

Former PS90 Site Task Force Meeting #1

December 9th 2020



Welcome

Goals for today's session:

- To kick off the Task Force process with intention. Provide time for introductions and level setting.
- To review the RFP process, objectives and timeline for this project.
- To build our knowledge of the history of the site.
- To collaboratively build a vision for shared leadership, success, and transparency.
- To outline next steps.

TYTHEdesign

We are design strategists for civic projects. We provides social impact strategies and community engagement expertise to bolster the capacity of government, nonprofits, and foundations to amplify resilient cities and healthy communities.



Kristina Drury
Principal



Claudie Mabry
Program Strategist



Hillary Clark
Program Strategist

Zoom 101

Framing best practices for this platform.

- **The chat box is a great tool!** Use the chat box for questions, comments and thoughts.... This is a helpful space for discussion.
- **Please stay on mute**, unless you are asking a question or in the breakout sessions. Trick: you can use the space-bar like a walkie-talkie.
- **We love seeing you!** If you are comfortable, please keep your video on. It helps us to see if you are nodding, confused... and looking to say something.

IN FULL TRANSPARENCY

- We would like to record this meeting, for internal purposes only.
- Notes will be taken throughout and shared following the session.

Land Acknowledgment

We hope to acknowledge the indigenous cultural groups that once occupied the land of the PS90 space.

Land acknowledgments are a critical learning tool, and a strategy for honoring the socio-historical and cultural context of where we work.

The **Canarsie** occupied territory on the western end of Long Island, including much of what is now Brooklyn and extending eastward to take in part of the former town of Jamaica.

The **Munsee Lenape** were the northernmost of an affiliated group of Indian Villages that came to be known as the Lenni Lenape or, Delawares - living in settlements along the tributary streams that flowed into the Delaware River and the Hudson River on their southward journey through the present States of Pennsylvania, Delaware, New York and New Jersey.

Task Force Co-Chairs

Eric Adams

Brooklyn Borough President

Ryan Lynch, Chief of Staff

Mathieu Eugene

Council Member, District 40

City Team



Julianne Herskowitz, Vice President, Neighborhood Strategies

Ricky Da Costa, Assistant Vice President, Government and Community Relations

Aileen Gorsuch, Assistant Vice President, Land Use

Lena Ferguson, Project Manager, Neighborhood Strategies

Monique Woods, Project Support Analyst, Planning Project Support

City Team



Department of Housing Preservation & Development

Perris Straughter, Assistant Commissioner, Planning and Pre-Development

Uriah Johnson, Neighborhood Planner

Erin Buchanan, Deputy Director, Brooklyn Planning

Lin Zeng, Director of Brooklyn Planning

Josh Saal, Deputy Director of Predevelopment

City Team



**Landmarks Preservation
Commission**

Amanda Sutphin, Director of Archaeology

Mark Silberman, General Counsel

John Weiss, Deputy Counsel

Timothy Frye, Director of Special Projects and Strategic Planning

Historical Perspectives, Inc (HPI)

Historical Perspectives, Inc. (HPI) is a women-owned cultural resources consulting firm offering archaeological and historic structures services.



Cece Saunders
President and Principal
Investigator



Faline Schneiderman
Vice President and Principal
Investigator

Task Force Members Introductions

Building our shared leadership, through knowledge building of perspectives, skills and resources.

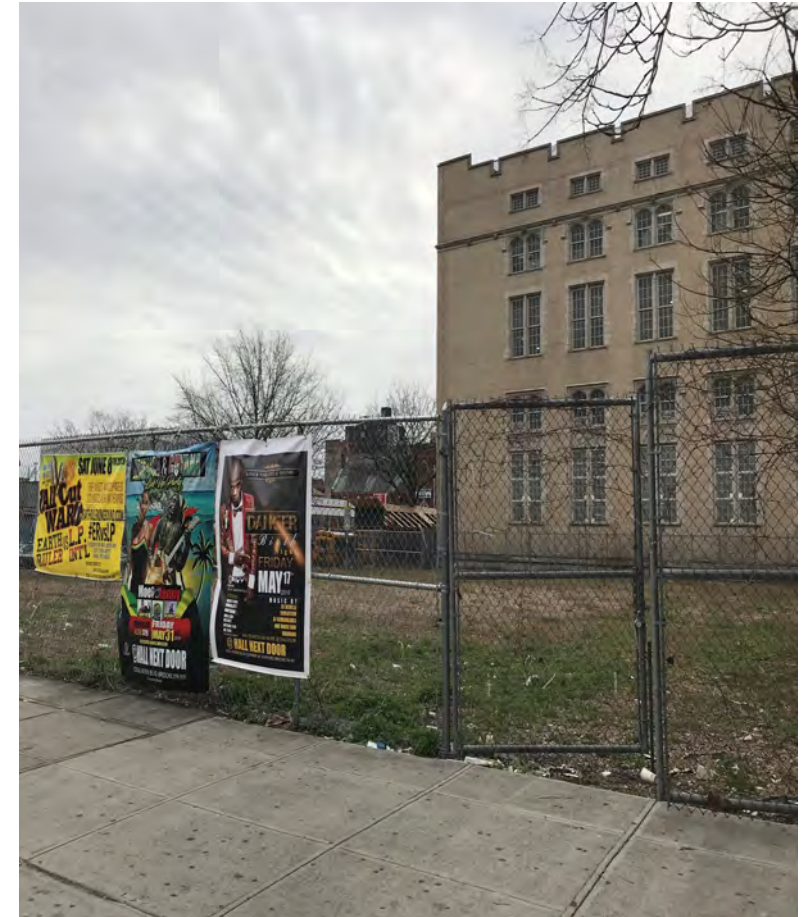
Each Task Force Member will have **90 seconds** to share the following:

- My name, role, organization, pronouns.
- My connection to the Flatbush neighborhood, the Former PS 90 site and/or the project is....
- I would like to contribute (skills, expertise or connection) to the Task Force...

Project Background

Activation of long underinvested City-owned site in Flatbush proximate to African burial ground

- Vacant site formerly contained landmarked school building demolished in 2015. Previous archaeological investigations uncovered artifacts and limited disarticulated human remains
- Announced Oct. 2020 by Mayor and CM Eugene, for development of affordable housing units and youth-centered community space
- EDC will facilitate Task Force engagement process and archeological/descendent research
- HPD will issue public procurement for future affordable housing project
- LPC will provide archeological technical expertise



Objectives of the Task Force

To work through a process of shared leadership to develop TWO sets of recommendations.

You will work closely with HPD to:

- To build your knowledge of the affordable housing opportunities and process for new construction.
- To identify recommendations for key aspects to be included in the RFP for the future new development. Recommendation may include:
 - Populations served
 - Ideas for the youth educational and vocations training and community facility space
 - Desired ground-floor uses
 - Site layout and urban design

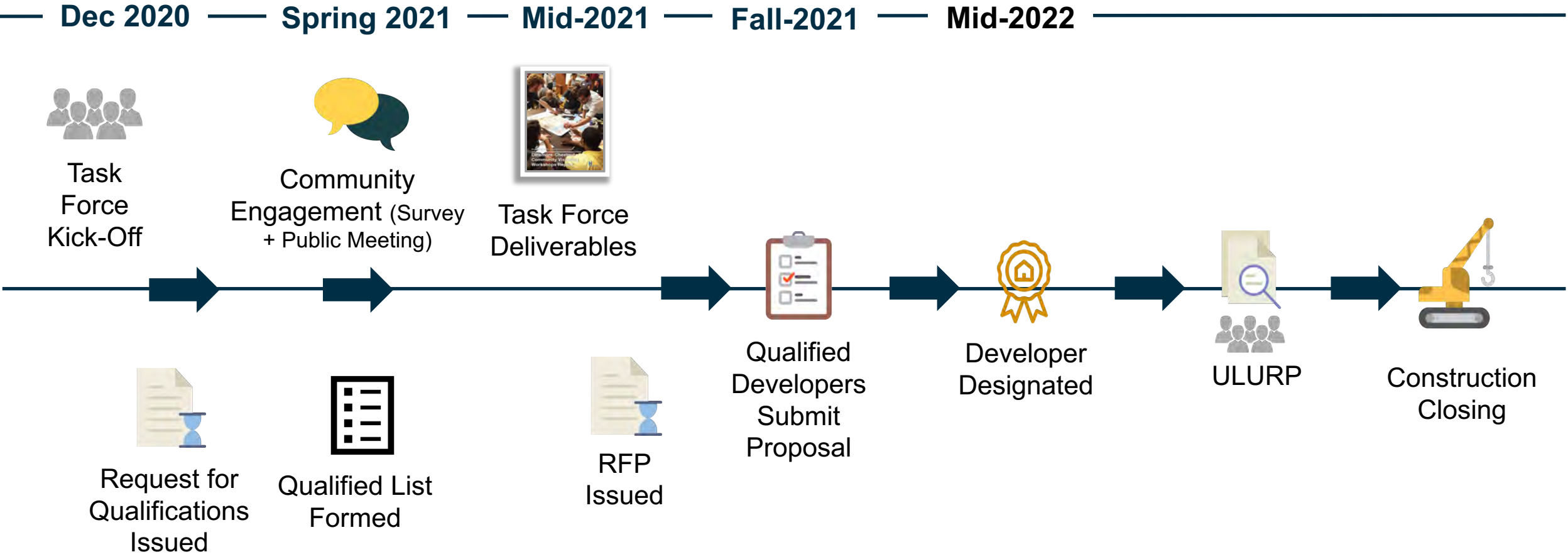
Objectives of the Task Force

To work through a process of shared leadership to develop TWO sets of recommendations.

You will work closely with HPI, EDC, LPC and HPD:

- To build your knowledge of the history of the PS 90 site, the neighborhood and the archaeological community engaging process
- To identify recommendations for on- and/or off-site memorialization
- To identify recommendation for the appropriate handling of additional artifacts and human remains, if discovered in the future

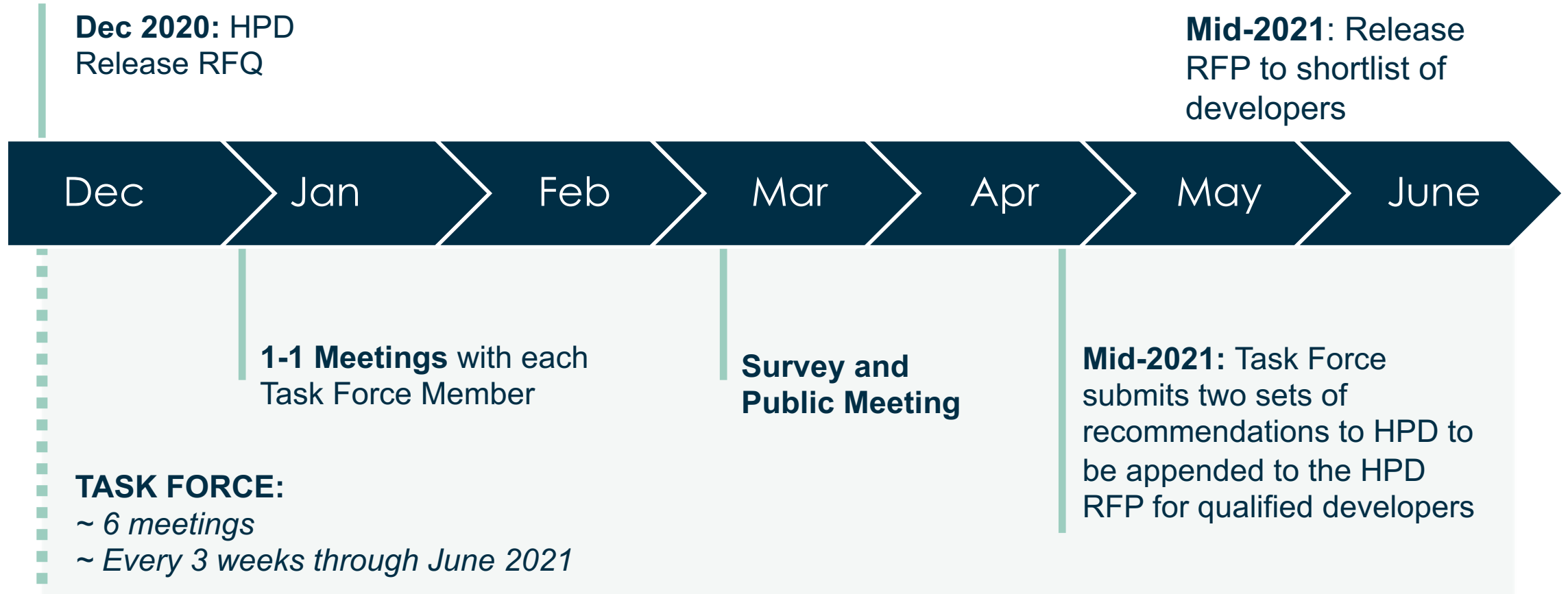
Development Project Timeline



Request for Qualifications

- **What** – Establish a list of Qualified Applicants who are pre-qualified to apply to a future RFP
- **Who** – Teams (Applicants) led by developer(s) with environmental consultant and defined community engagement leader. Developer can be joint-venture, for-profit, or non-profit, but must meet HPD's Equitable Ownership Requirement
- **How** – evaluate based on:
 - Development Experience
 - Environmental Consultant Experience
 - Community Engagement Experience
 - Project Vision Narrative
- **Why** – to ensure RFP applicants are both mission-driven and have the experience to deliver a project that responds to the vision the Task Force and Community create for the site

Task Force Timeline



What to expect from this process?

Task Force will be supported by NYCEDC and HPD, with technical expertise from LPC, HPI.

ROLE + RESPONSIBILITY of the Task Force

- To attend and participate in each Task Force Meeting
- 1-1 Meeting with TYTHEdesign
- To support the public engagement through survey distribution and outreach
- To support in the planning and leading of the public meeting
- To co-design the two sets of recommendations.

Questions

How can we support your understanding of the project, Task Force process and expectations?

Process note:

- As we are limited by time, we encourage you to use the CHAT box to share all your questions.
- Your questions will either be answered as part of a follow up email or as part of an upcoming meeting.
- Additionally, your questions, comments and concerns will support in the development of the full engagement plan.

SITE HISTORY



**Former Public School 90 Site
2274-2286 Church Avenue
Block 5103, Lot 58
Flatbush, Brooklyn, NY**



HPI Presentation Agenda

- Explain HPI's involvement with the PS 90 Site
- Provide an abbreviated history of the site
- Describe HPI's archaeological testing at the site
 - Detailed results are available in a series of reports on file with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC)
- Discuss HPI's ongoing research into a Descendant Community and work with the Task Force

Please be aware that the nature of this discussion involves some disturbing information that we strive to handle and share sensitively and with respect.



HPI's Involvement

- HPI (archaeologists and historians) has worked in NYC for over 38 years
- Completed four separate documentary studies of the PS 90 Site (1998-2019)
- Archaeological testing (2001) found limited human remains within disturbed soils, possibly of African American ancestry
- HPI helped to create a Community Engagement Plan and Unanticipated Discoveries Plan to address the handling of human remains should they be found on the site in any future development (2019)
- Working with City, we are helping to identify a descendent community and support the Task Force



Historical Context

- Flatbush (Midwout) was established in ca.1651 by the Dutch who farmed and created a village center on what is now Flatbush Avenue a block west of the PS 90 site.
- The Reformed Dutch Church of Flatbush was founded in 1654 and at one time owned the PS 90 Site.
- Many Flatbush families owned enslaved Africans.
- Dutch was spoken well into the 19th century.



Historical Context

- The written history of the Dutch residents is voluminous.
- The written history of the enslaved people is virtually silent.
- Historians have calculated that between 70 and 80 percent of all Flatbush families in 1800 enslaved at least one person.
- At one time, Kings County had a larger concentration of enslaved people than any other county in New York State.



Documentary Study Conclusions

- History books suggest that enslaved Africans had been buried on or near the site, possibly when it was part of the Bergen or Stryker farm, or under ownership of the Reformed Dutch Church of Flatbush
- No *primary* sources citing the exact location of the African American Burial Ground were found
- The enslaved population was predominantly of African origin and descent, with a few references to enslaved “Indians”
- One example of a primary source referencing the cemetery was an 1810 obituary in the *Long Island Star* that marked the death of Eve, age 110, buried in the Village of Flatbush “African burying ground”



DIED,

The 23d Inst. in the village of Flatbush, (L. I.) in the house of her last master, Lawrence Voorhes, a negro woman named Eve, aged near 110 years. She was born in the beginning of the last Century, in the afore-said viliage, and for more than 80 years lived under the roof of her third master, Lawrence Ditmas. She was a woman of strong intellectual capacity, and enjoyed an almost uninterrupted health, till within eight days of her departure. Such were her active powers, that she was seldom known to be unemployed, even in the most advanced period of her life. Her ordinary occupation during the summer months was, by her own ehoice, the dressing of a garden spot, and in this employment, in which she much delighted, she was still engaged the last summer of her life. Her behaviour was modest and unassuming, and her disposition naturally lively and chearful, excepting some slight rheumatic afflictions, she had none of the infirmities usually attending old age.—She had the perfect use of all her senses 'till the last. On Sunday evening her remains were piously interred in the African burying ground of the village of Flatbush, attended by a great concourse of the, people of colour.

The Long Island Star
March 29, 1810 p.3

“a negro woman named Eve, aged near 110...piously interred in the African burying ground of...Flatbush”

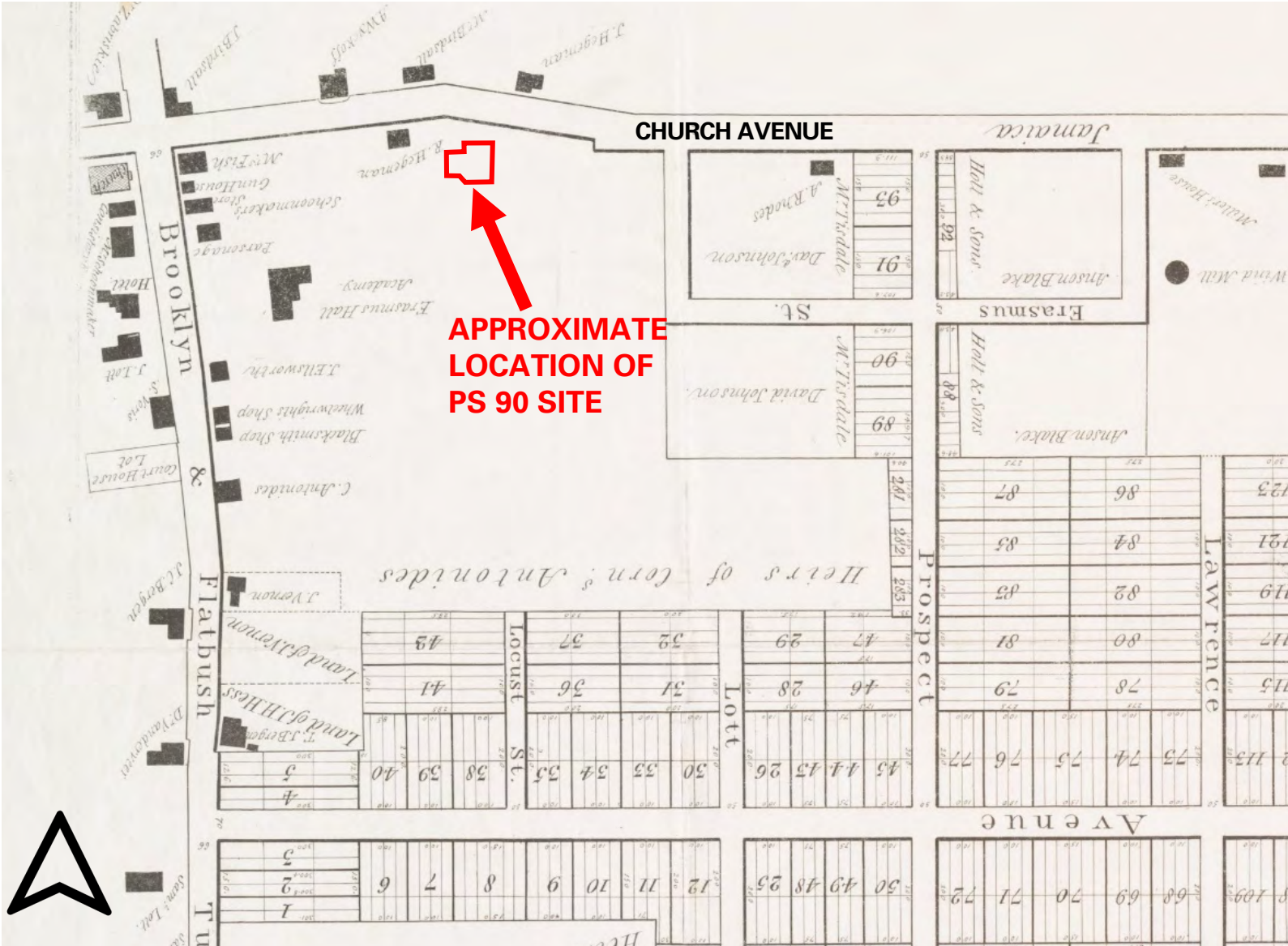


Documentary Research

- In 1884 historian Henry R. Stiles wrote about a “colored people’s burying ground” near a pond on or near the PS 90 Site and the Flatbush Engine Company. He reported that when the property was owned by the Reformed Church and Bedford Avenue was laid out in 1865, graves were opened and remains reinterred at the Cemetery of the Holy Cross.
- Another historian (Snyder 1945) wrote that skeletal remains were found when the basements of Flatbush School No. 1 and the house of A. Van Dyke were excavated.



Documentary Research: Map Review



1835-36 Flatbush Survey

Church Avenue had a crook in it just north of the PS 90 site and **Bedford Avenue** had not yet been laid out

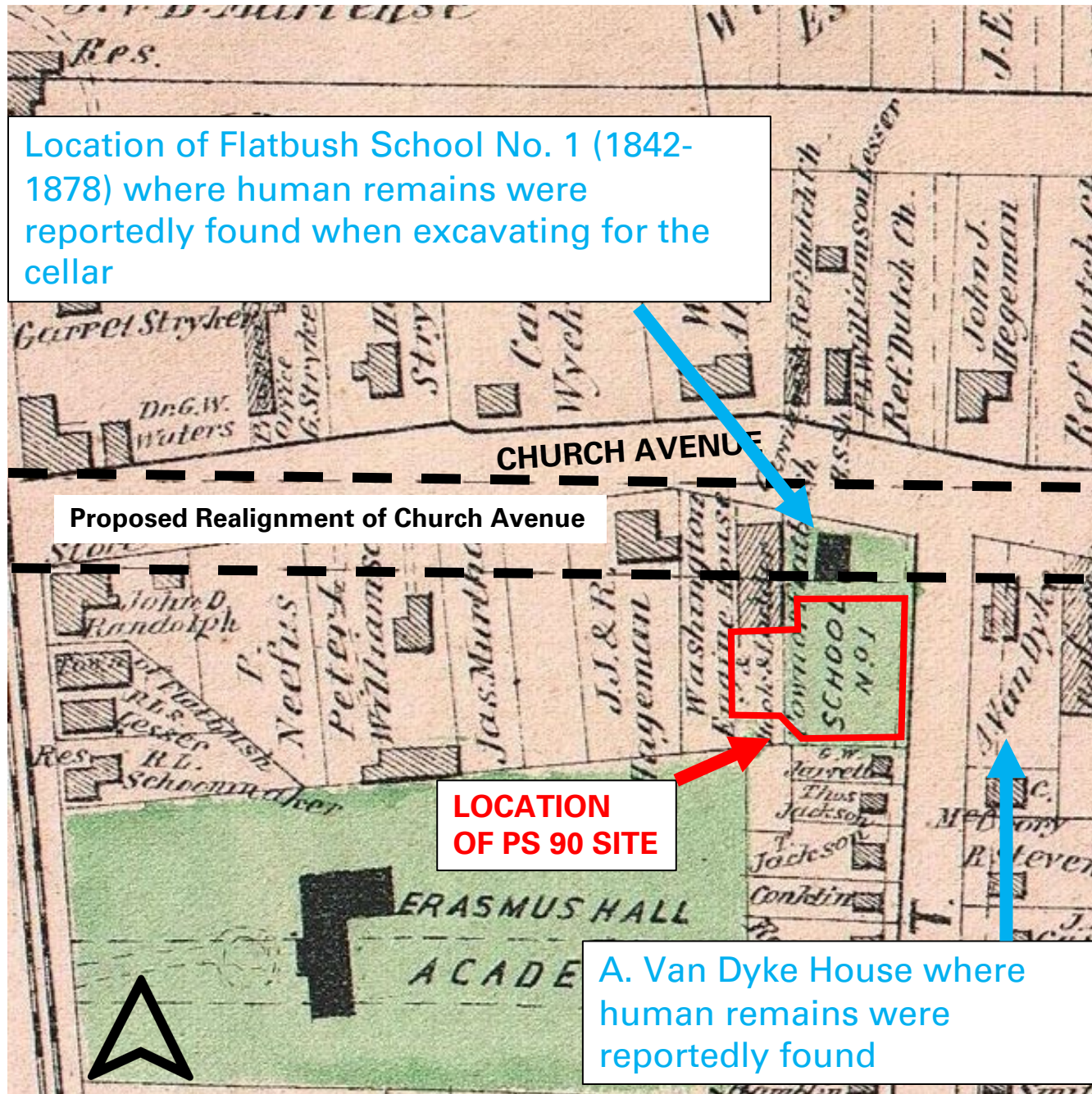
At this time, there were **no** mapped buildings, lots, or burial grounds near the PS 90 Site

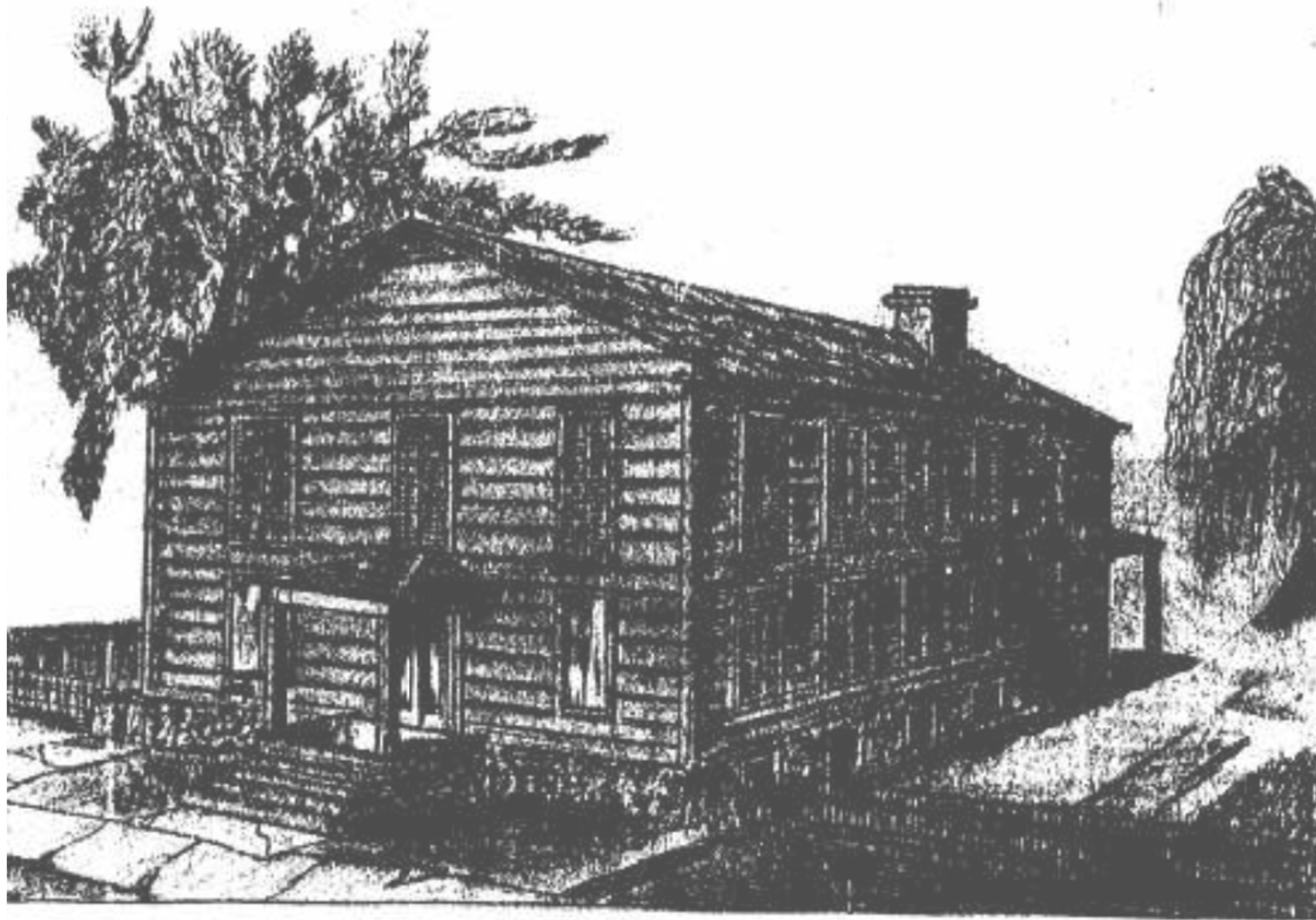


1873

Church Avenue was crooked - the dashed lines on the map show that there were plans to straighten it

At this time, the Reformed Dutch Church owned land on the north side of Church Avenue, Flatbush School No. 1 was immediately north of the PS 90 Site, an Engine House was to the west, and the Van Dyke house was to the east





Flatbush Village School, 1842-1878

Rendering of the original Flatbush School No. 1 that stood in what is now Church Avenue from 1842 to 1878.

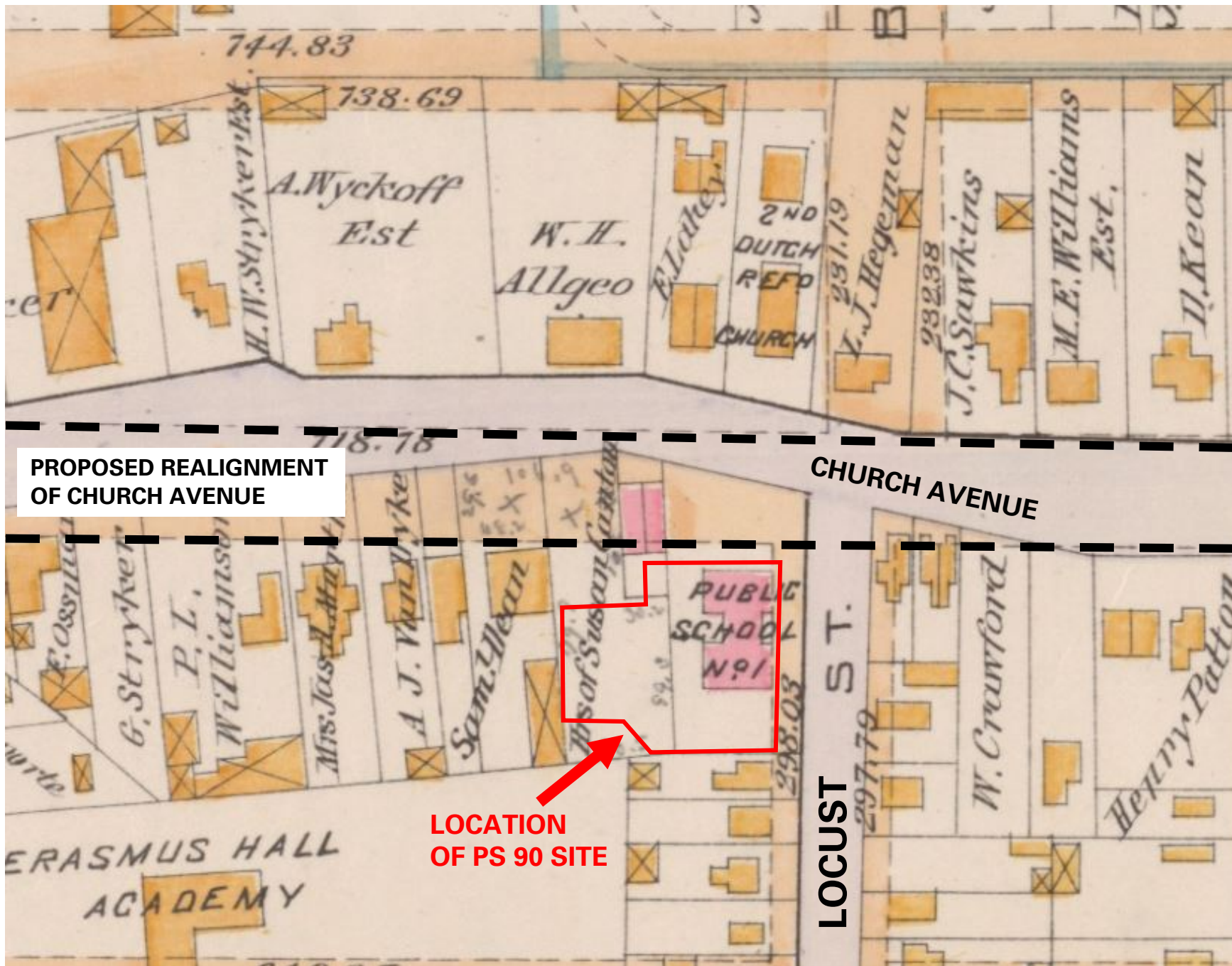
Skeletal remains were reportedly found in 1842 when its basement was excavated. They were reportedly removed and reburied in Holy Cross Cemetery.





In 1878, PS 90 (then called PS 1) was built and Flatbush School No. 1, in the footprint of Church Avenue, was razed. (Photo ca. 187? from Brooklyn Public Library Digital Collection)



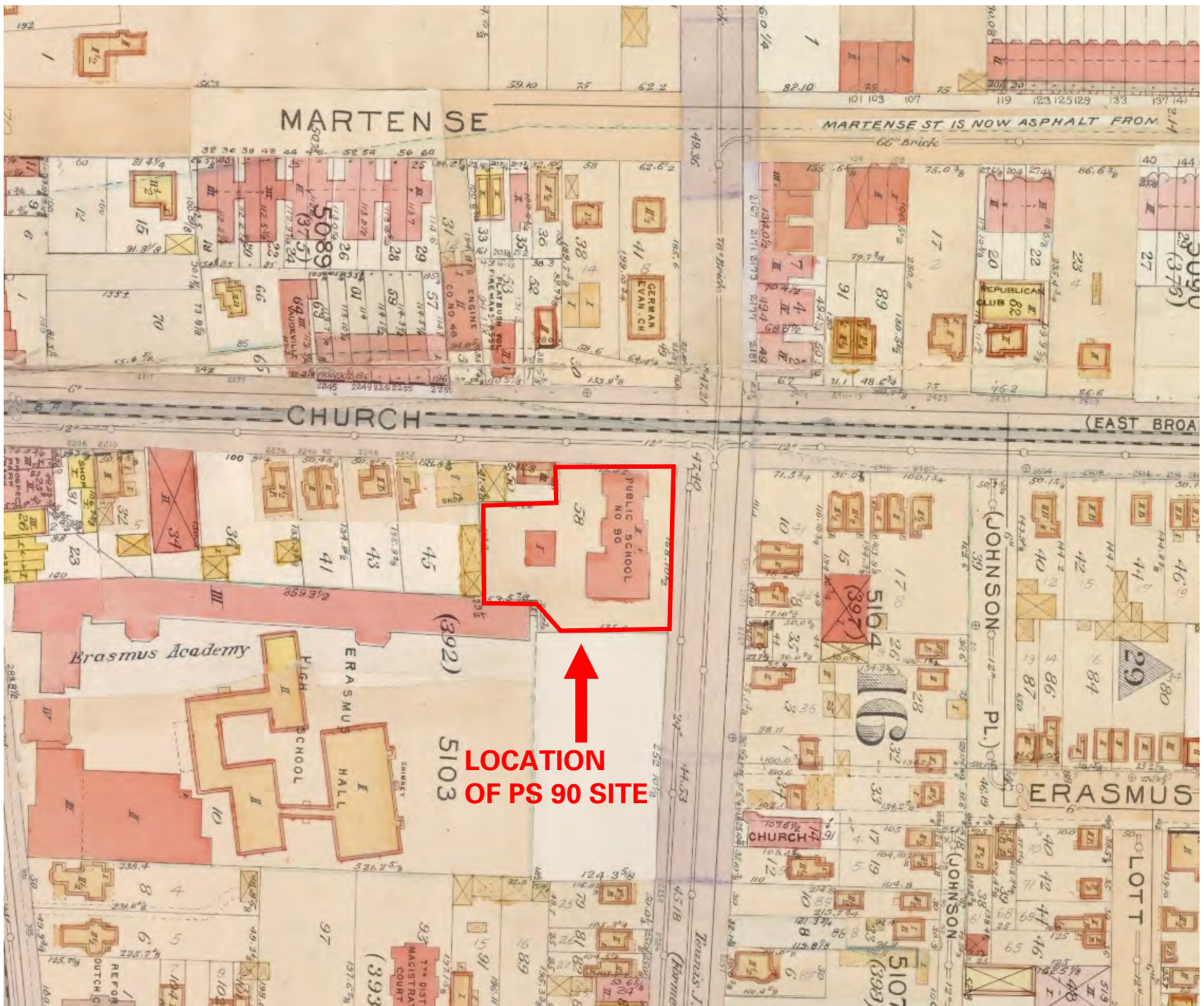


1890

Church Avenue was still crooked but the dashed lines on the map show that there were plans to straighten it.

By this time, Flatbush School No. 1 was gone, and a new school was built on the PS 90 Site (then called PS 1).





1906

Church Avenue had been straightened and all buildings in its route had been removed.

Bedford Avenue also had been straightened and widened with buildings in its route removed.

PS 1 had been renamed **PS 90**



Archaeological Sensitivity

Research in 2001 concluded the PS 90 Site had a *high potential* for:

- African American Burials
- Early Dutch home lot/farmstead remains
- Wells, outhouse pits, cisterns, and artifacts from:
 - Flatbush School No. 1 (ca.1842-1878) and PS1/PS 90 (1878-1960s)
 - The Washington Engine & Hook and Ladder Company (1865-1890)
 - The G. W. Jarrett House (1873-ca.1890)

Archaeological Testing was recommended



Archaeological Fieldwork

- In 2001 archaeological testing was completed to establish “Ground Truth”
- Concrete around the school was removed under the direction of archaeologists
- 40 hand excavated Shovel Test Pits, each about two feet by two feet, were completed to seek any possible burial shafts
- 4 machine excavated trenches were then undertaken to look for burial shafts



Stage IB Archaeological Testing 2001

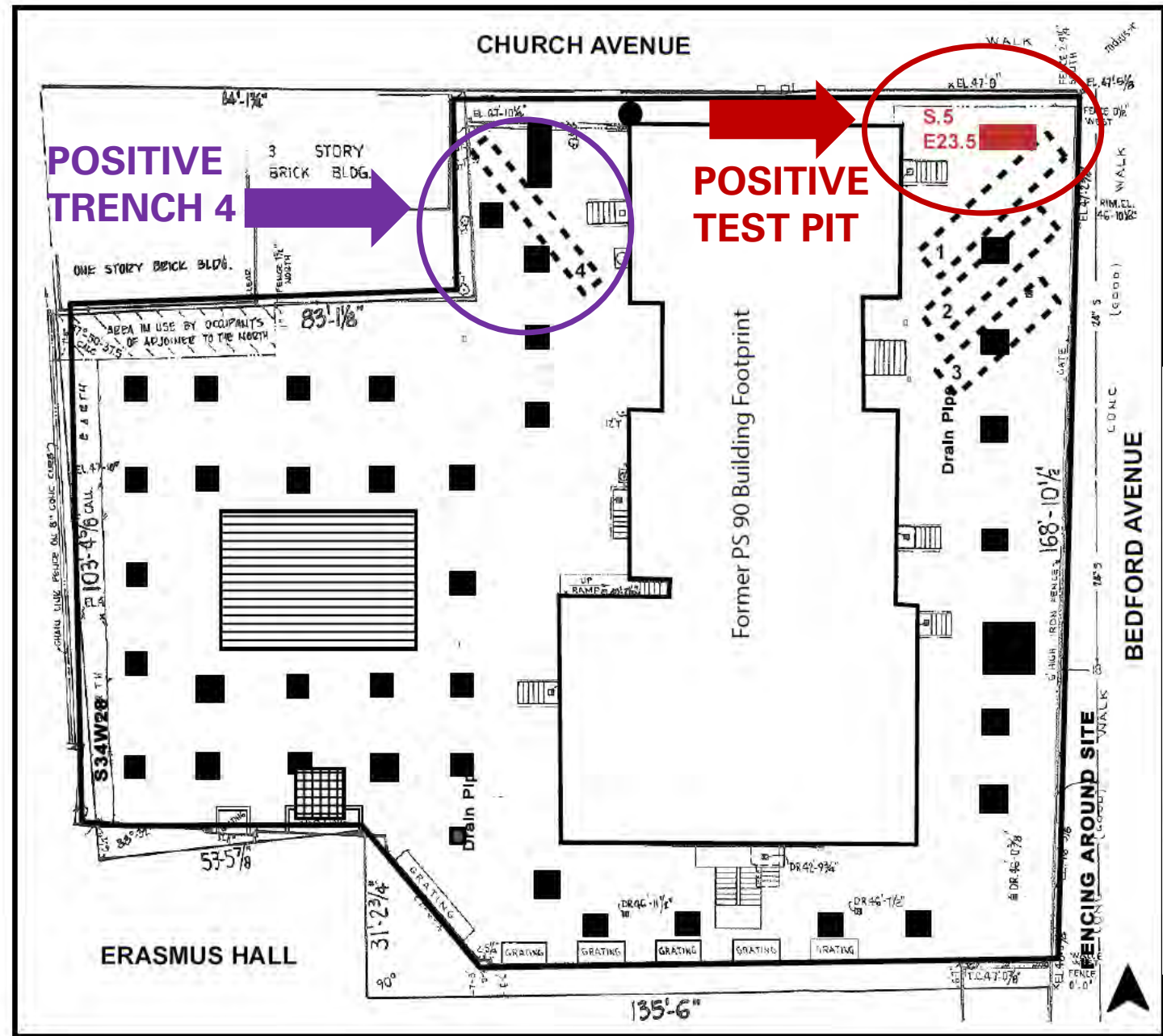
Example of a Shovel Test Pit profile showing an ash layer at the top with mixed soils directly beneath it



Field Testing Results

- Only one **Shovel Test Pit** had human remains - an adult premolar found immediately below the upper ash layer.
- Only one of four trenches, **Trench 4**, contained human remains including 3 teeth and small fragments of a lower jawbone in upper disturbed soils.
- No intact burials or burial shafts were found anywhere on the site.
- **The disarticulated remains from disturbed soils suggest they were not found where they were originally laid to rest. The burials were likely off-site and had likely been dispersed at some time during history.**

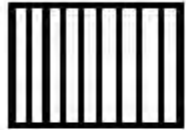




Stage IB Archaeological Testing 2001

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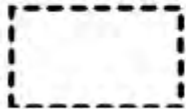
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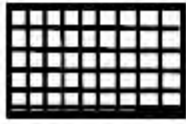
- Ca. 1905 Water Closet



- Shovel Test Locations



- Machine Excavated Trenches



- Brick Lined Privy Shaft



Analysis

- Tooth in Test Pit: Premolar with small cavities from a young to middle-aged adult (20-35)
 - Sex and ancestry could not be determined
- Teeth and Bone from Trench 4: likely from a single person, possibly female, with defects in the tooth enamel suggesting possible periods of hunger as a child
 - Ancestry could not be determined with a high degree of accuracy, although the surface of the second Lower Molar showed minor “enamel wrinkling” that previously has been associated with African ancestry by other researchers. *But this is not conclusive, and should NOT be taken as a final determination*



Artifact Disposition and Reinterment

- Artifacts related to PS 90 (1878-1960) were given to Erasmus Hall High School for curation and display
- The limited number of human remains found were accepted by Reverend Daniel Ramm of the Flatbush Reformed Church for appropriate reburial.



Next Steps

- Continue research on descendent communities.
- Establish how best to tell the stories of the past
- Establish how best to memorialize the area



Moving Forward

- The sensitivity of the site - proven through historical research and archaeology - needs to be acknowledged. We were asked, last year, to develop a Work Plan to move forward.
- A draft Unanticipated Discoveries Plan was created should human remains be found on the site at any future time.
- The Plan calls for all work to stop and for skeletal material to be sensitively handled and removed according to City and State protocols.
- Part of this Plan provides for the identification of a descendent community and the creation of a Task Force.
- HPI is continuing its research on the population that was interred near the PS 90 Site.



Forming a Community Task Force...

Action for the Future

- It takes a village; we need a village.
- We need your help to be the “village of the past” - to identify, through the best of our combined research efforts, those who may have been buried in this cemetery space in Flatbush.
- While the former burial ground may not be directly on this site, it merits a caring descendent community should any disturbed remains be found.



Site History Summary

- The available primary documentary records do not reference a cemetery on the PS 90 Site.
- Secondary documentary sources vaguely describe a burial ground near the site, with burials reportedly having been found to the north and east.
- Archaeological work found no undisturbed burials on the site but did find few disarticulated human remains near Church Avenue.
- Additional disarticulated human remains *should* be anticipated.
- These people deserve the utmost care and respect with regard to their proper handling, removal, reburial, and memorialization.



Extensive Research Was Carried Out by HPI at These Repositories:

- Brooklyn City Register
- Brooklyn College
- Brooklyn Historical Society
- Brooklyn Public Library-online plus Grand Army Plaza and Flatbush branches
- Brooklyn Surrogate Court
- Brooklyn Surveyor's Office
- Brooklyn Topographic Bureau
- Center for Thanatology Research and Education
- Erasmus Hall
- Holland Society Library
- Holy Cross Cemetery
- Kings County Clerk's Office
- Lefferts Homestead
- New York Municipal Archives
- New York Public Library
- New York State Library
- New York University Fales Collection
- New-York Historical Society
- NY State Historic Preservation Office
- NYC Landmarks Preservation Commission
- Office of Public Education & Interpretation of the African Burial Ground
- Reformed Protestant Dutch Church Archives
- Teachers' College Special Collections
- The Frances Donin collection on the Dutch Reformed Church, Flatbush and Flatlands
- Weeksville Heritage Center



Research Included Reviewing:

- Deeds and land transfers
- Wills
- Early Reformed Dutch Church records
- Flatbush Fire Company records (1829-1848)
- Town of Flatbush Records
- Transcriptions of Dutch legal documents for Flatbush, Flatlands, and Gravesend (early land divisions)
- Reformed Dutch Church land leases, including a lease to the Trustees of the Town of Flatbush for Flatbush School No. 1
- Property maps and surveys
- Newspaper accounts
- Personal interviews with Robert Swan, an independent scholar regarding slave cemeteries, and John Manbeck, the former Brooklyn Historian
- Cemetery records
- Board of Health Records
- Public School records
- Maps and atlases
- Local histories



Historical & Archaeological Resources

Available Reports:

- Stage 1A Archaeological Assessment (Documentary Research)
http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch_reports/857.pdf
- Stage 1B Archaeological Investigation
http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/arch_reports/858.pdf
- Flatbush School District No. 1 NYCLPC Designation Report
<http://s-media.nyc.gov/agencies/lpc/lp/2285.pdf>

*Please note that the site name has changed over the years and has been referred to as P.S. 90, Beth Rivka, PS 325-K, Flatbush School District No. 1, among others.



Questions

How can we support your understanding of the site history, the findings and the upcoming archaeological work and engagement process?

Process note:

- As we are limited by time, we encourage you to use the CHAT box to share all your questions.
- Your questions will either be answered as part of a follow up email or as part of an upcoming meeting.
- Additionally, your questions, comments and concerns will support in the development of the full engagement plan.

Intention Setting for Shared Leadership

What are the goals for this process/project look like and how can we plan ahead to achieve that?

What does success for this project and process look like for you and your organization?

Process note:

- We want to make sure that we hear from each person individually.
- This is a principle that we will carry throughout this Task Force – think individually and come together to build, collaborate and make decisions together.
- We encourage you to share your thoughts in ten words or less, as each Task Force member will have 1 minute to respond.

Next Steps

Request for information from Task Force:

- Complete the **capacity questionnaire** outlining your capacity (sent before this meeting).
- Complete the the **post-meeting survey** (which will be shared through email) outlining your questions and comments.

Communications:

- Expect communication (emails, calendar invitations, pre-work) to come from the TYTHEdesign team in the future.

What happens next on our end:

- **Notes** from this meeting will be shared shortly
- TYTHEdesign is utilizing the information shared today to build a **robust community engagement plan** (that will take into account your interests, needs and the condensed timeline.) The plan, including calendar dates will be shared in early January.
- In early end of December and early January we will schedule **1-1 sessions with each Task Force member** to support building your perspectives, needs and intention into the process.
- **Next Task Force meeting will be in January.**

Thank you

