8.0 Historic Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the Proposed Action on historic resources, including architectural and archaeological resources. Architectural resources include historically important buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts. Archaeological resources are physical remains, usually subsurface, of the prehistoric (Native American) and historic periods, including burials, foundations, artifacts, wells, and privies. The Proposed Action would result in no significant adverse impacts to historic or archaeological resources on the Project Site or in the Study Area. Because the variations would conform to the same footprint and building envelope as the Preferred Development Program, they would likewise result in no significant adverse impacts to historic and archaeological resources.

The largely vacant Project Site includes the former New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company's (two and one-half stories) main office building, and is immediately adjacent to the 354-foot-tall Queensboro Bridge, both of which are designated historic resources. There are also several other historic properties (designated or eligible for designation) within ½ mile of the Project Site. The Project design reflects careful consideration of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and the Queensboro Bridge. Since the proposed Project would require in-ground construction, the potential for disturbance of archaeological resources must also be considered.

The Project Site formerly was the home of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company factory where terra cotta ornaments were manufactured for celebrated turn-of-the-century buildings in New York City and elsewhere in the country between 1891 and 1932. Though the small office building is all that remains of the terra cotta works, it was once surrounded by a 12-foot-tall brick wall, a large 5-story factory building and other associated structures, including kilnworks and a large open storage yard. After the Terra Cotta works ceased operation, the Project Site was used for unrefined plastics manufacturing and electronics operations; in 1976, all the buildings except for the office building were demolished.

The Proposed Action would create a lively mix of uses and public open spaces that would attract people to the site and display the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building for the public to appreciate as never before. Likewise, the Proposed Action would provide new opportunities for visitors to view the Queensboro Bridge from the proposed outdoor plazas, Esplanade, and rooftop terrace and other vantage points.

The introduction of the Project would change the existing visual context on the Project Site; however, it must be noted that the historic visual context was very different from its current conditions, and included large industrial buildings. The Queensboro Bridge rises 300 feet above the nearby New York Architectural Terra Cotta building. The Proposed Action would be substantially taller than the bridge, with the tallest structures reaching 600 feet. However, the New York Architectural Terra Cotta building would be buffered from the full height of the Project by a mid-rise studio complex (114 to 140 feet tall) component of the Project that would serve to mediate between the smaller building's height and the height of the Project's tallest tower. The overall scale of the Project would not be unlike developments in other established and emerging areas of New York City. In the vicinity of the Project Site, the Long Island City waterfront is undergoing major transformation into a mixed-use nexus, with other new mixed-use developments completed south of the Project Site and

more planned in the vicinity. The low-scale industrial character of the neighborhood is changing, in conformance with various State and City policies (see Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy" for a more detailed discussion).

As a result of the Project's high-rise elements, shadows would be cast on the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and the Queensboro Bridge; however, no significant adverse impacts would result since neither property is a sunlight-sensitive architectural resource. Other inventoried historic resources in the Study Area are at least ¼ mile from the Project Site. At most, the Project would be visible in the distant background of these resources when viewed from their immediate surroundings, and likewise, views from the resources themselves may reveal the Project partially visible in the distance. As recommended by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) a Stage IB Archaeological Assessment will be conducted on the northern portion of the project site if appropriate. Based on the results of that assessment and consultation with the SHPO, further testing and, possibly, mitigation measures will be implemented to prevent any significant impacts on archaeological resources.

As defined under City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), historic resources include:

- Designated New York City Landmarks, Interior Landmarks, Scenic Landmarks, and properties within designated New York City Historic Districts;
- Properties calendared for consideration as one of the above by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (NYCLPC);
- Properties listed in or formally determined eligible for inclusion in the State and/or National Register of Historic Places, or contained within a district listed in or formally determined eligible for the State and/or National Register of Historic Places;
- Properties recommended by the New York State Board for listing in the State and/or National Registers of Historic Places;
- National Historic Landmarks; and
- Properties not identified by one of the programs listed above, but that meet eligibility requirements.

The determination of the eligibility of a resource for inclusion in the National or State Registers of Historic Places or in the list of New York City Landmarks is based on a review of its historic associations, integrity, and other considerations identified in the *CEQR Technical Manual.* The SHPO and the NYCLPC maintain records on known archaeological sites and areas that are considered likely to contain archaeological resources. Archaeological evaluation may be required to determine whether a resource has yielded or has the potential to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Archaeological resources usually need to be assessed for actions that would result in any in-ground disturbance. Architectural resources generally need to be assessed if an action would result in:

- Demolition of or significant alteration to any building, structure or object;
- Change in scale, visual prominence, or visual context of any building, structure, or object or landscape feature. (Visual prominence is generally the way in which a building, structure, object, or landscape feature is viewed. Visual context is the character of the surrounding built or natural environment.);
- Construction, including vibration, subsidence, dewatering, and possibility of falling objects;

- Additions to or significant removal, grading, or replanting of significant historic landscape features;
- Screening or elimination of publicly accessible views; and
- Introduction of new shadows or significant lengthening of the duration of existing shadows over a historic landscape or on a historic structure, if the features that make the structure significant depend on sunlight (e.g., stained glass windows).

B. METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the potential effects of the Proposed Action on the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, the Queensboro Bridge, and other local, state, and/or national historic (architectural) and archaeological resources located nearby. The study area under CEQR for above-ground historic resources generally extends 400 feet from a site, but because the Proposed Action involves a highly-visible, large-scale development, a ½-mile radius Study Area has been designated coincident with the limits of the land use secondary study area. The Study Area for the archaeological resource assessment is limited to the Project Site.

Listed, eligible, and potentially eligible historic resources have been identified through review of the city, state, and federal registers of historic properties, and consultation with the SHPO and NYCLPC. The findings of previously completed Stage 1A and Stage 1B archaeological assessments of the Project Site are included, as they pertain to potential on-site archaeological concerns.

Both NYCLPC and SHPO have been consulted regarding the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site. The NYCLPC determined that, given the extent of ground disturbance on the Project Site, it is unlikely that intact archaeological resources remain and therefore, the Project Site is not considered sensitive. The SHPO, however, determined that the northern portion of the Project Site has the potential for archaeological deposits, and so a Stage 1B will be conducted in consultation with the SHPO.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

1. Archaeological Resources

Two preliminary (Stage 1A) archaeological assessments were conducted for the Project Site: one was completed as part of the permitting process for siting the New York Power Authority (NYPA) facility currently located on the south side of the Project Site (Historical Perspectives, Inc., November 2000), and a second was completed for the Proposed Action on the northern portion of the Project Site (Historical Perspectives, Inc., February 2004). A Stage 1B assessment was later conducted on the southern portion of the Project Site, as described below.

This research indicated that a stream once ran along present-day 10th Street, about 800 feet east of the Project Site, and fed into the East River through marshland a few blocks south of the Project Site. These conditions would have been attractive to Native Americans, who utilized sites on elevated, well drained locations near the water. They would have fished in the East River and collected oysters in

Newtown Creek. Archaeological sites in such areas include villages and work areas (where food was gathered, for example, or where tools were made).[1]

Based on these findings, a Stage 1B archaeological field investigation was conducted in December 2000 on the southern portion of the Project Site to determine whether pre-contact (Native American) and historic-era cultural resources still exist there. The results of that investigation revealed no evidence of the presence of pre-contact archaeological sites, and, consequently, it was determined that no further archaeological consideration was warranted for pre-contact resources on the southern half of the Project Site.[2] Likewise the Stage 1B investigation also indicated a low potential for historic resources related to the Terra Cotta Works on the southern portion of the Project Site.

The Stage 1A assessment conducted for the northern portion of the site (February 2004) concluded that potential for intact on-site remains associated with two identified 19th century historic buildings was extremely low, primarily due to on-site disturbance associated with construction of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company Main buildings. These two former building sites: the Long Island Farms Orphans Asylum Schoolhouse and the Wallach Mansion, are described in more detail below.

The Stage 1A assessment also concluded that there was a high potential for substantial intact archaeological deposits, such as the foundations of buildings, kilns, and the remains of factory products related to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company operations. Both NYCLPC and SHPO have been consulted regarding the potential archaeological sensitivity of the site. The NYCLPC determined that, given the extent of ground disturbance on the Project Site, it is unlikely that intact archaeological resources remain, and therefore, the Project Site is not considered sensitive (see Attachment 1, "Agency Correspondence"). However, SHPO found that there is potential that archaeological deposits related to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company operations remain on the Project Site, and has determined that Stage 1B archaeological testing is warranted on Lots 13, 15, and 20, comprising the northern portion of the Project Site. The Stage 1B testing program will be conducted following completion of the FEIS. The results of the Stage 1B testing will dictate whether further archaeological investigations will be necessary for portions of these lots or not at all. Ongoing consultation with the SHPO regarding any evidence of potentially significant resources will ensure that appropriate mitigation procedures, if necessary, would be implemented prior to construction. Therefore, the Proposed Action would result in no significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources.

2. Architectural Resources

a) Development History

The western portion of Queens was the site of the earliest settlements in the borough, including Dutch settlement between 1637 and 1656. In particular, the East River waterfront was the focus of early settlement in Hunters Point, as well as the site of 19th-century industrial development. Small scattered rural farming villages were found throughout the area during the late 18th and 19th centuries.

The earliest structures to be developed on the Project Site included four large wood-frame structures (c. 1834–1835) owned by the City of New York, which together were operated as the Long Island Farms orphan asylum. Following the destruction of the orphanage school (which burned in 1847),

[1] Allee King Rosen Fleming for NYPA, In-City Generation Project Vernon Boulevard Site Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, January 2002, Page 3-3.

[2] Historical Perspectives, Inc., *Stage 1B Archaeological Assessment New York Power Authority Vernon Boulevard Site Queens*, January 2001.

the lots remained vacant until becoming the Willy Wallach estate in the 1860s. Early maps place Wallach's home somewhere on the western half of Lot 15, but its exact location is unclear. Vernon Boulevard, which today runs adjacent to the Project Site, was built as a private turnpike in 1840, about the time the elegant Ravenswood Mansions and promenade were constructed on the waterfront just north of the site.[3] Swamps throughout the area were filled, and streets were laid out in the 1850s. Ferry service played a crucial role in the development of Hunters Point in the 19th century, and beginning in 1861, development accelerated with the establishment of the Long Island Rail Road's transfer terminus in Hunters Point. Industrial and residential development, as well as commercial establishments serving commuters, were present in Hunters Point, while the nearby neighborhoods of Astoria and Ravenswood developed as predominantly residential areas.

Ravenswood's location on the East River near Manhattan made it an ideal place for industry. Over time, the wealthy residents left, and as was the case with Willy Wallach's estate, mansions were converted into offices and factories. The Wallach property and the Gottlieb Gunther estate (immediately to the south) were purchased by the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company. The neighboring Hinchmann estate further south became a stoneyard, while Bodine Castle and grounds (a suburban stone villa resembling a castle), also south of the Project Site, became part of Young & Metzner's paper and jute bag factory in 1893.

In 1892, the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, which still stands on the Project Site today, was constructed east of the 5-story Main Building where architectural terra cotta ornaments were manufactured. It was designed by Francis H. Kimball, architect of the Montauk Club (1889-91) in Park Slope, Brooklyn.

The nearby Queensboro Bridge opened in 1909 and connected East 59th Street in Manhattan to Long Island City, Queens, as well as connecting to Blackwell's Island (the original name of Roosevelt Island). The bridge's supporting piers originally included stairways and elevators, and later a large elevator structure was erected to Blackwell's Island below. The bridge, the City's first double-decker span, carried elevated railroad lines, trolley service, roadway for horse carriages, and pedestrian walkways. As such, it played a major role in stimulating residential and commercial development in the Borough of Queens.[4] Real estate speculation in the 1920s resulted in the spread of development throughout Queens, and by the late 1930s, Long Island City was the center of heavy industry, including metal works, food processing, textiles and paints production, woodworking and lumber yards, and stone cutting. Following World War II, many of the industrial buildings in the area began to be converted to other uses. The conversion of the Silvercup Bakery—originally the Gordon Baking Company—to Silvercup Studios in the early 1980s is a recent example of this trend.

With changing architectural styles, popular demand for carved stone and terra cotta lessened in the 1920s and 1930s. As a result, the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company went bankrupt in 1932, and the grounds were taken over by the Eastern Terra Cotta Company, which manufactured ornaments for many Robert Moses park projects. By 1950, the property was being used for plastics sorting and the "balling" of waste paper. In 1976, all buildings on the Project Site, except the surviving office building, were torn down.

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[3] Historical Perspectives, Inc., *Stage 1A Archaeological Assessment New York Power Authority Vernon Boulevard Site, Queens*, 2000.

[4] New York Historical Society, *The Encyclopedia of New York City*, Kenneth T. Jackson, ed., Yale University Press, 1995, page 576.

b) Designated Historic Properties and Districts

The following historic architectural resources, as defined under CEQR, are located within ½-mile of the Project Site (Figure 8-1):

- The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, located on the Project Site at 42-10 to 42-16 Vernon Boulevard between the Queensboro Bridge and 43rd Avenue, is a designated New York City landmark, is listed in the New York State Register of Historic Places, and has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. It was built in 1892 and was the office for the firm that produced much of the terra cotta ornament popular in New York architecture and across the country at the turn of the 20th century. The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company manufactured ornamental terra cotta for numerous important buildings around the country, including the Plaza Hotel, Carnegie Hall, and the Ansonia Hotel in New York City, the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Philadelphia, the Statler Hotel in Detroit, the Municipal Building in Dallas, and the Valley National Bank in Des Moines.

  The distinctive Tudor Revival style building stands two and one-half stories tall (approximately 45 feet tall) and features terra cotta trim. It was designed by Francis H. Kimball, architect of the Montauk Club (1889-91) in Park Slope, Brooklyn. It is located adjacent to the former site of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Works, which was established in 1891. The building is secured and has been vacant for many years. The NYCLPC report designating the building as a City landmark describes it as "beautifully crafted in brick and terra cotta . . . a veritable catalogue of the company's art, reflecting the quality and range of the company's products . . ." and states that the building is the only one of its kind known to survive in the United States and is a symbol of the material and industry that transformed the construction profession in the late 19th century.[5]

- The Queensboro Bridge, originally named Blackwell's Bridge, is located immediately north of and adjacent to the Project Site. It is a New York City landmark and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. It is an ornate, "through-type" cantilevered bridge with stone piers supporting the steel structure. Vaulted spaces beneath the bridge are faced in Guastavino tiles. It was designed by Gustav Lindenthal (engineer) and Henry Hornbostel (architect) and opened in 1909. It the first East River crossing to connect Manhattan and Queens, and as such, was a prime catalyst was the development of Queens in the early 20th century.

- The Hunters Point Historic District, designated a New York City Landmark and listed in the National and State Registers of Historic Places, consists of two blockfronts on 45th Avenue, between 21st and 23rd Streets, and five houses on 23rd Street, at the southeastern edge of the Study Area. The district features off-white "Westchester stone" town houses built in the Italianate style in the early 1870s, a time when rapid growth was extending into outlying areas not yet incorporated as boroughs. The architecture, although uniform in overall character, consists of neo-Greco and Queen Anne components, as well as elements of the French Second Empire. These multi-family units typify domestic architecture of New York City, during the period following the Civil War up to the late 1800s. The houses on this tree-lined street retain most of their original detail and character.

- Chapel of the Good Shepherd (now Good Shepherd Community Ecumenical Center) is located on Roosevelt Island and like many of the other 19th century structures on the island, was built to serve the inmates and patients of nearby city institutions. It is a designated New York City Landmark, and it is also listed in the State and National Registers. Its late-Victorian Gothic design combines traditional English parish church elements with the needs of its unique parishioners.

[5] New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission, Designation List 158 LP-1304, August 24, 1982.

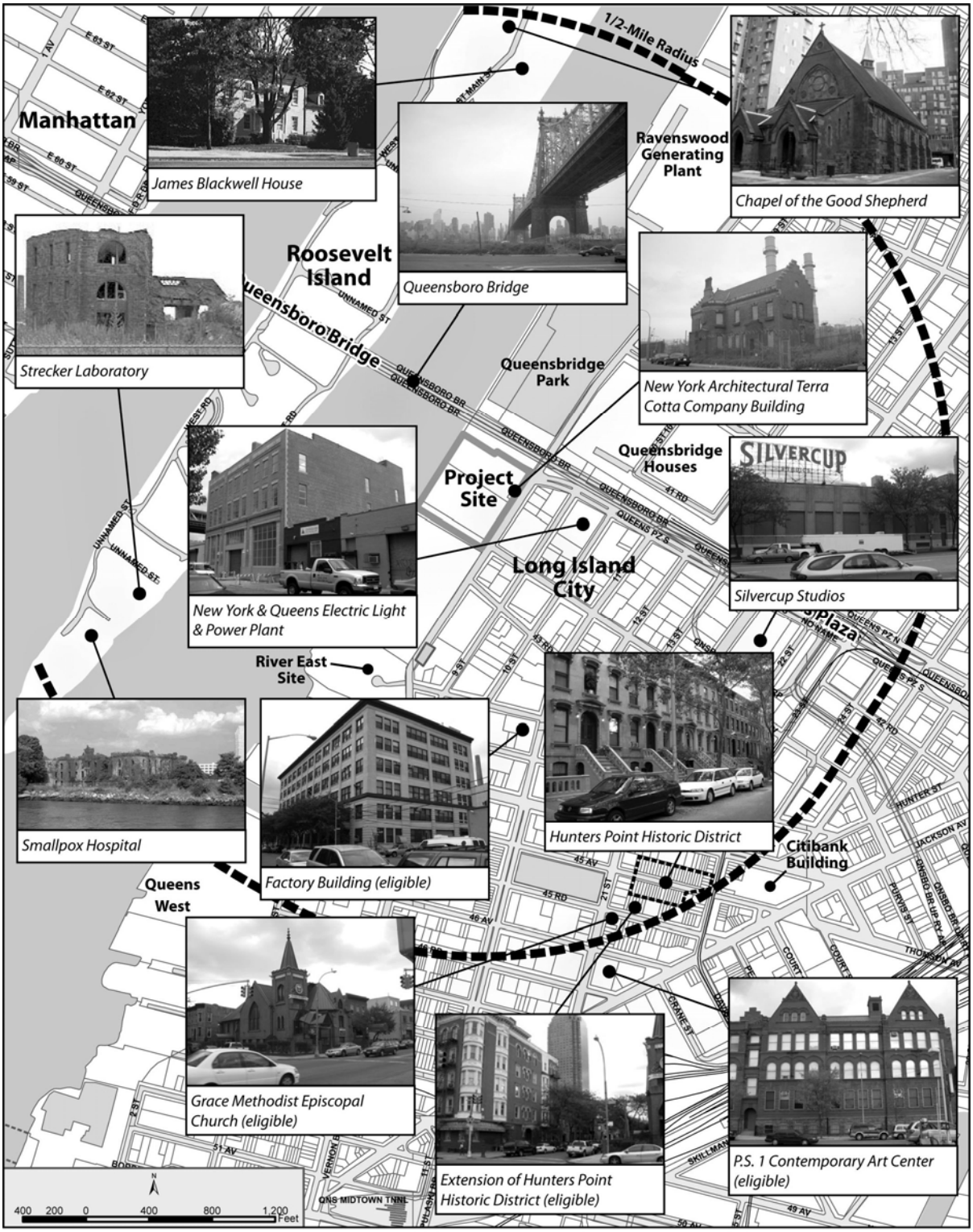


Figure 8-1:
Designated Historic (Architectural) Resources

- James Blackwell House, another New York City Landmark listed in the National Register, is the oldest building on Roosevelt Island. It was built by descendants of the island's first European settlers, between 1796 and 1804.
- Strecker Laboratory on Roosevelt Island, originally built in 1892 with a third floor added in 1905, is also a New York City Landmark and listed in the National Register. This small Romanesque Revival masonry building originally housed a pathology laboratory serving the Charity Hospital, but all that remains today is a seriously deteriorated ruin.
- Smallpox Hospital, originally built in 1896, designed by James Renwick, Jr., is now a Gothic Revival ruin at the southern tip of Roosevelt Island. It was expanded over the years and stabilized in the 1970s.
- P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center is located at the southeastern edge of the Study Area at 46-01 21st Street (between 46th Road and 46th Avenue). Built between 1890 and 1900, this Romanesque Revival school building houses art collections and holds shows in affiliation with the Museum of Modern Art. The building once supported a clock tower, which has been removed. The NYCLPC has determined that this building is eligible for New York City Landmark designation as well as for listing in the State and National Registers.
- Potential Hunter's Point Historic District Extension area, which is considered eligible by NYCLPC for New York City Landmark designation and eligible for listing in the State and National Register, consists of four brownstone rowhouses built circa 1890, located at 21-33, 21-35, 21-37, and 21-49 45th Road. These Romanesque and classical houses are local examples of late 19th century residential buildings, located about ½ mile southeast of the Project Site, near the Hunters Point Historic District.
- Grace Methodist Episcopal Church is located approximately ½ mile from the Project Site, at 45-27 to 33 21st Street. The church was built in 1900 in a late Victorian style, and the NYCLPC has determined that it is eligible for New York City Landmark designation as well as for listing in the State and National Registers.
- Silvercup Studios and garage, located at 42-01 21st Street and 42-42 22nd Street, have also been identified by NYCLPC as eligible for New York City Landmark designation as well as for listing in the State and National Registers.

As a result of their "Long Island City Survey of Historic Sites", the NYCLPC has also determined that two other properties in the Study Area are eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places, including:

- Factory Building at 44-02 11th Street; and
- New York and Queens Power Plant at 42-24 9th Street.

D. FUTURE CONDITIONS WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

There are several properties in the Study Area that NYCLPC has stated are eligible for listing in the State and National Registers of Historic Places as well as eligible for New York City Landmark designation. There is the possibility that some of these properties may be officially designated in the Future without the Proposed Action.

Additionally, in the Future without the Proposed Action, the temporary NYPA facility will be relocated to another site, and the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building will be

restored; however, the rest of the Project Site would remain vacant and inaccessible. The proposed restoration program would include preservation of the building's original terra cotta and brick exterior and interior features, as described in the permits approved by the NYCLPC (Nos. 04-2009 and 05-2067).

No other changes to any inventoried architectural resources, including the Queensboro Bridge, are anticipated. However, the general context of the Study Area, particularly along the southern Long Island City waterfront, is slated for major high-rise redevelopment in the Future without the Proposed Action. The new River East development (28 stories) is proposed to be built on the site of the former East River Tennis Club, about 1,000 feet south of the Silvercup West site. Further south, just outside the Study Area, two large-scale Queens West developments (Rockrose and Avalon Bay, ranging from about 30 to 40 stories) are scheduled to be completed. Additionally, two major new office buildings are proposed in the Citibank/Court Square vicinity, about ½ mile southeast of the Project Site, further increasing the scale of the Long Island City CBD.

Therefore, it is expected that the scale of the general area will change considerably in Future Conditions without the Proposed Action; however, the physical condition of the historic architectural or archaeological resources would not likely change, except for the proposed restoration of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building.

E. FUTURE CONDITIONS WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

There are several impact issues that do not apply to the Proposed Action, and can be dismissed from further consideration.

Development of the Proposed Action would not require demolition or alteration of any historic structures documented in the Study Area (including the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and Queensboro Bridge). Likewise, there is no significant historic landscape on the Project Site to be affected by the Proposed Action.

Having found that there is potential for archaeological deposits related to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company operations, the SHPO has determined that Stage 1B archaeological testing is warranted on lots 13, 15, and 20, comprising the northern portion of the Project Site. The Stage 1B testing program will be conducted following completion of the EIS. The results of the Stage 1B testing will dictate whether further archaeological investigations will be necessary for portions of these lots or not at all. Ongoing consultation with the SHPO regarding any evidence of potentially significant resources will ensure that appropriate mitigation procedures, if necessary, would be implemented prior to construction. Therefore, the Proposed Action would result in no significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources.

The following impact assessment is focused on impacts that may result from potential changes in visual context, scale, visual prominence, views and shadows, with special attention given to the nearby New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and Queensboro Bridge. Precautions that would be taken during construction (to avoid and minimize potential damage to historic resources) are described at the end of this section.

1. Impact Assessment

Given the largely vacant Project Site, the Proposed Action would alter the existing visual context of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and the Queensboro Bridge. However, given the historically industrial context of the Project Site and general context of the Long Island City

waterfront whose low scale, low-density development is now being replaced by high-rise development, this alteration would not constitute an adverse impact. The extent of the Project's potential effect would also be moderated by its design elements which would complement and reference these historic resources.

As proposed, Silvercup West would be distinct from, yet compatible with, its historic neighbors and would open up new public views of the waterfront, Manhattan, Roosevelt Island, and the nearby historic properties where no such immediate views have existed in over 100 years. This would be accomplished through sympathetic design, effective massing, and landscaping throughout the Project Site that would draw people in. From the many public open spaces proposed for the Project Site, visitors would be able to enjoy the details of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and experience the imposing engineering of the Queensboro Bridge up close.

The Proposed Action would set the taller towers furthest away from the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and Queensboro Bridge. In order to create a sympathetic environment for the diminutive New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, an L-shaped, mid-rise structure (about 114 to 140 feet tall) has been designed to surround the historic structure on the west and south, visually buffering it from the taller elevations on the Project Site. Likewise, the location and massing of the towers would maximize visibility of the Queensboro Bridge towers from various public perspectives, with the lowest tower (stepping up from 429 feet tall on the western edge to 537.5 feet tall on the eastern edge) sited 100 feet away from the bridge, and the tallest proposed tower (600 feet tall) located on the southern portion of the site, 500 feet away.

All other historic resources inventoried in the Study Area are more than ¼ mile away (including several on Roosevelt Island) and at most, the Proposed Action would be visible in the background of views in their vicinity and would not cast new shadows on them. An assessment was conducted to determine whether shadows from the proposed buildings would be cast onto the potentially light-sensitive Chapel of the Good Shepherd. As reflected in Figure 8-2, it was determined that the longest shadow in the direction of the Chapel, on winter mornings, would not extend as far as the Chapel. Based on this assessment, the NYCLPC has concluded that no significant impact would result (see Agency Correspondence appendix).

a) New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company Building

The Proposed Action would alter the visual context and scale of the Project Site but would not create a significant adverse impact on the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, given the Project Site's history and its future context without the Project. The Proposed Action's respect for the small historic building is evidenced by the extensive landscaping plan, which would provide more open space around the building and provide new opportunities for visitors to appreciate and learn about the building and its history. Furthermore, the Project's massing plan would place the tallest elements away from the historic building, and would buffer it with a mid-rise element.

This proposed mid-rise building set closest to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building would be reminiscent of the large (85 feet tall) main factory building that originally dominated the factory complex, and would accentuate the historic building within the new development. The large 5-story Terra Cotta Works factory stood on the Project Site, approximately 100 feet to the west (Figure 8-3). Although the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building has stood alone for many years, it is important to remember that it was not always that way—it was originally part of a large industrial complex that occupied the Project Site for nearly a century.

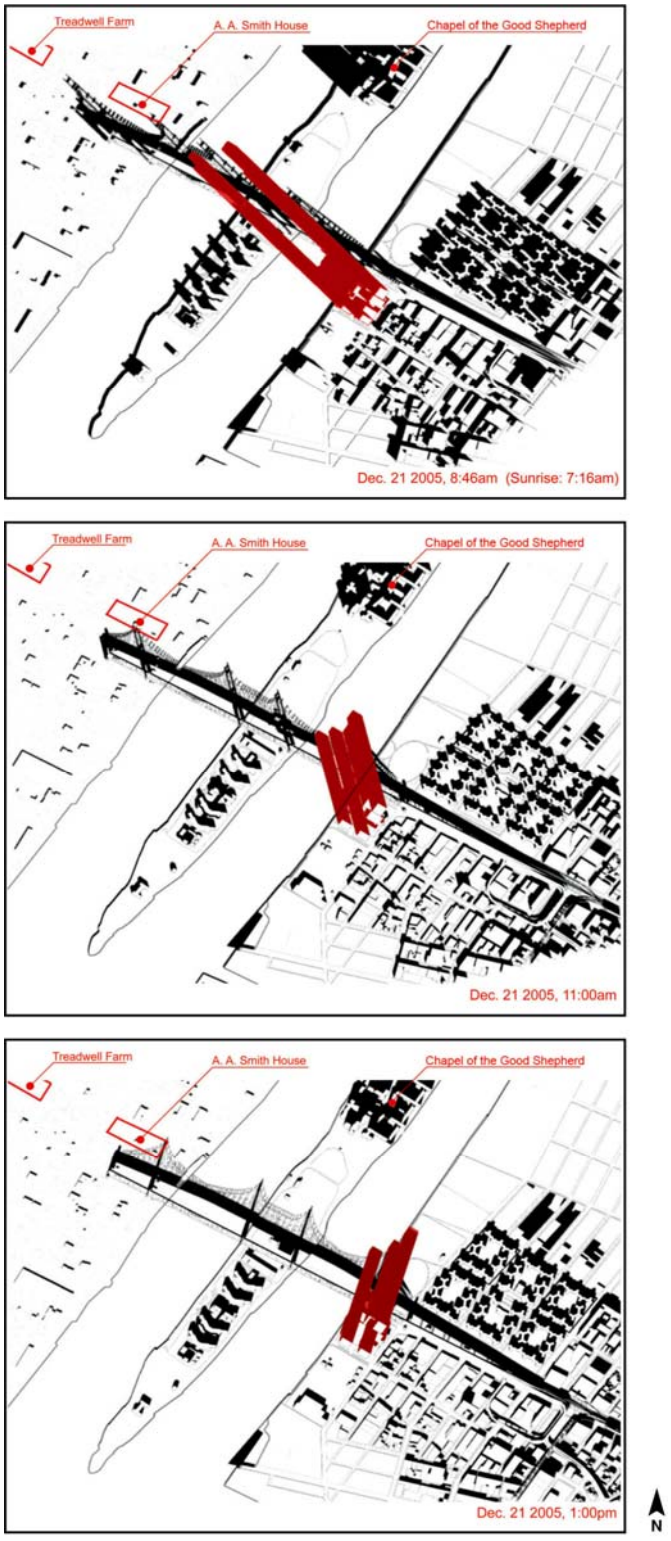
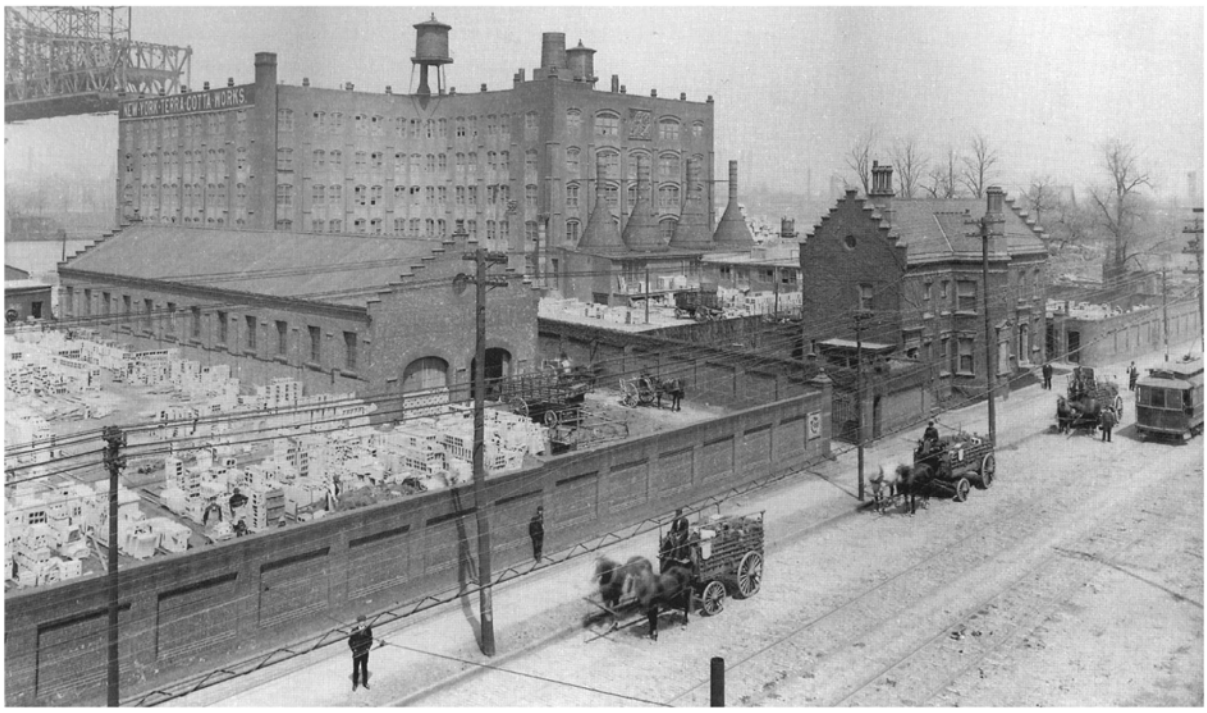


Figure 8-2:
Shadow Effect at Chapel of the Good Shepherd, Roosevelt Island



The New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company 1906.

Figure 8-3:
Historic Context

The three tall elements of the Proposed Action would change the existing scale of the site and vicinity, however, and would follow the current trend of high-rise development that has begun in the southern reaches of the Long Island City waterfront, which typifies recent New York City waterfront and CBD construction.

Given the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building's low scale—it stands approximately 45 feet tall—there are few existing views of the historic building except from points close by. It is visible only from Vernon Boulevard (from the south), westbound on 43rd Street, and partially from Queensbridge Park, where views of the building are partially obstructed by the stone bridge piers. The building is not visible from Manhattan, and there are only limited views from Roosevelt Island and from the east channel of the East River, due to its small scale and the rising topography at the shoreline. With the Proposed Action, these limited eastward views would be eliminated by the new Silvercup West building. However, direct views from the surrounding Long Island City streets would be enhanced by the improved visual environment, and most importantly, new views would be created from the new public walkways, plazas, and open spaces located throughout the Project Site. These new views and accessibility would be available from the proposed Terra Cotta Plaza around the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building. (Landscaping on the Project Site would feature terra cotta-inspired paving designed to enhance visitors' experience and heighten their appreciation of the historic building's design details [Figure 8-4]). Additionally the Applicant intends that the Esplanade would be paved in brick evoking the color and material of the historic building.

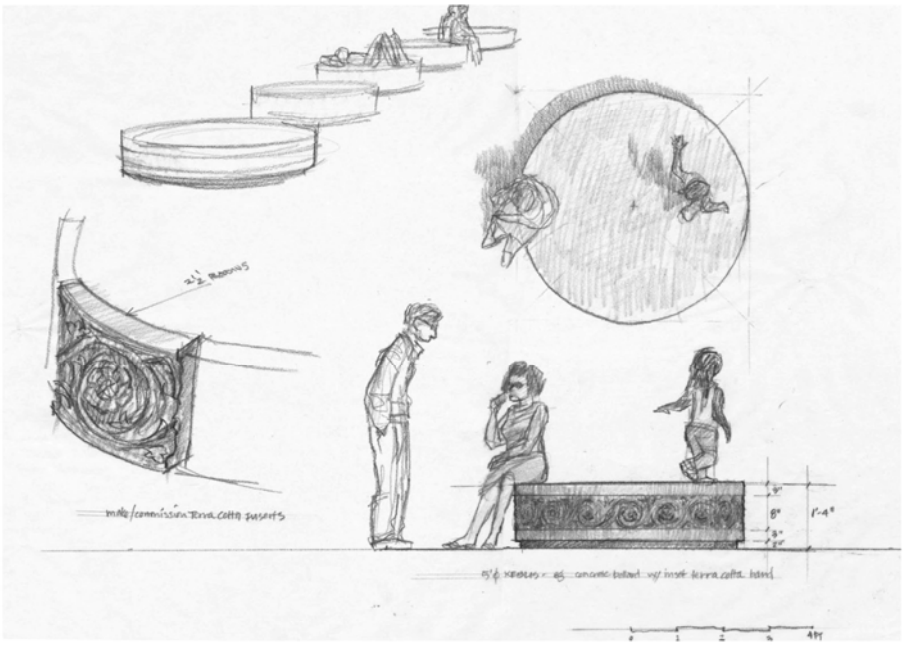
New shadows would be cast on the west façade of the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, but only in the afternoon time periods throughout the year. Both because this historic resource would receive sunlight during the morning throughout the year and because its historic integrity is not dependent on sunlight, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building as a result of new shadows created by the Proposed Action (see Chapter 7, "Shadows").

b) Queensboro Bridge

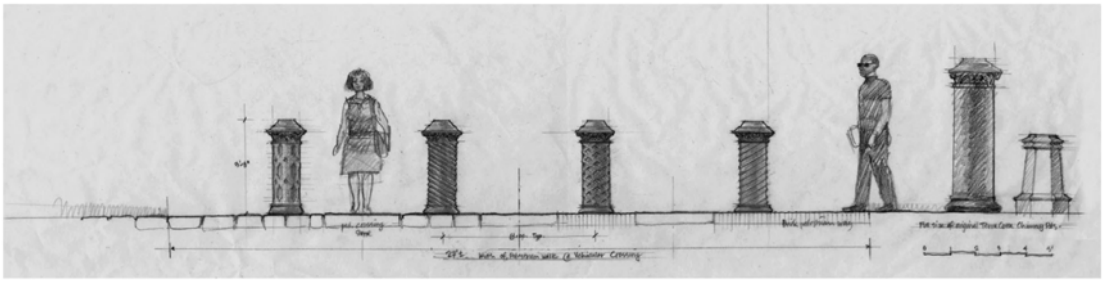
Like the Manhattan side of the East River, which features high-rise structures on all sides of the Queensboro Bridge (some rising 30 to 50 stories tall), the Proposed Action would introduce tall towers near the eastern end of the 354-foot-tall Queensboro Bridge in Queens. The nearest Project tower would be located about 100 feet south of the Queensboro Bridge, a distance slightly greater than the width of an average city street, and comparable to the distance between the western end of the Queensboro Bridge and the high-rise structures in Manhattan (Figure 8-5).

Echoing the arching profile of the bridge itself, the proposed tower heights would rise in a graduated fashion: the tallest elements would be sited further east (away from the waterfront) and at the southern end of the site, to minimize encroachment on views of the Queensboro Bridge and to maximize visibility of its easternmost tower from the river and from the new vantage points on the waterfront. Additionally, the Applicant intends to include visible x-bracing on the proposed towers which would reference the structural components of the bridge (Figure 8-5).

Views of the bridge from Queensbridge Park would remain unobstructed. However, the new towers of the Proposed Project would be clearly visible in the background, behind the bridge.



Proposed frieze on seating platforms.



Proposed bollard designs.

Figure 8-4:
Terra Cotta Inspired Design Elements
(for illustrative purposes)



View facing north toward Queensboro Bridge (Manhattan on left, Project Site on right).



View south from Queensbridge Park.

Figure 8-5:
Views of the Proposed Action

The location and massing of the towers are intended to maximize views of the Queensboro Bridge from various public perspectives. The lowest tower (stepping up from 429 feet tall on the western edge to 537.5 feet tall on the eastern edge) would be located 100 feet away from the bridge, while the tallest tower (600 feet tall) would be located 500 feet away from the bridge on the southern portion of the Project Site. The proposed open spaces, including plazas, the waterfront Esplanade, and the roof-top terrace, would all provide unique views of the bridge that do not exist today.

As with the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the historic Queensboro Bridge as a result of new shadows cast by the Proposed Action, because the historical significance and integrity of the Queensboro Bridge is not sunlight dependent (see Chapter 7, "Shadows"). Moreover, the duration of the shadows on the bridge would be limited. New shadows created by the Proposed Action would cross a small segment of the 7,449-foot-long bridge structure during the midday in March, May, and September and throughout the day during December.

2. Construction Protection

Given the proximity of the Project to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta building and the Queensboro Bridge, a construction protection plan would be devised to minimize potential damage from falling objects, ground vibration, changes in the water table, and other construction activities that could adversely affect these two historic resources. Construction of the Project would be required to meet New York City Department of Buildings requirements included in TPPN #10/88, concerning on-site construction period vibration monitoring. The construction plan would be developed to meet these requirements, and would describe in detail the site preparation procedures that would occur on the Project Site, provide documentation on the existing foundations and structural conditions of the two historic resources, and identify maximum vibration tolerances. Slurry or secant wall construction would be used to construct foundations. This would minimize the need for pile driving, greatly reducing the potential for adverse vibration-related impacts on either historic resource. Pile driving, if necessary, would be accompanied by vibration monitoring in the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company Building as a means of preventing impacts to this structure. The lifting of construction materials by cranes over the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building would be prohibited, eliminating the possibility of dropping heavy construction material onto the structure.

F. VARIATIONS

The three variations would be constructed within the same footprint and building envelope and use the same construction techniques as the Preferred Development Program and, therefore, would likewise not result in significant adverse impacts to architectural or archaeological resources. As with the Preferred Development Program, a construction protection plan would be developed to avoid potential damage to the New York Architectural Terra Cotta Company building and the Queensboro Bridge.