

2 new projects to bring more jobs to Glendale

Ambulance center, aviation school on the way

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Glendale leaders this week trumpeted more jobs coming to the city with the green lighting of two new projects downtown and near the city airport.

"In a very short meeting lasting about an hour, you have seen more than 150 new jobs come into the city of Glendale," Mayor Elaine Scruggs said at Tuesday's meeting. "The city of Glendale is still moving forward."

The number of jobs mentioned by the mayor and staff, however, has turned out to be overly optimistic, nearly double the 82 jobs the two employers said would come to the city.

Southwest Ambulance will open a dispatch center and Western Maricopa Education Center will build an aviation school for high school students. The City Council unanimously approved both.

Deputy City Manager Jim Colson said the school will accept up to 125 students a semester, create 200 construction jobs and 50 permanent jobs.

West-MEC spokeswoman Adriana Alvarado on Thursday said the number of permanent jobs has been downgraded to 10 to 12 jobs, which includes teachers and administrators.

West-MEC is building the school on 7.4 acres off Glendale Avenue and should open in fall 2011 with programs such as airplane mechanic training for juniors and seniors.

The larger employer will come with Southwest Ambulance opening a dispatch center, which won't house ambulances, but will provide dispatch services to 911 requests and schedule non-emergent transports.

City Manager Ed Beasley said the company will operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week and was expected to ultimately employ 110 people.

For now, the move brings no new hires. Southwest Ambulance spokesman Josh Weiss said about 70 employees would transfer to Glendale from a site in Scotts-

dale. In time, the company expects to hire more people, but how many and when remains unclear, Weiss said.

The lease is a score for Glendale as it will eat up the vacant space at the Promenade at Palmaire, a city-owned 600-spot parking garage with 12,000 square feet of retail underneath.

Glendale spent \$17 million to open the structure at 58th Drive and Palmaire Avenue in 2008 and struggled to find tenants during the recession.

Coffee & Tea Express has been the lone tenant for two years.

Kathy VanDerworp, owner of Coffee & Tea Express, was pleased to hear Southwest Ambulance employees would fill the building's remaining 10,000 square feet of space.

"Like any downtown area in the middle of the afternoon we start to die down and then people go home and leave. Afternoons are pretty slow. Hopefully this would keep more of a steady flow (of customers) going into our shop," she said.

City leaders see the lease and the employees it will bring as a way to jumpstart downtown redevelopment.

Downtown merchants should receive \$57,000 in annual spending from Southwest Ambulance employees, according to city Economic Development Director Brian Friedman.

Friedman said the city always envisioned either retail or office tenants at the Promenade.

"It was any combination of retail, office that truly benefit existing businesses, get people downtown and spending their dollars," he said.

The city's 10-year lease calls for Southwest Ambulance to pay annual rent increases and to pay a share of any operating expense increases incurred by the city. Southwest will have access to 50 parking spaces.

Southwest Ambulance's monthly rent for the first year will be \$10,525 a month. The rent will jump to \$32,581 a month in the final year.