



# City of Bowie

15901 Excalibur Road  
Bowie, Maryland 20716

January 27, 2020

The Honorable Joselin Peña-Melnyk  
House Office Building, Room 241  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

## **Re: Bowie Race Track Property**

Dear Delegate Peña-Melnyk:

As the Mayor of Bowie, this letter is written to express the unified support of the City's elected leadership in acquiring title to the approximately 180 acres that comprise the Bowie Race Track property. We understand that there may be an opportunity for the current owners of the Bowie Race Track to divest their interests in the property as part of the overall deal to save the Preakness Stakes and significantly improve Pimlico and Laurel race tracks. The City intends to use the property for public open space preservation and recreation uses.

The Mayor and City Council of Bowie consider their acquisition of the Bowie Race Track property to be their highest priority and we wholeheartedly join the City in its efforts. In addition to our discussions concerning the race track property with City representatives, we heard directly from our constituents on this issue during a public town-hall meeting held at the Kenhill Center on January 4, 2020. During the standing-room only meeting (attended by over 200 City residents), our constituents, one after the other, testified in favor of the City obtaining ownership of the Bowie Race Track property to dedicate the land to public open space and recreational uses. Our constituents have made their position clear and we agree with them.

We believe that the City is in the best position to maintain the Bowie Race Track property for recreational uses. The City currently works closely with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission concerning parcels of land near the race track that serve as parks and recreational trails. Moreover, this property is best suited for recreational purposes (as opposed to development or other uses) because the Bowie Race Track is accessible by only one road (Racetrack Road) – and Racetrack Road is already overused and subject to consistent bottlenecks.

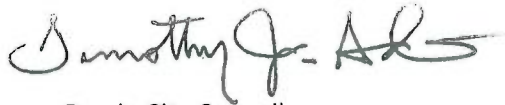
We further note that the approved 2006 Master Plan for Prince George's County for the Bowie area identified the desirability of acquiring land along the Patuxent River to provide both a buffer and a trail system for hikers and equestrians that would help conserve natural areas. The Plan specifically calls for acquisition of at least 50 acres behind the race track for recommended park use.

The City is seeking County and State funds to convert the Bowie Race Track property for the above stated uses and we are willing to partner with Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Prince George's County, Bowie State University, or other public use partners to that end.

Importantly, the City is committed to working with other parties who may be interested in the Bowie Race Track property. The City has expressed its interest in entering a long-term agreement with Bowie State University and other partners to ensure they may also use the property for public recreational activities. I recently communicated my interest in working with the University to its President. Transferring ownership of the race track property can be a win-win for the City, the County and other entities that share our constituents' vision for the use of the property.

We strongly support the City having title to the Bowie Race Track property and we stand ready to work with you and others in this endeavor. We respectfully request your support for the position of the City Council of Bowie. I have also attached a "white paper" for your information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy J. Adams". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Bowie City Council  
Timothy J. Adams  
Mayor

Attachment

## **The Bowie Race Track and The City of Bowie**

The Bowie City Council is interested in acquiring title to the approximately 180.844 acres that comprise the Bowie Race Track Property. The Bowie Race Track holds a special place in the history of Bowie. It opened in October 1914. The last race was in July 1985 and the training facility closed in 2015. After 2015 the facility and grounds have been used for County fairs and other similar events. The City intends to use the property for public open space preservation and recreational uses and acknowledge the track's history. The hope is that the property can serve as a community amenity and help satisfy the recreational needs of a growing Bowie population.

Prince George's County's Approved 2006 Master Plan for Bowie and Vicinity identified the desirability of acquiring land along the Patuxent River to provide both a buffer and a trail system for hikers and equestrians that would help conserve natural areas. The Plan specifically calls for acquisition of at least 50 acres behind the race track for recommended park use.

The City is very serious about its public stewardship responsibilities and providing opportunities for a wide range of community recreational amenities. However, transfer of ownership of the property, especially the parcels associated with the existing stable functions, is contingent upon any environmental hazards being fully mitigated. A Phase II Environmental Assessment will be necessary to evaluate the situation, and adequate financial resources will have to be identified for the study, as well as to complete any related remediation. If environmental problems are found to exist, the City would only be willing to take title to the property when all required remediation actions become fully funded.

The City is seeking County and State funds to convert the Bowie Race Track property for the above stated uses. Furthermore, the City is willing to enter a long-term agreement with

Bowie State University, the Maryland Park and Planning Commission, the State Department of Natural Resources, and/or other prospective partners.

At a town-hall meeting on January 4, 2020 the residents of Bowie have made it very clear that they want the City to get the land and that the land be used for recreational, open space, and similar purposes. The race track property abuts a number of communities in Bowie. There is one road, Race Track Road, that provides access to the former track property. Traffic congestion is legendary. Residents of the City of Bowie have the most to gain and lose relating to future plans for the site. The City of Bowie is willing and able to coordinate with the neighboring Home Owner's Associations to get the support of the surrounding community for an acceptable use by the City, Bowie State University, and others.

Bowie State University officials have expressed interest in the property. The land is 2.1 miles away from the University and again access is via Race Track Road. The City's position is that if the land was transferred to the University system it would usurp local decision-making. The City would not support dormitories or other traffic intense uses on the property. We believe the City is in the best position to maintain the property.

If the City acquires the land, it is open to a long-term agreement with the University and others such as the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission for joint use of the property. Through an interagency arrangement the City of Bowie is prepared to recommend land uses, establish binding covenants, and develop a cost sharing plan for the property with the partners. This property can be a community asset which meets the needs of multiple interests, and ownership by the City of Bowie is the best way to collaborate.

# BOWIE RACE TRACK PARCELS

