

WSSC Request for Information Response for Equestrian Center Management Services

September 20, 2024

OVERVIEW

Wyndham Oaks LLC, in partnership with Blackburn Architects, is pleased to respond to WSSC Water's Request for Information (RFI) for equestrian center management services. Wyndham Oaks has decades of experience managing equestrian centers in Montgomery County. Wyndham Oaks is well qualified and positioned to work with WSSC and community partners to develop and execute a comprehensive plan for a successful equestrian center on WSSC's property in the Avenel neighborhood. Blackburn Architects, through its founder John Blackburn, has more than 38 years in design of equestrian facilities including two projects for Wyndham Oaks. Together, we can build and manage a successful facility that WSSC will be proud of and the community can support.

We appreciate WSSC Water's attempt at outlining the scope of services needed for this project. We received this RFI September 7th and on September 16th requested from WSSC a site visit to better understand the property. We did not get a response and have been unable to view the property so, with such limitations, we cannot provide a comprehensive plan about the highest and best equestrian use of this property. We are fully prepared to do so in the future.

The RFI requests dialogue about best practices in the equestrian industry, which we are happy to provide in future conversations. However, the equestrian industry is vast, with many options and business directions. Each has their own set of challenges and requirements. For example, a therapeutic riding program needs facilities, staffing and operations practices that are very different from a barn strictly for private boarders. To discuss how to build or renovate the barn and the ancillary facilities, much less best practices, cannot be done accurately until the intended equestrian use or uses of the property are known.

Equine operations are uniquely difficult to run and the business case should be carefully considered before any other work is done. They must be seen as businesses first and equine businesses second; sound business principles are a starting point for all but the wealthiest of individuals who want barns solely for private use. Many people go into this business as a hobby rather than a business and quickly find that the business is not sustainable. Equine

operations across the county have been closing due to rising costs associated with feeding, caring, and housing horses. While this means that there is likely increased demand for many possible equine businesses in an area so close to Washington DC, we strongly recommend the first step as a market analysis of what demand this facility would meet in the community. Such an analysis should be done by a company with extensive experience and contacts in the equine industry; this work is where we would start the process. Our analyses would include integrating the goals of WSSC and the Avenel Community for this property beyond a general desire to keep horses on the property. With a solid market analysis, we will be able to provide a much more comprehensive business plan, including best practices, in response to the RFI.

WHO WE ARE

Our team, Wyndham Oaks, LLC and Blackburn Architects P.C. has the industry knowledge and direct experience to provide WSSC with a single source for development, construction and management of the Avenel facility.

Wyndham Oaks LLC/Wyndham Oaks II

Owned by Lori Larson and with Laura Groat as General Manager, Wyndham Oaks LLC and Wyndham Oaks II (Wyndham) are equestrian centers located in the Agricultural Reserve of Montgomery County and approximately 20 miles north of Avenel.

The first farm, Wyndham Oaks was completed over 20 years ago and maintains a very strong reputation for excellence in horse care, facilities management and programming for private owners. Purpose-built in partnership with Blackburn Architects P.C (Blackburn), the farm covers 100 acres and provides specialized services for clients and their riding horses. There are currently 80



horses on the property. The property features extensive amenities and a training program as well as access to miles of trails. A veterinarian office is being added to the list of amenities in 2025. Wyndham Oaks was the first equestrian facility in Montgomery County

to become certified under the Maryland Soil Conservation Service's Farm Stewardship Certification and Assessment Program, recognizing exceptional stewardship of the land. With a long history of full occupancy and long waiting lists, Wyndham Oaks' reputation speaks for itself in the equine community.

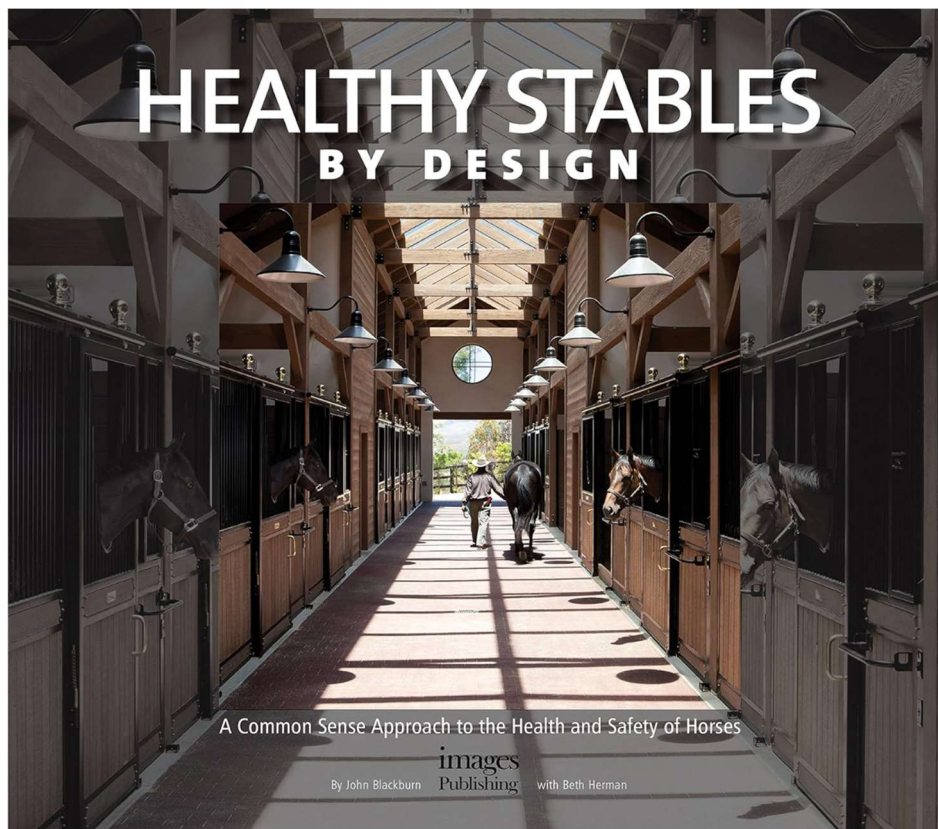


In 2020, Wyndham Oaks purchased a second property and built from the ground up a 30 horse center with an alternative, new-to-the-market boarding model for horses and owners. This farm features six barns and full-time turnout for the horses along with an outdoor arena, two homes and a multi-purpose building. Based on a master plan by Blackburn Architects, Wyndham Oak's management was the general contractor for the completion of not only the structures but a comprehensive reclamation and renovation of the land. Wyndham has years of experience managing large equestrian centers as well as building them for the current horse environment. Wyndham has won many awards for their commitment to steward the lands responsibly and leverage state and federal dollars for assistance in managing farmland in Montgomery County to the highest standard including in July of this year, the Maryland Association of Soil Conservation Districts' Cooperator of the Year.

Lori Larson and Laura Groat are also both individually active in the equestrian community. Ms. Larson is currently the Chairperson and appointed equestrian representative of the Montgomery County Agricultural Advisory Committee. She served as Chair of the Board of Great and Small Therapeutic Riding Center for almost 10 years and has multiple other non-profit board leadership positions to her credit.

Ms. Groat has been with Wyndham Oaks for over 10 years and currently serves as a member of the Equestrian Partners in Conservation (EPIC) board. Full resumes are attached.

Blackburn Architects P.C



John Blackburn turned his Master's Degree in Urban Design into becoming known as a world leader in the design of "horse first" buildings that "breathe" with air and light, dissipating heat and moisture to provide the optimum environment for our equine partners. Their designs are both innovative and beautiful. Their services include architecture, barn conversations and master planning. In fact, John is notorious for his "book" of questions given to owners as part of the master planning process. When done, there are no operational activities that have not be factored into the design and planning process.

John has written numerous books and articles ranging from the practical -- a December 2019 article on Horse Barn Renovations: Revamping & Renewal—to beautiful coffee table photo collections of his stunning designs.

Summary

Our goal in this response is to provide WSSC with information about our team and to suggest that redevelopment of the Avenel equestrian property is a complicated undertaking. Our experience tells us that to make this work well requires more time and analysis than the response to an RFI can provide, particularly in the short time frame that was available to us. At the end of the day, you want a team with a proven track record that personally and thoroughly understands the intricacies of the equestrian marketplace and the complexities of running an equestrian business. You also want to work with people who understand that there are multiple constituencies involved in this project and they must be consulted and included in the conversations, not least WSSC's ultimate goals for the property, both today and in the future.

We would enjoy the opportunity to work with you in more depth on this project with a goal of determining its ultimate feasibility and an overall plan of development and tenure that would benefit all parties.