

# VOICE of GOWANUS

## ENVIRONMENTAL BASELINES FOR JUST & SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GOWANUS

### **Baseline 1: Dredging and CSO Tanks Must Be Completed First**

**For human safety, the City MUST STOP using the Gowanus Canal as an open sewer. Legally ordered dredging and CSO Tank construction should be completed before taking any zoning action that impacts the sewage system.**

Although its contaminated waters are only 20 ft deep, the Gowanus Canal's bed holds dangerous toxic residues to depths of 100 ft. These toxins are replenished by Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) outfalls because of dangerously overburdened sewage treatment plants. Adding thousands of new users to this taxed system risks further violations of law, millions of dollars in fines, the health & safety of the community, and damage to existing property.

### **Baseline 2: Environmental Impact Statement Must Include Cumulative Analysis**

**The Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for any Gowanus rezoning must include a full cumulative impact analysis of all development projects that will: (1) use the Owl's Head and Red Hook sewage treatment plants; (2) add conventional and greenhouse gas pollution into the airshed. The EPA and FEMA must also participate in drafting, analysis, and oversight of the EIS.**

The Gowanus Superfund area is in a flood zone that straddles two overburdened sewer-sheds, where wet-weather flows already exceed limited built and natural infrastructure capacity. NYC is also in airshed non-attainment, and both NYC and NYS now limit greenhouse gases. Only a "hard look" under State EIS rules can determine if sufficient natural capacity is available to meet development demands that further burden our shared air- and sewersheds.

### **Baseline 3: No Cleanup, No Justice**

**Affordable Housing, whether new construction or rehabilitation, should be free of any toxic legacy or possible exposure, and should never be built on a former Manufactured Gas Plant (MGP) site.**

The legacy of Gowanus Environmental Injustice includes decades-long disproportionate pollution exposure suffered by communities of color and the poor, associated effects on the community's health and safety, and unequal regulatory and enforcement protections. NYC can rectify a small measure of this devastating and unjust legacy by preventing low-income housing development on contaminated land, such as the Public Place site.

### **Baseline 4: Flood Controls for Climate Change**

**Taxpayers must not bear the risk and cost of residential buildout in a FEMA flood zone. Restored Gowanus Canal shorelines are best used for flood protection, resiliency parks, and manufacturing.**

The hyper-polluted coastal zones in NYC are mapped as dangerous flood zones by FEMA for a reason. Parks and open space along the Gowanus Canal - where manufacturing is not in place or possible - pays multiple taxpayer dividends: recreation and open-space activity for residents; neighborhood flood control; and the prevention of additional releases of toxic contamination from upland areas.

### **Baseline 5: Keep the Profits, Retain the Costs**

**Future Gowanus development should collect full real estate taxes to be earmarked as direct and supplemental NYCHA, Canal, and Uplands restoration funding.**

National Grid's market capital is \$40B, yet toxic cleanups on its Gowanus legacy sites are being underwritten by working-family taxpayers through Brownfield programs. Similarly, exponential growth in 421a tax abatements subsidize luxury developers while NYCHA housing unjustly deteriorates. These corporate welfare programs must be reassessed.

**VoG is a coalition of community members and organizations that believes securing the health and safety of current and future residents of Gowanus must be a priority for future development. VoG welcomes your support. Please read more & donate at:**

**[www.VoiceOfGowanus.org](http://www.VoiceOfGowanus.org)**