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U.S. Department of Commerce Invests to Support Natural Disaster Recovery and Resiliency Efforts in Texas

WASHINGTON – Today, U.S. Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross announced that the Department’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) is investing \$48 million in the state of Texas to help it prepare for natural disasters and promote economic resiliency and business growth. The EDA grants, some of which are to be located in [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act](#) designated [Opportunity Zones](#), are expected to be matched with \$13.2 million in local funds, help create 7,487 jobs, retain 225 jobs, and generate \$6 billion in private investment.

“The Trump Administration’s goal is to create American jobs and to keep U.S. business communities competitive and thriving,” **said Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross**. “These preparedness efforts will support uninterrupted, stable, and growing business efforts in the state of Texas and bring development to underserved Opportunity Zones throughout Texas.”

“In 2018, EDA made \$587 million in Congressional supplemental appropriations available to eligible grantees in communities impacted by natural disasters in 2017,” **said U.S. Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Economic Development Dr. John Fleming**. “We are pleased to support Texas communities, including several in Opportunity Zones, as they work to diversify and strengthen the state’s economy.”

The EDA investments announced today are:

- The city of West Orange will receive \$5 million to support the design and construction of a new wastewater treatment plant. This new facility will support new and existing industrial customers in the area, as well as offer long-term resiliency, particularly during disasters. The grant, to be located in a [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act](#) designated [Opportunity Zone](#), will be matched with \$1.25 million in local funds and is expected to help create 520 jobs, and spur \$5.8 billion in private investment.

“I am glad to hear that the City of West Orange will be receiving this critically-needed federal disaster grant funding for expansions to the OCWC&ID #2 Waste Water Treatment Facility,” **said Rep. Babin**. “These funds will allow Orange County manufacturers to utilize the improved utilities and encourage further economic development, growth, and resiliency throughout the community. As a lifelong resident of Southeast Texas, a former small-town mayor, and U.S. Congressman, I know that EDA

funding for the City of West Orange project will help to provide critical infrastructure and incentivize new residential and commercial growth in the area.”

- Urban Partnerships Community Development Corporation (UPCDC) of Houston will receive \$5 million to renovate a facility to serve as a community fabrication space and incubator hub featuring workforce training and apprenticeship programs. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$1.25 million in local funds, is expected to help create 475 jobs, and spur \$70 million in private investment.
- Lamar State College Port Arthur will receive \$4.8 million to renovate an industrial training center to meet industry demand for trained commercial drivers in the region, and to serve as a job catalyst to support the economic recovery in an area impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$1.2 million in local funds and is expected to create 167 jobs.
- The city of Dayton will receive \$4.8 million to support infrastructure improvement, including the construction of a utility extension, road expansion, and signal installation, to serve the Gulf Inland Logistics Park, which was impacted by Hurricane Harvey. The grant, to be matched with \$1.5 million in local funds, is expected to create 5,000 jobs, and attract \$137 million in private investment.

“I was proud to support Dayton’s application for vital federal disaster grant funding to support and expand its existing city infrastructure and industrial growth,” **said Rep. Babin.** “I know that EDA funding for the City of Dayton’s project will be a much needed proverbial economic ‘shot in the arm’ to the recovery of our community.”

- Kleberg County will receive \$4.3 million to construct a Regional Public Safety Training Facility and Emergency Operations and Command Center. The Center will serve nine counties as both an emergency command center for natural disasters and training center for local, county, and federal first responders. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$1 million in local funds.
- Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation in Houston will receive \$3.7 million to create a technology center that will provide co-working and office space for entrepreneurs and startups. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$925,000 in local funds, and is expected to help create 500 jobs, and generate \$25 million in private investment.
- The city of Seadrift will receive \$3.45 million to help construct a new bulkhead, rock riprap, and jetty, and to aid channel dredging efforts at the Seadrift Municipal Harbor. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$862,500 in local funds and is expected to help create 40 jobs, and retain 90 jobs.

“The city of Seadrift will be able to increase the dredging operations and bulkheading in their harbor thanks to this grant,” **Representative Michael Cloud (TX-27)**. “Dredging is vital to the safety of the ships that come in and out as they import and export millions of dollars in Texas products. I was pleased to write a letter of support for Seadrift’s grant application. This is a win for their economy.”

- The city of Corpus Christi will receive \$3 million to support critical roadway improvements needed to expand industrial development. The grant, to be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone, will be matched with \$750,000 in local funds and is expected to help create 630 jobs.

“This grant to Corpus Christi will help improve and rebuild the city’s roads which in turn will expand the city’s economic opportunities,” **said Representative Michael Cloud (TX-27)**. “This is a big project that will undoubtedly help the city continue to thrive, attract new business to the area, and generate more private investment. The work that will be done will also create many good jobs for Corpus residents. This is great news.”

- LiftFund, Inc. of Victoria will receive \$3 million to establish a new Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) to assist businesses in disaster impacted areas with working capital, equipment, and inventory replacement needs. The project, to be matched with \$750,000 in local funds, is expected to create 113 jobs, retain 122 jobs, and attract \$3.5 million in private investment.

“My hometown of Victoria has come a long way since Hurricane Harvey, and a complete recovery depends on economic development,” **said Representative Michael Cloud (TX-27)**. “The new jobs and additional funds that Victoria will receive from this grant will spur our local economy to grow even more. I’m pleased to see that more recovery dollars are continuing to come to the community.”

- Common Market Philadelphia, Inc., will receive \$3 million to establish their Common Market Texas regional facility for resilient food systems, which will serve as a Houston food distribution facility. The grant will be matched with \$847,546 in local funds.
- The University of Texas Medical Branch (UTMB) at Galveston will receive \$2 million to design and construct a Center for Business Technology and Development, which serve as a centralized hub combining business, technology and medical care. The grant, to be matched with \$500,000 in local funds, is expected to create 12 jobs, retain 13 jobs, and generate \$1 million in private investment.

“I am so thankful the Department’s Economic Development Administration (EDA) is making Texas a priority,” **said Congressman Randy Weber (TX-14)**. “The aftermath of Hurricane Harvey was devastating. The hurricane cost Texans \$125 billion in damage and cost the Houston Metro area nearly 25,000 jobs. Tropical storm Imelda further complicated our recovery efforts – we are still awaiting damage totals. Although economic recovery efforts and flood preparedness have improved since Harvey, there is

more work to be done. These grants are a step in the right direction to stimulate job growth and get Texans on the path to a full economic recovery.”

- Bastrop County will receive \$2 million to establish the Bastrop County Emergency Shelter and Community Center. The Center will serve the dual purpose of providing a large community assembly area, as well as providing housing space for recovery team offices and local residents in the event of a natural disaster. The grant will be matched with \$1.3 million in local funds.

“The grant to Bastrop County brings important hurricane recovery aid to an area that Hurricane Harvey has seen more than their fair share of disasters recently,” **said Representative Michael Cloud (TX-27)**. “Bastrop is currently one of the top 50 fastest growing counties in America, and I’m excited to see the new facility that will serve the expanding communities and provide help in the natural disaster recovery process. This funding is going to make a real difference in Bastrop.”

- The city of La Grange will receive \$1.8 million to add a sanitary sewer line and lift station that will help mitigate economic damage from future flooding events along Highway 71. The grant, to be matched with \$450,000 in local funds, is expected to create 40 jobs.
- San Jacinto County will receive \$1.6 million to construct an Innovation and Emergency Command Center that will increase regional capacity to assist businesses in the wake of natural disasters. The project will include a proposed maker space, business education rooms and farmer’s market. The grant will be matched with \$400,000 in local funds.

“This grant will better equip our community to prepare for future disasters while also spurring economic growth,” **said Congressman Kevin Brady (TX-08)**. “I thank the EDA for their strong support of Texas, and I’m proud the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act will continue to bring jobs and investments to the Lone Star State.”

- Prairie View A&M University will receive \$800,000 to support a rural workforce partnership to cultivate skilled workers, create jobs, and strengthen the local economy in disaster-impacted areas. Training and technical assistance for construction, welding and medical industries for one of the participating counties will be located in a Tax Cuts and Jobs Act designated Opportunity Zone. The grant will be matched with \$200,000 in local funds.

These projects are all funded under the [Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 \(PL 115-123\)](#) (PDF), in which Congress appropriated to EDA \$600 million in additional Economic Adjustment Assistance (EAA) Program funds for disaster relief and recovery as a result of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria, wildfires, and other calendar year 2017 natural disasters under the [Stafford Act](#).

Projects located in the city of West Orange, Urban Partnerships CDC, Lamar State College Port Arthur, Kleberg County, Fifth Ward Community Redevelopment Corporation, the city of Seadrift, the city of Corpus Christi, and Prairie View A&M University will go to designated

Opportunity Zones, created by President Donald J. Trump's [Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017](#) to spur economic development by giving tax incentives to investors in economically-distressed communities nationwide. In June 2019, EDA added Opportunity Zones as an [Investment Priority](#), which increases the number of catalytic Opportunity Zone-related projects that EDA can fund to fuel greater public investment in these areas. To learn more about the Opportunity Zone program, see the Treasury Department resources page [here](#). To learn more about the Commerce Department's work in Opportunity Zones, please visit EDA's Opportunity Zones [webpage](#).