

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter considers the potential of the proposed actions to affect urban design and visual resources on Site A and Site B, as well as in the surrounding area. The proposed actions would dramatically alter the appearance of the sites by replacing a private tennis club, parking and vacant areas, and a manufacturing facility used for distribution purposes with a largely residential development comprising low-, mid-, and high-rise buildings, public parks, and open space areas. Development on this prominent waterfront site, which is visible from Manhattan and Brooklyn in addition to Queens, would bring a number of new structures of a larger scale and more modern design than the current context. These new structures would alter the urban design character of Sites A and B and the immediate surrounding area. Therefore, an analysis of urban design and visual resources is appropriate and has been conducted.

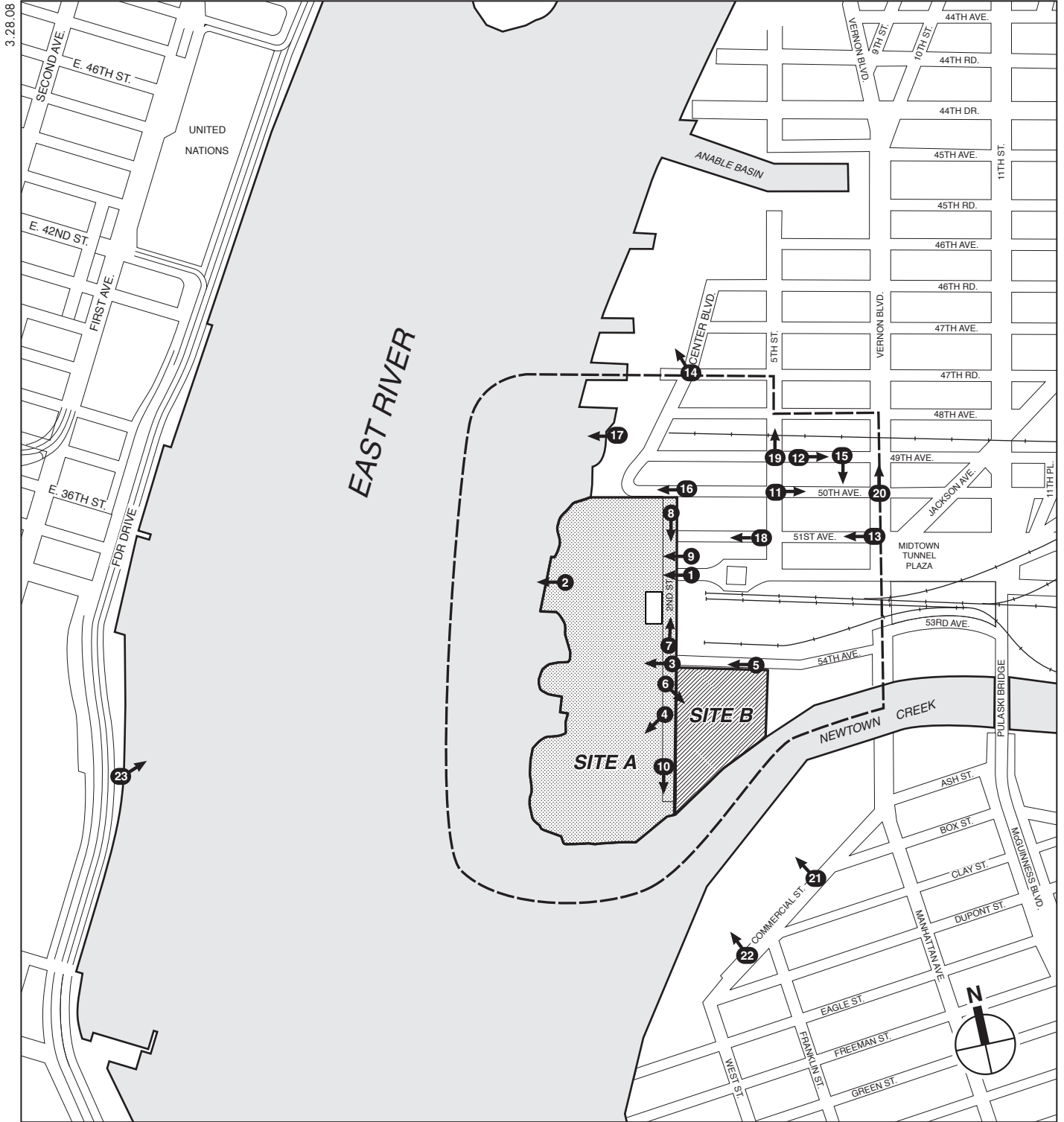
The study area for the analysis of urban design and visual resources has been defined as the area from which the project would be most visible. The study area is generally bounded by 48th Avenue and 47th Road to the north, Vernon Boulevard to the east, Newtown Creek to the south, and the East River waterfront to the west (see **Figure 8-1**). In addition, views from Greenpoint, Brooklyn near Newtown Creek and views from the East River waterfront in Manhattan between East 34th and East 39th Streets toward the project sites were considered in the evaluation of visual resources.





This chapter has been prepared in accordance with the 2001 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*. As defined in the Manual, urban design components and visual resources are the elements that determine the “look” of a neighborhood—i.e., the size and shape of buildings, their arrangement on blocks, the street pattern, and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis examines each of these characteristics for existing conditions and the future with and without the proposed actions.

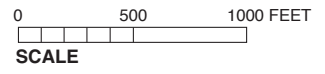
**PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**

This analysis concludes that the proposed actions would not have any significant adverse impacts on the urban design and visual resources of the study area.

The proposed buildings would be similar in height to the buildings currently constructed or under construction to the north as part of the Queens West development but the proposed height and setback provisions would reduce the allowed tower dimensions to less than the towers at Queens West. With a consistent streetwall with heights ranging from 40 to 70 feet, street trees and landscaping, and new park spaces, the urban design of the new development would be compatible with the urban design of the nearby residential community, which includes Queens West and portions of the Hunter’s Point neighborhood to the east of Queens West with a varied mix of building types. The new streets at Site A and Site B would continue the existing street hierarchy from the study area onto the project sites, connecting the new neighborhood to the surrounding area.



-  Site A
-  Site B
-  Visual Resources Study Area Boundary
-  Photograph View Direction and Reference Number



The proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on visual resources. The new development would not block any significant view corridors or views of visual resources, limit access to any resource, change the study area's urban design features so that a visual resource is no longer dominant in the area, or change the study area's urban design features so that the context of a visual resource is adversely altered. The proposed actions would maintain existing view corridors to the water and would greatly enhance visual access to the waterfront, making available to the public sweeping views of the water and Manhattan skyline as well as the Brooklyn waterfront.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this analysis considers the effects of the proposed actions 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, create view corridors, define the flow of activity through an area, and create the basic format on which building arrangements can be organized.
- ***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 define its visual and urban design character. Building type refers to a distinctive class of buildings and suggests distinguishing features of a particular building. Examples of building type include industrial loft, church, gas station, and walk-up tenement.
- ***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 be varied in their site plans. This urban design feature helps to convey a sense of the overall form and design of a block or a larger area.
- ***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.
- ***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 pedestrians' immediate visual experience.
- ***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 actions on the area's ***visual resources***. The *CEQR Technical Manual* defines visual resources as an area's 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.

## C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Site A and Site B are located at the end of a peninsula formed by the East River and Newtown Creek. Both sites are large parcels on the water's edge and at the end of the neighborhood's street grid. They are industrial sites at the edge of a mixed residential and industrial neighborhood, and they offer unique access to the waterfront in an area with few natural features.

### PROJECT SITES: URBAN DESIGN

#### *BLOCK FORM AND STREET PATTERN*

##### *Site A*

Site A is located on the Hunter's Point peninsula, on the tip of land formed by the intersection of Newtown Creek with the East River. Site A includes one built street, 2nd Street, which forms the eastern boundary of the site (see **Figure 8-2**). The site is bounded on the north by 50th Avenue and on the west and south by water. Thus, Site A currently consists of one large, roughly rectangular parcel. (However, Site A excludes a rectangular parcel of land on the west side of 2nd Street south of Borden Avenue, occupied by an Amtrak vent shaft.) The site is at the end of the regular street grid of the surrounding neighborhood, discussed below, and constitutes one large "superblock," much larger than a typical city block and undivided by streets.

Site A also includes a number of mapped streets that are not built. These were mapped in connection with the Queens West proposal for the site, which is described in Chapter 1, "Project Description." As illustrated in that chapter (see Figure 1-4), the mapped streets include a north-south road parallel to and west of 2nd Street (Center Boulevard), east-west streets extending certain existing study area streets (54th Avenue and Borden Avenue) onto Site A, and a circular street grid at the tip of the Hunter's Point peninsula.

##### *Site B*

Site B is also roughly rectangular in shape. The site is bounded on the north by 54th Avenue and on the west by 2nd Street (Site A). On the east, the boundary is the adjacent property line. Newtown Creek forms the site's southern boundary and is on a diagonal relative to the site's other boundaries. This site, approximately 7.5 acres, is larger than a typical city block.

#### *BUILDING BULK, USE, TYPE, AND ARRANGEMENT*

##### *Site A*

The northern half of Site A is almost fully occupied with low-rise structures and associated paved parking lots. From 50th Avenue to just south of Borden Avenue, the portion of Site A west of 2nd Street to the East River shoreline is developed with three large low-rise buildings that are the main buildings of a private tennis club, Tennisport. These buildings consist of a white quilted tennis "bubble" structure and two beige metal shed-like buildings with peaked roofs, which together house 16 indoor tennis courts. The bubble is oriented parallel to 2nd Street and the two sheds are perpendicular. Between these three buildings is a smaller two-story brick building. Eight outdoor tennis courts occupy the area between the buildings, so that the site is almost fully covered by these tennis-related features. East and south of the buildings and courts, the Tennisport facility also has paved parking areas as well as an unpaved area on 2nd Street being used as a dog run. At the front of the parking lot, a small one-and-a-half-story red brick



- Site A
- Site B
- Visual Resources Study Area Boundary



Block Form and Street Pattern  
in the Study Area  
**Figure 8-2**

building with rusticated brownstone details and a hipped roof is separate from the other Tennisport structures. This building, which forms a streetwall at the 2nd Street sidewalk, dates to the 19th century and was formerly the Queens County Savings Bank. Its former window openings along 2nd Street and facing the Tennisport parking lot are sealed with bricks; on the west side it has a modern one-story concrete addition. A red concrete block wall topped by an iron fence, and an iron fence with a gate separate the parking lot from 2nd Street; access is via a drive across from Borden Avenue (see **View 1, Figure 8-3**).

Behind (west of) the Tennisport facility, Site A also houses a ferry landing for the New York Water Taxi. The landing is situated on the water, behind a large parking lot. A large yellow trailer and a metal pier covered in a white tent-like structure make up the ferry landing. Adjacent to the ferry landing is Water Taxi Beach, a seasonal recreational operation that appears to have no permanent structures associated with it: several picnic tables, a volleyball net, and two concession stands designed to look like tropical huts are situated on a bed of sand separated from the nearby parking area by a chain-link fence (see **View 2, Figure 8-3**). The water's edge in this area is a hard bulkhead and no access to the water or bathing is permitted at the site.

The southern half of Site A is predominantly vacant. A paved parking lot south of 54th Avenue is used in connection with the Anheuser-Busch distribution facility on Site B (discussed below). This area is paved and striped for parking spaces, and surrounded by a chain-link fence (see **View 3, Figure 8-4**). The rest of the southern half of Site A is vacant and predominantly unvegetated, with the exception of the shoreline area. Large piles of rocks and dirt dominate the landscape, which is bordered by a chain-link fence (see **View 4, Figure 8-4**). The extension of 2nd Street south of 54th Avenue continues as a paved, street-like area that is occupied by trucks associated with the distribution use on Site B.

#### *Site B*

Site B is currently fully occupied by low-rise, utilitarian manufacturing buildings that are used by Anheuser-Busch as a beverage distribution facility and by NBC for storage, office, and studio-related uses. In front of the buildings is an accessory parking lot associated with the NBC building; behind the buildings is a truck parking area used by Anheuser-Busch.

At the western end of the block, near the corner of 2nd Street and 54th Avenue, three low, rectangular buildings fully occupy the site area. All three are one story in height. The building that faces 2nd Street has a flat roof and no adornments. It is set back from the street by a paved area used for parking. Abutting this building and each other, the two mid-block buildings are industrial building with pitched roofs; large, industrial-style windows; and large vehicle entrance doors onto 54th Avenue (see **View 5, Figure 8-5**). To the west of these buildings, a paved parking area fronts on 54th Avenue.

The remainder of the distribution facility, south of the three buildings and paved parking area, consists of a complex of large connected industrial buildings. At 2nd Street, a modern three-story office component occupies the full lot area to the building line. This office building is faced in brown brick with bands of windows and a curved corner element (see **View 6, Figure 8-5**). To the south and to the east of the office component are one-story large-footprint industrial buildings used for distribution. The distribution facility is set back from 2nd Street by a paved area. The north and south facades are lined with truck loading bays. Attached to the distribution center building on the easternmost portion of Site B is another brick two-story low-rise industrial building that houses a facility operated by NBC. The NBC building has a large parking lot in front and is surrounded by a chain-link fence topped with barbed wire.



Site A, looking west from 2nd Street and Borden Avenue 1



Water Taxi Beach, looking west from Site A 2



Anheuser-Busch parking area (Site A) looking west from 2nd Street 3



Southern portion of Site A looking southwest from 2nd Street 4





Site B and 54th Avenue, looking west from 54th Avenue 5



Anheuser-Busch distribution facility (Site B) looking southeast from 2nd Street 6

*STREET HIERARCHY AND STREETScape*

*Site A*

Second Street, which is part of Site A, is a two-way street that dead-ends on the site at approximately 54th Avenue. South of that street, a paved area continues until the waterfront, but it does not function as a public right-of-way and is used for truck parking associated with the Anheuser-Busch distribution facility on Site B. Second Street is currently a narrow street, with one lane of traffic in each direction.

The streetscape along 2nd Street on Site A is industrial in character (see **Views 7 and 8 in Figure 8-6**). With the exception of the former Queens County Savings Bank near 51st Avenue on Site A, no buildings are built to the building line, and along most of the street there are no buildings at all. Therefore, there is no streetwall along the west side of 2nd Street. The wall and fence along the Tennisport site and the various chain-link fences along the sidewalk's edge on the rest of 2nd Street create an informal streetwall. Between 50th Avenue and approximately 54th Avenue, both sides of 2nd Street have sidewalks and curbs, but in some locations the curbs are in disrepair. Along most of the street, the sidewalks are wide and in poor condition. Some are made of concrete, and others have been paved over with asphalt; at many locations, the sidewalks are sometimes used for parking. There is little street furniture in the area, with the exception of light poles and street signs. The only street trees are at the north end of 2nd Street, near 50th Avenue. On-street parallel parking is available along the street, without alternative-side parking regulations. Near 54th Avenue, the Amtrak vent building construction site (described below) has closed the sidewalk and parking lane nearby.

On the east side of 2nd Street, the streetscape is also industrial in character and is bordered predominantly by industrial buildings. At the north end of the street, near 50th Avenue, new residential uses and a commercial use are exceptions to this pattern. South of Borden Avenue, the Long Island Rail Road's (LIRR) Long Island City train yard and an associated conical structure front on 2nd Street and do not form a consistent streetwall. A temporary construction bridge crosses 2nd Street to connect the new vent facility and the train yard (see **View 7 in Figure 8-6**). This area is described further in the discussion of the study area, below.

*Site B*

Site B does not include any streets. The streets adjacent to Site B are 2nd Street, described above, and 54th Avenue. Along 2nd Street, the buildings on Site B are set back from the building line, and the paved areas and sidewalks in front of the buildings are used for parking. Fifth-fourth Avenue is a two-way street with one lane of traffic in each direction serving the many industrial businesses fronting along it. Along the south side of 54th Avenue, much of Site B is a paved parking lot; on-street parking on 54th Avenue also lines this side of the street. Fifth-fourth Avenue is lined with loading docks and wide sidewalks with multiple curb cuts. There is no street furniture in the area, aside from cobra head lighting, street signs, and utility poles. The sidewalks are wide, in fair to poor condition, and are sometimes used for parking.

*NATURAL FEATURES*

*Site A*

An important element in the overall visual character of Site A is its East River shoreline. Between 50th Avenue and a point just past Water Taxi Beach, Site A's East River shoreline is finished with a bulkhead. South of the New York Water Taxi landing, the water's edge is more



Construction bridge across 2nd Street (Site A) looking north 7



View south on 2nd Street from 51st Avenue 8

## **Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions DEIS**

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natural, with a slope and riprap defining the shoreline. In addition to the land area and shoreline, a portion of Site A is land underwater in the East River. Remnants of old piers and a former float bridge are visible in the water at approximately 54th Avenue.

Site A's shoreline south of the bulkheaded portion includes two promontories that rise up to form small but notable hills on the site. The slope of these hills that faces the river is overgrown with grass, trees, and shrubs.

Public access to the water's edge on Site A is limited. Other than Water Taxi Beach, most of the shoreline is inaccessible.

### *Site B*

Site B's southern boundary is formed by Newtown Creek. The site's Newtown Creek shoreline is bulkheaded. This property is not accessible to the public.

## **PROJECT SITES: VISUAL RESOURCES**

The structures and limited vegetation on Sites A and B are not visual resources.

From the project sites, there are sweeping views of the East River, East River bridges, and the Manhattan skyline, as well as prominent and iconic buildings on the Manhattan skyline, such as the United Nations, the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings, the Citicorp building, and the Met Life (former Pan Am) building. To the extent that they are publicly accessible, these views of the skyline and of iconic Manhattan skyscrapers and East River Bridges are visual resources.

From the publicly accessible sidewalks on Site A along 2nd Street, there are views west to Manhattan (see **View 9, Figure 8-7**). In most views, the United Nations building is large in the forefront of the skyline. The Empire State Building features prominently on the skyline in views from the site (see **View 4, Figure 8-4**). To the north of Borden Avenue, the Chrysler Building is visible over the rooftops of intervening buildings at the Tennisport facility. Wide and unobstructed views are available of the East River and Manhattan from the shoreline at Site A, including Water Taxi Beach. These views are also available from other locations on Site A, including the Anheuser-Busch parking lot and the portions of Site A that are not publicly accessible. On Site A, the view corridor north on 2nd Street is truncated where it terminates at 50th Avenue, but views south feature the steel tower of the Brooklyn side of the Williamsburg Bridge (see **View 10, Figure 8-7**). However, most of Site A is not accessible to the public, so unobstructed views are not available.

The shoreline of Site B also offers views of Manhattan, the East River, and Brooklyn, but this area is not accessible to the public.

## **STUDY AREA: URBAN DESIGN**

The study area for the analysis of urban design was defined to include the area from which the new development at Site A and Site B would be most visible. As described below, it includes the area of Hunter's Point in the immediate vicinity (roughly ¼ mile) of the project sites.

### *BLOCK FORM AND STREET PATTERN*

East and north of the project sites, the study area is generally laid out in a rectangular grid pattern (see **Figure 8-2**). The southern portion of the study area, south of Borden Avenue, is characterized by very long, rectangular blocks that are not interrupted by north-south streets,



United Nations and Chrysler Building, looking west from 2nd Street (Site A) 9



Williamsburg Bridge visible in distance, looking south from 2nd Street (Site A) 10

since 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard terminate on the north side of the rail yard there (discussed below). Borden Avenue is a wide east-west street that encompasses a vent structure for the Queens-Midtown Tunnel within the street bed.

North of Borden Avenue, the study area's blocks are rectangular and part of a regular grid system. Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street run north and south, and a series of east-west streets (47th Road through 51st Avenue) divide the area into typical New York City blocks. At the western edge of the study area at Queens West, however, the East River shoreline and Center Boulevard, which is on a diagonal, create an irregular end to otherwise rectangular blocks.

*BUILDING BULK, USE, TYPE, AND ARRANGEMENT*

The study area can generally be divided into three subareas, based on the block and lot shape, building footprint, and building type. As described below, the blocks south of Borden Avenue subarea are characterized by large-footprint, low-rise industrial buildings. In the subarea north of Borden Avenue and west of 5th Street, most buildings have large footprints, and the study area includes a number of new high-rise residential buildings. In contrast, the subarea north of Borden Avenue and east of 5th Street is dominated by low-rise buildings on small parcels. Most of these are older buildings that are a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial in use.

*South of Borden Avenue*

On the long blocks south of Borden Avenue, the study area is generally occupied by large, low-rise industrial and transportation-related buildings. Within the bed of Borden Avenue, the vent building for the Queens-Midtown Tunnel is unusual because of its placement within the wide street, separated from other structures. This building is an approximately 100-foot-tall, boxy gold brick structure in the Art Deco style (for more information, see Chapter 7, "Historic Resources"). Immediately south of Borden Avenue, the LIRR's Long Island City rail yard occupies a large portion of the study area and continues eastward outside the study area boundaries. This rail yard is notable predominantly for the absence of substantial buildings on the site; instead, the site is filled with railroad tracks and three small low-rise concrete buildings near the tracks. At the western end of the yard, LIRR's Long Island City passenger station also occupies a portion of this site. The station consists of a concrete platform with a canopy overhead and a small station building. In addition to these structures, the LIRR parcel also includes a small conical structure at the corner of Borden Avenue and 2nd Street. This structure is used by the Triborough Bridge and Tunnel Authority (TBTA) for salt storage. The rail complex is separated from Borden Avenue by a black iron fence and from 2nd Street by a chain-link fence. A paved parking lot is adjacent to the station and yard along Borden Avenue at the southern terminus of Vernon Boulevard.

On a parcel along 2nd Street and surrounded by Site A, Amtrak is currently constructing a new ventilation structure on a parcel on the west side of 2nd Street across from the Long Island City rail yard. Today, this structure is an active construction site surrounded by chain-link fencing.

The LIRR yard superblock continues to 54th Avenue. Large one-story industrial buildings are located on this block on the south side of the yard, fronting on the north side of 54th Avenue. These utilitarian warehouse-style buildings occupy the full block, with no setbacks. On 54th Avenue, large doorways and loading dock entrances are among the limited features on the buildings' facades. On the south side of 54th Avenue adjacent to Site B, the land along Newtown Creek is similarly developed with plain low-rise warehouse-style buildings.

*North of Borden Avenue and West of 5th Street*

The northwestern portion of the study area is characterized by the large, newly constructed residential towers associated with the Queens West development and other new residential developments, in combination with older low-rise industrial buildings near 5th Street. On the east side of Center Boulevard north of 50th Avenue, three new high-rise residential buildings occupy the three blocks in this portion of the study area; on the west side of Center Boulevard is a vacant, fenced area to be developed in the future. These buildings, modern in appearance and clad in brick, glass, or metal, consist of towers up to 42 stories high on lower-rise (5- and 6-story) bases that occupy the full building lot. Across Center Boulevard from the residential towers, the west side of the street is lined with a new waterfront park area. The park area has a wide area paved with large stone pavers and stone seating areas, landscaping and grass, and, most notably, wooden piers and iron float bridges.

East of the Queens West buildings and closer to 5th Street, two other large new residential buildings are currently under construction: the Foundry, at 5th Street just north of Borden Avenue; and the PowerHouse, one block to the north at 2nd Street between 50th and 51st Avenues. As discussed in section D, "The Future Without the Proposed Actions," below, the PowerHouse is the renovation and enlargement of a former Pennsylvania Railroad power generating facility. Adjacent to these parcels are low-rise industrial and commercial buildings along 5th Street between 49th and 51st Avenues and along 2nd Street between Borden and 50th Avenues. These are built to the sidewalk line and many have large vehicle entrances or loading bays. The corner of 2nd Street and Borden Avenue has an active commercial use, a two-story restaurant known as the Waterfront Crabhouse.

*North of Borden Avenue and East of 5th Street*

The northeastern portion of study area is a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings that range in height from one to four stories, and are clad in brick, siding, stucco, or cement. The industrial buildings tend to be shorter, consisting of only one or two stories, while the residential structures are primarily two to four stories (see **Views 11 and 12, Figure 8-8**). In this area, a number of former industrial buildings are being converted to residential uses.

The east side of 5th Street generally has smaller buildings than the west side, with smaller building footprints and a mix of older residential and industrial buildings. However, similar to the northwest portion of the study area (west side of 5th Street), new residential buildings are being built to replace older manufacturing buildings. Recently completed buildings include the Galaxy, a five- to six-story red and brown brick building at the northeast corner of 5th Street and 50th Avenue, and the Gantry, a six-story building along 5th Street that steps down to four stories along 49th Avenue. The Gantry building has a metallic silver façade and protruding balconies at the northeast corner of 5th Street and 49th Avenue.

Between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street, most of the buildings on the midblocks are plainly designed, with the exception of a group of three-story row houses on 51st Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street. As described in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," these buildings are designed in the Greek Revival style (see **View 13, Figure 8-8** and also View 9 in Figure 7-6 in Chapter 7). The buildings in the study area for the most part have high lot coverage and are built to the sidewalk with no front yards. Some older residential buildings have stoops that extend to the sidewalk; the rest are mostly built directly to the sidewalk line. This portion of the study area also includes two parks, which create a relief from the full coverage of the area's



Typical neighborhood street, looking east down 50th Avenue from 5th Street 11



Mix of industrial and residential buildings, looking east down 49th Avenue 12



buildings. These parks, the Hunters Point Community Park and Andrews Grove Park, are on the south sides of 48th Avenue and 49th Avenue, respectively.

On the south side of 48th Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard, the entire southern blockfront is occupied by the Hunters Point Community Park. Most of the park consists of paved, blue-surfaced basketball and handball courts behind a chain-link fence topped with decorative sculpture. The eastern portion of the block contains landscaped areas, trees, and seating areas, set behind a low concrete wall. Andrews Grove Park, located on the midblock of 49th Street between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street, occupies about one-third of the southern side of 49th Street. This park is paved with brick and contains large mature trees, benches, and playground equipment.

Vernon Boulevard is a neighborhood commercial street, lined along the west side by three- and four-story residential buildings with ground-floor businesses. Most of these are older, walk-up-style buildings, some with original ornamentation, such as lintels and cornices. The storefronts on the ground level are adorned with a variety of signage and awnings, creating a visually active presence at ground level. St. Mary's Church, directly adjacent to the study area at Vernon Boulevard and 49th Avenue, is a strong visual presence in the study area. Its tall steeple towers above the structures in the study area by several stories and can be seen from Brooklyn and across the East River from Manhattan.

#### *STREET HIERARCHY AND STREETScape*

Vernon Boulevard, a north-south street, is an important corridor in the study area because it continues northward outside the study area and allows connections to Borden Avenue and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel on the south. It is also the primary commercial street in the area. Vernon Boulevard is a two-way street and typically has one travel lane and a parking lane in each direction. The other north-south streets, 5th Street and Center Boulevard, are also two-way streets and are less traveled because they do not continue outside the study area. Fifth Street is a relatively narrow two-way street with one travel lane and a parking lane in each direction. Center Boulevard is a wide two-way street, but it is only a few blocks long. Center Boulevard currently extends from 50th Avenue to 48th Avenue, with two travel lanes and a parking lane in each direction and no traffic signals.

North of Borden Avenue, the east-west streets in the study area typically terminate at 11th Street or Jackson Avenue, just east of the study area, because they cannot continue through the complex of rail yard facilities at the Sunnyside Yard, located east of Jackson Avenue. They are used by local traffic related to the residences and businesses on these side streets. While the east-west streets throughout most of the Hunter's Point neighborhood are typically one-way roadways with parking on both sides, the urban design study area has many exceptions to this pattern. These exceptions include the block of 51st Avenue between 5th and 2nd Streets, a narrow, two-way street; the blocks of 49th Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street, a narrow two-way street; and 48th Avenue, a wide two-way street with a median in the center to separate traffic. Between Center Boulevard and 5th Street, the median is planted; between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard, the median is designated by striping.

Borden Avenue, a wide street, is also a two-way street. Borden Avenue continues beyond the study area, providing connections to many key roadways in Long Island City and, outside the study area, serves as the service road for the Queens-Midtown Expressway. Borden Avenue typically has two travel lanes in each direction, with no parking. In addition, south of Borden Avenue, 54th Avenue also does not follow the same pattern as the residential streets to the north.

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This street is a two-way east-west street that serves the industrial uses that line it. It provides secondary access to the Long Island Expressway as well as eastern Borden Avenue.

The streetscape of the study area north of Borden Avenue is fairly typical of a low-rise mixed residential and commercial neighborhood in New York City. The east-west streets and 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard are lined with on-street parking and have sidewalks on both sides. Most of this portion of the study area is planted with street trees, with the exception of 50th and 51st Avenues between 5th and 2nd Streets where new construction is currently under way. The low-rise buildings, whether residential, commercial, or industrial, are generally built to the street line, forming a fairly consistent streetwall created by many individual small buildings. At some locations, some row houses or groups of row houses are set back slightly to provide room for small stoops. Between the residential buildings, most blocks also have small industrial buildings, many with vehicle entrances and curb cuts. No street trees are present in front of these buildings. In addition, the streetwall is broken by two parks in this portion of the study area—Hunters Point Community Park, located on the south side of 48th Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard, and Andrews Grove, on the south side of 49th Street also between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard.

As the major commercial street in the neighborhood, Vernon Boulevard is characterized by ground-floor retail uses with a mix of awnings and signage, a regular streetwall, few curb cuts, and the greatest pedestrian activity in the area. Typical street furniture in the area includes light poles, traffic lights, parking meters, and bus stops. Street trees also line the sidewalks. There is a subway station serving the No. 7 line at the intersection of Vernon Boulevard and 50th Avenue, which also contributes to the street life in this area. Vernon Boulevard terminates in the study area at Borden Avenue, and its southern blocks near this terminus are different from blocks to the north. Specifically, between 50th Avenue and Borden Avenue, Vernon Boulevard is very wide, with a center median dividing northbound and southbound traffic. Between 50th and 51st Avenues, the median is a landscaped open space (the Vernon Mall) with trees and seating. On-street parking lines both sides of the Vernon Mall. Between 51st and Borden Avenues, the center area is a parking area used for diagonal vehicle parking. This block is particularly wide because of the intersection with Jackson Avenue here and the fact that the eastern side of the street overlooks the Queens-Midtown Tunnel entrance below.

The streetscape at Queens West, in the western portion of the study area, is different from the neighborhood to the east of 5th Street. The bases of the new residential buildings are built to the street line, creating a single, consistent streetwall on each block. These blocks have few curb cuts or building entrances, other than the main building entrance. The sidewalks in this area are wide and occasionally include wide plazas. Street trees are small and newly planted. Portions of Center Boulevard have Belgian block pavers, giving the street a distinct appearance from the surrounding study area's streets.

Reproduction historic lampposts are found along Center Boulevard and 48th and 49th Avenues in the vicinity of the Queens West development. There are reproductions of old gas lamps along the perimeter of Gantry Plaza State Park. On the west side of Center Boulevard, Gantry Plaza State Park and adjacent Peninsula Park provide a wide, open expanse and access to the water. Large concrete spheres along the sidewalk mark the entrance to the parks.

Borden Avenue is wide and notable because of the Queens-Midtown vent building, which rises in the middle of the street between 2nd and 5th Streets. The street bends around either side of the building; in the middle of the street adjacent to the vent building, wide striped areas are used informally for parking. At the northeast corner of Borden Avenue and 2nd Street, the Waterfront

Crabhouse restaurant's anomalous retail presence is marked by a red awning and cars parked head-in at the curb, rather than parallel. Street trees are planted along the perimeter of the TBTA's salt storage site. Overall, however, the streetscape of Borden Avenue and 54th Avenue is industrial, with curb cuts and loading docks, parked vehicles on the sidewalks, and no street trees. Along Borden Avenue and the east side of 2nd Street, entrances to the LIRR's Long Island City station are via a gate through a fence around the Long Island City rail property.

At the eastern end of the study area, there are also several large billboards on Borden Avenue approximately five to six stories high, designed to be visible from the Queens-Midtown Tunnel entrance near Vernon Boulevard. These are both freestanding near the LIRR yard and on top of buildings along Vernon Boulevard between 51st Avenue and Borden Avenue.

### *NATURAL FEATURES*

Other than street trees and trees and landscaping in several small parks, most of the study area has few natural features. Overall, the topography is flat and there is little vegetation. However, the western edge of the study area includes the East River shoreline at Queens West. This area has been developed as a waterfront park, from which wide, expansive views are available of the water's edge, river, and beyond. The shoreline is manmade, with a bulkhead along most of the Queens West frontage and several piers that extend into the water. At the northern edge of the study area, the park extends in a promontory between 47th Road and 48th Avenue that is finished with a bulkhead and a riprap edge.

### **STUDY AREA: VISUAL RESOURCES**

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, visual resources are an area's unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. These can include historic structures, parks, natural features (such as rivers), or important views. With a mix of unadorned residential buildings and utilitarian industrial buildings, much of the study area does not include any visual resources. However, the study area does include several historic structures and small parks that can be considered visual resources. In addition, the study area also includes important views that are visual resources: wide waterfront vistas from the waterfront at several locations, and views of the Manhattan skyline, notable Manhattan skyscrapers, and East River bridges from many locations, including across Site A and down other study area streets.

### *PARKS*

The expansive waterfront views to the Manhattan skyline at Gantry Plaza State Park/Peninsula Park, and the park itself, are important visual resources. The park is located along the East River between 50th Avenue and 47th Road, and consists of a wide paved plaza with planters and long wooden piers that extend into the river, bounded by low railings. Two recently restored early-20th century float bridges—tall steel-framed structures originally used for loading and off-loading rail and barge freight—are located between the piers. "LONG ISLAND CITY" is painted in bold red letters on one of the float bridges, facing Manhattan. The park also includes a crushed stone and grassy area at the water's edge where portions of the original railroad tracks leading to the bridges have been retained. The edge of the park is lined with reproductions of cast-iron gas lampposts. Outside the study area but visible from the Queens West parks, the iconic Pepsi-Cola sign, which was removed from a former bottling plant north of the park before the plant was demolished, has been temporarily relocated to the public park in the northern section of Queens West (see **View 14, Figure 8-9**).



View west down 51st Avenue from Vernon Boulevard 13



Pepsi-Cola sign at Queens West, looking northwest from Center Boulevard 14

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Because of the urban nature of the study area, the two landscaped parks in its midblocks provide notable relief from the street grid and therefore can also be considered visual resources. These parks, the Hunters Point Community Park and Andrews Grove Park, are both located between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard, on 48th and 49th Avenues, respectively. While both have landscaped areas and trees, Andrews Grove Park, in particular, contains many mature trees and shaded areas (see **View 15, Figure 8-10**). Hunters Point Community Park has views westward to the Manhattan skyline. While these sites are visual resources in the study area, there are few views to the project sites from these parks due to intervening buildings and large trees.

### *HISTORIC RESOURCES*

The study area includes several historic resources that are also visual resources. In addition, other historic structures just outside the study area are visible from within the study area. These historic structures include the following:

- The Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, located in the middle of Borden Avenue just east of 2nd Street and Site A. This building is a historic resource that is visible from many locations in the study area, particularly in the area along and south of Borden Avenue, where parcels with low buildings or no buildings allow long vistas to the tunnel vent building.
- St. Mary's Church, just outside the study area on the east side of Vernon Boulevard at 49th Avenue. Views of the church and of its steeple rising above the neighborhood's lower buildings are important in contributing to the character of this study area.
- The large gantries at Gantry Plaza State Park and the Pepsi-Cola sign to their north along the Queens West waterfront. These are important visual elements in the study area's streetscape.

These historic structures are visible not only from the study area, but also from locations along the East River Esplanade in Manhattan and from certain locations in the Brooklyn portion of the study area, discussed below.

### *VEWS AND VIEW CORRIDORS*

#### *Queens*

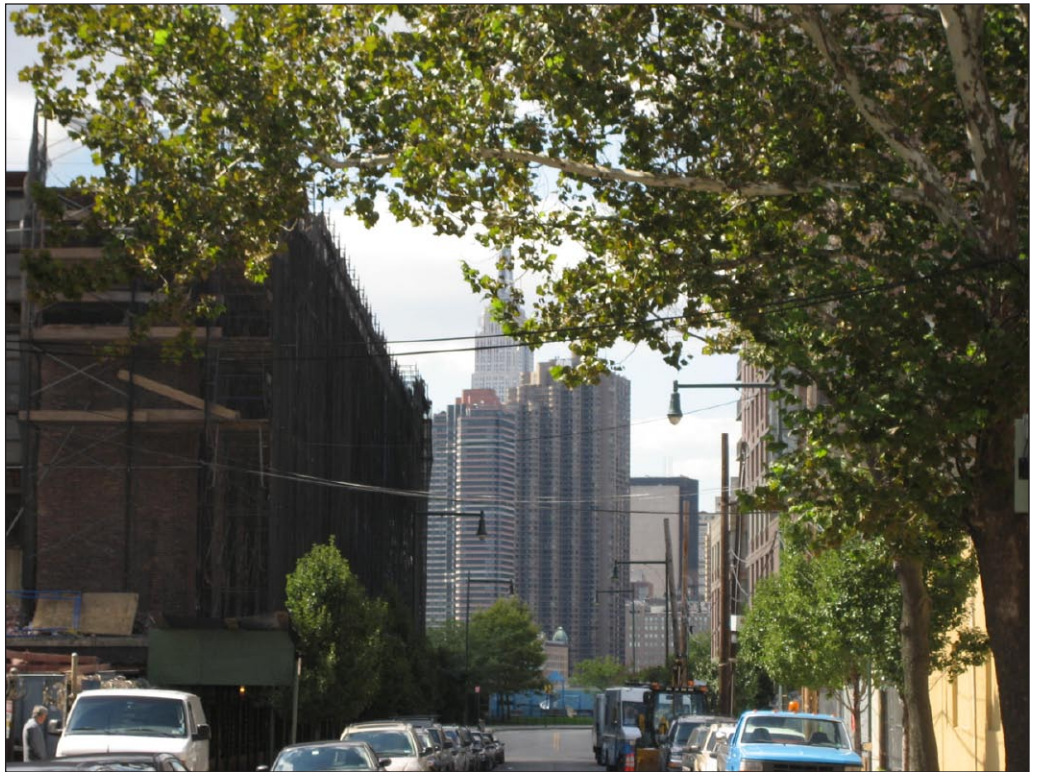
The study area has notable wide sweeping views from its waterfront. From the waterfront park at Queens West, these views include views of the East River, the bridges that cross the river, and the Manhattan skyline. The waterfront views are a significant visual resource in the study area.

Within the views of the skyline from the Queens West waterfront, numerous iconic Manhattan buildings are visible. Closest to the site, the United Nations complex is immediately across the river. Views of Tudor City, including the sign "TUDOR CITY" (which reads backwards in views from Queens, since it faces west into Manhattan), and the Empire State and Chrysler Buildings, are partially or completely obstructed by other buildings, depending on the viewer's location within the park. In most views, the Chrysler Building is partially blocked by the UN Secretariat building, although the spire of the Chrysler Building rises higher than the roof of the Secretariat and parts of the shaft and crown of the Chrysler Building are visible. The shaft of the Empire State Building is either fully blocked or almost completely blocked from view by the intervening buildings. In all views, the crown and spire of the Empire State Building are visible behind the buildings (see **View 16, Figure 8-10**).

Views of Manhattan skyscrapers and of East River bridges are also available from farther east in the study area, down the study area's streets. In much of the study area, long westward view



Andrews Grove Park, looking south from 49th Avenue 15



View of Empire State Building from 50th Avenue and 5th Street 16

corridors down east-west streets feature views of Manhattan. The Empire State Building features prominently in views west along the avenues south of 48th Avenue (see **View 5, Figure 8-5**), and the United Nations complex and the Chrysler Building are prominent in views west along the avenues north of 48th Avenue, and from Gantry Plaza State Park and the piers (see **View 17, Figure 8-11**).

As noted earlier, wide views are available across much of Site A toward the East River and Manhattan skyline. From farther east in the study area, view corridors down east-west streets that terminate at Site A also feature the skyline and the Empire State Building (see **View 18, Figure 8-11**). In views down 51st Avenue, the Empire State Building rises prominently above Tennisport's white tennis bubble on Site A. Views down Borden Avenue are blocked by the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, but west of the vent building, the Empire State Building is again visible above the buildings of the tennis facility on Site A. While a bend in 54th Avenue between 2nd Street and Vernon Boulevard limits the 54th Avenue view corridor, views west of the bend are again of the Empire State Building.

The length of view corridors on the north-south streets in the study area vary depending on the width and length of the streets. Views north on Center Boulevard are limited due to the curvature of the road and intervening buildings, but depending on the viewer's location, can feature a limited view of the truss of the Queensboro Bridge (see **View 19, Figure 8-12**). Views south terminate where Center Boulevard terminates at Site A, which is surrounded by a chain-link fence. Views to the north along 5th Street feature a portion of the Queensboro Bridge roadway, while views to the north along Vernon Boulevard feature the steel tower and structural supports of the Queensboro Bridge (see **View 20, Figure 8-12**).

#### *Views from Brooklyn*

The portion of Brooklyn closest to the project sites is the northernmost section of Greenport, along Commercial Street between approximately Manhattan Avenue and West Street. There is currently limited public access to the waterfront in this part of Greenpoint. Nonetheless, limited views of the Manhattan skyline are available between buildings and across undeveloped areas. From the Brooklyn waterfront at Manhattan Avenue, there are views across Newtown Creek of Sites A and B, the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, and sweeping, broad views of the Manhattan skyline, including the Empire State Building, Chrysler Building, and the UN Secretariat Building. Farther west along Commercial Street, glimpses of the skyline and of tall Queens West buildings are available behind existing buildings (see **View 21, Figure 8-13**). From the Newtown Terminal Barge Playground on the north side of Commercial Street and from the Right Triangle Park on the south side, the Manhattan skyline is visible but the project sites are only partially visible from the parks due to intervening tree cover (see **View 22, Figure 8-13**). Farther south, the Queens West buildings are clearly visible in views northward on Manhattan Avenue, which is the main commercial street in Greenpoint.

#### *Views from Manhattan*

From the Manhattan waterfront, the East River Esplanade provides sweeping views of Site A, the gantries at Queens West, the Pepsi-Cola sign (which is oriented to face the Manhattan waterfront), and the rest of Gantry Plaza State Park. The vent building for the Queens-Midtown Tunnel is also visible from the Manhattan waterfront, and the steeple of St. Mary's Church on Vernon Boulevard is partially visible in the distance between existing buildings (see **View 23, Figure 8-14**).



View of Midtown Manhattan from Gantry Plaza State Park 17



View west along 51st Avenue, from 5th Street 18





49th Avenue and 5th Street, looking north 19



Vernon Boulevard and 50th Avenue, looking north 20



View northwest from Commercial Street (Brooklyn) 21



View from Newtown Barge Park (Brooklyn) northwest toward project sites and Manhattan 22



Hunter's Point waterfront, viewed looking east from Manhattan waterfront **23**

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

### **PROJECT SITES**

In the future without the proposed actions, Sites A and B are expected to remain in approximately their current condition. The sites will continue to be large underdeveloped parcels with an industrial visual character. Wide views of the waterfront and Manhattan skyline will remain, but will be largely inaccessible to the public.

### **STUDY AREA**

As described in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," a number of new residential buildings are currently being constructed or are planned for construction by 2017 in the urban design and visual resources study area. These include the following:

- **The PowerHouse.** Directly across from Site A on 2nd Street between 50th and 51st Avenues, an old power station for Pennsylvania Railroad is being converted into a residential condominium building, the PowerHouse. When completed, this building will remain a massive, bulky building but will no longer have its former industrial appearance. The residential building will have bays of large arched windows and a taller, 11-story portion set back behind the original six-story structure.
- **The Foundry.** One block to the south of the PowerHouse, a large parcel directly north of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building is being developed with The Foundry condominiums. When complete, the building will rise to four stories and be clad in alternating sections of red and tan brick with large windows.
- **One Hunters Point.** Much of the northern blockfront of Borden Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard is being developed with a 12-story residential building that will be clad in glass and metal. The building will be rectangular in shape, with the long side along Borden Avenue, and will rise from the street to a setback above the eighth floor. Both this building and the PowerHouse will obstruct views to St. Mary's Church from the Manhattan waterfront.
- **Fifth Street Lofts (SSL).** A new residential building is being constructed on the north side of 49th Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard. The building is designed to resemble industrial lofts and will be a light-colored, six-story stone building built to the building line, with very large industrial-style windows.
- **Queens West.** Within the urban design and visual resources study area, one additional Queens West building will be constructed on the west side of Center Boulevard between 48th Avenue and 47th Road. In addition, just outside the study area (north of 47th Road), six more high-rise residential buildings are scheduled to be completed by 2017 as part of the final build-out of the Queens West development. In addition, the waterfront park is being expanded northward as the project is constructed. These new residential structures are altering the built context of the study area, creating a wide variety of building forms as the waterfront evolves into a higher density, mixed-use district.

In addition to these residential buildings, a new industrial building is currently under construction on the west side of 2nd Street surrounded by Site A. This building, a ventilation building for the railroad tunnels that pass beneath the site, will be two stories and approximately 40 feet tall and rectangular in shape. It will be built to the street line and will rise without setbacks. It will be faced in brick with ventilation louvers on the second floor facing 2nd Street.

With completion of these developments, by 2017 the portion of the study area west of and close to 5th Street will be transformed into a neighborhood dominated by new residential buildings, including those recently completed and those currently under construction. These buildings typically occupy large footprints and are built to the streetline, although they include more setbacks, larger windows, and balconies not typical of the older buildings in the study area. The portion of the study area east of 5th Street will also see some residential construction, but the urban design in this area is otherwise expected to remain similar as it is today. The southern portion of the study area, particularly the area south of Borden Avenue, is expected to remain in its current condition.

Visual resources and views in the study area will remain similar to what they are today. However, the upper floors of the PowerHouse and One Hunters Point will be the same height as the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building and will create a new backdrop for the vent building that lessens its prominence when viewed from distant points. These buildings and the Foundry will also block some views of the steeple of St. Mary's Church when viewed from distant points, including from Brooklyn and from the Manhattan waterfront.

In addition, outside the study area, the Greenpoint waterfront in Brooklyn is expected to undergo a gradual conversion from low-rise industrial to residential as a result of the 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, which allows higher-density residential uses along the waterfront.

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

### **PROJECT SITES: URBAN DESIGN**

The Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions would dramatically transform Site A and Site B from their current condition to a new development of residential buildings with retail and community facility uses. On Site A, a network of new streets, sidewalks, and bikeways would be developed, creating seven new city blocks from the single superblock on the site today. Center Boulevard would be continued southward onto Site A and would connect to the rest of the street network. In addition, a new waterfront park would continue along the west side of Center Boulevard along the site's East River and Newtown Creek frontage. On Site B, it is anticipated that the single parcel would be divided into two new blocks, with a new east-west street between them. This site would also be developed with new residential buildings. If 55th Avenue is not built through the site, Site B could be developed as single-block development.

#### *BLOCK FORM AND STREET PATTERN*

##### *Site A*

On Site A, the existing mapped streets that are not built would be demapped and a new network of streets would be mapped. These streets would conform to and extend the existing grid of the surrounding study area. Second Street would remain in place, curving Center Boulevard would be extended onto the site from Queens West to the north, and east-west streets would be extended from the study area across 2nd Street to meet Center Boulevard. As a result of these new streets, Site A would be divided into seven new city blocks, bounded on the east by 2nd Street, on the west by Center Boulevard, and on the north and south by the east-west avenues to be built across the site. Most of these new blocks would be fairly regular and rectangular in shape, although their western boundary would curve to reflect the Center Boulevard design. At the southern end of the site, the new blocks would bend to occupy the peninsula, and therefore these blocks would be slightly irregular in shape. The southernmost block would be narrow and

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rectangular and located along the Newtown Creek waterfront. There would be no streets south of this block.

### *Site B*

No new streets would be mapped across Site B, but the reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDS) analyzed in this EIS anticipates that the developer of the site would use the zoning bonuses available and provide a new east-west street (55th Avenue) to roughly bisect the site and curve northerly at the eastern terminus to intersect with 54th Avenue. As a result, Site B would consist of two parcels, one a regular rectangular city block and the other a triangular waterfront block.

### *BUILDING BULK, USE, TYPE, AND ARRANGEMENT*

#### *Site A*

The new Special Southern Hunter's Point Zoning District would establish special use, bulk, and height and setback provisions for the new development at Site A. The urban design elements to be regulated by the Special Zoning District would include the following:

- Streetwalls, including mandatory minimum and maximum heights and setbacks;
- Maximum heights and floor areas;
- The amount of transparency for non-residential ground-floor space (e.g., amount of window area on each façade);
- Locations of towers and maximum floor plates for towers on each parcel;
- Parking entrance locations and location of curb cuts; and
- Provision of wide sidewalks and street trees throughout the development.

The resulting development on Site A would consist of new buildings on the seven new blocks, referred to as Parcels A, B, C, D, E, F, and G in this EIS. The new buildings would be built to the streetline, creating a consistent streetwall generally 40 feet (four stories) to 70 feet (seven stories) on all sides of the blocks. Above the maximum streetwall height, buildings would set back and taller portions would rise from behind the setback. Building elements would have a variety of heights, with low- to mid-rise elements along most streets and a total of nine high-rise towers on the seven blocks. On most blocks, the buildings may surround an open courtyard in the center of the block and built atop the parking garages. On Parcel B (between 51st and Borden Avenues), however, the new school building would occupy a bulkier mid-rise building, 7 to 9 stories tall.

Low- to mid-rise elements would range in height from 40 to 125 feet in height (equivalent to approximately 4 to 12 stories). The nine towers would be narrow and rectangular and would range in height from 260 feet (26 stories) to 400 feet (40 stories). Two of the nine towers would be permitted to rise to that maximum height. The new buildings would be residential, with retail and community facilities at the base. As a result of the buildings' massing around central courtyards and the varied maximum heights, the new development would appear as a varied mix of higher elements atop wide, lower bases. This would help create a varying skyline that is complementary to the developments (both existing and proposed) north and south of Site A.

#### *Site B*

The new Special Southern Hunter's Point Zoning District would also set design controls for new development on privately owned Site B. As described in Chapter 1, the Special District would

include floor area incentives to encourage the developer of Site B to provide a new public street through the site (55th Avenue) with publicly accessible private open space along that new street. Other public open space along Newtown Creek would be required through the City's waterfront zoning provisions. In addition, the following design elements would be regulated by the Special District:

- Streetwalls, including mandatory minimum and maximum heights and setbacks;
- Maximum heights and floor areas;
- Locations of towers and maximum floorplates for towers;
- Parking entrance locations and location of curb cuts;
- Provision of wide sidewalk along 2nd Street;
- Location of waterfront access and visual corridors to the water; and
- Design of the new 55th Avenue public open space.

Similar to Site A, a mandatory streetwall of 40 to 70 feet would be required, above which the new buildings would set back. The buildings would have mid-rise elements of 85 to 125 feet along most of the 2nd Street and 54th and 55th Avenue frontages, with narrow, rectangular high-rise towers at opposite corners of the two blocks. A total of four such towers are anticipated, with maximum heights of 270, 300, 350, and 400 feet. On both blocks to be created at Site B, development would surround a central courtyard.

#### *STREET HIERARCHY AND STREETScape*

##### *Site A*

On Site A, the existing mapped streets that are not built would be demapped and a new network of streets would be mapped. Curb cuts would be limited to east-west streets, allowing for a continuous retail corridor along 2nd Street and a continuous waterfront experience along Center Boulevard sidewalks. These streets would serve local traffic and also provide a new Class 1 bikeway within the streetbed with a landscaped buffer between the travel lanes and bikeway. The new street system would be as follows:

- **Second Street.** Existing 2nd Street would remain in place, but it would be widened. Second Street would be one-way southbound, with two lanes of vehicular traffic and one parking lane/bus stop lane on the west side of the street. On the east side of the street, a two-way Class 1 bikeway would run for the length of 2nd Street, continuing along 57th Avenue at the southern end of Site A onto Center Boulevard. The bikeway would be separated from vehicle lanes by a planted median. The sidewalks on either side of 2nd Street would be wide, with street trees and landscaping along the edges. Second Street is intended to serve as a neighborhood retail street for the new neighborhood at Hunter's Point South.
- **Center Boulevard.** Center Boulevard would be extended onto Site A from Queens West. This street would be two-way between 50th Avenue and Borden Avenue, and one-way northbound south of Borden Avenue. It would have two lanes of vehicular traffic, with a parking lane/bus stop lane on the east side of the street. Sidewalks along both sides of the street would be lined with street trees and a landscaped area. The two-way Class 1 bikeway would be located west of Center Boulevard's western sidewalk, at the edge of the new waterfront park. A landscaped buffer would separate the sidewalk from the bikeway.
- **East-West Streets.** The Hunter's Point South project would continue 51st Avenue, Borden Avenue, and 54th Avenue onto Site A and create three additional east-west streets: 55th, 56th, and 57th Avenues. Most of these streets would carry one lane of one-way traffic in the

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same direction as they currently do outside of Site A, with one lane of on-street parking. Borden Avenue, a wide street, would carry two-way traffic. No parking would be permitted on the north side of the Borden Avenue, adjacent to the new school, where the lane would be reserved for school drop-offs, pickups, and deliveries. The two-way Class 1 bikeway would continue on the west side of 57th Avenue at the edge of the park, creating a continuous bikeway along 2nd Street, 57th Avenue, and Center Boulevard. One-way bike lanes in the same direction as vehicular traffic would be painted on 50th Avenue (eastbound) and 51st Avenue (westbound) to complete the bikeway loop at Site A.

The proposed actions also include the creation of a new waterfront park west of Center Boulevard and wrapping along the site's shoreline along Newtown Creek as well. In addition to this large park, an additional linear park space would also be created on the south side of 55th Avenue, creating a wide boulevard on that street.

As noted earlier, the new Special Southern Hunter's Point Zoning District would require a consistent streetwall 40 to 70 feet high along most blockfronts on Site A. It would also specify the location of building entrances, active ground-floor retail space, curb cuts, and parking garage entrances. Non-residential ground-floor uses would be mandatory along 2nd Street and two blocks along Center Boulevard and would be allowed along the south side of Borden Avenue across from the main entrance to the new school, and the south side of 55th Avenue alongside the new park.

### *Site B*

On Site B, the RWCDS assumes creation of a new publicly accessible private east-west street, 55th Avenue, through the site. This street would be one-way eastbound, curving northerly at the eastern edge of the site to intersect with 54th Avenue. Adjacent to Site B, 54th Avenue would remain two-way, with one lane in each direction. The sidewalks along Site B would be lined with street trees. In addition, a linear park would be created on the south side of the new 55th Avenue, continuing from the park to be created along that street on Site A. A new waterfront esplanade would also be created on Site B along the site's Newtown Creek frontage.

## *NATURAL FEATURES*

### *Site A*

The East River and East River shoreline along Site A are significant natural features, but little of this area is publicly accessible today. The Hunter's Point South project would create a 10.65-acre waterfront park along the site's entire East River shoreline. Although designs for this park have not yet been created, it is expected that along the water's edge the new park would incorporate a landing for the New York Water Taxi, areas of bulkhead and potentially areas with a more natural edge. The design would incorporate the existing topography of the water's edge, including the hill near the promontory of Hunter's Point. The waterfront park would continue along the site's Newtown Creek frontage, south of Parcel G.

In addition to the waterfront park, other park spaces would also be created on Site A. Along the south side of 55th Avenue, a new landscaped park area would be created. In addition, street trees would be planted along all the streets on Site A.

### *Site B*

The new development on Site B would include a publicly accessible waterfront esplanade that would provide visual access to the Newtown Creek waterfront where none is available today.



Site B is also expected to include new landscaped areas in the linear park to be created on the south side of the new 55th Avenue as well as additional open space along the waterfront esplanade. Street trees would also be planted on the sidewalks along Site B.

## **PROJECT SITES: VISUAL RESOURCES**

### *Site A*

The sweeping views of the East River and Manhattan skyline from Site A are visual resources, but there is limited public access to those views today. With the proposed actions, existing views from 2nd Street toward the waterfront would be removed, but the new waterfront park on Site A along the East River and Newtown Creek waterfronts would provide greatly increased public access to these views. Wide views of the waterfront and Manhattan would be available from locations throughout the park. From the promontory at the southern end of the site, views would also be available to the south and the East River bridges in that direction.

The blocks and new east-west streets would frame new view corridors from 2nd Street to the waterfront, Manhattan, and Brooklyn on Site A. Views down 51st Avenue, Borden Avenue, 54th Avenue, and 55th Avenue would be of Midtown Manhattan and the Empire State Building. In addition, the existing view corridor down 2nd Street to the Manhattan Bridge would be retained.

### *Site B*

The new waterfront esplanade along Site B would also provide public access to views of Newtown Creek and Brooklyn, the East River, and the Manhattan skyline for the first time. In addition, the new 55th Avenue would create a view corridor toward the Manhattan skyline.

## **STUDY AREA: URBAN DESIGN**

### *BLOCK FORM AND STREET PATTERN*

With the new east-west streets to be created at Sites A and B, the proposed actions would reconnect the project sites to the street grid of the study area. The new city blocks to be created at Sites A and B would be consistent in size and shape with other blocks in the study area.

### *BUILDING BULK, USE, TYPE, AND ARRANGEMENT*

The proposed buildings would be similar in type and height to the buildings currently constructed or under construction to the north as part of the Queens West development, but the proposed height and setback provisions would result in a smaller profile for the towers than those at Queens West. The new towers would also be narrower and less bulky than those that were originally planned for Site A as part of the Queens West project. With a streetwall of 40 to 70 feet, the new buildings would be consistent at street level with many of the blocks in the study area, and with a mix of low- and high-rise elements, they would be compatible with the urban design of the study area, which includes a varied mix of building types. The taller building elements would be located to create a smooth transition in scale from the existing upland community.

While the proposed residential buildings would be larger than most of the buildings within the study area, they would be similar in height to the Queens West development directly to the north, in which buildings range in height from approximately 80 to 400 feet, respectively. In

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addition, the proposed bulk of the buildings would be less than the bulk of the existing buildings to the north at Queens West.

### *STREET HIERARCHY AND STREETScape*

The new streets at Hunter's Point South and Site B would continue the existing street hierarchy from the study area onto the project sites. In terms of streetscape, the project would continue the pattern present at Queens West to the north, with landscaping and street trees along the sidewalks. The new waterfront esplanade would continue onto Site A and Site B from Queens West to the north as well.

The streetwall along the new blocks at Sites A and B would be consistent with the streetwalls present throughout much of the study area. The active retail space along 2nd Street, portions of Center Boulevard, and certain east-west streets would be appropriate for the new residential neighborhood being created. With landscaping, retail presence, and limited curb cuts, the new development would be compatible with the residential blocks of the study area and very different from the remaining industrial blocks.

### *NATURAL FEATURES*

The new natural features to be created at Sites A and B would substantially increase the natural features present in the study area, which has limited landscaping or natural areas. The proposed actions would provide public access to the waterfront in a study area where limited access is available, and would result in a continuous, wide public park and public open space along the East River and Newtown Creek waterfronts in the study area. Directly across Newtown Creek in Brooklyn, a 40-foot-wide public waterfront esplanade is expected to be developed as planned new residential buildings are constructed in Greenpoint. Together with the esplanade at Sites A and B, this would change the character of the area along Newtown Creek substantially from its current industrial condition.

## **STUDY AREA: VISUAL RESOURCES**

As described earlier in this chapter, the study area includes several historic structures and parks that are visual resources. The wide waterfront vistas available in some study area locations and view corridors to the waterfront, Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the East River bridges are also visual resources.

### *PARKS*

The proposed actions would not result in adverse effects on Hunters Point Community Park, Andrews Grove Park, or Gantry Plaza State Park/Peninsula Park. The two midblock parks (Hunters Point Community Park and Andrews Grove Park) are some distance from the project sites and would not be affected at all by the proposed actions. Gantry Plaza State Park/Peninsula Park would be enhanced by the new waterfront park to be created at Hunter's Point South, which would in effect create a continuation of the existing waterfront park at Queens West.

### *HISTORIC RESOURCES*

The historic resources that are visual resources for the study area are the industrial features at Gantry Plaza State Park (the gantries and the Pepsi sign), the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, and St. Mary's Church on Vernon Boulevard. Existing views of the gantries and Pepsi

sign from locations in the study area would be unaffected by the proposed actions. New public views of the gantries would be available from the new waterfront park at Site A. Views of the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building from locations within the study area would not be blocked by the new buildings expected in the RWCDS. From locations to the east, such as farther east on Borden Avenue, the vent building would remain prominent because of its location in the middle of Borden Avenue. Distant views from within the study area of the steeple at St. Mary's Church on Vernon Boulevard would also not be affected by the proposed actions. As described below in the discussion of views and view corridors, the new buildings on Site A would block most views from Manhattan of the steeple of St. Mary's Church and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, although some limited views might remain above low-rise portions of the new buildings and down east-west streets.

#### *VIEWS AND VIEW CORRIDORS*

The new waterfront park and esplanade at Sites A and B would create publicly accessible views of the East River waterfront and Manhattan skyline and the Brooklyn waterfront from the project sites. This would create new access to important visual resources in the study area.

Views from Gantry Plaza State Park/Peninsula Park at Queens West would not be adversely affected by the new development at Hunter's Point South. The extension of the waterfront park from Queens West onto Site A would enhance the character of the existing park.

The new blocks, streets, and buildings at Hunter's Point South would be arranged so that existing view corridors from the study area across Site A would be maintained. Views down 51st Avenue, Borden Avenue, and 54th Avenue to Manhattan would remain from east of Site A, with the Manhattan skyline and the Empire State Building visible. (This would be a significant improvement over the Queens West plan approved for Site A in 1990, which would have blocked this view corridor.) Removal of the tennis buildings and fencing currently present on Site A would enhance the views down 51st Avenue and Borden Avenue. In addition, the new block of 55th Avenue to be created across Site B in the RWCDS would create a new view corridor toward Manhattan where none exists today.

The new development at Sites A and B would be prominently visible across Newtown Creek from the end of Manhattan Avenue and from any new waterfront esplanade created along the creek as a part of future development projects on the north side of Commercial Street in the Brooklyn portion of the study area. It would also be visible above existing vegetation at Newtown Barge Terminal Playground and the adjacent Right Triangle Park. From those locations, it would not block any existing views of Manhattan. The tall towers on Sites A and B would also be clearly visible in the distance in views up Manhattan Avenue from the commercial hub of Greenpoint. These towers would join the Queens West towers already present in that view corridor and would not block any important visual resources beyond. Overall, therefore, the proposed actions would not adversely affect any visual resources visible from the Brooklyn portion of the study area.

From Manhattan and Roosevelt Island, new buildings at Site A and Site B would contribute to the creation of a new Queens skyline, which together with Queens West to the north would appear as a prominent collection of towers and lower buildings. This new skyline would be similar to what is anticipated immediately to the south along the Greenpoint waterfront in Brooklyn as a result of the recent rezoning there. The new buildings on Site A would block most views from Manhattan of the steeple of St. Mary's Church and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building, although some limited views might remain above low-rise portions of the new

buildings and down east-west streets. Both of these visual resources are already set in a diverse landscape of tall and lower-rise buildings along the Queens waterfront and the loss of views of them from Manhattan would not represent a significant adverse impact.

## **F. CONCLUSIONS**

The proposed buildings' bulk, height, and type would be similar to the buildings currently constructed or under construction to the north as part of the Queens West development and other new residential buildings in the study area, but the new buildings at Sites A and B would be smaller in overall bulk. With a consistent streetwall of 40 to 70 feet, street trees and landscaping, and new park spaces, the urban design of the new development would be compatible with the urban design of the nearby residential community, which includes Queens West and portions of the Hunter's Point neighborhood to the east of Queens West with a varied mix of building types. The new streets at Site A and Site B would continue the existing street hierarchy from the study area onto the project sites, connecting the new neighborhood to the surrounding study area.

The proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on visual resources. The new development would not block any significant view corridors or views of visual resources, limit access to any resource, change the study area's urban design features so that a visual resource is no longer dominant in the area, or change the study area's urban design features so that the context of a visual resource is adversely altered. The proposed actions would maintain existing view corridors to the water and would greatly enhance visual access to the waterfront, making available to the public sweeping views of the water and Manhattan skyline as well as the Brooklyn waterfront.

For these reasons, the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources on the project sites or in the study area. \*