



## **Bexar County Commissioners Court**

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### **Casa Helotes Senior Citizens Center celebrates grant-funded projects**

As the federal Community Block Development Grant (CDBG) program celebrates 40 years of boosting communities with funding for public improvements, local officials on Wednesday marked the occasion with a ribbon cutting for recently finished improvements at Casa Helotes Senior Citizens Center. In the past two years the center has received a little more than \$260,000 in Bexar County's allotment of CDBG funds to make improvements to the kitchen facilities and parking lot and increase energy efficiency.

"These may be some of the smaller projects we fund when it comes to monetary value, but they are by far some of the most important projects to ensure Bexar County provides for its residents by addressing quality of life issues," County Judge Nelson Wolff said.

The CDBG program was enacted as part of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. Bexar County has received more than \$57 million in CDBG funds since it started participating in 1986. The program has served as a major source of funding to extend water services to rural areas of Bexar County, improve other infrastructure and public facilities, and provide affordable housing. The formula grant program allows for local governments to address physical, economic and social deterioration in communities as they see fit. All told, CDBG has injected \$144 billion in urban and rural communities since August 22, 1974. The funds are distributed to local governments based on a formula including the area's population, poverty level and other housing variables.

Casa Helotes in 2012 and 2013 received \$264,575 to make improvements to the center that has served senior citizens for almost three decades by providing social interaction, assistance and hot meals. The most recent CDBG projects included purchasing new prep and serving tables, a commercial dishwasher, sinks and re-wiring for a kitchen that turns out more than 200 congregate meals per week.

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The center also completed a number of weatherization projects to improve energy efficiency and make the facility more compliant with Americans with Disabilities Act specifications.

“The CDBG program provides funding for projects that do everything from extending water and sewer services in rural communities to making the type of improvements we have unveiled today at Casa Helotes that serve our senior citizen population daily,” said Aurora Sanchez, Director of the Bexar County Department of Community Resources, which oversees the County’s CDBG program.

Commissioners Court in July approved 25 projects to receive nearly \$3 million from the County’s next cycle of CDBG, HOME and Emergency Solutions Grants – all programs of the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Those projects include infrastructure improvements for the cities of Somerset, Von Ormy, Balcones Heights, Kirby and Universal City; public service projects for local nonprofit agencies; public facility projects; and tenant-based rental assistance, homeless prevention and rapid re-housing to prevent homelessness.

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