The following facilities provide information for researchers of old buildings in Brooklyn.

**Brooklyn Collection**

**Address:** 10 Grand Army Plaza  
Brooklyn, NY 11238  
**Phone:** 718-230-2762  
**Website:** bklynlibrary.org/brooklyncollection

The Brooklyn Public Library’s local history division, the Brooklyn Collection, holds numerous materials that will benefit the buildings researcher.

Included in the collection are over 500 historic and contemporary maps and atlases, many of which show material content of buildings, house and block numbers, street status and usability, locations of sewers and water mains, locations of subway and rail lines, section and ward division lines, and original farm lines, among other information.

The Brooklyn Collection also has Sanborn maps on microfilm ranging from 1886 to 1951 as well as hardcopies of Sanborn maps with corrections made as recently as 2005. Sanborn maps were designed to assist fire insurance agents in determining the degree of hazard associated with a particular property and therefore show the size, shape, and construction of dwellings, commercial buildings, and factories as well as fire walls, locations of windows and doors, sprinkler systems, and types of roofs. The maps also indicate widths and names of streets, property boundaries, building use, and house and block numbers. The maps on microfilm, which are available upon request in the Brooklyn Collection, are in black and white only. We also have online access to the Sanborn maps database available on-site at the library.

If you have found the date of construction for your building, and if it falls before 1955, you can search the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* online for articles mentioning the address. Simply go to [https://bklyn.newspapers.com/](https://bklyn.newspapers.com/)

On our website you can also search for photos of buildings. On the Brooklyn Collection page, there is a search bar labeled “Search Historic Photos.” Enter either the address of your building or the cross streets. Though not all buildings are included in the catalog there is a chance you may find a photo of your building.

Additionally, we have a number of Landmarks Preservation Commission Designation Reports on file. Refer to the Landmarks Preservation Commission section of this handout for the kinds of information to be found in these reports.

Lastly, we have Brooklyn Address Books, or “criss-cross” directories, spanning the years 1929-1986. These directories, on microfilm and available upon request in the Brooklyn Collection and the Popular Library, will allow you to look up the address of a building to find listings of residents. For older buildings, we also have digitized city directories spanning 1856-1967. These are hosted at the Internet Archive. A link can be found on our “Collections” page at [https://www.bklynlibrary.org/brooklyncollection/collections](https://www.bklynlibrary.org/brooklyncollection/collections)

**New York City Department of Buildings**

**Brooklyn**  
**NYC Dept. of Buildings**  
**Phone:** 718-802-3675  
**Website:** nyc.gov/buildings

The New York City Department of Buildings regulates local laws related to building construction and alteration. Their records, which date back to 1866, include a variety of forms, such as NB forms (New Building forms, with information on building specs, architect, owner, and dates of construction), Alt Forms (Alteration forms), Dem Forms (Demolition forms), and CO forms (Certificates of Occupancy, outlining how a building was to be occupied at a certain point in time).
By visiting their website (listed above) you can search for general information on a property including recorded complaints, violations, actions, applications, and inspections. Use the Building Information System (BIS) on the right-hand side of the homepage to obtain your block and lot numbers as well as census tract and health area data.

Direct Manhattan inquiries to the website or to:  
NYC Dept of Buildings  
60 Hudson St. at Thomas St., 5th fl.  
311

New York City Department of Finance

Address:  NYC Office of City Register  
210 Joralemon St., 2nd fl.  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  
Phone:  311  
Website:  nyc.gov/finance

The New York City Department of Finance will provide you with an abundance of useful and interesting information on property, most of which can be found at their website listed above.

If you are interested in property history and value, go to the New York City Department of Finance homepage listed above. Under “Online Services,” click on “ACRIS Property Records,” from there click on “Begin Using ACRIS.” ACRIS (Automated City Register Information System) allows you to search property records and view document images for Manhattan, Queens, Bronx, and Brooklyn from 1966 to the present. For pre-1966 records you’ll have to make a visit, but call ahead before you go.

You can also find Digital Tax Maps at the homepage listed above. Like ACRIS, the Tax Maps are listed under “Online Services.”

Another useful resource on the site is the Borough, Block, and Lot finder. Every parcel of land in New York City is identified by a set of three numbers. This is known as the Borough, Block, and Lot (BBL). If you do not know your property’s BBL number you can search by address once you’ve clicked on “Borough, Block and Lot” under “Online Services.”

To contact a specific division within the Department of Finance try emailing them. From the Department’s homepage click on “Contact Finance” then click on “Email.” Here you’ll find a list of divisions within the Department of Finance.

New York City Municipal Archives

Address:  31 Chambers St.  
#103  
New York, NY 10007  
Phone:  311  
212-NEW-YORK  
(inside of NYC)  
Website:  nyc.gov/records (select Records from City Agencies drop-down menu)

TAX PHOTOGRAPHS

Between 1939 and 1941, and again in the mid-1980s, the city photographed every house and building in the five boroughs. Photographic prints of these images are available for purchase from the Municipal Archive. A digital gallery of the 1980s tax photos, along with thousands of other photographs taken by city agencies, can be accessed at:
http://nycma.lunaimaging.com/luna/servlet

For more information, and to learn how to order reprints, visit:

DOCKET BOOKS
New building docket books and alteration docket books were kept by the city and list every new building permit and alteration permit in number order. If you have the NB or Alt number you can look up the number in the docket books and get much of the pertinent construction information (architect, date, owner, size, materials, etc.) without going to the Department of Buildings.

Contact the Municipal Archives for further information on these and other holdings.

**The Landmarks Preservation Commission**

**Address:** Municipal Building  
1 Centre Street, 9th Fl.  
New York, NY 1007  

**Phone:** 212-669-7700  

**Website:** nyc.gov  
(select Landmarks & from City Agencies drop-down menu)  

**Email:** info@lpc.nyc.gov

Normal business hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, Monday through Friday, except holidays. If you are planning to visit the agency, please make sure to bring two forms of photo ID.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission is the New York City agency that is responsible for identifying and designating the City's landmarks and the buildings in the City's historic districts. The Commission also regulates changes to designated buildings.

The LPC’s designation reports explain the architectural, historical, or cultural significance of an individual landmark or historic district and describe the significant features of the individual landmark or historic district at the time of designation which provides the basis of regulating future changes to these properties.

You can download the more recently published reports from the LPC’s website, just click on Forms and Publications. From here you can also link to the Neighborhood Preservation Center’s website to search for earlier designation reports.

**Brooklyn Historical Society**

**Address:** 128 Pierrepont Street  
Brooklyn, NY 11201  

**Phone:** 718-222-4111  

**Website:** brooklynhistory.org

Brooklyn Historical Society has in its collection numerous historic atlases spanning the years 1846-1932. Depending on the level of detail, these atlases can include information such as the material content of every building, house and block numbers, content and condition of pavement, street status and usability, locations of sewers and water mains, locations of subway and rail lines, plate boundaries, section and ward division lines, and original farm lines, among other information.

In addition to maps and atlases, the BHS also has the Brooklyn Land Conveyance Collection, documenting Brooklyn land ownership from the late 17th Century through to 1896.

A third collection of note is the Real Estate Brochure Collection. This collection of real estate brochures, primarily advertising new apartment buildings, includes materials from the 1920s through the 1950s.

Contact them directly to find out more about these as well as other holdings.
New York Public Library

Address: 455 5th Avenue, New York NY 10016
Phone: 212-237-8225  Website: nypl.org

NYPL has numerous resources for the building researcher. Of particular interest is their collection of maps, to be found both online and in their Map Division, Room 117, at the Schwartzman Building.

Hours for the map division are: Tuesday-Wednesday 1:00-7:30pm, Thursday-Saturday, 1:00-6:00pm.

But you can also access the Map Division Digital Gallery at any time by visiting the link below:
http://digitalgallery.nypl.org/nypldigital/dgdivisionbrowseresult.cfm?trg=1&div_id=hm

NYPL Digital Gallery is The New York Public Library’s image database, developed to provide free and open online access to hundreds of thousands of images from the original and rare holdings of The Library. Here you’ll find thousands of digitized maps and atlas pages.

You may also want to visit their United States History, Local History, and Genealogy Division in Room 121 (Tuesday-Wednesday 11:00-7:30, Thursday-Saturday 10:00-6:00)

Or visit the Art and Architecture Division, Room 313 (Tuesday-Wednesday 11:00-7:30, Thursday-Friday 10:00-6:00, Saturday 1:00-6:00)

https://www.nypl.org/blog/2011/10/14/guide-researching-your-homes-history

New York Landmarks Conservancy

Address: One Whitehall Street New York, NY 10004
Phone: 212-995-5260  Website: nylandmarks.org

This is a private, non-profit group that provides financial and technical assistance to people renovating historic properties. Their website also contains numerous links to similar organizations.

Municipal Art Society

Address: 111 West 57th Street 16th Floor. New York, NY 10019
Phone: 212-935-3960  Website: mas.org

The Municipal Art Society of New York, founded in 1893, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) membership organization that fights for a more livable New York and advocates for intelligent urban planning, design and preservation.

The MAS also maintains a library devoted exclusively to New York’s urban culture and the built environment. Established in 1978, The MAS Research Library is the most complete collection of books, clippings, files, pamphlets, magazines and letters culled from the journalistic record pertaining to the development and future of our city. This makes the MAS library invaluable to scholars, journalists, preservationists, educators, students—anyone researching architecture, livability, urban planning, historic preservation or the history and culture of New York City’s varied communities. In addition to other printed materials, the number of clippings files now stands at 3,500, and includes new additions on the Gowanus Neighborhood, the proposed Trans-Hudson Express Tunnel, and the Silvercup West Mixed-Use Development.
Since space in the library is limited, an appointment is always required. Reservations are available for appointments starting February 1st. To schedule a visit, please contact Alana Farkas by phone, 212-935-3960 x1285 or email her at afarkas@mas.org.

Neighborhood Preservation Center

**Address:**
232 East 11th St.
New York, NY 10003

**Phone:**
212-228-2781

**Website:**
neighborhoodpreservationcenter.org

The Neighborhood Preservation Center is dedicated to facilitating and encouraging citizen participation in the improvement and protection of New York City’s historic neighborhoods. The Center maintains a non-circulating resource library open to the public by appointment. The library contains books, videos, reports, and reference works in the subject areas of Adaptive Reuse, Community Planning, Environment, General Architectural History, Historic Preservation, New York City History, New York City Maps and Guides, and Zoning. The collection also includes over 800 New York City Landmarks Designation Reports.

Other Useful Resources

**Real Estate Record and Builders Guide**
http://rerecord.cul.columbia.edu/

The Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University maintains fully digitized volumes of The Real Estate Record and Builders Guide. The website provides sales, mortgage, conveyance, and other data about buildings in Manhattan (including the Bronx between 1874 and c. 1913) and Brooklyn, as well as illustrated articles on buildings and neighborhood development.

The Real Estate Record and Builders Guide, a weekly magazine detailing building activity in New York City and its environs began publication in the late 1860s. The Columbia website includes all available public domain content, from Volume 1 (published in 1868) to Volume 110 (published in 1922), a total of over 112,500 scanned pages. The Real Estate Record was digitized from microfilm and original printed volumes in the Avery Architectural & Fine Art Library, as well as from supplemental volumes made available by the New York Historical Society.

Users may browse by volume or search by keyword. Advanced search features allow for proximity searching for names or addresses within standard subsections such as: alterations, conveyances, foreclosures, judgments, leases, mortgages, new buildings, and sales.

**The New York Real Estate Brochure Collection**
http://nyre.cul.columbia.edu/

The Avery Architectural & Fine Arts Library at Columbia University also maintains the New York Real Estate Brochure Collection. The collection consists of over 9,200 advertising brochures, floor plans, price lists, and related materials that document residential and commercial real estate development in the five boroughs of New York and outlying vicinities from the 1920s to the 1970s. You can browse the collection online by address, building name, neighborhood, architects and firms, or owners/agents.
Property Shark
http://www.propertyshark.com

PropertyShark.com aggregates real estate data and listings from hundreds of public and proprietary sources. This site provides property reports, pre-foreclosure and foreclosure listings, sales comparables, maps, building photos, for sale listings, and for lease listings. Because it is a for-profit business, some of the data is available only to paying subscribers. However, a lot of useful information can be had simply by signing up for free. And, should you require the paid subscription information, the library has a subscription which can be used on-site at Central Library.

Online Map Resources

NYCityMap
http://gis.nyc.gov/doitt/nycitymap/

NYCityMap is New York City’s online map portal. The application provides a wealth of information including the locations of schools, day care centers, senior centers, libraries, hospitals, subways, and more, as well as links to Web sites for these facilities. This page is also a single access point to many of the numerous location-based applications on NYC.gov such as online property, building, statistics, and census information. The maps can be navigated either by entering a specific address or simply using zoom and scroll tools, similar to other online map applications.

Open Accessible Space Information System (OASIS)
http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx

OASIS provides a tax map and aerial view of buildings as well as links to other important buildings websites. Owner information, estimated building age, dimensions and height are also listed here. This site also provides information on zoning, transit, historic buildings and neighborhoods, environmental characteristics, and parks, playgrounds and open spaces, among other things.

Historic Map Works
http://www.historicmapworks.com

A privately-run company, Historic Map Works, has a free online interactive collection of atlas pages from a variety of years and locations across the country. You can search by address and compare one year from another by turning on overlays.

David Rumsey
http://www.davidrumsey.com/index.html

This is a privately-run collection of over 27,000 digitized maps and atlases, with new additions added regularly. The site is free to the public. Here users have access not only to high resolution images of maps that are extensively cataloged, but also to a variety of tools that allow users to compare, analyze, and view items in new and experimental ways.