



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/1/2026

REQUESTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

PRESENTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks and Recreation

ITEM TITLE: CONSIDERATION OF APPROVAL, ACCEPTANCE, REJECTION, AMENDMENT, AND/OR POSTPONEMENT OF THE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW OPEN-AIR PAVILION IN REAVES PARK FOR THE PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT WITH UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA GIBBS COLLEGE OF ARCHITECTURE (GCA).

BACKGROUND:

The Norman Forward program, funded by a voter-approved half-cent sales tax beginning in 2015, has delivered a wide range of quality-of-life projects throughout the community—from major facilities like the Westwood Family Aquatics Center and Young Family Athletic Center to upgrades at parks, trails, libraries, and neighborhood amenities. As the 15-year collection period nears its end, the program is projected to finish with a fund balance higher than originally anticipated, allowing the City to revisit several unfinished elements from the initial project list.

One of these continuation efforts focuses on Reaves Park, where the Kids Space playground—originally built through a community-driven effort in 1999—has reached the end of its usable life. The Parks and Recreation Department has proposed using a portion of the remaining Norman Forward funds to replace the playground and improve the surrounding area with new site furniture, landscaping, and a picnic shelter. Earlier this year, the City received a \$600,000 Built Environment Grant from TSET to support the project, bringing the total projected budget to around \$1 million. Construction will begin in October, preceded by a public “Last Play Day,” and the new playground will again be created through a community-build process extending into next year. TSET will partner with the City throughout the project, assisting with coordination and grant management.

DISCUSSION:

The University of Oklahoma’s Gibbs College of Architecture will partner with the City to design and build a new open-air picnic pavilion at Reaves Park as part of their senior capstone program. Under the supervision of licensed architect faculty, students will serve as designers and general contractors, providing a cost-effective and educationally valuable project that

aligns with the Reaves Park Master Plan. Following approval from the Board of Park Commissioners and City Council, the City is moving forward with Contract K-2627-80 for a total of \$82,500, funded through the Norman Forward Reaves Park Improvements budget and the Norman Forward Fund Balance. Construction will begin once the existing playground area is cleared and will be closely coordinated with the Kids Space design team, with completion expected by May 2027.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Norman Board of Park Commissioners approve the design of the Reaves Park Open Air Pavilion near Kids Space and recommend the approval of the contract with The University of Oklahoma Gibbs College of Architecture for the Open-air Pavilion in Reaves Park.