

# **Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework**

**City of New York**

*Department of City Planning*

*Department of Housing Preservation and Development*

*Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination*



April 2007



## Framework for Gowanus Canal Area

### Outreach Meetings:

Jan. 25

Proposed land use framework

Today

Open space at canal's edge  
Goals for residential / mixed use areas

Future

Additional issues





## Background



- Current industrial uses on canal include construction materials, fuel, distribution
- Canal area also includes vacant and underutilized land





## Background



- Strong, stable adjacent neighborhoods with recent housing development





## Background



- Reactivation of flushing tunnel in 1999 – improvements in water quality
- Desire for public access at canal's edge and future recreational use





## Focus: Goals for Residential / Mixed Use Areas



### Subarea A

- Mix of residential, retail, and light industrial uses
- Residential and retail within 3rd and 4th Ave. corridors
- Known assemblages of vacant and underutilized land

### Subarea B

- Existing residential use a short block away from canal, and near Gowanus Houses
- Numerous vacant and underutilized sites on canal

### Subarea C

- Existing uses are primarily industrial
- Some vacant and underutilized land
- Recent investment in industrial buildings

### Subarea D

- Mix of uses, lower intensity industry west of Hoyt St.
- Public Place: City-owned site for redevelopment
- Active light industrial and commercial uses, recent investment east of Hoyt Street

### Subarea E

- Active industrial and commercial area
- Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Business Zone
- Nonconforming residential buildings along west side of 3rd Ave





## Focus: Goals for Residential / Mixed Use Areas



Issues raised at  
January 25<sup>th</sup> meeting:

- Public access
- Mix of uses
- Adjacent neighborhoods
- Environmental concerns
- Commercial corridors
- Off-street parking





## Residential / Mixed Use: Goals

**Achieve waterfront public access at canal's edge**

**Consider neighborhood context and character**

**Encourage mix of uses where appropriate**

**Accommodate off-street parking in new buildings**

**Support environmental improvement**

**Promote affordable housing opportunities**

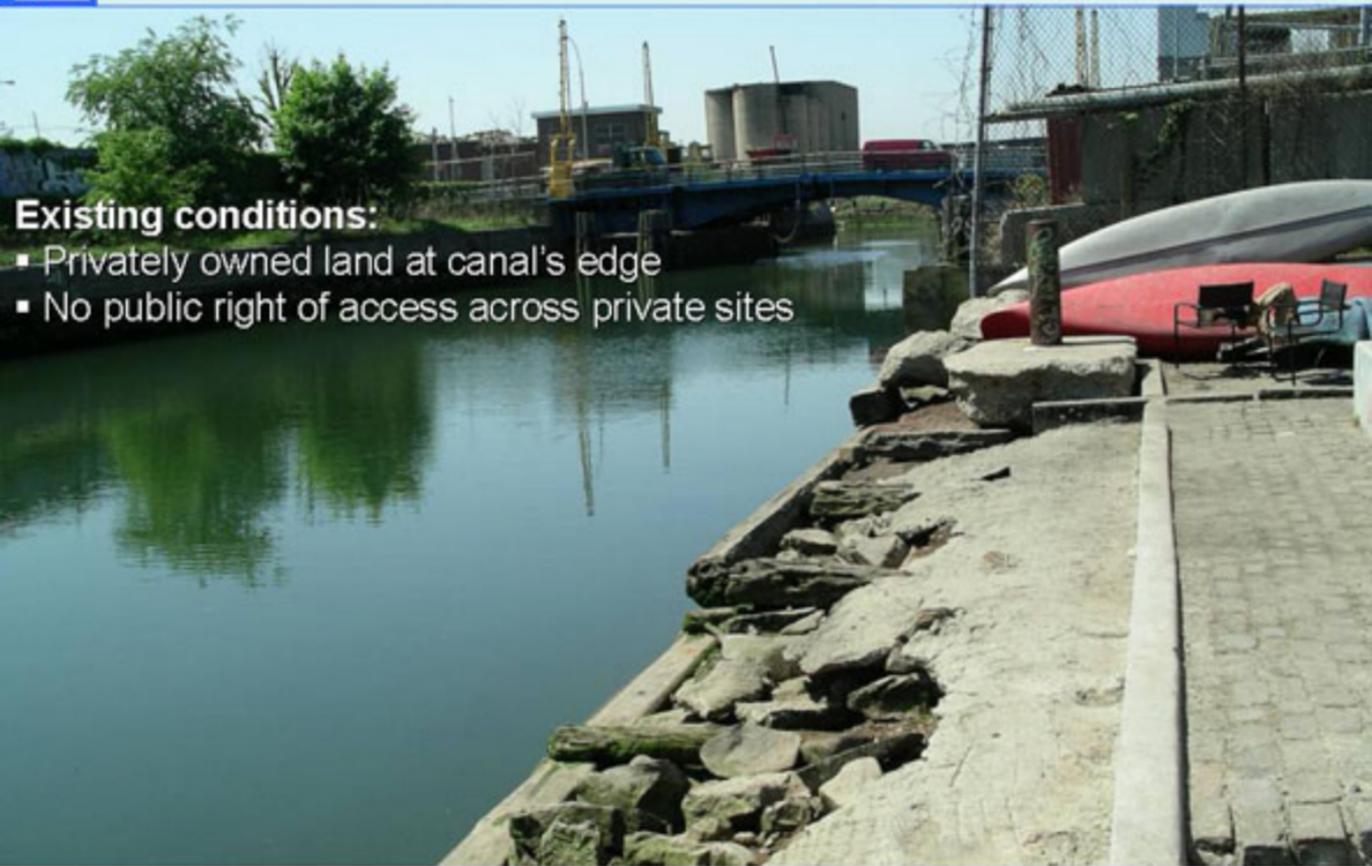




## Achieve Public Access to Canal's Edge

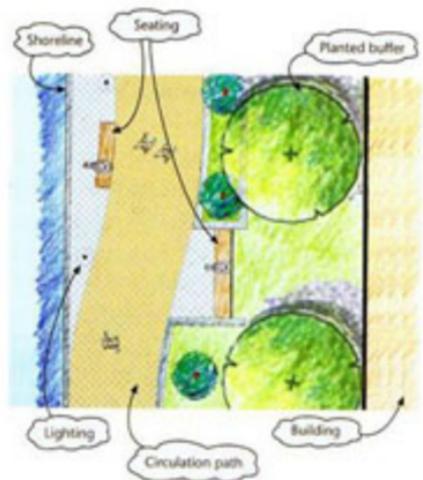
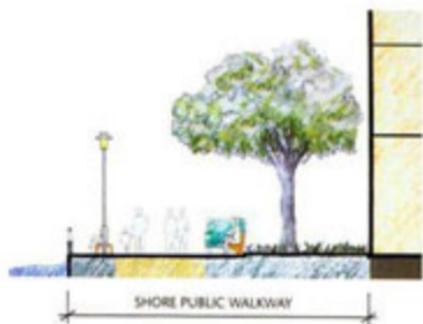
### Existing conditions:

- Privately owned land at canal's edge
- No public right of access across private sites





# Achieve Public Access to Canal's Edge



## Waterfront Zoning

- City's Zoning Resolution contains a model for requiring public access on privately owned sites undergoing development:
  - Shore public walkway up to 40 feet wide
  - Connections to public streets
  - Detailed design standards, requirements for plantings, seating, lighting
  - Developer must build and maintain
- Requirements apply to water bodies wider than 100 feet - do not currently apply to Gowanus Canal

## Opportunity to achieve public access through redevelopment of sites on canal

- Adapt waterfront public access requirements to Gowanus Canal





# Achieve Public Access to Canal's Edge

*Examine examples of public access along narrow urban waterways . . .*





# Achieve Public Access to Canal's Edge

## CANALS AS STREETS

Venice, Italy  
Hamburg, Germany  
Amsterdam, Holland

## CANALS IN DOWNTOWNS/TOURIST DESTINATIONS

Richmond, Virginia  
Providence, Rhode Island

## RECLAIMED INDUSTRIAL CANAL WATERFRONTS

Bronx River, New York

**These examples have certain similarities to the Gowanus Canal, but also many differences**





# Reimagine the Gowanus Canal



*Waterfront open spaces can define the character of  
a revitalized Gowanus Canal –  
a unique urban waterway . . .*





## Residential / Mixed Use: Goals

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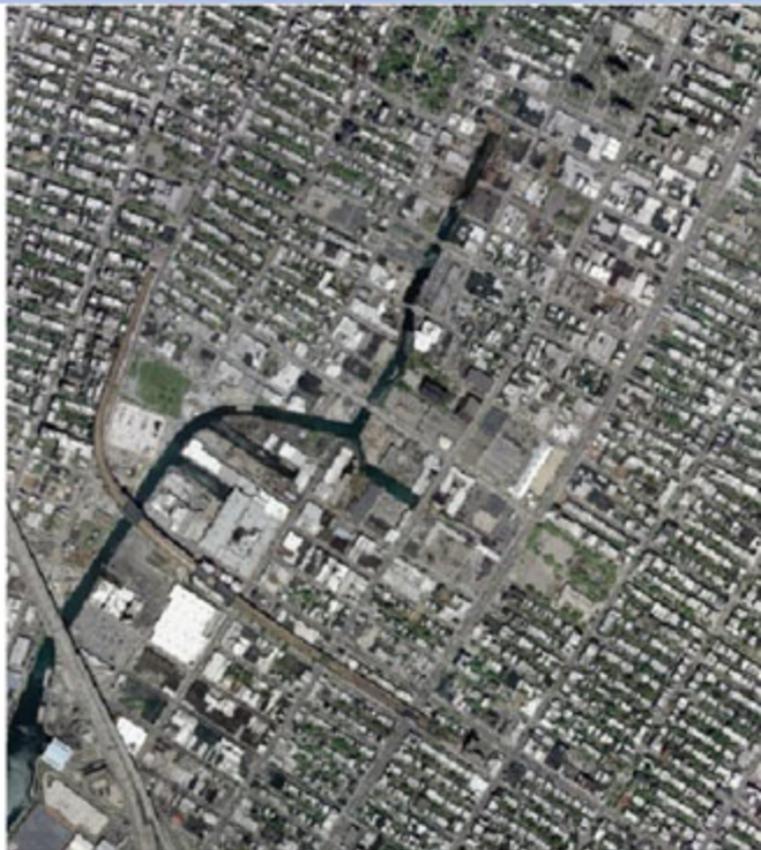




# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

## Existing physical conditions

- Topography
- Street widths
- Building form
- Building heights





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

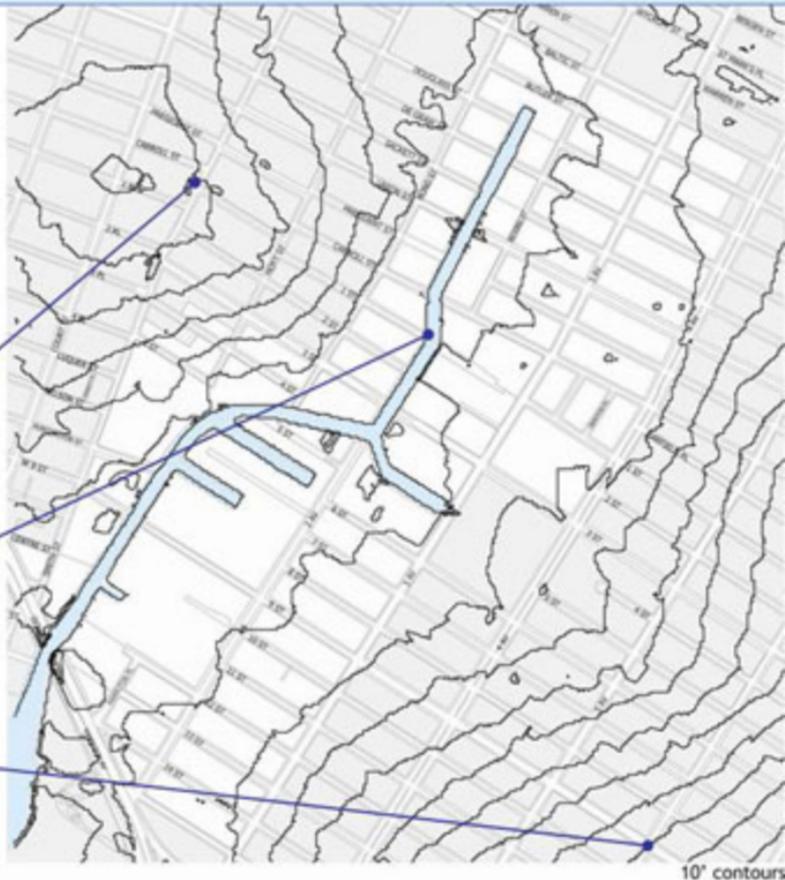
## Topography

- Gowanus Canal area lies in a valley within the center of CD 6
- Land slopes upward west of Bond Street, east of 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue

Smith St. and Carroll St.  
50 feet

Canal's edge  
3-12 feet

6<sup>th</sup> Ave. & 9<sup>th</sup> St.  
90 feet



10' contours

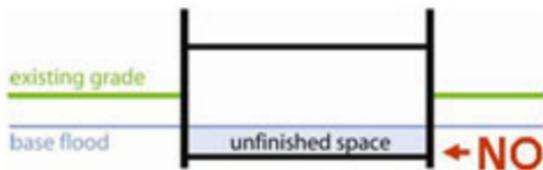




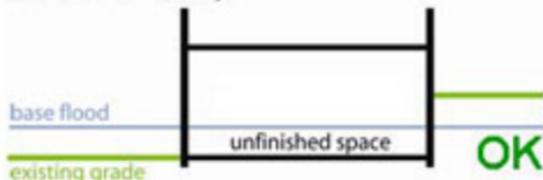
# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

## Flood zones

- Area adjacent to canal lies within 100-year flood zone
- FEMA regulations restrict what kind of space can be built below base flood elevation
- Implications for parking, streetscape



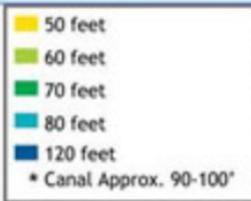
For residential buildings water from a flood incident should recede naturally.





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

## Street Widths





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

Building form and neighborhood fabric





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

Building form in surrounding area





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

Building form in surrounding area





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

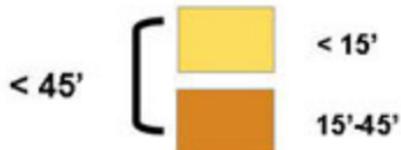
Building form in study area





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

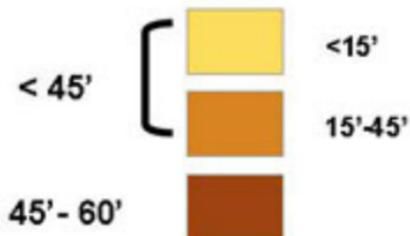
## Existing heights





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

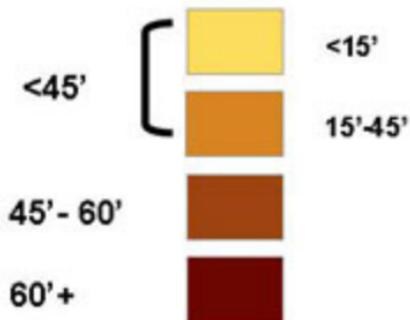
Existing heights





# Consider Neighborhood Context and Character

## Existing heights





## Residential / Mixed Use: Goals

Achieve waterfront public access at canal's edge

Consider neighborhood context and character

Encourage mix of uses where appropriate

Accommodate off-street parking in new buildings

Support environmental improvement

Promote affordable housing opportunities





## Encourage Mix of Uses

- Where appropriate, encourage mix of uses – residential, community facility, commercial, light industrial



3rd Ave. at Union St.



Union St. at Nevins St.





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# Promote Affordable Housing Opportunities



## Inclusionary Housing Program

- City has created an expanded program (2005) to spur development of affordable housing on privately owned sites
- Floor area bonus of 33 percent to developments providing 20 percent affordable housing
- On-site, off-site, and preservation options
- Can be applied in rezonings that encourage new housing, where sufficient density is possible





# Promote Affordable Housing Opportunities



## Public Place

- Keyspan responsible for environmental remediation on this and adjacent sites – coordination with DEC, City
- City ownership creates opportunity to address directly priorities such as affordable housing and open space
- Opportunity to target special needs such as seniors, home ownership



View of Public Place site

GOWANUS CANAL CORRIDOR

BROOKLYN OFFICE





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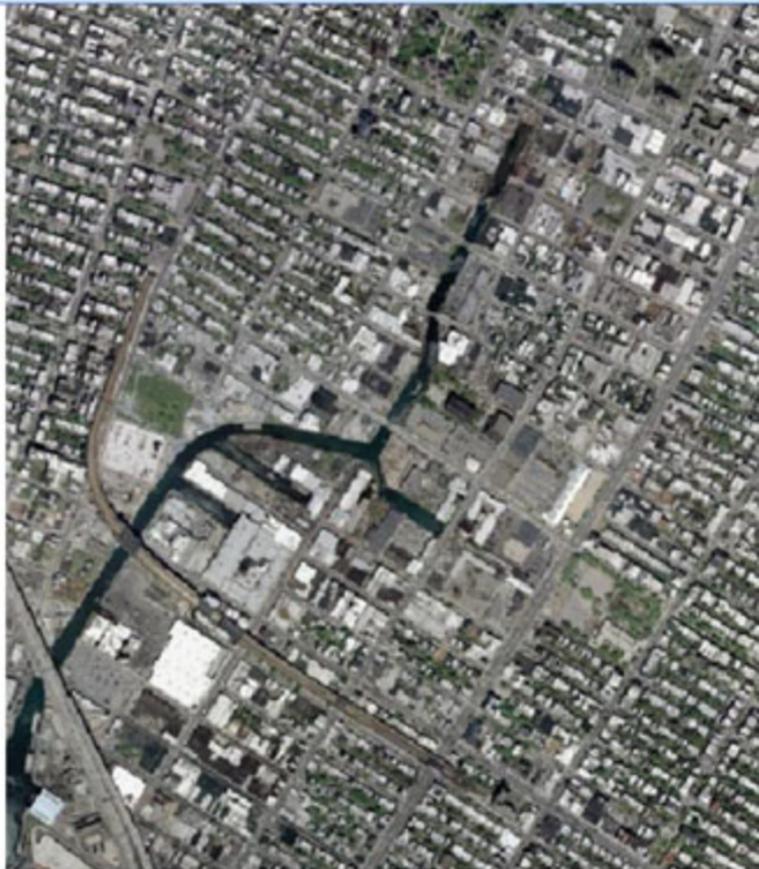




# Support Environmental Improvement

## Opportunities with redevelopment

- Redevelopment provides powerful incentive for cleanup of private sites
  - Cleanup would be a condition of redevelopment
  - Remediation of land prevents cross-contamination of canal
- Address flood zone issues – buildings must comply with DOB and FEMA standards
- Encourage best practices in stormwater management
- Coordinate with ongoing efforts to clean up canal





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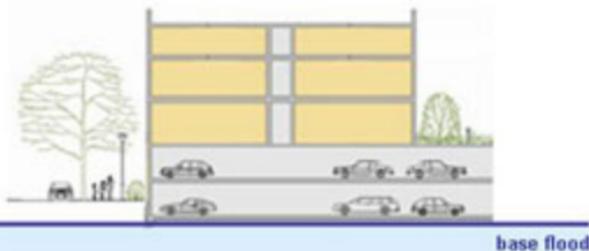
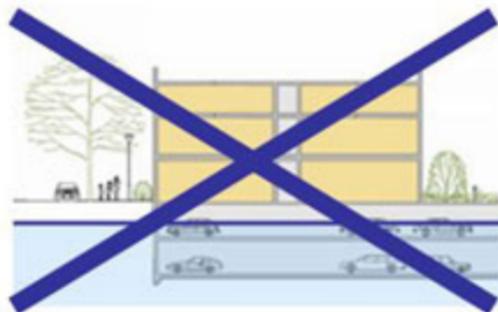




## Accommodate Off-Street Parking

### Flood zone and streetscape

- Federal flood zone regulations generally do not permit residential parking to be located underground
- Space below 100-year flood elevation must be unfinished space in residential buildings



*Locating parking above base flood elevation takes up space in above-ground building envelope*

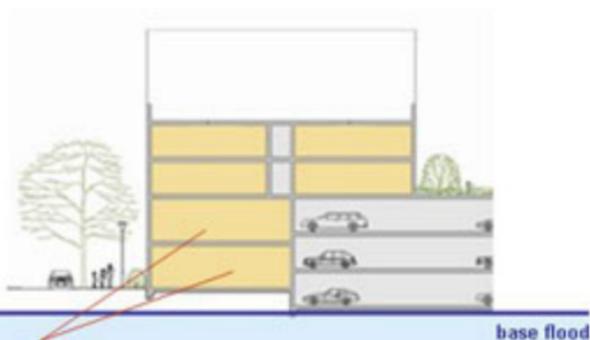




## Accommodate Off-Street Parking

### Flood zone and streetscape

- Goal: conceal parking from pedestrian environment where possible
- Generally screen parking from pedestrian view
- On larger sites, may be possible to “wrap” parking with use – locate parking within core of block



**parking “wrapped” by use**

(e.g., residential, commercial or light industrial)



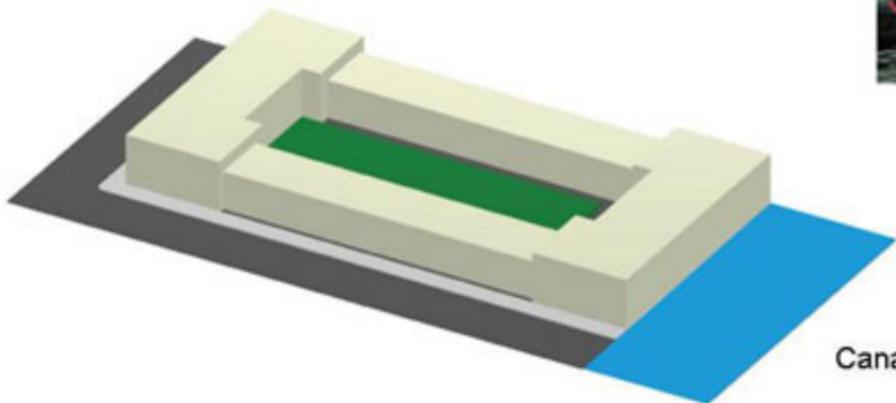


## Residential / Mixed Use: Goals





# Address Balance Among Priorities

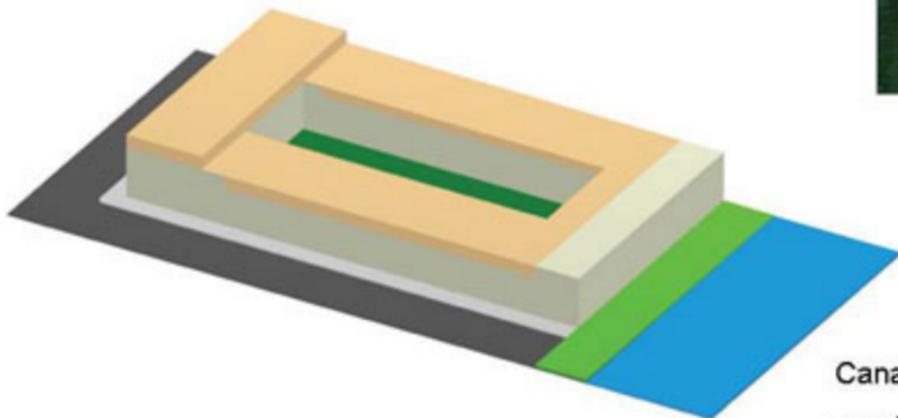


Canal block at typical height/density





## Address Balance Among Priorities

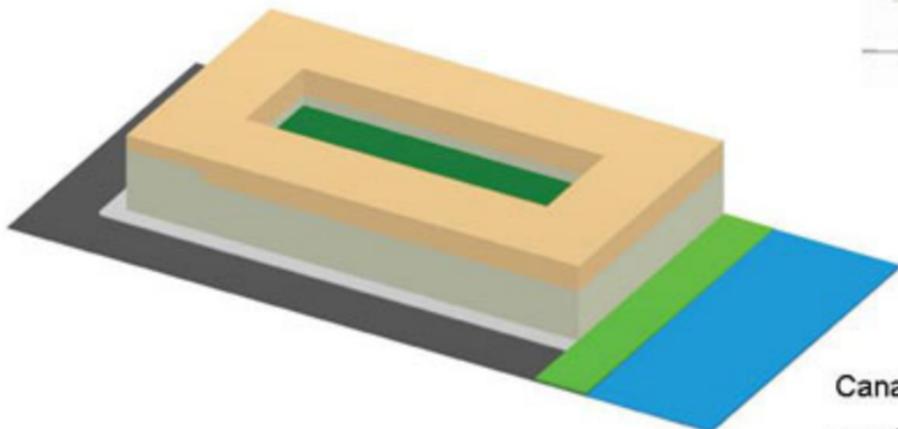


Canal block at typical height/density  
+ public access to canal's edge





# Address Balance Among Priorities

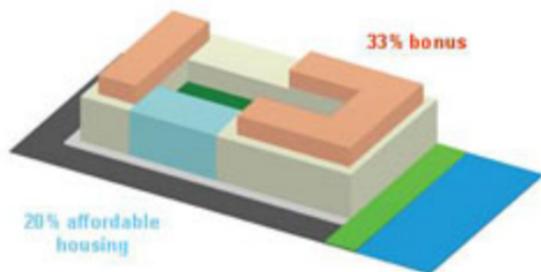
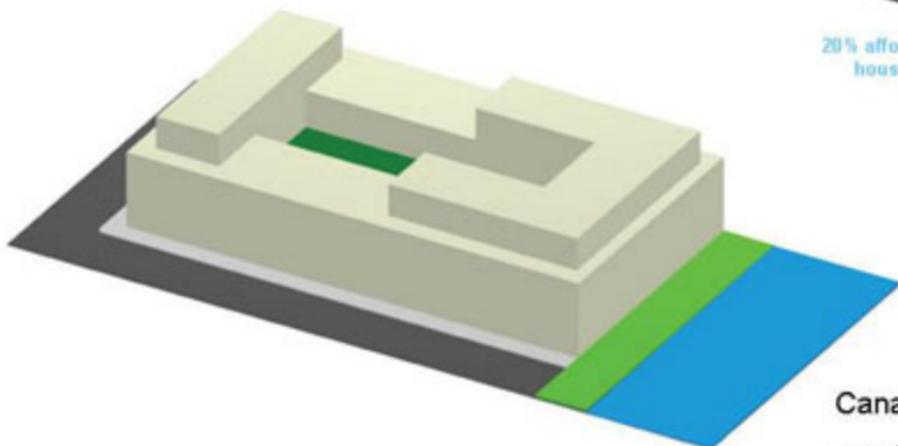


- Canal block at typical height/density
- + public access to canal's edge
- + off-street parking in flood zone, with "wrap"





# Address Balance Among Priorities



- Canal block at typical height/density
- + public access to canal's edge
- + off-street parking in flood zone, with "wrap"
- + Inclusionary Housing program





## Residential / Mixed Use: Goals

**Achieve public access at canal's edge**

**Consider neighborhood context and character**

**Encourage mix of uses where appropriate**

**Promote affordable housing opportunities**

**Support environmental improvement**

**Accommodate off-street parking in new buildings**

- Adapt waterfront zoning regulations to apply to Gowanus Canal
- Define character of revitalized canal
- Achieve harmonious relationship with adjacent areas
- Incorporate a variety of building forms
- Extend commercial corridors
- Mix of residential, community facility, commercial, light industrial where appropriate
- Private sites: Inclusionary Housing program where sufficient density is possible
- City-owned site: Public Place
- Use redevelopment as a tool for cleaning up canal area
- Coordinate with other environmental efforts
- Address physical and regulatory constraints
- Conceal parking from street where possible

