

Learning Places Summer 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal, Brooklyn, New York



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INTRODUCTION

As this class began, our task was to learn on how to learn about neighborhoods. To gain the experience on how the neighborhoods are made and to come to an understanding on the form they were created. The chosen site/ neighborhood that was selected was the Gowanus. The Gowanus is located in Brooklyn

near by Carroll Gardens, Park Slope, Boerum Hill, Prospect Park, and Red Hook. The Gowanus has its very known canal that was mainly used during the industrial times to transport goods in and out since it connects to the New York Harbor. The Gowanus Canal, brought bad effects after its industrial times, because of the materials that were being used. The materials were which were polluted the site is with industrial waste source like coal yards, chemical production, concrete and asphalt plant, paint and ink factories. What also polluted the canal was the manufactures gas plants along the canal. As I walked through the site I was able to see how it has changed and how the city is trying to bring a new crowd into the Gowanus, most specifically those with money by adding new condominiums. By analyzing the neighborhood I personally think that the city, instead of helping the neighborhood, it's bringing more issues into the plate. The city planning and development officials are more money driven than actual health and looking the best for the people who are at the Gowanus. It is very easy to say that the Gowanus is a victim of gentrification. As they had they ad new buildings with rent that the minimum is \$3,000 is forcing the other living spaces and its surroundings to increase the rent as well. Forcing those who can't afford that style of living, to move out of the Gowanus.

SITE IMAGE 1



This image is was taken right on front of the the new building apartment that was constructed right on the canal. And you can see the difference from the side of the canal where the new luxury apartments are at, and on the opposite side, where canal looks more abandoned. Also you are able to see the canals current development, along the canal. A visual view of the canal being under construction.

SITE IMAGE 2



This image shows the new urban walls that are being that are representing the Gowunas neighborhood today. I personally believe that it is very important to look at the surrounding of the site before designing and building. In class we discuss about the journalist Jane Jacob and her beliefs about communities and i feel like to a certain extent she would disagree on the transformation of the Gowunas. It is a very nice facade but the language of design doesn't really represent what the Gowunas neighborhood is.

SITE IMAGE 3



From this image you get a view of the new residential apartment building and also of the current canal. The canal from far you're able to see that the water isn't clean, but very polluted. You can also see the green spaces that have been added along the canal, in which people are suppose to go to and enjoy. On the canal you can all see that they are covering the old wall by adding more material instead of actually fixing the actual problem. I personally think because they try to cover up the real problems of the canal with time things are going to get worse instead of better.

SITE IMAGE 4



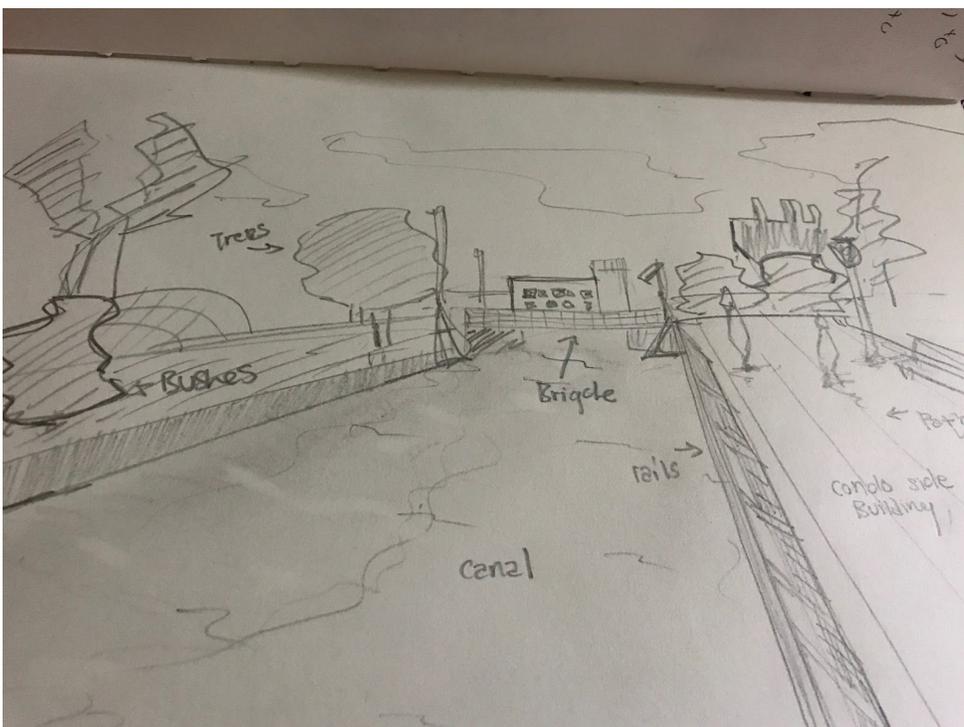
Here is a clear view on the difference between the side walks and how one side is more developed the other side. The side on where the new building is, feeling more inviting and safe to walk in unlike the other side. The other side seems more unsafe and less visual ability when walking after dust.



These images show the surroundings of the neighborhood and some of the images speaks out the problems the Gowunas faces. Such as floods and how the water of the canal can easily rise up and contaminate what's around it.

SITE DOCUMENTATION

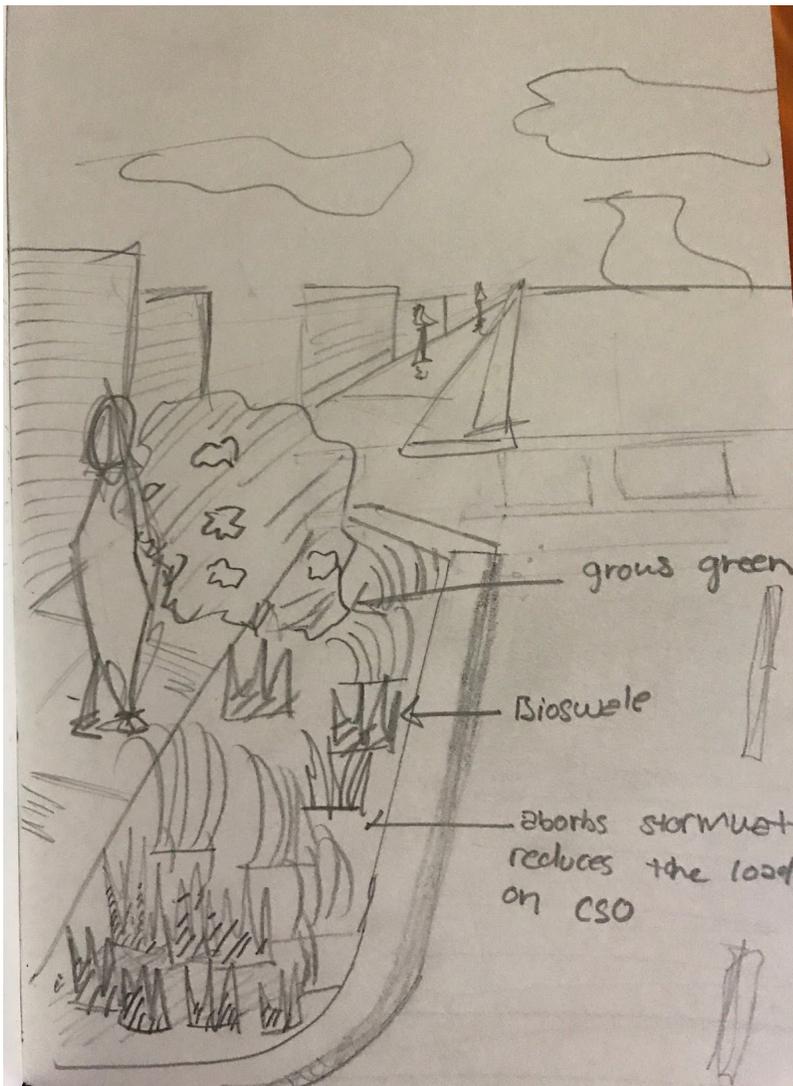
SKETCH 1



On this sketch i try to show on how narrow the canal is and how the water can easily go over to the streets or land. Which becomes a big issue if the developers want people to move is to live in an area where it can easily be flooded. And after having Joseph the author of the Guwanus, i came to a better

understanding on how the city believes that because they will have rich people move in into the area, the developers would invest their money into creating it into a better place for them. Which i believe is really unfair for those of lower class who were there before the change, instead of making it better for them. They decide to kick them out the place without any thoughts on what they think or feel.

SKETCH 2



On this sketch shows of a bioswale which helps reduce pollution in the neighborhood and it is also to obtain water to prevent it from going into the canal, which is one of the main issue the Gowanus has. I believe that the bioswale sounds more beneficial than its actual function in the specific neighborhood.

GENERAL NOTES:

- Having a new building means a new sewage system into Gowunas.
- New public spaces must be applied, 40 ft public expanse, associated with the water path.
- The bioswale by the canal can hold up to 1,000,000 gallons of water. CSO (combined sewage overflow)
- You can see the difference on the sidewalks conditions
- Whole food was a industrial commercial site, a brownfield site. Polluted site.
- They are adding more permeable surfaces, green roof, solar panels, eco friendly energy sources.
- The Gowanus became a superfund site from 2010 till 2022, when the changes are changed.
- A superfund site, is funded by the government time money.

INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

After the visit and from learning the different perspective people had such as Robert Moses and Jane Jacob, i feel i can connect more to Jane Jacobs view of what a community is. Developers don't really care about how to make the community better but instead just create more problems by hiding the real issues in the neighborhood. I feel they are overwhelming the site so many residential than actual space for people to create connection, that it's not even a community even part of the city. They are causing more issues into the Gowanus with the new buildings because is a new sewage system added, which will put more pollution into the canal making it impossible to ever make the site a cleaner environment for the people. Something i discovered was that Whole Food that's about the Gowunas has many eco

friendly sources which shows that they are somewhat helping the environment.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

SUPERBLOCK : an area of city land larger than the usual block, treated according to a unified plan and generally closed to vehicular through traffic.

GENTRIFICATION : the buying and renovation of houses and stores in deteriorated urban neighborhoods by upper- or middle-income families or individuals, raising property values but often displacing low-income families and small businesses.

SUPERFUND : a large fund set up to finance an expensive program or project.

ZONING : of or relating to the division of an area into zones, as to restrict the number and types of buildings and their zoning laws

PERVIOUS : admitting of passage or entrance; permeable

IMPERVIOUS : not permitting penetration or passage; impenetrable

BIOSWALE : a long, channeled depression or trench that receives rainwater runoff (as from a parking lot) and has vegetation (such as grasses, flowering herbs, and shrubs) and organic matter (such as mulch) to slow water infiltration and filter out pollutants.

BROWNFIELD : a tract of land that has been developed for industrial purposes, polluted, and then abandoned

CORNICE : any prominent, continuous, horizontally projecting feature surmounting a wall or other construction, or dividing it horizontally for compositional purposes

MODERNISM : modern character, tendencies, or values; adherence to or sympathy with what is modern.

NATIVE : being the place or environment in which a person was born or a thing came into being

LINTEL : being the place or environment in which a person was born or a thing came into being

COMBINED SEWER SYSTEM : A combined sewer system is a sewer that accepts storm water, sanitary water/sewage, and most likely industrial wastewater which ideally is

treated by a sewage/publicly owned treatment works (POTW). Under certain wet weather conditions, however, these sewer systems can become overloaded and release some of the untreated combined waste streams, these are known as combined sewer overflows (CSOs).

COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW : systems are sewers that are designed to collect rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater in the same pipe. Most of the time, combined sewer systems transport all of their wastewater to a sewage treatment plant, where it is treated and then discharged to a water body.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. What are other ways they plan on helping the Gowunas if the development does not advance as expected?
2. What happens if not enough people move into the new buildings that are building built in the Guwanus?
3. What will they do is the Gowunas is attacked by a very bad storm and damages all the progression it has achieved?