

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter considers the potential of the Willets Point Development Plan to impact the urban design characteristics and visual resources of the Willets Point Development District and the surrounding study area.

The analysis presented below follows the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*. As defined in the manual, urban design components and visual resources determine the “look” of a neighborhood—its physical appearance, including the street pattern, the size and shape of buildings, their arrangement on blocks, streetscape features, natural resources, and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis addresses each of these characteristics for existing conditions, the future without the proposed Plan, and the probable impacts of the proposed Plan. In accordance with the approach outlined in Chapter 2, “Procedural and Analytical Framework,” this chapter considers to the extent possible the cumulative impact of the Willets Point Development Plan and the anticipated development on Lot B.

## **PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**

As described below, the proposed Plan would not have significant adverse impacts on the urban design and visual resources of the District and the surrounding study area.

### *URBAN DESIGN*

The proposed Plan would greatly improve the appearance of the District, currently an underdeveloped site with a collection of low-scale buildings primarily related to automotive repair and larger, industrial buildings. The proposed Plan would result in new residential buildings of various heights, a large entertainment and retail corridor, and other potential uses, including a convention center, hotel, and office buildings. It would also create new public open spaces. The proposed Plan would add new uses and vitality to the site and dramatically improve the overall appearance of the District. Further, it would transform the underutilized site into a new retail and entertainment destination that would greatly increase the use of the site and improve the overall appearance of the area.

The proposed Plan would convert the existing underdeveloped and environmentally degraded Willets Point Development District into a vibrant, mixed-use urban environment. The buildings that would result from the proposed Plan would be cohesive in design and varied in use to create a new destination and entertainment location. The proposed Plan would also integrate 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 proposed Plan would add new publicly accessible open spaces to the District.

The proposed Plan would improve the urban design of the District and the surrounding area. The new development resulting from the proposed Plan would be a mixed-use community including retail, office, residential, community facility, and open spaces. These new uses would increase the vitality of the District; increase pedestrian traffic to the District and the surrounding area; and improve the appearance of the District by providing new streets and streetscape elements, such as street trees and lighting.

A new street pattern would be established in the District, including a primary retail street, two secondary retail streets, and two main connectors. New block forms would be created, including two superblocks along 126th Street and smaller residential blocks. The new buildings would be set back at a consistent distance and built to a similar height to create new, continuous streetwalls.

Overall, the proposed Plan would transform the District into a mixed-use destination area by providing retail, entertainment, and restaurant areas, and by creating a pedestrian-friendly environment that would complement the proposed residential area. The proposed Plan would significantly alter the urban design of the District and would ultimately have a beneficial impact on the overall appearance and feel of the District.

### *VISUAL RESOURCES*

The proposed Plan would not adversely impact any visual resources in the surrounding area, including Flushing Bay, the Flushing Bay Promenade, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the 1964 World's Fair structures. While the proposed Plan would create structures that are taller than what currently exists on the site, views to these resources would not be blocked by the new development, nor would the new structures be highly visible from these resources.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this analysis considers the effects of the proposed Plan on the following elements that collectively form an area's urban design:

- Block form and street pattern—This urban design feature refers to the shape and arrangement of blocks and surrounding streets, such as a grid pattern with regularly sized, rectangular blocks. These features set street views, define the flow of activity through an area, and create the basic format in which building arrangements can be organized.
- Building arrangement—This term refers to the way that buildings are placed on zoning lots and blocks. The buildings can have small or large footprints, be attached or detached and separated by open uses, and varied in their site plans. This urban design feature helps convey a sense of the overall form and design of a block or a larger area.
- Building bulk, use, and type—Buildings are usually described by these characteristics. A building's bulk is created from an amalgam of characteristics that include its height, length, and width; lot coverage and density; and shape and use of setbacks and other massing elements. The general use of a building (e.g., residential, manufacturing, commercial, office) gives an impression of its appearance and helps to understand its visual and urban design character. Building type refers to a distinctive class of buildings and suggests distinguishing features of a particular building (e.g., industrial loft, church, gas station, walk-up tenement).
- Streetscape elements—Streetscape elements are the distinctive physical features that make up a streetscape, such as streetwalls, building entrances, parking lots, fences, street trees,

street furniture, curb cuts, and parking ribbons. These features help define the immediate visual experience of pedestrians.

- **Street hierarchy**—Streets may be classified as expressways, arterials, boulevards, collector/distributor streets, or local streets, and they may be defined by their width, type of access, and the presence or absence of at-grade pedestrian crossings. Street hierarchy helps convey a sense of the overall form and activity level of a neighborhood.
- **Topography and natural features**—Topographic and natural features help define the overall visual character of an area and may include varied ground elevation, rock outcroppings and steep slopes, vegetation, and aquatic features.

This analysis also considers the effects of the proposed Plan on the area's visual resources, which the *CEQR Technical Manual* defines as unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. Visual resources can include waterfront views, public parks, landmark structures or districts, or natural features, such as a river or geologic formations.

As recommended by the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this technical analysis evaluates impacts in two areas—the District and the surrounding study area (see Figure 9-1). The District includes the majority of the Willets Point peninsula east of 126th Street. The study area is defined as an area extending approximately ¼-mile from the District and which includes part of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, the Shea Stadium and future Citi Field sites, and the industrial and commercial areas along Flushing Bay and the Flushing River.

The proposed Plan would be guided by the Special Willets Point District regulations. The Special District would regulate future development in the District, including building heights and setbacks, streetwalls, streetscape elements, and the location of certain building uses. A specific development plan has not yet been determined; however, illustrative diagrams are provided in this analysis.

## **C. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **WILLETS POINT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT**

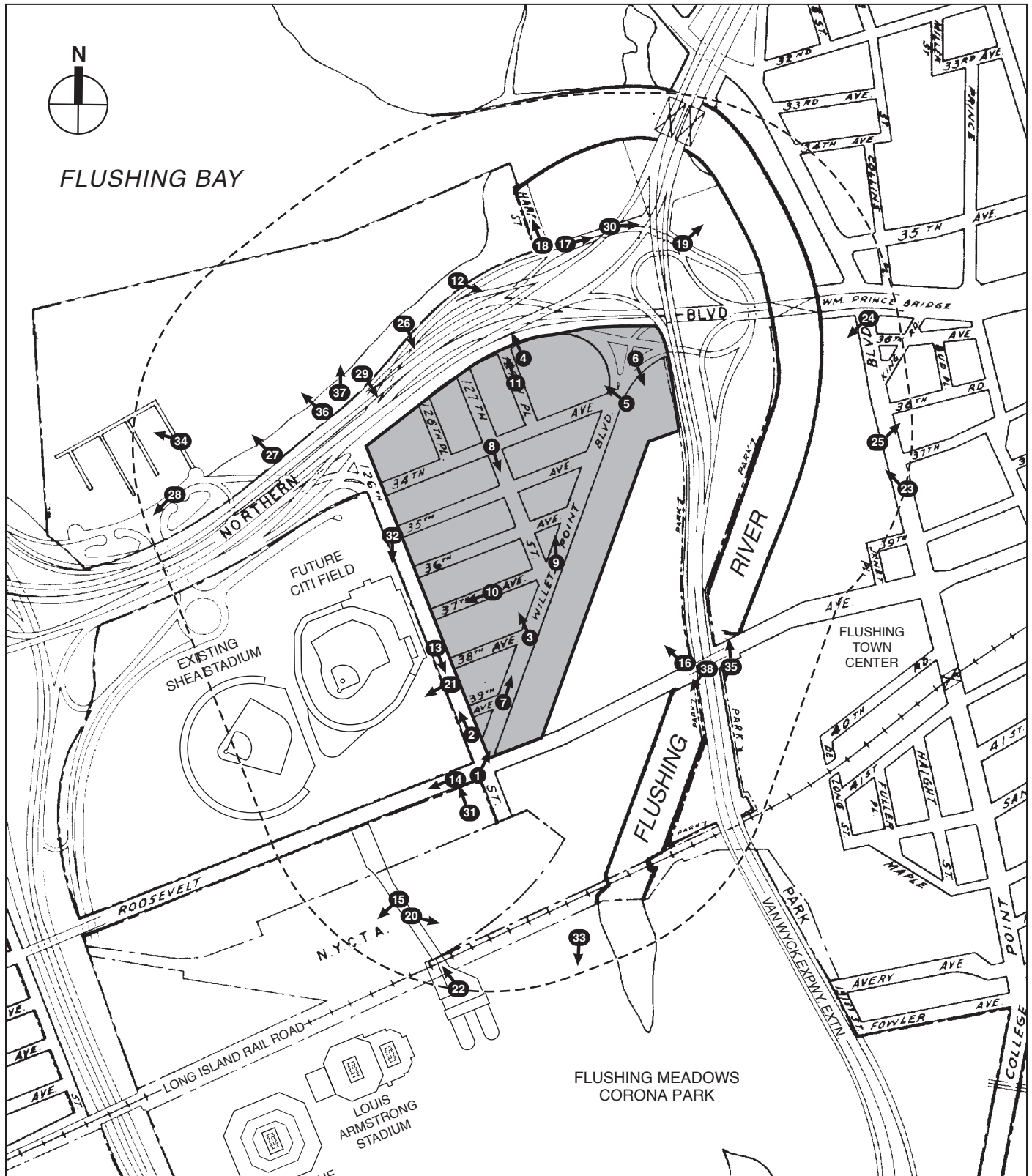
The District is located in northern Queens, adjacent to Shea Stadium, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the intersection of several major roadways, including the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, Roosevelt Avenue to the south, and Northern Boulevard to the north (see Figure 9-1).

#### *URBAN DESIGN*

The topography of the District is relatively flat. There are no natural features in the District. Mature sycamore trees line 126th Street; they are the only vegetation in the District.

The District is approximately 61.4 acres in size, comprising 14 blocks, the majority of which are irregular in shape. It is industrial in character, and has an active and industrial feel. The buildings in the District are a combination of small, low-scale structures and larger, boxier buildings.

The District is partially developed in a street grid with 34th through 39th Avenues running east-west, and with 127th Street bisecting the avenues. Short 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 (see View 1 of Figure 9-2). Starting at 126th Street, it runs on a northeast diagonal through the District and extends to the entrance of the Van Wyck Expressway. 126th Street forms the western boundary of the District, running parallel to 127th



- Willets Point Development District
- Study Area Boundary (1/4-Mile Perimeter)
- Photograph View Direction and Reference Number

0 1000 FEET  
SCALE

## **Willets Point Development Plan**

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Street and extending between Northern Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue (see View 2 of Figure 9-2). Roosevelt Avenue forms part of the southern boundary of the District. Northern Boulevard, which curves slightly, forms the northern boundary.

The streets in the District are in various states of disrepair. Most are partially paved and riddled with large, deep potholes, which collect stormwater. The only streets with designated or marked traffic lanes are 126th Street and Willets Point Boulevard.

Due to the diagonal trajectory of Willets Point Boulevard and the curve of Northern Boulevard, the majority of the 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. There are no streets south of Willets Point Boulevard in the District. The three blocks located between 34th Avenue, 127th Street, 37th Avenue, and 126th Street are the only rectangular-shaped blocks in the district.

There are two major building types and forms in the District: low-scale buildings located close together, and larger, boxier structures. The majority of the buildings are automotive repair shops, wholesale auto parts stores, or other auto-related use (see View 3 of Figure 9-3). These buildings are mostly small, temporary metal structures, metal Quonset huts, or brick buildings with small footprints (see View 4 of Figure 9-3). Exterior building materials include corrugated metal, concrete block, and brick. The majority of the buildings have large, projecting advertising signs. 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 (see View 5 of Figure 9-4). The site is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Large trucks and other manufacturing equipment are stored on the site. Also located in the northeastern section of the District is the House of Spices distribution site, which contains a plain, two-story, boxy concrete building, surrounded by a large paved area and smaller, one-story buildings. Another notable building in the District is the Fodera Foods Buildings (further described in Chapter 8, "Historic Resources"). This two-story building is located near the intersection of Willets Point Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway. It has a red brick front section, which faces onto Willets Point Boulevard, and a large, double-height, multi-paned glass section in the rear (see View 6 of Figure 9-4).

The streetscape of the District is industrial (see View 7 of Figure 9-5). Most of the streets are flanked by paved sidewalks, which are in poor condition (see View 8 of Figure 9-5). 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. There are few lane markings, sidewalk crossings, or stop signs. In some areas of the District there are no sidewalks and the streets are unpaved, adding to the underdeveloped and degraded look of the area.

Streetscape elements are limited to cobra-head lights and 30-foot utility poles with wires strung between them; the streets lack traditional streetscape elements such as trees, fire hydrants, and other street furniture. In a number of locations, the streetscape is broken up by vacant lots surrounded by chain-link fencing or sheets of corrugated metal (see View 9 of Figure 9-6). The vacant lots are used for parking and storage of used cars and other auto parts.



Willets Point Boulevard, view northeast from Roosevelt Avenue

1



126th Street, view north

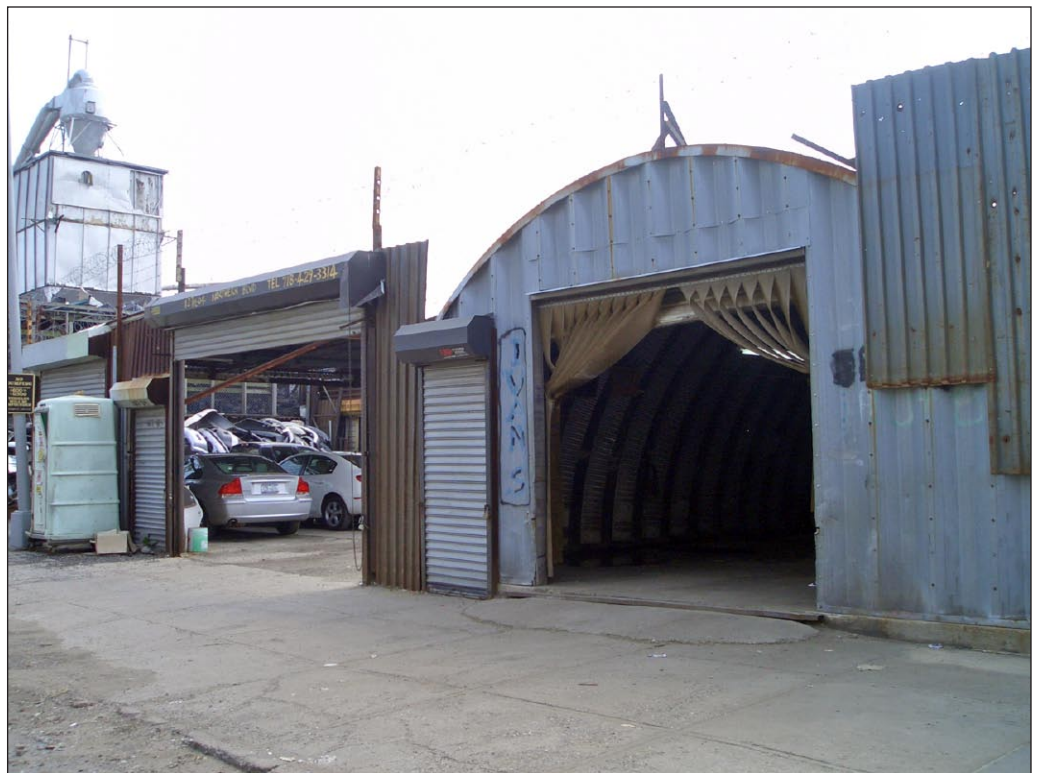
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Figure 9-2





Willets Point Boulevard 3



West side of 127th Place, between Northern Boulevard and 34th Avenue 4

Figure 9-3



Tully Construction site 5



Fodera Food Building 6





Willets Point Boulevard, view northeast 7

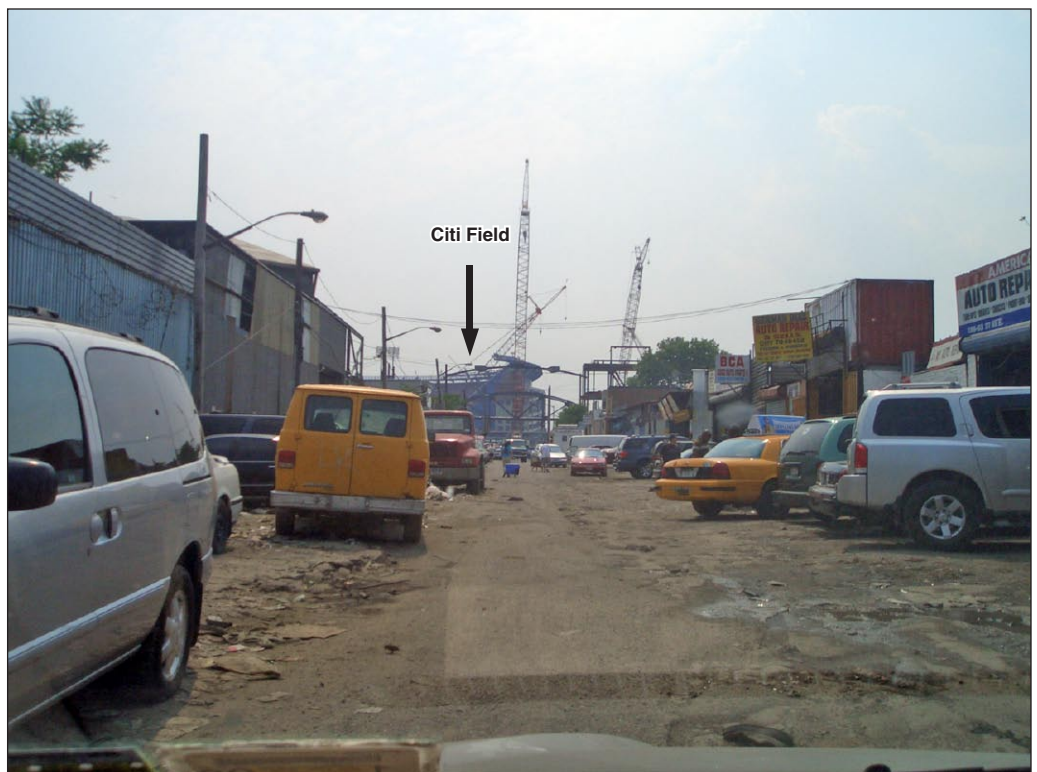


View south along 127th Street from 34th Avenue 8

Figure 9-5



Vacant lot used for car storage 9



View west along 37th Avenue from District 10

### *VISUAL RESOURCES*

There are no visual resources in the District, nor are any visible from the sidewalks and streets. Views to the west are blocked by Shea Stadium and Citi Field, currently under construction (see View 10 of Figure 9-6). 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 site (see View 11 of Figure 9-7).

### **STUDY AREA**

The study area is roughly bounded by Flushing Bay to the north, College Point Boulevard to the east, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to the south, and the Shea Stadium site to the west. The study area is dominated by three distinct uses and areas: transportation elements, recreational and open spaces, and industrial and commercial areas. Directly to the north and east of the study area are Northern Boulevard, the Grand Central Parkway connector, and the Van Wyck Expressway; these major thoroughfares are the defining features of this portion of the study area. Recreational and open space areas are located to the west (Shea Stadium), to the south (Flushing Meadows-Corona Park), and to the north (the Flushing Bay Promenade). Large industrial and commercial areas are located to the east, across the Flushing River, and to the south. The urban design characteristics of these three areas are described below.

### *URBAN DESIGN*

#### *Street Pattern and Hierarchy*

##### *Major Transportation Elements*

The study area is dominated by major transportation elements, including the Van Wyck Expressway, the Whitestone Expressway, and the elevated connector to the Grand Central Parkway (see Views 12 and 13 of Figure 9-8). These structures are primarily located to the north and east of the District and carry several lanes of traffic in each direction.

The Van Wyck Expressway is a major north-south artery that carries traffic from Kennedy Airport to the Whitestone Expressway and farther north to the Whitestone Bridge. The section of the Van Wyck near the District is elevated and carries two lanes of traffic in each direction. The Van Wyck is approximately 40 feet high and is supported by large T-shaped concrete piers. The Whitestone Expressway carries traffic from the Van Wyck Expressway to the Whitestone Bridge. It is slightly elevated, supported by T-shaped concrete piers, and has two lanes of traffic in each direction. Also north of the District is an elevated connector between the Van Wyck Expressway and the Grand Central Parkway. This elevated connector carries four lanes of traffic east-west, over Northern Boulevard, and is also supported by tall T-shaped concrete piers.

Northern Boulevard, north of the District, is a major east-west artery that carries traffic at grade from Long Island City through northern Queens to Long Island. Near the District, Northern Boulevard has three lanes of traffic running in each direction, as well as numerous exit and entrance ramps. Near the northeast corner of the District, Northern Boulevard connects to the Van Wyck Expressway and the Whitestone Expressway, which merge via a connecting ramp and run along the eastern edge of the District.

Roosevelt Avenue runs east-west through the southern section of the study area and carries traffic east-west through Queens. It has two lanes of traffic running in each direction, and the





View north along 127th Place of Northern Boulevard and Grand Central Parkway connector 11





Elevated transportation structures surrounding District 12



Roosevelt Avenue with elevated No. 7 train, view south from 126th Street 13

elevated No. 7 subway line runs above it. Within the study area, Roosevelt Avenue also carries traffic over the Flushing River on the Roosevelt Avenue Bridge, a single-truss bridge supported by large square piers and surrounded by a high metal fence. The elevated No. 7 subway line runs above the bridge on a steel viaduct structure and spans the entire width of Roosevelt Avenue, casting the street in shadow (see View 14 of Figure 9-9). The subway platforms are constructed in concrete and bordered by corrugated metal walls with overhangs that partially shade the platforms.

### *Other Streets*

Smaller roadways in the study area include the access roads for Shea Stadium, which are located north of the stadium and are narrow, paved, one-way streets. The small paved streets in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park are narrow, winding, and carry one lane of traffic in each direction. A traffic circle directly north of Shea Stadium brings traffic from the Northern Boulevard service road to the parking lots surrounding the stadium. The traffic circle has two lanes of traffic, both of which travel counterclockwise.

College Point Boulevard, which runs north-south and carries two lanes of traffic in each direction, is the major street east of the Flushing River. The side streets east of College Point Boulevard are laid out in a grid pattern and have one lane of traffic traveling in each direction. Located just to the east of the study area are smaller, one-way streets that run perpendicular to College Point Boulevard, with the exception of a service road for the Whitestone Expressway, which runs at an angle to College Point Boulevard.

### *Block Shapes*

The majority of the study area comprises large, irregularly shaped parcels. Flushing Meadows-Corona Park to the north, south, and west of the District is located on a large parcel; Roosevelt Avenue and Northern Boulevard bisect the park and create the large parcel on which Shea Stadium is located. Also to the south of the District, between Roosevelt Avenue and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, is a large parcel with the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) stop and the MTA Corona Yards (see View 15 of Figure 9-9).

The portion of the study area between College Point Boulevard and the Flushing River is also characterized by large, irregularly shaped parcels.

### *Building Uses, Bulk, and Type*

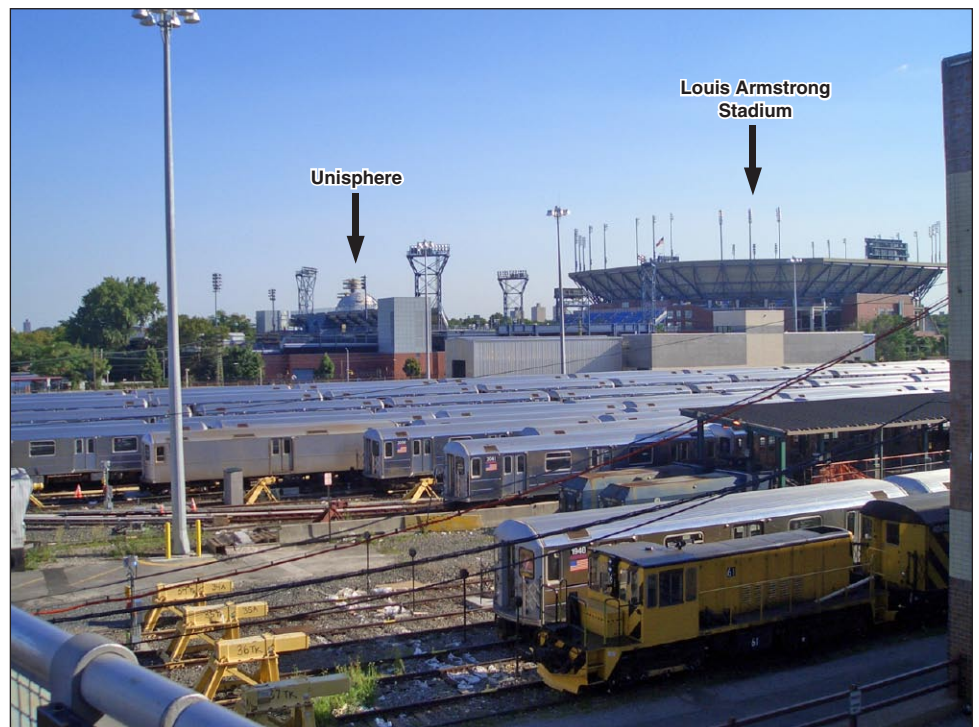
In contrast to most of the buildings in the District, the majority of the buildings in the study area are large industrial and commercial buildings, which are primarily located on large lots.

Located immediately to the south of the district, on a large lot between Willets Point Boulevard and the Flushing River, is a large undeveloped property owned by MTA. The majority of this site is leased to Tully Environmental, Inc., which operates a construction and debris recycling operation. The site contains shipping containers, heavy equipment, and piles of aggregate materials (see View 16 of Figure 9-9).

North of the District, near the Northern Boulevard and Van Wyck Expressway interchange, is a New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) maintenance and repair facility (see View 17 of Figure 9-10 and View 18 of Figure 9-11). This site contains seven freestanding buildings, one and two stories in height, constructed of brick and steel with minimal exterior details. The main building on the site faces onto Northern Boulevard; it is one story in height, long and narrow in form, and clad in red brick. The other buildings on the site are located closer

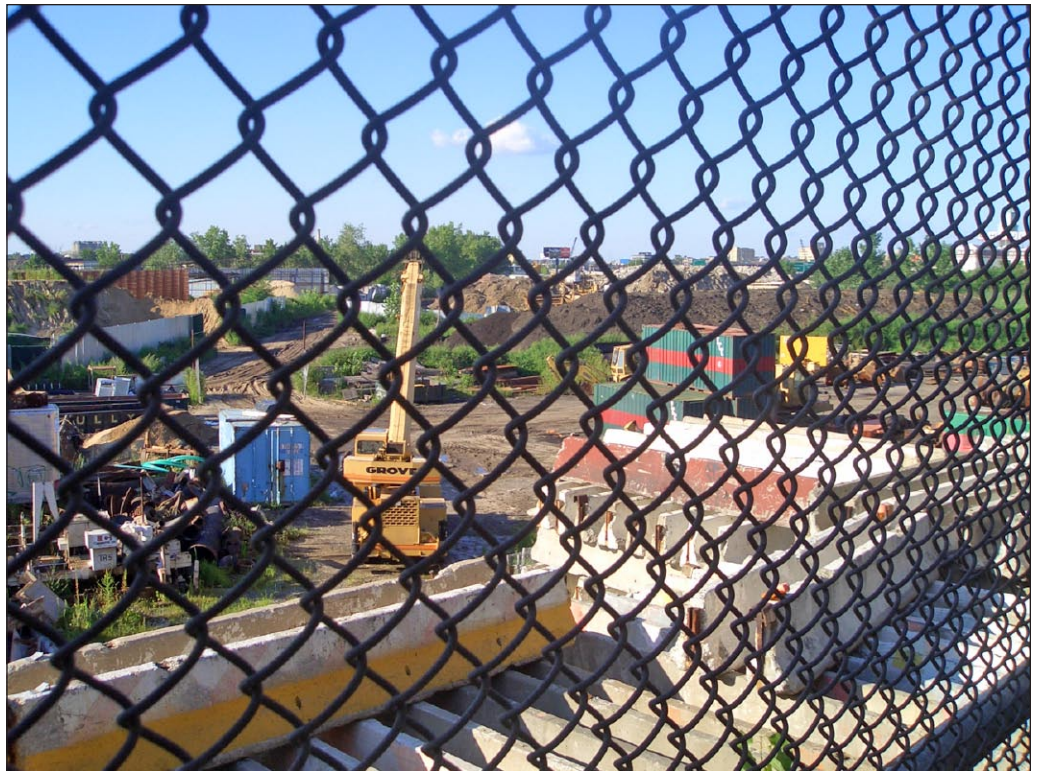


Roosevelt Avenue, view west from 126th Street 14



MTA Corona Yards 15





MTA parcel (used by Tully Construction) 16



New York City Department of Transportation building 17





New York City Department of Transportation site 18



Asphalt plant near Northern Boulevard and VanWyck Expressway 19

to the waterfront and are one or two stories and also clad in red brick. A small security booth is set back from Northern Boulevard at the entrance to the site. Most of the site is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence. The site also has large paved area used for parking and vehicle storage.

Northeast of the District, between the Van Wyck Expressway and Northern Boulevard, is a large asphalt plant (see View 19 of Figure 9-11). This industrial 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.

To the south and west of the District are the Corona Yards, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the Shea Stadium site. The buildings located in the Corona Yards are low-scale, boxy buildings. The New York City Transit (NYCT) Casey Stengel Bus Depot is the largest building in this area (see View 20 of Figure 9-11) and 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. There is also a long, narrow building used for storage and repairs. It is four stories in height and is topped with a peaked roof and skylights.

Within the study area, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park contains a number of buildings, most prominent of which is Shea Stadium. This large, circular, open air stadium has approximately six-story walls on all sides except on the east (see View 21 of Figure 9-12). The eastern section of the stadium is open and topped with a large scoreboard. On the exterior of the stadium are exposed concrete ramps and tall panels with reliefs of baseball players.

Also located in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is the Passarelle Building and Ramp (see View 22 of Figure 9-12). The ramp structure begins at the Willets Point-Shea Stadium No. 7 subway station and continues south into the park, terminating at the Passarelle Building. The ramp is an elevated boardwalk-style structure with low metal railings and reproduction gaslights. The long, slightly curved ramp crosses over the MTA parking lots and the LIRR tracks and into the park. The ramp also provides access to the LIRR Shea Stadium station, though this station is only open on Mets game days, and to the USTA Tennis Center. Shade structures and seating areas are located along the ramp. The Passarelle Building comprises two, approximately two-story rounded structures with public restrooms and other amenities.

Other buildings in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park include the Ground Crews Building, a small structure in the northeast corner of the park that is used as offices and storage for park employees. The building is one story in height, is constructed of concrete, and has small window openings. Located on World's Fair Marina/Pier 1 is a small gas station structure and a small concession stand.

Located to the east of the District, across the Flushing River from the District, are a number of large, industrial sites located on large lots between the Flushing River and College Point Boulevard. The most prominent building on College Point Boulevard is a U-Haul storage facility (see View 23 of Figure 9-13). Located near 36th Road, this T-shaped concrete building is five stories in height and topped with a two-story, square tower. Capped by a cupola, the tower has a clock on each face. The only functional openings on the buildings are located on the ground floor and are large enough to accommodate trucks. The large windows on the upper stories of the building have been sealed over.

North of this site, near 36th Avenue, is another large asphalt plant. This paved industrial site is developed with a one-story, irregularly shaped concrete building and a smaller steel building.



Casey Stengel Bus Depot 20



Shea Stadium 21





Passarelle Ramp 22



U-Haul Building, view north along College Point Boulevard 23



## **Willets Point Development Plan**

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The site is dominated by tall steel silos connected by large conveyor belts. The paved areas are used for parking and vehicle storage.

Near Northern Boulevard and College Point Boulevard is a large lumberyard and processing site (see View 24 of Figure 9-13). Buildings on the site include three large, boxy, one- and two-story concrete buildings with minimal openings and exterior details. Large pallets of wood are stacked on the site and surrounding sidewalks.

The east side of College Point Boulevard is lined with one-story industrial and commercial buildings (see View 25 of Figure 9-14). They are adjacent to one another and have an assortment of advertising and display signs.

### *Building Arrangements*

The buildings in the industrial and commercial areas are, for the most part, freestanding structures. Along the east side of College Point Boulevard, the buildings are built to the lot line and form a fairly consistent streetwall. Along the west side of College Point Boulevard are larger industrial and commercial buildings that are set back a distance from the street, though they are still oriented toward College Point Boulevard. The buildings in the Corona Yards face Roosevelt Avenue, though they are set back some distance from Roosevelt Avenue by large paved parking surfaces used for cars and buses.

The main buildings on the two industrial sites to the north of the District are located on large blocks and oriented toward Northern Boulevard. The smaller buildings located on these sites are placed perpendicular to the main buildings.

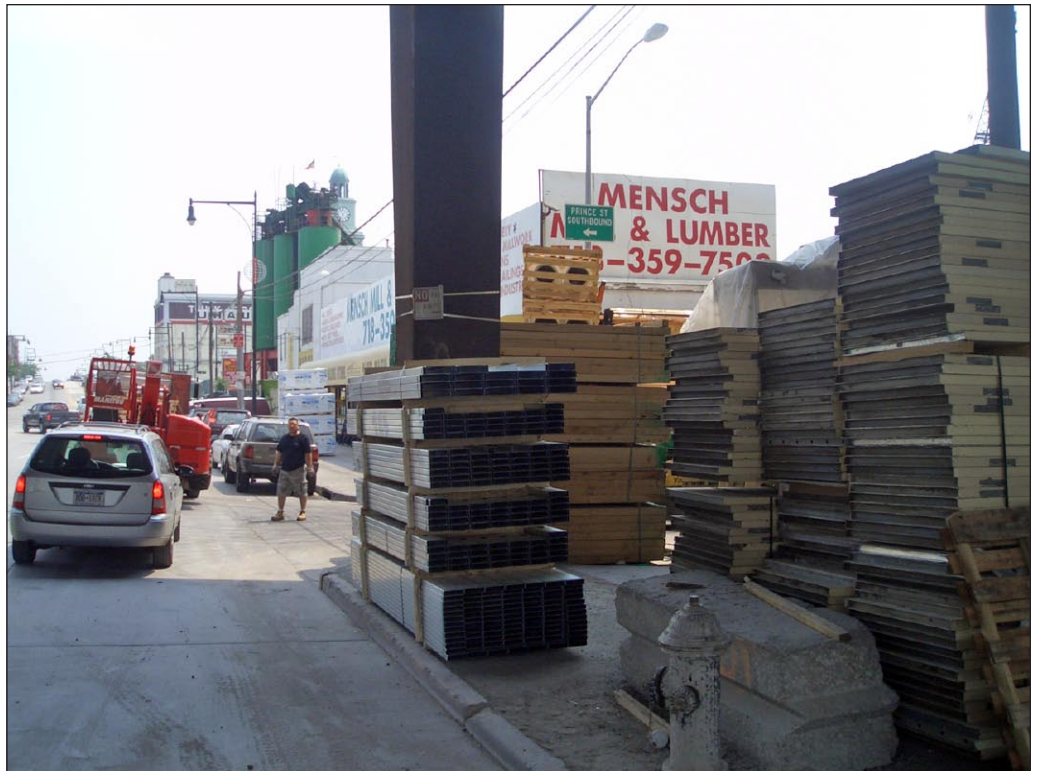
### *Streetscape*

To the north, east, and south of the District, the streetscape is dominated by elevated transportation structures. To the north are Northern Boulevard and the elevated connector to the Grand Central Parkway. This elevated connector is approximately 40 feet in height and is supported by heavy concrete piers. Other streetscape features include tall highway signs, tall metal fencing, cobra-head lighting fixtures, and low guardrails. The area under the connector is used for car parking (see View 26 of Figure 9-15). The elevated Van Wyck Expressway runs through the east side of the study area. Similar to the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector, it is supported by heavy concrete piers, and has large highway signs and tall cobra-head light fixtures.

South of the District, the streetscape of Roosevelt Avenue is mostly defined by large paved parking lots with buildings set back a distance from the sidewalk. The parking surfaces are surrounded by chain-link fencing. On the southeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street is a one-story, graffiti-covered concrete structure with no openings. Other streetscape elements include cobra-head light fixtures, garbage cans, and street signs.

South of Roosevelt Avenue are the MTA Corona Yards and the LIRR stop. LIRR tracks extend east-west through the yards in a shallow rail cut. The Corona Yards also has subway tracks placed parallel to each other and used for subway car storage.

North of the District and the elevated transportation structures are the Flushing Bay Promenade and World's Fair Marina/Pier 1 (see View 27 of Figure 9-15). The promenade is a wide landscaped walkway that extends almost the entire length of the bay. It is covered in hexagonal paving stones and lined with benches; tall trees, and reproduction lampposts. Pier 1, a wooden plank pier, extends into the bay. Small recreational boats and larger vessels such as ferries dock



Lumber processing site, view south along College Point Boulevard 24



East side of College Point Boulevard, view north 25





Parking areas underneath elevated structures 26



Flushing Bay Promenade and World's Fair Marina, Pier 1 27

at the pier. Along the Flushing Bay Promenade, near the Shea Stadium traffic circle, are the Candela Structures, two open-air modern sculptures (see View 28 of Figure 9-16), which were originally used as bus shelters for the 1964 World's Fair. Located between the promenade and the elevated transportation structures are paved parking surfaces that extend from Pier 1 to the NYCDOT site (see View 29 of Figure 9-16). The paved parking areas have small trees in planters and tall cobra-head light fixtures.

The streetscape of Northern Boulevard near the NYCDOT site and the asphalt plant is industrial and undeveloped (see View 30 of Figure 9-17). The asphalt plant is surrounded by a high concrete brick wall and concrete jersey barriers. There are no paved sidewalks, and trash and other debris is scattered around. The elevated connector casts the area in shadow, and there is no pedestrian activity.

West of the District, the streetscape consists mainly of the broad expansive paved surfaces surrounding Shea Stadium (see View 31 of Figure 9-17), set off with high, metal chain-link fencing. A large portion of the paved parking surface, located near 126th Street, is currently under construction for the new Citi Field. In addition to the stadium, office and retail spaces are under construction along the west side of 126th Street (see View 32 of Figure 9-18). The new retail and office spaces are two stories in height, have large display windows, and are clad in red brick.

The streets located in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park are winding and landscaped with trees and decorative plantings. In some areas there are narrow landscaped medians with tall trees, while other sections have a metal fence (see View 33 of Figure 9-18).

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.

#### *Topography and Natural Features*

The topography of the study area is relatively flat. Near College Point Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue, the topography slopes downward toward the Flushing River. There are rolling hills in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

The most prominent natural feature in the study area is Flushing Bay, a small, scenic inlet with a landscaped promenade and a small marina (see View 34 of Figure 9-19) with wooden docks for small recreational boats. Larger boats, such as ferries, dock and discharge passengers at the World's Fair Marina/Pier 1, which juts out into the bay. Pier 1 is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence and gate topped with barbed wire.

The Flushing River separates the District from the Downtown Flushing neighborhood. The river is a narrow waterway with industrial buildings and vacant lots on both sides; it is not accessible to pedestrians (see View 35 of Figure 9-19).

#### *VISUAL RESOURCES*

There are a number of visual resources in or visible from the study area, including Flushing Bay and its promenade, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the structures associated with the 1964 World's Fair.





Candela structures 28



View south toward the District from parking areas between Northern Boulevard and the Flushing Bay Promenade 29



Northern Boulevard, northeast of District 30



Citi Field Stadium under construction, view north from Roosevelt Avenue 31





Citi Field Stadium development along 126th Street 32



Flushing Meadows - Corona Park 33





Pier 1 34



Flushing River, view north from Roosevelt Avenue Bridge 35

Flushing Bay is a scenic body of water. As described above, there are benches along the promenade that face the water. Views from the promenade are long across Flushing Bay (see View 36 of Figure 9-20). To the north, these views mostly contain the commercial and industrial buildings of the College Point Industrial Park (see View 37 of Figure 9-20). LaGuardia Airport and the Whitestone Bridge are visible in the distance. Views to the south from the promenade include Shea Stadium through the elevated Grand Central Parkway connector obscures views to the stadium.

Flushing Meadows-Corona Park is a large, scenic park with grassy areas, mature trees, water features, and recreational areas, including a pitch and putt golf course. The park features provide visual relief from the surrounding industrial areas. Visual resources within the park and visible from the study area are the 1964 World's Fair structures, including the Unisphere (a large globe structure) and the multi-level observatory towers of the New York State Pavilion (see View 38 of Figure 9-21).

Views from the Pasarelle Ramp are long and include the District and most of the study area; however, the primary views from the ramp are south toward Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Visual resources that can be seen from the ramp include the general landscaping of Flushing Meadows Corona Park and the 1964 World's Fair structures.

## **D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PLAN**

### **DISTRICT**

In the future without the proposed Plan, it is anticipated that the District will remain in its current condition, and no major changes to the building form and uses or street plan are contemplated that would substantially alter the appearance of the District.

### **STUDY AREA**

As described above in Section C: "Existing Conditions," the new Citi Field is currently under construction on a large lot west of the District. The new 44,000-seat stadium will be similar in size and configuration to Shea Stadium; however, it will be located closer to 126th Street than the existing Shea Stadium. Shea Stadium will be demolished when the Citi Field is completed. As part of the Citi Field project, a two-story retail and office building will be constructed on the west side of 126th Street. As described in Section C: "Existing Conditions," this building is already under construction.

The Sky View Parc project, located on a large lot bounded by the Flushing River, Roosevelt Avenue, and College Point Boulevard, is currently under construction. This large project will be a mixed-use development including commercial and residential uses and is expected to be completed by 2009. Commercial, community facility space and parking uses will be housed in a six-story base; the base will be topped with residential towers. The tallest buildings on the site will be approximately 16 stories in height. The Sky View Parc project is expected to include a waterfront promenade.

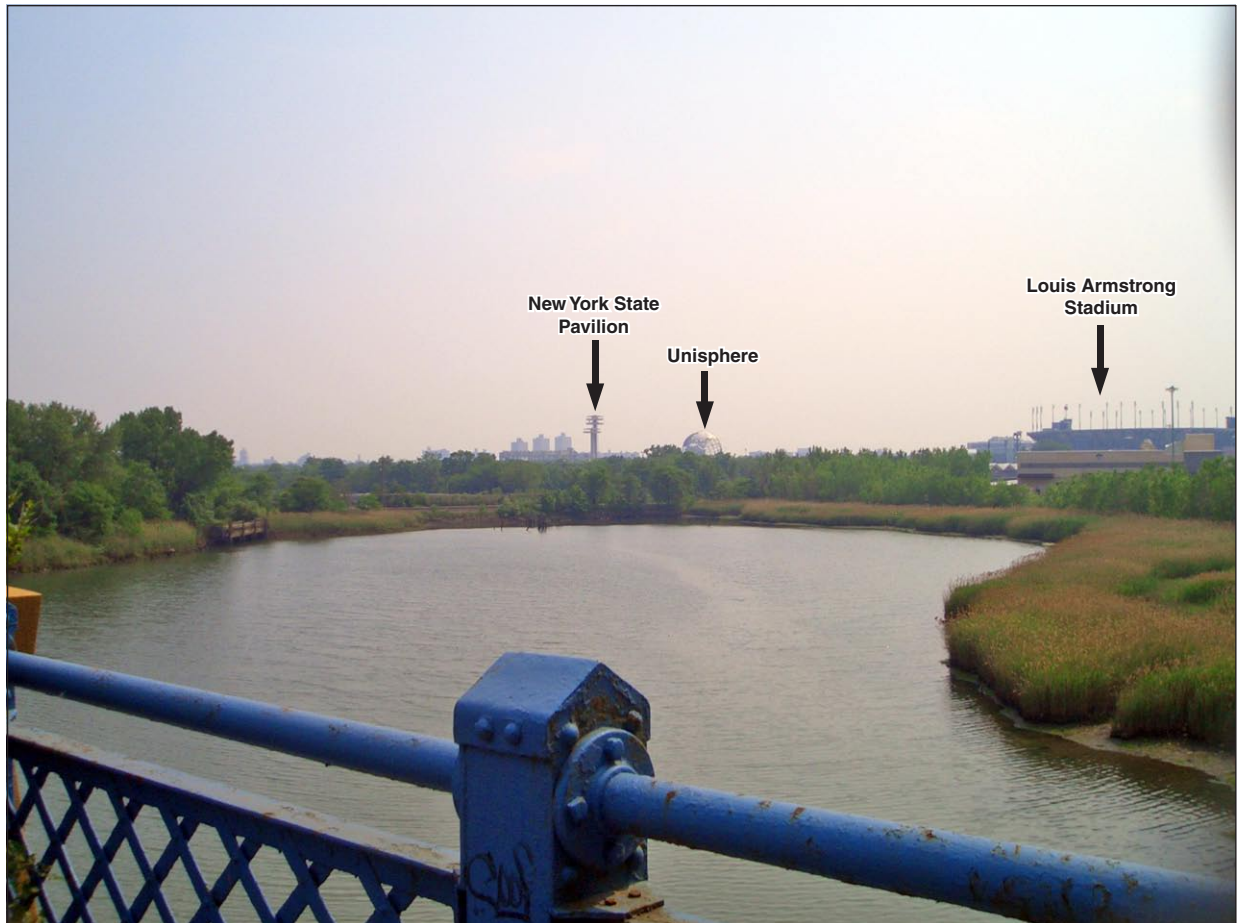


Flushing Bay, view north 36



Flushing Bay, view northeast to College Point 37





Flushing Meadows - Corona Park, view south from Roosevelt Avenue Bridge 38

## **E. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PLAN**

### **DISTRICT**

The proposed Plan would dramatically alter the urban design and general appearance of the District by replacing the predominantly low-scale, auto-related uses with a new mixed-use development. The proposed development would primarily be residential and retail uses; however, there would be also be open spaces, office space, a hotel, community facility space, and possibly a convention center (see Figure 9-22). The proposed Plan would create a new street network through the District as well as new block forms. The proposed Plan would also result in new building uses, heights, arrangements, and forms.

Specific development plans have not been formulated, and future development would be determined based on the Willets Point Urban Renewal Plan (URP) and the Special District regulations. The URP would define the District boundaries as well as require maximum development envelopes. As described in Chapter 2, the URP would prescribe a maximum permitted floor area of 8.94 million gross square feet in the District, but would allow flexibility in the combination of uses to be developed in the District. The Special District regulations would guide such urban design elements as the placement of uses within the District, building heights and setbacks, street hierarchies, and basic site planning and design provisions. The regulations would guide development for four basic components of the proposed Plan: streets and streetscapes, a regional entertainment and commercial center, a convention center, and a residential neighborhood. The regulations would also include requirements for open spaces and other measures aimed at creating a sustainable environment.

### *STREET GUIDELINES*

Under the proposed Plan, all of the existing streets in the Districts would be demapped and replaced with a new street network. The Special District regulations would require four or five intersections at specified locations along 126th Street, and would establish five types of streets in the district: connector streets, a primary retail street, retail streets, residential streets, and an eastern perimeter street (see Figure 9-23).

The two main connector streets would be the main access streets into the District and the primary streets through the District. One of the main connector streets would run east-west in the northern section of the District, connecting with 34th Avenue west of 126th Street. The other would run on a diagonal starting at 126th Street just south of the new Citi Field. The two main connector streets would merge near the northeast corner of the District and would connect with the new access ramps to the Van Wyck Expressway. The two main connector streets would be at least 75 feet wide and no more than 86 feet wide, and be flanked by two 15-foot wide sidewalks on either side. In addition, two nine-foot-wide lanes would be located adjacent to the sidewalks which could be used for either parking lanes or as a landscaped amenity, which may include seating and walkways. The two main connector streets would have at least two (and no more than three) travel lanes, which would be a total of between 22 feet and 33 feet in width. A bicycle lane, at least five feet wide, would also be provided on each connector street.

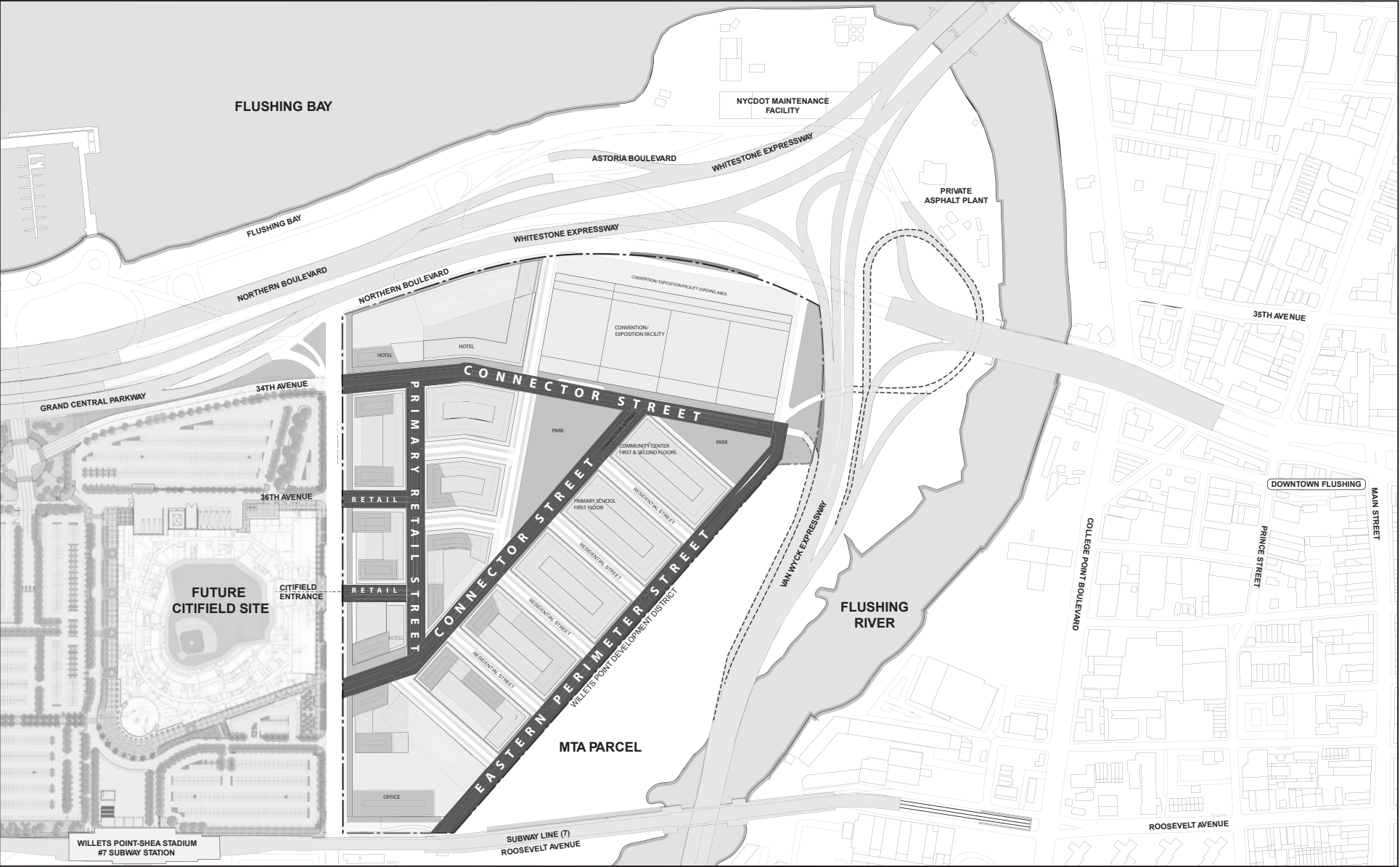
The primary retail street would run parallel to 126th Street and would be located at least 220 feet and at most 320 feet east of 126th Street. The primary retail street would connect to the two connector streets and two secondary retail streets. The 70 foot wide right-of-way would include two travel lanes totaling 22 feet, and paved 15-foot sidewalks on either side of the street. The



Illustrative rendering of the District

Figure 9-22





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Figure 9-23  
Proposed Street Network

sidewalks would be separated from the roadway by a nine-foot-wide area used for a pedestrian amenity zone, landscaping, or parking, and may include seating and walkways.

At least two, and at most three, retail streets would be perpendicular to 126th Street and to the primary retail street, connecting the two, and would be located in proximity to the new Citi Field. The 68-foot right-of-way would include two travel lanes totaling 22 feet, and 13-foot-wide sidewalks on either side of the street. Between the sidewalk and the roadway would be a 10-foot-wide area which could be used as a pedestrian amenity area that may include seating or walkways.

The residential streets in the District would each have a 62-foot-wide right-of-way and would be flanked by 13-foot-wide sidewalks on either side. The residential streets would have two travel lanes totaling 20 feet in width, and two eight-foot lanes, which may be used for either parking or as a landscaped pedestrian amenity, possibly with seating and walkways.

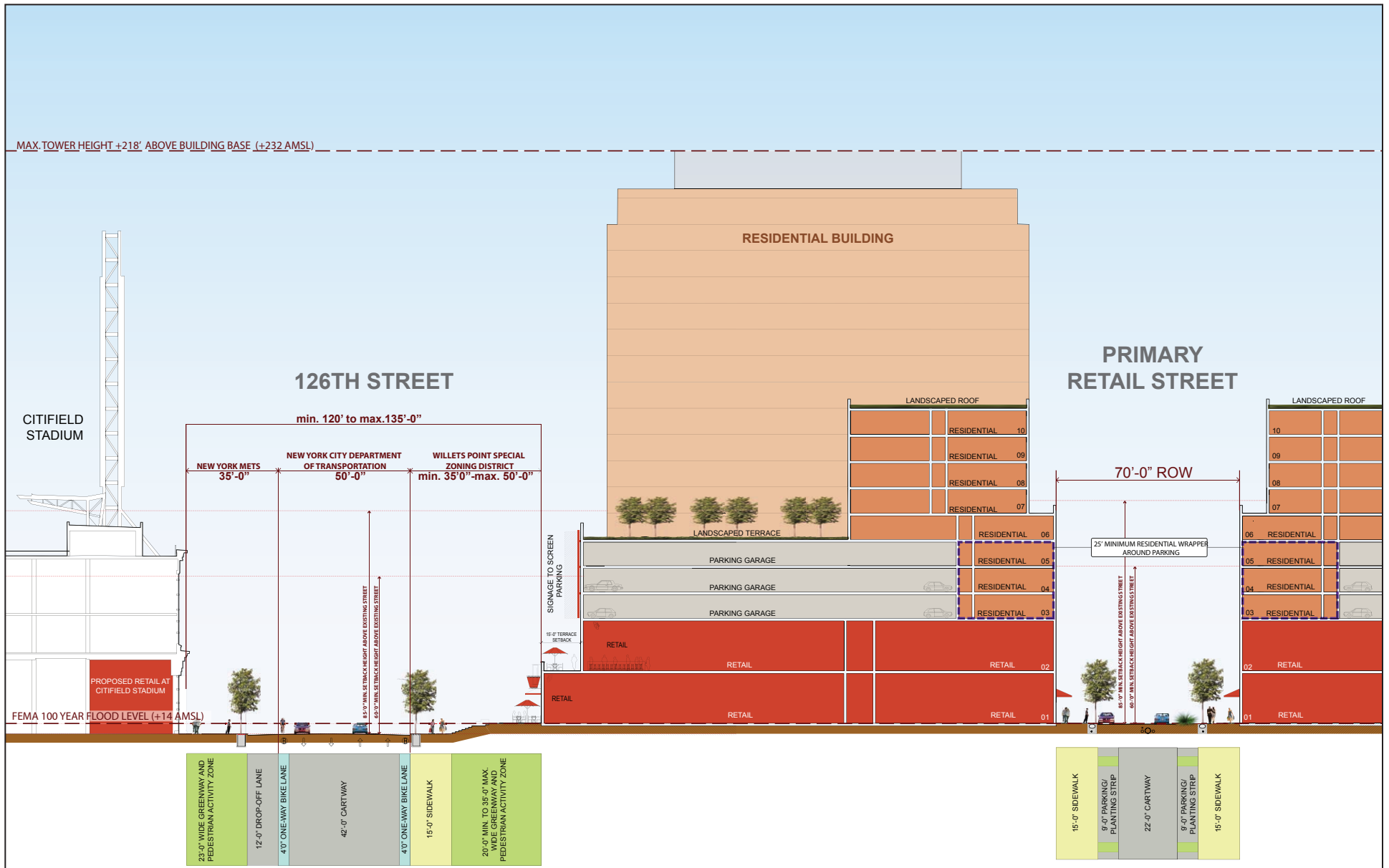
The eastern perimeter street would be located within 20 feet of the eastern boundary of the District and would extend between Roosevelt Avenue and one of the connector streets. The eastern perimeter street right-of-way would be at least 62 feet wide and no more than 75 feet wide, with a 13-foot-wide sidewalk on the western edge and a sidewalk at least five feet wide on the eastern edge. This street would have at least two, but no more than three, travel lanes, which would in total be between 20 and 33 feet wide. Additionally, an eight-foot-wide area would be located between the sidewalks and the travel lanes. This area would be used for parking or as a landscaped pedestrian amenity, possibly with seating and walkways.

### *ENTERTAINMENT AND COMMERCIAL CENTER*

The Special District regulations would allow for the development of 126th Street as a commercial corridor with continuous large ground-floor retail spaces. These retail spaces would be required to have large display windows to create transparency on the street level. 126th Street would also have a wide sidewalk (at least 15 feet) and a pedestrian amenity zone of 20 to 35 feet in width (See Figure 9-24). The pedestrian amenity zone would provide a grade change that could lead to an outdoor café or other amenity area across from the new Citi Field, and would require a minimum of five feet of circulation space in front of the streetwall. Stairways and ramps would connect the pedestrian amenity zone to the sidewalk at the existing grade of 126th Street. The buildings along 126th Street would have a base height of between 60 feet and 85 feet (lowered to between 20 and 30 feet across from Citi Field) and a setback of 10 feet.

The entertainment and commercial center would be a pedestrian-oriented area with a movie theater, restaurants, large and small retail spaces, and outdoor cafés. The Special District regulations would develop 126th Street as the main commercial corridor with entertainment, restaurant and commercial uses, and the smaller retail spaces on the primary retail street and the retail streets (see Figure 9-24). The entire area would extend 600 feet east from 126th Street and from Northern Boulevard to Roosevelt Avenue. The larger retail spaces would be located along 126th Street, while the smaller retail spaces would be located on the retail streets. In order to have continuous retail spaces on the street level, the regulations would prohibit certain ground-floor uses, including offices, auto repair shops, non-commercial clubs, and parking garages. Curb cuts would also be prohibited, as would loading areas on 126th Street and the primary retail streets.

The entertainment and commercial center would be anchored by two superblocks, one located at the corner of 126th Street and Northern Boulevard, the other at the corner of 126th Street and



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Roosevelt Avenue. The superblock at the corner of 126th Street and Northern Boulevard would have a maximum length of 675 feet, while the superblock at the corner of 126th Street and Roosevelt Avenue would have a maximum length of 575 feet. These superblocks would be exempt from the maximum store frontage requirements. The blocks located between the superblocks would have a maximum length of 450 feet.

To further encourage pedestrian activity, the regulations would require that if a movie theater or an office building over 120 feet in height were built, they would be located within 600 feet of the intersection of 126th Street and Roosevelt Avenue. It is anticipated that an office building could be located on the northeast corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street.

In order to create continuous streetwalls, the regulations would require base heights within the entertainment and commercial center to be a minimum of 60 feet with a required setback after 85 feet. After the setback, buildings within the entertainment and commercial center would rise from between 110 feet to 218 feet, depending on the location within the District (see Figures 9-25 and 9-26).<sup>1</sup>

#### *CONVENTION CENTER*

The Special District regulations would also allow for the construction of a convention center. While the location of the convention center is flexible, the Special District would allow for two options, both of which would locate the convention center on the perimeter of the District (see Figures 9-25 and 9-26). The convention center would be located either within 1,800 feet of the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street, or within 650 feet of Northern Boulevard. Additionally, the convention center would be located at least 200 feet east of 126th Street. Further, any section of the convention center located between 200 feet and 450 feet east of 126th Street would be a maximum of 50,000 square feet (sf) in size. The convention center would have a minimum base height of 40 feet; after 85 feet, a 10-foot setback would be required. The main entrance of the convention center would be located on a connector street.

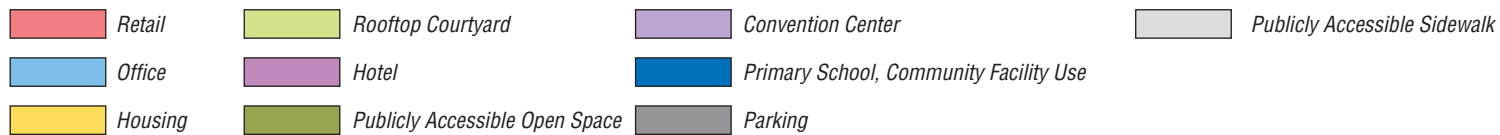
In order to maintain the pedestrian-friendly nature of the proposed Plan, the regulations would require that the front of the building be oriented along one of the connector streets with a 15-foot-wide sidewalk, a landscaped public access area between 10 and 22 feet wide, and a 12-foot-wide drop-off lane. The front of the convention center would be further required to have ground-floor glazed windows to prevent a solid, dark streetwall. All loading would be located at the rear or side façades (at least 100 feet from a connector street) of the convention center.

#### *RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD*

The Special District regulations would also create a new, sustainable, pedestrian-friendly residential neighborhood. While this area would be predominantly residential, community facility, office, and retail uses would also be permitted, creating a lively streetscape. The regulations would set building dimensions at a maximum of 210 feet by 450 feet and would require one building entrance for each ground floor unit on a residential street (except on Northern Boulevard.). Buildings within the residential neighborhood, except those along

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<sup>1</sup> Due to the District's proximity to LaGuardia airport, building heights on the site would be set by height limits related to aerial runway approach "surfaces" which would 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.





- |         |                                |  |                              |
|---------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| Retail  | Rooftop Courtyard              | Convention Center                      | Publicly Accessible Sidewalk |
| Office  | Hotel                          | Primary School, Community Facility Use |                              |
| Housing | Publicly Accessible Open Space | Parking                                |                              |

WILLETS POINT DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Figure 9-26  
Illustrative Site Plan - Scheme B



Northern Boulevard, would not be set back more than eight feet from the streetline and would have a minimum base height of 40 feet and a required setback at 85 feet. Residential buildings along Northern Boulevard would be located between eight and 15 feet of the streetline, with a base height of 60 feet and a required setback after 85 feet. After 85 feet, the buildings would be required to have a setback of 10 feet on a wide street and 15 feet on a narrow street. After the setback, the residential buildings could rise to a total height of 120 feet, and up to 218 feet in some areas. Any residential building above 120 feet would be considered a tower and would follow additional guidelines in terms of bulk, orientation, and massing. Under the Special District regulations, the residential buildings would also be required to have interior courtyards with a minimum width of 60 feet (see Figures 9-27 and 9-28). 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 (see Figure 9-28), except along parts of Northern Boulevard and the eastern perimeter street where parking would be required to be screened within a structure.

### *OPEN SPACE AND PUBLIC ACCESS AREAS*

The Special District regulations would also mandate the development of a minimum of eight acres of publicly accessible open space. The open spaces would contain a combination of both active and passive uses. At least one open space area would be located in the interior of the District—at least 200 feet from the boundaries of the District—and would be a minimum of two acres in size, with frontage on at least one connector street.

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.

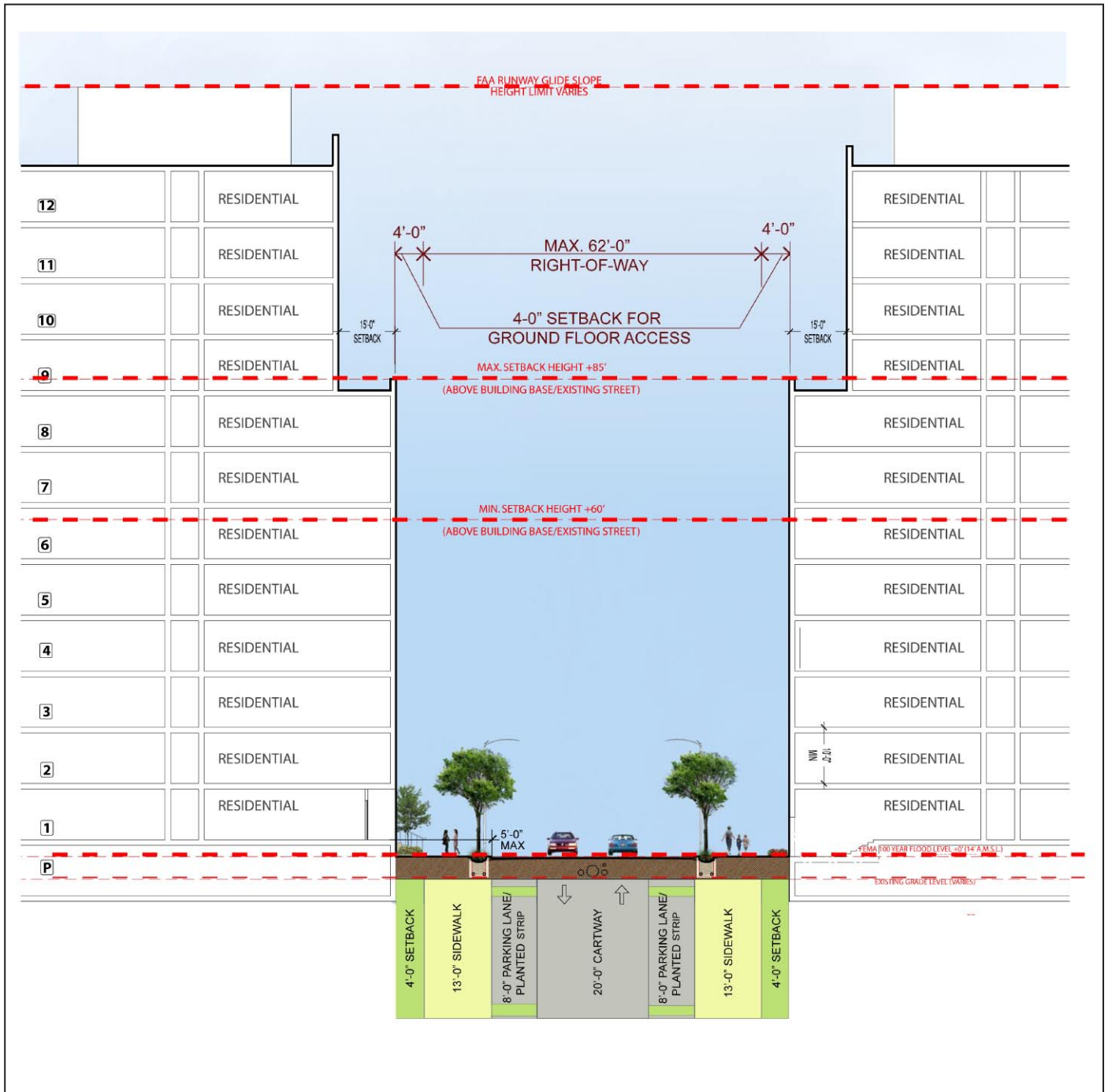
### *OTHER SPECIAL DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS*

#### *Parking and Curb Cut Regulations*

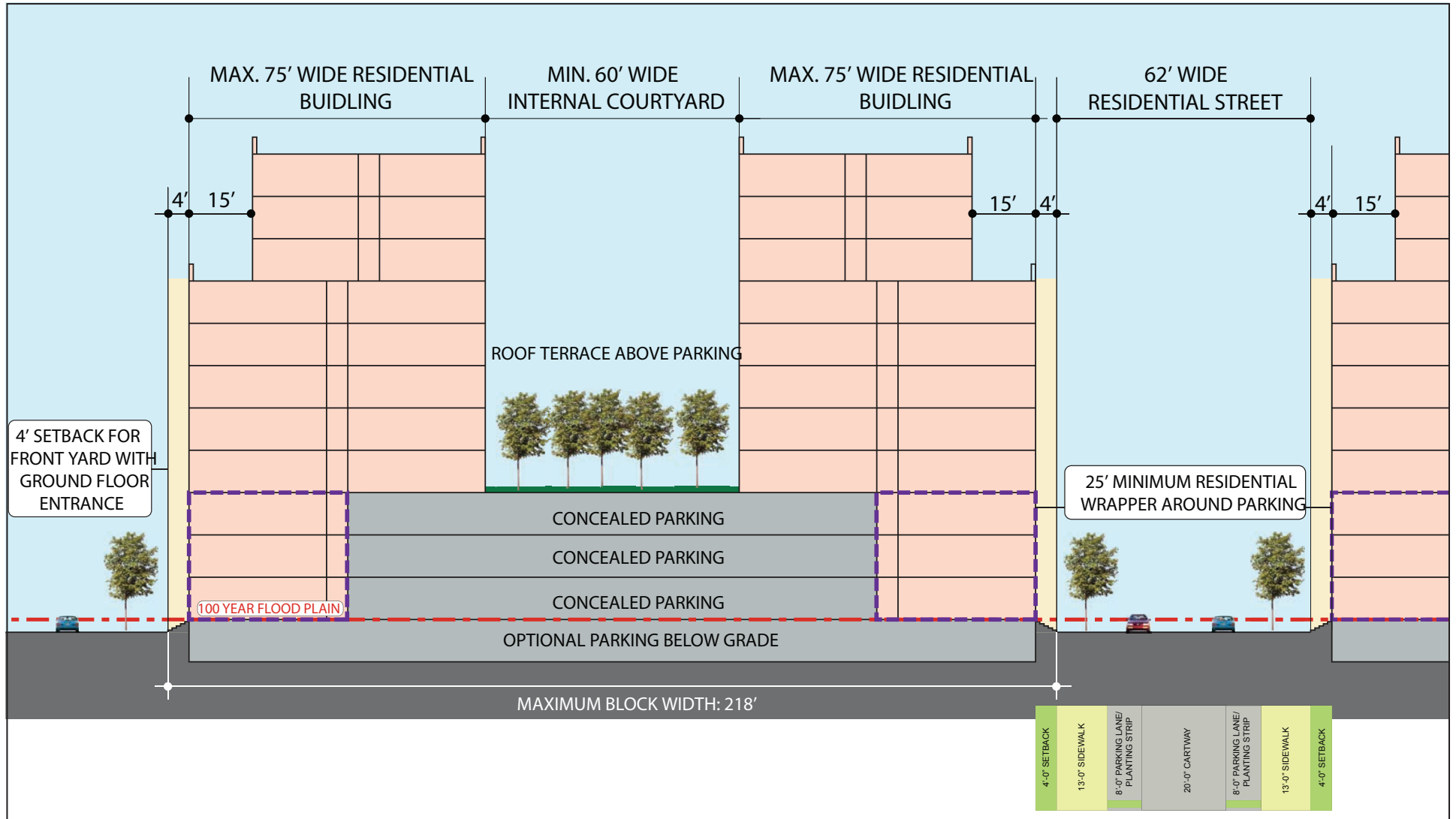
The regulations would also require that all off-street parking uses be located either underground or inside buildings and screened so as not to be visible from adjacent sidewalks or open spaces. Exceptions—areas where parking may be partially visible behind required screening treatments—include parts of Northern Boulevard and the eastern perimeter street, and upper level parking along 126th Street. Curb cuts would be prohibited on 126th Street, the primary retail street, the connector streets, and across from any public open space of two acres in size or greater. Curb cuts would also be prohibited for parking facilities or loading berths within 50 feet of any street intersection, except for the convention center or a hotel over 50,000 sf.

#### *Signage*

Signs in the entertainment and commercial area, including along Roosevelt Avenue, Northern Boulevard, and within 600 feet east of 126th Street, could be up to 500 sf and could rise to a



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height of 85 feet.<sup>1</sup> In the residential area (over 600 feet east of 126th Street), signs would be limited to 150 sf and a height of 25 feet.

#### *Other Uses*

A power plant and electrical substation would also be permitted in the District; however these uses would be subject to subsequent review and approval by the City Planning Commission (CPC) and other agencies.

Overall, the requirements set forth in the Special District regulations would create an attractive, pedestrian-friendly environment by creating new sidewalks, streetscape elements such as trees and other amenities, and interest on the street level with new retail spaces. While the proposed Plan would significantly alter the urban design of the District, the Plan would ultimately have a beneficial impact on the overall appearance and feel of the District. The new development that would result from the proposed Plan 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 the new Citi Field by increasing retail and entertainment spaces in the area.

#### *SUSTAINABLE DESIGN*

As described in Chapter 1, Project Description,” the Willets Point Development Plan has been accepted as a pilot Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design for Neighborhood Development (LEED-ND) project by the United States Green Building Council. The illustrative site plans (as shown in Figures 9-25 and 9-26) have been designed to achieve LEED-ND certification, and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) would encourage any future development in the District to achieve LEED-ND certification.

Other sustainable measures required by the regulations would include bicycle storage and rooftop landscaping for at least 40 percent of all parking structures.

#### **LOT B**

As described in Chapter 2, it is anticipated that if the proposed Plan is approved and the District is redeveloped into a new mixed-use community and regional destination, additional development could occur on Citi Field parking lot B (Lot B). While specific development plans for Lot B have not yet been formulated, it is anticipated that the site could be developed with a 14-story office building with ground floor retail space and 970 parking spaces housed in a two-story parking garage.

As described above, Lot B is currently a paved parking surface located on the northwest corner of Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street. The entire site is surrounded by a metal chain link fence. In the future with the proposed Plan, it is anticipated that Lot B would be occupied by a mixed use building that would complement the new Citi Field development and the proposed Willets

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<sup>1</sup> Along 126th Street, signs could be unlimited in size provided they are no higher than 85 feet and project between 4 and 6 feet, and provided ground floor transparency and parking screening requirements are met.

Point Development Plan. 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 ground floor 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 currently under construction as part of the Citi Field Development project and the office space that would be located in the District to the east of Lot B.

### **NO CONVENTION CENTER SCENARIO**

The additional residential and retail development that would be introduced by the No Convention Center Scenario would be located in the eastern or northern portion of the District, and the Special District regulations pertaining to the residential zone would also apply. There would be no changes to the provisions in the zoning Special District text with respect to streets and streetscapes, building bulk and arrangements, and block shape and size. Therefore, while it would result in additional residential and retail uses, in comparison with the proposed Plan, the effects of the No Convention Center Scenario on urban design would be largely the same.

### **STUDY AREA**

#### *URBAN DESIGN*

##### *Street Pattern and Hierarchy*

While the proposed Plan would create streets and a new ramp structure, it would not have an adverse impact on these elements.

##### *Major Transportation Elements*

As described above, there are a number of elevated transportation elements, including connector ramps, in the study area. The proposed Plan would result in a new connector to the Van Wyck Expressway. While plans for the connector are still not finalized, it is anticipated that the connector would be located near the northeast corner of the District and would be designed in a manner similar to the existing connectors in the study area. It is further anticipated that new streets would be constructed that would connect the District to Northern Boulevard and 126th Street.

##### *Other Streets*

The proposed Plan would extend some of the other streets in the study area into the District, including 34th Avenue and the access roadways along the northern and southern edges of Citi Field. 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.

##### *Block Shapes*

While the proposed Plan would create new block shapes in the District, and different block shapes and sizes than those found in the study area, it would not create parcels that are larger than what already exists in the study area. The proposed Plan would not alter the block shapes found in the study area. Instead, the Plan would create new, smaller pedestrian-oriented blocks within the District. Therefore, the proposed Plan would not have an adverse impact on the block shapes found in the study area.

### *Building Uses, Bulk, and Type*

The proposed Plan would introduce new building uses, bulk, and types to the District, which would complement other proposed development in the surrounding area. The mixed-use retail and residential uses would be similar to the proposed Sky View Parc development, while the new retail corridor along 126th Street and anticipated development on Lot B would further complement the new retail spaces currently under construction as part of the Citi Field project.

It is expected that the residential and commercial buildings in the District would be constructed to a consistent streetwall and would be in keeping with the general arrangement and bulk of the new Citi Field buildings along 126th Street, which are currently under construction. Therefore, the proposed buildings would be in keeping with the general height and bulk of the newly created structures in the study area.

While the proposed Plan would introduce new uses and buildings to the study area, this would not be an adverse impact, as the new building uses would increase pedestrian activity to the District and the surrounding area.

### *Building Arrangements*

The proposed Plan would introduce new buildings and building arrangements to the study area; however, these buildings would create new, continuous streetwalls. Further, the retail buildings along 126th Street and the mixed use building anticipated on Lot B would create a new streetwall and pedestrian area that would complement the Citi Field buildings currently under construction to the west of the District. Therefore, the proposed Plan would be in keeping with the general arrangements of buildings found in the immediately surrounding area, and there would be no adverse impacts on these urban design features.

### *Streetscape*

The proposed Plan would enhance the vitality of streets in the study area by introducing new commercial and residential uses that would increase pedestrian activity to the District and surrounding area. The proposed Plan would also improve the appearance of the surrounding area's streetscape by adding street lighting and general landscaping. The illuminated signs along 126th Street would further improve the appearance of the street and, combined with the new Citi Field, would create a new destination retail and entertainment corridor.

Overall, the proposed Plan and anticipated development on Lot B would have a positive affect on the streetscape of the study area. It would develop a large, underdeveloped parcel of land and a surface parking lot and would add new streetscape elements, such as landscaping and street lighting, to the District.

### *Topography and Natural Features*

The proposed development would be constructed on an already developed site and would not involve the removal of or alterations to any of the surrounding natural resources. Therefore, it would not affect the natural features in the surrounding area, including Flushing Bay, the Flushing River, and Flushing Meadows-Corona Park.

### *VISUAL RESOURCES*

The proposed Plan and anticipated development on Lot B would not affect views to or from Flushing Bay, the Flushing Bay Promenade, or views to the 1964 World's Fair structures in



## **Willeys Point Development Plan**

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Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. New development in the District and on Lot B 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 Citi Field. The proposed development would not interfere with views across Flushing Bay from the promenade. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts on Flushing Bay or the Flushing Bay Promenade with the proposed Plan.

Structures resulting from the proposed Plan and anticipated 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 located within the District and on Lot B would not detract from the visual appreciation of the park or the landscaping, trees, and open lawns that make the park a visual resource. The new buildings would be visible in views from the Pasarelle Ramp structure. However, these views are only available to pedestrians using the ramp and looking north; as described above in “Existing Conditions,” 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 Plan. Additionally, these new structures would not be very tall and would also not block the long views north from the Passarelle ramp. Therefore, the new development would not detract from the visual appreciation of the park, the World’s Fair structures, and the surrounding area. \*