

# LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2026



## Town of Bladensburg Legislative Priorities Outline

Mayor Takisha James and the Town Council

Town of Bladensburg

July 14, 2025 – Draft Document

Dear Partners and Legislative Colleagues,

As we prepare for the upcoming legislative session, the Town of Bladensburg stands as a **Town with Momentum**—a community determined to move forward, even amid broader economic uncertainty. Guided by a shared commitment to progress, equity, and regional cooperation, our Mayor and Town Council remain focused on delivering meaningful results for our residents while continuing to build strong partnerships across the Port Towns. We can not be stopped and we have continued to provide and increase services to our residents.

We believe that optimism paired with strategic action is essential to resolving long-standing issues and positioning our Town—and our region—for long-term success. In this report, we have outlined our key priorities, which reflect the bold direction we are pursuing in FY 2026:

### **Advancing Growth, Annexation, and Regional Collaboration**

We are actively working to expand our municipal boundaries, invite new business opportunities, and ensure residents and businesses in unincorporated areas have access to high-quality services and representation. Regional coordination with our fellow Port Towns is central to this effort.

We are also thrilled to be a part of the Prince George's Gateway Arts District with the municipalities of Brentwood, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, Mount Rainer, and North Brentwood. This group has made great strides over the last year in developing a vision and gathering economic data. These collaborative efforts have greatly encouraged us and provided additional momentum in our forward progression.

### **Pushing for Greater Influence in Land Use and Zoning**

Local voices must have a stronger role in the decisions that shape our built environment. We are advocating for legislative changes to increase municipal input into planning and zoning, particularly in areas where redevelopment is most needed.

### **Launching the BCCE Port Towns Community Development Corporation**

This transformative initiative will unite Bladensburg, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, and Edmonston in a shared economic development vision. This project has been underway for the last few years, but this year is different we have formed a new entities and appointments will be

taking place in each entity. Together, we have applied for funding and started to develop the first-year goals. Key projects include:

- Board Formation and Kick off will be in Fall 2025.
- A branding and wayfinding strategy to strengthen regional identity
- Façade improvement programs to support small and mid-sized businesses
- Strategic initiatives to spur development and redevelopment in key corridors
- A comprehensive approach to flooding and infrastructure planning, especially in our industrial zones
- Programs to honor our rich history and culture through community events and public art

### **Continuing Capital Investments**

We are committed to completing and advancing major capital projects that enhance our Town's infrastructure and cultural assets, including:

- Stabilizing and preparing Bostwick House for future use
- Planning for a new Town Hall and updated Police Department facilities

### **Addressing Long-Term Challenges**

Bladensburg is actively working on long-term priorities that require sustained advocacy and funding:

- Solutions for the Peace Cross intersection
- Monitoring the potential impacts of the proposed MAGLEV project
- Expanding senior transportation services (Call A Bus)
- Supporting affordability through homeowner and renter assistance, including energy efficiency programs
- Encouraging changes to laws that support HOA Groups and renters
- Coordination with MNCPPC on the Upcoming Projects
  - Publick Playhouse
  - Bladensburg Community Center

### **Enhancing Public Safety**

We are prioritizing a safe, walkable, and resilient community through:

- Pedestrian safety improvements and green infrastructure investments
- Legislative advocacy on juvenile crime and recent changes to Maryland law
- Strategies to address organized retail theft
- Continued support for automated traffic enforcement to improve safety and accountability

We are deeply grateful for the continued support of our County and State partners, and for the collaboration of our fellow Port Towns. This report is designed to elevate the priorities of the

Town of Bladensburg and provide a clear roadmap for how we can work together to meet the evolving needs of our residents and businesses.

We look forward to a productive session and thank you for your partnership in building a brighter future for Bladensburg and the region.

**Sincerely,  
Mayor Takisha James  
And the Bladensburg Town Council**

DRAFT

# Town of Bladensburg Legislative Priorities

## Growth, Annexation, and Regional Cooperation

Building on momentum from last year's high-profile annexation efforts at Hospital Hill, the Town of Bladensburg is preparing for the next phase of **smart, cooperative growth**. In FY 2026, we are renewing our focus on annexation in partnership with our neighboring jurisdictions, with the shared goal of promoting stability, equity, and economic opportunity for the Port Towns region.

Our annexation plan is both **strategic and community-centered**, and we are developing educational materials and outreach tools to show **why businesses and residents should choose Bladensburg**. We believe joining the Town offers distinct advantages, including:

- 24/7 Dedicated Police Coverage
- Responsive Public Works Services (e.g., Enhanced Snow Removal)
- Improved Code Enforcement and Infrastructure Maintenance
- Easier Access to Local Elected Officials and Services
- Support for Local Businesses through Grants and Incentives
- Increased Representation in Local Planning and Decision-Making

We look forward to collaborating with residents, county leaders, and property owners to ensure this process is inclusive, transparent, and forward-thinking. The Town is supportive of legislation that protect the rights of municipal entities and does not curtail annexation by municipalities.

## Land Use and Zoning Authority for Bladensburg

As we look ahead to FY 2026, the Town of Bladensburg remains steadfast in its commitment to equitable growth and inclusive planning. One of our top priorities continues to be securing a more meaningful role for municipalities in land use and zoning decisions that directly impact our communities.

Currently, municipalities have limited participation in county-level planning and zoning processes. In 2024, the Town passed a resolution in support of legislation that would provide greater municipal input in land use decision-making. Since then, we have engaged actively with other like-minded municipalities to build a coalition of support that advocates for more local authority and collaboration with state and county partners.

We have also maintained a productive partnership with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) and were proud to participate in the development of the Port Towns Sector Plan. While we are encouraged by this collaboration, zoning control remains a fundamental issue, and we continue to seek legislative remedies that will help us shape development that reflects the needs and values of our residents.

## **Formation of the BCCE Port Towns Community Development Corporation (CDC)**

A major highlight for FY 2026 is the official formation of the BCCE Port Towns CDC—a collaborative initiative uniting Bladensburg, Colmar Manor, Cottage City, and Edmonston under one visionary platform for shared progress.

This CDC represents a transformational step for the region. With support from state and county partners, the BCCE Port Towns CDC will serve as a centralized engine for revitalization, branding, and economic development, helping our communities attract investment, improve quality of life, and create a cohesive identity for the Port Towns corridor.

### **Planned initiatives for FY 2026 include:**

- Obtaining funding for branding, signage, and wayfinding program to unify the four towns
- Supporting local entrepreneurs through technical assistance and façade improvement grants
- Advocating for infrastructure and transit improvements to support residents and businesses
- Coordinating workforce development programs and promoting local hiring and training for local residents.
- Pursuing public-private partnerships to strengthen commercial corridors and mixed-use development

We are optimistic that this new structure will not only **amplify each town's strengths**, but also **provide a strong, united voice** for the region's future.

## **State Legislation and Capital Funding Priorities**

### **Bostwick House Preservation and Activation**

The **Bostwick House**, one of the most historically significant sites in Bladensburg, continues to be a focus of preservation and revitalization efforts. Over the years, the Town has successfully secured grant funding for **exterior and structural stabilization**. However, **interior restoration** is urgently needed to make the home usable for events, tours, and civic engagement.

We are actively pursuing **additional capital investments** and bond bill funding to bring Bostwick House to full functionality. Once restored, the site will become a vital part of the Town's cultural and tourism strategy—**a community anchor that bridges our past and our future**.

### **New Town Hall and Municipal Facilities**

The Town of Bladensburg does not meet the community's needs and staffing of our essential functions. A new Town Hall facility is needed to encompass more space for resident use,

featuring a visitor's center, emergency response and preparedness, job training center, the Town's police department, administrative staff, council, and possibly the Fire Department.

The Town has limited community space for resident functions, meetings, job training, computer lab, etc. In addition, we have very little room for growth as it relates to our administrative staff. Our facilities are dated and would benefit from more energy-efficient and sustainable construction.

We currently do not have sufficient space to house our growing public safety and public works functions. The Town's facilities are outdated and do not match the modern needs of the community.

### **Bladensburg Community Center:**

MNCPPC has begun evaluating the current site and building a new center, and the town has participated in this process. However, the current designs show a slightly larger building, but the community's needs are great. We are being told that there are site constraints, but we would like more opportunities for public input.

The Bladensburg Community Center is an essential recreational asset for local communities. The Center offers multiple fitness and sports programs, summer camps, after-school activities, and classes designed to improve the quality of life for residents of all ages. The Center also serves as a community gathering location for social interaction and educational opportunities.

Due to limited space, the Bladensburg Community Center cannot currently expand its programming and meet the area's growing needs. Expanding or building a new facility will improve the overall quality of life and provide essential programs and services needed in Port Towns. However, we do not want to continue to have an undersized facility.

### **Peace Cross Traffic Management Plan**

This is a longstanding issue and priority not only of Bladensburg but of all of the Port Towns. The Town has worked with SHA and other State and Federal officials to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure at the Peace Cross Intersection. This intersection is where three major roads converge, and both pedestrian and vehicle traffic are subject to potentially life-threatening situations daily.

This area is adjacent to the Bladensburg Waterfront Park, a major recreational asset of the Port Towns. A study is needed at this intersection to help identify alternatives that will allow pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles to move safely. This is a significant intersection of the Port Towns has an effect on the overall area traffic flow.

### **Condominium and Homeowners Association – Repair and Rehabilitation Funding**

The town supports legislation introduced during the last session by Delegate Marvin Holmes to secure funding from the county or state to support this fund. The previous bill called for

authorizing a county or a municipality to establish a specific fund to support infrastructure repair in a community subject to a condominium association or a homeowner's association and requiring that certain property tax revenues be assigned to a fund created under the Act. In Bladensburg, we have this issue and need legislation to address the needs of our residents.

### **Homeowner Assistance**

With the end of APRA funding, the town needs assistance in identifying rehabilitation programs for homeowners. Identifying potential incentives for first-time homeowners will increase homeownership and result in more families relocating to the Port Towns. Equally important is matching affordable housing programs and services to help existing homeowners stay in their homes longer and age in place.

### **Tenant Rights - Failure to Repair Serious and Dangerous Defects - Tenant Remedies Tenant Safety Act:**

With several multi-family and rental units in the Town of Bladensburg, we support legislation that establishes tenant remedies. The bill last session that Senator Washington authored established that a landlord that offers a dwelling for rent is deemed to warrant the dwelling fit for human habitation, authorizing a single tenant or tenants' organization to seek remedies on behalf of a group of tenants for a landlord's failure to repair serious and dangerous defects on the leased premises; authorizing a tenant, a group of tenants, or a tenants' organization to bring a civil action for money damages if a landlord fails to repair certain defects within 90 days of the court finding the conditions complained of exist; etc.

### **Bladensburg Internal Operations:**

**water** Assist with identifying funding to facilitate a branding/marketing campaign to help define the Port Towns' identities and to promote the benefits of living, working, and visiting the area. Better defining the identity of the Port Towns will lead to increased awareness of the benefits of living, working, and visiting the area. A strong identity will also strengthen the ability of our partners to attract resources, resulting in better and improved services and programs for our residents.

## **PUBLIC SAFETY**

### **Pedestrian Safety**

Over the past few years, we have had three tragic incidents within the town border and one adjacent to the Town where pedestrians have been struck and resulted in fatalities. The Town has recently adopted the Vision Zero pledge, and we need legislative support to hold individuals

accountable and ensure the infrastructure is in place to keep Bladensburg and Port Town residents safe. We also need more safe routes for children and families.

### **Organized Retail Theft Assistance**

We have started to work with the County on this emerging issue, but this requires a multi-phased approach to enforcement and interventions. Major retailers are leaving urban areas due to high rates of retail shrinkage. On the ground, we have partnered with our shopping centers by installing mobile cameras in parking lots and obtaining “No Trespassing” agreements, which enable better enforcement outcomes.

We are asking state legislators for more substantial penalties for repeat offenders and mandatory rehabilitative measures to deter the behavior in the future.

### **Juvenile Crime – Child Interrogation Act**

This issue was not resolved in the last session, and we would like to see some action. In Maryland, violent crimes have spiked and are associated with juvenile involvement, including armed carjackings, assaults, homicides, car thefts, and more. The Child Interrogation Act impedes law enforcement officers from removing violent juveniles from communities such as Prince George’s County, MD. Law Enforcement Officers would like to see violent criminals held accountable. We recognize that 98% of juveniles are law-abiding citizens working hard in schools to become productive citizens. They are our future leaders, but those committing murder, carjackings, shootings, robberies, assaults, and other heinous crimes should be held accountable.

A bill was passed in the General Assembly in 2022, which prohibits law enforcement officers from interrogating juveniles without allowing them to consult with an attorney and requires that parents be notified before questioning anyone under the age of 17. This bill restricts officers from interrogating suspects who typically cooperate with police officers during interrogations. They will freely consent to speak with officers or interrogators who ensure their rights are read to them, and the juveniles acknowledge that they understood their Miranda Rights.

These interviews/interrogations are recorded and screened intensely by prosecutors, judges, and defense attorneys before they are admitted into court as evidence in criminal cases. These interactions also provide law enforcement with crucial information that could lead to the identification, arrest, and prosecution of suspects involved in committing dangerous, violent crimes within communities, victims and evidence, such as firearms and other dangerous and deadly weapons, stolen property, and illegal CDS Activities; and facts that could assist in the investigation of additional alleged criminal activity which ultimately could bring criminals to justice and provide closure to families.