

Contact: LVEJO
Lorena Lopez /
Cell Phone: 773.704.8307 (LL)
Cell Phone: 773.503.0413 (EA)

2856 South Millard Ave
Chicago, IL 60623
Phone 773.762.6991
Fax 773.762.6993

**Little Village
Environmental
Justice Organization**

Press Release

USEPA ignores Massive Contamination on the new Planned Park Site in Little Village.

Little Village Environmental Justice Organization joins community members and local representatives to demand a proper Clean Up of the Celotex Superfund Site on Saturday March 15, 2008 at 11:00 p.m. at the corner of 31st and Albany.

Saturday March 15, 2008 at the Celotex Site, we will meet on 31st and Albany. Little Village Community Members, Elected Representatives, the Little Village Environmental Justice Organization (LVEJO) and students from the community and around the City of Chicago will protest outside the Celotex Site to demand a proper clean up of the 24 acre USEPA toxic Superfund site. The former Asphalt Factory will be converted into a public park. The event will begin at 11:00 AM.

Little Village, a neighborhood of 95,000 residents, has been fighting for a park for over 10 years. On June 2, 2007 the City of Chicago and Chicago Park District announced they would build a park on the Celotex Superfund toxic waste site on 28th and Sacramento.

"The Little Village Community is glad the City of Chicago and Park District have finally decided on a park site," said Lorena Lopez, LVEJO Community Organizer. "However, we will not accept a park that could put our health and environment at risk." We want a proper cap on the site, not just gravel that both was dumped with no oversight for its proposed use and that the EPA knows is not a proper cap for PAH's. We need a park for the community that will be safe and used to its full capacity, by having the site at street level and properly capped to protect human health.

Community leaders point to a series of dangers posed by not cleaning up the cancer-causing polyaromatic hydrocarbon (PAH) hotspots at Celotex, and possible solutions:

- The Celotex site preliminary hazardous risk score to qualify for the National Priority List's cleanup of contamination ranks higher than any site in the United States: of 703 sites listed when the U.S. EPA last categorized Superfund sites.
- Surrounding Homes that have been contaminated for over 88 years by PAH's, were cleaned up in 2007-2008 and run the risk of re-contamination with the site not being brought down to street level and capped.
- Cleaning the Celotex site and surrounding neighborhood is feasible. Barrie Park, a similar Superfund site in Oak Park, IL, was recently cleaned up to Illinois EPA park & residential standards.
- Cleanup of the Celotex site in Little Village is affordable and will take less than \$50 million, which the USEPA is NOT enforcing.

The USEPA heard from Community members in a public meeting 10 years ago that the site should be remediated for public use. Those plans have remained the same yet the USEPA is ignoring both our health and the environment.

Community members fought to enforce and won full residential Remediation without any support from the USEPA. Now we are once again fighting the Agency that is suppose to protect our human health, the USEPA is claiming that gravel dumped, with no Agency supervision is safe enough for our community. . The U.S. E.P.A. has publicly stated that the site will only be, "*Tweaked from Industrial Standards and given to the City of Chicago for a park.*" The intervention and negotiation by the U.S. E.P.A have been grossly negligent.

The USEPA recently stated “they are waiting for the City of Chicago to purchase the property before requesting a final report”. This is a perfect example of the USEPA’s gross neglect of the primarily Mexican community of Little Village and of environmental racism. This is a historic trend by corporations to avoid cleanup in low income and minority communities.

The Little Village community demands that the entire site be cleaned up properly to street level, homes should not run the risk of being re-contaminated, and this would allow the park to have much need accommodations such as a field house, swimming pool, gym, and other facilities. This plan should be demanded now before the City acquires the property to ensure the responsible party pays for the cost and not the City of Chicago tax payers.

Don’t band aid the Celotex site, clean and cap it and help protect our health.