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District 8 Candidates Attend Forum to Discuss Key Community Issues

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By [Andrea Lopez-Villafaña](#)

Eight years since being elected to the San Diego City Council, Councilmember David Alvarez will no longer serve District 8 when he is termed out, leaving his seat up for grabs.

On Thursday, March 15, community members had the opportunity to meet three of the candidates running for the City Council: Antonio Martinez, Vivian Moreno, and Christian Ramirez at the Sherman Heights Community Center.

Over 100 people attended the forum, which was hosted by the Environmental Health Coalition from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and moderated Jose Cruz, CEO of Barrio Logan College Institute.

Candidates were given two minutes to answer pre-submitted questions read by the residents who asked them.

Barrio Logan resident Philomena Marino, asked candidates what they would do to improve parking in her community, which is largely impacted by the amount of people who work in the surrounding industrial companies and Navy, making it difficult for the residents who live in the neighborhood.

"One was a cookie cutter, one was extremely heartfelt and I think that one actually offered a solution," Marino said on how each candidate answered her question.

The candidates were asked questions pertaining to homelessness, housing affordability, land use and planning, and "rapid fire" questions about supporting community members' needs, new community plan for Barrio Logan, and many more.

Moreno stood in front of the crowd and said that in relation to the housing crisis there needs to be more affordable housing and stated that her goal would be to have affordable housing near transit lines.

She said people are being squeezed out of their own homes with rent prices increasing but later emphasized that she does not support rent control, citing the expensive rent prices San Francisco as her example why said approach does not work.

Moreno is a South Bay native who is currently a City Council policy advisor and sits on the boards of Border View YMCA and MANA de San Diego. She is the only woman running for the District 8 seat.

On homelessness in San Diego, she said that the San Diego County Board of Supervisors needs to step up with regards to mental health services.

Martinez explained that due to his background he understands that solutions to issues like homelessness can be complicated because each person has different reasons for being homeless, he said.

Martinez said that organizations need to join together to tackle the problem and he also explained that there needs to be more focus on what he called "transitional homeless" and preventing people from becoming homeless in the first place with rent control.

"We need to form a collaborative to solve the problem," Martinez said.

San Ysidro native Martinez currently serves on the San Ysidro School District Board.



Ramirez, who had many supporters in the room, said that City Hall has constantly pushed the problem to communities and explained his disagreement with Mayor Kevin Faulconer's plan to open a second storage facility for homeless in Sherman Heights.

"That is the kind of half-baked ideas that have turned our communities into dumping grounds for the elite," Ramirez said.

Ramirez was previously human rights director at Alliance San Diego and is now running for City Council.

Candidates were also asked several questions related to land use and planning.

Martinez said that to resolve issues of zoning and land use, there needs to be an updated community plan for Barrio Logan, which dates to 1978.

Moreno added that there was a plan update in Barrio Logan that was reversed by a referendum but added some of the communities like San Ysidro and Otay Mesa that have gotten community plan updates.

Ramirez said he understands the topic is a long fight, but said he is willing to put in the work.

In closing remarks, each candidate reiterated their reasons for running and some of the key issues they plan to address if they win.

District 8 includes the communities of Barrio Logan, Egger Highlands, Grant Hill, Logan Heights, Memorial, Nestor, Ocean View Hills, Otay Mesa East, Otay Mesa West, San Ysidro, Shelltown, Sherman Heights, Stockton, and the Tijuana River Valley.

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