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# WEST END

*Rising*

**Metro Almost Broke  
Day Without a Woman  
Amina Rubinacci Style  
Le Decor Reads in Bed**





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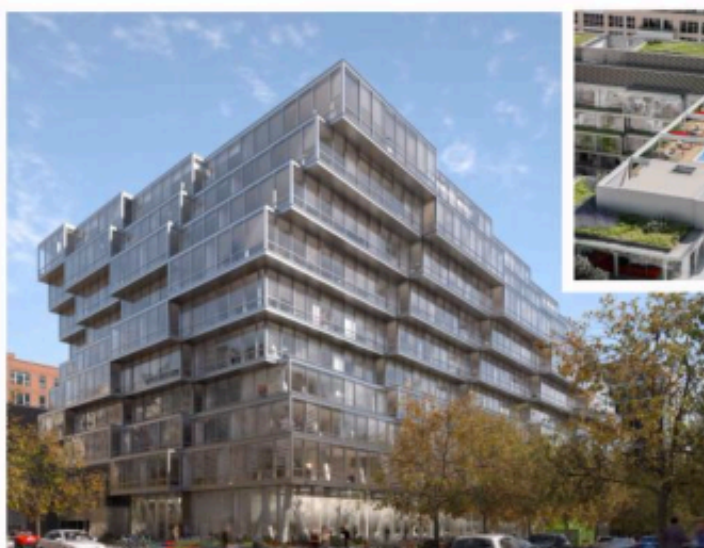
## ON THE COVER

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The Westlight residences rise at 1111 24th St. NW (at L Street), land once occupied by the West End Public Library and the Special Operations Division of the Metropolitan Police Department. The new building, which extends a full city block along L Street, will hold 71 condominiums on the 24th Street side and 93 rental units on the 23rd Street side, plus a new West End Library. Designed by architect Enrique Norten, the EastBanc development is expected to open this summer. Rendering courtesy EastBanc.

# WEST END RISING

Birthplace of Duke Ellington, the neighborhood between Georgetown, Foggy Bottom and downtown continues its climb to a sophistication the legendary composer would appreciate.



Left to right: Chef Nobu Matsuhisa. Renderings of the Westlight building by EastBanc. Courtesy Nobu Restaurants and EastBanc.

BY ROBERT DEVANEY

"They have the president of the United States," said Nobuyuki Matsuhisa, founder of Nobu Restaurants, of his decision to locate in Washington, D.C. "I'd like to feed him." His latest spot, at 25th and M Streets in the West End, is two blocks east of Georgetown.

For Matsuhisa — first encouraged by Robert De Niro to expand his Los Angeles restaurant to New York and beyond — the opening in the nation's capital comes at the best of times and the worst of times: the age of Trump. His sophisticated fusion cuisine will surely get the attention of the president he had in mind a few years ago, when he announced the D.C. venture.

That would be former President Barack Obama, who will open an office on 24th Street in the World Wildlife Fund building, a block from Nobu. From this spot in the West End — and from his new Kalorama home, rented by the Obamas for daughter Sasha's remaining high school years — 44 will begin his post-presidency.

As for 45, President Donald Trump — he of the fully cooked steak, ketchup on the side — there's no word on his other culinary preferences. That seems as it should be in these seemingly chaotic, early days of his administration.

What's clear is that the West End, mere blocks from the White House, is the little neighborhood that can.

## RESIDENCES & RESTAURANTS

Expected later this year, the coming of Nobu — a group of 32 restaurants in 26 different cities, spanning five continents — is the latest signal that the West End has arrived. This part of the federal city got its name as the western end of 19th-century Washington City, adjacent to Georgetown, D.C. Generally speaking, its borders run north from K Street to just below P, east to 21st or so and west to Rock Creek.

The West End's most famous favorite son is Edward Kennedy Ellington, known to the world as Duke, born on Ward Place near 22nd Street in 1899. A plaque marks the spot and the small park facing the street bears his name.

Part of the neighborhood's current flare of recognition is due to the impending opening, at 24th and L Streets, of Westlight, which will house the West End Library and residential units at the new-old firehouse — Engine Company 1 — first responder for the White House. As a buffer between the firehouse and the apartments above, at 23rd and M, a top-end sports club, Squash on Fire, is set to open next month.

Westlight is a project of EastBanc, a developer that has done much to remake the West End. EastBanc also helped build the Ritz-Carlton Hotel and Residences on 22nd and 21st Streets, as well as the condos across the way called 22West.

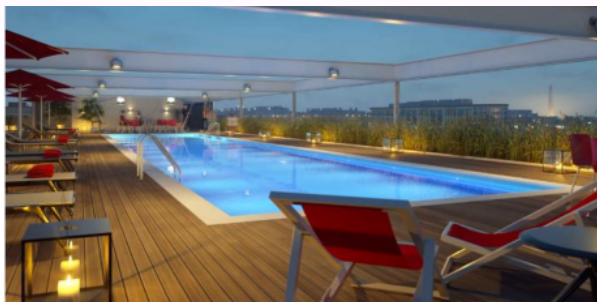
"I grew up in Georgetown, but have lived in the West End," said EastBanc's Philippe Lanier. "It's a wonderful neighborhood and so accessible to the city." His father, Anthony Lanier, who started the Georgetown-based company, has been called "the king of Georgetown" for his visionary retail and residential work.

Some of EastBanc's residential buildings are designed to be half owner-occupied and half renter-occupied, the younger Lanier pointed out. "We're ready for the new administration types as well as empty-nesters." The first 20 units of Westlight (those persons camping out for contracts notwithstanding) are spoken for, he said.

Just as EastBanc has been around for years, so too have some of the West End's restaurants.

"The West End is one of the nicest areas for living and working," said chef-owner Robert Wiedmaier, who opened his haute-cuisine flagship Marcel's at 2401 Pennsylvania Ave. NW in 1998. Marcel's is named for Wiedmaier's son, who was born at Columbia Hospital for Women on L Street. Like several of the neighborhood's institutions, the hospital is no more. In 2006, it became the Columbia, housing 225 residences, with a jam-packed Trader Joe's on the ground floor.

On the soon-to-arrive Nobu, "The more, the merrier," said Wiedmaier, who first appeared on the scene taking over the Watergate Hotel's Jean-Louis restaurant from beloved chef Jean-Louis Palladin.



Rendering of rooftop pool area at the Westlight building. Courtesy EastBanc.



# West End ANC: 'It's More About Excitement'

BY PEGGY SANDS

"What are the big issues that the West End's Advisory Neighborhood Commission is dealing with right now?" ANC 2A's Rebecca Coder mused, repeating The Georgetown's question. "Actually, right now it's more about excitement than big issues," she said, laughing.

"First of all, it's with some excitement that we consider our newest working neighbor — former President Barack Obama. Reportedly, he has rented executive offices in the World Wildlife Fund building at 24th Street NW between M and N. We expect we'll be seeing him around, and highlighting the building as well. If you can get in to see it, do so. It has the greenest roof garden in the city," she added.

According to Coder, Obama's decision to locate his office in the West End shows the new dynamism of the area. Now, instead of being an area that thousands of Washingtonians and Virginians pass through on their way to and from Georgetown, Key Bridge and Memorial Bridge, it has become a destination in itself.

Long dominated by George Washington University students, World Bank and International Monetary Fund staffers, the neighborhood is welcoming a new demographic: a mix of 30- and 40-something professionals with a child or two and empty-nesters moving back to the city from the suburbs.

This new, less transient population wants to live in airy condominiums and apartments in a walkable neighborhood with plenty of restaurants, shops and high-quality markets. The close-by medical services, including

George Washington Hospital and the many new medical offices, are part of the package, too.

"We're about food and fitness," Coder said. "It's not a 'do-it-yourself remodeling for a growing family' population."

She pointed to the new West End restaurants, such as Blue Duck Tavern and Westend Bistro, that were included in D.C.'s first Michelin Guide. Specialty grocer Trader Joe's is on 25th Street between M Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and a Whole Foods is across from the Foggy Bottom Metro and Washington Circle, on the edge of the neighborhood.

In addition, there are several new-concept fitness centers that have moved to the area, including SoulCycle, Blast — soon to be installed as a buffer between the brand new fire station on the ground floor and the firemen's quarters upstairs at 23rd and M — a squash court called Squash on Fire.



At the groundbreaking for the Westlight construction in December 2014: EastBanc's Anthony Lanier, Mayor Vincent Gray, Council member Jack Evans and Foggy Bottom-West End Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner Rebecca Coder. Courtesy ANC2A.



Condos under construction at 25th and M Street NW. Photo by Robert Devaney.

"That's because the visionary of the West End, Anthony Lanier, and his family love squash. So when the firemen asked for a buffer between floors, he decided to design in a squash court," Coder said.

West Enders also want easy access to public transportation to get to cultural activities downtown and on the Hill. A big success for the ANC last year was to persuade the District Department of Transportation to extend the hours of the Circulator buses that cross the West End, connecting Georgetown with Dupont Circle and running between Rosslyn and Union Station.

"Transportation problems for us is not so much parking, since only about 50 percent of West End residents own cars," said Coder, who grew up in Chevy Chase and moved to the West End 15 years ago. "Here, it's more about walking, easy public transportation access and traffic flow."

"Once all the construction is done, the West End will be pretty much completely developed," she concluded. "The new condo buildings will have parking for residents and some for the public. We'll see if that's sufficient and how that affects street flow, as many of the new residents may not have cars."



Left: Former President Barack Obama has a new office on 24th Street in the World Wildlife Fund building. Courtesy Georgetown University.

Below: Lobby of Squash on Fire fitness club. Courtesy EastBanc.



## Ravishing West End Library on the Way

Without a doubt, the most anticipated piece of the new Westlight building by EastBanc at 1101 24th St. NW will be the newly refigured West End Library on the ground level. The closing and demolition of the library was protested, delayed and bemoaned over the past five years. But West Enders' agony will end soon, possibly as early as June.

The new 21,000-square-foot, two-floor library will be located in the spectacular glass residential and retail building designed by Mexican architect Enrique Norten of TEN Arquitectos. The library's interior, designed by Georgetown-based CORE, will include separate book and computer sections for

adults, teens and children, a meeting room for 100 people, two smaller conference rooms and five quiet study rooms.

The most unusual feature will be a large café and bakery inside the library, separated by a glass wall. "It will make the library even more friendly, a community space to go and spend time," said Rebecca Coder of the West Side ANC, which had a good deal of input into the planning process for the new facility.

In the meantime, the interim West Side Library has been located since June 2014 at the Watergate office building on Virginia Avenue NW, next to the post office and the escalator to the lower-level shopping mall.



A rendering of the first floor lobby of the West End Public Library. Courtesy EastBanc.