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Economic growth may be in store for DeSoto

Nearby development sites expected to attract people, businesses

By Jon Nielsen

Attracting new business to DeSoto has been a talking point in the city for years. Scott D. Livingston, director of the DeSoto Economic Development Corp., projects that DeSoto's population could increase from the current 47,600 to 70,000 or 80,000 in the next few decades as the Dallas Logistics Hub takes shape.



MIKE STONE/Special to the DMN
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Most recently, in the May City Council election, every candidate recognized the need for commercial and industrial growth to keep pace with residential growth in the bedroom community.

In years to come, however, that talking point could become moot as the Dallas Logistics Hub and the Union Pacific Corp.'s Dallas Intermodal Terminal take shape.

Both are expected to be a boon to the economy in southern Dallas County, specifically in Lancaster, Dallas, Wilmer and Hutchins. Outlying towns in southern Dallas County, such as Mesquite, Balch

Springs and DeSoto, and Ferris and Red Oak in northern Ellis County expect the ripple effect.

Because of its proximity to Interstate 35E and Interstate 20, businesses are recognizing DeSoto as one of the region's hot spots for growth.

The development hub – when completed in 30 to 40 years – is expected to employ about 30,000 workers in as much as 60 million square feet of distribution, manufacturing, office and retail facilities.

"We fully recognize we're not going to be an immediate or direct beneficiary of the inland port because it's farther from us," said DeSoto Economic Development Corp. director Scott D. Livingston. "But we anticipate, and we've already seen proof, that we probably will be indirect beneficiaries of the spillover effect."

He also said he didn't expect the effect to happen as quickly as it has. Before April's groundbreaking on the 6,000-acre logistics facility, Mr. Livingston was getting calls from developers wanting to be part of the development, but not in it.

"I think people realize this is a real deal and it's moving pretty quickly," Mr. Livingston said.

Developer Hillwood broke ground in March 2006 on a 113-acre site near I-35E and Daniieldale Road and plans to build a 1.8 million-square-foot distribution center. The company recently released plans for a 550,000-square-foot building to be constructed at the site.

Six hotels are also scheduled to open or start construction within six months to a year, Mr. Livingston said.

DeSoto's population stands at about 47,600. With the general growth in southern Dallas County, and DeSoto attracting the development's workers, Mr. Livingston projects the city's population could reach as high as 70,000 to 80,000 in the next couple of decades.

Former DEDC president and current council member Sandy Respass said DeSoto's growth is in need of change. In the last few years, residential growth has hovered around 10 percent, with retail and commercial at a 2 percent and 3 percent clip, respectively, he said.

"We're becoming a city of residences without a proper balance of tax base and job base," Mr. Respass said.

An April 2006 study by the University of North Texas Center for Economic Development and Research shows that DeSoto has a large pool of employees who regularly commute more than 30 minutes to work. New businesses will help keep that money in DeSoto and create jobs closer to home, said Dr. Terry Clower, associate director at the center and co-author of the study.

"Of course the advantage DeSoto has is they already have workers who are looking to find jobs closer to home. In that sense it's a good, positive gain for them," he said. "Working three miles down the road as opposed to 23 makes a lot of sense."