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Maritime industry moves to overturn Barrio Logan zoning plan

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SAN DIEGO — Representatives of San Diego’s maritime industry said Thursday they’ve launched a drive to gather signatures in an effort to overturn an update to Barrio Logan’s community zoning plan that was recently adopted by the City Council.

The goal of the update was to provide separation between shipyards and residential housing, but opponents said it would cause suppliers to San Diego’s shipyards to move out of the neighborhood — disrupting the supply chain and raising costs.



The new zoning for the area south of downtown passed on a 5-4 party line vote Sept. 17. The dispute was over what kind of businesses would be allowed into a five-block-long buffer zone between the houses and shipyards.

“We are extremely disappointed that the City Council voted to approve the plan and are convinced that this decision represents a dangerous first step toward the elimination of San Diego’s shipyards,” said Fred Harris,

president of General Dynamics NASSCO. “We have no choice but to protect the future of our industry by taking this aggressive action to prevent the adoption of this flawed plan.”

At a news conference, the speakers said around 46,000 San Diegans are employed by the maritime industry. The Navy relies heavily on the three main shipyards — NASSCO, Continental Maritime and BAE Systems — to build, repair and maintain vessels.

Mark Cafferty, president and CEO of the San Diego Regional Economic Development Corp., said the industry pumps \$14 billion into the region’s economy annually.

In a statement, the Environmental Health Coalition, which supports the zoning update, said it objects to “out-of-state, multi-billion-dollar corporations (that) are positioning themselves to control San Diego communities.”

The zoning update breaks a 30-year history of “toxic” land-use planning that allowed houses, parks and schools to intermingle with polluting industrial organization said. It

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said the newly approved plan will finally separate industrial establishments and residential neighborhoods in the interest of breathable air, affordable community housing and support for the maritime workforce.

“The residents of San Diego know what’s best for their communities and EHC applauds the San Diego City Council for approving their plan,” said Diane Takvorian, executive director of EHC. “These wealthy executives that live out of state — and country — want to decide the fate of San Diego communities. Don’t be fooled — don’t sign the petition: your community could be next.”

The zoning update was the first for the neighborhood in 35 years.

Supporters of the shipyards need to gather 34,000 valid petition signatures within 30 days. The City Council would then have to rescind the zoning update or place it on the June 2014 ballot.

The referendum would become the second to force the City Council’s hand in three years if enough signatures are collected.

In 2011, supporters of medical marijuana got the council to rescind regulations on dispensaries that they considered to be too restrictive. However, the effort backfired because taking the law off the books made dispensaries illegal within the city.

The issue could also play a role in the mayor’s race.

Councilman Kevin Faulconer voted against the zoning update and has served as a vocal supporter of the shipyards.

His mayoral opponent and council colleague, David Alvarez, led the effort to pass the plan.

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