EHC, Shipyard Union Workers Hold Press Conference to Urge City Council to Take Barrio Logan Referendum to Ballot

Groups highlight need to protect democracy against recent trend of business financing referendums to overturn City Council votes

SAN DIEGO, December 16, 2013 – At a press conference held today at the home of Barrio Logan resident Hector Villegas, Environmental Health Coalition (EHC) joined forces with leaders from labor unions, housing organizations and the community to ask City Council to send the Barrio Logan Community Plan referendum to the citywide ballot in June.

Today the shipyard workers union spoke publicly about its support of the plan and the economic health of the shipyard industry. The union's backing deepens EHC's long-time message that the community-approved plan will protect both community health and workforce prosperity.

"For years, we have been misled to believe that we could have good jobs or healthy neighborhoods – this plan proves we can have both," said Bobby Godinez from Boilermakers, Local 1998. "And that's why shipyard workers, who make up 80 percent of jobs on the working waterfront, whole heartedly support the community plan."

Godinez will also share his message at tomorrow's San Diego City Council meeting when elected officials will vote on the two industry-funded signature-gathering campaigns to overturn a City Council-approved community plan update for Barrio Logan. After a five-year planning process, which included participation of all community stakeholders, the plan received unanimous approval from the San Diego Planning Commission in July and a full council approval on September 17 and again on October 15. Refusing to accept the Council's direction, the shipbuilding industry funded the two referendums, making false claims to gather signatures and silence the democratic process.

"It's clear that the greedy executives running these out-of-state corporations don't care about the folks living and working in Barrio Logan," said Georgette Gomez, associate director of EHC. "We want City Council to stay the course by sending the Barrio Logan Community Plan to a citywide vote and telling the industry they can't buy democracy in San Diego."

Speakers at the press conference also warned that the referendum process is heading a dangerous direction, noting another recently launched, business-funded referendum aimed at overturning a City Council approval of a Workforce Housing Offset to support affordable housing in San Diego.
"Unfortunately the opponents of the Barrio Logan plan have chosen to take democracy into their own hands. This in not unique," said Susan Riggs, executive director for San Diego Housing Federation. "In fact, the same interests are currently working to repeal an action by the City Council that would create local revenues for much-needed affordable housing for families in Barrio Logan and the other 125,000 families working at or below the federal poverty line." EHC and leaders from the unions, housing organizations and community will speak during public comment at Tuesday's City Council hearing at 2 p.m.

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