



# Panel Says Summer Successful, but Economic Challenges Remain

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**Atlantic City, N.J.** — While many southern New Jersey businesses appear to have weathered the COVID-19 pandemic and had a successful summer, a new set of concerns — labor shortages, higher gas prices and inflation — have all emerged to challenge companies in the future, according to a recent panel discussion of regional business leaders.

“Visitors are still coming to the Jersey Shore,” said Jane Bokunewicz, faculty director of the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming, Hospitality and Tourism (LIGHT) in Stockton University’s School of Business. “They may spend a little less when they get here, but they are still looking at it as a good option.”

Bokunewicz moderated the Jersey Shoreview at Stockton Atlantic City on Oct. 19. The event featured four business leaders who recapped the summer season and looked ahead to southern New Jersey’s economic future.

The panelists for the event, which was sponsored by LIGHT, were:

- Michael Busler, professor of Business Studies and Finance at Stockton University
- Anthony Catanoso, president and principal owner of Steel Pier
- Emily Paul, president and CEO of the Cape May County Chamber of Commerce
- Jim Ziereis, vice president of hotel sales, Caesars Entertainment, Atlantic City region

Bokunewicz said overall the panelists reported positive results for the summer. Meetings and convention bookings were up, hotel bookings were up and Canadian tourists returned to the Jersey Shore. But higher gas prices and inflation definitely had some impact on visitation and spending.

Following are some of the questions asked to the panel and selected responses. The full event can be viewed on the LIGHT website at [stockton.edu/light](https://stockton.edu/light).

**Q: How did summer 2022 measure up to preseason predictions? And did it meet, exceed or disappoint expectations?**

**Jim Zierys**

some of these higher gas prices may have had some of an impact on travel, especially with day trippers.

**Q: Were staffing levels a concern and the cost of labor?**

concerts could be midweek, this city would thrive. It would make such a difference, because you're going to have a great Friday, Saturday in July, anyhow.

**Q: How do you feel new amusements and the water park slated to open at Showboat might impact tourism in the city?**

**Anthony Catanoso:** The development that's happening at Showboat, specifically the

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