

Manor: Doctors needed, stat!

No physicians, clinics so city goes courting

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Manor, the bedroom community just east of Austin, is making progress toward filling the void of medical services there, economic development professionals believe.

Despite having 15,000 to 20,000 people in its trade area, the city doesn't have a primary care doctor practicing within its borders, let alone a hospital or clinic, said [Pam Uhr](#), president of the Manor Economic Development Corp.

"The need is there," Uhr said. "But it's on the radar of all the major health care providers."

By some estimates, Manor, about 15 minutes east of downtown Austin on U.S. Highway 290, could support up to five doctors, Uhr said. But for now, its residents drive to Austin for basic medical care. The three closest hospitals are along I-35: Dell Children's Medical Center, St. David's Medical Center and University Medical Center at Brackenridge.

But there is cause for optimism. At least two developers are working to bring medical office space to Manor, which would be a major step toward bringing a broad array of medical services there. Onair Development is planning a 26,000-square-foot medical office building, called The Medical Plaza at ShadowGlen, off U.S. 290, CEO [Kerry Angus](#) said.

Developer [Stan McElroy](#) of Austin is further ahead with his development, called Greater Texas Center, at 11401 U.S. 290. The U.S. Postal Service opened there in 2010, followed by Greater Texas Federal Credit Union. Also, a day care is under construction.

McElroy's goal is to attract a health care provider that would invest in a 5,000- to 8,000-square-foot clinic on his site.

Although Manor is viewed as a bedroom community by many, it has the characteristics of an infill market because of its proximity to Austin, McElroy said.

Another factor favoring growth in Manor is its proximity to the relatively new State Highway 130 toll road, which extends east of I-35 through Williamson, Travis and Hays counties.

McElroy considers it curious that Manor has gone this long without basic retail and health care services, but he sees signs of change.

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. has plans to break ground on a store in Manor at U.S. 290 and FM 973 in the fall, with an opening set for fall 2013.

"These are just basic services that the market has an overwhelming need for and has been trying to attract. It's now having some success in doing so," McElroy said.

McElroy said he's talked with all the major health care systems and was pleased to find that they already had Manor on their radar.

Although Scott & White Healthcare doesn't have any plans to announce, it "is frequently evaluating proposals and exploring ways that Scott & White Healthcare might be able to enhance or increase additional services to communities like Manor," CEO [Ernie Bovio](#) said.

Administrators at Austin Regional Clinic, which often brings primary care doctors and clinics to underserved markets, hinted that they're figuring Manor into their growth plans.

"Austin Regional Clinic management visited Manor and spoke with community leadership. We were very impressed with its growth potential as a medical location," CEO and founder Dr. [Norman Chenven](#) said. "Our challenge as an organization is to prioritize the many opportunities in the metro region, given our desire to serve the entire geographic area. Manor is one of those areas on our radar."

Still, he said, Austin Regional Clinic doesn't "yet have a timeline or any immediate plans to expand there."

[Andrew Kim](#), superintendent of Manor Independent School District, has attended meetings with health care providers. As a superintendent, he has a particular interest in seeing students and their families gain access to health care. Manor ISD grew from about 4,000 students six years ago to about 7,600 students today. About 82 percent of the district's students qualify for the free or reduced-cost lunch program.

"As a school district, we are very concerned about immunizations, minor health care, eyesight and dentistry. We have needs," he said.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin