

PRESS RELEASE
BEN DAVIS CONSERVANCY DISTRICT

The Ben Davis Conservancy District (BDCD) is issuing this statement to correct information that has been disseminated with regards to the petition filed by the BDCD to re-zone the property at 900 S. Tibbs Avenue from I-4 (Heavy Industrial) to SU-41 (Special Use) in order to build a wastewater treatment facility. The BDCD was formed in 1949 and was the first Conservancy District established in Indiana. The District was specifically formed as a means of providing wastewater service to a residential area whose homes were on the verge of being condemned due to failing septic systems with no alternative to correct.

The BDCD is owned by the property owners (freeholders) in the district and is managed by a three-person elected Board of Directors who are also freeholders. The District encompasses a large part of Wayne Township and contains approximately 6,000 parcels that represent an estimated population of 15,000 persons.

Since installation of the sanitary sewers in 1958, wastewater from the District has been transported to the treatment plant that was operated by the City of Indianapolis. In 2011, the City assets were sold and the District received notice that their agreement would be renegotiated and the rates increased. After a lengthy and expensive court battle, it was mandated that the requested rate increases be phased in over an 8-year period after which the rates would again be raised to accommodate any increases that occurred during the previous period.

Over the past few decades, the District has been able to operate with only minimal increases to the annual budget. Between 2018 and 2025, the treatment rates will increase by nearly 900%. In order to make-up for these increases, an additional service fee had to be levied to each user. This was financially devastating since the majority of property owners in the District have low or fixed incomes.

The Board members, as well as most of the staff, reside, own property, and work in the District so are well aware of the negative impacts these increases have had on the community. These impacts are what prompted the Board to commission a study to evaluate other alternatives. The study indicated that a new plant would be less costly than continuing to transport the wastewater to another entity for treatment. A dedicated plant will also allow the District to control costs.

The District operates under the jurisdiction of the Circuit Court. All proceedings are public record and public hearings and meeting are required for any significant change to the operating Charter. Hearings and meetings are always publicly noticed and attendance is actively encouraged. After many hearings and public meetings, the decision was made and approved by the Circuit Court to allow the BDCD to construct a plant.

After a 3-year search for suitable property, the site at 900 S. Tibbs Avenue was purchased. Approvals from the State took another a year. This site is ideal due to its location, historical land use, and proximity to the District's existing system. The use is consistent with the Westside Indianapolis Neighborhood Land Use Plan that was adopted by the City in 2011. Since the land was first developed in the 1950s, it has always been used for industrial purposes. For many decades, and previously contained the treatment plant that was operated by the Chrysler Foundry. The property carries an Environmental Restrictive Covenant which prevents future residential use.

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The facility being proposed is a 4.0 MGD Extended Aeration treatment facility with an aerobic sludge digestion process. An aerobic process uses oxygen in all treatment steps so no odor producing compounds such as methane or hydrogen sulfide are produced. The plant will discharge to Neeld Ditch with stringent effluent limits that are issued and regulated by IDEM.

Changing the land use from the previous scrap yard to a plant will eliminate the heavy traffic flow from the site which will reduce pollution and road deterioration. The site is isolated from surrounding properties by I-70 on the south and a 25' high railroad bed on the north. The proposed plant will also be aesthetically appealing from the street view due to planned landscaping and lighting. Open areas on the site which are currently concrete will become green space. The proposed re-zoning of the site from I-4 to SU-41 was recommended by the DMD Staff and Hearing Examiner to be approved.

Representatives from the Ben Davis Conservancy District representative and the District's Engineering firm will be available to answer questions at the District office between 9 and 11 on Monday, March 14th. The District is located at 703 S. Tibbs Avenue, Indianapolis, Indiana 46241.