

The Path Forward: Recommendations for UNC Asheville's Millennial Campus Development

UNC-Asheville Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee



July 2026

Roger Aiken
Chair, Endowment Fund Board of Trustees
University of North Carolina Asheville
1 University Heights
Asheville, NC 28804



RE: Recommendations for UNC Asheville's Millennial Campus Development

Dear Chair Aiken,

We are pleased to present the final recommendations of the UNC Asheville Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee. This report is the product of five months of research, community engagement, and deliberation. We are confident it offers a sound framework for UNC Asheville to develop its Millennial Campus properties in order to strengthen the university for generations to come.

From the outset, the Committee approached this work with no predetermined program or preferred development scenario. Prior proposals were set aside in favor of addressing a more fundamental question: What does UNC Asheville need, and what approach will best serve both the university and the broader Asheville community? The result is a set of findings and recommendations grounded in evidence, informed by community voices, and calibrated to support the long-term health of the university.

Listening was central to the process. Over five months, the Committee and its consultants engaged approximately 2,700 stakeholders, including students, faculty, neighbors, and civic leaders, notably including environmentalists and business owners. Their voices are reflected in our recommendations. Of course, not every concern was resolved, and not every vision could be accommodated, but every perspective was heard, and this report is better for it. That same care for the campus shaped how the Committee approached design and land use, starting with UNCA's history of protecting its natural areas.

The Committee recognizes that UNCA has a long track record of development that thoughtfully integrates natural areas into the campus environment, from the Asheville Botanical Garden to its broader landscape character. The Committee expects that tradition to continue, and that any development on the Millennial Campus Properties will be designed to weave natural features, trails, and open space into a plan that is both financially productive and reflective of what makes this campus distinctive within the UNC System.

Plainly: UNC Asheville matters to this community. The university is a civic anchor, an employer, a source of talent, and a cultural institution for the region. Its long-term viability should be a shared priority for everyone who calls Asheville home. A thriving UNCA benefits Asheville; a struggling one is a loss to the community.

With those facts in mind, the recommendations in this report are offered as a beginning, not an endpoint. They establish principles and priorities from which UNC Asheville leadership and its Board of Trustees can move forward with confidence. The next steps are consequential: engaging a development advisor, commissioning technical studies, performing an assessment of current real estate conditions, and eventually launching a developer solicitation. The university should move deliberately and lead these efforts with an affirmative vision of what this development will create for students, faculty and staff, neighbors, and the greater Asheville community.

We are grateful to our fellow Committee members, the HR&A Advisors and Parks PR team, and to the many community members who gave their time and trust to this process.

Respectfully,

Peter Heckman, Co-Chair, UNC Asheville Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee

Adam Walters, Co-Chair, UNC Asheville Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

UNC Asheville (UNCA) is at an inflection point. Enrollment trends, a shifting state funding picture, and the national demographic outlook for college-age students dictate university action; “wait and see” is not an option. Development of UNCA’s Millennial Campus properties is among the easiest-to-deploy tools available; development can strengthen the university’s¹ position by attracting investment, generating recurring revenue, and building a campus that works better for students and the community around it, thereby boosting enrollment.

To guide this work, the UNC Asheville Endowment Fund Board formed the Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee, and the university engaged HR&A Advisors, Inc. to staff the effort. The Committee began by discussing goals for its work² and for the future development of the Millennial Campus properties. It revisited these continually over the course of five months in which it engaged approximately 2,700 stakeholders, reviewed peer institution precedents, and assessed the physical and market conditions of each site. The Committee also received six proposals³ submitted independently by community members and organizations, each of which it reviewed and considered. The recommendations that follow reflect that full body of work.

Ultimately, the Committee coalesced around five principles that should guide any development of the sites:

- 1. Generate recurring revenue for the university.**
- 2. Strengthen the livability of the campus, including by adding housing for the university community.**
- 3. Create a place that welcomes both students and the broader local community, celebrating the city fabric and cultural richness of Asheville.**
- 4. “Greenlight” only land uses that align with the university’s mission.**
- 5. Commission design that treats landscape as a defining priority.**

The Committee recommends prioritizing institutional partnerships, initially, to support selection of one or more developers of the sites who will be charged with advancing mixed-use commercial development, including supportive amenities for the university and broader community. Some combination of the developer(s), institutional partners, and university should be charged with stewarding natural spaces and trail connections that make the development special and advance the principles. Faculty and staff housing, senior housing and programming, hospitality and meeting space, and recreation uses warrant further feasibility analysis but could be consistent with a development program that respects the principles. A large-scale sports venue and a performing arts center or amphitheater do not appear to meet the tests established by the principles at this moment in time.

The Committee recommends that the South Campus site be the first site for development. It offers the most potential to meet the university’s goals at a scale that can generate recurring revenue, attract mission-aligned partners, and create a gathering place for campus and community, with a landscape-sensitive approach given its character. The Broadway property is well-suited for uses that incorporate green space around Reed Creek and the greenway as part of any future development. The Rhoades property can be activated in the near term through low-intensity programming but will ultimately need to reflect the development guidelines established during conveyance of the property to UNCA.

Before advancing to developer solicitation, UNCA should conduct a series of detailed visioning tasks that will optimize its outcome and yield a stronger development. UNCA has a long history of establishing and maintaining institutional partnerships, as exhibited in its relationship with the Asheville Botanical Garden and the USDA’s Forest Service. Throughout the process, UNCA should lead with principles rather than a prescriptive program in

¹ Note: lowercase ‘university’ refers to UNC Asheville throughout this document, while capitalized ‘University’ refers to the University of North Carolina System.

² See [Appendix 1: The Committee and its Process](#) for more details on the Committee’s charge and process.

³ See [Appendix 5: Community Engagement Process and Participant Synthesis](#) for summarized community engagement findings.

order to yield similar institutional partnerships that produce mission-driven outcomes. This approach will provide a foundation for continuing to transparently share efforts with the broader community.

WHY THIS MATTERS

UNCA faces a set of converging pressures: declining enrollment, constrained public funding, and a campus that is missing meaningful community and industry connections. The Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee was convened to identify a path forward to address these pressures through development of UNCA's Millennial Campus properties.

The Millennial Campus designation enables public-private real estate partnerships on university-owned land. The designation, granted by the University of North Carolina System's Board of Governors, offers land use flexibility, potential cash flow from ground leases, and creative mechanisms to deliver amenities and other institutional benefits at zero or low cost to the university. Other UNC System institutions have leveraged this designation to deliver transformational projects, most notably Centennial Campus at North Carolina State University in Raleigh.

Why Development, and Why Now

The Committee heard a consistent message from UNCA leaders: new sources of recurring revenue and a more vibrant campus will be important to UNCA's ability to sustain academic programs, increase student enrollment, attract faculty, and better serve students over time. Without action on its Millennial Campus properties, UNCA forgoes revenue, misses a key opportunity to deliver much needed housing and amenities while establishing a more vibrant and connected campus that current and prospective students are seeking. The Committee recommends development not for its own sake, but because developing the Millennial Campus properties is the most potent way to ensure the long-term success of UNCA.

The Opportunity

UNCA's campus straddles a growing downtown Asheville along one of Asheville's most active corridors. Development on UNCA's Millennial Campus properties can do more than generate revenue; it can deliver a highly connected and attractive campus experience. Through a thoughtful and principled approach, UNCA can develop with vision rather than react to market and other pressures.

The Places

Upon examining UNCA's portfolio of Millennial Campus properties,⁴ the Committee affirmed and expanded the university's priority development sites for evaluation:

- The South Campus property, the assemblage of parcels totaling approximately 45 acres, of which approximately 25.7 acres are developable, at the corner of W.T. Weaver Boulevard and Broadway;
- The Broadway property, a 22.1-acre site on the west side of Broadway; and,
- The Rhoades property, a 9.5-acre site at the corner of W.T. Weaver Boulevard and Merrimon Avenue.

These properties are collectively described throughout this report as "the Millennial Campus Properties."

PRINCIPLES FOR DEVELOPMENT

The Committee developed a set of principles through deliberation, informed by community and stakeholder engagement, physical and economic considerations, and goals adopted at the outset of its work. They represent the shared expectations the Committee believes any development on these sites must meet.

1. **Generate recurring revenue for the university.** UNCA requires new revenue to ensure its long-term success. Development of the Millennial Campus Properties can generate revenue for UNCA in different

⁴ See [Appendix 4: Millennial Campus Property Map and Parcel Overview](#) for an overview of all UNC Asheville's Millennial Properties.

ways: ground lease income, increased enrollment as a byproduct of a more vibrant campus, and new sponsorship opportunities, among other mechanisms. The Committee recommends the following to amplify this principle:

- **Focus on partnerships.** Ground lease structures that attract private financing while preserving university land ownership are the appropriate model for development partnerships. But the partnerships worth pursuing go beyond development. The most valuable are those where commercial or institutional uses directly enable new or expanded academic programs, student internships, or research opportunities, creating a multi-dimensional return to UNCA.
 - **Take a phased approach.** Initial partnerships may carry added risk by being the first to commit before the area is market proven. A phased approach to development of the Millennial Campus Properties can ensure later-term partnerships are optimized for UNCA's benefit.
2. **Strengthen the livability of the campus, including by adding housing for the university community.** University campuses typically function like a microcosm of a city, providing housing, food, culture, recreation, and social life on top of the institution's foundational academic and research offerings. But in the 21st century, a livable university campus includes amenities and land uses that invert the experience, propelling the campus community beyond the institution and inviting the broader community into the institution. The Millennial Campus Properties form the boundaries of UNCA's campus and present an exceptional place for this dynamic.
 3. **Create a place that welcomes both students and the broader local community, celebrating the city fabric and cultural richness of Asheville.** UNCA sits within Asheville, a nationally recognized example of a great city. UNCA should embrace this context by ensuring new development is woven into the city's infrastructure fabric, enhancing walkability to and from campus. Retail spaces should prioritize local businesses. Public programming within the development should be attractive and relevant to the broader Asheville community.
 4. **"Greenlight" only land uses that align with the university's mission.** As the higher-education landscape evolves, new developments on the Millennial Campus Properties are likely to diverge from current land uses on UNCA's campus. But new development land uses should continue to reflect UNCA's mission as an academic institution, ensuring that the campus community clearly benefits from the development.
 5. **Commission design that treats landscape as a defining priority.** Site planning should begin with the land: topography, ecology, hydrology, and character. Tree canopy, native plantings, and stormwater function should carry through design and construction. UNCA has a long history of planting trees and vegetation to strengthen the environment and should continue this legacy during and beyond development of the Millennial Campus Properties. Development should acknowledge and respect adjacent neighborhoods and reinforce the campus' landscape identity.

LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS

The Committee's intent is to establish programmatic direction, **not** a development program. UNCA and its future development partner(s) will ultimately determine the precise mix, density, and phasing through a solicitation and negotiation process. The Committee's recommendations below are organized by level of priority.

Foundational Uses

The Committee recommends the following uses as the foundation for development, and any developer solicitation should prioritize them:

- **Anchor institutional partnerships:** Institutions and partners whose programs advance UNCA's academic mission, and whose presence on or adjacent to these sites would activate the development and build public trust while generating revenue and economic activity on the Millennial Campus Properties. Examples of these partnerships may include:
 - a. A research and learning organization, such as a museum, that leverages the Millennial Campus Properties and the university's development opportunity to establish a new facility and collaborate with UNCA faculty and students.
 - b. A government agency whose mission aligns with the assets of UNCA and the Asheville region and whose co-location with UNCA on the Millennial Campus Properties establishes a meaningful research cluster on campus.
- **Mixed-use commercial development:** The most important component of adding to the livability and vibrancy of the UNCA campus is mixed-use development. This mixed-use development should include:
 - a. **Student housing:** Apartment-style formats that promote moderate density and align with student expectations.
 - b. **Retail and dining:** Addresses unmet daily needs of a livable campus while also activating new development and creating a stronger "sense of place." Locally oriented tenants are encouraged over chain or formula retail. Food and beverage formats should include flexible and outdoor options that extend activation beyond traditional retail hours.
 - c. **Community-activated open space:** Highly programmed, managed gathering space that functions as the connective tissue of any mixed-use development. This space should be funded and maintained by development revenue.
- **Supportive amenities for the university and broader community:** These amenities should include childcare, convenience retail, and social spaces. While some of these uses may be folded into commercial mixed-use space, the Committee recommends UNCA and its development partner(s) prioritize these amenities.
- **Stewarded natural space and trail network connections:** Stewardship and connections to existing greenway and trail assets formalize access and conservation and create lasting value for residents and the broader public. Natural space is an important ingredient in reducing development impacts to surrounding properties. An active stewardship partnership, such as with the Asheville Botanical Garden, is the recommended approach.

Uses Pending Further Study

The Committee supports the following uses in principle, but each requires further feasibility, partnership, or phasing analysis before it can be included in a solicitation:

- **Faculty, staff, and workforce housing:** Though a documented need with strong community support, this category of housing will likely require additional analysis and planning to ensure that it addresses the needs of the campus community.
- **Senior housing and programming:** UNCA's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) likely presents an opportunity for growth and broader impact. Coupled with senior housing, this use could create meaningful value on the Millennial Campus Properties.
- **Hospitality and meeting space:** Hospitality uses can deliver valuable amenities to the campus community, but its greatest value may be in supporting related academic programs such as business or tourism. UNCA should further explore mission and program alignment of this use.
- **Recreation and wellness:** Recreation and wellness uses can advance student health and campus life while also serving the broader community. As the university defines these uses, it should distinguish between active uses (such as fields, courts, and fitness facilities) and passive uses (such as trails and open space), as each carries different space, cost, and partnership implications. Recreation uses may not be financially viable on their own and will likely depend on a strong mix of other revenue generating uses that benefit from recreational and wellness facilities' value.

Not Recommended Here or Now

The Committee does not recommend the following uses on any of the Millennial Campus Properties at this moment in time:

- **Large-scale sports venue:** The scale and spatial demands of such a facility (as proposed to UNCA by a prospective development partner in 2025) would organize development around a single use, crowding out the higher priority uses as defined by the Committee's principles. While the Committee does not recommend this use on the Millennial Campus Properties in this report, it takes no position on this use on other UNCA sites.
- **Performing arts center or amphitheater:** Existing and planned performing arts venues across Asheville already serve this need, and a facility of this scale is unlikely to generate the revenue or mission alignment the Millennial Campus Properties need to deliver. Additionally, UNCA is renovating Lipinsky Hall, which will deliver a comparable facility within the campus.

SITE RECAP

The Committee reviewed all of UNCA's Millennial Campus properties,^{5,6} evaluating the location, condition, and development opportunity of each against the principles and land use recommendations set out above. The Committee assessed each site's physical, market, and programmatic conditions and worked to understand the full range of community perspectives, devising principles to serve as guardrails for responsible development. From that review, the Committee identified three Millennial Campus Properties as UNCA's priority development sites, each with a distinct character, scale, and opportunity. The Committee recommends UNCA further pursue development of each of the sites in parallel, with each site approached on its own terms and guided by a program and partnership model suited to what it can credibly offer.

1. South Campus

South Campus should be considered the highest priority for development and UNCA's best opportunity to achieve its core goals on a meaningful scale. Most proximate to the heart of campus and adjacent to the Broadway corridor connecting to downtown Asheville, it is the site which can best meet the principles and development objectives and is also most capable of attracting the mission-aligned private partnerships that can generate recurring revenue over time. In addition, its topography is more favorable than the Broadway site. It is currently underutilized, a condition that represents both an institutional gap and an opportunity. Of the three priority sites, South Campus offers the greatest developable scale, the strongest physical connection to the existing campus, and the clearest path to the enrollment, placemaking, and revenue goals at the center of the Committee's charge, pending further studies.

2. Broadway

Broadway is a development opportunity with a more specific set of suitable uses, shaped by its landscape. A perennial stream and the adjacent Reed Creek Greenway run along the Broadway-facing edge of the site, offering a natural point of connection between UNCA and Asheville's trail network. These features shape where development is best located, but they do not preclude it. The site includes graded land well suited to selective commercial and mixed-use development. Protecting the greenway corridor will help define which uses are

⁵ See [Appendix 4: Millennial Campus Property Map and Parcel Overview](#) for detailed map and parcel-level overview of all Millennial Campus properties

⁶ See Appendix 3, [Meeting 3: Market, Physical, and Program Considerations](#) for a summary of the Committee's findings on priority sites for evaluation.

appropriate and where on the property they should be located. Its position across the Broadway corridor presents access and connectivity considerations to be addressed in site planning. Realizing the site's potential will likely require external partnerships. Preservation of the existing Odyssey School will continue to yield benefit to UNCA in alignment with the Committee's principles.

3. Rhoades

This property is a welcoming gateway to UNCA from Merrimon Avenue. The conveyance of the property to UNCA reflected a shared commitment to responsible stewardship, which the university will continue to honor through thoughtful, deliberate planning for its future.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS FOR UNCA

The Committee's recommendations establish principles for development and a general framework for how to appropriately approach development of the Millennial Campus properties. Detailed visioning, site-specific programming, a financial framework, and defined partnership structures will follow. The Committee offers the following guidance to UNCA leadership on what should happen before it formally engages development partners.

1. **Craft a development vision that builds off the Committee's principles and general framework.** UNCA should establish a more detailed vision, particularly as it explores institutional programming and creating a more livable campus by utilizing the Millennial Campus Properties. This work may include a consideration of academic programming in the new development, an exploration of prospective institutional partners who may be interested in joining UNCA's vision, and a financial framework for advancing the vision.
2. **Initiate a development solicitation process.** A development solicitation process will help UNCA explore partnerships that will ultimately yield its goals. The process should state UNCA's vision and metrics of success for the development partnership. All parties interested in a formal partnership with UNCA on the Millennial Campus Properties should be invited to submit responses to this solicitation.
3. **Establish a process for ongoing communication and community engagement.** As development advances, UNCA should provide regular public updates on progress at each site, from planning milestones to key partnership decisions.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: The Committee and its Process

Committee Members & Composition

The Committee was assembled to bring together expertise in higher education, real estate development, planning, environmental stewardship, and the Asheville region. Co-chaired by Peter Heckman and Adam Walters, its thirteen members include UNC Asheville trustees and alumni, former city and state officials, and leaders from business, finance, tourism, and regional planning.

1. Peter Heckman, Committee Co-Chair
2. Adam Walters, Committee Co-Chair
3. Lou Bisette
4. Kelly Davis
5. Victoria Isley
6. Keith Krump
7. Rick Lutovsky
8. Lakesha McDay
9. Chuck McGrady
10. David Meyer
11. Jim Peterson
12. Nathan Ramsey
13. Chuck Tessier

Mission & Scope

The Committee was charged with the following mission:

- Explore, understand, and articulate the university's needs and aspirations for future development of the Millennial Campus Properties.
- Gather input from the university community, city residents and businesses, and stakeholders across the region on priorities and concerns related to UNC Asheville's future and the Millennial Campus Properties.
- Develop a clear set of recommendations and an action plan to guide development of the Millennial Campus Properties, including a compelling development vision; guiding priorities; preferred uses; urban design and siting guidance; and identified milestones, responsibilities, and engagement points throughout the development process.

Project Goals

At the outset of its work, the Committee established three project goals to define what a successful development on the Millennial Campus Properties must achieve. These goals shaped every deliberation that followed, from the parcels considered to the uses prioritized to the partnerships pursued.

1. *Generate revenue through development.*
2. *Increase enrollment for the university.*
3. *Create a vibrant place for students and the community.*

Process

From January through May 2026, the Committee met monthly to work through a structured progression of topics: defining UNC Asheville's position and the case for development; examining precedent university-led developments; assessing the market, physical, and programmatic conditions of the Millennial Campus properties; and reflecting on what the Committee heard from the community. Community engagement ran in parallel through stakeholder interviews, public feedback sessions, and a public web form, and is summarized in Appendix 5. With this report, the Committee delivers its recommendations to the university and concludes its charge.

In addition to its structured deliberations, the Committee received and reviewed six proposals submitted independently by community members and organizations over the course of the process. A full summary of those proposals and the Committee's findings is provided in Appendix 5.

Appendix 2: University Mission Statement

UNCA Mission Statement: UNC Asheville equips the next generation of leaders and community members to think critically, express creative ideas, explore leading-edge research, and engage with those around them. To achieve these goals, we base our liberal arts and sciences education around small, collaborative classes that center on high-impact experiential learning.

UNC System Mission Statement: The University of North Carolina is a public, multi-campus university dedicated to the service of North Carolina and its people. It encompasses the 17 diverse constituent institutions and other educational, research, and public service organizations. Each share in the overall mission of the University. That mission is to discover, create, transmit, and apply knowledge to address the needs of individuals and society. This mission is accomplished through instruction, which communicates the knowledge and imparts the skills necessary for individuals to lead responsible, productive, and personally satisfying lives; through research, scholarship, and creative activities, which advance knowledge and enhance the educational process; and through public service, which contributes to the solution of societal problems and enriches the quality of life in the State. In the fulfillment of this mission, the University shall seek efficient use of available resources to ensure the highest quality in its service to the citizens of the State.

Appendix 3: Committee Findings

Over five months, the Committee worked through a structured progression: establishing UNCA's institutional context and the case for development; reviewing precedent university developments; assessing the physical, market, and programmatic conditions of the Millennial Campus properties; and reflecting on community input gathered throughout the process. The following summarizes the key findings and decisions from each Committee meeting that shaped the Committee's final recommendations.

Meeting 1: UNC Asheville Today and its Future

- UNC Asheville faces consecutive years of declining enrollment, reduced state support, and an approaching national demographic cliff among traditional college-age students. The Millennial Campus designation is one of the few tools available to address these pressures without requiring the university to spend capital it does not have.
- Three development typologies emerged as worth exploring on the Millennial Campus properties: a student-community "front porch"; a public-private investment partnership leveraging regional economic strengths; and housing affordable to students, faculty, and staff.
- Initial discussion pointed to South Campus and Broadway as likely candidates given their proximity to campus and downtown Asheville, with the full portfolio of UNCA's Millennial properties to be reviewed before any conclusions.

Meeting 2: Precedent Developments

- Five precedent university developments—UConn's Storrs Center, UNC Wilmington's Student Village, Lehigh's Mountaintop Campus, Wake Forest's Innovation Quarter, and the University of Akron's Polsky Building—demonstrated that phased, mixed-use development anchored by public-private partnerships can advance housing, vibrancy, and revenue goals together.
- Such partnerships are essential to financing and execution, and they require sustained commitment beyond construction. Community trust depends on transparency and consistent communication; good design, careful partner selection, and phasing together lower risk and build credibility.

Meeting 3: Market, Physical, and Program Considerations

- Three Millennial Campus properties emerged as viable for development. South Campus offers the greatest scale and the clearest path to the university's enrollment and placemaking objectives, pending further studies. Broadway/Zillicoa is viable but may present constraints for the scale of development due to the perennial stream, adjacent greenway, and ridgeline.
- Rhoades, at Merrimon Avenue and W.T. Weaver Boulevard, could be considered by the university for potential development and would generate revenue that offsets what South Campus needs to deliver. Other properties were set aside for topography, size, or location.
- The Committee found a multi-use soccer stadium proposed for South Campus would not meet all the university's objectives; its footprint would crowd out the enrollment and gathering place uses central to the site. Additionally, any development should be phased and mixed-use, with early phases at sufficient scale to generate revenue, drive enrollment, and create a community gathering place.

Meeting 4: Reflections on Community Engagement

Over eight weeks, the Committee and its consultants engaged approximately 2,700 stakeholders through three channels: a public web form, community listening sessions, and Committee-led one-on-one interviews. Voices represented a cross-section of university, neighborhood, civic, business, and environmental perspectives. Consistent themes emerged across every channel, with stakeholders falling into two roughly equal groups.

- About half support development, provided it is mission-aligned, affordable, and transparently governed. Affordable housing for students, faculty, and staff drew the broadest support, alongside childcare and small-scale, mixed-use development on already-cleared parcels. A smaller subset argued that bolder investment—market-rate housing, entertainment venues, or a large athletic facility—is needed for UNCA to remain competitive.
- The other half expressed concern about developing South Campus, viewing the property as an ecological, academic, and community asset central to UNCA's identity and academic mission. Post-Helene tree canopy loss has sharpened sensitivity to further forest removal. Some in this group proposed alternatives such as formalized trails, interpretive programming, and outdoor classrooms, or suggested that ecosystem service values be weighed alongside projected development revenue.

Six community-submitted proposals, while too conceptual for design or revenue conclusions, reinforced three priorities heard throughout engagement: siting matters as much as use; costs and benefits extend beyond the balance sheet to ecosystem services and community goodwill; and mixed-use concepts that transition thoughtfully into surrounding neighborhoods tend to be more durable than single-operator scenarios. The Committee heard all perspectives, and they are reflected in the recommendations that follow. A full community engagement synthesis is provided in Appendix 5.

Meeting 5: Finalizing Guiding Principles and Site Direction

In its fifth and final meeting, the Committee finalized a framework of six guiding principles for future development and outlined initial land use direction for each Millennial Campus property:

- Development decisions will be guided by a framework of six principles: mission alignment, financial and resource sustainability, campus livability, community connection, partnerships, and design quality and landscape management.
- Because UNC Asheville lacks the capital to fund large-scale development on its own, private investment—with the university contributing land—will likely drive Millennial Campus projects, and financial impact must be neutral or positive from the outset.
- A phased, less prescriptive approach will preserve flexibility for future community input, market adjustment, and negotiations with development partners.
- South Campus remains the primary site for catalytic development; the Rhoades property suits low-impact, high-visibility uses given conveyance restrictions; and the Broadway property can support amenities without requiring campus adjacency, with its existing development preserved.

Please see the UNCA website for the full meeting summaries.

Appendix 4: Millennial Campus Property Map and Parcel Overview

Note: Due to the size and length of this document, it has been uploaded to **UNC Asheville's Millennial Campus** webpage.

Appendix 5: Community Engagement Process and Participant Synthesis

Overview

This appendix synthesizes community feedback gathered to inform the Millennial Campus Development Advisory Committee's deliberations on the future of UNCA's Millennial Campus properties. It is one of several inputs into the Committee's five-month evaluation process, culminating in recommendations to the university in June 2026.

This document is a synthesis of community feedback and a tool for identifying patterns, shared concerns, and risk signals. It is not a vote or ranked preference survey, a substitute for technical due diligence, or a final account of community opinion, as engagement is ongoing.

Engagement Channels and Scale

Approximately 2,700 stakeholders were engaged across three channels over eight weeks, representing a cross-section of university, neighborhood, civic, business, and environmental perspectives:

- Public web form: 2,600 submissions, with 1,400 substantive⁷ responses
- Community listening sessions: 16 small-group sessions engaging university, community, government, neighborhood, and industry stakeholders
- Committee-led interviews: 61 individuals across 58 sessions, representing university, government, nonprofit, business, healthcare, environmental, cultural, and local community sectors

Community Leadership Listening Sessions

The following individuals participated in the 16-community leadership listening sessions, organized by stakeholder group:

Session #	Stakeholder Group	# of Participants	Participants
1	UNCA Administration	1	Melanie Fox, Associate Vice Chancellor & Dean of Students
2	UNCA Administration	2	Vollie Barnwell, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs; Daran Dodd, Chief of Police
3	UNCA Staff, Academic Leadership & Faculty/Student Research	3	Dr. Kathleen Lawlor, Associate Professor of Economics; Graduate students Willow McNeil and Britton Hamrick
4	UNCA Staff, Academic Leadership & Faculty/Student Research	5	Faculty Senate Executive Committee: Jacob Butera, Kirk Boyle, Fabrice Julien, Rob Shrode; Faculty Assembly Representative: Toby King

⁷ "Substantive responses" refer to submissions with one or more complete answer.

Session #	Stakeholder Group	# of Participants	Participants
5	UNCA Staff, Academic Leadership & Faculty/Student Research	4	Staff Council Representatives: Lauren DeHaan, Kate Hayes, Deaver Traywick, Jeffrey Jenkins
6	UNCA Student Leadership	2	Obianko Osaro, SGA President; Victor Cabral, SGA Vice President
7	Planning, Design & Civic Stakeholders	1	Scott Burroughs, Principal Architect, This Land Studio
8	Planning, Design & Civic Stakeholders	1	Frank Balentine, UNC Asheville alumnus and North Asheville resident
9	Neighborhood & Community Organizations	4	Save the Woods Coalition: Elizabeth Pritchitt, Kerry Graham-Walter, Woody Davis, David Clarke
10	Neighborhood & Community Organizations	5	Five Points Neighborhood Association: Mary Schultz, Dennis Ash, Heather Rayburn, Matt Lee, Chris Cotteta
11	Neighborhood & Community Organizations	5	Montford Neighborhood Association: Randy Hall, Lynn Raker, Susan Loftis, Bill Eakins, Peter Tromba
12	Government & Public Officials	1	Amanda Edwards, Chair, Buncombe County Board of Commissioners
13	Government & Public Officials	2	Esther Manheimer, Mayor, City of Asheville; Keith Aitken, Urban Forester, City of Asheville
14	Economic Development, System-Affiliated & External	1	Kit Cramer, President & CEO, Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce
15	UNC System Leadership	1	Kirk Bradley, member of the UNC System Board of Governors

Session #	Stakeholder Group	# of Participants	Participants
16	Economic Development, System-Affiliated & External	1	Ryan Kelley, Asheville City Soccer Club
TOTAL INTERVIEWED		39	

Committee-Led Interviews

Sixty-one individuals participated in approximately 58 interview sessions. Individual names are withheld from this appendix; the table below reflects participant counts by sector.

Sector	Participants	Sessions
UNC Asheville Faculty, Administrators, Staff & Affiliates	5	5
Students, Alumni & OLLI Participants	5	5
Local & State Government / Civic Leadership	9	10
Business, Real Estate & Economic Development	19	14
Nonprofit, Philanthropic & Workforce / Education Leaders	6	6
Environmental, Land-Use & Urban Forestry Experts	8	8
Cultural, Arts & Community Leaders	3	3
Long-Time Residents & Neighborhood Voices	6	7
Total	61	58

Key Themes

Consistent themes emerged across every engagement channel. Stakeholders fell into two roughly equal groups:

- About half support development, provided it is mission-aligned, affordable, and transparently governed. Affordable housing for students, faculty, and staff drew the broadest support, alongside childcare and small-scale, mixed-use development on already-cleared parcels. A smaller subset argued that bolder

investment—market-rate housing, entertainment venues, or a large athletic facility—is necessary for UNCA to remain competitive.

- The other half expressed concern about developing South Campus, viewing the property as an ecological, academic, and community asset central to UNCA's identity. Post-Helene tree canopy loss has sharpened sensitivity to further forest removal. Some proposed formalized trails, interpretive programming, and outdoor classrooms as alternatives, or recommended that ecosystem service values be weighed alongside projected development revenue.

Spectrum of Perspectives

Deeper analysis of the feedback revealed four clusters of perspectives, reflecting the range of values, priorities, and conditions expressed throughout the engagement process. Below is a summary of the different perspectives, supplemented with quotes from stakeholders engaged.

Transformative Opportunity

A smaller constituency argued that incremental approaches carry their own risk, and that UNCA must act with greater urgency and scale to remain competitive. Bold, mixed-use development along Broadway is seen as an opportunity to reduce UNCA's perceived isolation, strengthen campus-city connection, and address enrollment and workforce needs at the scale the institution requires.

- *"This moment represents a chance for UNC Asheville to lead by aligning values, community, and strategy."*
- *"There's risk in doing nothing—or too little."*

Development with Guardrails

This was the broadest area of cross-channel alignment. Conditional support for development was paired with clear expectations around affordability, transparency, and mission alignment. Stakeholders broadly preferred phased, incremental development over singular large projects. Single-purpose facilities such as a stadium were seen as misaligned with UNCA's identity. Public buy-in was treated as inseparable from long-term feasibility.

- *"The primary challenge facing UNCA is not the concept of development itself, but the lack of community engagement, transparency, and clarity around decision-making."*
- *"Housing makes sense if we can see how it supports enrollment and faculty retention."*

Low-Intensity Development

This cluster of stakeholders reflected a preference for directing development to already-cleared parcels first, with any woods-adjacent development approached at lower scale and explicitly tied to student, faculty, and staff needs. Affordable housing and childcare were cited as priority investments.

- *"Build on the two Millennial Campus plots already primed for development. There are 10 acres on the Broadway property and 9.5 acres on Merrimon and W.T. Weaver Blvd. Developing these properties would more rapidly and at far less expense address student housing needs instead of clearing the South Campus woods."*
- *"If it doesn't make student life better day-to-day, I'm not convinced."*

Preservation and Trust

Stakeholders in this group argued that preserving the South Campus woods is itself the enrollment and reputational strategy, and that proceeding otherwise risks irreparable harm to UNCA's community standing. Many frame preservation not as opposition to UNCA's success, but as a prerequisite for it. Distrust of the planning process ran deep, with calls for engagement that demonstrably shapes outcomes.

- *"The South Campus is not vacant land—it is an academic, environmental, and community asset."*
- *"This land has value even if it never generates a dollar."*

Community-Submitted Alternative Development Proposals

The Committee's charge was to develop recommendations for Millennial Campus development, not to evaluate or select a development proposal. Throughout its process, the Committee received six unsolicited proposals from community members and organizations. To varying degrees, each presented ideas and approaches the Committee found to be consistent with its own findings and potentially worth carrying into the formal solicitation process.

- **UNCA Woods (This Land Studio / Scott Burroughs):** A mixed-use Zillicoa corridor with housing, hotel, food hall, arts, and incubator alongside five alternative stadium options on the existing Greenwood athletic campus, with the woodland preserved. The Zillicoa corridor concentrates density on already-disturbed land between Broadway and Reed Creek, with residential buildings, a hotel block, a large food hall anchoring the southern end, a performing arts venue, and an innovation incubator. The five Greenwood stadium alternatives range from siting the facility on existing cleared fields to a full sports complex with baseball, a plaza, and food hall—all within UNCA's I-26-accessible athletic campus.
- **Climate-Resilient Campus Vision (UNCA M.S. in Environmental Resilience students):** Low and medium development scenarios grounded in faculty and student surveys, climate hazard mapping, and a benefit-cost analysis of the proposed stadium. Both scenarios concentrate new uses on already-cleared land: the low scenario places student housing, childcare, and a community garden on the Zillicoa property and a sculpture forest and outdoor classroom at the woodland edge; the medium scenario adds a food hall and community center on Zillicoa, a gear rental hub and coffee shop at the woodland edge, and affordable faculty housing on the Merrimon/W.T. Weaver site. The woodland is preserved in both scenarios.
- **Hillside Bowl Alternative (Frank Balentine, community stakeholder and UNCA alumnus):** A 5,000-seat collegiate bowl carved into the hillside of South Campus using cut-and-fill engineering, preserving a forest buffer and reframing the siting debate as a question of smart urban infill. The stadium is positioned on the southeast-facing hillside south of Brumit House, with cut-and-fill keeping all earth on-site. The eastern forest buffer is preserved for apartments, greenways, and parking, and a traffic circle at Founders Drive and W.T. Weaver manages event-day circulation. A Research Station surface lot is converted to a parking deck to add capacity without canopy loss. Also included was a vision for housing and multi-use development on adjoining Millennial Campus property.
- **Connected Campus & Community (Susan Loftis, Montford Neighborhood Association and former Georgia Tech campus planner):** Broadway redesigned as a pedestrian boulevard, the woods as a living lab, and a tiered residential village with planted rooftops on the already-impacted Zillicoa/Cumberland Avenue site. The residential village uses the existing topography to step building heights down toward the street, with a maximum of two stories at the Zillicoa and Catawba/Cumberland edges to protect neighborhood view sheds. The woods are proposed as an urban forest and living lab, potentially in partnership with the NC Arboretum, with an open-air forestry museum celebrating Asheville's history as the cradle of American forestry.
- **Saved by the Woods (independent research project, [savedbythewoods.org](https://www.savedbythewoods.org)):** An evidence-based geodesign analysis of the South Campus woods submitted in response to the McCullers Group stadium proposal, comparing 13 development and preservation scenarios across stormwater, financial, ecological, and governance criteria and recommending that housing and stadium uses be redirected to UNCA's 56+ acres of cleared Millennial Campus land while the forest is preserved. The analysis maps the cleared Millennial Campus parcels — including Broadway, Zillicoa, and Merrimon/W.T. Weaver — as sufficient to accommodate all identified programmatic needs, and quantifies the ecosystem service value of the woodland as a material offset to any projected development revenue from the forested site.
- **A Conservation Path for the South Campus Woods (Friends of the Woods / Save the Woods movement, fiscally sponsored by Southern Conservation Partners):** A community- and partner-

funded \$25 million capital endowment that would deliver roughly \$1 million per year to UNCA beginning at execution, paired with a long-term conservation lease on the South Campus woods, a collection of multiple Millennial Campus sites totaling approximately 45 acres, generating stable income for UNCA without development while preserving the urban forest and its ecosystem services. Rather than proposing built uses, this proposal treats the woodland itself as the revenue-generating asset — the endowment is structured to fund ongoing conservation stewardship, and the lease terms would prevent development while providing UNCA a predictable annual income stream comparable in scale to modest residential development revenue.