

Beverley Square West Historic District

Borough of Brooklyn

Proposed Action: Propose for Calendaring June 17, 2025



East Side of Argyle Road, LPC, 2025

The proposed Beverley Square West Historic District contains 119 freestanding houses built between 1894 and 1910 along four streets in the Flatbush neighborhood of Brooklyn. Located just south of Prospect Park (a designated Scenic Landmark) and the Prospect Park South Historic District (designated in 1979), Beverley Square West is among the finest and best-preserved sections of historic suburban Flatbush, an expansive area of turn-of-the-20th-century houses extending southward from the park to Brooklyn College. This area also contains the Ditmas Park and Fiske Terrace-Midwood Park Historic Districts, which were designated in 1981 and 2008, respectively.

Flatbush's suburban development began when it was still an independent town, before its 1894 annexation by Brooklyn, and Brooklyn's absorption into New York City in 1898. Suburbanization was made possible by the 1878 opening of the Brooklyn, Flatbush & Coney Island Railroad—the predecessor of today's B and Q subway lines—along the eastern boundary of the proposed district, and its subsequent extension, as the Brooklyn & Brighton Beach Railroad, into Lower Manhattan around 1900. Flatbush's first suburban development, called Tennis Court, was begun in 1886. In 1894, local builders began constructing houses within the northern portion of the proposed district, an area that soon became known as Matthews Park. In 1901, the *Brooklyn Citizen* observed that "Of all the building tracts into which historic Flatbush is now divided, none are more beautiful than ... Matthews Park.... Four or five years ago the land was covered with waving rows of corn, but now it is a remarkably attractive settlement." Also in that year, the T. B. Ackerson Company purchased the former Voorhies farm south of Matthews Park comprising the southern portion of the proposed district, and began improving the land for the construction of freestanding houses.

The Ackerson company was one of Flatbush's most prominent developers. By 1902, it completed ten houses on the former Voorhies farm and had begun marketing the development as Beverley Square West, the name that would ultimately supplant Matthews Park to encompass the entire area. Ackerson's houses were designed by a team of experienced Brooklyn architects including A. White Pierce, John J. Petit, and Benjamin Driesler. In 1902, the firm had the names of East 13th, East 14th, and East 15th Streets changed to Argyle, Rugby, and Marlborough Roads to match their names in the prestigious Prospect Park South development to the north. By 1906, 114 of the 119 houses within the proposed district were completed, with the five remaining houses built by 1910.

This rapid development gives Beverley Square West remarkable architectural cohesiveness. Most houses were completed in the Queen Anne or Colonial Revival styles, or in a mixture of the two, with some houses incorporating Tudor Revival or Shingle-style elements. Though diverse in style and design, they form harmonious suburban streetscapes little changed from the early 20th century. The historic landscape plan, which includes front lawns and grass strips between the sidewalks and streets, remains intact.

As was typical of suburban Flatbush, all of Beverley Square West's early residents were white, except for a few African American women working as live-in servants. Most homeowners were native-born Americans; men worked as attorneys, company heads, doctors, sales managers, engineers, or in other upper-middle-class or elite professions. Although Beverley Square West was impacted by Brooklyn's population decline during the 1960s and 1970s, local organizations as well as individual residents have been crucial in maintaining its historic character. Today, with its streetscapes of historic freestanding houses remaining largely intact, the proposed Beverley Square West Historic District continues to appear much as it did more than a century ago.

