Buncombe County Board of Commissioners

Chair	*District 1*	*District 2*	*District 3*
Amanda Edwards	Al Whitesides	Martin Moore	Parker Sloan
	Jennifer Horton	Terri Wells	Drew Ball

August 19, 2025

Dear Chancellor Kim Van Noort,

We deeply value UNC-Asheville as a cornerstone of Western North Carolina's academic, cultural, and civic life. We are committed to the UNC-Asheville's long-term success, and our County's long-term vision as detailed in our Comprehensive 2043 Plan. Due to significant strong opposition regarding the proposed lease and development of 45 acres of the university's designated Millennial Campus, we initiated conversations with UNC-Asheville's leadership to learn more. While we are pleased the plans have been temporarily paused, we respectfully request that you do not proceed with approval of any project at this time, meaningfully engage the community, and work alongside local government.

These Millennial Campus projects represent a major development with lasting implications for our county's identity and economic future. Yet, to date, Buncombe County has not been meaningfully engaged as a planning partner. As the local government responsible for long-term land use and economic development, we bring deep experience and a forward-looking vision for growth. Our Buncombe 2043 Comprehensive Plan, built on extensive public input, outlines a 20-year strategy for development, environmental conservation, infrastructure, and hazard resilience. The university and the Millennial Campus projects should align with that plan, not move ahead in isolation.

We share UNC-Asheville's interest in mixed-use development that strengthens enrollment, enhances academics, and supports regional economic goals. We share two goals for our community: ecological sustainability and increased available housing options, especially in walkable, higher-density neighborhoods in our urban growth areas. Increasing mixed-use housing options, like those that UNC Asheville is proposing, could provide much-needed housing for both young adults (including students) and seniors if affordable to our residents. This can strengthen enrollment and support regional economic development. However, we do not see that the plan includes options for supporting our community's ecological sustainability when contemplating development on this site. Also, while we do not oppose Asheville City Soccer Club's growth as a business, we are concerned that the site chosen is not suitable for stadium development due to incontrovertible facts: the site is hilly and heavily wooded. Further, the site is within a residential neighborhood that will experience a significant reduction in quality of life if a professional stadium designed for both night games and concerts operates there.

We understand the real fiscal pressures facing UNC-Asheville: state and federal cuts, declining enrollment, and the need to diversify revenue. These are complex challenges, but how the university responds matters. We believe there is a better path that builds on the university's strengths, preserves its natural assets, and involves its local government partners from the outset.

Our request is urgent and clear: as the process has been paused, bring the local government to the table. Let's hold a transparent community dialogue and explore alternative proposals together that could involve new development and plans that could strengthen UNC-Asheville and our community as a whole. We believe that with trust, collaboration, and shared vision, UNC-Asheville and Buncombe County can build something truly lasting, academically, environmentally, and economically.

We stand ready to partner. Let's work together to get this right.

Amanda Edwards
Chair
Buncombe County Commission

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