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**NEWS**

Nathan J. Lee, Contributing Writer

May 28, 2025

# Avalon Clean: The South LA Facility Fighting for Its Future —and Ours

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Avalon Clean Vice President Reid Lathan (Courtesy photo)

For more than 90 years, Avalon Clean has operated quietly, effectively, and compliantly in South Los Angeles. The fourth-generation, woman- and Black-owned business has served as a behind-the-scenes environmental steward, protecting LA's water, economy, and public health. Now, its very existence is threatened, not by pollution or misconduct, but by a controversial zoning reclassification that could force the facility to shut down operations.

“Our role in the community is that we’re a silent guardian,” said Reid Lathan, Vice President of Avalon Clean. “We protect the infrastructure that allows us to enjoy the comforts of life. We protect the water that you drink every day. We protect the foods that you consume every day.”

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Avalon Clean Operations  
Manager Calvin Pinkoson  
(Courtesy photo)

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The heart of Avalon's operation lies in industrial tank cleaning and wastewater pretreatment, services vital to food manufacturers, transportation fleets, and public institutions like LAUSD, SoCal Edison, and emergency response teams. When January wildfires struck LA, Avalon stepped in to pre-treat firefighting foam and contaminated pool water. These materials require special handling; Avalon's pre-treatment ensured proper handling without polluting local waterways.

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Avalon Clean Consultant Ezunial Burts III (Nathan J. Lee/L.A. Sentinel)

The company holds multiple permits with LA County Sanitation, Public Works, and the South Coast Air Quality Management District. Each agency has reviewed and approved Avalon’s operations down to the dish soap used to clean tank exteriors. “That’s the level of scrutiny we face,” said Lathan. “We work hand in hand with Public Works and Sanitation. Our compliance record is strong.”

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Avalon Clean, a local anchor for environmental infrastructure, regulatory compliance, and industrial stewardship for over 90 years. (Nathan J. Lee/L.A. Sentinel)

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Despite this, Avalon was abruptly flagged by the Department of Regional Planning in 2023, accused of operating a sewage treatment and disposal facility and violating zoning laws. **This reclassification happened after Avalon supported the Chiquita Canyon Landfill with wastewater treatment.** All regulatory agencies had signed off, except Regional Planning, which claimed the company's use did not align with the site's zoning. "It was a blatant misclassification," said Lathan. "We're not a sewage treatment and disposal plant. And no other companies in the area that have industrial treatment permits are classified this way." Avalon sends its liquids to a treatment and disposal plant.



An Avalon Clean technician collects and catalogs water samples as part of the company's rigorous wastewater pretreatment process. (Nathan J. Lee/L.A. Sentinel)

This reclassification comes amid broader efforts to rezone industrial land in Los Angeles for potential housing development. Avalon supports equitable development but contends that the decision to reclassify its land without proper dialogue contradicts LA County's own commitments to industrial job protection and environmental equity. "It is

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incredibly disheartening,” said Lathan. “To hear from customers that Regional Planning is telling them Avalon won’t exist soon, without ever reaching out to us directly, is devastating. It isn’t just painful for our family business, its unsettling for the entire community and ecosystem that depends on us.”

If the June 3rd zoning hearing does not resolve in Avalon’s favor, litigation may be the only recourse. But the stakes are higher than one business’s survival. The closure of Avalon would send thousands of gallons of industrial wastewater hundreds, sometimes thousands, of miles away for treatment in less regulated municipalities. That shift would increase carbon emissions, raise costs, and undermine California’s environmental goals.

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“We already have the infrastructure here,” said Lathan. “To say ‘just move’ is financially and logistically impossible. This isn’t just about us. It’s about what kind of environmental strategy we want as a region.”

The company employs 25 people and serves as a training ground for local high school graduates. Operations Manager Calvin Pinkoson ensures systems function at full capacity. “My job is making sure we don’t get complacent,” he said.

“Everything we do here is above board, and we do a great job.”

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Consultant Ezunial Burts III, a USC alum, lifelong resident of LA County, and longtime associate of the Lathan family, sees Avalon as essential infrastructure for South LA. “This is a multigenerational legacy rooted in mentorship, education, and community empowerment,” said Burts. “Avalon treats more than water, it builds careers, uplifts communities, and protects the health of people across South LA. If you care about clean water and local jobs, then you care about Avalon.”

The company is not asking for special treatment, only for recognition, fairness, and a seat at the table. “Let’s make smarter zoning policies that distinguish between polluters and protectors,” Lathan said. “Let’s not outsource our environmental responsibilities. Let’s keep solutions here, where they belong.”

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