February 12, 2021

AASHE STARS Program:

The University of Virginia is proud to support the submittal of the Brandon Avenue Green Street Plan for a the STARS AASHE program. The master plan has been highly successful in envisioning the future redevelopment of a strategic 10-acre parcel at the junction of three important but distinct areas of the UVA campus: the Jeffersonian-era Academical Village with its central Lawn, the South Lawn Complex, and the Health System. The significance of this location and its potential to connect these three important areas at the heart of the Grounds have been recognized for over a decade and are now underwritten by two key initiatives of the University’s 2030 Strategic Plan: cultivation of the most vibrant community in higher education and enabling of discoveries that enrich and improve lives. In planning for this new district, the University conducted multiple studies and engaged stakeholders to generate concepts and ideas for a future neighborhood, slated to provide 500,000–600,000 gross square feet of built space. The Green Street Plan illuminates the potential of this new mixed-use neighborhood in a way that consolidates University support around a clear, cohesive idea for the future and continues to enhance the architectural and landscape heritage of the University.

Like the Lawn at the heart of Thomas Jefferson’s original plan for the Academical Village, the Green Street Plan organizes the building program around a linear open space. Although the site is similar in proportion to the historic Lawn, the landscape design does not seek to replicate UVA’s iconic historic core. Instead it responds to the topography and hydrology of the site by centering the development on a bioremediation corridor, which serves as both a visual amenity and a “working landscape,” designed to manage the stormwater for the district and seasonal fluctuations in water flow. This arrangement creates a generous interior civic space with a wide pedestrian promenade overlooking the water feature, in turn creating maximum high-value program frontage along the parcel’s entire interior. By means of its broad public realm and park–green space connections to adjacent areas of the Grounds, the Green Street opens itself to the surrounding University community.

The Green Street Plan also supports the University’s mission for the district with new infrastructure that encourages the desired academic program collaborations and efficiencies. Introduction of wide sidewalks shaded by street trees, bicycle lanes and ADA interconnections in park spaces between the planned buildings will improve campus mobility. The proximity and orchestration of these new features will enhance connectivity according to institutional priorities and values.

This planning effort’s greatest success may have been the lead consultant’s realization of a modern-day vision of the Lawn by assembling a highly skilled team of specialized consultants. This interdisciplinary team collaborated to analyze the complex planning issues, from hydrology and transportation to academic programming, and found effective and grand solutions. The Green Street Plan’s organizing vision for the strategic opportunity at Brandon Avenue was so compelling that the Board of Visitors adopted the Plan and funded its implementation in the same year the master plan was completed. Five years later, the University has completed the Green Street and the first building, which provides housing for upper-class students. The new integrated Student Health and Wellness Center, is near completion, and additional upper-class housing with a major dining component have completed design. It is exciting to witness implementation of the plan on its way to making the green street’s central civic space both a “living room” for the district’s new academic and mixed-use buildings and a vibrant link to unite the Grounds and larger local community..

Sincerely yours,

Julia Monteith