4,000-square-foot structure on less than an acre. Bank officials were worried at first that an all glass structure would act like a large greenhouse, creating unbearable heat during the Texas summers. But Bruce Morrison, project architect with Antenora Architects, calculated the sun's angles to keep it from shining into the building.

"The glass slopes outward so the roof and building create shade," Morrison says.

This additional branch meets the needs of the bank's growth strategy in Southwest Austin. The location on the corner of Brodie and Slaughter lanes combined with the glass design act as a billboard for the bank. This is important, says Morrison, because UFCU wanted a new flagship branch.

"They've got a lot of membership in the south," says Morrison. "It's a landmark that everyone can recognize."

There are added features on the inside too, like video tellers that are more efficient and provide extra security at the bank. When customers pick up the phone on the teller machines, they see the person with whom they're making the transaction. This allows the tellers to serve



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clients from a secure location.

The building's progressive design extends beyond the structure itself. Stephen Sharpe, editor of *Texas Architect* magazine and a judge for the awards, says the bank adds to the surrounding landscape.

"It's a project that reaches beyond the typical architecture of a bank," Sharpe



PHOTO COURTESY OF ANTENORA ARCHITECTS LLP

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says. "I bet the neighborhood loves it."

Brent Baker, the site's landscape architect echoes similar sentiments. Because the building is on a corner and has good visibility, he says he wanted to create a unique landscape to match the building's personality.

"The landscape will give a memorable experience," Baker says. "The landscape and building should complement each other."

Baker worked closely with the building's architects on a design that existed both inside and outside the building. The landscape design is an extension of the interior floor plan, he says. There are concentric ellipses inside the building, which

extend outside with trees that surround and frame the building. This visually extends the lobby outside the bank to the site's natural surroundings and the man-made structure, Baker says.

Baker says he also decided on an alternating pattern between grass and ground cover to make the immediate landscape unique, partially because this is the last remaining site on the block.

"We didn't want to treat this building like any other suburban building," Baker says.

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