

Learning Places Fall 2017

### **SITE REPORT #3**

Gowanus Canal Group Visit



Here is an image of the SuperFund plan at work. Dredging of the canal.

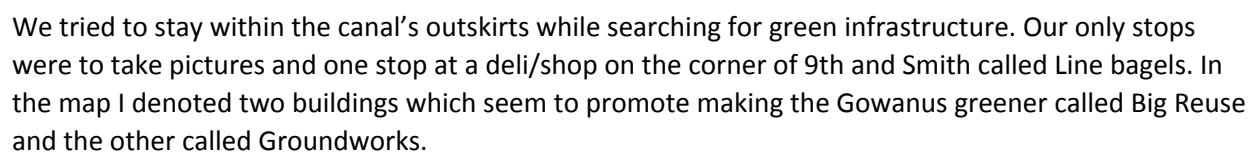
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### **INTRODUCTION AND PRE-VISIT REFLECTIONS**

Prior to this site visit, I have already seen a sponge park by 365 Bond and some biowales just nearby where the sponge park is. The problem with that was : that was it. There were no other green infrastructure around the gowanus in any of our other visits and it seemed to me like they could use green infrastructures a lot more than most other neighborhoods considering the nasty condition the gowanus canal is currently in and will be for years to come. Even when Superfund cleans up most of the “black mayonnaise” and other disgusting things in the canal, what plan is there to keep the canal clean?

(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.







Here you can see a couple of things. First you have a fence that is leaning towards the canal and looks like it may break at any moment. Then across the canal, on the other side, you can see all the unused land on the edge of the canal that currently have some plants and vegetations but nothing is actually there. That is a possible location where the city or a developer can add green infrastructure to enrich the canal and the area all around it.





In these images you can clearly see how the residential side of the gowanus has a lot of vegetation and probably will be the first to have new trees planted and even new green infrastructure. On the other hand, you have the industrial part of gowanus where there are practically no plants, almost no trees, and there's this big lack of land use around there. The second picture was taken from google maps at the edge of bond and 4th street. What is even more interesting is that google maps allows you to check their older pictures of the same area as far back to September 2007, and when you look back at this area, in the past decade they have only added 2 trees. Thinking back at our Gowanus Conservancy visit, those two trees could have been planted by them because maybe they also realized that this area is lacking in vegetation and decided to plant trees there after their own research into the gowanus.





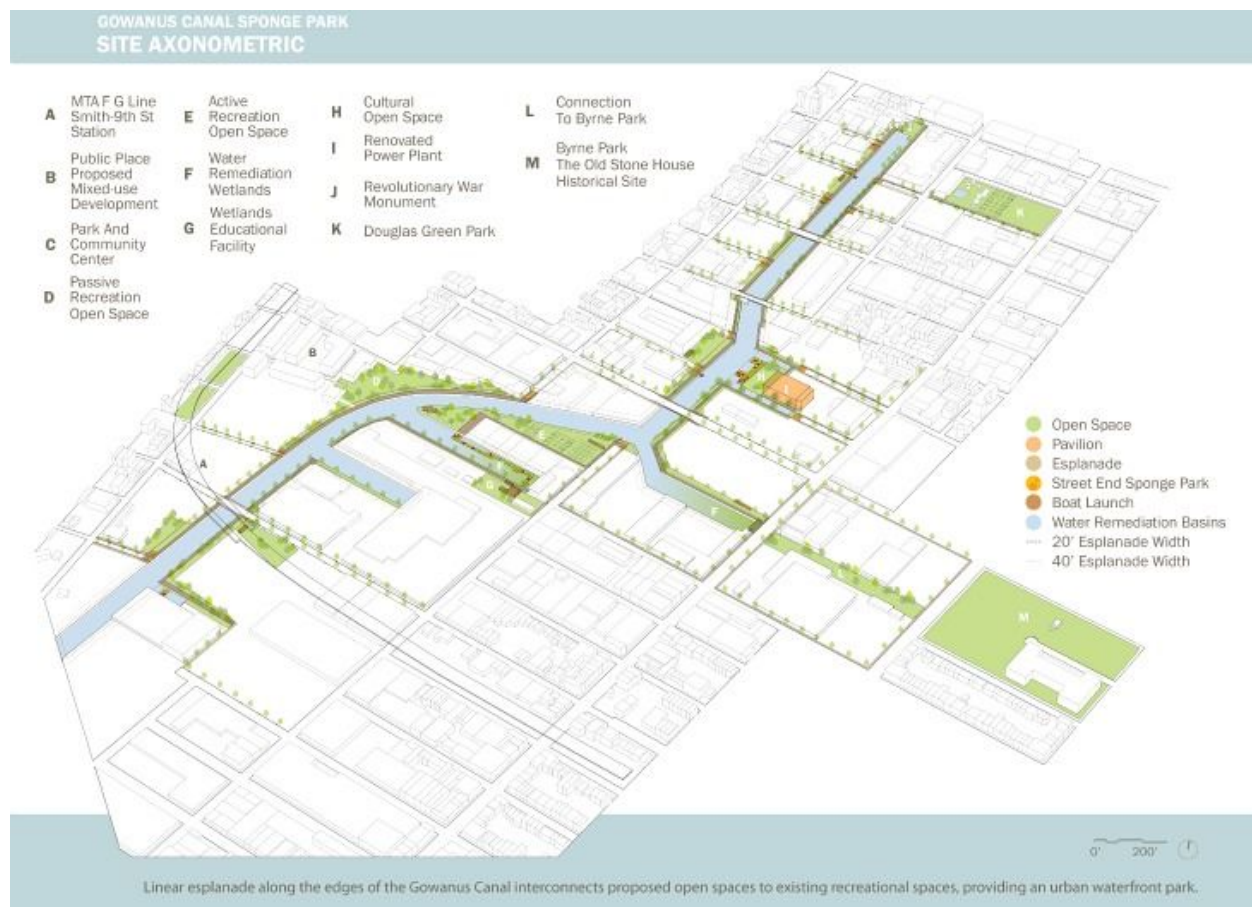
Here is the Groundworks building that I showed in the map above. From the picture you can tell that the people who work there want to plant more vegetation into the area and really want to make it more green. They also work on garden designs, building them and maintaining them. Maybe they helped build the sponge park by 365 Bond or any of the nearby rooftop gardens, something we can look into in the future.



Lastly, here is the Big Reuse building that is almost directly across from the Groundworks building. They seem to be encouraging their neighbors and everyone around to reuse any materials they may have, whether it is wood, metal, paper, doors, appliances, the list goes on and on. Very environmentally friendly and green.

## ANALYSIS:

One topic that we discussed while we were on our group visit was the lack of green infrastructure. Even any kind of vegetation was lacking on the areas where there were industrial buildings. Yes, not many people will probably be walking around there due to the lack of commercial shops, but that does not mean that the area should look abandoned. At the dead end on Bond and 4th street, it looked like a ghost town--no cars were passing by and no people were walking around. All you could see and hear was the construction due to the manufacturing business nearby. Why is that the case? Shouldn't the city look at that area and realize all the unused land? The real problem is that this is not the only case. There are multiple dead ends around the gowanus and not all of them are being used to its maximum potential. Here is a picture from the book "Eco-Gowanus: Remediation by Design", by Patricia Culligan and Richard Plunz, showing what I believe the area around the canal should be made to look like :



In this image, you can clearly see how there would be more open space around the canal's edges and how they will most likely be a lot of vegetation and green infrastructure in those open spaces. This kind of plan would be great for the canal and it would make it more attractive for those who are moving into the area as well. I say that last comment because you cannot really stop the developers from building the new residential buildings but we can try to make them pay to make the area look nicer/better in exchange for them building.

**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. Big Reuse
2. Groundworks
3. Dredging
4. Bioswales
5. SuperFund

**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. When Superfund is done doing their cleanup of the canal, what plans are there to keep the canal clean?
2. How can we use the developer's wishes against them to get them to build green infrastructures around the canal like in 365 Bond?
3. What and how many green infrastructure can we build around the canal to contribute to the maintenance of the canal?