Morning Report: National City Struggles to Untangle Homes and Polluting Businesses
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The gnarliest fights in local land use are over where to put industrial businesses that could endanger nearby residents. Unsurprisingly, it's a burden that disproportionately falls on lower-income and minority communities.

Twelve years ago, National City adopted a policy intended to fix it.
Not only did it change local zoning, prohibiting new industrial businesses from opening too close to homes and schools, it also created a way for the city to identify the businesses that were most likely to cause a problem and force them to relocate.

But the bold policy so far hasn’t amounted to much bold action. The city has forced just two businesses to move since it adopted the ordinance. And the entire effort is now effectively on pause, because the city can’t find a consultant in its price range to lead the charge.

The Environmental Health Coalition, a nonprofit advocacy group that pushed for the ordinance in the first place, is getting frustrated with the lack of results. City officials think they've still made incremental progress. And a representative for the business community supports the goal, but thinks the process needs to improve.

The other high-profile example of incompatible uses is in Barrio Logan. The San Diego City Council tried to adopt a plan to permanently separate industrial and residential land back in 2013, but the shipbuilding industry successfully persuaded citywide voters to kill that plan.

City planners last year toyed with re-starting the planning process to find a long-term solution in Barrio Logan, but ran into the same opposition that made it so hard to solve anything five years ago.

It’s unclear if the city still intends to take on that fight.