

NEW HAVEN CITY PLAN COMMISSION ADVISORY REPORT

RE: **ZONING ORDINANCE MAP AMENDMENT**, Amend Zoning Map to Change the Zoning Classification of property known as 115 Peat Meadow Road (MBL #072/0982/00300) from BA (General Business) to BB (Automotive Sales)(Economic Development Administrator).

REPORT: 1461-01

ADVICE: Approval

BACKGROUND

The Office of Economic Development is proposing to change the zoning designation of property consisting of approximately 6.12 acres located just north of I-95 and abutting the Town of East Haven from General Business (BA) to Automotive Sales (BB). The property was until recently the site of a U.S. Postal Service Facility. Properties located to the west of this site are predominantly residential in nature; areas to the north are a mix of park and industrial use, while directly to the east (and within the East Haven Town Limits) there is a large used auto sales center and, finally, I-95 to the south. The Zoning Map (attached) is largely reflective of this diversity of land use in the area in that while this single designated for General Business (BA) it is bordered on the east by Low-Middle Density Residential District on the north by a Heavy Industry (IH) District, one small IH property located to the southwest, Automotive Sales (BB) on the south side of I-95, and a General Commercial (CC) District to the west in the Town of East Haven.

The site itself is as mentioned just over six acres in area and is the former site of a 24,000 s.f. US Postal Service facility (photo#3, attached) with associated parking and loading dock facilities (photo #4, attached). The site is currently accessed by means of Peat Meadow Road (photo #1, attached) and a right to pass over the driveway that runs from Peat Meadow Road, along the northern boundary of this property into East Haven, along the rear of the Carmax facility and eventually in a southerly direction to Frontage Road. There is currently a vegetative buffer area of approximately 200ft between currently developed portions of this property and Peat Meadow Road.

The initial impetus behind this proposed amendment to the New Haven Zoning Map was the interest of a private party in this now vacant parcel for use as a new car dealership. As new car dealerships are currently limited to Automotive Sales (BB) Districts in the City of New Haven such use could not take place on the site without either an amendment to the Zoning Map or Zoning Regulations. Because inclusion of new auto dealerships as a permitted uses in General Business (BA) Districts, which generally feature commercial uses of a more neighborhood-based character, was not considered to be either practical or wise, consideration of the proposed use on this property has focused on a map rather than text amendment.

PUBLIC HEARING: At the public hearing on February 15, 2012, Thomas Talbot, Deputy Director, Zoning, presented the referral from the Board of Aldermen to the Commission. The proposed BB District was likely preferable to the existing BA District in that BA allowed a much wider range of commercial uses, some which had the potential to be much more intensive in terms of the traffic they would generate. The BB District was possibly an obsolete model in that if the City was interested in retaining automotive uses, it had to recognize the regional character of the use.

Ms. Ford submitted a letter for the record dated February 13, 2012 from the South Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency determining that the proposed Amendment did not appear to cause any inter-municipal impacts to the Towns in the Region nor do there appear to be negative impacts to the habitat or ecosystem of the Long Island Sound.

Commissioner's questions centered around impact of the change which would permit a new car dealership on the abutting residential neighborhood.

The sole speaker, Anthony Bialecki, Deputy Director of Economic Development, noted that at the urging of Alderman Alphonse Paolillo, his Department had organized two neighborhood meetings to brief interested parties on the proposed map change. Given that the traffic would not substantially change with the new zone, the citizens who turned out generally supported the amendment with the anticipation of a future curb cut onto Forbes Avenue to reduce traffic on local streets, and also the retention of a median in Peat Meadow Road which deterred traffic from turning into the residential neighborhood.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Review of this proposed Map Amendment involves analysis on three different levels. Initially, there should be evidence that the proposal is in accordance with and furthers the goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of Development and sound land use regulation policy. Next, it should be demonstrated that it is in harmony with and provides benefit to both the actual zone in which these properties will be located as well as to the surrounding neighborhood. Finally, it should be established that the subject properties themselves are locationally appropriate and of such size and shape so as to be reasonably capable of supporting the uses that the BB District permits.

In terms of the Comprehensive Plan of Development, while there is little in the way of explicit mention or recommendation related directly to this type of proposal, the general concerns and recommendations expressed in that document in both the Transportation and Economic Development chapters do have relevance. Current regulation limits new auto dealerships to BB Districts. The BB District with the largest number of properties is located in the portion of Whalley Avenue closest to the Central Business District. At one time this area contained most of the City's new car dealerships. The nature of the business has changed significantly, however, over the last 20 to thirty years. Rather relying on smaller, strictly local dealerships, the retail auto industry is characterized by much larger dealerships that draw from a regional customer base. This retail model is highly reliant upon access to regional transportation routes. Two additional BB Districts, one located just south of the 115 Peat Meadow Road on the other side of I-95 as well another on Amity Road adjacent to the Merritt Parkway are locationally typical of that mode, as is the current proposal. The enabling of that model within the limits of the City of New Haven helps to ensure a commercially diverse tax base by means of allowing a use with a regional level customer base direct access to regional transportation resources.

The second level of analysis is concerned with the relationship of the subject property to the immediate area. Because the area to the north (along with one parcel to the southwest) is parkland and industrially zoned, and car dealerships are currently in operation to the west and south, it is difficult to envision any use-related conflict between an auto dealer and any of these adjacent properties. Properties located to the west, however, are residentially zoned and are of much greater concern in terms of measureable impact. The issue of impact upon the RM-1 District should really be examined in both relative and actual terms. Viewed relatively, the Commission is aware that a wide variety of commercial uses, many of them much more intensive in terms of traffic generation, hours of operation, are permitted in the existing BA District as opposed to the proposed BB District. Actual impact should also be minimal. City Staff has been working with the Connecticut DOT to provide direct ingress to the site from Frontage Road with egress from the driveway in back of Carmax back to Frontage Road. This will minimize traffic onto Peat Meadow Road.

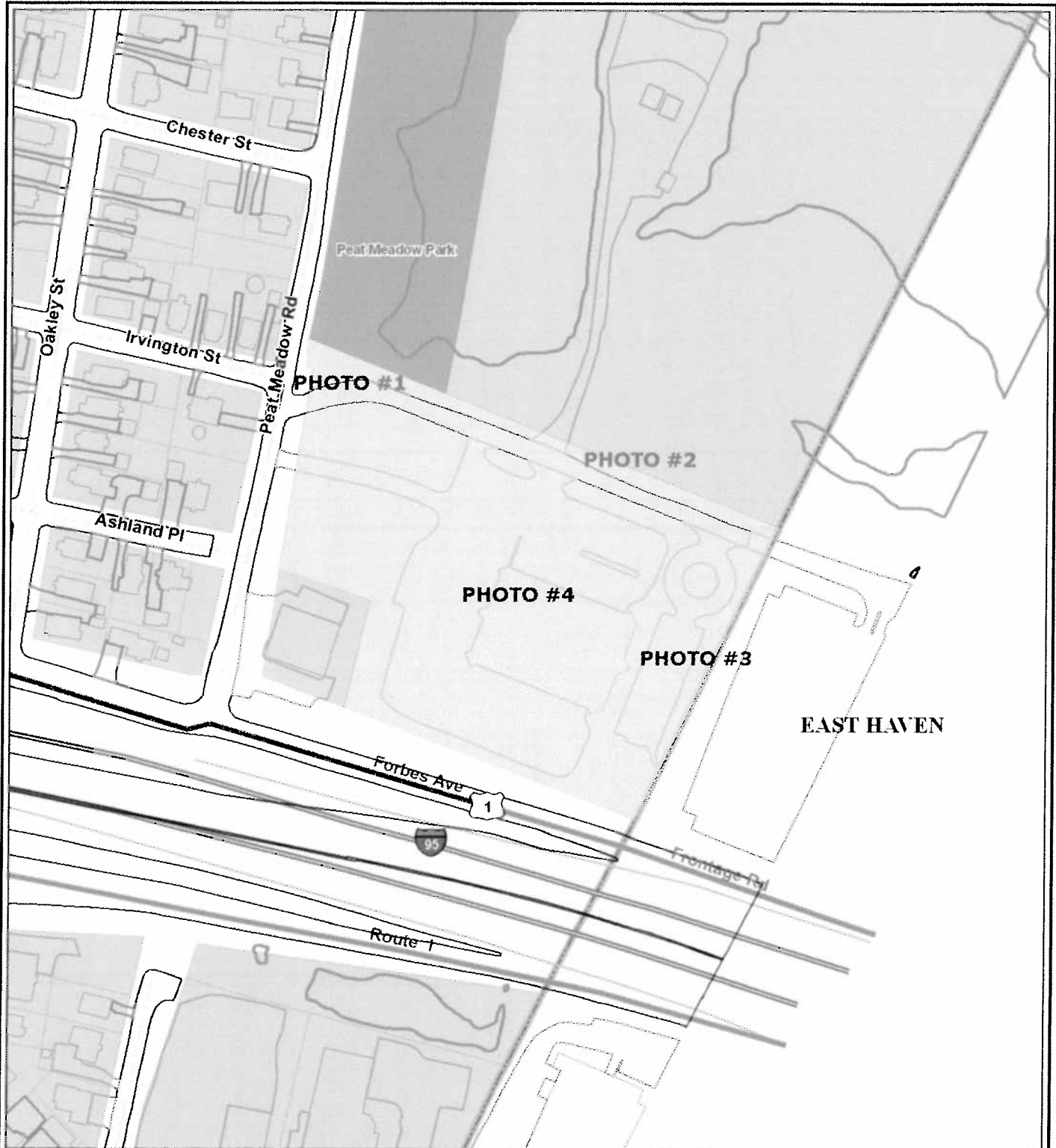
The final set of concerns regarding this proposed change has to do with the nature of the property itself. This is clearly a property that although located adjacent to a residential area, does not lend itself to a close connection to that area. In the view of the Commission, any such connection is not in the best interests of the neighborhood and should be discouraged to the fullest extent that land use regulation will permit. This proposal largely achieves that goal. Permitting a use that is related to the highway rather than the neighborhood on a property which has the physical means to maximize that highway connection and thereby minimize impact upon the neighborhood is clearly in the best interest of both.

ADVICE

The Commission finds that the proposed zoning map amendment is consistent with goals and objectives of the Comprehensive Plan of Development and is appropriate given the character of both the surrounding area and the subject property and the need to ensure the continued viability of the existing commercially zoned areas. The Commission further finds the proposed amendment serves a substantial government interest, is in the public interest and promotes the health, safety and general welfare of the community without unreasonable limits on land use and therefore recommends approval.

ADOPTED: February 15, 2012
Edward Mattison
Chair

ATTEST: 
Karyn M. Gilvarg, AIA
Executive Director



City of New Haven, Connecticut
John DeStefano Jr., Mayor



115 Peat Meadow Road

Produced by the
Office of Information Technology
Geographic Data Viewer

- Waterway
- Lake - Pond
- River
- Shoreline
- Stream
- Wetland
- Parcel
- City Boundary Line
- Schools
- Administration
- Food Service
- Private School
- Public School
- Fire Station
- Police Station
- PD Headquarters
- Substation
- Health Centers
- Hospital
- Library

- Railroad
- Railroad Track
- Abandoned Railroad Track
- Airport Runway
- Parcel Line_2005
- Parks
- Park
- Triangle
- Golf Course
- Land Trust Preserves
- Airport boundary
- Shoreline

This map is intended for illustrative and Community-Based Planning processes. Every reasonable effort has been made to assure the accuracy of the map and data provided; nevertheless, some information may not be accurate. The City of New Haven assumes no responsibility arising from the use of this information.

No warranty is made by the City of New Haven as to the accuracy, reliability or completeness of these data for individual or aggregate use with other data. Original data compiled from various sources. Spatial information may not meet national map accuracy standards. This information may be updated without notification.

Scale: 1" = 192 ft

Created: February 10, 2012





City of New Haven, Connecticut
John DeStefano Jr., Mayor



- City Boundary Line
- ▨ Coastal Area Management
- ▨ Local District
- ▨ PDU_poly
- ▨ Zoning
- ▨ Zoning Map Grid

115 Peat Meadow Road Existing Area Zoning

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Office of Information Technology
Geographic Data Viewer

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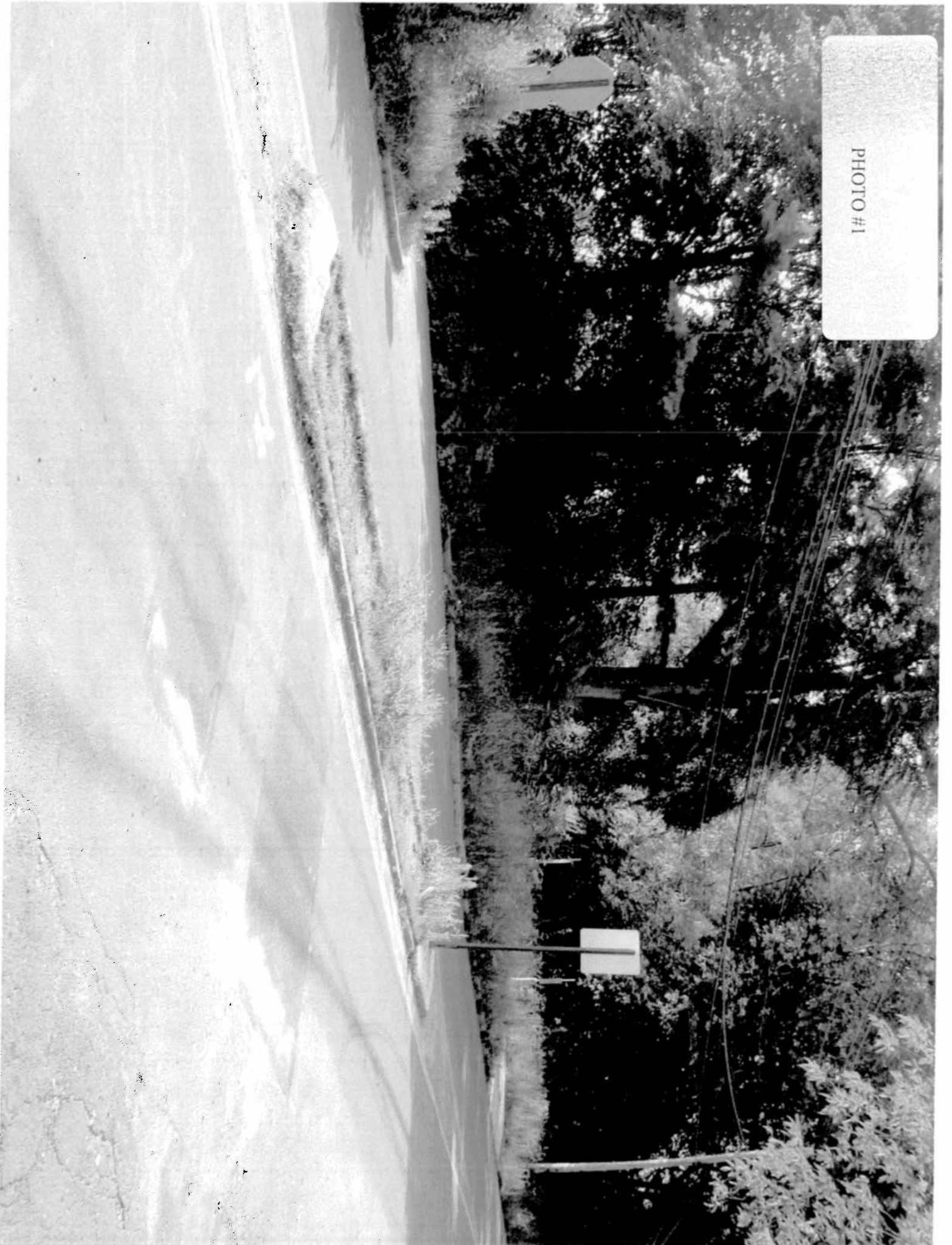
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PHOTO #1



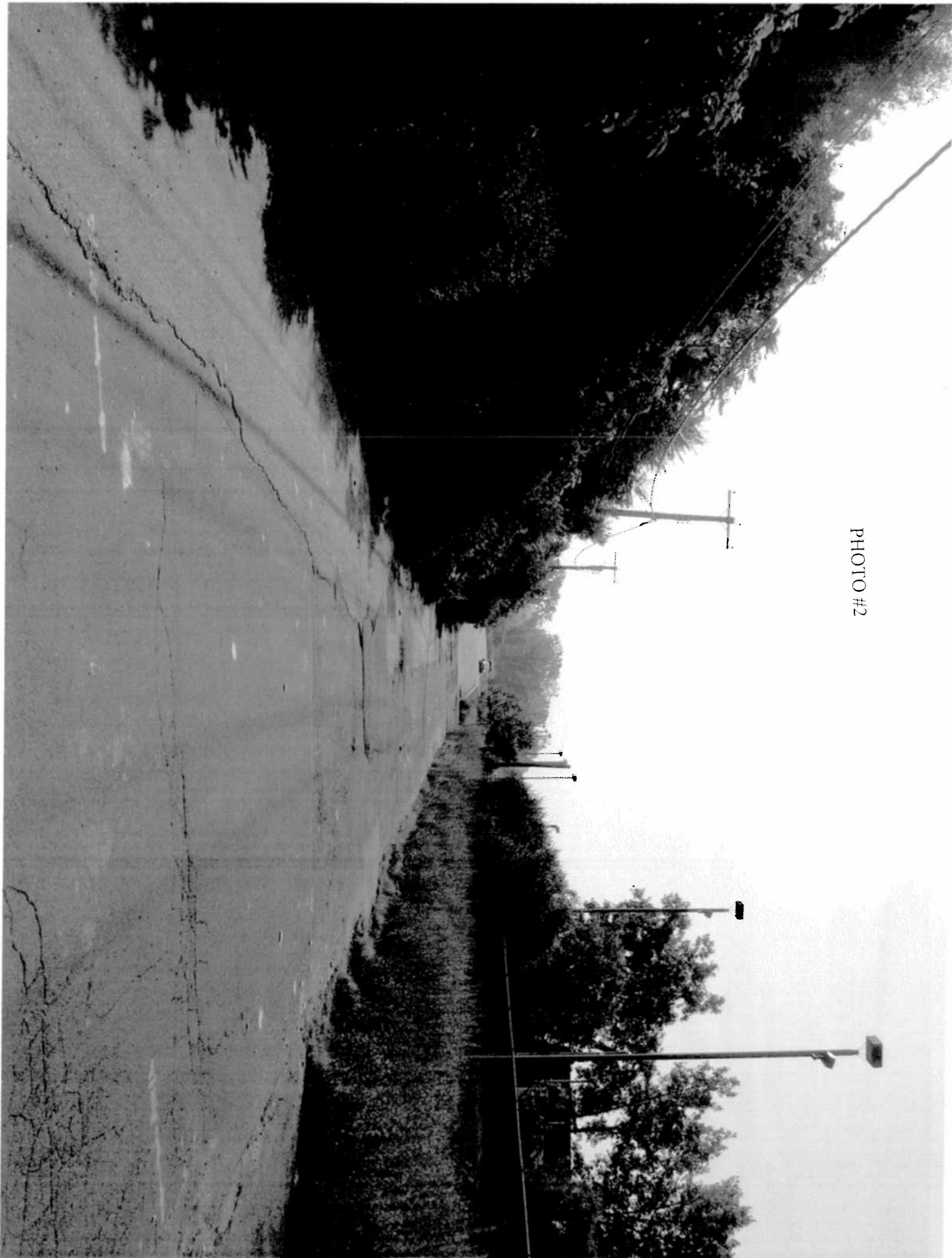
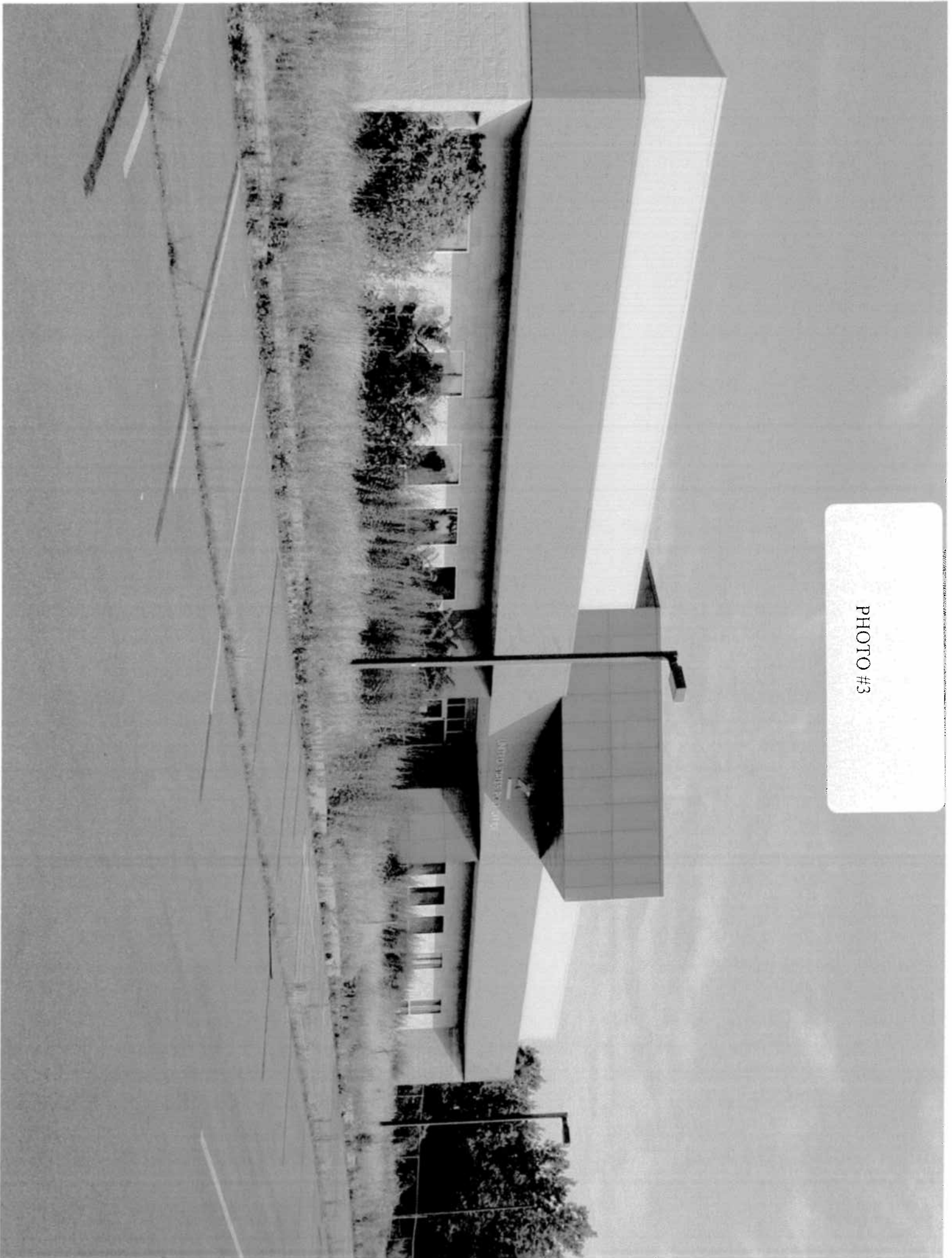


PHOTO #2

PHOTO #3



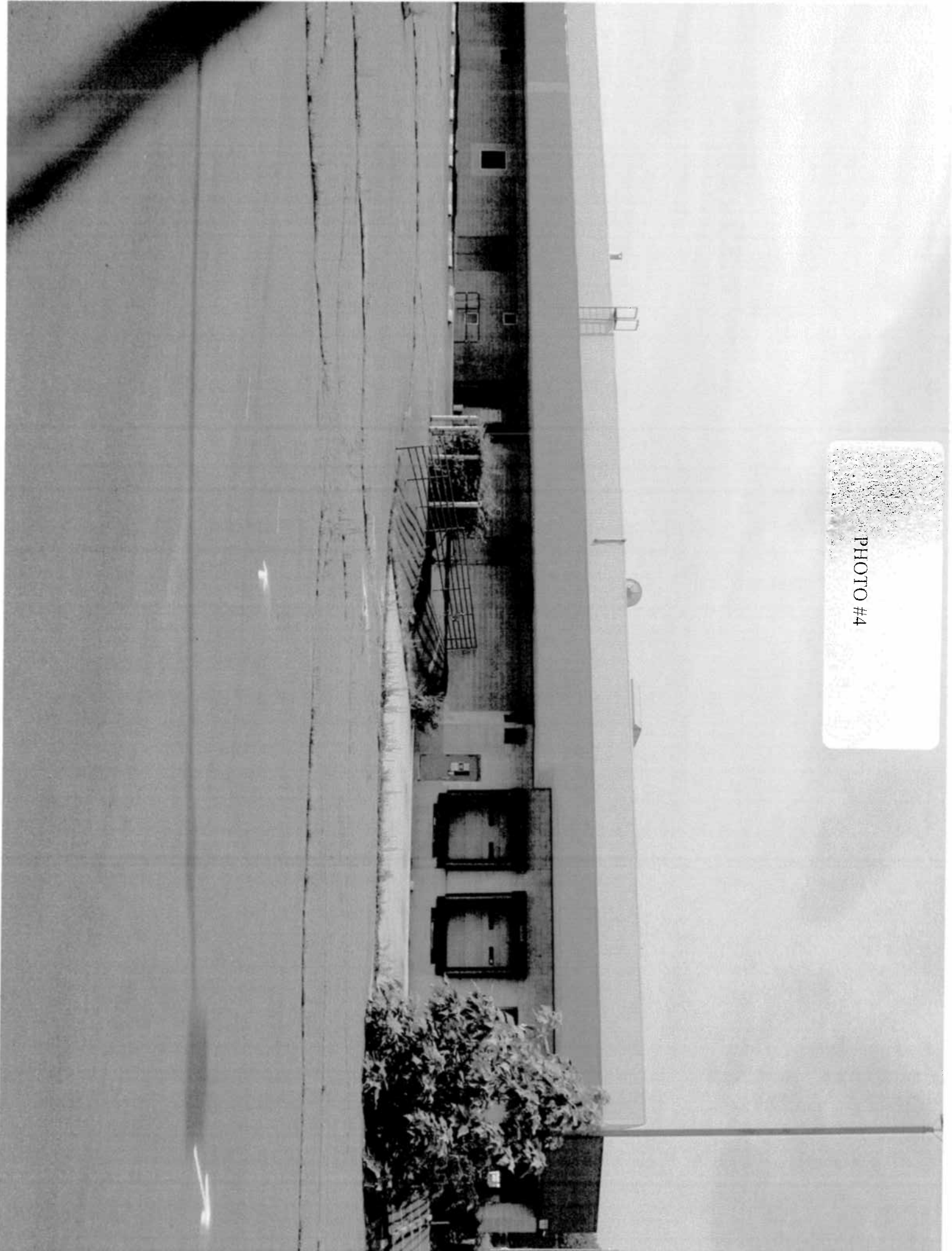


PHOTO #4