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Memorandum

Date: 10/3/12
Project Name: Gowanus BOA Nomination
Project No.: 12007.10
Subject: 9/27 Stakeholder Workshop Summary



14 stakeholders and two Community Board members attended the September 27th stakeholder group meeting, as well as representatives of the project team and the Department of City Planning. On the whole, attendees represented a range of interests in Gowanus, from business advocacy, to environmental concerns, to quality-of-life proponents.

Upon entering the space, participants were invited to share knowledge of properties in the area through a wall exercise. A brief presentation introduced them to the BOA program, the project and the study areas, and provided an overview of existing land-use and zoning in the area. Three interactive exercises asked attendees to map important features of the study areas, confirm and add to project goals, and help target necessary changes by identifying local strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats.

Exercise 1: Mapping Gowanus

In four small groups, participants were asked to annotate maps of the study areas with information relevant to the area's potential for business investment and retention.

- Map annotations clearly and consistently identified MGP sites, CSOs, areas of flooding, and high traffic corridors.
- Some maps also identified road conditions, unusual clusters of activity (athletics/physical culture in the north area, entertainment/restaurant in the south area), transit stops/routes, planned EPA cleanup areas, bulkheads in need of repair, and current barge users of the canal.
- One table expressed interest in potentially expanding the study area boundaries to include the west side of the canal to Bond Street and to connect the north and south areas in a corridor centered on the canal between Bond and 2nd Avenue, particularly to include the Power Station/Gowanus Village site.
- The area bordered by 2nd Avenue, 7th Street, 3rd Avenue, and 15th Street was identified by multiple tables as an area of concern that houses both grandfathered

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residential properties and a concentration of manufacturing/contracting businesses, leading to conflicts of interest and development pressures.

- The Salt Lot in the south area, currently used as a DSNY storage lot and by Gowanus Canal Conservancy as a staging area for various projects including composting, was identified as a good location for continued public access and education.
- Several tables commented that the infilled section of the 4th Street turning basin is not considered part of the Superfund, and is therefore a significant brownfield site.
- Representatives of business and environmental interests both expressed interest in developing targeted flood mitigation projects and green landscaping that can address storm-water issues, respect business's needs for loading and parking areas, and mitigate conflicts between pedestrian and truck traffic.
- Several specific remediation ideas included: adjusting M zoning regulations and/or offering incentives to allow greater FAR in M zones; relocating a sanitation garage at 11th Street and 2nd Avenue, and replacing it with stormwater infrastructure and open space; encouraging transportation use of the canal as a way to mitigate truck traffic.

Exercise 2: Project Goals

Participants were invited to comment on a list of goals extracted from the project Work Plan and RFP (see attached).

- None of the participants objected to any of the stated project goals.
- The majority of suggestions spoke to preservation of the character of Gowanus, with infrastructure improvements, preservation of the architecture, and incentivizing commercial/industrial development.
- One proffered goal, to provide community facilities like daycare or schools, illustrated the competing demands of serving the area's residents and families.

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Exercise 3: SWOT

Participants brainstormed a list of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in Gowanus in relation to the project goals.

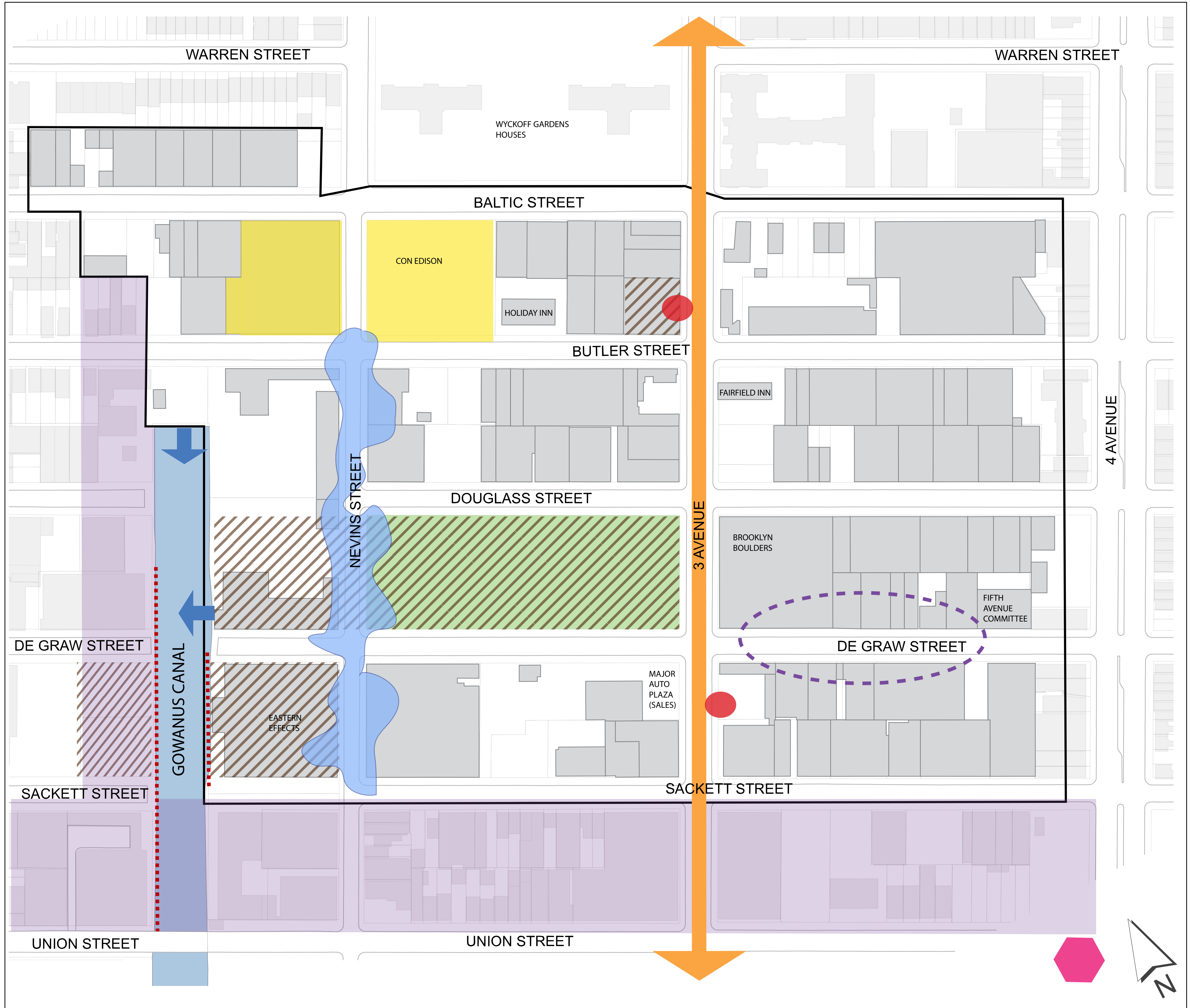
- Location-specific factors of Gowanus were seen equally as strengths and weaknesses
- Policy, zoning, and a lack of comprehensive planning were seen as the largest threats to successful retention and development of businesses
- Participants thought the study areas provided opportunities for environmental improvements and policy changes

General Take-Aways

- The pressure of residential conversion manifested in multiple ways during the meeting: in sincerely offered advice that the area should include school or daycare facilities; in adamant pleas that the M-zones not be “strangled” (i.e. cut off from transportation routes, parking areas, or opportunities to grow) by preferences of residential neighbors; in complaints about lack of zoning enforcement, unpredictability of rents from building to building; and in concern that open/green spaces entice a greater flow of pedestrians into the area, introducing conflicts with industrial uses/needs.
- Prominent challenges to businesses include poor telecommunications, recurrent flooding, lack of parking, unpredictable space costs, and growth restrictions arising from lack of space/zoning restrictions.
- There is interest from all quarters in pursuing green infrastructure solutions as a way to mitigate flooding, but it was generally noted that implementation requires carefully considering the potential for increasing recreational/industrial conflicts.
- Ideas about how the canal should be used are potentially conflicting, including both industrial goods transportation (barging) and public waterfront access (esplanades, recreational boating). Waterfront development requirements triggered by building use can prove prohibitive to business investment.

As part of the stakeholder workshop, participants annotated study area maps with features that were relevant to potential business development. After the workshop, those maps were collected and their annotations aggregated into summaries. The map below represents the data from the four maps annotated by workshop participants. Notes to the right are intended to clarify and describe the diagrammed features.

SUMMARY MAP: NORTH AREA

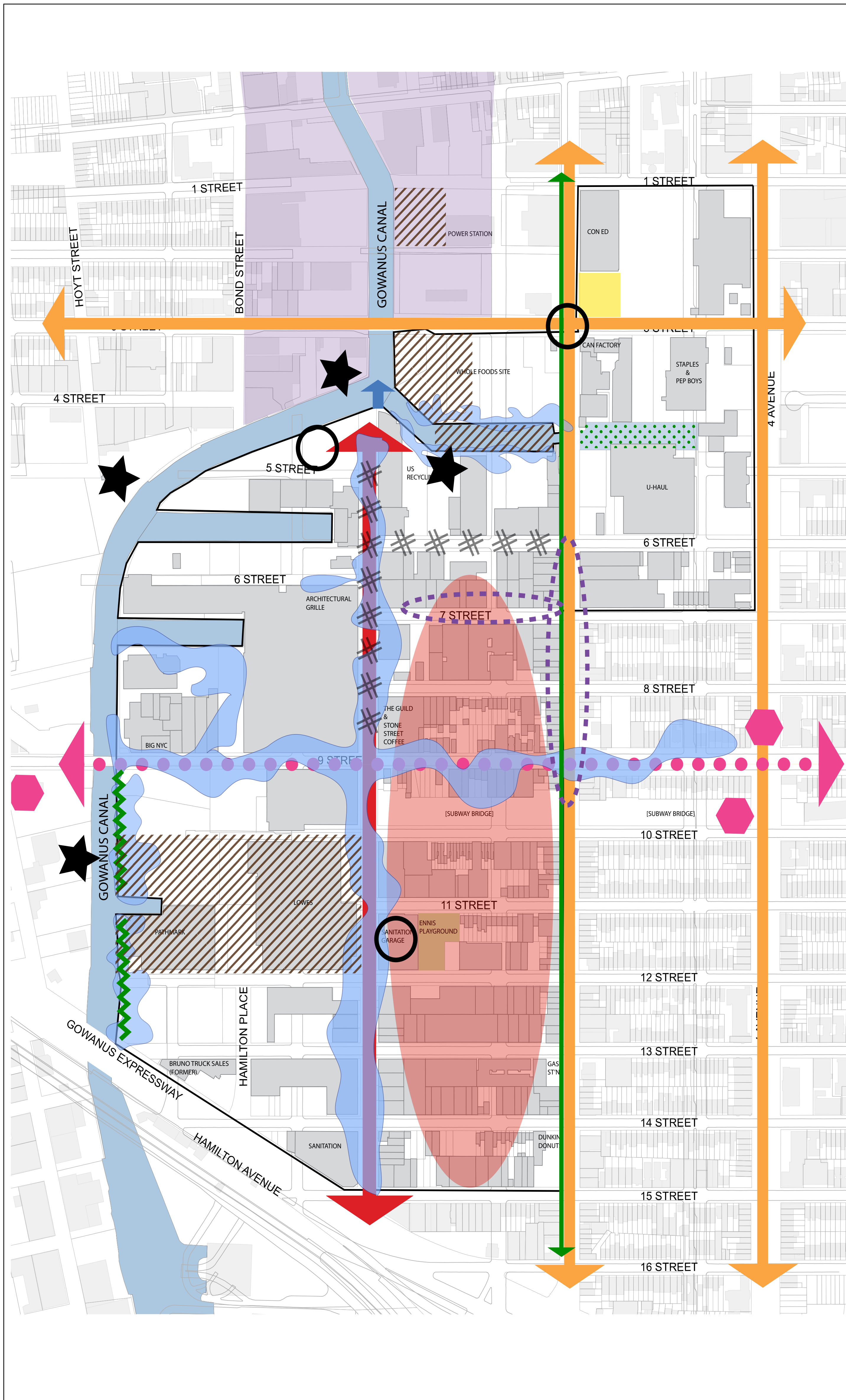


SUMMARY NOTES:

- Heavy car traffic on 3rd Ave, particularly headed north in the AM
- Real estate potential at Butler and Nevins
- Flooding on Nevins
- Bulkhead issues on both sides of canal
- Desire to expand study areas (purple shading)
- Unique athletics cluster along De Graw Street
- Noxious smells and possible contamination reported from building at corner of Butler and 3rd (possibly mis-identified? note indicates former silk-screen use - could be building at Douglass & 3rd)
- Sex worker activity along 3rd Ave at Butler and De Graw/Sackett
- CSOs indicated in two locations on canal
- Subway stop at Union & 4th

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SUMMARY MAP: SOUTH AREA



SUMMARY NOTES:

- Car traffic on 3rd Street, 3rd & 4th Aves
- Intersection of 3rd and 3rd noted as busy, scary, and fast
- Real estate interest in Con Ed vacant site across from Can Factory
- Interest in expanding study area north along both sides of the canal
- Barging sites noted (black stars)
- 4th Ave turning basin noted as polluted and not part of the Superfund study
- Filled-in end of 4th Ave basin elicited interest as possible open water, possible retention feature, etc.
- Truck route along 2nd Avenue
- Flooding along 2nd Avenue and 9th streets, and in vicinity of 9th Street bridge and 4th Street basin
- Road condition poor on 2nd avenue north of 9th Street and 6th street west of 3rd Ave
- Entertainment/restaurant district along 7th Street and 3rd Avenue from 6th to 10th Streets
- Bike lane on 3rd presents conflict with truck and car traffic
- Transit access is primarily on 9th street, with subways at Smith Street and 4th Ave, as well as busses
- Sanitation garage at 11th and 2nd noted as being under-capacity and presenting a smell and safety conflict with neighboring park
- Area between 2nd and 3rd Avenues and 7th and 10th Streets noted as a "delicate balance" area of businesses (perceived as a design district) and residences
- Green space along Lowes/Pathmark parking lots is both unknown (noted as "should be green") and fragmented.
- Salt lot indicated as community access point/education location

Gowanus BOA: Goals and SWOT

Participants were asked to review the goals that have been guiding the project, and to add their own.

Existing Project Goals (no objections from stakeholders):

- Aid in the redevelopment of specific areas surrounding the Gowanus Canal
- Re-use and redevelop properties along the canal for
 - o Industrial use
 - o Economic development
 - o Environmental education
- Acknowledge the canal area's significance in a broader local and regional context
- Coordinate and connect recommendations with existing plans
- Prioritize appropriate development:
 - o Industrial and commercial retention
 - o Manufacturers of building materials for construction
 - o Green technology design and manufacturing
 - o Incubator spaces for green industries
 - o Adaptive re-use of building stock
 - o Opportunities for environmental education, open space, and waterfront access

Suggested by Stakeholders:

- Preserve architectural/industrial resources
- Incentives for commercial/industrial owners & businesses
- Community facilities (worker support services: daycare, schools)
- Infrastructure Improvements
 - o Marine bulkhead
 - o Sewers (flooding)
 - o Telecommunications
 - o Maintain navigable canal
 - o Parking & transit access

After identifying a range of possible goals for the project, participants identified strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats in the study area that might help or hinder achievement of those goals: SWOT items were later sorted into four categories: social, locational, environmental, and policy.

	Strengths	Weaknesses	Opportunities	Threats
Social	Local work force Involved community Entrepreneurial community	Public safety (isolated at night) Illegal dumping	Impetus for change/transition Entrepreneurial, organic growth Local workforce (development)	Residential Conversion Political climate
Locational	Access to Manhattan Working canal Affordable space Minimal residential conflicts	Telecommunications undependable Flooding Lack of parking Traffic		
Environmental	Push to improve water quality		Improve water quality Superfund designation Create green, high-performing open space Climate change/sea level rise Re-use/remediation of contaminated canal sediments	Superfund/brownfields Climate change/sea level rise
Policy	Industrial uses allowed as-of-right	Lack of comprehensive plan	Reconceptualize mixed-use as vertical/per building Rethink M zoning to increase FAR	Uncertainty about zoning Lack of zoning enforcement Unstable/uneven property values arising from zoning uncertainty Poor past planning Spot zoning Lack of comprehensive plan