

Small Business Resource Center

Photography by Edward Badbam



A colorful, translucent light-box with visible light tubes adding a sense of motion draws visitors to the receptionist desk. The existing ceiling was retained, while new finishes and furniture create a welcoming space.



A curved desk that wraps the receptionist area includes an extension and guest chair where brief consultations take place. The chamber's main offices are in a different building.



The seating area with two groupings allows tenants to have brief meetings with visitors. The credenza and floating-panel screen to the left separates the area from another office entrance.

By Philip Morris



This small (1550-square-foot) renovation to serve the Montgomery Chamber of Commerce's Small Business Resource Center shows how far good design can go on a budget. It serves as an incubator providing tenants small offices, a receptionist and meeting areas at a modest rent. Many components – including the design – were donated.

"It was a challenging program since it had to do a lot of things for a lot of people," says interior designer Heather Steen, who led the project for Goodwyn, Mills & Cawood. "We had to match the existing color palette, because we were only renovating the lobby, but we were able to create an inviting and flexible space that appeals to a wide range of users."

The receptionist space, where two people work, now has a dramatic light-box that banners the name, so visitors know where to stop. A desk and visitor chair integrated into the unit allows the receptionist to talk to visitors about the program. Beyond are two seating areas where tenants can have deliberately brief meetings without taking visitors to their workspaces. A flat-screen television mounted above a credenza flanking the seating areas scrolls displays about businesses in the incubator.



Two corridors off the lobby were also remodeled like this one. Auburn University Montgomery and Alabama State have space in the building.