Chapter 8: Historic and Cultural Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential for the proposed project to affect architectural and archaeological resources on the project site and in the surrounding area. The project site generally consists of vacant land and buildings and underutilized industrial uses along the waterfront on the Halletts Point peninsula as well as two waterfront park areas and the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Astoria Houses Campus (see **Figure 8-1**). As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the project site would contain eight building sites on which new development would occur pursuant to the proposed project; the building sites do not include areas where no development associated with the proposed project would occur, i.e., on Hallet's Cove Playground, Whitey Ford Field, or portions of the NYCHA Astoria Houses Campus not located within the building sites for Buildings 6, 7, or 8.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

As described below, the proposed project would have no adverse impact on archaeological resources as the project site is not sensitive for precontact or historic-period archaeological resources. In addition, the proposed project would have no adverse impacts on architectural resources, as there are no architectural resources on the project site or in the study area. In comments dated December 17, 2012, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) determined that there were no concerns with respect to archaeological and architectural resources on the project site and in the study area. In a letter dated February 21, 2013, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) determined that the proposed project would have no adverse impacts on cultural resources in or eligible for inclusion in the State and National Register of Historic Places (S/NR) [see **Appendix B**].

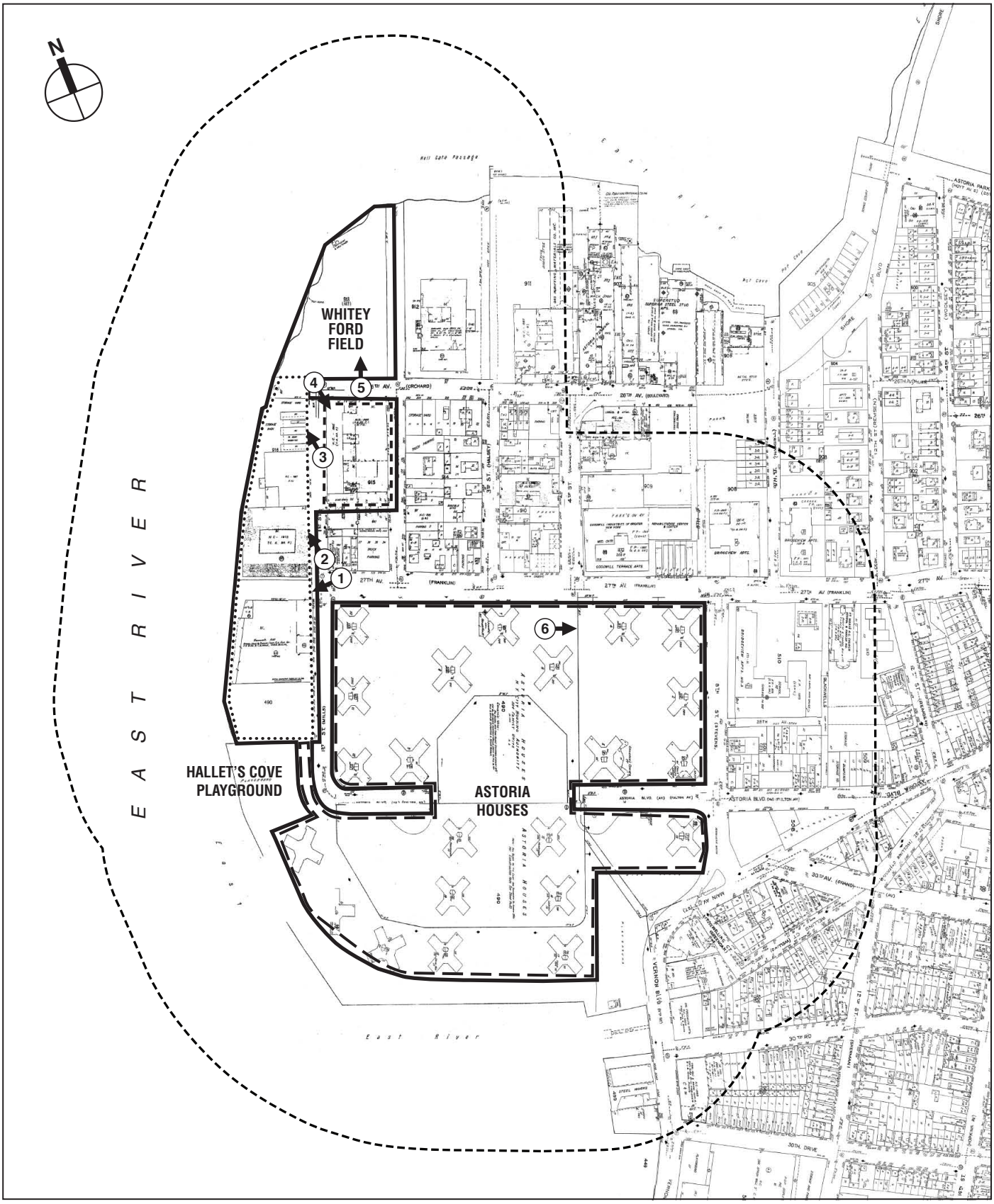
B. METHODOLOGY

This historic resources analysis has been prepared in accordance with the City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and SHPA. These laws and regulations require that City and State agencies, respectively, consider the impacts of their actions on historic properties. This technical analysis follows the guidance of the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*. This analysis has also been prepared in accordance with Section 106 of the NHPA.

The study area for archaeological resources includes all areas that could experience ground disturbance under the proposed project alternatives. Therefore, the study area for archaeological resources is the project site itself.

In general, potential effects to architectural resources can include both direct physical effects (e.g., demolition, alteration, or damage from construction on nearby sites) and indirect contextual effects, such as the isolation of a property from its surrounding environment, or the

2.7.13



Project Site

Study Area Boundary (400-Foot Perimeter)

1 Photograph Reference Number and View Direction

Eastern Parcel

WF Parcel

NYCHA Parcel

0 400 FEET

SCALE

Architectural Resources Study Area

Figure 8-1

HALLETTS POINT

introduction of visual, audible, or atmospheric elements that are out of character with a property or that alter its setting. Based on the guidelines of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a study area for architectural resources was defined as extending 400 feet from the project site (see **Figure 8-1**).

Within the study area, architectural resources that were considered include properties listed on the S/NR or determined eligible for such listing, and New York City Landmarks (NYCL) and Historic Districts or properties pending such status or determined eligible for landmark status by LPC ("Known Architectural Resources"). A site visit was also undertaken by an architectural historian to determine if there were any properties on the project site or in the study area that appear to meet criteria for S/NR listing or NYCL designation ("Potential Architectural Resources"). As discussed below, there are no architectural resources on the project site or in the study area.

C. DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

The area now known as Astoria was part of a large land grant made to Dutch colonist William Hallett Senior in 1652, and for which Halletts Cove and Halletts Point, a promontory extending into the East River, are named. Astoria, part of Long Island City, historically developed as a primarily residential neighborhood with industrial development locating along the river.

Development in Astoria commenced in 1835 when Stephen Alling Halsey, a fur trader, purchased a large tract of land around a ferry landing that had been established providing service to Manhattan at the East River and Astoria Boulevard known as Halletts Cove. At that time, development consisted of less than 20 homes, and Halsey developed a village there, including laying out streets and building structures along them. Halsey had the area incorporated as a village in 1839, and named it in honor of John Jacob Astor, also a prominent fur trader and his friend. Halsey's home was located on a large tract of land between 27th Avenue and Astoria Boulevard east of 2nd Street, in the area now developed with the Astoria Houses.

Development grew inland in the 1840's and 1850's from the Halletts Cove ferry landing. Wealthy New Yorkers built large homes on 27th Avenue and on 12th and 14th Streets. In the late 1860's, and a German community established itself between 35th and 50th Streets. Construction of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) terminal in Hunter's Point in 1861 spurred industrial development in the area. On May 4, 1870, Astoria, Hunter's Point, Steinway, and Ravenswood consolidated to form Long Island City. Industrial development was encouraged, with industry spreading northward along the East River. The Steinway factory was established on Steinway Street between Astoria Boulevard and the East River in 1870 with housing erected for its workers. By 1873, portions of the project site waterfront parcels had been developed with a gas works and icehouses.

The late 19th and early 20th centuries saw major development in the area. In 1898, Long Island City became incorporated as part of New York City. The opening of the Queensboro Bridge in 1909, the Hell Gate Bridge in 1916, and construction of the subways in the area, including the Astoria elevated which opened on 31st Street in 1917, spurred both industrial and residential growth. Inland Astoria continued as a residential area with areas along the East River in Long Island City and continuing to the north in Astoria developing with manufacturing uses and gas, power, and chemical plants. While the Eastern Parcel (Block 915) remained largely undeveloped through the first half of the 20th century, by 1915, the WF Parcel had become fully developed with a variety of industrial and manufacturing uses, including lumber yards, stone, marble and

iron works, and a power plant. These structures were later replaced with other manufacturing buildings erected in the mid-to-late 20th century.

Astoria Park along the East River opened in 1913 (originally called William J. Gaynor Park after the mayor), providing an amenity for the local residents. Between 1920 and 1923, the area east of the project site and north of Broadway experienced a development boom that transformed the area from farmland to a built up community of single family homes and apartment houses, with churches, schools, and stores following. In 1942, Parks Commissioner Robert Moses (1888-1981) petitioned the city to assign property located along the East River at 26th Avenue and 2nd Street to the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) after the Board of Education stopped using the facility. At that time, the field had a baseball diamond, running track, and grandstand. Moses argued that the site was necessary in this section of Queens, as the neighborhood lacked adequate opportunities for baseball and other forms of "adult recreation." In October of 1943 the site was assigned to Parks and became known as Astoria Athletic Field. The site later became known as Hell Gate Field, and is currently named Whitey Ford Field.

Additional transportation initiatives increased connectivity with the rest of the city, including the extension of subway service on Steinway Street and Broadway in 1933 and construction of the Triborough Bridge (renamed the RFK Bridge) three years later. The Astoria Houses, a complex of 22 X- shaped buildings set on 32 acres between 27th Avenue, Astoria Boulevard, the East River, and 8th Street, was completed by the NYCHA in 1951.

The 1970s saw a decline of manufacturing throughout the country, a pattern reflected in the industrial sections of Queens. Today, once industrial areas are being redeveloped with residential and commercial uses. The demographics of the area have also changed through time, with a more diverse population, including those of Asian, Middle East, South American, and Caribbean ancestry, replacing a predominantly Italian and Greek population that had settled in the area after World War II.

D. EXISTING CONDITIONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

LPC and OPRHP were contacted for their preliminary archaeological determination of the project site's sensitivity. In comments dated January 9, 2009, March 15, 2012, and December 17, 2012, LPC determined that the project site has no archaeological significance. In letters dated March 26, 2009, January 25, 2012, and February 21, 2013, OPRHP indicated that the project would have no adverse effect on cultural resources (see **Appendix B**).

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

PROJECT SITE

There are no architectural resources on the project site. The project site includes sites developed with open storage/parking areas and plainly designed manufacturing structures built during the mid- to late-20th century and two waterfront park areas that would not meet criteria for listing on the S/NR or NYCL designation (see **Figures 8-2, 8-3,** and photo 5 of **Figure 8-4**). OPRHP has indicated they have no architectural concerns with these portions of the project site in letters dated March 26, 2009, January 25, 2012, and January 2, 2013.



View southwest at 27th Avenue and 1st Street **1**



View northwest at 27th Avenue and 1st Street **2**

Views of the Project Site

Figure 8-2



View northwest on 1st Street near 26th Avenue **3**



View southeast at 26th Avenue and 1st Street **4**

Views of the Project Site

Figure 8-3



View of Whitey Ford Field from 26th Avenue **5**



View east of parking lot and NYCHA buildings on the Astoria Houses campus **6**

Views of the Project Site

Figure 8-4

The project site also incorporates portions of the NYCHA Astoria Houses campus (see photo 6 of **Figure 8-4**). The Astoria Houses consist of 22 X-shaped buildings that were completed by NYCHA in 1951. Designed by Harrison & Abramovitz, the Astoria Houses complex was one a number of public housing projects that were planned during World War II for post-war construction. The land for the Astoria Houses was acquired by NYCHA in 1946, with the development completed in two stages, and with final completion in November 1951. The Astoria Houses have been altered since their completion, including replacement of the original windows, roofs, and modifications to the main entrances of the buildings. The layout of the grounds has undergone significant alterations. The principal north-south open space, originally a tree-lined grassy area with paths, was designed to provide views of the Manhattan skyline and physical access to the esplanade along the waterfront. Substantial modifications to this space include the addition of playgrounds, basketball courts, and new paved and reconfigured seating areas and paths. Parking lots have also been added to the campus, which was built without parking; other playgrounds have been constructed on the campus; a relocated trash compactor area has been constructed on 27th Avenue; and new steel bar fencing has been added surrounding the green areas and at the perimeter of the campus, largely restricting residents access to the lawns. In a letter dated January 2, 2013, OPRHP requested a description and history of the Astoria Houses in order to complete an evaluation of the potential historic significance of properties located on or adjacent to the project site. This documentation was submitted to OPRHP on February 14, 2013. Based on their review, OPRHP determined that the Astoria Houses do not meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing.[1] In addition, LPC indicated in comments dated December 17, 2012 that the project site has no architectural significance (see **Appendix B**).

STUDY AREA

There are no architectural resources in the study area. The study area contains primarily undistinguished industrial structures and a number of small residential buildings that have been significantly altered. As described above, OPRHP requested and received information on the NYCHA Astoria Houses, located within the study area, and subsequently determined that the Astoria Houses do not meet the eligibility criteria for S/NR listing

E. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In the future without the proposed project (the No Build condition), the project site will remain in its current condition.

Several No Build projects are anticipated in or nearby the 400-foot study area by the 2022 analysis year—most notably, Astoria Cove, which if approved, will transform five lots (totaling approximately 8.4 acres) on the northeastern portion of the Halletts Point peninsula, on either side of 26th Avenue, which are currently occupied by industrial uses, into a mixed-use, predominantly residential waterfront development.

Other No Build projects in the study area will replace underutilized industrial uses and vacant land with new residential development. Some retail and community facility development is also planned to support the new housing.

The No Build projects will not adversely affect architectural resources as there are no such resources located on the No Build development sites.

[1] Email correspondence to AKRF from Kathleen Howe, OPRHP, February 21, 2013.

F. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

As there are no archaeological resources on the project site, the proposed project would have no significant adverse impact on such resources and no further analysis is warranted. LPC concurred with this impacts determination in comments dated December 17, 2012 (see **Appendix B**).

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

There would be no adverse impacts on architectural resources from the proposed project as there are no architectural resources located on the project site or in the study area. In their December 17, 2012 comments, LPC determined that there were no concerns with respect to architectural resources on the project site and in the study area (see **Appendix B**). In their February 21, 2013 letter, OPRHP determined that the proposed project would have no adverse impacts on cultural resources in or eligible for inclusion in the S/NR (see **Appendix B).** ✷