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Westgate Shopping Center sold to UNC Health for \$19.5M

Will Hofmann
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

ASHEVILLE – One of the region’s oldest commercial hubs, the Westgate Shopping Center, has been sold for \$19.5 million to UNC Health, North Carolina’s nonprofit health system seeking to establish a new hospital in the Asheville-area.

The sale includes all of the outdoor mall, a commercial building on the south side of its parking lot and a 6.3-

acre parcel north of the shopping center along with a commercial building, according to filings with the Buncombe County Register of Deeds in mid-June and early July. It sits just off Patton Avenue and I-240 in West Asheville.

UNC Health purchased Westgate Shopping Center from FIRC Group, Inc, the Asheville-based commercial real estate company. FIRC has retained ownership of a hotel — Country Inn & Suites — just south of Westgate. When

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Shoppers exit the Earth Fare grocery store in Westgate Shopping Center on March 24 in Asheville. JOSH BELL/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

‘The bridge is beginning to list’



Horses at Missed Path Sanctuary in Candler endured pounding rain and flooding during Tropical Storm Helene on Sept 27, 2024. PROVIDED BY MARC DIFRANCIA

FEMA denial leaves Candler couple with no clear way home

Cory Vaillancourt
Asheville Citizen Times
USA TODAY NETWORK

CANDLER — The Federal Emergency Management Agency kept telling Mike Cooper and Marc DiFrancia their house was safe to live in. They got that part right. But the problem never was the house.

The problem is the private bridge that carries Cooper and DiFrancia across Stony Fork to their home and horse sanctuary at the base of Mount Pisgah in southern Buncombe County. The bridge was damaged by Tropical Storm Fred in 2021, then beaten harder by Tropical



Marc DiFrancia inspects damage to his bridge caused by Tropical Storm Helene in 2024 in Candler. As of July 1, it was only getting worse.
CORY VAILLANCOURT/ASHEVILLE CITIZEN TIMES

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Graham’s death leaves key Senate post open

Budget panel helped pass Trump’s agenda

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – The sudden death of Sen. Lindsey Graham on July 11 at age 71 sent shock waves through Capitol Hill, leaving lawmakers reeling from the unexpected passing of their longtime colleague.

Graham’s death marks the passing of a longtime conservative fixture in the Senate, and one of President Donald Trump’s closest political allies. It also opened up an important vacancy atop a key Senate committee – one that’s increasingly an architect of some of the most consequential legislation affecting Americans’ lives.

He had traveled to Turkey earlier in the week for the NATO summit followed by a meeting in Kyiv with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

The lawmaker “passed away from a brief and sudden illness,” a statement posted to his social media account said, adding “Senator Graham’s family appreciates prayers at this time and asks for privacy during this incredibly difficult period.”

The South Carolina Republican was the powerful chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. The panel may sound like just another wonky corner of Congress, but it’s much more than that.

It’s also the place where Trump’s biggest second-term legislative wins have originated. That’s because budget bills only need a simple majority to survive, unlike other legislation in the Senate that requires 60 votes.

Congressional Republicans, on Trump’s orders, have become more and more accustomed to muscling big

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