

# San Diego redrafting highly contested blueprint for Barrio Logan

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**Barrio Logan** has long been a jumble of homes, heavy industry and freeways — with residents breathing some of the worst air in the state.

A plan aimed at separating homes from industrial uses in the future was overturned by a majority of city voters in 2014. Mayor **Kevin Faulconer**, ship builders and associated companies said the zoning plan didn't provide enough room for industry to operate.

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Now Faulconer and his staff are restarting the update of Barrio Logan's community plan. As it stands, the blueprint dates to 1978 and imposes few restrictions on development.

The process is expected to officially kick off this month with a presentation before the neighborhood's local planning group. The meeting is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Sept. 20 at Woodbury University at 2212 Main St.

"Most of the community is such that it's legal to build heavy industrial next to a single family house," said Mark Steele, chair of the planning group. "That's got to be cleaned up."

The campaign on the referendum to overturn the updated community plan took place during a turbulent time in the city. Mayor Bob Filner had resigned in disgrace and Councilmen Kevin Faulconer and David Alvarez, who represents Barrio Logan, were running for mayor. The referendum vote took place a few months after Faulconer was elected.

The city planning staff has been "evaluating potential changes to the Barrio Logan (plan) that meet community planning goals for the neighborhood while respecting the will of the voters to protect the maritime and defense industries," Christina Di Leva Chadwick, Faulconer's press secretary, said on Friday.

She also suggested there needs to be an agreement with Alvarez, who grew up in Barrio Logan.

"It wouldn't make sense to move forward with the new (plan) without the support of the council member ..." she said. "We don't want a repeat with another referendum."

Already, community activists, who have successfully worked to revamp zoning and relocated businesses away from homes in National City, have started gearing up for a fight.

"I think a chaotic environment is to their benefit," said Diane Takvorian, executive director of the Environmental Health Coalition, referring to the ship building and repair industry. "It's the Wild West in Barrio Logan. This is about the future and what's going to be built here."

Port of San Diego Ship Repair Association, which represents scores of companies in the San Diego region, said it wants to reach an agreement and get a new zoning plan in place.

"The maritime industry looks forward to working with the community, city and all Barrio Logan stakeholders to find a positive compromise," said Derry Pence, president of the association. "We are excited to have another opportunity to develop a beneficial outcome that serves as a blueprint for the Barrio Logan community for many decades to come."

General Dynamic NASSCO, which donated about than \$600,000 to defeat the zoning overhaul, could not be reached for comment Friday about the renewed push to update the plan.

The most contentious aspect of the overturned plan was a five-block section along Harbor drive that is northeast of the shipyard and dominates the area's waterfront.

Ship builders had asked the city to zone that area to allow maritime-related businesses to operate. It's currently filled with businesses that service the industry, as well as parking lots and warehouses.

Community members have pushed for transitioning it into a pedestrian friendly shopping area that could act as a buffer between homes and businesses that use industrial-grade chemicals.

It's likely this will continue to dominate the conversation going forward, and early draft maps released to the planning group suggest the city is exploring the idea of carving out a swath of land for heavy industry to operate.

"It's a zone they're creating," Steele said. "It's something like marine commercial."

When zoning plans are updated, existing businesses are grandfather into perpetuity.

Before being overturned in a voter referendum, the Barrio Logan community-plan update took five years and cost \$4 million, culminating in a 5-4 party-line vote of the council in 2013 in favor of the plan.