

San Diego Reader



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- Mark Steele (center) flanked by business community supporters of Barrio Logan community plan update
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Who doesn't not want hazardous chemicals?

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Pro-business advocates assemble to endorse Barrio Logan plan update

By [Dave Rice](#), May 29, 2014

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A group of local professionals convened in Barrio Logan on morning to express support for local ballot Propositions B and C, which would collectively allow for the implementation of the Barrio Logan Community plan update, which was developed over a period of several years and approved by the city council before [the local maritime industry initiated a citywide referendum in hopes of overturning the plan.](#)

"The barrio took five years to work out compromises [with the shipyards]. And those compromises have resulted in a plan that's actually very conservative," said Mark Steele, owner of the MW Steele Group architecture and planning firm, addressing media from a loft above his firm's Barrio Logan office.

Steele qualifies his opinion on the plan's business-friendly nature through experience working on similar plan updates in the neighborhoods of Southeast, Encanto, Golden Hill, and South Park.

"Everyone needs to recognize throughout the city that when they vote on B and C, they're voting on our community," Steele continued. Those who support keeping the plan as developed by local stakeholders have warned that overturning it would open other neighborhoods up to such challenges, weakening the rights of residents citywide to have a say in how their neighborhoods are developed.

Mel Katz, previous chair of the pro-business San Diego Chamber of Commerce, said the plan update, as it stands, offers businesses a significant improvement over the existing plan.

"[The update] really proves that the economy and the environment are compatible and can work together," said Katz. "It strikes a great balance between economic development, job protection, and public health."

Katz went on to [reiterate several B/C backer points](#), reminding the assembled media that the update calls for a net increase in industrially zoned land as well as projected area employment. Both statements are refuted by proposition detractors, who claim the update's implementation will push the maritime industry (and the Navy) out of San Diego, causing tens of thousands of lost jobs.

He also defended the "buffer zone" included in the plan, which would eventually phase out industrial and residential use along several blocks in favor of commercial zoning between the bayfront shipyards and the neighborhood immediately east.

"It's basically saying that companies that use hazardous chemicals shouldn't be located next door to schools, homes, or parks. I know I want that to be the case in my community, and the people in Barrio Logan need it here, too," Katz added.

Both Steele and Katz joined councilmembers Todd Gloria and David Alvarez in signing a statement of support for the measures that was presented to voters in official registrar voter guides.

[Onetime political staffer, lobbyist, and pro-business advocate](#) Richard Ledford also spoke and signed a letter of endorsement for the measures.

"In the business community, the number-one issue for us is making sure we have consistency, making sure there's certainty in the rules and regulations that govern our activities," Ledford said. "B and C offer that certainty that the business community wants in a couple of areas. First it gives you a land-use plan you can live with.... If you have a business in the zone where you may not be allowed in the future, you're allowed to be there under these provisions for as long as you're living.

"Another certainty it creates is this buffer zone. For those that remember [Fat City and Solar Turbines](#), you'll remember the business community was very forceful about demanding, and actually getting, a buffer between industrial and residential properties. I would submit to you that this plan does exactly what the business community is asking for."

Propositions B and C will go before voters next Tuesday, June 3.

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