

PortSide NewYork comments and questions for USACE before hearing their 3/6/23 Zoom Town Hall presentation about HATS

Our final testimony will be written after we hear their presentation and input from others.

Thanks to the Congressmembers Nydia Velazquez and Dan Goldman for bringing Army Corps to the community. Thanks to CB6 for co-hosting.

Concerns:

1. USACE method. It's not acceptable to not communicate with the community and do something TO them while thinking you are doing something FOR them. You need to work WITH the community. Not TO, not FOR, but WITH. We hope that changes with this meeting.
2. You need to give us an extension due to your lack of communication and collaboration.

Brooklyn D10 also needs more time because we are grappling with high turnover of elected officials during the pandemic. For Red Hook, it's been Congress – the key liaison for USACE work – and State Assembly, State Senate 2x, City Council, Borough President and Mayor, at the same time that the Brooklyn D10 electeds and community have been tackling big complex issues: re-envisioning the BQE, Gowanus Superfund, EPA abatement of Red Hook ballfields. the resiliency project at Red Hook NYCHA, the eruption of last mile facilities in Red Hook and Sunset Park (an EJ issue) on top of the effects of the pandemic itself.

Your plan could impede growth of maritime in Red Hook

As advocates for increasing maritime activity, PortSide is concerned that the placement of your wall could make this even harder by preventing or inhibiting maritime uses in several places. Note that Red Hook property owners have growing and trying to grow maritime activity in Red Hook since the early 90s. Getting permits has been an impediment.

The Army Corps already prevented a lot of maritime activity in Red Hook by ripping down piers as part of your drift prevent program. We got no credit for

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those piers. You owe Red Hook; don't take more away. (For people who don't know, as piers decayed large timbers began to float around and were hazardous. The USACE picks up "floatables" but also pulled down piers in Red Hook, we were told.)

Since the first resiliency planning meeting after Sandy, PortSide has advocated for solutions that are not high walls since we advocate for access to and use of the waterways. Use is what we want to stress there, not access to the waterfront to look at it.

Have you considered surge powered barriers? We know of some made by Belgian firm Aggeres. See <https://youtu.be/OFglSBzgVyl>

Where USACE wall is so close to water's edge as to seem to impede maritime (moving east to west):

1. Along Gowanus Bay, what was Bowne Storehouse, going S and W around through Hornbeck's homeport.
2. From Bryant Street up to Halleck in the Henry Street Basin – cutting off the waterfront from Samson Sound Stages that is planning a new building with a waterfront park at that corner
3. O'Connell's Beard Street Pier

Why did you choose to protect the Beard Street Pier & warehouse but not O'Connells Pier 41?

Have you worked with the O'Connell's during this process?

Waterfront attractions & heritage damaged by your plan

Your wall placement also destroys parts of the Red Hook waterfront that are major attractions/destinations and heritage sites:

1. the western esplanade of O'Connell's Beard Street Pier, going west along the esplanade past the Fairway/Food Bazaar Building to the park.
2. The historic atmosphere from Pier 41 on Van Dyke around the corner to Coffey Street where 19th century brick warehouses are on all sides. Is there another solution for this area? Surge powered barriers?

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3. Cobblestone streets are a beloved part of Red Hook’s heritage, and resiliency assets for creating a more permeable surface that slows flash flooding. They should be preserved and repaired around any resiliency installation.

HALLECK ST TRUCK ROUTE:

Your wall looks like it may obstruct a truck route proposed for Halleck Street that community members and staff of federal, state and city officials worked on during the pandemic. That route is to address the surge in last mile trucking, moving the route south from Bay Street to Halleck. Your wall seems to be in the way in some places, but there’s a lack of detailed operational info about your wall.

1. Are there openings in the wall at all intersections? If not, which ones?
2. If there are openings, what kind of deployables are to be used?
3. Who deploys them?

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE (EJ)

The proper posture for dealing with EJ issues or helping a community beleaguered by EJ issues is not the one the USACE chose here (no consultation, no offer of a presentation until dragged to the table on the last day of the deadline).

Your assessment of Red Hook demographics and cultural features shows a resulting cluelessness. We have more schools than you list. We have many National Register eligible buildings, but to use National Register listings as a measure of heritage is to be insensitive to how preservation requests from communities like Red Hook are ignored and/or how it’s hard for a beleaguered community to have bandwidth to battle for these designations. Plus, speculative developers have gobbled up major parcels since the 90s and demolished historic structures. The Opportunity Zone program intensified that and looks to have supported a surge in last mile facilities being located in D10, Red Hook more than Sunset Park.

How does the White House Justice40 initiative come into play with HATS? Red Hook, Gowanus and Sunset Park are all EJ communities.

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CITYWIDE

To pull back to a citywide issue, why is there no flood protection for Hunts Point? That is a hardworking EJ community, and it's the site of the Hunts Points Market which receives and distributes most of NYC's perishable food. If that market is flooded out, NYC has a food shortage.

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