

Project Marvel estimate analysis sparks questions on growth priorities

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One of the city's oldest and largest advocacy groups is pushing back against Project Marvel. (SBG San Antonio)

SAN ANTONIO - One of the city's oldest and largest advocacy groups is pushing back against Project Marvel.

The proposed multi-billion-dollar project includes a renovation of downtown and a new Spurs arena. COPS/Metro says the money could be better spent.

The group said they're not buying projections from an estimate study commissioned by the city. It's a difference in opinion.

"You are looking at tens of thousands of people across the city of San Antonio that are saying 'no' to Project Marvel," said COPS/Metro member Father Jimmy Drennan.

Several community members voiced their thoughts both for and against the project.

"The sports and entertainment district can be the next World's Fair for generations to come," said Downtown San Antonio Neighborhood Association Chair Jesse Cazares at the July 25 special council meeting. "It is estimated that San Antonio is on the track to become the 6th largest city in the nation -- surpassing Philadelphia. We need to be prepared. This isn't just about the Spurs, this is about our future as a city."

A new Project Marvel estimate analysis estimates what some consider to be a promising future for San Antonio.

The study, done by CSL International, estimates Project Marvel will generate \$18.7 billion in revenue over the next 30 years. That includes totals for a renovated Convention Center, Alamodome, music venue, and mixed-use district.

"The more that the public knows about it, the greater chance of getting it passed, and hopefully that's going to happen now," Former Mayor and County Judge Nelson Wolff said.

While members of COPS/Metro say they don't feel the study comes with a tag of transparency.

"We had been asking for an independent look," Beverly McClure said. "If you're going to be asking for this much money, on what basis is this going to be good for our community?"

"This is an investment into the future," said San Antonio Chamber of Commerce CEO Jeff Webster during the July 25 meeting. "We have case studies showing business when they relocated to corporate cultures -- made those decisions over the quality of life in a Community. These are quality of life decisions."

The impact study also projects \$225 million in new spending annually with a new Spurs arena. COPS/Metro members said they're worried it's all happening too fast, and at the cost of the taxpayers' pockets.

"Our voices matter. The citizens of San Antonio demand to be heard and not to be treated as if we are insignificant," said Father Jimmy Drennan. "There is absolutely no need to rush through this."

Officials have said possible contributions from the city and county won't cause an increase in taxes.

The city will use money that would normally go to the state, while the county's money could be charged to tourists through hotel taxes.

There's also a \$1 billion offer from the Spurs organization on the table.

Supporters of Project Marvel, as well as CSL International, say they're expecting the project to 'transform San Antonio's core'

Those against it said they're questioning priorities. Additionally, the city should focus on building dependable infrastructure.