Public Testimony
January 23, 2019

New York City Council, Committee on Economic Development
Re: Oversight–Brooklyn Navy Yard Expansion Plans

Submitted by Roland Lewis, President and CEO
Waterfront Alliance

Waterfront Alliance is a non-profit civic organization and coalition of more than 1,000 community and recreational groups, educational institutions, businesses, and other stakeholders. Our mission is to inspire and enable resilient, revitalized and accessible coastlines for all communities.

The Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC) has successfully innovated on the Yard’s maritime and manufacturing roots to preserve and build the kind of spaces and access that grow the city’s modern industrial sector and fuel economic vitality. Chief among these accomplishments is maintaining the active working waterfront of the Yard — boat berths, cargo piers, and ship repair facilities — that are now rare and in demand in our city’s post industrial era. Valuable recreational and educational uses also share our harbor now, and integrating increased public access is a welcome component of the Yard’s new master plan. Waterfront Alliance supports BNYDC’s new master plan and Yard expansion to include public access to the water, while maintaining a vibrant and well supported working waterfront.

- **Build access to touch, learn or paddle on the water integrated into the proposed public esplanade on Kent.**
  The Kent site, or north section along Kent Ave., includes Wallabout Channel, identified as the Barge Basin Loop in master plan renderings. Thanks to support from BNYDC, this well protected waterway already hosts an oyster restoration nursery with Billion Oyster Project and a public rowing program with Village Community Boathouse. Public access in this section should prioritize expansion of these stewardship opportunities with a floating dock, boat ramp, or get down into the water. Waterfront Alliance can provide guidance for integrating public access with other maritime and site needs through our Maritime Activation Plan, a customized menu of options for the waterfront coalescing in a path to full and best use, including relevant feasibility considerations and potential partnerships.

- **Site the proposed science and engineering museum and youth STEM programs immediately on the waterfront for direct access to learning on the water.**
  The Navy site, or west section at the NYPD tow pound, is proposed to
host a museum and learning center, but is landlocked. It would be a significant missed opportunity to not allow these programs to have direct access to the water, which could be obtained by switching the proposed museum space over to the Kent site, where the esplanade and public access to the water is planned. In addition, this move would enhance equity. The western Navy site is about a half mile from the existing education center at Brooklyn Bridge Park. Moving the proposed science museum and STEM activities to the northern Kent site would create an educational opportunity in a waterfront stretch of three miles without one. Waterfront Alliance’s WEDG program offers guidance for these kinds of development projects, integrating resilience, ecology, and access on the waterfront.

- **Rationalize ferry access for the public.**
  The Flushing site, or center section near building 77, is proposed as a potential master plan gate for a flyway bridge over restricted parts of the Yard allowing the public to access a new NYC Ferry stop at Dock 72. However, this would be a significant infrastructure investment, potentially covering more than one quarter mile. The promise of NYC Ferry should honestly include the realities of public access at the Navy Yard, including publicizing the likelihood of a shuttle bus to the ferry as the more cost effective alternative for the general public.

- **Preserve the working waterfront of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.**
  Across the city, our working waterfront sustains our high standard of living while struggling to keep a place among new residential buildings, parks and resiliency efforts now crowding at the edge. At least six maritime dependent organizations call the Yard home for their boats, including the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), GMD Shipyard, Lehigh Cement, New York Sand and Stone, NYC Ferry, and Harbor School. To accomplish their work, they need full utilities on the waterfront, construction areas for repars, and sometimes truck access to the dock. The Pier D RFEI is another opportunity for working waterfront in the Yard, and it’s particularly meaningful that BNYDC and the city offer some financial support for the necessary infrastructure rebuilding at Pier D. We applaud BNYDC for their continued support of the working waterfront.

- **Increase resilience and access.**
  The proposed master plan carefully considers resilient design for new buildings at the Yard. We encourage BNYDC to continue extending this focus to existing waterfront infrastructure, and to plan creatively to maintain access to the water for both commercial and recreational uses while building resilience.