

# Bolton Hill

## Community Association

## Table Of Contents

<b>ATTENTION ALL BHCA MEMBERS: hold this date -- Feb. 6</b> .....	3
<b>City takes first baby steps toward planning State Center's future</b> .....	5
<b>Bolton Hill musician, public school grad, will Join Met Opera Orchestra</b> .....	7
<b>Getting to know Oge Okoli...</b> .....	9
<b>Druid Hill Lake Reservoir is up and running, finally</b> .....	11
<b>Remembering Pittsburgh's, and Bolton Hill's, Bob Metz</b> .....	12
<b>Midtown and Mt. Royal EMS hold their own in state school ratings</b> .....	14
<b>Tailoring and alterations shop opens at Memorial Episcopal</b> .....	16
<b>Bolton Hill Notes</b> .....	17

## **ATTENTION ALL BHCA MEMBERS: hold this date -- Feb. 6**

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/open-house-hold-the-date/>



BHCA board members brainstorming during January meeting

Bolton Hill Community Association will hold a first-time Open House – inviting all residents of the neighborhood to learn what BHCA does and give input– on **Tuesday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m.** at Baltimore Unity Hall on Eutaw Place.

“We are hoping that every BHCA member will come and help BHCA set its priorities for 2024 and beyond,” said Amy Sheridan, the association’s president. “We are particularly interested in expanding and refreshing the organization’s leadership going forward. This is not just a board or leadership meeting – it’s for everyone.”

Bolton Hill residents who are not members can join before or on arrival; first-year membership is free. BHCA sponsors who wish to do so may set up tables and provide information about their business or activities.

The open house is an opportunity to look back on the community’s successes in 2023, and also to establish what neighbors want to see and need going forward. Last year was a high-water mark for BHCA since its 2018 name change, with 351 paid member households.

Treasurer Chris Kingsley told the Jan. 9 BHCA board meeting that the organization begins the calendar year with \$239,783 in assets, including \$132,165 in restricted assets for specific purposes, such as greening and costs associated with the recent donation of six art pieces to be placed in neighborhood parks.

Sheridan told the board she does not intend to serve a third term as president and that she hoped to see new, younger leadership step forward. After the February meeting the nominating committee will assemble a slate of nominees from those who have indicated a willingness to serve in leadership or on the board. There are 30 board positions and five officers. Members who may be interested in serving should send a message to [nominating@boltonhillmd.org](mailto:nominating@boltonhillmd.org) .

BHCA bylaws state that new officers and directors shall be elected at the annual meeting held in May. In April, the nominating committee presents a slate of nominees for officers and the new class of directors. Between those two meetings a, alternative suggestions may be made to the nominating committee for officers or directors by a petition of at least 10 members for each alternative nominee, which must be considered by the nominating committee. Nominations at an annual meeting may not be made from the floor.

At the January board meeting, members brainstormed about ways to broaden the leadership and expand volunteer-led programs. Some of the ideas:

- Broaden the executive committee (now the five officers) to include some or all committee chairs
  - Create a correspondence/communications committee
  - Create a board member handbook
  - Develop better use of technology
  
  - Emphasize younger membership and leaders
  - Engage MICA students in community activities, especially around arts and greening
  - Develop handouts for new tenants and encourage landlords to sponsor memberships
  - Create a city service committee to monitor and reach out to city agencies
  - Channel residents with strong interest into committees.
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## City takes first baby steps toward planning State Center's future

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/state-center-future/>



State Center sign off Preston and Howard. Credit: Ed

Gunts

More than a year after former Gov. Larry Hogan agreed to transfer Maryland's 28-acre State Center tract over to Baltimore City, city planners have selected an urban designer to start preparing a master plan to guide redevelopment of the property.

Gensler, the firm that serves as master planner for the revitalization of Harborplace, also has been chosen to begin creating a plan for State Center, just south of Bolton Hill at Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard and Eutaw Street.

Baltimore's Board of Estimates was to approve a professional services agreement with Gensler Architecture Planning & Design P. A. to perform a "marketing and conceptual predevelopment study" for the State Center area. (Gensler is a global architecture, design, and planning firm with 6,000+ professionals networked across the Americas, Europe, China, Asia Pacific and the Middle East.)

The city planning department's goal is to "create a vision for the State Center site guiding eventual redevelopment as a transit oriented development and anchor for this area of Baltimore." The department is the client for Gensler's study, which runs from Jan. 1 to June 30, and will cost \$396,550. The funding request is a sign that city officials are moving ahead to jumpstart planning for the land formerly occupied by a dozen state agencies that are relocating to other parts of the city.

State Center is served by both the light rail and Metro subway lines operated by the state. It has roughly the same amount of land as the Harbor Point community between Harbor East and Fells Point. In 2005, Former Gov. Robert Ehrlich Jr. (R) selected a team led by Maryland's Ekistics LLC to redevelop the State Center area as a \$1.5 billion mixed-use community, and planning continued through the administration of former Gov. Martin O'Malley (D).

A coalition of nearby neighborhoods, led by Bolton Hill's John Kyle, worked closely with the planners to ensure that the project blended with commercial and other needs supported by residents.

But Gov. Larry Hogan and others on the state's Board of Public Works canceled the plan in 2016, ending more than 10 years of work. In April 2021, Hogan announced plans to allocate \$50 million to relocate more than 3,000 office workers to Baltimore's central business district.

The plan was seen as a way to move state office workers out of aging office buildings while filling vacancies in privately-owned buildings and boosting downtown's economy. In all, more than 5,300 full time state employees are set to relocate to downtown Baltimore by April 2024.

The previous redevelopment plan called for demolition of most of the state-owned buildings, which dated from the 1960s and 1970s and would have needed extensive repairs and upgrades for continued use. One of the few state-owned buildings that was targeted for preservation and adaptive reuse under the private developer's plan was the Fifth Regiment Armory, a structure that dates from 1901 and was envisioned as a potential location for a grocery store and other community uses.

According to city planners, the contract with Gensler is not for the creation of a shovel-ready plan that can be put out for construction bids but for a more general "predevelopment" plan that can be used to show the highest and best uses for the property given current conditions in the real estate market. In other words, nothing will happen quickly.

Such a plan, officials say, could indicate which buildings might be recycled; what new uses could be introduced; how streets might be realigned; and how development could be completed in phases, most likely by seeking proposals from the private sector. Actual redevelopment of the parcel, planners say, will require even more planning and likely will take place over the next five to 10 years or more.

*--Adapted from former Bolton Hill resident Ed Gunt's article in Baltimore Fishbowl*

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## **Bolton Hill musician, public school grad, will Join Met Opera Orchestra**

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/silvio-guitian/>



Silvio Guitian, Clarinet

A young man who grew up on Bolton Street and graduated from Baltimore School for the Arts, Silvio Guitian, 27, is about to become a member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, based at Lincoln Center in Manhattan and one of the world's great performing ensembles.

"I'm very excited about the move. I love playing opera," he said from Kansas City where, for nearly five years, he has been part of the Kansas City Symphony. At the MET he'll hold one of two principal clarinet positions, starting in February.

It's a great career move. According to his mother, he showed an interest in music as a four-year-old, playing first drums and recorder and then the clarinet. He attended Waldorf School, took private music lessons and studied music at Oberlin Conservatory, part of Oberlin College in Ohio, and in graduate school at Rice University in Houston.

"There were five of us who graduated together from BSA who were in my starting class at Oberlin, which was really great," he said. Baltimore School for the Arts is a public high school for the arts on Cathedral Street in Mt. Vernon. It calls itself one of the top five public performing arts high schools in the country, with an impressive roster of graduates in dance, film, music, stage design and production, theatre, and the visual arts. Guitian said he auditioned for admission to a school where half of the day was devoted to music and the rest to high school studies.

For the Met Opera assignment, Guitian competed with about 200 other applicants in a series of blind auditions. That field winnowed down over three days, judged by a panel of orchestra musicians from whom the identities of the applicants were hidden. "They even took away our phones," he said.

“I’ve done several of these auditions around the country and you come to know and respect the other musicians,” he said.

Although moving to New York is daunting, “my grandfather lived in the city, and he and his wife were very into opera and The Met. They were big opera fans. I think he would have been very excited about this.” He said a lot of his Baltimore high school friends live and work in New York.

Guitian’s parents, Ginny Perkins and her former husband Celso Guitian, moved to Bolton Hill in 1999 and raised Silvio and his sister in the 1300 block of Bolton Street. Ginny has taught at MICA and now does ceramics at Baltimore ClayWorks.

--*Bill Hamilton*

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## Getting to know Oge Okoli...

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/oge-okoli/>



Bolton Hill welcomed a new resident, Oge Okoli, in December 2022. Originally from southeastern Virginia and a Nigerian-American family, Oge was drawn to our neighborhood's rich history and the unique character of the homes. "Row homes are not common where I am from, so getting to live in one has been a new and enjoyable experience," she shared.

Oge, 23, is currently pursuing her master's degree in biotechnology at Johns Hopkins University. She has five high-achieving brothers "scattered all over the United States." Her parents arrived in the U.S. in the 1980s.

"I am currently a graduate student at Johns Hopkins; however, I am not a medical student, yet. Medical school is my goal, but for now, I am getting my M.S. in Biotechnology with a concentration in regenerative and stem cell technologies. I love my program because it has helped me review the basic sciences while keeping me informed on cutting-edge research and developments in the biotechnology sphere, especially as it relates to gene therapy and stem cells."

Her goal is to become a psychiatrist so she can support people's mental health journeys. "I am very passionate about mental health and would love to be in a position to help people navigate it," Oge explained. In addition to her studies, she works as a surgical technician, pharmacy technician, and art teacher. "I get to work with a local nonprofit to provide art classes to people experiencing homelessness. My students are brilliant, and it is truly my privilege to get to work with them."

Oge has enjoyed exploring Bolton Hill and getting to know community members in her limited free time. "I absolutely loved the Arts in the Parks series. Through that I was able to discover the variety of outdoor spaces in the neighborhood as well as meet more of my neighbors," she said. Local eateries like Llama's Corner, On the Hill and Brass Tap have become her go-to spots.

”When I want to relax, I enjoy playing board games with friends, roller skating and practicing my juggling. I also enjoy learning new skills, like sewing, and reading scientific articles.” With a background working in greenhouses, Oge has appreciated our proximity to Rawlings Conservatory and the greenery in Druid Hill Park. You may catch her crocheting in one of our neighborhood parks or playing her violin on nice days.

Oge's parting advice? ”Please talk to your neighbors when you can! We live in such a colorful community with people of many different backgrounds, perspectives, and values. I am so grateful to constantly be learning from the people of Bolton Hill, whether it is a conversation with an encouraging and insightful Hopkins professor at Llama's Corner or twirling streamers with a friend in Arnold Sumpter Park while live music plays. There is so much love to be felt throughout this community and always something new to experience.”

--*Lisa Savage*

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## **Druid Hill Lake Reservoir is up and running, finally**

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/druid-hill-lake-resevoir/>



Functional but not so beautiful...

After six years of work and about \$140 million in mostly federal and state funds, Druid Hill Lake Reservoir is back in full operation -- providing covered and treated fresh water for Bolton Hill and hundreds of thousands of other residents and businesses in the city, Baltimore County and beyond.

The city declared the covered reservoir project to be complete as of Dec. 21, 2023, after the federal Environmental Protection Agency ordered completion of the long-delayed project and another at Lake Ashburton by year's end. The Druid Hill tank -- about 450 feet in diameter -- is more than 20 feet tall and can hold 50 million gallons of filtered and treated water.

Water from Druid Lake Reservoir reaches an area that stretches northwest from Elkridge in Howard County toward Arbutus, cuts through the middle of Baltimore City and includes a large section of Baltimore County north of the city in Parkville, Towson and Cockeysville. The two facilities were among the last public water reservoirs in the northeast to comply with a 2006 EPA regulation. At that time the city had five uncovered water storage facilities.

Additional site work for both locations, including park amenities, is scheduled for completion next summer, but given DPW's history on the project, that likely is optimistic. Although the tank in Druid Hill Park is operational, it is bare and exposed, waiting for landscaping. According to DPW, most of the remaining portion of Druid Lake will continue as a recreational amenity. Water will be aerated to keep it fresh, though instead of drinking water it will mostly be for stormwater runoff from Druid Park.

A year or so ago the city announced plans to make the lake available for swimming, boating and fishing. Calls to DPW to check on when that construction might begin went unreturned.

## Remembering Pittsburgh's, and Bolton Hill's, Bob Metz

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/remembering-bob-metz/>



Bob and Trish Metz

Bob Metz, who came to Bolton Hill only in 2019 after a rich and full life in Pittsburgh, died on Oct. 23, at the age of 71. He was living with his sister, Patricia A. (Trish) Metz, in what she called “the great sibling experiment.” Overall, she said, it was a success, if too short.

Before his retirement and arrival from Pennsylvania, Robert Charles Metz served as a priest for a Greek Catholic church. He also owned a children’s bookstore and served as director of the Wilksburg Public Library. He was a graduate of Duquesne and Michigan universities. He loved books and classical music and relished being able to walk to the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall and to concerts at Peabody Institute.

At a recent remembrance service at Brown Memorial church, Trish said this about her brother:

*In The Year of Magical Thinking, Joan Didion wrote: “Life changes fast. Life changes in the instant. You sit down to dinner and life as you know it ends.”*

*Bob had many plans for retirement.... The long-term goal was to visit all the Carnegie Libraries in the world and the short-term to read all the Caldecott winner and honor books. (Caldecott annually recognizes the preceding year's “most distinguished American picture book for children.”). There have been 368 Caldecott awards. And if I understand Bob’s recordkeeping, he read all but 23, thanks in large part to the outstanding Enoch Pratt and Baltimore County libraries’ children collections.*

*Bob didn’t do so well with the Carnegie Libraries. He only visited 58 of the 2,811 libraries that Andrew Carnegie funded around the world. On our first Christmas holiday trip in 2015 to Hawaii, he visited the furthest U.S. Carnegie library, in Honolulu. Last Christmas, our holiday trip was to Scotland where Bob visited not only the very first Carnegie Library in the world, located in Dunfermline, but also the birthplace of Andrew Carnegie.*

*Bob loved words. He valued good writing and in turn worked hard to put together the perfect combination of words for any given situation. Former parishioners said he gave wonderful sermons. Colleagues said he produced attention-grabbing newsletters, announcements and flyers for his children's bookstore, for community events he organized for a retail bookstore, and for the library where he worked. The extra notes he added to cards were always witty and a delight. Bob also liked word puzzles – Wordle, Spelling Bee, and crosswords. As his health was declining, he told me his entire life revolved around words, and wasn't it interesting that he now struggled to communicate.*

*Bob was thoughtful. He listened and remembered. When he knew someone had a sick relative or upcoming surgery, a new baby in the family, they just returned from or were going on a trip, started a new job, or bought a new car, Bob would ask that person for an update. He did this before our exercise classes at the Y and at Atrium social events.*

*Bob was quiet in a world of talkers. I think his quiet nature made people talk more. I told him if he didn't speak up others would keep talking. Unlike teachers, talkers don't understand the importance of wait-time. But ever the gentleman, Bob would never interrupt the talkers and he listened patiently.*

*For the past month, people have said to me that they are sorry for my loss. However, Bob was more than just a brother. He was a cousin, parish priest, partner, colleague, collaborator, and co-worker, friend, neighbor, and acquaintance. And so, I say to each of you: I'm sorry for your loss and I thank you for being an important part of Bob's beautiful life.*

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## Midtown and Mt. Royal EMS hold their own in state school ratings

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/school-ratings-24/>



Bolton Hill's two remaining public schools scored as well as in pre-pandemic measurements in the [2023 Maryland School Report Card](#) ratings released at year end.

Maryland gives schools one to five stars based on both academic and nonacademic factors. This year's ratings are the fourth time the state has used the rating system, which was paused during the pandemic. A school can earn up to 100 points based on a series of indicators, including academic achievement, academic progress, the proficiency of English language learners, chronic absenteeism, whether a school has a well-rounded curriculum, and a school survey.

**Midtown Academy**, the public charter school that serves some 200 K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade students maintained its three-star evaluation with 52 points. A detailed breakdown of the state's findings can be found [here](#).

Midtown, located at 1398 W. Mt. Royal Ave., is the oldest and smallest charter school in the city. It was established in 1997 in a building owned by the Archdiocese of Baltimore, which previously operated a Catholic private school. The Archdiocese has indicated a desire to close or sell the building where the school is located, which could lead to re-location next year.

**Mt. Royal Elementary and Middle School**, which is a neighborhood public school serving children from pre-K to 8<sup>th</sup> grade, also drew three stars, with 48 points. It is located at 121 McMechen Street and serves about 800 students. More information on its performance can be found [here](#).

**Eutaw-Washburn Elementary at 1624 Eutaw Place**, which had a one-star rating in the previous state ratings, closed at the end of the 2022-23 school year.

Baltimore City schools' overall growth in the state ratings outpaced the state's average. The most positive growth came in the lowest-rated schools, with 19 schools moving from one-star to two-star ratings. Still, 15 schools received a one star, the highest number in the region, and the city still has more one-star schools than it did before the pandemic. The proportion of three-, four- and five-star schools in

the city rose from 25% to 35% this year.

For information on how other public schools performed, click [here](#).

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## Tailoring and alterations shop opens at Memorial Episcopal

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/alterations-at-memorial-episcopal/>



An Afghan family, settled in Bolton hill as refugees from that troubled nation, has opened a tailoring and alterations shop in the Bolton Street courtyard at Memorial Episcopal Church.

Abobaker Tahiri, 19, and the family’s primary English speaker, said his family operated a tailor and clothing manufacturing shop with as many as a dozen employees in downtown Kabul, Afghanistan’s capital, before the Taliban takeover. His father, Mohammad Arif Tahiri, opened the neighborhood shop to serve the community that has welcomed them, and to supplement the income that he and his wife bring home from tailoring work they perform for a shop in Towson.

As the sign indicates, the Tahiris are available most days through a phone number that Abobaker answers. ‘We’ve had a good response from church people and neighbors,’ he said.

Although he is engaged in the alterations shop, Abobaker hopes to find full-time work for himself and, eventually, study software engineering at UMBC, he said. The Tahiri family includes his parents and three siblings -- two brothers and a sister who are enrolled in school. For information about tailoring, alterations or other sewing projects, drop by or call 443 440-7477.



## Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-jan24/>



### *MICA kicks off search for new president*

MICA has hired a Boston-based headhunting firm to lead its international search for a new president. The eventual candidate will replace Bolton Hill resident Sammy Hoi, who [announced last August](#) that he will end when the current school term ends. Hoi, 65, has led the school since 2014.

The search firm Isaacson Miller, in a job search document widely circulated, said the school offers “an exciting opportunity for an inspiring, communicative, and unifying leader who can guide MICA into the future of art and design education. “

The 195-year-old art school has struggled with lost enrollment caused by the COVID pandemic and complicated by geopolitical strains with China, where many pre-pandemic students were recruited. According to Isaacson Miller the college has about 1900 students (including 500 graduate students) and a budget of \$84 million.

MICA is currently in the midst of a comprehensive fundraising campaign set to end in 2027, which has raised over \$66 million to date. The campaign focuses on building fiscal resources for key priorities and goals in its newly adopted strategic plan. MICA has an endowment of \$105 million, the search group said.

### *North Avenue project has a new name: Reservoir Square*

The [\\$100 million mixed-use community](#) that MCB Real Estate and its partners are building on eight acres along West North Avenue, between Bolton Hill and Reservoir Hill, has a new name. Once the site of a public housing project dubbed “Murder Mall” because of the criminal activity there, it formerly was called Madison North.

Reservoir Square began site preparation last year for what will, it is said, eventually become a site for 120 townhouses to be priced above \$300,000, according to the developers. The first townhouses are expected to go on sale late this year.

The second phase includes two more parcels, totaling nearly three acres. Plans include a grocery store;

about 200 apartments including workforce housing; up to 100,000 square feet of office space and additional street-level retail space.

***Beth Am concert: turning sorrows into song***

Beth Am Synagogue in Reservoir Hill is hosting a concert/album launch on Sunday, June 21 at 7:30 p.m. for musicians associated with Beth Am's Uncle Ira's Hebrew Washboard Ensemble. *Gam Ki Elech* is an album of 13 original melodies in Hebrew drawn from liturgy and psalms.

Rabbi Ilan Glazer and his wife Sherri assembled the music and arranged the concert in memory of their son Shemaryah Zichri, who died at birth after a long series of attempts by the parents to have a child. General admission tickets are \$18. More information [here](#).

**About The Bulletin....**

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**Bolton Hill**

**Community Association**