

Developer vows to bring back ‘better plan’ after pulling proposal for landfill near Memphis elementary school

A Memphis developer is retreating — for now — from its second proposal to expand a landfill next to an elementary school after again drawing the ire of residents in the city’s Frayser community.

However, a spokeswoman for Memphis Wrecking Co. said Wednesday that the developer expects “to come back with a better plan.”

The company announced it has pulled its application to expand next to Whitney Achievement Elementary School one day before the proposal was scheduled to go before the Shelby County Land Use Control Board.

The decision came after several months of dialogue with local residents, said company planner Brenda Solomito Basar.

“This process has been extremely valuable and has inspired us to keep working and to come back with a better plan,” she said in a news release.

Contacted later, Basar said a “plan is in the works” based on discussions with residents, but that she could not provide details.

“All I can say is there were a lot of good insights in meetings with the neighbors about different things they will like to see, so we are going to explore those ideas and come back with a better plan,” she said.

This is the second time that Memphis Wrecking Co. has backed off from plans to expand its Frayser landfill. Last June, the company pulled its application following media reports about the company’s desire to expand its landfill for demolition material on 34 acres adjacent to the school, with a buffer of about 25 acres.

As they did last year, company officials argued that the debris has to go somewhere and that this landfill would not hold household materials or hazardous waste. And as they did last year, school and community advocates argued that an elementary school where children study and play isn’t an appropriate neighbor for a landfill.

With 440 students, Whitney Achievement Elementary School serves children who are mostly black and from low-income families in one of the city’s most economically depressed areas. The school is operated by the state-run Achievement School District.

At a recent community forum, Frayser residents expressed concern about blight in their community and questioned whether the landfill would have been proposed as a neighbor for schools in more affluent neighborhoods.

Tim Ware, executive director for Achievement Schools, has been among the most vocal opponents of the proposal.

“The message from Frayser is that the expansion of a trash pile next door to a school as great as Whitney Elementary is diametrically opposed to the best interests of the community,” Ware told Chalkbeat earlier this week.

The company’s website offers specifics about its proposal [here](#).

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