

BA advances tax districts for company, downtown

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BROKEN ARROW — The school board and City Council both approved a plan Monday to create two tax-increment financing districts.

One would be an incentive to keep the city's largest employer, FlightSafety International, in the city and to move it into the Broken Arrow school district from the Union district. The other is for the revitalization of downtown.

The plan has yet to receive final approval from the city, but City Manager David Wooden said the issue likely would come before the City Council again during its first meeting in August.

Both TIF districts would last 25 years and together are expected to generate \$13.5 million.

A TIF district allows cities to divert taxes collected in a particular area to projects that stimulate investment in that area. Although TIF districts traditionally have been used to improve blighted areas, many cities use them to spur economic development.

Under the FlightSafety TIF plan, the difference between current and future property and sales tax revenues in what is known as the "Old Town" area would be used to help finance about \$7.5 million worth of goods, services or cash that FlightSafety is seeking to keep its operation in Broken Arrow, Wooden told the City Council and school board. The city also will build and lease three restaurant buildings north of the new facility.

FlightSafety makes flight simulators for the military and commercial airlines, and it trains more than 75,000 pilots, technicians and aviation specialists each year. The New York company employs 687 people locally.

Work has begun on the property where the company will build a streamlined facility near 71st Street and Lynn Lane Road. The company's current operation is at 2700 N. Hemlock Circle.

FlightSafety has said it plans to add about 1,000 employees after the move.

Incentives have been offered for the company to move to Tulsa or to Texas, city officials said.


The FlightSafety TIF district is to be bordered by Kenosha (71st) Street on the north, Houston (81st) Street on the south, Elm Place (161st East Avenue) on the west and Lynn Lane Road (177th East Avenue) on the east. Most of the area is developed, Wooden said.

The downtown TIF district is intended to encourage renovations of buildings and the opening of businesses there, Wooden said. Money raised from the downtown TIF district would be used to buy land, create jobs and pay for renovations.

"We've been talking about downtown revitalization for 20 years, but we haven't been able to provide the funds," Wooden said. "Without putting some kind of stimulus into the downtown area, not much is going to change."

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