

## Outlet mall boosts Oklahoma City's sales tax revenue

Sales tax revenue from The Outlet Shoppes at Oklahoma City, the new outlet mall along Interstate 40 at Rockwell Avenue, has exceeded Oklahoma City's expectations so far, city officials said.

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Business has been brisk at The Outlet Shoppes at Oklahoma City, and that has led to a better-than-expected boost to the city's sales tax revenue.

The new factory outlet mall, along Interstate 40 at Rockwell Avenue, opened in August. Since then, the chunk of city sales tax revenue from accessories and apparel has been about 20 percent bigger each month than it was last year, according to a report presented Tuesday to the Oklahoma City Council.

The bump represents about an extra \$100,000 per month so far for the city, Budget Director Doug Dowler said. It's hard to trace every dollar, but he said there's no doubt the outlet mall has been the biggest reason.

Total sales during the shops' first four months of business were about \$50 million, which is \$15 million higher than city officials projected, said Brent Bryant, the city's economic development project manager.

Bryant said it's a good sign the mall is bringing in the dollars city leaders hoped for, but he cautioned that the small sample size means it's not safe to assume the numbers always will be as flashy.

### Out-of-town money

City officials banked on the mall attracting shoppers from near and particularly far, and that's what the shops are seeing so far.

"We're attracting people on I-40 as they're traveling through the community," The Outlet Shoppes spokeswoman Gina Slehta said, adding that holiday season sales at the mall also were stronger than expected. "We're seeing a lot of license plates from Wichita (Kan.), Fort Smith, Ark., (and) from Tulsa. That was one of our goals, and it's happening."

The plan was to bring in extra business without poaching from other local retailers, and Bryant said the out-of-town money and jump in sales tax revenue is an indication it's

working.

“That's one of the reasons why we wanted it,” Bryant said.

“It's a regional draw.”

Some of the retailers in the outlet mall also opened their first local branches here, putting them on a level online playing field with retailers that already had a physical store in Oklahoma City. Retailers with local branches have to charge sales tax to local online buyers, which brings yet more money to city revenue.

“That means that now, any time (local) people buy something off the Internet off those stores, they have to pay sales tax, as well,” Dowler said.



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