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# City voters say 'yes' to MAPS 3 proposal

## Extended penny sales tax will pay for \$777M package

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Hoping to continue Oklahoma City's renaissance, voters on Tuesday passed a far-reaching MAPS 3 initiative aimed at continuing citywide progress that began with the first MAPS in 1993.

"Oklahoma City's golden age continues," Mayor Mick Cornett said at a watch party for the Yes for MAPS campaign as red, white and blue confetti blasted into the air. "Let's enjoy this. Let's take stock of who we are and keep in mind we're creating a city our kids and our grandkids are going to be proud of for generations to come."

The penny sales tax that will pay for the \$777 million package passed with more than 54 percent of the vote with all precincts reporting.

Voter turnout was about 31 percent, about twice as high as a typical city election, said Doug Sanderson, Oklahoma County Election Board secretary.

The final vote was 40,956 yes, 34,465 no.

The MAPS 3 tax will last seven years and nine months when it begins April 1.

It replaces the current penny sales tax that funds Ford Center improvements and a practice facility for the Thunder. The city's 3.875 percent sales tax rate will not change.



Oklahoma City Mayor Mick Cornett celebrates Tuesday night with members of the city council, including Meg Salyer, right, after Cornett announced the passage of MAPS 3 during the Yes for MAPS watch party at the Cox Convention Center in Oklahoma City.

PHOTO BY NATE BILLINGS, THE OKLAHOMAN

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# MAPS 3: City, unions will face familiar issues

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"Our only hope is to go forward," said Gil Hensley, president of the city's police union and co-chairman of the Not This MAPS coalition, which led opposition to MAPS 3. "Our message never changed: This city does not provide adequate essential services to its citizens. The votes are in. The vote's done."

The Yes for MAPS watch party, held in a Cox Convention Center ballroom, featured giant projection screens and flat screen televisions showing election coverage, a lighting system projecting colorful designs around the room and an ice sculpture adorning one of several food tables.

As election results came in, partygoers cheered while dining on upscale foods and vast selections of artisan breads, cheeses, meats and fresh vegetables.

Like its predecessors, MAPS and MAPS For Kids, MAPS 3 is designed to dramatically change the face of the city.

Once all projects are complete, downtown will be connected to the Oklahoma River by a sprawling, 70-acre central park that will house attractions of all types. Nearby, a new convention center will be built to attract coveted conventions and the economic perks that come with them. The river will be home to world-class kayaking and whitewater rafting facilities. Residents and visitors will be able to use a modern streetcar system to get there and elsewhere throughout the downtown area.

Outside downtown, MAPS 3 seeks to make the city healthier by adding more sidewalks, more trails and five senior aquatic centers to help keep the city's aging population in shape. The state fairgrounds will also receive extensive improvements.

The first two MAPS — short for Metropolitan Area Projects — spurred billions in private development, and city leaders anticipate the same with MAPS 3.

There is no timeline for which projects will be built first, Cornett has said. A citizen oversight board would be appointed in coming weeks to help the city decide which projects to build first. Cornett has said he expects the park to be one of the earlier projects and the convention center to be built later.

Cornett said he'd like the park open by 2014, when a new downtown boulevard replacing the Crosstown Expressway bridge is scheduled to

## AT A GLANCE

### MAPS 3 PROJECTS

**New convention center:** \$280 million

**70-acre downtown park:** \$130 million

**Mass transit:** \$130 million

**Oklahoma River improvements:** \$60 million

**State Fair Park improvements:** \$60 million

**Senior aquatic centers:** \$50 million

**Trails:** \$40 million

**Sidewalks:** \$10 million

**Contingency funds:** \$17 million

**TOTAL:** \$777 million

put MAPS 3 use tax money toward hiring more police officers and firefighters.

Use taxes are charged in place of sales taxes to businesses that buy items outside the city for use in the city.

The use tax plan was made in response to concerns from the city's police and firefighter unions that MAPS 3 did not address public safety. The unions led the opposition to MAPS 3, forming and largely funding the Not This MAPS coalition.

"We realize the city made some specific promises toward the end of this campaign to address the need of public safety in this community and we're going to hold them to those promises," said Phil Sipe, president of the city's firefighter union, during a Not This MAPS watch party at the Fraternal Order of Police lodge.

"Not addressing those needs, this city is not going to move forward — not in our mind," Sipe said.

The MAPS 3 debate further strained an already-sour relationship between City Hall and the city's police and firefighter unions.

All but one city council member supported MAPS 3, but union members actively campaigned against it, criticizing the package as unnecessary and a bad deal for taxpayers because of economic woes.

Also opposing MAPS 3 were local Tea Party groups and other conservative taxpayer groups.

City officials and MAPS 3 supporters accused the unions of opposing MAPS 3 to gain leverage in work contract negotiations with the city, which stalled earlier this year when the cash-strapped city refused

to meet the demands of the unions.

City voters will decide in May whether the firefighters should get the contract they've requested. The police contract continues to make its way through an appeals process.

The MAPS 3 campaigns both went negative leading up to the election, accusing one another of favoring special interests rather than all citizens.

With MAPS 3 behind them, city officials and union members are now back where they started: Trying to get along.

Hensley said it could be a decade before more police officers are hired. He doesn't anticipate the relationship between the city and the unions improving soon.

"I think that's a sad thing for the citizens," Hensley said.

"There's been a long history of this city not acting openly with the employee groups, and I don't expect that to change."

Ward 6 Councilwoman Meg Salyer said she thinks easing the tension is possible — and needed.

She cited an e-mail discussion she had Tuesday with a police officer she had known for some time. Although the discussion got contentious, they were able to find some common ground.

"We can come together for the betterment of the city," Salyer said. "If we can do that one-on-one, then I think the city can do it with a force of people we respect and appreciate."

Cornett agreed, saying: "This city will pull together — it always has. We won't let this split us apart."

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City officials also plan to

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