Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The City’s recently announced draft rezoning plan for Gowanus has spurred a wide range of reactions and emotions. We fear towering buildings, accelerated gentrification, and a loss of neighborhood identity. At the same time, we are hopeful for long-term investments in the canal’s health, new public space, and an accessible waterfront.

These conflicts and contradictions are daunting for our neighborhood — a diverse, overlapping and interdependent community of manufacturers, brownstone dwellers, environmentalists, public housing residents, landowners, canoeists, teachers, students and more. We bring different experiences, different voices and different perspectives to this moment.

But our common ground is clear: We all love Gowanus. It is our home — where we live, where we work, and where we play.

We will need this common ground to find our way through the rezoning process and, more importantly, through the larger challenges that lie ahead; a city that is increasingly dense; a climate that is increasingly warm; and urban infrastructure that is increasingly vulnerable, stretched and exposed.

The road ahead will require honesty and openness. It will also require collaboration and compromise. We at Gowanus Canal Conservancy look forward to listening to you, talking with you and working with you to make the right things happen. Today; and for the future of our neighborhood.

Ben Jones
Board Chair, 2015-2018
2018 was another busy year in Gowanus! As the neighborhood around us changes rapidly, we have deepened and strengthened our core programming to engage stakeholders in understanding, stewarding, and advocating for our unique watershed. I am continually amazed by the passion and commitment of our neighbors – a few of my favorite 2018 memories...

Gowanus Green Team apprentices stretched their design muscles facilitating a Lowlands Master Plan charrette for their elders...

The evolution of street tree beds under the care of the Gowanus Tree Network Ambassadors...

Both the extreme rain and the extremely high community spirits at EXPO Gowanus in Thomas Greene Park...

The passion of the Gowanus Blue Schools students as they presented green infrastructure ideas – now that they understand that we adults haven’t actually figured it all out...

Hours of discussion and consensus building about the future of our neighborhood with our fellow members of the Gowanus Neighborhood Coalition for Justice...

Thank you all for your support and engagement over the past year. We at Gowanus Canal Conservancy look forward to many more!

Andrea Parker
Executive Director
The future of Gowanus is entering a critical phase with the confluence of several long-standing efforts: the federally mandated cleanup under the Canal’s Superfund status; related cleanups at the state and city levels; and land use changes that will cue both private development and City investments in the public realm. Through the Gowanus Lowlands Master Plan, we seek to ensure the community has a key role in shaping a watershed that is accessible, active, and clean for all.

The Gowanus Lowlands planning process builds upon Bridging Gowanus and the NYC City Planning PLACES study. During 2018, we held 9 community outreach workshops with the help of partner organizations. Thematic workshops focused on the arts; design and planning; recreation and access; environmental justice; and youth, education, and community. Area-specific workshops were organized in north Gowanus, Park Slope, and lower Gowanus.

The Gowanus Lowlands Master Plan is an evolving document that coordinates ongoing plans with community priorities for open space. This plan is a tool to advocate for and facilitate resilient, vibrant and equitable design across numerous projects by public and private entities.
VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

Our volunteers are essential to our work throughout the neighborhood. From our neighbors who drop in for a one-day project to our dedicated Volunteer Committee that meets monthly to plan initiatives and projects, we couldn’t function without them.

2,298 HOURS VOLUNTEERED
726 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
2,850 LBS TRASH COLLECTED
17 PUBLIC + 9 CORPORATE EVENTS
18 MEMBERS + 10 CHAIRS 5 SUB-COMMITTEES

In 2018, Gowanus Canal Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy piloted the Gowanus Tree Network: neighbors working together to build a healthy urban forest. Tree Ambassadors enroll in free Citizen Pruner training, organize tree stewardship with their neighbors, and enter the Greenest Block in Brooklyn contest.

We engaged 4 blocks and 10 volunteers in 8 events to install native plants and tree guards, expand tree beds, and amend tree beds with compost and mulch.

Funded by the 2018 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Urban and Community Forestry Grants Program (Round 14).

GOWANUS TREE NETWORK

Volunteers weed the Salt Lot Berm Garden, a native plant garden along the banks of the Canal.

Gowanus Tree Ambassadors lead their neighbors in street tree stewardship on 4th Avenue and 8th Street.

Volunteers weed the Salt Lot Berm Garden, a native plant garden along the banks of the Canal.
Through service-learning, citizen science, walking tours, and STEM curriculum, we teach students and community members of all ages about the complex ecological, historical, and social issues of Gowanus so that they can become better advocates for a sustainable future.

EDUCATION PROGRAMS BY THE NUMBERS

2,108 people learned about CSO
583 students engaged in walking tours
173 students engaged in service-learning
373 students engaged in citizen science
150 students designed green infrastructure

Citizen Science Educator Emma McCauley introducing students from Ditmas Junior High School 62 to the Gowanus Watershed.

GOWANUS BLUE SCHOOLS

In 2018, over 150 middle and high school students from M.S. 88 Peter Rouget, M.S. 447 The Math & Science Exploratory School, and Brooklyn Collaborative Studies investigated combined sewage overflow through the Gowanus Blue Schools program. Students developed math, science, and design skills related to spatial thinking, calculating stormwater runoff, research, technical drawings, building models, team collaboration, and public presentations by designing comprehensive green infrastructure proposals for their school campuses and exploring environmental justice topics.

At the end of the school year, students presented their final projects at the Gowanus Blue Schools Design Competition to a panel of reviewers who are experts on green infrastructure design, environmental justice, and environmental engineering, as well as a public audience of parents, local organizations, and community members.
As an activist who sought to connect people with their environment, Massiel understood the importance of humans and each other, in her honor.

Massiel impacted all of us with her positive energy, strong will, and generous spirit. She was tenacious, smart, and full of life, 1992 - 2018

In Memoriam Massiel Rueda 1992 - 2018
Massiel impacted all of us with her positive energy, strong will, and generous spirit. She was tenacious, smart, and full of life, with a warm manner that made her exceptionally easy to talk to.
As an activist who sought to connect people with their environment, Massiel understood the importance of humans and equity in this work. We will strive to pursue all that Massiel cared about and rise to the task of furthering justice while caring for the environment, and each other, in her honor.
GOWANUS SPRING GALA

Honorees
Honorable Kathryn Garcia
NYC Department of Sanitation
Commissioner

Stephen Giumenta
Vice President & Design Engineer, Architectural Grille

Kate Orff
Founding Principal, SCAPE
Associate Professor, Columbia University

Clean & Green Sponsors
Brown and Caldwell
Heidi & Sam Dolnick
Richard & Diane Greene

STEM Gowanus Sponsors
The Aquayo Team at HPDM
The Brooklyn Home Company
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Heidi & Sam Dolnick
Richard & Diane Greene

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Wendy Andringa
Nancy Belkov

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Jay Walder
Susan Cummings-Walder
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Marios Diaz Gonzalez & Madeley Rodriguez
Andrew Kimball & Sarah Williams
John Lavelle
Virginia McNeney
Lisa Melmed
Wendy Moore
Andrew Simons

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Nancy Belkov & Jeffrey Parker
Winfield Clifford
Ron & Daniel Faris
Anselm Fusco
Rose Gasner & Larry Chertoff
Lisa Goldfarb & Jack Dehovitz

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The Nature Conservancy
The PepsiCo Foundation
The Rockefeller Foundation

Agencies
NYC Civic Corps
NYC Dept. of Education
NYC Dept. of Environmental Protection
NYC Dept. of Sanitation
NYC Soil & Water Conservation District
NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
US Environmental Protection Agency
US Forest Service, US Dept. of Agriculture

In-Kind
ARUP
Baba’s Panigies
Brooklyn Brewery
Fifth Avenue Committee
Five Borough Brewing Co.
Folksbier Brauerei
Gotham Greens
Grand Army
Grimm Artisanal Ales
Greenbelt Native Plant Center
JS Gallery
Langan Engineering
Moore Borthers Wine
Other Half Brewing
SCAPE
Six Point Brewery
South Brooklyn Local Development Corporation
Strong Rope Brewery
The V Spot
Threes Brewing
Trader Joe’s
Wartega
Whole Foods

Individuals Over $250
Wendy Andringa
John Craver & Lindsay Karich
Amy & Peter Davis
John Grimes
Anisa Javeri
Hans Hesselein
Anselm Fusco
Rose Gasner & Larry Chertoff
Lisa Goldfarb & Jack Dehovitz
Richard Kampf
Patrick Karlshof
Rosanne Pugliese & Bill Dudine
Jevon Roush & Grier Coleman
Eliza Rossman
Nelson & Diana Tebbe
Lee Weiskott
Gena Wirth

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