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Real Estate

New AAA call center to bring 1,200 jobs to OKC

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OKLAHOMA CITY – AAA will build a 198,000-square-foot customer contact center that will employ more than 1,200 workers in the Quail Springs Office Park of northwest Oklahoma City, AAA officials said Friday.

“This site selection is not only good news for Oklahoma, it’s good news for members of participating AAA clubs who stand to benefit from Oklahoma’s motivated work force, friendly business environment and low cost of operation,” said Neal Krueger, president and chief executive officer of AAA Oklahoma, in a prepared statement.

Dallas real estate firm Koll Development Co. will build the center, which will service the motor club’s members in northern California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, South Dakota and Oklahoma to start. AAA and Koll have signed a lease contract to allow Koll to purchase land.

Construction on the building will begin next month and is expected to be completed in late 2009.

The facility will provide information such as membership, travel, insurance and emergency road services to members.

Krueger said the center will qualify for incentives under the state’s Quality Jobs Act.

Chuck Mai, vice president of public affairs for AAA Oklahoma, said the decision “was a result of a year’s worth of review. There were several cities competing and it came down to Oklahoma City and Indianapolis. The momentum of the city of Oklahoma City played a large role.”

AAA had plenty of support here, Mai said.

“The Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, the city and the state stepped to the plate and encouraged us to do this,” Mai said.

Roy Williams, president and CEO of the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber, said AAA’s decision is a great victory for the area.

“It’s obviously terrific news because this is a very sizable project,” Williams said. “When you look across the U.S. you just don’t see 1,000-plus employee projects announced every day. These are kind of rare and it’s great to be in the running for one and it’s even better to win it. It’s a project that has been relatively short in duration in developing.”

Williams said last month that a consultant with Staubach Co., which was involved in the search, had voiced concerns over recent anti-homosexual comments by Oklahoma Rep. Sally Kern.

Mai said Kern’s statement ultimately did not hinder a move to the city.

“AAA always has been an organization that embraces diversity,” Mai said. “We respect and try to do all we can no matter what lifestyles our employees have.”

Williams said AAA leaders talked with leaders here regarding Staubach Co.’s concerns.

“I think that after they spent time here and talked to other companies and talked about their experiences here, they now are convinced this is a good place for them to be.” Williams said. “After they spoke with state and community leadership, concerns were addressed and they were comfortable with it.”

Williams said the chamber and AAA have worked together for only about six months.

The labor force was the main attraction, he said.

“It has verified what we have been telling everybody now for the past several years and that is

companies now are basing their corporate location and relocation decisions based on access to talent,”

Williams said. “It was talent, labor availability for the skill sets they need that drew them here. It was the same thing that brought Dell here. We have been saying how that paradigm has changed our business,

where it used to be market or supplier access and labor force equally. Now it's not equal – it's labor, labor, labor. Not just labor, but talented labor.”

AAA has not decided the level and pay for the local positions.

Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett said city leaders are thrilled with AAA's decision.

“We chase a lot of these and land a few,” he said. “These will probably be above-average jobs and benefits and it will also mean new construction, which is a boost to the city.”

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101 N. Robinson Ave., Ste. 101, Oklahoma City, OK, 73102 |

P.O. Box 26370, Oklahoma City, OK, 73126-0370 | (405) 235-3100

415 S. Boston Ave., Ste. 101, Tulsa, OK 74103 | (918) 295-0098