

Testimony of Louis Sanchez
Before the Village of Port Chester Board of Trustees
Regarding the Draft Scoping Document for the Form-Based Rezoning of Port Chester
October 15, 2018

Good evening. My name is Louis Sanchez. I'm a business representative for the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 3. I'm here tonight on behalf of the dozens of Local 3 members living in Port Chester and their families. Local 3 is standing up for responsible development with the Sustainable Port Chester Alliance.

By the time everything is built, this rezoning will probably have created tens of thousands of construction jobs. All of them will likely be on development subsidized by Port Chester taxpayers. And many of them will be on land that currently belongs to Port Chester taxpayers.

We all have a responsibility to make sure these are good jobs that provide workers with family-sustaining wages and benefits. We have a responsibility to make sure they are safe jobs, where workers are provided with all the necessary protections, are empowered to speak out when they see unsafe conditions, and receive life-saving training. We also owe it to Port Chester taxpayers to make sure these jobs aren't just temporary, low-wage work, but serve as a pipeline to meaningful, middle class careers.

Unfortunately, that often hasn't been the case with past development in Port Chester. Projects like the Castle and the Mariner employed irresponsible contractors with records of unscrupulous pay practices and unsafe jobsites. The Castle had safety issues that endangered workers and the public, such as when plywood blew off the rooftop and into the street and power lines. Gonzalo Cruz tells us that a group of workers constructing the Castle faced wage theft, and Don Bosco Workers had to intervene on more than one occasion to get the workers paid.

Just a couple of months ago, an irresponsible demolition contractor operating at 18 South Main Street sent debris showering onto the street and sidewalk. Fortunately, no one was passing by on the sidewalk or street and a worker suffered only a minor injury. It later emerged that the contractor was working illegally, ignoring a stop-work order issued by the village building dept for unsafe conditions at the site.

Do we want this to be the norm for construction in Port Chester? Unsafe jobs that threaten the safety of workers and passersby alike; unscrupulous contractors that steal wages from workers? Low-wage, temporary jobs?

The DGEIS should study construction employment closely. Among the areas that need to be analyzed are:

- Exactly how many construction jobs will this rezoning create and what kind of wages and benefits are workers likely to be paid?
- What will be the impact on area wages in Port Chester and Westchester County if construction resulting from this rezoning is performed by non-union contractors offering minimal wages?
- What are the threats to public safety from the work being performed by non-union construction contractors?

- What would the positive economic impacts be if all the work were performed by union contractors paying family-sustaining wages and benefits and a pre-apprenticeship program was created to give local residents an opportunity to begin their careers on construction right here in Port Chester? What is the difference in economic benefits for Port Chester under this scenario versus a scenario in which much of the work is performed by non-union contractors?

We have a desperate need for good jobs in this community. 58% of Port Chester residents are either living below the poverty line or are what the United Way calls asset limited, income constrained, employed (ALICE), meaning they are working but do not earn enough to afford life's basic necessities.

It's important that publicly-subsidized development in Port Chester be used to lift Port Chester residents out of poverty and give them a path to good careers, not just create more of the low-wage jobs that are already all too available.