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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: February 2, 2021

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**NEW YORK CITY KICKS OFF BLACK HISTORY MONTH WITH OFFICIAL
LANDMARKING OF TRUESDELL HOUSE AT 227 DUFFIELD STREET**

Landmarks Preservation Commission designates downtown Brooklyn home of 19th-century abolitionists; home to become a permanent part of City's Black historical record

NEW YORK—Today, Mayor Bill de Blasio and First Lady Chirlane McCray joined community advocates and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) to celebrate the designation of the Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House at 227 Duffield Street in Brooklyn as an individual landmark. This Greek-Revival style former row house is a rare surviving 19th-century abolitionists' home in Downtown Brooklyn.

“The battle for justice in this country always has been – and always will be – fought in the heart of New York City,” said **Mayor Bill de Blasio**. “Black History Month in this city means more than just words. It means honoring the legacy of the Black New Yorkers who came before us. I’m grateful to every advocate and community leader who made this day possible, and this city will continue to stand with you in the future.”

“We may not know the names of the African souls that traveled in secrecy and desperation through downtown Brooklyn in search of a better life, but we do know this is one of the many sites that served as a temporary haven as they sought freedom,” said **First Lady Chirlane McCray**. “We also know that the residents of 227 Duffield Street risked losing power, respect and even their lives by helping those who were fleeing enslavement. These stories of our history need to be celebrated, not erased. It is an honor to highlight these sacred passages of our ancestors.”

“The Landmarks Preservation Commission is committed to telling the story of New York City’s African-American heritage and experience and is prioritizing designations like the Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House as part of its [equity framework](#),” said **Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Sarah Carroll**. “The Harriet and Thomas Truesdell House represents the important role the city played in the efforts to abolish slavery. The Truesdells were active abolitionists during a decisive period of resistance and their legacy of commitment is representative of the many abolitionists who supported total emancipation as part of the local and national movement.”

For more than a decade prior to the Civil War, 227 Duffield Street was the home of Thomas and Harriett Truesdell, who had been active in abolitionist work in Rhode Island before continuing to support the movement in Brooklyn. Brooklyn was a hub for abolitionist activity in the early 19th century due to its active waterfront and large population of free African Americans. The

Truesdells lived at 227 Duffield from 1851 until 1863, a time marked by more clandestine abolitionist activity due to the harsh penalties on those who broke the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law, which required that all escaped slaves be returned and that officials and citizens of free states had to cooperate.

In 2007, the City worked with advocates and community leaders to create Abolitionist Place, an official street renaming on Duffield Street between Willoughby Avenue and Fulton Street in Brooklyn.

Local groups including Friends of Abolitionist Place, Equality for Flatbush, FUREE (Families United for Racial and Economic Equity) and Joy “Mama Joy” Chatel raised awareness about the home’s history and fought for permanent recognition. Mama Joy passed in 2014, after 16 years of tireless and fearless advocacy.

The Brooklyn waterfront was the entry point for many freedom seekers who stowed away on ships to escape slavery in the south; many of them were sheltered by local abolitionists and either stayed in Brooklyn or traveled north to Upstate New York, New England; or Canada.

The property remained in the Truesdell family until 1921. While a two-story commercial extension was added in 1933, the house retains its 19th-century form and historic fabric above it, and its significant association with the Truesdells and the history of the abolition movement in Brooklyn prior to the Civil War is still legible.

“Few New Yorkers know that a small rowhouse in Downtown Brooklyn was a critical site in our nation's history - a place where abolitionist thought flourished, and a safe harbor for slaves on their long sojourn to freedom. That's why months ago, we joined a campaign to preserve the historical integrity of 227 Duffield Street - to show that the Black lives of freedom-seekers mattered, and still matter to this day. At a time when our nation continues to face a reckoning over the long and painful legacy of racial injustice, remembering and permanently enshrining these pieces of our history has never been more urgent. We thank the Mayor and the LPC for recognizing the significance of this site, and the need to preserve it for future generations,” said **Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams**.

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