

Learning Places Summer 2019

# SITE REPORT #1

## “Saving The Gowanus Canal”



Polluted areas within Brooklyn Gowanus Canal.

**STUDENT NAME:** Brandon Raeburn

### SITE OBSERVATIONS

What it could be?



What it should be?



What it really is?



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

Carroll Gardens, the neighborhood surrounding the Gowanus canal is filled with historic brownstone houses and bluestone sidewalks. The illusion of an 1890's bustling city is intertwined with modern citizens enjoying a brisk walk with their beloved dog. The area gives off a sense of hope, safety, and progress within the near future.

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 natural world has been shaped or contained primarily to the banks of the canal and the "gardens" within the neighborhood. There are many trees upon the sidewalk and small flower beds within the residential areas. The marsh lands have been replaced with high rise residential apartment buildings, storefronts and other commercial buildings. However, the invasive Chinese Packing Peanut Trees can be found all over the canal and in the area of the old box factory.

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

Many dog owners can be seen on their daily walks throughout the neighborhood. Cyclists and joggers were also present; with a predominant member of the community board amongst them. Workers of the many businesses can also be seen.

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 Carroll Street Bridge is a retractile bridge crossing used to connect traffic. The bridge was designed to allow commuters access between Bond & Nevins Streets. It allows commutes in automobiles and walking pedestrians.

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

All New York State and City traffic laws are applied within the space of the bridge. The only posted rule is to observe your speed with a penalty of \$5.00 for infraction.

- 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.)?

A possible creative reuse of the Carroll Street Bridge would be an organized shutdown of the bridge. A block party for workers, inhabitants, tourists, passersby and eco-friendly protestors to inspire cleanup of the canal. A DJ, signs, music and dancing would all be viable methods to ensure awareness. The DJ could use the sound system to enlighten the public of all researched facts regarding the pollution in the area. The local community board should also be present to inform people on ways of pollution mitigation. Local politicians who are pro clean-up would be given a chance to explain how their purposed plans would work. Social media should be used to gain the audience attention to the area. The 350 group could come in and design a piece to go along with the block party.

**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?

What would be necessary to start the creative reuse of the Carroll St bridge?

2. Question?

Why didn't the government clean up the Gowanus Canal?

3. Question?

## FURTHER RESEARCH

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

Revised Research Question:

What would be necessary to start the creative reuse of the Carroll St bridge for a theatrical performance?

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

MLA Citation for source:

Berger, Joseph. "Antique Bridge Closed to Traffic while It's Open for Repairs". The New York Times. May 13, 2013

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

This article was selected because it conveys the engineering highlights, intended uses and all historic facts regarding the bridge.

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

I used Google.com as my primary search engine with the phrase "carroll street bridge newspaper article" to find the New York Times article.

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

m.wikihow.com for the process of obtaining permits and city ordinances for protests. historicbridges.org for more information on the Carroll street bridge. library.citytech.cuny.edu for information on the community board of Gowanus.