



Argyle Road is representative of the tree-lined streets and Victorian homes that line swaths of the Flatbush area.
 (Photos: Katya Pronin)

In a Flatbush ‘state of mind’

A pocket of Brooklyn is blooming

By Lana Bortolot
 Special to amNewYork

Good luck trying to get a straight answer on where Flatbush is. Encompassing 11 neighborhood associations, the boundaries are amorphous — something in which local civic leaders seem to take pride, given the great diversity that exists here.

“The real issue is what’s in the mind of residents,” says Alvin Berk, a lifelong resident and chairman of Flatbush’s Community Board 14. “The boundaries expand and contract in the minds of residents. It’s a state of mind.”

Robin Redmond, Flatbush Development Corporation’s executive director, agrees.

“Technically, people who don’t live in Flatbush feel like they do. It just doesn’t matter what you call this place; there’s intense neighborhood pride here,” she says. “It’s not just about their block now, it’s about their community.”

Bolstered by capital improvements, grassroots community groups, and renewed interest in formerly for-

lorn commercial strips, Flatbush seems poised for discovery.

“People have heard it’s up and coming and they’re priced out of other neighborhoods,” says Jan Rosenberg, a principal in Brooklyn Hearth Realty. “We’re seeing young professionals and families, a lot of creative types [moving in].”

Find it

Many adjacent enclaves are considered part of Flatbush, but the most accepted formal parameters are Coney Island Avenue on the west, Parkside Avenue to the north, Bedford Avenue to the east, and train lines on the other side of Brooklyn College to the south.

Flatbush’s housing stock — a mix of Victorian houses and stately apartment buildings — is one magnet. Another is its small-town feeling: tree-lined streets, wide porches, manicured lawns. And all this fewer than seven miles from Manhattan.

“You get a lot more in terms of a tranquil life here rather than Park Slope, Fort Greene and Carroll Gardens,” says Julie Kestyn, of Kestyn Real Estate.

While most of the recent attention has focused on the historic neighborhoods around Ditmas Park, other areas of Flatbush are thriving and on the radar for improvements.

“Flatbush is like the starlet who’s an overnight success after 30 years of hard work,” says Kestyn. “It’s taken a while to get discovered.”



A firehouse on Cortelyou Road is part of the area’s fine architecture.

Basics

Transportation

Church Avenue, Newkirk Avenue are served by the B, Q, and 2 and 5 lines. The Q also stops at Parkside Avenue, Cortelyou and Beverly roads, and the 2 and 5 stop at Beverly Road and Flatbush Avenue/Brooklyn College

Library

Brooklyn Public Library has branches at 1305 Cortelyou Road, 22 Linden Blvd., and in neighboring Midwood, East Flatbush and Kensington.

Crime

Flatbush is in the 70th Precinct, which reports for 2008: two murders, 13 rapes, 158 robberies, 97 felony assaults, 115 burglaries, 206 grand larcenies and 48 grand larceny assaults. Crime for this period in 2007: no murders, 11 rapes, 126 robberies, 116 felony assaults, 139 burglaries, 215 grand larcenies and 40 grand larceny assaults.

Post offices

2273 Church Ave., 1451 Nostrand Ave. and 1525 Newkirk Ave.

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On Argyle Road, you'll find one Victorian beauty after another.

Real estate

Flatbush's glory is in its intact stock of Victorian-era homes, the prices of which have risen steadily. Co-ops are fairly new to the market as many apartments are converting from rentals to occupant-owned.

To buy

- Studio, post-war co-op, 600 square feet, 390 Rugby Road: **\$169,000**
- Two-bedroom, two-bath condos with terraces, new construction, about 1,000 square feet. 1103 Cortelyou Road: **\$507,000-516,000**
- Two-bedroom, two-bath duplex with terrace, 1,250

square feet, postwar co-op, 415 Argyle Road: **\$545,000**

- One-bedroom, prewar co-op, 850 square feet, 570 Westminster Road: **\$295,000**
- Five-bedroom house with double parlor, 2,210 square feet, large deck and back yard, 23 Waldorf Court: **\$1,075,000**
- Eight-bedroom, two-family house with two porches, 3,200 square feet on a 5,000-square-foot lot at 352 Argyle Road: **\$1.249 million**

To rent

- One-bedroom, prewar, 800 square feet, 365 Westminster Road: **\$1,600**
- Four-bedroom duplex in

Looking for a home?

- Kestyn Real Estate (Julie Kestyn) www.kestyn.com
- Brooklyn Hearth Realty (Jan Rosenberg) www.brooklynhearth.com

Victorian house, 1,300 square feet: **\$3,400**

- Two-bedroom with private deck in a Victorian house, 1,100 square feet, 543 Rugby Road: **\$1,700**
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To eat

Bahar Restaurant

Lodged between storefronts on a busy strip, this pleasant Afghan restaurant has a robust menu of intriguing dishes.

984 Coney Island Ave.
718-434-8088

Cinco de Mayo

Eight tables at which you can eat authentic Mexican fare surrounded by serapes and an homage to Frida Kahlo.

1202 Cortelyou Road
718-693-1022

The Farm on Adderley

Simple country-inspired fare heavy on regional and seasonal food. There's a pleasant outdoor dining space in the back.

1108 Cortelyou Road
718-287-3101

Fisherman's Cove

Standard menu of jerk chicken, Jamaican fried fish and dumplings in a neighborhood full of similar fare. But the packed tables indicate they're doing something unusual here.

37 Newkirk Plaza
718-859-1580

Vox Pop

A low-key coffeehouse with a high profile in the nabe. Its tagline, Books, Coffee and Democracy, pretty much sums up the cool-kid vibe here.

1022 Cortelyou Road
718-940-2084



Pomme de Terre, a French bistro, recently opened on Newkirk Avenue.

The buzz

Cortelyou Road, a seven-block-long strip, has been infused with a number of locally owned upscale restaurants and retail, making this Flatbush's hot destination. Local real estate agent Jan Rosenberg was a founder of the Friends of Cortelyou, a grassroots effort that over six

years recruited new businesses to co-exist alongside the longtime storefronts. "This was a wonderful place to live, but we had no central community," Rosenberg said. "We didn't have what makes an urban neighborhood exciting — the organic criss-crossing of people in public places."

John's Bakery

It's hard to know what's more tantalizing here: the smell of butter baking or the resulting cookie display. It's been family owned for generations.

1322 Cortelyou Rd.
718-287-6799

Picket Fence

Comfort food in a kid-friendly restaurant. There's a large back-

yard for outdoor dining).

1310 Cortelyou Road
718-282-6661

Pomme de Terre

This spot was recently opened by the owners of The Farm on Adderley. Chef Tom Kearney calls it a mini version of some more well-known bistros.

1301 Newkirk Ave.
718-284-0005

San Remo Pizza

One of Brooklyn's finest, authentic, family-owned pizzerias, it's been a staple on the street for more than 30 years.

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To party

773 Lounge
A hipster-free neighborhood watering hole known for its lack of pretension, hopping jukebox and Tuesday night dart league games.
773 Coney Island Ave. (Cortelyou Road) 718-462-9746

Foundation Restaurant and Lounge

A slick lounge lodged in the midst of the strip. Come here on the first Friday of the month for live music and a Brooklyn version of hip-hop vibe.
1254 Flatbush Ave. 718-693-5425

Visions Lounge

A slick nightclub with flat-screen TVs, a pool table and DJs spinning on the weekends. Flatbushers converge on themed dance nights featuring Calypso and reggae music.
752 Coney Island Ave. 718-282-3388

To shop

belle & maxie
Children's clothing and toys, with an emphasis on good design. Owner Gilbert Flores says 99 percent of the toys are "kid-powered," not requiring batteries or electricity.
1209 Cortelyou Road 718-484-3302



C.J. Camerieri, left, and Tim Albright have a couple of pints at The Farm on Adderley.



"Once Upon A Time Antiques" is a curiosity shop on Coney Island Avenue that's teeming with finds.

Elizy B
This shop offers original beaded jewelry, aromatherapy and other personal healing products.
1604 Newkirk Ave. 917-538-9352

Flatbush Food Coop
The 31-year-old community-owned coop just moved into a large new space, tripling its capacity. It's sustained by 3,000 members, but open to all for shopping.
1415 Cortelyou Road 718-284-9717

Natural Frontier Market
This is the Brooklyn outpost of a 12-year-old Manhattan "chain" that stocks organic and natural foods, vitamins and products.
1104 Cortelyou Road 718-284-3593

Once Upon a Time Antiques
A bric-a-brac time capsule in a strip once known as the antiques shopping mecca. Closed Sundays.
1053 Coney Island Ave. 718-859-6295

T.B. Ackerson Wine Merchants
What looks like an old-time wine shop actually has very modern focus: carefully selected global wines from artisanal producers. Manager Cole Chilton says: "The idea is it's someone's grandfather who's one step between the grape producer and us."
1205 Cortelyou Road 718-826-6600

Trailer Park
Home furnishings with a cool but not precious retro influence.

The mainstay here is furniture made from reclaimed barn wood.
1211 Cortelyou Road 718-282-2800

To do

Flatbush's active neighborhood groups ensure there are activities to draw residents together. The community seems to thrive more on the local vibe rather than lofty cultural institutions.

Annual Victorian Flatbush house tour
June 8, 1-6 p.m. Tickets: \$20. Advance tickets: \$16.
Temple Beth Emeth 83 Marlborough Road, near Church Avenue 718-859-3800 www.fdconline.org

Farmers Market
Every Sunday starting June 1, this thriving market is testimony to Flatbush's diversity.
Cortelyou Road, between Argyle and Rugby roads

Culture at Vox Pop
There's an open mike every Sunday night at Vox Pop on Cortelyou Road, as well as reading, music and talk.
www.voxpopnet.net/events 1022 Cortelyou Road 718-940-2084

Brooklyn Center for Performing Arts
Year-round performances include Shakespeare, opera and readings on the Brooklyn College campus.
www.brooklyncenter.com 2900 Campus Road

Q&A
with Julie Kestyn

Julie Kestyn moved here 34 years ago from Stuyvesant Town and nabbed a Victorian house early on.

What has to happen to keep Flatbush thriving and vibrant?
As storefronts become available, local enterprises rather than national chains will help us to keep our vibrant and individual flavor.

What's the best thing about living here?
We have a real sense of community. We have chosen to have a somewhat countrified lifestyle and still be close to all that the city has to offer.



Kestyn

Any drawbacks?
We don't have enough homes and apartments for all who want to move here.

What kinds of changes have you seen or would like to see?
With young people moving in, we're enjoying the restoration of some of our properties. I would like to preserve the neighborly flavor, and avoid too much gentrification.

What would you like to stave off?
We are actively trying to stop the further destruction of our homes by builders.