

ELGIN COURIER

Walmart is coming to Elgin, set to open

2013 By CHARLES WOOD

After years of slow economic growth, Elgin got some big development news last week. The city will soon be home to a new Walmart, one of four stores the retail giant has decided to build in Central Texas.

The store will be 150,000 square feet and will be located at U.S. 290 and Saratoga Farms Boulevard, between Prosperity Bank and First National Bank. It will create over 300 jobs. A groundbreaking will be held in the summer of 2012 and the store should open in early 2013.

New Walmarts are also planned in Manor, Kyle and Cedar Park. According to the Austin American Statesman, which broke the story, the Elgin store will be the first to open. The Manor store, which will be at the intersection of U.S. 290 and FM 973, will have a groundbreaking in fall 2012, with an opening planned for fall of 2013.

Economic Development Director Joe Newman said the new development will not just include Walmart as an anchor, but will have space for several retail businesses, ranging from 2,400 to 34,000 square feet.

The Elgin Walmart will be similar in size to the one in Taylor and slightly smaller than the Walmart store in Bastrop. It will be a "super" Walmart that will carry groceries.

"This has been in the works for a while," said Newman, who began working for Elgin on May 1. "It was in the works before I got here. I was fortunate to help move it along. It's not just Walmart. We have a lot of great things happening. ACC is coming. We're getting a 50-room Best Western motel and we've received grants for infrastructure improvement. I think I came here at the right time."

Elgin Mayor Marc Holm said while bringing Walmart to Elgin is important, it is just part of an

overall plan to develop the town. "Growth is coming this way," he said. "This will help with the tax base. A lot of people are already shopping outside the area and we'll have more of them shopping at home. That's an important part of the picture, but it's not the whole picture. We are focusing on growth and preservation."

Holm said he hopes the retail development opening around Walmart will include some Austin-area chains such as Amy's Ice Cream or P. Terry's, not just national chains. "I want people to be able to tell that this is Elgin. I want us to be unique and have our own identity, even if we do have some national chains."

Holm said he realized some Elginites would be happy about Walmart's arrival and others would be more cautious. "This is the world's largest retailer, but we will do our best to manage it well." He said Walmart's decision will likely attract other businesses as Austin grows to the east along U.S. 290. "I think over the next couple of years we will see a lot of other businesses following suit."

Elgin ISD Superintendent Bill Graves said Walmart should have a positive impact on the school district. "It will increase our student population. It will also increase our tax base," he said.

Although EISD will not get more revenue from the added property value, due to the state funding system, "It will help with debt retirement, so we will not have to see a tax increase for debt retirement," Graves said. "It's also a wonderful economic development issue. I'm thrilled that our store is going to open before the others. I appreciate the hard work that the Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Corporation and lots of other people have put in over this. I think it's also great that it coincides almost exactly with the opening of ACC."