



FIRST FARMERS TO COMPLETE FINANCING PACKAGE TO RE-OPEN FRANKLIN THEATRE

FRANKLIN, Tenn. (March 30, 2010) – Movies, live entertainment, fresh popcorn and even first kisses are coming back to downtown Franklin as an important piece of the fundraising puzzle to Save The Franklin Theatre has fallen into place.

The Williamson County Office of First Farmers & Merchants Bank (www.myfirstfarmers.com) and the Heritage Foundation of Franklin & Williamson County (www.historicfranklin.com) today announced the bank will be handling construction financing for the long hoped-for project. This completes a critical phase of the project needed to put the landmark building on a path to reopen in possibly a year.

“We’re pleased to help the Heritage Foundation with the theatre project,” said Chuck Isaacs, senior commercial relationship manager, First Farmers Williamson County. “Franklin is a great city in which to live and work. Helping rebuild and reopen the Franklin Theater is a perfect way to bring our expertise and community focus to bear for the city. We’re excited to see this process continue.”

Idle since 2007, the historic building was purchased by the Heritage Foundation with plans to refurbish it for a multi-use entertainment facility. A fundraising campaign has been steadily raising money to help cover remodeling and renovation costs.

“We’re pleased that First Farmers was able to provide financing for the project,” said Mary Pearce, executive director, The Heritage Foundation of Franklin & Williamson County. “The theatre is a vital part of Franklin and First Farmers will be a wonderful partner in restoring it to prominence. That’s exactly what I’d expect a community bank to be about.”

The theatre opened July 15, 1937 with the showing of *Night Must Fall*, starring Robert Montgomery and Rosalind Russell. The one-screen cinema seated 600 on the main floor and 130 in the balcony and initial admission price was 25 cents for adults and 10 cents for children. In 1938, it became one of the first buildings on Main Street to be air conditioned and by the 1940s was showing movies seven days a week until its closure in 2007. Several special premiers have since been held at the cinema, including *Friday Night Lights* in 2004, *Elizabethtown* in 2005 and a number of Veggie Tale productions from now Franklin-based Big Ideas Inc.

The Heritage Foundation of Franklin & Williamson County is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization focused on preserving the historic resources in Franklin and Williamson County, Tennessee. Among its programs is the award-winning Main Street Program and the Downtown Franklin Association, which promotes and revitalizes the 150 unique places to explore in the 15-block downtown National Register District.

An official groundbreaking ceremony has been scheduled for Wednesday, April 7th. Additional details for this ceremony will be announced shortly.

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About First Farmers & Merchants Bank

Founded in 1909, First Farmers & Merchants Bank (Member FDIC) is one of the most successful independent banks in Tennessee, with total assets of approximately \$935 million and deposits in excess of \$772 million. An additional \$2.7 billion in assets is held by its Trust & Financial Management Department. Headquartered in Columbia, Tenn., the bank operates 17 offices in a seven county area in Middle Tennessee that includes Maury, Lawrence, Marshall, Hickman, Giles, Dickson and Williamson counties. It is distinguished by its commitment to traditional, personal banking relationships that incorporate state-of-the-art technology to provide the highest possible level of service. For additional information, visit www.myfirstfarmers.com or call the main office at 931.388.3145.