What’s going on in Gowanus?

There are lots of different government and community plans, initiatives, and legal processes impacting the neighborhood right now. Other plans, initiatives, and decisions from the past have already shaped the Gowanus we know today.

This chart shows the major efforts since 2003. They are organized into three groups: environmental initiatives (in green), planning initiatives (in purple), and public housing related initiatives (in brown).
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**ENVIRONMENT**

- **Manufactured Gas Plant Clean-Ups (2003–ongoing)**
  - What is it? Three former manufactured gas plants, which are a source of coal tar contamination, surround the canal.
  - Who's in charge? NYC Department of Environmental Conservation, with input from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).
  - How are community members involved? Community outreach is guided by the NYC Department of Environmental Conservation’s public comment and engagement process.

- **Gowanus Green (2007–ongoing)**
  - What is it? A plan to redevelop the Public Place site on the northwest side of the canal.
  - How are community members involved? Community engagement is guided by the NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD).

- **Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) nomination study (2012–2014)**
  - What is it? The New York State Department of State’s BOA Program provides funding and assistance to cities and community-based organizations to improve urban sites that have been contaminated (called “brownfields”).
  - Who is in charge? A resident advisory committee at Wyckoff Gardens.

- **North Park Slope Rezoning (2003–2007)**
  - What is it? In 2003 and 2007, the city changed the zoning along parts of 4th Avenue to allow for bigger residential buildings. Since then, rents in the area have increased dramatically, and many low- and moderate-income renters have been displaced.
  - Who is in charge? NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) under the Bloomberg administration

**PLANNING**

- **Gowanus Neighborhood Conservation Plan (2010–ongoing)**
  - What is it? A rezoning changes the rules about what can be built where, including what buildings can be used for and how big they can be. The Gowanus rezoning is one of several happening across the city as a part of Mayor de Blasio’s plan to build more affordable housing.
  - Who is in charge? NYC Department of City Planning (DCP)

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**PUBLIC HOUSING**

- **NYCHA Gowanus Houses Community Center Renovation (2014–ongoing)**
  - What is it? The Gowanus Houses Community Center has been mostly closed to residents for more than a decade. With FUREE’s organizing support, Council Member Levin raised nearly $500k in 2014 from his Participatory Budgeting process to pay for capital upgrades to re-open the center. In 2017, Mayor de Blasio publicly committed to re-open the center and offer programming for residents of all ages. With the release of the Gowanus draft zoning proposal in February 2019, the City has committed $4 million for adaptive reuse and the community center.
  - Who is in charge? New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA); NYC Department of Youth and Community Development

- **Gowanus Houses RA Leaders, Fifth Avenue Committee, FUREE, and Council Member Levin have convened a working group to reopen the center and offer temporary programming.

- **NYCHA Wyckoff Infill (2015–ongoing)**
  - What is it? As part of a plan to close its budget gap, NYCHA is allowing private developers to build on public housing sites. NYCHA chose Wyckoff Gardens as one of the first sites for a new residential development. A developer was selected in January 2018 but they will have to go through the city’s land use approval process (ULURP) to move ahead. Their proposed building will likely be 16 stories tall and include 500 apartments—50% affordable housing and 50% market-rate. They will pay $37 million to NYCHA, and half of that ($18.5 million) will go to Wyckoff Gardens.
  - Who is in charge? NYCHA

  - What is it? Funding to restore and repair buildings and grounds damaged by Hurricane Sandy, and make the buildings more resilient to future storms.
  - Who is in charge? Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); NYCHA

- **NYCHA PACT/RAD Warren Street Houses (2018–ongoing)**
  - What is it? As of a plan to close its budget gap, NYCHA is participating in HUD’s Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program, which NYCHA calls Permanent Affordability Commitment Together (PACT). RAD/PACT brings private developers into the ownership and management of public housing. In 2018, NYCHA announced that Warren Street House residents will be in the PACT/RAD program. In 2019 NYCHA put out a Request for Proposals (RFP) for Warren Street Houses, which is the first step in the process. Many residents are concerned about the oversight of private developers, especially around RAD relocation rules and their right to return to their homes.
  - Who is in charge? NYCHA; US Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- **NYCHA Legal Challenges (2017–ongoing)**
  - What is it? NYCHA has been sued many times for mismanagement and failure to keep residents’ homes in decent, safe, and sanitary condition. Lawsuits have focused on mold issues, lead paint, heating, elevators, and vermin, among other problems. In 2019, NYCHA reached an agreement with the federal government and the City that will require NYCHA to meet strict standards for improvement of its properties. This will be overseen by a federal monitor.
  - Who is in charge? A federal judge; a federal monitor; HUD; the mayor

- **NYCHA Superfund Site Plan and Clean-Up (2008–ongoing)**
  - What is it? A plan for cleaning up contamination in the Gowanus Canal, plus other improvements to keep water clean in the future. Some of the work has started, and cleanup is scheduled for completion around 2022.
  - Who’s in charge? US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

  - What is it? Funding to restore and repair buildings and grounds damaged by Hurricane Sandy, and make the buildings more resilient to future storms.
  - Who is in charge? Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); NYCHA

- **Bridging Gowanus (2013–2015)**
  - What is it? A community planning initiative focused on issues impacting the neighborhood, like environmental sustainability, preserving manufacturing jobs, and creating affordable housing. The plan was designed to shape a vision for the community before the city proposed a rezoning. DCP has said that ideas in Bridging Gowanus will help shape their rezoning proposal.
  - Who is in charge? Council Member Brad Lander led the initiative, supported by all local elected officials. Pratt Center for Community Development provided planning expertise and assistance, with significant public involvement.