

# Inside Brooklyn's Building 77, a Modern Manufacturing Palace

 [thebridgebk.com/inside-brooklyns-building-77-a-modern-manufacturing-palace/](http://thebridgebk.com/inside-brooklyns-building-77-a-modern-manufacturing-palace/)

November 14, 2017

At the Navy Yard, a refurbished bunker-like structure is unveiled as a gleaming new workspace for 3,000 employees

By Arden Phillips - November 14, 2017

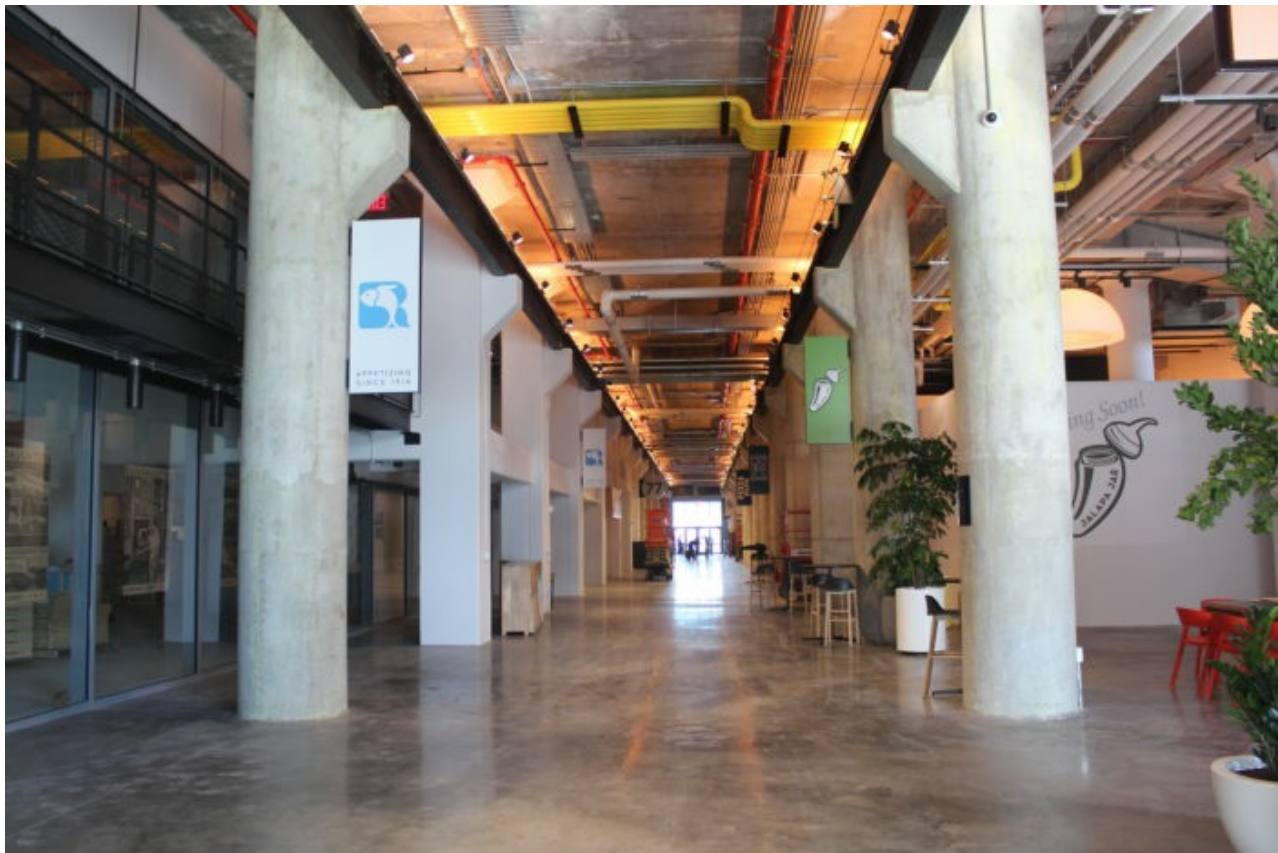


The refurbished Building 77 is expected to employ 3,000 workers (Photos by Arden Phillips except where noted)

The building today looks like a modern tech center built from scratch, with its gleaming walls of glass and muscular metal signs announcing BROOKLYN NAVY YARD 77. But in fact, Building 77 represents an enormous makeover from a 16-story concrete monolith that was constructed in just five months during 1941 as an office and storehouse for the wartime Navy Yard. The first 11 floors had no windows at all, and pilings had to be driven 150 feet below ground to support the weight of the gigantic building, according to the Brooklyn Historical Society

Thanks to a \$185 million renovation unveiled last week, Building 77 is now a modern, light-industrial hub that will bring 1 million sq. ft. of space to the already booming Navy Yard. The makeover took the basic strengths of the structure—including spacious, 58,000-

sq.-ft. floors and 10-foot ceilings—and added 50,000 sq. ft. of windows and modern infrastructure like 24/7 digital security.



The ground floor of the building will house 60,000 sq. ft. of food-making facilities and several retail outlets

The resulting 1 million sq. ft. of light-manufacturing space, about 85% already rented, will be the workplace of an estimated 3,000 employees. “The rise of Building 77 represents the type of sustainable and community-centered development that we need in Brooklyn,” U.S. Representative Hakeem Jeffries, whose 8th District includes neighboring Clinton Hill and Bedford-Stuyvesant, declared at the unveiling. “It will bring real jobs and economic opportunity to the hardworking people of the adjoining communities and throughout the borough.”

The ground floor of the building will house 60,000 sq. ft. of food-production facilities, anchored by Russ & Daughters, the 103-year-old maker of smoked fish, caviar, baked goods and specialty foods, whose Houston Street shop in Manhattan is an appetizing landmark. When Navy Yard management told the company they could use the space for manufacturing, “That was music to our ears—that’s not what you hear from most landlords,” fourth-generation co-owner Niki Russ Federman told *Curbed*. “As a business, once you get to a certain size, it’s very hard to stay and operate in the city. At the Navy Yard, we saw a base where we could grow and stay for decades.”



The food-making facilities will be anchored by century-old Russ & Daughters

While the ground floor is not designed to be a retail food court like the DeKalb Market Hall at City Point, it will offer workers several tempting Brooklyn-born dining choices. Among them: Brooklyn Roasting Co., salsa-and-taco brand Jalapa Jar, and Rustik Tavern. Upstairs, tenants will include the fashion brand Lafayette 148, which is relocating from its Soho headquarters and will occupy 100,000 sq. ft. The company reportedly considered moving to Sunset Park, but decided on the Navy Yard because it's more accessible to Manhattan.

All told, the 300-acre Navy Yard is expected to add 10,000 jobs over the next three years. To train potential workers for those jobs, Building 77 will team up with the city's Department of Education to provide vocational training to local high schools. The program will also help train groups that are sometimes overlooked or turned away in the job market, for example, formerly incarcerated people





While the building has been thoroughly modernized, reminders of its World War II heyday have been included

The goal is to create a variety of jobs, including good-paying industrial jobs that have disappeared from Brooklyn in recent decades. “As a major driver of quality middle-class jobs, investing in and expanding manufacturing space is key to growing and diversifying our economy and boosting wages,” said Mayor de Blasio at the building’s opening. The rejuvenated Navy Yard is city-owned property, operated by the non-profit Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corp and now home to more than 300 companies, double what it was 15 years ago.



A rendering of a light-flooded lobby area once the final touches are added (Image from Building 77)

Arden Phillips is a New York-based writer and a graduate of the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications at Syracuse University, where she received a degree in Television, Radio, and Film.