

## 9. URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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### 9.1. INTRODUCTION

This section considers the potential of the Proposed Action to affect urban design and visual resources. As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. The assessment focuses on the components of a proposed project that may have the potential to alter the arrangement, appearance, and functionality of the built environment. A visual resource can include views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings, and natural resources.

### 9.2. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT THRESHOLD

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary assessment is appropriate when there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning, including the following: (1) projects or actions that permit the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements; and (2) projects or actions that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed as-of-right or in the No-Action Condition. The purpose of the preliminary assessment is to determine whether any physical changes proposed by the project may have the potential to significantly and adversely affect elements of urban design. If a preliminary analysis determines that a change to the pedestrian experience is minimal and unlikely to disturb the vitality, the walkability or the visual character of that area, then no further assessment is necessary.

The Proposed Action would create a Special Permit for self-storage facilities within Designated Areas. It would not result in the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements, nor would it result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed "as-of-right." The With-Action Condition could, however, result in an increase in floor area beyond the No-Action Condition, and as such, additional analysis is appropriate.

### 9.3. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

The purpose of the preliminary assessment is to determine whether any physical changes proposed by the project may have the potential to significantly and adversely affect elements of urban design. Since it is not possible to predict exactly how development might change as a result of the Proposed Action, a highly localized assessment of potential effects on urban design is not possible or appropriate. Therefore, this analysis considers attributes of the built environment in the affected areas that can be broadly considered and described in order to provide a representative understanding of how the Proposed Action might affect urban design. The DEIS thus provides a broad description of the following attributes both within Designated Areas and in M and C8 districts outside Designated Areas: narrative summaries of land use, zoning, and recent development patterns; and maps depicting buildings and built floor area ratio, and existing features that may qualify as visual resources (waterfront public access areas, individual historic landmarks, landmark districts, and open space).

### 9.3.1. Existing Conditions

Figure 1:  
Average height of new buildings permitted between 2010 and 2016, by building class

	Total NB Permits	Average Building Height
<b>In Designated Areas</b>	<b>113</b>	<b>47</b>
Warehouse or Factory	37	31
Misc. or N/A	34	50
Hotels, Hostel or Dormitories	16	95
<b>Self-Storage Development</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>52</b>
Garage, Gas Station or Parking	7	30
Utilities and Infrastructure	4	39
Office	3	30
Theaters	2	17
Retail	1	19
Public facilities, schools, Houses of worship	1	71
<b>M and C8 Districts Outside Designated Areas</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>66</b>
Warehouse or Factory	62	35
Misc. or N/A	55	82
Residential	35	95
Hotels, Hostel or Dormitories	25	146
Public facilities, schools, Houses of worship	21	75
Garage, Gas Station or Parking	20	47
Office	18	49
Theaters	11	26
Retail	11	27
<b>Self-Storage Development</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>67</b>
Utilities and Infrastructure	10	31
Parks and Outdoor Space	2	19
Medical or Institutional Facilities	1	44
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>61</b>

#### 9.3.1.1. Designated Areas

The Designated Areas are composed only of M1, M2 and M3 districts, which allow industrial and manufacturing uses, most commercial uses and some community facility uses. New residential development is not allowed within the IBZs. Many of the businesses in IBZs generate truck traffic, noise, odors or emissions, require relatively large sites and are incompatible with residential and high density commercial or community facility development. Land uses within the Designated Areas in M Districts are predominantly industrial and utilities or transportation-based. Over 60 percent of all lot area in the Designated Areas in M Districts is classified as industrial/manufacturing or utilities/transportation. A high percentage of the land is also classified as vacant (16 percent), which is principally due to a few very large lots on Staten Island that have not been developed.

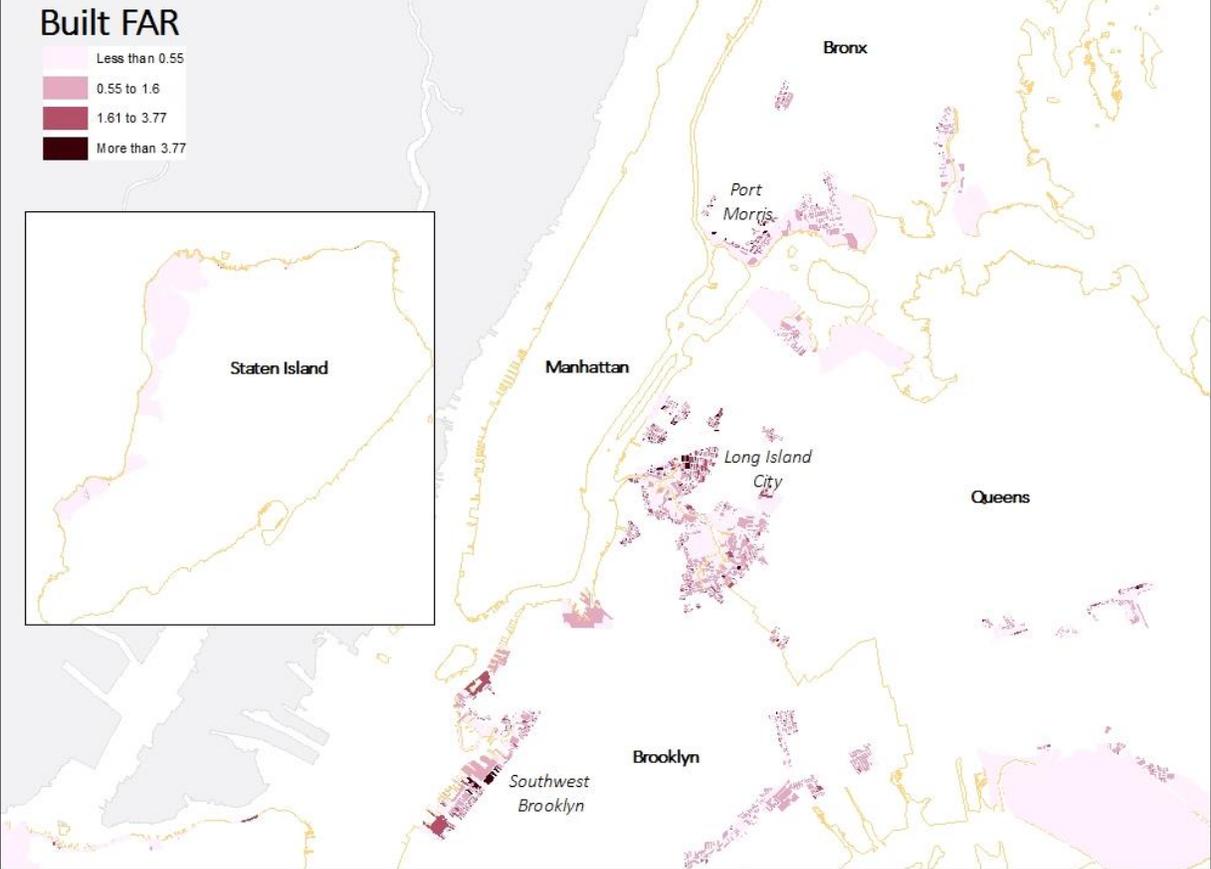
The Designated Areas are entirely mapped as Manufacturing Districts and include: M1-1, M1-2, M1-3, M1-4, M1-5, M2-1, M3-1, M3-2. Light manufacturing uses are permitted in all manufacturing districts. Potentially noxious uses (Use Group 18) are limited to M3, but may also locate in M1 and M2 districts if they comply with the higher performance standards of those districts. Commercial uses are generally permitted in Manufacturing districts, with some exceptions. However, Use Groups 4 and 5 are not permitted within M2 and M3 districts. Use Group 5 includes community facilities such as houses of worship, community centers, hospitals, ambulatory health care facilities and non-profit facilities without sleeping accommodations. Use Group 5 includes transient hotels.

Three different floor area ratios (1.0, 2.0, and 5.0) regulate building size in the mapped districts within the Designated Area. Parking and loading requirements vary with district and use. M1-1, M1-2, M1-3, M2-1, and M3-1 districts are subject to parking requirements based on the type of use and size of an establishment. Typically, these districts require one space for every three employees or every 1,000 square feet of floor area, whichever requires more parking spaces. Warehouses and other storage establishments require one space for every three employees or every 2,000 square feet of floor area, which requires fewer spaces. M1-4, M1-5, and M3-2 districts are not required to provide off-street parking. In terms of bulk regulations within the Designated Areas, 18 percent of land area permits a maximum FAR of 1.0, 66 percent of land area allows a maximum FAR of 2.0, and the remaining 16 percent allows a maximum FAR of 5.0.

#### *9.3.1.1.1. Bulk characteristics*

The size and height of existing buildings can affect the pedestrian experience since the form of development affects view corridors, light and general aesthetic at the street level. The maps in Figures 2 and 3 provide a high-level overview of the existing bulk characteristics within Designated Areas. As shown in Figure 2, the Designated Areas are largely characterized by low built floor area ratio (FAR), with many buildings built to less than 2.0 FAR. Although areas of higher density and taller buildings (see Figure 3) can be found in areas with greater concentrations of pre-war vertical factory and warehouse buildings, such as parts of Southwest Brooklyn, Long Island City and Port Morris. Similarly, within Designated Areas, most existing buildings are low-rise, built to two or fewer floors (see Figure 3).

# Existing Built FAR in Designated Areas



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Figure 2: Built FAR in Designated Areas

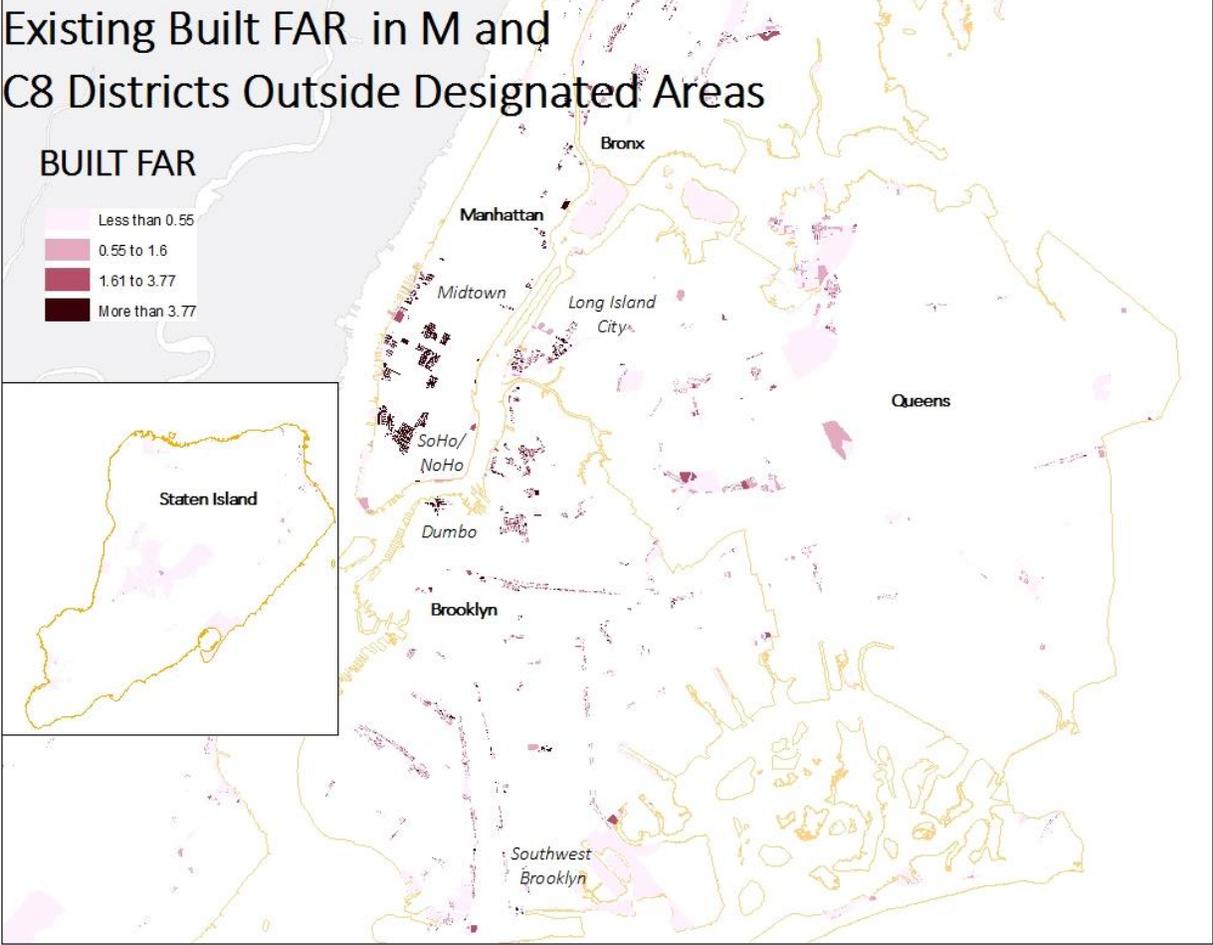
### **9.3.1.2. C8 and M Districts Outside of Designated Areas**

In C8 and M Districts outside of Designated Areas, M and C8 districts are comprised of C8, M1, M2, and M3 Districts. These areas also include land mapped with mixed use zoning districts that permit both light industrial and residential uses. C8 districts bridge commercial and manufacturing uses and provide for automotive and other heavy commercial services that often require large amounts of land. Typical uses permitted in C8 districts include automobile showrooms and repair shops, warehouses, gas stations and car washes. Most commercial uses as well as certain community facilities are also permitted in C8 districts. Within the M1, M2, and M3 districts outside of Designated Areas, industrial uses are permitted, according to the characteristics of their operations. Land uses within M and C8 Districts outside of Designated Areas include a mix of transportation and utilities, residential, industrial, and commercial uses, vacant land, and parking facilities.

Within the M and C8 districts outside of Designated Areas, almost 55 percent of land area is mapped as M1. The majority of this is mapped as M1-1 (47 percent of all indirectly affected areas), which allows a maximum floor area ratio of 1.0. 7 percent is mapped as M2, and 24 percent is mapped as M3. In addition to these areas that do not permit residential, some of the indirectly affected area is mapped with mixed use zoning districts. In total, mixed use districts in M and C8 districts outside of the Designated Areas comprise less than 4 percent of total land area, but make up approximately 16 percent of lots, due to the relatively smaller lot size for areas mapped as mixed use manufacturing districts.

As shown below in Figure 3, the recent new development in Designated Areas and in C8 and M Districts outside of Designated Areas show that, while warehouses and factories indicative of industrial uses represent the majority of permits for new construction, development has covered a wide spectrum and a variety of uses and businesses, even in NYC's most active industrial areas. Non-industrial new development has included hotels, retail, and offices, which are typically permitted by the zoning regulations, as well as schools and residential development.

Although average building heights can vary widely by the type of building and the zoning district, the average height of new self-storage development is similar to the average height of all new development, both in Designated Areas and in M and C8 district outside of Designated Areas.



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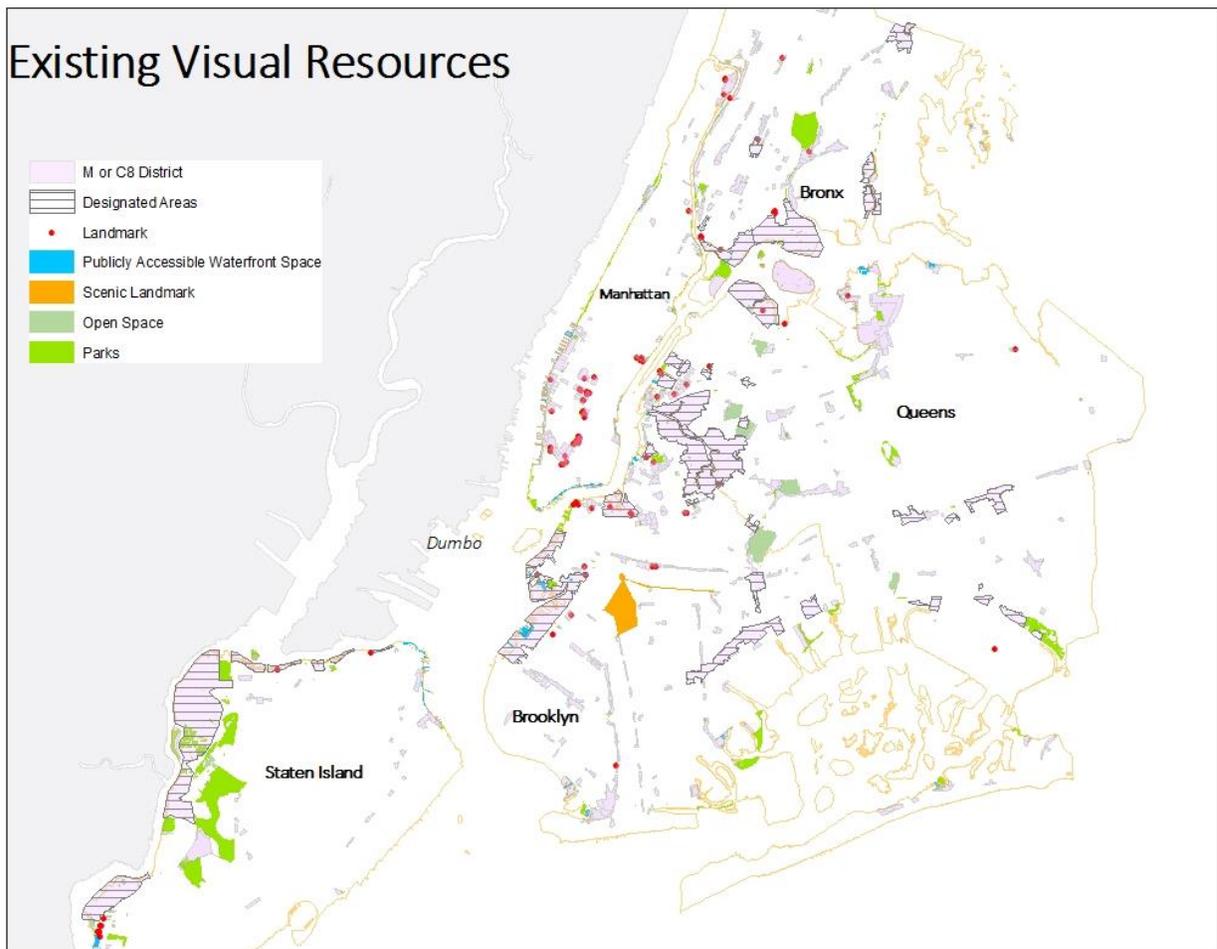
Figure 3: Existing Built FAR

9.3.1.2.1. Bulk characteristics

In C8 and M districts outside of Designated Areas, there are a greater number of higher density and taller buildings, reflecting higher density zoning districts in places like Midtown, Dumbo, and part of Long Island City. Outside of these areas, buildings tend to be low-rise buildings built to less than 2.0 FAR (see Figures 2 and 3 below).

9.3.1.3. Visual Resources in Designated Areas and M and C8 districts outside of Designated Areas

A visual resource can include views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings, and natural resources. Figure 4 below shows the location of existing publicly accessible waterfront areas, scenic landmarks, designated historic landmarks, open space and parks that are completely or partially within M and C8 districts. As indicated below, there are relatively fewer potential visual resources within Designated Areas compared with M and C8 districts outside of Designated Areas. In most cases, only small portions of the existing open spaces, parks and scenic landmarks are located in either area.



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Figure 4: Visual Resources in M and C8 Districts

### 9.3.2.No Action

#### 9.3.2.1. *Land Use, Zoning, and Development*

As described above in Existing Conditions, the Designated Areas are characterized predominantly by industrial land use and industrial employment. Although these areas have experienced some non-industrial job growth, the land use characteristics are expected to remain predominantly industrial. As explained under Existing Conditions, land uses outside the Designated Areas tend to be more heterogeneous with industrial, commercial, and residential uses occurring in close proximity to one another. In M districts outside Designated Areas, according to DCP employment analysis (see Appendix), industrial sectors are somewhat less significant than in Designated Areas, and in 2014, just over half of the employees worked in Retail Trade, Health Care & Social Assistance (both non-industrial), Construction and Transportation. Job gains in M districts outside of Designated Areas have also been more mixed, with non-industrial employment dominating job growth. It is expected that recent trends in M and C8 districts outside of Designated Areas will continue, and that these areas will gain an increasing share of development in commercial, community facility and other uses.

In the Future No-Action Condition, recent patterns of employment and development are expected to continue, affecting land use conditions both within and outside of the Designated Areas, with self-storage facilities built to similar heights and as new construction overall.

#### 9.3.2.2. *Bulk Characteristics / Visual Resources*

Given expected future conditions in land use, zoning, and development trends, the predominant bulk characteristics within Designated Areas and in M or C8 districts outside Designated Areas are not expected to change significantly. Likewise, visual resources are not anticipated to significantly change within either the Designated Areas or in C8 and M districts outside of Designated Areas.

### 9.3.3.With-Action Condition

The Proposed Action has the potential to change the geographic distribution of self-storage facilities, resulting in 9 fewer self-storage facilities within Designated Areas and four additional facilities in C8 and M districts outside of Designated Areas. The Proposed Action could introduce four new facilities to C8 and M districts in Non-Designated Areas. The buildings would have a compatible height, zoning calculation, and floor area calculation to other buildings in Non-Designated Areas. It should be noted, however, that self-storage facilities tend to be brightly colored as part of their branding. Although color isn't specifically mentioned in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the Manual does mention facades noting, "the public realm extends to building facades and rooftops, offering more opportunity to enrich the visual character of an area." Although not all facilities are brightly colored, since a large number are brightly color, and this would have the potential to change the pedestrian's experience, it is noted here.

Overall, the Proposed Action is anticipated to have minimum effects on the pedestrian's experience. The proposal is anticipated to result in four additional facilities in C8 and M districts *outside of Designated Areas citywide*. These facilities are largely compatible with the surrounding context (see Figures 5 and 6).

Additionally, just because some of the facilities are colorful, does not mean it would necessarily result in a negative pedestrian experience; some people may find the colorful facilities attractive and find they enliven the surrounding area. Thus, overall, the Proposed Action is unlikely to disturb the vitality, the walkability or the visual character of that area and no further assessment is necessary.

Ground level photographs can be seen below:

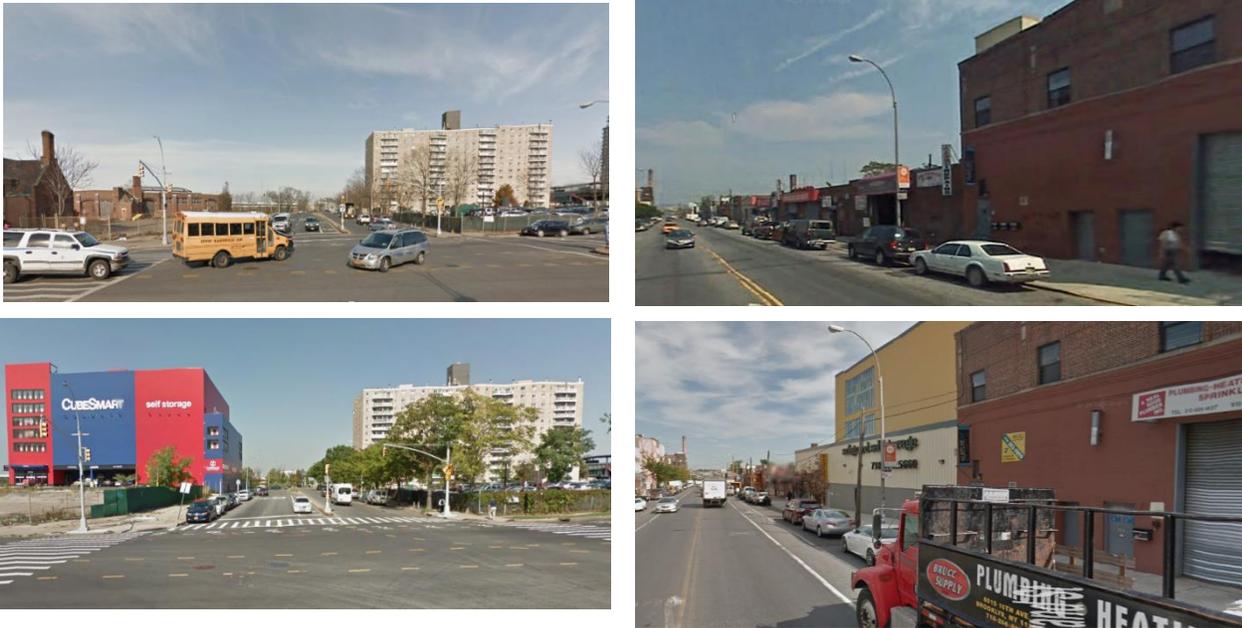


Figure 5: Examples of self-storage facilities and their surrounding context, before and after

Source: Google, "Streetview," digital images, Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>)



Figure 6: Examples of self-storage facilities and their surrounding context, before and after  
Source: Google, "Streetview," digital images, Google Maps (<http://maps.google.com>)