

Docket Item #12

DEVELOPMENT SPECIAL USE PERMIT #2007-0026  
CITY PUBLIC RECYCLING CENTER

Planning Commission Meeting  
November 8, 2007

**ISSUE:** Consideration of a request for continued operation of the City's public recycling drop-off and leaf mulching center.

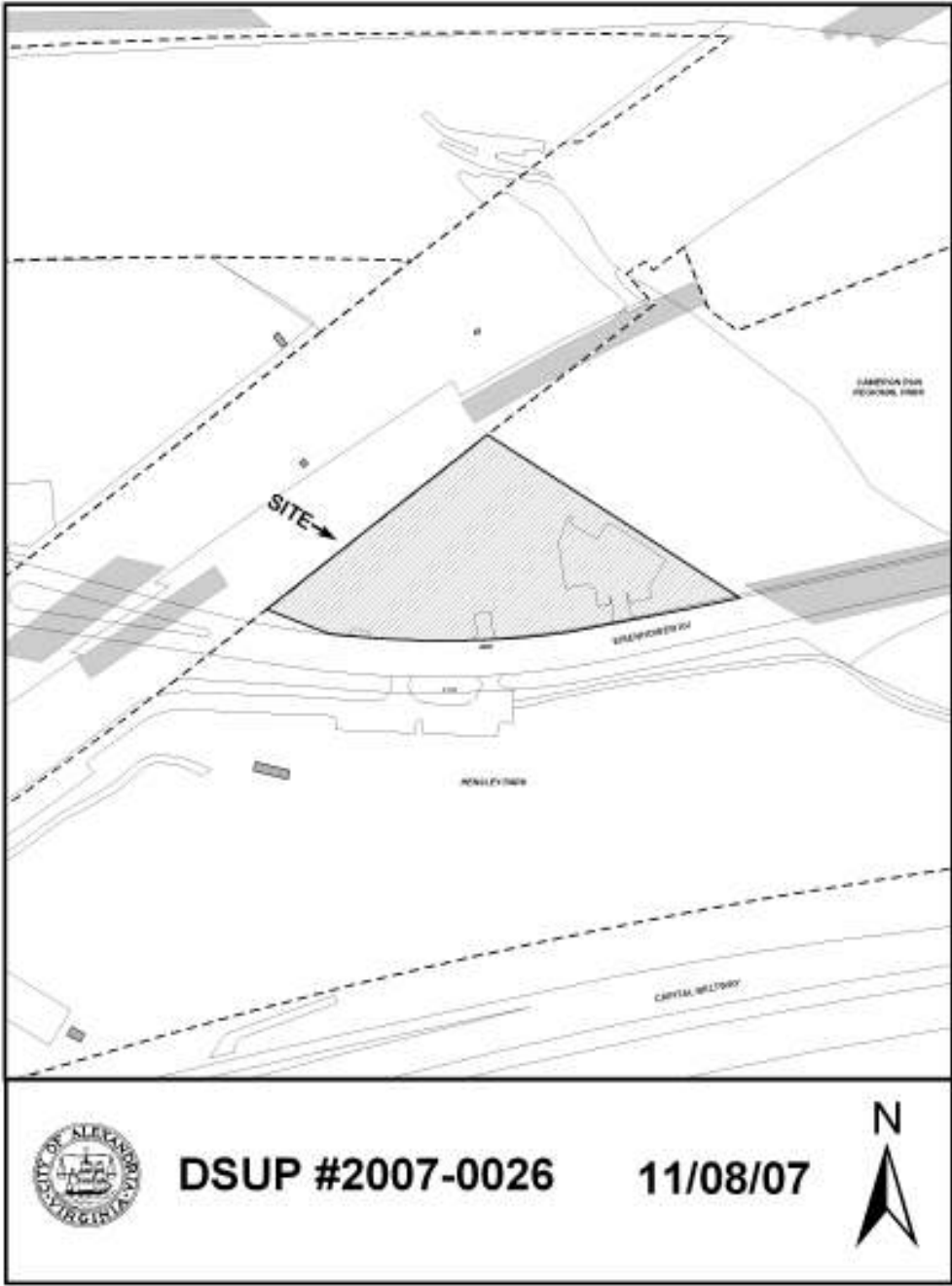
**APPLICANT:** City of Alexandria, Department of Transportation and Environmental Services

**STAFF:** Jeffrey Farner, Division Chief, Development  
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Katy Parker, Urban Planner  
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**LOCATION:** 4251 Eisenhower Avenue

**ZONE:** POS/Public Open Space and Community Recreation

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## **I. BACKGROUND**

### **A. Request**

The Department of Transportation and Environmental Services (T&ES) has requested approval to continue operating the recycling center at 4251 Eisenhower Avenue, which was originally approved in September 2002 by DSUP 2002-0007. Since the recycling center was proposed in a City park and along a portion of Eisenhower Avenue that is experiencing new development patterns, the Planning Commission was hesitant to approve a permanent special use permit for the use. As a result, a condition was added by the Commission that limited the special use permit approval of the recycling center to five years. The recycling center has now been in operation for five years and T&ES is requesting the use be allowed to continue through a new special use permit.



*Figure 1: 2001 Aerial*



*Figure 2: 2006 Aerial*

### **B. Site location and layout**

The subject property is one lot of record with approximately 554 feet of frontage on Eisenhower Avenue and a total lot area of approximately 2.1 acres. Vehicular access to the property is from Eisenhower Avenue. To the north of the site is Cameron Run, to the east is the Vola Lawson Animal Shelter, to the south is Hensley Park, and to the west are WMATA tracks. A portion of the lot is contained within the Resource Protection Area (RPA) which renders a large section of the lot undevelopable. At the time of the 2002 DSUP, the site was used as a leaf collection center. Since that time and pursuant to the approval of the 2002 DSUP, approximately 20,000 sf, which is less than a quarter of the lot, has been paved, and four recycling containers and five parking spaces have been added. The remaining portion of the site is



*Figure 3: Existing Recycling Containers*

still used for leaf collection. In addition to the recycling center and leaf collection, the site is also used temporarily for disaster debris consolidation and management in the event of an emergency.

## **II. STAFF ANALYSIS**

### **A. Zoning**

The site is zoned POS/Public open space and community recreation zone. At the time of the original approval, recycling facilities were only permitted in the Industrial zone. As a result, T&ES initiated a text amendment to allow the recycling use in the POS zone. At the public hearing in June 2002, the Planning Commission noted that a distinction between a public recycling center, which was what T&ES was proposing, and a recycling facility needed to be made since reprocessing and manufacturing activities that generally occur in recycling facilities should remain in industrial zones and are not appropriate in parks. In response, staff developed the following definition for public recycling center: “A collection site for acceptance by donation or redemption of recyclable materials from the public. Such center may not include permanent structures or buildings (other than fences and screens), but typically consist of portable containers which can be readily moved to be emptied or relocated”.

Through the text amendment, public recycling centers, by the new definition, are only permitted in the POS zone with a special use permit if (1) it does not interfere with an established active or passive recreation area, (2) no trees are removed to accommodate the use, unless approved by the director of RP&CA, and (3) the adjacent uses are compatible with the recycling activities. The text amendment was approved by City Council at the September 2002 public hearing. At the same public hearing, special use permit for the recycling center at the Eisenhower Avenue location was also approved, consistent with the amendment. Given the non-permanent nature of the center, the location in a City park, and the uncertainty of development activity in the Eisenhower Valley, the permit was approved for a period of five years.

### **B. Continued Use as a Recycling Center**

During the public hearing for the 2002 DSUP, the Planning Commission discussed the appropriateness of this use in a City park and potential impacts on other City parks. The Commissioners acknowledged the importance and necessity of providing recycling centers in the City and recognized the existing use of the site for leaf collection. However, there was some reservation about approving this type of use on City parkland, particularly given the development opportunities and activity along Eisenhower Avenue.

In recognition of the development pressures facing the area of Eisenhower Valley outside of Eisenhower East, Planning and Zoning has identified this area as one of the next small area plans to be developed. Upon completion of the Braddock Plan and Landmark/Van Dorn Plan, P&Z staff will begin the planning process for the Eisenhower West small area plan. This plan will focus on the area of Eisenhower Valley from Telegraph Road west to the Fairfax County border, which includes the recycling center. The plan will examine the mix of land uses found in this area, particularly industrial uses, and will review connectivity, transit, and streetscape.

Although this is a small parcel and recycling centers are needed uses in the City, it is important to note the possibility of new recommended uses being identified for this parcel through the Eisenhower West Plan. Therefore, the time period needed for developing the plan should be considered when reviewing this request. The existing use strongly supports the City Council stated goal of environmental stewardship and “greening the City”. If this parcel were developed for other purposes, it would be necessary to identify an appropriate replacement site for recycling, leaf collection, and disaster debris management, given the site’s importance in helping the City achieve the State’s minimum recycling rate and the need to manage debris in the event of a natural disaster or terrorist attack.

### **C. Current Operations**

The recycling center functions as a one of four City drop-off centers for the general public, with the other three centers located at S. Whiting Street at Tower Court, 3540 Wheeler Avenue, and Jones Point Park (in parking lot under Woodrow Wilson Bridge). The City provides four 20 yard containers that collect cardboard, newspaper, aluminum, plastic, steel, glass bottles, cans, and jugs. Household batteries are also collected in a 55 gallon drum. No hazardous material is recycled on the site (this can be recycled at the Wheeler Avenue center). Signage has been installed to clearly identify the types of materials that may be recycled at the center and the civil penalties for dumping refuse or hazardous waste at the site. The center is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week in order to allow easy access for use by City businesses and residents. A City employee empties the recycling containers about two times per week, sweeps or flushes the site weekly, and picks up any litter daily Monday through Friday. This site averaged 41 tons of recyclables per month in FY 07, which is up from 34 tons per month in FY 06. Approximately 36% of all recyclable drop-off material is collected at the Eisenhower Avenue center, which is the highest of the four recycling centers. Additionally, the adjacent leaf collection site diverts over 4,500 tons of material from the waste stream, contributing significantly the City’s waste diversion goals.

Under the original approval, the applicant had identified several areas where the site would be improved. First, additional landscaping was installed along Eisenhower Avenue to screen the use. For the recycling area, new pavement and fencing was installed to clearly delineate the recycling area from the mulch pile. In addition, a curb cut was relocated and five parking spaces were created to serve the recycling area.



*Figure 4: Landscaping Along Eisenhower Avenue*

### **III. CONCLUSION**

Staff recommends **approval** of the applicant's request for continued use of the recycling center approved by DSUP #2002-0007, subject to Staff Recommendations below. However, staff recommends the permit only be approved for five additional years or upon implementation of the Eisenhower West Plan, whichever occurs first.

STAFF:       Faroll Hamer, Director, Planning & Zoning;  
              Doug McCobb, Deputy Director, Operations, T&ES;  
              Jeffrey Farner, Chief, Development;  
              Christine McCoy, Solid Waste Planner; and  
              Katie Parker, Urban Planner.

#### IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends **approval** subject to compliance with all applicable codes and ordinances and the following conditions:

1. **[AMENDED CONDITION]** The applicant ~~shall install the landscaping, and make the related site improvements, as depicted on the attached landscaping plan within one year of approval and~~ shall maintain the landscaping in good condition to the satisfaction of the Director of Planning and Zoning. (P&Z) (DSUP 2002-0007)
2. All lighting shall be screened and directed downward to prevent glare and spillover onto adjacent properties and public rights-of-way. (P&Z) (DSUP 2002-0007)
3. The parking lot, driveway, street, and sidewalk shall be kept clean and free of recyclable material, litter, and debris at all times, and the applicant shall police these areas daily Monday through Friday in order to insure proper upkeep. (P&Z) (DSUP 2002-0007)
4. The applicant shall attach a copy of the final released site plan to each building permit document application and be responsible for insuring that the building permit drawings are consistent and in compliance with the final released site plan prior to review and approval of the building permit by the Departments of Planning and Zoning and Transportation and Environmental Services. (P&Z) (DSUP 2002-0007)
5. The Director of Planning and Zoning shall review the special use permit one year after approval and shall docket the matter for consideration by the Planning Commission and City Council if (a) there have been documented violations of the permit conditions, (b) the director has received a request from any person to docket the permit for review as a result of a complaint that rises to the level of a violation, or (c) the director has determined that there are problems with the operation of the use and that new or revised conditions are needed. (P&Z) (DSUP 2002-0007)
6. **[NEW CONDITION]** This special use permit shall expire five years from the date of this approval or upon the implementation of the Eisenhower West Small Area Plan, whichever occurs first. (P&Z)

**CITY DEPARTMENT COMMENTS**

Legend: C - code requirement R - recommendation S - suggestion F - finding

**Transportation and Environmental Services:**

F-1 T&ES has no objections to the continued use of this facility.

**Code Enforcement:**

F-1 No objection to this application.

**Police:**

F-1 The Police Department has no objections to the continued use of the recycling center.

**Archaeology:**

F-1 There is low potential for significant archaeological resources to be disturbed by this project. No archaeological action is required.