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Examining Norman's past, present, future



BEST OF NORMAN 2026

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Submissions, which may be sent to dailyeditor@ou.edu, will be edited for accuracy and style and run at the editor-in-chief's discretion. Students must list their major and classification; community members must list their title.

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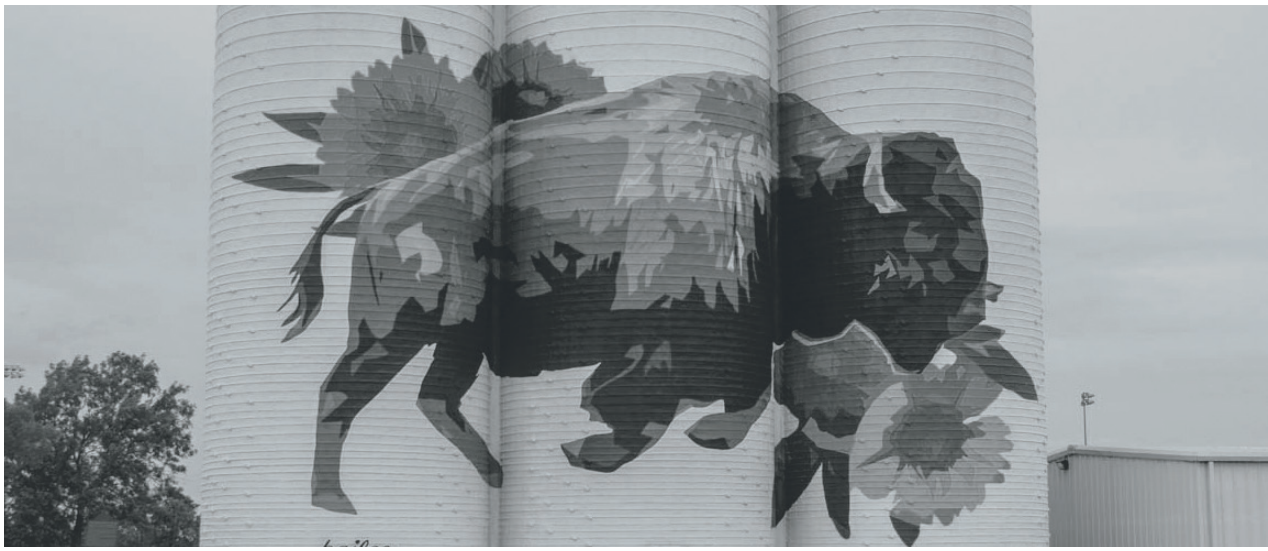
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FROM THE EDITOR



JACK RAMON/OU DAILY

The city of Norman has experienced exponential growth since its founding as a railroad town in the late 1800s.

Growing with Norman

Dear readers,

Welcome to one of my favorite times of the year: Best of Norman.

Best of Norman has become an opportunity to recognize the people, places and traditions that make this community what it is. Each new edition raises the question of how we can make the publication better and more reflective of the city many call home while creating stories that remain relevant long after they hit the rack.

That thought process led us to step back and ask ourselves a bigger question: What makes Norman so special? It's more than restaurant staples and OU football. It's the history that shaped the city, the arts and culture that continue to define it, the communities bringing people together and the people imagining what it could become. This year, we're honoring where we've been, where we are and where we're going.

Last year's edition taught us there is always more to discover when we look beyond what we already know. This year, we carried that lesson forward and challenged ourselves to look at Norman from different angles to tell a more complete story about its community.

When developing the poll, we discussed what categories were important to the community, and every year the list grows longer. This year was no exception as we went from 30 to 80 categories, all of which were voted on by the Norman community this summer. We wanted to make room for more parts of Norman, including the stories and places that don't always get publicity.

You'll find stories exploring Norman's past, present and future alongside results of the poll. Throughout the publication, you'll find sidebars highlighting East Norman and west Norman.

As the first person to edit two Best of Norman publications, I've had the honor to see how much thought and effort goes into creating something that feels simultaneously familiar and new. No single publication can tell every story of Norman, but each year offers another chance to tell more of them. I've learned that celebrating a community means more than recognizing the things people already know. It means listening to the people who live there, seeing what stories matter to them and what stories have gone untold.

One of the things I've come to appreciate most about this publication is how many people can find themselves in it. For some, Norman is filled with decades of memories and traditions. For others, it's a place they've only recently had the chance to discover that's full of new restaurants to try, local artists to support and neighborhoods to explore. Both perspectives, and everything in between, are a part of what makes the community what it is today and what it will be tomorrow.



Madisson Cameron
News editor
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To everyone who voted, shared recommendations, contributed to stories and helped bring this publication to life, thank you. I'm especially grateful to the staff who made this edition possible. Best of Norman may be produced by the OU Daily, but it belongs to the community who bring it to life. Thank you for continuing to support our mission to share your stories. We couldn't do it without you.

Here's to many more editions,
Madisson Cameron

Picturing the past

Memories, places that shape Norman

BY MADISSON CAMERON • MADISSON.R.CAMERON-1@OU.EDU



ZSOPHIA TOWSON/OU DAILY

The Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum is a Victorian home located in the Old Silk Stocking neighborhood.

Norman has grown beyond its railroad town beginnings, but traces of the early days remain in its historic homes, familiar streets and the memories of those who've watched it change.

The city was named after Abner E. Norman, a surveyor who worked in the area in 1870 whose crew reportedly burned "Norman's Camp" into a tree. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway selected Norman as a stop, and the first passenger train arrived in June 1887.

Two years later, the Land Run of 1889 opened the surrounding area to non-Indigenous settlement. Norman grew as settlers claimed land and established homes and businesses. OU was established in 1890, bringing students, employees and visitors to Norman, further shaping the city's identity for generations.

But that familiar account of Norman's early development is not the whole story.

The transformation of Norman into a settler town also changed life for the Indigenous people whose histories are tied to the land. Understanding the city's early years means considering both the new community that developed and the people whose lives were affected by that development.

Moore-Lindsay House: a Norman history museum

Built in 1899, the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum — which now serves as a Norman history museum — is a Victorian home that belonged to members of the Moore and Lindsay families. Their experiences reflected a more affluent side of the community, including dinner parties, women's social clubs and involvement in charity and politics.

For Savannah Miller, director of the Moore-Lindsay Historical House Museum, the city's early history becomes more tangible inside a home than on a timeline. To Miller, the Victorian home is one surviving piece of a much larger picture — the Old Silk Stocking neighborhood.

"It was the district where, if you lived here, you could afford to have your stockings made out of silk rather than cotton. So it was kind of the well-to-do neighborhood," Miller said. "That was pretty significant for how it started out. It obviously continued to grow from that. It does seem to me that this neighborhood has always kind of been really close."

Over time, the house underwent renovations including electricity and indoor plumbing, shadowing the technological evolutions much of Norman was going through. The house itself holds century-old stories that are just as endearing as they are relatable today.

"Mrs. Lindsay really loved to cook, and her grandkids and great-grandkids would come visit her, and she would cook these huge breakfasts," Miller said. "To keep the kids from being super hungry while she was cooking the big meal, she would sneak them little ginger snaps, which was just such a grandma thing to do. It's just very relatable."

> "It's so important to preserve Norman's history because there is so much that we can learn about humanity as a whole. From seeing the similarities between people from the past and people now, and how similar they really are, I think really can teach us a lot about ourselves and kind of just who we are."
>
> **SAVANNAH MILLER**
> **DIRECTOR OF THE MOORE-LINDSAY HOUSE**

However, there are more stories of Norman outside of the historic house.

Personal histories

Norman's history is not only found in preserved houses or official records. It also lives in the everyday stories of longtime Normanites.

82-year-old Ardella Loughmiller was born in Norman and has lived here her entire life. She and her late husband, James 'Jim' Loughmiller, owned Ardella's Flowers and Garden Center on Porter Avenue for 33 years.

Throughout her childhood, she remembers days spent at City Park, now Andrews Park. She remembers Saturday mornings downtown with her mother, the days of there being only one high school and traveling around a community whose edges felt much closer than they do today.

Her family lived near Kansas Street and Berry Road, where she remembers a dirt road that, for some time, was outside of city limits.

"Our house faced Berry Road, but the front door faced Kansas Street. So if you called a cab, if you told them your address was 951 Kansas, you could ride the cab for 10 cents. But if you told them 951 Berry Road or corner Berry Road and Kansas, they charged you a quarter," Loughmiller said.

Other memories point to the ways residents entertained

themselves. Loughmiller recalled free tickets for Wednesday matinees at Sooner Theatre, several movie theaters, drive-ins, and high school football games played on OU's field.

What she remembers most about the Norman of her childhood is how easily people connected with one another.

"You walked down Main Street and you knew everybody you met, or they knew you, …" Loughmiller said. "It was nothing to see people out walking, and you probably knew them from school or church or somehow or other. There was a connection there that just everybody spoke to you, or you spoke to them, whether you know them or not."

Louise Lazalier and her late husband Jim Lazalier arrived in Norman in 1966 when her husband started graduate school. Their three children were young, and the family settled near OU's intramural fields. Lazalier worked at OU's continuing education program for 25 years, and their daughter, Kristen, now works at OU as a senior director for the OU Foundation.

Similar to Loughmiller, she remembers Norman as a small city with local shops downtown, movie theaters and drive-ins. At the time, she thought the city's western edge was around Berry Road. Today, she sees how far development has reached along 24th Street and appreciates the businesses that have grown there.

"We really like Norman, and I think it was because it was small to begin with, and we kind of grew up with it, … " Lazalier said. "I just think Norman's a great place to raise children and to live."

For those who have called Norman home for decades, the city's history is more than a timeline. It lives in the streets they remember, the places that have disappeared and the community that grew around them.

Military facilities

World War II brought another major change to Norman, as military training facilities drew thousands of service members to the city.

"Part of Norman's history that I think maybe a lot of people don't know as well is that during and after World War II, Norman had a naval base here that brought a lot of people in," Miller said.

In 1942, the U.S. Navy established major training facilities in Norman. This included a naval flight training center at the city's north base, located at Max Westheimer Airport, and a technical training center known as south base located south of OU's campus. Thousands of service members trained at the facilities.

Following the end of World War II, the base was decommissioned and all of the land, facilities and operations responsibility was transferred to OU. While the base was operating, sailors filled the city.

"On Saturday nights, they would line up on Main Street from about the railroad down to Porter Street, and there was an interurban trolley system, and a lot of them would get on that," Loughmiller said. "It would go to the city and then come back, and there was a little diner called Denco Cafe. The drunk sailors would go in there to eat a 'Denco darling,' … they would sober up and then go to their post and do their job."

The university, military facilities and expanding access to Oklahoma City all contributed to Norman's growth throughout the 20th century. Norman's population rose from 27,006 in 1950 to 52,117 in 1970 and is now estimated to be 130,943 as of the July 2025 census.

Untold narratives

Growth and preservation raise another question: whose stories are told when a community looks back at its past?

Miller said many historical narratives have often left out voices.

"A lot of people do not know about the history of Norman as a sundown town, which is really significant, but not necessarily talked about as much as it needs to be," Miller said. "There were a lot of people of color in Cleveland County. I think it would be great to learn more about the women's stories in Cleveland County. … Especially in frontier towns like this, they have really significant and interesting experiences that we could be hearing about."

Norman's past includes residents who built lives and businesses here, but also people who faced barriers to being accepted, represented or able to remain. A fuller history requires looking beyond the most visible landmarks and the memories most often repeated.

Preservation can help open those conversations. Miller said historic buildings give people a way to connect with earlier generations, but she also sees them as a starting point for asking questions about the people who lived in and around them.

"It's so important to preserve Norman's history because there is so much that we can learn about humanity as a whole," Miller said. "From seeing the similarities between people from the past and people now, and how similar they really are, I think really can teach us a lot about ourselves and kind of just who we are."

For Loughmiller, the most meaningful changes are often the ones that have affected everyday connections. She appreciates what Norman offers now, including its schools, restaurants, shopping and hospitals. Still, she misses the neighborly routines she remembers from earlier years.

"People don't have time now. I lived in a neighborhood where everybody left in the morning, they came back at five o'clock at night, walked their dogs, go in the house and you didn't see them till the next day," Loughmiller said. "I miss being friendly with neighbors, and you know you'd meet in somebody's front yard or backyard, and you'd sit outside and visit till time to go to bed and make homemade ice cream and have cooked hamburgers out and everything. (For) the last several years, people don't do that. They don't have as much time, … people just don't have time to be neighbors anymore."

Lazalier also remembers the value of a familiar place. She misses the house and backyard where she once lived, especially her flower garden, and wishes there were more walking trails.

Norman is anything but frozen in time. Residents hold affection for what has changed and what has disappeared, while acknowledging the conveniences and opportunities the city offers today.

Norman's history remains visible in its railroad, historic houses and older streets, but it also lives in memories of downtown errands, school traditions, family homes and neighbors who knew one another by name.

As the city continues to grow, those memories offer a way to understand not only how Norman has changed, but what has made it home for generations. Preserving that history means looking beyond landmarks and familiar stories to recognize the many experiences that have shaped the community.

"This is home, and I just don't think there's any other place for me," Loughmiller said.



FILE/OU DAILY

Kevin Gottshall II Memorial Park offers space for family fun.

WEST NORMAN

BY AJ COVEY • ALEJANDRO.M.COVEY-1@OU.EDU

Get away from the loud, heavy traffic that Interstate 35 brings through the city and explore west Norman, where the concrete jungle turns to grassy plains, the city becomes quieter and the green fields showcase a more relaxed side of town.

Sunset Ranch: Open fields make west Norman a hot spot for equestrian activities. Sunset Ranch provides a relaxing getaway to the Norman countryside, with 160 acres to explore from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily at 1500 60th Ave. NW. Stay in the Airbnb or sign up for their guided trail rides, ranch tours and other family activities that are available to book online.

Majic Stable: Majic Stable, a full service board and training facility for horses and riding lessons, is open 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 9 a.m. to noon Friday and 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday at 7070 W Rock Creek Road.

Kevin Gottshall II Memorial Park: There are multiple parks in west Norman, but Kevin Gottshall II Memorial Park is a smaller space that has basketball courts, picnic tables, a playground and soccer goals. The park is and open 6:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. daily at l5399 Cypress Lake Drive, next to Cypress Lake.

Wizard's Asylum Comics and Games: Near Sooner Mall, Wizard's Asylum Comics and Games sells comic books, trading cards and other games. It hosts a Pokemon league, Magic: The Gathering, Star Wars: Unlimited and Warhammer game nights throughout the week. The store's hours are 11 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. Monday, 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to midnight Friday, 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday and1 to 5 p.m. Sunday at 3717 W. Main St.

Soonercade: Spend the day at Soonercade, where it offers a rotation of games with modern arcade machines that are tokenless. The arcade offers unlimited play for $10, as well as prize machines and concessions. Concessions include chili cheese hotdogs, loaded nachos and corn dogs. The arcade is open 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Saturday and noon to 6 p.m. Sunday in Sooner Mall.

2026 BEST OF NORMAN

OU DAILY

READERS' CHOICE NOMINEES & WINNERS

In May 2026, the OU Daily posted an online survey on its social media asking the Norman community to nominate the best businesses in the area across 80 categories. When voting wrapped at the end of the month, the Daily compiled the answers and sent out a second-round survey with those nominees. This is the list of nominees and winners submitted and voted on by the Norman community.

FOOD AND DRINK

Must be 21+ to purchase alcohol.

BREAKFAST/BRUNCH

Levity Breakfast House | *309 S. Peters Ave.:* What began as a childhood dream of two Portland-born brothers became a reality when they brought a slice of Oregon to Norman in 2024. Many dishes are inspired by their grandmother, including potato pancakes, Belgian waffles, scones and specialty sandwiches. A fan favorite at Levity is the matcha blueberry latte flavored with vanilla and blueberry syrup.

Neighborhood JAM | *102 W. Main St.:* #1 PICK Neighborhood JAM brings a commitment to keeping its business rooted locally in all that it does, partnering with two local coffee roasters from bean to cup. The restaurant offers tasty takes on the classic brunch menu, with go-to orders of the Hot Jam Biscuit and the Heap.

The OK Diner | *1700 Lexington Ave.:* From pancakes to sandwiches, The OK Diner has breakfast and brunch covered for the whole family. Fan favorites include The Nap Maker, a gravy-smothered burrito stuffed with cheese, chicken fried steak and eggs, and the All the Meats omelette, filled with bacon, sausage, ham and cheddar.

Press & Plow | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Press & Plow is perfect for a quick drive-thru latte or a relaxed dine-in meal. Locals rave about the eggs any style, applewood smoked bacon and toasted bread with signature strawberry basil jam. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, it's a go-to spot for any time of day.

The Diner | *213 E. Main St.:* In a location that has housed a variety of restaurants for over a century, The Diner has been bringing Tex-Mex breakfast and lunch to Norman since 1918. Crowd favorites include the Eggarito, the Mexiscram, Sante Fe chicken burger, blueberry pancakes and its famous homemade chili.

DOUGHNUT

Daylight Donuts | *1300 12th Ave. SE:* Founded over 70 years ago in Tulsa, Daylight Donuts brings new takes on the classic breakfast staple. The company continues to expand across the country at an average rate of 35 locations opening a year. Stop by to enjoy a doughnut covered in a wide range of candies, cereals or glazes.

Donut King | *1214 W. Lindsey St.:* Craving a late-night doughnut run? Head to Donut King to enjoy 24/7 drive-thru and in-store service. Choose from the classics or try something new, like a Cronut or vanilla creme horn. Its menu goes beyond doughnuts with sandwiches, kolaches, muffins, sausage cheese rolls, coffees and floats.

Gourmet Donut | *518 N. Porter Ave.:* A frequent stop for doughnut enthusiasts, Gourmet Donut serves fluffy, well-priced delicacies. Locals praise the hospitality and handful of free doughnut holes with each order. Fan-favorite doughnuts include the orange glazed, strawberry glazed and old fashioned.

Happy Day Donuts | *3600 W. Main St.:* Happy Day Donuts lives up to its name by giving each customer a great start to a happy day. Guests specifically note the speedy, delightful service and the free doughnuts thrown in on occasional orders. Pop in for the house specialties: maple bacon doughnuts and apple fritters.

Main Street Donuts | *906 W. Main St.:* #1 PICK Main Street Donuts crafts a variety of doughnuts, from glazed red velvet to chocolate frosted. It also specializes in fun, character-shaped doughnuts. Some of its bestsellers are the glazed doughnut holes, jumbo sausage rolls and signature apple fritters.

COFFEE

Beanstalk Coffee & Sno | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Stop at Beanstalk to enjoy treats made with over 100 house blend syrups. Opt for a snow cone or coffee made with Beanstalk coffee beans. Go to the food truck or enjoy its brick-and-mortar locations, featuring Instagram-worthy decor and an interactive chalk gallery.

Gray Owl Coffee | *223 E. Gray St.:* Gray Owl Coffee is a worker-owned and operated cafe that lives to its motto – "handmade with love." Hung on the walls are art pieces painted by local artists. It specializes in house-made syrups, such as lavender, mocha, French toast and seasonal flavors. Favorite drinks include the lavender latte and French toast latte, perfect to pair with its blueberry scones.

Haystack Coffee | *1203 Elm Ave.:* Named after the 1806 "Haystack Prayer Meeting," the cafe is an extension of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry, also known as the BCM. Whether you're in the mood for a coffee, energy drink or tea, Haystack has something for you.

Press & Plow | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Press & Plow is perfect for a quick drive-thru latte or a relaxed dine-in meal, each with its own menu. Locals rave about the eggs any style, applewood smoked bacon and toasted bread with signature strawberry basil jam. Open for breakfast, lunch and dinner, it's a go-to spot for any time of day.

Yellow Dog Coffee Company | *1230 Alameda St.:* #1 PICK Named after the owners' labrador, Yellow Dog Coffee Co. brings

locally roasted, ethically sourced coffee to Norman. In addition to serving delicious brews, the coffee shop houses a neighborhood pantry in the back, and the owners run local dog shelter Annie's Rescue Foundation. Stop by and try Rob's Way: espresso with lavender, honey and oat milk.

ENERGY/PROTEIN

Haystack Coffee | *1203 Elm Ave.:* Named after the 1806 "Haystack Prayer Meeting," the cafe is an extension of the Baptist Collegiate Ministry, also known as the BCM. Whether you're in the mood for a coffee, energy drink or tea, Haystack has something for you.

Rooted Cafe, formerly Daily Grindz | *1915 Classen Blvd.:* At Rooted Cafe, customers get more than just a cup of coffee – they get connection. Rooted Cafe's interior design is crafted to feel like a second home. Visit to experience hand-crafted drinks made with over 70 available flavors and sauces, including sugar-free options.

The Fix Energy & Nutrition Lounge | *2100 W. Lindsey St.:* From protein shakes to energy drinks, The Fix has your fix when it comes to healthy pick-me-ups. Everything is customizable – from the flavors to the additives, like fiber and pre-workout – making finding your new go-to an easy, delicious journey.

#1 PICK

The Tower Energy and Nutrition | *584 Buchanan Ave.:* Frequented by OU students and Normanites alike, The Tower offers low-sugar energy drinks with antioxidants and metabolism boosters, along with customizable protein shakes and coffees. Customers appreciate the plethora of options and close location right on Campus Corner.

ITALIAN

#1 PICK

Benvenuti's Ristorante | *105 W. Main St.:* Founded in 2005, Benvenuti's blends traditional Italian dishes with flavorful twists. With over 150 boutique wine selections offered by the bottle, half-bottle and tasting flights, it's easy to celebrate your loved ones on a special night out. Try the snow crab claws, sauteed in garlic-lemon white wine butter sauce.

Gaberino's Homestyle Italian | *400 Ed Noble Parkway:* Gaberino's Homestyle Italian uses family recipes to make delicious meals from scratch. Since the restaurant opened in 2010, it has taken pride in accommodating a wide range of diets, including vegan, vegetarian, low-carb and gluten free. This is reflected in its customizable menu options such as zucchini noodles and gluten-free penne.

Othello's Italian Restaurant | *434 Buchanan Ave.:* Family-owned for over 35 years, Othello's serves classic Italian dishes with prices averaging at $20-25. Come on a Friday night and enjoy live piano and singing with jazz performances. Othello's is home to the local favorite and award-winning coconut cream pie. Try its crowd-pleasing baked ziti, lasagna, chicken parmesan or shrimp scampi.

Sergio's Italian Bistro | *104 E. Gray St.:* Whether you want to grab a cocktail or sit down for an elegant dinner, Sergio's is the place to be. Renowned as "Norman's own little Italy", the bistro accounts for different types of diets, including vegetarian and vegan options. Try its spinach and goat cheese ravioli for a flavorful take on an Italian classic.

Victoria's The Pasta Shop | *215 E. Main St.:* For 30 years, Victoria's The Pasta Shop has been serving mouth-watering dishes made from simple, fresh ingredients. Walk into its welcoming restaurant and order the cheese bread appetizer while you wait for homemade pasta. Victoria's is known for its signature Lasagna Rolls: fresh lasagna noodles wrapped around delicious fillings.

MEXICAN

Pepe Delgados | *786 Asp Ave.:* Stop by Pepe Delgados Mexican restaurant to try its signature Super Nachos dish or flavorful beverages, like Mexican beer, fresh juice margaritas and premium tequilas. In addition to great, traditional Mexican food, Pepe Delgados offers vegan and vegetarian-friendly menu items.

Rosa Mezcal | *214 E. Main St.:* Rosa Mezcal has attracted Mexican food-lovers from all over town. Crowd favorites are the Quesabirria tacos, Taco Shots, El Jefe shrimp tacos, guacamole and fried plantains. Try the Noche en Tulum cocktail – mezcal, lime juice, limoncello and blue curaçao – a blue cocktail served in an elegant octopus-shaped glass.

#1 PICK

Tarahumara's Mexican Cafe & Cantina | *702 N. Porter Ave.:* Family-owned since 2001, Tarahumara's offers fresh chips and salsa, homemade corn tortillas and generous portions of its fajitas, tacos and enchiladas. From family dinners to margarita nights, Tarahumara's atmosphere meets the vibe of any occasion.

Ted's Cafe Escondido | *700 N. Interstate Drive:* In 1991, Ted Curtis opened his first location in Oklahoma City, quickly growing over the next few years and reinventing ways to bring its made-from-scratch mentality across the state. Ted's is the intersection of classic Mexican food and a welcoming atmosphere suited for the whole family.

Volcano's Mexican Food | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Whether it's a date night dinner or a large party, Volcano's has its customers covered. The restaurant serves classic street tacos, hearty burritos and its own hand-crafted specialty items to bring the perfect mix of flavor and heat in every bite. Order its chimichangas and anything from its bar that is fully stocked with margaritas.

ASIAN

Mr Hui | *1522 W. Lindsey St.:* Mr Hui lives by a promise to serve high-quality Chinese food to every guest, whether it's ordered online or in store. Customers rave about its attentive staff and deals, with all the classic Asian food Normanites could want, made with fresh ingredients daily.

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SPONSORED CONTENT



Midway Deli's best-selling sandwich, the Vulcan.

WITH A SIDE OF STORIES

From 'the Vulcan' to the 'John Hancock,' here are the stories behind 5 of Midway Deli's sandwiches

Midway Deli has always been a bustling hub for the community – a place where friends of owner Bob Thompson would drop by and neighborhood children would mark their heights on the doorframe.

"Even when we get it wrong, we want a positive outcome," said Thompson. "I think that maintains both our intimacy and connection to our customers."

Once a grocery store, Midway Deli celebrates its 100th anniversary in its current location. Thompson bought the business in 1985 and said the community has contributed to many of Midway's most popular sandwiches. Here are some of the stories behind them:

- **The Vulcan:** Employee Bianca Hoover created a daily special that she wanted to name "The Vulcan" to match her gothic style. Although Thompson was hesitant about the name, it eventually stuck and became Midway's most popular sandwich. It features Santa Fe turkey, pepperoni, cheddar, avocado and tomato with sweet chili mayo on sourdough.
- **The Arnie:** Thompson's best friend and golf buddy Kent VonBargen went by "Arnie" (short for golf icon Arnold Palmer) on his scorecard. VonBargen agreed to build the blackboards for Midway's menu if he got a sandwich named after him. As a jest, Thompson named the sandwich "The Arnie." It has ham, pepperoni, salami, provolone, banana peppers, tomato, onion, Italian dressing and mayo on ciabatta.
- **Bette's Tuna Melt:** This sandwich was Bette Maffucci's classic order. Maffucci was Thompson's role model in local politics and advised Thompson with his new deli. The tuna salad and swiss on toasted wheat is Thompson's tribute to a beloved friend.
- **The John Hancock:** This egg salad with bacon or ham on wheat sandwich was named after John Hancock – the actual name of Thompson's friend. Hancock would always order half the sandwich to-go and half to dine-in, but always end up staying and eating both halves while chatting with Thompson. Thompson called it "a comedy routine."
- **The Michael:** A creation of regular customer Michael Webb, "The Michael" is Midway's signature croissant sandwich. Thompson thought this was the perfect item to get his croissants more attention. It is made with peppered turkey, swiss, tomato and banana peppers with mayo served on a fresh croissant.


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NORMAN
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Best of Norman Winner 2026
Dr. Amanda Venk
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MADISSON CAMERON/OU DAILY
Tamashii Ramen House offers unique Japanese cuisine on Main Street.

#1 PICK

Tamashii Ramen House | *126 W. Main St.:* Tamashii Ramen House's Norman location opened in 2025 and offers authentic Japanese cuisine and top-rated ramen bowls. Try its unique ramen bowls – miso butter corn, curry, spicy miso or mazemen – and enjoy its anime-inspired art and decor while you eat.

Tea Cafe on the Corner | *788 Asp Ave.:* The perfect place to unwind or spend quality time with a friend, Tea Cafe on the Corner brings warmth with every drink or meal. Affordable pricing makes the restaurant a go-to spot for college students and families alike, and the staff makes sure every customer feels like family. Try any of its wide-range of boba teas if you're looking for a quick stop or a bowl of noodles for a hearty meal. *(This business has temporarily closed since being voted a Best of Norman Asian restaurant.)*

Thai Delight | *761 Jenkins Ave.:* Thai Delight lives up to its name, delighting customers with Thai and Japanese cuisine since early 2000. Try its Som Tam salad – with papayas, carrot, shrimp, tomatoes, green bean and peanut mixed with lime sauce – or its lobster roll, topped with kani and a special sauce.

Thai Thai Asian Bistro | *3522 24th Ave. NW:* Praised for its sweet and spicy flavors, Thai Thai Asian Bistro offers generous portions and specials perfect for family events or a quick bite. Stop by to try its appetizers – such as the Thai Thai Fresh Roll or crab rangoon – or its red Thai curry. Finish a meal off with desserts like the mango or strawberry banana with sticky rice.

BURGER

Bad Daddy's Burger Bar | *2050 24th Ave. NW:* What began as a southern burger and beer spot has grown nationally. Bad Daddy's Burger Bar consistently pushes the boundaries of what burgers can be. Create your own burger, try one of its many classics or just come get a drink. Make sure you're on the lookout for its monthly drops and special deals.

#1 PICK

The Garage Burgers & Beer | *307 E. Main St.:* The Garage houses some of the tastiest burgers in Norman, made from a variety of meat options or a plant-based patty. Customer favorites include the BBQ Bacon Theta, Spicy Sriracha Bleu, Sticky Finger Burger and Thunder Fries – seasoned with blue cheese crumbles, bacon and spicy aioli.

The Mont | *1300 Classen Blvd.:* Known for its Sooner Swirl and loaded cheese fries, The Mont is a Norman staple. Celebrate your birthday there for a free T-shirt. With timeless ambiance and attentive service, The Mont is a bucket list restaurant experience for many OU students, visitors and Normanites.

The Standard | *315 E. Gray St.:* This restaurant and beer garden is known for its relaxing atmosphere. Try one of its classic burgers while enjoying the shaded outdoor seating. You can sip on a refreshing spritz drink or choose from the seemingly endless list of draft beers and IPAs. The Standard sets the standard for locations specializing in event hosting and catering.

PIZZA

#1 PICK

Hideaway Pizza | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Renowned across Oklahoma, Arkansas and Texas, Hideaway Pizza began as a casual dining concept in 1957 in Stillwater and grew into the well-loved place known today. Stop by and try the standout margherita-style pizza and stay for its Sweetza pizza-pan cookies.

New York Pizza & Pasta | *217 W. Boyd St.:* Want a vacation? Take a trip to New York without ever leaving Norman with its huge pizzas, always hot and fresh. The restaurant is praised for its reasonable prices and friendly staff.

Pizza Shuttle | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Since 1981, Pizza Shuttle has been preparing pizza dough and sauce fresh daily. With such care for its craft, it's no wonder it has become a Norman favorite.

Volare Pizzeria | *315 White St.:* Want to feel like you're on an Italian getaway? Try Volare's Aperol Spritz or pair the Italian summer drink with its Mount Vesuvius dish – presented in a volcano shape. Dine in

and watch the chefs cook pizza in the wood-fired oven at the heart of the restaurant.

TACO

Fuzzy's Taco Shop | *752 Asp Ave.:* With more than 100 locations across the country, it's no shock that Fuzzy's is a staple. Come to a community-centered taco shop all about kicking back, enjoying great food and sipping margaritas. When you visit, make sure to order its famous chips and queso.

La Reina de los Tacos | *1119 E. Constitution St.:* La Reina doesn't overcomplicate it; it just serves classic, cooked-to-order Mexican food made from fresh ingredients. Start with the fan-favorite al pastor tacos and work your way around the menu, but make sure to end your meal with the sopapillas.

Taco Casa | *731 W. Main St.:* Taco Casa takes tacos to the next level with its fresh, "crunchy-licious" tacos, salads and burgers. Download the app for rewards and stay tuned for new deals. Douse Taco Casa's fan-favorite burritos in its original hot sauce, if you can handle the heat.

Taco Villa | *723 Asp Ave.:* Everyone knows that to raise a taco, it takes a villa. At least, that's the belief of Taco Villa, with three certified chefs bringing hand-made tortillas and simple ingredients to Norman for authentic Mexican food. Order street tacos or beef quesabirria that'll transport you directly to Mexico.

Velvet Taco | *1440 W. Lindsey St.:* Have late night cravings for authentic Mexican at reasonable prices? Velvet Taco gets it. Pay this funky taco spot a visit to try international flavors, slow-roasted chicken and margaritas. Customers can't get enough of the customizable Velvet Bowls, with your choice of rice or napa slaw as a base.

SANDWICH

Bison Witches Bar & Deli | *211 E. Main St.:* Bison Witches lives up to its name as there truly is something magical in the food. Nestled in the heart of Downtown Norman Arts District, this deli offers unique food, hand-crafted drinks and an energy that matches its environment. You'll never go wrong with a sandwich or bread bowl.

The Earth Cafe & Deli | *309 S. Flood Ave.:* Open since the mid-1980s, The Earth Cafe & Deli is known for its organic cuisine. Stop by for a quick bite or dine alongside the blossoming flowers and trees. With a plethora of vegan and vegetarian options, this cafe and deli has something for everyone.

Midway Deli | *601 W. Eufaula St.:* This deli has flavor packed into its classic, made-to-order sandwiches. A Norman favorite is The Vulcan sandwich: a hot, grilled sourdough sandwich layered with turkey, avocado and a sweet chili mayo sauce that's sure to melt your taste buds. Don't forget to leave your mark; grab a Sharpie and sign your name on the wall after you're done eating.

Pickleman's | *759 Asp Ave.:* Pickleman's prioritizes fresh and high-quality ingredients, serving flavorful sandwiches with your choice of wheat or white bread. Its crispy pizzas can be made with a gluten-free crust and the creamy mac and cheese bowls have delicious options for the whole family.

The Winston | *106 W Main St.:* The Winston puts a modern spin on classics and hosts a happy hour that'll have your wallet thanking you. Sit on its dog-friendly patio no matter the season, equipped with fans and heaters. While the weather's still hot, try the pulled pork sandwich with a Frozen Watermelon Fresca.

SUSHI

I Sushi | *762 Asp Ave.:* Feeling hungry? I Sushi has you covered whether you want to dine in or have rolls delivered directly to your door. Along with the classics, I Sushi prides itself on its adventurous flavor options, such as its Oklahoma Roll, with Tempura shrimp, baked crawfish & crabstick, masago, spicy mayo, eel sauce, tempura flakes, green onions and sesame seeds.

The Moon Sushi & Asian Bistro | *326 E. Main St.:* The Moon Sushi is known for its specialty sushi rolls and house-made sauces. Fan favorites are the Meek Monster, Seared Tuna Surprise, Habanero Heaven and poke bowls. Come by to experience its dive-bar setting, great service or Happy Hour.

Tatsumaki Ramen & Lounge | *1300 12th Ave SE:* With a wide variety of ramen, starters and sushi available for dine-in or pick-up, it's no wonder Tatsumaki has become a go-to stop for Japanese cuisine. Customers praise its generous portions at great prices and quality service. Try the spicy miso ramen or White Lotus roll.

Volcano Sushi Bar & Hibachi | *3700 W. Robinson St.:* This sushi bar is on fire – in every way but literally. Try the Godzilla roll stuffed with cucumber and blue crab and topped with eel, spicy tuna and avocado – if you don't get appetizers like crab wontons and barbecue squid.

VEGAN/VEGETARIAN

The Earth Cafe | *309 S. Flood Ave.:* Open since 1969, Earth Cafe is known for its organic quiche and soup of the day. Immerse yourself in refreshing cuisine by sitting in the garden and sipping on a fruit smoothie, or have a slice of a vegan dessert. This quiet place is perfect for reading books in the comfort of nature, tucked away with blossoming flowers and trees.

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Sisters Mediterranean Taste | *1400 12th Ave. SE:* At Sisters Mediterranean Taste, you're family from the first bite. Run by sisters, this restaurant is focused on authentic Mediterranean food, welcoming service and great prices. Whether it's ordered meat or meatless, customers gush about its hummus.

Thai Delight | *761 Jenkins Ave.:* Thai Delight lives up to its name by delighting customers with Thai and Japanese cuisine since the early 2010s. Try the Som Tom salad – with papayas, carrot, shrimps, tomatoes, green bean and peanut mixed with lime sauce – or its lobster rolls, topped with avocado and a special sauce.

DESSERT

Apple Tree Chocolate | *209 E. Main St.:* This chocolate factory, founded in 2015 by OU alums Scotty and Ashley Jackson, creates handcrafted chocolates. They prepare the ingredients the old-fashioned way: in copper pots. Customers enjoy the slow-cooked caramel apples with a variety of choices from Turtle, Apple Pie, Snickers and Mexican Hot apples.

Custard Factory | *301 E. Main St.:* No matter what cold dessert you're craving, Custard Factory has it all: concretes, sundaes, malts, shakes, floats and frozen custard sandwiches. Try a standard base of vanilla, chocolate, strawberry or espresso, or stop by to see its rotating featured flavor. *(This business has closed since being voted a Best of Norman dessert restaurant.)*

The Ice Creamatory | *1200 12th Ave.:* This horror-themed ice creamatory will have you terrified to learn it's closed Mondays, as it is the perfect mix of experience and taste. Pick a base of vanilla or chocolate and swirl in toppings of your choice – including cereals, treats and drizzles – or choose from the menu.

La Baguette Bakery & Cafe | *2100 W. Main St.:* Established in 1984, La Baguette is a French-style bakery and Norman classic. Famous for its European breads and cafe-style meals, it offers a daily menu that spans from soups to quiches and more, with a wide range of beloved desserts to choose from after your meal.

FOOD TRUCK

Abu Omar Halal | *101 N. Porter Ave.:* Abu Omar Halal began as Houston's first and only halal food truck. Today the food truck has spread across Texas, Florida, California and Oklahoma. Pop by and try a chicken shawarma wrap, a salad, a rice bowl or the mouth-watering hummus dip.

BillyGoat Grub | *209 W. Main St.:* There's a lot to like about BillyGoat Grub, whether it be the adventurous flavors – like the Pot Roast Mac & Cheese, the Lobster Rolls – or its convenient location. Try the rotating menu of globally inspired comfort food and drinks at its truck or brick-and-mortar restaurant.

Taco Villa | *723 Asp Ave.:* Everyone knows to raise a taco, it takes a villa – or three certified chefs bringing hand-made tortillas and simple ingredients to share authentic Mexican food with Norman. Order Mexico City street tacos or beef quesabirria that'll transport you directly to Guadalajara.

Taqueria La Chiva | *1224 W. Lindsey St.:* Nothing hits the street taco craving quite like a taco bought on the side of the street. Taqueria La Chiva has an excellent mix of moderate spice, tender meat and expertly-toasted tortillas. Top any of the dishes with house-made green or red sauce for that perfect bite.

CAMPUS CORNER FOOD

Louie's Grill & Bar | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Louie's Grill & Bar is an American eatery and pub decked out with flat-screen TVs that make it the perfect spot for game day, whether you want to catch Sooner football or OKC Thunder basketball. Don't miss out on the Big Lou – a burger with American cheese, pickles, grilled onions and mustard. Kids eat free on Wednesdays with the purchase of an adult entree.

New York Pizza & Pasta | *217 W. Boyd St.:* Want a vacation? Take a trip to New York without ever leaving Norman with these huge pizzas, always hot and fresh. The restaurant is praised for its reasonable prices and friendly staff.

Pepe Delgados | *786 Asp Ave.:* Stop by Pepe Delgados Mexican Restaurant to try its signature Super Nachos dish or flavorful beverages, like Mexican beer, fresh juice margaritas and premium tequilas. In addition to great, traditional Mexican food, Pepe Delgados offers vegan and vegetarian friendly menu items.

Pickleman's | *759 Asp Ave.:* Pickleman's prioritizes fresh and high-quality ingredients, serving flavorful sandwiches with your choice of wheat or white bread. Its crispy pizzas can be made with a gluten-free crust and the creamy mac and cheese bowls have delicious options for the whole family.

Tea Cafe on the Corner | *788 Asp Ave.:* The perfect place to unwind or spend quality time with a friend, Tea Cafe On the Corner brings warmth with every drink or meal. Prices make it a go-to for college students and families alike, and the staff makes sure every customer feels like family. Try any of its wide-range of boba teas or a bowl of noodles for a quick stop or a hearty meal. *(This business has temporarily closed since being voted a Best of Norman Asian restaurant.)*

CAMPUS CORNER BAR

The Deli | *309 White St.:* The Deli – Norman's longest continuously running live music venue – is a historic dive bar that has serviced customers since the 1970s. The environment makes it an attraction to many. It offers live music every night with bands, signature menu items and karaoke nights.

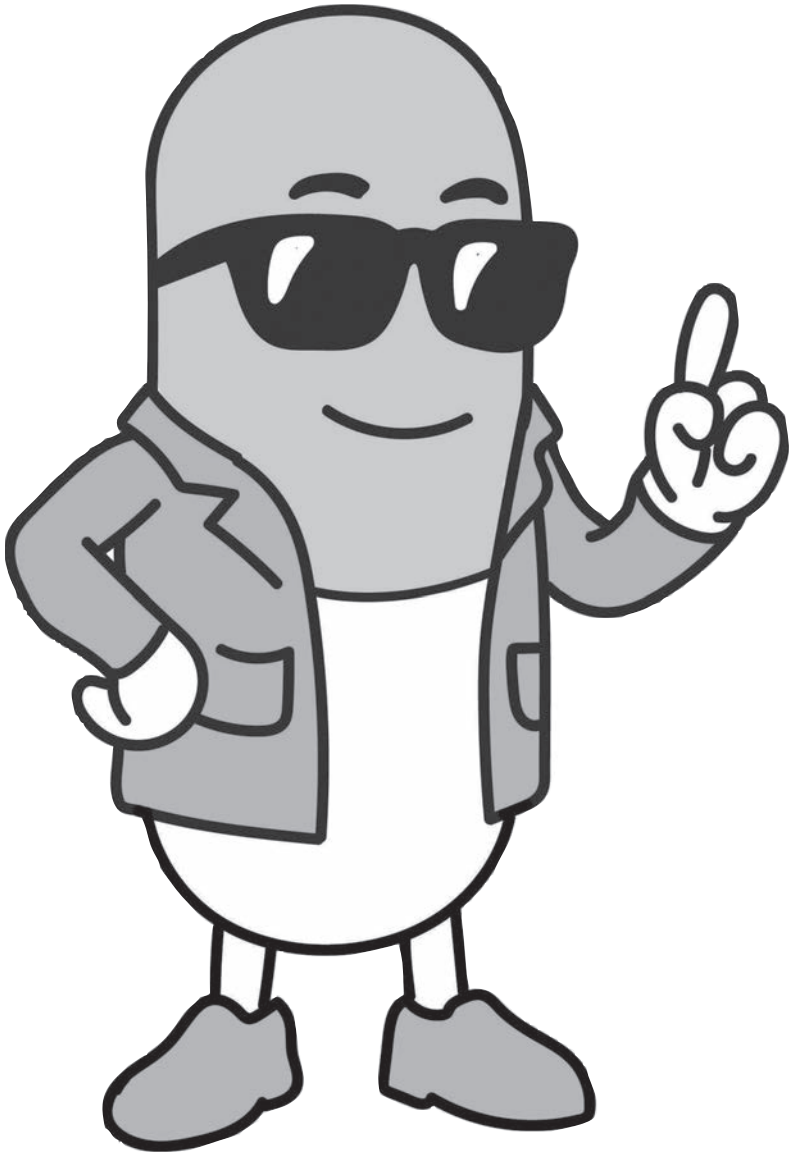
Heist Nightclub | *750 1/2 Asp Ave.:* There's never a dull moment at Heist, with a rotating lineup of DJs and blaring music that keeps the crowd on their feet the whole night. Come by for a night you won't forget and the atmosphere of a lifetime.

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SEE MORE >>

Don't let a fake pill take you out of the game.

Homecoming week is here. And here are a few prescription medication tips to help you stay healthy and safe.



Hey, Sooners!

Homecoming is one of those times of the year when campus comes alive. There are football games, tailgates, parties, concerts, and plenty of opportunities to spend time with friends.

For many college students, it is also a time of increased independence. You are making more of your own decisions about your health, your schedule, and your safety.

That independence also comes with responsibility, especially when it comes to prescription medication.

Fake Pills Can Look Real

Counterfeit prescription pills are made to look like legitimate medications, including oxycodone, Xanax® and Adderall®. The problem? They may contain entirely different substances, including illegally manufactured fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that can cause a fatal overdose.

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), counterfeit pills can closely resemble legitimate prescription medications. You cannot reliably identify a fake pill by its color, shape, markings or appearance alone.

A pill that looks familiar isn't necessarily safe.

Know Where Your Medication Comes From

Someone may offer you a pill and insist it's legitimate. Even if they believe it's real, there is no guarantee they know what's inside.

Protect yourself by following a few simple rules:

- Only take medications prescribed to you by a healthcare professional.
- Obtain prescription medications from a licensed pharmacy.
- Never share prescriptions or take medication offered by friends.
- Take medications exactly as directed by your doctor or pharmacist.
- Ask your pharmacist if you have questions about a medication.

Buying prescription pills through social media, dealers or unverified online sources can expose you to counterfeit medications and potentially deadly substances.

Have questions for me?
I want to hear from you.
No lectures. No judgment.
Just real answers.

@Prof.Pill

Know What to Do in an Emergency

Recognizing an opioid overdose can save a life. Warning signs include slow or difficult breathing, extreme drowsiness, unresponsiveness, or an inability to wake someone.

If you suspect an overdose, call 911 immediately and administer naloxone (Narcan®) if available. Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose, including one involving fentanyl. Stay with the person and follow emergency responders' instructions.

Think Twice

You don't have to know everything about every drug. Just remember: if a pill wasn't prescribed to you and dispensed by a licensed pharmacy, don't take the chance.

Have fun, cheer loud, make memories, and look out for your fellow Sooners.

Boomer Sooner!

UNIVERSITY OUTREACH
SOUTHWEST PREVENTION CENTER
The UNIVERSITY of OKLAHOMA

FUNDED BY SAMHSA SPF-RX GRANT

Logie's on the Corner | *749 Asp Ave.:* Logie's sports-bar energy is always on point for college students. It offers an upper-deck patio, smoke room and multiple TVs playing sporting events. Come by for Power Hour every Friday during the school year from 4 to 6 p.m. or show up to Two Dollar Tuesday for $2 shots.
O'Connell's Irish Pub & Grille | *769 Asp Ave:* Located in the heart of Campus Corner, O'Connell's Irish Pub & Grille is a frequented location for students and Normanites. Wednesdays at O'Connell's are Karaoke Night; grab your friends and prepare to sing all night long. O'Connell's is always at its most popular during football games, so get there early to grab a seat.

NORMAN BAR/BREWERY

BIG Brewing Co | *216 E. Main St.:* Beer Is Good Brewing Company, or BIG Brew Co., lives up to its name by making good beer. What started in college kitchens as a desire to create and share exceptional beer has turned into a vibrant hub for beer-lovers. Whether it's after a long day or the start to an unforgettable night, a stop at BIG Brew Co. is never the wrong choice.
Lazy Circles Brewing | *422 E. Main St.:* After starting as homebrewers, Lazy Circles Brewing opened its doors in 2017. Try the Boss Lady or Station 1 brews or catch one of the rotating options.
Legally Brewed | *123 W. Main St.:* Legally Brewed offers fun twists on classic beers. Stop by on Monday to enjoy board game night or Wednesday for $1 off 6-ounce wine pours. If you want a sweet treat with your beverage, find scrumptious cookies in the tap room from local partner Six30 Sweets.

#1 PICK
The Mont | *1300 Classen Blvd.:* Known for its Sooner Swirl and loaded cheese fries, The Mont is a Norman staple. Celebrate your birthday there for a free T-shirt. With timeless ambiance and attentive service, The Mont is a bucket list restaurant experience for many OU students, visitors and Normanites.
The Standard | *315 E. Gray St:* This restaurant and beer garden is known for its relaxing atmosphere. Try one of its classic burgers while enjoying the shaded outdoor seating. You can sip on a refreshing spritz drink or choose from the seemingly endless list of draft beers and IPAs. The Standard sets the standard for locations specializing in event hosting and catering.

HAPPY HOUR

Blu Fine Wine & Food | *201 S. Crawford Ave.:* Established in 2007, Blu Fine Wine & Food offers cozy ambiance, monthly wine tastings, American-style tapas and an extensive wine list. Blu is a local favorite for Normanites and visitors alike; enjoy half-price pizzas with a drink during Happy Hour.
Library Bar & Grill | *607 W. Boyd St.:* The Library began as a 20th-century home established in 1920; today it serves Norman as an English-style pub. The pub has a substantial tap list that pairs nicely with its renowned appetizer menu, of which customer favorites include the spinach queso dip and the sourdough pretzel. Its tap list is extensive, including local brews, imports and domestic beers. Happy Hour at the Library includes half-price pizzas with the purchase of a beverage as well as $2 off all draft beers.
New York Pizza & Pasta | *217 W. Boyd St.:* Want a vacation? Take a trip to New York without ever leaving Norman with these huge pizzas, always hot and fresh. The restaurant is praised for its reasonable prices and friendly staff.

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The Winston | *106 W Main St.:* The Winston puts a modern spin on classics and hosts a happy hour that'll have your wallet thanking you. Sit on its dog-friendly patio no matter the season, equipped with fans and heaters. While the weather's still hot, try the pulled pork sandwich with a Frozen Watermelon Fresca.

DATE NIGHT/SPECIAL OCCASION

Scratch Kitchen & Cocktails | *132 W. Main St:* In the heart of downtown Norman, Scratch Kitchen & Cocktails is known for house-made sauces, Southwestern flare and custom cocktails. Living up to its name, the food is made entirely from scratch, securing it a reputation as a fresh and tasty choice for lunch or dinner. Customer favorites include the Creole seafood pasta and the coffee-crusted pork loin.
Othello's Italian Restaurant | *434 Buchanan Ave.:* Family-owned for over 35 years, Othello's serves classic Italian dishes with prices averaging at $20-25. Come on a Friday night and enjoy live piano and singing with jazz performances. Othello's is home to the local-favorite and award-winning coconut cream pie. Try its crowd-pleasing baked ziti, lasagna, chicken parmesan or shrimp scampi.
Legend's Restaurant | *1313 W. Lindsey St.:* Serving Norman since the late 1960s, Legend's Restaurant is known for its house-made soups, a vast range of hearty dishes and desserts made fresh daily; customer favorites include the Onion Soup Gratinee, Lemon Cream Cake and Coca-Cola Cake. Legend's prides itself on its versatility, prepared to serve business meetings, romantic dinners, or casual gatherings.

#1 PICK
Benvenuti's Ristorante | *105 W. Main St.:* Founded in 2005, Benvenuti's blends traditional Italian dishes with flavorful twists. With over 150 boutique wine selections offered by the bottle, half-bottle and tasting flights, it's easy to celebrate your loved ones on a special night out. Try the snow crab claws, sauteed in garlic-lemon white wine butter sauce.
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PATIO DINING

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NORMAN STAPLE

The Diner | *213 E. Main St.:* In a location that has housed a variety of restaurants for over a century, The Diner has been bringing Tex-Mex breakfast and lunch to Norman since 1918. Crowd favorites include the Eggarito, the Mexiscram, Sante Fe chicken burger, blueberry pancakes and its famous homemade chilli.

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SHOPPING AND SERVICES

THRIFT /VINTAGE

Antique Paradise | *1321 E. Lindsey St.:* Carve a whole day out for thrifting at Antique Paradise. Shop a huge catalogue across 20,000 square feet. Whether you're looking for antiques, collectibles or house decor, Antique Paradise is the perfect stop at a great price.
Crimson Vintage | *406 E. Main St.:* Crimson Vintage is a top-rated vintage thrift shop with a curated collection of quality merchandise – specifically OU apparel. On a lucky day, you might find an old football game shirt from the '80s or a vintage OU logo shirt that's no longer being made.
Robinson's Repurposed | *300 E. Main St.:* Moving in? Do it with prices that won't hurt the wallet. Robinson's Repurposed has a wide variety of furniture and clothes in every style, from every era. Stop by one of its Art Walks featuring portraits and stories to celebrate local creativity.
Trendy Thrift | *1213 E. Lindsey St.:* Whether you're on the hunt for high-quality clothing, old books, collectibles or just a fun outing with your friends, Trendy Thrift has you covered. Stay alert for different color tags and keep up with promotions.

#1 PICK
Uptown Cheapskate Norman | *1544 24th Ave.:* Want to find name-brand steals for a fraction of the price or make a little extra cash by selling your old clothes? Uptown Cheapskate is the place for you. It offers gently-used clothing, shoes and accessories for up to 70% off retail pricing.

BOUTIQUE

Blush | *566 Buchanan Ave.:* A must-visit spot for affordable, high-quality fashion, Blush has everything from game-day chic to accessories that go with every outfit. It also offers decor that makes both the perfect gift and the extra something your room may be missing.
The Clothing Bar | *2001 W. Main St.:* Raise the bar on your everyday style with a curated mix of trendy women's apparel, shoes and standout accessories. The boutique focuses on affordable everyday wear and game day outfits for busy women.

#1 PICK
STASH | *412 E. Main St.:* If you've been searching for a place to STASH your style expectations, look no further than this downtown Norman boutique brimming with sustainable fashion, handmade goods and home accents you can't find anywhere else. It's a perfect place to look for yourself or shop for gifts.
Tulips Home & Gift | *570 Buchanan Ave.:* Let your lifestyle bloom with Tulips' array of upscale home decor, kitchenware and clothing. Celebrate any and all occasions with the perfect gifts, and stop by for the cutest school essentials that make studying just as aesthetic as it is useful.

SEE MORE >>



PHOTO PROVIDED

OU GEAR/MERCH

Balfour of Norman | *792 Asp Ave.:* At Balfour, you can find graduation keepsakes to cherish and OU merchandise like T-shirts, mugs and athletic gear for any OU team. Since 1974, Balfour has been providing Norman with top-quality OU gear and gifts.

Crimson Vintage | *406 E. Main St.:* Crimson Vintage is a top-rated vintage thrift shop with a curated collection of quality merchandise – specifically OU apparel. On a lucky day, you might find an old football game shirt from the '80s or a vintage OU logo shirt that's no longer being made.

#1 PICK

Rally House | *1510 24th Ave. NW:* What started as a dream to bring Kansas together turned into over 300 stores across 30 states, each unique to the fans in the area. For Norman, it's no shock that the walls are decked out with OU apparel of all shapes and sizes, with a dash of support for Oklahoma State University and the Dallas Cowboys.

The Sooner Shop | *1185 Asp Ave.:* Get the latest apparel across all styles and sports at the official Oklahoma Sooners shop. Whether you're looking for that game day head-turner, a gift for your parents or decor that keeps the Sooners front and center across state lines, the Sooner Shop is the stop for you. Watch out for sales and make sure to visit the clearance section.

TATTOO PARLOR

Hall of Tattoos | *328 E. Main St.:* Opening the store just six years after moving to Norman in 2000, Kenny Hall has designed art for hundreds, including tattoos and sculptures. The Hall of Tattoos features two other licensed artists.

Just Skin Tattoos and Piercings | *1015 N. Flood Ave.:* Formerly known as Skin Vandals, this body art changes your body into more than just skin. Not only are the tattoos and piercings beautifully done, but the artists make sure to walk each guest through proper care procedures.

Main Street Tattoos | *320 E. Main St.:* Main Street Tattoos is dedicated to one thing: making your dream tattoos a custom, one-of-a-kind reality. The artists are friendly, helping every step of the way with proper attention and professional advice. It takes appointments and walk-ins.

#1 PICK

Studio Ink | *220 E. Main St.:* Customers rave about Studio Ink's high-end custom tattoos. In the heart of downtown Norman, its artists are always up for the challenge, whether you're looking for vibrant colors, linework or cover-ups. Make it a one-stop trip and get a piercing, too.

HAIR SALON

#1 PICK

Clementine Hair Lounge | *740 W. Main St.:* Wanting to add some extra flare to your look? Clementine Hair Lounge gives clients that effortless, fresh out-of-the-salon glow. Get matched with your perfect "cutie" artist on its website, and book an appointment for head-turning color transformations, quick trims or hand-painted balayages.

Mave Beauty | *761 Asp Ave.:* In the heart of Campus Corner, Mave Beauty is the ultimate glow-up destination for students and Normanites. Go for hair styling, blowout sessions, nails, lash and beauty treatments or a mix of all four. Mave is a go-to for all things beauty, whether it's for a big event or just to treat yourself. *(This business has closed since being voted a Best of Norman hair salon.)*

Neon Tiger Salon | *301 S. Porter Ave.:* If you're looking for a bold new look, Neon Tiger Salon is the place to be. It specializes in women's and men's cuts, color, eyelash extensions, facials and waxing, making this a one-stop salon for any beauty need. Don't be afraid to walk on the wild side – Neon Tiger's stylists are masters of the craft.

Shyloh, The Green Hairdresser: Shyloh can create any style or look under one caveat: it's always green. By that, she means the environment, because she believes great hair shouldn't cost the Earth. Using eco-conscious products and low-waste practices, Shyloh makes you look good and feel good about your eco-footprint.

BARBERSHOP

#1 PICK

The Mane Man | *1215 W. Lindsey St.:* Servicing the Norman community for over 40 years, this barbershop serves as a hybrid salon and barbershop for men, women and children. It offers everything from tailored fades to hair coloring, waxing and eyelash extensions. Look your best at an affordable price.

The Neighborhood Shop | *210 N. University Blvd.:* Founded in 2021, the Neighborhood Shop builds community through good coffee and great hair. With friendly prices and even friendlier staff, it feels more like catching up with old friends than an appointment.

Legacy Men's Grooming | *2218 24th Ave. NW:* Legacy Men's Grooming is known for its meticulous detail work and top-tier customer service. From sculpting beards to razor-sharp cuts in classic and contemporary styles, this barbershop aims to transform your haircut into a high-end experience.

MANI/PEDI

BOSS Nail Spa | *3321 W. Tecumseh Road:* Become the CEO of self-care with BOSS Nail Spa's VIP pampering experience. No matter which service you get – acrylic nails, pedicures, massages, facials, waxings or eyelash extensions – you'll look and feel good enough to run the world.

#1 PICK

Filed Nails Spa Beauty | *3408 36th Ave. NW:* Filed Nails Spa Beauty is all about giving your hands and feet the care they deserve. With precise work and a tranquil atmosphere, it replaces daily stress with a flawless nail set. Look your best when you leave its doors, because Filed Nails believes beauty starts with self-care.

KS Luxe Nail Salon | *3522 24th Ave. NW:* From the beginning, KS Luxe Nails aimed to create not just a salon, but a destination blending top-tier beauty with relaxation. It's safe to say it's accomplishing its mission, with every service a spa can offer, from nail refreshes to head spas, and everything in between.

Noir Nail Studio | *1915 Classen Blvd.:* At Noir Nail Studio, you are greeted with a smiling face and a complimentary basket of chips, soda and water. Enjoy excellent nail service in an elegant facility with stunning gold detailing. At Noir, beauty is made to feel "personal, effortless and uplifting."

Wonder Nails and Spa | *1221 Alameda St.:* It's no wonder people keep coming back to this nail salon; customers keep their nails on point without breaking the bank. Wonder Nails and Spa offers detailed service in a welcoming atmosphere, whether it's a quick shaping or full spa pedicure.

FLORIST

Bella Grace Designs: Bella Grace brings an artistic touch to every bouquet she creates, bringing your vision to life and telling a story. She specializes in custom arrangements for weddings, special events and everyday celebrations. If you want to make a floral statement, Bella Grace has you covered.

Betty Lou's Flowers & Gift | *445 W. Gray St.:* In 1979, Betty and Dewight Mitchell combined their love for flowers and serving people to create Betty Lou's Flowers & Gifts. Today, their daughter continues that legacy with passion and dedication, offering flower delivery to Norman and surrounding areas. Welcome guests to campus with a Bloomer Sooner Bouquet or enjoy fresh flowers regularly through subscription packages.

#1 PICK

The Flower Shop | *1440 N. Porter Ave.:* For over 10 years, The Flower Shop has been a woman and family-owned flower shop offering seasonal arrangements and custom florals for events. This shop supports local farmers and offers custom flower arrangements, wrapped bouquets, corsages, boutonnieres and potted plants.

Oklahoma Cut Flower Co | *10351 Kiamichi Court:* A breath of fresh air for flower enthusiasts, Oklahoma Cut Flower Co. focuses on locally grown, sustainable flowers. It crafts organic arrangements designed to let natural beauty shine through. Stop by the farm for a fun outing with your favorite people and enjoy a little piece of nature.

NONPROFIT

Food and Shelter | *201 Reed Ave.:* With a mission so simple it's in the name, Food and Shelter aims to provide the basic necessities of life, along with friends and a support system. It offers a variety of services such as two hot meals daily, a resource center, day shelter, emergency shelter, re-housing, permanent supportive housing and prevention assistance.

Norman Care-A-Vans: Norman Care-A-Vans is a nonprofit dedicated to delivering meals to unsheltered individuals and offers free on-demand shuttle services. You can help by being a volunteer driver, cooking meals or donating through the links on its website.

OU BCM | *1203 Elm Ave.:* The OU Baptist Collegiate Ministry aims to help students know, love and glorify God by developing student leaders and disciples. It hosts a number of weekly and monthly events, including Renown worship on Wednesday nights and various challenge groups.

SEE MORE >>

SEE IT LIVE!



NOV. 9 JONAS BROTHERS



DEC. 3 HUDSON WESTBROOK

11.08.26 MERCY ME
11.15.26 LEANNE MORGAN
12.12.26 OU VS OSU BEDLAM BASKETBALL
2.20-21.27 MONSTER JAM

3.18.27 STAIND
3.21.27 HANS ZIMMER
6.3.27 DEF LEPPARD & GOO GOO DOLLS
9.16.27 THE RED CLAY STRAYS

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SPONSORED CONTENT



OU DAILY ARCHIVES

The Mane Man has served the campus and Norman community for more than 45 years. Pictured are its promotions and coupons through the decades, including its current deal below.

More Than the Mane:

Historic Barbershop Continues Legacy of Community, Innovation

Since opening its doors, The Mane Man has welcomed more than half a million walk-in guests.

"It's just one of the most historic barbershops in Norman," said Amber Rivers, current manager for The Mane Man. "I've worked here for about 20 years, so I've gotten to watch it grow into what it is today."

In 1979, founder Jerry Evans began a legacy that has now spanned more than four decades. From the beginning, Evans understood how his shop could connect with the OU and Norman community.

The business, located at 1215 W. Lindsey St., has evolved from a barber shop into a full-service salon and beauty destination, adding sister salons MM Salon Suites and MANE. Rivers said innovation and changing with the times is what makes The Mane Man unique and why it has stood the test of time.

"The number one thing is we're trying to stay ahead of the curve and adapt to changes in the industry," said Rivers.

The Mane Man was one of the first in Norman to embrace the private-suite concept, which has grown into a space featuring 25 private suites providing professionals with opportunities to build their own careers.

Evans had a passion for teaching the next generation of beauty professionals and trained many apprentices throughout the years. More than 40 stylists from The Mane Man have gone on to open salons of their own.

From a place to get a haircut to a launching pad for entrepreneurs, The Mane Man's greatest legacy isn't simply how long it's been here, but also how many people it's helped along the way.



FILE/OU DAILY

The OU Food Pantry is a free resource for faculty, staff and students.

#1 PICK

OU Food Pantry | *331 Cate Center Drive:* OU students, faculty and staff can get free supplemental food assistance and other resources from the OU Food Pantry. Students can join the Canvas page to volunteer or learn more about upcoming events, operations, staff and how to support those suffering food insecurity.

PLACE TO VOLUNTEER

Food and Shelter | *201 Reed Ave.:* With a mission so simple it's in the name, Food and Shelter aims to provide the basic necessities of life, along with friends and a support system. It serves two hot meals daily, a resource center, day shelter, emergency shelter, re-housing, permanent supportive housing and prevention assistance.

#1 PICK

Norman Animal Welfare | *3428 Jenkins Ave.:* Whether it's a visit to the Norman Animal Welfare Center or filling out an online form to foster a pet, Norman Animal Welfare makes it rewarding to fall in love with furry friends. The shelter has a live release rate of over 90% of homeless pet populations.

OU BCM | *1203 Elm Ave.:* The OU Baptist Collegiate Ministry aims to help students know, love and glorify God by developing student leaders and disciples. It hosts a number of weekly and monthly events, including RENOWN worship on Wednesday nights and various challenge groups.

OU Food Pantry | *331 Cate Center Drive:* OU students, faculty and staff can get free supplemental food assistance and other resources from the OU Food Pantry. Students can join the Canvas page to volunteer or learn more about upcoming events, operations, staff and how to support those suffering food insecurity.

RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION

OU BCM | *1203 Elm Ave.:* The OU Baptist Collegiate Ministry aims to help students know, love and glorify God by developing student leaders and disciples. It hosts a number of weekly and monthly events, including Renown worship on Wednesday nights and various challenge groups.

St. Stephen's United Methodist Church | *1801 W. Brooks St.:* Looking to grow your faith and serve the community? St. Stephen's is a warm, inclusive congregation that practices loving in action through open minds, open hearts and open doors. With engaging worship services and outreach projects, it's a great spot to build meaningful connections in the city.

St. Thomas More | *100 Stinson St.:* A Catholic community and student center, St. Thomas More is a spiritual home away from home. Stop in for daily Mass, enjoy a quiet moment in prayer or join one of the vibrant fellowship programs. There's something for everyone, whether you're bringing peers or your whole family.

#1 PICK

Victory Family Church | *4343 N. Flood Ave.:* At Victory, everyone is winning because everyone is family. What launched in 2013 as a few hundred people in a small church became four campuses across the state. Victory is committed to following God's call to reach as many people as possible, no matter their walk of life.

DAYCARE

Around the World Bilingual Daycare | *3001 S. Berry Rd.:* Give your children a global edge. Around the World introduces Spanish and other languages to its students, blending immersion learning with playtime. The mission of Around the World is to foster social and intellectual growth through a greater understanding of the cultures of our modern, open world.

Go Kids Mother's Day Out & Childcare | *2300 24th Ave. SW:* Operating under a simple philosophy: love God, love others and have fun, parents can rest easy. Go Kids fosters a nurturing and active environment for growing minds that focuses on teaching children kindness with creativity.

#1 PICK

McFarlin Daycare Center | *419 S. University Blvd.:* A part of McFarlin United Methodist Church, this childcare center creates a welcoming atmosphere that

models empathy and encourages each child's unique qualities and creativity. Toddlers and preschoolers learn, play and build strong foundational skills in a supportive setting.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Shelby Ortiz Media: If you want your memories frozen in warmth and authenticity, Shelby Ortiz has the eye for it. She specializes in lifestyle, couple and portrait photography, turning candid moments into frame-worthy art to fill your walls and camera roll.

#1 PICK

Shevaun Williams & Associates | *221 E. Main St.:* Shevaun Williams' studio on Main Street produces striking commercial portraits, headshots and more. Known for exceptional lighting and an effortless ability to make clients comfortable, Shevaun makes every photo truly picture perfect.

Shot by Gab: No matter who you are – from musicians, brands, weddings and everything between – Shot by Gab will bring a pop of energy and vibrancy to every photo. Shot by Gab brings a fresh perspective to senior photos, lifestyle sessions and every event. *(This business has moved to New York City since being voted a Best of Norman photographer.)*

REALTOR

Ashley Adair-Garner | *205 E. Main St.:* Navigating the real estate market is easy with Ashley Adair-Garner in your corner. She blends sharp market knowledge with a genuine passion for helping clients, working to help you close the deal on that perfect property.

#1 PICK

Shavonne Buckner-Evans | *3421 W. Rock Creek Road, Suite 110:* Shavonne Buckner-Evans is dedicated to top-tier service for home buyers and sellers across Norman. Whether it's your first foray into the real estate world or you're just searching for an upgrade, customers say Shavonne ensures the entire process feels smooth and stress-free.

Jen Kelsey | *124 SW. 167th St.:* When it comes to finding your forever home, Jen Kelsey delivers fantastic results with a personal touch. She's praised for her attention to detail and honest advice, guiding clients through every step of buying or selling to make sure you make all the best moves on the board.

Tina Pastran | *114 N. Walker Ave.:* Tina Pastran brings local expertise and a client-first mindset to every real estate adventure. She speaks both Spanish and English, and lays down a blueprint from listing strategy to grabbing your new keys on closing day.

Michael Zorba | *800 W. Rock Creek Road:* Ready to make your next big real estate move? Customers review Michael Zorba's combination of deep market insights with a straightforward approach. He is a great choice for investing, selling or searching for the perfect neighborhood.

ATTORNEY/LAW GROUP

Carter Jennings | *400 N. Walker Ave.:* Drowning in legal questions? Carter Jennings is known for providing clear, strategic guidance that helps you navigate complex situations. His firm stands ready to defend your interests and keep the scales balanced in your favor.

#1 PICK

Robert Norman | *6301 Waterford Blvd:* Bringing years of legal expertise to the table, Robert Norman is a highly experienced labor and employment, business and insurance lawyer. He offers reliable representation when you need it most, leaving clients with peace of mind.

Richard Vreeland | *104 W. Gray St.:* Licensed in Oklahoma since 2006, Richard Vreeland is an attorney and legal educator that delivers trustworthy, straightforward legal counsel for individuals and local businesses. He's served on the boards of counties across the state, and is currently on the board of directors for Norman Pride.

GROCERY STORE

ALDI | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Shopping on a budget is easy at ALDI. Bring your own bags and fill them with fresh produce or walk down the famous "ALDI Finds" aisle. If you're busy, order online for delivery or pickup, making shopping from home just as easy.

#1 PICK

Crest Foods | *2550 Mt. Williams Drive:* Crest lives to its founding creed: "Stack it high and sell it cheap!" with massive aisles and incredible bulk deals. The Harroz family has owned this Oklahoman company for three generations and has expanded to 10 locations in the Oklahoma City area.

Natural Grocers | *1918 W. Main St.:* For over 70 years, Natural Grocers has brought affordable healthy lifestyles to the shelves. The store has grown to over 175 locations in 22 states, stocked exclusively with 100% organic produce, body care products and dietary supplements.

Sprouts Farmers Market | *559 W. Main St.:* Sprouts brings that farmer's market feel to the aisles with a large selection of fresh fruits and vegetables, bulk bins and natural snacks. Turn over a new leaf and begin stocking up on nutritious products that let you shop healthy without breaking the bank.

LIQUOR STORE

9 East Liquor | *751 S. Canadian Trails Drive:* Stocking up for game day or a night in with the girls? 9 East Liquor has you covered with a great selection of seltzers, whiskey, vodka and wine. Customers praise the attentive staff that's always ready to help you find the perfect drink.

#1 PICK

Cellar Wine & Spirits | *555 W. Main St.:* A large local favorite, Cellar Wine & Spirits has an extensive inventory of domestic beers, spirits and global wines. Browse in person or order from its website for local pickup and delivery.

Joe's Wine & Spirits | *1330 E. Alameda St.:* Joe's is a go-to neighborhood favorite for dependable beverages and kegs. Every trip is a breeze with its friendly service, competitive prices and great mix of brands.

SEE MORE >>



MCFARLIN CHILDCARE

CELEBRATING 60 YEARS! For nearly six decades, **McFarlin Day Care** has had the privilege of becoming part of **generations of family stories**. We provide a safe and nurturing environment, led by Christ-like principles, that promotes the social, emotional, and intellectual growth of each child. At McFarlin, **all are welcome, valued, and appreciated.**

Best of Norman Winner 2026

McFarlin offers three weekday childcare programs (Monday–Friday):

- **Day Care:** Full-time care for ages 0–5
- **Children's Day Out:** Part-time care
- for ages 0–5
- **Kid Zone:** After-school care for Norman Public Schools (Pre-K–5th grade)

Visit: mcfarlinumc.org/children/day-care/

LICENSED AND MONITORED BY THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES.

mcfarlinumc.org

419 S. University Blvd.



The Spirit Shop | *109 S. Berry Road:* Located in the heart of Norman, The Spirit Shop is bound to boost your spirits. From top-shelf liquors to signature mixers it makes sure you're always equipped to knock a few back with friends.

BOOKSTORE

#1 PICK

Green Feather Book Company | *300 W. Gray St.:* Norman's oldest bookstore, Green Feather Book Company is a woman and Indigenous-owned bookstore. This bookstore offers new and used books with seasonal sections.

The Lore Bookstore | *220 S. Porter Ave.:* The Lore is a creative general store that sells new and used books, locally made art and handmade items. The Lore began as a mobile shop, but became a brick-and-mortar location in 2024 to better foster the love of art and community.

Speeding Bullet Comics | *614 N. Porter Ave.:* Beginning in 1998, Speeding Bullet Comics is a staple for comic lovers. In 2005, the store became a nominee for the Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailing Award. It offers graphic novels, manga and more with collectables, including action figures and T-shirts.

COMIC BOOK STORE

#1 PICK

DMDave's Books and Games | *122 W. Main St.:* With events almost every night, it's not hard to find your community at DMDave's. Shop for collectibles, books, games and everything in between, or come join the tabletop gaming. Don't be afraid to talk to the staff, who are always ready to talk about books and games.

One Stop Anime | *121 24th Ave. NW:* Make One Stop Anime your first stop for apparel, books, games, novelties, figures and snacks – whether you're in the market for the newest items or revered classics. If it's your first look into the media, stop by and talk to the workers for recommendations and tips. Join some of its tournaments and open play sessions.

Speeding Bullet Comics | *614 N. Porter Ave.:* Beginning in 1998, Speeding Bullet Comics is a staple for comic lovers. In 2005, the store became a nominee for the Will Eisner Spirit of Comics Retailing Award. It offers graphic novels, manga and more with collectables, including action figures and T-shirts.

Wizards Asylum Comics & Games | *3717 W. Main St.:* For years, this family-owned store has been selling all things comics to the Norman community. It carries the largest selection of comics and graphic novels in Oklahoma and offers a discounted subscription service for customers. After your shopping, stay to play table-top games including Thursday night Pokemon League and various Dungeons and Dragons open-groups.

STORAGE UNIT

#1 PICK

Morningstar Storage | *1606 24th Ave. SW:* When your home starts feeling a bit too packed, Morningstar Storage is the place to clear space and start fresh. Offering climate-controlled units, 24/7 security and drive-up access, it makes stashing extra belongings simple and stress-free.

Public Storage | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Public Storage makes finding an extra pocket of space effortless. Move into a new place or downsize your mess with its clean and secure facilities. Take advantage of the flexible sizing options for every budget, and rest easy knowing your possessions are safe without burning a hole in your wallet.

Storage 1 | *1331 24th Ave. SE:* Make Storage 1 your No. 1, with its modern facility featuring wide driveways for easy loading, high-tech surveillance and a variety of unit sizes to fit anything. Clear the clutter without giving up the things you love, whether it's a college dorm overflow or a storage spot for seasonal items.

BICYCLE SHOP

#1 PICK

Buchanan Bicycles | *561 Buchanan Ave.:* Buchanan Bicycles has been helping Norman stay on two wheels for decades. Stop by for a speedy tune-up, buy a sturdy bike for commuting or just pick out a new helmet, and roll out of the shop with confidence.

Neighborhood Bicycle Shop | *562 W. Main St.:* This welcoming shop offers personalized service and community-driven expertise to every rider. Get custom gear adjustments and tire repairs to ensure your bike is running smoothly, because owners Chad and Sarah Shanks live by their shop's name – everyone is their neighbor.

Phat Tire Bike Shop | *2264 W. Main St.:* Gear up for your next big cycling adventure with Phat Tire's massive selection of top-brand bicycles, accessories and apparel. It's not hard to see why the shop has expanded to 12 retail locations across two states; its full-service repair bench handles everything from flat tires to complete overhauls, so you can enjoy the trails without any hassle.

Scissortail Cycles | *127 E. Gray St.:* Dedicated to modern cycling and custom builds in downtown Norman, Scissortail's passionate crew specializes in tailored bike fittings, high-end components and precise maintenance. It's a great landing spot for anyone looking to make the leap from casual to expert cycling.

USED CAR DEALERSHIP

#1 PICK

Cavender Subaru | *3305 Corporate Centre Drive:* If you're searching for a pre-owned vehicle built to handle the changing Oklahoma weather, Cavender Subaru is the dealership for you. Its sales team ensures you drive off the lot with complete peace of mind.

Ferguson Buick GMC | *1015 Interstate Drive:* Ferguson offers an impressive selection of pre-owned trucks, SUVs and sedans that look, feel and drive as if they were brand new. The dealership's team works hard to match your budget with a dependable vehicle.

Ricky Stapleton Autos | *330 24th Ave. NW:* With an inventory that ranges from 20 to 30 vehicles,

Ricky Stapleton Autos has helped people find budget-friendly cars since 1987. The dealership makes buying easy with no fees and flexible financing – it'll work directly with your bank. Drive on in and find a budget-friendly ride to fit your lifestyle.

NEW CAR DEALERSHIP

Brookhaven Auto Care | *3701 W Robinson St.:* Serving Norman since 1977, Brookhaven Auto Care is a local family business that gained success by providing excellent service, quality parts and honesty with customers.

Cavender Subaru | *3305 Corporate Centre Drive:* If you're searching for a vehicle built to handle the changing Oklahoma weather, Cavender Subaru is the dealership for you. Its sales team ensures you drive off the lot with complete peace of mind.

Ferguson Buick GMC | *1015 Interstate Drive:* Ferguson offers an impressive selection of trucks and SUVs. The dealership's team works hard to match your budget with a dependable vehicle.

#1 PICK

Fowler Toyota | *4050 N. Interstate Drive:* Whether you're eyeing a fuel-efficient hybrid or an SUV, find your dream car with no stress at Fowler Toyota. If you can't find what you're looking for on the lot, fill out its vehicle finder service form to be informed when a vehicle matches your search.

Nelson Mazda | *821 N. Interstate Drive:* Since its founding in the late 1950s, the Nelson family has been a part of the automotive business with an unwavering commitment to customers. Don't sacrifice quality and work with Nelson Mazda on financing options that fit your needs and your budget.

CAR REPAIR

Firestone: Complete Auto Care | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Whether it's to fix strange noises or for routine maintenance, Firestone is ready to get you back on the track. Its technicians handle it all with efficiency, making keeping your vehicle in peak shape a breeze.

#1 PICK

Ron's Automotive | *1215 24th Ave. SW:* A family-owned auto repair center since 1981, Ron's has worked hard to provide the best care possible. Not only does Ron's fix what's wrong, its team educates each customer on maintenance measures to avoid future visits.

Wells Automotive | *1901 W. Lindsey St.:* Since 1992, Wells Automotive has delivered top-quality auto repair and maintenance services for Norman. Its mission is to take the guesswork out of auto care at affordable prices, meaning you can drive smoothly without breaking the bank.

CAR WASH

#1 PICK

Club Car Wash | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Join the clean car club and give your vehicle the treatment it deserves. Club Car Wash has state-of-the-art tunnel washes, high-pressure rinses and free vacuums to leave your car looking brand-new inside and out.

Cruise-In Auto Spa | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Treat your ride to a relaxing pampering session at Cruise-In Auto Spa. It offers washes, wax treatments and a multitude of finish options so your car rolls out sparkling from bumper to bumper.

Okie Express Auto Wash | *2450 W. Main St.:* Need a fast, high-quality cleaning on the go? Okie Express delivers it all in an instant. Its drive-thru wash uses eco-friendly soaps and advanced equipment to blast away dirt, leaving behind a brilliant shine every time.

EXPERIENCE

ANNUAL EXPERIENCE

Jazz in June | *201 W. Daws St.:* What started as an idea discussed over drinks and coffee spiraled into a sprawling annual cultural event and organization going into its 41st year. Jazz in June features a diverse lineup of performers over three nights and educational events with the same musicians during the day that can reignite anyone's love for music.

Medieval Fair of Norman | *2501 Jenkins Ave.:* The Medieval Fair of Norman was founded in 1977 by an OU English Department alum in honor of William Shakespeare's birthday. The fair is free to attend and offers a plethora of events to immerse yourself in: jousting tournaments, dancers and theater, juggling and human chess matches.

#1 PICK

Norman Music Festival | *Downtown Norman:* Starting in 2008, the annual Norman Music Festival has grown into a multiple-day event featuring local and national bands. It's the largest free music festival in the state. NMF transforms downtown into streets of pop-up tents, local venues and various performances each spring.

Norman Pride | *Multiple locations:* This family-friendly event features community entertainment and performances. Don't miss the grand finale: the pride parade, which is free to attend. Celebrate 2SLGBTQ+ pride with live music, local vendors and food trucks.

Summer Breeze Concert Series | *450 S. Flood Ave.:* A beloved tradition for Normanites, the Summer Breeze Concert Series features national and local musicians in performances every other Sunday from mid-May to mid-August. Don't forget a blanket and picnic basket full of snacks for family fun or a truly special date night.

ART STUDIO

#1 PICK

Firehouse Art Center | *444 S. Flood Ave.:* Founded in 1970 as a community art center and housed in a historic former fire station, Firehouse Art Center is a nonprofit dedicated to sparking creativity across Norman. The Firehouse offers ceramic pottery, glasswork and painting classes for all skill levels, along with rotating galleries and a local gift shop.



PHOTO PROVIDED

Firehouse Art Center is a nonprofit located in the historic former fire station off Flood Avenue.

Main Street Pottery | *410 E. Main St.:* Ready to try your hand at the potter's wheel? Main Street Pottery offers wheel-throwing and ceramic sculpting classes for beginners and experts. Whether you're making your own coffee mug or just spending an evening with clay, you're guaranteed a wheel-y good time.

Resonator Institute | *325 E. Main St.:* Opened in 2016, Resonator is the vision of a group of local artists dedicated to promoting all forms of creative expression. This nonprofit art space and community gallery is a launchpad for Norman artists, hosting everything from art exhibits and workshops to live music and performance art.

Uncanny Art House | *106 E. Main St.:* Featuring contemporary and outsider art exhibits, monthly "Art Hangs" and pop-up markets, this studio is all about embracing the unexpected. Find unique pieces and connect with fellow artists, regardless of age or experience levels.

MUSEUM

Fred Jones Jr. Museum of Art | *555 Elm Ave.:* Located right on campus, this world-class museum boasts a collection featuring French Impressionism, Native American artwork and contemporary pieces. Admission is free for OU students, faculty and staff. Stop by for a quick break between errands or spend hours wandering through the artwork.

National Weather Center | *120 David L. Boren Blvd.:* Visit the one-of-a-kind collaborative work environment for federal, state and academic units. About 550 research scientists, faculty and support staff work in the NWC, and the Oklahoma Weather Lab is run entirely by students. Go on a public tour to see radar technology, storm-chasing vehicles and real-time forecasting.

#1 PICK

Sam Noble Museum | *2401 Chautauqua Ave.:* Journey back in time to the prehistoric ages, with massive dinosaur skeletons – including the world's largest skull – a giant mammoth and immersive native habitat displays. This is a fan-favorite for families, students and history buffs alike.

PARTY VENUE

Legally Brewed | *123 W. Main St.:* Legally Brewed offers fun twists on classic beers. Stop by on Monday to enjoy board game night or Wednesday for $1 off 6-ounce wine pours. If you want a sweet treat with your beverage, find scrumptious cookies in the tap room from local partner Six30 Sweets.

Logie's on the Corner | *796 Asp Ave.:* Logie's sports-bar energy is always on point for college students. It offers an upper-deck patio, smoke room and multiple TVs playing sporting events. Come by for Power Hour every Friday during the school year from 4 to 6 p.m. or show up to Two Dollar Tuesday for $2 shots.

The Railhouse Event Center | *102 W. Eufaula St.:* This restored warehouse in downtown Norman offers an enchanting setting for weddings, receptions and special events. The rental venue includes chairs and tables to accommodate up to 200 guests. The Railhouse also offers office startups, freelancers and everything in between.

#1 PICK

The Standard | *315 E. Gray St.:* This beer garden is known for its relaxing, serene atmosphere with outdoor seating shaded by canopies. Enjoy cornhole while sipping on a refreshing drink or choose from the list of draft beers and IPAs. Try one of its classic burgers paired with fried okra or plan an event for family, friends or your organization.

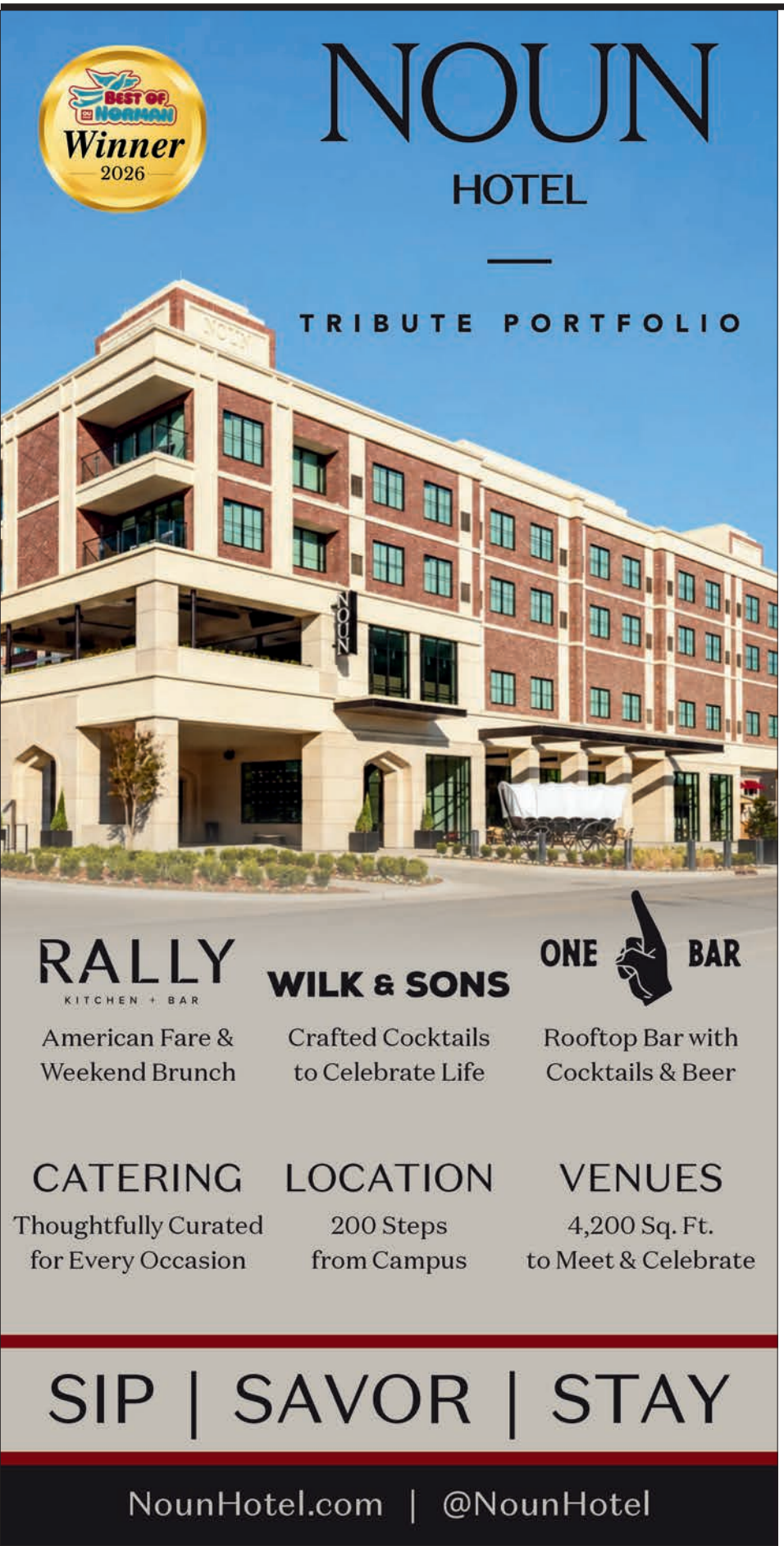
Up Together Venue | *428 E. Main St.:* Up Together Venue is praised for its top-notch customer service and great atmosphere for big or small events. With a clean and customizable layout, a kitchenette and easily-accessible location, Up Together makes it simple and stress-free to bring your event to life.

MUSIC VENUE

#1 PICK

The Deli | *309 White St.:* Norman's longest continuously running live music venue, The Deli is a historic dive bar that has serviced customers since the 1970s. The environment makes it an attraction to many. It offers live music every night with bands, signature menu items and karaoke nights.

SEE MORE >>



Legally Brewed | *123 W. Main St.:* Legally Brewed offers fun twists on classic beers. Stop by on Monday to enjoy board game night or Wednesday for $1 off 6-ounce wine pours. If you want a sweet treat with your beverage, find scrumptious cookies in the tap room from local partner Six30 Sweets.

Opolis | *113 N. Crawford Ave.:* A staple venue and vegan restaurant for 20 years, this worker-owned cooperative is a must-visit site for anyone in Norman. Stop by its dance parties or come see your favorite local musicians. Want to get into the music world yourself? Take private lessons, record in the studio or attend workshops at the Opolis Music School.

LOCAL BAND/MUSICIAN

Funny Dog: An alternative rock band from Oklahoma City and Norman, there's nothing funny about this band's skill – you'll be immersed in '90s rock from the first note. Listen to their original songs anywhere you get music and visit their website to stay up to date on when their next shows are.

#1 PICK

Mike Hosty: It's no wonder Mike Hosty has an underground following of bikers, sorority girls and everything in between; this one-man band takes "multitasking" to the next level. He plays the drums with his feet, sings and plays the guitar all at the same time, occasionally mixing in harmonicas and kazoos. Show up to any of his nearly 250 shows a year and know you're in for a good time.

Renown Worship | *1203 Elm Ave.:* Renown Worship is a rotating roster of band members – with a handful of regulars – that aim to usher God's presence into each room they play with contemporary Christian music. Visit Haystack Coffee every Wednesday at 8:30 p.m. or listen to them on Spotify to keep the worship going.

ENTERTAINMENT/ACTIVITY CENTER

#1 PICK

HeyDay Entertainment | *3201 Market Place:* This massive entertainment hub has something for every age, including two levels of laser tag, a bowling alley, mini golf and a sprawling arcade. Top it all off with a craft cocktail or pizza, and you've got the ultimate weekend outing. *(This business has closed since being voted a Best of Norman entertainment/activity center.)*

Main Event | *1929 Mt. Williams Way:* Take casual hangouts to a whole new level – literally, when playing laser tag. Featuring bowling, gravity-defying rope courses and arcade games, this venue is built for friendly competition. It's a great place for birthday parties, family nights out and blowing off steam after a long week.

Sooner Bowling Center | *550 24th Ave. NW:* A staple of the Norman area, Sooner Bowling Center is modern fun with retro charm. Featuring 24 lanes, bowling nights, and a grill, Sooner Bowling Center guarantees you'll roll right into a good time.

The Well | *210 S. James Garner Ave.:* As a Norman community hub, The Well is where local health and culture run deep. Hosting weekly farmers markets, cooking and wellness classes and seasonal gatherings, the Well is a source of renewal, support and shared resources.

PLACE TO PLAY POOL

The Bluebonnet Bar | *321 E. Main St.:* Established almost a century ago, the Bluebonnet Bar is a staple for live music. It's outfitted with classic entertainment, including pool tables and shuffleboard. The bar is a home for all ages 21 and up – with dominoes in the early afternoon and live entertainment at night.

#1 PICK

Louie's Grill & Bar | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Louie's Grill & Bar is an American eatery and pub decked out with flat-screen TVs that make it the perfect spot for game day, whether you want to catch Sooner football or OKC Thunder basketball. Don't miss out on the Big Lou – a burger with American cheese, pickles, grilled onions and mustard. Kids eat free on Wednesdays with the purchase of an adult entree.

Maximillian's Social Club | *101 S. Porter Ave.:* Maximillian's offers a casual yet elevated atmosphere. Known for its welcoming crowd, great drink specials and pool tables, this social club makes it easy to stick around and come back the next day.

Oklahoma Memorial Union | *900 Asp Ave.:* On the OU campus, the Union's game rooms are the go-to spot for students looking to unwind between classes or meet up after a long day. Test your skills at ping pong or challenge friends to electronic games, and get a meal after it all. *(These pool tables have closed since being voted a Best of Norman place to play pool.)*

OUTDOOR EXPERIENCE

#1 PICK

George M. Sutton Wilderness Park | *1920 12th Ave. NE:* Escape the hustle and bustle of the city without having to leave Norman. Enjoy Sutton's peaceful pond, open fields and winding trails. Whether you're there to jog, birdwatch, fish or walk your dog, it offers a breath of fresh air.

Brandt Park | *500 E. Lindsey St.:* More commonly known as the Duck Pond, Brandt Park is a quintessential hangout spot for OU students and Normanites. This is a prime location for afternoon picnics, quiet getaways and duck watching.

The Mont | *1300 Classen Blvd.:* Known for its Sooner Swirl and loaded cheese fries, The Mont is a Norman staple. Celebrate your birthday there for a free T-shirt. With timeless ambiance and attentive service, The Mont is a bucket list restaurant experience for many OU students, visitors and Normanites.

GOLF COURSE

#1 PICK

Jimmie Austin Golf Club | *4 Ransom Drive:* Located on what was once the Navy Air Technical Training Center, the Jimmie Austin Golf Club has played host to

multiple championships and unparalleled golfing experience. It features immaculate greens, challenging water hazards and rolling fairways.

The Trails Golf Club | *3200 S. Berry Road:* The Trails offers a secluded oasis for golf enthusiasts from beginner to expert. Trees line the fairways and greens. Refine your putt and enjoy a relaxed day out on the course, then stop by its grill and lounge to get a bite to eat.

Westwood Golf Course | *2400 Westport Drive:* Owned and operated by the City of Norman, Westwood is a public course that's accessible and wallet-friendly. It has an 18-hole layout, a driving range and a pro shop, making it perfect for a quick round with friends. Look out for the several water hazards on the course that make it fun for both casual and seasoned golfers.

PLACE TO FISH

George M. Sutton Wilderness Park | *1920 12th Ave. NE:* Escape the hustle and bustle of the city without having to leave Norman. Enjoy Sutton's peaceful pond, open fields and winding trails. Whether you're there to jog, birdwatch, fish or walk your dog, it offers a breath of fresh air.

Hall Park Lake: A hidden local secret for a relaxing day near the water, Hall Park Lake is the perfect place to cast a line. Its calm waters are packed with bass and catfish. It's a peaceful piece of nature right in Hall Park.

#1 PICK

Lake Thunderbird | *13101 Alameda Drive:* A go-to spot for students and Normanites alike, Lake Thunderbird offers vast open waters and miles of shoreline perfect for casting a line or a scenic hangout. Find plenty of crappie, catfish and bass waiting to take the bait.

PLACE TO PLAY
PICK-UP BASKETBALL

Sarkeys Fitness Center | *1401 Asp Ave.:* Perfect for OU students, Sarkeys Fitness Center is located in the heart of campus, just a few steps away from most of the residence halls. Sarkeys offers free membership for all OU students along with several courts, an indoor track, weight and cardio rooms and a climbing wall.

YMCA | *1350 Lexington Ave.:* Like the song suggests, it's always fun at the YMCA. The Norman location brings players of all ages and skill levels together for friendly, competitive pick-up games. It's a great place to drop in, lace up your sneakers and get a solid workout in.

#1 PICK

Young Family Athletic Center | *2201 Trae Young Drive:* With a massive 74-foot video screen for live game displays and eight courts, the Young Family Athletic Center is an ideal setting for youth and adult co-ed leagues, camps, rentals and tournaments. Whether you're a serious or casual basketball player, the YFAC is the place for you.

PICKLEBALL COURT

#1 PICK

Hey Pickle Pickle | *3251 Market Place:* It will be hard to say "Bye Pickle Pickle" after visiting this court. The indoor facility offers courts to play in any weather, along with leagues and lessons to ensure every season is pickleball season. Whether you're a beginner or a pro, there's a paddle waiting for you.

Timberdell Tennis Courts | *W. Timberdell Road:* Right on campus, Timberdell has 10 courts for tennis and pickleball that make it easy for all students. It operates on a first-come, first-served basis that's a go-to spot for friendly competition under the sun.

Westwood Tennis Center | *2420 Westport Drive:* No longer just for tennis, Westwood is a major hub for Norman's pickleball enthusiasts. Regular open-play sessions make it easy for players of all skill levels to drop in for a quick match. Players can book a court three days out.

HOTEL

Embassy Suites Convention Center Hotel | *2501 Conference Drive:* Looking to suite-en your stay? Embassy Suites has complimentary evening reception, an indoor pool and free made-to-order breakfasts. Its connected convention space makes it great for business, too.

NCED Conference Center and Hotel | *2801 Highway 9:* Spanning over 70 acres, this hotel and retreat center is an epicenter for relaxation, learning and gathering. You'll know you're making a good choice when you visit the extensive fitness amenities, outdoor pool and quiet walking paths.

#1 PICK

NOUN Hotel | *542 S. University Blvd.:* Directly across from Campus Corner, NOUN brings refined style and luxury right to OU's doorstep. With carefully curated rooms, a vibrant bar and an upscale restaurant, it's an essential way to upgrade your Norman experience.

SPA

#1 PICK

Le Visage Spa & Wellness | *3540 RC Luttrell Drive:* Give yourself the ultimate reset at Le Visage, where personalized skincare takes center stage. It specializes in facials, body treatments and health coaching. Put your best face forward and walk out glowing.

Nature Day Spa | *301 S. Porter Ave.:* Put yourself first and keep a clean conscience at Nature Day Spa, with an eco-friendly approach to wellness and skincare. Book an appointment and enjoy everything from soothing deep-tissue massages to refreshing body scrubs.

Oodelah | *2222 Westpark Drive:* Suffering from chronic pain? Oodelah has been there and has you covered. Known for its cozy atmosphere and attentive staff, it's the perfect place to treat yourself. Drop in for a quick massage or entire package.

HEALTH

YOGA/PILATES

Simply Yoga | *501 N. Porter Ave.:* Whether you are looking to build strength, improve balance, or rest and relax your body, Simply Yoga is the spot for you. If you are a local student, Simply Yoga offers discount deals in addition to packages and drop-in rates.

SPACE Yoga | *3770 W. Robinson St.:* This yoga studio brings rest and healing to your mind, body and soul. With heated, restorative and grounding classes SPACE Yoga has a class fit for you. First time participants can use the code 1FREE to enjoy one of its daily classes.

#1 PICK

Sweat at Selah | *18818 Selah Way:* Selah's goal is to leave you feeling not just physically recharged but mentally as well. Located in Norman's urban living community, this yoga studio is perfect for residents and nonresidents who love a friendly boutique fitness studio.

Pilates Fitness Center | *210 36th Ave. SW:* When you finish your first session at the YMCA center, you'll be asking yourself why you didn't go sooner. Pilates Fitness offers small group reformer and mat classes focused on form, flexibility and controlled movement. Whether you're a complete beginner or long-time pilates enjoyer, this is the place for you.

GYM

The Athletic Loft | *3058 Classen Blvd.:* The Athletic Loft is a 24-hour fitness center perfect for people looking for the latest studio and cardio equipment. For members of the gym, it offers free tanning services and group fitness sessions.

The Health Club | *2301 36th Ave. NW:* The Health Club's mission statement of "getting us all to a healthier place" is backed up with its highly-trained professionals, premium equipment and body composition testing. The club offers cardiac rehabilitation programs and special discounts for cancer patients and survivors.

#1 PICK

Sarkeys Fitness Center | *1401 Asp Ave.:* Perfect for OU students, Sarkeys Fitness Center is located in the heart of campus, just a few steps away from most of the residence halls. Sarkeys offers free membership for all OU students along with several courts, an indoor track, weight and cardio rooms and a climbing wall.

Steel Fitness & Tan | *1051 12th Ave. NE:* Locally owned and operated since 1988, Steel Fitness & Tan makes you feel at home with its friendly and clean atmosphere. Offering tanning services, aerobic classes, childcare, personal trainers and 24/7 hours of operation, this gym meets you right where you are.

URGENT CARE

Classen Family Medicine | *2824 Classen Blvd.:* A primary care provider who truly cares about you and your family, Classen Family Medicine has been one of Norman's favorite clinics for over a decade. From wellness screenings to chronic disease management, Classen Family Medical makes sure you and your family are taken care of, just like its mission statement says.

#1 PICK

Classen Urgent Care | *2818 Classen Blvd.:* Walk-ins are welcome at Classen Urgent Care, with a guarantee that patients are seen 20 minutes from when they first walk through the door. Classen Urgent Care received the Norman Transcript Readers' Choice Award for best healthcare facility in 2025.

Immediate Care of Norman | *Multiple Locations across Norman:* This clinic is easily accessible from major roads and landmarks, making it convenient for Norman patients and others from the surrounding areas. This clinic offers walk-ins that meet your primary and urgent care needs close to home.

INTEGRIS Health | *2361 36th Ave. NW:* With personalized ongoing care, INTEGRIS Health offers a wide range of family healthcare services, from infants to seniors, to guarantee everyone in your family is properly taken care of.

DENTIST

Gabriel Bird DDS | *227 W. Main St.:* "Norman's Dentist" wants to put a smile on your face, offering general and cosmetic dental services, such as porcelain veneers, dental implants, crowns and bridges. Your teeth will feel healthy and look as good as new.

Heritage Dental | *3600 W. Tecumseh Road:* This family-focused dental office offers over 50 years of proficiency and a relaxing experience at every visit. Heritage Dental provides modern X-ray services, preventive cleanings, gum disease treatment and a range of cosmetic and general dentistry.

#1 PICK

Norman Family Dentistry | *709 W. Main St.:* Feel right at home when you walk into Norman Family Dentistry – it's just as committed to your smile as you. Its friendly team goes the extra mile to make every visit comfortable, ensuring you walk out with the pearly whites you want.

VETERINARIAN

Cat Clinic of Norman | *1000 E. Alameda St.:* Cat Clinic of Norman will have all your furry friends feeline purrrfect. The clinic's mission is to educate all cat owners about feline health, provide progressive evidence-based medicine and treat your furbabies with personalized care.

McGee Street Animal Hospital | *1140 McGee Drive:* McGee Street Animal Hospital has worked with pet families since 1974, providing veterinary care from a personal and experienced team. The team will provide your pet with a wide range of services, from routine wellness care and vaccinations to life-saving surgery.

SEE MORE >>

Rose Rock Veterinary Hospital and Pet Resort | *400 24th Ave. NW.:* Rose Rock Veterinary Hospital and Pet Resort is a full service clinic and spa for your furry friend. Rose Rock works with you to create a lifetime preventive healthcare plan. Not only is it a pet hospital, but it is also your pet's home away from home, offering luxury room and boarding services.

Sooner Veterinary Hospital | *107 Vicksburg Ave.:* Established in 1981, Sooner Vet has been serving Normanites with knowledgeable pet medical care. Its four full-time veterinarians and support staff provide Norman pet owners with a wide range of medical and wellness services. Sooner Vet offers a 10% discount to students, teachers, police, military, veterans and senior citizens.

OPTOMETRIST

Eyecare Norman | *1021 24th Ave. NW:* "Your vision, our priority." Eyecare Norman has been serving the Norman community for over 20 years. Its dedicated team prescribes the most optimal glasses or contacts and helps treat various eye conditions.

Miller Vision Center | *316 W. Main St.:* Serving the Norman community since 2005, Miller Vision Center is "Your home for happy eyes." If you are in the market for a new pair of contacts or eye glasses, Miller Vision Center offers a multitude of popular eyewear brands along with services ranging from regular eye exams to eye disease treatment.

Norman Vision Clinic | *2501 Boardwalk St.:* Norman Vision Clinic is here to help you find the perfect pair of glasses from the comfort of your own home. With its new easy online ordering portal, you can browse glasses and contacts virtually or in-office. Norman Vision Clinic has been a leading provider of eyecare products since 1995.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

Physical Therapy Central | *Multiple locations across Norman*: Back pains? Sports-related injuries? Equilibrium feeling off? PT Central's team of professional therapists employs techniques including soft tissue therapy, manipulation and joint mobilization to get you back to feeling like your best self.

Therapy in Motion | *Multiple locations across Norman:* Receiving the Norman Transcript Readers Choice Award for the best physical therapy in Norman, Therapy in Motion prides itself in patient care. From convenient locations to comfortable treatment areas, this physical therapy center provides over 20 services to ensure careful and timely rehabilitation.

WIN Physical Therapy | *118 Thompson Drive:* At this family-run clinic, physical therapists Jimmy and Kim Robinson serve the Norman community by ensuring each patient gets a personal experience. Physical therapists treat a multitude of physical pains using treatment techniques such as cupping, dry needling, mobilization and therapeutic exercise.

COUNSELING SERVICES

Grace River Christian Counseling | *2212 Westpark Drive:* Grace River is a nonprofit organization with a mission to provide Christian-based counseling to all walks of life. Its team uses Christian principles and sound psychological practices to "treat the entire person."

Norman Behavioral Health Group | *712 Wall St.:* Norman Behavioral Health Group serves the Norman community through providing family, couple, individual and pediatric counseling services. Its clinical psychologists and licensed counselors meet you where you are, with 20 counseling services to create a personalized counseling plan that satisfies your emotional needs and physical commitments.

Peak Behavioral Health | *2405 Palmer Circle:* Peak Behavioral Health supports you and your family to help navigate intellectual disabilities, language delays and difficulties with motor skills. After initial assessment, Peak Behavioral Health creates a comprehensive treatment plan in sync with its many behavioral services and techniques.

Red Road Counseling Services | *1139 36th Ave. NW:* Red Road Counseling Services strives to protect, impact and involve the Oklahoma community it serves. As a part of its wide range of counseling services, Red Road offers telehealth for patients who would like an affordable and personable therapy service from the comfort of home.

PEDIATRICIAN

Little Axe Health Center | *15951 Little Axe Drive:* Little Axe Health Center currently sees all Native Americans, Soonercare members and insured AST employees. Little Axe is proud to bring a new era of healthcare to the Native American community through holistic and evidence-based practices that address all healthcare needs.

Norman Pediatric Associates | *3231 Healthplex Drive:* Norman Pediatric Associates serves the Norman community from "cradle to college" by providing premiere pediatric services, including newborn care, vision screening, nutrition guidance and immunizations. Norman Pediatric Associates guarantees its many pediatricians and pediatric providers will tend to your child.

Premiere Pediatrics | *3261 24th Ave. NW, Suite 101:* Serving the Norman community since 1982, Premiere Pediatrics is committed to giving patients high-quality care while facilitating lifelong relationships between staff and patients. Premiere Pediatrics is the proud home of four award-winning pediatric physicians and seven nurse practitioners.

SOONER FAVORITES

COLLEGES

Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences | *633 Elm Ave.:* Founded in 1892 as the College of Liberal Arts, Dodge Family College of Arts and Sciences provides OU students a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs, as well as extensive research opportunities. The college offers more than 60 majors including biology, chemistry, physics, economics, political science, psychology and public health, with extensive research opportunities.

Gallogly College of Engineering | *202 W. Boyd St.:* Gallogly College of Engineering offers undergraduate students over 35 degree paths – such as aerospace, chemical, electrical and industrial engineering. The college received $52 million in research grants for the fiscal year 2024 and had an 85% employment rate post graduation as of the 2023-24 school year.

Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication | *395 W. Lindsey St.:* Gaylord College of Journalism and Mass Communication is recognized as the No. 1 media program in the country by student achievement, offering students a wide range of degree programs and a plethora of media internship opportunities. The college is named after the former publisher of The Oklahoman, Edward Lewis Gaylord.

Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education | *820 Van Vleet Oval:* Dedicated to preparing teachers for K-12 classrooms, the Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education builds and encourages the teachers who will shape the futures of the generations to come. It offers programs in everything a future educator might need, including special education, STEM teaching and educational leadership.

Price College of Business | *307 W. Brooks St.:* OU students have the option to partake in top-ranked programs including finance, marketing, entrepreneurship and supply chain management. The college connects students with internships, mentorships and hands-on experience to ensure each one of them is ready to step into the business world.

OU ATHLETE

Tristan Davison: A forward for OU's hockey team, Tristan Davison brings dedication, heart and energy to the rink. Davison grew up as one of 13 relatives playing the sport, which pushed him to follow the same calling. Last season, he amassed 30 total points, with five goals and six assists.

John Mateer: As the name on the back of many jerseys, starting quarterback John Mateer is known for his explosive play. Though he suffered a hand injury and had a subsequent surgery, Mateer led the Sooners to an overall record of 10-3 and a 6-2 SEC record during the 2025 season.

Isaiah Sategna III: It's no surprise Isaiah Sategna is the SEC's leading returning receiver after last season, with 67 receptions for 965 yards and eight touchdowns across all 13 games. He's known for his blazing speed and knack for game-changing plays, entering 2026 projected by some analysts to lead the conference in receiving yards for another season.

Kendall Wells: Taking the collegiate softball world by storm by shattering the single-season freshman home run record with 39 blasts last year, Kendall Wells earned her National Fastpitch Coaches Association and SEC Freshman of the Year honors. She sports a 1.106 slugging percent, one of the top in the nation.

MOST INVOLVED GREEK ORGANIZATION

Interfraternity Council: Uniting 18 fraternities across campus, the Interfraternity Council builds leaders who are involved in academics, philanthropy and campus life. IFC members are always at the center of the action, whether it's community service or game day events.

Multicultural Greek Council: The Multicultural Greek Council is the home for culture-based fraternities and sororities, celebrating diversity and service. Serving a combined total of 11 sororities and fraternities, MGC brings rich heritage to OU through educational forums, community outreach and cultural showcases.

The National Panhellenic Conference: With 26 member organizations across 665 campuses, the National Panhellenic Conference has empowered its members to raise millions of dollars in philanthropic support for worthy causes across the nation for the past 124 years. It stands by four core values: belonging, collaboration, relevance and respect.

STUDENT ORGANIZATION

iLink International: iLink International builds connections and bridges cultures together. With cultural dinners, language exchanges and social outings, iLink helps everyone put the "home" in Oklahoma.

OU BCM | *1203 Elm Ave.:* The OU Baptist Collegiate Ministry aims to help students know, love and glorify God by developing student leaders and disciples. It hosts a number of weekly and monthly events, including Renown worship on Wednesday nights and various challenge groups.

President's Leadership Class | *900 Asp Ave.:* Bringing together some of OU's most motivated freshmen, President's Leadership Class focuses on developing leaders through mentorship, community service and seminars. Members gain early access to campus leadership roles and form bonds that last well after graduation.

PLACE TO EAT WHEN YOUR PARENTS ARE PAYING

#1 PICK

Benvenuti's Ristorante | *105 W. Main St.:* Founded in 2005, Benvenuti's blends traditional Italian dishes with flavorful twists. With over 150 boutique wine selections offered by the bottle, half-bottle and tasting flights, it's easy to celebrate your loved ones on a special night out. Try the snow crab claws, sauteed in garlic-lemon white wine butter sauce.

Charleston's Restaurant | *300 Ed Noble Parkway:* Charleston's is a top-tier choice for upscale American classics. Known for its spinach artichoke dip, prime rib and baked potato soup, it's an easy choice to bring the parents. End your meal off with a slice of pie, if you don't get too full eating the appetizers and main dishes first.

The Mont | *1300 Classen Blvd.:* Known for its Sooner Swirl and loaded cheese fries, The Mont is a Norman staple. Celebrate your birthday there for a free T-shirt. With timeless ambiance and attentive service, The Mont is a bucket list restaurant experience for many OU students, visitors and Normanites.

Ranch Steakhouse | *2120 24th Ave. NW:* Going all-out for a celebration? Ranch Steakhouse is your match. The high-end, traditional steakhouse features prime cuts of beef, fresh seafood and an extensive wine list. Its dimly lit ambiance makes it feel like an absolute treat from the moment you sit down.

The Winston | *106 W. Main St.:* The Winston puts a modern spin on classics and hosts a happy hour that'll have your wallet thanking you. Sit on its dog-friendly patio no matter the season, equipped with fans and heaters. While the weather's still hot, try the pulled pork sandwich with a Frozen Watermelon Fresca.

CAMPUS FOOD

Baja Fresh Express | *900 Asp Ave.:* Want quick, custom Mexican food? Stop by Baja Fresh to get a loaded burrito, cheesy quesadillas or filling rice bowls that ensure you power through your afternoon lectures. It's an easy way to stay healthy without having to leave campus.

#1 PICK

Chick-Fil-A | *Multiple locations*: A go-to for many OU students, Chick-Fil-A offers chicken, fries and desserts that'll be your pleasure to eat. Order any of the classics – from the sandwiches to the nuggets, fried or grilled – and don't forget to grab some sauce.

Couch Restaurants | *333 Fourth St.:* Home to the world's only all-you-care-to-eat Chick-Fil-A, along with 13 other restaurants serving stir fry, barbecue, Halal, mediterranean and vegan dishes. Grab a bite with your friends at a place that ensures there's something for everyone, and end the afternoon with one of its many desserts.

Quiznos | *900 Asp Ave.:* An ideal stop between classes, Quiznos serves warm, toasted subs loaded with meats, cheeses and bold signature sauces. Try its chicken carbonara sandwich served on rosemary Parmesan bread, and grab a soup or salad to go with it.

CAMPUS PHOTO OP

#1 PICK

Bizzell Memorial Library | *401 W. Brooks St.:* One of the most photographed spots in the state, the Bizz is both a historical landmark and a go-to spot for students. The building houses thousands of books, along with research collections. It's no wonder it's a stopping point for all locals and tourists alike.

Gaylord Family-Oklahoma Memorial Stadium | *1185 Asp Ave.:* Nothing captures the spirit of OU quite like a photo in front of the football stadium – especially on game day. It's an absolute must-visit location for students, alum and visiting fans.

The Spoonholder | *OU North Oval lawn:* Legend has it that any couple who shares a kiss on this stone bench in the North Oval is destined to get married. Drop by to snap a timeless photo with friends or with that special someone.

CAMPUS STUDY SPOT

#1 PICK

Bizzell Memorial Library | *401 W. Brooks St.:* One of the most photographed spots in the state, the Biz is both a historical landmark and a go-to spot for any student. The building houses five floors filled with books and research collections. It's no wonder it's a stopping point for students, locals and tourists alike.

Gaylord College creative lab | *395 W. Lindsey St.:* Lined with high-powered desktop computers, editing software and work stations, the lab is a Gaylord student's dream – especially when up against a deadline. It's perfect for group collaboration and total focus.

Starbucks at the Oklahoma Memorial Union | *900 Asp Ave.:* Who doesn't love getting work done at a coffee shop? You don't even have to leave campus when you stop at this Starbucks, making it an ideal spot for breaks between classes and for study sessions with friends.

ANNUAL CAMPUS EVENT

The Big Event: As OU's largest day of community service, The Big Event brings thousands of students, faculty and staff together as one massive "thank you" to the Norman and Oklahoma City metro area. Volunteers spread across the city to help charities and residents in need, all while making memories with their closest friends.

Camp Crimson: Where every Sooner's story begins, Camp Crimson is the ultimate crash course in OU traditions, chants and life. It's led by energetic student mentors and gives students the opportunity to make lifelong friends while learning the lay of the land.

#1 PICK

Family Weekend: Bring a little bit of home to Norman by inviting your parents to Family Weekend, where they'll experience tailgating, campus tours and Sooner football. This wonderful tradition lets students show off their college home, introduce friends and share OU spirit with their loved ones.





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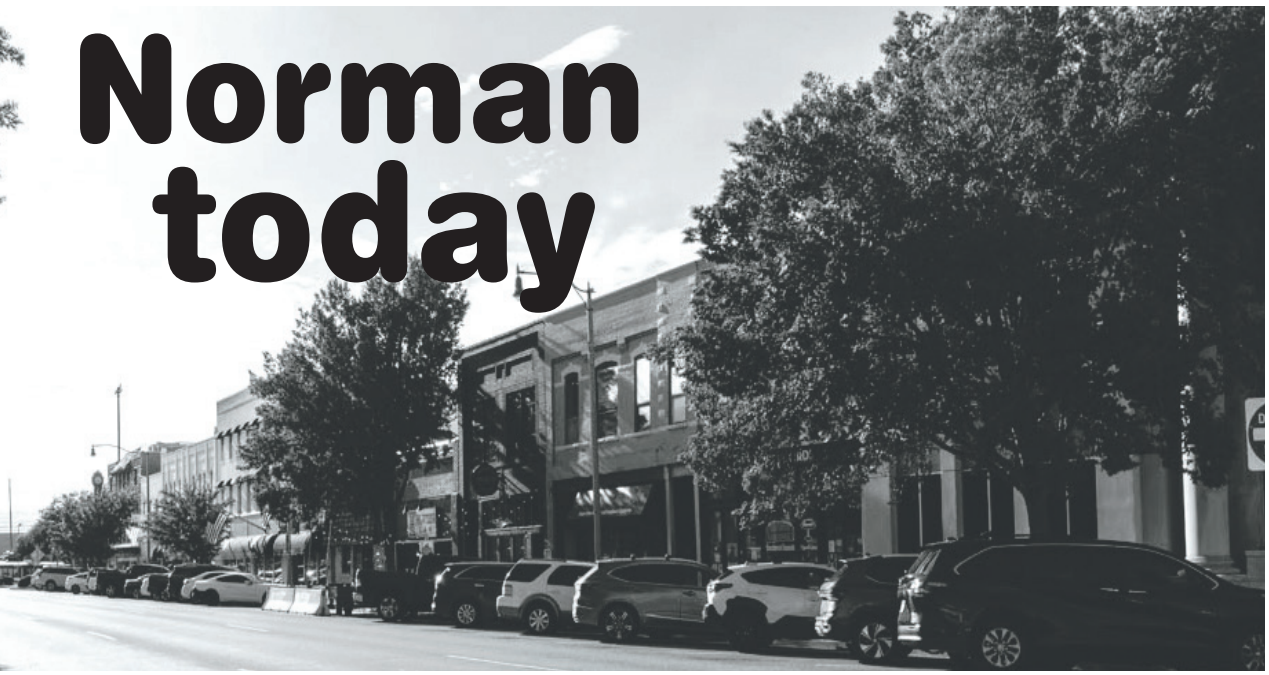
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Norman today



ZSOPHIA TOWSON/OU DAILY

Norman community members hope to keep the city's local feel by supporting independently-owned businesses.

How belief in community endures despite growth

BY KAYLEE HOPKINS • KAYLEE.S.HOPKINS-1@OU.EDU

New development may change Norman's landscape, but the city's character is shaped by something harder to measure: local businesses, traditions and gathering places that bring people together.

For Bonnie Amspacher, owner of The Diner, Norman's identity comes down to its small-town feel, local business scene and sense of community.

Many people who visit The Diner, a chili parlor and brunch stop on Main Street, bring old memories of Norman with them, sharing stories about what life used to look like.

The sense of community stretches beyond these shared stories, according to Amspacher.

"I think the best way to describe that is when people come in to eat, and they see other people they know, and they're like, 'Oh, hey, it's you. How are you?'" Amspacher said. "Or when you'll be talking to a customer from a table, and someone at another table chimes in, and then it's sort of like a conversation in the whole restaurant."

With OU now in the Southeastern Conference, more out-of-town fans have been eating at The Diner, bringing new faces into a restaurant where longtime residents continue to gather. This closeness is what Amspacher hopes Norman never loses as it continues to grow.

"I hope that it holds on to its ... funky, local flavor," Amspacher said. "I hope that (Norman) doesn't expand and get so big that it can't support local, interesting places, because it's when places get so big, a lot of times it's just chains."

Amspacher emphasizes the unique experiences that local businesses offer. She hopes that as Norman grows, it doesn't lose the identity and community these businesses have fostered.

"I would like to encourage the people of Norman to come out and support independently owned local businesses," Amspacher said. "I feel like they do a lot to make a place have a form of identity and build a sense of community that I think people need to be happy and thrive. It's a lot of hard work, and we need their support."

Norman's identity is also shaped by the people who study and work here.



ZSOPHIA TOWSON/OU DAILY

Second Wind Coffeehouse is a nonprofit cafe on Campus Corner that accepts donations rather than set prices.

Dawn Solis, coffeehouse director of Second Wind Coffeehouse and OU literary and social studies junior, said that the variety of backgrounds and beliefs in Norman differ from what she experienced in her hometown.

"It's very radical to be able to see the way that people talk to each other and the amount of political activism that is in the space, even just at OU, but overall in the metro city area," Solis said. "It's very interesting to see the different ideologies that I come across. Even just having multiple religions in one space is very interesting to me."

Solis described Second Wind as a "melting pot," something that echoes the diversity seen throughout Norman.

"We have different people ... and that is what makes Second Wind such a safe space and such a great space," Solis said.

Solis sees the university as the central part of Norman, the thing that distinguishes it from other cities. Its influence can be seen even in the way traffic and business hours revolve around students' schedules.

"This very much is a college town," Solis said. "I feel like there's no way to get away from that."

Solis' favorite Norman tradition stems from university culture: "Boomer Sooner." When fans walk around on game day, Solis enjoys watching them yell "Boomer" and "Sooner" to each other.

"That just brings up such catharsis in me because I grew up watching the game on TV, and now I get to be a part of the action now that I live on campus," Solis said. "It's a lot of fun."

The university may anchor Norman as a college town, but its influence reaches beyond campus and the football stadium.

Wess McMichael, owner of McMichael Music and co-founder of Norman Porch Fest, said the university helps make Norman a cultural center by attracting artists and intellectuals. The city's music scene also influenced his decision to move to Norman.

When he was younger, McMichael said he would travel to Norman to play chess with OU's chess club. Afterward, he would walk around Campus Corner and listen to the different musicians.

"I was like, 'Wow, this is really cool!'" McMichael said. "I hadn't seen anything like that since I was in Austin, so I got my ducks in a row and I moved down here."

The combination of artistic opportunities and small-town setting continues to be a big part of Norman's appeal. McMichael said Norman offers opportunities to experience "big city sorts of art" while maintaining a friendly, smaller community feel.

That balance is reflected in Norman's music scene, which includes longstanding venues such as The Deli and Bluebonnet Bar, as well as newer additions like Opolis.

Like Amspacher, McMichael hopes Norman continues to support local art and businesses.

"I would like to see it keep the small-town friendly attitude, not become corporate," McMichael said. "Fight that urge. Keep it small and local."

Norman will continue to grow and change, but it is not necessarily defined by its size or the number of students who live here.

It lives in conversations between customers in a restaurant, the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs in a coffee shop, the traditions that unite the city and the artists that bring everyone together.

Arts scene soars



KAYLA REINICK/OU DAILY

The Norman Arts Council was created in 1976 and has provided grants, scholarships and support for arts across the city.

Norman arts flourish through community support, investment

BY KOLBY BROWN • KOLBY.K.BROWN-1@OU.EDU

Norman has dedicated itself to art and culture in the community, with a push for historical preservation, arts cultivation and education in the last 50 years.

Being a university town is an important pillar of Norman's arts scene, with students adding to the push for artistic creation and expression. Norman Arts Council Executive Director Leslie Nottingham said Norman's involvement in the arts stretches far back.

"I think (art) always existed here in Norman, and I think a large part of that's due to the university," Nottingham said. "We get all these fresh thoughts, these really dedicated people who are into education and learning, and they come and they don't just join the university — they join our community as a whole."

While the university has always supported Norman's arts, Nottingham said there was noticeable change five decades ago, when the city began to form organizational support for the arts community.

"There was a great push in the '70s for a lot of communities to start arts councils, and that's typically when you see them cropping up across the United States," Nottingham said. "It's the '70s where these things are starting to get established. There's a need that people are reacting to."

Norman Arts Council was one of those established, providing organizational and artist grants, offering arts education scholarships, supporting public art and developing and running MAINSITE Contemporary Art.

Following the Norman Arts Council's establishment in 1976 came the guest tax, which Nottingham attributes to the art community's growth.

"It's that hotel tax that really gives us our main tenet and gives us the core of our mission," Nottingham said.

The guest tax — paid by visitors on their short-term stays in hotels, motels and rentals — was first established in Norman in 1981, according to the council's website. Norman Arts Council utilized this tax to fund its various arts programs. The tax has increased multiple times since its establishment: in 2013, 2023 and again in 2026 to sit at a current rate of 10%.

Born and raised in Norman, Shari Jackson — executive director of The Depot, Norman Music Alliance and producer of Norman Music Festival — agrees with Nottingham that Norman has always been a thriving arts community, but that the guest tax incited widespread involvement.

"One of the things that really shifted the arts and made them explode over the last few decades was something that Norman, Oklahoma has that a lot of communities don't, … the hotel guest tax," Jackson said. "Creating that and creating a funding mechanism for the Norman Arts Council to be able to give that money to arts organizations trying to get up and running and create events for the community made it possible for some extraordinary growth in the arts."

According to Jackson, the guest tax increased production

quality of events and advertising for arts organizations that, prior to the early 1980s, were more casual.

"The formal part came with the money part. Before that it was a lot (of) DIY, and we have this funny perception sometimes about free things not necessarily being as good as something that feels a little more expensive," Jackson said. "Getting some money and being able to produce and being able to formalize some of the things in our art scene makes them a little more legit."

One of the most notable events within Norman's arts scene is Norman Music Festival, a free three-day music festival that fills Main Street with tens of thousands of concertgoers each April. Founded by the Norman Arts Council in 2008, around 13,000 people showed up to the inaugural event — showing Norman's love for live music and establishing the festival as an annual event.

Norman Music Alliance was created in 2012 with the intention to support the festival effort and local musicians, and Jackson was appointed as its first executive director in 2015. Platforming more than 200 bands each year, composed almost completely of Oklahoman bands, the festival stays localized despite its massive growth.

Downtown Norman became the Walker Arts District in 2015, a certified cultural district for its dedication to supporting the arts, historic roots and events.

In the last decade, Norman has continued to be an advocate of arts and expression with help from members of the arts community — including artist, musician, photographer and creative director of Uncanny Art House, Chase Spivey.

Spivey has lived in Norman since 2000, and has been heavily involved in Norman fine arts since arriving— helping start a co-op gallery called Form and Function Lab in 2009, around the time of downtown Norman's renaissance, with 2nd Friday Art Walks and Norman Music Festival.

This arts renaissance inspired Spivey to begin creating marker on Mylar — a shiny polyester film — drawings and paintings, which have been featured at MAINSITE, Uncanny Art House and at an Oklahoma Visual Arts Coalition Members Show.

One of Spivey's longest gigs is capturing promotional content for local bands. Spivey has done photography, videography and drone work for Oklahoma-based groups Sisteria, rapper Jabee and his own bands — garage rock band Therogy and Ghost of Monkshood — as well as other groups on their record label. He was also responsible for campaign videos and a commercial for Mayor Stephen Tyler Holman.

Spivey continues to explore the arts, recently venturing into theater as a cast member of Sooner Theatre's "Les Miserables" this fall, his first time singing on stage since being in Ghost of Monkshood.

Sooner Theatre has been a pivotal aspect of downtown Main Street for decades, as the region's first talking picture movie theater and now as the community's main performing arts center. The building closed in 1975 as the theater struggled, but was saved from demolition through community demand, reopening in 1982 as a rental theater space after restoration efforts.

Sooner Theatre became a nonprofit organization in 1976, beginning its first busy season of shows in the early 2000s. PR and development director of Sooner Theatre Nancy Coggins said the community has been incredibly supportive of their mission, as they've now grown to two spaces on Main Street.

"It's not just the downtown community, the entire community of Norman. Everyone has been so incredibly supportive of the Sooner Theatre and our programming," Coggins said.

This support is not just for Sooner Theatre, as Coggins said the community has a desire for cultivating a vibrant arts scene in Norman.

"I'm grateful that our community understands the importance of vibrant districts all over our city, and so the downtown district is just one of those," Coggins said. "I'm grateful that it's alive and well, and people are doing great things down here."

Norman's art scene is also inclusive. Spivey said collaboration across disciplines in the arts community in the city makes it easy for beginner artists to get their foot in the door.

"A lot of artists here work with each other on numerous different projects. There's not a lot of infighting in the art scene here. There's a lot of collaboration and building each other up and supporting each other, and I think that's really cool," Spivey said. "You don't really see that in big cities as much, because … like in New York or something, you're fighting for a finite amount of resources."

> "I'm grateful that our community understands the importance of vibrant districts all over our city, and so the downtown district is just one of those, and I'm grateful that it's alive and well, and people are doing great things down here."
>
> **NANCY COGGINS, PR AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR OF SOONER THEATRE**

Despite the steady growth of support for the arts community, those invested struggle with funding and exposure. Jackson said that when she was growing up in Norman, there was more funding specifically allotted for children to engage with the arts.

"I'm sad that's not the case today, because we used to take field trips and get on buses and go to all these fabulous places in town," Jackson said. "When I first started my career in the arts here in Oklahoma, I worked at the Sooner Theatre, and I worked for Cimarron Opera and it was a great joy of mine to be able to welcome all of the third graders to see an opera."

This loss of funding will have resounding impacts on Norman, according to Spivey.

"Money drives the arts. Money drives the cultural heart of your city, …" Spivey said. "If you're not investing in galleries and venues, then that culture that you love about your town will wither and die. So the only way to keep it going, the only way to keep Norman a town that we all love, is to invest in it."

Nottingham believes funding the arts is a reimbursement into Norman.

"The arts community supports 600 local jobs, and it's a $36 million economic impact in our community," Nottingham said. "That's just here in Norman. That's not outside in the county. That's just here inside the city limits, it's a $36 million economic input impact and $6 million in taxes."



JACK RAMON/OU DAILY

East Norman is home to multiple fishing and recreational areas.

EAST NORMAN

BY KAYLEE HOPKINS • KAYLEE.S.HOPKINS-1@OU.EDU

East Norman is home to a variety of parks, offering opportunities for recreation, sports and other outdoor activities.

Lake Thunderbird: Lake Thunderbird State Park offers a range of amenities, from recreational vehicle and tent sites to boat ramps and picnic areas. Visitors have access to two swim beaches, equestrian trails, hiking, fishing, playgrounds and an archery range. Visitors can rent pontoons, canoes and paddleboats from Calypso Cove Marina and jet skis and pontoons from Little River Marina.

Lake Thunderbird is also home to the Discovery Cove Nature Center, which offers various events throughout the year focusing on the lake's environment and biodiversity. The center is open 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday. Lake Thunderbird's park office is open 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily at 13101 Alameda Drive.

Griffin Community Park: Griffin Community Park spans 110 acres and gives visitors access to disc golf courses, a dog park, a walking and jogging trail and playground equipment. Visitors can enjoy sitting at picnic tables under the pavilion or fishing at the lake. The park is home to a major soccer complex, featuring 22 soccer fields. Griffin Community Park is open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily at 1001 E. Robinson St.

Colonial Estates Park: Colonial Estates Park is one of East Norman's largest parks and includes walking trails suitable for running and cycling, disc golf courses, picnic tables, a playground area and a splash pad. Visitors can enjoy the natural surroundings, including creeks and wooded areas. Colonial Estates Park is open 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily at 1641 E. Lindsey St.

Northeast Lions Park: Northeast Lions Park features large green spaces, thick wooded areas and offers visitors access to disc golf, picnic tables, a lake and playground equipment. Visitors can enjoy fishing for bass, sunfish and catfish. Northeast Lions Park is and is open 24/7 at 1800 Northcliff Ave.

Sketching the future

City reckons with growth while protecting identity

BY AJ COVEY • ALEJANDRO.M.COVEY-1@OU.EDU



FILE/OU DAILY

Main Street hosts many local businesses and restaurants that preserve Norman's small-town feel.

Nobody knows what Norman will look like 20 years from now. As the city grows, local business owners, community organizations and city leaders are discussing how the city should adapt to protect the community.

For some, that future starts downtown.

The Walker Arts District thrives partly because of the arts and community, but Sereta Wilson, owner of Yellow Dog Coffee Co., thinks the area could become more accessible.

Wilson envisions a downtown with more residences, car-free mobility and a more robust bus system. This year, Gray Street became a two-way road, something Wilson said could happen to Main Street.

Multiple cities have restored two-way street designs. Advocates cite reduced pedestrian accidents, speeding and motor vehicle crashes, as well as increased pedestrian traffic and a decrease in business vacancies.

Theron Jessop, co-owner of Juliette Oyster Bar and Steakhouse, describes the need to protect Norman's unique downtown business ecosystem.

"Main streets and downtowns are a dying dream. Nobody wants to be down there and none of the buildings can stay open. So I think that it's rare that we have so many businesses in this area, …" Jessop said. "Hopefully it'll just keep expanding."

Jordan Cramer has watched local restaurants come and go as the city expands. As a Chamber of Commerce member, he likes to see small businesses succeed.

"It breaks my heart when I see a small business come in and have a great neighborhood around them, and then they pop up and then go out of business," Cramer said.

He believes those closures are driven by a lack of information. Cramer is developing "Norman Connect" to connect residents and local businesses with their council member and help nonprofits work together to better serve the community.

Scott Martin, Norman Chamber of Commerce president and CEO, said that as utilities, insurance and property taxes rise, businesses on thin margins can struggle to balance those costs while paying employees a fair wage.

Martin said the city can control permitting and inspection costs and believes it is trying to reduce them, but difficulties remain. Martin said the chamber regularly talks to Norman City Council, advocating for policies that keep prices lower for small businesses.

"In today's world, businesses have choices just like people do. You can kind of go wherever you want to, so you want to create a climate that is very welcoming and attractive for businesses and families to be at," Martin said.

Cramer said he hopes a data center is built in Norman, as it could make the city more affordable through deals that help pay residents' property taxes, fund schools and bring jobs.

But Norman's future is not just about its growth. For some, it's about where that growth stops.

While much of the city expands, Ward 5 Councilmember Trey Kirby advocates for the protection of Norman's watershed, fighting development of East Norman.

He said he believes watershed preservation will come from banning data centers in Norman, opposing Cramer's stance that a data center would make the city more affordable.

The South Extension Turnpike is expected to be complete by 2034, and Kirby fears it will invite development to East Norman.

"Every big city at some point in time stopped and left a pretty good-sized green space for people to be able to go and enjoy nature, …" Kirby said. "At the end of the day, we're going to have development all the way around us. We need to start looking at that Lake Thunderbird area as our green space. That's always going to be a green space for all the future generations."

Wilson believes developing Downtown Norman will protect rural areas and the water supply — a stance she held as a former city council member.

The debate over growth comes as residents and organizations face another challenge: affordability.

Mike Butler, executive director of Mission Norman, said hunger crises are getting worse. Currently, the organization serves 600 to 800 Norman families monthly, but he said cuts to families eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, benefits have made it harder to keep its shelves stocked.

"The inflation, the cost of groceries is so high. That's why (there's a) growing number of families that are coming here, …" Butler said. "That's one of the challenges that we have, and we're not government based. We're totally (based on) donations from the community, and so sometimes it's hard. The food comes in … and it goes out as fast as we get it."

For Butler, food insecurity is only part of the problem, as he said the organization will need to continue supporting Norman residents facing housing challenges.

Martin agreed housing affordability is an issue, but it isn't unique to Norman.

"Housing issues are nationwide. The cost of housing, these are not unique to us," Martin said. "I would just offer that some of these things where we have control over, we should take a little bit more ownership over and chart our own path and try to set a different course."

For Wilson, building Norman's future depends on creating a community for people to connect.

She said she aspires for her coffee shop to be the heart of downtown, where activist groups, book clubs, bible studies, artists and musicians meet, along with its food pantry.

"We have become kind of the living room of downtown. I think we have everybody in here all the time, …" Wilson said. "Our goal is to provide great coffee, and be sustainable and a fair trade coffee provider, but also be a community. … I think we achieve that on the regular with just the different walks of life."

Loveworks Leadership, located on Gray Street, aims to support kids and create community in Norman.

Kennedy Corbin, Loveworks community relations manager, said the organization supports middle school children who face challenges regarding image, especially in the age of social media. She said the goal is to build up kids for the community.

"I think everybody's kind of seen that there's been a real big shift of younger generations going through and building community," Corbin said. "Loveworks is a really cool place for them to be able to form a community built on principles that help them not only get to find people who are learning and developing as well, but also learning useful skills that they can apply beyond just their day-to-day in school, or they can take on with them at any point in their life."

She also said that in Norman, protecting the community is a priority.

"We're a pretty small community, but it is cool getting to see how big and homey we can feel at the same time," Corbin said. "That's something I think really needs to be protected."



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