



A GUIDE TO HISTORIC NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS

SUNSET PARK

BROOKLYN





The Historic Districts Council is New York's citywide advocate for historic buildings and neighborhoods. The Six to Celebrate program annually identifies six historic New York City neighborhoods that merit preservation as priorities for HDC's advocacy and consultation over a yearlong period.

The six, chosen from applications submitted by community organizations, are selected on the basis of the architectural and historic merit of the area, the level of threat to the neighborhood, the strength and willingness of the local advocates, and the potential for HDC's preservation support to be meaningful. HDC works with these neighborhood partners to set and reach preservation goals through strategic planning, advocacy, outreach, programs and publicity.

The core belief of the Historic Districts Council is that preservation and enhancement of New York City's historic resources—its neighborhoods, buildings, parks and public spaces—are central to the continued success of the city. The Historic Districts Council works to ensure the preservation of these resources and uphold the New York City Landmarks Law and to further the preservation ethic. This mission is accomplished through ongoing programs of assistance to more than 500 community and neighborhood groups and through public-policy initiatives, publications, educational outreach and sponsorship of community events.

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A BRIEF HISTORY

Originally part of Bay Ridge, the area got its own name with the creation of Sunset Park in 1891. Today, the neighborhood extends from Prospect Expressway to 65th Street and Eighth Avenue to the waterfront. Sunset Park's first major development began after the Civil War, when manufacturing enterprises were established on its waterfront. Beginning in the 1880s, the inland area developed as a residential neighborhood for middle- and working-class families, including many who worked on the waterfront. A major stimulant to its growth was the establishment in 1889 of a ferry service to and from Manhattan at Second Avenue and 39th Street. Sunset Park's first waves of immigrants were Irish, German and Scandinavian, but by the late 19th century, immigrants from Italy, Greece and Poland also arrived. To accommodate them, large swaths of rowhouses were built. Puerto Rican and other Latin American populations began settling here in the 1940s, and large numbers of Asian immigrants arrived in the 1980s, establishing Brooklyn's first and New York City's third "Chinatown."

Sunset Park's standout building type is the masonry rowhouse. In fact, Sunset Park contains one of the earliest and most extensive concentrations of two-family masonry rowhouses in the city. Mostly built between 1885 and 1912, these stunning blocks are accented by commercial thoroughfares and institutional and religious buildings mostly completed by the early 1930s. The area also has many multiple-family dwellings and tenements, with some early examples of non-profit cooperative apartment buildings. The neighborhood's most pronounced architectural styles are neo-Grec, Romanesque Revival and Renaissance Revival, all popular at the end of the 19th century. While these rows are attributed to specific architects, it is believed that at this time, architects mostly worked on interior layouts, as exterior designs were repeated in modest neighborhoods like this one. In 1988, an area encompassing 3,237 buildings was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. All of the sites in this brochure are part of the district except numbers 7, 12a and 18. Despite this designation, Sunset Park currently remains unprotected by local landmark status, aside from a few individual landmarks.

Though not covered on this tour, Sunset Park's waterfront is occupied by several notable institutions. To the northwest is Bush Terminal, an enormous industrial complex developed by Irving T. Bush beginning in the 1890s, which at its height consisted of roughly 200 acres. The first facility in the city to integrate shipping, manufacturing and warehousing, it was also the largest multi-tenant industrial complex in the country. In the mid-1980s, Bush Terminal was renamed Industry City, and there remain roughly 40 acres and 16 buildings housing artisans, garment manufacturing and warehousing. Just south of Industry City is the Brooklyn Army Terminal, constructed by the Federal government in 1918. During World War II, roughly 85% of army equipment and personnel were shipped overseas from this 95-acre complex. Sold to the City in 1981 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1983, it now houses light manufacturing, warehousing and small businesses.

**I. FORMER SUNSET PARK
COURTHOUSE ★ ★**

4201 Fourth Avenue

Mortimer Dickerson Metcalfe, 1931

This Classical Revival courthouse was built to house the magistrates' and municipal courts. Its architect gained prestige for assisting with the design of Grand Central Terminal roughly 20 years before this commission. The courthouse features grand porticos on both the 42nd and 43rd Street façades with Ionic columns, quoins, eagle capitals, limestone details and moldings.



LEGEND OF DESIGNATIONS

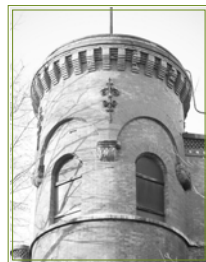
National Historic Landmark:	◆
National Register of Historic Places—District:	★
National Register of Historic Places—Property:	☆
New York City Historic District:	✱
New York City Individual Landmark:	✱
New York City Interior Landmark:	✿

2. FORMER 68TH POLICE PRECINCT STATION HOUSE AND STABLE ★ ★

4302 Fourth Avenue

Emile Gruwe, 1886

Due to its growing population in the 1880s, Brooklyn expanded its police force and built precincts borough-wide. Sunset Park's station was re-numbered several times, but eventually became the 68th precinct when New York City, and thus the boroughs' police forces, consolidated in 1898. The station house and stable were designed in the Romanesque Revival style with Venetian and Norman Revival ornament, including brick molded cornices, arched openings, brownstone moldings and stone bandcourses with carved dogs' faces and Byzantine leafwork. The station house has a crenellated corner tower and a projecting pavilion on Fourth Avenue. The buildings, connected by a one-story brick passage, have been vacant since 1970 and are in a severe state of disrepair.

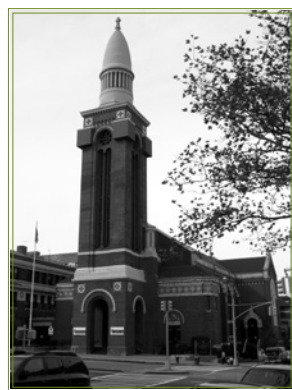


3. ST. MICHAEL'S ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH ★

4200 Fourth Avenue

Raymond F. Almirall, 1905

The 200-foot tower of St. Michael's was the second tallest building in Brooklyn after the Williamsburgh Savings Bank until the early 21st century, when high-rise residential towers began to sprout up across the borough. The tower's egg-shaped dome recalls the famous basilica of Sacré-Cœur in Paris, a French connection made through its École des Beaux Arts-trained architect. Almirall also designed the Emigrant Industrial Savings Bank Building at 51 Chambers Street in Manhattan, as well as most of the campus of Seaview Hospital in Staten Island.



4. FOURTH AVENUE ★

Before walking north to 40th Street, peek down 43rd Street between Fourth and Fifth Avenues at the brownstone rowhouses (circa 1898–1904) that form a topographically elegant streetscape. In the 1890s, Fourth Avenue was planned as a “parkway” to South Brooklyn, with planted malls down its center, much like Park Avenue in Manhattan. Unfortunately, the malls were demolished when the subway arrived in Sunset Park in 1915 to make way for vents. Until the 1950s, when car ownership and vehicular traffic were on the rise, Fourth Avenue’s sidewalks were roughly eight feet wider than they are today, to accommodate the popular 19th- and early 20th-century pastime of “promenading.” Only the east side of the Avenue is in the National Register historic district.



5. 442–472 40TH STREET BETWEEN FOURTH AND FIFTH AVENUES ★

Eisenla & Carlson, 1912–13

With increased demand for housing after the arrival of the subway, there was a push to construct larger, multi-family dwellings in Sunset Park. This row of three-story tenements contained two apartments per floor, housing six families each. The Renaissance Revival brick tenements feature gabled pediments, accentuated bays, limestone trim and rusticated stone entryways.

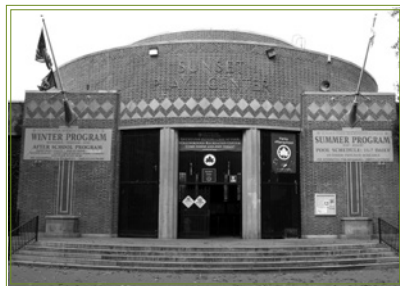
6. SUNSET PARK ★

1891

Sunset Play Center * ♣ :

Herbert Magoon with Aymar Embury II, Harry Ahrens and others, 1934–36

In 1891, the city of Brooklyn, planning for future growth, set aside 14 acres for Sunset Park, which was enlarged to 24.5 acres in 1903. The park affords views of Manhattan, New York Harbor and, more locally, St. Michael's tower. At the park's eastern edge, the play center was one of several built across the city during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration. The facility was constructed of low-cost brick and cast concrete and employed details characteristic of the Art Moderne style, including sleek curvilinear forms, decorative brickwork and diamond-patterned cast stone. The bathhouse features a one-and-a-half-story center rotunda flanked by corner piers and lined with stacked cylindrical brick walls.



7. ALKU AND ALKU TOINEN

816 & 826 43rd Street

Eric O. Holmgren, 1916–17

In 1916, 16 families formed the Finnish Home Building Association and broke ground on two co-operative apartment buildings, Alku (meaning “beginning”) and Alku Toinen (toinen meaning “two”), the nation’s first non-profit, cooperatively owned apartment buildings. At the time, the concept was so new that the state classified the buildings under the

Department of Agriculture, which regulated cooperative farms, rather than as housing. Roughly 10 years later, Sunset Park became home to Brooklyn’s “Finntown,” with roughly 50 more co-op apartment buildings and a cooperative shopping complex.



8. 566, 570 AND 574 44TH STREET AND 4404 SIXTH AVENUE ★

Eisenla & Carlson, 1913–14

In addition to the construction of new apartment buildings for cooperative ownership, the Finnish Home Building Association purchased already-built apartment houses and converted them into co-ops. These four buildings on the south side of Sunset Park are also outstanding in their architectural details, which include Beaux Arts ornament, ornate brickwork, and beautifully detailed iron and glass canopies on numbers 566 and 570.



9. 514–560 44TH STREET ★

Thomas Bennett, 1908

Distinctive rowhouses line both Sixth Avenue and its side streets in this part of Sunset Park. This row of Renaissance Revival limestone houses forms an elegant streetscape sloping down the hill from Sixth Avenue. Limestone experienced a surge in popularity after the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, which was dubbed

“the white city” for its use of light stone cladding. The exposition made a great impression on American architects, including Thomas Bennett, who resided in Sunset Park and designed over 600 rowhouses in the area.

10. 4701–4721 SIXTH AVENUE ★ Henry Pohlman of Pohlman & Patrick, 1904

This lovely row of Renaissance Revival houses between 47th and 48th Streets also employs limestone cladding and features elegant carvings, including a dragon-like motif, projecting bays and columns around its entryways. To break up the repetition, Pohlman clad the houses on either end in brownstone, creating a “bookend” effect. Walk along the pretty blocks on 47th or 48th Street toward Fourth Avenue to get to the next stop.



11. ST. ANDREW'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH ★ 4917 Fourth Avenue Lawrence B. Valk & Son, 1893

This Romanesque Revival church is Sunset Park's oldest church. Valk was a prolific designer of churches throughout the United States, many in this same Romanesque style. The church is graced with many unusual and charming features, including the arches of varying heights and widths on the front façade and a skinny column running up the side of its bell tower, capped with a small turret and modest cross.

12a. FORMER EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH OF THE INCARNATION

5323 Fourth Avenue

Harold T. Brinkerhoff, 1927–28

12b. ST. JACOBI EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH ★

5406 Fourth Avenue

1908–10

On the corner of 54th Street and Fourth Avenue are two magnificent Lutheran churches designed in the Gothic Revival style. The former Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Incarnation features red and orange brick with cast stone trim and a large pointed-arch stained-glass window dominating its Fourth Avenue façade. The building next door, which is part of the complex, was the congregation's original church, designed by Bannister & Shell and built in 1908. St. Jacobi, which once offered services in German for area immigrants, features beige brick, a pyramidal spire with copper dormers, and a grand crenellated entry with three pointed-arch doorways.



13. FORMER DR. MAURICE T. LEWIS HOUSE ★

404 55th Street

Harde & Short, 1907

The neighborhood's only freestanding mansion originally belonged to the director of the nearby Bay Ridge Savings Bank. The Renaissance Revival brick structure with a rusticated limestone base was designed by Harde & Short, a prestigious firm that

was also responsible for many grand apartment houses, including the fanciful, terra-cotta-adorned Alwyn Court on Seventh Avenue and West 58th Street in Manhattan.



14. 5404–5420 FIFTH AVENUE ★

William H. Abbott Jr., 1897

5424 FIFTH AVENUE ★

J. H. Nadigan, 1897

Designed for a mix of uses, Fifth Avenue contains buildings with retail shops at ground level and residential units above. In addition to these, the avenue is also home to religious institutions, firehouses, police stations, schools, banks and other commercial properties. One of the most architecturally distinguished sections is numbers 5404–5420, a Renaissance Revival row featuring projecting angled iron bays and metal window lintels. The brick Queen Anne building at number 5424 stands out for its pronounced corner turret and projecting bay on its 55th Street façade, which are both made of pressed metal.



15. BAY RIDGE

SAVINGS BANK ★

5323 Fifth Avenue

1926

The most prominent commercial building along this section of Fifth Avenue, this Classical Revival limestone bank features Ionic columns and pilasters along both its Fifth Avenue and 54th Street façades and grand arched window openings. Though it now functions as a Chase Bank, the original company name, foundation date and date of the building's construction still grace its crown.

16. 59TH STREET BETWEEN FOURTH AND FIFTH AVENUES ★

411–471: Henry Spicer, 1895

412–440: Frank S. Lowe, 1896

444–468: Henry Pohlmann, 1902

This block showcases some of the rowhouse architecture that defines Sunset Park. On the north side are 26 houses, unusual for their flat-fronted façades, all designed and built by the same person in the same year. Across the street are two sets of 13 houses by two different architects, but all of

them feature projecting bays, which creates an interesting contrast with the north side's flat wall.



17. OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP ★

526 59th Street

Franz Joseph Untersee, 1905–28

St. Alphonsus School:

5902 Sixth Avenue

1902–03

The largest religious edifice on Long Island, the basilica of Our Lady of Perpetual Help occupies an entire block. The granite Romanesque Revival basilica is a “double church” with two levels for worship. The ground floor was completed in 1909 and the second floor was completed in 1928. In its early years, the parish consisted mainly of Irish congregants. Today, some Irish remain, but the congregation is largely Hispanic and Chinese. Its subsidiary buildings include the Romanesque Revival brick rectory with Gothic Revival details and terra-cotta trim, which is to the rear of the basilica, and the St. Alphonsus School on Sixth Avenue, which predates the basilica by several years. The school was designed in the Ruskinian Gothic style with fanciful beige and black brickwork, pointed-arch door and window openings, and a central statue above its entry.

18. CHINATOWN

Eighth Avenue between 42nd and 68th Streets

This is the third Chinatown in New York City. Chinese immigrants made their way to Brooklyn from Chinatown in Manhattan in the 1980s, traveling on the N train from Canal Street to 62nd Street. Because the station is above-ground and open-air, the Chinese immigrants nicknamed it “Blue Sky Station,” which also references the relatively suburban environment of this Brooklyn neighborhood.



GREEN-WOOD CEMETERY ♦

At Sunset Park's northern border is the beautiful Green-Wood Cemetery. Opened in 1838, it was the city's first rural cemetery and its first great park (Central and Prospect Parks would not be built until later in the century). People from all over the city travelled to enjoy its lush surroundings, putting this rural neighborhood on the map before any major development took place here. The cemetery extends from 20th to 37th Streets and Fort Ham-



Green-Wood trolley



Sylvan Lake

A bronze statue entitled *Altar to Liberty: Minerva* by Frederick Ruckstull was erected on the site in 1920, in commemoration of the battle. Minerva's arm is outstretched toward the Statue of Liberty across New York Harbor.

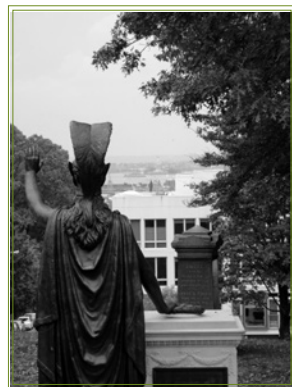
In addition to the cemetery's lavish mausoleums and memorials, other architectural marvels include the cemetery gates and chapel, which are both designated New York City landmarks. The brownstone gates were designed in the Gothic Revival style in 1861 by Richard Upjohn, the famed church architect who



Gothic Arch

ilton Parkway to Fourth Avenue, encompassing 478 acres in the heart of Brooklyn. Its rolling hills, specimen trees, ponds and beautiful gravesites continue to draw visitors. The entire site is a National Historic Landmark.

The cemetery is home to the highest topographical point in Brooklyn, roughly 200 feet above sea level. This is a site in the Battle of Brooklyn, which took place on August 27, 1776, America's first battle after signing the Declaration of Independence.



Minerva on Battle Hill

is best known for designing Trinity Church in Lower Manhattan. The chapel was constructed in 1911 after designs by Warren and Wetmore, architects of Grand Central Terminal, and is a reduced replica of Christopher Wren's Thomas Tower at Christ Church College in Oxford, England.

Among the noted residents of the cemetery are DeWitt Clinton (1769–1828), who, as governor of New York, was largely responsible for the construction of the Erie Canal; Henry Steinway (1797–1871), founder of Steinway & Sons, piano manufacturers; Samuel F. B. Morse (1791–1872), painter and inventor of the telegraph; William M. “Boss” Tweed (1823–1878), infamous New York politician and leader of Tammany Hall; Nathaniel Currier (1813–1888) and James Merritt Ives



Historic Chapel

(1824–1895),

famous printmakers; Susan Smith McKinney-Steward (1846–1918), the first black female doctor in New York State and third in the country; Louis Comfort Tiffany (1848–1933), decorative artist best known for his works in stained glass; Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960–1988), artist; and Leonard Bernstein (1918–1990), musician, composer and conductor.



William M. “Boss” Tweed’s family monument

SUNSET PARK

