Chapter 7: Historic and Cultural Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

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

This chapter provides an assessment of existing and future conditions with and without the proposed project for the project site and a study area surrounding the site, which are described in detail below.

As part of the 2001 *FEIS*, a cultural resources assessment was undertaken to evaluate the possibility that archaeological resources might exist on the project block.[1] This report concluded that the project block was not sensitive for pre-contact or historic-period archaeological resources. The area that would experience subsurface disturbance with the proposed project has not expanded since the 2001 *FEIS*. Therefore, as the project block is not considered to be sensitive for archaeological resources, this analysis focuses on standing structures only.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

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

B. SUMMARY OF 2001 FEIS FINDINGS

The 2001 *FEIS* analyzed potential impacts resulting from the proposed development of the full block bounded by West 57th and 58th Streets and Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues. The 2001 *FEIS* concluded that development of the project block pursuant to either scenario would not result in any significant adverse impacts on historic or cultural resources. As described above, the project block was determined to be not sensitive for archaeological resources; thus, while the project would have involved subsurface disturbance on the project block, it would have no impact on archaeological resources. No architectural resources were identified on the project block, and thus the project was not anticipated to have any direct, physical impacts to on-site resources. Construction of the project was not anticipated to have any physical, construction-related impacts on the Consolidated Edison Power House. The project would have somewhat altered the context of the Consolidated Edison Power House, but this change in context was not

[1] *Cultural Resources Assessment Report, Durst West 57th Street, Manhattan, New York*, prepared by Historical Perspectives, Inc., January 2000.

considered to be adverse. In addition, while new shadows would fall on the Consolidated Edison Power House as a result of the project, no adverse shadows-related impacts were anticipated. Overall, the 2001 *FEIS* concluded that neither of the development program scenarios would result in any significant adverse impacts on historic resources.

C. METHODOLOGY

ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the analyses in this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) compare conditions in the future without the proposed project to conditions in the future with the proposed project. The future without the proposed project scenario in all technical areas assumes that none of the discretionary actions now being sought by the applicant are approved. Absent those approvals, it is assumed that development on the projected development sites would be within the envelope of the development analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*, but with a commercial building containing approximately 331,275 gsf of office use, 67,500 gsf of retail use and 239 public parking spaces on projected development site 1. (Absent the approvals, there would be no change in the assumed development of projected development site 2—the existing mini-storage building would remain). The assumption regarding projected development site 1 is based on the fact that the applicant has applied for a building permit for such a building (the permitted building). The permitted building can be constructed under the land use approvals granted in 2001 without further discretionary approvals or actions. It would be smaller than that which is permitted under current zoning, and, accordingly, assuming that development on projected development site 1 as a basis for comparing the impacts of the proposed project to the future without the proposed project is more conservative than using the more fully built out development scenario that was analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*.

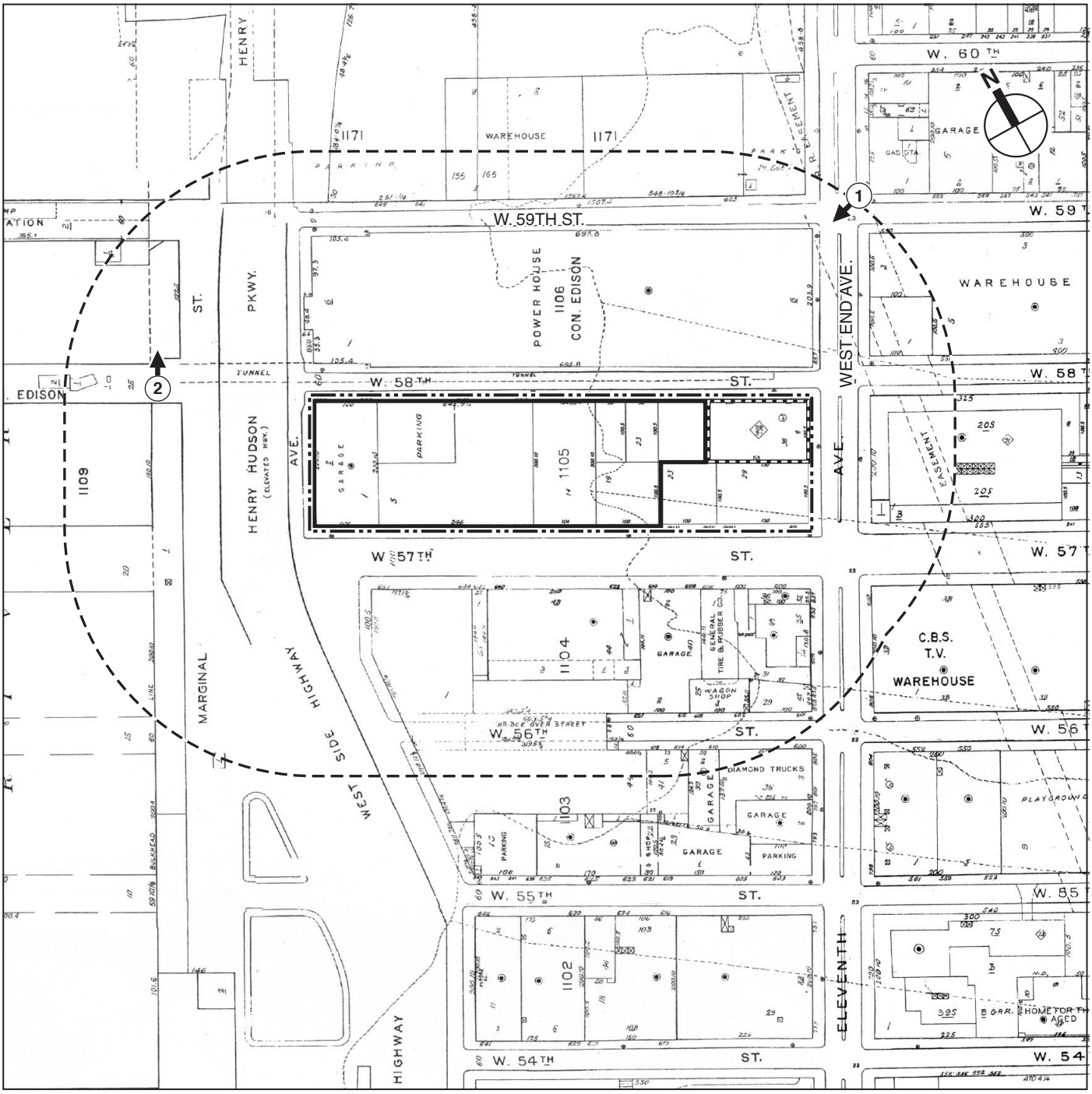
ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

Study areas for architectural resources are determined based on an area of potential effect for construction-period impacts, such as ground-borne vibrations, and on the area of potential effect for visual or contextual effects, which is usually a larger area. The study area has been defined as the project block and the area within 400 feet of the project block's boundaries (see **Figure 7-1**). This study area is consistent with 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology in developing study areas to assess an action's potential impacts on architectural resources, which sets forth that the size of the study area should be directly related to the anticipated extent of the action's impacts.

Since the 2001 *FEIS*, the area surrounding the project site has been marked by a change in context through the construction of buildings that are tall and of contemporary design. These include those built north of the project site as part of the Riverside South development and to the east along West End Avenue. The construction of these buildings has resulted in a mixed context of older, shorter buildings and taller towers, with the tall buildings generally limiting views to the project site. As such, potential contextual or visual impacts would not be anticipated to occur on resources beyond 400 feet of the project site.

To assess the potential impacts of the proposed project, an inventory of architectural resources in the study area was compiled. In accordance with CEQR guidelines, the inventory includes all officially recognized architectural resources. These resources ("known architectural resources") are defined as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs); properties or districts listed on the State

10.12.11



Projected Development Site 1 Boundary

Projected Development Site 2 Boundary

Project Block

Study Area Boundary
(400-Foot Perimeter)

① Photo View Direction
and Reference Number

Historic Resources Study Area

625 WEST 57TH STREET

Figure 7-1

and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), or previously determined to be eligible for such listing; New York City Landmarks (NYCLs) and Historic Districts (NYCHDs); and properties that have been considered for designation ("heard") by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) at a public hearing, calendared for consideration at such a hearing ("pending" NYCLs), or found by LPC to appear eligible for designation. This inventory includes one resource that has been determined eligible for listing on the S/NR by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) since the publication of the 2001 *FEIS*.

In addition to identifying known architectural resources, an evaluation of the study area was undertaken to identify any "potential architectural resources;" that is, other buildings in the study area that could warrant recognition as architectural resources (properties that could be eligible for S/NR listing or NYCL designation). Properties were evaluated based on site visits by an architectural historian and the review of prior studies of the study area.

Once the architectural resources in the study area were identified, the proposed project was assessed for its potential to have direct, physical impacts and/or indirect visual or contextual impacts on architectural resources. Direct impacts include demolition of a resource, and alterations to a resource that cause it to become a different visual entity. A resource could also be physically damaged from adjacent construction, either from vibration (i.e., from construction blasting or pile driving), or from falling objects, subsidence, collapse, or damage from construction machinery. Adjacent construction is defined as any construction activity that would occur within 90 feet of an architectural resource, as defined in the New York City Department of Building's (DOC) Technical Policy and Procedure Notice (TPPN) #10/88.[1]

Indirect impacts are contextual or visual impacts that could result from project construction or operation. As described in the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, indirect impacts could result from blocking significant public views of a resource; isolating a resource from its setting or relationship to the streetscape; altering the setting of a resource; introducing incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to a resource's setting; or introducing shadows over a historic landscape or an architectural resource with sun-sensitive features that contribute to that resource's significance (e.g., a church with stained-glass windows).

The setting of each architectural resource, including its visual prominence and significance in publicly accessible views, whether it has sun-sensitive features, and its visual and architectural relationship to other architectural resources, was taken into consideration for this analysis.

D. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The Helena, a 38-story residential apartment building was completed in 2004 pursuant to the 2001 approvals as modified in 2004 and fully occupies the southeastern corner of the block. The 2001 *FEIS* assumed that the new residential development along Eleventh Avenue would include Lot 36 on the northeastern corner of the project block; however, this lot was not included in the development of The Helena. Instead, Manhattan Mini-Storage currently occupies a 6-story building on this lot.

[1] TPPN #10/88 was issued by DOB on June 6, 1988, to supplement Building Code regulations with regard to historic structures. TPPN #10/88 outlines procedures for the avoidance of damage to historic structures resulting from adjacent construction, defined as construction within a lateral distance of 90 feet from the historic resource.

The buildings on the mid and western portions of the project block were demolished subsequent to the 2001 *FEIS* and the lots are now vacant. In 2010, the applicant filed a new building application with DOB for a development on the mid and western portions of the block pursuant to the existing zoning and approvals for the site. Under this application, the mid and western portions of the block would be developed with office, retail, and public parking uses. Subsequent to that filing, the applicant determined it would not construct new below-grade parking at the site, and amended the application to include only the 239-car above grade public garage permitted under the existing special permits. Absent the proposed project, this new building would be completed in the future without the proposed project.

E. EXISTING CONDITIONS

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES

No known or potential architectural resources are located on the projected development sites.

PROJECT BLOCK

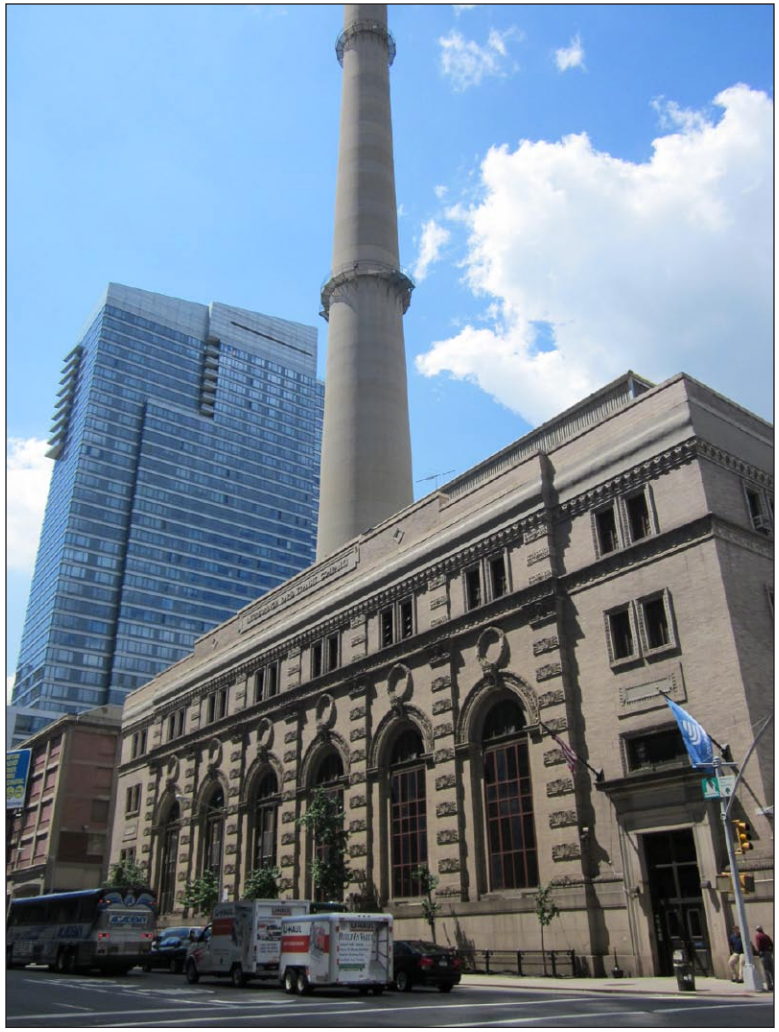
No known or potential architectural resources are located on the remainder of the project block.

STUDY AREA

Two known architectural resources were identified in the study area. The first of these is the **Consolidated Edison Power House** (S/NR-eligible, NYCL-pending), formerly the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Company Power House.[1]

This prominent, 6-story neo-Renaissance-Revival-style structure occupies almost the entire block north of the project site (see View 1 of **Figure 7-2**). It was built in 1900-1904 to generate all of the power for New York City's first subway system. Designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, it was the largest power house in the world at the time of its completion. By 1940, the IRT had been absorbed into the City's Board of Transportation, and in 1959, the power house was sold to Consolidated Edison, which currently operates it as an active power facility, primarily supplying private customers with steam. This Renaissance Revival structure is constructed of buff brick with terra cotta ornamentation, set on a base of pink granite. The building is made up of several bays containing tall, arched windows that are framed by ornamental terra cotta and separated by brick pilasters with terra cotta capitals, bases, and banding. The ornamentation is highly decorative, featuring elaborate keystones, wreaths above the arches, and dentils. The words "Interborough Rapid Transit," a reference to the original owner, are located on a raised stone tablet in the upper middle portion of the building's main façade on Eleventh Avenue. Originally, six chimneys rose from the building but these were replaced with one chimney in 1959. Another chimney was added as part of the construction of a western addition to the building, a plain buff brick structure, also in 1959. Presently, only one prominently visible smokestack remains, located at the east end of the building along West End Avenue. In addition, the building's cornice was removed sometime before 1992.

[1] LPC held hearings with respect to the designation of the Consolidated Edison Power House in 1979 and 1990. The building was not designated at that time. LPC held another public hearing to consider the designation of the building on July 14, 2009. A decision on designation remains pending.



Consolidated Edison Power House **1**



Hudson River Bulkhead **2**

Known Historic Resources in Study Area

Figure 7-2

The Consolidated Edison Power House is prominent in views along Eleventh Avenue, and up and down West 58th and 59th Streets. The plant's bulk and smokestack make it a dominant feature in most views. The plant's smokestack is also visible from locations in the study area where the rest of the building cannot be seen, including from the study area across the elevated Route 9A.

A portion of the **Hudson River Bulkhead,** which runs along the Hudson River on the west side of Manhattan from Battery Place to West 59th Street, has been determined S/NR eligible. A small section of the bulkhead is within the study area. The Hudson River bulkhead remains the principal artifact of New York City's waterfront redevelopment program, which was the first and largest of its kind in the United States and which helped sustain Manhattan's maritime prominence until the advent of airplane travel, containerized shipping, and interstate trucking in the 1960s. The city bulkheads are also perhaps the earliest American examples of granite seawalls placed on concrete bases. The portion of the bulkhead in the study area is granite wall supported by pre-cast concrete blocks and a concrete base below West 58th Street, and concrete walls on piles with exposed timber relieving platform above West 58th Street (see View 2 of **Figure 7-2**).

A survey of the study area by an architectural historian did not identify any other potential architectural resources to be considered in this analysis. As described above, the study area is largely developed with high-rise buildings, most of which were constructed in the last ten years as part of Riverside South and other developments. The other structures in the study area typically consist of plain industrial structures which have been heavily altered over time, including the addition of new storefronts and the sealing of windows. As a result, these structures would not meet criteria for listing on the S/NR or designation as an NYCL in terms of age or architectural significance.

F. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT SITE

Absent the proposed actions, it is assumed that the project site will be developed with the permitted building. This development, on the mid and western portions of the block, conforms to the existing zoning and approvals for the project block. The building would be five stories (95 feet) tall with office, retail, and parking uses. The mini-storage facility on projected development site 2 would remain in its current use. Therefore, this scenario would construct a smaller office and retail building than permitted under the 2001 approvals and analyzed in the 2001 *FEIS*.

As described above, there are no known or potential architectural resources located on the project site. Therefore, development of the project site absent the proposed actions would not have any direct, physical impacts to on-site architectural resources.

Construction on the project site would occur within 90 feet of the Consolidated Edison Power House. In the 2001 *FEIS*, it was concluded that construction of a larger project would not have any adverse physical impacts resulting from ground-borne construction-period vibrations on the power house, as it is located across West 58th Street from the project block and is a massive brick structure. Nonetheless, the applicant will comply with LPC's *Guidelines for Construction Adjacent to a Historic Landmark* and the procedures set forth in DOB's TPPN #10/88 and consult with LPC to avoid any inadvertent construction-related impacts on the power house. The Hudson River bulkhead is more than 90 feet away from the project site, and, therefore, is not expected to be affected by construction activities.

STUDY AREA

There are several projects within and just outside of the study area that are expected to be completed by 2015. These include Pier 97 along the Hudson River waterfront, which will be redeveloped with open space uses, and Pier 99 (the West 59th Street Marine Transfer Station), which is proposed to be converted to accept commercial waste. John Jay College of Criminal Justice is continuing its expansion to occupy the full block bounded by West 58th and 59th Streets and Amsterdam and West End Avenues. North of the project block, development of the Riverside Center complex will continue, with Buildings 2 and 5 expected by 2015. These buildings will host residential, public school, hotel, and retail uses. These projects continue the study area's existing trend toward high-rise buildings with a mixture of uses, and will continue to change the context of the study area's architectural resources.

The status of historic resources could change in the future. S/NR-eligible architectural resources could be listed on the Registers, and properties found eligible or pending designation as NYCLs could be designated.

Changes to the architectural resources identified above or to their settings could occur irrespective of the proposed project. Future projects could also affect the settings of architectural resources. It is possible that some architectural resources could deteriorate, while others could be restored. In addition, future projects could accidentally damage architectural resources through adjacent construction.

Historic resources that are listed on the S/NR or that have been found eligible for listing are given a measure of protection under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act from the effects of projects sponsored, assisted, or approved by federal agencies. Although preservation is not mandated, federal agencies must attempt to avoid adverse effects on such resources through a notice, review, and consultation process. Properties listed on the Registers are similarly protected against effects resulting from projects sponsored, assisted, or approved by state agencies under the State Historic Preservation Act. However, private owners of properties eligible for, or even listed on, the Registers using private funds may alter or demolish their properties without such a review process, assuming no state or federal approvals are required. Privately owned properties that are NYCLs and in NYCHDs are protected under the New York City Landmarks Law, which requires LPC review and approval before any alteration or demolition permits can be issued, regardless of whether the project is publicly or privately funded. Publicly owned resources are also subject to review by LPC before the start of a project. However, LPC's role in projects sponsored by other city or state agencies generally is advisory only.

The New York City Building Code provides some measures of protection for all properties against accidental damage from adjacent construction by requiring that all buildings, lots, and service facilities adjacent to foundation and earthwork areas be protected and supported. In addition, provisions specifically designed to protect historic structures, including development of a monitoring program to avoid the likelihood of damages to adjacent structures, are set forth in DOB's TPPN #10/88.

G. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

PROJECT BLOCK

As there are no known or potential architectural resources on the projected development sites or the remainder of the project block, the proposed project would have no adverse impact on such resources.

STUDY AREA

Similar to the permitted building as well as the development anticipated in the 2001 *FEIS*, the proposed project would result in new construction within 90 feet of the Consolidated Edison Power House. Therefore, the proposed project would comply with LPC's *Guidelines for Construction Adjacent to a Historic Landmark* as well as the guidelines set forth in section 523 of the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* and the procedures set forth in DOB's TPPN #10/88. This includes preparation of a Construction Protection Plan (CPP), to be prepared prior to demolition and construction activities and submitted to LPC for review and approval. The Hudson River bulkhead is located more than 90 feet away from the project site and would not be expected to be adversely affected by the project's construction-related activities.

The proposed project would result in a building of greater height and density than what would be built absent the approvals sought by the applicant. However, the proposed project would result in approximately the same amount of density on the project block that was anticipated in the 2001 *FEIS*, and would similarly change the project site from its current vacant status to an active use. The proposed project would alter the context of surrounding architectural resources, and would contribute to the study area's already changing character. The architectural resources in the study area—particularly the Consolidated Edison Power House—will continue to exist in a mixed context of older shorter buildings and taller towers, with the taller development oriented toward Eleventh Avenue. While the proposed development also would be of a more contemporary, unique design than the building that would be constructed absent the proposed actions, these resources exist in an area that already includes buildings of contemporary design and materials, including a number of buildings that were built after the 2001 *FEIS*. In addition, the buildings to be developed on the Riverside Center site in the future without the proposed project will be faceted rather than rectilinear (as assumed in the 2001 *FEIS*), further establishing the visual context for non-rectilinear building massing on projected development site 1. The proposed building's north and east façades would consist of a textured, "sawtooth" pattern of glass that would reflect and thus emphasize the decorative features of the Consolidated Edison Power House's façades. Furthermore, the project's tower would not exceed the height of the Consolidated Edison Power House stack, which is approximately 500 feet above grade.

The Consolidated Edison Power House's prominent smokestack is located near West End Avenue/Eleventh Avenue, and views of the smokestack along West End Avenue/Eleventh Avenue and adjacent east/west streets would remain predominantly unaltered. Some existing views of the smokestack from Hudson River Park south of West 58th Street could be limited with the proposed project; however, these views would already be limited by the building to be constructed in the future absent the proposed actions. Furthermore, because of the unique configuration of the proposed tower, the smokestack would still be visible in most views from this area.

Overall, the proposed project would not alter the 2001 *FEIS* findings of no significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources. In a letter dated March 12, 2012, LPC concluded that the text of this chapter was acceptable (see Appendix A, "Agency Correspondence"). ✷