

**RECONNECTING HERITAGE:
PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE CONNECTIVITY TO MONTICELLO
PRE-ASSESSMENT REPORT**



Saunders Bridge from Monticello (Aaron Eichorst)

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PLAN 5993: Applied Independent Study

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December, 2016

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report describes a collaborative process and is itself the work of many minds. All of the stakeholders listed in the document generously shared their time and expertise. Several of them provided multiple rounds of advice and feedback. I also would like to thank the entire faculty of the UVa Urban and Environmental Planning department—several of whom mentored the project—and especially my advisor Andrew Mondschein.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Monticello is an important source of Charlottesville's history, cultural identity and economic vitality. In combination with the *Academical Village* at the University of Virginia it is a nearly unmatched resource and very unusual for a town of this size. Monticello is close to the city (its lands are less than a mile from the border) and it is visible from many locations, yet it is difficult and potentially dangerous to get there without a car. This discontinuity poses problems of equity and unrealized opportunity for Monticello, the city and the region.

Monticello was once easily accessible. There were multiple routes into town with significant travel and exchange in both directions. When Interstate 64 was built (in the 1960's and 70's) all of those routes were severed except for one (VA-20) and that was widened for highway speeds without accommodation for bicycles or pedestrians, effectively cutting Monticello off from those who do not have—or choose to use—a car.¹ There is no transit connection, which limits residents and visitors alike.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, which owns and operates Monticello and much of the surrounding lands, bridged half the distance in 1998 by opening Saunders Monticello Trail. This winding two-mile pathway is fully ADA accessible (while climbing a mountain!) and its beauty attracts tremendously diverse visitorship. Combined with the 600 adjoining acres of parkland, it is a wildly successful landscape and a destination in its own right yet it is difficult to get there with a vehicle and nearly impossible without one.

The remaining gap, subject of this study, is small but complicated. The highway itself is a formidable physical and psychological barrier.² The zone is split between two jurisdictions (Charlottesville and Albemarle County) with a third (Virginia Department of Transportation) in

¹ That segment is part of National Bike Route 76, notwithstanding its unsuitability.

² I theorize a nexus between these three forces—physical, psychological and procedural—that causes them to mutually self-reinforce to make simple problems more challenging. See Appendix E.

between. There are multiple institutional landowners as well, most of whom would like to solve the problem but none able to tackle it alone. A collaborative process will be required.

Both the City and County's *Comprehensive Plans* mention Monticello connectivity or show it on their maps but they are not coordinated. Additionally, Morven has begun a study for a trail from its vast and historically significant lands south of town, through James Monroe's Highland to Monticello.³ The regional Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) has begun a decennial revision of its 2004 Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan and this segment will be a crucial part of it. As part of that process, the TJPDC is sponsoring a spring study by Masters students (including myself) from University of Virginia's department of Urban and Environmental Planning. We will provide research support.

This document provides background for the Monticello Connectivity portion of that work by identifying key stakeholders and issues, and examining the overlapping spatial factors such as jurisdiction, land tenure and legacy infrastructure that make this problem complicated. It evaluates the current planning environment to determine whether a collaborative approach is likely to succeed.

Here are some key findings, several of which will be investigation topics for the practicum group:⁴

- The key stakeholders are motivated and ready to work together but they need coordination. They have good but mostly informal working relationships.
- Multi-jurisdictional plan integration is not the local norm, but that might be changing.
- The TJPDC decennial process will provide coordination and yield recommendations but it is not advocacy. Stakeholders will need implementation strategies and funding.
- To be successful, this project needs to pay attention to the regional context and look at opportunities near (but outside of) the study area, such as Piedmont Virginia Community

³ The University of Virginia Foundation owns Morven as it does the Blue Ridge Sanitarium site, which occupies much of the land between Charlottesville and the Saunders Trail.

⁴ Full issue/opportunity list on page 28; Successful Practicum proposal in Annex A.

College and the County's Southern Neighborhood area. It is not only about trips to Monticello from Charlottesville.

- The notion that the trail could extend all the way to Morven, and connect Highland, is extraordinarily compelling and appears within reach.
- The issue of connectivity and accessibility to Monticello (and the other sites) is not only a physical question. It has an important socio-historical component, which the Thomas Jefferson Foundation is actively engaging. This trail would therefore not a typical piece of infrastructure: it would be a physical expression of historical and cultural discovery. That history is being energetically debated, contested and expanded. The trail will have to acknowledge and reflect that.
- The landscape in question is quite beautiful, with many opportunities for recreation and education.
- The entire pathway from Morven to the UVa Rotunda (and beyond) via Highland, Monticello, the Saunders Trail, Belmont, the Downtown Mall, the Jefferson School and West Main carries nearly infinite possibilities for interpretation, programming and storytelling.
- Planning history and theory recommends circumspection: even though this project seems very beneficial, there could be hidden downsides, such as residential or business displacement. There is no specific evidence that this is likely, but it is serious enough to merit investigation.

This will not be a typical amenity or recreational trail. It is a connection between two halves of a UNESCO World Heritage site; a region and the full telling of its history; a community and a vast zone of ecological and cultural discovery. There are challenges but very high and very likely rewards. It is an exciting project and an opportunity to model a better collaborative approach between neighboring localities, governments and foundations to unlock a shared opportunity.

The situation is ripe for a collaborative master planning process to proceed.

I. INTRODUCTION



The Saunders Monticello Trail, a popular destination in itself, bridges more than half the distance between Charlottesville and Monticello. The remaining gap is small but complicated and the subject of this study.

Charlottesville hosts a World Heritage Site spread over two locations: Thomas Jefferson's Academical Village at the University of Virginia and his home at Monticello. Both institutions offer opportunities to the living that exceed even their historic stature but they are not similarly accessible. The University is located in town and well connected to the City's streets and daily life. Monticello is just a mile from the city but nearly impossible to reach without a car.

The Thomas Jefferson Foundation, the non-profit organization that operates Monticello, has already reached about halfway to Charlottesville with its wildly successful Saunders-Monticello Trail. That trail, and the 600 acre⁵ park that surrounds it, significantly expands the realization of

⁵ Source: GIS analysis

Mr. Jefferson's humanist legacy by offering opportunities for outdoor fitness, learning and access to nature. It is widely celebrated and locally popular, with 140,000 annual visitors.⁶ Yet, although it is only about half a mile from Charlottesville, it is nearly inaccessible by foot or bicycle.

This is problematic in three inter-related ways:

Cultural Fragmentation

It is undeniable that the region would be quite different (and probably less prosperous) had Jefferson not chosen to settle here. That legacy endured long after his death through those who visited Monticello, through those who lived and labored there and through the work of their descendants. The mountaintop remains a key socio-cultural and economic driver for the region but the intervening Interstate separates that resource from its core. Restoring the link between the city and its *raison d'être* would facilitate exchange and help both entities—and their surroundings—to flourish.

Social Justice

Given Jefferson's importance to the local cultural life, the visibility of Monticello from many locations in town and the many diverse contributions it has to offer, it is unjust that it be out of reach to so many. The fact that it is close makes it worse. For example, the children at Clark Elementary School can see the mansion from their classroom windows, would benefit enormously from a healthy walk⁷ through a beautiful setting (to say nothing of the World Heritage Site at its end). Do they not deserve that? Monticello derives its value as a heritage site explicitly from its connection to the local community as well as to the nation. Making it available to the most inclusive possible audience would be an important part of a larger ongoing conversation about our region's—and country's—complex shared history.

⁶ Source: Thomas Jefferson Foundation

⁷ The school is about 2.5 miles from the Monticello Visitor Center.

Opportunity Cost

Stakeholders have identified dozens of straight-forward opportunities that would arise from restoring the connection (e.g. greater access to the Saunders Trail, uniting UVa Grounds with Morven, connecting the county's Southern Neighborhood area) and tremendous second-and-third order benefits (e.g. greater equity, regional connectivity, business attraction, community health and physical expression of cultural heritage). Continued failure to complete this connection represents lost opportunity.

Although the gap is small, it exists because the space is physically and jurisdictionally complicated. Yet there is tremendous enthusiasm to get it right. This document examines the situation, identifies key stakeholders and assesses the possibility of resolution.

Project Background

My research began in 2010 with a community engagement project on Monticello Road in Charlottesville. This multi-year exploration, which included exhibitions, community events and hundreds of conversations, celebrated a fascinating neighborhood but it also revealed two major spatial problematics: the Belmont Bridge (which is a separate project) and Charlottesville's severed connection to Monticello.

In the spring of 2016, as part of my Master's program in Urban and Environmental Planning, I began an independent study on restoring bicycle and pedestrian connectivity to Monticello. The process was to have two parts: a pre-assessment and a planning report. The pre-assessment would take one semester to examine the socio-spatial environment to see if a collaborative planning process would be feasible. Because of the multijurisdictional nature of the problem it was clear from the start that a successful process would require collaboration. This is that pre-assessment report.

Assessment Process

The assessment, preceding a planning report to be completed Spring 2017, has the following objectives:

1. Identify key stakeholders
2. Understand complex and overlapping spatialities
3. Catalog issues and opportunities
4. Assess whether the problem is ripe for resolution

Beginning in the Summer of 2016, I conducted a document review and met with representatives from key institutional stakeholders, governments and non-profits. I wanted to understand their points of view and to catalog their thoughts and to identify other groups that could make meaningful contributions. The discussions happened primarily at the staff level (usually designated by executives). They were informal and on background only, in order to allow maximum honesty. I was actually surprised at the similarity of their perspectives. It was as if they had already discussed the issue among themselves to the point that everyone was mostly on the same page.⁸

Of course there are concerns and one reason why the problem has seemed intractable is because every obstacle has been seen as reason not to proceed. That is understandable in an environment where no single actor controls the space and therefore no one entity can solve the problem alone. That makes obstacles seem more daunting than they would be under any of the players' unique jurisdiction.

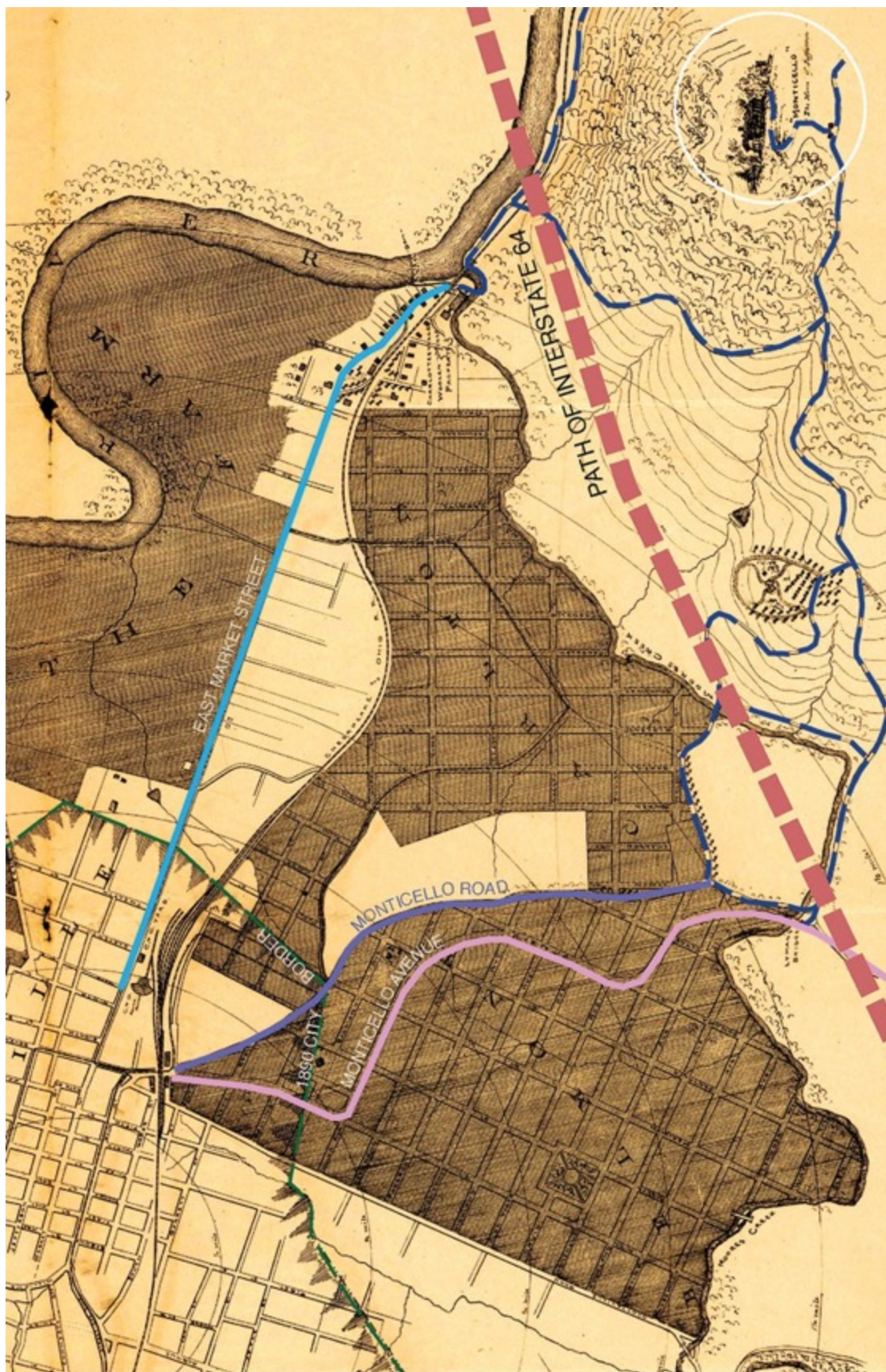
For now, I have recorded all concerns I have heard and they are summarized in Section V. Feedback fell into two categories. *Strategic* issues, such as the jurisdictional overlap, effect how the problem must be addressed at a process level and those all contribute to the narrative of this report. Other *tactical* questions, such as a need for parking or funding, will be contingent upon

⁸ I did not find any documents that comprehensively or specifically address the issue of Monticello accessibility as this one does, but many plans acknowledge other entities' efforts in that direction. There have also been research projects similar to this one about related questions such as redeveloping the Blue Ridge Hospital site.

which solutions the community ultimately endorses. It is too early to do anything but note those but they too will inform future efforts.

I did not meet formally with individual members of the general public, although I know from my earlier work and casual interactions that there is great interest. There will need to be plenty of engagement with the public around the planning, design, interpretation, implementation and upkeep phases of this project but a pre-assessment does not require it and for this document to be useful, it must be brief. Furthermore, the scope of the assessment is not large enough to be properly fair or systematic in evaluating public opinion. Still, almost every stakeholder is already indirectly represented either through elected officials, colleagues or staff working on their behalf.

This project sits at the juncture of advocacy and planning in public interest (see attached essay). It has a point of view that the project should go forward if it can do so without causing harm. It will be a major task for the Master Plan to devise a process that balances efficacy, procedural fairness and social justice. That is what a fully-realized planning process is all about.



1890 Charlottesville Land Company Map, showing several of the lost roads (dashed), Monticello Road and Avenue and Market Street (which still exist) and the path of Interstate 64. (Special Collections Library, University of Virginia via Scholars' Lab).

II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

For most of its history, it was easy to get to Monticello. There were multiple possible routes: through Woolen Mills, Carlton, present-day Monticello Road and present-day Route 20. There was busy commerce along all of these routes and there is enduring evidence—and local memories—of that. The advent of the automobile did not itself cause a disruption. During my earlier work studying Monticello Road (which inspired this project), I met long-time residents who used to travel that route and I heard amusing stories of joyrides along the steep and winding road into town.

Construction of Interstate 64 in the 1960's sliced between Charlottesville and Monticello, obliterating those old routes.⁹ The Woolen Mills/Carlton approaches exist in only on maps; Monticello Road is in two disconnected segments (one of which is completely disused) and the Monticello Avenue approach was widened to a four lane divided highway without sidewalks.

There was a flurry of institutional building at that same time, with the opening of Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) in 1973, the original regional visitor center (now PVCC Stultz Center) and the serial repurposing of the Blue Ridge Hospital (ultimately mothballed in the 90's). Since then, there has been steady growth south on Route 20 (including several subdivisions and a high school), but pedestrian access has not gotten easier.

Although they can best be described as other-than-suitable, Routes 20 and 53 were designated part of the national Bicycle Route 76 in 1982.

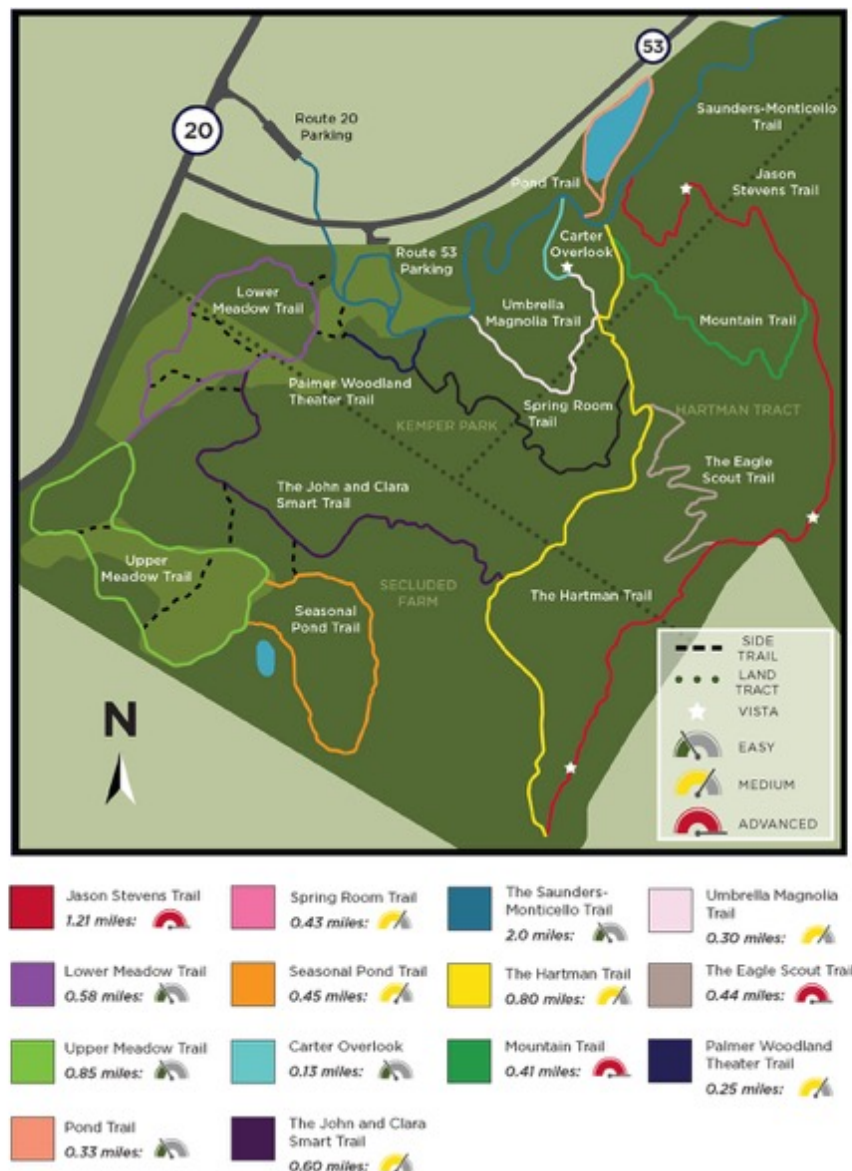
Saunders Monticello Trail

In 1998, the Thomas Jefferson Foundation took a significant step toward Charlottesville by opening the Saunders-Monticello Trail. It begins at a parking lot on Route 20 and winds two miles up the mountain along wheelchair-accessible crushed stone and boardwalk paths to the visitor center at Monticello. The \$6.5 million trail was financed through an approximately 50/50

⁹ The Charlottesville segment opened in 1970.

combination of Federal Highway funds (connected to the development of the Thomas Jefferson Parkway/Route 53) and an array of private donations.

In the past decade, this park environment has been enlarged with two additional tracts and expanded to include farm and mountain trails for a wide range of fitness levels. Although the trail does provide access to Monticello, it is a very popular recreational destination in its own right, with 140,000 visitors annually. Bicycles are permitted but must observe a 10 mph speed limit.



Southwest portion of Saunders-Monticello Trail and rustic woods-and-fields trails.

(Thomas Jefferson Foundation)

III. CURRENT CONDITIONS



Route 20 near the Saunders Monticello Trail entrance.

Although the Saunders trail is just half a mile from the Charlottesville border, Route 20 is the only existing connection and it is extremely dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists. One local official described Route 20 as “inherently dangerous.” (Provence 2016). He was speaking of danger to drivers but the situation is many times worse for those *not* in cars for the crucial thousand meters between the city and the trail head. It is a high-stress and dangerous place to ride a bicycle (notwithstanding the Route 76 designation).¹⁰ There are no pedestrian facilities and it is a harrowing place to walk.¹¹

¹⁰ See TJPDC’s Route 76 Corridor Study (2015, 71-79) for a detailed description of deficiencies, which include high vehicle speed and volume, shoulder conditions and turning vehicle visibility. They give the corridor a “D” (unsuitable for cycling) rating.

¹¹ A pedestrian was killed there as I was writing this report, on November 18, 2016. (Source: NBC29)

Even if one does drive, it is not easy to get to the Saunders Trail. One can either park in a small (12 space) lot on the Thomas Jefferson Parkway or a larger (50 space) lot on Route 20. Unfortunately, the larger parking area is only accessible to north-/in-bound traffic and it is difficult/illegal to make a U-turn for others to get there. Nevertheless, even this large, difficult parking lot is often full, requiring visitors to park (also dangerously) on the shoulder of Route 20. A large additional parking lot exists across 20 at the Stultz Center, which could be ideal for overflow but it cannot be made available under current conditions because its entrance has guard rails hard against the travel lanes on both sides of a bridge over a moat-like stream. Furthermore, although its entrance (College Drive) is signalized, there is no pedestrian crossing.

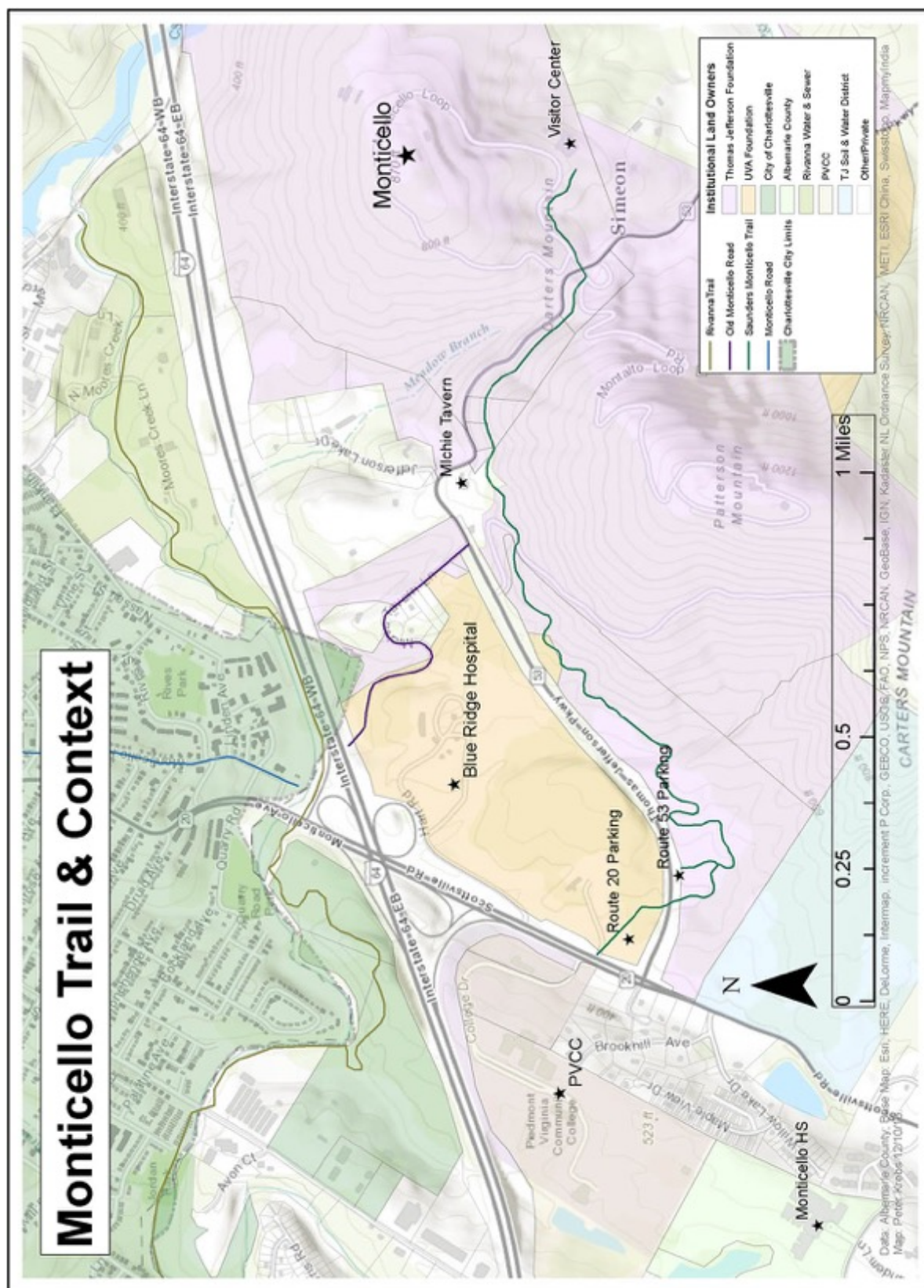
It might seem obvious that there be sidewalks and/or bicycle facilities along Route 20 but it would be difficult, owing to a highway cloverleaf for Interstate 64 that is used at extremely high velocity and steep banks on both sides of the roadway. For now, Monticello, the Saunders trail, Piedmont Virginia Community College and Albemarle County's Southern Neighborhood area—all of which are adjacent to Charlottesville—are effectively severed to cyclists and pedestrians.

It is also important to note that the Southern Neighborhood area and the zone around Monticello are also a travel *sources* as well as *destinations*. This is not only an issue for Charlottesville; County residents are also cut off from resources in the City.

Overlapping Jurisdictions

Aside from the difficulties related to terrain and perhaps over-built infrastructure, the situation is complicated by the simple fact that the zone is split between two jurisdictions (Charlottesville and Albemarle County) with a third-party (VDOT) right-of-way in between. So neither government owns the whole problem, nor is capable of solving it alone.

Discontinuous pathways at the Charlottesville/Albemarle border are not uncommon. It seems extreme in this case, however, because the change in road typology near the county line is dramatic and the disconnected resources have a very high profile.



The core of the study area, showing roads, parcels and institutional landowners.

Planning Environment

Both the City and the County clearly recognize the importance of regional connectivity, both sets of comprehensive plans call for greenways/trails in this specific zone and both acknowledge one another's priorities. Although the plans are not formally integrated there is a regional planning process getting underway, which has the potential to close the gap. Other actors are also working on connectivity as well.

The *Albemarle Comprehensive Plan* calls for a greenway along Route 20 and a trail along the south border of the Interstate, with crossings at Avon and the Rivanna River. (*Comprehensive Plan*, a-11-31; *Plan S+W*, 29) The County is committed to the Avon corridor and is currently building pedestrian facilities further out.¹²

The *Charlottesville Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan* (p. 34) recommends bikeways along Route 20 and Avon and a trail that tunnels under the Interstate and reconnects Monticello Road with its disused portion. The City owns some land on the south side of the Interstate (including a tract that was orphaned when the Interstate was built). They are also working to obtain the



Portions of maps in the [above] County's 2015 *Comprehensive Plan* (appendix 11.31) and [below] City's 2015 *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update* (p. 33), which acknowledge one another.

¹² It is starting where it is because of an elementary school (Cale).

adjoining parcel from the Thomas Jefferson Foundation and to finalize the needed easements and permissions both in the city and county. This plan would also require a pedestrian bridge over Route 53 near Michie Tavern. The county acknowledges this trail on its Master Plan maps but not in its text.

Regional Integration

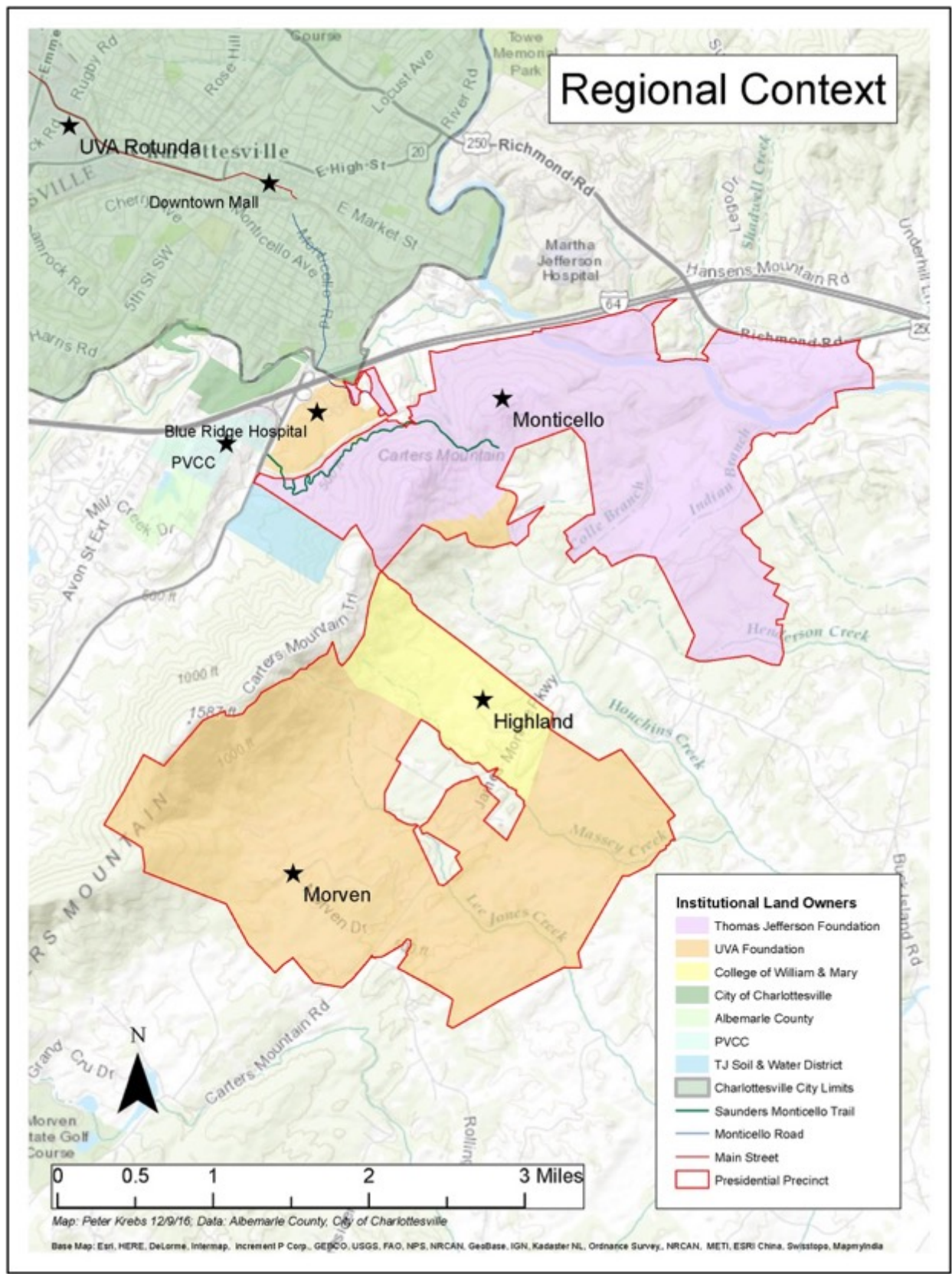
The Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC), which also staffs the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization, published a very detailed analysis of the Bike Route 76 corridor (2015) and it includes the entire road portion of this study area, including the Morven extension. They are also updating their *2004 Jefferson Area Bike and Pedestrian Plan*. The process will serve as a practical guide for local, regional and state decision-makers.

The connection explored in this assessment is a crucial link in the regional network and a case study in interjurisdictional problem-solving. Therefore, the TJPDC has agreed to sponsor an enlarged version of the second part of my project in conjunction with their master planning process.

As part of the UVa School of Architecture Urban and Environmental Planning department's terminal Practicum course, five Masters Degree candidates will delve deeper into the issues raised in this document and place them within the regional planning context. I will lead this team and will be joined by Maura Harris, Caroline Herre, Joel Lehman and Julie Murphy. I will refer to that effort henceforth as "the Practicum."¹³

It is also significant that the City and the County have signed a series of *Memoranda of Understanding* resolving that the two entities will work together on issues such as infrastructure, the environment and recreation. I have spoken with members of both Planning Commissions and both will be closely involved in the study as it moves forward. Their occasional joint meetings will be a good opportunity to speak with both simultaneously in an interjurisdictional forum.

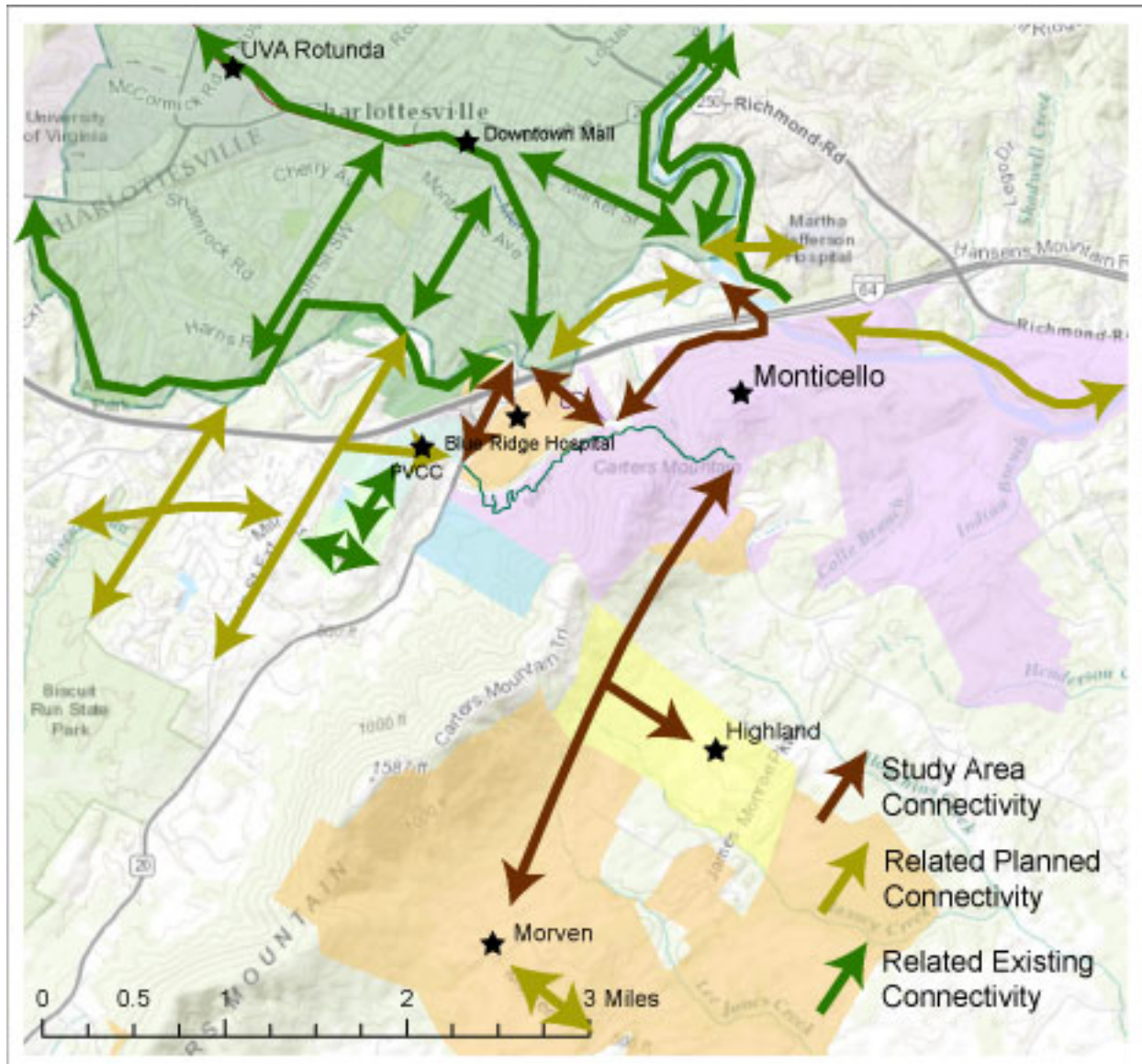
¹³ Full text of the successful proposal is included in Annex A.



Regional context, institutional land owners and extent of the Presidential Precinct.

Outward Extension: Morven

University of Virginia's center at Morven has received a planning grant from the Dominion Foundation to study the feasibility of a trail connection between Morven, James Monroe's Highland and Monticello.



Connectivities within and related to the study area.

UVa faculty and students will study the concept from multiple perspectives including landscape design, law, ecology and cultural heritage. This project meshes well with the Practicum project and the groups will work in close collaboration and share some students and advisors. The

combined trail will extend more than eight miles and connect Charlottesville with the vast¹⁴ Presidential Precinct—and beyond.

Land Ownership

Most of the land surrounding the potential trail routes belongs to institutions that endorse the trail idea. These include the Thomas Jefferson and University of Virginia Foundations, City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County and Highland. There are some private residences along Old Monticello Road (now called Michie Tavern Lane) and Michie Tavern itself is private as well. They have concerns but there are also opportunities (especially for hospitality), located as they are in the heart of the study area. Some potential routes do not touch private land at all.

Of particular interest, the Blue Ridge Hospital sits right in the center of the study area and several possible connections pass along its periphery (or potentially through it). The 142-acre site belongs to the UVa Real Estate Foundation and many people have had ideas about how to use it, including a major research project in 2002 directed by Daniel Bluestone, who was then a UVa professor. The site is currently disused, with several historic buildings that are closed and carefully preserved.

Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) controls the right-of-way around the Interstate. They are aware of—and accepting of—the tunnel concept.

Note that there have also been suggestions about accessing Monticello from the east—either from Woolen Mills or Shadwell—but Monticello does not have infrastructure to receive visitors to its eastern flank at this time. Although the practicum will include the concept, it is unlikely to be part of a near-term solution. However, that approach does possess the virtue of avoiding the Interstate completely and could be important for regional connectivity so it should not be omitted either.

¹⁴ Approximately 6,000 acres (per GIS analysis).

There are also a few private properties between Monticello and Morven. Depending on the route selection from Monticello to Morven, easements will be needed for that extension. That will be a topic of the Cultural Landscapes course and a related class at the UVa Law School.

Natural Environment

The beauty one experiences along the Saunders Trail continues undiminished all the way to the edge of Charlottesville and were it not for the Interstate, it would be widely celebrated. There are cliffs, streams, hills, woods and abundant wildlife. Although the area is relatively compact, there are some fascinating ecosystems—particularly in the nearly inaccessible tract behind the Interstate, which includes an arc-shaped pond that is an oxbow of Moore’s Creek that was orphaned when the highway was constructed, resulting in an interesting man-made but now well-established habitat. Some of the land is steep or in a flood plain, which brings challenge but also the opportunity for natural interpretation and escape, extremely close to the city.



A portion of Monticello Road remains cut off on the south side of the Interstate.

Cultural Landscape

The study area is even richer in social history and the potential for historical interpretation is so clear and so vast that I did not explore it in depth for this assessment. Innumerable stories and lives have unfolded in this space and there is a powerful sense among the stakeholders that this is about more than a physical link.

Monticello is serious about exploring connections between the heritage site and the local community, particularly with respect to the descendants of enslaved workers. They have hired two community engagement officers, one of whom is a recent graduate of the Architecture School. They will be crucial resources for the project team.

The story of the connection between Monticello, Highland and Morven is fascinating as well, offering alternative ways to view the American story, full calendars of community events and programs that look toward a sustainable future. The discoveries from the Morven trail explorations will enrich this project and the prospect of linking Morven to the University Grounds is compelling.

This entire narrative extends through Charlottesville's Downtown, to the Jefferson School for African American Heritage, UVa's Rotunda, and well beyond. It will intertwine with the future Three-Notch'd Trail travelling past Ivy, Rockfish Gap (where the University's site was selected¹⁵) and on into the Shenandoah Valley. The opportunity for expression of heritage through this trail and its extensions is simply breath-taking.

Vulnerable Communities

There is much, though also much-debated, literature positing that Creative Class¹⁶ amenities (such as bike trails) can have a negative effect on commercial and residential rent affordability. Most of the likely routes for the trail would terminate in either Belmont or Carlton—two

¹⁵ Blackwell's Tavern.

¹⁶ One quality that people like best about the Saunders Trail is that it is one of the least segregated public spaces in the region. To dismiss this project as elitist or for the privileged would be a misreading.

historically affordable neighborhoods that either are currently experiencing or could soon see price pressure with or without this enhancement. One has to wonder if a trail to Monticello landing in the neighborhood could indirectly cause displacement. Stakeholder reactions to this question were mixed, though at least one told me that even the perception (true or not) is a concern that needs to be taken very seriously. The Practicum will need to explore this issue.

IV. KEY INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS

This is a partial list of stakeholders I have identified and/or engaged. See appendices for key contacts and an interview log. Stakeholders identified with an asterix were not interviewed but should be involved with the process going forward.

Thomas Jefferson Foundation (Monticello)

Monticello is the indispensable party in this effort. They maintain and operate the historic estate and own much of the intervening and surrounding land, including the Saunders Monticello Trail. They have capacities related to planning, education, outreach, public programs and philanthropy, all of which should be involved in the discussion.

Government

City of Charlottesville

City Council and *Planning Commission* both have jurisdiction. Staff: *Parks & Recreation*; *Neighborhood Development Services* (including *Transportation*, *Planning* and *Housing*); *Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee**, *Economic Development**

Albemarle County

Board of Supervisors and *Planning Commission* have jurisdiction. Staff: *Parks & Recreation*; *Transportation*; *Economic Development** (Note: the City and County Planning Commissions periodically meet jointly. It is conceivable, and possibly desirable, to brief them both simultaneously.)

Commonwealth of Virginia

*Virginia Department of Transportation** controls the Interstate right-of-way, as well as that of the major routes. They will need to approve any projects dealing with the Interstate, county roads, or using state money for transportation purposes. Other state-level departments will also likely be involved, such as DEQ.

Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission

The TJPDC is the regional planning organization for Charlottesville and the five surrounding counties. They would be an essential convening entity in any case but their current decennial multimodal planning update and sponsorship of the Practicum places them at the center of the effort.

Presidential Precinct

The Presidential Precinct is a non-profit that unites the University of Virginia, the College of William & Mary, William Short's *Morven*, and the homes of three Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson's *Monticello*, James Monroe's *Highland* and James Madison's *Montpelier*.¹⁷ Four of these five parties control much of the acreage surrounding the study area. Their properties are both destinations and cultural landscapes, each have distinct missions, perspectives, programs and funding capacities.

Education

University of Virginia

The *Architecture School* is deeply involved in this endeavor. This assessment and the two upcoming trail plans are student projects. Multiple students will be working on the project and several members of the faculty—particularly the *Department of Urban and Environmental Planning*—will be advisors. Additional partners include the *Center for Cultural Landscapes* and the *Office of the Architect*.*

University of Virginia Foundation

The UVa Foundation manages the University's real estate holdings, which includes *Morven* and the Blue Ridge Hospital site—both key properties within the study area.

¹⁷ Montpelier is not in the study area.

Morven

I mention Morven an additional time because they will play a research and pedagogical role (through their sponsorship of the Cultural Landscapes class) in addition to being institutional stakeholders.

Piedmont Virginia Community College

They are not a formal part of the study but they are so close and their role in regional human and economic development is so important that they need to be involved. They just completed a Campus Master Plan but it does not speak about connections to the outside world or bicycle/pedestrian accessibility.

*Local School Districts**

Though not directly responsible for land use or transportation planning, they will be central to programming decisions and advocating for the needs of young residents. Their needs and capacities need to be considered. Several schools are near the study area.

Additional Non-Profit Organizations*

I have not reached out to any of these entities, but they could be important stakeholders going forward. The list is by no means exhaustive.

Cultural Heritage: *Preservation Piedmont; Jefferson School African American Heritage Center*

Economic Development / Tourism: *Charlottesville Area Visitors Bureau*

Environmental: *Friends of the Monticello Trail; Piedmont Environmental Council; Rivanna Trail Foundation.*¹⁸

Housing and Community Development: *Habitat for Humanity; Piedmont Housing Alliance*

Neighborhoods: *53/20 Club; Belmont Carlton Neighborhood Association; Woolen Mills*

Recreation: *Charlottesville Area Mountain Bike Club; Outdoors Adventure Club; Charlottesville Trail Running Club*

¹⁸ They developed and largely maintain the Rivanna Trail, a likely case study.

V. SUMMARY OF IDENTIFIED OPPORTUNITIES AND ISSUES

The assessment process is all about learning. As I went from stakeholder to stakeholder, our ground rules stated that all ideas are valid and would be recorded. I categorized the feedback into four categories—Benefits (primary and secondary) and Challenges (strategic and tactical). It will be for the later process to digest them and weigh them against one another. Many of them have been described in the report narrative. This is the full list, in no particular order.

Primary Benefits

These are direct tactical benefits that would flow from a successful project. Not only is that useful for justifying funding or in weighing difficult choices, it also begins to resemble a list of success conditions.

- Connect City to Monticello
- Connect UVa Rotunda and Monticello
- Connect UVa Grounds with Morven
- Facilitate auto-free commuting
- Non-standard connectivity (reverse commuting, recreation, dendritic/lateral)
- Greater access to PVCC and Southern Neighborhood Area
- Provide new access point to Saunders Trail, alleviating parking shortage and dangerous entry patterns

Second Order Benefits

These are social benefits that are likely to flow from the primary.

- More recreational opportunities
- More exposure to nature
- Increased and more diverse visitation to Monticello, Highland
- Opportunity/Challenge for Morven to become a truly public site
- Economic development: tourism
- Economic development: boost to neighboring businesses, multiplier effect
- Economic development: business attraction

- Restoring a broken physical connection will facilitate programmatic connections
- Activate Blue Ridge Hospital site
- Bike Route 76 will avoid a very harrowing segment with a “low compatibility” rating yet a prominent location.¹⁹
- Unlocks potential bike-friendly areas east and south of Brown’s Mountain
- Interpretation opportunities: cultural heritage
- Interpretation opportunities: nature
- Better connection to nature in core area encourages settlement in core (but trail zone itself is protected so it is assured to remain park-like)
- Model for better regional cooperation around a shared opportunity
- Model for issues in comprehensive plans actually being implemented
- Case study for restoring connectivities broken by 20th Century infrastructure
- Opportunity to think of open space in new ways, just as the Saunders Trail did
- Strong, physical statement of community values in a highly visible location

Strategic Challenges/Opportunities

These challenges will need to be addressed for any route

- A regional approach is needed; but the traditional approach is jurisdictionally siloed.
- Several entities are working on Monticello connectivity (Highland, Morven, City, County). They need to work in concert.
- The Interstate is a formidable barrier—physically and psychologically.
- The most obvious route (20) has a design that encourages highway speeds and that arrangement seen as locked-in.
- Multiple approaches are possible, each with different tactical issues.²⁰
- The pursuit of one route by no means excludes the other options; quite the contrary: their value would be cumulative.

¹⁹ TJPDC 2015, 5.

²⁰ Identified routes (listed counter-clockwise): Morven*; Shadwell; along the Rivanna; Monticello Road extended*; Monticello Avenue*; via culvert to PVCC; Avon + PVCC Woods*. * These routes recommended for follow-up.

- The Southern Neighborhood area is an important part of the County's plans.
- There is work already proceeding along Avon Street.
- The inaccessibility of PVCC mirrors that of Monticello, with arguably even larger equity issues. Opportunities exist to simultaneously address both.
- Kemper Park/Saunders Trail is a locally unusual park resource. It is public but it is not publicly owned unlike, for example, Skyline Drive or the Downtown Mall. The Rivanna Trail, which is also a hybrid (though different) type of space, has seen challenges.
- Issues around connectivity and heritage are both highly contested.
- Potential for gentrification in Belmont and Carlton. Potential to be caught in broader city-wide concern about the intersection of amenity, opportunity and housing.
- Land use changes could impact nearby businesses positively or negatively.
- Most of the study area is within Monticello's viewshed.
- Nobody wants to work on another plan that winds up on the shelf.
- Increased visitation will impact infrastructure at all stakeholder sites.
- There could be opposition from a small number of neighboring private landowners.
- Increased park usership could decrease park tranquility.
- Upstream infrastructure in the City (especially Monticello Avenue) is not currently ready. Note, however, that Monticello Avenue is a priority for bicycle/pedestrian improvement, with nearly complete sidewalks and bike lanes planned for 2017.

Cross-Cutting Tactical Challenges

These are tactical questions that will need to be addressed once an overall concept is decided. Most are common to any approach—indeed, to any project of this kind. Route-specific issues will be explored if/when routes are defined.

- Someone would need to own it
- There will be cost, potentially large
- Parking
- Security at all sites but especially Monticello
- Liability

- Bathrooms
- Trespass on neighboring land
- Sensitive ecosystems
- Land/Easement Acquisition
- Programming
- Flood zones with occasional intense episodes. Particularly (but not only) on Moore's Creek
- Possible sensitive archeology or habitats
- Interpretation and programming

VI. RECOMMENDED PLANNING APPROACH

Besides making contacts, exploring the terrain and collecting information, the purpose of this assessment has been to determine if it is appropriate for a Master Planning Process to go forward. I find that to be the case: the circumstances are right and the stakeholders are ready. Indeed, several of them have already started.

This final section will combine learnings from my conversations with stakeholders with what I have learned about Planning Theory and Practice in my Master's program. They are organizing principles to help make the process and results efficacious, equitable and just.

A Collaborative Process that Produces a Unified Result

This is an exciting topic and it is good that many people and organizations—past and present—are working to improve connectivity and bring opportunity to more people. Yet, the stakeholders each know that they cannot solve the problem alone. That was clear from my first discussion: a collaborative approach will be necessary.

There are many interconnected pieces and overlapping issues that cannot be disentangled. In some ways, uncoordinated effort is how we got where we are today. The Master Planning process that follows must bring rational coherence to the many related plans from different interest groups, past and present so the actors will have finite options to pursue with seriousness.

We are fortunate that TJPDC is already convening an interjurisdictional effort. The Practicum group will work with this framework, bring in non-governmental stakeholders and leverage collaborative planning resources the Architecture School offers.

Plan implementation will most likely require some kind of collaborative working group, which will likely have at least some overlap with the Practicum's advisory board. Indeed, the group will be recruited with that in mind. Fostering horizontal collaborations within that group will help lay institutional groundwork for future endeavors.

Regional Perspective

The plan must contribute to a better regional multimodal network and it must consider factors outside of the study area's boundaries. There are other nodes and opportunities in the neighborhood besides Charlottesville and Monticello. This project will add to and learn from the TJPDC effort.

No Plans on a Shelf

All of the stakeholders I spoke to represent busy organizations doing amazing things. They are passionate in their desire to find a solution but they do not have time for idle chatter. They have all seen many great ideas—including projects similar to this one—wind up as notebooks on a shelf and nothing more. This project needs to bring results and if it doesn't, it will make the next effort more difficult.

In that respect, the Practicum, and whatever form its successor effort takes, will need to go beyond both decennial TJPDC Plan (which is self-consciously *not* advocacy) and the Morven Project (which is an academic exercise). Those processes will set the table well but the process also needs to have momentum that will grow instead of subsiding when all the reports are submitted.

We have identified several organizations that can champion the project and keep it moving toward implementation. The Practicum group must work with them to define active roles, keep them engaged and identify resources for the stakeholders to do actual work on the ground.

Fair Process with Just Outcome

We have seen planning processes that exclude those they intend to serve. We have also seen good intentions that lead to tragic results. Although this project seems quite beneficial, we must be vigilant for potential harms such as gentrification and of past well-meaning but unhelpful intrusions by the University into community life.

Yet we must also make available UVA's considerable resources when they can make a positive difference. This is not an easy balance, but it will help to be humble and self-critical and wary of the pitfalls the theoretical literature and local experience warn us about. That doesn't mean that we should avoid ambitious suggestions; it means we should be circumspect.

Don't Respond to Obdurate Physical Legacies with Stubborn Plans

There is an interesting theoretical nexus between the obduracy of legacy infrastructure and corrective plans, which sometimes become obstinate themselves. [See Appendix D] When designers spend time envisioning alternative futures, they often become invested in their ideas. When they present their plans and designs to the public—particularly if they are refined or represent major investments—those plans can themselves become stakes in the ground that the public can accept or modify but not fundamentally re-think.

Yet designers' ability to envision alternative possibilities is often the best way to answer a well-entrenched status quo. It is difficult to balance enthusiasm around an idea that has the power to motivate change while also being open to real contributions and alternatives. The solution to the dilemma is for the design process itself to be a public collaboration.

The Monticello Trail was designed by a single firm with magnificent results but that was only possible because the Thomas Jefferson Foundation controlled most of the land—and even that required both leadership and listening. To complete this link, the project will need more than one owner, including public agencies. That means that there will need to be public involvement. The best, most inclusive, results will happen if the public is invited in as soon as the broadest conceptual issues are resolved (e.g. what combination of stakeholders will own the project and where will it be.) Don't wait until everything of consequence is already decided.

Issues for the Practicum Group

Although the Practicum group will receive its official assignment after this report is complete, it should closely resemble the proposal I wrote earlier in the Fall (see Appendix A). Generally speaking, it will clarify issues and identify precedents, opportunities and solutions. Its primary client will be the TJPDC but it will work closely with the Morven project and the Center for Cultural Landscapes. It will receive significant advice and input from the Architecture School as well.

Here are some issues for the team to examine:

1. Possible routes: advantages, disadvantages and precedents
2. Context within and contribution to a better multimodal regional network
3. Cultural and environmental education; Opportunities for programming
4. Economic Impact—short and long term
5. Possible gentrification and proactive/preventative strategies
6. Resources and Funding
7. Who uses the Saunders Trail and how. Who if anyone is missing?
8. Process to keep the stakeholders engaged, involve the community and build forward momentum

This will be a graduate-level process, conducted by a select group within a renowned program. It is our expectation that the result will reflect best practices and be theoretically rigorous. We also know that expertise is problematic and has its limitations. There are many knowledges, many with experience and ideas about this unique space.

The problem of connecting a city to a heritage site like Monticello is a rare opportunity to model a collaborative approach and a new kind of transportation planning that is about meaning as much as it is about infrastructure. We have the possibility (therefore a responsibility) to move the profession forward and make a real and lasting difference.

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Data

Albemarle County Real Estate Parcel Data

City of Charlottesville Assessor's Office

Maps

Albemarle County

City of Charlottesville

Base Map: Esri, HERE, DeLorme, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey,, NRCAN, METI, ESRI China, Swisstopo, MapmyIndia.

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