



December 22, 2025

Members of the Oconee County Council:

In addition to responding to Council's FOIA requests for records, Clemson University would like to take this opportunity to address our relationship with Oconee County and the reports of our association with the Newry Project housing development.

It is important to state at the outset: Clemson University values its longstanding relationship with Oconee County. Together, we have achieved meaningful progress – from expanding rural health care through the Clemson Health Clinic in Walhalla to creating pathways for teacher education for Oconee County students through Expressway to Tiger Town. Members of our campus community serve on the board of directors for the Oconee Economic Alliance Board and the Oconee County Chamber of Commerce – strengthening Oconee County's economic development. Clemson University contributed \$4.859 billion annually to the Upstate's four-county region, which includes Oconee County.

Oconee County has a strong track record of economic development and as stated on the Oconee Economic Alliance website, the County is "A Manufacturing Powerhouse." The County also is an excellent place to live as confirmed by Niche ranking Oconee County the 4<sup>th</sup> Best County in South Carolina to buy a house. The credit goes to the citizens and government leaders of Oconee County for these accomplishments, and the University is proud to be listed as a location advantage for business considering Oconee County.

It is in that context, being a valued economic development partner for the County, that the University became involved in a concept discussion about creating a research and innovation park in Oconee County. The following summary outlines that involvement:

- As part of its land-grant mission, Clemson is typically presented with 20 or more economic development and land development project proposals each year around the state. We assess each opportunity for alignment with the University's strategic plan.
- Research parks such as the Clemson University Center for Automotive Research (CUICAR) in Greenville County and the Anderson Materials Research Lab (AMRL) in Anderson County are examples of University projects which bring economic development to our region.



- In late 2023 a developer reached out to the University regarding a research park concept for Oconee County that would attract high-tech companies to the County leveraging the proximity of the University.
- The approximately 30-acre research park concept was to be connected with a larger development in Oconee County, also at the concept phase.
- The developer shared materials describing a similar concept that had been built at Purdue University and proposed a trip of County and University personnel along with the developers to visit Discovery Park, a research and innovation park located on Purdue's main campus.
- Planning for the trip to Purdue included Oconee County Government and Oconee Economic Alliance personnel.
- On January 18, 2024, a group visited Discovery Park at Purdue University. Participants included representatives from the University, Oconee County, State Commerce, and the developers.
- In May 2024 University personnel visited the proposed site.
- The final discussions between the developers and the University concerning the research park concept were in November 2024.
- While the University is very open to being a part of advancing economic development in Oconee County, this research park proposal was not one that was further pursued by the University after the November 2024 meeting.
- No deal terms were developed. No details of any land transaction (gift or sale) were developed. No actions or terms were approved by the University Board of Trustees to enter into an agreement to develop this research park. This proposal is not under consideration by the University and has not been for over a year.
- Simply put, the University is not and will not be a part of this proposed research park nor any associated housing development.

Recognizing the significant concerns and confusion caused by the identity of the developers it should be noted:

- External Affairs received an email from the developer's representative who used a Great Southern Homes (GSH) email address asking to share information on the project. However, it was later confirmed that an entity called East Shore South, LLC was the developer for the project, not GSH nor its parent company United Homes Group (UHG).
- All three of those entities are associated in some manner with University alumnus and donor Michael Neiri.
- UHG issued a statement in October, and later confirmed by the Newry Project developer, that UHG was not a part of the Newry Project.
- Both University President Clements and Trustee Haley were previously on the UHG Board of Directors but have now resigned. Both disclosed their UHG relationships.



- As the University has not participated in discussions about the research park concept for over a year, it has not been a part of the preparation or discussions for any Newry Project proposals to Oconee County, nor any representations made by the developers.
- To reiterate, the University is not and will not be a part of this proposed research park nor any associated housing development including the Newry Project.

With respect to the Newry Project housing development proposed to Oconee County, the University clearly recognizes Oconee County government's authority to consider, reject, or approve such development proposals as it sees fit in the best interest of its citizens. The University is not part of, nor does the University endorse, the pending Newry Project housing development. Any representations to the contrary are incorrect.

Thank you for your consideration in reviewing this letter. We hope that the County and the University can renew our long-standing partnership to make our region a better place. Our commitment to South Carolina – and to Oconee County – remains steadfast. We are here to serve the people of this state, and we will continue to advance our land-grant mission of education, research and public service. Looking ahead, we will build on these partnerships at the local and state levels to create even greater opportunities to ensure our state – and Oconee County – thrives for decades to come.