

# State Of Maryland

## 2026 Bond Initiative Fact Sheet

<b>1. Name Of Project</b>		
Forge of the BIT Center		
<b>2. Senate Sponsor</b>	<b>3. House Sponsor</b>	
	Embry	
<b>4. Jurisdiction</b> (County or Baltimore City)	<b>5. Requested Amount</b>	
Baltimore City	\$1,000,000	
<b>6. Purpose of Bond Initiative</b>		
the acquisition, planning, design, construction, expansion, repair, renovation, reconstruction, site improvement, and capital equipping of the 1866 former Saint John in the Village 14,000 sq ft historic Parish Hall to create The Forge: a fully accessible, code-compliant Gastronomy		
<b>7. Matching Fund</b>		
Requirements:	Type:	
Grant		
<b>8. Special Provisions</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Historical Easement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Non-Sectarian	
<b>9. Contact Name and Title</b>	<b>Contact Ph#</b>	<b>Email Address</b>
Monica E. Lapenta		703-340-4012
<b>10. Description and Purpose of Organization</b> (Limit length to visible area)		
<p>The Bit Center is a Baltimore-based nonprofit umbrella organization dedicated to improving community health, expanding food access, and creating youth workforce opportunities through gastronomy education. Founded in 1955 as the Italian Cultural Center, the organization has evolved into a dynamic community hub that integrates food, culture, health, and education. Through programs such as Be a Chef for a Day, Food for Better Health, B-More Pasta, and the Italian Cultural Center arts initiatives, The Bit Center provides nutrition education, cooking skills training, healthy food distribution, and paid workforce opportunities for young people ages 14-24. Today, the organization serves approximately 2,500 individuals each month, empowering families with the knowledge, access, and skills needed to pursue healthier lives.</p>		

**11. Description and Purpose of Project (Limit length to visible area)**

The Bit Center seeks \$1,000,000 in Maryland Legislative Bond funding to complete The Forge, our new community campus in Baltimore. With \$1.3 million already invested in renovation and stabilization, this final phase will build the Gastronomy Center and a fully equipped commercial teaching kitchen. These spaces will expand our proven programs Be a Chef for a Day, B-More Pasta youth workforce development, and Food for Better Health nutrition education. Completion of this project will allow us to triple the number of youth trained and employed in culinary workforce programs and quadruple the number of community members receiving hands-on nutrition and cooking education to prevent diet-related diseases such as diabetes. The Forge will serve as a hub where health, gastronomy education, and youth opportunity come together to strengthen community well-being across Baltimore.

*Round all amounts to the nearest \$1,000. The totals in Items 12 (Estimated Capital Costs) and 13 (Proposed Funding Sources) must match. The proposed funding sources must not include the value of real property unless an equivalent value is shown under Estimated Capital Costs.*

**12. Estimated Capital Costs**

<b>Acquisition</b>	\$0
<b>Design</b>	\$35,000
<b>Construction</b>	\$1,800,000
<b>Equipment</b>	\$465,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,300,000</b>

**13. Proposed Funding Sources - (List all funding sources and amounts.)**

Private Donors	\$800,000
City of Baltimore	\$75,000
Past Legislative Bond	\$300,000
Capital Campaign	\$50,000
Organization Own Funding	\$75,000
LBI	\$1,000,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,300,000</b>

<b>14. Project Schedule (Enter a date or one of the following in each box. N/A, TBD or Complete)</b>			
<b>Begin Design</b>	<b>Complete Design</b>	<b>Begin Construction</b>	<b>Complete Construction</b>
9/2/2024	1/26/2025	3/4/2025	11/1/2026
<b>15. Total Private Funds and Pledges Raised</b>	<b>16. Current Number of People Served Annually at Project Site</b>		<b>17. Number of People to be Served Annually After the Project is Complete</b>
130000.00	3000		10000
<b>18. Other State Capital Grants to Recipients in the Past 15 Years</b>			
<b>Legislative Session</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	
2022	\$300,000	Acquire a property for the Be a Chef for a Day Culina	
<b>19. Legal Name and Address of Grantee</b>		<b>Project Address (If Different)</b>	
BIT Community Center INC		3009 Greenmount Avenue, Baltimore, MD 21218	
<b>20. Legislative District in Which Project is Located</b>	43A - Baltimore City		
<b>21. Legal Status of Grantee (Please Check One)</b>			
<b>Local Govt.</b>	<b>For Profit</b>	<b>Non Profit</b>	<b>Federal</b>
[ ]	[ ]	[ X ]	[ ]
<b>22. Grantee Legal Representative</b>		<b>23. If Match Includes Real Property:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	Monica E. Lapenta	<b>Has An Appraisal Been Done?</b>	Yes/No
<b>Phone:</b>	410-547-9934		No
<b>Address:</b>		<b>If Yes, List Appraisal Dates and Value</b>	

<b>24. Impact of Project on Staffing and Operating Cost at Project Site</b>			
<b>Current # of Employees</b>	<b>Projected # of Employees</b>	<b>Current Operating Budget</b>	<b>Projected Operating Budget</b>
7	14	300000.00	550000.00
<b>25. Ownership of Property (Info Requested by Treasurer's Office for bond purposes)</b>			
<b>A. Will the grantee own or lease (pick one) the property to be improved?</b>			Own
<b>B. If owned, does the grantee plan to sell within 15 years?</b>			No
<b>C. Does the grantee intend to lease any portion of the property to others?</b>			No
<b>D. If property is owned by grantee any space is to be leased, provide the following:</b>			
<b>Lessee</b>	<b>Terms of Lease</b>	<b>Cost Covered by Lease</b>	<b>Square Footage Leased</b>
<b>E. If property is leased by grantee - Provide the following:</b>			
<b>Name of Leaser</b>	<b>Length of Lease</b>	<b>Options to Renew</b>	
<b>26. Building Square Footage:</b>			
<b>Current Space GSF</b>	14000		
<b>Space to be Renovated GSF</b>	7000		
<b>New GSF</b>			

**27. Year of Construction of Any Structures Proposed for Renovation, Restoration or Conversion**

1866

**28. Comments**

For decades, this section of the Waverly Main Street corridor has experienced disinvestment, leaving historic buildings underutilized and limiting opportunities for community growth. The renovation of The Forge represents a turning point. By restoring this historic structure and activating it as a Gastronomy and Community Health Center, The Bit Center will create a vibrant destination that brings education, jobs, cultural programming, and healthy food access to the neighborhood. The project will serve as a catalyst for renewed activity along the corridor, strengthening nearby small businesses, drawing visitors, and establishing the area as a welcoming epicenter for community life, learning, and economic revitalization in North Baltimore.