8 Urban Design and Visual Resources

Introduction

This chapter considers the potential of the Proposed Actions to affect urban design and visual resources. According to the 2014 *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is defined as the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space, including streets, buildings, visual resources, open spaces, natural resources, and wind. Per *CEQR Technical Manual* guidance, an urban design assessment considers whether and how a proposed action may change the pedestrian's experience of the built environment in a project area. The assessment focuses on the components of a proposed action that could alter the arrangement, appearance, and functionality of the built environment. In addition, the assessment considers the potential for a proposed action to affect any view corridors associated with visual resources. A visual resource can include views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings, and natural resources.

The Proposed Actions are analyzed as a "generic action" because no known developments are projected at this time; therefore, the urban design and visual resources assessment is performed for the four prototypical analysis sites as defined and described in **Chapter 1**, *Project Description*. The analysis provided below addresses urban design characteristics and visual resources for existing conditions, the No Action scenario, and the With Action scenario.

Principal Conclusions

The Proposed Actions are not expected to result in significant, adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources. The Proposed Actions would not have any discernable effects on the pedestrian's experience of public space in the SNRD or the affected area. In accordance with *CEQR Technical Manual* methodologies, a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources was conducted for the four prototypical analysis sites identified for the Proposed Actions. The assessment determined that proposed zoning changes would be unlikely to disturb the

vitality, walkability, or the visual character of the surrounding area, and the Proposed Actions would not promote new development that is inconsistent with existing uses, density, scale, and bulk. The Proposed Actions are not expected to result in buildings or structures that would be substantially different in character or arrangement than those that currently exist in the special district. Minimal new development or enlargement that would not have occurred in the future without the Proposed Actions is expected; however, this new development or enlargement is not expected to change the context of the project area, nor is it expected to result in any substantial changes to the built or natural environment that would significantly change a pedestrian's experience of public space. Additionally, the Proposed Actions would not eliminate any publicly accessible view corridors or block public views to any visual resources, and they would not result in any substantial changes to a historic district. The Proposed Actions are intended to enhance the visual character and urban design features of the project area by preserving and promoting the natural features and broader ecological context of the area, which includes some of the City's most ecologically sensitive areas. Therefore, no significant, adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources are expected as a result of the Proposed Actions.

Methodology

The 2014 *CEQR Technical Manual* indicates that an urban design analysis is not needed if a proposed project would be constructed within the existing zoning envelope and would not result in physical changes beyond the bulk and form permitted as-of-right.

Per the 2014 *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary analysis 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 absence of the proposed project or action. The purpose of the preliminary analysis is to determine whether any physical changes proposed by the action 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.

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual,* the analysis in this chapter considers the effects of the Proposed Actions on the following elements that collectively form an area's urban design and contribute to a pedestrian's experience of public space:

- **Street Pattern and Streetscape**: The arrangement and orientation of streets define location, flow of activity, and street views and create blocks on which buildings and open spaces are arranged. Apportionment of streetscape among cars, bicycles, transit, and sidewalk is critical to making a successful streetscape, as is the careful design of street furniture, grade, materials uses, and permanent fixtures, including plantings, street lights, fire hydrants, curb cuts, and newsstands.

- **Buildings**: Buildings support streets. A building's streetwalls form the most common backdrop in the city for public space. A building's size, 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 facades and rooftops, offering more opportunity to enrich the visual character of an area.

- **Open Space**: For urban design, open space includes public and private areas that do not include structures, including parks and other landscaped areas, cemeteries, and parking lots.

- **Natural Features**: Natural features include vegetation and geologic, topographic, and aquatic features. Rock outcroppings, street slopes, or varied ground elevation, beaches, or wetlands may help define the overall visual character of an area.

- **View Corridors and Visual Resources**: A visual resource is the connection from the public realm to significant natural or built features. Visual resources include significant natural or built features, including important view corridors, views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, or otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings.

The Proposed Actions would not change underlying zoning and therefore, would not modify underlying zoning envelopes or bulk regulations. Because the Proposed Actions would remove certain land use actions and allow some sites to proceed with as-of-right development that requires discretionary approval under existing special district regulations, the Proposed Actions may facilitate new or different development than the No Action scenario, which could change pedestrian's experience of public space. Therefore, it is appropriate to assess the Proposed Actions' potential impact on urban design and visual resources.

The urban design and visual resources assessment follows *CEQR Technical Manual guidance* and is based on a comparison of the development of the four prototypical analysis sites under the No Action

scenario with the With Action scenario, as described in **Chapter 1**, *Project Description*. The Proposed Actions would not affect street hierarchy or reconfigure blocks. A pedestrian wind condition analysis is also not warranted for the Proposed Actions pursuant to *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology, because the Proposed Actions would not facilitate the construction of tall buildings or structures. The urban design and visual resources analysis is based on field visits, photography, and computer imaging.

Study Area Definition

The study area for assessment of urban design and visual resources corresponds to the area where the Proposed Actions may influence land use patterns and the built environment and is consistent with that used for the land use analysis. For visual resources, major view corridors in the study area from which such resources are publicly viewable have been identified.

The urban design analysis considers a study area, which is coterminous with the boundaries of the directly affected area comprising the existing SNAD NA-2 in the Bronx **(Figure 8-1)**. Given the size of the special district, areas were defined in accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* and roughly correspond to neighborhood boundaries of Riverdale, Fieldston, and Spuyten Duyvil within the special district (**Figure 8-1)**.

Preliminary Analysis

The purpose of the preliminary analysis is to determine if any physical changes facilitated by the Proposed Actions may have the potential to significantly and adversely affect elements of urban design.

Existing Conditions

The following section discusses existing urban design components in the study area, which encompasses the NA-2 district, which includes five underlying residential zoning districts that are defined by unique natural landscapes and topography.

As described in **Chapter 1**, *Project Description*, about 1,000 properties in the Bronx could be affected by the proposed zoning changes in the special district regulations. The following assessment focuses on streets, buildings, open space, natural resources and topography, as well as visual resources.

Size and height of existing buildings can affect the pedestrian experience of public space; **Figures 8-2** and **8-3** provide a high-level overview of existing bulk characteristics of buildings in the special district. **Figure 8-2** shows the existing density in FAR for the special district, and **Figure 8-3** shows the existing building heights in the special district.

Figure 8-1. Urban Design and Visual Resource Study Area

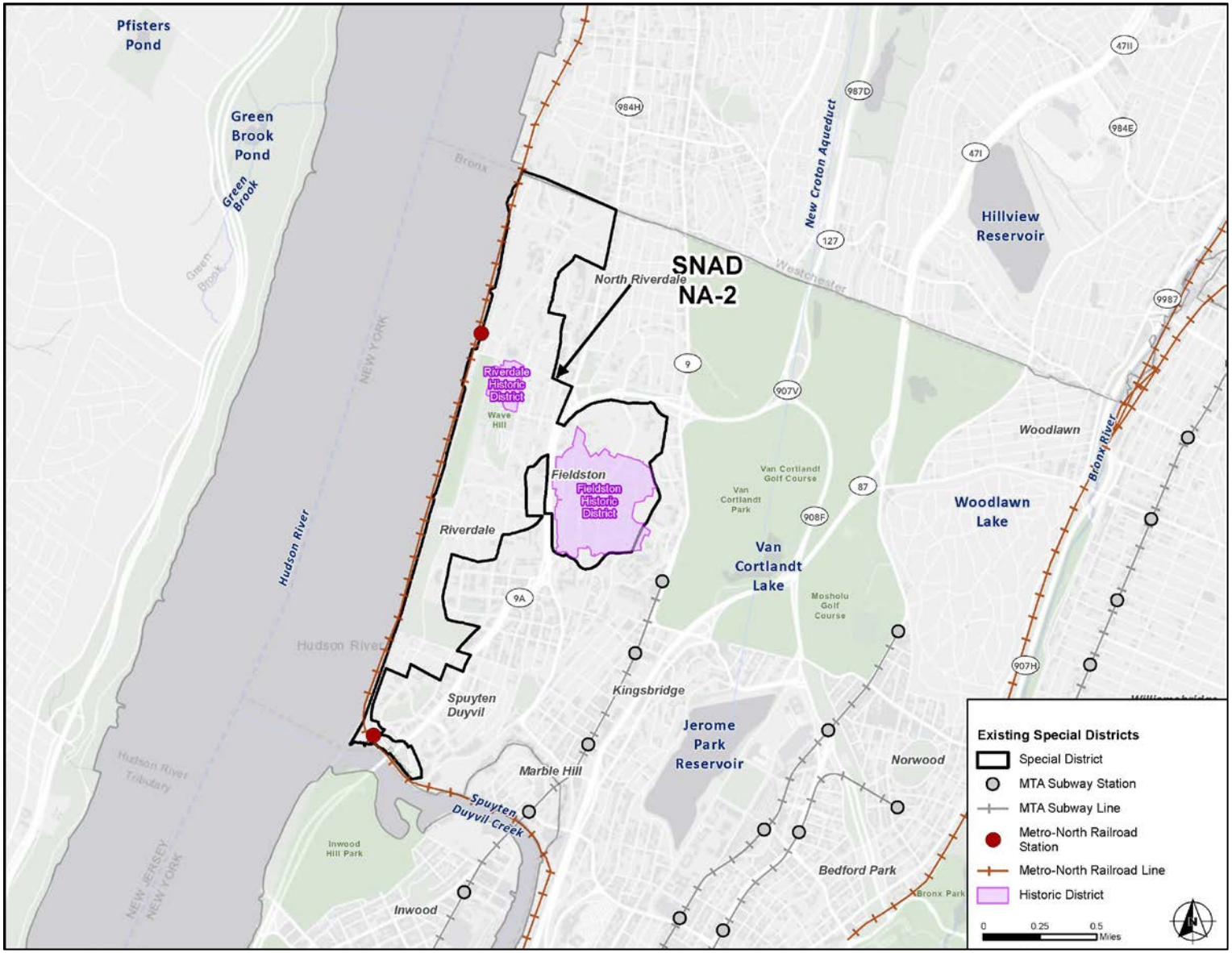


Figure 8-2. Existing Built Floor Area Ratios in Special Natural Area District (NA-2), Bronx

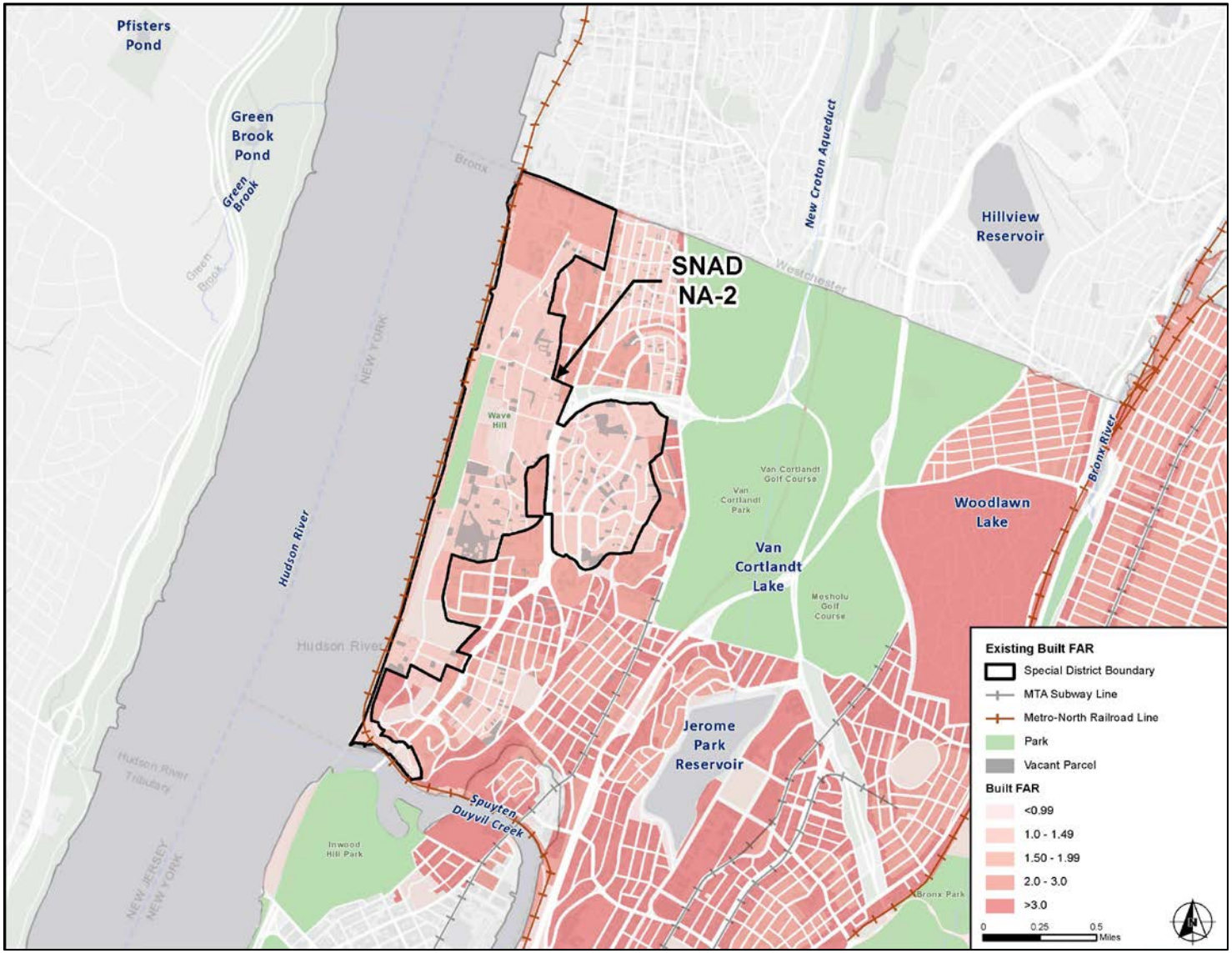
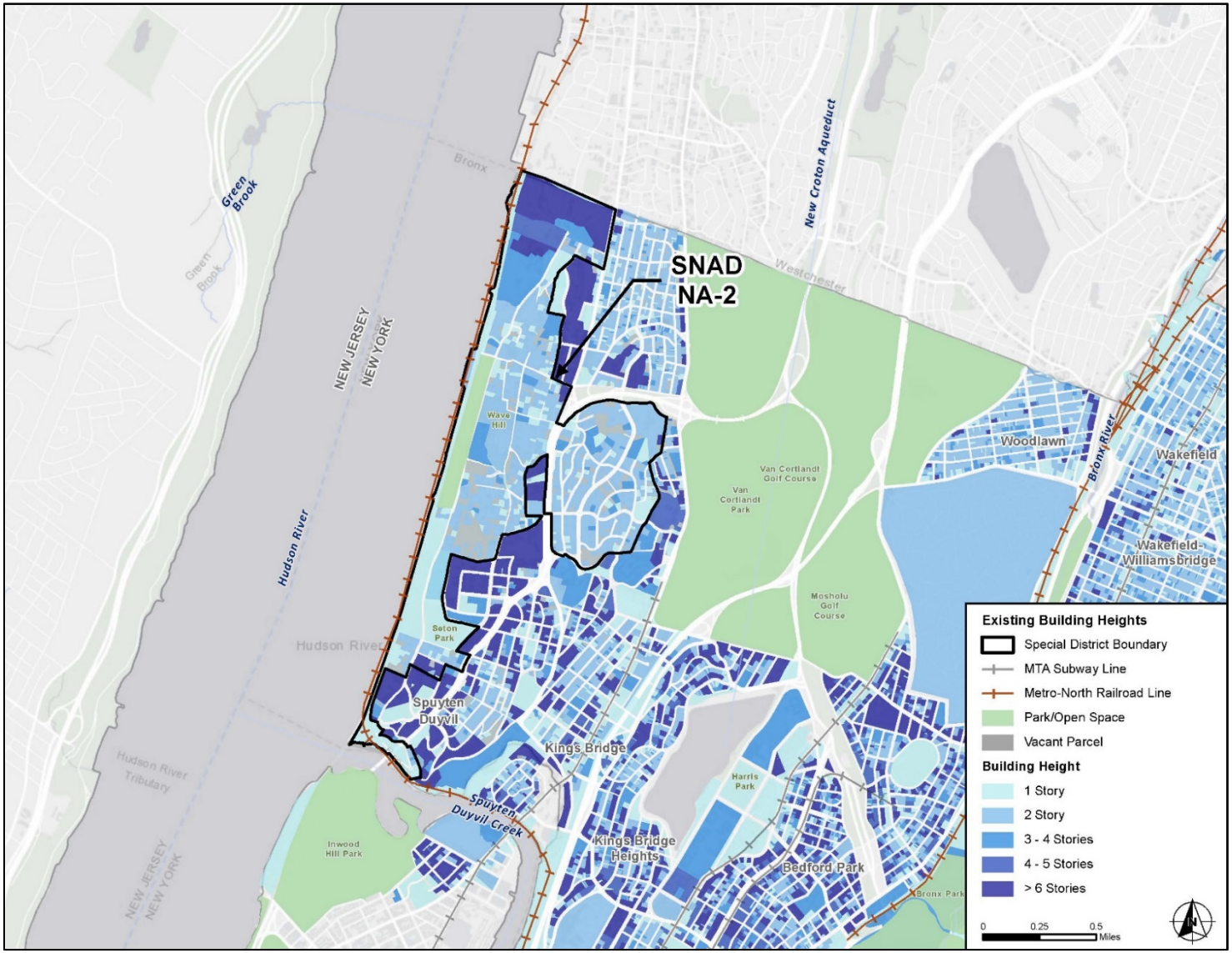


Figure 8-3. Existing Building Heights in Special Natural Area District (NA-2), Bronx



Special Natural Area District

As noted previously, the SNAD is mapped in two non-contiguous areas of Staten Island, in the Bronx, and in Queens,[9] and is intended to preserve and protect these natural areas. NA-2 is mapped within Bronx CD 8 and includes portions of the Riverdale, Fieldston, and Spuyten Duyvil neighborhoods.

NA-2 is mapped along the Riverdale Ridge, which extends along the northwestern edge of the Bronx in CD 8 and includes portions of the predominantly residential neighborhoods of Riverdale, Spuyten Duyvil, and Fieldston **(see Figure 8-1)**. In its entirety, NA-2 comprises nearly 900 acres, occupies slightly more than 1,000 lots, and encompasses several large public parks. Major public parks in NA-2 include the 144-acre Riverdale Park and nearly 7-acre Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park, which extend along the Hudson River and Spuyten Duyvil Creek waterfront, respectively, as well as the approximately 12-acre Seton Park and the nearly 5-acre Raoul Wallenburg Forest. The 28-acre Wave Hill Public Garden and Cultural Center, which overlook the Hudson River, is also mapped within NA-2.

NA-2 also contains LPC-designated historic districts: the Riverdale Historic District and the Fieldston Historic District. The area's underlying zoning consists primarily of low-density, non-contextual residential zoning districts, including R1-1, R1-2, R2, and R4, as well as a small medium-density, contextual R6A residential district mapped along a single block front in Riverdale near the Henry Hudson Parkway and service road.

The NA-2 landscape is defined by its steep slopes, rock outcrops, ponds, brooks, marshes, and mature trees. In addition, the western foot of Riverdale Ridge includes marshes, and the shoreline of the Hudson River contains aquatic habitat that supports marine life. Land uses in NA-2 consist primarily of detached, single- and two-family homes, public parks, and some community facilities on large parcels, such as senior care, educational, and religious institutions. There are no commercial, industrial, or mixed-use commercial developments. Vacant land is also prevalent and interspersed throughout the district. Most recent development in NA-2 has been enlargements to existing buildings. Little new development has occurred. A description of NA-2 neighborhoods is provided below, and **Figure 8-4** provides photographs of existing conditions in NA-2.

[9] The proposed zoning changes would not affect the SNAD in Staten Island and Queens (NA-1, NA-3, and NA-4).

Figure 8-4. Existing Conditions Photographs in Special Natural Area District (NA-2), Bronx

Riverdale: View looking south on Palisades Avenue. The Hebrew Home is visible on the right.

Riverdale: View looking north on Sycamore Avenue.

Riverdale: View of the entrance to Delafield Estates private residential enclave.

Fieldston: View looking north on Fieldston Road.

Figure 8-4 (continued)

Fieldston: View on Iselin Avenue.

Spuyten Duyvil: View looking southwest from Henry Hudson Parkway to ex-isting 4-story townhouses on south side of West 232nd Street.

Spuyten Duyvil: View looking east on West 232nd Street. Raoul Wallenberg Forest is visible on the left.

Spuyten Duyvil: View looking northwest on Edsall Avenue. The Henry Hudson Bridge is visible in the background.

Riverdale. Riverdale forms most of the western and northern portions of NA-2, extending from the College of Mount Saint Vincent near West 263rd Street in the north to West 232nd Street in the south. The portion of Riverdale included in NA-2 is generally characterized by low-rise, one- to three-story, detached, single-family homes and larger estates, but it also includes a small number of multifamily developments. Riverdale also includes a considerable amount of open space, as well as significant amounts of community facility uses such as schools, which occupy sizeable properties, some of which support several buildings on campus settings.

The area's underlying zoning primarily consists of low-density R1-1 and R1-2, which permit detached, single-family homes up to a maximum FAR of 0.5 and a limited range of community facilities up to 1.0 FAR. A large R4 zoning district overlays the College of Mount Saint Vincent campus at the northern end of the district near the border with Yonkers. Another smaller R4 district includes an approximately 9-acre property that contains the Hayden on the Hudson residential condominium complex extending between Douglas Avenue on the east and Palisades Avenue on the west from roughly West 240th Street on the north and West 236th Street on the south. Two small triangular-shaped pockets of R2 districts are located near the Henry Hudson Parkway at West 249th Street and West 246th Street. R2 districts only permit detached, single-family houses up to 0.5 FAR on slightly smaller properties than R1 districts (minimum lots size of 3,800 square feet and minimum lot width of 40 feet).

Buildings in Riverdale are largely built into the landscape. Most houses are oriented to the street with varying setback distances. Some houses are built near the street line with narrow front lawns, while others are set back far from the street line. Most houses have low lot coverage set on large properties with expansive lawns, private driveways, and other amenities, including detached garages and swimming pools. Some homes are not visible from the street, and many houses are enclosed by fencing and/or have dense foliage along the streetscape with gated entrances.

Lot sizes range significantly, from roughly 3,500 square feet (0.08 acre) to upwards of nearly 108,900 square feet (2.5 acres), with most lots encompassing 10,000 square feet (0.23 acre) or more. The average lot size of single-family house is nearly 0.33 acre. The average single-family home includes approximately 3,200 square feet of floor area. A handful of two-family homes are generally clustered near Arlington Avenue and West 246th Street, and a few larger multifamily cooperatives and condominium buildings are located near the Henry Hudson Parkway.

The local street network includes both public and private streets, which generally do not follow the typical grid pattern, but consider the surrounding topography, resulting in an intricate, interlacing pattern that

meanders around rock outcroppings, hills, and other natural features. Except for the Henry Hudson Parkway, all roads are local streets. Most roadways are two-way, but narrow and often can only accommodate one vehicle in either direction. There are often no curbs, and utility poles can be located in the roadbed. Several streets are dead ends or unpaved roadways. Many roadways resemble country lanes that are lined by mature trees, which often overhang the roadway and are defined by stone walls with buildings set far back from the road. There are few public sidewalks.

The northern portion of Riverdale in NA-2 is generally characterized by the expansive campuses of community facilities, such as the approximately 70-acre College of Mount Saint Vincent and the 50-acre Hebrew Home at Riverdale. Both developments are built into the hillside, overlook the Hudson River waterfront, and are enclosed by fencing with gated entrances. These facilities include multiple buildings, ranging in height from 2 stories to upwards of 12 stories, with internal roadways, at-grade parking areas, and open space.

The Riverdale Historic District, designated in 1990, comprises approximately “15 acres of steeply sloping land overlooking the Hudson River” from West 252nd to West 254th Streets between Independence Avenue and Riverdale Park. It contains 34 buildings on landscaped lots that once composed larger estate properties (LPC 1990).

To the south of the Riverdale Historic District lies Wave Hill, which is a public garden, nature preserve, and cultural center overlooking the Hudson River. Occupying approximately 28 acres, the garden features the historic Wave Hill House and landscaped terrain views that extend to the Hudson River. Its main entrance is at West 249th Street and Independence Avenue. The garden is enclosed by fencing with dense foliage screening its interior from the streetscape.

Riverdale Park and the Raoul Wallenberg Forest, both designated Forever Wild sites, and Seton Park form a network of open space. Riverdale Park extends along much of the waterfront, running parallel to the Metro North Railroad right-of-way and stretching from West 254th Street in the north to West 237th Street in the south to the west of Palisades Avenue. Comprising approximately 112-acres, the vast park remains in a predominantly natural state and is known for its secluded thick woods, views of the Palisades along the Hudson River, walking trails, and as a haven for birds. It contains about 50 forested acres, including mature oak-hickory forest, provides public access to the waterfront, and has extensive areas of preserved wetlands.

Raoul Wallenberg Forest is located on a hillside bounded by Palisade and Douglas Avenues, between West 235th and West 236th Streets, directly across the street from Riverdale Park. Comprising nearly 5 acres, it

features dense shrubbery and thickly wooded areas that are a haven for birds.

Unlike Wallenberg Forest and Riverdale Park, Seton Park offers more formalized recreational activities and includes play equipment, sprinklers, an array of basketball and tennis courts, ballfields, a comfort station, and several seating areas across the park's 12 acres. Seton Park borders Wallenberg Forest to the west and is bounded by West 235th Street on the north, Independence Avenue on the east, and West 232nd Street on the south.

Between West 246th Street and Douglas Avenue, is an approximately 11-acre, private, gated community known as the Delafield Estates, which includes 33 tax lots oriented around a private traffic circle (Delafield Lane). Roughly 70 percent of Delafield Estates is permanently preserved as natural open space. The area is governed by the Delafield Estates Homeowners Association, which maintains the streets and common areas.

Fieldston. The neighborhood of Fieldston forms the eastern offshoot of NA-2 (see **Figure 8-1**) and is separated from Riverdale and Spuyten Duyvil by the Henry Hudson Parkway and its service roads. Fieldston is a private, planned, residential enclave within the larger Riverdale section of the northwest Bronx. Comprising roughly 140 acres in its entirety, it includes approximately 257 homes and is generally bounded by Manhattan College Parkway to the south, Henry Hudson Park to the west, West 250th Street to the north, and Broadway to the east. Most of the neighborhood is included in NA-2, except for the area located to the east of Tibbett Avenue.

Unlike the larger Riverdale, Fieldston is privately owned and maintained by the Fieldston Property Owners' Association, which provides security and maintains the neighborhood's streets and sewers. There are no guards or gated entrances to Fieldston, but the neighborhood's streets are closed to commercial traffic and patrolled by private security.

Fieldston is suburban in nature and characterized by large, detached, single-family homes generally constructed in the early 20th century in a variety of architectural styles including Mediterranean, Tudor, Colonial, Craftsman, and Medieval, as well as formal modernist houses. Newer construction is largely concentrated in the northern section of the neighborhood. The average single-family home includes approximately 3,600 square feet. Fieldston also supports several religious institutions and the approximately 19.5-acre Hill Campus of the private Riverdale Country School, which serves grades 6 through 12.

The topography of the area is defined by rolling hills and rock outcroppings, and the houses are integrated into the topography of the

land. Most of the neighborhood is located within the Fieldston Historic District, designated by LPC in 2006. The district "is a rare, largely intact example of a romantic planned suburban community that has evolved over time" (LPC 2006).

Fieldston's underlying zoning consists of largely R1-2, except for its northeastern corner, which is zoned R4 and includes the campus of the Riverdale Country School. Both districts are low-density, non-contextual residential districts. R1-2 districts permit only detached, single-family homes up to maximum FAR of 0.5 and a limited range of community facilities up to 1.0 FAR, whereas R4 districts permit single- or two-family homes as well as multifamily buildings up to a maximum residential FAR of 0.75, and community facilities up to 2.0 FAR.

Most houses are set back from the street with manicured lawns and an abundance of mature trees. Some houses face the street, while others are tucked in sideways. Lot sizes vary, but a 0.5-acre property is considered large with most lots ranging in size from 7,000 (0.16 acre) to 10,000 square feet (0.23 acre). The average lot size is roughly 13,700 square feet (0.31 acre). Many lots are irregular in shape. All houses have private driveways, most with attached or detached garages, and on-street parking is not permitted.

The neighborhood's streets are generally two-way, well-maintained, and paved. Fieldston Road, a wide two-way boulevard with planted median, serves as the neighborhood's main north-south corridor, and West 246th Street functions as the main east-west road. The two streets intersect at a traffic circle. Most streets lack sidewalks and do not follow a grid pattern. Most roadways are curvilinear and maneuver around hills, large trees, and outcroppings following the area's natural contours.

Spuyten Duyvil. The southern tip of NA-2 encompasses the western edge of the Spuyten Duyvil neighborhood and Spuyten Duyvil Shorefront Park along the Spuyten Duyvil Creek (see **Figure 8-1**)**.** Spuyten Duyvil is generally located to the south of West 232nd Street and west of Irwin Avenue/Johnson Avenue. The portion of the neighborhood included in NA-2 consists of the Hudson River shoreline and the northwestern corner of the neighborhood located generally west of Independence Avenue between West 232nd and West 231st Streets and along the west side of Palisade Avenue to the north of Kappock Street.

This area's underlying zoning includes R1-1 and R1-2 non-contextual, low-density residential districts and an R6A contextual district. R1-1 and R1-2 districts permit only detached, single-family homes up to a maximum FAR of 0.5 and a limited range of community facilities up to 1.0 FAR. A small R6A district is mapped along Henry Hudson Parkway West between West 232nd and West 231st Streets. R6A contextual districts permit Quality Housing buildings with high lot coverage allowances up to

a maximum residential FAR of 3.0. Community facilities are also permitted up to a 3.0 FAR in R6A.

This area is largely characterized by older, detached, one-to three-story, single-family homes on sizeable, generally rectangular-shaped properties that range in size from 2,500 square feet (0.6 acre) to nearly 65,340 square feet (1.5 acres). Many of the homes are built into the hillside, especially the houses closer to the waterfront. Most homes are oriented to the street and have private driveways with sizable front and side yards. Many houses also have fences and/or dense vegetative screening at the edges of their properties. There is a small pocket of recently constructed four-story attached single-family townhouses with ground floor garages and private driveways at the southwest corner of Henry Hudson Parkway West and West 232nd Street located in the R6A district. Additionally, part of the 9-acre Schervier Rehabilitation and Nursing Care Center campus at 2975 Independence Avenue is located within NA-2.

Spuyten Duyvil is characterized by its abundance of mature trees and other dense vegetation, and few roadways pass through this area. Most roadways generally follow a disjointed grid pattern. Streets are generally paved and allow two-way traffic but are narrow and lack sidewalks closer to the waterfront.

Spuyten Duyvil Park and the Spuyten Duyvil railroad station along the Metro North Hudson Line form the southern edge of NA-2. Spuyten Duyvil Park comprises roughly 6.6 acres and is largely defined by its natural and untamed state. The park also features a terraced overlook with views of the Hudson River, as well as a network of graveled pathways and a footbridge allowing pedestrian accessibility to a natural spring and small pond that feed the Hudson River. To the north of the Metro North station is a small row of detached, two- and three-story houses built into the hillside extending between Johnson and Edsall Avenues. Most of these houses have driveways, and several have detached garages.

Prototypical Analysis Sites Description

As described previously, four prototypical analysis sites were identified to produce a reasonable analysis of the possible effects of the Proposed Actions in the special district. A summary of the prototypical analysis sites is provided in **Table 2-3** in **Chapter 2**, *Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*, and illustrations of each site are provided in Appendix 2.

Except for prototypical analysis site 1, which is assumed to be occupied by a detached, one-story, single-family home in the existing condition, all other prototypical analysis sites are undeveloped and vacant. One of the prototypical residential sites (site 4) abuts an ecologically sensitive area along its respective property line. All of the prototypical sites are interior lots ranging in size from 4,500 to 12,000 square feet.

No Action Scenario

As discussed in **Chapter 2**, *Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*, in the No Action scenario, it is anticipated that current land use trends and general development patterns in the study area would continue.

Without the Proposed Actions, most of the prototypical analysis sites would be developed or enlarged pursuant to existing zoning regulations to the largest as-of-right building permitted, except for prototypical analysis site 3, which would not experience any new development absent the Proposed Actions. This site would remain undeveloped, vacant land; under the current special district's regulations to undergo any development, it would require discretionary approval involving a CPC authorization for development on a lot greater than 10,000 square feet.

As indicated in **Table 2-4** in **Chapter 2**, *Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*, new as-of-right development is anticipated to occur on three of the four prototypical analysis sites. The No Action scenario would involve the construction of low-rise, two- and three-story, one-family detached homes; and the vertical and horizontal enlargement of a single-family detached home. New construction would largely replace vacant land. Because the existing special district requires various discretionary actions to alter or modify natural features outside the construction zone (i.e., 15 feet in the NA-2) for each building, any amenities located outside the construction that would require CPC authorization are not assumed to be granted in the as-of-right No Action scenario. The No Action scenario for the prototypical analysis sites assumes that ministerial Chair or CPC certifications would be granted.

The new buildings constructed on the prototypical analysis sites would be constructed to comply with all height, yard, setback, and parking regulations of the underlying zoning district and with the existing special district's rules. The new buildings would be oriented toward the street, have low lot coverage, and are anticipated to be similar in height and bulk to other recently developed buildings in each respective underlying zoning district. The existing special district's regulations and yard requirements of the underlying zoning would define the placement of the buildings, driveways, and parking spaces. Buildings would be set back from the street line with front yards.

Buildings on the 3 prototypical analysis sites in the No Action scenario are anticipated to range in size from approximately 2,250 square feet to 4,000 square feet and would have FARs of 0.5 or less. Each of the prototypical analysis sites developed under the No Action scenario would be occupied by low-density uses, with low lot coverage.

Under the No Action scenario, there would be no change to existing street patterns or street hierarchies at any of the prototypical analysis sites.

There would also be no changes to public open space or visual resources.

With Action Scenario

As described in **Chapter 1**, *Project Description*, the Proposed Actions are not expected to change the rate of development in the special district, nor are they expected to induce new development where it would not have occurred absent the Proposed Actions. As described in **Chapter 2**, *Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*, With Action land use trends and development patterns are expected to be similar to existing and No Action scenarios. The proposed zoning changes also would not increase the allowable density or permitted floor area in the special district but would allow greater flexibility and the construction of amenities, such as a pool. The Proposed Actions would update tree rules, establish new biodiversity rules, and provide clear planting requirements in the special district that are expected to give greater value to existing (i.e., preserved) trees, support native species and trees planted in groups, require planting of more trees, and enhance the biodiversity and ecological health of the community. Under the proposed zoning changes, every site plan would be required to meet a specified number of biodiversity points, which would be determined by proximity to natural resources. Additionally, the proposed zoning changes would update regulations related to lot coverage and provide new rules for hard surface areas to preserve natural features and provide space for planted areas, increase provision of open space, and achieve better stormwater management. Lot coverage requirements under the Proposed Actions would recognize the specific natural environment and be defined for all residential lots and large institutions/community facility sites based on proximity to natural resources (i.e., ecological areas). Under the Proposed Actions, hard surface area in the special district would be defined to include building footprints, driveways, and other paved areas such as a patio, deck, or pool. Although the Proposed Actions may change the proportion of development sites proceeding as-of-right, the overall amount, type, and location of development within the affected area is not expected to change under the Proposed Actions.

As described under the *Existing Conditions* section, the special district is largely defined by its natural landscape and significant trees, greenery, wetlands, topography, and/or open space areas. Under the proposed zoning changes, development in the special district would be shaped by focusing on outcomes that seek to balance development rights with the protection of natural resources. The proposed zoning changes are intended to create a better urban design relationship with the surrounding area by strengthening natural resource preservation and enhancing the ecological importance of the special district to preserve existing neighborhood character. The Proposed Actions are intended to support and enhance the natural landscape, including significant trees, greenery,

wetlands and open space areas, by preserving steep slopes, rock outcrops, and large trees; limiting retaining walls; diversifying planting requirements; creating permeability requirements; and strengthening regulations for aquatic resources. The Proposed Actions are also expected to create greater flexibility to allow for the as-of-right development of additional amenities.

The Proposed Actions would not affect the underlying zoning as it pertains to bulk or the maximum floor area of new development. The proposed zoning changes would result in minor changes to front yard regulations and maximum building heights in certain low-density residential zoning districts that are mapped within designated resource adjacent areas or near NYSDEC wetlands and adjacent areas. Additionally, front yards could be reduced to 10 feet in R2 and R4 districts to protect significant rock outcrops, aquatic features, or one or more trees of significant value in the back portion of a lot. The proposed reductions in front yard depths would permit buildings to be located closer to the street line. The Proposed Actions would also allow for slight increases (5 feet) in building heights in R1 and R2 districts within resource-adjacent areas or on lots with steep slopes or near NYSDEC wetlands. In resource-adjacent areas where additional height is permitted under the proposed regulations, any side of a building that rises more than 31 feet from ground level to roof would be required to break up the façade by incorporating building projections, such as bay windows or recesses, into the outer wall.

The Proposed Actions would modify parking and/or curb cut regulations at a variety of sites. The proposed regulations would modify curb cut and parking location regulations for lots within resource adjacent areas and lots with steep slopes or nearby NYSDEC wetlands to allow more flexible site design to avoid disturbance to slopes or other sensitive natural features. These modifications would allow parking to be located in the front yard, and located parallel to the street, either of which could minimize disturbance to steep slope sand other natural features.

The proposed zoning changes would establish limits to the modification of natural features; promote greater biodiversity; encourage the preservation of the tree canopy, mature trees, rock outcrops, and steep slopes; as well as foster the connection of larger natural resources, such as parks and waterways. The proposed zoning regulations would also require more planting, trees, and biodiversity on development sites, including planting native species and limiting invasive species, and the clustering or grouping of trees. Through encouraging the planting of biodiversity gardens with native plants, trees, shrubs, and groundcover, the proposed zoning changes are expected to maintain and create ecological corridors. Additionally, the Proposed Actions would require the creation of planted buffer or transition area between private property and public lands

containing habitat to preserve habitat and limit encroachment on steep slopes and rock outcrops to minimize erosion. The proposed regulations would also limit retaining walls and require maintaining a minimum number of trees and a minimum square footage of planted area on a site. In addition, the proposed zoning regulations would protect existing habitat on sites of 1 acre or more to provide connectivity between larger natural resources. These proposed zoning changes are expected to enhance neighborhood and visual character by maintaining the area's natural green character and ecologically sensitive area, which define the special district.

Prototypical Analysis Sites

As shown in **Table 2-10** of **Chapter 2**, *Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*, and Appendix 2, all four prototypical analysis sites would be redeveloped under the Proposed Actions with low-rise, two- to three-story buildings, ranging in size from roughly 2,250 square feet to upwards of 6,000 square feet. Development on prototypical analysis sites would have FARs of 0.5 or less. Most sites would have low lot coverage of 30 percent or less.

New development under the Proposed Actions would be low-density, similar in bulk and height to existing buildings in the surrounding area and would not alter the existing urban context or obstruct a natural or built visual resources. The Proposed Actions would also not modify the type of development or the proposed uses at the prototypical analysis sites, compared to the No Action scenario. The Proposed Actions would result in some minor modifications to building placement, setbacks, yards, lot coverage, and hard surface area and would generally encourage the planting of more and/or clusters of trees and biodiversity gardens. The size of the biodiversity planting area would generally correspond to the size of the lot, and planting areas would range in size from less than 450 square feet to approximately 1,200 square feet. The Proposed Actions would also permit some development on sites in the special district of more than 10,000 square feet without CPC review.

In general, new development or enlargement on the prototypical analysis sites under the With Action scenario are expected to be similar in height and bulk to development under the No Action scenario and would be consistent with the existing surrounding context. Two the four prototypical analysis sites, including sites 1 and 2, are expected to experience the same amount of development (i.e., no change in FAR) under the With Action scenario as under the No Action scenario. Under the With Action scenario, prototypical analysis sites would have greater flexibility to locate amenities (such as a pool) without requiring additional discretionary approvals where they would minimally disturb tree-critical root zones and preserve trees. One prototypical analysis site (site 4) would be

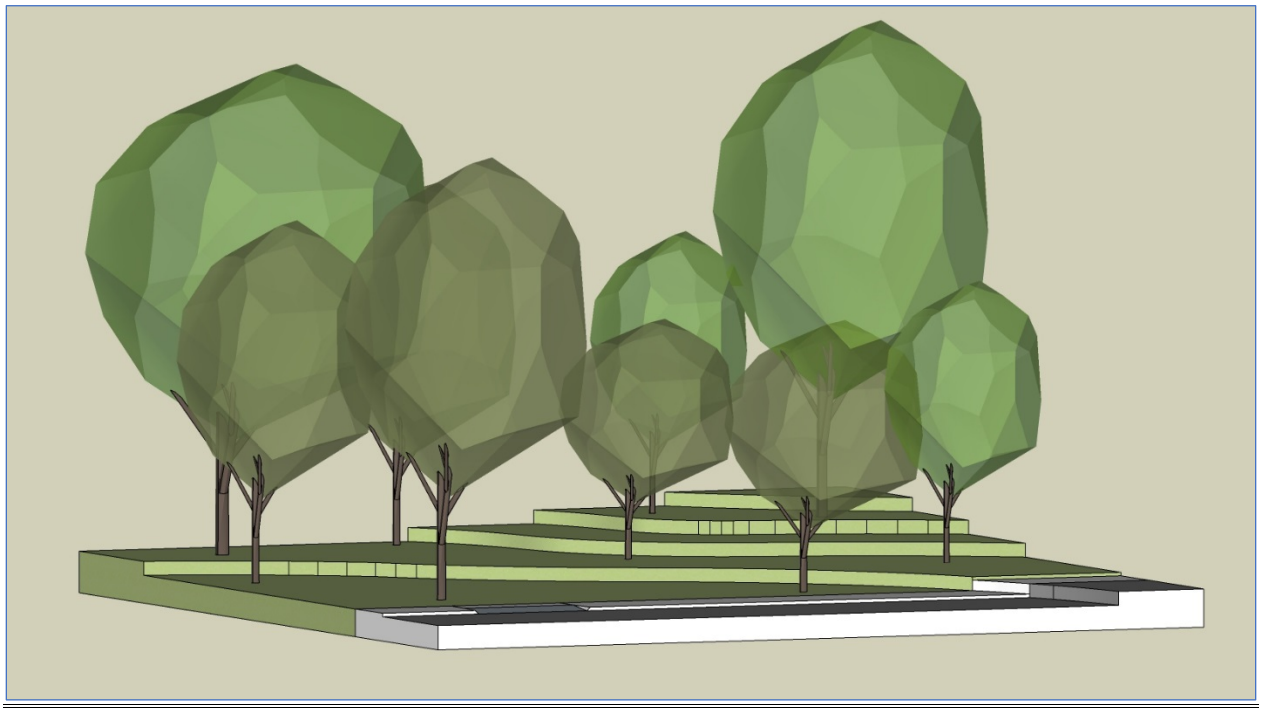
redeveloped with a slightly smaller building under the Proposed Actions than under the No Action scenario.

The Proposed Actions would also facilitate new development on one prototypical analysis site that would remain undeveloped under the No Action scenario. As shown in **Table 2-10**, prototypical analysis site 3, which would require discretionary approval under the No Action scenario, would be developed with detached, two-story, single-family home including approximately 6,000 square feet.

All prototypical buildings developed under the With Action scenario would be oriented to the street and generally set back from the street line consistent with existing conditions. Like the No Action scenario, there would be no change to the existing street pattern or street hierarchy at any of the prototypical analysis sites. There would also be no changes to open space, visual corridors, or visual resources under the With Action scenario.

Figure 8-5 provides three-dimensional illustrative comparisons of the No Action and With Action scenarios for prototypical analysis site 3. As shown in **Figure 8-5**, at site 3, the Proposed Actions would facilitate the construction of low-rise, two-story, detached residence, which would remain undeveloped under the No Action scenario given the site's lot area of 12,000 square feet. Under the With Action scenario, the new building on prototypical site 3 would be set back from the road and partially obscured from the street by several clustered trees. With Action scenario development on site 3 would be developed pursuant to underlying zoning, and would be consistent in size, height, and form to surrounding development. Many of the site's existing trees would be retained, and new trees and vegetation would be planted near the retained trees to form a cluster of dense vegetation at the site and help to preserve the area's natural character under the With Action scenario.

Figure 8-5. Prototypical Analysis Site 3—No Action to With Action Comparison



No Action

With Action

The Proposed Actions are intended to enhance the visual character and urban design features of the affected area by preserving and augmenting the natural features and broader ecological context of the area. The Proposed Actions are not expected to result in new construction or development that would change the context of the special district, nor are the Proposed Actions expected to result in any substantial changes to the built or natural environment that would significantly change the pedestrian's experience of public space. Additionally, the Proposed Actions would not eliminate any publicly accessible view corridors or block public views to any visual resources, nor would they result in any substantial changes to a historic district. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources.

Conclusion

The Proposed Actions are expected to have minimally discernable effects on the pedestrian's experience of public space in the special district and no significant, adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources. In accordance with *CEQR Technical Manual* methodologies, a preliminary analysis of urban design and visual resources was conducted for the four prototypical analysis sites identified for the Proposed Actions. The assessment determined that the proposed zoning changes would be unlikely to disturb the vitality, walkability, or visual character of the surrounding area, nor would the Proposed Actions promote new development that is inconsistent with existing uses, density, scale, and bulk. The Proposed Actions are not expected to result in buildings or structures that would be substantially different in character or arrangement than those that currently exist in the special district. The Proposed Actions are expected to result in minimal amounts of new development or enlargement that would not have occurred in the future without the Proposed Actions, and any new development or enlargement under the Proposed Actions is not expected to change the context of the special district, nor is it expected to result in any substantial changes to the built or natural environment that would significantly change a pedestrian's experience of public space. Additionally, the Proposed Actions would not eliminate any publicly accessible view corridors or block public views to any visual resources, nor would they result in any substantial changes to a historic district. The Proposed Actions are intended to enhance the visual character and urban design features of the special district by preserving and promoting the natural features and broader ecological context that defines the area. Therefore, no significant, adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources are expected as a result of the Proposed Actions.