

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential impacts of the Proposed Project with respect to the urban design and visual resources of the Project Site and the surrounding area. The Project Site occupies most of the block east of Eleventh Avenue, between West 44th and West 45th Streets in Manhattan (Block 1073, Lot 1). It contains a parking lot, three buildings—including P.S. 51—and an Amtrak rail cut. As discussed below, development of the Proposed Project would result in the removal of a parking lot, demolition of two buildings on the Project Site (a vacant warehouse and a stable), and a platform over the Amtrak rail cut. The Proposed Project would redevelop the Project Site with four new residential buildings and a new school building; the Proposed Project would provide 1,157,283 gross square feet (gsf) of new development in buildings ranging from five to 31 stories. The existing P.S. 51 building would be converted to residential use.¹ Absent the Proposed Actions, the Project Site is assumed to remain in its current condition.

Views to the Project Site are generally limited to the immediately surrounding streets. Therefore, the urban design and visual resources study area has been defined as a 400-foot area surrounding the Project Site, roughly bounded by the mid-blocks of West 43rd and West 46th Streets, Tenth and Eleventh Avenues (see **Figure 8-1**).

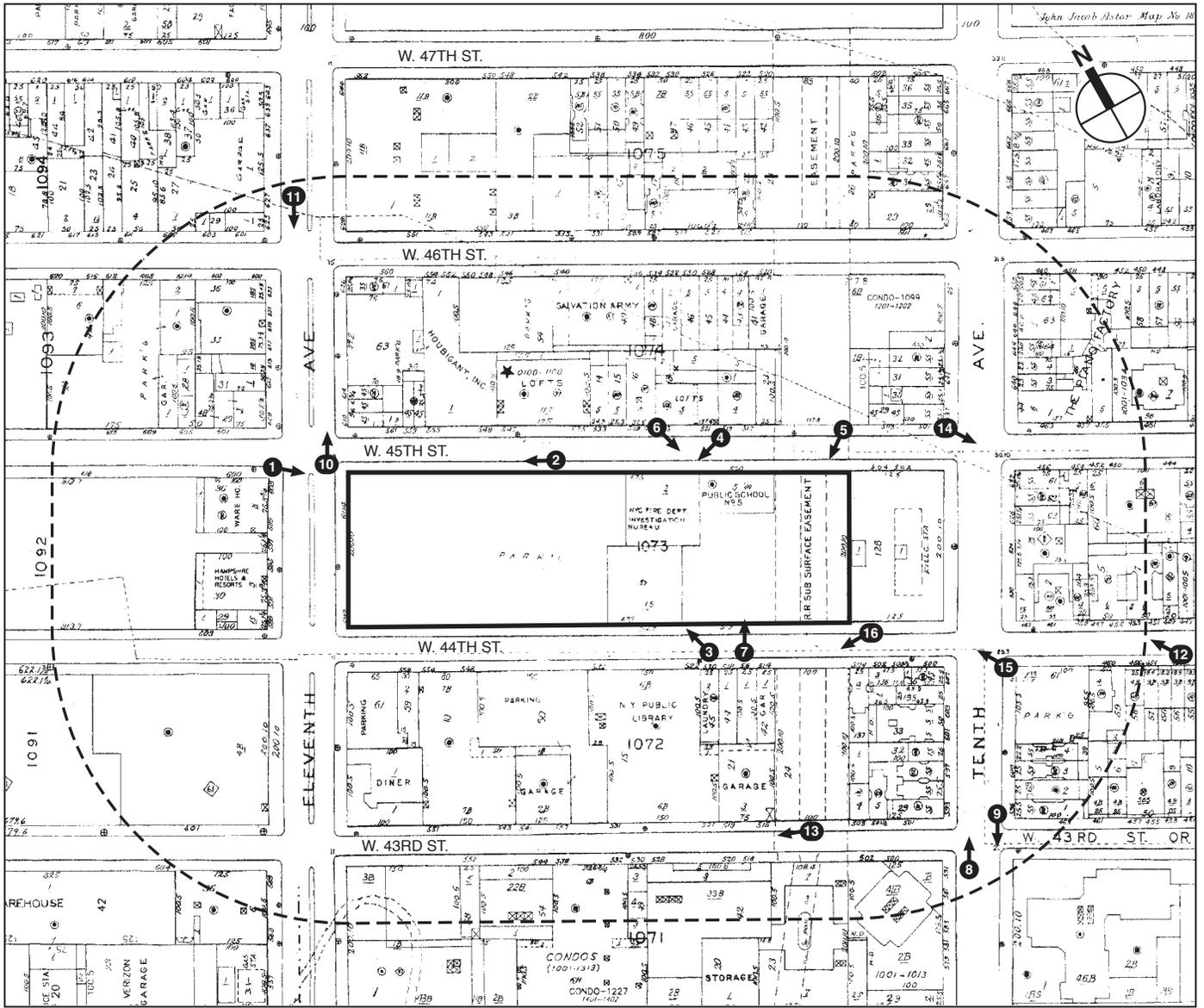
As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design components and visual resources determine the “look” of a neighborhood—its physical appearance, including the size and shape of buildings, their arrangement on blocks, the street pattern, and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis addresses each of these characteristics for existing conditions and the future without and with the Proposed Actions for the year 2013, when the Proposed Project is expected to be completed.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Actions would alter the urban design of the Project Site by redeveloping it with three new residential buildings and a new and expanded P.S. 51 school, and renovating and converting the existing P.S. 51 to a residential building. Although the Proposed Actions would change the uses on the Project Site, these new uses would be consistent with the existing residential, commercial, and community uses in the study area. The new residential buildings would have larger footprints than the existing buildings on the Project Site. However, these new buildings would be similar in bulk, massing, and materials to the variety of existing and planned buildings in the study area and would not adversely affect these urban design components.

The new buildings and renovated P.S. 51 would contribute to an enlivened streetscape in the study area near the Project Site as they would add active ground-floor uses with increased pedestrian activity. The Proposed Project would result in beneficial effects as it would replace a

¹ The existing school would function as a school until the new, expanded school is operational.



-  Project Site Boundary
-  Study Area Boundary (400-Foot Perimeter)
-  Photograph View Direction and Reference Number

0 200 400 FEET
SCALE

Urban Design and Visual Resources

Figure 8-1

largely underutilized site with new residential buildings along with a new and expanded school and would create continuous streetwalls along West 44th and West 45th Streets and Eleventh Avenues where none currently exist on the Project Site. The new streetwall would be consistent with continuous streetwalls elsewhere in the study area.

Views in the study area closest to the Project Site would be altered by the Proposed Actions, as the new buildings would replace the one- and two-story buildings, parking lot, and Amtrak rail cut with three new taller residential buildings and a new school building. The new buildings, including the new school building and the renovated existing P.S. 51, would alter some views in the study area closest to the Project Site but these view corridors and views to visual resources would remain available with the Proposed Project. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse urban design or visual resources impacts.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT SITE

URBAN DESIGN

The Project Site contains a parking lot, three buildings—including a vacant warehouse, a stable, and P.S. 51—and an Amtrak rail cut. The parking lot has an asphalt surface and is surrounded by a chain link fence, some parts of which are bent and damaged. It is accessible from West 45th Street and on Eleventh Avenue and contains approximately 300 parking spaces. The parking lot also contains two attendant kiosks near the entrances. The vacant warehouse is located on the south side of the Project Site at 527 West 44th Street. It is a one-story brick-faced building with two garage entrances and two doorways, all of which have metal security screens. The building's windows have been filled with cinder block or metal panels. The stable at 522 West 45th Street is a plain two-story brick-faced building on the north side of the Project Site, west of P.S. 51. The stable has three wide entrances with double, wooden barn-like doors. The street façade also has two doorways, one at each end of the building, and three windows. East of the stable is the five-story P.S. 51. The school, located at 520 West 45th Street, dates from the early 1900s and is faced in red brick and tan limestone. The school has three entrances from West 45th Street, each with decorative architectural elements. Above the first floor which is faced in smooth limestone, the school has a red brick façade with large multi-paned windows. The building rises from the sidewalk without any setbacks. The eastern portion of the Project Site contains a through-block, north-south rail cut used by Amtrak and owned by the Penn Central Railroad. It contains open air, below grade rail lines (see **Figures 8-2** through **8-4**).

VISUAL RESOURCES

Views to the Project Site are generally limited to the surrounding streets. Views from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site's west end include views north and south on Eleventh Avenue that continue for long distances. Views from the eastern end of the Project Site include the Hess gas station immediately east of the Project Site, the continuation of the on-site Amtrak rail cut to the north and south of the Project Site, shorter buildings on Tenth Avenue and West 44th and West 45th Streets, and taller buildings at greater distances. Views on the cross-town streets are more limited to the buildings lining these streets as these streets are narrower. Views west the Project Site include the western bank of the Hudson River in the far distance. The



View southeast to Project Site from Eleventh Avenue 1



View west on West 45th Street 2

Urban Design and Visual Resources Project Site



527 West 44th Street 3



522 West 45th Street – Stables Building 4



View southwest to AMTRAK rail cut 5

Urban Design and Visual Resources Project Site

Figure 8-3



Public School 51 – 520 West 45th Street 6



Public School – South facade 7

Urban Design and Visual Resources Project Site

Figure 8-4

openness of the Project Site allows views south from the Project Site's sidewalks to several tall residential buildings in the study area located on West 43rd Street (see View 1 of **Figure 8-2**).

There are no visual resources on the Project Site. While P.S. 51 has been determined eligible for listing on the State/National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR-eligible), it is not visually prominent within the surrounding context. Visual resources that can be seen from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site include the USS Intrepid Aircraft Carrier (National Historic Landmark [NHL], State/National Registers) and the dense collection of commercial and residential skyscrapers in Times Square (see Views 1 and 2 of **Figure 8-2**). The USS Intrepid, moored in the Hudson River at the foot of West 45th Street, is visible in the far distance in views west from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site on West 45th Street and Eleventh Avenue. Because of their height, the Times Square skyscrapers, though located a far distance outside the study area to the east and southeast, are visible in views from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site.

STUDY AREA

The discussion below focuses first on the area's urban design—its basic layout and structures—and then describes its visual resources.

URBAN DESIGN

Building Bulk, Use, and Type

Most buildings in the study area are residential or industrial. The study area also includes parking lots, commercial, and institutional buildings. Most residential buildings in the study area are on Tenth Avenue and on the cross-town streets to the east of Tenth Avenue and include tenements and townhouses, respectively. These are generally older residential buildings with small footprints that range in height from three to seven stories and are built to the sidewalk. Most residential buildings on Tenth Avenue are tenements with ground-floor retail. These residential buildings generally have small footprints. Newer and much taller residential buildings with large footprints are located on the south side of West 43rd Street in the study area and range in height from 22 to 46 stories. These buildings generally do not have ground floor retail. Industrial, manufacturing, and automobile-related buildings are located on the cross-town streets to the west of Tenth Avenue and along Eleventh Avenue. These buildings include 1- to 11-story buildings with larger footprints. Many of these buildings are older, brick-faced warehouses and one-story garages. Most buildings throughout the study area do not have setbacks, except for a few taller residential buildings described below (see **Figures 8-5** and **8-6**).

Institutional uses in the study area are limited to two former warehouse buildings: the six-story New York Public Library Annex Building at 521-531 West 43rd Street and the five-story Salvation Army building at 536 West 46th Street. Both of these buildings are older brick-faced buildings. Transportation and industrial buildings in the study area are located west of Tenth Avenue and include automobile-related industries and storage facilities. Most of these buildings are older structures with brick cladding and have various types of building-mounted signage. Commercial uses are located in both older and newer buildings. Commercial buildings along Eleventh Avenue generally contain commercial uses only while buildings on Tenth Avenue are residential with commercial on the ground floor.



View north on Tenth Avenue 8



View south on Tenth Avenue 9

Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Area

Figure 8-5



View north on Eleventh Avenue 10



View south on Eleventh Avenue 11

Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Area

Figure 8-6

Building Arrangement

Buildings in the study area are generally attached structures built to the sidewalk (see **Figures 8-1, 8-5, and 8-6**). Most of the smaller residential buildings are on Tenth Avenue and on the cross-town streets to the east of Tenth Avenue. These buildings have high lot coverage and are generally built to the sidewalk. Larger residential buildings are generally located on the south side of West 43rd Street and are set back from the sidewalk by paved plazas. These buildings are attached but do not occupy their entire lots. Warehouses in the study area are built to the sidewalk and include both attached and detached buildings. Most detached buildings are immediately adjacent to a paved parking lot.

Block Form and Street Pattern

Located in the Clinton neighborhood on the West Side of Manhattan, the study area is developed in the typical Manhattan grid pattern with wide north-south avenues and narrow cross-town streets creating long, rectangular blocks (see **Figure 8-1**).

Streetscape Elements

The streetscape of the study area is urban in character, with wide sidewalks on the avenues and narrower sidewalks on the cross-town streets. The study area east of and including Tenth Avenue is generally characterized by three- to six-story older buildings, including tenements with ground floor retail along Tenth Avenue and rowhouses and small apartment buildings on the cross-town streets (see Views 12 and 13 of **Figure 8-7** and View 14 of **Figure 8-8**). In general, the streetwall in this part of the study area is consistent, with the exception of the Hess gas station that occupies the blockfront facing Tenth Avenue between West 44th and West 45th Streets (see View 15 of **Figure 8-8**). The older residential buildings on the cross-town streets to the east of Tenth Avenue are attached buildings, most of which are faced in brownstone or brick and have high front stoops; older apartment buildings in this part of the study area are also attached buildings faced in brick with stone at the base. Newer residential buildings are generally much taller buildings located on the south side of West 43rd Street. Some of these brick-faced buildings are set back from the sidewalk by plazas. The study area west of Tenth Avenue—including Eleventh Avenue and the cross-town streets to the west of Tenth Avenue—is industrial in character with numerous older brick-faced warehouse, industrial, and automobile-related buildings. The streetwall in this part of the study area can be characterized as inconsistent. Surface parking lots, a diner set back from the sidewalk, and the Amtrak rail cut interrupt the streetwall (see **Figures 8-5 and 8-6** and View 16 of **Figure 8-8**). These breaks in the streetwall create free-standing buildings. Several tall apartment buildings on the south side of West 43rd Street are set back from the sidewalk by paved plazas that also interrupt the streetwall.

Street furniture in the study area includes standard street signs, cobra head lampposts, bishop's crook lampposts on West 44th Street, wire mesh garbage cans, newspaper stands, and mailboxes. There are also a few new, stainless steel and glass telephone booths on Tenth Avenue. Some street vendors have carts on Tenth Avenue. Restricted on-street parallel parking is permitted throughout the study area; back-in parking occurs on the south side of West 44th Street across from the Project Site. Most of the residential buildings on Tenth Avenue have ground-floor retail with awnings and projecting signage; several buildings on Eleventh Avenue have building-mounted signage and large billboards (see **Figure 8-5 and 8-6**).



View northwest on West 44th Street 12



View southwest on West 43rd Street 13

**Urban Design and Visual Resources
Study Area**
Figure 8-7



View to southeast corner of Tenth Avenue and West 45th Street 14



View northwest on Tenth Avenue toward Gas Station 15



View Southwest on West 44th Street across from Project Site 16

Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Area

Figure 8-8

Street Hierarchy

Tenth and Eleventh Avenues, the primary north-south streets in the study area, are approximately 100 feet wide and carry a substantial volume of vehicular traffic. Tenth Avenue carries four lanes of northbound traffic; Eleventh Avenue carries two lanes each of north-bound and south-bound traffic and an additional turning lane in some areas. Both avenues also have on-street parallel parking during certain hours along both sides of the streets (see **Figures 8-5** and **8-6**). The cross-town streets are narrower (60 feet), carry one-way traffic, and have restricted on-street parallel parking (see Views 12 and 13 of **Figure 8-7**).

Natural Features

The only natural features in the study area are street trees. They are sparse on the sidewalks west of Tenth Avenue while the sidewalks on the streets east of Tenth Avenue have more street trees.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Because the topography of the area is relatively flat, view corridors are generally long. Views north and south on Tenth and Eleventh Avenues are uninterrupted and continue for long distances with views to taller buildings in the distance. Views away from the Project Site on the cross-town streets are more limited as these streets are narrower and are lined with attached buildings on the north and south sides of these streets. Views east on these streets include some of the taller buildings in Times Square. Views in the study area closest to the Project Site are generally longer and include views across the Project Site because, with the exception of P.S. 51, it contains one- and two-story buildings and a parking lot. No distant or prominent visual resources are visible in views north along these avenues. Some views south on Tenth and Eleventh Avenues include views to the skyscrapers in Times Square, a visual resource. These views are available from Eleventh Avenue due to the low-rise character of the Project Site. Views from Tenth Avenue are more limited because the buildings on the east side of Tenth Avenue obscure views to the south and east. Views east on the cross-town streets include some of the Times Square buildings in the distance. Views west on West 45th Street and views west from Eleventh Avenue near West 45th Street include the USS Intrepid, a historic and visual resource described above (see Views 1 and 2 of **Figure 8-2**). Other historic resources in the study area, described in more detail in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," that are visible in views near the Project Site include the Houbigant Company building, an 11-story warehouse at 539 West 45th Street and the six-story E. & J. Burke Company Warehouse at 616-620 West 46th Street. Natural features in the study area are generally limited to street trees, although views west on the cross-town streets in the study area from vantage points near Eleventh Avenue include the western bank of the Hudson River in the distance.

C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

PROJECT SITE

In the future without the Proposed Project, the Project Site would remain unaltered and P.S. 51 would continue to function as a school.

OTHER FUTURE PROJECTS

One notable development project is located within the urban design and visual resources study area that is expected to be completed by 2013. This No Build project, located on the south side

of West 43rd Street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, would result in two new buildings—an approximately 37,950-square-foot retail building and a high-rise residential building with approximately 1,000 residential units. The residential building would be taller than some buildings in the study area but would be similar in height, massing, and cladding materials as other newer buildings already located in the southern section of the study area.

Just outside the study area to the north, east, and south are several residential and commercial developments that are currently under construction or planned that are expected to be completed by 2013. These developments would contribute to the variety of taller newer buildings and shorter older buildings in the study area.

D. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The discussion below considers the Proposed Project’s probable impacts first on the Project Site and then in the larger study area.

PROJECT SITE

URBAN DESIGN

The Proposed Project would alter the urban design of the Project Site by removing the warehouse, stable, and parking lot, and decking over the rail cut. These areas of the Project Site would be redeveloped with four new buildings (residential buildings A, B, CN, and CS, and the new and expanded school). The existing P.S. 51 would be renovated and converted to a residential building (see Figures 1-4 and 1-5 of Chapter 1, “Project Description”).

As described below, the Proposed Project would alter the current urban design of the Project Site in relation to three of the five urban design elements assessed under CEQR—building bulk, use and type, building arrangement, and streetscape elements. No changes to block form and street pattern, street hierarchy, and natural features would occur on the Project Site as a result of the Proposed Project.

The four residential buildings would be built to the sidewalk, faced in brick, and would have both rectangular punched windows and glass curtain wall components. The new residential building to be constructed on the western portion of the Project Site (Building A) would have its north, west, and south facades along West 44th Street, Eleventh Avenue, and West 45th Street, respectively. This building would have a seven- and nine-story base with ground floor retail with glass shop fronts and a center courtyard. Above the base, the building’s north and west portions would set back approximately 15 and 10 feet, respectively. Along West 45th Street, the eastern section of the building would rise an additional 3 stories (12 stories or 145 feet in total) and the center portion would rise an additional 21 stories (28 stories or 300 feet in total). The building’s Eleventh Avenue façade would rise to a total height of 31 stories (approximately 335 feet) closest to West 44th Street and 31 stories plus a mechanical bulkhead closest to West 45th Street. The building’s primary entrance would be from West 45th Street.

Immediately adjacent to the new westernmost residential building (Building A) would be a new mid-block residential building (Building B). This building would have an L-shape with its long façade oriented along West 45th Street and a much narrower façade along West 44th Street. Along West 45th Street, the building would have a nine-story base. Above an approximately 15-foot setback, the building would rise an additional five stories to a total height of 14 stories. The southern portion of the building fronting West 44th Street would have a seven-story base. Above

the seventh floor, the building would set back approximately 15 feet and would rise an additional seven stories to the building's overall total height of 14 stories (175 feet). This new residential building would have its primary entrance from its north facade.

The two new residential buildings on the eastern portion of the Project Site, Buildings CN and CS, would be constructed east of the existing P.S. 51 and the new school building (both buildings are described below). These two buildings would be constructed atop a decking structure that would be built above the Amtrak rail cut that extends north-south through the eastern section of the Project Site. The north building (Building C1) and south building (Building C2) would be separated by an open courtyard. Each building would be set back approximately eight-feet from the sidewalk, would have a nine-story base along both West 44th and West 45th Streets containing the building's primary entrance. Above the bases, the buildings would rise to a total height of 14 stories (162 feet). The courtyard area would open to the new adjacent mid-block school yard to the west that would be created behind the new school building, as described below.

The portion of the Project Site between the new mid-block building and the new residential buildings above the rail cut would be redeveloped with a new five-story school building (approximately 106 feet) with its primary façade and entrance along West 44th Street. It is expected that the new school building would be faced in brick. A side yard would provide access to the school yard behind the new school building. The existing P.S. 51 building on the northern part of the Project Site would remain operational until the construction of the new school building would be complete. Upon completion of the new school building, the existing P.S. 51 building would be repaired, renovated, and converted to residential use. The proposed alterations to the existing P.S. 51 building would not substantially alter its exterior appearance. As described in "Historic Resources," Chapter 7, because P.S. 51 is eligible for listing on the State/National Registers of Historic Places, the project sponsor would consult with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) regarding alterations to this building as part of the Proposed Project.

VISUAL RESOURCES

As noted above, there are no visual resources located on the Project Site. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have any adverse impacts on visual resources on the Project Site. Views to the USS Intrepid from the West 45th Street and Eleventh Avenue sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site would remain unchanged. Views to the skyscrapers of Times Square from the Eleventh Avenue sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site would be obstructed by the proposed new buildings on the Project Site. However, views to this visual resource from vantage points from the sidewalks adjacent to the Project Site on the Tenth Avenue and West 44th and West 45th Street would remain available. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have a significant adverse impact on views to visual resources from the Project Site.

STUDY AREA

URBAN DESIGN

Building Bulk, Use, and Type

Although the new residential buildings, the new school building, and the conversion of P.S. 51 to residential use would change the uses on the Project Site, the Proposed Project would be consistent with the existing residential and institutional uses in the study area. The proposed

West 44th Street and Eleventh Avenue Rezoning

buildings would range in height from a new five-story school building on West 44th Street to a new residential building on Eleventh Avenue with a seven-story base and taller 28-, 30-, and 31-story components oriented closest to the building's Eleventh Avenue street frontage. The other three new residential buildings would have 7- and 9-story bases with overall heights of 14 stories. The new residential buildings would be of a greater bulk and would have larger footprints than the existing warehouse, stable, and school building on the Project Site. However, the new residential buildings would be similar in bulk, massing, and materials to the variety of existing buildings in the study area, including larger buildings like the mid-block 11-story former warehouse immediately north of the Project Site at 539 West 45th Street and the 43-story residential building at the southeast corner of West 43rd Street and Eleventh Avenue. The new residential building to be sited along Eleventh Avenue would be oriented with its tallest components along Eleventh Avenue, a wide primary thoroughfare through the west side of Manhattan. Several tall residential buildings north and south of the Project Site in the study area, including a residential building with 43 stories, are already located along Eleventh Avenue. The renovation and conversion of the existing P.S. 51 building into residential use would not affect the bulk or use of buildings in the study area. The new buildings would be faced in brick and would have both punched rectangular windows and glass curtain wall components (see Figures 1-4 and 1-5 of Chapter 1, "Project Description"). The new buildings would contribute to the variety of building bulk, height, massing, materials that already characterize the study area and would be not adversely affect building uses, bulk, or type in the study area.

Building Arrangement

The arrangement of the proposed buildings on the Project Site would create uninterrupted frontages on the Project Site's West 44th Street and West 45th Street elevations and on Eleventh Avenue, an improvement over existing conditions. The bases of each building would be built to the sidewalk and would be similar in height to some of the shorter buildings in the study area. The Proposed Project would not affect building arrangements in the study area.

Block Form and Street Pattern

The Proposed Project would be constructed on an existing block and would not alter the street patterns or block shapes in the study area. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to these urban design features as a result of the Proposed Project.

Streetscape Elements

The Proposed Project would change the streetscape of the study area immediately surrounding the Project Site. Like the existing P.S. 51, the five proposed buildings would be built to the sidewalk. The new buildings and the renovated P.S. 51 would contribute to an enlivened streetscape in the study area near the Project Site as they would add to the study area new, active ground-floor uses with increased pedestrian activity. The new buildings would create continuous streetwalls along West 44th and West 45th Streets and Eleventh Avenues where none currently exist on the Project Site. The new streetwall would be consistent with continuous streetwalls elsewhere in the study area.

The new residential and school buildings would be designed to be compatible with other nearby buildings by using cladding materials, windows, and façade treatments that would complement the existing masonry buildings in the study area (see Figures 1-4 and 1-5 of Chapter 1, "Project Description"). The seven- and nine-story bases of the new buildings would visually minimize the perceived height of the buildings from the study area closest to the new buildings. The

setbacks would also relate to the lower heights of nearby buildings. The taller components of the new residential buildings would be oriented along Eleventh Avenue where other tall buildings are visible in views north and south on Eleventh Avenue in the study area and visible farther away. The study area is already characterized by buildings of varying heights, faced in different cladding materials, and dating from different construction periods. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the study area as a result of the Proposed Project.

Street Hierarchy

The Proposed Project would not alter any streets in the study area and, therefore would not affect the study area's street hierarchy.

Natural Features

The Proposed Project would not affect natural features in the study area. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to natural features as a result of the Proposed Project.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Views in the study area closest to the Project Site would be somewhat altered by the Proposed Project, as development of the Proposed Project would replace the one-story vacant warehouse, two-story stable, parking lot, and Amtrak rail cut with four new residential buildings and a new school building. The new residential buildings would be taller than the existing buildings on the Project Site and the new school building would be of a height similar to the existing school on the Project Site. The new buildings, including the new school building and the renovated existing P.S. 51, would alter some views in the study area closest to the Project Site.

The Proposed Project would not obstruct any existing views to the north and south on Tenth Avenue, views to the south on Eleventh Avenue, and views on the cross-town streets in the study area. Views to the south on Eleventh Avenue would be altered as the Proposed Project would obstruct some existing views to the skyscrapers of Times Square, a visual resource, located outside the study area to the southeast. Views to the west from West 45th Street and Eleventh Avenue toward the USS Intrepid, a visual and historic resource, would be somewhat altered by the presence of the new buildings, however, these views would not be obstructed. Views to the aircraft carrier would also remain available from more distant vantage points on West 45th Street east of the Project Site and other vantage points outside the study area to the west. The context of the other historic resources in the study area, described above, that are visible in views near the Project Site would also be somewhat altered by the new buildings on the Project Site. However, these changes are not considered significant adverse impacts, as these historic buildings are already located within a context that contains a variety of older and newer buildings of varying heights. The Proposed Project would not affect views to any natural resources. Further, the Proposed Project would not obstruct any views west on the cross-town streets in the study area that include the banks of the Hudson River in the distance. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not cause a significant adverse affect on visual resources in the study area. *