



# 1st Choice Savings & Credit Union

*TABER, ALBERTA*

*BRANCH TRANSFORMATION | TENANT IMPROVEMENT*

For many financial institutions across the country, COVID halted plans, progress, and construction. Everything had to change to adapt to a new consumer market focused on digital banking and increased health and safety procedures. While some financial institutions took this time trying to recover and survive, other institutions took this opportunity to redo and improve their facilities while many of their members remained at home. For 1st Choice Savings Credit Union, they weren't going to let COVID stop them from building a new branch, even if they had to work digitally.

## 3,500

SQUARE FEET



OUTDOOR PUBLIC SQUARE



AGRARIAN INTEGRATION





## *NEWGROUND ADAPTS TO DIGITAL DESIGNING*

NewGround starts our strategy with our clients through a Discovery Session. This Discovery Session, usually carried out in person, aims to fully develop a client's brand identity and how they want their brand to translate into their space. This includes new ideas for design, functionality, and how their consumers and/or employees will interact with the physical space. However, with the onset of COVID and the following health and safety restrictions, meeting in person became impossible. So NewGround set out into uncharted territory and conducted our first all-virtual Discovery Session.

"My favorite thing about the process would be NewGround's Discovery process, specifically because of how NewGround handled it," says 1st Choice Savings CEO, Jason Sentes. "I was never asked formal questions about budgets or square footage. We walked through the process to understand what we were trying to accomplish with the space. We used these blueprints and designs throughout our process."

While the digital world was different, NewGround accepted and thrived amid the challenges of COVID and being unable to meet in person. Overall, 1st Choice Savings was still extremely happy with the quality of work and the amount of communication.

## *A REFLECTION OF THE COMMUNITY*

Taber, Alberta is a small, farming town, but 1st Choice Savings takes great pride in the local community and all the farmers do for the region. In order to pay homage to this vibrant and important area, 1st Choice Savings wanted to ensure that they incorporated farming elements into their design. Taber's farming techniques are very unique; they use farming methods that result in large circles on their fields, visible even from satellites or from above. This unique visual element was incorporated into the design of the space.

We also incorporated an awning and public square within the credit union's square footage to allow for town events. The credit union is positioned well within the center of town, and the new awning means that public events can be held right there on the property.

"It has had a positive effect on the community. Neighboring facilities and businesses have started cleaning up their street presence to improve the overall look and feel of the community after our facility finished," says 1st Choice Savings CEO, Jason Sentes. "We've even had some folks who live outside of the direct community, who didn't realize we had a branch here, start showing interest because they thought we were new to the community. It really is a landmark for the town."

## *NEWGROUND PROVES INNOVATION IS KEY*

NewGround worked closely with 1st Choice Savings to ensure that all of their needs and design choices were met throughout the course of the project. While COVID may have originally posed a problem for the process, we were happy to implement new and innovative ways to work through the strategy and design process. From beginning to end, we made sure to collaborate with 1st Choice Savings every step of the way. Through integrating designs of the farming and agricultural community to implementing ATMs and community public squares, the finished product stands proudly as a physical representation of Taber and 1st Choice Savings themselves.

