

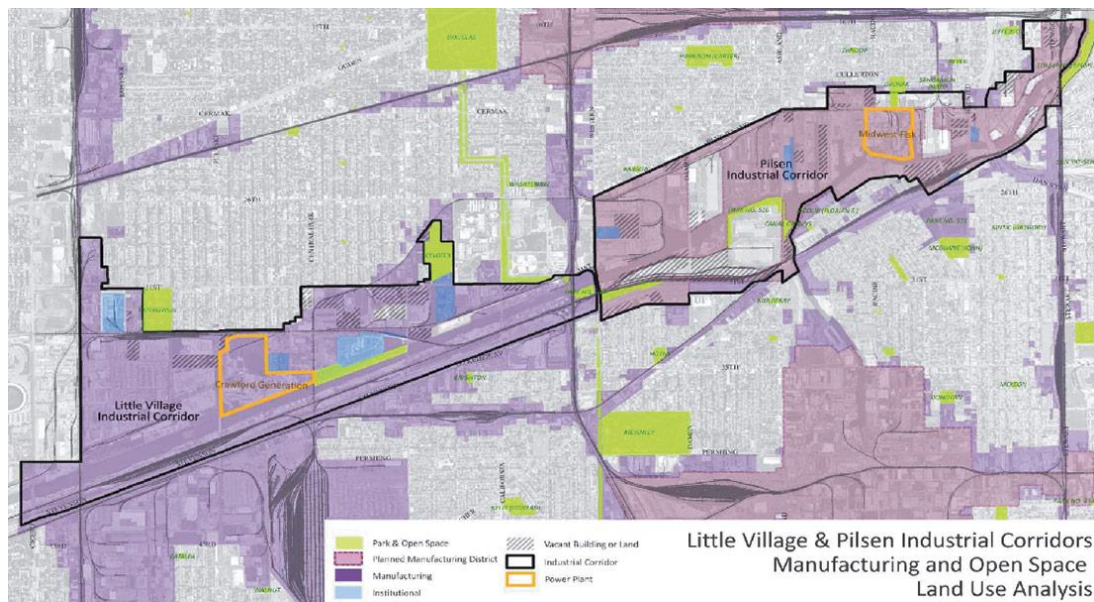
COPING WITH COAL: LIFE AFTER THE FISK AND CRAWFORD COAL PLANTS



Greenpeace activists placed a banner on the Fisk plant last year

In September, two coal-burning power plants on the Southwest side of Chicago closed down operations, leaving the nearby communities with the pressing question of how best to re-use the combined 132 acres. The Fisk and Crawford coal plants have been decommissioned by their owner Midwest Generation in response to increasing pressure from community groups and environmental groups like Greenpeace, who last year scaled the smokestack at the Fisk plant to paint a “QUIT COAL” banner.

The predominantly Latino communities of Pilsen and Little Village are now faced with an urban planning quandary, finding the most equitable redevelopment solution for an unusually large parcel of land along the Chicago River.



The Pilsen-Little Village Industrial Corridor

It's changing the way the city does development in a community like ours," said Kim Wasserman, coordinator for the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO). "Conversations that have historically never happened are now happening."

Certainly these communities are happy to be free of the environmental health risks posed by these plants, linked to 41 premature deaths and 2,800 asthma attacks annually by a 2002 Harvard School of Public Health study.

Yet the stage is now set for a series of discussions that will seek to create jobs for community members, while also increasing access to remediated green space in a district that is poor in parkland.

“This is the first brownfield coal site that has engaged in this kind of process with the community,” said Jean Pogge, CEO of the Delta Institute, the Chicago-based non-profit leading the mayor’s task force.

Curiously absent from any redevelopment proposals is a call for more housing, given residents’ fears that new housing will mean more gentrification. At any rate the remediation and redevelopment process should be worth watching, as other communities prepare for life after coal. Engineering a solution will not be easy, but the potential for these communities to reinvent their economic livelihood and relationship to the Chicago River is exciting.

Source: <http://www.globalsiteplans.com/environmental-design/coping-with-coal-life-after-the-fisk-and-crawford-coal-plants/>