

Dear Council Person,

My name is Maria Lopez-Ibañez and I live within two blocks of the proposed Charlotte Street development by RCG and the Killian family, and directly behind Fuddruckers, where there is another proposed development by the [Kassinger Development Group](#), both of which are seeking conditional rezoning in order to build.

Currently both of these sites are zoned as CB1, or Central Business District 1, that allows for 40 units per acre with 20% affordable housing and a maximum of 6000 square feet of building footprint for development.

The 101 Charlotte Street proposed plan is seeking Conditional Zoning (CZ), which abuts residential neighborhoods in the historic districts of Asheville, to be developed with 183 units, 30,000 square feet of office space, and 20,000 square feet of retail space. And when I say abut, I mean they would be allowed to develop within 15 feet of residential properties with 4-5 stories directly behind houses that are 1-2 stories.

This is not considered infill, whereby buildings of the same scale are built in close proximity to one another, but instead, it is unrestricted development that does not take into account that there are homes directly adjacent to these lots that would be dwarfed by them if they were allowed to build with Conditional Zoning.

To those of you who have heard cries of NIMBYism and elitism as a retort to the opposition to these developments, I offer a small and humble snapshot of my neighbors and neighborhood, the one I interact with every day as I walk my dog, so that you may understand what is at stake with unrestrained growth in Asheville and growth that only caters to those who can afford 2<sup>nd</sup> homes in Asheville.

I am writing to you so that I can hopefully show you how those types of developments would change the cultural and economic fabric of these neighborhoods forever and potentially displace those who live here in the near future.

I live in the Chestnut Hills neighborhood on Broad St. I am a second generation Cuban-American, single mother, now with two grown children, one of whom lives in the same Chestnut Hills neighborhood with his family, and an artist.

My neighbors are brown, black, white, and from Asian descent. They are gay and straight, young and old. My neighbors are nurses, teachers, business owners, activist, students, parents and grandparents, single and partnered non-binary persons, women and men, families, intergenerational families living together, artists, woodworkers, musicians, pastors, Jewish Community Center members, and all of whom I encounter within the 10 blocks that I walk every day.

Mr E., a local black resident, (his last initial for privacy), lived in his house on Madison Ave. for 64 years until the day he died.

Ms. S (her first initial for privacy), a Korean grandmother, grows veggies on her small plot to make traditional kimchi.

Chestnut Hills is still one of those vanishing places in Asheville where some homes are less than \$300,000 and are close to downtown but also close to nature and the Blue Ridge Parkway. A lot of the residents I have met here have lived in their homes for over 30 years.

What I've seen in the past happen, when I lived in the Durham and Chapel Hill area, was that large developments would come in and promise things like 'affordable housing', and 'vibrant neighborhoods', buzzwords developers use to garner support, only to find that the majority of the residential units being offered start at \$550,000 for 1-bedroom condos.

If large scale development is allowed to happen at an unrestrained rate, I fear that the ability to have a home in Asheville will soon be relegated to the wealthy and those who can afford to have a 'downtown vacation condo' and force those of us on median incomes to be pushed further and further out.

What also happens in these large developments is that retail units sit empty because the rentals are too high. In one case, in Chapel Hill, local business owners could not rent at these new developments due to the high rents, and the majority of the retail space went to chains that overturned tenants at a high rate.

I fear that the same could happen at 101 Charlotte St. and at the Fuddrucker's site. The developers promise to fill these spaces with local businesses but in reality who will be able to afford these rents? And ultimately, who do they serve? Are there hardware stores, corner markets and groceries? Maybe a post office, a local plant store run by young people just getting a start, or black and brown owned businesses? Will the retail and office rentals reflect the diversity of Chestnut Hills and other surrounding neighborhoods or will it cater to only tourists? Will it become another brewery? What exactly will happen there is the question I think City Council needs to be asking these developers.

Also, have you thought about the traffic that would be diverted to this area, ironically, making the area less walkable and safe? Eventually, it would kill the bike lanes and the traffic lanes would need to be opened up again to handle the influx of cars that would commute to 50,000 square feet of office and retail space every day.

And finally, I would like to address the environmental impact this type of developed hardscape would entail. You would be demolishing old growth trees to develop enough parking and hardscape to support 50,000 plus square feet of buildings,

creating increased water runoff, and pollution with the influx of vehicles. All of which, to me, seems like the antithesis of why people come to Asheville in the first place, to enjoy nature, to commune with nature, to connect with others in a natural setting.

I am not anti-development.

I believe in thoughtful development that supports long term economic growth while promoting diversity and economic opportunity for all persons regardless of race or gender.

And I believe, along with many neighbors and other citizens in Asheville, that these two developments, as they are being proposed, do not support smart, thoughtful growth for Asheville or promote diversity and economic opportunity for local residents.

I am asking Asheville City Council to *not* extend Conditional Zoning to these developers parcels, to ask the developers to come back with more thoughtful and scaled back developments that fit within the current CB1 Zoning, that are scaled and designed to match existing building types in the neighborhood, that are more economically in line with average median incomes, and to give the people of Asheville a voice in this process.

I also ask City Council to allow all meetings going forward regarding these issues and developments to be public and accessible and to get citizens information to these meetings in a timely and transparent way.

Council members, I would like to remind you what our Mayor wrote while seeking public office:

*Esther supports controlled growth, and pushed for form-based code that will protect the character of our neighborhoods and business districts even as we grow to create more opportunities for residents to live, work, and raise families.*

ref: <https://esthermanheimerformayor.weebly.com>

Please show Asheville city residents support regarding smart and thoughtful growth of our town.

Thank you for your time and

With much respect,

Maria Lopez-Ibañez  
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