

Chamber members learn of area's growth plans

By Cheryl Bolen

Leader co-publisher Marie Flickinger was the instrument of several bombshell announcements about area growth at last Wednesday's monthly meeting of the South Belt-Ellington Chamber of Commerce.

Telling the large crowd—uncharacteristically populated with an abundance of local realtors—of the area's explosive growth, Flickinger said the tollway was the dynamite for the explosion.

About 80 percent of her talk was a recap and update on home, retail and road construction that had been previously announced in the Leader.

However, she was the first to make public news of the following projects:

Brand new announcements

- A 21-acre Carmax auto dealership is going to be constructed adjacent to and south of the AutoNation dealership being

constructed on I-45 at Fuqua. Like AutoNation, Carmax is a national used car dealership.

Carmax, owned by Circuit City, is being touted as no-hassle sales with computer assistance. Computers will enable buyers to designate a cost, number of payments and instantly to get a list of autos available to fit the buyers' needs. Carmax is expected to open this summer.

Flickinger said AutoNation is owned by the former Blockbuster owners who recently bought Avis and National Rent-a-Car and four Houston Joe Myers auto dealerships.

- Charlie Thomas Ford will relocate from the Gulfgate area to across the freeway from AutoNation into a \$5- to \$6-million facility that will sell new and used vehicles. It is projected to open Sept. 1.

The three dealerships will bring 500 new jobs to the area, she said.

- A new free-standing Walgreen's prototype building with drive-thru pharmacy will be constructed on the Scarsdale-Beamer intersection where a sign now proclaims it as the site of the future chamber office.

The land deal will close in April for the new Walgreen's, which will replace the present facility in the same intersection.

- A road she announced, though details appeared in last week's *Leader*, was the city's intention to widen Sabo to four lanes from Fuqua to Kingspoint.

She thanked the chamber's Dr. B.J. Garner for his efforts on behalf of its Traffic and Transportation Committee in urging the city to construct the road.

- Two co-brand gas stations are planned for the area along the beltway/tollway.

A Chevron-McDonald's with a convenience store is expected to open soon on the beltway at Beamer.

Also, an Exxon is planned for the beltway at Sabo. It will possibly be co-branded, possibly with TCBY yogurt.

Ground will break in May for the Exxon.

Updates on previously announced projects

- Final papers will be signed in April for

a \$5 million assisted living center to be constructed at the present end of Scarsdale Boulevard in Pearland.

"The fact that we have strong community ties is part of why the facility is being built here," Flickinger said.

The complex will feature private apartments, three meals a day and transportation to shopping and medical care.

For some residents, service will include help with bathing, dressing as well as receiving medication.

- Sagemont Church breaks ground this month for its \$1.7 million project that will include two entrances to the beltway, a 350-car lot, a road all around the church complex and retention and athletic facilities.

Phase II, which will cost \$7 million, will add more building space than is located in the church's present facilities.

As is the church's debt-free custom, all projects will be paid for as constructed.

- Cresco is developing 460 homesites on Hall Road between Moore Elementary and Rollac. Houses will range from 1,600 to 2,800 square feet and cost from \$95,000 to \$130,000. Lots are expected to be on ground in January.

- In another new area subdivision, the Estates of Green Tee on the south side of Scarsdale Boulevard, home sales are far ahead of expectations.

Nine houses have been sold, and 10 more are on contingency.

The builder has already requested more homesites to go with the original 35 lots.

"This has been way past their expectations," Flick-

inger said. She said sales there are projected at 60 a year.

- Close to the Estates of Green Tee, the defunct Southbend subdivision nears extinction.

Flickinger announced all 670 of the subdivision's homes will be torn down by the end of this month.

Also, she was the first to announce that the unfinished two-story Beamer Towers on Beamer will also be torn down by the end of the month.

Recap on previously announced projects

"Last year's projects such as the 67,000-square-foot Federal Express complex on Fuqua, the First Community Bank on the Gulf Freeway, the Park & Ride on Sabo should have been a clue," Flickinger said. "But they were the tip of the iceberg."

Some of the other projects she mentioned were:

- Fuqua Park & Pool, a 400-space lot expected to open early next month.

- This week's tollway opening will see 50,000 cars a day on the stretch of road from I-45 to SH 288.

- The stretch of tollway from 288 to 59 will open early May, with a road party estimated to cost \$300,000.

- Construction of a \$30 million AMC 30-screen theatre near the I-45 beltway intersection is expected to be complete by Christmas.

Land is currently being cleared for the theater, which will feature "love seats," a courtyard, 3,000 parking spaces and 15 ticket stations.

- Wings are being added to Stuchbery, Atkinson, Thompson and Meador campuses.

- Lutheran High School will relocate to the area and add a campus of 6th, 7th and 8th grade.

The 16-acre site for the school is located near I-45 and Dixie Farm Road.

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