

Learning Places Fall 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus is coming



Cover Image: Still here and not going anywhere. This is where we interviewed the man who has been living in Gowanus for decades.

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INTRODUCTION

Visiting the Gowanus and being right up to it for the very first time was a unique experience. It was no longer as polluted as before and I could really tell the difference and the changes from what I've heard and seen. Walking around not only the canal visiting the neighborhood and viewing the development around the Gowanus was also very unique experience. We got to see different businesses and the community which put itself right up to the Gowanus. For me I thought I was going to see a more broken down area but I can tell from this visit that a lot has changed and is continuing to change even more in the future.

SITE OBSERVATIONS:

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

You can tell most homes are built very similarly especially the warehouses and industrial buildings they are usually a simple box shaped they would have a large garage door. However we also saw more modern buildings but sitting beside older buildings they are built relatively the same size no more than 3 stories or so. Some larger industrial buildings are quite big they can span about half a block compared to the residential homes.



Caption: As you can tell the building over there is roughly two stores rather small but to the right you can see some of the buildings are taller but they are all about the same height side by side.

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

The buildings windows definitely stuck out to me many of them had unique window arches especially the larger and older buildings I saw had large windows. Also I noticed that a lot of the buildings used brick exterior and looked to be very sturdy. Also I noticed a lot of buildings had unique objects on top for example the tall apartment buildings had water towers. Some newer buildings had solar panels on top. As well. I also saw the more modernized buildings had different material some had this rough metal look that was rusted and you could definitely tell it was modern despite it's attempt to replicate the industrial experience.



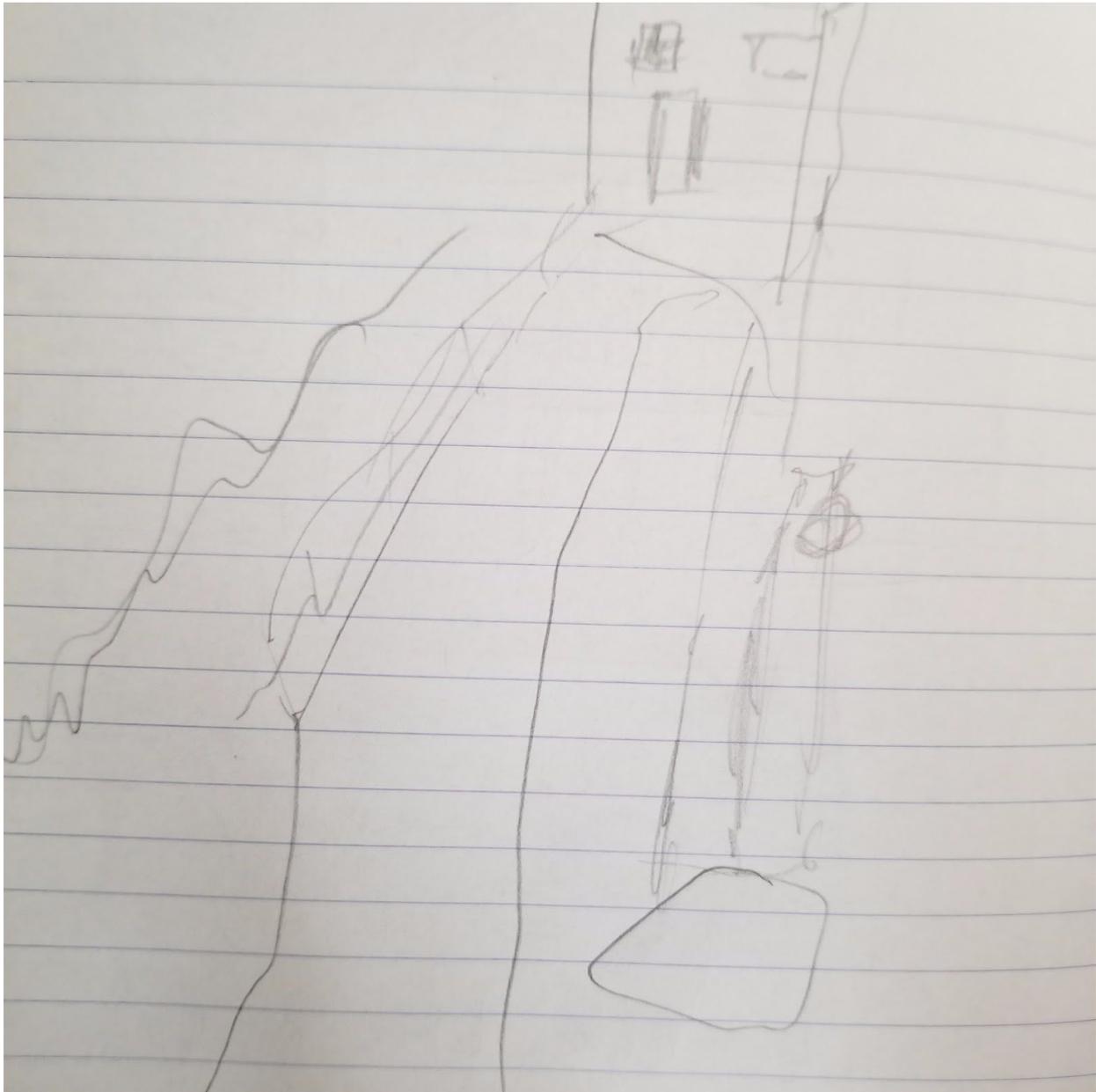
Caption: As you can see the building across batcave they called it had a lot of windows and they were pretty large it stood out because the entire side was completely window and it had these arches.

Notice and note location of trees and other types of vegetation

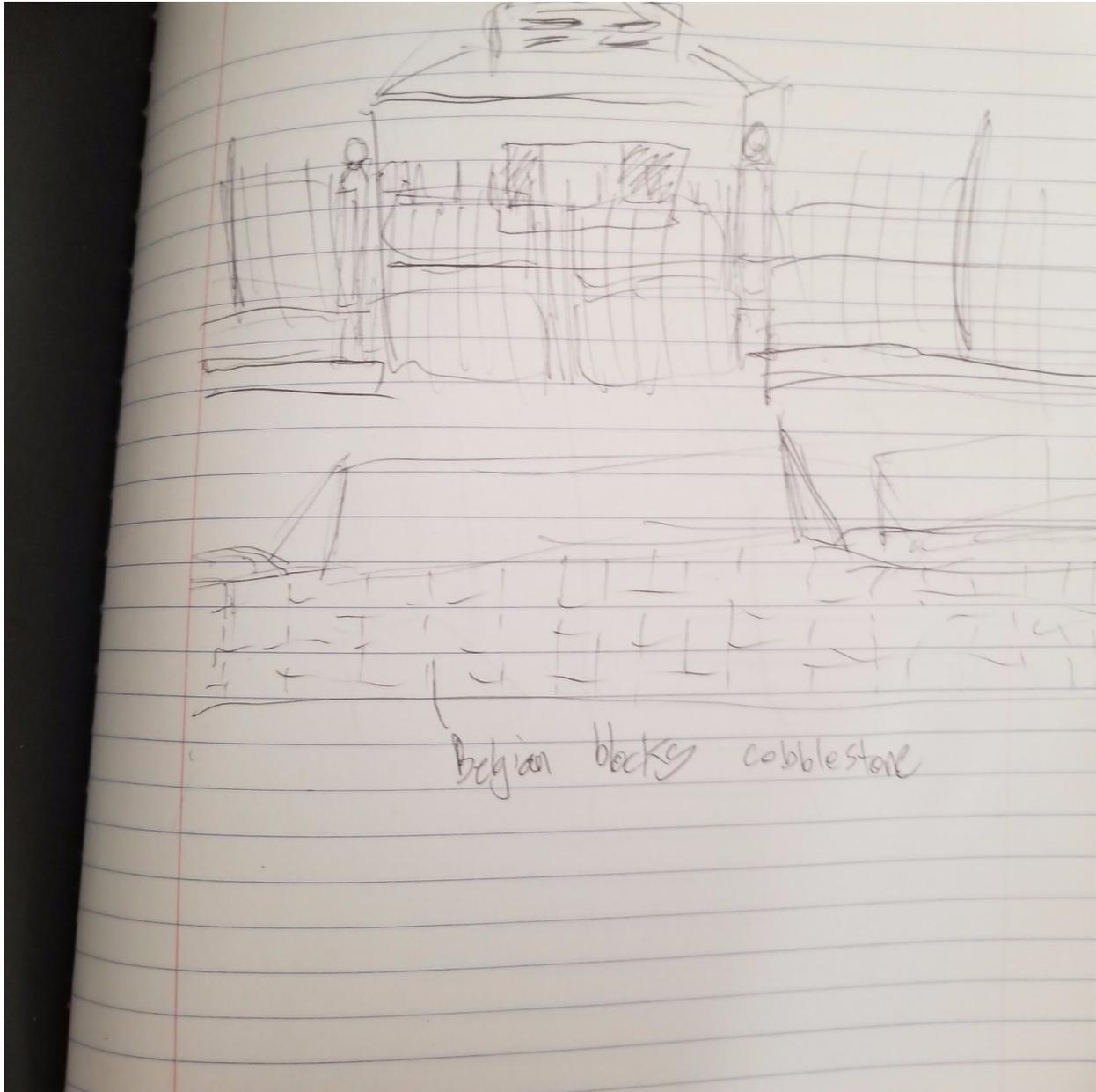
The main areas where there are a lot more traffic there are less vegetation mostly a few trees or a bush placed near a store. Unlike the areas with less traffic.



Caption: As you can tell there was a lot of overgrown vegetation here. Trees are overgrown grass and weeds coming out of the sidewalk and everywhere else not well maintained and there are many streets like this or similar where bushes and scrubs poke out into the sidewalk.



Caption: This is one of the bridges were we could see up and down the canal and had that booth where they could control the bridge by the NYC transit authority



Caption: the Pump station all the way up the canal at the very end. It still had the cobblestone streets which you rarely see and it was gated off had this very old feel to it. And watching the water being pumped full of air was interesting to see as foam formed.

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?

We saw many industrial businesses like this one ewaste location many residential buildings but to my surprise many stores that sold food and cafes. And with the whole foods we saw the seating area in

whole foods and also outside right along the canal where they intersected where people can sit and watch everything. And right across was construction and working being done. There are more walk ways from what I can tell along the canal.

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

The buildings are very crammed the canal isn't very large by any means and everything is packed around it. It doesn't seem planned as you can tell they threw up some buildings and parking lots around it and called it a day. But it worked out as people are utilizing the space around them.

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

People reuse buildings to further develop the area and make it a more unique place. We saw a few buildings that artists have turned into their own space. We even saw spray painted next to a storm drain to stop polluting the Gowanus. People around the area do care. They aren't just there everyone is doing their part to reconnect with the Gowanus canal. The area isn't very traffic heavy there is a few cars rolling by the sidewalks are normal size and even larged near industrial buildings. I had no problem walking even with the class.

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 felt that the Gowanus isn't really a highly polluted area anymore. I was expecting horrible stench to come out of the canal but walking past the dump site near the apartment buildings was far worse. I could tell the area has been already developed. The area was quite peaceful aside from the light traffic there wasn't too much noise near the beginning of the canal. For me it was quite peaceful made me feel curious.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

Use this section to analyze the observations you've noted. What conclusions can you draw about this place and the people who live and work here? What inferences can you make about how the place has changed throughout history and how it might change in the future? How is this place similar to or different from the places surrounding it? What does this place tell us about Brooklyn? About New York City in general? What is the Genius Loci, or spirit, of this place?

The Gowanus is just beginning what we see now is merely the very start the development done right now is barely the stepping stones for future of the area. And people who live there are constantly changing the community and improving it together. I like that the area has this very strong bond especially in this area it could be a plumbing company compared to some cafe. They might seem different but the fact that they are located near the Gowanus brings them together. I believe the Gowanus one day will be another attraction in New York and people are going to say hey lets take a stroll along the Gowanus canal and the area is going to be so developed and will bring many opportunities. And for most people who think about Brooklyn as a place that never changes and isn't the type of place that is to be visited they are wrong. And will only spark more development in all areas in Brooklyn and more. I wouldn't mind taking a swim in the canal.

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

1. EWASTE
2. Vigilante plumbing
3. Pump

4. Street Bridge
5. Whole foods

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. Will the Gowanus continue to develop at this pace?
2. How do people who lived there feel about the inevitable changes that are going to come to the area?
3. How much more can the Gowanus change?