

Soot to Solar

Fisk Generating Station – Pilsen Neighborhood, Chicago, IL

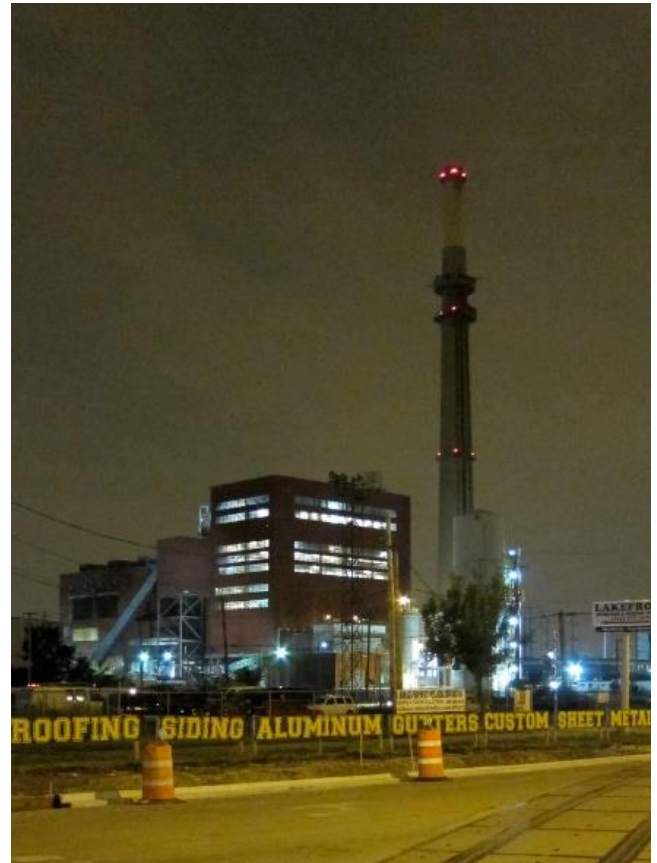
The Fisk Generating Station in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood closed in 2012, after a decade-long fight led by the Pilsen Alliance, the Pilsen Environmental Rights and Reform Organization (P.E.R.R.O.), and the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO). The organizing campaign to shut down Fisk was closely tied to the campaign to shut down the Crawford plant, and the two plants ultimately retired within a week of one another as part of the same agreement.

After the Fisk plant closed, community members voiced their priorities for the site's redevelopment—the creation of living-wage jobs and building a healthier neighborhood; more recently, Brian Sigcho of the Pilsen Alliance raised housing affordability as an issue (Spielman 2018; FCTRF 2012).

In 2015, the city of Chicago proposed—with few specifics—turning the Fisk site into a Chicago Transit Authority bus garage and/or a public park (Cora 2015). A study commissioned in 2017 to analyze the possibility of turning a portion of the site into a Throop Street River Park has not yet reported results (DPD 2017). It is possible that nearby industrial sites would make the site unsuitable for use as a park, as is the case at the Crawford site, but this issue has not yet been definitively analyzed.

An analysis by the Union of Concerned Scientists of the Fisk site's land area shows that the site could accommodate up to a 9 megawatt solar farm—which if installed would take up 98 percent of the site—as well as a 10 megawatt storage facility, which would occupy only 0.27 percent of the site and provide additional grid reliability. With the Future Energy Jobs Act there may be an opportunity to develop solar on the Fisk site. As a designated brownfield site, it would be eligible for extra financial incentives and its solar development would create jobs for local community members trained through the legislation's Solar for All training program.

The future of the Fisk site remains to be seen, but the opportunities are there to leverage the Future Energy Jobs Act to bring clean energy and jobs to the Pilsen community. Whatever the plan for the site, community input will be critical for making it successful and equitable.



The Fisk Generating Station is located in Chicago's Pilsen Neighborhood. The coal plant closed in 2012, after a decade-long fight led by the Pilsen Alliance, P.E.R.R.O., and LVEJO. The site has not yet been redeveloped. [Photo Credit: Flickr/dfritzon]

REFERENCES

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