Form No. 10-300 REV. (9/77)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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ZINIANAT	ITPE ALL ENTRIES 1	JOINIPLETE AFFLICAT	SLE SECTIONS	
1 NAME	1			÷
HISTORIC	Selden Brewer H	ouse		
AND/OR COMMON	Selden Brewer H	ouse		
2 LOCATION				
STREET & NUMBER				
,	137 High Street		NOT FOR PUBLICATION	
CITY, TOWN			CONGRESSIONAL DISTR	ICT
Eas	t Hartford	VICINITY OF	6A	
STATE Con	necticut	CODE 09	county H <b>artford</b>	CODE 003
3 CLASSIFICA				
CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRES	ENT USE
DISTRICT	PUBLIC	OCCUPIED	AGRICULTURE	MUSEUM
XBUILDING(S)	<b>X</b> PRIVATE	<b>X</b> UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
STRUCTURE	BOTH	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
OBJECT	IN PROCESS	YES: RESTRICTED	GOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
	BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	_INDUSTRIAL	_TRANSPORTATION
		_NO	MILITARY	OTHER:
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NAME	United Technolo	gies Corporatio	on .	
STREET & NUMBER		and the second s		
	400 Main Street			
CITY, TOWN	st Hartford	VICINITY OF	STATE Connecticut	
5 LUCATION	OF LEGAL DESCR	AP ITON		
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS,E	TC. Office of th	e Town Clerk, E	East Hartford To	wn Hall
STREET & NUMBER	740 Main Str	eet		
CITY, TOWN		_	STATE	
	East Hartfor	d	Connecticut	
6 REPRESEN	TATION IN EXIST	ING SURVEYS		
TÎTLE				
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DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS	Connecticut Hist	orical Commissi	ion	
CITY, TOWN	11 1-0 3	and the second s	STATE	
	Hartford		Connecticut	



#### CONDITION

CHECK ONE

**CHECK ONE** 

\_\_EXCELLENT

\_\_GOOD

\_\_FAIR

X.DETERIORATED

\_\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_RUINS

\_\_UNALTERED

XALTERED

X\_ORIGINAL SITE

\_\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Selden Brewer house is a two-story, brick residence, 32' x 38' in dimension, representing a Federal/Early Greek Revival transitional style. A two-part frame side wing was added around 1880-90. The house is located in a mixed-use area in the southeast section of East Hartford commonly known during the 19th-century as Hockanum. The east side of the house faces High Street while the main facade, facing south, looks out on a row of one-family, ranch-style dwellings dating from the 1950s, although several good houses dating from the late 17th through the mid 19th-centuries are scattered along High Street further south of the site. To the west, the land slopes down toward the Connecticut River, where the Wilgoos Turbine Laboratory of the Pratt & Whitney Aircraft Corporation now occupies part of the original Brewer tobacco fields as well as the site of the demolished 18th-century house of Seldon's grandfather, Daniel Brewer. The plant is accessed by a two-lane driveway which borders the Selden Brewer house lot closely on the north. North of the driveway, on both sides of High Street, are access ramps to Route 2 (Tolland Expressway) which passes over the street at this point.

The original brick house is a simple cubic mass with attic story, low hip roof, and four interior corner chimneys with tall, rectangular stacks rising high above the roofline. Originally only the attic level, which projects slightly from the lower wall, was painted white, treated as a frieze below the cornice. Some time in the early 20th-century the entire structure was painted this color. This overemphasizes the horizontal lines of the house and distorts the original effect of its classical proportions. The east and west sides of the house are articulated by four evenly-spaced rows of windows on the first and second stories, with corresponding narrow, eyebrow windows at the attic level. On the south and north facades, three rows of windows at each of the three levels are clustered at the center of the wall, the outside edges of the outer two windows on each story in line with the inner sides of the chimney stacks above. This arrangement, before the recent paint job, created a vertical emphasis equal to the horizontality of the attic and cornice lines. The roof is crowned with a square cupola containing two small outer lights and a large three-pane center light on each face. Its cornice line echoes that of the main roof. Above is a widow's walk with lattice-work railing. An original parapet with rectangular sunken panels, cut slightly higher at the center on each side, which surrounded the main roofline above the cornice has been lost.

The present, somewhat chunky south porch with Tuscan columns and sundeck above was constructed around 1920-21 to replace an original lattice-work iron porch shown in older views of the house. The original front door on this side has two verticle sunken panels and an excellent bronze doorhandle embellished with plant motifs. The door is flanked by two plain, slim pilasters, surrounded by top and side lights, and framed with a shouldered architrave. On each side of the main door is an eighteen-pane glass French door with three-pane top-light. Together the doors

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CONTINUATION SHEET

form a three-part formal entrance motif which echoes the triple fenestration of the upper stories and cupola on the facade. The bilateral symmetry of the south facade is broken only by an additional first floor window near the west end, which appears to be original.

The interior plan and decorative features of the main section of the house are largely intact and in fair to good condition. A central hall, originally running the length of the house, but now fitted with a bathroom on the north end, contains a single-flight staircase. stairs have simple mahogany handrail, turned balusters and newel post. A molding at shoulder level runs around the hallway and up along the stair wall. Four large main rooms open off this hall through doorways framed with shouldered architraves. Each room contains a fireplace flanked by plain pilasters carrying an abbreviated entablature and molded mantel shelf, which has been replaced by a plain board in the southwest room. The four windows on the east side of the house, in the northeast and southeast rooms, are pseudo-French doors on the interior, with moldings extending to the floors and paneling below the sills. An original wide opening framed with a shouldered and crested architrave, between the northeast and southeast rooms, has been blocked up, as has one between the northeast room and the hall, in which a smaller doorway has been cut. Originally these openings were fitted with folding or sliding doors, and were a characteristic feature of Greek Revival interiors. The embossed tin ceiling in the southeast and northeast rooms, and a decorative iron fireplace arch also in the northeast room, were probably added by Seldon's son, Norman, after he acquired The northwest room, entered from the hall, adjoins a the house in 1876. smaller room at the corner of the house through a wide opening with molded frame. The larger room contains a fireplace with side cupboard. These rooms, probably the original kitchen and pantry, were used as a sitting room with adjoining trophey room in the late 19th-century.

The central hall appears again on the second floor, with an additional corridor running from the stair landing to the west side of the house and enclosing the attic stairs in its south wall. The northeast and southeast rooms on this floor contain most of their original woodwork and are similar in character to those below, although without the pseudo-French doors or wide sliding-door openings. These rooms have been fitted with closets, which are probably original. The southwest corner room, accessed by the side corridor, is somewhat different and may have first served as a study. It is lit by three windows instead of two, and the fireplace frame here consists of a Greek Revival architrave with a segment omitted at the top. The northwest corner of the second

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floor originally contained one large room with fireplace, which was closed up and the space partitioned as two smaller rooms some time in the 20th-century.

The foundation of the original house is rough-cut brown sandstone with mortar below grade, and brick above, continuous with that of the exterior walls. At the attic level these walls, of a soft, low-fired brick, are bare and beginning to crumble from what appears to be acid corrosion. The posts, purlins and rafters of the roof frame system are secured by a combination of wood pegs and square-headed iron nails.

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The late 19th-century frame addition to the house is sheathed in original clapboards. The westernmost section, which when built enclosed an attached outhouse and wood storage area in the basement and laundry room on the floor above, is accessed by a cellar door on the south side set with a Tudor-arch lintel springing from capital-likeimposts. The interior of both main sections of this west wing are devoid of significant architectural features and have suffered more from deterioration and vandalism than the earlier brick section of the house. An additional enclosed corner porch at the juncture of the wing and the main house, and a second enclosed porch on the south side of the wing, date from the late 19th or early 20th-century. The exterior fire stairs on the north and south sides of the wing were probably added when the building was converted to a rooming house after World War II.

Although the grounds have been cut back drastically from their original extent of about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  acres, a few remnants of 19th-century landscaping remain. These include two groups of fir trees framing the south facade, additional fir and willow trees scattered around the south lawn, a round cobblestone rock-garden with flagpole, also on the south lawn, and an old gaslamp near the southeast corner of the house.

#### PERIOD

#### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

PREHISTORIC	ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	COMMUNITY PLANNING	LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	RELIGION
1400-1499	_ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	CONSERVATION	LAW	SCIENCE
1500-1599	X AGRICULTURE .	ECONOMICS	LITERATURE	SCULPTURE
1600-1699	<b>X</b> _ARCHITECTURE	EDUCATION	MILITARY	SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
1700-1799	ART	ENGINEERING	MUSIC	THEATER
<b>X</b> _1800-1899	COMMERCE	EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	PHILOSOPHY	TRANSPORTATION
1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVËRNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1827-

1827-early 1830 s

**BUILDER/ARCHITECT** 

#### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Selden Brewer House possesses considerable local significance (1) for its long association with one of the largest and most prominent tobacco-growing families in East Hartford, and (2) as a well-designed and essentially intact late Federal/early Greek Revival transitional style residence -- the only remaining example of its type in the town (Criteria B and C).

Although the precise dates of construction are not documented, Selden Brewer probably acquired the land for the house in 1827, when he was 16, as a gift from his father, Samuel. According to family tradition, Samuel brought the bricks to the site from Wethersfield in wagonloads, over the frozen Connecticut River, during the winter of 1827. The house first appears in the East Hartford Grand List in 1827, listing Selden as owner. However, given his tender age at this time, it is likely that Samuel made some or all of the decisions regarding the overall design of the house, and possibly also hired an architect or master builder, for his son. It is also quite likely, given the somewhat later appearance of many of the interior features, that the house was only begun in 1827 and finished some time before Selden's marriage in 1833.

The house is the earliest and most important residence still standing connected with the Brewer family in East Hartford. An earlier but now demolished Brewer homestead once stood nearby, on the present site of Wilgoos Laboratory. It was occupied by Samuel and probably built by his father Daniel Brewer, who came to East Hartford from Middletown around 1750. Another Brewer, Edgar, built a house around 1800 at 254 Main Street, in the same part of town, which has also been torn down.

The historic importance of the Brewer family rests largely with their prominence in the local tobacco-growing industry. By the 1870s East Hartford was one of the largest tobacco-producing towns in New England, and the crop totally dominated the town's economy until the 1940s. The Brewer plantation was one of the largest, and the Selden Brewer house was connected with four generations of Brewers who not only led the local industry, but contributed to the development and dissemination of improved agricultural techniques elsewhere as well. The Brewer owners and occupants of the house and their civic and agricultural accomplishments are summarized as follows:

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES Interview with Vincent Brewer, Jr., 11 November 1978. Commemorative Biographical Record of Hartford County, Connecticut. J. H. Beers & Co., 1901. East Hartford: Its History and Traditions. Joseph O. Goodwin. East Hartford: Case, Lockwood & Brainard Co., 1879. **10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA** ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.06 QUADRANGLE NAME OUADRANGLE SCALE UTM REFERENCES A 11 , 81 16 9,6 7,0,5 4,612,314,8,5 NORTHING VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION The house occupies an irregularly-shaped lot bounded on the east by High Street. On the south the boundary commences at a point on High Street 159.35' south of the driveway to the Pratt & Whitney Wilgoos LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES CODE CODE STATE COUNTY CODE STATE CODE COUNTY FORM PREPARED BY NAME / TITLE Susan Ryan 14 November 1978 DATE ORGANIZATION Connecticut Historical Commission STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE 59 South Prospect Street (203) 566-3005 CITY OR TOWN STATE Hartford Connecticut 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS: NATIONAL\_ STATE LOCAL X As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE DATE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER DATE ATTEST: DATE

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- (1) Captain Samuel Brewer (1776-1847): one of the largest landowners in the town with holdings totaling some 3,000 acres in Hartford and East Hartford, much of it sold between 1800 and 1850. Established sizeable tobacco plantation in the Hockanum area and traded cigars in New York for dry goods and rum sold in his own store in East Hartford. Served three terms as town selectman, four terms as state representative, and was one of five members of the building committee for the East Hartford Congregational Church erected at Church Corners in 1836. His connection with the house has already been mentioned.
- (2) Selden Brewer (1811-1876): son of Samuel. Operated the tobacco plantation inherited from his father and completed the brick house. Served several times as town selectman.
- (3) Norman S. (1840-1910): son of Selden. Made several small, successful gold ore claims in California during the 1860s. Returned to East Hartford and in 1877 married Agnes Roberts, a descendant of Reverend Thomas Hooker of Hartford, and personal secretary to Mark Twain. Operated the family plantation, then at 175 acres but still among the largest in town. Part owner of two freighters which transported the tobacco to trade in New York. Also managed and operated the New England Dye Works in Hartford, and acted as agent and supervisor of the Lewis Meyer Tobacco Warehouse in East Hartford. Occupied the Selden Brewer house throughout his life; owned it from 1876 to 1910.
- (4) Archibald Shamel: married Norman's daughter, Fay, and boarded at the house. Worked for the State Department of Agriculture to to increase the agricultural productivity of East Hartford and Glastonbury. Later migrated to California where he established the Riverside Experiment Station in Pasadena and contributed to the development of the navel orange.
  - (5) Vincent Brewer, Sr.: son of Norman. Occupied the Brewer house and owned it from 1910 to 1948. Operated the family plantation during the most successful period for tobacco growing in East Hartford. Leader in the training and employment of Italian immigrants in tobacco farming in the town. Vincent and his brother, Norman H. Brewer, were appointed by the U. S. Government to establish new strains of tobacco and corn and teach modern farming techniques in South Africa from 1908 to 1911.

Architecturally, the house represents the transition from the square, brick urban house type of the Federal period, to the full-blown Greek Revival style associated with the late 1820s and 1830s in New England. The relative flatness of the exterior elevations, and the light delicacy of the exterior detail, especially the original lattice-work

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porch (now lost) and widow's walk, merge with the more robust features of the later style, represented by the bold architrave moldings and severe classical fireplace frames on the interior. The house is the only example of its stylistic type in East Hartford -- one other square, brick Federal/early Greek Revival house of similar character was the Hollister House on Burnside Avenue, demolished within the last twenty years.

The building stands at the north end of a string of fine residences along High Street dating from the late 17th, 18th and early and mid 19th-centuries. Despite the interjection of modern apartment complexes and ranch-style dwellings in this area, these houses serve to define the core of historic Hockanum, a distinct neighborhood or village within East Hartford in the 18th and 19th-centuries. The loosely-connected group features the Moses Hills House of ca. 1727 (at #209), a somewhat deteriorating Georgian farmhouse; a late 18th-century two-story house with hewn overhang at the gable ends (#223); a typical vernacular Greek Revival house with gable pediment and classical doorframe typical of the late 1830s and 1840s (#235); and the George Risley House of ca. 1690 (#236), an excellent early colonial saltbox with six-inch hewn overhang. Of the group, only the Brewer house is clearly visible from Route 2, providing the principle landmark of the old Hockanum district from the expressway.

The house has changed hands six times since it was sold by the Brewer family in 1948, served as a rooming house in the 1950s and 1960s, and stood vacant and vulnerable since last May. Surprisingly, the principal structural and architectural features both inside and outside the main section of the house are largely intact and in fair to good condition. The interior plan and exterior design of the late 19th-century frame wing have become scrambled with numerous alterations and accretions and it contributes nothing to the historic or architectural character of the residence.

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Lee Paquette. Only More So; The History of East Hartford, 1783-1976. East Hartford: The Raymond Library, 1976.

#### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

ten

Laboratory, runs west 151.33', then south 59.93', and west again for 80'. From here the western boundary runs north 213.56', at which point the northern boundary runs east 134.51', then turns north for 7', then east again for another 135.49' along the driveway of Wilgoos Lab to its juncture with High Street.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

Selden Brewer House East Hartford, CT

Proposed CONTINUATION SHEET Move

d ITEM NUMBER PAGE 1

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It is proposed that the Selden Brewer House, East Hartford, Connecticut, be relocated. Accordingly, this documentation is submitted as a request that the house remain on the National Register during and after the move.

#### The reasons for the move.

The property has been purchased by the Pratt and Whitney Aircraft Corporation, division of United Technologies Corporation, for the purpose of using the land in an enlarged and improved entrance to their Wilgoos Turbine Laboratory (Photo 1). Thus, the reason for moving the house is to save it.

#### The effect on the property's historical integrity.

Two aspects of integrity are involved, first, the entity of the house, second, the site.

The present entity of the house will be altered, as it is proposed to move the principal block only, and not to move the front porch and the west wing (Photo 2).

The porch is described in the nomination of the house to the National Register in these words (Item 7, paragraph 3), "The present somewhat chunky south porch with Tuscan columns and sundeck above was constructed around 1920-21 to replace an original lattice-work iron porch shown in older views of the house."

The existence of the earlier porch is documented by a photo that appeared in <u>The Hartford Courant</u> August 13, 1978, captioned "Brewer Homestead in 1909." It shows a somewhat shallower porch than presently exists, occupying the full width of the house, with almost flat roof supported by six lattice-work metal columns.

The wing is described in the nomination in these words (Item 7, continuation sheet 2, paragraph 3), "The late 19th-century frame addition to the house is sheathed in original clapboards.... The interior of both main sections of this west wing are devoid of significant architectural features and have suffered more from deterioration and vandalism than the earlier brick section of the house...." And at Item 8, continuation sheet 4, final paragraph, the nomination reads. "The interior plan and exterior design of the late 19th-century frame wing have become scrambled with numerous alterations and accretions and it contributes nothing to

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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Proposed

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In contrast to this analysis of the wing expressed in the nomination, an architect who studied the foundations observed that the founda-

tions of the wing appear to have been built with the same materials and workmanship as the foundations of the principal block. Moreover, the eared architrave of the first door on the south facade of the wing closely resembles the eared architrave of the main entrance, indicating at the least an effort to construct the wing with a sensitivity for the

main block.

The present site, a small plot, is what is left of the 2½-acre grounds mentioned in the nomination. It is bordered on the north by the factory entrance road. North of the factory entrance road there is an off-ramp from Route 2, a limited access highway. The site is bordered on the east by High Street. Leading east from High Street, directly opposite the house, is an on-ramp to Route 2. Thus, a five-point traffic intersection abuts the house.

With respect to nearby structures, the nomination states (Item 8, continuation sheet 4, paragraph 2), "The building stands at the north end of a string of fine residences along High Street dating from the late 17th, 18th and mid 19th-centuries. Despite the interjection of modern apartment and ranch-style dwellings in this area, these houses serve to define the core of historic Hockanum, a distinct neighborhood or village within East Hartford in the 18th and 19th-centuries." Four structures are then enumerated, three on the same side of the street and one across the street. The nearest of these houses is a block and a half away.

With respect to the plot, the nomination reads (Item 7, continuation sheet 2, final paragraph), "...a few remnants of 19th-century lands scaping remain. These include two groups of fir trees framing the south facade, additional fir and willow trees scattered around the south lawn, a round cobblestone rock-garden with flagpole, also on the south lawn, and an old gaslamp near the southwest corner of the house." The fir and willow trees appear to be secondary growth, and may well date from the 20th century. The rock garden is a raised section of earth perhaps six feet in diameter encircled by a low stone wall and having a concrete basin in its center. The "gaslamp," while supported by an attractive post or column, has an electric light socket in its center, is fabricated of thin gauge metal, has no indication of a gas line or mantle, has an arm with rings for holding a sign, and may be of 20th century origin.

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The new setting.

The present relationship of the building to the ground will be replicated. At present the brick walls are visible down to grade. At the new location the foundations will be poured concrete, but they will be faced with brick on the exterior. Thus, the present appearance of the brick walls meeting the ground will be repeated when the house is placed on its new foundations.

Two possible sites are described here, with the request that both be approved. Final decision on which of the two alternatives actually will be used will come at a later date and will depend on developments. Both sites are on property belonging to the Town of East Hartford, and several matters remain to be worked out within the Town government before a final decision can be made between the two. proposed sites are close together, about 500 feet apart, three blocks away from the present site (see Maps A and B). Thus, the house will remain in its present neighborhood, will be no further away from the other historic houses cited in the nomination, and will be removed from a busy traffic intersection. In both cases the house will face east toward Main Street.

Option A on Map B is in front of the Hockanum School (Photo 3). The south border of the site is defined by trees that run along a brook. To the north and west the house enjoys the broad vista of the school The house is placed behind two existing trees (that are separate from those running along the brook) and therefore visibility from the street would be somewhat impaired. Photos 4,5,6, and 7 (keyed on Map B) show the site from four perspectives.

At present a sidewalk runs from a point on Main Street between the brook and the two separate trees in a straight line back to the school's main entrance and central lantern with gilded dome over the entrance. (Photo 8). A turn will be introduced in the walk so that it will come out on Main Street north of the house. The house will close off the straight-on view of the school entrance and lantern, but they will be visible still at an angle from the street north of the house.

In Option B the house will be placed on a triangular lawn in front of the Hockanum Library (Photo 9). Here the house will be easily visible from both Main Street and Naubec Avenue. In this location the house will displace the sidewalk that now runs from the apex of the triangle south to the front entrance of the library. Photos 10, 11, 12, and 13 show the site from four perspectives.

In either case the proposed plot is approximately 110 feet by

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Proposed

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160 feet, to be leased by the Town for 99 years to the new owner of the house.

The east side of Main Street, across from the Option A location, is a commercial strip. The neighborhood north from the school along Main Street is residential, mixed garden apartments and modest houses of various sizes. The neighborhood south along Main Street and Naubec Avenue from the apex of the triangle is middle class residential with a number of new, small houses mixed in with some older and larger houses.

Prepared by
David F. Ransom
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203 521-2518
June 2, 1979