PROPOSED BEDFORD HISTORIC DISTRICT

The proposed Bedford Historic District consists of approximately 800 buildings and is located within the area roughly bounded by Bedford and Nostrand Avenues on the west, Monroe Street and Putnam Avenue on the north, Tompkins and Marcy Avenues on the east, and Fulton and Halsey Streets on the south.

The proposed district is significant as part of the larger Bedford-Stuyvesant area, which, for two-thirds of the twentieth century, has been one of the nation's largest and best-known African-American and Caribbean-American residential communities, with its roots extending back to the period of Dutch colonial settlement in the 17th century.

The area consists mostly of masonry row houses and small apartment houses constructed between 1870 and 1900 in the popular architectural styles of the era: Italianate, neo-Grec, Queen Anne, Romanesque Revival, and Renaissance Revival. The buildings remain largely intact, forming extraordinary well-preserved late-19th century streetscapes. Many of the buildings were designed by the prolific Brooklyn architect, Isaac D. Reynolds. His earliest row in the district is 66 to 72 Halsey Street, built in 1881 in the Italianate/neo-Grec style. His latest rows, 254 to 260 Hancock Street, were built in 1889-92 in a combination of the Italianate, Romanesque Revival, and Queen Anne styles. Another prominent architect was T.B. Jackson, whose earliest row at 31 to 45 Halsey Street, was constructed in 1878 in the neo-Grec style. Gilbert A. Schellenger designed the row at 196 to 200 Hancock Street, built 1883, in the Queen Anne style. The prominent Brooklyn architect Montrose Morris, designed the handsome row at 246 to 252 Hancock Street, built in 1889, in a unified, Queen Anne style. Rudolph Daus designed, also in the Queen Anne style, the row house at 74 Halsey Street, which was built in 1886.

Many of the late 19th-century residents of the area were families of New England origins, while others were members of immigrant groups, such as the Germans and the Irish, who had prospered sufficiently to be able to afford the purchase of a newly-constructed row house or the rental of a flat in one of the apartment buildings. During this early period, prosperous African-Americans also purchased houses within the area. By World War I, the demographics of the area began to change and African-Americans and members of white ethnic groups, who were discriminated against elsewhere in the city, were able to acquire decent, affordable housing in Bedford-Stuyvesant. If Harlem was perceived as the center of New York's black cultural life with the rise of the Harlem Renaissance in the 1920s and 1930s, Bedford-Stuyvesant offered an alternative: a residential community within the "borough of homes and churches" with block after block of attractive row houses and small apartment buildings. With its unparalleled opportunities for home ownership, Bedford-Stuyvesant became the community of choice for many of New York's African-American residents.

The proposed district also includes four designated landmarks. The Alhambra Apartments, 500-518 Nostrand Avenue and 29-33 Macon Street (Montrose Morris, 1889-90), the Renaissance Apartments, 488 Nostrand Avenue and 140-144 Hancock Street (also Montrose Morris, 1892), Girls' High School, 475

Nostrand Avenue (James W. Naughton, 1885-86, 1891 and C.B.J Snyder, 1912), and Boys' High School, 832 Marcy Avenue (James W. Naughton, 1891-91 and C.B.J. Snyder, 1905-10).

The proposed Bedford Historic District maintains its largely intact late-19th century architectural character, forming extraordinary streetscapes of row houses and small apartment buildings with commercial ground stories, interspersed by churches, schools, and related public and institutional buildings.