

## PortSide NewYork proposals to fix EDC-Red Hook Relationship

11/22/22

Red Hook has not got the benefits from Atlantic Basin that the EDC promised since taking over the site in 2005. This huge site (light yellow at right) runs from Wolcott Street to Bowne Street and includes the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal (BCT), Pier 11 where our ship MARY A. WHALEN is, the Pier 11 warehouse next to us, and the asphalt connecting it all. The EDC promises include Red Hook retail benefiting from the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal, PortSide with enough space to fulfill our plans, and NYCHA residents benefitting from the NYC Ferry (promised respectively in 2006, from 2008 into 2011, and in 2017).



These promises have not been fulfilled because the EDC runs Atlantic Basin like a colonial power, keeping all the revenue from the site and ignoring local needs, concerns, and suggestions. The EDC is also tone deaf to user experience and customer service making the site challenging for many users.

There's good news! Fixing these things is not rocket science! There's precedent in our Council District in Sunset Park in how former Councilman Carlos Menchaca got the EDC to agree to take community input, share revenue and create indirect economic benefits from the development of the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT) which is becoming an offshore wind facility.

Below, PortSide proposes fixes for the site itself and for its relationship to Red Hook. Our main suggestions are:

1. PortSide finally gets adequate space. The EDC funds us to renovate building space they give us.
2. Red Hook gets a share of the revenue from the site.
3. A Red Hook stakeholder group is established to work with the EDC to plan how that revenue is used.
4. Red Hook entities are paid to execute the fixes proposed below and those proposed by the stakeholder group if locals have the skill set. The stakeholder group is run by the community, not the EDC, unlike the Sunset Park Task Force.
5. All prior EDC promises are fulfilled; and going forward, Atlantic Basin is run better so that it delivers indirect economic benefits, fosters community development, is more integrated into the fabric or Red Hook, and is more hospitable to cruise ship passengers. Everyone wins.
6. If the Formula E car race continues, there is compensation to tenants. The EDC is overhauled so it is less of an abusive landlord and better at supporting tenants — that's economic development!

The number and the size of [visiting cruise ships](#) is growing, so it's important to finally address issues below for the sake of Red Hook and for the cruise passengers. Sixteen ships are scheduled for the last three months of 2022 alone, sometimes there are three ships a week, and some ships stay more than one day. A huge Princess ship was here for three days in October with thousands of their passengers overwhelming the NYC Ferry (meaning locals could not get on), with hundreds of cruise passengers were at a loss about what to do, where to go, and how to get there.

**Precedent for EDC sharing revenue & taking community input.** In 2015, our last Councilman Carlos Menchaca made the EDC [sign an LOI](#) before they could develop the South Brooklyn Marine Terminal (SBMT) in Sunset Park. That LOI had the EDC complete unfulfilled promises to the community (that's how PortSide got our ship out of the container port), take community input about the development of

the site, make a community space available on the site, and have up to 5% of gross site revenue (too low in our opinion) go to Sunset Park. The LOI also created an ongoing dialogue between EDC and the neighborhood via the creation of the [Sunset Park Task Force](#).

More recently, Coney Island has pushed to change EDC plans for the NYC Ferry there and pushed to have the EDC share revenue from Coney Island boardwalk leases, netting an EDC offer on 9/28/22 to redirect 50% of the lease revenue to Coney Island. The former District Manager of our Community Board 6 Craig Hammerman moved to Coney and has been a leading voice in those efforts. He first learned about the EDC in Red Hook.

After the following needs are met in the following ways, we propose that funds could be redirected to other Red Hook projects. The first step is to determine how much money the EDC makes in Atlantic Basin. Red Hook should be told without a slow FOIL process.

1. **Discuss community needs and solutions.** Create a community conversation to determine what share of that revenue be redirected into Red Hook, with local stakeholders influencing where and how it is spent and having local stakeholders being paid for related projects. Red Hook is both a community of both talent and need. We propose the community lead the group, unlike the Sunset Park Task Force created via the LOI mentioned above that is led by the EDC. PortSide was on that task for its first few years, until the RFP for SBMT was awarded.
2. **Immediately fulfill the promise to Red Hook of a fully-realized PortSide.** We propose this item happen while 2 above is being organized because 14 years have passed since the EDC promised us space for a fully-realized PortSide (more space than just for our ship), and those years have taken their toll on PortSide. We promptly need sufficient space; we need to rebound and grow. The cure here is that the EDC provides building space, some of the funding to build out that space, and permissions for activities they have blocked. PortSide does not want the EDC to build the space. Our nonprofit can build it more cheaply and rapidly than their nonprofit; and if we do it, we know it will meet the needs of PortSide and our constituents. Plus, we need money added to our budget to be eligible for more funding. The EDC has blocked the revenue-generating activities in all our business plans, stunting our growth in a dynamic much like redlining (stunt your growth, then blame you for a small budget). The innovative maritime facility we have proposed since 2005 is designed to be an asset to Red Hook, the maritime community, and an inspiration for NYC as a whole; let's do it already!
  - a. 12,000 square feet at the south end of the Pier 11 warehouse and use of the adjoining loading dock with a 20-year lease.
  - b. Permission for a small wet lab structure, powered by solar and wind, next to the water south of MARY A. WHALEN for school marine life programs. The Red Hook architecture firm [MADE](#) offered to design it.
  - c. Use of the parking lot south of that space, including reinstallation of [PortSide Park](#) if Ports America approves. They use that area when cruise ships are at BCT and allowed the park during the pandemic.
  - d. Permission to have revenue-generating activities including vessels alongside our flagship MARY A. WHALEN that pay PortSide fees, retail (such as a museum store and café) and occasional tour boats using the NYC Ferry dock as others have been allowed to do.
  - e. Relief from the requirement that PortSide submit permits for events over 20 people. We should be able to conduct normal operations without suffocating interventions like this.

- f. Berth permit for the ship MARY A. WHALEN longer than one year to provide planning stability and facilitate getting multi-year grants and loans.
- g. Permission to have people sleep on the for programs, visiting crew, and the security provided by a sleep-over shipkeeper.

3. **Grow NYC Ferry benefits for Red Hook NYCHA residents.** The EDC promised that NYC Ferry would benefit Red Hook NYCHA residents; but they are not heavy users of the ferries. Over the years, via multiple means, PortSide concluded that many local NYCHA residents still don't know about the NYC Ferry. Funds should be allocated to put ferry mailers in tenant mail from NYCHA and in student backpacks at school, and to support stakeholder meetings to discuss other ways to reach local NYCHA residents and then execute the ideas. This means community-led planning not the EDC talking at the community in a presentation. Increasing awareness of the ferries can help NYCHA residents commute better to an existing job, seek a better job, enjoy affordable boat rides as recreation/staycation; and – this is key – know to apply to the jobs coming to the NYC Ferry Homeport 2 being built now in Atlantic Basin.

A fully-realized PortSide will also help NYCHA residents connect to the NYC Ferry jobs as we can be a workforce outreach liaison. Creating a pipeline to marine careers is part of our mission, but not fully realized due to lack of space thanks to the EDC. PortSide can help create internship and shadowing programs at the new NYC Ferry homeport. We currently connect Red Hook NYCHA residents to the waterfront exactly where the NYC Ferry is. Our youth education programs primarily serve Red Hook NYCHA residents, we have a track record of CTE programming by partnering with the union District Council 9 and Williamsburg HS of Architecture & Design.

4. **Create ways for the cruise terminal to benefit Red Hook.** The EDC promised that BCT would benefit Red Hook, retail businesses being a main beneficiary; but there is no info about Red Hook in BCT, despite many requests over the years for the EDC to add this.
- a. **Fund a Red Hook promotion campaign.** The EDC should fund the creation of neighborhood promotion for the terminal building and the grounds developed by the Red Hook Business Alliance (of which we are a member), PortSide and Ports America, the BCT manager who understands how cruise passengers move around the terminal and grounds. It is key that this info spread from the terminal building to the Pioneer Street fence because the attractions of low-rise Red Hook are not famous or readily visible from BCT the way Manhattan skyscrapers are from the Manhattan cruise ship terminals. PortSide has created the virtual guide to the area [Red Hook WaterStories](#) which includes a complete list of retail businesses, art galleries, nonprofits, and history info. This work should be done in tandem with (b) below.
  - b. **Fund wayfinding signs outside and within Atlantic Basin.** There are no signs identifying this as Atlantic Basin from the outside and no wayfinding maps within it. Many people struggle to find their way in, out and around this vast place: deliveries to tenants, people headed to the ferry, cruise passengers looking for public transportation or places to visit/spend time. This wayfinding should be created by PortSide and other tenants working with wayfinding pros. PortSide proposes to add interpretation of history and current maritime to some of the signs,

making Atlantic Basin an attraction, an appealing maritime gateway to Red Hook as we pitched to the EDC [here](#). Also needed is signage saying there is no public parking for ferry passengers.

- c. **Install outdoor wifi from BCT to Pioneer Street fence.** This will help foreign cruise ship passengers get info on transit and local attractions; they have different SIM cards in their phones and cannot get internet without wifi. PortSide finds them wandering around this vast sea of asphalt looking for wifi and info. Red Hook's local internet company BK Fiber should be paid to do this installation. They have experience here as the wifi installer for BCT, the emergency Covid hospital installed in BCT, and the Formula E car race.
  - d. **Create an informative landing page on the new wifi network.** This will explain the NYC Ferry system to BCT passengers, as hundreds queue up to find that they cannot get on the small boats. The landing page would also direct them to PortSide inside the Pier 11 warehouse where they could spend time and get local info at our tourism center. That landing page would also show PortSide's [virtual guide to Red Hook](#) to facilitate BCT passengers visiting Red Hook or getting to bus and subway, show our resiliency info so locals using the wifi as they wait for ferries learn about flooding and how to prepare.
  - e. **Create BCT schedule webpage.** A special webpage with the BCT schedule should be created listing all the dates ships are due, and which ships are "ports of call" ships, the ones whose passengers are visiting NYC as opposed to just loading off and on. The latter is key to support local businesses and help locals know when to avoid using the NYC Ferry as it will be overwhelmed by cruise passengers. This webpage should have ship info such as crew count, passenger count and passenger demographics (are they seniors, families, Americans, Europeans, etc). It should also list all the special events at BCT, their themes and demographics to help businesses pitch their services (vend at the event) or prepare for a surge of customers. Helpful info is day, hours of the event, number of attendees, event theme. For example, a tech conference with 2,500 attendees could lead to a lot of people in their 20s and 30s hitting Red Hook bars and restaurants after the event in the evening, whereas a morning port security conference of 100 people might, at most, lead to a small spike in local lunch business. A Hassidic wedding attended by 5,000 (this has occurred at BCT) will lead to a sudden rush of traffic before and after, but little economic activity at local bars and restaurants. PortSide did the matchmaking between Ports America and a local vendor United Sandwiches of America so that BCT staff have a food truck on cruise ship days.
  - f. **Add special NYC ferries when a "port of call" cruise ship is in** (a ship where the passengers are visiting NYC) so that the ferries are not overwhelmed and locals can still use them.
  - g. **Allow PortSide to have a sign on the NYC Ferry dock.** The EDC has prohibited this since the ferry dock opened in 2017. It would say we are here, list our e-guide [Red Hook WaterStories](#) and a blurb and link to our flood prep info to help locals prepare for floods.
5. **Keep BCT from hurting Red Hook by fixing the BCT shorepower.** The lack of shorepower contributes to air pollution in Red Hook. The fix means shorepower needs to work reliably and for all ship sizes and types. We have recently spotted cranes on the west side of Pier 12 and are wondering if this fix is underway. If it is not or if the current fix does not work, could this project be taken from the EDC, which has failed with this several times, and given to the DDC? We are concerned that having the EDC try again wastes money and time. Despite all the revenue this site generates for the EDC, Eric Adams, as Borough President, allocated \$750,000 in April 2021 for the

EDC to fix the shorepower.

**6. Reduce negative impacts of Formula E car race.** This event disrupts and hurts tenants during 5+ weeks of construction, race, and deconstruction. If the race occurs again, the EDC must financially compensate tenants for this. In the race's first years, the warehouse tenants did get some compensation; we don't know if this has continued. PortSide has never been offered compensation for the race by the EDC, though the race disruption kills attendance at our events so much that we have stopped trying to program for one month, which happens to be the key month of the summer. PortSide could receive an impact reimbursement from the EDC, or the EDC could fund us to move our ship and do programs some other place in their DockNYC portfolio.

**7. Resolve safety/security issues.**

- a. Immediately rebolt to stanchions embedded in the concrete a large, metal sign that blew down years ago and is wired to the fence where the south end of Pier 11 meets the sidewalk going to the ferries. The sign is wired to the chain link fence, and many of the wires have broken.
- b. Improve the pedestrian vehicle separation from the Pioneer Street gate to the ferry dock. The route is unclear to first-timers coming from land, and there is little physical safety (the raised sidewalk was removed for the Formula E race track; there are no DOT-approved bollards protecting people from moving vehicles).
- c. Paint a lane divider stripe at the Bowne Street vehicular entrance; there are many close calls there due to the blind curve and lack of lane demarcation.
- d. Have DOT paint a lane divider stripe on Bowne Street from Imlay to Van Brunt. Bowne is a bit to the south of the Atlantic Basin entrance, so exiting trucks often go into the left lane of Bowne since they can't tell it is a two-way street which blocks vehicles from turning onto Bowne from Van Brunt.
- e. Repair the doors (roll-up doors and man door) to bay 80 in Pier 11 so they can be closed, so intruders cannot get on the pier and the ships when the pier string piece gates are closed.
- f. Get the fire suppression system in the Pier 11 warehouse working again.

Should the Port Authority resume maintenance of the buildings and site signage since they have deteriorated so badly under EDC management?

Want a chronology of EDC planning efforts for Atlantic Basin? Get it [here](#).