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Project could produce \$14 million a year for Oldham

Study: \$14 million in taxes possible

By Andrea Uhde

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A 1,000-acre mixed-use campus being developed in La Grange could bring in up to \$14 million a year in property taxes and create up to 11,000 jobs, according to a study released yesterday.

The analysis by Paul Coomes, an economist at the University of Louisville, also says La Grange and Oldham County could split an additional \$1.5 million to \$4.7 million a year from the development if they levy a payroll tax.



Paul Coomes, a U of L economist, studied possible impacts of the Oldham Reserve development.

The project, called Oldham Reserve, would have offices, retail space and homes. It is south of Interstate 71 and bounded by New Moody Lane, Ky. 53 and Moody Lane.

The Oldham-La Grange Development Authority, which owns the land, paid Coomes about \$5,000 to conduct the study, said Joe Schoenbaechler, the group's executive director.

"The reason we were interested in the study was to try to analyze the difference between residential versus nonresidential development," Schoenbaechler said. "All the county has ever known is residential development."

The study comes as Oldham government faces an estimated \$2 million deficit.

The revenue from Oldham Reserve, once it's developed, "could either help avoid tax increases, or

actually possibly even reduce property taxes," said county Judge-Executive Duane Murner.

It could also help the county replenish its reserve fund, Murner said.

Hoping to broaden the tax base and attract more high-paying jobs, Oldham Fiscal Court and La Grange each sold \$10 million in bonds in 2005 so the development authority could buy the property and start building roads and adding utilities.

Since then, the Rawlings Group has moved there from downtown Louisville and is now the largest private employer in Oldham, with about 600 workers.

The master plan for the property calls for offices, retail businesses and more than 850 residences, but officials said they aren't sure what will be built there.

In his study, Coomes considered several development scenarios.

Under the master-plan scenario, there would be 850 residences, a hotel, offices and retail space that would bring in \$8.3 million each year in property-tax revenue, plus another \$4.7 million a year if there was a 1 percent payroll tax.

Under a similar plan with more homes, property-tax revenue would be \$14.5 million.

Oldham officials favor more office and retail development because it has less impact on schools and public services and brings better jobs close to home.

Coomes also found that Oldham Reserve could bring up to \$5 million more in sales to existing businesses, including grocery stores and restaurants.

"More lunch customers can only be a good thing," said Siobhan Reidy, co-owner of the Irish Rover, Too in La Grange.

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