

# Bolton Hill

## Community Association

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## Blossoms in Bolton Hill!

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/photos-of-the-season-april2023/>

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## BHCA annual meeting to elect leaders set for May 2

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/2023-annual-meeting-may-2/>

BHCA's annual membership meeting – open to members and neighborhood residents – will be held Tuesday, May 2 at 8 p.m. at Baltimore Unity Hall. The catered food and beverage event will include a single item of official business – the election of new BHCA leadership and a board of directors to govern the organization for the 2024 fiscal year that begins in May.

Paid-up members can nominate from the floor and vote on the new officers and board members. A nominating committee designated by the current leadership has proposed the following slate of officers:

**Amy Sheridan**, president; **Steve Howard**, first vice president; **Yulia Suslova**, second vice president; **Chris Kingsley**, treasurer and **Linda Stirling**, secretary. All are carryovers except for Stirling.

Board nominees for new two-year terms include Gary Bianco, Luke Chen\*, Zhee Chatmon, Maurice Corbett, Margaret De Arcangelis\*, Tom Hasler, Ben Meiselman\*, Elizabeth Peters, Lee Tawney\* and Marci Yankelov. Chevel Bess\* will fill a vacancy. Those with asterisks are new and [their bios are here](#).

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## **Madison Park, Bolton Hill associations team up on Pedestal Gardens design**

[https://boltonhillmd.org/?post\\_type=bulletin&p=31105](https://boltonhillmd.org/?post_type=bulletin&p=31105)



Following the lead of neighboring Madison Park residents and the Madison Park Improvement Association, BHCA's leadership is asking city officials to oppose recent design proposals for the redevelopment of Pedestal Gardens. They want the developers to build mixed-income housing that enables ownership for new and redeveloped townhouses, in addition to affordable workforce units and subsidized apartments for low-income tenants.

Pedestal Gardens is a string of five properties built in and since 1964 with HUD money to house low-income families in the Madison Park and Marble Hill neighborhoods to the west of Eutaw Place, as well as apartments on Bolton Hill's western border at Eutaw Place. In recent years negligent management, violence, and drug-dealing in and around the buildings made them undesirable. A Boston-based developer acquired ownership of the troubled complex in 2015 and secured townhouses and vacant land nearby as well.

The first phase of their redevelopment is called Marshall Gardens to honor the late Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall, who grew up nearby. Mostly complete and occupied since 2021, it entails 60 townhouses and 27 apartments in the 1700 and 1800 blocks of Division Street and along the 500 blocks of Wilson, Laurens and Roberts streets.

But in February the owners, [The Community Builders](#) (TCB), without notice to a community advisory group they had been working with, submitted designs to the city planning office for renewing apartment buildings on the Madison Park - Bolton Hill border around Eutaw Marshburn school. They proposed leveling current buildings but then replacing them with similar structures almost certain to attract only low-income tenants with few options, according to MPIA's vice president Nicholas Cohen, who spoke at BHCA's April meeting.

Cohen (who also chairs the Midtown Benefits board of directors) said the proposal lacked the vision the community has articulated. "If we do not act, we risk perpetuating the cycle of poverty and racism for another 40 years," he said. "Mixed housing, where neighbors share resources, enables all to thrive," he said. "We've seen the success of this model in other areas of the city, and it's essential to promote it in

our neighborhoods.”

To the surprise of many, the planning agency’s Urban Design and Architectural Advisory Panel on Feb. 23 rejected TCB’s submission, calling it lazy and unimaginative and sending them back to their drawing boards. Bolton Hill resident Charlie Duff, a building developer not involved in the Pedestal Garden project, told the BHCA meeting that there were several ways that TCB could redesign the proposed rebuild to make room for more townhouses and green spaces and a better mix of market-rate and subsidized units.

He said he consulted with David Bramble, who is building 300 market-rate apartments, townhouses and eventually retail across North Avenue. Bramble (a Madison Park resident) agreed that mixed housing would work economically for Pedestal Gardens and benefit the neighboring communities.

Cohen noted that in recent years vacant townhouses along Madison and McCullough streets in Madison Park have been renovated and occupied by homeowners. He said that while the Pedestal Gardens project has its most significant impact on Madison Park, a bad outcome will affect Bolton Hill and Marble Hill, as well. “Conversely, a happy ending benefits us all regarding community development, social stability and property values.”

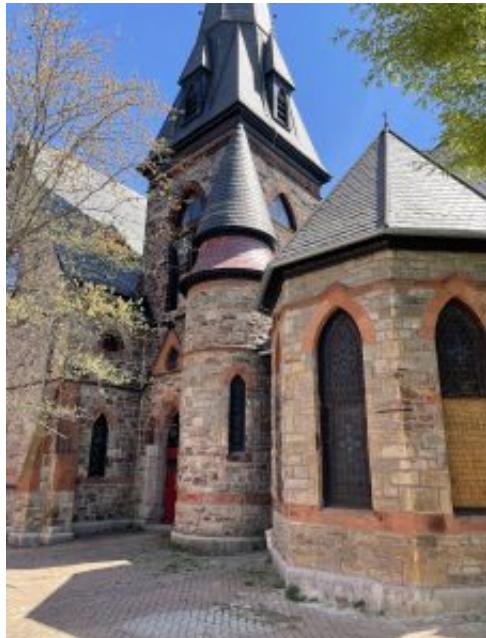
BHCA and MPIA have asked city leaders to pay attention. Cohen encouraged Bolton Hill residents to “voice your concerns to local and state officials” and demand a creative and inclusive mixed housing plan from TCB. “We cannot let TCB’s proposed plans for Pedestal Gardens continue to concentrate poverty and maintain the racial ‘red line’ along Eutaw Place,” he said.

--*Bill Hamilton*

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## Strawbridge church: the saga continues

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/strawbridge-church-the-saga/>



When did this story begin?

It could stretch back to 1889, when the classy English Gothic building that housed Strawbridge Methodist Church at 201 Wilson Street opened for worship, in what was then the new and trendy Baltimore neighborhood of Bolton Hill.

Or even earlier. It was named for Robert Strawbridge, a preacher and carpenter recruited by John Wesley who emigrated to Maryland from Drummersnave, Ireland, in the 1760s. He settled in what is now Carroll County, where there still is an operating Strawbridge UMC church in New Windsor.

Strawbridge is credited with establishing the Methodist church in America as he preached through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and Delaware. At the first Methodist conference held in America in 1773, [Francis Asbury](#), Strawbridge, and two others were appointed to Baltimore, the oldest and largest circuit of the fledgling church. From 1776-1781, he pastored near Aberdeen. He also fathered six children.

In 1781 he succumbed to an unspecified illness and died at about age 49. His body and that of his wife, Elizabeth, are at Mt. Olivet Cemetery in west Baltimore.

Bolton Hill's Strawbridge church shut down in 2009 and remained unused and unloved until 2014. It was for sale, priced at \$600,000 by the Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church. It eventually was purchased at auction, along with an adjacent residence. A development group called Bolton Hill Belfry LLC received approval from Baltimore's zoning board to recast the property as 11 market-rate apartments and began to stabilize the crumbling building in preparation for the conversion.

In 2019 the Maryland Historical Trust awarded \$294,250 in historic revitalization tax credits to help renovate the church's sanctuary to become an art gallery run by MICA. A \$1.4 million state tax credit

came next. The art gallery component was critical to securing the tax credits, according to Dan Kamenetz, head of the development team.

At neighborhood meetings led by BHCA on the redevelopment, close-by neighbors worried about the loss of limited street parking because as an historic renovation it was not subject to zoning board parking requirements.

And then came the pandemic.

So, what's going on these days? We connected with Kamenetz in early March.

"We are in the middle of a sprinkler rough-in. This is the trickiest part of the project to date. We had some issues to resolve with both historic review and the fire marshal. In the end we had to get a permit for a completely commercial sprinkler (instead of a residential multifamily sprinkler). With that permit now in hand, we are back to work on steel pipe installation.

"There are challenges with sprinklering every area of a building that was never designed for it: lots of core drilling through thick stone walls, and some work had to be redone to meet the fire marshal's requirements as well as to pass historic review.

"Once that's completed, we are ready for insulation and drywall. Doors, windows, and cabinets are all standing by. The stained glass is being removed off site for restoration by the best stained-glass artisan in Baltimore."

When does the story end?

"Before this recent delay we were aiming for lease-up by October or November. Now it's looking like early 2024," said Kamenetz. "Once we're past drywall it will be like any other project. Other than the sprinklers, everything has been by the original plans."

--*Bill Hamilton*

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## Gardening advice: avoid invasive plants and non-native plants

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/gardening-advice-nonnative-plants/>



5477773 Porcelainberry is often confused with wild grapes or kudzu

Urban Forester Megan Carr visited the March meeting of the Bolton Hill Garden Club hosted by Amy Sheridan. Ms. Carr gave a talk about Tree Baltimore, Tree Keepers, and Weed Warriors. Each of these groups welcome volunteers to join them. You can get trained and become certified if you wish. Their goals are training and support for communities. They do vegetation management, forest management and habitat restoration.

Non-native invasive species cause harm to our environment. The worst effects are seen in the lack of biodiversity, the effect on wildlife, the detriment to water quality and the harm to human health.

Some non-native plants, many of them very beautiful, are sold by big-box stores and go unmarked as non-native. Other are “hitchhikers,” the seeds having been carried to new locations. Even birds transport these non-native seeds. Three examples were [Wavyleaf Basketgrass](#), [Japanese stiltgrass](#) and [Paulownia](#), an ornamental tree that is among the faster-growing trees in the world.. Their seeds are carried by wind, water or animals (including humans).

The non-native vines covering the trees along the JFX, which I thought were kudzu vine, are really [Porcelainberry](#). They have grape-like seeds on them that the birds like and keep transporting. English ivy is another invasive that some people think is attractive, but it can be destructive to the surrounding environment. The same can be said for the euonymus shrub, wisteria, privet tree, and Japanese barberry.

Ms. Carr suggested that gardeners make conscious choices to buy native plants when we buy plants. You can research which ones you might like by checking out the website of the [Maryland Native Plant Society](#). Herring Run Nursery is a good source for buying plants, as is Direct Native Plants in Middle River.

Providing native plants in your garden will make ideal food and habitat for birds, wildlife and pollinating insects.

*--Barbara Blumberg*

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## Tulips, art and science provide a ticket to the Netherlands

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/tulips-art-and-science/>



Bolton Hill artist Anna Fine Foer's art is on display at The Peale Museum

Tulips are all around us now, a sure sign of spring's endurance.

In the early 16th century, botany was a fledgling science, and no one knew what caused the wild coloration of the most coveted tulips. These flowers commanded prices as high as the cost of a grand house on one of Amsterdam's main canals. The financial boom and crash that followed became known as "tulip mania."

Bolton Hill artist Anna Fine Foer's exhibition at [The Peale Museum](#) focuses on issues of loss, adaptation and survival in the natural world. Also on display is a series previously exhibited at the National Institute of Health Clinical Center in Bethesda that illustrates several aspects of a tulip's story. The work was a couple of years in the making, inspired by a chapter in Michael Pollen's book, *The Botany of Desire*, and by scientific inquiries into the tulip genome. The exhibit runs through April 30.

And in September Foer will head off to The Netherlands, having successfully caught the attention of researchers in Leiden, where the first known tulip garden flourished. She found the first sequenced tulip genome, which was incorporated into a collage entitled *A Code for Tulips*, that led to an invitation for a residency for several weeks in Leiden.

"I will create a series of collages based on the exploration of microorganisms in soil collected from the Tulip Mania Leiden citizen science project," she said. "I will visualize the data to tell a story about its significance. Just as the tulip bulbs are nurtured in soil, we will nourish each other's creative process." She will present her work during at a botanical garden, at a biotech company that was key to sequencing the tulip genome and as part of a workshop at an art studio in Leiden.

You can find more of Anna Fine Foer's work at [www.annafineart.com](http://www.annafineart.com)

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## Mt. Royal Tavern changes owners

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/mt-royal-tavern-changes-owners/>



Photo courtesy of Paul Newson/The Baltimore Banner

Bolton Hill's oldest watering hole – a nationally-noticed dive bar – has new owners for the first time in many years. One of them lives in the neighborhood.

According to the [Baltimore Banner](#), the four new owners of the Mt. Royal Tavern include Nicholas Wisniewski and Daniel Deacon of Baltimore plus Marlon Ziello and artist Derrick Adams, both of Brooklyn, NY. Together they formed a company called One Distinct, LLC. The LLC is registered to Wisniewski. [Deacon](#) is a musician and composer who lives in Bolton Hill.

Some years ago, Esquire magazine listed MRT as one of the best dive bars in America. Some locals call it The Dirt Church. Scuzzy and ill-lighted, it nevertheless commanded an \$800,000 sales price.

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## Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-april23/>



*Public meeting will consider fate of emptying Eutaw*

***Marshburn school building***

City council member Eric Costello told the BHCA April meeting that he would be part of a public meeting to be held in June on the disposition of the Eutaw Marshburn Elementary School, which is being declared a surplus building by the city schools administration. The school will cease operation at the end of the current academic year, with its approximately 185 students reassigned to other nearby public schools.

The Baltimore City Board of School Commissioners voted on Jan. 25, 2022, to close this school, located at 1624 Eutaw Place, at the end of the 2022-23 school year and to surplus the building. The building serves families west of Eutaw and in the Pedestal Gardens renewal area.

### ***BHCA board adopts FY 2024 budget***

BHCA's board at its April meeting adopted a \$91,388 operating budget for the fiscal year that runs May 1 – April 30, 2024. BHCA Treasurer Chris Kingsley projected what he called a conservative revenue estimate for the same period of \$97,800.

He said the association is in good financial condition, with \$173,000 on deposit – some of it earmarked for community projects. To see the budget that was unanimously approved, click [here](#).

### ***Ex-neighbor Bob Catsen dies at 94.***

Former [Bolton Hill resident Bob Catsen](#), an executive in the paper industry who was active in Jewish philanthropy and was an enthusiast of water sports, has died. He was 94 and living at Roland Park Place, a continuing care facility.

### ***New member party scheduled outdoors on May 23***

BHCA will celebrate residents who are new members at an outdoor party at Sumpter Park on Laurens Street Sunday, May 23, from 4 to 7 p.m. If you know of new residents in the neighborhood, encourage

them to join BHCA. The [first year membership](#) is free. Attendance is limited to *new* BHCA member families. In the event of rain, the party will move to nearby Unity Hall on Eutaw Place.

***Mfume wants high school art submissions for national competition***

Each spring, a nationwide high school arts competition is sponsored by the members of the U.S. House of Representatives. The Artistic Discovery Contest is an opportunity to recognize and encourage artistic talent in the nation, and our congressman, Kweisi Mfume, is asking for participation from his district. Deadline for submissions is April 21. All the details can be found [on his web site](#).

***About the Bulletin. . .***

*The Bulletin* is designed by Elizabeth Peters. We invite others to help write, edit, provide photos or work on the business side. Send suggestions and comments to [bulletin@boltonhillmd.org](mailto:bulletin@boltonhillmd.org). Thanks to Barbara Blumberg, Lynn Cripps, Paula Jackson, Deborah Morris, David Nyweide and Lee Tawney, among others, for advice and contributions this month. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the editor, Bill Hamilton.

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