



Save Asbury's Waterfront Celebrates the Rebuilding of the Historic Boardwalk on the North End The Asbury Park Community Wins Round One

Asbury Park, NJ:

Asbury Park recently unveiled its reconstructed north end boardwalk. A result of good old-fashioned grassroots organizing, the north end of Asbury Park's boardwalk was rebuilt reflecting the public's access and environmental concerns. Save Asbury's Waterfront (SAW) is celebrating the huge win for residents and visitors, specifically because the city kept the original historic 60-foot width of the boardwalk instead of the planned 15-foot meandering pathway originally agreed upon in the almost 20-year-old waterfront redevelopment plan. The rebuild provides added amenities such as brand-new bathrooms, showers, beach entryways that are ADA accessible, considerations for storm water management and ultimately, the rejection of a meandering pathway that would have given a more private feel to the public beach.

Save Asbury's Waterfront (SAW), the driving force behind the changes, is comprised of new and longtime residents, community leaders, environmental groups and Asbury Park historians. The group worked in unison with legislators and was able to inspire hundreds of local residents to attend city council meetings, planning board meetings and rallies to voice their concerns and demand their input be heard in the north end boardwalk project.

Catherine Murphy, SAW founding member, explains, "The final design was a result of a charrette held in February 2019 where the community gave their input on various models and their feedback ultimately resulted in an environmentally sound design created by T&M Associates that the whole community advocated for."

Still, SAW continues to fight to preserve the oceanfront for everyone, not just the wealthy. The 2002 Waterfront Redevelopment Plan includes plans for a private beach club that was advertised as an amenity for iStar's Asbury Ocean Club condominium buyers.

Former Asbury Park resident and civil rights leader Reverend Gil Caldwell remarked, "My wife and I were pleased with the emergence of SAW who were ready to rise up and deal with justice issues, there was real significance with their concern not only with the development but their concern with social justice issues." SAW argues that iStar's private pool club proposal for the Ocean Avenue lot between 6th and 7th Avenues is laden with access, equity and environmental issues.

Many residents and community leaders, like Nina Summerlin of Westside Citizens United, believe that instead of focusing on projects that will further divide the community, we should be focusing on residents' concerns and needs and meet those projects first in order to raise our entire community.

The half-acre of land in front of Asbury Tower, also remains a fight for preservation as it is one of the few remaining parcels of undeveloped waterfront land in Monmouth county. Istar currently owns the development rights to this area and has plans to build Bradley Cove, a townhome development adjacent to the sewer plant right and a low- and moderate-income senior building. In 2019, the city was exploring purchasing the development rights from iStar and was pursuing an appraisal of the land but no further mention of this process has been stated.

SAW founder Kathleen Mumma stated, "The new boardwalk, parking lot and dunes are the beginning of what residents and visitors have advocated for this area for years - an oceanfront park that ensures a beach and boardwalk for all.

I can envision this park expanding its footprint if we continue objecting to outdated development plans like private pool club and Bradley Cove. I encourage everyone to come visit and enjoy your new oceanfront park - park in the free lot or lock your bike to the new bike racks."

"I am very pleased to see the final outcome of that location, they've done a great job. We are appreciative of the developers for considering the input from the community and putting that input into the final project," stated Kay Harris, the owner of the Galleria on the boardwalk and President of the Asbury Park Historical Society. "My issue has always been about access and inclusion."

Tim Dillingham, Executive Director of the American Littoral Society and a fierce ally of SAW stated, "the two biggest issues for us (ALS) were making sure the boardwalk was protecting public access and not contributing to the gentrification and the ability of residents and people of the state getting onto the beach. The beach is the biggest piece of public trust and property, and it's a constant fight to preserve it for the community. The boardwalk redesign was a win that came from their (SAW and community) demands that the boardwalk and beach not be privatized. It is a fight for Asbury's future - physically what the city looks like and how the citizens and public live there." And, he praised SAW and supporters, "Democracy only works when people participate so for their work in getting the community involved, they really deserve respect. The mayor of Asbury also should receive respect for his commitment to preserving public space." Dillingham went on to explain that they call certain mayors who are open to preserving the coast "champions of the coast" and Mayor Moor is one of them.

Madeline Monaco, founding member of SAW reveled in the win and shared, "I am ecstatic to see the north end boardwalk rebuilt according to the desires of residents, and not driven by the interests of corporate developers. We worked diligently and collaboratively with Asbury Park's City Council and architects to bring this project to fruition. We will continue our critical efforts to prevent irresponsible development on Asbury Park's waterfront, specifically focused now on preventing the private pool, and the townhouse development planned to be built in front of the Senior Tower."

SAW encourages the community to stay involved and committed to ensure there is protected public space and an inclusive, forward thinking Asbury Park for all. For more information, contact Kathleen Mumma at kathleenmumma@gmail.com.

Save Asbury's Waterfront (SAW) has accomplished so much to ensure preservation of precious undeveloped land in the north end. There is still more to be done to prevent inappropriate development, and you can help with remaining legal expenses that have enabled us to get this far, and onward.

Please contribute to our fundraising effort: <https://gf.me/u/ygsf7k>