

Coalition Formed to Build a Safer, Better OKC

A coalition of Oklahoma City civic organizations announced the formation of a campaign to promote the passage of the City's general obligation bond and sales tax proposals being considered by voters on Sept. 12. Organized as the "Citizens for a Better OKC," the group is sharing the benefits of the proposals with voters. The effort is being co-chaired by current Mayor Mick Cornett and former Mayor Ron Norick.

"When I travel around the country and talk about our City's success, I most frequently point to two things – our willingness to invest in our infrastructure and build the City we want, and to our willingness to work together to do just that," Cornett said. "This campaign represents both of those vital components."

The Sept. 12 election will allow Oklahoma City's residents to invest in a safer, better Oklahoma City by approving a bond program and two sales tax issues. By voting yes, residents will:

- Invest \$847 million in rebuilding and improving Oklahoma City's streets, which are ranked the eighth-worst in the nation and are consistently the top concern of residents. Repairs include replacing bridges, resurfacing streets, building sidewalks, improving drainage, adding bike lanes and more.
- Address understaffed police and fire departments by hiring 129 more police officers and 57 more firefighters to keep Oklahoma City residents safe.
- Improve life in Oklahoma City by investing in parks, police and fire stations, libraries, transit systems, community and economic development, and more.

The ballot will include a 10-year, \$967 million general obligation bond package, a permanent quarter-cent sales tax proposal generating \$26 million a year for hiring more police officers and firefighters, and a



temporary 27-month penny sales tax extension raising \$240 million for street improvements – 15 ballot items in all. When combined, the bond and sales tax items will direct \$1.2 billion toward Oklahoma City's most pressing needs, including road improvements and increased public safety funding. Property taxes will not increase, and when both sales tax proposals are approved by voters, Oklahoma City's total sales tax will be at the rate of 8.625 percent, lower than the state average of 8.86 percent.



Q&A with Georgie Rasco, Neighborhood Alliance

The general obligation bond and sales tax proposals on the Sept. 12 ballot will create a safer, better Oklahoma City for all residents. Read on for a Q&A with Georgie Rasco, executive director of Neighborhood Alliance of Central Oklahoma, to learn how voting YES on Sept. 12 will benefit neighborhoods throughout Oklahoma City.

What do you see as the biggest need for neighborhoods across Oklahoma City?

Neighborhoods are the backbone of our City. Neighborhoods work cooperatively with police and fire to reduce crime and fire risks and they know firsthand how stretched our City's public safety resources are. In surveys and focus groups, neighborhoods have repeatedly asked for better streets, more sidewalks and more police/fire protection.

How does the upcoming election address that need?

The City heard us! Neighborhoods have an opportunity to vote YES on a \$967 million bond package. With the sales tax proposals, it will invest \$847 million in rebuilding OKC streets and hire 129 more police officers and 57 more firefighters. This is not even mentioning the investments in libraries, parks, police and fire stations, transit systems and economic development that leads to good paying jobs. Most of the improvements neighborhood leaders have asked for over the years are addressed in this package.

What will happen if we don't address our deteriorating roads?

I would hate to see the condition of our roads if we stopped investing in them. We went so many years in the '70s and '80s without improving our streets and we are still suffering those effects today. We allowed developers in the 1930s to convince City leaders that they shouldn't be required to build sidewalks because cars were the way of the future. The City is now fully aware of the benefits of sidewalks and is trying to retrofit sidewalks throughout the City. Maintenance of infrastructure should not even be a question: We simply have to do it.

How will the street improvements impact neighborhoods?

The streets, sidewalks, drainage and traffic controls all work together to keep people safe

and proud of their neighborhood. Many of us have had out-of-town visitors say, "We love OKC, but what about those streets?" Surveys show only 9 percent of OKC residents are satisfied with our current street maintenance. Street repairs were the No. 1 issue as ranked by neighborhoods in the bond surveys that were completed in early 2017.

In the past, penny sales tax proposals have been used for transformative projects, but the temporary sales tax on the Sept. 12 ballot will fund street improvements. Why should we use these funds for something so practical?

Most homeowners enjoy the results of a bathroom remodel much more than repairing a cracked foundation. However, in the bigger picture maintenance pays off the most. Citizens must vote to allow the City to spend money on our maintenance needs as well as the "new stuff." This initiative will create a \$240 million, debt-free investment in our streets. The \$240 million we will collect includes \$168 million for street resurfacing (in addition to the \$491 million allocated for streets through the bond proposal), \$24 million for streetscapes, \$24 million for sidewalks, \$12 million for trails and \$12 million for bike infrastructure. A strong City is achieved when all neighborhoods are doing well. The extension of the penny sales tax helps make this statement a reality in our City.

What role does funding for police and fire departments play in quality of life of residents?

We don't really think about an emergency worker's response time until there are flames coming out of our neighbor's roofline, or a burglar breaks into our home at midnight. We need our professional public safety officers there sooner rather than later. By adequately funding our police and fire units, response times will be reduced and more officers will be patrolling the streets. Adequately staffing our

police department is something neighborhood leaders talk about on a regular basis, and now we have a chance to make it happen!

Why is it important to increase public safety funding? Can't we just make do with what we have?

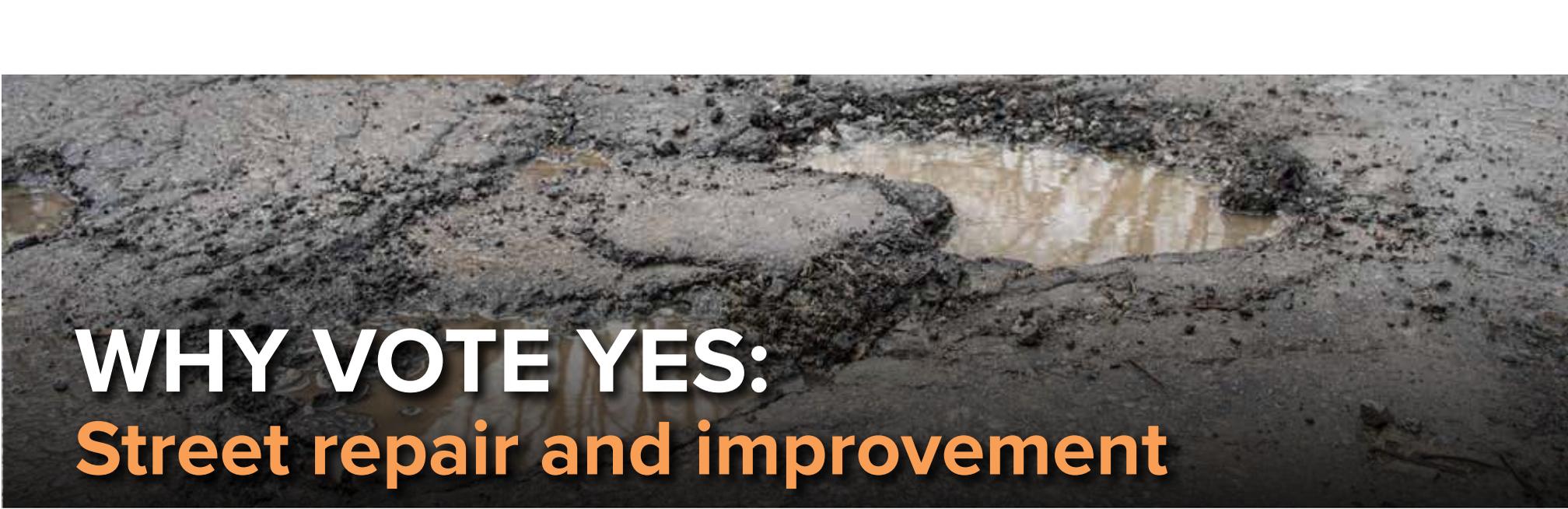
This is the first time the City of OKC has asked for a sales tax increase since 1976. It will only add 25 cents to each \$100 purchase you make. A permanent quarter-cent sales tax increase is estimated to bring in \$26 million in revenue, which will help to bolster our police and fire. Response times for police now average around eight minutes, but when we hire an additional 129 officers that response time will dramatically decrease.

There are also quality of life improvements as part of the bond package, like improvements to parks, libraries, and other programs that create jobs. Why are those important to neighborhoods?

An opportunity to stay in OKC and work in a well-paying profession can mean generational change for some families and the neighborhood leaders I work with support that effort. I think of parks and libraries as the neighborhoods' living room, where everyone comes together to play or learn. Continuing to grow and improve our system is a huge investment in community and in our children.

Why should people vote yes on Sept. 12?

Neighborhoods show their civic pride almost daily, by landscaping public areas, participating in clean up days, volunteering to help neighbors in need, and helping local schools succeed. By voting YES on all 15 of the Sept. 12 ballot proposals, you are saying you are behind the City's plan to put money back into the neighborhoods by improving our community infrastructure and increasing public safety citywide.



WHY VOTE YES: Street repair and improvement

With more than 8,100 miles of street lanes, 12,405 traffic signals and 50 miles of unimproved drainage channels to maintain, keeping Oklahoma City's streets in good condition is a huge responsibility. On Sept. 12, Oklahoma City residents who vote yes on the 15 items on the ballot will be making the largest investment in Oklahoma City streets in history. This unprecedented investment is a direct response to listening to Oklahoma City resident feedback. For four consecutive years, residents who responded to a citywide survey indicated that improving the condition of city roads was their top priority.

It is also one of the only City services with a satisfaction level consistently below national average – and dropping. In 2014, 14 percent of Oklahoma City residents said that they were satisfied with Oklahoma City road conditions. By 2016, only 9 percent of people expressed satisfaction with Oklahoma City's roads.

With the City filling 80,000 potholes each year, it is obvious that investment is needed, but the evidence is more than anecdotal. According to a 2016 report by TRIP, a national transportation research group, Oklahoma City's roads rank the eighth worst in the nation for cities with more than 500,000 residents. TRIP also estimates that 79 percent of major roads in the Oklahoma City area are in poor or mediocre condition.

This is an issue that costs Oklahoma City residents \$832 in vehicle repairs, depreciation and tire wear each year. The bond and sales tax proposals in the Sept. 12 election directly combat these concerns, investing more than \$847 million in improving Oklahoma City's streets, bridges, drainage and traffic control.

Not only does the majority of the general obligation bond fund street projects, but the 27-month temporary sales tax also contributes \$240 million to streets. By voting YES on all 15 ballot items on Sept. 12, Oklahoma City will continue its legacy as a community that invests in itself. Finally, Oklahoma City streets will be worthy of our city's transformation.

BY THE NUMBERS: OKLAHOMA CITY STREETS

8,100 miles of street lanes in OKC

12,405 traffic signals in OKC

50 miles of unimproved drainage channels in OKC

79 percent of roads in poor or mediocre condition

OKC drivers pay **\$832** each year in vehicle repairs, depreciation and tire wear

91 percent of residents are dissatisfied with OKC roads

OKC's streets are **8th-worst** in the nation

\$847 million in street improvements possible on the Sept. 12 ballot

What's on the ballot?

The Sept. 12 election will give you 15 opportunities to vote “YES” for a safer, better Oklahoma City. Here's exactly what will be on the ballot.

General Obligation (GO) Bond Package

The city uses general obligation bonds to fund critical infrastructure projects. The 2017 bond package dedicates more than half of its \$967 million to improving Oklahoma City's streets, which is consistently the top concern of Oklahoma City residents. The bond package includes:

Streets and sidewalks
(\$491 million)



Traffic control
(\$28 million)

Bridges
(\$27 million)

Parks and recreation
(\$138 million)



Drainage control
(\$62 million)

Economic and community
development
(\$60 million)

Fire facilities
(\$45 million)

Police facilities
(\$31 million)



Libraries
(\$24 million)

Transit
(\$20 million)

Civic Center complex
(\$20 million)

City maintenance facilities
(\$13 million)

Downtown arena
(\$9 million)



All of these projects will be addressed without increasing property taxes, meaning that the City millage rate will remain at 16 mills.

Temporary Penny Sales Tax for Streets

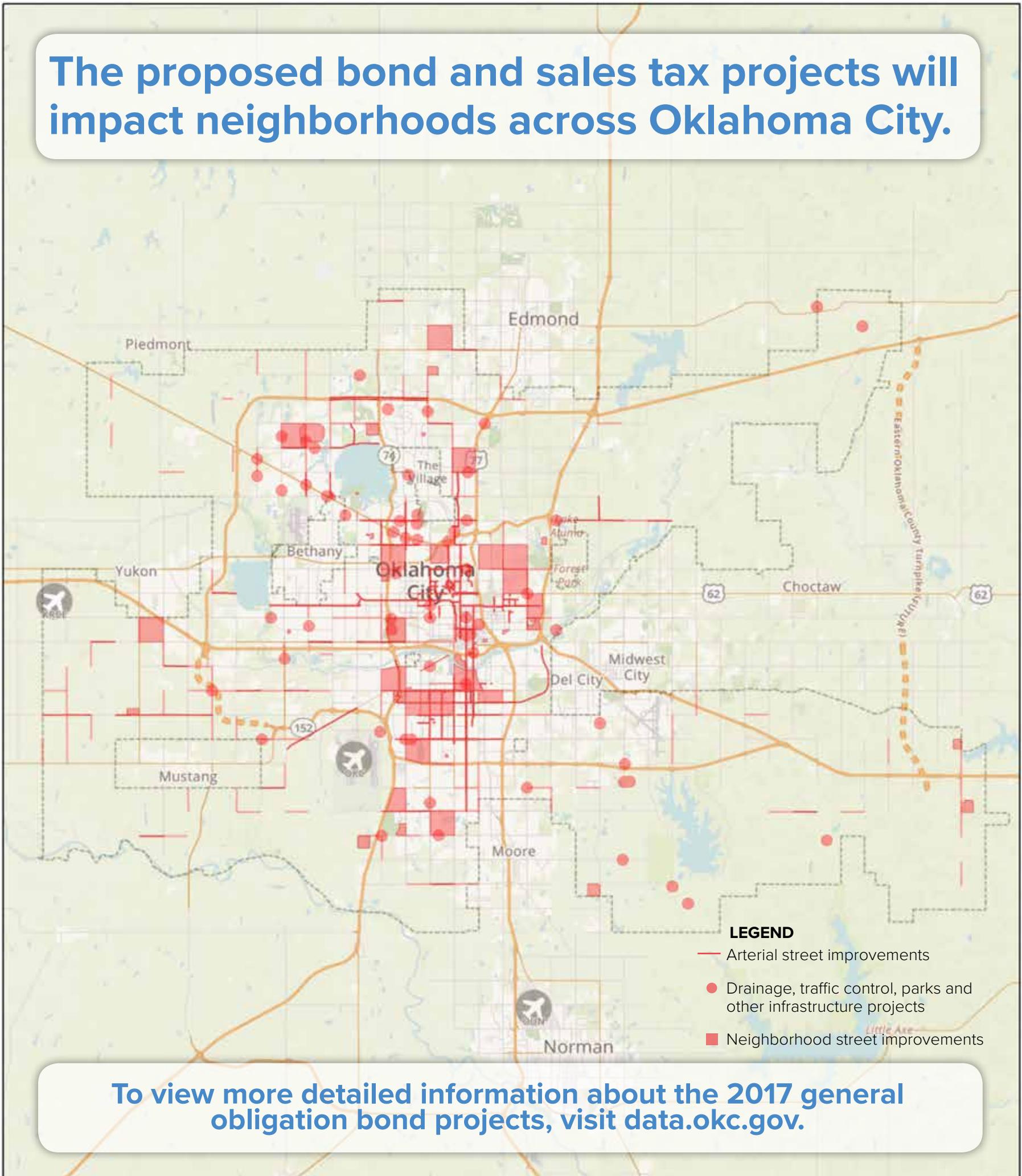
Oklahoma City has historically used temporary penny sales tax funds to address community needs, and this is no exception. This 27-month penny sales tax, which replaces a current penny sales tax, will generate \$240 million for street repairs, bringing Oklahoma City's streets up to the level that a Big League City should have.

Quarter-Cent Sales Tax to Hire Police and Fire

Voting YES on the sales tax will add 129 police officers and 57 firefighters to Oklahoma City's understaffed police and fire departments, making Oklahoma City a safer place for everyone. These funds will also allow City Council to reverse some recent cutbacks to other critical services. This permanent sales tax would add 25 cents to a \$100 purchase in Oklahoma City. When approved, Oklahoma City's total sales tax will be at the rate of 8.625 percent, lower than the state average of 8.86 percent.



The proposed bond and sales tax projects will impact neighborhoods across Oklahoma City.



LEGEND

- Arterial street improvements
- Drainage, traffic control, parks and other infrastructure projects
- Neighborhood street improvements

To view more detailed information about the 2017 general obligation bond projects, visit data.okc.gov.



WHY VOTE YES: Public Safety

With 600,000 residents and more than 600 square miles to cover, Oklahoma City’s police and fire departments stretch resources to the limit in order to keep residents safe. The upcoming bond and sales tax election on Sept. 12 will give residents the opportunity to vote yes for public safety investments – including hiring new officers and firefighters.

A permanent quarter-cent sales tax increase, which would generate \$26 million annually, would give Oklahoma City the opportunity to hire 129 police officers and 57 firefighters. The addition of more officers will allow the Oklahoma City Police Department to reach staffing levels that are in line with other similarly sized cities, and the additional firefighters will be able to better respond to the growing number of calls to the Oklahoma City Fire Department.

Both the Oklahoma City Police Department and the Oklahoma City Fire Department are funded through sales tax collections and have experienced budget cuts in the past few years as those collections have dropped. In the most recent staffing study, an analysis of Oklahoma City’s police department indicated that Oklahoma City needed to hire 200 more officers to reach “acceptable” coverage levels.

Despite Oklahoma City’s growth of 200,000 residents in the past 20 years, Oklahoma City still has essentially the same number of police officers on patrol as it did in 1993. In March 2017, there were not enough officers on a shift more than 30 times. Because of this

shortage, the average response time to high-priority calls where a life is in danger is eight minutes.

The 2017 bond proposals also include capital improvements for existing police and fire stations and a new training station for both groups to use. By voting YES on Sept. 12 on all 15 ballot items, Oklahoma City’s police and fire departments will receive the resources it needs to make Oklahoma City a safer place for everyone.

BY THE NUMBERS: OKLAHOMA CITY POLICE & FIRE

Police and fire departments respond to calls within more than

600

square miles.



Oklahoma City’s population has increased by **200,000** in the past 20 years, but the number of patrol officers remains the same.



The average response time to high-priority 911 calls is **8** minutes

Sales tax funds will hire **129** police officers and **57** firefighters

Calls to the fire department have increased by **57** percent

WHY VOTE YES: Quality of Life

As Oklahoma City continues to grow, it is important that the city continues to invest in itself. The upcoming election on Sept. 12 will give Oklahoma City residents 15 opportunities to do just that by voting yes. In addition to the investments in street repair and public safety funding that have already been covered, the bond issue and sales tax proposals also invest in Oklahoma City's quality of life in order to continue its momentum and create jobs for its residents.

Oklahoma City's primary means of providing its residents with services, like parks to enjoy, libraries to visit, trails to use, etc., is through sales tax collections. With the number of residents increasing but the sales tax collections dropping, it is more important than ever to proactively invest in the City's critical needs and in projects that all residents have the opportunity to enjoy.

Portions of the bond issue will address critical needs like drainage control, needed park improvements, increased public transit funding and maintenance of city buildings like libraries, City office buildings, the central maintenance facility and others. The bond issue will also invest in economic and community development programs that, as a result of the voter-approved 2007 bond issue, have helped create more than 4,200 good-paying jobs in Oklahoma City.



Coalition Formed to Build a Safer, Better OKC continued from page 1

Improving Oklahoma City's streets and continuing to invest in safety are consistently among the top concerns of residents, and both are investments that will improve every corner of the community. In the City's most recent resident satisfaction survey, the top concern remained the quality of Oklahoma City's streets. Only 9 percent of residents said that they were satisfied with Oklahoma City's streets, and TRIP, a national transportation research nonprofit, ranked Oklahoma City's streets as the eighth-worst in the nation among cities with more than 500,000 people. As Oklahoma City continues to grow and welcome new residents, it is important that the City continues to invest in critical infrastructure improvements.

For this reason, a majority of the bond funds, around \$607 million, are dedicated to repairing Oklahoma City's streets and bridges, building sidewalks, improving drainage and making other street enhancements. When combined with the temporary sales tax extension, an estimated \$847 million will be invested in street improvements.

The permanent quarter-cent sales tax will also meet Oklahoma City's need for more police officers and firefighters protecting residents. The funds generated each year will hire 129 police officers and 57 firefighters.

Mayor Norick spoke to how important the campaign is to the Oklahoma City community. "We have made such progress in the last 25 years, and we need to keep that momentum to maintain and improve this city. Surveys of city residents and business owners both show the demand for better streets and infrastructure improvements. These projects are important to economic development and to citizens' quality of life."

For more details about the members of the coalition, the proposals or how you can be involved in the effort, visit www.betterokc.com.

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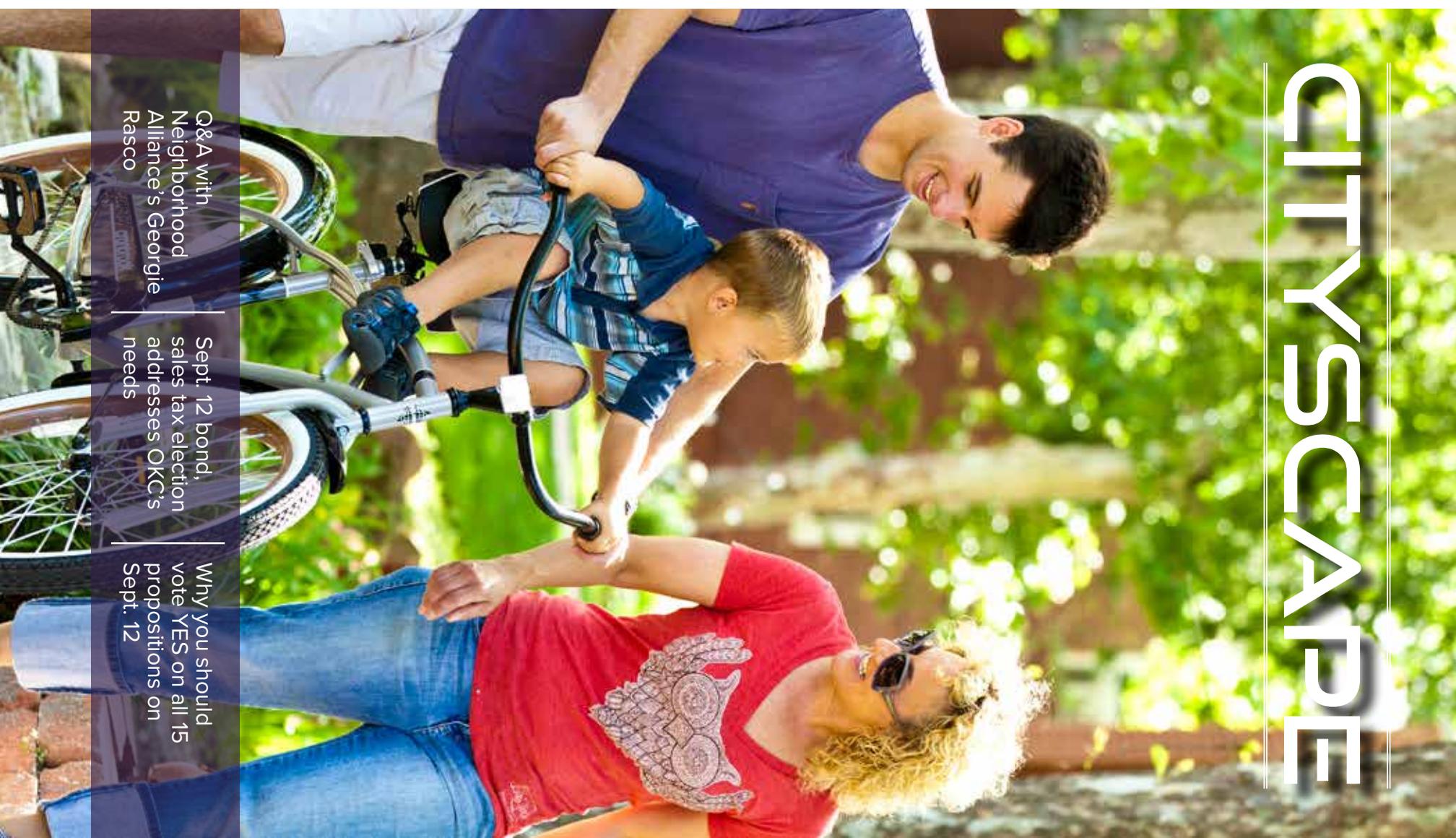


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Q&A with
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Why you should
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