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Friday, May 15, 2026 • PressofAtlanticCity.com

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DEVELOPERS ON AC: GET IN WHILE IT'S HOT



WAYNE PARRY, STAFF WRITER

Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small Sr. speaks Thursday at a development conference at the Island Waterpark at Showboat Resort Atlantic City. "I want you to invest in Atlantic City," he said. "You have me as an undying advocate, someone who will stand shoulder to shoulder to make sure your project gets built."

Now's the time to buy cheap and build big, Blatstein and others say

WAYNE PARRY Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — Developers who have invested millions of dollars in housing and other projects in Atlantic City say the market offers unrivaled opportunities, citing open land and comparatively lower prices than elsewhere on the Jersey Shore.

At a forum on the state of the Atlantic City real estate market Thursday, sponsored by the commercial real estate marketing firm Bisnow, developers promoted Atlantic City as a great place to do business in a market that is attracting some top-name builders.

"You're going to hear five words from me in a few years: 'It's over; it's too late,'" said developer Bart Blatstein, who moderated the event held at his Island Waterpark at the Showboat Resort Atlantic City. "You're going to miss out."

From multibillion-dollar residential and entertainment projects to single-family homes, the city is experiencing a spate

of development that, for the first time in decades, has drawn some of the state's largest builders to the seaside resort, including K. Hovnanian and the Kushner Companies.

Builders, officials and legal experts agree on several reasons:

- Comparatively cheap land, and lots of it
- Free beaches and an established casino industry
- Intensive state oversight and support, with development incentives, coupled with a business-friendly city administration
- Continuation of a trend that started with the COVID-19 pandemic of remote work away from big cities. Development begins and ends with available land. Atlantic City has 1,000 vacant lots, Liz Terenik, executive director of the Chelsea Economic Development Corp. and a former city planner, said in October.

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VIEW: For a video interview with Bart Blatstein from the development conference, point your smartphone camera at the QR code, then tap the link. NEWSVU

Council introduces budget with hike

WAYNE PARRY Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — City Council introduced a municipal budget Wednesday that calls for a 2% tax increase, saying they were forced to do so by the state instead of adopting the slight tax decrease that Mayor Marty Small Sr.'s administration had engineered.

It marked the beginning of a more uncertain period for the city's finances, with it still under state oversight and substantial control, and with a host of financial challenges being considered by people beyond the city's control.

Those include the potential end of investment alternative tax payments that once went to the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority but had been going to the municipal government in recent years to help with its finances.

And even greater potential problems could be on the horizon. The first of three new New York City casinos began operating this month with the addition of live table games to the Resorts World casino in Queens.

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Health panel backs casino smoking ban

WAYNE PARRY Staff Writer

ATLANTIC CITY — New Jersey's Public Health Council wants the state health commissioner to take "urgent action" to close a loophole in the state's indoor smoking law that exempts Atlantic City's casinos.

The advisory board voted earlier this week to recommend a resolution to New Jersey Health Commissioner Raymond Washington calling for action to address the casino smoking loophole.

The state health department is being sued by casino workers seeking to end smoking in Atlantic City's nine casinos, one of two parallel tracks smoking foes are using to try to end the practice.

The other is a so-far fruitless effort in the state Legislature to pass a smoking ban.

Paul Roman, vice chairman of the council, cited the long, unresolved history of the issue.

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Cape seeking permission to build housing at airport

FAA: No.

DAN GROTE Staff Writer

LOWER TOWNSHIP — Cape May County has asked the agency that operates the county airport to submit a formal application to the Federal Aviation Administration seeking approval to build rental housing on the property, despite previous notification from the FAA that it would not do so.

The county says it wants to develop townhomes on 18 acres of the nearly 1,000-acre airport property on Breakwater Road that would be reserved exclusively for Coast Guard personnel; other military members supporting airport operations; airport maintenance; police, fire and EMS personnel; and other personnel needed for national security, disaster response and emergency operations.

"This is a plan the county has been actively developing and working towards for the better part of a year in anticipation of the Coast Guard's expanding mission and growing needs for proximate workforce housing," county Commissioner Director Leonard Desiderio said Wednesday in a statement.

Desiderio suggested the airport housing would dovetail with plans underway at the U.S. Coast Guard Training Station in Cape May to build new barracks and training facilities. U.S. Rep. Jeff Van Drew, R-2nd, announced this month the issuance of a \$400 million contract to design and construct the new facilities.

According to the county, Cape May was designated a Critical Housing Area by the Coast Guard in June 2025 because of a severe shortage of affordable nearby housing.

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MATTHEW STRABUK, STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cape May County says it wants to build workforce housing for military and first responders on the grounds of the airport in Lower Township.