

PROPOSED CROWN HEIGHTS NORTH III HISTORIC DISTRICT BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN

The proposed Crown Heights North III Historic District contains a rich variety of late-19th- and early-20th-century residential buildings, including long blocks of well-preserved row houses, the inviting enclaves of Revere, Virginia, and Hampton places, and an extraordinary collection of “Kinko” houses—perhaps the most extensive and varied group of these remarkable two-family houses in the entire city. It also includes one of the neighborhood’s great houses of worship, the former Shaari Zedek Synagogue (Simeon D. Eisendrath and B. Horitz, 1922-25) at the southeast corner of Kingston Avenue and Park Place.

The proposed district, which comprises approximately 640 buildings, lies to the east of the Crown Heights North and proposed Crown Heights North II historic districts. Most of its houses were constructed in the Renaissance Revival style, including the stunning group of red-brick and limestone houses at 1096 to 1104 Park Place (William Debus, c.1906). These complement the proposed district’s earliest houses, which include the neo-Grec/Queen Anne style group at 1513 to 1521 Pacific Street and the neo-Grec style group at 1112 to 1124 Prospect Place (both c.1888).

As Brooklyn’s population boomed in the late 19th century, developers began constructing short, midblock “courts” and “places” that had the feel of private enclaves. Streets of this type in the proposed district include Revere Place, completed in 1897, and Hampton and Virginia places, which were begun in 1899. All are lined with handsome two- and three-story homes, and Virginia Place, which is anchored by large corner houses with monumental side entrances, is particularly impressive. The southern portion of Hampton Place is home to two groups of the innovative two-family, four-story dwellings called Kinko houses, which enjoyed a brief period of popularity between 1905 and 1915. Along with the Arts-and-Crafts style group at 35 to 41 Hampton Place (William Debus, c.1908), other Kinko houses in the district include the Renaissance Revival style group at 1083 to 1089 Prospect Place (c.1908) by the notable firm of Chappell & Bosworth.

At the turn of the 20th century, St. Mark’s Avenue was one of Brooklyn’s most fashionable streets, and today, the portion within the proposed district has some of its finest flats buildings and row houses. In the 1960s, however, it was suffering from the widespread disinvestment that gripped the broader neighborhood following World War II. In the late 1960s, as part of an effort to revitalize the area, St. Mark’s was closed to through traffic between Kingston and Albany avenues, and a park, intended to serve as a neighborhood focal point, was constructed in the middle of the street.

The district’s most significant historical figure is Shirley Chisholm (1924-2005), who was the first black woman to serve in the United States Congress and to run as a major-party candidate for the Presidency. Chisholm lived much of her life within the proposed district; during part of her time in the New York State Assembly, she and her husband, Conrad, resided at 28 Virginia Place, and shortly after her election to Congress, they bought the house at 1028 St. John’s Place, where they lived during her dramatic 1972 Presidential run. Rich in history and historic architecture, the proposed Crown Heights North III Historic District is one of Brooklyn’s most distinctive areas, and a worthy complement to the existing Crown Heights North and proposed Crown Heights North II historic districts.

