

Learning Places Summer 2019

SITE REPORT #1

The Gowanus Neighborhood



View of The Gowanus Canal from the Carroll Street Bridge.

STUDENT NAME: Bryant Vera

SITE OBSERVATIONS

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



Gentrification



Carroll Gardens



Brownstone

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

The Gowanus neighborhood appeared to be peaceful and calm. There was not much noise and residents from the community seemed to roam the streets securely. It reminded me of Sunnyside, Queens a neighborhood where I grew up in. The reason for the similarity between both neighborhoods is gentrification which has attracted new inhabitants and has caused higher rents and mortgages.

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 vegetation in Gowanus has been used in specific places by past residents of the community to represent a more luxurious neighborhood. An example of this are the buildings near the canal with patios full of gardens and green space. Another example would be the Paulownia Tree also known as the "Aluminum of Timber" planted on top of the edge of the canal near the Union Street Bridge. However, throughout history the Gowanus Canal has been affected and polluted by human activity which has caused disruption in the sewer system of Gowanus and New York City.

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

During the site visit I spotted many people jogging or biking around the community which seemed to be residents of the Gowanus neighborhood. There was also an old packing warehouse which is now a residential building between Union St. and Nevins St. where many artists and film makers reside at. Near this building was a candle factory where we were able to spot workers making the candles.

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 was designed for people and vehicles to cross the Gowanus Canal. Anybody crossing the bridge can view and smell the Gowanus Canal from both sides of the bridge.

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

The Carroll Street Bridge is a retractable bridge with a wide wooden-decked lane for vehicles and people built in 1889.

- 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.

The drive lane can be used by the actors to perform on and the walkways can be used by the audience to observe the performance.

- 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?

The performance can be targeted for any type of person crossing the bridge mostly workers and inhabitants who use the bridge everyday. Inhabitants cross the Gowanus Canal to get to the subway stations or can also use it while jogging around the neighborhood. As mentioned before the workers from the factories in Gowanus also use the bridge to get to their jobs.

- c) Discuss how light and sound would support a theatrical event.

The lighting on the Carroll Street Bridge is perfect for any performance because there aren't any tall buildings around to block the sunlight from shining on the bridge. During the time we were crossing the bridge there was no loud noises disturbing the area which can also benefit the performance to be heard by the audience.

- d) What kinds of performance would work best (intimate or grand; processional or stationary; text and/or music; interactive or passive audience; etc.)?

The space can be best used as both grand and stationary performance because it will prevent vehicles from passing and attract attention from people crossing the bridge. It can also be used for a musical performance due to natural lighting and non obtrusive noise.

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?

How can the community board of Gowanus do something to raise awareness of clean efforts?

2. Question?

If the Gowanus Canal continues to be uncared for, how will it affect the community and even New York City in the future?

3. Question?

What does the community of Gowanus think about the situation?

FURTHER RESEARCH

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

Revised Research Question:

How can the community board of Gowanus make sure that environmental issues are being considered in the rezoning plan of the community?

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

MLA Citation for source:

Enman, Scott. "Fix the environment before rezoning, Gowanus residents say." Brooklyn Eagle. 03 May 2019. Brooklyn Daily Eagle. 07 June 2019 <<https://brooklyneagle.com/articles/2019/04/26/fix-the-environment-before-rezoning-gowanus-activists-say/>>.

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

I selected this source because it is a newspaper article by Brooklyn Daily Eagle that talks about the residents of Gowanus and their concern about how environmental issues around the community should be resolved before the final rezoning plans begin.

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

I went on Google and searched up "Gowanus, Brooklyn Zoning Plan". I tried to look for the most recent posts about the topic as well.

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

Try to attend a meeting of the community board of Gowanus to further investigate about the environmental issues in the neighborhood and the steps that are being done to resolve this issue.