A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the potential effects on urban design and visual resources that could result from the proposed action. 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. An analysis of urban design and visual resources is appropriate if a proposed project would a) result in buildings that have substantially different height, bulk, form, setbacks, size, scale, use, or arrangement than exists in an area; b) change block form, demap an active street, or map a new street, or affect the street hierarchy, streetwall, curb cuts, pedestrian activity, or streetscape elements; or c) would result in above ground development in an area that includes significant visual resources.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed action would result in an approximately 1.3 million gross square foot (gsf) mixed-use development rising to a maximum of 32 stories, including two mechanical levels above the top residential story, plus three cellar levels on the 94,463 sf project site. The proposed building, which would feature a design tailored to address the specific conditions on and surrounding the project site, would be developed on a site that otherwise is assumed to remain vacant in the future without the proposed action. Therefore, the proposed action would result in a new above-ground development that would differ in height, bulk, form, setbacks, size, scale, use, and streetscape elements from that which currently exists on the project site. Given the above conditions, an analysis of urban design and visual resources is therefore appropriate as per the guidelines set forth in the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

The analysis concludes that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to urban design or visual resources.

B. METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this analysis considers the effects of the proposed action on the following elements, which collectively form an area's urban design:

- *Block Form and Street Pattern.* This urban design feature refers to the shape and arrangement of blocks and surrounding streets, such as a grid pattern with regularly sized, rectangular blocks. These features set street views, define the flow of activity through an area, and create the basic format on which building arrangements can be organized.

- *Building Arrangement.* This term refers to the way that buildings are placed on zoning lots and blocks. The buildings can have small or large footprints, be attached or

detached and separated by open space uses, and be varied in their site plans. This urban design feature helps to convey a sense of the overall form and design of a block or a larger area.

- *Building Bulk, Use, and Type.* Buildings are usually described by these characteristics. A building's bulk is created from an amalgam of characteristics that include its height, length, and width; lot coverage and density; and shape and use of setbacks and other massing elements. The general use of a building (e.g., residential, manufacturing, commercial office) gives an impression of its appearance and helps to convey visual and urban design character. Building type refers to a distinctive class of buildings and suggests distinguishing features of a particular building. Examples of building type include: industrial loft, church, gas station, and walk-up tenement.

- *Streetscape Elements.* Streetscape elements are the distinctive physical features that make up a streetscape, such as street walls, building entrances, parking lots, fences, street trees, street furniture, curb cuts, and parking ribbons. These features help define the immediate visual experience of pedestrians.

- *Street Hierarchy.* Streets may be classified as expressways, arterials, boulevards, collector/distributor streets, or local streets, and they may be defined by their width, type of access, and the presence or absence of at-grade pedestrian crossings. Street hierarchy helps convey a sense of the overall form and activity level of a neighborhood.

- *Topography and Natural Features.* Topographic and natural features help define the overall visual character of an area and may include varied ground elevations, rock outcroppings and steep slopes, vegetation, and aquatic features.

The analysis focuses on nearby locations from which the proposed project would be visible. Views to the project site are limited primarily to surrounding streets. As views of the site and the proposed development generally would not be available beyond 400 feet, apart from the western portion of De Witt Clinton Park, the urban design and visual resources study area has been defined as the area roughly bounded by W. 55th Street on the north, Tenth Avenue on the east, W. 52nd Street on the south, and De Witt Clinton Park on the west (refer to Figure 8-1). Please note the study area includes the north side of W. 54th Street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues and the west side of Eleventh Avenue between W. 54th and W. 55th Streets.

The analysis of urban design and visual resources is based on field visits, photography, and computer imaging of the proposed project and buildings on surrounding sites.

As stipulated by CEQR, the analysis of urban design will assess the effects of the proposed action on those attributes that constitute the physical appearance of buildings and streets in the study area. These attributes include building bulk, use, and type; building arrangement; block form and street pattern; streetscape elements; street hierarchy; and natural features. Bulk is created by the size of a building and its massing on a site. Height, length, and width define a building's size while volume, shape, setbacks, lot coverage, and density define its mass. The analysis of visual resources provided

in this chapter assesses the effects of the proposed action on the visual resources of the study area, which are its unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. Waterfront views, public parks, landmarked structures, and landmarked districts are all examples of visual resources. As stipulated by CEQR, only views of visual resources from public and publicly accessible locations will be assessed.

As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," this analysis is prepared using an existing conditions analysis year of 2008, which does not necessarily reflect conditions in the area at the time the EIS is issued. This is a dynamic area and it should be noted that the description in this chapter reflects a "snapshot in time" of existing conditions. The analysis employs a Build analysis year of 2011. In the future without the proposed action, the analysis assumes that project site would be vacant and this would serve as the baseline for comparing the effects of the proposed project, which is defined in Chapter 1, with additional relevant information provided in this chapter to facilitate the assessment of the project's expected environmental effects on urban design and visual resources.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Project Site

Urban Design

The project site occupies the western portion of the block bounded by W. 54th Street, Tenth Avenue, W. 53rd Street, and Eleventh Avenue, encompassing slightly more than half of the entire block. The 94,463 sf site consists of Block 1082, Lot 1, a rectangular parcel with street frontages on three sides. Until May 2007, the site was occupied by a Verizon automotive service/vehicle storage facility, and now is vacant. It consisted of two utilitarian one to two-story brick garage buildings along the Eleventh Avenue frontage built to the street line with no setbacks, while most of the property was an open paved area used for vehicle storage. Vehicle access was provided via curb cuts on W. 53rd and W. 54th streets. The site perimeter was enclosed with chain link fencing. Photographs of the project site as of summer 2007 are shown in Figure 8-2.

The applicant proceeded with as-of-right demolition of site buildings and excavation during the second half of 2007 which continued into 2008, followed by as-of-right foundation work and as-of-right construction.

The right-of-way of Amtrak's below-grade Empire Line traverses the northeastern edge of the project site. As the right-of-way is below-grade and covered by a platform on the project site and throughout the study area, it is not visible from the street. Therefore, it has no effects on the visual character of the project site or the study area.

Visual Resources

There are no notable visual resources located on the project site.

Remainder of the Block

Urban Design

The remaining, eastern portion of Block 1082 is occupied by the AT&T Switching Tower, a 457-foot tall windowless structure housing telephone equipment serviced by a small staff. This property (Block 1082, Lot 25), is bounded by W. 54th Street on the north, Tenth Avenue on the east, W. 53rd Street on the south, and the project site on the west. The building covers virtually its entire lot and has a streetwall base equivalent to several stories on its three street frontages. Above the base, the building has setbacks and rises as a tower, with an antenna structure extending from the roof. It is the tallest building in the study area.

The *AIA Guide to New York City*, 4th edition (2000), describes it as a "tall windowless colossus that looks, from a distance, as though covered with glistening mattress ticking." This building is shown in Figure 8-3.

Visual Resources

The AT&T Switching Tower is not considered a notable visual resource, although it does have a strong visual impact on the study area due to its large base and overall height.

Study Area and Vicinity

Urban Design

General Features, Street Patterns, and Streetscapes

This area of Manhattan features the standard 1811 Commissioner's Plan rectilinear street grid. In general, north-south avenues are major thoroughfares mapped 100 feet wide and spaced 800 feet apart from Sixth Avenue through Eleventh Avenue, and most east-west streets are narrower side streets mapped 60 feet wide and spaced approximately 200 feet apart. The wider north-south avenues generally provide longer view corridors, while the east-west narrow streets have shorter view corridors due to their narrower widths. Within the study area, the grid is discontinuous west of W. 53rd Street and Eleventh Avenue due to De Witt Clinton Park which encompasses a two block area bounded by W. 54th Street on the north, Eleventh Avenue on the east, W. 52nd Street on the south, and Twelfth Avenue. A further distinctive characteristic of this area is its proximity to the Hudson River shoreline; Twelfth Avenue, designated State Route 9(A), forms part of the two-way median separated urban arterial roadway extending along the west side of Manhattan parallel and adjacent to the river.

Throughout the study area and vicinity, ground elevations gradually slope up from the Hudson River, rising from west to east. For example, according to US Geological Survey's 7.5 Minute Series Topographic map, the elevation at W. 54th Street and Twelfth Avenue is 11 feet above the National Geodetic Vertical Datum of 1929 (NGVD) while the center portion of the project site is 30 feet above NGVD and W. 54th Street just east of Tenth Avenue is 40 feet above NGVD. This change in elevation of approximately 30 feet from Tenth to Twelfth avenues combined with the rectilinear

street grid facilitates views of the piers, Hudson River, and New Jersey palisades from the view corridors extending along W. 54th Street and other streets in the study area. The view corridor along W. 53rd Street is interrupted by De Witt Clinton Park, which contains trees and baseball batting cages that obstruct views to the river.

In terms of built features, the study area is urban in character, with streets flanked by concrete sidewalks that are typically wider on the north-south avenues. Curbside parking lanes, typically occupied by cars, buses, and trucks, on both sides of the streets and avenues bracket traffic lanes in the center of the roadbed. Apart from Twelfth Avenue, which has a narrow mall separating northbound and southbound traffic lanes, none of the streets in the area have a center median or mall. On the sidewalks, modern "cobra-head" lampposts are used in the area and there is typical street furniture (e.g., public telephones, newspaper boxes, bus stops). There are street trees present throughout the study area (including adjacent to the project site).

With several waves of urban development over the past approximately 200 years, there are no remaining natural features within the study area.

Building Forms

In general, the study area does not have a uniform urban design character, architectural style, or building type as it features a variety of building forms and heights. Buildings on the blocks located between Tenth and Eleventh avenues range considerably in height and type, including high rise residential and mixed-use elevator buildings, lower rise walkup residential buildings, and commercial buildings. Most buildings have brick or stone facades.

Building forms in this area reflect, in part, the changing design paradigms of different eras, including industrial and tenement development during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the urban renewal period ushered in by the establishment of the Clinton Urban Renewal Area in 1969, and more recent private developments built pursuant to streetwall and setback zoning regulations. Most buildings are streetwall buildings built at or close to the front and side lot lines, with only small front or side yards (if any), while others, typically developed pursuant to urban renewal, are tower-in-a-park buildings surrounded by front and side yards. Lot sizes also vary considerably ranging from traditional small lots plotted in the nineteenth century, to larger lots created as land assemblages through urban renewal. This area also includes a number of small open spaces and accessory surface parking lots. As such, even though most buildings are built at or close to the street line, many blocks lack a continuous streetwall.

East of the study area, the blocks east of Tenth Avenue are located within the Preservation Area of the Special Clinton District, which limits the height of new construction. Most buildings in this area are low- and mid-rise residential or commercial loft buildings, with a few high-rise buildings interspersed. There are also institutional uses in the vicinity of the study area, including schools and churches. In this portion of Clinton the streetscape typifies the historical Manhattan development pattern, with most buildings built at or close to the street line, clearly defining the public sidewalk. The avenues are lined with a mixture of low-, mid- and high-rise buildings, many with ground floor retail or other streetfront oriented use.

To the west of the study area, in addition to the 5.8-acre De Witt Clinton Park, the blocks immediately adjacent to the study area consist primarily of high lot coverage commercial and industrial buildings and vehicle storage areas. On these blocks, the prevalence of general commercial and industrial uses, with loading docks and vehicle lots and buildings having little or no connection between ground floor building space and the sidewalk, make for an unattractive and inactive pedestrian environment. Beyond Twelfth Avenue are Hudson River Park and the Hudson River piers, including Pier 94, used for a trade show facility, Pier 92, presently part of the passenger ship terminal but slated to be added to an expanded trade show facility, and Pier 96, which is part of the park. (Refer to Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy" for a description of the planned future use of Pier 92.)

Although lacking a unified character, many individual buildings are built with streetwalls and are articulated at the street level with ground floor retail, fenestration, ornamentation, or architectural details. Pedestrian activity varies throughout the study area and generally is highest in the vicinity of ground floor retail uses present on portions of the avenues.

W. 55th Street from Tenth to Eleventh Avenues

North Side: At the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 55th Street is the Westport, a 24-story mixed-use building completed in 2003, which is a brick streetwall building and also has frontage on W. 56th Street (Block 1084, Lot 25). In the midblock is the 15-story northern tower of the Harborview Terrace Houses NYCHA development (Block 1084, Lot 9), completed in 1977. The building is an L-shaped tower fronting on both W. 55th and W. 56th streets, which rises without setbacks. Along with the southern Harborview Terrace Houses tower (described in the following paragraph), the *AIA Guide* describes this development, as "the Authority's [NYCHA] best in Manhattan. The combination of cast-in-place concrete and deep-terra-cotta-colored giant brick (for walls) and bronze anodized aluminum (for balcony railings) promotes a domestic and urbane scale." This building occupies only a small portion of the its 1.84-acre lot, which also includes a parking lot and a basketball court. At the northeast corner of Eleventh Avenue and W. 55th Street is the 6-story Potamkin Cadillac building, a commercial loft building constructed in 1967 (Block 1084, Lot 1). It is a full lot coverage building with no setbacks.

South Side: At the southwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 55th Street, are five walkup brick apartment buildings of 5 stories or less (Block 1083, Lot 35). To the west of these buildings, is a 6-story brick apartment building constructed in 2001 which is part of the Archstone West 54th development (Block 1083, Lot 37). Further west, also within the midblock area, is the 14-story southern tower of the NYCHA Harborview Terrace Houses (Block 1083, Lot 15). This tower is rectangular and is oriented perpendicular to the street, extending from W. 55th Street south towards W. 54th Street. It only occupies a small portion of its 0.92-acre midblock through-lot, which also includes surface parking and open space. At the southeast intersection of Eleventh Avenue and W. 55th Street is the 39-story Clinton Towers (Block 1083, Lot 1), completed in 1974. This U-shaped building has frontage on W. 55th Street, Eleventh Avenue, and W. 56th Street. The *AIA Guide* notes: "the high rise tower and its low rise leg on West 55th Street are clad in a combination of smooth and striated pink concrete block. They embrace a courtyard and play area that gather the noonday sun."

Figure 8-4 shows photographs of W. 55th Street between Tenth and Eleventh avenues.

W. 54th Street from Tenth to Eleventh Avenues

North Side: At the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 54th Street is a 12-story mixed-use building which is part of the Archstone West 54th development (Block 1083, Lot 29). To the west of this building, are two commercial buildings of 4 and 5 stories. These two buildings and the Archstone West 54th building form a continuous streetwall along the eastern portion of this block. To the west of these is the southern tower of the Harborview Terrace Houses (refer to description above). Also in the midblock portion, located between the Harborview Terrace Houses and the Clinton Towers is the 4-story Centro María (Block 1083, Lot 10), a brick building constructed in 1910.

Figure 8-5 shows photographs of the north side of W. 54th Street between Tenth and Eleventh avenues.

South Side: The southern side of W. 54th Street from Tenth to Eleventh avenues is occupied by the AT&T Switching Tower and the project site.

W. 53rd Street from Tenth to Eleventh Avenues

North Side: The northern side of W. 53rd Street from Tenth to Eleventh avenues is occupied by the AT&T Switching Tower and the project site.

South Side: At the southwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 53rd Street is a low-rise portion of the Archstone Clinton mixed-use development (Block 1081, part of Lot 29), which is completing construction in 2008. At the corner, the development is the equivalent of approximately 10 stories, with loft apartments above a theatre base. West of this lower rise portion the development has a 24-story apartment tower which extends south to W. 52nd Street, with a setback at the 21st floor (Block 1081, Lot 39). This development is being built at or close to the street line with a brick and glass facade and the midblock apartment tower is oriented perpendicular to the east-west streets. To the west of this new development is the 7-story TanaSaybert printing plant building, constructed in 1929 which extends to W. 52nd Street and covers almost its entire midblock through-lot (Block 1081, Lot 7501). To the west of this industrial building are a parking lot, 3-story brick walkup, a 1-story utilitarian garage, vehicle storage area, and a 4-story brick building. At the western end of the block at the southeast corner of Eleventh Avenue and W. 53rd Street, are two attached 4- and 7-story brick apartment buildings (Block 1081, Lots 61 and 160), called the Old School and Flats, respectively. These early twentieth century buildings were renovated into one unified development for affordable housing, a project completed and occupied in 2007.

Figure 8-6 shows photographs of the south side of W. 53rd Street between Tenth and Eleventh avenues.

W. 52nd Street from Tenth to Eleventh Avenues

North Side: At the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 52nd Street is a 5-story residential building with ground floor retail, a brick building with ornamentation (Block 1080, part of Lot 29). Originally four attached buildings, it was rehabilitated into one building in 2003. To the west of this

building is a community garden, the W. 52nd Street frontage of the Archstone Clinton development's northern apartment tower, and the W. 52nd Street frontage of the TanaSaybert printing plant building. Further west within the midblock area, are parking areas and several small utilitarian commercial and industrial buildings. At northeast corner of Eleventh Avenue and W. 52nd Street is the 11-story Clinton Parkview mixed-use brick building (Block 1081, part of Lot 1). It forms a continuous streetwall with its neighboring buildings on both street frontages.

South Side: At the southwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 52nd Street are two 6-story buildings (Block 1080, part of Lot 25). Adjacent to these is the southern 24-story tower of the Archstone Clinton development (Block 1080, part of Lot 25). To the west of this new building is an 8-story apartment building, which is the northern building of the two building Clinton Manor complex occupying a 1.59-acre midblock through-lot (Block 1080, Lot 10). This brick building was constructed in 1981 and is built to the street line but separated from the Archstone Clinton building by a through-lot surface parking area. To the west of this development and also within the midblock area, are two attached commercial buildings, of 4 and 5 stories (Block 1080, part of Lot 103). Further west, at the southeast corner of the intersection of Eleventh Avenue and W. 52nd Street, is a mixed-use complex consisting of 6 brick attached buildings of 4 and 5 stories which were rehabilitated in 2001 (Block 1080, Lot 105).

Figure 8-7 shows photographs of W. 52nd Street between Tenth and Eleventh avenues.

Tenth Avenue from W. 52nd Street to W. 55th Street

West Side: As noted above, the west side of Tenth Avenue from W. 52nd to W. 55th streets, is generally lined with streetwall buildings varying in height from the 5-story building at the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and W. 52nd Street to the 457-foot tall AT&T Switching Tower. Apart from the latter building, most of these contain ground floor retail with residential uses on the upper floors.

East Side: Along the east side of Tenth Avenue from W. 52nd Street to W. 55th streets, buildings include PS 111, a 4-story school building between W. 52nd and W. 53rd streets setback from the avenue behind a playground (Block 1062, Lot 3); full lot coverage commercial buildings of 1 and 4 stories on the avenue between W. 53rd and W. 54th streets; and a row of small lot buildings ranging from 1 to 7 stories on the avenue between W. 54th and W. 55th streets.

Figure 8-8 shows photographs of Tenth Avenue between W. 52nd and W. 55th streets.

De Witt Clinton Park

This park (Block 1100, Lot 1) encompasses the two square block area bounded by W. 54th Street on the north, Eleventh Avenue on the east, W. 52nd Street on the south, and Twelfth Avenue on the west. Most of the park is occupied by recreation facilities including baseball/softball diamonds, basketball courts, handball courts, a dog park, and a playground. The diamonds include lights and bleachers. In addition, there are also benches, a garden, and trees, including many planted along the park's perimeter.

While the park remains at a roughly level elevation throughout, the street elevation adjacent to it slopes downward to the west toward the river. As such, while the park's elevation matches the street at Eleventh Avenue at the eastern end of the park, at the western end of the park it is several feet higher than Twelfth Avenue and separated from the street by a retaining wall.

North of the park along the west side of Eleventh Avenue between W. 54th and W. 55th streets is an 8-story commercial loft building fully covering its lot, which houses the Manhattan Auto Company, an automobile dealership.

Figure 8-9 shows photographs of De Witt Clinton Park and surrounding buildings, including the Manhattan Auto Company building.

Visual Resources

Within the study area, except for the Hudson River, there are no notable visual resources. In terms of views of visual resources located outside the study area from within the study area, the Hudson River and its piers are generally visible along view corridors formed by the linear public streets in the area. As noted above, along east-west streets in the study area, views to piers and the Hudson River are present along W. 54th Street and other east-west streets, apart from W. 53rd Street which provides views toward De Witt Clinton Park. Views from De Witt Clinton in the direction of the project site are dominated by the AT&T Switching Tower, which, as noted above, is not considered an important visual resource.

Also within the study area, there are limited views of notable buildings such as the Time Warner Centre and the Chrysler Building. However, as other buildings partially obstruct the site lines to these buildings, these are not considered significant visual resources.

D. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Project Site

In the 2011 future without the proposed action, it is assumed that the project site would remain vacant following as-of-right demolition and excavation. As such, it would continue as a large, fenced site that does not contribute positively to the urban character of the area.

Study Area

Within the study area there are several development projects that are expected to be completed by 2011.

These are discussed in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," but are summarized below in terms of their effects on urban design and visual character.

Harborview Terrace Houses Project Expansion

HPD and NYCHA are planning to work with a private developer to construct two 15-story apartment buildings on the northern portion of the Harborview Terrace Houses by 2009. It is expected that this will involve construction on the existing parking lot and basketball court adjacent to the development's northern tower, with new buildings on the north side of W. 55th Street and/or the south side of W. 56th Street. These buildings would reduce the tower-in-a-park character of the site and strengthen the area's urban character with a built form closer to Manhattan's traditional pattern.

533-541 W. 52nd Street and 530-548 W. 53rd Street Projects

It is expected that HPD, working in partnership with a non-profit affordable housing developers, will develop two apartment buildings on these adjoining City-owned midblock Clinton Urban Renewal Area sites. These developments, expected by 2011, would replace the existing mix of undistinguished, utilitarian commercial and industrial buildings, accessory parking, and open areas. However, some existing businesses may be incorporated into the new developments, which will also include a new community garden. These developments likely will strengthen the area's urban character and be consistent with the area's trend toward built forms that relate more sensitively to the street and pedestrian environment. Although specific designs for these buildings have not been finalized yet, it is likely they will be similar in height to the nearby 11-story Clinton Parkview and 7-story TanaSaybert buildings.

In addition, construction of Archstone Clinton is being completed in 2008. The occupancy of these buildings will enhance the urban character of the area by improving its physical appearance, adding residents and others to an urban neighborhood, and strengthening the street aesthetics with building elements such as retail, theatre, and architectural details visible from the sidewalk and roadway.

With these new developments, the visual character of the study area is expected to improve in the 2011 future without the proposed action as compared to 2008 existing conditions.

E. FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed project would be an approximately 1.3 million gross square foot (gsf) mixed-use development rising to a maximum of 32 stories, including two mechanical levels above the top residential story, with three cellar levels on the 94,463 sf rectangular project site. Refer to Figures 8-10 through 8-15 for architectural drawings of the proposed project. Overall, it would include approximately 900 DUs; approximately 8,800 gsf of local retail; approximately 330,000 gsf of automobile sales, preparation, and repairs (dealership) space; approximately 20,000 gsf of health club space; an approximately 36,000 gsf NYPD Mounted Unit stable facility; and up to 225 accessory parking spaces. The retail space is expected to be occupied by and is being designed for an 8,000 sf food market on the ground floor and mezzanine above it and 800 sf for other local retail on the ground floor. The auto dealership space would occupy 56,000 gsf of showroom and related space on the ground floor and mezzanine above it, along the Eleventh Avenue frontage. In addition, the dealership would utilize approximately 274,000 gsf of space for vehicle storage in the three below-grade cellar levels, which would be accessible from vehicular

entrances on W. 53rd Street and W. 54th Street. The NYPD Mounted Unit facility would include horse stables, offices, and related facilities on the ground floor on the midblock portion of the site on W. 53rd Street. The accessory parking is expected to be located on the second floor and accessible from a midblock ramp on W. 53rd Street.

The design of the proposed project is intended to reflect the site's dimensions and its unobstructed views to De Witt Clinton Park and the Hudson River. In order to keep the project's mass away from the park and set back from the side streets, the proposed development presents a unique design. The overall height slopes up and away from the park, starting at approximately 89 feet along Eleventh Avenue and climbing to approximately 340 feet at the midblock, near the neighboring approximately 457-foot tall AT&T Switching Center tower. The sloped roof line will create a series of stepped outdoor terraces with views to the water. The building moves diagonally across the site, providing maximum light and air for both the apartment units and their neighbors along the east-west streets.

The proposed development features a high two-story base fully covering the project site, providing a continuous streetwall apart from vehicle entrances and loading areas. The base would support non-residential uses, residential lobbies, and residential amenity space. The applicant intends to construction a building design that would create a vibrant pedestrian environment with a transparent (glass), active streetwall with ground floor commercial areas, residential lobbies, and NYPD Horse Stable oriented to the street. Rising from the base there would be tower structures forming an S-shaped pattern and containing residential units. Along Eleventh Avenue facing De Witt Clinton Park, the residential tower would step up from 7 stories on the north (W. 54th Street) to 10 stories on the south (W. 53rd Street). On the eastern edge of the site adjacent to the 457-foot tall AT&T Switching Tower, the residential portion would step up from 29 stories on the north to 30 stories plus two mechanical levels on the south. Connecting these two sections would be a tower on a diagonal alignment relative to the street grid, stepping up from the west along W. 53rd Street to W. 54th Street on the east. The maximum building height (including mechanical space at the top) for the proposed project would be approximately 340 feet under Build conditions.

The portions of the base structure not covered by the residential towers would have a flat roof predominantly covered by garden terraces for use by building residents and skylights providing natural lighting for the residential lobbies. These areas would provide approximately 52,569 sf of private open space for the building as required by the proposed zoning.

The existing platform over the below-grade railroad right-of-way would remain in place and the right-of-way would continue to be covered and not visible from the street or the site.

Final design of the proposed building's facade has not yet been determined and as such, the proposed rendering perspective views provided in this EIS (Figure 8-13) are for illustrative purposes only in terms of building exteriors (they do reflect the proposed bulk characteristics that are specified in the GLSD Special Permit). It is expected that the automobile dealership and ground-floor retail use would employ a glass and aluminum treatment. Other parts of the building are likely to employ a panel wall system. In any event, the building is not expected to use individual bricks or stone facades or brick or stone curtainwall exteriors as are found on many buildings in the study area. Facade colors have not been selected.

Urban Design

Natural Features, Street Patterns, and Block Shapes

The proposed building would be constructed on an existing lot. It would not alter any natural features, the street pattern, or block shapes in the study area. Accordingly there would be no effects on any of these urban design features as a result of the proposed action.

Streetscape

The proposed project would be an improvement over current and No-Build urban design conditions on the project site, in which the site would remain an open lot surrounded by fencing adding no vitality or visual character to the area. The proposed project would result in a large-scale, mixed-use development that would fill a sizable vacant site in an urbanized area where blocks are typically fully developed. The proposed mixed-use development is expected to enhance the vitality of the surrounding streets by introducing resident, worker and visitor populations to the project site. The proposed building would be a prominent addition to the cityscape, both in its immediate environment and from a distance away. It would be built to the lot line thereby establishing continuous streetwalls.

The applicant intends to develop the street level with pedestrian amenities in the form of the retail food market, street plantings, and improved sidewalks. Additionally, the proposed glass curtainwall of the auto dealership, the other businesses, and the NYPD Stable facility shown by the applicant's renderings would seek to enliven street level activity and provide visual interest along the project's three street frontages. However, it should be noted that the City Planning Commission's (CPC's) approvals do not specifically govern the facade treatment of the building.

Building Uses, Shapes and Forms

As described in the "Existing Conditions" section above, the project site is set in an area that lacks a unified urban design character. The surrounding area is already quite varied with a mixture of building types and heights. The proposed project relates to its surroundings with its varied height ranging from 7 to 32 stories, with its highest section adjacent to the taller AT&T Switching Tower. Furthermore, the proposed building would activate and enliven the street level frontage on W. 53rd Street, W. 54th Street, and Eleventh Avenue. The ground floor facades, including the auto dealership's glass curtainwall, is intended to animate the street frontage and enhance the pedestrian experience.

The proposed building would be compatible with the existing pattern of development and built forms in the study area. The building's varied heights would acknowledge the mixed height character of the surrounding area. The portion located along Eleventh Avenue would be lower-scaled, with a height ranging from approximately 89 feet to 122 feet. This would reflect the project's intent to concentrate massing away from the park. In addition it would represent a height within the mid-range of buildings along Eleventh Avenue in the study area, as it would be higher than the 7-story Flats/Old School complex, shorter than the 39-story Clinton Towers to the north, and similar in height to the 11-story Clinton Parkview building located south of the Flats/Old School. The approximately 42-foot

high streetwall along most of the W. 53rd Street and W. 54th Street frontages would establish a well-defined distinct character for both the site and the adjacent public street.

The building's height and lot size, while taller and bigger, respectively, than some buildings in the study area, would generally be consistent with other large-scale buildings in the study area (such as the 39-story Clinton Towers and 11-story Clinton Parkview building). Its modern design would visually link it with other contemporary buildings in the area while its streetwall base would relate it in form to older lower-rise buildings.

The facade of the building would be distinctive in terms of materials and built form, but as the area features a variety of building forms and facades it would not disrupt any well-established uniform design style.

Accordingly, as the proposed building would generally be compatible with the urban design character of the project site and surrounding study area and would add vitality to the area, as compared to existing and No-Build conditions, it would not result in significant adverse urban design impacts.

Visual Resources

As noted above, the only significant visual resources in this area are views provided along the visual corridors of the east-west streets in the area toward the Hudson River, the waterfront piers, and De Witt Clinton Park. The proposed project would not affect views of these significant visual resources from public areas adjacent to the project site.

The proposed signage special permit would allow commercial uses on the ground floor to use the equivalent of the C6-3X district signage regulations without limitation imposed by the proposed building's location adjacent to a park and a residential district (see Figure 8-14 and illustrative rendering in Figure 8-15). Eleventh Avenue, which separates De Witt Clinton Park from the proposed building, is a heavily trafficked street with a commercial character. West 54th Street is a major eastbound thoroughfare. The modest increase in signage would allow for better identification and directional signage for the auto dealership without imposing on neighborhood character.

The proposed building would not block any view corridors or block views to any significant visual resources. The proposed building would be visible from De Witt Clinton Park as well as the section of Hudson River Park immediately to the west and would for the most part obstruct views of the AT&T Switching Tower that, as noted above, is not considered a visual resource. Accordingly, the proposed project is not expected to result in any significant adverse visual resources impacts.

F. CONCLUSION

The proposed building has a stepped design developed in efforts to respond to the conditions on and surrounding the project site. The proposed building is intended to complement the skyline in this area of the City. Although the building is larger in bulk than many of the surrounding buildings in the vicinity it would not result in impacts because of the building's modern design and streetwall base. The proposed action would not adversely affect any of the urban design components defined

in the *CEQR Technical Manual* nor would it affect the views of any important visual resources. The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources.