

Bolton Hill

Community Association

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2025 Festival on the Hill was a smash!

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/2025-foth-a-smash/>



Young and “not young” came to the festival

Great weather, great food and drink, and hundreds of friendly neighbors showed up! Has there ever been a more successful Festival on the Hill?

Not only was the 70th annual neighborhood extravaganza on Oct. 2 well attended, but preliminary accounting shows it to have been a financial success, as well. Income for the Bolton Hill Community Association for the day neared \$24,000 – not counting the revenue received by other organizations with their individual booths.

Expenses so far add up to about \$12,500, so that a net outcome of \$10,000 or more will be available to fund neighborhood projects and designated charities. Thanks to everyone who pitched in or attended.

BHCA re-affirms opposition to council housing bill that Blanchard favors

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bhca-housing-bill/>



The City Council is considering a package of five bills related to zoning for housing. The Land Use Committee of the BHCA has studied them pretty deeply, and the association board adopted a resolution that has been sent to the Baltimore City Planning Commission and our elected officials.

The most important of these bills is Council Bill 25-0066, designed to allow anyone to convert a single-family house into an apartment house with no public review and no parking requirements.

Council Bill 25-0066 is the brainchild of Ryan Dorsey, the councilman from Northeast Baltimore, and is supported by our District 11 council member Zac Blanchard. Dorsey introduced it in 2020, and BHCA worked with six or seven other center-city neighborhoods to evaluate it. All of us agreed that Dorsey's bill would give an unfair advantage to absentee landlords and would upset the delicate balance of owner-occupants and renters in Baltimore's center-city neighborhoods. Bolton Hill is 40 percent homeowners and 60 percent renters.

But we didn't oppose every aspect of it. We agreed that the current zoning restrictions were excessive. Under current zoning, it's hard to create a second unit in a big old house or in a carriage house, and we felt that people should have the right to do that easily. We agreed that a mix of owners and renters is a good thing. Renters bring youth and diversity, while owner-occupants provide stability and good maintenance. Absentee landlords are unlikely to buy a big single-family house so that they can convert it into just two units.

After many meetings, our coalition proposed a compromise that would allow anyone to create a second unit on their property without public review or parking requirements. But anyone who wanted to create a third or more units would have to go through the ordinary processes of review and approval and would have to meet parking requirements.

Although Dorsey's bill went nowhere in 2020, he brought it back in 2022, and the Planning Commission recommended our compromise. In the end, the bill went nowhere again.

Dorsey's bill is back this year, endorsed by the mayor and co-sponsored by Blanchard, who represents

much of Bolton Hill. The BHCA board this month reaffirmed its opposition to the bill as drafted and our support for our 2022 compromise proposal and the recommendation of the planning commission.

The bills, titled Abundant Housing and also called the Housing Options and Opportunity Act, are part of a national movement to increase the supply and reduce the cost of housing by relaxing regulations on development. There's a lot to be said for this in general. Much of America has single-family zoning that was designed to exclude large parts of the population, and a lot of suburban zoning requires large lots that are environmentally wasteful and force people to drive everywhere.

But Bolton Hill is not like that. Bolton Hill and the other developed neighborhoods of Baltimore's center city are not the causes of America's housing problems. We don't exclude renters or people of varied incomes. In fact, 60 percent of Bolton Hillers are renters, and about 20 percent of them live in government-financed low-income housing. And we are not suburban sprawl. Bolton Hill has a population density of 24,000 people per square mile. How dense is that? So dense that, if all of metropolitan Baltimore were as dense as Bolton Hill, you could fit the combined population of metropolitan Baltimore – everyone from Annapolis to Columbia to Westminster to Havre de Grace -- into the boundaries of the city.

Those of us who have studied this issue hope that you will get in touch with your councilmember and any other city officials and say that you support your association's position. Zac Blanchard (zac.blanchard@Baltimorecity.gov), who represents Bolton Hill south of McMechen Street, is a sponsor of Council Bill 25-0066. Please ask him to modify his position. Council member James Torrence (James.Torrence@baltimorecity.gov), whose district includes the rest of the neighborhood, has said he does not support the legislation, but he needs to hear from us, as well.

Of the other bills in this five-bill package:

- One is designed to eliminate parking requirements for many developers and landlords. We recommend amending this so that it fits with our compromise proposal on 25-0066. Owners and renters who park on the streets of Bolton Hill may be troubled by this proposal as it exists.
- One is designed to allow people to build buildings that cover their entire lots. We oppose this.
- One is designed to move Zoning from the Department of Housing and Community Development to the Planning Department. We support this.
- One is designed to reduce the requirements for fire exits. We have taken no position as this is a technical question for architects and code officials.

For his part, Council Member Blanchard says the test of the legislation is: "Will the package create lower-cost opportunities for homeownership? Will the package lower the average price of rent? Will the package reduce homelessness? Will the package expedite the end of our crisis of vacant buildings and lots?"

No doubt there are neighborhoods in the city where landlord investors from out-of-town are a welcome alternative to today's underinvestment. That is not the case in Bolton Hill, nor is our neighborhood likely to become more affordable for first-time homebuyers – although there is within the neighborhood quite a range of housing available for purchase – from small apartments to historic, stately homes.

--*Charlie Duff*

Train whistles are back in Bolton Hill, two years ahead of schedule

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/howard-st-tunnel-completion/>



On Sept. 26, CSX officials gathered at MICA's Mt. Royal Station to celebrate the reopening of the Howard Street Tunnel – ahead of schedule. This event marked the completion of a construction project that increased the 130-year-old tunnel's diameter by nearly two feet to accommodate double-stacked trains.

The construction to enlarge the tunnel began in February 2025 and was originally scheduled to include workarounds to accommodate existing train traffic, extending the completion date to late 2027. Subsequently, CSX negotiated an agreement to reroute the train traffic, allowing construction to proceed 24/7, which accelerated the completion of the work by nearly two years. According to CSX, the tunnel expansion was completed in 233 consecutive days of work, including weekends and holidays.

Train traffic has returned to the Howard Street Tunnel, and you can again hear the train whistles from Bolton Hill. Double-stacked trains, however, cannot be accommodated in the tunnel until the bridge and clearance work are completed on North Avenue and several other locations along the CSX corridor between Baltimore and Philadelphia. The entire clearance project is scheduled for completion in the first quarter of 2026.

When finished, double-stacked trains will provide increased capacity and efficiency for intermodal shipping along the I-95 Corridor from Florida to the Northeast and provide improved access to the Midwest and other inland markets from the Port of Baltimore. The Port of Baltimore estimates that the clearance project will move an additional 160,000 containers through the port annually and generate 13,000 new jobs. CSX projects that the project could produce up to 125,000 new intermodal loads annually. This can have a tremendous direct impact on the local and national economy and should reduce truck traffic on the I-95 corridor.

The Howard Street Tunnel Clearance Project is an incredible accomplishment and a testament to how things can get done when the parties work together in partnerships. From the dedication and perseverance of the funding partners (CSX, the Federal Railroad Administration, the State of Maryland, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and the City of Baltimore) to the creativity and collaboration between CSX and its Skanska-Fay Joint Venture Construction team, this important national project was completed

under budget and nearly 2 years early. And it happened in our backyard!

--*Sallye Perrin*

Kurt Schmoke to speak at Gray Panthers salon

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/kurt-schmoke-gray-panthers/>



Kurt Schmoke – Baltimore’s mayor from 1987 to 1999 and currently the president of the century-old University of Baltimore – will speak at a BHCA Salon hosted by the Gray Panthers on Monday, Nov. 10 from 6 to 7:30 p.m. at Linden Park Apartments Community Room.

Admission is free and all are invited. Schmoke was the city’s first African-American mayor and previously served on the city council. He served as dean of Howard University’s School of Law before assuming his duties at UB in 2014. He was invited to speak reflecting on his half century of experience in public life and what he sees ahead for Baltimore and the country.

Now 75, Schmoke may become the first non-resident member of Bolton Hill’s Gray Panthers, which exists to encourage neighborhood residents who wish to do so to age gracefully in place.

Linden Park Apartments are located at 302 McMechen Street, across from the Sav-a-Lot strip mall, where parking is plentiful. Light refreshments will be available

In Karen Warshal's art, the ordinary becomes extraordinary

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/karen-warshal-art/>



“Someone, Somewhere, Something,” is the title of Karen Warshal’s solo exhibition, currently on view at Gallery Blue Door. In the cozy and bright front room of the Mount Vernon gallery (833 Park Ave.). Warshal’s paintings are glimpses into intimate spaces, where a bowl of lemons, a bouquet of roses, and a basket of vegetables are portrayed with precision and careful attention.

The paintings on display include objects of ordinary life, yet they glow with what is extra-ordinary; elegant arrangements, clear and subdued color palettes, and vibrant, atmospheric light. This light bathes the subjects, whether the subject is a figure sitting for a portrait (the Someone), a landscape, quiet and serene (the Somewhere), or the aforementioned Still Life compositions (the Something).

A visit to Warshal’s studio makes it apparent that she is steady and prolific. The walls of the second and third floors of her Bolton Street rowhome are covered with canvases of people, places, and things that tell a variety of stories. She has completed a series of figurative canvases that tell Biblical stories. Other figurative portraits are strikingly straightforward and bold, with the figure looking directly out at the viewer. One aspect of her aesthetic that connects all her motifs is a desire for pleasing images. “I am after beauty. I know when the painting is finished because it is finally beautiful.”

The light that is so important to Warshal’s work enters her third-floor studio via a sky light, intentionally designed to be open to the northern light. “This is the light you want,” she says, “indirect light from above.” Under this skylight is where models sit every Saturday for figure drawing and painting sessions and through which the room fills with natural light.

Warshal is an absolutist when it comes to working from life. Between her models for portraits and objects for still lifes, her work is all about observing life authentically. This is one thing she tells her students, “If you copy from a photo, it isn’t going to be as good, and you certainly won’t learn as much.” Warshal thrives in the process of drawing from life. To her, “my models are my collaborators.”

Warshal has lived in their home in Bolton Hill for over 28 years and in the Baltimore area for 30. Her husband, Michael Tobin, sometimes models for her and is featured in one of her paintings in City Hall. After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1970's, followed by grad school at the Boston Museum School, she found herself in the greater DC area, studying at the Parker School of Structural Sculpture in Bethesda and later at the Schuler School in Baltimore for instruction in classical art.

Now, her art and her teaching connect her to MICA, where for 16 years she has taught portraiture and anatomy, classes that are sought after and always full. Her art and interests also have led her to spending extensive time in Italy, where she “accidentally” bought a house a few years back (you ask her), and where she leads art-historical tours through provinces such as Umbria and Sicily as well as to the major art centers of Rome, Florence and Venice. Fluent in Italian, Warshal is enamored with the work of the Renaissance and Old Masters. Her study of their work is apparent in the way that she uses the motifs and moods of the periods to make work that is both contemporary and classical.

You can learn more about Warshal's work at karenwarshal.com. She has paintings in the 2025 MICA Faculty Exhibition through Oct. 19, a show at City Hall through Nov. 14, and at Gallery Blue Door through Nov. 22. *See the BHCA Facebook and Instagram pages for images of Warshal's work.*

--*Francine Marchese*

Druid Lake perimeter is open, but completion of the project is years away

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/druid-lake-perimeter-open/>



Then-Mayor Catherine Pugh at 2017 ceremony starting work on the lake, which, the sign says, would be complete by 2022. Credit: Baltimore Brew

Let's say you were a young Bolton Hill couple expecting a baby when plans to reconstruct Druid Lake first came into view. By now, if all went to plan, your child could be about to finish college.

Everything has *not* gone according to plan since the federal EPA in 2006 directed the city of Baltimore to cover at least that portion of the reservoir in Druid Hill Park that supplies drinking water to much of the city. Construction finally began in 2017 with a big sign posted promising completion in 2022. Notwithstanding obvious progress, the project continues at a crawling pace.

For neighborhood bikers, hikers and joggers who used to count access to the lake's perimeter as a major asset, it is finally once again possible to circle the smaller lake's edge without much inconvenience, once you figure out how to get past the fences and roads that segregate it from the reservoir area and the rest of the 745-acre expanse that is one of the oldest city parks in the nation.

It has been more than a year since city council president Nick Mosby, fresh from a Democratic primary drubbing, exulted, "I can ride off on my horse knowing that Druid Park Lake is done," even as the Board of Estimates on which he served was approving \$4 million in over-budget payments for some of the work that separated the reservoir now storing water in huge underground tanks from the remaining part of the lake. That piece of work, the tanks, seems complete and covered with healthy lawns of green and brown grasses, but is still entirely fenced off.

So far, more than \$140 million of mostly federal and state funds has been spent. The rest is up to the city. In July 2020, the Board of Estimates awarded architects Unknown Studio \$1.5 million to create a "vision plan." Two years later, it was estimated that the new amenities – a wish list that has included a footbridge across the lake, a lakeside restaurant, an amphitheater, maybe little islands, a boat dock, a new trail around the entire circumference of the park – would cost at least \$50 million more.

The state has committed \$17 million for lake improvements. The city coughed up \$800,000 for additional planning and studies. The other millions are still to be found. Three city agencies are involved in the project: Recreation and Parks, Public Works, and Transportation. Appearing on WYPR's Tom Hall Show

a few days ago, Rec and Parks chief Russell Moore put blame for the delays on DPW.

He said his agency is designing the first phase of the “vision” execution so that once DPW moves on, it can *start* to execute – by July 2027! He said, “things around the lake still need attention,” like strengthening the shore. Moore acknowledged that the project “has been longer than usual.... There’s times when you have plans, and unknown things come up.”

If he qualifies, that kid born to Bolton Hill parents might be finishing law school or entering a medical residency before the Druid Lake project is actually finished. A lakeside amphitheater could be a great place for a wedding.

--*Bill Hamilton*

Bmore Community Fridge opens a nearby location; volunteers invited

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/community-fridge-opens-nearby/>



The Bolton Hill area now has a new way to share food, reduce waste and strengthen community care. Bmore Community Fridge Network (BCFN) has opened a community fridge and pantry at Woofotel, a pet care facility located at 863 N. Howard St. The fridge is open daily from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., making it the closest and most accessible location to Bolton Hill.

Bmore Community Fridge Network is a grassroots initiative combating food insecurity and food waste throughout the city. The group recently has expanded into several county locations, as well. The concept is simple but powerful: “Take what you need, leave what you can.” Each fridge and pantry provides free, easily accessible food to anyone, 24/7 or during set hours, no questions asked.

Stocked and maintained by volunteers and community members, these fridges rely on collective generosity — a shared effort to ensure that everyone has access to fresh, healthy food. The network has both full-size and mini fridges, pantry-only locations and pet pantries. They have partnerships with Future ThinkHub and Leftover Love Inc. Both non-profits provide some of the rescued food to help fill the fridges.

BCFN was co-founded by four community leaders, two with roots in Bolton Hill. Elizabeth Ann Miller, an artist, art educator and community organizer, and Marci Yankelov, a REALTOR®, BHCA board member and a longtime food rescue coordinator, lived in the neighborhood and helped shape the vision of the network. They are joined by Julie Kichline, owner of Kik-line Design, who has been instrumental in creating the network’s brand, design, graphics and site map. The fourth co-founder, Lila Perilloux, is a former consultant who retired to become a full-time volunteer.

The fridge at Woofotel extends BFCN’s mission into our backyard. It includes both a refrigerator for fresh items and a dry pantry for shelf-stable goods and hygiene items. Community members are

encouraged to contribute regularly by donating fruits and vegetables, packaged meals, snacks, drinks and small hygiene items.

Homemade meals are welcome and should be labeled clearly with basic ingredients, allergens and the date. An easy way to contribute is by cooking a little extra so you have leftovers that can go into the fridge or get together with friends to make sandwiches. Another way to help is to give a second life to single-use plastic containers from food deliveries and groceries, which the network encourages neighbors to collect and share with community cooks.

Moving into the colder months, donations of soups, stews, and ready-to-heat meals are especially appreciated. Even small contributions add up to a big impact when shared across our neighborhood. Marci says. “We could fill these fridges multiple times a day and they would still empty quickly.”

The Bmore Community Fridge Network reminds us that food is more than sustenance — it’s a form of care, connection, and solidarity. By participating, Bolton Hill residents can help ensure that neighbors in our city have access to good food and the dignity that comes with it.

Other nearby fridge locations are at 2122 Maryland Ave., 1820 Pennsylvania Ave. and at Red Emma’s bookstore/café, 3128 Greenmount Ave. See a map of fridge and pantry locations, and learn more about how you can contribute by volunteering or hosting a site here:

<https://linktr.ee/bmorecommunityfridgenetwork>.

BCFN has a Facebook page and invites interested parties to join the conversation. Fridge network leaders also are available to speak at community events and conferences as well as help with corporate days of service.

--Marci Yankelov

Neighbors launch petition for historically-sensitive safety measures

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/petition-safety-measures/>



A group of Bolton Hill neighbors has created a petition that seeks both improved traffic safety and solutions that are respectful of our neighborhood's historic character.

The recently installed flexi-posts along Park Avenue were a first step toward addressing transportation safety concerns. We should thank the BHCA Transportation Committee for initiating this effort. However, many residents believe safety can be further improved. Flex-posts do little to reduce vehicle speeds except at intersections, and some have already been damaged, creating additional hazards.

To move forward, meaningful collaboration with the Baltimore City Department of Transportation (BCDOT) is essential. The goal is to develop more permanent options that are context sensitive and more completely address neighborhood safety hazards. Importantly, there is no intent to remove the existing flex-posts until alternative solutions are developed and agreed upon by residents.

The petition has already received strong support from neighbors. An electronic version can be viewed at sites.google.com/view/bhcandobetter.

If neighbors prefer to sign the paper petition or want to assist, please contact:

Ellen Meyer at emeyer1818@aol.com or

James Prost at jprostmd@gmail.com

Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-oct25/>



Mayor backs down on Sisson Street dump relocation

Once in a while when citizens make get riled up they make a difference. Consider the Sisson Street dump controversy. The mayor, without public notice, made a deal with a developer friend to sell it and move the recycling and hazardous materials site to 2801 Falls Road, in a flood plain near the Jones Falls.

Amid protests from people concerned that heavy rain would wash pollution from the site into the Jones Falls stream, among other objections, the process was put on hold. Many of those protesting were from Bolton Hill and adjoining neighborhoods. Now “all options are on the table,” the mayor said last week as he announced a task force to reconsider his decision.

City Council Member James Torrence, whose 8th district includes half of Bolton Hill and Reservoir Hill, is on the task force with two other council members. Representatives from eight community groups will make up the rest of the task force including a delegate from our Midtown Community Benefits District and Friends of the Jones Falls, Stonehill Community Association, Hampden Community Association, Greater Remington Improvement Association, Charles Village Civic Association, Reservoir Hill Community Association and Bikemore.

Don't drive on Saturday, Oct. 18!

The 25th annual Baltimore Running Festival kicks off at 7:30 a.m. from Pratt and Light Streets and they'll cover much of the city before it is all over around 2 p.m. Information about street closings can be found at <https://www.thebaltimoremarathon.com/Race/MD/Baltimore/TheBaltimoreRunningFestival>

BHCA creates working group to monitor State Center developments

BHCA President Lee Tawney named a task force to keep an eye on machinations by the state and the city as the office complex known as State Center empties out its remaining occupants and becomes a potential problem until it is redeveloped. He named Charlie Duff to chair and Beth Benner, Davin Hong, Sallye Perrin and himself to serve. Others who are interested may join.

The state's Department of General Services announced in June that it would hire a consultant who can

draw up a vision for the site. The consultant will review all the prior State Center plans and studies – (there have been quite a few,) identify options for building and rebuilding and come up with cost estimates and potential funding sources. That initial effort could cost as much as \$2 million.

It has been a quarter century since the state first announced plans to close the decaying complex with lots of political maneuvering by several governors and litigation over what will happen when. The last 2,000+ employees are expected to move out and relocate downtown in 2026.

Brown Memorial to offer afternoon “Tiffany” concert on Nov. 16

Lyric soprano Natanya Sheva Washer and guitarist Sean Brennan will perform a curated program of arrangements for guitar and voice on Sunday, Nov. 16 at 3:00 pm in Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church’s sanctuary. It will feature the work of female and minority composers for an evening that blends the healing power of music with moments of deep meditation.

Each piece has been chosen to evoke harmony with nature, introspection and connection. The program will feature works by Rosephanye Powell, Kaija Saariaho, William Grant Still, and Laura Snowden. The church’s collection of eleven original Tiffany stained-glass windows creates a gorgeous setting for this exciting concert.

About The Bulletin

The *Bolton Hill Bulletin* is published monthly, except for July and August. It is designed by Elizabeth Peters. Paula Jackson is our proofreader. We invite others to help with writing, editing, photography or work on the business side. Contributors this month were, among others, Kevin Cross, Charlie Duff, John Loggin, Francine Marchese, Ellen Meyer, Sallye Perrin, Lee Tawney and Marci Yankelov. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the editor, Bill Hamilton. Comments are welcome at bulletin@boltonhillmd.org

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