

SECRET IS OUT IN PROSPECT LEFFERTS GARDENS

By Joseph De Avila | February 4, 2012

The stunning architecture and easy access to Prospect Park have always been the main draws for newcomers to Prospect Lefferts Gardens in Brooklyn. The neighborhood offers some of the city's best examples of turn-of-the-century architecture at a fraction of the price for homes in Park Slope on the other side of Prospect Park.

The Romanesque Revival, Colonial Revival and Neo-Federal style homes in the historic district are highly coveted properties with homeowners who often have lived in the neighborhood for more than 30 years. Residents say the long-term homeownership makes the community a tightknit group that takes pride in preserving its historic homes.

"People can't believe the architecture in that neighborhood and how nice it is," said Keith Mack of Corcoran Group, who has lived in the area since 1998. "The secret is out."



Ramsay de Give for The Wall Street Journal

Ocean Avenue along Prospect Park in Brooklyn's Prospect Lefferts Gardens.

The neighborhood has historically been home to one of the city's largest West Indian populations. They began moving to Prospect Lefferts Gardens in the 1950s and 1960s. In recent years, the neighborhood had increasingly attracted more young people seeking affordable condos and apartments as well as the older homes, said Bill Sheppard of Brown Harris Stevens, who has lived in the neighborhood for 24 years.

"It's drawing a big segment of younger people priced out of other locations," Mr. Sheppard said. "It's your classic New York melting pot."

The historic homes in the neighborhood date back to about the 1890s. In 1893, James Lefferts, a descendant of Dutch settlers, divided up his family farm into 600 building lots. That area now makes up the Prospect Lefferts Gardens Historic District.

Building restrictions were enacted at the time so that the homes would develop in a uniform way, and houses were given deed covenants that permitted only single-family homes. Those restrictions remain today, and they have prevented homes in the area from being separated into individual apartments.

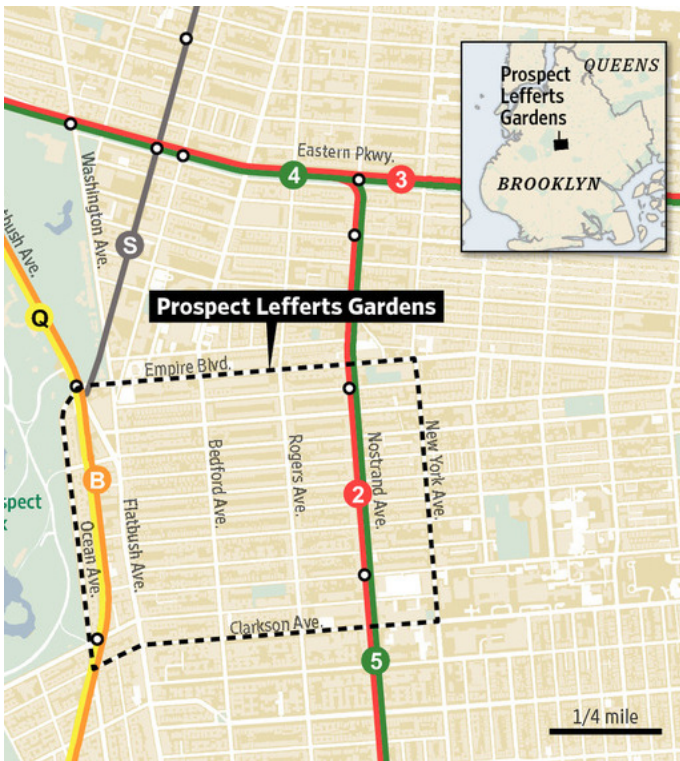
The median asking price for Prospect Lefferts Gardens homes, condos and co-ops is \$374,500, or \$470 a square foot,

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according to real-estate site StreetEasy.com. In Park Slope to the west, it is \$686 a square foot, and in Crown Heights to the north, it is \$397, according to StreetEasy.

Less than a dozen single-family homes a year in the historic district are put on the market, brokers say. Prices range from the low \$900,000s to around \$1.5 million, said Lee Solomon of Brown Harris Stevens.

Ms. Solomon recently sold a three-story limestone townhouse with six bedrooms and three bathrooms that had an asking price of \$1.695 million. The home, built in 1901, has a wraparound, rear garden, and most of the home's original woodwork has been preserved.

In Park Slope, similar homes are sold in the range of \$3 million to \$4 million, she said. "People are just blown away by the space that they can afford over there," according to Ms. Solomon.

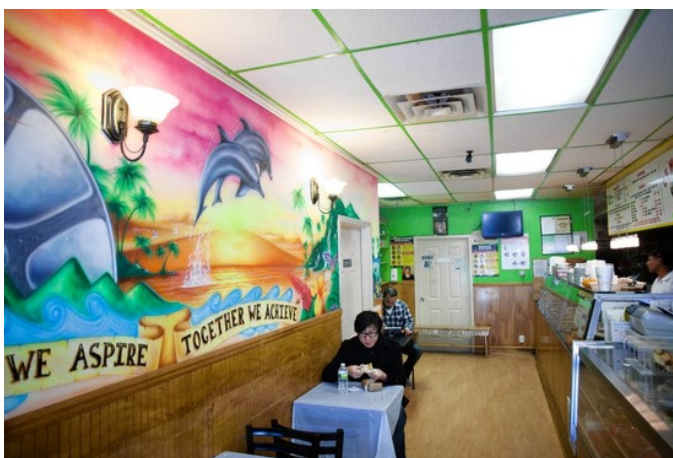
There were some condo developments in the area that have been build in recent years, but most have sold out. Now condo inventory in the neighborhood is very tight. There is, however, a new condo development at 185 Ocean Ave. that faces the park. Current asking prices range from \$299,000 to \$575,000.

Prospect Lefferts Gardens has easy access to express train stops. The neighborhood is serviced by the 2, 5, B and Q trains as well as the shuttle to Prospect Park.

Parks: Prospect Lefferts Gardens is near the southeastern portion of Prospect Park. It is close to the park's lake and also the Parade Ground, which has baseball fields, a football field, a soccer field and basketball and volleyball courts.

Schools: Prospect Lefferts Gardens public schools are in District 17. They include primary school Adrian Hegeman and middle schools Parkside Preparatory Academy and Gladstone Atwell. Also in the area is Lefferts Gardens Charter School.

In 2011, 47.1% of District 2 students in grades three through eight received a proficient score on the math exam, and 37% of students received a proficient score on the English exam. In 2006, the results were 43% for math and 39.8% for English.



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Numerous Caribbean restaurants in the neighborhood, such as De Hot Pot, pictured here, serve food from all over the West Indies.

Private schools nearby include St. Gregory the Great in neighboring Crown Heights. That school runs from nursery through middle school. Also in Prospect Lefferts Gardens is the Lefferts Gardens Montessori School.

Restaurants: Caribbean restaurants in Prospect Lefferts Gardens including Culpeppers and De Hot Pot serve food from all over the West Indies. Gino's Trattoria on Flatbush Avenue serves Italian fare.

Shopping: Flatbush Avenue is the neighborhood's main thoroughfare and has basic shops including grocery stores, hardware stores and pharmacies. There are also independent stores like Monk's Trunk, a vintage and children's clothing store.

Entertainment: The Wollman Ice Skating Rink at Prospect Park is under construction, but is scheduled to be ready in time for next winter. Also nearby to Prospect Lefferts Gardens is the Prospect Park Zoo and the Brooklyn Botanic Garden.