

Official: rail park may bring 1,000 jobs

With Ground Break Comes Marketing Campaign's Start

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Gathered around a sand-filled trough in El Campo's Civic Center Tuesday morning, officials "broke ground" on a soon-to-be developed multi-million dollar rail-supported warehouse development.

Dubbed the Southwest International Gateway Business Park, the 540-acre site is located at the intersection of CR 421 and U.S. 59.

"This is a huge stride forward. It has the potential to create a lot of jobs ... (and) ... making Wharton (County) one of the regional hubs. This could be the break we've been waiting for," State Senator Lois Kolkhorst (R-Brigham) told the *Leader-News*.

Kolkhorst, who's coverage area includes Wharton County, was on hand for the ceremony along with State Rep. Phil Stephenson (R-Wharton), a representative from Gov. Greg Abbott's office and most of El Campo's City Council and City Development Corporation.

(See PARK, Page 10-A)



TOO RAINY FOR ON SITE EVENT: Developers of the Southwest International Gateway Business Park gather with state and local officials Tuesday for a ceremonial ground breaking. Pictured (l-r where visible) are CDC Executive

Director Carolyn Gibson, CDC members Larry Russell, David Allgayer and Wesley Lange, CDC President Kinnan Stockton, Mike Gray from Ridgmont, Zack Markwell from Stonemont, Tim Carr from Kansas City Southern, State Rep. Phil

Stephenson, Betty Russo representing Gov. Greg Abbott, City Manager Mindi Snyder, City Councilwoman Gloria Harris and El Campo Mayor Randy Collins.

L-N Photo by Shannon Crabtree

ECONOMY



GROWTH SPURT: The \$125 million Phase I of the rail park development should bring jobs to El Campo and Wharton County.

Contributed Graphic

— Park promises millions in revenue

(Continued from Page 1-A)

The \$125 million Phase 1 of the development should bring needed jobs as well as spur other growth.

"My estimate is this park could create at least a thousand jobs or more," said Mike Gray with Ridgmont Property Group.

Developers Stonemont Financial Group, Ridgeline Property Group, Kansas City Southern and NAI Partners have yet to announce a client for the facility. However, Gray said, "The door is now open for business at the Southwest International Gateway Business Park."

Lease proposals are being sent out to potential clients this week with construction anticipated "in the near term."

Gray and Zach Maxwell with Stonemont both thanked the efforts of locals in making the project a reality.

"You will not be disappointed in the people of Wharton County and how hard they work," Kolkhorst told them.

In addition to the jobs the park will create, citizens can expect more, Stephenson added.

"It will bring in many sat-

elite businesses and economic growth," he said, adding, "This just might be our moment. It's up to you El Campo and Wharton County to make our area great again."

Once fully in place, the development is expected to bring \$16.7 million in utility franchise fees for the city.

KCS rail runs from the Port of Lazo Cardenas on Mexico's Pacific Coast through Laredo, up the com-

extensions from existing lines to the proposed development.

The development is projected to add \$1.5 million in tax revenues to El Campo ISD, \$600,000 to Wharton County, \$170,000 to Wharton County Junior College, \$255,000 to the hospital district and \$62,000 to Emergency Services District 1.

Property taxes for the city are projected at less than \$1 million because tax dollars

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pany's main line to Houston and ultimately north to Kansas City.

"This is potentially very big. This is great for Wharton County," CDC Board President Kinnan Stockton said.

CDC directors approved up to \$3 million in utility line construction funding in April 2017 while the city agreed to cover the \$397,500 cost for designing water and sewer

in the target area have been redirected to a Tax Reinvestment Zone funding freeway frontage roads.

It's growth, Mayor Randy Collins said, but added, El Campo is not forgetting its roots. "We are not putting a blind eye to future agriculture and oil and gas development, and I'd like to thank those people for what they've done for the last 100 years."