

Businesses jumping on Crosstown

Extension could mean new hub

By Nick Nelson Caller-Times
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Local businesses are snatching up property that will be more accessible when the Crosstown Extension is finished early next year and are moving to what some say is the city's new hub.

In September, Austin-based Arnold Oil bought two properties and a total of 12 acres on Ayers Street two blocks south of South Padre Island Drive. Arnold Oil will move from its current location on Broadway Street downtown to the 35,000-square-foot former Noland Supply building. Arnold Oil company distributes auto parts and lubricants.

Matthew Cravey, president of NAI Cravey Real Estate Services Inc., who arranged the Arnold Oil deal, said the extension has attracted retail and light industrial businesses.

Shortly after Arnold Oil inked its deal, United Rentals, the nation's largest equipment rental company, signed an agreement with Arnold Oil to lease an 11,000-square-foot building next door. Greenwich, Conn.-based United Rentals already has two branches in Corpus Christi, and the new branch will rent more equipment than the others - ranging from lawnmowers to bulldozers - and will create 15 new jobs.

Sam Orta, who will manage the new location when it opens in March, said the site was ideal because it was centrally located among many established businesses that are potential clients.

"The city has a hub in that area," he said. "I think when that new extension opens, its really going to be an opportunity to capitalize on that. There are also a lot of old businesses in that area that we hope to serve."

The extension is scheduled to be finished by March and will lengthen the Crosstown Expressway past SPID and connect it to Holly Road and Saratoga Boulevard.

Cravey said the new extension would affect development of the area in two ways. Retail properties will likely pop up along the extension as they have along SPID, he said. And light industrial businesses will likely be attracted to Ayers Street once the expressway relieves the through traffic.

"Ayers had gotten very congested," he said. "What's going to be nice is that Ayers is going to be a nicer road to be on because the through traffic is going to be up on Crosstown. If you have a service truck, it's dangerous to pull out on a congested road."

Wayne Lundquist, a commercial real estate broker with Cobb, Lundquist & Atnip, said businesses still are reluctant to buy property more than a few blocks south of SPID, but he said he has little doubt that the intersection of the Crosstown Extension and Saratoga Boulevard will thrive one day.

"I have taken several clients to where the extension empties into Saratoga," he said. "They think it's just too premature and that there's just not enough development there yet. The first two or three people to buy are taking a real risk, but eventually, there's no doubt about it - it will be booming."