

Learning Places Fall 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Understanding the City: The Gowanus Canal



A view of the Gowanus Canal from the elevated train station near Smith Street.

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INTRODUCTION

This is our first visit to the Gowanus Canal and we already had some prior knowledge and knew what to expect. As soon we got we there you notice that the slope of the area is downwards towards the canal. The canal, green and very polluted, was not in good shape. We saw a lot of graffiti and small and/or industrial businesses around the canal that are either rundown or going out of business. And this was to be expected.

SITE OBSERVATIONS:



The view of the Gowanus Canal from the first bridge at Union Street.

This image is good because it shows how green the water of the Gowanus Canal is. You can tell there's a lot of pollution in the water and if you were to zoom into the picture, at the start of the canal, you can see that there's foam on the top of the water. This comes from the runoff from rain and sewage near the canal. Also comes from the added oxygen that they add when they bring in water from the East River. You can also notice some graffiti on the walls on the left of the picture and that is a symbol from the many artists that live in the Gowanus Canal area, of which we will see more in the next image. Lastly, what left to notice is how there are no residential buildings directly next to the canal in this area. Only a few industrial businesses such as parking lots. I did not see any parks or playgrounds in this area and that may be because the area is very industrial but that may change in the near future.



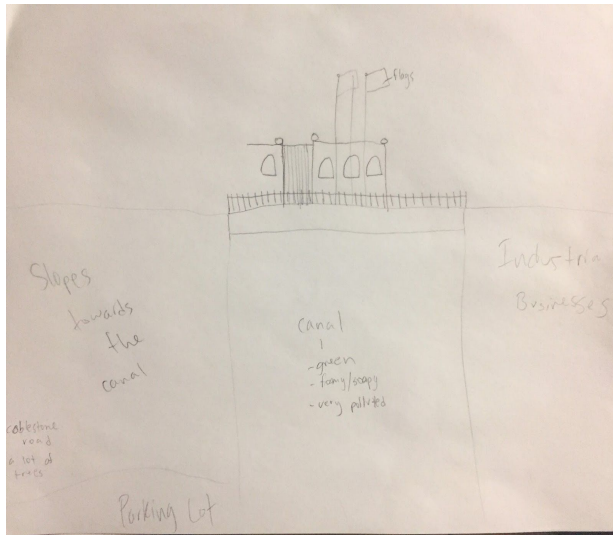
An image of the many artwork from the artists who live in the Gowanus area.

There is a large community of artists in the Gowanus area and this image shows only one of the many art pieces that they make on walls. Everything that happens in the Gowanus area greatly affects them and I thought it was important to show some of their art as this will probably get painted over or destroyed in the upcoming years. It seems studio space is getting more and more expensive for them and with the new developments that are occurring around the canal will only make the prices get even more expensive. But, this is not the only kind of art in the Gowanus area. We also went by a small little shop where the owner sold all sorts of pottery and mirrors and a lot of small home appliance things, which is another kind of art.

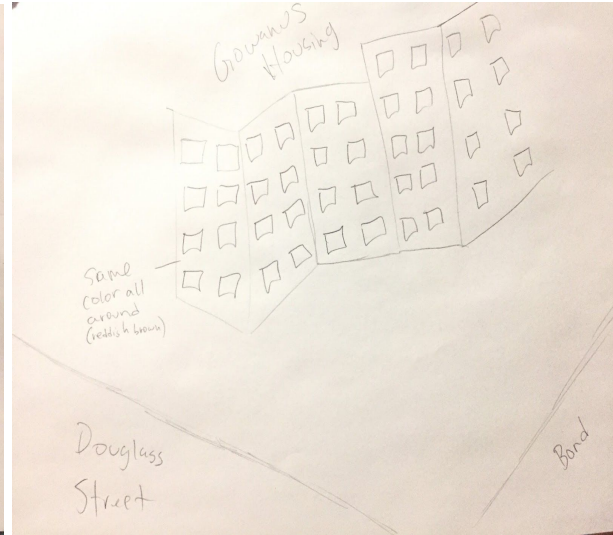


This image shows one of the new residential buildings that has been built.

Here we see a modern residential building that they built right along the canal. This is very different from all the other areas around it. You see it has a lot of vegetation and glass windows, the texture of the building is different from the buildings around it, the color is different. It stands out because there aren't many buildings like it around the gowanus. There was even a small boat in the canal right next to this building and they plan to add a lot of attractive amenities in the building so it's safe to say that the buildings apartments will be priced very high. This would raise the price of the land by a lot more and I'm sure that threatens some of the people who live around the area especially the artists who are trying to thrive and would not do so if prices around them go up.



This first sketch shows the gowanus canal and the area around it.



This next sketch shows the Gowanus Housing project right next to the canal on Douglass & Bond.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

A conclusion that I can draw about this place is that the Gowanus area can definitely can become the Venus of New York City. Right now you may see a dirty canal and a rundown neighborhood but if fixed in the right way and done correctly, this area can become very popular to the point even that tourists would want to visit. The people who live around the Gowanus canal don't currently live directly next to the canal, instead they live a block or more away, and everything around the canal is industrial businesses. But tear down those businesses, add in actual houses or modern condos, clean the water, add in small and attractive businesses, fix the bridges and I believe the area could be transformed. Maybe I might make it sound simple but I know that it would take many years and a lot of money, but it would create a lot of jobs in the meantime.

KEYWORDS/ VOCABULARY (these might include specialized vocabulary, city agencies, names of businesses or people
*5 keywords minimum required per site visit)

1. Superfund
2. Industrial
3. Residential
4. Demographic
5. Corproations

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH

1. How will new residential and business developments around the Gowanus canal affect the current ones?
2. Who, how and what actions are people taking into cleaning up the Gowanus canal's pollution?
3. How will the demographic of the Gowanus area change when new developments finish building?