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David Alvarez Brokers Compromise on Siting of Winter Homeless Shelter

by [Brent E. Beltrán](#) on October 9, 2014 · [0 comments](#)

in [Desde la Logan](#)



Barrio Logan to host this year but won't be considered in

2016

By Brent E. Beltrán

With his back against the wall, and a community within his district upset with the continued siting of the winter shelter in their neighborhood and the negative impact it brings, Councilmember David Alvarez stepped up and brokered a compromise.

Though the shelter will return this coming winter the City Council voted unanimously (with Councilmember Marti Emerald absent due to health reasons) with Mr. Alvarez's motion to not have the location at Newton Avenue and 16th Street in Barrio Logan considered by the Housing Commission in 2016.

It's rare that Republican City Councilmembers vote on anything positive for Barrio Logan. This compromise is one of the few times in recent memory and a welcome sight. It also shows Mr. Alvarez's ability to get deals done when needed.

Though groups like the [Barrio Logan Association](#), along with residents, property owners and business owners who spoke at the meeting, would have preferred that the shelter not return at all they are thankful for the guarantee that the shelter would be located elsewhere in 2016.

As reported by [10News](#):

“Officials with the San Diego Housing Commission, which runs homeless and affordable housing programs for the city, said the winter shelter program would be operated differently this time.

To eliminate the large number of people who line up for admission on a given night, the shelter will only accept those referred by outside social service agencies or the San Diego police Homeless Outreach Team, according to the commission. Catholic Charities will perform case management work with each shelter resident with the aim of getting them into more permanent housing.

The commission representatives also said those accepted into the shelter will only be allowed to stay for up to 45 days.

The City Council voted unanimously to support Alvarez's motion to approve the staff recommendation of authorizing a \$225,000 expenditure to get the tent running by the beginning of next month, but also to no longer consider the Barrio Logan site for next year.

Other provisions outlined by the councilman, and approved by his colleagues, were for the Housing Commission and city staff to work to find a permanent, indoor shelter; to stage three public meetings in Barrio Logan by the end of March to address community concerns; for patrols around the surrounding neighborhood to be enhanced; and for the future of the winter shelter program to be discussed at a meeting of the council's Public Safety and Livable Neighborhoods Committee early next year.”

As a resident of Barrio Logan and the Secretary of the Barrio Logan Association I was pleasantly surprised that Councilmember Alvarez was able to broker that compromise. Going into the meeting I wasn't expecting anything positive to come out.

The compromise was an 11th hour deal that was finalized after the City Council heard gripping testimony from those in opposition to the siting. Without the community speaking up the compromise would not have been possible.

Speakers against the shelter being placed in Barrio Logan included longtime activist Connie Zuñiga, BLA Vice President Rudolph Pimentel, BLA members Marcos Aguilera and Georgette Gomez, business owner Mark Steele, resident Maria Martinez, and myself (see my presentation below) among other Barrio Logan stakeholders.

A staff member from Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez's office, whose district includes Barrio Logan, read a letter expressing her solidarity with the community and asked the City Council to choose a different location for the shelter.

At no point did any of those that spoke in opposition to the siting of the shelter, oppose the City opening a

temporary winter homeless shelter. The opposition was against the continued placement of the shelter in Barrio Logan. Homelessness and the temporary winter shelter are citywide issues. Not just something that Barrio Logan should have to deal with. All City Council districts and communities need to do their fair share.

Barrio Logan is one of the most marginalized communities in San Diego. It's a community that has dealt with a large amount of disrespect and neglect by the City and big business over the years, and as recently as this year after the dirty defeat of the Barrio Logan Community Plan. To keep placing the shelter in Logan would have just been another insult added to the long list.

Barrio Logan has stepped up for many years on this issue. Now it's time for other communities. Thanks to David Alvarez's compromise it looks like we'll finally get a reprieve after this winter.

The following is my presentation to the San Diego City Council on October 7, 2014 regarding the siting of the Single Adult Emergency Winter Shelter in Barrio Logan

Good afternoon. First I'd like to say that I'm the Secretary of the Barrio Logan Association but I am not here today to speak on behalf of the BLA. These are my own opinions that I'm expressing.

A few months ago I stood before you, alongside fellow BLA board member Marcos Aguilera, asking this Council to not approve the extension of the so-called "temporary" winter homeless shelter. Council President Gloria and Councilperson Emerald gave positive feedback to what we had to say that day even though the continued siting of the shelter was a done deal. They spoke of how there needs to be an alternative location since Barrio Logan has hosted the site for many years.

Now, a few months later, I'm back before you to demand an end to the continued siting of this so-called temporary shelter (it does not seem temporary to those of us in Barrio Logan). Barrio Logan has done its fair share to house the tent yet other communities have not. It's fine time that other neighborhoods step up to host the site and deal with the impacts, with minimal mitigation by the City, that we've had to deal with.

First came the shipyards and their suppliers and the toxins therein. Then came the freeway and the bridge and the health hazards from the vehicles that use them.

We have semi-trucks rumbling down residential streets next to schools. Train whistles obnoxiously blowing between midnight and 5am. Navy helicopters flying above us on the daily with thunderous noise echoing off our streets. Shipyard workers and Navy personnel hog up parking spaces on residential streets and parks. Comic-Con and Padres fans use the neighborhood as a parking lot. MTS wants to build a potentially hazardous gas station near two schools in the community.

And even the Republican candidate for the 53rd Congressional District, as [reported](#) in the UT, has the stupid idea to build a small nuclear generating power plant adjacent to the Coronado Bridge (which means Barrio Logan since we all know Coronado wouldn't stand for such a thing).

Yet the Housing Commission, the Mayor and this City Council wants to, once again, site the temporary winter shelter here amongst everything else we have to deal with and against the wishes of Barrio Logan residents, property owners and businesses? If I was the conspiracy theory type I'd think it was a concerted plan. But I'm not. So I think it comes down to this body, the Mayor and the Housing Commission not really caring about what goes on in my community. And that needs to end.

I'm calling on the majority of this Council to stand with Barrio Logan like you tried to do with our community plan. I'm not asking the minority here to do so because I have no faith in them to do what is right for my community. They've shown time and time again their unwillingness to help us out. But I still have a little faith left in the majority here to help out a marginalized community like my Barrio Logan.

Councilmembers Alvarez, Gloria, Lightner, Emerald (who is not here but whom I hear is doing better after her recent diagnosis), Cole, and Harris please do us a solid and vote against siting the shelter again in Barrio Logan. Show Barrio Logan that you care about us, that you are willing to go against the Housing Commission's poor recommendation, that you are willing to stand with the people of La Logan. Do what is right. Reject Barrio Logan as the location for the shelter. Give my community a small victory in the face of the many defeats that this City has given us over the years. Stand with us and say ¡Ya Basta! Say, Enough!

Barrio Logan deserves better and we demand better!

¡Viva Barrio Logan!

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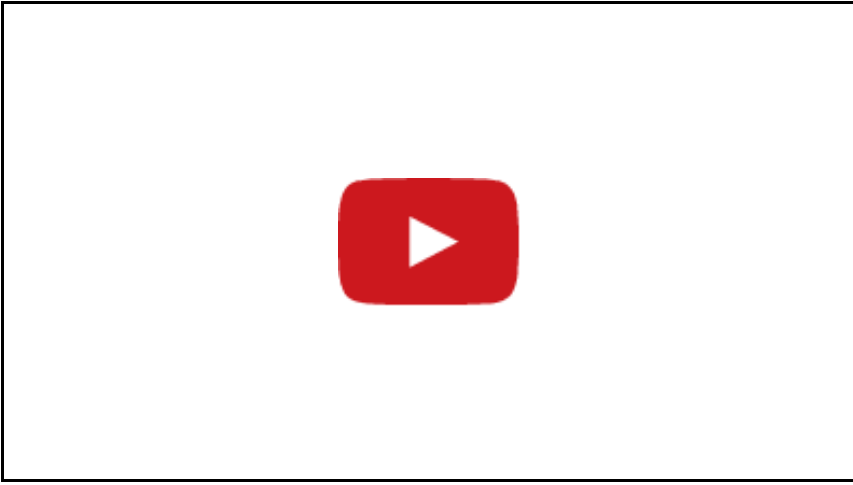
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