



# BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Esther Akutekha

347-381-3712

[eakutekha@brooklynhistory.org](mailto:eakutekha@brooklynhistory.org)

## RONALD SHIFFMAN COLLECTION ON THE PRATT CENTER FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IS OFFICIALLY OPEN FOR RESEARCH AT BROOKLYN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

*Collection spans over fifty years of community development by leading city planner*

**[April 24, 2019] Brooklyn, NY**— Brooklyn Historical Society (BHS) is pleased to announce that the [Ronald Shiffman collection on the Pratt Center for Community Development](#) is now officially open for research. This collection provides new and unprecedented material related to community planning, housing programs and policies, community development corporations, and land use across New York City and internationally. Its 140 boxes of materials document a number of major redevelopment projects across New York City between 1960 and 2018, including the country's first community development corporation, known today as Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation.

With the Ronald Shiffman collection, a vast wealth of materials is now available to researchers and the public, opening windows onto the history of neighborhoods in Brooklyn and beyond. Resources consist of planning papers, correspondence, reports and publications, audio recordings, and transcripts. These materials represent a broad scope of Shiffman's career from the 1960s to the present, with the bulk of material spanning 1980 to 2010.

Ronald Shiffman is a city planner, architect, and expert in community economic development and sustainable development assistance for community-based groups in low and moderate-income neighborhoods. A graduate of Pratt Institute's School of Architecture and later its graduate program in City and Regional Planning, Shiffman has over 50 years of experience in the field. In 1964, he co-founded Pratt Institute Center for Community and Environmental Development, now known as the Pratt Center for Community Development. Today the center is the nation's largest public interest architectural, planning, and development office. One year after founding the Pratt Center for Community Development, Shiffman, partnered with the Central Brooklyn Coordinating Council and Senator Robert F. Kennedy to conceive and launch the Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, the country's first community development corporation. Shiffman chaired the Department of City and Regional Planning from 1991 to 1995 and served on the NYC Planning Commission from 1990 to 1996 after Mayor Dinkins appointed him. He is currently Professor Emeritus at Pratt Institute's Graduate Center for Planning and the Environment, School of Architecture.

Shiffman collaborated with Brooklyn Historical Society in 1986 for an exhibition entitled *Another Side of Brooklyn's Renaissance: The Community Housing Movement*. Years later, in 2013, Shiffman made the initial donation of his materials, mostly audio recordings, to BHS. A subsequent donation of additional documents and recordings was made in 2018. Brooklyn Historical Society has processed the collection thanks to generous support and funding from Pratt Institute.

The collection includes rich materials related to community planning projects including the rebuilding of Coney Island after Hurricane Sandy and redevelopment projects in Red Hook, the Gowanus Canal, the Atlantic Yards and Columbia University. Many of the community development materials relate to Brooklyn neighborhoods such as Bedford-Stuyvesant, Crown Heights, and Williamsburg-Greenpoint as well as the rebuilding of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. Researchers will also find materials on New York City housing programs and policies, particularly mutual housing and land trust projects such as Strycker's Bay, Cooper Square, Midwood Friends, the Mutual Housing Association of New

York, [MHANY}, and the United Tenants Association. Finally, the collection includes materials on environmental programs Ron Shiffman and the Pratt Center aided in the development of relating to brownfields and energy conservation. In addition to the extensive information about New York City, researchers will find other materials pertaining to South Africa, Germany, and Chile.

As an accompaniment to this important collection, Brooklyn Historical Society has developed a [research guide](#) on neighborhood change and gentrification which highlights related resources in BHS' Othmer Library, including oral histories, maps, books, and manuscript collections.

Researchers can access the Ronald Shiffman collection on the Pratt Center for Community Development at the Othmer Library at Brooklyn Historical Society. Research hours for the Othmer Library are Wednesday through Saturday, from 1pm to 5pm. To make an appointment to view the collection, please contact [library@brooklynhistory.org](mailto:library@brooklynhistory.org).

### [About Brooklyn Historical Society](#)

Founded in 1863, Brooklyn Historical Society is a nationally recognized urban history center dedicated to preserving and encouraging the study of Brooklyn's extraordinary 400-year history. Located in Brooklyn Heights and housed in a magnificent landmark building designed by George Post and opened in 1881, today's BHS is a cultural hub for civic dialogue, thoughtful engagement and community outreach. In May 2017 BHS opened a second site in the Empire Stores in DUMBO's Brooklyn Bridge Park.

###