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ARCHAEOLOGICAL TEST EXCAVATIONS  
AT THE  
MELVILLE PLAZA SHOPPING CENTER  
DEVELOPMENT PROPERTY  
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK  
CEQR NO. 94DCPO28R

RECEIVED  
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

MAY 19 1995

LANDMARKS PRESERVATION  
COMMISSION

by

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## MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Archaeological testing was carried out within the Melville Plaza Shopping Center property located on Richmond Avenue and Richmond Hill Road, Staten Island, New York. No prehistoric cultural resources were found within the project area. The landscape within the property has been extensively altered and disturbed, therefore its potential for containing evidence of prehistoric occupation is extremely low.

A 19th century farmstead known as the Alston-Decker-Rettle House was formerly located at the northern end of the property near Richmond Hill Road. This structure was removed from the site after 1981. No physical evidence of the house or other structures was found. The site of the farmstead has been highly disturbed by the construction of sewer lines and manholes. A few historic period artifacts were found at widely scattered locations, but these specimens are not of historic research value or significance.

The development property lacks physical integrity and research potential. The proposed construction of the shopping center upon this site will have no impact upon any cultural resources.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
MANAGEMENT SUMMARY .....	I
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING .....	4
III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....	7
IV. REFERENCES .....	8
V. APPENDIX .....	9

# LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	Page
FIGURE 1: Portions of U.S.G.S Map Arthur Kill NY-NJ Quadrangle showing location of project area .....	2
FIGURE 2: Portion of Borough of Richmond Tax Map showing location of project area .....	3
FIGURE 3: Project Base Map .....	5

# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Melville Realty Co, Inc. proposes to construct a new shopping center within a 6.38 acres parcel of land located on Richmond Avenue and Richmond Hill Road in Staten Island, New York. The proposed shopping center will consist of two adjoining one-story masonry structures with a total building area of 63,805 square feet. The structures will be occupied by Marshall's and Linen-N-Things (Vaccaro 1994a). The project will also include the construction of parking areas, curbs, a concrete walk and a fenced loading area.

This report presents the results of Phase IB cultural resources investigation conducted within the proposed development property. This study was conducted in accordance with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission guidelines for archaeology and the CEQR regulations. The CEQR project number is 94DCPO28R. The objectives of this cultural resources investigation was to gather historical and archaeological data in order to locate and identify prehistoric and historic cultural resources that may exist within the proposed project area.

## **B. STUDY AREA LOCATION**

The proposed Melville Plaza Shopping Center is located on Richmond Avenue and Richmond Hill Road Staten Island, New York. It is listed on the Borough of Richmond tax map as Block 2400, Lots 25 and 83. The project area is bounded on the north by a gas station, an abandoned sewage treatment plant and Richmond Hill Road, on the east by Richmond Hill Boulevard and a condominium, on the south by open private land, and on the west by Richmond Avenue.

The location of the project site is indicated on the Arthur Kill New York - New Jersey quadrangle, United States Geological Survey map, 7.5' series photo revised in 1981 (FIGURE 1). The project area is also shown on the tax map (FIGURE 2).

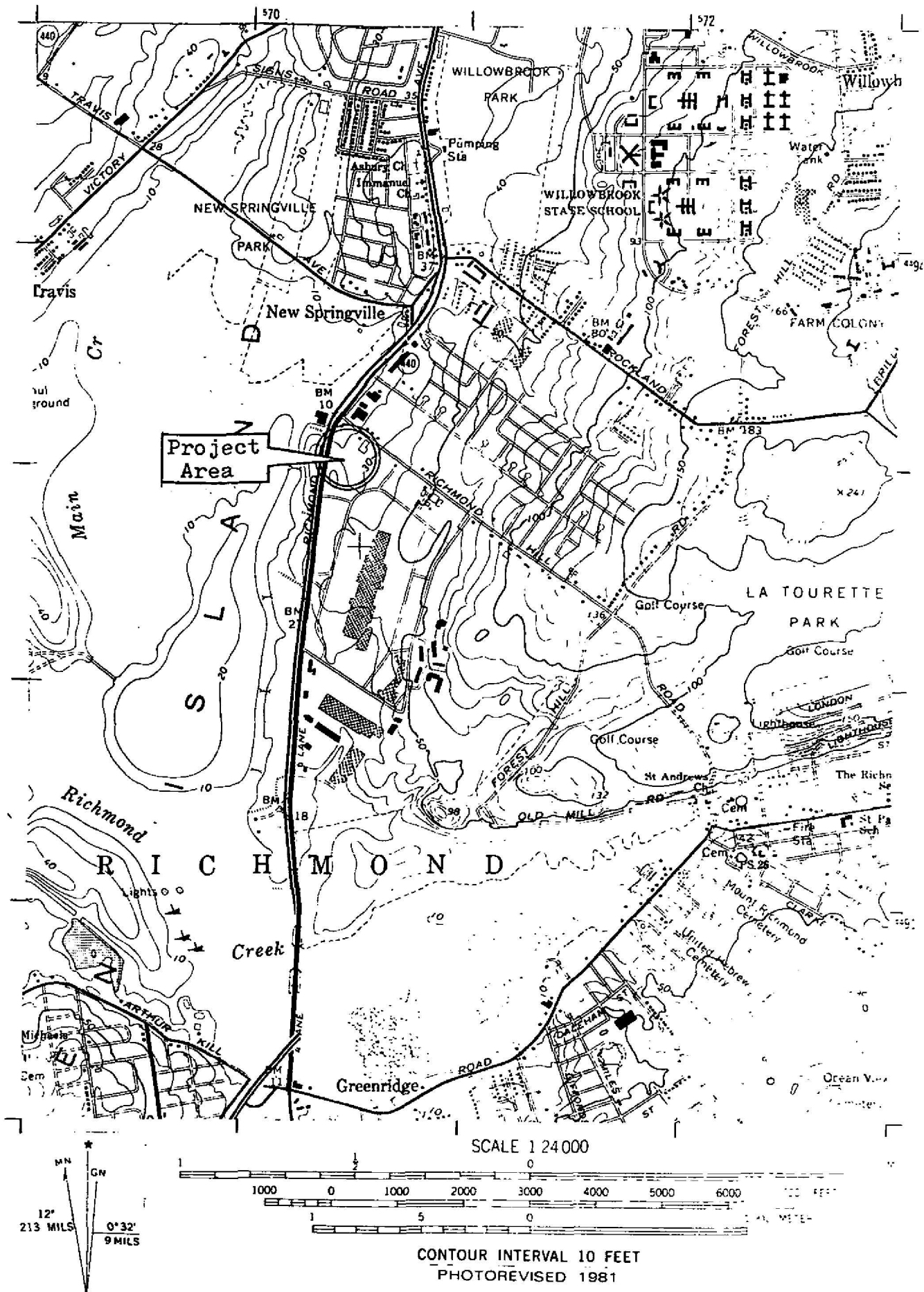


FIGURE 1: Portion of U.S.G.S. map Arthur Kill N.Y.-N.J. quadrangle showing location of project area.



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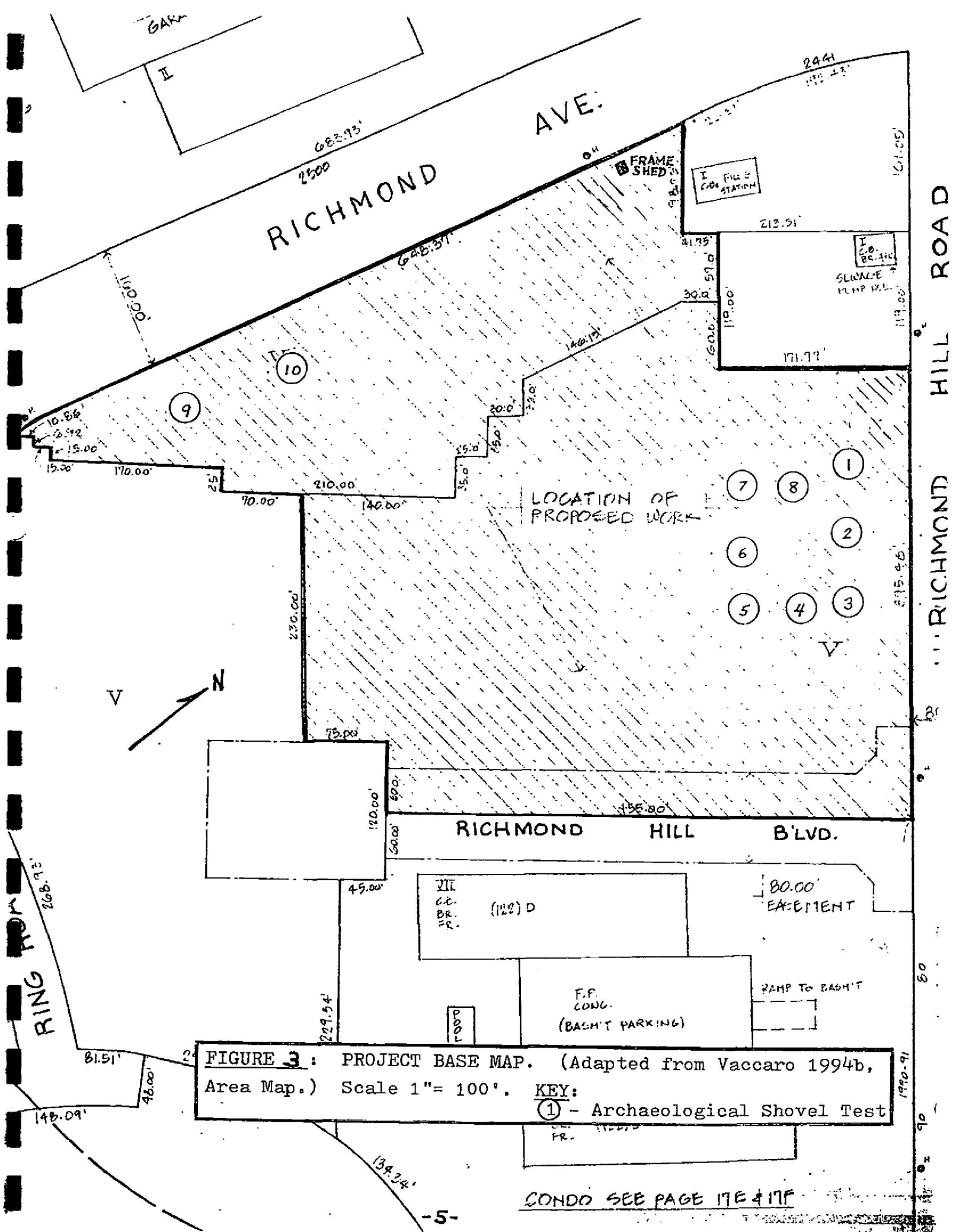
## II. ARCHAEOLOGICAL TESTING

Subsurface archaeological tests were conducted within the property in areas which could reasonably be expected to contain buried cultural resources and to confirm or negate observations made during the pedestrian survey (Lenik and Gibbs 1994). The tests measured one foot by one foot in plan and were excavated to culturally sterile depths by shovel and hand trowel. All soils were screened through one-quarter inch mesh hardware cloth. All tests were backfilled after all data had been recorded. A description of each test is presented in this report.

Eight shovel tests were excavated within the north-central section of the site (FIGURE 3). These tests were placed around a pile of concrete blocks, boulders, and dumped cement. This pile of material appeared to be land fill material. The soil encountered in these tests was hard-packed silty stony clay that was primarily yellowish red in color (Munsell 5YR 4/6). This material is the natural subsoil on this site. Artifact recoveries were sparse and included a piece of black plastic electrician's tape, a crushed aluminum Coke can, a piece of anthracite coal, and two pieces of macadam. These items date to the 20th century. No cultural features were found.

Two shovel tests were excavated at the south end of the project site. Only one soil layer was encountered in this location, a yellowish red (Munsell 5YR 4/6) hard-packed silty, sandy stony clay. No artifacts or cultural features were found.





# TEST EXCAVATION RECORDS

<u>Test Number</u>	<u>Stratum</u>	<u>Depth (inches)</u>	<u>Description of Strata</u> <u>Munsell Soil Color</u>	<u>Cultural Remains</u>
1.	I	0-12	Yellowish red, hard packed silty clay with stones; 5YR 4/6	none
2.	I	0-14	Yellowish red, hard packed silty clay with stones; 5YR 4/6	pc. of plastic tape
3.	I	0-8	Reddish yellow, hard packed silty clay with shale and small stones; 7.5YR 6/6	crushed alum. Coke can.
	II	8-12	Reddish brown sandstone; 5YR 5/4	none
4.	I	0-8	Strong brown, hard packed silty clay; 7.5YR 5/6	pc. anthracite coal;
	II	8-14	Very pale brown, hard packed silty sandy clay; 10YR 7/4	pc. macadam none
5.	I	0-14	Yellowish red, hard packed silty stony clay; 5YR 4/6	none
6.	I	0-16	Yellowish red, hard packed silty stony clay; 5YR 4/6	none
7.	I	0-8	Yellowish red, hard packed silty stony clay; 5YR 4/6	pc. macadam
	II	8+	rock	none
8.	I	0-6	Mottled brown, yellowish brown silty stony clay; 10YR 5/3, 5/4	none
	II	6-14	Yellowish red, hard packed silty stony clay; 5YR 4/6	none
9.	I	0-15	Yellowish red, hard packed silty stony clay; 5YR 4/6	none
10.	I	0-9	Yellowish red, hard packed silty sandy stony clay; 5YR 4/6	none

### **III. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The documentary research, informant interviews and field reconnaissance of the proposed Melville Plaza Shopping Center property have failed to locate any evidence of prehistoric occupation within the project area. Our investigation has clearly established that the landscape within the project site has been extensively disturbed by construction activity, excavation, grading and filling. Therefore, we conclude that the project site has extremely low potential for containing evidence of prehistoric occupation.

The small wooden shed-like structure located near the northwest corner of the property is associated with the nearby sewage treatment plant, which is now abandoned. The shed was built after 1981. We conclude that this structure is not architecturally or historically significant and lacks research potential.

The nineteenth century Alston-Decker-Rettle House was formerly located at the northern end of the project area near Richmond Hill Road. Our research has determined that this structure and other associated outbuildings were removed from the site after 1981. We found no physical evidence of the house or other structures on the project site. The landscape in the area in which the house formerly stood has been highly disturbed by machine excavation for and construction of several sewer lines and manholes, as well as grading of the land surface.

The historic period artifacts found in the course of this investigation are primarily of twentieth century origin. They can be characterized as widely scattered trash or roadside litter. The few artifacts found are lacking in association-context and are not significant specimens of material culture.

In conclusion, this cultural resources investigation has determined that the proposed construction of the Melville Plaza Shopping Center will have no impact, direct or indirect, upon any cultural resources. The archaeological sensitivity of the property is extremely low.

## IV. REFERENCES

**Lenik, Edward J.**

1994      Cultural Resources Investigation of the Melville Plaza Shopping Center Development Property, Staten Island, New York, CEQR NO. 94DCPO28R, Sheffield Archaeological Consultants, Butler, NJ.

**Vaccaro, Frank A., P.E.**

1994a      Site Plan. Proposed Marshall's and Linen-N-Things, Richmond Avenue/Richmond Hill Road, Staten Island, NY, March 24, Consulting Engineer, Staten Island, NY.

1994b      Area Map. Proposed Marshall's and Linen-N-Things, Richmond Avenue/Richmond Hill Road, Staten Island, NY, Block 2400. Consulting Engineer, Staten Island, NY.

## **V. APPENDIX KEY PROJECT PERSONNEL**

**Edward J. Lenik, Principal Investigator.** President, Sheffield Archaeological Consultants; Certified Professional Archaeologist, Society of Professional Archaeologists; Director, Archaeological Research Laboratory, Van Riper-Hopper (Wayne) Museum; B.A. Fairleigh Dickinson University, M.A. Anthropology, New York University, Fellow of the Archaeological Society of New Jersey and New York State Archaeological Association. Author of numerous technical reports, articles, monographs and books on prehistoric and historic archaeology. Thirty-five years of experience in northeastern history and archaeology.

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