

Town of Bladensburg – Bostwick House Site Improvements



Figure 1 Aman Trust - <https://amanmemorialtrust.org/>

What is Bostwick House? Bostwick, a jewel of Bladensburg's history, is an eighteenth-century site in Maryland. It comprises an elegant Georgian-style main house, multiple outbuildings, and landscaped grounds. Constructed in 1746 by Christopher Lowndes, a locally prominent, English-born merchant, Bostwick is a testament to Maryland's colonial elite's wealth and aesthetic tastes. Its strategic location on the Eastern Branch of the Anacostia River made Bladensburg one of several small but important commercial centers in early Prince George's County. From the

import and sale of dry goods to shipbuilding and ropemaking, Lowndes' various business ventures paint a vivid picture of the diversity of regional economic activity in the eighteenth-century Mid-Atlantic. Bostwick, a property where Christopher Lowndes also owned and traded slaves, represents an important part of the early African American experience in Maryland.

The House is situated on approximately seven (7) acres of land in Bladensburg. Over the last 30 years of ownership, the Town of Bladensburg has engaged in several studies and strategic planning efforts to develop a conceptual use and implementation plan for the main house and adjacent Bostwick property. These improvements include building adjacent structures for restrooms, which aim to preserve the site's historical integrity while making it more accessible and engaging for the community.

About Bladensburg: Bladensburg is a town of 9,660 (Census, 2020) residents located in Prince George's County; it is a small community in an Urban Area with an average median household income of \$58,619 (Census, 2022), which places many of its residents in the 60% of Area Median Income (AMI) for the metro area. Bladensburg has changed significantly from a deep-water port town platted in 1742 to a dynamic and ethnically diverse Prince George's County community. Its population is 45% African American and 45% Latino. Its residents comprise a workforce of both white—and blue-

collar jobs, with occupations such as service providers, sales and office workers, and professionals.

Recent Updates ULI – Technical Assistance Panel: In April 2024, the Town of Bladensburg engaged with the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Washington, DC Chapter to conduct a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) to evaluate the site development and its community use. The Town sought advice from ULI with a vision in mind to transform Bostwick into a community anchor, a place that extends its influence beyond its fence line. The Town has owned and maintained the Bostick House since 1996. The goal of the TAP is to activate the property better, protect its character-defining features, and make it more of an asset.

The Town of Bladensburg requested assistance from the Urban Land Institute through a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) in its quest to find opportunities for this underused location. This TAP aims to find the most viable use(s) in a concept encompassing economic vitality, preservation and adaptive reuse, accessibility and connections, open space, meaningful historical interpretation, and placemaking. The panel deliberated on these issues for over two days and presented its recommendations, which were informed by input from community, municipal, and private sector stakeholders.

Community Partners: The Town is fortunate to have stewardship partners in the Aman Memorial Trust, the University of Maryland, and the Anacostia Watershed Society. The property is a designated historic site on Prince George’s County’s Illustrated Inventory of Historic Sites and Districts and the National Register. The Maryland Historical Trust and M-NCPPC hold preservation easements on the property.

TAP Panel Findings:

RECLAIMING BLADENSBURG



CONNECT FROM OUTSIDE IN



CREATE NEW RESIDENTIAL



CREATE TOWN CENTER



Image Credit: ULI Panel

Explanation of the Project/Program and Justification for the Use of Taxpayer Funds:

The Town of Bladensburg is seeking \$275,000 in taxpayer funds for site improvements at Bostwick House, with the primary goal of enhancing community engagement and revitalization efforts. The Town owns the site and has the legal authority to borrow funds and all of the other items required by the UDSA. As a small community, the town has struggled to obtain conventional funding for this project and other improvements to the property. To complete this project, the town will also complete regulatory and environmental reviews of the site.

These improvements will involve creating adjacent restrooms and storage facilities to support various community events at the site. Additionally, the project includes the construction of public restrooms and any necessary archaeological studies to minimize ground disturbances during these improvements.

The rationale for these site improvements lies in several key factors:

1. **Community Engagement for Special Events:** The enhancements aim to facilitate community events and activities at the Bostwick House site, fostering greater participation and interaction among residents. The town seeks to encourage more frequent and diverse site use by providing essential facilities like restrooms and storage, thereby promoting community cohesion and local pride. Currently, the site has limited access for residents, and this will allow people to use the grounds for outdoor events and festivals.

2. **Economic Revitalization:** The development of these facilities is viewed as an opportunity to attract more attention and investment to the Bostwick House site. By making it more accessible and accommodating for events, the town hopes to generate increased interest from visitors, potentially leading to greater economic activity in the area through tourism, local spending, and potential business opportunities.
3. **Preservation and Reinvestment:** The project aligns with efforts to preserve and promote the historical and cultural significance of the Bostwick House site. By creating infrastructure that supports public access and engagement, the town aims to ensure the continued relevance and sustainability of the site for future generations. This reinvestment in the site reflects a commitment to preserving local heritage while also fostering its continued use and enjoyment by the community.



Image Credit: Shirl Spicer, MNCPPC Parks

Additional Project Information (TAP): The findings of the TAP have highlighted an immediate opportunity to activate the site and allow residents and visitors to enter the grounds while the House is undergoing restoration and stabilization efforts. The first phase of community activation will involve **Site Improvements**, which will create adjacent restrooms and storage facilities to facilitate community events at the site. Additionally, the project will include the building of public restrooms and any archeological (ground disturbances studies) that are required for these improvements; the development of these facilities will allow the Town to use the site for special events and activities to bring more attention to the

site for reinvestment and use.

The TAP outlined the following items that specifically apply to this project (this has been summarized and revised for the presentation):

Year 1: Site Improvements

- Create and explore the development of 4-stall public restrooms (2 ADA toilets;2 regular/family toilets, compostable)
- Selectively deconstruct and rebuild with concrete slabs and outbuildings.
- Providing a public toilet is necessary for any outdoor programming at scale.

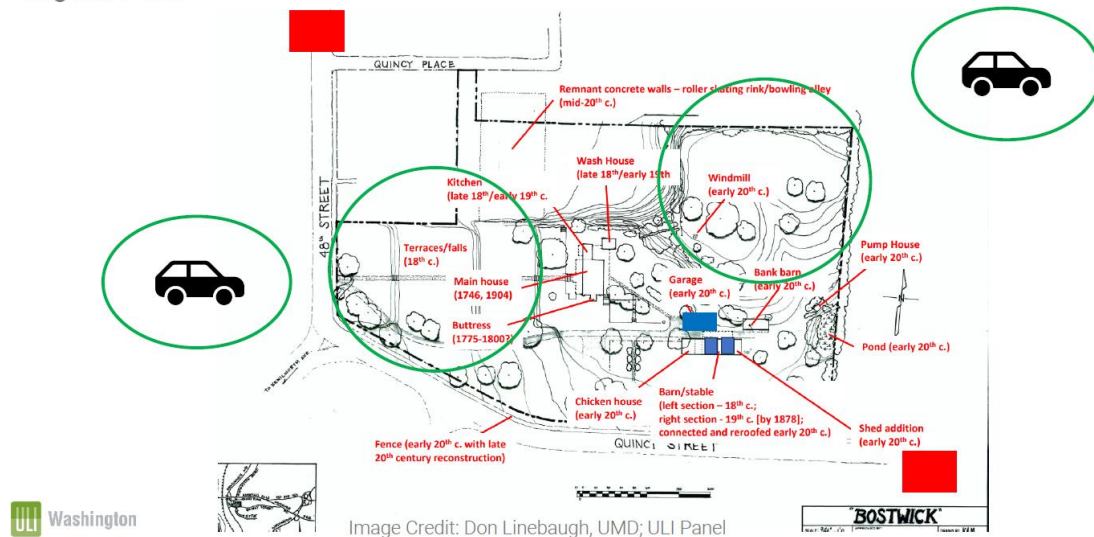
These improvements would support:

Years 2-3: Bostwick House Programming / Site Activation

- 4 Annual Events (Spring -Summer –2 Fall) throughout the year sponsored by the Town.
- Spring = environmentally focused event // Summer = Fourth of July // Fall = Harvest Festival and Founders Celebration (rotating between (4) towns annually
- Open and Free to the Public: Activating Grounds for Public Programming on a Regular Basis

Years 2-3: Activity Zones

Activating Grounds for Public Programming on a Regular Basis

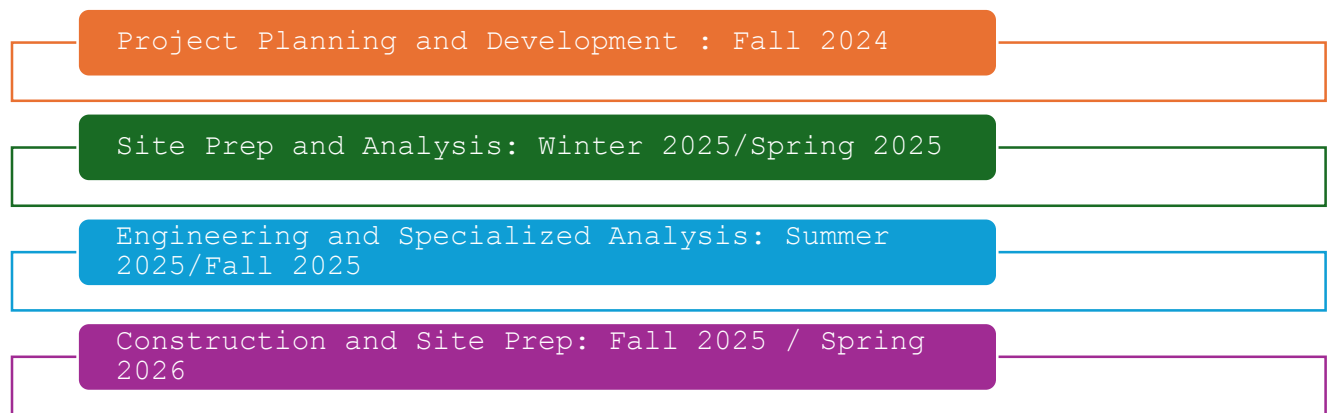


Project Request Budget Items:

Budget Items	Estimated Amounts
Site Prep Work and Archeological Fees	\$125,000
Construction Cost – Restrooms	\$250,000
Consulting Fees and Engineering Costs	\$75,000

Contingency (historic site)	\$50,000
Total Budget	\$500,000

Potential Project Timeline: The timeline for the Town is based on what we see as a reasonable high-level overview of what to expect for the Site Improvement Project that would allow the Town to host more visits and use the outside properties.



Conclusions: Bostwick House is a jewel in Bladensburg that is not readily accessible to the public. The current configuration does not allow the facilities to support larger-scale events for the public. This improvement project would open the property by bringing more events and opportunities for residents to learn about the area's history and use an amenity of the open space and sprawling lawns, which would be perfect for outdoor movies, cultural festivals, and other options.

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