6

Urban Design and Visual Resources

This chapter assesses the Proposed Action's potential effects on urban design and visual resources. Per the *2020 City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, the urban design and visual resources assessment is undertaken to determine whether and how a project or action may change the visual experience of a pedestrian, focusing on the components of the project or action that may have the potential to affect the arrangement, appearance, and functionality of the built and natural environment.

Introduction

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is defined as the totality of components—including streets, buildings, open spaces, wind, natural resources, and visual resources—that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. A visual resource is defined as the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, and natural resources.

As described in **Chapter 1, Project Description**, the Proposed Action would facilitate the redevelopment of the Project Site with a new, approximately 925,630-gross-square-foot (gsf), commercial office building up to approximately 1,050 feet tall (including the bulkhead), with ground floor retail uses and below-grade space (i.e., mechanical and back-of-house space). The Proposed Project would provide transportation improvements on-site that create

new pedestrian access to, and egress from, the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) East Side Access (ESA) concourse (the existing connection from 45th Street to the Grand Central Terminal Roosevelt passageway would remain adjacent to the site at 52 Vanderbilt). The Proposed Project would also provide offsite improvements to passenger circulation at the Grand Central – 42nd Street Subway Station—including improvements to passenger connections to the IRT Flushing Line (#7 Train) platform.

Principal Conclusions

An urban design and visual resources assessment was conducted and concluded that the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts with respect to urban design and visual resources.

Urban Design

The Proposed Action would facilitate the construction of a new building that would change visual conditions—and thus, the pedestrian experience—within the study area, as compared to the No-Action condition. However, the analysis of the Proposed Project found it would not have significant adverse impacts to the urban design of the area. The Proposed Project would be a high-rise commercial tower up to approximately 1,050 feet and 55 stories tall, consistent with the typical built form in East Midtown. The building would be constructed to the lot lines along East 44th Street and East 45th Street and set back from the Madison Avenue lot line (7 feet), resulting in a wider, 20-foot sidewalk to allow for improved pedestrian circulation. The Proposed Project massing would incorporate an additional setback at a height of 321 feet[1], creating a base height that is similar to or taller than the overall height of several neighboring buildings, including the building directly south of the Project Site at 333 Madison Avenue.

The Proposed Action also would not alter the arrangement, appearance, or functionality of the Project Site or study area such that the alteration would negatively affect a pedestrian's experience of the area. The ground floor of the Proposed Project would provide an active streetfront appropriate for a highly-trafficked location within East Midtown—including entrances to the office lobby as well as the ground-floor retail spaces on both Madison Avenue and East 45th Street. The Proposed Project would also facilitate significant improvements in the pedestrian experience within and around the Project Site—including the proposed seven-foot sidewalk widening and a generous building entrance recess area along Madison Avenue, as well as above- and below-grade improvements to the pedestrian and mass transit circulation network, comprising an at-grade entrance to the LIRR ESA terminal at the intersection of Madison Avenue and East 45th Street. In addition, the north sidewalk along East 45th Street adjacent to the Project Site would be extended along the frontage of the site by approximately five feet to provide for a 15-foot-wide sidewalk. The Proposed Project would be built on an existing block, and would not entail any changes to topography, street hierarchy, block shapes, or natural features.

Though the With-Action condition would result in an increase in density on the Project Site compared to the No-Action condition, in either condition, the Project Site would be

[1] As described in **Chapter 1, "Project Description**," since publication of the DEIS, it is proposed that the maximum height of the street wall would be reduced to approximately 295 feet. The analysis for the chapter conservatively assumed the higher street wall height of 321 feet.

redeveloped as a high-rise commercial building typical of East Midtown and consistent with the zoning framework for the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea. Although the Proposed Project would be taller than the No-Action development, the proposed height is consistent with other existing and recently completed buildings in the area. Additionally, the Proposed Action would facilitate many on-site benefits, including greater access to local and regional mass transit and an improvement to the pedestrian experience around the Project Site. The Proposed Project is expected to complement and enhance the urban design of the area, replacing an underutilized site with a new active development.

Visual Resources

The Proposed Project is not anticipated to have significant adverse impacts to visual resources within the study area. The design of the Proposed Project would not significantly alter the character of the surrounding area compared with the No-Action condition, and is appropriate for its location in East Midtown, which is characterized by mid- and high-rise commercial buildings.

The Proposed Action facilitates a building form that would maintain existing views to the MetLife Building when facing east along East 44th Street and would not affect views to any of the other visual resources within the study area. The Proposed Project would be constructed within the existing street grid and present as a tall building lining an avenue that has a predominant character of commercial mid- and high-rise buildings.

The overall height associated with the Proposed Project would sit within the context of other tall towers of the East Midtown Manhattan Skyline, including the One Vanderbilt, the Chrysler Building, and the MetLife Building. Therefore, the impacts associated with the Proposed Project are anticipated to be similar to those of other newly constructed tall towers in the context of a densely developed skyline.

Methodology

Per the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the urban design and visual resources assessment is conducted in three basic steps. First, a proposed action is reviewed to determine whether such an assessment is warranted, based on whether it would be expected to result in changes to elements particular to urban design—such as streets, buildings, visual resources, open space, natural features, and/or potential wind effects, and whether there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning. Pursuant to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, projects that permit modification of yard, height, and setback requirements, and projects that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed as-of-right, or in the future without a proposed action, require preliminary analysis. When such changes, or "effects," could be expected with a proposed action, then a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources is conducted to determine which particular effects expected with the proposed action may warrant further investigation in a detailed analysis. A detailed analysis may be needed for projects or actions that potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alterations to the streetscape of a neighborhood by noticeably changing the scale of buildings. It is within the detailed analysis that the effects are characterized and a determination is made as to whether any changes to the urban design and visual resources of an area would alter the pedestrian's experience of public space in a significant way. The Proposed Project is located adjacent to historic and visual

resources, and given its proposed height, would be visible among existing recognizable buildings in the skyline. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on urban design and visual resources is warranted per the *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines and is provided below. This analysis describes existing conditions and compares the future with and without the Proposed Action, to determine potential urban design and visual resource impacts.

Per the criteria listed in Section 230 of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a pedestrian wind condition analysis is not warranted for the Proposed Action. The Project Area is not located in a high wind location, such as directly along the waterfront, but rather is in a location where wind conditions from the waterfront are attenuated by existing buildings.

Information pertinent to the assessment of the urban design and visual resources analysis includes data collected and analytical information prepared as part of other analyses included in this ~~DEIS~~FEIS, specifically: **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**; **Chapter 5, Open Space**; and **Chapter 7, Historic and Cultural Resources**. In addition, the study of existing urban design and visual resources conditions has been informed by field visits and photography, and future conditions without and with the Proposed Action also rely on computer imaging and graphic renderings. All photos included in this assessment were taken on June 10, 2020.

Assessment Criteria

In general, an assessment of urban design is needed when a project may have effects on one or more of the elements that contribute to a pedestrian's experience of public space. The elements contributing to urban design are described in the *CEQR Technical Manual* as follows:

- **Streets:** For many neighborhoods, streets are the primary component of public space. The arrangement and orientation of streets define the location and flow of activity in an area, set street views, and create the blocks on which buildings and open spaces are organized. The apportionment of street space between cars, bicycles, transit, and sidewalk is critical to making a successful streetscape, as is the careful design of street furniture, grade, materials used, and permanent fixtures, including plantings, streetlights, fire hydrants, curb cuts, or newsstands.
- **Buildings:** Buildings support streets. A building's streetwalls form the most common backdrop in the City for public space. A building's size, shape, setbacks, lot coverage, placement on the zoning lot and block, orientation of active uses, and pedestrian and vehicular entrances all play major roles in the vitality of the streetscape. The public realm also extends to building façades and rooftops, offering more opportunity to enrich the visual character of an area.
- **Open Space:** For the purpose of urban design, open space includes public and private areas such as parks, yards, cemeteries, parking lots and privately-owned public spaces.
- **Natural Features:** Natural features include vegetation and geologic, topographic, and aquatic features. Rock outcroppings, steep slopes or varied ground elevation, beaches, or wetlands may help define the overall visual character of an area.
- **Visual Resources:** A visual resource is the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources.

› **Wind:** Channelized wind pressure from between tall buildings and downwashed wind pressure from parallel tall buildings may cause winds that jeopardize pedestrian safety.

As described in **Chapter 1, Project Description**, the Proposed Action would permit additional floor area on the Project Site and would modify certain regulations that relate to height, street wall height, setbacks, curb cuts, loading berth, and building entrance and lobby requirements, including the width of lobby and entrance space and building entrance recess areas. Therefore, an urban design and visual resources analysis is warranted.

Study Area

Consistent with **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**, the area within 400 feet of the Project Site is defined as the study area for this analysis; this is typically considered an appropriate radius for a site-specific development. As shown in **Figure 6-1,** the study area for this analysis is generally bounded by midblock between East 46th Street and East 47th Street to the north, Fifth Avenue to the west, East 42nd Street to the south, and the eastern portion of the Park Avenue Viaduct to the east. In addition, to account for views toward the Project Site from points at a greater distance, representative views from outside the study area have also been considered.

Detailed Analysis

Existing Conditions

Figure 6-1 provides an aerial image of the Project Site and study area and provides a photo key for area photographs. **Photo 6-1** through **Photo 6-17** show the existing conditions of the Project Site and study area.

Urban Design: Streets, Buildings, Open Space, and Natural Features

Project Site

The Project Site consists of Manhattan Block 1279, Lots 23, 24, 25, and 48, located on the western half of the block bounded by Madison Avenue to the west, Vanderbilt Avenue to the east, East 44th Street to the south, and East 45th Street to the north. The Project Site is located in Manhattan Community District 5. The Project Site has a combined lot area of 25,104 square feet (sf) and approximately 204 feet of frontage on Madison Avenue, and 128 feet of frontage on East 44th Street and East 45th Street.

Three buildings are currently developed on the Project Site that together previously served as the headquarters of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA); these buildings total 351,871 gsf of commercial office and retail space that is now vacant. The building on Lot 48 is a 20-story brick and limestone building with a setback above the 12th floor as well as along the center of the building above the third floor. The adjacent building on Lot 23 is 13 stories with building materials and a setback matching that of the adjacent building on Lot 48. Lot 24 is improved with a 19-story building with a taller streetwall along Madison Avenue compared with the adjacent buildings (see **Photo 6-1**). Lot 25 contains a ventilation structure that will serve MTA's ESA project (see **Photo 6-2**), which is currently under construction with an anticipated completion in 2022 (further discussion of the ESA project is provided below in the "Future Without the Proposed Action" section).

Paved sidewalks are provided along all three street frontages, with some pedestrian obstructions including street trees, trash cans, and street signage poles. There are no existing publicly-accessible open spaces or natural features on the Project Site with the exception of street trees along Madison Avenue.

Figure 6-1 Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Area and Photograph Locations

Photo 6-1 View of Project Site facing north along Madison Avenue

Photo 6-2 View of Project Site facing west along East 44th Street

Photo 6-3 View of the Yale Club looking north from East 44th Street and Vanderbilt Avenue

Photo 6-4 View of 52 Vanderbilt Avenue west along East 45th Street

Photo 6-5 View of the Roosevelt Hotel southeast from Madison Avenue and East 46th Street

Photo 6-6 View south along Vanderbilt Avenue from just north of 44th Street

Photo 6-7 View south along Vanderbilt Avenue from 45th Street

Photo 6-8 View south along Vanderbilt Avenue toward Grand Central Terminal

Photo 6-9 View of MetLife Building east along East 44th Street

Photo 6-10 View north along Madison Avenue from East 41st Street

Photo 6-11 View east along East 43rd Street

Photo 6-12 View west along East 43rd Street

Photo 6-13 Pedestrian plaza adjacent to One Vanderbilt currently under construction

Photo 6-14 View of Frederick F. French Building facing east from Fifth Avenue

Photo 6-15 View west along East 46th Street with view of the Helmsley Building

Photo 6-16 View of Park Avenue Viaduct bridges facing west along East 45th Street

Photo 6-17 View west across the East River from Gantry Plaza State Park

Study Area

Many aspects of urban design are directly related to land use and zoning, particularly as types of buildings relate to land use. Urban design typically reflects the types of uses that are present in an area, which in the case of the study area, is predominantly commercial, though there is also a mix of institutional and transportation uses. Zoning controls the types of land uses that may be located in an area, and it also controls the forms the development may take.

The urban design character of the study area is largely shaped by the context of its location within the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea and Grand Central Core Area within the Special Midtown District's East Midtown Subdistrict. As discussed in detail in **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**, the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea was established by the City Planning Commission (CPC) in 2015 with the stated goals to provide modern commercial space in the immediate vicinity of Grand Central Terminal; create a mechanism for linking new commercial development to significant infrastructure improvements in the overall Grand Central Terminal area; and provide greater options for the transfer of unused landmark development rights. Within the Vanderbilt Corridor, developments can achieve a maximum FAR of 30.0 through various zoning mechanisms including the provision of transit improvements.

Outside of the Vanderbilt Corridor, much of the study area is located within the East Midtown Subdistrict and various subareas within it, which was established by the CPC in 2017 and resulted in an increase of achievable FARs within much of the study area. With the application of these zoning frameworks, the study area is developing, and is expected to continue to develop, with greater density than was previously permitted.

Streets

The study area roadway network generally consists of a grid of wide north-south avenues and narrower east-west streets. The one notable exception is the interruption of the Grand Central superblock located between East 42nd Street and East 45th Street, from Vanderbilt Avenue to Lexington Avenue. This superblock cuts off east-west through traffic along East 43rd Street and East 44th Street, providing connections through Vanderbilt Avenue, a short avenue

running from East 42nd Street to East 47th Street. Madison Avenue carries one-way traffic and is an important pedestrian corridor within the study area. Vanderbilt Avenue and the side streets carry local one-way traffic but provide direct connection to Grand Central Terminal.

East Midtown pedestrian amenities include well-maintained sidewalks, walking signals, and crosswalks, which together facilitate the movement of a large volume of pedestrians. There are currently no pedestrian plazas or publicly accessible open spaces completed within the study area. As part of the Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt project currently under construction (detailed in the "Future Without the Proposed Action" section below), Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd Street and East 43rd Street will become a pedestrian plaza. Many of the avenues and cross streets within the study area are lined with retail uses that add to the activity and vitality of the East Midtown central business district.

Examples of street furnishing in the study area include decorative and standard street lighting, parking regulation signs and payment kiosks, bus stop signs, fire hydrants, garbage cans, concrete and steel protective bollards, concrete planters, mailboxes, and newspaper boxes. Food carts are numerous along Madison Avenue. Greenery is extremely limited in the study area, with most blocks having no greenery apart from a few small street trees on certain sidewalks and street-light-affixed planters at certain locations. Most streets in the study area have parallel parked vehicles, including cars and trucks.

Buildings

Buildings in the study area are primarily commercial office towers, with ground floor retail uses along the avenues and many of the side streets, and some institutional, transportation, and mixed commercial-residential buildings as well. Consistent with their location in the East Midtown central business district, buildings in the study area generally have high FARs, with most buildings above 10 FAR and many above 15 FAR. Buildings range generally from 11 stories to over 40 stories in height.

In addition to the buildings on the Project Site, the project block is improved with two historic buildings: the Yale Club of New York City, a 22-story Renaissance Revival building located at the northwest corner of Vanderbilt Avenue and East 44th Street (see **Photo 6-3**); and the Vanderbilt Concourse Building located at 52 Vanderbilt Avenue, just north of the Yale Club, which is a 20-story Renaissance Revival building with no setbacks (see **Photo 6-4**).

The remaining blocks within the Vanderbilt Corridor, which spans the blocks from East 42nd Street to East 47th Street between Madison Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue, contain primarily older commercial buildings. The block between East 45th Street and East 46th Street just north of the Project Site contains the Roosevelt Hotel, a 19-story Italian Renaissance-style building with a brick façade above a four-story limestone base (see **Photo 6-5**). 383 Madison Avenue, at the northern end of the Vanderbilt Corridor between East 46th and East 47th Streets (Block 1282, Lot 21) contains a 44-story office tower completed in the early 2000s, as seen in the background of **Photo 6-1**. Just south of the Project Site at 333 Madison Avenue is a full-block marble and glass 28-story office building that is approximately 312 feet tall with a setback along the avenues above a five-story base (see **Photo 6-6**). The frontage of this building along East 44th Street across from the Project Site provides a consistent streetwall with no setbacks. One Vanderbilt, a 67-story glass building currently under construction between Vanderbilt and Madison Avenues along 42nd Street is already a highly visible building within East Midtown (see **Photo 6-7**). The building, which

occupies the entire block, rises to 1,414 feet (1,514 feet to the top of the spire), with a tapered form almost from top to bottom and a glass facade.

The study area is anchored by the historic Beaux-Arts-style Grand Central Terminal building located at the southeast corner of the study area. The building is oriented facing south along East 42nd Street, with a clock and statue at the apex of the building. Given the location of the superblock at the eastern edge of the study area, from within the study area Grand Central Terminal is mostly visible facing east along East 43rd Street and from Vanderbilt Avenue (see **Photo 6-8**). The 59-story concrete, steel, and glass MetLife Building is located directly north of the Grand Central Terminal building, towering above the historic train station. The MetLife Building is most visible within the study area from views facing east along East 44th Street, where the view is framed by buildings on either side (see **Photo 6-9**), or from Vanderbilt Avenue.

The Vanderbilt Corridor buildings and Grand Central Terminal largely define the character of Madison Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue within the study area. Generally, these two corridors are lined with a mix of mid- and high-rise office buildings, with ground floor retail primarily included along Madison Avenue. Buildings along these avenues range in height between 10 and 30 stories tall, with a few buildings that are comparatively taller, including the MetLife Building; 383 Madison Avenue with a 44-story octagonal tower above an eight-story base; and the 34-story Beaux-Arts New York Central Building (now Helmsley Building) located just north of the MetLife Building. Buildings along these corridors are generally built to the lot line, creating a uniform streetwall. Several buildings provide multiple setbacks above the base height while others have a consistent massing with no setbacks (see **Photo 6-7** and **Photo 6-10**). The cross streets within the study area have a similar character to that of the avenues, with generally uniform street walls and mid- to high-rise buildings framing views along the roadways (see **Photo 6-9** and **Photo 6-11**).

There are three buildings within the study area serving institutional uses, one of which is the Yale Club building on the project block described above. Both of the other buildings, including the Berkeley College building on the north side of East 43rd Street (**Photo 6-12**) and the Consulate of Colombia building on the south side of East 46th Street, have a lower profile than surrounding buildings.

As detailed above, no building material or pattern of material is dominant in the study area, and there is also wide variation in architectural styles. Throughout the study area, there is a mix of pre- and post-war buildings, as well as a variety of building materials, with many brick and stone exteriors intermixed with glass façades on neighboring buildings. In addition, just outside the study area, the buildings of East Midtown are generally tall office towers that in many cases are visible from and influence the urban design character of the study area. East 42nd Street in particular is a major office tower corridor, with large buildings such as the 53-story Lincoln Building (also known as One Grand Central Place), visible from Vanderbilt Avenue, the 52-story Chanin Building, and the 77-story Chrysler Building.

Open Space and Natural Features

Open spaces and natural features are limited within the 400-foot study area. See **Chapter 3, Open Space**, for a detailed assessment of study area open space. Notably, there are no privately-owned public spaces (POPS) within the study area. There is one pedestrian plaza

adjacent to One Vanderbilt which is currently under construction and will provide seating, planted areas, and protected walking areas for pedestrians in the study area (see **Photo 6-13**).

As mentioned above, greenery is also limited in the study area, with most blocks having no greenery apart from a few small street trees on certain sidewalks and street-light-affixed or sidewalk planters at certain locations.

Visual Resources

This section presents the visual resources assessment, which focuses on views of distinct buildings or structures within or viewable from the study area. As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, "a visual resource is the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources." Visual resources within the study area generally consist of older, historic buildings that are visually prominent. These resources are identified in **Table 6-1** and **Figure 6-2**.

Table 6-1 Study Area Visual Resources

Figure 6-2 Reference	Visual Resource	Address
A	Pan Am MetLife Building	200 Park Avenue
B	Grand Central Terminal	77 East 42nd Street
C	Park Avenue Viaduct	Park Avenue from East 40th Street to East 46th Street
D	Frederick F. French Building	547-551 Lexington Avenue
E	Helmsley Building	230 Park Avenue

Source: Greater East Midtown Rezoning Environmental Impact Statement, 2017

The East Midtown central business district is fully developed and characterized by buildings that, all together, represent greater height and bulk than is present in neighborhoods surrounding it. Given the critical mass of buildings that are constructed with such height and bulk, view corridors and existing views of the visual resources located within the study area are provided primarily along major avenues and streets. For many of the visual resources identified, the most representative views are typically limited to a distance of a few blocks and from sides of the street opposite the resource.

For example, the 38-story Frederick F. French Building, located at the northeast corner of 45th Street and Fifth Avenue, is constructed within the typical East Midtown street grid, and views of the building are generally limited to vantage points along the adjacent roadways, namely Fifth Avenue and East 45th Street (see **Photo 6-14**). Direct views become partially obstructed as a pedestrian moves further from the building. Within the study area, views of the Helmsley Building are similarly situated within the normal street grid along Vanderbilt Avenue and East 45th and 46th Streets (see **Photo 6-15)**. However, the Helmsley Building is also located at the southern end of Park Avenue as it transitions to the Park Avenue Viaduct, meaning Park Avenue north of the study area also provides significant views to the building.

The superblock between East 42nd Street, East 45th Street, Vanderbilt Avenue, and Lexington Avenue interrupts the street grid and creates opportunities for additional views of nearby visual resources, including the MetLife Building, Grand Central Terminal, and the Park Avenue Viaduct. The MetLife Building is visible and recognizable from further distances,

given its respective height compared to the surrounding buildings and location on the superblock. As shown in **Photo 6-9**, the MetLife Building is visible from longer views along East 44th Street. Similar views east along East 43rd Street show how portions of Grand Central Terminal are visible (see **Photo 6-11**). Similarly, the Park Avenue Viaduct is visible from views facing east along the streets within the study area. Most particularly, the Park Avenue Viaduct bridges over East 45th Street are visible along the 45th Street corridor (see **Photo 6-16**). As the structure extends over 42nd Street, a major east-west corridor, and wraps around Grand Central Terminal, it is a visually prominent feature of the area. Though existing views of these resources are available from the streets within the study area, they are still most visible from adjacent roadways, particularly along Vanderbilt Avenue (see **Photo 6-8**). These visual resources contribute to the character and setting of the study area.

As detailed above, East Midtown and the study area contain buildings that generally have a greater height and bulk compared with the neighborhood buildings that surround it. As a result, the tallest buildings within East Midtown are visible from further distances beyond the study area. To demonstrate, **Photo 6-17** provides the existing viewpoint from Gantry Plaza State Park in Long Island City, Queens. As shown, prominent buildings within and around the study area from this vantage point include the Chrysler Building, the MetLife Building, and One Vanderbilt.

The Future Without the Proposed Action (No-Action Condition)

Urban Design: Streets, Buildings, Open Space, and Natural Features

Project Site

Absent the Proposed Project, in the future No-Action condition, the current buildings on the Project Site would be demolished and a 15-FAR, 474,532-gsf as-of-right mixed commercial office and retail building would be constructed. The building would contain 6,144 gsf of ground floor retail space, 411,540 gsf of commercial office space above, and 56,848 sf of below-grade and mechanical space. The ground floor retail would be provided along both Madison Avenue and East 45th Street, and access to the office lobby would be provided from Madison Avenue. The No-Action condition would also include an easement for possible ESA circulation, to be built by the MTA, located at the northwest corner of the building.

The building would be a high-rise tower on a 114-foot-tall podium, with a total height of 472 feet and 30 stories. The base of the building would be set back seven feet from the lot line along Madison Avenue to allow for a 20-foot sidewalk along that frontage. The building tower would have one additional set back at 194 feet. Under the No-Action condition, the ventilation structure on Lot 25 would remain as under existing conditions. In accordance with zoning, the No-Action building would have one curb cut that would be 25 feet wide to allow for a loading dock along East 44th Street.

A ground floor plan of the No-Action condition is provided in **Chapter 1, Project Description**. **Figure 6-3** provides a section diagram of the illustrative No-Action condition.

Study Area

As detailed in **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy** and shown in **Table 6-2** below, there are two development projects within the study area that are anticipated to be completed by the analysis year. These development projects include One Vanderbilt,

described above and currently under construction; and 250 Park Avenue, located at the northeast corner of Vanderbilt Avenue and East 46th Street. However, as One Vanderbilt is largely constructed, although unoccupied, it is considered an existing condition for the purposes of the urban design and visual resources analysis, as opposed to a No-Action project, and is described in detail above.

Just to the north of the study area on Block 1283, Lot 21 stretching between Park Avenue and Madison Avenue from 47th Street to 48th Street, is the redevelopment of 270 Park Avenue. Anticipated to be built in 2024, the new building would contain approximately 2.4 million gsf of commercial office space (an addition of over one million gsf as compared to the previous office building on the site) for the world headquarters for JPMorgan Chase Bank, and rise to 1,425 feet.

In addition to these development projects, MTA's ESA project is currently under construction, with anticipated completion in 2022. The ESA will bring LIRR service from the main line in Queens directly into a new concourse below Grand Central Terminal.

Table 6-2 No-Action Projects Within 400-Foot Study Area

Site.	Location	Description	Proposed Height	Building GSF
1	250 Park Avenue	Mixed commercial office and retail building	778 feet	775,287

Source: Greater East Midtown Rezoning FEIS

Streets

The two No-Action development projects within the study area would be set within the existing street grid, and therefore would preserve the existing street patterns in the study area. One exception is the construction of the Vanderbilt Avenue pedestrian plaza, which would be completed in the No-Action condition and would close Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd Street and East 43rd Street to vehicular traffic.

Buildings

250 Park Avenue is a high-rise commercial building that would reinforce the prevailing building form characteristic of the East Midtown central business district. It is indicative of a larger development trend within the study area and East Midtown neighborhood toward greater height and density. Reinforcing the goals for the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea detailed above, the stated goals for the East Midtown Subdistrict were to enable the development of new, modern office buildings, to preserve and maintain landmarked buildings, to facilitate public realm improvements, and to maintain key physical characteristics of the area, including active retail corridors and the streetwall character of the area around Grand Central Terminal. 250 Park Avenue would continue this trend toward higher density in East Midtown and help to promote the goals of both these areas.

Open Space and Natural Features

Under the future No-Action condition, the One Vanderbilt project would contribute a new pedestrian amenity to the study area: the pedestrian plaza to be located along Vanderbilt Avenue from East 42nd Street to East 43rd Street. No other changes to study area open spaces and natural features are anticipated.

Figure 6-2 Study Area Visual Resources and Comparative Viewpoints Photo Key

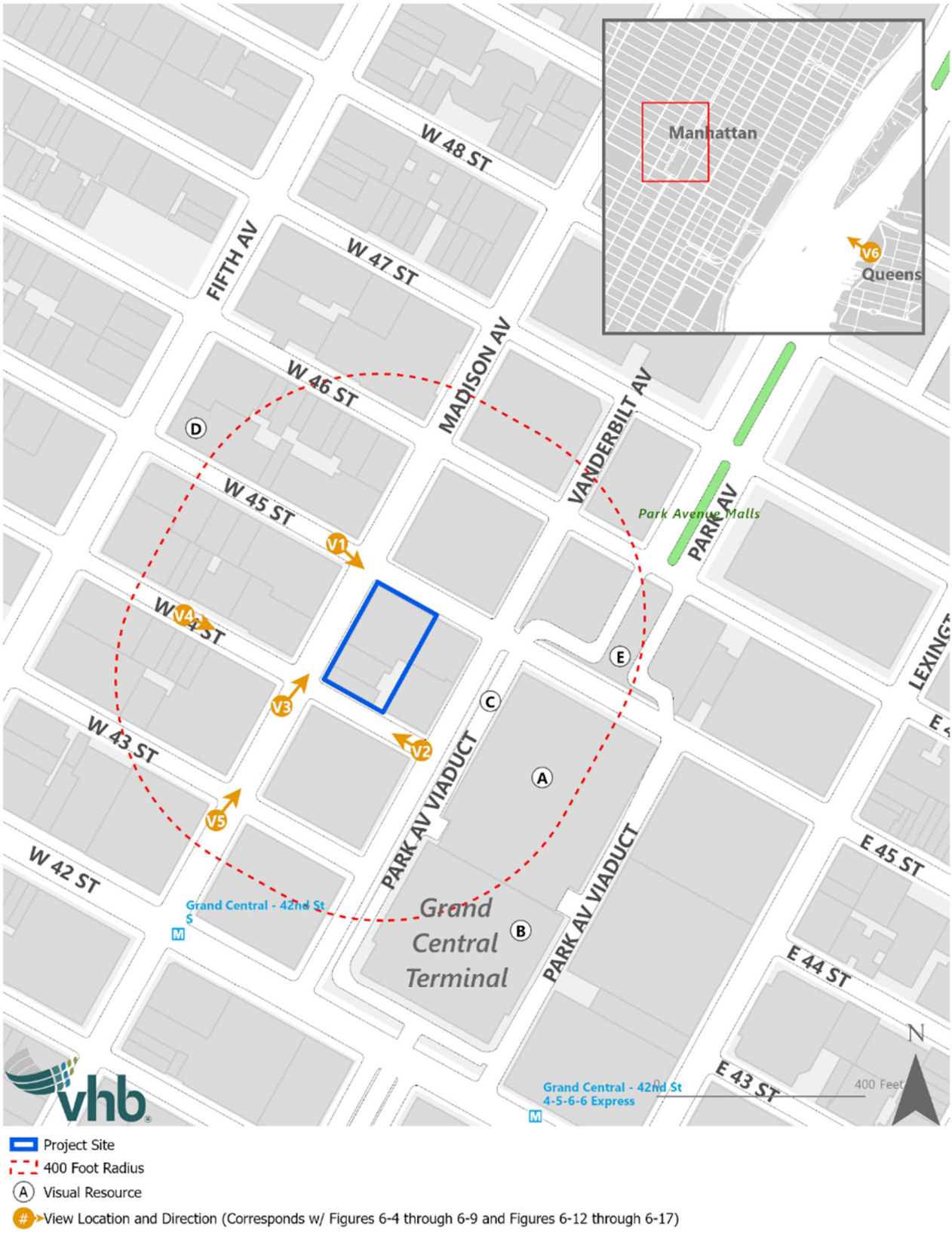
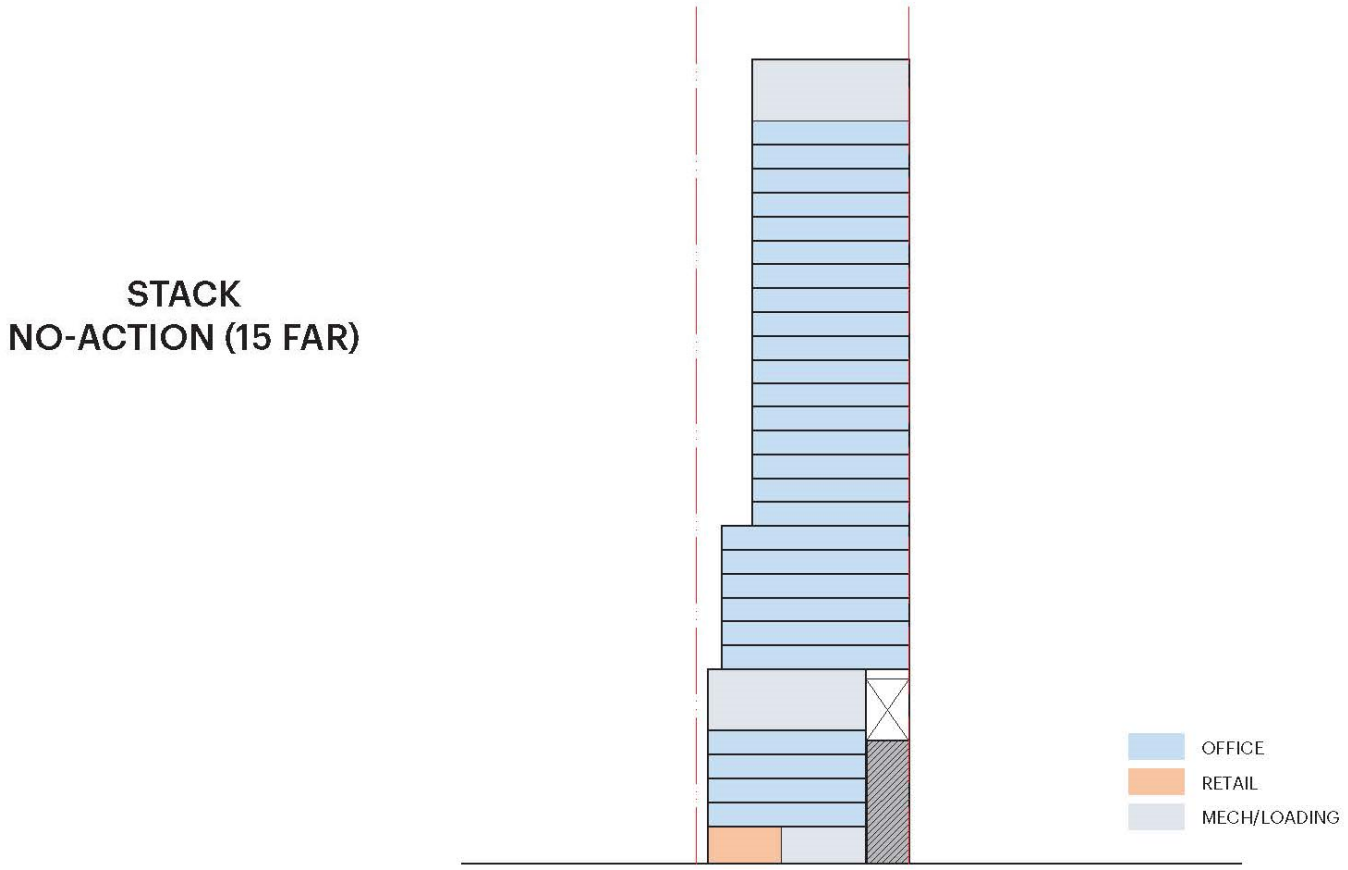


Figure 6-3 No-Action Illustrative Section Diagram



Visual Resources

Figure 6-4 through **Figure 6-9** show illustrative views of the Project Site under the No-Action condition. **Figure 6-4** through **Figure 6-6** provide illustrative views of the No-Action development along the three building frontages: East 45th Street facing east, East 44th Street facing west, and Madison Avenue facing north, respectively. As shown and detailed above, the No-Action development would be constructed within the context of the existing East Midtown street grid. This would provide a continuation of the existing streetwall with a setback above the base height, a design exhibited in many buildings along these view corridors. As a result, views along the roadways within the study area would not be significantly altered, or interrupted, by the No-Action development.

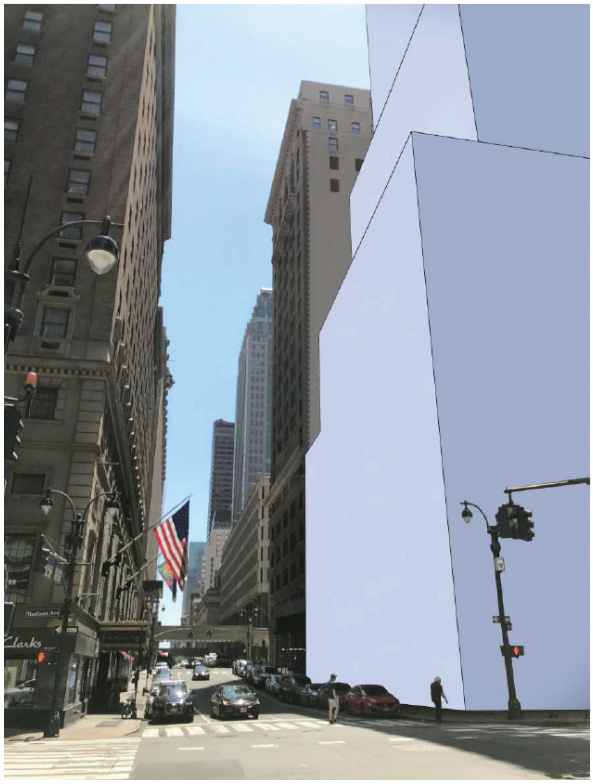
Figure 6-7 provides an illustrative view of the No-Action development from midblock between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue facing east along East 44th Street. As described above, under the **Existing Conditions** section, this view corridor provides views of the MetLife Building and the Park Avenue Viaduct, two important visual resources in the study area. As shown, the No-Action development would not obstruct these existing views, but rather would frame the view toward the MetLife Building, mirroring the other tall office building across East 44th Street to the south. The No-Action development would not affect views to any of the other visual resources within the study area.

As shown in **Figure 6-8**, views facing north along Madison Avenue reinforce how the No-Action development would present a continuation of the consistent streetwall along the view corridor and would preserve existing views along the avenue, typical of this mid- to high-rise central business district.

Views from further distances show that, while tall, the No-Action development would not be visible within the existing skyline of East Midtown and the study area. **Figure 6-17** shows a representative view from Gantry Plaza State Park. As shown in this figure, from viewpoints facing west, no portion of the No-Action development would be visible, and the skyline would remain in its existing condition.

Figure 6-4 View 1: Facing East along East 45th Street from Madison Avenue

No-Action



For illustrative purposes only

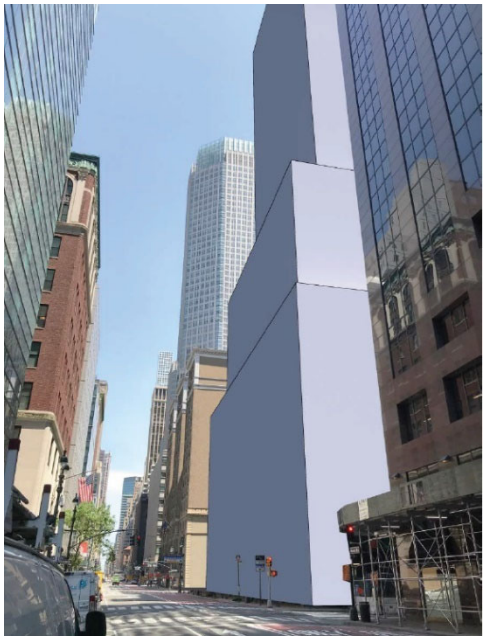
Figure 6-5 View 2: Facing West along East 44th Street from Vanderbilt Avenue

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-6 View 3: Facing North along Madison Avenue from South of East 44th Street

No-Action



For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-7 View 4: Facing East along East 44th Street midblock between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-8 View 5: Facing North along Madison Avenue from South of East 43rd Street

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-9 View 6: Facing West from Gantry Plaza State Park, Long Island City

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

The Future With the Proposed Action (With-Action Condition)

In the With-Action condition, the Project Site would be redeveloped with approximately 925,630 gsf of mixed-commercial development, including primarily commercial office space, with retail, a circulation area to access the ESA terminal located below the Project Site, and below-grade space (i.e., mechanical and back-of-house space). See **Figure 1-3** in **Chapter 1, Project Description** for the illustrative ground floor plan for the With-Action condition.

Figure 6-10 provides a comparative, illustrative section diagram of the No-Action condition and the Proposed Project along 42nd Street and **Figure 6-11** provides an illustrative aerial rendering as viewed from the northwest of the Project Site facing southeast. **Figure 6-12** through **Figure 6-17** show comparative perspective views of the Project Site in the No-Action and With-Action conditions. The comparative perspective views show both the maximum building envelope as permitted by the Proposed Action (indicated with a black dotted outline) and the illustrative Proposed Project.

Urban Design: Streets, Buildings, Open Space, and Natural Features

Project Site

The Proposed Project would be a high-rise tower, consistent with the typical built form in the study area. The building would be up to approximately 1,050 feet tall and 55 stories, and it would be constructed to the lot lines along East 44th Street and East 45th Street and set back from the Madison Avenue lot line to allow for improved pedestrian circulation and a seven-foot sidewalk widening along that frontage. In addition, the north sidewalk along East 45th Street adjacent to the Project Site would be extended by approximately five feet to provide for a 15-foot-wide sidewalk, along the site frontage only. Although the building design has not yet been finalized, it is anticipated that the building would feature a primarily glass façade, including at the entrance to the ESA terminal, to promote a feeling of openness and make the transit entrance clearly visible and inviting to the public. As shown in **Figure 6-18,** the Proposed Project building would include setbacks on each frontage at a height of approximately 321 feet, with a tower above. The With-Action development would increase height on the Project Site relative to the No-Action condition by an increment of 578 feet.

The Proposed Action includes a special permit to increase the maximum FAR permitted from 15.0 to 30.0, in connection with the proposed pedestrian and mass transit circulation improvements. The design of the building as proposed would also require, in conjunction with the additional floor area, relief from the current zoning requirements, including the following:

- The maximum permitted length of the building's frontage on Madison Avenue occupied by lobby and entrance space, to provide adequate ingress to and egress from the building's office lobby;
- The required street wall height, to permit a 321-foot building base;
- Pedestrian circulation requirements, to permit a wider building entrance recess area and obstruction of the recess area by proposed revolving doors;
- Height and setback requirements, to permit an optimal floor plate given the relatively small footprint of the Project Site, and an improved distribution of bulk across the building massing;

- Building entrance requirements, to permit a single lobby entrance on Madison Avenue, with a sidewalk widening of less than 10 feet; and,
- Curb cut requirements, to permit a larger curb cut on East 44th Street to accommodate three loading berths and to permit loading berths that are not arranged for head-in and head-out truck movements.

These requested actions would result in a better site plan and design of the Proposed Project building, which would enable the building to both accommodate the proposed circulation and mass transit improvements and meet the standards of a world-class office building in East Midtown, supporting the stated goals of the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea and East Midtown Subdistrict. As detailed above, to achieve its stated goals, the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea set in place various zoning mechanisms to permit greater density. The Proposed Project would make use of this zoning framework in order to facilitate the type of building that was envisioned as part of the Vanderbilt Corridor.

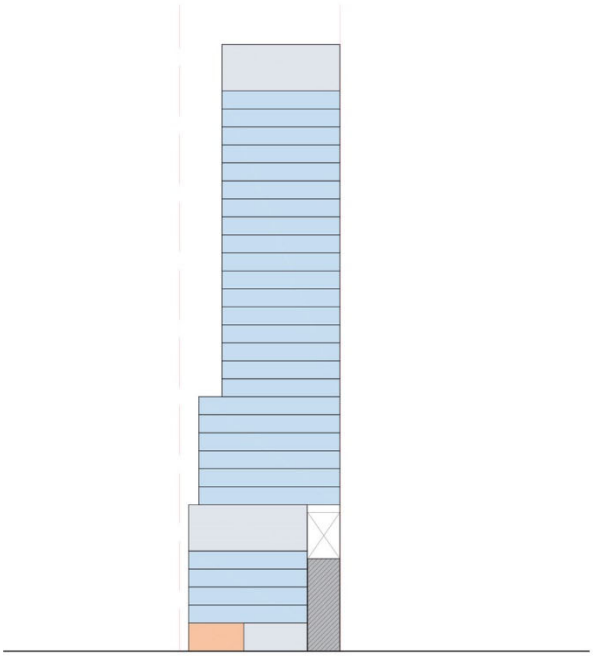
The ground floor of the Proposed Project would provide an active street-front appropriate for a highly-trafficked location within East Midtown, including entrances to the office lobby as well as the ground-floor retail spaces along Madison Avenue and East 45th Street. The Proposed Project would also facilitate significant improvements in the pedestrian experience within and around the Project Site, including the proposed seven-foot sidewalk widening and overall sidewalk width of 20 feet, and generous building entrance recess area along Madison Avenue.

The proposed new at-grade entrance to the LIRR ESA terminal would be a significant element of the Proposed Project, contributing to meaningful above- and below-grade improvements to the pedestrian and mass transit circulation network on the Project Site. The ESA entrance would be located at the intersection of Madison Avenue and East 45th Street, and as detailed above, would feature a glass façade to create an open and welcoming gateway to the LIRR service. The rail transit facility entrance would incorporate three escalators, a stairwell, and an ADA elevator providing direct connections to the ESA concourse, and through the concourse to Grand Central Terminal. These improvements would substantially improve the accessibility of the overall pedestrian circulation network, reduce points of pedestrian congestion, and extend and provide more direct and generous connections to the existing below-grade pedestrian circulation network serving Grand Central Terminal.

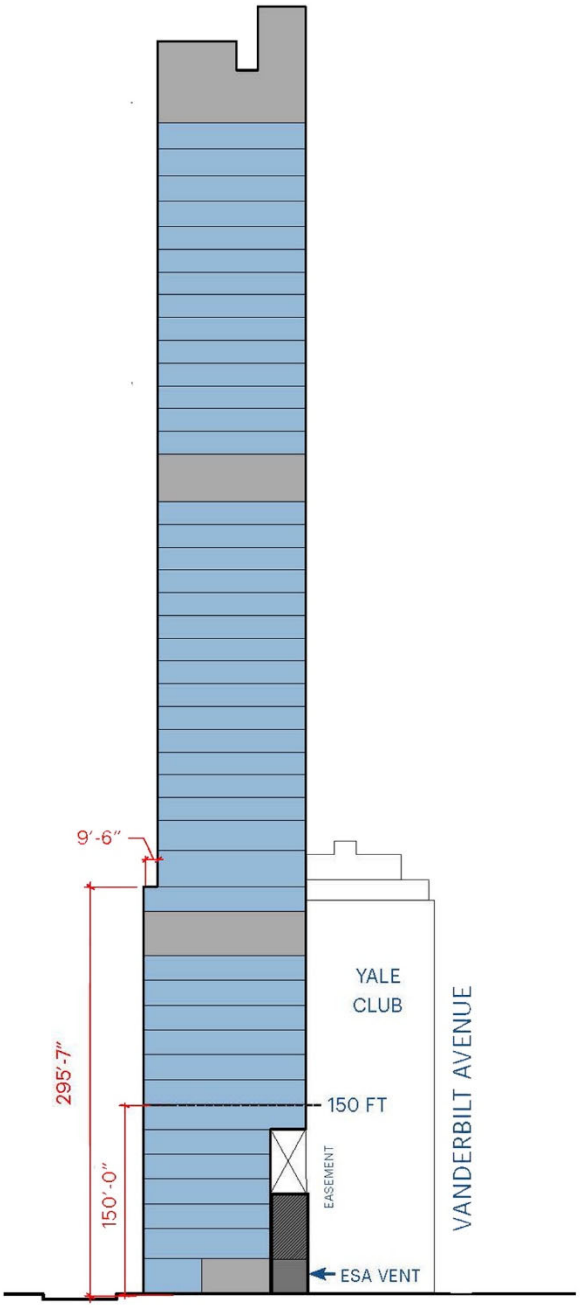
The Proposed Project would also improve off-site passenger circulation at the Grand Central – 42nd Street Subway Station—including improvements to passenger connections to the IRT Flushing Line (#7 Train) platform, detailed in **Chapter 9, Transportation**.

Figure 6-10 Comparative Section Diagrams

No-Action Section



With-Action Section



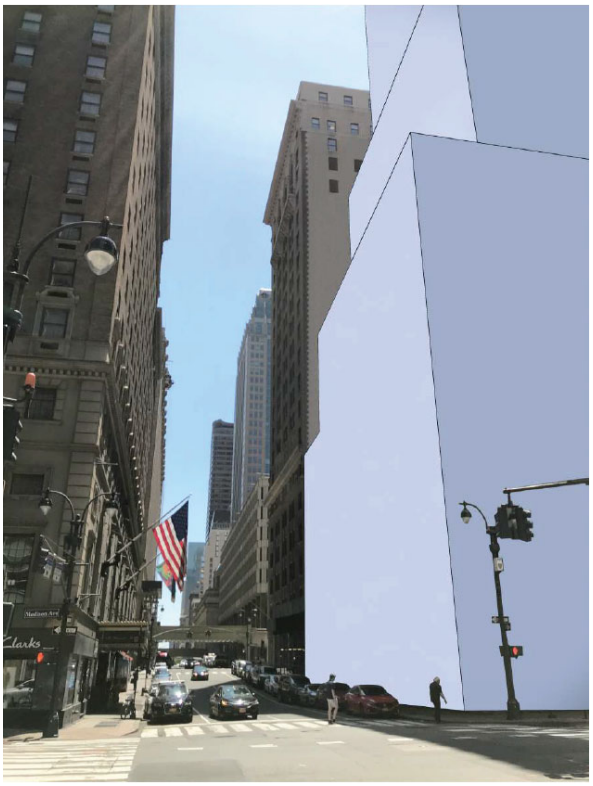
For illustrative purposes only. Relative building heights are not to scale.

Figure 6-11 Illustrative Aerial Rendering of the Project Site facing Southeast

For illustrative purposes only

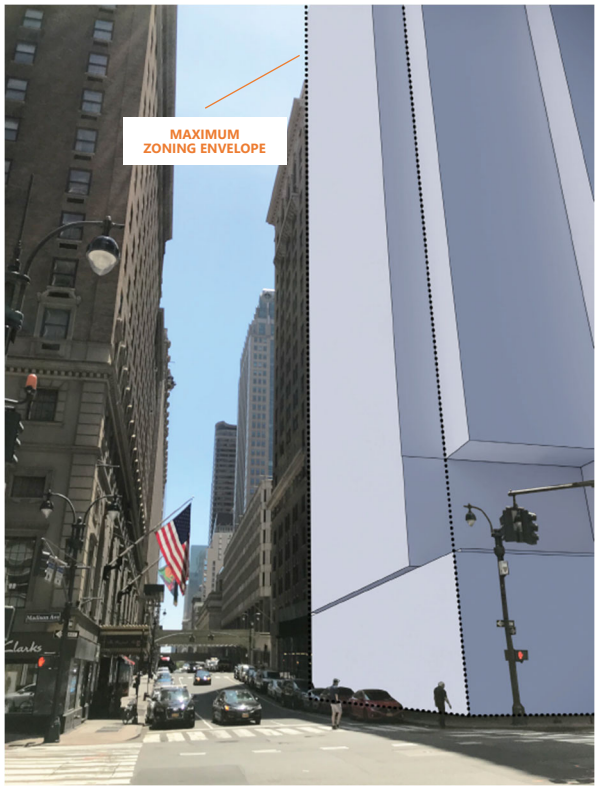
Figure 6-12 Comparative View 1: Facing East along East 45th Street from Madison Avenue

No-Action



For illustrative purposes only

With-Action



For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-13 Comparative View 2: Facing West along East 44th Street from Vanderbilt Avenue

No-Action

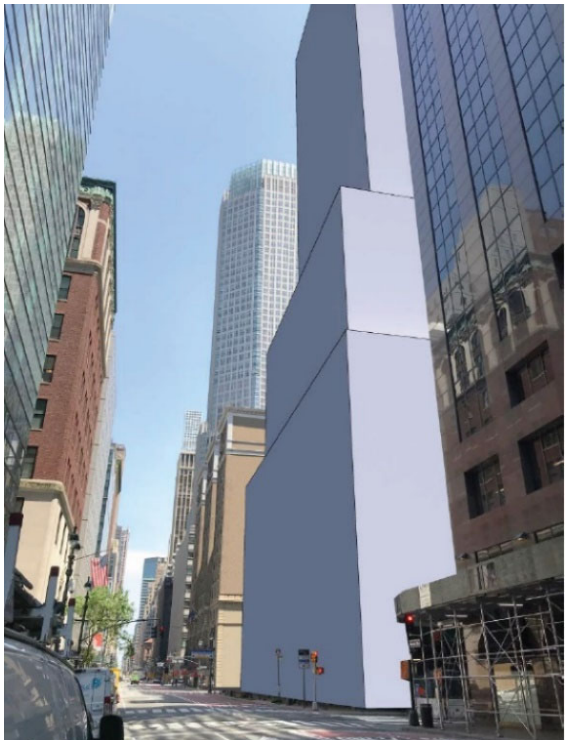
For illustrative purposes only

With-Action

For illustrative purposes only

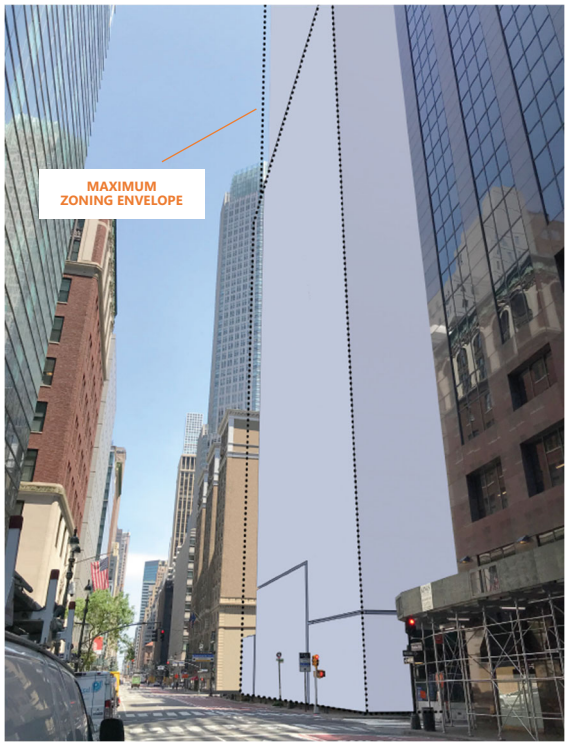
Figure 6-14 Comparative View 3: Facing North along Madison Avenue from South of East 44th Street

No-Action



For illustrative purposes only

With-Action



For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-15 Comparative View 4: Facing East along East 44th Street midblock between Madison Avenue and Fifth Avenue

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

With-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-16 Comparative View 5: Facing North along Madison Avenue from South of East 43rd Street

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

With-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Figure 6-17 Comparative View 6: Facing West from Gantry Plaza State Park, Long Island City

No-Action

For illustrative purposes only

With-Action

For illustrative purposes only

Study Area

Streets

As detailed above, the Proposed Project is anticipated to have beneficial effects on the streetscape and pedestrian circulation within the study area. Compared with the No-Action condition, the proposed entrance to the ESA terminal would greatly enhance access to subway transportation and the regional rail transit network from East Midtown. In summary, the Proposed Project would change the urban design of the study area but would improve the pedestrian experience by activating an underdeveloped and under-utilized site and improving pedestrian connectivity.

Buildings

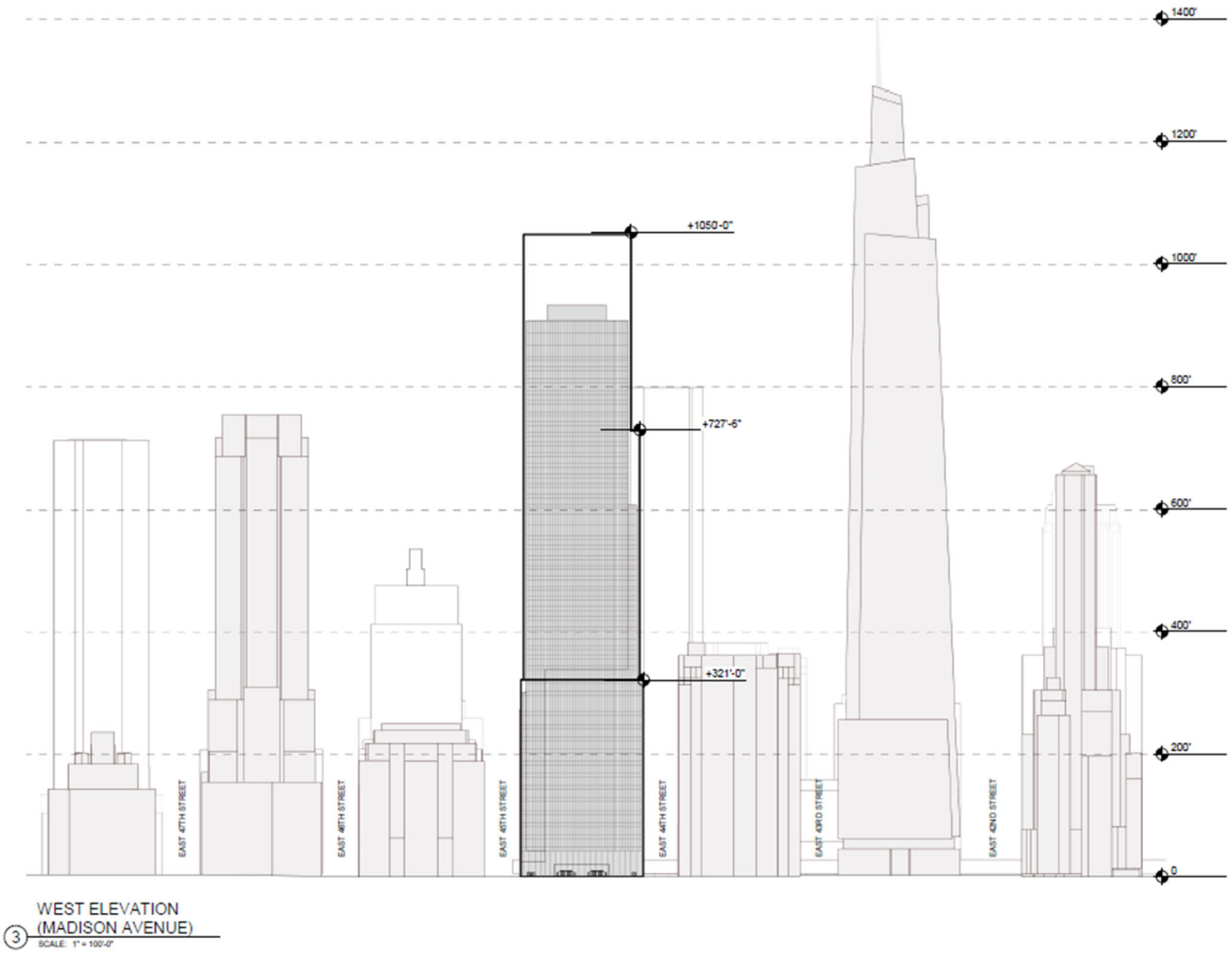
Views representative of the Proposed Project from the surrounding streets within the study area are provided in **Figure 6-12** through **Figure 6-17**. These representative views demonstrate that from close-range and mid-range views within a few blocks, the Proposed Project building, even with the maximum zoning envelope, would fit within the context of the densely developed street grid of East Midtown Manhattan. The design of the Proposed Project would respect and reinforce the strong and consistent streetwall that is a central feature of the East Midtown central business district.

Figure 6-12, Figure 6-13, and **Figure 6-14** show that from a pedestrian's perspective, the design of the Proposed Project would not significantly alter the character of the surrounding area compared with the No-Action condition. The base of the building would be approximately 207 feet taller compared with the No-Action building. This would be taller than the height of several adjacent buildings without setbacks, including the building at 52 Vanderbilt with a height of approximately 260 feet, and similar in height to the commercial building across East 44th Street to the south of the Project Site, which provides no setback along 44th Street.

The Proposed Project would also fit within the context of the other tall buildings within the study area (see **Figure 6-18**). At up to approximately 1,050 feet, though taller than other buildings, including the MetLife Building (769 feet tall), the building two blocks to the north at 383 Madison Avenue (713 feet tall), and the Chrysler Building (1,046 feet tall), located east of the study area, the Proposed Project would be shorter than One Vanderbilt (1,414 feet tall), which would remain the tallest building in the study area.

Overall, though taller than the No-Action building, the building would be one of many tall office buildings in a densely developed commercial district that contains skyscrapers and other historic buildings that exhibit a range of heights. The building style and massing would also fit within the context of a central business district that contains a variety of styles, forms, and materials, as detailed in the "Existing Conditions" section above. Given the diversity of these urban design elements, the building's design would be well-integrated within its context, and would not adversely affect the built environment's arrangement, appearance, or functionality.

Figure 6-18 With-Action West Elevation along Madison Avenue



For illustrative purposes only

~~6~~Open*Open Space and Natural Features*

Similar to the No-Action condition, there is limited space to provide new publicly ~~-~~accessible open spaces on the Project Site, and no new open spaces are included as part of the Proposed Project. However, as detailed in **Chapter 5, Open Space**, no significant impacts to open space are anticipated to result from the Proposed Project.

Visual Resources

The Proposed Project would be constructed within the existing street grid in East Midtown, and therefore existing visual corridors along the study area roadways would be maintained in both the No-Action and With-Action conditions. The design of the Proposed Project is appropriate for its location in East Midtown, already characterized by mid- and high-rise buildings. The area is also exhibiting a trend toward increasing density facilitated by the zoning framework for the Vanderbilt Corridor Subarea and East Midtown Subdistrict, meaning the Proposed Project would fit within the context of the view corridors that capture other high-density developments in the study area.

As shown in **Figure 6-15**, the Proposed Project building form (and maximum zoning envelope) would maintain the existing views to the MetLife Building and Park Avenue Viaduct facing east along East 44th Street, and like the No-Action building, would frame the view toward the MetLife Building, mirroring the tall office building across East 44th Street to the south. Similar to the No-Action, the Proposed Project would not affect views to any of the other visual resources within the study area. From vantage points to the south of the Project Site, views north along Madison Avenue would not be significantly altered by the Proposed Project, but rather would incorporate a tall building along a corridor that includes several other high-rise buildings (see **Figure 6-18**).

Figure 6-17 presents a viewpoint from Gantry Plaza State Park, as a representative of other long-range views of the East Midtown skyline. As shown from this perspective, the Proposed Project within the maximum zoning envelope would be highly visible, particularly as compared to the No-Action development which would not be visible from this vantage point. The Proposed Project would sit directly behind the MetLife Building, and therefore would not block direct views to that building, nor would it block views to the other visual resources within the study area. The design of the Proposed Project building would include an orthogonal building form, in contrast to other commercial towers in the vicinity, including 383 Madison Avenue, two blocks to the north, and One Vanderbilt Avenue, two blocks to the south. The design of the building would produce a distinctive addition to the East Midtown skyline.

Overall, the Proposed Project would sit within the context of other tall towers of the East Midtown Manhattan Skyline, including One Vanderbilt, the Chrysler Building, and the MetLife Building. The Proposed Project continues a tradition of towers that define the East Midtown skyline, including many of the surrounding visual resources. Moreover, the goal for the Vanderbilt Corridor and East Midtown Subdistrict is to facilitate new, high-quality commercial towers. As a result, the Proposed Project will be constructed within a newly revitalized East Midtown skyline, including towers such as One Vanderbilt. Therefore, the impacts of the Proposed Project are expected to be consistent to those associated with any mid- to high-rise commercial development that is characteristic of the East Midtown central business district.

Based on the analysis provided above, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to have significant adverse impacts to visual resources within the study area.