

Grow Where You're Planted

Meet Dr. Phil Farley, a man with a vision for the revitalization of downtown Loveland

By Jade Cody
Special Sections Editor

In November 2008 at an event called Destination Downtown Loveland, keynote speaker William Hudnut, former Indiana congressman and four-term Indianapolis mayor, had two pieces of advice for Loveland: Be what you are, and grow where you are planted.

His words resonated with Dr. Phil Farley, the man spearheading the Loveland Community Fund Committee's drive for revitalization in the heart of Loveland, which he says is the downtown area. The LCFC is a division of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado.

Farley, who three years ago retired from IBM, has made it his mission to provide downtown Loveland with the tools it needs to flourish.

"In my opinion, downtown Loveland is the heart and soul of Loveland," Farley said.

"It seems that the trends that we're seeing throughout the country are that more and more people would like to live in a downtown environment. So we want to make sure that we can help create that environment that would attract people to live and to work downtown," he said.

Attracting downtown residents and workers is essential for a large resurgence downtown, he said. Although there are already a lot of really good stores, more are needed.

After spending 18 months researching what it would take to revitalize the downtown community, the Loveland Community Fund Committee found that more than anything, Loveland has a unique distinction as a community driven by art.

"Eight percent of the Loveland economy is driven by the arts, which I understand, is the same percentage of the economy represented by HP at the height of its employment in Loveland," Farley said. The LCFC is currently putting its efforts into helping initiate two projects, the Rialto Bridge project and ArtSpace.

Rialto Bridge expansion

The Rialto Bridge expansion would add 20,000 square feet to the existing Rialto building — one Farley said is direly cramped for space.

The Rialto Bridge project would gain space by way of a three-story building in the space currently occupied by two one-story buildings west of the theater. The new building would enhance the performances at the Rialto because it would provide much-

needed dressing rooms for performers, space for stage sets, an elevator and stairs, and both commercial and community offices and gathering spaces.

The Rialto would also have a space for Phyllis Walby's library of films, which was donated to the city. The library would be housed in a conference room/library that could also be used as meeting space for the community.

"The city is expected to fund about 3,000 square feet focused on the performers, so we stepped up as the Loveland Community Fund Committee and committed to raise the additional \$700,000 necessary to fund those community spaces — the community room which could provide space for smaller performances, a reception area and the library/conference room. The Rialto Bridge will not only enhance the experience for the performers, but also the experience for the patrons," Farley said.

Farley said the Rialto project is hinging on Amendments 60 and 61, as well as Proposition 101 in the upcoming election. If passed, he said the impacts to the Rialto Bridge project would be devastating.

For more information on the Rialto Bridge project visit www.rialtobridgecampaign.org

ArtSpace

Farley and the Community Fund also supported a project through ArtSpace, a non-profit organization that provides work/live housing to artists across the country through a \$15K grant to fund the initial feasibility study. Ideally, the ArtSpace housing would be located in downtown Loveland and would help foster the economic and residential push that the downtown area needs to thrive. The housing units would be owned and operated by ArtSpace and rented out as affordable housing to artists, many of whom when first beginning work are unable to support themselves with art as their primary source of income.

In a preliminary study, ArtSpace identified more than one hundred artists in the area who would like to live in this type of affordable housing, Farley said. They also found a little over 100 art related businesses in and outside of Loveland that would like to relocate to the building.

"These are all existing businesses supporting the arts, he said. "That's pretty significant that they had this kind of demand in Loveland." Farley said ArtSpace found Loveland had many more world-renowned artists than other communities they had visited in the past.



Dr. Phil Farley is spearheading the LCFC push for the Rialto Bridge project.

He said they are in the preliminary stages and have asked the City for funding to find a site location.

"They are asking city council to provide \$550,000 over the next two-to-three years for site location and all of the pre-design activities they need to go into," Farley said.

"We're helping the public understand that this is an ideal environment for public and private partnerships. The City would be asked to invest \$550,000 to get a \$15 million affordable housing space with maybe 100 new small businesses downtown. Even though ArtSpace is a nonprofit, they will own, maintain and pay the property taxes on the structure, thus increasing the property tax flow into city and county coffers. We're trying to get people to understand that the arts really do give an economic boost to the economy."

For more information about ArtSpace or to see some of its former projects, visit www.artspace.org.

Farley moved to Loveland in 1978, and before that worked as a mathematics professor at Regis University. He came to Loveland to work at HP in global marketing before moving to IBM. Farley joined the LCFC, which was then called the Loveland Community Foundation, 12 years ago. He served as a trustee of the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado before becoming a part time employee in July to drive the Rialto Bridge campaign.

"Downtown Loveland is the heart and soul of the community. We've got to make sure we grow where we were planted."

For more information on the Loveland Community Fund Committee, visit www.communityfoundationnc.org.