

NoMA VISION

**ENVISIONING A NEW NoMA NEIGHBORHOOD
PLANNING FUNDAMENTALS
BUILDING ON NoMA'S HISTORY
GREAT PLACES IN NoMA**

OCTOBER 2006

Envisioning a New NoMA Neighborhood

“NoMA will be a vibrant, diverse and highly pedestrian-oriented mixed-use neighborhood, defined by its unique industrial heritage, linked to its surrounding neighborhoods, built with enduring character, and strengthening central Washington with long term economic viability and environmental sustainability”

Vision Statement From Public Meeting #1

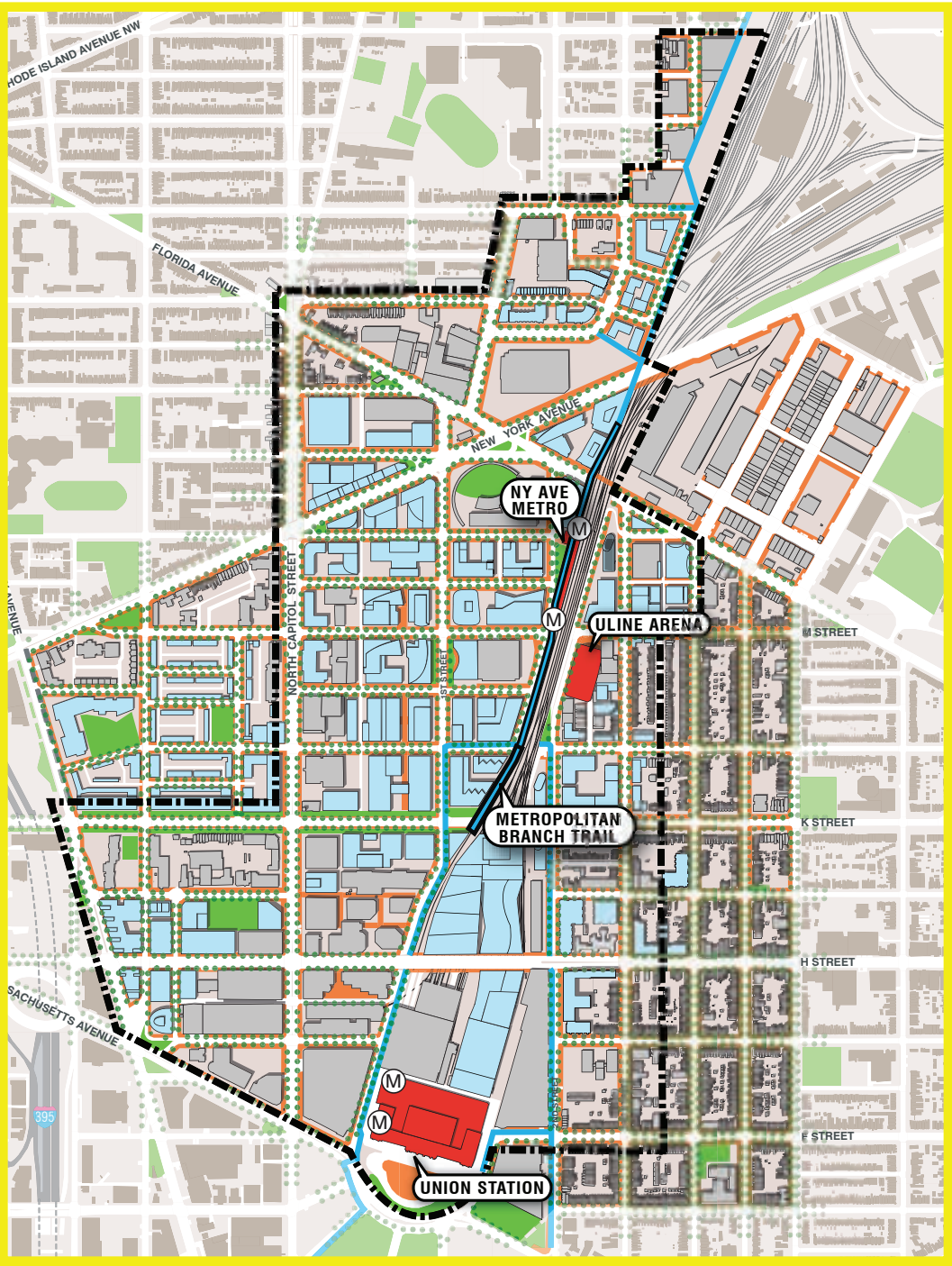
The plan below on the right and bird’s eye view on the next page illustrate the magnitude of development that may occur over the next 20 years in NoMA. These illustrative and conceptual views of the larger neighborhood structure provide a context for the more specific recommendations in the following chapters. This chapter describes the big ideas underlying the NoMA Vision. The next chapter, Chapter 3, “NoMA Development Strategy”, breaks down these big ideas into specific details and action steps according to six major categories: “Land Use Mix”, “Infrastructure & Transportation”, “Public Realm and Open Space”, “Identity & Building Design”, “Existing Neighborhoods”, and “Environment & Sustainability”.

The vision shows how all of these elements taken together form a whole which is greater than the sum of its parts; a complete neighborhood that will become an integral part of the District’s Central City growth, while maintaining a distinct identity with a strong market edge.

Some of the recommendations of this plan are very general and some are very specific, such as the NoMA Action Agenda (see page 1.4 in the Executive Summary). All of these initiatives, however, have been developed with an understanding of how they relate to each-other, working together to propel development activity and to guide the future shape of the NoMA neighborhood.



Existing Conditions



Potential long-term build-out



The Vision of a New Well-Connected Neighborhood, Looking South Towards the U.S. Capitol

Planning Fundamentals

These 8 principles, along with the preceding vision statement, form the core values that have guided the creation of the NoMA Vision Plan and Development Strategy. How do you plan an authentic neighborhood that is greater than the sum of its various buildings, streets, and open spaces? These fundamentals define the challenge to which this plan responds, and the goals that will be realized by the builders of NoMA.

PROVIDE A DIVERSE MIX of uses that creates a variety of options for living, working, shopping, recreation, and culture



PURSUE A BALANCED APPROACH to transportation, creating a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood with improved transit accessibility and vehicular circulation



CREATE A VIBRANT, HIGHLY WALKABLE ENVIRONMENT with landscaped, attractive streets and open spaces, active ground floor uses, and strong pedestrian-links



DESIGN TO INSPIRE a new standard of exciting, modern architecture and urban design, with high-quality materials and creative design solutions, to achieve a lasting, competitive identity



PRESERVE AND ENHANCE surrounding neighborhoods and historic landmarks, and guide redevelopment to address unmet community needs



ADDRESS SUSTAINABILITY with high performance design and environmentally friendly planning and construction methods as carried out in the high-performance American Realtors Association Headquarters building pictured above



XM Radio Corporate Headquarters



One NoMA Station



Gonzaga



US Government Printing Office Building



Uline Arena and Ice Manufacturing Plant

Building on NoMA's History

The area North of Massachusetts Avenue (NoMA) extends past the original northwest boundary of Washington, D.C., known as Boundary Street (Florida Avenue today). Florida Avenue was the dividing line between the paved, planned streets laid out in the L'Enfant plan of 1791, and the countryside, where landowners maintained orchards, country estates, and a mixture of commercial properties.

The rural nature of the neighborhoods north of Boundary Street changed in the late 1880's. The Eckington neighborhood became valued as a provider of light industrial merchandise, and as the location of train yards and transportation routes into and out of the city. Washington's first electric streetcar line was the Eckington & Soldiers' Home Railway, chartered in 1888.

Near Northeast, a historically working-class and ethnically diverse neighborhood, was slower to develop, due to the Union Station tracks bordering the west, and its proximity to the swamp and marsh conditions around Tiber Creek. The construction of the H Street Viaduct in 1962 visually and physically separated the area west of the tracks from neighborhoods east of the tracks. The neighborhood's mostly low scale residential buildings and rowhouse character, including some light industrial uses near the tracks, have been generally preserved.

Also located near the banks of Tiber Creek, the area bound by North Capital, 1st, A, and H Streets, NE was the heart of a community commonly referred to as Swampoodle, home to mainly working class Irish and Italian immigrants. Between 1886 and 1889, the neighborhood included Swampoodle Grounds, home to Washington's baseball team. Swampoodle's population was displaced during the construction of Union Station, which opened its doors in

October of 1907. The terminal quickly became the portal to the Capital City, with as many as 200,000 people passing through in a single day.

H Street, NE became one of the city's major commercial hubs during the early 20th century. The 12 blocks from 3rd to 15th Streets once made up the third busiest commercial area in Washington, serving both local and city-wide residents. H Street served as a critical connection between the city's commercial center and Bladensburg Road, which in turn connected the District with the eastern port towns of Bladensburg and Annapolis. Commercial operations on H Street abruptly declined as a result of citywide rioting following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in 1968.

At present, NoMA is characterized by numerous empty or underutilized lots forming potential sites for redevelopment. Because of this, the identity of the neighborhood is largely undefined. NoMA is not a blank slate, however; within NoMA are examples of the area's heritage of industrial architecture, and along its edges are historic residential rowhouse neighborhoods. The new NoMA should, first and foremost, reflect this existing architectural heritage and development history, responding with development that is both sensitive to historic structures, and pro-active in enhancing these structures with compelling adaptive re-use and/or preservation. Buildings such as One NoMA Station (the old Woodies warehouse), and the XM Radio renovation are successful examples of adaptive reuse of existing industrial buildings. Attention to the preservation of existing residential areas and scale transitions to the surrounding rowhouse blocks is critical. Finally, new architecture in NoMA can build upon the spirit of the industrial past, while creating bold and dynamic new identities.



Union Station, the "Gateway" to the City



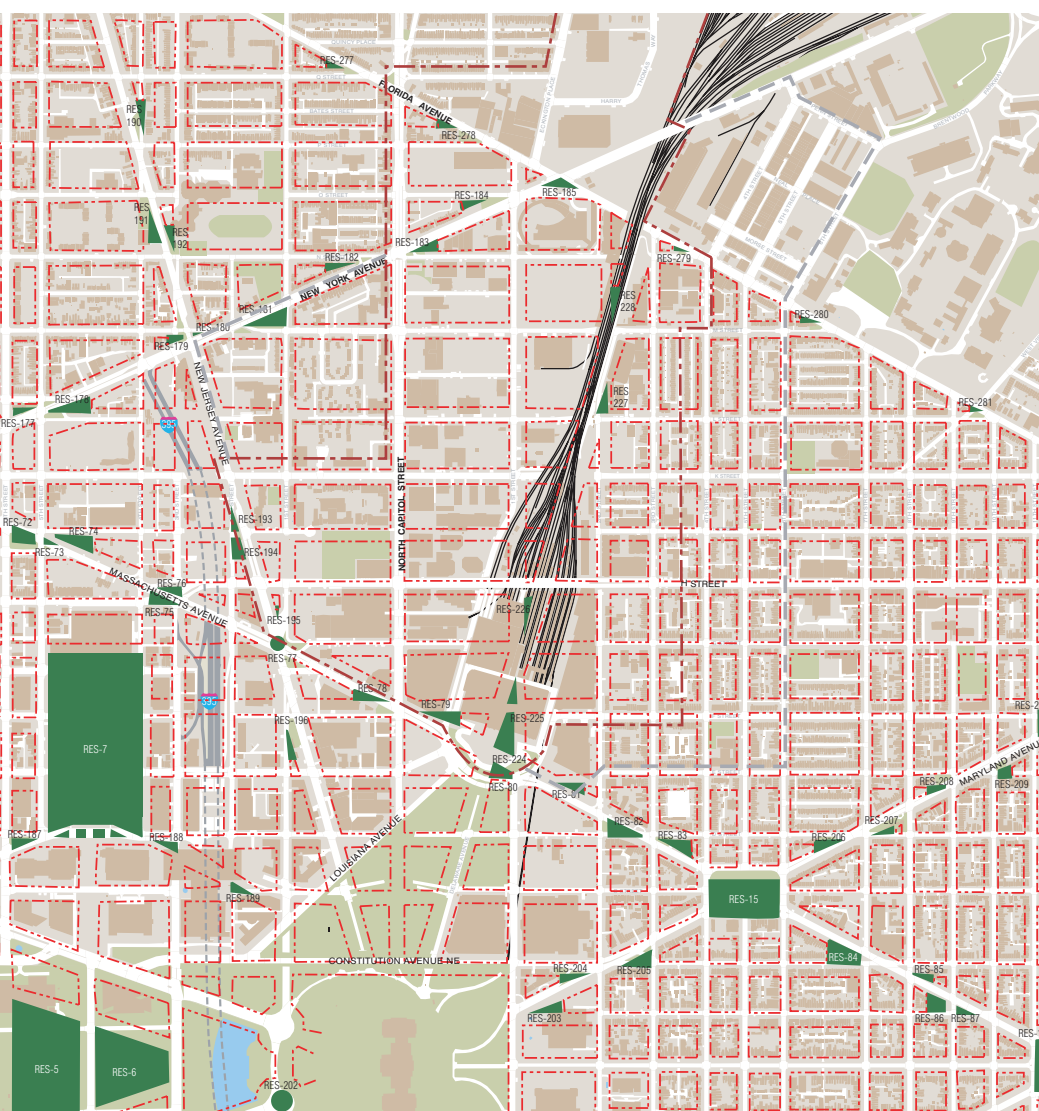
The Eckington & Soldiers' Home Railway, 1888



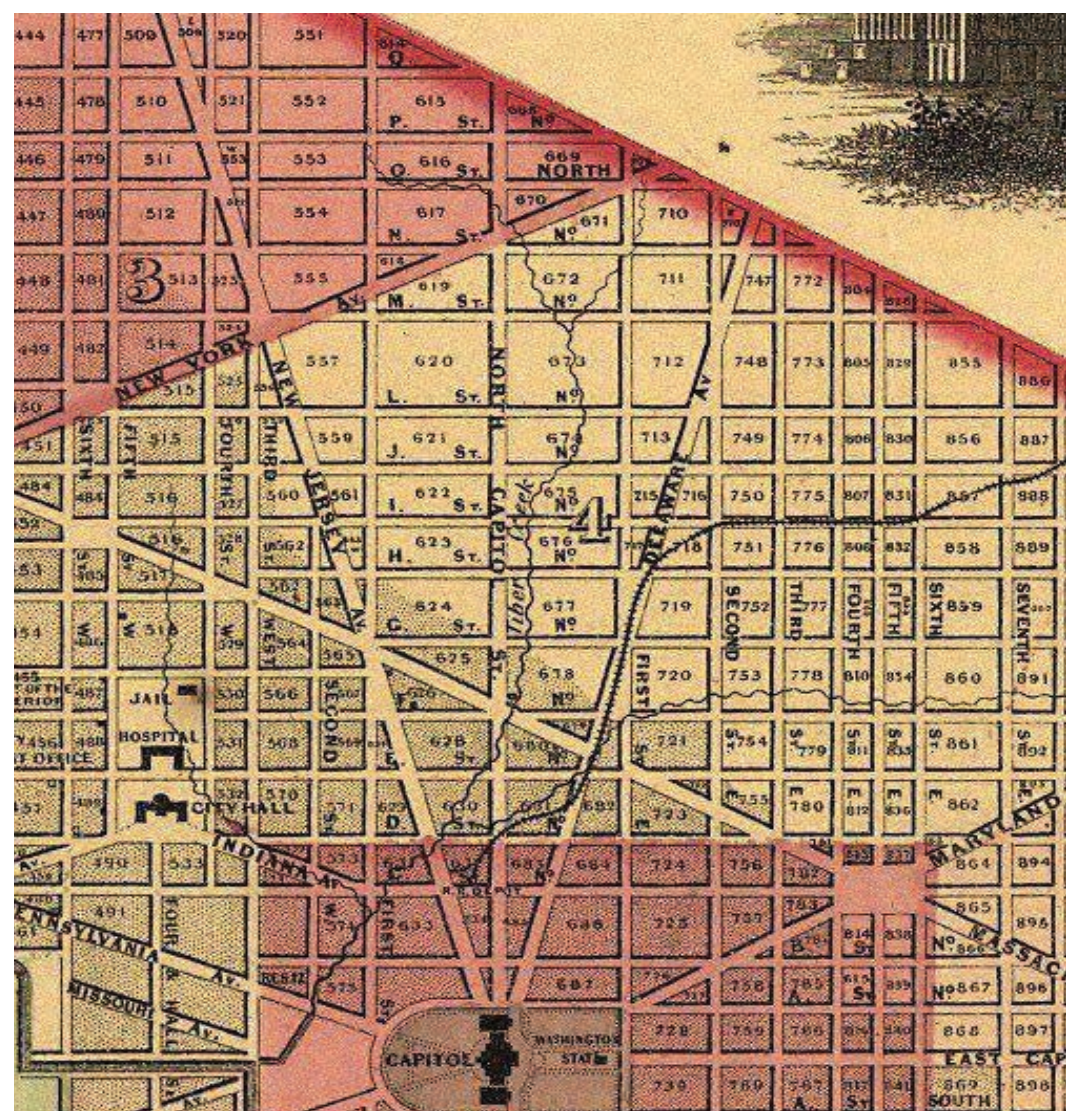
Swampoodle Grounds, 1888



Pierce, L, 1st & N. Capitol Streets, 1935



Planned Blocks and Land Reservations, Following the L'Enfant Plan, 1791



From Johnson's Map of Washington D.C. and Georgetown, 1862

Great Places in

A Real Mixed-Use Neighborhood



NoMA, with its proximity to Downtown and the U.S. Capitol, is a logical location for the long-term expansion of the Downtown commercial market. However, NoMA can be much more than another typical office district, with inactive streets after business hours, and generic office building architecture. A balance of residential and commercial uses will help create a vibrant mix of residents, workers, and visitors, while making appropriate transitions to the surrounding residential communities.

As Americans rediscover the benefits of downtown living, cities across the United States, including Washington DC, have leveraged residential development as a successful catalyst for urban regeneration. Downtown residents bring a sense of community and civic pride; benefit from easy access to employment and services; enjoy shopping, dining, and cultural activities; create safe, vibrant and active streets and parks; reduce traffic congestion; and strengthen the tax base. An expanded urban population can invigorate the physical and cultural core of the city, reinforcing the emerging trends of investment occurring throughout Downtown and increasing the likelihood of enduring economic sustainability. A wide variety of retail and cultural uses can support this residential development, activating the streets and sidewalks and providing needed services and amenities for residents of both NoMA and adjacent neighborhoods. The residential development itself should be appropriately dense, to ensure a critical mass of population and a strong sense of community. Varied housing types, including townhouses in lower levels of new buildings, apartments and lofts, with both rental and homeownership opportunities, will ensure a diverse population similar to traditional urban neighborhoods.

The mix described above is essential for achieving balanced, sustainable development: influencing travel patterns through appropriate land use strategies; reducing auto-dependence; helping to redirect continuing sprawl; and utilizing the investment in transit for both local and commuter travel.

A vibrant neighborhood with a mix of residential, commercial, recreation, and supporting retail is the right set of uses for NoMA



Looking East in Central NoMA, New Construction Along East-West Residential Street



NoMA

A Real Mixed-Use Neighborhood
Mixed-Use/Creative Industries District
Burnham Spine
Burnham Park
K Street Linear Park
Union Station Hub
Uline Arena & Plaza as Neighborhood Anchor

Mixed-Use District With Creative Industries

By building on the area’s unique character, comprised of existing alleys and industrial buildings, and adding new infill construction; a distinctive, creative enclave can be created. New mixed-use buildings that change the area to a live-work district with residents and workers in flexible arrangements is envisioned. Through the use of Planned Unit Developments (PUDs), this area could include diverse uses such as residences, non-profit offices, studios, arts, technology, production, media, film, graphics, etc., and community and recreation uses, to achieve the density that takes advantage of proximity to the Metrorail Station. Building form can reinforce the goal for transit-oriented development by locating higher density near the rail tracks and Florida Avenue, then stepping down and limiting office uses closer to nearby rowhouse blocks. The marketability of this area as a place for creative industries will be strengthened by the artwalk potential of the proposed “Burnham Spine”, an overall art program for this district, and the improvements to the four underpasses that includes public art light installations. In addition, the preferred creative industries could be included in any NoMA incentives package.

Realizing the potential of the Florida Avenue Market as a destination and the preservation of its function and character are important goals for the District. Ideally, it will be enhanced over time with a vibrant overlay of complementary new uses, creating jobs for neighbors. The Market’s anticipated economic vitality can spill over into NoMA’s “Mixed-Use/Creative Industries District” creating a link - both in terms of use and scale - between the Market District, the railroad tracks, and the Near Northeast neighborhood. (Development Guidelines, p. 5.12-5.13)

An area around Uline Area is designated for change from industrial zoning to a unique mix of residential, and creative uses in older existing and new infill buildings, providing a graceful transition between the Florida Avenue Market and existing residential areas.



Proposed Relationship Between New Infill Uses and Surrounding Rowhouse Neighborhood

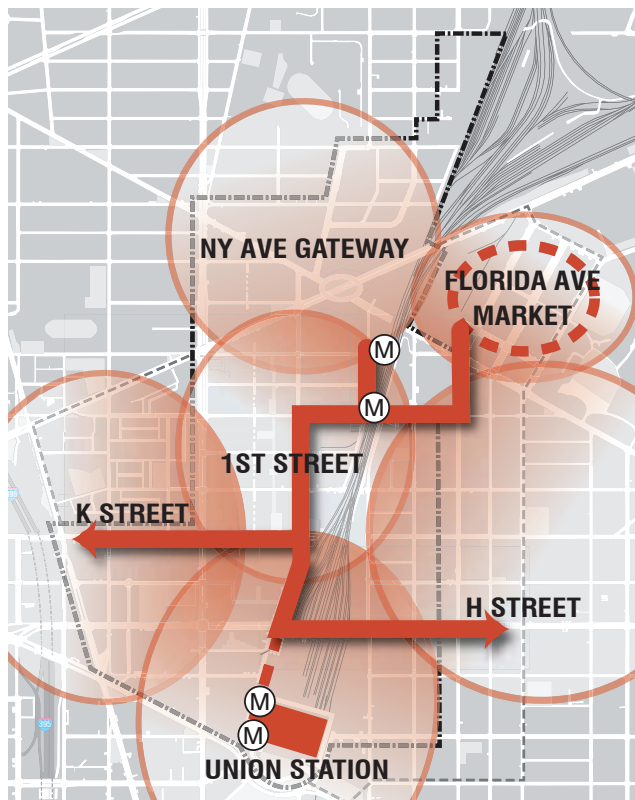
Existing NoMA Building and Alley





Streets as Neighborhood Places

RETAIL IN THE RIGHT PLACES



PEDESTRIAN-FRIENDLY PUBLIC REALM

NoMA's streets, sidewalks, and open spaces are the glue that will hold the neighborhood together. They are the places for social interaction, shopping, movement, and recreation. A hierarchy of streets with varying emphases can create a diverse and interconnected network of pedestrian-friendly places. Some streets are more pedestrian-oriented (1st and K Streets, for example), while others can accommodate service and parking access to major development sites (the proposed east-west street extensions, for example). Privately-developed and owned "public spaces" can contribute to the overall sense of neighborhood if they are accessible, interconnected, and inviting. This plan proposes at least one public open space at the intersection of K and First Streets SE as illustrated below. It also proposes the development of more detailed public realm plan to address the design, materials, and landscapes details for streets, sidewalks and public spaces.

RETAIL & RESIDENTIAL IN THE RIGHT PLACES

Active streets are dependant on the uses that line them and retail space must be located strategically in places that support surrounding retail patterns and reinforce the role and character of specific neighborhood streets. In addition, residential uses in the right configuration can enliven streets with both activity and visual interest. In NoMA, there is an opportunity to strengthen the east-west connections to surrounding neighborhoods with ground floor residential activity on minor streets, while emphasizing ground floor retail in the north-south direction along 1st Street NE and along some of the existing major east-west corridors, such as K and H Streets.



Burnham Park at First and K Streets NE, also showing a portion of the K Street Linear Park



Burnham Spine

PULLING TOGETHER THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Currently, the tracks leading to Union Station creates a major physical and psychological barrier between neighborhoods to the east and west of the tracks. The “Burnham Spine”, a new concept and name for the dramatic, existing stone wall that supports the rail lines and the elevated section of the Metropolitan Branch Trail, can be developed as a dramatic new public space connecting the street level with the upper level of the Metrorail station. This segment of the Metropolitan Branch Trail follows the tracks from the north but transitions to the street level just south of M Street. By extending the elevated section further south, a remarkable upper-level connection will link NoMA to Union Station and the proposed “air-rights” development over the rail yard. This would allow people to walk or bike across ten blocks without dealing with traffic at street level. The “Burnham Spine” follows the historic stone wall that is part of Union Station, designed by Daniel Burnham. This new open space element will pull together areas east and west of the tracks, and provide a transportation amenity and recreational feature for both the NoMA neighborhood and the wider community, connecting to regional trail systems north and south of NoMA and eventually all the way to Maryland and Virginia.

TWO-LEVEL ATTRACTION

The proposed “Burnham Spine” will consist of recently-built elevated portions of the Metropolitan Branch Trail, proposed above-grade extensions, and connections to at-grade trails. In addition, it can connect to the H Street bridge, the future air-rights development over the tracks, and to Union Station. This multi-level configuration creates a unique experience and opportunities for upper-level entrances into adjacent buildings, and for dramatic stairs and elevators connecting the two levels. Like the proposed “High-Line” development in New York City, and the “Promenade Plantee” in Paris; the “Burnham Spine” has the potential to exploit the design possibilities of a “two-level city”. This elevated attraction allows for a secondary means of circulation that bypasses many of the permanent barriers in NoMA, and provides unexpected views and vistas over the neighborhood and the city.

IMAGE AND IDENTITY

The “Burnham Spine” can become a landmark that contributes to the new identity of NoMA. As a unique piece of urban infrastructure and open space, it can include several defining features, such as color, signage, vertical connections (stair towers, ramps, etc.), landscaping, lighting, with a focus on achieving the kinds of rich, tactile qualities present in existing sections of the original stone wall. The “Burnham Spine” will reflect an interesting cross-section of the area’s history, from the solid monumentality associated with the functional, utilitarian aspects of NoMA’s industrial and transportation identity to the current high-design potential.

PUBLIC ART

Public art in strategic locations will further advance neighborhood connectivity and enhance identity. Budgeted reconstruction of the underpasses at K, L M Streets, and Florida Avenue, creates an opportunity to redefine dark, inhospitable passages into well-lit, walkable, east-west connections with public art rendered in light. This incorporation of public art into infrastructure can be carried to the upper level of “Burnham Spine”, creating an exciting “art-walk” in the sky.

Open space, neighborhood connections, transportation, recreation, and public art are tied together in a unique, linear open space.

“Burnham Spine” at K and First Streets, NE: Vertical ‘tower’ elements connect the elevated pedestrian and bike trail and future air-rights development over the tracks to the street level

As the tracks move north through NoMA, new developments near exposed sections of the wall should maintain the level of material quality, scale and detail as exemplified in the original wall. (Image of existing wall at left along 1st Street NE.)



Looking North along First St, NE: Depicting new air rights construction above the rail tracks and along the “Burnham Spine”, punctuated by vertical circulation elements that become identifying features of NoMA.

THE BURNHAM SPINE





Burnham Park

Every neighborhood benefits from a recognized public gathering place that serves as the heart of the community. This plan anticipates a long-term need for one or more small to medium size open spaces that can function as community recreation space and enhance a sense of neighborhood. Given the price of land in NoMA and the absence of publicly owned parcels; short-term recommendations for parks are limited to areas within extra-wide street rights-of-way under public control. The most visible of these proposed spaces, is the new “Burnham Park”, proposed at the intersection of K and 1st Streets, in close proximity to the “Burnham Spine” and at the terminus of the proposed K Street Linear Park (described below). As NoMA continues to grow, with significant increases in the residential population, the lack of a major public open space may eventually turn into a significant weakness and opportunities should be sought for expanding Burnham Park, or creating additional public open spaces.

K Street, Before



K Street, After



‘Burnham Park’ at the intersection of 1st and K Streets, occupying an large setback area currently under public ownership

K Street Linear Park

K Street is one of the few streets that extends through most of Central Washington, east to west from Near Northeast to the Potomac riverfront in Georgetown. In addition, it has unusually deep building setbacks, allowing for generous sidewalks, seating areas, and landscaping. A recently completed plan for K Street in the Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood to the west proposes a linear park with ample space for lush plantings, sidewalk cafes, sidewalk seating, and pedestrian-circulation (*Mount Vernon Triangle Transportation and Public Realm Plan, 2006.*) This concept can be extended eastward through Northwest One and into NoMA, and developed into one of this neighborhood’s primary open spaces. Terminating the linear park at the intersection with 1st Street, where it meets “Burnham Park” and the “Burnham Spine”, and where it can be complimented by ground floor retail at all four corners of the intersection; provides the potential for a major neighborhood activity center.



Union Station and Columbus Circle

Union Station Hub

Union Station was designed by architect Daniel Burnham in 1908 to serve as a gateway for the capital city. Following three years of renovation, Union Station reopened on September 29, 1988; it has become a bustling retail center and intermodal transportation facility, with the possibility of intercity bus lines re-located to Union Station in the future. In addition to over 130 unique shops and restaurants, it is the hub for Amtrak’s headquarters and executive offices. It currently serves approximately 25 million visitors a year; the station is both the District’s transportation center and one of its greatest communal gathering places.

Union Station is a major asset for the neighborhood, however it literally “turns its back” on NoMA. Air rights development over the tracks, the extension of the elevated segment of the “Burnham Spine”, and strategically placed vertical connections between upper-level and street-level, will help connect this commercial hub with NoMA. This connection will finally give the NoMA neighborhood a Union Station entrance and greatly improved access. In addition, a consolidation of regional bus lines into the Union Station complex will strengthen its role as a true multi-modal transportation and shopping hub.



Beatles first US concert was held at Uline Arena



Uline Arena area with hypothetical infill development

Uline Arena & Plaza

Uline Arena is an existing historic industrial-style structure east of the railway lines on M Street NE. It is currently used as a parking garage, but feels like an urban ‘ruin’ from the past. Originally built as an ice arena with attached ice storage facility, its unusual history includes diverse uses ranging from the Beatles’ first U.S. concert, to ice hockey games, to speeches and gatherings with prominent African-American speakers, to a garbage transfer station. The Arena could serve as a community anchor, focal point, landmark, and gathering place, by exploiting its distinctive architectural and spatial features, introducing exciting new uses to the area, and creating a plaza at the entrance. By incorporating recreational or cultural/performance spaces, Uline Arena could once again become an active part of both the local NoMA neighborhood and the District. Adjacent structures (like the old ice house) can be programmed to complement uses in the Arena, ensuring that it accommodates activity throughout the day. Shared parking arrangements with nearby office buildings and direct adjacency with the Metro Station can mitigate traffic impacts on the surrounding Near Northeast neighborhood.

With a rich background of social and recreational uses, Uline Arena should build upon its history to re-create a new neighborhood amenity and hub of activity.

NoMA