STAFF REPORT

The city of Douglasville, Block and Kahan Properties and the University System of Georgia have inked an agreement that provides a facility for 10 years to Georgia Highlands College and the University of West Georgia to provide educational services in Douglasville.

The building, formerly the home of Cub Foods on Stewart Highway, includes about 44,000 square feet. The $1.5 million renovation will result in seven classrooms, both a wet and dry lab with a common prep area, auditorium, faculty offices, student lounge, library and conference room. The USG also has an option on 50 acres in the city for future expansion as enrollment grows.

Georgia Highlands College is currently offering classes in modular units at Chapel Hill High School, which allowed the institution to begin instruction in Douglas County in time for fall semester 2009. GHC is a two-year college that provides core curriculum courses transferable to other USG institutions.

GHC President Randy Pierce believes the college is meeting a vital need of the Douglasville area.

"Douglasville and Douglas County is growing at an incredibly rapid rate," Pierce said. "Until we arrived, students who wanted to study at a USG institution had a rather inconvenient commute. Now they can do so in their own community. When the new facility opens, their options will expand even further with additional core and upper-level courses."

The University of West Georgia's plans are still being formulated. Sandra Stone, acting vice president of academic affairs at UWG, said that the university remains committed to the project but wants to conduct an assessment in Douglasville to determine which programs of study have optimal demonstrable need in the area, so that those programs may be offered following the core curriculum provided by Georgia Highlands.

"There has been discussion to offer courses in education and business and perhaps criminology," Stone said. "We would like to begin offering undergraduate classes there in fall 2010, but right now our ability to do so will depend on funding."

Douglasville was identified by the USG several years ago as underserved by the university system. The partnership between Georgia Highlands College and the University of West Georgia is the result. GHC is also in partnership with Kennesaw State University in downtown Dallas to provide a similar program.

"The expansion of higher education institutions to Douglasville is a major priority for the city," Douglasville Mayor Mickey Thompson said. "Georgia Highlands College and University of West Georgia's move to Douglasville provides an excellent opportunity for our residents to further their skills and education. In a tough econo-

my this gives us a competitive advantage by providing additional programs that will further advance our workforce."

Officials in Douglasville believe the USG's presence will positively impact the economy of the city. Darren Bak, chairman of the City of Douglasville Development Authority, says the recruitment of Georgia Highlands College and University of West Georgia to Douglasville is a benefit to city residents.

"Providing educational opportunities right here in the community makes us very attractive to companies looking to relocate or expand. Education brings higher salaries," Bak said. This is a win-win for the Douglasville Development Authority, the city of Douglasville, Georgia Highlands College and the community at large."

Georgia Highlands College is a two-year institution of the University System of Georgia, serving more than 5,000 students at six sites in Rome, Cartersville, Marietta, Dallas and Douglasville.

A four-year unit of the University System of Georgia, the University of West Georgia is a residential, doctoral comprehensive university that offers a broad undergraduate and graduate curriculum based on a liberal arts foundation. UWG serves more than 11,000 students through its College of Arts and Sciences, Richards College of Business, College of Education and School of Nursing.