

8 PLACES TO WATCH

Neighborhoods where big things are happening



DC is betting that a new baseball stadium will spark a renaissance on the Anacostia waterfront. But that's not the only area primed for change. Here are places where big things are expected.

Renewal begun with the AFI Silver Theatre and the Discovery Communications headquarters is spreading to the southern edge of Silver Spring, a gritty area of auto-body shops and low-budget retail. Trendy condo buildings are going up near a Discovery annex; the Silverton is replacing an old bottling plant and promises flat-screen TVs in every unit. Also new to the area are a county business incubator for tech firms; Jackie's Restaurant, a funky, '60s-fueled eatery; and the Mayorga Coffee Factory, a spacious coffeehouse and wine bar run by Guatemalan-born Martin Mayorga with wireless Internet.

New development is bubbling up around Crystal City in Arlington. To the north the county is breaking ground on a public recreation facility that will include a swimming pool, soccer fields, and outdoor performance space. To the south, bulldozers are reshaping the remaining undeveloped land from the Potomac Yard rail depot. One of the central features: two 11-story condo buildings with nearly 500 units, retail space, and a grocery store. In the Alexandria section of Potomac Yard, plans call for homes, retail, and offices.

PBS is scheduled to move to Crystal City in 2006. New restaurants such as Jaleo and Oyamel—both owned in part by José Andrés, chef of downtown DC's hot Zaytinya—are adding style to the neighborhood, which is known largely as home to government contractors.

Developers are carving up the rolling land west of Bowie for homes, many of them on big lots. Oak Creek, a sister to the popular River Creek community near Leesburg, will be a gated golf community anchored by the nearly 200-year-old Bowieville Mansion, a country club, and 18 holes designed by architect Tom Clark. The Rouse Company, known for its development of Columbia and other planned communities, is trans-

forming an old turf farm into a village-centered community where homeownership will include membership in a country club.

A new arts, recreation, and education center is bringing energy to Congress Heights in Marion Barry's Ward 8. Opening this spring after ten years of planning and work, the ARC will house Children's Hospital clinics, a counseling center for teens, a gym and rec facilities, a dance studio, recital hall, and theater. The Washington Ballet, Corcoran College of Art & Design, and Levine School of Music will run programs at the center, believed to be the first in the country to house such a variety of programs.

A nonprofit arm of developer William C. Smith & Company has replaced 38 boarded and vacant buildings nearby with townhomes, some that are selling in the \$200,000s. Smith's group plans to build 75 detached homes—to sell for \$300,000 and up—and the ward's first grocery store.

The average sales price of a house in the area doubled in the past three years—the second highest percentage increase in the District—to \$156,000.

DC's downtown renewal is spreading to Mount Vernon Square, where developers are turning abandoned buildings into condos and homeowners are renovating historic homes. The neighborhood is a historic district and one of the city's most diverse architecturally. Many streets are lined with Victorian rowhouses.

Neighborhood activist Lydia Goring Byrd, 62, says that when she moved to the area in the late 1970s, "the only thing here were street people and drugs." A Metro stop followed, then the MCI Center, and now the new convention center. Crime began to disappear, Goring Byrd says, and boarded-up buildings took on new life.

Lorton, once home to a prison and landfill, is now the fastest-growing area in Fairfax County. Lorton Station, a six-year-old collection of townhouses, apartments, and homes built around a Virginia Railway Express station, recently won national recognition as a "smart growth" community. De-

velopers have broken ground for a town center, and condos near the station go up for sale in late spring.

The landfill has been capped, and the prison is being converted to a golf course, athletic fields, and park area. An arts foundation plans to convert prison buildings into studios, galleries, performance spaces, and a museum. A new high school—run by veteran principal Dale Rumberger, who in 2000 opened Chantilly's popular Westfield High—opens this fall.

A vibrant mix of old and new is bringing people to Howard County's Ellicott City, an old train town becoming a popular bedroom community for Washington and Baltimore. New upscale businesses are joining the antique shops on Main Street in the historic district. Michael Jordan's Steakhouse recently opened, along with Tiber River Tavern, a popular American eatery. What's in Store, a modern home-furnishing shop built from an old auto-body shop, is bringing a touch of SoHo to town.

Ellicott City is known for its historic homes, from 18th-century stone houses and converted churches to 20th-century cottages. A 19th-century French gothic cottage known as Chateau de Angelo was listed for sale recently at \$900,000.

The town is a 50-minute drive from DC, 25 minutes from Baltimore.

South Arlington is due for a big makeover. County officials recently signed off on a 20-year plan to remake Columbia Pike between the Pentagon and Baileys Crossroads and give it a small-town, Main Street feel. To encourage foot traffic and window-shopping, officials will widen sidewalks and put new buildings close together. They also hope to introduce a bus rapid-transit system.

In Columbia Heights, near the pike's intersection with Walter Reed Drive, the plan calls for a string of townhouses with first- and second-floor stores. Across the street in the Douglas Park neighborhood, a condo building with 269 units and 45,000 square feet of retail is set to open in 2007.

Ground already has been cleared in nearby Alcova Heights for 22 high-end townhouses at the corner of Columbia Pike and George Mason Drive. They will begin selling from the \$580,000s.

In 2006 the National Air Force Memorial opens at the east end of Columbia Pike in Foxcroft Heights near Washington Boulevard. Planners predict the new memorial—with steel spires reaching as high as 270 feet—will attract more than 750,000 visitors a year.

—JASON BRESLOW, KIM FORREST, AND DREW LINDSAY