

Bolton Hill

Community Association

Table Of Contents

Most reported crime categories fell in 2025 in Bolton Hill 3

Bolton Hill ‘pioneer’ remembered for her energy and activism 4

Garden Club offering grants for neighborhood green space projects 6

This ‘Artist of the Month’, Ash Esposito, also runs Unity Hall 7

Bolton Hill’s residential footprint changed and grew in the 20th Century 9

Says our guru: these times require meditation 25

Renewed and reorganizing, Midtown District begins the new year 27

MICA to celebrate bicentennial with Fête of Lights gala, other activities 29

Future for further zoning modification is uncertain 30

Bolton Hill Notes 31

Most reported crime categories fell in 2025 in Bolton Hill

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/crime-down-in-2025/>



Crime in Bolton Hill was down significantly from 2024 to 2025, but reported incidents of property crime bumped up, the chair of BHCA's safety committee, James Prost, told the association's January meeting.

The number of incidents of violence in the neighborhood decreased from 50 to 28, a decline of 44 percent. Violent crime in the city as a whole declined by 19 percent and violent crime in the Western Police District (which includes Bolton Hill) was down 24 percent. Violent crime includes homicide and rape, which did not occur in Bolton Hill in either year, but also robberies, aggravated assault and domestic incidents.

Year-over-year property crime in Bolton Hill increased significantly ? from 162 to 118 incidents, or 37 percent. This increase was primarily a result of a double increase in burglaries, from 14 incidents to 32 incidents. Fortunately, the accused perpetrator of most of these burglaries was arrested in November and the burglaries seem to have stopped.

Property crimes in the city decreased by 8 percent but were up in the Western District. Burglaries in both the city as a whole and in the Western District were essentially flat. In addition to burglaries (which include breaking into a property), property crimes include larceny (stealing from a store, yard or auto), auto theft, and arson. A high proportion of property crimes in Bolton Hill consist of shoplifting from retail establishments such as Walgreens and Sav-A-Lot.

Violent crime declined citywide from approximately 17.9 to 14.6 incidents per 1000 people. In Bolton Hill the violent crime rate declined from 10 incidents per 1000 population to approximately 5.6 incidents per 1000.

Monthly neighborhood coordination meetings are held with the Western District on the third Tuesday each month. BHCA Safety Committee meetings are held the third Wednesday every month at 5 p.m. in the Brown Memorial Church Parish office on Park Avenue. Both are open to the public. More information from jprostmd@gmail.com .

Bolton Hill ‘pioneer’ remembered for her energy and activism

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/henri-daniels-remembered/>



Henri Ann Daniels, a longtime resident of Bolton Hill and an activist in neighborhood and city affairs, died at the age of 83 on Dec. 15 after a brief hospitalization. A funeral at Douglas Memorial Community Church a few days later attracted a hall filled with family, neighbors, professional colleagues and friends who came to remember the diminutive woman who helped restore Eutaw Place half a century earlier.

“She was a Bolton Hill pioneer,” said BHCA President Lee Tawney.

Henri was one of eight children born to her parents in the small community of Everetts, in eastern North Carolina. Her mother died when Henri was just two and she was raised by her grandparents on a farm they owned nearby. At the age of 10 she moved to Baltimore to pursue an education not easily available to black children in the rural south at that time, where she lived with her older sister, Della.

She graduated from Edmondson High school as a member of its first integrated class in 1959, later enrolling at Morgan State University. She graduated from Morgan and successfully pursued a social work master’s degree at Howard University. According to her daughter, she developed a passion for politics and civic affairs in college that stayed with her for the rest of her life. She ran unsuccessfully for Baltimore’s city council in 1983. Earlier she interned in the congressional office of U.S. Rep. George H. Fallon (D-MD).

She was working for the city, lived on Preston Street, and often walked along Eutaw Place, admiring the neighborhood. A friend told her about a city program to sell off old Eutaw houses that had been allowed to deteriorate, cut up into what the city’s housing director at the time called “real rabbit warrens.” In 1976, she applied and won a lottery to take possession of a four-story building at 1308 Eutaw. That began the expensive and slow process of restoring the building into four distinctive apartments. (More about that here: <https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/eutaw-place-history/>)

“I believe that’s how she met my father; he was the contractor,” said her daughter, Dr. Angela Watkins. “I remember as a child we were living on the third floor,” while the work continued on the floors below, she said. Later the family moved down to the entry floor, but at the time of her death Henri had re-located back to the third floor while again renovating downstairs. She and her ex-husband, Vincent Watkins, remained close friends, according to their daughter.

Dr. Watkins, a physician, attended Mt. Royal Elementary School and the Friends School. Her mother was

active in PTA activities. She said her mother was passionate about keeping the neighborhood safe and positive. She teamed with the Prince Hall Masons leadership across the street to keep that block of the Eutaw median park well groomed. “She was always committed to something. I grew up handing out leaflets,” her daughter said.

Henri volunteered with Friends of the Lillie Carroll Jackson Museum and worked to preserve Baltimore’s civil rights legacy. She was a longtime member and officer of the church where she was memorialized.

Garden Club offering grants for neighborhood green space projects

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/garden-club-greening-grants/>



The Bolton Hill Garden Club Greening Grants Program is now accepting grant applications. They are to help create and improve publicly accessible green spaces to beautify the Bolton Hill, Marble Hill, and Madison Park Communities. The deadline for proposals is March 1. Awards will be announced April 1.

“We fund the planting and maintenance of neighborhood parks, public green space, and tree wells. Priority projects focus on the planting of perennial flowers and native plants, shrubbery and trees, and related gardening materials. We will consider, in the case of tree wells for example, hardscape or labor costs to enlarge, prepare, or contain green spaces,” the program coordinator, Bonnie Legro, said.

Applications are evaluated by the Bolton Hill Garden Club Grant Committee. Previous grants ranged from under \$100 to over \$2,000. Last year, the Bolton Hill Garden Club awarded 11 grants totaling \$10,000. More information at <https://boltonhillgardenclub.org/greening-grants/>

This ‘Artist of the Month’, Ash Esposito, also runs Unity Hall

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/artist-of-month-ash-esposito/>



Ashley (Ash) Esposito has many talents. She is a visual artist, community organizer, non-profit leader, elected school board member, and a mother. Her life is busy, yet what is remarkable is how successfully she weaves together these varied roles with her mission, purpose, and creative intention.

Since becoming executive director of Baltimore Unity Hall in 2024, Esposito has overseen a series of art exhibitions and community events, as well as managing a suite of artist studios now at full occupancy. In the main gallery on the first floor, she and her team host exhibitions that give voice and space to artists in the community. Esposito attributes the success of these programs to collective effort, crediting her staff, partners and network. Her strength, she explains, is “bringing people together.”

Located at 1505 Eutaw Place, Baltimore Unity Hall serves and unites the Central West neighborhoods of Madison Park, Marble Hill, Bolton Hill, and Upton. Recent exhibitions, including *Sacred Ground* and *To Baltimore with Love*, combine visual and literary art with community gatherings, artist talks, and open mics. In leading programs such as these, Esposito is guided by her stated passions: “the arts, accessibility, storytelling, and community placemaking.”

As an artist herself, with a studio in the Old Goucher neighborhood, she says, “any type of artwork makes my heart happy.” On her website, *Little Box of Random*, one can see her expansive range, from photography and painting to graphic design. “It took me a long time to call myself an artist,” she reflects. “People said pick a lane, but I like the flexibility.” What connects her work across mediums are her inspirations and intentions. “Art became my way of expressing myself,” she explains.

In a recent solo show of paintings, *Mind’s Eye*, held at Red Emma’s, Esposito used bold color and vivid imagery—eyes and tears—as a visual catharsis for childhood traumas. In similar work, paintings titled *Vertigo* and *Migraine*, she utilizes abstraction and strong colors to convey physical pain. And in *Return to*

the Land, a group show at Motor House Gallery, she exhibited work exploring her Afro-Indigenous identity. Much of her recent painting focuses on this heritage, “reclaiming ancestral foods, language, rituals, and stories.” Revisiting her family's roots in South Carolina, where she is a tribal member of the Lower Eastern Cherokee Nation, inspired a multimedia collage about kinship, solidarity and the historic alliance between Black and Indigenous people.

Originally from Arizona, Esposito spent her high school years in Wilmington, DE. After graduating, she pursued opportunities aligned with her artistic interests, though undiagnosed learning disabilities initially stood in her way. Once treated, she was able to move forward with renewed strength and determination.

Twenty years ago Esposito settled in Baltimore, where she earned a bachelor’s degree in software development from the University of Maryland Global Campus and is currently pursuing an MBA. Her dedication to her adopted city extends beyond leading a community nonprofit; she also serves as an elected commissioner on the Baltimore City School Board. A passionate advocate for wraparound services for Baltimore’s students and families, Esposito draws on her personal experiences with learning challenges. She is guided by purpose-driven values of “community, accessibility, and educational equity.” She is up for re-election in 2026.

Esposito lives with her husband, Calogero, and their son, Vincenzo (Vinny), in Southwest Baltimore. Vinny is a kindergarten student in Baltimore City Public Schools. The family includes a dog, Chachi, and two cats, Sunshine and Lemon.

You can view photos of Esposito’s work on the BHCA Facebook page. Visit her portfolio at littleboxofrandom.com to see the full range of her artwork, and learn about upcoming events and artist calls at Baltimore Unity Hall at baltimoreunityhall.org.

--*Francine Marchese*

Bolton Hill's residential footprint changed and grew in the 20th Century

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bh-residential-footprint-changes/>



A view of Sutton Place Apartments (nee ReNew) taken from Howard Avenue. (Credit: Eli Pousson)

When one thinks today of Bolton Hill or describes it to a friend, it's likely to reflect a bias for what the City of Baltimore website calls *its strong Victorian-era, traditional rowhouse character with relatively intact blocks of structures from the middle-to-late-19th Century*. A few of those buildings date back to pre-Civil War times.

No one talks much about the “new” Bolton Hill: the hundreds of rowhouses and apartment units constructed in the 20th Century. The advent of that “new” construction dates to the early 1960s and seemingly ended with the opening of Spicer's Run, the gated community opened in 1998 on the neighborhood's northern boundary.

Our intrepid neighborhood historian, attorney Kevin Cross, takes a deep dive into the origins of 10 real estate developments that more than doubled the neighborhood population. It raises but does not answer the question: Is Bolton Hill expansion over, frozen in time?

Within our long-established boundaries there remains at least one big plot available for significant new construction: the three-acre vacant site of Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School, closed and empty since 2023. The city makes occasional noises about releasing the property and at least one local developer has expressed interest. Stay tuned.

For almost 300 years, the people of Baltimore—a kaleidoscopic mix from the beginning—have been

building and rebuilding their city. ... As the community has grown, as tastes have changed, as business has evolved and technology advanced, Baltimoreans have built and razed buildings, opened and closed streets, and restored and demolished whole neighborhoods.

- from the introduction to *Then & Now: Baltimore Architecture* (2006), by Charlie Duff & Tracey Clark

In late 1926 and early 1927, aerial photos of Baltimore were snapped from a surveying airplane, including this composite image of Bolton Hill:



Baltimore City Archives (Dept. of Public Works)

hosted at Maryland State Archives, available at

https://mdhistory.msa.maryland.gov/bca_brg47_39/bca_brg47_39_1/html/brg47_39_1-0047.html

In 1964, another plane passed over the neighborhood, capturing the dramatic changes since the earlier photos:



Baltimore City Aerial Maps (file 16-312) available at

<http://jhir.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/34678>

The light-colored parts of the 1964 photo show entire blocks razed for “Urban Renewal,” when dilapidated structures, mostly along Linden Ave., were demolished to make way for modern homes.

In follow-up to the September 2025 Bulletin article showing 1950s and 1960s photos by [R. Julian Roszel, Jr.](#), it might be useful to survey the various “modern” housing developments, some of which are now more than 60 years old themselves – not so modern anymore.

1. Sutton Place – 1962/1963

The 300-apartment tower at 1111 Park Ave. was the first new housing project in Bolton Hill in the modern era, originally called Sutton Place. “The Sutton” – now known as “Renew Mt. Vernon” – sits east of Park Ave., immediately south of Dolphin Ln. (formerly known as Dolphin St. there), and this 1952 Sanborn map with added red boxes shows the houses and buildings previously occupying that space:



Sanborn Map Co., vol. 2, 1914; republished 1952, available at https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn03573_038/ (red boxes added)

Originally, the Sutton was proposed to be two towers:



USModernist.org, Spring 1960, available at <https://www.usmodernist.org/AIABALT/AIABALT-1960-spring.pdf>

It was by design that the commercial storefronts face Howard Street, according to a February 1961

Baltimore Sun article, to accommodate Bolton Hillers' concerns about "creeping commercialism." A September 1963 Sun article pointed out that the white marble steps at the upper entrance, supporting lamp posts now, were stoops found on site after the earlier houses were demolished, and the band of red bricks were pavers previously used for the surface of Howard Street.



The Sutton had a dinner theater open there in 1969, and in October of that year it hosted a fashion show narrative by the actress Joan Crawford. According to former Bolton Hillers Richard Stein and Dino Sangiamo, the Baltimore Colts player Bubba Smith, who later acted in movies such as *Police Academy*, lived at the Sutton.

Consider those aerial photos and the landscape into which the Sutton was born. An August 1963 Sun editorial said of the building, "While now complete in itself, it still stands amid the rubble of companion structures yet to come and companion improvements yet to be fulfilled." (Further detail about the history of 1111 Park Ave. can be found in the excellent blog entry "Sordid Sutton Place" by Mt. Vernon resident Julian Frost on [Substack](#))

2. Bolton Place – 1965

Bolton Place is a group of 16 houses – two connected rows and one freestanding home – opposite the Sutton on the west side of Park Ave., shown on this 1965 plat map:



<https://gis.baltimorecity.gov/zoning/blockplats/0421.pdf>

Prior to Bolton Place, this irregular plot of land had been the site of several houses and a church fronting on Park Ave., shown in this embellished excerpt of the 1952 Sanborn map:



1952 Sanborn map, red line added, available at https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195202/?sp=64

The new development's two rows of houses enclose a courtyard accessible by Park Ave.:



[Walter Sondheim Jr.](#) lived in Bolton Place at no. 201, and the freestanding house at the back of the rows was the home of Gerald Johnson, a writer who had previously lived at 1310 Bolton Street. According Frank Shivers, he was who had these decorative elements installed at the entrance to his new Bolton Hill house:



In his 1995 book *Walking in Baltimore*, author Frank R. Shivers Jr. wrote that these medallions were brought to Bolton Place by Gerald W. Johnson.

Bolton Place has a fun origin story stemming from a misunderstanding, recounted in the Sun's old "Gallimaufry" column in March 1980. The brief anecdote is best taken in full rather than summarized:

If we go back to the beginnings of Baltimore's renaissance, one of the earliest urban renewal projects was in the Mount Royal-Bolton Hill area north of the 5th Regiment Armory. The Sutton Place apartments were its most visible symbol. The late Gerald W. Johnson and his wife Kathryn had occupied for 25 years a rented house in the 1300 block of Bolton street. Their landlord's notification that he wanted to reclaim the house coincided with the razing of nearby blocks for renewal purposes. Mr. Johnson called Walter Sondheim to say that Kathryn and he liked downtown living and wanted to buy a piece of the renewal land on which to build a house. Mr. Sondheim took Richard Steiner, then the city's renewal chief, to see the Johnsons and explain that urban renewal land was sold in large parcels, not individual house lots.

The story might have ended here, except that Mr. Sondheim was disturbed that a famous writer's desire could not be accommodated, so he had a talk with James Rouse, who aroused the interest of a Philadelphia architectural firm in building a townhouse development with one lot set aside on which the Johnsons could build their own home. Thus, Bolton Place came into being as a pioneering example of new in-town living, and all because one determined couple liked it where they were and wanted a house lot.

A correction the next month clarified that the Philadelphia firm, Van Arkel & Moss, Inc., was the project's developer, while the architect was Richard C. Donkervoet, of the Baltimore firm Cochran, Stephenson & Donkervoet. Among the architectural elements helping the modern houses fit their surroundings are bishop cap chimneys:



3. Memorial Apartments – 1966/1967

Now known as Linden Park Apartments, the 286-unit building at 301 W. McMechen was originally known as the Memorial Apartments.



The 12-story tower has a three-pointed star footprint, seen in this Google maps image:

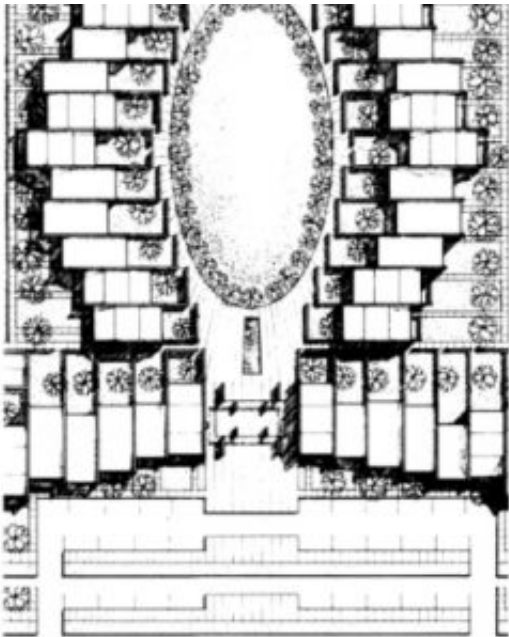


These apartments were created by nearby Memorial Episcopal Church “to prevent deterioration of the neighborhood” and as “a way of helping people,” according to an October 1966 Sun article. The project was specifically for residents at least 62 years old and with income limitations. Construction got underway in November 1965, and at a cost of about \$3 million, the project was completed and dedicated in May 1967. (Decades later, in the 2010s, part of the lot was subdivided to create The Jordan, market-rate apartments, discussed at <https://macbaltimore.org/linden-park-apartments>.)

The building was once home to a restaurant called the Café at Bolton Green, which even merited a mostly positive review from the Sun’s former restaurant critic (with the best aptronym in the business) Elizabeth Large. Of spotty service, she suggested a silver lining: “One of the problems was that this is a neighborhood restaurant, our waitress seemed to know and stopped to chat with practically every other table but ours. That’s the important thing to remember about the Café at Bolton Green, I suppose. It’s a neighborhood restaurant – one I wish I had in my neighborhood, as a matter of fact.”

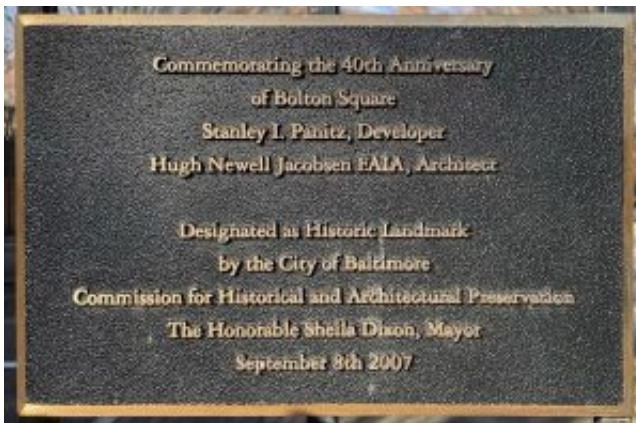
4. Bolton Square – 1967

North of W. Lafayette, between Jordan St. and Mason St., sits Bolton Square, a group of 35 houses in staggered rows, designed by architect Hugh Newell Jacobsen and built by Stanley Panitz, clustered around a central green space.



Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Architect, preview available at https://www.google.com/books/edition/Hugh_Newell_Jacobsen_Architect/63qCmyexUZ8C?hl=en&gbpv=1

Mr. Panitz himself lived in Bolton Square at 236 W. Lafayette, and among the other early residents was Larry Reich, Director of Planning for Baltimore. The houses were designated a historic [landmark](#) by Baltimore City in 2007 and have won multiple design awards.



5. Lafayette Close – 1968

The plan had been for all the modern houses south of Lafayette Ave., along what had been Linden Ave., to be built at once, but those plans took a left turn. A February 1965 Sun article announced that the developer, called “Redevelopers of Baltimore,” would be building 40 new townhouses named “Lafayette Close” in the block south of Lafayette, north of Lanvale, and between Mason and Jordan streets. The total number of houses planned increased with time.

Ground was broken for the first seven red-roofed houses on the south side of W. Lafayette Ave. in August 1966 (i.e., 243-255 W. Lafayette Ave.). But a May 1966 Sun article had said the commitment to build the whole project at once had been “eased,” scaled back to building the project “in five stages.” It was reported this was mandated by the mortgage lender: “If the seven houses built in the first stage should not sell and Redevelopers was foreclosed, the bank’s liability would be less than if it were saddled with 43 unsalable houses.”



Richard Stauffer was identified in articles as the architect of the project. One wonders if his red roofs were a visual reference to the roofs on 204 W. Lanvale St. – the nursery school (and [oldest existing Bolton Hill house](#)) – and to 211 W. Lanvale St. At any rate, once these were built, the rest of the project stalled for several years.

6. Park Purchase I / Atrium – 1975



In the image below, this edited excerpt of the plat for the area south of Lafayette shows in green the seven houses previously built as Lafayette Close, and in orange are the next 29 houses – the first phase of the joint venture between Park Purchase Corp. and Atrium Inc. [Morton Sarubin](#), who had developed the Beethoven Apartments, headed up Atrium, while Arthur L.S. Waxter Sr. led Park Purchase (hence his name now appears on a lane down near Dolphin St.) In the image, the bottom two rows of houses on Lanvale are just the top half of what’s commonly called the “Lion Park” today. The lower half of those

weren't built until later.



Plans for these 29 additional houses were approved by the city in July 1973 (over some objections from the Mt. Royal Improvement Association, related to parking and other elements). A May 1974 article, once construction was underway, noted the new architects involved were Peter D. Paul Associates. Of the courtyard in the center of the block, the article explained: “Park Purchase will include an elaborate landscape plan for the townhouses, featuring a park and plaza. The plaza will have a garden pool and fountain, with a wooden footbridge over the pool.”

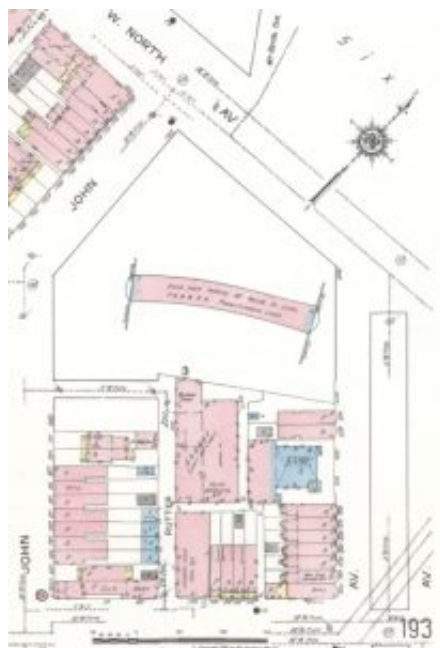


The house at 1307 Linden Green was profiled in an April 4, 1976 Sun [article](#).



7. Bolton North – 1977

Bolton Hill got its third new apartment building in 1977, the Bolton North high-rise on Mt. Royal between McMechen Street and North Avenue. On this site there once stood several houses and the Mt. Royal Ave. Methodist Protestant Church.

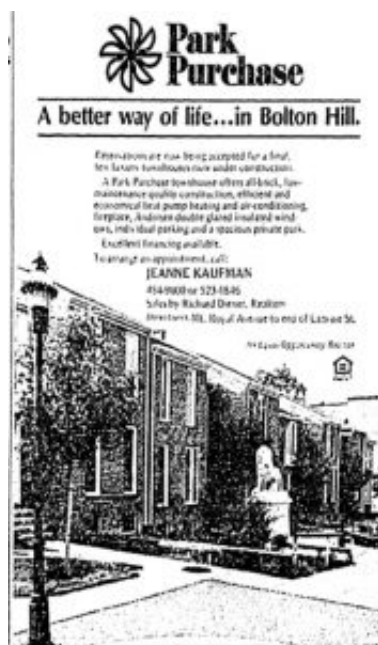


In April 1976 the Sun reported that the 15-story, 208-unit building would be constructed here “for low and moderate income renters.”



8. Park Purchase II - 1979

A June 1978 advertisement in the Sun announced that the then-final phase of Park Purchase was under construction, and an accompanying photo shows us that by then, the [lions](#) had been installed. These are the 15 modern townhouses on the south side of Lanvale St. between Mason Street and Eutaw Place.



The blurry text of the advertisement begins, “Reservations are now being accepted for a final few luxury townhouses under construction.”

Another ad in September of that year described, ““PARK PURCHASE”” 2ND SECTION—15 New houses being constructed. 3 Dble. Bedrms., 2½ baths, den, full basmnt., fenced lots and assigned parking.”

18. "PARK PURCHASE" 2ND SECTION—15 New houses being constructed. 3 Dble. bedrms., 2½ baths, den, full basmt., fenced lots and assigned parking. All plans and details exclusively thru'out. Joanne Kaufman 523-1846.

9. Park Purchase III – 1985

And finally, for the series of Park Purchase phased-in construction, down by Dolphin Street we have Park Purchase III, 27 houses outlined in red in this excerpt from their plat:



A March 1985 article in the Sun reported that the architects for this phase were Building Technologies, Inc., of Columbia, Maryland.





10. Spicer's Run – 1998

At the northwest corner of Bolton Hill, in a large triangular lot bounded by Eutaw Place, Robert Street, Bolton Street, and North Avenue, once stood a good many houses, outlined in red on this excerpt from the 1952 Sanborn maps:



1952 Sanborn map, red line added, available at https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3844bm.g3844bm_g03573195202/?sp=93

Subsequently, on this land stood a collection of three- and four-story apartment buildings called Eutaw Gardens, for low-income residents. Conditions at Eutaw Gardens became so bad, the U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development, under then-Secretary Andrew M. Cuomo, took control of the site, relocated the residents, and sold the entire lot to Baltimore City for \$1, according to a June 1997 Sun article by Ed Gunts.

A duo of young developers, Wendy Blair and Derek McDaniels, led the creation of a new development of 86 market-rate single-family homes there called [Spicer's Run](#), named after a stream that once ran through the area. Architectural historian Charles Belfoure wrote for the Sun in December 1998 that the architect for this project was the late [Don Taylor](#) and his firm D.W. Taylor Associates in Ellicott City. Their house designs did not merely suggest, nod to, or reference historic details; they liberally borrowed aspects from the older houses, to great success:

“We drove up and down the neighborhood looking at the detailing of the houses,” Taylor said. “We couldn’t duplicate everything we saw, but we could include some important historic design features.” The tall, narrow proportions of the windows of the Eutaw Place houses were incorporated in the facades of Spicer’s Run. ... Other design elements include a cornice that matches the scale and detailing of the historic houses. But the most prominent feature is the arched door surrounds on many of the new houses.



Isn’t it ironic, after building and razing and rebuilding, that we return so often to townhouses? Or as we call them here, of course, rowhouses. Look across North Avenue at the new Reservoir Square development, and what do we find progressing? Yet another new rowhouse development.



Thank you for feedback, corrections, & suggestions from Doug Kelso, Barbara C. White, Merry Rogers, Dino Sangiamo, Charlie Duff, Monty Howard and Stephen Howard, Richard Stein, and Lynn Cripps. A complete set of the 1952 Sanborn maps with red outlining of razed properties can be found at this [link](#). A survey of MICA’s dorms was left to be covered in another article to come. If you would like to write that, please email history@boltonhillmd.org.

Says our guru: these times require meditation

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/times-require-meditation/>



Peter Van Buren, back to camera, leads Sheng Zhen class. (Credit: Zhee Chatmon)

We all know. We all feel it.

Great changes are happening everywhere, and everyone is affected. We see and feel the changes socially, politically, and environmentally. Globally, the climate is changing and so are our lives. We know that positive change is desperately needed, but we have so far to go. Where do we start?

As we do our best to find a good path, the chaos continues to swirl around us. This is unsettling and we can easily find ourselves lost in the latest news, becoming overwhelmed and feeling hopeless. Amidst this storm, how can we find a quiet space to restore ourselves? How can we find our calm, our balance, and the positive energy to continue?

From the headline above, you can guess my answer is “meditation.” But how does that work? Ten years ago, before I started practicing, I would have been skeptical. My old self would have said, “OK, sure; meditation might help but I’ve tried it a few times, and I can’t do it. I have no idea how to ‘think about nothing’.”

That’s the way everyone feels before they start practicing. Meditating is a skill that humans develop ? like talking, walking or eating spinach. None of us knew how to do those things when we were born, but we tried, we practiced and we learned. Now many of us can even talk, walk, and eat ? all at the same time.

Meditation is a mind-body practice that trains attention and awareness to achieve a calm, clear and stable state, helping to reduce stress, anxiety, and improve focus. We already know how to do many things with our body and our mind and so learning to meditate is relatively easy by comparison. And fun.

I teach the practice of Sheng Zhen Meditation; a new form of *qigong* that evolved over centuries in China but is certainly suited to these times of great transformation. Its purpose is to open human hearts and connect to the power of *qi* (or chi/ki), the life force that many believe animates everything and connects the body to the universe. Every living being is thought to be connected to the flow of *qi*. The flow of *qi*

gives us life and keeps us alive. When it stops flowing through us, we die. Sheng Zhen (pronounced “shung jen”) can be translated into English as “open heart” or “unconditional Love.”

A millennium ago, the ancients who first developed an understanding of *qi* also invented *qigong* practices to improve its flow. In Chinese, “gong” means “work” or “cultivation”, so *qigong* refers to the practices humans have created to cultivate their life force, to strengthen and enhance it. The creators wisely realized that improving their life force would help them with everything they did.

Over time, many different *qigong* practices were developed – the different forms of yoga and meditation, the martial arts of tai chi, aikido, karate, and more are all types of *qigong*. So, what’s special about Sheng Zhen? And why haven’t we heard of it like all those other practices?

Sheng Zhen is new, only 30 years old, and I am one of the 200-ish teachers worldwide who have been trained directly by Master Li, the teacher of this practice. We don’t have a big footprint yet, but our practice is special because it was made for these times.

We all need big help, and time is of the essence. Sheng Zhen doesn’t require us to work for years and years to finally get “there”. We can enjoy the benefits of meditation right away. It only gets better the more we practice. Sheng Zhen quickly and easily empowers people to connect to the source of *qi* and improve the flow of their life force.

Sheng Zhen’s comprehensive system of moving forms, still meditations and philosophy taps into the body’s natural ability to heal itself. The graceful, flowing movements relax and strengthen us physically, while quieting the mind and the heart. Practice reduces stress and balances emotions, so that we can find our center amidst all the external upheavals. Most importantly, we gain the skill to fill our heart with joy and energize our spirit any day, anytime, no matter how the winds of change may blow.

During 2026, I encourage you to do something good for yourself: give Sheng Zhen meditation a try. Our class meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 5-6 p.m. in Fellowship Hall at Brown Memorial Presbyterian Church.

For more information, visit the [Sheng Zhen Maryland website here](#).

--Peter Van Buren

Renewed and reorganizing, Midtown District begins the new year

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/midtown-renewed-reorganizing/>



Credit: Baltimore Banner

After a tumultuous 2025 in which the continued existence of the quasi-public Midtown Community Benefits District and Management Authority was in doubt, Midtown begins this new year with a new board and interim director and with plans to audit and beef up needed services to residents of Bolton Hill, Charles North, Madison Park and the Mt. Vernon-Belvedere neighborhoods.

That follows the “Yes” vote last spring by property owners in those neighborhoods in a March referendum to re-establish the special tax district after the city council failed to reauthorize the district. In April Eric Souza, the president of Midtown since 2022, announced his resignation, and vice-president Zac Blanchard left to run for the city council. In July a new board was sworn in and assumed responsibility for the surtax paid by property owners in the district.

The interim executive dDirector is Colleen Stanley and Rayco Turner is community coordinator. Mary Ann Henderson is chair of the board of directors. Bolton Hill is represented on the board by Lee Tawney, BHCA’s president, and neighborhood residents Oge Okoli and James Prost. Each of the other neighborhoods in the district have similar representation.

The Midtown Community Benefits District provides cleaning and greening services to more than 4,000 properties across the 144 blocks of Bolton Hill, Charles North, Madison Park, and Mount Vernon.

Clean

- Removes litter from streets, sidewalks, gutter lines, tree pits, bus stops, storm drains and parks using mechanized equipment and brooms and dustpans for detailed work
- Empties 173 trash cans, 7 days per week
- Provides bulk trash removal on request of residents
- Removes graffiti and stickers on light poles, trash cans and bus stops
- Inspects and cleans alleyways on Monday, Wednesday and Friday
- Hand wipes vertical surfaces, i.e., trash receptacles, benches, lamp posts and dog stations

Green

- Helps maintain 20+ acres of public green spaces
- Provides tree and tree-pit stewardship, including mulching, pruning and watering
- Assists community associations (and/or groups) with tree plantings and pruning events
- Promotes tree and park stewardship by sharing best practices with a goal towards increasing community involvement
- Provides seasonal leaf management service
- Offers sustainable green waste removal collection
- Provides weeding along gutter lines and curbs (Owners are responsible for sidewalks and tree wells per city code.)

To request services for general cleaning, bulk trash, or tree/weeds/green waste make a service request on the Midtown website: <https://www.midtownbaltimore.org/>

--*Lee Tawney*

MICA to celebrate bicentennial with Fête of Lights gala, other activities

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/mica-fete-of-lights-gala/>



MICA is kicking off its 200th anniversary yearlong celebration this month. This comes from MICA President Cecilia M. McCormick: “Since 1826, the Maryland Institute College of Art has been a place where creative courage, rigorous inquiry, and a commitment to social impact have shaped artists, designers, and educators who change the world. Today’s official launch of the bicentennial is rooted in our history – Charter Day – the milestone moment when the State of Maryland granted MICA its charter 200 years ago.”

MICA was founded when a group of Baltimoreans led by 22-year-old John H. B. Latrobe founded the Maryland Institute for the Promotion of the Mechanical Arts. As Latrobe later reflected, “The idea [of a mechanics’ institute] took my fancy greatly, and I thought it might be carried out, perhaps, in Baltimore.” From that moment, the foundation of what would become MICA was set.

More from MICA’s President: “Join MICA as we honor two centuries of art and design education, spotlight the incredible transformation taking place today, and boldly imagine a more vibrant future together. At the Fête of Lights, bring your own creative vision to life in light-themed wearable art — a beautiful way to mark this special occasion.” Tickets are \$350. More information at [here](#).

Future for further zoning modification is uncertain

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/zoning-uncertain/>



Credit: Baltimore Banner

City Councilmember Zac Blanchard told the January BHCA meeting that council members will be discussing changes to the bill, which he supports. As written, the bill would make it easier for investors and residential building owners to acquire and cut up single-family properties into as many as four units without neighborhood or city intervention.

Blanchard, who supports those zoning changes, suggested that a compromise might look more like what BHCA has suggested as an alternative: encouraging resident owners, who wish to do, to divide large properties into only two units as a matter of right, without seeking city approval. He said no further council hearings or votes on the measure have been scheduled. Blanchard's 11th district includes the southern portion of Bolton Hill. The neighborhood's other council member, James Torrance, opposes the zoning change.

The council, with Blanchard's support and Torrance's opposition, last year passed a package of other zoning changes that the mayor signed into law. One of them, which BHCA opposed, erased a long-standing requirement that landlords with more than four apartments provide off-street parking or obtain a zoning waiver from the city.

Some community associations that opposed the zoning changes are considering a lawsuit to challenge the way the bills were passed with, in their eyes, too little community engagement. BHCA is monitoring those discussions.

Bolton Hill Notes

<https://boltonhillmd.org/bulletin/bolton-hill-notes-jan26/>



Progress on neglected properties?

Of 25 Neglected and Mismanaged Properties on BHCA's watchlist last year, 10 are now in foreclosure or other legal proceedings – an important step toward, hopefully, a better future for each of them. That was the report at BHCA's January meeting from Jeff Thompson, who leads the committee charged with overseeing reported properties, most of them with non-resident owners.

The properties in foreclosure litigation are at 1804 Bolton St. & 1741 Park Ave. and 1429 John St. Complaints about a troubled property at 1703 Linden Street has led to efforts by the owner to secure and clean up the residence. These additional residences are in some stage of receivership -- a code enforcement tool that allows the city to request the appointment of a "receiver" to force the sale or abatement of the nuisance created by problem properties: 1625, 1700, 1702 and 1920 Eutaw Place; 1532 Mt. Royal Ave.; and 1622 and 1741 Park Ave.

Free light bulbs available for safety lighting

BHCA received a \$10,000 safety and security grant from the BGE/Excellon Foundation to enhance outdoor lighting in the neighborhood. Grant funds are being used to purchase dusk to dawn energy, efficient lightbulbs to be installed in private fixtures and lighting the public way. Those light bulbs are available to BHCA members now.

Additional funds are available for installing solar powered, motion detection alley lights. Funds *may* be available to purchase solar powered, front façade lights that meet CHAP standards. Additional assistance to help distribute and/or install lighting is needed; contact jprostmd@gmail.com

DPW offers holiday tree disposal and mulching

The city Department of Public Works is offering free Christmas tree mulching services through Sat., Feb. 7 at Sisson Street Residential Recycling Center, 2840 Sisson St., 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Saturday. Ornaments, tinsel and decorations must be removed before drop-off. Residents should bring bags or containers if they want to collect mulch.

Residents may also dispose of Christmas trees with their regular weekly trash collection through Sat., Feb. 7. Trees must be placed at the same location as regular trash pickup, and ornaments, tinsel and decorations must be removed.

City garden plots registration is open

Registration for City Farms garden plots for 2026 is open until March 22. Several Bolton Hill vegetable and flower gardeners have plots at Druid Hill Park, but they also are available elsewhere across the city.

The program is open to Baltimore residents and city employees wishing to garden, regardless of experience level. Novice “farmers” are mentored by volunteer garden managers and others eager to share their knowledge. Additional support is provided in the form of hands-on gardening seminars, training manuals and bulletins. The city provides water, manure and mulch for a small fee. More information at <https://bcrp.baltimorecity.gov/special-programs/farms> .

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, Francine Marchese, Jim Prost, Lee Tawney and Peter Van Buren. Errors and omissions are the responsibility of the editor, Bill Hamilton. Comments are welcome at bulletin@boltonhillmd.org.

Bolton Hill

Community Association