

Town of Bladensburg – Bostwick House Site Improvements: Accessible & Eco-Friendly Comfort Stations at Historic Bostwick House



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 Improvements at the Site (2020-2025): Over the past five years, the Town of Bladensburg has undertaken significant restoration and preservation efforts at Bostwick House to ensure its long-term sustainability. Key improvements include the replacement of the building's buttresses, repairs to damaged and broken window and door panels, and essential roof repairs to protect the structure from further deterioration. In addition to these physical restorations, the Town has engaged Encore Sustainable Architects to conduct a comprehensive conditions report and develop a strategic use program for the site. This initiative aims to repurpose Bostwick House as a sustainable event center, ensuring its historical preservation while contributing to the Town's long-term environmental and economic goals.

Recent Updates ULI – Technical

Assistance Panel: In the Fall 2024, the Urban Land Institute (ULI) Washington, DC Chapter completed a Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) Report on the site development and its community use of the Bostwick House. The Town sought advice from ULI with a vision to transform Bostwick into a community anchor, a place that extends its influence beyond its fence line. The Town has owned and maintained the Bostwick 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) 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.

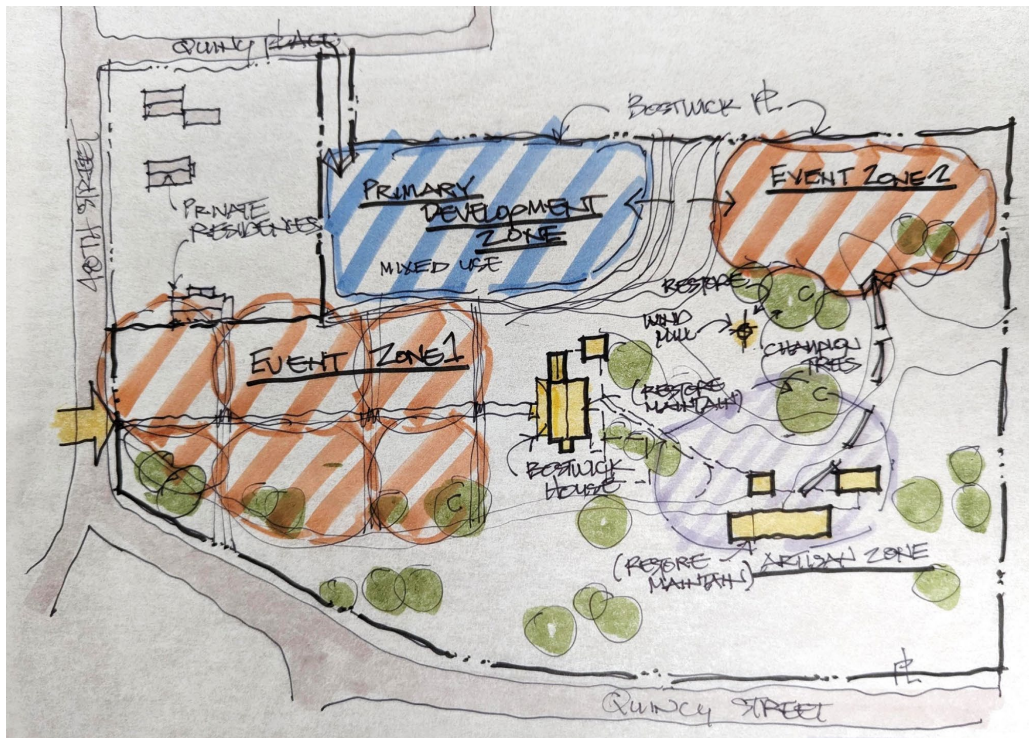
Community Partners: The Town is fortunate to have stewardship partners in the Aman Memorial Trust, the University of Maryland, and the Anacostia Watershed Society. The property is a designated historic site on Prince George's County's Illustrated Inventory of

Historic Sites and Districts and the National Register. The Maryland Historical Trust and M-NCPPC hold preservation easements on the property.

TAP Panel Findings: The Urban Land Institute (ULI) panel recommended a phased transformation of Bostwick into a civic campus organized into five distinct zones:

1. Bostwick House: Reimagined as a civic hub for community engagement and public programming.
2. Event Zone 1 – “The Terraces”: Designed for formal events and structured gatherings.
3. Event Zone 2 – “The Orchard”: A more informal event space adjacent to Bladensburg Elementary School, ideal for community activities.
4. Artisan Zone: A creative area anchored by workshops and service-oriented buildings supporting the entire campus.
5. Primary Redevelopment Zone (Parcel 4): Envisioned as the site for a new Town Hall and townhouses, aligning with the Town’s growth and infrastructure needs.

Each zone is designed to have a unique identity, with strategic phasing for activation to ensure a cohesive and functional civic space.



ULI Year 1 Activation Recommendations – Summary

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) recommends expanding public programming at Bostwick into a **year-round event calendar**, fostering community engagement across the Port Towns. Key activation events for **Year 1 (2025)** include:

- **Spring 2025 (May 3, 2025): A Community Fair** in partnership with MNCPPC, incorporating environmental programming and interactive activities.
- **Fall 2025: A Harvest Festival & Founders Celebration or Movie Night on the Terraces**, featuring performances, classes, and public history presentations.

Event Zone Utilization

- **Event Zone 1 (“The Terraces”)** will accommodate **tents for performances, workshops, and educational activities**.
- **Event Zone 2 (“The Orchard”)** offers a natural amphitheater for **hands-on family and youth activities**.
- **The Artisan Zone (barn, stables, and garage)** will house **historic trade and ecological restoration demonstrations**, with a **vendor midway along the central pathway**.

Community Engagement & Logistics

- The **Orchard** can serve as an outdoor space for **Bladensburg Elementary School**, supporting family programming and providing access via **Annapolis Road**.
- **Nearby churches (Grace of God Ministries & Ministry International Cristo El Rey)** should be engaged for **parking and outreach support**.

Successful implementation will require **ongoing community outreach** and collaboration to ensure broad participation and long-term sustainability of the site as a civic and cultural hub.

Explanation of the Project/Program and Justification for the Use of Taxpayer Funds | Accessible and Eco-Friendly Comfort Stations at the Historic Bostwick

The Town of Bladensburg is seeking \$100,000 for site improvements at Bostwick House, with the primary goal of enhancing community engagement and revitalization efforts. The Eco-Friendly Comfort Stations at the Historic Bostwick 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.

BOSTWICK HOUSE IMPROVEMENTS | Accessible and Eco-Friendly Comfort Stations at the Historic Bostwick



Image Credit: Spirit 2pic, MNCPPC Parks

What Improvements would be required? Site improvements will be made to 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 disturbance studies) 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 it for reinvestment and use.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) that was completed in fall of 2024, outlined the following items that specifically apply to this project (this has been summarized and revised for the presentation):

Phase 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.

Currently, the site has limited access for residents, and this will allow people to use the grounds for outdoor events and festivals. These improvements would support:

- 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, promoting community cohesion and local pride.

What is the application being proposed? Modern built but historically appropriate comfort stations that would be sustainable but practical for the site. Composting toilets are increasingly being installed at historical sites due to their environmental benefits, minimal infrastructure requirements, and ability to preserve the integrity of sensitive locations. Here's a summary of their role and advantages:

- **Eco-Friendly Waste Management:** Composting toilets use little to no water, turning human waste into compost through natural decomposition, reducing water consumption and sewage output.
- **Minimal Infrastructure Impact:** They don't require traditional plumbing or septic systems, making them ideal for historical sites where digging or construction could damage artifacts or structures.
- **Preservation of Historical Integrity:** Because they are self-contained, composting toilets can be installed without altering the site's layout or aesthetics.
- **Cost-Effective:** They reduce utility and maintenance costs associated with traditional restrooms, especially in remote or off-grid locations.
- **Visitor Accessibility:** Modern designs provide clean, odor-free facilities, enhancing visitor experience without compromising historical authenticity.



Historical sites, such as national parks, preserved homes, and archaeological sites, are adopting composting toilets as part of sustainable tourism and preservation strategies.

Cost Estimates: Project Overview

This cost estimate outlines the anticipated expenses for the installation of two 2-stall composting restroom units at the Bostwick House site. The estimate includes archaeological survey costs, site preparation, development, and construction.

Cost Breakdown

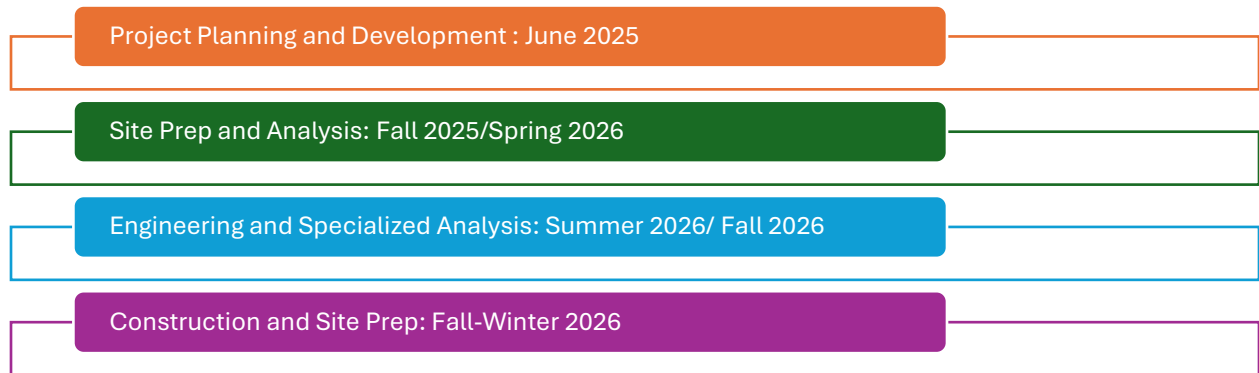
Category	Description	Estimated Cost
Archaeological Survey	Hiring archaeological crew to survey site for historic artifacts (2-week survey, 4-person crew)	\$30,000
Site Preparation	Clearing, grading, and preparing the site for construction (includes erosion control measures)	\$20,000
Composting Restroom Units	Purchase of two pre-fabricated 2-stall composting toilet units	\$80,000
Utility Connections & Foundations	Concrete foundations, electrical, and water access for maintenance	\$20,000
Construction Labor	Assembly and installation of restroom units	\$30,000
Permits and Inspection Fees	Local permits and environmental inspections	\$5,000
Contingency (7-10%)	Unforeseen conditions or changes	\$15,000
Total Estimated Cost		\$200,000

Notes

- The archaeological survey is a critical step to ensure compliance with historic preservation regulations and avoid disturbance of any potential artifacts.
- Site preparation will involve minimal ground disturbance to preserve the historical landscape.
- The composting restroom units selected will be ADA-compliant and designed for low-maintenance, eco-friendly operation.
- The contingency covers unexpected site conditions or regulatory changes.

This estimate serves as a preliminary budget and may be subject to adjustments based on site conditions, vendor quotes, and regulatory requirements.

Project Timeline: Below is the proposed timeline for the project.



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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