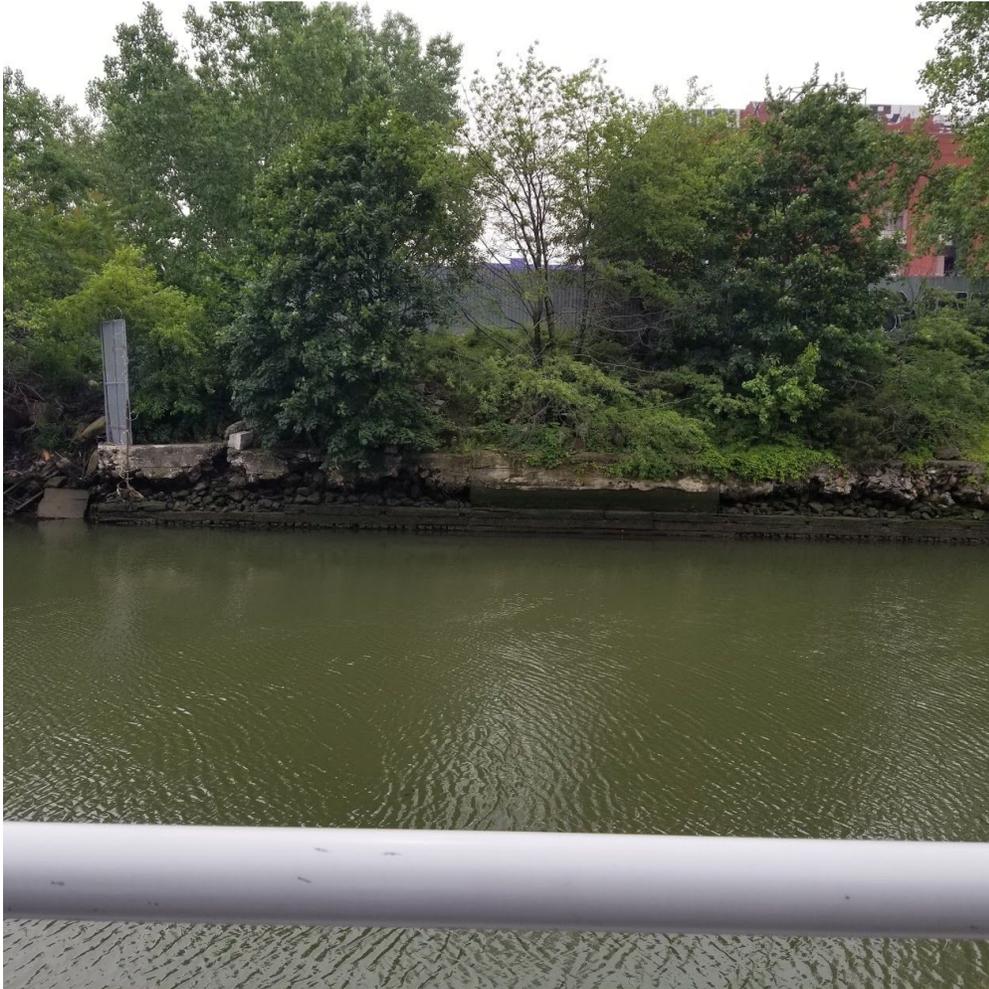


Learning Places Summer 2017

# SITE REPORT #1

## Gowanus/Housing Projects



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### INTRODUCTION

Last week, our class visited two sites in Brooklyn NY. The first site visit was the Gowanus canal and the surrounding neighborhood. We had a guide takes us around the neighborhood and point out facts about the Gowanus and problems surrounding the canal. Our second site visit was to the Gowanus Houses

public housing projects and Wyckoff Gardens public housing projects. We entered the project's grounds and explored the superblocks.

## Bioswale



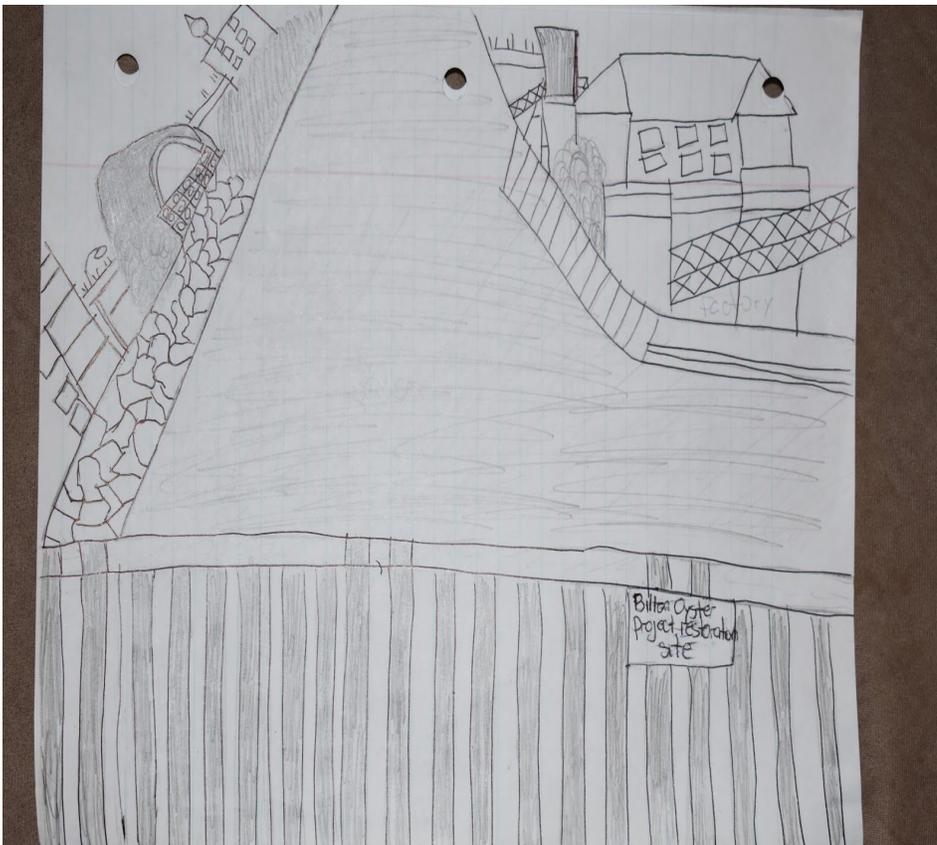
The photo above is showing a bioswale. This particular bioswale collects polluted water running the streets and absorbs it to stop it from going into the Gowanus canal. This is important because when excess water run the streets it collects all sorts of chemicals and pollution. This water will eventually enter the canal, adding more contamination. But with the help of bioswale this problem can be reduced, it also gives opportunity for native plants among others plants to grow for beautiful green

space in the city.



The photo to the left is a photo of the Gowanus canal. On the left side of the canal there is a newly constructed building. On the right side of the canal there are trees and grass. Towards the end of the canal there is a factory. This photo demonstrates, the past, the present and the future of Gowanus. On the left of the canal we see that the future of the Gowanus canal is heading towards construction of high rise residential buildings. To the right side of the canal we see unattended trees and grass, which up to now is a large portion of what the canal edge is

composed of. And towards the end of the canal we see what Gowanus canal used to be known for, which was an industrial area.



The sketch to the left is a sketch of the Gowanus canal and the factories around it. This sketch represents a part of the Gowanus canal that has been untouched by gentrification. Since the 1800's the Gowanus canal has been a place for factories. Many of these factories dumped their waste on the canal therefore are responsible for part of the pollution the Gowanus canal suffers from today. The coal tar dumped into the canal by these factories still remains there

until this date. Fortunately the dumping of coal in the canal has stopped but the canal face a new pollutant of raw sewage.



The sketch on top is the first location the class visited as a group. This image is important because it was the first time I saw the Gowanus canal and remember getting the impression of abandonment. On the right of the canal boats are neglected. There is also wild grass and trees, that clearly have not been maintained. The new constructed building don't fit in, making it look extremely awkward in that location. There is garbage in the middle of the canal which makes me think the residents don't really care and litter, instead of reducing pollution.



The picture above is the polluted brackish water of the Gowanus canal. The picture shows how easy it can be for the canal to overflow in certain events due to the level of the ground and the water. This image reminds us of how buildings built near the canal are vulnerable to floods.

## Housing Projects

### Wyckoff Garden Public Housing projects



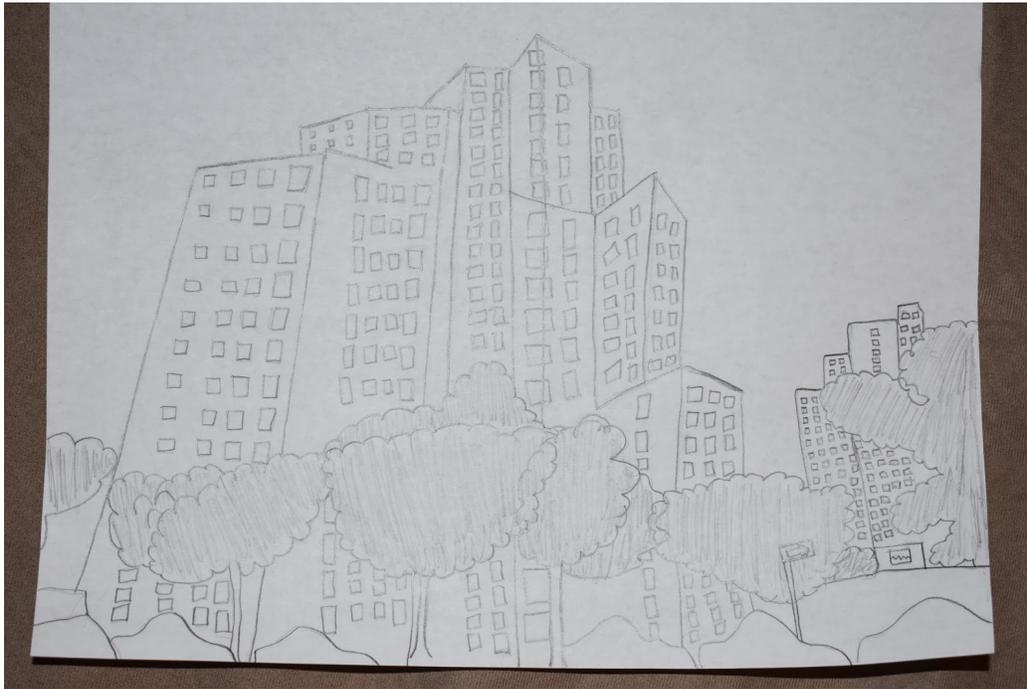
On the left there is a picture of the Wyckoff Gardens public housing projects. This picture is a partial view of one of the three buildings of Wyckoff Gardens. From this angle you can see how tall this building is. This building looks like a prison with bars on windows. This building is a perfect example of what Jane Jacobs wanted to avoid. This place doesn't look like the neighborhood Jane Jacobs described. There is no one looking out the windows nor people walking outside. There is no type of interaction going on, that makes Wyckoff Gardens look isolated and unfriendly.



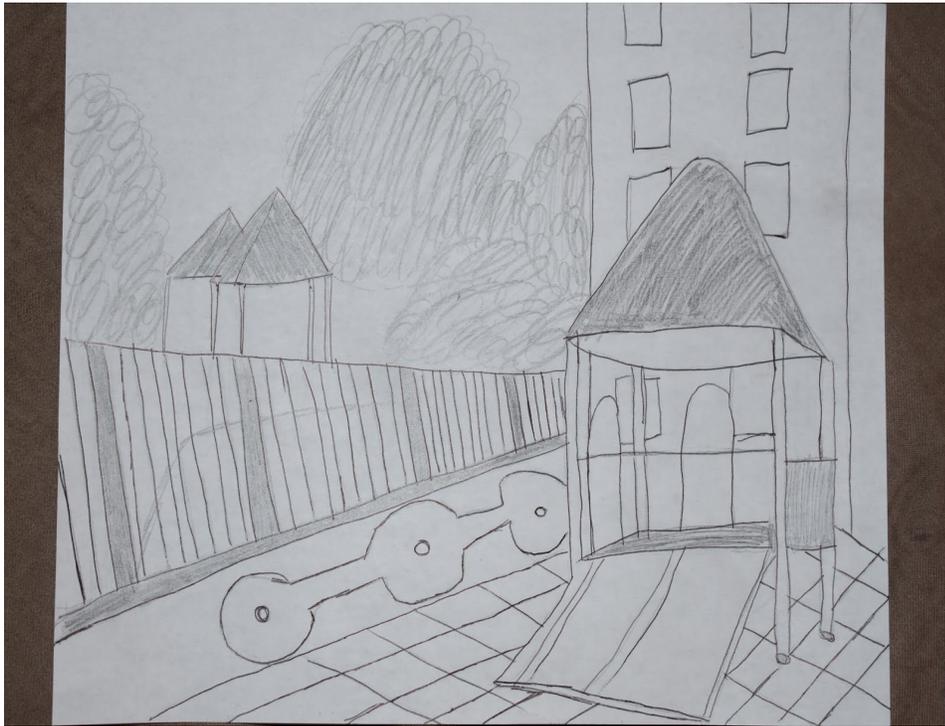
The image above is of one of the 14 buildings composing the Gowanus Houses projects. This building is much smaller than the others, therefore it represents what Jane Jacobs mentioned as being vital to a neighborhood. If housing projects had continued to be built in this style, we might have been able to preserve the neighborhoods that were lost due to the construction of high building housing projects.



The picture on top is one block with completely different agendas. This image is a perfect example of gentrification. The picture clearly shows the transformation of the Gowanus neighborhood to cater to the upper middle class and above and in turn getting rid of the original residents that had once lived there.



The sketch above is the Wyckoff Gardens public housing projects near the Gowanus canal. The buildings on this sketch are all crowded and it seems like one building is coming out of another building making it look unappealing. It seems like the developers were looking for ways to stack a large amount of people instead of providing quality to the tenants. Again there is no people outside just cars. It makes the projects look deserted and unwelcoming.



The image above is two playgrounds separated by a double fence. This image shows us how deep the separation between the Gowanus Houses public housing projects and the rest of the neighborhood. Although they are literally right next to each other they don't interact with one another, allowing segregation to take place.

## GENERAL NOTES:

- The first type of pollution to the Gowanus canal was coal, which started in the 17th century.
- The canal has 100 million gallons of sewage per year.
- The canal has flushing tunnels to provide the water with oxygen.
- Native plants live near the canal

- The middle of the canal is the most contaminated.

## INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

While going on these two site visits I have discovered many new things. First, I didn't know there was a Gowanus canal. I was amazed how the canal overflows with sewage when it rains a certain amount, and had imagined that by this date and age the city of New York would've fix that problem but they haven't. We also have been learning about what makes up a neighborhood. It seems that neighborhoods are more successful when they have smaller buildings, this makes it easier for people to interact and have a sense of belonging. I was surprised to know that that's the reason that housing projects are unsuccessful. I have also discovered how gentrification is affecting minorities and how unfair the government is being to them as a group. This saddens me deeply and question how will New York look like in 20 years.

## KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

Pervious- (of a substance) allowing water to pass through; permeable.

Impervious- Not allowing fluid to pass through.

Brownfield land- Denoting or relating to urban sites for potential building development that have had previous development on them.

Salt marsh- An area of coastal grassland that is regularly flooded by seawater.

Brackish water- (of water) slightly salty, as in river estuaries.

Superfund- A fund established to finance a long-term, expensive project.

Cornice- An ornamental molding around the wall of a room just below the ceiling.

Lintel- A horizontal support of timber, stone, concrete, or steel across the top of a door or window.

Gentrification- The process of renovating and improving a house or district so that it conforms to middle-class taste.

Modernism- Modern character or quality of thought, expression, or technique.

Urban planning- The planning and regulation of building, development, reconstruction, etc., in an urban area.

## QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Will building high rise buildings be the same as the construction of housing projects in the sense of isolating people?
2. After the Gowanus gets cleaned, how will the city of New York maintain the canal from getting polluted once more?
3. Is the city of New York working on a plan to correct the flaws with the sewage disposal system?

## Reference

(n.d.). Oxford Dictionary online. Retrieved from:  
[https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/urban\\_planning](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/us/urban_planning)

This source was used to to define the words in the vocabulary section.