

Bolton Hill

Community Association

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Midtown Academy will acquire its building, stay in Bolton Hill for now

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/midtown-academy-staying-in-bolton-hill/>



A math class at Midtown Academy

After a nerve-wracking year of looking for alternatives, the leaders of Midtown Academy last month breathed a sigh of relief and announced that the public charter school will remain at its Bolton Hill location for another couple of years.

“Our school community is grateful to be part of this vibrant neighborhood, and that we’ll continue to be for the next few years,” said Whitney Birenbaum, vice-president of Midtown’s board of directors.

In 2023, Corpus Christi Catholic church leaders informed Midtown that it would end the lease arrangement that allowed the charter school to occupy the building that shares a lot with the church rectory and faces Mt. Royal Avenue. It had been there since 1997, in a building that once was a Catholic school. With just under 200 students, it’s the smallest of the 31 charter schools in the city.

In an ironic turn of events, Corpus Christi church itself is now likely to close under the Archdiocese of Baltimore’s citywide downsizing plan. Midtown was able, on the heels of that announcement by Catholic leadership, to forge an agreement with the archdiocese to acquire the building the school now occupies, along with the rectory. The board hopes to finalize the deal and make physical improvements in the coming weeks, as both buildings need repairs and upgrades.

Unlike traditional public schools, public charter school operators must arrange their own building occupancy and assure that the building adheres to the city building code. Under its contract with BCPS, Midtown receives public funds on a per capita basis tied to student enrollment but must fundraise to meet operating expenses that in traditional public schools are covered, such as maintenance, landscaping and janitorial services.

Public charter schools may not charge students tuition nor discriminate in admissions policies. About half of Midtown's students come from Bolton Hill, Reservoir Hill or nearby. In 2022 tax filings, Midtown showed operating expenses of about \$2.4 million.

Board members for Midtown spent months exploring possible new locations both in and outside of Bolton Hill. In addition to the agreement with the archdiocese, they have entered into a tentative agreement with the city to obtain ownership, at some point in the future, of a larger former middle school building in Guilford.

In a letter to parents, the Midtown board said, "Midtown Academy will remain here at the Corpus Christi building until renovations are completed at Guilford, which we anticipate will be two years." Once the larger location is ready, Midtown likely will leave Bolton Hill. Kimberly Davis is Midtown's principal.

--Bill Hamilton

BHCA: looking ahead for the next two years

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bhca-new-leadership-2024/>



When the leadership of our association chose to change the name from the Mount Royal Improvement Association to Bolton Hill Community Association in 2018, it was about much more than changing some words. It was a recognition of what had happened in the past with an eye to the future. With that refocused foundation, we have been and will continue to partner with Madison Park, Marble Hill and Reservoir Hill to enhance the quality of life for our greater neighborhood.

There are upcoming events in that greater neighborhood that will get us together, including the recent Green Streets Arts Festival, the Family Potluck at Sumpter Park (June 29), the Arts in the Parks concerts beginning in July, the Crab Feast in August, and our annual Festival on the Hill . a tradition since 1955 (Oct. 5).

Zoning/Land Use issues that we are watching include Pedestal Gardens apartments, the closed Eutaw Marshburn school, State Center, the Sav-A-Lot shopping center and Corpus Christi Church. We are keeping an eye on the Amtrak Frederick Douglas Tunnel Community Investment Program to pursue capital projects in the greater neighborhood. There are transportation and traffic challenges we need to watch. And we will continue to work with our partners in Madison Park, Marble Hill and Reservoir Hill.

The overriding issue for us now is safety and security. Jim Prost, Elizabeth Peters, John Timson and Ben Meiselman are working on a crime survey so that when we meet with the Baltimore police we have as many facts as we can garner. In addition, Jim Prost and I will be meeting with the vice president of security at MICA, Eric Sousa at Midtown Community Benefits District, and Baltimore City School Police to determine what resources they have and what can be done for better communication between them and BPD.

I would ask you to remember that the BHCA board members are all volunteers and BHCA is not 911

nor 311. We have a talented team of neighbors who are keen to make the greater neighborhood a better place to live for our children, grandchildren, and ourselves. Please consider asking your neighbors about becoming a member of the Bolton Hill Community Association.

If there is anything you would like to help with, please let me know: pres@boltonhillmd.org. I look forward to working with you.

--Lee Tawney was elected BHCA's president at the association's annual meeting on May 7.

Archdiocese proposes to close Corpus Christi church

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/corpus-christi-closure/>



Father Marty Demek - Kristine Smets

On April 14 the Archdiocese of Baltimore unveiled its ["Seek the City to Come" proposal](#) which seeks to reimagine the Catholic Church's ministry and reorganize Roman Catholic parishes across Baltimore City. The proposal would consolidate 61 parishes down to 21. Among those facing potential closure is the 144-year-old Corpus Christi parish, situated at the corner of Mt. Royal and West Lafayette Aves.

Corpus Christi parish was established in 1880 to strengthen the Catholic presence in the growing "Bolton Depot" neighborhood. The first services were held at the residence of the Rev. William Star, the first pastor, located at 45 Bolton St., a house that once stood near present-day Bolton House Apartments. Ground was broken for the first Corpus Christi school building at Mt. Royal and Lafayette in May 1881, and mass was celebrated in the school's chapel starting in November.

The church building, financed by [the Jenkins family](#), was consecrated on Jan. 1, 1891. It was designed by renowned architect Patrick Charles Keely, featuring neo-Gothic stained-glass windows, mosaics, marble wainscoting, and a two-manual Odell organ. Additional enhancements were made over the years, including the addition of a new tower and spire in 1913. Its Florentine glass mosaics are considered some of the finest examples in the world.

Throughout its history, the parish faced challenges such as the [Tivoli disaster in 1883](#), which claimed the lives of many parishioners, and the decline in membership after World War II as residents moved to the suburbs. In 1976, the Rev. Francis Dougherty left the parish, and the future was uncertain until the Revs. Frank Callahan and John Sewell were appointed, ushering in a new era of leadership. Under their guidance, the church underwent a much-needed renovation. Sister Jane Coyle's appointment in 1987 as pastoral life director brought national attention as an early example of a woman-led Catholic parish, which flourished with a strong community spirit and outreach programs. Her leadership upheld the strong "Vatican II mission" that encouraged parishioners to actively engage and take ownership of their parish ministries.

The Rev. Richard Bozzelli, installed in 2000, continued this progressive legacy of lay involvement and oversaw another extensive renovation. Despite declining religious practice and controversies within the

Catholic church, the parish remains vibrant, inclusive, and active in community outreach to this day.

Corpus Christi parish today counts 170 registered households. The Rev. Martin Demek, the pastor's 14th pastor and Baltimore native, came in 2010. The parish prides itself on being an inclusive community that embraces individuals who may have previously felt marginalized by the church.

Kristen Bowden, who joined the pastoral team in 2012, runs a successful faith formation curriculum for the parish's children. Parishioner and Bolton Hill neighbor Beth Steinrock leads a thriving food ministry at the St. Francis Neighborhood Center in Reservoir Hill. The parish engages in ecumenical activities with neighboring Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church and Memorial Episcopal Church, including longstanding traditions such as the Ash Wednesday service (established in 1989), the Palm Sunday procession, and participation in the Tri-Church Lenten Series. The "Corpus Christi Chili Booth" has been a beloved fixture at Festival on the Hill since 1969.

The recent archdiocesan proposal sent shockwaves through the congregation. Numerous parishioners weighed in during the public comment sessions. Kevin Kostic, a resident of northeast Baltimore, voiced the concern of many parishioners that the proposed merger may not continue the parish's longstanding commitment to supporting women leaders and the LGBTQ+ community.

Dan Meyer, the music director at Corpus Christi since 2001, worries that the current proposal places too much emphasis on geography and not enough on diversity. Dan remarked: "At Corpus Christi I am fully accepted into the church and am not just a member of a 'gay group'." At the April 30 session, a group of parishioners voiced their optimism and desire for the archdiocese to reconsider its stance and recognize the pivotal role that Corpus Christi's parish can play in revitalizing the church's ministry within the city.

Corpus Christi has parishioners who come from as far away as Perry Hall, but at the same time, it is rooted in the central city. Local parishioners who do not have easy access to transportation are understandably worried. Roberta Morgan, who lives on Guilford Avenue and rides her power wheelchair to church, discovered the church when she was a MICA student in the early seventies. The priests allowed her access to the church space for quiet contemplation before classes each day. Al Johnson, a resident at Bolton North since 1979 and a proud parishioner, is deeply upset about the possibility of the Catholic church abandoning his neighborhood.

The formal public comment sessions concluded on April 30, with the archdiocese indicating that a final plan will be announced in mid-June. Echoing the archdiocese's statement that the proposed parish reorganization and closures are not yet finalized, Father Demek encourages his parishioners to continue to make their voices heard.

Likewise, all Bolton Hill neighbors and any others who value the presence of faith-filled congregations in their community are encouraged to voice their opinions about the fate of Corpus Christi, its building, its people, and the resources it provides, by emailing seekthecity@archbalt.org.

--*Kristine Smets*

Mourning and celebrating a former neighbor: William G. Noel, 1965-2024

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/mourning-and-celebrating-will-noel/>



Will Noel with his wife and son, a few years ago

Dr. William Noel, 58, a former Bolton Hill resident and a distinguished scholar, was [hit by a van and killed on April 10](#) while walking along a road in Edinburgh, Scotland. He directed the Archimedes Palimpsest Project, an international collaboration to conserve, image and study the erased texts lying beneath a 13th century prayer book. He also pioneered the presentation of machine-readable, openly licensed datasets of digitized illuminated medieval manuscripts at The Walters Art Museum.

In the spring of 1997, a friend of my wife Lydia's and mine, an expert on medieval manuscripts, took us aside at a party in New York and said that the most brilliant young man in his field was about to move to Baltimore and we should be nice to him. Our friend added: "Classic Cambridge Brit. Six-foot-five, 120 pounds, tousled hair, smokes like a chimney, drinks like a fish."

A month or so later, Will Noel turned up in Baltimore to run the manuscripts and rare books collection at the Walters, and the Duffs gained one of the dearest friends we will ever have.

Will lived in Baltimore for 17 years. Although he hung his hat in Bolton Hill for only four or five of them, Bolton Hill turned out to be the center of his Baltimore. For one thing, he had Sunday dinner with the Duffs almost every week for 14 or 15 years. More importantly, when he met Lynn Ransom and settled down, it was in Bolton Hill. They bought one of the Hugh Newell Jacobson houses at Bolton Square on Jordan Street, became pillars of the Bolton Square community, welcomed their son, Henry, and introduced many of us to each other.

Along the way, Will became a star at The Walters. He mounted exhibitions that brought the world to The Walters' door – the scholarly world and the rest of the world. He brought old pages to life and made them

available online. People of all kinds streamed in to see fascinating maps, enchanting marginalia, and the fabulous images that medieval painters used to bring stories to life for the benefit of lords and ladies who were even less literate than we are.

Then, adventure struck. An odd billionaire turned up in Will's office with an ugly Byzantine prayer book that seemed to have something else written beneath the visible words. The "something else" seemed to be a set of lost works by the great ancient mathematician Archimedes, things that scholars had been speculating about for centuries. This was tantalizing, but the Archimedean writing was almost invisible under the Byzantine prayers. Will set out to read it and get it out to the world.

But how? Who could figure out how to read writing that was almost invisible? Words and letters that were almost entirely scraped away a thousand years ago so that they could be covered by something else? What amazing technologies would it take to do that? And, supposing you could uncover the letters and the words, who could figure out what they mean?

Over a period of three years, Will organized and ran an international team with a wide range of esoteric skills. I remember classicists, scientists from the Jet Propulsion Lab, specialists in ancient mathematics, and the people who ran the Cyclotron at Stanford. Not to mention a grumpy bunch of self-described geniuses in Budapest. Will coached his team well, and they won. You can read [the Archimedes Palimpsest online](#) whenever you want, and the book that Will co-wrote with mathematician teammate Reviel Netz and others, *The Archimedes Palimpsest*, has been translated into 14 languages.

The world soon noticed, and Will became the head of special collections – all the cool artworks – at Penn and then at Princeton.

Just a few weeks ago, I was hoping Will would come back to Baltimore and Bolton Hill. When I got the *Baltimore Banner* flash that the director of the Walters was moving on, I sent it to Will, and he wrote back the next day to say that he would compete for the job. And then, just a couple of days later, Will was walking down a street in Edinburgh when a truck, apparently driven by someone on drugs, jumped the curb and hit him. Modern miracle-workers were able to get him into a coma, but he never got out of it, and he died.

If you knew Will, you know what we've lost. If you didn't, please realize that we Bolton Hillers have lost a splendid neighbor. We all should do our best to bring more wonderful people like Will and his family to this neighborhood.

-- *Charlie Duff*

Neighborhood's new laundromat locates adjacent to Sav-A-Lot

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/neighborhoods-new-laundromat-opens/>



The refreshed strip mall on McMechen Street just east of Eutaw Place has a brand-new business – a laundromat with sparkling new equipment that provides drop-off wash, dry and fold services as well as self-service.

Wash E-Z moved to the neighborhood in March and is open and staffed seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. The owner, Farooq Iqbal, has operated other businesses in Baltimore, including a laundromat in Remington. Lack of parking there was a hindrance, he said, so he shut it down after four years, sold the equipment and started anew in Bolton Hill.

The new facility adjacent to the Sav-a-Lot grocery has 30 dryers and 27 washing machines, all operated in a cashless fashion. “You buy a laundry card using either your credit card or money in our machine and use the value on the card to access the washers and dryers,” Iqbal said. Cash is accepted from customers who drop off and pick up laundry, if that is their choice.

He said the investment in all-new equipment was expensive but in line with his belief that customers expect efficient and reliable machines and a clean facility. Located where an old and dingy laundromat once operated that closed several years ago, the new facility is spotless and brightly lit. An attendant’s desk is stocked with detergent and other supplies for self-service clients who do not bring these items with them.

Prior to leasing the space, Iqbal said he did market research which led him to believe that a well-run laundry would do well here. “We have all sorts of customers coming in, students, people who live in apartments with no laundry facilities and others who have access to washers at home but prefer that we do it for them,” he said. He said he looked carefully at demographics in Bolton Hill and surrounding neighborhoods.

Iqbal immigrated from Pakistan, arriving in Baltimore in 2002. He learned about the available space from the Pakistani-rooted family that now owns and operates Sav-A-Lot stores throughout Maryland. He said another new business, a café and carryout that will serve Halal meals, also will be located in the mall in the coming months.

Bolton Hill Nursery names new director, seeks board members

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bhn-new-director/>



Christy Barnes-Toprac

Bolton Hill Nursery has appointed a new executive director, Christy Barnes-Toprac, who started her new role in March.

Christy has a long-standing relationship with BHN. She served as a teacher and assistant director from 2009-2017 before moving to Austin to become program coordinator for UTeach Fine Arts at the University of Texas. In this position, she managed the arts certification program for K - 12 teachers.

Christy is a native of the Gettysburg, PA, area and attended Goucher College, where she studied studio art and arts management. At BHN, Christy taught classes at each age level and also managed an after-school science program.

“I am humbled to accept the position as executive director. This school holds a special place in my heart and, as I look back, I credit my time at BHN for igniting my passion for providing and advocating for high-quality education for all children. I have always valued BHN’s approach to early childhood education and its commitment to community engagement and I will continue to honor and build upon that legacy.”

Also joining the BHN community are Christy’s husband, Alex Toprac, and their 14-month-old son, Oscar. An artist at heart, Christy enjoys visual arts but also dabbles in music and has recently taken up the drums as a hobby. She also enjoys exploring the outdoors and is an avid reader.

Founded in 1969, BHN is a play-based nursery school and childcare center serving 2, 3 and 4-year-old children and their families living in Bolton Hill and surrounding neighborhoods. It operates year-round in the historic building at 204 W. Lanvale St. and serves about 70 children. Its mission is to foster through

its curriculum a culture that nurtures and empowers empathetic, creative, and inquisitive children. The core values of the school are joy, discover, empathy and community

Play-based learning builds on the philosophy that children learn best through play. At BHN, children's learning is open-ended. Our educators build from each child's interests and prior knowledge to create an environment that encourages the development of confidence, perseverance, and problem-solving skills. Children at Bolton Hill Nursery gain competencies such as pre-literacy skills, spatial awareness, emotional maturity, and number sense while experiencing the joy of discovery and learning. Through play, children flex their most important skill of all – to be active agents in their own learning.

Bolton Hill Nursery is governed by an all-volunteer board comprised of current parents, alumni parents and neighborhood residents. We are currently looking to add several new members. If you are interested in joining our board, please send an email to: board@boltonhillnursery.org

--John Timson, is BHN's board treasurer

Restoration of school attended by Thurgood Marshall nears completion

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/thurgood-marshall-school/>



The Rev. Dr. Alvin Hathaway has for several years now been leading an initiative to convert the historic PS 103 school in nearby Upton into an educational and empowerment center for West Baltimore. Raised in the area, Dr. Hathaway is driven by a desire to honor the legacy of this once-segregated public institution and leverage his community ties and service experience to create new opportunities for Baltimore residents.

The Thurgood Marshall Amenity Center is expected to open on July 2, the 116th birthday of the national civil rights advocate who became the nation's first black jurist on the U.S. Supreme Court. Formerly the Henry Highland Garnet School, it was attended by young Marshall from 1914-1920 as a boy growing up in Marble Hill. The school is located at 1315 Division St. It was constructed in 1877 and has been vacant for many years.

As the retired pastor of Union Baptist Church, Dr. Hathaway has focused much of his attention on the historical significance of PS 103, designed by architect George Frederick. After a devastating fire in 2016, Dr. Hathaway and the community rallied to raise more than \$14 million for the restoration.

As the Justice Thurgood Marshall Amenity Center, PS 103 is ready to serve as a community hub, offering restorative justice, education, and community development programs. Collaborations with the University of Maryland College Park and the BWI Thurgood Marshall Airport Project Takeoff aim to provide residents with opportunities in aviation and hospitality.

With the impending grand opening, Dr. Hathaway's project is the beginning of a broader initiative for community empowerment. He says it signifies West Baltimore's potential and aims to provide sustainable benefits to residents. Dr. Hathaway says this is "community at its best."

His vision extends beyond mere buildings. With Project Takeoff, he expects to provide direct access to technology, engineering, and entrepreneurship training and resources. Dr. Hathaway recognizes that with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in emerging industries, he is creating pathways to economic survival and social mobility.

--*Lisa Savage*

National organ history convention to visit Bolton Hill churches in July

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/organ-convention-july/>



The Organ Historical Society will present its 2024 annual convention in Baltimore July 20-26, with programs and organ concerts around the city and in Bolton Hill.

Founded by aficionados of old pipe organs and their music in New York in 1956, OHA has grown to become an international society of musicians, organ builders, historians, scholars and music lovers. This is their first meeting in Baltimore in 25 years. Several of America's early great crafters of pipe organs were based in Baltimore in the 19th century.

Bolton Hill resident David Storey, [featured in the Washington Post](#) for his maintenance of organs in the region, is the national convention chairman. He said the convention will visit and hear 25 different instruments during their week in the city. "The breadth of styles visited is truly amazing, with organs originating from 1817 to 2007, both mechanical and electric action. Attendees will have the opportunity to visit and sing in some of the largest, resounding rooms in Baltimore with some of the country's best-known organists playing," Storey said.

Convention attendees will visit and hear performances at Corpus Christi and Brown Memorial churches in the neighborhood on July 24. Performances in those and other facilities may be open to the public. For registration or further information go to <https://organhistoricalsociety.org/2024/>

Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-may24/>



Plant your garden now, win neighborhood recognition

in September

BHCA and the Bolton Hill Garden Club are planning to host an end-of-summer, community-wide beautification garden judging. Residents and business owners are encouraged to plant and beautify their street-facing garden spaces of planters and urns, window boxes, and tree/sidewalk wells.

Anyone in the neighborhood can enter; no fees are involved. On Saturday, Sept. 14, a team of judges will judge the entries. Winners will receive a 1st, 2nd, 3rd or Honorable Mention blue ribbon. All entrants will be invited to the Bolton Hill Garden Walk reception that afternoon.

Entries will be judged by these criteria: plant health, water, and weed management (10%); color, form and texture usage (15%); use of space (15%); overall uniqueness (15%); curb and/or yard appeal (20%); and overall attractiveness (25%). For more details [go here](#) or email flora.bhgc@gmail.com.

The Brass Tap craft beer pub to host fundraiser for autistic children's summer camp

The Brass Tap, at 1205 W. Mt. Royal Ave., will host an all-day fundraiser to benefit the League for People with Disabilities. on Sunday, May 19, from 2 p.m. until the bar closes at 2 a.m. “We will be sponsoring scholarships for autistic kids to attend summer camp,” said Barry Lowenthal, one of the pub owners.

“We have a special beer, brewed by Carl Young (a Reservoir Hill resident). All proceeds of sales for this beer will be donated, along with 5% of all other food and drink sales that afternoon and evening,” he added. Both Lowenthal and Young have family members on the autism spectrum.

The Brass Tap is a BHCA business sponsor. It routinely offers 50 or more beers on tap plus others in bottles and cans, along with bar food and other beverages.

Neighbors threaten legal action to change Amtrak tunnel plans

At one of several information sessions Amtrak is providing to neighborhoods affected by the massive

Frederick Douglass tunnel construction project, some residents of Reservoir Hill [announced they plan to file a legal complaint](#) to force it to change its path, which currently runs under that neighborhood just north of Bolton Hill.

The civil rights complaint claims that construction would disproportionately harm black and low-income communities and that Amtrak has not done enough to gather community feedback. At Mt. Royal School in Bolton Hill this month, Amtrak officials spent most of the two-hour meeting talking about the windows, landscaping and other aesthetics of three new nearby ventilation facilities.

The new \$6 billion tunnel would be 3.7 miles long, and head northwest and west out of Penn Station through Reservoir Hill, Penn North, Sandtown-Winchester, Bridgeview/Greenlawn, Midtown-Edmondson and Penrose/Fayette neighborhoods before meeting existing tracks west of Maryland Route 1. At the meeting attended by several Bolton Hill residents, some raised concerns about pollution and structural racism.

About The Bulletin....

The Bolton Hill Bulletin is published monthly except for July and August. It 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. Thanks to Maurice Corbett, Charlie Duff, Paula Jackson, Lisa Johnson, Lisa Savage, Kristine Smets, David Storey, Lee Tawney and John Timson, among others, for helping with this issue. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the editor, Bill Hamilton.

Bolton Hill

Community Association