

Learning Places Summer 2019

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus



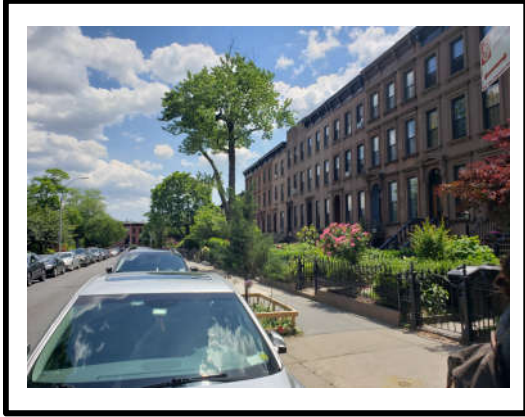
This is the Carroll Street Bridge. One of the bridge that lies on the Gowanus canal connecting two areas. On the side that the picture is taken from, we have Gowanus neighborhood and on the other side, we have Carroll Garden neighborhood. The bridge is operated by a switch that pulled the whole bridge to the left or right (depending on side you are standing) to allow bigger boats through the canal. One top of the bridge, there is a warning sign that there will a fine if vehicle crossing the bridge goes faster than a walking person crossing the bridge, in order words, telling drivers to slow down to 5 mph when crossing the bridge.

Select a meaningful image to that captures your perception of the site we visited and provide a caption explaining what the image is.

STUDENT NAME: Benjamin Liang

SITE OBSERVATIONS

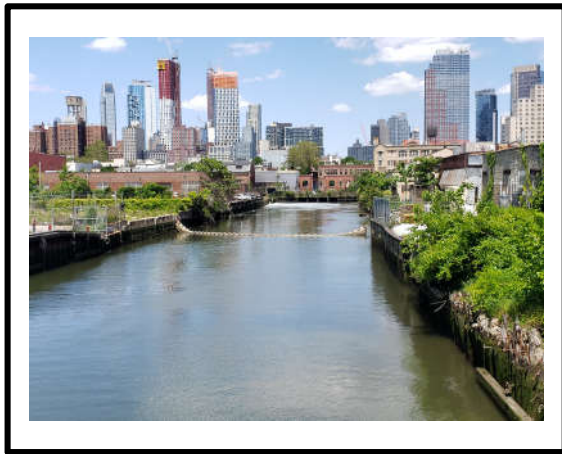
Insert 3 photographs and provide a *creative* title for each image. The title should be a word or short phrase that suggests a theme or conceptual association related to the photo.



Block of Houses – Row of House build using Brownstones



Paulownia Tree – Tree of life growing on the walls on of the canal.



Head of the Canal – Where the journey for all polluted water flow begins

1. What are some general observations about the character of this neighborhood? What does it remind you of? How does it make you feel?

We see that part of the neighborhood is clean and full of houses, school, and parks. But as we went down toward the canal, we see less resident but more industrials and couple of restaurants. Some buildings such as The Mill, was originally a factory where about 250 women worked creating linen, the historical area, or Private Street on President Street near the canal. The house on Carroll Street remind me of the housing that in my neighborhood. I lived in Bay Ridge, there is a street name called Senator Street. Some of the house there are still in brownstone and they have a yard in the front and back as well. The water from these canal flow into the big body of water at the end of the canal, which the water flows to Red Hook and Bay Ridge. This is why people fishing from Pier 69 should not take the fish home and eat them because aquatic animals can be containing toxin inside their body.

I have driven by the head of the canal multiple times but didn't notice any of the smell until I have visit the canal on a closer view. I would not like to live in this neighborhood because of the polluted space and the air might be toxin. If they are able to remove the waste and toxin from the canal, living near this part of the neighborhood might be consideration to make.

2. How is the natural world contained or shaped by human activity or architecture in Gowanus? In what ways does the natural world invade or disrupt human activity or architecture in Gowanus?

The lifeform growing around the canal can be useful for businesses around the canal such as plants and trees growing. National Packaging factory near the Union Street Bridge is utilizing the trees or plants growing on the canal. Along the Gowanus canal, Paulownia tree is a species that you would normally see in Asia or Japan but it is rarely outside; therefore, the tree is an invading species to the nature of the canal and grow into a full grown tree. There are two Paulownia tree on each side of the Union Street Bridge on four corners of the bridge. Paulownia seed are used for packing packages and they are a fastest growing tree that can grow up to twenty feet in one year. The Paulownia tree is feeding off the waste water from the canal as a source of nutrition. National Packaging factory is no longer in business, the Paulownia tree bark can be used for other use such as creating boards for skateboards, surfboards, and guitars.

3. What people did you observe in the neighborhood and what activities are they engaged in?

When walking down Carroll Street, we saw an old man sitting on a bench chair outside his house, he told us that the street was used to call Seccor Street. As we walk closer to the canal on Carroll Street, we see people walking their dogs. We also see the president of the community board and two EPA members on their boat, doing some form of survey on the canal. When we walk up Nevins Street, we see an e-waste collection warehouse and a candle production warehouse. When standing on the Union Street Bridge by the canal, we see a group of tourist and local people walking by to get from one place to another. On the corner of Union Street and Nevins Street, an ice cream shop, Ample Hill creamery, a shop that sells great ice cream at a decent price. Across from Ample Hill, you will see couple auto repair shops, National packing factory which is turned into an apartment building to rent out to writers. Carroll Street Bridge, near Nevins Street, there was a gate full of graffiti that extend at least a block long.

4. Reflect on a **specific** space you viewed in this neighborhood:

- a. who was the space designed for and what is its general purpose?

The space is designed for industrial like factories and warehouse because we see a lot of factories at one part of the neighborhood and some abandon buildings. We also see a one condo building and Lavender Lake restaurant by the Carroll Street Bridge and a BBQ restaurant and ice cream shop by the Union Street Bridge. The restaurants and ice cream shop around the two bridges serve food for local residents and any tourists exploring the area. The candle warehouse in the area, making production for candles that we still use today.

- b. what are the implied rules of this **specific** space? How are people meant to interact with one another and with the environment?

I didn't see much rules except for Carroll Street Bridge. The sign states "ORDINANCE of the City: Any Person Driving over this Bridge Faster than a Walk will be Subject to a Penalty of Five Dollars for Each Offence." Since the bridge is old and the middle section is created of wood, they warned people when driving on the bridge to go slow and if they ignore the sign, they will have to pay the penalty price. By respecting to the rule applied for the bridge, drivers slow down when crossing the bridge to prevent further damages. When we did observations on the Carroll Street Bridge, I see a lot of people walking their dogs and I didn't see any dog poop on the ground, this mean that people curb their dogs and take the waste to a nearby trash can. Local residents greet each other and even

if some of the people are not local, they greet them to make them feel welcome to the neighborhood.

- c. describe a possible creative reuse of this **specific** space for a theatrical event:
- a) Which areas are best for actors and which areas are good for observers? Do these spaces overlap? Mention specific objects and structures in your answer.
 - b) Describe the potential audience. Who are they (workers? inhabitants? recreational users? tourists?) and why would they be passing through? Where are they going and where did they come from?
 - c) Discuss how light and sound would support a theatrical event.
 - d) What kinds of performance would work best (intimate or grand; processional or stationary; text and/or music; interactive or passive audience; etc.)?

The possible creative reuse of the area between Carroll Street Bridge and Union Street Bridge can be used for a theatrical event. The area between the two bridges will be for actors and the bridges will be for the observers to stand to and watch. The audiences can consist of tourists and recreational workers like EPA, and it can also be local residents. I know that there is a nursery home for the elder across the Gowanus on 3rd place so you may see homecare workers commuting around the canal to get to their destination. You will see EPA workers on their boats monitor or observe to see if there is something going on the canal. Tourists can do an attraction tour on the canal and observing the neighborhood from Gowanus to Carroll Garden.

For the theatrical event, they will have to depend on the sound of cars passing by from one side to the other. In term of lights, street lights are the only source for people to see where they are going. On the gate for the bridges, there are right caution lights but they are only turn on if the bridge is being operated. Text and music performance will be best to be displaying in Gowanus because it is something that can easily to deliver the message to people of a flyer in a newspaper article that will attracts people to go visit. A message attached to a plane flying over the five boroughs or flying over the most crowded areas like Lower Manhattan, Red Hook by Ikea, or beaches.

QUESTIONS for FURTHER RESEARCH. Write down questions that require further research to answer. 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. Question? In future developments, will each neighborhood have their own water waste system or Gowanus will remain a centralized system for all surrounding neighborhoods?
2. Question? Will the city government implement a system that will help clean up the canal by flushing waste water from the canal to the open water?
3. Question? What plans evolve Gowanus into an industrial and residential neighborhood?

FURTHER RESEARCH

Choose and revise one of your research questions for further research.

Revised Research Question: What infrastructure(s) can be used to help mitigate sewage overflow in the Gowanus Canal?

Find a book or newspaper article that could help you answer your question.

MLA Citation for source:

“Storm Drain Stenciling Manual-A Guide to Reducing Trash in Our Waterways.” *Brooklyn Public Library*, www.bklynlibrary.org/digitalcollections/item/58be75c0-a4a7-4ca5-b6de-5c9cb15db440.

“Citizen's Guide to the Sewershed - Newtown Creek WPCP Drainage Area.” *Brooklyn Public Library*, www.bklynlibrary.org/digitalcollections/item/7c80b823-270e-4879-95f8-1f3d49eb3113.

Why did you select this source? How does it address all or part of your research question?

I choose this source because it provide a guide or ways to help reduced the pollution on Newtown creek and Gowanus Canal. There is a message to asking people not to create any more pollution to our water and so that we can have cleaner water. Message can be either display on poster or can be painted onto the drain itself so that people are aware of what to do to help

improve water quality.

Describe the process you used to find this source including any keywords and the search engine or tool you used to search.

Doing a search by using keywords are easier to find what you want to find. Keywords that I would use to help me narrow down the search will be: CSO, flooding, combined sewer overflow, sewer system, drain, urban infrastructure, and hazardous neighbors. By using these keywords, you will be able to narrow your search down to whatever you are looking for. You can also perform the search using a questions but it will be a little harder to narrow down your topic or the information that you needed.

What other sources or further information would you need to answer your question? Where would you look for them?

You can look in the newspaper articles or in books. You can also find information on the city's website or community board for the neighborhood that you are focusing on. You will need to know what infrastructure that is being used and how the infrastructure help and benefit the community or the surrounding areas of the polluted areas. You can find most information from the local public libraries or on the web since almost everything can be found on the web.