

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

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AST BB1

# Making homes affordable is partnership leader's goal



STAR-TELEGRAM/STEWART F. HOUSE  
Ken Elliott collects Etch A Sketches.

By SUSAN SCHROCK  
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ARLINGTON — When Ken Elliott drove through the deteriorating east Arlington neighborhoods where he grew up, he saw the potential to help others attain their dreams.

After leaving a 20-year career in auto sales and management, Elliott began buying and renovating older homes around Arlington about five years ago and

## HOUSES

By the end of 2003, the effort may have led to the building of 20 new homes and refurbishing of about as many.

reselling them for a profit. It wasn't long before the city approached Elliott about turning his venture into a nonprofit organization.

Arlington officials were seeking a local group to

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direct the city's federal funding for revitalizing neighborhoods and creating affordable housing.

Initially, the offer didn't seem appealing, Elliott said, but a short drive down memory lane changed his mind.

"When I saw some of the areas that really had fallen in distress, I realized I had the possibility to give back to the community," Elliott said. "Everything I contributed to the community in the past 20 years was sitting in a salvage yard in Fort Worth."

Last year, Metro Housing Partnership Inc. was born.

It helps low- to moderate-income families become first-time home buyers by refurbishing or building homes and then selling them in the \$70,000 to \$80,000 range. So far, Metro has refurbished 10 homes in east Arlington and has built a new home on Hillcrest Drive, which

## Profile

**Name:** Ken Elliott, 49

**Occupation:** President, Metro Housing Partnership Inc.

**Experience:** 20 years in auto sales and sales management; former vice president of Fort Worth Jaycees; former president of Tarrant County Young Republicans; member of Promise Keepers and Optimist Club.

was purchased by a family in August. The organization plans to begin building six more homes in the coming weeks.

By the end of 2003, Elliott expects to have built 20 new homes and refurbished about as many.

City Councilman Wayne Ogle, head of the city's housing finance corporation, said Elliott has worked aggressively to improve east Arlington neighborhoods.

"Our goal is to have someone who finds those houses in our city that are the worst-case scenario or those neighborhoods that are in desperate

need of renovation," Ogle said. "Anybody can renovate a house, but it takes a home-grown organization to know what we're trying to accomplish in the community."

Elliott's father, Harold Elliott, worked with his son to renovate several homes before Metro Housing was created. He said his son pays close attention to detail and did his best to make sure the new residents would be happy.

"The people in east Arlington, many of them deserve better than what they have," said Harold Elliott, the Arlington Police Department chaplain. "That was our home for many years. Our roots go deep in that area."

Ken Elliott wants to buy his childhood home on Jonathan Lane and restore it for sentimental reasons, but until then he'll continue to create memories for other families.

"When you take an old house that is a tragedy to a neighborhood, rebuild it and make it look as new as possible and then see the look on a



Ken Elliott leads the nonprofit Metro Housing Partnership Inc. in efforts to promote affordable homes in east Arlington.

young couple's face as they buy their new home — there's no feeling like that," Elliott said.

When he's not working on houses, Elliott spends time

drawing buildings on one of the Etch A Sketches in his Etch A Sketch collection.

"In the next year, I hope to have one Etch A Sketch of

every house Metro has done or will do," Elliott said. "It's the only talent I have."

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