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Coalition of Norman Leaders Provide Important Update on Proposed Entertainment District

Momentum growing behind the project as broad and united coalition releases renderings of exciting new entertainment zone

NORMAN, June 5, 2024 – A broad coalition of Norman and Cleveland County leaders met today in a working session on the proposed University North Park entertainment district. The event was attended by OU President Joseph Harroz Jr., OU Athletics Director Joe Castiglione, Norman Mayor Larry Heikkila, VisitNorman President and CEO Dan Schemm, President and CEO of the Norman Chamber of Commerce Scott Martin and a cross-section of other city and county leaders.

At the meeting, the coalition released conceptual renderings of the proposed entertainment district that underscore the exciting new possibilities for local residents and visitors. The renderings can be found embedded in [this link](#).

“The broad support behind the new entertainment district continues to expand, and it is exciting to see it gain momentum,” said Harroz. “OU is incredibly proud to be part of the united effort that is driving this project to completion, creating thousands of new jobs, housing, entertainment options and economic opportunities for the citizens of Norman.”

Norman and university leaders are collaborating to help make the vision of the entertainment zone a reality. This coalition has come together at this crucially important time for the City of Norman.

The proposed district would create at least 5,000 new jobs, as well as new housing for at least 3,000 Norman residents at a time when housing options are very limited. Specifically, the new district’s versatile, multi-purpose performance venue will be used approximately three-fourths of the year to bring in new concerts, shows and other events. The university will use the arena the remaining time primarily for athletics events, including contests for the women’s and men’s basketball teams, as well as for women’s gymnastics.

“The new entertainment zone will do wonders for the City of Norman and Cleveland County,” said Castiglione. “New retail, housing and jobs will spur great economic growth and our citizens will undoubtedly reap the rewards. Moreover, as we enter the SEC, the district will build upon OU Athletics’ strengths, adding to our suite of best-in-class facilities and attracting a whole host of talented student-athletes. The project will also bring new events to Norman and will serve as



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a beacon of possibilities for our city and community. We're extremely enthusiastic about what this development and new environment can mean for our city and for the university."

The new zone also will include restaurants, retail outlets, offices, housing and other quality-of-life amenities, positioning Norman as a regional destination. Approximately 80 percent of the plan's cost would be paid through private investment, including a significant commitment by the university. The remaining 20 percent would be paid through public sources. No funds will come from city or county general funds, and the public will not see a tax increase.

"I look forward to seeing this project reach final approval in the coming weeks as the coalition continues our work," said Heikkila. "We are so excited about the large number of new jobs, the new housing options for our residents and the economic growth potential for our city. Importantly, all of this will be accomplished without raising taxes on the residents of Norman. We've worked together in a very collaborative fashion to help make this project a reality, and I am very proud of this strong show of unity during this important time in Norman's history."

"We stand at a pivotal moment in our community's development, and the VisitNorman membership of local leaders is proud to advocate for this visionary project that will create jobs and help build Norman's vibrancy and sustainability," said Schemm. "The inclusion of the new arena, alongside modern residential units, a welcoming hotel and dynamic office spaces will enhance Norman's quality of life while helping alleviate some of our current housing shortage. This project is right in line with our five-year strategic plan to bring more visitors and professionals to Norman that will help create jobs, spur growth and contribute to a thriving local economy."

"The Norman Chamber is excited about this once-in-a-generation opportunity to bring a dynamic mixed-use development to our community," said Martin. "Norman has not recently, or maybe ever, seen this amount of private investment in one project. Not only will this venture provide for much-needed housing, but it will also add thousands of new jobs to our economy, thus increasing our quality of life. This development will add to our world-class community with a true live, work, play environment that will be second to none."

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