

Learning Places Fall 2017

### SITE REPORT #3

3rd Visit to the Gowanus Canal



Cover Image: The machine in the image above is a Grab Dredger. Its' function is to scoop out mud, weeds, and garbage from the bed of the canal. This is located at the 4th street basin along the Gowanus Canal, between 2nd and 3rd avenue.

Anjali Rawat

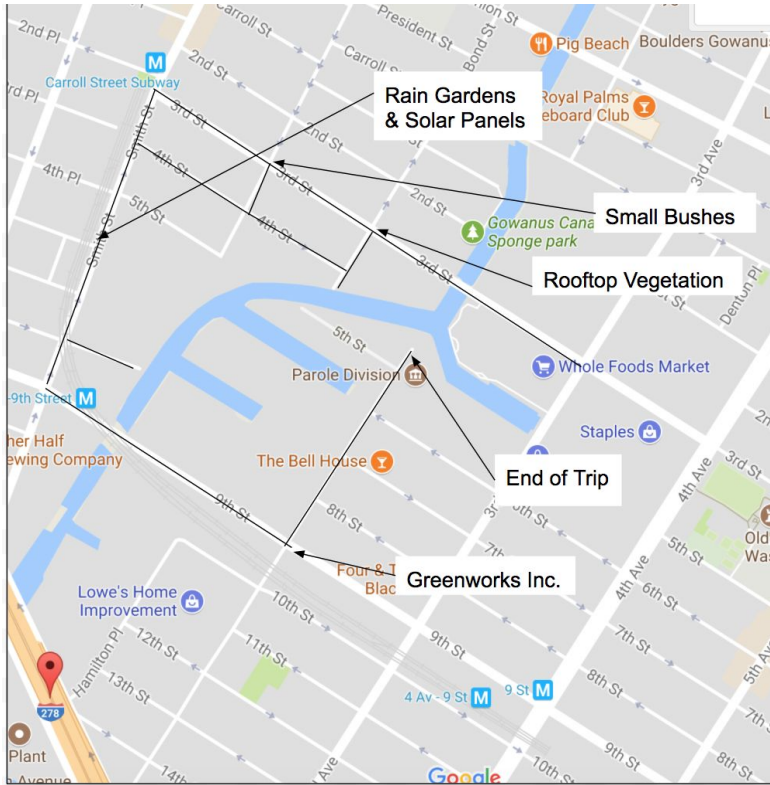
10.21.2017

#### INTRODUCTION AND PRE-VISIT REFLECTIONS

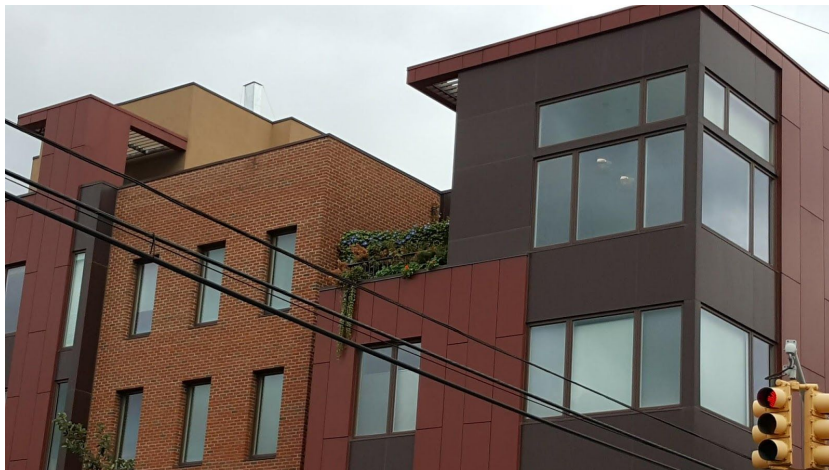
Prior to the 3rd site visit, I anticipate on discovering and learning more information about the parts of the Canal that I haven't visited. I also expect to discover more examples of green infrastructure around the Gowanus Canal. During the visit, there was a major lack of green infrastructure along the Canal. There was an abundance of construction sites and warehouses surrounding the Canal. After walking about 5 blocks away north, there were very few rain gardens. There were also some vegetation on the rooftops and some along the sidewalks.

**SITE DOCUMENTATION:** Take notes and sketch in your notebook, take many photographs – search for angles and details that really tell a story and use those to report your documentation. Your site documentation will include the following:

- (1) MAP OF AREA OF INVESTIGATION -- on a map like the one below chart the route of the walk and mark the following: (a) significant stops; (b) Locations and directions of your photos and sketches.



- (2) PHOTOS AND SKETCHES: Provide a minimum of 4 photos and 2 sketches of places, elements, processes, people or anything else that you found significant and meaningful during the walk. Focus on scenes that relate to ecology, the environment and public spaces. Feel free to include IN ADDITION other “findings” that you found intriguing. For each photo provide captions and explanations – why is the image shown significant for your exploration.



Rooftop Vegetation; This is one of the newer buildings located at Bond and 3rd street. There are many benefits of having rooftop vegetation. Some include: providing insulation, absorbing rainwater, and aiding in lowering temperature.



Small bushes; These small bushes are on 4th and Hoyt street. In midst of the lack of greenery I saw these small bushes on top of these wooden structures. They're probably placed there to add more character to the area and provide fresh, clean oxygen.



Rain Gardens; These Rains Gardens were found on 2nd Avenue between 5th and 6th street. I was really excited when we found actual Green Infrastructure during this site visit because it was at a new location from the previous site visits. The function of the rain garden is to collect excess rainwater in its shallow depression and slowly infiltrate the plants within the depression. It also removes pollutants from the streets and reduces stormwater runoff.



Solar Panels; These solar panels were found also right in the middle of the rain gardens. It's also located on 2nd Avenue between 5th and 6th street. Solar panels absorb sunlight as a source of energy and then utilizes it to generate electricity.

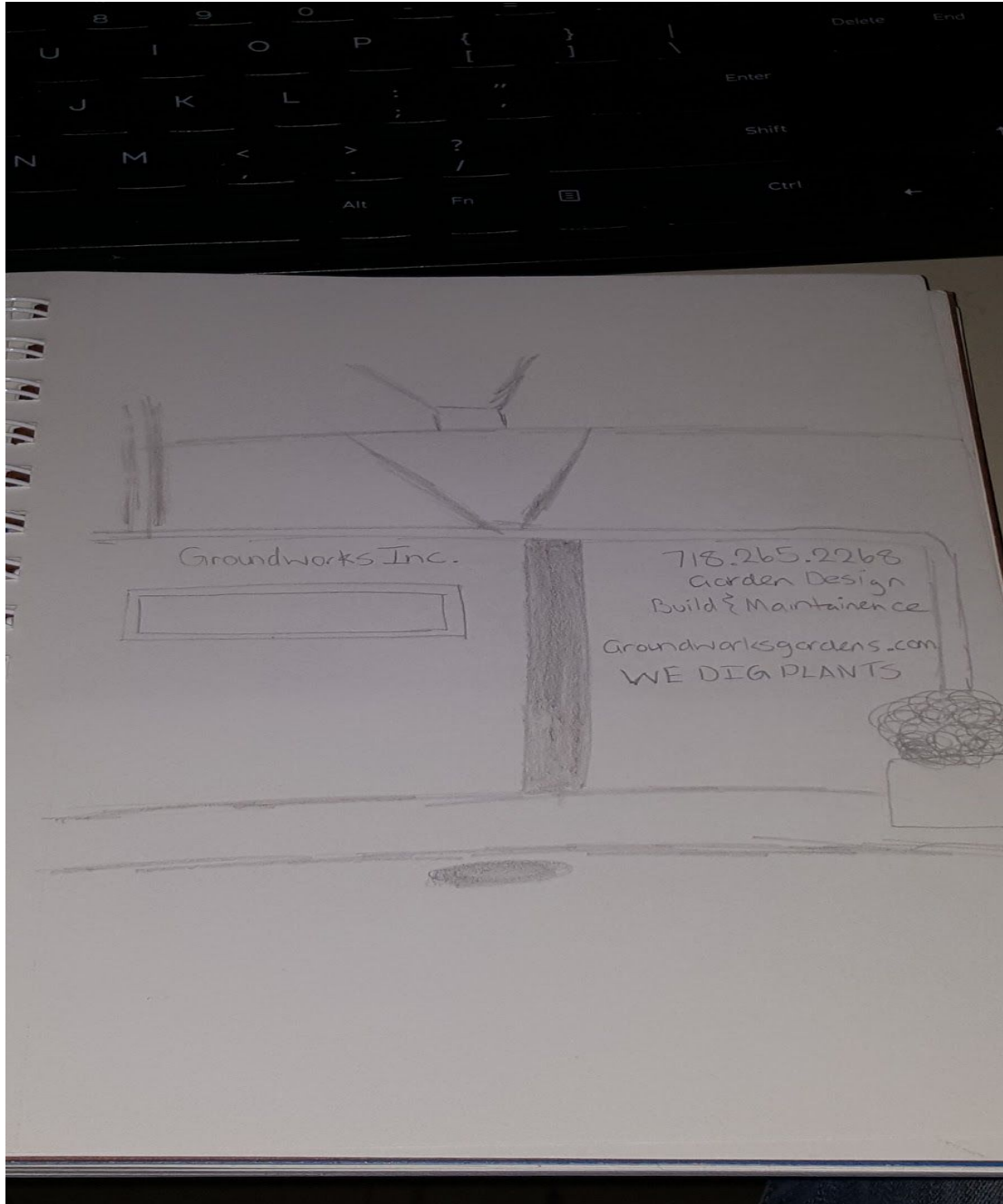


Other side of the 4th street basin; My group and I ended up on the opposite side of where the class

had originally met that day. We ended our trip on 2nd avenue and 5th street. It's interesting viewing the basin and the dredges from a different perspective.



A Tree on the Street; This tree one of the only examples of plant life around the Canal. It's located around the end of 4th street towards the Canal. It's isolated from the other plants and it proves that plants are very scarce around these parts.



Greenworks Inc. ; This company specializes in landscape maintenance. It's near the 4th avenue 9th street station. I assume it's for wealthy people who own large properties which includes lawns and such. This establishment might encourage more greenery around the Gowanus Canal.

**ANALYSIS:** Select one of the topics discussed on the walk and 1-3 most important of your images (from those presented in the documentation section) and develop a 300-500-word discussion of that topic. Be specific and consider multiple points of view of that topic. Consider how it might affect the neighborhood, people, environment, art, development or anything else that you detect as significant either positively or negatively or both. How are your images relevant to the discussion? How will this topic affect the Genius Loci, or spirit, of this place? Does it have any ramifications for the rest of Brooklyn?

During the walk, my group and I discovered a few examples of Green Infrastructure. In the beginning, there were some residential neighborhoods. It was easy to differentiate which buildings were brand new and which were older. Some of the newer buildings had rooftop vegetation which was refreshing to see. There was a major lack of plant life throughout the entire walk so, it was great to see at least a few. Most of our walk were mainly quiet streets that had a deserted look to it. We found out that most of the area is under construction. There were some warehouses and old factories as well. Some streets were dead ends along the Gowanus Canal. From there we walked back up those streets and walked further along the Gowanus.

The most interesting part was finding some rain gardens on 2nd Avenue between 5th and 6th street. Before then, I was starting to doubt that there were any due to the scarcity so far. The gardens were filled with these huge green and yellow plants. There was a pole in the middle of one of them that held a couple of solar panels. The solar panels are hugely beneficial to society because they absorb sunlight and transform it into electricity for people's homes and can generate heat. The rain gardens are beneficial as well as they can absorb excess rainwater to prevent flooding and help clean the pollutants off the streets.

I believe that there should be more plant life and vegetation around the part of the Gowanus we walked on because there is an abundance of pollution and there needs to be more fresh air flow. Around the area, let alone the entire Gowanus Canal. I see that there's evidence of some green infrastructure but, there should be more implemented probably after the construction work is done. The Green Infrastructure and vegetation will have a more positive effect on the spirit of the place because it will aid to the well being of the residents around it. The more greenery there is, the more healthier the environment will be in the long term for the Canal and for Brooklyn.

**KEYWORDS/ VOCABULARY** (these must be words you learned on this walk such as specialized vocabulary, city agencies, names of businesses or significant people – they must be specific to the topic of the walk) \*5 keywords required per site visit

1. Solar Panel
2. Dredging
3. Vegetation
4. Basin
5. Groundworks

**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 are the roles of the solar panels in relation to green infrastructure?
2. What are the city's plans for the recently visited areas that are under construction?
3. How could more green infrastructure be incorporated into the areas north of the basin?