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Protect America moves, grows

Home monitoring business to employ 300 at Travesia

Premium content from Austin Business Journal - by Cody Lyon, ABJ Staff

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An Austin-based electronic home security company has nearly doubled its space as it moved from Round Rock to North Austin, having outgrown its prior location and confident in its industry's future.

Protect America Inc. moved into 43,000 square feet that had been an empty shell at 3800 Quick Hill Road in Building One of the Travesia corporate complex in North Austin. It left 23,000 square feet in the Teco Westinghouse building at 5100 N. I-35 in Round Rock, where it had been for eight years.

The Travesia property — which is owned by Champion Partners, a private firm in Dallas — will house 300 employees at Protect America's sales and call centers.

Jay Lamy and **Zane Cole** at Aquila Commercial LLC represented Protect America, while **Jim Ballard** and **Matt Frizzell** at Stream Realty Partners LP represented Champion. Negotiations took six months.

Founded in 1992, Protect America has about 125,000 home customers in all 50 states, Vice President and Chief Financial Officer **Mike Nagy** said.

Protect America expects to grow that customer base and increase its workforce incrementally over the coming years if the company follows market trends.

The residential security alarm and monitoring industry is on pace to grow by about 9 percent nationwide and 27 percent during the next 3 years, according to Parks Associates, a private research and marketing firm.

"The home alarm business is cyclical," Nagy said.

Even without the industry's strong outlook, Protect America needed more room now.

"We were on top of each other in the old location," Nagy said.

The company began searching for a new home about a year ago.

"We looked at built-out existing space and compared that to brand new open shell space," among other criteria, Nagy said.

The company chose a space that wasn't built out so it could have control over its interior design and functionality.

Protect America's new lease, a seven-year commitment, is a sign that Austin companies are beginning to "pull the trigger to absorb more space" with an eye on the future, said Cole at Aquila Commercial.

And, he said, it may signal a reversal of recent practice in which most Austin companies have been unwilling to commit to longer-term leases because of economic uncertainty.

For Nagy and his employees, who are still settling into their new offices, the more spacious home is so much more.

"This is our first really nice office space, so it's a nice boost to morale," he said.

Courtesy of JB Goodwin