

Red Hook, Brooklyn

New York - New Belfast



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New York - New Belfast is an ongoing collaboration between government officials and business leaders from New York and Northern Ireland to share best practices at the intersection of business, neighborhood development, and public policy.

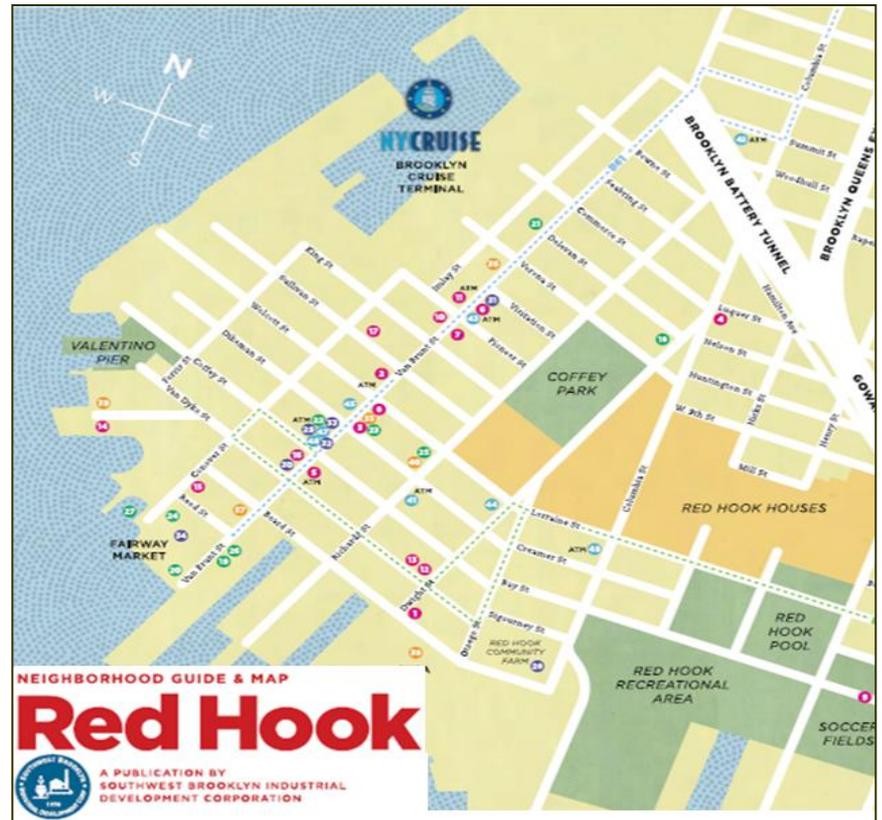


On June 8, 2011, 50 delegates from Northern Ireland assembled at Fordham University's Lincoln Center campus for the 2011 conference hosted by the Irish Echo. The two-day event featured the fourth annual Irish Echo Index luncheon honoring the top 30 companies with operations in the US and Northern Ireland as well as eminent Irish-American leaders including Congressman Richard Neal (MA-2).

The conference included a visit to historic **Red Hook** in South Brooklyn on June 9. Led by New York City Department of Small Business Services Commissioner **Robert W. Walsh**, the delegation from Northern Ireland toured the commercial corridor along Van Brunt Street, learned about the local criminal justice system, and explored the neighborhood's successful adaptive reuse developments.



Director of Belfast Media, Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, District Attorney Charles Hynes and Commissioner Robert Walsh meet outside of the Red Hook Community Court.



Historic Red Hook



This image shows Red Hook Brooklyn from the Brooklyn Bridge to the end of the Island in 1875, when Red Hook was known for its heavy industrial use.

Red Hook, named for its red clay soil and topographic shape projecting into the East River, was originally inhabited by a group of American Indians called the Lenape, and settled by the Dutch in 1636.

In the 1840s, construction of the Atlantic Basin drew significant investment along the piers and wharves. Red Hook became one of the busiest ports in the country.

In the second half of the 20th century, many of the docks became obsolete with the introduction of container shipping. Ports in New Jersey and other southern locations drew business and jobs away.

The construction of the Gowanus Expressway cut Red Hook off from the rest of Brooklyn. Between 1960 and 1980, the population of the area dropped over 40 percent.

Red Hook Today



The Brooklyn Cruise Terminal opened in April 2006 and is one of three terminals for ocean-going cruise ships in the metropolitan New York City area.

Today, Red Hook is home to factories, art galleries, a 58-acre public park, and the largest public housing development in Brooklyn accommodating roughly 5,000 residents.

In recent years, development in the industrial and manufacturing business sector and the arrival of a growing creative and artistic community have led to the revitalization of the neighborhood.

New developments include the City's first and only IKEA, cultural attractions such as art shows, film festivals, and theater performances, and the opening of the Brooklyn Cruise Terminal.



A old grain plant sits empty adjacent to the Red Hook park.



IKEA opened in June 2008. Its 346,000 square-foot store is one of two in New York State. The other is located in Long Island.

A Tour of Red Hook

The Northern Ireland delegation visited three destinations in Red Hook:

1. Kings County District Attorney [Charles Hynes](#) introduced the [Red Hook Community Justice Center](#) and Brooklyn's innovative court system. He was joined by presiding judge, Alex Calabrese.
2. [Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation](#) Director of Revitalization and Development Elizabeth Demetriou led a walk down Van Brunt Street, Red Hook's primary commercial corridor.
3. Neighborhood developer Gregory O'Connell showcased two new redevelopments, the [Fairway Market](#) and the [Beard Street Warehouses](#).



Red Hook Community Justice Center



The Red Hook Community Justice Center opened in the long-abandoned Visitation school in June 2000 as one of two innovation courts in NYC.

The Center provides programs to engage local residents in “doing justice” including mediation, community service projects, and a youth court.

Operating out of a refurbished Catholic school in the heart of the low-income Brooklyn neighborhood, the Justice Center seeks to solve neighborhood problems like drugs, crime, domestic violence, and landlord-tenant disputes. The court serves 3 police precincts with about 200,000 residents.



Kings County District Attorney Charles Hynes explained the impact the Community Court had in stabilizing the surrounding neighborhood.

An Innovative Court System



The Red Hook judge has an array of sanctions and services at his disposal, including:

- Community restitution projects
- On-site educational workshops
- GED classes
- Drug treatment and mental health counseling.

At the Red Hook Community Justice Center, a single judge hears neighborhood cases that, under ordinary circumstances, would go to three different courts – Civil , Family, and Criminal.

The goal of the court system in Red Hook is to offer a coordinated, rather than piecemeal, approach to people’s problems.

The Justice Center has been credited with improving compliance with court orders, enhancing public trust in the courts, and reducing levels of fear in the community.

Each year, the Justice Center contributes approximately 70,000 hours of community service to Red Hook.

A Walk Down Van Brunt Street

Small businesses have flourished on **Van Brunt Street**, from restaurants and markets to clothing boutiques and art studios.

Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC) provides advocacy and services to help businesses in Red Hook grow and create employment opportunities for local residents.



The tour continues down Van Brunt towards the waterfront.



➤ **Hope and Anchor**, a neighborhood diner and bar is just one of a number of new restaurants that have opened their doors on Van Brunt Street.

Local businesses include:

- **Baked**, a full service bakery serving cakes, cupcakes, and coffee.
- **Kentler International Drawing Place**, an exhibit and archive for contemporary drawings.
- **Metal and Thread**, a shop offering hand-made textiles and metal work.
- **Chelsea Garden Center**, a garden center offering landscaping services.

Building a Commercial Corridor

The small businesses in the community frequently collaborate on projects; restaurants hang paintings or photography by local artists, and cooks find fresh fare from the [Added Value Community Farm](#).



Red Hook Urban Garden Center provides gardening supplies, plants, and landscaping services.



Dry Dock Wine + Spirits imports from smaller producers around the world.

Bringing New Life to Old Buildings



In recent years, Red Hook has become a draw for artists seeking large, inexpensive live-work spaces.

Long abandoned and derelict, the Warehouse's restoration preserved its historic character, including 250 arched iron shutters and the retention of the original beams and massive supporting timbers.

Local adaptive reuse developer **Gregory O'Connell** restored the **Beard Street Warehouse**, which today is the home to over 40 businesses and numerous educational and cultural organizations.

A prominent community figure, O'Connell owns about 25 buildings that house 200 businesses and employ 2,000 workers, as well as acres of undeveloped land.



O'Connell in front of the Beard Street Warehouse with members of the Belfast delegation.

Gregory O'Connell also transformed the waterfront building now housing Red Hook's own unique 52,000 square-foot **Fairway Grocery Center**, featuring traditional and specialty groceries as well as café seating for 50.



The Red Hook Fairway market opened in May 2006, bringing more variety to the neighborhood.



A view of the Upper New York Bay on Fairway's rooftop, from which the Statue of Liberty can be seen.

Cultural projects in Red Hook maintain and enhance the historic connection of the area to the waterfront, preserving historic maritime structures such as the **Mary Whalen** and the **Lehigh Valley Railroad Barge**.



Thanks to District Attorney Charles Hynes, SBIDC's Elizabeth Demetriou, Gregory O'Connell, Irish Echo Publisher Máirtín Ó Muilleoir, and the entire Northern Ireland delegation for another successful New York – New Belfast conference. Visit <http://newyorknewbelfast.com/> for more information.



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