



Office of Mayor Jessica Anderson
Town of Chapel Hill
415 Martin Luther King Jr Blvd
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
919-968-2714

March 4, 2026

Chancellor Lee Roberts
The University of North Carolina – Chapel Hill
South Building
200 East Cameron
Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Dear Chancellor Roberts,

On behalf of the Chapel Hill Town Council, thank you for the University's renewed momentum toward advancing development at Carolina North. We are encouraged by the meaningful steps underway and write to share the Town's perspectives as planning progresses.

A Shared, Future-Focused Vision

Carolina North represents a generational opportunity for both UNC and the Town. As envisioned in the 2009 Development Agreement, the site can support a learn–live–work–play environment aligned with Chapel Hill's Complete Community vision — creating a connected, vibrant hub for students, faculty, staff, residents, and visitors.

We see Carolina North as a place where academic and research space is integrated with housing, employment, retail, and cultural amenities. Strengthening the University's academic and research capacity — particularly in ways that fuel innovation, entrepreneurship, and public-private partnerships — supports long-term economic resilience and shared prosperity.

Housing as a Core Priority

Meeting Chapel Hill's pressing housing needs must remain central as Carolina North moves forward. The 2021 UNC–Chapel Hill Housing Needs Assessment underscored the importance of expanding housing options to ensure both the Town and University remain economically competitive and environmentally sustainable. The University's goal of enrolling approximately 500 additional students per year further reinforces the need for expanded onsite student housing.

We are encouraged by the emphasis on housing in early planning. Phase 1 planning for thousands of undergraduate and graduate beds is an important step toward easing rental pressures and creating a more balanced housing ecosystem.

Long-term success will require a diverse mix of housing options serving students, faculty, researchers, and workforce households across a broad range of incomes. Given the site's location along a strong transit corridor, Carolina North is well positioned to compete for federal funding to support mixed-income and affordable housing.

Connectivity, Transit Integration, and Mobility Investments

Carolina North's location along the North–South Transit Corridor presents a significant opportunity to integrate land use and transportation planning. The corridor's planned transformation into a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route — along with continued support for and investment in Chapel Hill Transit — positions Carolina North as a place where people can conveniently walk, bike, or take transit to campus, the medical center, downtown, and other destinations.

Ensuring the site's success will also require strategic roadway improvements and realignments, particularly along key corridors that connect Carolina North to the broader community. Estes Drive is a prime example of where targeted investments will improve safety, multimodal access, and traffic flow — all essential to supporting the development and strengthening connections between the main campus, Carolina North, and surrounding neighborhoods.

Aligning University plans with the Town's Complete Community goals will require thoughtful integration of BRT, greenways, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, roadway improvements, and other mobility options. This approach supports daily travel while also promoting environmental sustainability and community health.

Coordinated Planning to Mitigate Impacts

As Carolina North advances, sustained coordination between the University and Town will be essential to addressing potential impacts related to traffic and connectivity, stormwater and environmental cleanup, transitions with adjacent neighborhoods, and multimodal access and safety.

A key component of multimodal success is the Town's planned Everywhere-to-Everywhere Greenway Network, intended to provide safe, continuous, and accessible routes for pedestrians and cyclists across Chapel Hill. Integrating greenway corridors into the site design will help advance this shared vision.

We appreciate the University's commitment to retaining the site's natural trail system, which offers valuable recreational opportunities and informal connections to surrounding areas. Preserving and enhancing these natural assets can strengthen ecological networks and contribute to the site's overall character and livability.

Recent storms, including Tropical Storm Chantal, underscore the importance of resilient and environmentally responsible infrastructure. As redevelopment occurs, we urge careful attention to stormwater management and the use of innovative approaches that manage runoff at its source and protect downstream neighborhoods and waterways.

We also hope the University will partner with the Town on the coal ash cleanup at the former police station site. This location sits along a critical corridor linking the main campus to the future Carolina North campus, and the greenway network runs directly through this area. Faculty, staff, and students live along this corridor, making environmental remediation essential for the health, safety, and long-term vitality of the entire area — and for ensuring a safe, seamless connection between Carolina North and the main campus.

Growth Supporting Community Values

Growth at Carolina North can honor Chapel Hill's character while preserving green space, trail networks, and other environmental assets that contribute to our community's quality of life. Thoughtful planning can ensure the site strengthens connectivity — physically and economically — through activated frontages, a high-quality public realm, and walkable, welcoming spaces that encourage gathering and everyday interaction.

Equally important is the relationship between Carolina North and Downtown Chapel Hill. Growth at Carolina North should complement — not compete with — downtown's role as the community's historic, cultural, and commercial heart. Strategic alignment can reinforce downtown's innovation ecosystem, create synergies with the Innovation Hub and future Arts District, and encourage activity, investment, and collaboration that benefit both areas.

Carolina North also presents opportunities to support a more diverse and resilient local economy, including expanding the commercial tax base in ways that benefit both the University and the Town. We encourage exploring public-private partnerships that allow portions of new development to contribute to local tax rolls while advancing shared goals.

Moving Forward Together

We deeply value the University's partnership and leadership. We welcome continued coordination to ensure that Carolina North advances shared objectives — expanding UNC's capacity while strengthening housing, economic opportunity, transit-oriented development, mobility infrastructure, and community connections — ultimately creating synergies that benefit downtown and the broader Chapel Hill community.

Sincerely,

Mayor Jess Anderson
Mayor Pro Tem Camille Berry
Council Member Melissa McCullough
Council Member Wes McMahan
Council Member Paris Miller-Foushee
Council Member Theo Nollert
Council Member Amy Ryan
Council Member Elizabeth Sharp
Council Member Louie Rivers