



Gowanus Canal  
CONSERVANCY

2014



ANNUAL REPORT





# LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear Friends, Partners and Members,

In 2014, what was once on the horizon for Gowanus began to arrive: pilot tests for the EPA Superfund clean-up; the first bioswales for DEP’s Long Term Control Plan; and a wave of new businesses and developments throughout the neighborhood.

Together, these inflection points mark the start of a dramatic transformation of the Gowanus Canal, its Watershed, and the people who live, work and play here. For this reason, the Conservancy spent 2014 focusing on two areas: community programming and community planning.

For programming, we continued to expand and extend core stewardship initiatives like composting, urban forestry and gardening, and also launched STEM Gowanus, a middle school curriculum focused on our neighborhood’s unique environmental challenges. We see these programs— and the wildflower corridors, windrows, and young scientists they produce— as critical anchors for a sustainable Gowanus community in this time of change.

From a planning perspective, we provided leadership in a wide range of forums and projects, including: participating in Councilman Brad Lander’s Bridging Gowanus process; serving as a member of EPA’s Community Advisory Group; and collaborating with DEP on the newly installed 6th Street Green Corridor bioswales. By investing in these partnerships and activities, the Conservancy ensures that the environmental and ecological priorities of the community are front and center in the zoning, infrastructure and clean-up decisions that are underway.

As the speed and scale of change in Gowanus increases, we expect our dual role— in programming and in planning— to diversify and deepen. We look forward to working with you on both of these fronts, and to building on our accomplishments from this past year as we move closer to an open, clean and alive Gowanus neighborhood.

Ben Jones  
Board Chair

# MISSION + VISION



We envision the evolution of an **Open, Clean and Alive Gowanus Canal and Watershed** with accessible, connective open space; clean water, soil and air; and vibrant ecological, business and cultural activity.



# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

We firmly believe that engaging the community through our Volunteer, Education, Design Advocacy and Capital Programs is key to a healthy Gowanus evolution. Over the past year, we expanded and linked our programming to strengthen outcomes and leverage synergies. Our Volunteer Stewardship programs continue to grow in terms of partnerships and geographical scale. Our Education programs address a spectrum of ages and proficiencies, to engage across a wide range of stakeholders.

We are also developing programs that stack on each other - for instance, our newly constructed 6th Street Green Corridor is now the testing ground for our Bioswale Maintenance Curriculum. Similarly, our first annual Gowanus Expo, in the Spring of 2015, will facilitate a layered community conversation by showcasing investigations and interventions from local schools, our volunteer coordinators, and area professionals.



## VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

We empower community members to implement positive change through hands-on interventions.

## EDUCATION

We teach community members of all ages about the complex environmental, social and political issues of the Gowanus so that they can become better advocates for change.

## CAPITAL PROJECTS

We build innovative landscapes that test best practices and improve the resiliency and sustainability of the Watershed.

## DESIGN ADVOCACY

We facilitate community conversations about the future of Canal and Watershed design and planning.



## Garden & Open Space Stewardship

We host and facilitate community-driven stewardship of parks and open space around the Canal and throughout the Watershed. In 2014, we tended GCC installed gardens on 3rd Ave & 3rd St, 2nd Ave, Ennis Park and the Salt Lot, as well as Joseph Mayrose Park and Carroll Park. Volunteers installed 882 perennials and shrubs spread across these gardens. Our nursery was vibrant with native plant life - volunteers propagated 1,470 plants during workshops and volunteer days, and we held our first annual Fall Plant Sale. We will host additional propagation workshops in 2015, in addition to expanding interventions in Slope Park, Carroll Park, and Long Bank Park.

2014 Partners: [Friends of Carroll Park](#), [Gowanus Alliance](#), [MS88](#), [NYC Wildflower Week](#), [Prospect Park Alliance](#), [PS295](#)



## Urban Forestry

Our Urban Forestry Program aims to map, monitor and steward all of the street trees throughout the Gowanus Watershed. In 2014, in partnership with numerous neighborhood organizations, the Urban Forestry Team stewarded 625 trees in a 78-block radius, distributed over 2,000 pounds of compost, and started logging valuable tree care data to OpenTreeMap ([opentreemap.org/gowanustrees/map](http://opentreemap.org/gowanustrees/map)). In 2015, as a partner of NYC Department of Parks & Recreation Tree Census, we will expand our inventory to include additional blocks north and south of the Canal. Using this inventory, we will create a Street Tree Management Plan that will incorporate stewardship and monitoring to enhance our urban canopy.

2014 Partners: [Forth on Fourth Avenue](#), [Park Slope Civic Council](#), [TreeKIT](#), [the 8th St Block Association](#), and [9th Street residents \(between 2nd and 3rd Ave\)](#)



## iComposting Gowanus!

Our Composting program reuses local organic waste as a resource to replenish the degraded urban soils of the Gowanus. In 2014, over the course of 8 windrow builds and 32 windrow turns, compost volunteers processed roughly 97 tons of food-scrap and yard waste. The compost was incorporated into potting soil for our nursery, added to street trees and gardens, and donated to community gardens and parks in the neighborhood. We plan to increase access and distribution of GCC compost throughout the Watershed, as well as build a state-of-the-art compost facility with city allocated funding.

2014 Partners: [Arborpolitan](#), [Brooklyn Woods](#), [BuildItGreen!](#), [Groundworks Inc](#), [GrowNYC](#), [NYC Parks](#), [Project LeafDrop](#), [Urban Arborists](#)

# VOLUNTEER STEWARDSHIP

In the fifth year of our highly successful Clean & Green Volunteer Program, we partnered with a host of neighborhood organizations, businesses and corporations to make the Canal and its Watershed more ecologically vibrant through community stewardship.

1,315 volunteers  
3,685 hours of service  
625 trees stewarded  
882 plants installed  
23,000 pounds  
compost distributed



## Wildflower Corridor

In partnership with Future Green Studio and NYC Wildflower Week, we built and installed 24 wildflower planters along the 9th St corridor between 2nd and 5th Aves, creating a dynamic connective path of native plants and pollinator habitats. We will expand the installation in the spring of 2015.  
2014 Partners: Allied Building, BuildItGreen!NYC, Future Green Studio, Greenbelt Native Plant Center, The Home Depot, NYC Wildflower Week, North Creek Nurseries, Quadrozzi, Scout + Gather



## Floating Garden

In early Fall, volunteers launched the annual Floating Garden, a bamboo tetrahedron that supports grasses, perennials, and vines. Dozens of recycled water bottles and three reclaimed buoys keep the structure afloat. Over the year, installed plants such as blue flag iris and smooth cord grass will filter and clean the surrounding water. Future projects will experiment with bulkhead and canal edge modules.  
2014 Partners: Balmori Associates, Greenbelt Native Plant Center



## Plein Air on the Canal

Art is an essential component of the Gowanus character. On September 27, 2014, for our first Plein Air event, over 40 artists came out to the Canal to capture our unique landscape. Over 100 impressions were created over the 7 hour period, sketching from the vantage point of the Salt Lot, the Whole Foods promenade, the 2nd Street boat dock, and the Carroll Street Bridge. We plan to host this event annually to celebrate the Canal's fascinating character and document its evolution.  
2014 Partners: Gowanus Swim Society, NYC Urban Sketchers, Oil Painters of America

2014 support generously provided by: City Council Members Brad Lander, Stephen Levin and Carlos Menchaca, Build It Green! NYC, CitiBank, Con Edison, FedEx, Forex Capital Markets (FXCM), Future Green Studio, Greenlab Studio, Home Depot, National Grid, Patagonia, Pleasant Run Nursery, Rockefeller Foundation, Whole Foods Market

# THE GOWANUS WATERSHED URBAN ECOLOGY LECTURE SERIES



## PUBLIC EDUCATION

### Urban Ecology Lecture Series

Our Lecture Series explores cutting-edge urban ecological ideas and projects. In 2014, 179 people attended the series of 6 lectures:

- Civic Science and the Gowanus Canal / Moderator: Gillian Baine (NYC Urban Field Station), Panelist: Liz Barry (Public Laboratory); Ellen Jorgensen (Genspace); Jeffrey Laut (Brooklyn Atlantis); Phil Silva (TreeKIT)
- What is the Best Proxy for the Common Good? / Natalie Jeremijenko (NYU)
- Ecological Effects of Estuarine Modification in Urban Areas / Elisa Bone (Columbia University)
- The Role of Honeybees and Other Urban Pollinators in Urban Areas / Shelly Fank, Tim O’Neal, Kimberly Rubin and Olivia Weber (BoroughBees)
- NYC as an Evolutionary Force / Jason Munshi-South (Fordham University)
- The Rise and Fall of Gowanus / Joseph Alexiou

The 2015 Spring series “Living Things in an Urban Ecosystem” will feature panel discussions examining the dynamics of ecosystem layers, including marine life, invasive plants, and pollinators.

2014 Partners: [BuildItGreen!NYC](#), [Brooklyn Brewery](#), [FIND Furnishings](#), [NYC Honey Week](#), [US Forest Service - NYC Urban Field Station](#)

## VOLUNTEER TRAINING

### Citizen Pruner Certification

In partnership with TreesNY, our Citizen Pruner Classes prepare volunteers to care for trees in the Gowanus Watershed. In 2014, the GCC helped train and certify 26 new volunteers as Citizen Pruners through 10 hours of instruction and field work. Volunteers learned tree identification, how to detect problems and proper pruning techniques. Many newly licensed pruners joined the Conservancy’s tree stewardship team.

2014 Partners: [Fifth Avenue Committee](#), [TreesNY](#)



### Bioswale Maintenance Certification

In preparation for DEP’s construction of numerous bioswales in the Gowanus Watershed, we are developing a maintenance training program to steward these curbside gardens. Volunteers will take a 6-week course over the Spring and Fall to learn how bioswales work, specific techniques for their care, and how to identify their plants and weeds. The Gowanus pilot course will begin in spring 2015. In future years, TreesNY will offer the course across NYC.

2014 Partners: [NYC Dept of Environmental Protection](#), [TreesNY](#), [TreeKit](#)





# EDUCATION

Gowanus Education Programs serve to inform, engage and train educators, students, community members and volunteers. Our education resources equip the wider community to steward and advocate for an Open, Clean and Alive Gowanus Canal and Watershed.

1,143 youth  
1,322 adults  
3,621 hours of education  
830 hours of service

## SCHOOL PROGRAMS

### STEM Gowanus

We nurture stewards through science-based education in the urban outdoor classroom. Over the past year, the GCC teamed up with teachers at PS 32, MS 51 and MS 88 and the Urban Memory Project to write a curriculum focused on the urban ecosystem of the Gowanus Canal. The STEM Gowanus curriculum includes over 24 lessons in history, geography, water quality, soil quality and plant and animal life. Lessons are flexible for grades 5-8 and include supportive maps and illustrations. Partner teachers received professional development in the curriculum topics. In 2015, they will test this curriculum in the classroom and the field, culminating in student developed design interventions to address environmental issues. After this pilot, the curriculum will be available to all local schools, and the GCC will offer professional development to teachers in the Gowanus Watershed.

2014 Partners: NYC Dept of Environmental Protection, NYC Dept of Parks - Greenbelt Native Plant Center, NYC Soil and Water Conservation District, Urban Memory Project, and numerous professionals who volunteered their time.



### School Clean & Greens and Canal Walking Tours

Our school work days and tours introduce students to the Canal's ecosystem challenges and demonstrate the positive impacts they can make. In 2014, 532 students from local schools and organizations worked 830 hours building compost and propagating plants to enrich gardens in the Gowanus Watershed. 612 students participated in a canal walking tour or school presentation, which focus on the Canal's history, environmental challenges and interventions. We will continue to offer these immersive learning experiences to Watershed schools in 2015.

2014 Partners: [Complete list of participating schools at end of report](#)



2014 support generously provided by: Ben Herzog Architect, Captain Planet Foundation, Con Edison, Google, National Grid, New York State Dept of Environmental Conservation, NYC Dept of Education, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Tiger Baron Foundation, Verizon, USDA Forest Service

# CAPITAL PROJECTS

Building cutting-edge, high performance landscapes is integral to developing our vision of an Open, Clean and Alive Canal and Watershed. These projects test ideas and develop best practices for design, construction and maintenance.



## 6th Street Green Corridor

In 2014, we completed construction of 11 highperformance bioswales between 2nd and 4th Aves, in the heart of industrial Gowanus. These installations were designed to test various configurations, including alternative inlet, connection and overflow typologies. In partnership with Drexel University, we will be monitoring the performance of the installation for three years via sampling and state of the art sensors. The information gained from this pilot installation will inform the design of bioswales across the region.  
2014 Partners: [eDesign Dynamics](#), [NYC Dept of Environmental Protection](#), [Perfetto Contracting Company](#), [US Environmental Protection Agency](#)



## Sponge Park

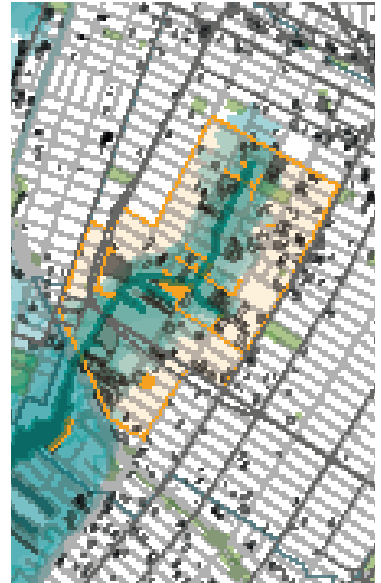
In 2008, we worked with [dlandstudio](#) to develop the Sponge Park master plan, which proposed a vibrant park network around the Canal to create public space and retain stormwater. The vision is now becoming a reality, as ground broke for the first section of Sponge Park, where West 2nd St meets the Canal. This set of street-end green infrastructure will hold and treat runoff in an innovative series of catchments, reducing combined sewer overflows into the Canal. After installation, the GCC will maintain the park.  
2014 Partners: [dlandstudio](#), [NYC Dept of Environmental Protection](#)



# DESIGN ADVOCACY

In the next few years, the EPA will begin a multi-year Superfund clean-up to dredge toxic sludge from the bottom of our Canal, and the City of New York will upgrade neighborhood sewer infrastructure. As a cleaner Canal creates desirable waterfront property, the Gowanus neighborhood is an increasingly attractive area for development—at the same time, rising sea levels and increased storm events threaten existing businesses and future growth. As the neighborhood changes, how do we ensure that a cleaner Canal equals a stronger Gowanus?

We envision a Canal ecosystem that celebrates our character—concrete plants, salt marshes and long-term businesses and residents—while setting an example for future changes. The Canal can anchor a public space network that connects the neighborhood aesthetically, economically and ecologically. Realizing this vision will require knitting a set of disparate developments into a cohesive, connective and healthy neighborhood. Over the past year, we have been investigating how to facilitate a framework to manage this change.



## Design Guidelines

This past Summer, as a Design Trust finalist, we began planning for the development of community Design Principles and Guidelines to coordinate the approach and methodology to the coming physical changes. In the coming months, we will work with local stakeholders and residents to solicit input and ideas about the future of our neighborhood with the goal of developing a cohesive vision and path towards an open, clean and alive Gowanus Canal and Watershed.



## Design Summit

This past Fall, we hosted our first Design Summit to foster dialogue, collaboration and innovation among design-oriented professionals who are invested in the rapidly evolving Gowanus. A diverse and distinguished set of speakers presented built and speculative work on the Canal and related waterways, promoting a lively conversation about resilient infrastructure, master planning, and community engagement. Next year's Summit will broaden the audience and dig into the details of the Design Guidelines. 2014 Partners: [Bridging Gowanus](#), [Bronx River Alliance](#), [dlandstudios](#), [Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance](#), [SCAPE](#), [SIMS Recycling](#), [Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects](#), [The Municipal Art Society for New York](#), [The Trust for Public Land](#), [TreeKIT](#), [WeDesign](#), [Weintraub Diaz](#)

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Natasia Sidarta,  
Program Manager



LaToya Anderson,  
Education & Compost  
Coordinator



Nya Wilson,  
Communications &  
Garden Coordinator



Hans Hesselein,  
Executive Director  
*(through 7/14)*



Jason Diaz,  
Communications &  
Education Coordinator  
*(through 7/14)*



Sarah Snow,  
Compost & Volunteer  
Coordinator  
*(through 7/14)*

## Interns & Fellows

Summer 2014  
Emily Vaughn  
Leonardo Jerome  
Madeleine King  
Ruby Walsh  
Siavonh Lenaburg  
Yesmin Alexandra  
Vega Valdivieso

Fall 2014  
Belineda Marcelin  
Finn O'Driscoll  
Isabel Shriver  
John Bonina  
Lucy Royte  
Sarah Petrick  
Wisnerlande Pierre

# PEOPLE



## Volunteer Coordinators

Aaron Nesser, Composter  
Adam Lopez, Electrician  
Adriana Jovanovic, Gardener  
Alexandria Donati, Landscape Designer  
Allison Hamilton, Bookkeeper  
Andrea Solk, Designer  
Andrew Simons, Graphic Designer  
Angela Pasquale, Architect  
Annie Bergelin, Landscape Designer  
Barbara Blechman, Gardener  
Ben Jones, Restaurateur  
Bob Lesko, Tree Steward,  
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Christian Jungers, Master Composter  
Christine Rung, Landscape Designer  
Claire Snavely, Composter  
Eleanor Cooney, Marketing  
Emily Vaughn, Gardener & Designer  
Eric Olsen, Landscape Designer  
Erik Martig, Compost Operations  
Development & Landscape Architect  
Erin Johnson, Sustainable Community  
Development Student  
Eymund Diegel, Environmental Planner  
& Historian

Frederick Phillips, Composter  
Gena Wirth, Landscape Designer  
Greg Thornberg, Tree Steward  
Hannah Edmunds, Gardener &  
ISA Arborist, Garden Stewardship  
Subcommittee Co-Chair  
Hillary Cohen, Landscape Architect,  
Bricolage Subcommittee Co-Chair  
Ian Quate, Landscape Designer  
James Riso, Economic and Financial  
Consulting Associate  
Jason Mortara, Artist & Carpenter,  
Construction Subcommittee Chair  
Jennifer Roberts, Artist & Tree Steward  
Jessica Dalrymple, Gardener & Artist  
John Craver, Architect, Compost  
Subcommittee Co-Chair  
John Donnelly, Landscape Architect  
Jon Chesley, Architect  
Joy Wang, Designer  
Julia Fuchs, Carpenter  
Julia Price, Landscape Designer  
Kim Ruben, Beekeeper  
Leah Wener, Landscape Designer  
Leila Mougouli Bakhtiari, Forester, Urban  
Forestry Co-Chair

Lindsay Karich, Composter  
Liz Barry, Gowanus Low-Altitude Mapper  
Markley Boyer, Composter  
Michelle Kamerath, Gardener  
Oliver Diller, Gardener  
Olivia Weber, Beekeeper  
Omar Clarke, Environmental  
Science Educator  
Peter Tzannes, Composter  
Phil Silva, Environmental Planner  
& Educator  
Prospero Herrera, Urban Planner  
Ruth Hofheimer, Artist  
Ruth Nervig, Gardener  
Ryan Olds, Gardener & Composter  
Sam Silver, Tech Wizard  
Samantha Yost, Environmental Science  
Sarah Sasser, Gardener  
Suzanne Lipton, Environmental Science &  
Policy, Compost Subcommittee Co-Chair  
Suzanne Smith, Composter &  
Tree Steward  
Taylor Knoblock, Composter  
Wendy Andringa, Landscape Architect,  
Bricolage Subcommittee Co-Chair

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Anselm Fusco  
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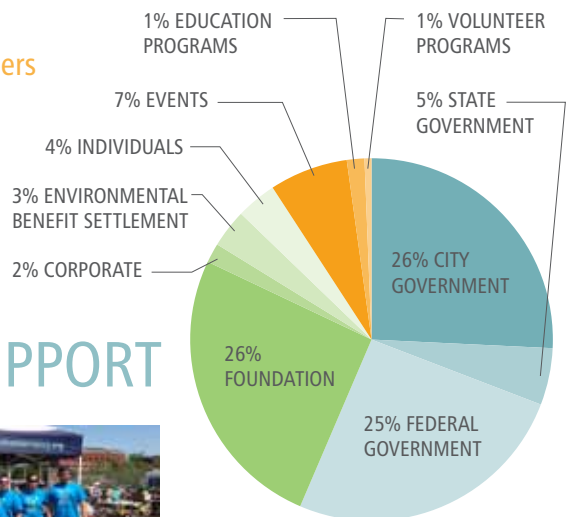
Brad Lander  
City Council Member, District 39  
Stephen Levin  
City Council Member, District 33  
Carlos Menchaca  
City Council Member, District 38  
Nydia Velázquez  
US Congresswoman



## Supporting Agencies

NYC Civic Corps  
NYC Dept of Education  
NYC Dept of Environmental Protection  
NYC Dept of Sanitation  
NYC Dept Parks and Recreation  
NYC DPR - Greenbelt Native Plant Center  
NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation  
NYC Water & Soil Conservation District  
US Dept of Agriculture, US Forest Service  
US Environmental Protection Agency  
US Forest Service, NYC Urban Field Station

# 2014 SUPPORT



# PARTNERS



## Local Partners

8th Street Block Association  
Allied  
The American Legion  
Arborpolitan  
Balmori Associates  
BoroughBees  
Bridging Gowanus  
Bronx River Alliance  
Build it Green! NYC  
Citizens Committee for New York City  
Detective Joseph Mayrose Community Garden  
dlandstudios  
Fifth Avenue Committee  
Film Biz Recycling  
FIND Furnishings  
Forth on Fourth Avenue  
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Genspace  
Gowanus Arts  
Gowanus Alliance  
Gowanus Dredgers Canoe Club  
Gowanus Swim Society  
Greenlab Studio  
GrowNYC  
Home Depot  
ioby  
Metropolitan Waterfront Alliance  
MillionTreesNYC  
Mississippi Consortium for Intl. Development

The Municipal Art Society for New York  
NEIWPC  
New York Cares  
New York Restoration Project  
North Creek Nurseries  
NY ASLA  
NYC Honey Week  
NYC Urban Sketchers  
NYC Wildflower Week  
Oil Painters of America  
Open House New York Inc.  
Park Slope Civic Council  
Prospect Park Alliance  
Prospect Park Zoo  
Public Laboratory  
Ray Smith Studio  
Riverkeeper  
SCAPE  
Scout & Gather  
SIMS Recycling  
Starr Whitehouse Landscape Architects  
The Trust for Public Land  
Threes Brewing  
TreeKIT  
Trees New York  
Trilox  
Urban Arborists  
The VSpot  
WeDesign  
Weintraub Diaz  
Working Harbor Committee  
Youth in Planning, APA

## K-12 Partners

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Brooklyn Friends School  
Brooklyn New School  
Brooklyn Technical School Key Club  
Brooklyn Technical School Red Cross Club  
Brooklyn Urban Garden School (BUGS)  
CAMBA, Inc. and PS 139  
Expanded Horizons - The Henry Street Settlement  
Girl Scout Council of Greater New York  
Hannah Senesh Community Day School  
International School of Brooklyn  
IS 295  
Launch Expeditionary Learning Charter School  
MS 447  
MS 51  
MS 88  
One to World  
Packer Collegiate Institute  
Packer Parent Association Green Committee  
Parents and Teachers of PS29, Inc.  
PS 32  
PS 372  
PS 58 PTA  
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