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REAL ESTATE REALTY CHECK

The Brooklyn Navy Yard is booming, but still holds rustic charm



Rendering of Admirals' Row at Brooklyn Navy Yard with Wegmans store at top right.

By [Steve Cuozzo](#)

The booming Brooklyn Navy Yard, where mighty World War II battleships were launched, has scores of more peaceful new stories to tell. Owned by the city since 1966, the contemporary industrial park now boasts a daily workforce of 9,500, up from 3,600 in 2001, and on track to more than double to 20,000 by the end of 2020.

The Yard is home to dry docks for ship repairs that recall, in miniature, its maritime and wartime origins — but mainly to companies that produce everything from body armor to organic vegetables from the world's largest rooftop farm.

But its most glamorous face is Steiner Studios, a film and TV production complex that's grown from 310,000 square feet in 2004 to 760,000 square feet today — with plans to get even bigger.

Beautifully crafted sets for TV shows and films are sadly off-limits to the public. But a quite different project by Studios developer Doug Steiner will soon bring the public into the 300-acre Navy Yard in a big way: The city's first Wegmans Food Market, a 75,000-square-foot store in the Yard's Admirals Row section, along with 85,000 of retail yet to be leased and under construction.

Steiner Studios' growth is taking place against the backdrop of a \$1 billion expansion of the whole Navy Yard. An even more ambitious, \$2.5 billion expansion is on tap to be completed by 2030, by which time the site will be home to 30,000 jobs. The master plan calls for new manufacturing buildings and a more public-friendly face, including parks and sky bridges.

Today's Yard — bustling, atmospheric and somewhat confusing — is unlike anything in the city.

It's full of wartime ghosts, such as the radio towers atop Steiner's building at 25 Washington Ave. (which are lit blue at night) and the romantic ruins in a still-wild section called the Naval Annex, which Steiner plans to revive in the form of modern media and educational facilities.

But the complex is humming with 21st century commercial enterprise in buildings old and new. Steiner Studios is now the largest full-scale production facility east of Los Angeles, eclipsing Silvercup Studios and Kaufman Astoria Studios by just about every major metric.

The Steiner complex has been used for "Boardwalk Empire," "Sex and the City," "The Taking of Pelham 123" and scores of other films and TV shows.

Among them: Amazon Prime's "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel." The interiors for Miriam "Midge" Maisel's Upper West Side apartment and a Greenwich Village comedy club are all at Steiner.

"We're happy that the whole Navy Yard has been transformed along with our portion," said Steiner, a man of many interests who also developed Brooklyn's tallest tower, the residential building known as The Hub on Schermerhorn Street.

His studios and related support facilities started with 15 Washington Ave. in 2004. More sound stages opened in 2012, 2013 and 2018 at a total development cost of \$338 million, with more to come.

The building that houses sound stages 25-30, opened in 2018 for \$102 million, evokes a fantasy 1930s Hollywood studio, thanks to a vanilla-colored concrete facade that gleams in the sun.

Steiner also plans to build a large back lot that will include classic New York exteriors such as a "quintessential" Brooklyn brownstone, a police precinct house and Chinatown. "We'll start designing it soon and build it in the next three or four years," he said.

Meanwhile, Steiner's enthused about Wegmans. So is Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation president David Ehrenberg, who's overseen the Yard's dramatic growth for the past six years. Ehrenberg said of the Wegmans launch, "I think it's really important. We're trying to create moments all along the fence line where the public can come in and see what's going on at the Yard." Right now, the Yard's few public amenities include a Russ & Daughter's shop and a Visitors' Employment & Exhibition Center.

Wegmans is close to 399 Sands St., also part of the Admirals Row section that Steiner is developing at a total cost of \$341 million. The group of buildings includes one for offices and parking, a community facility and more stores.



Steiner Studios in the Brooklyn Navy Yard

Also on Steiner's agenda is redevelopment of the Naval Annex, an 18-acre corner of the Yard with 11 romantic ruins, including a spooky Navy hospital and a building where the Navy made wartime propaganda films.

Exact plans are uncertain, but Steiner said, "I think of the hospital as the crown jewel of the Navy Yard" that could be a "major media headquarters."

He said, "We're about to start putting in infrastructure both to stabilize the structures and to put in modern utilities."

Wegmans and the other stores are expected to bring several thousand more jobs to the Yard. More job growth by the end of 2020 will occur at Dock72, a mold-breaking, \$314 million, 675,000-square-foot office building designed by Rudin Development and Boston Properties for collaborative-workspace use. WeWork has pre-leased 220,000 square feet at the dramatically designed, ship-like structure on the East River waterfront. An NYC ferry dock is to open by summer at the building's foot to serve the whole Yard.

More jobs are also coming at Building 77, the Yard's largest single structure, The BNYDC converted a former, windowless storage building into contemporary offices for vertically integrated design and manufacturing firms diverse as Nanette Lepore, Catbird Jewelry, and also for the unique public school for hands-on science and technology known as the Brooklyn STEAM Center.