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Barrio Logan Community Plan Highlights Split Between San Diego Mayoral Hopefuls



Photo by [Sandhya Dirks](#) / KPBS

Above: City Councilman and mayoral candidate Kevin Faulconer speaks to the media outside an Albertsons in Allied Gardens.

Wednesday, November 13, 2013

By [Sandhya Dirks](#)

Outside the Albertsons grocery store on Waring Road, the campaign to overturn the [Barrio Logan community plan](#) is still ongoing. At a folding table cluttered with clipboards and petition pages, two signature-gatherers were working on getting a second round of 40,000 signatures to force the full plan to the ballot in a referendum.

“Stop a moment and sign here to save the shipyards,” one of the signature-gatherers called out to a passing shopper. “We think we should put this on the ballot and let the voters decide.”

The signature-gatherers wouldn’t give their names to KPBS and they weren’t exactly being upfront about the community plan when they repeatedly told passers-by “they want to build condos and force out the

shipyards.”

The new zoning would in fact prevent the building of any residential buildings in the contested buffer zone; it would specifically disallow building condominiums.

Mayoral candidate and City Councilman [Kevin Faulconer](#) showed up to support the signature gatherers' efforts. He opposes the San Diego City Council's plan and believes voters should have a chance to overturn it in a referendum.

Asked whether he was concerned that the signature gatherers might be spreading misinformation, Faulconer said, “I think it's clear that this signature drive is all about protecting these jobs, protecting the ship repair industry. It says so very clearly on the petition about what is at stake.”

Faulconer said that the plan doesn't need to allow for condos to spring up to pose a threat to the shipyards and lucrative Navy contracts. He said the plan would severely limit the growth of businesses that supply the shipyards, forcing new business to go through a permitting process to get a conditional-use permit, or C.U.P.

Faulconer said getting that conditional-use permit would be onerous and prohibitive.

“The right decision was to make sure they are allowed to locate there by right, just like they have been for decades,” he said. “The wrong decision was to make them go through a bureaucratic process down at City Hall that puts those jobs in jeopardy.”

But supporters of the rezoning say a permitting process is a small price to pay for industry oversight in a neighborhood that has seen more than its fair share of pollution. They say regulating the kinds of chemicals shipyard suppliers can store in the buffer zone protects residents.

That's a view shared by City Councilman [David Alvarez](#). Alvarez, who is also running for mayor, is a native of Barrio Logan and fought to push the plan through council. He said for too long [the city allowed pollution to run rampant](#).

“We don't want an oversaturation of polluters who are releasing toxic chemicals,” he said.

Alvarez said it is about finding balance between the needs of the community and industry demands “in a healthy, environmentally speaking, manner.” That is why, he said, the city council voted to have ultimate oversight when it comes to what businesses set up shop between the ports and residential homes.

Alvarez also said forcing shipyard supply businesses to get a C.U.P. would not cause the shipyards to crumble, noting that all businesses currently there would be grandfathered in and allowed to expand up to 20 percent.

He says the campaign to overturn the council vote is being waged with outsider money intent on protecting the status quo for a moneyed special interest at the expense of residents.

“What I'm concerned with,” he said, “is that one industry with a lot of money can threaten what a community process brought forward and control what happens in every community.”

While Faulconer stumped for the shipyards, casting himself as the candidate who will best protect jobs in San Diego, Alvarez appeared at a press conference with former San Diego Councilwoman Donna Frye. Alvarez has made no secret that he looks to Frye as a model for outsider, progressive governance.

Frye and Alvarez met to announce their plans to make the city charter more transparent and open. They are drafting amendments they hope to put on the ballot in June 2014, the same ballot which could also hold the fate of the Barrio Logan community plan.

Comments



Ken | yesterday at 9:53 a.m. — 1 day ago

Does anyone else recall a community plan in San Diego drawing as much well funded opposition before?



sara_k | yesterday at 10:17 a.m. — 1 day ago

Supplemental background information:

At the July 11 Planning Commission Hearing, a Shipyards/maritime industry representative told the City what they wanted in a presentation:

“...that’s Harbor Drive right there and...that’s proposed to be Community Commercial and I think, by and large, that’s a pretty good place to have Community Commercial because residential is not allowed there and maritime businesses can operate.”

“What is the area that we have a difference of opinion on with staff is that secondary along Main Street that Lara is talking [about] today.

That’s predominantly industrial today, and we believe that it should maintain *at least* non-residential. We’re not saying it has to be industrial per se, but it should not be allowed for residential.”

“This compromise represents a significant shift from our original position, which advocated not rezoning any industrial land in Barrio Logan at all.”

So, they actually got what they stated they wanted. The Barrio Logan Community Plan that was adopted was a compromise that didn’t please everybody, because that’s what “compromise” means. Residents didn’t get everything they wanted, and the shipyards didn’t get everything they wanted.

It seems they’ve reverted to their original position, which is: “no change.” They want to not only keep doing the existing businesses (which will continue operating by right), but grow additional polluting businesses without a permit process.

Barrio Logan has three times the asthma sickness as the rest of San Diego County due to these kinds of operations, which is why the community plan is important. The air will become healthier over time, unless the shipyards get their way with this expensive referendum.



[CaliforniaDefender](#) | yesterday at 5:05 p.m. — 17 hours, 29 minutes ago

I'm surprised that a few "activists" are pushing to eliminate ship building jobs via the community plan.

Many residents are employed at the shipyards and if that income is lost, the community will become even poorer and blighted than it already is.

They won't even have the resources to paint violent revolutionary images on the undersides of bridges.



[CallieSD](#) | yesterday at 6:42 p.m. — 15 hours, 51 minutes ago

Signature gatherers in Clairemont were also saying that this had to do with a plan to build condominiums. That caught my attention as I hadn't heard that part of the plan (which makes sense, since it doesn't exist!)



[Alaheljen](#) | yesterday at 7:50 p.m. — 14 hours, 44 minutes ago

I both live in Barrio Logan, and work at the shipyards. Don't flatter yourselves politicians, the Navy's stated position is neutral. In other words, the shipyards aren't going anywhere, any time soon. Remember sequestration? Laughable, we will end up with more ships ported here. Making company's pay for their oversight is just the "cost of doing business"

I love living here in Barrio, what I fear most is turning this neighborhood in to an East Village clone. Sadly, in time, the old neighborhood will give way to developer money, but till then let keep it a nice, healthy, place to live.