



WAMM CIVIC ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY MEETING

December 10, 2024

Bering Church of Christ

MINUTES

Maria Morandi, Secretary, called the meeting to order at 6:35 pm.

1. Introduction of Officers

Maria Morandi introduced the current Board members present at the meeting, including: Mary Alice Carpenter, 1st Vice President, Kathleen Conti, 2nd Vice President, Maria Morandi, Secretary, and Diane Baker, Treasurer. She thanked all members that were able to attend.

2. Order of Business

2.1. Introduction of Speaker and Guests.

Maria Morandi introduced the speaker for the evening, Mr. Benjamin Llana, Vice President - Real Estate for Skanska USA Commercial Development, which will develop the site at the southwest corner of Westheimer Rd. and Montrose Blvd. Mr. Llana was accompanied by Ms. Jamila Martinez, Development Associate at Skanska. Mr. Llana will provide an update on the revised development plans for the site.

In addition, Maria Morandi introduced Cruz Almonaci, Community Outreach Coordinator with the Office of Council Member for District C Abbie Kamin. Ms. Almonaci is a new hire at the office and she will speak briefly about developments at District C.

After reminding the attendees to hold questions until the end of the presentation, Maria Morandi asked Mr. Llana to proceed with his talk.

2.b. Presentation by Mr. Llana.

Mr. Llana provided a brief history of the site at the corner of Westheimer Rd. and Montrose Blvd., which was familiar to the audience. Development of the site was delayed mainly due to economic conditions. His presentation will describe the revised development plan for the site.

Development of the site will be undertaken in two phases. As an initial part of Phase 1, a private drive will be constructed dividing the site in two parcels. This private drive will allow delivery of materials and supplies for construction, so that local streets will be

minimally impacted. Phase 1 will involve construction of a 344-unit rental building, with retail spaces at the ground level on the Montrose/ Westheimer corridor. The complex will include a city plaza at the corner of Westheimer and Montrose. A local landscaper has been contracted to develop the landscape for the plaza, which will include only native plants. Skanska expects to submit a variance request to the COH for a 25 feet allowance for the building by the end of the year. Sidewalk will be 13 feet wide.

Plans for Phase 2 will be developed in the future. In the meantime, the Phase 2 parcel will be used for surface parking, including for Phase 1 contractors and construction workers. This will also contribute to minimize impact in the local streets.

Gretchen Shoup asked about parking space for the Phase 1 building. Mr. Llana responded that 500 parking spaces are planned for residents and retail customers, 100% contained within the 31-floor building. Floors 1-7 will be dedicated to parking, which will be free of charge for tenants but paid for retail customers. The building will be managed by a 3rd party.

Lin Perez asked about the start of construction. Mr. Llana responded that work could start towards the end of 2025 under a best-case scenario. Construction is expected to be completed in 30 months. Replating plans were submitted to the city this past September 23. Phase 2 development remains to be determined.

Diane Baker asked whether the site will continue to be leased to the Montrose market before construction starts. Mr. Llana responded that it will, in addition to some parking for Legacy Community Health, and also AOS and Covenant House.

Chris Oskol-White asked whether street curbs will be rebuilt. Mr. Llana responded that it is questionable for the Westheimer pending the city's plan for redevelopment of the Westheimer corridor.

There was a question about the level of investment for the site. Mr. Llana responded that the estimate for Phase 1 is approximately \$200 million. With Phase 2 development, total investment could reach \$500 million. Rentals will consist of approximately 30% each studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom units, and the rest penthouses. Monthly rent for studio apartments will be approximately \$1,500.

Maria Morandi asked about the type of retail business Skanska is targeting. Mr. Llana responded that it is expected to be approximately 50% food/beverage and 50% soft goods, perhaps with some health-related retail added.

Chris Oskol-White asked whether Skanska has any relationship with the owners of the former Kroger site. Mr. Llana answered that they do not, but that the city is trying to identify the contractor for the Kroger site.

Maria Morandi indicated that there should be a clear line of communication to alert the neighborhood about construction activities. She asked whether WAMM could get a copy

of the Skanka plans as shown by Mr. Llana during his talk, but he responded the renderings cannot not be shared until the request for variance is submitted to the city.

Hearing no further questions, Maria Morandi thanked Mr. Llana and Ms. Martinez for coming to the meeting and for the instructive update on this important new development.

Maria Morandi asked Ms. Almonaci to proceed with her update.

2.c. Presentation by Ms. Cruz Almonaci.

Ms. Almonaci indicated that she started very recently in his position at District C, but was encourage to come to our meeting to present brief updates on important city and district developments, including:

Sidewalks: The Planning and Development Department gathered feedback about the Sidewalk Network Ordinance, and has proposed amendments to the ordinance that would amend the current codes. More information and upcoming community engagement opportunities, can be found at <https://houstontx.gov/planning/sidewalk-ordinance-amendments.html>

Short Term Rentals: District C and other council members' offices have received numerous complaints from many residents regarding bad acting Short-Term Rental (STR) operators in Houston. In response, a draft of the proposed STR Ordinance has been published by the Administration and Regulatory Affairs (ARA) department. Yesterday (December 9) there was a hearing by the Quality-of-Life Committee on the proposed ordinance, and a vote will come to city council in a few weeks. A Feedback Form remains available and accessible online (<https://www.houstontx.gov/ara/str.html>) for submitting comments. Ms. Almonaci encouraged all attendees to provide input.

W Alabama St.: There has been over a decade of community engagement on the redevelopment of W Alabama St. This long-standing project was successfully moved from the city's capital improvement project list to the TIRZs. Council Member Abbie Kamin has spoken at council regarding W Alabama. It has become apparent that the mayor's administration is modifying the design to remove public amenities from the redevelopment plan, including widened sidewalks. Ms. Almonaci emphasized that Council Member Kamin wanted our association to be made aware that these changes have happened without community engagement.

Montrose Bridges (I-59): Council Member Kamin discovered there was a single line in the monthly financial report showing that a 2.7-million-dollar loan for fixing faulty bridge lighting was being taken back by the city. Council had approved an agreement for fixing the lights in six bridges across I-59, for which the city was going to pay a portion of the costs with the majority of costs and maintenance paid by the Houston First Corporation, This is a needed repair that Montrose neighborhoods had been advocating for years. Houston First Corporation had already paid for the design.

Council Member Kamin inquired on how the city could procedurally take the money back for other purposes. She was told by the city legal department: “we don’t know.” Council Member Kamin has two main concerns:

- 1) Regarding the city finances, what is the legal process and is it being followed?
- 2) Is the city sure that residents are fully aware of what happened after they had been told that the issue of bridge lightening had been resolved?

Ms. Almonaci indicated that the district knows people love the lights in the bridges, but the council member’s main concern and priority is safety. There is no street or pedestrian lighting for nightly use, and the lighting that remains is falling apart. Again, Ms. Almonaci expressed that the district wants to make sure the community is updated about this issue.

End of Year Report - Coming Soon! Ms. Almonaci asked that If the attendees had not yet signed up for the District C newsletter to do so (bit.ly/DistCNews), and would like to please let her know. District C shares monthly updates on construction projects, community initiatives, and other important information. The district will be publishing their End of Year Report in early 2025 on their website, so to make sure to sign up to stay in the loop.

3. New Business

3.a. Announcement of 1st WAMM social of the year

Maria Morandi announced that WAMM will be holding its Winter Social on January 21, 2025. It will be hosted, as in past years, by Deborah Quintero. Details will be provided in the January 2025 issue of the WAMM Gazette, and to please remember to RSVP.

3.b. Vote for 2025-2027 WAMM Officers

Maria Morandi thanked the attendees for coming to the meeting and making it possible to exceed the requiring minimum quorum of 15 attending members to hold the plebiscite for the new roster of members. A quick count indicated 22 members present. She recognized Michael and Susan Salinas who volunteered to the Nominations Committee. She presented the roster of candidates for the 2025-2027 WAMM Board:

- Lane Llewellyn – President
- Mary Alice Carpenter – 1st Vice President
- Maria Morandi – 2nd Vice President
- Diane Baker – Secretary
- Kevin Oskol-White – Treasurer

No other candidates were nominated for any of the positions.

Maria Morandi called the vote by raising hands. The vote was unanimous for approving the new roster of Board members.

Maria Morandi asked for any additional new business. Hearing none, she called the meeting adjourned at 7:10pm.