

Warner Ranch – Round Rock Related Articles

| | |
|--|----------|
| Articles | 2 |
| Austin-Round Rock MSA named "Best Metro for Business Expansions" | 2 |
| 2 big projects on tap for Williamson..... | 3 |
| Texas State gets \$6M for nursing..... | 6 |
| Toll roads to open Nov. 1 | 7 |
| IKEA seeking 300 local employees | 7 |
| Austin-Round Rock MSA ranks on list of "2006 America's 50 Hottest Cities" ... | 8 |
| Just one day till toll roads greet drivers | 8 |
| Sales Tax Revenue: friend or foe | 12 |
| Impact: Round Rock..... | 15 |
| Texas unemployment unchanged in October..... | 16 |
| Round Rock gets a positive job report from chambe..... | 18 |
| Retail hot spot will add a J.C. Penney | 20 |
| Expanding in Texas and U.S., IKEA Brings Swedish Home Furnishings & Meatballs to Austin-Area With Store's Opening; Grand Opening of IKEA Round Rock on November 15 Will Include Festivities, Flag-raising, Log-sawing, Community Involvement, Recognition of Customers..... | 22 |

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Articles

Austin-Round Rock MSA named "Best Metro for Business Expansions"

Expansion Management Magazine - 08.07.2006

When Samsung announced in mid-April that it would build its next generation semiconductor plant in Austin, Texas, it marked one of the largest investments by a foreign company in the U.S. Sure, a \$10.8 million grant from the Texas Enterprise Fund probably played a role in Samsung's decision but, let's face it, for a company making a multibillion dollar capital investment, \$10 million is just a little kiss on the cheek.

Site location decisions are made based largely upon data (demographic, economic and financial, taxes, cultural, etc.) gathered in an effort to measure the likelihood of a company's success in any given metro area. Businesses choose places like Austin, or Seattle, or Raleigh or Dallas because they are the "total package."

For our nation's mayors, attracting new business — and supporting existing business — is their No. 1 priority. Why? Because successful economic development programs result in increased job opportunities for their constituents, as well as additional tax dollars to pay for basic government infrastructure and services.

"Creating jobs and economic opportunity is one of the core priorities of my administration," said Greg Nickels, mayor of Seattle, Wash. "We've simplified the land use code, created a Business Advocate position to be a point person with businesses, and worked with individual industry sectors to tackle work force and other issues they are facing. We're proud to be a partner for business, and not a problem."

Working hand in glove with the business community is the hallmark of a successful metro area.

"Dallas' historic commitment to a strategic partnership with the business community has resulted in a healthy and prosperous community," said Laura Miller, mayor of Dallas, Texas. "Dallas is the heartbeat of the DFW region, a wonderful place to live, work and have fun."

Similar sentiments are shared by mayors throughout the country.

Top 10 Metros Overall

- 1. Austin-Round Rock, Texas MSA**
 - 2. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, Minn.-Wis. MSA**
 - 3. Raleigh-Cary, N.C. MSA**
 - 4. Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, Texas MSA**
 - 5. Houston-Baytown-Sugar Land, Texas MSA**
 - 6. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, D.C.-Md.-Va.-W.Va. MSA**
 - 7. Madison, Wis. MSA**
 - 8. Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, Wash. MSA**
 - 9. Pittsburgh, Pa. MSA**
 - 10. Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, Ariz. MSA**
- SOURCE: 2006 Mayor's Challenge, Expansion Management**

"We pride ourselves in creating an environment in which companies can thrive," said Charles Meeker, mayor of Raleigh, N.C. "Raleigh is emerging as a world-class marketplace, known for its solid business opportunities and commitment to maintaining an excellent quality of life for its citizens."

**"We pride ourselves in creating an environment in which companies can thrive."
— Charles Meeker, mayor of Raleigh, N.C**

But creating an environment that's attractive to business means paying close attention to the dollars and cents issues.

"We've worked hard in Raleigh to maintain a solid business climate by keeping taxes low and standards high," said Meeker.

Still, successful companies exist in virtually every community, so what makes some metros more attractive to business than others? (Click here to read commentary on [Why Some Communities Lose Businesses, While Others Do Not](#))

The answer is simple.

These metros have the best overall secondary school districts, the greatest concentration of workers with post-secondary advanced and technical degrees, high quality healthcare at a reasonable cost, a place where employees can enjoy exceptional quality of life at a reasonable salary, the best logistics infrastructure, and the best business climates as established by the state legislature in terms of taxes and spending.

We add all of those attributes together to come up with our list of the 2006 Top Business Opportunity Metros.

2 big projects on tap for Williamson

Shonda Novak

984 words

7 June 2006

[Austin American-Statesman](#)

Final

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English

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A Texas-based developer is planning two large mixed-use projects for Williamson County that will add hundreds of apartments and up to 2 million square feet of office space.

Simmons Vedder & Co. is in the preliminary planning stages for both projects in one of Texas' fastest-growing counties. One is slated for 43.5 acres within the massive La Frontera development in Round Rock; the other is on 63.5 acres near Lakeline Mall.

Altogether, the company will spend \$375 million to \$475 million on the projects, said John McKinnerney, a partner with Simmons Vedder.

The Round Rock development would be about 2 million square feet built along Texas 45 at the southwest corner of La Frontera. The majority of the project will be office space but will also include some shops and apartments. The company has not yet determined how many apartments it will build, McKinnerney said.

The Lakeline project, called Lakeline Station, will be 1.5 million square feet on 63 acres adjacent to a Capital Metro Park & Ride station that will become a rail stop in mid-2008. Lakeline Station will have offices, shops and about 800 apartments ranging from moderately priced to luxury units, McKinnerney said.

Simmons Vedder plans to break ground early next year on the office portion of the Lakeline project, which would open in early 2008; the apartments would open later that year.

Both projects are tied to the late-2007 opening of Texas 45, a toll road that will link four major highways: U.S. 183, MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1), Interstate 35 and Texas 130.

"We haven't built a roadway anything like it in Austin," said McKinnerney, whose projects will be at two major intersections along Texas 45. "The importance of that road will dictate where development goes in northern Travis and southern Williamson County over the next five to 10 years."

McKinnerney predicted that Texas 45 will greatly expand employers' access to workers, prompting existing employers to expand and new ones to relocate in areas along its route.

Don Martin, co-developer of La Frontera, agreed with McKinnerney's assessment, noting that Texas 45 "is the only major east-west connector to be built north of the Arboretum area. Areas in Cedar Park, Leander, Avery Ranch and the Lakeline area will be six to eight minutes from Round Rock, instead of 20 to 30 minutes or more."

Development patterns have been similarly altered with new toll roads in places such as Dallas, Atlanta and northern Virginia, where Simmons Vedder is building another mixed-use project that McKinnerney said will be a model for its Central Texas projects.

Dulles Station, in Herndon, Va., will have about 1.5 million square feet of office space and 1,100 apartments and condominium units.

Simmons Vedder's project in La Frontera will help meet significant demand for office space, said Joe Vining, vice president of the **Round Rock Economic** Development Partnership. Round Rock has missed some opportunities with companies looking for office space, including national financial and insurance firms considering establishing back-office operations in the area, Vining said.

"It will have a tremendous impact on our job growth," Vining said. "We've been without (first-class) office space for so long. I think the demand will quickly fill that up."

In addition, the apartments will serve an expanding work force, including support staff expected to be hired as three hospitals recruit 500 doctors, Vining said.

"A high percentage of those (staffers) are going to be pretty young, and these products probably will be tailored to that market," said Vining, who also noted that many employees will come with the opening of the upscale Round Rock Premium Outlet Center in August and a 252,000-square-foot IKEA store, scheduled to open in the spring.

Simmons Vedder expects to file plans this summer with the City of Austin for the Lakeline project and with the City of Round Rock for the La Frontera development, McKinnerney said.

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(Box)

Simmons Vedder & Co.

Founded: Tom Simmons and Wolf Vedder left Trammell Crow Co. in 1992 to form their own company. Vedder is now president and CEO; Simmons is chairman. Both have MBAs from Harvard.

Based: In Austin and Houston, with offices in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., and Herndon, Va.

What it does: Specializes in the acquisition and development of commercial real estate and multifamily properties. The company has built or acquired more than \$1.5 billion in projects since 1995 in Atlanta; Austin; Denver; Houston; Oklahoma City; Orlando, Fla.; San Antonio; and Washington.

Other Austin projects: The Quarters, a 825-unit student housing development in West Campus; the Triangle, a 22-acre, mixed-use community in Central Austin; and Reserve at Bull Creek, a 26-acre office park.

(Box)

Other developers with La Frontera plans

North American Properties: Cincinnati-based company is set to break ground by the end of the year on a mixed-use project on about 9 acres at La Frontera Boulevard and Hesters Crossing Road, pending approvals and permits from the City of Round Rock. Plans call for 349 residential units; 13,677 square feet of retail; 19,000 square feet of offices and 12,600 square feet of restaurants, said Mike Pacillio, a partner with North American Properties.

Oxford Alliance Investments LLC: This affiliate of Colliers Oxford is constructing three buildings fronting Hesters Crossing Road, each with 4,000 to 6,500 square feet of professional and medical office space and each available for purchase, said George

McCanse, president of Oxford Alliance. A second phase will include an adjacent 24,000-square-foot, two-story office building. Both phases will cost about \$5 million.

Cousins Properties Inc.: Developer has property at La Frontera, but spokesman Matt Gove said the company is not ready to talk about its plans.

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Texas State gets \$6M for nursing

Austin Business Journal - 11.08.2006

A new nursing school in Round Rock will bear the St. David's name, thanks to a \$6 million gift from the health care system's nonprofit foundation.

The **St. David's Community Health Foundation** has donated the funds to help Texas State University-San Marcos establish the nursing program. The money will help the school hire new faculty, buy equipment and pay expenses at its **Round Rock Higher Education Center**.

This year, the Texas Legislature gave preliminary approval for a \$35 million nursing building in Round Rock. Texas State officials expect legislators to fund the project in its 2007 session, and the school could break ground by spring 2008. If that schedule sticks, Texas State will admit its first class of 100 junior-level students to the program in fall 2010.

Denise Trauth, Texas State president, says the school will be named the St. David's School of Nursing.

"This is not just a gift to Texas State -- it is a gift to Texas," she says. "It will allow us to establish a new school of nursing at considerably less cost to the taxpayer than previously expected."

The gift highlights recent efforts to address what health care providers are calling a Central Texas nursing shortage.

In September, the Seton Healthcare Network and St. David's HealthCare Partnership announced they will give **Austin Community College** about \$847,000 during the next four years. The effort will fund three new full-time faculty positions and one full-time staff position, which will allow the college to expand its offerings to 10 extra nursing students a year.

Growth trajectories estimate that Central Texas will need 11,000 nurses by 2012 -- a 25 percent jump over the number employed in 2002. Seton says it will need 3,000 more nurses during the next 15 years to keep up with patient demand.

"We are pleased to be a partner with Texas State in this important effort," says Dick Moeller, president and CEO of the St. David's foundation. "Nursing education programs in Texas are at full capacity, and the need for more nurses is critical."

Toll roads to open Nov. 1

Austin Business Journal - 09.19.2006

Austin's new toll roads will open to traffic on Nov. 1 -- a year ahead of schedule, according to the **Texas Department of Transportation**.

The Central Texas Turnpike Project includes: the Loop 1 extension from Parmer Lane to State Highway 45 North; SH 45 North from Loop 1 to State Highway 130; and SH 130 from U.S. Highway 79 to U.S. Highway 290.

In December, another segment of SH 130 -- from I-35 to US 79 -- will open, bringing Central Texas more than 40 miles of new roadways in less than four years. The remaining segments of SH 130 (US 290 to US 183 in southeast Austin) will open by Dec. 2007, TxDOT officials say.

In addition to a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Nov. 1, an early opening celebration is scheduled for Oct. 22. Plans include a competitive run, cycling tour and other family activities.

"For decades, area motorists have been asking for congestion relief and help will arrive on November 1 - ahead of schedule and under budget," says Phil Russell, director of TxDOT's turnpike division. "This is one of the best examples of what toll financing can bring -- improved mobility sooner rather than later."

IKEA seeking 300 local employees

Austin Business Journal - 07.20.2006

IKEA International A/S is recruiting nearly 300 new employees for its new Round Rock store opening this fall.

The store will be the Swedish home furnishing company's third store in Texas and 29th in the U.S.

"We are thrilled to offer interested job seekers in the area diverse positions with limitless opportunity at a global company," says Jeff O'Shaughnessy, store manager of IKEA Round Rock. "At IKEA, we realize that the opportunity to be able to do the things in life that bring success and happiness is extremely valuable to our coworkers."

Prospective employees can apply for almost 300 positions available in home furnishings sales, interior decoration, customer service, safety and security, cashiers,

maintenance, goods flow, receiving, warehouse, stock replenishment, and approximately 60 food service positions.

IKEA offers full medical/dental insurance to employees working 20 hours or more per week with eligibility for domestic partners and children, vacation, paid maternity or paternity leave, paid time off for child adoption, tuition assistance, 401(k) match, professional development, training and mentoring programs, and a discount on IKEA purchases.

Interested candidates should apply online at **www.ikea-usa.com**. The new 252,000 square-foot IKEA is currently under construction on 22 acres at I-35 and University Boulevard in Round Rock.

IKEA employs more than 10,000 in the U.S. and 90,000 globally. There are more than 235 IKEA stores in 34 countries.

Austin-Round Rock MSA ranks on list of "2006 America's 50 Hottest Cities"
- 06.30.2006

Austin-Round Rock MSA ranked 18 on the list of "2006 America's 50 Hottest Cities" for business expansions and relocations.

Five Texas cities made the list, which polls 80 prominent site location consultants on their opinion of the 50 best cities in the US for expanding or relocating a business. Nashville, Tennessee topped the list at No. 1.

The annual list is coordinated by Expansion Management Magazine.

Just one day till toll roads greet drivers

Ben Wear

1385 words

30 October 2006

[Austin American-Statesman](#)

Final

B1

English

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Central Texans, in case you've been vacationing on Krypton and hadn't heard, we will see something new starting in a little over 24 hours: toll roads. The new roads and the new pay-to-drive setup, of course, raise an almost infinite set of questions.

Newspapers being by nature finite things, the bosses only gave me room to answer some of them. So, here goes:

What roads are opening this week?

A 3.5-mile extension of MoPac Boulevard (Loop 1) from just north of Parmer Lane connecting to Texas 45 North; Texas 45 North, running east-west from RM 620 to the new Texas 130 (An extension west to U.S. 183 will open in late spring); and Texas 130, a north-south road from U.S. 290 to U.S. 79. Another 13.8 miles will open in December from U.S. 79 to Interstate 35 north of Georgetown, and yet another 20.2 miles from U.S. 290 south to U.S. 183 at Mustang Ridge should open by the end of 2007.

How much will I have to pay to drive?

Nothing for two months, a promotional period that the roads' owner, the Texas Department of Transportation, is offering to entice people to try out the roads.

People with electronic toll tags (What? See below.) will get additional free or discounted rates through February and a permanent 10 percent discount over cash customers.

The price amounts to about 12 cents a mile. But given the toll approach, with periodic toll plazas on the main lanes and toll stations at many entrances and exits (but not all), what you pay per mile will depend on when you get on and get off the tollways.

Can you be more specific? I need to know how many quarters to have.

Well, on MoPac, there will be one "main lane" plaza just north of Merriltown Drive, where cash customers will pay 75 cents. On Texas 45 North, there will be two such plazas -- again, with a 75 cent fee -- one near Heatherwilde Boulevard in eastern Round Rock and the other (available only after the whole road opens in a few months) just west of Parmer Lane.

The charge at ramp plazas, when there are toll stations, will be 50 cents if you pay cash. But the majority of the three dozen or so entrances and exits on Loop 1 and Texas 45 North have no toll charges.

What about Texas 130?

The main lane plaza charge will be \$1.50 because the distance between the plazas will be longer. The two sections of Texas 130 opening this week and next month, which run almost 29 miles, will have one main lane plaza apiece, totalling \$3 for the whole drive, or 10.3 cents a mile.

And for all three roads, the charges for people with electronic toll tags will be 10 percent less. So that \$1.50 cash charge on Texas 130 would be \$1.35 with a toll tag.

Are there some vehicles that don't have to pay?

Only law enforcement and marked emergency vehicles such as fire trucks and ambulances.

Explain this "main lane" plaza thing to me. I'm going to have to stop at toll booths every few miles, right?

Not if you get a toll tag, which the Transportation Department is calling a TxTag. These are windshield stickers, smaller than a credit card, with a microchip. At main lane plazas and at ramp plazas, devices suspended on metal gantries above the road will recognize your individual tag and debit your account for the toll.

My account? My bank account?

No, your pre-paid TxTag account, assuming you've set one up, which you can do by going to www.txtag.org, calling (888) 468-9824 or going to the tollway customer service center at 12719 Burnet Road.

You'll get the windshield sticker free, but you'll have to pre-pay \$20 in tolls. If you use a debit or credit card, each time your account falls under \$10, it will hit your card for another \$20 to replenish the account. The rules on this vary if you have multiple cars and tags or a business account.

And you can also choose to simply put \$20 on your tag and replenish it from time to time at your choosing. But this exposes you to the possibility of driving on the road when your tag is, in effect, broke and then having to pay a \$5 processing charge in addition to the missed toll.

So I don't stop if I have a TxTag?

Correct. You can drive through those main lane plazas at full highway speed and the ramp plazas at, of course, a slower speed appropriate to entering or exiting a freeway. In each case, there will be booths off to the side for cash customers. They may have to wait in line to pay. Most of that time they'll pay an attendant, but on some ramp plazas, there will be a basket to toss in change.

What if I go under one of those toll readers without a tag or blow through a toll booth lane without paying?

A picture will be taken of your vehicle and its license plate, and the registered owner will get a bill in the mail for the toll charge and the \$5 processing fee. If that person (you, perhaps) still doesn't pay, collection agencies get involved, the fees get much higher, and a court appearance could eventually be required. Again, the responsible party is the vehicle owner, not the driver at the time the violation occurred.

Can I move my tag from car to car?

Not very easily, and it's not recommended. Remember, they're free (at least for now; the state may eventually charge for it), so you might as well get one for all your cars.

What about rental cars?

For now, they can go through the cash booths. Or if they're going to be in Central Texas for a few days, they can buy a temporary TxTag with \$20 pre-paid.

I'm a senior citizen. What sort of discount do I get?

None

Do motorcycles pay the same toll charges? Can they get TxTags?

Yes, they pay the same toll charges, and they can get a toll tag as well. These tags are slightly different from those for cars, and bike owners will have to pay a \$20 tag deposit, as well as the pre-paid tolls.

Will my TxTag work on Dallas or Houston toll roads?

Yes, it's true, and in Tyler, too. And if you have a Dallas or Houston toll tag, they will work on the Central Texas roads as well.

I have a toll tag from Illinois. Will it work here?

No. Only tags issued by Texas toll agencies work in the state. And your Texas tags won't work in other states.

I hear there's another toll road opening next year, U.S. 183-A, and that TxDOT isn't running it. Will my TxTag work there?

Yes. The Central Texas Regional Mobility Authority is building that road, and the toll money will go to that agency, not the state. But the two agencies have combined their toll operations, and a TxTag will work on that road as well.

So now I have to pay to drive where it was free before?

No. Some portions of these three roads go places where there was no road at all before.

But in the places where they overlay pre-existing roads such as FM 1325, RM 620 and **Louis Henna** Boulevard, there will be free frontage roads that trace the same path as the roads that were there before. For example, you can still get from the Parmer and MoPac intersection to I-35 for free along FM 1325.

What will the speed limit be on the tollways?

70 miles per hour at first. The state will conduct traffic studies and could change the limits later.

Getting There appears Mondays. For questions, tips or story ideas, contact Getting There at (512) 445-3698 or bwear@statesman.com. JumpHead:

IKEA furniture may be cheap, but Round Rock hopes for big bucks

11/16/2006 11:16 AM

By: Allison Toepperwein



Humongous crowds packed opening day at IKEA in Round Rock.

IKEA is now officially open in Round Rock. City leaders are calling the section of town where IKEA and the new outlet mall are located the "epicenter of retail."

This is the only IKEA in Central Texas, and city leaders say they've already seen people traveling to Round Rock for the inexpensive, modern Swedish furniture.

"We're drawing folks from Temple, I met a couple from San Antonio. We're importing sales tax dollars from all over Central Texas. We feel the epicenter for growth in Central Texas, this I-35/University Blvd. intersection. And the entire University Blvd. corridor. And we're not going to stop here," Round Rock Mayor Nyle Maxwell said.

The 252,000 square-foot store employs 300 coworkers is located along Interstate 35 at the University Boulevard exit.

"Anytime you get an opportunity to add another sales tax generator to Round Rock, it's a great victory for us. Because, as you know, we've tried over the last few years to lessen our dependency on Dell," Vining said.

Round Rock's Premium Outlet Mall opened three months ago and is located one block north of IKEA. The city of Round Rock also hopes having IKEA in town will cause other businesses to locate here.

"What's very significant about that is that the two of those combined make an attraction, and a lot of people will start looking at Round Rock in a different way," economic development director Joe Vining said.

Sales Tax Revenue: friend or foe

Cities work to balance revenues and expenditures

By [Christ Snow](#)

Building a stronger base for sales tax has become an increasingly important priority for both Pflugerville and Round Rock city officials. One city hopes to form a better foundation for business, while the other plans to continue diversifying retail. Both see these efforts as an opportunity to minimize property tax rates.

WATCH THE VIDEO

Retail mecca

News 8 Austin's Allison Toepperwein reports from opening day in Round Rock.

[PLAY](#) [ADD TO CART](#)

| City Facts | |
|---------------------|--|
| ROUND ROCK | General Fund Expenditures: \$79 million |
| | Population: 88,500 |
| | Tax Rate: \$0.36021 cents/\$100 |
| | Genl. Fund Sales Tax Revenue: \$49,800,000 |
| | City Limits: 30.4 square miles |
| | ETJ: 67.5 square miles |
| PFLUGERVILLE | General Fund Expenditures: \$15.5 million |
| | Population: 28,939 |
| | Tax Rate: \$0.635 cents/\$100 |
| | Genl. Fund Sales Tax Revenue: \$1,980,000 |
| | City Limits: 16.5 square miles |
| | ETJ: 43.4 square miles |

PFLUGERVILLE BUDGET:

| ■ General Fund Expenditures | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Administrative | \$2,894,854 |
| Library | \$619,624 |
| Planning | \$704,694 |
| Street/Fleet | \$1,858,819 |
| Engineering | \$734,560 |
| Parks | \$1,987,250 |
| Police/Court | \$6,099,772 |
| Building | \$601,787 |

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Administration**
Employ 2 new personnel
- **Parks and Recreation**
Employ 2.5 new personnel
- **Planning Department**
Employ 1 new personnel
- **Police Department**
Employ 7 new personnel
- **Street Department**
Employ 5 new personnel
- **Library**
Computer system upgrade



32 computers were added to the library.

Pflugerville's tax rate dilemma

The annual budget for a Texas city usually relies on two major sources of revenue—property taxes or sales taxes.

Ideally, a city will use a balance of both since property taxes provide a more guaranteed income, but can frustrate homeowners, while sales taxes might fluctuate with the nation's economy, yet can ease the financial burden from residents.

As a bedroom community with little commercial growth, Pflugerville depends on property taxes for city operations since even the properties along IH 35 fall within Austin's extraterritorial jurisdiction.

So for the 2007 fiscal year beginning in October, Pflugerville attempted to give homeowners a break by cutting property tax rates, from \$0.635 per \$100 valuation to \$0.624.

"It was very important [to the council] to lower the tax rate and they did," said Lauri Gillam, the city's finance director and assistant city manager. "The staff followed what they wanted to do without lowering the level of service in our city."

Yet despite the change, residents may still get a higher bill since appraised property values increased by 7.6 percent. Owners of an average-valued home, worth \$155,391, will pay \$969.64 this year, Gillam said.

Hope for the future

Pflugerville has hope for change, Gillam said, starting with a new Wal-Mart that will open next year at FM 685

and Pfennig Lane. The store is expected to emerge as an epicenter for other businesses.

Pflugerville also has another prime opportunity to attract more commercial growth along the intersection of the toll roads SH 45 and SH 130.

By 2010, the council anticipates reaching \$4.5 million in sales taxes to add into the budget compared to the nearly \$2 million slated for the 2007 fiscal year.

Round Rock's security

In contrast to Pflugerville, Round Rock's budget already relies heavily on sales taxes to generate more than 60 percent—or \$47,753,559—of their revenue for general operations alone.

Almost half of that number comes from money received through an agreement with Dell, Inc. that gives the city a portion of sales taxes produced from all Dell purchases

| ROUND ROCK BUDGET: | |
|--|--------------|
| ■ General Fund Expenditures | |
| Administration | \$1,958,757 |
| Transportation | \$759,319 |
| City Shop | \$1,015,677 |
| Finance | \$1,388,466 |
| Information Technology | \$1,266,184 |
| Human Resources | \$920,926 |
| Municipal Court | \$677,571 |
| Police | \$18,664,616 |
| General Services | \$15,373,701 |
| Purchasing | \$494,325 |
| Engineering & Development | \$3,046,804 |
| Building Inspection | \$817,562 |
| Planning & Comm. Development | \$1,751,968 |
| Fire | \$11,017,725 |
| Street | \$7,907,418 |
| Parks & Recreation | \$8,268,484 |
| Library..... | \$2,300,117 |
| Legal Services | \$1,205,725 |
| HIGHLIGHTS | |
| The budget will focus a major portion of funds on improving public safety and transportation. These two issues emerged as most important to residents during an open house forum held this spring where more than 600 residents participated in the process. | |
| ■ Police Department | |
| • Full funding of new motorcycle program | |
| • Employ 6 new personnel, including 4 police officers and 2 support staff | |
| ■ Fire Station | |
| • Employ 8 firefighters following completion of Fire House 7 | |
| ■ Transportation | |
| • Purchase a computer system to monitor pavement conditions | |

made in Texas.

Round Rock Finance Director Cindy Demers noted the city could dedicate additional Dell-generated funds, but practices a financial management policy instead that requires them to depend on no more than 50 percent of sales tax monies to come from the company in that portion of the budget.

The city then directs the extra sales tax for capital projects or to deplete debt early, which in turn, keeps down the property tax rate.

That is why the city staff and council members made a concerted effort to solicit more destination retail, including the new Premium Outlets and IKEA, slated to open next month.

“Sales tax [revenue] is critical to our operations,” City Manager Jim Nuse said. “Having a diverse retail, including destination retail, is a top priority for our city council.”

As for the financial management policy, it is primarily a preventative practice, safeguarding against any economic slumps because when people quit buying computers, Round Rock has no financial guarantee.

In 2002, the city experienced a short-term slump following the dot.com crash and the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. However, the city has a plan to combat similar or worse situations.

“We monitor sales tax revenue on a monthly basis,” Demers said. “If we see a slowing of sales, then we

slow expenditures.”

In the event of a consistent pattern of decreasing sales, they might halt or delay projects. Demers also mentioned a “rainy day” fund where they keep a rate comparable to 33 percent of their expenditures available for an emergency.

She also notes that Round Rock’s heavy use of sales taxes translates into lower property taxes. A resident who owns an average value home will pay \$598.42 a year.

Overall, the budget increased by around 10 percent to a total \$119 million budget, with the new property tax rate set at 37.105 cents per \$100 of valuation.

Impact: Round Rock

1. Annex Land Purchased

Williamson County contracted 25 acres of land off Old Settlers Boulevard near Sunrise Road for the county's new Round Rock Annex. The new building will take about two to three years to complete and will include offices for Precinct 1 Commissioner Lisa

Birkman, justice of the peace, constable, sheriff's office substation, EMS, tax office and the Williamson County and Cities Health District.



2. Holiday Bazaar

The Clay Madsen Recreation Center will host a free holiday bazaar Saturday, Nov. 11, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The Rock'N Around the Holidays Bazaar will have more than 90 vendors displaying jewelry, candles, toys, pictures, holiday décor, holiday gifts and more. Contact Dawn Moonan at 218-3216 for more information.

3. Janitor's Warehouse

A new wholesale and retail distributor of janitorial and packaging supplies opened in September at 3910 Gattis School Road. Janitor's Warehouse sells toilet paper, paper towels, soap, chemicals, trash liners, bowl cleaners, commercial floor equipment and packaging supplies like boxes, tape, peanuts, bubble and foam wrap. Customers can place orders in the new showroom complete with a floor demo room and full supply store. Call 671-7627 for more information.

4. New Music Store

Danny Ray's Music will open at the end of November, at 1920 Sam Bass Road next to the new Red Onion Market. The store offers a full line of guitars including Martin and Fender. Danny Ray's will be the only Fender dealer in Round Rock with the closing of the Brook Mays Music Store in Hester's Crossing. Dan Ellis, owner, also plans to offer lessons on most instruments and have a full-line repair store. To inquire about lessons, call 671-TONE (8663).

5. Texas BBQ Cookoff

The Texas Country Music Fest and BBQ Cookoff will be Nov. 17 and 18 at Old Settlers Park. The Cookoff will offer Texas BBQ, live music by Stoney LaRue, Micky and the Motorcars, Granger Smith and Chute Nine. Two-day tickets are \$20 online and \$30 at the gate. Tickets for Friday are \$10 online and \$15 at the gate and Saturday tickets are \$15 online and \$20 at the gate. Tickets provide you with barbecue and live music. Tickets available at www.texascountrymusicfest.com.

Albertsons to Ross

Ross Stores, Inc. has signed an agreement with Albertsons LLC to purchase 46 of the

closed Albertsons real estate sites in California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, Colorado and Oklahoma. The company plans to incorporate these properties into its 2007 expansion program. Ross will take possession of some of these sites as early as this month, with estimated openings as early as March 2007. No announcement has been made about the Albertsons location at 620 and IH 35.

6.A Christmas to Remember

The First Baptist Church of Round Rock will have its third annual Christmas presentation of "A Christmas to Remember" which blends traditional carols and seasonal songs with new material. Music and drama combine to tell the making of present day memories, as well as celebrating the truth of that first Christmas. The presentation will be Dec. 9 & 10. See more information and show times at www.fbcrr.org or call First Baptist Church at 255-3454.

Texas unemployment unchanged in October

503 words

17 November 2006

17:22

[Associated Press Newswires](#)

English

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AUSTIN (AP) - The state's unemployment rate remained steady at 4.8 percent although the state added 27,900 nonagricultural jobs in October, the second-largest gain of the year, the Texas Workforce Commission reported Friday.

The commission said the jobless rate remained at its lowest level in five years. The number of working Texans rose to just over 11 million in October, but statewide unemployment also increased.

Initial claims for unemployment benefits jumped nearly 17 percent in October, to 54,918 from 47,016 in September.

Both the unemployment rate and job figures were adjusted for seasonal trends in hiring and firing, which most economists believe gives a better picture of the job market. Local jobless rates are not adjusted.

Midland, Amarillo and Austin had the lowest unemployment rates, while El Paso, Brownsville and the McAllen area had the highest jobless figures.

Statewide, the number of people with jobs has increased for 25 straight months, according to the state commission.

"The Texas labor market continues to gain momentum, bringing more good news for employers and job seekers as we approach the end of the year," said commission Chairwoman Diane Rath.

Ron Lehman, who represents employers on the commission, said gains were spread across the state and through many industries.

Karen Person, Texas regional manager for Spherion Corp., a temp and recruiting agency, said the job market for professional workers has turned in favor of job seekers.

"Employers can't take a couple weeks to make a (hiring) decision, because that candidate will be out the door," she said. "We're even seeing signing bonuses coming back."

Person said hiring has been strong in information technology, accounting and engineering.

The state commission said 9,000 jobs were added in construction, 8,700 jobs in leisure and hospitality, and 4,000 in manufacturing.

Following are the preliminary October unemployment rates with revised September figures in parentheses for Texas metropolitan areas. The figures are not seasonally adjusted, which resulted in a statewide rate of 4.6 percent, slightly lower than the seasonally adjusted rate.

Abilene 3.9 (3.9)

Amarillo 3.6 (3.6)

Austin-**Round Rock** 3.7 (3.8)

Beaumont-Port Arthur 5.8 (6.0)

Brownsville-Harlingen 6.1 (6.2)

College Station-Bryan 3.7 (3.7)

Corpus Christi 4.9 (5.0)

Dallas-Plano-Irving 4.5 (4.6)

El Paso 6.8 (6.8)

Fort Worth-Arlington 4.5 (4.5)

Houston-Sugar Land-Baytown 4.5 (4.7)

Killeen-Temple-Fort Hood 5.3 (5.3)

Laredo 4.8 (4.8)

Longview 4.3 (4.4)

Lubbock 3.7 (3.8)

McAllen-Edinburg-Mission 6.3 (6.6)

Midland 3.4 (3.3)

Odessa 3.9 (3.9)

San Angelo 4.2 (4.3)

San Antonio 4.4 (4.4)

Sherman-Denison 4.4 (4.4)

Texarkana 5.0 (5.0)

Tyler 4.4 (4.4)

Victoria 4.1 (4.1)

Waco 4.3 (4.4)

Wichita Falls 4.3 (4.2)

7

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Round Rock gets a positive job report from chamber

Andrea Lorenz

651 words

16 November 2006

[Austin American-Statesman](#)

Williamson County

02

English

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This year has been a good one for job creation and retention in **Round Rock**, Joe Vining told the City Council last week.

The openings of furniture store IKEA this week and the **Round Rock** Premium Outlets in August, as well as construction on two hospitals, are obvious gems, he said.

But he also emphasized that existing companies are growing.

Vining is the vice president of economic development for the **Round Rock** Chamber of Commerce.

He gave the City Council some encouraging numbers: 1,000 jobs have been created in **Round Rock** this year by companies that expanded, and 83 percent of companies interviewed reported plans for expansion in the next year.

Square lighting

Sure, the day after Thanksgiving is a shopper's dream, but in Williamson County, the lighting of the Georgetown square creates a holiday mood in a way that malls -- even the new **Round Rock** Premium Outlets -- cannot.

Caroling and refreshments start at 5:30 p.m. Nov. 24, and an official square-lighting ceremony begins at 6 p.m. The sheriff's office and the Georgetown Police Department will accept toy donations for children in need as part of their Brown Santa/Blue Santa programs.

Stores on the square will be open until 8 p.m. for those shoppers who did not buy enough gifts that morning.

Volente Road to close

Cedar Park announced that Volente Road (RM 2769) east of Dies Ranch Road will be closed Saturday and Sunday. During that time, the city plans to complete the connection of Volente Road to Anderson Mill Road South.

To get to Volente or the Bella Vista neighborhood while traveling west from RM 620, the city suggests going north on Anderson Mill Road, turning left on Dies Ranch Road and then traveling back to Volente Road.

To get from Volente or Bella Vista to RM 620, turn left on Dies Ranch Road, follow it to Anderson Mill Road and reconnect to Volente Road.

Plant permit sought

A **Round Rock** concrete company has applied for a Texas Commission on Environmental Quality permit to build two concrete plants near Liberty Hill.

Lauren Concrete LP wants to put them at the southeastern corner of the U.S. 183 and County Road 258 intersection.

A public hearing has been set for 7 p.m. Dec. 14 at the Liberty Hill school district's administration offices, 14001 Texas 29 West. There will be an informal discussion and a formal comment period.

Written comments may be submitted before the hearing to the Office of the Chief Clerk, MC-105, Texas Commission on Environmental Quality, P.O. Box 13087, Austin, TX 78711.

To see the application, go to either of the commission's Austin offices at 12100 Park 35 Circle or 1921 Cedar Bend.

More ways to give

Through Monday, the City of Hutto is calling on residents to give canned or dry goods for area families that do not have enough to eat during the holidays.

All city locations, including City Hall at 401 West Front St., will accept the donations. On Tuesday, the city plans to deliver them to the food pantry at Hutto Lutheran Church.

If you have a favorite Hutto city department, be sure to drop off the goods there; city officials and staff members are in competition to see which department can raise the most. Based on the large turnout of interested people at meetings in the past few months, our money's on the City Council.

In the western part of the county, Cedar Park is wrapping up Operation Christmas Child Week. Fill a shoe box with toys, stuffed animals, crayons and other items for the group Samaritan's Purse to give to a child in need in another country. Drop donations off at HighPoint Fellowship at 600 West New Hope Road.

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Retail hot spot will add a J.C. Penney

M.B. Taboada

634 words

16 November 2006

[Austin American-Statesman](#)

Final

D1

English

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A once-obscure intersection in **Round Rock** has become the area's newest retail hot spot.

Thousands flocked to IKEA's big blue box during its grand opening Wednesday, some even camping out during the previous the two days. The 252,000-square-foot store is the largest single retail space in Central Texas. Directly across the street, the **Round Rock** Premier Outlets opened in August.

Now, J.C. Penney Co. Inc. will join the retail rush, opening its third Central Texas stand-alone store next fall in the designated retail area surrounding IKEA, at Interstate 35 and RM 1431, recently renamed as University Boulevard east of the interstate. Work will begin on the store's 8 1/2 acre site today.

It's part of a wave of major retail projects to open in Central Texas over the next year and just one piece of development that will take place in the 42 acres surrounding IKEA.

Round Rock officials expect IKEA and the new outlet mall to draw 6 million to 7 million people a year to the intersection and generate millions in sales tax revenue.

And Penney wants a piece of the pie.

"We're going where the retail growth is," said Tim Lyons, a spokesman for Penney. "Having a concentration of retail helps to drive traffic to your site . . . There's a lot of growth there and we're trying to get our stores in the right location where we can serve our customers."

At IKEA, traffic was jammed and lines snaked around the building prior to opening. Employees handed out 2,500 gift cards in varying denominations within 20 minutes after the store opened at 9 a.m., and they banged together yellow and blue Thundersticks to pep up the hundreds of shoppers as they poured through the doors. Shoppers traveled from Killeen and San Marcos to attend the opening, and nearly two hours later, cars were still lined up trying to make it into the store's full parking lot.

"I didn't expect this big of a crowd," said Leila Melara, a shopper from **Round Rock** who was after an orange sectional for her kids' playroom. "I've never been to anything like this before."

The area is likely to draw in even more retailers; other than Penney, the tenants planned for the remaining 33 acres around the Swedish furniture retailer have yet to be announced.

"The 1431/I-35 area has the right demographics . . . as well as spacing between Georgetown and La Frontera to become a major retail hub," said Jill Rowe, president of Rowe Investments, an Austin retail development and brokerage firm. "That will be a fabulous location for them."

The nearly 100,000-square-foot Penney store will be directly across from IKEA, on the southeast corner of University Boulevard and I-35 in **Round Rock**.

Penney's newest planned site is part of the traditional mall anchor's efforts to expand its stand-alone stores. The company opened 28 stand-alone stores this year and plans to open 50 more each year for the next two years. Two similar stores opened this fall in South Austin's Southpark Meadows at I-35 and Slaughter Lane and at North Austin's Tech Ridge Center at I-35 and Parmer Lane.

The retailer typically has been an anchor in enclosed malls and has two mall locations in Barton Creek Square and Lakeline Mall. Penney recently closed its store in Highland Mall.

"We're able to get into markets sooner than we would if we waited for a mall to go up," Lyons said.

The freestanding stores are about half the size of the retailer's existing mall locations.

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Expanding in Texas and U.S., IKEA Brings Swedish Home Furnishings & Meatballs to Austin-Area With Store's Opening; Grand Opening of IKEA Round Rock on November 15 Will Include Festivities, Flag-raising, Log-sawing, Community Involvement, Recognition of Customers

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PR Newswire (U.S.)

English

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ROUND ROCK, Texas, Nov. 15 /PRNewswire/ -- IKEA, the world's leading home furnishings retailer, will open the doors of its Round Rock, TX store to customers at 9:00 a.m. CST, Wednesday, November 15, 2006. The 252,000 square-foot IKEA Round Rock is located along Interstate Highway 35 at the University Boulevard exit, and is the 29th IKEA store in the U.S. and 247th worldwide. The store employs 300 coworkers, and features 10,000 exclusively designed home furnishings all under one roof, a 300-seat IKEA Restaurant, a supervised children's play area and 1,200 parking spaces.

"We are excited to bring the fun and unique IKEA family-friendly shopping experience to Round Rock, Central Texas and beyond," said Jeff O'Shaughnessy, IKEA Round Rock store manager. "The excitement, surprises and shopping experience customers will receive truly reflect the enthusiasm the IKEA Round Rock coworker family feels about this big day and about opening the store."

Moments before the doors open, O'Shaughnessy will welcome the community into the IKEA customer family with a traditional Swedish log-sawing ceremony, bringing good luck to the new home and all its future visitors. In addition to brief remarks by the Honorable Round Rock Mayor Nyle Maxwell, Mayor Pro-Tem Alan McGraw will raise the U.S. flag; Carrin Patman, representing the Swedish Consulate, will raise the Swedish flag; and Williamson County Commissioner Lisa Birkman will raise the Texas flag.

IKEA Round Rock Offers ...

- * Low prices for well-designed, quality furnishings where customers visit the store, choose items and pick products from the self-serve warehouse by themselves.
- * 50 inspirational room-settings and three model homes reflecting a variety of living situations with creative design ideas that can be brought to life in any room in the home.
- * More than 10,000 exclusively designed home furnishings ranging from beds, desks and sofas to cookware, pet products and kitchens, complete with cabinetry and appliances.
- * Same-day shopping satisfaction with products in easy-to-transport flat-pack boxes that benefit the customer and the environment, and which customers can transport and assemble easily.

IKEA Round Rock is a Fun Day Out for the Family with ...

- * Smaland, a supervised children's play area (for children who meet the 37"-54" height requirement) that replicates the look of a typical Swedish farmhouse and forest.

- * Additional play areas throughout the store, offering activities for kids shopping with parents.

- * A "Children's IKEA" area in the Showroom that also offers fun, interactive play.

- * Attention-to-detail conveniences such as: family-friendly parking, strollers, baby care rooms, and a private, comfortable room for nursing moms.

No Need to Shop on an Empty Stomach at IKEA Round Rock ...

- * The IKEA Restaurant opens for breakfast one half-hour before the store opens for shopping and serves a full hot breakfast, including scrambled eggs, potatoes and bacon for 99¢.

- * The 300-seat restaurant also offers lunch, dinner, snacks and dessert, with a diverse menu, including traditional Swedish specialties such as the popular IKEA Swedish meatballs, shrimp sandwiches, salmon platters, and American dishes such as pasta, chicken and a vegetarian option. or macaroni and cheese, while organic baby food, bottle warmers and bibs are available for even younger visitors.

- * A Bistro near the store's exit serves hot dogs, cinnamon buns, frozen yogurt and beverages.

- * The Swedish Food market offers Swedish delicacies, treats, and even frozen Swedish meatballs (the same ones served in the store's Restaurant) to purchase and then prepare at home.

IKEA Round Rock Shopping Conveniences ...

- * Customers can pick-up catalogs (in both English and Spanish) up at the store.

- * Measuring tape, pencils, store maps, yellow shopping bags and two types of carts are available.

- * Numerous conventional, self-, and handheld checkouts to ensure efficient customer purchasing.

- * Home-delivery (starting at \$49) and assembly services can be arranged while at the store.

With IKEA Round Rock open, there will be 247 IKEA stores in 34 countries, including 29 in the U.S., where the company plans to open three to five stores a year. Other U.S. stores are being planned in: Brooklyn, NY; Draper, UT; Orlando, FL; Portland, OR; Somerville, MA; Sunrise, FL; and West Chester, OH. Since its 1943 founding in Sweden,

IKEA has offered a wide range of home furnishings and accessories of good design and function, at low prices so the majority of the people can afford them. IKEA has been ranked in FORTUNE's annual "100 Best Companies to Work For" List (two years in a row), Working Mother magazine's annual list of "100 Best Companies for Working Mothers" (four years in a row) and Training magazine's annual "Top 100" ranking of companies that excel at human capital development (four years in a row). IKEA incorporates environmentally and socially responsible efforts into day-to-day business, and continuously supports initiatives that benefit causes such as children and the environment. To visit the IKEA Web site or for information about working at IKEA, please go to <http://www.IKEA-usa.com> .

SOURCE IKEA