

Learning Places Summer 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus



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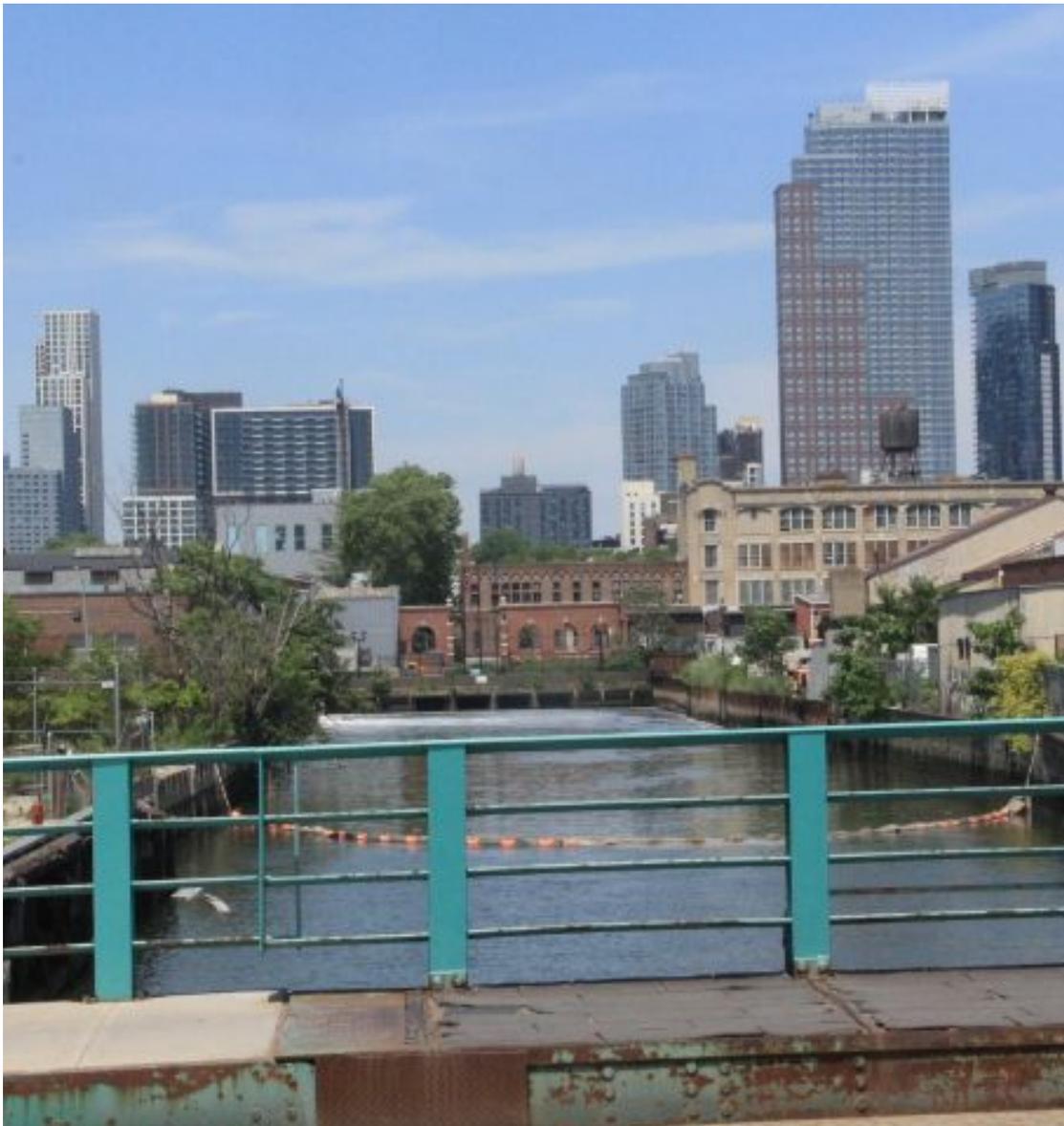
INTRODUCTION

The class visited two different sites within and surrounding Gowanus. First site visit was on June 5th we met at the Union Street Bridge. Purpose for visiting Gowanus Canal was to understand its history, the importance of the canal to its neighborhood and what are changes are being implemented to improve

the canal. June 7 we explored public housing Wykoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses. These projects were created to hide away the low income people, by knocking down old architecture and creating brand new ones that mimicked Le Corbusier's building in a park ideas.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (photos*)

*3 photos minimum required per site visit



This photo indicates where Flushing tunnel is located on the canal, the photo was taken on the Union Street Bridge surrounded by different architecture.



This photo was taken outside of Wykoff public housing projects. This project was completely different than the Gowanus project, in a sense that this building was created to keep its tenants separated from the people of this neighborhood. The drastic change in height of this building and the surrounding houses demonstrates that.



This is a photo of new construction in Gowanus. This neighborhood is going through hyper-gentrification.



1



2



3

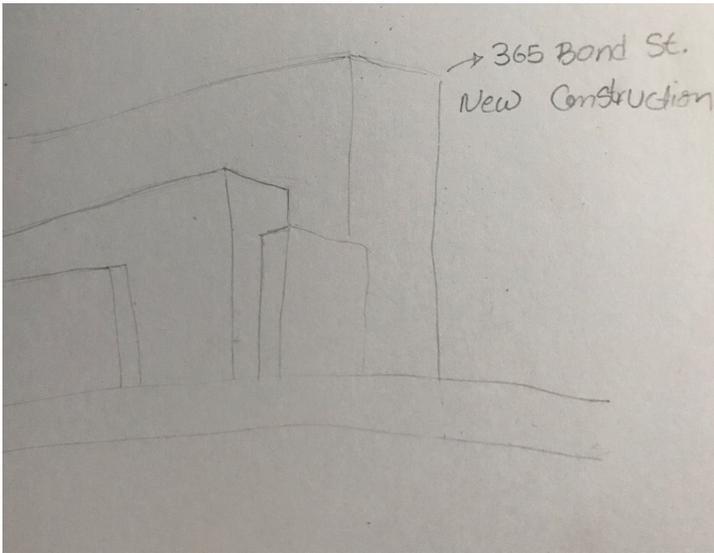
1 - This is one of the bioswales located in Gowanus it is maintained by volunteers. It catches the runoff water from the street so the rain water doesn't end up in the sewer system.

2 - This is a photo of a bio sponge located in an esplanade by the canal near Bond Street. It is similar to a bioswale but instead of only collecting water from rain it also observes water from underneath.

3 - These playgrounds are located by Gowanus houses. This photo is a perfect example of how the government separates people. On the right it's a playground from NYCHA, run down and ill-maintained, on the left is a city playground. Both of them are separated by two fences, even though people from NYCHA can go into city park, non-Gowanus residents are restricted from going in.

SITE DOCUMENTATION (sketches*)

*2 sketches minimum required per site visit



One of the first few things i noticed when i arrived at the site was the new construction. Some parts of the building has different facades which makes them look like collections of different buildings rather than just one building.



GENERAL NOTES:

- Gowanus canal is 1.8 miles long and 100ft wide.
- Canal was originally a creak

- Coal tar is coated on the bottom of the canal which is considered historical pollution
- About 27 billion sewage is dumped every year
- Bioswale can hold upto 1000 gallons of water

INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

I have been unofficially living in Park Slope for past six years and June 5th was the first time I had seen Gowanus canal. Prior to our site visit I thought that the canal would be little grander, I also didn't realize how polluted the canal is and had been polluted for over 100 years. I have seen news and read about mammals such as baby whale and dolphin making their way in the canal but died within hours. There is a initiative to clean it but in my opinion combine sewage system will always be a step back and unless something is done about CSO the canal won't truly be clean. Bioswales have been created to help with storm surge. Which means less water will mix with sewage water and water

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

*5 keywords minimum required per site visit

COAL TAR: A form of tar produced by distilling bituminous coal, used as a sealant and preservative and in antiseptic skin preparations, and as a source of organic chemicals.

IMPERVIOUS: Through which there is no way; not affording passage (to); not to be passed through or penetrated; impenetrable, impermeable, impassable.

PERVIOUS: Allowing the passage of water, air, etc., through its substance; permeable. Freq. with *to*.

SUPERFUND: n. a very large or otherwise exceptional fund (in various senses); *spec. (U.S.)* (freq. with capital initial) a federal government fund established in 1980 to finance the Environmental Protection

Agency's clean-up of sites contaminated with hazardous waste; (also) the associated clean-up programme.

ESPLANADE: A levelled piece of ground; often, such a space intended to serve as a public promenade.

MARSH: Low-lying land, often flooded in wet weather and usually more or less waterlogged throughout the year; a tract or area of such land.

BROWNFIELD SITE: A previously developed site, which has been abandoned or has stood idle, or an underused industrial site, where redevelopment is complicated by environmental contamination issues.

JANE JACOBS: Journalist, author, and activist known for her influence on urban studies.

LINTEL: A horizontal piece of timber, stone, etc. placed over a door, window, or other opening to discharge the superincumbent weight.

CORNICE: A horizontal moulded projection which crowns or finishes a building or some part of a building.

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 WEBSTER

SUPERBLOCKS: a very large commercial or residential block barred to through traffic, crossed by pedestrian walks and sometimes access roads, and often spotted with grassed malls Webster

GENTRIFICATION: The process by which an (urban) area is rendered middle-class.

COMBINED SEWER SYSTEM (CSS): Collects rainwater runoff, domestic sewage, and industrial wastewater into one pipe. Under normal conditions, it transports all of the wastewater it collects to a sewage treatment plant for treatment, then discharges to a water body.

COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOW (CSO): During heavy rain and snow storms, combined sewers receive higher than normal flows. When this occurs, untreated stormwater and wastewater, discharges directly to nearby streams, rivers, and other water bodies. (CSOs) contain untreated or partially treated human and industrial waste, toxic materials, and debris as well as stormwater.

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. How long would it take to complete the cleanup of the Canal?
2. How much has the neighborhood changed considering the gentrification?
3. Do the new tenant know anything about the polluted canal?