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Art brought to Barrio Logan battle

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"It's a fight between corporate moneyed interests and the regular people."

By [Dave Rice, June 2, 2014](#)

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Barrio Logan residents and other San Diegans packed the Chicano Arts Gallery on Logan Avenue Saturday evening, May 31. Showing was *Until our Last Breath*, a one-day art exhibit organized by [longtime Barrio activist Brent Beltrán](#) in support of the passage of Propositions B and C. If passed, the initiatives would allow for the implementation of a community plan update developed by locals, approved by the city council, and opposed by a big-money campaign largely funded by the area's shipyards.



"Artists wanted an opportunity to express themselves when it comes to the community plan, Props B and C, and the general pollution that's been ongoing in our neighborhood," said Beltrán. "I've curated shows in the past, so it's something I thought I could do, and the idea was to put it together right before the election, to hopefully at least get a few extra voters out."

Inside the gallery, people milled about, observing walls packed with paintings and murals depicting the challenges of living in [the most polluted neighborhood in San Diego County](#). A portrait of Beltrán's young son, Dino, wearing a gas mask, greeted visitors at the front entry.

"What you see is a variety of not just artistic styles, but a variety of approaches to conveying what pollution means in this community," Beltrán continued.

Several speakers, including Beltrán, addressed an overflow crowd gathered on the sidewalk outside the gallery, where visitors also took in a contribution too large for the gallery to house — a giant totem carved from an unearthed tree trunk.

"You walk around and you see industrial properties right next to people's homes, around the elementary school — that's something that's unique to this community, something you don't see anywhere else," said Georgette Gomez, representing the Environmental Health Coalition, which has been supporting the plan update [even before it was placed on a citywide ballot](#).



City councilman David Alvarez, flanked by Georgette Gomez and exhibit curator Brent Beltrán

Onetime mayoral candidate and area city councilman David Alvarez also addressed the crowd. Alvarez has been a vocal supporter of the community plan throughout the campaign to overturn it.

"You can see through a lot of the artwork what this fight is all about — and it goes beyond Barrio Logan," Alvarez said. "It's a fight between corporate moneyed interests and the regular people. Unfortunately, [the opposition] is spending probably 20, 30, 40 times as much money to get their side heard. It's our duty to stand up and say, 'This isn't right.' What they're trying to do in buying this election should not be allowed.

"Never have I witnessed a campaign where there's [so much money being spent on one side](#), and so little on another. This is an uphill battle, and we're going to need to push hard to get up that hill."

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