



Little Village's Fight for the Right to Breath

On December 29, 2017, Hilco Global closed on the purchase of the former Crawford Coal Power Plant for \$100 million. In the announcement, Hilco stated that the site development would be for logistics and warehousing. Chicago Alderman Ricardo Muñoz, was already on board of supporting Hilco's vision of the Crawford site as needed in the last mile of logistics in Chicago, given how close the site is to I-55, Stevenson Expressway.

On August 14th & 16th, 2018, Hilco Global presented to the Little Village community their plans for a one million square foot warehouse on the former Crawford Coal Power Plant site at 34th St. & Pulaski Rd. The open houses took place at Second Federal Savings Community Room and Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez Elementary School.

In both open houses, Hilco presented the community with stations covering different topics of their development. Community members were encouraged to walk through the stations and ask questions and provide feedback. What was done with that feedback and how it would be incorporated into recommendations for the plan was not disclosed by Hilco in either meeting. The open house style of presentations was specifically designed to diminish dialogue and prevent the cultivation of open conversation amongst the room at large. This strategy and setting made it hard for the community to hold Hilco accountable for its proposal.

Additionally, Hilco felt it necessary to bring security to both community open houses. This made many community members feel uncomfortable and insulted as to why Hilco would feel the need to profile our community as so violent that there was a need for security.

In the first open house, Hilco did not provide seating for their two-hour session, and the snacks, water, and cookies were insufficient to accommodate participants. Community members had to find chairs and create space, against Hilco's demand to not sit and talk, to ask questions and share concerns of Hilco and their many consultants and staff.

In the second open house, Hilco knowingly hosted the event in a non-air conditioned gym in August. With only a few fans in the room, community members struggled for two hours with only warm water and cookies to help them make it through the meeting. Some had to leave due to aggravated health conditions caused by the heat. Hilco provided the same stations and included a seating area for a presentation & panel q&a.

Community members were given questionnaire cards to use, and an agenda was provided. In addition, a limit of one question and a two-minute time limit was imposed on community members

Although simultaneous translation was announced, the meeting did NOT have simultaneous translation and rather delayed translation at that. The lack of simultaneous translation ate up too much time and prevented robust community engagement, translations were not accurate, and the community had to keep reminding Hilco AND the interpreter to translate material they continued to overlook. It is perplexing that a multinational and multi-billion dollar corporation can spend money on security but not provide adequate translations. This simple oversight speaks volumes to their views of the community and their priorities.

Once Hilco completed their presentation, there were only 30 minutes left in the meeting for questions from the community.

Just as in the first meeting, community members shared their concerns:

- How will traffic be impacted on Pulaski with more trucks coming on and off of Pulaski and I-55?
- Do the street infrastructure and viaducts support these extra trucks?
- Are there other options possible besides a diesel intensive facility like this one?

As a community that fought to shut down the Crawford and Fisk coal power plants for 12 years, community members understand what this means for Little Village. Community members demanded Hilco commit to getting its future tenants to use filters in their diesel trucks and for them to transition to electric vehicles. Ultimately, the community asked Hilco to not develop a diesel intensive facility like the one they are proposing.

Hilco would not commit.

Alderman Muñoz, who only attended the first 15 minutes of the first Open House, has promised to get union warehouse jobs. Whereas, Hilco simply promised 178 jobs and would not specify the type of jobs (union or temp). The reality is many community members are concerned about the rampant abuse in similar warehouses across the city of Chicago and suburbs, including Amazon warehouses. Currently, the Chicagoland area has half a billion square feet of warehouse space and 150,000 warehouse workers, making it one of the largest concentrations of warehouses in the country.

Workers have been organizing for years to demand the rights and respect they deserve. Working conditions in many of these warehouses are notoriously bad with poverty level wages; temporary positions designed to prevent union organizing; wage theft; lack of essential benefits; unsafe working conditions; and rampant racial discrimination and abuse.

Community members demanded that Hilco commit its tenants to provide union, living wage jobs with training opportunities for youth and work opportunities for undocumented individuals.

Hilco would not commit or elaborate on what “good jobs” meant.

When community members asked about a possible Community Benefits Agreement (CBA), they were informed that they have to meet with Alderman Muñoz. In over 20 years, Alderman Muñoz has never passed a successful CBA. CBAs should not be negotiated with the Alderman, but directly with community and community organizations.

Hilco would not commit.

With one last opportunity to redeem themselves, Hilco was asked to speak of what they knew about the Little Village community for two minutes.

Hilco could not respond.

As the second Open House came to a close at noon, there were still ten community members in line waiting to ask questions. They were met with an announcement that the meeting was over, that their issues would not be addressed and a Hilco representative unplugged the microphone followed by panelists storming out of the room. Just as in the first meeting, community members were outraged that their voices were not heard.

As an organization, LVEJO met with Hilco four times spanning from March to June 2018, to express our opposition to this project and presented possible alternatives but our voices fell upon deaf ears.

Regardless of mounting community opposition, Alderman Muñoz is supporting Hilco’s application in front of the Public Building Commission on September 13, 2018.

LVEJO stands with Little Village in saying Hell No to Hilco!

Community members want an Industrial Corridor that speaks to the talent and skills of Little Village and a Corridor that supports the local economy. The community envisions large-scale urban farms; commercial kitchens; a 'mercado' (community market); small business incubators. The Little Village Industrial corridor and its community members have more to offer. The community vision does not have to sacrifice its members' health and well-being for Hilco's profit. We envision a Chicago that welcomes all, not just those who can profit and prosper at the expense of others. This is crucial to building a thriving new economy in Chicago that no longer features communities of color as sacrifice zones.

We are demanding the City of Chicago Department of Planning require health and environmental considerations when providing permits in the Industrial Corridor. To ensure communities like Little Village, which are already over polluted, are not highlighted as sacrifice zones. Little Village is no longer willing to be the dumping ground for the city and polluting industries.