



What's developing on H Street

By Erin Killian
Staff Reporter

Anwar Saleem, chairman of H Street Main Street, works out of a dark closed-down Bank of America branch, a gift from the bank to the organization. The longtime Washington native is pushing for a turnaround in the East End corridor. His cell phone rings incessantly.

"Everyone turned a deaf ear on H Street for a long time," Saleem says. "It's hot as a firecracker right now."

The 13 blocks that form the H Street NE corridor should see a renaissance in the next couple of years, especially at the corridor's west end, near Union Station, and its east

end in the arts district.

But the biggest plans are on hold: Akridge won air rights above Union Station two years ago and has preliminary sketches for office space, retail, parking and maybe a hotel for the 10 acres on either side of the bridge. The company may have the ability to develop more than 2 million square feet, but it is still working through terms of the transaction with Amtrak, the General Services Administration and Union Station Redevelopment Corp. to clear up an encroachment issue with the redevelopment corporation.

Abdo Development, however, is moving forward with its \$150 million project at the old Capitol Children's Museum and expects to break ground in the spring.

And the Atlas Performing Arts Center is opening next month. The Atlas is attracting new shops and a few trendy restaurants like the funky Phish Tea Cafe, which opened last spring. Saleem says the owners of other hot chains like Teasm have come down to check out the arts district.

In the past two years, nearly 20 businesses have set up shop on H Street, including Subway, Pet Dreams, the Game Store and woman's clothing store Rainbow.

With the new New York Avenue Metro station shuffling more people into the area to shop at the stores, H Street could — someday — be the next booming Chinatown. But not quite yet.

1 Station Place

Louis Dreyfus' and Fisher Brothers' massive 1.5 million-square-foot project on 5.5 acres is going up in three phases. The Securities and Exchange Commission will set up its headquarters in two of the three 10-story buildings. The SEC moved into the project's 705,000-square-foot building last year and will move into the 365,000-square-foot building in January 2006. The third building, with 505,000 square feet, is still in the marketing phase.

2 Empty parking lot

Louis Dreyfus bought this plot in December and hasn't started the rezoning process but says it will most likely be a 200,000-square-foot residential project with some ground-level retail.

3 Senate Square

Jim Abdo bought the old Capitol Children's Museum for \$24 million and is injecting \$150 million into a 480-unit condominium complex. Abdo Development will build lofts in the historic building and put up two buildings. It expects to break ground in late spring.

4 The old Black Taxicab site

Greenbaum Rose Associates has plans for a six-story, 100-unit condominium building, but those plans are still in the early stages. Partner Sam Rose says the company will probably start construction a year from now "if we're lucky." That would put the delivery date in late 2006 or early 2007.

5 British Petroleum site

Brad Stuart of Chevy Chase-based Stuart Investment owns part of the land on H Street between Third and Fourth streets. British Petroleum owns the other half.

6 Atlas Performing Arts Center

The Atlas Theater at 1333 H St., which has been vacant since 1976, soon will be a 58,000-square-foot, four-theater arts center. The first section of \$17.5 million project is set to open in February, and the whole center is expected to be completed by March 2006.