

https://nwitimes.com/news/local/lake/gary/article_d2c26430-4d48-4e2e-88e4-74ac455552e3.html

TOP STORY | SPOTLIGHT

Gary council to vote on go-ahead for soil recycling plant

Alex Dalton

Jan 15, 2026



Gary City Hall

Alex Dalton, file, The Times

Alex Dalton

An industrial firm is seeking to bring a new soil recycling facility to the corner of Clay Street and 15th Avenue in Gary.

The Gary Common Council will vote Tuesday on a special use permit that would allow the facility to operate on land already zoned for industrial use. The item went before the body on Jan. 6, but the council's members sent it back to the Planning and Development committee, delaying a final decision.

Scott Yahne, a Valparaiso-based attorney representing the site's prospective users, told the committee on Tuesday that his clients, who are operating through a corporate entity called Reconstruct Aggregates, Inc., are based in Northern Ireland.

In an Oct. 14 letter submitted to Gary's Board of Zoning Appeals, Yahne identified five stakeholders in the petitioning entity, all of them current or former executives at CDE, a designer and manufacturer of soil recycling equipment that is headquartered about 50 miles from Belfast, Ireland.

"My clients' project, if you all see fit for it to proceed, will be to have a facility that receives clean soils from construction projects, excavated soils," Yahne told the committee on Tuesday. "And ultimately, what they do is they clean and repurpose that material. Their objective is to obtain the sand."

The sand, an essential ingredient in concrete production, would then be sold to local construction firms for reuse. Yahne said his clients estimate that the process will reclaim around 80% of the soil received by the facility, with the remainder, comprising of clay along with "organic material leaves, grass, roots, that type of thing, and potentially some ferrous metal," either composted, recycled or sent to a landfill.

The process, he said, will help make the Region's construction industry more sustainable by cutting down on the amount of soil dumped in landfills and reducing the need for sand to be trucked into Northwest Indiana.

In his letter to the BZA, Yahne wrote that the planned facility, which would sit across the Indiana Toll Road from Gary's Aetna neighborhood, "features wet processing which removes any dust emissions."

"Although the facility requires water, the impact on the sewer system is minimal because the facility doesn't discharge any water from the process," he continued.

"Finally, the facility's noise profile won't be noticeable because the noise impact will be lower than the noise emitted from nearby traffic."

Yahne told the council committee that a concrete pad installed on the site would prevent the soil being processed from interacting with the surrounding environment.

"There should be no leaching or contamination of any of the soil in the city of Gary," he said. "And our site should keep those soils separated."

The BZA voted unanimously on Nov. 14 to deliver the special use petition to the city council with a favorable recommendation. The board added a number of conditions to its approval, including a mandate that the new facility operate only between the hours of 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Other conditions include requirements that the site be fenced or otherwise screened from view and that the site's users take steps to mitigate noise. The BZA also stipulated that if the special use permit is approved, Gary's engineering or public

works departments would be able to require the facility's owners to develop and implement a traffic management plan if the movement of trucks becomes burdensome on the surrounding area.

Addressing the Planning and Development Committee, Yahne said that the site would see between five and 13 trucks coming and going each hour.

The expected volume of truck traffic is one aspect of the plan that has drawn scrutiny from Gary Advocates for Responsible Development, a grassroots environmental group.

Addressing Tuesday's committee meeting, GARD member Jennie Rudderham said she is concerned about the impact that trucks will have on nearby roadways.

"I think we really need to think about if we're adding potentially 100 more trucks a day, riding on these streets, who's paying for the repairs to these roads?" Rudderham said to the committee. "It really needs to be part of the consideration, just when we're thinking of bringing in more truck traffic like this."

Carolyn McCrady, another member of the group, said she is apprehensive about the content of the soil that would be recycled on the site, which she fears could spread heavy metals and other contaminants.

"They say it's clean soil when they get it," McCrady said. "But how is that possible when it's coming from Northwest Indiana urban areas, urban industrial areas and also the South Side of Chicago?"

Yahne, responding, told the committee that the planned facility's truck traffic will be "less than our surrounding uses currently," noting that the recycling plant's neighbors would include a trucking company and a waste transfer station operated by Republic Services.

In addition to engaging with GARD members at public meetings, Yahne has privately fielded written questions from Michael Zoeller, an attorney who has represented GARD and its members in a number of areas.

In a Nov. 13 response to Zoeller, who had asked about “what contaminates and what levels of contamination in source materials will be accepted at the facility” and how “contaminated materials (would) be monitored prior to inclusion in the wet processing operation,” Yahne relayed an answer from his clients.

“The facility will only receive inert materials. The only ‘contamination’ within the materials will be inert clay, organic material (e.g. leaves, grass, roots), and potentially some ferrous metal which we’ll separate also,” the response read, also noting that “all trucks will have to go across a wheel wash facility before leaving the site.”

The answer didn’t satisfy McCrady, who told The Times on Tuesday that she wants more assurances from the petitioners.

“If they don't know what the contaminants are — heavy metals, lead, arsenic, mercury, all the kinds of things that are in our soil that we can't even plant gardens in because it's so contaminated — if they don't know what's in the soil, how can they claim that they're going to clean it up?” she said.

A representative of Yahne's firm said he was not available to comment on Wednesday afternoon.
