

Understanding of UNCG Objectives for the Millennial Campus Districts

The HR&A team traveled to UNCG for a series of meetings with University leadership and faculty representatives. Discussions were structured to elicit each stakeholder's vision for the Millennial Campus districts, including goals the University hopes to accomplish, ways this new designation can support ongoing research and programs, and desired physical attributes and types of development for inclusion within the Districts.

Chancellor Frank Gilliam laid out UNCG's overarching mission, built around the tagline "Find Your Way Here," and the role the Millennial Campus districts can play in supporting that mission. UNCG has a history of, and a commitment to, providing educational opportunities to people from a diversity of backgrounds. UNCG plays an integral role in preparing residents of North Carolina to be able to take on a variety of careers, and its graduates tend to stay within state, helping build communities and enrich the economy. The Millennial Campus districts represent an opportunity for UNCG to build on this foundation, helping expand its capacity for community-engaged research, provide its students with more hands-on learning opportunities, and support the Greensboro area through new partnerships that drive economic growth in both the City of Greensboro and throughout Guilford County.

Through this two-day engagement process, several shared elements of a vision for the UNCG Millennial Campus districts emerged. The HR&A team understands the following to be important pieces of the guiding vision for the new Millennial Campus districts:

- **Accessible:** The districts will embody UNCG's focus on community-engaged research and teaching and be outward facing, blurring the line between campus and the City of Greensboro. By interweaving the campus and the community, the districts will help promote increased collaboration between UNCG and the surrounding community and provide space that is open and accessible to outside partners and stakeholders, without imposing on the community. They will also help promote physical connections between the UNCG Campus, adjacent neighborhoods, and the nascent energy of Downtown Greensboro.
- **Collaborative:** The districts will support UNCG's ability to attract private partners and bolster external engagement activities. The districts will function as "brackish water," where flexible spaces and strong programs enable and facilitate increased public-private partnerships to support the success of UNCG and the City of Greensboro. The University will leverage its human capital and talented student pool to enter into partnerships with private firms who will help sustain spaces to benefit from this proximity.
- **Convergent:** The districts will encourage collaborative, convergent research within their focus areas. Both the Health & Wellness and the Visual & Performing Arts districts will emphasize interdisciplinary research, promote collaboration amongst UNCG and external partners, and offer opportunities to support innovative research with a focus on practical applications to promote community well-being. At the same time, the districts will also provide opportunities for convergent research that spans the two distinct themes, particularly promoting research at the intersection of health and the arts, such

as arts-based therapies, mindfulness and art, and evaluation studies on the impacts of arts exposure on health outcomes. The districts will include collaborative connector space to facilitate interaction and research across disciplines.

- **Distinctive:** While the districts will promote seamless integration with the Greensboro community, they will at the same time reflect the UNCG brand, creating a distinctive and identifiable district that both respects the character of surrounding neighborhoods while promoting and reflecting the University's identity.
- **Diverse uses:** The districts will provide an array of uses and amenities to build a vibrant area attractive to UNCG faculty, students, private partners, and community members. Quality dining options, healthcare clinics, childcare facilities, a diversity of performance spaces and venues, and neighborhood service retail offerings will exist amongst existing academic buildings, helping to further interweave the campus with the community. Within each district, core anchor uses will invite the public into the space – for example, public health clinics in the Health & Wellness District, and public art galleries in the Visual & Performing Arts District.
- **Entrepreneurial:** The districts will promote and showcase UNCG's entrepreneurial assets and complement the City of Greensboro's historic spirit of risk-taking and innovation by offering programs such as a business incubator and start-up competitions.
- **Engaging:** The districts will be designed to appeal to UNCG students, offering collaborative space attractive to students, encouraging students to spend time in the districts and contribute to the area's sense of vibrancy. The districts will provide students with new work and internship options, providing opportunities for UNCG students to take their academic experience and skills and apply them within the greater Greensboro community.
- **Enriching:** The districts will embrace the arts and enrich Greensboro's existing arts scene. Greensboro has a robust arts and cultural scene of which its residents are rightly proud. The districts will further build the city's reputation as a key destination for the arts and cultural events, activating the Millennial Campus as a principal node within Greensboro's vibrant arts scene.

Within this broader, overarching vision for the Millennial Campus districts, stakeholders also shared more specific vision for each of the two planned districts – the Health & Wellness District along Gate City Boulevard, and the Visual & Performing Arts District along Tate Street. These thematic vision elements include:

Health & Wellness

- **Focus on community wellness:** Building on UNCG's commitment to community engagement, the District will provide needed community health services, as well as research, practice, and hands-on learning opportunities for UNCG students. Students in health sciences classes will have new opportunities to shadow clinicians, volunteer in clinics, and gain hands-on experience. Similar to its partnership with Cone Health for Union Square, UNCG will partner with health care providers to develop shared facilities to marry academic research with clinical application. For instance, the District will promote partnerships between UNCG and major area health care providers, such as Cone Health, through lab space and patient clinics that support a holistic approach to building a healthy community. In addition to clinical space, the District will provide collaborative space dedicated to research and programming centered on wellness, health promotion, and strategies for prevention. For example, existing partnerships with the Wellness Council of America and Blue Cross/Blue Shield of North Carolina could be expanded via provision of incubator space to pursue new ideas for improving community wellness. Space for a center that brings together researchers in nutrition, social work, kinesiology, nursing, psychology and other fields involved in promoting

community wellness could help actively engage community residents, while providing students, faculty, and staff space to pursue new projects and interventions.

- **Create an urban feel:** The District will create new in-fill development opportunities along Gate City Blvd., with multi-tenant buildings housing private industry partners who engage with UNCG students and faculty in collaborative research and the delivery of health care services.
- **Support a true hub of innovation:** The District will include incubation space and provide opportunities for health and technology companies who take up tenancy to interact and partner with UNCG students and faculty. There will be multi-use buildings that include classroom space, clinic space, collaborative space, research space, and office space, to promote innovation in health and wellness related research.
- **Incorporate patient clinics:** UNCG currently operates successful patient clinics, such as the UNCG Speech and Hearing Center, the AD/HD Clinic, and the UNCG Psychology Clinic, and the District is a way to provide space for these external facing clinics. Rather than patients having to navigate through campus and contend with parking, buildings in the Health & Wellness District that house clinics can improve the process for community members who visit these clinics. Relocation of such clinics would make their existing space on main campus available for academic or other University uses that currently face limited space.
- **Leverage and support Greensboro's "Smart Corridor" on Gate City Blvd.:** The City of Greensboro, including a representative of UNCG, participated in Envision America's 2017 National Smart City Program, with a focus on developing new technological advances and initiatives to help Greensboro build a multi-modal "smart" corridor on Gate City Boulevard. Proposed plans for the corridor include a special bus route that would connect the convention center, UNCG campus, and downtown; information kiosks; free Wi-Fi; and embedded traffic sensors. The benefits of this "smart" corridor can help attract private industry tenants to locate within the District, while new sources of data collected on the corridor will be beneficial to UNCG researchers.

Visual & Performing Arts

- **Establish a new "user-friendly" arts destination:** The agglomeration of new space and programs within the District will enhance Tate Street as an arts destination within Greensboro, supporting a node of activity within the city's diverse, celebrated arts scene. With theaters, galleries, workshops, performances, and events open to the public, the district will attract people from around the region and increase the exposure of UNCG faculty and students who are able to share their art via the District.
- **Provide community art space:** The District will provide studio and work space for artists in the Greensboro community. The District should provide opportunities to celebrate the City's diverse, international population, creating and supporting programming and performances focused on highlighting and showcasing the unique cultural backgrounds of Greensboro residents.
- **Create new dining destinations:** New development should include a focus on attracting fine-dining and high-quality restaurants to capture visitors attending performances and events within the District.
- **Create a funky, organic feel:** The District will encompass smaller-scale development designed to create a walkable district with a distinct sense of place that offers a variety of performance and gallery spaces, including a new black-box theater already under construction, as well as potential venues like music studios or a comedy venue. UNCG will engage with existing neighborhood businesses to help them embrace the opportunities presented by the District, working collaboratively with these local business owners to create the desired environment.

- **Develop a community arts school:** Expanded facilities provided through the District will create opportunities for UNCG’s talented faculty and students to further serve the community. A community arts school will help build bridges into the community, serve populations across the socioeconomic spectrum, and provide UNCG students with hands-on community engagement experience.

Vision Statement

Based on these conversations with University stakeholders, the HR&A team proposes the following vision statement to help guide the development of the Millennial Campus Districts at UNCG:

“UNC Greensboro has a storied history of providing opportunity and excellence — and creating meaningful impact — through education. From our beginnings as a college for women, we demonstrated a commitment to providing both opportunity and excellence in higher education. We built on this foundation as we became one of the first three institutions in the UNC system, then a highly diverse, co-educational university, and now a growing research university of more than 20,000 students.

The legacy of opportunity and excellence is thriving today at UNC Greensboro. We are recognized for providing not just access to a vast array of students, but also for our tenacious commitment to student success. Through our research and creative activity, we are known and respected for addressing inequities across key domains in which significant demographic gaps remain, such as health and education. Even more, UNC Greensboro is a nationally renowned leader in closing achievement gaps, serving traditionally underrepresented groups and providing a truly transformative environment for one of the most diverse student populations in the state system.

As a public institution of the State of North Carolina, more than 90% of our students come from the state — many from central North Carolina. Even more, of our roughly 120,000 living alumni, 30,000 live within 25 miles of campus, and 80,000 live within 100 miles. As a key figure in the Triad region, we are intricately tied to our community. We share a place, a fate, and a responsibility for being an active partner in the future of both.

The Millennial Campus Districts at UNC Greensboro will build on this historic commitment to opportunity, excellence, and impact. By supporting new public-private partnerships, collaborative research projects, and community-engaged research, the Millennial Campus Districts will facilitate enhanced University-community interaction in ways that are physically, economically, and culturally interwoven with our surrounding community. UNC Greensboro’s strongly held commitment to service, community impact, and civic engagement, as well as our steadfast commitment to academic excellence, will inform development within the Districts and promote a roster of programming that prioritize hands-on learning and employment opportunities for our students. At the same time, the Districts will add value to the University, enhancing its research capacity, establishing new partnerships, and strengthening its role in driving economic development activity in the greater Greensboro community.

The UNC System’s strategic plan, Higher Expectations, calls for campuses to identify and highlight their areas of academic distinction. UNCG has identified two areas of distinction that emerge directly from our own strategic plan: Health and Wellness and Visual and Performing Arts. The Millennial Campus Districts will focus primarily on these two areas of distinction, building on our existing strengths and world-class programs in these areas.

UNC Greensboro is relentlessly focused on helping students unleash their potential and make a meaningful impact with their lives, in our community, and around the world, every day. The Millennial Campus will be an extension of that promise, to “Find Your Way Here,” delivering a mixed-use, innovation-focused district where the University, industry partners, and the surrounding community can come together around health and the arts to create a more vibrant community, a more prosperous city, and a stronger University for our students and our region.”

Initial Development & Design Considerations

- **Support the development of a “Game Changing” project:** To help jumpstart the Millennial Campus Districts and build excitement around this new project, the University will need to make targeted, strategic investments. Investing in an initial game changing project, such as a convergence center with flexible office and research space, will help build momentum for the districts and attract private firms interested in partnering with the University in future development projects within the districts. This convergent center should ideally be located at the intersection of the two districts, near the corner of Gate City Blvd. and Tate St.
- **Blur boundaries between campus and community:** To help create a district that promotes community interaction with UNCG, the University should look for opportunities to co-brand buildings and programs with private and civic partners. Development within the districts should not resemble a cluster of academic buildings, and should instead appear more welcoming and inviting to non-UNCG stakeholders, while at the same time creating a distinctive feel in sync with UNCG’s branding and identity.
- **Incorporate art throughout the districts:** The use of public art should be a key element of the branding of both Millennial Campus Districts. Forms of public artistic expression, such as outdoor art installations, street-facing window art displays, and murals should be incorporated throughout both districts, to serve as branding, wayfinding, and add to the general appeal of the districts. As a recommend first step, UNCG should engage the arts community to do a mural on the pedestrian passage on Tate St., underneath the railroad tracks. This is a key passage linking the two districts, and activating this pedestrian tunnel with public art will start to build excitement. Activating the block of Tate St. between Walker Ave. and Spring Garden St. is another key place-making opportunity. The large plaza in front of the Taylor Theater is another good place for UNCG to pursue low-cost interventions to make the corridor more exciting – installing new student art sculptures, providing seating and tables, and improving landscaping with new planter boxes are some ways UNCG can activate this area. There is potential to link the lobbies of the UNCG Auditorium and the Taylor Theater via an innovative and exciting architectural intervention, which would better serve the facilities while also providing new space for performances and exhibitions.

Another opportunity for artistic intervention is the area around the Center for Community Engaged Design, situated near the corner of Gate City Blvd. and Aycok Street. The Center’s space is home to an incubator for student research and design projects. Associated students and faculty could help design and create displays of student projects along Gate City Blvd., potentially including a display of a Tiny House from the Center’s Tiny Homes design initiative. Efforts to integrate the arts should be coordinated with ongoing UNCG branding efforts along Gate City Blvd., to promote cohesive

streetscapes and art displays.

- **Encourage pedestrian traffic:** Overall, the districts will need to promote a pleasant experience for pedestrians in order to build vibrancy, where people can walk from office space to a restaurant to a performance to a retail store. Walkability enables informal interactions and contributes to a place's sense of dynamism. Currently, the stretch of W. Gate City Blvd. from the UNCG pedestrian plaza to Tate Street does not offer a pleasant pedestrian experience. There are narrow sidewalks unprotected from a busy five-lane road. Given that this will be one of the major thoroughfares for the Health & Wellness District, alternative options should be explored, such as potentially routing pedestrians along the railroad tracks at Oakland Avenue to promote a more safe and enjoyable passage for visitors to the districts, or re-evaluating the potential for a pedestrian bridge across Gate City Blvd, building on a past UNCG study on the feasibility of underpass and overpass options to improve pedestrian passage across Gate City Blvd. Efforts to improve the pedestrian experience will need to be coordinated with ongoing municipal streetscape initiatives to promote collaboration and help build a cohesive, well-connected experience for pedestrians transitioning from the campus into the city.
- **Highlight what makes Greensboro special:** In addition to focusing on the themes of health & wellness and the visual & performing arts, the Millennial Campus districts are a chance for UNCG to celebrate the University's history and contributions to the City of Greensboro. Erecting historic panels that help tell the story of the University, and its role in shaping the City, is one such potential intervention to include in the districts to help highlight the University's strong commitment to community engagement.
- **Include unique retail:** The districts should include curated retail offerings within its buildings to support UNCG's vision of an area attractive to UNCG students, faculty, and community members. Student led pop-up stores, health and wellness focused eateries, and other unique ground-floor retail will help differentiate the districts and create a desirable pedestrian experience.
- **Build critical mass:** To influence the future of assets in the districts and ensure development proceeds in a manner aligned with UNCG's vision, UNCG should target a few key opportunities to build momentum and begin to attract private partners. For example, the large parking lot behind the Weatherspoon Art Museum is one such key opportunity – the University should begin to consider ways in which development and interventions at this location can help provide a spark for future activity within the districts.
- **Pursue near-term opportunities for activation:** The University needs to pursue initial activation to build momentum for the districts and begin to attract interest from the multiple audiences the districts will ultimately engage. These initial opportunities should be low-cost interventions the University can implement in the near-term, including developing and installing temporary uses, consistent with the themes of the districts, on vacant areas and unused spaces within the districts. These temporary uses could include programs and uses such as pop-up community event space, art exhibition space, display space for student research projects, a designated area for food trucks, a pocket dog park, and informal meeting space for students and faculty — all interventions that require minimal upfront investment from the University, while helping build vibrancy and attract visitors in the near-term, as a precursor to future major development initiatives.