



# AICP COMMUNITY PLANNING WORKSHOP

## Strategies for Parks and Open Space in NoMa

Final Report  
NoMa neighborhood  
Washington, D.C.  
October 28, 2011



American Planning Association  
*Making Great Communities Happen*

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*Cover Credit: Local residents, stakeholders, and APA leadership members arriving at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments meeting space in the NoMa neighborhood to participate in the day's workshop. Photo by J. Otavio Thompson*

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## PREFACE

The American Planning Association and the NoMa Business Improvement District (BID) would like to extend their gratitude to the community volunteers who participated in the 2011 AICP Community Planning Workshop. Without their efforts the goals of the community could not be realized. The following is a list of the community stakeholders who participated in the workshop:

Heather Strand	Carlos Bonner
Tony Goodman	Sandy Wilkes
Tom Madison	Joe McCann
Pei Pei Chan	Theresa Pangelanian
Heather Deutsch	Brian Chamowitz
John Mataya	Michael Bjornson
Willina Robson	Bruce Baschuk
Richard Layman	Ryan McGuinness

APA and NoMa BID are thankful for the APA members who volunteered their time and planning expertise to make the workshop successful:

Stephen Villavaso, FAICP	Anna Breinich, AICP
M. Margo Wheeler, AICP	Bruce Knight, FAICP
Angela Vincent	Philip Farrington, AICP
Deborah Lawlor, AICP	Susan Wood, AICP
Sue Schwartz, FAICP	W. Paul Farmer, FAICP
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Mitzi Barker, FAICP	William Anderson, FAICP
Deborah Myerson, AICP	Andrea Barbour
Terrance Harrington, AICP	Lauren Kruer

Both APA and NoMa BID staff collaborated to organize the day's events:

APA Staff	NoMa BID Staff
Monica Groh	Jamie Brätt
Ryan Scherzinger	J. Otavio Thompson
Thomas Bassett	
Julia Allman, APA intern	

## INTRODUCTION

Community assistance is built into the professional role of a planner. One principle of the *AICP Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* states that certified planners shall aspire to “seek social justice by working to expand choice and opportunity for all persons, recognizing a special responsibility to plan for the needs of the disadvantaged and to promote racial and economic integration.” Yet another principle is that certified planners should aspire to “contribute time and effort to groups lacking in adequate planning resources and to voluntary professional activities.” In the early 1990s, the American Planning Association (APA) and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP), began an on-the-ground effort of addressing issues of social equity by providing pro bono technical assistance to communities facing limited resources. By pairing expert urban planning professionals from around the country with citizens from local communities, the initiative seeks to foster community education, engagement, and empowerment. APA has worked with many communities across the country, including most recently, a concerted recovery effort in the Gulf Coast region in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

Through APA's Community Assistance Program (CAP), AICP sponsors two initiatives: the Community Planning Workshop (CPW) and the Community Planning Assistance Teams (CPAT). CPWs are held in conjunction with APA's National Planning Conference. Workshops are designed to address a local planning issue in a community of the conference host city. Projects are selected to ensure that the community benefits from a focused one-day effort involving community members, local planning staff, and APA volunteers from all over the country. Workshops assist a community that does not have all of the necessary resources to engage in the community planning process. Workshop planners prepare a program that is intended to: a) serve as a legacy of the National Planning Conference for the host city; b) highlight the capabilities of the planning profession; c) visibly demonstrate planning to the public; and d) provide training for both the practitioners and the community on public consensus building while honing skills in community participation and problem solving. CPATs are three- to five-day projects. Communities are selected during two annual application periods. Each team is selected for the specific expertise needed on the project to offer pro bono assistance in developing a framework or vision plan that promotes a sustainable, livable, economically vibrant, and healthy community. Information regarding all of APA's Community Assistance Program efforts may be found online at: [www.planning.org/communityassistance](http://www.planning.org/communityassistance).

### **Expanding the Community Planning Workshop**

The NoMa workshop, held in conjunction with the 2011 APA Fall Leadership Meetings and the Federal Policy and Program Briefing, was the start of an effort to extend the Community Planning Workshops beyond only the National Planning Conference. It was designed to give members of APA's Leadership, including the Board and Commission and elected members of Chapters and Divisions, a chance to experience a workshop firsthand and learn how to organize a similar one through their own Chapter or Division. APA participants assisted the NoMa neighborhood with strategies to preserve public open space and create parks in the rapidly growing area.

## PROJECT OVERVIEW

NoMa is the fastest growing neighborhood in the District of Columbia. In the past decade, the community has transformed from a mostly abandoned, underutilized neighborhood to a bustling office, retail, and residential destination. Spurred by the opening of the New York Avenue Metro Station in 2004, NoMa now has a daytime working population of over 40,000. The next wave of development is primarily high-rise residential product. Upon total buildout in the next 15-20 years, the neighborhood will be home to approximately 15,000 residents and 80,000 employees. Despite this engine for economic growth, NoMa suffers from a dearth of publically accessible open space. Currently, there is no land set aside for such use. It is critical that the neighborhood create park and open space to protect the quality of life for its current and future residents, employees, and visitors.

The NoMa Business Improvement District (BID) represents the 35-block neighborhood by providing a variety of services to support economic development, beautification, public safety, and urban planning & design.

Urban planners from around the country volunteered their time to work side-by-side with NoMa community stakeholders on Saturday, September 17, 2011, as part of the AICP Community Planning Workshop. The workshop was held prior to the APA's Federal Policy and Program Briefing, which took place on September 18-19 at the Omni Shoreham Hotel. The goal of the day-long workshop was to work with the NoMa BID to engage both residents and stakeholders about creating an effective Park Strategy.

Going forward, it is clear from the feedback received at the workshop that the type of public participation process modeled by the workshop—one involving active listening and engagement—inspires trust and confidence in the community. As a result of the successful workshop, the visions, goals, themes, and ideas contained in this report will be used by the NoMa BID as it moves forward to reach its goals for the neighborhood.



## BACKGROUND

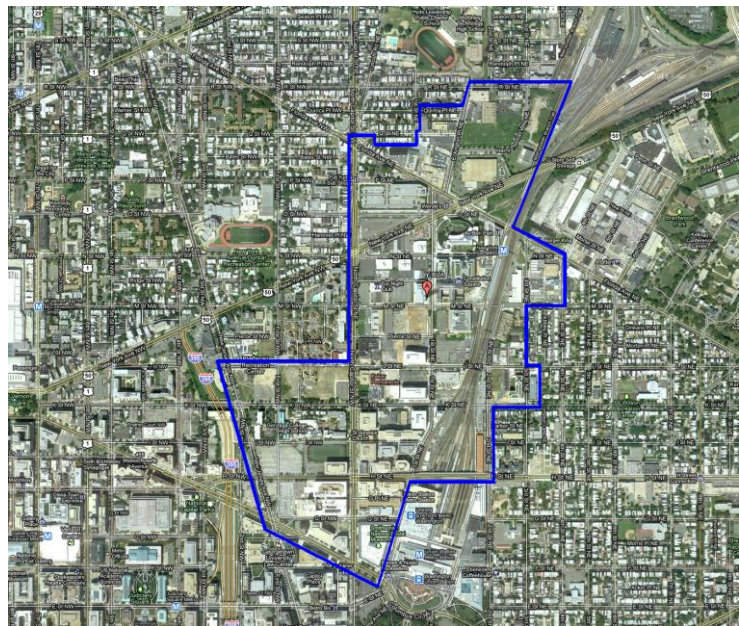
NoMa is one of the fastest growing neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. The 35-block, 240-acre neighborhood is situated just north of the U.S. Capitol and is anchored at the south by Union Station. In the last decade it has experienced a rapid transformation from a blighted industrial area into an area that, since the opening of the New York Avenue Metro station in 2004, has seen more than seven million square feet of mixed use development. Affordability, accessibility and amenities have made NoMa a popular choice among office users and residents.

NoMa currently has a daytime population of 40,000 people, and a full-time resident population of 1,500 (from zero residents before 2010). As new high-density residential and commercial buildings are constructed, the resident population is expected to double in the next 24 months. Upon full build out, the neighborhood is projected to have 32 million square feet of residential, commercial, and government space and a population of nearly 100,000 residents and employees. Currently, 70 percent of NoMa's employee population comprises federal and local government workers.

Deriving its name from the neighborhood location "North of Massachusetts Avenue," NoMa is bounded by high-volume roads and, to the east, the railroad yard serving Union Station. As a result, NoMa is a long and narrow neighborhood with development concentrated around First Street NE.

Despite NoMa's recent development success, the lack of public parks and open gathering space is a critical challenge to future vibrancy. Because of its industrial past, the NoMa neighborhood does not have a legacy of neighborhood parks that can be reclaimed. In addition, there are few publicly owned sites that could be used for parks and other civic amenities. The few parcels owned by the District government are committed for mixed income housing or currently used by District agencies. As such, it will be difficult to create a park in NoMa without acquiring land from private owners or possibly swapping publicly owned sites in other locations for a park site in NoMa.

The NoMa Public Parks Act (see *Appendix C for proposed document*) is one mechanism by which land might be acquired and converted into public space. If successful, the community needs to have a unified and prioritized vision for where and how to develop, maintain and program the public space. This workshop is meant to help develop that shared vision and prioritization.



Map 1: Aerial Map with blue lines demarcating the boundaries of the NoMa BID.  
Source: Google Maps

## **Open Space and Recreation**

The primary issue that the Community Planning Workshop addressed is NoMa's lack of public park space. Most land in NoMa's 35-city-block area is privately held and planned for commercial, residential, or retail construction. No parks were drawn into the neighborhood's original blueprint. A major challenge is land acquisition, made more difficult by the rapidly rising cost of land in the area.

## **Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence**

The NoMa BID commissioned the Trust for Public Land (TPL) to assess current neighborhood conditions and give recommendations on park goals and strategies. In its report, TPL recommends developing a central square park, possibly along First Street NE, complemented by smaller "affinity" parks in surrounding areas.

The central square "would serve as an important gathering spot for the community" and as an event space. Due to limited land availability and the high-volume roads that separate neighborhoods in the area, TPL suggests developing a number of smaller parks outside the First Street corridor. These might include playgrounds/"tot lots," dog parks, recreational facilities, community gardens, or pocket parks.

## **NoMa Public Parks Act of 2011**

While there is wide recognition of the need for public parks in NoMa, finding an acceptable mechanism by which they will be funded is a challenge. This proposed legislation was introduced by Tommy Wells, Ward 6 D.C. councilmember (serving the NoMa area), and is supported by NoMa BID as a means to finance, build, and maintain public parks within NoMa borders. The Act is expected to come up for a vote this fall. If passed, the Act would:

- Establish a NoMa Reinvestment Fund, which will be used by the NoMa BID for the acquisition, purchase, design, construction, and operation of public parks and infrastructure within the NoMa Reinvestment area.
- Create a parks funding mechanism which:
  - Allows for up to \$51.5 million of tax increment to be deposited in the Fund over 10 years
  - Uses property, sales, and deed/recordation taxes as revenue sources.

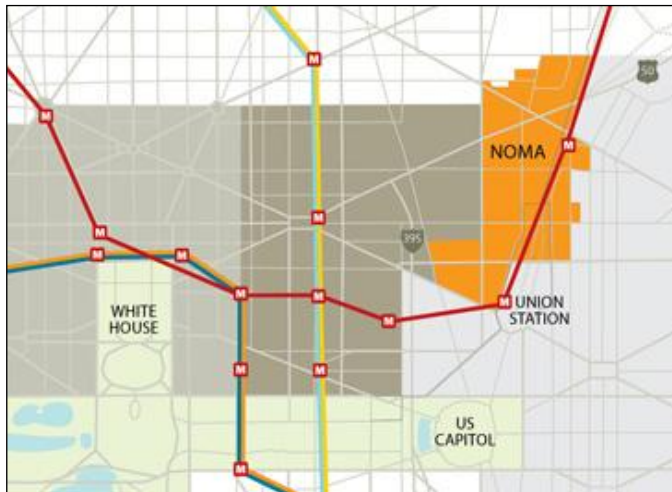
## **Transportation**

NoMa is served by many modes of transportation, including:

- Metrorail (New York Avenue Station and Union Station on the Red Line)
- MetroBus
- Amtrak and regional commuter rail via Union Station
- Bicycle
  - Access to the Metropolitan Branch Trail, an eight-mile, multiuse trail connecting Union Station to Silver Spring, Maryland
  - Five Capital Bikeshare stations
  - East Coast Bikestation (at Union Station), which provides secure 24/7 bike parking and lockers



- Running through NoMa are several high-volume traffic corridors, including Florida Avenue, New York Avenue, North Capitol Street, and H Street NE.



Map 2: Metrorail stations (red M's) and other transportation routes within and in proximity to the NoMa neighborhood. Source: NoMa BID

## WORKSHOP OVERVIEW

The 2011 NoMa Community Planning Workshop was held on Saturday, September 17, 2011. The workshop began at 8:00am and concluded at 4:30pm with a working lunch (*Please see the workshop agenda for more details in Appendix A*).

The planning participants met at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) offices for snacks and a background presentation from Jamie Brätt, Director of Planning & Economic Development for the NoMa BID. Participants had several questions preceding the tour, including the following topics:

- Open space provided by schools
- Efforts to improve pedestrian accessibility
- Efforts to relocate government offices to create open space
- Zoning of the bike path (Metropolitan Branch Trail)
- The residential makeup of the community

NoMa staff led participants, including APA members and local stakeholders, on an hour-long walking tour of the neighborhood, covering development activity, roads, and the Metropolitan Branch Trail. Following the walking tour, participants had several more questions (and the local stakeholders were instrumental in answering these questions), including the following topics:

- Establishment of BID boundaries
- City/local park requirements
- Plans for the historic Washington Coliseum (known as the U-Line Arena)
- Street closures to open up public space

Following the tour and Q&A, participants reconvened at the MWCOG offices. Participants were separated into 5 break-out groups, each containing a combination of planners and community

stakeholders. The community stakeholders included:

- NoMa residents
- NoMa employees (whom live in other neighborhoods)
- Residents of adjacent communities
- Landowners and developers with a stake in NoMa
- Local organizations, governments agencies, and nonprofits

These breakout groups worked individually in four different sessions. Each session covered a different topic. After discussing the topics within their groups, all participants rejoined and each group presented its takeaways from the discussion in a “Report-Out.”

The break-out groups collaborated on the following topics (*See Appendix B for detailed notes on the “Report Out” from each group*):

- Parks Vision Statement
- Reflections on the “Greening NoMa” Report
- Park Priorities
- Breezeway Design

Following the break-out groups and reporting out, the group worked collectively to discuss strategies for long-term public engagement. This concluding session was facilitated by APA members, Sue Schwartz, FAICP and Lee Brown, FAICP (*See Appendix B for detailed notes of discussion*).



*Image 1: The picture above captures one of the breakout groups in discussion. Workshop participants were divided into five smaller breakout groups each consisting of both APA members and NoMa stakeholders to discuss topics. Each group then reported back to the larger group with a brief summary of their discussion, ideas, and findings. Photo by J. Otavio Thompson*

## WORKSHOP TAKEAWAYS

Reviewing the vision statements and breakout group notes, one finds common threads, identified below. These ideas and themes listed could serve as a starting point for continued conversation between the BID, community residents, and local government. Detailed breakout group notes are provided in *Appendix B*.

### Topic #1: Parks Vision Statement

Each breakout group was given the task of formulating a statement that they felt conveys, broadly, their vision for NoMa public parks. This session included a working lunch. The following key takeaways and vision statements were formed. Questions considered can be found in the agenda in *Appendix A*.

#### Blue Group:

- Celebrate the existing character of the neighborhood while providing for a variety of daytime active and passive uses for the pedestrian.

#### Peach Group:

- Vision of “a diverse and multifunctional park network, serving NoMa and its many surrounding neighborhood...”
- Creation of a commons that creates a unique identity.
- Serve the needs of a diverse group of NoMa residents and visitors through a park network that serves many needs.

#### Green Group:

- Vision of “a network of green, creative, multigenerational spaces that delight the senses and bring warmth and civility to the neighborhood.”

#### Yellow Group:

- Retention of residents by providing amenities for the many young families with children.
- Repurpose parking spaces as a play area for children of all ages.
- Use the full right-of-way on streets to maximize land potential.

#### Red Group:

- Create central gathering places that are the heart of the community.
- Create a series of paths that have their own identities and activities.

#### Full Group Discussion:

- Importance of connectivity through either bike and walking trails or existing streets.
- Need an integrative public framework that incorporates open space, recreation space and community space- on a broader scale than just parks; this can also include the inside of buildings.
- The BID could use a planning process to determine which “typicals,” such as tot lots, park station, and game station for the elderly, should go on which street.

*Summary:* “Connectivity” and “corridors” emerged as strong themes in the discussions of a park vision. NoMa should consider how parks can be used to lead people into and out of surrounding areas.

## Topic #2: Reactions to the "Greening NoMa" Report

Participants were asked to review the "Greening NoMa" report (*see Appendix E*) by the Trust for Public Land and the NoMa Public Parks Act of 2011 (*see Appendix C*) in advance of the workshop. The breakout groups collaborated to come up with suggestions and comments to improve or expand on these documents. The following highlights the major takeaways from the succeeding "Report Out." Questions considered can be found in the agenda in *Appendix A*. Notes from each group's report out can be found in *Appendix B*.

### Blue Group:

- The report needs to focus not just on parks, but on civic space both inside and out.
- Allow for opportunities to re-engage with developers who have not yet built.
- Consider building design and greening vertically (such as through green walls); need to create a toolbox of incentives that help developers tweak their plans.
- Use the existing bike trail to extend cycle track of the entire city.

### Peach Group:

- Need more discussion and thought about linkages.
- Need to involve an artist.
- Graffiti is a good form of art to highlight (such as that at U-Line).

### Green Group:

- Come up with a robust open space analysis.
- Consider street conversion or time-of-day street conversion.
- Use existing bike trail as "poster child."

### Yellow Group:

- Need to incorporate signage (of how to get places within the community), destination maps, and kiosks (what's going on in the neighborhood?).
- Need to establish as many connections to the trail as possible.
- Use land swaps, both inside and outside of NoMa, to create the opportunity for a park; do not dwell on "accidental" locations.

### Red Group:

- Report should consider open space and connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Information on demographics could add depth to the report.
- Should consider how a park could take advantage of industrial character, rail yard, and vistas.
- Need to incorporate the element of NoMa as a "gateway" as experienced by drivers and train riders.
- Consider the open space and park system in time, both seasonally and through different times of the day.

*Summary:* The BID should consider how it can achieve many of its goals through taking advantage of existing resources, particularly using underutilized streets. There are many relevant examples of using small spaces creatively to create open and parks space (*Some suggestions can be found in the workshop notes in Appendix B*).

### **Topic #3: Park Design Guidelines**

The breakout groups assembled to discuss the biggest priorities for the incorporation of parks and open space into NoMa's future development. The groups were tasked with coming up with a list of the top three priorities regarding the design and programming of parks. The following is the list that each group formulated. Specific questions that were considered can be found in the agenda in *Appendix A*.

#### Blue Group:

1. Diversity of recreation activity – kids, dogs. Engage the neighborhood, do some polling or interaction with neighborhood residents.
2. Wayfinding – delight and surprise.
3. Connectivity – to outside neighborhoods, to breezeway, etc.

#### Peach Group:

1. Keep it simple with flexible programs; don't over-design or over-program with too many bells and whistles. Ratio of 80-20.
2. Use art for community character and a unifying theme for the neighborhood.
3. Give it something specific that fits the residents, such as a dog park combined with exercise trail.

#### Green Group:

1. Space for performing and visual arts of a wide variety.
2. Broadening the concept of community market – niche markets – foods, crafts, arts.
3. Create a neighborhood green that would be used as an active community center.

#### Yellow Group:

1. Find permanent space for film series.
2. Innovative outdoor use.
3. Events: (a) "Choo-choo" days: a train area that brings together businesses and residents, food, etc.  
(b) Mardi Gras dog parade

#### Red Group:

1. Second Street and N Street – closed off at strategic times for programming/farmer's market, connect into Breezeway.
2. Central square – NoMa 2-4 (M Street connection), connecting down to greyhound terminal.
3. Preserve the screen on the green site.

*Summary:* Important themes that arose from discussion include the establishment of open space as a central activity area and using art to create an identity for the community.

### **Topic #4: Breezeway Experiment**

The final task of the breakout groups was to create design and programming ideas for the breezeway and to identify ways to engage adjacent property owners, including WMATA, which owns the space. Participants were given photos of the current breezeway adjacent to the New York Avenue metro station (*The pictures can be found in Appendix D*). The following points are the key takeaways from the reporting out session succeeding the break-out group discussions. Specific questions considered can be found in the agenda in *Appendix A*. Notes from each group can be found in *Appendix B*.



**Blue Group:**

- Use the phrase “Pilot Program.”
- Important to have first floor retail.

**Peach Group:**

- Link breezeway to bike trail ramp.
- Local competition of artists for artwork along buildings that face breezeway.

**Green Group:**

- Negotiate with WMATA by the BID taking responsibility for offload cleaning and maintenance.
- Create more bicycle amenities, potentially from revenue sharing with kiosk vendors.

**Yellow Group:**

- Emphasis on the low total cost of the project.
- Add active recreation, such as a climbing wall.

**Red Group:**

- Transparency of adjacent buildings to maximize perception of space.
- Make the space available for kiosk vendors.

*Summary:* Preserving the open feel of the breezeway is paramount. Through lighting and pedestrian-level retail, this feeling can be preserved with the construction of adjacent buildings. Public art, such as rotating exhibits and local artists, can help to create an active space.

**Entire Group Discussion: Long-Term Public Engagement**

The resident population of NoMa is projected to grow four times larger over the next four years. Because of this, many of the voices that matter cannot be presently heard. Collectively the group of planners and local stakeholders were tasked with coming up with a list of recommendations for how the community should engage its growing resident base and other stakeholders in the neighborhood. Priorities identified include:

- The BID should incorporate a “Welcome to the Neighborhood” to identify why people have moved into the neighborhood.
- NoMa needs to create more democratic, resident-focused organizations, including a neighborhood association.
- NoMa could create an e-newsletter and place advertisements around the metro stations.
- Facebook, Twitter and webpage could be branded into the NoMa BID logo.
- Active and updated social media is better than an e-mail list.
- Focus on the transit station as an outreach place, at which all aspects of the community interact.
- Create a survey, through a free survey site (SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang, etc.), to gain concrete statistical analyses of community residents and stakeholders.
- Attend the meetings of existing ties and organizations rather than just having them attend the meetings of the BID.

- Investigate neighborhood blogs to stay engaged with what is happening in the community.
  - Create a community film that is connected with the film festival as a kickoff to dialogue.
  - When making decisions, consider both residents and workers; and engage with employers.
  - Place outreach materials from the BID in the lobbies of residential buildings and offices.
  - Reach out to building and business owners for buy-in.
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## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix A: Workshop Agenda**

**Appendix B: Notes from Workshop, Including "Report Out" and Group Discussions**

**Appendix C: NoMa Public Parks Act of 2011**

**Appendix D: Pictures of Breezeway Next to Metro Rail Station**

**Appendix E: Greening NoMa Report**

# APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP AGENDA

## Workshop Schedule

8:00-8:15 a.m.	Workshop participants meet at MWCOG offices for coffee and snacks
8:15-8:30 a.m.	Opening remarks by DC Councilmember Tommy Wells; Bruce Baschuk (BID Board of Directors); Sandy Wilkes (BID Board of Directors); and W. Paul Farmer, FAICP, APA Chief Executive Officer
8:30-9:00 a.m.	Background presentation
9:00-10:00 a.m.	Walking tour of NoMa BID area
10:00-10:30 a.m.	Return to MWCOG offices and form breakout groups
10:30-11:45 a.m.	Discussion and report out (Parks Vision Statement)
11:45 a.m. -1:15 p.m.	Discussion and report out ("Greening NoMa" report); working lunch
1:15-2:45 p.m.	Discussion and report out (Park Design Priorities and Breezeway Experiment)
2:45-3:00 p.m.	Break
3:00-4:00 p.m.	Entire group discussion and report out (Long-Term Public Engagement)
4:00-4:30 p.m.	Entire group discussion about overall impressions and perspectives
4:30 p.m.	APA participants return to Omni Shoreham Hotel via Metro rail for leadership meetings

## Breakout Groups

Workshop participants will be separated into breakout groups, each comprised of APA members and stakeholders. Community stakeholders will include:

- Residents of NoMa
- Employees who work in NoMa (but live in other neighborhoods)
- Residents of surrounding neighborhoods (Northwest One, Capitol Hill North, Bloomingdale, Eckington, etc.)
- Landowners and Developers with a stake in NoMa
- Local organizations, government agencies and nonprofits

## Breakout Group Session

*Introduce yourselves:*

- Neighborhood representatives: Include how long you have lived in the area, what brings you to the workshop, what you hope to achieve in participating, and so on.
- Planners: Identify where you come from, what you do in your profession, and so on.

*Meet your group leader:*

Staff will assign each breakout group a leader, who will facilitate the discussion and will be the “point person” for APA and the BID during the working session.

*Select both a record keeper and two spokespersons:*

- The *record keeper* is responsible for accurately capturing and recording the major points of discussion. The record keeper needs to be a good listener and be able to quickly record key points.
- The *spokespersons* are responsible for reporting back to the entire group of attendees after reconvening on the idea of each breakout group. Local neighborhood representatives are encouraged to take on this role.

*Work on your discussion questions:*

Find consensus among the group and report back with answers and recommendations.

## **Ground Rules**

In order for the day to go smoothly and effectively, please abide by the following ground rules:

- There are no observers. This is a participation exercise. Everyone is encouraged and welcome to join in and everyone has something to contribute.
- There are no right or wrong answers as we think about the future of the sites.
- Respect the opinion of others. Encourage others to participate.
- Commit yourself to a team approach. Together we can generate ideas and options.
- Think in terms of how to make things happen.

**During the Breakout Group Sessions:**

- Take some time to clearly state the issue for discussion.
- Ask for clarification if you do not understand the issues presented.
- Challenge your fellow participants to think outside the box.
- Do not dominate the discussion.
- Think in terms of doable steps in recommending approaches and setting priorities.
- Only one person should be speaking at any time at each table.
- Keep voices to a conversational tone to avoid drowning out the other breakout groups.

**During the Large Group Session:**

- Listen to the presentation.
- Contribute to the general discussion.
- Ask for clarification as needed. There are no dumb questions!
- Be respectful of other's perspectives.
- Try not to be repetitive but build on the discussion of others.

## **Subject Areas for Breakout Group Discussion:**

Each breakout group will consider the following topics in their discussion of a NoMa Parks Strategy. The questions under each heading are intended not only to start discussion during the working session, but to help APA member participants start thinking about these issues in advance of the workshop. Other questions and related discussion topics are encouraged.

Each group will organize a brief presentation for the final "Reporting Out" period that covers findings and recommendations for each of the bolded topic areas below. Members of each breakout group should elect two people to present their group's findings.

## **Breakout Groups - Phase I:**

### **Objectives:** 1) NoMa Parks Vision Statement 2) Beyond “Greening NoMa”

#### **Objective 1: NoMa Parks Vision Statement**

**Discussion:** 10:30–11:15 a.m.

**Reporting out:** 11:15–11:45 a.m.

Each breakout group should formulate a statement that conveys, broadly, their group’s vision for NoMa public parks.

#### **Questions to consider:**

- What are the groups’ favorite things about NoMa—what makes it a great place to live, work, and play? How might these elements be reinforced through public spaces?
- What specific benefits could park space provide for the neighborhood?
  - Special events (concerts, movie nights, festivals, farmers market, etc.)
  - Daily use (employees in area, residents, etc.)
  - Design features (seating, vegetation, ratio of permeable and impermeable surface, etc.)
  - Public art
  - Beautification
  - Exercise and fitness
  - Others...
- How would your group imagine people using the park(s)? Who would be there? What would they be doing?

***Deliverable:*** No more than three sentences expressing the vision for NoMa parks.

#### **Objective 2: Beyond “Greening NoMa”**

**Discussion:** 11:45 a.m. –12:45 p.m. (including a working lunch)

**Reporting out:** 12:45–1:15 p.m.

For this discussion, please refer to the “Greening NoMa” report by the Trust for Public Land (TPL) in *Appendix E*. In addition, please familiarize yourself with the NoMa Public Parks Act of 2011, which is available for review in *Appendix C*.

#### **Questions to consider:**

- In reviewing these documents, what are your reactions? Do you agree or disagree with the recommendations?
- Would you add anything to these recommendations?
- What neighborhood features should NoMa BID consider when choosing locations for future parks?

***Deliverable:*** Reactions and any recommendations and comments that go beyond these documents.



## **Breakout Groups—Phase II:**

### **Objectives:** 1) Park Design Priorities

#### 2) Breezeway Experiment

Discussion: 1:15–2:15 p.m.

Reporting out: 2:15–2:45 p.m.

#### **Objective 1: Park Design Guidelines**

- What community events are most important to you?
- What aspects of the neighborhood’s architecture, culture, or history would your group most want to incorporate into NoMa public parks?
- What balance—giving a rough percentage—would your group like to see between structured public spaces (seating areas, event space, playgrounds, dog parks, “spray parks,” etc.) and unstructured spaces that can accommodate a great variety of uses, including green space?
- What events does the community have now that your group wants to make sure to preserve?
- What new events or programming does your group want to see?
- Are there any fears or concerns about public spaces in NoMa?

*Deliverable:* A list of the top three priorities and other recommendations regarding the design and programming of the parks.

#### **Objective 2: Breezeway Experiment**

Picture of the breezeway space are located in *Appendix F*.

- How would you design the breezeway area? What elements would you consider essential (lighting, art, etc. ...)? Be specific and feel free to make any sketches that will help illustrate your ideas.
- What types of programming can you envision for the breezeway area?
- Several development sites are already planned directly next to the breezeway. What would you ask for from the developers to help create a successful public space? What types of commercial space would you like to see go in on the first floor, lighting features on the building, etc.?
- The breezeway space is owned by the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). What are some ways that the BID and the community can engage WMATA to explore new possibilities for the breezeway space?

*Deliverable:* Creative design and programming ideas for the breezeway and ways to engage the adjacent property owners, including WMATA, which owns the space.

## **Entire Group Discussion: Long-Term Public Engagement**

Discussion: 3:00–4:00 p.m.

Objective: Long-term public engagement strategy

NoMa’s resident population is projected to grow four times larger in the next four years, so many of the voices that will matter in the design and implementation stage of the Parks Strategy are not present in the neighborhood, or, for that matter, at this workshop.

- How can the community plan to incorporate the views of future residents as they move in?
- How should the community work with local and regional agencies such as the District Department of Transportation, Office of Planning, and others?
- How will the community ensure that adequate public facilities and services will be available inside the BID's boundaries and in adjacent areas?
- Others...

*Deliverable:* A prioritized list of recommendations for how the community should engage its growing resident base and other stakeholders in the neighborhood.

# APPENDIX B: WORKSHOP NOTES

*Recorded by Julia Allman, intern with the American Planning Association*

## Background Info – Jamie Brätt

- Rapid Growth Neighborhood.
- Need for public parks space.
- No density bonus; no open space requirement on new development.
- NoMa Public Parks Act.
- Trust for Public Land Report:
  - Central Square, adjacent to First Street
  - Small linkage parks
  - Embrace/celebrate local vernacular (trains, industrial past).
  - Mission: Articulate community priorities, generate creative ideas, establish goals for future public engagement.
- Questions from participants:
  - Do area schools have space that can be used by the community?
  - Have there been any efforts to remediate pedestrian inaccessibility/difficulty crossing at Florida Ave and New York?
    - DDOT has reconfigured FLA intersection – signal timing, lighting, etc. (120,000 cars per day).
  - Any relationship with fed/local government, move offices to create open space?
    - Broad conversations with fed, but no working group at that time
  - Bike path – how is it zoned?
    - Series of easements, public space, DDOT
    - Partnership with Casey Trees to plant where possible
    - But narrow easement (in some places, as low as 12 ft.
  - What kind of residents are in NoMa? Income, rent, what are they buying?
    - Only apartments right now
    - Rental rates: Studio over \$1000
    - Most car-free
    - Many own dog, work in DC
    - Young urban professionals
- Questions from participants after walking tour:
  - How were BID boundaries established?
    - Tax/zoning
    - Used by office of planning in the vision plan to establish the BID.
    - Avoiding individual residents who would not support/afford the BID tax.
  - Not requiring parks – is that just this area, or is that a citywide policy?

- City doesn't have a parks master plan
- There are some parks requirements, but eliminated in CBD, without requirements to pay into a fund
- Are there any plans for the U-Line arena? What effect might that have on surrounding area?
  - Historic register – outer facade won't change dramatically
  - Privately controlled, so no use requirements
  - Many exciting uses have been proposed
  - Feasibility depends on a particular proposal
  - Concert promoter wants to use it; owner doesn't want that use.
- Has there been any discussion of street closures to open up public space? Around ATF?
  - Has been discussed... N street on East and West side of the tracks; also smaller side streets
  - None of these discussions have been formalized quite yet
  - Large landholders would be engaged in those discussions
- DDOT collaborations?
  - Not on BID board, but a good cooperative relationship with the dept.

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## BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT-OUT #1 – Parks Vision Statement

### Key takeaways from this discussion:

- “Connectivity” and “Corridors” emerged as strong themes in discussion of a parks vision. Think about how NoMa links to other neighborhoods, and how parks can be used to lead people into and out of surrounding areas.
- Multi-use: Parks should have things to offer at different times of day (lunch time, after work, evening), days of the week, and seasons.
- Discussion: is the area east of the railroad considered NoMa?

### BLUE GROUP

- Trails, networks, and connectivity (bike paths, intersecting neighborhood, bring together).
- Variety of daytime opportunities (many uses, times of day, active and passive).
- Celebrate existing character (there's something there that brought people to the area, keep that).
- Play nice with streets (it's an existing feature, work with what we have to bring these together).

## PEACH GROUP

- A diverse and multifunctional park network, serving NoMa and its many surrounding neighborhoods...
- Creating a commons that creates a unique identity
- Understand the multiple users and their different needs/functions; workers, residents here on nights and weekends. Importance of serving those many needs and functions through the network.
- Incorporate the “vibe of the railroad.”
- Discussion of the portion of the neighborhood that is east of the RR – do residents there consider themselves really part of NoMa?
  - Former Resident of that E of RR area, Senate Square – didn't really call it NoMa, felt more a part of the H street corridor, felt drawn out that direction because it had more life to it. That was before the Harris Teeter, so I'm not sure now what my perspective would be
  - Other resident: in Near Northeast, I didn't used to cross much into NoMa besides for the metro. Now with the Harris Teeter and new retail, I use that area more and I feel myself drawn there. But I don't feel like I'm a NoMa resident.
- Comment from green group – we talked about how parks could link NoMa with surrounding neighborhoods, and make those corridors more attractive and inviting.
- Harris Teeter becomes the nexus where neighbors meet – there didn't used to be a central place that drew people into the neighborhood.

## GREEN GROUP

- Discussed the lack of warmth in the neighborhood.
- Vision: A network of green, creative, multigenerational spaces that delight the senses and bring warmth and civility to the neighborhood.

## YELLOW GROUP

- The theme we discussed the most is retaining residents you have here already. On the walking tour we saw families with young children. Provide amenities for when those children get older.
- Repurpose parking space as an opportunity to provide a play area for children of all ages.
- NoMa is a valuable, attractive area. We will take charge to use this vision. We need to take full advantage of the land that we have, using the full right-of-way on streets and sidewalks. For example, 5<sup>th</sup> and K community center at public right of way (tot block); tables with built in chess boards are there.

## RED GROUP

- NoMa has the opportunity to be a global destination at the heart of a growing neighborhood. Create central gathering places that are a community heart. Central space, series of paths with own identity and activities; connection with nature, inviting current and new residents.

## FULL-GROUP DISCUSSION:

- Key words: central place, connecting neighborhoods, making sure barriers are bridged (for example, both sides of the railroad)
- It's a challenge and opportunity that you have something so dramatic as Union station – a global destination. How you go from that scale and relevance of a focal point to something



that gives you relevance to the everyday residential space. Importance of keeping DC-standard quality.

- Jamie: NoMa is a microcosm for a general DC trend, that we have on average many acres per capita. But most of that is on the national mall and in federal spaces. Then you see park “deserts” in large areas. Sometimes the park is serving a more monumental function than something at the neighborhood scale.
- Connectivity. Something becomes global at the right location. This has the right location. It needs some other pieces to be connected well – whether through bike, walking trails, or existing streets
- This discussion is just parks (frustration with the approach) – not about integrative public framework. Open space, recreation space, community space are needed. They can be inside buildings too. There is a network that needs to be captured in a broader scope.
- Green group: We talked about “knitting together” neighborhoods and the public and private realm. Because you have setbacks and plazas that aren’t designed for people, and a lack of connection between space that is for actual public use. That rift hurts the neighborhood
- Red group: Other neighborhoods are becoming connected into NoMa. A few years ago that wasn't the case, and now this is becoming a town center for them. The other idea was the public realm, corridors, gathering as a neighborhood as you walk down the street. Functionality of the complete street. So it's not just about parks, its about greening the corridors.
- Public spaces become an afterthought. Why doesn't the bid put together some “typicals”: tot lot, park station, game station for elderly. Things you want to integrate into the community. Integrate together as pearls along a string. Use the planning process to think about what parts you want on each street.
- The current green spaces are functional for workers but not as much for residents.

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## BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT-OUT #2 – “Greening NoMa” Report

### Key Takeaways:

- Don't get boxed in by the “central park” idea – make the most of what you have
- Think about how to creatively use street space, especially underutilized streets (consider time-of-day/week closures)
- Long discussion about the importance of *relevant* examples (using small spaces creatively).
- Theme of NoMa as a “gateway”

### GREEN GROUP

- Critiques:
  - Didn't address the unique qualities of NoMa
  - Didn't give relevant examples that are within budgetary/planning reach of NOMA
  - The challenge of affinity parks “segregating” the community into distinct uses – rather than bringing it together
  - Didn't say WHY the parks are necessary, why legislators should support them, or the economic value

- Recommendations:
  - Need out of the box thinking
  - Need a robust open space analysis
  - Look at street conversion or time-of-day street conversion
  - Where there are zone requirements for public parking space, try to co-locate that. Put a park on top of a parking structure
  - Searching for better examples of comparable public use of park space – not pie in the sky. Examples (\*more at the end of this section):
    - Pearl district in Portland
    - Yaletown in Vancouver, BC
  - Build off of what has already been started
    - The bike trail could be a “poster child” for NoMa BID - seems stalled. Make use of space that's already available
  - Needs to be a frank and open discussion asap with the private development community – Are you willing to ante up? Are you willing to consider making your property more open to public park space

#### RED GROUP

- The report served its purpose, good to advance the legislation
- From that perspective, it could go deeper in terms of recommendations
- Recommendations:
  - Doesn't consider how open space and connections to surrounding neighborhoods are made. Look at linear elements, connections to northern neighborhood and e-w neighborhoods
  - Info about demographics and features could add depth of content
  - How could a park take advantage of industrial character, rail yard, vistas? Interesting places where you're watching trains come in, etc.
  - Element of a “gateway” - if you're driving or taking a train, NOMA is that gateway, how to reinforce and express that element
  - Thinking about open space and park system not just in space but in time – seasonal, through the year, but also different times of day (consider lighting and other elements)
  - The report got too locked into the idea of a central space.
    - You have to be opportunistic, only so many options available
    - Central space would be nice, but let's work with what's there – Pepco space near bike path.
  - Consider the future, not just right now, but what it can grow into, how it can become the gateway. When you come in on the train, what can we capture, what can we make people see that represents the neighborhood?

#### YELLOW GROUP

- Playgrounds are an important element
- Signage – lead people to important places (bike trail, restaurants, event spaces)
- community bulletin board

- Destination maps
- Kiosks – what's going on in the neighborhood?
- Individual elements - tot lot, dog park, etc. – can have multiple, not just one of each
- Accommodate large events w/ hard surface space (allows it to be opened to public again quickly)
- Pepco site for active use
- As many connections to trail as possible – from buildings as well as from the ground
- 300 Block of N street NE – underused, there might be other underused streets around
- Add local vernacular – U-Line Arena – prominent landmark with an interesting look to it should be included in park design
- Use land swaps to create the opportunity for a park – don't look just within NOMA. Take advantage of opportunities. Don't dwell on the "accidental" locations of where public space is now.

#### BLUE GROUP

- "Extending and amplifying"
- Report is just focuses on parks – should be more about civic space inside and outside
- Utilization of the streets, closure, time shifting
- "Alternative spaces" "remnant spaces" "edge space" - how do you integrate buildings into street space?
- Opportunities to re-engage with developers who have not yet built
- Building design and the options of greening vertically – green walls
- Except – there's no way to engage developers because of matter-of-right projects. How do we build a toolbox of incentives that help developers tweak their plans?
- Using the trail as a foundation to extend cycle track, make it a foundational piece not just for NoMa, but for the city as a whole

#### PEACH GROUP

- More discussion and thought about linkages – talks about the framework, but not how the framework is connected
- Not just streetscape design, but recreational functionality
- Maybe two more moderate-sized common spaces would work better, east and west
- How do these relate to the private spaces around it? Create value for retail, use retail to be activated "eyes on the street" - seamless integration of the two
- Affinity parks
  - Multiple uses – dog parks, tot lots
  - Affinity park on east side of the tracks to bring near NE community into the NoMa area
  - M street is most travelled route, so something around there
  - Pedestrian underpasses – lighting has been improved greatly, but there's more that can be done there to make them attractive gateways
- Union station: commercial and retail hub in the area, beautify the area that would lead into the community from there – specifically walkways that people would use to get to Harris Teeter and the central park
- Make better use of limited spaces – setbacks not currently designed for active use, but could be
- Bring buildings up closer to the sidewalk, create central spaces

- Public art – incorporate private spaces and public spaces together
- Value of the network – create value for commercial buildings

#### FOLLOW UP – Comparable Examples:

- Buckhead District in Atlanta
- Low tech signs with few words, neat pictures,
- Capital Hill neighborhood in Seattle – embedded in sidewalk
- Landmarks – planet sculptures in downtown anchorage – wayfinding, placemaking and public art combined.
- Wayfinding could help with special needs accessibility
- Pictures of warehouse district in Hamburg, Germany, use of vertical space
- Maps – part of the bikeshare station
- Apps – London wayfinding apps – give info about where you are
- City garden in St Louis
- University City – community center, indoor/outdoor
- Ross Elementary in Dupont Circle – corner park space that is multi-use. Tot-sized play area, older kids, benches to relax, small footprint.
- Dog park at 17<sup>th</sup> and R
- Lowell Mass – canal walk – connect to history and know where you are
- Dumbo area in NY – feels bigger than it is
- Ballard Commons Park in Seattle
- Midtown greenway in Minneapolis – bikeway underneath
- Elevated walkways to deal with busier intersections – Minneapolis
- Hardscaping center square – Ann Arbor
- Use public art – LOCAL public art – to make places
- Should have Beatles statues for NoMa
- Downtown Greenville SC – 12 very tiny bronze mice, based on a children's book – scavenger hunt
- Need to get artist in the conversation
- Instead of permanent installations – do seasonal rotations, creates interest
- Dallas – pop-up block greenscaping
- The “grit” and the “green” can coexist in NoMa
- U-Line – graffiti is a good type of art to highlight, fits in well with the general feel of things

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## BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT-OUT #3 – Park Priorities

### RED GROUP

- 1. Second Street and N Street – closed off at strategic times for programming/farmer's market, connect into Breezeway
- 2. Central square – NoMa 2-4 (M Street connection), connecting down to greyhound terminal
- 3. Screen on the green site – preserve
- 4. Don't neglect Pepco park green space, too valuable to slip away. More passive use, dog park

### BLUE GROUP

- 1. Diversity of recreation activity – kids, dogs. Engage the neighborhood, do some polling or interaction with neighborhood residents
- 2. Wayfinding – delight and surprise (scavenger hunt)
- 3. Connectivity – to outside neighborhoods, to breezeway, etc.

### PEACH GROUP

- 1. Keep it simple with flexible programs, don't over-design, over-program, too many bells and whistles. Ratio of 80-20
- 2. Art for character and unifying theme
- 3. Give it something specific that fits the residents – dog park combined with exercise trail
- other examples: vertical community gardens in greenhouses

### GREEN GROUP

- Play off of the neighborhood's history – use the look and feel of historic photographs versus today
- Elegant and distinctive look, colors, design
- Feel like a sanctuary. Invite interaction but allow introspection. Places for people to gather or to be apart. Free WiFi.
- 1. space for performing and visual arts of a wide variety
- 2. Broadening the concept of community market – niche markets – foods, crafts, arts
- 3. Neighborhood green – place to be active, be in the sun

### YELLOW GROUP

- Block off some of the streets, temporary interaction area.
- 1. Find permanent space for film series
- 2. Innovative outdoor use
- 3. Events:
  - “Choo-choo” days: train area that brings together business and residents, food, etc.
  - Mardi Gras dog parade
- Temporary seating areas – chairs and table that can be deconstructed/reconstructed
- Bench sponsorship by local businesses
- Put the NoMa name on tables and chairs – brand seating, public spaces
- Mini amphitheater – music in afternoons, evenings. Terracing off of the trail
- Bicycle facilities, connectivity - wayfinding



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**BREAKOUT GROUP REPORT-OUT #4 – Breezeway** – imagine yourself as the design consultant. You have 90 seconds to pitch your vision.

**Key Takeaways:**

- Importance to preserve open feel of the breezeway, even when neighboring building is constructed – specifically through lighting and pedestrian-level retail
- Strong emphasis on public art – perhaps rotating exhibits, local artists

**YELLOW GROUP**

- Educational element – historical character
- Lighting – prisms of light, diffuse
- Make it a pedestrian path from 2<sup>nd</sup> street
- Add active recreation like a climbing wall
- Above the breezeway – connect the elevated pathway with the trail
- \*Emphasize low total cost of their proposal.

**BLUE GROUP**

- Don't call it a breezeway! Rebrand: more lively
- Energize a developer to bring in retail
- Use the words “pilot program” to pitch to WMATA – possibly extend to other stations. Increase safety. NoMa should take over liability
- Minimize maintenance costs for whatever goes in
- Delightful and interesting
- Make it great – add a third entry/exit point
- Very important to have retail on first floor – bike shop, doggie day care, farmer's market
- Fix the overhead gap so you let in light but not rain

**PEACH GROUP**

- Kinetic art on the walls of the buildings that face the breezeway – use air rights as well
- Local competition of artists
- Cover the gap
- Embedded sidewalk art
- Keep in mind that it is a primary access point to sides of noma. Link the breezeway to the MBT ramp

**RED GROUP**

- Lighting
- Connector to N and 2<sup>nd</sup> street temporary plaza
- Focused on building next door – level of transparency, glass, make the space seem bigger
- Available for kiosk vendors
- One side (oak leaf) is permanent – keep the other side dynamic, rotating installations
- Put up murals of what the streetscape looked like in the past – 3d effects?
- Vertical green, freshen the space

## GREEN GROUP

- Incorporate history, rail yards – into the flooring, copper lines to show layout of trains
- Visual aspects of before and after – timeline of neighborhood history
- Vertical greening
- Importance of adjacent building – letting in light
- Art – revolving digital art wall – interactive - Seoul
- Community marketplace – kiosks
- Negotiating with WMATA: offload maintenance and cleaning to the bid – promote neighborhood development and safety – more bike amenities – revenue sharing from kiosks?

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WRAP UP – Facilitated by APA members, Sue Schwartz, FAICP and Lee Brown, FAICP

The population of the room is not representative of the future of NoMa. How can we pull in perspectives from the growing community? What tools can we offer beyond public hearings?

- “Welcome to the Neighborhood” from the BID
  - Get to know why they moved here, what is attractive, what input you have
- Need NoMa neighborhood association – more democratic, resident-focused organizations
- Get online, get interactive – have an e-newsletter, ads around the metro
- Facebook, Twitter, webpage into branded logo
- Social media is better than email list – keeps it active and updated.
  - There are stakeholders beyond the boundaries of the neighborhood
  - Be very specific about what these issues are – there are a lot of approvals and entitlements already there. What are the expectations when newcomers enter the process?
  - Elicit specific and targeted feedback on proposals/issues
- Focus on the transit station as an outreach place – all aspects of the community interact with the metro
- Residential buildings as communities – engage individually
- Survey – concrete statistical analysis of perspectives – SurveyMonkey
- “Community planet” – merging of survey and gaming – more interactive
- Go to existing ties and organizations – actively engage, rather than having them come to your meetings
- Neighborhood Blogs – residents reporting – find out what's happening there
- Community film, connected with film festival, as a kickoff to the dialogue
- Each building is a vertical gated community
- Think not just about residents, but workers – who spend time and money there, and make decisions about whether they will be there more. Therefore, engage with employers.
- Have outreach materials from NoMa in residential and employee lobbies
- Light post banners
- Reach building and business owners – get their buy-in

## APPENDIX C: NoMa Public Parks Act of 2011

### NOMA PUBLIC PARKS ACT

#### Overview

The NoMa Public Parks Act (“NPP Act”) provides a funding mechanism for public parks within the NoMa Business Improvement District. Funds would be generated by specific tax increments in the maximum amount of \$51.5 million over a maximum 10-year period. Projects in NoMa have the potential to generate \$8.7 billion in taxes to the General Fund over a 30-year period. Therefore, the requested investment in public parks in NoMa is just 0.6% of the projected return.

#### Rationale for NPP Act

While NoMa has experienced the beginnings of quality mixed-use development, key infrastructure and public improvements are needed to sustain and accelerate the momentum. The NoMa Vision Plan (2006) and the Center City Action Agenda (2008) underscored NoMa’s need for public investment, including aging infrastructure and streets and the lack of parks and open space. In 2010, the Office of Planning completed two additional studies that stressed the unique challenge NoMa faces – today there are no public parks in NoMa or within walking distance. The Center for Urban Park Excellence at the Trust for Public Land has authored a white paper outlining the types of park and recreational spaces that NoMa will need to support the 50,000 new residents and employees expected to populate the neighborhood over the coming years.

As the neighborhood matures, the NPP Act will ensure that NoMa becomes a truly livable community with essential community assets. Growing the residential population in the District of Columbia is a top priority for city officials. NoMa is one of the few communities that can accommodate high-density, transit-oriented residential development, with 10,000 new units planned. However, expanding the city’s residential tax base requires much more than simply developing more housing units. Parks are a critical component of healthy, dynamic and livable communities and will strengthen NoMa’s appeal to new residents.

The NPP Act funds up to \$51.5 million for land acquisition, park design, construction and maintenance of several park and open space amenities in and adjacent to the NoMa BID, as well as public infrastructure investments. Two tiers of park investments are proposed:

- A Central Square on First Street NE that would serve as an active, gathering space for community events like farmer’s markets, concerts, movies, etc.
- Smaller parks dispersed throughout the area that promote passive and active enjoyment, including playgrounds, dog parks, pocket parks and recreational fields.

### NOMA PUBLIC PARKS ACT

#### Funding Mechanism

Rather than burden the District’s General Fund with the cost of the projects of the NPP Act, they can be funded by the tax increment generated by the very projects that they help create.

- NPP Act creates a non-lapsing public fund, the NoMa Reinvestment Fund (“NRF”).
  - NPP Act will be funded by a portion of the real property, sales, and transfer/recordation tax revenue increment within the NoMa BID Area.

- A maximum of \$51.5 million will be deposited in the NPP Fund, over 10 years.
- NRF will be used only for projects that are clearly identified and approved through a transparent process by an Advisory Board consisting of
  - 3 appointments made by the NoMa BID
  - 1 appointment made by the Mayor
  - 1 appointment made by the Ward 5 Councilmember
  - 1 appointment made by the Ward 6 Councilmember
  - 1 appointment made by the Chief Financial Officer

### **No Negative Fiscal Impact**

The NPP Act is structured so as to minimize any adverse fiscal impact to the District:

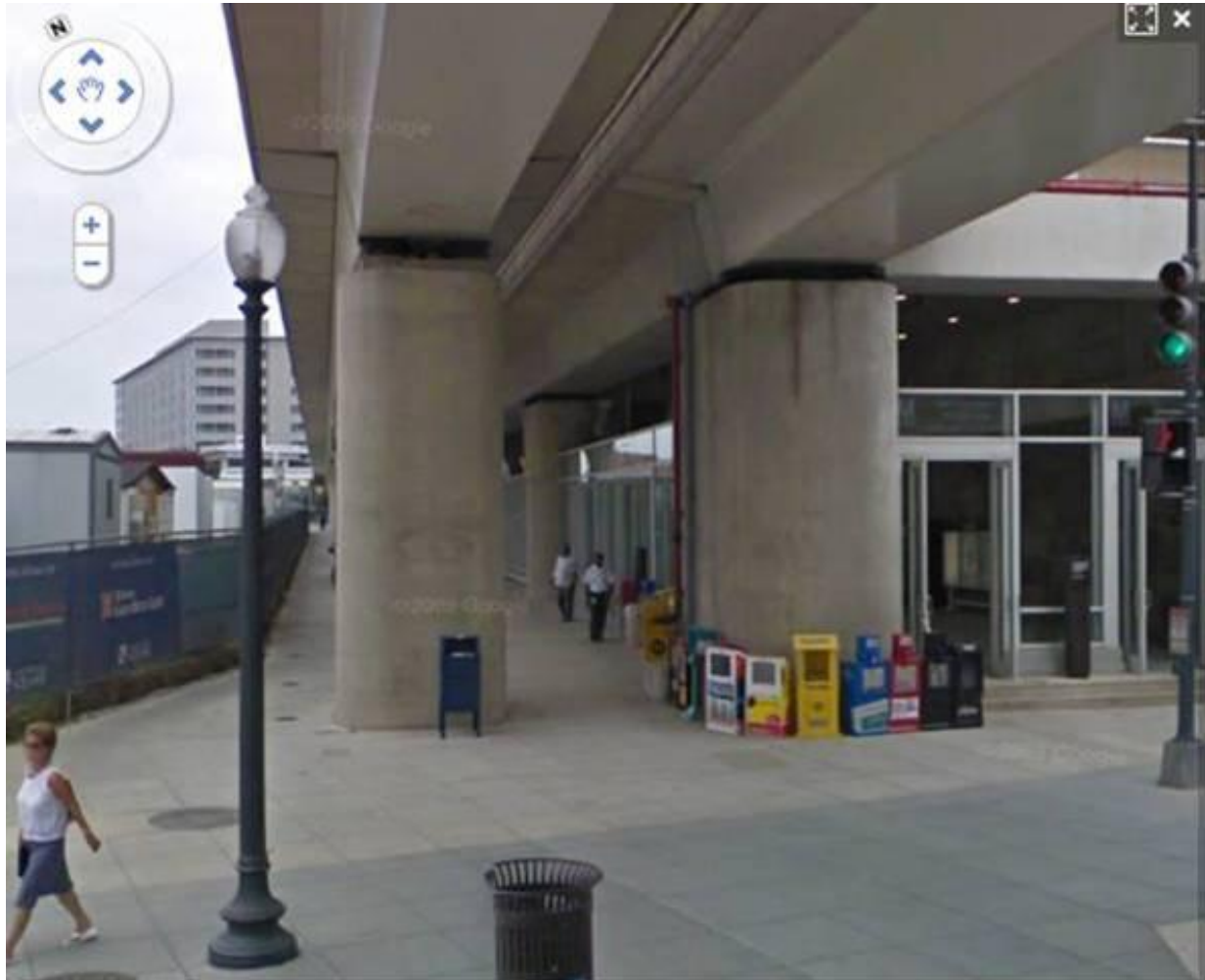
- *Incremental Taxes:* The NRF is funded out of the new tax increment (with FY 2010 as the base year) that is generated within the NoMa area, and not by the District's existing tax base. Tax increment will exclude the portion of taxes subject to pre-existing pledges, such as Special Tax securing general obligation bonds, sales taxes pledged to secure Washington Convention and Sports Authority bonds, and transfer/recording taxes pledged to Housing Production Trust Fund. Tax increment will also exclude any increment that is allocated to future project-specific TIFs in NoMa area approved by City Council.

*Protecting Projected Increases:* In determining the increment, the FY2010 base year is increased during each of FY2011 - FY2014 by the OCFO's projected citywide tax increase up to a maximum of 2 % annually.

### **No Debt Cap Impact**

The NRF is not dependent upon bonds to accumulate funds and does not authorize bonding at this time. Rather, the tax increment generated in NoMa above and beyond any other previously established set-asides would establish the pool of funds for specific public investment projects authorized by the NPP Act. In this way, the NRF is designed to enable and fund critical public investments without obligating bonds or triggering debt cap issues.

## APPENDIX D: Pictures of Breezeway Next to Metrorail Station



Breezeway outside of the Metrorail station in NoMa – looking north from N Street at Metro entrance. *Source: Google Streetview*

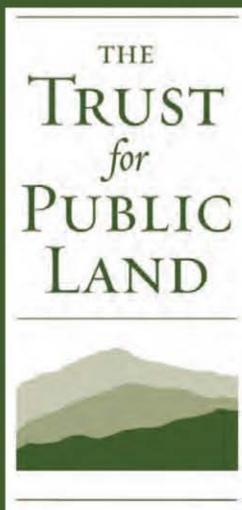


Breezeway outside of the Metrorail station in NoMa – looking south from Second Street and at the northern Metro entrance. The breezeway is under the Met Branch Trail and adjacent to the Metro station. *Source: Google Streetview*



## APPENDIX E: Greening NoMa Report

"We believe  
the NoMa BID has an  
extraordinary opportunity  
to create a highly  
impactful park system"



Center for City Park Excellence  
Trust for Public Land  
Washington, D.C.  
[TPL.org/CCPE](http://TPL.org/CCPE)

# GREENING NOMA

*Finding Space for Parks in Near Northeast  
Washington, DC*

## INTRODUCTION

The NoMa Business Improvement District (NoMa BID) commissioned the Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence to assess current conditions, suggest park goals for the neighborhood, and estimate the expected capital expenditures to achieve those goals. The Center offers unparalleled nationwide knowledge and data regarding center-city parks, with more than ten years examining the close interrelationship between successful parks and successful neighborhoods.

Based on our national experience and local assessment, we believe that the NoMa BID has an extraordinary opportunity to create a highly impactful park system within its boundaries. The central square and affinity parks recommended in this report will strengthen NoMa's position as a livable community, will add a dynamic element to its now primarily commercial character, and will bring additional tax revenue to the District of Columbia.

Given the impressive development that has already taken place and is poised to continue in NoMa, we urge public and private stakeholders to collaborate quickly on an effort to secure land and begin a legacy of community open space.



## EXISTING CONDITIONS

NoMa is one of the fastest-growing neighborhoods in Washington, D.C. Upon full build-out, NoMa is projected to have 32 million square feet of space and a population of nearly 100,000 residents and employees. Deriving its name from the neighborhood location “North of Massachusetts Avenue”, NoMa is bounded by high volume roads. Near its eastern boundary, the railroad yard serving Union Station sprawls above the road grid, supported by an impressive masonry wall designed by Daniel Burnham. As a result, NoMa is a long and narrow neighborhood with development concentrated around First Street, NE, NoMa’s main street. In addition to high-density office and residential construction, new development includes an impressive array of neighborhood serving retail, from Harris Teeter to CVS to Potbelly and many others.

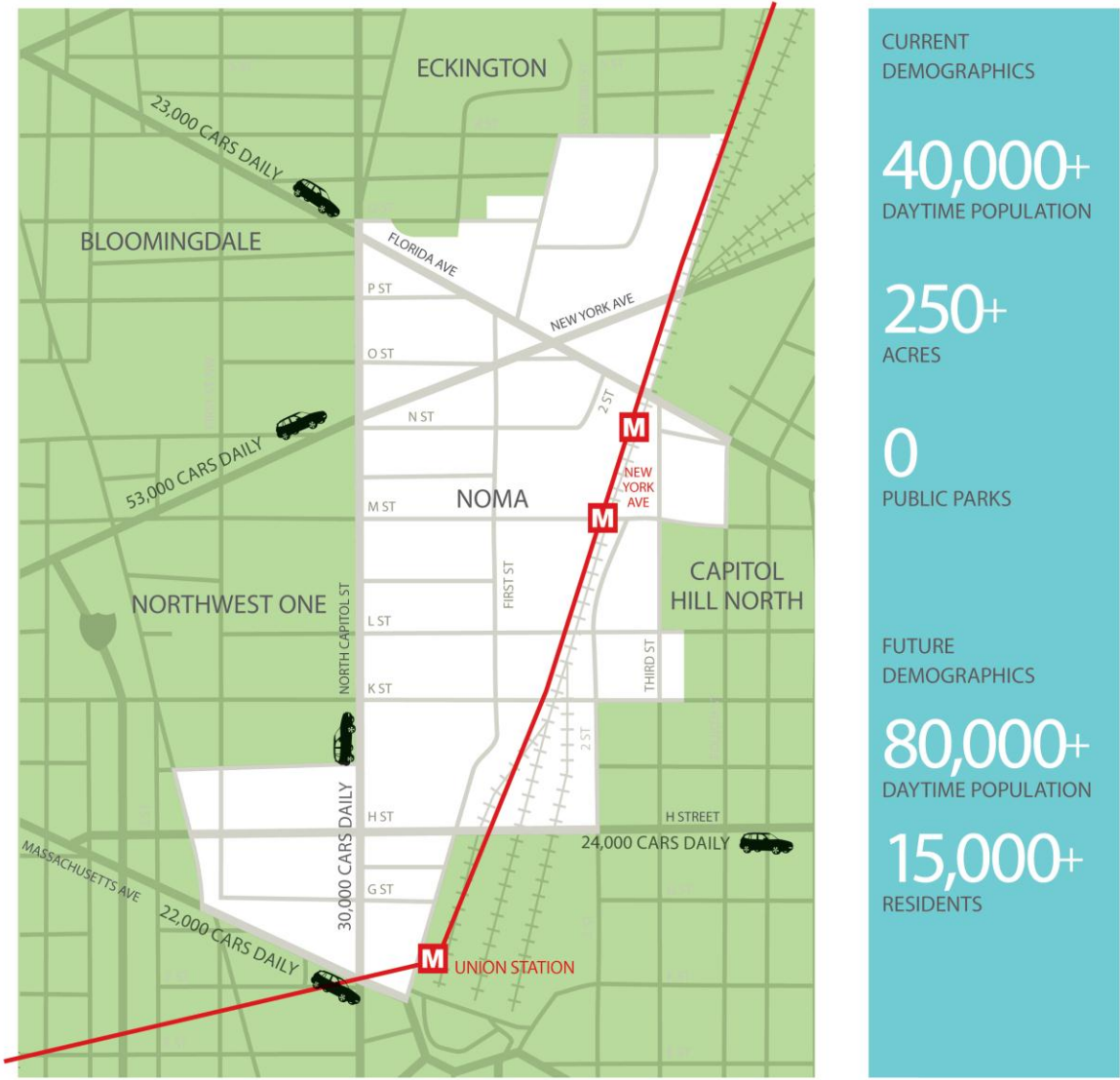
Despite NoMa’s recent development success, it is lacking parks and open space that will be critical to strengthening its appeal as a burgeoning residential community. The NoMa Vision Plan (2006) and the Center City Action Agenda (2008) underscored NoMa’s need for public investment, including aging infrastructure and streets and the lack of parks and open space. In 2010, the Office of Planning completed two additional studies that stressed the unique challenge NoMa faces – today there are no public parks in NoMa or within walking distance.

Because of its industrial past, the NoMa neighborhood does not have a legacy of neighborhood parks that can be reclaimed. In addition, there are few publicly owned sites that could be used for parks and other civic amenities. The few parcels owned by the District government are committed for mixed income housing or currently used by District agencies. As such, it will be difficult to create a park in NoMa without acquiring land from private owners or possibly swapping publicly owned sites in other locations for a park site in NoMa.

“Because of its industrial past, the NoMa neighborhood has little in the way of existing park resources”

Land acquisition is the single largest obstacle to achieving parks in NoMa. Time is of the essence, given the rapid pace of current development and the rapidly diminishing land available for parks. More than 7 million square feet of mixed use development have been built since the New York Avenue Metro station opened in November 2004. With the economy rebounding, development pressures are mounting again and there will be little undeveloped land available for parks in just a few short years. Furthermore, NoMa's excellent transit access and recent development have escalated land prices. For these reasons, it is necessary to act quickly to create a mechanism by which land can be conserved for park use in the future.

**NO PARKS NOMA**



## THE CASE FOR PUBLIC PARKS

National parks may guard and highlight the totemic landscapes and stories of the nation, but local parks shape our lives on a daily basis – toddling as babies, competing as children, hanging out as teens, courting, picnicking with friends and family, or relaxing on our own. The greatest, from Balboa Park in San Diego to Bryant Park in New York to Rittenhouse Square in Philadelphia, often become the very symbols of their cities, the central touchstones of memory and experience for residents and tourists alike.

The past decade has seen a resurgence of cities as downtowns transform from 9 to 5 office corridors to lively neighborhoods with growing residential populations and expanding retail and entertainment amenities. Many cities have made substantial investments in existing or new public parks to anchor new residential development. For example, New York City has recently committed \$3.3 billion to restore its waterfront parks.

In dense downtown locations where high rise apartment buildings and condominiums are the norm, residents are more likely to rely on parks and other community facilities for passive enjoyment and recreation. Well maintained parks can strongly influence the quality of life and appeal of a neighborhood. As cities compete to attract more residents, they must revive dormant open space or create new gathering spaces to meet the needs of these new residents.

Of course, there is a bottom line aspect, too. Numerous studies have shown that parks increase property values, and it has been found that the impact extends 2,000 feet from the park. Exciting new parks also clearly catalyze new development. Major parks such as Chicago's Millennium Park and New York's High Line have generated hundreds of millions of dollars of redevelopment construction and unit sales. Even much smaller spaces like Campus Martius in Detroit, Post Office Square in Boston and Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon have positive development and construction spin-offs.

**"Many cities have made substantial investments in existing or new public parks to anchor new residential development"**





Bryant Park - New York



Campus Martius Park - Detroit



Pioneer Courthouse Square - Portland



Post Office Square - Boston



Highline - New York



Millenium Park - Chicago

There is also anecdotal evidence that attractive parks shorten lease-up time. Accelerated development and stabilization translates to increased tax revenue for cities. The following case studies offer more insight into the impacts of specific park investments.

- Bryant Park in New York City is a paragon of a park's renaissance. With reinvestment, new management and radical new thinking around access and programming, it has become one of the nation's most successful parks, both in terms of attendance and revenue. According to local brokers, leasing activity on 6th Avenue increased 60% in the first eight months after Bryant Park reopened in 1994.
- Boston brokers report that the 1.7-acre Post Office Square helped contribute to a ten percent increase in leasing rates for offices that face the park. The site had been home to an unsightly parking deck - a detriment to the new high-rise developments springing up on adjacent sites in the Financial District. Revenue from the private parking garage now helps fund annual operations and maintenance for the park.
- The recent transformation of the main intersection in downtown Detroit into a spectacular civic square is one of the great stories of urban regeneration in America. Since the \$20 million construction of the Campus Martius park in 2004, a great deal of new construction and renovation projects have occurred in the immediate vicinity.
- Trust for Public Land's recent study of Seattle parks and their economic impact revealed a 4.84% increase in property value for residential properties within 500 feet of a park. Seattle's parks deliver annual municipal revenue of \$19.2 million, municipal savings of \$12.4 million, resident savings of \$511.6 million and a collective increase of resident wealth of \$110.8 million.

**"Accelerated development and stabilization near park amenities translates to increased tax revenue for cities"**



## LOCAL CASE STUDIES

City officials in the Washington, D.C. region have demonstrated a keen understanding of the importance of parks to developing high quality and competitive neighborhoods. From great urban plazas and dog parks in Columbia Heights to \$200 million in infrastructure and park funding for the Southwest Waterfront, the District of Columbia government has made noteworthy investments in recent years to develop truly memorable public spaces. Neighboring jurisdictions like Crystal City, Rosslyn and Montgomery County have also re-energized their park initiatives.

### *Capitol Riverfront*

The city has invested over \$40 million in two new world class parks in Capitol Riverfront. The 5.4 acre **Yards Park** opened last fall to much acclaim. It includes open grassy areas, a waterfall and fountains, a terraced lawn performance venue, biking/jogging trails, a dog park, a canal basin/wading pool and pedestrian bridge. The park was built on publicly owned land and cost more than \$25 million to construct. The funding came entirely from local tax dollars through a payment in lieu of taxes (PILOT) agreement with local developers.

*“the DC government has made noteworthy investments in recent years to develop truly memorable public spaces”*



Rendering of the now completed The Yards Park



Fountain fun in The Yards Park



**Canal Park** will open in 2011, bringing 3 acres of green space to the heart of the neighborhood along with a signature restaurant pavilion. Owned by the DC government, the land is licensed to the Canal Park Development Authority (CPDA) to design, construct and maintain. The park will contain a restaurant, a sculpture, water features, an ice skating rink and programmable space. Design and construction is estimated to cost \$19 million. These costs are being paid by the District (\$13.5 million), the JBG Companies (\$2.5 million), the DC Department of Housing, William C. Smith Co., the Washington Navy Yard and the Capitol Riverfront BID.



Plans for Canal Park

### *Crystal City*

Just across the Potomac, Crystal City has abundant “open space,” but it is underutilized and often not publicly accessible. The recently released Crystal City Sector Plan increases and consolidates high-quality usable and accessible public open space. In addition, county executives recently approved a tax increment financing (TIF) instrument for Crystal City, Potomac Yard, and Pentagon City. Roughly \$40 million of the TIF funds will be used to develop and upgrade parks and open space.

**Metro Market Square** would be located along 18th Street adjacent to the Metro entrance. This one acre plaza will become the focal point of the new retail center, and the center of Crystal City activity. **Center Park** is a two-acre site geared towards community events and civic uses. Smaller park spaces would be created throughout Crystal City, forming an open space network. All dwelling units and commercial buildings will be within a 3 minute walk of public open space.



Yoga in a Crystal City Park

## NOMA'S PUBLIC SPACE NEEDS

We see three critical needs for NoMa's park strategy. First, the burgeoning urban center of NoMa itself should have a signature gathering place adjacent to its main activity centers along First Street, NE. We refer to this proposed park as the central square. Second, we recommend a series of smaller parks that would knit the communities in Near Northeast to one another and could serve specialized recreational needs. We refer to these assets as Affinity Parks. Lastly, any new parks in the community should capitalize on the existing vernacular and neighborhood icons to help define a unique sense of place in the area. We see the Burnham Wall, the rail yard and the Metropolitan Branch Trail as three assets that could be celebrated both in park siting and design choices.

**"The paramount open space goal for NoMa should be the creation of a central square"**

### *Central Square*

The paramount open space goal for NoMa should be the creation of a central square, a striking and memorable place near the hub of the community. The NoMa Vision Plan (2006) and the Center City Action Agenda (2008) underscored the importance of First Street as NoMa's "Main Street." This boulevard is a critical north-south arterial road in a neighborhood otherwise constrained by high volume thoroughfares – North Capitol Street, New York Avenue, Florida Avenue and the rail yard.

NoMa's central square would serve as an important gathering spot for the community – a connection point between neighbors, colleagues, families and friends. The etymology of the word community derives from terms such as "public," "fellowship," and "shared by all or many." It is for this reason that many of the first in-town open spaces in this country were referred to as "commons." Great communities have always relied on commonly owned spaces where public fellowship can occur. As our cities become more dense and increasingly more privatized, the importance of this public space of exchange and community becomes even more critical.

The central square would be a natural event space, as well. In its four years as a local agent for community development, the NoMa BID has mounted several event series that have drawn the community together and attracted new visitors. Highlights include outdoor movies, lunchtime concerts, Artomatic 2008, and a farmers market that will launch this summer. As empty lots develop, these events should not be geographic afterthoughts. Rather these events should enjoy dedicated space near activity centers where the community is most likely to gather.

### *Affinity Parks*

Because of limitations on land availability and the high-volume roads that separate neighborhoods in this area, we recommend a series of smaller parks outside of the First Street core that address other community needs and strengthen community connections. These could include a playground or tot lot, dog park, recreational facilities, community garden or pocket park for passive enjoyment.

As a popular destination for families, residents surrounding NoMa have expressed keen interest in facilities within easy walking distance that cater to children and dogs. Eckington, Bloomingdale, Northwest One and Capitol Hill North are all park-poor neighborhoods that will benefit from nearby parks development. These parks will also serve to knit the neighborhoods to one another and to NoMa.

*“Affinity parks could include a playground to tot lot, dog park, recreational facilities, community garden or pocket park”*



This pocket park in Richmond, VA is popular with kids.



## LOCAL DESIGN VERNACULAR

Certain park elements seem to help foster success in any park. These include ample seating that is preferably movable, water features, commissioned artwork, adequate lighting, perceived safety, and well-designed areas for passive or active recreation. In addition, we feel that the design of NoMa's parks can help define the neighborhood as a uniquely exciting place by celebrating some of its distinct physical features.

### *Burnham Wall and Rail Yard*

When Daniel Burnham designed Union Station, which opened in 1908, he also engineered an impressive masonry wall that elevates the rail yard roughly 30 feet above ground level. Running the length of NoMa, the rail yard allows light and air into the densely developing neighborhood. The earth tones and texture of the stone wall as the patina and line of the rails and catenary lines make NoMa a place unlike any other DC neighborhood. This historic and industrial vernacular could be incorporated into the local parks design to celebrate NoMa's unique character.



An artistic image of catenary lines in the NoMa rail yard.

### *Metropolitan Branch Trail*

One important recreational amenity that NoMa has today is the Metropolitan Branch Trail, an 8-mile, multi-use trail connecting Union Station to Silver Spring. While the trail does much to increase connectivity of the neighborhoods, with further investment its impact on the community could be greatly expanded. The city should leverage opportunities along the trail to create playgrounds, recreational facilities, community gardens and tranquil spaces, greatly expanding public space amenities in Near Northeast.



Residents enjoying the Met Branch Trail

## PARK COSTS

There are three basic financial elements to creating an urban park: acquiring the land, developing the park and operating the park. The vast differences in land values between cities, and the vast array of park types and designs, makes it impossible to give a rule of thumb as to cost per acre for a new park. However, here are a few relevant lessons from other cities.

### *Land Acquisition Costs*

Acquiring land is the single biggest challenge for NoMa's park future. The capital cost of acquiring land ranges from zero to many millions of dollars. In Washington, D.C. there was no cost for acquiring both Canal Park and Yards Park because they were publically owned. The developers of Boston's Post Office Square, however, paid \$4.7 million (in 1986 dollars) for the site. Acquiring the land for Director Park in Portland cost \$6 million in the early 2000s. (See Table 2.) Despite the heavy financial lift, numerous cities have recently invested in park land acquisition.

**"Acquiring land is  
the single biggest  
challenge for NoMa's  
park future"**



Director Park, Portland

There is an understandable desire by city officials and even regular citizens to get parkland for free – by donation, land exchange, no-cost lease, or some of other pain-free “silver bullet” solution. And there are successful examples of those techniques.

But more numerous are cases where a compromise transaction ended up leaving the bullet tarnished – parks ending up in the wrong locations or with poor drainage, bad soils, or access problems. The truth is that many times the most effective way to address the lack of parkland is to do the obvious: spend some money and buy what is needed.

Land was purchased for such famous parks as Central Park in New York, Druid Hill Park in Baltimore, Piedmont Park in Atlanta, Post Office Square in Boston, the Burke-Gilman Trail in Seattle, Lykes Gaslight Square Park in Tampa and Pioneer Courthouse Square in Portland, Oregon.

“Many times the most effective way to address the lack of parkland is to the the obvious: spend some money and buy what is needed”

Table 1. Selected Downtown Parks - Acquisition Costs		
Park Name, Location	Acres	Land Acquisition Cost
Campus Martius Park Detroit	1.6	\$0. Land already owned by city
Post Office Square Boston	1.7	\$4.7 million (1986 dollars)
Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland	1.6	\$3 million (1984 dollars)
Jamison Square Portland	1.0	City negotiated land donation as part of planned development
Director Park Portland	0.5	\$6 million; surface donated to city, underground rights retained for parking
Canal Park, Washington, DC	3	\$0. Land already owned by city



### Park Design, Construction & Operation Costs

The capital cost of creating and maintaining parks has a broad range. Costs depend on site conditions, demolition and clean-up requirements, extent of hardscape/landscape, other uses (such as underground parking), and, of course, the number and quality of amenities built into the park. A sample of construction and operation costs from well-known parks are included in the tables below.

**Table 2. Selected Downtown Parks -- Construction Costs & Funding Sources**

Park Name, City	Acres	Year Built	Cost* (\$M)	Cost/Acre* (\$M)	Funding Sources
Jamison Square, Portland	1.0	2004	\$3.1	\$ 3.1	Portland Development Commission tax increment financing
Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland	1.6	1984	\$9.4	\$ 6.0	Portland Development Commission tax increment bond funds, the City of Portland, an adjacent department store and Pioneer Courthouse Square, Inc., matched by approx. \$1.6 M in federal transportation and conservation grants.
Post Office Square, Boston	1.7	1992	\$11.1	\$ 6.5	Funded entirely privately through sale of \$30 million in shares to neighboring property owners plus a private loan of \$48.5 million through for-profit Friends of Post Office Square, Inc.
Canal Park, Washington, D.C.	3.0	2011	\$20.0	\$ 6.7	Canal Park Development Assn received \$13.5 million from city plus used New Markets Tax Credits from Enterprise Community Partners
Director Park, Portland	0.5	2010	\$9.3	\$ 20.1	\$4.5 million from Portland Development Commission, \$1.9 million from city of Portland, \$2.9 million from private donations (mostly 2 developers).

**Table 3. Selected Downtown Parks -- Operating Costs**

Park Name	Features	Form of Management	Funding Sources	O&M Cost (M)
Campus Martius Park, Detroit	Ice rink, holiday tree, wireless, café, fountain, "water wall," Soldiers & Sailors Monument, two stainless steel "corner markers," two performance stages that recess into the ground	Land owned by city, fully operated and managed by non-profit organization	Private funding - endowment and enterprise revenue	\$1.1
Post Office Square, Boston	Café, moveable chairs, underground parking garage, benches, a garden trellis, two "fountain sculptures," a small open lawn, shoe shining, trees, decorative garden, park designed for performances using lawn, " information kiosk	Land owned by city, garage and park fully operated and managed by for-profit organization	Revenue from parking garage, restaurant and other enterprises	\$1.3
The Yards Park, Washington	Open grassy areas, a waterfall and fountains, a terraced lawn performance venue, biking/jogging trails, a canal basin/wading pool, iconic footbridge, and riverside gardens in which to eat and shop.	Land owned by city, operated and managed by private non-profit	Combination of public and private funds	\$0.5
Pioneer Courthouse Square, Portland	Indoor theater; a sculpture; bronze chess boards, amphitheater, unique sign posts, former Portland Hotel entry, waterfall, lectern for speaking, a weather machine, information center, coffee shop, ATM, wireless, 5 vending carts	Land owned by city operated and managed by nonprofit organization, with partial city stipend	City stipend (~ \$250,000); fundraising and enterprise revenue	\$1.4

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, we believe that the NoMa BID has an extraordinary opportunity to create a highly impactful park system within its boundaries, consisting of a central square and several affinity parks. Given the critical dearth of public parks in NoMa and the surrounding residential communities, the need for parks development is evident.

The central square and affinity parks recommended in this report will strengthen NoMa's position as a livable community, will add a dynamic element to its now primarily commercial character, and will bring additional tax revenue to the District of Columbia.

Given the impressive development that has already taken place and is poised to continue in NoMa, we urge public and private stakeholders to collaborate quickly on an effort to secure land and begin a legacy of community open space.

**"Given the pace of development in this area, we urge stakeholders to collaborate quickly to begin a legacy of community open space"**