2.G URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the visual character of the project site and its environs, as well as other aspects of urban design. Visual character consists of features such as building types, height and massing, street walls, lot coverage, landscaping, street layout, view corridors, and important natural or built resources that serve as visual resources. Other aspects of urban design include the questions of whether open spaces and natural features would be preserved and whether the arrangement and massing of buildings would exacerbate wind conditions. The section assesses the Proposed Project's potential impact in terms of how compatible it would be with its urban context, how it would affect the various aspects of the area's urban design, and whether it would diminish views or adversely affect the setting of identified visual resources.

As is described in detail in Chapter 1, Project Description, the Proposed Action is the approval of a package of zoning changes and special permits and related actions, including the rezoning of all or part of 11 blocks in the south central Bronx from manufacturing to residential districts and, to a lesser extent, from residential to higher density residential districts. The zoning, now primarily an M1-1 district with one small R7-1 district (partly covered by a C2-4 overlay), would be a combination of R6A, R7A, R7X, and R8X districts, with C2-4 commercial overlays covering parts of the rezoned area. Part of the applicant's project would be designated a Large-Scale General Development. Under the reasonable worst case development scenario (RWCDS) presented in Chapter 1, 49 tax lots would be redeveloped by the 2022 analysis year (as opposed to two in the future without the Proposed Action), with a projected 2,775 housing units and approximately 132,000 square feet of commercial space, an increment of 2,635 housing units and approximately 93,000 square feet of commercial space over the future no-action scenario, plus an approximately 12,000 square foot child care center. The new buildings would range from 7 to 15 stories in height.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action is not expected to cause any significant adverse impact to urban design or visual resources. The Proposed Action would lead to the removal of existing buildings and open storage areas that are inconsistent with the built form within the surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed residential street walls, with regular fenestration patterns and some ground floor storefronts, would create a streetscape that is more pleasing and conducive to pedestrian activity, and more consistent with the residential neighborhoods, than the existing array of blank walls, fences, and truck bays. The new buildings would be taller and larger than existing nearby residential development, except at the northern end of the proposed rezoning area, but the scale of the anticipated development would not undermine the character of the existing development in Crotona Park East and West Farms. The anticipated redevelopment would not obstruct existing views to or from the Bronx River or Starlight Park, which will be the area's principal visual resources in the 2022 analysis year (Starlight Park will be completed in 2012), and would not diminish any valuable aspects of their visual setting.

METHODOLOGY

Geographically, the discussion focuses on the proposed rezoning area and a secondary study area extending approximately 800 feet around this area. (An aerial photo is presented in Figure G-1a, and study area boundaries are shown in Figure G-1b.) The secondary study area includes parts of the Crotona Park East and West Farms neighborhoods and is primarily discussed at the beginning

of this section, in order to provide a complete picture of the visual context of the project area. Features such as building types, height and massing, street walls, lot coverage, landscaping, street layout, and topography are described, and visual resources such as important view corridors and important natural or built elements are noted. Next, changes anticipated by the 2022 analysis year are noted. The Proposed Project is then described, and its potential impact is assessed in terms of how compatible it would be with its urban context, how it would affect the various aspects of the area's urban design, and whether it would diminish views or adversely affect the setting of identified visual resources. As is the case throughout this EIS, the assessment is performed in accordance with guidance in the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

Study Areas

As is noted above under Methodology, this chapter considers the urban design and visual resources of the proposed rezoning area and an 800-foot study area. This section presents an overview of the two study areas. The proposed rezoning area is described in further detail under Existing Conditions. Photographs of the proposed rezoning area and the 800-foot study area are provided throughout the Existing Conditions section. Photos are keyed to the map in Figure G-1c.

The Proposed Rezoning Area and Its Setting

The proposed rezoning area is long and narrow, extending linearly in a north-northeast to south-southwest direction for eight physical blocks, from West Farms Square (at East Tremont Avenue) to the intersection of Freeman Street and Boone Avenue. A multilane, limited access highway flanked by adjacent service roads, the Cross Bronx Expressway, separates the two northernmost blocks from the rest of the area. The east-west local streets dividing the proposed rezoning area are Jennings Street, East 172nd Street, East 173rd Street, East 174th Street, and, north of the highway, Rodman Place. The area is more than eight-tenths of a mile long, but it is only one block to a block and a half in width, with block widths ranging from 150 to 290 feet. The eastern boundary is West Farms Road, except for the southernmost block, where it is an exit ramp from the Sheridan Expressway. At the southern end, the area extends westward one block to Boone Avenue; between 172nd Street and the Cross Bronx Expressway, the western boundary extends half a block further to the midpoint between Boone and Longfellow Avenues. Boone Avenue ends at the expressway; further north, the western boundary is Longfellow Avenue, and Boston Road forms the northwest boundary.

In terms of built form, this long corridor contains three distinct sub-areas. The southernmost portion, from Freeman Street through the northern frontage of Jennings Street, consists of a playground, an adjacent grassy slope, a school staff parking lot, and a public school; it is part of a cluster of three schools and associated open space that extends outside of the proposed rezoning area. The much longer middle portion, extending from the midblock between Jennings and East 172nd Streets to the Cross Bronx Expressway, is light industrial in character, with expanses of low rise industrial buildings and associated areas of open storage and open parking. The only exception consists of two residential apartment buildings flanking East 174th Street west of Boone Avenue, the one location where the adjacent residential neighborhood to the west intrudes into this part of the proposed rezoning area. The northern portion, between the Cross Bronx Expressway and Tremont Avenue, is mixed in character, with industrial buildings and open storage, commercial buildings, small residential buildings, mid rise apartment buildings, and a vacant lot. (The area's built form is discussed in more detail below.)

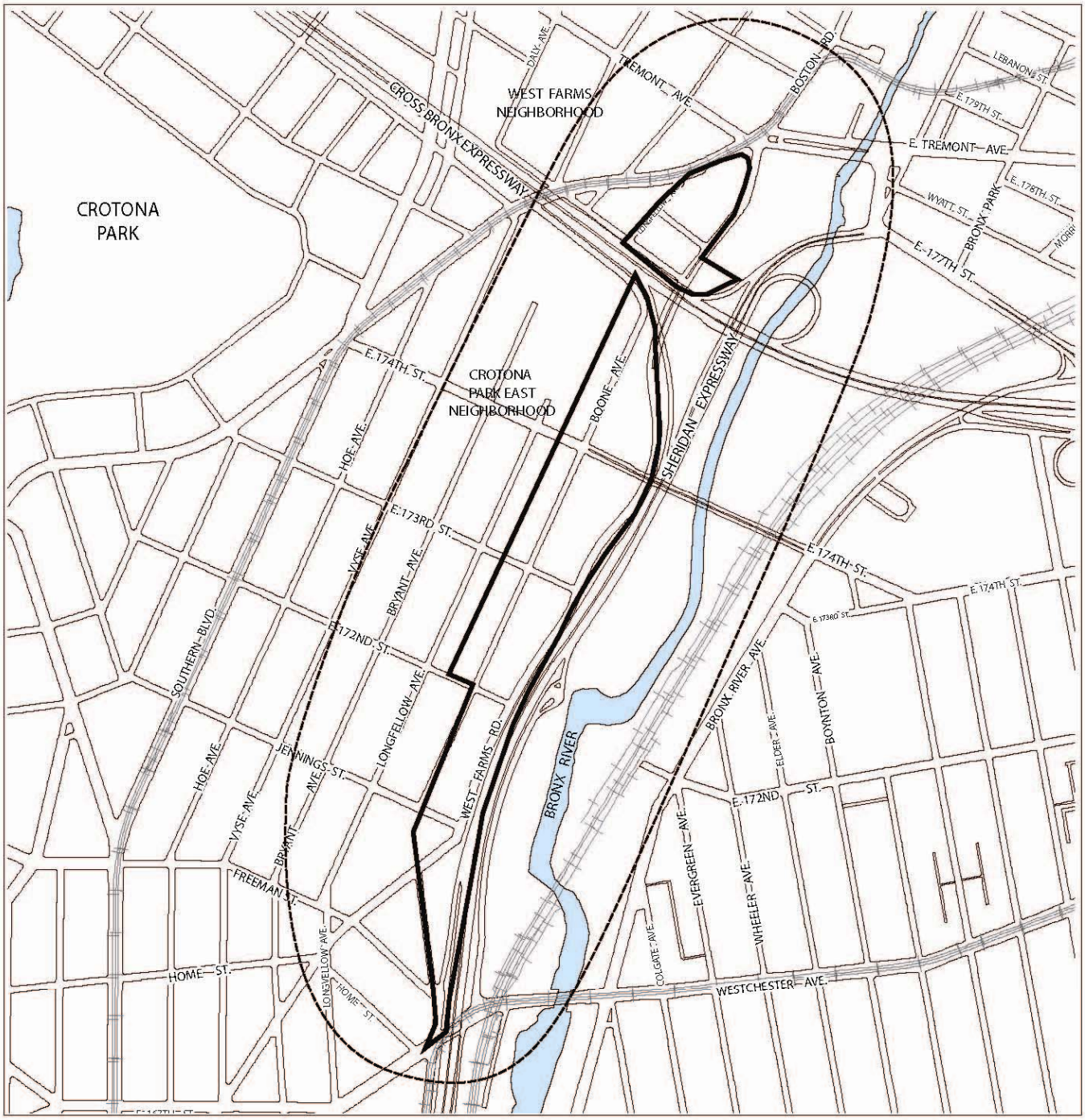
Figure G-1A: Aerial Photograph of Proposed Rezoning Area



Boundary of Proposed Rezoning Area

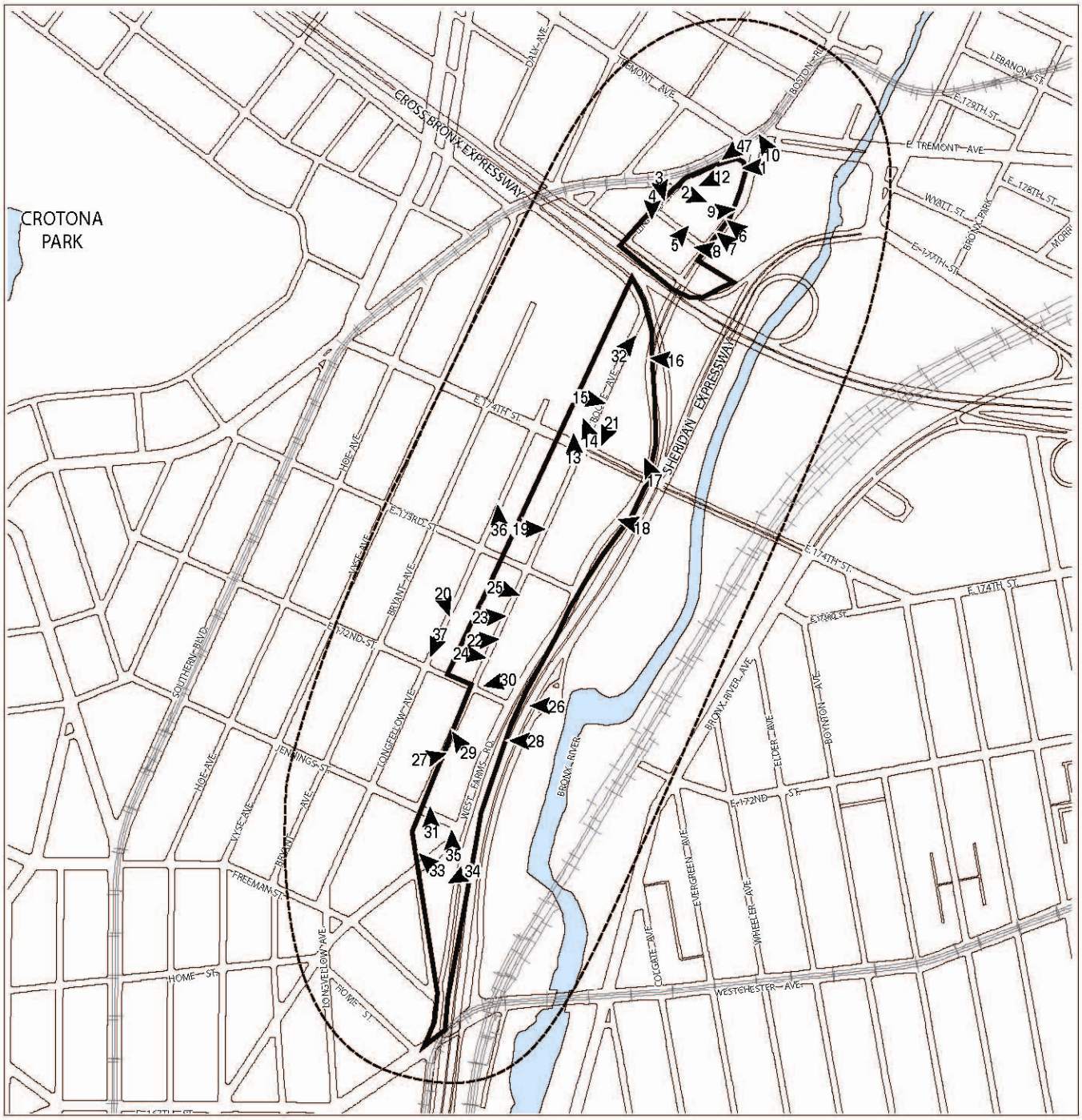
CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York



- - Boundary of Proposed Rezoning Area

--- Study Area (800-Foot Radius)



36 Location of Photograph

Boundary of Proposed Rezoning Area

800-Foot Radius

CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

One of the salient features helping to establish the area's visual character is the adjacency of two multilane, bifurcated, limited access highways, both of which are also truck routes. The Cross Bronx Expressway, which runs east-west, cuts through the proposed rezoning area, separating the two northern blocks of the proposed rezoning area from the blocks to the south, and separating the Crotona Park East neighborhood to the south from the West Farms neighborhood to the north. The busy highway, which carries very high traffic volumes, crosses over West Farms Road on an overpass and continues west on an embankment faced with low stone walls, then descends to surface level and into a trench west of the proposed rezoning area. The slight elevation increases the highway's visual presence. The other highway, the Sheridan Expressway, borders the eastern edge of the proposed rezoning area along the four blocks between Freeman Street and 174th Street and, between 174th Street and Rodman Place, is separated from the rezoning area by the ramps connecting the two expressways and the grassy, barren, unreachable patches of ground within the highway intersection. The Sheridan Expressway terminates at 177th Street, and only at its northernmost end does the proposed rezoning area face eastward to a developed block that forms a part of the urban fabric. The Sheridan Expressway forms a physical barrier as well as a visual edge; the only crossing from the rezoning area is a bridge at 174th Street.

Another visually dominant piece of transportation infrastructure is the elevated subway line above Boston Road, which abuts the proposed rezoning area's northernmost block on its northwest side. There is a station at West Farms Square, facing the northern end of the rezoning area. (The station and the elevated subway tracks are visible in photo 10.) Boston Road changes direction at West Farms Square, turning northward, but the elevated line continues on an undulating course northeastward on a right-of-way that does not follow any street layout.

Within the proposed rezoning area, there is a considerable change of grade from west to east. The change is part of a larger topological descent from the high ground to the west of the proposed rezoning area to the Bronx River valley to its east. Near 173rd Street the elevation of West Farms Road is 60 feet lower than that of Bryant Avenue, three blocks to the west. At that point the terrain descends 23 feet from Bryant Avenue to Longfellow Avenue, 20 feet from Longfellow Avenue to Boone Avenue, and 17 feet from Boone Avenue to West Farms Road. Between 172nd and 173rd Streets, the difference in elevation between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road varies from 11 to 20 feet; between 172nd and Jennings Streets, it varies from 12 to 21 feet. North of the Cross Bronx Expressway, there is as much as a 19 foot grade difference between Longfellow Avenue, the rezoning area's western boundary at this point, and West Farms Road, one block to the east.[1] Along most of its length, the rezoning area's eastern edge is essentially level with the Sheridan Expressway and, east of the highway, the land abutting the Bronx River.

In addition to the irregularities of grade, the blocks between West Farms Road and Boone Avenue are also irregular in shape and width because West Farms Road follows a curving, meandering path. The avenues to its west have straight rights of way, part of a regular street grid, so that the part of the area west of Boone Avenue has a more regular layout. At the northern end, block form is affected not only by the irregular path of West Farms Road but by that of Boston Road, which slices through the street grid, curving in a generally southwest to northeast direction.

[1] Elevation Figures are from drawings prepared by Dattner Architects, which are based on topographic information from surveys of the applicant-owned properties and Sanborn and USGS maps of the surrounding area.

South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the proposed rezoning area forms the eastern edge of what is otherwise a residential neighborhood of 5- and 6-story apartment buildings and smaller 2- to 4-family homes, on blocks that are generally 200 feet wide by 600 feet long. This block pattern and built form extend four blocks westward beyond Longfellow Avenue (about a quarter mile west of the proposed rezoning area) to Southern Boulevard, a commercial street beneath a trestle carrying an elevated subway line. The neighborhood extends approximately a quarter mile further west, to the edge of Crotona Park, but the street grid is different in the western part of the neighborhood, and devastation during the 1970s followed by a more suburban style of redevelopment has resulted in a much different urban environment. Because of its distance from the rezoning area, the western part of Crotona Park East cannot be considered part of the proposed rezoning area's visual and urban design setting.

West Farms is the name given to the area that extends from the Cross Bronx Expressway to Bronx Park, from Southern Boulevard to the Bronx River Parkway, although the portion east of the Bronx River (a mix of automotive, transportation, and commercial uses, dominated by a large bus terminal) is included for reasons of historical rather than contemporary neighborhood identity. The rest of the neighborhood is primarily residential, but with very different types of housing, ranging from row houses to 21-story apartment buildings. The street pattern consists of a very loose, sometimes interrupted grid, with some streets having been eliminated and some blocks combined.

To the east of the Sheridan Expressway is the Bronx River Valley. Flanking the river are stretches of fenced, unimproved land (some of it mapped as parkland) and, further south, industrial and automotive uses and a 3-story motor inn, plus a surface railroad line to the east of the river. At the eastern end of the valley, facing the proposed rezoning area, is another ridge, on which the Soundview residential neighborhood is located. The distance from the rezoning area to the facing ridge varies from about 600 to 1,000 feet, with the distance increasing from south to north, as the ridge curves northeastward. Consisting mainly of long blocks of mid twentieth century row houses and a large public housing complex with massive apartment buildings laid out within a superblock, Soundview has a much different urban design and visual identity from Crotona Park East or West Farms. Because of the large physical separation and the very different visual character, Soundview cannot be considered a part of the proposed rezoning area's visual context, and it is not discussed further in this section of the EIS.

800-Foot Study Area

The Crotona Park East Neighborhood

Crotona Park East is a residential neighborhood. The portion to the east of Southern Boulevard, including the blocks within the 800-foot study area, is laid out mainly in a grid of 200 by 600 foot long blocks lined with three predominant types of housing. One type consists of 5- and 6-story brick apartment buildings, mainly from the 1920s. They have high lot coverage and are built to the street line, but often with front court recesses. Building widths vary but are generally about 100 feet. The second type consists of 2- and 2½-story attached row houses, mainly from the 1990s. They tend to be recessed from the street line, sometimes with parking in the front, other times with front yards too shallow for parking. They tend to have pitched roofs and projecting dormers. Some are faced in brick, others in aluminum siding, and still others with brick first floors and siding above. Stylistic differences are found not from house to house but from row to row; within any row, the buildings are identical. The third type consists of unattached 2- to 4-story homes with shallow front yards and, generally but not always, narrow side yards. This is the area's oldest housing, from the first decades of the twentieth century, and they are the most varied in architectural style. Most are brick. One typical style is two bays wide, one with a door and one window per floor above it, the other a projecting bay with three windows wrapped about

it per floor; these buildings have projecting cornices above fascia boards. Another typical style is a simple rectangular building with a red brick façade, with geometric decorative inserts, short brick pediments, and no cornices.

Community facilities such as schools, churches, and children's centers are interspersed amid the housing. Small parks have been created on midblock sites. Except in one notable location, the New Horizons Shopping Center, commercial establishments are in the ground floors of apartment buildings rather than in separate buildings.

The older neighborhood pattern has been broken by the combination of three blocks to form a superblock to the immediate south of the Cross Bronx Expressway, which contains a suburban style shopping center known as the New Horizons Shopping Center. The superblock extends southward to 174th Street and is flanked by Vyse and Boone Avenues. The peripheral parcels along these three streets have been left intact, generally with older buildings remaining on these parcels, and Bryant and Longfellow Avenues continue past 174th Street to the rear lot lines of the adjacent parcels fronting on the street. These nuances largely mask the departure from the neighborhood's prevailing urban design; from the adjacent streets, the older pattern appears intact. The major change along the periphery is that a large footprint retail building now occupies the northeast corner of 174th Street and Vyse Avenue, where it is likely that apartment buildings once stood. On the interior of the superblock, large 1-story retail buildings, divided into numerous stores, form an L pattern along the western and northern edges, and a large parking lot occupies the rest of the space. The shopping center is most visible from the Cross Bronx Expressway and the adjacent service roads; the rears of the northern store buildings face the south service road.

The West Farms Neighborhood

The study area north of the Cross Bronx Expressway is part of the West Farms Neighborhood. In this area, the street grid is loose and irregular, and blocks have been combined by the closing of Bryant Avenue north of Tremont Avenue. The typical pattern of buildings lining the streets along the periphery of blocks remains intact in some locations, but in others housing complexes have been developed in ways that break with that pattern. Building types are also much more varied than in Crotona Park East.

A housing complex occupies the eastern and central portions of the superblocks bounded by Tremont Avenue, Boston Road, 179th Street, and Vyse Avenue. Bryant Avenue was demapped between Tremont and 179th Streets; a landscaped area with pedestrian walkways is now in its place. The housing complex is a mix of 7-, 8- 21-, and 22-story gray brick apartment buildings. There are no continuous street walls, and the tower buildings are located on the interiors of the blocks rather than oriented toward the street lines. Lot coverage is low. A parking lot rather than a building or plaza occupies the corner of Tremont Avenue and Boston Road at West Farms Square, and no buildings front on Boston Road between Tremont Avenue and 178th Street. Low rise commercial buildings occupy the Boston Road frontage between 178th and 179th Streets, near the northern edge of the study area. Towards the southwest corner of the southern superblock, a long 8-story building occupies the western part of the Tremont Avenue frontage but does not extend all the way to Vyse Avenue. An open landscaped area occupies the corner of Tremont and Vyse Avenues, north of which is another parking lot facing Vyse Avenue. Clusters of 2- and 3-story attached row houses, deeply recessed from the street lines, have been built elsewhere on the western portions of the blocks.

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

A detailed urban design and visual resources assessment is required because the Proposed Action would include a zoning map change that would alter the rules regulating development within the proposed rezoning area, allowing the construction of buildings that are different in type and in scale both from those that are now there and from those that would be allowed under existing zoning regulations, and because the Proposed Action is expected to result in considerable demolition and reconstruction by the analysis year. The anticipated redevelopment would alter the visual character of the eastern edge of the Crotona Park East neighborhood and part of the West Farms neighborhood, as well as the visual setting of the adjacent Bronx River corridor and Starlight Park, which was under construction at the time of this writing, but which will be an accessible, functioning open space resource by 2012, well before the project's analysis year of 2022.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* calls for a separate preliminary assessment to determine whether an analysis of pedestrian wind conditions is appropriate, since the construction of large buildings at locations that experience high wind conditions may result in channelization or downwash effects that could affect pedestrian safety. The proposed rezoning area is not subject to unusual wind conditions. It is not an exposed area on or near the waterfront, and it is not on high ground or on the upper portion of an exposed slope. Indeed, it is a low area at the base of a slope rising to the west, facing another ridge to the east on the other side of the Bronx River, and as such it is sheltered from high winds. None of the proposed buildings would be taller than 15 stories, and the contextual zoning regulations that would be put in place mandate street walls and high lot coverage. There would therefore not be freestanding towers that could cause pedestrian level vortex effects. Buildings would be oriented to the existing streets, and the only anticipated breaks in the street wall in the areas zoned for the largest buildings would be midblock open areas that, at 60 feet in width, would be as broad as streets. For these reasons, the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on pedestrian wind conditions, and a detailed wind conditions assessment is not required.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Urban Design

Proposed Rezoning Area North of the Cross Bronx Expressway

Street System

The proposed rezoning area north of the Cross Bronx Expressway consists of two blocks bounded by West Farms Road on the east, Tremont Avenue on the north, Boston Road on the northwest, Longfellow Avenue on the west, and the Cross Bronx Expressway's north service road on the south. The two blocks, which are actually one tax block, are separated by Rodman Place.

Rodman Place and Longfellow Avenue are both short, purely local streets, both of which are 60 feet wide. Rodman Place is only one block long. Longfellow Avenue is a continuation of a longer avenue to the south, but it is blocked by the Cross Bronx Expressway (a limited access highway) and has been discontinued between 174th Street and the Cross Bronx Expressway Service Road South. This portion of the avenue extends only 415 feet from the service road to Boston Road, where it ends.

West Farms Road, Boston Road, and Tremont Avenue are wide, major streets, and Boston Road and Tremont Avenue carry considerable through traffic. Tremont Avenue is one of the borough's major commercial thoroughfares. West of its intersection with Boston Road, it is 75 feet wide and straight in its layout, running "east-west" relative to the street grid but northwest-southeast

relative to the compass. At West Farms Square, Tremont Avenue jogs northward, widens to 150 feet (including a median strip), and continues on what is closer to an actual east-west course.[2] Boston Road is one of the oldest thoroughfares in the Bronx, built in the 1790s and winding irregularly north-northeastward through the borough.[3] At this point it is 100 feet wide but, rather than being an airy boulevard, lies beneath an elevated subway trestle. The portion adjacent to the proposed rezoning area is curved. West Farms Road -- which is 80 feet wide -- also follows a curving, irregular path and predates the modern street grid. Alongside the more northerly block, the road changes directions, from a northeasterly to a northerly course, as it approaches West Farms Square, which is where the road ends.

Block Form

The northern block is irregular in shape. The southern part, flanked by Longfellow Avenue and West Farms Road, is rectangular in shape and 250 feet wide. As Boston Road intercepts Longfellow Avenue and curves northeastward, and as West Farms Road turns more westward, the northern part of the block tapers to a 69-foot-wide curve at its northern end. From Rodman Place to the northern tip, the block is approximately 405 feet long.

The smaller southern block is close to rectangular in form. It is the only block within the proposed rezoning area that is longer from east to west than from north to south. It has 143 feet of frontage on West Farms Road, 254 feet of frontage on Rodman Place, 149 feet of frontage on Longfellow Avenue, and 264 feet of frontage on the service road.

Buildings

The built form on these blocks is more varied than in other parts of the proposed rezoning area. At the north end, facing West Farms Square, there was a 2-story commercial building with a curved façade that conformed to the lot's peculiar shape (photo 1), but the building was recently demolished. The adjacent building on Boston Road is a 2-story hotel with a spare stucco façade (visible in photo 2). The adjacent building on West Farms Road, which has also recently been demolished, was a windowless brown brick warehouse, devoid of signage (visible in the background of photo 2). To the south of the now vacant parcel is a 1-story brick industrial building (a marble, granite, and slate work warehouse) with an adjacent open storage yard behind corrugated metal fencing, which extends to Rodman Place (photos 6 and 7). On the block south of Rodman Place, a larger 1-story brick industrial building occupies most of the West Farms Road frontage between Rodman Place and the Cross Bronx Expressway (photo 8); it has cornices covered with signage for the steel door company that formerly occupied the building, and the building is topped by a tall pole bearing an advertising billboard facing the highway. A smaller 1-story industrial building is located to its immediate south. On the other side of these blocks, the northern end of Longfellow Avenue contains an accessory surface parking lot and a small brick building that appears to have originally been a garage but that now has simple signage identifying it as a synagogue. Two- and three-story residential buildings occupy the southern part of the

[2] There is a historical reason for the discontinuity in the avenue's route. Modern day Tremont Avenue was formed by piecing together different pre-existing streets. The portion west of West Farms Square follows the route of the earlier Morris Street, which terminated at Boston Road. The portion to the east was originally part of West Farms Road. (John McNamara, *History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names*)

[3] It was a rerouting of the older Boston Post Road, which, as the name implies, connected New York City (when it was confined to lower Manhattan) and Boston, largely following even earlier Indian paths. The original route crossed the Harlem River at the King's Bridge at the northern tip of Manhattan, continued through what is now Kingsbridge, and eventually veered eastward across what is now Gun Hill Road. (John McNamara, *History in Asphalt: The Origin of Bronx Street and Place Names*)

more northerly block; two attached 3-story brick buildings are recessed behind surface parking spaces, and a two-story aluminum sided building at the corner is built closer to the street lines (photo 3). Two 5-story brick apartment buildings occupy the Longfellow Avenue frontage between Rodman Place and the highway (photo 4). The land uses that primarily face Longfellow Avenue and West Farms Road occupy most of the Rodman Place frontages, leaving only a single narrow midblock property on either side of the street. On the north side, a small residential building is set well back on the block, barely visible behind fencing (photo 5); on the south is a cleared vacant lot.

Building Arrangement

The existing and recently demolished large footprint industrial and commercial buildings along West Farms Road are and were built to the street lines and occupied their entire (original) lots. The stone works establishment has taken over and fenced what was a separate vacant lot to its south, which it uses for open storage. The hotel facing Boston Road is also built to the street line and spans the entire width of the lot. The apartment buildings on Longfellow Avenue south of Rodman Place are built to the street line and cover almost all of their lots. The smaller buildings facing Longfellow Avenue on the northern block cover less of their lots, and the residential buildings are recessed from the street lines; the front and side "yards" have concrete surfaces, and fences and gates mark the street lines. The smaller residential building on the north side of the Rodman Place midblock is set well back from the street and covers a miniscule portion of the lot. The blocks also contain a parking lot and an older vacant lot, which are parcels that have been cleared and not redeveloped.

Topography

There are marked changes in grade within this part of the rezoning area. The area's western edge is higher than its eastern edge. This is most noticeable along the service road to the expressway, where there is a 19 foot change in elevation between Longfellow Avenue and West Farms Road. The slope is gentler along Rodman Place, where the difference in elevation is only 12 feet, because along Longfellow Avenue the terrain slopes gently downward from the service road to Rodman Place before rising again towards Boston Road. At the northern end there is no noticeable grade difference between West Farms Road and Boston Road, but along Boston Road the ground rises as one moves southwestward from West Farms Square. On West Farms Road a pedestrian does not have the sense of being at the bottom of a hill, perhaps because building lots were excavated prior to development; but, standing in the parking lot adjacent to the hotel, a person looks out over the roof of the 1-story stone works warehouse fronting on West Farms Road (photo 2).



1. View southwest on West Farms Road of vacant commercial building



2. View east from Boston Road hotel parking lot of the roof of the adjacent slate works warehouse



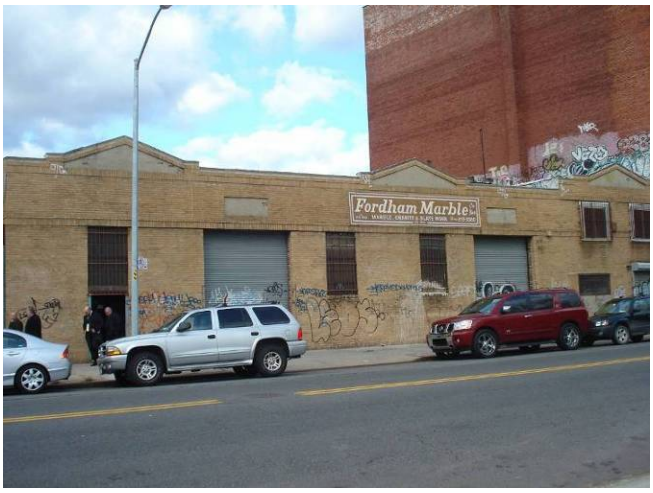
3. View southeast on Longfellow Avenue of residential buildings



4. View southeast on Longfellow Avenue of six-story apartment building



5. View north on Rodman Place of two-story residential building



6. View west on West Farms Road of marble, granite, and slate warehouse



7. View west on West Farms Road of marble, granite, and slate warehouse and open storage yard



8. View southwest on West Farms Road of industrial building

Facing Blocks

The northern end of the proposed rezoning area faces the busy, multi-legged intersection that is West Farms Square. At the northeast corner, 225 feet from the rezoning area across the diagonal axis of the intersection, is a plaza with seating. Behind it is a 1-story commercial complex, with a supermarket facing Boston Road and smaller establishments facing Tremont Avenue, and with rooftop parking. There is an elevated subway station above the northern end of the intersection, at a third story level, with stairways leading down to the east and west sidewalks of Boston Road (photo 10). At the northwest corner of the intersection is a parking lot for a public housing complex on that block, with large apartment buildings visible behind the parking lot. At the southeast corner, across West Farms Road from the proposed rezoning area, is a 3-story elementary school (photo 9). It is a large, squat, almost windowless building with facades of brown, beige, and white concrete blocks. At the southwest corner, across Boston Road from the proposed rezoning area, is a 1-story retail commercial building (photo 12).

To the east of the proposed rezoning area, the school occupies the northern part of the West Farms Road frontage, north of the jog in the road and facing the warehouse and the vacant commercial building (photo 9). To its south is the school's playground, opposite the stone works establishment. South of that, opposite Rodman Place and the southern block, is a grassy slope that is part of the right-of-way of the expressway interchange.[4]

To the west of the rezoning area, across Boston Road and the el trestle, the 1-story retail commercial building faces a vacant commercial building, and a 4-story parking garage faces the hotel (photo 11) and the parking lot at the corner of Boston Road and Longfellow Avenue. On the west side of Longfellow Avenue, a construction site occupies most of the block; to its north is an automotive repair shop (photo 12), consisting of a brick building and adjacent open parking partially hidden by a low wall topped by fencing, and to its south are two small residential buildings.

The Cross Bronx Expressway, slightly elevated on a low stone-faced embankment and carried over West Farms Road on a viaduct, is to the south of these blocks. From the Longfellow Avenue side, the rear of a shopping mall is visible beyond the highway (photo 9).

[4] The proposed rezoning would extend over this part of the interchange.



9. View northwest on West Farms Road of P.S. 214 building and schoolyard



10. View northwest on West Farms Avenue of West Farms Square elevated subway stop and NYCHA towers



11. View southwest on Boston Road of commercial building and parking garage



12. View southwest on Longfellow Avenue of automotive business, residential building, and construction site

Proposed Rezoning Area from the Cross Bronx Expressway to Jennings Street

Street System

This section of the proposed rezoning area is four blocks long, from the Cross Bronx Expressway's south service road to Jennings Street, with East 174th, 173rd, and 172nd Streets in between. West Farms Road borders the area on its east. One block west of West Farms Road is Boone Avenue, which is the western border of the rezoning area south of 172nd Street. Between 172nd Street and the expressway service road, the rezoning would cover both sides of Boone Avenue, extending to the midpoint between Boone and Longfellow Avenues and continuing along a straight line beyond the termination of Longfellow Avenue 80 feet north of 174th Street.

East 173rd and 172nd Streets, Jennings Street, and Boone Avenue are all local one-way streets that are 60 feet wide (as is Longfellow Avenue as well). East 174th Street is 80 feet wide and carries two-way traffic; it is the only east-west street between Westchester Avenue and the Cross Bronx Expressway to carry through traffic across the Sheridan Expressway and the Bronx River. It crosses over the expressway and river on a bridge that also crosses over West Farms Road. All of these streets and avenues are laid out in straight lines, are perpendicular to one another, and are part of a consistent street grid. In contrast, West Farms Road follows a curving, winding route; it demarcates the edge of a neighborhood and is not part of that neighborhood's grid. West Farms Road is 80 feet wide and carries two-way traffic.

Block Form

With one exception, the blocks to the west of Boone Avenue are part of a regular grid pattern, all rectangular, 600 feet long from north to south and 200 feet long from east to west. The one exception is to the north of 174th Street. Longfellow Avenue and Bryant Avenue (a block further west) terminate shortly beyond 174th Street, to form a superblock that extends three blocks from Boone Avenue to Vyse Avenue. Also, East 175th Street has been eliminated, and the block continues northward to the line where the Cross Bronx Expressway truncates the street grid and the neighborhood. Because the expressway and its south service road are not aligned with the Crotona Park South grid, the superblock has 690 feet of frontage on Boone Avenue and 899 feet of frontage along Vyse Avenue.

Between West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, the blocks are rectilinear on three sides, but their western edges conform to the winding path of West Farms Road. The three blocks between Jennings and 174th Streets are each 600 feet long, and the northernmost block is 615 feet long, but their widths and shapes are irregular. The southernmost block has 154 feet of frontage along Jennings Street, tapers to 126 feet wide midblock, then widens slightly to 136 feet at 172nd Street. The next block has 139 feet of frontage along 172nd Street and broadens progressively (but irregularly) to 202 feet along 173rd Street. The next block has 196 feet of frontage along 173rd Street, widens to 224 feet at midblock, then broadens outward to a width of 290 feet along 174th Street. The northern block has 287 feet of frontage along 174th Street but tapers to a width of only 61 feet at its northern end, with most of the tapering occurring along the middle third of the block. At the West Farms Road side of the area, the bridge superstructure rather than a street separates the two northern blocks.

Buildings

The building stock in this part of the proposed rezoning area consists mostly of low rise industrial buildings interspersed in places with open storage and parking areas.

Along the west side of Boone Avenue between 172nd Street and the expressway service road, there is a continuous street wall of 1-story brick warehouses and auto repair shops (photo 14).

They have doorways and truck entrances, plus windows that are crisscrossed with metal bars or, more often, bricked up. Their brick facades, in varying states of repair, are often painted different colors at different levels, and murals or graffiti often cover the lower portions. They align to form a consistent cornice line, interrupted by only a couple of 2-story structures. The only break in this pattern is at 174th Street, where two red brick apartment buildings, one five stories and one six stories in height, face each other, both with their entrances facing the east-west street (photo 13). The one on the south side does not extend to the Boone Avenue frontage, which is occupied by a couple of small, shallow automotive repair buildings.

East of Boone Avenue, on the northernmost of these blocks, there are two small, stucco covered buildings at the northern end of the Boone Avenue frontage, one an auto repair shop and the other an iron works. There are no other buildings on this blockfront of Boone Avenue. High metal fencing blocks most views of these properties, the exception (visible behind a partially intact chain link fence, shown in photo 15) being the vacant rear part of a through lot where, at a lower elevation, a building fronts on West Farms Road. The areas behind the metal fencing are used for open storage or other purposes by either the adjacent iron works or industrial operations fronting on West Farms Road; equipment but not permanent structures rises partly above the fencing in places. On the West Farms Road frontage, a mix of small residential buildings and auto repair facilities occupy the northern part of the block: a 2-story residential building with a brick front façade, a cinderblock auto repair shop with two repair bays, a 3-story wood frame house partially hidden by a brick wall at the front of the property, a shuttered 1-story building with no signage that appears to have been an auto repair garage, a gap hidden by a corrugated metal fence, and a 2½-story residential building (all of which is visible in photo 16). In the middle of the block is a large footprint, 2-story, brick industrial-looking building that is a Department of Sanitation garage (for small vehicles rather than sanitation trucks). Next to this is another auto repair shop. Three large footprint industrial buildings, one a lumber company warehouse and the others containing metal fabricating operations, occupy the southern part of the block (photo 17).

On the next block, between 174th and 173rd Streets, a contractor's metal shed occupies the northern end of the West Farms Road frontage. To its south are two deep, relatively narrow 2-story brick buildings occupied by a paint supplier and a window and door manufacturer. Next is a 1-story building, deeply recessed from the street, which was occupied by a laundry equipment wholesaler. In the middle of the block is a very large footprint self-storage facility, two stories tall but with no upper floor windows, covered in bright orange aluminum siding and contrasting blue paint, which stands out from its neighbors because its façade is so clean and well maintained (photo 18). To its south is a large 2-story muffler sales and installation establishment. A large 1-story buff brick building, a Department of Sanitation garage for small vehicles, occupies the southern end of the block. On the Boone Avenue side of the block, a commercial laundromat faces 174th Street, behind an accessory parking lot (photo 21). To its south is a 1-story brick industrial building, followed by the rear of the self-storage facility, which is a through-block building (photo 19). Next is another 1-story brick building occupied by a heating and plumbing contractor. An unbroken line of similar brick walls continues south to the 173rd Street corner, belonging to 1- and 2-story industrial buildings, except that at the corner the wall has been built in front of an older 2-story building that appears residential (photo 20). The brick wall contains the entrance to the building, the side of which faces 173rd Street.

The block between 173rd and 172nd Streets is divided between only two uses. A meat processing and packaging company's complex of interconnected buildings occupies the northern half of the block (photos 22, 23, and 25). It consists mostly of a single very large brick building, mainly one story tall; the building's blank wall occupies the entire West Farms Road side of the parcel. Along Boone Avenue, however, there appear to also be separate, smaller 2-story brick buildings and one 2-story rusted metal shed structure, although this may actually be a second story shed on top of the

brick building. It is hard to tell because a brick wall, painted with a lively mural, has been built across the Boone Avenue street line, generally blocking views of the buildings themselves. Large rooftop tanks are visible from Boone Avenue. There are no buildings on the southern half of the block, which is occupied by an auto impoundment facility – essentially, a large, unlandscaped, surface parking lot (photo 24).

Between 172nd Street and Jennings Street, a former steel fabrication shop, consisting of brick and cinderblock structures and walls about open areas used for storage and parking, occupies the northern part of the block. It is presently being used for tow truck parking for the auto impoundment facility to the north. To its south, on West Farms Road, are two small, vacant residential buildings, an open area, and an auto repair shop (photos 26 and 28). Along Boone Avenue a corrugated metal fence blocks views of an open lot (photo 27). A public school occupies the southern part of the block. From an urban design perspective, the school is really part of the southernmost sector of the proposed rezoning area, from the north side of Jennings Street to Freeman Street, so it is discussed below.

Building Arrangement

As is discussed above, there is a consistent building arrangement on the blocks on the west side of Boone Avenue. The arrangement of lots is orderly, all 100 feet deep, and the buildings cover the entire lots. The only exceptions are the two apartment buildings flanking 174th Street, which cover most but not all of their lots.

The inconsistent building arrangement pattern on the blocks between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road reflects the inconsistencies in land use, building type, block width (and thus lot depth), and topography. Some buildings cover all or most of the lots. Others coexist with open areas that may be used for storage, for parking, or as yards; the open areas may be in front of, behind, or beside the buildings, and the open areas may be visible from the street or hidden behind walls or metal fencing. In some cases the nature of the terrain – rock outcroppings or steep changes in grade – determines which lot portions remained undeveloped. There is no consistent pattern.

Topography

The drop in grade from west to east is much more noticeable south of the Cross Bronx Expressway than it is north of the Expressway. West Farms Road and Boone Avenue are clearly at different levels, by as much as 20 feet or more, Boone Avenue being at the higher elevation. East 174th Street continues east of Boone Avenue on a bridge over West Farms Road and the adjacent expressway, and the other east-west streets are steeply sloped. Grading has allowed some through lot buildings to be built, but in other cases there are sharp drops from land adjacent to Boone Avenue. In addition to the general east-west slope, there is a general unevenness of terrain, with mounds and depressions and rock outcroppings. One large and noteworthy rock outcropping is along West Farms Road north of 172nd Street.



13. View northwest on Boone Avenue of residential building



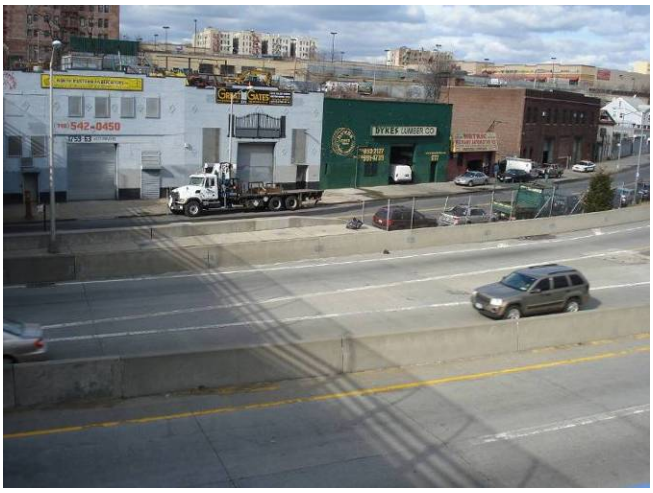
15. View east on Boone Avenue of open land behind a Department of Sanitation garage



14. View northwest on Boone Avenue of warehouses



16. View west on West Farms Road of residential and automotive uses



17. View northwest on West Farms Road of industrial uses



20. View southwest on Longfellow Avenue of residential buildings



18. View west on West Farms Road of self-storage facility



19. View northeast on Boone Avenue of self-storage facility



21. View south on East 174th Street of laundromat with accessory parking



24. View east on Boone Avenue of tow pound



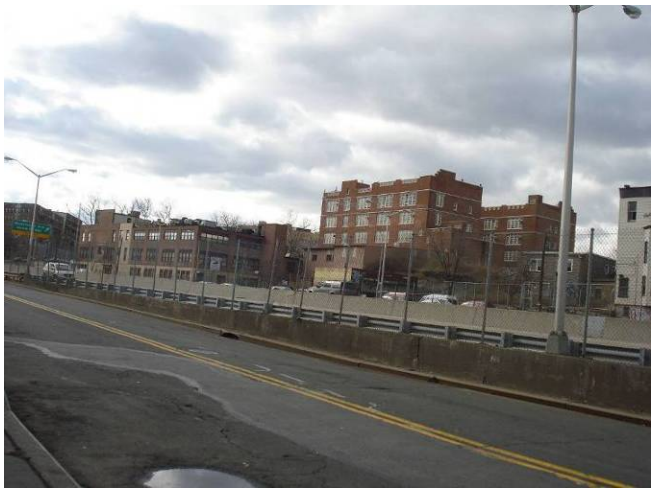
22. View east on Boone Avenue of meatpacking plant



23. View northeast on Boone Avenue of meatpacking plant



25. View east on Boone Avenue of meatpacking plant



28. View west on West Farms Road of P.S. 66 / I.S. 286 (right) and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School (left)



26. View west on West Farms Road of industrial, vacant residential, and school buildings



27. View east on Boone Avenue of open storage area

Streetscape

This is an area where little attention has been paid to streetscape elements. The public sidewalks are cracked and dirty on many blocks (particularly along East 173rd Street and along Boone Avenue), are devoid of plantings, and along Boone Avenue are unusually narrow. Cars often park on the sidewalks (particularly on Boone Avenue), and trucks in the laborious process of pulling into or out of warehouses to or from the narrow street further congest Boone Avenue. On the adjacent private property, although murals brighten some walls, more often walls are cracked, badly patched, flaking paint, or marred by graffiti. Utilitarian corrugated metal fencing marks the street lines along several properties. Where open lots are visible behind chain link fencing, they tend to be unkempt and garbage strewn. The auto impoundment facility on the north side of 172nd Street is an unscreened, un-landscaped open parking lot behind a chain link fence topped by razor wire.

Facing Blocks

Facing the proposed rezoning area across West Farms Road is the Sheridan Expressway and, beyond it, the land adjacent to the Bronx River, which consists of vacant, fenced land north of 172nd Street. The area across Sheridan Expressway and south of 172nd street is occupied by large footprint 1-story industrial and automotive buildings, a 3-story motor inn, a parking lot, and other open areas used for parking or storage. At its northern end, West Farms Road faces an embankment carrying the Cross Bronx Expressway (photo 32). Along three of the four blocks in this part of the proposed rezoning area, the proposed rezoning would cover both sides of Boone Avenue, so there is no facing block. It is only on the west side of Boone Avenue between 172nd and Jennings Streets that this part of the proposed rezoning area faces an urban block developed as part of a neighborhood. Late twentieth century brick row houses, with pitched roofs and projecting dormers and with front yards occupied by parking spaces, occupy the southwest corner of Boone Avenue and 172nd Street, facing East 172nd Street (photo 30). To their south is an accessory parking lot. Visible behind the parking lot are the rears of 6-story apartment buildings that front on Longfellow Avenue (photo 29). South of that is a school yard, a level area with paved game courts, a paved track, and a rectangle of grass, that extends through the block to Longfellow Avenue. Visible behind it on the far side of Longfellow Avenue are more late twentieth century 2-story row houses. At the southern end of the block is a red brick, 5-story, early twentieth century school building (photo 31).



29. View west on Boone Avenue of residential buildings and parking lot



30. View southwest on Boone Avenue of row houses



31. View north on Jennings Street of P.S. 66 / I.S. 286 (left) and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School (right)



32. View north on Boone Avenue of industrial building (left), brick wall along Cross Bronx Expressway embankment (center), and the fence around Boone Slope Park (right)

Proposed Rezoning Area South of Jennings Street

Street System

The southern end of the proposed rezoning area is only one block in length, from Jennings Street to Freeman Street. It is an area where the street system departs from the pattern that prevails to the north. West Farms Road changes direction and angles southwestward, away from the Sheridan Expressway and towards Longfellow Avenue; this part of the road is laid out in a straight line. Boone Avenue also changes direction, angling southeastward, so that it crosses West Farms Road. The portion of Boone Avenue between Jennings Street and West Farms Road has been closed and de-mapped. Freeman Street, which to the west is parallel with Jennings Street and the other streets to the north, veers slightly southeastward after its intersection with West Farms Road. In this southern portion, the mapped and de-mapped portions of Boone Avenue form the western edge of the proposed rezoning area, and the Sheridan Expressway and its exit ramp form the eastern edge. The rezoning area's southern edge is the sharp intersection of Freeman Street, Boone Avenue, and the exit ramp. The intersection is the eastern terminus of Freeman Street. Boone Avenue narrows, angles southward, and continues only another 166 feet before ending at Westchester Avenue, at the edge of a bridge that carries Westchester Avenue across the Sheridan Expressway and the Bronx River.

Block Form

This part of the proposed rezoning area contains only one full block, the one bounded by West Farms Road, Boone Avenue, and the Sheridan Expressway exit ramp. The block is long and narrow, with an irregular shape that resembles a modified triangle. It is 185 feet wide at its broadest, which is at the intersection of West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, and tapers to a point at its southern end and to a sliver just 18 feet wide at its northern end. From acute angle to acute angle, it has a north-south length of approximately 700 feet.

The proposed rezoning area also includes what was once the small triangular block bounded by Jennings Street, Boone Avenue, and West Farms Road, but which (because of the closing of part of Boone Avenue) is now the eastern edge of the larger block bounded by Jennings Street, West Farms Road, Freeman Street, and Longfellow Avenue.

Development

There are no buildings on the full block and partial block that comprise this part of the proposed rezoning area. A children's playground occupies much of the southern half of the full block; the rest of the block is just a grassy slope (photo 34). A school staff parking lot occupies the partial block (photo 33).

Nevertheless, school buildings in different architectural styles and from different eras dominate this part of the proposed rezoning area. One is the school on the north side of Jennings Street between West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, within the proposed rezoning area, and the other two are just outside, to the immediate west of the staff parking lot at the southeast corner of Jennings Street and Longfellow Avenue and on the north side of Jennings Street between Boone and Longfellow Avenues .

The school within the proposed rezoning area (the Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School) is actually composed of several 2- and 3-story buildings that have been combined, internally connected, and reclad in more or less uniform facades (photo 35). It is a boxy, unornamented structure that is built to the street lines. The portion fronting on West Farms Road has a beige painted stucco façade on the first floor and a red brick façade at the second and third floor levels, except for a small central portion that is finished entirely in beige stucco. This design is maintained on the Jennings Street side, except that, as the terrain slopes upward, the building

drops to two stories, and the beige stucco narrows to a base, almost disappearing entirely on the Boone Avenue side. On the more westerly section, a broad metal strip covers the top of the façades. The building has a shorter length along Boone Avenue, but to its north a separate building, a 2-story former warehouse with a mural painted on its bare façade, has been incorporated into the school complex (photo 27, above).

The school adjacent to the staff parking lot (I. S. 84) is four stories tall and consists of a drum-shaped building at the corner of Jennings Street and Longfellow Avenue attached, via a 1-story neck, to a roughly rectangular section to its south along Longfellow Avenue (photo 33). The portion of the drum facing the parking lot (and the playground behind it, across West Farms Road) is clad mostly in red panels, while the rest of the building has a buff brick façade.

The third school (P. S. 66) is a classic early twentieth century New York City school building, five stories tall with red brick facades, and U-shaped with a main façade facing Jennings Street and wings along the avenue frontages that flank a rear courtyard (photo 31). Large, multi-pane windows open up the brick facades, which are trimmed with white stone and topped by a crenellated cornice, decorated with foliate openings and foliated white stone.

Topography

Although the playground is level, the block as a whole slopes steeply down to the Sheridan Expressway. The parking lot appears to be essentially level. Jennings Street slopes upward as one moves westward, so that the same story of the high school is at the ground floor level on Boone Avenue and the second floor level on West Farms Road.

Facing Blocks

The schools facing the proposed rezoning area have already been described. A phalanx of 6-story brick apartment buildings faces the playground block across Boone Avenue, and such buildings flank West Farms Road south of the staff parking lot.



33. View northwest on Boone Avenue of I.S. 84 school building and staff parking lot



34. View southwest on West Farms Road of Boone Playground and apartment buildings beyond



35. View north on West Farms Road of Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School

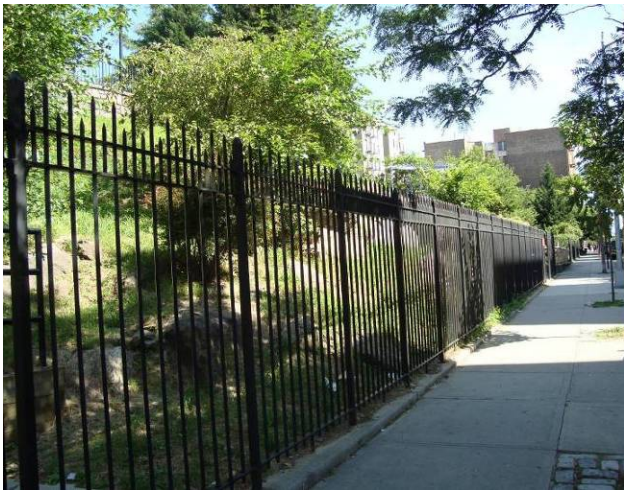
Visual Resources

The most important visual resource in the vicinity of the proposed rezoning area is the Bronx River. As has been discussed, the river is located to the east of the proposed rezoning area, on the other side of the Sheridan Expressway. Flanking the river are stretches of fenced barren land, railroad tracks, industrial and automotive uses, and a motor inn. North of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the school building on the east side of West Farms Road is between the proposed rezoning area and the river, which is not even visible from the rezoning area.

South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, from the west, the only views of the river are from West Farms Road and along the east-west street corridors. Although low rise buildings prevail within the proposed rezoning area, the buildings, along with fencing and bluffs, are sufficient to block views from Boone Avenue. Along avenues further to the west, the buildings along those avenues block views of the river.

South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, from the river the view to the west is of a multilane highway, the industrial and automotive buildings and rock outcroppings on the western side of West Farms Road, and, rising on the higher ground further to the west, rows of 5- and 6-story apartment buildings.

The only other visual resource that has been identified in the vicinity of the proposed rezoning area is Rock Garden Park (photo 38), a small park on the west side of Longfellow Avenue, occupying most of the midblock between 173rd and 174th Streets. A pathway with stairs leads from the street level entrance to higher terrain at the top of the large rock formations that give the park its name. There are trees and other plantings, pathways, seating, picnic tables, playground basketball equipment, and a small waterfall. The park is 160 feet west of the proposed rezoning area, but there is no direct line of sight because of intervening 6-story apartment buildings on the east side of Longfellow Avenue. Because of its midblock location and the nature of the street grid, the only views of the park are from across the street.



38. View south on Longfellow Avenue sidewalk of Rock Garden Park

No buildings or other structures in the vicinity have been identified as visual resources. As is discussed in Chapter 2.F, Historic Resources, the area does not have any designated landmarks or historic districts, and no buildings have been deemed eligible for designation.

FUTURE CONDITIONS WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

If the Proposed Action is not taken, then, within the proposed rezoning area, the only changes expected between now and the 2022 analysis year would be the redevelopment of a site at the northern end of the area and the construction of a small building on a lot facing West Farms Road between the Cross Bronx Expressway and 174th Street. The northern site is now partly vacant and partly occupied by the hotel fronting on Boston Road and the adjacent small parking lot at the corner of Boston Road and Longfellow Avenue. The site would be cleared, and a new building with residential apartments above ground floor retail space would be built. Plans are not available, but the building would fit the envelope established by the regulations governing the existing R7-1 zoning district, and it is assumed that the Quality Housing rather than the height factor regulations would be followed. The building would be approximately 80 feet tall. The other site, described above as a gap between buildings hidden by a fence, is used as a contractor's yard. A building permit has been issued for a 2-story, 25-foot-tall building covering slightly more than a quarter of the lot, which would contain offices accessory to the contractor's yard.

Nearby, within the areas constituting the visual context of the proposed rezoning area, certain changes will occur whether or not the Proposed Action is taken.

A new building will be constructed on what is now an excavated construction site on the west side of Longfellow Avenue across the street from the proposed rezoning area just north of the Cross Bronx Expressway. The large lot, which extends to Boston Road, is opposite the apartment building at the southeast corner of Longfellow Avenue and Rodman Place. The Cerebral Palsy Association of New York State is proposing to build an 8-story building with assisted living units above commercial and community facility space.

Other new buildings will be constructed on vacant lots in the Crotona Park East neighborhood. Three apartment buildings will be constructed on Vyse Avenue: a 5-story building at the southeast corner of 174th Street and two buildings of up to eight stories adjacent to the shopping center. Three-family homes will be built on smaller lots on Bryant and Longfellow Avenues.

The land along the west bank of the Bronx River between the levels of 172nd and 174th Streets, which is now mapped but fenced and unimproved parkland known as Starlight Park, will be transformed into a functioning park. Upon completion in 2012, the park will include a boathouse, a floating dock, native plantings, a fern garden, walking paths, playgrounds, ballfields, and a buffer zone of trees to block views of the Sheridan Expressway. The improvements will transform this derelict stretch of land into an important visual resource.

FUTURE CONDITIONS WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

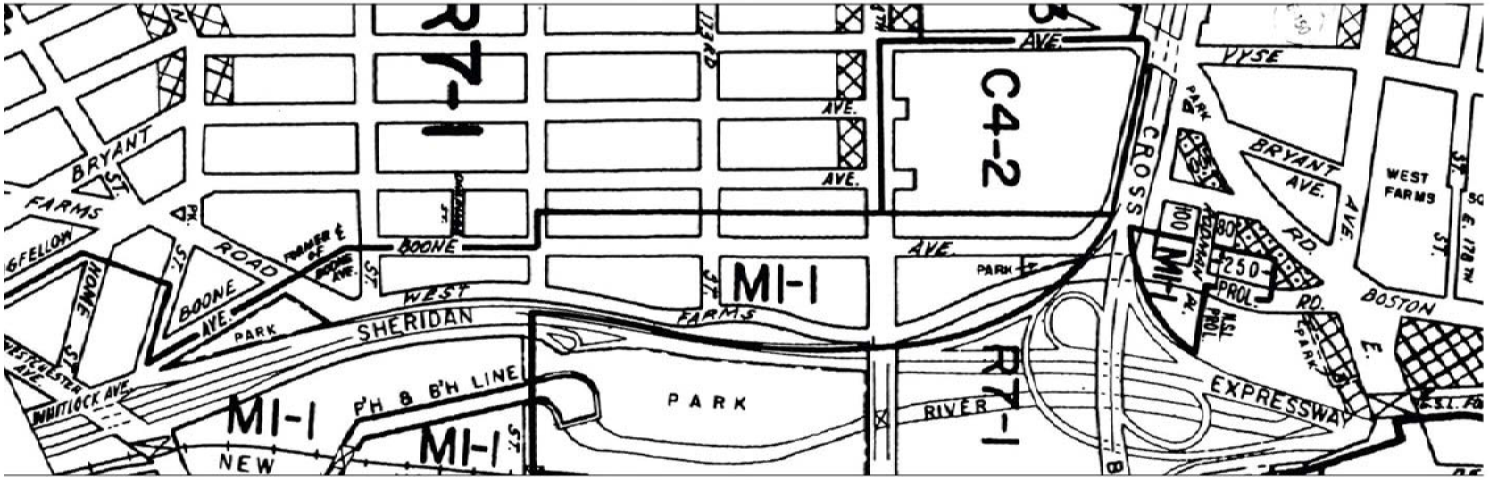
Proposed Zoning Map Changes

The Proposed Action would not involve any changes to the City Map and thus would not alter the street system or block form.

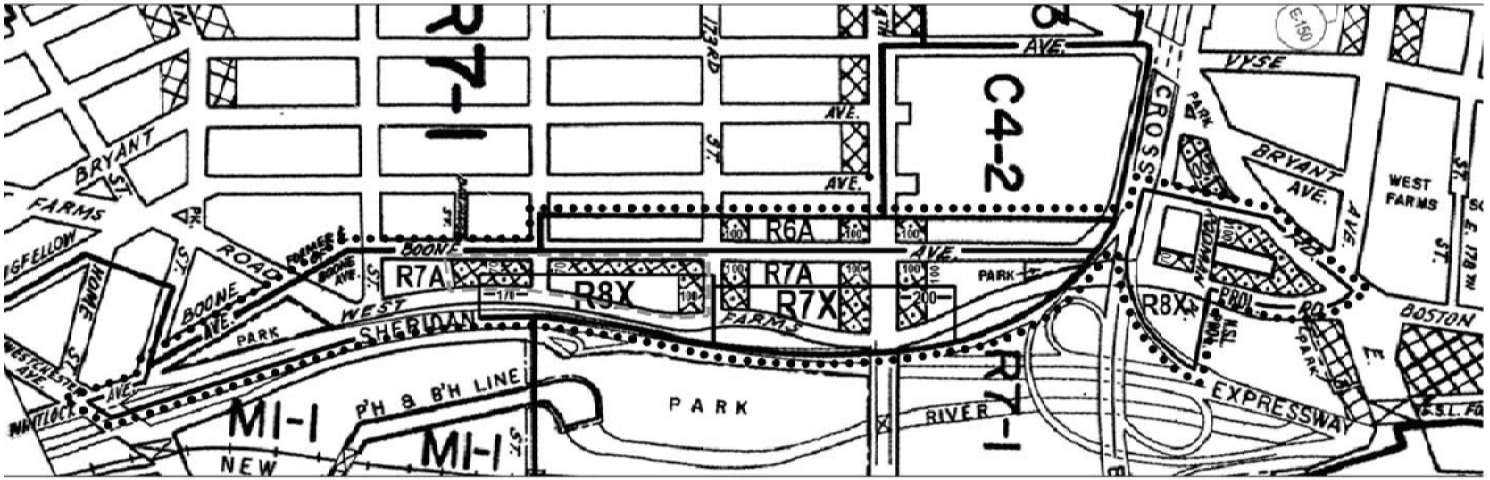
The Proposed Action would change the proposed rezoning area's zoning, allowing residential development in what is now an M1-1 manufacturing district where it is not allowed, and also allowing greater bulk than is now allowed, both in the portions of the proposed rezoning area now zoned M1-1 and in the much smaller area -- the western and northern portions of the two blocks north of the Cross Bronx Expressway – that are now within an R7-1 residential zoning district (partially covered by a C2-4 commercial overlay). The Proposed Action is therefore expected to result in considerable redevelopment, eliminating much of the development described above under Existing Conditions and replacing it with different building types. Also, in the one location in the proposed rezoning area where new residential and commercial development is expected in the future without the Proposed Action (the area's extreme northern end), the proposed higher density zoning would result in a taller building with more bulk than current zoning would allow.

The Proposed Action would map four different residential zoning districts over different parts of the proposed rezoning area. The lowest density district, R6A, would cover the western side of Boone Avenue from 172nd Street to the Cross Bronx Expressway. (Figure G-2 shows the proposed zoning.) The next lowest district in terms of permissible height and bulk would be R7A, which would be mapped along the eastern side of Boone Avenue, from Freeman Street to the Cross Bronx Expressway, and which would extend through the block to West Farms Road at the northern and southern ends (that is, from the Cross Bronx Expressway's south service road to a line 200 feet north of 174th Street and from Freeman Street to a line 350 feet south of 172nd Street). In between, where the R7A district would not extend to West Farms Road, it would be mapped to a depth of 50 feet from the Boone Avenue street line south of 173rd Street and to a depth of 100 feet north of 173rd Street. The next zone, R7X, would be mapped along West Farms Road from 173rd Street north to the line 200 feet north of 174th Street. The depth of this district would vary because the width of these blocks varies. The highest density district, R8X, would be mapped in two locations: along West Farms Road from 173rd Street south to the line 350 feet south of 172nd Street; and over the portion of the proposed rezoning area north of the Cross Bronx Expressway. C2-4 commercial overlays would be mapped over portions of the proposed rezoning area, allowing ground floor commercial use.

South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the result would be a stepped pattern in terms of allowable height and bulk. The greatest height and bulk would be allowed along West Farms Road, facing the Sheridan Expressway and, further to the east, the Bronx River. Permitted height and bulk would step down progressively to the west, as the area approaches the existing Crotona Park East residential neighborhood. Existing residential buildings would face or abut parcels zoned R6A or R7A. Also, the greatest building height would be allowed on the low ground at the bottom of the slope descending from Bryant Avenue to West Farms Road, and tighter height restrictions would apply on the higher ground along Boone Avenue. As is detailed below, allowable bulk (in terms of maximum permitted floor area ratio, or FAR) steps up in more or less even increments among the four proposed zones, but in terms of height, there is relatively little difference between the R6A and R7A districts but a major difference between those two districts and R7X and R8X districts.



Existing Zoning Districts



Proposed Zoning Districts

N

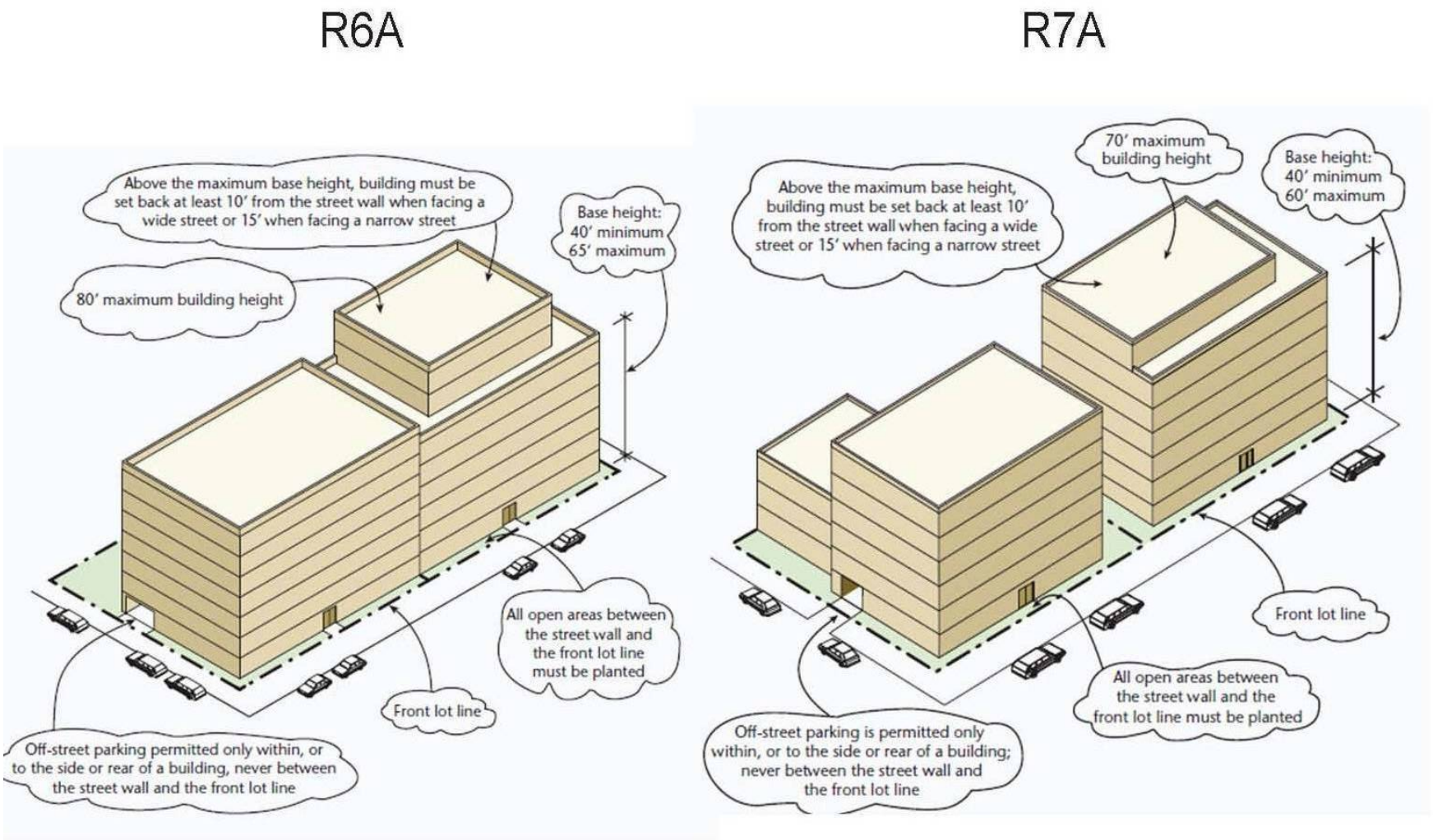
Legend

- Zoning District Boundary
- C2-4
- C1-2
- Area to be Rezoned
- General Large Scale Development Area

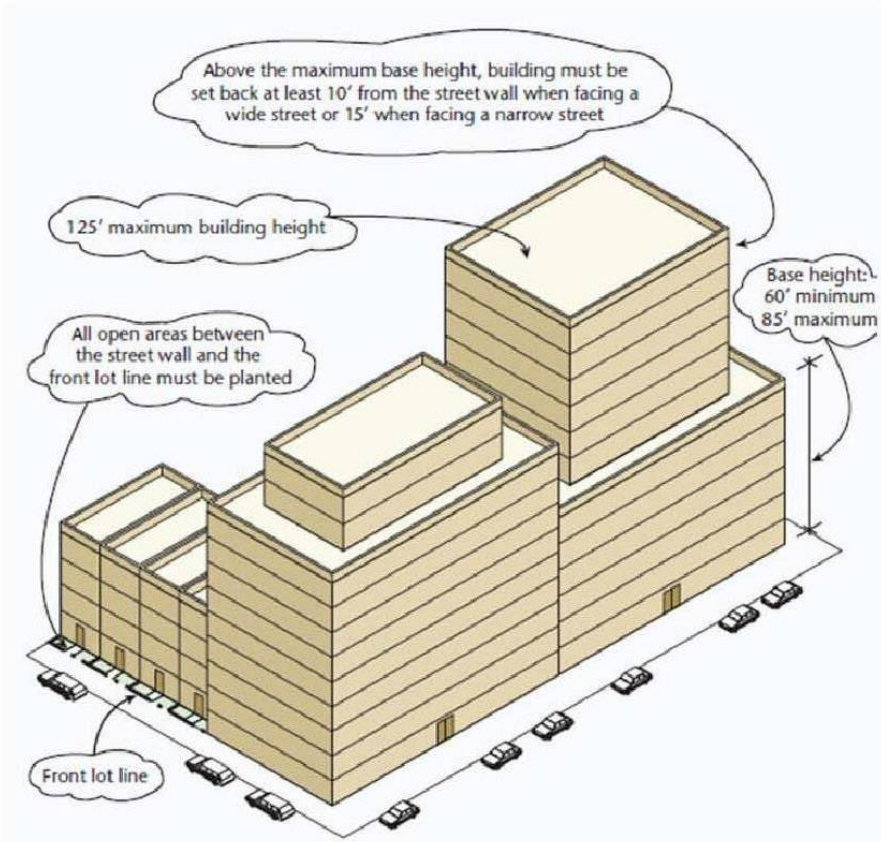
Note: Zoning Diagrams Excerpted from New York City Planning Department Zoning Map 3d

CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

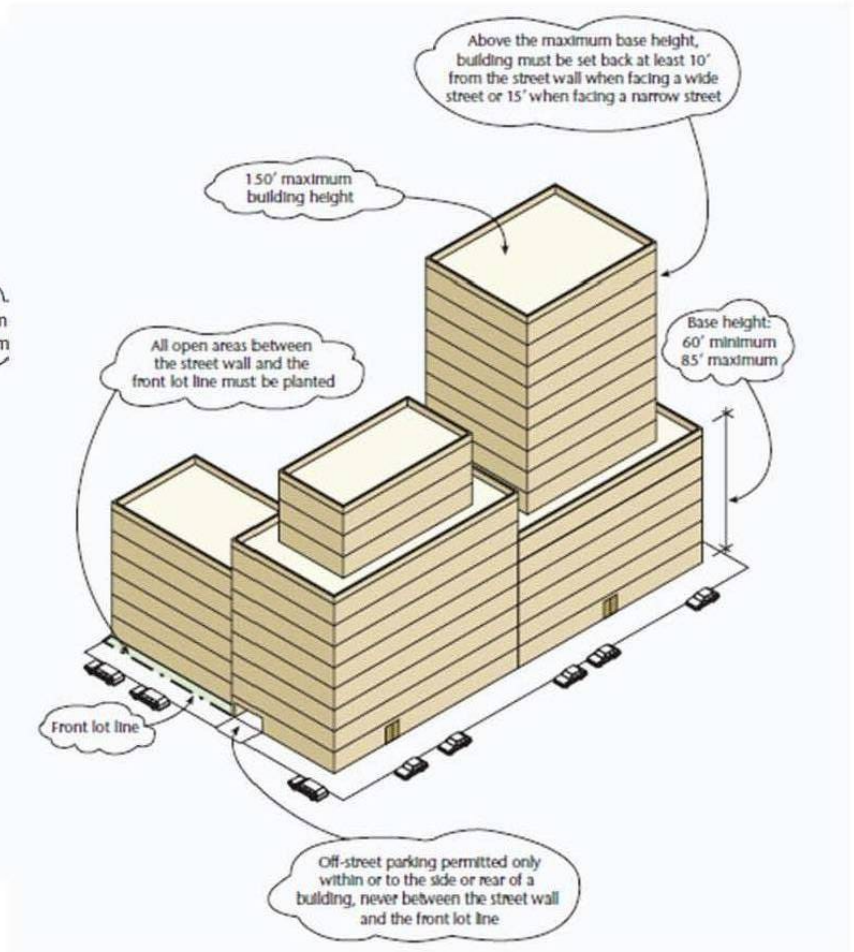
Bronx, New York


R6A
R7A
Above the maximum base height, building must be set back at least 10' from the street wall when facing a wide street or 15' when facing a narrow street
Base height: 40' minimum 65' maximum
80' maximum building height
All open areas between the street wall and the front lot line must be planted
Front lot line
Off-street parking permitted only within, or to the side or rear of a building, never between the street wall and the front lot line
70' maximum building height
Above the maximum base height, building must be set back at least 10' from the street wall when facing a wide street or 15' when facing a narrow street
Base height: 40' minimum 60' maximum
Front lot line
All open areas between the street wall and the front lot line must be planted
Off-street parking is permitted only within, or to the side or rear of a building; never between the street wall and the front lot line

R7X


Above the maximum base height, building must be set back at least 10' from the street wall when facing a wide street or 15' when facing a narrow street
125' maximum building height
Base height:
60' minimum
85' maximum
All open areas between the street wall and the front lot line must be planted
Front lot line

R8X


Above the maximum base height, building must be set back at least 10' from the street wall when facing a wide street or 15' when facing a narrow street
150' maximum building height
Base height:
60' minimum
85' maximum
All open areas between the street wall and the front lot line must be planted
Front lot line
Off-street parking permitted only within or to the side or rear of a building, never between the street wall and the front lot line

Because of the greater density and height of the existing development near the two blocks north of the Cross Bronx Expressway, these blocks would be zoned R8X in their entirety.

The proposed rezoning area would also be mapped as an inclusionary housing designated area, which means that the maximum floor area ratios usually associated with the proposed zones would not apply. The inclusionary housing provisions would substitute lower maximum base FARs for projects that do not include units (on or off site) that are set aside for low income households but would increase the permitted floor area for developments that include such units, up to specified maximums that, except in the case of R7X, exceed the usual maximum FARs for those zones. Although the provisions would thus allow greater bulk than is generally associated with these zones, the usual lot coverage, yard, and height and setback regulations would apply.

The bulk regulations, in summary form, are as follows. The maximum permitted FAR, assuming full inclusionary housing credit, would be 3.6 under R6A, 4.6 under R7A, 5.0 under R7X, and 7.2 under R8X. (If not for the inclusionary housing provisions, the districts would have a more even progression: 3.0, 4.0, 5.0, and 6.02.) The envelope into which the permitted bulk may be fit is controlled mainly by lot coverage, yard and height and setback regulations. The maximum permitted lot coverage for interior and through lots is 65 percent in the R6A and R7A districts and 70 percent in the R7X and R8X districts; for corner lots the maximum is 80 percent in all four districts. Where permitted, ground floor commercial space may occupy an unlimited amount of lot area; the lot coverage regulations apply only to residential space. Yard regulations are the same for all four districts. Except within 100 feet of a street corner and along the short dimensions of blocks, rear yards at least 30 feet deep, or (in the case of through lots) rear yard equivalents, are required. For commercial space, the required rear yard depth is 20 feet. No front or side yards are required. The maximum permitted base height, at which building walls must set back from the street line, is 60 feet in R6A, 65 feet in R7A, and 85 feet in R7X and R8X. The required setback is 10 feet along wide streets (West Farms Road, Boston Road, Tremont Avenue, East 174th Street and the Sheridan Expressway) and 15 feet along narrow streets (all others abutting lots in the proposed rezoning area). The entire building wall does not have to set back, however; dormers, equaling in their aggregate up to 60 percent of the lot's entire street wall length, are allowed to penetrate the setback distance. The maximum permitted building height is 70 feet in the R6A district, 80 feet in R7A, 125 feet in R7X and 150 feet in R8X. For purposes of the height and setback regulations, building height is measured not from curb level but from the lot's base plane, which, for a through lot, averages the elevations along the lot's street frontages. Because of the marked grade changes in the proposed rezoning area, particularly the differences in elevation between West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, this distinction is important. (Illustrative bulk diagrams from the Department of City Planning's *Zoning Handbook* are presented in Figure G-3a and G-3b.)

For the sake of comparison, it is worth noting the regulations applicable in the R7-1 district that covers the adjacent residential neighborhood, as well as the portions of the two northernmost blocks within the proposed rezoning area. Under the district's original regulations, the allowable FAR varies up to an overall maximum of 3.44 (although this is not attainable on smaller lots), and building height is regulated by sky exposure planes sloping upwards and backwards from front lot lines, with no explicit maximum building height, so that on sufficiently deep lots buildings of more than 20 stories are possible. Alternative Quality Housing regulations have also been available since the late 1980s, and no nearby development has followed the older regulations since the alternative was made available. Under Quality Housing the permitted FAR is 4.0 within 100 feet of a wide street and 3.44 elsewhere, and lot coverage and yard regulations are the same as in R6A and R7A districts. Along wide streets the height and setback regulations are the same as under R7A; on narrow streets, the maximum base height is 60 feet, and the maximum permitted building height is 75 feet.

Large-Scale General Development (LSGD) special permits would modify the bulk regulations applicable to the block bounded by Boone Avenue, West Farms Road, and East 172nd and 173rd Streets and the northern half of the adjacent block to the south bordered by Boone Avenue, West Farms Road, East 172nd Street, and Jennings Street. The LSGD special permits would allow modification of street wall location, minimum and maximum base height, minimum setback and maximum building height; allow the distribution of lot coverage without regard to corner or through lot lines; allow the distribution of floor area (and dwelling units) across the boundaries between the R7A and R8X districts; allow deeper outer court recesses than allowed by the regulations; allow parking to be distributed without regard to zoning lot lines; and exclude enclosed accessory parking from lot coverage. The special permits would provide design flexibility to address unique features of these blocks: their narrow, irregular shapes; marked grade changes; and rock outcroppings. They would also allow for midblock open areas (referred to below as midblock open areas) that would break up the buildings' massing, provide public open space amenities, and provide additional view corridors to the Bronx River and Starlight Park.

The width of the southern half-block ranges from 126 feet at the midblock to approximately 137 feet at East 172nd Street. Likewise, the width of the northern block ranges from a narrow 139 feet at East 172nd Street to a more standard 202 feet at East 173rd Street. The proposed lot coverage and outer court recess relief would allow functional, efficient buildings to be constructed both along West Farms Road and along Boone Avenue. Without the relief, the narrowness of the blocks would generally prevent development along the midblock portions of Boone Avenue. The modifications would thus enable the creation of a stronger, more activated street presence along Boone Avenue that is more conducive to pedestrian activity and more suitable to the goal of redeveloping the area as a vibrant, residential neighborhood with appropriate local retail and service uses.

Both the northern and southern blocks have approximately 600 feet of frontage along Boone Avenue and West Farms Road. The proposed street wall location relief would allow midblock open areas to traverse the blocks from Boone Avenue through to West Farms Road. Without the relief, development of at least five stories in height would have to be constructed along the entire block frontages of West Farms Road, resulting in extraordinarily long street walls and inhibiting views from Boone Avenue to the east. The proposed midblock open areas would moderate the scale of the development by providing breaks in the street walls along both West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, provide additional open space, and open view corridors to Starlight Park and the Bronx River.

The proposed height and setback relief would provide for a better site plan and more appropriate building depth for apartment layouts than would otherwise be possible. The modification would allow 8-foot rather than 10-foot setbacks, a difference that would not have a significant impact at street level, and would result in a more efficient layout, providing a larger number of units and a better distribution of unit sizes, while maintaining the goal of a varied building massing.

Although a basic familiarity with the zoning regulations is important, because they would shape the redevelopment that would occur as a result of the Proposed Action, the assessment of the action's potential urban design and visual resources impact is based not on hypothetical possibilities, but rather on projections about what redevelopment would occur between the effective date of the rezoning and the analysis year of 2022. That is to say, it is based on the formulation of a reasonable worst case development scenario (RWCDS), which is presented below.

Development Scenario

Overview

On property controlled by the applicant, a proposed development scheme is available. That development scheme constitutes the Proposed Project. Ten new buildings (designated as Buildings 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B, 3A, 3B, 3C, 4, 5, and 6 on Figures G-5a and G-8a) would be constructed on the five applicant-controlled parcels. Buildings 1A and 1B would be constructed on the northern half of the block bounded by West Farms Road, East 172nd Street, Boone Avenue, and Jennings Street. The next block to the north, bounded by East 172nd and 173rd Streets, West Farms Road, and Boone Avenue, would be redeveloped in its entirety, with Buildings 2A and 2B and associated open space. These two large development parcels, facing each other across 172nd Street, would be designated a Large-Scale General Development, and the applicant is seeking special permits from the City Planning Commission that would modify zoning regulations regarding location of commercial uses, street wall location, height and setback, and the depth of outer court recesses and that would allow flexibility in the distribution of floor area and lot coverage. Building 4 would be constructed on a 100 by 100 foot parcel on the west side of Boone Avenue, roughly midway between 172nd and 173rd Streets. The fourth parcel is the eastern part of the block bounded by the north service road of the Cross Bronx Expressway, West Farms Road, Rodman Place, and Longfellow Avenue, including the industrial buildings and the adjacent vacant lot, but excluding the apartment buildings fronting on Longfellow Avenue; Building 5 would be constructed here. Building 6 would occupy the southeastern part of the northernmost block, fronting on West Farms Road north of Rodman Place, where the slate work warehouse and open storage area are now located. Preliminary massing diagrams have been prepared for the proposed development on these parcels.

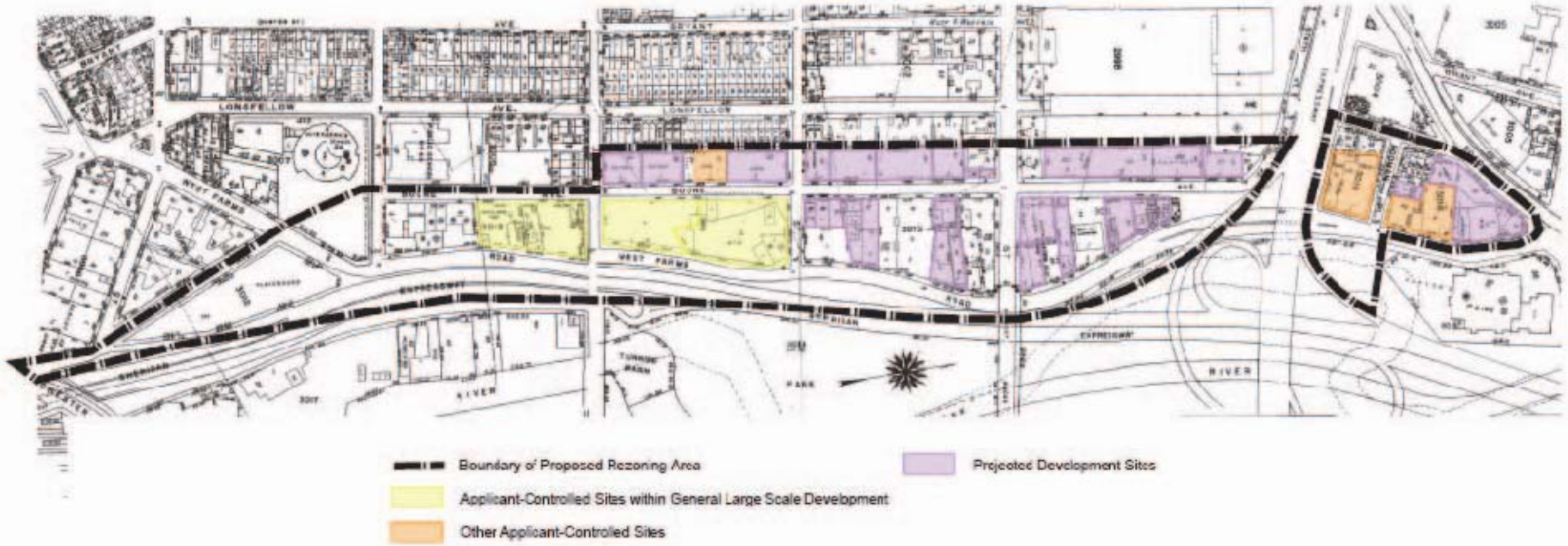
A soft site analysis was conducted for the property within the proposed rezoning area that is not controlled by the applicant, as is described in Chapter 1, Project Description. It excluded New York City facilities under the control of the Department of Education, the Department of Sanitation, and the Department of Parks and Recreation; large residential developments; flourishing businesses that have made considerable investments in their property; very small lots that are unlikely be incorporated into larger assemblages; and lots that are clearly constrained by irregularities of shape or terrain. Projected development sites were identified on six of the directly affected blocks. Development projections are based on the proposed zoning use and bulk regulations. The Proposed Project and the other projected developments together form the reasonable worst-case development scenario, presented in Chapter 1, which serves as a basis for assessments throughout this EIS. (Figure G-4 shows the proposed and projected development parcels, and identifies which are controlled by the applicant.)

What follows is a description of the proposed rezoning area in the future analysis year if the Proposed Action is taken, presented in a block-by-block format. It describes those buildings and open areas that are likely to remain as they are, as well as proposed or anticipated new development. Since the development scenario presented in Chapter 1 numbers both the development parcels and the buildings within the Proposed Project from south to north, the discussion here also proceeds from south to north.

From Jennings Street South

No changes are anticipated in the southernmost part of the proposed rezoning area. The playground and adjacent grassy slope, the school staff parking lot, and Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School are all stable uses that would remain.

Figure G-4: Proposed and Projected Development Sites



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

The northern part of the block bounded by Jennings Street, Boone Avenue, 172nd Street, and West Farms Road – now occupied by a former steel fabrication facility, vacant former residential buildings, an open lot, and an auto repair shop -- would be redeveloped with Building 1. Figures G-5a and G-5b show conceptual massing diagrams of the Proposed Project on the applicant's site in this area; Figures G-6a and G-6b show pedestrian-level elevations from the east and western blockfronts; and Figure G-7 shows site plans.

The southern part of this development site, abutting the high school, would be an open, landscaped area, 60 feet wide, separating the proposed new building from the school and providing a midblock open area between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road. This midblock open area would be the width of a typical street. It would be publicly accessible at grade from Boone Avenue and via stairs from West Farms Road.

Buildings 1A and 1B would be organized around a central landscaped courtyard for residents' use with a secured opening, approximately 71 feet wide along a portion of the midblock of Boone Avenue. At the corner of Boone Avenue and East 172nd Street, Building 1B would have a 6-story base with a ninth story set back 15 feet from Boone Avenue and 8 feet from East 172nd Street. Turning onto West Farms Road, the L-shaped building would have an 8-story base and, after setting back 8 feet from both West Farms Road and East 172nd Street, would rise to 15 stories (or 157 feet above base plane ("ABP") plus rooftop mechanical and elevator penthouses. Building 1B would meet Building 1A at the midblock of West Farms Road. Building 1A would step down to 9 stories along West Farms Road and the midblock open area. Returning to Boone Avenue, the C-shaped building would have a 6-story base, with a ninth story set back 8 feet from the midblock open area and 15 feet from Boone Avenue. A wing of 3-story townhouses, set back 5 feet from the street line, along the midblock of Boone Avenue would comprise the remainder of Building 1A. Building entrances would be located on the midblock open area and on Boone Avenue approximately 40 feet south of East 172nd Street. Except for the courtyard opening and the wing of townhouses, Buildings 1A and 1B would be built at the street line. The otherwise residential buildings would contain ground floor commercial space at the northwest corner of building 1B and southeast corner of Building 1A along Boone avenue and possibly the southeast corner of Building 1B at the intersection of East 172nd Street and West Farms Road. The principal façade material would be brick. There would be an open courtyard facing Boone Avenue, which would be 72 feet wide and 74 feet deep, connecting to an inner court between Buildings 1A and 1B.

Across Boone Avenue, the 9-story section of Building 1A at the northern end of the block would face the side of a brick row house, part of a row extending westward along 172nd Street, and to the south 3- and 9-story sections of Building 1 would face a parking lot. The 15-story façade of Building 1B along West Farms Road would face low rise industrial and automotive buildings and a motor inn on the far side of the Sheridan Expressway, with the Bronx River beyond.

172nd Street to 173rd Street East of Boone Avenue

The block bounded by 172nd Street, Boone Avenue, 173rd Street, and West Farms Road – now occupied by the auto impoundment lot and the meatpacker's complex of buildings – would be entirely redeveloped, with Buildings 2A and 2B, and 3A, 3B, and 3C separated by a landscaped midblock open area between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road. Buildings 2A and 2B would be constructed on the southern portion of this zoning lot, ranging from six to 14 stories in height wrapping around an interior courtyard that would open onto Boone Avenue. On the northern part of the block, Buildings 3A, 3B, and 3C, ranging from five to 15 stories, would enclose an interior courtyard. In both cases the greatest height would be along West Farms Road, with building height stepping down towards Boone Avenue. As on the block to the south, the midblock open

area would be 60 feet wide, the width of a typical east-west street, and would be publicly accessible at grade from Boone Avenue and via stairs from West Farms Road.

At the corner of Boone Avenue and East 172nd Street, Building 2A would have a 6-story base with a ninth story set back 15 feet from Boone Avenue and 8 feet from East 172nd Street. The L-shaped building would step up towards West Farms Road to a 9-story base, and after setting back 8 feet from both East 172nd Street and West Farms Road, would rise to 12 stories plus rooftop mechanical and elevator penthouses. The building would step down to 9 stories in the midblock along West Farms Road where it would meet Building 2B. Building 2B would rise to 14 stories (or 149 feet above base plane) plus rooftop mechanical and elevator penthouses along West Farms Road. Turning onto the midblock open area, the C-shaped building would step down to 11 stories, then to 9 stories, dropping to 6 stories at Boone Avenue. A 6-story wing along the midblock of Boone Avenue would complete Building 2B. On Boone Avenue between the 6- and 9-story southern wing of Building 2A and the 6-story wing of Building 2B to the north, there would be a 73-foot-wide gap in the street wall, most of which would be occupied by a children's playground with 60 feet of sidewalk frontage and an entrance onto Boone Avenue and with a depth of 31 feet from the street. The remaining 13 feet of street frontage, to the south of the playground, would be an entrance to a landscaped courtyard, which would extend northward to occupy the interior space bounded by the buildings' four wings and the playground.

At the corner of Boone Avenue and East 173rd Street, Building 3B would have a 6-story base with a seventh story set back 15 feet from Boone Avenue and 8 feet from East 173rd Street. The L-shaped building would retain the 6-story base along East 173rd Street but would step up after an 8-foot setback to 12 stories in the midblock and 15 stories (or 155 feet above base plane) plus mechanical and elevator penthouses at West Farms Road. Building 3B would meet Building 3A in the midblock of West Farms Road. Along West Farms Road, Building 3A would have a 7-story base with an eleventh story set back 8 feet. Turning onto the midblock open area, the L-shaped building would rise to14 stories (plus mechanical and elevator penthouses) while maintaining a 7-story street wall. Building 3A would meet Building 3C near the center of the midblock open area. Building 3C would have a 6-story street wall with a seventh story set back 15 feet from the midblock open area and Boone Avenue. Building 3C would drop to 5 stories, without setback, in the midblock along Boone Avenue, where it would meet Building 3B. The upper floors of Buildings 3A, 3B, and 3C would be entirely residential, but the ground floor along Boone Avenue would have storefronts at the corners (with the midblock open area and with 173rd Street) and a child care facility occupying most of the intervening avenue frontage, and there would be either retail space or a community room (in either case involving ground floor glazing) at the corner of West Farms Road and 173rd Street. The buildings would have three main entrances, one off 173rd Street just east of Boone Avenue, one off Boone Avenue just north of the midblock open area, and the other off the midblock open area.

The large rock outcropping that occupies the southern part of the block's West Farms Road frontage would be partly incorporated in the building foundations. Portions of the rock would be exposed to view between the building foundation piers unless further geotechnical investigation reveals that this is impractical. At the midblock open area, again subject to further geotechnical investigation, the rock outcropping would be incorporated into the landscape design as a natural feature and would be integrated with the stairs connecting the open area to West Farms Road. Because portions of the outcropping extend beyond the lot line into the public street, a determination would have to be made about whether these portions would have to be cut back for structural, safety, or regulatory reasons.

In urban design terms, the Proposed Project would divide this 600-foot-long block into two smaller blocks, both 270 feet long, with a landscaped open area between them. On both sides of

the midblock open area, buildings would be arranged in a traditional perimeter block fashion, with principal facades facing all streets (including the new midblock open area) and in all cases built to the street line, and enclosing open space in the interior of the block, except that the southern "block" would include a publicly accessible playground and an opening from Boone Avenue onto the landscaped interior open space. This opening (akin to a midblock plaza) would occupy slightly more than a quarter of the Boone Avenue frontage between 172nd Street and the midblock open area. The principal façade material of all buildings would be brick. Storefronts would be located at the four Boone Avenue corners, those at 172nd and 173rd Streets and those on the northern and southern sides of the midblock open area. Building heights would range from five to seven stories along Boone Avenue; and along West Farms Road, where the elevation is the equivalent of almost two building stories lower, buildings would have rooftop heights ranging from eight to 15 stories and street wall of seven and eight stories.

To the south, Buildings 2A and 2B would face Buildings 1A and 1B across East 172nd Street. On the Boone Avenue side of 172nd Street, similar 9-story residential buildings with 6-story street walls would face each other. At the West Farms Road corners, 12- and 15-story buildings would face each other. Across West Farms Road, Buildings 1A, 1B, 2A, 2B,3A and 3B would face the Sheridan Expressway and, beyond it, Starlight Park. Across Boone Avenue and 173rd Street, Building 3C would face portions of the proposed rezoning area that are not under the applicant's control. It is anticipated that almost all of the opposite Boone Avenue blockfront would be redeveloped, with 6- or 7-story apartment buildings. Under the reasonable worst case development scenario, only one of the existing 1-story warehouses would remain, a narrow building that would be opposite the midblock open area. Across 173rd Street, the existing 1-story truck garage facing West Farms Road would remain, and it is expected that a new 7- or 8-story apartment building would be built at the Boone Avenue corner.

West Side of Boone Avenue

On the west side of Boone Avenue between 172nd Street and the Cross Bronx Expressway's south service road, it is expected that the 1-story light industrial buildings that line these blocks would almost all be demolished and replaced if the Proposed Action is taken. The two apartment buildings that flank 174th Street would remain, and one narrow warehouse midway between 172nd and 173rd Streets is expected to remain.

The applicant owns only one property in this part of the proposed rezoning area, a 100 by 100 foot parcel on the midblock between 172nd and 173rd Streets, which is now occupied by a 1-story warehouse. The applicant intends to replace it with Building 4, a residential apartment building, which would have a 6-story street wall and a recessed seventh story. Building 4 would be built to the street line and would be 65 feet deep, with a 35-foot-deep rear yard. The seventh floor would be set back 15 feet from the street wall.

The massing scheme for Building 4 is shaped by the R6A zoning envelope, and the R6A district would cover this entire part of the proposed rezoning area. Similar buildings are therefore anticipated elsewhere along these blocks. Some buildings, particularly at the corners where higher lot coverage is permitted, might be six rather than seven stories, but taller buildings would not be possible. Ground floor commercial space would be permitted at the northwest corner of 173rd Street and Boone Avenue.

The one exception is at the southwest corner of 174th Street, where automotive repair shops now occupy a parcel that measures 25 feet by 100 feet. Because a residential apartment building would be unlikely on such a small and narrow lot, and because a commercial zoning overlay would be mapped at this location, and because retail uses are located on this stretch of 174th Street, a 2-story commercial building is anticipated.

The new development would face new 5- to 8-story apartment buildings, some existing low rise nonresidential buildings (a self-storage facility, a laundromat, and an auto repair shop), and one vacant lot (the rear portion of a parcel on which, at lower ground facing West Farms Road, a Department of Sanitation garage is located). Across 172nd Street, one new 6- or 7-story building would face 2-story row houses. The rear property lines would abut the rear yards of residential row houses (between 172nd and 173rd Streets), the rear walls of 6-story apartment buildings (between 173rd and 174th Streets), and the parking lot of a shopping center (between 174th Street and the highway's service road).

173rd Street to 174th Street East of Boone Avenue

The Department of Sanitation garage at the corner of 173rd Street and West Farms Road, the self-storage facility extending through the midblock with frontage on both West Farms Road and Boone Avenue, the laundromat at the corner of 174th Street and Boone Avenue, a contractor's shed at the corner of West Farms Road and 174th Street, and a 2-story building next to the contractor's shed that is occupied by a paint supplier are all expected to remain. Elsewhere on the block, three projected development parcels have been identified. One, at the corner of 173rd Street and Boone Avenue, is now occupied by three adjacent small buildings. The second, adjacent to the first on Boone Avenue and extending through the block to West Farms Road, now has a muffler sales and installation establishment on West Farms Road and 1-story brick buildings occupied by a contractor on Boone Avenue. The third, a through-block site to the immediate north of the self-storage facility, now contains 1- and 2-story buildings occupied by wholesalers and other uses.

The applicant does not control any of the identified redevelopment sites on this block, and no plans have been advanced, so the projected development scenario is based on zoning use and bulk regulations. The corner parcel would be zoned R7A/C2-4, accommodating a 7- or 8-story building with residential upper stories and ground floor retail space. Because this is a corner lot, high lot coverage is possible, and the commercial ground floor could cover the entire lot. That would pack the permissible bulk onto lower floors, reducing building height. The other two sites are split between the R7A district along Boone Avenue and the R7X district along West Farms Road, and they lack commercial overlays. R7X accommodates buildings of 12 to 13 stories. Rear yard equivalents are required, and floor area cannot be transferred across zoning district lines, so the sites would probably be developed with 7- or 8-story buildings fronting on Boone Avenue and 12- or 13-story buildings fronting on West Farms Road, with yards separating the buildings.

On the other side of West Farms Road, the new buildings would face the Sheridan Expressway and Starlight Park beyond it. Across Boone Avenue, the new buildings would probably face new 6- or 7-story residential buildings. Across 173rd Street, the corner development would face a new 7-story building.

174th Street to the Service Road East of Boone Avenue

On the northernmost block in the West Farms Road to Boone Avenue corridor, a lumber company warehouse, a Department of Sanitation garage, a small residential building, and an automotive repair shop are expected to remain. The warehouse fronts on West Farms Road 87 feet from the 174th Street corner. The garage fronts on West Farms Road 52 feet to the north of the warehouse; the lot continues through the block to considerably higher terrain, where an unkempt vacant rear yard faces Boone Avenue. At the northern end of the block, the 2-story residential building fronts on West Farms Road, and the automotive repair shop fronts on Boone Avenue. The rest of the block is expected to be cleared and redeveloped. The development scenario used in this EIS divides it into five projected development sites.

One of the projected development sites is at the corner of Boone Avenue and 174th Street, where a tall fence now blocks views of a manufacturer's open yard. It would be zoned mainly R7A/C2-4. It could accommodate a building of seven or eight stories with residential upper floors and ground floor retail space.

A second development site is adjacent to the first at the corner of West Farms Road and 174th Street. It is now occupied by large, low rise buildings used by a metal fabricator. It would be mainly in the R7X district, with a portion zoned R7A, and with a C2-4 commercial overlay. A residential building of up to 13 stories is expected, possibly with ground floor commercial space.

The third projected development site is a through-block parcel that to its south abuts the first development site at the Boone Avenue end and the warehouse at the West Farms Road end, and that to its north abuts the Department of Sanitation garage. It now contains an auto repair shop fronting on West Farms Road and a fenced open lot fronting on Boone Avenue. It would be divided between the R7A and the R7X districts. The most likely scenario would be a 7- or 8-story residential building fronting on Boone Avenue and a taller residential building of up to 13 stories fronting on West Farms Road.

The other two projected development sites, both through-block sites, are adjacent to each other, between the Department of Sanitation garage and the two small uses at the northern end of the block. They are occupied by several small residential, industrial, and automotive repair buildings and open storage areas. Both would be zoned R7A, and they would be developed with residential buildings of up to eight stories.

Across Boone Avenue, the new development would be expected to face new 6- or 7-story residential buildings and the existing 6-story residential building at the 174th Street corner. Across West Farms Road, the new buildings would face the Sheridan Expressway and, beyond, vacant land adjacent to the Bronx River. Across 174th Street, the new building at the Boone Avenue corner would face a laundromat and its accessory parking lot. To the east, 174th Street continues on a bridge above West Farms Road; the side of the new building at the southern end of the block along West Farms Road would thus face the bridge supports and, beyond, it is expected, a contractor's shed and yard.

Figure G-5a: West Farms Road Massing Diagram for Southern Applicant Parcels



Figure G-5b: Boone Avenue Massing Diagram for Southern Applicant Parcels

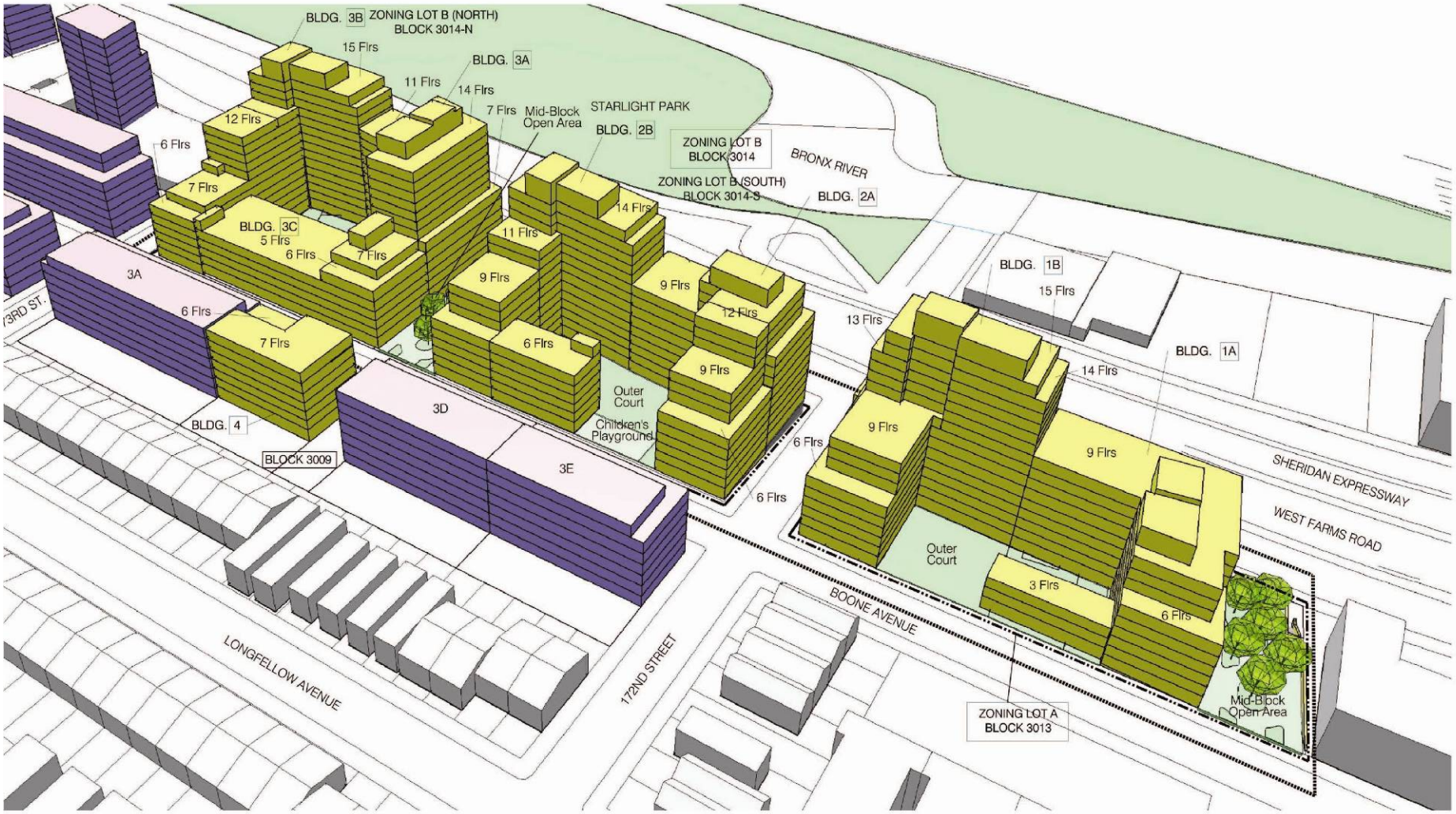
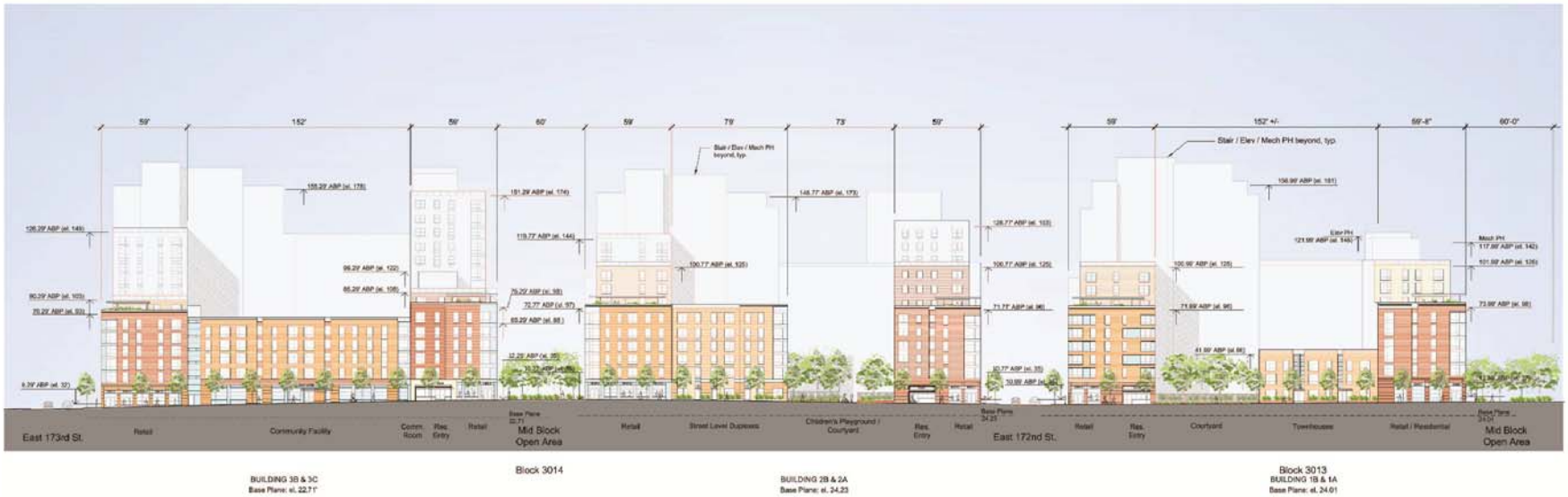


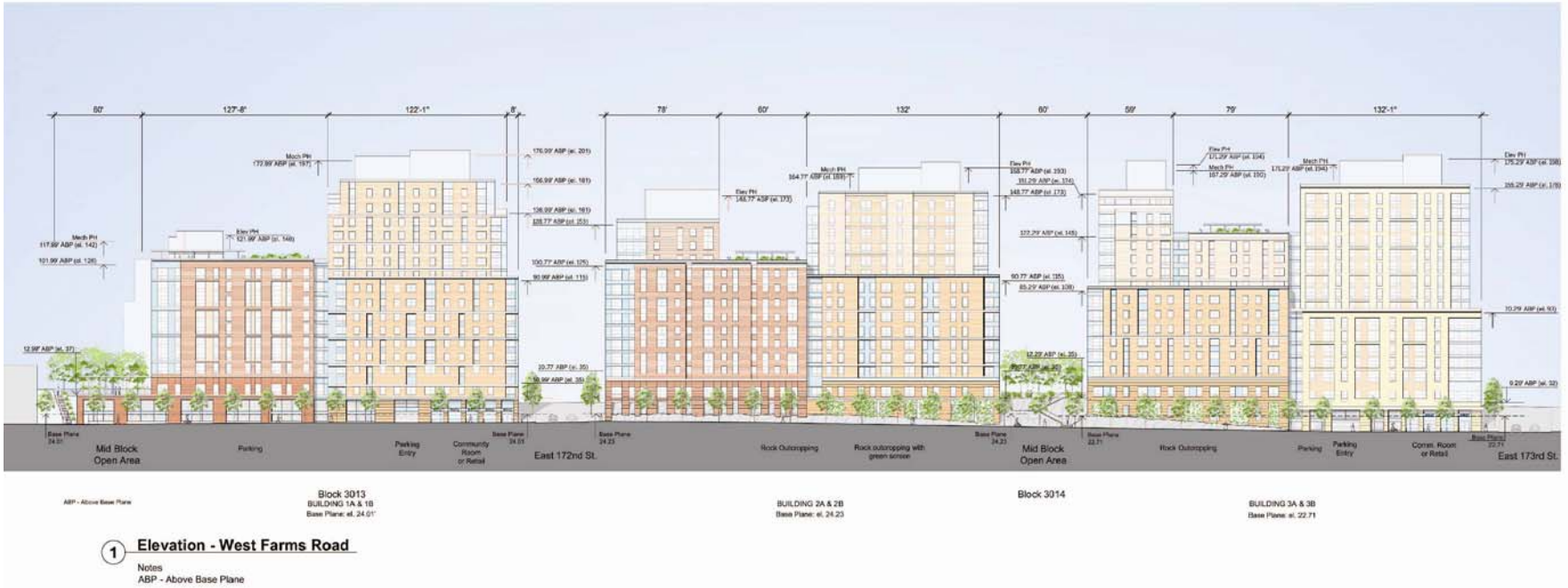
Figure G-6a: Boone Avenue Elevation for Southern Applicant Development Sites (LSGD)



2 Elevation - Boone Avenue

Notes
ABP - Above Base Plane

Figure G-6b: West Farms Road Elevation for Southern Applicant Development Sites (LSGD)



1 Elevation - West Farms Road

Notes
ABP - Above Base Plane

CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

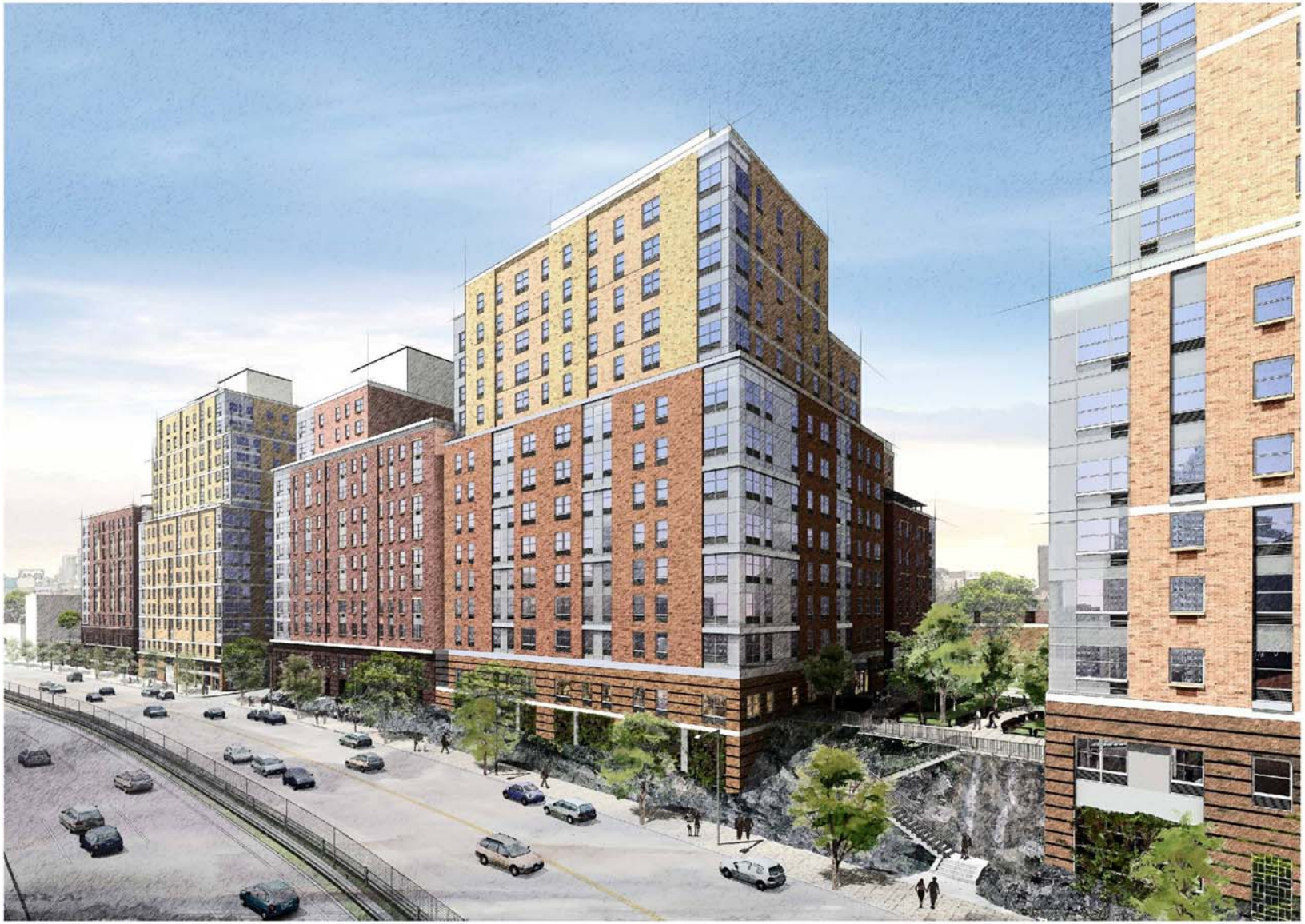
Figure G-6c: Perspective - Boone Ave.



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

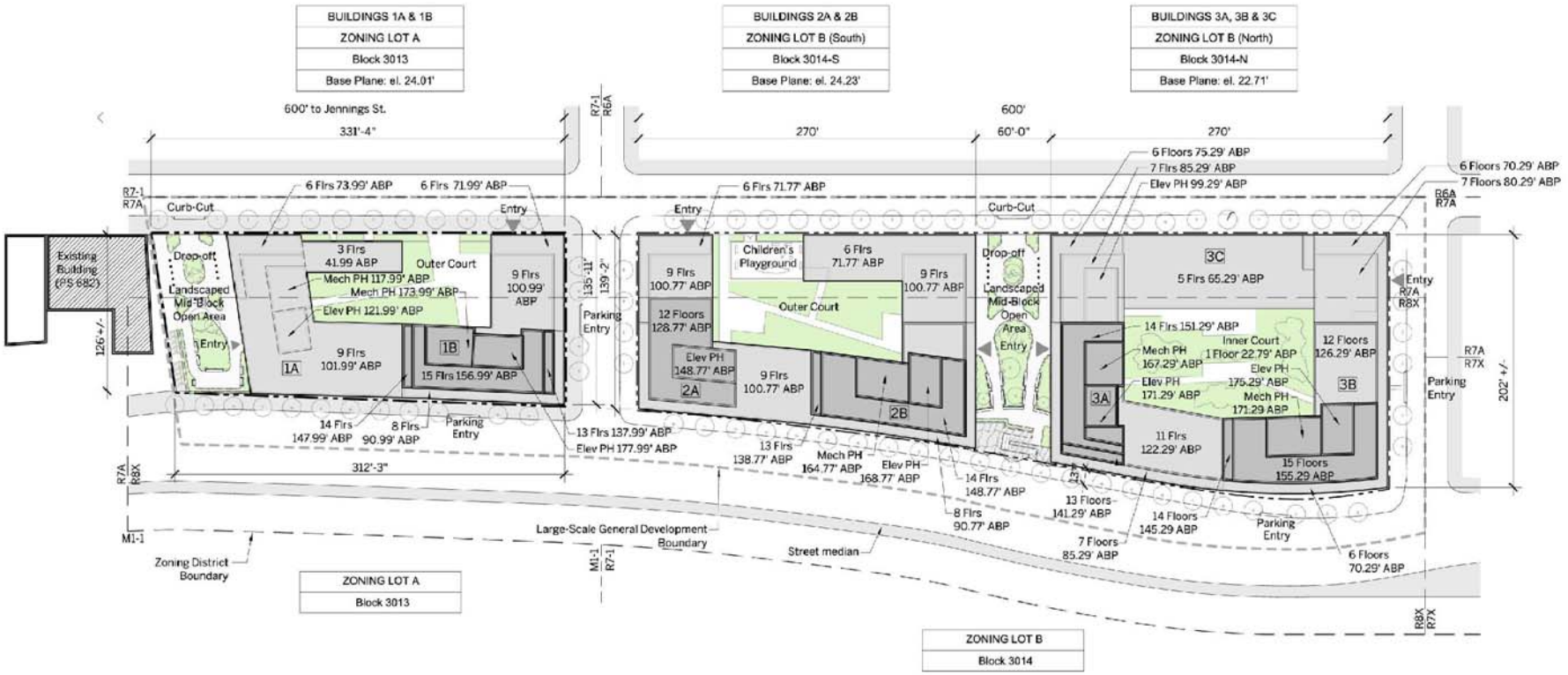
Figure G-6d: Perspective - West Farms Rd.



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

Figure G-7: LSGD Site Plan - Jennings St. to East 173rd St.



Legend

- General Large-Scale Development
- Zoning Lot Boundary
- Zoning District Boundary

Notes

1. ABP - Above Base Plane
2. Locations of building and parking entrances subject to change.
3. Landscaping subject to change.
4. Locations and sizes of existing curb cuts are approximate.

North of the Cross Bronx Expressway

On the block bounded by West Farms Road, Rodman Place, Longfellow Avenue, and the expressway's north service road, the existing industrial buildings would be demolished, and the entire eastern part of the block would be redeveloped with Building 5; the apartment buildings along Longfellow Avenue would remain. The redevelopment site is owned by the applicant, and the anticipated redevelopment is part of the Proposed Project. (Figures G-8a and G-8b show conceptual massing diagrams for Buildings 5 and 6; Figures G-9a and G-9b show street level elevations; and Figure G-10 is a site plan.) The ground floor of Building 5 would cover the entire site, but above the ground floor the building would be L-shaped, with street walls extending along the entire Rodman Place and West Farms Road frontages. Along the service road, the street wall would extend only 60 feet from the West Farms Road intersection; a 1-story section enclosing parking would abut the western two-thirds of the service road frontage. A landscaped terrace would cover the garage roof, which would be approximately 120 feet wide and 80 feet deep. The building's overall height would be 15 stories, and the street walls would be eight and ten stories tall: ten stories near the corner of West Farms Road and Rodman Place, and eight stories further west and south along those streets and along the service road.[5] The top floors would set back ten feet from the street walls along West Farms Road and the service road; along Rodman Place the setback would be an unusually deep 29 feet.[6] The rooftop height would be 140 feet above base plane. The building would be residential, except for ground floor retail space along West Farms Road. The main building entrance would be on Rodman Place.

On the block to the north, the applicant controls the southern part of the West Farms Road frontage, now occupied by a slate works warehouse and fenced storage yard. It would be redeveloped as part of the Proposed Project with Building 6, which would be similar in design to Building 5. The two buildings would face each other across Rodman Place. Building 6 would also be predominantly residential with ground floor retail space along West Farms Road. It also would have 8- and 10-story street walls, with the 10-story section at the corner, and an overall height of 15 stories. In this case the rooftop height would be 145 feet above base plane. As in the case of Building 5, the upper floor setbacks from the street walls would be ten feet along West farms Road and 29 feet along Rodman Place. Building 6 also would have a 1-story garage topped by a landscaped terrace, but here the 1-story part of the building would cover the interior of the lot, behind the principal building facades, and would not be visible from the street. Building 6 would be constructed to the street line along the entirety of both street frontages. The main building entrance would be on Rodman Place.

On the southwestern part of the northern block, the residential buildings and synagogue fronting on Longfellow Avenue are expected to remain, but the small midblock parcel along Rodman Street, now occupied by a small residential building, has been identified as a projected development site. The existing 2½-story residential building would be replaced by a residential apartment building of up to 15 stories, occupying the front 70 percent of the lot, with a 15-foot setback after the eighth floor.

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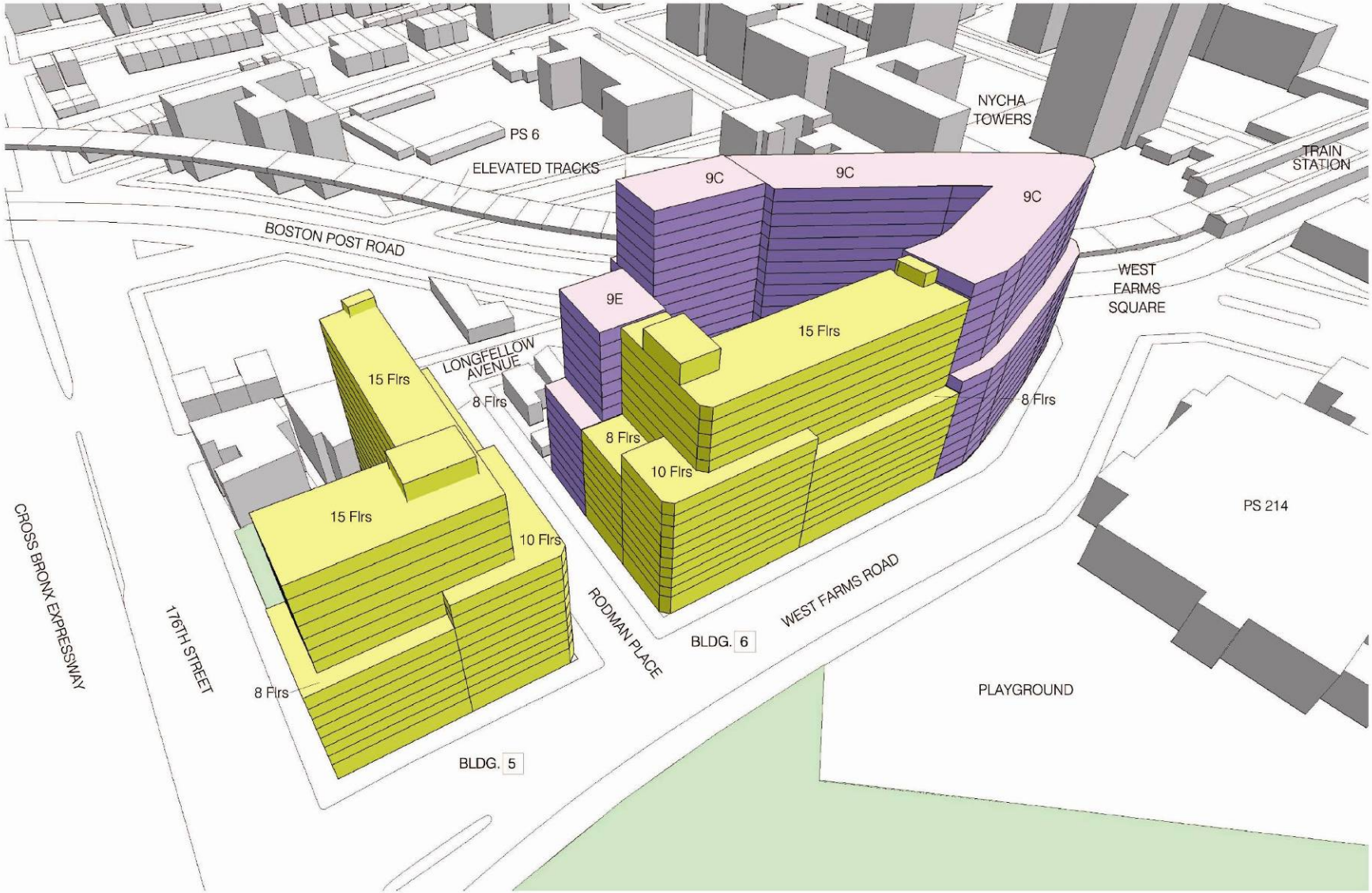
[5] For zoning purposes the additional two stories of street wall height are considered a dormer.

[6] In this section of the building, the lower floors would have two rows of apartments flanking a double-loaded corridor, and the upper floors would have a single row of apartments abutting a single-loaded corridor.

As has been discussed above under Future Conditions without the Proposed Action, the northern part of the block (the site of a recently demolished commercial building and warehouse fronting on West Farms Road, the hotel fronting on Boston Road, and the small parking lot at the corner of Boston Road and Longfellow Avenue) will be redeveloped whether or not the Proposed Action is taken. In the future with the Proposed Action, rather than an 8-story building that would comply with the existing R7-1 bulk regulations, the new building would probably be 15 stories tall.

To the east, across West Farms Road, Building 5 would face part of a highway interchange, and on its southern side (where the 1-story garage façade would be located) it would face a slightly elevated highway and its service road. On the northern block, across West Farms Road, Building 6 would face the school playground, and the new building at the northern end of the block would face the school. That northernmost building would face a parking garage and 1-story commercial building on the other side of Boston Road and the elevated train trestle, and to the north, across the length of the West Farms Square intersection; it would face a seating plaza and a low commercial structure behind it, the elevated train station, and a parking lot.

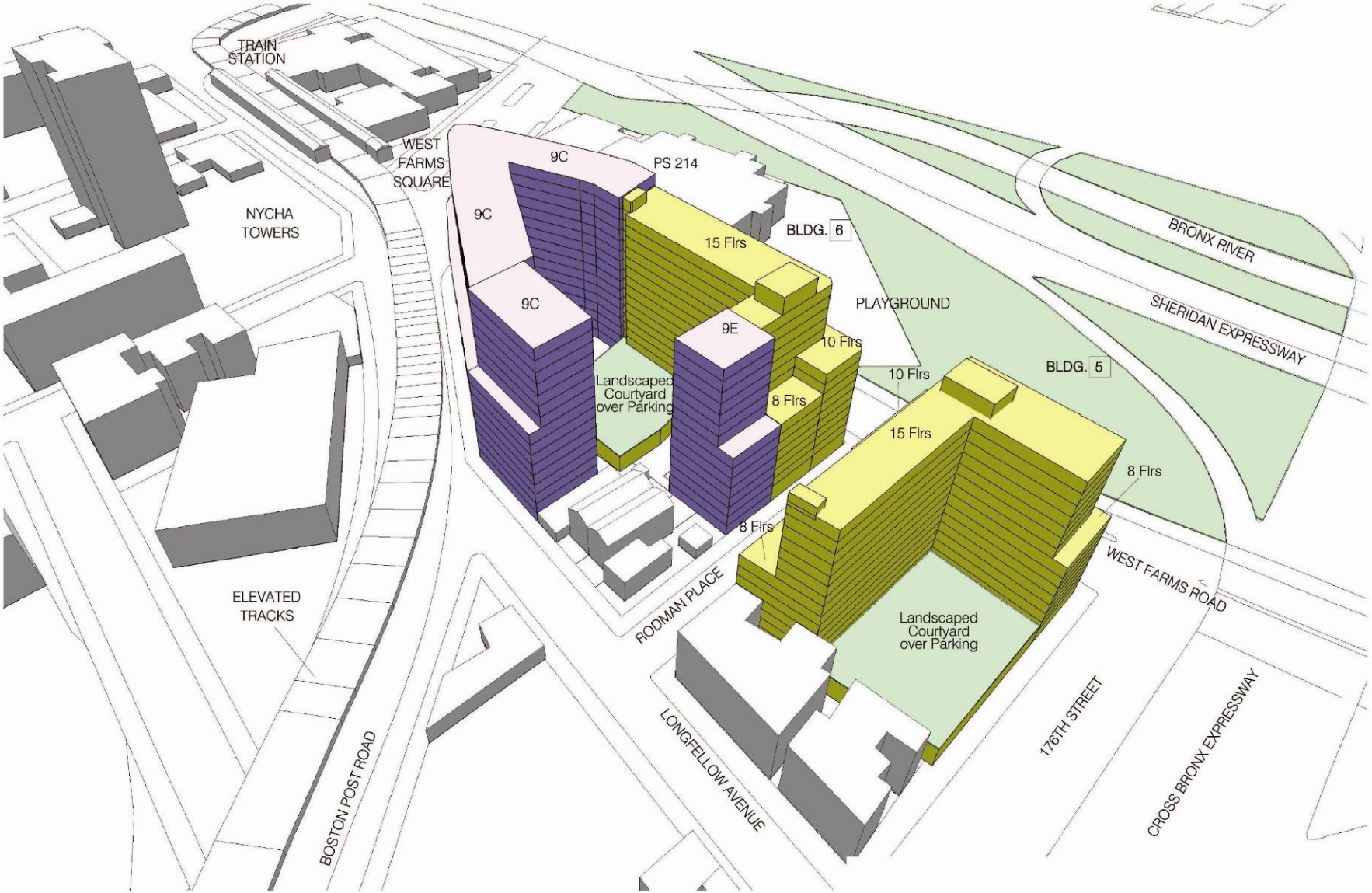
Figure G-8a: West Farms Road Massing Diagram for Northern Development Sites



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

Figure G-8b: Longfellow Avenue Massing Diagram for Northern Development Sites



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York



1 Elevation - West Farms Road

Notes
ABP - Above Base Plane



CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York


Longfellow Ave.
Cross-Bronx Expressway
East 176th Street
Rodman Place
West Farms Rd.
ROOF TERRACE
8 Floors el. 96 75.46' ABP
Parking Entry
15 Floors el. 161 140.46' ABP
10 Floors el. 115 95.45' ABP
8 Floors el. 96 75.46' ABP
Retail Entry
Retail Entry
Residential Entry
Residential Entry
Parking Entry
8 Floors el. 98 79.64' ABP
Elev PH el. 183 164.64' ABP
ROOF TERRACE
12 Floors el. 135 116.64' ABP
10 Floors el. 117 98.64' ABP
Ground Flr. el. 19
15 Floors el. 163 144.64' ABP
Retail Entry
Retail Entry
8 Floors el. 98 79.64' ABP



1. View north on West Farms Road of existing industrial, residential, and school buildings



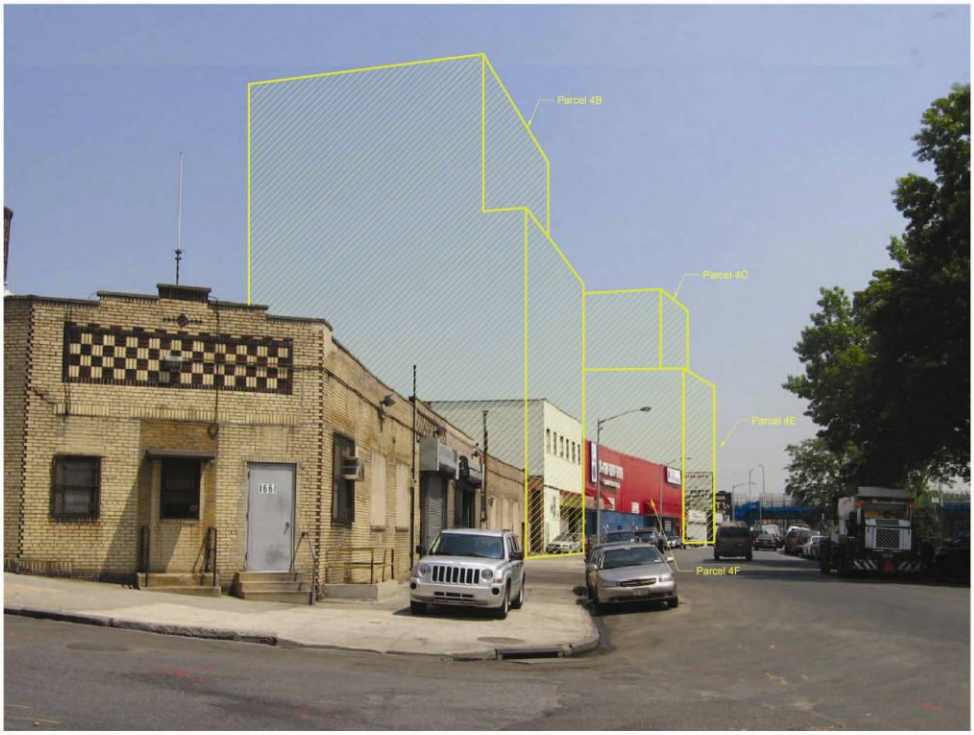
2. View south on Boone Avenue of existing school and industrial buildings



3. View north on Boone Avenue of existing industrial buildings; school at far right



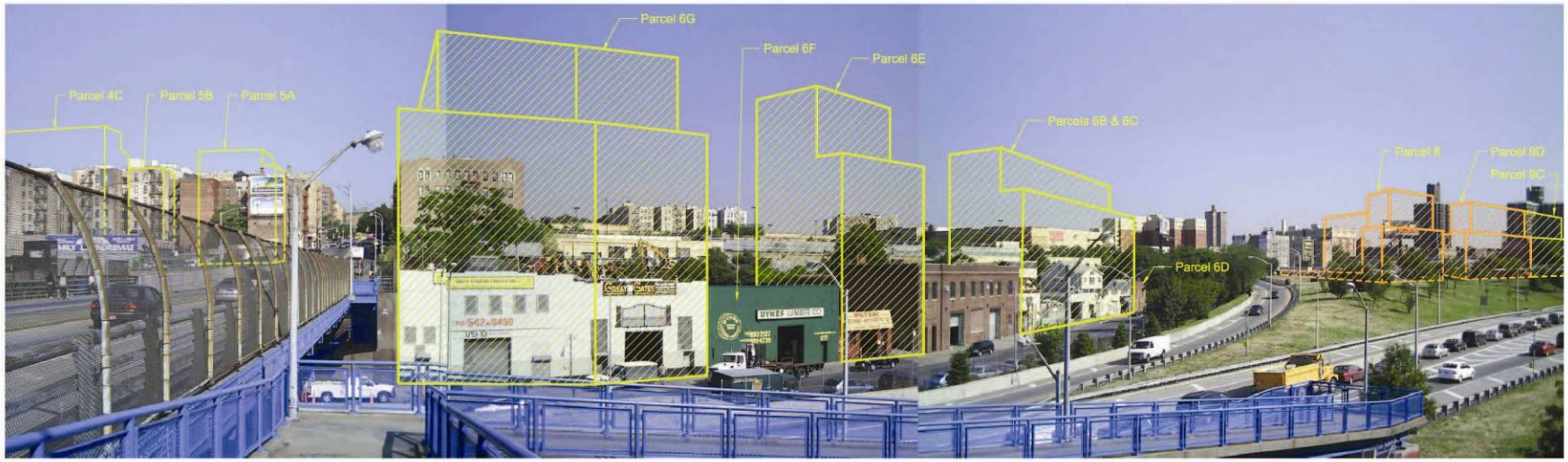
4. View north on Boone Avenue of existing industrial buildings



5. View north on West Farms Road of existing Dept. of Sanitation facility and warehouse buildings



6. View south on Boone Avenue of existing industrial buildings and undeveloped land



7. View northwest to Proposed Rezoning Area

CONCLUSION

Urban Design

An action may have a significant adverse impact if it would alter urban design elements in a way that would negatively affect a pedestrian's experience of the area. In this respect, one important consideration is context – for example, the scale and use of surrounding buildings – and whether the action would alter the sense of place associated with an area.

The Proposed Action would not alter block forms, the street pattern, or the street hierarchy. It would, however, completely alter the development pattern on all but the southernmost part of the proposed rezoning area.

As a result of the Proposed Action, many of the existing buildings, sheds, and fenced open areas would be replaced by a combination of residential apartment buildings, buildings with residential apartments above ground floor retail or community facility space, and landscaped courtyards and midblock open areas. The new development would be more consistent with prevailing neighborhood patterns. Because of the nature of these buildings, as well as the proposed zoning's height and setback and street wall regulations, a more consistent and typical perimeter block arrangement of building walls would be established. In some parts of the proposed rezoning area, the Proposed Project would introduce ensembles of buildings on adjoining blocks, with consistent design elements, providing an urban design consistency and visual identity on these blocks. Elsewhere, the extent of redevelopment would determine the extent to which a consistent development pattern emerges. As more properties are redeveloped with residential apartment buildings that fit the zoning envelopes, a more coherent sense of place would develop. In this sense, the reasonable worst case development scenario, which assumes a considerable amount of redevelopment by the analysis year, is an optimistic scenario, yielding a pattern of 5- to 8-story apartment buildings along the west side of Boone Avenue and along much of the avenue's east side.

Residential street walls, with regular fenestration patterns and some ground floor storefronts, would create a streetscape that is more pleasing and conducive to pedestrian activity, and more consistent with the residential neighborhoods, than the existing array of blank walls, fences, and truck bays. The one location where the Proposed Project would place a long, blank, 1-story garage structure along a front lot line is not along a neighborhood street but along the service road to the Cross Bronx Expressway, in a location that faces the elevated expressway: a location, that is, where streetscape is not an issue. Also, owners of residential properties would be much more likely to attend to the maintenance of the adjacent sidewalks than the owners of industrial and automotive establishments, and the Quality Housing regulations would mandate street tree plantings.

The development would lead to streetscape improvements, particularly in places (mainly along Boone Avenue and cross streets between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road) where streetscape elements have been neglected. In the locations that are redeveloped, trucks and cars would no longer block sidewalks, and the sidewalks in a residential neighborhood are more likely to be maintained than those in an area dominated by industrial, automotive, and vacant properties. (Compare, for example, sidewalk conditions along Boone Avenue within the rezoning area with those along residential Longfellow and Bryant Avenues.) The zoning would mandate the planting of street trees adjacent to new developments.

More is known about the future action condition pedestrian level streetscapes along the applicant-controlled properties, particularly along the LSGD blocks, than about other portions of the rezoning area. Street trees would be planted at 25 foot intervals. Street walls would be

interrupted only by courtyards and the midblock open areas, which would be landscaped and open to the public, rather than by chain link or opaque fences. The LSGD buildings' ground floors along Boone Avenue would be animated by several retail spaces, located at building corners, as well as by residential entrances and the day care center's windows and entrance. Along West Farms Road, retail spaces or community rooms would abut the southwest corners of Buildings 1 and 3 at East 172nd and 173rd Streets. To the maximum extent feasible, the rock outcropping along West Farms Road north of 172nd Street would be exposed to view and integrated as a landscape feature. On the two parcels north of the Cross Bronx Expressway, street trees would be planted, and continuous street walls would line West Farms Road and Rodman Place. Retail space would face West Farms Road, and residential building entrances would face each other across Rodman Place.

With regard to context, it is the existing development pattern within the proposed rezoning area that is inconsistent with the patterns in the larger neighborhoods that form the area's visual context. Those are the Crotona Park East and West Farms residential neighborhoods, in which the proposed rezoning area contains an anomalous mix of industrial and automotive buildings and sheds, scattered small residential buildings, derelict structures, and open storage and parking. Blank walls, corrugated metal fences, and chain link fences topped by razor wire abut the street lines along many properties, and, because of the nature of the uses, there is a general indifference to the appearance of building facades and the condition of adjacent sidewalks.

The Proposed Action would thus result in urban design improvements relative to building type and arrangement, streetscape elements, and overall consistency with the visual character of the adjacent neighborhoods. With respect to the appropriateness of the scale of the proposed development, several future streetscape representations (line drawings showing anticipated building massing and street walls superimposed on photos of existing conditions) are provided as Figures G-11a through G-11d.

As has been discussed, building scale would vary in different parts of the proposed rezoning area. Along the west side of Boone Avenue, the proposed zoning envelope would allow 6- and 7-story buildings. Along the east side of Boone Avenue, south of 173rd Street, the Proposed Project would introduce buildings three to nine stories tall; north of 173rd Street, the zoning envelope would allow buildings of up to eight stories. Along West Farms Road, buildings would vary in height, ranging up to 15 stories tall. On the two blocks north of the Cross Bronx Expressway, 15-story buildings are proposed.

South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the new buildings along Boone Avenue would not be substantially different in scale from the 6-story apartment buildings that are common in Crotona Park East. Between 173rd and 174th Streets, the new buildings along the west side of Boone Avenue would share rear lot lines with existing 6-story buildings fronting on Longfellow Avenue. On the block to the south, the new buildings would share rear lot lines with smaller row houses, but this is a neighborhood in which 2- and 3-story row houses are interspersed with 5- and 6-story apartment buildings, so such juxtapositions are common. Moreover, the row houses have 30-foot-deep rear yards and the new apartment buildings would have rear yards at least 30 feet deep and probably 35 feet deep, so a distance equal to the width of a street would separate the new buildings' bulk from the row houses. The buildings facing West Farms Road would be considerably taller than the neighborhood's existing building stock, but three factors would ameliorate the difference in scale. The first is distance; on the sections of West Farms Road along which the new buildings would be constructed, the closest existing residential development is generally at least two blocks away, along Longfellow Avenue. The second, related factor is that, although West Farms Road is part of Crotona Park East, it is not *within* the neighborhood, but instead forms its edge, and is as much oriented to the Sheridan Expressway and the Bronx River valley as it is to Crotona Park East. The third factor is topography. West Farms Road is at

the bottom of a slope; its elevation is 37 feet lower than that of Longfellow Avenue and 60 feet lower than that of Bryant Avenue, differences equivalent to four to six stories in height. From the avenues to the west within Crotona Park East, the new buildings along West Farms Road would therefore not loom over the roofs of intervening buildings as they would if this were level ground.

North of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the new development would be in a different neighborhood, with a different, less consistent visual context. A few buildings rise as tall as 22 stories, although the building stock is generally lower, ranging up to eight stories. Buildings 5 and 6 would be at the edge of West Farms neighborhood, and their bulk would be oriented towards the Cross Bronx Expressway and the interchange between the Cross Bronx and Sheridan Expressways. The new building at the northern end of the rezoning area would taper almost to a point and jut into West Farms Square, a historic intersection of unusually broad streets, where a distinctive architectural presence is appropriate. Also, that development site does not face lower scale residential buildings, but rather 1-story commercial buildings, a school, a parking garage, and an accessory parking lot for a complex of 7- to 22-story apartment buildings.

Furthermore, differences in scale or building form constitute a significant adverse urban design impact only if they disrupt a very homogeneous urban design setting, and no such urban design consistency exists in these neighborhoods. Both West Farms and Crotona Park East contain juxtapositions of different building types and scales, of row houses and apartment buildings. Crotona Park East is marked by consistent block form and perimeter block arrangement of buildings and a discrete number of building types that are replicated throughout the neighborhood, but even that level of consistency is absent from West Farms, where there is a greater disparity in building types and scales and where housing complexes that defy older development patterns occupy a number of blocks. To the immediate northwest of West Farms Square, a superblock created by the closing of Bryant Avenue has been developed with a combination of 21- and 22-story residential towers, 7- and 8-story slab apartment buildings, and 2-story row houses.

With regard to other aspects of urban design, the Proposed Action would not eliminate any existing open space resources and would result in the creation of new public open spaces in the form of the two midblock open areas. As is demonstrated in the Shadows section of this EIS, the anticipated development would not cast significant new shadows on existing open spaces. Natural features such as topography and the rock outcropping north of 172nd Street would be respected. As is discussed earlier in this section, the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on wind conditions.

In summary, the Proposed Action is not expected to cause any significant adverse urban design impact, and would have an overall positive effect on urban design elements.

Visual Resources

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an action may have a significant adverse impact if resulting development or other changes would block or impede views of important natural or built visual resources or would change the visual setting of a natural or built visual resource in a way that would adversely affect its prominence or contribution to the area's visual character. The visual resources that have been identified in the vicinity of the proposed rezoning area are the Bronx River, Starlight Park (which would be developed adjacent to a stretch of the Bronx River), and Rock Garden Park.

Rock Garden Park occupies the midblock portion of the west side of Longfellow Avenue between 173rd and 174th Streets. It is located 160 feet from the closest part of the proposed rezoning area, the rear lot lines of the properties fronting on Boone Avenue between 173rd and 174th Streets.

There are currently no views of the park except from Longfellow Avenue, since the park occupies a midblock location within a regular street grid, across from a continuous line of 6-story apartment buildings. Those buildings block any views of the park from Boone Avenue. The new development on Boone Avenue could therefore not possibly impede any existing views. The new buildings along the west side of Boone Avenue would be only one story taller than the existing apartment buildings on Longfellow Avenue and would be at a 20 foot lower elevation. They would therefore probably not even be visible from the park and would certainly not alter its visual setting. As is discussed in Chapter 2.E, Shadows, shadow diagrams prepared for this EIS show that new development resulting from the Proposed Action would not cast any new shadows on the park. In short, the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse visual impact on Rock Garden Park.

Starlight Park would occupy the west bank of the Bronx River, adjacent to the Sheridan Expressway, from the 174th Street bridge to the level of 172nd Street. It would be located across the Sheridan Expressway and West Farms Road from the proposed rezoning area.

From the west the only views of the future park are from West Farms Road and along the east-west street corridors; there are no views from midblock locations along the avenues in Crotona Park East, where buildings, walls, fences, and bluffs block potential views. Since the Proposed Action would not alter the street pattern, it would not interfere with the existing views. Because other views do not exist, they could not be impeded by the proposed or projected development projects. The Proposed Project would actually open up additional views of the park and the river from Boone Avenue by creating 60-foot-wide midblock open areas between that avenue and West Farms Road.

Starlight Park will be adjacent to a broad, multilane highway, and that will be a primary element in its visual setting. Because of this, plans for the park include a stand of trees along its western edge to shield parkgoers from views of the Sheridan Expressway and to partially buffer noise and exhaust fumes. This barrier will also diminish views of the Crotona Park East neighborhood on the other side of the highway. To the extent that views to the west are available, the redevelopment of the proposed rezoning area would replace views of gritty industrial and automotive buildings and rock outcroppings with those of street walls of residential buildings. It would therefore improve the park's visual setting. The existing views also include apartment buildings along Longfellow Avenue, which would be largely if not entirely blocked by the new buildings. Replacement of views of the rears of one set of apartment buildings with views of the front walls of another set of apartment buildings would not diminish the park's visual setting. Oblique views of the school buildings along Jennings Street are also available from the future park; because redevelopment is not expected in that part of the proposed rezoning area, such views would not be eliminated.

The shadow diagrams in Chapter 2.E demonstrate that the new development would not cast shadows on Starlight Park.

The Proposed Action would thus not have a significant adverse visual impact on Starlight Park.

The Bronx River is located several hundred feet to the east of the entire proposed rezoning area. As is noted above under Existing Conditions, however, north of the Cross Bronx Expressway there are no direct sight lines between the rezoning area and the river, at that point located a block to the east. New buildings on these blocks would therefore not affect the river's visual setting and would not block nonexistent views across the area to the river. The assessment therefore

focuses on the relation between the river and the portion of the proposed rezoning area at the edge of Crotona Park East.

For part of its length in this stretch, the river would be alongside the new Starlight Park. North of the park, the river's west bank is along unimproved land. South of the park, low rise industrial and automotive uses and a motor inn are located between the river and the Sheridan Expressway.

The analysis presented above of the Proposed Action's potential to impede views of Starlight Park or to adversely affect its visual setting also applies in full to the river beside the park. For the same reasons, the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on views of the Bronx River.

In summary, the Proposed Action is not expected to have a significant adverse visual impact on any visual resource.