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Team Norman Lays Out Billion-Dollar Plan for New Entertainment District

NORMAN – Sept. 6, 2023 – A broad and diverse coalition of Norman leaders have unveiled plans for a billion-dollar development that includes a venue for major entertainment and sporting events as well as retail shops, restaurants, bars, offices, a hotel and housing for thousands.

The Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC) has joined with the University of Oklahoma, the City of Norman, Cleveland County, the Norman Chamber, VisitNorman and the Norman business community to create a proposal that could transform the city. The coalition will work on this proposal in a collaborative fashion with local governmental leaders through the normal approval process.

“It is rare to have such a collaborative effort to produce a master plan, combining resources and assets to create a unique mixed-use development unlike any in Oklahoma – or the nation, for that matter,” said NEDC President Lawrence McKinney. “Once developed, this entertainment district will be a focal point for all of Central Oklahoma.”

In today’s announcement, officials outlined the comprehensive development that is planned at Rock Creek Road and 24th Ave. NW. McKinney was joined by University of Oklahoma President Joseph Harroz Jr., Norman Mayor Larry Heikkila, Cleveland County Commissioner Rod Cleveland, Norman Chamber President Scott Martin, and VisitNorman President Dan Schemm.

The proposed development will include a multi-purpose performance venue designed to host many different types of events from concerts and shows to OU basketball games and women’s gymnastics competitions. Adjacent to the performance venue will be an outdoor plaza and a burgeoning, job-creating entertainment district with everything necessary to ensure a premium entertainment experience.

Harroz said the district is exactly what Norman has needed for a long time, and it is exciting for the university to be the district’s first anchor tenant.

“OU is proud to be a part of this broad coalition of leaders who are coming together to help grow the Norman economy and provide new opportunities for local residents,” said Harroz. “This new district will be the perfect complement to Campus Corner and historic Downtown Norman. These enhancements will elevate our community’s unique entertainment options and improve the quality of life for residents of Norman and the broader region.”

To ensure a successful mixed-use development, the plan features a strong focus on density, diversity and walkability through multi-family and single-family housing, allowing thousands of residents to live within walking distance of shopping, entertainment, social gatherings and jobs.

Norman Mayor Heikkila called the entertainment district a pivotal development in Norman’s continuing effort toward economic growth and quality of life.

“Our citizens have made it clear that quality of life is important to them, and in fact, quality of life is essential for any healthy community, so we are delighted at the prospect of creating a new district that will build on the great assets we already have in Norman,” he said.

With respect to Norman’s role as the world leader in weather research and prediction, the proposed development plan also includes the potential development of a weather museum experience, bringing the exciting world of weather to thousands of visitors annually. In addition, the proposal includes potential airport access from the west side of Max Westheimer Airport, pending the outcome of an ongoing feasibility study.

Approximately 80% of the plan’s \$1 billion cost would be paid through private investment. The remaining 20% would be paid through public sources. None of the funds would come from the city or county general funds.

Cleveland County Commissioner Rod Cleveland called the project a positive step forward for Norman.

“I am incredibly excited about the proposed entertainment district. The collaboration and commitment between the private and public sectors is unprecedented and is the catalyst for our future,” Cleveland said.

Norman is well known for innovation and bold ideas, and this development is another recipe for success, said Norman Chamber President Martin.

“This mixed-use entertainment district will be one of a kind in Oklahoma, and it will further elevate our reputation as the place to live, work, and play,” he said. “The proposed development is also located next to the state’s most visited shopping district and will further enhance economic development and job creation in Norman.”

This proposed development is an opportunity for Norman to continue its long legacy as home to the University of Oklahoma and a showpiece for our state, said VisitNorman President Schemm.

“As OU enters the Southeastern Conference, VisitNorman is committed to ensuring that the welcome mat is out for visiting teams and their fans,” he said. “This is a top-notch development offering all the ingredients for a fun and inviting experience our guests will remember for years to come.”

For more information, go to teamnorman.us or scan the QR code below.





Fact Sheet and Frequently Asked Questions

Broad and Diverse Coalition Committed to the Norman Community. Team Norman, a broad and diverse coalition of organizations, has aligned to work in a collaborative fashion with Norman and Cleveland County governmental leaders to help create new jobs, drive economic growth, and bring significant benefits to Norman citizens and the entire metro OKC region.

The Proposed Development. The coalition – which includes the City of Norman, Cleveland County, the University of Oklahoma, the Norman Economic Development Coalition (NEDC), the Norman Chamber, VisitNorman, and many others – is proposing a \$1 billion business and entertainment district, and housing development. The project's boundaries are Interstate 35, W Rock Creek Road, Max Westheimer Airport, and W Tecumseh Road.



The blue colored area represents the land proposed for development by Team Norman.

Exciting Benefits and New Jobs for the Norman Community. The new projects within the master proposal would include many different facets that are designed to benefit Norman and the region. The development would include a new multi-purpose performance venue, restaurants, retail shopping, offices, housing, and other quality-of-life amenities that would make Norman a regional destination. The venue would host many different types of events from concerts and shows to OU basketball games and women's gymnastics competitions.



Commitment to Livability and Housing. Team Norman is committed to ensuring a successful mixed-use development through a strong focus on appropriate density, diversity, and walkability. The development would include multi-family and single-family housing, allowing thousands of residents to live within walking distance of shopping, entertainment, social gatherings, and jobs.

Other Potential Components of the Proposed Business and Entertainment District:

- **Potential West Side Airport Access:** The new business and entertainment district would drive interest and a significant increase in visitors to Norman and the broader region. Because of this increased interest, the NEDC is proposing additional airport access to the district and the Young Family Athletic Center. A recent Max Westheimer Airport Master Plan proposal would allow the NEDC's west-side, "through the fence" property to be used for this purpose. A Team Norman feasibility study is underway to determine if this project is viable. If not, it will be removed from the concept plan. Because its viability is currently unknown, the financial implications and impacts are not included in the proposed \$1 billion proforma.
- **Potential National Weather STEAM Education Interactive Experience and Museum:** Team Norman recently completed a feasibility study by Nashville-based D&G consultants. (The study will soon be available at: www.TeamNorman.us/studies.) Known worldwide as one of the leading centers for weather research and prediction, Norman would be the ideal location for this proposed educational and interactive weather museum experience. The attraction would bring the exciting world of weather, as well as intensifying worldwide interest in climate change, to thousands of visitors annually. Local, state, and national fundraising for its \$115 million construction is expected to begin in the fourth quarter of 2023. Currently, its financial implications and impacts are not included in the proposed \$1 billion proforma.



Frequently Asked Questions

Where is the proposed district specifically located?

- The proposed business and entertainment district's boundaries are Interstate 35, W Rock Creek Road, Max Westheimer Airport, and W Tecumseh Road. Under the development plan, the district would include multiple facets intended to benefit the entire Norman community and region, beginning with a multi-purpose performance venue that would attract major entertainment and sporting events. The plan also includes a new hotel, restaurants, bars, retail shopping, offices, housing, and other quality-of-life amenities that would make Norman a regional destination point.

How much will this development cost?

- The development will cost an estimated \$1 billion.

Where will the money come from to pay for this development?

- The plan's cost will be covered through a combination of private and public funds. Approximately 80% of the plan's \$1 billion cost would be paid through private investment. The remaining 20% would be paid through public sources. None of the funds would come from the city or county general funds.

What happens next?

- The Team Norman proposal must follow a process like every other proposed development in Norman. This comprehensive proposal to create new jobs and drive economic growth and prosperity must be reviewed publicly and approved by various stakeholders and governmental bodies, beginning with the Norman City Council and Cleveland County Board of Commissioners. We will continue to work with local leaders in a collaborative fashion to bring this project to reality, creating generational and synergistic opportunities for all of Norman.

Hasn't this been tried before?



- No, it hasn't. This proposal of collaboration and alignment is the result of diligent efforts from a broad and diverse coalition of leaders within the Norman community. This unprecedented team effort involved the City of Norman, Cleveland County, the University of Oklahoma, the Norman Chamber, the Norman Economic Development Coalition, VisitNorman, and business leaders from across our community. This plan's expansive scope sets the project apart. Beyond the performance venue, and entertainment district, the vision for this development also includes a new national weather museum, increased west-side airport access, regional transit options, workforce housing solutions, mixed-use performance options, and hard financial commitments from a lead anchor tenant.

How long will this development take to build?

- Development of this project will take time, patience, teamwork, and collaboration between the coalition, local leaders, and citizens. While everyone wants to move quickly to bring new jobs and economic benefits to Norman and Cleveland County, it is important that we get this right – not get it fast. All parties will work together in a collaborative fashion to make this project a reality and begin construction as soon as possible.

Who will use the multi-purpose performance venue?

- Everyone! The multi-purpose venue would host everything from concerts and shows to University of Oklahoma women's gymnastics and Sooner basketball games, Although the university would be the facility's anchor tenant, current projections call for OU to use just 28% of its availability. The remaining 72% would be filled with major concerts, business expos, local graduations, shows, rodeos, and more.

Who will own the multi-purpose performance venue?

- Although the performance venue will be publicly owned, its operations will be administered by a professional venue management firm, similar to Oklahoma City's contract arrangement at the Paycom Center.

What will its name be?



- A formal name has not been decided.

How will the entertainment district benefit Norman financially?

- Currently, the proposed site is mostly undeveloped space owned by the OU Foundation and the NEDC, which are both nonprofit organizations. Because this land is not developed, it does not generate property tax or sale tax revenue for the county, the schools, or the city. The proposed performance venue, retail shops, hotel, restaurants, bars, and other businesses would generate millions annually in property taxes and sales taxes for local governments and schools. If left as it is now, the property will not generate the income our schools and local governments need to address a host of educational, service and infrastructure needs within our community.

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