



Capital Riverfront Grows Near Nats Ballpark

BY CELESTE MCCALL

Cranes loom over the skyline in Southeast around the Navy Yard and the Nationals Ballpark. There's action here, and helping it along is the Capitol Riverfront Business Improvement District (BID), which is promoting the area between the US Capitol, Anacostia River and Barracks Row. (A BID is a nonprofit management or-

ganization funded through taxes and dedicated to revitalizing neighborhoods. For more information, visit www.capitolriverfront.org.)

"We are very much an emerging neighborhood," said Michael Stevens, executive director of the Capitol Riverfront BID, headquartered at 1100 New Jersey Ave. SE. "It will take 20 years to reach

completion. Washington itself is still unfinished after 200 years." Using a laser pointer in his spacious BID office, Stevens was displaying a model of the "new city on the river," which will eventually contain 16 million feet of office space with 100,000 employees. Stevens added that 60 percent of the land will be "scraped clean," but historical structures



TOP: The Yards, a development of Forest City Washington. Courtesy Capitol Riverfront BID



LEFT TO RIGHT: JPI's luxury apartments on I St. SE, Photo by Andrew Lightman
Opus East delivered 100 M Street in January, the building is currently 50 percent leased. Courtesy Capitol Riverfront BID
EVA's Capitol Quarter Townhouses began delivering in April, nearly half have been sold. Courtesy Capitol Riverfront BID



like the Navy Yard and Pepco power plant will be incorporated into the development. Posh condos, lofts and affordable apartments are also on the drawing boards, and 1,700 residential units are already built. About half are occupied. Eventually, the Riverfront community will have a total of 9,000 dwellings.

Residents are content in their new surroundings. "I'm very excited about the new apartments," said CHAMPS Executive Director Julia Christian, who lives with her husband and 2-year-old son in a townhouse in the 700 block of L St. SE, off Barracks Row, with friends moving into the new condos. "We like being south of the freeway because we have the best of both worlds. It's quiet, and I have easy access to the Barracks Row restaurants, and I can walk to work. I can't hear the freeway at all. In fact, we get more noise from the Nats' buses and fireworks, which we can see through our living room window."

We were eager to see all this, so BID's Claire Schaefer took us on a walking tour. At the Navy Yard Metro station, we met the personable BID Ambassador Andre Tobe, who greets Metro riders with a smile and gives directions and other information. Government workers were emerging from the new US Department of Transportation headquarters, which opened in 2007. Nearby was the Washington National's year-old ballpark, the catalyst for the Riverfront development.

Then we visited the Marriott Courtyard, with its small bar and eatery. Other nearby food options are Five Guys Burgers, Sizzlin' Express, Quizno's and Starbucks.

Far more festive is the Bullpen, a huge tent across the street from the ballpark at N and Half streets SE. Open since mid-May, the 15,000-square-foot space dispenses Armand's pizza and Rockland's Barbecue, plus beer and other libations. For at least two hours before and after home games, the Bullpen is planning to host live music ranging from Dewey Beach bands to local groups.

Back to our tour: To the east, 401 M St. SE is a historic brick structure slated to become The Yards. The 42-acre public/private partnership will house 170 residences and 40,000 feet of retail, including a Harris

Teeter on the ground floor. Farther east is the "Blue Castle" at Eighth and M streets SE. Originally a car barn, the distinctive blue structure is presently occupied by a charter school but will eventually become mixed retail.

Our stroll then took us to the Capital Quarter by EYA townhouses at Fourth and L streets SE (www.eya.com). Although brand new, the development has already gained recognition. On Earth Day (April 22), the US Green Building Council (USGBC) awarded LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) to the Capitol Quarter. Designed to use water and energy efficiently, Capitol Quarter's 323 townhouses and affordable rental units are constructed with sustainable materials. The first residents moved in around the first of May, and the complex will be fully operational by mid June. While we did not see an actual unit, we did get a peek at a sleek, upgraded model kitchen, with gleaming wood trim and granite counter tops.

Further exploration took us to other Riverfront residences. Lobbies are spacious, with exposed brick; comfy furniture, faux fireplaces and interesting artwork. Many pieces are by local artists, but we also saw vintage photos of the 1925 Washington Senators.

We inspected a swanky loft in the uber-posh Onyx on First (www.OnyxApts.com), which opened Sept. 26. The apartment featured an open floor plan, concrete floors, exposed vents and a gleaming kitchen appointed with GE appliances and granite counters. A washer-dryer was discreetly tucked into a closet. We were surprised to see the apartment's front door open right into the master bedroom, but were assured most units have a sliding door for privacy.

More than a quarter of the Onyx's 266 units are occupied. Monthly rents range from about \$1,675 for a studio to \$3,500 for a two-bedroom, den and two-bath unit. Residents have access to the well-equipped health club and rooftop pool. Pets are permitted for an extra charge.

For up-to-the-minute information on the emerging Capitol Riverfront neighborhood, click on www.JDLand, a nifty website which contains oodles of news, history, photos and history. ★

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