

What the Barrio Logan Signature-Gatherers Are Saying

BY: ANDREW KEATTS
([HTTP://VOICEOFSANDIEGO.ORG/AUTHOR/ANDREWKEATTS/](http://voiceofsandiego.org/author/andrewkeatts/))

CONNECT

OCTOBER 22, 2013 | COMMENTS (7)
Andrew Keatts

Send an email

(<mailto:andrew.keatts@voiceofsandiego.org>)



Photo by Sam Hodgson

A view of the NASSCO shipyards beyond a school bus passing through Barrio Logan.

There's been a lot of talk about what the folks tasked with gathering enough signatures from city residents to put the new Barrio Logan community plan (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/16/everything-you-need-to-know-about-the-barrio-logan-community-plan/>) to a citywide vote are telling normal people to help coax them into signing the petition.

I figured I'd go do some grocery shopping and let the signature-gatherers give me their pitch as I returned to my car.

Opponents of Barrio Logan's new outline for growth, led by the shipbuilding industry and some of its suppliers located in the neighborhood, need to collect almost 34,000 valid signatures by Nov. 1.

They announced almost two weeks ago they were off to a fast start, with 17,000 signatures collected and almost three weeks to go. But qualifying an issue for a citywide vote is a tall task, and plenty of well funded efforts have come up short in recent years.

I started at the Whole Foods in Hillcrest, where I was approached by a guy named Colby from Burbank who said he and all his friends were "like musician-political junkies" who travel the country collecting signatures whenever they don't have a full schedule of gigs.

He's paid by a company called Goldstein Ostic & Associates ("it's a direct-democracy firm, not Republican or Democrat") who has put him up in a hotel through the collection process.

In 2012, Goldstein Ostic was paid more than \$200,000 (<http://cal-access.ss.ca.gov/Campaign/Committees/Detail.aspx?id=1343629&session=2011&view=expenditures>) to collect signatures for Prop. 38, the alternative proposal to Gov. Jerry Brown's successful 2012 tax increase. The firm has also recently worked with a Los Angeles-based UNITE hotel workers union, and a campaign committee opposed to Republican Assemblyman Tim Donnelly.

The new plan for Barrio Logan, Colby told me, would rezone an area currently used to clean Navy ships, and put hundreds of waterfront, luxury condos in its place.

Residents think the shipbuilding industry is harmful to their health, he said, "but they knew where they were moving, so that's sort of like moving into an airport flight path and complaining that planes are too loud," he said.

San Diego gets most of its money from the Navy, and the new plan would encourage the Navy to leave, he told me.

"It's basically the first step to shutting down the shipyard," he said.

Twice, I asked if the plan would explicitly take area currently used to repair or clean ships and turn it into waterfront condos. And twice he said, "Yeah, exactly."

But that's not what's happening with the new Barrio Logan plan.

Really, what's in dispute within the plan (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/03/how-a-nine-block-area-in-barrio-logan-became-a-vast-gulf/>) is its attempt to separate industrial and residential areas by creating a commercial buffer in a small area northeast of the shipyard. Homes are explicitly banned (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/18/alvarez-strikes-final-compromise-for-childhood-home/>) from being built in that area – meaning no waterfront condos.

That area's currently occupied by an array of industrial companies, many of which service the shipyard in one way or another. One of those companies, for instance, is Cal Marine Cleaning, which does mechanical cleaning for the three major shipbuilding companies, BAE Systems, Continental Maritime of San Diego and General Dynamics NASSCO.

To Colby's credit, opponents of the plan *have* made the impossible-to-verify (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/09/13/why-the-maritime-industry-cares-so-much-about-the-barrio-logan-plan/>) claim that the buffer is the first step toward ousting the shipbuilding industry, just as it previously left San Francisco and Long Beach.

Even if the buffer area bars homes, opponents say, it nonetheless creates a commercial area catering to residents, not industry. The logic goes: First, the city re-zones the land for commercial. Then a few years from now, it

rezones it again to allow residents. Then, new residents start complaining about the industrial activity at the port, and it's just a matter of time before they're forced out. It's a slippery slope argument they're making.

I thanked him and said I wasn't comfortable signing anything until I read into the issue more. He said that was fine, and told me to Google "Barrio Logan shipyard shutdown."

Then I drove to the Vons in North Park, and encountered a middle-aged woman named Patricia. It was her first day collecting signatures, she said.

Her explanation was much closer to what's really happening.

A lot of kids in Barrio Logan were coming down with asthma, she said, so the city tried to create a separation between industry and residents so kids would be farther away from the shipbuilding industry.

"So, are they building condos next to the shipbuilding industry then?" I asked, devoid of subtlety.

"No, not at all," she said. "They're just separating residential and industrial. ... But that's the next step," she said, laughing.

Again, I said I wasn't comfortable signing anything until I looked into the issue more.

"Remember, you're not voting for anything," she said. "You're just putting it on the ballot so everyone can have their say."

Still, I said I'd rather not sign, and asked if she had any information I could take with me. She said she couldn't give me anything, but showed me this flyer (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/barriosiggatherers.pdf>):



Protect Our Jobs

Protect Our Jobs is a coalition of more than 5,000 residents, shipyard workers and maritime organizations that have come together to oppose the City Council's Barrio Logan Community Plan Update by **giving the voters the power to protect:**

- The ability of the U.S. NAVY to continue to have its ships built and repaired in San Diego
- **46,000 good-paying jobs**
- **\$14 billion in annual revenue to the region**

San Diego's shipyards have formed the backbone of the region's maritime industry for 50 years. The U.S. NAVY relies on these local shipyards and their suppliers to build and repair a major portion of its fleet, and the ship building industry is expected to expand dramatically in the near future with the U.S. NAVY shifting many of its assets to the Pacific Southwest.

This **flawed plan** represents a dangerous first step toward the elimination of San Diego's shipyards and sends the wrong message to the NAVY. Similar situations in San Francisco and Long Beach resulted in the NAVY leaving, leading to significant job loss. The **flaws** in the Logan Community Plan Update as passed by the City Council:

- This **defective plan** sends the wrong message to the NAVY that adding **500 new homes in Barrio Logan is more important than the 46,000 jobs provided by the maritime industry.**
- This **faulty plan** imposes unnecessary, costly and time consuming conditions on Shipyard suppliers that are virtually impossible to obtain.
- This **unsound plan** would force the rezoning of more than 20 key vendors and suppliers, limiting their ability to expand and potentially forcing them to relocate.
- This **misguided plan** would cut in half the amount of industrial land west of the shipyards – land that is needed for businesses serving the shipyards, particularly given the projected growth of the ship building industry.

Partial List of Supporters

- BAE Systems
- Barrio Logan Smart Growth Coalition
- Continental Maritime of San Diego
- General Dynamics NASSCO
- Industrial Environmental Association
- International Association of Machinists
- International Brotherhood of Boilermakers
- Pacific Ship Repair
- Performance Contracting Inc.
- Port of San Diego Ship Repair Association
- San Diego Port Tenants Association
- San Diego Gas & Electric
- San Diego Regional Chamber of Commerce
- San Diego Regional EDC
- US Joiner LLC
- Working Waterfront Group

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/BarrioSigGatherers.jpg>)

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/barriosiggatherers.pdf>)

Aside from making thorough use of the Thesaurus entry for “flawed” (“this defective plan,” “this faulty plan,” “this unsound plan,” “this misguided plan”), the flyer makes a case with a mix of misleading facts and accurate descriptions of the issue.

For one, it starts with the claim that qualifying for the ballot would let voters protect 46,000 jobs and \$14 billion in annual revenue.

Those numbers, from an industry-supported study in 2012

([http://www.sandiegobusiness.org/sites/default/files/San%20Diego%20Maritime%](http://www.sandiegobusiness.org/sites/default/files/San%20Diego%20Maritime%20Industry%20Study%202012.pdf) do not refer specifically to Barrio Logan's shipbuilders. They describe the size of the entire maritime industry — fishing, shipping, shipbuilding, maritime-focused construction, etc.

According to that same study, Barrio Logan's shipyard employs roughly 14,000 people. That's nothing to sniff at, but it's not 46,000.

Also, the plan does make way for roughly 500 new homes, but none of them are allowed in the disputed buffer area. And those opposed to the plan have said they're fine with everything in the plan —including the 500 new homes — so long as they get one last concession.

The flyer does, in its second bullet point, accurately describe the last remaining difference of opinion.

As envisioned by the adopted plan, maritime suppliers would need to secure a conditional-use permit if they want to open up in the commercial buffer area. Obtaining that type of permit would allow community input, meaning the community could conceivably say no each time.

The flyer's third bullet also says the new plan would rezone the suppliers currently operating there, limiting their ability to expand and

“potentially forcing them to relocate.”

That’s accurate too, although the “potentially” is doing a lot of work. Existing businesses would be able to remain as long as they don’t vacate their property for two consecutive years. They could expand up to 20 percent – and even more than 20 percent, if they get a conditional-use permit.

Nonetheless, it’s fair to say the goal of the rezoning is to eventually relocate those businesses.

The bullet point says there are 20 businesses whose properties are being re-zoned. There’s been some discrepancy about which businesses count as maritime-oriented, but the city’s report

(http://www.sandiego.gov/planning/community/cpu/barriologan/pdf/bl_pc_presentation) to the Planning Commission had a list of 25 industrial and maritime businesses in areas that would be re-zoned.

Four of those are located in an area zoned for the creation of a high-density residential area, a proposal that isn’t opposed by the shipbuilding industry. Even in their preferred plan, those businesses would still be re-zoned.

There are 18 businesses listed that are in or near the proposed buffer area. However, city staff has said some of those businesses would likely be considered in line with what’s allowed to operate there, without securing a conditional-use permit. That includes Cal Marine Cleaning, whose owner has been one of the most vocal opponents of the plan.

The City Council, and Councilwoman Lorie Zapf, who chairs the land use and housing committee, has discussed holding another hearing to clarify what type of businesses would fall under the commercial designation, and which ones would need to get a conditional-use permit.

And the final bullet, which says the plan cuts in half

(<http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/08/20/fact-check-industrial-land-in-barrio-logan/>) the industrial land outside the actual shipyard, is accurate.

(<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) 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>)

♥ THANKS TO REALTIDBITS

Like

Tweet

Email



Learn the views of the top City of San Diego mayoral candidates on top issues facing this city. Register today!

Andrew Keatts

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



I'm Andrew Keatts, a reporter for Voice of San Diego. Please contact me if you'd like at andrew.keatts@voiceofsandiego.org (<mailto:andrew.keatts@voiceofsandiego.org>) or 619.325.0529.

158
Comments

123
Posts

Login (<http://voiceofsandiego.org/sign-in-sign-up/?return=http://voiceofsandiego.org/2013/10/22/what-the-barrio-logan-signature-gatherers-are-saying/>)

