

Banks developers working to establish new taxing authority to fund events - Insider

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CINCINNATI -- Commercial property owners at The Banks riverfront development project are trying to form a new taxing authority that would raise more than \$500,000 a year to fund “programming and place-making improvements” that “create a heightened sense of community” for the district.

A petition for the organization of the Banks Community Authority was submitted to Cincinnati’s Clerk of Council July 27. It was signed by executives with several real estate companies that own retail, apartment and hotel properties at The Banks, including corporate affiliates of the Moerlein Lager House, Yard House restaurant and AC Marriott Hotel at The Banks.

The goal is to bring new visitors to Cincinnati’s riverfront and increase revenue for its retail establishments, said Tracy Nemenz Schwegmann, marketing director for Jeffrey R. Anderson Real Estate Inc., which handles retail leasing for The Banks.

“Think about things like a Thursday night concert series or we recently just did a World Cup sort of block party,” she said. “It’s that type of activity that’s going to enliven The Banks, encourage people to come and visit The Banks, patronize The Banks and enjoy Cincinnati’s riverfront.”

The petition projects that a 1 percent sales tax, or “facilities charge,” will generate \$515,000 in 2019 and \$5.6 million over 10 years. The new tax would apply to “gross receipts due to retail sales” but not hotel room and related service charges.

Cincinnati City Council has accepted the petition as complying with state law for the creation of a New Community Authority and scheduled a Sept. 5 public hearing on the matter. Council can ratify the creation of the new taxing authority if it determines it “will be conducive to the public health, safety, convenience and welfare,” according to Ohio’s [New Community Organization statute](#).

If all goes as planned, the Banks Community Authority could begin collecting the new 1 percent fee by year end in restaurants and bars located in buildings highlighted in yellow on a map submitted with the group's petition.



Banks Community Authority boundaries

Hamilton County Commissioner Todd Portune voiced his support for the idea as a creative way for those who benefit most from The Banks to promote its ongoing success.

“What’s lacking at the Banks are those elements that create what I call the wow factor,” he said, “an experience that’s so vibrant, so full, so eclectic that people want to come back again and again.”

Portune doesn’t think the new facilities charge will chase customers away from The Banks.

“Somebody who’s buying a high-priced specialty beer at Jefferson Social is not going to walk because the beer is going up by a penny on the dollar,” he said.

Schwegmann said retailers have signed letters of support for the initiative, recognizing that The Banks must compete against other venues that offer regular attractions to generate foot traffic.

“I think what everyone recognizes is The Banks has now been in operation for about seven years,” she said. “While we’re still experiencing some growth on the western end, there is now really a collection of private stakeholders and private business owners that really agree the Banks has reached a level of maturity and we should begin taking collective ownership of this neighborhood.”

Columbus suburbs have established more than a half dozen community authorities to finance various development projects. The Liberty Center project in Butler County uses a community authority to pay off bonds for roads, sewers and garages. It collects a half cent on every dollar of retail sales and raised \$1.4 million in 2017.