

NORMAN FORWARD Sales Tax Capital Projects Fund

On October 13, 2015, the citizens of Norman approved a ½ percent (0.5%), 15-year duration sales tax to pay for quality of life improvements throughout Norman. The approved initiative includes the following major capital projects:

• New Central Branch Library	\$ 39,000,000
• New East Branch Library	\$ 5,000,000
• Neighborhood Park/Trail Projects	\$ 14,500,000
• New Indoor Aquatic Facility	\$ 14,000,000
• Westwood (Outdoor) Pool Facilities	\$ 12,000,000
• Griffin Park Soccer Facility	\$ 11,000,000
• Griffin Park Land Acquisition	\$ 10,000,000
• Reaves Park Baseball/Softball Facility	\$ 10,000,000
• New Community Park Development	\$ 9,500,000
• New Indoor Multi-Sport Facility	\$ 8,500,000
• James Garner Avenue Extension	\$ 6,000,000
• Road Improvements	\$ 2,730,000
• New Youth Football/Adult Softball Complex	\$ 2,500,000
• Canadian River Park Development	\$ 2,000,000
• Westwood Tennis Center Improvements	\$ 1,000,000

The NORMAN FORWARD Ordinance also authorizes funds from the NORMAN FORWARD Sales Tax (NFST) to be used for other projects and services such as public art at NFST facilities; a senior citizen’s center; and staff and consultant support in the design, construction and maintenance of the NFST facilities. The proposed fiscal year 2021-2022 budget includes funding for three additional park maintenance personnel to be included in the General Fund, but paid from NORMAN FORWARD funds that have been programmed in anticipation of the added park land included in the NFST program.

Because of the intended completion schedule of the major NFST projects, debt financing was anticipated and authorized to move the projects forward ahead of the tax revenues being received. The first of three anticipated Sales Tax Revenue Note issuances was completed by the Norman Municipal Authority in December, 2015, a second Revenue Note was completed in June, 2017, and the final issuance of NFST-backed NMA Notes was completed in December, 2020.

Several of the NORMAN FORWARD facilities have been completed and are being enjoyed by Norman residents and visitors:

- Westwood Family Aquatic Center
- Norman Public Library, East and Central Branches
- Westwood Tennis Center Improvements
- Ruby Grant Community Park
- New Blake Baldwin Skate Park at Andrews Park

The new Ruby Grant Community Park, which includes major facilities for passive wilderness preserve; cross country, jogging and walking trails; disc golf; playground facilities, including Norman’s first all-inclusive playground for differently-abled users; dog park; and picnics, opened during fiscal year 2020-2021 and is depicted throughout these Budget documents. Ruby Grant Park is being further developed for youth football practice fields, with NORMAN FORWARD funds re-programmed from the planned separate Community Park development.

As discussed above, the Senior Wellness Center will begin construction in 2021 and will be completed in 2022. Several neighborhood park refurbishment projects have been completed as a part of the ongoing NORMAN FORWARD project to replace playground equipment and other facilities at all of the Norman’s public parks. The design of improvements to Saxon Community Park, including potential Native American pow-wow facilities, is ongoing. Public art installations have become a major component of the NORMAN FORWARD program. Major public art installations have been completed at the entrance to the Westwood Complex, at the East Branch Library, at Ruby Grant Park, and at the Norman Public Library, Central Branch.

The Blake Baldwin Skate Park in Andrews Park has been tremendously well-received, with skating, skateboarding and stunt biking enthusiasts from throughout central Oklahoma using the facilities on a daily and nightly basis.



Within the coming year, construction of the extension of James Garner Boulevard, from an intersection with Flood Avenue to the completed Acres Street intersection, will begin. The project will improve traffic flow into and out of downtown Norman tremendously, as well as serving the NORMAN FORWARD Central Library and Andrews Park facilities. Continuation of improvements and expansion of the Griffin Park Soccer Complex and the Reaves Park Baseball/Softball Complex will also be undertaken in FYE 2022.

The City has purchased land in the University North Park (UNP) development for the siting of the NORMAN FORWARD Indoor Multi-Sport (volleyball, cheerleading, basketball, gymnastics, etc.) and Indoor Aquatic Center. The project is in final design phases, with groundbreaking ceremonies planned for the summer of 2021. Funding for the land purchase and supplemental construction funding was provided from the UNP Tax Increment Finance District Fund (discussed below). The City is in negotiations with the Trae Young Foundation for an additional construction contribution and purchase of the naming rights to the facility (NBA All-Star Trae Young of the Atlanta Hawks is a Norman native and resident).

Locating these major recreational facilities within walking distance of the many hotels, retail establishments and transportation facilities in UNP and adjacent to the OU/Westheimer Airport will make Norman an attractive location for state and regional sports tournaments and other activities, drawing visitors and consumers to the City. As all of these projects progress, the full benefit of the NORMAN FORWARD program will begin to be enjoyed.



The Future “Young Family Athletic Center”

University North Park TIF District Capital Fund



In 2001, a large (approximately 580 acres) tract of land adjacent to (west of) the Westheimer/University of Oklahoma Airport and adjacent to (east of) Interstate 35 in northwest Norman was opened for development, by the lifting of Federal Aviation Administration development restrictions which had been in place previously. The tract was sold by the University of Oklahoma (OU) to the OU Foundation, who became the developer of the property. On August 27, 2002, the City approved a Planned Unit Development (PUD) to guide development of the property, which became known as “University North Park” (UNP).

Representatives of the OU Foundation approached the City of Norman for financial assistance with the infrastructural costs to develop the property. A citizen’s committee was appointed to study the proposal, and on September 13, 2005 the Council received the report and recommendations of the Tax Increment Financing Citizens Ad Hoc Committee Regarding a University North Park Tax Increment Financing District. From these recommendations, the Council approved a Project Plan Ordinance for the University North Park Tax Increment Finance District (UNP TIF) on May 23, 2006. The Project Plan authorized \$54.7 million dollars in public improvements within UNP, which was amended in 2019 to end the apportionment of taxes and reduce the amount of authorized improvement projects to the amount of UNP TIF revenues already on hand in the TIF Fund.

As discussed in the NORMAN FORWARD Section above, the partnership between the City and the UNP developers to locate the Indoor Aquatic and Multi-Sport Facility within University North Park will further the creation of the sort of “regional draw” that was anticipated when the UNP TIF was originally approved. The UNP TIF Fund is contributing \$2,069,000 for the purchase of the UNP land for the Indoor Aquatic and Multi-Sport Facility, as well as contributing \$2,700,000 in authorized “Recreational Facility” TIF funds toward the construction of the project.

The City’s continued investment in the University North Park development will continue to pay off years into the future. Major traffic and roadway improvements in the vicinity of UNP are planned as future uses of UNP TIF funds.