

CHV Kingsborough Seniors Project 1733 Bergen Street (Block 1344, Lot 175)

WEEKSVILLE, BOROUGH OF BROOKLYN, KINGS COUNTY, NEW YORK

Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation

SHPO Project Review Number: 24PR01561

LPC PUID: 37311

Prepared for:

CAMBA Housing Ventures, Inc.
50 Broadway, 30th Floor
New York, NY 10004

Prepared by:



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Management Summary

SHPO Project Review Number: 24PR01561

LPC Unique Project Identifier: 37311

Involved Agencies: New York City Housing Preservation Authority

Phase of Survey: Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study

Location Information

Location: 1733 Bergen Avenue, Brooklyn
Minor Civil Division: 04701
County: Kings

Survey Area

Length: Approximately 220 feet
Width: Approximately 115 feet
Area: Approximately 25,300 square feet

**USGS 7.5 Minute
Quadrangle Map:**

Brooklyn

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A. INTRODUCTION AND PROJECT DESCRIPTION

CAMBA Housing Ventures, Inc., (“the Developer”) and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) proposes to construct a mixed-use residential building at 1733 Bergen Street in the Weeksville neighborhood of Brooklyn (see **Figure 1**). The proposed Project Site includes a vacant portion of the NYCHA Kingsborough Houses Extension campus that was constructed on Block 1344, Lot 175 in 1965. The Project Site is situated on the north side of Bergen Street between Buffalo Avenue and Kingsborough 5th Walk. The remainder of the adjoining superblock is developed with NYCHA’s Kingsborough Houses, which were constructed in 1941.

The Project Site is currently an undeveloped landscaped area with trees, pathways, and seating. With the Proposed Project, the Project Site would be redeveloped with a 13-story, mixed-use building containing affordable senior units and community facility space. The existing tax lot (Block 1344, Lot 175) would be subdivided and a new tax lot number would be assigned to the Project Site subsequent to disposition approval. Once subdivided, the Developer would enter into a 99-year long-term lease and Development Agreement with NYCHA to develop the Proposed Project. The Proposed Project would provide needed affordable housing for seniors and would include on-site health and social services.

B. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The Proposed Project requires approval from the NYCHA Board of Trustees and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under Section 18 of the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, as amended, for the disposition of public housing property. In addition to disposition approval, the Proposed Project would include Mayoral zoning overrides requested by NYCHA. Construction funding is anticipated from the New York City Department of Housing Preservation and Development’s (HPD) Senior Affordable Rental Apartments Program (SARA) and the New York City Housing Development Corporation’s (HDC) Extremely Low and Low-Income Affordability Program (ELLA). In addition, NYCHA intends to utilize HUD Project-Based Vouchers. These discretionary approvals are collectively referred to as the “Proposed Actions.” The Proposed Actions are subject to New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (“Section 106”).

Pursuant to Section 106 and CEQR, consultation was initiated with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). In a comment letter issued March 27, 2024, SHPO determined that the Proposed Project would not result in adverse effects on archaeological resources. In a comment letter dated May 8, 2024, LPC determined that the site was potentially archaeologically significant for archaeological resources associated with the site’s 19th century occupation. LPC requested additional research in the form of an archaeological documentary study to determine if the Project Site is archaeologically sensitive.

To satisfy LPC's request, a Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study ("Phase 1A Study") of the Project Site was prepared by AKRF in June 2024. As described in detail in the following section, the northern half of the Phase 1A Study was identified as archaeologically sensitive for resources associated with the mid-19th century occupation of the Project Site. The Phase 1A Study recommended a Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation in the areas of sensitivity to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological shaft features.

The Phase 1A Study was submitted to LPC and SHPO for review and comment. SHPO accepted the report but did not issue formal comments. In a comment letter dated August 6, 2024, LPC concurred with the conclusions and recommendations of the Phase 1A Study and requested that a Phase 1B Archaeological Work Plan outlining the scope of work for the proposed field testing be prepared. A Phase 1B Archaeological Work Plan was completed by AKRF in October 2024. In separated comment letters issued on November 12, 2024, LPC and SHPO each concurred with the work plan.

C. PROJECT SITE HISTORY AND SUMMARY OF PHASE 1A STUDY

PRECONTACT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

The Phase 1A Study concluded that prior to modern development, the Project Site was situated on a hill, with steeper slopes in the southern half of the site. The Phase 1A Study concluded that because of the absence of previously identified precontact period archaeological sites within one mile of the site and the site's pre-development topographical setting, the Project Site is not sensitive for precontact period archaeological resources.

HISTORIC PERIOD ARCHAEOLOGICAL SENSITIVITY

The Phase 1A Study also determined that at least four historical lots within the northern half of the Project Site were developed with residential buildings between the mid-1850s and the early 1860s; the buildings were historically known as 1742 through 1748 Dean Street. The houses were primarily occupied by families of individuals of German and Irish origin or descent. It is likely that the houses were constructed before water and sewer lines were available, and may not have been connected to those lines immediately. Therefore, the occupants of these houses may have relied on shaft features (e.g., privies, cisterns, and wells) for the purposes of water gathering and sanitation. While some landscape modification occurred in the 19th century, when the site was developed with the Saint Joseph's institute—a residential home for children with hearing loss—and in the mid-20th century in association with the construction of the existing NYCHA facility, it is not clear that the ground surface would have been disturbed to a depth sufficient to disturb these shaft features in their entirety. The northern half of the Project Site was therefore determined to have moderate sensitivity for shaft features associated with the 19th century occupation of the houses at 1742 through 1748 Dean Street (see **Figure 1**). No historical development occurred in the southern half of the site, which featured a downward slope, and that portion of the site was determined to have no archaeological sensitivity.

D. SITE CONDITIONS AT THE TIME OF THE PHASE 1B ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION

The Project Site is situated at 1733 Bergen Street, to the east of the 25-story Kingsborough Houses Extension (ca. 1965) and its one-story circular community center that extends from its eastern side and sits within a large, paved patio. The Project Site is a level, landscaped lawn

with numerous mature trees and benches. The Project Site and the Kingsborough Houses Extension are situated above the grade of Bergen Street. An approximately 9-foot-tall stone retaining wall lines the southern side of Lot 175, and stone and concrete walls of varying heights extend around the eastern and northern sides of the lot. The main entrance of the western façade of the Kingsborough Houses Extension is at the grade of Bergen Street and Buffalo Avenue. The NYCHA Kingsborough Houses are located to the north and east of the Project Site.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation of the Project Site was completed on December 16 and 17, 2024 and supervised by Elizabeth D. Meade, PhD, Registered Professional Archaeologist (RPA) #16353, who served as Principal Investigator. Dr. Meade exceeds the requirements for the professional qualifications standards for archaeologists as defined by the Secretary of the Interior (36 CFR 61)¹ and complies with the codes and standards outlined by the RPA.²

B. POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES IDENTIFIED IN THE PHASE 1B WORK PLAN

As stated in the 2018 LPC guidelines, although documentary research determines archaeological potential, testing is required to confirm the presence of those resources and to determine their significance. LPC's guidelines indicate that "archaeological resources are significant if they provide new insight about the past and answer important research questions" (LPC 2018: 19). As described in the Phase 1B Work Plan (AKRF 2024b), the objective of the Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation of the Project Site was to document its subsurface conditions to determine whether soil levels were present that could potentially contain intact archaeological resources associated with the historic period occupation of the site. As described below, the Phase 1B Archaeological Work Plan outlined possible archaeological resource types that could be present on the Project Site.

POTENTIAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

As described above, the Phase 1A Study (AKRF 2024a) concluded that the northern half of the Project Site had moderate sensitivity for archaeological resources associated with the early 19th century occupation of the Project Site. Given the site's pattern of 19th century development and 20th century disturbance as documented in the Phase 1A Study, the site was considered sensitive for archaeological resources associated with domestic shaft features (e.g., privies, cisterns, and wells) associated with the houses constructed in the northern half by the 1850s and 1860s. Privies—the shaft features constructed beneath outhouses—are typically expected to be located at the rear of the historic property while wells and cisterns are typically located closer to a dwelling. These features would have remained in use until municipal water and sewer networks became available in the mid- to late-19th century, and possibly for decades after. The areas that may have been undisturbed and that could contain shaft features would be expected to be located to the rear of the historical houses in the southern portion of the area

¹ https://www.nps.gov/history/local-law/arch_stnds_9.htm

² <https://rpanet.org/page/CodesandStandards>

identified on **Figure 2**. These rear yard areas considered most likely to have archaeological sensitivity represent the sites most appropriate for excavation and subsurface testing.

C. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND GOALS

The determination of an archaeological site's significance is directly related to whether the identified resources on that site are considered to be of high research value. In order to determine if any archaeological resources from the Project Site would be considered to have significant research value, a list of research questions was developed that can be applied to any identified archaeological resources within the Project Site in an attempt to determine their research value. These research topics were specific to the types of potential archaeological resources that could be encountered within the Project Site as described in the previous section, e.g., domestic shaft feature.

Domestic shaft features—such as those that may be located within the former rear yards of the houses formerly within the Project Site—can contain important archaeological resources. As described above, these features were frequently filled with domestic refuse after they were no longer used for their original purposes. In the case of privies, such refuse deposition would typically also have occurred during the period of active use, as there were few alternate methods of garbage disposal at the time. As such, filled shaft features often contain valuable information about the daily lives of a site's residents.

Artifacts recovered from trash or surface deposits are the material remains of what an individual purchases and/or uses on a daily or routine basis and they can provide insight into certain aspects of his or her life. Such consumption patterns are strongly influenced by socioeconomic status, occupation, household composition, and ethnicity. Archaeological evidence from residential lots can provide information on how different characteristics, such as socioeconomic status or ethnicity, have influenced consumer choice behavior, which in turn can inform our knowledge about what life was like for the individuals and families that resided on a property. This information can then be compared and contrasted with data associated with similar populations elsewhere in the City. Similarly, if resources associated with the industrial use of the Project Site are encountered, they can be compared and contrasted with other archaeological sites in the region to identify broader patterns. These comparisons could yield previously unknown insights into the ways of life of the individuals living in the Weeksville area during the 19th century.

D. FIELD AND ANALYTICAL METHODS

As described previously, this Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation was designed to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological resources and to determine if additional fieldwork would be required to evaluate the site's potential eligibility for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (i.e., a Phase 2 Archaeological Survey/Evaluation). The Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation was conducted in accordance with LPC's "Guidelines for Archaeology work in New York City," issued in 2018;¹ with the standards for Historic and Cultural Resources analyses as specified in the *CEQR Technical Manual* as amended in 2014;² SHPO's *Phase I Archaeological Report Format Requirements* as issued in 2005;³ and the

¹ <http://www.nyc.gov/html/lpc/downloads/pdf/pubs/ayguide.pdf>

² http://www.nyc.gov/html/oec/downloads/pdf/2014_ceqr_tm/09_Historic_Resources_2014.pdf

³ <https://parks.ny.gov/documents/shpo/environmental-review/PhaseIReportStandards.pdf>

“Standards for Cultural Resources Investigations and the Curation of Archaeological Collections in New York State” as issued by the New York Archaeological Council (NYAC) in 1994 and adopted by SHPO in 1995.¹

All archaeological testing occurred within the areas of archaeological sensitivity identified in the Phase 1A Study depicted on **Figure 2**. The testing strategy as outlined below is consistent with that proposed in the approved Phase 1B Work Plan, except where noted.

METHODOLOGY FOR SUBSURFACE TESTING

The subsurface testing consisted of four mechanically excavated trenches. No artifacts were observed within the excavated soils and no laboratory analysis was required. Modern refuse (e.g., 20th/21st century trash or plastic) was not collected. As no historical ground surfaces or archaeological features/artifact deposits were observed, hand-excavation of shovel test pits (STPs) was not required. The length, width, and depth of trenches varied based on location and any associated obstructions.

Trenches were placed in areas free of obstructions (e.g., subsurface utilities, benches, and trees) and where there was sufficient room for the backhoe to operate (e.g., sufficient space for the safe rotation/operation of the machine and for stockpiling of excavated soils) without presenting safety hazards to either the archaeological team or staff or residents or visitors of the on-site buildings.

All trenches were located in unpaved areas and were excavated through grass and dirt surfaces. In each trench, the backhoe slowly and gently excavated soils within the trench under the direction and observation of the Principal Investigator. When trench depths were less than 5 feet below grade, the archaeological team entered trenches to trowel through surface deposits and side walls, make observations about soils, and look for artifacts. Soils at depths greater than 5 feet below grade were observed from the stable ground surface and observations regarding soils and artifacts were collected from backdirt piles or from soils within the backhoe bucket before they were dumped. Some measurements of deeply buried soil stratigraphy are therefore approximate except for those locations where it is noted that more specific measurements could be directly recorded. At each trench, excavation proceeded until seemingly undisturbed subsoil was observed or until the machine could no longer excavate to greater depths. Each test location was backfilled and compacted following its excavation.

As outlined in the approved Phase 1B Archaeological Work Plan, up to six trenches were proposed. Two additional trenches were initially proposed in the northeastern corner of the Project Site, in an area containing electrical and stormwater drainage lines. After the excavation of four trenches showed relatively consistent soil profiles and/or indicated the presence of clean fill, the Principal Investigator determined that the excavation of the additional trenches in the northeast corner was not likely to result in the collection of additional relevant data. The Principal Investigator notified LPC of this decision while in the field.

SITE DOCUMENTATION AND LOCATIONAL CONTROLS

Professional standards for excavation, recording stratigraphy, mapping, and photographing the excavation were applied during the Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation. All fieldwork was documented through notes, photographs, and drawings, and all relevant professional standards

¹ <http://nyarchaeology.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/NYACStandards.pdf>

were applied. Soil profiles including colors—recorded using Munsell® soil color charts—and texture/inclusions were recorded in field notes. Testing locations were recorded in field notes and field maps using standard nomenclature and established using measuring tapes. During testing, depths were recorded relative to the ground surface and converted to NAVD88 using nearby spot elevations as mapped on recent site surveys. The North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83) was used as a permanent horizontal datum.

A. SUMMARY OF TRENCH EXCAVATION

As described in the previous chapter, four trenches were excavated within undeveloped locations within the area of archaeological sensitivity as identified in the Phase 1A Study (see **Figure 2**). As described previously, the typical urban archaeological strategy for confirming the presence or absence of shaft features involves the placement of trenches near the rear wall of a house (where cisterns and wells would be expected) and near the rear lot line (where privies would be expected). Three trenches were excavated in an area near what was historically the southern end of the rear yards of the houses that stood on the Project Site in the 19th century. The fourth trench was excavated in the northwestern portion of the area of sensitivity and was excavated north-south to avoid active utility lines. The trenches were placed in locations determined to be free of utilities or other obstructions to confirm the presence or absence of intact buried historical ground surfaces or artifact deposits of such density that they could suggest the presence of nearby shaft features or middens.

As shown in **Table 3-1** and **Photographs 1 through 4** (see **Figures 3 and 4**), all of the trenches encountered either clean glacial subsoil or clean fill material under a layer of topsoil. No evidence of shaft features; historical building foundations; *in situ* historical artifact deposits; or intact buried ground surfaces was observed. Observations and artifact analysis associated with individual trenches are outlined in the following section.

Table 3-1
Summary of Trenches

Trench	Size (feet)			Approximate Surface Elevation (NAVD88)*	Observed Soil Levels		
	L	W	D		Depth (inches)	Description/ Soil Color	Notes
1	15	8	6	94.5	0 to 3	Top soil Black (10YR2/1) loam with gravel	
					3 to 16	Dark grayish brown (10YR4/2) fill material with gravel	
					16 to 36	Subsoil Yellowish brown (10YR5/4) silty sand with boulders	Tree roots and boulders throughout
						Brownish yellow (10YR6/4) very fine sand	Limited deposits that contained modern tubing; likely fill associated with recent Phase II Environmental Site Investigation
					36 to 72	Subsoil Dark yellowish brown (10YR4/4) gravely coarse sand	Natural and compact

Table 3-1 (cont'd)
Summary of Trenches

Trench	Size (feet)			Approximate Surface Elevation (NAVD88)*	Observed Soil Levels		
	L	W	D		Depth (inches)	Description/ Soil Color	Notes
2/3	25	5	5.5 to 6	94.6	0 to 8	Top Soil Black (10YR2/1) loose sandy loam with roots	Depth varies due to root activity; remnant of older disabled utility conduit observed at west end of trench
					8 to 36	Subsoil Dark yellowish brown (10YR4/6) silty sand; damp and rocky	Contains weathered rock
					36 to 72	Subsoil Yellowish brown (10YR5/6) coarse sand	Contains weathered rock; increasingly compact and rocky towards the bottom; rockiness decreases to the west towards the existing building
					72	Subsoil Yellowish brown (10YR5/4) coarse sand with gravel and boulders	
4	10	5	9	95	0 to 16	Topsoil Black (10YR2/1) sandy loam underlain by rocky gray fill (10YR4/2)	
					16 to 48	Fill Brown (10YR4/3) clean, loose sand with small rocks	Slightly damp
					48 to 108	Fill Yellowish brown (10YR5/4 and 10YR5/6) clean, loose sand	
Notes: *Estimated using spot elevations as seen on recent site surveys.							

B. OBSERVATIONS WITHIN INDIVIDUAL TRENCHES

TRENCH 1

Trench 1 was placed near what was historically the rear lot line of what was historically the house at 1746 Dean Street (see **Photograph 1** on **Figure 3**). The trench was placed west of an electrical line that connects lampposts along the eastern side of the Project Site and west of a drainage line and catch basin. Further excavation to the east was not possible due to the presence of the electrical line, mature trees, and the extant retaining wall that lines the Project Site. The trench measured 15 feet in length (east-west) and 8 feet in width (north-south) and was excavated to a depth of 6 feet below the ground surface (88.5 feet NAVD88).

The upper soils within the trench included loamy top soil underlain by a gray, rocky fill to a depth of approximately 16 inches. Evidence of iron plates similar to those used in landscaping features/planter boxes elsewhere within the open space were observed on the north and south sides of the trench. Beneath the fill were layers of yellowish brown, brownish yellow, and dark yellowish brown subsoil. Upper subsoil layers contained tree roots and boulders and lower levels were compact with gravelly coarse sand. In one portion of the trench, a brownish yellow clean sand was observed in association with a clear plastic tube that appeared to have been installed during recently soil borings completed for an environmental site assessment in association with the current project. No cultural material was observed within the trench.

The presence of large rocks/boulders and light colored soils and the absence of cultural material appear to suggest that these subsoil layers may have historically been situated at a greater

depth and were historically overlaid by soils that were previously removed by stripping or grading, either during the construction of the former children's home or the current NYCHA facility.

TRENCHES 2 AND 3

Trenches 2 and 3 were excavated as a single, continuous line across the southwestern corner of the area of sensitivity (see **Photograph 2** on **Figure 3** and **Photograph 3** on **Figure 4**). The trenches extended through what was historically the rear of the houses formerly located at 1742 and 1744 Dean Street. Further excavation to the east and west was limited by the presence of electrical lines and stormwater drainage infrastructure as well as presence of decorative trees. Trench 2 was excavated in an approximately 5-foot by 5-foot area and Trench 3 was continued to the west for a full combined length of 25 feet. The trenches were excavated to depths of 5.5 to 6 feet below ground surface (89.1 to 88.6 feet NAVD88).

The soil profile observed in Trenches 2/3 was similar to that seen in Trench 1. The ground surface was immediately underlain by a layer of loamy topsoil that was approximately 8 inches deep, but the depth of which fluctuated with root activity. Beneath the topsoil were layers of clean yellowish brown and dark yellowish brown subsoil. A broken defunct utility line was observed in the western end of Trench 3. A small pocket of clean sand was observed at depths of 2 to 4 feet in a portion of the trench that appeared to have been the result of a previous episode of limited disturbance, possibly associated with landscaping. No cultural material was observed within these soils. Similar to Trench 1, these soils contained large rocks—some of which appeared weathered—and slightly damp, coarse sand possibly indicating soil deposits that were historically situated at greater depths below the former ground surface, which may have been stripped away.

TRENCH 4

Trench 4 was excavated in the western portion of the area of sensitivity and was oriented north-south to avoid electrical and stormwater drainage lines to the west and east/northeast (see **Photograph 4** on **Figure 4**). The trench measured 10 feet in length (north-south), 5 feet in width, and was excavated to a depth of 9 feet below the ground surface (86 feet NAVD88). The trench was located within what was historically the central portion of the parcel formerly located at 1742 Dean Street. Excavation further to the north or in the vicinity of the rear wall of the 19th century house was limited by the presence of electrical and stormwater drainage infrastructure.

The ground surface of Trench 4 was underlain by an approximately 16-inch layer of topsoil and rocky gray fill similar to that seen in Trenches 1, 2, and 3. Beneath the topsoil were layers of sandy fill material to a depth of at least 9 feet below the ground surface. The fill included clean, loose sand with small rocks and no cultural material. The fill was likely deposited during the construction of the existing NYCHA facility or its associated utilities in this portion of the site. Given the depth of the intact subsoil seen in Trenches 1, 2, and 3 to the south, it appears that additional soils were stripped away from this portion of the site and the area was backfilled with clean sand.

A. CONCLUSIONS

As part of this Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation, four trenches were excavated within the area of archaeological sensitivity as identified by the Phase 1A Study. Trenches 1, 2, and 3 were excavated along the southern portion of the area of archaeological sensitivity near what was historically the rear lot line of the houses at 1742 through 1746 Dean Street. The trenches all contained culturally sterile subsoil levels beneath a layer of topsoil and associated bedding material. The subsoil levels at relatively shallow depths appeared to suggest that upper soil strata were historically removed through stripping or grading as part of a previous construction episode. Trench 4 was placed within what was historically the center of the rear yard of the property formerly known as 1742 Dean Street. That trench contained clean sandy fill material to a depth of at least 9 feet below the ground surface that may have been deposited during the construction of the existing NYCHA complex. No cultural material was observed in any of the trenches and no artifacts were collected or analyzed as part of this investigation. The soils observed in each of the four trenches appear to suggest that a greater amount of disturbance occurred as a result of the construction of the historical children's home and the existing NYCHA facility than could be documented using documentary sources.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

No archaeological resources were encountered during the Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation and no evidence of potentially sensitive soil levels were observed. No further archaeological analysis is warranted.

References

- AKRF, Inc.
2024a "CAMBA Weeksvillage Project: 1733 Bergen Street (Block 1344, Lot 175); Weeksville, Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County: Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study." Prepared for: CAMBA Housing Ventures; New York, NY.
- 2024b "CHV Kingsborough Seniors Project: 1733 Bergen Street (Block 1344, Lot 175); Weeksville, Borough of Brooklyn, Kings County: Phase 1B Archaeological Work Plan." Prepared for: CAMBA Housing Ventures; New York, NY.
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Figures





- Project Site
- Areas of Archaeological Sensitivity
- 1 Locations of Phase 1B Trenches
- Approximate Locations of Utilities

0 100 FEET

Locations of Archaeological Testing

Figure 2



Looking east at Trench 1 following excavation; showing iron plates/
planter boxes within topsoil and underlying layers of subsoil **1**



Looking west at excavated Trench 2; Trench 3 was opened in a
continuous line to the west **2**



Looking west at completed Trenches 2 (foreground) and 3 (background), showing a consistent soil profile across the excavation

3



Looking north at Trench 4, which contained clean sandy fill to a depth of at least 9 feet

4