PRESERVATION OF THE INNER CITY WATERFRONT:
THE FUTURE OF THE GOWANUS CANAL

Pat Seeumpornroj

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Abstract

Title: Preservation of the Inner City Waterfront: the Future of the Gowanus Canal

Author: Pat Seeumpornroj

Thesis advisor: Françoise Bollack

This study is an attempt to rethink the design approach for the new development in the old industrial waterfront of New York City. It focuses on the new housing developments that have caused dramatic changes in the historical fabric and the land use along the city industrial waterfront. The Gowanus Canal in Brooklyn is selected as a study focus. It has been facing a dilemma between industrial retention and new development for residential and recreational uses since the industrial decline in the 1960s. In order to preserve the Gowanus Canal, the new development has to be sensitive to industrial character and historic fabric of the area and has to strike a balance between residential development and industrial retention. Therefore, the thesis question of this study is what is a viable design strategy that can accommodate new development on the old industrial waterfront while retaining its industrial character?

A major finding of this study is a proposed design strategy that can accommodate new development on the Gowanus Canal while retaining its industrial character. The proposed design strategy has been tested on nine selected sites along the canal. The design results have proved that a cohabitation of industrial and residential uses is possible under the proposed design strategy. They have also proved that combination of old and new buildings derived from the variation of the Gowanus Canal's historic fabric can continue and its industrial character.