

Bolton Hill

Community Association

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For Thanksgiving, wear a mask. Keep your distance. Stay safe.

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/for-thanksgiving-wear-a-mask-keep-your-distance-stay-safe/>



We all hate wearing masks, not hugging friends and family, hunkering down away from crowds and gatherings, not sharing food and drink. But as we start the holiday season, the city and the state are trending in the wrong direction for COVID infections. Several Bolton Hill neighbors have contracted the disease and at least one has died. The virus is for real.

[The Centers for Disease Control](#) recommends approaching Thanksgiving and the holiday season this way:

- ***Celebrating virtually or only with members of your own household*** (who are consistently taking [measures](#) to reduce the spread of COVID-19)
- ***Avoiding big events.*** Organizers and attendees of events should consider the risk of virus spread based on event size and take steps to reduce the possibility of infection. ([Baltimore Mayor Young has prohibited public events of more than 10 people](#), closed bars and restricted restaurants serving indoors to 25 percent of their capacity.)
- ***Keeping it short and outdoors.*** Short gatherings are better than long ones. Outside is better than inside.
- ***Staying apart.*** Two (adult) arm-lengths or more of social distancing is crucial.
- ***Keeping away if you might have been exposed, even if you have no symptoms.***
- ***Staying home*** is the best way to protect yourself and others.

How do you stack up with your neighbors?

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/how-do-you-stack-up-with-your-neighbors/>



Electricity Rates are going up, again

Do you get a lot of mail from BGE? Especially mail that compares you to your neighbors in terms of efficient use of electric power?

“Here’s how you compare to your neighbors,” said my recent Home Energy Report, purporting to give me “context on your energy use to help you make smart, energy-saving decisions.” The answer for our household in a word: *poorly*. My 2,662 energy units were 40 percent above my “average neighbors” and 300 percent above my “efficient neighbors.”

Who are these “efficient neighbors” who live in and around Bolton Hill in big houses, mostly built around the time of the Civil War? A West Lafayette Street neighbor, also deemed a poor energy saver by BGE, insists that the so-called neighbors must be squatters in empty houses and apartments, maybe even some that are abandoned and disconnected.

Not so, says Amanda Janaske, part of the BGE team working on Empower Maryland, a state-mandated public awareness program designed to inform and perhaps shame resident users into making their houses more energy efficient and their usage less wasteful. She was helpful in explaining the program and the thinking behind it. Two surprising takeaways:

- **BGE knows a lot about you:** the size and age of your residence, the number of people in your household, your usage patterns, when you are at home and away, and other information that you have provided or they have discovered.
- **BGE’s energy-use awareness program is paid for by you,** based on your electricity usage. The

more kilowatt hours you consume, the more you pay BGE each month to tell you how to consume less. See the fine print on your monthly statement. You also pay them for the energy you consume, of course. They make money, either way.

That second number, BGE electricity supply rates, bounced up as of Oct. 1 by a bit more than 8 percent under a state-approved rate for standard offer service of 7.349 cents per kwh. That rate extends through May 31, 2021. (In my case, that means a bump of about \$50 at fall usage levels.) A new, probably increased rate will be set this month for the next year beginning June 2021.

Ms. Janaske says the “neighbor-to-neighbor comparison is based on behavioral science studies that show keeping up with your neighbors is a greater motivator for changing behavior” than other obvious ones like saving money or doing good or reducing greenhouse gases. “There is competitiveness in all of us,” she said.

The Empower Maryland program, she said, was mandated by legislation passed in 2008 that seeks to reduce energy consumption by 2 percent annually. “Our main goal is to help educate you on home energy efficiency,” she said. Collecting comparative data became easier for BGE with the installation of household Smart Meters after 2012. Empower Maryland applies to all electricity providers in the state, not just BGE.

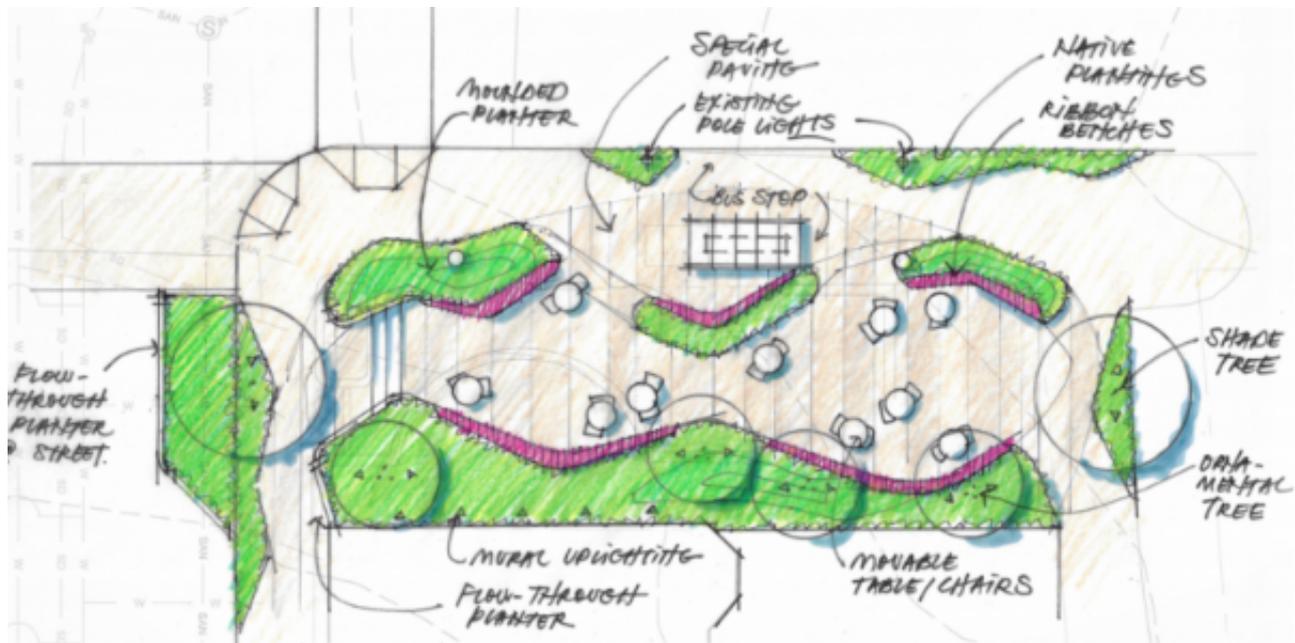
“There is no typical neighborhood,” she said. Your residence is matched with a cohort of up to 100 homes of comparable size, age and occupancy within a mile or so of where you live. So-called “efficient neighbors” are the most efficient 20 percent of that grouping. Vacant and disconnected properties are, contrary to folk wisdom, not included. “We’re constantly recalculating. Our goal is no bill surprises, so we are proactive to help our customers understand these issues.”

The Empower Maryland program is set to expire in 2023, Janske said, with public hearings on extending or modifying it expected next year. For more information on the state’s role go [here](#) and also to <https://bgesmartenergy.com/>

- *Bill Hamilton*
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Progress on “Park Ave Unity” improvements

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/progress-on-park-ave-unity-improvements/>



Landscape architecture firm EnviroCollab hosted a second community input session on Nov. 5 to solicit feedback on a pair of possible designs for the lot at the southeast corner of Park and North Avenues, one of several gateways to Bolton Hill.

Both draft designs highlighted features requested by neighbors during a first discussion in October: open sight lines and new lighting for safety, flexible space to accommodate different kinds of use, and physical elements like plantings and berms to protect the space from traffic along North Avenue.

Residents attending the session overwhelmingly favored the “Ribbon” design pictured here, which included additional seating for the corner bus stop and stormwater management features including curb cuts to allow runoff from Park Avenue to infiltrate specially designed planting beds during storms.

The redesign of 1743 Park Avenue is within a three-part project envisioned by neighbors to enliven this intersection. In addition to greening and improving 1743 Park Ave, “Park Ave Unity” includes new murals for both north-facing facades at 1741 and 1758 Park Avenue and a MICA-designed bus shelter. Both murals are scheduled for installation in early 2021 and an initial set of ideas for the shelter were [presented by MICA students](#) in October.

Helping to organize and fundraise for this effort are the owners of the two properties adjoining the intersection in Bolton Hill, Alex Aaron and Anthony Butler.

Aaron added: “It’s been a pleasure to work closely with the Bolton Hill Community Association on this transformation initiative. I think it is safe to say that we are all excited to reinvigorate the corner of Park and North avenues. Thank you to everyone who has participated in feedback sessions and or donated to

the project.”

A final concept for the 1743 Park Avenue lot will be delivered by EnviroCollab in December, reflecting additional feedback provided by neighbors, and this will be used to identify sources of support for construction. Updates and opportunities to volunteer, donate and help shape these projects are available at ParkAveUnity.com.

EnviroCollab's recorded presentation and slide deck are both available at ParkAveUnity.com.

--Chris Kingsley

F. Scott Fitzgerald's time in Bolton Hill

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/f-scott-fitzgeralds-time-in-bolton-hill/>



"So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." – Nick Gatsby

Although he spent most of his early years in St. Paul, MN, the famous Jazz Age author F. Scott Fitzgerald has strong biographical connections to Maryland, and more specifically, strong personal connections to our Bolton Hill neighborhood. Moreover, Fitzgerald ancestors can be traced back to a number of colonial families: Francis Scott Key was his second cousin, thrice removed.

In 1920 Fitzgerald published his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*, in an effort to win the love of Zelda Sayre, and that book not only won her hand, but also received critical praise and financial success. That success was even more firmly established with the publication in 1925 of the novel universally considered his greatest work, *The Great Gatsby*. Zelda and Scott became a Roaring Twenties celebrity couple who behaved much like today's young stars who are bestowed with riches and adulation but lack the self-control to handle notoriety.

By 1930 Zelda had suffered the first of her multiple breakdowns. Fitzgerald wrote to his first editor, H.L. Mencken, asking for advice, and Mencken suggested the Phipps Clinic at Johns Hopkins. Zelda was admitted in 1932 and accompanied by their young daughter Scottie, the Fitzgeralds rented a cottage called La Paix from Baltimore architect Bayard Turnbull on the grounds of what is now St. Joseph's Hospital in Towson. When he came to Baltimore, Scott was drinking heavily and was in severe financial straits because he hadn't published since *Gatsby*. He was struggling to finish *Tender is the Night*, which he hoped would rescue him from debt and re-establish his literary reputation.

Mencken and his wife, the writer Sara Haardt, socialized with the couple. In a diary entry Mencken describes them: "Scott . . . and his wife were here to lunch yesterday . . . the poor girl went insane in Paris a year or so ago and is still plainly more or less off her base. She managed to get through lunch quietly enough, but there was a wild look in her eye, and now and then she showed plain signs of her mental distress." Fitzgerald, he added, "is a charming fellow, and when sober makes an excellent companion. Unfortunately, liquor sets him wild and he is apt, when drunk, to knock over a dinner table, or run his automobile into a bank building."

A fire at La Paix, caused by electrical problems but falsely attributed by many to Zelda, led to a cancelled lease, and in August 1933, the Fitzgeralds moved to 1307 Park Ave in Bolton Hill, not far from the monument to his famous ancestor, Francis Scott Key, on Eutaw Place. This would be the last home Scott and Zelda shared.

Zelda spent her weekdays hospitalized at Sheppard and Enoch Pratt Hospital in Towson. Her health improved and she came home and took painting classes at Maryland Institute College of Art. A friend of Scottie spoke about playing with her on Park Ave where Zelda would fix snacks for them. Zelda also dabbled in the literary arts, writing an autobiographical novel, *Save Me the Waltz*, and a play called *Scandalabra*, which was produced by Baltimore's Vagabond Junior Players in the summer of 1933. For almost five years, Baltimore would be the most stable home the little family would ever have. Unfortunately, Zelda's mental illness continued to worsen.

While living on Park Avenue, Scott had a number of escapades that illustrate his eccentric behavior. According to neighborhood historian Frank Shivers, one night on his way home, a drunk Fitzgerald jumped out of a car as it approached the Francis Scott Key monument and hid in some nearby bushes. When the driver (a young Garry Moore, who later became a TV star and who lived for a time at 1434 John Street in Bolton Hill) asked what he was doing, Fitzgerald replied, "Shhh! I don't want Frank [i.e. Key] to see me this way!" Moore stood in front of the monument to distract "'Frank' while the drunken Scott slipped away.

On another occasion, Scott threw a Christmas party for his daughter, Scottie, at the Belvedere Hotel, a favorite Fitzgerald hangout. One of Scottie's friends, described him as "not . . . loud, or angry; he was just bleary-eyed, tottering and silly, and to make matters worse he insisted on dancing with some of the girls, who looked scared or embarrassed, while others giggled behind his back."

In October 1935, Fitzgerald left the Park Ave house and moved with Scottie to the Cambridge Arms Apartments just opposite Johns Hopkins University and transferred Zelda to a North Carolina hospital.

Shortly after, due to rent trouble, he gave up that apartment. After a brief residence at the Stafford Hotel in Mt. Vernon, he moved to Hollywood to work as a screenwriter and attempted to finish a novel, *The Last Tycoon*. There he began a relationship with gossip columnist Sheilah Graham, and in 1940 he died of a heart attack at 44. Zelda tragically died in a fire at the North Carolina Hospital in 1948.

Fitzgerald once wrote, "I love Baltimore more than I thought— it is so rich with memories— it is nice to look up the street and see the statue of my great uncle (*sic*) and to know that Poe is buried here and that many ancestors have walked in the old town by the bay. I belong here, where everything is civilized and gay and rotted and polite. And I wouldn't mind a bit if in a few years Zelda and I could snuggle up together under a stone in some old graveyard here. That is really a happy thought and not melancholy at all."

Scottie, who attended the Calvert School and then Bryn Mawr, long considered Baltimore her hometown and married a Baltimore man, Jack Lanahan, and regularly visited the city for all the holidays. She clearly loved both her parents and declared her time in Baltimore a wonderful childhood, but her later statement probably summed up how many felt about Scott and Zelda: "People who live entirely by the fertility of their imaginations are fascinating, brilliant, and often charming, but they should be sat next to at dinner parties, not lived with."

Today, Fitzgerald's time in Bolton Hill is memorialized by a blue plaque at 1307 Bolton Street and F. Scott Fitzgerald Park at the southeast corner of [Bolton and Wilson Streets](#).

For those who want to know still more about Fitzgerald's Baltimore life and days, check out these sources: Nathan Brucoli, *Some Sort of Epic Grandeur: The Life of F. Scott Fitzgerald*; Nathan Dennies, "F. Scott Fitzgerald at 1307 Park Avenue," Explore Baltimore Heritage, accessed November 10, 2020, <https://explore.baltimoreheritage.org/items/show/176> ; Rudacille, Deborah. "F. Scott Fitzgerald in Baltimore." Baltimore Style. [F. Scott Fitzgerald in Baltimore - Baltimore Style](#); Rosen, Jill, "F. Scott Fitzgerald's Baltimore House Up For Sale." The Baltimore Sun. [F. Scott Fitzgerald's Baltimore house up for sale](#). Feb. 1, 2013. And *Walking Baltimore* by Frank Shivers.

- Tom Delise

Pedestal Gardens redevelopment: more concentrated poverty?

https://boltonhillmd.org/?post_type=bulletin&p=27431



Photo Credit: Baltimore Business Journal

Residents of nearby Madison Park and Marble Hill have enlisted City Councilman Eric Costello to mediate conversations with the Boston-based owner and non-profit redeveloper of the 207 units that make up Pedestal Gardens, the aged former public housing complex on Eutaw Place's west side at McMechen Street.

Neighborhood residents are concerned that the mixed-income development [planned by The Community Builders](#) and supported by the city allocates too many units for low-income residents to make remaining units attractive at market rates. If that happens, unrented units also likely would become subsidized for more low-income tenants. The first of four phases of the project now underway will replace long-neglected housing with 27 new apartments and 60 townhouses.

At issue is the non-profit developer's plan that reserves 33% of the new units for Housing Choice Vouchers for families earning make less than 40% of the average median income (AMI) for the surrounding area; 33% for "workforce" housing, which locks in rates for renters making up to 50% of AMI; and 33% at market rate. The [Baltimore Business Journal](#) reported extensively on the project recently.

In recent years Pedestal Gardens residents have had to cope with drug dealing and other criminal activity. In 2018 a leader of the "Pedestal Gardens Gang" was sentenced for two murders and extensive fentanyl and heroin distribution charges. The gang ran its enterprise from an apartment in the 300 block of McMechen Street, federal and local prosecutors said.

Meanwhile, at the Old Strawbridge Church....

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/meanwhile-at-the-old-strawbridge-church/>



In the **February** version of The Bulletin, we wrote: *Renovation is about to get underway at the former Strawbridge Methodist Church at 201 Wilson Street at Park Avenue.*

Bolton Hill Belfry, LLC, the building's owner and developer, announced that major structural repairs in the sanctuary are completed. The project has recently won competitive historic tax credits from the Maryland Historic Trust. The owners also have applied for national historic tax credits. The early English Gothic-style church was constructed in 1889 and designed by renowned architect Charles L. Carson. The building has been vacant since 2009.

But that was in the Before Times, pre-pandemic. Here is an update from Daniel Kamenetz, who is leading the development:

“It may not look like much yet, but we are working hard on the Strawbridge renovation and making great progress. We have put together an excellent team with Edgemont Builders leading construction and Carballo Architecture leading up the design. Our team was recently interviewed in the Baltimore Sun for [another historic re-use project on Baltimore street](#).

“After stabilizing the building and removing the emergency shoring, our next major challenge with Strawbridge has been to plan the preservation. Unlike other projects, we are preserving literally every single historic component of this building--down to the last window, door, stone, and slate. This requires much more planning than your typical historic adaptive reuse project.

“For example, there are over 50 windows in the building, and most are original stained glass and completely unique. These are the details to plan, budget, and contract out before the construction begins.

“At our last update we were planning for a November start date, but now it is looking more like January. This has been an exceedingly difficult year for construction trades and that has caused some delay. Once construction begins, we can move quickly. You will not see much transformation from the outside because the facade will remain as it is, but we will post weekly photographs of the interior on our Facebook page.

“Here is a shot of the sanctuary with the emergency shoring down. That shoring held the roof up for over ten years. We held our breath the day we finally started taking it down.”

A Sweet, Spicy, and Small Holiday Side Dish

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/a-sweet-spicy-and-small-holiday-side-dish/>



As the pandemic continues to impact nearly everything, it was only a matter of time before holiday gatherings needed to be reevaluated. Many households are wisely scaling back large family parties to a more intimate get-together of immediate family only.

Whether you're planning on a large dinner with all the fixins or downsizing to a small entree, you may be on the hunt for a side dish that isn't a casserole for 10 this year.

Enter the harissa-maple carrots with whipped ricotta. Scale the recipe up or down easily depending on the number of people you need to feed and enjoy a holy trinity of flavors: sweet, spicy, and smoky with a touch of decadence from the ricotta. Best of all, it only takes about 40 minutes, with most of the time spent just waiting for the carrots to finish roasting.

Get the recipe [here](#).

-- *Kylie Perrotti*

Remembering Walter Sondheim alongside Cummings and Justice Marshall

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/remembering-walter-sondheim-alongside-cummings-and-justice-marshall/>



Walter Sondheim, who died in 2007 at the age of 98, was a Bolton Hill native (1612 Bolton Street) and a Baltimore civic leader extraordinaire.

His obituary recognizing his accomplishments ran 3,500 words in *The Sun*, but Sondheim was perhaps best known for his role as city school board president, leading the peaceful integration of the city's schools shortly after the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* Supreme Court decision. Baltimore was the first city south of the Mason Dixon Line to formally strike down school segregation.

Now those who are seeking to honor the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who grew up in nearby Upton, also want to acknowledge Sondheim's contributions and are searching for memories and mementos from friends and neighbors. A statue honoring Sondheim is located on the UMBC campus.

Dr. Al Hathaway, pastor of Union Baptist Church on Druid Hill Avenue, also a native of the area, is leading the effort to reestablish a community landmark, the former PS 103 School Building named in honor of abolitionist and minister Henry Highland Garnet but known commonly as The Thurgood Marshall School, located at 1215 Division Street. Marshall grew up in Marble Hill and attended the segregated school from 1914 to 1920, his first six years of public-school education.

The development team's plans include using some of the space for historical civil rights memorabilia related to Justice Marshall and a replication of the campaign office of the late Rep Elijah Cummings. Hathaway, whose church created the non-profit Beloved Community Services CDC to take possession of and renovate the school, also wants a room that recognizes Sondheim's achievements.

Built in 1877, the school building features 12 classrooms and still boasts many of its historic features. It has 14,000 square feet of developable space which will house a legal services center affiliated with the University of Maryland Law School, a job training center and a youth violence prevention center, operated jointly with Baltimore City Community College.

Hathaway said the transfer of the property from the city to the development corporation will take place in early 2021. Restoration is expected to cost more than \$8 million, with construction beginning next spring, he said, and occupancy in early 2022.

Anyone with material or stories to share about Walter Sondheim should contact Dr. Hathaway at Union Baptist, alathaway@gmail.com

Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-5/>



Longtime resident, research scientist Althea Wagman dies

Dr. Althea Wagman, who died recently, was a prominent research psychologist who taught at four area universities and an expert on schizophrenia and sleep disorders. She also was a mother of three who with her psychologist husband, raised a family and was part of civic life in Bolton Hill for four decades.

The Wagnans lived at 1533 Park Ave., next to Park Avenue Pharmacy “where I had my first job,” recalled a daughter, acupuncturist Idalee DiGregorio. She and her husband acquired her mother’s house and raised children of their own there before moving to Mt. Washington.

“There was a crazy art scene centered around MICA and my parents became very involved in it,” Ms. DiGregorio said. They were especially close to local artists Jim and Lois Hennessey and became collectors. Dr. Wagman was active in Mt. Royal Improvement Assn (now BHCA). They were founding members of Bolton Hill Swim and Tennis and part of a local Democratic organization. Dr. Wagman wrote and lectured extensively and was an administrator at National Institute for Mental Health.

Her [Baltimore Sun](#) obituary noted Dr. Wagman’s affection for cigars. “They both were smokers for most of their lives.” They took up cigars in the 1980, claiming they were less harmful if not inhaled, their daughter said. They also had a farm in Pennsylvania where, in retirement, the Wagnans enjoyed gardening and raising animals. Her husband, William Wagman, died in 2002.

Recycling pickup seems unlikely for the rest of 2020.

Although it had said back in August that it intended to restore residential recycling pickup by Nov. 1, the leaderless city Department of Public Works has kicked that ball down the field for at least another six weeks. On Oct. 27, DPW issued a news release saying that “Out of an abundance of caution, DPW will not resume curbside recycling collections” before Dec. 15,” a statement attributed to the agency’s acting director.

Outgoing Mayor Jack Young fired the last DPW director in 2019 and never got around to replacing him. In August, as COVID-19 tore through the ranks of DPW on-street workers, residential pickup was suspended, and residents were asked to haul their recycling to one of several recycling centers. The one nearest to Bolton Hill is **the Sisson Street Citizen Drop-Off Center**, 2840 Sisson Street. DPW did not promise to renew residential pickup before the year ends, only to **“provide an update on plans to restart curbside recycling collections on Tuesday, Dec. 15.”**

BHCA nixes zoning change for building at McMechen Street and Mt. Royal Ave.

Bolton Hill Community Assn has served notice that it will oppose an appeal for a zoning change that would enable the new owner of a former mansion at the southeast corner of Mt. Royal and McMechen streets to double the number of allowed apartment units from three to six. A virtual zoning appeal hearing is set for Nov. 17. Writing to the city BZA, BHCA President David Nyweide said the rowhouse unit does not have enough land to support six units under current zoning requirements and has insufficient off-street parking to meet existing zoning standards.

Strategic planning draft is out for community input

After months of deliberation, BHCA’s strategic planning committee this week distributed widely within the neighborhood a [34-page draft](#) of key topic areas it expects to cover in a final planning document that will help shape community priorities for the coming decade.

Before the COVID-19 shutdown, committee chair Neal Friedlander had planned to hold one or more communitywide meetings to get input on these topics: community engagement; communications; economic development; education and youth; environmental sustainability; infrastructure; institutional relationships, near-neighborhood relations; parks and gardens, traffic and transportation and zoning.

Feedback is invited and due by Dec. 15. If you did not receive a copy email BHCAStrategicPlan@gmail.com

Mayor-elect Scott invites participation in his transition planning

Preparing for his Dec. 9 inauguration as the city's 52nd mayor, City Council President Brandon Scott has created an elaborate transition team and is inviting other city residents to volunteer and participate in shaping his agenda.

Scott's transition committees will focus on generating proposals for how to rebuild city government from top to bottom, and ensure functioning, equitable, and efficient operations for all of Baltimore's residents, his campaign said. Ten committees have been created around broad subject topics such as Public Health and Safety; Fiscal Preparedness and Housing and Neighborhood Development. For further information and to volunteer, [click here](#).

The Bolton Hill Bulletin is produced 10 times a year, lately by Bill Hamilton, Kylie Perrotti and Marci Yankelov with welcome contributions this month from Chris Kingsley and Tom Delise, among others. We invite story ideas, contributions and, yes, feedback. Email us at bulletin@boltonhillmd.org.

Bolton Hill

Community Association