

Bolton Hill

Community Association

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February Finds: Photos of the Season

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/photos-of-the-month-feb23/>



TimesPace: Looking South on Mt. Royal Avenue - KT Tozzi

Meet and support the Afghan refugees among us...

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/support-afghan-refugees/>



Pillow covers, jewelry and other creations will be on sale

A community of refugees from Afghanistan, brought to this country after the U.S. military withdrawal in 2021, is living in Reservoir Hill just a short walk north between Bolton Hill and Druid Hill Park. ***Some of the women have, with community support, formed a sewing collective and will display and sell their creations for the first time at a bazaar on Sunday, March 5, from 3 to 5 p.m. at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church.*** Many of the women will be there.

Afghan Women Beyond Housework is a collective of Afghan women in their thirties, only two of whom speak English. They come together each week to learn or make use of sewing skills using donated machines and fabrics. They are mentored by Bolton Hill artist Anna Fine Foer with support from churches and Beth Am Synagogue. Brought to Baltimore under International Rescue Committee (IRC) sponsorship, they are overseen by the Luminus Network for New Americans, a Howard County non-profit group that assists new immigrants.

In all 14 families and single men, with about 60 children, form a community of about 100 residents living in Reservoir Hill apartments. Most of the men have been placed in jobs, but few of the women have ever worked outside their homes. Some are uneducated, which has long been the norm for girls and women in Afghanistan's conservative Muslim culture. The children are mostly enrolled in neighborhood schools.

The families were relocated from Afghanistan to Qatar, Abu Dhabi, Pakistan and Germany, to name a few locales. From those locations they were flown to military bases all over the US. Many of the Afghans who are living on Reservoir Hill spent time in Quantico, VA and Ft. Lee in New Jersey. From there, they were relocated to airport hotels at BWI. Finally, four months later, they arrived on Reservoir Hill.

Barbara Cook, a retired Johns Hopkins Medicine family physician and member of Brown Memorial Church, along with others at Brown and volunteers from Memorial Episcopal Church and Beth Am Synagogue and individuals, have over the past year donated or rounded up clothing, furniture, computers, cars and other equipment. They have helped place children in school, created startup English classes at St. Francis Neighborhood Center, and wrestled with city and state bureaucracies over rent assistance, landlord issues, health care and more.

“We’re a small group but we’ve managed to do some useful things,” Cook said. The families are here on special immigrant visas and work permits with a two-year window to qualify for “green card” permanent resident status. Although some of the refugee men had professional or skilled craft and technical jobs at home, most are working now at Amazon, Walmart and similar places that pay less than will support large families. Rent support was provided for six months through IRC but has expired. Language issues make coping with routine life more complicated.

Volunteers are needed. And contributions.

Anyone who wants to help can be of service. Families need cultural translators – assistance in buying groceries and assembling menus; support for families with children in school; mentoring for adults who speak English and ESL classes or tutoring for those who do not; figuring out transportation options, legal advice and support in understanding their rights here. And they need help finding and qualifying for jobs. Contact [Barbara Cook](#).

“I really enjoy it,” said Cook. “They have been through a lot,” she said. “I want to help people become independent, not dependent on us,” she said.

More about the Afghan women, Anna Fine Foer and their sewing project . . .

Although the status of women advanced substantially for some during the NATO presence in Afghanistan, historically these women from a conservative Muslim culture rarely ventured outside their homes and were buffered by a supportive extended family. So as discombobulating as any long-distance move can be, imagine the trauma of this re-location!

Enter Anna Fine Foer , an artist and textile conservator who has worked with ethnographic textiles much of her life in Philadelphia, New York, London, Israel, D.C. and, most recently Annapolis. She moved to Bolton Hill three years ago after commuting to a staff job at MICA. She became involved with the Afghans through Beth Am Synagogue. Leadership of the sewing collective is supported by Baltimore Hakhel, a collaborative community of Jewish-identifying artists.

“We set about finding donated sewing machines. When we got them, we had to get them into proper working order. We set up shop in a workspace rented from St. Francis Neighborhood Center, where some of the women were learning English, as well. Some knew a lot about sewing, others not so much. They took their machines home and worked there. We got some fabric from Scrap Bmore in Pigtown and more fabric was donated.”

“For our inaugural sale, we made decorative pillow covers that are hand-dyed and embroidered. I want them to decide for themselves what works best for them; this is a collaboration” Foer said.

Donations of money, goods or services for *Afghan Women Beyond Housework* can be made through <https://bethamsyagogue.shulcloud.com/payment.php>. Specify that the gift is for the *Afghan Women Beyond Housework*. Or contact Anna@annafineart.com

Macy Drake wants you to know about Mt. Royal Recreation Center

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/macy-drake-mt-royal-rec-center/>



Meet Macy Drake. She's a self-styled "Rec Baby" who grew up hanging out anytime she could get into the neighborhood recreation center in her south Baltimore – "they call it Federal Hill, now." Now she runs the Mt. Royal Recreation Center at 120 W. Mosher St., behind –and physically attached to – Mt. Royal Elementary and Middle School.

After months of disruption and closures because of COVID and then construction, the center for kids and adults is now open Mondays through Fridays each week from 1 to 9 p.m. Many Bolton Hill adults know the center primarily as an election day voting spot. Students from Mt. Royal EMS, Midtown Academy and other nearby schools know it as a place they can relax, study, use computers, do art and craft programs, learn about STEM, play games or just goof off and be safe.

It's one of more than 50 active centers citywide run by the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks. "We have a wide range of after-school programs, some every day and others on specific afternoons. The afternoons are pretty structured. After 5:30 we try to focus on those who are 13 and older," Drake said. "In all we have 31 after-school programs, clubs and activities. We especially target 12- to 15-year-olds." Currently they serve 50 children 8 to 12 and another 20 who are 13-15.

The center has a gym/basketball facility available to adults for evening pickup games and team play. Any resident can participate by [registering online here](#). During an afternoon tour in January there were a dozen teenaged boys playing in the gym and a separate room of young girls doing art projects. Other children were here and there. Mt. Royal school uses much of the space during the school day and school clubs can meet there, as well.

"Our big project right now is the Teen Lounge we're setting up, starting in March," said Drake. It will be set apart with couches, TVs and games and snacks." Teen engagement sessions were scheduled to get

input about how the lounge should look and feel and how to generate interest. The target is young people in school, 13 to 17.

She said the center's schedule is modified every couple of months to adapt to new programs and needs. Before COVID the center typically had about 100 engaged young people and adults. She is anxious to get new participation from adults and young people in and around Bolton Hill and would like to start up or host existing senior citizen programs. There is evening volleyball and basketball practice for adults and modeling classes for young people. All activities are free and open to anyone.

Non-profit and other community groups can use the facility for meetings or programs, as well, she said. Reach her at macy.drake@baltimorecity.gov or 410 396-0374.

In warm weather some of the programs move outside and in the summer the rec center takes on a summer camp motif, with field trips, swimming and meals. They will be looking for additional staff and volunteers to supplement the four parttime and two fulltime employees there year-round, plus a janitor. They welcome donations and equipment to support their programs.

Macy Drake was 5 years old when she started going to a community center and later, as a teen Youth Works summer employee, she was assigned to work there. She finished high school and at 18 was hired parttime "and I've been doing this ever since." Before Mt. Royal she led the Ella Bailey Rec Center attached to Thomas Johnson Elementary School in west Baltimore. Now 30, she and her husband recently bought a house in Middle River. She has a two-year-old son.

"It's a fun job," she said. "Our biggest challenge is communications, getting information out to the people who can use it. If there are people in the neighborhood who have ideas, we'd love to hear them. And we welcome visitors any time we are open. I like to look at it as a community center."

--- *Bill Hamilton*

Is 2023 the year to sell, or buy, a home in in Bolton Hill?

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/2023-time-to-buy-sell/>



This 3 BR 2 ½ bath-townhouse at 216 Laurens St is currently listed at \$525,000.

So, what’s a Bolton Hill homeowner – or would-be homeowner – to do in 2023? Is this the right time to put your house on the market, or to jump from renting to owning your home?

Mortgage rates are double what they were a year ago, and likely to keep rising through much of the year. Housing for sale inventory is low as we approach the optimum spring market for real estate sales. With the pandemic somewhat under control, will the availability of properties expand?

We asked three Bolton Hill-based real estate experts, with more than 60 years’ experience in the business between them, what to expect.

[Avendui Lacovara:](#) “I’m expecting a more robust spring market, although there is still not much inventory. There always are buyers looking to own one of these large, historic houses, but with interest rates rising, I expect buyers to be cautious about prospective maintenance. People with income and good credit can get the mortgage they need, but they may not want to take a chance on a house that might come with a big expense over their mortgage, such as a new roof or heating system.

“In recent months there have been so few properties on the market that it is hard to see any trends. Are the rate increases going to stop appreciating home prices? We don’t know, but it is likely that we won’t see multiple parties bidding up prices, as was common in neighborhoods like ours in 2021 and last year.”

[Jessica Dailey:](#) “I agree. Buyers are more cautious now, especially when it comes to these big, older houses. Sellers need to remember the house needs to show at its absolute best if they want to get the most money. They may not get that crazy price of 2022, nor may they get three offers, but if it is a home that

shows well, doesn't need a lot of work, it will sell.

“There are always people looking for homes in Bolton Hill. It might take them two to three years before they find THE one. When they do, they usually pounce! Also, buyer demographics are changing in Bolton Hill. Younger buyers may want different floorplans, amenities etc., than what would-be sellers have comfortably enjoyed for the last 20 to 30 years.”

Marci Yankelov; “In 2022 the average days on the market in Baltimore was 27; that is 40 percent below the three-year average. With the rise in interest rates and the slowly increasing inventory I expect that to increase slightly. However, well-priced homes are always going to sell faster. Your pricing strategy is more important than ever. It can either help sell your home or help sell the competition when buyers look at both and compare.

“Savvy Buyers are not deterred by interest rates; they understand that they can always refinance if the rates come down. There also are grants and employer programs like *Live Where You Work* to encourage buyers to purchase homes in the city.”

Data points:

- A [CNN survey](#) of the 50 largest cities across the country showed that skyrocketing rents and rising interest rates play out differently in different markets. In December 2022, their survey found, Baltimore was one of only five cities where buying a house was, on average, less costly than renting a comparable property, assuming mortgage eligibility.
- *Jessica Dailey crunched these numbers:* As of today (1/20/23), there are six active listings in the neighborhood with one pending sale.
- There were 65 properties traded in Bolton Hill in 2022. The top sale was 1603 Park Ave. for \$925,000. It was my listing and sold before it went on the market. Median days on market in 2022 was 27. Median closed sales price for older style Bolton Hill houses: \$635,000, a \$62,000 increase from 2021.
- In 2021 there were 67 properties traded in Bolton Hill. That year the top sale was 1601 Bolton St. for \$885,500. Median days on market in 2021 – 10; Median closed sales price for older style Bolton Hill houses \$573,000.

During the pandemic many sales were conducted without in-person showings, a trend that Dailey sees continuing. She said she recently sold a property to someone in Paris entirely based on video showings.

Yankelov feels upbeat about the level of major residential construction underway citywide:

Locke Landing in what is now called Baltimore Peninsula (nee Port Covington), 300 units scheduled to begin in the summer; *Eager Landing*, near the Johns Hopkins Hospital complex in East Baltimore, with 70 new units by 2024; *North Madison Park* just north of Bolton Hill in Reservoir Hill -- the first phase is underway of what eventually is to be 375 market rate townhouses and apartments over five years or so.

“It proves that Baltimore is still seen as a great place for real estate investing,” she said.

--*Bill Hamilton*

Former Park Ave Café to become coffee roaster and lunch spot

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/park-ave-cafe-updates/>



The property which housed the Park Avenue Café, shut down early during the pandemic, has been purchased and will re-open as a coffee roasting facility and coffee shop – perhaps as early as March. Workers are painting and sprucing up the facility, which closed in 2020.

Vanessa Hampden of Frederick and her husband, Mark, acquired the café and the attached apartments and commercial kitchen late last year. She said they hope to “create a vibe that meets in the middle, welcoming to students and staff at MICA and also to permanent residents of Bolton Hill. We’ll be serving fresh coffee roasted in the building, along with a light fare menu and pastries, food that is organic and healthy.”

Together they now run an online coffee business, [Coffee Llamas](#), that sells fresh roasted coffee at farmers markets, by mail and through wholesale arrangements.

A native of Barbados, Vanessa Hampden came to the area to attend college and has lived and worked in Maryland and Virginia since. She and her husband began experimenting with producing coffees that met their needs when she became caffeine sensitive while pregnant. They started their online business in 2021.

In the new location they plan to offer a range of caffeinated, decaffeinated and “half-caff” options and will prepare custom blends on request. Once up and running, they plan to offer tours to show how the roasting process takes place. “We’re pleased to be locating in Bolton Hill, because driving through we’ve always admired its buildings and its history,” she said.

Iconic Beethoven Apartments building is up for sale

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/beethoven-apts-for-sale/>



A neighborhood landmark apartment building, The Beethoven, is up for sale, one of two large properties on the market in Bolton Hill.

Built in 1880 the 60-unit, five-story building at 1518 Park Ave. is likely the oldest continuously operating apartment building in the neighborhood, although it sat vacant for a while after a fire decades ago. Much of Bolton Hill’s residential construction – the big old townhouses – took place between 1850 and 1900.

The Beethoven features 20 one-bedroom units, 39 two-bedroom units, and a single three-bedroom unit, as well as four offices. All the units are bi-level, according to the listing agent, Harbor Stone Advisors.

As an ominous note for existing Beethoven residents, the sellers note that there is a “potential to increase rents“ after some capital improvements. The agency does not list a sale price and did not return a call, but can be reached at [\(410\) 960-3962](tel:4109603962).

A second nearby building at 1504 Park Ave with seven units is listed by the same company at \$870,000.

Bolton Hill honors Lee Tawney

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-honors-lee-tawney/>



Tawney hidden by his flag

The Bolton Hill Garden Club, joined by BHCA, presented its first ever Greening and Beautification Award on Saturday to longtime resident and neighborhood advocate Lee Tawney.

Tawney as a leader of BHCA's Greening Committee took the lead in organizing three successive summer Arts in the Parks concert series in parks around Bolton Hill, Marble Hill and Madison Park. He was presented with an Arts in the Park flag.

The Garden Club and Greening Committee, joined by community leaders from west of Eutaw Place, spelled out ambitious plans for planting and refurbishing parks this year and next. Two public parks improvement grant programs were announced: the Garden Club has a [March 1 application deadline](#) for grants to enhance public parks and spaces in the neighborhood; and Midtown Benefits District offers [mini-grants of up to \\$250](#) for projects in public spaces within Midtown's district, with submissions due in June.

Park Avenue medians were designated as Park Place in 19th century

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/park-ave-medians-history/>



For as long as anyone remembers, those graceful park strips that separate the east and west roadways along Park Avenue have just been called the Park Avenue medians or parks.

But local historian Fred Shoken has uncovered new information. “The land appears to have been donated to the city as early as 1860, although it is doubtful that any improvements were made for a long time.

“There was a city council ordinance in 1860 for the city to accept the property. It wasn't unusual for an owner of a property to donate land to the city for a park or square and then develop the land facing the park with high quality residences. That is the case for other squares in West Baltimore,” Shoken last month wrote Lee Tawney, who with Doug Kelso leads BHCA’s Greening Committee.

“The official name of the Park Avenue medians is Park Place,” Shoken said. He said the city finally appropriated money in 1875 for improvements to the space. He noted an 1881 article in the *Baltimore Sun* describes Park Place as having trees, a fountain, a granite curb on the south end and similar improvements underway for the north park. Today it has traffic lights at each end. As well.

Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-feb23/>



Parking permit distribution set for March 18, 25

If your vehicle has a current parking permit decal or placard, you should receive an email from the Baltimore City Parking Authority to renew online by the end of February.

This year, you'll have the option of having your new parking permit(s) mailed for an extra fee; picking permits up at the parking authority office downtown, or getting yours at the community parking permit pick-up back at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church on Sat., March 18 or Sat., March 25 from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Bring your existing auto registration with you.

You'll need a renewed permit to park on Bolton Hill streets and avoid ticketing after April 1. Go to the [Parking Authority website](#) for more information. Volunteers are needed to help pass out permits on the two Saturdays. If you are willing, contact Bobbi Schilling at parking@boltonhillmd.org.

May 19 is likely BHCA night at a Baltimore Symphony performance

Members of BHCA and their guests will be welcomed at a first-time neighborhood event hosted by the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra at the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, probably on Friday, May 19, with a semi-private reception likely for members there before the 8 p.m. performance. Details will follow.

It is the first part of what may evolve into a neighborhood partnership of sorts between the community association and the famous orchestra down the street. It could lead to discounted-price tickets and other perks for BHCA members.

The May concert will feature BSO's new conductor and music director, Joseph Heyward, leading performances of British composer Grace-Evangeline Mason's new composition *The Imagined Forest*; a presentation by young American virtuoso Xavier Foley of the *Double Bass Concerto*; and, finally, the passionate Tchaikovsky Symphony No. 6, "Pathétique."

Midtown coordinating major Jones Falls Trail project.

Midtown Benefits District is coordinating a major sprucing up on Falls Road at Maryland Avenue, just

east of Bolton Hill, and stretching from the Trolley Museum to West Lanvale Ave. and Charles St. When it is complete the Jones Falls Trail, popular for biking and hikes, will all be on the south side of Falls Road.

Called the Falls Gateway Project, it will include new murals and other artwork, sidewalk and landscape enhancement and the painting and decorating of three bridges, all at a projected cost of \$5.7 to \$8.7 million. A slide show of what the outcome could be is [here](#). For questions or comments contact Eric Sousa at Midtown.

Unity Hall loses a tenant and Baltimore loses a theater troupe

One of the first and larger tenants at Baltimore Unity Hall, the experimental theater group Single Carrot Theater, has run out of money and will be shutting down.

“Compounding post-pandemic organizational challenges have made sustaining a theater of our size ever more difficult. These include issues of staffing shortages and stretched human capacity, limited regional philanthropic resources, and the ever-increasing cost of sustaining live theatrical productions,” the organization said [on its website](#). The group has been together for 15 years and moved into Unity Hall when it opened last summer.

About the Bulletin. . . .

The Bulletin is designed by Elizabeth Peters. We invite others to help write, edit, provide photos or work the business side. Send suggestions and comments to bulletin@boltonhillmd.org. Thanks to Steve Howard, Paula Jackson and Lee Tawney, among others, for advice and contributions. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the editor, Bill Hamilton.

Bolton Hill

Community Association