City Council Agenda Item Request
Submit to Clerk's Office
No later than 30 days before proposed Council meeting

1. **Date submitted to Clerk's Office: 2/4/26**

2. **Primary contact person and Department requesting agenda item:** Chris Corl, CREF Director.

3. **Requested Council meeting date:** 3/24/2026

4. **Subject:** Hold 2.4 acres for future development.

5. **Action Requested:** Adoption of a resolution reserving space for an Arts & Entertainment facility within the area targeted for a multi-use redevelopment project on property bounded by Marjorie Street to the north, Spruce Street to the west, Eagle street to the south and Davidson Drive to the east for up to two years, with all pertinent details to be included in a forthcoming joint development agreement between the City of Asheville and ATG Entertainment.

6. **Note if time sensitive, and why:** No

7. **Potential fiscal impact(s) - if known by staff at time of request:** No additional fiscal impact

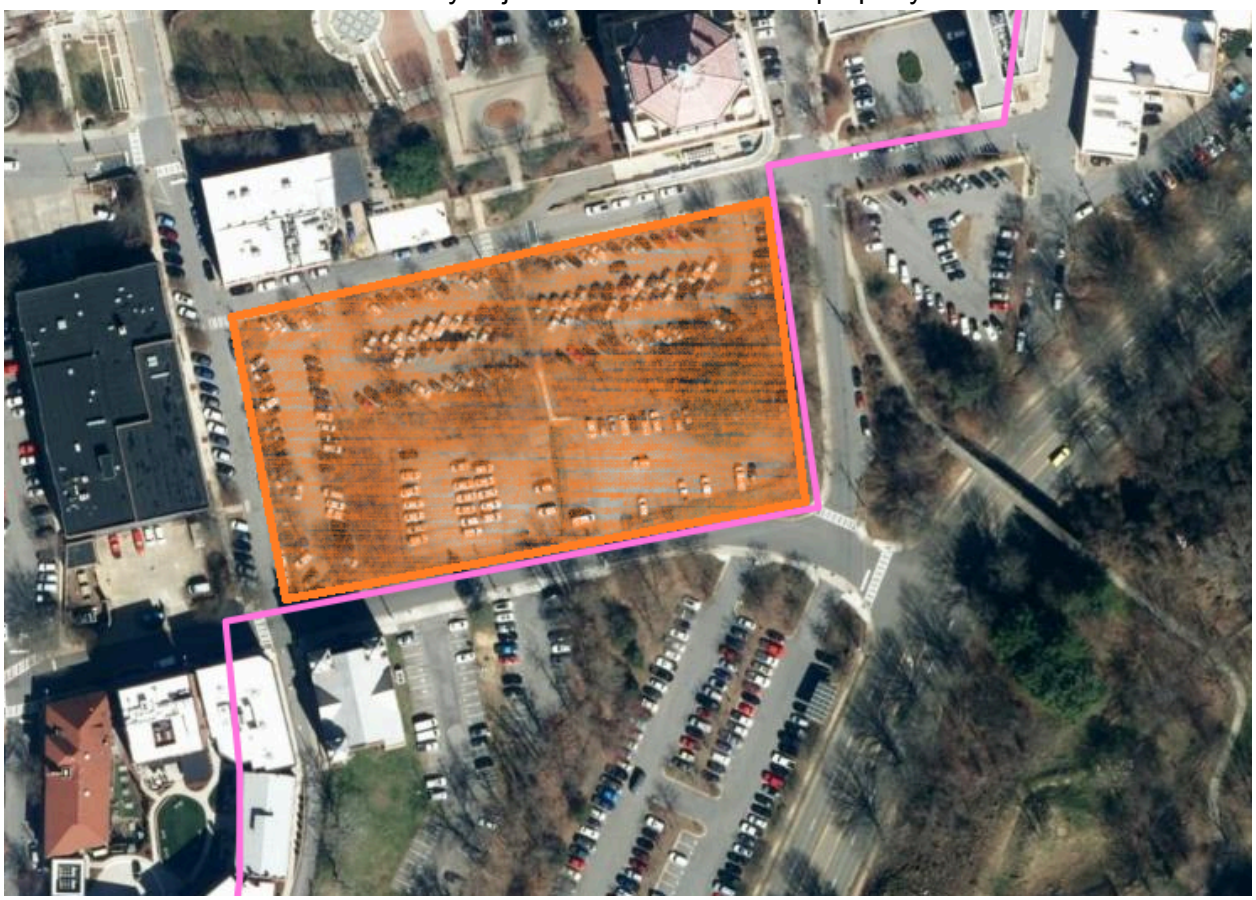
8. **Identify all vendor outreach for Minority & Women Owned Business Enterprises (MWBE).**
    - NA

9. **Identify all Boards, Commissions and Council Committees with tentative dates - add in the vote and recommendation from each Board:**
    - NA

10. **Identify key issues:**
    - Property being referenced consists of seven parcels all currently owned by the City of Asheville and shown on the following maps.
    - Some neighbors and community stakeholder groups have voiced concerns about this project and have requested meaningful engagement before the project moves forward.
    - Staff is developing a comprehensive communication and engagement (C&E) plan. Community stakeholder input will be sought and utilized to finalize the plan. An initial opportunity to gather community input will be at the March 19th Economy Recovery board meeting.



- The Property is not one of the properties associated with Urban Renewal, however is is directly adjacent to urban renewal property:



Overview:

- To assist with materials associated with an upcoming application for an Economic Development Association Grant and to continue moving forward with site - specific pre-development work with ATG entertainment, staff is requesting City Council commit to hold the land parcel for up to two years while predevelopment work is completed.
- History
    - December 2006: City Council adopts resolution 06-217, approving in part to;
        i. Continue to evaluate the feasibility of locating a new performance hall within a mixed-use development at Parkside
        ii. Continue to pursue a regional partnership for replacement of renovation of the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium and sustaining source of funding for future operation and maintenance.
    - November 2007: City Council adopts resolution 07-215, approving in part to;
        i. Support in principle the design of a facility that includes the key components and quality outlined in the Westlate Concept either in adaptive reuse or in a stand alone performing arts facility.
            1. This concept was an initial concept design of a performing arts facility on the Parkside parcel.
    - August 2008: City Council adopts resolution 08-179, approving in part to;
        i. Commit to reserve space for a performance center within the area targeted for a multi-use redevelopment project on property bounded by Marjorie Street to the North, Spruce Street to the west, Eagle Street to the south and South Charlotte to the east, expecting that construction will commence within five years.
            1. The non-profit partner tasked with raising the necessary funds to develop the project unfortunately was not able to do so due to many reasons.
    - February 2020: Staff rolls out a concept design to renovate the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium, with budget estimates of just under $100 Million.
        i. Project included robust community involvement over a full year and included a proposed funding structure.
    - January 2020: Staff begins preliminary conversations with The Ambassador Theatre Group (Now ATG Entertainment) about possible public private partnership related to renovation and future operations of the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium.
    - March 2020: COVID 19 Pandemic hits, project is halted indefinitely.
    - July 3, 2023: Thomas Wolfe Auditorium experiences a ‘catastrophic failure’ in the HVAC system, causing a 9 month closure of the facility for emergency repairs
    - August 2023: Arts AVL creates a ‘Thomas Wolfe Task Force’ with the goal of determining the best course of action for the facility and exploring the feasibility to renovate or replace the facility while factoring in funding constraints.
        i. Task force consists of representatives from;
            1. Community groups & civic volunteers
            2. City
            3. County
            4. TDA
            5. Asheville Symphony
            6. Arts AVL

- September 2023: City Council Worksession to discuss options related to the future of the Thomas Wolfe Auditorium.
    i. Council gives staff direction to explore opportunities for renovation of the TWA targeting two potential options; Improved Raked Floor Arrangement and Patron-Driven Significant renovations with ball park estimated costs between $105 and $150 Million
- October 2023: City Council approves ordinance #5044 transferring $1,400,000 from the HCCA fund Balance to HCCA Capital accounts for emergency repairs to the TWA HVAC System.
- January 2024: Staff reengages conversations with ATG Entertainment.
- February 2024: Task force concludes after consultation with numerous third party experts and consultants that the TWA is not 'worth' the investment required to update the facility in a meaningful manner.
- August 2024: Staff drafts a letter of intent for development partnership with ATG Entertainment with a two year target timeline to determine IF a Public Private Partnership is financially feasible in Asheville. Target intent to announce pre-development partnership in October 2024
- September 27, 2024: TS Helene hits WNC
- November 2024: As immediate emergency response begins to transition to recovery staff advises ATG, that for at least the time being this project is on hold.
- March 2025: Staff reignites conversations with ATG to explore the possibility of the project knowing that future Economic Development Association grants could potentially support the project.
- June 2025: Memorandum of Understanding for predevelopment work is executed with ATG Entertainment. Includes an initial budget of $160,000 towards predevelopment and discovery work, $80,000 from the City, matched by ATG.
- August 2025: MOU details announced to the public.
- October 2025:
    i. City Council approves Resolution 25-217 authorizing the City manager to submit a grant application for a potential Arts & Entertainment Facility project, provided they do not require a match.
    ii. ATG & COA retain Sound Diplomacy to conduct a Cultural and Economic Impact study to help support the City's future EDA grant application.