2017

GOWANUS CANAL CONSERVANCY
ANNUAL REPORT

10 YRS OPEN | CLEAN | ALIVE

CELEBRATING 10 YEARS
The Gowanus Canal Conservancy is dedicated to facilitating the development of a resilient, vibrant, open space network centered on the Gowanus Canal through activating and empowering community stewardship of the Gowanus Watershed.

**GOWANUS LOWLANDS**

In 2017, we launched a vision for New York City’s next great park: The Gowanus Lowlands. This vision builds on years of close collaboration with the community, landowners, elected officials, and agency representatives to advocate for a cohesive planning for open space and resiliency in a changing neighborhood. GCC partnered with SCAPE Landscape Architecture to develop the blueprint for a master plan, which envisions a network of parks and public spaces centered on the Gowanus Canal and connected to the surrounding watershed. It is a vibrant system that prioritizes access for everyone and shines a light on the Canal’s history and beauty against a backdrop of a healthy environment and safe, connected streets. At the heart of the Gowanus Lowlands vision is a clean and thriving waterway of aquatic habitat, community activity, and bustling industry.
Dear Friends,

In August of 2017, the EPA began dredging the Gowanus Canal in the 4th Street turning basin. Leaning over the rail nearby, I wondered what might be hidden within the layers exhumed—ancient seeds preserved in peat; shards of giant shellfish; perhaps a bullet from the Battle of Brooklyn; and most certainly polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, heavy metals, sewage and various detritus, large and small, piece upon piece. A scoop of history, capturing the radical leaps and transformations that have defined this neighborhood that we share.

Unpacking this history isn’t just an exercise in nostalgia; it is essential to our way forward, and it is the essential work of GOWANUS CANAL CONSERVANCY.

A resilient, vibrant and productive canal can only be achieved by incorporating what we’ve learned from the past and weaving it into the future. While oysters the size of dinner plates may never grace our shores again, there is no doubt that we still need a wild ecosystem to help keep Gowanus’s waters clean. And although barges, loading docks and factories are fewer and farther between, they are still a vital part of our waterfront economy. And for every stream disappeared and salt marsh hardened, there is an imprint for green infrastructure to better protect us and the canal.

This synergy between the past and the future, between learning and imagination, between cataloging and building, is at the center all of our programs: from the Gowanus Lowlands open space master plan, to local middle school STEM education, to Green Team community stewardship.

And all of them are only made possible by the participation and support of all of you. Thank you for digging through the layers with us and creating what’s next.

Best,

Ben Jones
Board Chair
Dear Friends and Neighbors,

Seven years ago, I volunteered at the Salt Lot to build a green roof on a shipping container and was immediately hooked by the collaborative vision of GCC volunteers. In our 10th year, I continue to be amazed by the depth of passion and commitment that our staff, volunteers and partners achieve every day.

In those 10 years, we have built capacity to spearhead a community-based vision for open space in Gowanus, while deepening our core programs to engage volunteers and students in hands-on stewardship and learning.

As we face dramatic neighborhood change, we are working closely with an incredible network of neighborhood partners to ensure this change allows a better Gowanus for all. We have grown both our professional staff and our job training opportunities in order to build an organization that can steward the future while providing opportunities to long-time residents.

And finally, we’re back at the Salt Lot—our stewardship center and outdoor classroom, with expanded gardens, compost and nursery—to hook new young gardeners, activists and volunteers on this special place.

Andrea Parker
Executive Director

Artists, residents, students and local organizations gather at Expo Gowanus, the 3rd annual celebration of the neighborhood, Thomas Greene Park, May 2017.
GREEN TEAM

2017 was the first year of Green Team, a job training program for high school students in the Gowanus Watershed that prepares them for environmental careers and expands green job opportunities in Gowanus. Through field work and class sessions participants gained physical skills, including gardening, infrastructure maintenance, and plant identification; and the gained social skills including teamwork and communication. Green Team apprentices are an integral part of our growing open space maintenance team, providing stewardship for priority areas of young urban forest, bioswales, parks, and public spaces.

CARROLL STREET PLANTERS

We worked with Future Green Studio, NYC Department of Design and Construction, and Council Member Brad Lander’s office to install 12 planters along Carroll Street in October 2017. These gardens are an interim replacement for decades-old street trees that were cut down to build a high-level storm sewer as a part of Department of Environmental Protection efforts to reduce combined sewage overflow in the Gowanus Canal.

GREEN TEAM BY THE NUMBERS

“Together, we are making Gowanus a model for sustainability, resiliency, and environmental justice, following many decades of environmental abuse and neglect. By employing young people from our community, by giving them job-skills for the future, and by making Gowanus greener, we’re investing in what matters.” COUNCIL MEMBER BRAD LANDER

GREEN TEAM

We build community capacity to install and manage gardens, bioswales, street trees, parks, and other public spaces that support a healthy ecosystem.

LANDSCAPE MANAGEMENT

We build community capacity to install and manage gardens, bioswales, street trees, parks, and other public spaces that support a healthy ecosystem.
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

Our amazing base of volunteers is 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.

3,333 HOURS VOLUNTEERED
941 TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
299 LBS TRASH COLLECTED
23 PUBLIC + CORPORATE EVENTS
12 PLANTER BOXES BUILT

THE SALT LOT

This year we returned to the NYC Department of Sanitation Salt Lot, our stewardship base and outdoor classroom.

NATIVE PLANT NURSERY

Volunteers and students help grow a wide array of native plants well-adapted to our urban conditions.

VOLUNTEER COMMITTEE

Our greatest asset is our dedicated Volunteer Committee. Comprised of five subcommittees, they meet every month to strategize and plan programming. This year, Compost and Design-Build collaborated on a compost bike sifter design, Urban Forestry helped plan and initiate a Gowanus Tree Network, Outreach brought hundreds of neighbors to EXPO Gowanus, and Horticulture led volunteers in planting green spaces.

THE SALT LOT

The Salt Lot now hosts an NYC Compost Project facility, thanks to a collaboration between GCC, DSNY, Big Reuse and funding from District 39 participatory budgeting.

BIOBLITZ

During our pilot BioBlitz, 12 taxa specialists set out to record what lives in and around the canal. 241 observations were made and 138 species recorded.
Through service-learning, citizen science, walking tours, and STEM curriculum, we teach students and community members of all ages about the complex ecological and social issues of Gowanus so that they can become better advocates for change.

**Citizen Science**

In 2017, we launched a Citizen Science Program with NYC Department of Education for middle school students. Using the Gowanus Canal as a field site, 100 students from 5 Brooklyn schools learned about Combined Sewage Overflow (CSO) and tested several water quality parameters, including enterococcus, an indicator of raw sewage.

**Education Programs by the Numbers**

- **2,462** People learned about CSO
- **23** Gowanus walking tours
- **17** School service-learning events
- **609** Students engaged in place-based learning
- **100** Students
  - **5** Schools
  - Engaged in citizen science

In 2017, 160 7th grade students participated in a week-long design project that included site visits to Gowanus, stakeholder interviews, in-class design work and guest critics. Students created 3D models, both digital and physical, of Thomas Greene Park and proposed adaptive designs that included education centers to teach others about resiliency. Students presented their projects to address climate change at the local level to nearly 700 people, including elected officials and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Superfund Community Advisory Group.

**STEM Gowanus Curriculum**

Graphics from the curriculum unit on Adaptive Design Solutions to Climate Change. Teachers from MS 88, Brooklyn Urban Garden School, and St. Ann’s School used this unit to support STEM learning and design.

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Agencies
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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

Elected Officials
City Council Member
Brady Lander

City Council Member
Stephen Levin

US Congresswoman
Nydia Velázquez

In-Kind
Brooklyn Brewery
Runner & Stone
Table 87
The V Spot
Whole Foods

Honorees
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Turning the Tide (T3)
Sims Municipal Recycling

Co-Chairs
Marcos Diaz-Gonzalez
Steve Hindy & Ellen Foote
Ted & Anne Wolff

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Honorees

Sponsors

Honorees

Sponsors
In Fiscal Year 2017 (July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017), we grew our core programming and our advocacy capacity to respond to the rapidly changing Gowanus neighborhood. We also diversified our funding sources to lessen reliance on government grants, though city, state and federal agencies remain important funding partners.

REVENUE & SUPPORT

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<tr>
<th>Revenue Source</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Membership</td>
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<td>Individual</td>
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<td>Foundation Support</td>
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<td>Government Grants</td>
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<td>Special Events Income</td>
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<td>Special Events Expenses</td>
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<td>In-Kind Services &amp; Facilities</td>
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<td>Total Revenue &amp; Support</td>
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EXPENSES

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<td>Management &amp; General</td>
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<td>Net Assets at End of Year</td>
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*The financial statements for Gowanus Canal Conservancy as of June 30, 2017 have been audited by an independent, certified public accounting firm. Copies of the complete audited financial statements are available upon request.

The Salt Lot is the eco-industrial heart of the Gowanus Lowlands. This image shows our vision for this peninsula, leveraging and coordinating the construction of a 4 million gallon sewage tank, ongoing salt and compost operations, and restoration projects through the Superfund related Natural Resource Damages Assessment, all overlaid with vibrant and immersive educational and stewardship programming.