

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter assesses the potential of the proposed project to affect urban design and visual resources. The analysis updates changes to the proposed project and background conditions since the 2008 Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS) and assesses whether any changed background conditions or differences in elements between the development program analyzed in the 2008 FGEIS and the proposed project would result in significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS.

Under the 2012 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, urban design is defined as the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. These components include streets, buildings, visual resources, open spaces, natural resources, and wind. An urban design assessment under CEQR must consider whether and how a project may change the experience of a pedestrian in a project area. The *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines recommend the preparation of a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources, followed by a detailed analysis if warranted based on the conclusions of the preliminary assessment. The analysis provided below addresses urban design characteristics and visual resources for existing conditions, the future without the proposed actions, and the probable impacts of the proposed project.

**PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**

This analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS. Overall, this analysis concludes that the proposed project would not have any significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources, consistent with the findings of the 2008 FGEIS and subsequent technical memoranda.

**B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS—2008 FGEIS AND SUBSEQUENT TECHNICAL MEMORANDA**

The 2008 FGEIS concluded that the Willets Point Development Plan would add new uses and vitality to the site and would greatly improve the appearance of the Special Willets Point District. While the Plan would significantly alter the urban design of the District, it would ultimately have a beneficial impact on the overall appearance and feel of the District. The Plan would transform the underdeveloped District into a vibrant, mixed-use urban environment. The buildings that would result from the Plan were found to be cohesive in design and varied in use to create a new destination and entertainment location. The Plan also would have integrated the District into the surrounding area by creating a new pedestrian-scaled street network with wide connector streets as well as smaller, retail and residential streets. In addition, the Plan would have added new publicly accessible open spaces to the District.

The 2008 FGEIS concluded that the new mixed-use development resulting from the Plan would have increased the vitality of the District; increased pedestrian traffic to the District and the surrounding area; and improved the appearance of the District by providing new streets and streetscape elements, such as street trees and lighting. The new buildings would be set back at a consistent distance and built to a similar height to create new, continuous streetwalls. The Plan also would not adversely affect any visual resources in the surrounding area, including Flushing Bay, the Flushing Bay Promenade, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the 1964–65 World’s Fair structures.

### C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Based on the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources is appropriate when there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning. Examples include projects that permit the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements, and projects that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed “as of right” in the future without the proposed actions.

To facilitate the redevelopment of the project site, several discretionary actions would be required, including a zoning special permit to allow surface parking/open and enclosed privately-operated recreation uses for Phase 1A within the Special Willets Point District. While the proposed actions do not constitute an upzoning, they would be expected to result in physical alterations within the District beyond those allowed by existing zoning, and thus would meet the threshold for a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines state that if the preliminary assessment shows that changes to the pedestrian environment are sufficiently significant to require greater explanation and further study, then a detailed analysis is appropriate. Examples include projects that would potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alterations to the streetscape of a neighborhood by noticeably changing the scale of buildings. Detailed analyses also are generally appropriate for areawide rezonings that include an increase in permitted floor area or changes in height and setback requirements, large-scale general developments (LSGDs), or projects that would result in substantial changes to the built environment of a historic district or components of a historic building that contribute to the resource’s historic significance. Conditions that merit consideration for further analysis of visual resources include when the project partially or totally blocks a view corridor or a natural or built visual resource that is rare in the area or considered a defining feature of the neighborhood; or when the project changes urban design features so that the context of a natural or built visual resource is altered (i.e., if the project alters the street grid so that the approach to the resource changes; if the project changes the scale of surrounding buildings so that the context changes; or if the project removes lawns or other open areas that serve as a setting for the resource).

The proposed project would involve changes to Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site, which were not previously analyzed as part of the 2008 FGEIS or subsequent technical memoranda. These changes would noticeably alter the scale of buildings on these portions of the project site, compared to the future without the proposed project. These portions of the project site would go from being developed with surface parking lots to being occupied by structures ranging in height from approximately 63 to 105 feet tall. Therefore, the proposed project would meet the threshold for a detailed assessment of urban design and visual resources. This analysis is provided below.

## D. METHODOLOGY

This analysis has been prepared in accordance with CEQR procedures and follows the guidelines of the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*.

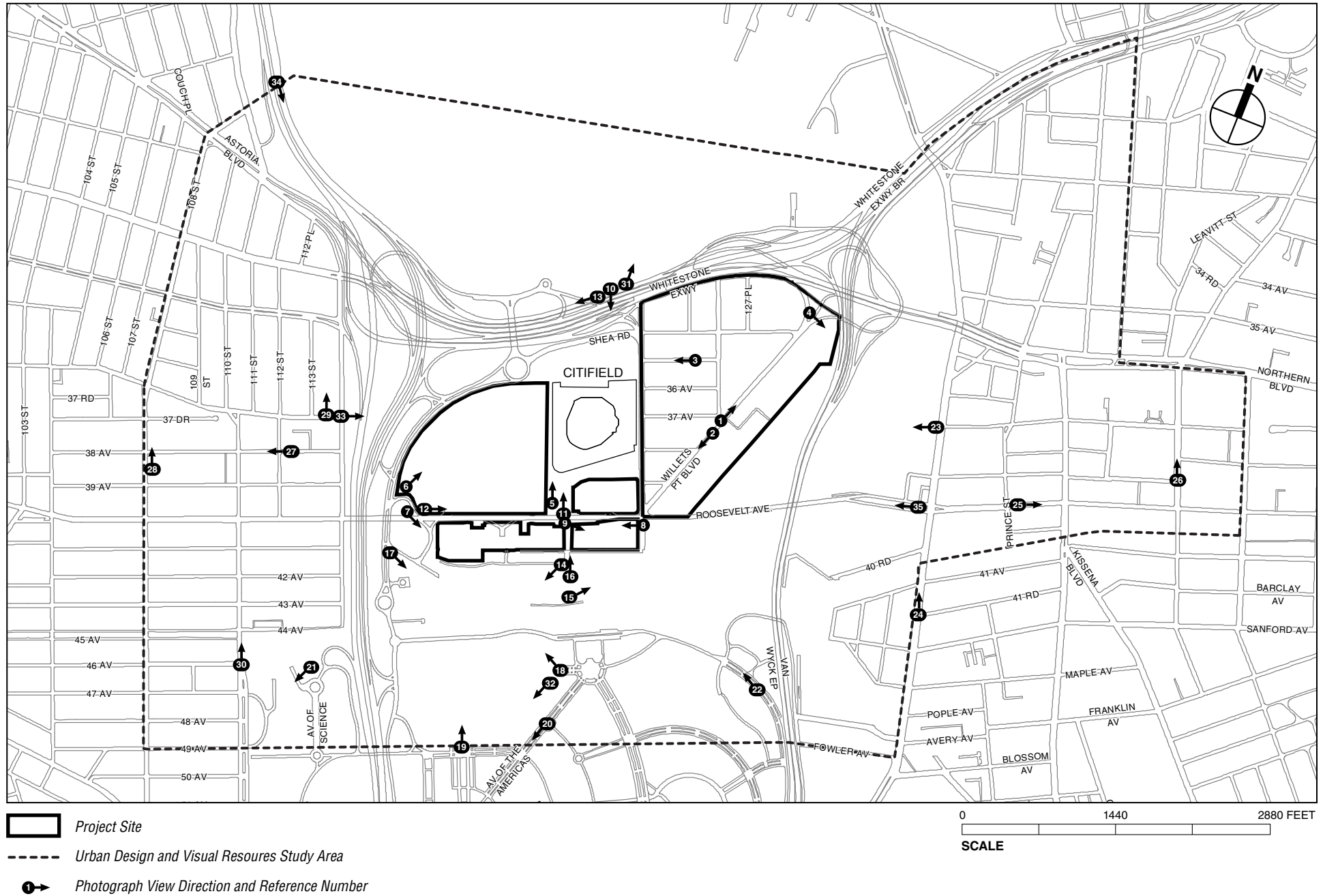
As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. This detailed assessment considers the effects of the proposed actions on the experience of a pedestrian in the study area. The assessment focuses on those project elements that have the potential to alter the built environment, or urban design, of the project area, which is collectively formed by the following components:

- Streets—the arrangement and orientation of streets define location, flow of activity, street views, and create blocks on which buildings and open spaces are arranged. Other elements including sidewalks, plantings, street lights, curb cuts, and street furniture also contribute to an area's streetscape.
- Buildings—a building's size, shape, setbacks, pedestrian and vehicular entrances, lot coverage and orientation to the street are important urban design components that define the appearance of the built environment.
- Visual Resources—visual resources include significant natural or built features, including important views corridors, public parks, landmarks structures or districts, or otherwise distinct buildings.
- Open Space—open space includes public and private areas that do not include structures, including parks and other landscaped areas, cemeteries, and parking lots.
- Natural Features—natural features include vegetation and geologic and aquatic features that are natural to the area.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* recommends an analysis of pedestrian wind conditions for projects that would result in the construction of large buildings at locations that experience high wind conditions (such as along the waterfront, or other location where winds from the waterfront are not attenuated by buildings or natural features), which may result in an exacerbation of wind conditions due to “channelization” or “downwash” effects that may affect pedestrian safety. While the project site is near the Flushing Bay waterfront, the proposed buildings would be limited in height by Federal Aviation Administration regulations, due to the proximity of the LaGuardia Airport. Furthermore, the project site is separated from the waterfront by elevated roadways, which reduce local wind conditions. Therefore, a pedestrian wind conditions analysis has not been prepared.

The study area for the urban design and visual resources analysis is consistent with that of the primary study area for the analysis of land use, zoning and public policy. This study area extends roughly from Flushing Bay to the north; Linden Place, Parsons Boulevard, and College Point Boulevard to the east; United Nations Avenue North within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to the south; and 108th and 111th Streets on the west (see **Figure 8-1**).

As detailed in the Staged Acquisition Alternative of the FGEIS and subsequent technical memoranda, since development would occur more incrementally in the District under the proposed project, and there would not be an open space area buffering eastern portions of the Phase 1A and 1B development from the industrial uses that would remain in the eastern portions of the District to be developed later (as previously analyzed), for Phases 1A and 1B the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will consider the contrast between the redeveloped portion of the District and the area that would remain largely industrial in nature.



## E. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### URBAN DESIGN

#### *PROJECT SITE*

The project site is composed of three discrete areas, roughly bounded by Shea Road and Northern Boulevard to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Corona Rail Yard to the south, and Shea Road to the west (see **Figures 8-1** and **8-2**). The three portions of the project site are defined as the Special Willets Point District, Willets West, and Roosevelt Avenue.

The Special Willets Point District is a triangular area roughly bounded by 126th Street to the west, Northern Boulevard to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, and Roosevelt Avenue to the south. This District is approximately 61.4 acres in size. The District is partially developed in a street grid, with 34th through 39th Avenues running east-west, and with 127th Street running north-south between Northern Boulevard and 37th Avenue. Short north-south streets—126th Place, 127th Street, and 127th Place—extend between Northern Boulevard and 34th Avenue. Willets Point Boulevard is the main thoroughfare through the District. Starting at 126th Street, it runs on a diagonal that extends northeast to the entrance of the Van Wyck Expressway. There are no streets south of Willets Point Boulevard in the District. 126th Street forms the western boundary of the District, running parallel to 127th Street and extending between Northern Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue.

Due to the diagonal trajectory of Willets Point Boulevard and the curve of Northern Boulevard, the majority of the 14 blocks within the District are irregular in shape. The blocks on 34th Avenue curve to conform to the shape of Northern Boulevard. Triangular and trapezoidal blocks are created by Willets Point Boulevard's diagonal path. The three blocks located between 34th and 37th Avenues, and 126th and 127th Streets are the only rectangular-shaped blocks in the District. The majority of the buildings within the District are small, temporary metal structures, metal Quonset huts, and brick buildings with small footprints and large, projecting advertising signs (see Views 1-3 of **Figures 8-3** and **8-4**). These structures house automotive repair shops, wholesale auto parts stores, and other auto-related uses. Most of the buildings in the District are attached or located close together. In contrast, in the northeast section of the District there are a number of freestanding buildings that are larger and boxier in form. These include the Tully Construction site, which contains a three-story, boxy red brick building and is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Large trucks and other manufacturing equipment are stored on the site. Another notable building in this portion of the District is the historic former Empire Millwork Corporation Building (see Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources"). This two-story, Georgian Revival-style red brick building is located near the intersection of Willets Point Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway (see View 4 of **Figure 8-4**).

The streetscape of the District is industrial in character. Most of the streets are flanked by paved sidewalks, which are in poor condition. The sidewalks have wide curb cuts and are only slightly elevated; in some parts, the sidewalks are almost flush with the streets. The sidewalks are also used for car parking, auto parts storage, and waste storage. The streets in the District also are in various states of disrepair. Most are partially paved and riddled with potholes. The only streets with designated or marked traffic lanes are 126th Street and Willets Point Boulevard. There are few sidewalk crossings or stop signs. Mature sycamore trees line 126th Street; they are the only









Special Willets Point District, view north on Willets Point Boulevard

1



Special Willets Point District, view south on Willets Point Boulevard

2

## Views of Special Willets Point District



Special Willets Point District, view from 35th Avenue **3**



Former Empire Millwork Corporation Building **4**

## Views of Special Willets Point District



vegetation in the District. Streetscape elements are limited to cobra-head lights and utility poles with wires strung between them; the streets lack traditional streetscape elements such as trees, fire hydrants, and other street furniture. In some areas, the streetscape is broken up by lots surrounded by chain-link fencing or sheets of corrugated metal, which are used for parking and storage of used cars and other auto parts.

The boundaries of the District portion of the project site are the same as the Special Willets Point District—a special zoning district that is coterminous with a C4-4 zoning district—and the Willets Point Urban Renewal Plan (URP) (see Figure 2-2 in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy”). The District was created in 2008 to allow for the redevelopment of this area consistent with the Willets Point Development Plan. Within the District, the zoning allows a range of maximum FARs, from 2.0 to 5.0. To create an appropriate scale and density within its boundaries, the special zoning district regulates a number of urban design elements, including the number of intersections along 126th Street, building heights and setbacks, street hierarchies, streetscape design, and basic site planning and design provisions. The URP, also adopted in 2008, established maximum square footage development envelopes in accordance with the City’s redevelopment goals. The overall maximum permitted floor area in the District was defined as 8.94 million square feet of zoning floor area (zsf), with maximum permitted floor areas for residential and commercial uses (5,850,000 zsf of residential use, 3,160,000 zsf of commercial use). The URP, as well as the special district regulations, also requires the creation of a minimum of eight acres of open space in the District and a minimum 650-seat school.

The Willets West portion of the project site is an approximately 30.7-acre section of the paved surface parking field west-adjacent to CitiField. This portion of the site is mapped as parkland; however, it does not function as open space. The land was occupied by Shea Stadium and associated parking and circulation space until it was replaced by CitiField in 2009, and it is now occupied exclusively by surface parking (see Views 5 and 6 of **Figure 8-5**). The area is lit by tall floodlights and there are traffic islands within and around the perimeter of the surface parking area, which are currently planted with trees. There are no structures on this portion of the project site.

The Roosevelt Avenue portion of the site consists of three CitiField-related, paved surface parking lots along Roosevelt Avenue, South Lot and Lots B and D (see Views 7 and 8 of **Figure 8-6**). The South Lot and Lot D are located between Roosevelt Avenue and the MTA Corona Rail Yard, and are separated by the elevated Passerelle Ramp, which extends south from the Mets-Willets Point subway station and comes to grade adjacent to the USTA National Tennis Center. There are two small station-related structures fronting on Roosevelt Avenue around the South Lot, but these are not included in this portion of the project site.

The South Lot and Lot D are collectively approximately 12.1 acres in size. Lot B is located on the north side of Roosevelt Avenue, west of 126th Street; this paved surface parking lot currently serves as VIP/ADA parking for CitiField (see View 9 of Figure 9-7). Lot B is approximately 4.7 acres in size. The parking areas each include a small number of trees at the site perimeter and are lit by tall floodlights. Lot B is surrounded by a decorative metal fence; the South Lot and Lot D are surrounded by chain link fencing. As with Willets West, the South Lot and Lots D and B are mapped as parkland but do not function as open space. There are no structures on this portion of the project site, except for small temporary structures related to the parking use.

Overall, the project site has no natural features, and its topography is relatively flat.



Willets West, view from No. 7 train platform **5**



Willets West, view from Roosevelt Avenue **6**

## Views of Willets West Project Area



South Lot, view from Roosevelt Avenue 7



Lot D, view from Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street 8

## Views of Roosevelt Avenue Project Areas



### *STUDY AREA*

As with the project site, the study area comprises several discrete areas. These are: the remaining portions of the Willets Point peninsula that lie outside the boundaries of the District; Flushing Meadows-Corona Park; to the east, Downtown Flushing and the greater Flushing area, which are separated from the Willets Point peninsula by the Flushing River; and to the west of the project site and the western boundary of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, portions of the neighborhood of Corona.

Directly southeast of the District on the Willets Point peninsula, along the Flushing River waterfront, is a large undeveloped MTA property that is currently in use by a construction and demolition debris recycling operation. The site contains shipping containers, heavy equipment, and piles of aggregate materials.

Directly north of the District on the Willets Point peninsula is a New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) maintenance and repair facility. This site contains seven freestanding buildings, one and two stories in height and constructed of brick and steel with minimal exterior details; in addition, the site has a large paved area used for parking and vehicle storage. Most of the site is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence. Between Northern Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway is an asphalt plant. This industrial site is surrounded by a high concrete wall and jersey barriers. The site includes a one- and two-story metal and concrete building, a boxy one-story metal storage building, and a large industrial structure with metal silos and connecting ramps. The site is paved, with piles of asphalt and heavy industrial equipment located across it. The MTA, NYCDOT, and asphalt plant properties are all zoned M3-1, which allows development of up to 2.0 FAR.

Separating the District from the NYCDOT and asphalt plant sites is Northern Boulevard and the elevated connector between the Van Wyck Expressway—which runs along the eastern edge of the District—and the Grand Central Parkway. This elevated connector, approximately 40 feet in height, carries traffic over Northern Boulevard and is also supported by tall T-shaped concrete piers (see View 10 of **Figure 8-7**). Near the District, Northern Boulevard has numerous exit and entrance ramps. Streetscape features on Northern Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway include tall highway signs, tall metal fencing, cobra-head lighting fixtures, and low guardrails. The area under the elevated connector is used for car parking. There is little pedestrian activity in this portion of the study area.

The portions of the 900-acre Flushing Meadows-Corona Park that fall within the study area extend north to Flushing Bay, west to 111th and 114th Streets, south to the southern boundary of the USTA NTC site, and east to Van Wyck Expressway. The park area between the Willets West and District portions of the project site is occupied by CitiField, the baseball stadium for the Mets that opened in 2009. The stadium is clad in red brick, and its principal entrance is oriented toward Roosevelt Avenue; this southwest corner of the building is rounded, evoking Ebbets Field (see View 11 of **Figure 8-8**). A paved plaza with landscaping links the stadium with the stairway leading to the elevated Mets-Willets Point subway station. The elevated train line runs above Roosevelt Avenue on a steel viaduct structure and spans the entire width of Roosevelt Avenue, casting the street in shadow (see View 12 of **Figure 8-8**). The station platforms are constructed in concrete and bordered by corrugated metal walls with overhangs that partially shade the platforms.

To the north of Northern Boulevard is the Flushing Bay Promenade, which winds along Flushing Bay for approximately 1.4 miles from LaGuardia Airport to the Willets Point peninsula. The



Lot B, view from No. 7 train platform **9**



View south from Flushing Bay Promenade **10**

## Views of Project Site

**Figure 8-7**





CitiField, view from No. 7 train platform 11



View east on Roosevelt Avenue near Grand Central Parkway 12

## Views of Study Area

Figure 8-8



promenade has decorative paving and contains many sitting areas, with a landscaped buffer between the walkway and the Northern Boulevard access road; it provides access to the World's Fair Marina and a restaurant located northeast of CitiField (see View 13 of **Figure 8-9**). There are more than 1,000 parking spaces located to the east and west of the marina, which are also available for parking on Mets game days. The marina hosts small recreational boats; ferries and other larger vessels dock at the World's Fair Pier. When not in use, public access to the pier is blocked by a chain-link gate. The Candela Structures, two open-air, expressionistic modern structures that provide shade and originally served as bus shelters for the 1964–65 World's Fair are located along the Promenade just north of CitiField.

Directly south of the Roosevelt Avenue portion of the project site is the 23-acre MTA Corona Rail Yard. The rail yard, which is not part of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and is zoned M1-1, is primarily used for the storage and maintenance of subway trains, but also includes surface parking areas and a few brick utilitarian structures (see View 14 of **Figure 8-9**). The rail yard is lighted by tall posts with flood lights and bounded by chain link fencing. There is a Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) Mets-Willets Point station within the rail yard, which operates on CitiField game days and during the US Open.

The New York City Transit (NYCT) Casey Stengel Bus Depot is adjacent to the east of the MTA Corona Rail Yard. The bus depot comprises two buildings located on a large lot south of Roosevelt Avenue and west of 126th Street. These long, narrow buildings are two and three stories in height, with large footprints, and are clad in alternating bands of light and dark concrete (View 15 of **Figure 8-10**).

The elevated No. 7 train station (and the LIRR station when operational) is accessed by the Passerelle Ramp, a pedestrian bridge which extends above the rail yard and connects the station with Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. The ramp is an elevated boardwalk-style structure with low metal railings and reproduction gaslights (see View 16 of **Figure 8-10**). The Passerelle Building, which consists of two tan brick, one-story pavilions separated by a central ramp, comprises the southern end of the Passerelle ramp. The Passerelle Building contains offices and support facilities for the park. The terrace area on the roof of the Passerelle Building, which is covered by fixed canopies, originally provided a viewing area from which visitors to the 1964–65 World's Fair could look across the fairgrounds. The entrance to Flushing Meadows-Corona Park off the Passerelle Ramp is surrounded by flagposts and has a decorative pavement, including mosaics depicting significant scenes and structures from the World's Fairs.

To the west of the rail yard is the Olmsted Center, a one-story modular building built as the 1964–65 World's Fair Corporation's administrative offices that currently contains offices for the design and construction supervision divisions of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) (see View 17 of **Figure 8-11**). Meridian Road is directly south of the rail yard; it provides access to various uses within the park, and the USTA NTC.

The USTA NTC site includes surface parking lots at the northwest and northeast corners of the site; three stadiums along the northern side of the site, decreasing in size from west to east; surface tournament courts along the western and southern edges of the site, some of which have bleacher-style seating; and a smaller stadium and the ±245,000 gross square foot (gsf), 60-foot-tall Indoor Training Center at the southeast corner of the site (see Views 18 and 19 of **Figures 8-11** and **8-12**). The stadiums on the site include, from west to east, the ±362,000-gsf, 120-foot-tall Arthur Ashe Stadium; Louis Armstrong Stadium; and the Grandstand Stadium (both of which are approximately 70 feet tall and collectively comprise approximately 117,000-gsf of enclosed space, approximately 280,000-gsf total). There is a tennis bubble at the northwest



Flushing Bay Promenade 13



MTA Corona Rail Yard from Passerelle Ramp 14

Views of Study Area

Figure 8-9



Casey Stengel Bus Depot from Passerelle Ramp 15



View north on Passerelle Ramp 16

## Views of Study Area from Passerelle Ramp





Olmsted Center 17



USTA National Tennis Center, east side 18

View of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park



View north to USTA National Tennis Center 19



View along Avenue of the Americas, to Unisphere 20

View of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park

Figure 8-12



corner of the site. The project site also includes food, beverage, and retail kiosks, temporary trailers for broadcast use during the US Open, and pedestrian plazas, including South Plaza and the Food Village. South Plaza serves as the focal point of the site during the US Open, and contains two fountains, seating, and retail/informational kiosks. East of South Plaza is the Food Village, which contains tables and seating, and kiosks for food sales during the US Open. Trees, landscaping, and seating are found throughout the site. Loading dock entrances are located at the rear (north) side of the site along Meridian Road and to the southeast along Path of the Americas. The perimeter of the USTA NTC site is mostly defined by chain link fencing, some of which is screened with hedges (and vinyl wind screening during the US Open).

An overpass for United Nations Avenue North provides vehicular and pedestrian access between the east and west sides of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, which are separated by the Grand Central Parkway. East of the Grand Central Parkway, the pedestrian pathways in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park generally have a geometric, Beaux-Arts plan composed of main spokes radiating out from a central point, the location of the Unisphere just south of the study area (see View 20 of **Figure 8-12**). West of the Grand Central Parkway, the plan of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is less geometric. Pedestrian pathways wind around the major park uses in this area, which within the study area boundaries include the New York Hall of Science. The original Hall of Science structure is an undulating form composed of precast concrete panels with stained glass; subsequent additions have added a new rotunda entrance and other elements (see View 21 of **Figure 8-13**). Surrounding the Hall of Science is a playground, sculpture, and Mercury-Atlas and Gemini-Titan rockets. There is a large (500-space) parking lot adjacent to the museum.

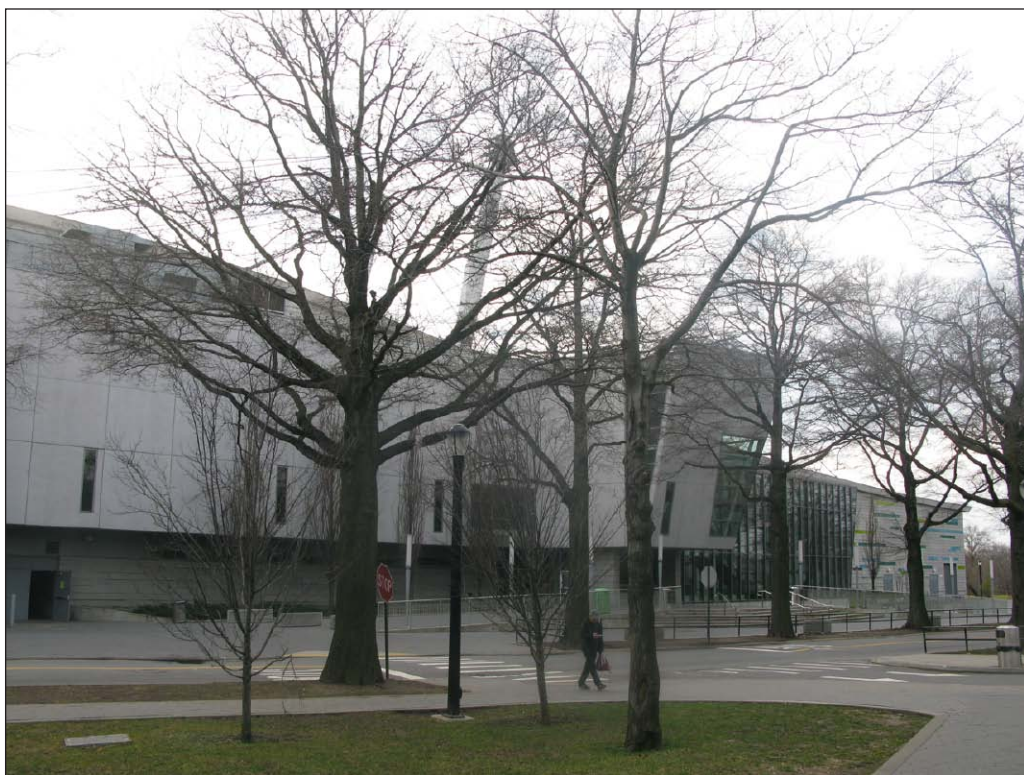
East of the Passerelle Ramp, the park contains a pitch and putt golf center, tennis courts, playgrounds, playing fields, broad lawn areas, Industry Pond, and trees, pathways, and sitting areas. The Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink is also located in this area. Built in 2008, the structure has curtain wall facades and 130-foot-high twin masts that act as the structural anchor to hold the cable-stayed roof (see View 22 of **Figure 8-13**). At the far-east side of the park south of Roosevelt Avenue and near the Van Wyck Expressway is the Ground Crews Building, a one-story concrete structure that is used as offices and storage for park employees. There is perpendicular street parking adjacent to the tennis courts along Meridian Road east of the Passerelle Ramp, but no sidewalks or pedestrian paths along this portion of the street. Because of the narrow sidewalks near the USTA NTC and lack of pedestrian paths or sidewalks elsewhere, there is little pedestrian traffic along Meridian Road within the study area. The topography within the park is generally flat, with some gentle rises and falls, particularly surrounding the Grand Central Parkway. Within the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park portion of the study area, there are few non-parkland streets or regular city blocks. The streets within the park are winding and landscaped. In some areas there are narrow landscaped medians with tall trees.

East of the elevated Van Wyck Expressway, the Flushing River is traversed by the Roosevelt Avenue Bridge—a single-truss bridge supported by large square piers and surrounded by a high metal fence—as well as by bridges carrying Northern Boulevard and the Whitestone/Van Wyck Expressway. College Point Boulevard, which runs north-south, is the major thoroughfare east of the Flushing River. The portion of the study area between College Point Boulevard and the Flushing River is characterized by large, irregularly shaped parcels and large-footprint, low-scale industrial and commercial structures, including a Home Depot with a large surface parking lot, an asphalt plant, and a lumberyard and processing site. The most prominent buildings on College Point Boulevard are a U-Haul storage facility near 36th Road and the new SkyView Parc mixed use development (see Views 23 and 24 of **Figure 8-14**). The U-Haul structure is a T-





New York Hall of Science 21



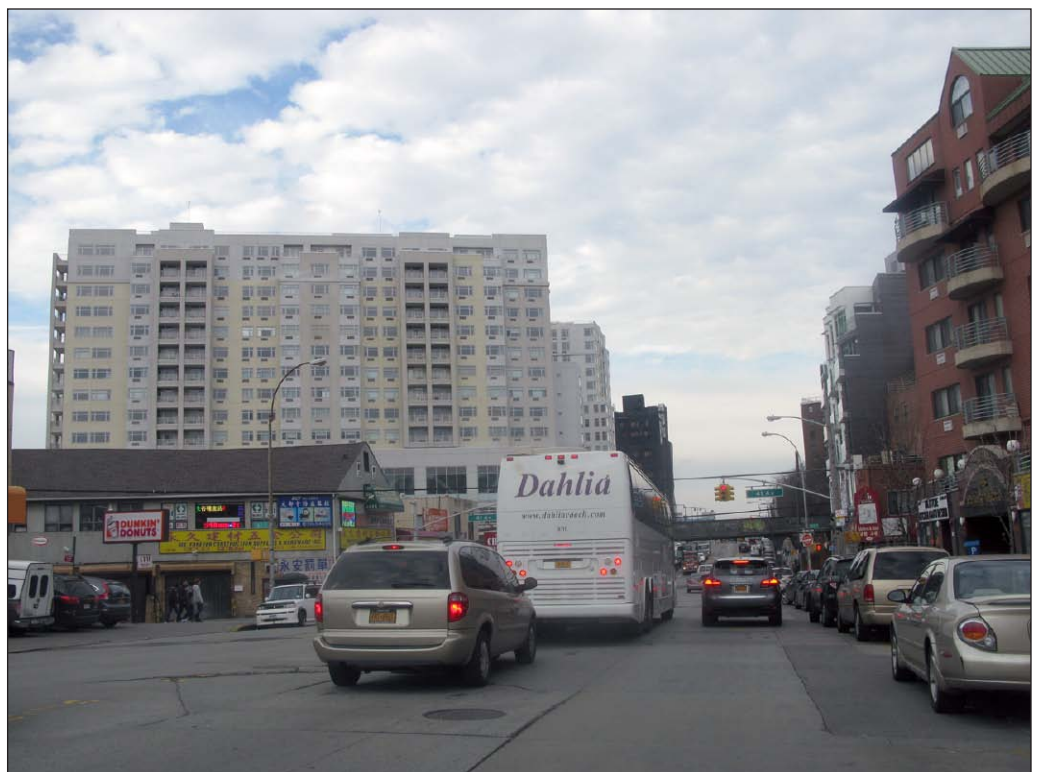
Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink 22

View of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park

Figure 8-13



U-Haul facility, view from College Point Boulevard 23



SkyView Parc, view north on College Point Boulevard 24

## Study Area Views from College Point Boulevard

shaped concrete building, five stories in height and topped with a two-story, square tower. Capped by a cupola, the tower has a clock on each face. SkyView Parc/SkyView Center, just south of Roosevelt Avenue, has two 18-story towers rising above a large footprint. Along the east side of College Point Boulevard, the buildings are built to the lot line and form a fairly consistent streetwall. College Point Boulevard and the surrounding streets are urban and industrial in character; the sidewalks are wide, with numerous curb cuts. The east side streetscape consists of large industrial buildings, built to the street line and interspersed with large paved parking lots. Along the west side of College Point Boulevard, breaks in the streetscape occur with recessed building entrances and buildings with loading docks set back from the sidewalk line. East of College Point Boulevard are smaller, one-way streets that generally run perpendicular to College Point Boulevard, except north of the Whitestone Expressway. The street grid in this area is discontinuous, creating mostly rectangular but irregularly sized blocks.

East of the College Point Boulevard area is Downtown Flushing. The urban design of already-dense Downtown Flushing has been changing in recent years, as more high-density residential and large-scale mixed-use developments have been constructed or are planned throughout the area. Two large mixed-use development projects, Queens Crossing (recently completed) and Flushing Commons (planned), will be located between Main and Union Streets, north of 39th Avenue. This area is very densely developed, with most buildings occupying most of their lot and extending to the street line (see Views 25 and 26 of **Figure 8-15**). Most of this area's residential uses are located east of Union Street and include 6- to 10-story apartment buildings and three-story rowhouses. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Bland Houses are located at the southeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and College Point Boulevard. The Bland Houses complex comprises five irregularly shaped, 10-story unornamented red brick buildings surrounded by 1.7 acres of publicly accessible open space, with amenities such as basketball courts, playground equipment, walkways, and benches. This open space and the approximately half-acre Bland Park are the only publicly accessible open spaces in this portion of the study area. Most streets in the area are lined with retail. The downtown Flushing area includes several surface parking lots, including most prominently Municipal Lot No. 1, located between Union Street, 138th Street, and 37th and 39th Avenues. Municipal Lot No. 1 contains approximately 1,020 public parking spaces, and is the site of the proposed mixed-use development known as Flushing Commons. Several of the area's main community facilities are located close to one another on Northern Avenue, including the Flushing Armory, Friends Meeting House, and Flushing High School; these are also all historic resources. The No. 7 subway line has a terminal station in Downtown Flushing, at Roosevelt Avenue and Main Street.

The study area west of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park includes a portion of the neighborhood of North Corona. The buildings in this area are generally two- and three-story detached, semi-detached and attached houses, and small apartment buildings of up to three stories (see Views 27 and 28 of **Figure 8-16**). They set back slightly from the lot line and are faced in brick or aluminum/vinyl siding. Neighborhood retail uses are primarily located along Roosevelt Avenue; other non-residential uses include gas stations, car washes, and vehicle repair shops. A few auto-related uses are located on Northern Boulevard. Some light manufacturing uses are located on 111th Street between Northern Boulevard and Astoria Boulevard, including a live chicken wholesale warehouse and storage warehouse. A construction material distribution warehouse and a few auto-related uses are also located on Roosevelt Avenue. Hinton Park is located directly west of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and the Grand Central Expressway; it is a 3.7-





Roosevelt Avenue, view east from Prince Street 25



View north on Union Street near 38th Avenue 26

## Views of Study Area - Flushing



View west on 38th Avenue from 112th Street 27



108th Street, view north near 38th Avenue 28

## Views of Study Area - Corona

Figure 8-16

acre park that stretches from 34th to 37th Avenues between 113th and 114th Streets and features game tables, benches, baseball diamonds, and play areas (see View 29 of **Figure 8-17**).

This portion of the study area contains rectangular blocks and thus a regular street pattern, with one-way traffic. The blocks south of 37th Avenue are generally oriented east-west; the blocks to the north are generally oriented north-south. Power lines run overhead and sidewalks are lined with street trees. While buildings in this area are generally older, there are also some new structures in the area, including the 8-story, dark brick Holiday Inn just south of Hinton Park. The right-of-way for the LIRR Port Washington Line runs parallel with 44th Avenue in this portion of the study area, before it extends east into Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and then into Flushing, running just north of 41st Avenue (see View 30 of **Figure 8-17**).

## VISUAL RESOURCES

### *PROJECT SITE*

There are no visual resources within the District portion of the project site, nor are any visible from its sidewalks and streets. Views to the west are blocked by CitiField. Natural features surrounding the District, including those in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Flushing Bay, and the Flushing River, are not visually accessible primarily due to the elevated transportation structures to the north, south, and east of the District.

There are no visual resources within the Willets West or Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site. The elevated viaduct for the No. 7 train and the MTA Corona Rail Yard create a visual and physical barrier between these portions of the project site and areas to the south. Views to the north are limited by Northern Boulevard and the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector. The Grand Central Parkway, which runs in a north-south direction through the study area, also creates a visual and physical barrier between the project site and areas to the west, as the Flushing River and Van Wyck Expressway do to the east.

### *STUDY AREA*

There are a number of visual resources in or visible from the study area, including: the landscaping, trees, and open lawns of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park; its structures and sculpture associated with the 1964–65 World’s Fair, most prominently the Unisphere and the multi-level towers of the New York State Pavilion; and waterfront views from the Flushing Bay Promenade.

Views from the Promenade are long across Flushing Bay (see View 31 of **Figure 8-18**). To the north, these views mostly contain the commercial and industrial buildings of the College Point Industrial Park; LaGuardia Airport and the Whitestone Bridge are also visible in the distance. Views to the south from the Promenade include CitiField, above the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector.

The Unisphere and the New York State Pavilion are visible from a variety of vantage points within the study area. Though they have limited visibility except from nearby locations, the various sculptures within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park also contribute to its visual environment and are considered to be visual resources. The long allees of mature trees along Flushing Meadow Corona Park’s main axes—including the Path of the Americas between the Unisphere and the park entrance at the Passarelle Ramp, the Avenue of Commerce leading south from this park entrance, and the Herbert Hoover and Dwight Eisenhower Promenades between





Hinton Park, view north from 37th Avenue **29**



111th Street, view north from 46th Avenue **30**

## Views of Study Area - Corona



View north from Flushing Bay Promenade 31



Avenue of the Americas, view south in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park 32

Views of Study Area

Figure 8-18



the Unisphere and Industry Pond—are also considered to be visual resources (see View 32 of **Figure 8-18**). Views from the Passarelle Ramp itself are long and include the project site as well as most of the study area; however, the primary views from the ramp are south toward Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, rather than north to the project site. Visual resources that can be seen from the ramp include the landscaping of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, the Unisphere, and the New York State Pavilion. Arthur Ashe Stadium and CitiField are also notable elements in views from the Passarelle Ramp as well as elsewhere in the study area (see Views 33-35 of **Figures 8-19** and **8-20**).

The perspectives of the No. 7 train itself and the elevated roadways surrounding the project site provide fleeting views of the resources noted above.

The twin masts of the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink are also notable in fleeting views from the Van Wyck Expressway, as well as from nearby portions of the park. In Downtown Flushing, several historic resources located close together on Northern Boulevard are visual resources—specifically the Friends Meeting House, the Flushing Municipal Courthouse, and Flushing High School—but these can only be viewed from immediately adjacent streets.

## **F. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **PROJECT SITE**

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” for the purposes of a conservative analysis, this EIS assumes that no changes occur on the project site in the future without the proposed project for the three analysis years (2018, 2028, and 2032). Therefore, no changes are anticipated to the site’s urban design or views to surrounding visual resources.

### **STUDY AREA**

In the future without the proposed project in 2018, 2028, and 2032, the remainder of the Willets Point peninsula, including the undeveloped MTA property to the east of the District, is also expected to remain unchanged.

As described in detail in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” and mapped on Figure 2-4, approximately 37 development projects are either under construction or proposed for the study area, all but two of which are anticipated to be complete by 2018. Most of these projects are within the Flushing portion of the study area, including several large-scale, mixed-use redevelopments along the waterfront; however, there is also a cluster of projects in North Corona between Astoria and Northern Boulevards related to the recent rezoning of this area. If developed, those projects would bring new residential units to the area, along with some retail and community facility uses, a hotel, and a public school. There also several significant efforts to be undertaken within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park itself, as described below. No other development projects have been identified for completion between 2018 and 2032 in the study area.

With these projects, the east side of the Flushing River will continue to be transformed from an industrial area to an area characterized by higher-scale, mixed-use developments. The projects along the river will include waterfront esplanades, as required; together with initiatives proposed to improve connections between Downtown Flushing and the waterfront, it is anticipated that pedestrian activity and the visual environment along the Flushing River waterfront will continue to be enhanced. Other large-scale mixed-use developments are either under construction or planned for Downtown Flushing as well as Flushing north of Northern Boulevard. Collectively,





View east along 37th Avenue in Corona 33



View east from Flushing Bay Promenade access point 34

Views to Project Site from Study Area



View west to project site from Roosevelt Avenue at College Point Boulevard **35**

Views to Project Site from Study Area

these projects are anticipated to increase the density of and bring new activity to these portions of the study area. In Corona, the bulk and use of projects to be completed by 2018 are anticipated to be consistent with the new zoning of this area. Some City capital funding has been allocated for streetscape improvements on Roosevelt Avenue west into Corona; however, there are no specific designs or timeline for implementation for this proposal. The reconstruction of the Roosevelt Avenue Bridge by NYCDOT is underway. It will involve the rehabilitation of the structure as well as improvements to the sidewalk.

Within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, there would be incremental increases in height and bulk related to the proposed new stadiums and parking facilities at the USTA NTC site, but these would be modest relative to the existing facilities, and would not be inconsistent with the surrounding park context. With the exception of a modest change to park land acreage, the elimination of one lane of United Nations Avenue North, and the relocated connector roadway, the USTA NTC project would not result in any changes to natural features, open spaces, or streets in the study area.

The City, through DPR, is currently in discussions with a private entity for a lease covering the construction and operation of a new stadium for professional soccer purposes in an approximately 13-acre area within the northern portion of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park south of Roosevelt Avenue and eastward of the USTA NTC, just outside of the study area. As currently contemplated, a 25,000-seat stadium (with the ability to be expanded to 35,000 seats) would be constructed by 2016 on the present site of the Fountain of the Planets and land surrounding the fountain. In addition to the fountain, the stadium would displace four existing soccer fields, a basketball court, landscaped areas, and pathways, which would be relocated to other locations within the park.

Elsewhere in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, ongoing capital improvement projects are being carried out by DPR to provide for up to date recreational facilities, including renovations and repairs to soccer fields and the creation of new volleyball courts. Although it is currently unfunded, DPR has identified repair of the tide gates within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to improve drainage flow that affects existing park facilities as a priority project.

By replacing the Fountain of the Planets and surrounding pathways, the soccer stadium project would be anticipated to change the urban design of that portion of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and thus the pedestrian's experience of that portion of the study area. It is possible that the other capital improvement projects also could affect the urban design of the park, or views to visual resources.

## **G. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **URBAN DESIGN**

#### *2018 (PHASE 1A)*

##### *Project Site*

In the future with the proposed project, by 2018 the Willets West portion of the project site would be developed with an entertainment and retail center of approximately 1.4 million gross square feet (see Figures 1-3a, 1-3b, and 1-5 of Chapter 1, "Project Description"). The new entertainment and retail structure would be oriented with its main entrance facing CitiField, creating a visual connection between the two buildings. The Willets West building would be



between approximately 40 and 105 feet tall, with the shortest portion of the building facing CitiField and the tallest portion at the center of the structure. It would have a footprint larger than the adjacent CitiField; however, while not yet fully designed, the treatment of the façade is anticipated to visually break up this bulk into smaller elements.

A six-level, approximately 63-foot-tall structured parking facility would be constructed on the western portion of the South Lot to accommodate a portion of the parking displaced from the Willets West area, replacing the existing surface parking on that portion of the lot. Within the District, an approximately 200-room (approximately 170-foot-tall) hotel and approximately 30,000 square feet of retail space would be constructed along the east side of 126th Street, along with a 20-foot-wide public esplanade.<sup>1</sup> A large surface parking area would be developed within the District east of the retail and hotel uses. A majority of this parking area would be converted to active recreational use a minimum of 6 months per year. Some of the potential recreational uses include street hockey, stickball, basketball and volleyball courts, a driving range, and batting cages.

The redevelopment of the District and the creation of the Willets West entertainment and retail complex in Phase 1A would considerably alter/transform the urban design of these portions of the project site, replacing a surface parking field and low-density auto-related, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution uses with new retail, hotel, entertainment, and recreational uses in new structures anticipated to be of contemporary design. The density of the project site would increase considerably, in particular on the Willets West site. As the Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site are not zoned, an FAR comparison of the future without and with the proposed project cannot be made; however, the Willets West development would be built to the FAR regulations of a C4-4 district, per the terms of the developer's contract with the City. For the District, the proposed development in Phase 1A would be less than what is allowed under the urban renewal plan. For Phase 1A, a special permit would be required to allow for the surface parking and open and enclosed privately operated recreational uses that are proposed for this phase of the project, as well as to address other sections of the Zoning Resolution. As described below, the development that would replace these uses in Phase 1B would comply with the District's zoning and special district regulations.

The proposed project—in particular the Willets West center, the proposed hotel, and the off-season recreational uses—would be anticipated to bring much more activity to the project site and enhance the pedestrian experience surrounding CitiField. The new uses at Willets West would complement existing retail and entertainment uses around the project site in the Flushing and Corona neighborhoods, as well as the CitiField and USTA NTC uses within Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

### *Study Area*

Phase 1A of the proposed project would not result in any changes to streets, buildings, natural features, or open spaces in the study area. If the traffic-related mitigation described in Chapter 21, "Mitigation" is implemented, however, the intersection of Northern Boulevard and 126th Street would be altered to include quick-curb and traffic signal louvers.

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<sup>1</sup> The height of the hotel could be less than 170 feet in Phase 1A; however, this height is assumed for the purposes of a conservative analysis.

## Willets Point Development

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As described above, most of the no action projects that have been identified within the study area are anticipated to be complete by 2018. This would continue to change the visual appearance of the Flushing River waterfront, increase the density of the study area, particularly along the river; and bring notable changes to Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Within this changing context, the scale of the retail, entertainment, hotel, and parking uses that would be developed in Willets West, the District, and the South Lot in Phase 1A would be consistent with those found within the study area, particularly within the dense commercial center of Downtown Flushing and developing waterfront area (as illustrated in View 35 of **Figure 8-20**). The proposed uses also would be more compatible with these adjacent neighborhoods than the existing industrial and auto-related uses. The entertainment and retail uses proposed for Willets West and the height and bulk of this structure would also be compatible with the adjacent CitiField stadium and other cultural facilities located within the boundaries of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. The closest passive open spaces within the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park are located approximately ¼ mile south of Willets West, creating a substantial buffer between the two uses.

It is expected that the MTA property adjacent to the District would continue to be undeveloped in 2018, as well as 2028 and 2032, and would contain industrial uses that are the same as or similar to the construction and demolition debris recycling operation that exists there today. Although the recreational uses to be developed in the District would not be compatible with the industrial activities permitted on the nearby MTA property, the times during which the two uses would be proximate would be limited. Furthermore, the recreational uses would be consistent with the nearby portions of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

### 2028 (PHASE 1B)

#### *Project Site*

In Phase 1B, anticipated to be complete by 2028, the interim surface parking lot/recreational space created during Phase 1A within the District would be developed into a new neighborhood (see Figures 1-4 and 1-5 in Chapter 1, “Project Description”). The program for this development would be consistent with the District’s zoning and would include approximately 4.23 million square feet of development, including residential, retail, hotel, office, parking, and community facility uses, in addition to a public school and approximately six acres of open space.<sup>1</sup> This development is anticipated to be developed block by block, substantially as envisioned in the 2008 FGEIS. Specifically, six blocks and one superblock would be created, as well as their surrounding streets; the superblock would be divided by a landscaped pedestrian path along the current alignment of Willets Point Boulevard. In addition, two six-level (approximately 63-foot-tall) structured parking facilities would be constructed on the eastern portion of the South Lot and Lot D to replace the CitiField parking spaces located within the District in Phase 1A. Overall, the density of development on the project site would continue to increase. The Roosevelt Avenue portion of the project site is not zoned, and thus FAR comparison of the future without and with the proposed project cannot be made; however, the development on this portion of the project site would be built to the FAR regulations of a C4-4 district, per the terms of the developer’s contract with the City. For the District, the proposed development in Phase 1B

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<sup>1</sup> It is possible that the hotel use developed in Phase 1B would be as an addition to the hotel developed in Phase 1A; in this scenario, the Phase 1B addition would bring the overall height of the structure to the 170 feet assumed in this analysis.

would be less than what is allowed under the urban renewal plan, but would be consistent with the approved zoning and special district's regulations.

Within the District, the previously-approved special district regulations would determine the placement of uses, building heights and setbacks, street hierarchies, maximum block dimensions, streetscape design, and basic site planning and design provisions within the District, as well as the general layout of the principal streets. Therefore, as contemplated in the 2008 FGEIS, the special district regulations would establish the basic form of the District, encouraging a pedestrian-friendly neighborhood environment, and ensuring that the new uses in the District are integrated into a cohesive site design. The uses proposed in Phase 1B would be consistent with and support the uses developed in the Willets West portion of the project site in Phase 1A, and would encourage pedestrian movement and activity between these two areas and surrounding CitiField.

Along 126th Street and adjacent streets, retail uses would line the ground-floor spaces and would generate new pedestrian activity at the site. The residential development would increase the use of the site and create a vibrant new community. The open spaces and landscaped sidewalks would create an attractive new development and, combined with the retail corridors, would create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Finally, the proposed development would complement CitiField by increasing retail and entertainment in the area.

The urban design of the redeveloped portion of the District in Phase 1B would differ substantially from that of the undeveloped portion of the District, where no changes would be made to the street grid, streetscape elements, grade, buildings, blocks, or uses. The buffer area between the developed and undeveloped portions of the District analyzed in the Staged Acquisition Alternative of the 2008 FGEIS and subsequent technical memoranda is not part of the proposed project; however, because streets in the undeveloped portion of the District would generally remain at their existing grade through Phase 1B, streets in the redeveloped portion of the District would be graded to slope down to the existing streets to the east, forming a physical barrier between the Phase 1B development and existing uses in the undeveloped portion of the District. There is anticipated to be some regrading in the street beds of the District to meet the grade of the new Van Wyck Expressway access ramps, which would be operational prior to the occupancy of the Phase 1B buildings. Any grade changes that would exist in Phase 1B would serve to provide a degree of visual and physical separation between the undeveloped and redeveloped portions of the District. Additionally, although there is no designated buffer area between the Phase 1B development and the adjacent undeveloped area, the new public open spaces to be provided east of Willets Point Boulevard and north of 35th Avenue also would serve to provide a visual buffer for the new residential and community facility uses from nearby auto-related uses.

#### *Study Area*

Phase 1B of the proposed project would not result in any changes to buildings, natural features, open spaces, or streets in the study area. Rather, the District as developed by 2028 would be more consistent with the urban design of neighboring Flushing than the existing buildings and uses in the District. Additionally, the bulk and type of uses proposed within the District in Phase 1B would be consistent with the ongoing development trends occurring along the Flushing River waterfront described above, including higher-density and mixed-use development.

The new open spaces to be developed in the District in Phase 1B would complement Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to the south and the Flushing Bay Promenade to the north, and would



## **Willets Point Development**

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provide an amenity for new residents and workers of the District and Willets West. The structured parking facilities proposed to be constructed on South Lot and Lot D also would be consistent with parking uses in Downtown Flushing and the portions of Corona in the study area, as well as at the adjacent Casey Stengel Bus Depot.

While the residential, school, commercial office, and community facility uses to be developed in the District in Phase 1B would not be compatible with the industrial activities permitted on the nearby MTA property, the District's regulations require the development of an eastern perimeter street, as well as a landscaped open space between 8 and 15 feet wide, which would provide a visual buffer between the redeveloped District and the adjacent MTA property. As described above, because streets in the undeveloped portion of the District would generally remain at their existing grade through Phase 1B, streets in the redeveloped portion of the District would be graded to slope down to the existing streets to the east, forming a physical barrier between the Phase 1B development and existing uses in the rest of the Willets Point peninsula, including the MTA property.

### *2032 (PHASE 2/RWCDS)*

#### *Project Site*

In Phase 2, anticipated to be complete by 2032, the remainder of the District would be built out consistent with the area's previously-approved zoning and substantially as anticipated in the 2008 FGEIS (see Figure 1-6 in Chapter 1, "Project Description"). Upon completion of Phase 2, the District is anticipated to include: up to 5.85 million gross square feet of residential use; up to 1.25 million gsf of retail; approximately 500,000 gsf of office; up to 400,000 gsf of convention center use; up to 560,000 gsf of hotel use; up to 150,000 gsf of community facility use; approximately 230,000 gsf of public school use; and a minimum of 8 acres of publicly accessible open space. The number of proposed parking spaces within the District would be determined based on project-generated demand, but is anticipated to be no more than the 6,700 spaces identified in the 2008 FGEIS.

As described above, for the RWCDS, it also is anticipated that by 2032 Lot B could be developed with a one-story retail structure and a 10-story office building containing 184,500 sf of retail use and 280,000 sf of commercial use with associated parking.

The proposed project would implement the new street network through the District as analyzed in the 2008 FGEIS and consistent with the requirements of the URP and the Special Willets Point District. The proposed project would also result in the building uses, heights, arrangements, and block forms and open spaces anticipated in the 2008 FGEIS for the District.

As described in the 2008 FGEIS, due to the project site's proximity to LaGuardia airport, building heights within the District are set by height limits related to aerial runway approach "surfaces" which limit building heights to approximately 100 feet at the northern edge of the District, 150 feet on the southern edge of the District, and 218 feet on the west side of the District. The special district regulations also require that residential buildings above 120 feet follow additional guidelines in terms of bulk, orientation, and massing, and residential buildings are required to have interior courtyards with a minimum width of 60 feet. In order to maintain the pedestrian nature of the area, all off-street parking would be fully enclosed, either below grade or within the residential buildings, except along parts of Northern Boulevard and the eastern perimeter street where parking would be required to be screened within a structure.

Consistent with the special district's regulations, the proposed project also would develop a minimum of eight acres of publicly accessible open space by 2032. The open spaces would contain a combination of both active and passive uses. The central public open space would be on a triangular-shaped block along Willets Point Boulevard, near the center of the District. In addition to this central public open space, wide public access areas would surround the District and would be located along 126th Street, the south side of Northern Boulevard, the north side of Roosevelt Avenue, and the east side of the eastern perimeter street. These public access areas would include wide sidewalks, pedestrian amenity zones, or open areas with landscaping and plantings.

Overall, consistent with the conclusions of the 2008 FGEIS, the RWCDs would significantly alter the urban design of the project site, replacing predominantly low-density auto-related, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution uses with a new mixed-use neighborhood in the District. While the proposed project would significantly alter the urban design of the District, the proposed project would ultimately have a beneficial impact on the overall appearance and feel of the District. The new development that would result from the proposed project would enliven the area by creating new, usable streets. Along 126th Street and adjacent streets, retail uses would line the ground-floor spaces and would generate new pedestrian activity at the site. The residential development would increase the use of the site and create a vibrant new community. The open spaces and landscaped sidewalks would create an attractive new development and, combined with the retail corridors, would create a pedestrian-friendly environment. Finally, the proposed development would complement CitiField by increasing retail and entertainment spaces in the area. The build-out of the District also would be consistent with and support the development in the Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site, created in Phase 1A and Phase 1B. The RWCDs would create pedestrian-oriented developments on either side of CitiField, creating a dynamic, new, mixed-use neighborhood with pedestrian-scaled streetscapes and new entertainment and retail attractions and amenities to integrate this area with uses in neighboring Flushing and Corona.

Development on Lot B would convert a surface parking lot into a new, actively used location and would increase pedestrian activity to the area. In addition, the retail space would further the transformation of 126th Street into a pedestrian-friendly, retail-oriented destination. The office space would be in keeping with the office space that would be located in the District.

### *Study Area*

The proposed project would introduce new building uses, bulk, arrangements, and types to the project site, which would complement existing development and projects currently under construction in the surrounding area. The proposed project would enhance the vitality of streets in the study area by introducing a variety of new uses that would increase pedestrian activity to the project site. The proposed project would also improve the appearance of the study area's streetscape by adding street lighting, signage, and general landscaping.

The proposed project would not result in any changes to buildings, natural features, open spaces, or streets in the study area. As noted in the 2008 FGEIS, the project would extend some study area streets into the District, including 34th Avenue and the access roadways along the northern and southern edges of CitiField. These new streets would be similar in width to those that exist in the study area and would travel on a similar trajectory as the existing streets. The newly created streets would link the District to the surrounding area and create new connector streets in the study area. The anticipated new connections to the Van Wyck Expressway would be designed in a manner similar to the existing connectors in the study area.

Overall, the RWCDs as developed by 2032 would have a positive effect on the urban design of the study area.

### VISUAL RESOURCES

#### 2018 (PHASE 1A)

##### *Project Site*

As described above, there are no visual resources on the project site, and thus no on-site resources would be affected by the proposed project in 2018. The development of the Willets West structure would limit views through that portion of the project site north to Flushing Bay; however, as noted above, these views are already constrained by the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector.

##### *Study Area*

**Figures 8-21** through **8-25** provide an illustrative comparison of existing/2018 No Action conditions to 2018 With Action conditions from viewpoints within the study area. As illustrated in these figures, the development of the Willets West structure and the structured parking facility on the South Lot would alter views north from the Passerelle Ramp toward CitiField. From this location, the parking facility and the Willets West structure would be visible, but not prominent, beyond the utilitarian structures on the MTA Corona Rail Yard. The proposed hotel within the District would also be visible from this viewpoint, but would be consistent with the heights anticipated for this area in the 2008 FGEIS. CitiField and Arthur Ashe Stadium would remain notable elements in views from the ramp, and southward views to the Unisphere and the New York State Pavilion would not be altered. In views from North Corona, CitiField would be less prominent behind the Willets West development; however, the stadium, at approximately 265 feet tall, would be taller than the proposed retail and entertainment center and thus would still be visible. From the Flushing Bay Promenade, the new development would be visible, but as noted above, the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector already limits views from this location. Views to the Bay itself from the Promenade would not be disturbed. The proposed project would not alter or obstruct any views to visual resources in Downtown Flushing, or to the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink. The proposed project also would improve the view corridor of 126th street by replacing the existing buildings with new development and beginning to create a pedestrian corridor, make the east side of the street more consistent with the west. Views along the other major street near the project site, Roosevelt Avenue, would not change substantially because of the view-constraining effects of the train viaduct overhead.

#### 2028 (PHASE 1B)

##### *Project Site*

As described above, there are no visual resources on the project site, and thus no on-site resources would be affected by the proposed project in 2028.

##### *Study Area*

**Figures 8-26** through **8-28** provide an illustrative comparison of existing/2028 No Action conditions to 2028 With Action conditions from viewpoints within the study area. As illustrated in these figures, the development of additional structured parking facilities on the South Lot and Lot D, and the build-out of the Phase 1A parking/recreational areas within the District, would





Existing Condition

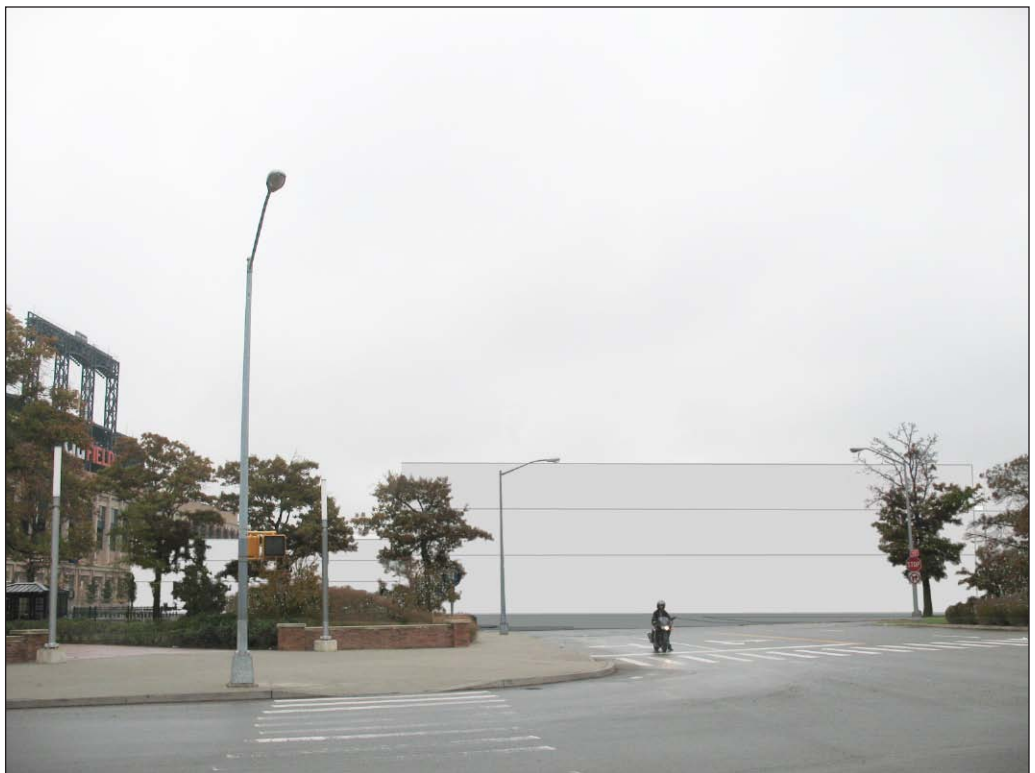


With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2018 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering from CitiField Plaza



Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2018 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering from Northern Boulevard



Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2018 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering South along 126th Street





Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2018 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering North along 126th Street



Existing Condition

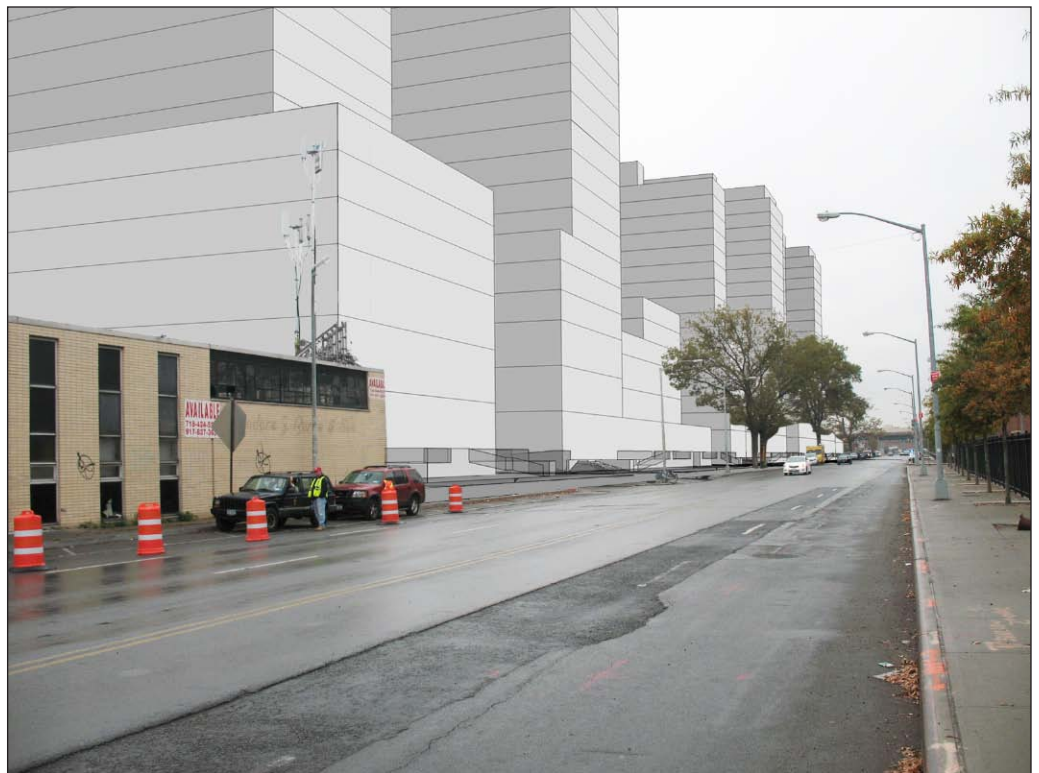


With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2018 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering from Passerelle Ramp



Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2028 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering South along 126th Street





Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2028 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering North along 126th Street



Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2028 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering from Passerelle Ramp

alter views north from the Passerelle Ramp. From this location, the various project site buildings would be visible beyond the utilitarian structures on the MTA Corona Rail Yard and adjacent to CitiField. The proposed hotel within the District would also be visible from this viewpoint, but would be consistent with the heights anticipated for this area in the 2008 FGEIS. CitiField and Arthur Ashe Stadium would remain notable elements in views from the ramp, and southward views to the Unisphere and the New York State Pavilion would not be altered. In views from North Corona, CitiField would be less prominent behind the Willets West development and with the backdrop of new development within the District; however, the stadium, at approximately 265 feet tall, would be taller than the proposed retail and entertainment center and thus would still be visible. From the Flushing Bay Promenade, the new development would be visible, but as noted above, the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector already limits views from this location. Views to the Bay itself from the Promenade would not be disturbed. The proposed project would not alter or obstruct any views to visual resources in Downtown Flushing, or to the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink. The proposed project also would improve the view corridor of 126th street by replacing the existing buildings with new development and beginning to create a pedestrian corridor, make the east side of the street more consistent with the west. Views along the other major street near the project site, Roosevelt Avenue, would not change substantially because of the view-constraining effects of the train viaduct overhead.

#### *2032 (PHASE 2/RWCDS)*

##### *Project Site*

As described above, there are no visual resources on the project site, and thus no on-site resources would be affected by the RWCDS in 2032.

##### *Study Area*

**Figures 8-29** through **8-32** provide an illustrative comparison of existing/2032 No Action conditions to 2032 With Action conditions from viewpoints within the study area.

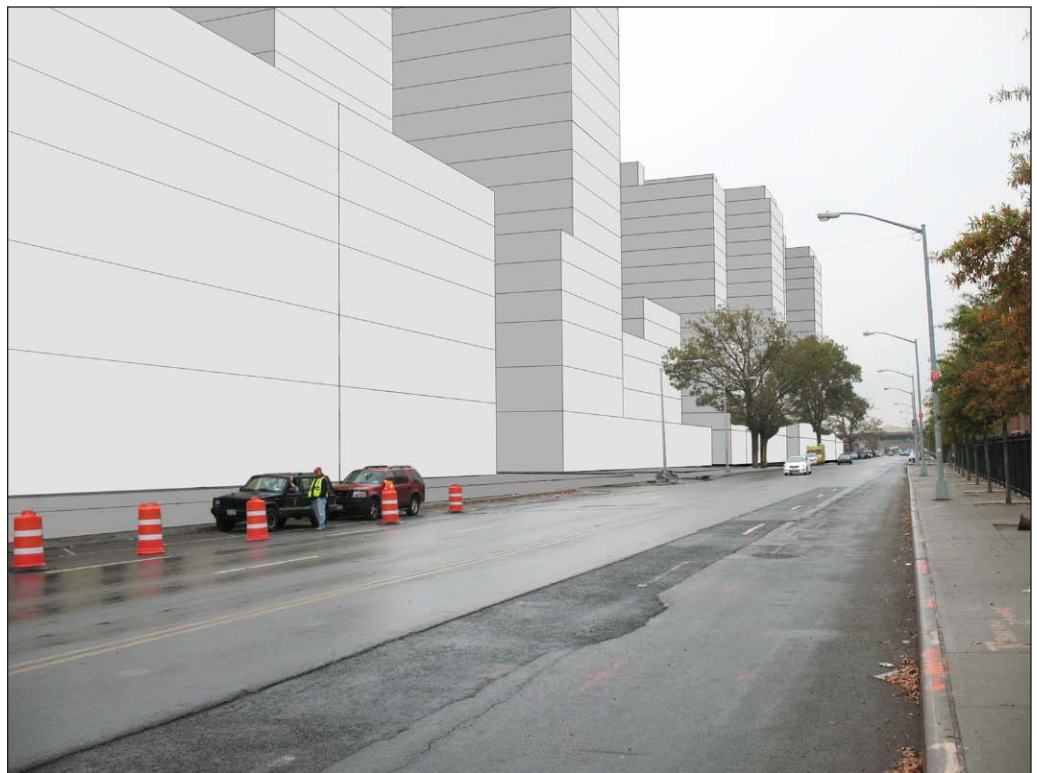
The buildings resulting from the proposed project as well as the potential future development on Lot B would be visible from sections of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park; however, the MTA Corona Yards and Casey Stengel Bus Depot would block most views. The new structures on the project site would not detract from the visual appreciation of the park or the landscaping, trees, and open lawns that make the park a visual resource. As illustrated in **Figure 8-22**, the new buildings also would be visible in views from the Passerelle Ramp; however, as described above, the primary views from the ramp are south toward Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and would not be obstructed by the structures that would result from the proposed project.

The proposed project and the potential future development on Lot B would not affect views to or from Flushing Bay, the Flushing Bay Promenade, or views to the 1964–65 World’s Fair structures in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. The new development on the project site would be visible in views south from the Promenade, however this is not the primary view from this location, and the buildings would be partially obscured by the elevated transportation structures and by the new CitiField. The proposed project would not alter or obstruct any views to visual resources in Downtown Flushing, or to the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Pool and Rink. The proposed project also would improve the view corridor of 126th street by replacing the existing buildings with new development and creating a pedestrian corridor, making the east side of the street more consistent with the west. Views along the other major street near the project site,





Existing Condition

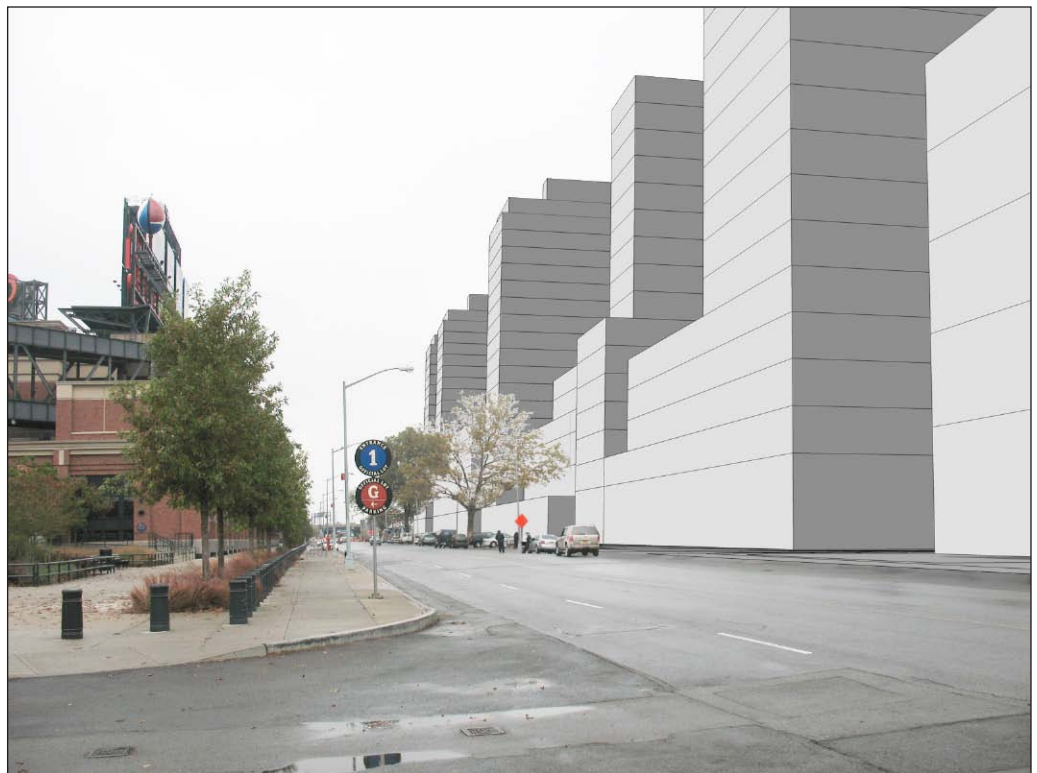


With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2032 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering South along 126th Street

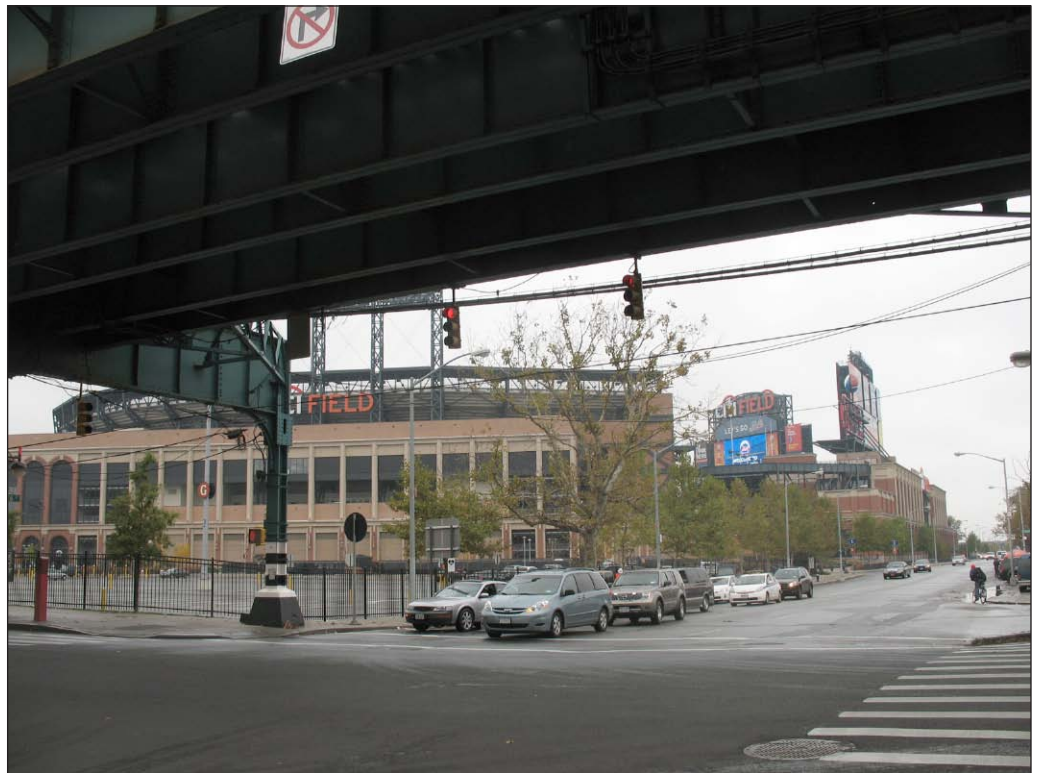


Existing Condition

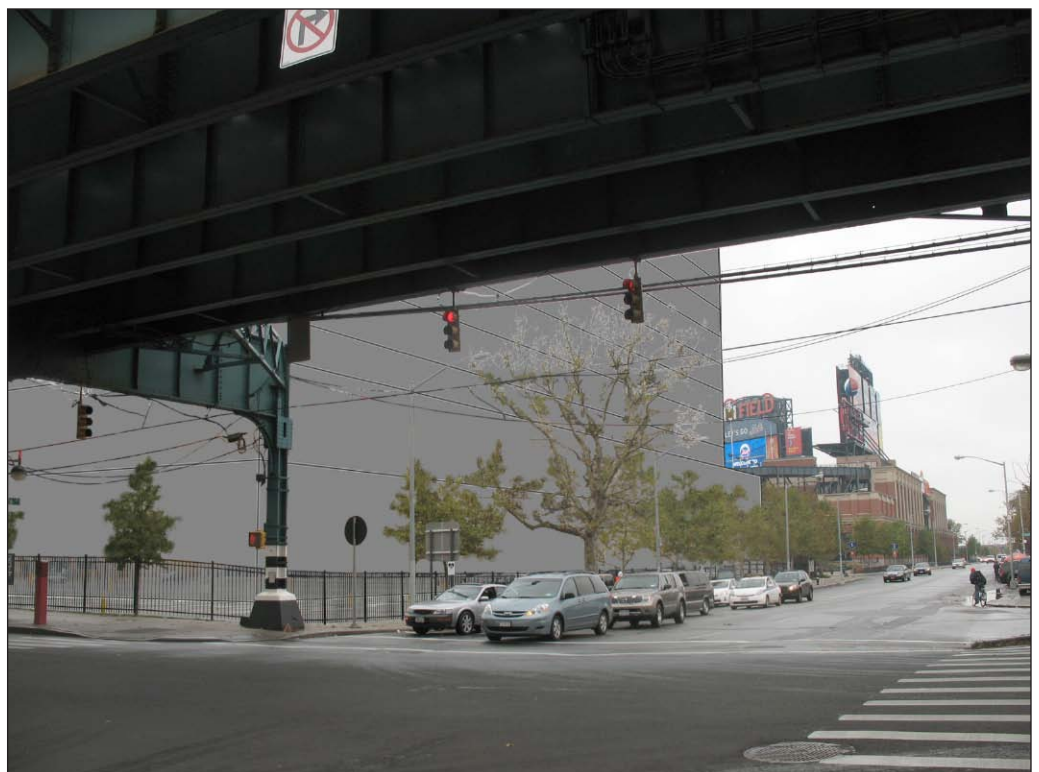


With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2032 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering North along 126th Street



Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2032 RWCDs,  
Illustrative Rendering of Lot B





Existing Condition



With Action Condition

Existing vs. 2032 With Action Condition,  
Illustrative Rendering from Passerelle Ramp

## **Willets Point Development**

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Roosevelt Avenue, would not change substantially because of the view-constraining effects of the train viaduct overhead.

In summary, this analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts related to historic and cultural resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS. \*