

■ West Washington

The 400 and 500 blocks of West Washington Avenue have a special character that is different from either the Mifflin district to the north or the Bassett district to the south, although it shares attributes with both and serves as the transition between them. Similar to the adjacent districts, the West Washington district is also currently characterized by significant amounts of older housing stock predominantly rented to university students — although the houses tend to be larger and better-maintained, and the building types more varied. The predominant physical characteristic of the West Washington district, however, is created by the Avenue itself. The width of the street, the broad terraces, large canopy street trees and generally consistent building setbacks provide an engaging public realm and the opportunity to further enhance a truly engaging entryway to Downtown.

The West Washington district is proposed primarily for residential uses — especially on the upper floors. Neighborhood-serving mixed-use development should be located primarily at the ends of blocks, but West Washington is not intended to become an employment or large retail district. Substantial redevelopment with larger, taller buildings is anticipated over time, and long-term preservation of older structures is not a specific recommendation, except in the case of designated landmarks. Selective conservation and rehabilitation of buildings with architectural or historic interest would be compatible with the development concept, however. Buildings up to four stories in height are recommended along both sides of West Washington Avenue, with the potential for two additional stories if there is a noticeable setback. The design of new developments should engage the



Scenes from West Washington

street and help maintain an active, pedestrian-scale environment through façade articulation and provision of multiple front entrances to larger buildings, porches and balconies, and other street-oriented features.

West Washington Avenue is also an important gateway to the Capitol and the Downtown Core, and design standards and streetscape improvements are recommended to maintain and enhance the special visual character of these blocks. Of particular importance to this character is the grand appearance created by the consistent building setbacks, wide terraces and large canopy trees, and these features should be maintained as public amenities as redevelopment occurs. Driveway openings along this frontage should be minimized and use of the terrace for vehicle pull-outs or other private activities should not be allowed.

The illustrations on the following page show conceptually how the West Washington district might appear after the area is substantially redeveloped, although the drawings are not site-specific and many other building arrangements are possible.

West Washington Recommendations

Objective 4.4: Enhance the distinctive physical character of West Washington Avenue as a gateway to Downtown, while providing opportunities for the development of additional high-quality housing and creation of an engaging transitional district linking the predominantly residential Bassett district and an evolving mixed-use Mifflin district.

Recommendation 83: Maintain predominantly residential uses along West Washington Avenue, with neighborhood serving mixed-use development located primarily at the ends of blocks.

Recommendation 84: Establish a minimum two-story and maximum four-story building height on the West Washington Avenue frontage, with up to two additional stories allowed if there is a noticeable setback.

Recommendation 85: Maintain and enhance West Washington Avenue as a “grand boulevard” entryway to Downtown, with wide terraces (but not a median); large canopy street trees; consistent building setbacks; and special lighting, signage and other streetscape improvements.

Recommendation 86: Restrict vehicle pull outs, wide driveways and street facing garages or parking areas on the West Washington frontage, and encourage cooperative solutions to vehicle access and parking, including underground parking and shared parking, to reduce driveway cuts and facilitate development of larger footprint buildings.

Recommendation 87: Prepare a detailed development concept plan, design standards, and a comprehensive implementation strategy to guide future redevelopment. Recommendations may include building form as well as streetscape design standards to help create a distinctive urban character and sense of place. This plan should be prepared as soon as possible and be adopted prior to a comprehensive rezoning of the area to implement these recommendations.