

Humana to expand to West Valley

Carrie Watters - Feb. 23, 2010 12:00 AM

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In a further expansion of its Arizona operations, Humana will relocate 300 of its employees from the East Valley to the West Valley in May, with plans to hire up to 150 more workers in 2011.

The move will bring more skilled jobs to the area, further develop Glendale's health-care-industry focus and fill a formerly largely empty building just east of Loop 101 on Glendale Avenue.

Although Humana's pharmacy division will maintain a call center in Tempe, pharmacists and other employees who work for the company's mail-order pharmacy service, *RightSourceRx*, will take a spot near Glendale's sports-and-entertainment district.

The Louisville, Ky.-based Fortune 100 company employs about 1,200 people at seven locations in the Valley and Tucson.

Company officials said the move to larger quarters was necessary because of increased demand for the prescription home-delivery service.

The majority of employees and future hires at the Glendale facility will be licensed pharmacy technicians, registered pharmacists and pharmacy clerks.

Health care is one of several key industries targeted by Glendale's economic developers.

The city is already home to Banner Thunderbird Medical Center, as well as Midwestern University, one of the state's few medical schools.

Glendale economic-development director Brian Friedman said that Humana strengthens the city's "impressive listing of health-care-industry institutions."

The announcement is a boon for the city, which continues to work to transform itself from a bedroom community into an employment corridor along Loop 101.

West Valley leaders have long bemoaned commuter patterns that trek from west to east.

Humana officials said one of the site-selection criteria was proximity to where employees live. They found at least 70 percent of the existing employees live closer to the Glendale site than the current spot in Tempe.

Friedman said each new major corporation that chooses the city gives momentum to snag others.

The city provided no direct incentives. Friedman, who as a city planner helped develop the high-end offices around the sports-and-entertainment district, provided a one-day turnaround time on design review and other permits.

Humana will lease 106,418 square feet, an entire three-story building at Shea Properties' 91 Glendale development. 91 Glendale opened three years ago on 21 acres just east of Loop 101 on Glendale Avenue. Wells Fargo's West Valley hub operates out of the property's other main building.

Although Shea originally intended to have some retail, including a Starbucks coffee shop, those smaller buildings at the site are being retrofitted into garden offices for a real-estate company and technology firm that are moving out of the main building to accommodate Humana.