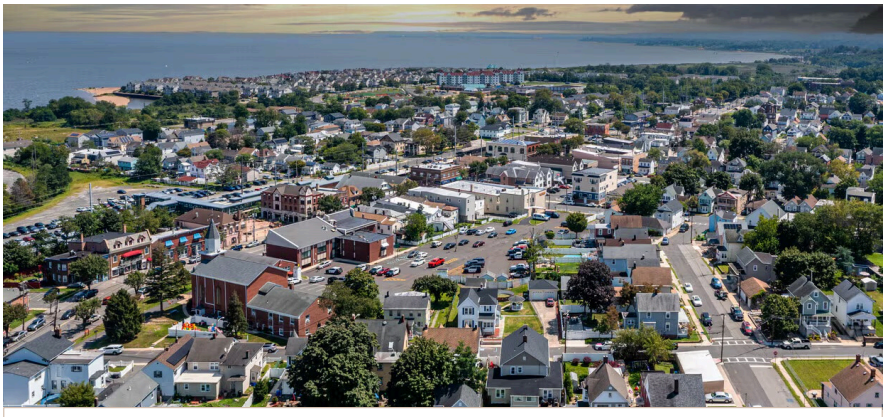
SOUTH AMBOY

A City and Community on the Rise

BY PAT CRADDICK-IRWIN • POP SOCIAL ENTERPRISE, LLC



Aerial View of South Amboy, NJ | Photo Credit: Homes.com



Pat Craddick-Irwin | South Amboy Resident

WHAT DREW US TO SOUTH AMBOY
AND WHY WE STAYED

Four years ago, my husband, John, and I made South Amboy, New Jersey, our home. At first glance, it might have seemed an unlikely destination for two people who had spent much of their adult lives in very different places—from Manhattan's Upper West Side to the more expansive landscape of Colts Neck, New Jersey. Yet almost immediately, there was something about this small waterfront city that captured our attention.

Coming from New York City, we were accustomed to the energy and convenience of urban life—the ability to walk almost everywhere, easy access to transportation, restaurants, museums, and Central Park just steps away, and the constant rhythm of people coming and going. South Amboy offered something different, yet surprisingly familiar. It was walkable and well-connected, with Manhattan within easy reach, but it also offered something increasingly difficult to find in a metropolitan area: the warmth, charm and intimacy of a small town.

Then there was the waterfront—one of the city's most treasured assets and a place where I walk my dogs nearly every weekday before work. There were quiet residential streets, local businesses and neighbors who stopped to say hello. People seemed to genuinely know one another, not simply recognize one another. South Amboy felt welcoming, unpretentious and remarkably accessible. My husband once summed it up in three words: "Nice, quaint and quiet." That description eventually made its way into The New York Times when we were interviewed for a story about South Amboy in 2022.

The longer we lived here, however, the more I began to see beyond the quaintness.

Seeing Beyond the Quaintness

A waterfront city's next chapter comes into view.

For more than 25 years, my professional career has centered on family financial stability and community economic development, so perhaps it was inevitable that I would begin looking at South Amboy through that lens. I saw a city with extraordinary geographic advantages: multiple transportation connections to New York City—including rail, bus and a new ferry terminal—a beautiful waterfront, significant new residential investment and, most importantly, people who cared deeply about where they lived.

My husband and I began talking about what South Amboy could become. Could this small city develop a stronger downtown, destination businesses and greater economic vitality while preserving the character and sense of community that made it special in the first place?

We weren't alone in seeing that potential.

Our first home in South Amboy was Station Bay, one of the city's first new luxury residential developments along the Raritan Bay waterfront. Living there gave us a particularly interesting vantage point. We were part of an influx of newer residents while, at the same time, becoming increasingly connected to people who had called South Amboy home for decades. That experience raised an important question for me: How do you turn new residents into members of a community rather than simply people who live in it?

That question helped inspire the South Amboy Community Engagement & Business Networking event we hosted in 2025 with the help of City Councilman Anthony Conrad. The idea was straightforward: connect residents of Station Bay with three important pillars of the broader South Amboy community—city government, nonprofit organizations and local businesses.

We wanted newer residents to better understand how their city works and encourage them to become civically engaged. We wanted to introduce them to nonprofit organizations where they could volunteer, participate and give back. And we wanted them to meet the entrepreneurs and business owners whose success contributes directly to the economic vitality and character of the city.

What resulted was more than a networking event.



South Amboy Ferry Service



South Amboy Train Station

Residents, elected officials, including the mayor, nonprofit leaders and business owners came together, exchanged ideas and formed relationships. The experience reinforced something I had sensed from the moment we arrived: South Amboy's greatest opportunity lies in connecting its growth to its community.



The City of South Amboy | Photo Credit: Apartments.com



Community Engagement & Business Networking Event — March 2025 at Station Bay



John and Pat Irwin with Mayor Fred Henry and Councilman Anthony Conrad

The Questions Shaping What Comes Next

Community Engagement & Business Networking brought residents, leaders, nonprofits and local businesses together.

Today, that opportunity appears even greater. New residential projects are reshaping parts of the city. New businesses are opening. Homebuyers and outside investors are taking notice. Longtime residents are watching their hometown evolve, while newcomers are discovering a community many may once have driven through—or passed on the train—without giving it a second thought.

Yet growth inevitably brings questions. What kind of development is right for South Amboy? What businesses does the city need? Can increased investment strengthen the community without diminishing its small-town identity? What is attracting people here now—and what will keep them here? And perhaps most importantly, who is helping shape the vision for what South Amboy becomes next?

Those questions became the starting point for this article.

Rather than answer them from my perspective alone, I went around the city and listened. I spoke with longtime and newer residents, business owners, community and city leaders, real estate professionals and investors who are participating in South Amboy's evolution or observing it firsthand. Their perspectives are not identical. Together, they offer a fuller picture of a city experiencing significant change.

This article is not an endorsement of any political party, developer, business, individual or vision for South Amboy. Rather, it is an exploration of a community in motion—where it stands today and what the people who live, work, invest and lead here believe it could become.

After arriving from New York City, I still appreciate the qualities that first attracted us. Four years later, I also see momentum. And across South Amboy, people are asking what that momentum could mean and who will help shape the city's next chapter. That conversation begins with leadership.

"Four years later, I also see momentum."

THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES WITH LEADERSHIP

Leadership Creating Confidence



Anthony Conrad | City Councilman | Mayoral Candidate
Photo Credit: Anthony Conrad

My interview with mayoral candidate and current City Councilman, Anthony Conrad, reinforced a theme that surfaced repeatedly as I explored South Amboy's evolution: growth is most meaningful when the community shares in its benefits.

Conrad approaches the city's future from the perspective of someone whose connection to South Amboy extends well beyond elected office. Over the past two decades, his involvement has included youth sports, the YMCA, the Board of Education, the redevelopment agency, local food pantries and, since 2022, the City Council. Throughout the interview, he returned repeatedly to the importance of bringing residents, businesses, community organizations and government together as the city grows.

What I found particularly noteworthy was his emphasis on balancing economic development with the everyday needs of residents. For Conrad, progress is not measured simply by new construction or private investment. He pointed to public safety, fiscal stability, efficient city services, infrastructure and improved public spaces as essential components of a thriving community.

He also highlighted the role that partnerships beyond South Amboy have played in the city's progress, citing more than $50 million in grant funding secured through relationships with county, state and federal partners. Those funds, he noted, have supported projects ranging from the ferry terminal and Raritan Street pump station to road and sewer improvements, a new fire engine, parks and playgrounds.

When the interview turned to the local economy, Conrad described a vision centered largely on small businesses and a more vibrant downtown. He sees an opportunity for South Amboy to attract a broader mix of restaurants, shops, services and entrepreneurs while continuing to invest in walkable streets, welcoming public spaces and places where residents can gather.

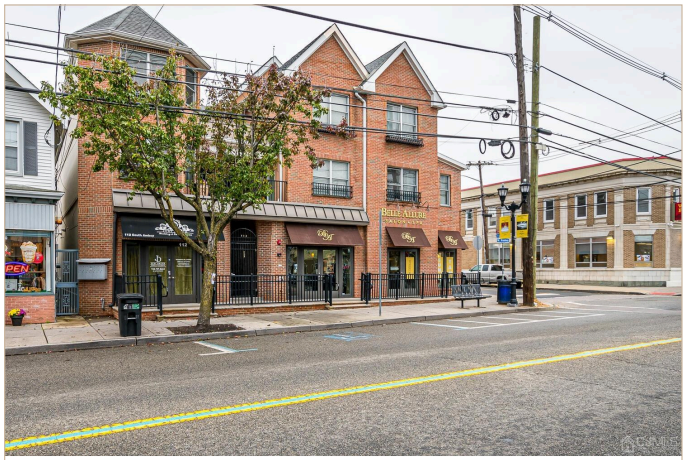
Perhaps the most compelling part of our discussion came when I asked what he would tell an entrepreneur or investor who had never considered South Amboy. His answer went beyond infrastructure, transportation and the evolving waterfront. He spoke about belonging — the idea that investing in South Amboy means becoming part of a community with a strong history, identity and sense of pride.

That emphasis on belonging resonated with me. As a South Amboy resident, I've seen Conrad work consistently to bring people together and strengthen the city's sense of community. His efforts range from helping champion the city's first Black History Month celebration and Summer Stage on Broadway to assisting Mickey Gross, "Mr. South Amboy," with the annual St. Patrick's Day and South Amboy Day festivities. Together, these efforts reflect his commitment to creating opportunities for residents to gather, connect, and celebrate their community.

As someone who came to South Amboy as a transplant, I understand the difference between simply living somewhere and becoming part of a community. The same principle can apply to development and business investment. The question is not only whether South Amboy can attract more investment, but whether that investment can become connected to the community around it.

My interview with Conrad suggested that South Amboy's next chapter will depend on maintaining that balance: welcoming progress without losing identity, directing investment toward residents' needs and keeping people connected as the city changes.

To understand how residents are experiencing these changes—and how South Amboy is planning for the future and supporting economic development—I spoke with Dr. Jorge Gonzalez-Gomez, a longtime resident of more than 40 years who serves as president of the South Amboy Business Association and is a member of the Planning Board.



Businesses on Broadway | South Amboy, NJ

Balancing Growth, Business and Community



Dr. Jorge Gonzalez-Gomez
South Amboy Business Association President
and member of the Planning Board
Photo Credit: Dr. Jorge Gonzalez-Gomez

My interview with Dr. Jorge Gonzalez-Gomez brought valuable historical and community insight to the discussion of South Amboy’s growth. A resident for more than four decades, he has also served as president of the South Amboy Business Association and as a member of the Planning Board. He emphasized that growth alone does not create a thriving downtown. New residents can increase demand, investors can provide capital, and entrepreneurs can bring fresh ideas, but a vibrant commercial district also depends on infrastructure, thoughtful planning, and businesses that give people a reason to gather and return.

A COMMUNITY IN TRANSITION

As South Amboy changes, residents are weighing how new investment can support the services, character and everyday needs that make the city feel like home.

After more than four decades in South Amboy, Gonzalez-Gomez brings the perspective of someone who has seen the city through different stages of its evolution. His message is ultimately one of balance: embrace new investment and entrepreneurship, strengthen the businesses that have long served the community, modernize where necessary, and ensure that development continues to reflect the character and needs of the people who call South Amboy home.

Having witnessed South Amboy evolve over more than 40 years, Gonzalez-Gomez sees development not as something new to the city, but as part of a longer process of transformation. He pointed to the redevelopment of much of the waterfront and the conversion of previously underutilized properties into homes, parks and other productive uses. At the same time, he emphasized the importance of planning in determining how that growth takes place, noting the role of the city's Master Plan in guiding development and balancing new opportunities with South Amboy's established character.

The interview also reinforced the connection between the city's growing residential population and its evolving business community. Gonzalez-Gomez has seen a variety of entrepreneurs open businesses in South Amboy during the past five years — from boutiques and specialty retailers to creative enterprises. But he was equally careful to recognize what he calls the "business backbone" of South Amboy: the salons, pharmacies, pubs, convenience stores, banks, neighborhood eateries, coffee shops, professional offices and healthcare providers that meet residents' everyday needs and give a small city its sense of place.

What stood out to me most was Gonzalez-Gomez's assessment of what South Amboy's downtown still needs. In his conversations with local business owners, he has heard a strong desire for one or more anchor businesses capable of generating additional activity downtown. That does not necessarily mean a national franchise. A quality restaurant or another substantial locally oriented business, he suggested, could become a destination that attracts people downtown while also supporting surrounding establishments.

His comments also highlighted one of the challenges that accompanies South Amboy's opportunity. Much of the downtown infrastructure was created for another era, while the needs of today's businesses, residents and consumers have changed considerably. Gonzalez-Gomez believes addressing that gap will require thoughtful redevelopment and collaboration among city officials, business leaders and residents who understand the community.

That point resonated with me because it connects many of the themes I have heard throughout these interviews.

The planning challenge is closely tied to what happens on the commercial corridors. To understand how outside investors view South Amboy's next phase, I spoke with real estate professional Joshua Wolf.

Commercial Real Estate Investment and the Next Opportunity



Joshua Wolf | Real Estate Guru | Berkshire Hathaway | Fox & Roach Realtors
Photo Credit: Joshua Wolf

My interview with Joshua Wolf, a real estate professional who works outside South Amboy, offered an important perspective on how the city is beginning to look to investors beyond its borders.

What initially caught Wolf's attention was the combination of two assets that surfaced repeatedly throughout my interviews: waterfront access and transportation. The ability to reach Manhattan by ferry or NJ Transit rail, combined with proximity to major highways, Newark Airport, shopping and the Jersey Shore, gives South Amboy a geographic advantage that Wolf believes investors are beginning to recognize.

Having recently sold properties in South Amboy, including commercial real estate, Wolf has seen that changing perception firsthand. In his view, South Amboy is no longer simply a quiet waterfront community. New residential development, improvements along the city's commercial corridors and growing interest from businesses are creating what he describes as the kind of early momentum commercial investors look for.

One of the most interesting points from the interview was the relationship between residential growth and commercial opportunity. As Wolf explained, every new household creates additional demand for the businesses that support daily life — restaurants, coffee shops, personal services, professional services and retail. As South Amboy's residential population expands, he believes areas such as South Broadway and the town center are particularly well positioned to benefit from increased foot traffic and consumer spending.

Wolf characterizes South Amboy as an emerging market rather than a mature one, which may be precisely what makes it attractive to outside investors. The infrastructure and transportation connections are already in place, while redevelopment continues and some properties remain underutilized. In his view, the city may be at a point in its growth cycle where much of the early uncertainty has diminished, but values do not yet fully reflect what South Amboy could ultimately become.

His advice to investors was straightforward: don't evaluate South Amboy based on what it was five years ago. Visit the city, understand its transportation advantages, study the commercial corridors and speak with the people who understand what is happening locally.

Perhaps Wolf's most thought-provoking observation concerned what happens next. He believes commercial development could ultimately determine whether South Amboy evolves into a true destination or remains primarily a commuter community. Residential development and transportation may bring people here, but restaurants, shops, offices, services and gathering places are what can encourage people to stay, spend and participate in the life of the city.

That distinction is important. Throughout my conversations, I heard considerable enthusiasm about South Amboy's waterfront, new housing and transportation connections. Wolf's perspective adds another dimension: residential development may create the momentum, but a thriving commercial center can help turn that momentum into a more complete community.

Looking five to ten years ahead, he sees opportunity not only in the properties receiving attention today, but also in smaller commercial and mixed-use sites surrounding the current redevelopment areas — the kinds of properties that can be easy to overlook during the early stages of a city's transformation.

His final observation captured his view of South Amboy particularly well: the opportunity is no longer about being first; it is about being early.



Aerial view of South Amboy, NJ
Photo Credit: Homes.com

Commercial opportunity depends in part on who is choosing to live here. The housing market offers another view of that demand, so I spoke with local real estate professional Sodeli Michelle.

The Local Housing Market



Sodeli Michelle | Realtor | PSA | Coldwell Banker Realty
Photo Credit: Sodeli Michelle

My interview with local real estate professional, Sodeli Michelle, offered a revealing look at South Amboy's changing housing market and, perhaps more importantly, the changing perception of the city itself.

Michelle has watched the market shift considerably in recent years. Homes that once could sit for months are now attracting buyers more quickly, while sale prices have risen. In her view, demand is beginning to catch up with what South Amboy has to offer. She also noted that in a more competitive market, presentation matters — well-prepared and well-marketed homes are often best positioned to capture buyer interest.

A recurring theme in the interview was value. Michelle pointed to South Amboy's relatively reasonable property taxes, waterfront location and convenient access to New York City as important factors drawing buyers. And the profile of those buyers is expanding. She is seeing interest from first-time homebuyers, move-up buyers and people relocating from Brooklyn and Staten Island who are looking for affordability while maintaining access to New York City and the waterfront lifestyle.

She also believes the city's new luxury rental developments are helping change perceptions of South Amboy and demonstrating that the market can support higher price points. As these developments attract a broader range of residents, some of today's renters could ultimately become tomorrow's South Amboy homeowners.

One story Michelle shared particularly captured my attention. A first-time buyer she was working with had never seriously

considered South Amboy and was initially hesitant when she suggested it. She convinced him to spend one afternoon touring the city. By the end of that visit, South Amboy had become one of his top choices. As she put it, "once buyers see the town in person, it sells itself."

That story resonated with me because it reflects something I have experienced myself and heard throughout these interviews: South Amboy can be difficult to fully appreciate from the outside. For years, many people may have known it primarily as a small city they passed through along Routes 9 or 35. Increasingly, however, people are stopping, looking around and discovering the waterfront, transportation connections, neighborhoods and sense of community that have been here all along.

Michelle was equally clear that growth should not come at the expense of what makes South Amboy appealing. She emphasized the importance of intentional rather than simply rapid development — protecting the waterfront as public space, attracting businesses that meet residents' everyday needs and ensuring the city can successfully absorb the development already underway.

Looking five to ten years ahead, Michelle believes South Amboy could become one of those communities people later describe as having been "discovered" — a place where those who recognized its potential early are glad they did.

Her perspective reinforces one of the strongest themes emerging from my conversations around the city: South Amboy's assets are not necessarily new. What is new is the growing number of people who are beginning to recognize their value.



Homes at Raritan Bay | South Amboy, NJ
Photo Credit: Zillow



Aerial view of Main Street, South Amboy, NJ

Housing figures show that people are arriving, but they cannot fully explain what makes the city appealing to them. Chris Porter, a young professional who has lived here for five years, shared how a newer generation sees South Amboy.

A New Generation Discovers South Amboy



Chris Porter | South Amboy Resident | Social Media Influencer | @ThisisChrisPorter
Photo Credit: Chris Porter

My interview with Chris Porter, a young professional, social media influencer and South Amboy resident of the past five years, offered another perspective on the city's transformation — this time through the eyes of a newer generation that values connectivity, convenience and the energy of a community on the rise.

What stood out immediately was Porter's enthusiasm for South Amboy's location. He described the city as potentially "the most ideal spot to live in New Jersey as an entrepreneur on the move." From his perspective, South Amboy offers something increasingly valuable: the ability to remain connected to New York City while also enjoying convenient access to the Jersey Shore and the broader Tri-state area. With ferry, rail and highway connections, he sees the city as uniquely positioned for young professionals whose personal and professional lives extend well beyond the boundaries of one community.

But location alone is not what has kept his attention. Porter sees opportunity in the pace of South Amboy's development and believes its waterfront, new residential investment and improving connectivity could position the city to become what he describes as the region's "next hot spot on the water."

His comments about South Amboy's changing identity were equally revealing. Porter recalled a time when people from outside the area largely viewed South Amboy as a small town they passed through — perhaps a shortcut when Route 9 became congested or a destination for a handful of local establishments. Today, he sees that perception changing as new development brings greater visibility and a new generation of residents discovers what the city has to offer. As someone who also came to South Amboy from elsewhere, I found his perspective particularly interesting. There is often a difference between how longtime residents experience a community and how newcomers see its possibilities. Sometimes it takes an outside perspective to recognize assets that have been there all along: a waterfront, proximity to major destinations, transportation options and the intimacy of a small city.

Porter's perspective also points to something larger happening in South Amboy. The city is no longer simply a place people pass through on their way somewhere else. Increasingly, it is becoming a place people are choosing to come to — and choosing to stay.

Like Porter, many residents of South Amboy's new luxury waterfront developments are young professionals drawn to the convenience of traveling by rail, ferry, or bus to New York City, Newark Airport, the Jersey Shore, and other parts of New Jersey. With so many transportation options available, some have chosen to forgo car ownership altogether, relying instead on public transit and rideshare services such as Uber.

The residents I spoke with at Station Bay reflect a diverse demographic mix — approximately 75 percent young professionals, 20 percent executives, and 5 percent retirees. Many echoed Porter's appreciation for the city's accessibility, convenience, and evolving character. However, while these developments offer events designed to build connections among their residents, there remains an opportunity to create stronger ties between these newer communities and the broader South Amboy community.

Changing perceptions may attract people to South Amboy, but a lasting sense of connection will determine whether newcomers become part of the wider community. At the same time, the enthusiasm of newer residents must be considered alongside the concerns of people who have watched the city change over many years.



Aerial View of South Amboy | Raritan Bay Waterfront
Photo Credit: Weichert Realtors

Longtime Residents Raise Concerns About Growth and City Resources

Growth brings opportunity—and questions about services, schools, traffic and parking.

While many residents welcome South Amboy's growth, some longtime residents worry that it is placing additional pressure on schools, public safety, and first aid services.

Still, concerns remain. One longtime resident, who has called South Amboy home since infancy and asked to remain anonymous, expressed unease about the number of apartment buildings rising throughout the city. Others worry that continued development will increase traffic and intensify competition for parking. Recent improvements—including the widening and repaving of downtown Broadway and the creation of a new parking lot—are beginning to address some of these concerns.

For another resident who lives at Harbor Village by the waterfront, the city's challenges extend beyond new construction. When asked how he sees South Amboy evolving, he described the city as economically 'in a box.' In his view, its ability to thrive will depend on expanding its commercial offerings—particularly its dining options—while continuing to strengthen its schools.



South Amboy City Services

Photo Credit: The City of South Amboy

Judith Raskoshin, a resident, president of the South Amboy Board of Education, and candidate for an at-large City Council seat, also identified investment in the city's schools as one of her leading priorities if elected. Her enthusiasm for education and commitment to the community were evident throughout our conversation.

For residents like my husband and me, an anchor restaurant like the ones we frequent outside of the city—ideally located near the ferry terminal or on Broadway—could encourage visitors to spend more time in South Amboy while giving residents a welcoming place within walking distance to gather and dine. A broader mix of quality restaurants and businesses could further enhance the city's appeal while contributing to the sense of community residents want to preserve.



South Amboy walkable community

WHY PLANNING MATTERS

These concerns do not negate the benefits of growth; they show why planning and public accountability matter.

New residents and investment can create momentum, but local businesses experience that change on the street every day. I spoke with several owners about the foot traffic and mix of businesses they hope to see.

Local Business Perspectives

South Amboy is already welcoming a more diverse mix of businesses alongside the restaurants, hair salons and other establishments that have long lined Broadway. Local staples such as GEMS Bagels, Sciortino's, Jacqueline's Florist, John's Auto Center, Oriental House, Delio's Pizza and others continue to rely largely on loyal, longtime customers. These business owners hope the city's growth will attract a broader range of establishments, including an anchor restaurant or another destination business capable of drawing more people downtown and generating greater foot traffic throughout the commercial district.

That shift may already be beginning. A new Italian restaurant a few blocks off Broadway is attracting diners with a unique family-style dining experience, suggesting that there is growing demand for new culinary options in South Amboy.



South Amboy Businesses on Broadway



A Neighborhood Favorite

A stronger business district matters, but a city's character is also shaped by the small interactions that bring people together. For me, that story begins at home and on walks with John and our dogs.

A Community, Not Just a City



South Amboy Day at Raritan Bay Waterfront

My understanding of South Amboy has been shaped not only by its waterfront, transportation options, or new development, but by the everyday moments that make a place feel like home.

Some of my most meaningful observations have come while walking our dogs, Tobi and Marley, through South Amboy's neighborhoods and along the waterfront. Those walks let me experience the city at a slower, more personal pace. A wave becomes a conversation; a neighbor stops to ask about the dogs, share a story, or reflect on how the city has changed.

Recently, I met Virginia, who lives a few houses down from us, and learned that she had been quietly bringing in our garbage can after pickup. It is a small kindness, but one that says a great deal about this community. Over time, unfamiliar faces become familiar, and brief encounters grow into genuine connections.

That sense of connection extends throughout the city. It can be felt in conversations at local restaurants and businesses, where owners and employees often know their customers by name. These establishments are more than places to purchase a meal, product, or service. They are gathering places woven into the daily lives of residents. Newer businesses are becoming part of that fabric as well, introducing fresh energy while helping to broaden the city's dining and commercial offerings.

Community celebrations reveal another side of South Amboy. Events such as the St. Patrick's Day Parade, summer programs, holiday gatherings, and South Amboy Day bring residents together across neighborhoods, generations, and backgrounds. South Amboy Day, in particular, reflects the city's pride in its history and its optimism about the future. Seeing families, longtime residents, newcomers, business owners, community leaders, and elected officials sharing the same public space reinforces the feeling that South Amboy is more than a collection of streets and buildings. It is a community with a shared identity.

Since moving here, John and I have met people from many different cultural, professional, and personal backgrounds. Some have lived in South Amboy for generations, while others arrived only recently, drawn by the waterfront, convenient transportation, new housing, or the city's small-town atmosphere. Their experiences may differ, but many share a desire to feel connected and to have a voice in the city's future.

These encounters have also helped me understand that community does not happen automatically. It must be nurtured. As new residential developments welcome hundreds of residents, one of South Amboy's greatest opportunities will be finding meaningful ways to connect those newcomers with the broader community. Festivals and events are important, but lasting connections are also built through neighborhood conversations, volunteerism, civic participation, support for local businesses, and the willingness to listen to perspectives different from our own.

This is why my experience in South Amboy resonates so strongly with the mission of POP Social Enterprise. Throughout my career in community and economic development, I believed that strong communities are built through collaboration, civic engagement, and shared responsibility. Progress is most successful when residents, businesses, nonprofit organizations, developers, and government leaders work together — and when the people most affected by change are included in shaping it.





Mayor Fred Henry (left) speaks at South Amboy's first Black History Month celebration, while Councilman Anthony Conrad (right) engages with residents at a Station Bay community event organized by POP Social Enterprise, LLC, in collaboration with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, and government leaders.

South Amboy has reminded me that civic engagement does not begin only at City Hall or in a formal meeting. It begins in everyday places: on a dog walk, across a neighbor's fence, inside a local restaurant, at a community celebration, or during a conversation between longtime and newly arrived residents. These seemingly small interactions build trust, strengthen relationships, and create the foundation for meaningful collaboration.

South Amboy is evolving, but its greatest strength remains its people. New development may change the skyline and bring fresh opportunities, yet the city's future will be shaped by how we welcome one another, support local businesses and nonprofits, and take part in civic life. For a city of just over 9,000 residents, South Amboy has possibilities far greater than its size. Realizing them will take the civic pride, collaboration, and willingness to work across generations and backgrounds. Those qualities will turn a place we chose to live into a community we are proud to call home — and they can guide what South Amboy becomes next.



John and Pat Irwin (left) hosted a community engagement event featuring local businesses, nonprofits, and elected officials at Station Bay | March 2025.



South Amboy Day | Community Event

Taken together, these interviews and everyday experiences point to a broader story about what is drawing attention to South Amboy—and what will matter as it grows.

Why People Are Paying Attention



South Amboy Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade

South Amboy is no longer being overlooked. Residents, business owners, real estate professionals, community leaders, and outside investors all see a city entering an important new chapter — one shaped by strong leadership, responsible planning, private investment, and a deep sense of community pride.

Much of the attention begins with location. South Amboy offers something increasingly difficult to find: a walkable waterfront community with direct access to New York City by rail and ferry, convenient connections to major highways, Newark Airport, and easy access to the Jersey Shore. These advantages are attracting young professionals, executives, retirees, and others who want metropolitan convenience without sacrificing the warmth and familiarity of a small town.

The growing demand for housing, particularly near the waterfront and transportation hubs, reflects this appeal. New residential developments are bringing people and investment into the city, strengthening the housing market and creating opportunities for additional businesses and commercial development. Real estate professionals are seeing increased buyer interest, while outside investors are beginning to recognize that South Amboy's momentum is still in its early stages.

Yet growth alone is not what makes the city's story compelling. Interviewees consistently emphasized the importance of thoughtful planning — encouraging development while protecting the character, history, and quality of life that residents value. They also expressed a desire for new investment to benefit the entire community by supporting established businesses, attracting a wider mix of shops and restaurants, increasing foot traffic, and strengthening connections between longtime residents and those moving into the city's newer developments.

South Amboy's growth will be measured not only by the homes it builds, but by the strength of the community it builds around them. With thoughtful planning, thriving local businesses, and residents connected across generations, the city can welcome new opportunities while preserving the character that makes it feel like home. That is the promise of South Amboy: a city shaping its future together.



Home in South Amboy, NJ