

A. INTRODUCTION

While not specifically required by the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* as an area of analysis during construction of a project, this chapter assesses potential temporary effects on urban context and visual resources during construction of the proposed project. Chapter 5.5, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” describes in detail the existing urban design and visual resources of the project area and a surrounding study area. Consistent with the *CEQR Technical Manual* guidance, this analysis focuses on the considerations of the pedestrian experience in the public realm, such as streets and open spaces. The analysis in this chapter considers the pedestrian experience of construction activities and changes to the urban context and visual character of the project area for each of the proposed alternatives.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 1)**

The No Action Alternative assumes that no new comprehensive coastal protection system is installed in the proposed project area. No changes to views or view corridors are expected to occur with the No Action Alternative.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 4): FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM WITH A RAISED EAST RIVER PARK

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would require the closure of East River Park for the 3.5-year construction duration. It is anticipated that the entirety of East River Park would be fenced off for construction to keep the public out of the working areas. The closed and fenced East River Park during construction would obstruct views from the FDR Drive and the upland neighborhood towards the East River. Therefore, construction of the Preferred Alternative would detract the experience of pedestrians in the vicinity and would have temporary adverse visual effects. In addition, the pedestrian experience in the vicinity of the existing bridge landings would temporarily be adversely affected during construction and views of the East River would be temporarily blocked. Murphy Brothers Playground, Stuyvesant Cove Park, Asser Levy Playground, and a portion of Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk would be closed and temporarily fenced off during construction. Closure of these open space resources would detract from the experience of pedestrians in the immediate vicinity and would also cause temporary adverse effects on the urban visual context.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES

The Flood Protection System on the West Side of East River Park – Baseline Alternative (Alternative 2), The Flood Protection System on the West Side of East River Park – Enhanced

Park and Access Alternative (Alternative 3), and The Flood Protection System East of FDR Drive (Alternative 5) would be similar in terms of their potential to obstruct views from the FDR Drive and the upland neighborhood towards the East River and detract the experience of pedestrians in the vicinity and would have temporary adverse visual effects during construction. However, since the flood protection and enhanced park and access features for these alternatives are expected to be completed over a 5-year construction period as compared to the 3.5-year period for the Preferred Alternative, the temporary adverse visual effects during construction would be longer for these alternatives.

C. REGULATORY CONTEXT

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires the consideration of visual resources when analyzing the potential effects of a Proposed Project. However, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has not created specific visual assessment guidelines. Therefore, the *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology for urban design and visual resources was followed.

D. METHODOLOGY

Following the methodology of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban context impacts for the construction of the proposed project are determined “by considering the degree to which a project would result in a change to a built environment’s arrangement, appearance, or functionality such that the change would negatively affect a pedestrian’s experience of the area.” In assessing the significance of a visual resource effect, key considerations include “whether the project obstructs important visual resources and whether such obstruction would be permanent, seasonal, or temporary; how many viewers would be affected; whether the view is unique or do similar views exist; or whether it can be seen from many other locations.”

E. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

A detailed description of the alternatives analyzed in this chapter is presented in Chapter 2.0, “Project Alternatives.” Construction of the proposed project is projected to start in spring 2020 with completion anticipated in 2025. Note that although the superstructure of the shared-use flyover bridge for the proposed project would be completed in 2025, the flood protection and enhanced park and access features under Alternative 4 (the Preferred Alternative) would be completed in 2023. This shorter construction duration for Alternative 4 is primarily due to less disruption to the FDR Drive since flood protection in East River Park would be primarily along the East River rather than along the FDR Drive, which would require temporary nighttime single-lane closures of the FDR Drive to facilitate the construction activities.

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 1)

The No Action Alternative assumes that no new comprehensive coastal protection system is installed in the proposed project area. No changes to views or view corridors are expected to occur with the No Action Alternative.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE: FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM WITH A RAISED EAST RIVER PARK (ALTERNATIVE 4)

PROJECT AREA ONE

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would require the closure of East River Park for the 3.5-year construction duration. It is anticipated that the entirety of East River Park would be fenced off for construction to keep the public out of the working areas and maintain public safety. The closed and fenced East River Park would obstruct views from the FDR Drive and the upland neighborhood towards the East River and detract the experience of pedestrians in the vicinity and would have temporary adverse visual effects. As discussed in details in Chapter 6.2, “Construction—Open Space,” there are open space resources within close proximity to East River Park, Stuyvesant Cove Park, Murphy Brothers Playground, and Asser Levy Playground that provide similar recreational opportunities to the public during construction of the proposed project and the City is exploring potential on-site or off-site measures to mitigate the construction open space effects to the greatest extent practicable.

The reconstruction of the East 10th Street, Delancey Street, and Corlears Hook bridges would result in additional view disturbances in the immediate vicinity of these bridges. Views from residences in the immediate vicinity of this work would be temporarily obstructed during construction. Outside of East River Park and near Montgomery Street, the pedestrian experience in the vicinity of the floodwall and closure structures would be temporarily adversely affected during construction.

PROJECT AREA TWO

Construction activities at and near Murphy Brother Playground would last for approximately three years. During this time, Murphy Brothers Playground would be temporarily fenced off. This work would detract from the experience of pedestrians in the immediate vicinity, but it would not affect any views or the pedestrian experience on Avenue C. Construction adjacent to the Con Edison parking area to the west of Murphy Brothers Playground at Avenue C would not affect any views or the pedestrian experience as there are no public sidewalks in this area.

The experience of users of Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk would be adversely affected since a portion of these resources may need to be temporarily closed to accommodate the construction activities associated with the flyover bridge, which is anticipated to take approximately 3.5 years to complete.

Construction at and near Stuyvesant Cove Park would last for approximately two years. During this time, temporary fences would separate the working area from the public area, affecting the pedestrian experience. Closure of Stuyvesant Cove Park would also cause temporary adverse effects on the urban visual context.

Construction at and near Asser Levy Playground would last for approximately two years. During this time, temporary fences would separate the working area in Asser Levy Playground from the public and would obstruct some views toward the waterfront. The eastern half of the playground, which currently contains play equipment, basketball and handball courts, and a track, would be closed off with temporary fences during construction.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE: FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM ON THE WEST SIDE OF EAST RIVER PARK – BASELINE (ALTERNATIVE 2)

As with the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 2 would involve the same general temporary effects on urban context conditions are expected for both alternatives. However, since the flood protection and enhanced park and access features for this alternative is expected to be completed over a 5-year construction period as compared to the 3.5-year period for the Preferred Alternative, the temporary visual effects during construction of this alternative would be longer.

In general, the experience of park users in the vicinity of closed and fenced sections of the park would be adversely affected, but these adverse effects would be temporary. The limits of construction for these activities would be within existing park space, roadways, or rights-of-way and would be fenced off (i.e., chain-link fences and a green screen). Views from residences and sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of this work would be temporarily obstructed during construction. In addition, views of the East River from adjacent locations would be temporarily blocked during construction.

In Project Area Two, similar or less temporary visual context effects are expected compared to the Preferred Alternative, since Murphy Brothers Playground and Asser Levy Playground would be replaced in kind and not be reconstructed and reconfigured as part of this alternative.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE: FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM ON THE WEST SIDE OF EAST RIVER PARK – ENHANCED PARK AND ACCESS (ALTERNATIVE 3)

PROJECT AREA ONE

As with the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 3 would involve the same general temporary effects on urban context conditions are expected for both alternatives. In general, the experience of park users in the vicinity of closed and fenced sections of the park would be adversely affected, but these adverse effects would be temporary. However, construction in Project Area One is anticipated to take approximately 5 years as compared to a 3.5-year duration for the Preferred Alternative; therefore, the temporary visual effects during construction of this alternative would be longer. The limits of construction for these activities would be within existing park space, roadways, or rights-of-way and would be fenced off (i.e., chain-link fences and a green screen). Views from residences and sidewalks in the immediate vicinity of this work would be temporarily obstructed during construction. In addition, views of the East River from adjacent locations would be temporarily blocked during construction.

In Project Area Two, the same visual context effects are expected as compared to those in the Preferred Alternative.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE: FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM EAST OF FDR DRIVE (ALTERNATIVE 5)

PROJECT AREA ONE

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, it is anticipated that the entirety of East River Park would be fenced off during construction. The reconstruction of the East 10th Street, Delancey Street, and Corlears Hook bridges would result in the same obstructed views and pedestrian experience as described under the Preferred Alternative. Therefore, construction under Alternative 5 would have temporary adverse visual effects.

PROJECT AREA TWO

In Project Area Two, this alternative would raise the northbound lanes of the FDR Drive between East 13th Street and Avenue C by approximately six feet to meet the design flood elevation. The raised FDR Drive platform would then connect to closure structures at the south end of Stuyvesant Cove Park. Maintaining the flood protection alignment along the east side of the FDR Drive would eliminate the need to cross the FDR Drive near East 13th Street as well as the need to install floodwalls adjacent to NYCHA Jacob Riis Houses, Con Edison property, and the Murphy Brothers Playground. The experience of users of Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk would be adversely affected since a portion of this resource may need to be temporarily closed to accommodate the construction activities associated with the raised section of the FDR Drive as well as the flyover bridge, but these adverse effects would be temporary. North of the raised platform, the flood protection measures provided in Project Area Two under this alternative would be the same as provided under Alternative 4. Closure of Stuyvesant Cove Park and Asser Levy Playground would cause temporary adverse urban context effects. *