Chapter 8: Urban Design and Visual Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on urban design and visual resources. The analysis updates changes in background conditions since the 2001 *FEIS* and assesses whether any changed background conditions or differences in program elements between the proposed development program and those assessed in the 2001 *FEIS* for the project block would result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources that were not addressed in the 2001 *FEIS*.

Under the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is defined as the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. These components include streets, buildings, visual resources, open spaces, natural resources, and wind. An urban design assessment under CEQR must consider whether and how a project may change the experience of a pedestrian in a project area. The 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines recommend the preparation of a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources, followed by a detailed analysis, if warranted based on the conclusions of the preliminary assessment. The analysis provided below addresses urban design characteristics and visual resources for existing conditions, the future without the proposed project, and the probable impacts of the proposed project.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

This analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources that were not addressed in the 2001 *FEIS*. Consistent with the findings in the 2001 *FEIS*, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources.

B. SUMMARY OF 2001 FEIS FINDINGS

The 2001 *FEIS* analyzed potential impacts resulting from the proposed development of the full block bounded by West 57th and 58th Streets and Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues. The 2001 *FEIS* concluded that development of the project block pursuant to either scenario would not result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources. The 2001 *FEIS* concluded that the project would complement development and design trends in the area and build upon the development and design patterns already established to the north and east. The then project's bulk and mass were found to be generally consistent with that of the area's tall apartment buildings and the more fully developed blocks in the surrounding area, including the blocks just east of the project block. As perceived from the east, the project analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*—in conjunction with other proposals for the area—would contribute to the conversion of Eleventh Avenue into a more residential boulevard. The project also would create a pedestrian-oriented environment where one does not currently exist and complement the Manhattan skyline.

The 2001 *FEIS* concluded that the new buildings would change the context of the setting for the Consolidated Edison Power House to the north; however, the plant's stacks would remain taller

than the proposed towers. The study area's strong downward slope from the east toward the river would reduce the apparent height of the project's tower relative to the upland buildings constructed on higher ground. The view corridor down West 57th Street would be protected.

Overall, the 2001 *FEIS* concluded that neither of the development program scenarios would result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Based on the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources is appropriate when there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning. Examples include projects that permit the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements, and projects that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed "as-of-right" or in the future without the proposed project.

The proposed project would involve rezoning a portion of the project block from M1-5 to C6-2, which would allow for an increase in the applicable zoning floor area ratio for this area from 5.0 to 6.02 (or 6.5 with community facility uses) and would provide an adjusted FAR across the entire zoning lot of 8.63 (8.8 with the additional community facility uses). The proposed project would require special permits to allow, in a large-scale development, the location of buildings without regard to height and setback regulations or distribution of bulk. Therefore, as the proposed project would be expected to result in physical alterations beyond that allowed by existing zoning, it would meet the threshold for a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources.

The 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines state that if the preliminary assessment shows that changes to the pedestrian environment are sufficiently significant to require greater explanation and further study, then a detailed analysis is appropriate. Examples include projects that would potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alterations to the streetscape of a neighborhood by noticeably changing the scale of buildings. Detailed analyses also are generally appropriate for areawide rezonings that include an increase in permitted floor area or changes in height and setback requirements, general large-scale developments, or projects that would result in substantial changes to the built environment of a historic district or components of a historic building that contribute to the resource's historic significance. Conditions that merit consideration for further analysis of visual resources include when the project partially or totally blocks a view corridor or a natural or built visual resource and that resource is rare in the area or considered a defining feature of the neighborhood; or when the project changes urban design features so that the context of a natural or built visual resource is altered (i.e., if the project alters the street grid so that the approach to the resource changes; if the project changes the scale of surrounding buildings so that the context changes; or if the project removes lawns or other open areas that serve as a setting for the resource).

The proposed project would involve changes to a general large-scale development and could potentially make noticeable alterations to the streetscape of the surrounding area by noticeably changing the scale of buildings, compared to the future without the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would meet the threshold for a detailed assessment of urban design and visual resources. This analysis is provided below.

D. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

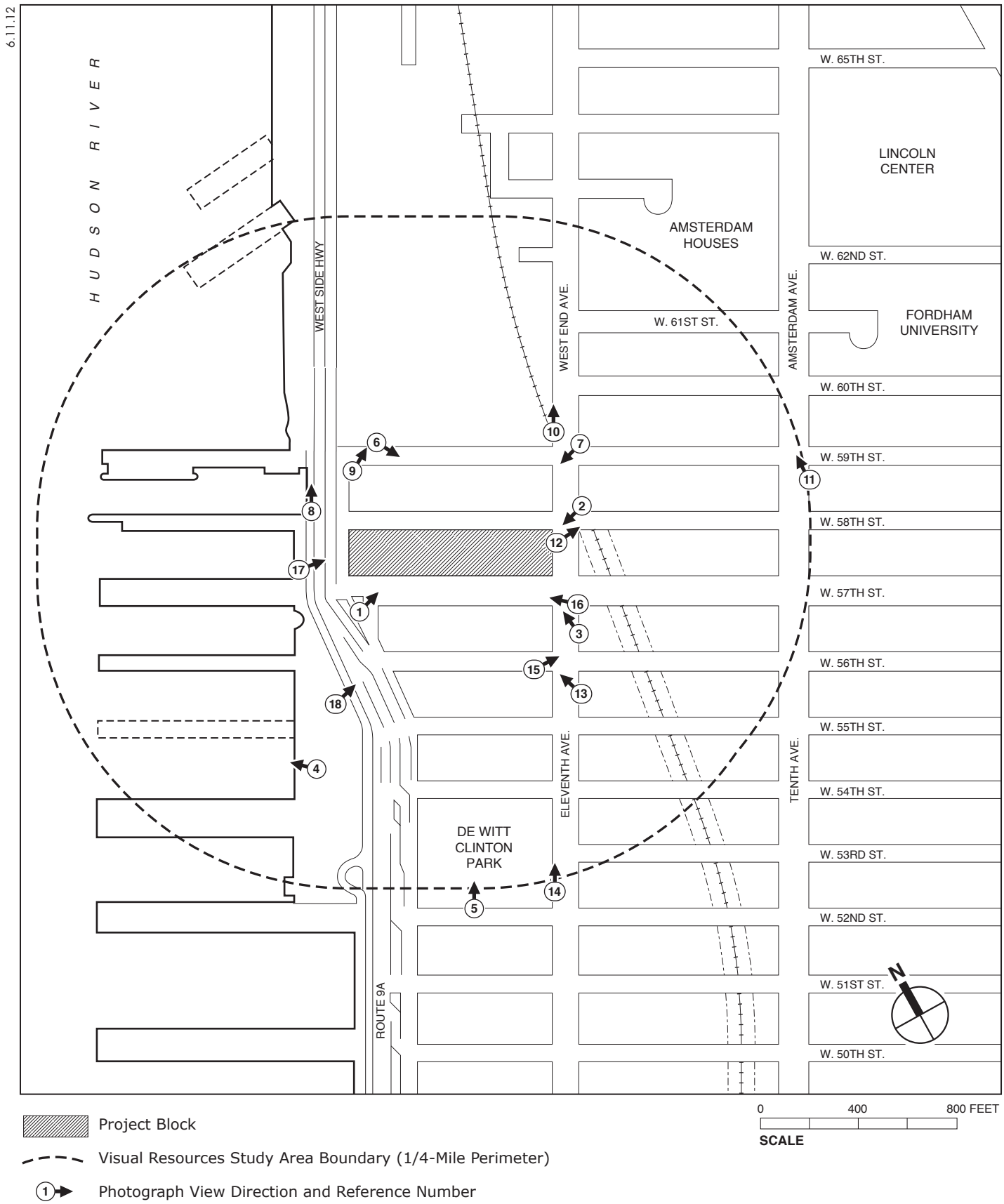
As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the analyses in this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) compare conditions in the future without the proposed project to conditions in the future with the proposed project. The future without the proposed project scenario in all technical areas assumes that none of the discretionary actions now being sought by the applicant are approved. Absent those approvals, it is assumed that development on the projected development sites would be within the envelope of the development analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*, but with a commercial building containing approximately 331,300 gross square feet (gsf) of office use, 67,500 gsf of retail use and 239 public parking spaces on projected development site 1. (Absent the approvals, there would be no change in the assumed development of projected development site 2—the existing mini-storage building would remain.) The assumption regarding projected development site 1 is based on the fact that the applicant has applied for a building permit for such a building (the permitted building). The permitted building can be constructed under the land use approvals granted in 2001 without further discretionary approvals or actions. It would be smaller than that which is permitted under current zoning, and, accordingly, assuming that development on projected development site 1 as a basis for comparing the impacts of the proposed project to the future without the proposed project is more conservative than using the more fully built out development scenario that was analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*.

E. METHODOLOGY

According to the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for urban design is the area where the project may influence land use patterns and the built environment, and is generally consistent with that used for the land use analysis. For visual resources, the view corridors within the study area from which such resources are publicly viewable should be identified. The land use study area may serve as the initial basis for analysis; however, in many cases where significant visual resources exist, it may be appropriate to look beyond the land use study area to encompass views outside of this area, as is often the case with waterfront sites or sites within or near historic districts.

Consistent with the analysis of land use, zoning, and public policy, the study area for the urban design and visual resources analysis has been defined as the area within a ¼-mile of the project site. This study area roughly extends from West 63rd Street to the north, West 52nd Street to the south, Tenth Avenue to the east, and the Hudson River to the west (see **Figure 8-1**). (The study area for urban design and visual resources as analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS* was slightly larger, extending from West 70th Street to the north, Central Park West/Eighth Avenue to the east, West 49th Street to the south, and the Hudson River on the west.)

The 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* recommends an analysis of pedestrian wind conditions for projects that would result in the construction of large buildings at locations that experience high wind conditions (such as along the waterfront, or other location where winds from the waterfront are not attenuated by buildings or natural features), which may result in an exacerbation of wind conditions due to "channelization" or "downwash" effects that may affect pedestrian safety. Factors to be considered in determining whether such a study should be conducted include: locations that could experience high wind conditions, such as along the waterfront; size, and orientation of the proposed buildings; the number of proposed buildings to be constructed; and the site plan and surrounding pedestrian context of the proposed project. As described in greater detail below, projected development site 1 would be developed with a building approximately



Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Area

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-1

470 feet in height (35 occupiable plus 4 mechanical stories) tall, that would approximate a hexahedron shape around an interior courtyard, with the lowest portions along Twelfth Avenue and West 57th Street. The building would slope up toward the northeast, with the tallest point at the northeast corner. For the purposes of presenting a reasonable worst-case analysis, this DSEIS analyzes a building design with a closed condition on the top 77 feet of the building. However, between the DSEIS and the FSEIS, the proposed design may be modified on the top 77 feet of the building to have an open design with structural elements on all sides. The existing mini-storage building on projected development site 2 would be 9 stories tall (approximately 135 feet in elevation), an increase of three stories. Thus, the proposed project includes the construction of just one large building, located near (but not along) the waterfront, and the design of the proposed building minimizes the potential for downwashing of winds, since the façade closest to the Hudson River would be much shorter than the overall height of the proposed building. Therefore, an analysis of wind conditions and their effect on pedestrian level safety is not warranted under CEQR.

F. EXISTING CONDITIONS

URBAN DESIGN

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES

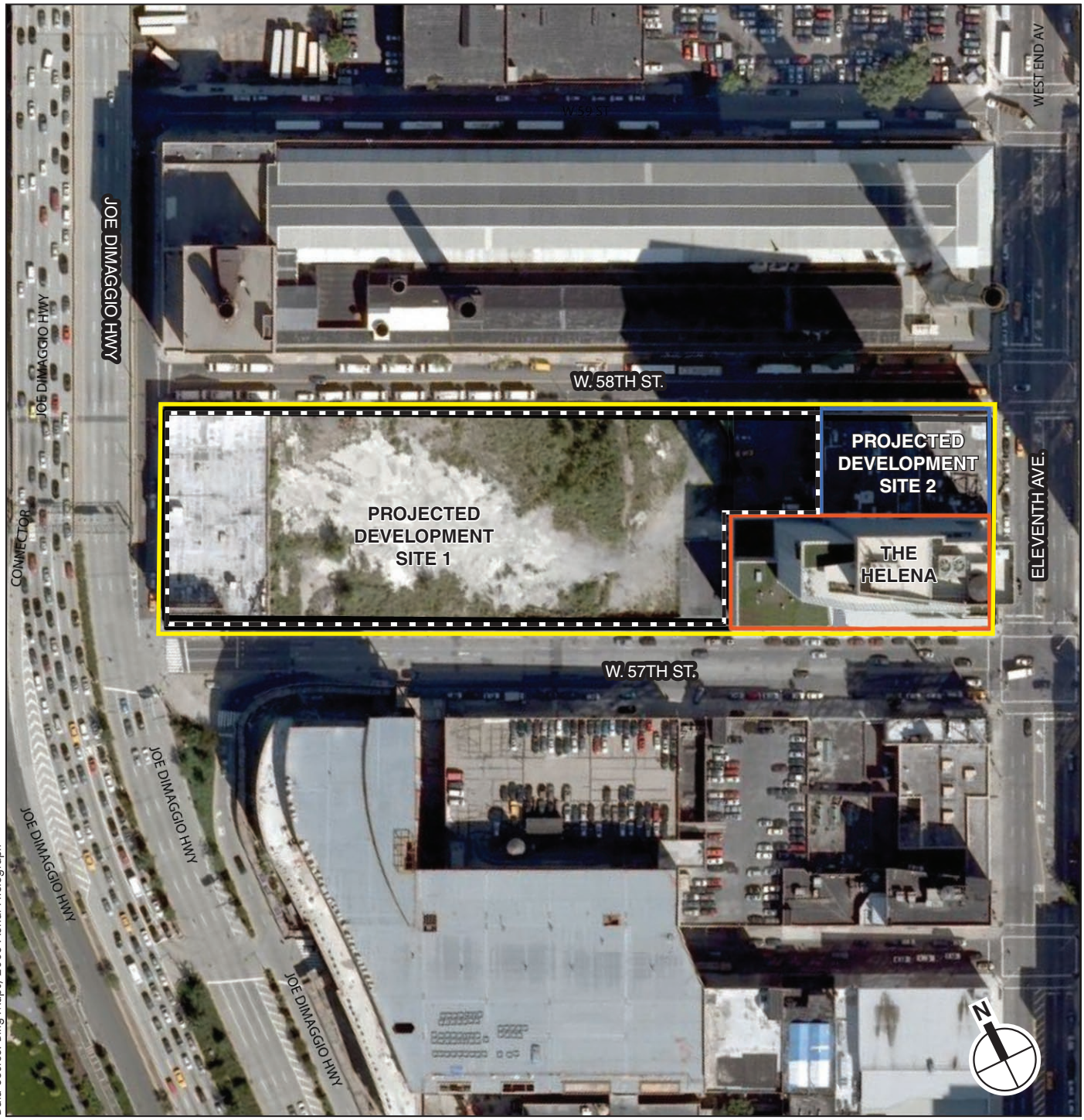
There are two projected development sites, both of which are located on the project block, which is bounded by West 57th and 58th Streets, Route 9A/Twelfth Avenue, and Eleventh Avenue (see **Figure 8-2**). Projected development site 1 has frontages on Route 9A/Twelfth Avenue, West 57th Street, and West 58th Street and occupies the majority of the block. This site is currently vacant and unpaved (see View 1 of **Figure 8-3**). Projected development site 2, which is located at the northeast corner of the project block on West 58th Street and Eleventh Avenue, contains a 6-story, 72-foot-tall concrete and masonry warehouse structure currently used for mini-storage (see View 2 of **Figure 8-3**).

PROJECT BLOCK

In addition to the two projected development sites, the project block includes the Helena, a 38-story, 421-foot-tall apartment building with ground-floor retail. This building, which was constructed subsequent to the 2001 *FEIS*, is located on the southeastern corner of the block, along West 57th Street and Eleventh Avenue. It is faced primarily in glass and has a modern design (see View 3 of **Figure 8-4**). The tower's bulk is oriented in an east-west direction, mirroring the long, narrow orientation of the project block. The total area of the block, which comprises a combined zoning lot, is 160,666 square feet.

STUDY AREA

The street pattern in the study area is the typical Manhattan grid system, with wide avenues running north-south and narrow cross streets running east-west. Several superblocks interrupt this pattern. DeWitt Clinton Park occupies the superblock bounded by West 52nd and 54th Streets, Eleventh Avenue and Route 9A. The superblock bounded by West 59th and 61st Streets, West End Avenue, and Route 9A/Riverside Boulevard is planned for development as part of the Riverside Center project. North of this superblock, portions of the street grid do not extend west from West End Avenue into the Riverside South development. The Amsterdam Houses residential complex (described below) is located on superblock to the east of the Riverside South complex, bounded by West 61st and 64th Streets and Amsterdam and West End Avenues.



Projected Development Site 1 Boundary

Project Block Boundary

0 100 200 FEET

SCALE

Project Block Aerial Photo

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-2



Projected Development Site 1, view northeast from West 57th Street and Twelfth Avenue **1**



Projected Development Site 2, view southwest from West 58th Street and Eleventh Avenue **2**

Photographs of Projected Development Sites

Figure 8-3



The Helena, view northwest
from West 56th Street and Eleventh Avenue **3**



Clinton Cove Park, view west **4**

Photographs of Project Block and Study Area

Figure 8-4

Route 9A (the West Side Highway), which runs roughly parallel to the shoreline of the Hudson River, and the river itself form the study area's western boundary. Route 9A is a highway with a narrow, landscaped median; it is elevated on a viaduct north of West 57th Street. The highway is heavily used and is accessed within the study area from an on-ramp located just below West 58th Street. Twelfth Avenue, in this area a service road for Route 9A, terminates at West 59th Street. North of West 62nd Street, Riverside Boulevard curves along the eastern edge of Riverside Park South. Eleventh/West End Avenue is a major two-way thoroughfare in the study area, and West 57th Street is a wide, commercial cross-town street that extends from the Hudson River to the East River. The remainder of the cross streets in the study area are generally one-way and less traveled.

The topography of the area generally slopes downward from the north and east to the Hudson River and is generally flat south of the project block. In particular, the elevation of West 57th Street goes from 84 feet at Ninth Avenue to 7 feet at Route 9A. The predominant natural feature in the study area is the Hudson River. The river's edge is mostly man-made, and within the study area the bulkhead is granite wall supported by pre-cast concrete blocks and a concrete base below West 58th Street, concrete walls on piles with exposed timber relieving platform above West 58th Street, and rip rap along Riverside Park South. Along the river is the study area's major open space, the Hudson River Park. The Clinton Cove section of Hudson River Park is located between Pier 94 (near West 54th Street) and Pier 97 (near West 57th Street). This area includes an esplanade with benches, lawns, shade trees, and a public boat house at the waterfront (View 4 of **Figure 8-4**). The park also includes a site-specific art installation by artist Malcolm Cochran. The art installation is titled "Private Passage" and is a 30-foot-long wine bottle resting on its side, an interpretation of a stateroom based loosely on photographs of the ocean liner R.M.S. Queen Mary. The lampposts within the park are a unique twin-arm design that appears to be clad in oxidized copper.

Pier 97, currently a New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) facility, is being rebuilt as a public pier. Amenities on Pier 97 will include courts for active recreation, a playground and a lawn. Pier 97 will also be used to berth historic ships. North of Hudson River Park, from West 59th Street to West 72nd Street, is Riverside Park South. This 12.9-acre park contains multi-purpose athletic fields, baseball fields, handball and basketball courts, playground equipment, a 740-foot-long recreational pier (Pier 1), overlook terraces/esplanades/promontories, landscaped areas, and walkways and bikeways. The park was designed to retain the industrial flavor of the railroad yard. Angular paths, intended to evoke railroad tracks, have been created from old concrete railroad platforms; other reused artifacts include ramps, piers, and a gantry. Stretching from Battery Park to West 59th Street between Route 9A and Hudson River Park is the Route 9A Walkway/Bikeway, which provides off-street paved paths for active recreational activities such as running, biking, and rollerblading. The walkway/bikeway continues northward through Riverside Park South.

At the southern end of the study area is DeWitt Clinton Park. DeWitt Clinton Park is set on a raised promontory above Twelfth Avenue. It is bordered by a low metal fence along Eleventh Avenue and a taller chain-link fence along Twelfth Avenue (View 5 of **Figure 8-5**). Within the park are baseball and soccer fields, paved basketball and handball courts, a dog run, perennial gardens, and a playground with a children's spray park that operates in warm weather.

There are also a few privately owned, publicly accessible open spaces in the study area that are associated with large-scale residential and commercial buildings. These areas typically have seating and landscaping, fountains, or sculpture. They include the Concerto, at 59th Street



DeWitt Clinton Park, view north from West 52nd Street **5**



West 59th Street, view east from near Twelfth Avenue **6**

Photographs of Study Area
Figure 8-5

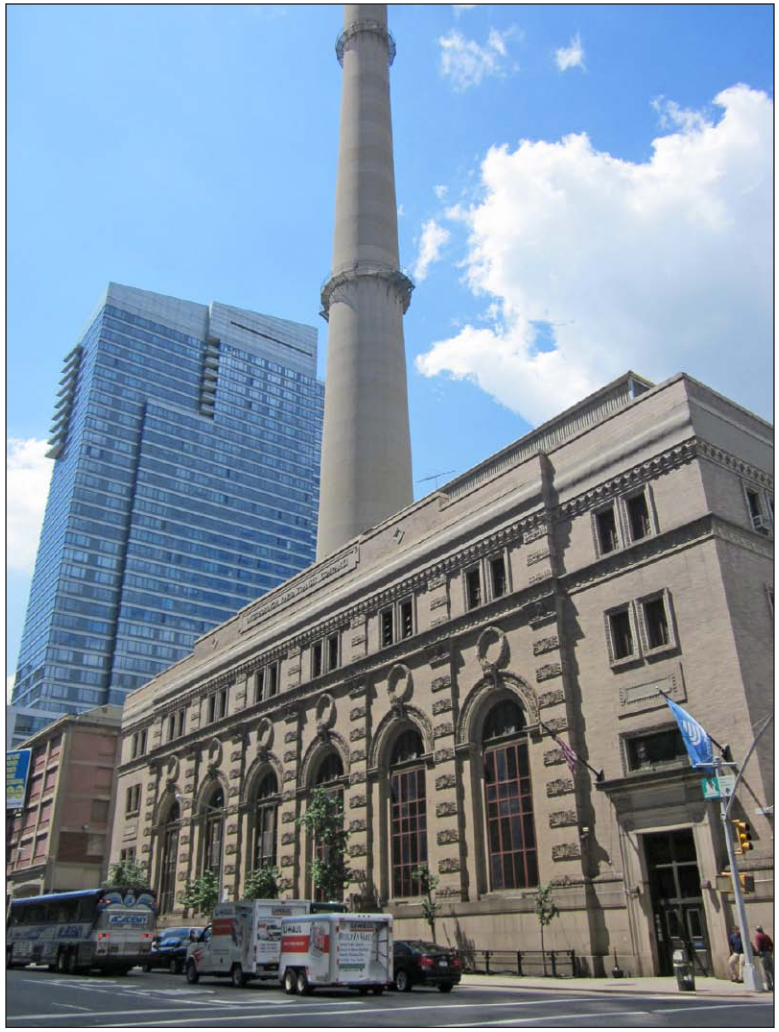
between Amsterdam and West End Avenues; the entrance plaza at St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital; Harborview Terrace plaza, at 530 West 55th Street; the Element Condominiums plaza, on West 60th Street between Amsterdam and West End Avenues; and the Clinton Towers plaza, at 790 Eleventh Avenue. 555 West 57th Street, a through-block office building directly east of the project block, has narrow, rectangular outcroppings of elevated terrace-like plaza, with a few wood benches and planters, flanking the building's West 57th Street and West 58th Street entrances. A newly developed, publicly accessible plaza at Freedom Place South and West 62nd Street is half hard-surfaced plaza, with some planted areas, and half grass, trees and plantings. The Amsterdam Houses complex contains landscaped walkways as well as the Samuel N. Bennerson Playground, which includes play equipment, seating, and basketball courts.

The study area is urban in character, with streets flanked by concrete sidewalks. Parked cars are located on most streets, and buses park on Eleventh/West End Avenue along West 59th Street west of Eleventh Avenue and on the north side of DeWitt Clinton Park (see View 6 of **Figure 8-5**). There are typical street furniture (e.g., bus shelters, newspaper bins) and modern lampposts throughout the study area, and some large signage on the sides of or atop buildings. There is also large directional signage on gantries above Route 9A. There are few street trees in the study area outside of the open spaces described above. The riverfront open spaces are well used by pedestrians, joggers, and walkers; otherwise, most of the study area's pedestrian activity is located along Tenth Avenue rather than the cross-streets and Eleventh Avenue, except near the area's major institutional uses.

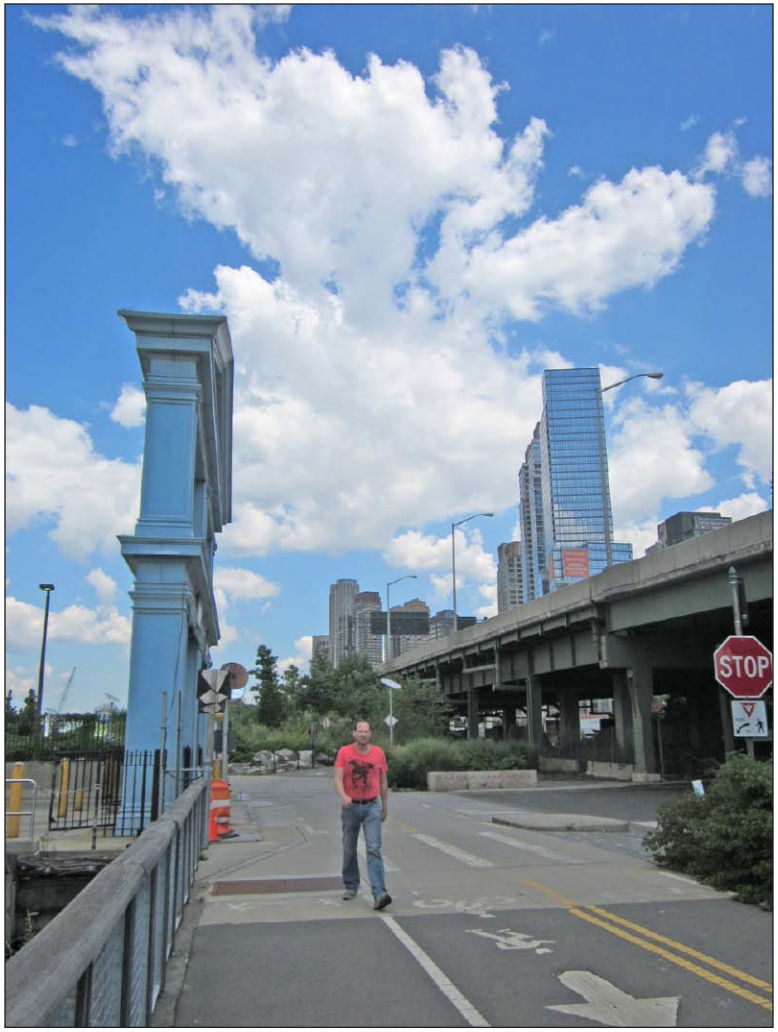
The project's study area is densely developed, particularly to the north and east. It is mostly composed of recently built residential and mixed-use towers, new and older community facility and institutional buildings, and a large industrial building (the Consolidated Edison Power House), although there are also commercial and automotive uses south of West 57th Street. There are also a number of sites within the study area that are currently under construction or awaiting development.

Directly north of the project site is the Consolidated Edison Power House, which comprises the entire block bounded by West 58th and 59th Streets, West End Avenue, and Route 9A. The power house is a six-story, bulky industrial building built in 1904, highly ornamented and constructed of buff-colored brick with terra cotta detail (see View 7 of **Figure 8-6**). The tall smokestack at the West End Avenue side of the building is approximately 500 feet above grade. Consolidated Edison operates a steam power station in this building, which is an architectural resource (see Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources.") West of the power house on the Hudson River is Pier 99, DSNY's West 59th Street Marine Transfer Station (MTS) (see View 8 of **Figure 8-6**). This facility, which is contained within a utilitarian, metal-clad piershed building, is proposed to be converted to accept commercial waste.

North of the power house is the Riverside Center development site. This site currently includes two 2- and 3-story brick buildings that have been connected for their present use as a parking garage. The buildings are built to the lot line and have been heavily altered; many of their windows have been enclosed with brick, cement, or wood. A paved parking lot for the United States Postal Service (USPS), which uses the lot for the storage of postal vehicles, is located in the southwest corner of this site (see View 9 of **Figure 8-7**). An Amtrak rail line is located within a sub-grade culvert at the northeast corner of the site. As noted below in "Future Without the Proposed Project," this site will ultimately contain five buildings 31 to 44 stories in height (393 to 535 feet tall), as well as publicly accessible open space.



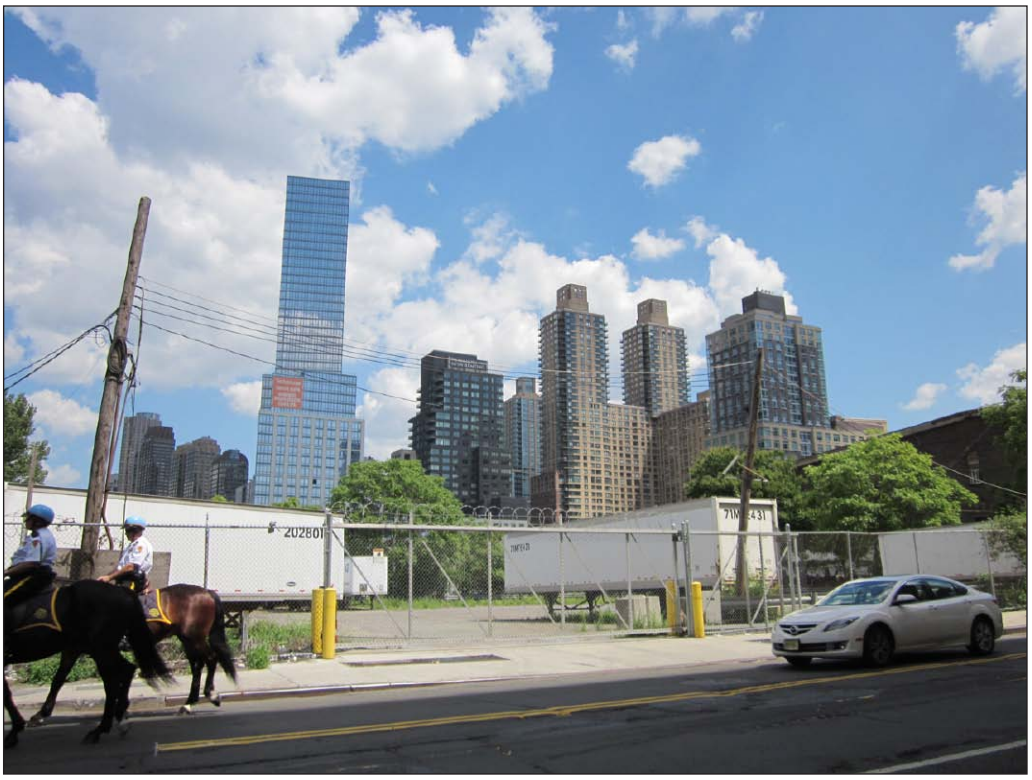
Consolidated Edison Power House, view southwest from West 60th Street **7**



View north along the Route 9A Walkway/Bikeway, including West 59th Street MTS entrance **8**

Photographs of Study Area

Figure 8-6



View northeast from West 59th Street, through Riverside Center site **9**



View north along West End Avenue, from West 60th Street **10**

Photographs of Project Site
Figure 8-7

North of the Riverside Center site is the Riverside South complex. This recently developed area, which extends north to West 72nd Street west of West End Avenue, has been constructed with large-scale residential buildings with accessory retail, office, and parking uses. These new buildings have large footprints and are set back above a wide base with one or more towers. The structures are built to their lot lines, creating strong streetwalls, and are mainly faced in glass, stone, and metal. They include Riverside South's Parcel O, 25-story, 222-foot-tall, masonry-clad residential building at West 61st Street and West End Avenue (see View 10 of **Figure 8-7**). West of Parcel O at West 61st Street, a site is being developed with one 13-story tower and another 33-story tower. To the north of Parcel O are the West End Towers, located at 55 West End Avenue between West 61st and 63rd Streets. This development is built to the lot lines along West End Avenue and West 62nd and 63rd Streets, and includes 16- and 39-story towers (up to 361 feet in height) above a large base. The West End Towers are clad in red and tan brick and have large windows and balconies.

Across West End Avenue on the superblock described above are the Amsterdam Houses, a series of 10 six-story "T" and "H" plan residential buildings and three 13-story (116-foot-tall) cruciform brick residential towers. The Amsterdam Houses are set back from the street on landscaped grounds, and are oriented to face inward, away from the surrounding streets. The portion of the complex along West End Avenue includes several six-story structures, and is slightly above grade and separated from the sidewalk by a red brick retaining wall with chain-link fencing above. There is no access to the complex from West End Avenue.

Along West End Avenue between West 60th and West 61st Streets, is a modern six-story building with a brick, metal, and glass façade that contains the Abraham Joshua Heschel High School. The Heschel School is currently expanding into an adjacent site at the corner of West 61st Street (see View 10 of **Figure 8-7**, above). Further south on West End Avenue, between West 59th and 60th Streets, is 10 West End Avenue, a new 31-story (400-foot-tall) residential tower with ground-floor retail. The building is built to the lot line along West End Avenue and is clad in glass and brick. The blocks between West 58th and 61st Streets and West End and Amsterdam Avenues have several large-scale sites that are currently under construction or recently completed for institutional, residential, and other mixed-use buildings. Among these developments are the expansion of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and the Adagio 60/Sessanta project at 243 West 60th Street. Residential uses in these blocks are modern and high-density and include the 35-story (335-foot-tall) Concerto, the 33-story (380-foot-tall) Element Condominiums at 555 West 59th Street, and the 33-story (307-foot-tall) Roosevelt Hospital staff residence on the eastern side of the block between West 59th and 60th Streets. The 59th Street Recreation Center, a public recreation center, is located in the midblock between West 59th and 60th Streets. It is a two-story, through-block brick structure with an entrance portico and stone ornamentation.

John Jay College occupies the full block between West 58th and 59th Streets and West End and Amsterdam Avenues. The college's existing building on Amsterdam Avenue between West 58th and 59th Streets is a historic, red brick U-shaped building with Flemish gables (see View 11 of **Figure 8-8**). As noted above, the college is currently developing the remainder of this block with a 13-story (239-foot-tall) modern glass and metal-clad facility (see View 12 of **Figure 8-8**). St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital is located opposite John Jay College, in a 13-story, red brick-clad modern building on the west side of Tenth Avenue between West 58th and 59th Streets.

On the blocks directly south of the project site, DSNY has recently constructed a new building containing garage and accessory office space. The 117-foot tall structure is clad in masonry and



View northwest from West 59th Street and Tenth Avenue **11**



View east from West 59th Street and Eleventh Avenue **12**

Photographs of Study Area

Figure 8-8

glass and spans the space above West 56th Street, extending from West 55th Street to West 57th Street and fronting on Twelfth Avenue/the Route 9A service road (see View 13 of **Figure 8-9**). These blocks also contain automotive dealerships and service facilities, a public parking facility, and various other small commercial uses in small-scale, utilitarian brick and concrete structures that fully occupy their lots. Directly east of the project block is 555 West 57th Street, a 20-story (298-foot-tall) dark glass and metal-clad building containing a BMC dealership and offices. This building occupies the full blockfront between West 57th and 58th Streets, is set back from the lot line, and has a glass-enclosed car showroom at the corner of West 57th Street.

South of West 57th Street, buildings in the study area are generally older, less tall, and contain more commercial uses. Currently, the tallest building in this portion of the area is the 400-foot-tall telephone switching equipment building on Tenth Avenue between West 52nd and 53rd Streets; there are also a few residential towers in this area, including the 39-story (346-foot-tall) Clinton Towers development at the northeast corner of West 54th Street and Eleventh Avenue. This older, L-shaped residential tower is clad in brick (see View 14 of **Figure 8-9**). South of West 57th Street on Eleventh Avenue, there are several auto dealerships south to West 54th Street, mostly contained within shorter, utilitarian structures built to the lot line. A CBS television studio occupies a series of 2- to 6-story red brick buildings on the block bounded by West 56th and 57th Streets and Tenth and Eleventh Avenues (see View 15 of **Figure 8-10**).

South of the television studio, the interior block portions between West 54th and 56th Streets and Tenth and Eleventh Avenues are occupied by the Harborview Terrace public housing complex, two buildings 14 and 15 stories in height. These buildings are oriented north-south, unusual for their mid-block site. Fronting on Tenth Avenue between West 55th and 56th Streets is the Westport, a modern 24-story (243-foot-tall) red brick condominium tower. Within these two blocks there are also plaza, playground and surface parking areas, tenements, and smaller apartment buildings. To the south, on the block bounded by West 53rd and 54th Streets, a mixed-use development is under construction at 770 Eleventh Avenue that will occupy more than half of the block. Directly west of this development site, on the block directly north of DeWitt Clinton Park, is a series of concrete loft and warehouse buildings, each of which fully occupies its site (see View 5 of **Figure 8-5**, above).

On the Hudson River at the southern edge of the study area are Piers 92 and 94, between West 52nd and West 55th Streets. A portion of Pier 92 and all of Pier 94 are currently used for consumer and trade show events. The remainder of Pier 92 is used for the embarking and debarking of cruise ship passengers. These uses are occupied within two-story, 45-foot-tall structures. Pier 94 also has a head house that is identifiable by its shallow, multi-gabled roof. A bi-level ramp providing access to Piers 88, 90, and 92 begins to rise from grade in front of Pier 94.

Within the study area, building footprint sizes vary widely. Some buildings—including the new John Jay College expansion building, and the Consolidated Edison Power House—occupy most of entire city blocks, while other, mostly older and utilitarian structures are no more than 25 feet wide. Footprint shapes are mostly rectangular but also include square, T-shaped, H-shaped (at the Amsterdam Houses), and L-shaped (the Clinton Towers); in the future, the study area will also include the more dynamically shaped structures on the Riverside Center site. Late 19th- and early 20th-century buildings are typically clad in brick, concrete, or cast stone, with more contemporary structures designed with steel and glass curtain walls. Some of the newer apartment buildings in the area are clad in brick with punched windows; some of these buildings also have projecting balconies. Many buildings in the study area cover their entire lot; however, some—as discussed above—are set back behind plazas or within a landscaped setting.



View northwest from West 56th Street and Eleventh Avenue **13**



View north from West 52nd Street and Eleventh Avenue **14**

Photographs of Study Area
Figure 8-9

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual resources are an area's unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. These can include historic structures, parks, natural features (such as rivers), or important views.

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES / PROJECT BLOCK

There are no visual resources on the projected development sites or the remainder of the project block. From the sidewalks adjacent to the project block, the Consolidated Edison Power House can be seen, particularly the south side of the building. At these close locations the scale and prominence of the building's significant bulk and smokestack are not as identifiable as elsewhere in the study area. Views west along West 57th and 58th Streets and the western edge of the block include Hudson River Park and Riverside Park South, the river itself, and New Jersey in the distance. Views east along West 57th and 58th Streets, and north and south along Eleventh Avenue, continue for long distances but do not contain any notable features.

STUDY AREA

Within the study area, Riverside Park South, Hudson River Park, and the elevated portions of Route 9A and Riverside Boulevard provide expansive views of the Hudson River and the New Jersey Palisades. Because it is a wide street, West 57th Street also provides a view corridor looking west to the Hudson River and New Jersey beyond (see View 16 of **Figure 8-10**). This view is enhanced by the rise in elevation going eastward, particularly in the blocks between Eleventh and Ninth Avenues. Some of the narrower cross streets also provide views west to the river and New Jersey; however, views west on West 56th Street are blocked by the new Department of Sanitation facility, which extends over this street at Twelfth Avenue/Route 9A, and views west along West 59th Street end with the MTS facility on the waterfront. Views west near DeWitt Clinton Park include the piershed buildings and transportation viaducts on Piers 92 and 94. Views west on West 60th and 61st Streets are largely blocked by parking uses and vegetation on the Riverside Center site as well as the Route 9A viaduct beyond. Further north in the study area, the Route 9A viaduct and changes in topography limit westward views to the New Jersey Palisades; the Hudson River generally cannot be seen in this area except from Riverside Boulevard and west. Views east on West 62nd Street from West End Avenue and on Route 9A from West 53rd Street are blocked by the superblocks containing the Amsterdam Houses and DeWitt Clinton Park, respectively.

The Consolidated Edison Power House and its tall brick smokestack are visible throughout much the study area, particularly from Riverside Park South and Hudson River Park, the elevated portion of Route 9A north of the project block, and along Eleventh/West End Avenue (see View 17 of **Figure 8-11**). The smokestack also can be seen from Amsterdam Avenue between West 60th and 61st Streets through the playground of P.S. 191. From certain vantage points in these areas, the full bulk of this massive building is visible due to the lack of development on the site north of the Power House and on projected development site 1. Views of the power house from the cross-streets and the more northerly and southerly portions of the study area, however, are blocked by intervening tall buildings and changes in topography. Views north and south along Eleventh/West End Avenue are long and include modern high-rise buildings; however, other than the power house, these views do not contain any notable features. Views north and south along Tenth/Amsterdam Avenue and views east on the east-west streets similarly continue for long distances. Although these views take in the multitude of buildings that line the streets and portions of the Manhattan skyline, they do not contain any notable features. Although the

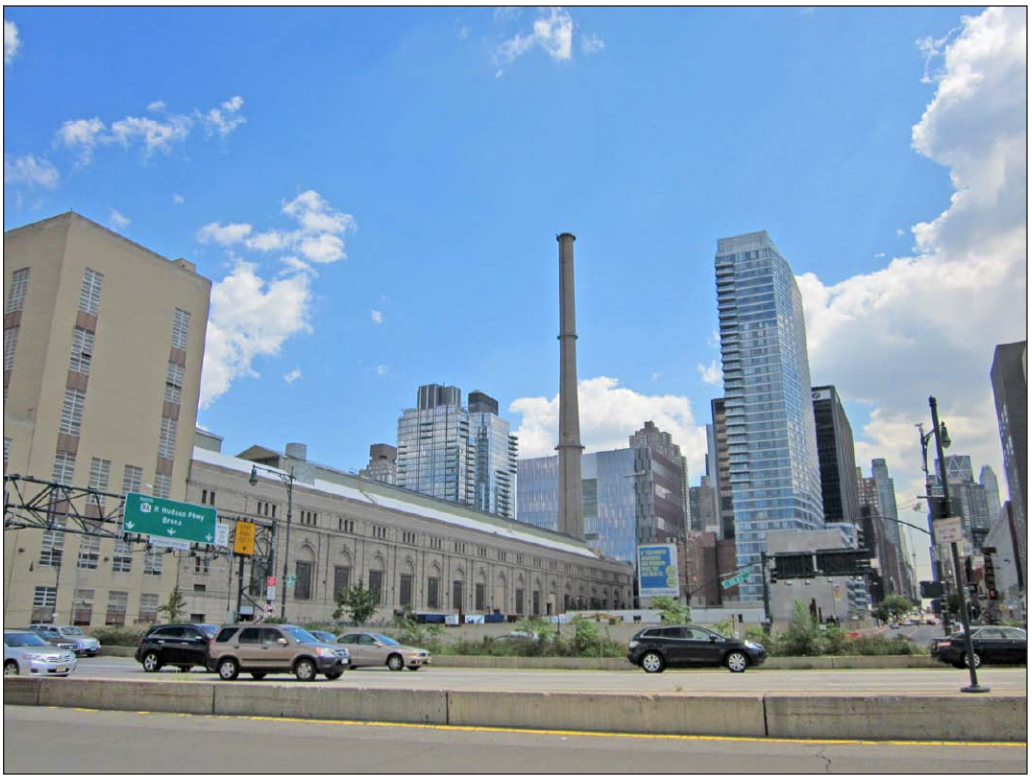


View east from West 56th Street and Eleventh Avenue **15**



View west from West 57th Street and Eleventh Avenue **16**

Photographs of Study Area
Figure 8-10



View east from West 57th Street and Route 9A **17**



View northeast from Clinton Cove Park **18**

Photographs of Study Area
Figure 8-11

modern buildings in the study area are not considered to be visual resources, they do contribute to its visual character.

Route 9A and the more easterly portions of Hudson River Park provide views to the project site, which can also be seen from Eleventh Avenue and nearby cross streets (see View 18 of **Figure 8-11**).

G. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES

Absent the proposed project, it is assumed that projected development site 1 will be developed with the permitted building. This development, on the mid and western portions of the block, conforms to the existing zoning and approvals for the project block. The permitted building would be five stories (95 feet) tall with office and retail uses (see **Figure 8-12**). The mini-storage facility on projected development site 2 would remain in its current form and use. Therefore, in the future without the proposed project, a smaller office and retail building than permitted under the 2001 approvals and analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS* would be constructed.

STUDY AREA

There are several projects within the study area that are expected to be completed by 2015. These include Pier 97 along the Hudson River waterfront, which as described above is being redeveloped with open space uses, and the use conversion of the West 59th Street MTS. John Jay College of Criminal Justice will complete its building expansion on the block bounded by West 58th and 59th Streets and Amsterdam and West End Avenues, and the Heschel School will complete its expansion at the southeast corner of West 61st Street and West End Avenue. North of the project block, development of the Riverside Center complex will continue, with two of the five buildings expected by 2015. These buildings will host residential, public school, hotel, and retail uses. Continued Riverside South development will occur north of this complex, just outside of the study area's boundaries. At the southern end of the study area, newly renovated exhibition space and a waterfront esplanade will be constructed on Piers 92 and 94; a new building with affordable housing will be developed at 530-548 West 53rd Street, between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues; and the Harborview Terrace project will be expanded with two new 15-story buildings. At 770 Eleventh Avenue, opposite DeWitt Clinton Park, the Clinton Park complex will be developed with residential, food market, retail, auto sale/repair, health club, parking, and NYPD mounted police uses.

These projects maintain the study area's existing trend toward the enhancement of open space options and development of high-rise buildings with a mixture of uses, and will continue to change the visual character of the study area.

H. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

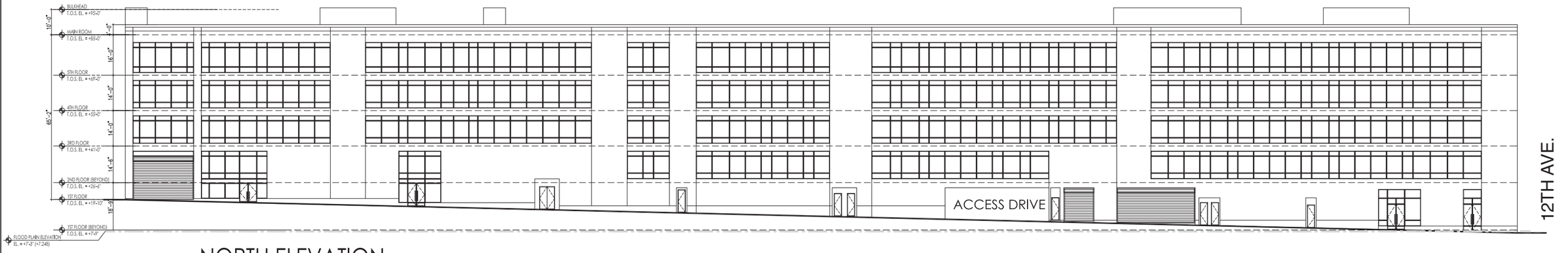
URBAN DESIGN

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES

The proposed project would result in a building on projected development site 1 of greater height and density than the permitted building. Specifically, the new mixed-use building on projected development site 1 would be approximately 470 feet tall, with 35 occupiable plus 2 mechanical floors (see **Figures 8-13** through **8-16**). This site also would be developed with a midblock, approximately 13,000 gsf, 1- to 2-story community facility building. Therefore, the buildings on this site would be approximately 375 feet taller (470 feet versus 95 feet) in comparison to the permitted building. Because of its hexahedral massing, the proposed mixed-

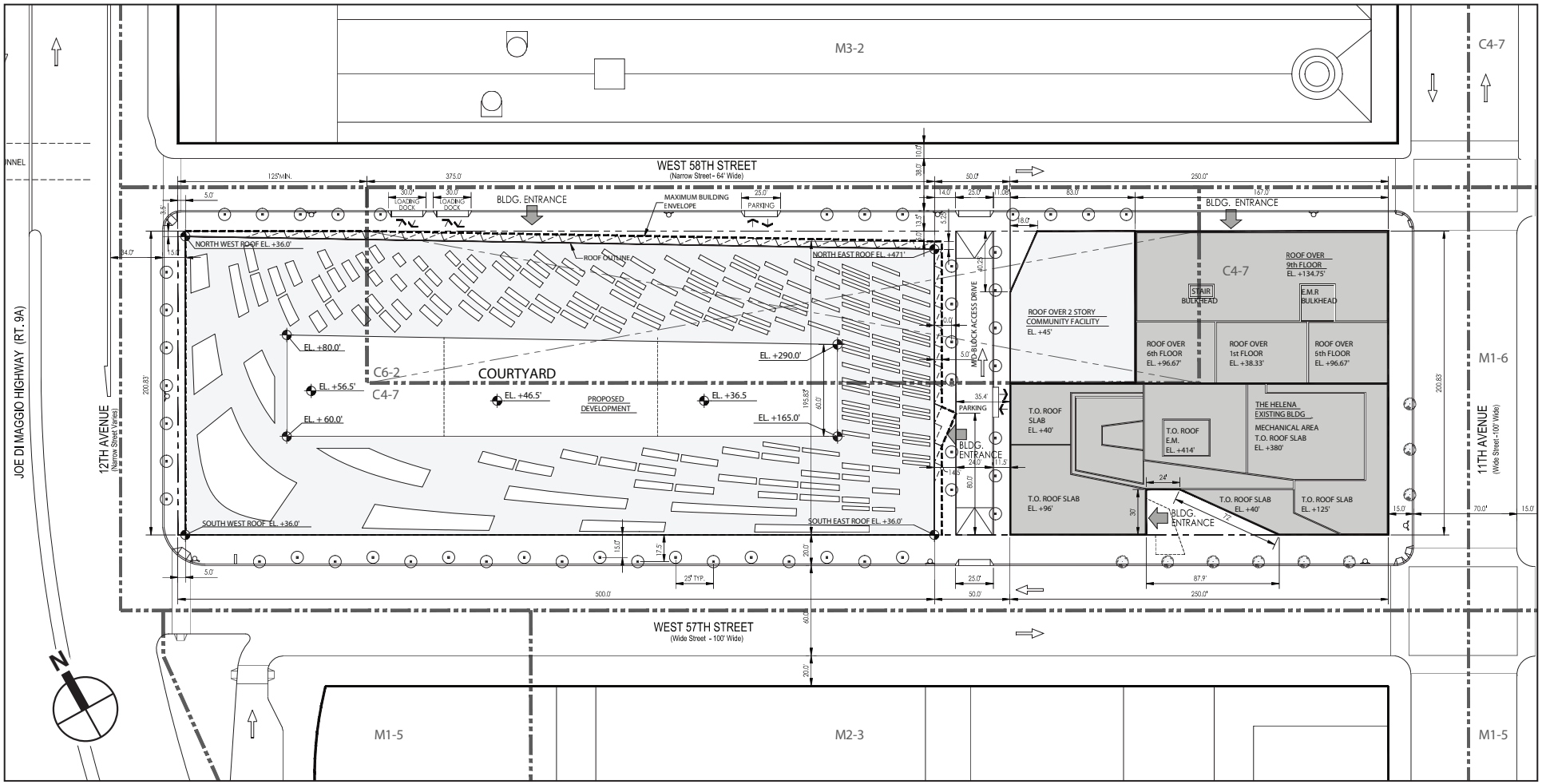


SOUTH ELEVATION



NORTH ELEVATION

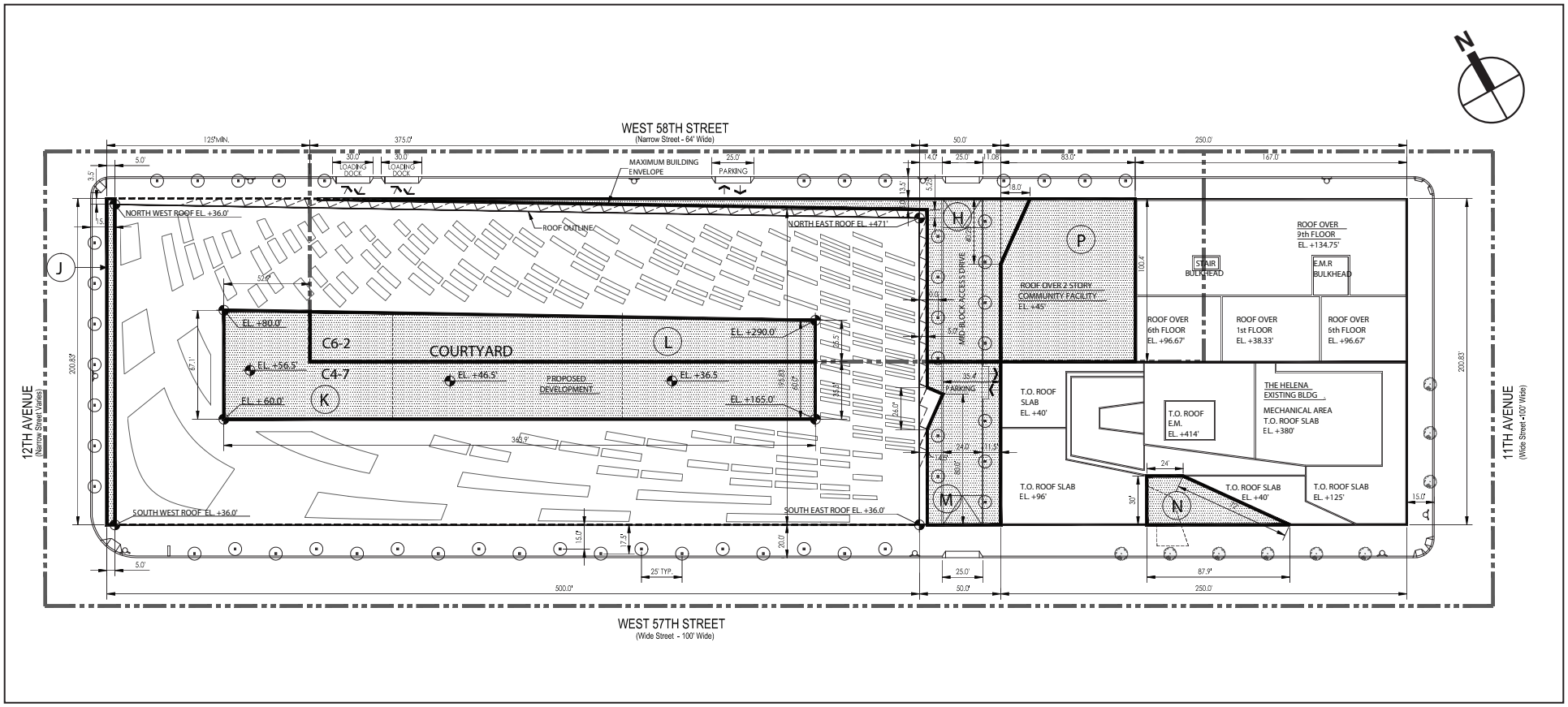
Permitted Building Scenario Elevation
Figure 8-12



- Existing Trees to Remain
- New Trees
- New Proposed Curb Cut
- Existing Hydrant
- Zoning District Boundary
- Maximum Building Envelope
- EL. — Illustrative Building Elevation & Height
- New Building
- Existing Building
- Residential Entrance (Illustrative Subject to Change)

Proposed Site Plan

Figure 8-13



Existing Trees to Remain

New Trees

New Proposed Curb Cut

Existing Hydrant

Zoning District Boundary

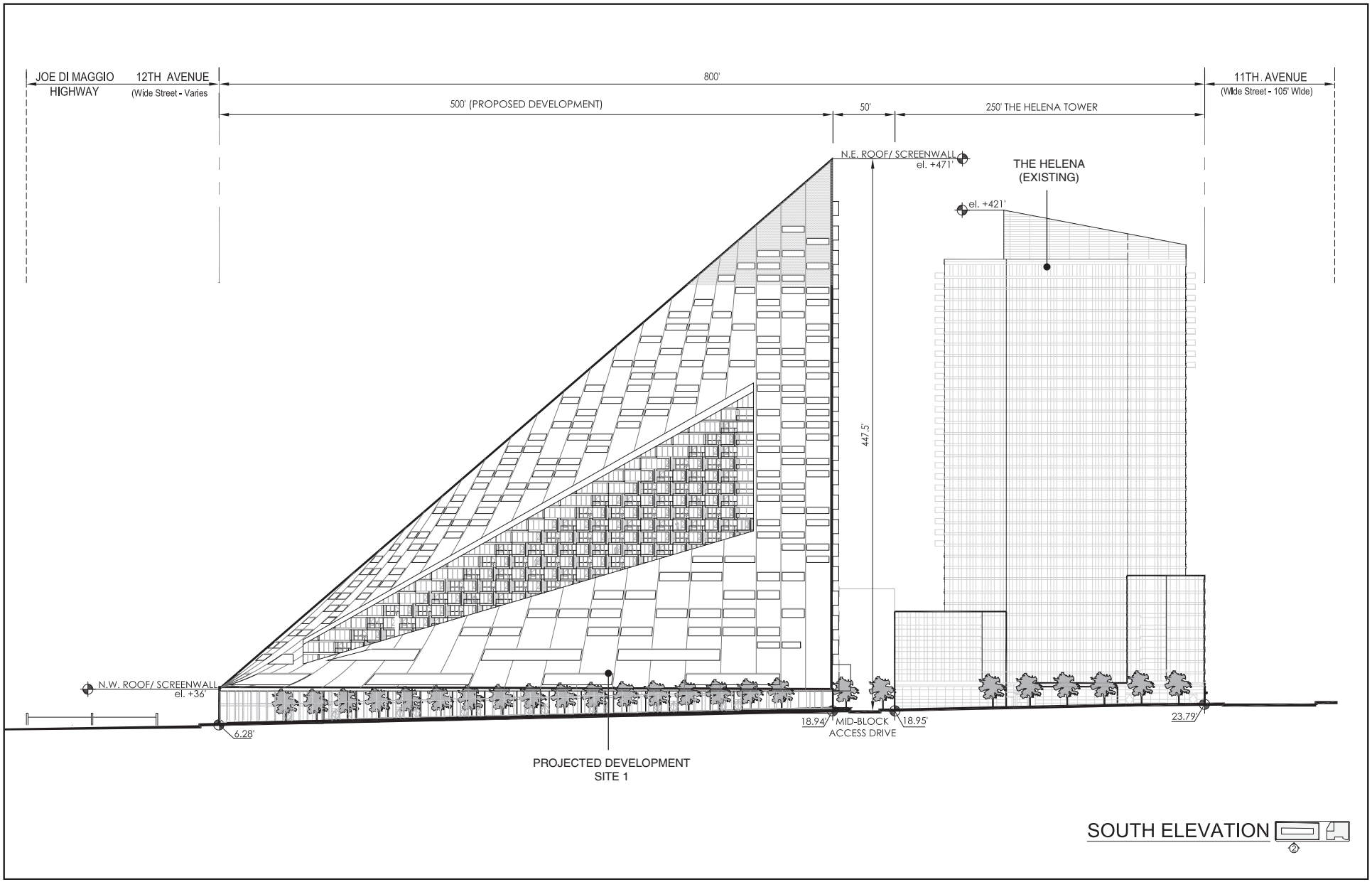
Maximum Building Envelope

EL. Illustrative Building Elevation & Height

Open Space Provided
(23-142, 24-163, 35-34)

Proposed Open Space Plan

Figure 8-14

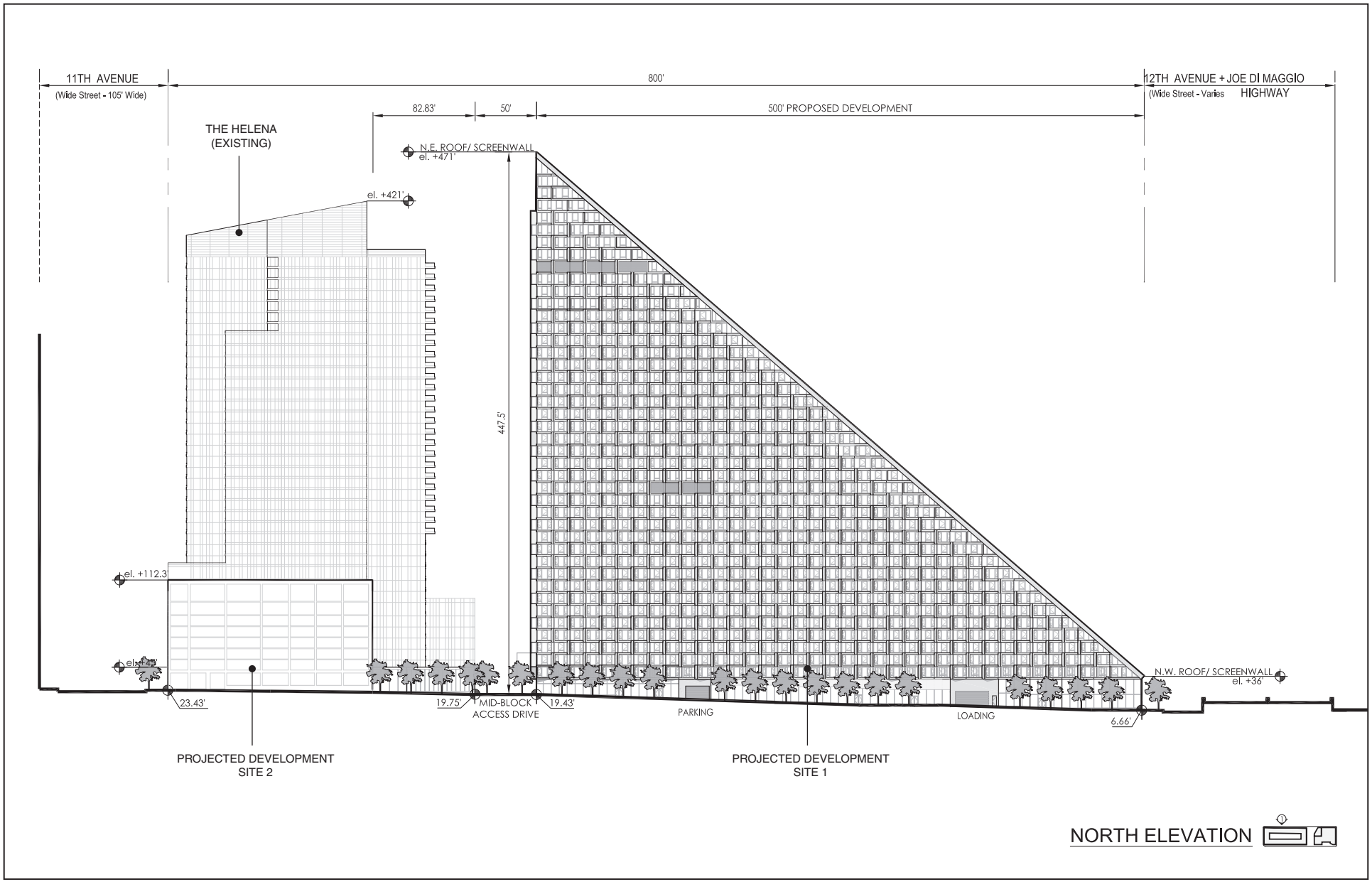


FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES

Project Development Site 1
South Elevation

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-15



FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES

Projected Development Site 1
North Elevation

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-16

use building does not have an "average" floorplate size, and thus a comparison to the average floorplate size for the permitted building cannot be made. The proposed mixed-use building would be occupied with residential, commercial office, retail, community facility, and parking uses, in comparison to future without the proposed project, where the permitted building would be occupied only with commercial office, retail, and parking uses (see **Figure 8-17**). As described in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the proposed project would require a rezoning of a portion of the project block and other special permits to allow for the development of these proposed uses and floor area.

With the proposed project, the existing building on projected development site 2 is assumed to be converted from mini-storage use to residential with ground-floor retail. Three floors would be added to this building and a core would be created, changing the gross square footage from approximately 98,414 gsf to approximately 110,000 gsf, and its height from the current elevation of 100 feet to approximately 135 feet, an increase of approximately 35 feet (see **Figures 8-18** and **8-19**).

The mixed-use building would approximate a hexahedron shape around an interior courtyard, with the lowest portions along Route 9A/Twelfth Avenue and West 57th Street. The building would slope up toward the northeast, with the tallest point at the northeast corner, near Eleventh Avenue. In both the future without the proposed project and the future with the proposed project, development on the middle and western portions of the block would fully occupy the project site, with the exception of an access drive which would be provided through the mid-block for access to the block's parking garages (see **Figure 8-20**). With the proposed project the access drive would be further east in the mid-block, compared to further west with the permitted building. The proposed project, as with the permitted building and the development anticipated in the 2001 *FEIS*, would change projected development site 1 from its current vacant status, enlivening the site with new buildings and users. The proposed project also would provide private, outdoor open space for residents on an elevated level of the mixed-use building, which would not be part of the development in the future without the proposed project.

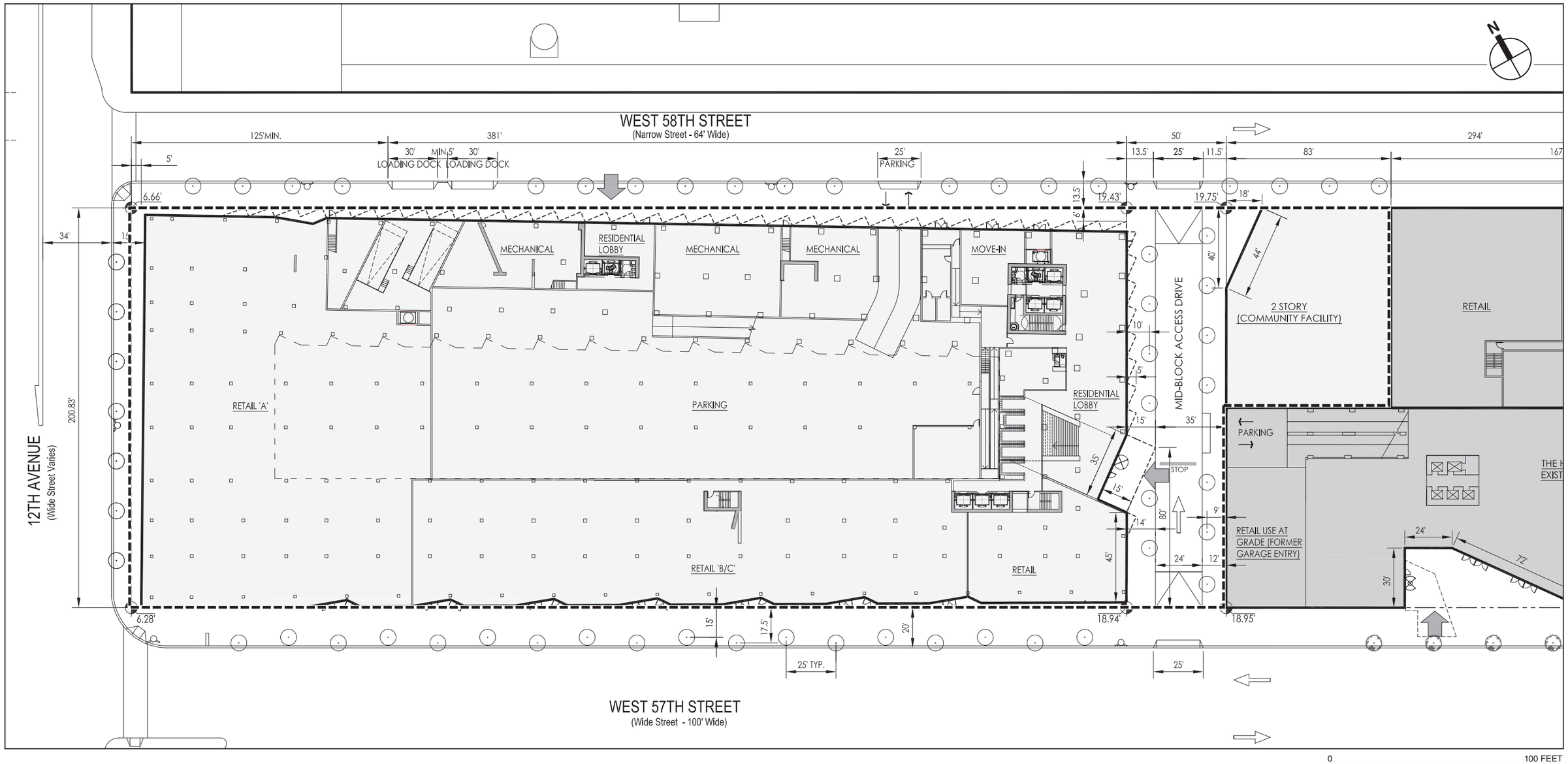
The proposed mixed-use building would have a long, narrow strip of tower encroachment along its West 58th Street façade (see **Figure 8-21**); in comparison, the permitted building in the future without the proposed project would not require any special permits for tower encroachment. The proposed mixed-use building would occupy no more than 40 percent of the zoning lot within the tower envelope. As the design of the building, including façade treatment, is finalized, the feasibility of incorporating bird strike avoidance measures will be evaluated.

PROJECT BLOCK

With the proposed project, the total development on the project block would be approximately 1,571,000 gsf. In comparison, in the future without the proposed project, the project block's total development would be approximately 1,185,000 gsf.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the project block's existing Restrictive Declaration provides that the projected development sites shall be developed in substantial conformity with the plans approved in connection with the 2001 large-scale permits as modified in 2004. As mentioned above, those plans include, among other things, maximum envelopes for buildings, setback requirements from each of the streets, and other bulk limitations. Therefore, modification of the Restrictive Declaration is necessary for the proposed massing of the new buildings on the project site.

6.12.12



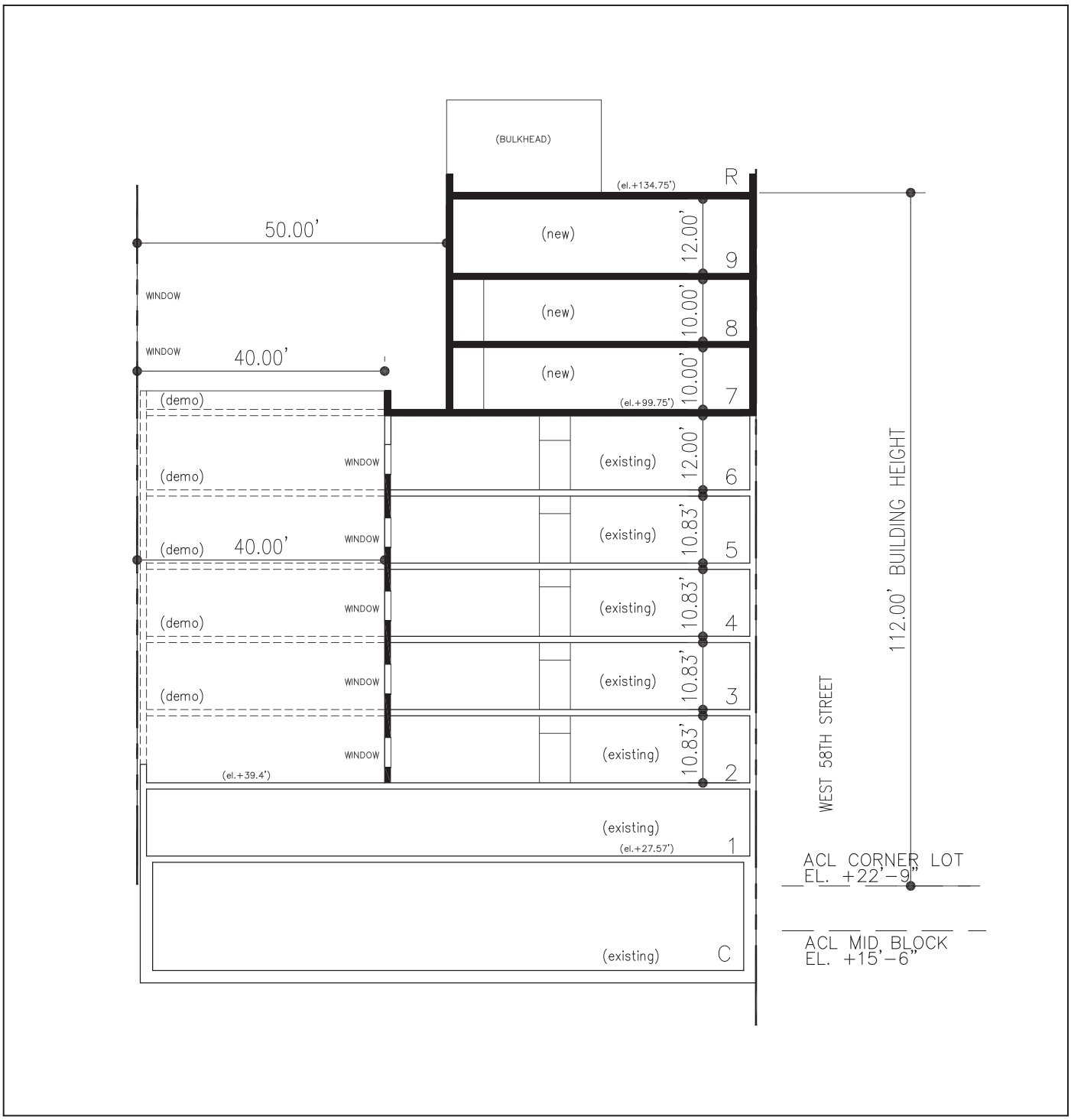
Projected Development Site 1 Boundary

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Projected Development Site 1-Ground Floor Plan

Figure 8-17

6.11.12



Projected Development Site 2 - Building Section

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-18

6.11.12

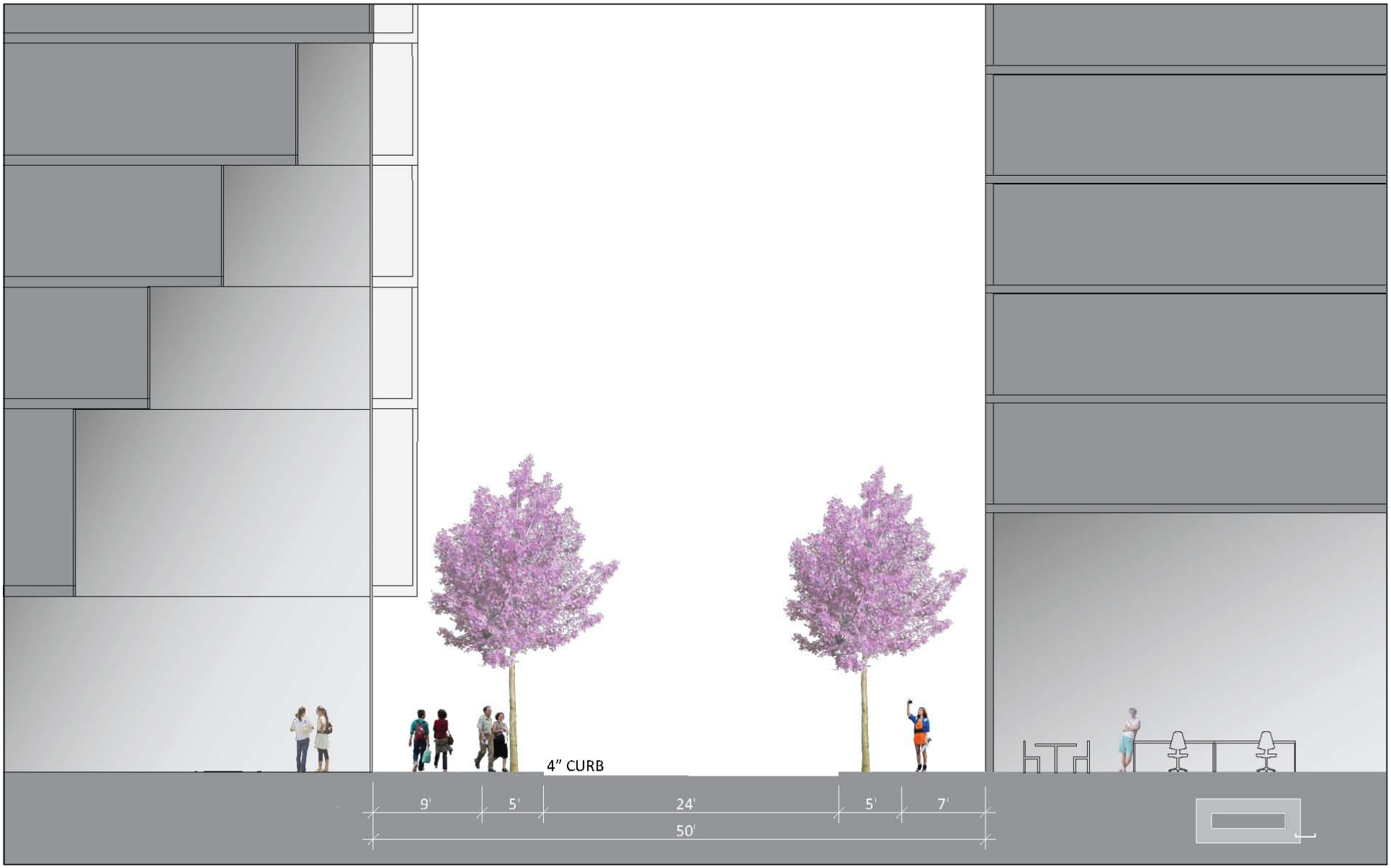


Projected Development Site 2

Projected Development Site 2
Illustrative Ground-Floor Plan

625 WEST 57TH STREET

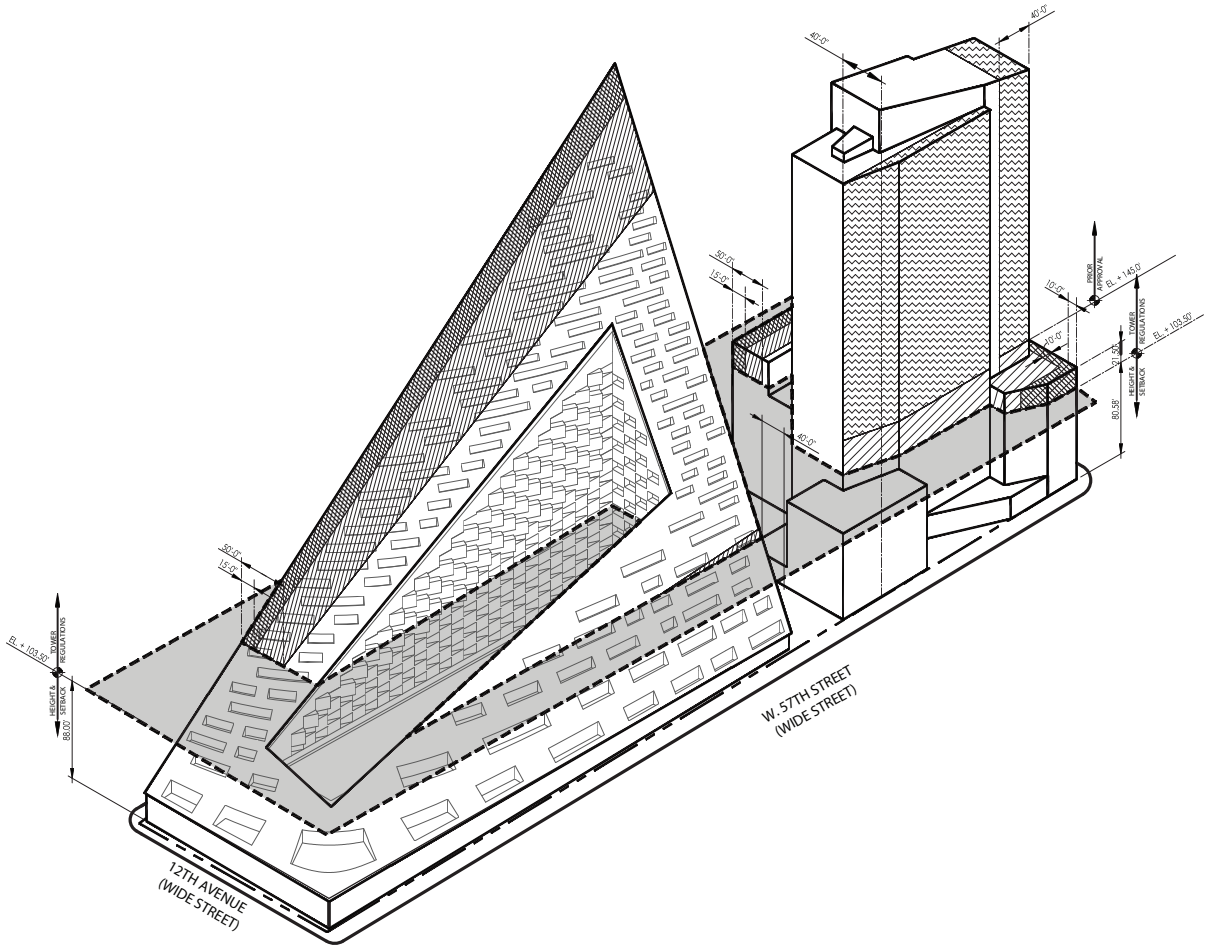
Figure 8-19



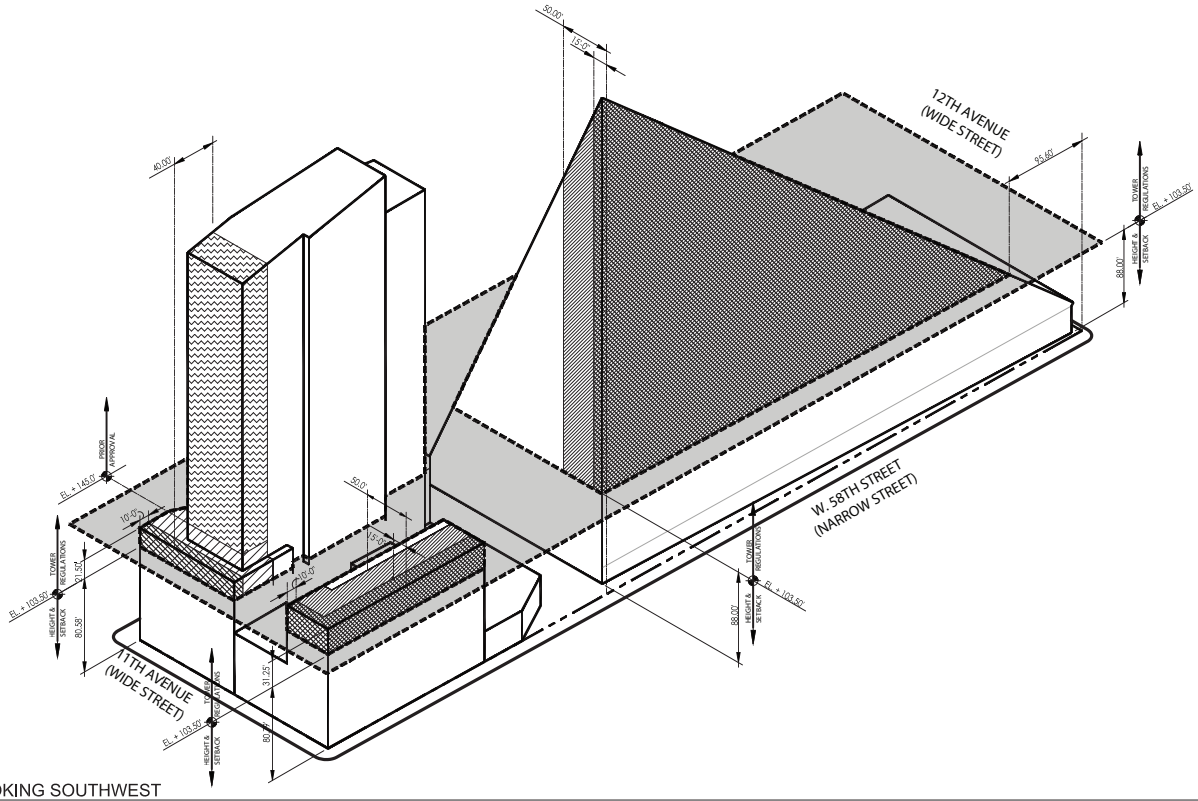
Proposed Site 1 Mid-Block Access Drive
East-West Section

Figure 8-20

6.11.12



ISOMETRIC LOOKING NORTHEAST



ISOMETRIC LOOKING SOUTHWEST

Isometrics of Proposed Project

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 8-21

The proposed rezoning of a portion of the project block from M1-5 to C6-2 would provide an adjusted FAR across entire zoning lot of 8.63 (8.8 with the additional community facility uses), and the proposed special permits would: allow floor area to be distributed across the zoning lot; allow buildings to be located without regard for distance between building regulations; permit the location of buildings without regard to height and setback regulations; and to permit a 285-space accessory parking garage. The height, setback, floor area, and overall site plan size of the proposed buildings on projected development site 1 and projected development site 2 would be restricted by the special permit drawings. These actions would not be required for development in the future without the proposed project; however, they would allow the new development to be designed to enhance the relationship between the proposed project, adjacent streets, and surrounding development and to enliven and enhance the West 57th Street corridor.

The proposed mixed-use building on projected development site 1 would be slightly taller than the Helena building on the project block, approximately 470 feet tall versus 421 feet tall (a difference of 49 feet). Like the permitted building, the lower levels of the proposed mixed-use building would continue the street walls established by the Helena and the mini-storage building on projected development site 2. The massing of the proposed mixed-use building would be oriented toward Eleventh Avenue, where a context of tall residential towers exists; the lower part of the proposed mixed-use building is more in line with the lower scale of development along Route 9A/Twelfth Avenue. The new ground-floor retail uses along the block's street frontages will help to activate these streets, which are currently not well used.

STUDY AREA

As with the development in the future without the proposed project and the 2001 *FEIS* development, the proposed project would not result in any changes to natural features, open spaces, or streets in the study area. Like the future without the proposed project and the 2001 *FEIS* development, the proposed project would alter the visual character of the surrounding area, but this character is already changing through the various recently developed residential towers and new institutional buildings and buildings currently under construction. While the proposed development also would be of a more contemporary, unique design than the building in the future without the proposed project, the surrounding area already includes buildings of contemporary design and materials, including a number of buildings that were built after the 2001 *FEIS*. In addition, the buildings to be developed on the Riverside Center site in the future without the proposed project will be faceted rather than rectilinear, setting the context for non-rectilinear building massing on projected development site 1.

Like the permitted building as well as several existing structures in the study area—the Consolidated Edison Power House and the new John Jay College building—the proposed mixed-use building on projected development site 1 would have a large footprint, covering the majority of its lot. While the allowable floor area on the project block would increase with the proposed project—from an adjusted FAR of 8.28 to an adjusted FAR of 8.63 across the entire zoning lot (8.8 with the additional community facility uses)—the resulting development would not be out of context with the residential buildings in the surrounding area, some of which have been built to an FAR of 10.0. The proposed project would introduce a different mix of uses to the project block compared with the 2001 *FEIS* program and the future without the proposed project, but these uses would be compatible with the existing uses and land use trends in the study area. As concluded in the 2001 *FEIS*, the proposed project—in conjunction with the study area's various background developments—would contribute to the conversion of the Eleventh Avenue corridor into a more residential boulevard. The proposed project also would create a

pedestrian-oriented environment where one does not currently exist and complement the Manhattan skyline.

The height of the mixed-use building on projected development site 1 would be consistent with that of other new residential towers in the surrounding area, including the Riverside Center buildings directly north, which will be between 31 and 44 stories in height (393 to 535 feet tall) (see **Figure 8-22**). Furthermore, the proposed mixed-use building's tower would not exceed the height of the Consolidated Edison Power House smokestack, which is approximately 500 feet above grade. The study area's strong downward slope toward the river also would reduce the apparent height of the proposed mixed-use building relative to the upland buildings constructed on higher ground.

Because of the proposed building's unusual shape—which makes it less bulky at the upper stories—it would be expected to provide more sunlight to surrounding areas than a typical rectangular tower massing. While project shadows would fall on nearby portions of the Hudson River, Hudson River Park, and the Route 9A walkway/bikeway, these shadows would be limited in extent and duration.

As concluded in the 2001 *FEIS*, the current proposed project would complement development and design trends in the area and build upon the development and design patterns already established to the north and east.

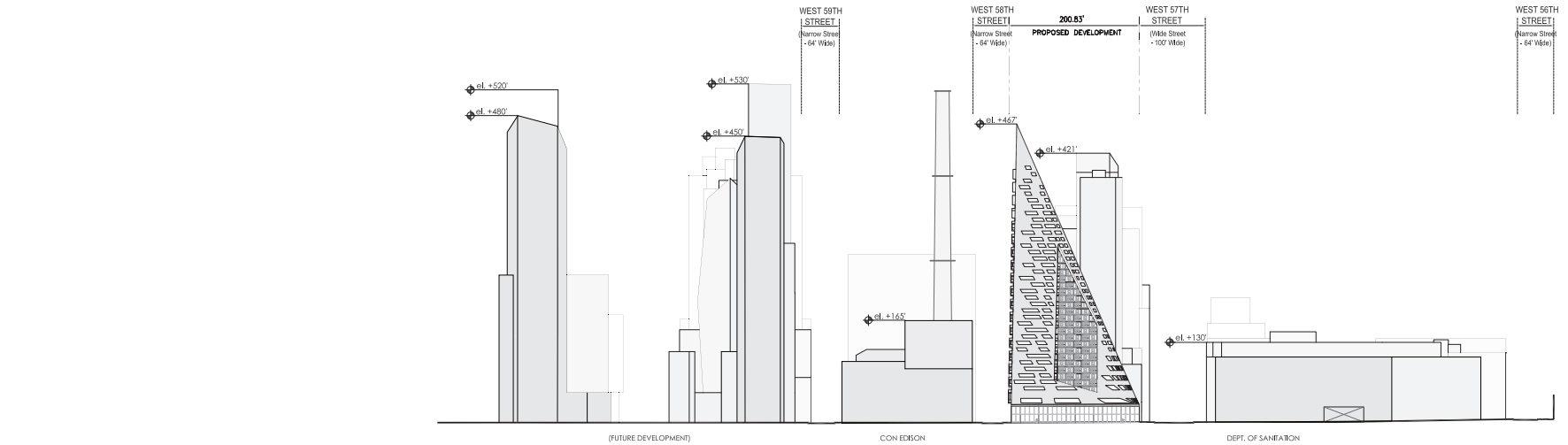
VISUAL RESOURCES

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES / PROJECT BLOCK

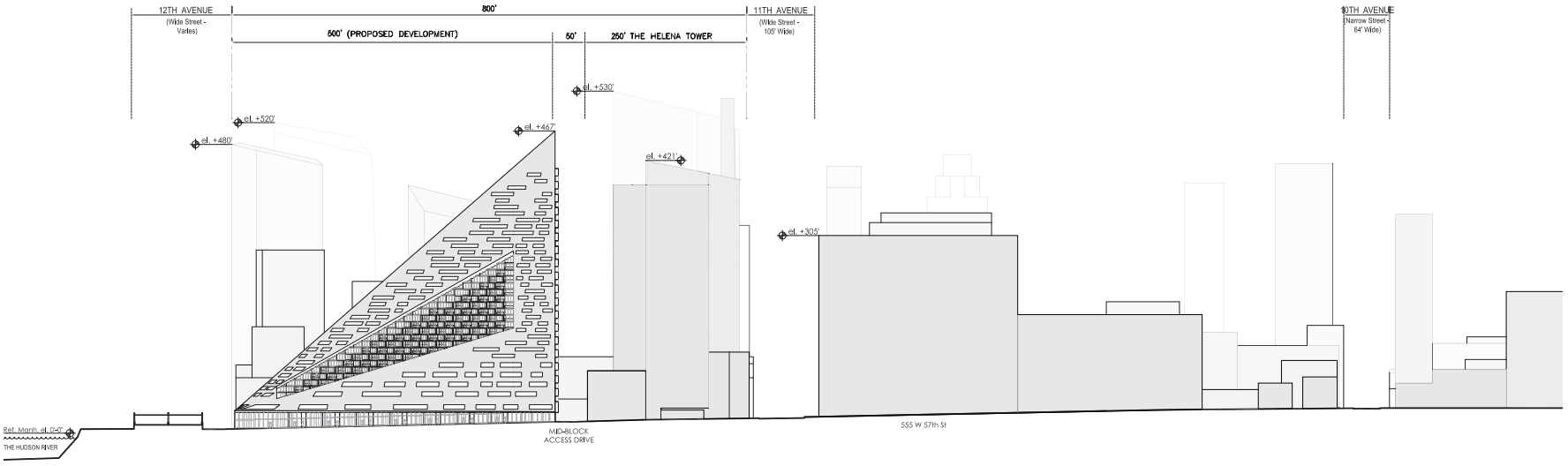
As described above, there are no visual resources on the projected development sites or the remainder of the project block. In the future with the proposed project, views through the project block from south to north, which currently include the Consolidated Edison Power House, would be of the proposed mixed-use building; however, these through-block views would already be obscured in the future without the proposed project. In either scenario, views of the power house from sidewalks on the north side of the project block would not be altered, and views of the Hudson River Park, the river itself, Riverside Park South, and New Jersey would still be available along West 57th and 58th Streets and the western edge of the block. The open space on an upper level of the mixed-use building would also provide new, elevated views of these resources, which would not be provided in the future without the proposed project.

STUDY AREA

In the future with the proposed project, expansive views of the Hudson River and New Jersey would remain from Riverside Park South, Hudson River Park, the elevated portions of Route 9A and Riverside Boulevard, and existing east-west street locations. The Consolidated Edison Power House and its tall brick smokestack would remain visible throughout much of the study area, particularly from Riverside Park South and Hudson River Park, the elevated portion of Route 9A north of the project block, and along Eleventh/West End Avenue (see **Figures 8-23** through **8-26** for images of the proposed building in context). From certain vantage points within Hudson River Park, the full bulk of this massive building would no longer be visible beyond the development on projected development site 1; however, these through-block views would already be limited in the future without the proposed project. The proposed mixed-use building would contribute to the changing visual character of the study area, which includes many modern residential towers and will contain even more in the future without the proposed project.



57th ST. STREETSCAPE (LOOKING EAST)



57th ST. STREETSCAPE (LOOKING NORTH)

Illustrative Streetscape Elevations

Figure 8-22



View northeast from Hudson River Park around 57th Street **Existing**



View east from Hudson River Park Bikeway between 57th and 58th Streets **Existing**



Proposed

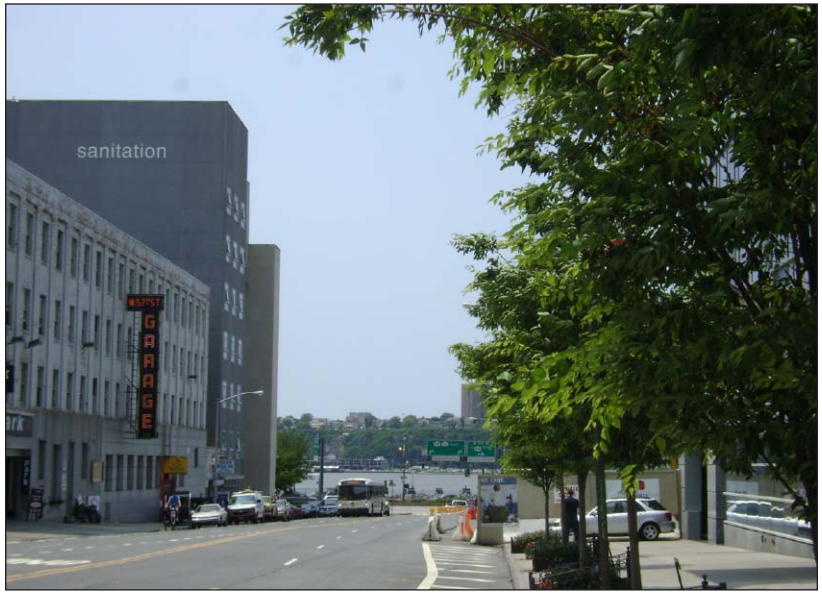


Proposed

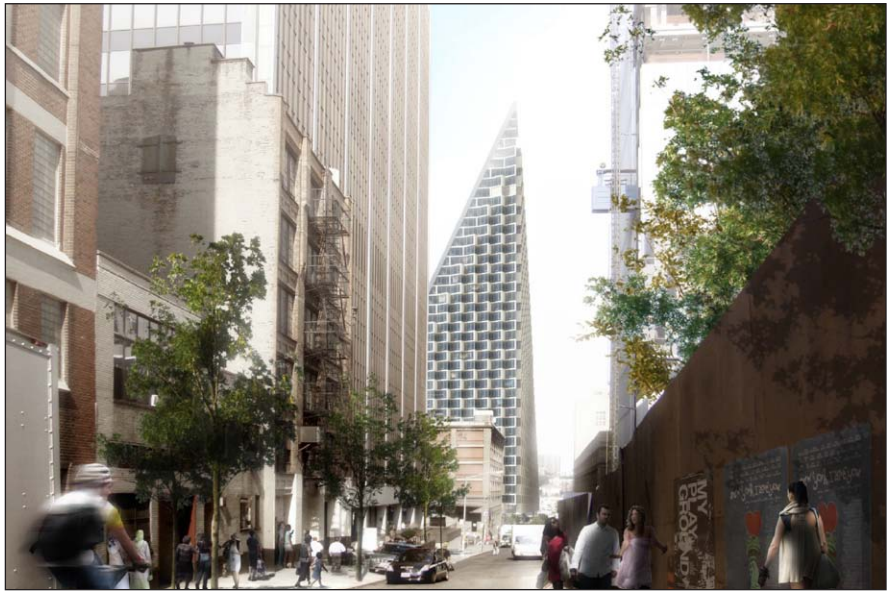
Illustrative Renderings of Proposed Project in Context, with Existing Conditions Comparison



View west from 58th Street and Tenth Avenue **Existing**



View west from 57th Street and Eleventh Avenue **Existing**

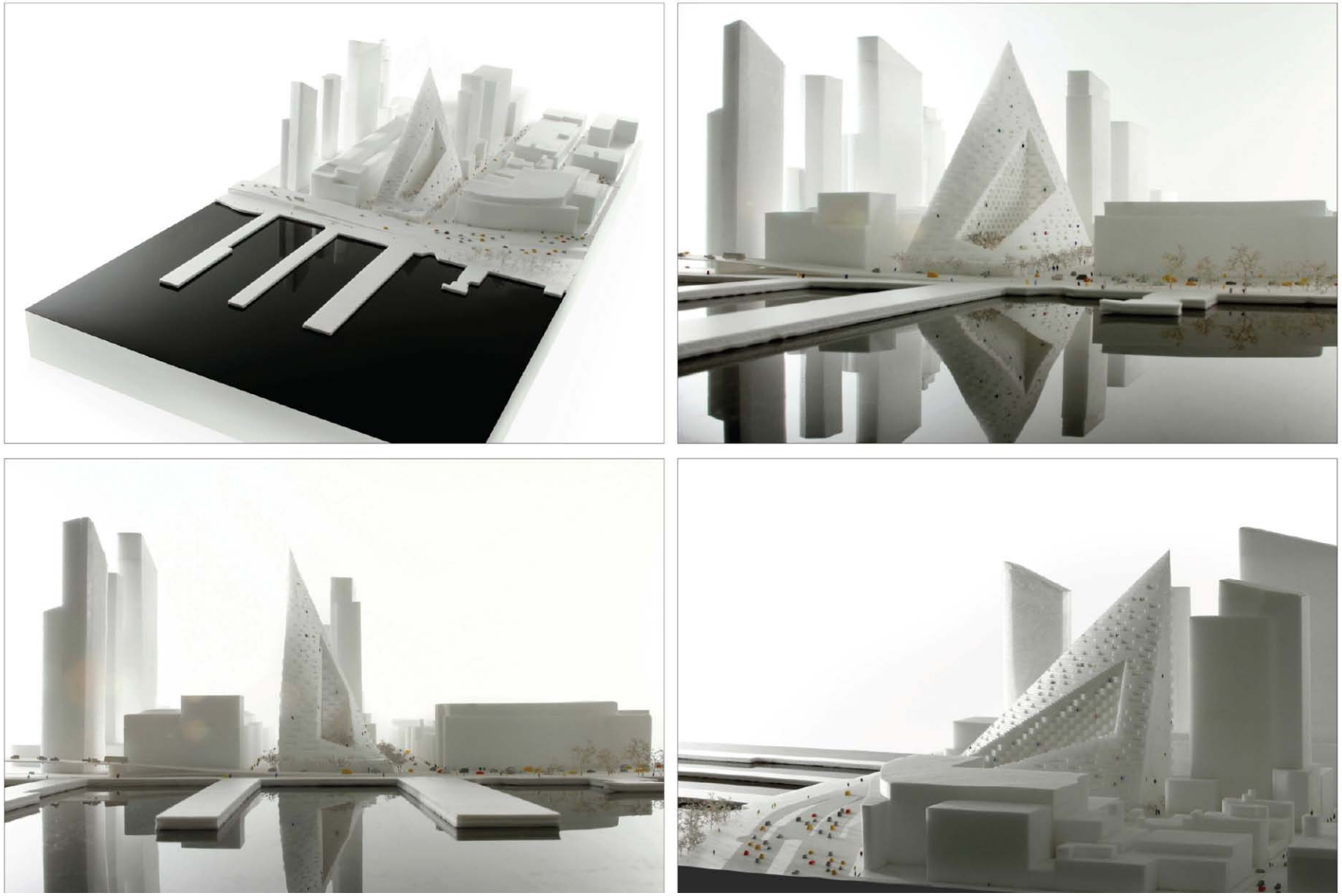


Proposed

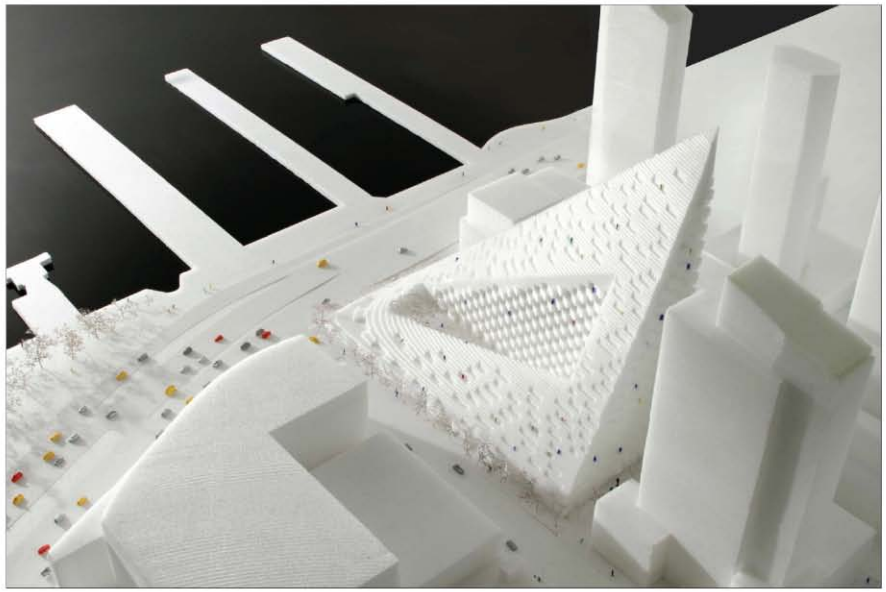


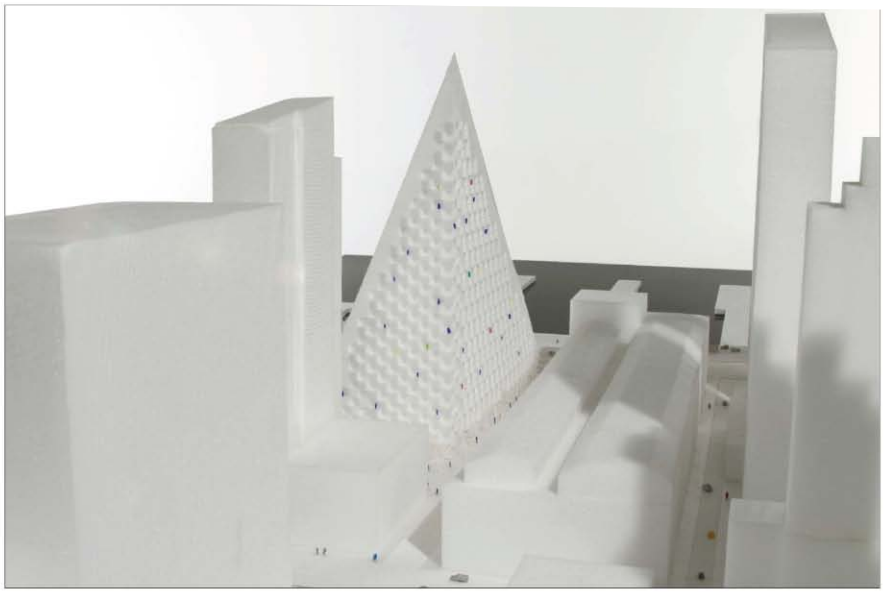
Proposed

Illustrative Renderings of Proposed Project in Context, with Existing Conditions Comparison



Illustrative Renderings of
Proposed Project in Context
Figure 8-25









Illustrative Renderings of
Proposed Project in Context
Figure 8-26

As described above, the 2001 *FEIS* concluded that the new buildings would change the context of the setting for the Consolidated Edison Power House, but the plant's stacks would remain taller than the proposed towers, and the view corridor down West 57th Street would be protected. Overall, the proposed project would not alter the 2001 *FEIS* findings of no significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources. ✷