

7.6 URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

7.6.1 Introduction

This Section evaluates the effects of construction and operation of the alternative Shaft Site on E. 61st Street west of First Avenue on nearby urban design and visual resources. This includes consideration of changes to the streetscape at the alternative Shaft Site, possible effects to the visual quality of the surrounding area, and potential impacts to views of significant visual resources. The Study Area for the analysis of the alternative Shaft Site's effect on urban design and visual resources is the area extending 400 feet from the boundaries of the site and the potential water main connection route that is unique to this alternative Shaft Site (Figure 7.6-1).

7.6.2 Existing Conditions

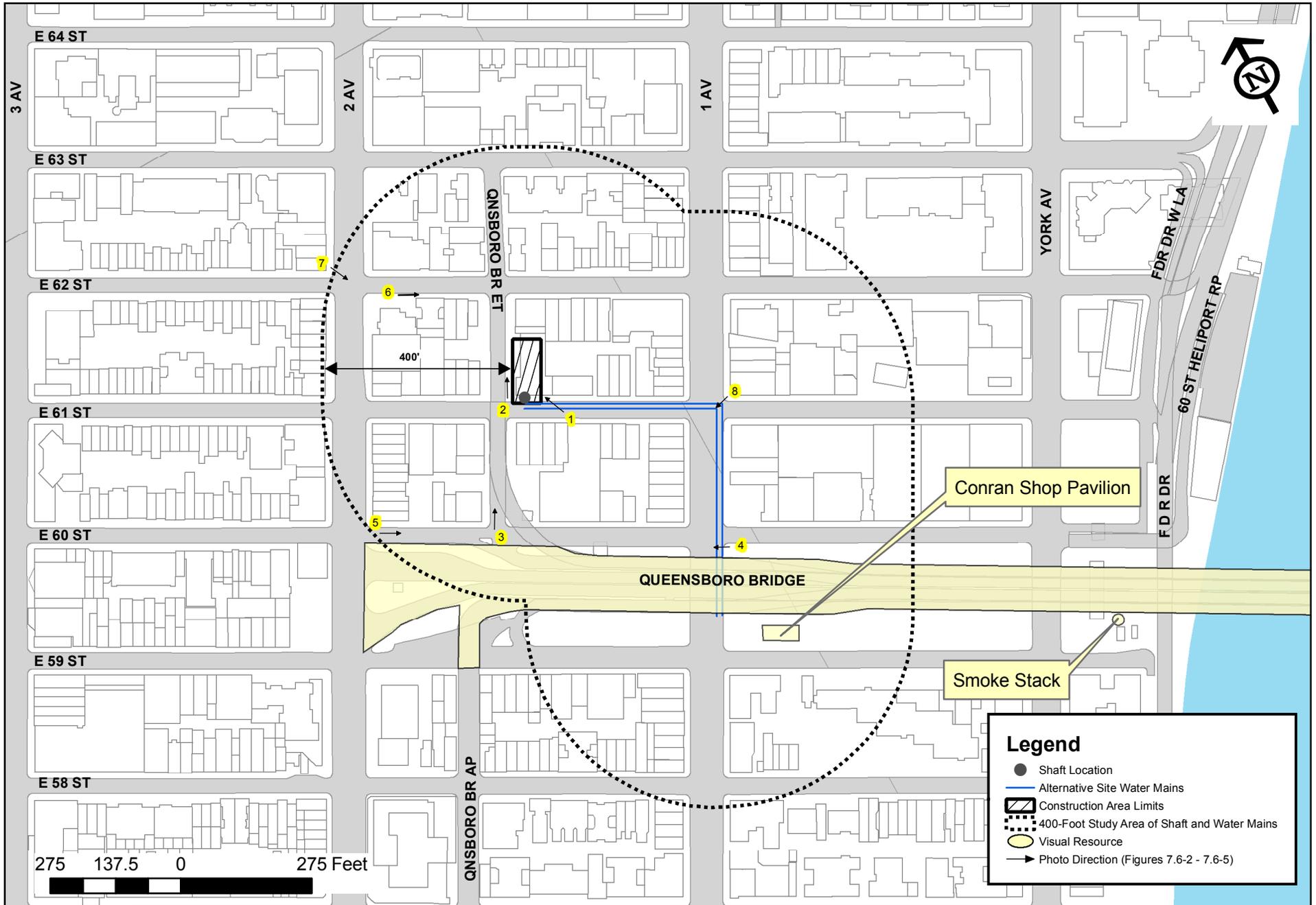
Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

The alternative Shaft Site is located on the north side of E. 61st Street west of First Avenue. The site is a vacant, grassy lot surrounded with chain-link fencing (Figure 7.6-2, Photograph 1). On the western side of the alternative Shaft Site, at the public side of the fencing, there are street-level planters with greenery and small trees along the sidewalk area (Figure 7.6-2, Photograph 2), adjacent to the Queensboro Bridge exit viaduct (discussed below). As noted in Section 7.3, "Open Space," this sidewalk is a Greenstreet, part of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation's (NYCDPR) program to provide landscaping on traffic islands and medians.

Study Area

A major element of the urban design of the area surrounding the alternative Shaft Site is the infrastructure of the Queensboro Bridge (Bridge). The concrete and steel viaduct for the Bridge exit runs from E. 60th Street north to E. 63rd Street between First and Second Avenues, immediately west of the E. 61st Street Shaft Site; there is also an exit at street level below the viaduct (Figure 7.6-3, Photograph 3). The Bridge exits also interrupt the typical rectangular street grid of Manhattan in this area. First and Second Avenues are major north-south thoroughfares that carry the majority of vehicular traffic through the area. Because the Bridge approaches and exits create intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to access and cross, the pedestrian activity in the area is mainly located on Second and First Avenues. Large portions of the south side of E. 60th Street between First and Second Avenues do not have sidewalks; however, adjacent to the E. 61st Street Shaft Site and the Bridge exit ramp is a sidewalk leading through the midblocks between E. 60th and 62nd Streets (Figure 7.6-2, Photograph 2 above). The combination of the midblock passage and the landscaped Greenstreet create an interesting urban design feature adjacent to the 61st Street Shaft Site. There is a pedestrian and bicycle entrance to the Bridge at E. 60th Street and First Avenue, identifiable by its surrounding tubular steel railing (Figure 7.6-3, Photograph 4).



Map Document: (S:\Projects\2175158\GIS_Figures\Shaft_33B\EIS_Field_Work\REVISED_MXD\Site_F_Visual_Resources.mxd) 9/22/2009 - 9:05:52 AM



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
 PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY TUNNEL NO. 3
 STAGE 2- MANHATTAN LEG
 E. 61ST STREET SHAFT SITE
 VISUAL RESOURCES

FIGURE 7.6-1



View of alternative Shaft Site on E. 61st Street 1



Western edge of alternative Shaft Site, view north 2

Source: Field surveys, spring and summer 2005



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
 PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY WATER TUNNEL NO. 3
 STAGE 2-MANHATTAN LEG
 E. 61ST STREET SHAFT SITE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 7.6-2



View of Queensboro Bridge exit ramp from E. 60th Street **3**



View of Bridge pedestrian and bicycle entrance at E. 60th Street and First Avenue **4**



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY WATER TUNNEL NO. 3
STAGE 2-MANHATTAN LEG
E. 61ST STREET SHAFT SITE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 7.6-3

The topography of the Study Area slopes gradually downward from Second Avenue to First Avenue and slightly upward toward E. 60th Street, except near the alternative Shaft Site, where the topography slopes upward toward E. 62nd Street. There are a few street trees along sidewalks throughout the Study Area. Cobrahead lampposts are used in the Study Area. There is a large amount of transportation-related signage near the Bridge, as well as typical street furniture (e.g. bus shelters, newspaper bins) throughout the Study Area. The wires and support towers for the Roosevelt Island tram run above E. 60th Street (Figure 7.6-4, Photograph 5).

The Study Area consists mainly of low-rise buildings with commercial and residential uses. The buildings in the area include 4- to 6-story tenements, small 6-story apartment houses, two tall apartment towers, and several storage warehouses (Figure 7.6-4, Photograph 6). The buildings within the Study Area are primarily built to the street line; exceptions include the two apartment towers in the area, Evansview Condominiums at 303 E. 60th Street and the Paladin Condominiums at 300 E. 62nd Street, both of which are set back behind public plazas (Figure 7.6-5, Photograph 7). The buildings are clad in a variety of materials, mostly brick and stucco.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

There are no visual resources located on the alternative Shaft Site. In addition, no visual resources can be seen from the site.

Study Area

Given its location within the midblock, the height of surrounding structures, and the proximity of the concrete and steel Bridge exit viaduct, the alternative Shaft Site can only be seen within the immediately adjacent area: the area along E. 61st Street on both sides of the viaduct, and from the intersection of E. 62nd Street and the Bridge exit. The only visual resources that can be seen within the Study Area are the Queensboro Bridge and the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure, which can be viewed along E. 60th Street (Figure 7.6-4, Photograph 5 above). The focus of views south along the view corridor of First Avenue is the First Avenue arch, which carries above it the approach ramp to the Queensboro Bridge (Figure 4.6-5, Photograph 8); views north do not have any distinguishing features. Other views along side streets and Second Avenue similarly do not have any distinguishing features.

7.6.3 Future Conditions Without the Project

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

In the Future Without the Project, the Archdiocese of New York's planned new residential building on the alternative Shaft Site will change the appearance and urban design of the site. Rather than a vacant, grassy parcel, the alternative Shaft Site will be occupied by a new residential building. Although no plans for this building are available, based on the site's zoning



E. 60th Street, view east toward First Avenue **5**



View east along E. 62nd Street, from Second Avenue **6**



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY WATER TUNNEL NO. 3
STAGE 2-MANHATTAN LEG
E. 61ST STREET SHAFT SITE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 7.6-4



Southeast corner of Second Avenue and E. 62nd Street 7



View south on First Avenue from E. 61st Street 8



NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY WATER TUNNEL NO. 3
STAGE 2-MANHATTAN LEG
E. 61ST STREET SHAFT SITE

PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 7.6-5

(discussed in Section 7.2), it is anticipated that the building will be a low- to mid-rise building consistent with the other buildings in the surrounding area.

Study Area

In the Future Without the Project, a formerly vacant site on the west side of First Avenue between E. 61st and 62nd Streets will be developed for residential use, which would be consistent with the primarily commercial and residential uses of the study area. Construction on this project has already begun. The development is being built to the streetline to fit in with the existing streetscape. Ongoing rehabilitation of the Queensboro Bridge could also result in minor changes to the streetscape of the study area. Overall, in the Future Without the Project the urban design of the Study Area would remain similar to existing conditions.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

As described above, there are no visual resources located on the alternative Shaft Site. In addition, no visual resources can be seen from the site. Therefore, no changes to views of visual resources would occur in the Future Without the Project.

Study Area

There are no projects planned within the Study Area that would be expected to significantly change views to surrounding visual resources.

7.6.4 Future Conditions With the Project

Construction

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

During construction, activities and equipment on the alternative Shaft Site would be shielded from view by a 20-foot-high barrier. The only equipment visible above the barrier from street level would be a crane and, possibly, a concrete truck enclosure. The barrier would block off the area on the alternative Shaft Site that is currently fenced. As a streetscape element, this barrier would be somewhat similar to the fence that currently encloses the site, except that it would be somewhat taller and would not allow views through to the site. As described in Chapter 2, “Purpose and Need and Project Overview,” some limited construction work would occur on the alternative Shaft Site at night. To facilitate this work, lighting would be installed around the site. This lighting would be noticeable from the surrounding area, but would not be substantially different from the lighting that already illuminates the Study Area at night.

Study Area

The project's construction activities would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. The activity on the alternative Shaft Site would not change access along the midblock sidewalk, and the Greenstreet landscaping would remain. The addition of a new construction barrier adjacent to the midblock Greenstreet and sidewalk would therefore not be anticipated to result in potential significant adverse impacts to that urban design feature.

Water Main Connections

Construction of the water main connections would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. During construction, the sidewalk area would be reduced, street pavement would be cut up, and construction equipment would be located in the street. These changes are typical of construction projects in Manhattan.

Every effort would be made to protect and maintain street trees before and during construction. However, it is possible that several street trees along the water main route would be removed. For street segments that would involve use of a 2-foot-wide strip of sidewalk, all street trees and street furniture located within the affected sidewalk areas may be removed during construction. The trees that could be removed for the three water main routes studied in this EIS from the preferred Shaft Site are described in Section 5.6, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," in Chapter 5, "Water Main Connections." For the 2½ blocks of additional water main connections associated with the E. 61st Street Shaft Site for the First Avenue or Sutton Place routes, three additional trees could be affected, all located on the north side of E. 61st Street between the alternative Shaft Site and First Avenue. Using the First Avenue route, Scenario A, if the water mains were laid close to the sidewalk down the east side of First Avenue between E. 61st and E. 59th Streets, this could affect an additional 8 trees, all located at the BridgeTower Place open space, for a total of 11 trees associated with the 2½-block water main connection. The same number of trees could be affected following the E. 59th Street/E. 61st Street route as for the preferred Shaft Site's water main connections along that route. Detailed information on the trees potentially affected is provided in Appendix 6. It is also possible that some additional street trees would be lost in locations where no sidewalk work is proposed, because of the excavation activities close to those trees. As described in Section 5.6, where possible along the water main routes, the New York City Department of Design and Construction (NYCDDC) would replace any removed street trees in accordance with the requirements of NYCDPR, which administers the street tree program in New York City. The replacement trees would in most cases be smaller than the trees that were lost. Depending on the placement of the mains within the streetbed, however, NYCDDC may not be able to replace all street trees in the areas where the water main would be located very close to the sidewalk because sufficient clearance between the tree roots and the water mains must be maintained. In this case replacement trees may be provided in the neighborhood area, rather than in existing tree locations. For more information, see Section 5.6.

The potential elimination of mature street trees, in the numbers described, would have a temporary adverse impact on urban design that would be offset by additional tree planting in the community. The elimination of these trees is not considered to be a significant impact because the urban design and visual resources characteristic of this area is not defined by this element. However, NYCDEP recognizes that street trees to be an important part of a community and will work with NYCDPR in the greening of this community.

Overall, due to the limited nature of the potential streetscape changes, no potential significant adverse impacts to the urban design of the Study Area are anticipated as a result of construction activities required for the alternative Shaft Site and its water main connections.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

The 20-foot-high barrier around the alternative Shaft Site during construction would be somewhat taller than the fence that surrounds the site today. As described above, there are no visual resources located on the alternative Shaft Site and none can be seen from the site. Therefore, the alternative Shaft Site would not have a significant adverse impact on visual resources.

Study Area

During construction, the enclosure surrounding the E. 61st Street Shaft Site would be visible along E. 61st Street from east of the Bridge exit viaduct, from the mid-block sidewalk between E. 61st and E. 62nd Streets, and along First Avenue at E. 61st Street. The enclosure and construction equipment and activity on the site would not eliminate views from the Study Area to surrounding visual resources, nor would they become a dominant element of such views. Views of the Queensboro Bridge and the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure would still be available along E. 60th Street, and views south along First Avenue to the First Avenue arch would not be disturbed. While the construction enclosure, equipment, and related activity would become part of surrounding views, they would be similar in nature to the enclosure, equipment, and activity on the site today and would not adversely affect the views. Therefore, due to the limited nature of the potential changes, the construction activities for Shaft 33B at the E. 61st Street Shaft Site are not anticipated to result in any potential significant adverse impacts to the visual resources of the Study Area.

Water Main Connections

During construction of water main connections from the E. 61st Street Shaft Site, the disturbance to the streetbed and sidewalk and construction equipment would be visible from elsewhere in the Study Area, but would not eliminate views from the Study Area to surrounding visual resources; nor would they become a dominant element of such views. As described in Section 5.6, while the construction equipment and related activity would temporarily become part of surrounding views, they would not adversely affect the views. The period of diminished visual quality would be short-term along each street segment. Therefore, no potential significant adverse visual impact

would be anticipated to occur during construction of the water main connections from this alternative Shaft Site.

Conclusions

Overall, construction activities for Shaft 33B on the E. 61st Street Shaft Site and its water main connections would result in temporary changes to the appearance of the site and water main connection route. No changes to urban design would result, and no views of visual resources would be blocked. Although every effort would be made to maintain and protect street trees before and during construction, some of the work along the water main routes could result in additional loss of street trees. This would be expected for any water main alignment that uses part of the sidewalk on either an avenue or a side street. The potential elimination of mature street trees, in the numbers described, would have a temporary adverse impact on urban design that would be offset by additional tree planting in the community. As described in Section 5.6, construction of the water main connections would not be anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to urban design or visual character. Overall, therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources are anticipated as a result of construction of Shaft 33B on the E. 61st Street Shaft Site or its water main connections.

Operation

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

During operation of the Shaft 33B, three permanent above-ground structures would be in place on the alternative Shaft Site: a 10-foot-tall, 14-inch diameter air vent and two 3-foot-tall, 6-inch diameter hydrants on the site or on the sidewalk. These structures would be visible additions to the streetscape, but are relatively unobtrusive and small in size and therefore would not have a potential adverse impact on urban design. In addition, the presence of hydrants near the street edge would be congruous with street furniture that is found surrounding the alternative Shaft Site in existing conditions. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts are anticipated to occur to urban design of the Shaft Site because of operation of Shaft 33B.

Study Area

The project would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; streetscape; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts on urban design of the Study Area are expected because of the operation of the Shaft 33B at the E. 61st Street Shaft Site.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

There are no visual resources located on the E. 61st Street Shaft Site. In addition, no visual resources can be seen from the alternative Shaft Site. Therefore, no changes to views of visual resources would be altered by the introduction of the air vent and hydrants onto the site.

Study Area

Views from the Study Area to the Queensboro Bridge and the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure would not be altered by the introduction of the air vent and hydrants onto the site. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts to visual resources are anticipated to occur as a result of the operation of Shaft 33B at the E. 61st Street Shaft Site.

