

# TeleCheck connects with Westchase for new call center

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TeleCheck Services Inc., a subsidiary of Denver-based First Data Corp., has inked a deal to purchase 24 acres of land in Oak Park at Westchase for a new call center.

The Houston-based check clearing-house will build a 106,000-square-foot facility in the corporate office park located along the West Belt between the Westpark corridor and Bellaire Boulevard.

The building's groundbreaking is scheduled for mid-December with a completion date slated for the summer of 2002, says TeleCheck spokesman Rodney Bell.

"In addition to allowing us to consolidate space, (the new call center) will provide us with some long-term cost savings in terms of facilities management,"

Bell says. "And it will allow us to have all the new state-of-the-art technology that goes into a call center facility."

The firm's call center operations, which are currently located in the Galleria area at TeleCheck's headquarters building at 5251 Westheimer near Sage, will be moved to the new property in Oak Park. TeleCheck occupies roughly 170,000 square feet of space in the Westheimer property.

Bell says it is still unknown how much space will be vacated at 5251 Westheimer. But the company's corporate offices will remain at the high-profile Uptown building.

TeleCheck has reportedly been scouting for new call center sites since 1998, when it came close to signing a deal for space at the Westwood

Technology Center.

Office broker Julie King of Strategis Cresa says an environment like Oak Park will make a good fit for a call center.

"It's perfectly suited for a large floor plate setting with high density and good parking ratios," she says.

The 75-acre Oak Park development was purchased two years ago by Means-Knaus and Florida partner The St. Joe Co. It is part of a 220-acre site originally developed by Halliburton Co. and The Staubach Co.

Means-Knaus will co-develop TeleCheck's new building. Bell wouldn't reveal the other contractors involved.

Scott Wegmann of Cushman & Wakefield represented TeleCheck in the deal.

Other recent build-to-suit projects in

the park include buildings for Veritas DGC, Jacobs Engineering, United Recovery Systems and M-I Drilling Fluids. Halliburton is planning a 2 million-square-foot campus in the park.

Office developers and large companies are choosing to relocate to the Westchase District partly because of its access to a large employee base, says the district's general manager James Murphy, citing the half-million people that live within five miles of the district's core.

And when firms build corporate-owned facilities, it spurs further development, he adds.

"When companies come in permanently, it attracts their suppliers, vendors and even competitors," Murphy says. ■

