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Finance

Study: Proposed MAPS 3 facility could have economic impact

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OKLAHOMA CITY – A proposed whitewater rafting and kayaking facility near downtown could have an annual economic impact of as much as \$29 million, a study conducted for the Greater Oklahoma City Chamber of Commerce shows.

The \$60 million project for improvements on the Oklahoma River is one of eight in the MAPS 3 sales tax package worth \$777 million to be decided by city residents Tuesday. If the single-penny tax is passed, the revenues collected over nearly eight years would also pay for a rail-based transit system and convention center downtown, a 70-acre park, fairgrounds improvements, senior wellness aquatic centers, and trails and sidewalks throughout the city.

The study by Phoenix, Ariz.-based Applied Economics was funded by the chamber. Although specific details of MAPS 3 projects have not yet been set by officials at City Hall, the Applied Economics researchers based their conclusions on certain assumptions about the facility.

“The total footprint of the mid-level park and associated buildings would be 15 acres,” the report says. “It would include a freestyle channel, an instruction channel, and a competition channel surrounding an upper and lower pond. There would also be a kayak- and canoe-launch area. The facilities would include a restaurant and conference center, an outfitter store and an adjacent climbing center.”

Researchers concluded the primary economic and revenue impact from the park would be from visitors who may spend only a single day at the park, but would still spend money on food, lodging, transportation, entertainment and retail while in Oklahoma City. Their portion of the total economic impact would be almost \$14 million annually.

The facility is expected to employ a full-time staff of about 48, with an average annual payroll of \$1.9 million, and it would indirectly support another 230 jobs each year with \$5.3 million in payroll at other local businesses, researchers said.

Chamber President Roy Williams said, “A world-class facility such as this will not only create hundreds of jobs each year, but will also appeal to families, recreational enthusiasts and Olympic caliber athletes.”

The chamber also announced that the USA Canoe/Kayak sport organization plans to open a permanent office in Oklahoma City, which would produce additional economic benefits.

The group is the governing body for the sport in the United States and stages the U.S. Olympic trials. Executive Director Joe Jacobi said the office will open in January regardless of the MAPS 3 election results.

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