

# Historic District Form

**Historic Site #: 0260-D59**

**Site Name:** Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt District  
**Street Address:** Route 4 **Type:** Transportation  
**Municipality:** Teaneck Township **County:** Bergen **Zip Code:** 07666  
**Local Place Name:** **Block/Lot:** See description  
**Development Period:** 1932 **To:** 1960 **Source:** history, maps  
**Physical Condition:** Good  
**Remaining Historic Fabric:** High  
**# of Properties:** Key Contributing 0 **Contributing** 9 **Non-Contributing** 2 **Total:** 11

**Registrations and Status Dates**
Date and ID Number
**BC DCHA Recommendation** Yes

**Historic Site Survey Committee of Interest:** 

**National Historic Landmark:**   
**National Register:**   
**New Jersey Register:**   
**SHPO Opinion:**   
**Local Designation:**   
**Other Designation:**

**BC Stone House Survey Id:**
**BC Cemetery Inventory Id:**
**BC Save Outdoor Sculpture Id:**
**NJDOT Historic Bridge Survey Id:** 0206166-0206175

**Certificate of Eligibility:**   
**Determination of Eligibility:**

**Other Survey Name and ID:**
**Description:**

Route 4 right-of-way; right-of-ways of Fairidge Terrace and Elizabeth Avenue; approaches and islands around entrances from Queen Anne Road, and Teaneck Road, and between Webster Av./Farragut Drive and Decatur Ave.; 401/ part of lot 1; 402/1; 502/18, 19; 503/10; 504/9; 901/part of lot 1 (Lincoln School); 902/1 (South Gaylord Park); 903/1 (South Gaylord Park); 1401/part of lot 1; 1403/part of lot 1 1501/1,7; 1502/1; 1503/1; 1504/11; 1506/14; 2210/5 (North Gaylord Park), 2211/1 (North Gaylord Park); 2401/ part of lot 1; 2701, part of lot 1 (Windsor Park); 2702/11; 2703/10; 4001/8; 4002/11; 4003/23; 4102/27; 4101/ part of lot 1 (Overpeck County Park); 4701, part of lot 1 (Windsor Park); 4703/4, 4704/1 (part of Milton Vottee Park); 4808/15; 4811/12; 4812/15; 5919/ part of lot 1 (St. Anastasia church property), part of lot 16; 5921/ 11,12; 5922/9; 5923/9; 5924/11; 5925/ 7, 8; 5927/1, 4 5; 6001/1, 3, 7, 8; 6002/10

The Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt District consists of the 2 1/2-mile long east-west transportation corridor through Teaneck that contains NJ Route 4 and the adjacent buffers with landscaped open spaces and parklands. The district extends from the Hackensack River at the border with the City of Hackensack to the border with the City of Englewood. A 5-6-lane highway with central concrete divider traverses the corridor. Some of the landscaped buffers are very narrow (circa 15'), but others extend into parks (North and South Gaylord Parks, Windsor Park, Milton Vottee Park, and Overpeck County Park). In some areas the access roads and road crossing have landscaped islands (south side of Route 4 in Fairleigh Dickinson University campus, around Queen Anne Road and Teaneck Road and between Webster Av. /Farragut Drive and Decatur Avenue). In several places local roads (Fairidge Terrace and Elizabeth Avenue) and school properties (Lincoln School (0260-D06, # 31) and Teaneck High School (0260-015)) contribute to the buffer. Within the district are nine bridges included in the New Jersey Department of Transportation's New Jersey Historic Bridge Survey (#0206166-0206169, 0206171-0206175). These bridges carry the highway over local roads and the Conrail railroad tracks or the local roads over the highway. There are two pedestrian bridges. The highway in the greenbelt has limited access to local streets. Most of the property in the Greenbelt

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District is owned by the State of New Jersey or the Township of Teaneck, but parts of some privately-owned parcels are included when they are adjacent to the Route 4 right-of-way and have landscaping that contributes to the quality of the cultural landscape.

## Setting:

Most of the Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt District has a suburban residential setting with adjacent houses dating from the 1920's to the present. Several of the residential neighborhoods are identified in this survey as historic districts. They are the Forest Knolls District (0260-D06) and the West Englewood Manor District (0260-D13). An exception to this residential character is found at the west end where educational buildings, playing fields, and parking lots of Fairleigh Dickinson University are adjacent to the Greenbelt. Other large educational buildings adjacent to the Greenbelt are the Lincoln School (0260-D06 # 31) and Teaneck High School (0260-015). Another institutional building near the district is the Richard Rodda Community Center at 250 Colonial Court, which was greatly expanded in the 1990's. Around the Teaneck Road intersection the setting is more institutional/commercial in character. St. Anastasia Roman Catholic Church (0260-053) has landscaped grounds that contribute to the character of the Greenbelt. The large office building at the northwest corner of Teaneck Route and Route 4 is an visual intrusion into the aesthetic quality of the Greenbelt. Other office and commercial buildings in the Teaneck Road area are smaller and so not intrusive. North of the Greenbelt between Decatur Street and the border with Englewood are light industrial buildings. They are well buffered by the landscaped area near them in the Greenbelt. In several places the buffer is enhanced by the presence of large parks (Overpeck County Park at the southeast edge of the district, Milton G. Votee Park (0260-70) extending north near the center of the district, and South and North Gaylord Park east of the Conrail bridge). While the yards of some houses abut the Route 4 right-of-way, but the buildings' scale and their properties landscaping do not detract appreciably from the parkway character.

## History/Significance:

In the Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt District, Route 4 appears to be a parkway with landscaped buffers and limited access. Such landscaping for an extended length along Route 4 is unusual as most property along the highway are developed commercially with unlimited access (i.e. highway strip development). The attractive greenbelt is the intentional result of actions that the Township of Teaneck took in the early 1930's through the 1940's. The state built Route 4 through Teaneck in 1932 without buffers, with a minimal right-of-way, and with the potential for unlimited access. The entire 10.9 mile-length of Route 4 goes from the George Washington Bridge to Paterson and was completed in 1934. It and the bridge enhanced Teaneck's and most of Bergen County's accessible for intense development as highway suburbs. However Teaneck was already experiencing rapid development prior to the construction of this road. The construction of the road coincided with the Township's realization that it needed to take actions to direct its future. This resulted in the approval of the Teaneck Plan of 1933 and its implementation in subsequent years. A key objectives of the plan was: "That everything possible should be done to preserve Teaneck's many advantages and charms and to encourage its future development as a predominantly residential community of the best type."

After the highway opened some of the property owners along the Route 4 corridor in Teaneck petitioned the Teaneck Council to change the zoning from residential to commercial. On the advice of its Planning Board, the Council refused to make to change to commercial along the highway as the Township's vision of the future called for the area to be residential. However, the governing body realized that to remain attractive, the residential areas needed to have buffers from the highway.

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From the mid-1930s to the mid-1940s the Township acquired a substantial amount of frontage along Route 4 through purchase and through donation to create the Greenbelt and landscaped these area with trees, shrubbery, flowers, and grass. Some of the parcels are very narrow, but some are over 50 wide and several are parts of large parks. This attractive greenbelt helped to continue Teaneck's appeal as an attractive residential community. It contributed to Teaneck having the qualities that caused it to be chosen as the Army's model community in 1949. The land in Teaneck along Route 4 remains predominately residential to today with desirable residential neighborhoods including several identified as historic districts. The exception is the light industrial area on the north side near the Englewood border, but the buildings here are hidden by the Greenbelt landscape buffer and do not have direct access to Route 4.

Over the years there have been many threats to the greenbelt and its now has more highway lanes and much more traffic than it did originally. There were numerous recommendations to change Route 4 to a freeway. In the early 1980s, the greenbelt was threatened as NJ Department of Transportation (NJDOT) wanted to widen it. The Route 4 was 6-lanes, except for a section in Teaneck where it narrowed to five lanes for the bridge over the railroad tracks. The NJDOT proposed to widen the Teaneck stretch into an 8-lane highway (3 lanes on each side with 12'-wide paved shoulder on both sides). This plan would have destroyed the greenbelt. Vocal Teaneck residents opposing the plan created the Preserve the Greenbelt Committee that remains active today. The Greenbelt was identified in the 1985 Teaneck Master Plan as a historic site. In Nov. 1984 the Township accepted a compromise, which will help alleviate the traffic bottleneck in Teaneck due to the reduction in lanes around Belle Avenue. NJDOT is allowed to widening the roads from five to six lanes, but must preserve the majority of the greenbelt by having minimal shoulders. Eventually NJDOT accepted this compromise and is currently planning the road widening. The railroad bridge is scheduled to be widened in 2011. NJDOT has schedules the railroad bridge widening for 2011. While none of the bridges, which were all constructed in 1931, are considered to be individually eligible for the National Register as they are typical examples of 1930's bridge design. Together they contribute to the historic quality of the cultural landscape. It is probable that the Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt district is eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places due to its importance in as a cultural landscape in the statewide historic context of Metropolitan New Jersey (1910-1945).

#### Bibliography/Sources:

John Chichowski, "Teaneck Greenbelt," The Record, March 1, 2007.

Judith Glassman, "The Master Planners," The Teaneck News, May 18, 1983,

<http://www.teaneck.org/virtualvillage/discoverteaneck/masterplanners.html>

Hall, pp. 86-87.

"NJ State Highways: 1-4", <http://web.mit.edu/smalpert/www/roads/nj/log/0.html>, consulted 4-18-2007.

Township of Teaneck, Office of Township Planning Board, The Teaneck Plan, 1933,

<http://www.teaneck.org/virtualvillage/TeaneckPlan/index.html>

1936, Franklin, Atlas.

2004, Pictometry International

Teaneck Route 4 Greenbelt District  
 Dashed line shows the boundaries of the district on a Teaneck Tax Map.

