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Yes on Props B, C: Protect health of Barrio Logan's children

By Georgette Gomez & Margaret Godshalk 5 P.M. MAY 3, 2014

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Propositions B and C. The zoning plan will improve children's health

community of vibrant culture and economic importance.

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heavy industrial use facilities to be built right next to schools,

playgrounds, and homes. Auto body and plating shops operate next

door to homes and schools, more than 2 million cubic feet of toxic and

flammable gases are stored, and diesel trucks drive to industries on the

same streets children walk to get to school. It's no wonder that kids in

Barrio Logan are three times more likely to have an asthma-related ER

visit than kids in the rest of the county.

One of San Diego's busiest freeways, I-5, runs through the

neighborhood and industrial shipyards border the community. These

are all sources of pollution but the freeway and shipyards are here to

stay.

So, instead of giving up and consigning our children to poor health, the

residents of Barrio Logan, the city of San Diego, and key stakeholders

— including industry — took five years to consider all points of view

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and generate an all-around solution that can change conditions. The changes are common-sense land-use zoning, currently an outdated mess created in 1978, that prohibits homes and schools to locate right

next to polluting industrial facilities, like all other communities in San Diego. The City Council approved the plan after careful consideration and many hours of testimony from all interested stakeholders.

So what does a Yes vote for B and C do? In simple terms, it approves the plan that rezones the area to provide a buffer zone between the heavy industrial and chemical-use facilities and the rest of the neighborhood. That means no polluting companies or homes can locate in the buffer in the future. Over time and as the businesses change ownership they will likely phase out and new businesses will move in that comply with the new zoning. All industrial uses are protected by citywide policy, the Legal Non-Conforming Use policy, which “grandfathers” existing uses allowing current businesses to continue operating unless they choose to move or are closed for two consecutive years; then the new business must comply with the new rules.

Opponents are using scare tactics like saying that thousands of jobs will be lost. In early April, the Superior Court found that these claims are “misleading” and that the Shipyard Association violated the California Election Code. The facts are that the official impact report for the plan projects that nearly 5,000 new jobs will be created because of the plan due to the increase on prime industrial and commercial acreage. No jobs will be lost.

Repeat: No jobs will be lost. And schoolchildren will not have to walk to school past more businesses such as Praxair on Newton Avenue. Praxair stores over 2 million pounds of toxic, flammable and pressurized gases on site. A Praxair facility in St. Louis had a huge explosion and fire in 2005, caused initially by a leak of propylene gas. It spread to other gas cylinders and ultimately took five hours to put out. The Praxair facility directly across the street from homes in Barrio Logan also stocks propylene gas. Barrio Logan also hosts extremely hazardous materials such as the chromic acid flake used at Carlson & Beauloye, a metal plater directly next door to Barrio Station, where youth gather every afternoon. Smaller businesses can also have accidents, such as the explosion and fire that happened just last month at a similar auto body shop in National City. In that incident, residents were startled to hear explosions very close to their homes, followed by a fire and toxic fumes that lingered some 12 hours. Barrio Logan has many large and small industries, which together harbor millions of pounds of hazardous materials and wastes, and also generate diesel truck traffic.

This plan makes sense. We have a zoning mess, and the problem is only getting worse. Just last week, California EPA issued a report that ranked California communities on their pollution burdens, and the Barrio Logan area came out first in our region. Let’s start to address this by approving the plan that separates families and toxic air, and that means Yes on B and C for children’s health.

**WE'RE
HERE
TO SAY
YES!**

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GOING ON NOW!

Ken Grody 