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# Barrio Logan Community Plan Update: Will It Address Community Environmental Challenges?

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*By Joy Williams*



It's official: Barrio Logan is an environmental justice hot spot.

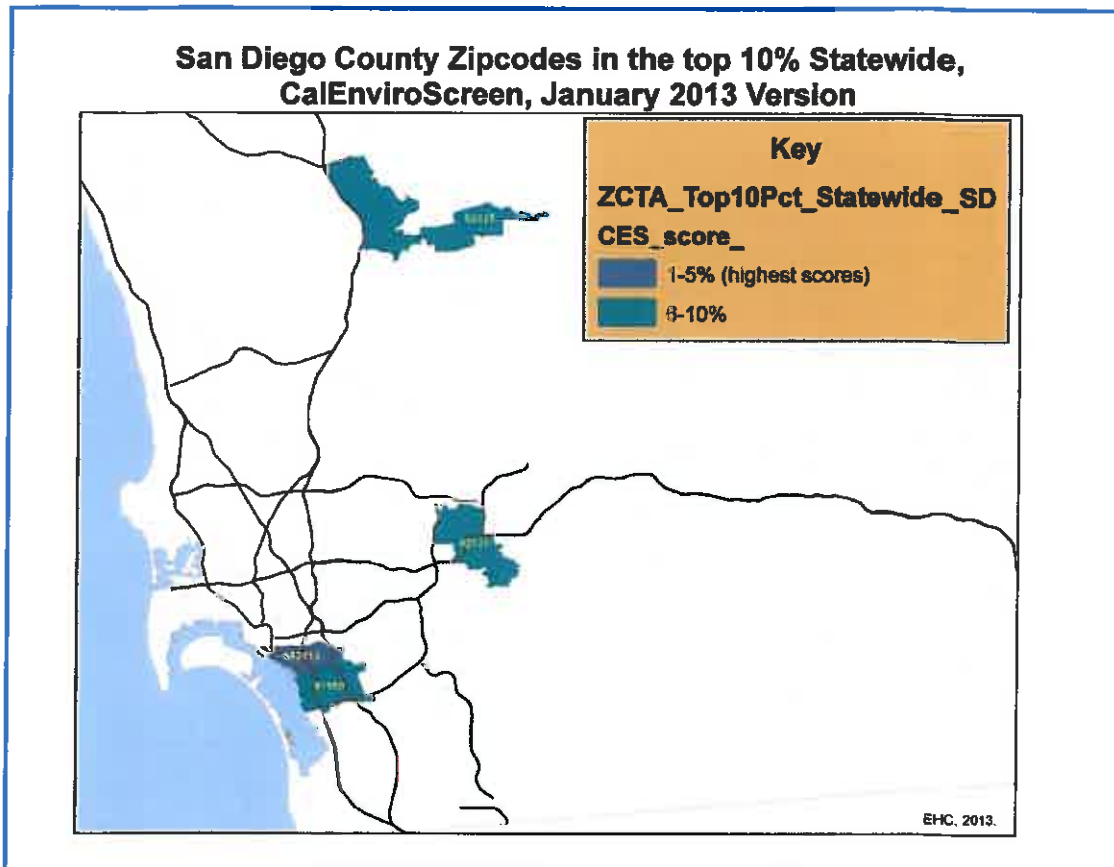
According to CalEnviroScreen, the State's environmental justice screening model, the Barrio Logan area ranks among the most vulnerable areas of the entire state.

Currently, 92113, the Barrio Logan zip code ranks in the top 5% in the state for environmental justice risks to the community and highest in San Diego County.

Developed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, CalEnviroScreen ranks California zip codes by their cumulative impacts of economic, environmental, health, and social disadvantage indicators. The model is in final draft mode and has had extensive input from community groups, academics, and others. With those particular indicators, it shouldn't come as a surprise to anyone who's been in Barrio Logan anytime in the last several decades that we're at the top of that not-so-majestic list.

A strikingly obvious feature of Barrio Logan is that land uses are mixed together in a way not seen in any other community in San Diego. Industries, homes, schools, auto body shops, recycling yards, stores, and parks all share the same compact space, wedged in between the I-5 freeway and the waterfront industries bordering San Diego Bay south of the Convention Center.

Heavy diesel truck traffic moves around and through the community; cargo ships run their engines at the Tenth Avenue Marine Terminal; and the BNSF railyard hosts aging locomotives a short distance upwind of Perkins Elementary School. Smaller industries contribute their own hazards to the community profile – they may be directly next door to homes and may have traffic, odor, vibration, and noise impacts, as well as fire hazards. Pollution close to people is reflected in Barrio Logan's "hot spot" identity.



In addition

to screening for pollution burdens, CalEnviroScreen ranks communities on population characteristics that make people more vulnerable to health damage from toxic exposures. Factors such as age (very young or very old), poverty, linguistic isolation, and education level affect the physical capacity to tolerate toxic assaults on our bodies, or the ability, even in our society, to access the health care system and get appropriate medical care.

High levels of health conditions such as asthma in our community may be at least partly caused by toxic exposures, and in turn, make pollution exposure more damaging. Factors such as age (very young or very old), poverty, linguistic isolation, and education level affect the physical capacity to tolerate toxic assaults on our bodies, or the ability to access the health care system and get appropriate medical care.

Barrio Logan's daunting profile of pollution sources and vulnerability requires active, informed residents and comprehensive policy solutions, starting with reform of the land use. The good news is that a new Barrio Logan Community Plan Update is headed to City Council, and a stakeholder committee of community residents and businesses have been actively engaged in the planning process.

The community's vision of the new Community Plan Update will address several of Barrio Logan's most pressing problems: separation of incompatible land uses; provision of more affordable housing; designation of parking areas for the large industrial workforce; and substantial conservation of industrial land uses to support the job-intensive waterfront.

At the same time, residents want the new plan to preserve all that's good about Barrio Logan – the Latino cultural history and art, the neighborhood feeling, the access to San Diego Bay, the resistance to gentrification of the working class community – all the traits referred to in planning documents as “community character” that make Barrio Logan singular and special.



Environmental Health Coalition, an organization that has fought toxic pollution in Barrio Logan for the last three decades, kicked off the five-year planning process with grant funding for the community visioning process.

After the City of San Diego spent all the funding, Environmental Health Coalition continued the process by providing basic training in land-use planning and hosting monthly stakeholder meetings of residents, business owners, and City staff. After the community completed its inspiring vision, the Environmental Health Coalition worked to find additional funding for the City to produce a completed draft Community Plan Update.

Two different land use alternatives are on their way to City Council. “Alternative 1” is the version preferred by the stakeholder committee and Environmental Health Coalition. Alternative 1 provides for a “transition zone” separating the industrial waterfront from the residential blocks of Barrio Logan. Neither residential nor industrial uses would be allowed in the

transition zone – a critical factor in accomplishing the separation of incompatible land uses.

The Barrio Logan Community Plan Update will go to City Council sometime later this year. Environmental Health Coalition will continue to engage residents in advocating for passage of the plan and speedy plan implementation. In the meantime, the high CalEnviroScreen ranking for Barrio Logan may actually assist the community in getting resources and regulatory attention focused on the neighborhood. Funding for environmental clean ups, increased enforcement, and affordable housing are some of the benefits that community residents hope to see.



To be notified when the Community Plan update goes to Council, contact Georgette Gómez, GeorgetteG@environmentalhealth.org or 619-474-0220 ext. 104.

To get more information about Environmental Health Coalition, click [here](#).

*Joy Williams is Research Director at Environmental Health Coalition*

*Since 1980, Environmental Health Coalition has fought [toxic pollution](#), [discriminatory land use](#), and [unsustainable energy policies](#). Through [leader development](#), organizing and advocacy, EHC empowers residents to achieve public policies that improve the [health of children](#), [families](#), [neighborhoods](#) and the [natural environment](#) in the San Diego/Tijuana region.*

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bob dorn [April 18, 2013 at 10:19 am](#)

A good long look at one of Logan's continuing realities. This was a city and state that sacrificed Logan's environment (along with Little Italy's) to freeways, and Logan especially paid for our national defense with its lungs and blood chemistry. Thank you to the ECH for keeping health issues alive, and to the residents of Logan who have been telling the story on their own walls and columns.

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