

GHOSTS OF THE ERIE CANAL: PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

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Summary

Bridges are an important part of the infrastructure system of the Erie Canal, with other pieces of infrastructure giving both context to and taking context from the bridges around them. The canal is a heritage piece of infrastructure containing many historic structures. Part of the redevelopment of the canals is about celebrating the past by not only working within the context of these structures, but ensuring they can continue to be used in the future

The examples below, highlight the significant difference footbridges can make to reconnect the local communities back to the canal:

New bridges are being designed to highlight the heritage of the Erie Canal, allowing users to enjoy a close experience of the heritage structures. Existing structures such as the Brockport guard gates gives a rich historic context for a new bridge. In this example the new bridge creates a public spaces around this wonderful iconic canal structure.

Existing historic bridges are also playing a part in the redevelopment of the canal, being converted for pedestrian use. An example of this is the Amsterdam bridge which is fundamental for potential new canal side developments by improving access to the canal for many users such a local families, ramblers, cyclists, and rowers.

Where some historic bridges cannot be saved, new bridges are being designed to pay respect to their predecessors. Often while its not possible to save the whole bridge, new bridges can reuse existing elements, aiming to reduce their equiverlent carbon footprint and retain as much of the history of the canal as possible. This will ensure future generations can continue to enjoy the canals history. As with all projects reusing existing structures, reducing their environmental impace, and creating socially inclusive spaces is important to ensuring long term sustainability.



Fig. 1. Brockport guard gates and proposed footbridge. Credit: ShoP Architects.

Fig. 2. Amsterdam bridge with proposed new pedestrian and cycle route.

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