

ZONING, COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

IN THE GOWANUS

Introduction to zoning in NYC and the Gowanus CONSIDERATIONS

- Zoning and Urban Ecology
- Zoning, Development and Gentrification
- Zoning and Public Space (POPS)

PHOTOGRAPH BY Miska Draskoczy --GOWANUS WILD



PHOTOGRAPH BY Miska Draskoczy --GOWANUS WILD

INTRODUCTION TO ZONING: NYC AND THE GOWANUS



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WHAT IS ZONING?

- Zoning is a tool the city uses for carrying out planning policies
- Zoning can be seen as a blueprint for the development of the city

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General Purpose of Zoning

Specific Purposes of Zoning

General Purpose of Zoning

According to the zoning resolution text, the zoning resolution is designed to promote and protect public health, safety and general welfare. It is usually also designed to fulfill more particular goals. For example, the zoning resolution for Special District Downtown Brooklyn adds specific goal.

Historically the concern regarding access to light and air was an important drive toward regulating the size of buildings.

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General Purpose of Zoning

Specific Purposes of Zoning

Specific Purposes of Zoning

Example from Special District Downtown Brooklyn

- (a) to strengthen the business core of Downtown Brooklyn by improving the working and living environments
- (b) to foster development in Downtown Brooklyn and provide direction and incentives for further growth
- ...
- (d) to encourage the design of new buildings that are in character with the area;
- ...
- (h) to promote the most desirable use of land and building development for Downtown Brooklyn and thus conserve the value of land and buildings and thereby protect the City's tax revenues.

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- USE
- BUILDING HEIGHT
- BUILDING BULK

• USE



A zoning district is a mapped district with similar use, bulk and density regulations.

R - RESIDENTIAL

C - COMMERCIAL

M - MANUFACTURING



- Permitted uses are grouped in 18 use groups based on the similarity and compatibility of their functions. (Zoning Handbook)
- The zoning resolution provides use group charts that identify the use groups permitted in the residential, commercial and manufacturing districts.

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- USE
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• BUILDING HEIGHT

- The zoning resolution regulates building height by specifying a particular height limitation for the building in any particular zone.
- In some cases the resolution might read "no height limitation" -- in which case, the height is limited in the zoning resolution by the size of the lot and the allowable floor area. However, the developer can still maximize the height of the building by controlling the floor-to-ceiling heights.

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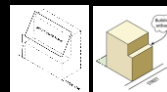


- USE
- BUILDING HEIGHT
- BUILDING BULK

• BUILDING BULK

$F.A.R. \times LOT\ AREA = MAX.\ ALLOWABLE\ BUILDING\ FLOOR\ AREA\ FOR\ THE\ LOT$

- The zoning bulk is determined by the Floor Area Ratio (FAR) : The size of the building in relation to the size of the zoning lot



- Set Backs and the Sky Exposure Plane: A setback is the portion of a building that is set back above the base height (or street wall) before the total height of the building is achieved. The position of a building setback in height factor districts is controlled by sky exposure planes and, in contextual districts, by specified distances from street walls. (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/glossary.page>)

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- The Zoning Resolution is a legal instrument to regulate and establish limits on the use of land and building size, shape, height, and setback. (<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/about-zoning.page>)
- The Zoning Resolution is written by NYC Department of City Planning and it contains text and maps.
- The online version can be found by following these links:
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/access-text.page>
<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/planning/zoning/index-map.page>

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- Banned the construction of dark, poorly ventilated tenement buildings in the state of New York (<http://gushp.org/blog/2016/04/11/tenement-house-act-of-1901/>)



- The first Zoning Ordinance in the city AND in the country: became a model for cities throughout the US
- Catalyst: Massive buildings rising in the Wall Street area. In particular: The Equitable Building 1915
- Established height and set backs
- Designated residential districts that excluded incompatible uses



- Incentives for incorporating public plazas
- Introduction of sky exposure plane (alternative to setbacks) and FAR - Floor Area Ratio
- Reduced residential density largely at city edges
- Provisions for parking
- Reorganization over 2500 amendments to facilitate faster zoning approval

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TYPES OF ZONING

- **EUCLIDIAN:** Named for the Village of Euclid, Ohio where zoning was upheld in 1926 as a legitimate governmental power. Euclidean Zoning is also referred to as "Traditional Zoning" or "Building Block Zoning." Generally addresses use, height and bulk
- **INCENTIVE BASED:** A reward-based system to encourage developments that meet established urban development goals
- **INCLUSIONARY ZONING:** (AKA inclusionary housing) require a given share of new construction to be affordable by people with low to moderate income.
- **CONTEXTUAL ZONING** regulates the height and bulk of new buildings, their setback from the street line, and their width along the street frontage, to produce buildings that are consistent with existing neighborhood character. (In some cases the zoning goes as far as requiring color, material and window treatment consistency)

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NYC ZONING TODAY

- Special Districts: some to encourage development and others to arrest development and limit building height
- Mixed Use
- Street Wall Continuity that activates the pedestrian environment Specifications for plaza design
- Ground Floor Retail Frontage and Transparency Requirements
- Specifications for waterfront design
- Contextual Zoning
- Inclusionary zoning -- incentives for affordable housing

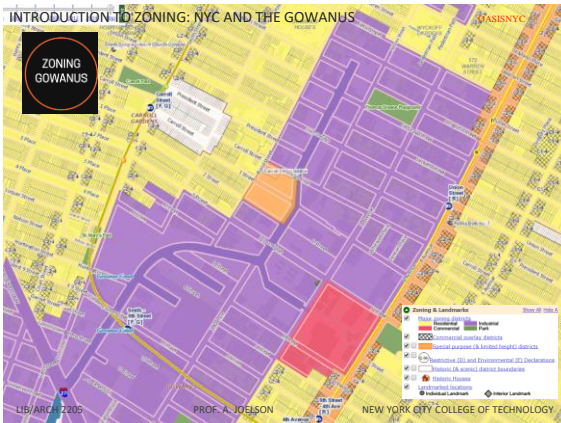
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ZONING GOWANUS



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ZONING GOWANUS

BRIDGING GOWANUS: Planning Framework

http://report.bridginggowanus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Executive-Summary_17Sept15.pdf

How community and public representative (New York City Council Member Brad Lander) worked to define desirable development for the Gowanus

For decades, cleaning up the Gowanus Canal has been a top priority for the Gowanus community and surrounding neighborhoods. With the EPA's (Environmental Protection Agency) Superfund Record of Decision, that possibility is finally moving forward and becoming a reality. Many leaders in the community have worked tirelessly – along with elected and appointed officials and community groups – to get sufficient attention and resources to reverse decades of neglect and bring disparate stakeholders together...

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ZONING GOWANUS

BRIDGING GOWANUS: Planning Framework

http://report.bridginggowanus.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Executive-Summary_17Sept15.pdf

Key infrastructure projects

...
A real plan for infrastructure financing
• Superfund resources: it is anticipated that the parties responsible for the pollution of the Canal – most significantly National Grid and the City of New York – will fund the dredging of the Canal, as well as significant improvements to water quality through two storm-water retention tanks.



Fig. 2. Flooding and Sewer Problems in Gowanus

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CLEANING THE CANAL

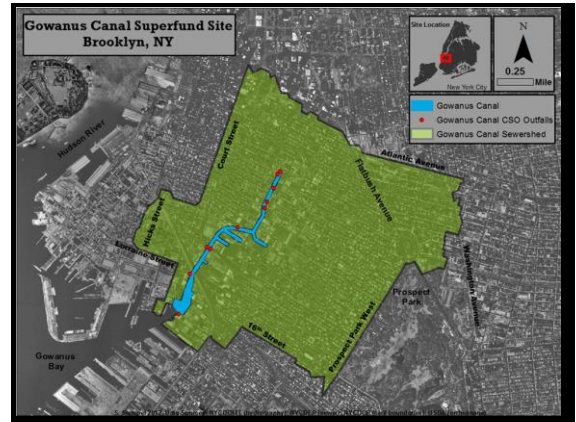
As part of the remediation of the polluted waterway, NYC's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) have recommended placing retention tanks at two different sites in the neighborhood, which will help with the combined sewer overflows (CSO) that push contaminants and, well, crap into the canal. The DEP has said that it will use eminent domain to seize nearby private property—including the current site of Eastern Effects's Nevins Street studio—that can be used as

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yFGB225A1w&feature=youtu.be>

The goals of Superfund according to the EPA are to:

1. Protect human health and the environment by cleaning up polluted sites.
2. Involve communities in the Superfund process.
3. Make responsible parties pay for work performed at Superfund sites.

<http://www.brooklynmagine.com/articles/2015/10/29/gowanus-canal-cleanup-update>



CLEANING THE CANAL

Eastern Effects may have to close its enormous studio for Gowanus Canal remediation

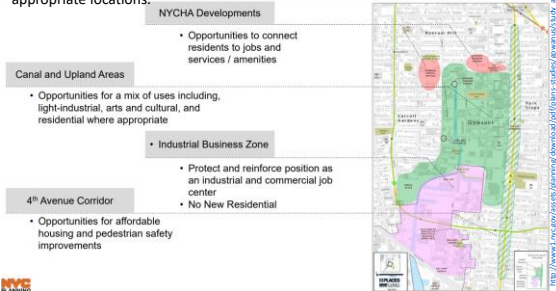


Eastern Effects's Nevins Street facility is on the right, and a vacant building (currently for sale) on the left

<http://www.mylife.com/2012/11/06/eastereffects/gowanus-canal-flooding-brings-contamination-concerns.html>

NYC PLANNING DEPARTMENT: Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study

The Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study seeks to foster a thriving neighborhood by reinforcing and encouraging a robust local economy anchored by a mix of uses and businesses, while creating opportunities for new housing with affordable housing in appropriate locations.

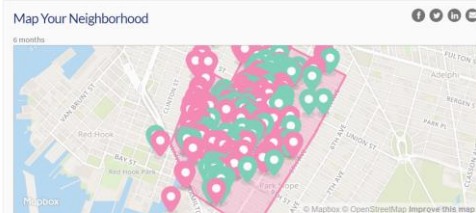


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NYC PLANNING DEPARTMENT: Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study



Tell us what you like and what you think needs improvement within Gowanus and its context area (shown within the map's pink boundary, which includes the proposed study area and surrounding blocks, as well as the IBZ and NYCHA properties). Please give us your ideas and suggestions and be specific.

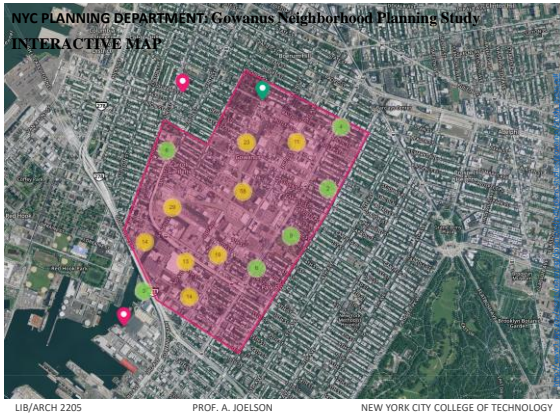
Instructions

- Choose a pin and **drag it** over to the pink boundary on the map.
- Drop your pin in your desired location on the map.
- A comment box will open with a list of topics. Check the topic that describes what you like or what you think needs improvement.
- Provide your **...Read more**

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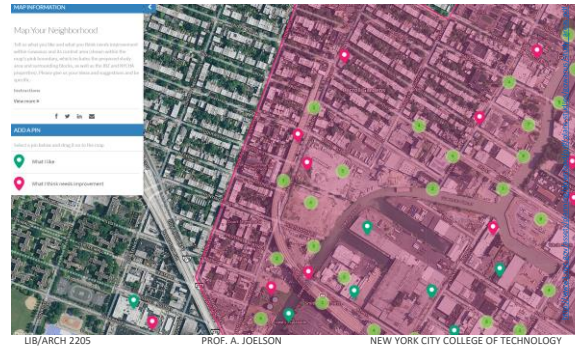


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NYC PLANNING DEPARTMENT: Gowanus Neighborhood Planning Study INTERACTIVE MAP



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Gowanus Canal Conservancy: Gowanus Forestry Study

Last summer, our Citizen Pruners conducted an inventory of over a thousand trees within two blocks of the Gowanus Canal. Over the past few months, our partners at TreeKIT organized the data collected to map these trees, and we'd like to share their work with everyone.



<https://gowanuscanalconservancy.wordpress.com/tag/tree-mapping/>

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LOST STREAMS OF BROOKLYN WORKING WITH NATURE – NOT AGAINST IT

https://motherboard.vice.com/en_us/article/city/544-the-hunter-for-brooklyn's-hidden-creeks
<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/14/nyregion/lost-streams-of-brooklyn.html>



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Green Infrastructure Plan

In September 2010, New York City released the NYC Green Infrastructure Plan which presents an alternative approach to improving water quality that integrates "green infrastructure," such as rain gardens and green roofs, with investments to optimize the existing system and to build targeted, cost-effective "grey" or traditional infrastructure.

Green infrastructure is an approach to water management that protects, restores, or mimics the natural water cycle. Green infrastructure is effective, economical, and enhances community safety and quality of life. It means planting trees and restoring wetlands, rather than building a costly new water treatment plant.

While green infrastructure refers to projects that draw from nature to achieve desired results, **grey infrastructure** includes the pipes, pumps, ditches, and detention ponds engineered by people to manage stormwater.



http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/stormwater/nyc_green_infrastructure_plan.shtml

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