City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 28, 2011

TO: Carlyle/Eisenhower East Design Review Board

FROM: Thomas H. Canfield, City Architect

SUBJECT: ASA Expansion (DRB #2011-0001) – Current Plans

At the last DRB meeting on June 30th, the Board reviewed the concept plan for the ASA expansion, which includes above-grade tanks with a soccer field on top. Although considerable progress had been made to develop the plans from the larger conceptual South Carlyle plan, there were still a number of items that the Board felt needed further refinement and consideration. The Board suggested that the applicant consider the points made at that meeting and return to the DRB for a worksession type meeting.

The specific design suggestions that ASA was to consider included the following:

1. Continue to refine the western entrance to the field and the transition from grade to the top of the tanks/field to create an inviting and complete entrance that is consistent with the concept plan developed during the South Carlyle planning process.

2. The fencing for the field should be the minimum height necessary, and should be visibly permeable at the entrance. Consider alternates to chain link that offer greater transparency, while maintaining functionality.

3. The hard edges of the restrooms and education kiosks should be softened or shifted to improve the entrance condition.

4. The design of the administration building should not replicate existing architectural styles and should consider the context of the future buildings in the surrounding area. It also needs to work in harmony with the natural bleachers that were a key design element in the South Carlyle concept design, while accommodating service and life safety needs (see below.)

Since the DRB meeting in June, staff has met briefly with the applicant to discuss these and other issues. Among the issues discussed were whether the public restrooms should be located inside or outside the fenced ballfield, and at the upper or lower level. There are pros and cons to each, in terms of ADA accessibility, security, and convenience. Also discussed was the character of the ped/bike access way, whether it should accommodate any parking, and the need for it to connect through into future landscaped deck areas. Some of those ideas have been incorporated into the current DRB package, but the plans continue to evolve.

Therefore, the Board should consider the submission as a starting point for discussion and from which specific direction about the above points should be made (although discussion about the specific design of the administration building should be reserved for future meetings since this will be constructed in a later phase).

The desired outcome from this meeting will be further direction for ASA on the design options they have presented regarding the above points. This direction should be included in future DSUP applications and as conditions of approval for the DSUP that will be reviewed in the fall.

Docket Item #3
Design Review Board Case #2011-0001
ASA Expansion (Blocks 29 and 30)

Application	General Data	
Project Name: ASA West Plant Facilities Expansion **Location:** 350 and 400 Hooffs Run Drive (Blocks 29 and 30) **Applicant:** Alexandria Sanitation Authority (ASA), represented by Ken Wire of McGuire Woods	**Site Area:**	10.61 acres ~4.5 acres outside of the RPA
	Zone:	CDD#11(South Carlyle)
	Proposed Use:	Utility, recreation field, office (future)
	Gross Floor Area:	~ 60,000 sf (for a future office building)

Purpose of Application	
Concept design review of the structures and site design for the above grade storage tanks, associated ASA facilities, and recreation field.	
Staff Reviewers:	Tom Canfield, AIA tom.canfield@alexandriava.gov Gwen Wright, gwen.wright@alexandriava.gov Gary Wagner, RLA, gary.wagner@alexandriava.gov Katye Parker, AICP, LEED AP katye.parker@alexandriava.gov

DESIGN REVIEW BOARD ACTION, JUNE 30, 2011: The Eisenhower East Design Review Board recommended that the applicant continue to work on the plans and return to the Board for another meeting prior to the public hearings before Planning Commission and City Council. The Board offered the following design suggestions:

5. Continue to refine the western entrance to the field and the transition from grade to the top of the tanks/field to create an inviting and complete entrance that is consistent with the concept plan developed during the South Carlyle planning process.
6. The fencing for the field should be the minimum height necessary and should be visibly permeable at the entrance.
7. The hard edges of the restrooms and education kiosks should be softened or shifted to improve the entrance condition.
8. The design of the administration building should not replicate existing architectural styles and should consider the context of the future buildings in the surrounding area.

Reason: The Board recognizes that this plan will be the first piece of the larger South Carlyle plan to be implemented and it is essential that it be done successfully to lend support and credibility to the remainder of the project.

I. RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Alexandria Sanitation Authority (ASA) is requesting that the Design Review Board (DRB) recommend approval of the proposal for above ground storage tanks and associated facilities with an athletic field above. Staff recommends that the DRB **recommend approval** of the proposal with conditions requiring further consideration of the following:

- Relocation of the parking area on the west side of the tanks
- Treatment of the entrance ramp/walkway to the field
- Expansion of the connection piece to the green deck to the north
- Development of design guidelines for the future administration building

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Background

Over the last six months, the DRB has been involved in the South Carlyle planning discussions that include these two ASA blocks and three blocks to the north (Blocks 26A, 26B, and 28). This is the first development application to be reviewed under the conceptual plan that was developed from that process. As discussed during the South Carlyle briefings, ASA needs additional property to add new treatment facilities to the process in order to meet stricter environmental standards and Blocks 29 and 30 were the only viable option for this expansion. The primary structure on these blocks will be storage tanks for wastewater that has gone through a primary treatment.

During the South Carlyle planning process, ASA, staff, and the other property owners in South Carlyle worked together to develop a creative solution to screening the above grade tanks. By reconfiguring the design of the tanks to be a large rectangular box, the surface is large and flat enough for an athletic field. The field would eventually link to the green deck to the north that would cover above grade parking on Blocks 26A, 26B, and 28. Long term plans also include relocation of the administration building to Block 29 between Limerick Street and the tanks/field.

Location

Blocks 29 and 30 are the southernmost development blocks in the South Carlyle neighborhood. The blocks are bounded by Limerick Street, the Alexan Carlyle residential building, and Virginia Concrete property to the north, the existing ASA facility to the east, the Beltway to the south, and the Public Safety Center to the west. A portion of Hooff's Run and the associated Resource Protection Area (RPA) wraps the western, southern, and eastern boundary of the property.

Project Details

The ASA expansion property is 10.61 acres but over half is within the RPA. The expanded facilities will be constructed on the portion outside of the RPA, which is approximately 4.5 acres. The primary structure will be a large concrete tank, measuring approximately 390 feet in length (east to west) and 260 feet in width (north to south). The tanks would be mostly submerged (approximately 20-30 feet), with the top 10-17 feet of the tank above grade. The roof of the tank will be designed to include an athletic field that would be large enough for a regulation sized soccer field (360 feet by 210 feet). The field would be accessed by a ramp at the northwestern corner of the property, which would eventually become a segment in the larger bike/ped path that

wraps through South Carlyle properties from Eisenhower Avenue at the northeast to Eisenhower Park Drive at the southwest.

This plan also includes the connection piece in the northeast corner between the field and the green deck that will cover the parking structure to the north. This piece would be constructed at a later date, but would provide for the change in grade between the two structures. The conceptual plan had suggested that this area should incorporate a set of terraces or natural bleachers to accommodate the grade change.

Also part of this project is the conceptual size and location for the ASA administration building that will eventually be relocated to this property. The building will be 60,000 sf and is envisioned to have 5 levels. The design of the building has not been developed, but there would be opportunities for the building to relate to the field, the green deck to the north, and Limerick Street.

III. STAFF ANALYSIS

Although this plan is generally consistent with the conceptual South Carlyle plan, it has been refined to address some of the technical needs of ASA and the physical site constraints that were not previously considered. Staff did not expect the conceptual plan to be the final design for the site and is well aware that small changes may be needed as more details are fleshed out. However, there are several design issues discussed below that should be further addressed.

Transition between ground level and the tank roof/field

Given the uniqueness of the concept for South Carlyle and the difficulty for the general public to fully understand what the final development will look like until it is constructed, it is extremely important that the first component of the plan be completed in a way that successfully represents the entire project. The primary area the public will see and interact with will be the western corner of the site at the entrance ramp to the field. The conceptual plan had shown this as a landscaped area that would provide a green entrance to the field. The current proposal shows a ramp with railings on each side to protect pedestrians from the ten foot grade change. Staff has suggested that instead of railings, ASA should explore berming or terracing up to the ramp to recreate the green entrance originally envisioned. This has the added benefit of fully completing this section of the site and providing a more welcoming entrance.

To the south of the ramp and west of the tanks, the conceptual plan had also envisioned a large green space. However, that plan did not account for ASA's parking needs once the administration building was relocated. Some parking for that building can be accommodated in the northeast corner under the green deck connection. However, additional parking is still needed. ASA has proposed using the west corner of their property for this additional parking area, which would also include an area for a recycled water bulk fill station for the general public to use. Staff has some concerns about the placement of a surface parking lot in this fairly prominent location since this will be the main entrance to the field. There is also the operational issue of enforcing the parking area for ASA use only given the proximity to the field and the likelihood of park patrons parking in this location. Staff has suggested that ASA explore incorporating parking into the ground floor of the administration building and redesigning this area to be a more landscaped transition between the tanks and ground level.

The southern and eastern sides of the tanks will be exposed 17 feet. However, these façades will not be extremely visible, even from the Beltway, given the low height and vegetation in this area. Staff recommends a very simple treatment of the tank walls, with perhaps a small embellishment at the southeastern corner. The bulk of the design for this site should be focused elsewhere in locations that will be more visible and directly accessed by the public.

Finally, along the northern property line, ASA has identified locations for the future administration building and parking/service yard that will be covered by the green deck connection. These structures would be constructed during later phases. However, some consideration should be given to how this area will look in the interim. Since this will be a construction staging area for ASA and part of the larger wastewater treatment facility once the tanks are constructed, this area needs to be secure. ASA has proposed security fencing behind the new streetscape improvements (sidewalk, on-street parking, etc.) along Limerick Street to allow for pedestrian connections while clearly delineating the secure areas of the site.

Extent of the deck

Another change to note from the conceptual plan is the extent of the deck to the east. While the conceptual plan had the deck covering the majority of the eastern portion of the ASA property, there were utility and access issues that prevent as large of a deck. There is an easement for the 72" sewer line from Fairfax County along the southeastern corner of the site that limits how far the tanks can be constructed. Additionally, there are easements along the east and south for the high tension power lines. Finally, the tanks will be accessed from the eastern side and ASA needs enough clearance to maneuver trucks in and out of this area.

However, despite these constraints, the roof area above the tanks is still large enough for a regulation sized athletic field. Staff has two recommendations to improve the size and configuration of the tanks and resulting deck. First, the conceptual plan rounded the two southern corners, which results in creating pinch points on the field. There are opportunities to square off these corners, or at least chamfer them within the constraints of the easements and RPA.

Second, staff is concerned that the reduction to the width of the deck that connects the field to the green deck over the parking structures to the north will lead the design of the larger green space on the northern blocks. The conceptual plan had a portion of the deck extended over Holland Lane which helps to increase the size of that deck, while also helping the bike/ped path maintain an accessible slope across the grade change. Staff requests that ASA explore ways to bring the northeast corner of this deck as far to the east as possible to ensure the deck to the north is close to the width originally envisioned.

Future review of the ASA Administration Building

As discussed above, ASA has plans to eventually relocate the administration building to a reserved spot along Limerick Street. Although this move would probably not occur for at least 5-10 years, ASA would like to request approval for the building in the overall DSUP for the site that will be reviewed by the Planning Commission and City Council in the fall. ASA has suggested that the Council conceptually approve the location and size of the future building and establish some guidelines for the design, but allow the Design Review Board to have regulatory approval of the final design.

Since this property is within Eisenhower East and not Carlyle, this would be a change from the DRB's role as an advisory review board. However, it would save ASA time and money by eliminating a second DSUP process in the future and would give the DRB more authority in reviewing the design of the building. Staff is open to this suggestion and asks that the DRB provide guidance as to their preference for how to proceed.

IV. CONCLUSION AND STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

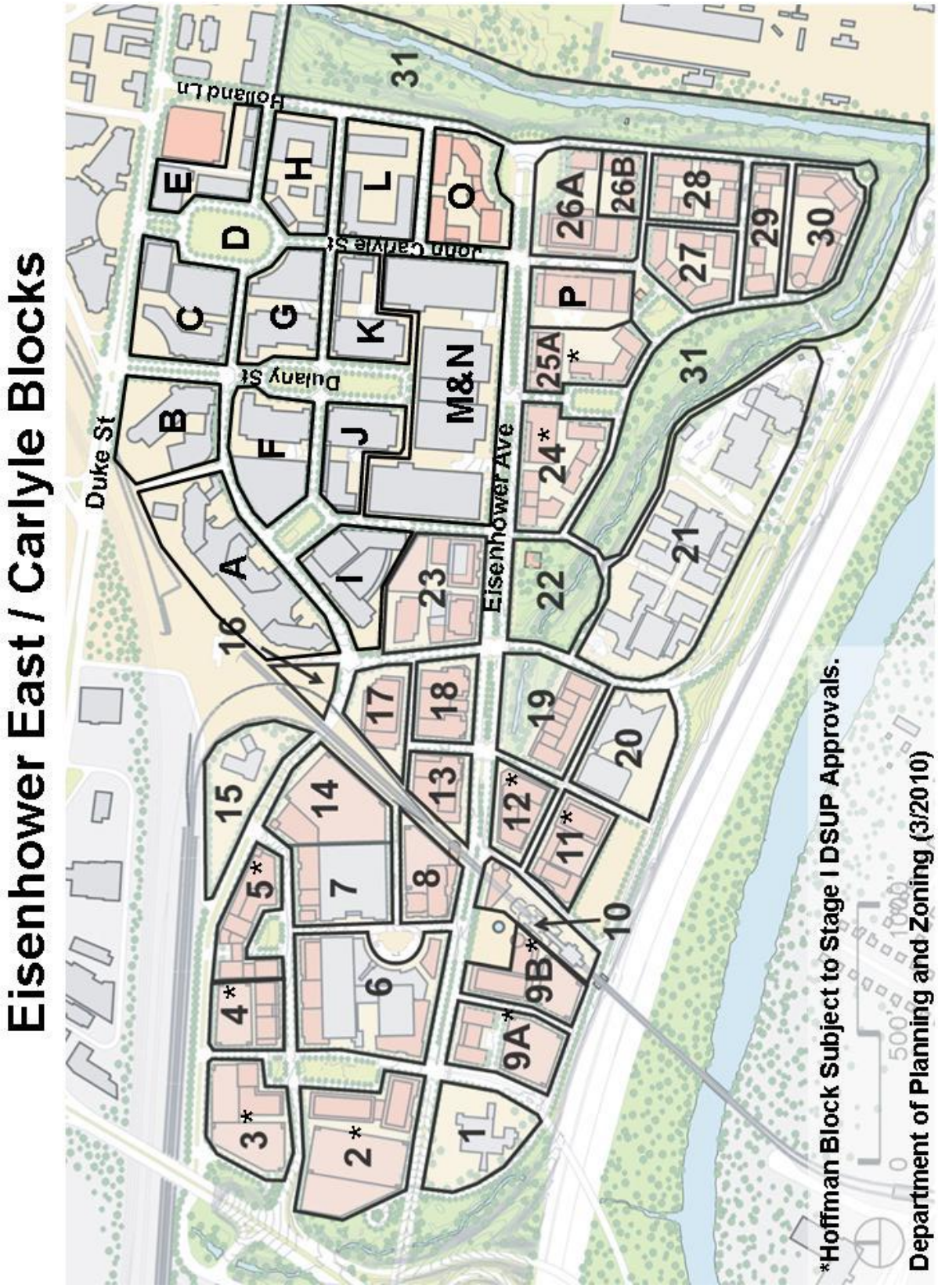
Staff recommends that the DRB **recommend approval** of the proposal with the following conditions:

1. The parking area on the west side of the tanks shall be relocated to a less visible location, such as the ground floor of the administration building. The western corner of the site should be designed for a more active use and inviting entrance to the field.

2. The area surrounding the entrance ramp/walkway to the field should be designed for the final condition to create a completed section of the project.

3. The connection piece to the green deck should be extended to the northeast to maximize the size of the green space it will eventually connect to at the north.

4. The applicant shall work with staff to develop a process and design guidelines for the DRB review of the administration building.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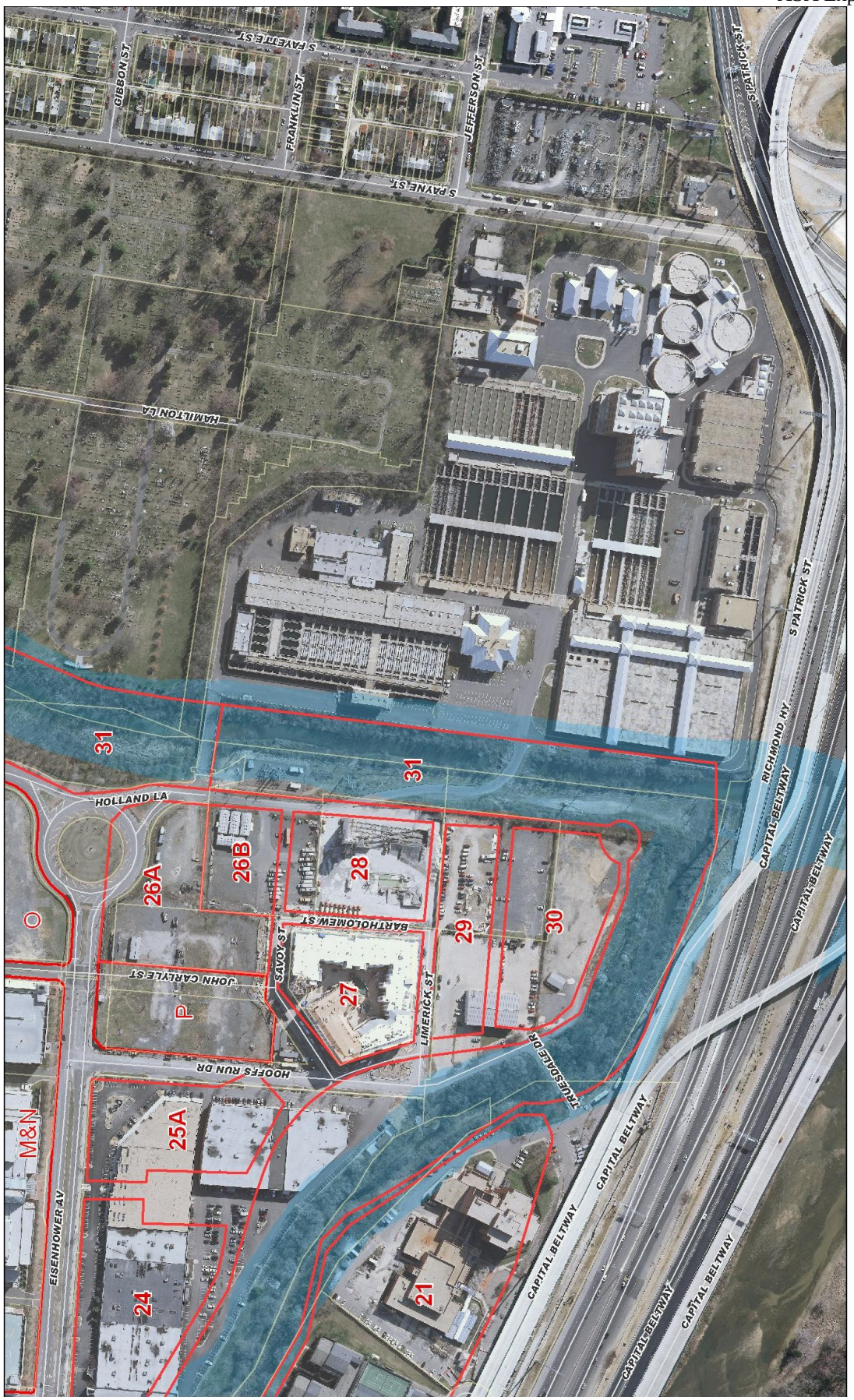
*Hoffman Block Subject to Stage I DSUP Approvals.
Department of Planning and Zoning (3/2010)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