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## **Unprecedented Public/Private Partnership Brings Workforce Solutions Office Back to Katy**

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### **Politicians and Business Leaders Unite to Provide Critical Job Services for the Community For Immediate Release:**

Katy, TX, September 2, 2009

The Katy Area Economic Development Council ("Katy Area EDC") and the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce ("Katy Chamber") today announced that through the efforts of an unprecedented partnership between government, community and business leaders in the Katy area, Workforce Solutions will be opening a new office in Katy Mills in mid September 2009.

This 1,800 square foot branch office of Workforce Solutions will replace the Workforce office formerly located at the Houston Community College Northwest campus on US Interstate 10 and Park Row at Foxlake Drive that was closed over a year ago. According to Sue Cruver, marketing coordinator for Workforce Solutions, funds from the US Department of Labor were allocated to other states based on the formula that drives dollars to states with higher unemployment. This action forced the Gulf Coast Workforce Board to consolidate and close some of its Workforce Solutions offices taking the total number offices within its 13 county territory from 35 to 29. The former Katy office was consolidated into the Spring Branch office.

Recognizing the vital services Workforce Solutions provides to both employers and employees, Katy's leadership including Lance LaCour, president and CEO of the Katy Area EDC; Ann Hodge, president and CEO of the Katy Chamber; Texas State Senator Glenn Hegar; Texas State Senator Dan Patrick; Texas State Representative Bill Callegari; and Texas State Representative John Zerwas came together to begin working on the problem.

"These services are always needed, but particularly in the current economic climate, Workforce Solutions and its offerings are crucial," said Lance LaCour, president and CEO of the Katy Area EDC. "The void left by closing the Workforce Solutions office in Katy was unacceptable and we knew as leaders that we needed to act swiftly and surely to fill the gap."

"The Gulf Coast Workforce Board was fantastic about working with Katy's community leaders to find a solution to this budgetary challenge," said Ann Hodge, president and CEO of the Katy Chamber. "In the end, everyone we called upon from our lawmakers to the owners of Katy Mills, Simon Property Group, was eager to answer the call and assist in bringing this asset back to our community."

The space, which was formerly used by Simon as an office for its land group, is being donated through an "In Kind" membership with the Katy Area EDC and Katy Chamber to Workforce Solutions. According to Mace Hirt, Katy Mills manager and representative from Simon Property Group, "The idea seemed like a good match. The space has its own entrance and access to ample parking. Also, the office will provide a service to the mall's tenants who are frequently looking for qualified employees."

Workforce Solutions has big plans for the office. Carole Anderson, project director for Workforce Solutions, believes that being located in the mall, closer to the general population, will offer additional opportunities to serve the community.

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"There will be people who have never heard of Workforce Solutions who will see the new office and take advantage of the services," notes Anderson. She says plans are in the works to expand the capabilities of the office beyond the four staff members who will be on site by installing video conferencing equipment. The video conferencing equipment will give customers access to other Workforce Solutions offices where counselors provide additional information, advice or assistance on any number of job search issues.

"This branch will focus on having a strong self service component," adds Anderson. "Job seekers will be able to access a library of materials to help in their search as well as have access to photocopiers, fax machines and computers with Internet access."

State Representative Bill Callegari, commented on the news: "I am delighted to learn that a new Workforce Solutions office will be opening in Katy Mills . This is great news for the Katy area as this office will serve as a needed, valuable resource for businesses and job seekers. The fact that the office will be located within Katy Mills , one of the cornerstones to the growth in our area, is very fitting. My thanks and recognition go to Lance LaCour with the Katy Area Economic Development Council, and Ann Hodge with the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce for their hard work and dedication to opening this new office."

Another influential participant in this effort, Texas State Senator Glenn Hegar said, "Recognizing the importance of the Workforce Solutions Office to the Katy Community, community leaders pulled all of their resources together to make this happen. This is another example of why I am proud to not only represent Katy, but to be a resident of Katy."

Both Hodge and LaCour hope that the public/private partnership forged in Katy for this project will serve as a model for other successful partnerships between economic development organizations, chambers of commerce, and Workforce Solutions.

"This sort of out of the box thinking and cooperation has created tangible benefits for the citizens and business owners of the Katy area," adds Hodge.  
End.

#### About the Katy Area EDC

Founded in 2003, the Katy Area EDC's mission is to establish the Katy area as the premier location for families and businesses through planned economic growth and development. Since its inception, the Katy Area EDC has grown to over 125 members and assisted in the creation of over 10,000 jobs and \$1.5 billion in capital investment.

#### About the Katy Area Chamber of Commerce

The Katy Area Chamber of Commerce is a voluntary organization of business and professional people who have joined together to offer services to strengthen existing businesses, encourage small business creation and develop a talented workforce. The Katy Area Chamber of Commerce has been serving the Katy area business community as its voice and assisting with business development and economic growth since 1960.

#### About The Mills

The Mills is one of Simon Property Group's five real estate business platforms. With 16 properties totaling approximately 23 million square feet, The Mills properties are large retail venues focused on delivering value to the consumer by offering a unique mixture of full price, value and outlet retail, dining and entertainment options. Mills' projects are well located in major metropolitan markets. Notable properties include Arundel Mills (Baltimore), Grapevine Mills (Dallas), Ontario Mills (Los Angeles), Opry Mills (Nashville) and Sawgrass Mills (Ft.Lauderdale/Miami).

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