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Christian Bros. auto eyes Montgomery

By **Cosby Woodruff**
cwoodruff@gannett.com

Christian Brothers Automotive Corp., a Houston-based chain of upscale car repair shops, plans a Montgomery location later this year.

Josh Wall, the company's vice president of development, said the company is finalizing franchise plans for the Montgomery location, and that it should open during the third quarter.

Wall said the deal is not finalized, and until that occurs he does not want to name the franchise operator or the store's location, but he said the company

is looking forward to opening a Montgomery location.

Christian Brothers is in the midst of a rapid expansion project focusing on recruiting new franchise operators. The chain announced plans to grow from its current 50 locations to more than 175 in the next few years.

The chain differs dramatically from the typical car-repair shop, Wall said. Its lobbies have hardwood floors, leather seating, artwork and decorative lighting to make the customer feel more welcome and confident, he said.

Beyond the lobby's comfort, he said

the company still focuses on repairing cars and light trucks.

A typical shop will have nine service bays and employ up to a dozen people. The shops hire only certified technicians and then train them to company standards, he said.

Mark Carr, the company's founder and CEO, said in a written statement that the front and back ends of the shop are designed to gain customer confidence.

"Historically, the automotive repair industry has been plagued by negative perceptions, and women are traditional-

ly more hesitant about the car service experience because of the dishonesty often associated with the industry," he said.

"CBAC exists to challenge the norm by insisting on quality, fairness and first-rate customer service at all times. And since women make up the majority of our customers, we go the extra mile to make them feel comfortable and at home."

The company, Wall said, does everything from changing a car's oil to changing its engine.

It focuses mainly on passenger cars, and does not do paint or body work, he said.