

**FINAL DRAFT**

**CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD**

# **VISITOR EXPERIENCE PLAN**

USS CONSTITUTION MUSEUM  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
UNITED STATES NAVY

**FINAL REPORT  
AUGUST 2018**

**BY SASAKI &  
LORD CULTURAL RESOURCES**

# CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD: HOME TO AMERICA'S SHIP OF STATE

The Charlestown Navy Yard has proudly served the nation for nearly two hundred years. Here, naval personnel and thousands of civilian workers built, repaired, and supplied warships from the majestic vessels of the nineteenth century to the powerful steel navy that sailed from Boston to defend freedom across the world.

Today, the Navy Yard is once again poised to serve a vital community function: as the hallowed ground of U.S. history and a vibrant locus of contemporary life and learning.



CHARLESTOWN

Charlestown Navy Yard

EAST BOSTON

DOWNTOWN

Freedom Trail

Black Heritage Trail

Boston Harbor Trail

BOSTON HARBOR

SOUTH BOSTON

HARBOR ISLANDS



Led by a consortium of partners and informed by broad community input, the visioning process unfolded over nearly two years. In the pages that follow, a vision for the Navy Yard's future begins to take shape. This document, the result of a thorough and consensus-driven process, is part plan — and part provocation.

It catalogs the Navy Yard's remarkable assets, but is not limited by them. It collects the needs of individual partners and publics, but prizes common interests. It sees the Navy Yard for the amazing resource that it is, but also for what it is yet to become. If it does nothing else, it strives to project the boundless optimism, ambition, and innovation that has ever defined this, one of America's most iconic places. Below is a brief summary of the salient points that emerged from the visioning process:

- The USS *Constitution* is an American icon. She is the US Ship of State. She deserves a setting within the National Park that is world class.
- The presence of the US Navy — manifested in "Old Ironsides" and USS *Cassin Young* — serves as a powerful reminder of global commerce and defense. These historic ships offer a window into maritime culture, naval service, and the American Experience.
- CNY has a strong visual and experiential identity as a place to see and touch history, to interact with knowledgeable people, to learn, to come to the water, and to share stories.
- CNY is distinctive among historic destinations in that it remains a "working yard" while also accommodating residents, businesses, and cultural sites.
- Visitors enjoy high-quality, varied, place-based experiences that reveal the history, significance, and relevance of the yard. The labor history of the site includes compelling stories of workers, including African Americans, immigrants, and women, who participated in important innovations.
- The collaborative work of the partners offers a spectrum of experiences that connect people with each other and bring new audiences to a broader understanding of this place.
- The visitor experience extends beyond the immediate site to incorporate the entire Navy Yard and encourages integration of the park and community resources that provide a full menu of experiences.
- CNY is seen as a gateway to the Boston harbor and has strong connections to other harbor sites and the islands.
- CNY benefits from the collective impact of strong public-private partnerships.



### **01 Process and partnership**

The first comprehensive planning effort since the Navy Yard became part of the National Park System, this eighteen-month process drew on the insights of the Navy Yard Partners — Boston National Historical Park, USS Constitution Museum, US Navy, Naval History & Heritage Command Detachment Boston — expertise of multiple stakeholders, and the wisdom of a community.

### **02 Then and Now**

The Navy Yard has long been a key site of American History. Today, as two hundred years ago, it remains a cultural touchstone: a site of pilgrimage, the setting for daily community life and the home of the USS *Constitution*.

### **03 A Case for Change**

The Navy Yard is a priceless asset, a symbol of national pride and local identity. As it enters the next chapter in its history, the Yard will compel, engage, and delight new generations of diverse audiences.

### **04 The Big Ideas**

Three discrete but interrelated concepts weave through both the interpretive dimension of the Navy Yard and its physical site. Together, they invite visitors to explore surprising stories embedded in the landscape; experience a place that is attuned to the needs of diverse communities; and embark on journeys to Boston Harbor and beyond.

### **05 Envisioning the Future**

A series of strategic interventions touch on visitor paths, building use, landscape strategies, and interpretive content. They form a framework for a cohesive and welcoming visitor experience — preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Yard and integrating new amenities for future visitors.

### **06 Next steps**

The Visitor Experience Plan is part of a master planned approach to allow the park to offer a cohesive visitor experience and enhance stewardship of park resources. This visioning document is the first step towards a reenergized Navy Yard. Short-term projects can bring about needed changes and maintain momentum; longer-term initiatives can transform the site for decades to come.





# PROCESS AND PARTNERSHIP: PUBLIC THINKING

The first comprehensive planning effort since the Navy Yard became part of the National Parks System, this eighteen-month process drew on the insights of the Navy Yard Partners, expertise of multiple stakeholders, and the wisdom of a community.



## PROJECT PARTNERSHIP

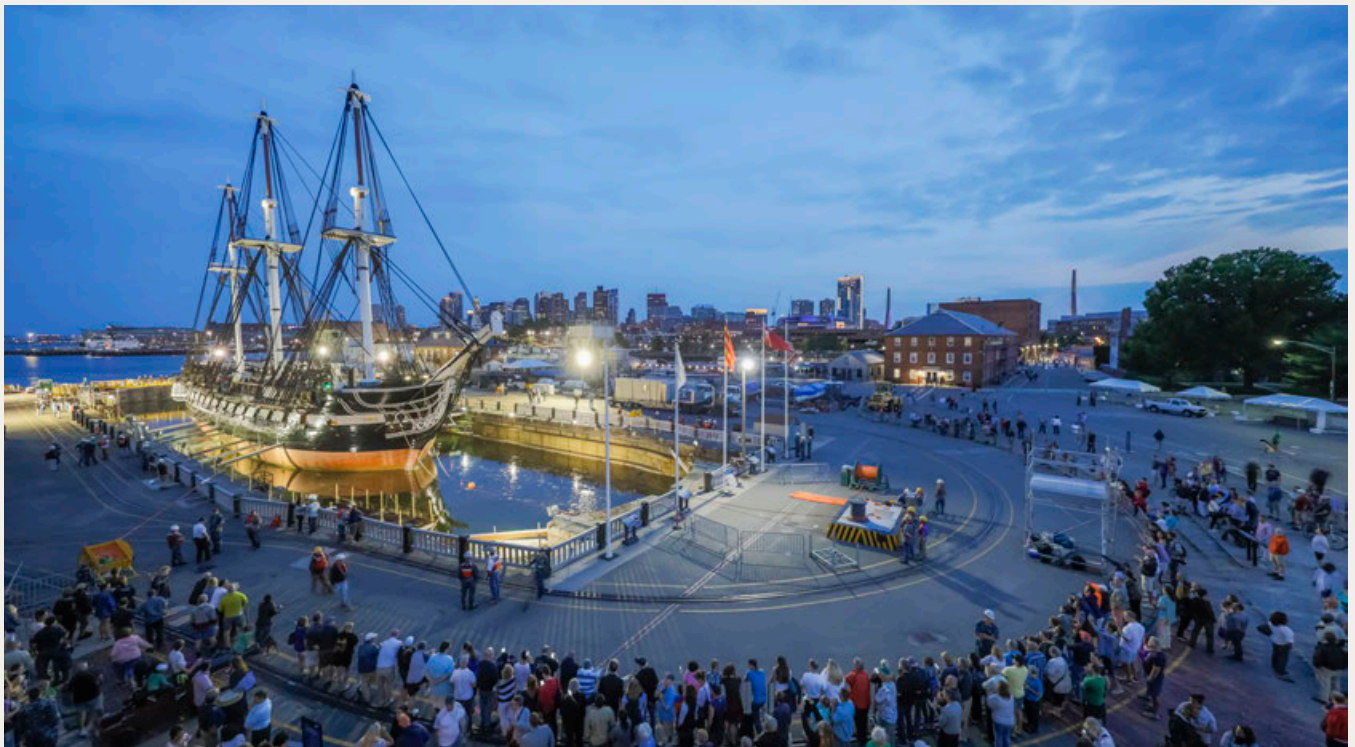
The vision expressed in this document is the direct result of an exceptional collaboration among three distinct entities who share the physical space of the Charlestown Navy Yard, as well as the responsibility for its stewardship. This collective effort asked the Boston National Historical Park, the US Navy, and the USS Constitution Museum to forge a common understanding that both supports and exceeds their individual missions.

The Boston National Historical Park, the US Navy, and USS Constitution Museum aspire to forge connections within Boston's diverse community groups and the creative sector; to cultivate people and institutions that will be voices and champions for the long term stewardship of the Park; to create a community identity that acknowledges the Navy Yard's unique history and natural and built environments; to foster an identity that builds on the Navy Yard's tradition of creative

invention; to reinvigorate and reimagine the Navy Yard as a cultural destination reflective of Boston's cultural fabric; and to forge sustainable conditions for meeting the 21st-century functional needs of visitors to the Park, USS *Constitution*, and USS Constitution Museum.

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Below: Undocking the USS *Constitution* in 2017 after a two year restoration process



## Boston National Historical Park

As a partnership park, Boston National Historical Park preserves, protects, promotes, and interprets for the benefit and inspiration of all people, certain historic sites, structures, and artifacts of outstanding national significance located in Boston and associated with the American Revolution and the founding and growth of the United States.

## USS Constitution Museum

Engages all ages in the story of “Old Ironsides” to spark excitement about maritime heritage, naval service, and the American experience. The Museum seeks to create a positive, memorable experience for both children and adults by inspiring within them a love for the freedom that *Constitution* symbolizes. The Museum shares *Constitution*’s contributions with a global audience, and we will strive to be the best museum possible based on scholarship and innovative ways of sharing *Constitution*’s stories.

## USS *Constitution* — U.S. Navy

Promotes understanding of the Navy’s role in war and peace through educational outreach, historic demonstration, and active participation in public events as part of the Naval History and Heritage Command. As a fully commissioned U.S. Navy ship, USS *Constitution*’s crew of 75 officers and sailors participate in ceremonies, educational programs, and special events while keeping the ship open to visitors year round and providing free tours.

## US Naval History and Heritage Command

Collects, preserves, protects and makes available the artifacts, documents, and art that best embody our naval history and heritage for present and future generations;

Advances the knowledge of naval history and heritage through professional research, analysis, interpretation, products and services;

Makes naval history and heritage “come alive” for our Sailors and Marines to enhance readiness and *esprit de corps*;

Reminds America of its need to maintain a strong Navy and Marine Corps to protect its citizens, their freedoms and the nation’s maritime commerce. The primary focus of the US Naval History and Heritage Command at the Charlestown Navy Yard is the preservation of USS *Constitution*.

PROJECT TIMELINE



Analysis

Feb  
Project kickoff

Concept Development

Jun 21  
Core team charrette

Aug 16  
Visioning session with National Park Service, U.S. Navy and USSCM staff

Partner Outreach

Mar 13  
Thought leaders summit

Mar 14 - Apr 1  
Stakeholder interviews

May 2  
Visioning session with partners and Boston Planning and Development Agency

May 20  
Public Open House

Jul 5  
BPDA discussion

Mar 2017

May

Jul







## Concept Refinement

## Implementation

**Sep 8**

Visioning charrette

**Oct 12**

Visioning charrette

**Dec 14**

Internal draft plan  
open house

**Feb**

Signage and wayfinding /  
Gate 1 landscape

**Dec 8**

BPDA/Boston Harbor  
Now draft plan review

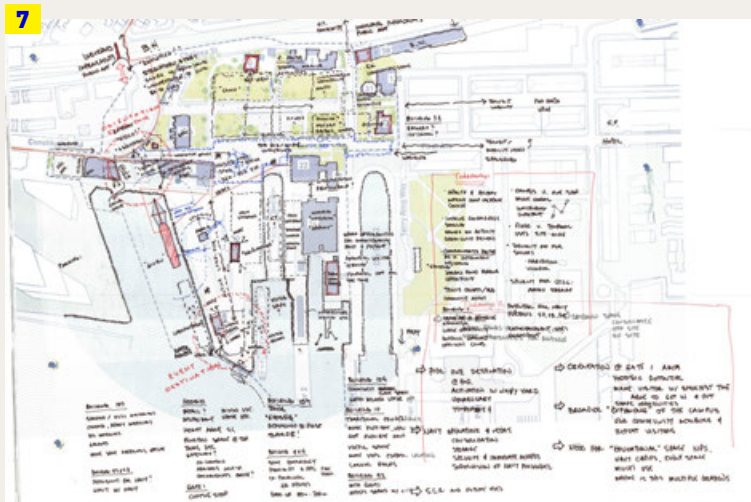
**Jan 11, 18**

Draft plan community open houses



Oct

Jan 2018



- 1 Assessment of current landscape conditions
- 2 Open House tent
- 3 Open House participants invited to indicate areas of challenges and opportunities
- 4 Charrette with all project partners
- 5 Documenting neighborhood context
- 6 Site observations and documentation with US Navy
- 7 Exploring alternatives with stakeholders

From visitors to the Museum and USS *Constitution*, to residents in Charlestown and throughout the city, the vision drew on a wide variety of sources, digital and traditional. The discovery processes focused on understanding existing challenges as well as on future aspirations. The results of these interactions, whether digital traces, written comments, or survey scores, were comprehensively analyzed to ground recommendations in the lived experience of residents, visitors, and Navy Yard workers.

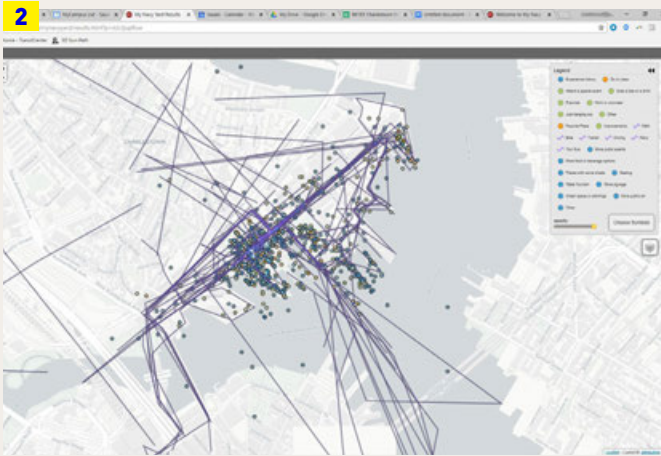
### FLOOR MAP EXERCISE

- New ideas
- Existing challenges



Digital Outreach

The digital mapping survey, MyNavyYard, invited participants to provide geo-tagged comments on their experience in the Navy Yard. The survey was distributed through the USSCM’s mailing list, and to a large number of stakeholders affiliated with the City and other nearby institutions.



1 Visitors were invited to place stickers on a large floor map, indicating positive and negative experiences at the Navy Yard  
2 MyNavyYard survey screen capture

One-on-one  
Conversations

The project team had extensive conversations with a wide range of stakeholders and experts about the Visitor Experience Plan. A partial list of these conversations is included below.

Stakeholders Consulted

- Alison Nolan  
Principal and General Manager,  
Boston Harbor Cruises, USS  
Constitution Museum Board of  
Trustees
- Anne Grimes Rand, Robert  
Kiihne, Sarah Watkins, Jennifer  
Zanolli  
USS Constitution Museum
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Bill McGonagle  
Boston Housing Authority
- Carole Charnow  
Director, Boston Children’s  
Museum
- CDR Robert Gerosa, LCDR Tim  
Anderson  
USS Constitution
- Cecilia Nardi, Elizabeth Stifel ,  
Corey Zehngebot  
BPDA Urban Design
- Charlestown Historical Society
- Chris Cook  
Commissioner, City of Boston  
Department of Parks

- David Beane  
President, DC Beane
- Dave DiLorenzo  
Courageous Sailing
- Dr. Nigella Hillgarth  
Director, New England Aquarium
- Harvard-Kent School Group
- Julie Burros, Kara Elloitt-Ortega  
Boston Creates
- Kathy Abbott, Meera Deean,  
Alice Brown  
Boston Harbor Now
- Lois Siegleman  
President, Friends of the  
Charlestown Navy Yard
- Margherita Desy, Richard Moore  
Naval History Heritage,  
Command Detachment Boston.
- Marriott Boston Harbor Tudor  
Wharf
- National Parks of Boston Staff
- Michael Manning  
Friends of Boston HarborWalk
- Peter Nash  
Executive Director, Charlestown  
Boys and Girls Club
- Rebecca Kaiser  
Spaulding Hospital
- Richard McGuinness, Chris  
Busch, Erik Hokenson  
BPDA
- Rickey Stern  
Executive Director, E-Inc.
- Susan Kane  
Massachusetts Department of  
Conservation and Recreation
- Thomas Kershaw  
USSCM Board, Founder, Owner,  
and Chairman of The Hampshire  
House Corporation
- Tom Cunha  
Chairman, Charlestown  
Neighborhood Council
- WalkBoston





**1** Visitors filling out comment cards

**2 3** The project team engaged with visitors through a variety of interactive formats



## Public Open House

A public open house was held at the Navy Yard on May 20, 2017, during which the project team spoke with hundreds of visitors and collected close to 200 written comments and survey responses. The open house which provided a rich snapshot of current perceptions of the Navy Yard, particularly from a visitor perspective.



## WHAT WE HEARD

Visitor Responses to “How Important Are the Following Items” (Sample Size = 157)



## Analysis of Results

The team analyzed results from the community engagement process—written comments, survey scores, and other raw data—and consolidated them into a set of easy-to-digest, data-centric analysis results. Interesting findings include, for example, a widespread desire to see more of the Navy Yard’s history interpreted in more creative ways.

### Orientation

- Use the ground plane as orientation
- Multilingual signs, maps and brochures

### Amenities

- Beer garden similar to Trillium on the Greenway
- Lots of food trucks
- Multi-use shade structures and seating
- Fitness and exercise circuit for Navy and public

### Family Activities

- Children’s activity area - hands on discovery

### Interpretation/Education

- Highlight the original shoreline – What is man-made? How has it changed?
- Push more interpretation out in the yard.
- Interpret laydown spaces/shipyard/shop maintenance activities
- Tours of the Commandant’s House.
- Create Story Walk

### Special Events

- More visiting ships to activate the area
- Open up the yard to host different community events
- Community Dinners

### Access

- More tangible connection to the rest of the Freedom Trail
- Free and open entry into visitor center without going through security

### Community Gardening

- Community Garden where Charlestown Community can come volunteer
- Victory Garden – engage local residents

### Art

- Incorporate community made art into the yard to activate asphalt
- Resident artists and temporary art installations

# THEN AND NOW: TWO CENTURIES OF SERVICE

The Navy Yard has long been a key site of American History. Today, as two hundred years ago, it remains a cultural touchstone: a site of pilgrimage and the setting for daily community life and public service. The site honors the heritage of service embodied at the Charlestown Navy Yard.







**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE**

After the revolution, the young American republic kept no standing navy. Recognizing the threat to merchant shipping from Barbary corsairs and French privateers and the need for an ambitious shipbuilding program, the Secretary of the Navy established six federal navy yards in 1800-1801, Charlestown among them.

**1797**

U.S.S. *Constitution* launched at Hartt’s Shipyard. These, along with two other frigates *United States* and *Constellation*, are among the Navy’s first ships.

**1800**

Charlestown Navy Yard established along with five other federal yards in Portsmouth, N.H.; Brooklyn, NY; Philadelphia; Washington D.C.; and Norfolk, VA.

**1812**

War of 1812 breaks out between the United States and the United Kingdom. U.S.S. *Constitution* sees significant action and emerges undefeated.

**1815**

U.S.S. *Independence*, the first ship built at Charlestown, becomes the nation’s first ship-of-the-line, the battleship of its day.



*In 1822, the Navy Yard employed 89 workers.*

**1833**

Dry Dock 1 completed, marking Charlestown as an important repair and shipbuilding facility. U.S.S. *Constitution* inaugurates the dock.

**1830s**

The U.S. Navy builds its only ropemaking facility at Charlestown, taking advantage of skilled labor in Boston and new technologies already in use in New England’s textile mills.

*In 1853, The Navy Yard’s workforce had increased to 370, most of whom were born in New England. Some 15% were Irish.*

**1850s**

Steam technology began to supplant sail power in the construction of naval vessels. The dry dock was lengthened, and a state-of-the-art machine shop was built to allow the Navy Yard to work effectively with metal.

The Navy Yard built a number of steam-powered warships, most notably U.S.S. *Merrimack*, which was converted into the Confederate ironclade C.S.S. *Virginia* in the Civil War.

Evolution & Innovation

For most of its history, Charlestown Navy Yard’s main purpose was the ongoing repair, outfitting, supply, and conversion work, punctuated by bursts of new ship construction in response to immediate demands of war. It built over 200 warships over 174 years of operation (75% of which were launched during WWII alone). The physical appearance and workforce of the Navy Yard changed dramatically too, in response to changing technologies and the ebbs and flows of naval activities.



National Park After 174 years of active service, the Navy Yard today remains an important Naval site, both as the home port and active maintenance facility of “Old Ironsides,” and as an interface between the US Navy and the 500,000 annual visitors who walk its decks.

### 1861-1865

Vessels built and repaired at Charlestown play an active role in the Civil War. The war leads to extraordinary levels of production, and some 3,000 workers are employed here at its height.

*In 1866, the Navy Yard employed close to 2,000 workers, a great portion of whom worked with steam machinery and ironcladding.*

### 1870s-1890s

Post-Civil War slump in naval investment leads to a reduced level of activity at the Navy Yard. In 1883, the Navy suspends repair and construction work. The workforce dwindles to around 200. The Navy Yard remains open thanks to manufacturing, particularly for supplying all of the Navy’s rope.

### 1890s-1910s

Renewed interest in naval construction, and particularly investment in large capital ships, restores life to the Navy Yard. The new 750 foot Dry Dock 2 is completed in 1905, built to receive the Navy’s largest ships.



### 1917

World War I sees a burst of activity in the Navy Yard, which employs some 10,000 workers by 1918 in 17 trade shops, characterized by the needs of modern steel shipbuilding.

### 1930s-1940s

The Navy Yard reaches the height of its activity, particularly related to the construction of destroyers. Twelve destroyers are built here in the 30s, and 24 more by the end of WWII.

In all, the Yard builds, repairs, overhauls, converts, or outfits 6,000 vessels between 1939 and 1945. The war effort also marks the first time when a significant number of women and African Americans are employed in the industrial shops.

### 1974-Present

The Navy Yard becomes part of the Boston National Historic Park. It interprets the landscape of the Charlestown Navy Yard, which, along with WWII destroyer *Cassin Young*, welcomes generations of people to connect with a living site of American history. The US Navy continues to maintain the USS *Constitution* with a detachment of skilled craftspeople.

- 1 U.S.S. Independence
- 2 Rope making
- 3 U.S.S. Forrest, 1941
- 4 Navy Yard during WWII










The Navy Yard is centrally located, with proximity to Boston’s downtown, residential neighborhoods, and transit hubs.

Pedestrian and bicycle connection to downtown Boston is available over the North Washington Street Bridge and the Charles River locks. Improvements to the North Washington Street Bridge and Constitution Road are set to

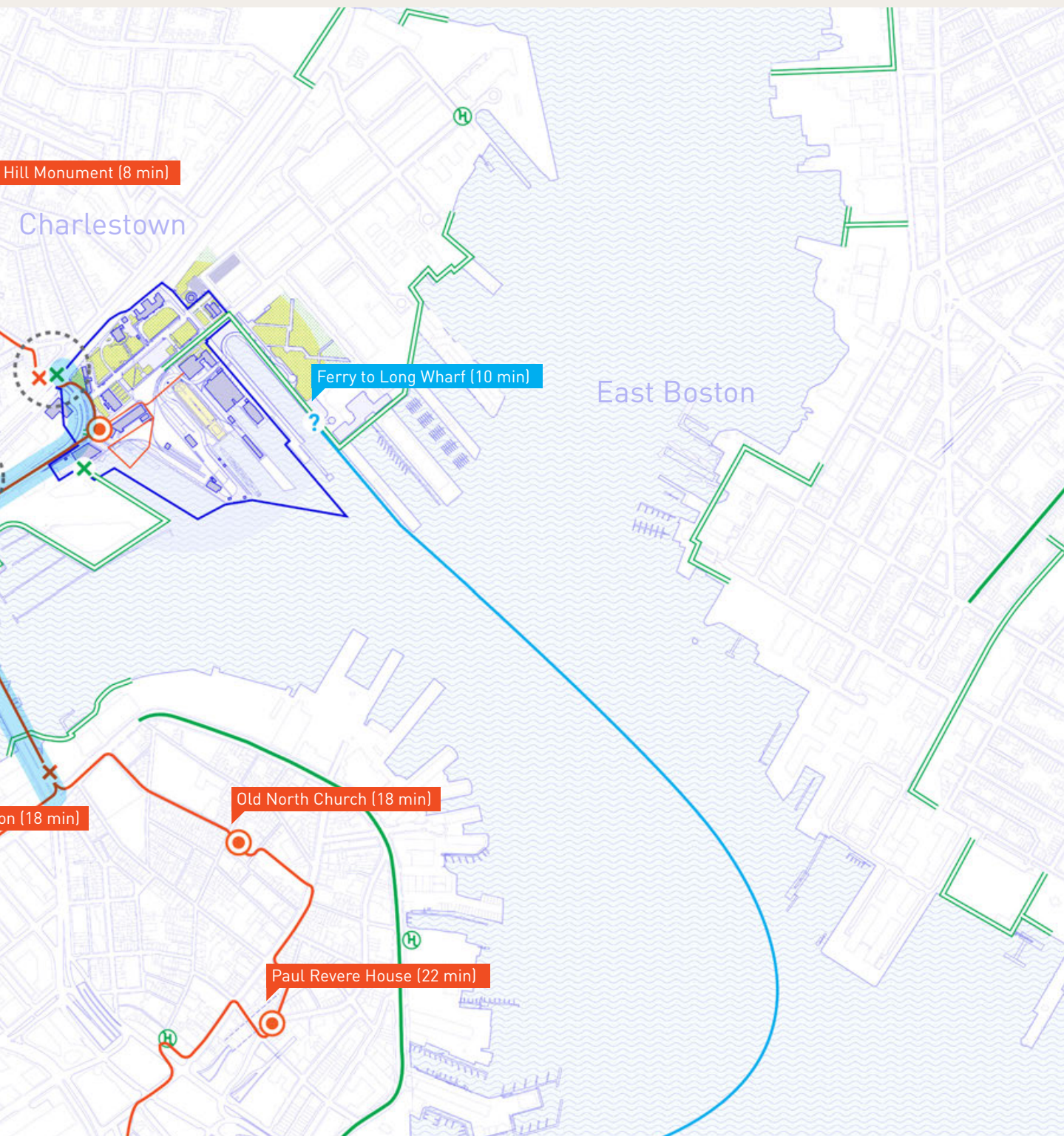
dramatically improve the pedestrian experience coming into the Navy Yard in the coming years. In addition, a substantial number of visitors arrive through the Long Wharf ferry, which docks at Pier 4.

The Charlestown Navy Yard also serves as a public open space for Charlestown residents, and as a gateway to the ~100 acres of the “greater” Navy Yard, which extends east along First Avenue all the way to the Spaulding Hospital and Menino Park.

ACCESS TO CHARLESTOWN NAVY YARD

	Key pedestrian path		Commuter ferry
	Bike lane		Barriers
	Shared used path		







The Charlestown Navy Yard today is among the “must-see” tourist sites of Boston. A part of the Boston National Historic Park and the Freedom Trail, which annually receives 1.5 million visitors, the Navy Yard is unique among Boston’s historic sites for still being an active naval facility and for its urban waterfront location.

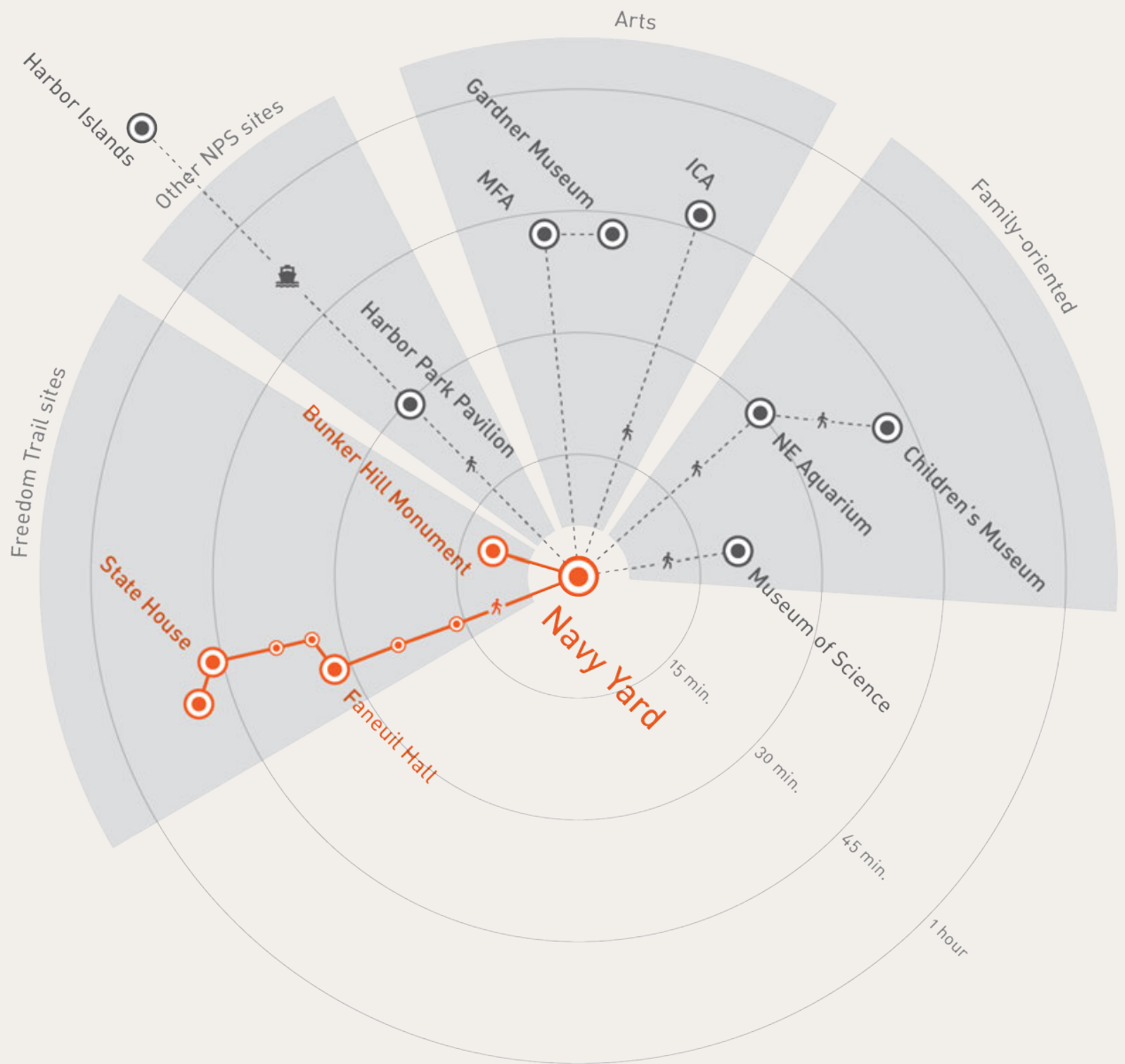
A mere 10 minute ferry ride away from Long Wharf in downtown Boston, the Navy Yard is also adjacent to the Harborwalk, a network of urban waterfront trails and walkways that connects to Boston’s larger system of waterfront recreational amenities.

While traditionally associated with the Freedom Trail, the Navy Yard is also in fact reasonably close to a number of other popular attractions in Boston, such as the Museum of Science and the New England Aquarium. An enhanced multi-modal transportation system that includes more water transportation options and an improved wayfinding system can make the Navy Yard a more integrated part of Boston’s tourism ecosystem.

**Top Boston Area Museums  
by Annual Visitation (2016)**

1	Museum of Science	1.4 million
2	NE Aquarium	1.39 million
3	Museum of Fine Arts	1.16 million
4	Children’s Museum	559,000
5	USS Constitution Museum	528,000





### THE NAVY YARD AMONG OTHER BOSTON -AREA TOURIST ATTRACTIONS

- Boston National Historic Park sites
- Other landmarks and attractions

## **CHALLENGES**

The Navy Yard today faces a number of challenges, from deferred maintenance to pressures brought by its rapidly changing urban context, as it continues to adapt to the needs of its visitors.

### **Deferred Maintenance / Underutilized Real Estate**

The physical structures of the Navy Yard, from its historic buildings to the structures that support the piers, suffer from varying levels of deferred maintenance, totaling \$84 million by one recent estimate. While building and site maintenance requires large and ongoing expenditures of resources, a significant portion of the Navy Yard's real estate portfolio is underutilized. The Hoosac Building and Building 32 are currently vacant, while the Commandant's House only receives occasional use.

### **Poor Access and Wayfinding, and Lack of Site Cohesion**

Infrastructural barriers, security perimeters, and a lack of clear wayfinding has made the Navy Yard a difficult place for visitors to find their bearings. The landscape of the Navy Yard lacks cohesion and a clear overall organization: few physical elements unify the experience of the Yard, and visitors jostle for space with parking and construction staging.

### **Visitor Experience vs. Operational Needs**

The operational needs of the Navy and the National Park Service / USSCM staff have come into conflict with providing visitors with an engaging experience. Notably, potential real estate for interpretive and recreational activities is sometimes taken up by parking and other "back-of-house" uses.



Gate 1 looking west, showing the now vacant Hoosac Building

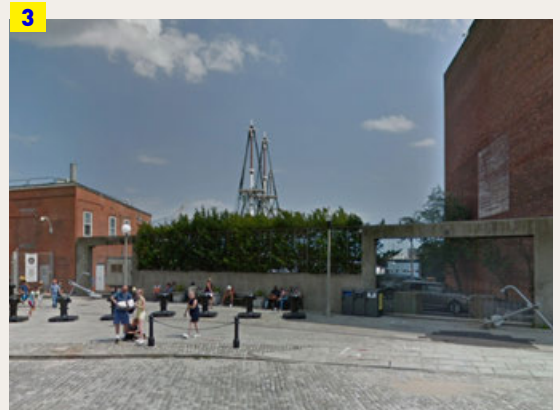
## BARRIERS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

Despite its central location, Charlestown Navy Yard can feel isolated from its urban context, as a result of infrastructural barriers and gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle network. Once in the Yard, poor signage and unclear wayfinding further contributes to visitors' sense of confusion.

- 1 Freedom Trail as it passes under the Tobin Bridge towards Bunker Hill Monument
- 2 Gate 1
- 3 Gate 1, looking towards USS *Constitution*
- 4 Security screening before entering the NPS Visitor Center



The Tobin Bridge presents an unwelcoming barrier for visitors going to and coming from Bunker Hill monument and Charlestown.



Gate 1 potentially offers a spectacular first glimpse of the USS *Constitution*, but this view is currently obscured by walls, vegetation, and parking.



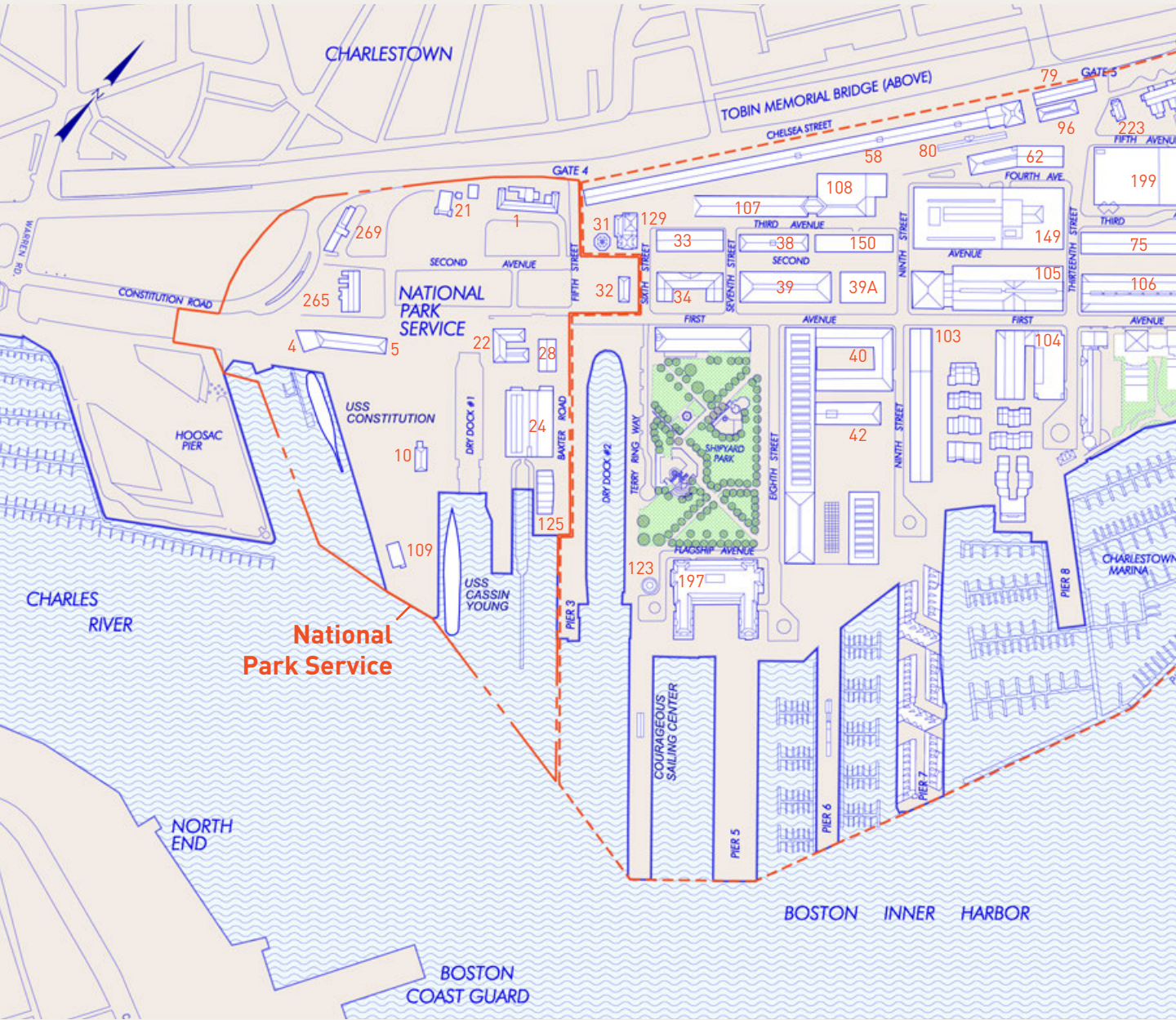
Over 90% of visitors to the Navy Yard come through Gate 1, which also serves as the gateway to the greater Navy Yard neighborhood. Yet the design of the space does little to celebrate its importance.



Key "decision points" in the visitor experience, such as screening before going on the USS *Constitution*, are poorly sign-posted.



THE NAVY YARD TODAY



Map Data Courtesy of Boston Planning and Development Agency

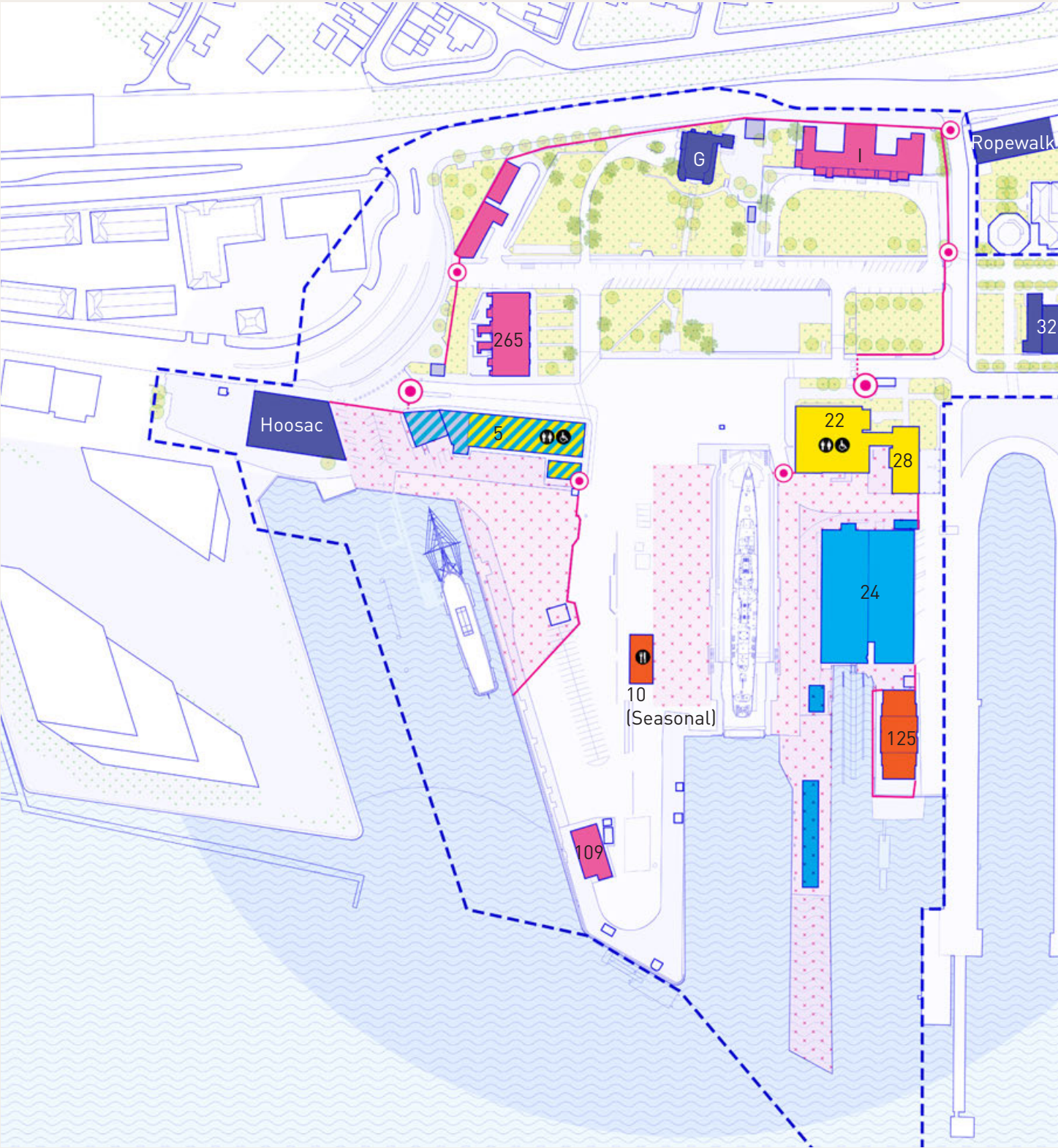


## HOW THE NAVY YARD IS USED TODAY

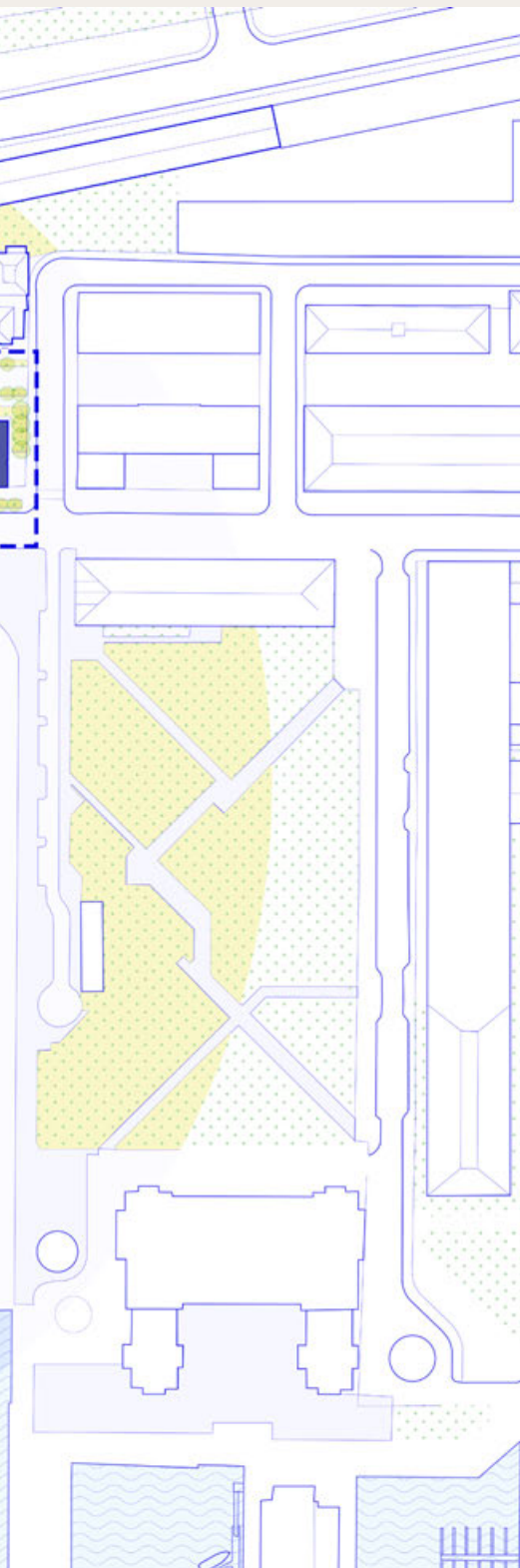
The Charlestown Navy Yard encompasses a total of 130 acres. While only 30 of those acres are included within the boundary of the Boston National Historical Park the resources contained within the larger navy yard site are important to telling the full navy yard story.

The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA) owns and manages the area outside the park, which has been redeveloped for a variety of uses, including hospital, medical research and educational facilities, housing, restaurants and hotels.









## HOW THE NAVY YARD IS USED TODAY

Simultaneously a visitor attraction and an active naval facility, the Navy Yard houses visitor amenities alongside back-of-house uses such as living quarters and offices. While this proximity creates opportunities for visitors to experience authentic life in the Navy Yard, it can also lead to confusing visitor paths and frictions where operational needs and visitor experience come into conflict.

### BUILDING USES

- Museum, NPS Visitor Center
- Offices and park operations
- Navy
- Externally leased
- Vacant / awaiting development

### SITE SECURITY

- Fence and security perimeter
- Gates
- Visitor-restricted areas

### Visitor-related Uses

Building 22/28 today houses the USSCM, while the NPS Visitor Center is located in Building 5. Building 10 houses the park's food concession, which is open only during the warmer months, currently the only food option in the Navy Yard.

### Requirements of the Navy

The Navy uses part of Buildings 4 and 5 to house its personnel and Building 24 as its main ship preservation workshop facility which, along with the construction staging area on Pier 1, supports the ongoing maintenance of the USS *Constitution*. Anti-terrorism force protection requirements have led to the erection of security barriers. For visitors to enter the NPS Visitor Center in Building 5, for example, they must first go through security screening.

### Parking

There are approximately 140 parking spaces in the Yard, taking up substantial surface space, notably on Pier 1, between the Hoosac Building and Building 4, and along Second Avenue. These represent valuable real estate that can potentially be turned over to visitor-related uses.

## KEY VALUES

The core project partnership between USSCM, NPS, and the Navy, with input from external stakeholders, has developed a bold vision and exciting ideas for how the Charlestown Navy Yard will evolve in the coming decades. At their core, these big ideas are guided by four “key values”—a manifesto for how the Navy Yard will serve its future visitors.

### Visitor-Centric

Put visitors first to shift to a visitor-centric approach that prioritizes visitor needs over operational expediencies

### Relevant

Welcome diverse audiences and be inclusive and relevant

### Collaborative

Continually build sustainable partnerships with Navy Yard partners and the broader community

### Transformative

Strive for Aha moments, transformational, mind opening, provocative







# **A CASE FOR CHANGE: AN ICONIC DESTINATION IN AN URBAN PARK**

The Navy Yard is a priceless asset, a symbol of national pride and local identity. As it enters the next chapter in its history, the Yard will compel, engage, and delight new generations of diverse audiences.

## **A COLLABORATIVE FOR CHANGE: THE NEXT EVOLUTION OF THE YARD**

When the Boston Naval Shipyard closed in 1974, the nation was in the midst of planning a grand celebration of its bicentennial. A new urban national park was being planned for Boston that would recognize significant historic sites and stories about the men and women who shaped the destiny of our nation. They would be connected by a “Freedom Trail.” The national park would be a partnership with seven partner landmark sites at the heart of the trail.

It is the story of freedom around which the park is galvanized, from the dramatic stories of Boston’s protests against English rule that unfolded at these sites to the bloodshed for freedom at Bunker Hill to the fiery discussions about maintaining that freedom that have continued at Old South Meeting House and Faneuil Hall. The defense of that precious freedom binds the USS Constitution and historic Charlestown Navy Yard to Boston National Historical Park. This was Boston’s bicentennial gift to the nation.

Since the bicentennial, significant investment and progress has been made to preserve these iconic historic sites and serve millions of people who come to engage in revolutionary stories. However, we recognize the need for parks and museums to be relevant as times change and narratives evolve.

The Visitor Experience Plan puts forth specific strategies to ensure that the Yard is a world-class berth for our nation’s ship of state, USS Constitution, and telling an American story that is told faithfully, completely and accurately.

In an age of growing cultural diversity, the park must continually ask whether the way in which stories are told has meaning to all of our citizens. Most importantly, this plan puts forth a way of connecting people to this special place that is more intentional and embraces collaboration, community engagement, creativity and sustainable strategies for the Yard’s stewardship.





# THE BIG IDEAS: THREE LAYERS OF A SINGULAR EXPERIENCE

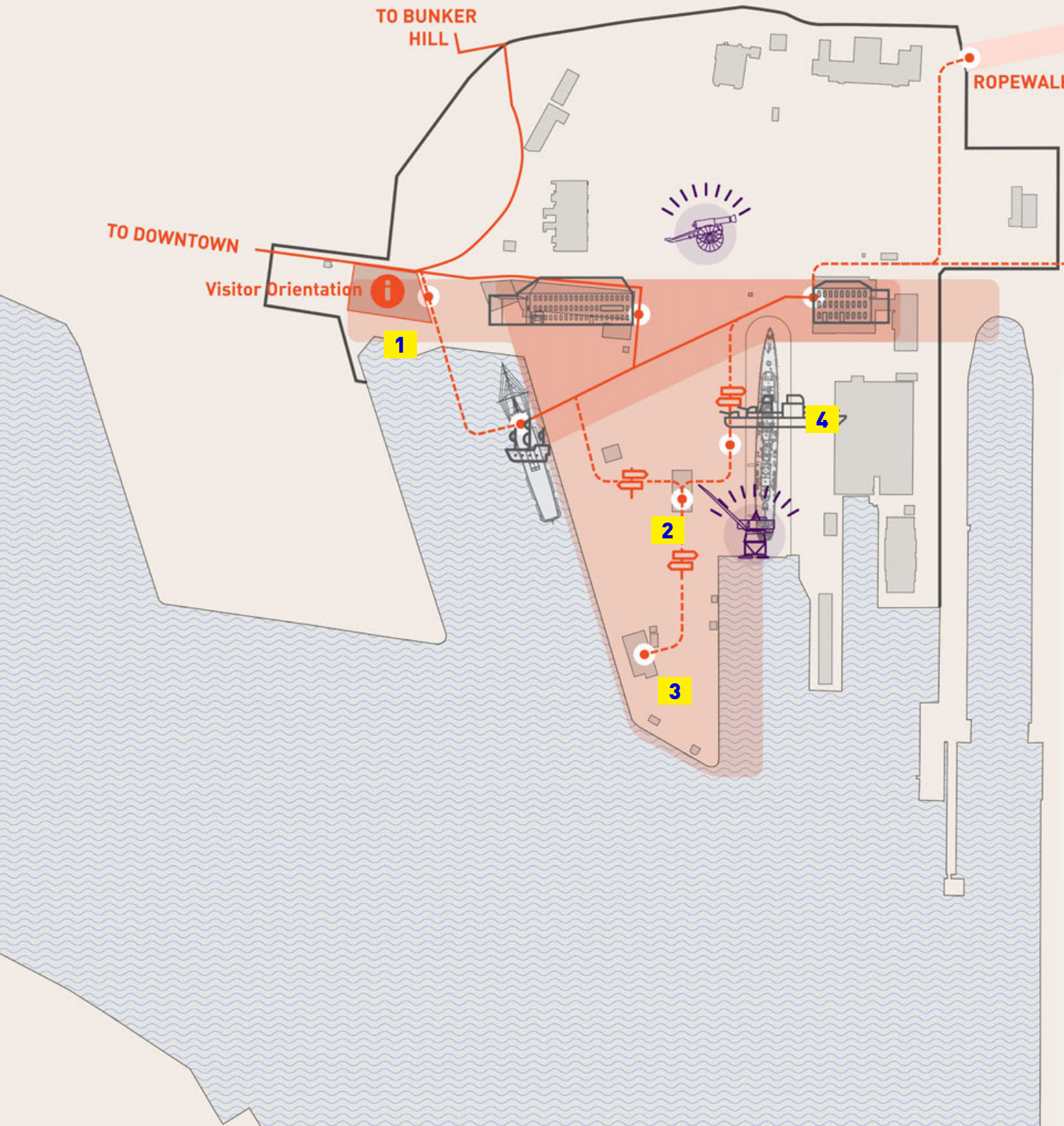
Three discrete but interrelated concepts weave through both the interpretive dimension of the Navy Yard and its physical site. Together, they invite visitors to explore surprising stories embedded in the landscape; experience a place that is attuned to the needs of diverse communities; and embark on journeys to the Boston Harbor and beyond.







# “TELLING STORIES”



The yard immerses visitors to one of America's great stories. The Yard stimulates the senses and ignites the imagination. The Yard is accessible to learners of all styles, ages, and educational levels. The Yard uncovers material cues, highlights authentic objects, layers interpretive materials, and invites visitors to experience history anew.

## I Expand the interpretive timeline



Under an overarching theme that goes beyond the War of 1812, the Navy Yard can move towards interpreting a broader history centered on its naval heritage, with additional thematic and chronological elements (such as the USS *Cassin Young* and World War II) in an expanded “campus” of interpretive experiences. With this approach, different zones of the Navy Yard can be activated and all the institutional partners at the Navy Yard can be involved in interpretation. Enhanced signage and in-person interactions with NPS and Museum staff will highlight thematic connections between these different zones.

USS *Constitution* anchors the interpretive experience both physically and chronologically. She was the first ship to enter dry dock I in 1832. From her maiden voyage to her last underway, the Ship has always returned to the Navy Yard. As the Yard took on change from wood to steel, from sail to steam and beyond, USS *Constitution* stood watch. She represented the peak of naval architecture in 1800 and the pride of service ever since, both critical to interpreting the 174 year history of the Charlestown Navy Yard.

## II Create consolidated visitor Orientation



A consolidated visitor center will provide visitors with an overall introduction and orientation to the Navy Yard. It will provide practical amenities and information such as hours, facilities, and directions, as well as give visitors an overall thematic introduction to the various interpretive elements in the Yard, resulting in a deeper understanding of the Navy Yard's stories. Key to the orientation experience will be integrating a visitor friendly security screening for visitor access to the USS *Constitution* and interpretative activities in the Navy Yard secured zone.

## III Enhance and interpret artifacts related to the working yard



From construction cranes to historic cannons, the seemingly mundane everyday objects in the Navy Yard provide a portal into understanding its past lives and its present as a working naval facility. In the future, these artifacts will be highlighted, interpreted, and celebrated.

**1** The Hoosac building provides the ideal site for a consolidated visitor center providing orientation to the navy yard and USS *Constitution* Museum.

**2** Building 10 can be converted to interpretation of the WWII and social history story.

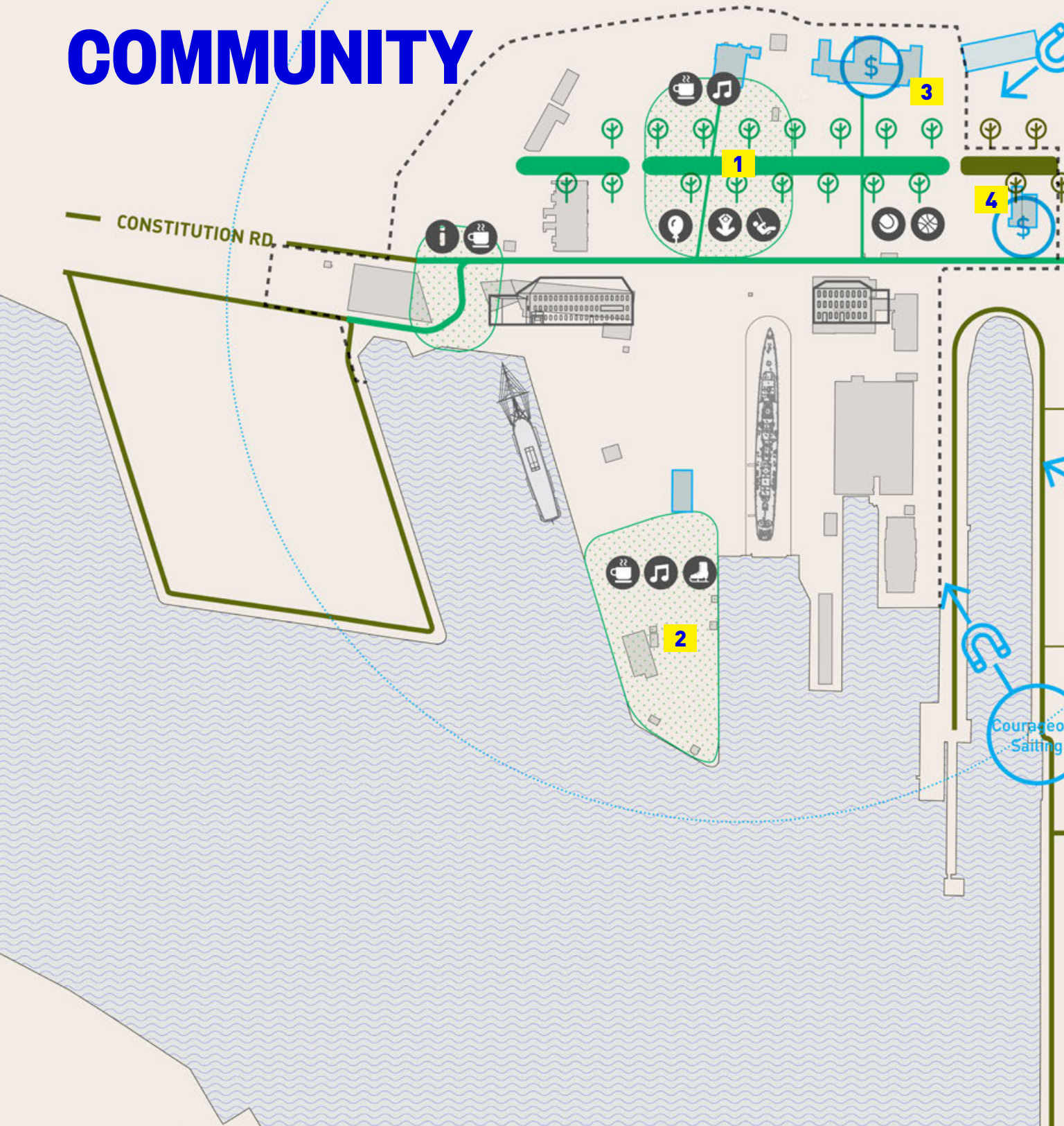
**3** Building 109, historically intended to be a temporary structure should be removed and “ghosted” as a shade pavilion for interpretive programs and special events.

**4** USS *Cassin Young* should become an exhibit in dry dock and showcase the Navy Yard's evolutionary role in the WWII effort.

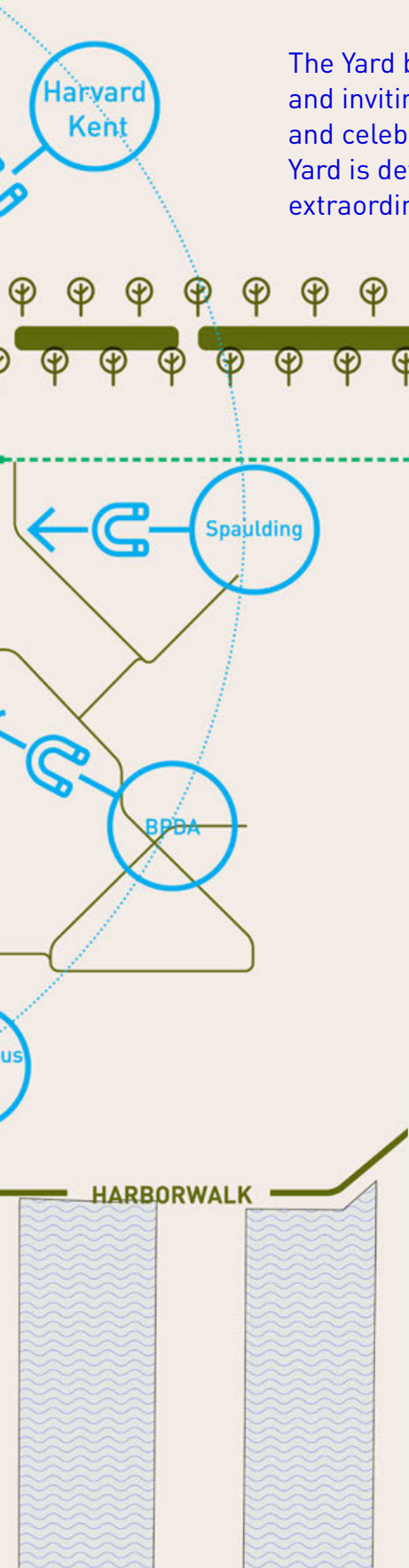
**5** Resources in the larger Charlestown Navy Yard, such as the industrial machinery in the lobby of the future Chain Forge Hotel and community space in the Ropewalk, should be integrated as part of the visitor itinerary and transportation scheme.

**6** Potential for multi-modal transportation options will be explored as a means for visitors to experience the full navy yard story.









The Yard belongs to our Nation and to Bostonians: a node of community life and inviting open space. The Yard is gardens and music, a place of respite and celebration, of school children and retirees, of work and leisure. The Yard is defined by community amenities, from bike lanes to lawns. The Yard is extraordinary, made for ordinary life.

## I Connect with the larger pedestrian, bike, and green space networks

The Navy Yard of the future will be easier to get to (and get through), and more integrated into the neighborhood fabric. Improved pedestrian and bicycle connections along the Harborwalk and the Freedom Trail will make the site feel more connected to the rest of the city. Another key enhancement will be creative improvements to the passage under the Tobin Bridge overpass, which currently cleaves the Navy Yard from Charlestown. Opening up gates along Second Avenue will create a secondary pedestrian-friendly circulation through the entire 130 acres of the Navy Yard.

## II Create activation zones as community destinations



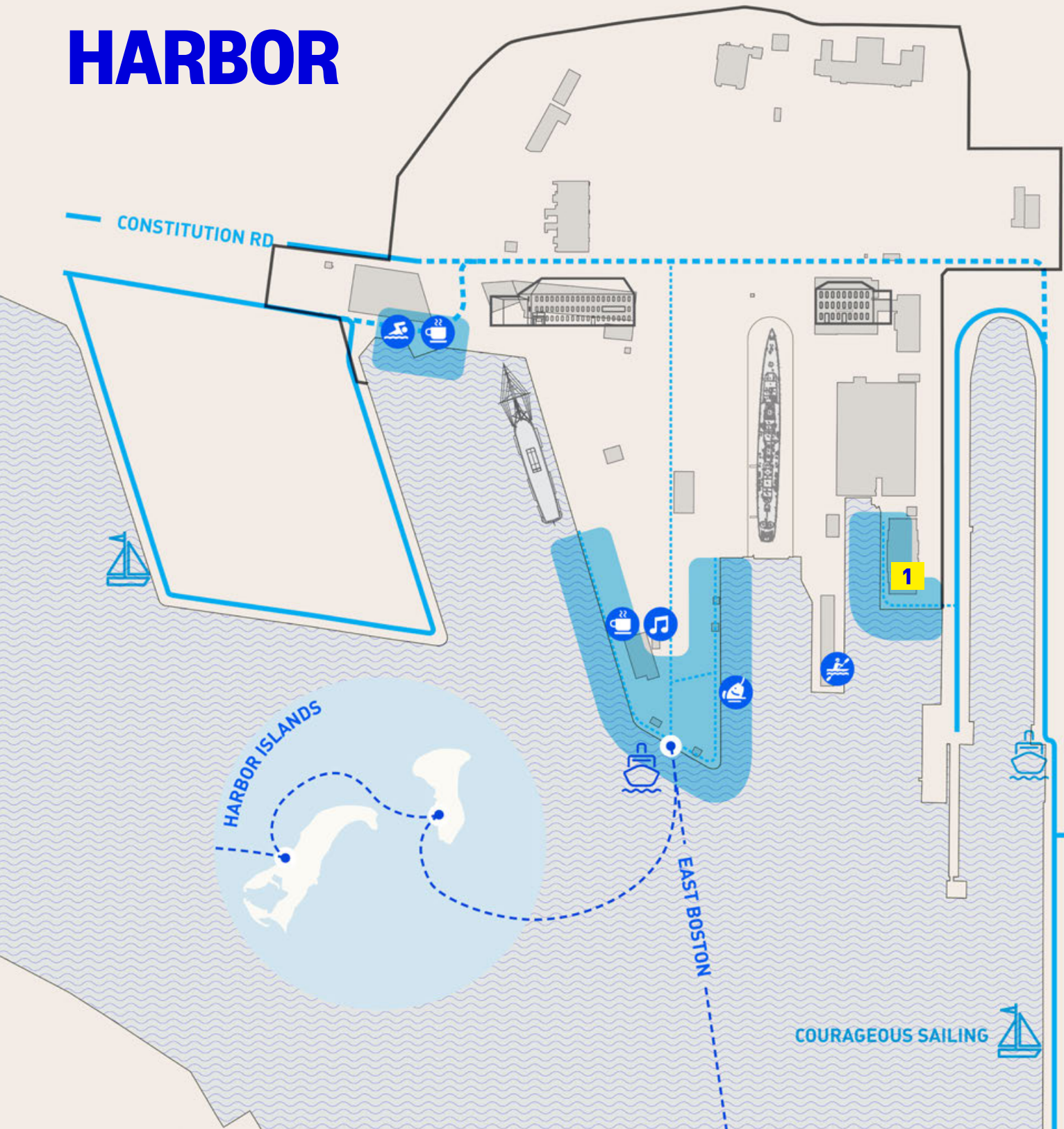
Improved open spaces on a new “Great Lawn” in front of the Commandant’s House and at the end of Pier 1 will serve as a magnet for the community, with active year-round programs, visiting ships and other special events, food and beverage options, or passive enjoyment.

## III Enhance Opportunities for Collaboration with Community Organizations



Partnerships with environmental, social, educational and healthcare organizations such as Spaulding Hospital, Courageous Sailing, HomeBase, and Artists for Humanity can be strengthened to activate the cultural potential of the park in ways that are relevant to Boston’s urban community.

- 1 Proposed “Great Lawn”
- 2 Pier 1 Activation Zone
- 3, 4 The Marine Barracks and Building 32 should be reconsidered for their revenue generating potential in the context of a future real estate strategy.





The Yard embraces its waterfront, connecting land and water, Boston and harbor, the New World and old. The Yard is profoundly rooted in its maritime legacy. The Yard is open to the recreational opportunities of the shoreline, while recognizing its environmental threats. The Yard is at water's edge, a place for people to experience a working harbor, embark on voyages, and enjoy a sunset.

## I Connect waterfront pedestrian and bicycle networks

By connecting to the Harborwalk, the Navy Yard will complete a crucial missing link in Boston's network of waterfront trails. Pedestrians and cyclists will have a continuous route along the water's edge, and a welcoming "hub" as they arrive to the Navy Yard. Opening up access to water, by removing unnecessary parking and other visual obstructions or physical barriers, will further a sense of connection to citywide networks – Freedom Trail and Connect Historic Boston.

## II Enhance water-based transportation links



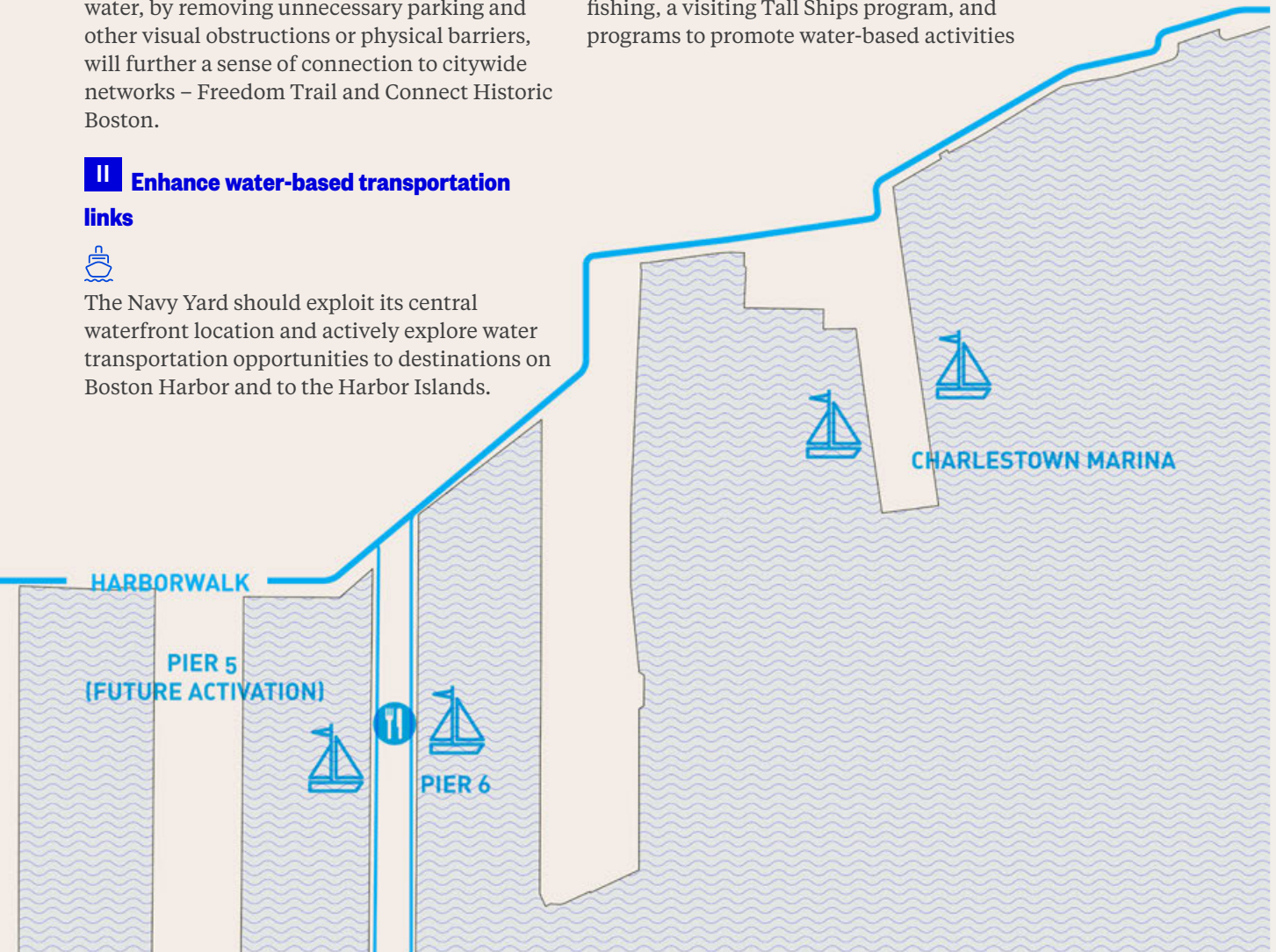
The Navy Yard should exploit its central waterfront location and actively explore water transportation opportunities to destinations on Boston Harbor and to the Harbor Islands.

## III Enhance cultural, dining, recreation, and education opportunities along the water



The Navy Yard will integrate a variety of cultural, dining, recreational, and educational options tied to the Harbor. Potential options include dining barges, floating platforms for fishing, a visiting Tall Ships program, and programs to promote water-based activities

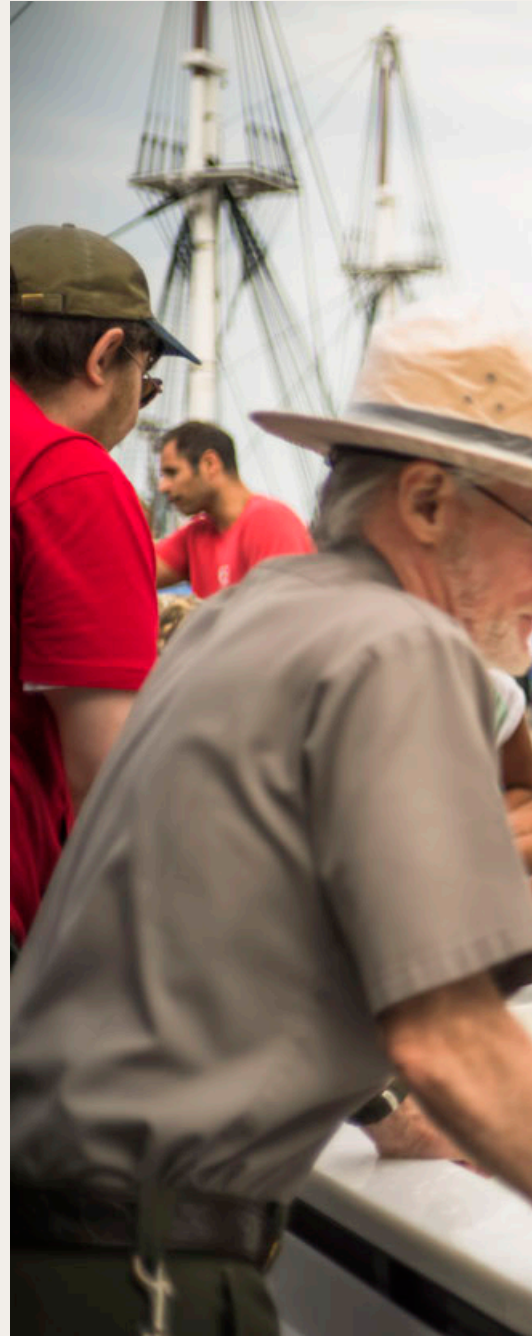
1 Building 125 could become the future base of water-related activities - kayak rental and marine education programs.





# ENVISIONING THE FUTURE: CULTURAL AND PHYSICAL INTERVENTIONS

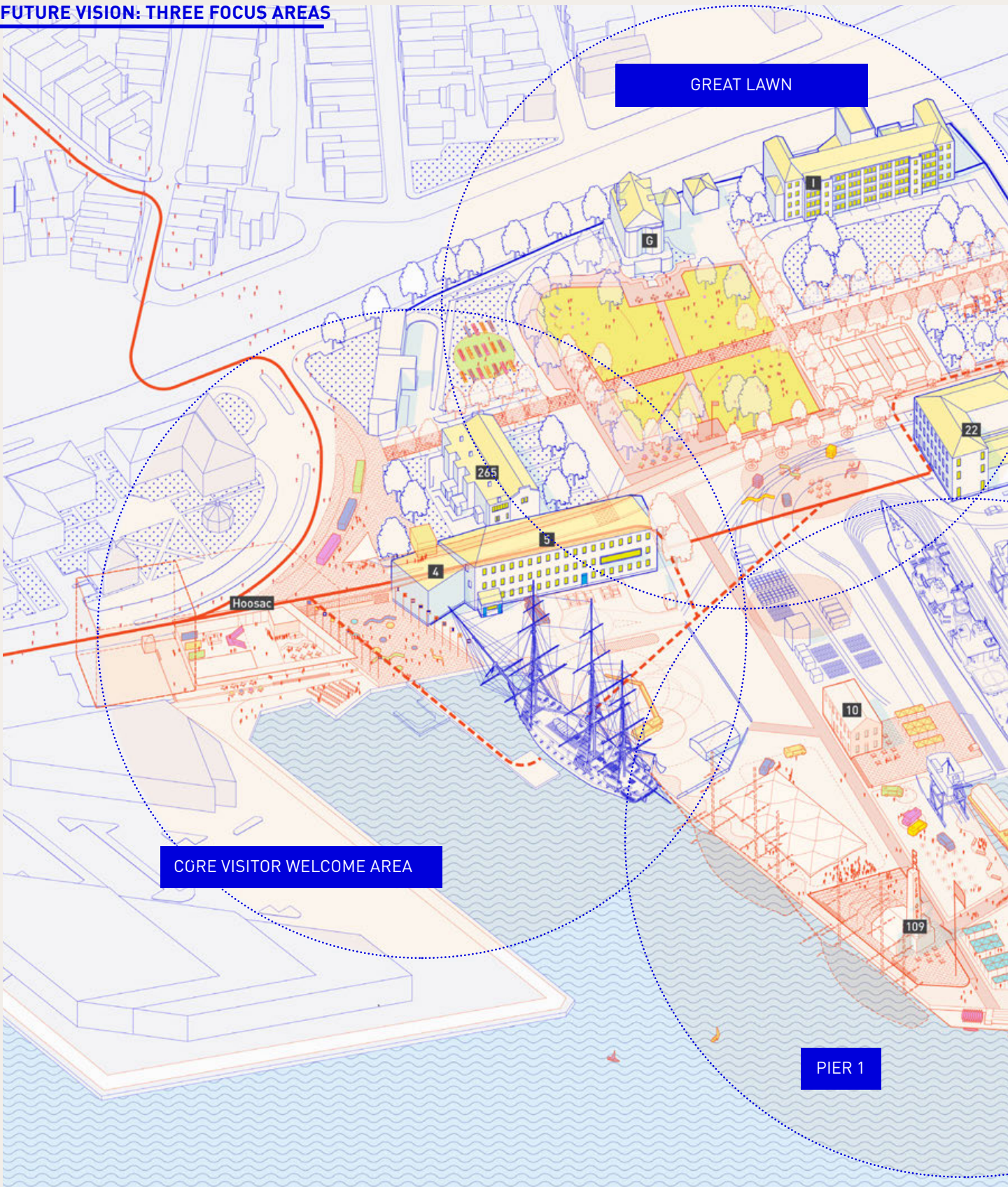
A series of strategic interventions touch on visitor paths, building use, landscape strategies, and interpretive content. They form a framework for a cohesive and welcoming visitor experience — preserving and enhancing the historic character of the Yard and integrating new amenities for future visitors.





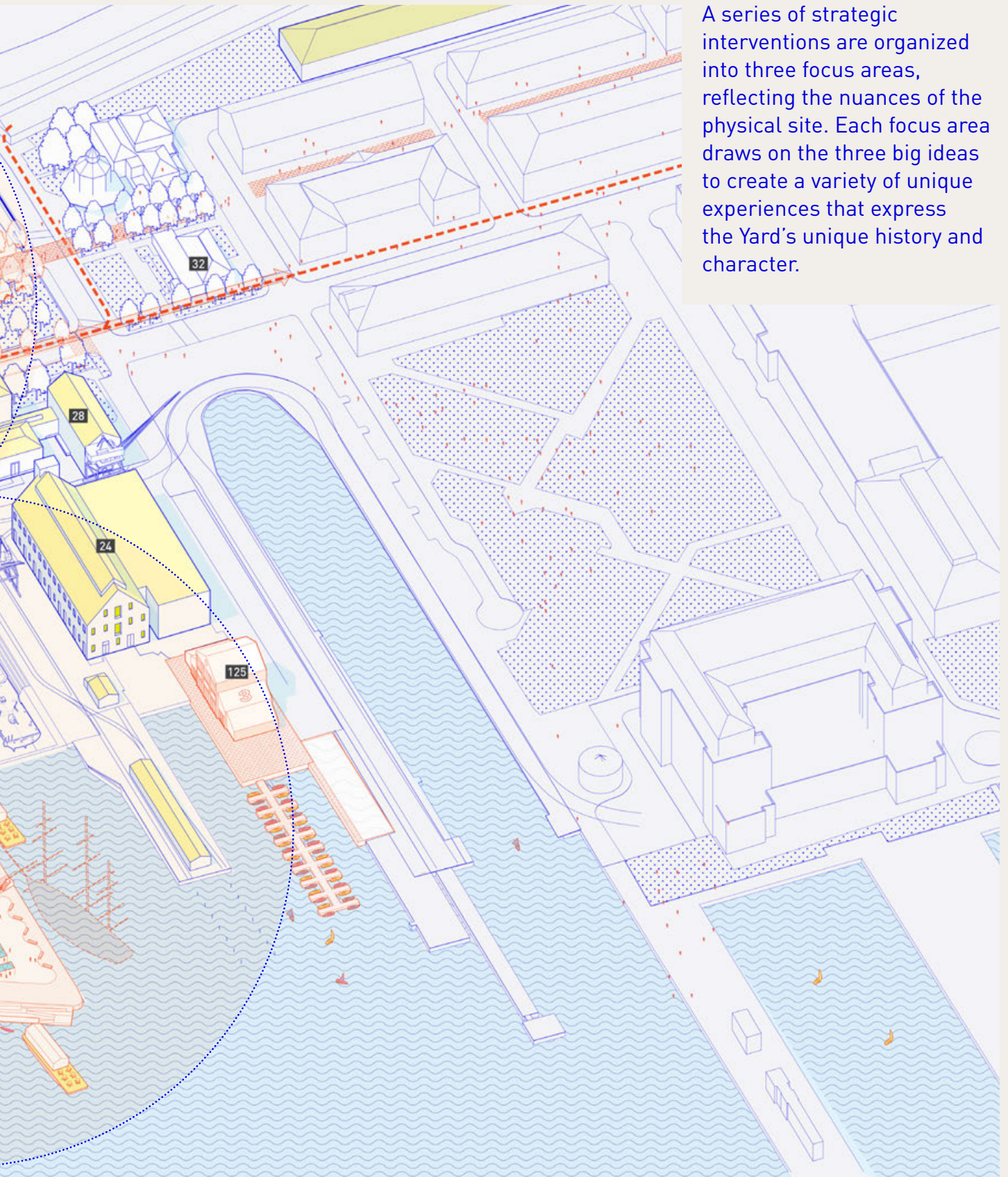


FUTURE VISION: THREE FOCUS AREAS





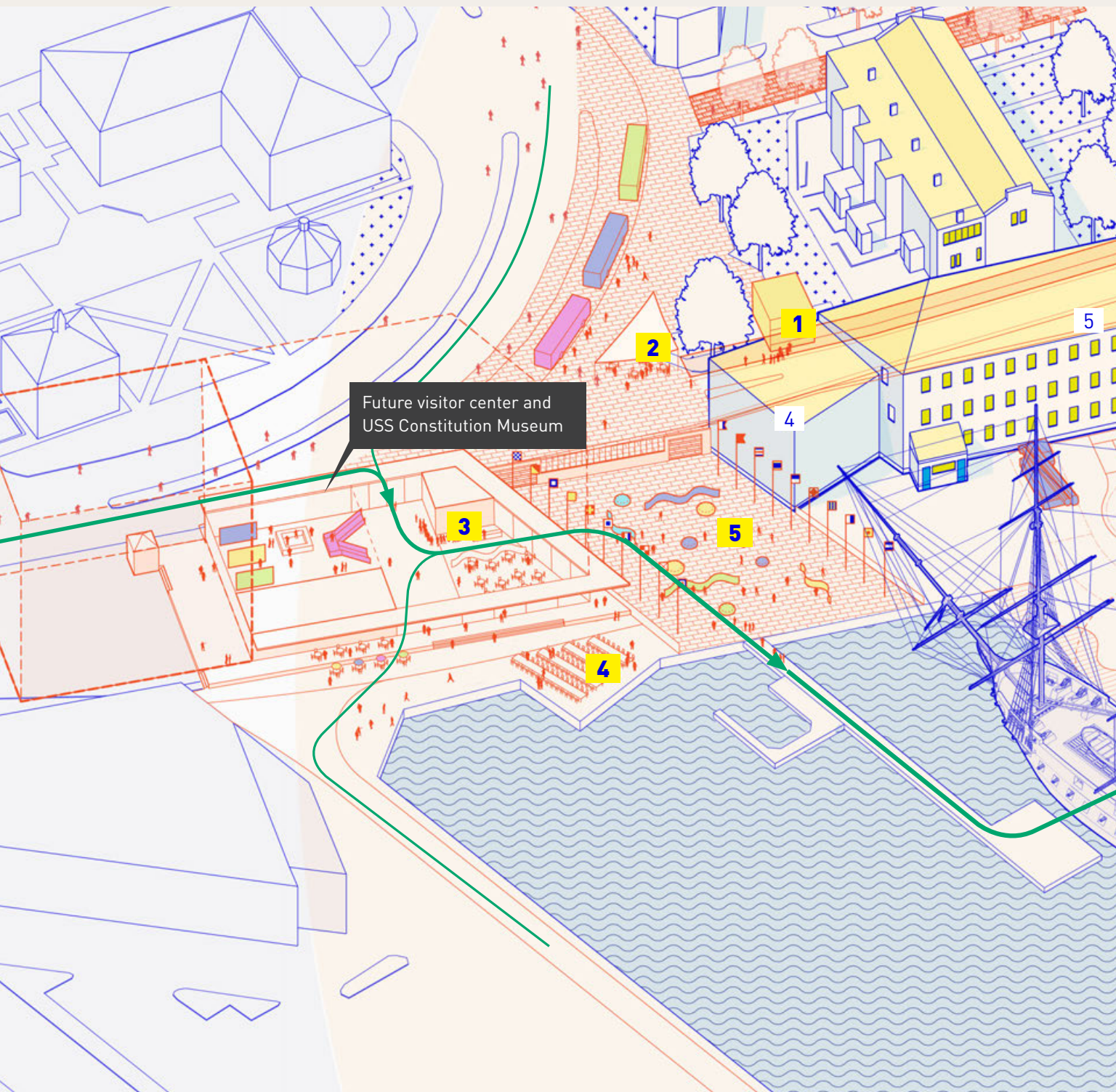
A series of strategic interventions are organized into three focus areas, reflecting the nuances of the physical site. Each focus area draws on the three big ideas to create a variety of unique experiences that express the Yard's unique history and character.





**FOCUS AREA: CORE VISITOR WELCOME AREA**

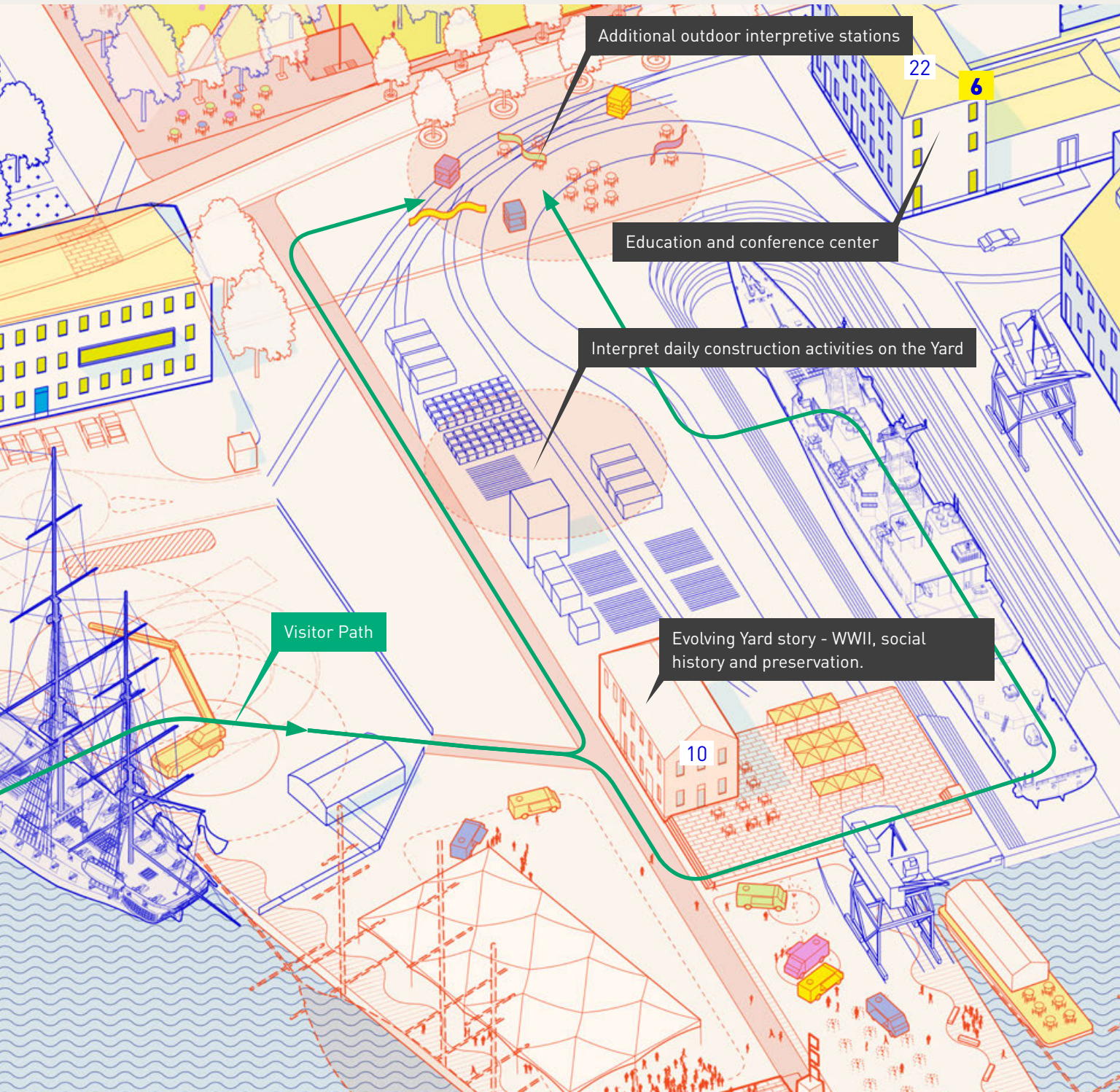
- 1** Gate 1 will be a welcoming gateway to the Navy Yard with landscape and other improvements to enhance visibility and multi-model connections.
- 2** Shade structure and seating for arriving/departing visitors
- 3** Improved visitor security screening within the visitor center/museum





4 Outdoor restaurant terrace  
5 Constitution Plaza will be a staging area for tours of the ship and yard and provide a place for programming and interpretative activities.

6 Education, youth programs and conference center





## PRECEDENTS: CENTRAL VISITOR ZONE



- 1 A former coal crane in Copenhagen has found new life as an event venue and spa.
- 2 In the Australian city of Parramatta, the Centenary Square offers shade, respite, and flex space to visitors.





**3** Adaptive reuse of a former industrial building in Bangkok is now a vibrant destination for retail, recreation, and special events.

**4** Granary Square in London integrates bold public art and water feature into a legacy landscape.





**BIG IDEAS: WELCOME CENTER**

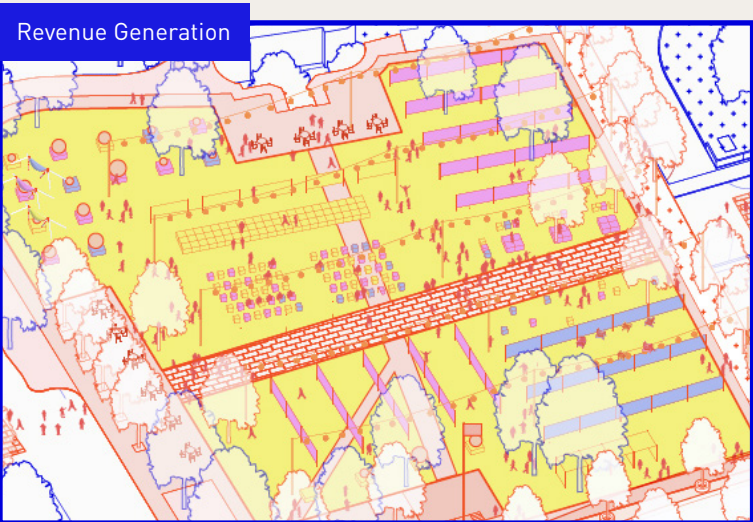
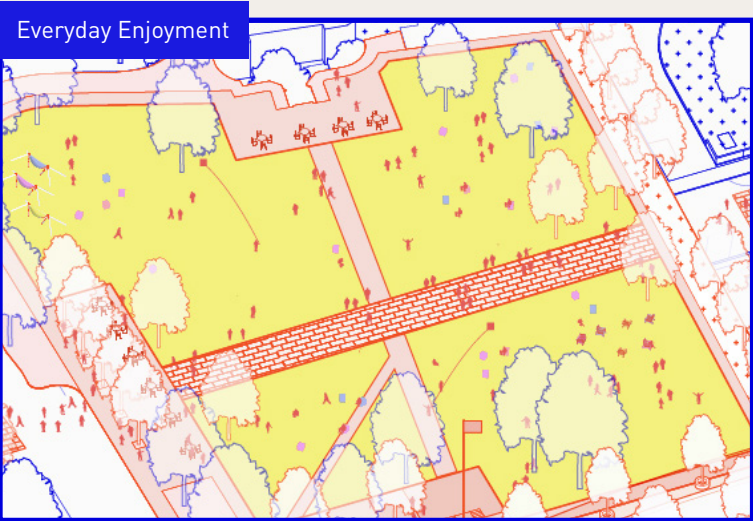
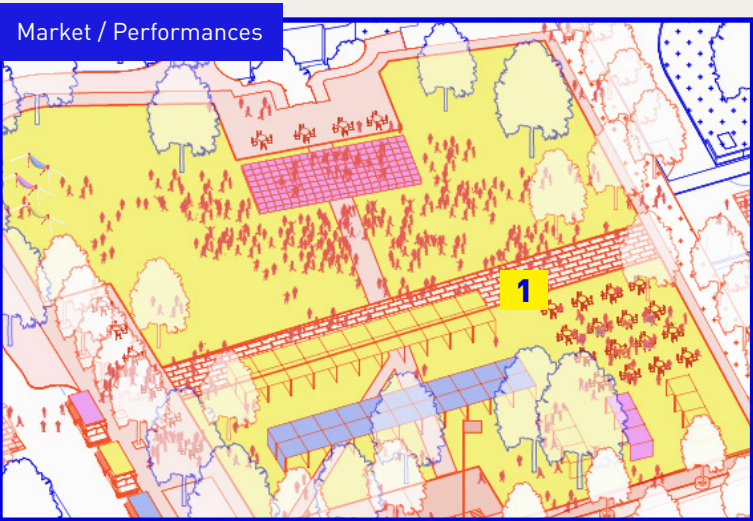








**FOCUS AREA: GREAT LAWN**



**1** Restore the integrity of the Great Lawn by closing down a section of Second Avenue to vehicular traffic during regular hours.

**2** Restore Second Avenue to its original cobble-lined condition, and connect it with the pedestrian walkway to the east.



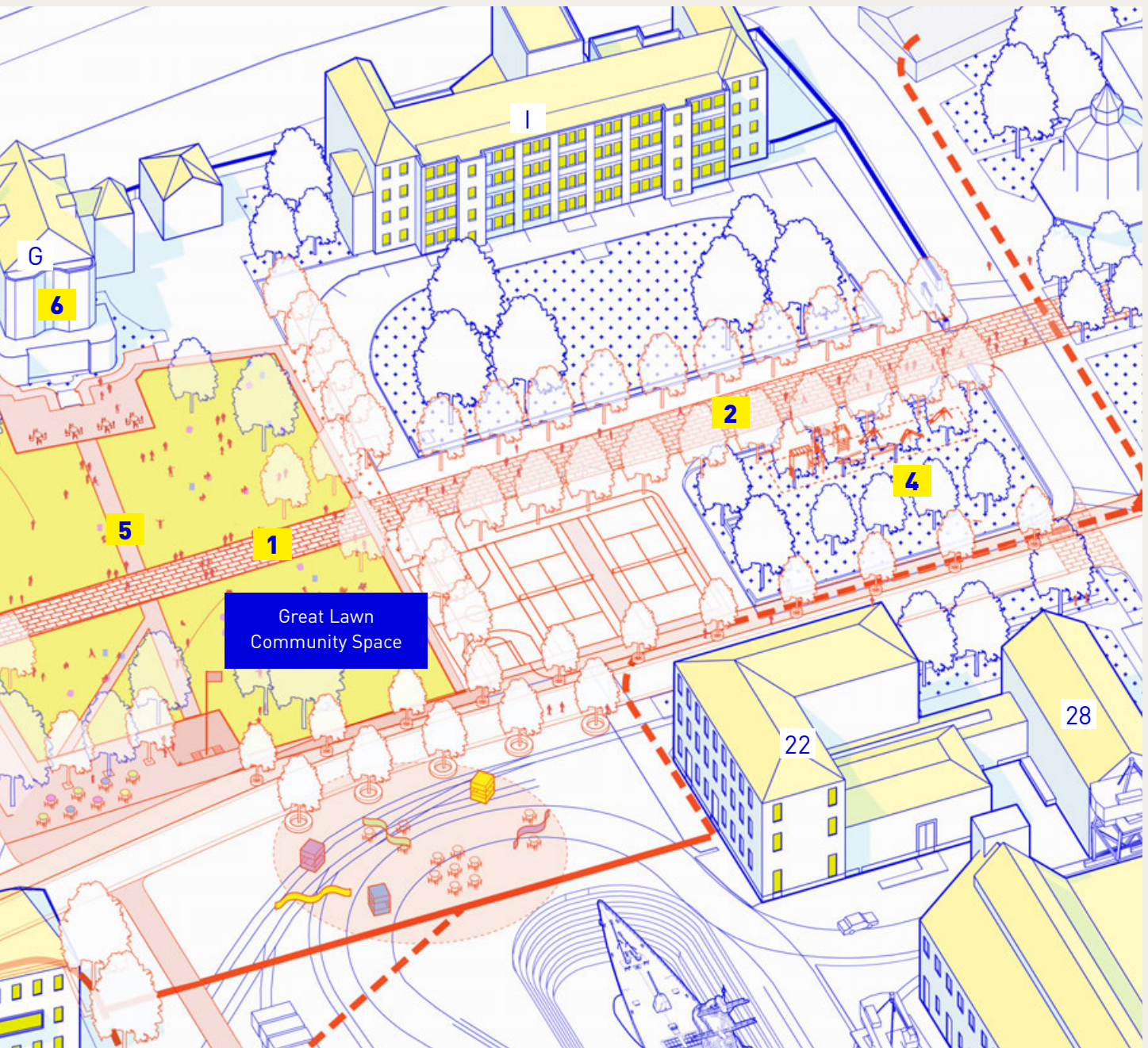


**3** Victory Gardens, which was part of the Navy Yard landscape during WWII, can serve as a teaching tool for students at local schools and community garden clubs.

**4** Improved fitness equipment to meet neighborhood needs.

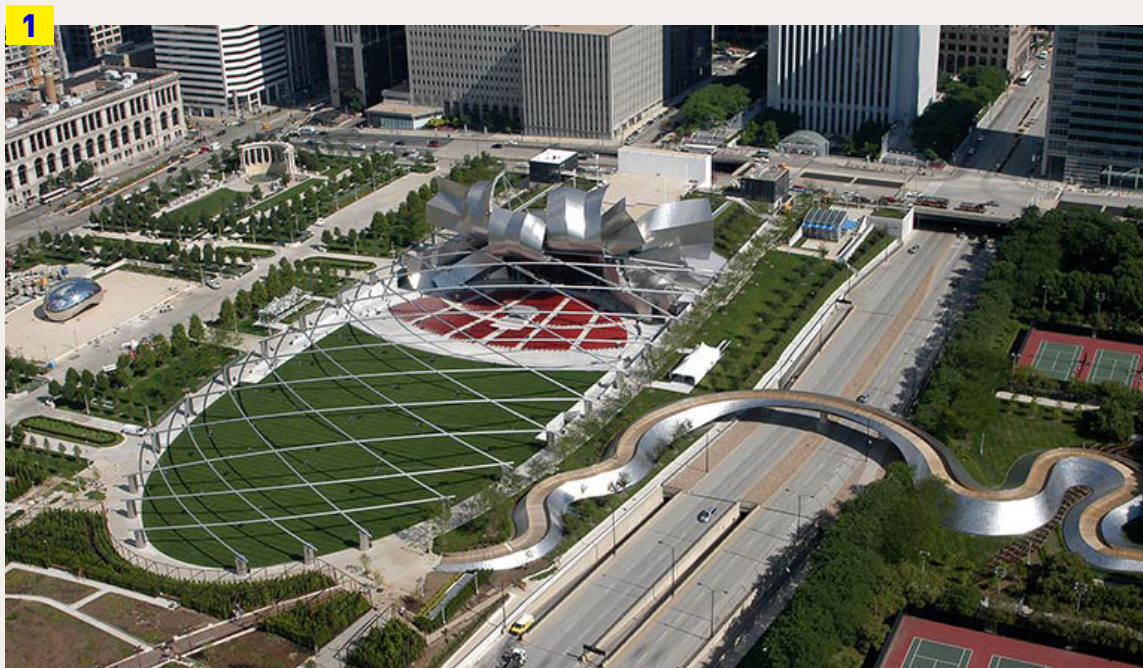
**5** Enhance landscape around the Commandant's House to highlight its significance in the yard and create welcoming 'Great Lawn' space for community programs and activities.

**6** Restore the historic grandeur of the Commandant's house and open it to the public for historic tours and special events.





## PRECEDENTS: GREAT LAWN



**1** Large-scale open spaces, such as Chicago's famed Millennium Park, are flexible enough for daily use and special events.

**2** Boston's Lawn on D uses a bold color palette, distinctive furniture and lighting, and art installations to signify an exciting new neighborhood destination.

**3** Low-impact programming, such as Victory Gardens, community yoga, or hammocks on Governors Island in New York, invite everyday use.



2



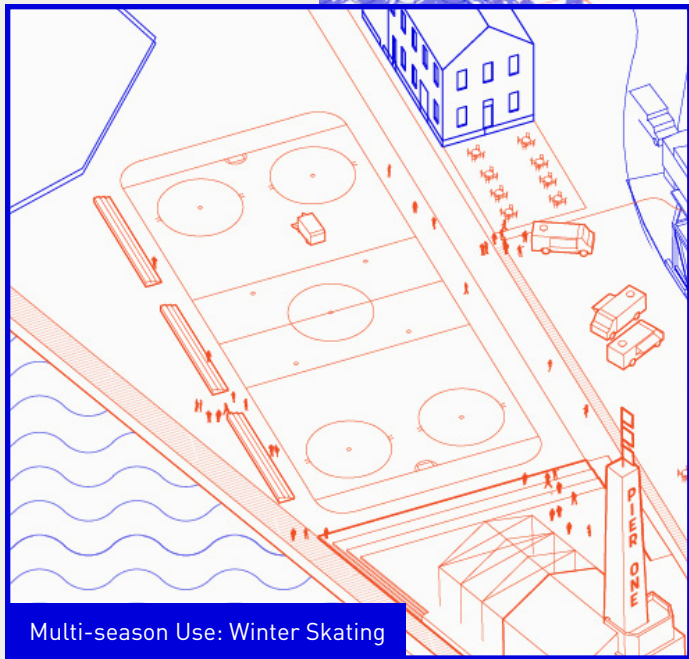
3





**FOCUS AREA: PIER 1**

Pier 1:  
Repurpose  
Options



**1** The water's edge along Pier 1 can host a thoughtfully curated program of temporary barges and visiting Tall Ships.

**2** A ghosted structure of Building 109 can become the physical focal point of Pier.

**3** Open areas on Pier 1 can have multi-season uses such as summer events or winter activities and provide revenue generating opportunities

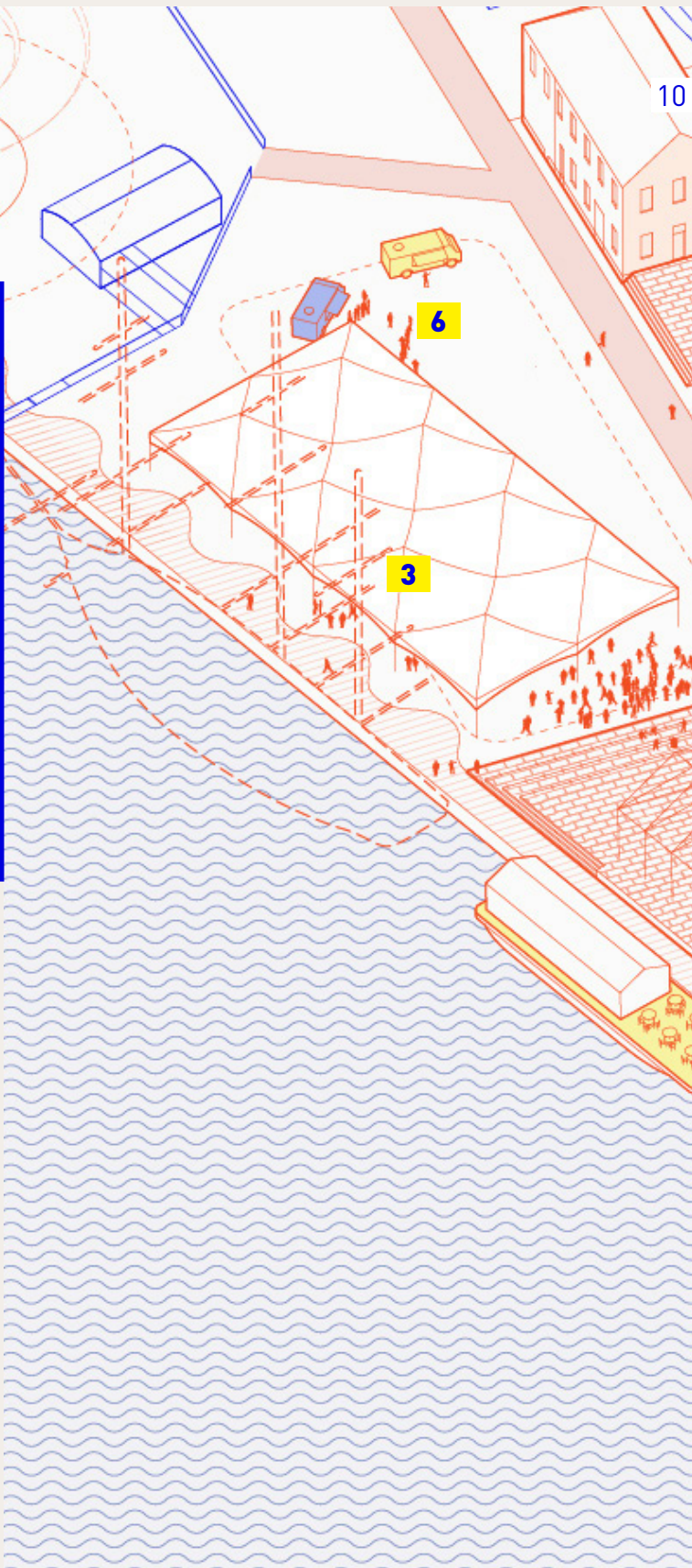
**4** Temporary tents and awnings can be erected on the Pier to provide additional programming opportunities at special events.

**5** The edge of Pier 1 should be accessible to visitors, and accommodate seating and places to rest and enjoy views of the harbor and Boston skyline.

**6** Space can accommodate temporary programming with food trucks and beverage gardens.

**7** The edge of Pier 1 can provide a link to water activities, harbor tours and water transportation.

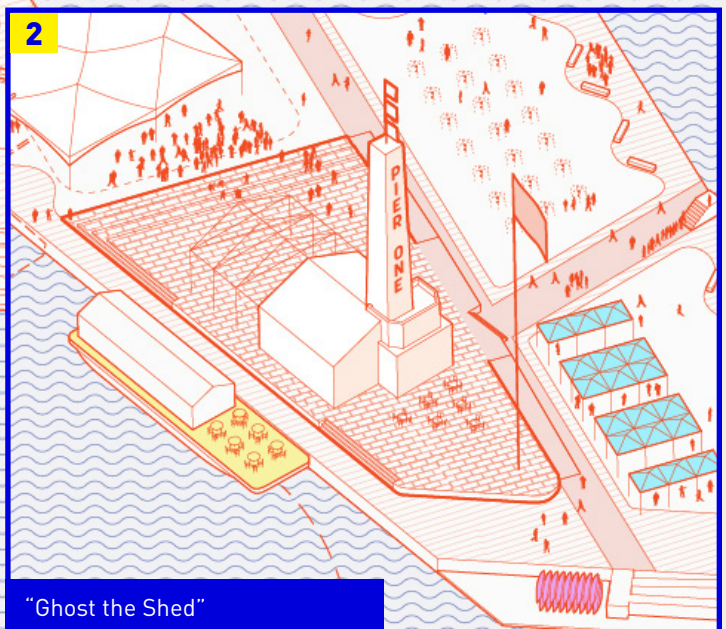
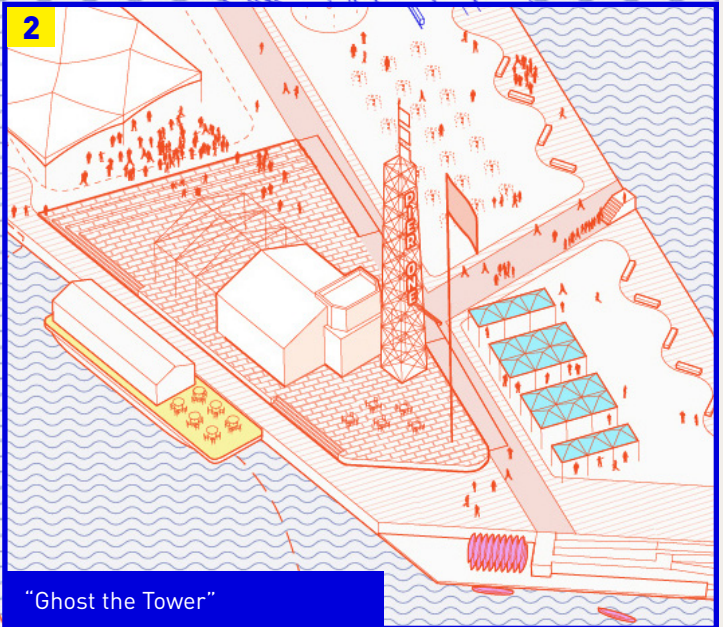
**8** Historic cranes provide a background to new activities.





Activation zones can support visitors' daily enjoyment and host a variety of activities and programs

## Building 109 Repurpose Options





**PRECEDENTS: PIER 1**

**1** Along the Chicago River, integrated seating provides a space for visitors to engage with the water.

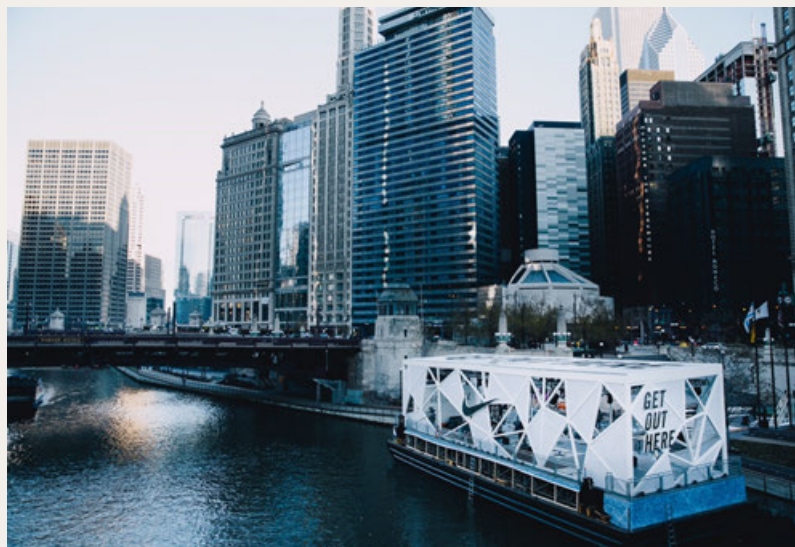
**2** Ghosting a structure, such as this structure at Parris Landing in the Navy Yard, can make it available for contemporary uses while preserving a sense of history.

**3** In London's Regents Canal, small barges and "longboats" enhance the shoreline experience with cafes, gardens, and bookstalls.

**4** Along the Chicago River, recreational craft can dock and reprovision in safety.













## **NEXT STEPS: IMMEDIATE AND LONG-TERM STRATEGIES**

This visioning document is the first step towards a reenergized Navy Yard. Short-term projects can bring about needed changes and maintain momentum; longer-term initiatives can transform the site for decades to come.



The Visitor Experience Plan represents only the beginning of a sustained effort to reimagine the Navy Yard for visitors and residents in the decades to come. With the framework in place, the partnership between the USS Constitution Museum, the National Park Service, and the US Navy will now oversee the implementation of the Plan, with the help of external collaborators and partners.

### **NEAR-TERM PROJECTS**

#### **Signage and wayfinding**

A signage and wayfinding improvement project will focus on improving navigation both within the Navy Yard, and from the Navy Yard to key nearby destinations such as the Harborwalk and Pier 4 ferry. Improved interpretive signage will support the “telling stories” strategy of broadening the interpretive focus of the Navy Yard.

#### **Parking**

Onsite staff parking needs will be analyzed, and where possible, will be moved offsite so that more of the Yard can serve visitor oriented uses. Current parking on lot between Hoosac and Building 4 obstructs the view of the USS *Constitution* from a central point of arrival.

#### **Creative placemaking**

Through arts-based and cultural programs, the Navy Yard can expand its program repertoire and invite new, diverse audiences to participate. In addition to an existing roster of concerts and events, the Navy Yard can serve as a vital site for weekend markets, public art “happenings,” and “yoga in the Yard.”

#### **Stewardship and real estate**

Consolidating public-facing activities within a smaller footprint will free up real estate for additional partners and opportunities for revenue generation.

#### **NPS space planning study**

A detailed space planning study by NPS will result in a clear understanding of space efficiencies and what real estate development opportunities exist on the Navy Yard.

#### **Technical feasibility studies**

The park will strategically undertake technical studies at the focus areas to determine uses, cost estimates and partnerships.

### **LONG-TERM PROJECTS**

#### **Capital projects**

Long-term capital projects include the renovation of the Hoosac Building as the future home of the Visitor Center and USS Constitution Museum; the Great Lawn; the landscape renovation of Pier 1; and the potential repurposing of the Marine Barracks and other properties.

#### **Climate change adaptation**

Climate change adaptation involves site-wide and building-specific improvements and reinforcements to make them less vulnerable to extreme weather events and coastal flooding.

#### **Partnership projects**

The Navy Yard is poised to partner with Boston cultural and civic organizations, such as Boston Harbor Now and BPDA, on projects that advance a common mission of educating visitors and enhancing Boston’s communities.











The Navy Yard Partners look forward to enhancing storytelling in the Navy Yard with participatory exhibits and programs both in the galleries and on the pier. The Museum seeks to engage all ages in the stories of “Old Ironsides” to spark excitement about maritime culture, naval service and the American experience. We will reach beyond our walls to make the Charlestown Navy Yard a vibrant visitor experience, facilitated by Navy Sailors, Park Rangers and Museum Staff. The Navy Yard will offer memorable hands-on activities — it will be a must-see destination in Boston!





## IMAGE SOURCES

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7	Michael Blanchard / USS Constitution Museum	
8	Matt Teuten / National Parks of Boston	
10	Sasaki BPDA	<a href="https://bostonplans.org/getattachment/cdbc8d26-cc98-4395-aeel-ea3b4e39a193">bostonplans.org/getattachment/cdbc8d26-cc98-4395-aeel-ea3b4e39a193</a>
14	Sasaki	
16	Victoria Kinney / US Navy	<a href="https://doncio.navy.mil/CHIPS/ArticleDetails.aspx?ID=5635">doncio.navy.mil/CHIPS/ArticleDetails.aspx?ID=5635</a>
18	National Parks Service	<a href="https://nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/shipbldg1.htm">nps.gov/bost/learn/historyculture/shipbldg1.htm</a>
25	Google Streetview	
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56	Acme Hotel Company Dezeen Magazine  Landezine  7 Tide City of Powell Pilates with a Purpose Governor's Island Hammock Grove	<a href="https://acmehotelcompany.com/play/chicago-classics/millennium-park.aspx">acmehotelcompany.com/play/chicago-classics/millennium-park.aspx</a> <a href="https://dezeen.com/2017/05/15/james-corner-field-operations-circular-landscape-philadelphia-navy-yards-central-green-architizer-awards/#/">dezeen.com/2017/05/15/james-corner-field-operations-circular-landscape-philadelphia-navy-yards-central-green-architizer-awards/#/</a> <a href="https://landezine.com/index.php/2015/08/the-jardins-de-la-palud-an-urban-park-along-the-elorn-quays-by-urbicus/the_jardins_de_la_palud-by-urbicus-06/">landezine.com/index.php/2015/08/the-jardins-de-la-palud-an-urban-park-along-the-elorn-quays-by-urbicus/the_jardins_de_la_palud-by-urbicus-06/</a> <a href="https://seventide.com/another-season-outdoor-music-art-fun-lawn-d-opens-may-1/">seventide.com/another-season-outdoor-music-art-fun-lawn-d-opens-may-1/</a> <a href="https://cityofpowell.us/residents/parks-recreation/community-garden/">cityofpowell.us/residents/parks-recreation/community-garden/</a> <a href="https://www.pilateswpurpose.com/">www.pilateswpurpose.com/</a> <a href="https://govisland.com/things-to-do/activities/hammocks">govisland.com/things-to-do/activities/hammocks</a>
60	Sasaki	
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62	Michael Blanchard / USS Constitution Museum	
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67	Matt Teurten / National Parks of Boston	