

'07 will be a year of building and perpetual traffic jams

THE GAZETTE

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It's not hard to see that for Colorado Springs, 2007 will be the year of the traffic jam.

A handful of projects along I-25 will shut down overpasses for months, so traffic downtown will be badly congested for months.

Hospitals will expand and preparations will be made at Fort Carson, which must make ready for the eventual arrival of thousands of more troops.

A municipal election in April could mean a changing of the guard on the Colorado Springs City Council, and there could be a new mayor. There will be board elections in several school districts, including for the two seats recently filled in the Colorado Springs School District 11 recall election.

But mostly, it will be a year of building to handle the region's growth.

The city will kick off its storm-water enterprise in January and residents will pay varying monthly charges as the city begins to chip away at a big backlog of drainage projects.

Other growth plans:

FORT CARSON

The Mountain Post will have a growth spurt early in 2007 when more than 2,000 soldiers arrive from Fort Hood, Texas.

Another 8,000 are due here by 2010 when the post will be home to 25,000 soldiers, including the entire 4th Infantry Division, which is moving its headquarters here from Fort Hood.

Millions of dollars' worth of construction work started at the post in 2006 and will continue this year as workers rush to complete more than \$1 billion in building projects to accommodate the growth. Significant projects planned for 2007 include adding more family housing to the post and construction of barracks and office buildings.

SCHOOLS

Some school districts have expansion plans, too.

Construction will begin on two major high schools in the Pikes Peak region this year. Lewis-Palmer School District 38, in the Tri-Lakes area, will get its second high school after voters approved a \$57 million bond issue in November 2006. The school will be built east of Interstate 25 and north of Lewis-Palmer Middle School.

Falcon School District 49 will erect its third high school north of Dublin between Powers Boulevard and Marksheffel Road. Although funding for the school was approved by voters in November 2005, construction debris was discovered on the building site. Getting the green light from state health officials took months, delaying the project by about a year.

Colorado Springs School District 11 is building two elementary schools.

The district passed a \$131.7 million bond in 2005 to build Freedom Elementary in the northeast part of the district and Christa McAuliffe Elementary School at Cimarron Hills in the southeast portion of the district.

The schools are set to open in the fall.

They will both have about 61,000 square feet, cost \$9.8 million and have room for 600 students.

Hanover School District 28 will add a second elementary school to the district.

Construction has begun on a school that will initially serve 60 to 70 students in kindergarten through fifth grade, beginning in the fall.

The building will cost \$2.5 million — money Hanover School District 28 borrowed with approval from voters in 2002 — and be in the Rancho Colorado area.

MEDICAL FACILITIES

City-owned Memorial Health System will open an expanded emergency room Jan. 11 at Memorial Hospital Central, the main campus east of downtown Colorado Springs. The 44,000-square-foot department will be double the existing space and have 68 beds. It will feature private exam rooms, a separate area designed specifically for children, state-of-the-art resuscitation rooms and a large area for treating minor injuries.

In April, Memorial Hospital North will open. The new, five-story hospital at Briargate Parkway and Union Boulevard will have 97 beds. A 123,000-square-foot medical office building will open on the 82-acre site in the fall.

A seven-story addition to Memorial Hospital Central will open in early fall with a new children's hospital, women's pavilion and maternity services and a cardiology wing.

Pikes Peak Regional Medical Center, Teller County's first full-service hospital with a 24-hour emergency room, will open in August at a 20-acre site off U.S. Highway 24 southwest of Woodland Park. The 40,000-square-foot building will have 15 inpatient beds and major medical services, including a helicopter landing pad.

Penrose-St. Francis Health Services will open an expanded emergency room at Penrose Hospital in early fall with separate rooms for individuals who have to be admitted.

Two independently owned medical complexes will open at a new medical campus near Centennial Boulevard and Fillmore Street. The Colorado Springs Osteopathic Foundation will complete a new headquarters in May, offering services for Medicare and retired military patients. The 11,706-square-foot medical office building will house administrative offices and the foundation's clinic, Centennial Health.

The Center at Centennial, a physician-owned, sub-acute care center adjacent to the osteopathic building, will open in late summer. The three-story, 68,000-square-foot building will have 80 private rooms.

Colorado Springs Health Partners, a group of 89 local physicians, will break ground mid-year on a new medical treatment center at the southeast end of the intersection of Centennial Boulevard and Fillmore Street. The 110,000-square-foot building on 44 acres will replace a smaller, aging building on South Nevada Avenue.