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NORTHEAST & AREA BRIEFS

City offices set to relocate

EULESS - The city's water, human resources and finance offices will be closed Friday during their relocation to the City Hall campus, 201 N. Ector Drive. The departments have been housed at other sites since the \$1.25 million renovation began in September. Office hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays.

- Terry Lee Goodrich

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LANDON R. CASILLAS
 1980-2006

GI always remained cheerful

■ He had a kind, gentle demeanor and smiled readily, his family says.

By **LEILA FADEL**
 STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

As a baby, Army 1st Lt. Landon R. Casillas never needed to be coaxed to smile. His father didn't coo or do tricks to elicit an ear-to-ear grin. From his first moments, it was always there.



CASILLAS

Lt. Casillas, of Eules, was killed June 9 after a precautionary helicopter landing at Outlaw Field in Clarksville, Tenn., according to the public affairs office in Fort Campbell, Ky. The aeromedical evacuation officer assigned to the 50th Medical Company was 26.

Military officials said they are still investigating the cause of Lt. Casillas' death.

That Friday, Richard Casillas said, he didn't get the nightly call from his good-natured son. The conversations would always end with, "I love you, Dad" and "I love you, son."

Instead, that night Richard Casillas and his wife, May-Ling, boarded a plane to Fort Campbell, where his son had been stationed less than a year.

On the plane, Richard Casillas said, people around him chatted, drank their complimentary soft drinks and read magazines.

"The hardest thing about when your son is killed is having to get on the plane," he said. "No one around you knows what just happened, what you're going through."

Landon Casillas was born in 1980 in Honolulu to his Hawaiian mother and Texan father. As a child, he moved around until his dad retired from the military and the family moved from Germany to Bedford in 1996 and to Eules in 1999.

At first, adjusting to a new place was daunting for the teenager, his family said. Lt. Casillas tried out for the football team at L.D. Bell High School; he'd been a linebacker at his school in Germany.

Richard Casillas recounted how his son had come home from school one day crestfallen.

"Dad, they put me on the JV [junior varsity] team," he said.

Richard Casillas said he followed his son into his room and told him that he'd just have to go out the next day and do his best.

Then he saw that smile.

"You know, Dad," Richard Casillas, 47, recalled his son saying, "you're right. I know I can play. They just have to know I can play."

The next week he was on varsity.

"He never let himself get down," Richard Casillas said. "And never let anyone around him get down."

Lt. Casillas was muscular and seemingly stood taller than his 5-foot-10-inch frame, his father said. At first glance, Lt. Casillas' appearance was intimidating, but he had a kind and gentle demeanor, his father said.

He was known for treating lower-ranked soldiers as

Funeral

- 1 p.m. Wednesday, Robert Carr Chapel, Texas Christian University
- Visitation, 7-9 p.m. today, Greenwood Funeral Home, 3100 White Settlement Road, Fort Worth

equals, his father said.

Lt. Casillas joined the military in 2004 after graduating from Texas Christian University, where he was in the ROTC.

He had a wife of one year, Jessica, and a 6-month-old daughter, Arle.

Jessica Casillas, 22, said she always loved her husband's goofy side.

Often he'd dance with his daughter around the room singing pop songs modified for the baby. His favorite was "I'm too sexy for my diaper," Jessica Casillas said.

Jessica Casillas said that at one time she was jealous that their daughter looks more like her husband than like her but that now she is thankful that Arle has his dark features.

"My husband was handsome," she said. "My daughter is beautiful."

At a memorial service for Lt. Casillas in Fort Campbell, Richard Casillas said, Arle grabbed at a photo of her father as her mother held her.

"Landon does not have any unfinished business here," he said. "His family knew he loved them."

Other survivors include his sister, Shannon Casillas, 19, of Eules.

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EXHIBIT

Vietnam wall replica to travel to Arlington for the weekend

■ The memorial, like the original in Washington, D.C., contains the names of 58,000 troops who died in the Vietnam War.

By **HEATHER ANN WHITE**
 STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

ARLINGTON — Every time the replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial comes near the Arlington-Fort Worth area, A.L. McCluney volunteers to help any way he can.

This month, the Korean War veteran from Hurst helped spread the word that the replica will roll down the road today in a tractor-trailer painted with an American flag. Organizers said the truck will be flanked by about 100 mo-

torcycles when it leaves Texas Motor Speedway at 9 a.m. en route to Moore Funeral Home & Memorial Gardens in Arlington.

"I haven't decided where I'll be yet," McCluney, 75, said Monday. "But Tiffany, my dog, and I will be watching.

"Those guys laid it on the line when the chips were down. Those guys in the military ... they're my heroes," said McCluney, who'll be wear-

ing his VMF 112 fighter squadron cap.

That's why it was important to him to encourage government officials, Marines, churches, organizations and businesses to line Texas 10 as the truck passes some time between 9:30 and 10:30 a.m. today, he said.

"Hopefully, this will be the homecoming parade the veterans never received," said Jamie Jewell, community outreach coordinator for Dignity Memorial Funeral Providers, which is helping sponsor the wall's visit to Arlington.

The public can view the replica, the Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall, for free Friday through Sunday at the funeral home. The faux-granite wall is 240 feet long and 8 feet tall and includes the names of more than 58,000 veterans who died.

The replica was created in 1990 by Dignity Memorial to honor the veterans and give closure to their friends and family, said Gary Westerman, location manager of Moore Funeral Home.

IN THE KNOW

Street closures

Some lanes of north Arlington roads will be closed between about 10 a.m. and 1 p.m. today as a tractor-trailer carrying a replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial passes through town. Officials advise drivers to avoid the route:

■ From 1:30, south on Cooper Street to

■ Road to Six Flags, west to

■ Davis Drive, south to Moore Funeral Home and Memorial Gardens, 1219 N. Davis Drive

SOURCE: City of Arlington

McCluney will help people find the names of loved ones on the wall.

He said he began volunteering six or seven years ago when he heard the replica was coming to town.

McCluney, who serves on the Tarrant County Veterans Council and is a member of a Tarrant County group that helps Marines, said he had uncles and cousins in the Vietnam War who survived. He said he has seen the Vietnam

Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C., five or six times. Paying tribute to veterans is important, McCluney said.

"I'm just not going to forget," he said. "People in school now, they don't teach history. They don't teach history like it should be."

McCluney said that when he volunteers, he hears touching stories about people whose names appear on the wall.

"A lot of people will leave notes and flowers," he said. "It's very moving. It will certainly put tears in your eyes if you haven't seen it."

Once, he saw a woman bring her son to the wall and point to



THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

If you go

What: Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall
Where: Moore Funeral Home and Memorial Gardens, 1219 N. Davis Drive, Arlington
Admission: Free.
When: Open 24 hours, Friday to Sunday
Online: www.vietnamwallexperience.com
 For volunteer information, call 817-275-2711

■ Street closures and map of the memorial's route, 7B

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a name.

"She said, 'Now, son, that was your dad,' he said."

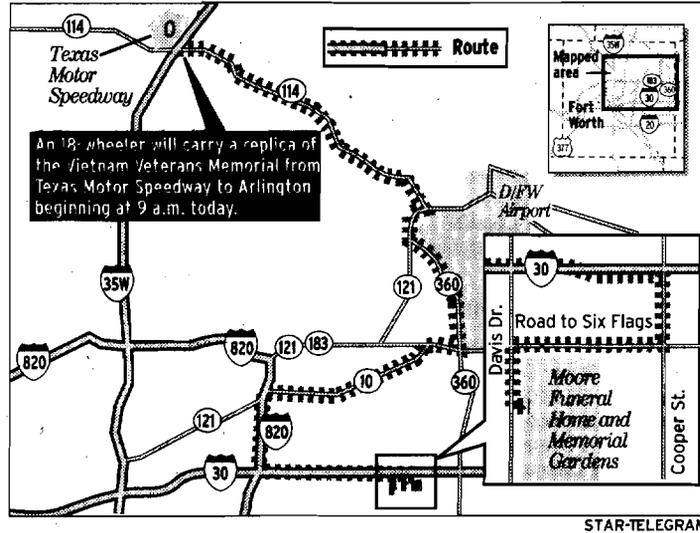
The boy had never seen the name before visiting the traveling memorial, McCluney said.

Even though he doesn't know any of the people whose names are on the wall, McCluney said he is grateful for the people who died.

"Those guys won't be there in person, but they'll be there in spirit," he said. "If you close your eyes for a minute, you'll see the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard and the nurses who were there."

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Vietnam wall route



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KELLER | SOUTHLAKE

Watering ordinances are passed

■ Northeast Tarrant cities that buy water from Fort Worth are expected to enact watering restrictions.

By **JESSICA DeLEÓN**
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

All new sprinkler systems in Keller and Southlake will be required to have rain and freeze sensors by next year. And similar changes may be coming to cities throughout Northeast Tarrant County.

The requirement is part of water ordinances that the Keller and Southlake city councils tentatively approved Tuesday night.

The ordinance is similar to one approved last month by Fort Worth, and all of the city's wholesale water customers will be expected to implement similar restrictions.

Haltom City, Haslet, Hurst, Northlake, Richland Hills, Roanoke, Trophy Club, Watauga, Westlake and parts of North Richland Hills also get their water from Fort Worth.

The restrictions include:

■ Outdoor watering is banned from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. until Sept. 30 unless done by a hand-held or soaker hose.

■ Rain and freeze sensors must be placed on new nonresidential irrigation systems installed on or after Aug. 1 in Keller. The sensors are devices that sense moisture or a certain temperature and interrupt the electrical circuit so the system does not activate.

■ Commercial property owners in Keller with existing systems have until Aug. 1,

2007, to install the sensors. Starting this month, all new systems in Southlake must have the sensors, and all pre-existing systems must be retrofitted by June 1.

■ Existing residential properties with irrigation systems are not affected in Keller. But sensors must be placed on residential irrigation systems installed on or after Aug. 1, 2007, in Keller and June 1 in Southlake.

■ The sensors must be inspected each year.

Any Keller violation would be considered a misdemeanor with a fine up to \$500. In Southlake, the fine could be up to \$2,000 for each offense. Keller Public Works Director Ed Ilschner said residents may call to confidentially report violators. Ilschner said the ordinance is needed

as the region experiences a drought and the population expands. Violators would first be given a warning.

"The water-use restrictions are very important because water is a scarce commodity," he said. "It's one of those nonrenewable resources we have to conserve."

Bedford, Colleyville and Euless, as well as parts of North Richland Hills and Grapevine, receive their water from the Trinity River Authority. The cities in that organization have voluntary guidelines, but they are discussing restrictions, said Debbie Bronson, public information assistant for the authority.

Bronson said the cities have different programs regarding the sensors.

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NORTHEAST AFTER HOURS

Children's comedy

EULESS - The final Starlight Performing Arts production, *The Legend of Pocahontas*, will conclude Sunday at the theater, 201 S.

Ector Dr.

Shows will be at 8 p.m. Friday, Saturday and 2 p.m. Sunday. Tickets are \$9 and \$11.

The children's comedy, directed by Lacey Smith, is based loosely on the American legend with some fun twists. This production will end four years of live theater at the Eules theater, which will close this summer. 817-508-9101.

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NORTHEAST TARRANT COUNTY DEVELOPMENT

RUNNING HOT & COLD

Aging communities hard-pressed to compete with booming neighbors

By JOHN KIRSCH
STAR-TELEGRAM STAFF WRITER

■ Development in Richland Hills and Southlake demonstrates a nationwide trend in which aging "inner-ring" suburbs are finding it hard to keep pace with newer "outer-ring" suburbs.

The pattern of development in Northeast Tarrant County over the past two decades can be illustrated in stark terms by comparing Richland Hills and Southlake.

In 1990, the cities were nearly identical in population.

Southlake had 7,082 residents; Richland Hills had 7,978. Southlake's tax base of \$525 million was about twice that of Richland Hills' \$255 million.

Sixteen years later, the differences between the cities are striking.

Richland Hills now has 8,300 people, only a slight gain in 16 years. From 1980 to 1990, Richland Hills' population increased by a grand total of one person.

Southlake, meanwhile, has mushroomed to nearly 25,000 residents. Its 2005 tax base of \$3.8 billion is about 10 times Richland Hills' \$394.4 million.

The paths the two communities have taken demonstrate a common trend seen nationwide between older "inner-ring" suburbs and the "outer-ring" suburbs that have had strong growth in recent years.

Inner-ring cities, such as Richland Hills, Haltom City and Bedford, are growing relatively slowly. And the communities are running out of land for new homes or stores, so they focus on redeveloping aging, blighted areas to increase their often stagnant tax bases. The process can be long and difficult: Homes



STAR-TELEGRAM/LAURIE L. WARD

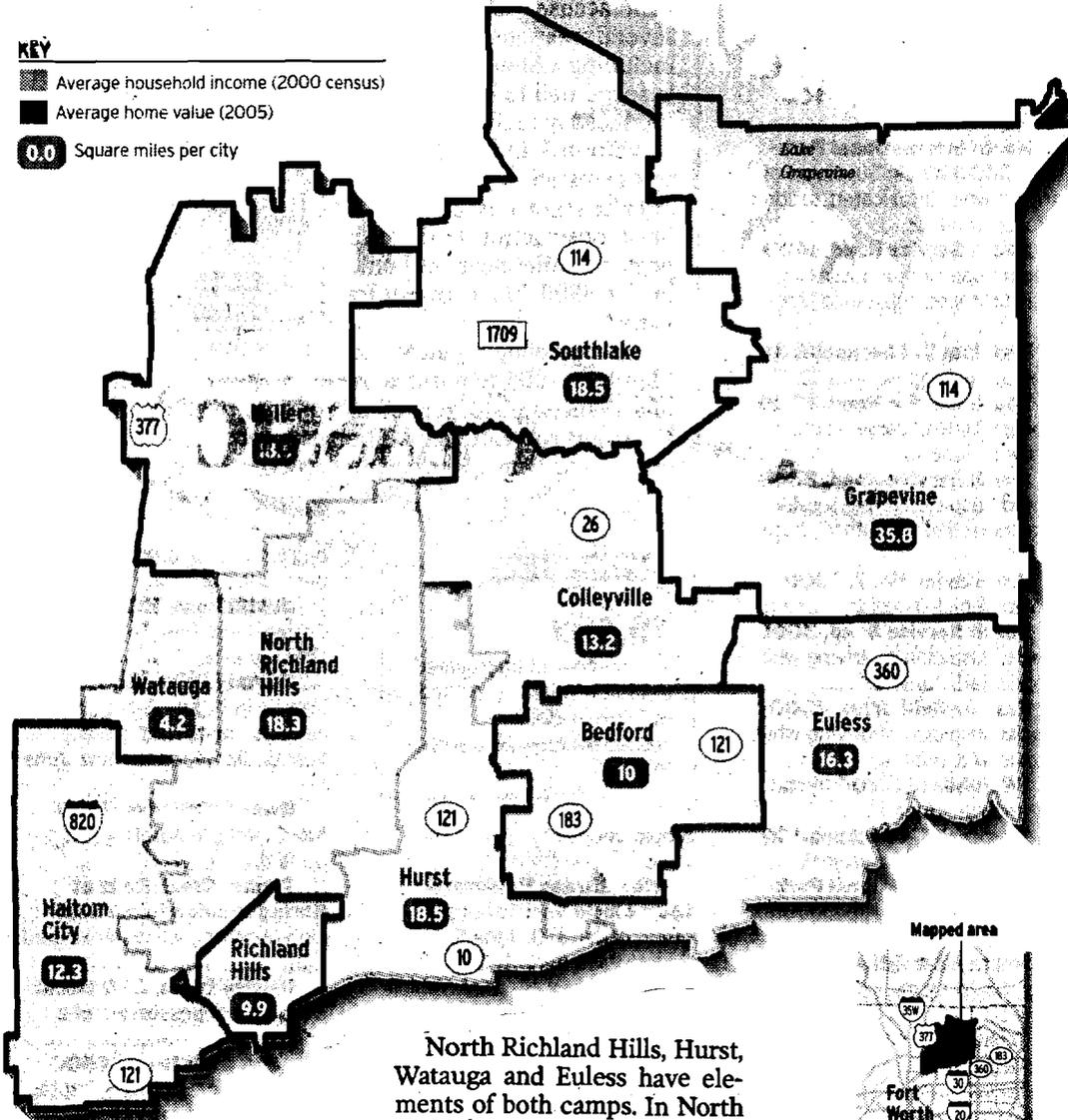
The Home Town NRH neighborhood in North Richland Hills features expensive homes with front porches, walking trails, a neighborhood elementary school and plans for businesses and a public library.

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Here's a comparison of Northeast Tarrant County cities:

KEY
Average household income (2000 census)
Average home value (2005)
Square miles per city

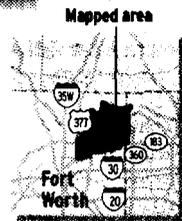


North Richland Hills, Hurst, Watauga and Euless have elements of both camps. In North Richland Hills, for example, the section of the city south of Northeast Loop 820 has a mix of vacant storefronts and existing businesses, closer in feel to neighboring Richland Hills.

But in the northern section, Home Town NRH, a planned community of upscale houses and businesses, continues to expand. The city plans to build a new library in the development. Throughout that part of the city, upscale subdivisions' break ground.

sometimes must be bulldozed.

Outer-ring cities, such as Southlake, Colleyville, Keller and Grapevine, can take advantage of their vacant land to attract developers. They also benefit from a widespread desire among families, particularly affluent ones, for new homes on big lots in communities that try to preserve their rural character. Businesses have followed the increase in the well-heeled population.



Balancing growth

Richland Hills saw only a 1.5 percent increase in preliminary property values for 2006 — the smallest in Tarrant County. Bedford and Haltom City had increases of 5 percent or less.

Baker Boulevard, Richland Hills' main thoroughfare, has islands of stores and churches interrupted by stretches of vacant land. Near the east end of Baker Boulevard sits the empty 15-acre former Sam's Club store and parking lot, the city's largest piece of vacant property. When Sam's left in 1999, the city lost \$500,000 in annual sales tax revenue and 14 percent of its annual budget.

Southlake, in contrast, has the swank and thriving Southlake Town Square shopping center, which this year added a multiplex theater, a bookstore, and pricey restaurants and clothing stores. Town Square is expected to generate about \$780,000 in sales tax revenue this year, or about 13 percent of the \$6 million in sales tax revenue the city receives.

Communities that had strong growth in the 1960s and 1970s feel left behind as people take advantage of freeways and low interest rates to live in "hot" suburbs like Southlake and, increasingly, Keller. In the case of Colleyville and others, the proximity to Dallas/Fort Worth Airport is a strong draw for business executives who travel frequently.

The rapid growth in some communities and the lack of it in others pose challenges for both.

Communities such as Keller must balance growth with finding ways to manage it.

About 25 percent of the available land in Keller is still available for development, Assistant City Manager Kevin Lahner said. Keller benefits from its proximity to Alliance Airport to the west and D/FW to the east, he said. Keller Mayor Julie Tandy, an American Airlines flight attendant, says that on a good day, it takes her 25 minutes to drive from her home to D/FW.

Like Southlake and Colleyville, Keller has tightened its building codes by requiring masonry exteriors, landscaping and other architectural features for homes and businesses, rules that appeal to upscale homeowners. Keller has also developed parks to please homeowners with children.

Colleyville has preserved a rural feel by keeping its narrow

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roads. The city avoided the fate of other suburbs crisscrossed by freeways and dotted with big-box retailers. The result has been to help maintain high property values in Colleyville, said Scott Welmaker, the city's economic development manager.

Grapevine, which traces its history to 1844, has focused on preserving its downtown and older homes. And Southlake generally requires 1 acre and half-acre lots to maintain its rural feel.

The result: Houses in Colleyville and Southlake are now valued at \$338,267 and \$397,395, respectively, compared with \$93,844 in Richland Hills and \$150,525 in Bedford.

The challenge that the hot suburbs face now is planning ahead for the day when they, like their neighbors to the south, are fully developed, said Paul Winkelblech, an economic planner with the North Central Texas Council of Governments. At that point, they will likely put more emphasis on redevelopment, he said.

Reinventing themselves

With little population growth on the horizon, the aging suburbs are already redeveloping areas and improving thoroughfares to attract new businesses.

At the same time, these suburbs face pressure from residents to repair old neighborhood roads and sewers, said Terry Clower, associate director of the Center for Economic Development and Research at the University of North Texas.

To expand the city's tax base, Richland Hills officials tried to lure a new retail outlet to a residential area in the northeast corner of town. The proposal would have required demolishing 22 homes and seven businesses. But the effort collapsed in December 2004 when some homeowners refused to sell.

Another effort to lure an Albertsons grocery store fell through in 2005 because the company was reorganizing. The city had already paid \$96,000 to demolish seven homes and some existing businesses for the project.

In Bedford, officials worked with a Dallas developer to plan a mixed-use town center just north of Airport Freeway near the empty Bank One building. But the ambitious project fell through after voters rolled back a 27 percent property tax increase in 2005.

Some cities try incentives. The Watauga City Council is considering sales tax rebates or property tax breaks to attract businesses to partially vacant shopping centers at Rufe Snow Drive and Watauga Road.

Or they look to improve roads and beautify blighted areas. In Haltom City, officials plan to hire a consultant to study Belknap Street, a major thoroughfare that is dotted with cheap motels, unsightly utility poles and weedy vacant lots. Officials hope the study proposes some ways to improve the street's appearance.

In Richland Hills, officials are focusing on improving Baker Boulevard. The county bond package that voters approved May 13 includes \$1.4 million for rebuilding the street, which would cost \$14 million. City officials are trying to come up with the rest of the money.

Some also turn to consultants. Haltom City has paid consultant Kent Flynn \$180,882 since he was retained in May 2004 to tell city leaders how to attract businesses. Flynn had previously been employed by the city as economic development director.

In November, Watauga hired GSBS Batenhorst of North Richland Hills for \$50,000 to promote economic development.

One option is for older communities to reinvent themselves, Clower said. That is part of the reason that Richland Hills and North Richland Hills

changed the name of Grapevine Highway to Boulevard 26 along the road's older section south of Northeast Loop 820. The change is part of an effort to revitalize the area.

In extreme cases, communities use eminent domain. Hurst condemned homes in 1995 for the expansion of North East Mall. But the effort was protracted and expensive for the city, which had to go to court to defend itself against a lawsuit filed by 10 displaced families. The families won a settlement of about \$3 million in 2000.

There have been some successes.

North East Mall is expected to generate \$12 million in sales tax revenue for Hurst next year, said Jason Little, the city's administrative services manager. That figure translates to 65 percent of the sales tax the city will receive in the fiscal year starting Oct. 1, he said.

Development is also booming along Texas 121 in Euless and Denton Highway in Watauga.

Even Richland Hills has had some recent growth. Forty-eight homes have been built in Faith Creek Estates, just north of Baker Boulevard, since 2000. And a strip center called Faith Creek Plaza opened on Baker Boulevard in early 2006. So far, the only operating business is a dry cleaner/tanning salon run by Alan Eadie. He said business has been slow but expects it to improve.

Richland Hills Councilman Mike Sloan said the planned widening of Northeast Loop 820 could draw more motorists looking for a faster way home, which would benefit city businesses. "The best we can do is the best we can do," he said. "Hopefully we'll catch a break. We're certainly due."

John Kirsch, 817-685-3805
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BY THE NUMBERS

1.5%

Richland Hills' 2006 property value increase

9%

Southlake's 2006 property value increase

25%

Portion of Keller land available for development

\$12 MILLION

North East Mall's projected sales tax revenue for Hurst

\$780,000

Town Square's projected sales tax revenue for Southlake

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HOT

SOUTHLAKE

■ \$159,142

■ \$397,395

Population: 25,350

Net taxable value: \$3.8 billion

Hot! Hot! Hot! Can you say Southlake Town Square? Oh, and then there's all that land on Texas 114. And the average house value is \$397,395, about three times the county average.

COLLEYVILLE

■ \$155,008

■ \$338,267

Population: 21,700

Net taxable value: \$2.8 billion

Town Center and The Village put some heft in the city's commercial tax base. But not all developers love Colleyville. The city's tough standards drive some away.

GRAPEVINE

■ \$84,066

■ \$189,843

Population: 45,600

Net taxable value: \$5.4 billion

A tourist hot spot with a historic downtown, the Gaylord Texan Resort & Convention Center and Grapevine Mills mall. What's not to like? Not much land left for new houses.

KELLER

■ \$99,396

■ \$225,329

Population: 36,350

Net taxable value: \$2.8 billion

Condos, stores, offices and art studios all headed to Keller Town Center. But the projects took their time coming. Housing developments are through the roof.

ON THE BUBBLE

EULESS

■ \$56,728

■ \$129,595

Population: 52,900

Net taxable value: \$2.25 billion

Attracting businesses to Texas 10 remains a struggle. But Dallas/Fort Worth Airport revenues and the Texas Star Golf Course give the city a boost. The 51-acre Shops at Vineyard Village on Texas 121 will be the city's largest commercial project.

HURST

■ \$59,478

■ \$129,705

Population: 38,300

Net taxable value: \$2.1 billion

North East Mall and development along Precinct Line Road help keep property taxes low. Development along Pipeline and Bedford-Eules roads lags.

COLD

RICHLAND HILLS

■ \$48,760

■ \$93,844

Population: 8,300

Net taxable value: \$394.4 million

Shuttered commercial property on Baker Boulevard has the city singing the blues. But new homes and businesses at Faith Creek Estates and Faith Creek Plaza offer hope. Surely some businesses could be lured to the city train station.

HALTOM CITY

■ \$45,697

■ \$84,001

Population: 39,450

Net taxable value: \$1.4 billion

Newer subdivisions in north Haltom City could blend in anywhere in Northeast Tarrant. The tax base remains weak. Revitalizing Belknap Street is still a drag.

BEDFORD

■ \$67,648

■ \$150,525

Population: 48,600

Net taxable value: \$2.8 billion

Sales tax revenues go flat as retailers stay away. The city's tax rate rollback and the temporary closing of the public library and recreation center make Bedford a tough sell for real estate agents and developers. But the location near two major highways is hard to beat.

ON THE BUBBLE

NORTH RICHLAND HILLS

■ \$67,950

■ \$134,822

Population: 63,500

Net taxable value: \$3.3 billion

The upscale Home Town NRH looks like something on Cape Cod without the ocean. But North Hills Mall is vacant, and efforts to redevelop it have stalled.

WATAUGA

■ \$60,181

■ \$96,789

Population: 24,100

Net taxable value: \$985.6 million

Retailers flock to Denton Highway. But the old shopping centers at Rufe Snow Drive and Watauga Road have lots of vacancies.

SOURCES: Cities, Tarrant Appraisal District, U.S. Census Bureau, North Central Texas Council of Governments

STAR-TELEGRAM GRAPHIC/
 W. MATT PINKNEY