

## WEEK News 25 Central Illinois

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# Riverfront Museum Project

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Next Tuesday Peoria County voters will have the last word on whether or not to "build the block" on the riverfront.

There's a week left before the crucial vote, and both sides are working hard to get the word out to residents about the 136-million-dollar museum project.

Opponents and supporters of the riverfront museum slated for the old Sears block in downtown Peoria are jockeying hard to get out their messages.

Signs for and against the museum are all over the county.

"People have said crime, streets, schools are our number one funding priority, that's where we need to be putting our money, infrastructure, curbs you know all of that type of thing. It's not glamorous, it doesn't have sizzle, but we don't need to go into debt to buy something else," said Karrie Alms of Citizens for Responsible Spending a group opposed to the museum project.

Peoria County voters will be asked in a referendum to decide on a quarter cents sales tax increase to support the museum project.

State Senator Dave Koehler is asking for an extra 4 million dollars in federal stimulus money and says up to 10-million dollars could come if the state approves a capital budget this Spring.

"This is our version of a stimulus project. It's important we keep those jobs here locally and put people to work. I think that's gonna happen if people will just have some faith and be able to vote yes," Koehler said.

Two Bradley University economics professors say critics of their study suggesting a long-term economic effect of more than 500 million dollars were not privy to the same data they used for their research.

"It's still an enormous economic benefit to our community if we build the block. Even it it's 14 to 1 that what we found, if it's 11 to 1 maybe that's what the Knox College professor found that's huge," said economics professor Joshua Lewer.

Two-hundred 50 local union workers could be employed on the museum project. Once it's complete tourists from all over the country could visit the museum and Caterpillar's visitors center bringing in an estimated 14-million dollars annually.

Unlike presidential elections voter turnout for local races traditionally has been lower. Whether or not low turnout affects the outcome of the build the block referendum remains to be seen.

The Peoria County Board will host another town hall meeting on the build a block project at 7 o'clock tonight at Woodrow Wilson Primary School.