



Emerging Leader Award Nomination for **Meredith Ver Steeg, ASLA**

Nominating Statement

Name: Meredith Ver Steeg

Current Title: Associate

Firm: Moody Graham

Degree and Landscape Architecture Program: Bachelor of Landscape Architecture, Iowa State University, 2015

Licensure: Maryland, #4149

Throughout her academic and professional experience, Meredith Ver Steeg has exhibited exceptional leadership through her **community work, team building, and strategic thinking**.

Meredith graduated cum laude from Iowa State University in 2015 where she was awarded the Barbara King Scholarship for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Arthur R. and Clare M. Merkle Endowment for Excellence Scholarship for Urban Design, an ASLA Honor Award, an ASLA Merit Award, and the Iowa ASLA President's Medal.

Following professional experience at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates, Inc. in New York, and Confluence in Missouri, Meredith moved to Washington, DC where she joined Moody Graham in 2017. Meredith became a licensed landscape architect in 2020 and was promoted to Associate in 2021.

Meredith's community focus includes work on a prison landscape while at Iowa State, volunteer design and construction for a local park in Washington, DC, volunteer design on a masterplan for Greenbelt, MD, and community building for a flood resilience strategy in Southwest DC with Moody Graham.

During her nearly six-year tenure at Moody Graham, Meredith has quickly become a leader in the firm. Meredith has a desire to develop her strengths in organization, writing, and project management and is currently considering business classes to expand her education. She has shown emotional intelligence and strategic thinking in understanding how her landscape architectural goals can uplift her colleagues and positively impact her community. Meredith's commitment and leadership has been a consistent thread throughout her achievements from Iowa State until today.

Summary Narrative

Community Engagement

Landscapes of Justice: Redefining the Prison Environment

While at Iowa State University, Meredith had the opportunity to design and build a therapeutic landscape to help rehabilitate offenders at the Iowa Correctional Institute for Women. Led by Professor Julie Stevens and a class of five students, the team designed and assisted with the construction of outdoor classrooms for counseling and vocational training. During her interview at Moody Graham, Meredith spoke about how this project gave her insight into the power of landscape architecture to have a meaningful impact on community and individual health. The project was awarded the Community Service Award of Excellence from the American Society of Landscape Architecture in 2015.



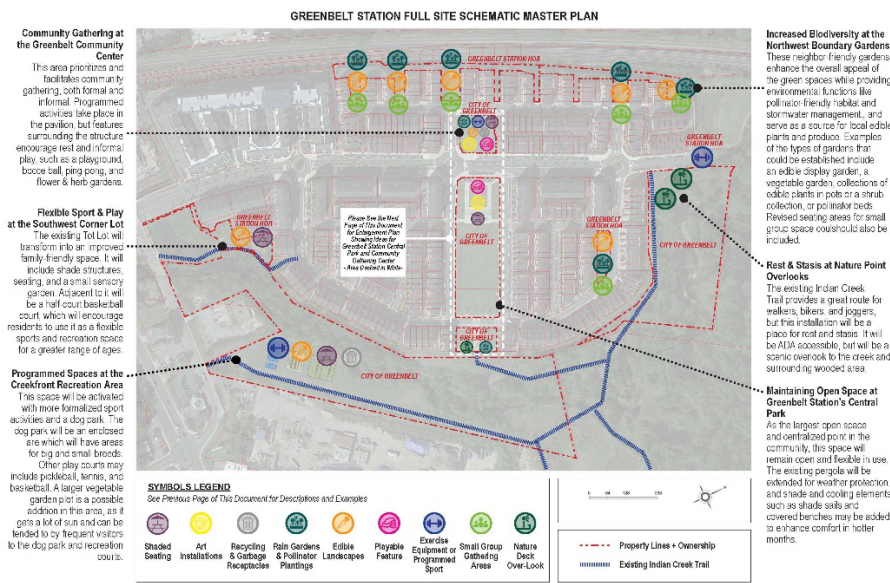
Meredith Ver Steeg (third from left) on-site at the project. Photo by Bob Elbert.

Community Improvement Day

From March through September of 2018, Meredith collaborated with volunteer architects and construction managers from DC-based companies to design improvements to Keane Field, a public park in Washington, DC. During her 60+ hours of volunteer time, Meredith sketched ideas, organized a community engagement event, assisted with project permitting, helped source construction materials, and lead over 100 volunteers in building the proposed design. The project was completed as part of the Community Improvement Day and organized by the *District of Columbia Building Industry Association*

Greenbelt Station Green Spaces

Under leadership from the Neighborhood Design Center, Meredith worked with local architecture students and professional city planners to create a master plan for the open spaces in the Greenbelt Station neighborhood of Greenbelt, MD. The team hosted three in-person public engagement events and six online group discussions to review master plan materials, confirm public engagement event findings, and receive additional feedback. The project culminated with a presentation to the Greenbelt City Council in February 2023. From April 2022 through March 2023, Meredith invested 73 hours of her personal time on this community led visioning and strategy project.



Pod First

Leaders “see more, before” others. This trait was exhibited by Meredith in the early days of the pandemic when she foresaw the need for collaborative software and planned outdoor events to keep our team connected. Meredith was able to read the conditions and let principals know when we were experiencing a loss of momentum after our transition to remote work. In the most difficult professional situations Meredith had the health of her colleagues top of mind. We call our team the “pod”- a group of seeds that collectively represent growth and renewal. Meredith’s leadership was represented by a *pod first* perspective that sustained our communication, morale, and mental health to help us serve our clients and present landscape architecture as an opportunity for maintaining wellness and promoting healing.

Meredith tackles every task with her contagious smile that radiates confidence and courage! Her friendly personality, collaborative nature, and intuitive listening skills make her easy to approach as a colleague, consultant, or a client. Meredith navigates through difficult situations and brings clarity through her brilliant communication skills.

-Mila Antova, Principal at Moody Graham

Strategic Thinking

Leaders don't simply do the work they are prescribed- they question the reason for the work and think about how to organize and articulate it. Meredith has an ability to see through messy thoughts and systems and consolidate them into a clear framework. At Moody Graham this was exhibited through her work on setting up office standards for how the firm pursues projects, collaborates with allied professionals, and communicates internally. Her work on our office Design Manual created graphic and written standards that allow us to better convey design ideas and values to our clients.

Meredith has applied the same strategic thinking to her professional growth. In recent conversations Meredith has discussed her interest in the business and management aspects of landscape architecture. She has sought out allied professionals, including architecture firm managing principals, to discuss their paths to leadership positions to better understand what stepping stones she might seek along her career discovery. Meredith has begun attending webinars focused on the business of architectural practice and is considering additional education during evening and weekend hours.

An Emerging Leader...

Collectively, Meredith's community work, team building, and organizational aptitude were on full display with her recent work for the *SW-Buzzard Point Flood Resilience Strategy*. Under the leadership of the District Office of Energy and Environment (DOEE) and Ramboll, Moody Graham is working on park designs that integrate into a Blue Green Infrastructure network that reduces interior flooding in Washington, DC. Meredith is managing this important project and has been critical in the successful presentation of the proposed design and its co-benefits to residents, community leaders, and city staff. Meredith organized the outreach boards, solicited feedback, organized comments, and presented findings to the team at recent meetings.



Meredith Ver Steeg (dark red pants) talking with community members about the SW Flood Resilience Strategy.



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A yearlong mentorship through the Potomac Chapter of ASLA and \$1,000 stipend would help Meredith refine her goals, expand access to mentorship, and facilitate additional education through ASLA. I have prepared this narrative with great conviction that Meredith Ver Steeg would be a worthy recipient of this honor. I enthusiastically support her nomination as a Potomac Chapter ASLA Emerging Leader and am appreciative of the time the chapter has taken to establish this award and review the nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "RM", written in a cursive style.

Ryan Moody, ASLA
Principal



March 14, 2023

To Potomac Chapter ASLA,

It is my pleasure to share my full support for Meredith Ver Steeg's nomination for the Potomac ASLA's Emerging Leadership award. For almost three decades, the Neighborhood Design Center (NDC) has partnered with community leaders and dedicated designers to support and advocate for stronger, more sustainable communities in Prince George's County. Meredith is one of the generous and dedicated designers who has made a significant contribution to the community-based design ecosystem in her role as an NDC volunteer.

Meredith most recently worked with the Neighborhood Design Center as a volunteer lead for a project to master plan greenspaces in a recently completed multi-family housing development. Community engagement is at the center of the design process at NDC. It is a skill that can take time to build and which does not come naturally to many. For Meredith, listening is a skill she excels in. During sessions with a range of voices, she was able to capture the feedback accurately and translate that to designs that reflected community priorities.

A natural complement to listening is communicating. For landscape architects, design drawings tell the story of projects and capture process. Meredith was able to create technically sound, beautiful drawings that communicated to an audience of non-designers. They saw their visions for their community in the sketches and plans Meredith created. The care and attention to detail paid off- they felt heard, understood, and included.

In addition to being attentive as a listener and an intentional communicator, Meredith takes initiative. She stepped up in the volunteer team, guiding design decisions and suggesting activities for community workshops. Her commitment to the project was strong- she attended all community sessions and working group meetings, usually after a full workday had ended. For the final presentation, Meredith joined NDC staff to present in person at the City Council meeting. She spoke naturally and understandably and answered questions in a manner that instilled confidence in the questioner.

Meredith uses her strong skills as a landscape architect to inspire people and to create healthy, safe, beautiful places for all people. Her natural leadership skills are another commitment she has made to improving the lives of others through her work. Meredith embodies what the profession of landscape architecture can be at its best – responsive, beautiful, inspiring, and inclusive. Honoring Meredith will no doubt inspire others to follow equally impactful career trajectories.

Sincerely,



Kelly Fleming, ASLA

Environmental Resilience and Landscape Design Program Director
Neighborhood Design Center