

Learning Places Fall 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal: Preserving the old while building new.



The image above is located at the Gowanus Canal, where began our trip to explore the environment and the area surrounding the canal.

STUDENT NAME: Gurjot Nijjar

09.13.2017

INTRODUCTION

This was our first class trip to learn and understand the Gowanus Canal. The idea behind for this physical trip was to sense the feeling of the area and to have a better understanding beyond the books. First thing we notice how polluted the area is and not just the canal. Walking around the neighborhood along the canal we had the opportunity of learn more in depth about the canal and the neighborhood such as the in

and out of business store, graffiti and the apartment/ private residential houses. This trip opens a broader view of the canal beyond the books.

SITE OBSERVATIONS : Take notes in your notebook and use those to report your observations

(include photographic documentation and visual notes—at least 3 photographs 2 sketches required -- provide a caption for each image. Also provide a brief explanation why you chose the image and how it is related to the text)

What do you notice about the scale and shape of buildings?

From the point of the beginning of the trip bond street and douglas, where the Gowanus canal ended we saw old run out of business buildings. As we progressed on our trip, we began to notice the different buildings and house. We saw on bond street how one side had different designed houses but they shared the same wall length. On the other side, we notice the apartment building complexes. However, the residential place had different aspects towards them like some had open vegetation on the roof and some have few behind the glass window and some had solar panels instead. The apartment building which allows more people to live there was something else as they all share one designed building. These building was made in a way that allowed all the apartments to have access to natural sunlight.

What patterns, textures, colors, and ornamental features of the buildings stand out?

At the beginning of the trip we notice a lot of red bricked building, which tells a story that they have been there for a while around the Gowanus canal on bond street. Looking at the brick building one understands right away that which had recently got renovation and which building is in need of one. As one observe more, they begin to understand the details of the structure such as new and old brick facades or stone facades. Also understand that long time ago this area was heavily dominated but industrial manufacturing companies and they preferred red bricked structures. Some of the places here made of brick and concrete that had large iron door or metal ornaments as they use to receive truck deliveries but now they are there for metal ornaments. There were a lot of graffiti which added more color scheme to the area and each one of them told a story but, On a bright sunny day the color red stands out from the neighborhood.

Notice and note location of trees and other types of vegetation

There was vegetation but not in large display. Some places has no vegetation at all but some covered the whole roof. There were few trees along the sidewalk but they grown in a controlled manner. There was one street corner where the whole corner property was dedicated for the plant nursery. There was plenty of vegetation along the canal as well old abandon building has plants growing out of the stones. There were few buildings that was covered with vines.

What are the functions of different buildings and spaces in this place? Does the place include residential, commercial, or industrial sites? Are there stores, restaurants, cafes? Are there public spaces like public squares or parks? Areas where people can get together? seating?

Currently the function of buildings and spaces in this place is for residential as well business to co-exist. That means there is no proper area dedicated to only business or only residential, there can private house,

small stores and cafes all in the same block. That's what make the neighborhood of Gowanus unique because of the variety. There were stores, cafes restaurant along the canal like the Pig beach or small industrial candles factory and artist places. There is newly residential building that has all public access seating, benches and even chairs and tables with waterfront park view of the canal. There was also a small docking station for private boats.

Does this place seem planned or organic? How do the structures and buildings in this place interact with or disrupt the natural environment?

This place is planned while keeping it as much as organic. After walking around the neighborhood, one can see that there is proper planned out map where they can see the upcoming building and where they are planning to keep it green with plants and trees. As the area is not fully developed yet, that's why it seems greener. As the development goes on in the future, there will be more buildings and less green.

What people occupy the space and how do they interact with the environment? Is this place crowded? Walkable? Easy to navigate?

Mostly this area is used for residential purposes. There are few businesses there, that either old or newly startups. There are also few artistic places that contribute to the environment either by building around or through their art of graffiti. During the day, it seems very quiet but during the evening the café and the restaurant makes it lively. It is walkable depends on where you are heading. For someone new it might take a while but for a regular New Yorker it's easy to navigate.

What is your personal experience of the place? Think about sound/smell/touch, your body's movement, contact with the ground and physical comfort - how does the place make you feel?

I personally enjoy this trip. This area was different compared to the nearby Brooklyn neighborhood. Walking this neighborhood made me appreciate the structure and vegetation that co-exist, the small manufacturing places, artistic graffiti, although the canal is little polluted but it adds a certain quality to the area. The area at end of the canal had awful smell to it but as we walked few streets away the smell disappeared. Walking on cobble stone road was a little discomfoting compared to the regular street roads. The area was very quiet and peaceful.

Passing the rusted ally way gave me feeling of being in the 60's



ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

The Gowanus is the new upcoming neighborhood. There is new development happening done every day. For me, that raises a question of how far will the Gowanus will to develop while keeping the old Gowanus preserved. Because there seems to be a lot of history in that place. Manhattan and Dumbo rent prices are all time high and Gowanus not being too far from them has a lot people rushing in nowadays. This causes the development to build more, I just hope they consider to preserve the old. The attention of Gowanus is all time high time, so this is leading the people to work more on cleaning up pollution in the canal, hopefully beyond the oyster project. This

neighborhood has very different feeling to it, its like you do live in the city but having that out of state quietness. That a very rare and unique quality for a Brooklyn neighborhood.

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

1. conservation
2. bridges
3. demographic
4. gentrification
5. vegetation

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH (these should follow directly from your analysis section and be complex and specific enough to serve as the basis of a research project; do not include questions you can answer with a quick google search)

1. how far will the development go, what vegetation will be conserved and what will be removed?
2. Apart from oysters, what other measures are being taken to clean the pollution?
3. What will happen to the older residents that living there because of their low income?