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Brooklyn Navy Yard to get a new front door, better linking industrial park to outside world

Manhattan-based Marvel Architects will design the 60,000-square-foot space, which will finally give Yard workers a place to gather.

[Joe Anuta](#)



Beyer Blinder Belle

A rendering of BLDG 77. Marvel hopes to transform the base into a grand hall that will include a food court.

packets to military-grade body armor, along with creative-class firms such as the film production outfit Steiner Studios. While anyone curious enough to stop by has had access to a visitors center, the facility on the whole has been walled off from the rest of the borough ever since it was built to produce ships for the U.S. Navy in 1801.

Now more than 200 years later, Marvel hopes to transform the base of a hulking World War II-era warehouse called BLDG 77—located behind an imposing metal fence along Flushing Avenue between Claremont and Vanderbilt avenues—into a grand hall that will include an industrial food court and central gathering point for both employees and the general public.

"The building essentially has two front yards," said Jonathan Marvel, principal and founder of Marvel Architects. "One side faces Flushing Avenue and the other faces the [industrial park]. What we're trying to do is connect the two."

To start, Marvel will take advantage of two yawning garage doors that open onto each side. In the 60,000 square-foot space in between, where rows of giant, temple-like columns stretch up to the ceiling, Marvel envisions a long public space flanked by retail storefronts. Many of these would be run by food production tenants that will have manufacturing facilities on the first and second floors, thus aligning the project with the yard's core job-creation mission.

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The Brooklyn Navy Yard announced Tuesday that Marvel Architects will design a new gateway to the 300-acre industrial park that will serve as a food court, a collaboration hub for businesses and a long-sought connection to the outside world.

"Fifteen years ago the yard was surrounded by razor wire ... and was not a place you thought to go for any reason except getting your impounded car," said David Ehrenberg, president of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp., the nonprofit that runs the park. "But we have been trying, in a controlled way, to invite the public in while still maintaining the industrial uses."

The yard is currently home to about 3.5 million square feet of space housing companies making everything from sugar



Joe Anuta

Scott Demel (left) and Jonathan Marvel, both of Marvel Architects, plan to transform the ground floor of BLDG 77 into a retail, manufacturing and collaboration space.

history, the new facility will serve a much more basic function—the only place where the more than 7,000 employees at the yard will be able to get lunch. (No other retail space exists on-site, so take-out businesses do well there.)

Plans for the hall are still in the early stages, but everything is expected to open in late 2016, when a [larger \\$140 million renovation ongoing at BLDG 77](#) is slated to wrap up as well.

Just north of the yard-side entrance is the site of a [new commercial building being built by Boston Properties and Rudin Management](#) and anchored by WeWork, plans for which were announced earlier this month.

Correction: The Brooklyn Navy Yard is a 300-acre industrial park. The size of the park was misstated in an earlier version of this article published online July 28, 2015.

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"You can sell something out the front, and ship it out the back," said Scott Demel, director at Marvel Architects. Although based in Manhattan, Marvel has been involved in several high-profile Brooklyn projects lately, including the controversial Pierhouse condo and hotel development in Brooklyn Bridge Park; and the proposed redevelopment of the Cadman branch of the Brooklyn Public Library, which includes the construction of a large condominium building.

At the Navy Yard, Marvel plans to preserve the pillars—down to the red, blue and yellow color scheme—along with an original gantry overhead that once was used to unload cargo trains that ran directly into the warehouse. But part of making such a space more inviting to the public will include punching out windows to allow for more natural light.

Aside from lofty goals of connecting the community to what remains of New York City's industrial sector, along with its