

Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework

Overview



Project Update: March 11, 2009

A public scoping meeting was held on the proposed Gowanus Rezoning and Related Actions on Tuesday March 10, 2009, at the Brooklyn Borough Hall, 209 Joralemon Street, Brooklyn, New York 11201.

Project Update: May 29, 2008

A draft zoning proposal for the Gowanus Canal area was presented at a public meeting on May 29, 2008.



The Gowanus Canal

Overview

The Department of City Planning has initiated a study of the Gowanus Canal corridor to establish a comprehensive framework to guide future land use changes. This effort responds to requests from the local community to establish a dialogue on land use issues in the Gowanus Canal area.

The Gowanus Canal is a 1.5 mile-long man-made waterway extending northward from the Gowanus Bay. It lies within a valley, with the blocks along its eastern and western banks rising in grade to the adjacent neighborhoods of Carroll Gardens and Park Slope. The canal was created in the late 1860s as an industrial waterway for barged materials. In the following decades, surrounding land was used for a wide range of industrial activities including heavy manufacturing, as well as the storage and distribution of materials used to build and maintain the adjacent residential neighborhoods.



Locator Map

In recent decades, the nature of activity along the canal has changed. Portions of the land along the canal are still strongly industrial in character. However, manufacturing and industrial uses are no longer present in other locations, leaving substantial parcels of vacant and underutilized land. Other areas near the canal contain a mix of uses, including housing and community facilities. A concentration of existing, non-conforming residential uses exists on the east side of the canal near Carroll Street. Commercial and light industrial activities are scattered through much of the area, with the greatest concentration in the area south of Third Street. As continuing efforts to improve water

quality in the canal have progressed, notably with the reactivation of the flushing tunnel at the head of the canal in 1999, area residents have expressed interest in creating opportunities for future recreation and open space at its edge.

The framework for the Gowanus Canal area identified areas where future housing or mixed use may be appropriate, as well as areas to be maintained for continued industrial and commercial use. It also proposed key urban design principles for areas where such land use changes could occur. The Department has since translated the parameters of the framework into a draft zoning proposal.



Land Use Map - [View a larger image.](#)



Commercial loft space on Union Street at Nevins Street



Mixed-use block – Carroll Street between Nevins and Third Avenue



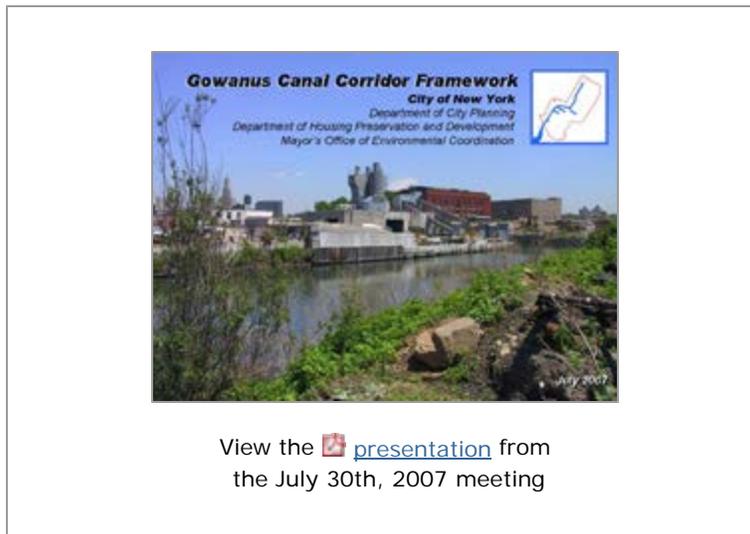
Mix of uses on Butler Street east of Bond Street

Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework

Land Use Framework

Proposed Framework - July 2007

Beginning in January 2007, the Department conducted a series of outreach meetings, hosted by Brooklyn Community Board 6, to inform the creation of a planning framework for the Gowanus Canal Corridor. On July 30, the Department held its fourth meeting in this series to present its proposed framework. The framework is a set of guiding principles relating to issues including use, density, bulk, and waterfront access, intended to provide standards for formulating and evaluating proposals for future land use changes.



What is the Framework?

The framework is a set of guiding principles that provides standards for formulating and evaluating proposals for future land use changes. These principles were shaped by shared goals, the opportunities and challenges of achieving these goals, and an understanding of the entire corridor.

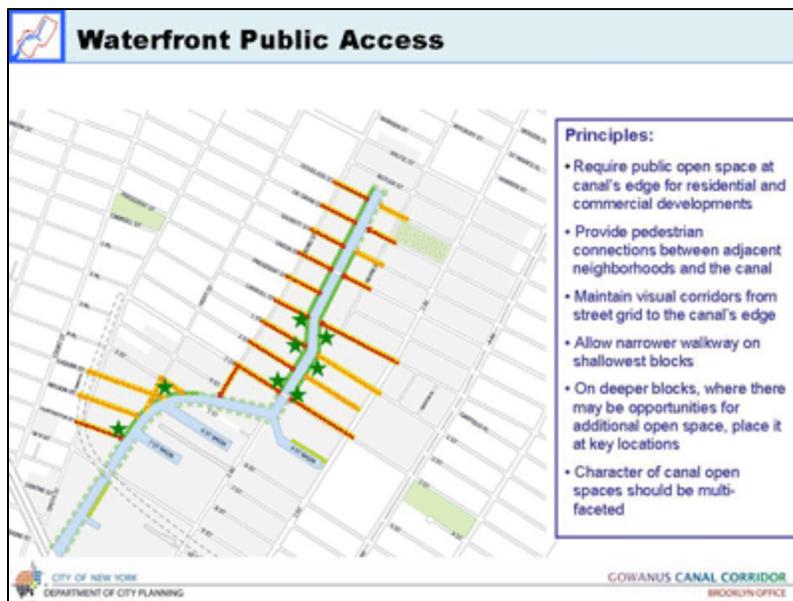
The meeting focused on identifying parameters for density, height and waterfront access that balance a variety of goals in areas where mixed use would be appropriate. These parameters could help to encourage cleanup and redevelopment of sites while balancing among a variety of goals, including:

- Establishing limits on building heights, especially near existing low-scale housing
- Ensuring harmonious relationship between waterfront open space and new buildings
- Including opportunities for application of Inclusionary Housing program



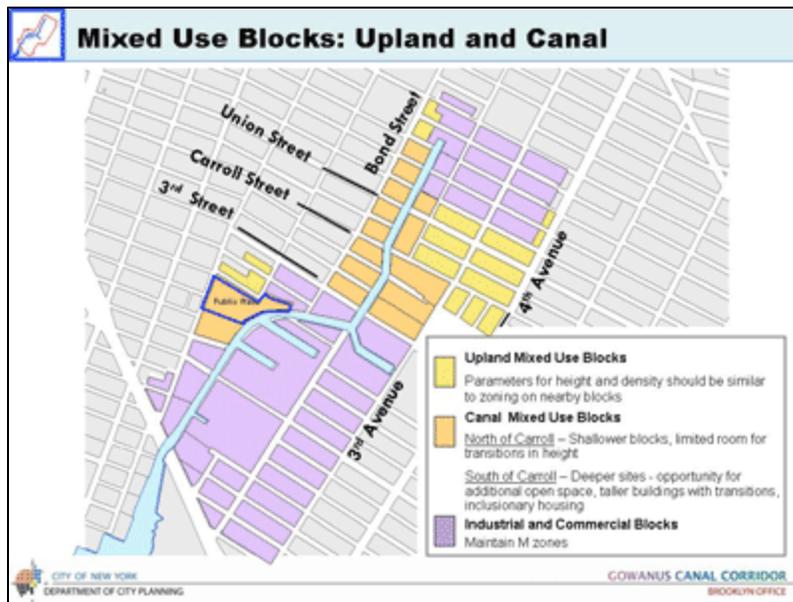
Waterfront Public Access

The prospect of redevelopment of sites on the canal creates an opportunity to achieve public access at the canal's edge. The framework identifies parameters for the creation of public open space at the canal's edge in conjunction with residential and commercial developments. The framework suggests providing pedestrian connections between adjacent neighborhoods and the canal as well as maintaining visual corridors from the street grid to the canal. The design of waterfront open space should respond to the unique conditions of waterfront sites.



Density and Height

The framework identifies parameters for height and density based on the specific conditions of each block identified as having potential for mixed use. The framework recommends that maximum densities generally be similar to those of nearby zoning districts. On canal blocks, it includes recommendations for varied limits on height to balance the need to address unique site conditions and the range of overall framework goals, including promoting affordable housing opportunities and considering neighborhood context.



Land Use Analysis - January 2007

The initial step of the Department's analysis examined the existing manufacturing zoning districts surrounding the canal within Brooklyn Community District 6. This area is bounded generally by Bond Street to the west, Butler Street to the north, 3rd and 4th Avenues to the east, and Hamilton Avenue to the south. Existing zoning districts in this area include M1, M2, and M3 manufacturing districts.

To the east and west of this area are the primarily residential neighborhoods of Park Slope and Carroll Gardens, respectively. The commercial corridors of 4th Avenue and Smith Street run along or near the boundaries of the area. At the northern edge of the area are the New York City Housing Authority's Wyckoff Gardens and Gowanus Houses developments. To the south, beyond the southern boundary of Community District 6, is the Hamilton Avenue Bridge and the Gowanus Expressway, and industrial areas flanking the Gowanus Creek.



Existing Zoning Map
[View larger image](#)

In order to identify areas where future housing or mixed use might be appropriate, as well as areas to be maintained for continued industrial and commercial use, the Department analyzed existing land use and recent trends within the manufacturing districts surrounding the Gowanus Canal. Based on this analysis, the area was divided into five subareas (A through E), within which different land use patterns exist.

The proposed land use framework, introduced at the January 25th, 2007 public meeting, identifies portions of the study area within which new residential or mixed use may be appropriate, as well as areas proposed to be maintained primarily for continued industrial and commercial activity. These recommendations also take into consideration the relationship between these areas and the adjacent neighborhoods, which are home to thriving residential communities and active retail corridors including 4th Avenue and Smith Street.



Proposed Land Use Framework
[View larger image](#)

Public Place

Located at Smith Street and 5th Street is a largely vacant City-owned parcel which is designated Public Place. Formerly the site of a coal gasification facility, this site requires substantial environmental remediation. Keyspan, as successor to the former owner of the site, has entered into a voluntary

cleanup agreement with the NYS DEC, which in January released a proposed remedy for achieving the cleanup of the site. This site, the only major piece of City-owned land in this area, offers a unique opportunity to pursue redevelopment options that address directly land use concerns such as affordable housing and public open space. HPD is currently leading an effort to coordinate redevelopment planning with the environmental remediation of this site.



View of Public Place Site

Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework Draft Zoning Proposal

Building upon the framework developed in a series of meetings with Community Board 6 over the past year, the Department of City Planning recently shared with Community Board 6 its draft rezoning proposal for 25 blocks along the Gowanus Canal. The proposal seeks to address many of the shared goals outlined during the development of the framework, including:

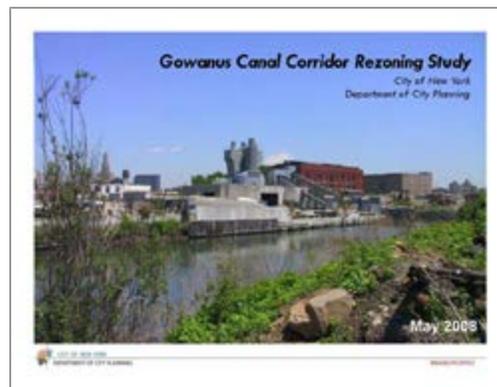
- Allowing for a mix of uses, including residential, in certain areas currently zoned for manufacturing uses - framework subareas A and B
- Maintaining areas for continued industrial as well as commercial uses
- Creating opportunities for public access at the canal's edge
- Enlivening the streetscape with pedestrian-friendly, active ground-floor uses
- Promoting affordable housing through the City's Inclusionary Housing Program
- Establishing limits for height and density that consider neighborhood context as well as other shared goals



[View a map of the draft zoning proposal.](#)

The draft zoning proposal for the area identifies maximum floor area ratios, limits on height and setback, and other zoning provisions for this 25-block area.

Click here to see [the Department's draft zoning proposal.](#)



[View the slideshow presentation outlining the Department's draft zoning proposal](#)

Background

In response to requests from the local community to establish a dialogue on land use issues in the Gowanus Canal area, the Department began working with the community in 2007 to develop a framework to guide future land use changes.

The framework identified shared goals and priorities such as permitting a mix of uses and providing public access at the edge of the Gowanus Canal, as well as urban design guidelines for density and building height.

The framework initially considered close to 60 blocks zoned for manufacturing along the Gowanus Canal. Analysis of existing land use and business activity revealed that the majority of these blocks include a mix of active industrial, manufacturing, commercial and arts-related uses. In subareas C and E, and the portion of subarea D east of Hoyt Street on [the study subarea map](#), maintenance of the current

manufacturing zoning is appropriate to support the continuation of these uses. Other areas including approximately 25 blocks in subareas A and B are characterized by lower levels of industrial and commercial activity, higher levels of vacancy and underutilization, and existing pockets of residential uses. The Department proposes rezoning these areas to permit a mix of uses, including residential, commercial, retail, light industrial, community facility and artist spaces.



[View a map of the Gowanus Canal Corridor Study Area.](#)



Manufacturing and industrial uses on Second Ave



Mix of residential and commercial uses on Third Ave

Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework

Public Outreach

Public outreach and involvement are important components of the Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework study. The Department is conducting a series of meetings, hosted by Brooklyn Community Board 6, to engage community members in a meaningful dialogue that will help shape the Department's recommendations to guide future land use changes in the Gowanus Canal area.

Public Meetings

Beginning on January 25, 2007, the Department held a series of meetings to discuss the proposed land use framework. On May 29, 2008, the Department presented a draft rezoning proposal for the area based on this framework. Future public meetings will be held to further discuss and build consensus on the rezoning proposal for the Gowanus Canal Corridor. The dates and locations of those meetings will be posted on this web site.

Public Meeting	
May 29, 2008 [Already Held]	Draft Rezoning Proposal PS 32 (317 Hoyt Street) More information...
July 30, 2007 [Already Held]	Planning Framework: Guiding Principles 250 Baltic Street, Auditorium More information...
May 31, 2007 [Already Held]	Shaping a planning framework: Opportunities and challenges P.S. 32 (317 Hoyt Street) More information...
April 19, 2007 [Already Held]	Goals For Mixed Use / Residential Areas More information...
January 25, 2007 [Already Held]	Proposed Land Use Framework St. Mary's Residence, 41 First Street Learn more about the proposed Land Use Framework discussed at this meeting

Public Review

Over the course of the next several months, the Department will work with the community to continue to refine the draft rezoning proposal. Implementation of this proposal will require preparation of a draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) to study the potential impacts the rezoning would have on the neighborhood. A draft scope of work which details the topics to be addressed in the DEIS, the methods of analysis to be used, and possible alternatives to mitigate or eliminate potential significant impacts of the proposed action will be prepared. A public scoping meeting will be held to

solicit comments on the draft scope from all affected and interested parties. Upon completion of the draft EIS the official public review process ([ULURP](#)) begins with certification and referral of the land use applications.

Interagency Coordination

The Department is coordinating its efforts with those of other City and State agencies working in this area, including the Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD), the Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination (OEC), the Mayor's Office of Industrial and Manufacturing Businesses, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and others.

For additional information, contact the Department of City Planning's Brooklyn Borough Office at (718) 780-8280.

Related Notes

-  Items accompanied by this symbol require the [free Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).
- Brief explanations of terms in *green italics* can be viewed by [visiting glossary page](#). Words and phrases followed by an asterisk (*) are defined terms in the Zoning Resolution, primarily in Section 12-10. Consult the Zoning Resolution for the official and legally binding definitions of these words and phrases.