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Date: April 18, 2019

From: Trustees of Edgecombe Community College

To: Rocky Mount City Council, Rocky Mount City Manager, NC Housing Finance Agency Board Members, and DFI Project Manager

Re: Proposed Affordable Housing Development on Existing Shared Parking Lots

Dear City Councilmembers, City Manager, NC Housing Finance Agency Board members, and DFI Project Manager:

In today's increasingly complex, competitive, and global society, the success of our communities depends on our ability to work together in harmony and in true partnership for the benefit of everyone. There is evidence that this is needed in the areas of local government and education. As Trustees of Edgecombe Community College, we understand the need and value of collaboration and partnership as we serve the higher education needs of our community. We have depended on this for the success of our students and the communities we serve.

For more than 47 years, the college has been a part of downtown discussions and has enjoyed strong and supportive partnerships with area businesses, community groups, and other local entities who understand and appreciate the important role that affordable, accessible, and high quality higher education and training contribute to a vibrant workforce and strong economy. No partner has understood or appreciated this better than the City of Rocky Mount. From our proud yet humble beginnings at the former Booker T. Washington High School to operating out of the Historic Downtown Post Office, nearby storefronts, and now the established Rocky Mount campus, the City of Rocky Mount has been with us every step of the way as a true partner in helping us educate and train the tens of thousands of students who have passed through our doors.

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Without the city leadership's assistance, support, and vision, it would have been quite difficult for the college to have made the significant impact that it has made for the community and its residents. A recent example of this partnership and vision was seen in 2015 when the City of Rocky Mount joined the college in acquiring multiple lots adjacent to the Historic Post Office and bounded by Rose Street, Atlantic Avenue, and Tarboro Street. After great discussion, analysis, and deliberation among city and college leadership, the acquisition of the lots was mutually agreed upon to specifically and expressly make overflow parking spaces available for the college's students and guests, downtown visitors, as well as the future patrons of the new event center to be constructed a block away. The decision made concerning which particular lots would be purchased by the city and which ones would be purchased by the college were made together and deliberately based on the economic opportunities available at the time. Furthermore, the city agreed to demolish and remove the building formerly used as a car dealership and later as a car wash located on one of the lots acquired by the college as well as the building formerly used as a laundromat and dry cleaners located on one of the lots acquired by the city which left a large open space for immediate use for parking.

All entities involved were pleased with the verbal agreement and conclusions which led to discussions about eventually paving the open lots in the future. From these discussions, the city conducted a study in 2017 entitled "Rose Street Streetscape and Parking Study." The study recommended paving the parking lot and incorporating detailed landscaping, designing a public gathering area, and installing outdoor art and bicycle paths for the future (See Illustrations A and B).

Subsequently during the summer of 2018, prior to the opening of the newly constructed Rocky Mount Event Center, the City of Rocky Mount reached out to the college to formalize a joint agreement to use the city-owned and college-owned parcels in question, in addition to a college-owned parcel located at the northwest corner of Arlington and Marigold Streets for overflow parking during upcoming major events and activities at the Event Center. These discussions initially led to a series of short-term written agreements

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that would support the overflow parking needs for the college and for events taking place during the first few months of the opening of the Event Center until the current version of the Agreement entitled “Parking Area Development and Shared Use Agreement” was eventually signed and dated on February 11, 2019. Shortly thereafter, the Rocky Mount City Council voted to convey the same shared use parking space for development. Unfortunately, no one at the college or on the Board, including the college’s new president, Dr. McLeod, was involved or engaged in any discussions concerning this development plan. Considering the scale of this plan, its proximity to the college, the imminent elimination of the shared use parking agreement between the city and the college, and the negative impact this development will have on our future growth it seems reasonable and appropriate that the college would have been invited to be a fully engaged partner throughout this study.

If there are estimates that the shared use parking space is no longer needed for Event Center overflow parking, it would probably be a premature position to take and would undermine its value for the rest of the city, area businesses, and the college. Know that ECC employees, students and visitors regularly use these lots to park as on-campus parking is limited, particularly during the day. With 2,900 students attending classes at the Rocky Mount campus, 122 faculty and staff, many library, barbering, and cosmetology patrons, and the numerous people who attend the various community meetings and events hosted there, finding an available space among the 194 parking spots on campus can be rather challenging depending on the time of day and year.

As Trustees of Edgecombe Community College, we have a sincere hope and vision for the college’s and community’s continued growth. As such, we are genuinely concerned that the plans that will eliminate this shared use parking space in order to construct affordable housing immediately across the street from the campus will not only negatively impact available and much needed parking but will also stifle the college’s future growth. Without viable options and solutions, this plan would significantly hinder our ability to adequately meet the evolving educational and workforce training needs of the residents of this community. The Trustees of

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Edgecombe Community College feel strongly and passionately that better locations exist that would ensure the opportunity for the future growth of the college, keep the needed and already established shared use parking for all of us, and give residents a safer walking path to the nearest grocery store rather than crossing busy railroad tracks. We ask that you please give the college the respect to hear our ideas to contribute to a vibrant, bright downtown and let's use this moment in time to give our city a boost, rather than create more division and strife. Our community deserves a win-win plan.

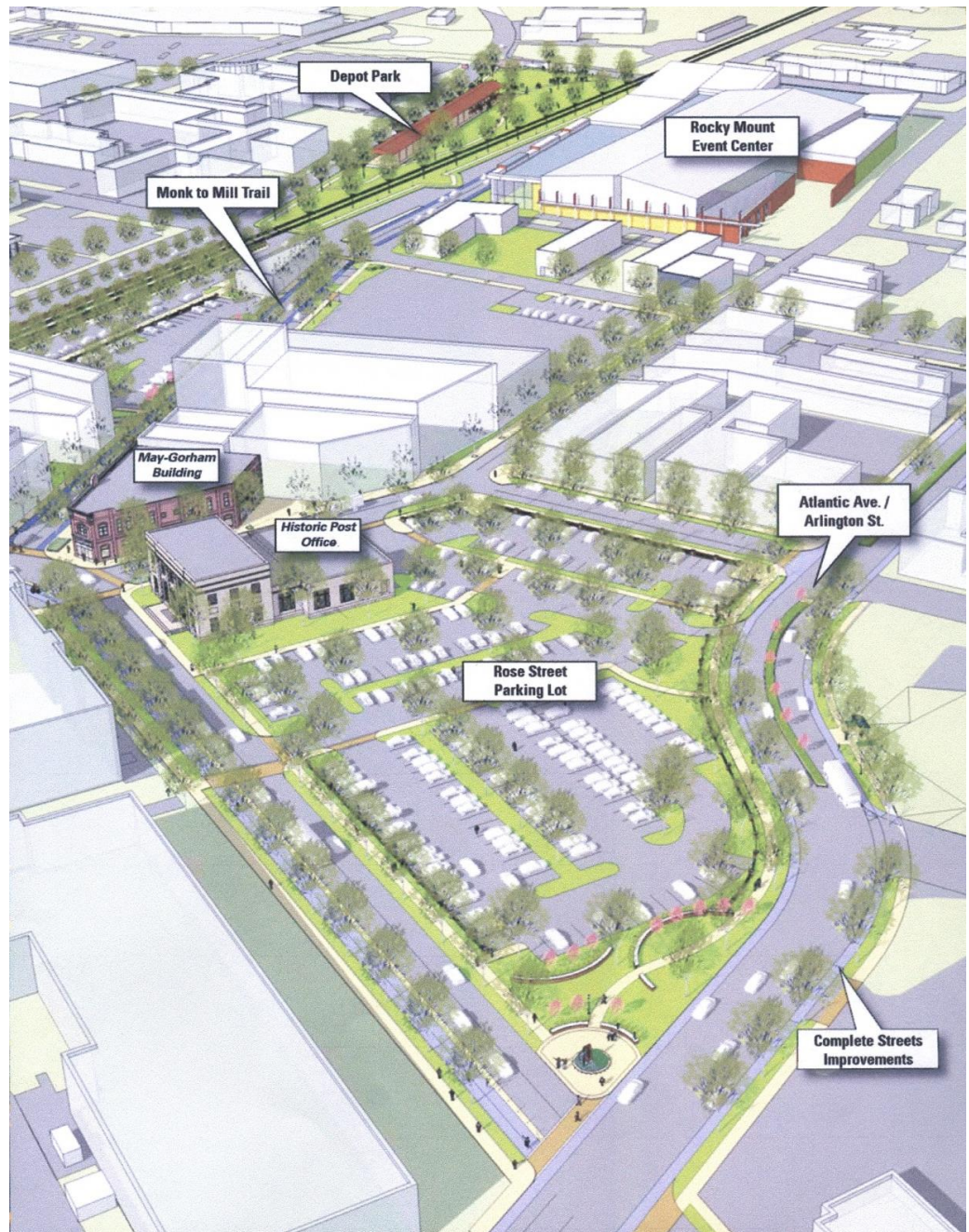
Sincerely,

Dr. Jerry Price, Chair

Edgecombe Community College Board of Trustees

cc: Trustees of Edgecombe Community College  
Edgecombe County Commissioners

Illustration A from the Rose Street Streetscape and Parking Study



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Illustration B from the Rose Street Streetscape and Parking Study

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