**Program Summary:**
Renovation and expansion of a downtown building to reflect the region’s innovative and dynamic culture as the organization works to connect and develop the business community.

**Program Statement:**

**VISION:**
The overall vision for the building was a modern, light-filled office and conference center reminiscent of the original design. The goal was to create a space that provided an inspiring and creative environment for the staff and visitors, as well as an impressive meeting space in the existing building footprint. The challenge was to create this atmosphere in a building constructed in the 1950s with several subsequent renovations that left the space dark, enclosed, and outdated.

**STRATEGY:**
The design team applied several techniques to reconnect the building with the streetscape/community and uncover/update the modern, progressive design. Clear, floor-to-ceiling windows provide ample natural light. A repurposed parking lot adds square footage, an additional entry, and strengthens the presence. An exposed ceiling adds height. Thoughtful integration of technology and AV equipment communicates innovation.
The first floor includes a two-story lobby, a pitch room, a coffee bar, a small conference room, the board room, the kitchen, the copy room, workstations for staff, and one private space.

The parking lot was used to create a new conference room and courtyard. Rear entry points from the courtyard allow for an alternate entrance for staff and a dedicated conference room entrance for special events.
The second floor includes workstations, a conference room, and two private spaces.

The center of the building remains open to the first floor creating a unified, open floor plan.
The organization raised funds in the community to construct the original building in the 1950s. The building served as a regional marketing resource, promoted local commerce and connected the business community.

The original building was modern for its time with clean lines and open spaces.

Prior to the renovation, the organization considered selling and demolishing the building, both of which would have abandoned the building’s original and historical use.
The all glass curtain-wall, added in the 1970s, closed off the building. The tint and reflectivity of the glass precluded transparency and reflected the surrounding buildings which created an ill-defined façade that either faded into the background or read as a solid impermeable mass.

The recent renovation removed the 1970s-era reflective glass cladding to uncover and enhance the original 1950s façade.

Threshold spaces, defined by floating planes, landscaping, and a dynamic rhythm of thin metal columns, add depth and gradation to the streetscape transition into the building’s interior.
Applying thematic architectural details to what was a parking area and rear entrance adds depth to the building, further develops the connection to the streetscape, and provides the additional space needed.

The side courtyard serves as an outdoor space for employees while also functioning as a direct entry to the conference space.

The organization’s signature blue is used on the exterior walls.
The lower before-image highlights the dated, dark wood paneling, carpeted floor, dark windows, and red linoleum that were added in the 1970s.

The interior was fully gutted down to the structure, to completely transform the interior character.

A large audio-visual screen was strategically placed in the lobby to be clearly visible from the street, reinforcing the innovative brand and connecting the interior to the exterior.

Strategically placed blue panels and wood finishes soften the modern, industrial finishes creating an approachable and comfortable space.
An original round, two-story conference room located in the middle of the building was removed to create a spacious atrium that enables open communication, dynamic collaboration and business transparency.

Open space was sized for future growth of workstations, a key objective of the building owner.

The need for private offices for senior level staff and “phone booths” for those seeking periods of privacy are achieved through sliding glass doors. These maintain full natural light.
A stainless-steel railing maintains the openness of the space.

All workstations are identical in size which allows for reconfiguration as needed and creates equality among staff.
By repurposing the parking lot into interior space, a 100+-occupant Conference Room was created to serve the needs of both employees and board members, while providing event space for the community.

Flexible furniture with casters and nesting features allows easy reconfiguration of the space to fit the meeting needs of the staff and community.

Bright greens and blues used throughout the space reflect the dynamic organization and region.
Scale and pattern was re-established in the façade through exposing the original 1950’s module of brick and windows accented by dark vertical reveals. A more transparent low-E glass and improved lighting increase the visibility between interior and exterior space.

Bold accent colors, graphics and lighting treatments energize the façade and focus views into the interiors; reestablishing the building as a vibrant component in the fabric of the city streetscape.

The building is once again a contemporary destination for promoting business growth, and a reflection of the entrepreneurial vitality of the region.
Project Name:
David E. Roberts Center for Economic Development

Project Location:
Baton Rouge, LA

Owner/Client:
Baton Rouge Area Chamber

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Consultants:
Structural: Wardlaw & Lasseigne, LLC
Mechanical: Thompson Luke & Associates
Electrical: M&E Consulting
A/V: General Informatics
Office Furniture: AOS & LA Office Supply

General Contractor:
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