

Rialto Theater Center in downtown Loveland takes form

Construction work marches toward January opening

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The Rialto Theater Center -- the ambitious new project formerly known as the Rialto Bridge -- was a beehive Wednesday.

Construction workers with Golden Triangle Construction Inc. and a host of subcontractors are within a few days of enclosing the three stories of modern space tightly wedged between the historic Rialto Theater and the 104-year-old building to the west on Fourth Street.

"We have squeezed a lot of building into a very small space," said Loveland senior planner and project manager Mike Scholl.

With concrete floors poured, stairways in place and huge glass panels about to be mounted across the front of the community room, Scholl this week is conducting hardhat tours through the busy construction zone, giving visitors a preview of what is in store when the new building opens in January.

When finished, the space will include a new restaurant under the name Next Door, first- and second-floor space to serve users of the Rialto Theater, second-floor community events and conference space, and three third-floor office suites.

Funding for the 20,000- square-foot, \$4 million building is a public, private and philanthropic split.

Private developer Troy Peterson will own and lease the restaurant and office space, comprising half the building, the city will fund the much-needed theater expansion and the Community Foundation of Northern Colorado will pay for the space devoted to community use.

The new project, called the Rialto Bridge since it was first announced nearly two years ago, will be joined with the theater as the Rialto Theater Center -- the name anointed by Loveland's Cultural Services Board at a meeting earlier this month.

"It's really a single entity," Rialto theater manager Jan Sawyer said. "It should go forward under a single name."

When the first visitors cross the Rialto Center's threshold, they will first see a terrazzo floor, designed by Denver artist David Griggs.

"It will feature the Rialto name in nine different colors," Loveland cultural services director Susan Ison said. "It's going to be absolutely spectacular."

Griggs is best known regionally for his monumental "Dual Meridian" sculpture that is the centerpiece of Denver International Airport's international concourse.

In partnership with Rialto Theater Center architect Randy Shortridge, of the Fort Collins firm RB+B Architects, Griggs will oversee the artistic touches throughout the building.

"The building itself is going to be beautiful, but the art is going to enhance it and make it a warm and interesting and inviting place," Ison said. "It's nice to do a truly integrated project."

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