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NEWS

Gas station in underdeveloped corner of NoMa could become 'prominent' building

An intersection targeted for growth may finally be transformed

By **Edward Russell** | Sep 14, 2018, 1:49pm EDT



The Exxon station at 1 Florida Ave. NE | Edward Russell



A recent land deal in D.C.'s flourishing [NoMa](#) neighborhood could help transform a long-untapped intersection where two major thoroughfares meet into a hub of housing and retail.

Inked at \$25.5 million, the deal makes way for a mixed-use project that would replace an Exxon gas station at North Capitol Street and Florida Avenue NE with what buyer Aria Development Group says would be a “prominent” building.

The company, which has projects in New York, Miami, and D.C., could build up to 130 feet under [existing zoning regulations](#). Aria also owns an adjacent parking lot that it [bought](#) for \$11 million in 2016, giving it more than 40,000 square feet total to work with. But its plans are not yet firm.

Joshua Benaim, a founding principal at Aria, tells Curbed DC that the company was looking for a site in the area that could accommodate a “distinctive multifamily apartment project.”

“We realized that between Union Market and U Street it’s largely a sea of townhomes,” says Benaim. He adds that the acquisition of the Exxon site—located at [1 Florida Ave. NE](#)—“completes the assemblage” of land that Aria had hoped for.

Bethesda-based Ronald D. Paul Cos. sold the gas station site to Aria earlier this month, and had previously planned a 230-unit mixed-use project there, per a [development map](#) the NoMa Business Improvement District published last January. Given the current zoning, Aria’s prospective development could be one of the tallest buildings in the immediate area, which also includes [Bloomingdale](#), [Eckington](#), and [Truxton Circle](#).



An aerial view of the surrounding area and its businesses | Aria Development Group

At a community meeting this past Monday, attendees largely expressed cautious optimism about the site's future. "We are excited to see mixed-use development rising to revitalize our community, however, [we] hope this new development will help existing residents remain in the neighborhood with more affordable housing options," said Eckington Civic Association President Katrina Velasquez.

The Exxon station and older retail storefronts have dominated the Florida Avenue and North Capitol Street intersection for years. City planners have targeted it for redevelopment since at least 2000, when [the area](#) joined D.C. [Main Streets](#), an official program that seeks to revive traditional business corridors.



But a transformation has been slow to come. A parcel that is catty-corner to the gas station has [remained vacant](#) for more than a decade.

According to D.C.'s Comprehensive Plan for growth, which was last updated in 2011, the commercial district that includes the intersection “suffers from a lack of neighborhood-serving businesses, high vacancies, crime, and inadequate access and parking.” (Lawmakers are [set to revise](#) the complex and [contested](#) planning document this fall.)

The intersection has seen a few changes in recent years, like the opening of Wicked Bloom and [DCity Smokehouse](#), which has since moved two blocks west on Florida Avenue. But it has not experienced the same boom as the rest of NoMa and nearby [Union Market](#) have.

Aria is hoping to change that. “With the right urban design and architecture, we can offer residents the chance to be a part of those authentic neighborhoods,” says Benaim.