

Friday, March 19, 2010

Austin Community College seeks land in Hays

Austin Business Journal - by [Sandra Zaragoza](#) ABJ Staff

Kyle, Buda and its sister cities in north Hays County are one step closer to clearing the path for Austin Community College, even as they engage in friendly competition to attract the community college to their towns.

The North Hays County Steering Committee, consisting of community leaders and supporters of ACC's annexation effort, has collected the more than 1,350 signatures it needs to put a proposition on the November ballot to have the county just south of Austin annexed into the Austin Community College Taxing District. Texas law requires that 5 percent of registered voters in the Hays County Independent School District sign a petition to put an annexation proposal on the ballot.

Those close to the deal believe ACC is interested in three sites for its future campus, including at least one in Buda and one in Kyle.

"ACC does not comment on real estate negotiations until a deal is final," ACC spokeswoman Alexis Patterson said.

Ray Hernandez, executive director of the Kyle Area Chamber of Commerce and Visitors Bureau, said ACC has committed to buying 100 acres of land and building a campus in north Hays County. The community college has said it wants that location to be accessible to major roads.

The city is not privy to any information concerning the sites under review, Hernandez said. But there is a site in the Plum Creek development that has been earmarked for a commuter rail stop, he said.

"We are more concerned that ACC come into the boundaries of Hays [Consolidated Independent School District]. This whole effort was not brought about because of just one community," Hernandez said. "It was brought about because we know that it should be in Hays CISD boundaries."

Vince Collier, a co-chairman of the steering committee from Kyle, said while there is some friendly competition among the cities for the ACC campus, there is an overwhelming sense of collaboration.

"In the end, nobody really cares [exactly where it is]. We just want it for our kids and for our community," Collier said.

Terry Mazurek, the steering committee's co-chair from Buda, agrees.

"We basically share a border. While both Buda and Kyle would like ACC to have their address, I think the underlying message is that what is good for one is good for the other," Mazurek said.

While ACC will not decide on programming until later in the process, the cities are hoping for degrees and certifications in health care.

"With our big new hospital here, we are really going to push for health care," Mazurek said.

Since opening late last year, Seton Medical Center Hays has created more than 400 jobs in the Kyle area, according to the Kyle Area Chamber of Commerce.

If voters approve the action to become part of the taxing district, residents will pay 0.946 cents per \$100 valuation of real property, which equates to \$137.17 of additional taxes annually on a \$150,000 home. ACC says it has one of the lowest tax rates among Texas community college districts.

Students will pay \$39 per credit hour for in-district tuition, compared with \$137 per credit hour for out-of-district tuition.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin