

# Former Mayor Andy Coats remembers “six to fix,” and backs MAPS 3



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Andy Coats

Having led Oklahoma City from 1983 to 1987, former mayor Andy Coats still carries a dark, mental picture of a shattered Oklahoma City before the Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) were born, Coats said in an interview.

His tenure oversaw an economy flattened by the Penn Square Bank failure, and the domino effects of that era's oil bust. Downtown was a ghost town. Massive foreclosures and job losses dominated the headlines.

“We had to close parks, swimming pools and let go or furlough massive numbers of city employee,” Coats recalled, his voice trailing off. “Everything just dropped off the edge. It was an era of silent desperation.”

City leaders tried to float a MAPS-like sales tax to restart the city's engine, but citizens felt so hopeless, it failed, said Coats, now dean of the University of Oklahoma's College of Law.

Coats and other city leaders began exploring concepts -- including a baseball park -- and even began preliminary work on a useable model for what became a successful downtown river destination. However, taxpayers were simply too devastated and afraid to step up, at least at that moment.

Ultimately, a successful “Six to Fix the City” bond issue passed which provided the funds to repair infrastructure that otherwise, by then, could never have sufficiently supported the MAPS projects that came soon after.

That rebuilt infrastructure remains one of Coats' prouder mayoral accomplishments, setting the stage for transformational MAPS projects that followed.

Coats said he has great respect for the subsequent leadership of mayors Ron Norick and Kirk Humphreys as they developed and led the initial MAPS implementation efforts.

Coats said MAPS 3 is another crucial step forward for the city that voters should support without reservation.

“It's very, very important,” he said. “We have a chance to continue that momentum. True, there are people who are shortsighted. It's disappointing that they're against it.”

Coats added, “If we continue this, it will attract more people, and the accordant increase in city revenues will address that which is important to the anti-MAPS groups.”

He noted that if the current proposal passes, city residents won't be footing the bill alone. He pointed out visitors and others patronizing city venues, businesses and attractions will spend money and pay taxes here, helping defray the costs for local citizens.