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Voters to decide 1/4-cent sales tax extension Election for economic development tax set for April 6

Bartlesville voters will decide next month whether to extend the City of Bartlesville's existing 1/4-cent Economic Development Sales Tax — a tax that has helped bring hundreds of jobs to the area since it was enacted nearly 35 years ago.

Economic development sales tax revenues are used to fund Bartlesville Development Authority programs including employer/employee job creation and relocation incentives, national brand retail recruitment packages and Visit Bartlesville's tourism efforts. As the economic development arm of the City, the proceeds from the 1/4-cent economic development tax are used exclusively for sustaining and enhancing the community's long-term viability.

Why it matters

The 1/4-cent Economic Development Sales Tax was first approved by voters in 1986 and has been extended by voters every five years since. If approved during the April 6 election cycle, there will be no increase in sales tax, as the existing 1/4-cent will simply remain in effect beyond July 1, 2021.

“The 1/4-cent Economic Development Sales Tax is a small tax that has a big impact on Bartlesville,” said BDA President/CEO David Wood. “It gives Bartlesville an enormous competitive advantage. When opportunities arise, our community has the resources on hand to immediately capitalize. So many of the assets we now take for granted – from our industrial parks to our new stores and restaurants – would not have happened without the community's long-standing investment in its future.”

The incentives and other programs funded by economic development sales tax revenues help keep the business community strong by keeping jobs in Bartlesville, Wood said.

“When we are able to grow and retain primary jobs locally, we keep employees and their families here,” he said. “This, in turn, puts more students in our schools, more shoppers in our stores and more people in our restaurants.

“The 1/4-cent Economic Development Sales Tax matters very much for our community. As a regional retail hub, Bartlesville also benefits from a steady stream of visitors who shop and spend time here. They pay our sales taxes, too, and thus contribute substantially to our economic development.”

Proven track record

In the current five-year ED tax period, economic development incentive funds have been used to facilitate several projects, some of which include:

- Construction of Silver Lake Village
- Relocation of Atwoods, which facilitated the construction of Chick-Fil-A and the redevelopment of Eastland Shopping Center
- The former Kmart site redevelopment, now the Shoppes at Turkey Creek
- The purchase of the former Siemens facility, which resulted in recruiting Tritanium Labs, retaining 18 Siemens employees, and securing the lease with Apple Studios, the company filming “Killers of the Flower Moon”

Other notable projects facilitated by sales tax revenues include the ABB Expansion, Walmart Distribution Center, Hideaway Pizza, Custom Molding Services, and Phillips Precision Machining.

The future

“The BDA has had great success in the last five years — and, actually, all the way back to 1986 — and I think the voters have agreed with that,” said Bartlesville Mayor Dale Copeland. “We have been blessed with success in Bartlesville. And while I know BDA officials often cannot share details about potentially upcoming projects, I think it’s fair to say there are more ‘strong potentials’ in the future.”

As important as the ED tax has been to the Bartlesville over the years, Wood says approval of the proposed extension for the upcoming five-year period will play a vital role in the city’s future.

“The BDA has been able to deliver a number of projects through the economic development tax, and we’re confident that we’ll be able to continue our mission of recruiting new primary jobs and targeted brand retail to Bartlesville,” he said. “We’re grateful for the success we’ve had over the last 35 years, and we look forward to continuing that success for another five years.”

How to vote

Absentee ballots, sample ballots and other information are available at the OK Voter Portal, <https://okvoterportal.okelections.us/Home>. In-person early voting will be held 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. April 1 and April 2 at the City Hall building, 401 S. Johnstone Ave. in downtown Bartlesville. (Saturday voting is not available for this election). Polls will be open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. on April 6.

More information

For more information, contact the BDA at 918.336.8708, the Washington County Election Board at 918.337.2850, or the City of Bartlesville at 918.338.4282.