

***“In the Way of Progress”: How a Federal Highway and Political Fragmentation Blighted
Neighborhoods in the Weequahic Section of Newark***

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14713/njs.v9i2.328>

This paper chronicles the history of interstate highway construction through the Weequahic Section of Newark, New Jersey. It expands the analysis of urban redevelopment in Newark, New Jersey, by shifting the focus from the Central Ward, the primary site of urban renewal, to the Weequahic Section, one of several districts in the broader Newark landscape. Tracing how urban renewal led to a broader set of changes in the Newark cityscape, this paper examines how city and state officials exploited Newark’s geographic resources, not for the benefit of Weequahic residents or Newark citizens more generally, but for downtown and regional commercial interests, and suburban commuters. Using newspapers to map out the chronology of events; municipal and state studies, and official correspondence to document state intentions and policy decisions; and organizational minutes, flyers, and correspondence to discern local reactions to highway construction, this work will show that the construction of the highway through Weequahic was not inevitable.



Photo taken by author, April 15, 2017, from Osborne Terrace Bridge spanning Route 78 facing west.

Drivers speeding eastward on Route 78 from the Watchung Mountains toward the New Jersey Turnpike pass through industrial areas of Springfield, Union, and Irvington before entering Newark. The 10-lane roadway descends into a channel where the Weequahic section, obscured by trees, sits atop retaining walls on the left and the right. Travelers pass under seven bridges before passing over Elizabeth Avenue and onward toward Newark Airport, the New Jersey Turnpike, or the Holland Tunnel into New York. Drivers will see the names of streets on signs affixed to overpasses that read like grave markers to communities long departed: Chancellor Avenue, Lyons Avenue, Leslie Street, Bragaw Avenue, Nye Avenue, Osborne Terrace, and Bergen Street. These streets, as crossways, are intact, but other streets, like Johnson and Lawton Avenue, were cleared away. Few drivers may realize that homes and storefronts once stood where steel, concrete, and chain link fence traverse a depressed roadway, and that their vehicles speed through spaces where children played, adults worked, congregations worshipped, and families ate meals.

This paper chronicles the effects of highway planning and construction on the Weequahic section of Newark. It expands the analysis of urban redevelopment in Newark, New Jersey, by shifting the focus from the Central Ward, the primary site of urban renewal, to the Weequahic section, one of several districts in the broader Newark landscape. The Weequahic Community Council embraced racial integration and organized to eliminate the threat Route 78 posed to their community, but ultimately failed in their efforts to reroute the highway because city and state officials used Newark's geographic resources not for the benefit of Weequahic residents or Newark citizens more generally, but for downtown and regional commercial interests and suburban commuters.

Histories of Newark have documented the effects of urban renewal programs on the city, detailing slum clearance and the displacement of residents; public housing as a form of racial containment; and the conflict and cooperation between local activists, city officials, and the business community to solve various problems confronting the city.¹ There are, however, no exhaustive studies on the role of highways on Newark's urban crisis.² A supplement to that literature, this study amends Newark's history of the urban crisis by decentering renewal in Newark's Central Ward and examining the impact of urban revitalization on the Weequahic section.

¹ See Mark Krasovic, *The Newark Frontier: Community Action in the Great Society*. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Kevin Mumford, *Newark: a History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America* (New York: NYU Press, 2007); Julia Rabig, *The Fixers: Devolution, Development, and Civil Society in Newark, 1960–1990* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2016); Yataka Sasaki “‘But Not Next Door’: Housing Discrimination and the Emergence of the ‘Second Ghetto’ in Newark, New Jersey, after World War II,” *The Japanese Journal of American Studies*, No. 5 (1993–1994).

² Junius Williams recalls organizing a group that traveled to Trenton to protest the construction of Route 75, an expressway slated to connect Routes 78 and Route 280. The highway would have destroyed large swathes of Newark's Central Ward. In 1969, the State of New Jersey cancelled plans to build Mid-Town Connector, also known as Route 75, amid protests from Newark Area Planning Association. See *Unfinished Agenda: Urban Politics in the Era of Black Power* (Berkeley, California: North Atlantic Books, 2014), 205–207.

Weequahic, captured in the fiction of Philip Roth, was a largely Jewish enclave through the early 1960s. Suburbanization pulled many of those residents to the greater Newark area for its many amenities. Others fled because of blockbusting and fears of collapsing property values. And yet others moved to downsize. Block associations around Weequahic partnered together to form the Weequahic Community Council (WCC), an interracial committee that engaged in their own community renewal project by cultivating what Robert Weaver called racially democratic communities.³ The WCC attempted to conserve their neighborhoods by securing funding for community services, stabilizing the local market by halting panic selling, and organizing to divert Route 78 around their neighborhood. Since 1961, leaders from Newark's Weequahic section sought the cooperation of city and state officials to reroute Route 78, a federal highway slated to cut a path through the city's southwestern residential community. As historian Eric Avila points out, "the disparate victories of the freeway revolt illustrate how racial and class privilege structure the metropolitan built environment, demonstrating the skewed geography of power in the postwar American city."⁴ This imbalance in power is seen in the failure of Newark mayor Hugh Addonizio and Newark Municipal Council (NMC) to adequately register residents' opposition to the highway. The NMC prioritized slum clearance and highway construction in the Central Ward and did not, initially, implement a highway diversion strategy in coordination with their constituents. This politically fragmented approach ultimately compromised the possibility of directing the federal

³ Robert Weaver, *The Negro Ghetto*, (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1948). According to Weaver, "Truly democratic neighborhoods—areas where many economic and all racial groups can find shelter—will be realized in our cities only when we plan and develop neighborhoods with facilities designed to meet the needs and rent-paying abilities of a cross-section of the income groups in our society and when such neighborhoods are open to all ethnic groups,"³⁴⁹. For an overview of the Weequahic Community Council see Gunter David, "They Battle Blight, Block by Block," *Newark Evening News*, November 18, 1963, 10.

⁴ Eric Avila, *The Folklore of the Freeway: Race and Revolt in the Modernist City* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2014). Newark's freeway revolt was, as Avila describes it, "a grassroots uprising of civic-minded people, often neighbors, banding together to defeat the technocrats . . . and ultimately the state itself, saving the city from the onslaught of automobiles, expressways, gas stations, parking lots, and other civic detriments," 2.

and state highway agencies to change the course of the highway. Using newspapers to map out the chronology of events; municipal and state studies and official correspondence to document state intentions and policy decisions; and organizational minutes, flyers, and correspondence to discern local reactions to highway plans, this work will show that the construction of Route 78 through Weequahic was not inevitable.

Scholars have documented the destructive impact of highway construction on urban communities in other cities.⁵ This study follows those who have examined the pattern of state and municipal officials charting highways through urban residential and commercial districts like Overtown in Miami, Florida, and the related ways in which civic groups and urban planners used highways as a block to residential integration in cities like Atlanta.⁶ The state of New Jersey announced the construction of Route 78 when the ethnic and racial balance in Newark's South Ward communities was shifting from majority Jewish and White to Black. There were local efforts to maintain Jewish presence in Newark and cultivate interracial communities in Weequahic at a time when nationally residential integration was economically risky and socially unpopular. While there was no explicit indication that local officials used the highway to stymie residential integration, it nonetheless had the effect of hastening racial segregation as the highway cut a path through racially diverse streets and neighborhoods, dislocating Black, Jewish, and White ethnic

⁵ See Mandi Isaacs Jackson's "The City and the Six-Lane Highway: Bread and Roses and Parking Garages," in *Model City Blues: Urban Space and Organized Resistance in New Haven* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2008), 161–194; Baltimore, Maryland; and Robert R. Gioielli's "'We Must Destroy You to Save You': Baltimore's Freeway Revolt" in *Environmental Activism and the Urban Crisis: Baltimore, St. Louis, Chicago* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2014), 73–103.

⁶ For a history of Interstate 95's impact on Miami, Florida, see N.D.B. Connelly's "Colored, Caribbean, and Condemned: Miami's Overtown District and the Cultural Expense of Progress, 1940–1970," *Caribbean Studies*, 34, no. 1 (Jan.–June, 2006), 3–60. Kevin Kruse, in his study of white conservatism in suburban Atlanta shows how highways were designed to create barriers to halt residential integration. See *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007). Similarly, Andrew Highsmith's study of Flint, Michigan, points to the ways in which city-led urban renewal rolled back civil rights gains and reinscribed borders of racial segregation. See Andrew Highsmith, *Demolition Means Progress: Flint, Michigan, and the Fate of the American Metropolis* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2015), 175–199.

residents, their businesses, and houses of worship.⁷

Federal highway construction was considered essential not just to Newark, but also the greater Newark metropolitan area—what historians Rose and Mohl call a “redevelopment and recentralizing process.”⁸ The highways were an essential part of the city’s urban renewal plan, and there was little regard for the needs of city residents. Amiri Baraka, reflecting on urban renewal and highway construction in Newark, judged the city “a bankrupt ugly colony, in the classic term, where white people make their money to take away with them.”⁹ In this way, highway construction projects, which federal, state, and city officials deemed essential to the health of American cities, were structures that took land and property from urban residents to use for the improvement of the larger metropolis with little to no reparations for those who were displaced. Economist Anthony Downs describes this process as *uncompensated highway costs*.¹⁰ Route 78 displaced home and business owners from their properties and city officials did not adequately compensate property owners for their losses. Highway construction also interrupted the daily routines of residents and led to deterioration of the surrounding neighborhoods. Federally funded highway construction through cities was a form of *underdevelopment* that abetted the growth of American suburbs while

⁷ Nonracial economic rationales were often used to justify racial segregation. See David Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy & White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

⁸ Mark H. Rose and Raymond A. Mohl, *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy since 1939*, 3rd ed. (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2012), 58.

⁹ LeRoi Jones, “Newark, Before the Black Man Conquered” in *Raise, Race, Rays, Raze: Essays Since 1965* (New York: Random House, 1965), 65. Kenneth B. Clark captured Baraka framing of Newark as a colony when describing the political economy of racial segregation as an “invisible wall.” He states, “The dark ghetto’s invisible walls have been erected by the white society, by those who have power, both to confine those who have no power, and to perpetuate their powerlessness. The dark ghettos are social, political, educational, and—above all—economic colonies. Their inhabitants are subject peoples, victims of the greed, cruelty, insensitivity, guilt, and fear of their masters.” See Kenneth B. Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York, Evanston, and London: Harper & Row, 1965), 11.

¹⁰ Anthony Downs, “Losses Imposed on Urban Households by Uncompensated Highway and Renewal Costs,” in *Urban Problems and Prospects* (Chicago: Markham Publishing, 1971), 192. According to Downs, “Urban highways . . . are public outputs that impose many nonconstruction costs upon households living in the metropolitan areas where they are located. Yet present public policies ignore most of these costs by failing to take them into account when planning the improvements concerned, and failing to compensate the citizens who are compelled to bear them. This failure results in widespread injustice, and its heaviest burdens tend to fall upon citizens least able to bear them because of their low incomes and generally restricted opportunities.”

diminishing the material resources of cities like Newark at a time when the city's population and tax revenues were declining.¹¹ The creation and support of the American property-owning middle class in the suburbs is entangled with the dispossession of urban residents in cities like Newark.¹² Indeed, the deterioration of Newark's economic, social, and political life was not an aberration of postwar capitalist expansion but a function of it.

Federal Highways and Urban Renewal

The construction of Route 78 was a direct consequence of President Dwight Eisenhower's 1956 National Interstate and Defense Highways Act. This bipartisan bill provided \$25 billion for highway construction over the next decade. In what amounted to a domestic Marshall Plan, the federal government now combined investments in housing with highway development, while assuming a larger share of land construction and highway costs than any of the states. The designs for Route 78, however, go back to the waning years of World War II, when there were calls from states and the business community for a national highway system. Federal and state officials worried that antiquated and congested roadways would stymie a resurgent economy. In 1945, Federal Highway Commissioner Thomas H. MacDonald of the US Bureau of Public Roads directed state highway commissioners to submit "mileage proposals" to the federal office in order

¹¹ Underdevelopment describes the exploitative relationship between African American workers and the larger forces of capitalist growth and accumulation in the United States. Manning Marable, using Walter Rodney's theory of underdevelopment, describes how "Afro-Americans have been on the other side of one of the most remarkable and rapid accumulations of capital seen anywhere in human history," 1. To be sure, Rodney and Marable determine that underdevelopment is a project of racial capitalism that oppresses Black people. This study finds, like Guinier and Torres, that while these racialized systems of power exact a heavy toll most acutely on African American communities, the repercussions of these systems also harm the interests of other Americans. See Manning Marable, *How Capitalism Underdeveloped Black America: Problems in Race, Political Economy, and Society* (Boston: South End Press, 2000); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (United Kingdom: Verso Books, 2018); and Lani Guinier and Gerald Torres, *The Miner's Canary: Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, Transforming Democracy* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2002).

¹² Robert O. Self provides a narrative of the conflict over suburban development and urban underdevelopment in East Oakland, California. See *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005).

to develop an “integrated network” of highways.¹³ While it is not clear which plans the New Jersey State Highway Commissioner submitted to MacDonald’s office, the 1955 Yellow Book, a compendium of maps that detailed built and proposed highway routes in and around US metropolitan areas, included a route running from central Brooklyn, across Manhattan, through Jersey City, near the Newark Airport, on through Newark, and points westward.¹⁴ Upon reaching the residential neighborhoods of Newark, the proposed route cut a curved path that began a northward course through Weequahic before banking southwestward enroute to western New Jersey and Easton, Pennsylvania. In June 1958, the Federal Government designated this road Route 78.¹⁵ Nationally, I-78 was an important highway connecting the greater New York City area to central Pennsylvania. More locally, Route 78 provided an express conduit connecting downtown Newark, Newark Airport, and Port Newark to the western New Jersey suburbs.

Nationally, central business districts in cities remained a vital part of the political, economic, and social health of expanding metropolitan areas even as white Americans departed for residences in the suburbs. Historian Paul Stellhorn noted as early as the 1920s that “the city’s largely nonresident business community no longer thought of Newark as a ‘home,’ but as the location of its business operations—an increasingly hostile location at that.”¹⁶ Moreover, the “elite took increasingly negative attitudes toward the city in general, and few of its members concerned themselves with Newark’s long-range development.”¹⁷ Such praxis remained after the Great Depression and World War II. Between 1950 and 1960, Newark’s population decreased from

¹³ Rose and Mohl, 30.

¹⁴ “New York, New York” *General Location of National System of Interstate Highways Including All Additional Routes at Urban Areas Designated in September 1955* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1955).

¹⁵ American Association of State Highway Officials, *Official Route Numbering for the National System of Interstate and Defense Highway*, [map], June 27, 1958.

¹⁶ Paul Stellhorn, “Depression and Decline: Newark, New Jersey: 1929–1941” (PhD diss., Rutgers University, 1982), 253.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

438,776 to 405,220, and the next decade would see the population decrease another 5.7% to 381,930.¹⁸ In the face of postwar suburbanization, Newark Housing Authority, the Newark Economic Development Committee, and downtown officials framed the needs of the city, not around the interests of Newark's residents per se, but around residents who were moving out of Newark and suburban residents who commuted to the city for work, shopping, or leisure.

A “City within a City”: the Municipal Bureaucracy of Underdevelopment

The Newark Housing Authority (NHA) directed the city's urban revitalization program. Founded in 1938, the NHA was tasked with building and administering public housing in Newark. That directive expanded after World War II, as the NHA committed to “tear down the entire ghetto and build a ‘city within a city.’”¹⁹ A *city within a city* was not just a metaphor but also a methodology. According to Harold Kaplan, “The cues of redevelopers and federal officials, rather than those of local interests . . . [governed] NHA's clearance decisions.”²⁰ Retooling Newark's downtown infrastructure without input from residents and without revitalizing surrounding residential communities was the praxis of underdevelopment. Kaplan described Newark's urban renewal leadership as “a relatively well integrated system,” composed of NHA and an “inner core” that included the office of the mayor, the Newark Economic Development Committee (NEDC), and the Central Planning Board (CPB).²¹ Under the stewardship of Louis Danzig, the Newark Housing Authority was by far the controlling principal of Newark's urban renewal program. Danzig, who is often described as a power broker akin to New York's Robert Moses, purposefully

¹⁸ United States Census 1950, 1960, and 1970.

¹⁹ Harold Kaplan, *Urban Renewal Politics: Slum Clearance in Newark* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 16. Political scientist Harold Kaplan observed the political economy of urban renewal in Newark and the ways in which Newark politicians went about solving the city's urban crisis. Kaplan worked in the Newark Housing Authority as a research analyst, and while his study provides a deep and wide structural analysis of Newark's urban renewal program, his work leans toward a positive view of the program and the arbiter of the program, the Newark Housing Authority.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 166.

developed plans outside of the public's purview, announcing a redevelopment project to the populace only after it was ready to proceed. By 1960, the NHA had received federal approval for 14 renewal projects, including six commercial and higher education redevelopment projects planned for the downtown corridor, all of which were at the center of an antiquated transportation network.²²

In 1955, the NEDC, an advisory body to the NHA, called for highway construction as part of the city's urban renewal plans. The NEDC claimed that Newark's "immediate emphasis should be on increased access for suburban shoppers to and from the business district."²³ For the NEDC, preserving downtown's desirability to suburban shoppers and consequently the flow of capital into downtown was a priority. "What Newark needed," according to Kaplan, "was a network of elevated highways emanating in radial spokes from the business district to carry the suburbanites quickly and safely over the slums."²⁴ Indeed, many centers of manufacturing were transitioning to hubs of finance, insurance, and real estate—the FIRE industries. By the mid-1950s many people that worked in Newark did not even live there. Newark mayor Leo Carlin's Commission on Changing Populations found that despite the exodus of white residents to the suburbs, "whites are more likely than the Negroes to work in Newark proper."²⁵ The Brookings Institute reported that in 1959 Newark's daytime population increased to 102% of its nighttime population, making it the

²² Ibid., 8–9. These projects included the clearance and rehabilitation of 15 blocks for Rutgers and Newark College of Engineering, 15 blocks for the "Penn Plaza Redevelopment," and 3 blocks for the expansion of Seton Hall.

²³ Kaplan, 94. Historian Alison Isenberg notes that one of the purposes of urban renewal was "to make America's downtowns appealing to white, suburban, middle-class women." See *Downtown America: A History of the Place and the People Who Made It* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 167.

²⁴ Kaplan, 94.

²⁵ Newark Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation, *Urban Renewal Plan: a Demonstration Grant Project: Delineation of Areas, 2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959), II-31-II-32, Sinclair NJ Open Stacks HT177.N54N48 1959, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

most commuted-to city in the United States.²⁶ With 484,000 persons entering the city on a given weekday and 90 percent of those persons arriving by car or bus, there was a need for high speed, high volume arteries that would ease the flow of traffic into and out of Newark. Additionally, Newark Airport and Port Newark, as terminals of travel and the supply chain, were under expansion and saw increases in the number of fares and freight.²⁷ These developments, as well as the city's location at the nexus of major roadways and railroads in the northeast corridor, helped Newark maintain its status as an important center of commerce. The CPB maintained "it is the responsibility not only of the City of Newark and other local communities, but also of the county, State and Federal Governments" to invest in municipal infrastructure. The federal government, through the Federal Highway Act of 1956, made good on that obligation to American cities, as it provided the means for cities, with help from the state highway agencies, to systematically redevelop their geography and reimagine what urban communities should look like.

The Central Planning Board, in coordination with the State of New Jersey, planned to build a perimeter highway system that would have created a veritable ring around Newark's central business district. The Newark Loop was "conceived to permit through traffic to circumvent the Central Business District" and ease the flow of traffic downtown.²⁸

²⁶ Ibid., II-26. "Population figures do not measure the full magnitude of the transportation problem, for in addition to those who live in the city a large number of people come into the city during the daytime to work. . . . in Newark, New Jersey, the population doubled during the daylight hours." Using the 1950 Census data, Newark's resident population, listed at 439,000, more than doubled to 885,000 during daytime hours. See Wilfred Owen's *The Metropolitan Transportation Problem* (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1966), 10–12; 233, Figure 4.

²⁷ Newark Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation, II-26.

²⁸ See "Existing and Proposed Highways with Neighborhood Boundaries," *Urban Renewal Plan: A Demonstration Grant Project-2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959). Howard Gillette observed circumferential highway designs in Washington, DC, noting that they separated "the central business district from the rest of the city," and mitigated "traffic from the suburbs away from the most congested parts of the city." See *Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D.C.* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 157. Such a design of isolation and protection are entangled with practices of racial restriction. See note 35.

Federal Interstates 78 (Southern Freeway) and 280 (East-West Freeway), respectively, made up the southern and northern legs of the loop. State highways 75 (the Midtown Freeway) and 21 (McCarter Highway), respectively, would make up the western and eastern legs completing the ring around downtown.



“Existing and Proposed Highways with Neighborhood Boundaries,” *Urban Renewal Plan: A Demonstration Grant Project-2nd Interim Report* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1959). Courtesy of New Jersey Environmental Digital Library.

It is not clear why the Central Planning Board did not, in collaboration with the New Jersey Highway Authority, propose an alternate route for Route 78 around the Weequahic section. One

possibility is the federal highway fit within the Central Planning Board's strategic housing development plan.

The "Proposed Housing Program" in the CPB's 1947 *Masterplan for the Physical Development of the City of Newark* classified entire swathes of the city, labeling the majority of the Weequahic section a "good residential area" that required "increased protection," while it graded Weequahic's peripheral neighborhoods—where 78 was slated to be built—"blighted" and in need of "rehabilitation."²⁹ A highway would not rehabilitate a community. It would destroy it, replacing homes and neighborhoods with an eight-lane barrier, and perhaps that was the point. Many years later the Newark Housing Authority, in its 1968 review of urban renewal initiatives, claimed that Route 78 was good for Newark and Weequahic, as it would "act as a natural boundary separating [Weequahic] from the industrial sections of the north."³⁰ Route 78, however, was not a natural boundary like a brook or river that whittled a configuration into the topography. Highways were mechanisms of underdevelopment that disrupted communal life by uprooting families and their surrounding environs. Highways abruptly reshaped the contours of the city and created high-speed throughways for the suburban travelers while eliminating usable space and limiting the material benefits of an area to the builders and maintainers of roads on one hand and motorists on the other.

These massive infrastructural investments did not come without costs for Americans, namely the nation's Black population, who were moving to urban centers in greater numbers after World War II. It's important to note that the underdevelopment of Weequahic occurred during a

²⁹ "A Proposed Housing Program for Newark," *The Master Plan for the Physical Development of the City of Newark, N.J.* (Newark, NJ: Central Planning Board, 1947), 43. In the program the city was classified into three categories with corresponding actions: "obsolete" therefore "clear and rebuild;" "blighted" therefore "rehabilitate;" and "good residential area" therefore "give increased protection."

³⁰ City of Newark, *Community Renewal Program* (Newark: Newark Housing Authority, 1968).

time when federal laws were passed to mitigate racism in public spaces and increase African American participation in political, economic, and public life. *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education*, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and “the vigor of the civil rights movement,” Mindy Thompson contends, “led to the expectation that black Americans would be better off when segregation was defeated.”³¹ However, highway construction forestalled the long-term and widespread impact of those policies by destroying the social fabric and the economic foundations of urban communities like Weequahic. Michael Grier, who was a member of the Black Planners Association and lived just outside of the area zoned for highway construction in Weequahic, echoed Thompson’s observation at a 1972 blight hearing:

Now a long time ago we were in this area in question and there was a lot of people living in the area, and they were uprooted because of the highways and urban renewal, and they lost their properties at that time. The black people just became middle class then. And they went into that area and they lost them because of urban renewal and transportation.³²

Indeed, by 1961, the same year New Jersey announced plans to build Route 78 through Weequahic, the United States Commission on Civil Rights (CCR) identified a national pattern of highway planning that routed interstates through African American communities.³³ The CCR found that there were “massive displacement and relocation problems” created by highway construction, and that a “*large number* of the displacees are nonwhite.”³⁴ CCR conclusions confirm

³¹ Mindy Thompson Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America, and What We Can Do About It* (New York: One World/Ballantine, 2004), 11. Thompson, a professor of clinical psychiatry and public health, points to widespread impact of urban renewal and how it causes root shock. Describing the impact of displacement she says, “Root shock, post urban renewal, disabled powerful mechanism of community functioning, leaving the black world at an enormous disadvantage for meeting the challenges of globalization,” 20.

³² Central Planning Board, public hearing on Weequahic Park urban renewal area, 114–115.

³³ 1961 United States Commission on Civil Rights, *Housing* (Washington, DC, 1961), x. The United States Commission on Civil Rights was tasked with appraising the fairness of federal policies.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 99–100, emphasis added. President John F. Kennedy, in a special message to Congress in February of 1961, acknowledged the magnitude of the problem, noting that federal estimates suggested the right-of-way construction of highways would displace more people than urban renewal and slum clearance projects combined. Moreover, President Kennedy noted the failure of both the federal and state governments to provide adequate relief and compensation to the displaced. “Neither the Federal Government nor the State highway departments have assumed any positive or explicit responsibility for meeting these needs.”

warnings made a decade earlier by Robert Weaver, chairman of the National Committee against Discrimination in Housing. Commenting on the Chicago Housing Authority's development plans and the subversive potential of the Housing Act of 1949, Weaver warned that that public and private development designs potentially functioned "as a guise for displacing minorities from desirable areas" and for "breaking up established racially democratic neighborhoods."³⁵ It is important to appreciate the scope of CCR and Weaver's scrutiny of federal redevelopment law and practice, for while African American communities were grossly impacted by slum clearance, some communities, like Weequahic, were in various stages of racial transition. There were efforts in Weequahic, and Newark's South Ward more generally, to resist forces that structurally destabilized communities and hampered the preservation of racially diverse neighborhoods, and Route 78 upended that work.

The Weequahic Section of Newark and the Weequahic Community Council

Weequahic did not begin as a racially diverse community. It emerged during Newark's late 19th-century expansion efforts through the annexation of Clinton Township farms. Beginning in 1902, Frank Bock, Newark's former postmaster and the proprietor of the Weequahic, Land and Development Company, procured tracts of land beyond Hawthorne Avenue, the border of the Clinton Hill section. Suburban-like neighborhoods like Clinton Hill and Weequahic developed, in part, because of an innovation in transportation: the streetcar. Weequahic is what Delores Hayden calls a "streetcar buildout," or a residential section that was developed "along expanding transit lines" that branched out of increasingly crowded, poorly planned, and polluted center cities.³⁶ In contrast to the crowded commercial and industrial hubs in Newark, newspapers ads billed

³⁵ Arnold Hirsch, "Containment on the Home Front: Race and Federal Housing Policy from the New Deal to the Cold War," *Journal of Urban History* 26, no. 2 (January 2000): 166.

³⁶ Delores Hayden, *Building Suburbia: Green Fields and Urban Growth, 1820–2000* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 76.

Weequahic as a quaint and serene neighborhood: “One of the Handsomest Park Developments in Essex County, Accessible Residential Property Opposite Large Public Breathing Places is Bound to Become Extremely Valuable with the Natural Upbuilding (*sic*) of the City.”³⁷ Middle-class marketing aside, Weequahic was a variegated community, as neighborhoods between Hawthorne and Lyons Avenue were zoned for two- and three-family homes and four-story apartment houses for residents with more modest incomes. The rest of the section, notably the districts nearest to Weequahic Park and closest to Hillside, were zoned for single-family homes.

Initially settled by upwardly mobile and assimilated German and Irish families, Jewish professionals and entrepreneurs made inroads into one of the city’s freshest neighborhoods in the mid-1920s.³⁸ By 1930 the community had become a socioeconomically diverse and thoroughly Jewish enclave. African American families began moving into the northern sections of Weequahic as early as the late 1940s, and their numbers increased through the next decade. There was a concomitant Jewish departure from those neighborhoods deeper into Weequahic or out of Newark altogether. Succession, however, did not go unaddressed as concerned residents attempted to mitigate Jewish flight from Weequahic under the auspices of the Weequahic Community Council.³⁹

³⁷ “Display Ad 19, No Title” *New York Times*, May 30, 1909, 16.

³⁸ Williams B. Helmreich, *The Enduring Community: The Jews of Newark and MetroWest* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 1999), 53–54.

³⁹ The Newark Human Rights Commission’s 1959 survey on intergroup relations reveals that many Jews wanted to draw boundaries between themselves and non-Whites. One question queries Weequahic Jews desire to distance themselves from African Americans. When asked whether they “would accept Negroes socially,” (Table 46) the majority of Jews surveyed said they “would accept Negroes only as speaking acquaintances (71%), or did “not want to have anything to do with Negroes (8%). In stark contrast, an overwhelming majority of African Americans surveyed (86%) said they would be “willing to have some white people for close personal friends” (Table 57). Two of the survey questions report on Weequahic Jews desire to stay in Weequahic. When asked to assess the condition of their neighborhood, 67% of Whites responded that Weequahic was “a good neighborhood in which to live,” and 26% responded that the “neighborhood good in some ways” with only 7% saying “not a good neighborhood to live” (Table 105). Surveying the 33% that said Weequahic was “good in some ways” or “not a good neighborhood,” 42% pointed to the “presence of Negroes” as the cause of discontent (Table 110). Interestingly, when asked if they intended to move in the next year, 73% of White respondents said no (Table 117), suggesting a desire to stay in Weequahic despite

The WCC was an umbrella organization of 50 block associations. Its objectives included “working toward amiable integration, stopping the white exodus to the suburbs, maintenance of property values and installation of neighborhood pride in the hearts of all” 36,000 residents.⁴⁰ This “integrationist project” mirrored efforts observed by historian Abigail Perkiss in the West Mt. Airy section of Philadelphia at a time when “middle-class identity had become the focal point of race-based reform,” and “integration . . . was grounded in notions of middle-class access and opportunity.”⁴¹ In many ways, WCC’s goals resonated with those of redevelopment proponents, including conserving housing stock and retaining middle-class residents by improving local services and amenities. They also demanded open housing laws to stop racial restrictions in other sections of Newark and the surrounding suburbs.

WCC leadership directed local opposition to the construction of Route 78 through Weequahic. According to Rose and Mohl, successful highway resistance campaigns were comprised of several factors, including “committed local leaders,” “cross-city, cross-class and interracial alliances,” and “strong support from at least some local politicians and from influential newspapers.”⁴² WCC’s campaign had the makings of a politically coherent political movement. They reimagined urban revitalization as a more inclusive and democratic project that sought to preserve, rather than destroy, Newark’s housing stock. The WCC was an interracial community

the demographic changes. See *Newark, a City in Transition: Volume II, Residents’ views on intergroup-relations and statistical tables*, 1959, Newark City Documents, Charles Cummings New Jersey Information Center.

⁴⁰ Gunter David, “They Battle Blight, Block by Block,” *Newark Evening News*, November 18, 1963, 10.

⁴¹ Abigail Perkiss, *Making Good Neighbors: Civil Rights, Liberalism, and Integration in Postwar Philadelphia* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 2014), 57. While Weequahic was described as a middle-class community, families in the neighborhoods were more socioeconomically diverse, and many African Americans, Jews, and others held blue-collar jobs. Sherry Ortner reframes the idea of class as a process rather than a status or position. “If class is always an object of desire (or repulsion) . . . then it seems more useful to think of people, groups, policy makers, culture makers, and so on, as engaged in ‘class projects’ rather than, or in addition to, being occupants of particular classes-as-locations,” 13. See Ortner’s *New Jersey Dreaming: Capital, Culture, and the Class of 58* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

⁴² Rose and Mohl, 115.

organization, and it garnered support from local community allies like the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council, another broad-based neighborhood organization that was waging its own fight against urban renewal in their neighborhood.⁴³ Even the city's dailies—*the Newark News* and *the Star Ledger*—provided timely and comprehensive reporting on developments related to Route 78. From the outset, the WCC utilized a two-prong approach to defending their community: get political leaders to intervene and secure an engineer who could make the case for an alternate route for the highway.

In May 1961, the WCC traveled to Washington, DC, to meet with administrators at the Federal Bureau of Roads (FBR) and Congressional leaders who represented constituencies threatened by highway displacement.⁴⁴ Leading the delegation was WCC president Lee Bernstein and Bock Avenue Block Association president Donald Payne.⁴⁵ They met with FBR highway administrator Rex Whitton who was appointed by President John Kennedy in 1960 to accelerate the pace of highway construction. Whitton was a consummate highwayman who once testified that “Problems and challenges are the bedfellows of progress.”⁴⁶ He believed that highways were a “monument to our system . . . to the cooperation between local, state, and federal governments in

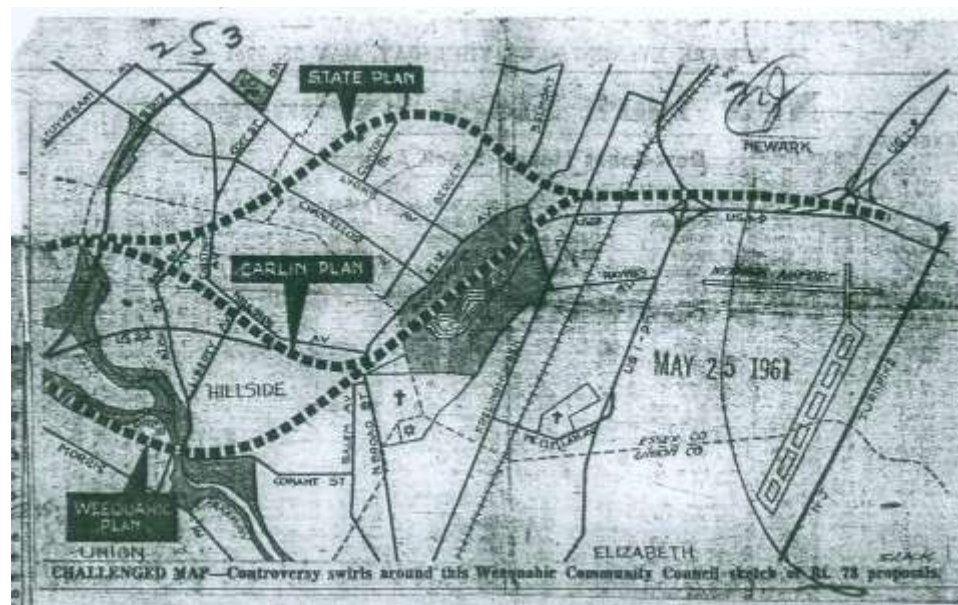
⁴³ Jennifer Frost, *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the New Left in the 1960s* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 50.

⁴⁴ “To Stir Up Rt. 78 Fight: Newarkers Will Take Advice of Nevada’s Rep. Baring,” *Newark News*, May 13, 1961.

⁴⁵ Donald Payne grew up in Newark’s North Ward and graduated from Barringer High School in 1952. After completing undergraduate and post-graduate studies, Payne moved to the South Ward where he taught English and Social Studies and coached at South Side High School. Payne was the first Black president of the Council of YMCAs. He would go on to be the first African American to be elected to Congress from New Jersey in 1988. Raymond Hernandez, “Donald M. Payne, First Black Elected to Congress From New Jersey, Dies at 77,” *The New York Times*, March 6, 2012. Lee Bernstein was born and raised in Newark. He became South Ward councilman in 1963 and supported efforts to divert the highway, but he was also a conservative whose political interests conflicted with the WCC’s broader efforts to create racially democratic communities. Bernstein and Payne’s alliance on Route 78 would dissolve on the issue of antipoverty programs in Weequahic. Bernstein believed anti-poverty programs in Weequahic would, among other things, negatively affect property values. Payne unsuccessfully ran to unseat Bernstein in the 1966 Municipal Council election. See Cyril D. Tyson, *2 Years Before The Riot!: Newark, New Jersey and the United Community Corporation Inc., 1964-1966: The Full, Real Story Of The Anti-Poverty Program* (New York: Jay Street Publishers, 2000), 323–335, 339, 369, 378–379, 451.

⁴⁶ Tom Lewis, *Divided Highways: Building the Interstate Highways, Transforming American Life* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 162.

the service of the people for whom these governments serve.”⁴⁷ Reflecting on highway-induced community displacement, Whitton quipped, “people do not like to leave their homes, and you cannot blame them, but they are in the way of progress.”⁴⁸ It was not a matter of if the highway would be built, but when. After the meeting with Whitton, WCC representatives received word that he asked the New Jersey office of the FBR in Trenton to pause development of the “State Plan,” which ran Route 78 through Weequahic, and consider the feasibility of alternative plans submitted by the WCC and Newark mayor Leo Carlin.⁴⁹



“State Plan, Mayor Carlin Plan, Weequahic Community Council Plan,” *Newark News*, May 25, 1961. Courtesy of the Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center, Newark Public Library.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 161. An engineer by training, Whitton served as president of the American Association of State Highway Officials in 1955 and 1956. When he took over the Federal Bureau of Roads in 1961, the agency was marked by inefficiency, as only 8,000 of the 41,000-mile goal were open for traffic. Whitton was well aware of the impact of highways on communities: “we as highway officials have coordinated our work with other affected groups such as the urban renewal authorities and have been keenly aware for many years of the impact on many individuals of route locations such as this through heavily built up areas.”

⁴⁸ Ibid., 160.

⁴⁹ “State Plan, Mayor Carlin Plan, Weequahic Community Council Plan,” *Newark News*, May 25, 1961; “New Rt. 78 Plan Eyed: U.S. Road Chief Asks for Good Look at Alternatives,” *Newark News*, May 21, 1961. Mayor Carlin’s Plan would have taken I-78 through Weequahic Park next to Route 22 and then through a residential section of the town of Hillside, New Jersey. The Weequahic Community Council’s Plan paralleled Route 22 through Weequahic Park as well, then banked further south into an industrial area of Hillside and along the Elizabeth River.

The Highway Director's call to Trenton imparted some optimism to the WCC, who subsequently encouraged homeowners back in Weequahic to spruce up their property, perhaps to stem the onset of blight caused by the looming possibility of the highway.⁵⁰ The *Newark News* reported that the FBR administrator sent a letter to then Congressman Hugh Addonizio, indicating that the federal agency was "willing to be shown some really acceptable alternative that will do the necessary job at the same or lower costs, if the state is able to make such a presentation."⁵¹ The *Newark News* opined, "Indicators are that from the way progress is being made . . . the highway will be rerouted to avoid the Weequahic section."⁵² Rosy signals coming from the nation's capital aside, the *Newark News* did not account for the well-established pattern of Newark officials discounting residents' interests and demands in favor of urban redevelopment, nor did it perceive Rex Whitton and the Federal Bureau of Roads' stubborn commitment to building the Federal Interstate Highway System.

FBR's ostensive support for the WCC belied the designs of federal and state authorities to press forward with the original highway course through Weequahic. One month prior to the WCC's meeting with Whitton, highway officials in Washington had already deemed the Weequahic's proposal impracticable. An executive summary of the Route 78 dispute reported any promises made by New Jersey highway officials were "non-committal."⁵³ The report also detailed off-the-record comments made by a Federal Bureau of Roads official noting that the "Weequahic (WCC) proposal is out." The memo also cited the City of Hillside's organized opposition to rerouting, and the political capital backing the Union County suburb's efforts to maintain the status

⁵⁰ Ibid. *Newark News*, May 25, 1961; "New Rt. 78 Plan Eyed: U.S. Road Chief Asks for Good Look at Alternatives," *Newark News*, May 21, 1961.

⁵¹ "U.S. Highway Chief Silent on Alternative Plans," *Newark News*, July 5, 1961. (Emphasis added).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Executive Summary of Route #78 Dispute, April 1961, File 32 Box 583, Harrison A. Williams Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

quo. While Mayor Carlin's proposal remained under consideration, in November 1961 Whitton sent a letter to New Jersey Congressman Harrison Williams conveying his staunch support for the State Highway Department's first course of construction through Weequahic. He noted that each of the alternative routes were "\$10 to \$20 million more" expensive, and that each alternative route required, in his estimation, "removal of a substantial number of residences and a larger number of industrial and business establishments."⁵⁴ Whitton expressed regret over the "inconvenience necessarily done to some persons" for the construction of the highway, but the alternative of "doing nothing" was of "greater inconvenience and loss to a larger number of people and has more damaging effects on the economy as a whole."⁵⁵ He drew the letter to a close by affirming that the original course was the "best possible choice of several possible alternatives," and that his office had "authorized" the NJHD to "proceed with further development of the previously recommended general routing." Whitton closed his letter to Senator Williams with a nudge toward acquiescence: "I hope that after similar further study of the matter, you also will be able to reach this same conclusion." The WCC did not immediately perceive federal and state intransigence on rerouting Route 78.

Adjoining townships and interest groups strongly supported the original routing, too, albeit with varied motives. A traffic safety advocacy group called the Weequahic Community Council "obstructionist," contending that "every week of delay adds to lives lost and mounting costs of congestion far in excess of right of way costs."⁵⁶ Residents in neighboring Hillside and their

⁵⁴ Rex Whitton to Honorable Harrison A. Williams Jr., November 21, 1961, File 32 Box 583 Harrison A. Williams Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ "Hits Critics of Rt. 78: State Group Labels Opposition to Road 'Obstructionist,'" *Newark News*, December 31, 1962. While the New Jersey Citizens Highway Committee (NJC) struck a pragmatic tone, the business concerns of NJC president Duncan Thecker raises questions about the potential financial interests in the construction of highways throughout New Jersey. According to a bio, Thecker founded United Materials Company, a conglomerate of four concrete manufacturing companies. A proliferation of highway construction may have provided contracting

political representatives railed against Newark mayor Carlin and the WCC's proposals. Each of the alternative routes would have carried the highway through their town. In June 1961, an overflow crowd of 2,500 residents spilled out of Hillside city hall into the street to hear their fellow Hillsiders decry any new alignment. City and county officials who represented constituents in the western suburbs beyond Newark forcefully registered the protests of Hillside residents.

There was no coalition between residents and local elected officials to avert highway clearance in Weequahic, and that political fragmentation ultimately doomed efforts to stop Route 78. The Newark Municipal Council backed the Central Planning Board's highway plan for a northerly route that would have spared Weequahic but displace Newarkers in the predominantly Black Central Ward. In 1960, before the state's formal announcement, the WCC engaged South Ward Municipal Council member Sophie Cooper about Route 78.⁵⁷ She promised to respond, "pending engineering studies."⁵⁸ The WCC was not keen on the councilwoman's early gradualism and initiated a fundraiser to hire an engineer to survey alternative routes. In response, Cooper used her council powers to halt the fundraiser, stating "the fight against Route 78 is the responsibility of city officials."⁵⁹ Her resistance to her constituents' demands illustrated the NMC's larger efforts to limit citizen input on the Route 78 alignment. She would later backtrack those comments,

opportunities for companies like United Materials Company. See "New Jersey Assembly Bill 1156," LegiScan, accessed June 19, 2021, <https://legiscan.com/NJ/bill/A1156/2018>.

⁵⁷ Cooper became South Ward councilwoman in 1957 after her husband Samuel, the erstwhile South Ward councilman, died unexpectedly from a heart attack. She took over her husband's seat on the council, and in 1958 ran as a popular incumbent, winning by over 15,000 votes. See "S.E. Cooper Dead; Newark Official," *The New York Times*, January 20, 1957; "Mayoral Run-off is Set for Newark," *The New York Times*, May 14, 1958.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Bob Shabazian, "Fund Drive Foiled," *Newark News*, June 7, 1961. After the State's formal announcement, the Weequahic Community Council initiated the *Help Save Our Homes* fundraising campaign. The WCC asked businesses throughout Weequahic to collect monies in blue collection cans to raise funds to hire a highway-planning consultant who could verify the fiscal soundness of alternative routes. Using a rarely enforced statute, Cooper halted WCC fundraising efforts, claiming that the WCC did not obtain solicitation permits to fundraise at stores.

explaining, “Action by community groups is a democratic prerogative, and it is the responsibility of citizens to make their voices heard.”⁶⁰

From 1961 to 1963, the Newark Municipal Council snubbed multiple WCC requests to appropriate funding for an engineering study that would survey paths outside of Weequahic. Engineering studies determined the feasibility of route proposals and provided important data like the projected costs of construction, estimated number of people and buildings to be displaced, and cost comparisons to other route proposals. Independent engineering studies were critical tools for freeway revolts because they allowed for critical reexaminations of the social and economic impacts of highways on community spaces. In the case of Newark, engineering studies rebutted the claims made by Whitton that the State’s route through Weequahic was more cost effective than alternative proposals. Ralph Zinn, who succeeded Bernstein as president of the Weequahic Community Council, noted the irony of the Newark Municipal Council’s resistance to additional highway studies, pointing out the council’s “failure to provide funds to combat the proposed alignment” was “unlike efforts put forth by Hillside and Union against Route 78.”⁶¹ He discerned the problem facing Newark’s freeway revolt, stating, “there is no room for factionalism in the fight against the state’s proposed Route 78 alignment” through Weequahic. With the 1962 election looming, resistance to resident appeals would have repercussions for Mayor Carlin and Councilwoman Cooper.

Route 78 was a major campaign issue for Newark voters in the 1962 citywide election. Congressman Hugh Addonizio challenged incumbent Leo Carlin in the mayoral race. Addonizio accused Carlin, among other things, of “deserting the ranks of citizens opposing the proposed

⁶⁰ “Mrs. Cooper Hits Rt. 78: Asks Joint Cooperation in Fight Against Highway” *Newark News*, June 10, 1961.

⁶¹ Ralph Zinn, “Route 78 Criticism,” *Newark News*, December 27, 1961.

alignment of Route 78.”⁶² Certainly, Mayor Carlin was a staunch advocate for Weequahic residents, however, Addonizio won the race in a landslide on the strength of his many promises, including redirecting the highway. In his inauguration speech, he proclaimed:

It is my conviction that Newark can only survive if our neighborhoods survive. Neighborhoods must not be amputated by highways. Each neighborhood is important to our city and they must be preserved so that its families, its institutions, its small businesses and its individual culture can become an integral part of the total community.⁶³

Carlin was not the only incumbent to lose on the question of Route 78. In a close race for the South Ward seat on the Municipal Council, Sophie Cooper lost to former WCC president Lee Bernstein. Carrying the water for the NMC rather than advocating for her constituents came back to haunt Cooper. Though she had a “traditional following” of Democrats in a heavily Democratic South Ward, *the New Jersey Afro American* reported Bernstein’s “reliance upon one campaign issue—route 78—pointed up his lack of wide experience in civic affairs.”⁶⁴ Bernstein unseated Cooper in the run-off, securing a platform on which he could bring the force of the NMC to the defense of Weequahic, or so he thought.

In March 1963, the CPB finally submitted its alignment plan for Route 78 to the NMC.⁶⁵ The “City Alternate Alignment Plan” would eliminate less desirable housing in the Central Ward, preserve good housing in the South Ward, tighten the circle of the Newark Loop, and create a veritable wall of expressways isolating Newark’s Central Business District and the city’s urban renewal projects from the rest of the city.⁶⁶

⁶² “Addonizio Blasts Carlin on Rt. 78,” *Newark News*, January 23, 1962.

⁶³ “Inauguration speech, Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio, City of Newark, N.J., July 1, 1962,” *House Congressional Record*, 1962, 11835.

⁶⁴ Lee Johnson, “Ward Elections Had Exciting Contests,” *The Afro American*, June 9, 1962, 5.

⁶⁵ See Figure 4, “The City Alternate Alignment.”

⁶⁶ The City’s route 78 proposal was not the first Central Ward thruway plan. In 1959, the Central Planning Board initially proposed an expressway designated the “Springfield Avenue Connector” as part of a network of highways in Newark. See “Existing and Proposed Highways with Neighborhood Boundaries.”



“The City Alternate Alignment” from *Route 78 Freeway Study - II: An Analysis of the Alignment Proposed by the State Highway Department: Alternate Proposals by the City of Newark* (Newark, NJ: Division of City Planning, 1963). Courtesy of Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

The construction costs for the City’s alignment were greater, but estimated acquisition costs were significantly lower.⁶⁷ *The Newark News* reported that at a January 1963 meeting New Jersey governor Hughes and “city and highway department officials” developed a plan to share clearance and construction costs between Federal Highway and Urban Renewal programs.⁶⁸ For his efforts, Bernstein’s membership on the NMC did not preclude his press for an independent

⁶⁷ According to the *Route 78 Freeway Study*, construction costs for the “State Approve” alignment through Weequahic and “City Alternate” alignment were, respectively, \$23,899,000 and \$43,227,000. Right-of-Way Cost in Newark were \$33,242,000 for the State Plan, while the city’s plan was \$16,360,000. In sum the City Alternate plan was \$59,587,000, and the State Approved Plan was \$57,141,000, making the City Plan almost \$2.5 million more expensive. See *Route 78 Freeway Study - II*, 14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

engineering study, nor did it weaken the NMC's opposition to his motions.⁶⁹ The NMC's meeting following the release of the city's highway proposal was a raucous affair. Bernstein's motion for an independent study went down by an 8-1 vote. North Ward councilman Joseph Melillo described the majority's disapproval: "If we hire another consultant, and we pay him as our agent, he is going to give us the survey we want."⁷⁰ If the consultant "comes up with another route," Melillo explained, "it will only confound and confuse the situation and weaken our present position."⁷¹ Perhaps, but what if the State rejected the City's proposal? Given the urgency to complete highway construction, additional studies could render more cost-effective proposals for state and federal review, thus extending the prospects for protecting Weequahic. Ultimately, New Jersey State Highway Commissioner Dwight Palmer rejected the Central Ward alignment, deeming it too costly. Later that summer Mayor Addonizio disregarded a major campaign promise and dealt another blow to the movement to save Weequahic.

Commissioner Palmer met with Governor Richard Hughes and Mayor Addonizio in Trenton to discuss the commissioner's "final conclusion" in late July 1963.⁷² The governor told the mayor that the commissioner's plan "will receive favorable reaction from all parties at interest." In a closed-door meeting, Addonizio assented to the State's plan which brought Route 78 through Weequahic. There was a slight adjustment in the alignment to spare a few more homes, but Route 78 would nonetheless cut a path through Weequahic.⁷³ Addonizio called the compromise "a victory," maintaining that "I still object to this alignment" as it passes through Weequahic, "but I have emphasized the full support that I have received for this position from every elected

⁶⁹ Moray Epstein, "Planners to Propose New Path for Rt. 78," *Newark Sunday News*, March 17, 1963, 24.

⁷⁰ Bob Shabazian, "Gavel Gives Out," *Newark News*, April 4, 1963.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Moray Epstein, "To Present New Rt. 78 Alignment," *Newark News*, July 25, 1963. Newark's Central Planning Board presented their plan to Palmer on May 2, 1963.

⁷³ Moray Epstein, "New Rt. 78 Line Studied," *Newark News*, August 4, 1963.

municipal and county official in Essex County.”⁷⁴ The mayor, it seems, did not consider Councilman Bernstein, who accused the mayor of “playing politics.”⁷⁵ The South Ward councilman condemned the mayor’s decision, carping that he “had the responsibility of representing this unanimous opposition” to the State’s plan. Bernstein was at the governor’s office in Trenton but was not invited to participate in the meeting. “I have represented the council and all of the people in the city,” explained Addonizio, “and felt saying that in view of the strong position of the administration and all elected officials in Essex County regarding alignment.”⁷⁶ Sounding very much like Newark Municipal Council members dismissing the input of Weequahic residents on highway matters, Addonizio concluded, “It was not necessary to have personal representation from all elected officials at every meeting.”

A brief speculation on Mayor Addonizio’s concession is warranted. The mayor was a central figure in bringing the New Jersey Medical School to Newark, and completion of the Newark Loop would be a boon for the success of the medical school and other renewal projects in the central business district. Another perhaps more verifiable motive was political corruption. In 1971, a federal court found Addonizio guilty of conspiracy “to extort kickbacks from contractors, suppliers and engineers engaged in public work projects within the city of Newark.”⁷⁷ Acquiescing to the State’s plan through Weequahic placed contractors tied to the extortion scheme in a position to place bids on and accept contracts for work on Newark sections of Route 78.⁷⁸ According to

⁷⁴ “Addonizio Raps Bernstein For Statements on Rt. 78,” *Newark News*, August 28, 1963.

⁷⁵ “Route 78 Plan Hit,” *Newark News*, July 31, 1963.

⁷⁶ “Addonizio Raps Bernstein,” *Newark News*.

⁷⁷ *United States v. Addonizio* 451 F.2d 49 (3d Cir. 1971).

⁷⁸ Robert Curvin’s scrutiny of Addonizio’s support for the New Jersey Medical School project tracks closely with why the former mayor allowed Route 78 to bisect the Weequahic section. Curvin noted that the mayor held gubernatorial ambitions and delivering the medical school to the state’s largest city “would demonstrate competence and leadership,” 121. Likewise, settling the highway dispute and expediting the construction of Route 78 could have garnered Addonizio strong consideration from suburban voters in the greater Newark area. Additionally, Curvin speculated that “[s]ome suspected the mayor’s stronger motive was the potential influence he would have in parceling

Addonizio's conviction record, the State of New Jersey in spring 1965 contracted Mal Brothers Contracting Company for \$6 million.⁷⁹ Subpoenaed records showed the company made payments to a shell corporation that shuttled money to various public officials, including Addonizio. The extent to which the mayor's extortion schemes shaped his reasoning on Route 78 requires more examination. It nonetheless fits an unfortunate and longstanding pattern of political corruption that benefitted a few at the expense of the many in Newark's history.⁸⁰

Responses to Addonizio's concession were swift. A contentious debate over the State's highway proposal was the focal point of the August NMC meeting that went late into a humid August evening.⁸¹ Attendees pressed the council to hire a consultant to review alternative routes. It "should have been done years ago," someone yelled out.⁸² East Ward councilman Phil Gordon opined that the mayor should be a part of the Municipal Council's discussion. Bernstein, perhaps smarting from the mayor assuming sole discretion over Route 78, shot back: "Where does togetherness start?"⁸³ WCC president Murray Aboff along with the Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council president Louis Patterson called for an independent engineering study and a statement from NMC opposing the highway. In Aboff's estimation the South Ward communities of Clinton

out contracts." See Curvin's *Inside Newark: Decline, Rebellion, and the Search for Transformation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 121.

⁷⁹ Moray Epstein, "The Case of the Vanishing Lake," *Newark News*, May 23, 1965. In 1970 Louis and George Malanga, were indicted by a federal grand jury for filing false tax returns from 1965 to 1968 ("Malanga Brother Indicted," *New York Times*, September 16, 1970). Their company, Mal Bros, was contracted to fill a dredged-up lake bed and form a sturdy bottom for a system of bridges for I-78 highway to Newark Airport, Port Newark, Routes 1 and 9, and the Newark Bay Extension. In *Mal-Bros. Contracting Co. v. Kohl* 113 N.J. Super. 144 (1971), Judge Sullivan's opinion read: "Basically, Mal's disqualification grew out of its involvement with Kantor Supply Company (Kantor Supply), which featured prominently in the criminal trial of former Newark Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio et al. At that trial Kantor Supply was shown, through the testimony of Irving Kantor, the key government witness, to have been a dummy corporation which existed only for the purpose of siphoning moneys out of construction contracts as "kickbacks" to public officials. Mal was named in the testimony as having delivered checks to Kantor Supply against fictitious invoices."

⁸⁰ Dorothy H. Guyot, "Newark: Crime and Politics in a Declining City," in *Crime in City Politics* ed. Anne Heinz, Herbert Jacob, and Robert L. Lineberry (New York: Longman, Inc., 1983), 30–31.

⁸¹ "City Votes \$10,000 for Route 78 Study," *Newark News*, August 22, 1963; "City Council Busy," *Newark News*, August 24, 1963.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

Hill and Weequahic were paragons of racial understanding. The highway, he said, “would destroy the integration in the South Ward which the suburbs refuse to accept.”⁸⁴ The pressure worked as the NMC passed a resolution declaring its opposition to the State’s alignment. In December 1963, the NMC hired engineer John Clarkeson.⁸⁵ However, only eight months into his contract, he submitted his resignation. In his letter he cited “a definite lack of cooperation efforts to obtain basic information and data required for the study” from Newark City Hall and the State Highway Department offices in Trenton. He described “the lack of unity at certain governmental levels.”⁸⁶ While he did not identify the persons or offices that hampered his inquiries, the bureaucratic intractability could not be coincidental as it forestalled the development of alternate plans and allowed the state to move closer to the acquisition of properties in the path of Route 78.

In October 1964, the Newark Municipal Council retained the services of Warren Stadden to replace Clarkeson.⁸⁷ Stadden was the mayor of Roselle, a township seven miles southwest of Newark. He was also a licensed engineer with credentials in four states and contended with State Highway Department Commissioner Palmer regarding threat of Interstate 278 bisecting Roselle and several Union County municipalities.⁸⁸ In his preliminary analysis of each route, he found that a modified version of the WCC’s alternate plan was more cost effective than the state’s original

⁸⁴ “City Votes \$10,000,” August 22, 1963. The motion passed with six yeas, two nays, and one abstention.

⁸⁵ The Newark Municipal Council contracted Clarkeson to conduct an independent study of all alignments. His credentials included serving as Acting Division Engineer and Chief of Design Section of the United States Bureau of Public Roads Office at Albany, New York. In a book co-authored with Arthur Bruce, Clarkeson stressed “the newer aspects of highway engineering.” The authors noted that changes to the metropolis and the increased dependency upon motor vehicles required newer approaches to highway design: “The location, design, and construction of highways has, in the last decade, developed into a highly scientific professional work. This change from the earlier days of just ‘road building’ was brought about by the enormous popularity of the motor vehicle both as a means of providing individual freedom and recreation and as a very versatile medium of commercial transportation,” *v. Highway Design and Construction* was a gateway text for civil engineering students. See *Highway Design and Construction*, 3rd edition (International Textbook Company: Scranton, Pennsylvania, 1950), *v.*

⁸⁶ John Clarkeson to Harry Reichenstein, August 14, 1964, Box 452, Route I-78: Stadden Report, City of Newark Archives, Newark, NJ.

⁸⁷ “Rt. 78 Delay Asked: City Awaiting Separate Report,” *Newark News*, January 24, 1964.

⁸⁸ See “Roselle ask meeting over Route 278,” *Newark Star-Ledger*, August 18, 1964 and Robert P. Kalter, “Plan to ease Bayway traffic jam offered,” *Newark Star-Ledger*, December 27, 1964.

plan, contradicting Rex Whitton's earlier claim about the high cost of the WCC's course proposal.⁸⁹ In January 1965, Stadden notified Whitton of the less costly alternative route around Weequahic. Additionally, he informed Whitton of his difficulties securing data from the New Jersey State Highway Commission. Despite those delays, Stadden completed his study and reported the findings to the NMC in April 1965. He found routing the highway through Hillside and along the Elizabeth River with "improvements to state highways would save approximately \$81 million under the state's present plans."⁹⁰ He also approximated that only 900 people would be displaced in contrast to 15,000, significantly reducing relocation costs. The NMC unanimously voted to extend Stadden's contract and commissioned him to speak on behalf of the city at federal and state hearings on the highway.⁹¹

The Stadden Report was a breath of life for Weequahic residents and their advocates, and vocal support for saving Weequahic increased. A bipartisan group of New Jersey legislators called for the new alignment.⁹² Morristown and Roselle, towns that also faced interstates bisecting their communities, expressed their support for Weequahic, calling the Elizabeth River route the "logical" choice.⁹³ The Congress of Racial Equality announced their opposition to the State's proposal.⁹⁴ The Stadden Report should have garnered serious consideration from the State Highway Department and persuaded state planners to submit the Elizabeth River route to the Federal Bureau of Public Roads for review and approval; however, the State Highway Department

⁸⁹ Warren Stadden, "Stadden Report Press Release," January 11, 1965, City of Newark Archives, Newark, NJ.

⁹⁰ Minutes of the Newark Municipal Council, April 7, 1965, pp. 535–536, Newark Public Library, accessed February 18, 2023, https://archive.org/embed/NewarkMinutes_1965.

⁹¹ Minutes of the Newark Municipal Council, May 5, 1965, pp. 633–634, Newark Public Library, accessed February 18, 2023, https://archive.org/embed/NewarkMinutes_1965.

⁹² "River Path Urged As Rt. 78 Alignment," *Newark News*, April 1965; Moray Epstein, "Legislative Move Due in Rt. 78 Fight," *Newark News*, March 8, 1965.

⁹³ Tessa Van Horne, "Letter to the Editor," *Newark News*, February 26, 1965.

⁹⁴ "CORE Opposes Route 78 Line," *Newark News*, April 4, 1965.

admitted to not reviewing the less-costly alternate proposal at an open hearing in October 1965.⁹⁵ The path to underdevelopment in Weequahic was clear for state and local officials despite the WCC and their supporters' best efforts to divert the roadway.

Right-of-way: The State Bureaucracy of Underdevelopment

In July 1966, the New Jersey State Highway Department mailed acquisition notices to Weequahic property owners whose homes and businesses were in the path of the highway.⁹⁶ This in effect marked the end of resistance to the Route 78. Two months later, the NMC passed a resolution by an 8-1 vote allowing the City of Newark and the State of New Jersey “to relocate facilities necessitated for construction of freeway Interstate Route 78 . . . through City of Newark, cost thereof to be borne by state.”⁹⁷ In other words, the State and Newark's Department of Public Works would partner to complete final designs for the highway, conduct land surveys, secure materials and equipment for construction, and begin to acquire real property for demolition. Bernstein cast the lone “no” vote.

The State Highway Department required foot soldiers to acquire properties in the path of approved highway plans. Right-of-way appraisers, like real estate blockbusters, were heralds of underdevelopment. In the summer 1964, while Clarkeson unsuccessfully attempted to secure data to review alternative routes for Route 78, the first class of 77 prospective appraisers began coursework in New Jersey State Highway Department's School of Advanced Studies to become appraisers in the highway department's Right-of-Way Division.⁹⁸ Appraisers had the

⁹⁵ “Highways May Destroy Neighborhoods,” *Advance*, 1, No. 16 (January 6, 1966): 10.

⁹⁶ New Jersey State Highway Department, “Interstate Route 78 Newark, Essex County Right-of-Way Acquisition,” July 7, 1966, Document Box 3, Ernest Erber Papers, Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center, Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ.

⁹⁷ Minutes of the Newark Municipal Council, September 7, 1966, pp. 104–105, Newark Public Library, accessed February 18, 2023, https://archive.org/embed/NewarkMinutes_1966.

⁹⁸ The New Jersey State Highway Department created a professional training program to advance its acquisition goals. “The advanced school of right-of-way acquisition was organized because there is no university in the country that

responsibility of acquiring “approximately 4,700 individual parcels of property, worth an estimated \$41,500,000, which are needed for construction projects already authorized.”⁹⁹ For perspective on the enormity of this endeavor, New Jersey would be second only to California in total volume of acquired land and dollars, and the right-of-way acquisitions would collectively be the largest in state history. The sheer scale of this process may explain the slow pace of appraisal and acquisition in Weequahic. Residents were in limbo months after the state notified them that an appraiser would make an offer on their home. Those delays were costly.

“In the Way of Progress”: Underdevelopment in Weequahic

Oadelline Truitt and her family moved onto Wainwright Street in Weequahic from the Central Ward in 1966. While hers was the fourth Black family to move onto that block, she recalled the neighborhood was still socioeconomically and racially diverse: “There was a fireman, a doctor, a white family.”¹⁰⁰ As more Black families moved onto Wainwright, though, more white families moved out. Some of the new families bought homes that were in the path of Route 78. “The people were purchasing homes were not aware of it. They did not know the highway was coming,” Truitt remembered. Noting the proximity of her home, she shared, “We just missed it by a few houses but there were people in that line of where the highway came. Many of them had just bought their houses.” Somewhat unsure of the reimbursement offered by the state to take her neighbors’ homes, Truitt knew “they didn’t get what they should have gotten . . . It was not a pretty picture.”

graduates professional right-of-way people who qualify to fulfill the multiple role of appraiser, negotiator, lawyer, salesman, and public relations expert.” The curriculum was “recommended by the American Association of State Highway Officials and the Federal Bureau of Public Roads. Instructors were drawn from universities, industry, and the American Institute of Real Estate Appraisers.” New Jersey State Highway Department, “School of Advanced Studies Right-of-Way Division Graduation,” July 9, 1964, Document Box 3, Ernest Erber Papers, Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center, Newark Public Library, Newark, NJ. New Jersey State Highway Department, “Appraiser Recruiting Right-of-Way Division,” February 4, 1965, Ernest Erber Papers.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Oadelline Truitt, interview with author, on phone, September 25, 2018.

In January 1967 the *Newark News* profiled residents and business owners of properties along the Watson Avenue business corridor who faced the dilemma of owning a home in an impending demolition area. Van and Mae White were an African American couple who owned a two-story walk-up at 50 Watson Avenue.¹⁰³ The Whites purchased their building in 1949 and spent almost 20 years making a home on the second floor while building up their dry-cleaning business on the first. “What can we do,” Ms. White lamented, as the couple had not found a new home within their diminished budget. “We’re in our fifties, we can’t go out and get jobs.” Van White, her husband, summed up their predicament: “This interruption is killing the poor man.”¹⁰⁴

The State received approval to build Route 78 in 1961. Despite the best intentions of the Weequahic Community Council and their supporters, the protracted wrangling between pro and anti-highway factions was bad for home and business owners, especially as it became increasingly clear that the highway would be built through Weequahic. The fight over highway alignment was a war of attrition, and those aware of such costs chose to abscond before the prices of their property bottomed-out. Those who did not witness the steady decline of their beloved community. Ethel Sacharow managed her son’s pharmacy at 46 Watson Avenue.¹⁰⁵ When asked about the onset of blight in the neighborhood, she replied, “I’d say it started about three years ago when talk of the highway was strong.”¹⁰⁶ She continued, “A lot of people moved out, rented their homes.” Six

¹⁰³ See the General Property Map. This image is an excerpt from one of more than a dozen property maps that detail streets in the Weequahic section that were in the delineated path of Route 78. The highly detailed record shows the names of the streets, the trees, utility poles, the composition of the sidewalk, and the parcels on which sat homes, businesses, houses of worship and other buildings that would be razed to make way for the highway. Each parcel notes the name(s) of the owner(s), the type of home or business, and the dimensions of the structures. The Whites’ building is highlighted by circle 2.

¹⁰⁴ Jean Joyce, “For Many in Weequahic, Rt. 78 Means Agonizing Trip,” *Newark Evening News*, February 1, 1967.

¹⁰⁵ See the General Property Map. The Sacharow Drug Store is highlighted by circle 1.

¹⁰⁶ Jean Joyce, “For Many in Weequahic, Rt. 78 Means Agonizing Trip.” Hilary Moss, Yinan Zhang, and Andy Anderson examined the Massachusetts Department of Public Works (DPW) Inner Beltway project. DPW abandoned plans to build the roadway in 1971, but the longstanding threat of neighborhood clearance wrecked home values and accelerated the onset of blight in the neighborhood. See Moss et. al, “Assessing the Impact of the Inner Belt: MIT, Highways, and Housing in Cambridge, Massachusetts,” *Journal of Urban History* 40, no. 6 (November 2014): 1054–78.

months elapsed since the Highway Department sent out notices of acquisition, and the NJHD appraisers had not assessed all properties. When state officials finally acquired land titles, properties were not immediately shuttered or demolished. This neglect furthered neighborhood deterioration near the condemned zone.¹⁰⁷ Two years later, a *Newark News* reporter surveyed the streets in and around the path for Route 78 and observed some well-kept houses, but also signs of neglect, including “outdated and faded election posters . . . plastered on wall exteriors, the only relief from them being peeled and blistering paint.”¹⁰⁸ Complicating matters were “[w]ooden stairs” that were “rickety, defying approach.” These properties became haunts for the dispossessed, drug pushers, and users. Regrettably, children from the surrounding neighborhoods played in the vacant buildings. The Newark police announced there was an increase in robberies in vacant communities and abutting neighborhoods. The bodies of a four-year-old boy and an eighteen-year-old girl were found amongst the buildings. Reflecting on what happened to her little section of Weequahic, Sacharow kvetched, “What happened to the neighborhood is a disgrace.”

The scope of loss becomes clearer when one considers the matter of relocation and compensation for property. Federal law required state governments to mitigate the burden on residents who were dislocated from their homes, and the Newark Housing Authority created a displacement office in January 1967 to address the needs of Weequahic residents displaced by Route 78.¹⁰⁹ Downs points out that nationally less than 50 percent of people displaced by federally funded projects received any funds to cover moving costs.¹¹⁰ While NHA’s relocation procedures and overall record are not aggregated, testimony from a 1972 blight hearing sheds some light on

¹⁰⁷ “Meeting Due On Vacant Dwellings,” *Newark News*, October 22, 1969.

¹⁰⁸ Jean Joyce, “For Many in Weequahic, Rt. 78 Means Agonizing Trip.”

¹⁰⁹ “Relocation Office for Weequahic,” *Star-Ledger*, January 25, 1967. The state opened a displacement office in Weequahic to “provide relocation help to residents and businessmen being displaced by proposed construction Interstate Route 78 in the area.”

¹¹⁰ Downs, 199.

the challenges displaced people faced in Newark. The CPB held the hearing to finalize condemnation proceedings for the “Weequahic Park Urban Renewal Area,” a residential district near the Watson Street corridor. Appraisals by city officials supporting the blight designation did not account for resident activity in the neighborhood save for references to passengers in vehicles. In a few instances those officials made sweeping generalizations about blight in the area while failing to mention any buildings that were in good condition.¹¹¹ Ida Best, who lived just outside the condemned area, gave testimony to set the record straight about the conditions of her neighborhood:

We do not see that our homes are an eye sore or that they are substandard, unsafe, unsanitary, dilapidated or obsolete or that they are lacking in light and space or are not conducive to wholesome living or in any way are social or economic liabilities to the community or to the municipality.

Best, perhaps unknowingly, also challenged Rex Whitton’s early contention about the acceptable costs of progress:¹¹²

We do not wish to stand in the way of progress but we do not see where progress should be made at the expense of the small homeowners, which is the very core of our community life.¹¹³

The deleterious effects of Route 78 were not limited to Weequahic. Highway construction destroyed ratables, properties that the city assessor collected tax revenues from to fund public services including schools and libraries, police and fire departments, and utilities like street cleaning, road repair, and building inspections.¹¹⁴ Clinton Hill Neighborhood Council president

¹¹¹ Newark Central Planning Board hearing on Weequahic Park urban renewal area, January 17, 1972, Newark City Documents, Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center. In one exchange, a commissioner who was familiar with the area asked one of the surveyors if he observed a particular building that was actually in good condition because the surveyor’s report indicated that all the buildings were dilapidated. Pointing out the oversight, Commissioner Cocuzza said, “You did not mention it at all. I am just pointing this out for the record.” The surveyor admitted, “I did not enumerate every building in the area, Mr. Chairman,” 42.

¹¹² See note 45.

¹¹³ Newark Central Planning Board hearing on Weequahic Park urban renewal area, 95 (Emphasis added).

¹¹⁴ *Route 78 Freeway Study - II*. 18. The Central Planning Board estimated Newark would see a tax dollar loss of \$1,928,000 with the State’s alignment. The City’s alternate plan would see a smaller loss of tax revenue at \$949,000.

Stanley Winters testified before the State Highway Authority at a 1960 public hearing on Route 78, warning that “55 percent of Newark’s land is already tax-exempt,” which amounted to “eight thousand of its fifteen thousand acres.”¹¹⁵ Route 78, Winters warned, “would increase tax-exempt land in the city of Newark and put additional burdens on small homeowners and business.” In 1961, the state of New Jersey passed the Fox-Lance Act, a law that allows municipalities, in exchange for a payment greater than “the amount of taxes received prior to the development (or renovation),” to grant tax abatements to developers and corporations.¹¹⁶ Tax abatements were inducements to draw major corporations and developers to the city or keep them from retreating to the suburbs. Newark’s tax rate by 1960 was already high, and it would only increase with the inordinate number of tax abatements city officials granted corporations to stay in or come to Newark. Route 78 was a toll-free pathway to and through the city for suburban commuters and truckers. Federal highways, as projects of underdevelopment, had the immediate impact of depreciating land values, allowing officials to seize the property of individual home and business owners to repurpose the acquired land for use by persons whose primary residence was not in Newark. It also had the larger impact of limiting the material benefit of land to motorists while increasing the financial burden of municipal maintenance on homeowners throughout the entire city.

Epilogue

The Newark sections of Route 78 opened in 1976, and travelers along the then-eight-lane highway shuttled into a trench, passing underneath eight overpasses that a decade prior had been

¹¹⁵ New Jersey State Highway Department hearing on Route Studies for I-78, July 15, 1960, General Publications and Reports of Department of Transportation, New Jersey State Publications Digital Library, <https://dspace.njstatelib.org/xmlui/handle/10929/49335>.

¹¹⁶ Curvin, *Inside Newark: Decline, Rebellion, and the Search for Transformation* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 205.

through streets. Absent from that road scape were over 800 homes; dozens of churches, synagogues, and small businesses; and the people who were the lifeblood of those communities. The communities in the shadow of Route 78 were in various states of disrepair, but Weequahic neighborhoods farther removed from the highway reveal a more complicated story.

Weequahic Community Council was not able maintain the interracial character of Weequahic. That failure was due in no small part to the 1967 uprising. The section remained a destination for the Black middle class as African American professionals began to settle in homes south of Lyons Avenue.¹¹⁷ Black folks, like the Jews before, fashioned a community in their own image. In 1972, Gladys Grauer opened Aard Studio, an art gallery that featured the work of African American artists.¹¹⁸ Black proprietors bought the storefronts and opened, among other enterprises, a pet shop, record shop, and a hardware store. Black congregations acquired old Jewish synagogues as African Methodist Episcopal, Baptists, or other denominations celebrated the birth, death, and resurrection of the King of Jews. As early as the mid-1960s, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a nationally distributed Black newspaper, regularly reported on “the happenings” in Weequahic, attesting to the high status conferred by having a Weequahic address. It would seem that Route 78 did protect Weequahic. Newark however faced manifold crises, and many of them landed hard on Weequahic. Slum clearance for the highway and renewal projects displaced thousands of families into the private rental market in Weequahic and neighboring Clinton Hill, which overburdened revenue-starved city services.

Rerouting the highway may have simply delayed the onset of blight. However, it is also highly plausible that intact neighborhoods, which included small businesses that provided jobs and

¹¹⁷ Don Vaillancourt, “Weequahic Elegance,” *Newark News*, March 8, 1971.

¹¹⁸ Gladys Grauer, interview with author, Newark, NJ, November 20, 2012.

services to the community, as well as communal bonds created by clusters of neighbors, houses of worship, and other institutions, would have been a bulwark against blight. We can only speculate.

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