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A chance to continue city's momentum

POINT OF VIEW: SUPPORT MAPS 3

BY JEFFREY A. ELLIOTT Comments  1

Published: December 4, 2009

Oklahoma City might seem an odd place for a cutting-edge operator of virtual schools to call home. Areas that are traditional high-tech hotbeds like Austin or Silicon Valley may seem a more natural fit.

But Advanced Academics is a company with strong Oklahoma roots. Founded in Ponca City in 2000, it relocated to Bricktown in 2001. What drew us to Oklahoma City?

Oklahoma City offered access to the human and financial capital we needed to grow. It boasted a low cost of living and a high quality of life.

Downtown amenities like the Bricktown Canal and the AT&T Bricktown Ballpark impressed us greatly. Part of the original MAPS proposal passed in 1993, these projects transformed Oklahoma City and influenced our decision to locate our headquarters here.

Further, the decision by Oklahoma City to invest in its educational system by passing MAPS for Kids signaled city leaders' recognition that long-term prosperity hinged upon a well-educated populace. As a high-tech company and education provider, our success also hinges on our ability to find and hire creative, articulate people.

Since moving to Oklahoma City, Advanced Academics has undergone explosive growth. We now operate online schools in 30 states, serving thousands of students in grades 6-12 nationwide. Two years ago we were acquired by Chicago-based DeVry, Inc., one of the largest publicly held higher education companies in North America.

While it would have been easy to relocate when the acquisition occurred, we opted not to. We're here in Oklahoma City for the long term. In fact, we recently invested in a new, larger headquarters in the Bricktown area.

Why?

Because we believe in Oklahoma City. The city is undergoing a renaissance created by MAPS. Its booming business district, growing tourist industry and new school facilities are the envy of cities coast to coast.

Now, we have the chance to continue this momentum. Oklahoma City residents will vote Tuesday on MAPS 3, a \$777 million initiative that includes a new convention center,

downtown transit hub and a 70-acre city park, among other improvements.

MAPS 3 will make the city a better place to live. Its improvements will attract new business, jobs and private investment, just as the MAPS and MAPS for Kids helped convince Advanced Academics to move here eight years ago. I urge you to vote yes for this proposal Tuesday.

Elliott is president of Advanced Academics, Inc.

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12 photos



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Edmond Community Thanksgiving dinner at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, OK,

11 photos



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