

# **SAY NO TO THE CASINO CIVIC ASSOCIATION**

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## **Large Group of Say NO to the Casino Activists Spoke with Passion, Armed with Facts at Jan 18 Hearing *Speakers Argued Sands Proposal is Unmitigable***

Uniondale, NY: Las Vegas Sands' (LVS) presentation at the Town of Hempstead's environmental scoping session last week shows they're willing to co-opt and fleece our community on a grand scale in service to their profits. LVS confirmed that the proposed casino would be massive - 2nd largest casino floor in the country, with hotel towers as tall as Nassau University Medical Center - and will have far-reaching, unmitigable impacts on our community. Unmitigable impacts include more snarling traffic, more air, light and noise pollution; exploitation of our infrastructure including our sole source aquifer, waste disposal system, and power grid; exponential increases in crime and gambling addictions; and a corrosive, destructive change to the character of our community. Nothing in the colossal proposal can be mitigated. In fact, the most substantive way Sands proposes to mitigate is to offer money. Money doesn't replace our water, our fresh air, our safety, or our quality of life.

Say NO celebrates and appreciates the large group of concerned residents and Say NO members who came out in force to speak up against the proposed casino. Some missed a day of work to speak or made child care arrangements, others mustered new courage to speak in front of the crowd - all because the threat of a casino disturbed them so profoundly. Each one discussed aspects of the proposal that are most distressing to them, and indeed, unmitigable.

Here are just a few of the highlights:

**Pearl Jacobs of Uniondale** focused on environmental racism. "I live in Uniondale, an underserved, minority community. The asthma rates in Uniondale among our youth are 17%, Hempstead's asthma rate is 25%, 2-3x higher than the state average of 8%. NYSDEC has identified the minority communities of Uniondale, Hempstead, Roosevelt, New Cassel, Westbury, as disproportionately disadvantaged by air pollution and respiratory illnesses. NYSDEC reports that roads in proximity to the proposed casino currently handle 100,000-130,000 vehicles per day. If you put a casino there, traffic would increase by 20,000-30,000 cars a day. How would that mitigate our asthma rates? The environmental impacts will be devastating to our community. You're not looking out for our communities, you're looking out for the money."

**George Krug of Garden City** spoke of the dangers of living near a casino. "Casinos attract bad behavior - it's a feature! They call (Las Vegas) sin city for a reason. Colleges are places that lift people up and prepare them for a better life. Casinos are places that lift people up and shake them until all the money falls out."

**Scott Livingston of Sands Point** stated firmly, "I am an emphatic NO! This is the biggest missed opportunity in our history. Generations in front of us are going to pay for our short sightedness. In Albany, they created a semiconductor center of excellence that created lots of investment and high paying jobs, it's being replicated all over the country - and we get a casino? It's like Biff from Back To The Future II - a few (Sands executives) get rich and the rest of us get low paying jobs. We spend so much on education, we have the best high schools in the country. We send hundreds and thousands of kids each year to the best universities in the country, and they don't come back! Why? Because there are no industries of the future here. You think we'll get our kids to come back and

make Long Island great because we have a casino? Long Island used to make things that mattered. We don't do anything that matters anymore. We need to reinvest in the jobs of tomorrow, not a casino."

**Steve Rolston, Sierra Club member and resident of Baldwin**, was concerned about the environmental impact. "Noise, light, particulate, and chemical pollution from the casino will disrupt the natural environment and quality of life for residents. Covering the ground with an excessive amount of impermeable surfaces will affect groundwater. Town of Hempstead is already exceeding water withdrawal limits, and drawing so much water will affect drinking water south of the casino. Large amounts of garbage will be generated at a time when most landfills must soon close. Where will the garbage go, how will it get there, and at what cost to the towns that accept it? Waste water volume will be high, it should be treated onsite to recharge groundwater, but will instead be transported off-site and sent to sea. Electric energy demand will be very high, this comes during a climate crisis, with 2023 being the hottest year on record. Land at the Hub wasn't zoned for this use, nor should it be. The land is one of the few places where the vast Hempstead Plains of Long Island's past still exist, as such it is a refuge for many animal and plant species and could be developed as a tourist attraction. Sierra Club agrees with the growing number of residents as well as the courts who are demanding that the process slow down and allow for an independent environmental review of the Sands proposal."

**Arthur Mackey Jr., Pastor, Mt Sinai Baptist Church, Roosevelt NY** considered our veterans, "I feel this proposal is spitting on the graves of all of our veterans who gave their lives so we can enjoy the freedoms that we do everyday. Sloan Kettering, Hofstra, Nassau Community College surround the site. It is just the wrong location for a casino. We don't need billions for a casino, we need billions to keep Nassau County Medical Center open - our priorities are not straight. This proposal is all about environmental racism."

**Juile Berger of East Meadow**, is adamantly against the casino. "First, I'm disappointed that the flier sent to town residents was not transparent - it doesn't even include the word 'casino'. I'm part of the 1199 healthcare union, and to all of my construction union people, I'm for you also, but we can build something else - something that's healthier for Nassau County. And I ask the 17 County Legislators that voted for this - How do I trust you to spend money wisely, because these same legislators agreed with Bruce Blakeman to take COVID money for golf tournaments, parties and concerts instead of using it where the constituents need it - for education, health care, mental health, our roads. I pray that this proposal doesn't go through. This proposal is not helping us, this is only helping the Sands. And as far as Sands bringing in David Becham and Carli Lloyd - that's not collaborating with the community, that's bribery."

**Mike McKeever of Garden City** has young children, and took off from work to speak. "The idea of putting the second biggest casino in North America adjacent to Museum Row/Cradle of Aviation is offensive to me. I'm not anti-union, I'm supportive of economic development, but a casino will have a major impact on our social fabric. Sands estimates that 23,000 people a day will visit. About 2-4% of those people will be problem gamblers, and 20% of problem gamblers consider or attempt suicide each year. We already have a crisis in Nassau County with respect to behavioral health. Where are these people going to go for help? Casinos bring problem gambling, crime, and mental health crises. We all will bear the burden of these social costs."

**Kyle Texter of Garden City** raised three major reasons to oppose this casino. "Having a casino and crime around my children would be terrible. I invite you all to read a paper titled 'Casinos, Crime, and Community Costs.' It shows there's a lag effect in crime; each year a casino is operating, there's an exponential increase in crime, including violent crime. Dollar amounts from tax revenue are minimal in comparison to multi-billion budgets. We have no real estimate of how much extra costs we will have. This casino could cost us much more than \$50m in additional services, and end up costing Nassau County much more than any expected tax revenue. Casinos make their money from gambling revenue - all the other trinkets surrounding the casino are there just to bring people in to gamble more money. I would implore you to look at how casinos make money - it's not in food and beverage, it's in gambling losses."

**Chris Jacobs of Uniondale** spoke of traffic and the risks from additional air pollution. “Everyday I deal with traffic on Hempstead Turnpike. We are in a public transit desert. Uniondale, Hempstead, Westbury and New Cassel have been identified as communities overburdened by air pollution. We have very high rates of asthma. How does adding traffic, adding vehicles, adding more emissions fix that?”

**Mike Jacobs of Wantagh**, addressed the town board directly. “The casino proposal is based on a lie - call it gambling, not gaming. “Gambling” is a word Sands has a hard time getting out. This project is wrong on a moral basis. You are taking the less fortunate and you are trying to raise revenues, just like someone pushing crack cocaine. And I fully understand how much work this could be for the unions, but you can’t ‘shine crap’. The people behind this project don’t want us to understand that their revenue will come from addicts. We will change our beautiful Nassau County into Atlantic City. If you value our neighborhoods, don’t go for the short term gain. We must work harder and smarter. It’s your responsibility to look past the lie. This project is working against what is good for the people, it should be killed.”

**Lynn Krug of Garden City** raised issues around the firm hired to assess environmental impact. “I extend concern to your choice of Nelson & Pope to guide this process, a choice made almost immediately after the now-nullified lease was signed. It doesn’t appear that this contract was bid out to any other qualified entities. It was widely reported that in a contract for similar services with a town on the east end, Nelson & Pope agreed to “neutralize and discredit opposition as NIMBY.” Can you reassure us that the nature of this engagement is not the same? We want to trust that our local government is looking out for us, but when these things come to light, and when these issues clearly benefit those who wish to act against the will of the people, the ability to trust is challenged.”

**Monica Kiely of Garden City** noted that we are Sands’ targets. “Casinos do not create wealth, they extract wealth. Sands is not coming here to make us rich, they’re coming here to get rich at our expense. They’re expected to take in \$2B /yr in gambling losses; this is money diverted away from our downtowns and into Sands coffers. Recently Sands representative Michael Levoff acknowledged Sands wouldn’t generate a lot of tourism and that the clientele would mainly be people in Nassau County. The casino industry is predatory and we are its target. Jeff Reynolds of Family and Children’s Association says it’s ok to locate a casino between two colleges because the kids can gamble on phone anyway - well, he should be ashamed of himself. Anyone who works in addiction should know that the more available something is, the more addiction is created. We already have a crisis, why do we want to throw gasoline on that fire?”

Those that spoke up against the casino represent the very best of our community. The “Say NO” group is tremendously proud of them - they are leading the fight to ensure that the Long Island our children and grandchildren will inherit, will be a safe, prosperous one.

We encourage all who are against the proposed casino to submit written comments to the Town of Hempstead through this link: <https://hempsteadny.gov/1044/Public-Comments> by February 20. Residents can also sign up for updates and send an opposition letter to the New York State Gaming Commission at <https://form.jotform.com/233377955558170>. Visit our website [www.nocasinonassau.org](http://www.nocasinonassau.org) to learn more and get involved.

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\* *Say No to the Casino Civic Association* is a non-partisan group, composed of Republicans, Democrats, and Independents from across Nassau County, who have come together with one goal: to stop the Las Vegas Sands Casino proposal. The group believes that a casino will have an unequivocally negative impact on our community and irrevocably change the character of our county. The group believes that a casino will lead to an increase in crime, gambling addiction, bankruptcy and home foreclosure rates; exacerbate traffic problems; impact our natural environment including air and water quality; depress home values; and strain law enforcement. We invite everyone in Nassau County to join us and get involved by signing our letter to the New York State Gaming Commission on our website, [www.nocasinonassau.org](http://www.nocasinonassau.org), joining our Facebook group, and following us on Twitter and Instagram, @NoCasinoLI.