

- [Home](#)
- [About](#)
- [Staff](#)
- [Contact](#)
- [Terms of Use](#)
- [Calendar](#)
- [Subscribe!](#)
- [Site Navigation](#)
- [OB Rag](#)

[San Diego Free Press](#)

- [Activism](#)
 - [Battle for Barrio Logan](#)
 - [Environment](#)
 - [Immigration](#)
- [Business](#)
 - [Labor](#)
- [Columns](#)
 - [City Heights: Up Close & Personal](#)
 - [Desde la Logan](#)
 - [Editor's Picks](#)
 - [El Machete Illustrated](#)
 - [Femanisto](#)
 - [Field of View](#)
 - [From the Soul](#)
 - [Geo-Poetic Spaces](#)
 - [History of Neighborhood House](#)
 - [Junco's Jabs](#)
 - [Looking Back at the Week](#)
 - [NumbersRunner](#)
 - [Readers Write](#)
 - [SD for Free](#)
 - [Sex in San Diego](#)
 - [The Dove and the Cockerel](#)
 - [The Starting Line](#)
 - [Tio Emilio](#)
 - [Under the Perfect Sun](#)
 - [Who Runs San Diego?](#)
- [Culture](#)
 - [Arts](#)
 - [Books & Poetry](#)
 - [Cartoons](#)
 - [Film & Theater](#)
 - [Food & Drink](#)
 - [Marijuana](#)
 - [Music](#)
 - [Religion](#)
 - [Sports](#)
 - [Travel](#)

- [Economy](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Government](#)
 - [Military](#)
 - [War and Peace](#)
- [Health](#)
- [Media](#)
 - [Encore](#)
- [Mexico](#)
- [Politics](#)
 - [2014 June Primary](#)
 - [Courts, Justice](#)
 - [Faulconer vs Alvarez](#)
 - [Gender](#)
 - [Nov 2014 Election](#)
 - [Voter Guide 2012](#)
 - [Voter Guide Special Election](#)
- [Satire](#)

A One-on-One Conversation with District 8 Councilman David Alvarez

by [Brent E. Beltrán](#) on September 18, 2014 · [7 comments](#)

in [Desde la Logan](#), [Editor's Picks](#)



In this first of two parts the Councilman discusses the minimum wage, upgrades to Chicano Park, Barrio Art Crawl and creating a place to be on Sunday

afternoons in Barrio Logan

By Brent E. Beltrán

I woke up on Monday morning and, as I usually do, checked my email first (then Twitter and Facebook). In my inbox was an email from the [Raise Up San Diego](#) campaign stating that they were holding a press conference with David Alvarez at Chicano Park at 10am.

Feeling compelled to attend a presser across the street from where I lived I went about my morning business of getting my son Dino ready for preschool and walked him the two blocks to Perkins Elementary.

With him starting school I've been on a walking kick to get rid of some of the "sympathy" weight I gained in solidarity with my wife during the pregnancy. From 9am to about 10am I'd walk from Barrio Logan down Harbor Dr. — dodging traffic since there are no sidewalks — to the Convention Center stairs and then back to my barrio.

Knowing that I'd be dripping sweat, from not only walking but from the muggy weather we've been having, I thought I'd hang in the background of the presser once I arrived to Chicano Park. That was not to be the case.

Seeing me the Councilman came over to say hello. As I continued to sweat from the heat and walk we engaged in some chit chat about our kids going to school and then I asked him if at some point, when he has the time, if we can sit down and have a one-on-one conversation about all things Barrio Logan. He was interested and it was just a matter of scheduling it.

Cool, I thought. I had wanted to have an in depth interview with him since he was running for Mayor but never asked. It's all about seizing the opportunity. He was in front of me so I asked.

Apparently the Raise Up campaign had also scheduled a press conference at 10:30am at City Hall with Councilwoman Myrtle Cole and Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez and pretty much all of the media decided to attend that instead of the one at Chicano Park.



Councilman David Alvarez flanked by Raise Up San Diego activists Jessica Cordova and Crystal Paige.

Recognizing the dearth of reporters, there was only a Spanish media journalist and myself, they did a

quick photo-op and the presser was over. The Spanish media reporter took off for the other one leaving me alone, still sweating, with my Councilman.

Since I'm all about seizing journalistic opportunities when they arise I asked him, "How about that interview?" He graciously accepted and we sat down on a nearby bench and talked about the minimum wage, how it affects communities in District 8, and the interests opposed to it. We then we talked about various things Barrio Logan.

Here is the first part of the interview with some minor editing.

Brent E. Beltrán: Similar interests are going against the minimum wage [raise], that went against your campaign, that went against the community plan here in Barrio Logan.

David Alvarez: And similar tactics.

BEB: Using similar tactics. So this issue of the minimum wage affects this community as much, if not more, than any other community in San Diego. So what are your thoughts on how it affects residents here in Barrio Logan and other communities in District 8.

DA: It's a very disturbing trend that we're seeing that the council, who gets elected by the public to make decisions, makes decisions and then big moneyed interests overturn those decisions. This goes back to the [Phil Thalheimer decision](#). [He's] a big Republican here in San Diego that sued the city to allow more money in politics. It goes to the Supreme Court decision [in Citizens United]. So we're seeing this trend of just ton of more money from big, in this case, corporate interests that are undoing the will of the people. Because Council gets elected by the people to make those decisions. It's really disturbing.

And the fact that the last two referendums you referenced, it's really issues about people who are low income, people who live in communities that have been marginalized and fear tactics that are being used to scare others into believing things that are not true. You've got freedom of speech, right? Anybody can say anything they want. But when you start lying that is what turns people off about politics. It just been lie after lie on Barrio Logan, it was lies on minimum wage. I don't blame people for feeling just fed up with politics because of what we see the other side doing.

And like you mentioned, in this case, it's a Latino community who benefited from the Barrio Logan Community Plan Update. It was minority communities who would benefit more from an increase in the minimum wage and paid sick leave. It's an attack on working people, on people who are struggling, and people who are just trying to get by and try to be successful and creating an even bigger divide between those that have and those that don't have. That's what I take away from the two instances of both Barrio Logan and this minimum wage.

BEB: Todd Gloria has stood out really well with this issue with the minimum wage. You're speaking out very well. I've seen Ed Harris out there, Myrtle Cole. It seems like the Democrats are pretty strong on this issue. It's just the intransigence of the other party.

DA: Yes. It's definitely Republicans: It's individuals, the Republican Council, the Republican Mayor, the Republican establishment of this city, whose controlled this city for such a long time. We're united in this because we believe that people should be given opportunities.

I grew up in this neighborhood. My parents had minimum wage jobs. Back then in the eighties you could survive even in a very poor neighborhood like this one on minimum wage. That's not the case anymore. Now if you don't have two jobs then you're probably aren't making it or you're probably living with a couple other families. As I find to be the case. You most definitely can't focus on getting your kids to do

well in school. You can't focus on buying a house, achieving the American Dream, starting a business. Those are not even options for you if you're on minimum wage today.

BEB: Let's move on and talk about a few other things. Some upgrades are coming to Chicano Park. A bathroom. Has the funding been secured or will it eventually get fully secured?

DA: We're on that track. I think we've got the money for it. It's like everything else that has always bothered me about the City the fact that it takes so long. To be honest when I got to the City Council we did not have the money to build this bathroom. This is now a regional park which means that Chicano Park is eligible for citywide funding. It's a special pot of money. It gives us a little bit of an advantage over regular parks, rightfully so because Chicano Park is such an important park. It is a regional park. It's now a national historic place. So now we actually have the money. Now it's gotta go through design. It's gotta go through building. Everything just takes a long time. At least we've got the money. That's the first challenge in government projects. And then comes the design, the input from the community, we want to make sure the community knows what's going on, and then the construction. We're still a couple years away.

BEB: Best case scenario would be about two years?

DA: Best case scenario is two years. But we're probably more like three or four.

BEB: There are going to be some [recreational improvements](#) added to Chicano Park. Hopefully some skater amenities for that section of the park down there which has become [a de facto skate park](#). Which I think is great though some people may not like it. It's being used by people throughout San Diego. It's become world renown as a skater haven. This will add to it.

DA: Like every other public amenity, public facility and especially parks, if you are actually using it, if there is activity, if there are people on the site then that'll attract more people and people will feel safe to come here. You are successful in keeping away the nuisances that you don't want in public spaces like parks. The more you can activate a park, like we are doing with the grants, then the better it is for the community so they feel that it's a park they can go out to like any other park. And it's becoming that. You see it more and more. There're a lot of young people, a lot of kids around here. So let's give them something they can enjoy in a positive way. So that's what we are trying to do with these amenities.

In addition, there's going to be some handball editions. That place is always full. That's unique. This is the only park that has that. So that's kind of cool. And then as part of the study we're going to figure out if we can light up the murals. That [Barrio Art Crawl](#) was very inspirational. As someone who has seen these murals my whole life I had never seen them at night. And they look even more beautiful if they're lit up at night. There's a study that's going to be done. The money is not there to light it up but we're going to figure out if we can. And then how much it costs and then go after the money for them.

BEB: That's great news. You mentioned the [Barrio Art Crawl](#). These art spaces opening up in Barrio Logan, these grassroots art spaces have revitalized the community somewhat. It's not an official city project. There's no grant funding coming in for it. It's just people doing it themselves. So how do you feel about this and maybe how can your office and the rest of the city help promote this even more?

DA: I think government is always behind the 8 Ball on this, on everything. As someone who spends a lot of time here and lives here I get to enjoy what's happening naturally. It's evolving on its own. When that happens, and I've said this from the beginning, you've got to have grassroots movements in the communities. There are opportunities in government but government is not going to support something that doesn't exist. Now we have this art movement that exists. Now you see people getting organized. And so now it is more sophisticated and so now that's where government can come in, and not do

everything for the arts organizations — and that's not what they want — but how do we come in and sort of fill in the gaps? How do we get to the next level as a community.

The Art Crawl is a great example of that. We had the Art Crawl and it was organized in a grassroots manner. So now we think towards the future. That worked out so well. What can we do to add to that? Can we find some grants from, for example, the Arts and Culture Commission to do some more nighttime activity? Can we do a festival in the evening? An idea that I had, and I have to talk to the [\[Chicano Park\] Steering Committee](#) about this but, can we expand Chicano Park [Day] to be more than just until sunset? Can we do an evening part of Chicano Park Day? I think that would be really fascinating. You start to see things opening up as possibilities.

BEB: More art is coming. It's coming all the time in various forms. Myself, with Georgette Gomez, is organizing a concert series on behalf of the [Barrio Logan Association](#). That's coming up at the [Mercado del Barrio Plaza](#). That's another addition to this community. It's going to be all local bands performing. Hopefully the average Northgate shopper on a Sunday afternoon is going to see it, come out, and enjoy some music.

DA: I was out there the Sunday that [Family Health Center](#) did a little thing at the plaza. It was really successful. I've been telling Martha [Zapata] in my office that we gotta to do a concert series at the plaza. A lot of the roots of the people that live here go back to Mexico. On Sunday afternoons people go hang out at the plaza. They'd listen to acts or walk around and chitchat. I think we need to activate space like that here. This is a perfect community to do that. I'm really pleased that that is happening. I hope that we can come in and with the Association and my office can go get some more funds and try to enhance whatever you guys are trying to do. Make it the place to be. That's what I always imagined. Let's have a place to be on a Sunday afternoon for the families that are here.

In Part 2 of the interview we talk about the Emergency Winter Homeless Shelter and its impact on Barrio Logan, the Family Health Center's interest in creating an outpatient mental health facility on City land on the corner of National Ave. and Sampson St., semi-trucks rumbling through Barrio Logan streets, and the Bayshore Bikeway extension from 32nd St. to Park Blvd.

Tagged as: [Barrio Logan](#)



6

{ 7 comments... read them below or [add one](#) }



[John Lawrence](#) [September 18, 2014 at 11:02 am](#)

Congrats, Brent, for snagging an interview with a real live Council member. Maybe David Alvarez will make it into the Mayor's office on the next go around. Hope so.

[Reply](#)



[Frank Gormlie](#) [September 18, 2014 at 11:53 am](#)

Yea, also another congrats – you too made local google news. (Doug's post and yours)

[Reply](#)



bob dorn [September 18, 2014 at 12:17 pm](#)

What a pleasure to read candid and clearly put ideas from a local politician. David Alvarez manages to make sense AND be upbeat.

[Reply](#)



Howard Kahn [September 19, 2014 at 9:16 am](#)

I am grateful for the process that allows the citizens of San Diego to bring issues to the ballot when the council oversteps.

[Reply](#)



bob dorn [September 19, 2014 at 9:54 am](#)

Whom did the Council step on, or over, in the case of the minimum wage increase, Howard?

[Reply](#)



Howard Kahn [September 19, 2014 at 10:41 am](#)

Bob, When Kevin Faulconer was elected Mayor, his council seat was not given to someone who represented his constituency. If it was, the Mayor's veto would not have been overridden. This issue should have been put to the ballot to begin with, and now it will. I am grateful for that.

[Reply](#)



bob dorn [September 19, 2014 at 2:05 pm](#)

Howard, we have a representative form of government. It does not pass laws by quizzing the electorate, at least it doesn't do that until Big Money shows up and pays Sig Whores to gather signatures throwing out a minimum wage law in favor of a direct vote on Big Money's version of wage levels. In this case, the referendum has made you grateful.

I'm just guessing now, but I can't help thinking you really don't want us rabble to be voting on everything you hold dear. Direct democracy would probably make you feel uncomfortable if everyone could vote on subsidized housing for the poor and homeless, subsidies to homeowners for solar installation, establishing public food banks, public works jobs, public health clinics and other legislation aimed at altering the distribution of well being more equitably.

[Reply](#)

Leave a Comment

Name *

E-mail *

Website

Submit

Older Article: [San Diego Really Has It All](#)

Newer Article: [As Study Shows Poverty Rising in San Diego, Campaign to Shame Restaurant Industry Over Wages Emerges](#)



- **Support the SDFP**

DONATE!

Make a non tax deductible donation with Paypal

- **Keep in Touch with SDFP**



- **Get SDFP Updates by Email**


Enter your email address to get daily updates via email:

Delivered by [FeedBurner](#)

See our [Subscriptions Page](#) for more options

- **Freeps and Friends Tweet**

Freeps
Tweets from a list by
SDFreePress.org
Freeps & Friends



United Taxi Workers 9m
@UTWSDSanDiego


UTWSD stands in solidarity with our brave champion Marti Emerald. Our drivers and community are eternally...
fb.me/1zxBYwwck



UFCW Local 135 15m
@UFCW135

Donate new, unwrapped toys or gift cards for Union Families for SD&IC Labor Council & the United Way.
pic.twitter.com/Elk6tHFiKi

Retweeted by anabel



Holiday Toy Drive
Together we can make the Holidays Brighter

Please drop off donations no later than Monday, December 15 at

UFCW 135
Mission Valley
2001 Camino Del Rio South
San Diego, CA 92108
or
North County
323 A South Rancho Santa Fe Road
San Marcos, CA 92078

- **Communities: Click the name to view the archives**

[Balboa Park](#) [Barrio Logan](#) [Carlsbad](#) [Chula Vista](#) [City Heights](#) [Coronado](#) [Del Mar](#) [Downtown](#) [downtown San Diego](#) [El Cajon](#) [Encinitas](#) [Escondido](#) [Golden Hill](#) [Hillcrest](#) [Imperial Beach](#) [La Jolla](#) [La Mesa](#) [Logan Heights](#) [Mission Bay](#) [Mission Beach](#) [Mission Valley](#) [National City](#) [Normal Heights](#) [North County](#) [North Park](#) [Ocean Beach](#) [Oceanside](#) [Old Town](#) [Otay Mesa](#) [Pacific Beach](#) [Point Loma](#) [Poway](#) [Ramona](#) [San Diego at Large](#) [San Onofre](#) [Santee](#) [San Ysidro](#) [Sherman Heights](#) [Solana Beach](#) [Southeast San Diego](#) [South Park](#) [Temecula](#) [Tijuana](#) [UCSD](#) [University City](#)

- **Over at OB Rag:**

- [“OB Time” – Shrooming in Joshua Tree](#)
The Old OB Hippie Speaks - Writes Shrooming in Joshua Tree is one of my most favorite things to do....
- [Friends of OB Library Install the Bench](#)
It's finally happened! A brand new bench was just installed in front of the OB Library. The Friends of the...
- [“OB Needs You!” Community Clean-Up Sat. Nov. 22nd](#)
There is an OB community clean-up happening Saturday, November 22nd. Sponsored by the Cleaner Streets Initiative OB, it will start...
- [Keeping Up With OB's Slightly Stoopid in New Hampshire](#)
Editor: Keeping up with OB's iconic band, Slightly Stoopid, here's a review from a New Hampshire online mag. They played...

 [Subscribe to this Feed](#)



[Sitemap](#) | [Contact](#) | [About Us](#) | [Terms of Use](#)

Copyright 2010-2013 SanDiegoFreePress.org | [Web Hosting](#) By Arvixe | Code is Poetry