A PHASE IB CULTURAL RESOURCE INVESTIGATION OF THE PROPOSED REGO PARK MALL, QUEENS, NEW YORK

CEQR NO. 86-013Q

PREPARED FOR:

THE TRUMP ORGANIZATION
NEW YORK, NEW YORK

PREPARED BY:

THE CULTURAL RESOURCE GROUP
LOUIS BERGER & ASSOCIATES, INC.
EAST ORANGE, NEW JERSEY

BENJAMIN RESNICK, S.O.P.A.
PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR

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607

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF PLATES

I. INTRODUCTION

The following Phase IB report is submitted to the Trump Organization by the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (LBA) of East Orange, New Jersey. This report summarizes the methods and results of an archaeological cultural resource investigation (CEQR No. 86-013Q) of the proposed Rego Park Mall, Block 2084, Rego Park, Queens, New York (Figure 1). The goal of this investigation was to identify the presence or absence of archaeological resources within the proposed construction site that may have the potential to be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. All services performed under this contract were pursuant to the instructions and intents set forth by the New York City Environmental Quality Review Act of 1978, Part 617.11, and guidelines established by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC).

A Phase IA documentary research study of the project area was prepared by Historical Perspectives Incorporated in 1984 as required by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. This research determined that there was a potential for encountering prehistoric and historic cultural resources in the southern portion of the block, near the intersection of 63rd Road and 97th Street.

As part of the Phase IB archaeological study, the Cultural Resource Group of Louis Berger & Associates, Inc. (LBA) reviewed the results of technical soil borings conducted within the project area by Woodward-Clyde Consultants. LBA also monitored additional soil borings in the southernmost portion of the study area. These test borings uncovered evidence of a buried natural surface below modern fill deposits. Consequently, a series of backhoe trenches were excavated in order to determine the presence of intact features and cultural deposits related to the history and prehistory of the project site. Seven of these trenches were located in the high probability area adjacent to the swamp, and one was placed in the northern section of the study area to positively verify the presence of peat deposits.

The environmental setting is discussed in Chapter II. Results of the background research are presented in Chapter III and include a review of the potential for identifying historic and prehistoric cultural resources. Chapter IV discusses the results of archaeological field investigations including field methods and artifact analysis. Conclusions and recommendations are listed in Chapter V.

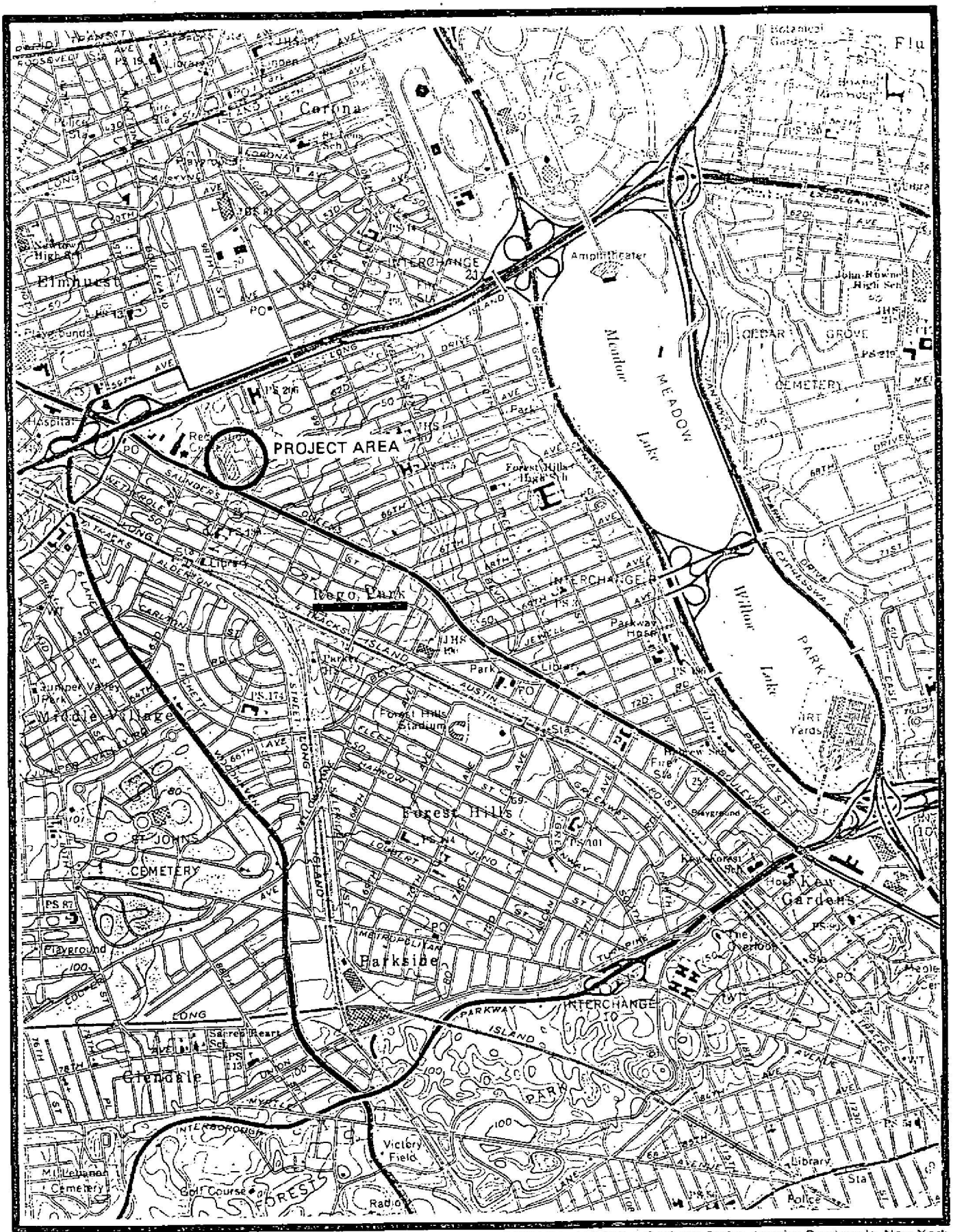


FIGURE 1: Project Location

SOURCE: U.S.G.S. 7.5 Minute Series, Jamaica Quadrangle, New York

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The proposed Rego Park Mall site is located within the Coastal Plain Physiographic Province of the Atlantic Coastal Lowland Landform (Thompson 1977). Geographically, the area is associated with the Ronkonkoma and Harbor Hill (terminal) morainal ridges (Schuberth 1968) which were created during the Wisconsin Stage of the Pleistocene Ice Age. These ridges contain schist, granite, and other shales and limestones (Barlow 1971). Soils of the area are alluvial, situated within valley bottoms, and originated from the deposition of glacial outwash. Although these soils may be characterized by poor drainage, they have excellent agricultural potential. Unlike glacial till, outwash deposits consist of stratified sediments.

Glacial retreat occurred from about 17,000 to 15,000 years ago and subsequently created a variety of ecological habitats such as estuaries, saltwater and freshwater marshes, bogs, upland and midslope communities. By about 2,000 years ago, environmental and meteorological conditions approached those of the present (Barlow 1971). The coastal plain of New York proved attractive to aboriginal populations due to a relatively long frost-free period, a greater annual reception of sunlight, and the tempering effects of a coastal environment.

The project tract is situated approximately 2.5 miles east of Newtown Creek, and one mile west of a drainage that flows into Flushing Bay to the north. Historically, Flushing Creek was located immediately northwest of the study site and contributed to the formation of wetlands in the area. According to local informants, the general area along the Long Island Expressway was filled during the twentieth century, and perhaps earlier. Presently, two man-made lakes are located one mile east of the proposed mall site.

III. BACKGROUND RESEARCH

A. INTRODUCTION

The New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission requested a documentary search of the proposed Rego Park Mall site to determine the potential for identifying the presence of archaeological resources. The southernmost section of the project area was considered to have the highest cultural resource potential since it bordered a wetlands area to the north.

The Phase IA report prepared by Historical Perspectives Incorporated documented the location of an early nineteenth-century farmstead in the southern section of the project area. In addition, several prehistoric archaeological sites, located in a similar environmental setting to the proposed construction site, have been recorded nearby. For these reasons, this study was potentially sensitive to both historic and prehistoric cultural resources.

B. RESULTS

Historical Resources

The earliest indication of a structure within the project site was a circa 1812 farmhouse near the intersection of 63rd Road and 97th Street. This structure was probably built by Michael Vandeveer following his move from Flatbush in 1810 (Historical Perspectives Incorporated 1984). Although industrialization increased during the mid-nineteenth century, historic maps from this period indicate a farm structure at this location.

During the early twentieth century, it appears that a two-and-one-half-story frame residence and stables (to its west) owned by Anthony Uhl were situated at the intersection of 63rd Road and 97th Street. The farmhouse appears to lie partly within 97th Street immediately east of the project site, and was extant until at least 1927.

Investigation of the Queens Building Department files by Historical Perspectives Incorporated (1984) failed to uncover any evidence of building activity in the northern section of the project area prior to the construction of Alexanders Department Store in 1960. Similarly, these files contained no evidence of post-1960 construction activity in the southernmost portion of the proposed mall site.

Based upon the above results, there is a potential for uncovering structural remains and artifacts relating to the nineteenth-century farmstead located in the southernmost portion of the project area. It is possible that the parking lot now located in

this area may have acted to preserve cultural deposits associated with this occupation.

Prehistoric Resources

The prehistoric occupants of the project vicinity may be assigned to the Delaware Culture which covered all of New Jersey and portions of Delaware, eastern Pennsylvania, and southern New York. The Rego Park area appears to be situated within a cultural boundary of the Delaware between the Rockaway and Massapequa political groups (Goddard 1978:214-215). This boundary may have served as an important communication center for the flow of information between these different groups.

The earliest identified archaeological site in the vicinity of the project site is the Grantville Site near Flushing. This Archaic stage site contained evidence of human occupation dating from approximately 6,000 years before present.

The potential for identifying prehistoric cultural resources within the project area is associated with its inland wetland habitat. Newtown Creek, located to the west of the proposed mall site, was intensively occupied during the prehistoric period (Historical Perspectives Incorporated 1984). These wetland areas were most likely exploited on a seasonal basis for plant collecting, seed gathering, fishing, and the hunting of migratory waterfowl.

Given the environmental setting of the project site, there is potential for uncovering prehistoric cultural resources in this area. Although these inland wetland sites appear to be temporary, their importance lies in their contribution to a more complete understanding of seasonal resource exploitation and settlement.

IV. ARCHAEOLOGICAL FIELD INVESTIGATIONS

A. BACKGROUND

Based on the previous research, the New York City Landmarks Commission determined that the project area was potentially sensitive to both prehistoric and historic archaeological resources. LBA, in consultation with the Trump Organization, subsequently implemented a Phase IB study involving the review of previously excavated geotechnical soil borings, and the monitoring of four additional borings within the southernmost section of the proposed construction site (Figure 2).

LBA decided to concentrate its efforts toward historical resources following the completion of the background research and the analysis of geotechnical data generated by Woodward-Clyde Consultants (Figure 3). Figure 3 indicates that approximately 14 to 18 feet of fill overlie natural sediment in the southernmost section of the proposed mall site. The presence of an original ground surface suggested the potential for identifying prehistoric archaeological remains.

Unlike the southern portion of the project area, the northern section contained substantial deposits of organic clay and peat (Strata 2 and 3 in Figure 3). These soils suggested a swampy environment that would not normally be exploited during the prehistoric period. Therefore, the potential in this area of the project appeared low. Conversely, Stratum 4 may have represented the original ground surface and had a higher potential to contain prehistoric remains.

LBA's monitoring of four geotechnical test borings (Figure 4) supported the findings noted above, and indicated that between 12 to 15 feet of fill (Stratum A) overlay a possible original ground surface (Stratum B). This fill consisted primarily of sand, gravel, and silt mixed with coal, ash, cinder, and building rubble (i.e., brick, mortar, window glass). The possible original ground surface contained only small fragments of brick, ceramics, and window glass. It was uncertain if these artifacts originated from Stratum B since the three-inch diameter borings may have worked materials down from Stratum A. Stratum C consisted of a sterile layer of coarse to fine red glacial sands with gravel.

The borings were not an adequate method of determining the presence or absence of subsurface archaeological resources. For this reason, LBA recommended the excavation of a series of backhoe trenches in areas of high archaeological sensitivity (i.e., southern portion of project area) to more fully determine if any archaeological remains were extant.

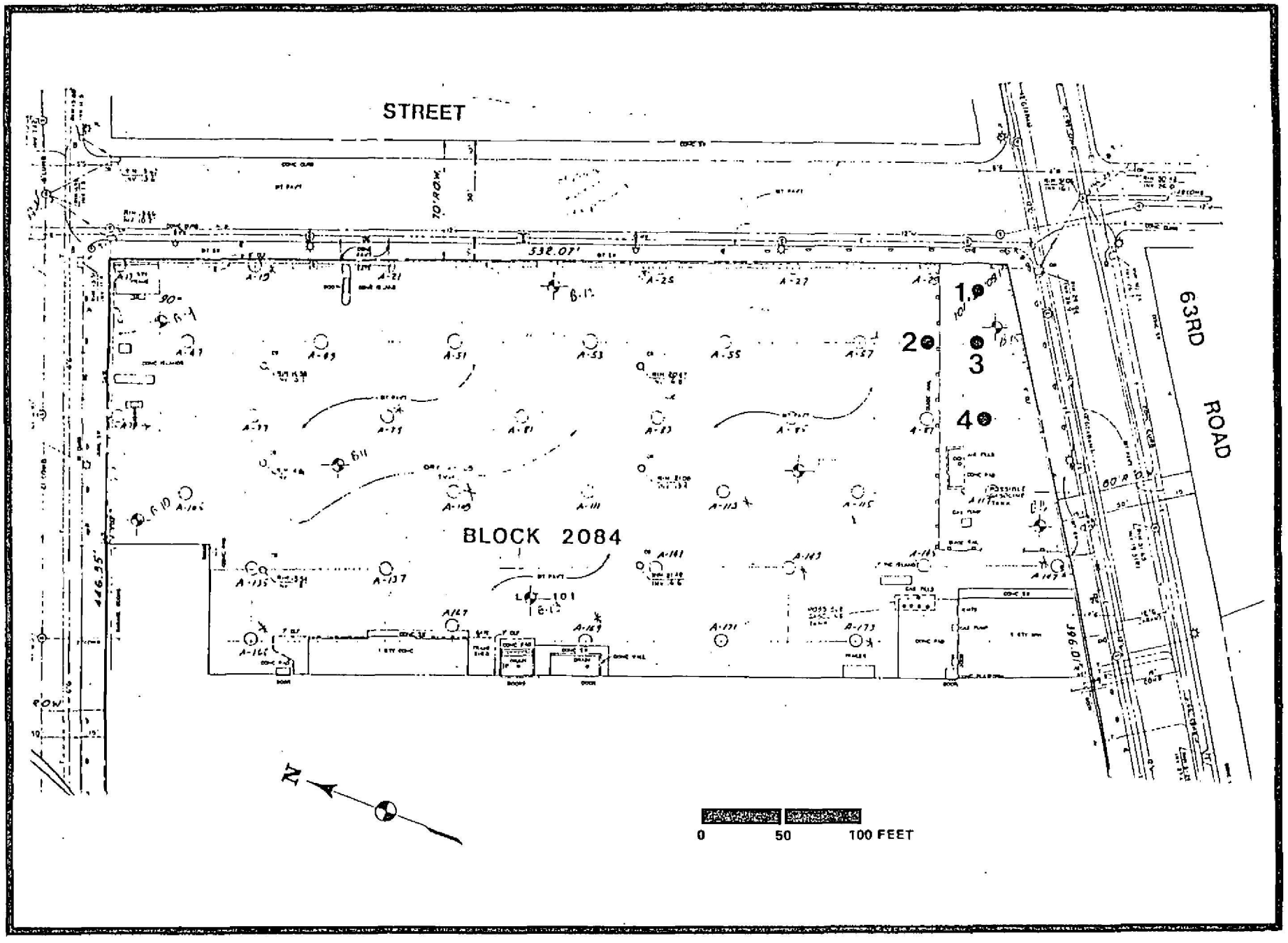
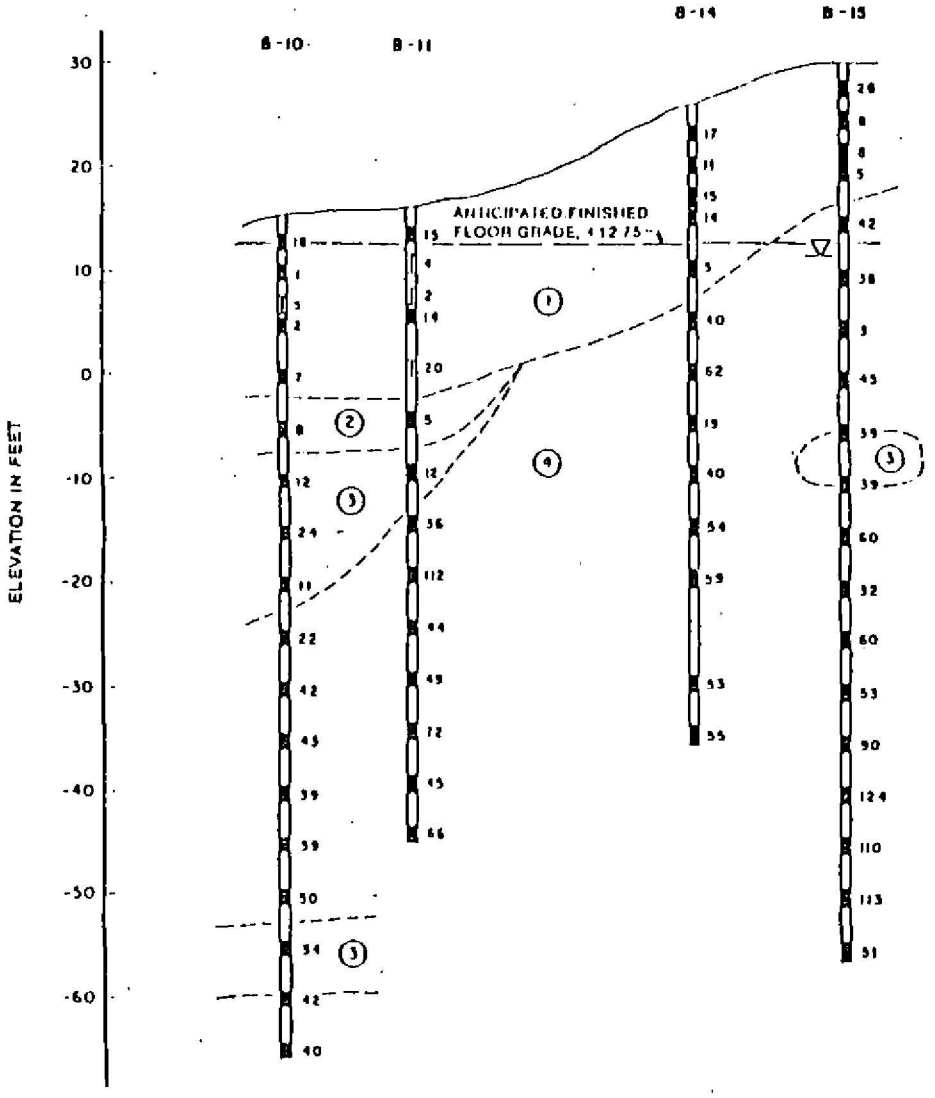


FIGURE 2: Base Map of Geotechnical Borings by Woodward-Clyde Consultants, and Additional Soil Borings Monitored by Louis Berger and Associates, Inc.



LEGEND:

① VERY LOOSE TO DENSE FILL, CONSISTING OF SAND, GRAVEL, SILT, WOOD, CINDERS, TRASH, AND RUBBLE (CLASS 11-65)

② FIRM TO STIFF BROWN ORGANIC SILT AND PEAT (CLASS 11-65).

③ STIFF TO VERY STIFF GRAY SANDY SILTY CLAY/CLAYEY SILT (CLASS 9-65/10-65).

④ DENSE TO VERY DENSE BROWN AND GRAY SILTY COARSE TO FINE SAND, TRACE GRAVEL (CLASS 7-65).

▽ GROUNDWATER LEVEL

NOTE: SEE PAGE A-2 IN APPENDIX A FOR EXPLANATION OF SYMBOLS AND TERMS.

INFERRED SUBSURFACE PROFILE
PROPOSED REGO PARK MALL
QUEENS, NEW YORK

WOODWARD-CLYDE CONSULTANTS
CONSULTING ENGINEERS GEOLOGISTS AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENTISTS

Drawn by	J.C.	SCALE (FEET) 0 100	Date 6/4/87
Checked by	A.H.D.		File 86C2269

FIGURE 3: Inferred Subsurface Profile from Woodward-Clyde Consultants Geotechnical Soil Borings

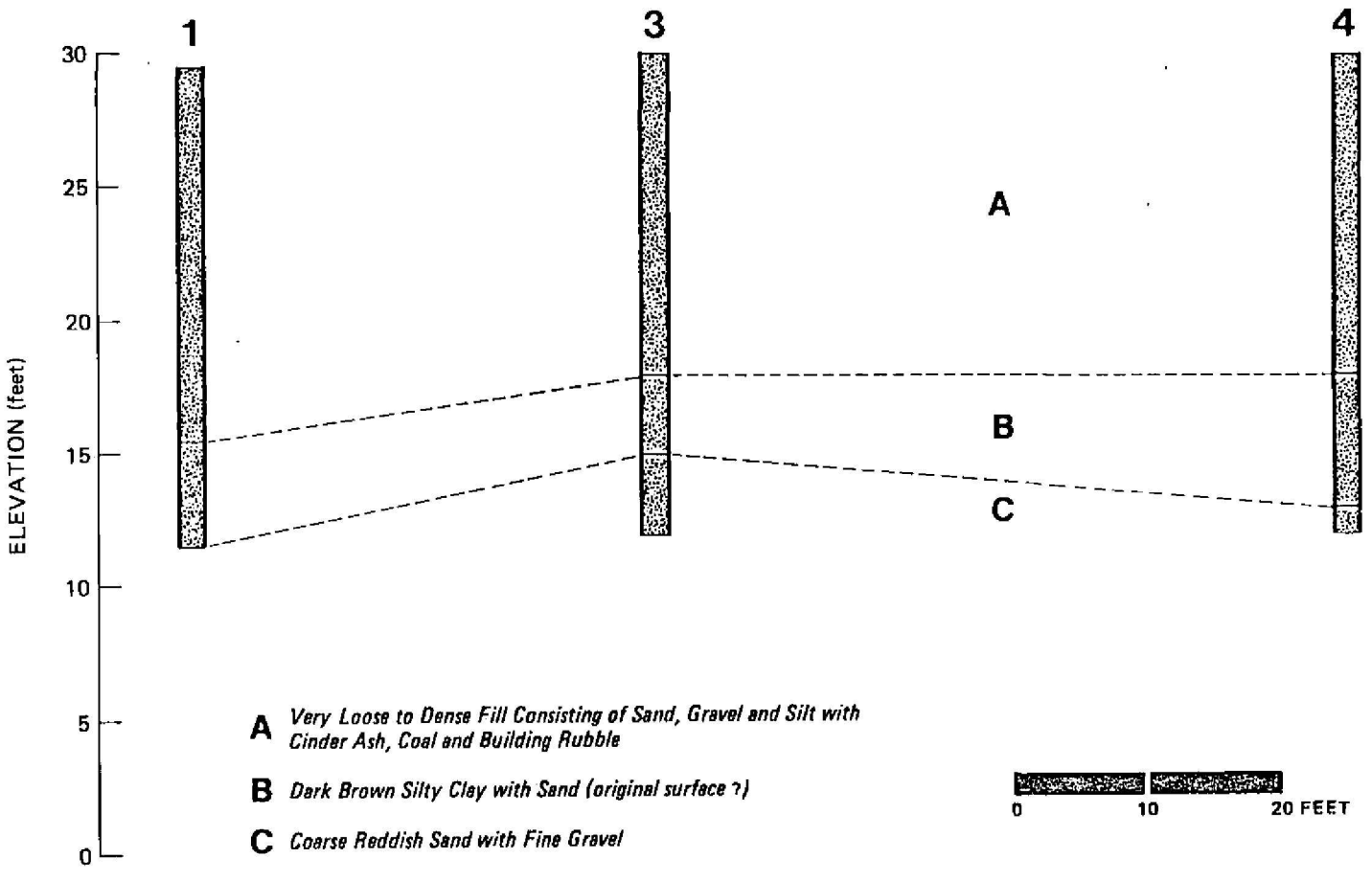


FIGURE 4: Monitored Soil Borings and Inferred Subsurface Profile, Rego Park Mall Project, Queens, New York

The preceding discussion presents the archaeological testing of the project area. Based on models of site location the southernmost area, adjacent to the swamp, had the highest probability to contain prehistoric cultural resources. The nineteenth-century farmstead, referred to in the historical background, was also located in this area. The northernmost portion of the project tract was briefly tested to confirm the presence of peat deposits. Backhoe trench excavations provided the necessary data on the historic potential of the site as well as sufficient depth to explore the potential for identifying prehistoric cultural resources.

B. TRENCH EXCAVATIONS

Methods

Fieldwork was implemented on February 16, 1988 and concluded on February 18, 1988. All excavations were backfilled at the end of each workday. The project tract slopes gradually over a distance of 600 feet from 31 feet amsl in the south to approximately 13 feet amsl in the north (Figure 5).

A total of eight backhoe trenches (655 square feet) were excavated during the Phase IB archaeological study (Figures 5 and 6). Seven of these trenches were located in the high sensitivity area in the southernmost portion of the study area. One trench was also placed in the northern section near 62nd Drive to test the locations of possible buried peat soils.

Since all but two of the backhoe trenches measured 5 feet x 15 feet, the total area excavated was similar to that which was originally proposed. These dimensions seemed to be the most efficient given the size of the backhoe bucket. Trench 1 was 5 feet x 20 feet, and Trench 7 measured 9 feet in width in order to provide a wide apperture to view the original ground surface.

A datum was established for the southernmost portion of the project site in order to tie the location of test trenches to existing landmarks (Figure 6). Another datum was established in the northernmost section of the project area prior to the excavation of Test Trench 8. Generally, three corners of each test trench were sited with a transit and stadia rod. Distances were taped as a means of crosschecking transit readings. Several of the geotechnical boring locations within the project tract were also sited in order to tie trench elevations to mean sea level.

Test trenches were excavated by natural and cultural stratigraphy as determined by soil color (Munsell), texture, and artifact content. In general, at least one 5-gallon bucket of each soil stratum was sifted through 1/4-inch hardware mesh. Two or more 5-gallon buckets of soil were sampled, however, when the historic surface was encountered. Additionally, diagnostic artifacts were selectively sampled from individual strata.

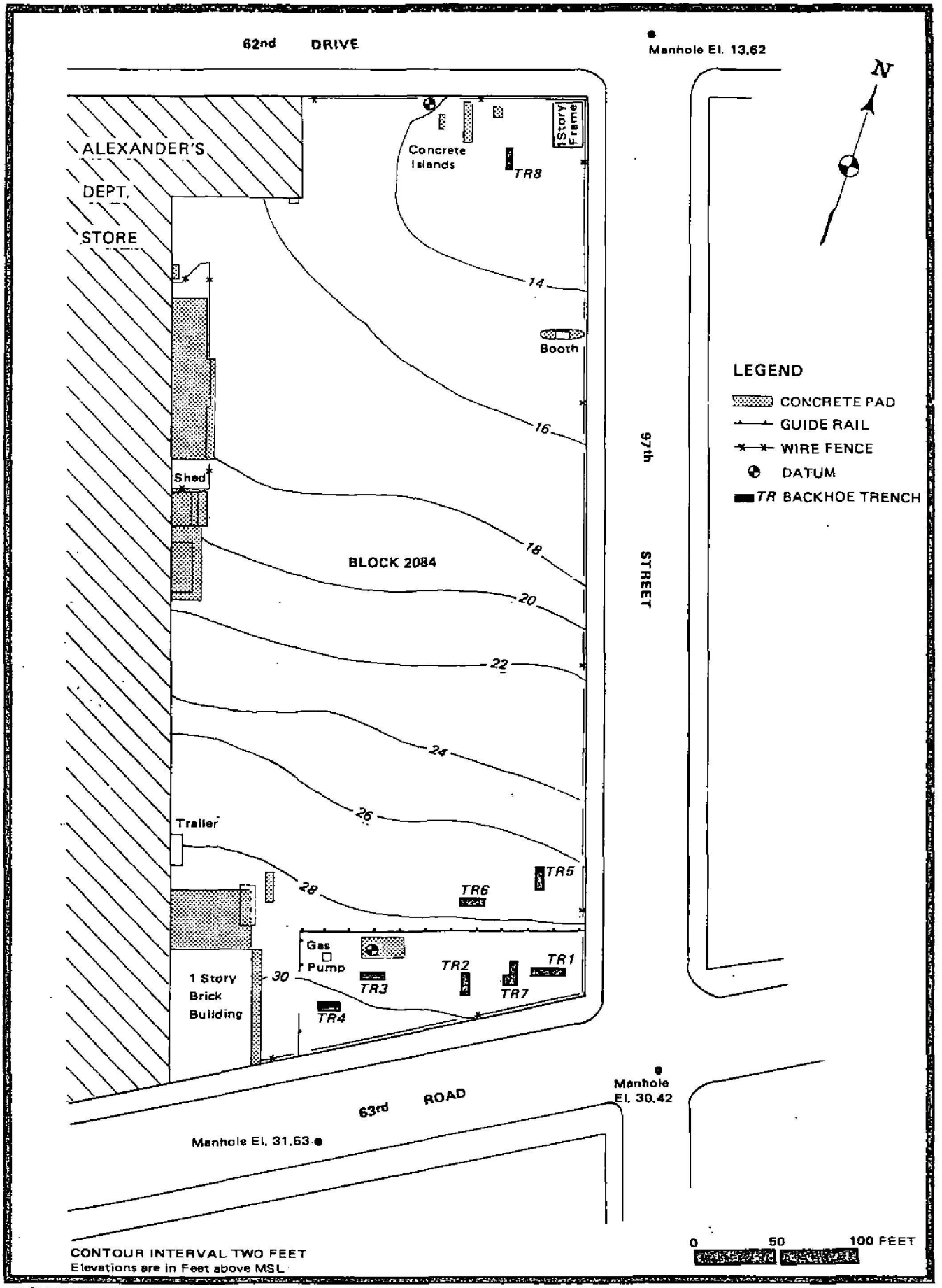


FIGURE 5: Plan View of Project Tract

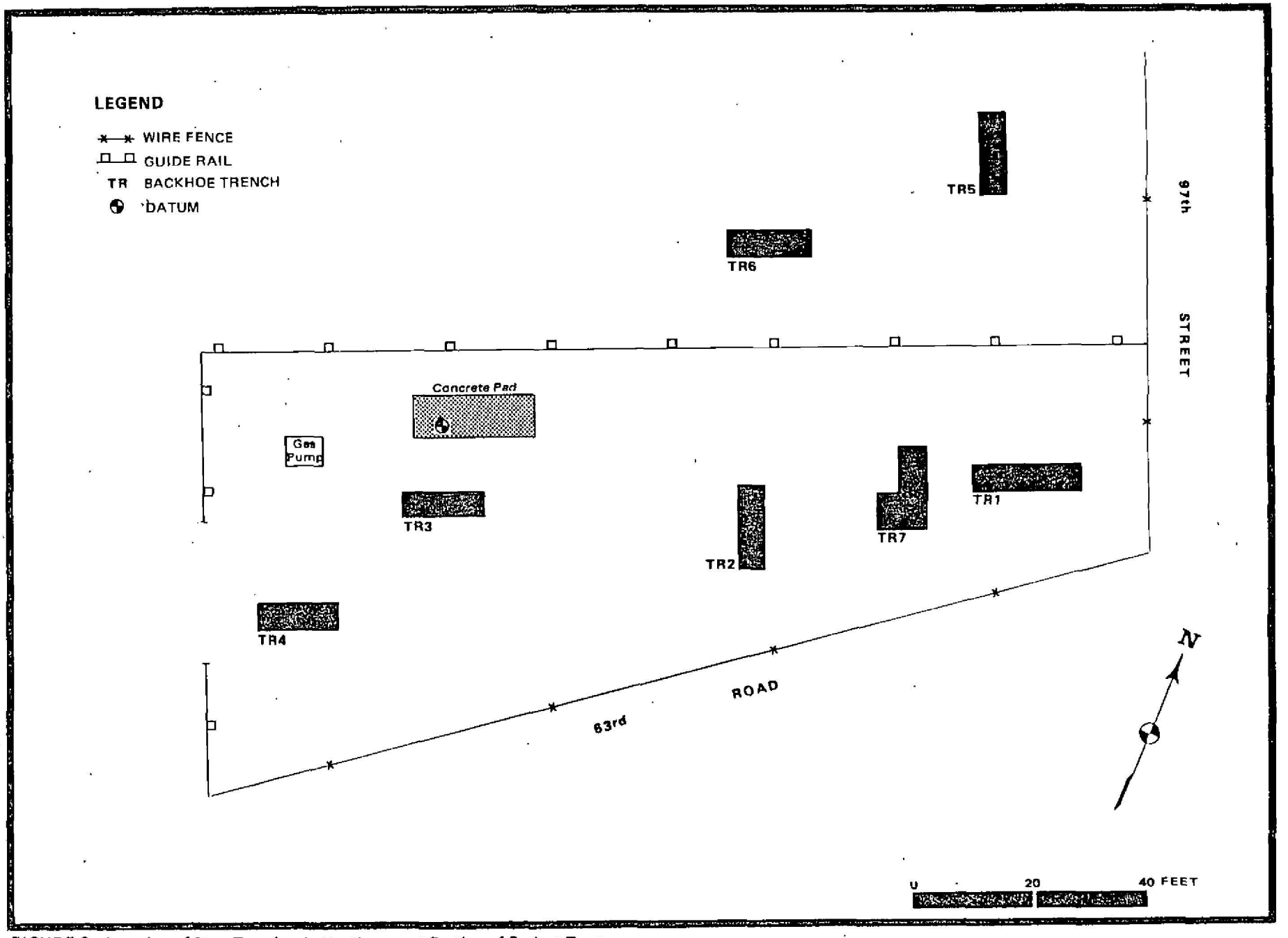


FIGURE 6: Location of Test Trenches in Southernmost Portion of Project Tract

Provenience forms and field notes were completed in order to document fieldwork. Excavations were also recorded with black-and-white print film and color slide film. Generally, one representative soil profile was drawn for each excavated test trench. The depths of individual strata were measured from the surface (Plate 1), and were noted according to relative and absolute elevation (amsl). Soil samples of the original ground surface were, at times, physically obtained from trench side walls. All trenches were, at excavated to the sterile brown and gray clay subsoil approximately 18 feet below the parking lot surface.

Results

Table 1 notes the soil strata encountered and artifacts recovered during Phase IB test trenching of the proposed Rego Park Mall Site. The predominant stratigraphy included brown and gray brown sandy loam fill (Strata A and B) overlying a possible historic ground surface of brown sandy clay to silt loam (Stratum C). This latter soil horizon was identified about 10 to 12 feet below the present parking lot surface in Test Trenches 1, 2, 5, and 7 (Figure 7). It appears then that this horizon is concentrated near the intersection of 97th Street and 63rd Road in the vicinity of the nineteenth-century farmstead.

Artifacts were retrieved from the possible historic surface, which varied from 2 to 3 feet in thickness. No intact features or prehistoric cultural materials were recovered. For the most part, artifact yield from the surface was low and included window and bottle glass, a cut nail, ceramic tile, brick, roofing slate, and an automobile-related artifact, indicating that final deposition on this surface occurred during the twentieth century. A twentieth-century bottle was also collected from the possible historic surface, although it may have originated from the upper fill horizon during backhoe excavation.

Nearly all of the recovered cultural materials were produced from the fill horizons. These fill deposits (10 to 15 feet below current grade) attained their greatest depth in Test Trenches 3, 4, 6, and 8 in the southwestern and northern sections of the study area. No evidence of the original ground surface was identified in these areas (Figure 8). In the case of Test Trench 8, two successive layers of fill were encountered directly above the water table. Peat soils (at least 1 foot in depth) were obtained at the base of the trench just below the water level, and confirmed the presence of a swampy environment (Figure 9). No artifacts or shell were present within the peat soils.

The recovery of many machine-made bottles (wine/liquor, mineral water, milk, soda), whiteware, stoneware, and hard paste porcelain dates the fill episodes to the early to mid-twentieth century. Historically, this general area had been filled repeatedly since it was primarily marshland.

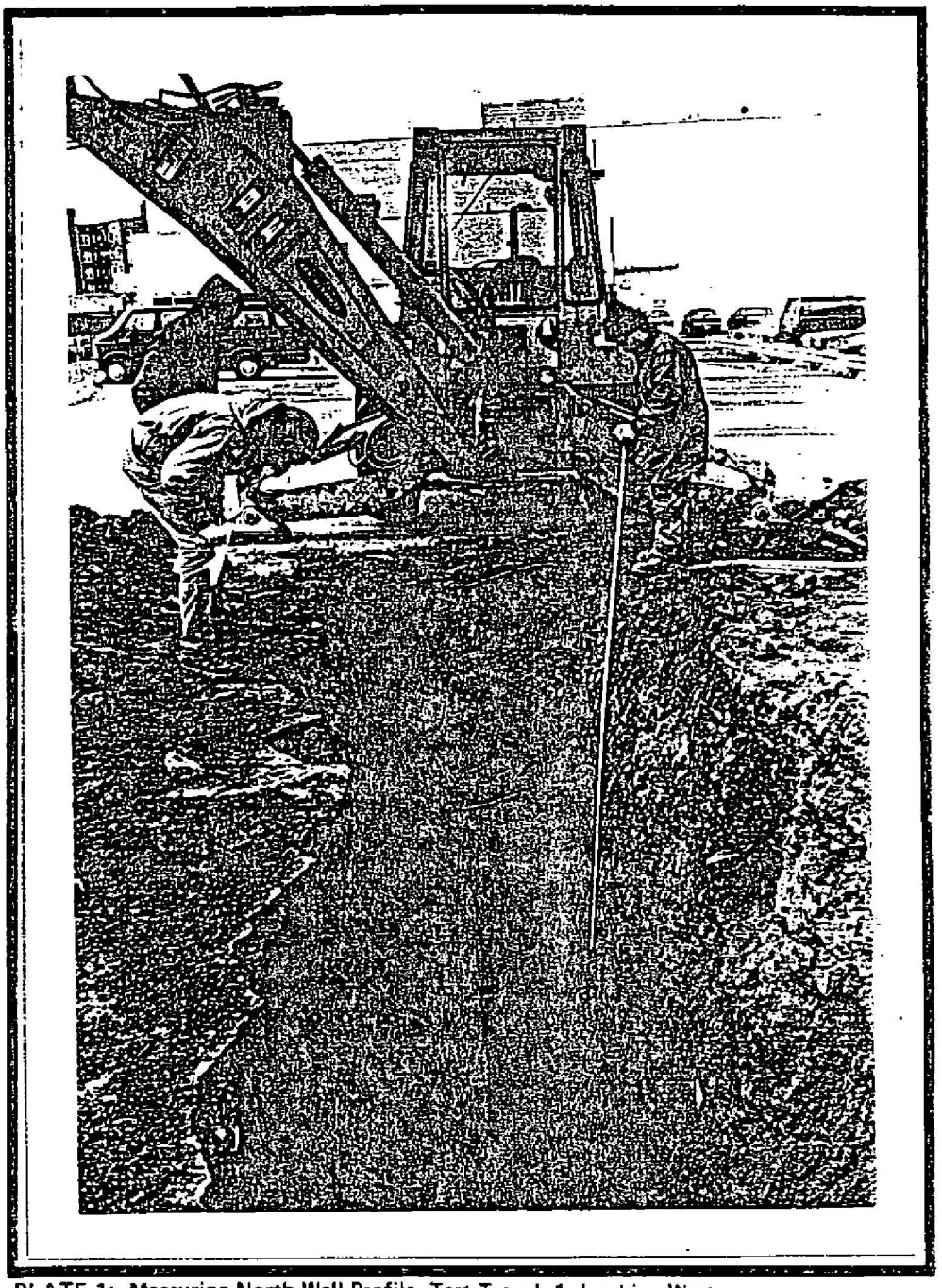


PLATE 1: Measuring North Wall Profile, Test Trench 1, Looking West

TABLE 1

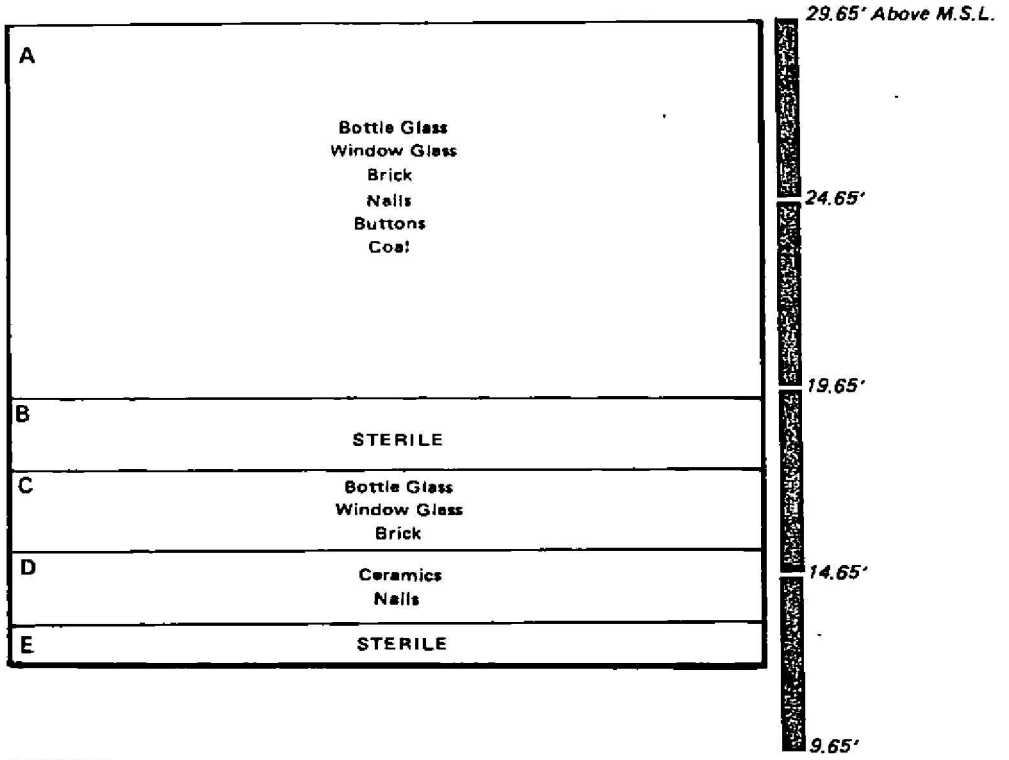
ARTIFACT INVENTORY

Test Trench	Stratum	Depth[1]	Munsell Color	Soil Description	Artifacts
1	A	29.10 - 22.10	10YR 3/2	VDk Gry Br Sa Lo	Ceramics, window glass, nails, slag, hardware, shell
	B	23.10 - 20.00	7.5YR 4/6	Str Br Sa Cl Lo	Sterile
	*C	20.10 - 19.10	7.5YR 4/4	Br-Dk Br Sa Cl Lo	Window glass
	D	19.10 - 18.60	10YR 3/2	VDk Gry Br Sa Lo	Ceramics, tumbler Nails, window glass, slag, shell, bone
	E	18.60 - 14.60	10YR 5/6	Y Br Cl	Sterile
2	A	29.65 - 19.65	10YR 3/2	VDk Gry Br Sa Lo	Bottle glass, window glass, brick, nails, button, coal, auto part
	B	19.65 - 17.65	10YR 4/4	Dk Y Br Sa Lo	Sterile
	*C	17.65 - 15.65	10YR 3/3	Dk Br Sa Cl Lo	Bottle glass, window glass, brick
	D	15.65 - 13.65	10YR 5/6 mottled w/ 10YR 5/3	Y Br-Br Si Cl w/pebbles	Ceramic, nail
	E	13.65 - 12.65	10YR 4/6 mottled w/ 2.5Y 5/2	Dk Y Br w/ Gry Br Sa Cl	Sterile
3	A	29.22 - 18.22	10YR 3/4	Dk Y Br Sa Lo	Window glass, concrete
	B	24.72 - 16.72	10YR 4/3	Dk Br-Br Sa Lo	Bottle glass, window glass, nails, wire, tile, slag, brick, shell
	C	16.72 - 13.72	10YR 4/6 mottled w/ 2.5Y 5/2	Dk Y Br w/ Gry Br Sa Cl	Sterile
4	A	29.94 - 19.94	10YR 4/3	Br-Dk Br Lo Sa	Bottle glass
	B	23.44 - 18.44	10YR 4/2	Dk Gry Br Lo Sa	Ceramic, bottle glass, window glass, tile, slag, electrical hardware

Test Trench	Stratum	Depth[1]	Munsell Color	Soil Description	Artifacts
	C	18.44 - 14.94	2.5Y 6/2 mottled w/ 7.5 YR 4/6	Lt Br Gry w/Str Br Sa Cl	Sterile
	D	16.94 - 12.94	10YR 5/3 mottled w/ 10YR 5/8	Br w/Y Br Sa Cl	Sterile
5	A	26.15 - 19.15	10YR 3/3	Dk Br Sa Lo	Ceramic, bottle glass, window glass, brick, roofing tile, nails, rubber
	B	19.65 - 15.65	10YR 5/2	Gry Br Sa Lo	Bottle glass, window glass, roofing slate, tile, wire, linoleum
	*C	16.65 - 13.15	10YR 3/3	Dk Br Lo Sa	Bottle glass, window glass, nails, roofing slate, tile, auto part
	D	13.15 - 11.15	10YR 4/6 mottled w/ 2.5Y 5/2	Dk Y Br w/Gry Br Sa Cl	Sterile
6	A	27.46 - 13.96	10YR 3/2	V Dk Gry Br Sa Lo	Ceramic, bottle glass, window glass, nail, machine parts
	B	13.96 - 10.96	2.5Y 5/2 mottled w/ 10YR 5/6	Gry Br w/Y Br Sa Cl	Sterile
7	A	29.45 - 23.45	10YR 3/3	Dk Br Lo Sa	Ceramic, bottle glass, window glass, brick, wire, wood, auto part, bone, shell
	B	23.45 - 16.95	7.5YR 4/6	Str Br Sa Lo	Window glass, nails, tile, marble, auto part
	*C	17.45 - 15.95	10YR 3/3	Dk Br Si Lo	Sterile
	D	17.00 - 14.25	10YR 5/6 mottled w/ 2.5Y 5/2	Y Br w/Gry Br Sa Cl	Sterile
8	A	13.55 - 9.55	10YR 6/3	Pl Br Lo Sa	Not sampled
	B	9.55 - 0.00	2.5YR 3/0	V Dk Gry Silt	Ceramics, bottles, window glass, utensil, slag, marble, bone
	C	0.00 -		Peat Deposit	Sterile

[1] Absolute elevation (amsl)
* Denotes possible historic surface

Test Trench 2 WEST PROFILE



LEGEND

STRATUM A 10YR 3/2 VERY DARK GRAYISH BROWN SANDY LOAM

STRATUM B 10YR 4/4 DARK YELLOWISH BROWN SANDY LOAM

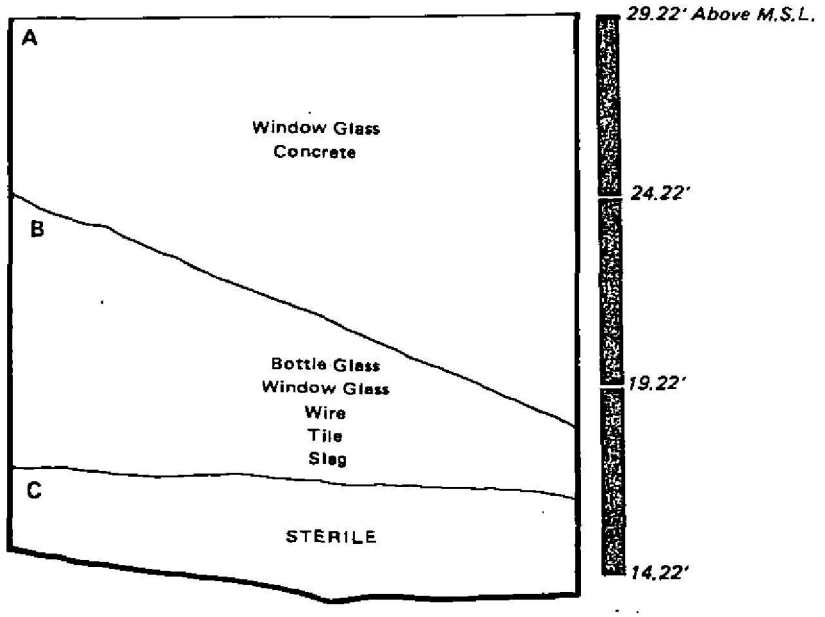
STRATUM C 10YR 3/3 DARK BROWN SANDY CLAY LOAM

STRATUM D 10YR 5/5 YELLOWISH BROWN SILTY CLAY MOTTLED WITH 10YR 5/3 BROWN SILTY CLAY

STRATUM E 10YR 4/6 DARK YELLOWISH BROWN SANDY CLAY MOTTLED WITH 2.5Y 5/2 OLIVE GRAY CLAYEY SAND

FIGURE 7: Test Trench 2, West Profile

Test Trench 3 NORTH PROFILE



LEGEND

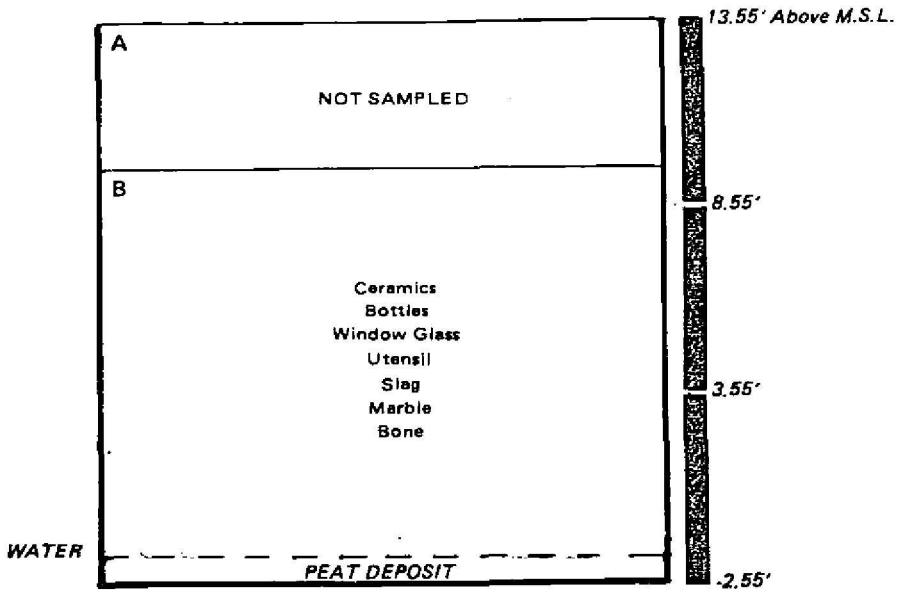
STRATUM A 10YR 3/4 DARK YELLOWISH BROWN SANDY LOAM

STRATUM B 10YR 4/3 BROWN TO DARK BROWN SANDY LOAM

STRATUM C 10YR 4/6 DARK YELLOWISH BROWN SANDY CLAY MOTTLED WITH 2.5Y 5/2 OLIVE GRAY SANDY CLAY

FIGURE 8: Test Trench 3, North Profile

Test Trench 8 EAST PROFILE



LEGEND

STRATUM A 10YR 6/3 PALE BROWN LOAMY SAND
STRATUM B 2.5YR 3/0 VERY DARK GRAY SILT

FIGURE 9: Test Trench 8, East Profile

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Phase IB archaeological investigations of the proposed Rego Park Mall Site produced no significant features or cultural deposits. Although the original ground surface was exposed in the southeasternmost portion of the study area, only a small amount of predominantly non-diagnostic and twentieth-century artifacts were recovered. Moreover, there was no evidence of prehistoric exploitation of the study area.

A series of extensive fill deposits were identified within the project area. These deposits consisted of a large amount of architectural and kitchen debris (ceramics, glass bottles) dating to the early to mid-twentieth century. Although Phase IB excavations were concentrated near the intersection of 97th Street and 63rd Road, there was no physical evidence of the farmstead referred to in the historical record. It is suspected that it was destroyed, probably during the widening of the above-noted intersection. Test Trench 8, placed in the northernmost portion of the project area, contained peat soils directly below the water table at approximately 15 feet below grade. These soils confirmed the presence of former marshland in this area, and would not have been exploited during the prehistoric period. Therefore, it is proposed that no cultural resources will be affected by construction activities related to the proposed Rego Park Mall and no additional work is recommended.

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