



Vision Tulsa squeezes out "Third Penny" for streets; Dollars for dams instead

Proponents claim that Vision Tulsa won't increase the overall sales tax rate, but there's a hidden trap in Proposition 3 that will force voters in 2021 to accept a hike in the overall tax rate in order to continue the long-standing "Third Penny" for streets and other basic infrastructure.

This chart shows the current allocation of City of Tulsa and Tulsa County sales taxes, with the proposed changes on the April 5, 2016, ballot highlighted with a heavy black boundary.

Tulsa County's "Vision 2025" 0.6% sales tax expires at the end of 2016. The City of Tulsa is proposing a combination of temporary and permanent taxes that begins at 0.55% for 4½ years, climbs to 1.15% for 4 years, shrinks back to 0.65% for 6½ years, and then leaves a permanent increase of 0.345%. Tulsa County is proposing a 0.05% increase for 15 years.

Starting in 1980, Tulsa citizens have approved a series of temporary sales taxes, earmarked for streets, reservoirs, sewers, stormwater system, and other fundamental city infrastructure. Because the original tax was an additional 1% levied on top of the 2% sales tax for the city's general fund, it became known as the "Third Penny."

The current "Third Penny" is 1.1% and it expires on June 30, 2021. If Vision Tulsa passes, it will grab a half-penny from that expiring "Third Penny" and put it toward Proposition 3, which includes building two new low-water dams in the Arkansas River. Another 0.1% from the expiring tax will go to increasing the permanent tax for public safety operational costs. That leaves only a ½ penny for a new streets package.

That four-year bulge in the Vision Tulsa tax amounts to \$160 million that won't be going to rebuild our crumbling streets. Instead, that's just about what it will cost to build two new dams in the river.

If we VOTE NO on APRIL 5, the Council can eliminate the dams and a couple of other wasteful projects, and thus eliminate that four-year, ½-penny bulge in the Vision Tulsa tax. That would allow our traditional "Third Penny" for streets and basic infrastructure to be extended as usual in 2021 without an overall tax increase. To make that happen, we have to VOTE NO ON APRIL 5.

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LEGEND

CITY	COUNTY	
		Permanent tax for operational expenses
		"Vision" projects
		Capital improvements ("Third Penny", "4 to Fix")
		Proposed

VERTICAL SCALE
0.5" = 1 year

HORIZONTAL SCALE
1" = 1% sales tax rate

\$80,000,000

= 1% sales tax for 1 year (CITY)