



Legislature funds new med school

By Christi Snow

COMMUNITY IMPACT NEWSPAPER

The Texas Legislature dedicated \$9 million to Texas A&M University recently to support a medical school in Round Rock. Anticipated to open in 2009, the campus will eventually support 100 students in their third and fourth years of studies as they complete clinicals.

Rep. Dan Gattis, who represents Round Rock, said he recommended the idea last year when the university approached him about expanding its medical program.

“If you look to the growth and where the needs will be, Williamson County is either the first or second fastest growing area,” he said.

Texas A&M’s College of Medicine students take two years of courses in College Station, then complete clinical studies at the Scott & White hospital in Temple. The match made sense, Gattis said, because of the school’s relationship with Scott & White, which is opening its Round Rock location on University Boulevard this year.

Texas A&M is exploring building a physical campus, but it is not the priority, said Jenny Young, vice president of governmental affairs at Texas A&M Health Science Center. The initial \$9 million will finance administration costs. In future legislative sessions, Young said Texas A&M will try to acquire additional funds for facilities.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin

MEDICAL MILE

The City of Round Rock and the Round Rock Chamber of Commerce are making an effort to build infrastructure for a healthcare-driven economy. It is a cycle many local leaders say will provide for a prosperous future. Since 2001, the healthcare industry has been the only industry with net growth according to *Business Week*.

1 People move to Round Rock

Since Dell Inc. came to Round Rock, the population has more than doubled. In 1994, the city had 39,455. In 2007, that number increased to 88,500. Williamson County is also considered one of the top two fastest growing areas in Texas, according to Rep. Dan Gattis.

2 Need for healthcare

Until last year, St. David's Medical Center Round Rock was the only local hospital. Now Seton and Scott & White are building additional medical centers. Clinics, offices and support services have also begun to emerge.



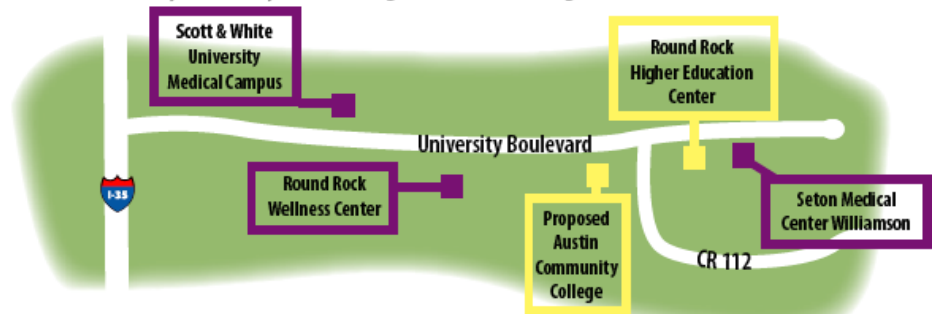
3 Need for supporting services, including education.

This spring, Round Rock had three major announcements regarding higher education.

Austin Community College plans to acquire land on University Boulevard with intentions of building its largest campus in Round Rock. Texas State University received funding from the Texas Legislature to build a nursing college based at the Round Rock Higher Education Center. Texas A&M University received funding to finance a Round Rock branch of its college of medicine.

4 Need for personnel

An increase in medical professionals and students are necessary to fill the hospitals and education facilities.



During the last several years, University Boulevard has evolved with medical and support growth. It was this boom development that attracted education leaders, according to Jenny Young, vice president of governmental affairs at Texas A&M Health Science Center.

Behind the scenes

Sen. Steve Ogden, Rep. Mike Krusee and Rep. Dan Gattis, all three powerful representatives at the state level in the Williamson County area, worked together to have funding for a Round Rock medical school in the legislative session's House Appropriations Bill.

Both A&M, based in College Station, and the University of Texas, based in Austin, have expressed interest in creating a medical school in the Central Texas region. So Gattis approached both about their plans.

A&M planned to put their med school in Temple, the home of Scott & White. UT had no immediate plans and weren't yet ready to pursue the med school.

Unwilling to wait, the focus of Krusee, Gattis and Ogden turned to A&M.

Gattis argued that A&M shouldn't go to Temple when the growth is in Round Rock, but also that the big advances now are in biotechnology and bioscience and Round Rock is a hub for both of these. Sometimes it can be hard for a student to get the required amount of experience he needs before graduating and the number of medical facilities in the area would help.

Part of Ogden, Gattis and Krusee's compromise with UT was that A&M's medical school would stay in the Round Rock boundaries, offering UT a chance at their own school.