

Wednesday, July 26, 2000

Taxable values stay flat

Tight budgets across county

By Guy H. Lawrence
Caller-Times

Taxable property values increased across the county by just 1.8 percent over last year, leaving some cities and schools with tight budgets to work with for next year.

Although single family home values in Corpus Christi increased by \$240 million, commercial values decreased by nearly \$17 million, according to records at the Nueces County Appraisal District. The district officially released values for all taxing districts Tuesday.

The value of single family residential properties in the city increased to \$5.24 billion in 2000 from \$5 billion in 1999. Commercial property values dropped to \$1.635 billion from \$1.652 billion in 1999.

Chief Appraiser Ollie Grant said the county lacks an economic driver to spur growth. The low growth has been a constant characteristic for the last four years, said Grant, who became the chief appraiser in January.

"Right now we haven't taken a look at what the trend is or what might cause a slowness in the growth," Grant said. "I really don't know."

Matthew Cravey, president of NAI Cravey Real Estate Services, said that without institutional building projects from schools, hospitals and the federal government, there would be serious ripple effects through the community. Some office buildings are 80 percent full and still losing money, he said.

"Our city is stagnant," Cravey said.

The low growth was reflected across most school districts and municipalities in the county. The city of Corpus Christi reaped a 2.5 percent increase, while Corpus Christi Independent School District gained 1.7 percent from the prior year and Nueces County netted 1.8 percent.

The growth in taxable value hasn't kept up with the rise in operating costs taxing districts face, forcing many to consider tax increases, budgets cuts or both.

The City Council on Tuesday approved a budget with \$6 million in cuts. The city's taxable property values increased to \$7.65 billion this year from \$7.46 billion in 1999.

"What that represents is a continued stagnant growth in our

economy," said city Budget Director Rudy Garza said. "The budget we just adopted does not include a property tax increase. What the budget does include is \$6 million in reductions from the operating costs."

The county's taxable property values increased to \$10.47 billion this year from \$10.27 billion in 1999. The \$200 million in growth will mean about \$600,000 in extra property tax revenues that will be eaten up by increases in costs like fuel or supplies, said County Judge Richard Borchard.

"We are not doing a very good job as far as priming the pump for generating new tax bases," Borchard said.

For the Corpus Christi school district, a 1.7-percent increase is not significant, said Interim Superintendent Sandra Lanier-Lerma. The school district's taxable property values increased to \$6.31 billion this year from \$6.21 billion in 1999.

On Monday, the board of trustees discussed increasing the district's tax rate 7 cents per \$100 valuation.

"We are shooting for a balanced budget with a tax increase," she said.

Some taxing districts, such as the Banquete, Driscoll and Agua Dulce school districts, saw double digit increases in their tax bases. The city and school district of Port Aransas saw increases of 8.19 percent and 6.7 percent respectively.

But for Port Aransas Independent School District, the increase means the district may have to give more revenues away if enrollment does not increase, said Superintendent John Rouse. The state considers the district a wealthy district, meaning it has to share revenues with area districts or send money back to the state, Rouse said.

The district will probably have to give away about \$2 million of its \$7 million to support programs at the Education Service Center and a regional alternative education program.

"It hurts us, in that we have to give away more money," Rouse said.

2000 Net Taxable			
Values for all taxing districts			
District	2000 values	1999 values	percentage change
Corpus Christi	\$7,652,057,403	\$7,462,585,204	2.53
Robstown	\$138,570,847	\$136,454,698	1.55

Bishop	\$54,581,579	\$53,993,460	1.08
Agua Dulce	\$7,142,092	\$6,930,219	3.05
Driscoll	\$8,243,845	\$8,049,040	2.42
Port Aransas	\$378,473,998	\$349,814,971	8.19
Nueces County	\$10,473,439,460	\$10,278,349,916	1.89
Del Mar College	\$9,691,224,136	\$9,536,054,799	1.62
Farm-to-Market	\$10,353,713,037	\$10,163,631,245	1.87
London ISD	\$64,087,807	\$58,959,546	8.69
Banquete ISD	\$147,009,382	\$116,757,801	25.90
Corpus Christi ISD	\$6,317,347,678	\$6,210,773,570	1.71
Tuloso-Midway ISD	\$920,608,143	\$972,786,973	-5.36
West Oso ISD	\$275,272,818	\$250,446,283	9.91
Flour Bluff ISD	\$827,831,130	\$803,974,397	2.96
Agua Dulce ISD	\$67,313,771	\$60,186,329	11.84
Calallen ISD	\$851,758,905	\$825,095,418	3.23
Port Aransas ISD	\$459,869,328	\$430,901,322	6.72
Bishop ISD	\$474,696,065	\$489,521,653	-.02
Robstown ISD	\$176,497,286	\$171,141,658	3.12
Driscoll ISD	\$77,377,624	\$69,368,224	11.54
Downtown Management Dist.	\$107,409,150	\$107,268,124	.13
Bishop Drainage District No. 3	\$19,450,107	\$18,732,289	3.83
Robstown Drainage District No. 2.	\$190,074,224	\$184,630,161	2.94
Fire District No. 3	\$493,681,098	\$496,984,352	-.66
Fire District No. 1	\$966,547,653	\$986,486,822	-2.02
Fire District No.	\$906,012,484	\$871,924,710	3.90

2			
Fire District No. 4	\$153,229,106	\$122,618,257	24.96
Fire District No. 5	\$67,039,992	\$59,935,957	11.85
South Texas Water Authority	\$352,920,070	\$322,012,616	9.59
Water District No. 4	\$475,181,237	\$445,231,823	6.72
Banquete Water District No. 5	\$4,044,617	\$4,014,695	.74

Source: Nueces County Appraisal District