



THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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RUSH TRANSCRIPT: DE BLASIO ADMINISTRATION LAUNCHES MAJOR MANUFACTURING EXPANSION AT BROOKLYN NAVY YARD

David Ehrenberg: Mayor de Blasio and honored guests, good morning and welcome to the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and thank you for joining us on what is an extremely exciting day for us. I'm David Ehrenberg, president of BNYDC, the not-for-profit that manages and develops the yard on behalf of the city. Through our programs and initiatives, we support the 330 industrial and manufacturing companies that call the Navy Yard home, as well as the 7,000 employees that come to work here every day. We are joined today by Councilmember Cumbo, whose support was extremely important in securing the necessary funding for this project; as well as other local elected officials, including Representative Velasquez, whose support has been extremely important to us throughout the years; as well as – I'm sorry – State Senator Squadron, who's also with us. Thank you all for being here.

I must also thank our other financial partners in this project – the Robin Hood Foundation, whose support has been critical to the development of our employment center, as well as Goldman Sachs, the New York Regional Center, and Dudley Ventures, who are providing debt and equity to this project. There are members of our board here, including our board chair, Hank Gutman, who have obviously been extraordinarily important to the resurgence of the yard over the last few years, as well as this particular project. And finally I want to take a moment to call out the BNYDC staff and team, who often behind the scenes pours their heart and soul into the yard to ensure that we can deliver for our tenants, their employees, and the community.

Since the beginning of the year, the Navy Yard has pursued initiative to meet the mayor's mandate of expanding the middle class, ensuring economic opportunity for all, and supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses. The two projects being announced here today are two of the largest such initiatives, and will together allow us to further our mission of large scale, community-based economic development like never before. The foresight, vision, and leadership of Mayor de Blasio and Deputy Mayor Glen is driving progress at the yard – progress that will only accelerate in the coming years and ensure that there are economic opportunities for all New Yorkers here at the yard. Without further delay, it is my honor to introduce the mayor.

Mayor Bill de Blasio: Thank you very much, David. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

Thank you, David. Thank you for your extraordinary leadership as the president of the Brooklyn Navy Yard. This facility is such a good news story and you have continued to deepen that tradition. It's something all New Yorkers are proud of. I want to thank the chairman of the board of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, my good friend, Hank Gutman. And I want to thank, of course, our Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Housing Alicia Glen, for her tremendous leadership. This is an investment she believed in deeply and it's quintessential to what we're trying to do to create quality jobs for the long run for this city.

Now, Brooklyn Navy Yard is such a great example of how to do things right in the modern economy – how to create businesses that make sense in terms of the economic needs of today, how to employ a lot of people at good wages, and to ensure that people from surrounding communities get maximum opportunity. That’s what the Brooklyn Navy Yard has been all about. It has continued to get better and better each year, literally. The idea has grown and grown. The impact of the yard has grown and grown. There’s a – the willingness, the desire of employers to be here has grown and grown. And what’s interesting is the Navy Yard is the epitome of something very very quintessentially New York – the ability to reinvent, the ability to figure out where the future is going and get there to great effect.

Brooklyn Navy Yard, if you were to come here decades ago, was the largest – or one of the largest Navy yards in the country. It was, in its heyday, a place that employed tens of thousands of people. It was, in its heyday, a place that probably people believed would continue to be a Navy yard for every – forevermore, and a ship-building facility forevermore. The world changed. And what the city of New York did, to its great credit, is saw a new use for the Navy Yard that was very dynamic, that moved with the times – and the successive leaders of the Navy Yard have built upon that over and over again. So if you want to have a snapshot of the vibrancy of the New York City economy, the dynamicness, the ability of the economy here to see the future and react to it and move with it – here you find it at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which is now a vibrant hub for modern manufacturing, for technology, for the things that will define our future.

Today, I’m very pleased to announce a \$140 million dollar investment by the city, by the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation, by the Brooklyn borough president, and the City Council – more than \$73 million of which is from the city directly. This is for the ongoing transformation of Building 77, where you are today. This is an extraordinary building. Building 77 is a real centerpiece of the yard – one million square feet – it’s literally 25 percent of all the built space in the Brooklyn Navy Yards. This is a pivotal facility. And what will be created here will be beautiful, environmentally-friendly 21st century workspaces, ideal for next generation enterprises.

One new tenant is FXE Industries, which is creating the next great motorcycle. Ed Jacobs, where are you? Ed is creating the next great motorcycle here in Brooklyn.

[Cheers]

[Applause]

Now, Ed gets a lot of different credit here. He is creating it in Brooklyn. He went to Pratt, a great Brooklyn institution, and he likes this place because it has all the resources and facilities he needs to build his business – and it’s just a short commute from his home in Bushwick. This is a Brooklyn trifecta here. [Laughs] Thank you very much, Ed, for what you’re creating.

Now, the city’s investment is about more than just physical building and the businesses that will be here – it is about jobs, it is about building the economic future for our people. From the beginning, our vision is about the growth of our economy, the creation of jobs, the creation specifically of jobs that are high-quality jobs – good wages, good benefits, the kind of jobs that can sustain families. And that’s what you find here at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. When this building is completed, it will increase employment at the Navy Yard by more than 40 percent – 40 percent on what’s already a great success story.

And we’re committed to making sure that a significant portion of these jobs go to local residents – and this is something the Brooklyn Navy Yard has done a great, great job at – a focus on serving local communities. In the past three years, the employment center here at the Navy Yard has helped more than 600 New Yorkers find jobs – 24 percent from the surrounding community, 21 percent are public housing residents. We’ve gotten help from the Robin Hood Foundation, which we appreciate, and with that, the yard will expand its employment center so it can do even more.

The project we're announcing today, the investment we're announcing today, is part of our broader mission. It is part of going full square at the income inequality crisis, at the inequality gap in this city. This is the way you address these problems head on – by creating these kind of quality jobs and making sure there's real opportunity for those who need a good job to get connected to them. This is one piece of a strategy that will have many, many pieces. Some of it is starting at the beginning in our public schools, with pre-k, with afterschool. Some of it is the investments we're making in CUNY, in STEM programs. Some of it is what we'll do to specifically help industries grow in this city – and we've talked about so many industries that are thriving here, that do offer those high-paying jobs that we're doing a lot to facilitate, so they can build here. We're doing other things of course to help keep pushing up wages and benefits, like paid sick leave law, like the living wage executive order. All of these pieces are necessary. I want to emphasize that – they're all necessary. No single piece alone will address the inequality crisis. All of these pieces are necessary and they have to keep building over time to reach more and more people.

And through our economic strategy, we are focusing smart investments of city funds in projects like Building 77. They'll yield – this is what we're looking for – a project like this that yields a large number of jobs and high-quality jobs in terms of wages. We'll be doing more of this across the city – places like the Brooklyn Army Terminal and the Hunts Point Market, both of which have even greater potential that we want to tap into. So when I talk about one city rising together, I want you to think of a place like Building 77 – I want you to think of the Navy Yard, where people's lives are being transformed right now. And this is what we came here to do.

A few words in Spanish.

[*Mayor de Blasio speaks in Spanish*]

We all want more *puestos de trabajo*. [Laughs]

All right, with that – good, you were next. I was about to let you skip the line, but okay. I am pleased to say we've just been joined and we welcome – we welcome Borough President Adams, Deputy Mayor Glen, Councilmember Steve Levin, and Senator Montgomery. Welcome to you all.

[Mayor de Blasio introduces various elected officials]

[Various elected officials speak]

[Mayor de Blasio introduces Brooklyn resident Dana Brown]

[Dana Brown speaks]

Mayor: All right, we're going to take questions on topic first, then we'll go to off topic. On topic.

Question: Mayor, I was wondering if maybe you or someone else could talk a little bit about the history – a little bit more about the history of this building – what it was used for [inaudible]?

David Ehrenberg: This building was built in the run-up to World War II. It was actually built in about six months. The bottom 11 floors were storage space. The top five floors were the offices of the commandant of the yard, where they oversaw the wartime efforts during World War II. Most recently, it was used as extremely passive storage. There were perhaps a couple dozen jobs in the entire building. We took it back now about four years ago or so, and have been planning the redevelopment ever since.

Question: [inaudible] during World War II or before then?

David Ehrenberg: It was – the general supplies necessary for – for the ships. It had been reported that it was a munitions depot and it was apparently not, according to our historians.

Mayor: There are no munitions here, if you're concerned.

[Laughter]

Yes.

Question: Can you elaborate on [inaudible] expand upon what was planned previously? [inaudible]?

Mayor: [inaudible]

David Ehrenberg: The original plan was about half the – half the size, both in terms of cost and in terms of jobs that would've been created. Effectively, it would've left the bottom floors of this building without windows, which meant that it would have to be returned back to warehousing and distribution uses, which are not particularly job intensive. And so we took a timeout on the project, redesigned it, and then, working with the city, secured the additional funding necessary – as well our council people and borough president – necessary to add windows and [inaudible] safety, more elevators, everything necessary in the building to support that many additional workers.

Mayor: Okay, on topic – yes –

Question: [inaudible] green roof [inaudible]?

David Ehrenberg: We – that is certainly in our – in the planning stages right now. We have not fully designed all elements of the building, but we have spoken with Brooklyn Grange, who operates that – the farm across the way, and we are planning out the required infrastructure that would be necessary for a green roof [inaudible].

Question: What's the timetable for this? And also I noticed [inaudible] motorcycle [inaudible]?

David Ehrenberg: So in terms of timing, we expect to deliver the building in 2016 – mid to late 2016. This building will be a mix of existing Yard tenants and new tenants. We have been 100 percent occupied for ten years. Today, we literally have not a single square foot to lease at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, and we have not been able to keep up with demands of our existing tenants as they've wanted to expand and grow their employment. So we will certainly be going to our existing tenants and putting them into this building, either out of their existing space or just expanding into this building. We will then fill the space if anybody moves out, of course, with smaller companies. This, though, we do believe will get us in front of the curve, for the first time in ten years, where we will be able to bring in new – new tenants into the yard.

Mayor: I just want to add a note as a layman. This place is hot as can be. And any space that's created here will be filled – that's the reality. There's a huge demand to be here. On topic, going once. On topic, going twice – there's always the person who likes to raise their hand just at the end of going twice. That person is not here now. Okay, we're going to –

[Laughter]

– we're going to off topic.

Question: Mr. Mayor, your office put out a statement regarding Rachel Noerdlinger's decision to take a leave of absence. Can you [inaudible] what exactly is involved with a leave of action and if it will be paid or not paid or – ?

Mayor: Well, once she – once she goes on leave, she will not be paid of course – it's leave. You know, she made a decision to focus on her family, and I respect that decision for sure. There'll be a period of transition until she takes the leave, but once she takes the leave, you know, that means she is no longer on the payroll. Obviously, you know, that's an open-ended dynamic as she works on, you know, trying to make sure she can do all she can for her family.

Question: [inaudible]?

Mayor: No, it's indefinite. It's indefinite so that she can focus on what's her first priority.

Question: Are you sorry that [inaudible]?

Mayor: Of course. Look, I – I could get into a larger discussion about public life in America today. I would only [inaudible] and I think you probably all don't have enough time for that, so I'll make it simple. I think she's a hard-working public servant who's tried to do good throughout her life. I think the notion that, somehow in modern society, not just your own actions, but you know, your girlfriend or boyfriend, your own teenage child – somehow all of this is fair game in the public discourse. I think something's gone wrong here that we need to really look at. It's going to be very hard to get good people into public service if we continue on this path. Now maybe there are some people out there who like that fact, maybe they want to discourage good people from going into public service. I, for one, think that everyone deserves some measure of privacy in their private life, even if they are a public servant.

Yes.

Question: [inaudible] do you plan to replace her and give the first lady a new chief of staff instead? And two – can you explain what the staff of the first lady does on a day-to-day basis?

Mayor: Sure. First of all, the first lady will make a decision about her own chief of staff. From my understanding, she'll bring in a new person, because obviously this is an open-ended leave. I think the notion is that my wife plays a very, very active role in this administration as chair of the Mayor's Fund, as someone that I consider a crucial advisor on a whole host of matters, as someone who represents the city of New York in a variety of activities around the city – events, et cetera. She played, obviously, a very leading role in our efforts to secure full-day pre-k for example, and she'll continue to work on a host of areas. So – and I will say with great admiration for her, she's in demand in a lot of different places. So the notion of the chief of staff is to organize all of that work for greatest effect on behalf of the people of this city. And my wife is a public servant who, for whatever reason, has chosen to take no money from the people of New York City to be a public servant, and she gives of herself for free, and she does a lot of work on behalf of the people of this city, and I think she's doing a great job. So her chief of staff is the person who obviously organizes that work with her.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: This is one of the more surreal moments I've experienced – when the state GOP chairman is telling you what I'm doing with my life. I am entirely honored to be mayor of New York City and at some point will talk about – when the time is right – re-election to this post – and that's all I'm doing.

Question: Mr. Mayor, will the new chief of staff be paid the same salary?

Mayor: It will depend on the situation.

Question: In her statement, Rachel referred to [inaudible] attempts to derail the administration. In a statement from Reverend Al Sharpton, [inaudible]. I was wondering if you could speak a little bit [inaudible] and also what you think [inaudible] police unions, who obviously you'll have to be negotiating with – I mean, [inaudible]?

Mayor: Look, I separate the negotiation process at all times, and I've been very up front with all of my friends in labor that whatever they do publicly has no bearing on our negotiation process. If some people think they're creating positive pressure for themselves with their public pronouncements, they are sorely mistaken. We negotiate on behalf of the people, we negotiate on behalf of the taxpayer, we think about what's right for the long term of this city. They can have all the pronouncements and protests they want – it doesn't affect our negotiating position. On the public discourse, we're all mature adults here. This is – a lot of really nasty stuff was done here. It is clearly for a purpose. This just – it's quite obvious. Why would so much attention be given to one person and her personal life? It's clearly a pretty systematic effort to undermine certain work that's being done – and we're not going to be dissuaded by that one bit. You know, it's like, do whatever you want to do. We're going to keep doing our work. The people want us to do our work. We're going to keep doing it. Wait – who hasn't gotten in?

Question: [inaudible] new park that's being built over the Hudson and [inaudible] the amount of money that's being given by some private citizens in order to [inaudible] money that the city's putting into it? What do you expect the result of that to be and how long – do you have any idea how long it will take?

Mayor: I can't give you an exact timeline. I think it's going to be a great deal for the people of this city. I think it's going to give us a lot more park space in that part of the city that people can enjoy. It's going to be fully open to the public. And – look, I know a good deal when I see one. If someone offers us a lot of resources to create something we need, and with minimal investment by the city, I think that's great. And what I'll – what I'll insist on was already in the plan – that it be available to all, and it is.

Question: Mr. Mayor, are you and the first lady expecting Ms. Noerdlinger to return to the administration to some point in the near future, is she welcome [inaudible]

Mayor: Well, first of all – again, attempting to get facts through – it's an indefinite leave, because she's attending to family issues, and I don't think any of us knows exactly how our family dynamics play out. So, point one, it's an indefinite leave. Point two, it's a leave. By definition, she is welcome back to the administration if she gets to the point that she decides that's the right thing to do. As I said, the actual chief of staff role will need to be filled, but there's plenty of other important work to be done, and she brings a lot to the table.

Who did I see – Jen?

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I think that's Jen, but with the hard hat – forgive me, I'm not 100 percent sure.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: I'm – guys, I really am not going to spell it out too much longer. I think it's pretty obvious. We've seen this – we saw this in the 1950s, we've seen this throughout the history of this country. If someone wants to smear people, and use that for political purposes, there's a pretty easy playbook for doing it. It's repulsive, but it's become quite common. The idea is that for those of us who have a sense of mission, we're not going to let it stop us. So, character assassination happens every day in public life. What's sad is when it goes beyond the boundaries of the public servant, and starts to be something that could include anyone they ever met – any family member, anyone they're romantically involved with, their children. It's something – look, you guys do what you want to do. But for the rest of us, as citizens, as people trying to make this city better or this country

better, we have to get on with the work, and not be putting so much time and energy into one person's personal life when we have things like affordable housing, job creation, education to talk about. The public doesn't want to talk about these scandals and gossip and everything else. They want to talk about what will make their lives better. And I, for one, am not going to be distracted. We're going to work on the issues of helping people's lives in this city.

Phil: Couple more, guys.

Mayor: In the back.

Question: [inaudible]

Mayor: No. [Laughs]

[Commotion]

Question: Mr. Mayor, do you feel that all of this is [inaudible] specifically, in your opinion, [inaudible]?

Mayor: I think it is far, far overblown. I think it's perfectly fair to say if a public servant does something that people have concerns about, that's great – but again, when you start going into a child, you know, when you start going into a boyfriend – where are we going? Where are we going? Does everyone want – would you all like to have that discussion about yourselves? You're in the public eye. This is – something's wrong, guys. Something's really wrong here. This should be about the issues, it should be about the substance, it should be about what we're trying to achieve for people. So, I'm very comfortable with the fact that we have brought together an extraordinary group of people to do hard work on behalf of the citizens of this city. They're giving their all to try and make people's lives better. We're going to stay on the mission, and I wish there was more time and energy and space devoted to affordable housing and job creation and education and things that actually affect people's lives.

Yes sir.

Question: You talked about this being a matter of someone's [inaudible]. At the same time, many people in this city associate you [inaudible] your relationship with [inaudible]

Mayor: No, I don't, because I ran for office. I ran for office. That's a very, very different dynamic. Again, if you want no one to become public servants, keep doing what you're doing. Maybe some people want it that way. I think the bottom line here is – someone runs for office, okay. We're putting ourselves out there, in a way that's very different than 40 years ago, right? 40 years ago, your family life was considered personal – people kept to certain ground rules. Now, apparently, there are no ground rules. Not surprisingly, a lot of people don't want to go into public life. I would ask you all to consider what effect that's having on our city, our state and our nation – if you're interested. But when it comes to a public servant who signs up to work as an appointee – I'm sorry. It's just not the same thing. I don't – their child should not be our interest. That's the bottom line.

Thank you, everyone.

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