

Angler's Conservation Network • Asbury Park Complete Streets • American Littoral Society • Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling • Clean Ocean Action • Citizens for Oceanfront Preservation • Deal Lake Commission • New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance • Senator Vin Gopal • Surfrider Foundation Jersey Shore

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SAVE ASBURY'S WATERFRONT Demands Transparency, Inclusion, Environmental Protection in Asbury Park

Asbury Park, NJ – Asbury Park residents, civic and social justice leaders, as well as local, state and national environmental groups, in concert with State legislators spoke out strongly against developer iStar Financial's current plans on the City's northern waterfront. The Phase 5 Infrastructure plans call to pave "Fisherman's Lot," a flood-prone public space between the Atlantic Ocean and Deal Lake, and to construct a 15-foot pathway instead of refurbishing the current 64-foot wide boardwalk. These infrastructure projects set the stage for an exclusive pool and beach club being advertised as an amenity for buyers in the Asbury Ocean Club residences iStar is building at 1101 Ocean Avenue, and also for a highly contested townhome development known as Bradley Cove.

Asbury resident and Save Asbury's Waterfront organizer Kathleen Mumma stated, "We want iStar to immediately stop its ongoing construction that is based on outdated plans approved in 2004. Asbury Park has undergone tremendous change in 15 years and iStar's current development initiatives on the North End no longer suit our City. Instead, we want iStar to use its innovation and vast resources to develop transparent, forward-looking plans for Asbury's waterfront."

Asbury resident and Save Asbury's Waterfront organizer Dr. Madeline Monaco said raised concerns about accessibility and inclusion in a diverse City. Monaco lamented, "We see people every day, many from the west side of town, who already have to wait until 5:00pm to visit the beach because they can't afford a beach badge, and who also don't feel welcomed in the gentrified part of town. Our citizens will feel even more out of place and blocked from entering the waterfront because there will be a huge, elite, walled club blocking the beach."

Kay Harris, a third-generation Asbury Park resident and boardwalk business owner, said while she is not opposed to the city moving forward, her biggest concern is gentrification, and she advocates for mindful development. Harris said the current development conjures up memories of the racial segregation she experienced as a child at the pool club formally located on the same site zoned for iStar's proposed pool club. Harris remarked, "Many of you will remember the Monte Carlo pool, that you have fond memories of. My memories aren't necessarily so fond, because in my lifetime, I was denied access."

Joyce Grant, Founder of Citizens for Oceanfront Preservation and Asbury Towers resident, said that we must not accept the current and future construction on land protected by the Public Trust Doctrine as a done deal. iStar's north end construction "is not for the common good, not for the preservation of our public beaches, ocean, lakes, parks and land. It is not for the health and wellbeing of our economically, inclusive, and racially diverse residents."

Civil rights activist Reverend Gil Caldwell foresees that the boardwalk reconstruction plans will set the stage for racial and economic segregation. Reverend Caldwell is "concerned about the injustice that this [development] represents," and quoted his mentor, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Pam Lamberton, 18-year resident and member of Asbury Park Complete Streets, is concerned about the lack of transparency from iStar and the City. She stated, "If elected officials are not kept apprised of the actions of City employees, those employees are not doing their jobs."

Diana Pittet, Asbury resident and Surfrider volunteer, underscored, “It doesn’t reflect this post-Superstorm Sandy world that we live in, a world that now has new environmental regulations, new flood maps and new stormwater runoff regulations as well.” iStar’s plans, which were approved by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection in September 2018, are “grandfathered in” under 2004 environmental regulations.

Kerry Margaret Butch, 20-year resident, former Executive Director of the Asbury Park Consortium that advocated for citizen participation in the 2002 plan, says it’s time for iStar to agree to renegotiate the City’s 2002 Waterfront Redevelopment Plan. “In 2002, an inept city council, in partnership with a corrupt city manager, brokered a bad deal. Asbury was sold for a song, and the planning process began. But never in earnest.”

Avery Grant, Board Member of the New Jersey Environmental Justice Alliance stated, “This is a fragile coastline and you saw what happened in Sandy because of this [overdevelopment].” Grant also spoke to the importance of inclusion, stating “we fight to keep a diverse community because we love our neighbors and people, and this project doesn’t take that into account.”

Assemblyman Eric Houghtaling, a lifelong resident of nearby Neptune, is concerned about the effects of development on Deal Lake, New Jersey’s largest coastal lake. “As a member of the Deal Lake Commission, that area [of the Fisherman’s Lot] is our buffer. Our Deal Lake is very fragile.” Houghtaling also expressed concern about social inequality created by the proposed developments. “We cannot create a town of have and have-nots. We cannot let that happen here in Asbury Park.”

Senator Vin Gopal said it is not reasonable to hold the City of Asbury Park responsible for a bad deal in 2002. Senator Gopal called out iStar, citing lack of transparency and not hiring local unions for its construction of 1101 Ocean Avenue. “They are not doing good by this City, they are not doing good by the people.”

Don Brockel, lifelong resident on Deal Lake and Chairman of the Deal Lake Commission said, “Infrastructure is everything and our fragile infrastructure along the ocean is being changed.” Brockel said in the 6 years he’s been head of the Commission, he’s never been notified of the details of any plans regarding waterfront redevelopment. He continued, “We would like to have this stopped until we can get our engineers to look at it.”

Captain Paul Eidman of Angler’s Conservation Network spoke on behalf of those who can’t talk – the animals. “The north end of this beach represents a lot more than a pool, a beach and a boardwalk. It represents a mini ecosystem at the base of Deal Lake.” He explained that Deal Lake is a historical spawning ground for river herring and he is concerned iStar plans will extend the parking lot to the existing flume where the fish access the Lake. Eidman said Deal Lake paid \$7 million for the flume in 2005 specifically so the fish could access Deal Lake.

Tim Dillingham, the Executive Director of the American Littoral Society, a coastal conservation organization based in Sandy Hook said, “Our people and our waterfront. We stand up against this ill-thought development. We have to be concerned about vulnerability, accessibility, public trust. We have an opportunity to rethink about how we live along this coastline, so that we make ourselves less vulnerable to storms and bring back wildlife. A 2002 or 2004 permit is not the last word on anything. If iStar wants to be here a long time, there are opportunities to renegotiate the City’s plan.”

Cindy Zipf, the Executive Director of Clean Ocean Action, remarked emphatically that Asbury’s waterfront “belongs not just to us but to the marine life. There’s no possible way that iStar didn’t get the memo that developing on a beach is a bad idea after Superstorm Sandy. The fact they are coming back and pursuing this reckless development that the community has been fighting for over 20 years is just unacceptable.”

Watch a 32 minutes of the press conference at <https://www.facebook.com/SurfriderJSC/videos/261600124552374/>

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