

Shoppers line up for opening of Sam's Club in Pearland

By Natalie Harms | October 16, 2012

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Brazoria
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Laura Joseph of Houston gives associates high fives during the grand opening of Sam's Club in Pearland.



More Information

10 years of growth: Pearland's population grew from 37,640 in 2002 to 91,252 in 2010. Sales-tax receipts grew from \$5.76 million in 2000 to \$19.54 million in 2010.

Feb. 2012: "Sales tax growth (in Pearland) has

welcomed its first **Sam's Club** in Pearland with open arms on Sept. 27.

"For years people always asked me when are we going to get a Sam's Club," said Mayor **Tom Reid**. "And I've had that weight on my shoulders for years. And now all of the sudden we have one and it contributes to the image of Pearland as not only a place to live and work but also to shop."

averaged nearly 8 percent annually over the last five fiscal years making this revenue stream the largest single source of general fund revenue, accounting for nearly 30 percent of the total, in fiscal 2010," - Fitch Ratings.

Some of the draw, according to **Matt Buchanan**, president of the **Pearland Economic Development** Corp., is due to the store's location.

The store, at the corner of Discovery Bay Drive and Texas 288, is in the Shadow Creek Ranch development, a fast-growth area of the city.

"The store has been very well-received," Buchanan said. "I know it will be very successful in the area because it's become a retail center for this part of Houston over the last five years.

"Any time a retail organization such as Sam's Club comes to Pearland, we see a noticeable positive effect in the community. This is measured not only in sales-tax revenues, but also in how the store offers an additional shopping option for our residents and its ability to bring shoppers to our community," Buchanan said.

"The opening of the new Sam's Club further solidifies the 288 Corridor area as a regional shopping destination which will most definitely have an impact on the community. The recent retail developments in that area offer our residents more options than ever before," Buchanan said.

EDC officials do anticipate an increase in sales-tax revenue as a result of Sam's Club opening in Pearland, but don't have an estimate on the amount of sales taxes to expect.

Sales-tax revenue has been growing in the city, he added.

"Our average increase in sales-tax revenue from 2000-2011 is 12.7 percent," said Buchanan, adding that so far this year, sales-tax revenue of \$18.4 million represents a 10.7 percent increase over the same time period last year.

Construction of the 136,000-square-foot store, which began in February, was completed in late August. The team had a mere four weeks to finish the store's interior.

The opening day proved just how popular the store is going to be.

"We had a line that went from our front door all the way around our building," Club Manager **Randy Yarborough** said. "It took 30-45 minutes just to get everyone inside."

Yarborough said the opening ceremony's biggest draw was its celebrity guest list.

Lines weaved down the aisles for local sports stars who were signing autographs and posing for pictures. The lineup included former **Houston Oilers'** quarterback **Dan Pastorini**, retired NBA star and Houston Cougar basketball announcer **Elvin Hayes** and even **James Casey** of the Texans made time during his winning season to pay a visit.

Along with the guests, the Sam's Club played host to temporary showcases, said Yarborough, which offered items like ceramic pottery, gourmet butters and jambalaya mixes.

All of these attractions brought in more than 4,000 transactions on Thursday and more than 14,000 throughout the weekend - those numbers neglecting the patrons who went in without making a purchase.

The shopping community includes all of Brazoria County - even as far south as Freeport, said Yarborough.

The new location features an electronics department, packaged prepared meals made fresh everyday, fresh produce, meats and seafood and personal shopping through Click 'n' Pull.

Walmart Stores Inc., the parent company for Sam's Club, hired about 175 sales associates from the community, and also gave more than \$25,000 in grants to local nonprofit groups, including the **Pearland Fire Department**, **Ronald McDonald House** and Keep Pearland Beautiful. Others participants included the **Young Entrepreneur Academy** and the **Forgotten Angels Foundation**.

Yarborough, who expects the club to remain busy throughout the holiday season, just hopes to inspire his team with his story. Twenty-eight years ago he was an associate pushing carts in the parking lot. Now he is managing his third store.

"I always like telling my story to the new associates," he said. "You can do anything you want with this company."

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