

More details revealed about medical school, colleges in Round Rock

Nursing program and new health professional school among topics discussed.

By [David C. Doolittle](#)
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ROUND ROCK — Officials from three colleges on Tuesday revealed additional details about their plans for Round Rock's developing higher-education hub, including moving a health care college from San Marcos to Round Rock.

The confluence of new projects will transform hay and cornfields in northeast Round Rock into a college center with a focus on medical education.

Texas A&M's Health Science Center plans to build a campus near A.W. Grimes Boulevard and County Road 112. Texas State University-San Marcos and Austin Community College, which have been in Round Rock for several years, are planning to expand on nearby land.

Officials from the three colleges gave presentations on their plans Tuesday to the Round Rock Friends of Higher Education, a group of business and civic leaders that was formed about five years ago to help ACC and Texas State gain support in the city.

"My brother Charles and I knew all facts, but we also knew that the individual colleges didn't know what each other is doing," said John Avery, whose family donated or sold land to the schools as well as to Seton Medical Center Williamson.

Texas State University, which has been at the Round Rock Higher Education Center since the center opened in 2005, is planning to develop a nursing program for the first time, which will be in Round Rock.

Perry Moore, Texas State's provost, said that the university eventually plans to move its College of Health Professionals — which offers undergraduate and graduate degrees in subjects such as communication disorders, health care administration and physical therapy — from San Marcos to Round Rock.

Texas State is planning several buildings on about 100 acres. Ground breaking on the nursing building is scheduled for Aug. 22, said Edna Rehbein, director of the Round Rock Higher Education Center. The \$36 million building is expected to be completed by the fall of 2010, she said.

The Texas Legislature in 2005 authorized \$36 million in tuition revenue bonds for the building. During the 2009 legislative session, the school plans to request about \$120 million for two additional buildings, Rehbein said.

A&M Health Science Center's plans for a medical school in Round Rock have been moving briskly since the Legislature last year appropriated \$9 million for the campus. The Avery family donated about 15 acres and sold another 35 acres to the center this year. Construction of the first phase is scheduled to begin this summer, though no date for a groundbreaking has been set; plans call for the first phase to be completed in the fall of 2009.

The first building will have about 134,000 square feet and will include educational space and clinical facilities. It will cost about \$54 million, said Robert Wunsch, who is developing the building with the Avery family. The developer will construct the building; the center will lease it with an option to purchase it.

The Health Science Center's new campus will provide clinical training for third- and fourth-year medical students, most of whom will have spent their first two years at College Station, said Christopher Colenda, the center's dean of medicine. Students will do clinical rotations among Round Rock's three hospitals, he said. The center will have about 35 such students for the 2008-09 academic year.

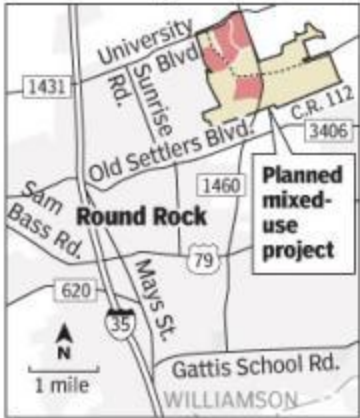
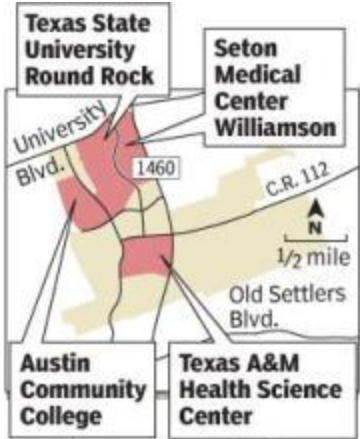
Austin Community College, which shares space in the Round Rock Higher Education Center and offers classes whose credits can transfer to Texas State, plans to build its largest campus on about 80 acres in Round Rock that will eventually accommodate about 12,000 students, said Veronica Rivera, vice chairwoman of the board of trustees. The school plans to break ground on the first phase in January, with plans for five buildings that total about 250,000 square feet, Rivera said. Two of those buildings will be dedicated to health science programs, she said. The first phase is expected to open in 2010, she said.

Residents in the Round Rock school district voted in May to join ACC's taxing district, trading higher property taxes for a 67 percent tuition reduction, from \$118 to \$39 per credit hour.

Plans also call for about 1,000 acres near the three schools and hospital to be a mixed-use development that will include retail, office space, and single-family and multifamily homes. Construction is expected to begin in two or three years.

At the meeting Tuesday, representatives of Seton Medical Center Williamson, St. David's Round Rock Medical Center and Scott & White University Medical Campus made presentations as did officials from the East Williamson County Higher Education Center in Taylor.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin



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