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BUSINESS

Farmland ready to produce industrial crop Allen Group to build hub on 6,000 acres in southern Dallas County

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With 6,000 acres of land assembled in southern Dallas County, the Allen Group, a California real estate developer, is now planning to build the first office and industrial space in its logistics and industrial park.

The move is expected to boost efforts by local officials and business leaders to create an inland port in the economically depressed area.

Currently, all of the 6,000 acres is farmland. But the logistics park and an adjacent Union Pacific Corp. intermodal rail terminal are situated along key highway and rail routes. These routes are becoming more important, thanks to the boom in trade with Asia.

It took the Allen Group three years and \$150 million to \$200 million to assemble the land for its Dallas Logistics Hub.

About 65 percent of the land will be set aside for industrial and distribution space, with offices, retail stores, hotels and homes on the rest. The project expects to create a property tax base of more than \$2.5 billion as well as 30,000 jobs.

"It's essentially a very large industrial park," said Richard Allen, founder and chief executive of the San Diego-based developer. "Dallas is the gateway to the population centers of the East."

Later this year, he plans to officially unveil the master plan for the hub. So far, the Allen Group has not signed any contracts with tenants, but it has not yet begun to market the park, Mr. Allen said.

Groundbreaking will occur in a few months, he added.

Due to its size, development of the Dallas Logistics Hub is expected to occur over a 30- to 40-year period. "This is a long, long project," Mr. Allen said.

The Dallas hub is being planned as a rival to the gigantic AllianceTexas, the 17,000-acre mixed-use development in North Fort Worth that includes an 11,600-acre industrial and logistics center.

The Dallas hub plans to pursue the same kinds of companies as AllianceTexas, such as big-box retail chains, Mr. Allen said.

Nearly 17 years after it opened, AllianceTexas has attracted more than 140 companies and has distribution centers for Coca-Cola, Home Depot and Motorola.

"We are in a better logistics location," said Mr. Allen, who also noted that a large and underemployed workforce lives around his park.

David Pelletier, a spokesman for Hillwood Development Corp., which developed AllianceTexas, said, "Hillwood and AllianceTexas compete every day with the top developments across the country. We consider Alliance the premiere logistics hub in the country. Hillwood has a proven track record."

But the Dallas hub could get a big boost if Burlington Northern Santa Fe Corp. builds an intermodal terminal in southern Dallas County.

Patrick Hiatte, a spokesman for the Fort Worth-based railroad, which already operates an intermodal terminal at AllianceTexas, said the company continues to study the idea but has not made a decision.

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