

Learning Places Fall 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal



The image above is located at one end of the Gowanus Canal. It is located at the end of the canal on Douglas Street

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INTRODUCTION

The class took a field trip to Gowanus Canal where we would observe and learn about the history, the present, and the future of the place. We observed the areas surrounding the canal. We walked around the canal, visited shops, public areas, and discovered art. There are a few trains that are close by such as

the F train. I expected to learn interesting things and to have fun doing so.

SITE OBSERVATIONS:

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

Around Bond street and Douglas, there's a housing project that's shaped differently around the sides of the building(s). Some sides are more protruded than others because it would allow more natural lighting and clean air in and out of the apartments. The height of the buildings allows more people the reside there. Some buildings have vegetation on balconies and rooftops. This is common with the houses and some of the more expensive buildings.

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

There's plenty of graffiti around the sides of some of the buildings. Some seem commissioned and some seem done naturally by the artists themselves.



The images above are some examples of the beautiful graffiti and the artwork around the Gowanus

canal and shows what makes the area unique and beautiful.

Notice and note location of trees and other types of vegetation

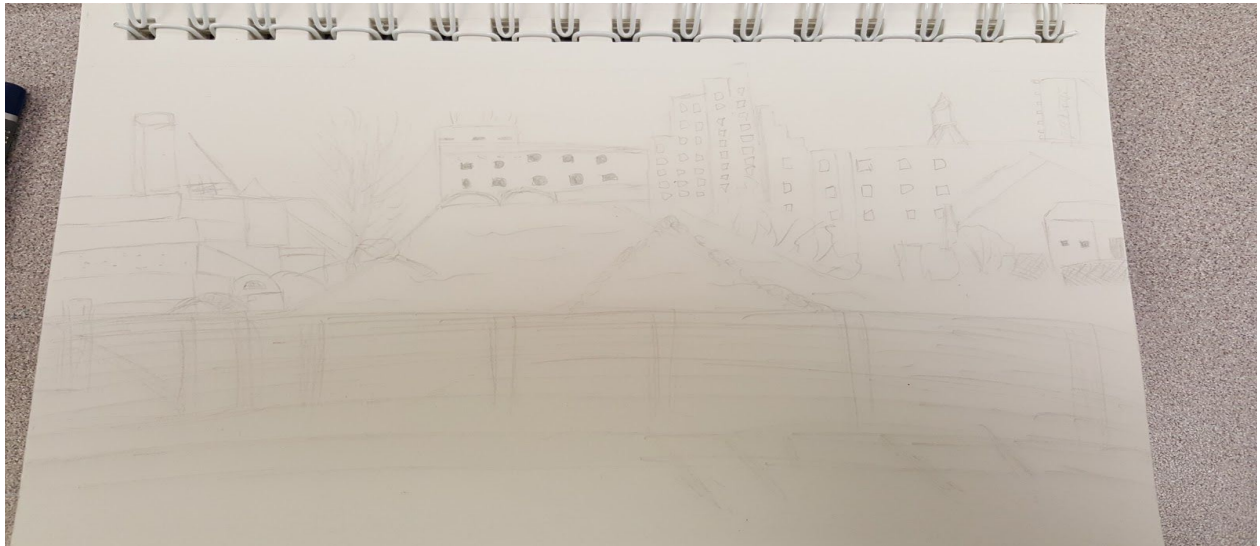
There's vegetation near the canal and vegetation on various rooftops of places and surrounding buildings. There's small plants near residents homes.



I chose this image because it's a great example of vegetation near the canal and the fact that it's being preserved means that there's hope for more in the future.

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?

There are a variety of buildings that surround the Gowanus Canal. There are residential homes which include apartments and houses of a few stories, rentals, and commercial buildings. There are small stores such as Claireware Pottery store on Union street. There are restaurants like Pig Beach, Whole Foods and cafes too. There are public spaces where people can sit and and get together around 1st, 2nd and 3rd avenues. In those open spaces there's, tables and transportable chairs, benches, and spaces to engage in public activities.



The image above is a sketch of the Union Street Bridge. The perspective is looking at the left side of the bridge where you see the industries that surround the Gowanus Canal. There's some vegetation around the canal such as trees and big bushes. This is a great example of easy transportation for residents and others to use.

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

I believe that the place is planned but, it tries it's best to work around the natural environment. One example of this would be the bridges above the canal. It's working with the environment by letting the canal flow freely while giving people easy access to transportation. There are also conservation of vegetation and plants being grown around some areas near the canal. The industrial buildings and rentals take up a massive amount of space on the land. You can tell this because there's natural vegetation around some of the old factories. In fact, there are so many buildings that most of the vegetation are mostly seen near the coast of the Gowanus.

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

Various types of people occupy the space. There are housing projects around the canal which leads to residents with low income. There are also residents who can afford to live in the newer houses and apartments which mean there are also middle and high income people residing there as well. Lastly,

there are workers working in the industrial factories, and workers in the small shops and restaurants.

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?

In some parts of the canal, there's a pungent smell due to the garbage and the sewage such as around the area of Douglas Street. Going towards Carol Street, the smell became more neutral and pleasant in some streets. There was some discomfort walking on cobblestones because I was wearing boots but, most of the walking was tolerable. The place made me feel calm, collected and happy. Being near areas with a body of water generally makes me feel this way and also the area surround it aids to that as well.

ANALYSIS/DISCOVERIES

We get different perspectives on the Canal as we move further up the blocks. We notice that the area somewhat changes. On the bridges on Union and Carol Street, there's a change in perspective and development of the Canals' surroundings. One side of the bridge views the natural vegetation and the undeveloped land at the end of the canal and on the other side, you see the new developments of buildings. I thought that, it was very interesting seeing that because it represents the past and the future of the land. In the past, around the 19th century, people just threw garbage and been polluting it ever since. In the future, there's definately going to be more and more developments. This tells us that Brooklyn is going to be changing heavily to further improve the areas. The Genius Loci of this place is hope and serenity.

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

1. Establishments
2. Conservation
3. Vegetation
4. Superfund
5. Development

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. What actions are going to be taken towards preservation of vegetation as well as cleaning up the Gowanus Canal and the area around it?
2. How will the continued gentrification of the area affect the low income residents?
3. What others things are being done to the area for further development?