Institute to Hold “Reconsidering Gowanus” Conference on May 12, 2010

A far-reaching framework for redeveloping the Gowanus Canal section of Brooklyn that brings together stakeholders, policymakers and urban planning experts will be the subject of a May 12 conference presented by the Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute at Baruch College/CUNY.

At the conference, the Institute will release its report, “Reconsidering Gowanus - Opportunities for the Sustainable Transformation of an Industrial Neighborhood,” which looks closely at the demographic trends shaping the canal-based neighborhood and proposes a multi-tiered approach toward restoring, reinvesting in and redeveloping one of the city’s most distinctive communities.

"When we began this study of the Gowanus Canal corridor 14 months ago, we saw daunting challenges, including environmental contamination and distressed buildings. But we quickly determined that these hurdles were more than offset by the rich potential this historic community offers, such as the opportunity to create substantial new affordable housing, waterfront amenities and dynamic mixed-use blocks," said Jack Nyman, director of the Newman Real Estate Institute.

"Our goal today is to spur dialogue among stakeholders, and, ultimately, to help forge a consensus that will enable the community to embrace these singular opportunities, ensuring a vibrant and sustainable future for Gowanus," he added.

Two of the report’s principal authors, Rosemary Scanlon, clinical associate professor, New York University Schack Institute of Real Estate, and Harry Schwartz, a New York-based urban planning and development consultant, will discuss their research and analysis.

Their talk will be followed by panel discussions featuring prominent policymakers, academic researchers, planners, developers and community advocates, on such vital topics as a rezoning proposal that preserves key elements of the neighborhood while encouraging growth, the creation of affordable housing and strategies for "greening" the neighborhood and the canal, which was recently designated a Superfund site.

"Gowanus, which has already developed a thriving creative economy and attracted hotels, presents environmental challenges but has the potential to be something special - Brooklyn's very own Venice and the city's premier 'green district' - if we make the right choices about its future," said Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz, a keynote speaker at the conference. "This event will be the beginning of a much-needed conversation - not just about Gowanus, but also about how to bring Brooklyn's neighborhoods into the 21st century while preserving their unique connections to the past."

About the Institute: The Steven L. Newman Real Estate Institute, located at Baruch College, meets the needs of the dynamic real estate industry through our professional and continuing education courses, applied research, and conferences on topical issues. Since our founding in 1996, it has been the Institute’s mission to provide timely research on industry trends, and, more broadly, on factors ranging from public policy, to economics and finance, to new technology, that shape development in New York City and other urban communities. Our primary focus areas are real estate finance, economics, land use planning and zoning, urban planning and policy, infrastructure and transportation, and sustainable building and urban systems. Our research, conducted by noted scholars in a range of disciplines and by leading practitioners from private industry, is designed for a broad readership spanning many arenas, including the real estate industry, professional organizations and policymaking government agencies. Our professional and continuing education programs, as well as our certificate programs in real estate, sustainability,
construction management and facilities management, reflect our multidisciplinary expertise and deep industry connections.