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Polluting Business in National City Reaches Phase-Out Deadline

Environmental Health Coalition celebrates momentous step in protecting the health of children

National City, Calif.—July 28, 2015—Saturday marked the last day that Jose’s Auto Electric, a polluting auto repair business, could legally operate in the residential neighborhood of Old Town National City. After years of operating within 100 feet of Kimball Elementary School, National City’s Council gave Jose’s a formal phase-out deadline for last Saturday, July 25, 2015, to protect the health of children and begin the restoration of approved land uses in the community.

[Environmental Health Coalition](#) (EHC), an organization fighting toxic pollution in underserved communities, thanks the council for taking action to remove one of the city’s most damaging polluters. The organization, committed to building healthy communities, now works to find solutions for preserving National City’s auto businesses in designated industrial areas, away from homes and schools.

In 2012, a thorough evaluation ranked Jose’s Auto Electric and another local auto business, Steve’s West Coast Automotive, as posing the most significant risk and no longer conforming to approved land uses in Old Town National City. The two businesses have been cited more than 23 times for code violations during an eight-year period. On November 5, 2013, National City’s Council approved the terms to phase out the two auto businesses and the deadline for conforming the property to standards of a healthy community.

“We need the auto industry in Old Town National City, but not in a proximity that compromises the health of our children and families,” says Carolina Martinez, policy advocate with EHC. “We celebrate our elected officials for taking the necessary actions to separate polluting industries from residential areas and move the community closer to becoming a thriving neighborhood.”

Old Town was rezoned in 2010 to residential and commercial-compatible designation to reestablish the community as a safe, healthy and vibrant neighborhood. Because of dangerous land-use patterns, National City adopted the amortization ordinance in 2006, which gave the City the right to phase out non-conforming uses that endanger residents. According to the ordinance, the City should set a reasonable phase out timeframe to allow each owner to recuperate investments made into the business.

Old Town National City houses 194 polluters per square mile compared to 44 in National City and three in the county. This intermingling of industrial uses with homes, and schools creates air quality hazards for Old Town residents, including those with asthma or other respiratory illnesses. In the San Diego region, National City children visit emergency rooms for asthma treatment at almost twice the rate of the county as a whole.

“As a former resident, it gives me great comfort to know that our city has taken action in providing a healthy neighborhood for the students of Kimball School,” said Sonia Ruan, principal at Kimball Elementary School. “My family lives two blocks from Kimball School, and I share with the community many concerns for issues still pending. Knowing that there is a plan and that our community leaders care enough to take action gives me confidence in our elected officials and pride in the work of the Environmental Health Coalition.”

Historically, Old Town National City was a residential area, but to facilitate the car industry after World War II, incompatible land-use patterns were permitted and industrial businesses came into the neighborhood. For years, [EHC and community residents advocated](#) for a new community plan and zoning in the area because the many auto-related shops and small industries in residential neighborhoods raised

high concerns.

For more information on EHC, please visit www.environmentalhealth.org.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH COALITION: Founded in 1980, [Environmental Health Coalition](http://www.environmentalhealth.org) (EHC) builds grassroots campaigns to confront the unjust consequences of toxic pollution, discriminatory land use, and unsustainable energy policies. Visit us online at <http://www.environmentalhealth.org/>.