



THE ADVOCATE FOR NEW YORK CITY'S HISTORIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Date: May 5th, 2026

Dr. Margaret Herman, Director of Research,
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
253 Broadway, 11th Floor
New York, NY 10007

Dear Dr. Herman,

The Historic Districts Council (HDC) and the Vanderveer Place Block Association are submitting the following RFE for the designation of the Vanderveer Place Historic District in the Flatbush section of Brooklyn.

The proposed district encompasses a cohesive group of early twentieth-century residential buildings that collectively illustrate the transition of Flatbush from a rural agrarian landscape to a suburban-style residential enclave shaped by modern transportation, speculative development, and evolving domestic life.

The district retains an exceptional concentration of architecturally significant houses and two-family rowhouses that reflect key developments in early twentieth-century residential design, including the rise of “easy housekeeping” homes and accommodation for the emerging middle class. The area’s historic development is closely tied to the former Vanderveer family estate, one of the most prominent landholders in colonial and nineteenth-century Brooklyn; and to the transformative infrastructure and real estate expansion that followed the consolidation of Greater New York City in 1898.

Together, the architectural integrity, historical associations, and cohesive streetscape character of Vanderveer Place warrant consideration for designation as a New York City Historic District. This exceptionally scenic section of Flatbush Avenue contains three blocks of high architectural integrity and significance. These blocks contain authentic renditions of early 20th-century bungalow-style and row house designs. The quaint architecture and the street’s intact historic character transform this area into a terrace-like suburb that blend together to form one of Flatbush Avenue’s most cohesive residential units.

We offer this statement of significance as part of the Historic District RFE.

Boundaries

The boundaries of the proposed Vanderveer Place Historic District have been carefully selected to encompass the contiguous area of greatest architectural integrity, historical coherence, and shared development history, while excluding areas that have experienced substantial alteration or loss of historic character.

The northern boundary at Clarendon Road marks a historical development edge associated with the subdivision of the Vanderveer estate and the early twentieth-century speculative construction that extended southward from this corridor. Flatbush Avenue forms the western boundary and historically functioned as the principal transportation and commercial artery of Flatbush, separating the intact residential enclave from later, larger-scale commercial and apartment development along the avenue.

The eastern boundary along East 23rd Street with a transition in architectural character and development patterns. This delineation forms a cohesive interior residential corridor characterized by early twentieth-century two-family rowhouses and detached suburban-style dwellings developed by a limited number of builders and architects. These blocks exhibit a high degree of visual unity in scale, materials, and architectural vocabulary that distinguishes them from surrounding areas and supports their treatment as a discrete historic district.

Historical Development

- The Vanderveer Family

Flatbush (from the Dutch “vlacke bos”, flat forest or wooded plain) was one of the original six towns making up the city of Brooklyn, and became part of that city in 1894. However, at the time of consolidation, much of the area that is now Vanderveer Place remained farmland that belonged to the Vanderveer family.

The earliest members of the Vanderveer family arrived in 1659 as Dutch settlers of indigenous Munsee Lenape land.¹ The homestead established by Cornelius Janssen Vanderveer was placed along Flatbush Avenue, originally an indigenous trail used by tribal members prior to colonization.² The farmland owned by the Vanderveers consisted of several wooden structures belonging primarily to descendants Jacob P. Vanderveer and John Vanderveer.

The Vanderveer family became one of the largest landowning families in Brooklyn. In 1805, artisans enslaved by the Vanderveer family constructed a windmill at the intersection of Clarendon Road and Rogers Avenue (just outside the proposed boundaries) that became an iconic landmark of pastoral Flatbush. This immense windmill,

¹ Mann, Mary. “‘Indian Villages’: The Story Behind a Map.” Brooklyn Public Library, April 30, 2020.

² Ibid.

four stories high, sheltered African American families seeking refuge during New York's 1863 draft riots. It became both a cultural marker and point of orientation, till it was destroyed in a fire in 1876.

- Transportation and Real Estate

By 1898, New York was consolidated into one city, and the burgeoning transportation networks that came about as a result of the unification would have deep ramifications in Flatbush. The BRT was formed in 1896 and, throughout the following decade, would play a critical role in establishing faster, more reliable forms of transportation for the Flatbush area. By 1901, the Brooklyn, Flatbush & Coney Island Railroad expanded through the Brooklyn Bridge and electrified, priming the neighborhood for a massive population surge and an increased demand for housing.

Infrastructural change began at Clarendon Road, which, until 1901, was known as Avenue C. When this street was renamed, this area was still the homestead of Captain Cornelius Vanderveer, a local hero known for supporting the American cause during the Revolutionary War. When he died in 1904, his estate quickly began to shrink; his home was demolished to make way for a series of single-family homes developed by John W. Egen and designed by architect G.M. Lawton. Meanwhile the homes of farmers Jacob Vanderveer, Randolph Brandt and William Bonner remained surrounded by lush farmland.

In 1906, advertisements for new homes highlighted easy access to the Brighton Beach train, newly paved avenues, shade trees, and close proximity to nearby trolleys. In the following ten years, Clarendon Road would continue to develop alongside the growth of transportation in the area.

However, residential development had to adjust to changing social circumstances. The growth of the white collar workforce (which included a larger segment of women in professional jobs than ever before) as well as the disappearance of servant labor, required a new type of home design. Multi-generational family living was being replaced by what was later described as the nuclear family. Many such families could not afford a single-family rowhouse, but wanted the form of a traditional rowhouse. Architects and developers worked around this need by creating two-family row houses. According to historian Suzanne Spellman, "It didn't matter the style, materials or configuration, two family houses were the new way to build."

The intersection of Vanderveer Place and East 23rd Street were the first houses to be constructed in the area in 1912 by the Jaret Construction Company, and designed by the prolific Cohn Brothers. They were advertised as "easy housekeeping" homes that had a suburban and quaint aesthetic, while also contributing to the need for high-density housing that emerged with increased transit in the area. Unfortunately, the creation of these houses also meant the demolition of the original Vanderveer homestead in 1911-12. The loss of the Dutch-style Vanderveer farmhouse, alongside the demolition of the old Vanderveer mill in 1876, signaled to the locals that a new era of development was underway in the once bucolic landscape.

The turn of the 20th Century also harkened the introduction of the automobile as a key component of residential design. By 1913, then-Brooklyn Borough President and the local council approved to pave the road between Vanderveer Place and East 23rd Street.

Following the new road, a group of eleven two-story rowhouses were erected on the Southern half of Vanderveer Place. The developer, Charles Infanger, partnered with architect Charles Goel to construct homes that displayed the same aesthetic qualities of the “easy housekeeping” homes across the street, with the added benefit of driveways for cars. Houses 2220 and 2224 that were particularly close to Flatbush Avenue not only had built in garages under the house, but also side parking for extra cars. The popular choice of the time was a seven-seater Studebaker, which is seen close to the houses in the 1940’s tax photo.

Architectural Development

The construction of Vanderveer Place marked an intersection between the old architectural styles of Queen Anne and Romanesque and the burgeoning popularity of Colonial Revival. The style came about as a result of the Centennial of the Declaration of Independence, which brought on a new fascination for Federal and Georgian elements in design. Gabled roofs, pronounced front porches surrounded by columns and Palladian windows returned with technological advances that allowed them to be more robust than their predecessors. Keeping in line with the Colonial Revival style, Red brick was the material of choice with white stone trim, decorative urns on the parapets, plus quoins and Classical pilasters.

The Cohn Brothers opened their first firm in Flatbush, and went on to become one of Brooklyn’s most prolific apartment design firms until the 1950’s. Some of their work can be found in the Jackson Heights, Crown Heights, and Park Slope Historic Districts. However, their work on Vanderveer Place combined the firm’s interest in contrasting aesthetics by combining Colonial Revival style with Renaissance Revival, Arts-and-Crafts and Tudor styles among others.

Much like Colonial revival, Renaissance Revival, Arts-and-Crafts alongside Tudor style harkened the opulence of earlier design forms alongside modern brickwork designs that emphasized frugality. The earlier houses constructed on Vanderveer place had creative brick ornamentation alongside the typical gabled roofs popular during their time of construction. Alternate homes have a set of three windows connected to an arch over the gabled roof. This is a part of the Cohn design that was not replicated.

While Charles Infanger mostly constructed his previous buildings in Romanesque Revival styles, the opportunity arose on Vanderveer Place to construct houses that appeared in continuity with the Cohn Brothers’ work, but with Infanger’s unique interpretation. The houses 2224-2246 in particular, had wooden porticos, pediments and lintels that created uniformity while the brickwork alternated in color. The result is a coherent

yet unique housing stock made by builders who had long honed their understanding of architecture and design in Brooklyn.

Integrity

The proposed Vanderveer Place Historic District retains a high degree of architectural and historical integrity, expressed through its cohesive streetscape, intact building fabric, and legibility of its early twentieth-century development. The district's rowhouses and detached dwellings largely preserve their original massing, lot configurations, rooflines, materials, and architectural detailing, including brick façades, gabled roofs, porticos, pediments, keystones, and Classical and Tudor-inspired ornamentation.

Alterations within the proposed boundaries are generally limited and reversible in nature, consisting primarily of window replacements, minor façade repairs, and localized porch modifications that do not substantially obscure the district's defining architectural characteristics. The spatial organization of the blocks—setbacks, driveways, and relationships between detached houses and rowhouses—remains consistent with the original suburban-inspired planning concept, conveying the historic transition from agrarian land to early twentieth-century residential enclave.

Collectively, the proposed district conveys integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and clearly communicates its period of significance as an intact speculative development dating from the 1910s and 1920s.

Conclusion

The proposed Vanderveer Place Historic District represents a rare and highly intact example of early twentieth-century suburban-style residential development within Brooklyn's urban fabric. Its buildings embody the architectural transition from nineteenth-century revival styles to Colonial Revival and Arts-and-Crafts-inspired design, while also reflecting changing domestic arrangements and the emergence of middle-class housing typologies in the era of expanding transit access.

The district's historical significance is rooted in the transformation of the Vanderveer family farmland into a planned residential enclave, the role of speculative builders and architects such as the Cohn Brothers and Charles Infanger, and the broader infrastructural and demographic shifts that shaped Flatbush and Brooklyn in the early twentieth century. Despite subsequent development pressures along Flatbush Avenue, the core blocks of Vanderveer Place retain a remarkable degree of architectural coherence, material integrity, and historic character.

Designation of the Vanderveer Place Historic District would recognize and protect this distinctive residential landscape as an important component of Brooklyn's architectural and social history, preserving a tangible record of Flatbush's transition from pastoral farmland to a modern urban neighborhood.

Work on this RFE would not be possible without the research of Shannen Smiley, as part of Pratt GCPE's Heritage Documentation Studio, February 2024. All present day photographs are credited to the Vanderveer Place Block Association unless stipulated otherwise.

Warm Regards,



Frampton Tolbert
Executive Director

Photographs:



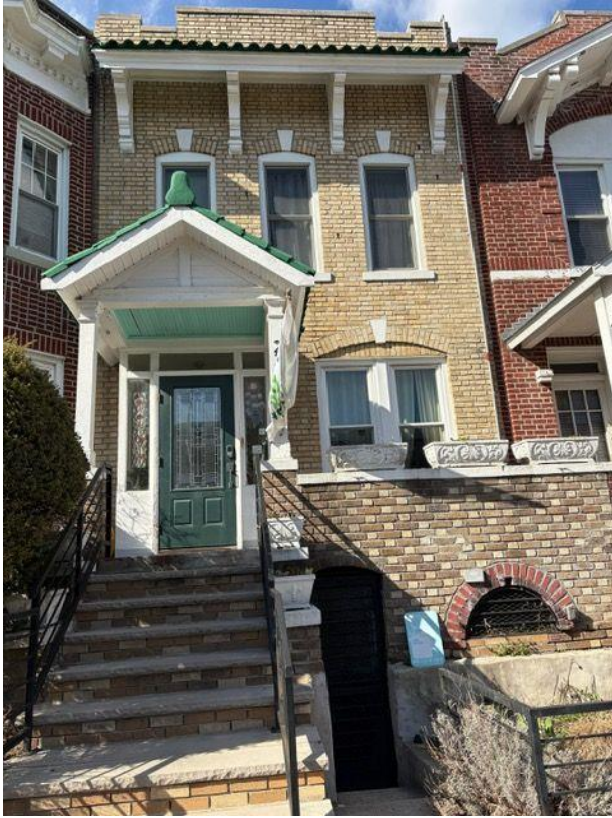
2222 Vanderveer Place, current condition (Left) and 1940's Tax Photo (Right).



2219 Vanderveer Place, current condition (Left) and 1940's Tax Photo (Right).



2228 Vanderveer Place, current condition (Left) and 1940's Tax Photo (Right).



2227 Vanderveer Place, current condition (Left) and 1940's Tax Photo (Right).



Vanderveer Place North Side



Vanderveer Place, South Side



2224 Vanderveer Place



2231 Vanderveer Place



Vanderveer Place Streetscape (photo credits to HDC)



Vanderveer Place North Streetscape (photo credits to HDC)

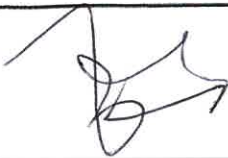
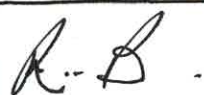
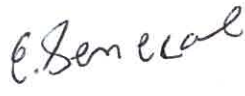
THE VANDERVEER PLACE BLOCK ASSOCIATION

Support to Seek Landmark Status to Preserve Vanderveer Place

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE
Giovana Holiday	2243 Vanderveer Place Brooklyn NY 11226	347-262-4626	Holidaygiovana@gmail	gjh
Jade Holiday	Same "	347-623-0929	Jade holiday16@gmail.com	JH
Jackie Holiday	↓	718-749-3423	holiday.jackie@yahoo.com	JH
Asia Mckenzie	2240 Vanderveer Pl	347-784-6841	Yarp.amkenzi@gmail.w	del
Petal Mckenzie ROYER	2240 Vanderveer Pl	917-865-9197	petalmdia@gmail.com	Petal
Sirithana Buyanova	2223 Vanderveer Pl	347-261-3284	Sbuyanova@gmail.com	SBuyanova
Vernese Edgheill Walden	2245 Vanderveer Pl.	301-370-3066	veewalden@gmail.com	Vernese Walden
Grace Edgheill	2245 Vanderveer Place	301-370-3066	Grace Seale Edgheill graceseeleedgheill@gmail	Grace Edgheill
Yvonne Murray	2242 Vanderveer Place	347-420-9082	ymurray253@gmail.com	Yvonne Murray

THE VANDERVEER PLACE BLOCK ASSOCIATION

Support to Seek Landmark Status to Preserve Vanderveer Place

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE
Jessica Dawson	2241 Vanderveer	917-608-3343	Jessicadawson@gmail.com	
FELIPE (Luis)	2241 VANDERVEER	917-449-3669	Pelipe.floros@gmail.com	
Annie MacDevitt	2227 Vanderveer Pl	646-725-4945	anniemacdevitt@gmail.com	
Tiffany Erskine	2225 Vanderveer Pl	929 233 1245	Tiffany.Erskine4@gmail.com	
Raymond Baptiste	2219 ^{PC} vanderveer	917 562 0634	dj.page2u@yahoo.com	
Jean Johnson	2228 Vanderveer Pl	718-469-3781	JeanLJohnson923@gmail.com	
Michael Johnson	2228 Vanderveer Pl	(477) 200-5738	mJohnson3228@gmail.com	
Tori Johnson	3420 Avenue K	347-546-9799	t.johnson9270@gmail.com	
Elizabeth Senecal	2230 Vanderveer Place	917 375 2437	Senecal.elizabeth@gmail.com	

THE VANDERVEER PLACE BLOCK ASSOCIATION

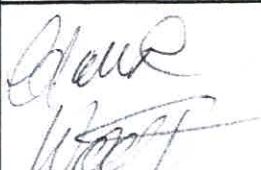
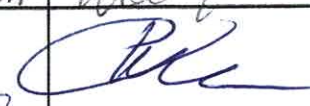
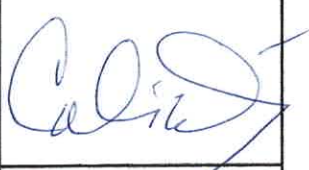
Support to Seek Landmark Status to Preserve Vanderveer Place

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE
Mary Peart	2232 Vanderveer	718 941-439		Mary Peart
Ellaine Peart	2232 Vanderveer Pl	same		Ellaine Peart
RONALD HOLIDAY	2243 VANDERVEER PL.	(718) 930-3062	airtech2243@gmail.com	R. Holiday
Cheryl Cuffley Connell	2238 Vanderveer Pl.	(917) 837-1722	cheryl328@gmail.com	Cheryl Cuffley Connell
Rosemary Cuffley	2238 Vanderveer Place	917 882-5051	relise230@aol.com	Rosemary Cuffley
ANNETTE L. CUFFLEY	2238 VANDERVEER PLACE	(917) 647-8051	alav25@aol.com	Annette L. Cuffley
JOHN CUFFLEY	2238 VANDERVEER PLACE	(347) 581-8487		John Cuffley
CECILE CUFFLEY	2238 VANDERVEER PLACE	(917) 414-5192		Cecile Cuffley
Leon Felix	2236 Vanderveer PL	718-926-0046	leon.felix00@gmail.com	Leon Felix

W

THE VANDERVEER PLACE BLOCK ASSOCIATION

Support to Seek Landmark Status to Preserve Vanderveer Place

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	E-MAIL	SIGNATURE
CHRISTE WOODS	2280 VANDERVEER BL Bklyn-1	718 826 2704	CWOODS007+YAHOO.COM	
Charles Etienne	1161 FLATBUSH	347-556-5759	Etienne CHARLES 23@YAHOO.COM	
Calvin Downing	2222 Vanderveer Pl	718-603 4294	DowningCalvin 817@Gmail.com	
Kim Fraser	2225 Vanderveer Pl	347 526-8227	Kim.Fraser 2225@Comcast.com	
Debra Murray McArthur	2242 Vanderveer Pl	856-782-3347	Wearable Art 60@hotmail.com	