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ECONOMY

Southlake tax revenues fall most in Tarrant County for January

The numbers are from January sales, which were down 22 percent compared with 2008.

By AMAN BATHEJA

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The bad economy delivered a slump in sales tax revenue for most Texas cities, but Southlake officials are grappling with a full-fledged nosedive.

Sales-tax revenue returned in February to the upscale Tarrant County city of

about 26,000 dropped 22 percent compared with the same period in 2008, according to data released by the Texas Comptroller's Office last week. County-wide, sales tax revenue fell 2 percent.

The revenue came from sales made in January, according to the comptroller's office.

Southlake's numbers suggest a steep drop in local shopping compared to the 10 percent decline the city saw during the holiday season.

The drop "was more than what we had anticipated," Southlake Finance Director Sharen Jackson said. "I think it's still stemming from the holiday season . . . People spent less in January."

Jackson's office had budgeted for a downturn this fiscal year but is now preparing to readjust that in light of the latest figures, she said.

"We will monitor the budgets closely and make any necessary budget

More on TAXES on 7B

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Taxes: Most Tarrant County cities saw lower revenue

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amendments over the next 30-60 days," Jackson said.

Any amendments to the budget will have to be approved by the City Council, she said. She held a meeting Thursday with directors of city departments to discuss ways to address the revenue decline, including delaying capitol projects and holding off filling vacant positions.

Southlake City Councilwoman Virginia Muzyka said the city was well-prepared for the drop.

"We expected and we did budget for a downturn. We are still in good shape," Muzyka said. "We will do a budget readjustment if necessary."

The Southlake City Council, which normally meets on the first and third Tuesday of each month, cancelled its

meeting today because some council members are going to be out of town during spring break, spokeswoman Pilar Schank said.

Sales tax revenue dropped in most Tarrant County cities.

Most of the declines were under 10 percent. Fort Worth sales dropped 2 percent, and Arlington revenue dropped 4 percent.

Except for Euless and Richland Hills, which had increases of less than 2 percent, every city in Northeast Tarrant County suffered a decrease in sales tax revenue. After Southlake, Westlake posted the largest slide with an 18 percent drop.

Fort Worth officials are already preparing for the expected drop in sales taxes.

Assistant City Manager Karen Mont-

gomery said during a budget workshop last week that sales tax revenue might be lower this year than last year; the city had predicted that there would be no change.

Looking forward, Montgomery and other budget planners expect total tax revenue, including sales and property taxes, to drop by \$17 million from 2008-09. And expenses are expected to rise even faster, resulting in a projected \$50 million gap between expenses and revenue.

The Fort Worth City Council will start looking this year for ways to close that gap as they begin writing next year's budget.

Staff writer Mike Lee contributed to this report.

AMAN BATHEJA, 817-685-3932

Tarrant County sales tax revenue

The figures are based on retail sales in January:

Arlington: \$5.7 million, down 3.7 percent from \$5.9 million.

Fort Worth: \$7.4 million, down 1.9 percent from \$7.5 million

Grapevine: \$2.52 million, down 1.4 percent from \$2.56 million

Hurst: \$977,000, down 2.9 percent from \$1 million.

Mansfield: \$968,000, up 4.6 percent from \$925,000

North Richland Hills: \$856,000, down 7.7 percent from \$928,000.

Southlake: \$882,000, down 22.1 percent from \$1.1 million.

Westlake: \$232,000, down 17.6 percent from \$281,500

Keller: \$460,500, down 2.6 percent from \$473,000

Source: Texas Comptroller's Office

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BRIEFS

Woman arrested after boyfriend shot

EULESS — A 41-year-old Euless woman was arrested Monday evening after her live-in boyfriend was fatally shot, police said. Officers were called about 5 p.m. to a house in the 500 block of Sage Lane, said Lt. John Williams, a police spokesman. Investigators believe that the couple argued, and the woman got a gun and shot the man, who was believed to be in his 30s, Williams said. The boyfriend was dead when police arrived, he said. Neither the man nor woman was identified Monday night. The couple was living at the house with the woman's mother, Williams said.

— Alex Branch

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Northeast

EULESS

Woman jailed in homicide case

By **DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR.**
ramirez@star-telegram.com

EULESS — A Euless woman remained in custody Tuesday after she was arrested on suspicion of fatally shooting her boyfriend during a domestic dispute, police said.

The 32-year-old man, who authorities did not identify pending notification of relatives, died from a single shotgun wound to the chest, police said.

It was the first homicide in the city this year. The last one in Euless was in November 2007, when Vikky Overstreet, 51, was strangled at her apartment. Her husband, Jerome Overstreet, 52, is accused in the case. His trial is pending.

In Monday's case, police identified the woman as Vivian Wallace, 41. She was being held in the Euless City Jail on Tuesday on suspicion of murder.



The shooting happened at 5 p.m. Monday in the 500 block of Sage Lane.

Patrol officers responded after receiving a call from Wallace, police Lt. John Williams said Tuesday.

Wallace was taken into custody and police later found the man lying on a laundry room floor, police said. He was dead at the scene.

A shotgun also was found in the home, police said.

Police did not say what the couple had been arguing about, but they said that patrol officers had not answered any family violence calls to the house. There also had not been any protective orders, police said.

Wallace and her boyfriend had been living at her parents' home on Sage Lane, police said. Her mother and stepfather were not home during the shooting, police said.

The couple had been living there since January, police said.

DOMINGO RAMIREZ JR., 817-685-3822

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EULESS

Shooting victim is identified

Star-Telegram

EULESS — The man who was fatally shot at a Eules home on Monday has been identified as Matthew Norris, 32, police said Tuesday.

Norris was shot about 5 p.m. during a fight with his live-in girlfriend, Vivian Wallace, 41, police said. Wallace called 911. She remained in the Eules City Jail on Wednesday with bail set at \$75,000.

Wallace and Norris had been living at her parents' home in the 500 block of Sage Lane, police said.

— Domingo Ramirez Jr.