# Chapter 7: Historic and Cultural Resources

## A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the potential of the proposed actions to result in significant adverse impacts to historic and cultural resources. The rezoning area is located on the block bounded by West 57th Street to the north, West 56th Street to the south, Eleventh Avenue to the east, and Twelfth Avenue to the west (the "project block"). The site is currently occupied by a mix of commercial uses that include a parking garage, car dealerships and repair shops, office space, and a restaurant.

The proposed actions would result in the redevelopment of the parcels controlled by the applicant—Block 1104, Lots 31, 40, 44 and 55 (the "proposed project site" or "development site 1")—with a mixed-use, primarily residential building with three basement levels containing, utility space, amenity space, and parking and other potential auto-related uses. The proposed actions may also result in redevelopment of one additional site that is not applicant-controlled (Block 1104, Lots 25 and 29—"development site 2") with a hotel. No changes as a result of the proposed action are anticipated for a third parcel located within the rezoning area (Block 1104, Lot 36), which is not controlled by the applicant.

Historic resources include both archaeological and architectural resources. The study area for archaeological resources is the site itself where disturbance from excavation and construction can be anticipated. In a comment letter dated August 22, 2012, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) determined that the rezoning area is not sensitive for archaeological resources. Therefore, this analysis focuses on historic standing structures (architectural resources). This analysis does not make a distinction between Reasonable Worst Case Scenario 1 and 2, since either would result in substantially the same new building on development site 1 and the same potential new hotel structure on development site 2, and would therefore have comparable potential to result in significant adverse impacts to historic resources.

### PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

There are no known architectural resources within the rezoning area or on the project block. There is one State and National Registers of Historic Places -eligible (S/NR) resource in the study area: the Consolidated Edison Power House, which is also pending New York City Landmark (NYCL) designation. This resource is located over 90 feet from the proposed project site; therefore the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse physical impacts.

As described below, there would also be no indirect impacts on architectural resources. Views to the Consolidated Edison Power House would not be obstructed. In addition, this architectural resource exists in a mixed context of older structures and more recently constructed high rise buildings in the study area. Therefore, the proposed actions would not adversely alter the setting or historic context of this architectural resource or result in a significant adverse impact related to historic and cultural resources.

## METHODOLOGY

### *ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK*

As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the analyses in this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) compare conditions in the future without the proposed project to conditions in the future with the proposed project. This analysis assumes that none of the discretionary actions now being sought by the applicant are approved in the future without the proposed actions. Absent those approvals, it is assumed that the rezoning area will continue in its current use.

### *ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES*

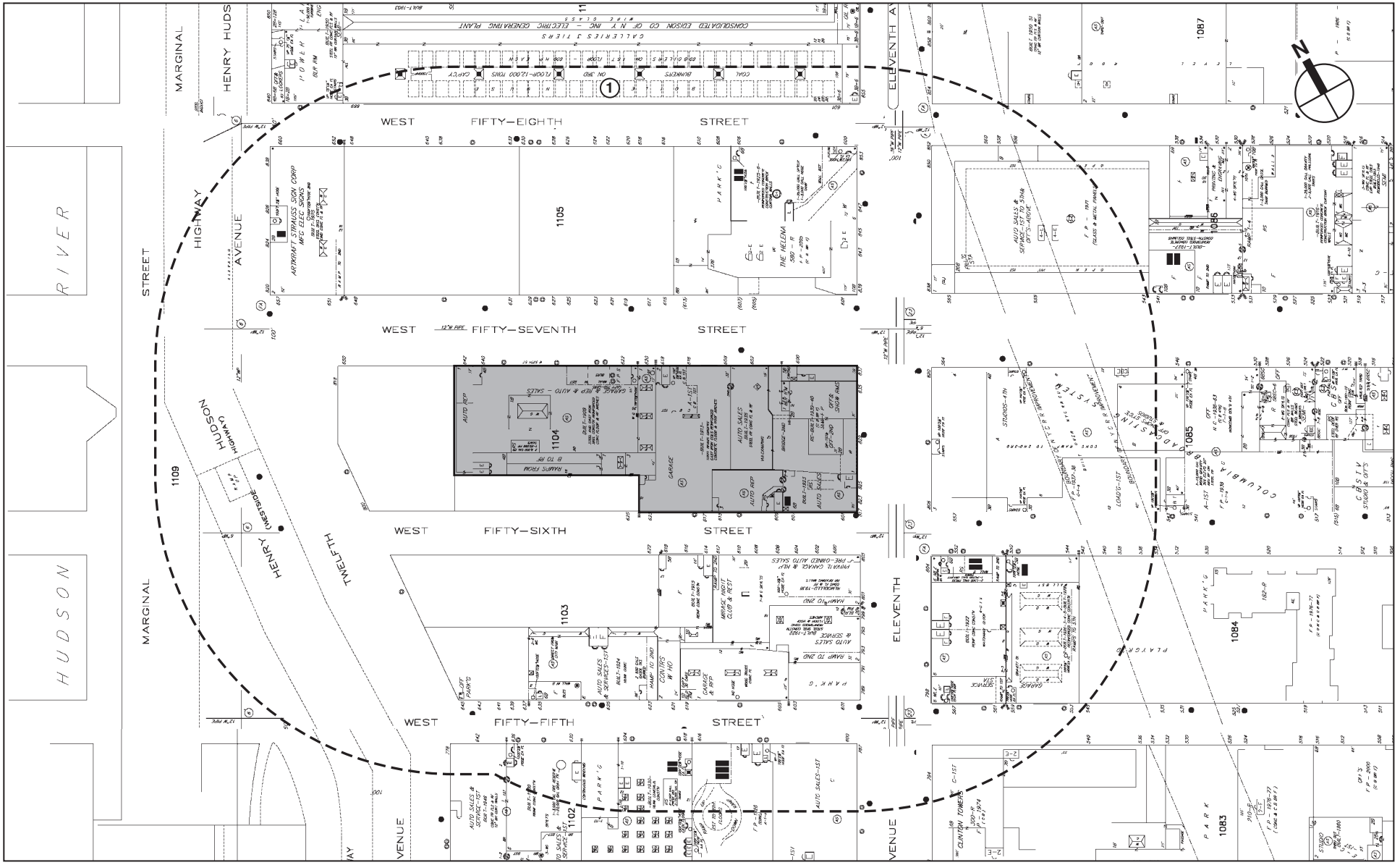
Study areas for architectural resources are determined based on an area of potential effect for construction-period impacts, as well as the larger area in which there may be visual or contextual impacts. The 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* sets the guidelines for the study area as being typically within an approximately 400-foot radius of a project site. Accordingly, the study area for this analysis has been defined as the lots within the proposed rezoning area and the area within a 400-foot radius (see **Figure 7-1**).

To assess the potential impacts of the proposed actions, an inventory of architectural resources in the study area was compiled. In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines, the inventory includes all officially recognized architectural resources. These resources ("known architectural resources") are defined as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs); properties or districts listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), or previously determined to be eligible for such listing; NYCLs and New York City Landmark Historic Districts (NYCHDs); and properties that have been considered for designation ("heard") by LPC at a public hearing, calendared for consideration at such a hearing ("pending NYCLs"), or found by LPC to appear eligible for designation. This inventory contains one resource in the study area that is S/NR-eligible: the Consolidated Edison Power House. This resource is also pending NYCL designation.

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

Once the architectural resources in the study area were identified, development resulting from the proposed actions was assessed for the potential to have direct, physical impacts and/or indirect visual or contextual impacts on architectural resources. Direct impacts include damage from vibration (i.e., from construction blasting or pile driving) and additional damage from adjacent construction that could occur from falling objects, subsidence, collapse, or damage from construction machinery. Adjacent construction is defined as any construction activity that would occur within 90 feet of an architectural resource, as defined in the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) *Technical Policy and Procedure Notice* (TPPN) #10/88.[1]

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




*Project Site*

*Study Area Boundary (400-Foot Perimeter)*

① *Architectural Resource - Consolidated Edison Power House*

**606 WEST 57TH STREET**

Architectural Resources
**Figure 7-1**

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

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

## B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### DEVELOPMENT SITE 1

A utilitarian one-story brick garage is located at the northwest corner of the site, fronting West 57th Street. To its east is a larger four-story brick parking garage (with rooftop parking) that includes frontage on both West 56th and West 57th Streets. The first floor of the structure has been altered with stone facing, new windows, and a garage entrance. Continuing east along West 57th Street are two two-story car dealerships, (one of which also features a frontage on Eleventh Avenue). A two-story gray brick building is at the southwest corner of the site with a public parking garage entrance.

The buildings on development site 1, including the older brick garage and commercial buildings, are not particularly distinguished, and do not display any significant architectural characteristics. As such, the buildings do not appear to meet criteria for listing on the S/NR or NYCL designation.

### REMAINDER OF REZONING AREA

There are three "outparcels" within the rezoning area (Lots 25, 29, and 36) that are not owned by the applicant.

Development site 2—Lots 25 and 29—is at the southeast corner of the project block; these lots are under common ownership and function as a single building. At the corner of West 56th Street and Eleventh Avenue is a six-story utilitarian brick structure with a car dealership on the ground floor. This building is devoid of ornamentation except for a simple cornice. A three-story wing, also of a plain design, extends west along West 56th Street from the rear of the main building. Three roll-up garage doors have been installed at ground level in this structure.

Lot 36 is located at the northeast corner of the project block on the corner of West 57th Street and Eleventh Avenue and is occupied by a five-story brick office building. The first floor of this structure has been altered with a restaurant, and portions of the upper floors are covered with advertising billboards. There is also a large billboard and cell phone towers located on the roof.

The buildings in the rezoning area are not particularly distinguished and do not have any significant architectural or historic characteristics. As such, the buildings do not appear to meet criteria for listing on the S/NR or NYCL designation.

### STUDY AREA

One known architectural resources was identified in the study area: the Consolidated Edison Power House, formerly the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) Company Power House (S/NR-eligible, NYCL-pending). This building is two blocks north of the project site on the block bounded by West 59th Street, West 58th Street, Eleventh Avenue, and West End Avenue/Twelfth Avenue (see **Figure 7-2**).

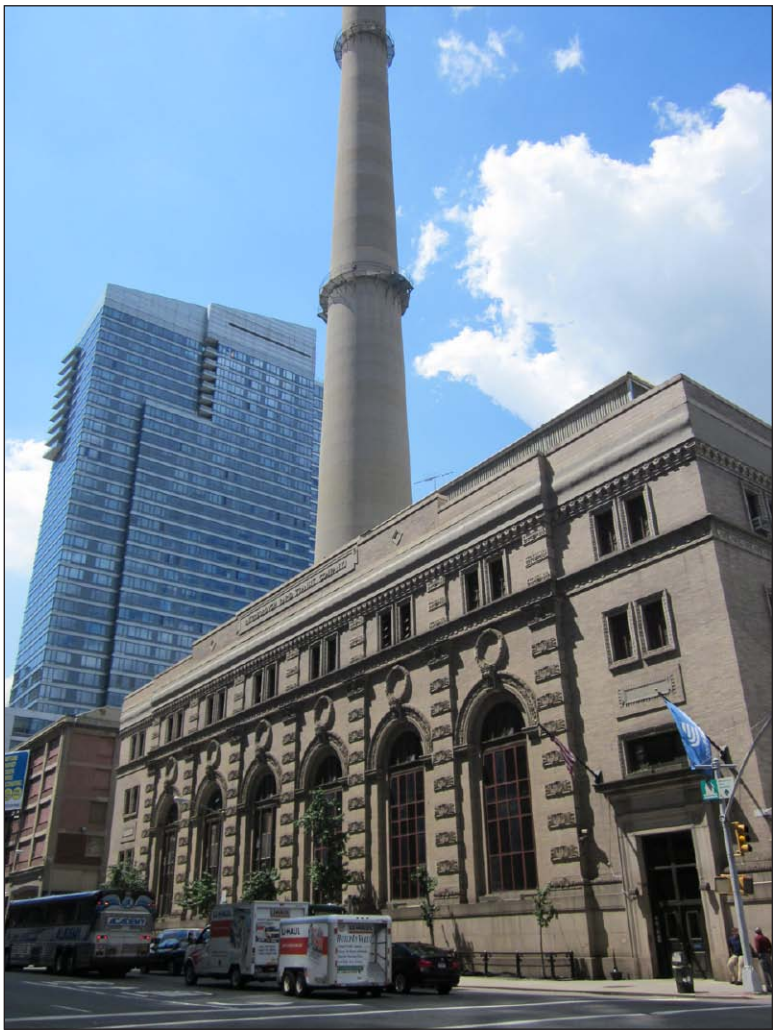
The Consolidated Edison Power House is a prominent, 6-story neo-Renaissance Revival-style structure built in 1900-1904 to generate all of the power for the Interborough Rapid Transit (IRT) system, New York City's first subway system. Designed by the architectural firm of McKim, Mead & White, it was the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

A survey of the study area by an architectural historian did not identify any potential architectural resources. The study area is largely developed with recently constructed buildings, including "The Helena," a 37-story residential building of a contemporary glass and metal design, and the masonry and glass office and garage building operated by the Department of Sanitation (DSNY) located on the western end of the project block. There are also older utilitarian industrial structures that have been heavily altered over time and do not possess significant architectural characteristics. As a result, these structures would not meet criteria for listing on the S/NR or designation as an NYCL in terms of age or architectural significance.

## C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

In the future without the proposed actions, it is assumed that the structures within the rezoning area would not be altered and would remain in their current commercial and auto-related uses.

There is one project within the architectural resources study area that is expected to be completed by 2017. The Durst Development at 625 West 57th Street, just north of the project block, is anticipated to be completed by 2015. The project consists of a new approximately 450-foot-tall triangular tower on the vacant western end of the block and the redevelopment of an existing self-storage facility on the eastern side of the block. The buildings will contain residential, commercial, office, and community facility space in addition to accessory parking spaces. This proposed development and additional projects proposed just outside the architectural resources study area will continue the study area's trend toward high-rise buildings with a mixture of uses, replacing underutilized buildings and vacant land.



Consolidated Edison Power House **1**

Consolidated Edison Power House –
Known Architectural Resource in Study Area
**Figure 7-2**

# D. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

## DEVELOPMENT SITE 1

The applicant is proposing the demolition of the existing structures on development site 1 and construction of a new high-rise building with mixed-use development. The building is expected to include active retail space with frontages on both Eleventh Avenue and West 57th Street. The building would be a distinctly modern structure intended to include a number of distinct components. On the eastern half of the proposed project site would be two perpendicular towers, connected by a glass bridge. A "cube" would sit atop the two towers but be offset to create the appearance of a separate massing. At the top of the building there would be parapet enclosing mechanical equipment. Another building element would be a lower wing along West 57th Street, which itself would be distinguished from the rest of the building by another glass bridge.

As there are no architectural resources on development site 1, the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact.

## REMAINDER OF REZONING AREA

The proposed actions would facilitate the redevelopment of Lots 25 and 29 with a hotel. This proposed development would involve the demolition of the existing structures. As the existing structures on Lots 25 and 29 are not architectural resources, the proposed actions would have no significant adverse impact on such resources.

The proposed actions would not result in any redevelopment on Lot 36 due to the size of the lot, setback requirements, structural restrictions preventing enlargement of the existing building, and the current active use. In any event, the existing structure on Lot 36 is not an architectural resource. Therefore, the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact.

## STUDY AREA

The one architectural resource in the study area, the early 20th century Consolidated Edison Power House, is located more than 90 feet from the project site, the distance as defined by DOB at which an adverse physical impact is possible. Therefore the proposed actions would not be expected to result in adverse physical impacts to this resource.

The redevelopment expected to occur with the proposed actions would also not be expected to significantly alter the context of the Consolidated Edison Power House. The new buildings would not adversely affect the setting of the Consolidated Edison Power House, which would continue to exist in a mixed context of older low structures and recently constructed high-rise buildings. In addition, the recently constructed 37-story Helena condominium building and the proposed development on the same block would intervene between the Consolidated Edison Power House and the rezoning area. Therefore, there would be little or no visual relationship between the development resulting from the proposed actions and the Consolidated Edison Power House. The proposed actions would not introduce incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to this resource's setting. The proposed actions would also not obstruct significant public views of the Consolidated Edison Power House or isolate it from its setting or relationship with the streetscape. Therefore there would be no significant adverse indirect impacts to architectural resources. ✷