

# STW Non-Environmental Talking Points

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**There is no evidence supporting the touted economic returns of this venture.** While UNCA claims the venture will add \$250M of economic activity to Asheville, these astronomical returns are not justified by any realistic analysis. And historic evidence would indicate that for stadium projects generally, such economic returns do not materialize. This is a misguided allocation of taxpayer resources that shows little promise of return.

**This development is an abuse of the Millennial Campus designation.** The Millennial Campus wasn't created to subsidize entertainment venues; it was created to support the university's research, education, and service mission while enhancing the economic development of the region. But this development does none of those things: It's not associated with education, research, or service, and all credible evidence suggests this proposal would fail to enhance the economic development of the region.

**UNC has struggled in the past with its Millennial Campus developments.** The UNC system's track record in Millennial Campus developments over the last 20 years has been decidedly mixed. Given the sloppy, opaque, and high-handed way UNCA has so far pursued this project, the public has serious concerns that the project will join other Millennial Campus developments in suffering from repeated delays (as at App State and UNC Greensboro) and endless environmental violations (as at WCU, including a landslide)—all assuming the developer doesn't drop out before construction finishes, as happened at ECU.

**This is government overreach.** The university, led by someone who does not even live in this county, is trying to force through the construction of a soccer stadium that is heavily opposed by local citizens—citizens who will bear the ultimate cost of this development. Over and over again, UNCA has refused to subject this project to meaningful community input, undermining the voices of regular citizens in favor of bureaucratic overreach. Such a development will have drastic and far-reaching impacts on the city of Asheville and Buncombe County, and it's all being handed down from the ivory tower. UNCA has failed to meet the most basic standards of transparency, let alone engagement with impacted communities. This is anti-democratic, a misuse of public funds, and a serious violation of public trust.

**This will hurt local businesses already reeling from hurricane Helene.** Asheville is still very much recovering from the long-term impacts of Helene. Local businesses are still struggling to get back on their feet and will be for years to come. Extensive economic research shows that stadium developments don't increase local economic activity so much as cannibalize other local businesses. With this development, an out-of-state entity will profit at the expense of locally owned and operated businesses.

**UNCA is focused on the enrollment boost but misses the enrollment cost.** UNCA's brand is anchored in connection to nature and connection to the city of Asheville. This development is so out-of-step with that brand and UNCA's identity as an ecologically conscious institution that vast swaths of its alumni network will be alienated. At least one alum is already planning to remove a \$2 million bequest to the university from her will because of this project.

**UNCA is ignoring the real value the woods hold, also affecting enrollment.** The urban forest is a recruitment tool for natural sciences programs, such as environmental studies and biology, some of UNCA's most popular majors—and UNCA just rolled out a new master's program in Environmental Resilience. While UNCA can't compete on lab facilities and technology, it can offer high-quality natural areas such as the urban forest as a unique differentiator that many campuses just don't have—a real benefit in efforts to increase enrollment. This asset will be destroyed if UNCA goes through with this development plan instead of finding an alternative.

**UNCA's reputation will be irreparably harmed.** Warren Buffett said, "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it." The shocking lack of transparency on the university's part has already done real damage to UNCA's reputation as a credible institution. Alumni won't donate, local students won't enroll, and UNCA will suffer lasting reputation loss among the entire WNC community. Parents are already opting to send their children to colleges elsewhere as a result of UNCA's behavior and decision to go through with this plan despite widespread community opposition.

**UNCA woods are not unused vacant land, but crucial to education, research, and student well-being.** Per a recent report from UNCA's Natural Areas Advisory council: "Preserving South Campus [the urban forest/UNCA woods] in its current natural state means protecting a vital asset that sustains research, education, and teaching." Around twenty classes in Environmental Studies and Biology alone rely on the forest for educating their students. The woods have also been an important source of grant funding over the years, as well as a place for students to unwind, decompress, and invest in their own health and well-being.

**The City of Asheville will be paying hidden costs for years to come.** Studies have shown that these developments severely hinder and ultimately harm the local economy through hidden costs of overburdening infrastructure and other associated issues that increase taxes in the long term. These events will require more police, emergency services, and sanitation. Roads will be stressed and need more frequent repair. Storm runoff will worsen, requiring expensive sewer upgrades. Coupled again with the lack of public engagement and transparency, this is effectively taxation without representation and is inherently undemocratic.

**This development would exacerbate the cost-of-living crisis in Asheville.** The cost of living in Asheville has skyrocketed in recent years. Regular working-class people are finding it harder and harder to get by and many are leaving the city. This development only makes matters worse by eliminating a public good, further straining infrastructure, and reducing quality of life for residents. Tourism will suffer due to a shortage of an employable workforce