

## **OUTLINE:**

**Title:** Community and Development

**Thesis:** How are the developers, the politicians and the community residents working with or against each other regarding the redevelopment of the Gowanus area?

**I. Introduction:** The Gowanus Canal is an 1.8 miles long man-made waterbody in the neighborhoods of Red Hook and Carroll Gardens. From the time the Gowanus Creek was turned into a canal in the mid-19th century, the area has been on a rollercoaster of changes. With several changes came up several problems as well. A much neglected area for a long time gained a lot of notice after being declared a Superfund site in the year 2010. In the podcast we will discuss the perspectives of the developers, the politicians and the local residents regarding the redevelopment of the area.

## **II. Developers:**

### **A. Developers:**

1. Gowanus Green Partners was chosen by HPD to be the developer for the redevelopment of the Public Place site according to the visioning principles decided by the local community. The development will consist of:
  - Mix housing types (homeownership rental, and senior housing)
  - Ground floor neighborhood retail and commercial space
  - Community facility spaces
  - Waterfront open spaces
  - LEED certification
  - Sustainability
2. The partnership stands with the community, elected officials, City officials, and NYS DEC in advocating the remediation of Public Place to an accepted level that will allow safe residential development.
3. Lightstone spent approximately \$350 million in order to build 365 Bond. To remove the pollution, Lightstone dug up more than 12,000 tons of dirt and removed seven underground oil storage tanks. In addition to the massive excavation, Lightstone installed heavy duty plastic barriers that bonds to poured concrete beneath the building foundation. These barriers block water, soil and vapor and are designed to prevent lingering contamination in the ground from entering the building. The site also has an underground system of fans and vents that sucks contaminants out of the ground and moves them away from the building.
4. Understanding the importance of community in relation to Jane Jacobs but realizing to prosper as a city we need the forsite of Robert Moses.

## **B. Marketing:**

1. 365 bond shows false sense of community.
2. Developers advertise the usage of the Gowanus Canal as safe when in reality it is laced with toxins.
3. Some residents are against these developments and their false advertisement while others just see it as an opportunity for a better future.
4. Some developments say that they are for the community and try to involve them in activities and etc. but it doesn't look like they really advertise it.

## **III. Politicians:**

- A.** While the government initially resisted the Superfund terms and tried to clean it themselves, it eventually relented.
- B.** While they have engaged in "spot" rezoning, they claim it is in the best interests for the community
- C.** While the government does claim that they are willing to work with the community, there are things that they claim "the mechanisms or tools discussed were beyond the scope or ability of this neighborhood study for feasibility, legal or other policy reasons."

## **IV. Small Business:**

### **Concerns**

1. *Displacement* - Transitioning neighborhoods induce rising rental costs and taxes, ultimately leading to the displacement of local/small business owners.
2. *Landlord harassment* - Reacting to the rising rents, transitioning neighborhood, and potential to increase profit, landlords are pushing tenants out by refusing maintenance services or creating unlivable living conditions.

### **City Initiatives to Prevent the Displacement of Small Businesses as Neighborhoods Transition**

1. *Changes to the Commercial Rent Tax/ Tax Relief* – Mayor De Blasio announced a new bill that would make changes to the Commercial Rent Tax (CRT) that will reduce taxes for 2700 small businesses, including 1800 that will no longer pay tax at all.
2. *Services provided by the Department of Small Business Services* – The Dept. of SBS are working on roll out programs targeting small businesses in transitioning neighborhoods. Programs like NYC Business Solution offer FREE services such as, Business Courses, Legal Assistance, Financing Assistance, Incentives, Navigating Government, Recruitment, Training, Selling to Government, and M/WBE Certification at locations in every borough. The goal is to support the small business owner allowing continuous operation and expansion.

3. *Protection From Landlord Harassment*

File Number: Int. No. 851-B

Name: Curtailing harassment of small businesses and other non-residential tenants.

Summary: "This bill would create a cause of action for harassment of small businesses and other non-residential tenants by landlords. The bill would specify acts and omissions that constitute non-residential tenant harassment when committed with intent to cause the tenant to vacate the leased property or to surrender a right held under the lease agreement. The bill would also specify remedies available to a small business or other tenant that has been the victim of non-residential tenant harassment."

**V. Residents:**

**A. Existing Residents:**

- Concerned about being disconnected with the new residents
- Concerned about rising rents and fearful of being pushed out
- Concerned about the continuous harrassments by the landlord.
- Strong belief in the unity of community to undo what they think is unjust

**B. New Residents:**

- Many are coming for the type of living that the Gowanus provides
- Concerns about the Canal and what is being done about it
- Ultimately, would like to see how they can fit in with the old residents without feeling like the "bad guy" that has taken over their neighborhood.

**VI. Conclusion:**

Local residents (old and new) and businesses are hopeful that as Gowanus evolves, the opportunity to meaningfully address the community's desire to grow inclusively and equitably by preserving Gowanus' greatest assets: housing, businesses and their residents will stay in the forefront of every politician and Developer eager to stake its claim to the City's first Eco-District, "Gowanus."

**VII. List of Photos and Powerpoint:**

- A. Picture of Matt Bruno as an old resident courtesy of Ramana Syed
- B. Renderings from The Lighthouse Group and Gowanus Green Partners
- C. Picture of Gowanus Projects courtesy of Matthew Traub
- D. Picture of new development courtesy of Lisa White
- E. Pictures of 365 Bond and dredging Courtesy of Kristopher Garay
- F. Picture of Maria Baez,her Deli, where her old business once stood, and Residential plans Courtesy of Sanaya Brown