

Meriwether Lewis Institute for Citizen Leadership Summer 2019 Project Document



How do we build an engaging, inclusive community in the Brandon Avenue Precinct?

President Ryan has asked the UVA community to re-dedicate itself to its original *raison d'être*—“to serve our democracy” by helping students to become “citizen-leaders.” As we prepare students “to be productive servant-leaders in a diverse, globally connected world,” our charge is to think imaginatively about how we can re-envision students’ lived experience at UVA even as we build “on existing programs and experiences in and outside the classroom.” UVA’s current draft of the Strategic Plan announces a bold first step toward that goal:

*“We will establish a series of **residential communities** that will house all first and second year students on grounds and provide ways for third- and fourth- year students to stay connected to their residential communities. Providing students a meaningful **opportunity to live and learn together in a diverse and inclusive community** will help prepare them to live and lead in an increasingly diverse world.”*

*“Every member of our community should feel **welcome** and be able to **find a home** at UVA. We should also make it easier for students, faculty, and staff to **build bridges across lines of difference**, because any community is only as strong as the connections within it.”*

Both these goals are central to our understanding of a successful residential community within the newly constructed “Brandon Avenue Precinct.”

The primary purpose of the Brandon Avenue Precinct is to create community, specifically among 2nd year students. To that end, the MLI Project of 2019 asks your cohort to propose ideas for how UVA can best create a strong, vibrant, bridge-building, community for second year students within this new—and still evolving—neighborhood. Specifically, we ask you to look at:

- How should we use the spaces and places available in **Bond, Bice, the Student Health Center, and Brandon II** to meet the precinct’s stated primary purpose of building community?
- How can we provide opportunities to then connect the Brandon Avenue Precinct community back out to—or invite in—the broader UVA community?
- How do we maintain a sense of community (in Brandon/in general) from the first year to the second year and beyond?
- How can we build bridges across differences to create & maintain strong community?

We ask you to design the life best led within the Brandon Avenue residential community and how it can serve as a model for continued innovation across Grounds.

As you think about these project questions, focus first on the physical spaces available in the four anchor buildings toward the end of the Brandon Avenue Precinct. How might the spaces in *Bond House*, *Bice*, *Brandon II*, and the new *Student Health Center* function to bring people together? How can we:

- Create an inclusive community *within* each building?
- Create an inclusive community *amongst* the buildings within the Brandon neighborhood?
- Cultivate an overarching sense of *social, cultural and academic* belonging for all residents?
- Connect students, faculty & staff in ways that build bridges across lines of difference?
- Share innovative ideas about potential elements—physical, programmatic, philosophical, logistical, etc.—vital to this vibrant “hub” of UVA life?

“Architects can’t force people to connect, they can only plan the crossing points, remove barriers and make the meeting places useful and attractive.”—Denise Scott Brown

There are multiple entry points, and many potential topics to be discovered in our MLI project this summer. To augment the view we had of the construction site during our project launch, we’ve also posted the master plan and building blueprints for the Brandon Avenue Precinct on our MLI collab site.

Yet, before you begin to pour over building plans, your group should take time to think through your own experiences with community at UVA.

- How does UVA *currently* promote belonging, bridge-building, and community?
- How do we foster community in *other* residential communities?
- When have you felt most comfortable, nourished and engaged with a community at UVA?
- What elements have contributed—or would contribute—to your own sense of belonging here at UVA?

As you work on the project this summer, please bring to bear all the design thinking tools you learned with Prof. Elgin Cleckley. Identify all major stakeholders, not just students, as you think through how the Brandon Avenue Precinct experience might look and live, and also the larger implications for how the precinct might serve as a model for future building plans and community bridge building?

“You cannot defend your design without knowing what you’re designing for.” – I. M. Pei

We will continue to post relevant University resources to collab, and your first stop logically should be the [Master Plan for the Brandon Avenue Precinct](#) and then the general plans for [Bond House](#) as described on the [Housing and Residence Life](#) website. You might review information about UVA’s existing versions of “residential communities,” its residential colleges, also on the HRL website, and review this video about why students select to live in [residential colleges](#).



Brown College



Hereford College



IRC

Our MLI approach to group projects, key stakeholder resources, and project due dates are below

For your projects, you're expected to propose viable ideas that speak to our core purpose—building community in the Brandon Avenue Precinct. In addition, your ideas will need to be positioned in relation to President Ryan's stated strategic goals while also being feasible within the budgetary realities and decision-making structure of The University.

As you've learned, real-world projects often require you to work in groups or teams to best leverage strengths as you tackle the challenge you're set. In the MLI Summer Program, you'll work in groups of five on the project. You'll use design thinking to refine the opportunity and develop creative proposals that address optimal design, use, and purpose for the Brandon Ave Precinct residential community spaces. You'll want to identify present opportunities, innovations, and solutions, yet also keep in mind how changes you make today will anticipate future needs both for space and for overall planning. You will want to communicate your arguments clearly and in a compelling, persuasive fashion. Consider how best to frame your argument, your story, and your data in support for your final proposal.

As you work, keep in mind basic questions necessary for most projects:

- Is there a “problem,” and if so, *why* does it need solving now?
- Why do your specific ideas make sense and whom do those ideas need to persuade?
- Who has the power to make the decisions your project & proposal will need made?
- How will you create persuasive recommendations that are neither too extensive nor too narrow?
- What other policies, programs, and/or stakeholder communities will your proposed changes affect?

How much will your ideas cost? Where will you get the funds? As with all proposals, you'll want to include a reasonable budget—in terms of cost and time—for implementing your ideas.

To assist you, we've provided a list of probable key decision makers—the audience you need to persuade—for the project. Your audience includes, but is not exclusive to:

- **Allen Groves**, Associate VP for Student Affairs & University Dean of Students
- **Chris Holstege**, M.D., Executive Director of Student Health
- **Dirron Allen**, Assistant Dean of Students & Director of Student Activities
- **Nicole Eramo**, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs, VPSA, and Second Year Council Advisor
- **Gay Perez**, Executive Director of Housing & Residence Life, Assistant Vice President of Student Affairs
- **Andy Petters**, Director of Residence Life, Orientation & New Student Programs, Associate Dean of Students
- **Adriana Allen**, Co-Chair of Housing & Residence Life
- **Nick Smith**, Co-Chair of Housing & Residence Life
- **Alice Raucher**, University Architect
- **Elisa Holquist**, Special Adviser to the Vice President of Student Affairs
- **Colette Sheehy**, Senior Vice President for Operations
- **Rich Kovatch**, Associate Vice President for Business Operations

Keep the audience of key decision makers in mind as you frame your research and as you create each of the deliverables for the MLI Project. Pay considerable attention to multiple audiences' potentially overlapping, or even conflicting, agendas and construction project realities. For example, Bond House *is in process*—you can't change the architectural plans. However, you might be able to influence the outfitting of space for various purposes or the protocols for use, oversight, and management of space.

You will be most successful in your project if you develop a clear understanding of why it is important that these spaces are used, designed, and successfully build diverse yet inclusive communities. What matters to your stakeholders? What matters to students? *What matters* to the multiple decision makers in your audience who are responsible for implementing President Ryan's visions for a vibrant learning community designed to enhance the sense of belonging and engagement for all.

The Brandon Avenue Precinct Inclusive Community Project--Sequence of Deliverables

1. **Monday 6/3**—Review of Design Thinking methodology with Prof. Elgin Cleckley
2. **Friday 6/13 2:00pm: Project 1**
 - a) **5-7 min.** briefing (presentation and Q&A combined) to MLI Faculty
 - b) Concisely & persuasively present your *working* ideas, key insights, and any questions you have about your project or additional resources you might need
 - c) Use 4-8 preliminary slides to support your working ideas—make sure to include
 - i. a title slide, a “non-agenda” slide, an image focused slide and a data focused slide to practice with the slide formats
3. **Monday 6/24 1:30pm Project 2**
 - a) **Working Budget for your proposal**
Using excel, the tools you learned from Prof. Margaret Grundy, Prof. White, and your research into current and likely costs for your proposal, create working, viable, rationally defensible budget for projections for your project. Benchmark at least one similar project at a peer institution.
4. **Sunday 6/ 30 4:00pm-5:00pm Project 3**
 - a) **Final Client Deck due before 5:00pm**
 - b) Please submit your deck electronically to Pat Lampkin, Alex Johnston, Nicole Eramo, Marcia Pentz and Gary Ballinger.
 - c) Please also submit two color, hard-copies, of your final deck.
 - d) Follow the deck design conventions explained in the section below and developed in conjunction with your visual design course.
5. **Tuesday 7/2 10:00am-1:30pm Project 4**
 - a) **Public Final Group Presentation**
 - a) Submit your final Presentation slides by 10:00am 7/2
 - b) Presentations will take place in a room TBD—(last year it was Minor Hall)
 - c) Be able to access your slides via multiple formats—just in case
 - d) Save files regularly, and make sure the slides follow presentation slide conventions, not deck slide conventions. Presentation slides have less text and more supporting graphics to help audiences follow structure, compare ideas, and easily access the data you present in support of your idea. Make your final ideas crystal clear to your audiences; persuade members of the audience to enact your proposals.

You'll receive more detailed explanations for, and instruction about how to prepare, each deliverable as we proceed through the institute.



Architects' Rendering of the New Student Health Building