Chapter 9: Urban Design and Visual Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential for the proposed actions to affect urban design and visual resources. As defined in the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. A visual resource can include views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, or otherwise distinct buildings, and natural resources.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the two applicants—DD West 29th LLC (Applicant A) and West 30th Street LLC (Applicant B)—are requesting discretionary actions to facilitate the redevelopment of a Project Area comprising two project sites in the West Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan Community District 4. The two project sites are project site A at 601 West 29th Street (Block 675, Lots 12, 29, and 36) and project site B at 606 West 30th Street (Block 675, Lot 39), on the block bounded by West 29th and West 30th Streets, Route 9A/Twelfth Avenue and Eleventh Avenue. The Project Area also includes an intervening lot (Lot 38), which is not part of either project site (see **Figure 9-1**). The Project Area would be rezoned and included in the Special Hudson River Park District.

Based on the *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 No Action condition.

As described in detail in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed actions include a zoning map amendment, a zoning text amendment to include project sites A and B and Lot 38 in the Special Hudson River Park District and to map a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) designated area, special zoning permit to allow for the transfer of air rights from the park to project sites A and B, and future Chairperson's certifications. In addition, the development on project sites A and B also require an action by The Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT). Overall, the proposed actions would be expected to result in physical alterations beyond those allowed by existing zoning; thus, the proposed actions would result in projects that meet the threshold for a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources.

The proposed actions would allow for mixed-use developments with buildings of varying heights, including taller and shorter components. The proposed building on project site A would have residential and retail uses, parking, and may include an FDNY-EMS Station; on project site B, the proposed building would contain residential and retail uses and parking on the ground and second floors. The one-story brick building located on Lot 38 would remain and no construction would occur on that lot. It is assumed that the full build out would be completed by 2022.



Urban Design and Visual Resources
Reference Map

BLOCK 675 EAST

Figure 9-1

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources.

URBAN DESIGN

The proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to urban design. The proposed buildings would bring mixed used development with active ground floor uses to the Project Area. The buildings would be built to the sidewalk to maintain a consistent streetwall. While the proposed buildings would be taller than older buildings within the study area, they would be in keeping with the new buildings being developed over the rail yards north of West 30th Street and would act as a transition in scale between the older buildings to the south and the new developments to the northeast. The buildings would be in keeping with current development trends in the area and would improve the pedestrian experience.

VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on view corridors or visual resources in the study area.

The proposed projects would not obstruct any existing view corridors in the study area, including along Twelfth Avenue, the High Line, or the Hudson River Park. With the proposed projects, westward views on West 30th and West 29th Streets would continue to provide limited views and visual access to the Hudson River Park and the Hudson River. The Twelfth Avenue view corridor would include views to the new buildings within the Project Area and would continue to provide northward views toward the buildings in Hell's Kitchen and Midtown Manhattan and southward views to the One World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. Views eastward from the High Line toward the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan would already be limited by the Eastern Rail Yard project and would not be further limited by the proposed projects. The other view corridors and visual resources in the study area do not have a meaningful visual or contextual relationship with the Project Area and, therefore, would not be affected by the proposed projects. The visual resources in the study area exist in the context of the changing built environment of the study area. Skyline icons including the Empire State Building and One World Trade Center, the Hudson River, Hudson River Park, and High Line would remain available from existing vantage points as the proposed projects would be developed on an existing block.

Therefore, the proposed projects would not result in any significant adverse impacts to view corridors or visual resources in the study area.

B. METHODOLOGY

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. This analysis considers the effects of the proposed actions on the experience of a pedestrian in the study area. The assessment focuses on those project elements that have the potential to alter the built environment, or urban design, of the Project Area, which is collectively formed by the following components:

- *Streets.* For many neighborhoods, streets are the primary component of public space. The arrangement and orientation of streets define the location and flow of activity in an area, set street views, and create the blocks on which buildings and open spaces are organized. The apportionment of street space between cars, bicycles, transit, and sidewalks and the careful

design of street furniture, grade, materials used, and permanent fixtures, including plantings, street lights, fire hydrants, curb cuts, or newsstands are critical to making a successful streetscape.

- *Buildings*. Buildings support streets. A building's street walls form the most common backdrop in the city for public space. A building's size, shape, setbacks, lot coverage, and placement on the zoning lot and block; the orientation of active uses; and pedestrian and vehicular entrances all play major roles in the vitality of the streetscape. The public realm also extends to building façades and rooftops, offering more opportunity to enrich the visual character of an area.
- *Open Space*. Open space includes public and private areas such as parks, yards, cemeteries, parking lots, and privately owned public spaces.
- *Natural Features*. Natural features include vegetation and geologic, topographic, and aquatic features. Rock outcroppings, steep slopes or varied ground elevation, beaches, or wetlands may help define the overall visual character of an area.
- *View Corridors and Visual Resources*. A visual resource is the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including important view corridors, views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources.

Wind conditions also affect the pedestrian experience of a given area. Channelized wind pressure from between tall buildings and down-washed wind pressure from parallel tall buildings may cause winds that affect pedestrian comfort and safety. While the proposed actions could result in the construction of two tall buildings within the Project Area, the location is not on or in close proximity to the waterfront. It is located on the eastern half of the block between Twelfth Avenue (a six-lane highway) and Eleventh Avenue, and the western-most portion of the Project Area along West 29th Street is approximately 400 feet from the eastern-most edge of Hudson River Park (and approximately 500 feet from the Hudson River bulkhead). Further, the tower portions of the two buildings that could be constructed within the Project Area would be located closer to or on the Eleventh Avenue end of the Project Area, even farther from the waterfront. Therefore, it is not expected that the two buildings located at the Eleventh Avenue end of the block away from the waterfront would result in an exacerbation of wind conditions due to 'channelization' or 'downwash' effects that may affect pedestrian comfort and safety, and a pedestrian wind analysis is not warranted.

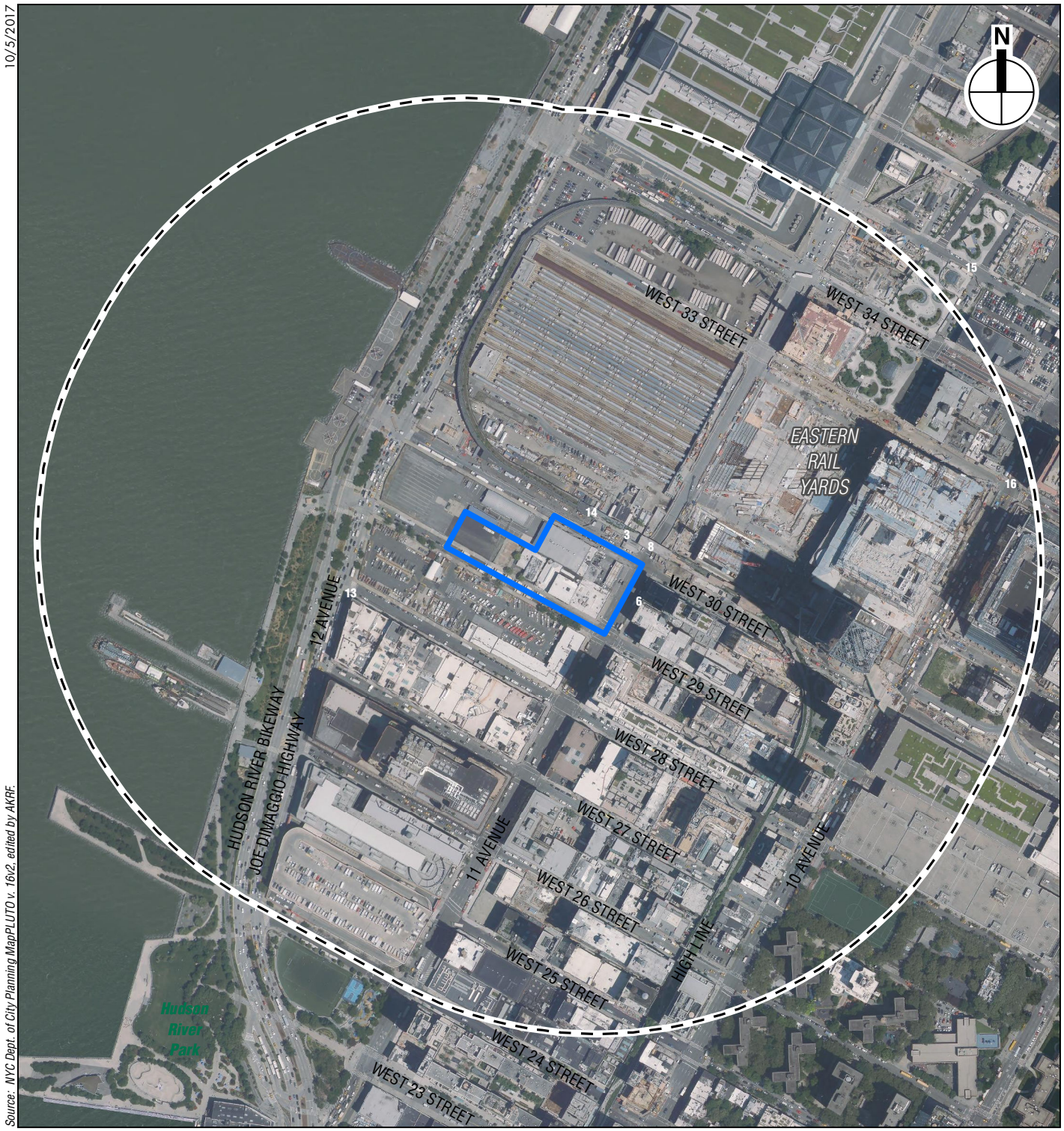
Consistent with the land use, zoning, and public policy analysis, the following analysis considers a ¼-mile study area around the Project Area, with a particular focus on the area within 400 feet of the Project Area (see **Figures 9-1 and 9-2**). This analysis addresses the urban design and visual resources of the Project Area, granting site, and study area for existing conditions, the future without the proposed actions (the No Action condition), and the future with the proposed projects (With Action condition) for the 2022 Build year, when the complete build out of the proposed projects are expected to be completed.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

URBAN DESIGN

PROJECT AREA

The Project Area comprises two project sites—project site A (Lots 12, 29, and 36) and project site B (Lot 39)—and one additional lot (Lot 38) (see **Figures 9-1 and 9-2**).



Source: NYC Dept. of City Planning MapPLUTO v. 16v2, edited by AKRF.

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Project Area

Study Area (1/4-mile boundary)

Urban Design and Visual Resources
Aerial Photograph
Figure 9-2

BLOCK 675 EAST

On project site A, Lot 12 contains a four-story warehouse, a one-story former garage, a two-story commercial building, and a temporary surface easement on the western 210 feet maintained by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ); Lot 29 contains a one-story former garage; and Lot 36 contains a gas station (see **Figure 9-3**). The western portion of Lot 12 is developed with the temporary surface easement. Immediately to the east is the two-story (approximately 24-foot-tall) office building at 615 West 29th Street that is set back from the sidewalk beyond a chain-link fence. The building is clad in corrugated metal with small window openings, and has a narrow covered front porch. To the east of this is the one-story (approximately 34-foot-tall) red brick garage at 609-611 West 29th Street which has two large garage door openings, two pedestrian entrances, and large rooftop mechanical equipment. The four-story (approximately 48-foot-tall) warehouse building at 603-607 West 29th Street is faced in red brick, has two loading docks, a garage entrance, and two pedestrian entrances (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 1). The building has regularly spaced rectangular windows, and a fire escape that extends between the second floor and the roof. Lot 29 is located immediately east of the warehouse on Lot 12.The one-story brick former garage building at 601 West 29th Street has four garage bays with frosted-glass and metal garage doors and a central pedestrian entrance (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 1). Lot 36 at the corner of West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue contains a gas station with three gas pump islands under a flat canopy structure (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 2). A small, one-story office and automotive service building is located at the southwest corner of the lot. The gas station entrances on West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue have frequent vehicular traffic and are located within close proximity to the High Line entrance stairs. The traffic at the gas station makes pedestrian access difficult at various times of the day.

Project site B contains a one-story (approximately 28-foot-tall) brick garage with three garage bays that have metal rolling security gates, three large glass-block window openings with metal ventilation grills, and three pedestrian entrances (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 3).

Lot 38 is located between project site B and Lot 36 on project site A. Lot 38 contains a non-descript one-story brick garage building (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 3).

The remainder of the project block (Block 675, Lot 1) is subject to a temporary easement by PANYNJ that currently is used for bus parking. There is a large metal structure at the northeast corner of the lot, and the entire site is enclosed by chain-link fencing.

The sidewalks adjacent to the Project Area vary in width. On West 29th and West 30th Streets, the sidewalks are approximately 12 feet wide. There is one standard cobra head streetlight adjacent to 603-607 West 29th Street on Lot 12 of the Project Area and one at the eastern end of Lot 39. The Eleventh Avenue sidewalks adjacent to the Project Area are approximately 15 feet wide, with two wide curb cuts at the north and south ends of the gas station and standard cobra head streetlights with hanging traffic lights at West 30th Street. A bus stop and telephone booth are located at the corner of Eleventh Avenue and West 29th Street, adjacent to Lot 29 within the Project Area. There are no street trees adjacent to the Project Area.

GRANTING SITE

The Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT) has identified portions of the property known as Chelsea Piers as the granting site. Chelsea Piers includes Piers 59, 60 and 61 and the headhouse directly west of Eleventh Avenue between West 22nd and West 17th Streets. The three-story headhouse and two-and-one-half story piers contain sports and recreational facilities, a movie and television studio, and several restaurants along the Hudson River.



Lot 12 and Lot 29 of project site A contain a four-story brick warehouse, a two story commercial building, and a one-story former garage. View from Eleventh Avenue at West 29th Street looking northwest. **1**



Lot 36 of project site A contains a gas station with curb cuts along West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue. The four-story warehouse on Lot 12 can be seen on the right. View from the High Line at West 30th Street west of Eleventh Avenue looking south. **2**



Lot 38 contains a one-story garage. Project site B comprises Lot 39 which is developed with a one-story brick garage. View from the High Line at West 30th Street west of Eleventh Avenue looking southwest. **3**



The Hudson River Park has bikeways and walkways, seating areas, and upland landscaping. View from bikeway near West 26th Street looking north. **4**



STUDY AREA

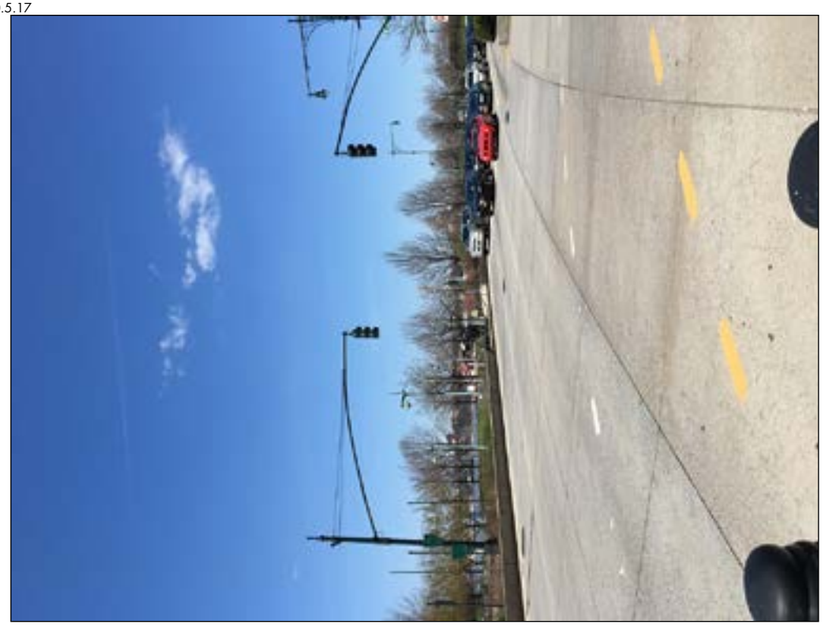
The ¼-mile study area is generally bounded by Tenth Avenue to the east, the Hudson River to the west, West 34th Street to the north, and West 24th Street to the south (see **Figures 9-1 and 9-2**). The western portion of the study area contains the Hudson River and Hudson River Park, including an extensive walkway/bikeway system, green space, former Pier 66, and the West 30th Street Helipad (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 4 and **Figure 9-4**, photo 6). The study area to the north includes the Eastern and Western Rail Yards of Hudson Yards and the Eastern Yards redevelopment project that includes the ongoing construction of tall buildings and public greenspace. The new buildings will contain a mix of ground floor retail, residential, and commercial buildings constructed over the Hudson Rail Yard. The eastern section of the study area is a mix of newer residential buildings with ground floor retail and older commercial buildings. The southern portion of the study area contains older former industrial buildings and warehouses, and the U.S. Postal Service Vehicle Maintenance Facility (USPS VMF). **Figures 9-4 through 9-9** provide photographs of the study area.

Streets

The study area streets are generally laid out in a grid, though the grid is interrupted by a few superblocks and Twelfth Avenue which extends at an angle south of West 30th Street (see **Figures 9-1 and 9-2**). The rail yards owned and operated by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), which are located between Tenth and Twelfth Avenues and West 30th and West 33rd Streets form two larger blocks just north of the Project Area. Between West 31st Street and West 33rd Street, Dyer Avenue runs below raised concrete decking creating a larger block bounded by Tenth Avenue, Ninth Avenue, West 30th Street, and West 33rd Street. The Jacob K. Javits Center creates a superblock north of the rail yards on a block bounded by Twelfth Avenue and Eleventh Avenue, West 34th Street and West 40th Street. South of the Project Area, the USPS VMF occupies a large, irregularly shaped block bounded by Twelfth Avenue and Eleventh Avenue, West 24th Street and West 26th Street (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 5).

Study area streets vary in width. Generally, the north-south avenues are 100 feet wide and carry one-way traffic, while the east-west cross streets are narrower, typically sixty feet wide, with one-way traffic. Twelfth Avenue (approximately 100 feet wide) is the primary north-south roadway in the western portion of the study area. It is a six-lane surface level divided highway, with raised medians—approximately 21 feet wide—that contain plantings, trees, decorative lighting, and bollards (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 6). There is one lane of ribbon parking on the north-bound side of the highway. West 34th Street is a major east-west cross-street in the northern section of study area that is 100 feet wide with two-lanes of two-way traffic, two dedicated bus lanes, and curbside parking on either side of the street. Dedicated bike lanes are located on West 30th and West 29th Streets. Adjacent to the Project Area, DSNY vehicles park along both sides of West 29th Street.

Street furniture in the study area includes decorative and standard street lighting, parking regulation signs and parking meters, subway station entrances, bus stop signs and shelters, parking meter kiosks, newspaper stands, fire hydrants, garbage cans, concrete and steel protective bollards and jersey barriers, concrete planters, benches, mailboxes, newspaper boxes, produce stands and food cart vendors, pay telephones, bike racks, and Citi Bike parking stations. Several buildings have rooftop water towers. Directional roadway signage spans above portions of Twelfth Avenue and Tenth Avenue, and bus lane signage above portions of West 34th Street. Some buildings have rooftop or façade-mounted billboards. Most streets in the study area have parallel parked vehicles, including cars and trucks. Stairs and elevators providing entry to the



6 Views from Twelfth Avenue include the foliage of the median and Hudson River Park and the Hudson River where there are breaks in the foliage.



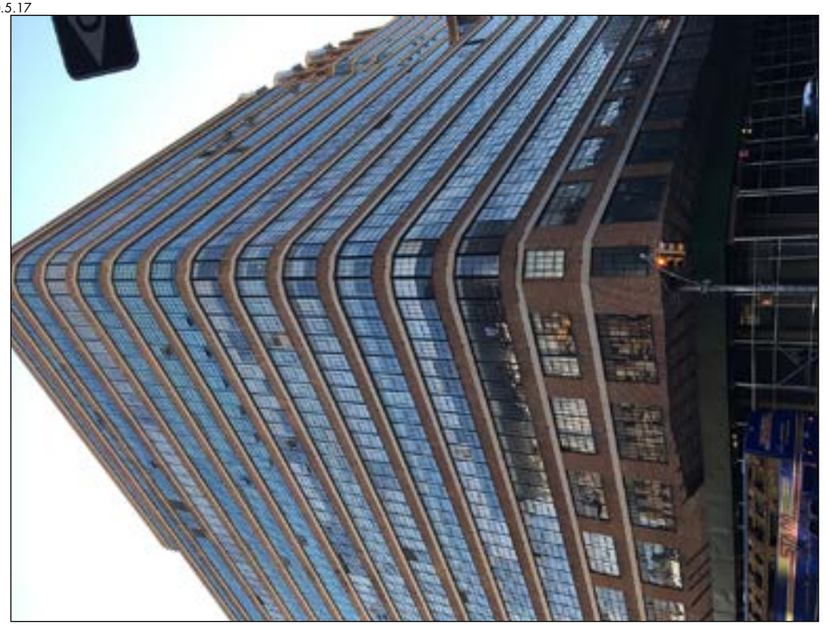
7 Buildings under construction in the Eastern Rail Yards include the recently completed 52 story building at 10 Hudson Yards.



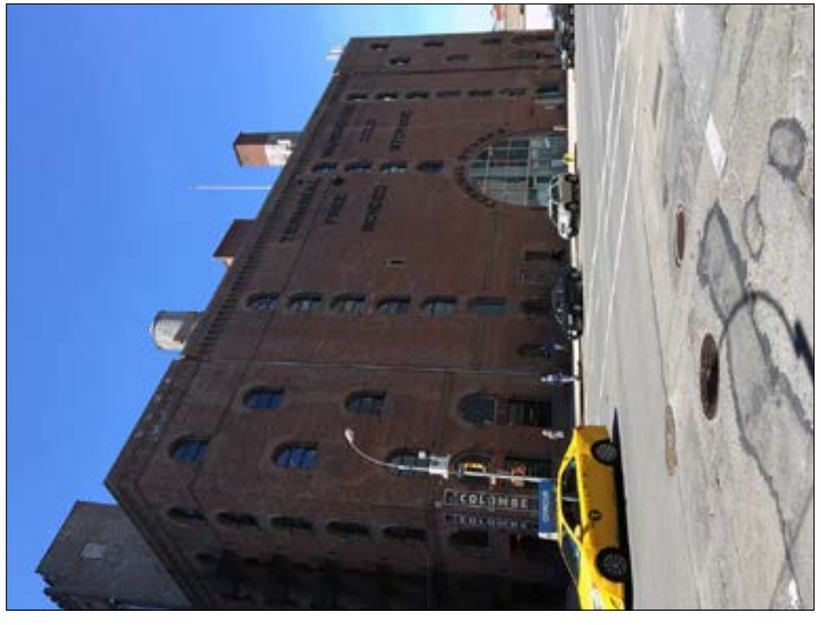
5 The USPS VMF occupies an irregularly shaped block and is clad in concrete and metal. View from West 24th Street at Twelfth Avenue looking northeast.



8 The former W & J Warehouse building, seen on the right, is one of the older masonry buildings located in the study area. The building on the left is the recently constructed 312 Eleventh Avenue, a mixed-use building clad in glass and concrete.



10 The Starett-Lehigh building rises 22 stories and occupies an entire block. The building is has steel-frame ribbon windows and brick spandrel panels.



9 The New York Terminal Building occupies a full block and rises between seven and nine stories without setbacks.



11 The High Line is an elevated walkway with landscaped areas, seating, and artwork. The High Line provides expansive views to the Hudson River to the west and Midtown Manhattan to the east.



12 The view west along West 29th Street is constrained, but includes the Hudson River Park, a partial view of the Hudson River, and the New Jersey waterfront.





13 The High Line is an elevated linear park. A stair entrance is located adjacent to project site A. View from Eleventh Avenue at West 30th Street looking northwest.



14 The elevated structure of the High Line limits views within the study area. View from Tenth Avenue at West 33rd Street looking south.



15 The narrowness of the cross streets, traffic, parked cars and the elevated High Line limit views east and west.



16 The elevated structure of the High Line limits views within the study area. View from Tenth Avenue at West 33rd Street looking south.





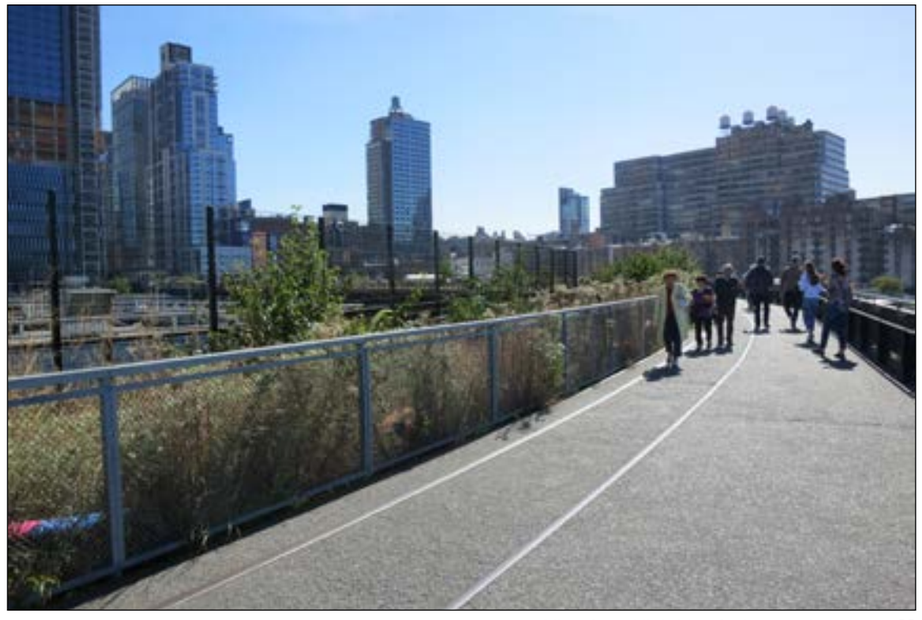
11th Avenue at west 24th Street looking north **17**



11th Ave at West 34th Street facing south **18**

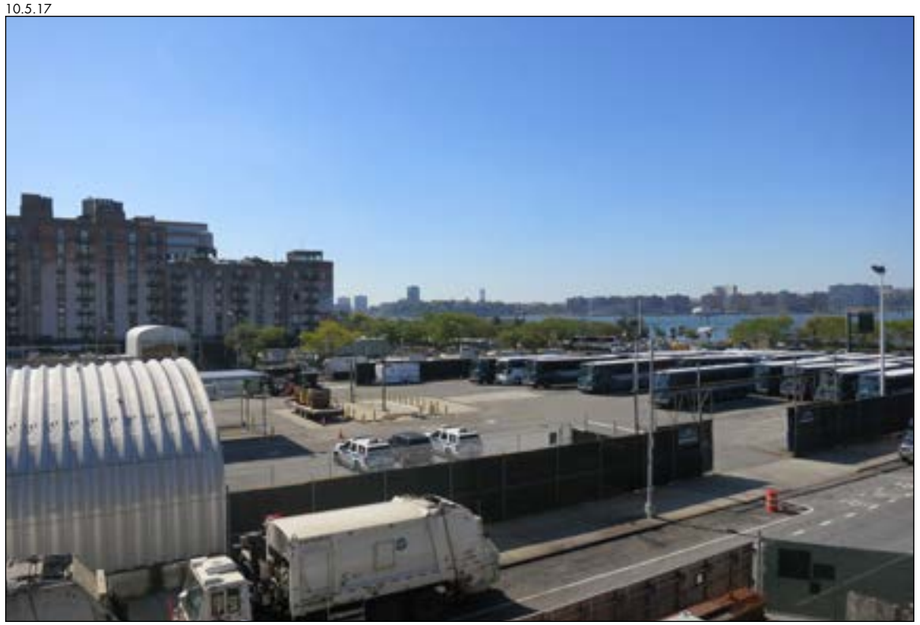


West 34th Street facing southwest **19**



View from High Line facing southeast **20**





View from High Line facing southwest **21**



View from High Line at West 29th Street facing west **23**





Fig 9-13, photo 22 -- view from HL at W30th St facing west **22**



View from West 30th Street west of the High Line **24**



30th street east of 10th Avenue looking west **25**



View from West 29th Street west of the High Line **26**



View from West 29th Street east of the High Line **27**



High Line are located at West 23rd Street, West 26th Street, West 28th Street, West 30th near Tenth Avenue and at Eleventh Avenue and West 34th Street at Eleventh Avenue.

Street trees in the study area are limited, with most street trees located on the avenues. In contrast, Twelfth Avenue has many trees and landscaped areas in the medians and more extensive plantings in the Hudson River Greenway to the west, as described in "Open Space and Natural Features." Various plantings, including trees, landscape the raised High Line which creates an elevated greenspace that cuts through existing blocks within the study area.

Entrances to the Hudson River Park (described below) are located on the west side of Twelfth Avenue at West 34th, West 30th, West 29th, West 26th, and West 24th Streets. Typically, the entrances are accompanied by off-set crosswalks and are demarcated by Belgian block. Within the study area, the crosswalks at the park entrances are the only crosswalks spanning Twelfth Avenue and pedestrian traffic tends to be higher at these intersections. A bicycle lane with access to the park is located at West 30th Street. The West 29th Street Hudson River Park entrance is the largest of the entries with two crosswalks, a separate bike lane, raised planters, and art installations.

Entrances to the High Line are located on the south side of West 34th Street between Twelfth and Eleventh Avenues, at the northwest corner of West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue, on the south side of West 30th Street west of Tenth Avenue, on the south side of West 28th Street west of Tenth Avenue, and on the north side of West 26th Street west of Tenth Avenue. The entrance located on West 34th Street is the starting point of the High Line and is the only at-grade entrance to the park within the study area. A tall metal fence and plantings surround the entrance. Metal stairs provide access to the High Line at West 30th, West 28th, and West 26th Streets and an elevator is located at West 30th east of Tenth Avenue. Pedestrian traffic in the areas immediately surrounding these entrances is heavier, particularly at the West 30th Street entrance which is the only entrance within the study area located at an intersection.

Buildings

Building types vary by location in the study area: recently constructed or under-construction large residential and mixed-use buildings in the northern and eastern portion of the study area; low-rise light industrial buildings in the western portion of the study area; mid-size former manufacturing buildings, many of which have been converted to commercial use in the southern portion of the study area.

Recent construction of mixed-use buildings in the study area is concentrated north of West 30th Street within the Hudson Yards development project. Once completed, the project will consist of 18 million square feet of new residential and commercial space and 14 acres of open space constructed over the existing rail yards. The development incorporates the High Line through both building integration and landscaping. The Eastern Rail Yard project is currently underway as phase one of this work, developing new, large, primarily glass-curtain-wall buildings. The first completed building within the development is a 52-story (approximately 895-foot-tall) glass building located at 10 Hudson Yards (Tenth Avenue just north of West 30th Street) that rises without setbacks along its north and west façades (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 7). Five other buildings are currently under construction with the Eastern Rail Yard and are described below in the No Action Condition. Other residential buildings located to the east and north of the Project Area include the recently constructed 37-story (approximately 355-foot-tall) residential building at 312 Eleventh Avenue, across from the Project Area (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 8). The building has large punched window openings, and the tower rises from a five-story base. Ground floor retail

fronts onto Eleventh Avenue and the western end of the West 30th Street façade, and a parking garage entrance is located at the eastern end of the West 30th Street façade. The building is clad in glass and concrete. Located on the east side of Eleventh Avenue between West 29th and West 28th is a recently constructed residential building with ground-floor retail and parking. Along Eleventh Avenue, a 30-story (approximately 328-foot-tall) tower rises from a six-story base; along West 28th Street the building rises 13 stories without setbacks. The building is clad in glass, brick and concrete. At the southwest corner of Tenth Avenue and West 29th Street, 323 Tenth Avenue is a recently constructed 35-story (approximately 385-foot-tall) residential building with ground floor retail. Along Eleventh Avenue, the building has a setback after the sixth floor clad in glass.

The industrial buildings include a one- and two-story (approximately 18- to 28-foot-tall) L-shaped concrete block building used by Con Edison across West 29th Street from the Project Area. The site occupies an entire block—bounded by Twelfth and Eleventh Avenues and West 29th and West 28th Streets—and also contains a large surface parking lot. A ribbon window between the first and second floor extends across the two-story portion of the Eleventh Avenue façade and wraps around to the West 29th Street façade and square punched windows are located on the second floor on Eleventh Avenue and West 29th Street. On West 28th Street there are no door or window openings. East of the project site, a mini-storage facility is located at 541 West 29th Street in the former W & J Sloane Warehouse and Garage building (see Chapter 8, "Historic and Cultural Resources"). The 10-story (approximately 134 foot-tall) brick building has a small, paved loading area at the southwest corner of the lot with two garage entrances and two pedestrian entrances (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 8). The upper window openings on the Eleventh Avenue and West 29th Street façades have been filled in. At the southern boundary of the study area, tow vehicle maintenance and storage occupy most of the superblock bounded by Twelfth and Eleventh Avenues and West 26th and West 24th Streets. The USPS VMF is separated by a private driveway from the NYC Department of Sanitation (DSNY) repair shop to the north. The USPS VMF building is three stories (approximately 77 feet tall) and clad in concrete and metal with metal ventilation screens (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 5). A large garage entrance with a roll-down security gate is located toward the eastern end of the West 24th Street façade. At the southwest corner of the building, a ribbon-window opening is located between the first and second floors and extends from the garage opening and wraps along the Eleventh Avenue façade. The brick DSNY building is two stories (approximately 90 feet tall). Along Eleventh Avenue, the building has four garage-bay entrances with corrugated roll-down garage doors and one wide curb-cut. The building is topped with a tall, circular decorative metal frame. Along Twelfth Avenue, two shorter, curving sections are built out to the sidewalk. There are two garage entrances with metal roll-down garage doors at the north end and an oversized garage entrance is centered on the façade and set at an angle to Twelfth Avenue. Large plate glass windows cover most of the second floor and follow the curve of the lower, projecting southern portion of the façade.

In the southern portion of the study area, the West Chelsea Historic District (see Chapter 8 "Historic and Cultural Resources") which is roughly bounded by West 28th and West 25th Streets, Twelfth and Tenth Avenues, consists of former industrial and warehouse buildings that are clad primarily in brick with evenly spaced window openings. The buildings typically have footprints between 5,000 sf to 136,000 sf and range in height from two-story former stables to 22 stories. Many of the historic district buildings in the study area have been converted to commercial use. The New York Terminal Building has a large footprint (approximately 136,000 square feet) and occupies a full block bounded by Twelfth and Eleventh Avenues, West 28th and

West 27th Streets (see **Figure 9-5**, photo 9). The brick building rises between seven to nine floors (between approximately 80 to 102 feet) without setbacks. A two-and-a-half story arch is centered on each of the avenue façades and provides the primary entrances for the ground floor commercial space. The Starrett-Lehigh building at 601West 26th Street was completed in 1931 and originally used as a warehouse and for manufacturing (see **Figure 9-5**, photo 10). The central portion of the building rises 22 stories (approximately 297 feet) with setbacks occurring after nine stories; along Eleventh Avenue it rises 15 stories before a setback; and on Twelfth Avenue it rises the full height of 11 stories. Beginning on the fifth floor, strips of multi-paned steel ribbon windows encircle most of the building and curve around the rounded corners. On each floor, the large windows are set above narrow brick spandrel panels and exposed concrete floor slabs. The building is now used as a commercial loft building. Smaller commercial buildings occupy the mid-blocks between Eleventh and Tenth Avenues. 518-534 West 26th Street is a ten-story (approximately 137-foot-tall) tan brick building with large window openings. Galleries occupy the first floor, with raised entries along West 26th Street. The primary entrance for the commercial spaces located on the upper floors is centered in the façade with a projecting glass overhang and frosted glass double-doors and sidelight.

The streetwall is generally varied and while most buildings are built to the property line, there is not a consistent base height. The older manufacturing and warehouse buildings tend to rise their full height without setbacks, while older garages or stables are shorter; newer buildings typically have a four to seven story base. Additionally, vacant lots, construction sites, and parking lots interrupt blocks. Surface parking lots near the Project Area include the western portion of the Project Area block which is currently occupied by The PANYNJ for staging and the possible construction of the recently announced PANYNJ, NJ TRANSIT, and Amtrak plans for the Hudson Tunnel Project, and the western portion of the block just south of the project site which is used by Con Edison for the parking and storage of automobiles, utility trucks, and equipment.

Open Space and Natural Features

The study area topography is generally flat. The Hudson River is the most prominent natural feature in the study area as it is the western boundary of the study area. However, its visibility from the study area is generally limited to areas closest to the river and from the elevated High Line. The Hudson River Park is a 500-acre linear park that extends along the Hudson River waterfront between West 59th Street and Battery Park at the southern end of Manhattan. The portion of the Hudson River Park within the study area includes a waterfront esplanade with upland areas improved with a habitat garden, landscaping, seating areas, decorative lighting, drinking fountains, bike path, bike racks, and grassy lawns (see **Figure 9-3**, photo 4). In the study area, the park also includes Piers 66, 66 Maritime, and 64. Piers 66 and 64 contain publicly accessible recreational amenities including kayaks and non-motorized boats for public use, sailing and outrigger canoe lessons, grassy lawns, and seating areas. Pier 66 Maritime contains a privately owned barge that operates as a seasonal bar and restaurant, and the historic lightship "Frying Pan" and former FDNY fireboat John J. Harvey which have limited public accessibly.

The High Line is the largest of the parks located within the study area. The elevated walkway is a former rail viaduct that spans from 14th Street to 34th Street and the portion within the study area includes pathways, landscaped areas, artwork, seating, and food kiosks (see **Figure 9-5**, photo 11). Chelsea Park is located on 28th Street between Ninth and Tenth Avenues with the western portion located in the study area. This park features swing sets, slides, basketball and handball courts, baseball fields, paved walkways, seating, play equipment, and planters. Hudson Park, located between West 36th Street and West 33rd Street, is a recently completed park that

includes landscaped areas set within pavers, seating, restrooms, a shaded playground, and decorative fountains (see **Figure 9-6**, photo 16).

VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, "a visual resource is the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources (p. 10-1)." There are no visual resources on the Project Area as the buildings on the Project Area are not visually distinct or visually prominent.

PROJECT AREA

Adjacent to the Project Area, views east along West 30th and West 29th Streets are limited due to the elevated High Line; views west include the Hudson River and the New Jersey waterfront beyond (see **Figure 9-5**, photo 12). On Eleventh Avenue, views to the south truncate at Chelsea Piers, just over a quarter-mile away, with distant views of the Goldman Sachs Tower in Jersey City partially visible over the headhouse at Chelsea Piers. Views north on Eleventh Avenue are limited by the elevated High Line, just north of the Project Area.

The Hudson River Park, Hudson River, and High Line are visual resources that can be seen from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Area. Components of the Hudson River Park that can be seen in views from the Project Area include walkways and bikeways, landscaped lawns and seating areas, and trees and foliage. The Hudson River vista with New Jersey in the distance is another visual resource that can be viewed from vantage points adjacent to the Project Area. However, because the Hudson River Park and the Hudson River are low, linear visual resources, their visibility diminishes to the east, with views being partially obstructed by trees in the Twelfth Avenue median (see **Figure 9-4**, photo 6). As the High Line is elevated above the street grid, it can be easily seen from several vantage points surrounding the Project Area, particularly the areas immediately north and east (see **Figure 9-6**, photo 13).

GRANTING SITE

The granting site is developed with piers and a headhouse and is not a visual resource. Views from the granting site include uninterrupted views of the Hudson River from the piers, the Starrett-Lehigh building, and One World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. Due to distance and the height of the intervening buildings, the Project Area is not currently visible from the granting site.

STUDY AREA

Visual resources in the study area include the Hudson River, the Hudson River Park, notable historic buildings within the West Chelsea Historic District including Starrett-Leigh, and the High Line. Skyline icons including the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan and One World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan are located outside of the study area, but are visible within it and are important visual resources.

View corridors include the north/south avenues, West 34th Street, and the High Line within the study area. Views on Twelfth Avenue include close views of the Hudson River, Hudson River Park, the High Line which is adjacent to Twelfth Avenue between West 30th and West 34th Streets, the Eastern Rail Yard project including the approximately 895-foot-tall 10 Hudson Yards, the Starrett-Lehigh building, and distant views of One World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan and the Goldman Sachs building in Jersey City to the south and views of Midtown

Manhattan and Hell's Kitchen—including the approximately 670-foot-tall Silver Towers building and the approximately 755-foot-tall New York Times building—to the north (see **Figure 9-7**). The Hudson River provides expansive views of buildings in Manhattan and the New Jersey waterfront. Along Eleventh and Tenth Avenues, views include the buildings lining these streets and longer southern views that include distant views of the Goldman Sachs building in Jersey City; northern views are truncated by the elevated High Line (see **Figure 9-6**, photo 14). Along Eleventh Avenue south of the High Line, the buildings on either side of the street vary in height, but form a consistent streetwall with a mix of older and newer buildings with large footprints and wide street frontages that are built out to the sidewalk (see **Figure 9-7**, photo 17). North of the High Line, recently constructed and under-construction buildings line the east side of the road and the High Line and concrete wall around the Wester Rail Yards partially blocks views to the south (see **Figure 9-7**, photo 18).

Along West 34th Street, views west include the Hudson River Park and the Hudson River, while views east include long views of the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan. West 34th Street is adjacent to the Eastern Rail Yard development site, and provides close views of the recently constructed Hudson Park and under-construction buildings (see **Figure 9-7**, photo 19). From the High Line, pedestrians are afforded raised, unobstructed views of the Hudson River Park and Hudson River to the west; Starrett-Lehigh to the south, and close views of the Eastern Rail Yard project (see **Figure 9-7** photo 20 and **Figure 9-8**). Views east include the Empire State Building.

Views along the east-west cross streets are limited due to the elevated High Line. Additionally, the narrowness of the streets and parked cars limit westward views, and the Hudson River is only visible from the cross streets within close proximity to the river (see **Figure 9-6**, photo 15 and **Figure 9-8**, photo 24; and **Figure 9-9**). However, the Hudson River vista, including the New Jersey waterfront and the wide expanse of sky, can be seen at a great distance along the east-west streets.

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

URBAN DESIGN

PROJECT AREA

Absent the proposed actions, it is assumed that the existing buildings on project sites A and B, and on Lot 38, will remain as in existing conditions. The PANYNJ temporary surface easement is also expected to remain on the western portion of Lot 12.

GRANTING SITE

Absent the proposed actions, the proposed transfer of floor area from Chelsea Piers to the Project Area would not occur. Without the proposed transfer of floor area and its financial benefit to HRPT, the Hudson River Park would not be able to fund improvements or would need to find alternate sources of funding.

STUDY AREA

As described in Chapter 2, "Analytical Framework," there are several projects planned or under construction in the study area that are expected to be built by 2022 (see Table 2-2 and Figure 2-1). These projects are expected to add new buildings to the study area that will change the built environment in terms of introducing new, taller and mid-rise buildings with a variety of forms, massings, and materials that will add new active uses that will enliven the streetscape of the

study area. The majority of these buildings will be constructed within the Eastern Rail Yards portion of the Hudson Yards project, located just north of the Project Area. These currently under-construction buildings include 15 Hudson Yards, an 88-story (approximately 910-foot-tall) residential building expected to be completed in 2018. The building will rise without setbacks and be clad in glass. Expected to be completed in 2019, 30 Hudson Yards, located northeast of the Project Area, is the tallest of the Eastern Rail Yards buildings and will rise 90 stories (approximately 1,296 feet). The building will be clad in glass and have 2.6 million sf of commercial space. 14 acres of open space are planned for the development.

Outside of the Eastern Rail Yards development, other No Action projects include a 33-story (approximately 367 feet) mixed-use building that will have residential over ground-floor retail. The building will be clad in copper-colored cast-stone and green glass and will be located east of the Project Area at 520 West 30th Street. Located, Other No Action projects in the study area are located at a greater distance from the Project Area and, therefore, do not have a contextual relationship with the Project Area. In general, the No Action projects are anticipated to be consistent with the changing urban design context of the study area and will enliven underutilized lots and add active street life to the study area.

While not expected to be competed by the 2022 build year, a Hudson Tunnel ventilation shaft structure is expected to be developed on the western-most portion of the block fronting onto Twelfth Avenue. As currently planned, the ventilation shaft would be constructed within the current as-of-right zoning envelope with a base height of 85 feet along Twelfth Avenue, West 29th and West 30th Streets and could rise to a total height of 150 feet. Along Twelfth Avenue the tower would be set back approximately 15 feet and along the side streets it would be set back approximately 30 feet.

VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

PROJECT AREA

Absent the proposed actions, it is conservatively assumed that the existing structures will remain on the Project Area with uses similar to or the same as existing uses.. DSNY has plans to vacate the property and is currently seeking approvals to construct a replacement facility on Manhattan's East Side, closer to the District 6 service area.There will be no change to any existing view corridors and visual resources.

GRANTING SITE

Absent the proposed actions, the proposed transfer of floor area from Chelsea Piers to the Project Area would not occur. Views from the granting site would continue to include views of the Hudson River, the Starrett-Leigh building, and One World Trade Center.

STUDY AREA

Views within the study area will substantially change as a result of the No Action projects in the study area. The development of the Eastern Rail Yard project will add taller buildings to a previously under-developed site. Views along Twelfth and Eleventh Avenues will include views of these new buildings. Along Twelfth Avenue, views toward Hell's Kitchen and Midtown Manhattan will be partially blocked and will include the new buildings. Views from the High Line will also include the new development, and at certain points along the linear park, views of skyline icons, including the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan, will be partially blocked by the new buildings. Views of the High Line from within the study area will not

change, however, as a result of the No Action projects. These new buildings will change the context of nearby visual resources including the High Line.

E. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

See Chapter 1, "Project Description," Figures 1-11 through 1-16 for the proposed plans and elevations for each project site. **Figure 9-10** is a proposed massing of the project sites with existing and No Build buildings. **Figures 9-11 through 9-16** show comparative No Action and With Action illustrative views of the Project Area.

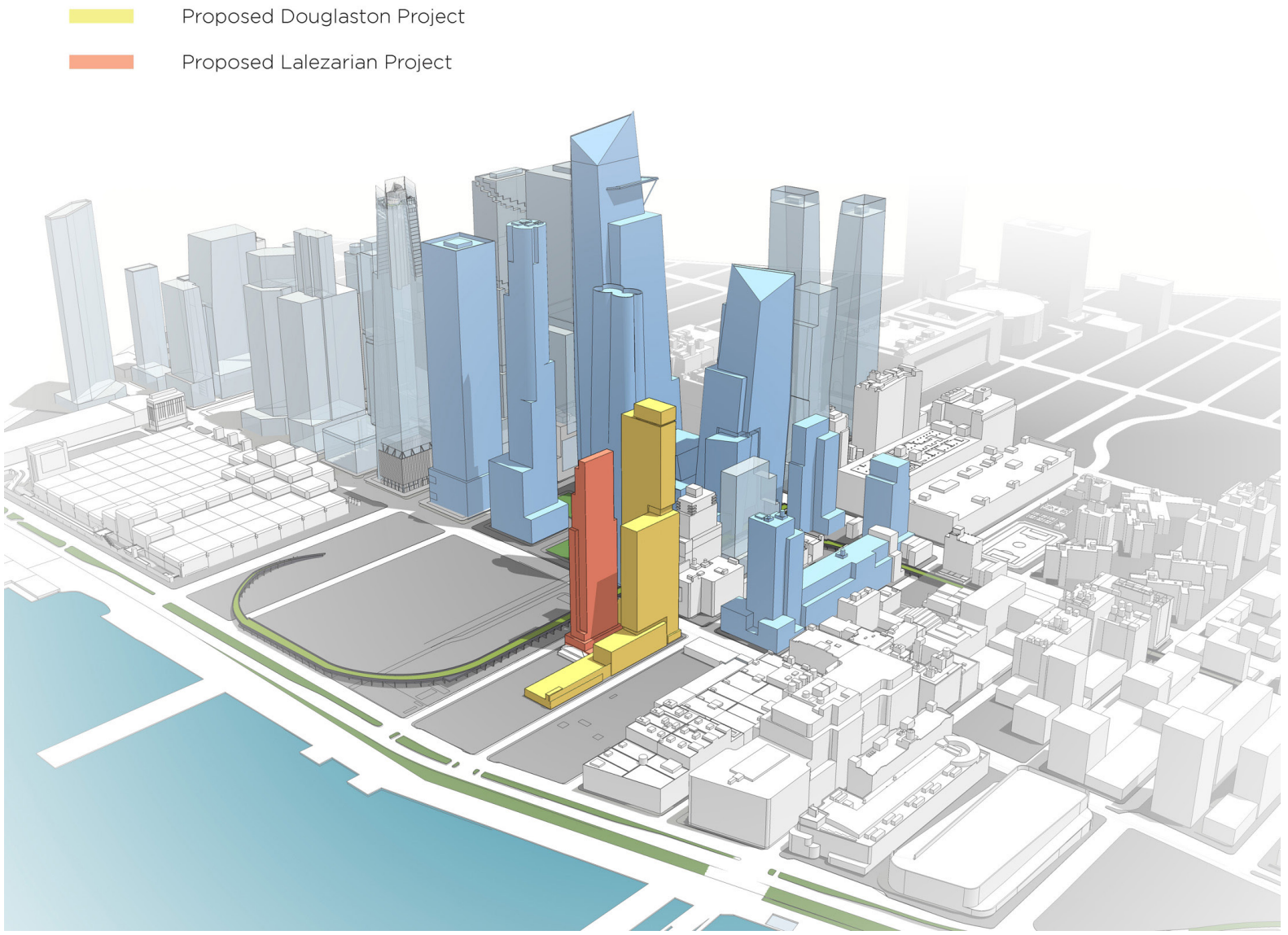
This analysis considers the maximum building envelope that could be developed with the proposed actions. As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," since Lot 38 would be rezoned and included in the special district, potential development on this site is conservatively assumed for purposes of the environmental review to be similar to the development on the two project sites.

URBAN DESIGN

PROJECT AREA

The proposed actions include a zoning map amendment, a zoning text amendment to include the sites in the Special Hudson River Park District and to map a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) designated area, special zoning permit to allow for the transfer of air rights, and future Chairperson's certifications. These actions would result in buildings that would be taller than allowed under current zoning. On project site A, the proposed 62-story building would have a two- to five-story L-shaped base with its primary residential entrance at the corner of West 29th Street and Eleventh Avenue. The tower would be approximately 700 feet tall (including approximately 40 feet for the building's mechanical bulkhead) and would be oriented north-south along Eleventh Avenue. The tower would be set back from the base and would rise in an L-shape with the West 29th Street façade rising to approximately 36 stories and the Eleventh Avenue façade rising to the full 62 stories without setbacks. Based on current design, the building's façade would be clad in glass and a masonry material, to act as a visual transition between the brick former industrial buildings found to the south and the glassy towers of the new Eastern Rail Yard to the north. The proposed building would be primarily residential, including affordable units consistent with Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) requirements. It would also contain retail uses, and may include an FDNY-EMS Station. The building would have ground floor retail frontages on both Eleventh Avenue and West 30th Street, and entrances on Eleventh Avenue. Parking for proposed project site A building would be located at the ground level, with the entrance centered on West 29th Street. The proposed FDNY-EMS Station would have an entrance on West 29th Street. Parking for the FDNY-EMS Station would be located on the western portion of Lot 12.

A 37-story building with a two-story base would be constructed on project site B. The tower would be up to approximately 520 feet tall (not including the building's mechanical bulkhead) and setback approximately 15 feet from the base. The building would be primarily residential, with retail and a parking facility located in the base of the building. The residential entrance would be centered on the building's West 30th Street façade with entrances to the flanking retail space. The proposed retail use would be located on the ground and second floor of the building. The parking entrance would be located toward the west end of the West 30th Street façade and would primarily occupy the second floor. Based on current design, the building would be primarily clad in glass.



Proposed Massing of Project Site A and B with Existing and No Build Buildings



Illustrative Rendering of Project Site A

Figure 9-11



Illustrative Rendering of Project Site B

Figure 9-12



Current/No Action Condition



With Action Condition

Comparison View from the High Line
Looking Southeast

Figure 9-13



Current/No Action Condition



With Action Condition

Comparison View from
High Line Entrance Looking West

Figure 9-14



Current/No Action Condition

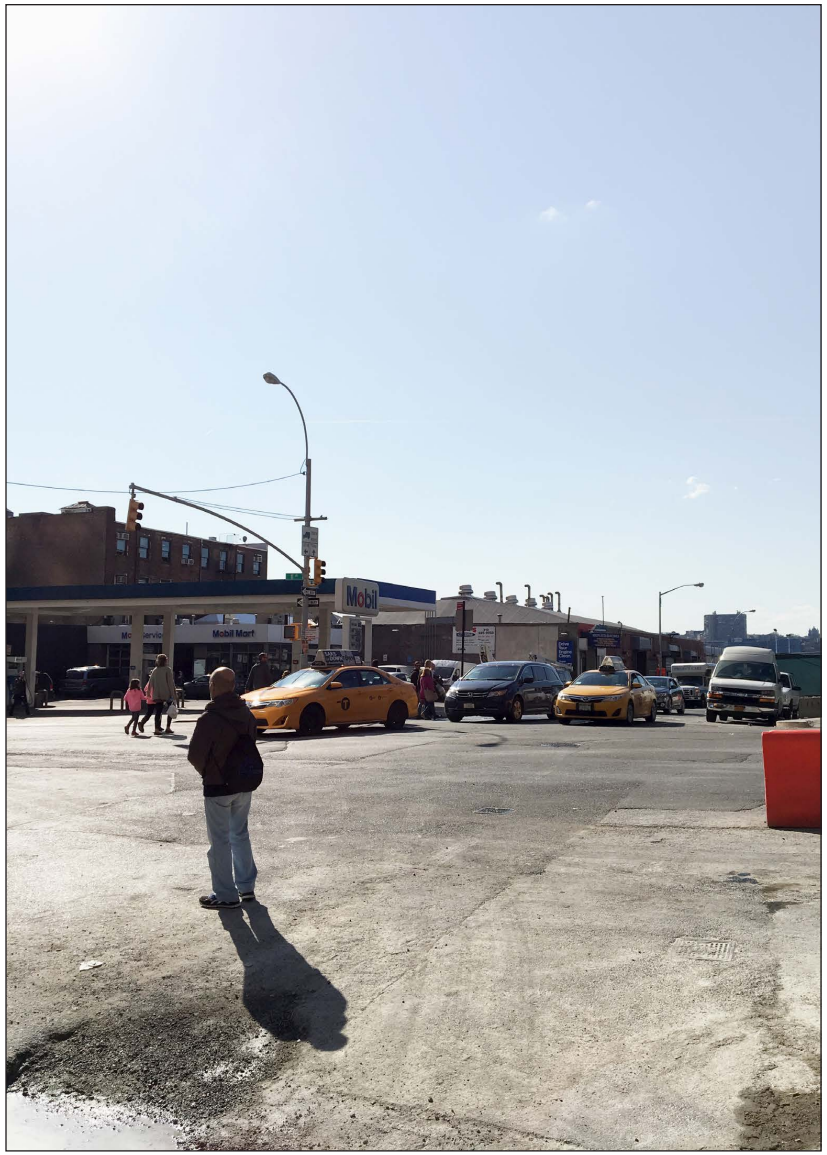


With Action Condition

Comparison View from 11th Avenue and West 29th Street Looking Northwest

Figure 9-15

10.23.17



Current/No Action Condition



With Action Condition

Comparison View from 11th Avenue and
West 30th Street Looking Southwest

Figure 9-16

While there is no proposal to develop or to transfer floor area from Hudson River Park to Lot 38 at this time, since it is proposed to be rezoned and included in the Special Hudson River Park District as a receiving site, its potential to be redeveloped under the proposed rezoning is conservatively considered as part of the environmental review. Assuming full utilization of the development potential of this site, the air rights generated by Lot 38 would allow for a 41-story building approximately 579 feet tall on project site B.

Compared to the No Action condition, the proposed project would replace warehouses, garages, and a gas station with two new mixed-use buildings that would enliven the surrounding area with active uses. In the No Action condition, project site A and project site B would continue in their current condition, and would continue to detract from the pedestrian experience with underutilized lots that do not engage the pedestrian and make access to the adjacent High Line and the Hudson River waterfront difficult. In contrast, the two new buildings that would be developed in the With Action condition would enliven the streetscape on West 29th and West 30th Streets and Eleventh Avenue with active ground floors. By replacing the existing gas station at the corner of West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue, the vehicle traffic generated by the gas station would be lessened making pedestrian crossing safer and easier to access the adjacent High Line entrance. The green roof on project site A would also visually extend the greenspace to the south of the High Line and would be visible to pedestrians on the High Line. The new buildings on project site A and project site B would improve the pedestrian experience on the High Line along West 30th Street by improving views toward the south with the green roof, visually interesting buildings, and by the removal of sanitation trucks and industrial properties currently on the project sites. Although the buildings would be taller than the older buildings to the south, they would be a similar scale to new buildings under construction in the immediate vicinity, and would be shorter than recently constructed or under-construction buildings in the Eastern Rail Yard development. The proposed buildings would be clad in a mix of glass and masonry allowing them to act as a visual transition between the newer glass towers to the north and the older masonry buildings to the south. The improvements to Hudson River Park, made possible by the funds of the transfer, would improve the physical appearance of the park area as compared to the No Action condition. Therefore, the proposed actions would not have significant adverse impacts on the urban design of the Project Area but would enhance the pedestrian experience by creating an enlivened streetscape, visually enhancing an underutilized lot, and improving pedestrian access to the High Line and the Hudson River.

GRANTING SITE

The transfer of floor area to the project sites would support significant improvements to Hudson River Park. As described in Chapter 6 “Open Space,” the funds generated by the transfer of air rights would be used for park improvements north of Chelsea Piers, but there would be no change at Chelsea Piers.

STUDY AREA

As described above, the proposed project would have beneficial streetscape effects in the areas closest to the Project Area as the proposed development would contribute active ground floor uses to the surrounding area and activate an underutilized site, in contrast with the No Action condition. These urban design components of the proposed project would enhance the pedestrian experience of the Project Area by improving traffic flow at the intersection of West 30th Street and Eleventh Avenue by replacing the gas station and improving ease of access to the High Line, and enlivening the street life. Additionally, the proposed project would improve visual east-west connections to the Hudson River and Hudson River Park by removing the DSNY trucks and

other utility vehicles parked along West 29th and West 30th Streets. The scale and materials of the new buildings would be in keeping with the new and under-construction buildings just north and east of the Project Area. On project site A, the 62-story (approximately 655-foot-tall) building would be similar to the 52-story (approximately 895-foot-tall) glass-clad building located at 10 Hudson Yards and 15 Hudson Yards which will be an 88-story (approximately 910-foot-tall) building when it is completed in 2018. These buildings are located within 600 feet of the Project Area. The 41-story (approximately 579-foot-tall) building on project site B would be similar in size to 10 Hudson Yards, and slightly taller than the 37-story (approximately 355-foot-tall) glass and concrete building and the 30-story (approximately 328-foot-tall) glass, brick, and concrete building located across Eleventh Avenue from the Project Area. The proposed buildings would be designed to incorporate elements of the industrial warehouses to the south while reflecting the size and materials of the newer buildings closer to the Project Area. The proposed buildings would act as a transition between the new buildings in the Hudson Yards development and around the High Line and those older buildings in the southern portion of the study area. In contrast, the No Action development would maintain one- to four-story buildings and a large parking lot on the site that would not act as a visual connection between the Eastern Rail Yard development and would not provide active use or improve the pedestrian experience. Further, the new buildings that would be constructed in the With Action condition would contribute vitality to the pedestrian experience through new active uses at the ground floor levels of the new buildings. In addition, the juxtaposing heights and forms, new street trees, and active ground floors would be in keeping with the changing urban design character of the study area and would not adversely affect a pedestrian's experience of the urban design characteristics of the study area.

VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

PROJECT AREA

Occupying an existing city block, the With Action developments would not obstruct any existing view corridors in the study area, including the view corridors on Twelfth Avenue, the High Line, or the Hudson River Park. With the proposed project, westward views on West 30th and West 29th Streets would continue to provide views and visual access to the Hudson River Park and the Hudson River. The Twelfth Avenue view corridor would include views to the new buildings on the Project Area and within the Eastern Rail Yard and would continue to provide northward views toward the buildings in Hell's Kitchen and Midtown Manhattan and southward views to the One World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan. Views eastward along West 30th Street and from the High Line toward the Empire State Building in Midtown Manhattan would already be limited by the Eastern Rail Yard project and would not be further limited by the proposed project. From the Hudson River Park, views toward the Project Area would include the new buildings which would be improved compared to the No Action condition.

GRANTING SITE

Within the Hudson River Park, upland park improvements and capital maintenance plans would improve the appearance of the park and views toward that resource. From Chelsea Piers, the top of the proposed buildings could be seen, however these would be distant views with several intervening buildings. As such, there would be no impact on views from the granting site.

STUDY AREA

In both the No Action condition and with the proposed project, views to visual resources—skyline icons including the Empire State Building and One World Trade Center, the Hudson River, Hudson River Park, and High Line—would remain available from existing vantage points as the proposed project would be developed on an existing block. In addition, these visual resources exist in the context of the changing built environment of the study area. Other visual resources in the study area would not be affected by the new buildings on the Project Area as the visual resources are located away from the Project Area and do not have a meaningful visual relationship with the site due to distance and intervening buildings. Therefore, the new buildings that would be constructed on the Project Area would not adversely affect visual resources in the study area.

Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to view corridors or visual resources in the study area. ✷