

Fundraising begins for new attractions along Oklahoma River

An elaborate pavilion with two new attractions — an OKC Riversport Sky Trail and Adventure Zip Line — are in the works for boathouse row along the Oklahoma River.

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An elaborate pavilion with two new attractions — an OKC Riversport Sky Trail and Adventure Zip Line — are in the works for boathouse row along the Oklahoma River.

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma, which recently sponsored creation of a new playground along the river's north shore, kicked off the fundraising drive for the new attractions with a \$500,000 donation.

Mike Knopp, director of the Oklahoma City Boathouse Foundation, said the new attractions are inspired by venues he saw at the U.S. National Whitewater Center in Charlotte, N.C., which was also the inspiration for the white water attraction to be built along the Oklahoma River as part of MAPS 3.

Knopp called the Sky Trail a new approach to a traditional ropes course.

“Sky Trails are becoming hugely popular at various attractions across the country, and we feel like the Oklahoma River is the perfect place to bring this adventure concept to Oklahoma City,” Knopp said.

Once built, participants will clip into a safety harness at ground level of the pavilion, then climb, jump and swing across various adventure elements as they ascend to a height of four stories. At the 75-foot peak, they will have the option of zipping across a 700-foot Adventure Zip Line spanning the Oklahoma River.

A return zip line will bring them back to the north shore skimming just above the roofline of the pavilion.

The budget for the new Boathouse District attractions, including the pavilion, Sky Trail and Adventure Zip Line, as well as a mountain bike trail, will range between \$3 million and \$5 million.

Bert Marshall, president of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Oklahoma, said the recently opened playground on the same inlet and the proposed new venues fit into its three-

year “Healthy Kids, Healthy Families” initiative to promote healthy habits among youths.

“Blue Cross and Blue Shield is focused on improving the health and wellness of Oklahoma families, and we're very excited about our growing involvement at the Oklahoma River,” Marshall said. “Motivating children to engage in healthy habits such as nutrition and exercise at an early age will likely foster healthier adults and steadily increase the health of our state.”

Elizabeth Laurent, director of marketing for the boathouse foundation, said the pavilion will be located on the river inlet east of the Devon Boathouse and west of two inlets that will be the future home of boathouses for the University of Oklahoma and the University of Central Oklahoma.

She said the footprint of the pavilion will be comparable to that of the Devon Boathouse and is designed by the same architect, Rand Elliott.

“It's on prime real estate,” Laurent said. “We wanted to do something special with it. This is an opportunity for people to get involved in something that is really community based and also has a focus on youth.”

She said the foundation expects the project will be embraced by the corporate community and that fundraising won't take long.

“We're hoping we can do something within the next year,” Laurent said. “Maybe not all of it, but at least part of it. People are really excited about it — it will bring a whole new level of attractions to the Oklahoma River. It creates a really robust destination not just for people who live in Oklahoma City, but also something from a tourism viewpoint that will be huge.”



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