

WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL

COVER STORY

ALL ON THE LINE

Prince George's leaders
are betting big on Metro's
Blue Line for long-coveted growth

BY ALEX KOMA | PAGE 16



WBJ PHOTO ILLUSTRATION; WMATA; GETTY IMAGES

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THE LIST

BACK TO BIDNESS

BY CAROLYN M. PROCTOR | cmproctor@bizjournals.com | @WBJBookofLists

The region’s 20 business improvement districts — sometimes called urban districts or by other titles on our List, but for our purposes, “BID” is a catch-all — market their neighborhood’s small businesses, support new businesses, host events, address challenges like homelessness, and tidy up to make a good impression on visitors. They are generally funded through taxes on commercial property, with budgets ranging from thousands to millions of dollars a year.



Robinson

Throughout the pandemic, BID employees continued to clean the streets, act as guides and serve their communities — in the District, for example, BIDs served 2,300 meals a day to children, seniors and homeless populations through a partnership with José Andrés’ World Central Kitchen, according to the D.C. BID Council.

But while the BIDs kept busy, their best-known activities were dramatically limited. In fact, the Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District on

June 16 held its first event since the pandemic began, the first concert in a summer series. That was a step in the right direction, President and CEO Kenyattah Robinson said. But there are still challenges to overcome for the BID’s members — perhaps chief among them is staffing up, especially for restaurants.

It’s a balancing act for one such restaurant, dLeña, which just opened at 476 K St. NW, to seat new customers, but not more than staff can manage.

“They would love to pack it out to capacity now, but they don’t want to do that at the expense of service provision,” Robinson said.

Meanwhile, Mount Vernon Triangle contains 1.8 million square feet of office, and tenants are mostly looking at a September return.

“And when I talk to them, to a person, they all

say, ‘Our employees kind of want to know, where can I go eat?’” Robinson said. So the BID is putting together a “welcome back” video sharing some familiar dining and retail options and also quite a few recent additions, providing coupons to encourage local spending and launching a fund to support neighborhood businesses with microgrants.

But it all started with that first “Tunes in the Triangle” event at Milian Park, featuring the sounds of Justin Trawick.

“I turned a corner, and I didn’t know what to expect. And when I laid eyes on the park, I was amazed at the number of people at the concert,” Robinson said. “Our community really showed up. And they all said, ‘We’re so glad you guys are doing this again.’”

BEHIND THE SCENES

WE WANTED TO LEARN WHAT BIDS DO THAT YOU MIGHT NOT REALIZE. HERE’S WHAT THEY REVEALED.



“Something about the Golden Triangle BID most people may not realize is our commitment to sustainability. The

Golden Triangle has been awarded LEED Platinum, the highest level of LEED certification, by the U.S. Green Building Council. It is the first BID in the world to be certified through the LEED for Communities.”

LEONA AGOURIDIS, executive director, Golden Triangle BID

“Those outside of Southwest may not know that our biggest community assistance project has been our food distribution program in partnership with D.C. Central Kitchen and D.C. Public Schools. In 2020, SWBID and our volunteers distributed over 120,000 meals to our neighbors. And as we approach the halfway point of 2021, we’re averaging 2,250 meals and 450 produce bags a week.”

STEVE MOORE, executive director, SWBID



NOMA BID

“The NoMa BID recently launched a 100% tuition reimbursement program for our ambassador team. This benefit is an example of concrete action the BID is taking to address the systems that contribute to inequity and unequal access to education and opportunity. This new employee benefit, available only to our ambassador team, provides full funding for an associate degree or an equivalent professional certification.”

MAURA BROPHY, president and CEO, NoMa BID

“One thing we do that many may not realize is when businesses have an issue with utilities — water, electric, gas, cable, etc. — we are able to quickly connect them to people who can help resolve the issue.”

KRISTEN BARDEN, executive director, Adams Morgan Partnership BID

NEXT STOP: NATIONAL LANDING



Gabriel

It's been a year since the Crystal City BID was reborn as the National Landing BID, with its borders expanded to include Pentagon City and portions of Potomac Yard in Alexandria — the broader area designated as such as part of their joint bid to land Amazon.com Inc.'s second headquarters in 2018. We caught up with Tracy Sayegh Gabriel, president and executive director of the National Landing BID, about that transition, the fairly new "National Landing" moniker, the rise of Amazon's HQ2 and what's on the horizon. Read her comments here, edited for space and clarity.

The "National Landing" name has existed since 2018 as a branding exercise to lure HQ2, but then was adopted as the BID's name in 2020. Explain the BID's expansion and reason for switching to that name. Expanding our boundaries to incorporate the interconnected portions of Pentagon City and Potomac Yard was a logical next step and accomplished a long-standing goal. This evolution better positions our organization to serve all three neighborhoods, their residents and businesses as we navigate this period of momentous growth. Following approval [to change the name] from the Arlington County Board in September 2019, we set out to find an umbrella term to accurately describe our area — one that would speak to its collective identity and elevate it on the regional, national and even international levels.

SUMMER, SUMMER, SUMMER ... HOUSE

The National Landing BID has launched a new outdoor flex space, called "Summer House," which will feature weekly events through August, "colorful, Instagrammable seating and displays," summer-themed giveaways and office-like amenities.

- **Location:** Gateway Park Green, 101 12th St. S, Arlington
- **Features:** Wi-Fi, standing desks, happy hour events
- **On the agenda:** Thursday happy hour DJ sets; to-go picnics that feature food and meals from several local restaurants, including The Freshman, Rasa and Peruvian Brothers; and coffee available on Tuesday mornings from Commonwealth Joe

Was there pushback to the name change? Overall, the reactions we've received on both the name and our organization's overall rebrand have been overwhelmingly positive. Any pushback we received was generally a result of a person mistakenly thinking that "National Landing" would replace the individual neighborhood names, but that is simply not the case. Crystal City, Pentagon City and Potomac Yard are each unique places with their own individual identities.

What are some fun facts about National Landing? People have historically viewed National Landing as an office district dominated by workers during the daytime, but a relatively sleepy place on evenings and weekends. In reality, we have one of the most balanced downtowns in the region in

terms of the jobs and housing mix. With more than 26,000 residents calling National Landing home and another 7,000 housing units in the pipeline, our district remains vibrant well beyond working hours. Our dining scene alone includes more than 100 restaurants ranging from cafes, celebrity chef outposts, bars ... to fine dining establishments.

How do you see the status of Amazon's buildup? Amazon continues to make progress on its new ground-up development, with construction at Metropolitan Park underway and PenPlace plans currently under review. In addition to being a state-of-the-art workplace for its employees, Amazon is designing a place for the entire community to gather and enjoy with active ground-floor uses and lush open spaces. They've also been actively recruiting their HQ2 workforce, bringing exciting opportunities to our region.

What's next on your plate this summer? With National Landing back open for business, we are excited about summer programming, new retail and restaurant openings, and welcoming workers back to their offices over the next few months. Building on our efforts to beautify the public realm, we recently launched a design competition to reimagine a retention wall in the Crystal City Metro station plaza with a new mural that will be completed in the fall, along with other plaza enhancements. In addition, we plan to continue our push to transform Route 1 into a greener and safer thoroughfare, advance other important transportation projects like the CC2DCA Intermodal Connector, and build on our efforts to make National Landing an even better place for all who live and work here.



WBJ ILLUSTRATION; GETTY IMAGES

"The Capitol Hill BID hires and provides extensive supportive services to homeless and formerly incarcerated individuals through our Ready, Willing & Working program. Our Clean Teams are contracted to other BIDs and Main Streets, allowing us to provide employment opportunities to nearly 60 individuals."

PATTY BROSMER,
president, Capitol Hill BID



Capitol Hill BID RWW Group

CAPITOL HILL BID

"Our organization is always thinking holistically about how to connect people with each other and the neighborhood, and a prime example of this is our business engagement program. We support business leaders and their employees from as early as their first tour of Rosslyn to the moment they move into their new space and as they become an integral part of our community. Most recently, this included support navigating a global pandemic, which was why we launched our Rosslyn Ready campaign, a coordinated reentry effort to ensure businesses and retailers had the resources and tools to navigate the pandemic."

MARY-CLAIRE BURICK,
president, Rosslyn BID

WHO'S NEXT?



Philibin

What neighborhood is a BID in waiting? Congress Heights in Southeast D.C. and "Greater Brookland" in Northeast have both been floated. Another in the D.C. area is ready to go now: "It would be wonderful to take our support of the local businesses, revitalizing our community, beautifying our streets and maintaining the uniqueness of our neighborhood to the next level," said Jenée Padmore, executive director of the Clarendon Alliance.

We asked our local BID leaders where they thought the next should be in Greater Washington. "The 14th and U Street NW corridor," said Kristen Barden, Adams Morgan Partnership BID executive director. "Because of the heavy foot traffic and nightlife, an extensive amount of trash is generated. The nearby Metro makes the neighborhood easily accessible and with the upcoming redevelopment of the Reeves Center, the neighborhood will continue to flourish." Thomas Philibin, Ballston BID spokesman, nominated Virginia Square. "We share much of the same community composition, demographics, appeals to prospective businesses, and potential as premiere edge cities," he said.