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**NEWARK CITY SUBWAY EXTENSION-
VEHICLE BASE FACILITY
NJ TRANSIT**

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RESPONSE TO SHPO 9/28/95 COMMENT

Lynn Drobbin & Associates
for
BRW Inc.

November 1, 1995

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**NEWARK CITY SUBWAY EXTENSION-
VEHICLE BASE FACILITY
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INTRODUCTION

The following supplemental information is submitted in response to comments from Dorothy P. Guzzo, NJ SHPO, to David Koenig, NJ TRANSIT, by letter dated September 28, 1995. NJ SHPO comments were made with regard to the report *Historic and Architectural Resources Background Study for the Newark City Subway Extension and Vehicle Base Facility (Historic Resources Study)*, prepared by Lynn Drobbin & Associates. The items below are in the order presented in the September 28, 1995 letter.

Item 1. Belleville Fire Stations

A windshield survey of fire stations was conducted in the Town of Belleville. There were four buildings identified in Belleville that are currently or were formerly used as fire stations, all of which, with the exception of Fire Station No. 3, are outside the Newark City Subway Extension/Vehicle Base Facility (NCSE/VBF) study area. Of the four, one was constructed in the 1990s (Headquarters Building, 275 Franklin Avenue: Appendix A, photo F-1) and is therefore not eligible for the National Register of Historic Places due to being less than fifty years old and lacking exceptional significance. Of the three historic period fire stations, two are in active use by the Belleville Fire Department: Fire Station No. 3 (photo 3-4 of the *Historic Resources Survey*) and Fire Station No. 2 (Appendix A, photo F-3). Former Fire Station No. 1 (Appendix A, photo F-2) is now used for storage by the municipality. The following supplemental photographs and photo key are in Appendix A.

Photo F-1: Fire Department Headquarters Building, 275 Franklin Avenue.

Photo F-2: Fire Station No. 1, Williams Street at Washington Place.

Photo F-3: Fire Station No. 2, Washington Avenue at Division Avenue.

Fire Station No. 3, located at the northeast corner of Franklin and Magnolia Streets (*Historic Resources Study*, photo 3-4) within the Area of Potential Effect, is one of three intact Belleville fire stations constructed in the first three decades of the twentieth century, a period of rapid growth in Belleville, as evidenced by a five-fold increase in population from 1900 to 1930. Fire Station No. 3 is a two and one-half story, flat-roofed brick structure with limestone trim in a modified Classical Revival/Mission Revival style. The station has a high degree of integrity and is the most architecturally elaborate of the three structures, featuring a limestone frontispiece framing the single engine-bay door and three double-hung windows on the second story. A limestone base and limestone cornice further embellish the facade. Fire Station No. 3 has been minimally altered by the installation of a metal overhead engine-bay door but otherwise retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Fire Station No. 1, located on Williams Street at Washington Place (Appendix A, photo F-2), is a two-story, flat-roofed brick structure with a facade of cream brick accented by geometric, red brick banding and panels. The facade is dominated by paired engine-bay doors at the ground story and four double-hung windows at the second-story. Fire Station No. 1 has been altered by

the installation of aluminum storm sash and metal overhead doors at the engine bays but otherwise retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

Fire Station No. 2, located on Washington Avenue at Division Avenue (Appendix A, photo F-3), is a two-story, hip-roofed brick structure of rectangular plan in a modified Classical Revival/Mission Revival style. The Washington Avenue facade has two engine-bay doors; the northern of the two is double the width of the southern opening. Geometrical black brick banding frames a central panel of diaper-pattern brickwork above the engine bays. A bank of five double-hung windows above a continuous limestone sill are at the second-story. The broad eaves of the hipped roof project above an entablature with circular and rectangular panels. Fire Station No. 2 has been slightly altered by the installation of metal overhead engine-bay doors but otherwise retains a high degree of architectural integrity.

In summary, Belleville Fire Stations No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 retain their historic architectural integrity with the exception of modification of the engine-bay doors. These alterations, necessary for the operation of a modern fire station, do not diminish the historic character of these stations. It is the consultant's opinion that Belleville Fire Stations No. 1, No. 2 and No. 3 are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a multiple property submission under Criteria A and C for their association with Belleville's peak years of municipal expansion, from 1900 to 1930, and as highly intact representatives of the neighborhood fire station, a distinctive and threatened building type.

Item 2. Former Bakelite Corporation Factory Buildings, 230 Grove Street, Bloomfield.

The linked two- and three-story former laboratory buildings for the Bakelite Corporation, as described in the *Historic Resources Study*, are the only remaining historic buildings of a once larger complex. Figure 2-1 in the *Historic Resources Study*, showing a portion of the 1950 Sanborn Map for Bloomfield, shows intense development of the property including offices, shops and storage buildings east of the laboratories, and shipping and storage facilities north of the laboratories. By 1977 (Sanborn Map, Figure 2-2, *Historic Resources Study*), all accessory buildings and structures associated with the laboratories were demolished, with the exception of a water tower to the east and a small storage building to the north. Foundation remains of demolished buildings to the east of the laboratories serve as shallow retaining walls for fill brought in to level the site for parking and storage. The water tower and shed indicated on the 1977 map are no longer extant. Modern additions to the site include a one-story, multi-bay structure for storage of recycled materials at the northeast corner of the property and a free-standing canopy sheltering fuel pumps east of the laboratory.

The former Bakelite Corporation property is now owned by the Town of Bloomfield and is used by the Department of Public Works as the "Town Barn" for vehicle and equipment maintenance and storage, and for storage of recycled waste and other bulk materials.

“Bakelite” and “Condensite”

Leo H. Baekeland was a pioneer in the field of plastics and the developer of a heat and pressure process to combine phenol (carbolic acid) and formaldehyde to produce the first synthetic, thermosetting resin, which he named “Bakelite.” Baekeland first worked from a laboratory adjacent to his Yonkers (New York) home, later leasing a factory in Perth Amboy, New Jersey, to increase production and to develop new products and materials based on phenolic resins. Dr. Edward Weston, an acquaintance of Leo Baekeland and head of Weston Electrical Equipment Company, Newark, saw promise in this new material for use in electrical equipment due to its moldability and insulating properties. In 1906, Weston took an early batch of the new plastic resin to the Loando Hard Rubber Company, Boonton, New Jersey, (later Boonton Rubber Company) where the resin was mixed with wood and asbestos fibers and processed to produce the first molded commercial application of Bakelite.

Baekeland’s breakthrough soon attracted the attention of other scientists and industrialists, including Thomas A. Edison who was interested in the use of the new phenolic resin in the production of phonograph records. In September 1910, J.W. Aylesworth, Chief Chemist for Edison, joined Kirk Brown and others to form the Condensite Company of America to further develop commercial applications for the new plastic. Although Edison was not directly involved in the Condensite project, Edison’s support for the emerging industry may be inferred from the location of the first Condensite Company facilities in a former Edison Battery factory in Glen Ridge, New Jersey, and from the free hand given to his chemist, Aylesworth, in developing Condensite.

In the face of possible legal action over the use of the patented Baekeland process, and following Edison’s intercession on behalf of the company, the Condensite Company secured a license from Baekeland in 1913 to manufacture and develop the Bakelite phenolic resin. In that same year, the 230 Grove Street property, Bloomfield, was purchased by the Condensite Company and the first of three Condensite Company buildings were erected (not extant).

The Condensite Company continued independent operation until 1922 when the Condensite Company, Baekeland’s General Bakelite Company and the Redmanol Chemical Products Company of Chicago were united as the Bakelite Corporation. The existing two- and three story brick laboratory buildings were constructed between 1923 and 1928, following establishment of the new corporation. The July 1928 issue of “Bakelite Information,” a single-sheet promotional publication of the Bakelite Corporation, references the Bloomfield facility by including an interior photograph captioned “*Analytical laboratory at the research plant of the Bakelite Corporation at Bloomfield, N. J. Here the exact chemical constitution of the resinoid materials is determined, also their ability to resist chemical action.*” By the late 1920s, the Bakelite Corporation had plants in Chicago and Toronto, with licensees operating in Germany, England, Japan and Italy.

In 1932, Bakelite’s production facilities were consolidated in a new plant in Bound Brook, Somerset County, New Jersey. The Bloomfield plant continued in operation as a research and development facility for new products to be produced at the Bound Brook plant. The Bakelite

Corporation became a unit of the Union Carbide and Carbon Corporation in 1939 and continued its plastics operations at Bound Brook and Bloomfield. Union Carbide moved its research and development functions from Bloomfield to Bound Brook in 1957; the Grove Street property was sold the following year to the Schering Corporation, pharmaceuticals manufacturers, for a research facility. The former laboratory buildings were used by Bloomfield College during the 1980s as instructional spaces for chemistry, physics and biology.

The light-weight, accurate moldability and insulating properties of phenolic resin products that Weston saw in Bakelite, Condensite and other phenolic plastics led to rapid development of numerous applications in the manufacture of electrical and electronic products. Among the first reported users of phenolic plastic products were Westinghouse Electric, Remy Electric Company (later Delco-Remy), General Electric, Western Electric, the Kellogg Switchboard Company and Wagner Electric. The development of the automobile created an additional and rapidly expanding market for plastic products including steering wheels, knobs, switches, battery casings and distributor caps.

Many industries in Bloomfield and Belleville used Bakelite in the manufacture of or as components in their various products. Among these industries were:

- Edison Battery Company, 75 Belmont Avenue, Belleville (demolished)
- Delco-Remy storage battery plant, 55 La France Avenue, Bloomfield (now General Plastics)
- M.G.M. Company record manufacturing plant, Arlington and Floyd Avenues, Bloomfield
- Westinghouse Electric & Manufacturing Company, spanning Arlington Avenue south of Watsessing Avenue, Bloomfield (vacant)
- Tung Sol Electric Company, Watsessing Avenue and Bloomfield Avenue, Bloomfield
- Chevrolet Motors Division, General Motors Corporation, Bloomfield Avenue and Grove Street, Bloomfield (vacant)

Summary and National Register Recommendation

Due to demolition of the surrounding office, shop and storage buildings formerly associated with the laboratory complex, the laboratory buildings are the only resources potentially eligible for the National Register. It is the consultant's opinion that the former Bakelite Corporation laboratory facility, 230 Grove Street, Bloomfield, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the research development of Condensite and Bakelite and the growth of the national and international plastics industry.

The recommended boundary for National Register listing follows the existing property line on the west, and the north and south property lines eastward to a line perpendicular to the south lot line to include the easternmost portion of the laboratory buildings (see Appendix B, Boundary Map). The modern storage shed and canopy are excluded from the proposed National Register property.

Supplemental Sources and Bibliography

In addition to the sources cited in the *Historic Resources Study*, the following resources were consulted with regard to Leo H. Baekeland, Bakelite, Condensite, the development of the plastics industry and the history of the former Bakelite factory at 230 Grove Street, Bloomfield, New Jersey. Research was conducted at the Newark Public Library, New York Public Library, Avery Library (Columbia University), Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (Troy, NY), and Bloomfield Historical Society. Limited materials relating to the Union Carbide Corporation have been placed in selected archives; these materials are highly topical and do not contain information about the general development of Union Carbide and Bakelite. Union Carbide corporate records are stored at the Records Retention Center, Morrisville, Vermont.

Baekeland, Leo H. "Bakelite, Its Synthesis, Constitution and Uses." Scientific American Supplement, vol. 68, November 20, 1909 (continued November 27, 1909).

_____ "Uses of Bakelite." Scientific American Supplement, vol. 69, January 1, 1910 (continued January 8, 1910).

"Bakelite Information." Publication of the Bakelite Corporation, from March 1927.

Bloomfield Historical Society files, Bloomfield Children's Library, 90 Broad Street, Bloomfield

DuBois, J. Harry. Plastics History U.S.A. Boston: Cahners Books, 1972.

Geismar, Joan. Newark-Elizabeth Rail Link: Archeological Resources Phase 1 Study. Draft, July 1995

Independent Press (Bloomfield). Various articles in the Bloomfield Historical Society files (some dates not legible or not completely cited): "Bakelite Plant Devoted to Development of Plastics," 6/7/40; "Bakelite Shift to Bound Brook to Begin Shortly," 8/57; "Bakelite Plant Price: \$175,000," 9/25?/58; "Bakelite Plant Products Go Into Almost Every Art and Industry," 1944?

Mumford, John Kimberly. The Story of Bakelite. New York: Robert L. Stillson Company, 1924.

Sparke, Penny, ed. The Plastics Age: From Bakelite to Beanbags and Beyond. Woodstock, NY: The Overlook Press, 1993.

Item 3. Halcyon Park Historic District, Bloomfield.

Halcyon Park was developed as an insular neighborhood, characterized by narrow, curved lanes and limited site lines. Although the boundary of the Halcyon Park Historic District as proposed in the *Historic Resources Study* was defined by Watsessing Avenue on the south and west, Berkeley Avenue on the north and Franklin Street on the east, further field investigation recommends the exclusion of properties fronting on Franklin Street from the proposed district. Photographs and a photo key illustrating the Halcyon Park Historic District boundary are in Appendix D. The consultant recommends the following boundary for the Halcyon Park Historic District, as indicated by a dashed red line on the enclosed photo key:

North: The recommended boundary follows the centerline of Berkeley Avenue eastward from the intersection of Berkeley Avenue and Watsessing Avenue to the northward extension of the rear lot line of the property at the southwest corner of Berkeley Avenue and Franklin Street.

Berkeley Avenue is a broad street providing a clear visual separation between the single-family frame residences lining the north and south sides of the street (Appendix D, photos 1, 2, 3 and 4). Berkeley Avenue is uninterrupted on the north between Watsessing Avenue and Franklin Street. In contrast, the streetscape on the south is broken in four places by narrow lanes accessing the interior of the Halcyon Park development. The residences on the south side of Berkeley Avenue are of materials, style and scale comparable with residences on the interior of the development and form the northern boundary of the proposed Halcyon Park Historic District.

East: The recommended boundary follows the rear lot lines of properties fronting Franklin Street from Berkeley Avenue to Florence Avenue.

The commercial and multi-family residences on the west side of Franklin Street southeast of Berkeley Avenue are of a scale and use not consistent with single family residences of Halcyon Park (Appendix D, photos 5 & 6). The single family residences on the west side of Franklin Street from Berkeley Avenue to Florence Avenue (at the intersection of Watsessing Avenue and Franklin Street) have generally undergone extensive modernization and alteration incompatible with the character of the Halcyon Park development (e.g., Appendix D, photo 8). The two-story, hip-roofed residence south of Franklin Street at the intersection of Watsessing Avenue and Franklin Street (Appendix D, photo 13) marks the southeast entrance to Halcyon Park and is comparable in material and design with other residences of the development; this building is recommended for inclusion in the district.

South and West: The recommended boundary follows the centerline of Watsessing Avenue westward, then turning northwesterly to the intersection of Watsessing Avenue and Berkeley Avenue.

The buildings on the north and east side of Watsessing Avenue between Franklin Street and Berkeley Avenue are single-family residences oriented toward the interior of the Halcyon Park development with garages either backing or opening to Watsessing Avenue (Appendix D, photos 12 and 15). These properties literally turn their backs to the industrial properties to the south and

west (Appendix D, photos 16, 17 and 18) and to the few residences on the west side of Watsessing Avenue north of Grove Street.

Item 4. Rowhouse, 41 Belmont Avenue, Belleville.

Enclosed are additional streetscape photographs in the immediate vicinity of 41 Belmont Avenue. Although buildings of similar scale, use and style are found in the area, the rowhouse at 41 Belmont Avenue is distinguished by the degree of architectural detailing on the primary facade and by its high degree of integrity in materials and design. Photographs B-1 and B-2, Appendix C, illustrate the predominance of two- and three-story rowhouses and townhouses that line the street. Characteristic of these buildings are the flat roofs, bracketed and modillioned cornices, classically-inspired window treatments and raised basements. As photos B-1 and B-2 indicate, few buildings in the vicinity of 41 Belmont Avenue are unaltered, many having been significantly modified by the installation of modern siding and windows.

Among the relatively intact rowhouse examples in the neighborhood, the rowhouse at 41 Belmont Avenue is distinguished by its decorative brick coursing, round arched and flat-arched window openings, enriched entablature and projecting cornice. The rowhouse at 41 Belmont Avenue is unusual in the Silver Lake area of Belleville for its retention of a high degree of integrity and craftsmanship. The rowhouse at 41 Belmont Avenue is recommended by the consultant as eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an intact example of a rowhouse which demonstrates the masonry craftsmanship that characterized the Silver Lake area of Belleville in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.

Item 5. Foodtown Supermarket, Watsessing and Arlington Avenues, Bloomfield.

Records in the Town of Bloomfield Assessor's Office indicate that this building was constructed in 1967. The decorative laminated wood arches originally suggested a stylistic link with post World War II futuristic designs of the 1950s. Based upon the late date of this building and its lack of exceptional merit, it is the consultant's revised opinion that the Foodtown Supermarket building does not meet the National Register criteria and therefore is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Item 6. Power Plant/Smoke Stack, former General Motors Delco-Remy complex, 55 La France Avenue, Bloomfield.

Now owned by the General Plastics Corporation, this facility was formerly owned by Westinghouse Plastics and, before World War II, by the International Projection Corporation, manufacturers of motion picture cameras. Mumford's The Story of Bakelite notes that during World War I, the Delco Company delivered 25,000 "sets of ignition equipment" to the Liberty Motor company for their engines installed in military vehicles and aircraft. According to

Mumford, “The duplicate distributor heads, having twelve ignition points, were among the most perfect examples of Bakelite molding that have ever been produced.”¹ It is possible that the La France Avenue plant was engaged in production of these parts.

Despite additional research in the Bloomfield Public Library, the Newark Public Library and the New York Public Library regarding the construction and early use of this facility, no further information could be located. Based on the lack of available information indicating the significance of this facility, it is the consultant’s revised opinion that the Power Plant/Smoke Stack of the former General Motors Delco-Remy complex is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

Item 7. Silver Lake Building & Loan Association Building, 10 Bloomfield Avenue, Belleville.

Records of the Belleville Assessor’s office confirm a construction date of 1931 for this building, as indicated on the building’s parapet datestone. The building was converted to a fish market in the early 1940s and remained such until the mid-1980s. It has been used as a real estate office for the past four or five years.

The Silver Lake Building & Loan Association was established by Jeraldo Maioran. A brief and anecdotal biography of Mr. Maioran in the Belleville Public Library files states that Maioran, a carpenter, built several small houses in the Silver Lake vicinity in the 1890s. The biography continued, indicating that Maioran briefly operated a “beer saloon” until 1899, after which he operated as a builder and developer: “He was a friend of the poor and built and sold homes to people who paid him on easy terms as low as five and ten dollars per month.”² The majority of buildings in the Silver Lake area predate the Silver Lake Building & Loan Association Building, which may be seen as representative of the success of Maioran’s venture. Jeraldo Maioran died in 1944 at the age of 73.

Based upon our additional research, and despite a loss of architectural integrity due to inappropriate storefront renovation as noted in the *Historic Resources Study*, it is the consultant’s opinion that the Silver Lakes Building & Loan Association Building is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with Jeraldo Maioran and the development of the Silver Lake area of Belleville.

Response to “Additional Comments”

As requested in the “Additional Comments” section of the September 28th NJ SHPO letter, a written rationale for the Area of Potential Effect (APE) is provided below. A map delineating the APE is attached as Appendix E, reproduced from Figure 12-1 (“Historic Resources”) of the *Environmental Assessment for the Newark City Subway Extension and Vehicle Base Facility*,

¹ Mumford, The Story of Bakelite, p. 74.

² Typescript manuscript, Belleville Library local history files. Unpaginated; author not indicated.

BRW Rail Link Team, Newark, New Jersey, March 1995, prepared on behalf of the Federal Transit Administration and New Jersey Transit.

The APE for the proposed Newark City Subway Extension and Vehicle Base Facility (VBF) extends approximately 0.25 mile (0.4 km) from the footprint of the VBF, tracks, and proposed stations, and has a boundary defined by current street alignments in the Towns of Bloomfield and Belleville and the City of Newark. The APE's western boundary was originally located on Bloomfield Avenue; the western boundary was extended further west with the addition of the proposed Grove Street Station, a park-and-ride station with feeder bus connections.

This is the area most likely to be affected by a change in traffic circulation due to the train headways, employees going to/from the VBF, and patrons using the proposed Grove Street Station park-and-ride lot; noise and vibration emanating from the VBF during the work day and from the trains; a change in the visual environment, air quality, and soils; and any impacts to aquifers/groundwater runoff. The APE encompasses those portions of Belleville, Bloomfield and Newark where the project may impact historic architectural and archeological resources or may result in property displacements, relocations or other change to the neighborhoods. In addition, temporary impacts could occur within the study area due to construction activities.

APPENDIX A

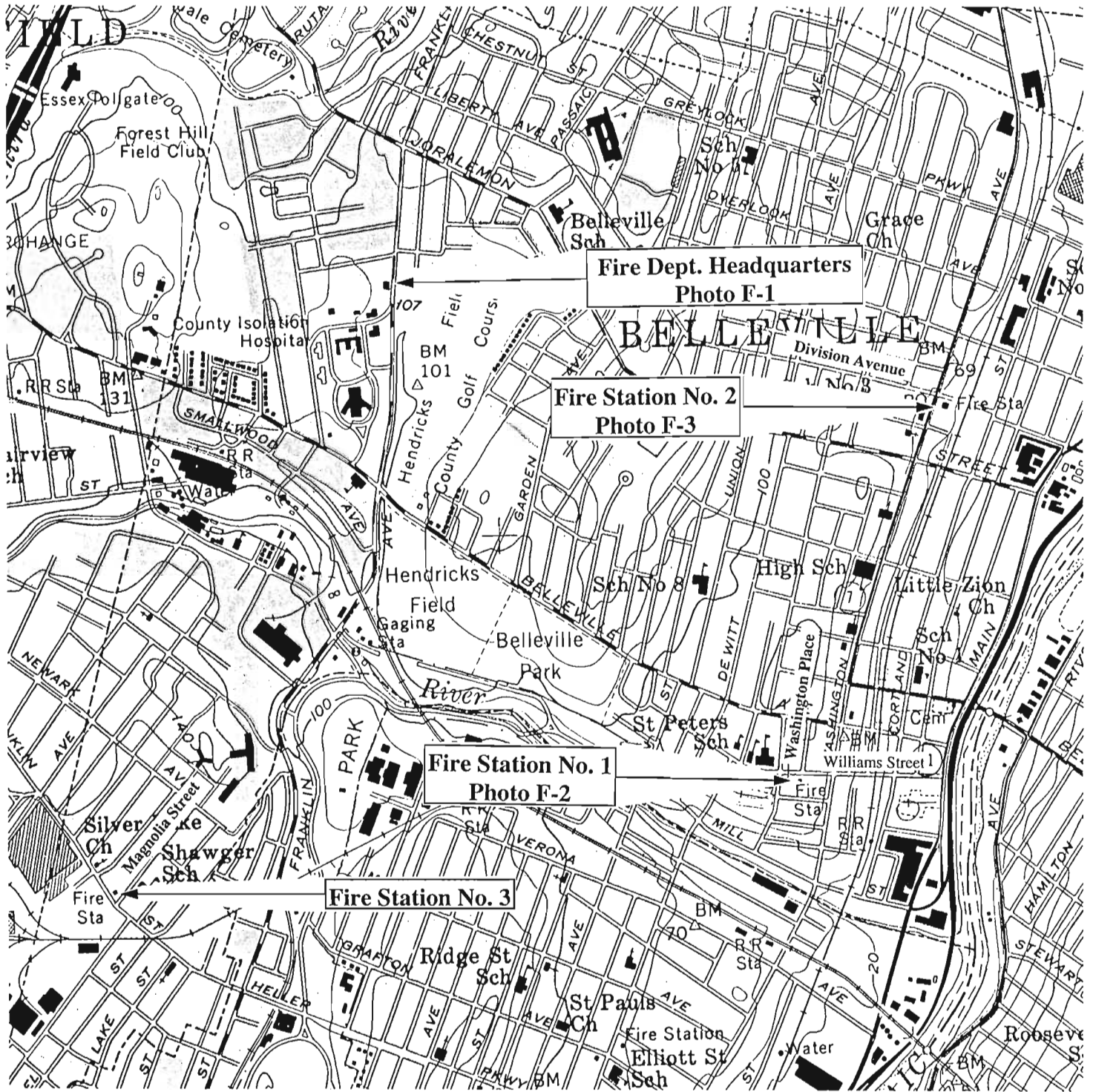




Photo F-1: Fire Department Headquarters Building, 275 Franklin Avenue.



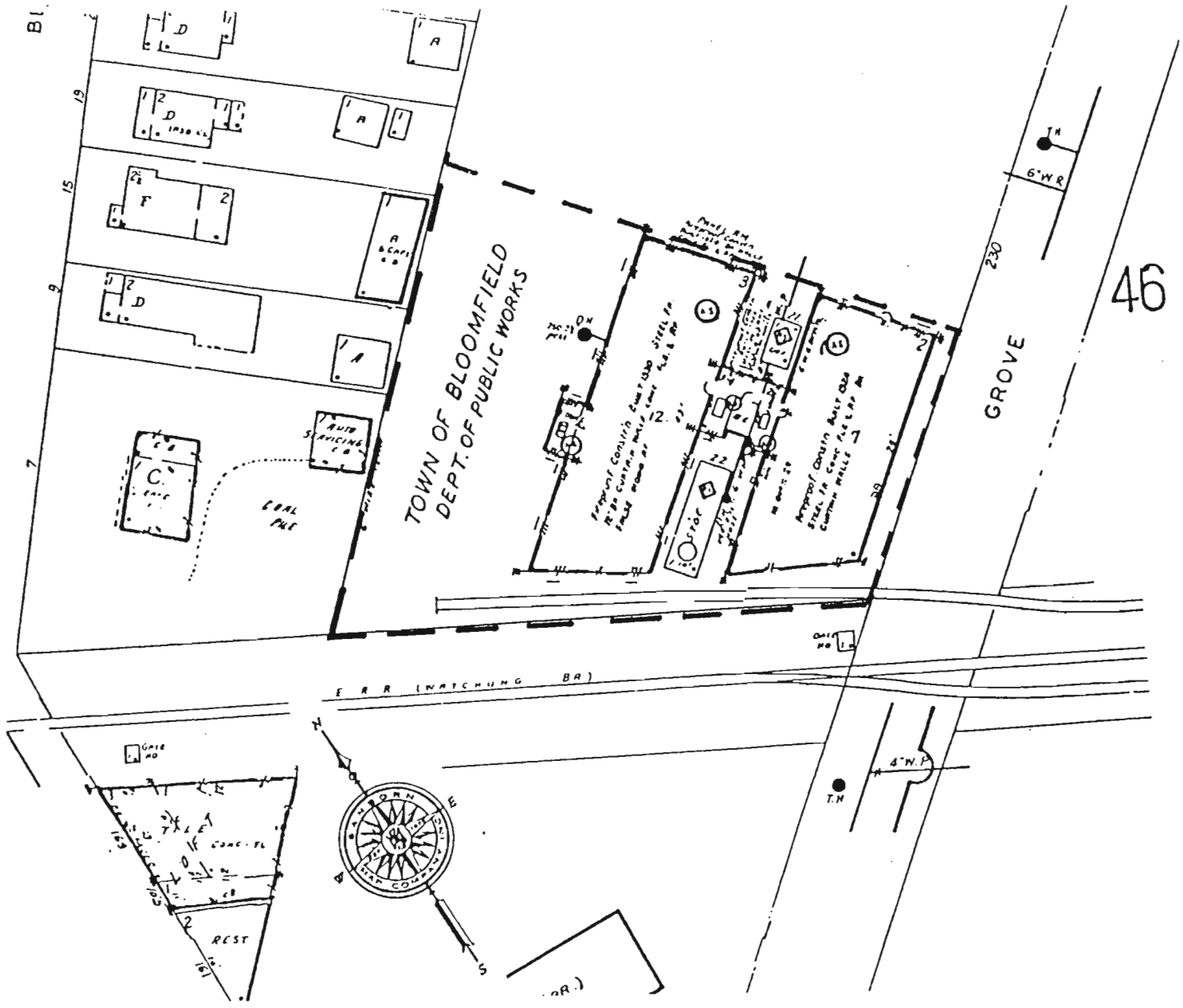
Photo F-2: Fire Station No. 1, Williams Street at Washington Place.



Photo F-3: Fire Station No. 2, Washington Avenue at Division Avenue.

APPENDIX B

BAKELITE CORPORATION RESEARCH LABORATORIES
230 GROVE STREET, BLOOMFIELD, NEW JERSEY
PROPOSED NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY



APPENDIX C



**Photo B-1: View West, North Side of Belmont Avenue
(41 Belmont Avenue Right of Center)**



**Photo B-2: South Side of Belmont Avenue
(Opposite 41 Belmont Avenue)**

APPENDIX D



Photo 1: View North, East Side of Berkeley Avenue from Watsessing Avenue



Photo 2: View North, West Side of Berkeley Avenue from Watsessing Avenue



Photo 3: Berkeley Avenue, View North of East Side



Photo 4: Berkeley Avenue, View North of West Side



Photo 5: View Southeast behind Franklin Street Commercial Properties



Photo 6: View Southeast from NW Corner of Berkeley Ave. and Franklin St.



Photo 7: View South, West Side of Franklin Street



Photo 8: View South, West Side of Franklin Street



Photo 9: View South, West Side of Franklin Street



Photo 10: View Southeast, East Side of Franklin Street



Photo 11: View Southwest from Franklin Street and Watsessing Avenue



Photo 12: View Southwest down Watsessing Avenue from Franklin Street



Photo 13: View Southwest down Florence Avenue from Watsessing Avenue



Photo 14: View Southwest of Northwest Side of Watsessing Avenue

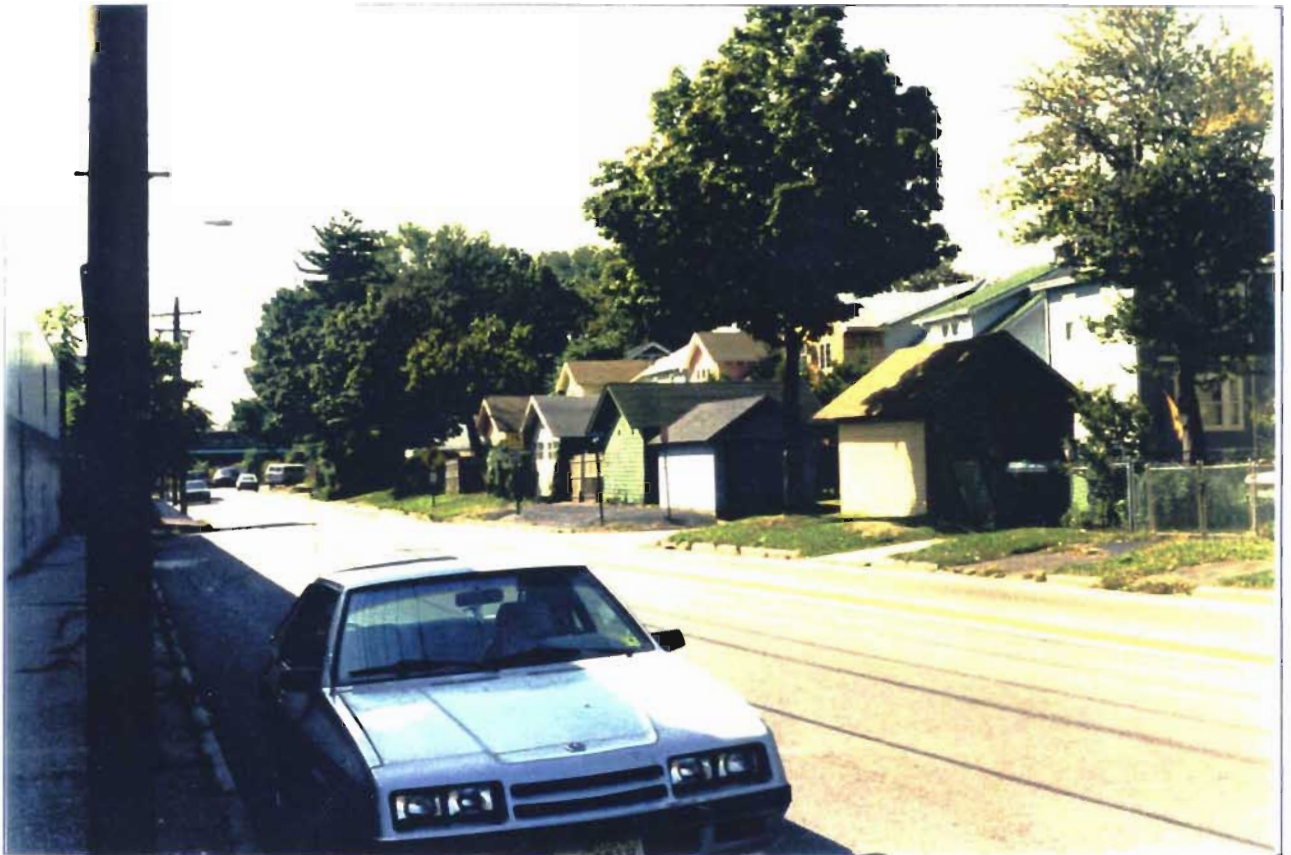


Photo 15: View Southwest of Northwest Side of Watsessing Avenue



Photo 16: View Northeast down Watsessing Avenue



Photo 17: View West down Watsessing Avenue



Photo 18: View West down Watsessing Avenue



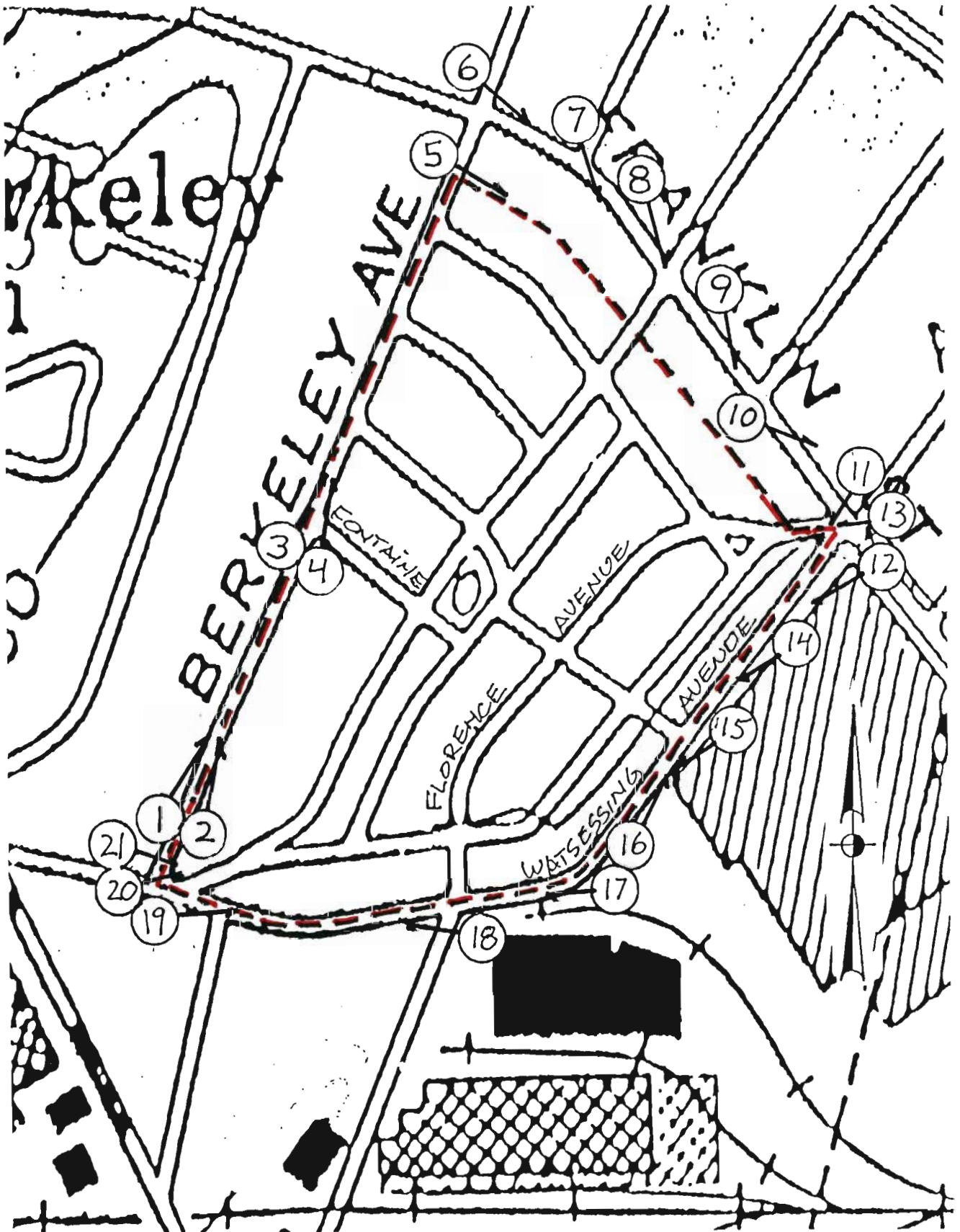
Photo 19: View East down Watsessing Avenue from Berkeley Avenue



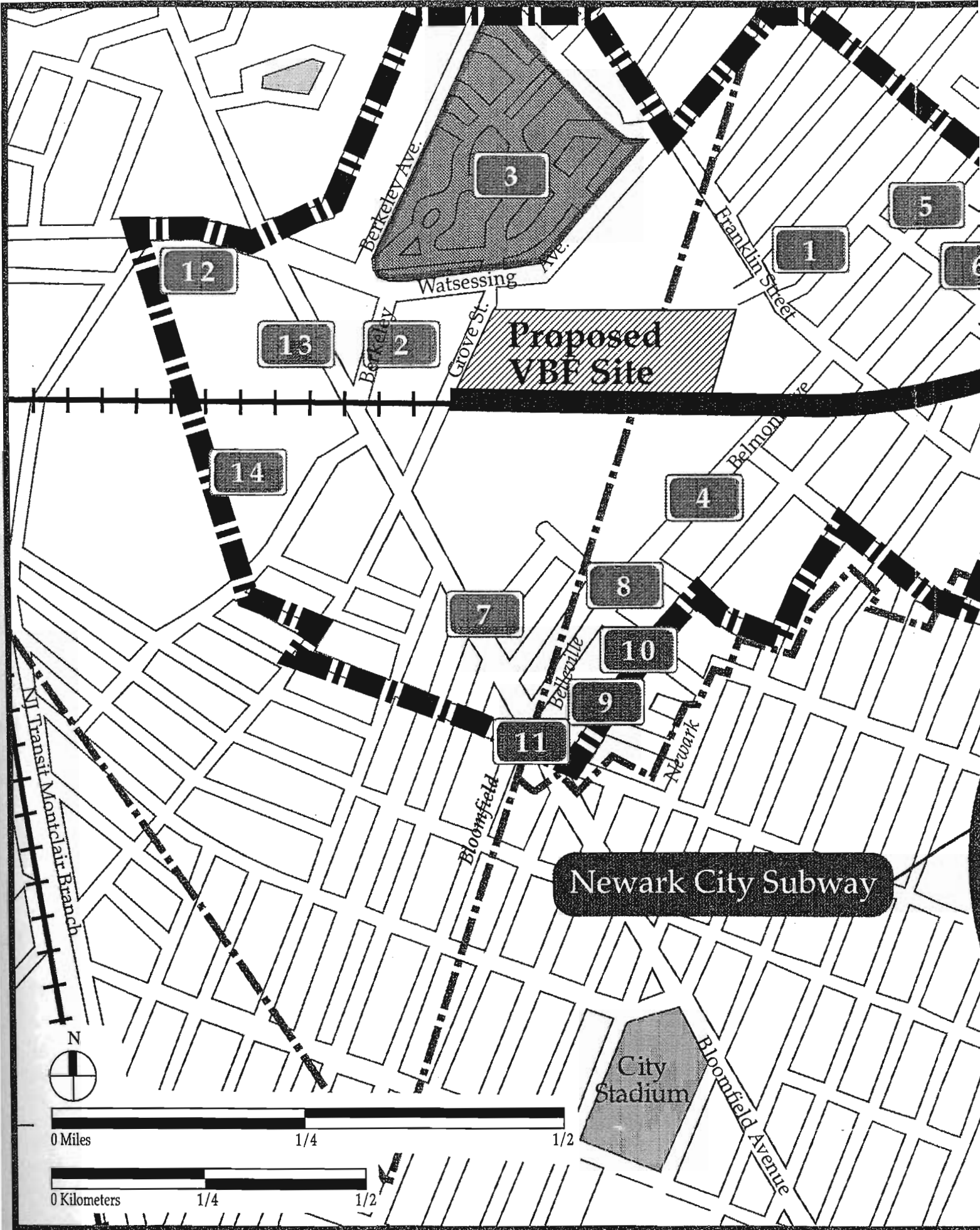
**Photo 20: View East of Entry to Halcyon Park at Watsessing Avenue
and Berkeley Avenue**



**Photo 21: Detail, Entrance to Halcyon Park at Watsessing Avenue
and Berkeley Avenue**

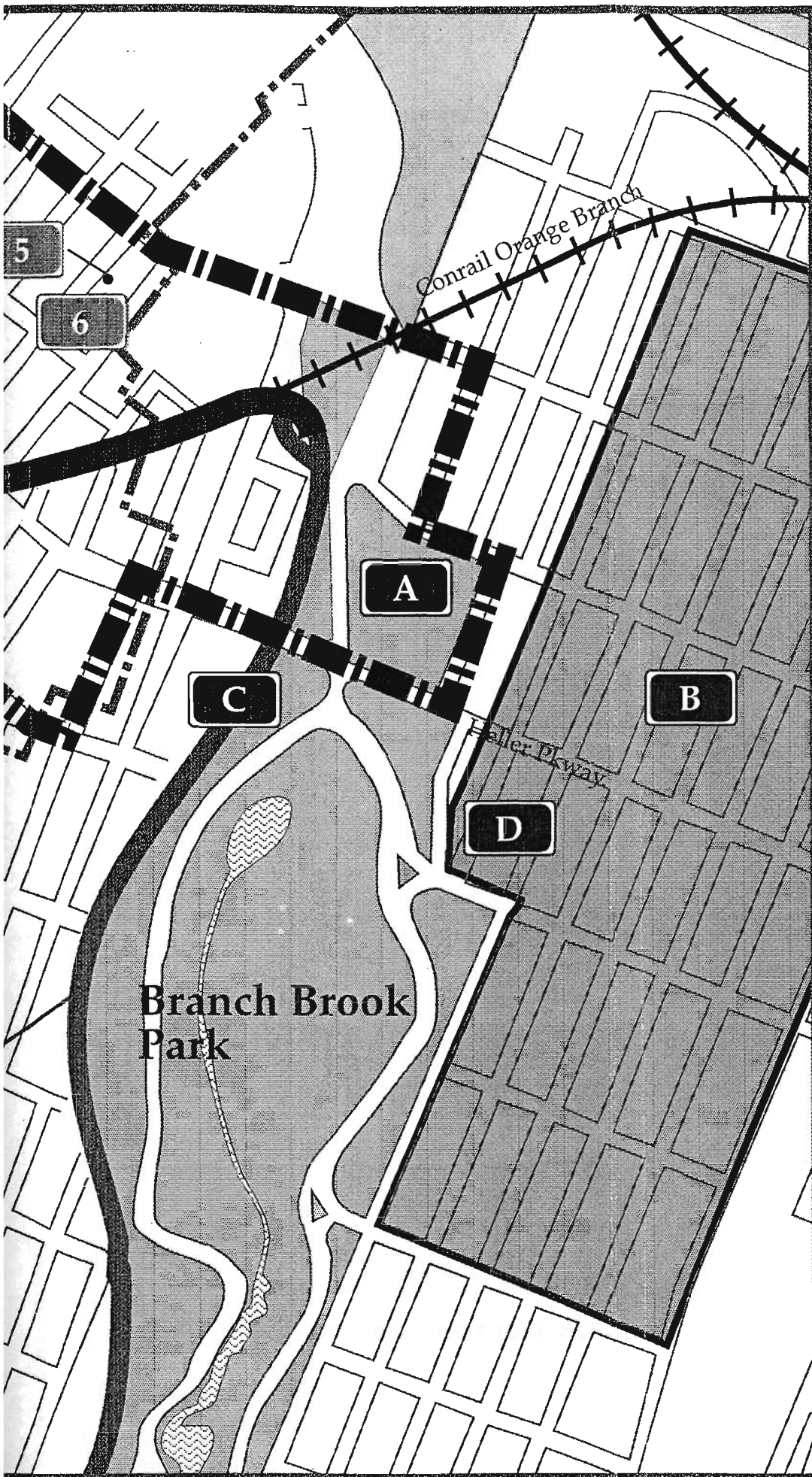








APPENDIX E



Historic Resources

Figure 12-1



-  National Register Resource
-  Potentially Eligible
-  Municipal Boundary
-  Railroad
-  Study Area
-  Proposed Alignment

Environmental Assessment
for the Newark City Subway
Extension and Vehicle Bas
Facility



Prepared By
BRW Rail Link Team