

## An Excellent Summer in West Midwood!



Rugby Road entrepreneurs Kaia and Sage (not pictured) were excited to share their favorite homemade treats, lemonade and banana bread, on a hot August day. —*Photo by Liza Lowenger*



Twenty seven members of the Wasserman clan had a wonderful reunion this July on Long Beach. Their ages ranged in from one to 96-3/4! *Photo courtesy of Gail Wasserman*



A praying mantis waiting of lunch.  
*Photo by Laura*



A happy crowd enjoying jazz on a warm summer evening on Wellington Court.

# West Midwood Architecture

By Nate Rogers

Welcome to the second installment of the West Midwood architectural field guide! In the last issue, I outlined some of the unique physical qualities that make our neighborhood so special, explained why this guide is for every audience, and introduced the topic of roof shapes,

beginning with the gambrel or ‘barn’ roof.

In this article, I’ll talk about some of the other roof varieties and silhouettes commonly (or not so commonly) seen around our blocks, helping you to form your own taxonomy.

Roof type and roof orientation have deep roots in our visual culture—our ability to “read” buildings and their uses and form a collective understanding of place, in other words—and they set the stage for every other aspect of a home’s exterior design.

The most common, bread-and-butter roof type in our neighborhood is the traditional **gable roof**: simple to build, sheds snow and water, and can be dressed up with dormers, chimneys, and cross-gables. Just like the gambrel I discussed in the last installment, the first order of differentiation is whether the main ridge runs perpendicular to the street or parallel to it. The perpendicular option is more common here, since our tax lots are long and narrow. The perpendicular option with its end-gable on the front is the familiar, timeless roof of children’s

European-inspired look. In the postwar period, gables with much shallower angles became common. West Midwood also has houses with ridges that run parallel to the street: this design harkens back to the modest vernacular homes of Colonial New England. In these instances, the gable is expressed on the side-yard, and the angle is eased a bit to cover the deep footprint while adhering to the neighborhood’s common ridge height. Instead of a triangular silhouette at the sidewalk, what you’ll typically find on a parallel ridge house is an on-center dormer or bay window to draw the eye and organize the primary facade.

Another traditional roof type you can spot in West Midwood is the **hipped roof**. Here, there are no end-gables—no triangular vertical walls. In place of that expressed ridge on the gabled facades, additional roof planes of equal size and slope create an unbroken perimeter of overhanging eaves around the entire structure. Typically, hipped roofs are paired with squarer—rather than elongated—house footprints; there is less hierarchy between the two main axes, so a more unidirectional roof suits.

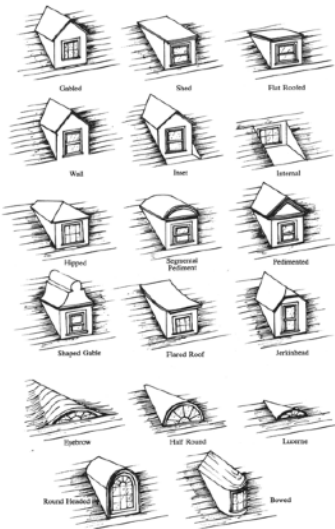
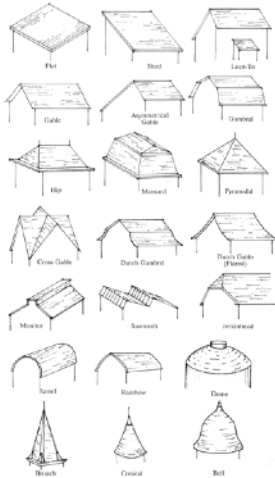
While West Midwood’s houses might seem to defy categorization at first impression, these three basic types—the gambrel, end-gable, and hipped roof—are used on almost every prewar home you see in the neighborhood.

As we’ve discussed, the secondary order in the taxonomy after roof type is which direction the main ridge

## Can You Identify These West Midwood Houses Just by Their Roof?



(Answers on next page)



Drawings of Roof shapes and dormers reprinted from *Architecture and Ornament*, by Margaret Maliszewski-Pickart

drawings: two planes forming an inverted V, sloping away from a central ridge and forming a triangular silhouette.

In West Midwood, the angle formed by these two planes is typically around 90 degrees, giving this roof its steep pitch and further reinforcing its traditional,

## West Midwood Architecture — *continued*

runs. From there, several other variables can be modulated to produce a range of outcomes, but these are really just combinations of everything we've already discussed.

For instance, you may have noticed what looks like an end-gable house, but with a small roof hip applied to the top few feet of the end-gable. This goes by the quirky identifier of “**Jerkinhead**.”

One of the particular challenges the architects and builders of our neighborhood faced was how to build detached homes of a certain floor area on relatively narrow lots while maintaining the look and feel of a residential scale – the particular proportions that make a house sit comfortably and recognizably as a house. This was accomplished by breaking down the mass and scale in various ways and organizing elements into different compositions that could also create variety and visual interest along the block.



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One way to do this was to include minor, isolated roof elements on the end-gable façade that could divide the composition horizontally. These are typically found at the third-floor line, or less commonly, above the third-floor windows. Another was to overhang the third floor beyond the second floor by a foot or two, borrowing the look of an old structural technique that dates to the early 17th-century colonial houses of New England. A third solution is to introduce an additional, secondary gable set off-center on the street façade, either in what I call a “gable within a gable”, or by setting a stand-alone, shallow-sloped gable over a bay window (a common sight on Argyle Road).

There is one final roof type, which is relatively uncommon in our neighborhood. A few houses have a **mansard roof**, defined by very steeply sloped roof planes rising from the eaves with shallow overhangs and meeting a practically flat, usually invisible roof above. Mansards are strangers in a strange land: hallmarks of Second Empire architecture, a style not seen in West Midwood. West Midwood houses with mansards are interesting hybrids, pairing the Colonial Revival architectural motifs seen throughout the neighborhood with a roof shape that comes from a different vocabulary altogether. This loose approach of borrowing from various architectural styles and trends at the turn of the 20th century means our houses defy simple stylistic categorization – and that is itself a defining characteristic of our neighborhood’s eclectic, vibrant architecture -- and a particularly New York story.

*1.1316 Glenwood: End gable, main ridge running front to back. Additional gable over window bay 2.751 Rugby Main ridge running side to side, parallel to sidewalk 3.726 Rugby: Hipped roof and large central dormer 4.756 Argyle: Jerkinhead treatment at gables 5.721 Argyle “Gable within a gable” and third floor overhang 6.721 Rugby: End gable with additional roofing elements above/below third floor windows 7.755 Rugby: Mansard roof.*

## Who You Gonna Call?

When you need help, it's important to call the right number. Here's a list of useful phone numbers with an explanation of when to call which number. It's not a bad idea to cut out this list and stick it on your refrigerator or by your phone.

**911**—The number to call for emergencies, such as fire, medical emergencies, accidents of any type, a crime in progress, violent behavior, or a person in trouble. Remember to stay on the line until the operator tells you it is okay to hang up. The operator will also ask you your location, so note the nearest house number and street address.

**311** — Call this number for non-emergencies such as noise complaints, animal control, air quality, blocked driveway, dangerous tree situation, or to find out where to get other information. For a complete list, see [www.nyc.gov/311](http://www.nyc.gov/311).

**988** — Call this number for mental health crises or suicide prevention. For more information about this service, here is a link: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2022/07/15/1111316589/988-suicide-hotline-number>

***If you're unsure, call 911.*** The operator will either take your information or redirect you to 311. Remember to get a complaint number and write it down.

## Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCOs):

**P.O. Viodelys Brathwaite (917-864-7912)**

[Viodelys.Brathwaite@nypd.org](mailto:Viodelys.Brathwaite@nypd.org)

**P.O. Roshael Layne (929-270-7068)**

[Roshael.layne@nypd.org](mailto:Roshael.layne@nypd.org)

The NCOs are usually on duty Tuesdays to Saturdays from noon to 6:30 p.m. (Sometimes they are unavailable because they have been pulled for training or special duty.) Former West Midwood president Linda Howell reports that she relies on the NCOs for quality-of-life issues, especially situations “where I do not have complete details, only secondhand reports of events. I feel comfortable giving them as much information as I can and asking them to check into the potential problem.” Examples include gatherings at the dead ends, abandoned cars, chronic parking violations, and patterns of package theft from porches. You can also contact them if you feel a 911 or 311 call was not handled correctly. Note that while they will make every effort to assist, they may also be handling other more time-critical issues.

## Community Board 14 (CB14), 718-859-6357

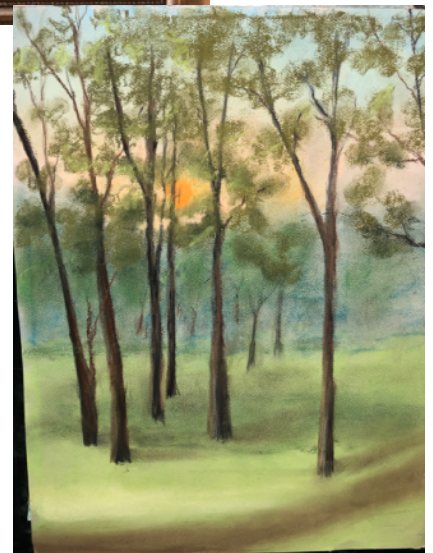
This office and its staff are a valuable resource that can be contacted for a myriad of situations. Call them to find out the status of a 311 complaint, why your recycling wasn't picked up, how you can get a tree planted in front of your home or a dead one removed, or what's going on with construction (or lack of it) at a specific location. They can also help you get in touch with the local representative for a specific city agency. This is by no means a complete list. If you're unsure of how to handle an issue, call them and ask. They are there to help.

## For Information About Covid-19:

<https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/covid/covid-19-main.page>

## Artist's Notebook:

*Florence Manglani*



*We know there are many talented artists in our neighborhood. Would you like to have your work featured in this newsletter? Let us know!*

*Editor: [WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com](mailto:WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com)*

## Neighbors' Businesses and Services

To add, cancel, or update a listing,  
contact **Tori Rosen** at [editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com](mailto:editor.WestMidwoodNews@gmail.com)

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**Florence Manglani** Semi-retired *bilingual school psychologist* Still teaching at Brooklyn College, is available for consultations.  
718-434-2134; [florence@imagineblue.com](mailto:florence@imagineblue.com).

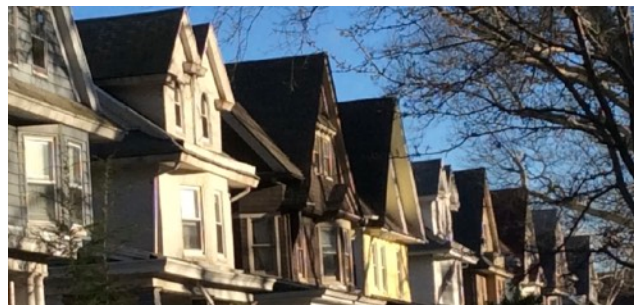
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**Julian Rhine** *Guitar lessons; SAT, SHSAT, and Regents tutoring*. BA in music and English from Vanderbilt University. 917-981-0675;  
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**Jeannine Umrigar** *Collectiv3 Fashion Portfolio Lab*. Individual mentorships for students to build fashion and art portfolios for college entrance and beyond. For more information see our website: [www.collectiv3.nyc](http://www.collectiv3.nyc).



**David Wechsler** *Flute lessons*. Many years of teaching at all levels from beginner to professional. Long-time member of Brooklyn Philharmonic and many other groups in the NYC area, including Broadway, recordings, symphony, opera, ballet orchestras, and chamber music. 347-528-6318; [davewechs@earthlink.net](mailto:davewechs@earthlink.net).

### Health and Mental Health

**Laura Campbell-Lui** Shaklee Distributor household cleaning products; nutritional skin care; nutritional supplement products; appointments available. 917-767-3579;  
[lauraclui@yahoo.com](mailto:lauraclui@yahoo.com).

**Jan Castro**. De-stress with Swedish massage or Thai body work. Safe, clean, open space. I've had 3 vaccine shots. Credentials & references on request. 60–120 minute sessions, reasonable rates. Phone 314-323-9060.

**Andrea Freshman, LCSW** Specialty: trauma healing with emphasis on integrating the mind-body connection 718-434-6873.

**Sara Hochman** *Nutritionist*, MS, RD, CDN. Registered Dietitian specializing in chronic disease management and weight loss, nutrition therapy for all ages. Reasonable rates, in-person or televisit appointments. [Sarahoch780@gmail.com](mailto:Sarahoch780@gmail.com)

### Pet Sitting

**Nell Mendlinger and Lauren Sullivan, Owners, Abby on Argyle Pet Sitting & Dog Walking, LLC**. Available 365 days a year for your pets. We have been in the neighborhood for 10+ years. Bonded and insured. Member of PetSitters International and an eco-friendly company. [www.AbbyOnArgyle.com](http://www.AbbyOnArgyle.com).

### Real Estate

**Miriam Hurwitz** Associate real estate broker with Douglas Elliman on Cortelyou Road. 917-589-6717.

**Ester Sciallo** Brooklyn residential real estate. Office: 718-676-1755; cell: 646-389-6248; [es@brres.com](mailto:es@brres.com).

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