

Gowanus BOA Nomination Study: Frequently Asked Questions

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Q: Who chose the study area? Why is it in two sections?

The study area was selected by Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6. It includes portions of Gowanus that were identified during the land use studies associated with the Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework as predominantly industrial in nature. The Gowanus Canal Corridor Framework, developed in 2007 by the Department of City Planning in coordination with local stakeholders, analyzed on-the-ground land uses and identified five sub-areas in Gowanus based on observed conditions. Sub-areas C and E were identified as predominantly industrial in nature. While these two areas are not contiguous, Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6 chose to limit the study area for this BOA Nomination to these areas to focus on the environmental and economic issues relating to bolstering and facilitating local industrial and commercial activities.

Q: Why is this project focused on industrial retention and redevelopment?

Sub-areas C and E are slated to retain their current manufacturing zoning, which is M2-1 and M1-2. These zoning classifications encourage light and medium industrial use respectively and disallow new residences. Because rezoning of the areas is not anticipated, and because the areas have historically been home to industrial uses that contribute to the employment base, physical character, and cultural identity of Gowanus, the study plans to focus on redevelopment strategies that work within the existing framework.

Q: What is “as-of-right” development?

An as-of-right development complies with all applicable zoning regulations and does not require any discretionary action by the City Planning Commission or Board of Standards and Appeals. Most developments and enlargements in the city are as-of-right.

Q: Wouldn't increased industrial presence in the area contribute to increased pollution of the canal?

A business's contribution to localized pollution depends on its practices. The overwhelming majority of the most persistent and noxious contaminants found in the canal are “legacy contaminants” which resulted from discontinued industrial businesses and processes. New businesses locating in the Gowanus are required to follow current environmental regulations. The study will also be investigating local use and promotion of green best practices among existing businesses.

To further ensure that the Nomination process affords due consideration to the incipient cleanup of the canal, we have invited the EPA's coordinator for the Superfund site to participate in our stakeholder group. Many of the stakeholders

also participate on the Superfund's Community Advisory Group (CAG), as do members of the consultant team.

Q: What is a brownfield?

Brownfields are abandoned or underused properties, including but not limited to industrial and commercial facilities, where redevelopment or expansion may be complicated by possible environmental contamination (real or perceived). A brownfield site is defined in New York State Environmental Conservation law as "...any real property, the redevelopment or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a contaminant." Specific examples of sites which could qualify include: abandoned gas stations, old factory and mill complexes and foundries.

Q: If this is a Brownfield Opportunity Area project, why isn't the focus on environmental remediation?

The goal of the BOA program is to provide resources to New York communities to establish effective revitalization strategies that return dormant and blighted parcels into productive, catalytic properties. The Department of State works in partnership with local communities and organizations to develop and realize a community vision for redevelopment and community revitalization.

As part of the process, the study team will identify properties suspected to be brownfields. This identification will primarily rely on the wealth of information available regarding contamination on both waterside and upland parcels in the sub-areas. Identified brownfield sites that are important to the community's redevelopment strategy may be determined to be eligible for funding or technical assistance programs to facilitate cleanup in the third stage of the BOA process. More detailed information about the steps of the BOA process can be found at <http://www.dos.ny.gov/communitieswaterfronts/brownFieldOpp/boaprosteps.html>

Q: This project claims to be community-based. How is the community involved?

Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6 has contracted a team of consultants to conduct research and analysis, support the work of the community, and create written recommendations and the final Nomination product, but major decisions will vest with local stakeholders.

The community will be involved in multiple ways:

- We are conducting a survey of local industrial business owners about company information, locational decisions, company trends, and sustainable business practices, to get a better picture of the way industrial businesses in the area function, and how well they are supported. Due to time constraints, not all businesses will be surveyed, but we are aiming for a sample that represents the variety of businesses in the area.

- We are interviewing owners of selected non-industrial businesses about similar topics, to better understand their reasons for locating in Gowanus.
- We are convening a stakeholder group consisting of leaders of non-profit and community organizations whose target area of concern includes the study areas. The list of groups invited to participate in the stakeholder group is available in this FAQ. The stakeholder group will be contributing to the study's vision and goals, deepening the consultant team's understanding of the area, and identifying strategic redevelopment sites, priorities, and policies.
- We will be holding two public presentations, open to all interested individuals, at regularly scheduled committee meetings of Brooklyn Community Board 6's Economic/Waterfront/Community Development Committee. Dates, times, locations, and background materials will be available on this website.
- We are accepting comments, questions, and suggestions via planner@BrooklynCB6.org

Q: My organization is not part of the stakeholder group, but I think it should be. Whom can I speak to?

You should contact Melissa Umberger, Urban Planner at Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6 at (718) 643-3027, extension 203.

Q: Who is on the Steering Committee?

The Steering Committee meets every few months, to guide the project's progress and weigh in on major questions. It comprises representatives from:

- NYS Department of State Division of Coastal Resources
- NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
- NYC Department of City Planning
- Mayor's Office of Environmental Remediation
- NYC Economic Development Corporation
- Friends and Residents of Greater Gowanus (FROGG)
- Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation (GCCDC)
- Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6
- Brooklyn Community Board 6

Q: Who is in the Stakeholder Group?

The stakeholder group is an invited group of representatives from local community organizations, city agencies, and utilities that own land in the sub-areas. Much of its work will be done in small groups. In order to ensure that no viewpoint is overrepresented and that there is time and space for everyone to be heard, each invited group is limited to two representatives.

The following groups were invited to join the Stakeholder Group prior to its first meeting, in September 2012:

Fifth Avenue Committee
Friends and Residents of the Greater Gowanus (FROGG)
Friends of Douglass/Greene Park
Gowanus Alliance
Gowanus Canal Community Development Corporation (GCCDC)
Gowanus By Design
Gowanus Canal Conservancy
Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club
Gowanus Houses Tenants' Association
Gowanus Institute
South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation (SBLDC)
Urban Divers Estuary Conservancy
Wyckoff Gardens Houses Tenants' Association
NYC Department of Environmental Protection
NYC Department of Parks and Recreation
NYC Department of Transportation
US Environmental Protection Agency
Con Edison (local land owner)
National Grid (local land owner)
Verizon (local land owner)

Q: Why is the stakeholder group by invitation only? Why aren't individuals invited? My organization should be involved – whom can I speak to?

Development in the Gowanus inspires passionate opinion in many residents of neighboring areas, and we welcome input from interested individuals via phone calls, this website, and public presentations. The stakeholder group is designed to be a working group closely focused on supporting as-of-right redevelopment in the manufacturing-zoned sub-areas. We have identified indigenous groups with clearly articulated interests in the study areas. If you are part of an organization that you feel should be part of the stakeholder group, please contact Melissa Umberger, Urban Planner at Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6 at (718) 643-3027, extension 203.

Q: Who are the consultants working on the project?

The consultant team consists of four organizations.

Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects and Planners is the lead consultant on the team and manages the overall organization and progress of the project. In addition, Starr Whitehouse will lead the planning work, environmental and urban design analyses, and public outreach. The firm has extensive experience with public outreach and planning in New York City, including managing public

outreach for the City's Long Term Control Plan for Combined Sewage Overflows, coordination of site design and drainage issues for the Gowanus Green project at the Public Place site, and leading NYCEDC's planning effort for environmental mitigation of the BQE between Atlantic and Hamilton Avenues.

Appleseed, Inc. is the lead economic consultant on the team. From its founding in 1993, the firm has been deeply involved in projects and policies affecting New York City's economy. Appleseed has worked in neighborhoods throughout the five boroughs on diverse economic and planning projects, from apparel manufacturing in the Garment District, maritime trade, and recycling, to an analysis of the network of industrial businesses in the Brownfield Opportunity Area at Newtown Creek.

Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation (SBIDC) is a nonprofit economic development organization that provides advocacy and services to help businesses in the Sunset Park, Red Hook and Gowanus neighborhoods grow and create employment opportunities for local residents. Around since 1978, SBIDC has extensive experience in studying and directly supporting industrial businesses throughout these three Brooklyn neighborhoods. The organization is leading the business survey and providing valuable connections to the local Gowanus business community.

The Pratt Center for Community Development is a nonprofit organization that works for a more just, equitable, and sustainable city for all New Yorkers, by empowering communities to plan for and realize their futures. Pratt Center has a long history of engaging in community outreach and community-led participatory planning in the area. In addition, the organization has worked with local industrial and manufacturing businesses for over two decades providing a combination of business services, research, and advocacy support on behalf of the sector. Pratt Center has been involved in brownfield projects throughout New York City.

The team's work is supported by planning fellows at Brooklyn Community Board 6.

Q: I own an industrial business in one of the sub-areas and I want to take part in the survey. Whom should I contact?

You should contract Mark Genua at South Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation at (718) 965-3100, extension 111.

Q: I have information that I think you should have. Whom should I contact?

You should contact Melon Wedick at Starr Whitehouse at (212) 487-3272.

Q: The Nomination Study is the second stage of the BOA process; was a Pre-Nomination completed for this area? Are there other stages?

The three stages of the BOA process are as follows:

- 1) Pre-Nomination Study: The Pre-Nomination Study consists of a preliminary analysis so communities can gain a basic assessment and understanding about existing conditions, brownfields and the area's potential for revitalization. This step sets the stage for detailed work.
- 2) Nomination Study: The Nomination consists of an in-depth assessment and evaluation of existing conditions, including an economic and market trends analysis, and assets to determine the best reuse potential for strategic sites and other revitalization opportunities.
- 3) Implementation Strategy: The Implementation Strategy funds a range of techniques and actions to achieve revitalization objectives by advancing redevelopment on strategic sites, improving supporting infrastructure, and overall neighborhood revitalization through investment, provision for public amenities and improving environmental quality.

The Gowanus BOA did not undergo a formal Pre-Nomination Study. Due to the wealth of information available about the area, the State directed us to proceed directly with a Step 2 – Nomination Study project.

Q: What is the outcome of this process?

The Nomination will result in a report with the following sections:

Section 1 - Description of the Project and Boundary

- Lead Project Sponsors
- Project Overview and Description
- Community Vision, Goals and Objectives
- Project Boundary Description and Justification

Section 2 - Public Participation Plan and Techniques to Enlist Partners

- Public Participation Plan
- Techniques to Enlist Partners

Section 3 - Inventory and Analysis of the Proposed Brownfield Opportunity Area

- Community and Regional Setting
- Inventory and Analysis
- Existing Land Use, Zoning, and Economic Districts/Designations
 - Brownfield Sites
 - Strategic Sites
 - Land Ownership
 - Building Inventory
 - Historic or Archeologically Significant Areas
 - Transportation Systems
 - Infrastructure
 - Natural Resources and Environmental Features
 - Economic and Market Trend Analysis

- Analysis, Findings and Recommendations of the BOA and Strategic Sites

More detailed information about the BOA process can be found at <http://www.dos.ny.gov/communitieswaterfronts/brownFieldOpp/boaprogsteps.html>

Q: What happens with the results of this study?

Once complete, the Nomination will be circulated for review and comment by area residents and agencies.

Upon receipt and acceptance of a satisfactory Nomination, the participant (Friends of Brooklyn Community Board 6) may apply to advance to Step 3 and complete an Implementation Strategy and/or Site Assessments. At the conclusion of the Nomination, the participant is encouraged to meet with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and State Division of Coastal Resources to discuss the status of strategic sites and to consider which sites would be most competitive for site assessment funding.

More detailed information about the steps of the BOA process can be found at <http://www.dos.ny.gov/communitieswaterfronts/brownFieldOpp/boaprogsteps.html>