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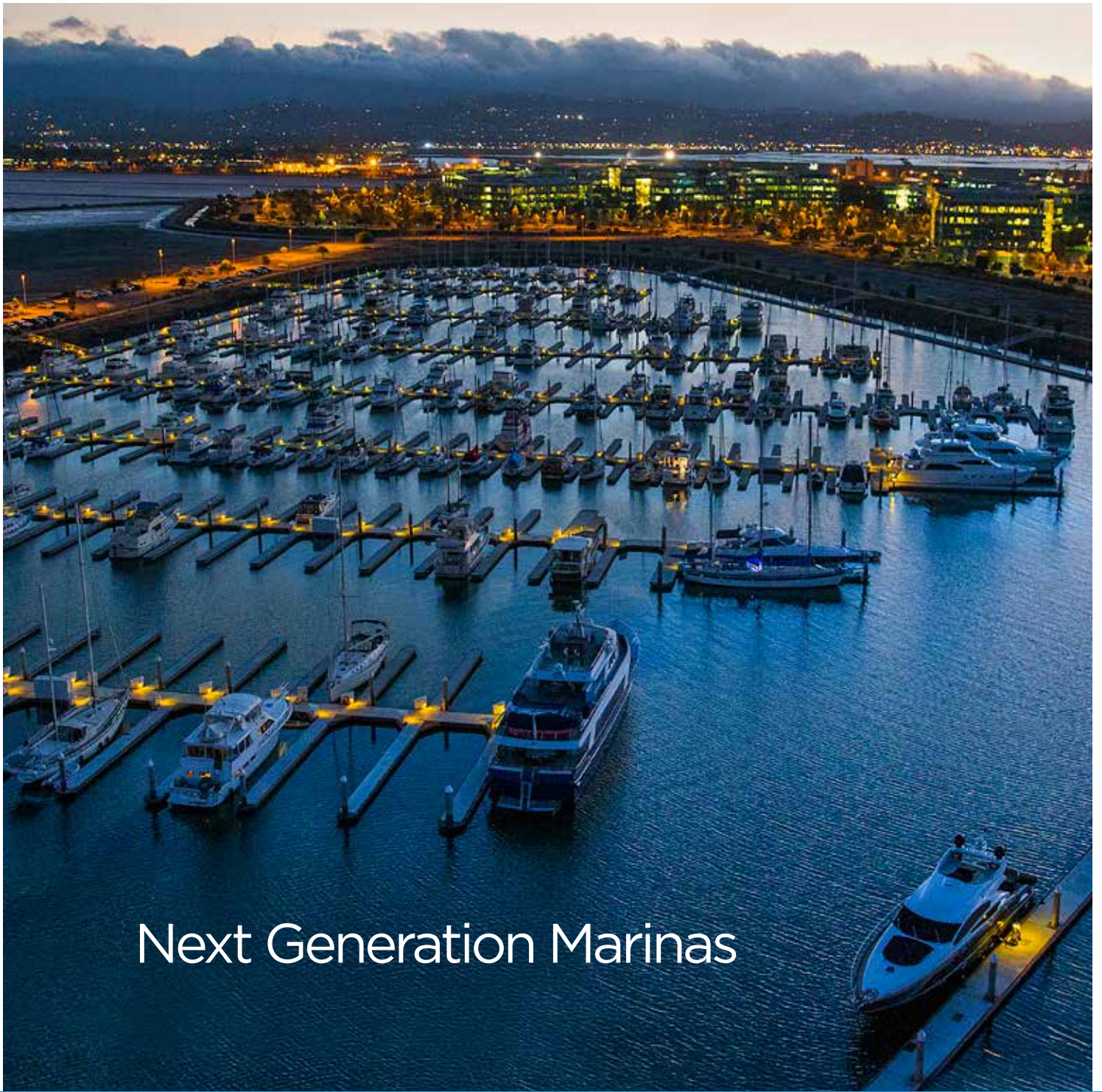
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# Bluewater Bay Marina

- 2017 Photo Contest Cover Winner: see other entries starting on pg. 30
- Boatyard Efficiency, pg. 13
- Animal Nuisances, pg. 22
- Marina Fueling Procedures, pg. 32

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## Dormant for 40 Years, The Yards Brings the Waterfront to Life

By Robert Wilkes

Children splashing under a waterfall in an enormous wading pool, a parade of mothers pushing strollers down the boardwalk, yoga classes, concerts, artisanal ice cream, taco-Korean fusion cuisine, residential apartments in a former Navy Yard foundry and office working spaces in a repurposed lumber shed are some of the things you'll find at The Yards on the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C.

The water is humming with life as well. Water taxis soon will take people to work and play. Paddleboards and kayaks explore the river, and on the Education Dock, Living Classrooms Foundation, a non-profit organization, teaches disadvantaged youth life skills and gives them hands-on job training. On game day boaters moor at The Yards Marina, have dinner in an au courant locally-owned restaurant, walk to Nationals Park baseball stadium to see a game and

return home under the stars by boat—avoiding the traffic snarl on the highways. The Yards development has made this 48-acre, once-abandoned industrial site explode with life and created a new neighborhood on the river.

Few areas in the U.S. have as much unrealized potential for waterfront development as Washington, D.C. Bordered by the Potomac and bisected by the Anacostia Rivers, the District of Columbia has waterfront in abundance, much of it formerly federal land. D.C. boat owners typically drive to Annapolis and put their boats in the Chesapeake Bay.

The rivers will no longer be lifeless backdrops in tourist photographs. They will be buzzing with boats, water taxis and excursion cruises. Projects like The Yards are now coming on line thanks to large-scale public-private partnerships. The Yards Marina is now operating on the Anacostia and a nearby major

development with a marina is soon to open on the Potomac.

### Community Development

The developer of The Yards is Forest City Realty Trust in partnership with a number of federal, local and non-profit agencies and organizations. The project is a long-term commitment to benefit the community. Sarah Forde, development director for Forest City, said, "We are committed to hire locally and engage with small and local businesses. So it's not just about pouring money into infrastructure, the marina and buildings. It's about creating jobs, creating exciting public spaces and getting everyone in the community involved with the waterfront."

The Yards will feature 3,400 residential units, 400,000 square feet of retail, dining and services, and 1.8 million square feet of office space at full build-out, expected in 15 to 20 years. Forest City estimates the investment will ultimately be \$2 billion and will include 25 buildings on 48 acres.

Three historic buildings, the Lumber Shed, the Foundry Lofts and the Boilermaker Shop, are protected under the National Historic Preservation



*The Yards Marina in Washington, D.C., is a small but active marina, within a much larger waterfront development.*

Act. They have been adapted and repurposed with sleek new materials while still preserving much of their original character.

The feature that has captured everyone's attention is Yards Park. The park is a huge success, with Friday night concerts, the DC Jazz Festival, exercise classes, a large water feature to play in and much more. The park's operating budget, more than \$1 million annually, is derived primarily from the District foregoing a portion of sales tax on the adjacent Lumber Shed restaurants, and also from private contributions, program sponsorships and lease revenue for events held in Yards Park.

## The Yards Marina

The floating dock marina provides 26 slips for annual leases and 25 slips for transient moorage in 40-, 50- and 60-foot double berths with side tie up to 120 feet. The District requires half the slips to be transient with stays of less than ten days to allow more people to enjoy the facilities. The boardwalk above the marina is finished in Ipe wood decking.

The 161-foot long by 41-foot wide Education Dock is made of match-cast, post-tensioned concrete modules in two levels. The upper level is surfaced in concrete and the lower level in composite decking. The lower level is 9 feet wide with a 15-inch freeboard for staging and launching paddle craft and kayaks. Bellingham Marine added an additional small launch step with a 9-inch freeboard as a convenient and safe boarding assist for kayakers and other paddle craft users.

Bellingham Marine staged the floats early because upland construction would have cut off access. The marina includes features for winterizing and power pedestals for each double berth. The GFI system trips at 5ma for each slip and 100ma at the mains. Well-designed GFI is important because there is increased danger to swimmers near boats in freshwater as compared to saltwater.

"There were some challenges," said Bill Huffman of Structural Systems Analysis, structural engineer on the project. "Subway tunnels go under the marina, so we couldn't drive pile. We



*The floating docks have 25 slips. The District requires that half the slips are for transient boaters, who can stay up to 10 days.*

selected a Seaflex flexible anchoring system and specified 4-ton anchor blocks. The river had an especially soft bottom that required a 30 day waiting period for the blocks to settle into the mud. They were then tested with a tugboat to validate they provided the required holding strength. The bi-level Education Pier is made of one piece castings. We had to calculate extra ballast to be added during manufacture to ensure it floated level."

The Yards occupies land formerly part of the Washington Navy Yard. An industrial section of the Navy Yard was designated surplus and transferred to the Government Services Administration (GSA) in the 1960s. It sat there for 40 years.

Eleanor Holmes Norton is the District's representative in Congress. She led efforts to bring in private developers to improve the site for the benefit of the community and the District. "I couldn't bear that there was a wasteland five minutes away from the Capitol," Norton said.

An act of congress in 2003 authorized the GSA to put the site up for development. The resulting RFP required the private developer to partner with a non-profit capable of providing educational and employment opportunities to the community. Forest City Realty Trust partnered with Living Classrooms Foundation and submitted a successful 500-page bid. Prior to their involvement in The Yards, Living

Classrooms had operated Center Dock Marina in Baltimore for nearly 30 years, employing people from their education and workforce development programs.

The Yards is proving the wisdom and effectiveness of public-private partnerships. The District believes this to be the best arrangement to envision, build and operate the city's valuable waterfront. Forest City Realty Trust benefits the District as it builds and manages hundreds of tax-paying retail, office and residential properties. A Business Improvement District (BID) called The Capitol Riverfront BID was formed to provide maintenance and upkeep of Yards Park and other public spaces.

Forest City's Forde said, "This was an industrial site for the Navy, and it lacked infrastructure. It didn't have a proper road network, street grid and utilities. We had to come up with creative solutions to fund the infrastructure and the marina."

Some of the needed funding resulted from developing a series of PILOT funding sources. PILOT stands for "payment in lieu of taxes." For example, the real estate taxes of nearby buildings, including the Department of Transportation, are used to defray development costs of the infrastructure including Yards Park and the marina. After a set period of time, the taxes revert back to the District. In addition, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service provided a grant of more than \$1 million for the marina.

## Living Classrooms

The program takes advantage of natural and maritime resources available at The Yards. The Education Dock is a “Living Classroom,” offering education and hands-on job training to help disadvantaged youths achieve their potential. The organization’s historic vessel, the Half Shell, is docked at the marina and is also a living classroom. D.C. youth participate in hands-on STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) and environmental education programming while exploring the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Living Classrooms in partnership with Oasis Marina Management operates the slips and the taxi dock. Profits from the marina support the Living Classrooms Foundation.

With Nationals Park baseball stadium nearby and a professional soccer stadium on the way, The Yards Marina has an additional revenue stream as a boat parking lot during sports events. Current pricing for three hours before to three hours after the game is \$30 Monday to



The waterfront includes Yards Park in addition to the marina, and the 48-acre development has plans for more residential, retail and dining services in the next 15 to 20 years.

Thursday and \$50 Friday and Sunday and holidays with an extra charge for electricity. There is also a similar “dine and dock” rate of \$10 weekdays and \$20 weekends for four hours, no reservations.

The Yards Marina on the Anacostia and the nearby Wharf Marina (scheduled to open October 2017) on the Potomac are large-scale, big-city developments on the

waterfront. These are bold leaps forward in boating infrastructure that will make these rivers an exciting place to own and use a boat. Once an underutilized asset, the riverfronts of Washington, D.C. are coming to life. ⚓

*Robert Wilkes writes about the marina industry from Bellevue, Washington.*

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