

Dear WAHA members,

I am writing as a 28-year West Adams Heritage Association member to ask your help in ending a nine-year slum property in the midst of the Adams-Normandie HPOZ. Since 2007 the gas station at the corner of Adams Blvd. and Normandie Avenue has been shut down. Surrounded by slashed and graffitied tarps stuffed with trash, it has been a disaster for our historic neighborhood and contributed to a great deal of violent crime. We thought the problem would finally be solved when David Shantoub early this year offered to buy the property (for \$3 million), and spend \$2 million more to renovate the gas station and to tear down the substandard building now on the property and build a new 7-11 market there.

Mr Shantoub has won approval for the project from the Adams-Normandie HPOZ Design Review Board, agreeing to build it in an Art Deco style to match the period of the original gas station, which operated from 1937-2007.

We understand that a gas station and 7-11 would not be the first choice for a key intersection in a West Adams HPOZ. But there has essentially been no real investment (sic) in this part of Adams and Normandie since it was built, between 1900 and the end of the 1930s. Further, the land cannot be used for any other purpose unless the underground tanks are removed, at large expense and with the risk of contaminating the soil, which would make the land unusable for many years. We are convinced that no alternative offer involving converting the location to a different use has even a slight potential.

Unfortunately we are confronted with a militant campaign by a local church, and two block clubs it leads (both outside of the HPOZ) to have the city reject approvals. They have been packing hearings trying to win enough votes to kill our one chance to end the shabby and dangerous existing situation. Their key argument is that gas stations are too dangerous to health to allow another one to open in the neighborhood. We think this is a greatly exaggerated claim, put forward by some individuals who were active in trying to restrain the activities of the oil drill sites at Jefferson and Budlong and at Adams and Grammercy. This is an illegitimate expansion of the very worth campaign against "big oil" to now try to roll back any use of fossil fuels. A raucous group from this church intimidated a November 3 meeting of the Empowerment North neighborhood council that was supposed to vote on endorsing the project. A majority of the council board ended up abstaining. One of those who did vote in favor of the new 7-11 was Jean Frost, WAHA Preservation Chair.

The matter is coming up for a decisive vote at the Tuesday, December 6, meeting of the South Los Angeles Area Planning Commission. The meeting will begin at 4:30 pm at the CD8 Constituent Service Center, 8475 S Vermont Avenue. We need community members, especially those who value the historic character of our West Adams neighborhood and don't want this slum property to disfigure it, to attend.

Some of the opponents of the project live in the surrounding neighborhood. Others do not, but attend the Redeemer church on Adams east of Normandie. That church has enlisted pastors from the Holman United Methodist Church, several miles away, in the meetings and hearings that have taken place so far. We regret that the prestigious Holman church has lent its name to that effort, and believe that it is an erroneous extension of the fight they helped to lead against the Freeport-McMoRan Murphy Drill Site not far from their church. But it is clear that people from anywhere in West Adams are taking part in this debate so all of you who live in West Adams should be welcome to speak at the December 6 Planning Commission meeting.

The flyer below gives some basic information and I have attached a longer document for those who want more details.

Leslie Evans
President, Van Buren Place Community Restoration Association
[323-574-5586](tel:323-574-5586)