MSMX

Midtown South Mixed-Use Neighborhood Plan

City Planning Commission Review Session

May 05, 2025

MSMX would foster vibrant, 24/7 mixed-use neighborhoods across 42 blocks of Midtown South.

Create Vibrant Mixed-Use Communities



Create opportunities for housing, including affordable housing.

Support Critical Economic Activity



Support diverse economic sectors and job growth as a regional job hub.

Enhance Neighborhood Character



Active sidewalks, streets, and public spaces for quality-of-life improvements.

Proposed Actions

Zoning Map Amendment
Enable growth of housing and jobs with zoning districts appropriate for the Midtown South urban fabric.

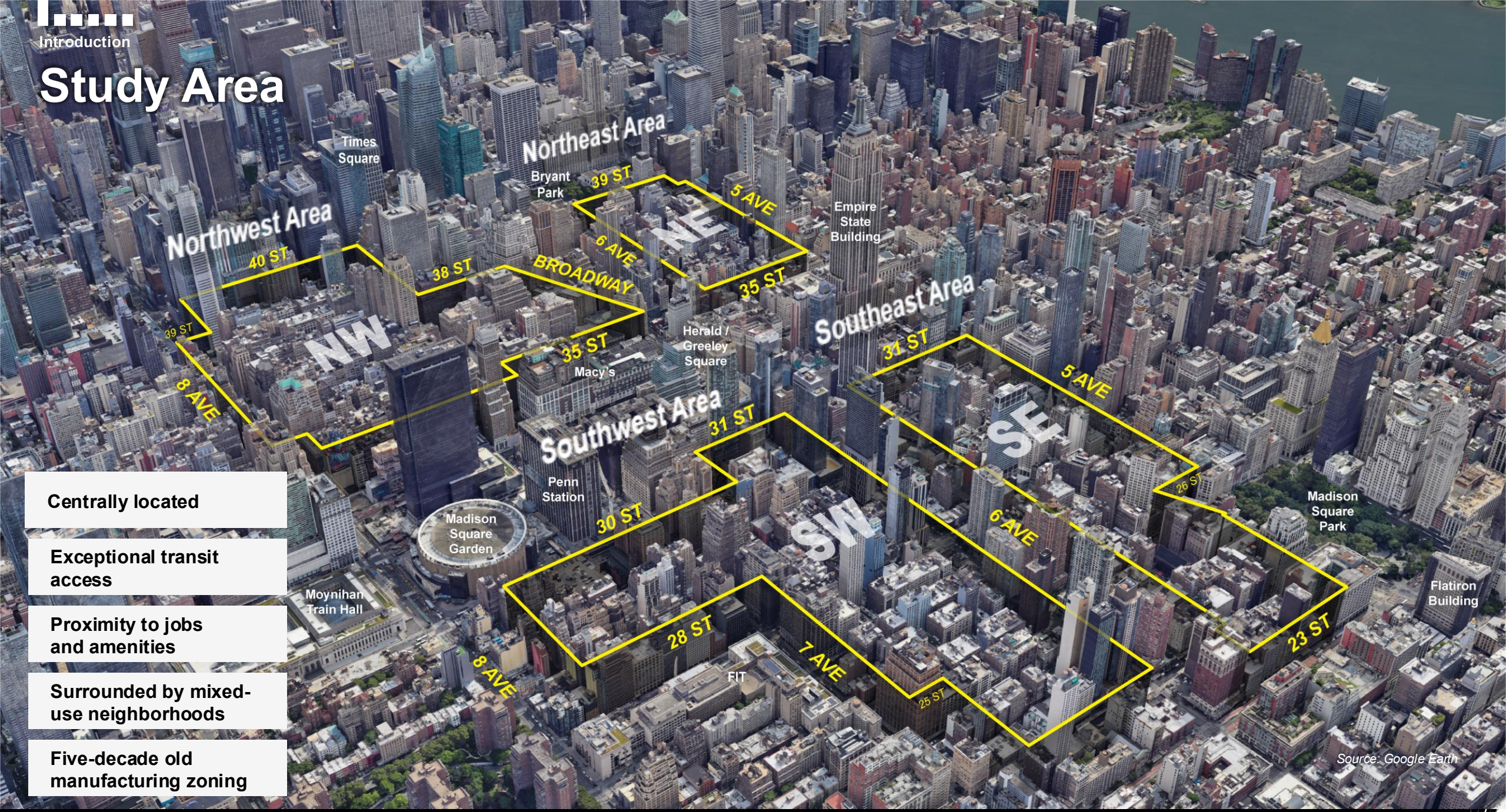
Zoning Text Amendment
Apply Mandatory Inclusionary Housing and establish a Special District to support pedestrian-oriented bulk regulations and incentivize public realm improvements.

The MSMX Plan will:

Create ~9,700 homes
including up to 2,900 income-restricted homes

Support economic resiliency
with Midtown South's 135,000 jobs and 7,500+ businesses

Study Area



- Centrally located
- Exceptional transit access
- Proximity to jobs and amenities
- Surrounded by mixed-use neighborhoods
- Five-decade old manufacturing zoning

Source: Google Earth

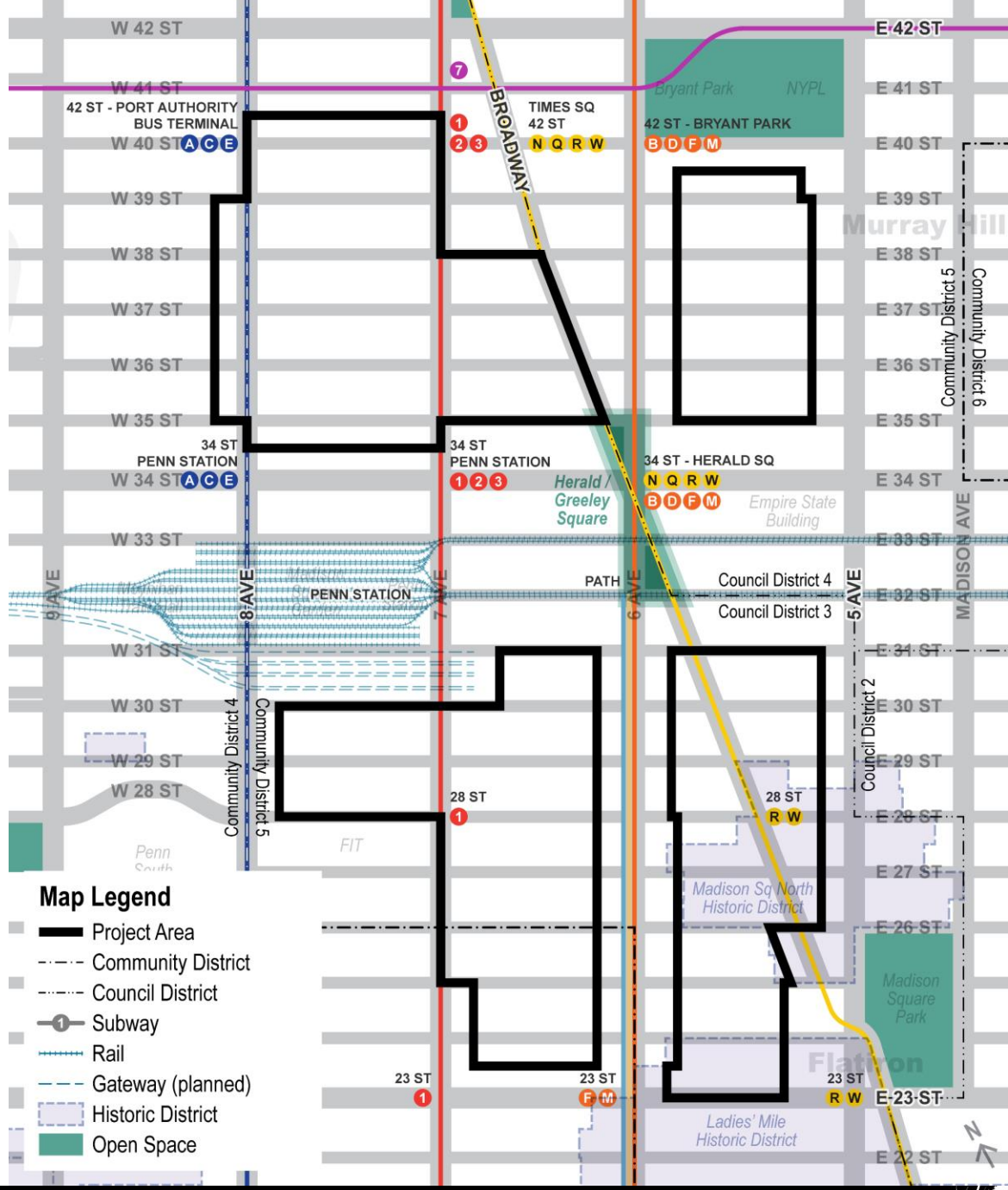
Study Area

Project Area

- 42 full or partial blocks
- Four non-contiguous industrially zoned areas

Historic Districts

- Madison Square North Historic District
- Ladies' Mile Historic District





Proposal

Proposed Actions

Zoning Map Amendment

- Rezone all M districts to **paired manufacturing and residential MX districts**
- Establish a new **Special Midtown South Mixed-Use District (MSX)**
- **Reconfigure boundaries of the three special districts** in the area to remove overlap and align with proposal

Zoning Text Amendment

- Map **Mandatory Inclusionary Housing areas** across all plan area
- **Special Midtown South Mixed-Use District (MSX) regulations** for:
  - Bulk requirements reinforcing surrounding loft character
  - Bulk flexibility for challenged sites
  - Use flexibility appropriate for the neighborhood context
  - Incentives for public realm improvements
- Remove restrictions on residential conversion in **neighboring C6-4M zoning district**

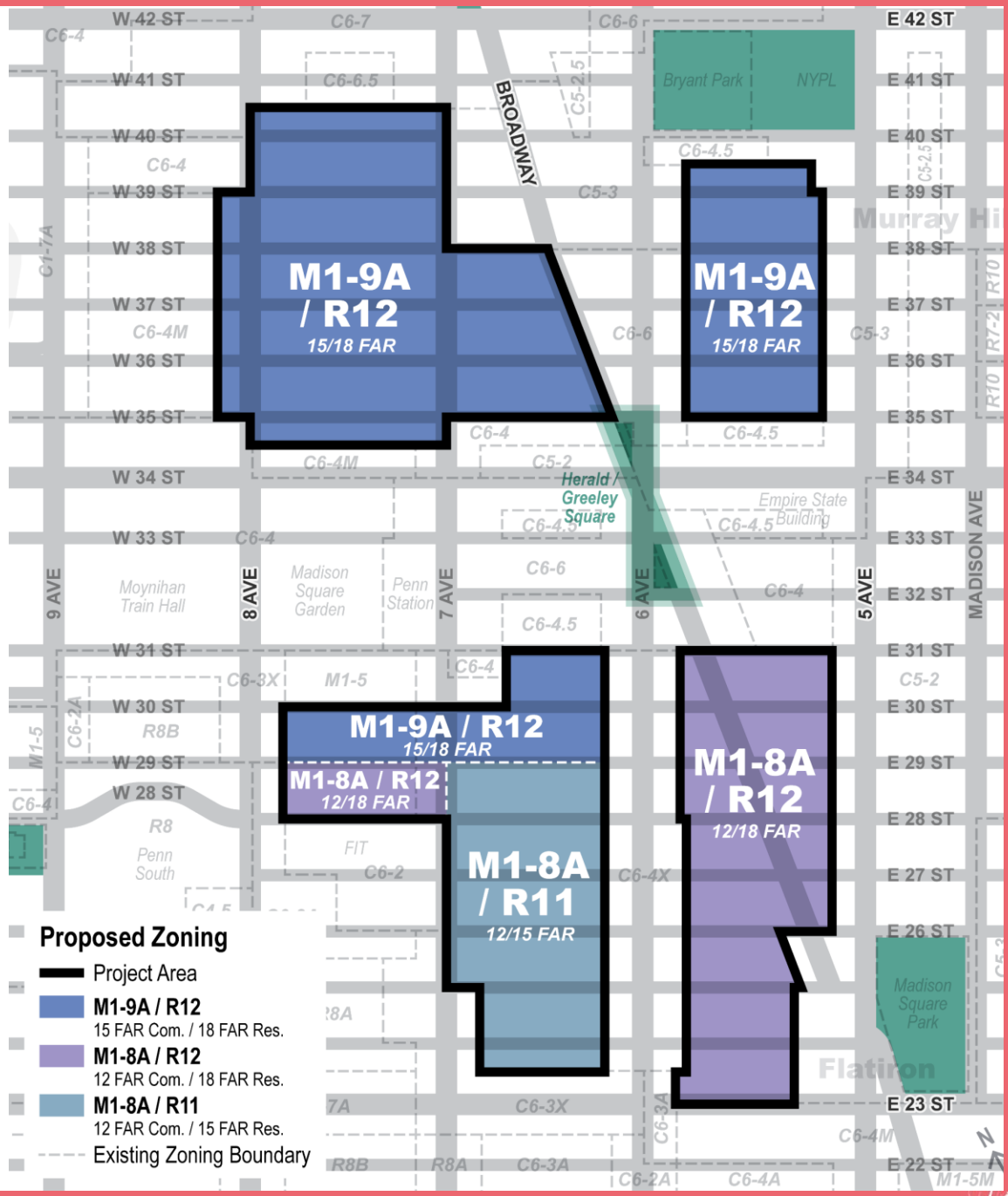
Proposed Zoning

Zoning Map Amendment **Zoning Text Amendment**

- **Map paired manufacturing / residential districts** to support dynamic mix of housing, commercial, manufacturing, and community facility uses
  - **M1-9A / R12**
  - **M1-8A / R12**
  - **M1-8A / R11**

- **Establish Special Midtown South Mixed-Use District (MSX)** to shape building form and incentivize public realm improvements

- Designate **Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Area** to require permanently income-restricted affordable housing in Midtown for the first time



Proposal

M1-9A / R12 Districts

Zoning Map Amendment | Zoning Text Amendment

M1-9A / R12 Maximum Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR)

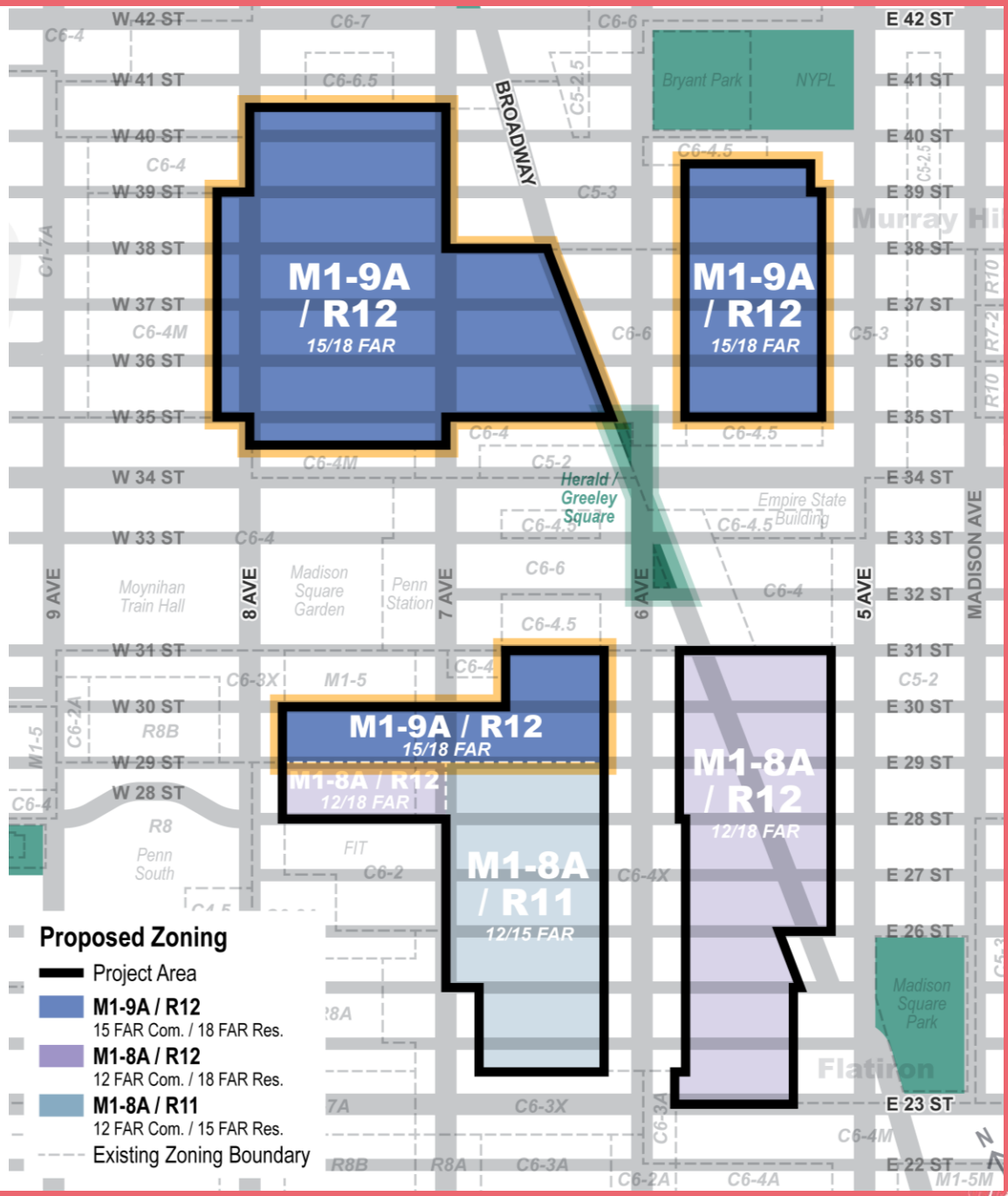
Residential	18.0
Community Facility	15.0
Commercial/Manufacturing	15.0

MSX-wide Bulk

Flexible, minimum/maximum base heights with street wall requirements.

MSX-wide Permitted Uses

Residential, most community facility and commercial, and light manufacturing uses.



Proposal

M1-8A / R12 Districts

Zoning Map Amendment | Zoning Text Amendment

M1-8A / R12 Maximum Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR)

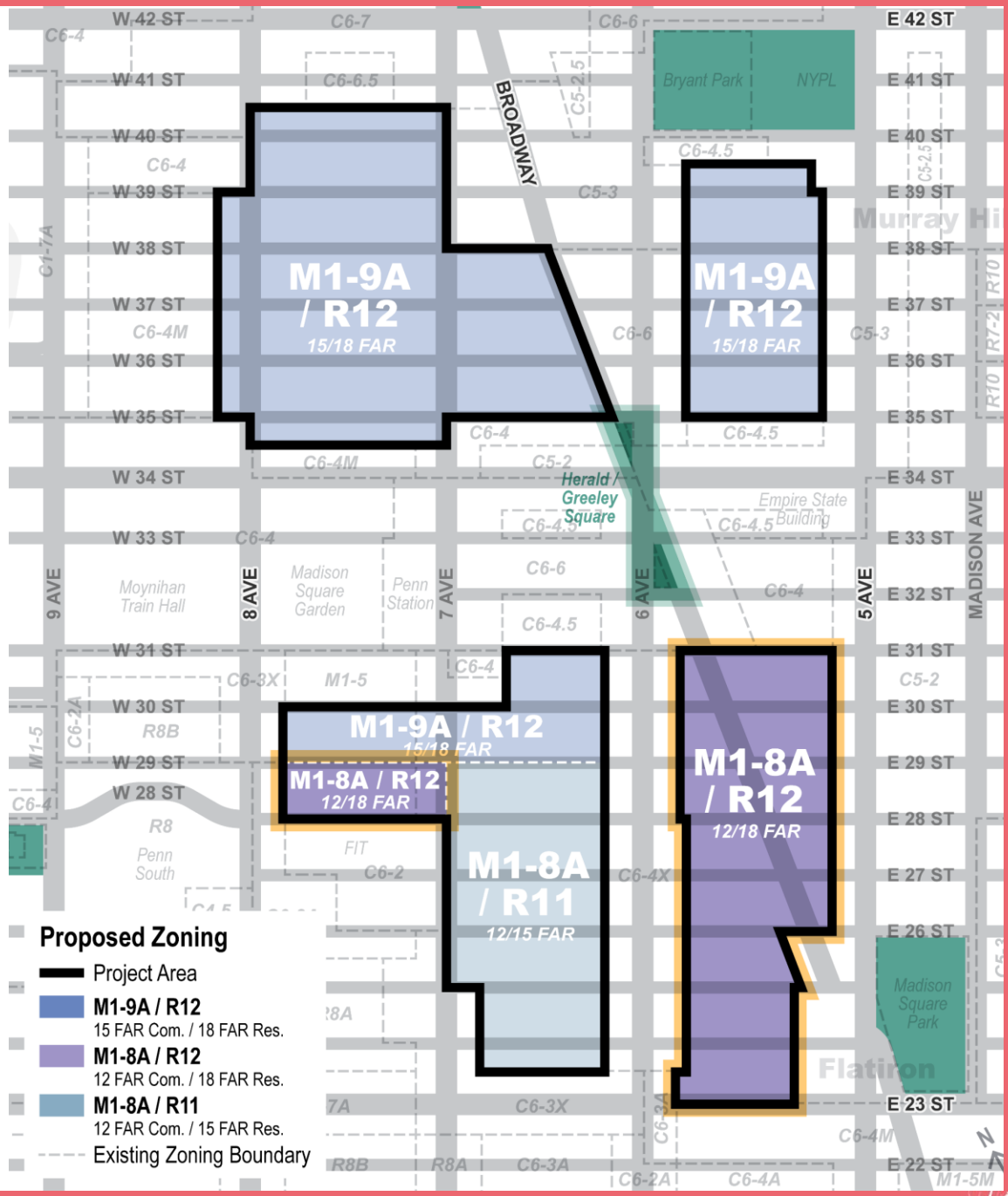
Residential	18.0
Community Facility	12.0
Commercial/Manufacturing	12.0

MSX-wide Bulk

Flexible, minimum/maximum base heights with street wall requirements.

MSX-wide Permitted Uses

Residential, most community facility and commercial, and light manufacturing uses.



Proposal

M1-8A / R11 District

Zoning Map Amendment | Zoning Text Amendment

M1-8A / R11 Maximum Floor-Area-Ratio (FAR)

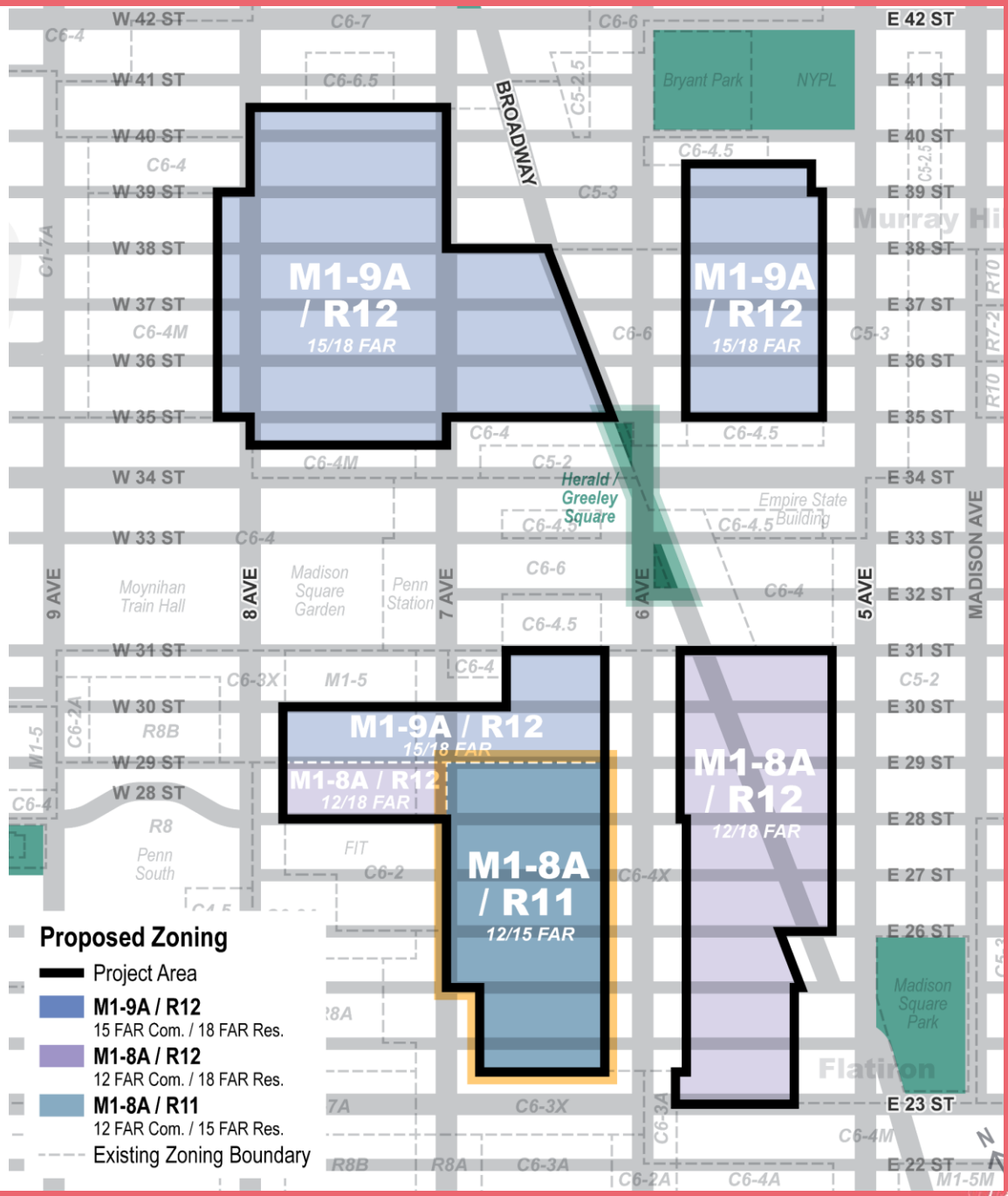
Residential	15.0
Community Facility	12.0
Commercial/Manufacturing	12.0

MSX-wide Bulk

Flexible, minimum/maximum base heights with street wall requirements.

MSX-wide Permitted Uses

Residential, most community facility and commercial, and light manufacturing uses.

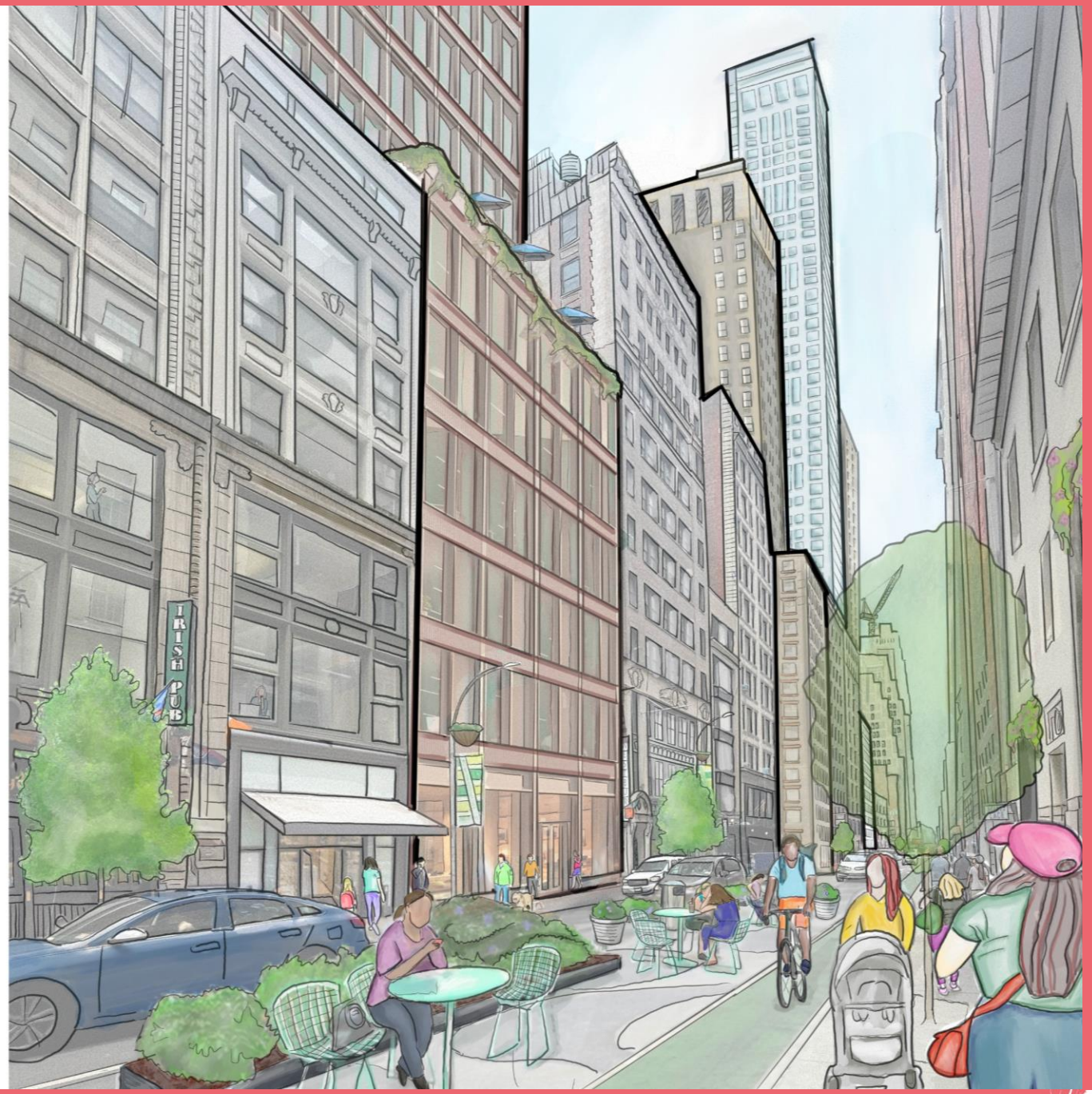


MSX Bulk Requirements

Zoning Map Amendment | **Zoning Text Amendment**

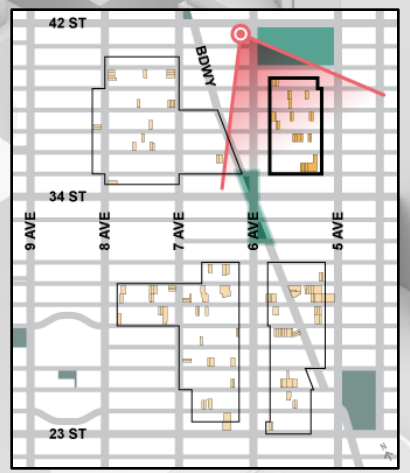
Special Midtown South Mixed-Use District would reinforce loft character with strong street walls

MSX-wide Base Height	
Minimum	60’
Maximum	155’
Flexibility	Match neighboring
MSX-wide Street Wall	
First Story	100% within 8’ of the street line
Up to Min. Base	70% within 8’ of the street line



Aerial View

NE quadrant looking south from Bryant Park



Conceptual image based on projected sites identified in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

Other Regulations

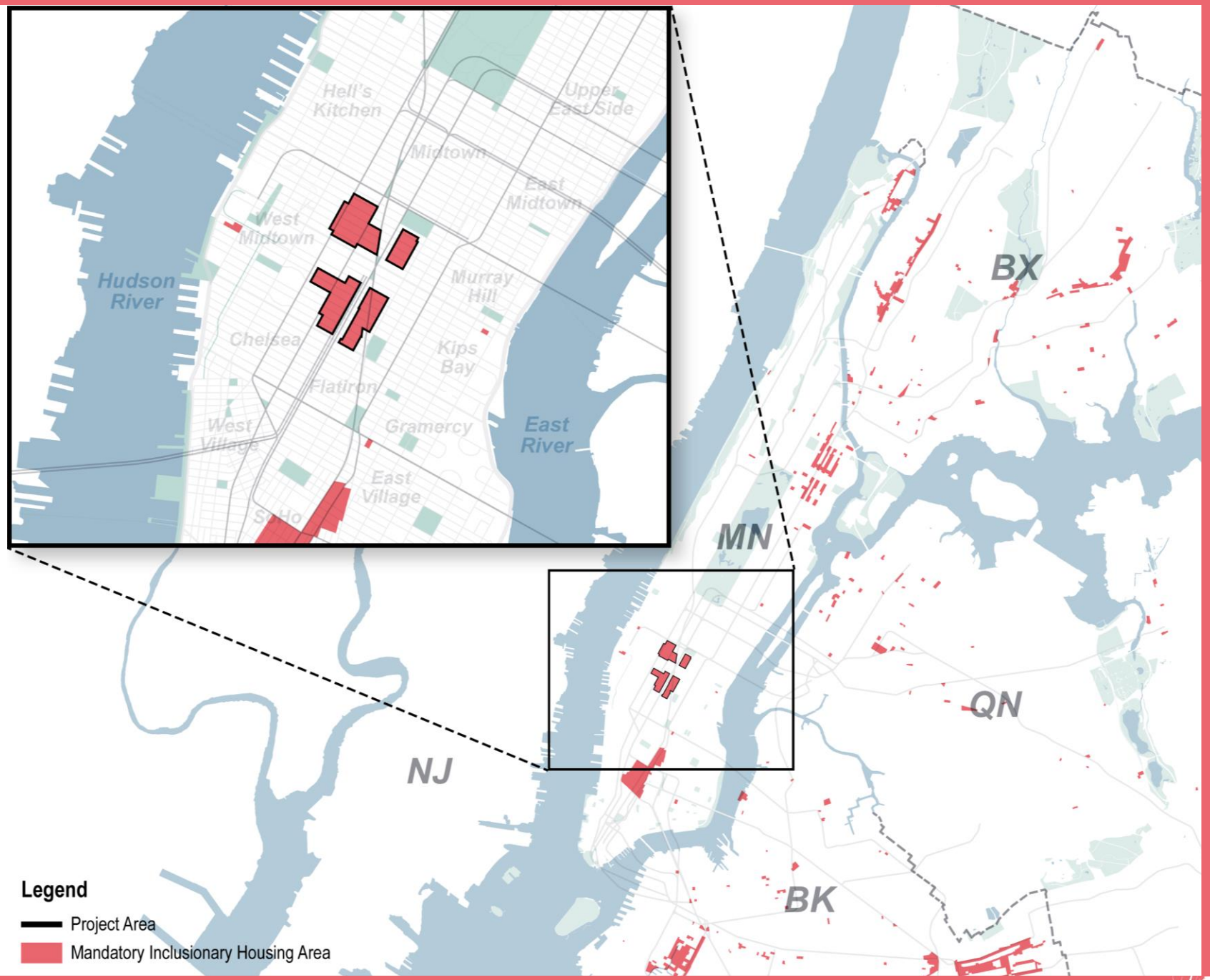
Zoning Map Amendment | **Zoning Text Amendment**

- **ZFA Exemption for Public School –** up to 150,000 sf of public school on qualifying sites
- **Covered Pedestrian Space Bonus –** Special permit FAR bonus up to 20%
- **Transit Bonus –** Extend transit bonus applicability from 500 feet to 1,500 feet from mass transit stations
- **Large Retail –** Remove 10,000-square-foot limit on retail
- **Minimum Distance between Buildings –** 8’ to provide additional site planning flexibility for large lots
- **Split Lots with Historic Landmarks –** Allow floor area to be freely distributed on split zoning lots
- **Signage –** Prohibit flashing illuminated signs
- **Tier B and Tier C Frontages –** Promote active streetscapes
- **Changes to Special District Boundaries –** Garment Center, Hudson Yards, Midtown

Mandatory Inclusionary Housing

Zoning Map Amendment | **Zoning Text Amendment**

- Map Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) with Options 1, 2 and 3 (F/K/A the Deep Affordability Option)
- First application of MIH in Midtown
- **Require up to 2,900 permanently income-restricted units in Midtown South**





Environmental + ULURP Update

Environmental Review

A Notice of Completion of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was issued on January 17, 2025

The DEIS identifies no impacts in these categories:

- Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy
- Socioeconomic Conditions
- Community Facilities
- Urban Design and Visual Resources
- Water and Sewer Infrastructure
- Solid Waste and Sanitation
- Energy
- Greenhouse Gases and Climate Change
- Public Health
- Neighborhood Character

The DEIS identifies potential for "significant adverse impacts" in these categories:

- Open Space
- Shadows
- Historic Resources
- Transportation (traffic, transit, pedestrian)
- Air Quality (industrial source)
- Construction (Transportation, AQ, Noise, Historic and Cultural Resources)

The DEIS could not preclude impacts in the following categories because their likelihood depends on specific site characteristics related to residential conversions: Hazardous Materials; Air Quality; Noise.

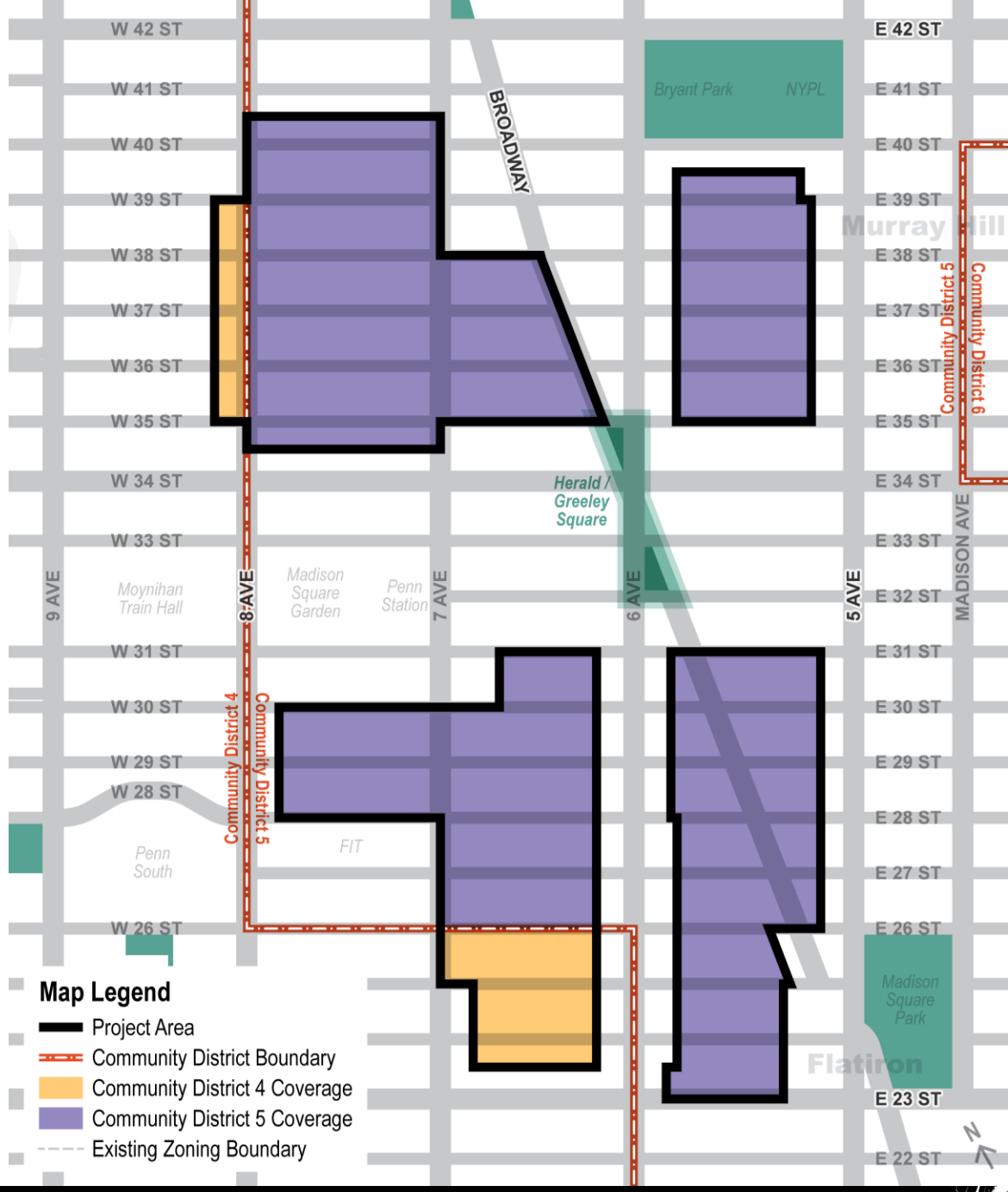
No other significant adverse impacts were identified. Mitigation measures are identified in the DEIS and will be detailed in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

ULURP Update

Community Board 5
Favorable, with Conditions (April 10, 2025)
33 in favor; 0 against; 1 abstaining

Community Board 4
Unfavorable, with Conditions (March 5, 2025)
36 in favor; 4 against; 2 abstaining

Manhattan Borough President
Favorable, with Conditions (April 25, 2025)
Borough Board Meeting (April 17, 2025)



Community Board 5

On April 10, 2025, CB 5 voted 33 in favor, 0 against and 1 abstaining to **approve with conditions**:

1) Southeast Quadrant Density Mapping. We propose mapping the lower density M1- 8A/R11 (12 FAR for commercial uses / 15 FAR for residential) instead of M1-8A/R12 (12/18) in the Southeast Quadrant. This adjustment aligns more closely with the extensive historic district, which is effectively a 12 FAR equivalent under LPC review, and will preserve the value of landmark transferable development rights (TDRs). It will help preserve view corridors to the Empire State Building and mitigate afternoon sunlight issues in Madison Square Park. Additionally, this change would retain more of the existing built environment in the quadrant, which currently has the lowest existing FAR of 8, thereby eliminating the need for lower midblock zoning. Map lower residential density of R11 in the midblocks of the Northwest quadrant to encourage more conversions and utilization of bonus mechanisms such as Landmark TDR, covered pedestrian space bonus and transit improvement bonus.

2) Northwest Quadrant Midblock Zoning. We propose mapping R11 in the midblocks of the Northwest Quadrant to support the conversion of existing buildings rather than demolition. This approach meets the planning goal of maintaining lower density on narrow streets for improved light and air and easier access to services for large buildings on the avenues. Given the block's 750-foot width between 7th and 8th Avenues, we propose that the R12 zoning on the west side of Broadway, both sides of 7th Avenue, and the east side of 8th Avenue be designated at 200 feet in width to accommodate most existing buildings and reasonable-sized floorplates for both residential and commercial uses.

3) Southwest Quadrant Avenue Zoning. We do not currently propose any changes to the proposed zoning in the Southwest Quadrant. However, CB5 received comments from area residents requesting a reduction in density to R11 from R12 in the area between 29th and 30th Streets from 6th to 8th Avenues to better align with the current built character. CB5 ultimately felt that R12 in this area was appropriate as a buffer to the very high density that could exceed 30 FAR in the GPP on Block 780 and the neighboring blocks.

4) No Change to NE Quadrant. We do not propose any changes to the proposed zoning in the Northeast Quadrant. This quadrant is currently surrounded by very high density development.

5) Retention of Rear Yard for Large Sites. We propose the retention of rear yards for large sites (greater than 1.5 acres) throughout MSMX. We believe that the two towers with a garden design is more appropriate than a single supertall tower. However, we may need to consider an exception for school construction due to complex structural challenges.

6) Addressing FAR Differential Concerns. Although we struggled with the effectiveness of the proposed 3 FAR difference between commercial and residential uses (12/15 or 15/18) as an incentive to build housing, we believe that implementing R11 in the NW Quadrant (15/18 Avenues, 12/15 midblock) will address this concern by focusing commercial uses on large sites on the Avenues.

7) Broader Mapping of R11 to Expand TDR and Bonus Utilization. Mapping R11 more broadly should help address historic district, theater, and landmark Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) issues and preserve the fabric of these districts. This adjustment is also expected to increase the utilization of open space and transit bonuses while maintaining a lower base FAR.

8) Comparison with Manhattan Institute Revisions. While our proposal shares some similarities with the Manhattan Institute revisions, we find their approach too stringent in reducing the R12 zone. Our adjustments aim to strike a better balance that considers the unique characteristics of our district.

9) Protection of Site #40 for School Development. We must protect Site #40 in the Southeast Quadrant, which the School Construction Authority (SCA) identified as the sole site feasible for school development. This site is critical for meeting educational needs in the area.

10) Undercounting of Residential Units.. We assert that DCP's CEQR methodology significantly undercounts the number of units that could be delivered in MSMX. Past rezonings have also resulted in multiples of the number of projected units. Therefore, the zoning adjustments proposed by CB5 will still generate a number of new apartments at least equal to the current projections. Adverse impacts will therefore be proportionally larger than presented in the DEIS.

11) Developer Insights on Housing Feasibility. Conversations with real estate industry contacts reveal that due to the high prevailing wage requirements of 485x for larger apartment buildings, many developers are focusing on smaller buildings or conversions under 467m. Additionally, as DCP has indicated, contacts believe that condominium buildings with MIH but without 485x may not be feasible. While this reflects the current situation, it could change as the housing shortage persists and tax abatements evolve

12) Follow-on Avenue Rezonings. Most of the MSMX areas are mid-block adjacent to older Avenue zones. In order to rationalize the Avenue and midblock densities, we support follow- on rezonings on 5th and 6th Avenues to increase densities relative to the new MSMX densities.

Community Board 4

On March 5, 2025, CB 4 voted 36 in favor, 4 against and 2 abstaining to **disapprove with conditions**:

A. Protecting Existing Character

1) Protections against demolition, in favor of more and faster conversions to residential use, restoration, and adaptive re-use. The proposed plan, through the introduction of residential FAR's of 15 and 18, incentivizes larger, denser development on the midblocks and avenues to produce more housing. The existing building stock is prime for conversion to residential use and can deliver much needed affordable housing in less time than it would take to demolish a building and build a new one. Introducing incentives for conversion to residential use would go a long way to preserving the fabric of the area.
2) Include zoning requirements for light and air to reach the street and sidewalk. The Garment Center District is typified by a built environment that allows light and air to penetrate through the windows of buildings and reach the street and sidewalk, enhancing the pedestrian and residential experience.
3) Strengthen the street wall requirements and eliminate any recessed walls from the sidewalk. The cohesive street wall is a defining characteristic of the previously-manufacturing building type that make up the project area. The proposed rezoning would allow the street wall to setback after the first story of the building, which would break the contiguous street wall and undermine the street level experience.
4) Eliminate plaza bonuses to create Privately-Owned Public Spaces (POPS) that create sidewalk recesses and add to building heights. Either open air plazas or covered pedestrian spaces are not effectively maintained throughout the district and serve as a space for congregation and encourage illicit activity. Granting developers a 20% FAR bonus for building a covered pedestrian space undermines the safety of the residents and allows for buildings to go beyond the 18 FAR to a maximum of 21.6 FAR.
5) Landmark significant buildings to protect those structures and further incentivize their conversion to housing through the use of Historic Tax Credits.
6) Impose restrictions on lot mergers and transfer of development rights

B. Managing Building Height and Density

1) Require a minimum of 30% of all units to be permanently affordable with no disparity in materials, finishes, or amenities. Higher density residential developments will not provide more income-restricted affordable housing unless required to do so through regulation. As a tool to continue to address the City's shortage of affordable housing, language should be incorporated into the zoning text that requires the percentage of permanently affordable units to increase once a residential building exceeds 12 FAR. This public action is the first time that residential FAR above 12 is being mapped in the city. It presents an opportunity for securing the development of a greater degree of more permanently affordable housing in exchange for greater density.
2) Modify proposed density to 13 FAR on the west side of 8th Avenue from West 35th to West 39th Street with a height cap of 350 feet to better align with those same blocks to the west. MCB4 supports those western mid blocks, (from West 35th to West 39th, 100 feet west of 8th Avenue to 100 feet east of 9th Avenue) be included in Special Hudson Yards District.
3) Consider a Special Permit process for any building over 12 FAR. The SGCD currently has a Special Permit process for hotels. This process ensures that hotels are appropriately sized, supports the surrounding area, and limits the number of hotels on the edge of the Midtown Manhattan tourist areas. A Special Permit process for buildings over 12 FAR would give the public some input over building design, ensuring that buildings over 12 FAR are not egregiously high or dense and/or disruptive to the existing character of the neighborhood.
4) Include height caps for different subareas or sections subareas restrictions. As expressed in MCB4's letter of April 22, 2024, MCB4 requests a height limit that varies by location in order to reinforce the neighborhood character of the existing Garment District's early 20th century loft buildings. Height limits are mapped at 250 feet immediately to the west from West 35th to West 38th Streets, 8th to 9th Avenues, and have accommodated a density of 13 FAR. Height caps should range from 300 to 450 feet depending on subarea context.
5) Restrict lot mergers to ensure resulting construction does not result in out of context buildings or create Billionaire's Row type pencil tower. Prohibit the creation of open-air parking lots that could be used as a means to construct higher buildings on receiving sites, or delay construction while awaiting merging of sites.
6) Restrict and manage the layering of affordable housing and transit bonuses, which could result in a residential building of greater than 20 FAR. No residential building should be greater than 18 FAR.
7) Transit Bonus-- reduce the covered distance to the original 500-foot radius or restrict only to the specific blocks within the new mixed-used zones.

C. Other Concerns

1) Restricting mechanical voids to commercial as well as residential buildings.
2) Widening sidewalks into the street to assist with pedestrian flow.
3) Adding new greenery including tree pits and 9-foot planters.
4) Offering incentives to promote preservation rather than demolition.
5) Increasing the mix of dwelling unit to include more multiple bedroom homes.

Borough President

On April 17, 2025, Borough President Levine held a public hearing on MSMX and on April 25, 2025, submitted a **recommendation for approval with the following conditions:**

1) Establish a Public Realm Fund for a new school, public space and transit improvements.

2) Ensure that the relevant agencies:
   a. Further explore incentives that prioritize the conversion of properties rather than demolition.
   b. Prioritize the delivery of more than 25% of affordable housing units in newly created buildings.
   c. Explore methods by which legacy industries can be protected.
   d. Explore opportunities to invest in the revitalization of open spaces within and neighboring the rezoning area.

Summary

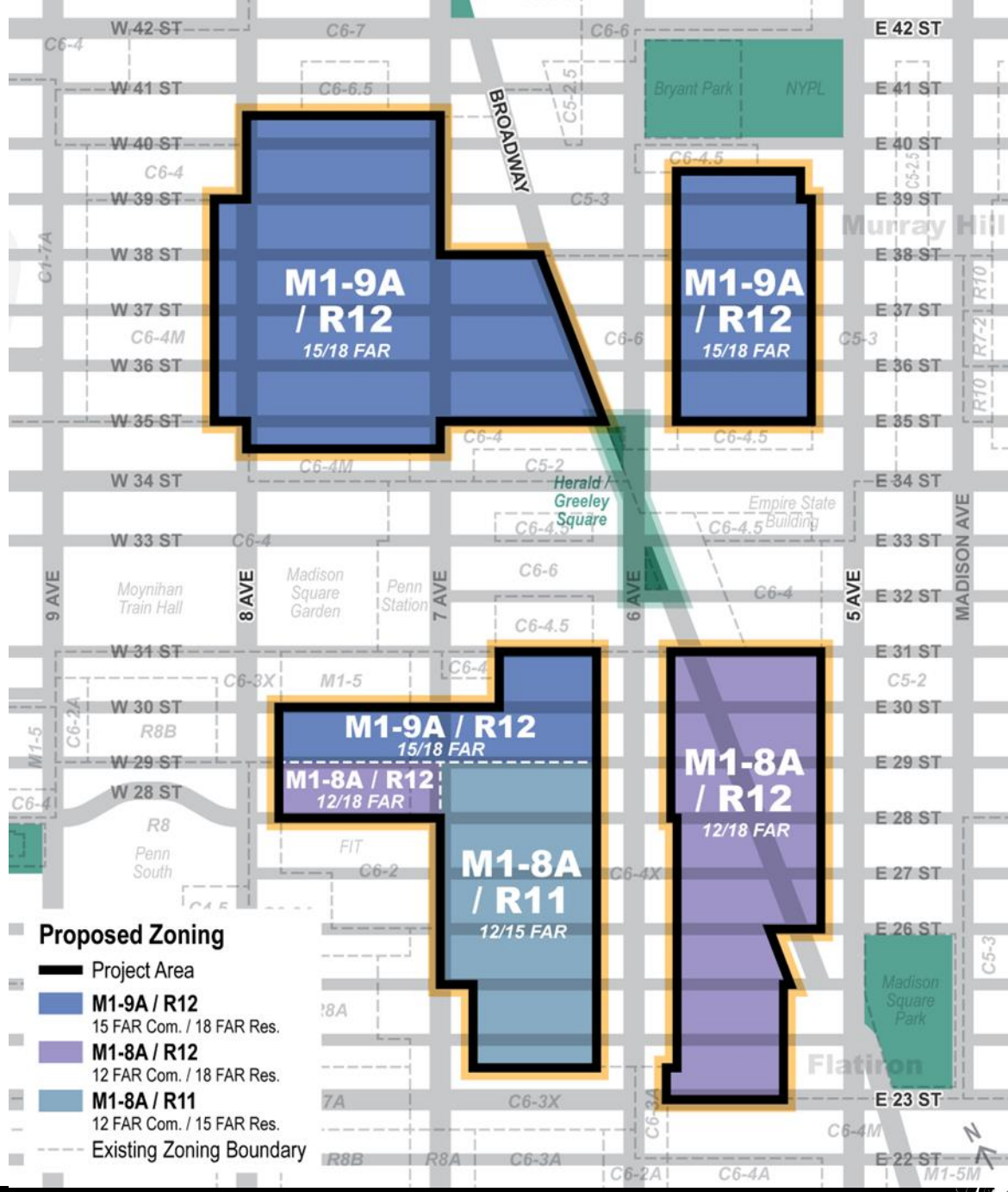
Zoning Map Amendments

- **Map paired manufacturing / residential districts** to support dynamic mix of housing, commercial, manufacturing, and community facility uses

Zoning Text Amendments

- **Establish Special Midtown South Mixed-Use District (MSX)** to shape building form and incentivize public realm improvements
- Designate **Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Area** to require permanently income-restricted affordable housing in Midtown for the first time

Together, actions could deliver ~9,700 new homes, up to 2,900 of which would be permanently income restricted



MSMX

Thank You!

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