

To: Trey Irby, City of Asheville Neighborhood Services

The Rhododendron Creek + Horney Heights Community Neighborhood Association urges the City of Asheville to repair and re-open both wings of the closed West Asheville Community Center below the Asheville Police Department's West Resource Center at 970 Haywood Road.

The Center served West Asheville for decades as a place for residents to meet in person for classes, dances, group meetings, choir practice, elections, and much more. At this time of rapid private development when public space in our community has become an endangered species, the Center needs to be enabled to serve its critical function of bringing people together once again.

We believe it was shortsighted of the City to hand this space over to the Asheville Police Dept., without public input, instead of renovating it. It was permanently closed to the public just before our city was devastated by Tropical Storm Helene, forcing residents and officials to scramble to find places that could serve as disaster-resource centers. Instead of having to congregate outdoors in the West Asheville Library parking lot to get cell service and internet, for example, residents could have sheltered in the community center instead, had its facilities been upgraded in a timely manner instead of neglected for years as they were.

Now that the APD has chosen to expand its Resource Center elsewhere, this space needs to be returned to community use. Doing so will align with the City's long-range goals for "resiliency centers" in neighborhoods, as described to the People and Environment Recovery Board in its Dec. 2025 meeting. Our Neighborhood Association would have applied for "upfit" funding for this space had it not been rendered apparently ineligible by the handover to the APD.

Reopening the West Asheville Community Center is all the more urgent now that even the high-demand community room in the West Asheville Library is no longer available in the evening, which is the only time most people are able to attend a community function. The building's large windows that are a safety concern for a police station are a welcoming feature for a community center. Local businesses as well as community groups could use this easily accessible space -- which includes a fully equipped kitchen -- for holding events.

Going forward, City officials must ensure that our neighborhood association is involved in decisions about the future of 970 Haywood, which lies within the boundaries of RC+HHC NA.

Steve Rasmussen, Chair

Rhododendron Creek + Horney Heights Community NA

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