

# Alvarez's Signature Deal Could Come Back to Haunt Him

BY: LIAM DILLON  
([HTTP://VOICEOFSANDIEGO.ORG/AUTHOR/DILLONLIAM/](http://voiceofsandiego.org/author/dillonliam/))

CONNECT

16 HOURS AGO | COMMENTS (6)  
Liam Dillon

Twitter

(<https://twitter.com/dillonliam>)

Send an email

(<mailto:liam.dillon@voiceofsandiego.org>)



David Alvarez speaks during a debate at Family Health Center of San Diego's Spirit of the Barrio luncheon.

---

*This is the last of a three-part series.*

*Previously: How Barrio Logan's Fumes Pushed David Alvarez into Politics*

*(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/16/how-barrio-logans-fumes-pushed-david-alvarez-into-politics/>) and On City Council, Alvarez*

*Took Up Anti-Establishment Cause*

*(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/17/on-city-council-alvarez-took-up-anti-establishment-cause/>).*

It was Christmastime and Rachael Ortiz's Barrio Station nonprofit received a \$100 donation for a needy family to buy gifts. Ortiz thought of the Alvarezes, a poor family from Mexico that had just moved in down the block from the community center she ran. A few weeks later, Ortiz knocked on Alvarez's door again, this time with a job offer. Barrio Station needed a janitor, and the father, Jose Alvarez, had told Ortiz he was a hard worker.

Jose Alvarez took the job and for the next quarter-century he was a janitor and handyman at the Barrio Station community center. When he retired, Ortiz and Barrio Station gave him a gold-plated watch.

Barrio Station was part of the lives of Jose Alvarez's kids. David Alvarez, now a Democratic City Councilman, spent much of his free time there growing up. A photo of it appears near the beginning of a video David Alvarez

produced (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OkwW1uK8ryY>) to introduce his mayoral candidacy.

Yet the fond feelings Ortiz has for David Alvarez's father don't extend to David.

"He sold us out totally," Ortiz said.

In September, Alvarez made a deal (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/11/alvarez-faulconer-emerge-in-last-minute-fight-over-barrio-logan-plan/>) to resolve Barrio Logan's most intractable problem, one he's fought since he's been a teenager. Tow yards and chrome plating shops reside next door to homes and apartment complexes, and the blueprint for the neighborhood's future growth is supposed to slowly create a buffer between the two.

But the bargain Alvarez struck has now struck back.

Industrialists, backed by Republican mayoral candidate Kevin Faulconer, are collecting signatures to overturn the plan, which a divided City Council finalized (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/18/alvarez-strikes-final-compromise-for-childhood-home/>) this week. The shipbuilders say the deal, which amounts to a dispute over nine blocks in the middle of Barrio Logan (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/03/how-a-nine-block-area-in-barrio-logan-became-a-vast-gulf/>), doesn't do enough to protect their businesses. Ortiz, on the other hand, argues Alvarez already gave up too much residential land to the industry's interests

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/16/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-barrio-logan-community-plan/>).

Alvarez's life story, efforts at a compromise and ultimate stand against industry should have cemented his message that he can bridge the aisle while keeping neighborhood needs at heart. Instead, Alvarez has made multiple interest groups unhappy and could be left with nothing to show for his efforts.

The most direct threat to Alvarez comes from the shipbuilders. Organizers have touted that they already have half the signatures they need to force the issue to the ballot (<http://www.utsandiego.com/news/2013/Oct/11/barrio-logan-community-plan-referendum/>). If the plan is overturned, the old mix of industrial and residential zoning would remain intact.

Alvarez has said he's given up enough already (<http://www.kpbs.org/news/2013/oct/04/barrio-logan-referendum-kicks/>). Diane Takvorian, who heads the Environmental Health Coalition and is a longtime Alvarez ally, didn't love the deal the councilman worked out but supported it because she thought it would resolve the issue. She understands why people like Ortiz might be upset at the loss of residential land, especially since it seems to have made no difference to the shipbuilders.

But Takvorian said she can't imagine that the situation alone led Ortiz to spurn Alvarez and endorse one of his rivals, former Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher.

Despite her longtime association with Alvarez's family, Ortiz has never supported Alvarez's during his political career. She backed Alvarez's opponent, Felipe Hueso, in the 2010 Council race, and remains a big ally of Felipe's younger brother Ben, a state senator and Alvarez's predecessor on the Council. Ben Hueso has made no secret of his distaste for Alvarez (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2010/11/16/council-prez-goes-on-the-defensive-over-hires/>), and has endorsed Fletcher, too. Alvarez sees Ortiz's opposition in that context.

"She's a very political individual," Alvarez said. "She's been around a long time and she's very clever about how she states different positions."

Indeed, the candidate Ortiz endorsed has been vague and evasive about his ideas for the future of Barrio Logan. Fletcher hasn't come out in favor of either the industry or Ortiz's vision.

At a recent debate in Barrio Logan (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/27/the-faulconer-alvarez-debate-alliance/>), Fletcher suggested that not enough work went into the plan's development, and that he could strike a deal that made everyone happy.

Alvarez got angry. He grew up here, Alvarez told the crowd. Barrio Logan, he said, had been left behind, neglected and mistreated, and just because shipbuilders have a lot of money doesn't mean they know what's best for the neighborhood. Alvarez said he'd spent endless hours trying to reach a compromise.

“Nobody,” Alvarez said, “knows this community better than I do.”

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/>)

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org>) *Voice of San Diego* (<http://voiceofsandiego.org>) is a nonprofit that depends on you, our readers. Please donate

(<http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/donate/>) to keep the service strong. Click here

([http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/support\\_us/about\\_us/#funding](http://www.voiceofsandiego.org/support_us/about_us/#funding)) to find out more about our supporters and how we operate independently.

**Value investigative reporting? Support it.**

**Donate Now.**

**(<https://co.clickandpledge.com/sp/d1/default.aspx?wid=63596>)**

♥ SHARE AND REALTIDBITS WILL DONATE \$1

Like Tweet Email



San Diego County Taxpayers Association  
www.sdcta.org



**SDCTA Mayoral Debate**  
Wednesday, October 30th  
Wyndham San Diego Bayside Hotel

**Liam Dillon**

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/author/dillonliam/>)



Liam Dillon is a news reporter for Voice of San Diego. He covers how regular people interact with local government. What should he write about next? Please contact him directly at [liam.dillon@voiceofsandiego.org](mailto:liam.dillon@voiceofsandiego.org) (<mailto:liam.dillon@voiceofsandiego.org>) or 619.550.5663.

**281**  
Comments

**790**  
Posts

Login (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/sign-in-sign-up/?return=http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/18/alvarezs-signature-deal-could-come-back-to-haunt-him/>)

