



Hanger marks Austin move as it ramps up hiring

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When Hanger Orthopedic Group Inc. decided 18 months ago to relocate its Bethesda, Md., headquarters, it evaluated 30 cities before making its choice.

"Austin beat them all hands down," said CEO Tom Kirk . "Other cities are at various stages of development. We looked at Austin and said it's happening now. We wanted to be part of the innovation and creativity that thrives here."

Hanger celebrated the opening of its new headquarters Wednesday with a ceremony attended by City of Austin and Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce officials who recruited the company.

By the end of the year, Hanger will have 145 employees working in its 77,000-square-foot offices in the Domain, the North Austin shopping, office and apartment development.

Hanger's Austin work force includes 40 employees who relocated from Maryland. The company is hiring locally in a variety of areas, including information technology, human resources and finance.

Landing Hanger was one of Austin's biggest economic development victories in the past several years, and the first in a series of job wins this year.

After the Hanger announcement in January, Facebook Inc. and LegalZoom Inc. said they too would open Austin offices, adding a total of more than 700 jobs over the next several years.

In June, Samsung Electronics Co. Ltd. said it would invest another \$3.6 billion to expand its Austin chip manufacturing operations, creating 500 jobs by next year.

Hanger designs and manufactures prosthetics and orthotics for amputees and patients with musculoskeletal problems, and operates 600 patient care centers across the country, including three in Central Texas.

Founded in 1861 by James Hanger , who was reputed to be the first Civil War amputee, the company now has annual revenue of more than \$740 million. The company has operations across the country, with more than 3,000 employees.

Hanger could qualify for up to \$2 million in state and city incentives, if it meets job creation targets and other benchmarks.

A 10-year city agreement stipulates that Hanger have at least 133 employees in Austin in each of the first five years, growing to 250 in the last five to earn city payments of \$50,000 a year. Under the agreement, the median salary would be \$60,000 a year, while the lowest-paying job at \$35,000 a year still would include benefits.

In addition, Hanger will receive \$1.5 million from the Texas Enterprise Fund.

Mayor Lee Leffingwell told attendees Wednesday that the company is in an industry that Austin is targeting for growth.

"Austin has long been a center for innovation and technology. We're pleased to be raising our profile in the medical technology field as well, and having Hanger here is a big part of that," Leffingwell said.

Kirk said Hanger evaluated a number of factors in its relocation search, including quality of the work force and education systems; cost of living; and the depth of the technology community. The finalists were Austin and Nashville, Tenn., he said.

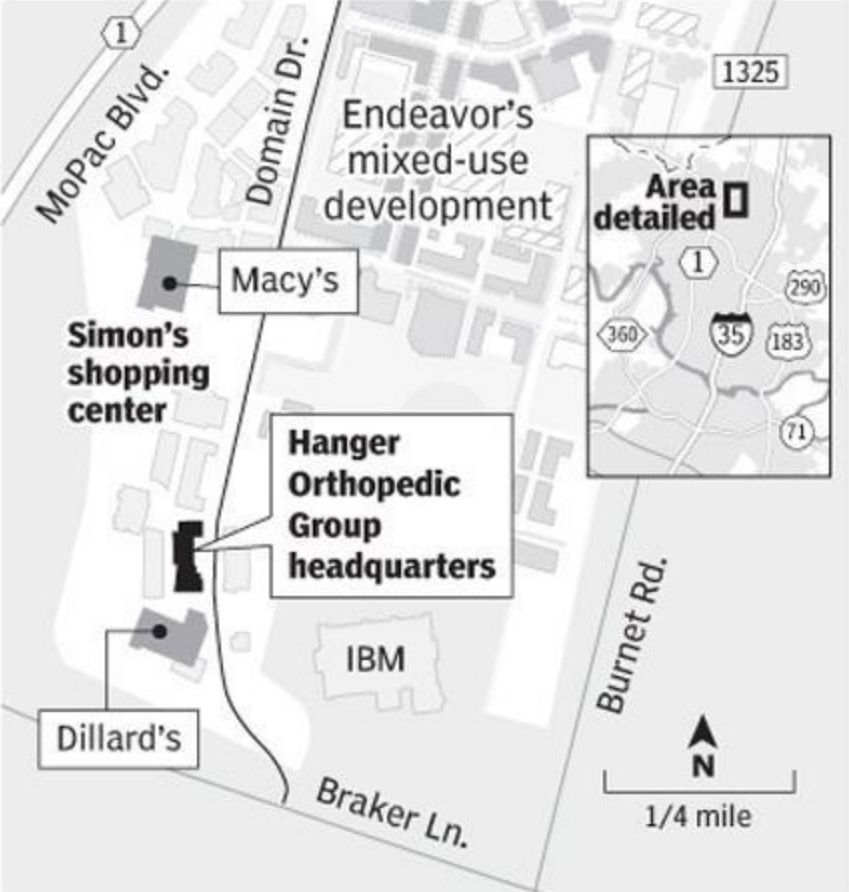
In the end, Kirk said Austin won because of its central location, which is convenient to Hanger's other operations, and its quality of life amenities, ranging from outdoor activities and favorable weather to the strong presence of area universities and a positive business climate.

"Although we've been around for a long time, we felt very much in sync with the spirit and energy and sense of adventure that you feel in Austin every day," Kirk said.

In an effort to support Austin's creative community, the company said it is holding a competition for local artists that will include a \$10,000 commission. Hanger will accept submissions, which should reflect the theme "Moving Lives Forward," through Oct. 19. For more information, visit Hanger's ARTroduction to Austin website (<http://artroduction.com>).

Courtesy of JB Goodwin

Domain development



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