



Proposed Waste Transfer Station Draws Criticism

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Dump the trash plan. That's what some neighbors are saying on the Northshore about a proposed waste transfer site in St. Tammany Parish. St. Tammany Planning and Zoning Commission approved a permit for the transfer waste site. But residents are concerned about odors, safety, and a drop in property values.

Kit Friedrichs-Bauman has worked at St. Joseph Seminary for the last four years. "I work in the development department, and I write grants for the abbey." She is also on the Northwest St. Tammany Civic Association and wants to preserve the area's pristine beauty - beauty she says is being threatened.

Earlier this week, the St. Tammany Parish Planning and Zoning Committee approved a special use permit for a proposed waste transfer station nearby on Highway 25. "It's a bad location for many reasons: because it's in very close proximity to St. Joseph's Abbey which is on the National Historic Register, the Bogalusa River, which is a natural and scenic stream, many, many, many residents," says Kit. She and others say a waste transfer site will have a negative impact on the community. "Both environmental and aesthetic, and we're concerned about that."

"I think from the outset, there has been some misinformation," says Jeff Schoen. He's the attorney for IESI, Louisiana Corporation. That's the parent company of Coastal Waste Services, the group that wants to build the transfer site. "This station will be in an enclosed building, much like the warehouses you can see." Schoen says the transfer site is not a landfill or dumpsite. Garbage trucks will pick up garbage, take it to the transfer station and unload it directly onto a trailer inside an enclosed building. That trailer will then dump the garbage in an Avondale landfill. "None of the garbage actually hits the ground or hits the slab. It's not processed or separated. It's not part of a recycling program. There's no burning," says Schoen.

He says he understands residents' concerns. That's why he says the company is taking precautions to make sure the site is environmentally sound and a good neighbor. Plus, Schoen says the site is in on an industrial park and acres around it are zoned for industrial use away from homes.

Even so, Kit says she understands the need for a transfer site. "We're not against the solid waste management industry. Someone has to take care of the garbage and God bless them, that do," she says. But, it's still too close for comfort.

Kit says the Northwest St. Tammany Civic Association filed an appeal over the conditional use permit. The St. Tammany Parish Council is scheduled to hear the appeal and vote on the permit February 5th.