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HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Agency awards millions to cities

By ALEX BRANCH
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The Housing and Urban Development Department has allocated \$517 million in economic recovery stimulus funding to Texas, including \$4.5 million to Fort Worth and \$2.2 million to Arlington, the agency said Friday.

The money is for rehabilitating affordable housing, improving public facilities, stabilizing communities, creating jobs and fighting homelessness, according to a HUD news release.

HUD funding

- Arlington:** \$2.2 million
- Eules:** \$101,900
- Fort Worth:** \$4.5 million
- Fort Worth Housing Authority:** \$2.5 million
- Grapevine Housing Authority:** \$149,905
- North Richland Hills:** \$87,739
- Tarrant County:** \$1.9 million

Tarrant County received \$756,109; an official said it will help pay for shovel-ready projects in area cities. The county

also received \$1.15 million to combat homelessness.

"It is very good news," said Patricia Ward, director of community development and housing for Tarrant County. "It should fill the gaps. We will get out the door as soon as possible. It will create jobs."

Eules Mayor Mary Lib Saleh said the \$101,900 that her city received will help continue a home-revitalization project that has been ongoing for two years.

The county, city and churches work together to re-

vitalize older homes.

"It all goes back to our citizens," Saleh said.

Overall, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 included \$13.61 billion for projects and programs administered by HUD. The agency has allocated 75 percent of the funds.

The rest will be awarded later.

Staff writer Diane Smith contributed to this report.

ALEX BRANCH, 817-390-7689

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Ed Housewright: McKinney hopes ice hockey project yields cold cash

11:48 AM CST on Monday, March 2, 2009

By ED HOUSEWRIGHT / The Dallas Morning News
ehousewright@dallasnews.com

Keith Andresen has a good description of hockey:

"The hand-eye coordination of baseball, the strategy of basketball and the physical play of football – all on ice," said Andresen, who works at the Dr Pepper StarCenter in Euless.

McKinney residents will soon get a chance to watch and play amateur hockey, a sport booming in North Texas, without leaving town.

The City Council made a courageous, and correct, decision to proceed with plans to build a Dr Pepper StarCenter in McKinney.

The politically safe choice would have been to keep the project on ice. The council delayed the \$13.2 million, taxpayer-funded center in November because of rising costs.

In this doom-and-gloom economy, council members could justify holding on to every cent.

But, instead, they squeezed money from the Stars organization and local developer David Craig to cover the rising costs and make the project happen. Construction is scheduled to be completed Oct. 1.

"We'll pick up some sales-tax dollars," said McKinney Mayor Pro Tem Bill Cox. "It can generate more traffic in McKinney, more hotel stays, more fuel sales."

McKinney desperately needs the StarCenter to stay competitive. Both Frisco and Plano already have one, and they are hubs of activity.

The StarCenters often open at 6 a.m. with youth hockey practice and close at midnight with an adult hockey game. In between, you'll see figure skaters perfecting their skills and beginners just learning to stay upright.

StarCenters also host birthday parties, meetings, concerts and gymnastic competitions. They're a safe, fun place for people of all ages.

"It's almost like a mini-mall," said John McManaman, hockey director of the Frisco StarCenter.

The first StarCenter opened in Euless a decade ago. Others soon followed in Duncanville and Farmers Branch, as well as Frisco and Plano.

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A total of more than 150 adult hockey leagues and 100 youth leagues now play at the centers, said Andresen, senior director of hockey programs.

"The bottom of the pyramid has been growing every year – the 4- to 6-year-olds and 7- to 8-year-olds," he said.

I recently dropped by the Plano StarCenter over lunch. Twice a week, it holds adult "drop-in" games, akin to pickup basketball games.

The guys divide into two teams and have good-natured competition. I watched for an hour and didn't see fights (unlike some pro games), trash talking or taunting.

I was surprised by the speed and grace of the players, even at this level. You can't really appreciate hockey by watching it on TV or sitting up in the rafters.

In the adult leagues at the StarCenters, players are grouped by age and skill level. Checking, or slamming an opponent against the boards, isn't allowed.

"We want to make sure everybody can get up and go to work the next day," Andresen said.

I was amazed when he said some people play until they're 60.

"You're never really too old," Andresen said. "Hockey players are hockey players for life."

Even adults like me, who have never held a hockey stick, can learn to play.

Thanks, but I'll let the youngsters learn. And they do.

"It's like riding a bike," Andresen said. "It doesn't take long."

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SOCIALEYES

NORTHEAST CLICK

STUDENTS WHO HAVE SUPPORTED TROOPS WILL BE RECOGNIZED

The special evening will honor members of the military and their families.

Liberty and freedom: For the past two Christmases, 80 students at Come Read to Me, ranging in age from late teens to mid-50s, made, decorated and signed more than 600 cards to troops in Iraq. These adults with developmental disabilities will be thanked by some of the returning soldiers in a flag ceremony from 7 to 8:30 p.m. Thursday at 901 Clinic Drive in Euless. The folks at Come Read to Me, under the leadership of Executive Director **Martha Kate Downey**,

Cylinda Marshall, advisory board member **Rita Goodner**, government instructor **Joe Henning** and the organization SNAP, hope that the evening will be well-attended for these soldiers and their families. A special presentation to these students will also come with a special gift; come see for yourself. To learn more about Come Read to Me, visit www.comeread-withme.us.

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CANDIDATE FILINGS

Star-Telegram

The filing period for Tarrant County municipal and school board elections ended Monday. The elections are May 9. Among the candidates to officially file:

Councils

Bedford

- Mayor: Jim Story, Kenneth Kimmons
- Place 1: Francisco A. Chinchilla, Roger D. Fisher, Jason L. McCaffity
- Place 2: Roy H. Savage, Jason Sinisi, Dave Gebhart

Colleyville

- Place 5: Tom Hart
- Place 6: Mike Taylor, Carmen Thayer, Chris Parshall

Euless

- Place 5: Glenn Porterfield, Eddie Price
- Place 6: Lorren Britton, Perry Bynum

Flower Mound

- Place 1: Steve Dixon
- Place 3: Mike Wallace
- Place 5: Rick Cleland, Angie Cox

Fort Worth

- Mayor: Louis McBee, Mike Moncrief, Clyde Picht
- District 2: Sal Espino
- District 3: Eric Fox, Gary Hogan, Bill Lawson, Elizabeth Jane McCune, James Nuttall, W.B. "Zim" Zimmerman
- District 4: Lupe Arriola, Danny Scarth
- District 5: Melinda Hamilton, Frank Moss
- District 6: Jungus Jordan
- District 7: Carter Burdette, Charlie Murphy
- District 8: Kathleen Hicks,

Suzette Watkins

- District 9: Joel Burns

Grapevine

- Mayor: William D. Tate
- Place 1: C. Shane Wilbanks
- Place 2: Sharron Spencer

Haltom City

- Mayor: Bill Lanford
- Place 1: Carl Grassl
- Place 2: Bob Watkins
- Place 7: Ken Gibson, Gary Nunn

- Place 6: Darlene Hooks

Haslet

- Mayor: Bob Golden, Kathy Hopper
- Place 2: Lynnda McCoy
- Place 4: Brian Ebersold, Harold Williams

Hurst

- Place 1: Charles Swearengen
- Place 2: Larry Kitchens
- Place 6: Henry Wilson

Keller

- Mayor: Pat McGrail
- Place 1: Ray Brown
- Place 5: Mitch Holmes

North Richland Hills

- Place 1: John Lewis
- Place 3: Tom Lombard
- Place 5: David Whitson
- Place 7: Tim Welch

Richland Hills

- Place 1: Jeffrey Ritter, James Blyn
- Place 3: William J. Agan, Mark Donald Karpinski
- Place 5: Edward E. Lopez, Larry Marrs

Roanoke

- Ward 1: Melvin Smith
- Ward 2: Kevin Stillwell
- Ward 3: Frank Temple, Sharron Holland

- Mayor: Carl "Scooter" Gierisch Jr.

Southlake

- Mayor: Rick Stacy, John Terrell

- Place 2: Carolyn Morris, Vernon Stansell

- Place 3: Brandon Bledsoe

Trophy Club

- Mayor: Nick Sanders, Jim Budarf, Connie White
- At-large: Jim Moss, Bill Rose, Kathleen Wilson, Joseph Boclair

Watauga

- Mayor: Henry Jeffries
- Place 2: Brandon Krausse
- Place 3: Mike Steele
- Place 4: Robert Davis
- Place 5: Seth Thomas

Westlake

- At-large: Larry Corson, Carol Langdon, Don Redding, Rick Rennhack

School boards

Birdville

- Place 3: Brad Greene
- Place 4: Wanda Strong
- Place 5: Richard Davis
- Place 7: Cary Hancock

Carroll

- Place 4: Read Ballew, Jamie Cadiz

Grapevine-Colleyville

- Place 1: Charlie Warner
- Place 2: Vince Rosen

Hurst-Euless-Bedford

- Place 1: Kay Miller
- Place 2: Jeff Burnett

Keller

- Place 6: Wendy Collins, Brian Crowson, Jennifer Lutz
- Place 7: Melody Kohout, Raquel Fenton

Northwest

- Place 1: Kyle Young, Jeff Kennedy, Joshua Wright
- Place 2: Mark Schluter

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YOUNG McDONALD COLLINS C. BARKER GETCHELL LIBRARY ADMISN LIBRARY REF ANIMAL CNTRDATE DISTRIBUTED 3/13/09 DATE OF ARTICLE 3/12/09 NEWSPAPER FWST**DEVELOPMENT****QuikTrip is to open north
of downtown Fort Worth**By **SANDRA BAKER** sabaker@star-telegram.com

QuikTrip will soon begin construction on a convenience store on the city's north side.

The Tulsa-based company recently bought slightly more than 1 acre at the northeast corner of North Main Street and Northside Drive, just north of the downtown business district, according to deed records.

The company bought some commercial buildings along Main Street owned by the Mulholland Co. and a few houses on Commerce Street that date to the 1920s.

Construction on a 5,000-square-foot store should begin in April and be completed in October, said Mike Thornbrugh, QuikTrip's spokesman. It will have 10 gas pumps to accommodate 20 vehicles at a time, he said.

QuikTrip is a 50-year-old privately held company. It has 60 stores in Dallas-Fort Worth, with six more under construction, including one in Euless.

"We're going to be expanding like crazy," Thornbrugh said. QuikTrip stores employ 15 to 18 full- and part-time workers, he said.

SANDRA BAKER, 817-390-7727

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Groundwater districts are a wellspring of controversy

Attempts to assess fees and impose conservation rules have met resistance.

By **BILL HANNA**
billhanna@star-telegram.com

For Parker County resident Kathy Chruscielski, moving to the country a decade ago seemed like the best of both worlds. She fell in love with the scenic rolling hills of Remuda Ranch Estates, a few miles west of the Tarrant County line.

"We have these beautiful hills, yet we can be in Fort Worth within a matter of minutes," Chruscielski said. "It's like having one foot in the country and one in the city."

She learned that it has its downside.

In January 2002, Chruscielski was forced to drill a new well after her old one went dry.

"They told us when we bought this place that groundwater levels had remained the same for the last 40 years," Chruscielski said with a rueful laugh. "Then I learned differently."

She started the online newsletter *PARCHED* to address groundwater issues in Parker County and backed the creation of a groundwater district as she watched other wells go dry during recent droughts. She became concerned as some new subdivisions in the county tapped groundwater for man-made ponds and lawns.

Groundwater is a critical issue in Texas because it is the source of 59 percent of the water used, according to the 2007 State Water Plan. The danger is that the aquifers — underground pools of water that are a lifeline to farmers, rural residents and many cities — could eventually be depleted. To avoid that, the Legislature decided that groundwater districts should create plans that could limit how much water is pumped.

Many of Chruscielski's neighbors view groundwater districts as another unwanted layer of bureaucracy.

But the Texas Commission on Environ-

mental Quality said most North Central Texas counties are exceeding or close to exceeding what can safely be taken out of the Trinity Aquifer, the huge underground pool of groundwater in this region.

And as the population swells in once-rural counties such as Parker, Hood, Wise and Montague, the tensions are likely to keep growing.

'An illegal operation'

The Upper Trinity Groundwater Conservation District, which covers those counties, was created by the Legislature in 2007. The four counties banded together in part to avoid being lumped in with large urban areas like Tarrant County. They felt they would have little or no political clout, said Bob Patterson, the district's executive director.

When the district began imposing rules and user fees in recent months, though, many city officials and residents began complaining that it had gone too far, too fast.

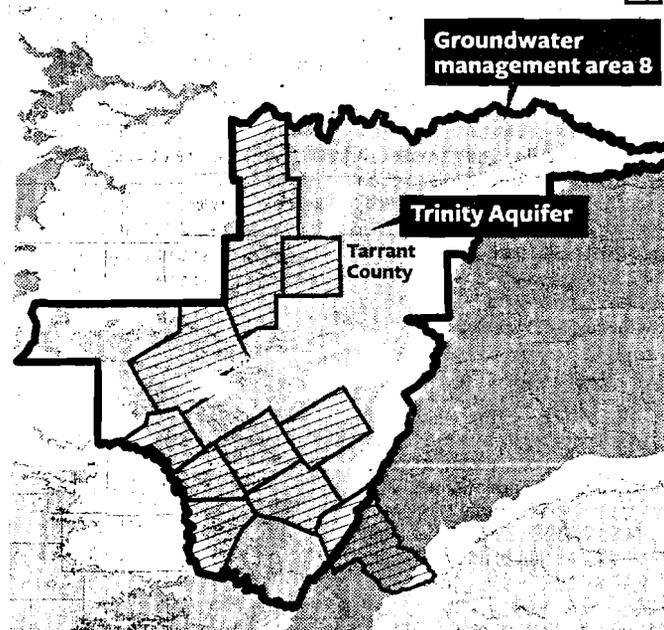
"I have told our city not to give them any money, not to cooperate with them," Willow Park Mayor Marvin Glasgow said. "The entire setup is confusing. In my mind, they are an illegal operation."

New groundwater districts in Tarrant and McLennan counties are also struggling with funding, and other counties are scrambling to create local groundwater districts more to their liking. Many dis-

Groundwater conservation districts

The state of Texas favors a regional approach to groundwater management, but many counties are using legislation to carve out their own, smaller districts.

Groundwater Conservation Districts



tricts are close to bankruptcy since legislators essentially designed them as unfunded mandates, said Laura Marbury, Texas water projects director for the Environmental Defense Fund.

"The state is requiring them to enforce rules that affect these resources, and if anybody comes up and sues over these rules, the state says, 'Sorry, you're on your own,'" Marbury said.

Parker County officials are hearing from irate residents, cities and developers who say the Upper Trinity is overreaching.

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LAW ENFORCEMENT

County's police agencies prepare wish lists for stimulus funding

Departments are seeking new equipment and improved technology.

By **ALEX BRANCH**
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Tarrant County law enforcement agencies are shaping their wish lists for \$4.15 million in federal law enforcement grants they can soon receive as part of the economic stimulus.

The Fort Worth Police Department is eligible for \$2 million, the largest amount to be received in Tarrant County.

Arlington police could receive \$1.3 million, while smaller cities stand to get between \$10,000 and \$122,502.

Hurst police are preparing a proposal for new body armor, an emergency generator and weapons, Assistant Chief Richard Winstanley said.

"Some of the weapons we have are 20 years old," Winstanley said. "Like most cities, we've been slashing these items from our budget lately because of losses in tax revenue. Now we have a chance to get them."

Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants are allocated through a formula based on population and violent crime rates, according to the U.S. Department of Justice. Houston stands to receive the

Stimulus for cops

Here's how much area law enforcement agencies can receive through Edward Byrne Justice Assistance Grants:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| ■ Fort Worth: \$2 million | ■ Watauga: \$28,795 |
| ■ Arlington: \$1.3 million | ■ White Settlement: \$22,451 |
| ■ Bedford: \$122,502 | ■ Lake Worth: \$22,125 |
| ■ North Richland Hills: \$99,563 | ■ Kennedale: \$19,034 |
| ■ Hurst: \$93,706 | ■ Azle: \$16,919 |
| ■ Haltom City: \$82,644 | ■ Saginaw: \$17,245 |
| ■ Euless: \$61,820 | ■ Benbrook: \$15,455 |
| ■ Tarrant County: \$54,987* | ■ Keller: \$13,015 |
| ■ Mansfield: \$45,714 | ■ Everman: \$12,852 |
| ■ Grapevine: \$44,088 | ■ Crowley: \$12,689 |
| ■ Forest Hill: \$42,298 | ■ Richland Hills: \$10,737 |

*Tarrant County also can receive \$653,627 under an agreement with municipalities

most money in Texas at just under \$12 million. Dallas is eligible for \$7.1 million.

Increased funding

Law enforcement agencies apply for the grants — known as JAG grants — every year. But the amount of available funding swelled this year because of the recently passed stimulus package.

Arlington police, for example, received only \$130,000 in JAG grants in 2008.

Among the items on the department's wish list is an unmanned aircraft, which police spokeswoman Tiara Ellis said would cost about \$50,000.

"It could be used for search-and-rescue or hazardous spills," Ellis said. "It

would be utilized similar to how tactical officers use the robot to keep officers out of harm's way."

Fort Worth police will finalize their proposal in about two weeks, spokesman Lt. Pedro Criado said.

JAG grants can be used for a range of purposes, including equipment, technology and prevention and education programs, said Susan Oliver, a spokeswoman for the U.S. Justice Department. While the money can be used to retain officers that would have otherwise been laid off, its purpose is not to fund new officers.

Agencies use the Community Oriented Policing Services program to hire new officers, she said.

As for how new equip-

ment saves jobs or helps the economy, Oliver said: "I think you have to take a look at the big picture. When a department purchases new equipment, they purchase it from a business. That helps that business stay in business."

The county's share

Municipalities will not keep the entire amount allocated, officials said. Under a decade-old agreement with Tarrant County, each city gives 16 percent of its yearly JAG grant allocation to the county.

The money is used for such things as drug diversion, mental health diversion and recidivism re-entry programs, said Marc Flake, a Tarrant County spokesman. Tarrant County will receive more than \$700,000.

JAG proposals are due by May 18, Oliver said. Once submitted, jurisdictions could receive funding in 15 days.

Forest Hill spokeswoman Venus Wehle said the city would move quickly to apply for the \$42,000 available to its police force.

"That's a good amount," she said. "We are very excited about the possibility of receiving this grant money."

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"I've had more complaints over this issue than anything else in my 10 years in office," said state Rep. Phil King, R-Weatherford, who sponsored the initial legislation to establish the water district.

King has filed bills that would exempt fire departments from the new water fees

— though the Upper Trinity board has already voted to exempt fire departments.

He has also filed legislation requiring the water district to post its check transactions on its Web site. King said the district wasn't created to levy fees on municipalities' water supplies. Instead, it was designed to deal with large commercial wells and had power to charge fees to gas drillers, he said.

"Nobody has shown that there is a need for this regulation," he said.

Patterson has heard the complaints but insists that the district is fulfilling its mission and needs to make residents understand that preserving groundwater is a mandate.

"There are some people that do not understand the principle of water conservation or what the state of Texas is trying to accomplish and what the water development board has set out," Patterson said.

'Patchwork quilt'

The Northern Trinity Groundwater District in Tarrant County is in its embryonic stages. In an urban county where most residents and businesses use surface water, groundwater isn't irrelevant: More than 20 cities and small water providers use it during peak usage.

"The biggest problem actually is funding," said Jim Oliver, director of the groundwater district and also general manager of the region's primary water source, the Tarrant Regional Water District. "You have to go out and levy fees without knowing who you are levying fees on."

Last month, the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality proposed an eight-county district that would run from Cooke County at the Oklahoma border through Dallas County and then southwest to Johnson County.

But even before commissioners approved the district, many counties were seeking to break off from it.

For example, Dallas County could end up with Tarrant, Oliver said, because Grand Prairie has wells in both counties.

Environmental Quality Commissioner Larry Soward of Austin lamented the state's "patchwork quilt" approach to groundwater conservation. "I think if this state is ever to truly manage its aquifers, we're going to have to get away from county-by-county groundwater districts," Soward said during the meeting.

Oliver agrees. "I think it's just intercounty politics," he said. "If you look at it from a pure science standpoint, they probably all need to be in one district. It just makes sense from economies of scale."

A commission executive order prepared for the Feb. 11 meeting said North Central Texas counties and others "are experiencing, or are expected to experience critical groundwater problems in the next 25 years."

It also said that "water-user groups in Ellis, Johnson and Tarrant counties, collectively, are using the Trinity Aquifer at quantities over regional planning groups' estimates for the safe supply for each county" and that "water-user groups in Collin, Cooke, Dallas, Denton, Fannin, Grayson, Hood, Parker and Wise counties" are using the aquifer "near each county's estimated safe supply."

State law requires that desired future conditions must be set for the state's major and minor aquifers by Sept. 1, 2010, and then must be updated every five years.

A closer look

Tarrant County water suppliers that use some groundwater.

- Bedford
- Benbrook/Benbrook Water and Sewer Authority
- Bethesda WSC
- Blue Mound
- Colleyville
- Crowley
- Dalworthington Gardens
- Euless
- Everman
- Grand Prairie
- Haslet
- Hurst
- Johnson County Rural WSC
- Keller
- Kennedale
- Lake Worth
- Lakeside
- North Richland Hills
- Pantego
- Pelican Bay
- Richland Hills
- Sansom Park
- White Settlement

Note: Most Tarrant County cities and water providers use groundwater only during peak usage times.
Source: Tarrant Regional Water District

"We want enough water left for future generations and not just to pump them dry," said Horace Grace, president of the Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District in Bell County.

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