

BOLTON HILL

source: <http://BoltonHill.org>

Bolton Hill, only 1.5 miles from Baltimore's world-famous Inner Harbor, and 2 miles from Camden Yards and Ravens Stadium, is a premier neighborhood of about nine blocks by five blocks. The community, consisting of approximately 2,000 residents and several shops, has a rich history and a bright future. Primarily a residential community of single-family homes, Bolton Hill also includes schools, churches, grocery stores, a florist, a video store, restaurants, hardware and drug stores, bed-and-breakfasts, and more.

Bolton Hill's elegant 19th century row houses set among tree-lined streets and deep, leafy gardens qualified the neighborhood for placement on the National Register of Historic Places. Several enclaves of award-winning contemporary town homes and parks blend with the classic architecture of the larger 19th century community. New Orleans-style balconies are fragrant with flowers and parks with fountains and sculptures are alive with neighbors, art students, dog walkers, and joggers.

Bolton Hill overlooks the monuments, church steeples, and skyscrapers of Baltimore's downtown. As part of the Baltimore Cultural District, Bolton Hill is within walking distance of the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, Lyric Opera House, University of Baltimore, Maryland Institute College of Art, and Theatre Project. Neighboring Mt. Vernon with the Enoch Pratt Free Library, Walters Art Gallery, Peabody Conservatory, Antique Row, more shops, and restaurants is a ten minute walk away.

Public transportation includes a light rail Cultural Center stop on Howard Street, the State Center subway stop on Dolphin, a five-minute walk to Penn Station, and a 20 minute drive to BWI airport, as well as City transit buses along the periphery of the neighborhood. Bolton Hill's neighborhood association, the [Mount Royal Improvement Association](#), represents the community, increasing the power of our individual voices. It serves as liaison with City departments, addresses concerns of the community, and coordinates communications including the *Bolton Hill Bulletin*, Bolton Hill E-Mail Network (BHEN), and this web site. We welcome you to explore this site and take a closer look at our neighborhood. The menu on the left will give you detailed information about Bolton Hill. Our [links page](#) will connect you to those organizations and places mentioned above.

Located directly northwest of downtown Baltimore, Bolton Hill is one of Baltimore's premier neighborhoods. Elegant homes, landscaped boulevards, decorative civic monuments, and lovely religious buildings are distinctive characteristics of this community. Major development took place in Bolton Hill between 1850 and 1900. Primarily a row house neighborhood, Bolton Hill architecture ranges from traditionally styled row houses with refined details to elaborately decorated Queen Anne designs. Other historic housing types include huge mansions, early brick cottages, alley houses, duplexes with small front yards, early 20th century apartment buildings, and carriage houses converted into residences.

Among the prominent residents of Bolton Hill were noted writer F. Scott Fitzgerald, art collectors Dr. Claribel and Etta Cone; Johns Hopkins PhD. candidate and later U.S. President Woodrow Wilson; first Johns Hopkins president Daniel Coit Gilman; department store owners Thomas O'Neill and David Hutzler; and philanthropist Jacob Epstein. In the nineteenth century, Bolton Hill was also home to many Confederate Civil War veterans, German Jews, and a few African-Americans who lived in small alley houses or within large houses as servants of wealthy homeowners.

The community experienced a brief period of decline in the mid-20th century, followed by a period of stabilization. Urban renewal efforts replaced deteriorated housing with new townhouses and private preservation activities restored magnificent Victorian-era houses to their original splendor. At the turn of the 21st century, Bolton Hill is a bastion of in-town living. As one long time resident stated, "Bolton Hill is more than a neighborhood. It is a state of mind."

The name Bolton Hill is derived from "Bolton-le-Moors," the English property after which the Baltimore merchant, George Grundy, named his original estate house. Bolton stood on the current site of the Fifth Regiment Armory. Rose Hill and Mount Royal were other early estates in this vicinity.

Although estate houses were built in the area as early as the Revolutionary War era, the major development in Bolton Hill took place between 1850 and 1900. Two of the earliest individual brick cottages survive: 204 W. Lanvale Street, now home to the Family and Children's Services of Central Maryland, and 232 W. Lanvale Street, a private residence. By 1870, the neighborhood extended from Eutaw Place to John Street and from Dolphin Street to roughly Mosher Street. Unlike most Baltimore neighborhoods that were built along a north-south grid, Bolton Hill's traditional brick row houses were built along a diagonal orientation first laid out in 1821 by Thomas Poppleton, a surveyor. Poppleton departed from the norm in the northwest section of Baltimore, following instead the alignment of the old Reisterstown Road (Pennsylvania Avenue) and the Jones Falls.



The early stately row houses of Bolton Hill feature plain brick facades with refined ornamentation, primarily to define front entrances, windows, and rooflines. The only decorations on these austere facades are bracketed cornices, decorative door surrounds, and the occasional ornate window lintel. These traditional red brick row houses express simplicity and elegance. Other early housing types include: unified row houses and duplexes. Beethoven Terrace in the 1500 block of Park Avenue is an early example of a unified block front of row houses faced with stucco and designed in the Second Empire style. In addition to the rows of houses, duplexes were built in the 1300 block of John Street and 100 block of West Lafayette Avenue. These houses are set back from the street with small front yards. Some have entrances on the side, rather than on the front facade.



Later 19th century row houses were influenced by popular architectural styles of the era, most notably Queen Anne. These later houses are more highly ornamented than the traditional row house. Red brick gives way to stone and other materials. Projecting bay windows and balconies break the plane of front walls. Terra cotta decoration, corner towers, rusticated stonework, stained glass, and distinctive rooflines replace the tradition of simplicity and elegance.

Huge mansions were built along Eutaw Place, taking advantage of the landscaped setting.

By the end of the 19th century, row house development was complete. A few large apartment buildings, most notably the Marlborough Apartments, were constructed in the neighborhood in the first decade of the 20th century

Public urban renewal funding used for slum clearance in the early 1960s, spawned major changes in the community. Three new townhouse developments – Linden Green, Bolton Common, and Park Purchase – replaced the buildings in the 1200 through 1600 blocks of Linden Avenue. The Memorial Apartments for senior citizens and the Bolton Hill Plaza shopping center were built on either side of McMechen Street. New apartments, a school, and an office building replaced several blocks of houses along Eutaw Place. Other new structures included Sutton Place, a multi-story apartment building constructed in 1969 to anchor the southern edge of the community, Mount Royal Elementary School, on McMechen Street, and Bolton North, a high-rise apartment building for the elderly anchoring the northwestern corner of the neighborhood.

While public efforts often centered on demolition and new construction, private preservation activities focused on restoring original houses. Preservation activities ran the gamut from restoring mansion houses to the adaptive reuse of carriage houses for homes. Some buildings were meticulously restored while others were preserved on the exterior but completely remodeled inside. Alley houses on Rutter Street became an artist colony.

Bolton Hill became a Baltimore City historic district in 1967, mandating the preservation of building exteriors. The neighborhood was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. A major preservation battle took place in 1978 when the Beethoven Apartments suffered a devastating fire. The Baltimore City's Commission for Historic and Architectural Preservation (CHAP) refused to allow its demolition. Instead, a new developer was found to renovate the building. The preservation of historic houses, parks, and monuments is now standard policy in Bolton Hill.

The 1960s innovative, adaptive reuse of Mount Royal Station for the Maryland Institute helped spearhead not only local efforts to find new uses for old buildings, but also a national movement. Railroad stations became art schools. Schools became apartment buildings. Industrial buildings were converted into offices. Power plants became entertainment centers.

The past ten years witnessed major improvements in Bolton Hill. The Maryland Institute built dormitories for students on a large vacant parcel of land bound by North and Mount Royal avenues. Between Eutaw Place, North Avenue, Robert Street and Bolton Street, Spicer's Run, a modern market-rate townhouse development, replaced the deteriorated Eutaw Gardens apartments. New townhouses compatible to the historic character of the neighborhood were built on a continuation of the street grid, including the first new houses on Linden Avenue after so much of that street was razed during the urban renewal era. The long vacant Women's Hospital was converted into Maryland Institute's Meyerhoff Hall taking advantage of Maryland Heritage Tax Credits. Also noteworthy was the 1999 restoration of the Key Monument on Eutaw Place, part of a nation-wide effort to preserve America's historic treasures.

[Artscape](#), Baltimore's annual major arts festival continues to attract hundreds of thousands of people from Maryland and beyond each July along Mount Royal Avenue on the eastern edge of Bolton Hill. The festival takes full advantage of the cultural institutions in and around Bolton Hill, including the Lyric Theatre, Meyerhoff Symphony Hall, and the Maryland Institute College of Art.

Bolton Hill was one of the original communities to join its neighbors in forming the [Midtown Community Benefits District](#), created primarily to combat crime and grime in the greater midtown area. The District encompasses Bolton Hill, Charles North, Madison Park, and Mount Vernon-Belvedere.

At the turn of the 21st century, Bolton Hill, better than any other Baltimore neighborhood, has preserved its 19th century character, while remaining a vibrant in-town community. It has a diverse population of all age groups, races, religions, ethnic backgrounds and lifestyles. The arts thrive. Parks and gardens abound. Home ownership is pervasive and on the rise as many sub-divided houses are restored to single-family dwellings.

Bolton Hill's future will be built on its strong foundation combining a high quality physical environment with civic activism. Working together, its residents continue to improve the neighborhood's physical character and enhance its quality of life.