



CITY OF NORMAN, OK STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: 04/02/2026

REQUESTER: Karla Sitton, Administrative Tech IV

PRESENTER: Jason Olsen, Director of Parks & Recreation

ITEM TITLE: UPDATE REGARDING THE FINANCIAL STATUS OF THE NORMAN FORWARD PROGRAM

DISCUSSION:

On October 13, 2015, Norman residents passed the Norman Forward (NF) initiative, which encompasses various quality-of-life projects, with a 1/2% sales tax collected over 15 years.

NF is a citizen-initiated proposal to renovate, expand, construct, and fund quality-of-life projects, such as multiple recreational facilities, libraries, parks, athletic venues, public art, trails, swim complexes, and other quality-of-life projects throughout Norman. The initiative came to the City Council from community groups, stakeholders, and Norman residents, who prepared an initial package using analysis and information from recreational planning professionals and research firms. Citizens passed the initiative at the polls in October 2015.

At the February 24, 2026, Council Conference, Staff presented an update on the financial status of the NF Program, reviewing the original and revised project budgets and noting that most NF projects have been completed or are near completion. The program is now primarily focused on the remaining pay-as-you-go projects. Staff identified remaining projects as including Canadian River Park, Saxon Park, neighborhood park development and renovations, and trail development.

Staff reviewed financial projections and said the program could end with an estimated remaining fund balance of approximately \$11 million after completion of the remaining authorized projects, which were estimated at approximately \$22.7 million. Staff presented a preliminary list of potential NF eligible projects that could be considered if excess funds remain available, to include: the purchase of Sutton Wilderness property currently leased from the State; acquisition of property for future softball/football complex; multi-purpose gym addition to the AWE; replacement of kidspace playground and/or construction of Miracle Field at Reaves Park; playground and restroom improvements and Griffin Park; pond and restroom improvements at Andrews Park; YFAC improvements including a weight room addition or payoff existing debt; trail and cross-country course upgrades at Ruby Grant Park; new feature at Westwood Family Aquatic Center; and System-wide park signage and wayfinding improvements.

The projects presented were for discussion only and were not listed in any priority order; the staff wanted to gather input from Council, the Park Board, and the CFOB before bringing any recommendations back for final Council consideration. Staff said some funds may need to be reserved for maintenance or replacement of NF improvements as facilities age.

Council discussed the process for prioritizing future projects, specifically the need to improve Andrews Park by adding a restroom and associated stormwater and grading work, noting the park's importance for downtown events and public use. Council also discussed the Canadian River Park project and the uncertainty associated with land acquisition, as well as questions the public may raise about whether any remaining funds could be reserved for the Central Library.