

Asli Oney
Yuying Xian
Melissa Benitez
Karla Patrone
Monty Nijjar
Andrew Alleyne

Narrator:

Good Morning All, Today we will be talking about The Increase of artist evictions specifically the artist community in Gowanus. Today's question is WHAT IS THE IDEAL protect/actions PLAN THAT WOULD BENEFIT ARTISTS of GOWANUS IN AN UNDERGOING GENTRIFYING COMMUNITY?

We will have a discussion with Historian Melissa Benitez, Artist of the Gowanus Karla Patrone, Artist activist of Gowanus Monty Nijjar, City Planner Asli Oney, City Council Yuying Xian, and the Developer Andrew Alleyne. These people are about to share their contributions and experiences of the thriving area of Gowanus neighborhood in Brooklyn, NY. This discussion will extract the reason artist, residents, politician, and developers are attracted to Gowanus. We will begin our broadcast with Karla.

Karla:

Gowanus has become a popular and lively neighborhood. One can say the reason for that is because of the artist community. Throughout the years many artists have migrated to the Gowanus for both affordable spaces and the titebond the artists share between each other. The rush of artists to this location caused developers to see the Gowanus neighborhood as the next big thing.

. Which leads to the question; What are the artists in Gowanus currently facing when it comes to their work spaces?

-Well , we know that there has been an enormous community of artists there based off of Gowanus Open studios. It is an event the community hosts every year to give the public insight of the artists in the area and hundreds of artists participate. The number of participants has decreased since the gentrification of Gowanus begun.

-One artist Alex Nero was assured by his landlord that he could renew his lease for three years. Therefore he invested into building out his studio space to then have to move out because the new management needed the space to give it to their assistants.

But one of the biggest hits the artist community received was when the 94th 9th street building was purchased by Eli Hamway in 2015.

Developer Eli Hamway leased three large building in Gowanus. Where many artists had studio spaces. The 94th 9th street location was where majority of affordable studios were located. Once under new management after the purchase the artists were told that their leases were not going to be renewed causing them to be displaced and forced to find alternate locations similar to what happened in other neighborhoods like Dumbo and Soho.

So we know that Melissa did research on the Gentrification of SoHo,, Melissa, tell us what happens to the artist in SoHo? (South of Houston Street)

In the 1960's SoHo had many open apartments available due to the lack of industry. That's really when the migration of the artist began in SoHo. The artist were seeking for large spaces that will serve for their studios but most importantly large spaces that were cheap. And they found that in SoHo. There were many places with large spaces and with large windows that allowed natural light to go in the spaces. Eventually the artists were too comfortable with their studio space that they decided to live in them. Back in the 60s that was illegal. The zoning for SoHo was only for industrial usage and not residential. So that became a big issue because artist couldn't afford to own a studio and a home. Eventually the city took charge of it and in 1971 the zoning resolution was amended to permit the Joint-Live- Work Quarters for artists. Which meant that the artists can live and work in the same space. That's when the garbage trucks started to come to SoHo because they had to make it a habitable place rather than only being

Asli Oney
 Yuying Xian
 Melissa Benitez
 Karla Patrone
 Monty Nijjar
 Andrew Alleyne

industrial. Later in 1987 those that were living in SoHo without being artists were able to stay there, but it was only a one time agreement. The zoning change in SoHo didn't happen right away. In 1973, SoHo was designated a landmark as the SoHo- Cast Iron Historic District. That's when the very high end stores like Prada started to come in to SoHo. Eventually the artist had to leave their studios because the rent went sky rocket. And then Gentrification took place in SoHo and it was completely redeveloped.

What is Gentrification ?

Melissa:

Definition: the process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste. So just to shorten it, is just the redevelopment of an existing community.

What are the Signs of Gentrification?

Melissa:

- Community is abbreviated with a Real Estate Friendly Name.
- Street Art replaced by Commissioned Street Art.
- Brand Stores or Food Chain Restaurant replace authentic restaurants and small grocery stores.

Ever since the 9th street location was closed it seems like there is a segregation between the changing community , artists and industrial business that share the same blocks. With the current zoning of mixed use, what is the current relationships between the artist and community?

Asli:

Mixed use zoning of a building can be visualized as if---- you think of a contemporary 6 story building, and at its ground levels which are closer to pedestrian levels consist of, storefront or restaurants, operating under commercial use. Or industrial or community facilities. Zoning also controls the use in densities by type meaning the maximum floor to area ratio gets divided into several industries under one roof. Consider a building's site location is designated to a certain height that can be divided into business industries compatible to each other. This building could be a residential building that has 5 FAR where 4FAR goes to residential and 1FAR goes to commercial, that building could also become 2FAR residential and 3FAR to commercial, under MIX USE zones. During the design of the building of 5FAR , there is an independent choice between the commercial and residential designation that is most likely determined by the developer which..... could be driven by the community. In a true gentrifying community this same building that we're talking about would..... be a minimum 3FAR residential and 1FAR community facility and maybe a 1 FAR for commercial use.

-As you know right now, Gowanus is common 2FAR with industrial on the bottom and commercial on the top. But combining mixed use creates increase in costs, it would require 2 separate cores, lobbies, and also to add the conns like, noise, vibrations, docking proximity to residential lobby or truck loading and pedestrian conflicts... Through architectural design these pedestrian level matters need to be carefully addressed.

-Mixed use also needs to be thought linear on the street level. One typical block in Gowanus..... we would see a three-story residential, a two-story commercial, five story residential, a two-story industrial, two-story industrial, Kind of dynamic scene to walk through. Creating more interaction with the community passing through such businesses at the street level.

-Mix uses can also be attained on a neighborhood scale when we're considering narrow streets versus wide avenues.

Asli Oney
 Yuying Xian
 Melissa Benitez
 Karla Patrone
 Monty Nijjar
 Andrew Alleyne

The separation of use and density by geography would be like block by block, or corridors versus side street, or access to transit, and the benefits of avoid conflicts and creating easier access becomes as a result residential buildings become more accessible to the wide avenues. And mixed commercial and industrial are closer to narrow streets with less residential access.

The community relationships are currently threatened due to the rezoning that is currently happening in the Gowanus. Gowanus is a light industrial neighborhood and a business intersection from New Jersey to Brooklyn, Manhattan and major highways. Gowanus is a threshold of some of the NYC industry. The relationships will be tied through: Provide consistent, predictable regulations to guide development, Embody goals and principles established through outreach and framework process, Maintain areas for continued industrial as well as commercial activity, Achieve cleanup and redevelopment of underutilized sites, Consider the scale and context of surrounding neighborhood in creating zoning regulations for the area, Produce opportunities for affordable housing, achieve waterfront public access at the canal's edge . This will bring the community more together than it was before.

If the community and artists come together what would be the combined synopsis for merging into mixed zone use? Attempts like *Bridging Gowanus* must have some impact already to the Gowanus community?

Asli:

City Planners identified four goals during Brad Lander's Bridging Gowanus meetings to preserve and create affordable housing, investments in infrastructure, a thriving manufacturing sector, and a genuine Gowanus mix of uses. This all indicates that the city is trying to nurture job growth in Gowanus. Growth in different businesses and more people on the street is what Gowanus needs, and they should be implementing this culture by connecting with the community at the ground level. Gowanus' current mixed-use character is unpredictable. The challenge to maintaining and growing the current mix is that, individual land use actions are haphazardly chipping away at the balance of uses and threatening its longevity. As real estate pressures continue to mount, the manufacturing-zoned areas are becoming susceptible to private landowners filing variance and rezoning applications to build structures like the large Whole Foods store and the residential Lightstone development. Most of these new uses serve to drive up property values, which in turn inspires land speculation, which threatens to displace the manufacturing businesses that remain.

Asli:

The challenge to maintaining and even growing the current mix is that individual land use actions (e.g., spot rezonings and zoning waivers or variances) are haphazardly chipping away at the balance of uses and threatening its longevity. As real estate pressures continue to mount, the manufacturing-zoned areas are becoming susceptible to private landowners filing variance and rezoning applications to build structures like the large Whole Foods store and the residential Lightstone development. Most of these new uses serve to drive up property values, which in turn inspires land speculation, which threatens to displace the manufacturing businesses that remain.

Seems like each redevelopment plan has to consider the sites culture to accommodate the future infrastructural need through prototyping/ beta planning programs. Is the DCP focused on any programs that will bridge the artists and the community?

Asli:

DCP's "PLACES" studies (Planning for Livability, Affordability, Community, Economic Opportunity, and Stability).
 Minimize conflict between industrial businesses and residents
 Explore funding opportunities to assist artist to purchase property

Asli Oney
Yuying Xian
Melissa Benitez
Karla Patrone
Monty Nijjar
Andrew Alleyne

Explore funding opportunities for new housing to support the artist at arts culture
Make connections between arts and cultural organizations that need space and property owners who wish to maintain or expand arts and culture
Seek to support for arts and culture uses in new developments
Encourage active grounds inviting street level entrances

How does rezoning come in play to protect the artists from displacement?

Asli:

Many of the light industrial and commercial sectors that are doing well in Gowanus (such as creative and maker firms) are environmentally compatible with other uses, including housing. Also, businesses often want to be near their consumer markets, and mixed use neighborhoods can promote workers' ability to walk to work. So, to make connections between arts and cultural organizations is key. If property owners who wish to maintain or expand arts and culture seek uses in new developments. The "MX" zoning designation introduced by the NYC Department of City Planning in 1997 and used in 15 districts throughout the city allows for manufacturing and housing to co-exist within a district, where artist can work and live in the same property.

With the new zoning is allowing mixed incomes, what is the criteria for the affordable income in the Gowanus due to gentrification? Are there future plans to maintain city blocks that are affordable to live?

Asli:

During the development of new affordable housing (by applying Mandatory Inclusionary Housing MIH), (the city's new policy that requires a percentage of affordable housing on all upzoned sites) and ensuring that on publicly owned land, the creation of affordable housing exceeds minimum MIH requirements. Inclusionary housing program criteria: In exchange for 33% Floor Area bonus, 20% of the floor area must be set aside as affordable units, annual income up to \$61,450 for a family of four (80% of the HUD Income Limits).

So the question is how are the people reacting towards the Bridging Gowanus Proposal?

Yuying:

Well, Bridging Gowanus meeting is hosted by city council. As a city councilman, we will love to hear different voices from representatives. Such as small businesses, local organizations, and especially local artists. From our latest bridging gowanus framework, it is not only include four goals as the city planner mentioned before. It also intrude a range of projects. For example, we will design the Powerhouse Arts Workshop which was a former transit power station built in 1903. And, the building will serve as a permanent industrial fabrication center for artist in the Gowanus community as one of the cultural focal point for Brooklyn. The goal of this program is to provide affordable and accessible space for artists. It will also support public art and increase access for artists to public space. To support the artist, the workshop also create the full service fabrication. So artists can use this space to make arts, share skills, and exhibit their works. For example, when artists create ceramic art and use kiln to make glazing and fire the pottery, they can use it in the workshop, which is safer and cheaper. The bond between the artists, artist community and neighborhood is becoming stronger and stronger. According to the meeting, the site begins in 2017 and the building will open in 2020. I believe this program will benefit to local artists.

What are the councilman doing about the artists in Gowanus? Are they trying to help them or are they ignoring the artists?

Asli Oney
 Yuying Xian
 Melissa Benitez
 Karla Patrone
 Monty Nijjar
 Andrew Alleyne

Yuying:

Since the rezoning happening in Gowanus, there are many artists displaced. In order to help the artist, Council Members are trying to pass a bill, called Small Business Jobs Survival Act. The main focus of this bill is to give small businesses a fair right to renew the lease. It also provide a fair environment for artist to negotiate the lease renewals. For example, from the bill, artists have a right to renew their studio for ten years if they sign a lease when they rent the studio. However, If artists use the space different from what they described in the lease, or they persistently delay payments without reason, they may lose their right to renew the lease for the future. In Gowanus, many artists are sharing the studio or they are sub letters. The prime tenants need to be informed the landlord in the lease, otherwise, they also may lose their right to renew the studio. If the landlords refuse to renew the lease, they have to inform the artist 180 days before the expiration of the lease. Moreover, they also need to write a statement to explain it in detail to the artist and the American Arbitration Association. That means, artists have at least 6 months to finding a new studio or looking for help from organizations, such as artist's studio affordability project, arts Gowanus, and city agency, and so on. During this period, if artist disagree with landlord and still want to renew their lease, they can inform the administering agency and the American arbitration association or any other Arbitration recognized organizations. Then the Arbitration will explain the process of hearing to the artist and landlord.

Karla:

I sat down with gallery owner Krista Scenna to ask her opinion on the current events in Gowanus. She had a valid point of stating that until artists purchase their own space they will live with the fear of having to move every time an area gets gentrified. Her exact words were : "Until artists and art advocates band together and start to OWN these spaces I fear little can be done." She brings up a valid point and some artists have taken the necessary steps to own their buildings.

Robin Grearson: *How will the loss of these workspaces (and artists) impact Gowanus?*

Krista:" The eviction just makes us feel like we're all on borrowed time here. I didn't think it would happen so fast and I think that's why many people find it jarring. It also makes me wonder, we've worked so hard to bring attention to this community, are we also responsible for this in some way? That's the tricky part about gentrification, right?"

!!Robert G: *Can we create change if we work together and if so, what are the obstacles?*

KS: Until artists and art advocates band together and start to OWN these spaces, I fear little can be done.!!

Monty:

yes this building actually had a very interesting story. Around 05-06 a bunch of artist rallied together and bought this building from the owners. Its a 19th century brick building on 543 union st. and is now zoned commercially. BUT!! each apartment in that building is owned by artist of various kind. Interestingly that building use to be a box factory. Now i want to take your attention to the issue artist facing in gowanus and all over nyc. Artist community is facing crisis more than ever and they are in need of help. Advocacy (what has happened) Activist:

What were the living/working conditions of an Gowanus Artist prior to the 2010 super fund site approval. What has changed since then?

Asli Oney
 Yuying Xian
 Melissa Benitez
 Karla Patrone
 Monty Nijjar
 Andrew Alleyne

Monty:

Pre superfund- artist were given to live in the abandoned lofts and buildings for the fraction of the price that they are being asked today. And they were happy about it. Mind you that this wasn't an ideal place for a family to move in but it was a utopia for a low income artist. Artist was able to live and openly practise their art without having to worry about the mess. But in 2010 EPA declared the gowanus canal a superfund site, which means the city was forced to clean the canal up and surprisingly major real estate development also started in that area around the same time. The rezoning of this area allows for more residential building to be build which was a sure gamble for many developer and real estate owner.

But after after the superfund effect, artist started to see the struggle again that they have been dealing with time and time again which is forcing to relocate. As the real estate market in gowanus hikes up and clears the way for tenants, who can pay much higher price than a struggling part time artist.

As gentrification takes effect, low income artist and middle class families are facing eviction and these people need support and someone to stand along with them to fight for what is right, which is why we have organisation like asap, artFcity, wage for work and many more who are willing to fight for the artist community survive gowanus. Their mission is to preserve the diverse artist community in these neighborhood by bring their issue to general public, media and local politicians. By raising awareness about the injustice being done to them as gentrification spreads, artist are being kicked out of their own live/work space and most of these artist does not have the final background to support themselves. So these artist are in need of support by the very same neighborhood they helped to raise. by raising awareness about the crisis of studio space they need help from various organization like Volunteering law for arts (VLA) who fights for artist for free or very low fee. This organization help and give legal aid to the artist by educating them about their rights.

We also need to get together to protest like Asap organized a protest call double crossed brooklyn. In nov 17 2015 artist from all over gather in front of brooklyn museum during a real estate submit for 600 developer with signs and banners, and some people brought their own furniture demonstrating the fact they are unfairly being kicked out of their own homes.

Gowanus is the mecca of real estate right now, but the artists are getting evicted who helped to built it? So what can we do help artist with this issue?

Monty:

We do understand and realize that we have a problem, but instead of crying about, we need to stand up and fight. Because the moment we stop fight stopping for what's right, is the moment we lose. So what we need is to look for solution, according to **Deputy Borough President of Brooklyn, Diana Reyna** she suggest that, " We believe that the solution to the precarious situation that many artists find themselves in is to become owners themselves. Currently, we think that having a nonprofit or low-profit model, a company, and entity that would lease out to artists at market or below-market rates- at least provide stable leases- would go some way toward providing stability of artists, stability of community."

In an interview with Jenny Dubnav from asap, she talks about asked about the small business jobs survival act. according to her, " This Act allows the basic right to renew lease which, unbelievably, doesn't exist for a commercial lease holder. That is why landlord's has the power not to renew a lease. SBJ will ensure all commercial tenants the basic right to renew unless they have breached their lease. Lease renewal jacked up 40%, or more that is a large amount for a struggling artist or small grocery store or Bodega. Also, if you feel your lease increase is too

Asli Oney
Yuying Xian
Melissa Benitez
Karla Patrone
Monty Nijjar
Andrew Alleyne

high, and the landlord and the tenant mediation did not work, you can go to binding arbitration where you would have to come up with a mutual rent increase. We feel that in general, that would dampen the skyrocketing rates and it would be a perfect solution for commercial rent control. This would probably be the best solution but we're not there yet politically. so as we know artist are in a crisis and and we're at the point now where the city council has to step up and even small businesses in a crisis and we need sweeping policy change and that's where we need the city council to come up with something which benefits all." According to the blog take back nyc, " **the SBJSA has a majority of the New York City Council (27 out of 51)** who have signed on for the rights of small business. But, there are **4 individual lawmakers who stand in the way of saving NYC small businesses: Mayor Bill de Blasio, Speaker Melissa Mark-Viverito, Public Advocate Letitia James, and Council Member Robert Cornegy.** These individuals, whether through action or inaction, are destroying NYC small business and not representing the will of the people." Artist are not asking for much except a place to stay and their pursuit of passion, Losing art in nyc is like losing soul from a body.

Is there a solution to break the infamous cycle between artist and real estate developers?

Andrew:

A solution may be deemed as something that completely solves a problem and become beneficial to the two parties we are exploring. Personally I believe that both sides of the spectrum can merge and become an irrefutable force within the community. As a day to day developer I've put together detailed case studies, observations and trends amongst artist and developers. Many of these instances deal with areas that were in the similar predicament as the Gowanus. They are Williamsburg, SOHO and Dumbo that we all have grown to love.

Both developers and artist alike aren't completely different. They both introduce aforementioned factors into low cost, undeveloped neighborhoods. My reasoning behind this statements follows many years of observation within these communities. It's a ever going constant cycle between both parties in undeveloped neighborhoods.

We can fix many of these issues that plague both parties when it comes to uplifting neighborhoods that peak our interest. For instance, many developers have taken to partnering with artist allowing eye catching collaboration to surface within their building. A great example of that is the 864 unit Mercedes house rental in hell's kitchen features art from local artist that begins on a wall behind the front desk, curls around a corner and over a mail room, and ends near an elevator bank. Some 150 feet in width, the eye-catching piece shows waves of primary colors that blend into pastels. Another great example of partnership is the recent development in East Williamsburg on 51st north street. That particular situation is unique due to the fact that At 80 Met, a luxury six-story condo in Williamsburg, the structure will be built around the performance space used by a nontraditional dance studio called StrebLab for Action Mechanics.

Developer Steiner Equities bought the entire block for its development, but instead of booting the arts group sitting in the middle of the block, the group, which was in the middle of a 10-year lease, purchased its space at 51 North 1st Street. They wanted to preserve some of the artistic element of Williamsburg and even plans to market the condo project with the help of StrebLab.