3.7 URBAN DESIGN & VISUAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

The *New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* states that urban design components and visual resources determine the "look" of a neighborhood—its physical appearance, including the size and shape of buildings, and their arrangement on blocks, the street pattern and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. Since the proposed development would be notably different from existing development on the project site, a detailed urban design and visual resource analysis was conducted to determine whether the development would result in significant adverse impacts to these resources. This chapter analyzes existing conditions, the future without the East 125th Street Development, and probable impacts of the proposed development related to urban design and visual resources.

Urban design analysis considers the following elements that collectively define an area's urban design:

- *Block form and street pattern*: This urban design feature refers to the shape and arrangement of the blocks and streets, such as a grid pattern. These features set street views, define the flow of activity through an area, and create the basic format on which building arrangement can be organized.

- *Building arrangement*: How buildings are placed on lots and blocks describes building arrangement. The buildings can have small or large footprints, be attached or detached and separated by open uses, and varied in their site plans. This feature helps to convey a sense of the overall form and design of a block or a larger area.

- *Building bulk, use and type*: Characteristics that describe the buildings are bulk, use, and type. A building's bulk is created from an amalgam of characteristics that include its height, length, width, shape, and lot coverage. A building's use helps describe its visual and urban design character, including the concept of transparency. Transparency refers to the condition of the streetwall and if there are glass storefronts or building lobbies that face the street (high transparency), or blank wall without windows that face the street (low transparency). Building type refers to class of building (e.g., tenement, church, loft, office building).

- *Streetscape elements:* The distinctive physical features that make up a streetscape include elements such as streetwall, building entrances, parking lots, curb cuts, fences, landscaping elements, street furniture, etc. These features help define the pedestrian experience.

- *Street Hierarchy:* Streets may be classified as expressways, arterials, boulevards, collector or local streets. Street width (e.g., "wide streets" such as avenues and major cross-town streets, and "narrow streets," such as typical cross-town streets) is a common distinction in New York City. Street width makes a practical impact on the urban design of an area, impacting the relationship of buildings to street, but it is often a legal distinction in the Zoning

Resolution, where some activities or higher densities are allowed on wide streets, but not on narrow streets. As a matter of practice, street hierarchy conveys a sense of activity in a neighborhood.

- *Topography and natural features.* Topographic and natural features help define the overall visual character of an area and may include hills and slopes, rock outcroppings, aquatic features and water bodies.

This analysis also considers the project's effect on the area's visual resources, which are defined as unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or building features. Visual resources can include landmark buildings or features, parks, waterfront views, and important historic resources, among others.

3.7.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Project site

URBAN DESIGN

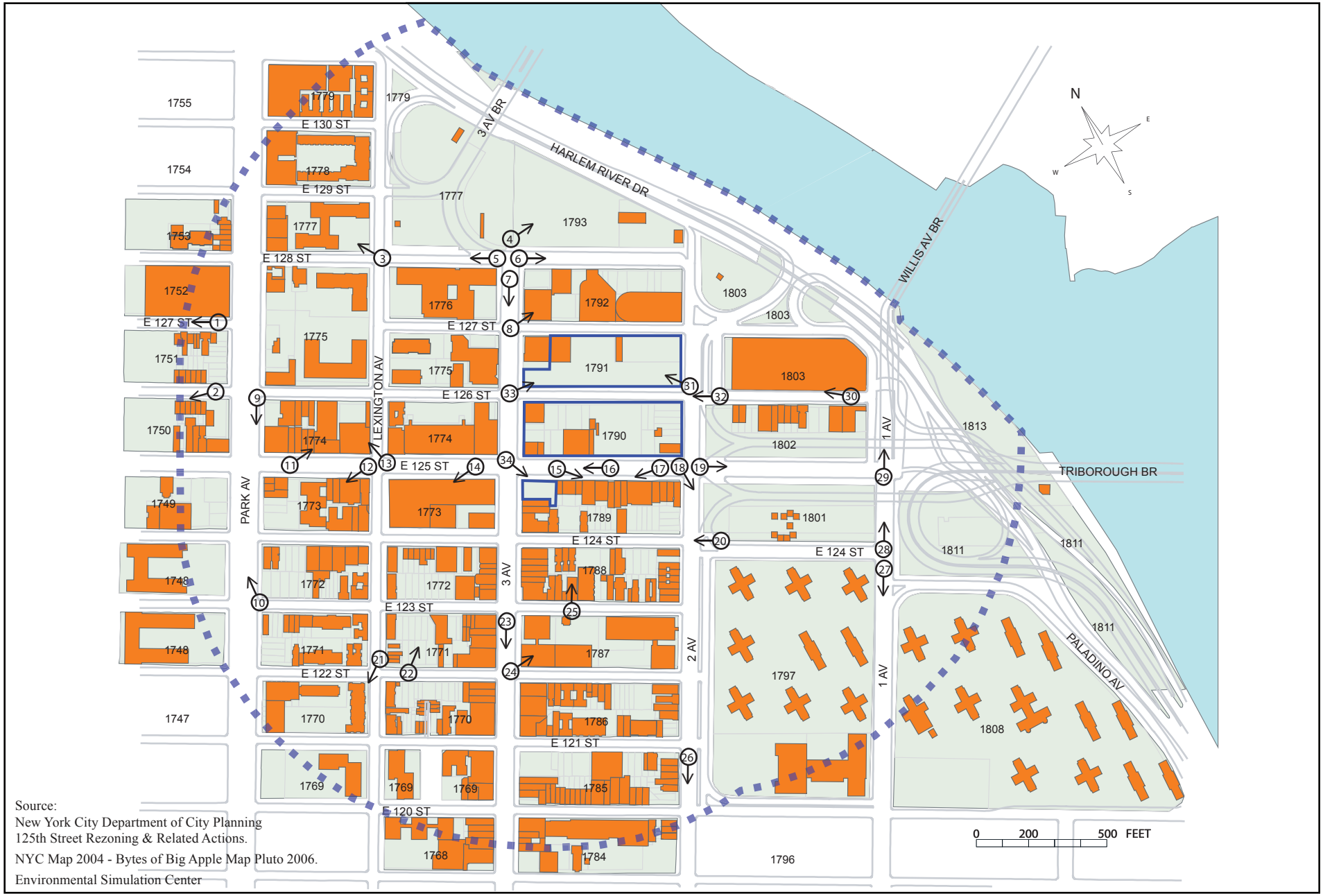
The proposed project site is located at the foot of the Triborough Bridge in East Harlem, at the end of the 125th Street commercial corridor. It sits between the largely residential neighborhoods to the south and open spaces to the north, just south of the Harlem River Drive. The project site comprises all of Block 1790 (Parcel B), all but the northwest corner lot (Lot 44) of Block 1791 (Parcel A), and the northwest corner lot of block 1789 (Lot 46, Parcel C). Parcel C is entirely vacant. Most of Parcel A is used for parking, outdoor storage or is vacant. A one-story repair shop and a converted five-story residential building with a motorcycle dealership, both of which face 127th Street, are the only buildings on the block. Parcel B has several commercial and mixed-use residential buildings that are between one and four stories in height, most of which are on the Third Avenue portion of the block. Existing uses include a gas station and donut shop at the corner of East 125th and Second Avenue, a dry cleaners, and flooring store on Third Avenue, and two formerly mixed-use buildings facing East 125th Street that no longer appear to contain occupied dwelling units. While Parcel B is the most developed of the project site parcels, much of it remains underutilized, with large portions being used for outdoor storage and parking, trash collection, or simply vacant.

The project site has no natural features and few street trees or other landscape or streetscape amenities. Pedestrian access around the site is impeded by traffic headed to and leaving the Triborough Bridge, with both East 125th and East 126th Street receiving traffic from bridge ramps. Streets through the project site follow the Manhattan grid system that is typically found in this area. The Avenues that bound the site to the east and west are wide streets along with East 125th Street, while East 126th Street and East 127th Street are narrow streets. Current uses by the MTA attract buses to the project site and the surrounding streets. Parked or idling buses often line the west side of Second Avenue adjacent to the project site, and the majority of Parcel A of the project site is used for MTA bus storage and agency personnel vehicle parking.

With its tall chain link fences, curb cuts, vacant lots, and general lack of street level activity, the urban design character of the project site can be characterized as very poor, and can be seen as an impediment to pedestrian access to the large public open spaces to the north of the site from the established residential neighborhoods to the south and west.

VISUAL RESOURCES

There are no visual resources on the project site such as landmark buildings or features, parks, waterfront views, or important historic resources.



Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings
- (#) Photograph view direction and reference number

Figure 3.7-1 - Key to Photographs; Project Site & Study Area

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Source: Microsoft Virtual Earth

Legend

Project Site Boundary

Figure 3.7-2 - Site Aerial View from Southwest

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Viewpoint 31 - View of site (Parcel A) looking north from intersection of East 125th Street and Second Avenue

Viewpoint 32 - View of site (Parcel A & B) looking northwest from intersection of East 125th Street and Second Avenue

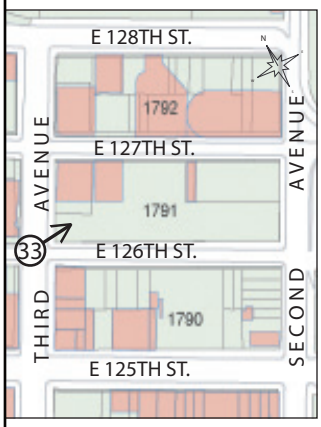
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

Figure 3.7-3 - Project Site Views

East 125th Street Development EIS

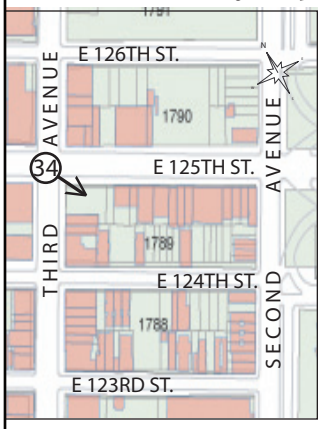
NYC Economic Development Corporation

Key Map



Viewpoint 33 - View of site (parcel "A") looking east from 126th Street & Third Avenue

Key Map



Viewpoint 34 - View of parcel "C" looking south from 125th Street and Third Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Figure 3.7-4 - Study Area

Study Area

URBAN DESIGN

The study area for Urban Design is the same as the study areas for land use, or ¼-mile from the project site. For the purposes of this analysis, parcels are not split and if part of a parcel is within ¼-mile of the project site, the entire parcel is included in the analysis.

Topography & Natural Features: The study area slopes gently from Park Avenue, which has an elevation of about 25 feet above sea level, down toward the Harlem River Drive, which has an elevation of about five feet above sea level. The project site is at a mean elevation of about 15 feet above sea level. The study area occupies one of the lower areas in Manhattan, and the slope over much of the project area is imperceptible to pedestrians.

The only notable natural feature in the study area is the Harlem River, which forms the Study Area's boundary to the north. Physical and visual access to the River is largely blocked by the Harlem River Drive and bridge ramps.

Block Form, Street Pattern & Hierarchy: For most of the study area, the blocks and streets follow the typical Manhattan grid pattern. Most blocks are rectangular and 200 feet wide. Lengths vary according to block location. Blocks between First and Third Avenues are 600 feet long, while blocks between Third and Park Avenue are 400 feet long.

To the north and west of the study area, the block and street pattern is broken by the Harlem River Drive, the Third Avenue, Willis Avenue and Triborough Bridges, and bridge ramps. The ramps of the Harlem River Drive are either at grade or sunken. The ramps to the bridges start or finish at grade and rise up to the bridges (Figure 3.7-5 illustrates how the regular street grid gives way to these ramps and bridges.) At certain times along the major thoroughfares, heavy traffic is created by circulation to and from these ramps and the Harlem River Drive.

To the southeast of the study area, Wagner Houses is located on superblocks, or blocks that are larger than those created by the traditional Manhattan street grid. The southern boundary of these two blocks is East 120th Street, and the northern boundary is East 124th Street, where Second Avenue forms the eastern terminus of East 121st, East 122nd and East 123rd Streets. Block 1775 to the west of the site is also a superblock, interrupting East 127th Street.

The elevated Metro-North Railroad viaduct runs down the center of Park Avenue at the western edge of the study area. Here, Park Avenue is 140-feet wide, which is wider than the other wide streets in the study area. Third Avenue, Second Avenue, First Avenue, and East 125th Street are more typical 100-foot wide streets. The other streets in the study area that are a part of the Manhattan grid are 60 feet wide, which is typical of narrow streets. The width of the Harlem River Drive varies according to the ramps that enter and exit this limited access highway. At its narrowest points beneath bridges, the Harlem River Drive is only 80 feet wide. It expands to 130 feet at its widest points. Regardless of width, the Harlem River Drive acts as a boundary and effectively separates the study area from the Harlem River.

Source: Microsoft Virtual Earth

Legend

Project Site Boundary

Figure 3.7-5 - Oblique Aerial of the Site

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Streetscape Elements: Streetscape amenities in the area are generally limited, but vary according to block with some blocks having no positive streetscape elements, while other blocks have many.

Examples of existing streetscape conditions can be seen in some of the industrial and institutional buildings to the north and west of the project site, where buildings are built to the lot line, but have little transparency and are on blocks that have no street trees (e.g., Figure 3.7-14, Viewpoint 5, and Figure 3.7-26, Viewpoint 30.) Likewise, the Metro North viaduct helps to create very poor streetscape condition along Park Avenue at the western end of the study area with parking lots, fenced vacant lots, and no street trees, (e.g., Figure 3.7-16, Viewpoints 9 & 10.)

Other blocks have better conditions, with ample street trees and active streets. This includes portions of 125th Street (e.g., Figure 3.7-19, Viewpoint 15 and Figure 3.7-22, Viewpoint 17), and some of the residential streets with narrow lots that exhibit a more regular building type and establish a rhythm through materials, fenestration and building ornamentation (e.g., Figure 3.7-12, Viewpoints 1 and 2). Off of East 125th Street, some of the secondary commercial areas are less active and the relationship of development to the street and neighborhood urban design character suffers from metal pull-down gates in place during much of the day (e.g., Figure 3.7-24, Viewpoint 26). These unsightly barriers can be seen even on East 125th Street, which is an otherwise active commercial corridor.

Building Arrangement, Bulk, Type and Use: The study area contains a variety of building types and uses. New law tenement buildings, mixed-use commercial buildings, light industrial and auto-related commercial buildings, single-purpose institutional, educational and cultural buildings, transportation-related facilities, and high rise and 'Tower-in-the-Park" housing developments (e.g., tall, low coverage buildings) can all be found within the study area, along with 14 separate public open spaces.

In general, the taller buildings in the area can be found south of East 123rd Street, and bulkier buildings can be found west of Third Avenue and north of East 125th Street. Buildings on relatively narrower lots generally located south of East 125th Street and west of Second Avenue create more continuous streetwalls and building bulks. To the north and east of the project site, large open spaces buffer the built-up areas from the Harlem River Drive and the ramps that lead to and from the Harlem River Drive and the Triborough Bridge.

The variety of building forms and heights and how they vary within the study area is best seen graphically in Figures 3.7-6 through 3.7-10, which show building footprints and the buildings that exceed the height noted in the title of each of these figures. Figure 3.7-6 shows all buildings in the study area. Figure 3.7-7 shows all buildings in the study area over 30 feet in height. Most buildings in the study area are over 30 feet tall, but 21 percent are less than 30 feet tall, including several of the large footprint buildings (e.g., the MTA bus depot and the Pathmark Store). Figure 3.7-8 shows all buildings in the study area over 60 feet in height. This figure shows that 78 percent of the buildings in the study area are 60 feet tall or less, demonstrating the low-rise nature of much of the study area. Still 22 percent of the buildings are taller than 60 feet,

especially along Lexington Avenue and to the southeast. Figure 3.7-9 shows buildings more than 100 feet tall, of which there are 23 in the study area, all but two of which are to the south of the study area. Figure 3.7-10 show the five buildings that are more than 150 feet tall, including the residential building at the southwest corner of East 122nd Street and Lexington Avenue, and Taino Towers' four main towers.

Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

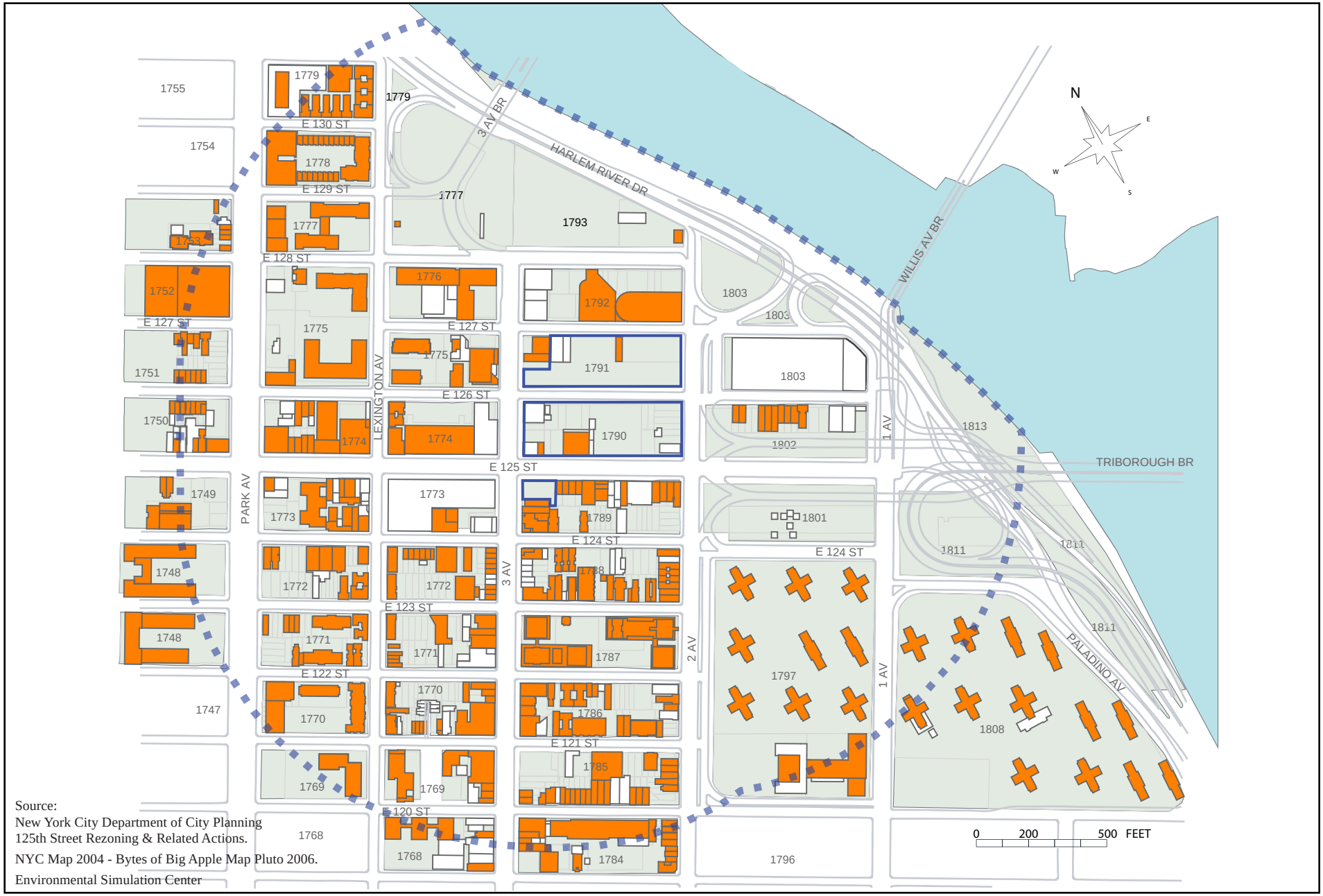
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings

Figure 3.7-6 - Buildings in Study Area

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

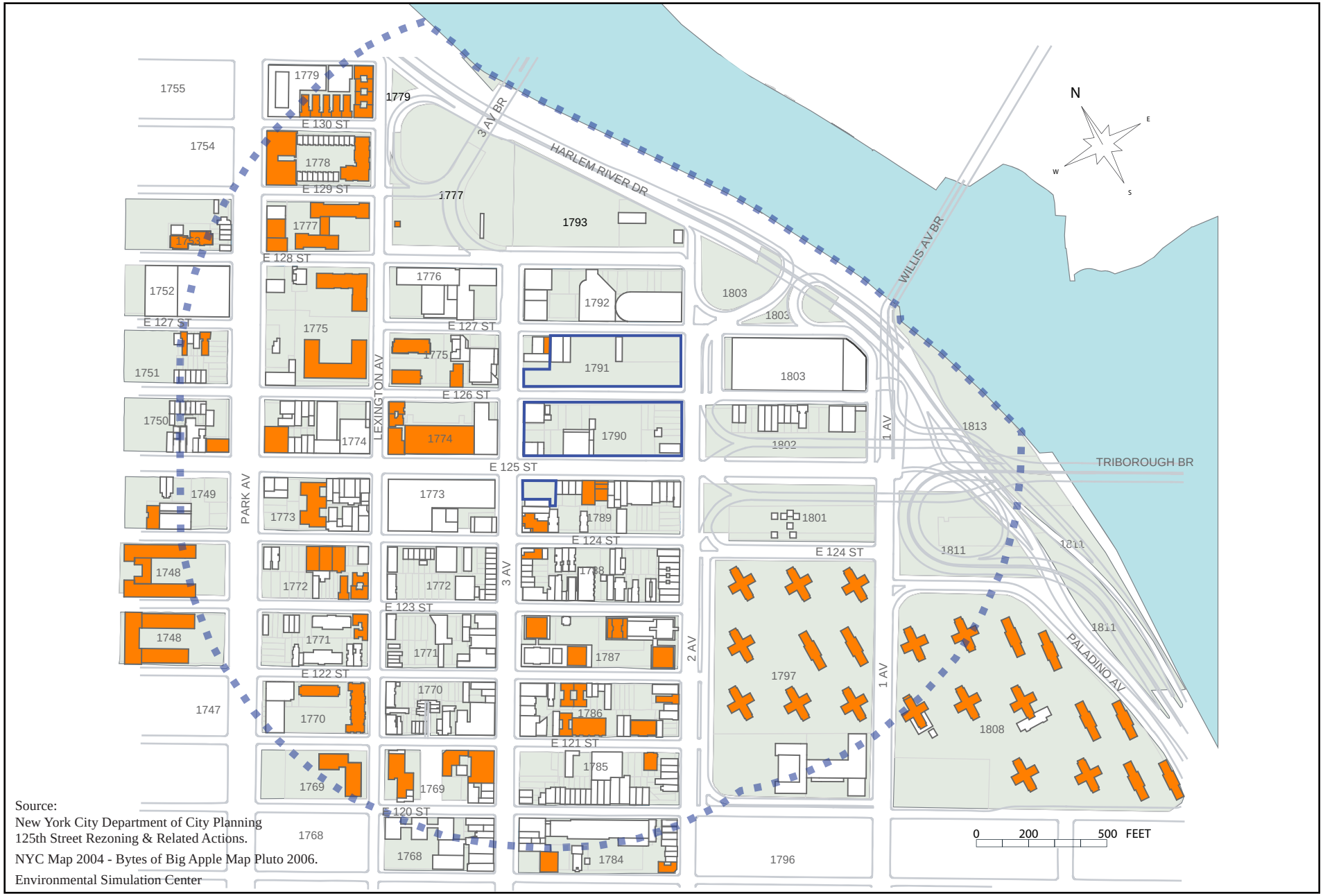
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 30 Feet

Figure 3.7-7 - Buildings Higher Than 30 Feet

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 60 Feet

Figure 3.7-8 - Buildings Higher Than 60 Feet

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 100 Feet

Figure 3.7-9 - Buildings Higher Than 100 Feet

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 150 Feet

Figure 3.7-10 - Buildings Higher Than 150 Feet

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Sub-areas

For the purposes of summarizing elements of urban design, the study area has been separated into four sub-areas, and the project site itself. Boundaries for these sub-areas can be found on Figure 3.7-11 and are defined and generally characterized as follows:

1. Northwest Sub-Area: larger grain development (grain referring to the width of buildings and lots) to the north and west of the site.

2. Southwest Sub-Area: mostly finer grain development to the southwest of the site on smaller lots, with some notable exceptions, such as residential towers and large-footprint commercial buildings.

3. Southeast Sub-Area: Tower-in-the-park development to the south and east of the site.

4. Northeast Sub-Area: The collection of blocks to the north and east of the project site that contain open space, mid-rise residential buildings on East 126th Street, the MTA bus depot, and a car dealership, among other uses.

Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings
- Sub Areas (1 - Project Site; 2 - Northwest; 3 - Southwest; 4 - Southeast; & 5 - Northeast)

Figure 3.7-11 - Urban Design Sub-Areas

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Northwest Sub-Area

The sub-area to the north and west of the project site contains many of the larger, bulkier buildings in the study area. A regular street pattern and block forms characterize the sub-area, whereas lot sizes and building footprints are generally larger than those of blocks in the rest of the study area. The buildings are generally arranged in slabs with forms including straight slabs, or slabs in "U" or "L" shaped arrangements. These arrangements create defined open spaces that are programmed for less intense outdoor activities in some cases, such as playgrounds or passive sitting areas. There are multiple land uses in the area, though the larger lots and buildings that characterize this area are typically either residential or institutional. Building heights vary in this area, though many of the large buildings are over 60 feet tall and two buildings are over 100 feet tall. Because of the larger sizes of these buildings, most viewers would perceive the mass of these buildings in proportion to their height. More importantly for urban design is the fact that larger buildings in this area often do not create a continuous streetwall, but because they have bulkier shapes and forms, they define the streets. Some streets have street trees that soften the building bulk and create a more attractive and -- in places -- quiet pedestrian environment. This is in contrast the East 125th Street corridor at the southern end of this sub-area, which has a great deal of pedestrian activity, with its many commercial uses, and subway and commuter rail stations.

Southwest Sub-Area

This sub-area has a mix of land uses and building forms. Many of the blocks exhibit development characterized by finer grain and smaller lot sizes, with lower buildings of three-to-five stories. To the southwest of the sub-area are some taller, larger-footprint buildings, including a residential tower at East 122nd Street and Lexington Avenue that is 280 feet tall. The Park Avenue edge of this sub-area is characterized by poor urban design conditions. On the west side of Park Avenue, parking lots face the Metro North Railroad viaduct, which itself is a major impediment to street level activity. On the east side of Park Avenue in this area, fenced vacant lots or parking lots are common. There is activity on East 125th Street, though in some places there is little transparency since much of the Pathmark Store at the northern edge of this sub-area creates a blank, concrete-paneled wall along East 125th Street. South of East 125th Street within this sub-area are some small vacant lots and mid-block neighborhood open spaces.

Southeast Sub-Area

This sub-area consists of three blocks of residential towers. Wagner Houses is a classic "Tower-in-the-Park" residential development built on two large superblocks east of Second Avenue and south of East 124th Street. The other block in this area is across Second Avenue and is the block that contains Taino Towers. Wagner Houses is made up of mostly 140 foot tall, "X"-shaped towers set back from the street and surrounded by open space that contains many mature trees and a limited amount of parking. This design creates a less active, relaxed pedestrian environment. While also comprised of tall residential towers, the Taino Towers complex has a quite different character than the Wagner Houses. Built on a base that creates a streetwall, the

block has a good deal of activity at street level. Its associated open space is enclosed and accessible to residents only.

Northeast Sub-Area

The sub-area that is to the north of the project site that bounds the Harlem River Drive has an irregular street pattern due to the curve of the Harlem River and the substantial transportation infrastructure that exists in this area. Transportation infrastructure like the entrance and exit ramps to the Harlem River Drive, and the Triborough, Willis, and Third Avenue Bridges, dominate this area. Buffering these transportation uses from the built up areas to the south are large open spaces including the Crack is Wack Playground, Alice Kornegay Triangle, and Harlem River Park, which includes newly constructed ball fields. Other transportation uses also buffer this area including the MTA bus depot, open MTA bus storage on block 1793, and a car dealership. Visual and physical connections of these open spaces to the more populated areas to the south are not strong, despite pedestrian bridges that provide access to Harlem River Park. Heavy traffic conditions and the MTA buses that are present in the area act as access impediments to those traveling to the area's open spaces. Considering the amount of public open space in the area, there is relatively little pedestrian activity on the street.

The only residential buildings in this sub-area are located on the northern half of Block 1802, sited between a Triborough Bridge ramp and the MTA bus depot.

Quantitative Differences between Sub-Areas

While many aspects of the urban design of the sub-areas are described above qualitatively, there are some elements that can be described quantitatively, including building height and coverage and building footprint size. Together these often comprise the perceived density of a neighborhood. Quantitative differences between the sub-areas described above and the project site are summarized in the following table:

Table 3.7-1: Sub-Area and Project Site Building Height, Coverage and Footprint Size

Area	Mean building height (in stories)	Building coverage (as percent of lot area)	Mean size of building footprint (square feet)
Project site	2.1	13%	3,253
Southeast Sub-Area	18.3	21%	8,959
Southwest Sub-Area	3.9	54%	3,703
Northeast Sub-Area	2.0	8%	5,500
Northwest Sub-Area	3.9	59%	7,338

Source: Environmental Simulation Center, 2007.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Besides its numerous open spaces (e.g., Figure 3.7-13, Viewpoint 4, and Figure 3.7-23, Viewpoint 22), the study area has limited visual resources. The Triborough Bridge is the most notable visual resource in the area, but views to it are often obstructed by the ramps that rise up at the eastern end of the study area (e.g., Figure 3.7-25, Viewpoint 28). Further away, the Triborough becomes more visible, but there are no notable views that allow the entire bridge to be visible. Typically, only partial views of the western abutment are visible (e.g., Figure 3.7-21, Viewpoint 19). While not as tall as the Triborough Bridge, the Willis Avenue Bridge is a distinctive Visual Resource in the area but, like the Triborough, views to the Willis Avenue Bridge are often obstructed by bridge ramps (e.g., Figure 3.7-26, Viewpoint 29).

The New York Public Library 125th Street Branch, located at 224 East 125th Street, Block 1789, Lot 37 (National Register and NYC Landmark eligible building), is a notable historic visual resource in the immediate vicinity of the project site, as described in detail in Chapter 3.6. The building has a unique character when compared to the other existing buildings in the surrounding area. However because it is a small building on a block that has many other buildings, the visual significance of the building is not easily perceivable.

Other visual resources that exist within 400 feet of the project site include 221 East 124th Street (Block 1789, Lot 10), which is already a historic resource. The building has a significant side façade with a mural facing the Dream Street Park. The mature trees in the park make the mural not quite visible from the Second Avenue and East 124th Street intersection.

Harlem River is a natural visual resource of the area, but because of the structural elements of bridge ramps and the Harlem River Drive the visual link between the river and the site is very poor. The river is not easily perceivable from streets and public spaces.

Taino Towers is an important visual resource as a way-finding landmark. At 325 feet tall, Taino Towers buildings are visible throughout much of the study area and provide visual orientation for pedestrians, motorists and those viewing the area from afar, such as from the Metro-North Railroad viaduct (e.g., Figure 3.7-15, Viewpoint 7).

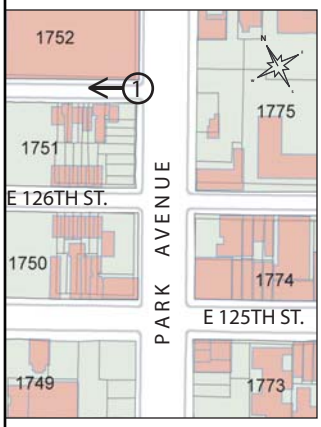
Views south down the avenues are important view corridors in the study area. Because the elevation of the study area gently slopes and the avenues are wide and unobstructed to the south, view corridors continue for great distances (e.g., Figures 3.7-23 to 3.7-25, Viewpoints 23, 26, and 27). Comparatively, East 125th Street is a poor view corridor as it terminates at the entrances to the Triborough Bridge to the east and is obstructed by the Metro-North Railroad viaduct to the west. The Metro-North Railroad viaduct is very visible in views to the west and, because of its continuity along Park Avenue, it is a significant visual resource in the area.

URBAN DESIGN VIEWS

Figures 3.7-12 through 3.7-26 illustrate representative views of the urban design and important visual resources (morning period, June 8, 2007). Figure 3.7-3 shows panoramic views of the project site in the vicinity of Second Avenue.

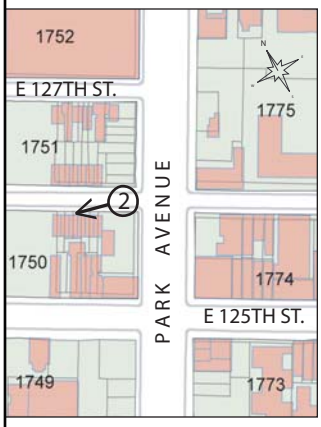
.

Key Map



Viewpoint 01 - View of E 127th Street looking west from Park Avenue

Key Map



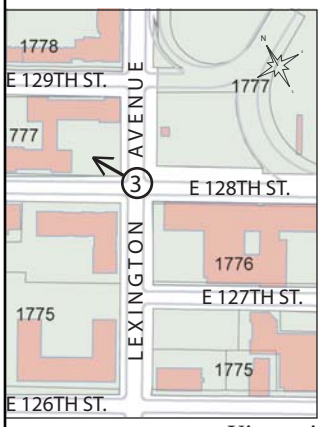
Viewpoint 02 - View of E 126th Street looking west from Park Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

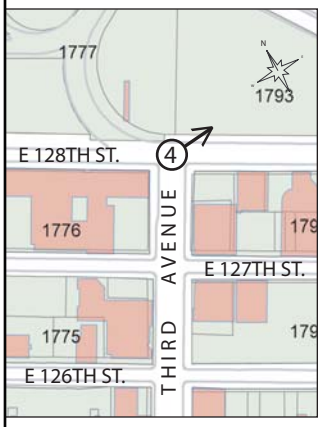
Figure 3.7-12 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 03 - View of Jackie Robinson Houses (playground in front) from E 128th Street & Lexington Avenue

Key Map



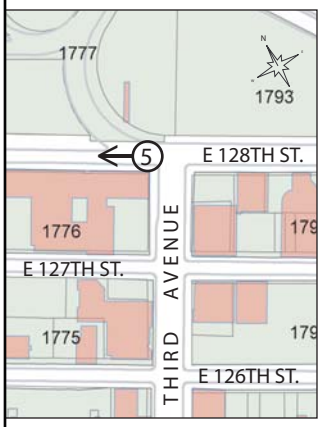
Viewpoint 04 - View of Harlem River Park playfield at E 128th Street

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

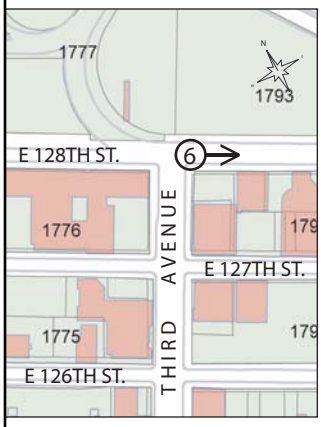
Figure 3.7-13 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 05 - View of E 128th Street looking west from Third Avenue

Key Map



Viewpoint 06 - View of E 128th Street looking east from Third Avenue

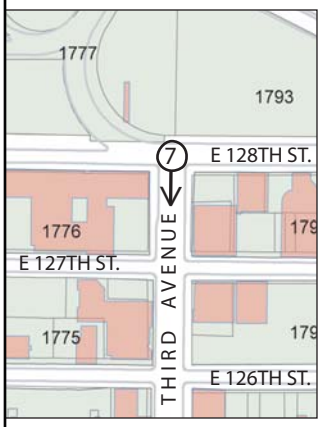
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

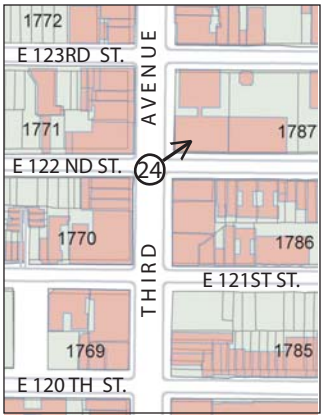
Figure 3.7-14 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 07 - View looking south on Third Ave. from E 128th St, Taino Towers in the background

Key Map



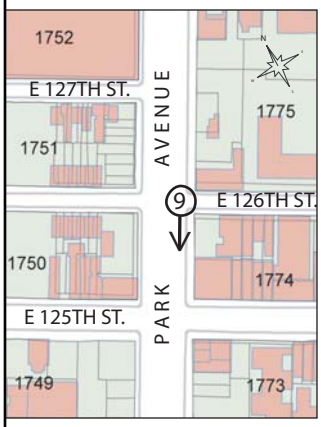
Viewpoint 24 - Street level view of Taino Towers at E 122nd St. & Third Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

Figure 3.7-15 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 9 - View of Metro-North Railroad Viaduct from street level

Key Map

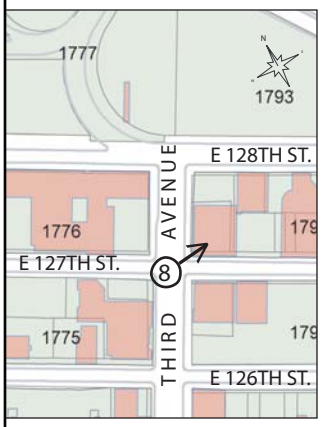
Viewpoint 10 - Metro-North Railroad Viaduct; view from E 123rd Street & Park Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

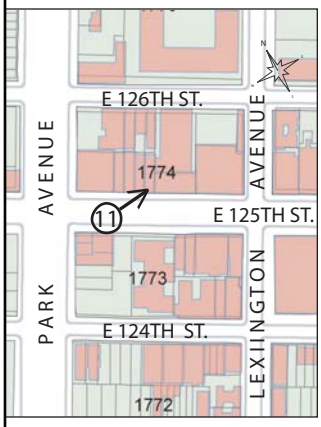
Figure 3.7-16 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 08 - View looking east at E 127th Street & Third Avenue

Key Map



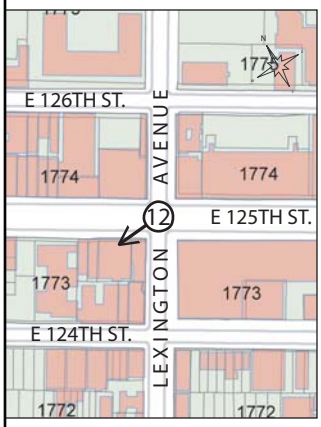
Viewpoint 11 - View of E 128th Street looking east between Park & Lexington Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

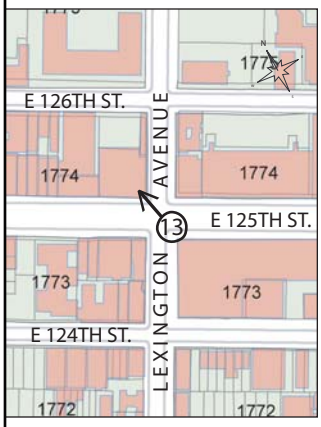
Figure 3.7-17 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 12 - View looking west at E 125th Street & Third Avenue intersection

Key Map



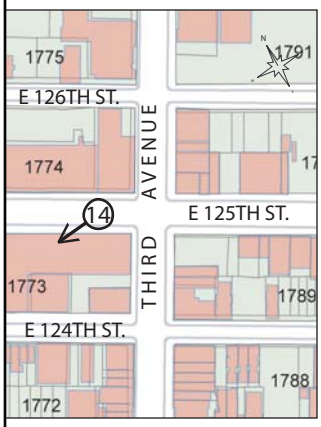
Viewpoint 13 - View looking north at E 125th Street & Third Avenue intersection

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

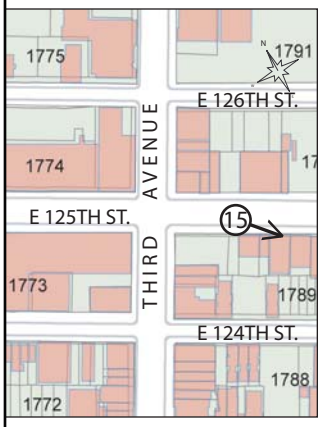
Figure 3.7-18 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 14 -View of Pathmark building looking west between Third & Lexington Avenue

Key Map



Viewpoint 15 - View looking southeast at E 125th Street between Third & Second Avenue

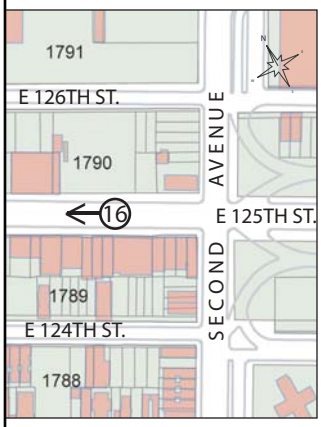
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

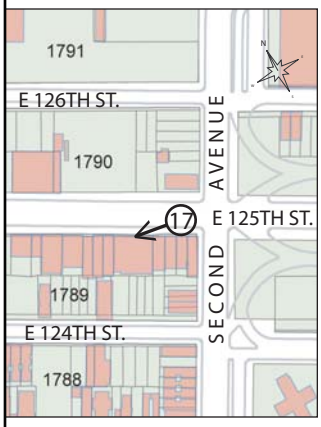
Figure 3.7-19 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 16 - View looking west on E 125th Street between Second & Third Avenue

Key Map



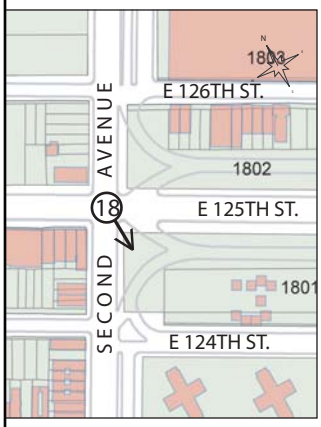
Viewpoint 17 - View looking down E 125th street towards Third Avenue from Second Avenue

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

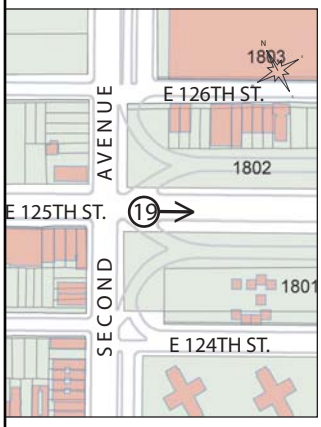
Figure 3.7-20 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 18 - View of Wagner Houses from E 125th Street & Second Avenue intersection

Key Map



Viewpoint 19 - View looking east from E 125th Street towards Triborough Bridge

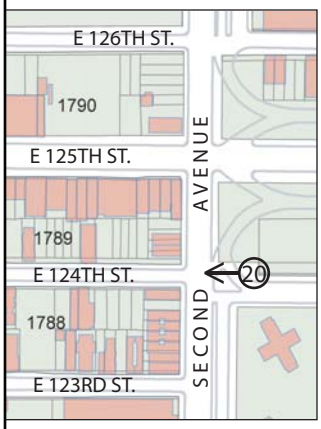
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

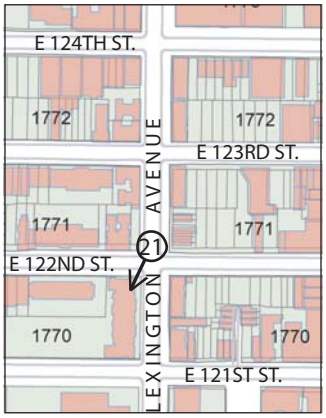
Figure 3.7-21 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 20 - View looking west on E 124th St. from Second Avenue

Key Map



Viewpoint 21 - View of a residential tower at Lexington Avenue between E 122nd & E 123rd Street

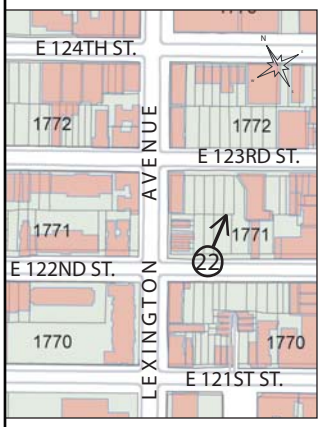
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

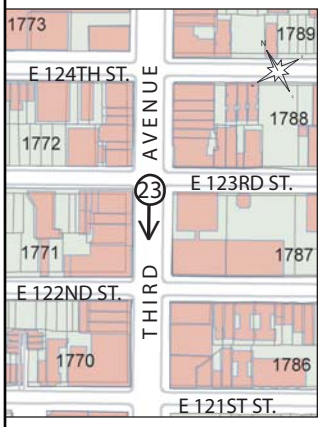
Figure 3.7-22 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 22 - View of McNair playground at E 122nd Street between Third & Lexington Avenue

Key Map



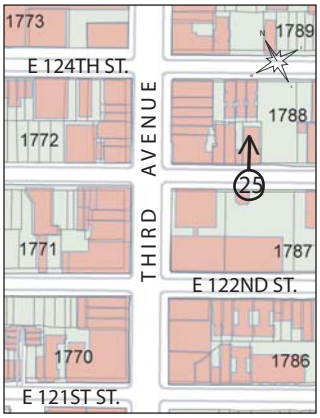
Viewpoint 23 - View of Third Avenue from E 123rd St. looking South

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

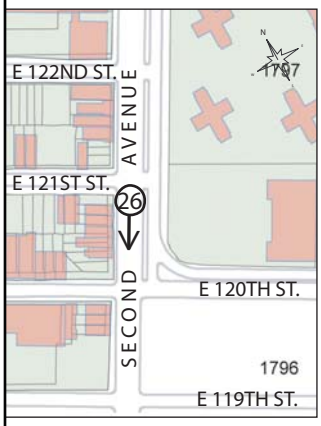
Figure 3.7-23 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 25 - View of Chambers Memorial Baptist Church on E 123rd St. between Second & Third Avenue

Key Map



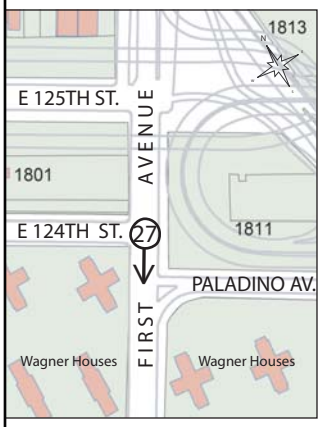
Viewpoint 26 - Second Avenue from E 121st St. looking South

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

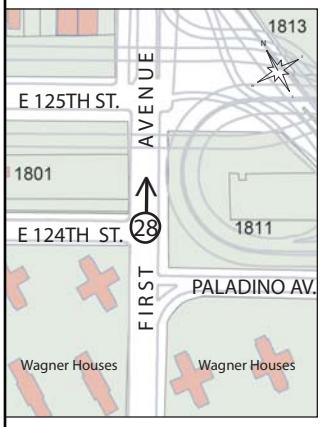
Figure 3.7-24 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 27 - View of Wagner Houses looking South on First Avenue from E 124th Street

Key Map



Viewpoint 28 - View looking north on First Avenue to Triborough Bridge ramps

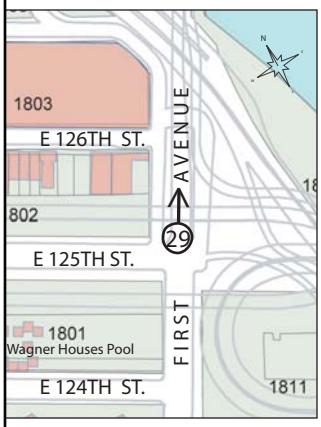
Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

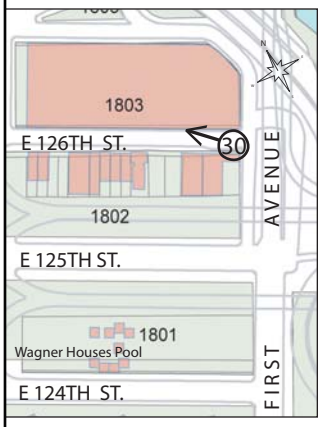
Figure 3.7-25 - Study Area Photographs

Key Map



Viewpoint 29 - View of First Avenue looking north towards Willis Avenue Bridge

Key Map



Viewpoint 30 - View of the MTA bus depot from First Avenue & E 125th St. intersection

Photos: Environmental Simulation Center / June 08, 2007

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

Figure 3.7-26 - Study Area Photographs

3.7.2 FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Project site

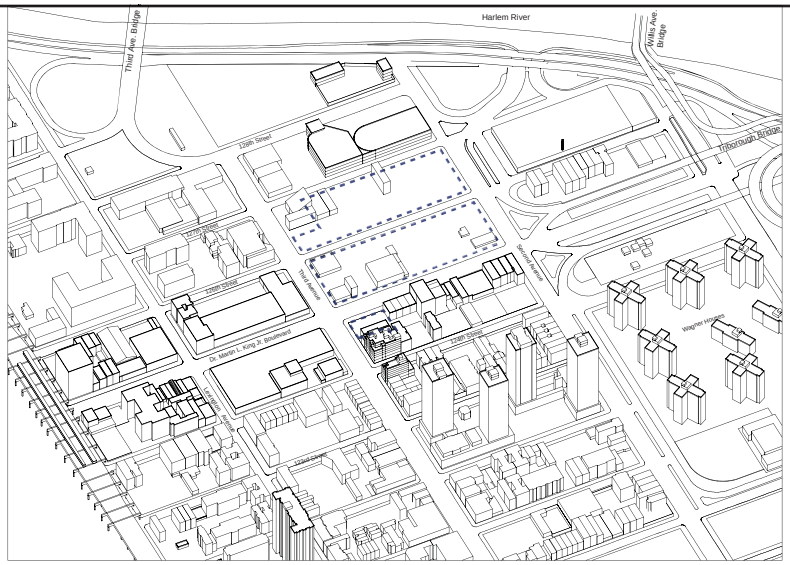
URBAN DESIGN

No change in the urban design character of the project site is expected under conditions without the proposed action in the year ~~2012~~2016. The current zoning on the project site that faces much of 125th Street (M1-2) will continue to act as an impediment to uses considered desirable for a commercial corridor.

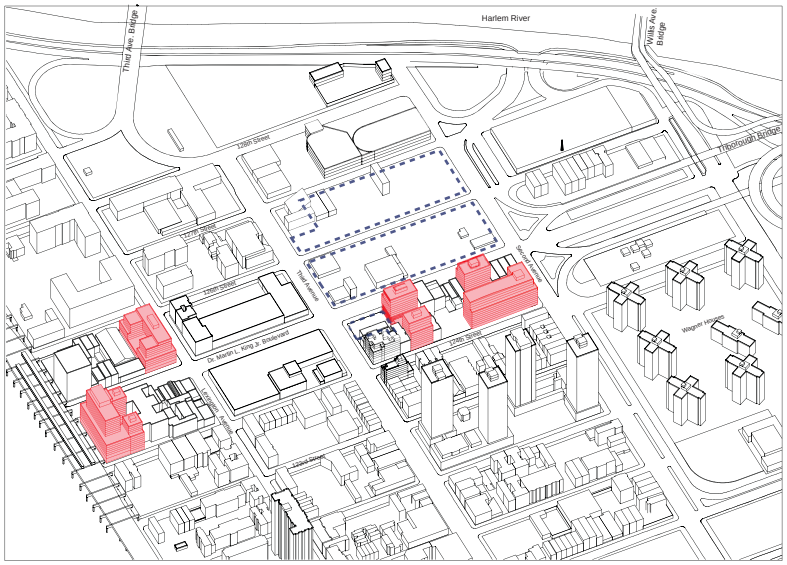
STUDY AREA

Five new developments are expected to occur within the study area regardless of whether the proposed action is implemented or not. They are all within the rezoning area of the 125th Street Corridor Rezoning and Related Actions project. Three of these developments are on Block 1789, another is on Block 1774, and a third is on Block 1773. These expected developments will intensify activity along East 125th Street and represent an increase in density for the area, replacing vacant and underutilized land. It is expected that these developments will be built on a base that continues the existing streetwall of East 125th Street and that ground floor retail uses will help to foster an active streetscape.

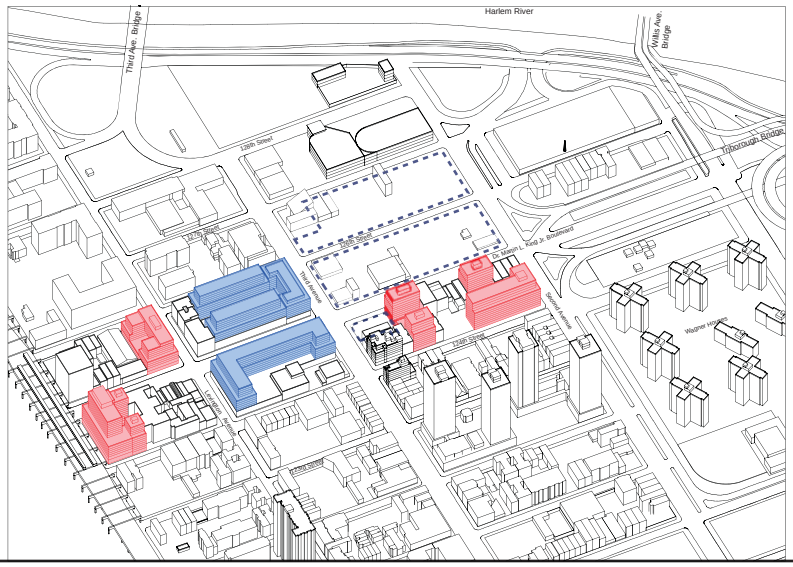
The 125th Street Corridor Rezoning and Related Actions project within the study area would increase existing allowable densities. This means that many other sites that are not expected to be developed by the build year of ~~2012~~ 2016 would have additional development capacity and would be considered to be "soft-sites." While it is unknown if these sites will ever be developed, the 125th Street Corridor Rezoning and Related Actions project would allow them to be developed at higher densities than are currently allowed. Figure 3.7-27 shows Existing Conditions, the Future Without the Proposed Action, and a practical build-out of several of these soft sites under the new 125th Street Corridor rezoning east of Park Avenue. The practical buildout of sites that would be expected to occur after ~~2012~~ 2016 is considered only for the urban design analysis, according to the methods described in the *CEQR Technical Manual*.



Existing Conditions



Future Projected Development



Future Projected and Potential Development

Source:
New York City Department of City Planning
125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions.

NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.

Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Existing Buildings
- Future Projected Development
- Future Potential Development

Figure 3.7-27
Future Without the Action Isometric Views

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

The 125th Street Corridor Rezoning and Related Actions project is expected to facilitate the construction of larger buildings on certain sites characterized by a continuous streetwall along East 125th Street and a mix of uses. These changes would be beneficial for the urban design conditions of the study area as it will bring more activity to the area and upgrade physical conditions.

This area will also see the eventual construction of the Second Avenue Subway, which has a planned terminus at 125th Street with entrances at Lexington Avenue and Park Avenue. The increased transportation access should also increase pedestrian activity in the area, resulting in a more active streetscape in this already busy area. However, the segment of the Second Avenue between 96th Street and the 125th Street terminus is not expected to be in place by 2012.

VISUAL RESOURCES

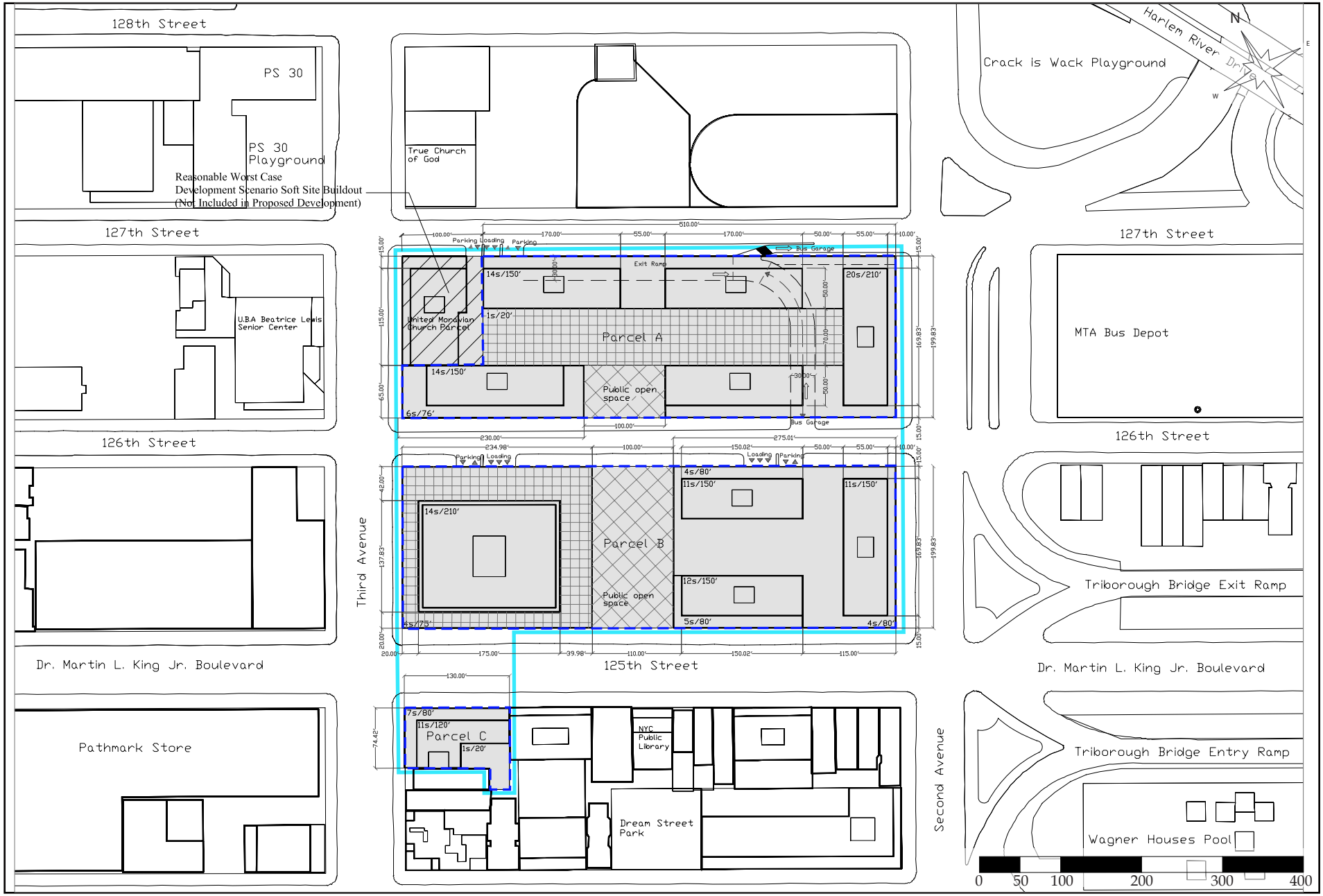
Without implementation of the proposed action, visual resources in the area would be expected to remain largely unchanged, as view corridors and existing historic structures would be unchanged.

3.7.3 FUTURE WITH THE ACTION

Project site

URBAN DESIGN

In the future with the proposed action, primarily vacant and underutilized land on the project site would be replaced with a new mixed-use development consisting for the most part of residential, retail, office, commercial and hotel uses. A large, publicly accessible urban plaza is proposed to provide mid-block access from 125th Street to 126th Street, and surface parking lots used for MTA buses would be relocated underground. As shown in plan view as Figure 3.7.28 and isometric view in Figure 3.7.29, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts related to urban design conditions of the project site, rezoning area or study area, and would transform the project site from its substantially degraded urban design condition into an active, multi-use site.



Legend

Project Site Boundary

Rezoning Boundary

*Preliminary Site Plan based on meeting urban design guidelines. Building massing is represented for visual simulation purposes only.

Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Figure 3.7-28 - Proposed Conceptual Site Plan*

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Source: DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

*Preliminary Site Plan based on meeting urban design guidelines.
Building massing is represented for visual simulation purposes only.

Figure 3.7-29 - Proposed Conceptual Plan Isometric View*

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Future conditions with the proposed action are expected to reflect a dramatic improvement in urban design conditions compared to the future without the proposed action. The new buildings proposed for the site would be much larger than the buildings that currently exist on the site, and would be characterized by a much larger grain of building frontages, and a more intensive array of uses, than would otherwise be present under future conditions without the proposed action. The proposed development would bring activity further east on the 125th Street corridor, transforming portions of its eastern end that are primarily zoned for manufacturing uses to be more consistent with the mixed-use development pattern that is prevalent on blocks to the west.

The proposed project would bring new office, retail, cultural, hotel, and residential construction, and new open space, to the blocks between Second and Third Avenues, north of 125th Street. The project is designed so that up to four levels of retail uses line the base of the proposed mixed-use buildings, which are expected to draw shoppers from outside the immediate neighborhood. The office tower at the corner of Third Avenue and 125th Street would bring additional office workers to the area, and the residential and hotel uses would help to foster street level activity at all hours. The form of the proposed buildings along 125th Street would encourage this street level activity. The buildings are proposed to be built to the lot line, maintaining a consistent streetwall that is interrupted only at mid-block for the proposed open space. The proposed open space is designed not only to create a pedestrian connection to the portion of the development north of 126th Street, but also to serve as a visual connection to the activity and open space along 126th Street.

Ground floor retail would also encourage street level activity along 126th Street. Two floors of retail are proposed on the north side of 126th Street. This is expected to be smaller scale retail, servicing the needs of future residents and the surrounding neighborhood. Required parking entrances and loading docks are proposed for the south side of 126th Street to service the buildings on Parcel B. A mid-block pedestrian crossing at 126th Street connecting the open spaces on the two blocks would allow pedestrians to avoid these curb cuts should it be feasible.

The project's edge at 127th Street faces the back of an automobile dealership and surroundings that are less residential in character than other portions of the surrounding neighborhood. As such, this edge of the site presents urban design challenges. The proposed East 125th Street Development would have loading docks, vehicular parking garage access, and a bus ramp accessing a lower level bus garage on East 127th Street. The only change in the block form of the project site occurs on this block and affects the sidewalk. The ramp up from the lower level bus garage on East 127th Street is proposed to take up a portion of the existing sidewalk from about 120 feet from Second Avenue to the corner of Second Avenue. The portion of the sidewalk used by the bus ramp would be replaced by a sidewalk built on the project site itself. The proposed project does not make any change to the street hierarchy.

The portions of the development that face avenues have a consistent streetwall and buildings without any setback from the street. Transparency at the ground floor is proposed along the avenues, either with retail, or lobbies for residential or office uses. No curb cuts for parking or loading have been placed on any of the wide streets, and have instead been located on 126th and 127th Street.

Building bulk, form and arrangement of the proposed East 125th Street Development follow design guidelines for the site that were prepared by a Task Force. These guidelines describe what is known as contextual buildings in New York City. The specifics of contextual buildings vary according to zoning district, but are described as generally consistent with existing neighborhood character in terms of height, bulk, setback from the street line, and width along the street frontage. Contextual buildings are high coverage, relatively low buildings with a consistent streetwall and setback. Two buildings of the proposed project considerably exceed the normal contextual height limits established for a C6-3 contextual district (145 feet). These are the residential tower on the east side of Block 1791 and the office tower on the west side of Block 1790. Both of these towers are 210 feet tall. The other buildings on the site are a maximum of 150 feet tall, which exceed the typical maximum height for contextual buildings in a C6-3 district by five feet. All buildings are constructed on a base built to the lot line, which at its maximum is 85 feet tall on the office tower. Although they exceed C6-3 zoning regulations, they would comply with the design guidelines. The other buildings have a base ranging from 76 to 80 feet in height. On block 1791, the rear yards of these buildings contain an above-grade accessory parking garage that is 20 feet tall. The portion of the project site on Block 1789 contains a single residential building over street level retail. The base height is 80 feet, while the total building height is 112 feet.

STUDY AREA

The intensity of use of the project site under future conditions with the proposed action represents a dramatic change for both the project site and the study area. The project would be in keeping with changes that are occurring and planned along the 125th Street corridor. It would serve as the eastern anchor to the 125th Street corridor and would complement new developments that have already occurred, or which are planned.

While taller than most of the new buildings built or planned for the study area, heights of proposed buildings would not be exceptional in the study area. The mid-rise buildings at 150 feet are similar in height to most of the buildings that comprise the nearby Wagner Houses public housing complex (approximately 138 feet), while the two towers at 210 feet rank as the 6th and 7th tallest buildings in the study area. While the building heights proposed would be similar to large developments in the study area, the proposed project would generally have a much larger building footprint than other developments in the study area. Table 3.7.3 details proposed building footprint coverage compared to the subareas in the study area.

Table 3.7-3: Sub-Area and Project Site Future With the Action Building Height and Coverage

Area	Mean building height (in stories)	Footprint coverage (as percent of lot area)	Mean size of building footprint (square feet)
Project site	13.5	81%	53,147
Southeast Sub-Area	18.3	21%	8,959
Southwest Sub-Area	4.0	58%	4,041
Northeast Sub-Area	2.0	8%	5,500
Northwest Sub-Area	4.0	61%	7,608

Source: Environmental Simulation Center, 2007.

The higher building coverage proposed within the East 125th Street Development is expected to be beneficial for urban design conditions of the study area, bringing more activity to the sidewalks of the area while maintaining a continuous streetwall that would create an attractive environment for pedestrians. Urban design conditions in the northwest subarea reflect building coverage of the proposed project, whereas urban design conditions to the southeast feature the tower-in-the-park form, with low coverage, tall buildings. Each of the subareas have similarly large footprint buildings, including the Pathmark store at Lexington Avenue and East 125th Street, the MTA bus Depot that covers nearly all of Block 1803 to the east, and the car dealership directly north of the project site across East 127th Street.

Considering the proposed intensity of use of the site and the available publicly accessible open spaces nearby, the higher building coverage proposed is considered to be appropriate. Figures 3.7-30 through 3.7-34 show building height and building coverage in the study area. Figure 3.7-35 shows a street level view of the future condition without the action compared to the future condition with the proposed action from the vantage point of a pedestrian walking east on the south side of 125th Street near Third Avenue.

Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

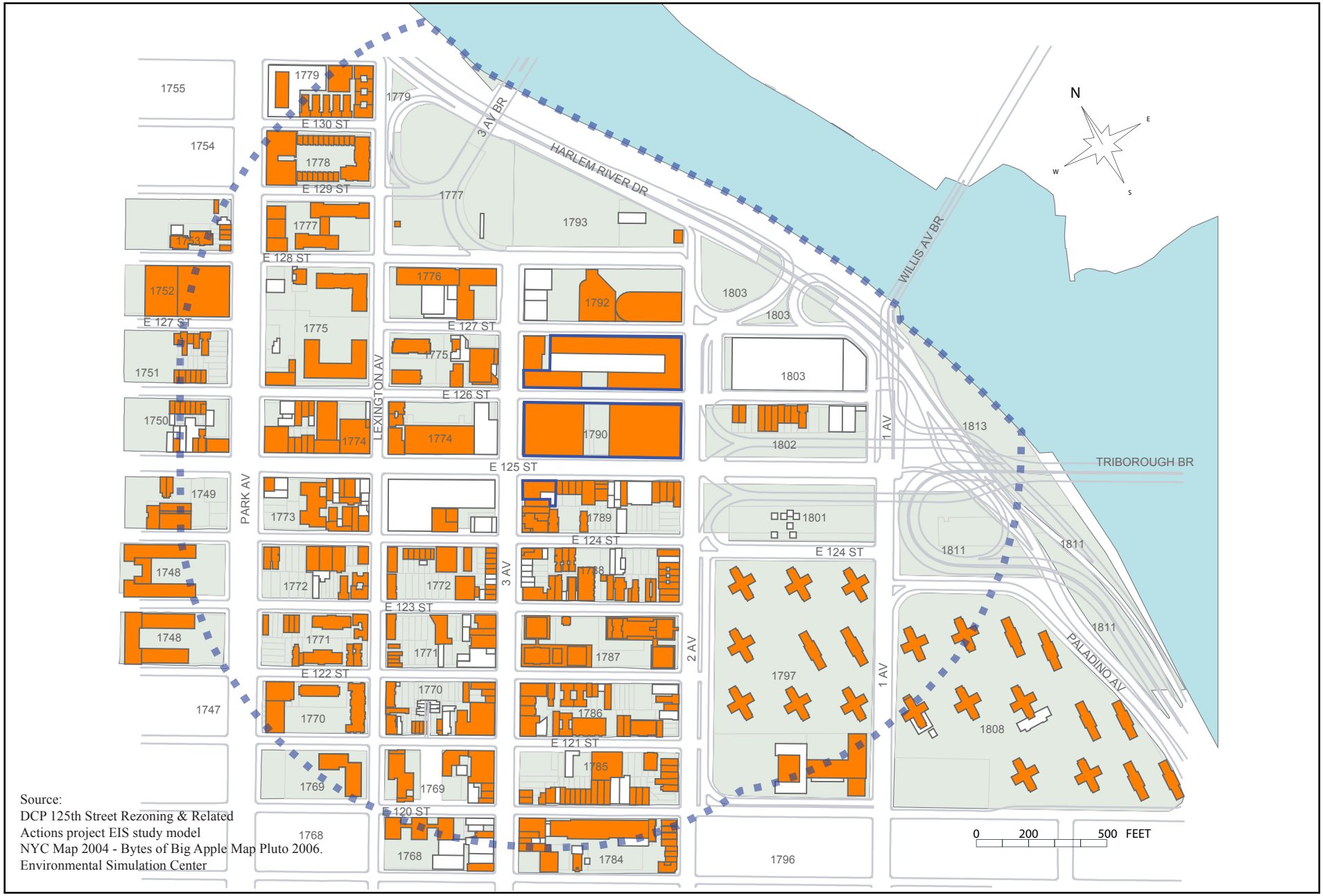
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings

Figure 3.7-30 - Buildings in Study Area - Proposed Conditions

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

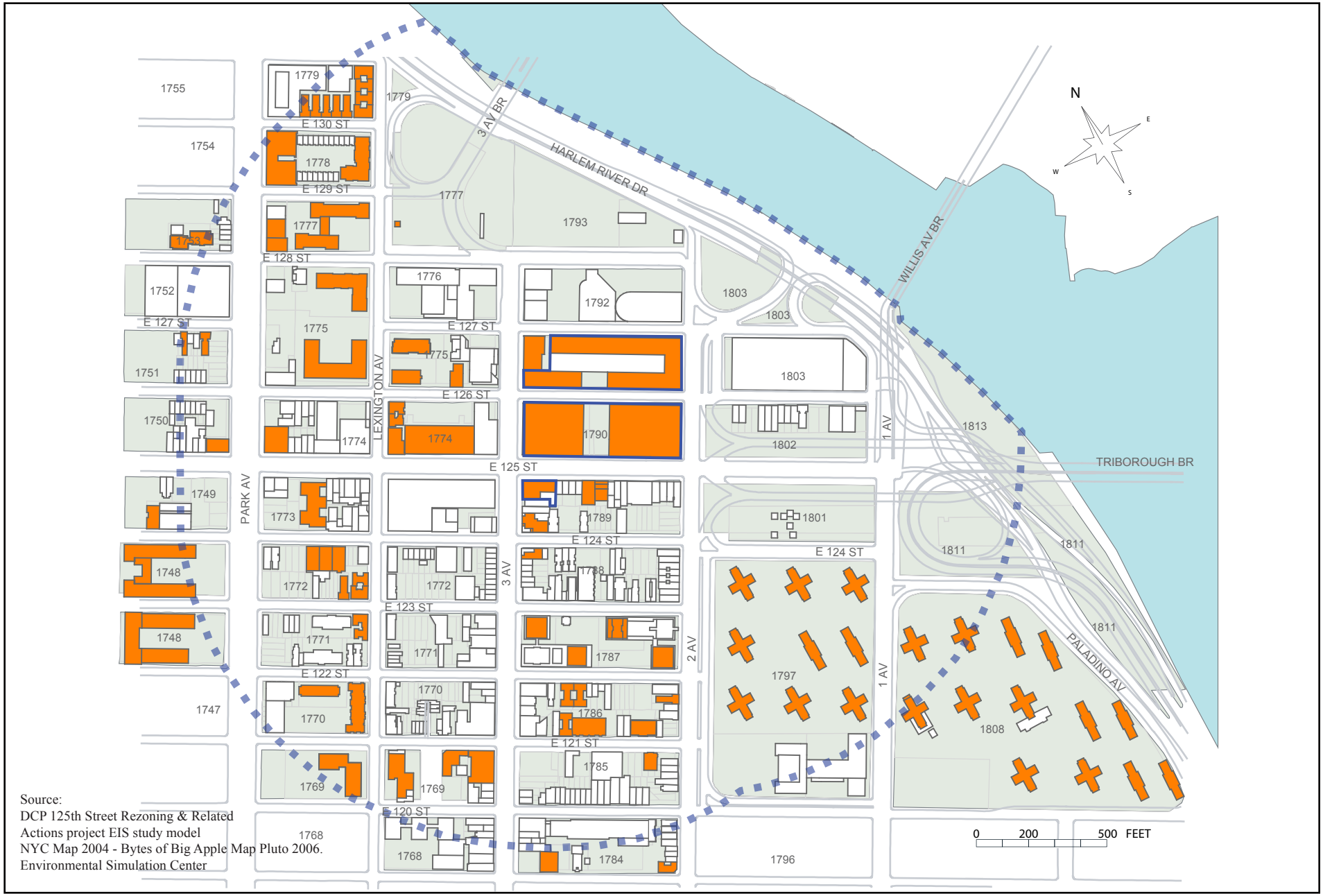
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 30 Feet

Figure 3.7-31 - Buildings Higher Than 30 Feet - Proposed Conditions

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

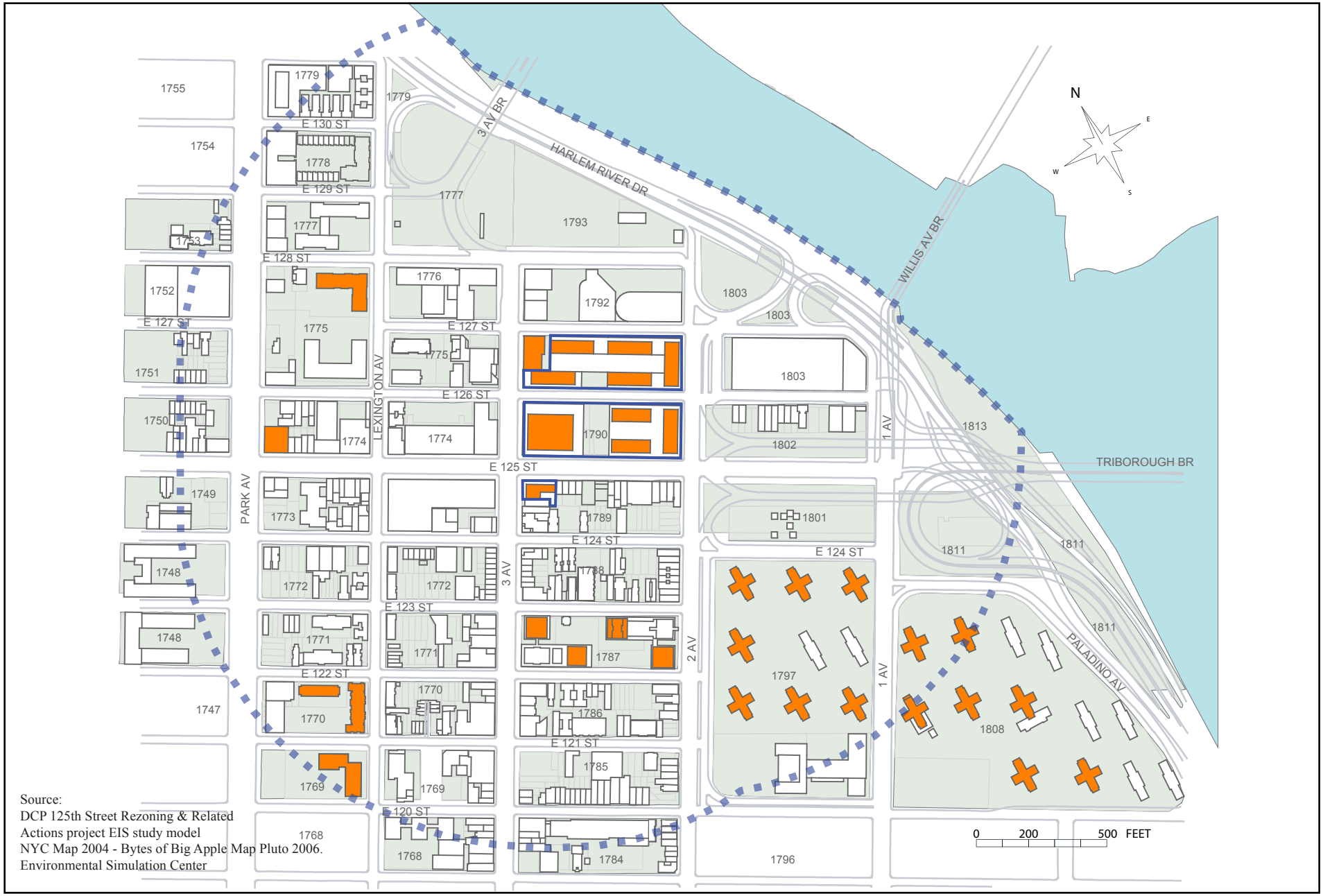
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 60 Feet

Figure 3.7-32 - Buildings Higher Than 60 Feet - Proposed Conditions

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 100 Feet

Figure 3.7-33 - Buildings Higher Than 100 Feet - Proposed Conditions

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Source:
DCP 125th Street Rezoning & Related Actions project EIS study model
NYC Map 2004 - Bytes of Big Apple Map Pluto 2006.
Environmental Simulation Center

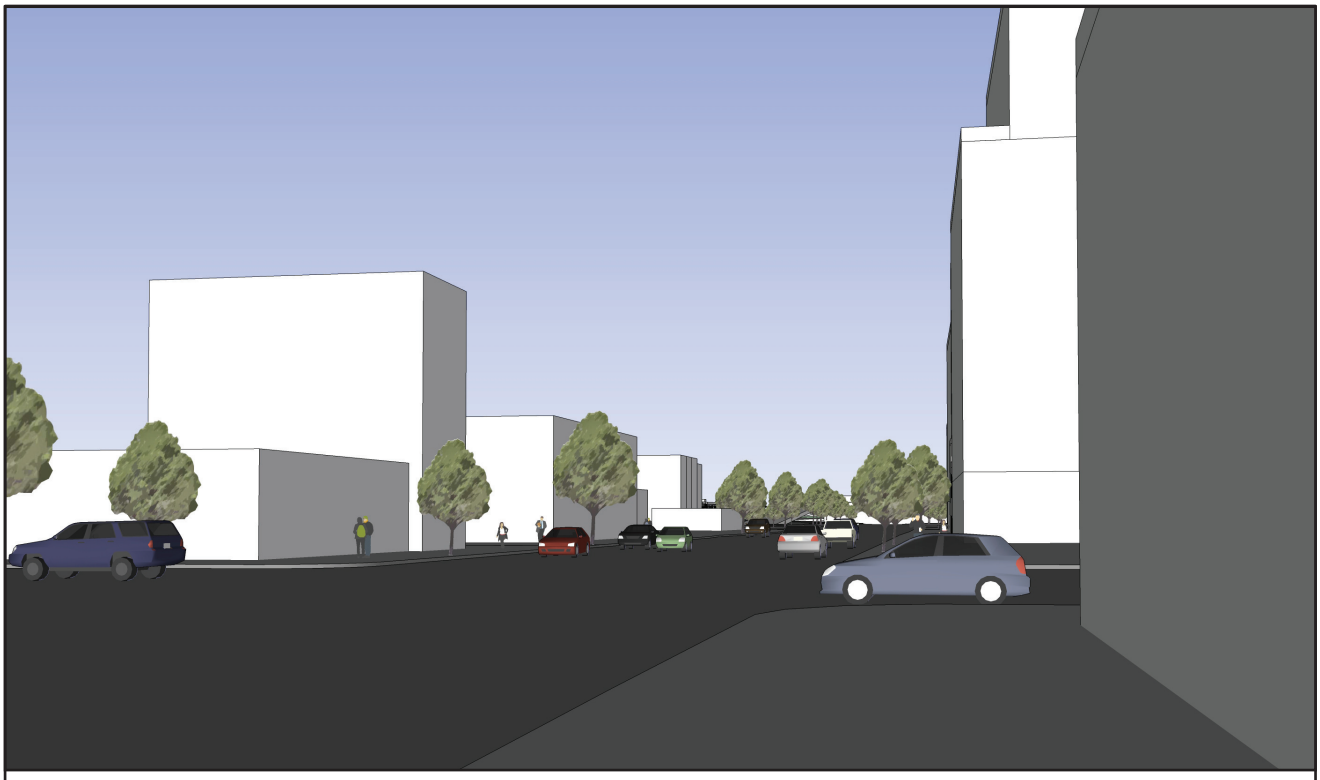
Legend

- Project Site Boundary
- Study Area
- Buildings Higher Than 150 Feet

Figure 3.7-34 - Buildings Higher Than 150 Feet - Proposed Conditions

East 125th Street Development EIS

NYC Economic Development Corporation



Future without the action - View looking east from the E 125th Street and Third Avenue intersection

Future with the action - View looking east from the E 125th Street and Third Avenue intersection

Figure 3.7-35
Simulated Street Level Views along East 125th Street

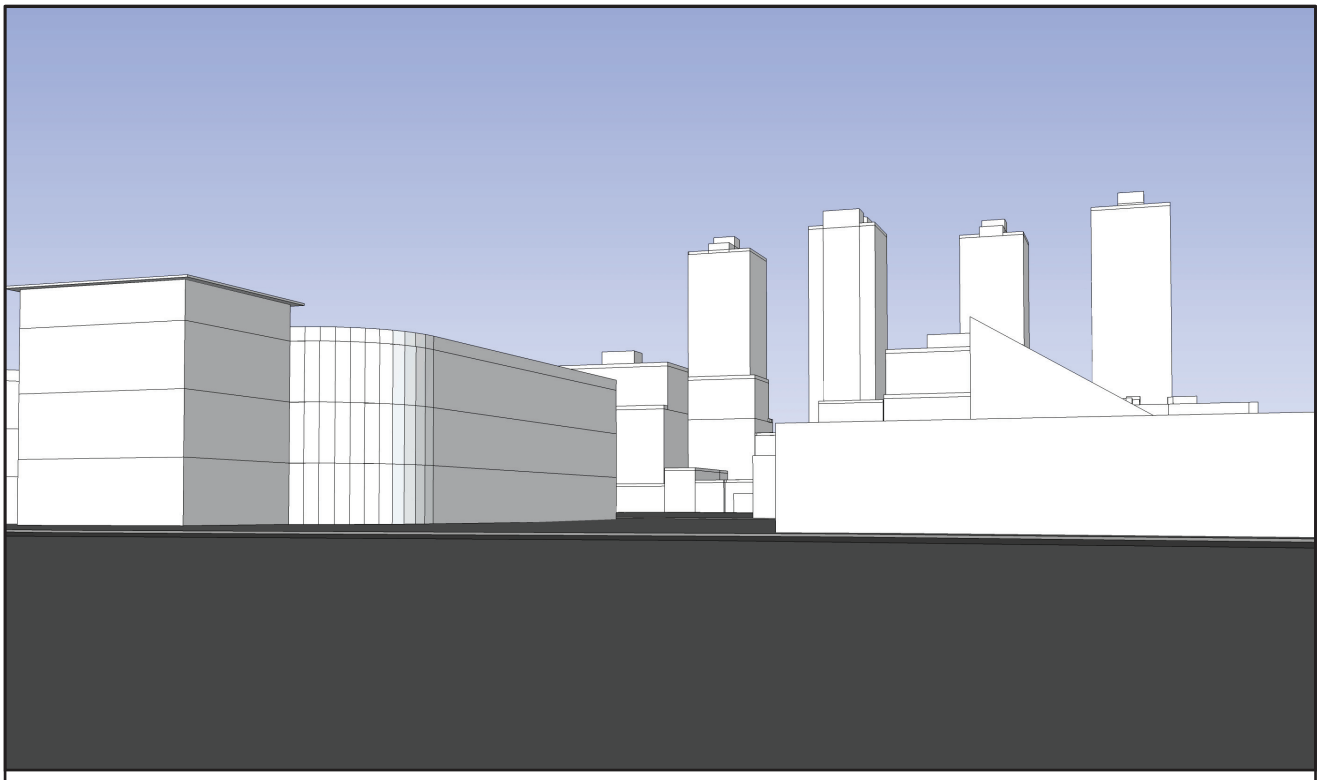
East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation

VISUAL RESOURCES

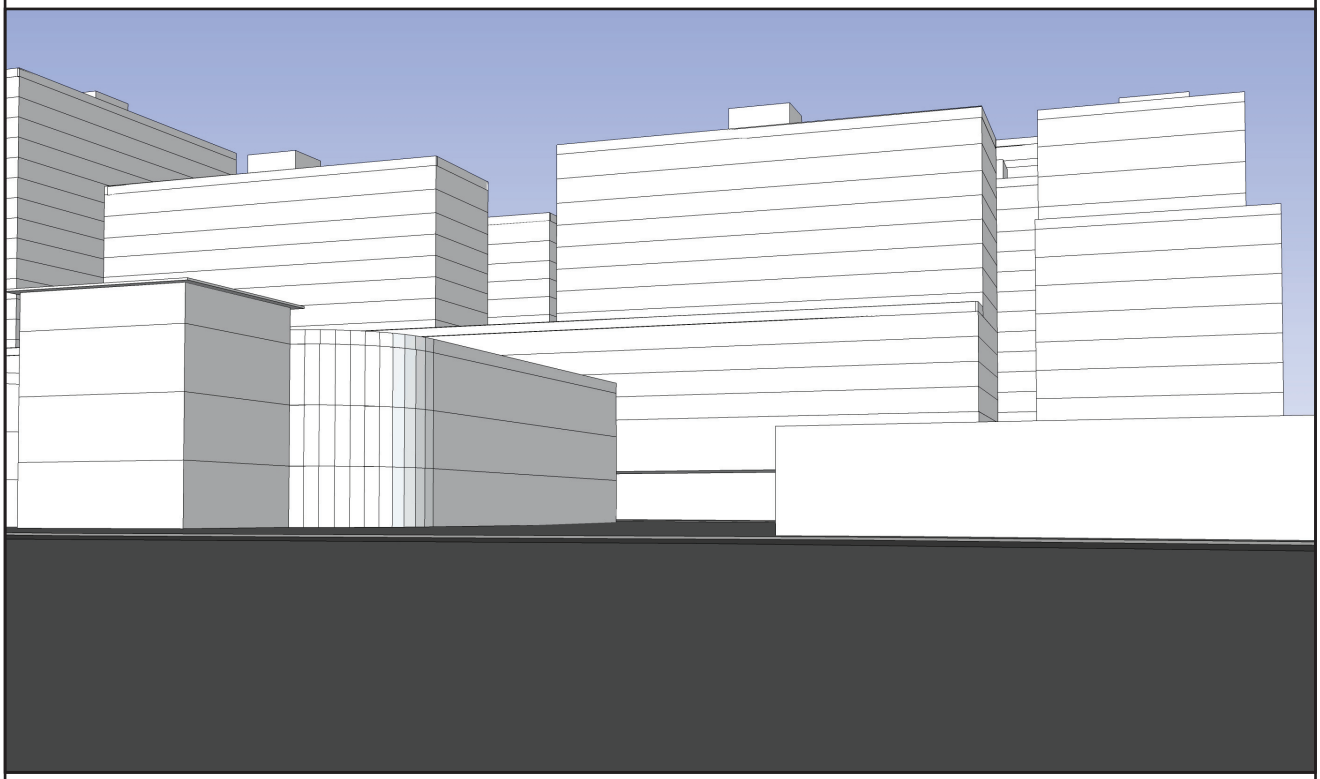
The proposed action is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on visual resources in the study area. Existing notable view corridors down the Avenues would remain unobstructed and views to the New York Public Library 125th Street Branch would also be unobstructed from publicly accessible viewpoints.

The project would obstruct views to some way-finding landmarks in the study area. Some partially obstructed views to the western abutment of the Triborough Bridge would become totally obstructed. More notable, however, are the views to Taino Towers. These towers, at 325 feet, are the area's tallest buildings and are visible throughout much of the study area, whereas the Triborough Bridge abutment has only limited visibility in the study area. While not a listed visual resource, Taino Towers are notable as a way-finding landmark to help to orient the area's pedestrians. Views to Taino Towers from the publicly accessible open spaces along the Harlem River, north of the project site, would be either partially or completely obstructed by the proposed action. Figure 3.7.36 shows a street level view from the center of the Harlem River Park playfield, between 128th Street and the Harlem River Drive, in both the future without the action condition and with the future with the proposed action condition. The proposed action would completely obstruct views to Taino Towers from this location.

The proposed East 125th Street Development would replace Taino Towers as a way-finding landmark from some viewpoints to the north such as those shown in figure 3.7-36, and would become a new way-finding landmark from some viewpoints to the south. While visibility to the proposed action would not extend as far as Taino Towers, the building's location at the edge of Manhattan bounded by low buildings and open spaces to the north and east would ensure substantial visibility to and from the project throughout much of the study area.



Future without the action - View looking south from Harlem River Park playfield



Future with the action - View looking south from Harlem River Park playfield

Figure 3.7-36
Simulated Street Level Views from Harlem River Park

East 125th Street Development EIS
NYC Economic Development Corporation