

Learning Places Summer 2017

SITE REPORT #1

Gowanus Canal and Neighborhood



ARNULFO MORALES

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References

INTRODUCTION

What impact does new development do to a neighborhood that needs more than just buildings going up? The experience that I had when visiting Gowanus is an example in where this neighborhood needs a lot more than just new buildings going up. Gowanus, home of the most attracted yet most polluted canal in New York, the Gowanus Canal. Developers are developing and building these residential housing on a polluted area. A division between manufacture and housing, almost like a segregation divided by the 1 mile and 100 ft wide polluted canal. Although the canal is now under the federal superfund program, and say that the canal will be cleaned up, there is still questions in how this would have an impact on the environment on Gowanus, with a goal to clean up the canal what kind of social would come out of it. With new developments, and rezoning, Gowanus is still a questioned, what will the Gowanus look like in ten or plus years.

SITE IMAGE



On our first trip towards Gowanus, we experienced the neighborhood and what goes around there. One of the many things that we stopped and looked at was on the corner of Bond St. and Carroll St. was this green extra space that is called a Bioswale. In where its function is stop an overflow from the sewage system that the neighborhood has.

References

SITE IMAGE 2



This image shows a series of small town houses that were built for people who worked on the industrial field. It was amazing how small these masonry buildings worked. These small buildings are now next to actual size housing that can be for two families. It's amazing to see these small houses still being up, with all of the urban renewal going on, in gowanus. Now it's just part of the neighborhood and it's a beauty just to see and visualize a part of history, compare and contrast to the other buildings and houses around them.



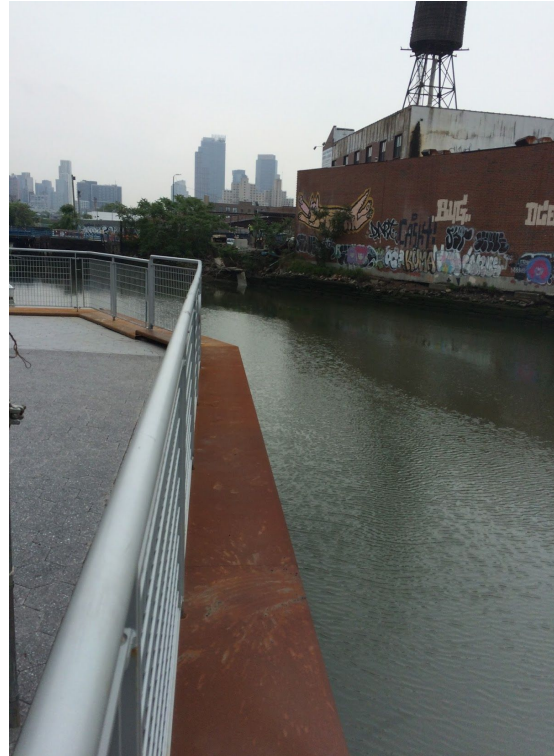
In this image it can clearly show the problem of the gowanus canal. A sad body of water being un utilized for its purpose. Its only purpose is to be there and get waste water from the one pipe sewage system that is under gowanus. "Maybe Jesus is the only one who can clean up this canal," said Margaret Vollaro, who has lived in the neighborhood all of her 78 years. "Nobody else is doing it. None of the politicians are doing it." ("Invoking a Higher Power to Clean Up the Gowanus Canal" By Corey Kilgannon, April 22, 2016, New York Times) It may in fact be true, the Gowanus Canal is so polluted that it's nearly impossible to clean up even if it is now a superfund site by the federal.

References

SITE IMAGE 2



A



B

On image A it shows these new residential houses built. These new residential housing will hold more than 700 units. As I saw these new buildings I thought to myself, the architecture martial feels right, the brick and masonry on this neighborhood goes well with the context of its surroundings. But then as i started looking around these new buildings look massive compare to the other housing, it's almost as if it's being forced down the neighborhood's throat and in a way saying this goes here and its final. Although the architecture modern style looks pleasing it doesn't feel right towards its surroundings.

On image B it is a picture taken to show the waterfront accessibility that these new buildings bring, buildings such as image A. By zoning rule and regulation it is required to have a small plaza for the

References

residential and people around the area. Although we walked around the waterfront it felt weird in a certain way that this plaza was made for and only the residents living there.

SITE IMAGE 3



Both of these images were taken while we were walking towards the gowanus housing projects. On our walk on Smith St, once we hit Atlantic Ave, we turned around and compared both sides. Towards the north where Nam building is located is more tall building, residential mix use going on as you can see on image B, and towards the south is more of commercial spaces, more buildings scaled down almost a sense of a neighborhood (image A) rather than the upper part where it's just buildings and buildings. I put these two images together because it's as if Atlantic Ave. is separating them. On one side is the new modern neighborhood, and on the other is the old, past date neighborhood that I grew up with.

References

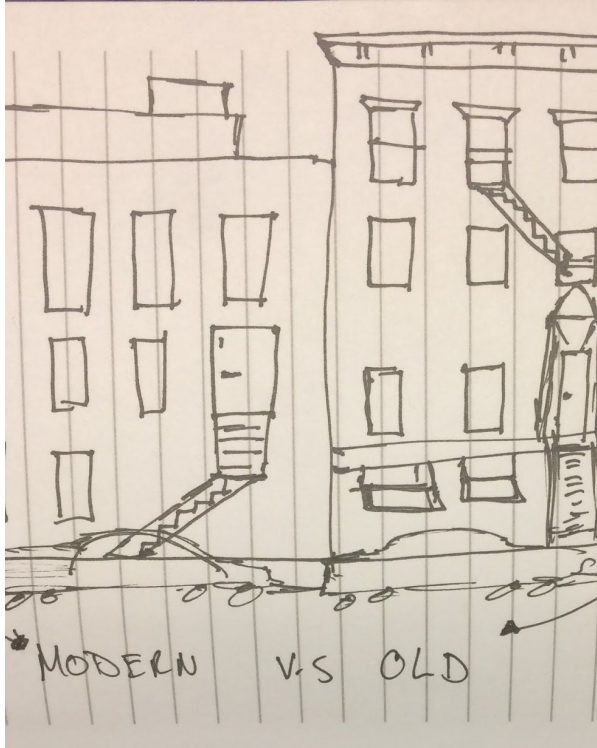
SITE IMAGES



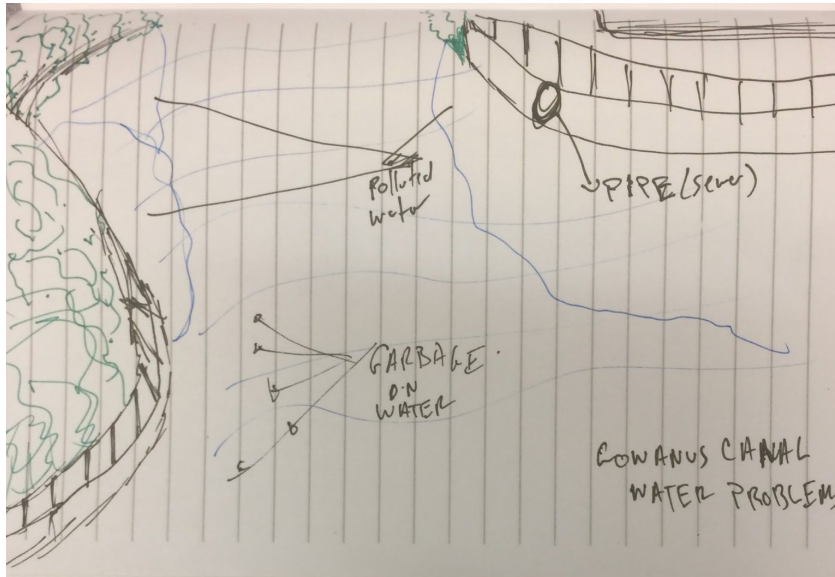
The next three images as shown above were again taken while we walked towards the gowanus housing projects. The first two images were taken on Wyckoff St. The experience and transition walking from Smith St. and making the left turn towards Wyckoff St. was a big change. From a busy and noisy street to this quiet, lovely neighborhood with trees giving it a shade from the hot sunny day that it was. The thing that I liked and picked besides the feeling of an actual neighborhood, were the buildings, as an a student in the architecture field, I liked the comparison of the new modern architectural style towards the old one. On the first image on the left, two masonry houses right next to each other, and two different style yet it all goes well together because of the masonry material. The image in the middle again goes back to my idea that i like having two different architecture styles being next to one another. Although on the image in middle looks more of a different style it goes well in my mind because it introduces change and it stands out to the neighborhood. On the last image towards the right shows the image taken inside the gowanus housing. A sad image but reality, here we see two different playgrounds. Small playgrounds for children to play, but separated. Behind the gates is a park for the public yet it is on the other side separated from the park inside the public housing. The different looks between the two playgrounds, the different colors, different slides, different playgrounds.

References

SKETCHES



This sketch was based on the comparison between the two housing on Wyckoff St. The reason why i sketched it was because even though it's a new modern style the architectural sense is to not go too different. Respecting its surroundings and the context of the other buildings, the modern housing looks almost the same as the old ones but with a new twist.



When coming out of 9th street and smith, i decided to sketch the gowanus canal because it is one of the first things you see when you get out of the train station. I later on put the sewage pipe, not because it was there and i saw it but to show one of the cause and reasons of why the canal is polluted.

References

GENERAL NOTES:

- The gowanus canal is 1.8 mile long, 100 foot wide.
- Gowanus canal historically was home to many industries including manufactured gas plants.
- After nearly 150 years of use, the canal has become heavily contaminated.
- Residential buildings going up, more than 700 units.
- Bioswale are around the neighborhood to help prevent overflow for sewage.
- Sponge parks are being developed around the waterfront, can hold upto 1 million gallons of water.
- Gowanus canal is a superfund site and expected to be cleaned up by the year 2022.
- Coal tar and many other industrials caused the damage to the gowanus canal.
- \$500 million cleanup project.

INSIGHTS/DISCOVERIES

I never thought urban renewals would have its downfalls. I think in this case because the gowanus canal is still polluted and around the surroundings all these high residential housings are going up, without a proper goal. From my observation i saw different types of communities being segregated. I think that in the end of the day the renewal of the gowanus neighborhood is moving on too quickly for people to adapt. Many people that lived there are being confused on how many wealthy people are going to live in these high end residential housings. I have learned that even though if the canal is cleaned up the canal would be polluted more and more after the cleanse because i think one of the issues is that one way sewage system. In where all the grey water and waste from the neighborhood all end up being in this system in which is being dump to the gowanus canal especially when it rains and there is a huge storm

References

and that sewage system overflows where it causes the most damage to the canal. Although there are many waterfronts going on, the differences and presence i felt when walking through there was uncomfortable. If i were to walk by myself, i properly be nervous that i'll be accused of trespassing. The gowanus urban development is moving on quickly but in the end of the day i think that it would be and hopefully be a successful project. To have another neighborhood with great waterfront opportunities and great green public spaces being utilized for both residential and tourist would make brooklyn even more popular than it is now.

KEYWORDS/VOCABULARY & DEFINITIONS

SUPERFUND A US federal government program designed to fund the cleanup of toxic wastes.

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

ZONE: An area or stretch of land having a particular characteristic, purpose, or use, or subject to particular restrictions.

BIOSWALE: landscape elements designed into concrete to remove silt and pollution from surface runoff water.

MODERNISM: A style or movement in the arts that aims to break with classical and traditional forms.

SPONGE PARK: to prevent polluted stormwater from flowing directly into rivers or overloading sewage treatment plants.

References

BROWNFIELD SITE: industrial pollution.

G.I.S: geographic information system

BOULEVARD: A wide street in a town or city, typically one lined with trees.

SUPERBLOCKS: more than to blocks and lots that were converted to one huge block/lot.

INDIGENOUS : Originating or occurring naturally in a particular place; native.

PERVIOUS: allowing water to pass through; permeable.

SETBACKS: The distance by which a building or part of a building is set back from the property line.

AVENUE: A thoroughfare running at right angles to the streets in a city laid out on a grid pattern.

DEMOGRAPHICS: Statistical data relating to the population and particular groups within it.

CORNICE: A horizontal molded projection crowning a building or structure, especially the uppermost member of the entablature of an order, surmounting the frieze.

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

PROJECTS: public housing

URBAN: In, relating to, or characteristic of a city or town.

References

QUESTIONS for Further RESEARCH

1. Would it be possible for the sewage system to be changed in gowanus?
2. How does the gowanus canal waterfront work? Who is the green public spaces benefiting? What kind of impacts would creating new public spaces have on the industrial/ manufacture?
3. How would the gowanus canal be maintain?
4. What type are people would be attracted towards the gowanus neighborhood?

References

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3. <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/04/23/nyregion/wanting-gowanus-canal-cleaned-up-they-invoke-a-higher-power.html>
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