



The News & Observer

NEWSOBSERVER.COM

UNC-Chapel Hill plans Carolina North on historic land

BY JANE WINIK SARTWELL jane.sartwell@newsobserver.com

UNC-Chapel Hill is pouring millions of dollars into developing a satellite campus two miles north of campus, a 230-acre tract of land now dubbed Carolina North.

But there are some old and unusual strings attached to the development, thanks to a former professor's will that's over 85 years old.

Before it was known as Carolina North, it was the estate of UNC philosophy professor Henry Horace Williams, a man who grew up near the Great Dismal Swamp in the aftermath of the Civil War. Later in life, he became a learned logician at UNC and a real estate tycoon in Chapel Hill.

When Williams died in 1940, he willed his estate to the university with the purpose of funding fellowships for the philosophy department. Williams' will was a short document that covered nearly 1,000 acres of land. He was laser-focused on benefitting the philosophy department.

"I give to the University of North Carolina all my property of every description and all of it," his will reads. "This property is to be held in trust forever."

And crucially: "The income from this property is to be used for Fellowships in Philosophy."

In the 1990s, some 50 years after Williams' death, members of the philosophy department raised questions about whether the university was honoring his final wishes and properly funding the department with the land.

For a long time, the property functioned partially as Horace Williams Airport, a World War II-era airfield where presidents like Gerald Ford and George H.W. Bush practiced flight. Other parts were used as a town landfill and dumping ground for hazardous waste from the chemistry department.

It's now mostly a green space, with miles of trails snaking through forest. The landing strip is overgrown, and the buildings that once serviced it stand empty.

All these years later, the university is planning to build out Carolina North on the land, but many questions remain about what that could look like — and whether it will be home to a new basketball arena.

WHAT ARE PLANS FOR CAROLINA NORTH?

The university has plans for an ambitious development that will include student and workforce housing, academic classrooms, research facilities, retail and entertainment options, restaurants, health services and a hotel. A basketball arena isn't out of consideration yet — much to the dismay of certain UNC fans who have been vocal in their opposition.

On Monday evening, the Carolina North stakeholder advisory committee, made up of interested people from both the community and university, visited the property by bus and on foot. As the orange sun set over the weedy airfield, committee co-chair Anita Brown-Graham told reporters she was overcome by the "sense of opportunity" that the property presents to both the town of Chapel Hill and to UNC.

But the issue of complying with Williams' will remains. Earlier this month, the university announced that as it moves forward with its master plan for the land, "addition-

SEE CAROLINA NORTH, 5A



A federally endangered Carolina madtom rests beneath a tile and a section of pipe on the bottom of an aquarium at the Yates Mill Aquatic Conservation Center in Raleigh. The center specializes in propagating endangered species native to North Carolina.



We're dedicated to delivering the journalism you rely on. Discover the stories that matter to you inside. Subscribers, explore more stories and features like puzzles and games at newsobserver.com/edition.

FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE QUESTIONS, CALL US AT: 800-522-4205

OR REACH US ONLINE AT: newsobserver.com/customer-service

