

MID-IOWA NEWS

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Woodruff finds strong partners in Ames

By: Teresa Kay Albertson , Special to The Tribune

Woodruff Construction and Woodruff Design are located in a quiet, bright office in east Ames. The furnishings are contemporary and light. The conference room near the main entrance is dominated by two florid paintings by Ames artist Bill Lee. The paintings feature buildings constructed by the company.

"Beautiful, aren't they?" said CEO Bill Woodruff, an accomplished artist himself.

One building featured in the paintings is the Hixson-Lied Student Success Center on the Iowa State University campus.

Some of the significant landmark buildings in Ames and on the Iowa State University campus that were built by Woodruff

Construction include Bethesda Lutheran Church, the Ames High School football stadium, Ames Municipal Pool, Towne Engineering Building and Beyer Hall.

Woodruff Construction has been around for a while.

"It was started by my dad, (Leonard Woodruff)," Woodruff said about the beginnings of Woodruff Construction in 1956. "He and Jack Evans started it in Fort Dodge."

The company focuses on commercial and industrial design and construction. Woodruff said Evans retired in the 1980s. Woodruff and his fraternal twin, Don, who is president of the company, returned to their roots and joined the firm 20 years ago.

"Thirteen years ago, we got a big job at Mary Greeley hospital," Woodruff said. "At that time, I had two young children, and this was a long-term project. I moved my family down here, and we decided to give it a try and open an office in Ames."

Woodruff said opening an office in Ames has been a good move for the company.

"In Ames, we've been able to attract workers on the professional level - architects, interns and construction engineers," Woodruff said. "But Ames itself is a challenging community. It needs to have a broader base of business support. Ames is not living up to its potential."

Woodruff said the company has been trying to educate the community to the benefits of a stronger business base.

"Most communities see economic development as a positive thing," Woodruff said. "I don't know if that is always the feeling here."



By Ronnie Miller/The Tribune

The Woodruff Construction and Woodruff Design office in east Ames is home to two paintings by Ames artist Bill Lee. The paintings feature buildings constructed by the company.

By economic growth, Woodruff said he does not mean sprawl, but well-planned, intentional growth.

Dirk Westercamp, president of Woodruff Design, the architectural arm of the business, said he is working with Story County Supervisor James Strohman and Ames Electric Services' Steve Wilson to help facilitate development.

"We are trying to be a catalyst, working toward smart change and growth," Westercamp said.

One point of common ground, Woodruff said, is the growth in green construction. He and Westercamp are accredited professionals in Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, which is offered by the U.S. Green Building Council.

An element of Woodruff's activities in the community has been his involvement in a Leadership Ames class a few years ago.

"It was a great experience," he said. "But I do think they need to add an economic development topic to the program."

Woodruff learned this month he will have the opportunity to expand on his Leadership Ames experience. He has been accepted into the Leadership Iowa program.

"I think it will give me a good perspective to bring back to Ames," he said.

As the company looks ahead, Woodruff said he expects things to remain busy. Current projects include the ISU Alumni Center, which is nearly complete, Nevada City Hall, several USDA projects and the Woodward-Granger High School.

"We are putting a lot of energy into the design-and-build part of our business," Woodruff said of the design company started six years ago. "It is like one-stop shopping. And we like the collaborative process."

"We really enjoy working with the public organizations in Ames," he said. "The Department of Transportation, ISU, Mary Greeley and the city, they all make for some strong partners in the community."