

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential for the proposed actions to affect the urban design characteristics and visual resources of the project area, which is bounded generally by the Van Wyck Expressway service road on the west; 87th Road and Highland Avenue to the north; 189th, 190th, 191st Streets and Farmers Boulevard on the east; and Waltham Street, 105th, 108th, 109th, Sayres and 110th Avenues to the south. The proposed actions would facilitate the redevelopment of Downtown Jamaica to create a vibrant center of office, retail, entertainment, residential, and community facility uses and, therefore, an urban design and visual resources analysis is appropriate. In addition, the proposed actions would bring contextual zoning to the existing residential neighborhoods of Hollis, South Jamaica, and St. Albans.

This chapter has been prepared in accordance with New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR), which require that City agencies consider the effects of their actions on urban design and visual resources. The technical analysis follows the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*. As defined in the manual, urban design components and visual resources determine the “look” of a neighborhood—its physical appearance, including the street pattern, the size and shape of buildings, their arrangement on blocks, streetscape features, natural resources, and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis addresses each of these characteristics for existing conditions and the future without and with the proposed actions for a 2015 Build year. This chapter has been updated since the Draft Environmental Impact Statement to reflect changes to the Reasonable Worst Case Development Scenario, as described in Chapter 1, “Project Description.”

B. METHODOLOGY

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this analysis considers the effects of the proposed actions on the following elements that 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 uses, and 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 understand its 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, 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 elevation, rock outcroppings and steep slopes, vegetation, and aquatic features.

This analysis also considers the effects of the proposed actions on the area's visual resources, which the *CEQR Technical Manual* defines as unique or important public view corridors, vistas, or natural or built features. Visual resources can include waterfront views, public parks, landmark structures or districts, or natural features, such as a river or geologic formations.

As recommended by the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this technical analysis evaluates impacts in the project area, but because views into the project area from surrounding areas are limited due to intervening buildings, structures, and distance, a secondary study area, outside of the project area, is not considered. Similar to the analysis in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," this analysis focuses on the area proposed for the Special Downtown Jamaica District (SDJD), the blocks proposed for the Jamaica Gateway Urban Renewal Area (JGURA), and the following major corridors: Archer Avenue, Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica Avenue, Hillside Avenue, 163rd Street/Guy Brewer Boulevard, and Merrick Boulevard.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

In total, the project area covers 368 City blocks, or approximately 778 acres. It is characterized by a mix of retail and commercial office, transportation, government office, community facility, residential and industrial buildings that range from low-rise single-family detached houses, low-rise industrial and warehouse buildings, retail taxpayers, and churches to larger buildings and complexes that occupy full blocks including the Queens County Superior Court on Sutphin Boulevard and 89th Avenue, the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex at Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, the U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters on Jamaica Avenue between Parsons Boulevard and 153rd Street, and the campus of York College, which occupies several large blocks along Liberty Avenue between 158th and 165th Streets. Parks, cemeteries, and parking lots are also found throughout the project area.

The main line tracks of the LIRR physically and visually bisect the project area from west to east. The tracks run on an elevated embankment and concrete trestles where they cross over north-south streets. Due to the tracks, there is an extremely limited visual relationship between the north and south portions of the study area. From south of the tracks, there are some distant views of the upper floors of some of the taller buildings along Jamaica Avenue. Otherwise, there is almost no visual connection between the two halves of the large project area.

North of the LIRR tracks, the project area encompasses the Downtown Jamaica Center Central Business District (CBD), a commercial, civic, and residential district generally bounded by Archer Avenue to the south, Hillside Avenue to the north, Merrick Boulevard to the east, and Sutphin Avenue to the west. The major commercial corridors through the Jamaica Center CBD are Sutphin Boulevard, which runs north-south, and Jamaica Avenue, which runs east-west and is most densely developed between 160th and 164th Streets. North of Jamaica Avenue, the area is largely residential with a mix of low-rise detached and attached houses and mid- to high-rise apartment buildings. Institutional and community facility buildings including churches, the central building of the Queens Borough Public Library, schools, court houses, and Mary Immaculate Hospital are found throughout the Jamaica Center CBD. Rufus King Park, located on Jamaica Avenue between 150th and 153rd Streets, provides a large open space and ample greenery. At the western edge of the Jamaica Center CBD is the LIRR Jamaica Station.

South of the LIRR tracks is the large campus of York College, as well as a primarily low-rise industrial area between the college and Sutphin Boulevard to the west, and some residential neighborhoods to the south of Liberty Road and to the west of Sutphin Boulevard that consist of low-rise detached single-family houses, attached row houses, and mid-rise apartment buildings, with some low-rise commercial buildings along the larger roads, such as Guy Brewer and Merrick Boulevards. The urban design characteristics and visual resources of the project area are described in more detail below.

URBAN DESIGN

Topography, natural features, street pattern, block shapes, and building arrangements are discussed below for the entire area. Building bulk, use, and type and streetscape features are discussed separately and in more detail for the proposed SDJD and JGURA and for the major corridors listed above. Figure 8-1 shows the location and direction of photographs referenced in the discussion below.

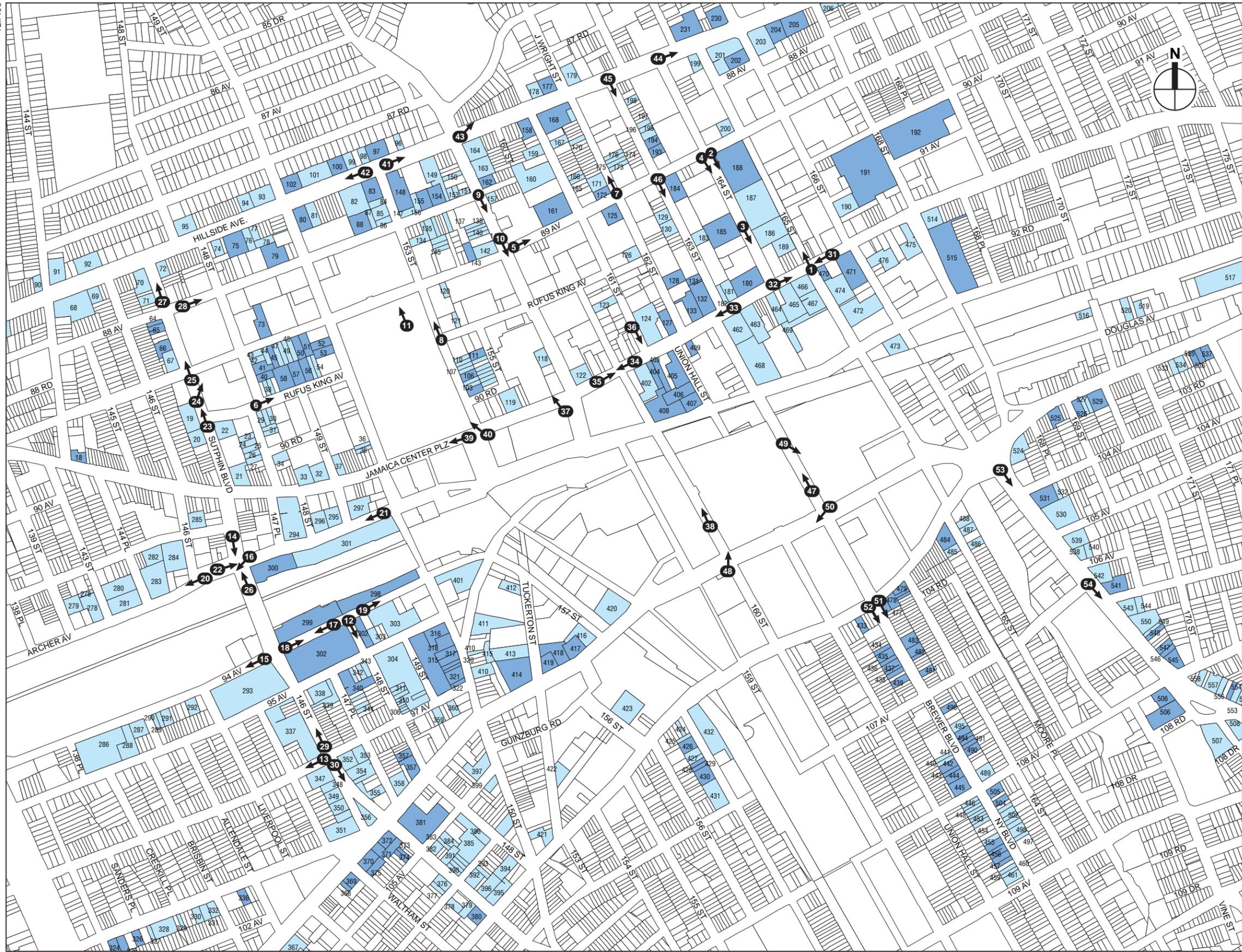
TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL FEATURES

Throughout the project area, the topography is generally level, with a gentle rise in terrain north of Hillside Avenue where the topography slopes upward with a pronounced hill located in the vicinity of 162nd Street. Around Liberty Avenue and Guy Brewer Boulevard, the terrain begins to gently slope downward to the south. There are no natural resource features in the area. Greenery is provided by street trees, grass-covered yards on residential properties, the grassy lawns and playing fields of the York College campus, Rufus King and Liberty Parks, and cemeteries that include the Grace Episcopal Church Graveyard on Jamaica Avenue at Parsons Boulevard and Prospect Cemetery on 159th Street at Beaver Road. Those two cemeteries contain numerous mature trees. Bordered by 153rd and 150th Streets, 89th and Jamaica Avenues, the large Rufus King Park also contains numerous trees, along with lawns, playing fields, benches, and playgrounds.

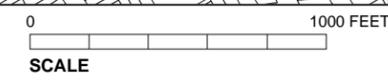
STREET PATTERN AND HIERARCHY

In general, the project area is developed with an irregular grid pattern composed of street systems aligned with three major roads that wind through the area—Sutphin Boulevard (that runs north-south), Jamaica Avenue (located north of the LIRR tracks), and Liberty Avenue (located south of the LIRR tracks). Since those three roads follow irregular paths, they create multiple grid patterns. In addition, short streets, the LIRR tracks, and streets interrupted by large

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- Projected Development Sites
- Potential Development Sites
- Photo Reference Number and View Direction



blocks add to the irregularity of the street pattern. The major east-west streets are: Jamaica Avenue, a busy two-lane commercial road with additional bus lanes that runs through the center of the project area; Hillside Avenue, a four-lane road bordered by low-rise commercial and auto-related buildings along the northern edge of the area; and Liberty Avenue, a divided six-lane road located south of the LIRR tracks that is primarily bordered by low-rise industrial buildings and the York College campus. All three roads carry east and westbound traffic.

The major north-south streets in the project area are: Sutphin Boulevard, which is located at the western edge of the project area and is a wide two-lane road mostly lined by commercial buildings, as well as the frontage of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex; Merrick Boulevard, a four-lane divided road lined by low-rise auto-related buildings and yards south of Archer Avenue and by institutional and commercial buildings north of Jamaica Avenue; Guy Brewer Boulevard, which is a wide two-lane road that runs south from Jamaica Avenue through the York College campus and residential neighborhoods below South Road; and Parsons Boulevard, a two-lane road that runs north from Jamaica Avenue and is lined by several churches, the former Queens County Family Courthouse, mid-rise apartment buildings, and low-rise commercial taxpayers. All four roads carry north and southbound traffic.

However, the majority of project area streets are smaller streets that carry both two-way and one-way traffic. Most streets run east-west and north-south, while there are some that run at angles to adjacent grid systems. South of Liberty Avenue and west of Sutphin Boulevard, the residential street pattern follows a northeast-southwest orientation. Throughout the project area, there are also short streets that run for one, or just a few, blocks.

BLOCK SHAPES AND BUILDING ARRANGMENTS

Most project area blocks are rectangular. However, the presence of short streets creates blocks of varying widths and lengths, while curving roads create irregularly shaped blocks. Buildings in the study area consist of attached and detached structures with varying footprints. Lots in the study area tend to be rectangular, but they vary in size, ranging from small 20- by 80-foot lots to much larger ones that occupy partial or full blocks. There are buildings that only occupy portions of their lots and others that are built to the lot lines. Many of the attached and detached houses, along with the churches, are set back from the street behind small yards, and they also typically have side yards or driveways. The larger apartment buildings tend to be built closer to the street, but they have irregular footprints with entrance courts, lightwells, and interior light courts. The commercial retail and office buildings, as well as many of the industrial buildings, are generally built out to the lot line.

STREETSCAPE AND BUILDING, BULK, USE AND TYPE

Proposed Special Downtown Jamaica District Area

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the area of the proposed SDJD encompasses 71 blocks that include the Jamaica Center CBD, the Sutphin Boulevard corridor (described below), the area around the LIRR Jamaica Station that includes the proposed JGURA (also described below), and the Liberty Avenue corridor (see Figure 2-10 in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy”). The discussion below focuses on the streetscape and building bulk, use and type of the areas north of Jamaica Avenue and around the Liberty Avenue corridor, with the Jamaica Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard corridors discussed separately.

Streetscape. Throughout the area of the proposed SDJD, the streetscape is urban in character, but it varies between specific subareas. Along Jamaica Avenue, the streetscape has a busy commercial character where most buildings have sign-covered storefronts (the discussion below on the Jamaica Avenue Corridor describes the avenue streetscape more completely). North of Jamaica Avenue, the commercial streetscape extends along some of the north-south streets, including 163rd, 164th, and 165th Streets. The latter street is a pedestrian mall lined by one- and two-story retail buildings with decorative brick paving, street trees, and decorative lampposts. Sutphin Boulevard, as it runs north from Jamaica Avenue, has a commercial streetscape similar to that of the avenue—it is described more thoroughly below in the section on the Sutphin Boulevard Corridor.

North of Jamaica Avenue, the area of the proposed SDJD has a largely residential streetscape with wide sidewalks flanked by the ground floors of masonry apartment buildings, churches, and detached houses clad in synthetic siding. There are no uniform street walls due to buildings being set back from the street and the presence of parking lots, yards, driveways, and garage entrances. Many of the residential lots have small landscaped strips or shallow grassy front yards; metal fences enclose many of the house lots. Low masonry walls are often found bordering the landscaped strips adjacent to apartment buildings. There are numerous trees, both located on the sidewalks and within property lines. This residential streetscape is also characteristic of the area north of Jamaica Avenue but outside of the proposed SDJD, an area roughly bounded by Hillside Boulevard on the north, Sutphin Boulevard on the west, and 153rd and 164th Streets on the east.

Discussed more completely below, Sutphin Boulevard, south of Jamaica Avenue, has a streetscape dominated by the LIRR Station Complex and low-rise commercial, industrial, and auto-related buildings. To the east of Sutphin Boulevard, the portion of the proposed SDJD between Archer and Liberty Avenues has a streetscape spilt between that of a residential district and an underutilized industrial neighborhood. Along 94th Avenue, the street is lined by lots enclosed with concrete walls and chain-link fencing interspersed with attached, low-rise masonry industrial buildings with blank walls distinguished only by vehicular openings, and the occasional window, covered with roll-down metal security gates. Those buildings are generally built out to the lot line. Along 97th Avenue and to the south toward Liberty Avenue, the streetscape is more residential. Detached single-family houses set back from the street within grassy yards line the streets, occasionally intermixed with non-descript industrial buildings. Street furniture in this portion of the proposed SDJD area consists of standard metal street signs and lampposts, tall wood utility poles carry overhead lines through the area, and street trees are common on most residential blocks.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. The proposed area of the SDJD includes a range of buildings that vary in use, type, height and bulk, and style. Along Jamaica Avenue and to the north, commercial, residential, and institutional buildings of one to eleven stories predominate. There are also several parking garages. South of Jamaica Avenue, the area primarily consists of one-story, non-descript industrial buildings around the prominent Jamaica Station/AirTrain transportation hub, although some low-rise commercial and residential buildings are also found in the southwest portion of the proposed SDJD.

Described in more detail below, Jamaica Avenue, as it runs through the area of the proposed SDJD, is lined by one- to eleven-story retail, office, religious, and government buildings. Architectural styles include Gothic and Romanesque for the religious buildings, modern for two of the government buildings, and Moderne, Art Deco, and Classical Revival for the commercial

buildings. Many of the smaller retail buildings are nondescript in appearance except for the presence of applied signage and awnings.

North of Jamaica Avenue, commercial buildings are also found along some of the smaller north-south streets intermixed with residential and religious structures. Some notable commercial buildings north of Jamaica Avenue include the ten-story, brick and limestone Georgian Revival-style Jamaica Chamber of Commerce at 89-31 161st Street, the eight-story, brick and terra cotta Art Deco Suffolk Title and Guarantee Building at 90-04 161st Street, and the one-story steel clad Art Deco Jamaica Business Resource Center, all described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources.” The Chamber of Commerce and Suffolk Title buildings have rectangular footprints and are massed with upper floor setbacks.

Attached one- and two-story retail buildings line 165th Street, which is a pedestrian mall (described above). They are style-less rectangular buildings with narrow facades characterized by large storefront windows and a profusion of awnings and signs that obscure the upper wall surfaces (see view 1 of Figure 8-2). On 164th Street, a one-story mall runs the full length of the block between Jamaica and 89th Avenues, across from a church complex, two large apartment buildings, and another small church. The Jamaica Colosseum Mall is a concrete Moderne structure of one and two stories. It has rounded corners, bronze show windows at the northern end, and some strip windows located higher up on the façade (see view 2 of Figure 8-2). A vehicular entrance is located at the 89th Avenue end of the building—there is parking on the building roof. At the southern end, there are storefronts that have been altered and partially obscured by awnings. On the west side of the street, the complex of the First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica, located at 89-60 164th Street, consists of a Georgian-style church capped by a square bell tower and clad in wood siding, a two-story Federal-style parish house also clad in wood siding (see view 3 of Figure 8-3), and a two-story brick Classical Revival-style administration and school building that has a columned entrance porch and small cupola. (The complex is described in more detail in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources”). The three church buildings are set back from the street and a circular drive and parking area is located in the center of the site. A large brick apartment building is located to the north of the First Presbyterian Church complex. It is a six-story, boxy structure with an entrance court and a narrower light court facing the street, and some minor ornamental details in the form of crenellations at the parapet and stone window architraves and lintels (see view 4 of Figure 8-3). The other apartment building on the block is four-stories, brick, and detailed with stone trim. Also boxy in form, it lacks an entrance court, but it has ground-floor storefronts. Between the two apartment buildings is a one-story Georgian Revival-style building occupied by the First Church of Christ Scientist, which has the appearance of a residential, rather than a religious, building. It is set back from the street within a grassy lot enclosed by a chain link fence.

North of Jamaica Avenue, residential and institutional structures primarily compose the building stock within the proposed area of the SDJD. Similar buildings define the area of the Jamaica Center CBD outside the proposed boundaries of the SDJD—an area roughly bounded by Hillside Boulevard on the north, Sutphin Boulevard on the west, and 153rd and 164th Streets on the east. Within this portion of the project area, buildings range in bulk and height from two-story single-family detached houses, to mid-rise apartment buildings on large lots, to the Mary Immaculate Hospital complex. Masonry is the predominant cladding material, but some of the single-family houses are clad in wood or synthetic siding. Vacant lots and paved parking areas are interspersed throughout the area.



View north on 165th Street from Jamaica Avenue 1



View south on 164th Street 89th Avenue 2



First Presbyterian Church in Jamaica. View south 3



View south on 164th Street from 89th Avenue 4

Houses in this area tend to be two-story detached single-family houses and attached two- and three-story row houses. In general, the detached houses maintain a consistency of form and style throughout the Jamaica Center CBD. They tend to be cross-gabled buildings set back from the street within small yards, many of which are enclosed with chain link fences (see Figure 8-4). The majority of houses are clad in synthetic siding, although some retain wood siding, and they have front porches, a large number of which have been enclosed. The attached row houses are largely faced in brick, although some are clad in synthetic siding. Like the detached houses, they are frequently set back from the street behind small yards and accessed by stoops (see view 7 of Figure 8-5). Stylistically, the row houses are more varied than are the detached houses and they exhibit ornamental details such as projecting cornices, decorative brickwork, stone trim, bay windows, and varied rooflines. Some of the row houses also have front porches.

Throughout the area, apartment buildings are generally boxy brick structures of four to fourteen stories (see Figures 8-4 and 8-5). They are often found adjacent to the low-rise houses, and like those smaller residential buildings, they are usually set back from the street, although at shorter distances and behind small landscaped strips or basement areaways. The forms of the apartment buildings differ little throughout the Jamaica Center CBD, with some variation arising from the use and placement of lightwells and entrance courts. The apartment buildings are generally unornamented, although some of the buildings have stone trim or minor decorative details. A few of the more modern apartment buildings have balconies.

There are a variety of religious buildings throughout the proposed area of the SDJD and the Jamaica Center CBD. Both the churches and synagogues are typically detached buildings raised above the street and set back from it, like the area's residential buildings. Historical revival styles used for the religious buildings include Romanesque, Gothic, and Colonial Revival. Steeples are a common feature of the churches, and some of them have related buildings that include schools, parish houses, and rectories (see view 9 of Figure 8-6). Most of the religious buildings are modest in size.

Institutional and community facility buildings within the Jamaica Center CBD and the proposed area of the SDJD include the former Queens County Family Courthouse on Parsons Boulevard and 89th Avenue, a YMCA across the avenue from the courthouse, the buildings of the Mary Immaculate Hospital Complex on 89th Avenue to the north of Rufus King Park, and the Queens Borough Central Library on Merrick Boulevard. All of these buildings are large, solidly massed structures. The former Queens County Family Courthouse consists of two, currently vacant buildings—an older four-story Classical Revival-style brick and stone structure and a four-story brick and concrete modernist annex on 89th Avenue, both of which are set back from the street. Originally built as the Central Library Building of the Queens Borough Public Library, the courthouse has a colonnaded façade on Parsons Boulevard (see view 10 of Figure 8-6). The adjacent YMCA is a nine-story, brick and stone building with Classical-style architectural details. It has a square footprint and a solid massing with no setbacks, and it is built to the lot lines with a long frontage on 90th Avenue that includes a three-story wing. Located just north of Rufus King Park, Mary Immaculate Hospital consists of several large masonry buildings of three to seven stories with solid massing (see view 11 of Figure 8-7). The older hospital buildings are brick and designed in historical revival styles. There is also a large modernist concrete building, a parking garage, and a parking lot on the hospital property. The current Queens Borough Central Library is located on Merrick Boulevard at 89th Avenue. It is a two-story modernist concrete structure with a rectilinear, horizontal massing, strip windows, and a recessed ground floor.



View southeast on 89th Avenue from Parsons Boulevard 5



View east on 90th Avenue from 148th Street 6



View north on 162nd Street from 89th Avenue 7



View north on 153rd Street from 90th Avenue 8



Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary Church Complex. View south on Parsons Boulevard from 88th Avenue

9



View south on Parsons Boulevard from 89th Avenue

10

Urban Design and Visual Resources
Proposed Special Downtown Jamaica District Area
Figure 8-6



Mary Immaculate Hospital. View north from Rufus King Park 11



View south on 148th Street from 94th Avenue 12

In the proposed area of the SDJD south of the LIRR tracks, the blocks north of Liberty Avenue and east of Sutphin Boulevard primarily contain low-rise industrial buildings and warehouses, although there are detached two-story houses located along 97th Avenue. The industrial buildings tend to be non-descript boxy masonry structures (see view 12 of Figure 8-7). The one-story buildings and the ground-floors of the few two- and three-story buildings are generally blank masonry wall surfaces with vehicular entrances and windows covered by roll-down metal security gates. Also found in this area are vacant lots and storage yards enclosed with concrete walls and chain link fencing capped by barbed wire. Like the houses to the north of Jamaica Avenue, those found in the southern portion of the proposed area of the SDJD are gabled structures with front porches and synthetic siding (see view 13 of Figure 8-8). They are usually set back from the street within small yards enclosed by fencing.

Proposed Jamaica Gateway Urban Renewal Area

Located within the area of the proposed SDJD, the proposed JGURA covers three blocks across from the Jamaica Station/AirTrain transportation center (see Figure 2-12 of Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy”). The streetscape and building bulk, use, and type of the area are described below.

Streetscape. The streetscape of the proposed JGURA is predominately defined by transportation infrastructure and non-descript industrial buildings. The LIRR Jamaica Station is located on the west side of Sutphin Boulevard between Archer and 94th Avenues. The station platforms are located above the boulevard on a wide metal and concrete structure with footings placed within the street and flanking sidewalks (see view 14 of Figure 8-9). This structure creates a dark underpass for cars and pedestrians. The LIRR tracks run on an embankment through the area, and the tall concrete viaduct of the Jamaica AirTrain runs west from the station (see view 15 of Figure 8-9). The LIRR embankment is grassy and has some tree cover. On 94th Avenue, the LIRR Station is built over a vehicular drop-off and supported by columns that touch down in the sidewalk. At the intersection of Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard, there are entrance stairs in the sidewalks to the Sutphin Boulevard subway station for the E, J, and Z lines. As described above, the streetscape along 94th Avenue to the east of Sutphin Boulevard is industrial. West of the boulevard, the streetscape of 94th Avenue is characterized by the AirTrain viaduct on the north side and the largely blank ground floors of some commercial buildings on the south side of the street.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. The Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex consists of two buildings on Sutphin Boulevard—an older brick and limestone structure at Archer Avenue and a modern glass curtain wall building at 94th Avenue. The LIRR tracks run between the two buildings, with the recently reconstructed platforms extending over Sutphin Boulevard. A large, curved metal and glass roof with a supporting truss structure covers the platforms. Described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources,” the older brick building on Archer Avenue is a five-story structure with a rectangular form that extends west along Archer Avenue. Ornamental details include a rusticated stone base, decorative brickwork on the upper floors, metal spandrel panels, and a bracketed cornice (see view 16 of Figure 8-10). A canopy projects above the entrance on Sutphin Boulevard. The modern AirTrain building is an approximately six-story, metal and glass box with a large footprint (see view 17 of Figure 8-10).

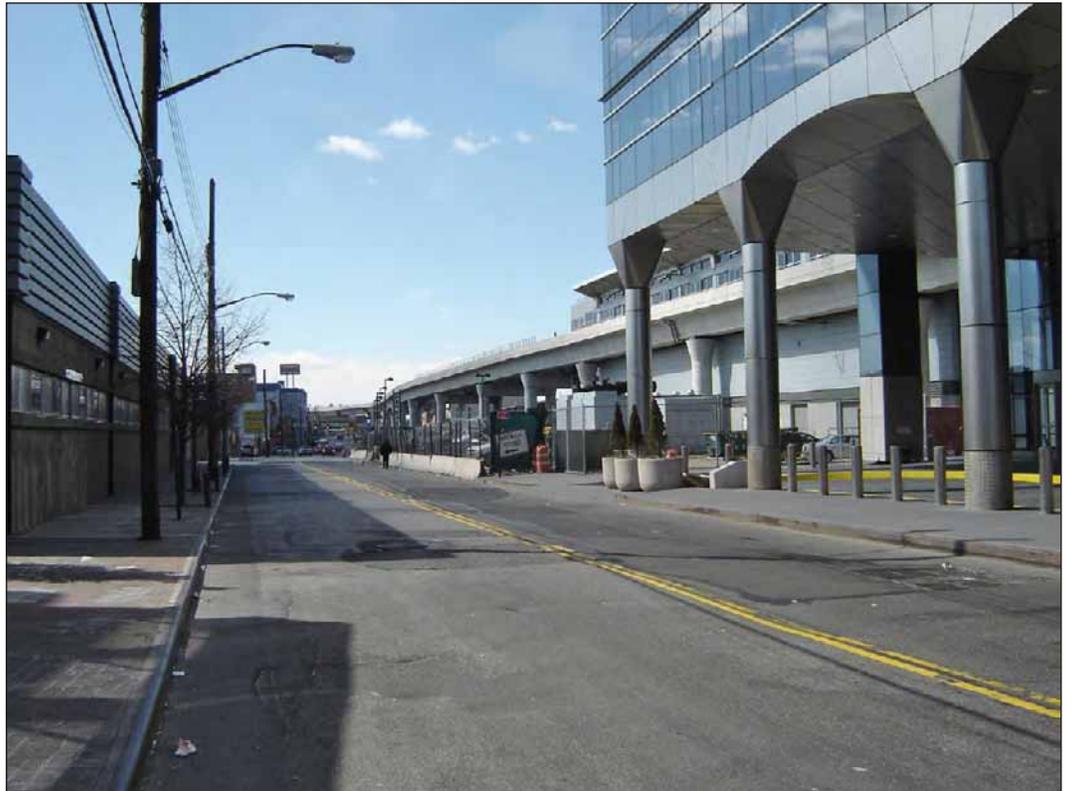
Located east of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain transportation center, one- to three-story commercial and industrial buildings occupy the three blocks of the proposed JGURA. On the north side of the LIRR tracks, the buildings along the south side of Archer Avenue consist mostly of two- and three-story masonry commercial buildings. These buildings exhibit some



View west on 97th Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 13



Jamaica Station. View south on Sutphin Boulevard. 14



View west on 94th Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 15



Jamaica Station. View southwest 16



View west on 94th Avenue from 148th Street 17

Classical-style architectural motifs such as cornices and stone trim, and they have ground-floor storefronts marked by awnings and projecting signs. Along 94th Street, to the south of the LIRR tracks, buildings are primarily low-rise, non-descript brick industrial buildings. Massed as simple boxes, they generally have no distinguishing architectural features other than the use of roll-down metal security doors on doors and windows (see Figure 8-11). However, a three-story building on the north side of the avenue just east of Sutphin Boulevard has an entrance framed by columns that support a small entablature. West of Sutphin Boulevard, the buildings along the south side of 94th Avenue are undistinguished one-story masonry commercial buildings.

Archer Avenue Corridor

Streetscape. The streetscape of the Archer Avenue corridor is largely that of an industrial and transportation-related district with some scattered commercial buildings and inconsistent street walls. The LIRR tracks run along the south side of the avenue through most of the project area. A tall concrete retaining wall bordering the embankment, along with the concrete trestles over the north-south streets, creates a long masonry wall along the south side of the avenue that makes it somewhat uninviting to pedestrians.

West of Sutphin Boulevard, low-rise industrial and commercial buildings line the north side of the avenue. Some buildings are built to the property line, while others are set back within paved parking lots. Many of the buildings have ground-floors that are blank except for a door or window enclosed with roll-down metal security gates. A variety of awnings and signs are affixed to the buildings along the avenue. Street furniture is standard, consisting of metal street signs and cobra head streetlights. Metal bus stops are also found along the avenue. Concrete planters are located in front of the LIRR station. Within the Jamaica Center CBD, large concrete parking garages, in addition to generic automotive-related storefronts, largely define the streetscape along the north side of Archer Avenue. East of the CBD, Archer Avenue assumes a residential streetscape similar to the residential streetscapes found throughout the project area.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. For the most part, Archer Avenue through the project area is lined by low-rise, non-descript commercial, industrial and auto-related buildings. Similar to those found in the southern portion of the proposed SDJD and in the area around the JGURA, these buildings are small boxy structures with blank masonry facades containing openings enclosed with roll down metal security gates (see Figure 8-12). At Sutphin Boulevard, there are some two- and three-story brick commercial buildings with ground floor storefronts and architectural detailing in the form of stone trim and projecting cornices (see view 22 of Figure 8-13). As mentioned above, the LIRR tracks run along the south side of the avenue for most of its length within the project area.

On the north side of the avenue within the Jamaica Centre CBD, there are multi-level parking garages and low-rise retail buildings defined by large storefront windows and awnings. Between 153rd Street and Parsons Boulevard is the eleven-story U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters, the main façade of which fronts on Jamaica Avenue. Occupying a full block, the modern government building is a massive structure with facades articulated by multi-colored brick banding and a massing that utilizes recesses and upper floor setbacks to break up the bulk. Around 165th Street, Archer Avenue moves away from the LIRR tracks to run east through a residential neighborhood of houses similar in size, form, and style to those found throughout the project area. At the southeast corner of the intersection with 168th Street is the 104th Field Artillery complex, also known as the Jamaica Armory. Fronting on 168th Street, the main building is a four-story brick Art Deco structure with a central rectangular tower



View east on 94th Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 18



View east on 94th Avenue at 148th Street 19



View west on Archer Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 20



View west on Archer Avenue from 150th Street 21



View east on Archer Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 22

form—the building is described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources.” The drill hall extends east from the main building along Archer Avenue, which becomes 93rd Avenue.

Sutphin Boulevard Corridor

Streetscape. North of Archer Avenue, the Sutphin Boulevard Corridor has a busy commercial streetscape created by low-rise retail buildings, mid-rise apartment buildings with ground-floor storefronts, and the Queens Civil and Superior Courts. Most buildings are attached and built to the lot lines, creating uniform street walls. However, the monumental Superior Court building—located on the east side of the boulevard between 89th and 88th avenues—is set well back from the street behind a paved plaza bordered by a tall metal fence. Located on the east side of the boulevard between 89th and 90th Avenues, the Queens Civil Court building is partially built to the lot line. The entrance is set back from the street behind a paved plaza with landscaping, and Jersey barriers are placed along the sidewalk. On the building’s south façade that fronts on 90th Avenue, there are ground floor windows and vehicular garage and loading entrances. As along Jamaica Avenue, the numerous glazed retail storefronts on Sutphin Boulevard are marked by a profusion of signs and awnings. Street furniture consists of metal street signs, cobra head street lights, metal garbage bins, parking meters, fire hydrants, and newspaper boxes. There are parking ribbons on both sides of the boulevard. Some scattered street trees are found along the wide sidewalks.

To the east and west of Sutphin Boulevard, the streetscape is mostly residential, except in the immediate vicinity of the two courthouses. As described above, the streets are lined by a mix of single-family detached houses and mid-rise apartment buildings, most of which are set back from the street behind yards or narrow landscaped strips. The east façade of the Superior Court building is set back from 148th Street behind a paved parking lot surrounded by the tall metal fence that encircles the courthouse property. On the residential side streets, trees are more common, especially in the neighborhood to the east of the boulevard.

Between Archer and 94th Avenues, transportation facilities define the Sutphin Boulevard streetscape, as described above. Between 94th and 97th Avenues, the boulevard has a commercial streetscape similar to that north of Archer Avenue. Low-rise, attached commercial buildings maintain a consistent street wall of glazed storefronts covered by awnings. To the west of the boulevard, 97th Avenue runs through a residential neighborhood of detached single-family houses set back from the street within grassy yards that are mostly bordered by chain link fences. To the south of 97th Avenue, the streetscape of the Sutphin Boulevard corridor becomes characterized by non-descript gas stations, car washes, one-story industrial buildings, and parking lots.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. Three architecturally notable buildings add distinction to the Sutphin Boulevard corridor between Archer and Hillside Avenues. Those buildings are the former Jamaica Savings Bank at the northwest corner of the intersection with Jamaica Avenue, the Queens Civil Court at 90th Avenue, and the Superior Court at 89th Avenue. Described in more detail in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources,” the former Jamaica Savings Bank is an attached, two-story Art Deco concrete building with a curved façade at the corner entrance. The Queens Civil Court is a freestanding, modern five-story building clad in stone and massed as a series of crisp rectilinear components formed by recesses, cut-outs, and setbacks (see Figure 8-14). Windows are recessed within the exterior wall planes, and a narrow metal and glass wall projecting outward from the boulevard façade at the entrance reveals the presence of an interior atrium. Across 89th Avenue to the north, the Superior Court is a monumental, seven-story stone building, which is also described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources.” Designed in a



Queens Civil Court. View northeast on Sutphin Boulevard 23



Queens Civil Court. View northeast 24

Classical Revival-style and organized in an approximate U-plan, the building is set back on all four sides from the adjacent streets and it is surrounded by a metal fence. On Sutphin Boulevard, a large paved plaza leads to the main entrance, a columned porch raised above a low staircase. The wings of the U-plan face east to 148th Street, where there is a parking lot. The tall building, which has high floor to ceiling heights, is solidly massed with some shallow setbacks on the upper floors (see view 25 of Figure 8-15).

The remainder of structures along Sutphin Boulevard between Archer and Hillside Avenues are one- to two-story, attached commercial buildings and a few four-story residential buildings with ground-floor storefronts. Some of the commercial buildings are small, architecturally undistinguished one-story taxpayers. Between Archer and Jamaica Avenues, there is a row of two-story buildings faced in terra cotta and ornamented with pinnacles (see view 26 of Figure 8-15). The residential buildings are located on the east side of the boulevard between 88th and Hillside Avenues. They are boxy brick buildings with light courts and stone trim (see view 27 of Figure 8-16). All of the storefronts along the Sutphin Boulevard corridor are announced by large colorful awnings, and there is the occasional projecting sign. The blocks east and west of Sutphin Boulevard between Jamaica and Hillside Avenues contain two-story detached houses with gable roofs and front porches and four- to six-story boxy, brick apartment buildings (see view 28 of Figure 8-16).

South of 94th Avenue in the area of the proposed JGURA, two-story attached, masonry commercial buildings line the boulevard. These buildings are similar in size, form, and style to those commercial buildings north of Archer Avenue (see view 29 of Figure 8-17). South of 97th Street, small brick industrial buildings, gas stations, car washes, and other automotive-related facilities line Sutphin Boulevard. Those buildings are non-descript, one-story boxes, most of which are detached, and they are similar to the industrial buildings in the southern portion of the proposed SDJD and the JGURA (see view 30 of Figure 8-17). The blocks east and west of Sutphin Boulevard contain a mix of low-rise industrial buildings and detached two-story houses with gable roofs, porches, and front yards.

Jamaica Avenue Corridor

Streetscape. The wide sidewalks of the bustling Jamaica Avenue commercial corridor are primarily lined by low- to mid-rise commercial and institutional buildings that are attached and built to the property line, creating uniform street walls. Most buildings have altered ground-floor storefronts that exhibit a jumble of flashy signage and awnings of various sizes, colors, and styles. The majority of ground-floors tend to be glazed and building entrances are often slightly recessed. West of Parsons Boulevard, two modern government buildings—the U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters and the Queens Family Court—create a more staid, institutional streetscape. Along Jamaica Avenue, street furniture includes standard metal light poles, parking and street signs, fire hydrants, and parking meters, and specially designed garbage bins for the district. Along Jamaica Avenue, there are few street trees. Parking ribbons are located on both sides of the avenue and bus lanes add to the constant flow of vehicular traffic. Two notable elements of the Jamaica Avenue streetscape are Rufus King Park and the cemetery of Grace Episcopal Church—open, grassy areas bordered by decorative metal fences.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. Buildings of one to eleven stories line Jamaica Avenue through the project area. Most are attached structures with facades that rise flush from the street, and they include small retail taxpayers, department stores, office buildings, multi-story commercial buildings, churches, a historic farmhouse, a movie theater, and government buildings. On the more substantial buildings, façade materials include brick, terra cotta, and stone. Historic



Queens County Superior Court. View north on
Sutphin Boulevard 25



View north on Sutphin Boulevard from Archer Avenue 26



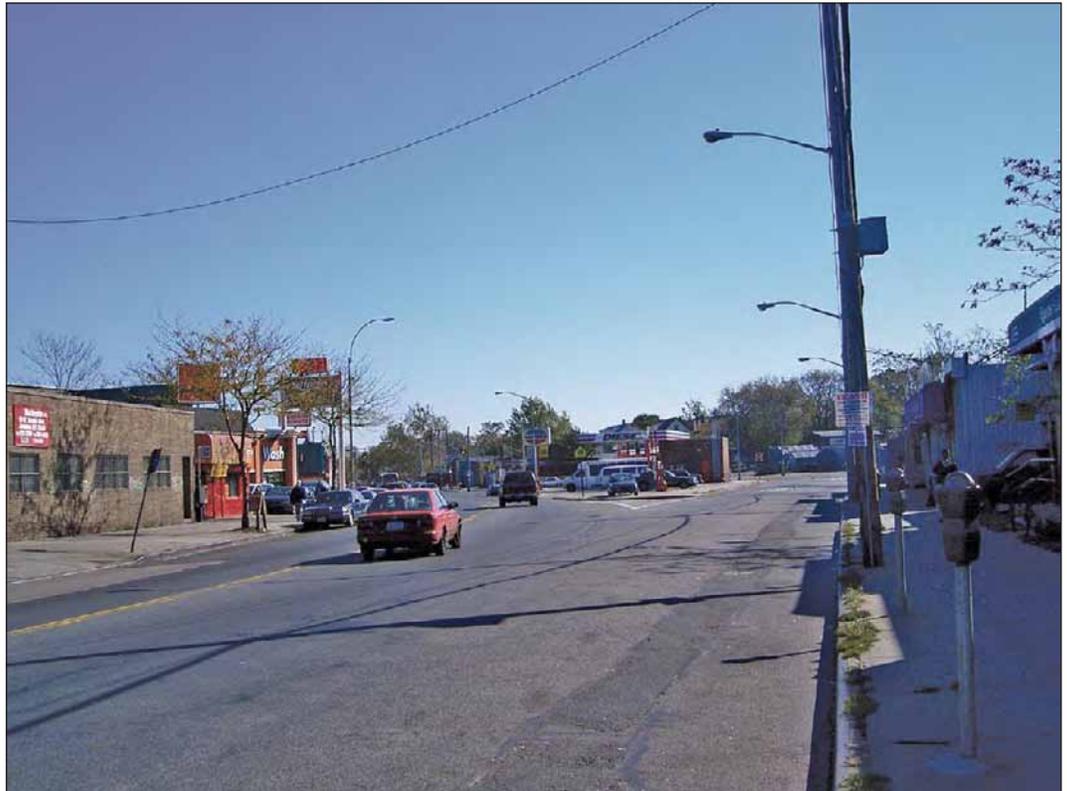
View north on Sutphin Boulevard from 88th Avenue 27



View east on 88th Avenue from Sutphin Boulevard 28



View north on Sutphin Boulevard from 97th Avenue 29



View south on Sutphin Boulevard from 97th Avenue 30

architectural styles include Art Deco, Spanish Baroque, Classical Revival, and Renaissance Revival, among others. Some of the distinctively designed buildings along the avenue remain relatively unaltered except at the ground floor, where the majority of buildings have modernized storefronts. However, there are numerous examples of buildings along the avenue that were once designed in a historical style, but which have lost most of their ornament to retail signage or larger show windows. The smaller retail buildings along the avenue either have narrow facades covered in stucco and large signs or facades that consist solely of show windows. Awnings and signs are a dominant ground-floor feature of the buildings along the avenue. West of 153rd Street, the buildings lining Jamaica Avenue are one to three stories. The taller buildings in the corridor are found to the east of 153rd Street. See Figures 8-18 and 8-19 for representative views of buildings along Jamaica Avenue.

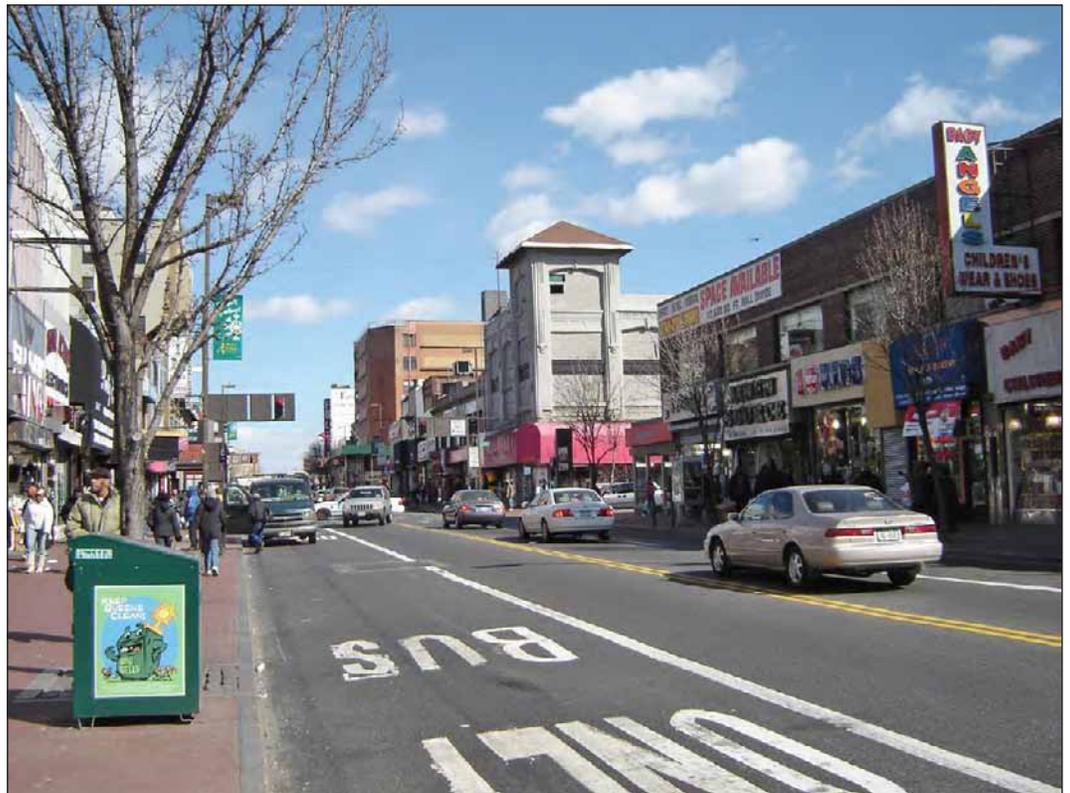
In the vicinity of 160th to 164th Streets, Jamaica Avenue exhibits a wider range of building heights, sizes, and styles than to the east and west, and several of the buildings on those blocks are discussed in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources." On the south side of the avenue at the foot of 161st Street is an eleven-story brick and stone office building. It is massed as a tall shaft without setbacks and is ornamented with Romanesque Revival-style details in the form of an arch above the entrance, balconies, and decorative reliefs. As with many of the older buildings along the avenue, the ground floor has been altered with a modern storefront. Adjacent to the west of the office building is a three-story Classical Revival-style building with a long blockfront and a stone façade designed above the ground floor as a colonnade. Adjacent to the east of the office building are the four-story Beaux Arts former Jamaica Savings Bank and the three-story Renaissance Revival-style Jamaica Arts Center (formerly the Register). Together, those four buildings form a blockfront of elaborately designed masonry buildings (see Figure 8-20).

Another distinctive section of Jamaica Avenue lies between Parsons Boulevard and 150th Street. On the north side of the avenue, located between a four-story, brick and stone Renaissance Revival-style commercial building on Parsons Boulevard and some non-descript two-story commercial buildings at 153rd Street is Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard (described in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources"). Set back from the street, the church is a small Gothic sandstone structure with a tall spire (see view 37 of Figure 8-21). The graveyard surrounds the church and fronts on both Jamaica Avenue and Parsons Boulevard. Enclosed by a decorative metal fence, the graveyard contains tombstones and monuments in a grassy setting with numerous mature trees. Across the avenue from the graveyard and church, with which it contrasts greatly, is the monumental eleven-story U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters. As mentioned above, that massive, modern building fills an entire block and is solidly massed with a minimal use of recesses and setbacks to alleviate the bulk (see view 34 of Figure 8-19 and view 38 of Figure 8-21). At the base, there is a three-story extension along the street, and the main entrance is an open corner vestibule underneath the bulk of the structure. Alternating strips of windows and bands of multi-colored brick articulate the facades.

The modern Queens Family Court is west of the U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters, across 153rd Street. It is a five-story brick and glass building organized into two distinct wings connected by a one-story entrance pavilion. The east wing is a rectangular building massed with a central recess and a set back fifth floor that creates a composition of connected rectilinear forms (see view 39 of Figure 8-22). Along Jamaica Avenue, the façade of the east wing presents a large amount of glazing in the form of squared and projecting window columns. The west wing sharply curves into the site, forming an entrance plaza, and the façade of the curved wing is designed with a grid of small, square windows. Across Jamaica Avenue from the courthouse is Rufus King Park, which is bounded by Jamaica and 89th Avenues, and



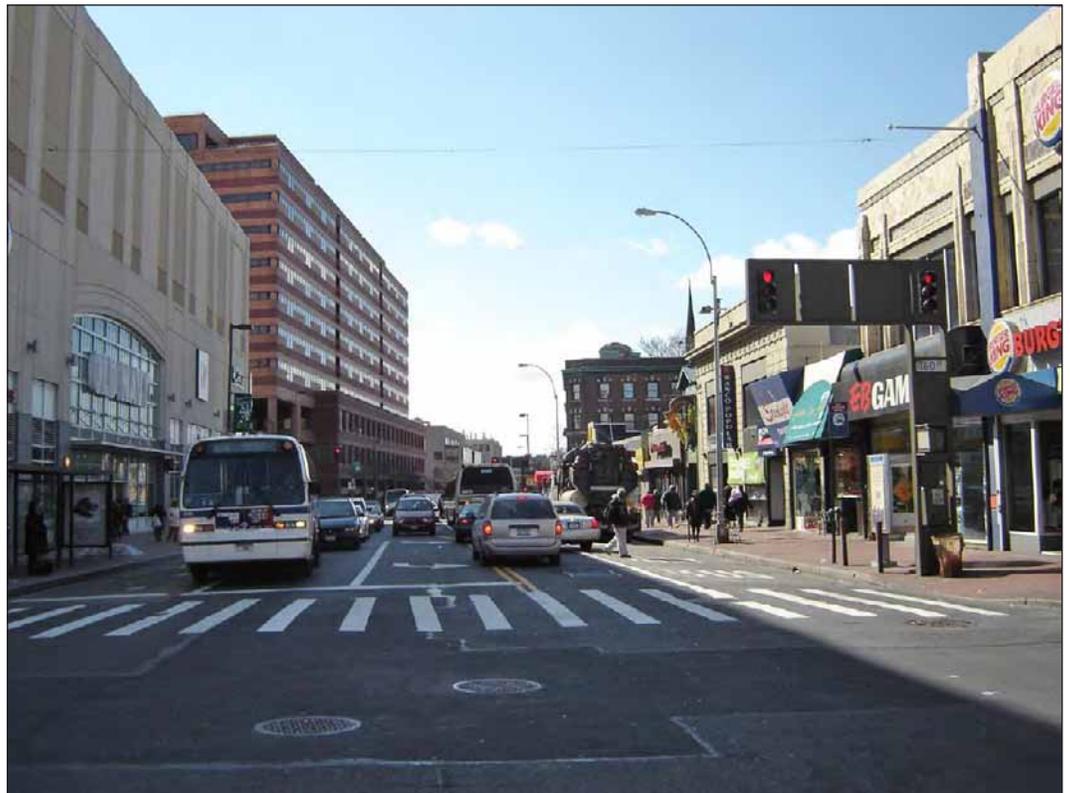
View west on Jamaica Avenue from 165th Street 31



View east on Jamaica Avenue from 164th Street 32



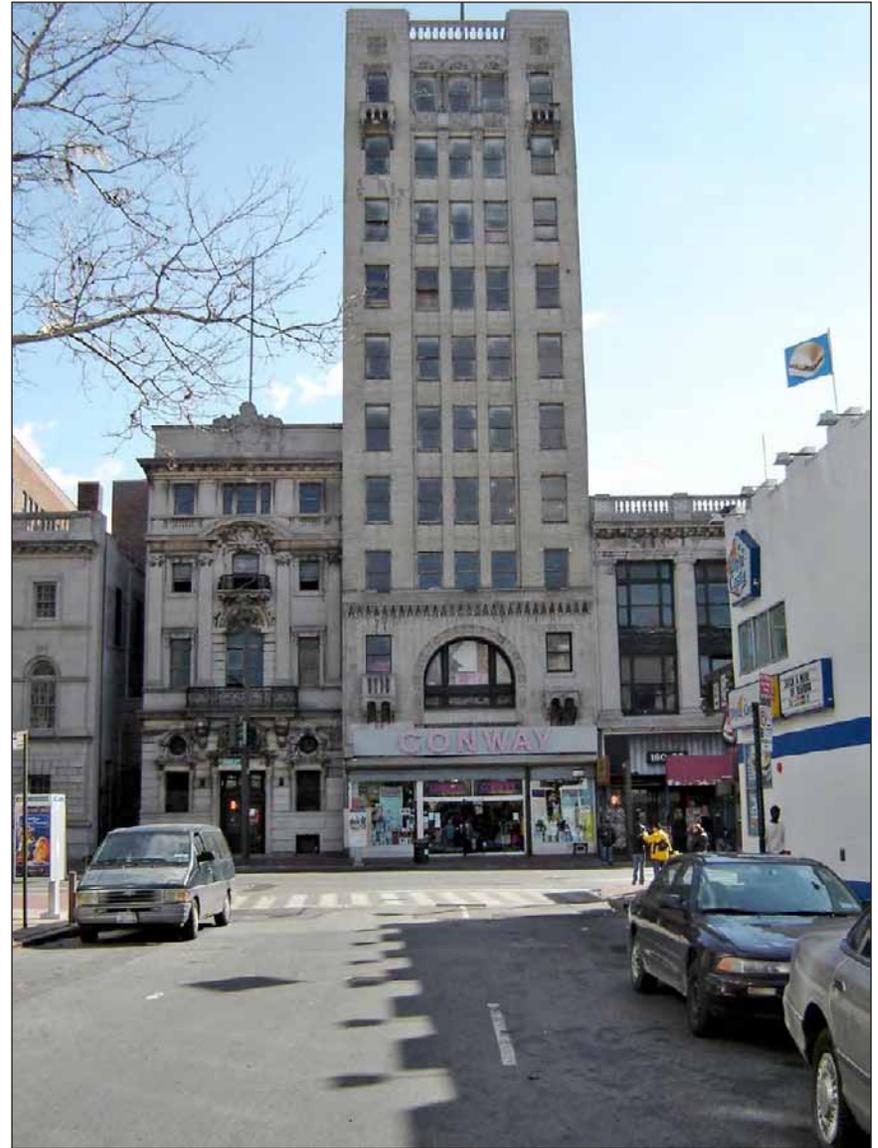
View west on Jamaica Avenue from 163rd Street 33



View west on Jamaica Avenue from 160th Street 34



View east on Jamaica Avenue from 160th Street 35



View south on 161st Street to Jamaica Avenue 36



Grace Episcopal Church. View northwest 37



View north on 160th Street from Liberty Avenue 38



Queens Family Court. View west 39



Rufus King Park. View west on Jamaica Avenue from 153rd Street 40

153rd and 150th Streets. The large park is fully surrounded by a fence, and it contains grassy lawns, a playground, benches, a small garden, numerous mature trees, a comfort station, a circular pavilion, and the Rufus King House (see view 40 of Figure 8-22). Now containing the King Manor Museum, the house—described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources”—is a gambrel-roofed farmhouse with wood siding, a columned front porch, and a rear addition. The house is located at the Jamaica Avenue end of the park.

Hillside Avenue Corridor

Streetscape. The streetscape of the Hillside Avenue corridor is commercial. Non-descript, one-story attached and detached buildings line the avenue interspersed with some low-rise attached residential buildings with ground-floor retail. Along certain blocks street walls are consistent, but there are numerous paved parking lots on the avenue. Some tall apartment buildings begin to appear in the corridor east of 163rd Street. Large colorful awnings, signs, and billboards dominate the streetscape. Parking ribbons line the avenue. There are few street trees along Hillside Avenue, and street furniture consists of the standard mix of metal street signs, parking meters, and cobra head streetlights. To the north and south of Hillside Avenue, the streetscape assumes the typical residential character of the northern portion of the project area.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. The majority of buildings along Hillside Avenue are non-descript one-story retail buildings, the dominant architectural features of which are glazed storefronts with large awnings (see Figure 8-23). There are some two- and three-story brick and terra cotta buildings along the avenue that have architectural ornamentation in the form of stone trim, decorative brickwork, and crenellated parapets (see view 43 of Figure 8-24). On the ground floor, those more distinguished buildings still have glazed storefronts dominated by awnings. East of Parsons Boulevard on the north side of the avenue, there is a row of three-story attached brick row houses with ground floor retail additions that extend out to the sidewalk. East of 163rd Street, tall brick apartment buildings of seven to fourteen stories are located along the avenue. Those buildings are non-descript, boxy structures, some of which have light courts while others have balconies (see view 44 of Figure 8-24). A more notable building on Hillside Avenue is the Old Jamaica High School between 162nd and 163rd Streets. Described more fully in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources,” it is a three-story brick and brownstone Gothic Revival-style building raised slightly above the street on a low grassy hill. The streets north and south of Hillside Avenue mostly contain residential buildings—detached houses with gable roofs and porches, some attached brick row houses, and mid-rise, boxy brick apartment buildings (see view 45 of Figure 8-25 and view 7 of Figure 8-5).

163rd Street/Guy Brewer Boulevard Corridor

Streetscape. The streetscape of the 163rd Street/Guy Brewer Boulevard corridor changes as it runs through the project area. Between Hillside and 89th Avenues, the streetscape of 163rd Street is residential, with the street lined by both attached and detached houses and low-rise apartment buildings, most of which are set back from the street behind small yards and driveways. Some houses have fencing along the sidewalk. In this area, there are few street trees. Between 89th and Jamaica Avenues, commercial storefronts dot the streetscape. There are no detached single-family houses and the apartment buildings are taller and larger. Also found along this block is a post office parking lot. Most buildings are built to, or closer to, the lot lines. There are no street trees in this area. Between Jamaica and Archer Avenues, the streetscape is entirely commercial and similar to that of Jamaica Avenue.



View east on Hillside Avenue from 153rd Street 41



View west on Hillside Avenue from 153rd Street 42



View northeast on Hillside Avenue from Parsons Boulevard 43



View east on Hillside Avenue from 164th Street 44



View south on 163rd Street from Hillside Avenue 45



View south on 163rd Street from 89th Avenue 46

South of the Jamaica Center CBD, 163rd Street becomes Guy Brewer Boulevard, which runs through the York College Campus and the neighborhood of South Jamaica. To the south of the LIRR tracks, buildings of York College line both sides of the boulevard. On the east side of the boulevard between the tracks and Liberty Boulevard, the performing arts building is set on a large parcel that also contains a paved parking lot and an open, grassy area. The building is set well back from the street and a metal fence with security kiosks borders the property. On the west side of the avenue between the tracks and Liberty Boulevard, the low-rise academic building fills almost the entirety of the block extending west to 160th Street. Most of the building is set back from the street and a metal fence encloses the property. Campus buildings and athletic fields are also found across Liberty Boulevard. The design of the college campus creates a streetscape unfriendly to the pedestrian, because the buildings are removed from the street and isolated behind paved plazas, parking lots, and tall fences, which makes the street feel wider and emptier. Street trees are located along the wide sidewalks. Additional buildings of the college are located on the west side of 160th Street between Liberty Avenue and the LIRR tracks. They are also removed from the street and positioned within grassy lawns enclosed by chain link fencing. Two small cemeteries are also located within the Guy Brewer Boulevard corridor on the east side of the avenue just south of Liberty Avenue and at the southwest corner of the intersection of Liberty Avenue and 160th Street.

From South Road, Guy Brewer Boulevard runs through the neighborhood of South Jamaica where the streetscape assumes a residential character. Detached single-family houses, a church, and attached low-rise residential buildings with ground-floor storefronts line the boulevard. Most buildings are built close to the lot lines, the sidewalks are narrow, and there are numerous mature street trees. An unusual feature of the streetscape is the presence of tall wood utility poles carrying transmission lines along the boulevard.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. Between Hillside and Archer Avenues, the buildings along 163rd Street are typical of those throughout the Jamaica Center CBD and similar in use, form, size, and style to those described above along the Jamaica Avenue corridor and within the proposed area of the SDJD. Residential buildings include: two- and three-story detached and attached houses with gable roofs, porches, synthetic siding, and small front yards and driveways; three- to four-story brick apartment buildings that are set back far from the street and have peaked roofs that suggest the appearance of houses; and taller brick apartment buildings that are located close to the street and massed with lightwells and entrance courts (see Figure 8-25). Also located along 163rd Street are some low-rise non-descript commercial buildings.

Located south of the LIRR tracks, York College consists of several modern buildings located along Liberty Avenue within large parcels. Although the college buildings are low-rise structures, they have large footprints. The main academic building occupies the block bounded by Guy Brewer Boulevard on the east, the LIRR tracks on the north, Liberty Avenue on the south, and 160th Street on the west. It is a large, but low-lying, brick building massed with multiple wings, set back levels, and rounded tower forms (see Figure 8-26). Strip windows emphasize the building's horizontality. On Guy Brewer Boulevard, the central portion of the building—the location of the primary entrance—is set far back from the street behind a paved plaza with flanking wings built out close to the property line. To the east of the main academic facility is the performing arts center. Located on a large parcel that contains a paved parking lot and a grassy lawn, the performing arts center is a brick building with two boxy rectangular components (see view 49 of Figure 8-27). The main bulk of the building is largely windowless, while the smaller entrance component facing the boulevard has an extensive expanse of glass curtain wall. Across Liberty Avenue to the south of the academic building is the health and



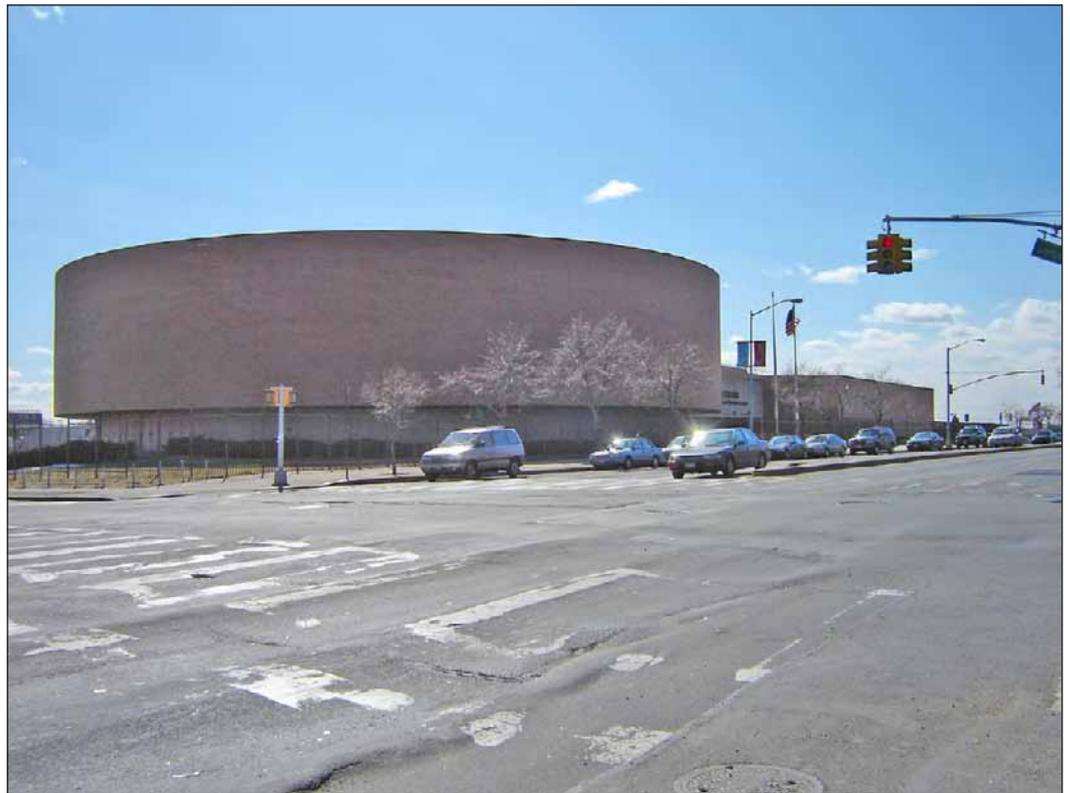
York College. View north on Guy Brewer Boulevard from Liberty Avenue 47



View northeast on 160th Street from Liberty Avenue 48



York College. View southeast on Guy Brewer Boulevard toward Liberty Avenue 49



York College. View southwest at Liberty Avenue and Guy Brewer Boulevard 50

physical education building. It is distinguished by a modernist brick, drum-shaped wing placed close to Guy Brewer Boulevard (see view 50 of Figure 8-27). Athletic fields occupy the block to the west, along with a small cemetery. The remaining college buildings are smaller rectangular buildings on the north side of Liberty Avenue between 160th and 158th Streets.

In the residential neighborhood of South Jamaica, buildings along Guy Brewer Boulevard include attached three-story brick apartments with ground-floor storefronts, attached two-story brick row houses, a small church, and detached houses (see Figure 8-28). The apartment buildings and row houses are placed close to the street, and they are ornamented with cornices and decorative parapets, stone trim, and decorative brickwork. The detached houses are typical of those found throughout the project area—the have gable roofs, small front yards, porches, and wood or synthetic siding. Located just south of South Road, the church has a peaked roof and a large arched entrance.

Merrick Boulevard Corridor

Streetscape. North of Jamaica Avenue, Merrick Boulevard, which is lined by commercial and institutional uses, has a streetscape similar to that of Jamaica Avenue. South of Archer Avenue and the LIRR tracks, the streetscape has an underutilized character, as it primarily runs through an area of one-story, non-descript buildings containing automotive uses. Parking lots enclosed by chain link fencing are common. Tall freestanding signs along the sidewalks are a common streetscape element and there are few street trees. South of 107th Avenue, mid-rise apartment buildings and attached and detached low-rise houses, start to appear. To the east of Merrick Boulevard is a neighborhood of small attached and detached houses. Vacant lots are interspersed through the neighborhood. Liberty Park, a long rectangular park with a running track, baseball diamonds, and tennis courts is located within the residential neighborhood on the east side of 172nd Street between Liberty and 106th Avenues. Trees circle the perimeter of the park.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. As it runs through the Jamaica Center CBD, Merrick Boulevard primarily contains institutional buildings, such as the Queens Borough Central Library and a few churches, office buildings, a bus depot, and six- to nine-story apartment buildings. Paved parking lots are also found along the boulevard. Buildings tend to be set close to the property line, solidly massed with boxy forms, modern in style, and clad in brick and stone. The massing of the apartment buildings includes the use of lightwells and entrance courts. A ten-story telecommunications building is located on the west side of the boulevard at 88th Avenue. It is massed without setbacks and has largely solid masonry walls with some thin vertical rows of windows. South of Liberty Avenue, one- and two-story non-descript, boxy automotive-related buildings such as garages, gas stations, and dealerships characterize Merrick Boulevard to around 108th Avenue (see Figure 8-29). East of the boulevard is a residential neighborhood of mostly detached houses with gable roofs, some front porches, and small yards. South of 107th Street, residential buildings—boxy brick apartment buildings of around six stories and detached houses—begin to appear along Merrick Boulevard.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual resources located within the project area include Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard and Rufus King Park and House on Jamaica Avenue, the steeples of two churches on Parsons Boulevard, the Queens County Superior Court building on Sutphin Boulevard, and the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex.



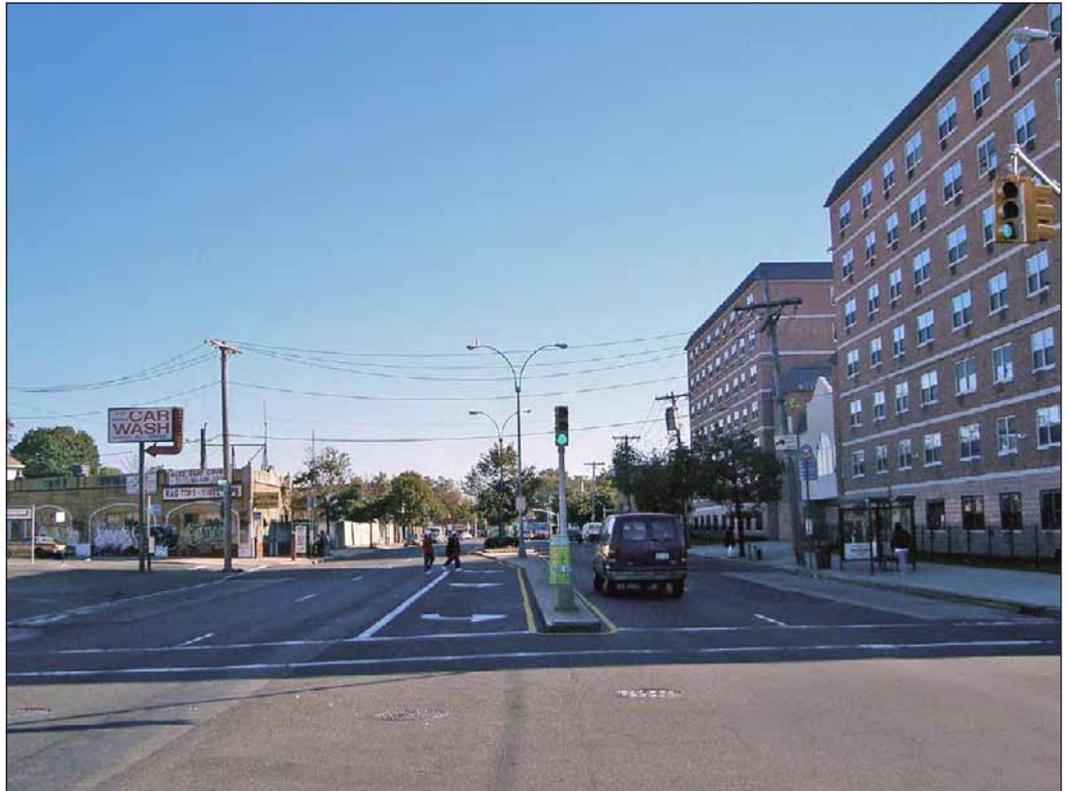
View southeast on Guy Brewer Boulevard from South Road 51



View southwest on Guy Brewer Boulevard from South Road 52



View south on Merrick Boulevard from South Road 53



View south on Merrick Boulevard from 107th Avenue 54

Both Grace Episcopal Church and the Rufus King House are architecturally distinguished historical buildings set within landscaped open spaces. Views of the church are limited to its immediate vicinity on Jamaica Avenue due to its position set back from the avenue and to intervening buildings. The cemetery and the trees within it are better seen on Parsons Boulevard, where the cemetery has a lengthy frontage along the street. Rufus King Park is a large property that is visible for longer distances on Jamaica Avenue than is the church; the house, however, is better viewed in its immediate vicinity. From within Rufus King Park, there are open, expansive views of the surrounding neighborhood of low-rise houses and boxy brick apartment buildings along 153rd and 150th Streets, the Mary Immaculate Hospital Complex to the north, and the Queens County Family Court on Jamaica Avenue. The massive U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters is also visible from within Rufus King Park.

On Parsons Boulevard, the tower and steeple of the Blessed Virgin Mary church on 89th Avenue and the steeple of All National Apostolic Tabernacle at 90th Avenue are distinguishing features of the Parsons Boulevard view corridor, and they are visible for long distances from the north and south. Similarly, the large, Classically styled Queens County Superior Court building is prominently visible for long distances in the Sutphin Boulevard view corridor. From certain locations, the upper floors of the courthouse are visible over smaller intervening buildings.

The Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex is prominently visible along the Archer Avenue and Sutphin Boulevard view corridors. Composed of the older brick LIRR Station building, the modern glass and metal box of the AirTrain station, and the modern metal and glass canopy arching over the platforms above Sutphin Boulevard, the complex is a visually interesting structural and architectural composition in the western portion of the project area.

In general, views along the study area view corridors are long due to the relative straightness of the streets, flat topography, and low-rise buildings. Short streets and curved streets, however, do add some variability to area views. Throughout much of the project area, there are expansive views of the sky due to the area's primarily low-rise character. Although most of the view corridors provide views without any prominent points of interest, there are views of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex and the Queens County Superior Court along Sutphin Boulevard and views of Rufus King Park and Grace Episcopal Church and Cemetery on Jamaica Avenue. Views on Jamaica Avenue also include a mix of tall and short buildings and the bustle of commercial activity and signage in the Jamaica Center CBD. Tall apartment buildings appear in views along Hillside Avenue and Parsons Boulevard. From north of the LIRR tracks that bisect the project area, there are no views to the southern portion of the project area, as views on the north-south streets terminate at the LIRR overpasses. From south of the LIRR tracks, there are occasional views over the tracks of the upper floors of some of the taller buildings on Jamaica Avenue, such as the U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters.

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

As described more fully in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy," there are several large projects planned or under construction in the project area. Within the Jamaica Center CBD, a private developer has proposed redeveloping the vacant former Queens County Family Courthouse with residential, retail, and community facility uses. As currently contemplated, the Parsons Boulevard facade of the older courthouse building would be preserved and incorporated into the new development. That project will increase the density along Parsons Boulevard and add to the residential character of the immediate area. Also in the Jamaica Center CBD, a Home Depot building is under construction on 89th Avenue and 168th Street. Located near the Queens

County Central Library, the one-story building will have a large footprint and rooftop parking. On Merrick Boulevard at the southern edge of the project area, a four-story residential development is under construction.

Within the project area, the Greater Jamaica Development Corporation has plans for several transportation and streetscape improvements in the vicinity of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain transportation center. To increase pedestrian access and safety, improve traffic flow, create public open space, and spur transit-oriented development, the Jamaica Transportation Center Intermodal Enhancements and Atlantic Avenue Extension project includes the redesign of: Archer Avenue between 144th Place and 148th Street; Sutphin Boulevard between 94th and 95th Avenues; the block bounded by 94th and 95th Avenues, 138th Place, and the Van Wyck Expressway; and the area below the LIRR Jamaica Station platforms over Sutphin Boulevard. Each of these projects will improve the area's existing streetscape through pedestrian-friendly improvements and commercial development. The proposed plan for the Sutphin underpass area would create a row of retail spaces under the platforms to enhance the character of the area. At the Archer Avenue and Sutphin boulevard intersection, sidewalks would be widened and the subway stairs would be reoriented to allow for the creation of public plazas. Between 144th Place and 147th Place, Archer Avenue would be realigned to allow for improved traffic flow and pedestrian safety. In addition, Atlantic Avenue would be extended between the Jamaica LIRR station and the Van Wyck Expressway, and a strip of new open space would be created along either side of it.

In addition, the reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDs) for the proposed actions assumes that development would occur in the future without the proposed actions throughout the project area on some of the projected and potential development sites in accordance with existing zoning. This growth is anticipated to include local retail space, residential and community facility development, and manufacturing uses. This general growth would reinforce the existing urban design character of the project area.

E. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

As described more fully in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed actions include zoning map and text amendments, designation of the JGURA, demapping of a street, and the disposition of City property. Certain of the text amendments would facilitate the creation of the SDJD, which would establish special use and urban design regulations. Overall, the proposed actions aim to support the revitalization of the Jamaica Center CBD by permitting new development with a greater mix of uses and densities.

By 2015, it is anticipated that the proposed actions would be in place, and that, as a result, all or most of the 186 projected development sites and some of the 420 potential development sites would be redeveloped with a net development (as described in Chapter 1, "Project Description") of the following: 3,565 residential units; 3.1 million square feet of commercial space; 200,000 square feet of hotel space; 245,180 square feet of community facility space; 400,000 square feet of public parking; and a net decrease of 379,752 square feet of industrial space. Development on the projected development sites and less likely redevelopment of the potential development sites pursuant to the proposed actions would affect the area's urban design, specifically the streetscape and building bulk, use, and type of the area, as described below.

URBAN DESIGN

TOPOGRAPHY AND NATURAL FEATURES

The proposed actions, and redevelopment pursuant to the proposed actions, would not alter the topography and natural resources of the project area. Although redevelopment of any projected and potential development sites could include regrading, there would be no overall effects to topography, which is relatively level throughout the project area. As described above, there are no natural resources in the project area. A street tree planting provision within the SDJD would add greenery to a portion of the project area.

STREET PATTERN AND HIERARCHY

For the most part, the proposed actions would not alter the street pattern and hierarchy within the project area. However, there would be one change to the street pattern. Between 94th and 95th Avenues within the proposed JGURA, the block-long segment of 148th Street would be demapped. This proposed action would facilitate the development of a 1.26-million-square-foot commercial building on the block between 94th and 95th Streets and Sutphin Boulevard and the roadbed of 148th Street, which would remain. This small change to the City map would not have a significant adverse impact to the street pattern of the project area.

BLOCK SHAPES AND BUILDING ARRANGEMENTS

The proposed actions would not alter block shapes and building arrangements within the project area. The small change to the street pattern created by demapping a portion of 148th Street would not affect the rectangular shapes of adjacent blocks. Development pursuant to the proposed actions would occur on existing blocks and lots, and the site plans and footprints of new buildings would be in keeping with the varied building arrangements in the project area, where buildings occupy full and partial lots, are set back from or built to the lot lines, are attached and detached, and have irregular footprints.

STREETSCAPE AND BUILDING BULK, USE AND TYPE

Proposed Special Downtown Jamaica District Area

Pursuant to the proposed actions, there is expected to be development within the proposed SDJD of approximately 3.6 million square feet of commercial space comprising office, hotel, and local and regional retail uses, 126,000 square feet of community facility space, and residential space totaling approximately 1,800 units. The SDJD would include special provisions governing bulk, use, parking, and urban design considerations. Projected and potential development sites are spread throughout the area, but they tend to be clustered on Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica Avenue, 89th Avenue, and 163rd and 164th Streets.

Streetscape. In general, the proposed actions are expected to have beneficial effects on the streetscape of the proposed SDJD, and therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to this urban design feature. Vacant and underutilized lots would be redeveloped, and urban design provisions would create a pedestrian friendly environment and pedestrian amenities. In conformance with the proposed zoning, new buildings and enlargements on specified street frontages within the C6-2, C6-3, and C6-4 districts would be required to have ground-floor glazing that covers at least 50 percent of the ground-floor frontage. Also within those districts, ground-floor uses within 5 feet of curb level and within 50 feet of the street line would be

limited to community facility uses and certain commercial uses. These provisions would create lively, visually transparent ground-floors. Street walls within the SDJD would be set at varying heights and the provisions would reinforce existing street wall continuity along the major corridors, including Jamaica Avenue, Sutphin Boulevard, 163rd Street, and Merrick Boulevard. The mandatory street walls and glazing requirements would frame views along those major corridors, improve the existing incoherent streetscape of blank ground-floors, storefronts, and jumbled signage, and enliven the ground-floors of buildings.

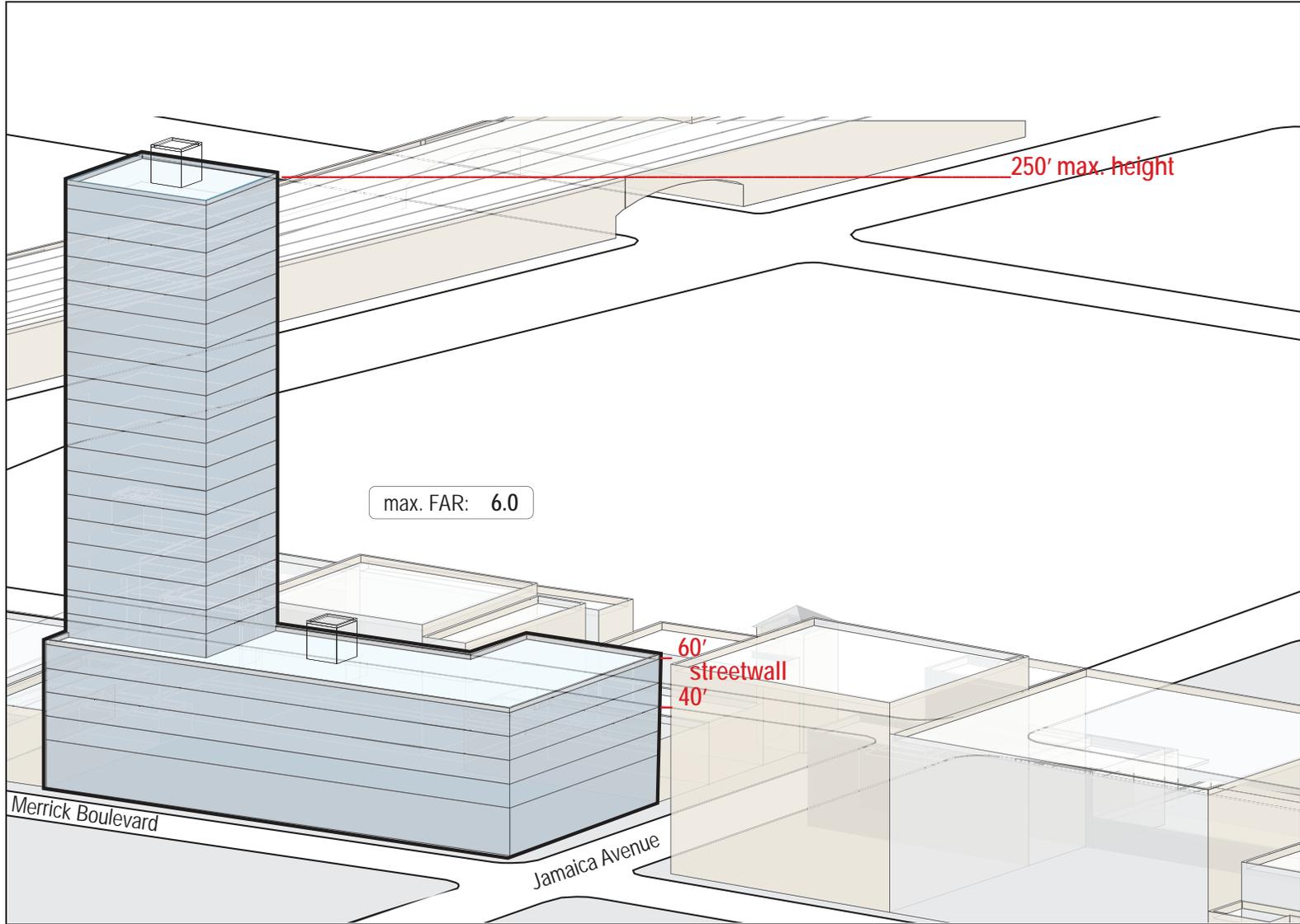
Additional streetscape improvements that would create inviting corridors through the SDJD include: permitted unenclosed sidewalk cafes; required major building entrances on designated streets within the C6-2, C6-3, and C6-4 districts for any development or enlargement on a zoning lot with frontage on such street; and publicly accessible sidewalk widenings of 15 or 20 feet for all developments at specified locations. In addition, lighting would be required with the mandatory sidewalk widenings of 15 feet or more, seating would be required for widenings of 20 feet or more, and street trees would be required for all new developments located on streets subject to the mandatory sidewalk widenings. All of these elements would create lively streetscapes through the proposed SDJD.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. The proposed actions would increase allowable bulk on the projected and potential development sites within the proposed SDJD, but mixed-use development pursuant to the proposed actions would be compatible with the urban design of the area (see Figures 8-30, 8-31, and 8-32). Parking garages would also be consistent with the existing urban design of the area, where there are already garages, and the central business district location. Overall, the proposed actions would not have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the area of the proposed SDJD, where there is a wide range of buildings that includes small two-story detached houses, tall and bulky governmental and institutional buildings, small churches and synagogues, tall and narrow office buildings, low-rise retail taxpayers, and boxy tall and mid-rise apartment buildings. Throughout the area, buildings of varying size, use, type, and style exist adjacent to each other. Throughout the entire proposed SDJD, there would be a maximum height limit of 250 feet, but floor area ratio (FAR) and lot coverage regulations would vary, according to the zoning district. Changes to the building bulk, use, and type characteristics of the major corridors and the proposed JGURA within the proposed SDJD are discussed in more detail below.

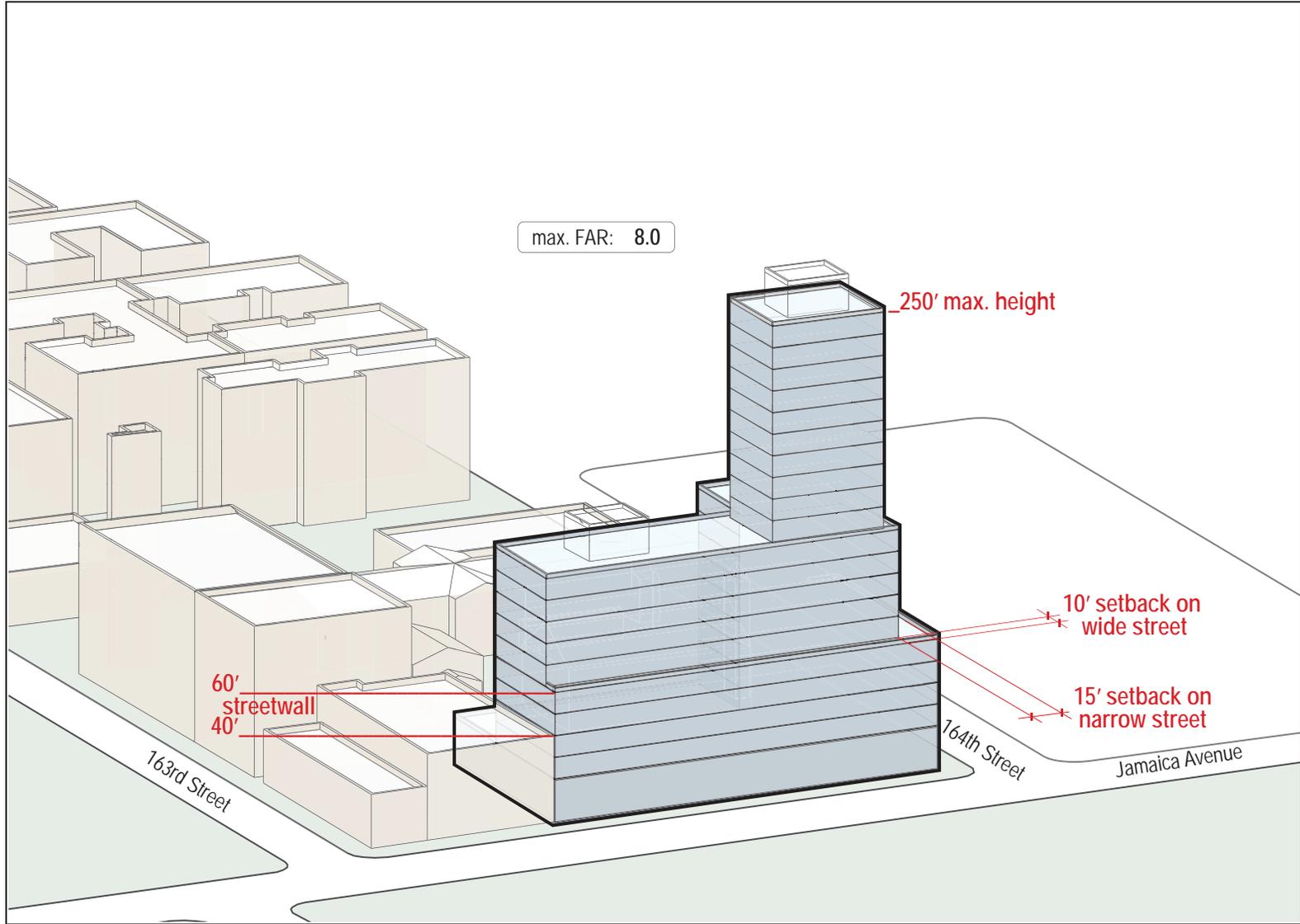
Proposed Jamaica Gateway Urban Renewal Area

On the three underutilized blocks of the proposed JGURA, the proposed actions would facilitate new mixed-use development totaling approximately 2.1 million square feet of commercial space with 206 residential units, open space, and parking. The demapping of 148th Street between 94th and 95th Avenues, along with the acquisition and disposition of real property, would facilitate construction of a 1.2-million-square foot commercial building on the JGURA block bounded by Sutphin Boulevard, 94th and 95th Avenues, and the roadbed of the demapped 148th Street. That building would contain three floors of retail, 10 floors of showrooms and offices, and below-grade parking. Pursuant to the proposed actions, it is also anticipated that a hotel would be constructed within the JGURA.

Streetscape. The urban design provisions of the SDJD, described above, would apply to the three blocks within the proposed JGURA. Those provisions would enhance the streetscape around the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex. The streetscape is that of an underutilized, low-rise industrial area, and there would be no significant adverse impacts to this urban design feature.

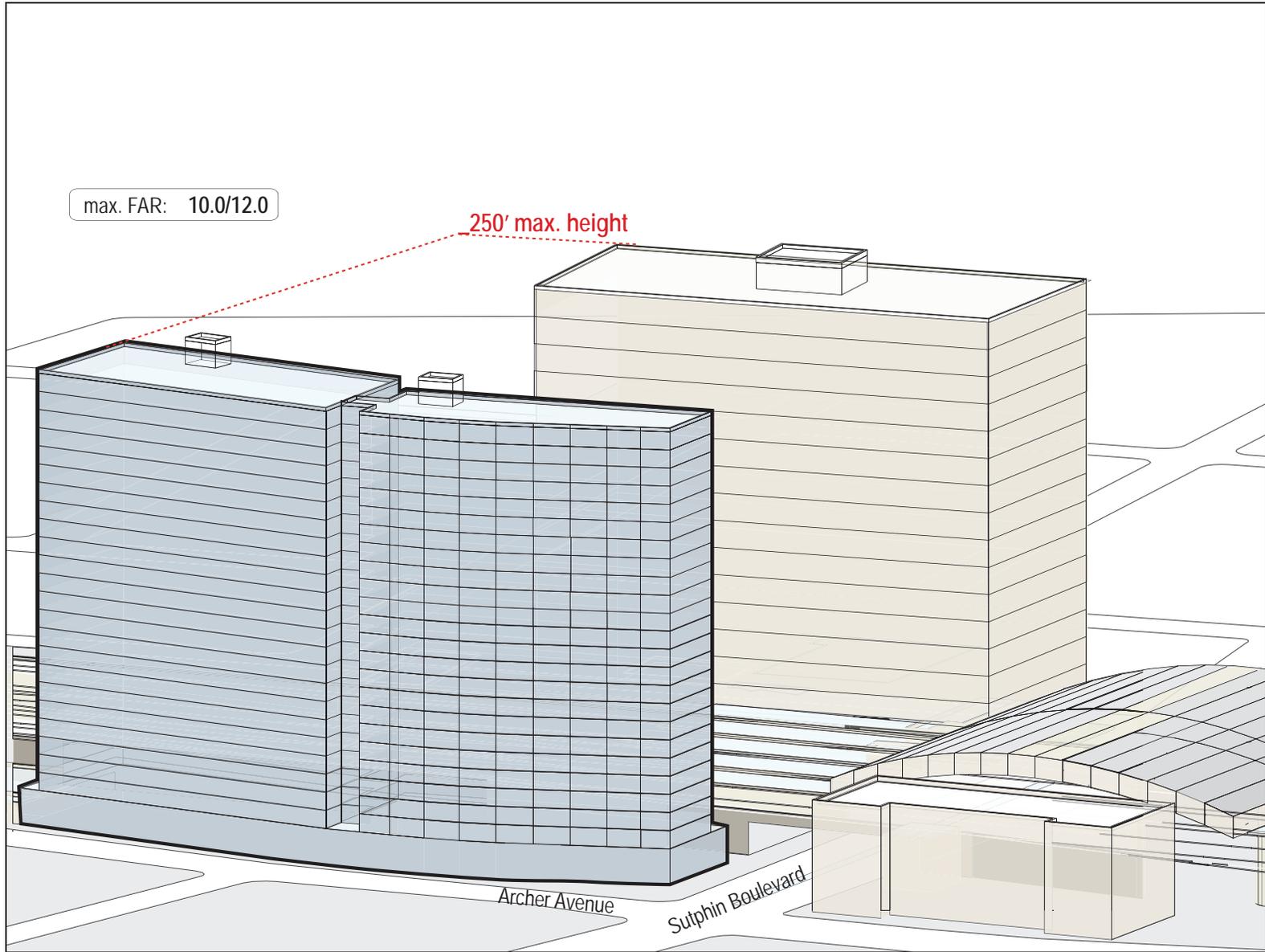


Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006



View looking north-east

Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006



View looking south-east

Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006

Building Bulk, Use and Type. The maximum FAR for new buildings within the proposed JGURA—which would be mapped with a C6-4 district—would be 12.0 for commercial buildings and 10.0 for residential and community facility buildings. Constructed at these maximum FARs, new buildings would be substantially larger than the existing one- to three-story structures on the JGURA blocks. They would, however, be similar in bulk and massing to the existing, boxy AirTrain station, and the maximum building height would be 250 feet. See Figure 8-32 for an illustrative rendering of a building that could be constructed within the JGURA pursuant to the proposed actions. That illustrative building consists of two boxy towers set above a low-rise base. The new commercial, residential, and community facility uses would differ from the largely industrial uses within the area, but they would be compatible for new development adjacent to a major transportation hub (the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex), and they would be in keeping with the mix of uses that characterize Sutphin Boulevard and Jamaica and Archer Avenues. Therefore, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the project area.

Archer Avenue Corridor

Within the proposed SDJD, the Archer Avenue corridor would be mapped with C6-2 and C6-3 districts, which would allow mixed-use development at higher densities than is currently permitted (see Figures 8-30 and 8-31). Along most of the corridor, construction of mixed-use residential and retail buildings is expected. To the east of the proposed SDJD, development would be expected to reinforce the existing urban design character of the residential and industrial areas along Archer Avenue. Most of the projected and potential developments sites along the Archer Avenue corridor are located west of Sutphin Boulevard and in the easternmost portion of the project area (east of 177th Street). There are some projected and potential development sites between 160th and 16th Streets in the central portion of the project area.

Streetscape. The urban design provisions of the SDJD, described above, would apply to a large portion of the Archer Avenue corridor. Those provisions would enhance the streetscape within the area of the proposed SDJD, which is largely characterized by non-descript industrial and commercial buildings, parking garages, and auto-related uses. To the east of the proposed SDJD, the existing residential and industrial streetscapes would be maintained. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the Archer Avenue corridor.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. Overall, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the Archer Avenue corridor portion of the project area. Within the proposed SDJD, maximum FAR along the Archer Avenue corridor would range from 4.0 to 6.0 and 8.0. Most development would occur west of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex in an area of low-rise non-descript commercial buildings. In that area, new buildings constructed pursuant to the proposed actions could be built to a maximum FAR of 4.0, which would allow larger, but moderately-sized, buildings. To the east of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex, buildings constructed on the few projected and potential development sites in the central portion of the project area could be much larger in terms of bulk and height than existing buildings. The street wall, maximum building height, and lot area coverage regulations of the proposed SDJD would apply to create buildings massed with uniform street walls and set backs. Although taller and larger than most existing buildings along the Archer Avenue corridor, they would be similar in size and massing to the existing AirTrain Station and the U.S. Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters at 153rd Street, as well as to some of the larger existing buildings along Jamaica Avenue to the north within the

Jamaica Center CBD. The mix of uses and building types would be in keeping with those existing urban design elements within the Jamaica Center CBD.

One of the two sites proposed for disposition by the City is located in the Archer Avenue corridor at 168th Street. Pursuant to the proposed actions, this site, which contains a garage, would be developed with a new 270,000-square-foot mixed-use building that would contain office, residential, and retail spaces, as well parking and a training facility for the New York City Police Department. The new building would be similar in size to the armory located across Archer Avenue, and the mix of uses in the new building would be in keeping with uses found throughout the Jamaica Center CBD.

In the eastern portion of the Archer Avenue corridor, buildings constructed on the projected and potential development sites within the new R5 district (FAR of 1.25) would be similar in size and form to the existing small, attached and detached houses in the residential neighborhood. In addition, the new M1-2 district would reinforce the existing industrial area in the eastern portion of the project area, while allowing growth at a slightly greater density (see Figure 8-33).

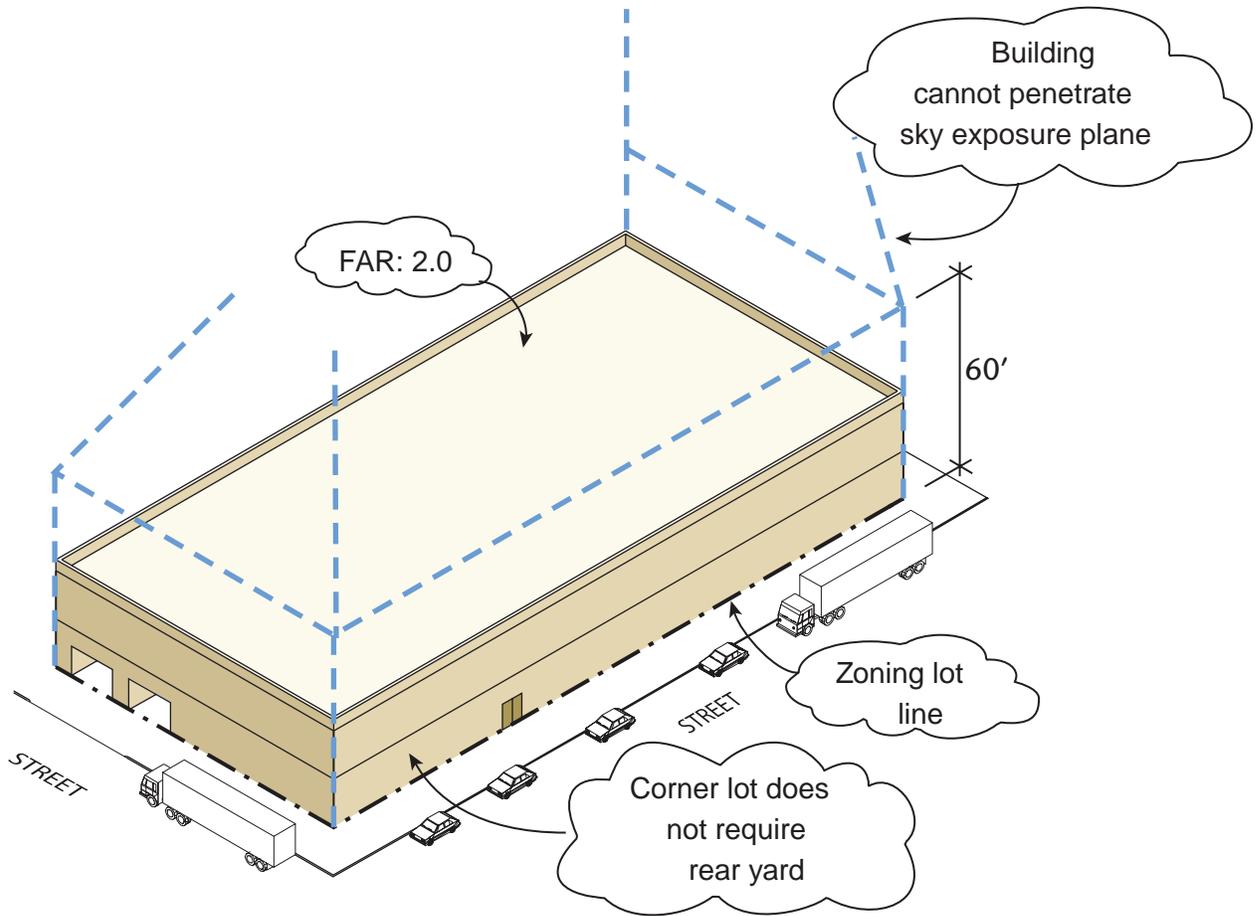
Sutphin Boulevard Corridor

Allowable bulk along the Sutphin Boulevard corridor would be increased, and it is expected that the corridor would be developed with new mixed-use buildings. North of Archer Avenue and in the southern portion of the project area, it is expected that new development would consist of residential buildings with ground-floor retail. Around the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex, new development is expected to consist of office and retail buildings. The highest concentration of projected and potential development sites in the Sutphin Boulevard corridor are located south of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex, although there are some sites to the north of Jamaica Avenue.

Streetscape. The urban design provisions of the SDJD, described above, would apply to most of the Sutphin Boulevard corridor. Those provisions would enhance the streetscape within the area of the proposed SDJD by reinforcing existing retail continuity north of 97th Avenue, improving the existing incoherent streetscape of blank ground-floors and jumbled signage in the area around the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex and to the south, enlivening the ground-floors of buildings, and providing pedestrian amenities. Between 97th and Liberty Avenues, the proposed SDJD urban design provisions would especially enhance the corridor, which is currently characterized by parking lots and non-descript car washes, gas stations, and other such facilities. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the Sutphin Boulevard corridor.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. North of Jamaica Avenue, the maximum FAR within the Sutphin Boulevard corridor would increase from 3.4 to 4.0. This increase would allow for larger buildings, but existing buildings in the corridor vary from one-story retail taxpayers to the bulky, seven-story Queens County Superior Court at 89th Avenue. The new residential buildings with ground-floor retail would mostly replace non-descript, low-rise commercial buildings, and they would be in keeping with existing building uses and types within the corridor.

In the vicinity of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex, the maximum FAR would be 6.0, 8.0, and 12.0, depending on the zoning district; buildings constructed in that size range would be much larger than existing buildings along the Sutphin Boulevard corridor, especially in comparison to the low-rise detached houses west of Archer Avenue. (See Figure 8-32 for an illustrative rendering of a building that could be constructed in the Sutphin Boulevard corridor around the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex). New buildings could have different massings



but, if built to the maximum FAR, they would likely be boxy structures with some upper floor setbacks. However, large new buildings would be compatible with development expected around a major transportation hub and the location within the Jamaica Center CBD. Further, it is expected that new mixed-use buildings, even at a greater bulk and height, would be an improvement over the existing low-rise, non-descript industrial buildings that largely line the corridor south of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex. Farther south beyond Liberty Avenue, new residential development would be limited to a maximum FAR of 3.0, which would allow the construction of moderately-sized buildings that are somewhat larger than existing residential buildings in the southern portion of the corridor. Therefore, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the Sutphin Boulevard corridor portion of the project area.

Jamaica Avenue Corridor

In the Jamaica Avenue corridor, new retail and office buildings are projected for development within the area of the proposed SDJD, as is the conversion of existing vacant office buildings to residential use. Within the area of the proposed SDJD, projected and potential development sites are clustered between 160th and 168th Streets and between 150th Street and Sutphin Boulevard. In the western and eastern portions of the study area, new apartment buildings with 70-foot height limits are projected for development within the Jamaica Avenue corridor. In the easternmost portion of the study area, industrial development at a higher density than currently exists is also anticipated.

Streetscape. The proposed actions are expected to have beneficial effects on the streetscape of the Jamaica Avenue corridor within the proposed SDJD. Underutilized lots mostly occupied by low-rise non-descript retail buildings would be redeveloped, and the proposed SDJD urban design provisions, described above, would create a pedestrian friendly environment and reinforce the existing retail and street wall patterns in the study area. The ground-floor glazing requirements would create lively, visually transparent ground-floors and, combined with the street wall requirements, would improve the existing incoherent streetscape of altered ground-floor storefronts and jumbled signage. The additional streetscape improvements that would permit unenclosed sidewalk cafes and mandate sidewalk widenings, along with the related provision of lighting and street trees, would enhance the busy pedestrian environment of the Jamaica Center CBD. To the east and west of the proposed SDJD, new residential and industrial development would reinforce existing streetscape characteristics. Overall, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the Jamaica Avenue corridor.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. Overall, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the Jamaica Avenue corridor portion of the project area. Within the proposed SDJD, maximum FARs along the Jamaica Avenue corridor would be 6.0 and 8.0, which would permit buildings that are larger and bulkier than the majority of buildings along the avenue. Constructed in accordance with zoning regulations and the special provisions of the SDJD, typical buildings would be boxy structures massed with tall street walls and setback upper floors. The maximum building height in the area would be 250 feet. See Figures 8-30 and 8-31 for an illustrative rendering of buildings that could be constructed along Jamaica Avenue pursuant to the proposed actions. A typical building would have a mid-rise base built to the lot line with a more narrow upper section set back from the base. While new buildings, if constructed to the maximum allowable FARs, would alter the typical building bulk of the corridor, there are existing mid-rise buildings along Jamaica Avenue that have tall street walls and/or setback massings—some of those structures include the U.S.

Region II Social Security Administration Headquarters, the eleven-story office building at 163rd Street, and the Jamaica Chamber of Commerce and Suffolk Title and Guarantee Buildings that are a block north of the avenue on 161st Street. In addition, new buildings, while larger than most of the surrounding existing buildings, would improve the urban design of the area by mostly replacing non-descript, low-rise retail structures. Further, the increase in bulk along Jamaica Avenue would be appropriate to the wide and busy avenue and would reinforce the area's position as a central business district and the location near a major transportation hub. New tall buildings would also frame views along Jamaica Avenue, creating a clear visual connection to the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex to the west.

In the vicinity of Rufus King Park, bulk would primarily be limited to 4.0 FAR. Therefore, new commercial and residential development around the park would consist of moderately sized buildings that would be in keeping with the area's mix of two-story attached and detached houses, mid-rise apartment buildings, and the large buildings of the Mary Immaculate Hospital complex (see Figure 8-34). In the park's vicinity, a maximum FAR of 8.0 would be permitted along Jamaica Avenue (see Figure 8-31), but there are few projected or potential development sites with that FAR adjacent to the park. Therefore, the density of the area immediately surrounding the park would not be expected to change dramatically as a result of the proposed actions.

New commercial and retail buildings along Jamaica Avenue within the proposed SDJD would continue the existing commercial character of the corridor, which contains retail, office, community facility, entertainment, and institutional buildings. The conversion of vacant office buildings to residential structures with ground-floor retail would increase the mix of buildings uses and types along the avenue, while integrating the avenue into the residential neighborhoods to the north.

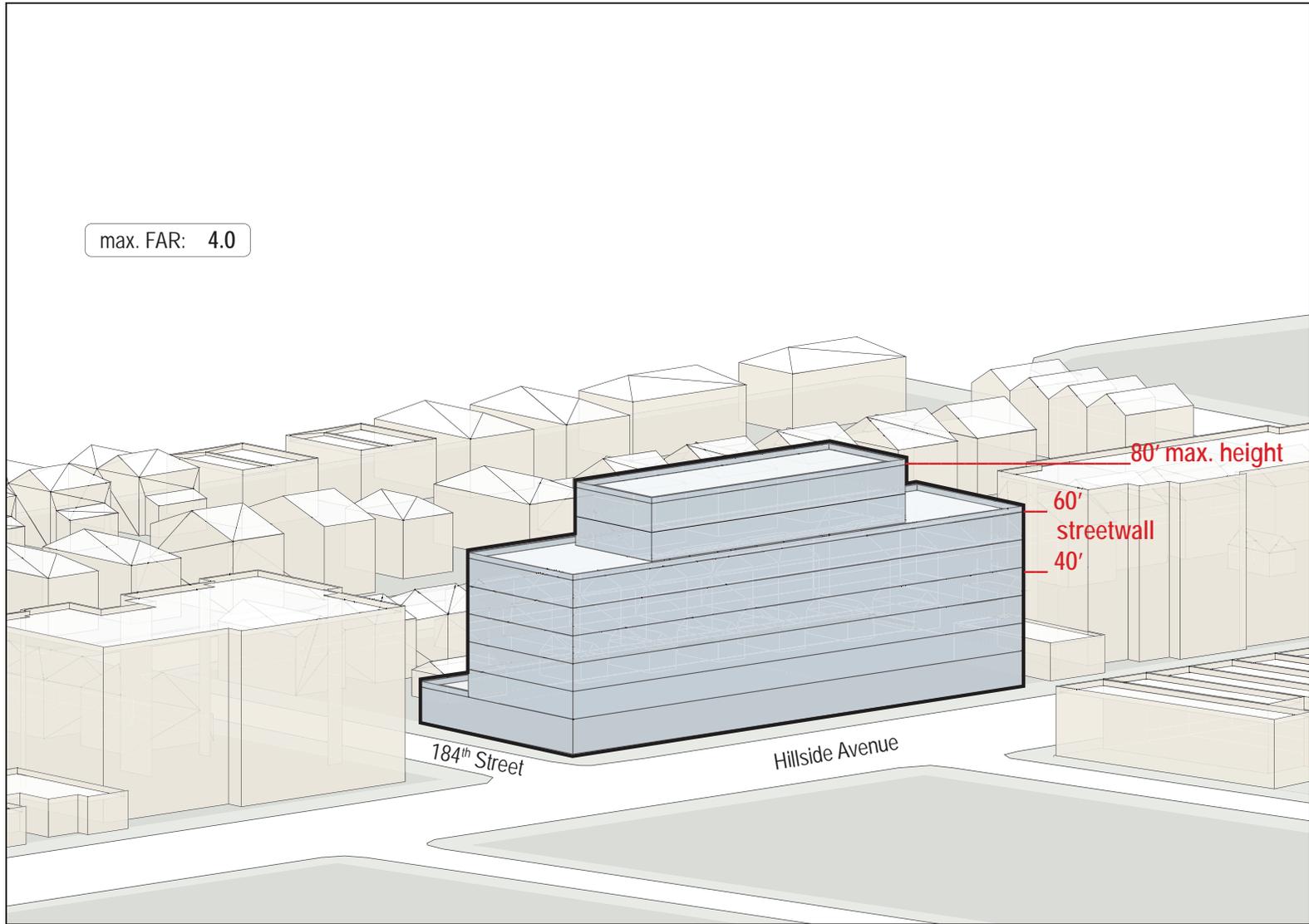
New residential development along Jamaica Avenue to the east and west of the proposed SDJD would be limited to a maximum building height of 70 feet. This cap would result in modestly-sized residential buildings that are in keeping with the existing low- and mid-rise residential and commercial buildings in the east and west portions of the study area (see Figure 8-35). Industrial development along the south side of Jamaica Avenue in the eastern portion of the project area would reinforce the existing urban design character of the area while allowing for new industrial development at a slightly greater bulk.

Hillside Avenue Corridor

Under the proposed actions, the streetscape and building bulk, use, and type elements of the Hillside Avenue corridor would change considerably. The proposed actions would encourage the development of new residential buildings of up to 12 stories. There are numerous projected and potential development sites along the full length of Hillside Avenue as it runs through the project area.

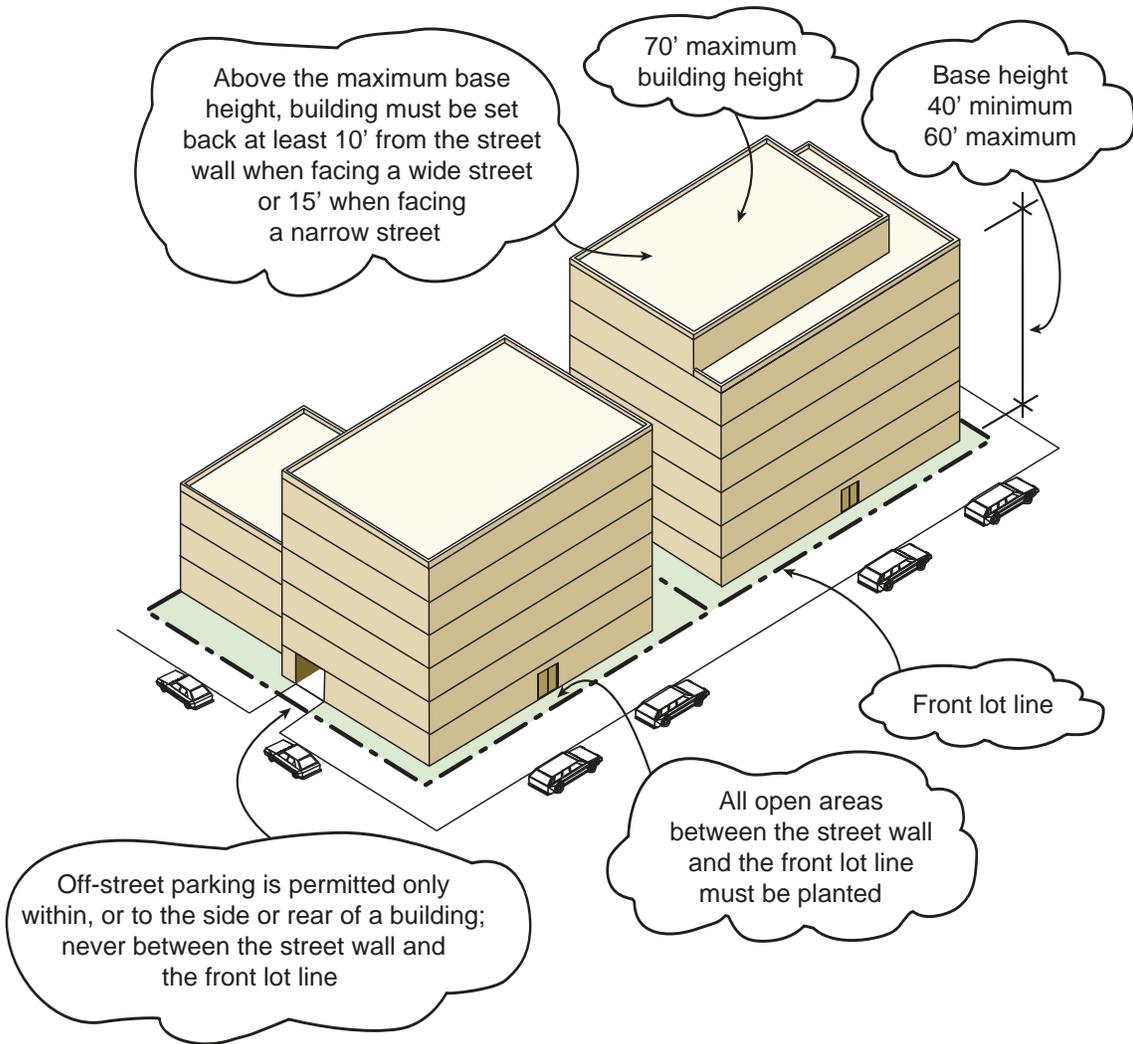
Streetscape. New residential buildings with ground-floor retail would beneficially alter the existing streetscape of the Hillside Avenue corridor. As describe above, the streetscape is primarily defined by parking lots, a large number of auto-related buildings, and non-descript ground-floor storefronts marked by a jumble of signage. In addition, new residential buildings would bring greater pedestrian activity to the area. Overall, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the Hillside Avenue corridor.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. At 12 stories, new residential buildings would be much larger than the majority of existing buildings along the Hillside Avenue corridor, which are primarily



View looking north-east

Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006



one-story, boxy and style-less retail buildings. There are, however, some existing seven- to fourteen-story apartment buildings to the east of 163rd Street. In addition, street wall, set back, and height requirements of the new R7X zoning district would result in buildings that do not overwhelm the urban design of the corridor in terms of bulk and height (see Figure 8-36). Further, the width of the avenue would lessen the perception of bulk and height. See Figure 1-14 for an illustrative rendering of buildings that could be constructed along Hillside Avenue. Typically, these new buildings would have low-rise bases and slim upper sections that are set back from the base. Although residential buildings are not currently common along Hillside Avenue, they would be in keeping with the residential areas adjacent to the south and north of the avenue. Further, ground-floor retail would be in keeping with the existing uses along the avenue and would provide amenities to the existing and future residential populations. Therefore, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the Hillside Avenue corridor portion of the project area.

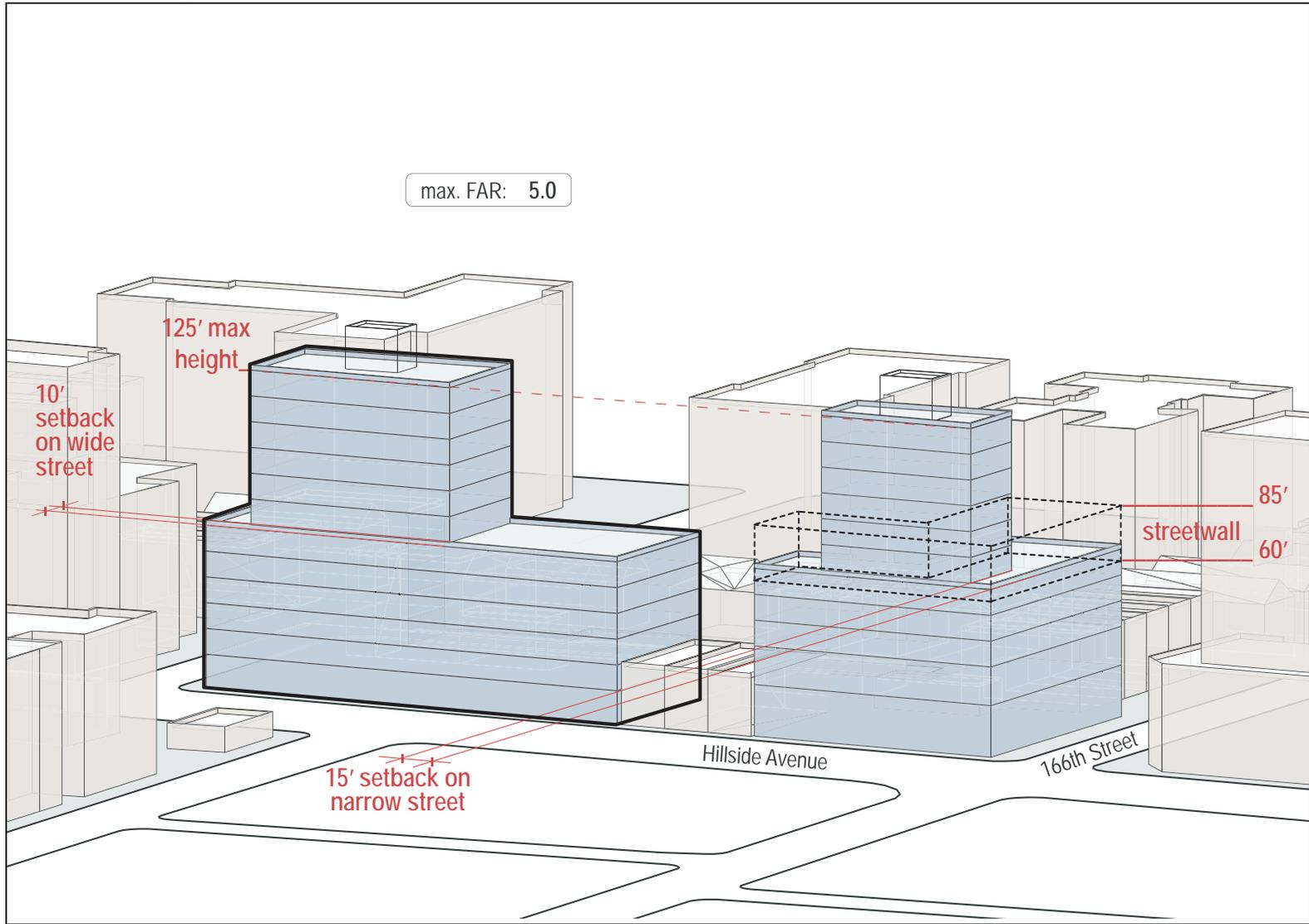
163rd Street/Guy Brewer Boulevard Corridor

North of Archer Avenue, there is expected to be new residential and commercial development along 163rd Street through the Jamaica Center CBD and the area of the proposed SDJD. South of Liberty Avenue, construction of five-story residential buildings with ground-floor retail is expected.

Streetscape. The urban design provisions of the SDJD, described above, would apply to the 163rd Street corridor. Those provisions would enhance the streetscape, as they would throughout the rest of the proposed SDJD, and there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape. The urban design provisions would provide street wall continuity and active uses in this portion of the study area, which currently has a streetscape defined by scattered storefronts, parking lots, inconsistent street walls, and residential yards and driveways. In the southern portion of the study area, the residential and retail ground floors of new buildings would improve the streetscape along Guy Brewer Boulevard corridor by infilling vacant and underutilized lots in the residential neighborhood located south of York College. The streetscape would not change through the York College campus, where there are no projected or potential development sites.

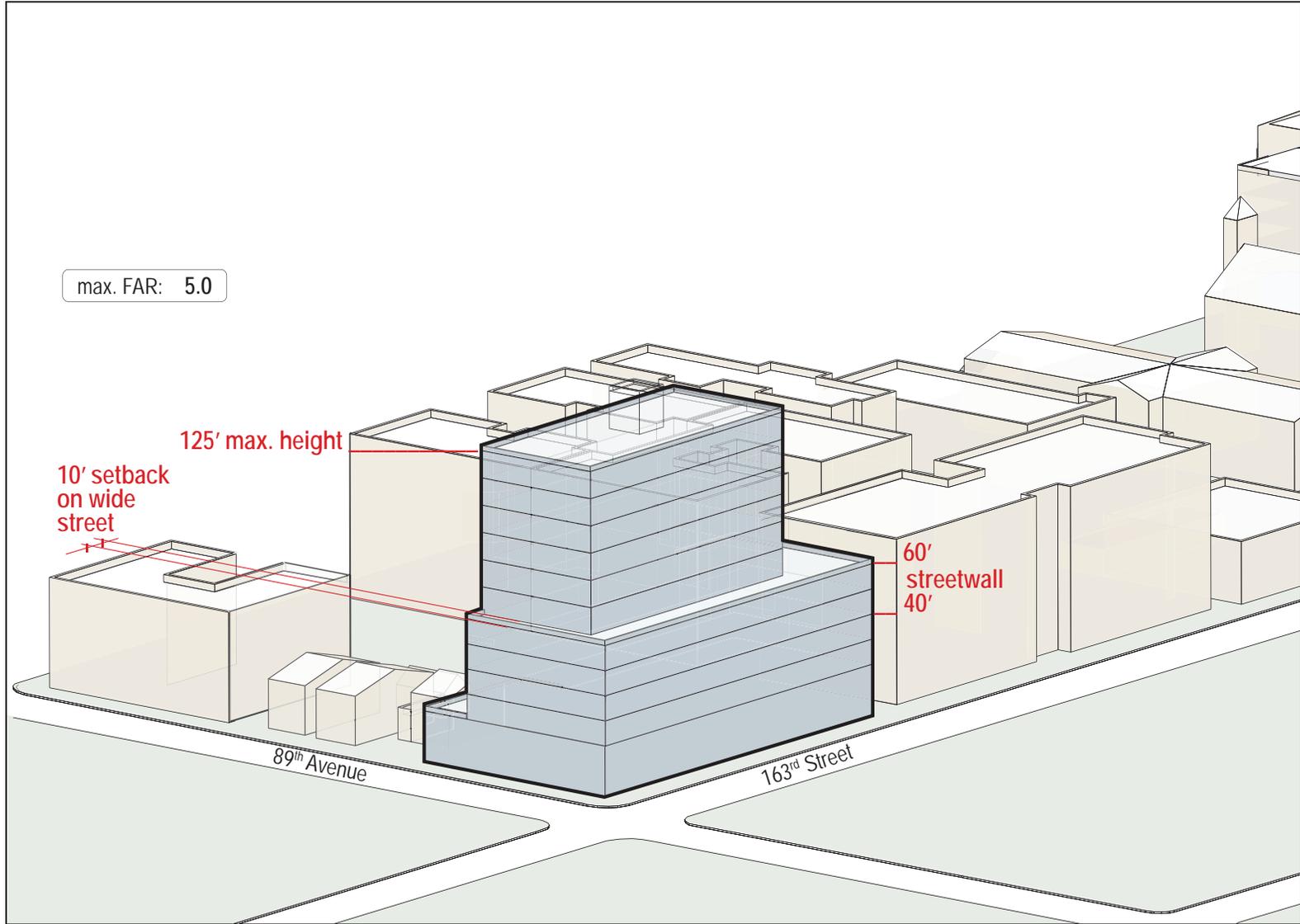
Building Bulk, Use and Type. In the 163rd Street corridor between Jamaica and Archer Avenues, the maximum FAR would be 8.0, which would permit the development of mixed-use buildings that would be larger than most existing buildings in this portion of the proposed SDJD. They would, however, be compatible with the location in the Jamaica Center CBD where there are existing large buildings and where new buildings of similar size are expected to be built. To the north of Jamaica Avenue, the maximum FAR would be 5.0, and new buildings constructed to that maximum floor area would be in keeping with the bulk of existing mid-rise apartment and office buildings in the area (see Figure 8-37). Construction of new residential, commercial, and community facility buildings pursuant to the proposed actions would not alter the mix of building uses and types in the study area, and there would be no significant adverse impacts to urban design.

In the southern portion of the study area, new five-story residential buildings with ground-floor retail would be consistent with the existing urban design of the study area. See Figure 8-38 for an illustrative rendering of buildings that could be constructed in the southern portion of the study area pursuant to the proposed actions. Typically, new buildings would be attached four-story structures. The Guy Brewer Boulevard corridor runs through the residential neighborhood



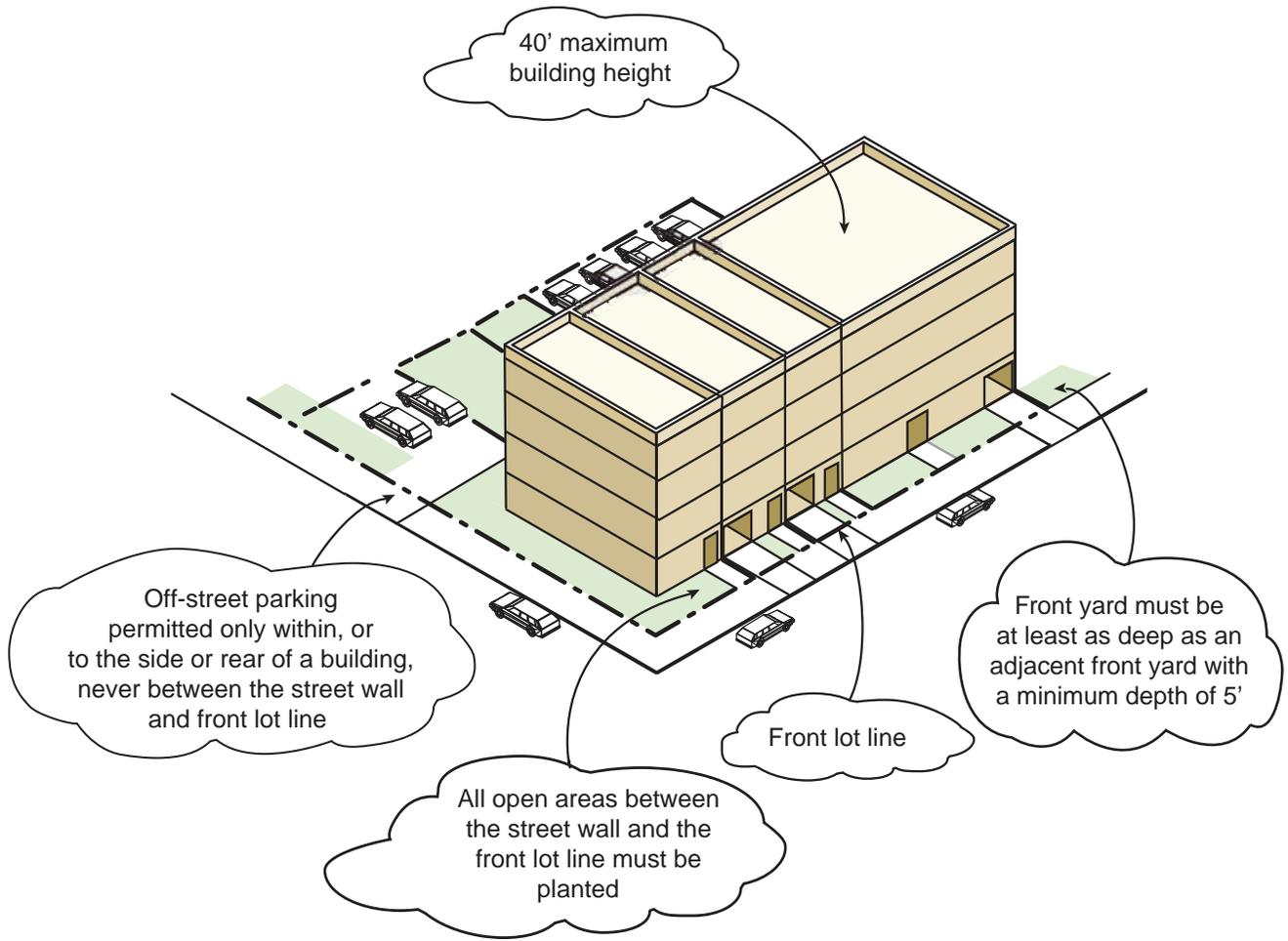
View looking north-west

Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006



View looking north-west

Source: New York City Department of City Planning, Queens Borough Office, December 2006



of South Jamaica, which contains a mix of two-story row houses, three-story apartment buildings, and two-story detached houses.

Merrick Boulevard Corridor

The proposed actions would facilitate the construction of new residential and commercial buildings on Merrick Boulevard through the area of the proposed SDJD and of new medium-density residential buildings with ground-floor retail in the southern portion of the study area. Most of the projected and potential development sites are located to the south of Liberty Avenue.

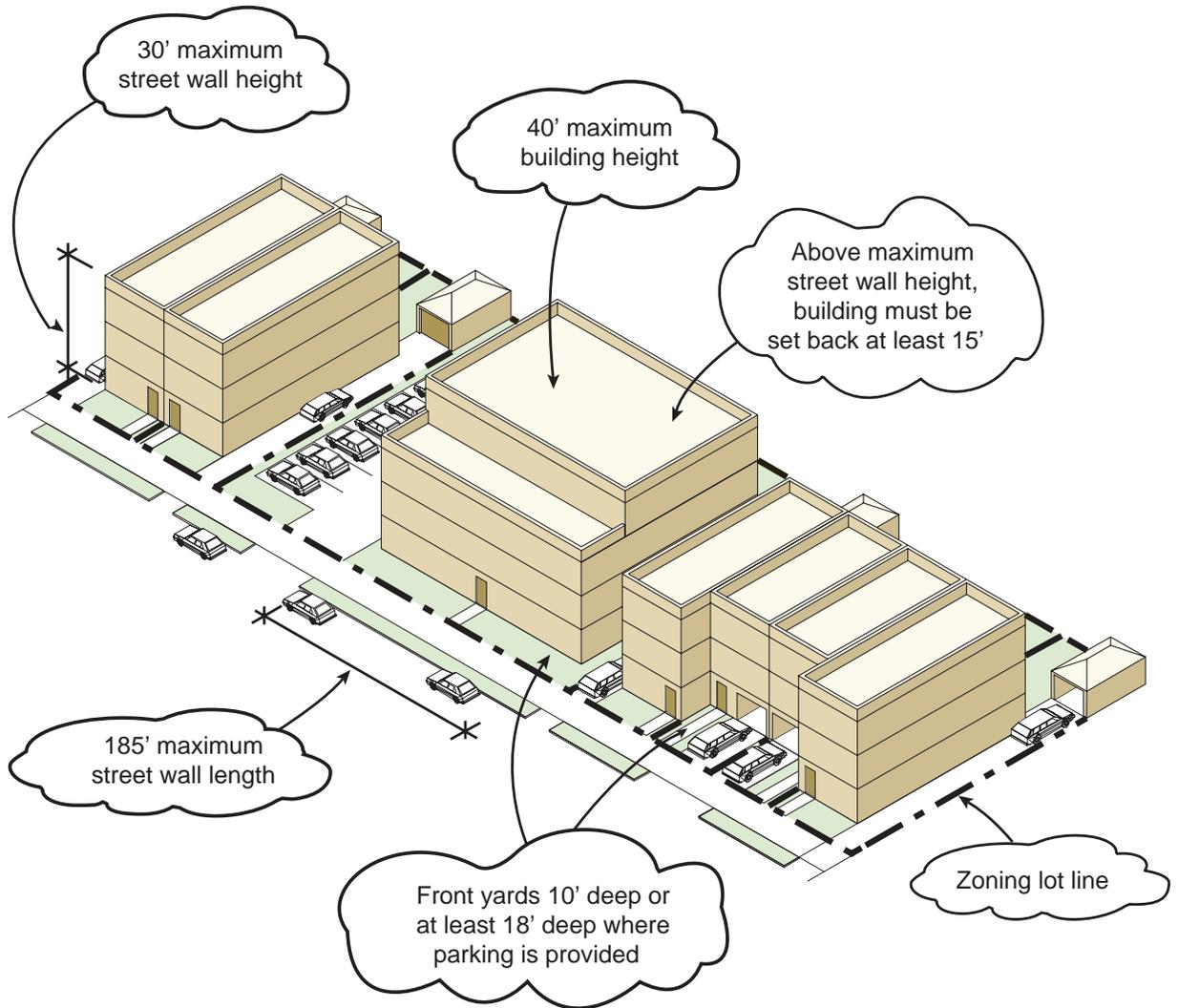
Streetscape. The urban design provisions of the SDJD, described above, would apply to the few sites within the Merrick Boulevard corridor north of Archer Avenue. Those provisions would enhance the streetscape, as they would throughout the rest of the proposed SDJD. In the southern portion of the study area, new residential, community facility, and commercial development would improve the streetscape by replacing parking lots and non-descript automotive related buildings that line the boulevard between Archer and 107th Avenues. To the south of 107th Avenue and to the east of Merrick Boulevard, new residential development would reinforce the existing residential streetscapes by infilling vacant and underutilized lots. Overall, there would be no significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of the Merrick Boulevard corridor.

Building Bulk, Use and Type. In the Merrick Boulevard corridor north of Jamaica Avenue, the maximum FAR would be 6.0 and 5.0, which would permit the development of mixed-use buildings somewhat larger in bulk than existing buildings in this portion of the proposed SDJD (see Figures 8-30 and 8-37). For the most part, new buildings would be similar in size to existing six- to nine-story apartment buildings in the area, and they would be compatible with the location in the Jamaica Center CBD. As described above, a ten-story telecommunications building is located at 88th Avenue. Construction of new residential, commercial, and community facility buildings pursuant to the proposed actions would not alter the mix of building uses and types in the study area.

In the southern portion of the study area (along Merrick Boulevard), new residential buildings with ground-floor retail built to a maximum FAR of 3.0 would improve the existing urban design of the study area. These new buildings would be larger than the existing one-story, non-descript commercial buildings that line the boulevard, but they would be at a modest scale that would preserve the area's low-rise character. See Figure 8-35 for an illustrative rendering of buildings that could be constructed in the southern portion of the study area pursuant to the proposed actions. Buildings would typically be attached four-story, boxy structures. New residential buildings with retail and community facility uses would be compatible with the surrounding residential neighborhoods of small, mostly detached houses. Overall, it is not expected that the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on building bulk, use, and type in the Merrick Boulevard portion of the project area.

Residential Neighborhoods

The low-density residential neighborhoods described above (including Hollis, South Jamaica, St. Albans) would see very little or no new development in the future with the proposed actions. R5 zoning in portions of South Jamaica and north of Jamaica Avenue to the west of the CBD would allow buildings up to 2.0 FAR with a maximum street wall height of 30 feet and a maximum overall building height of 40 feet (see Figure 8-39). R4 and R4-1 zoning proposed for much of Hollis, South Jamaica, and St. Albans would allow infill housing with a perimeter wall height of



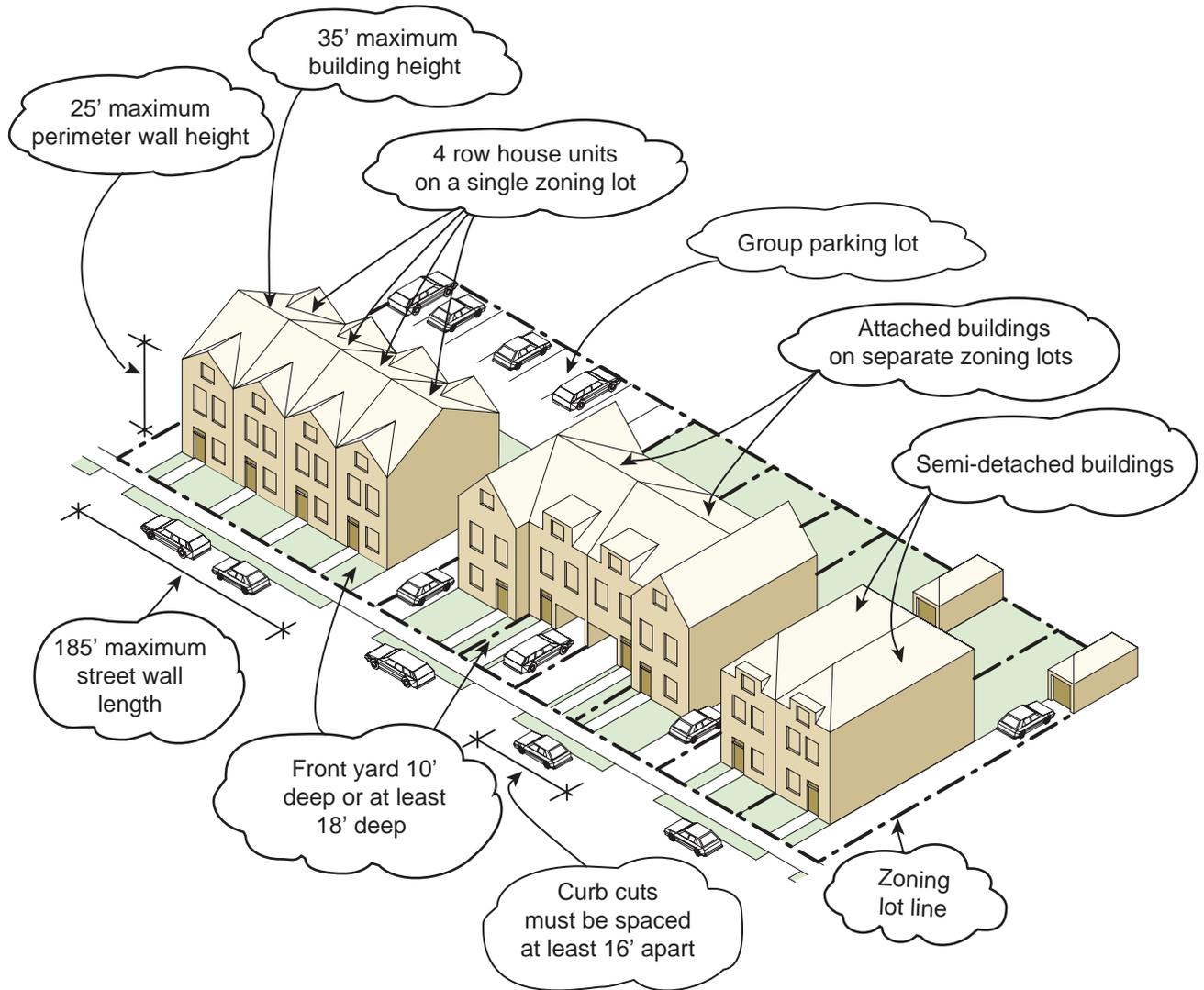
up to 25 feet and an overall building height of up to 35 feet (see Figures 8-40 and 8-41). R3A and R3X zoning in portions of Hollis and St. Albans would allow detached houses (R3A would also allow semi-detached houses) with a perimeter wall height of up to 21 feet and an overall building height of up to 35 feet (see Figures 8-42 and 8-43). The proposed actions would eliminate the potential for out-of-scale development in these areas under the proposed actions. For these reasons, the land use impacts of the proposed actions on these communities are considered positive.

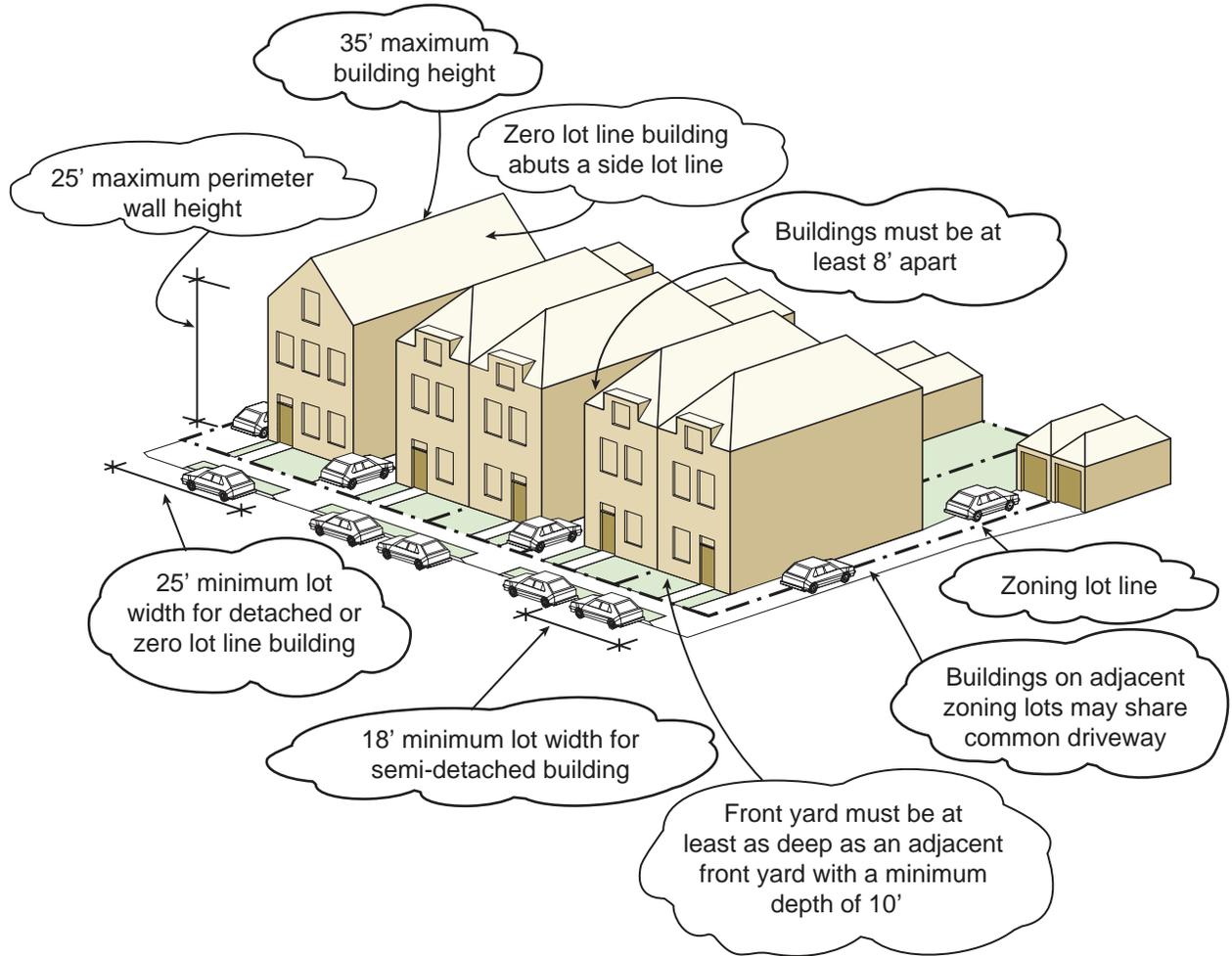
VISUAL RESOURCES

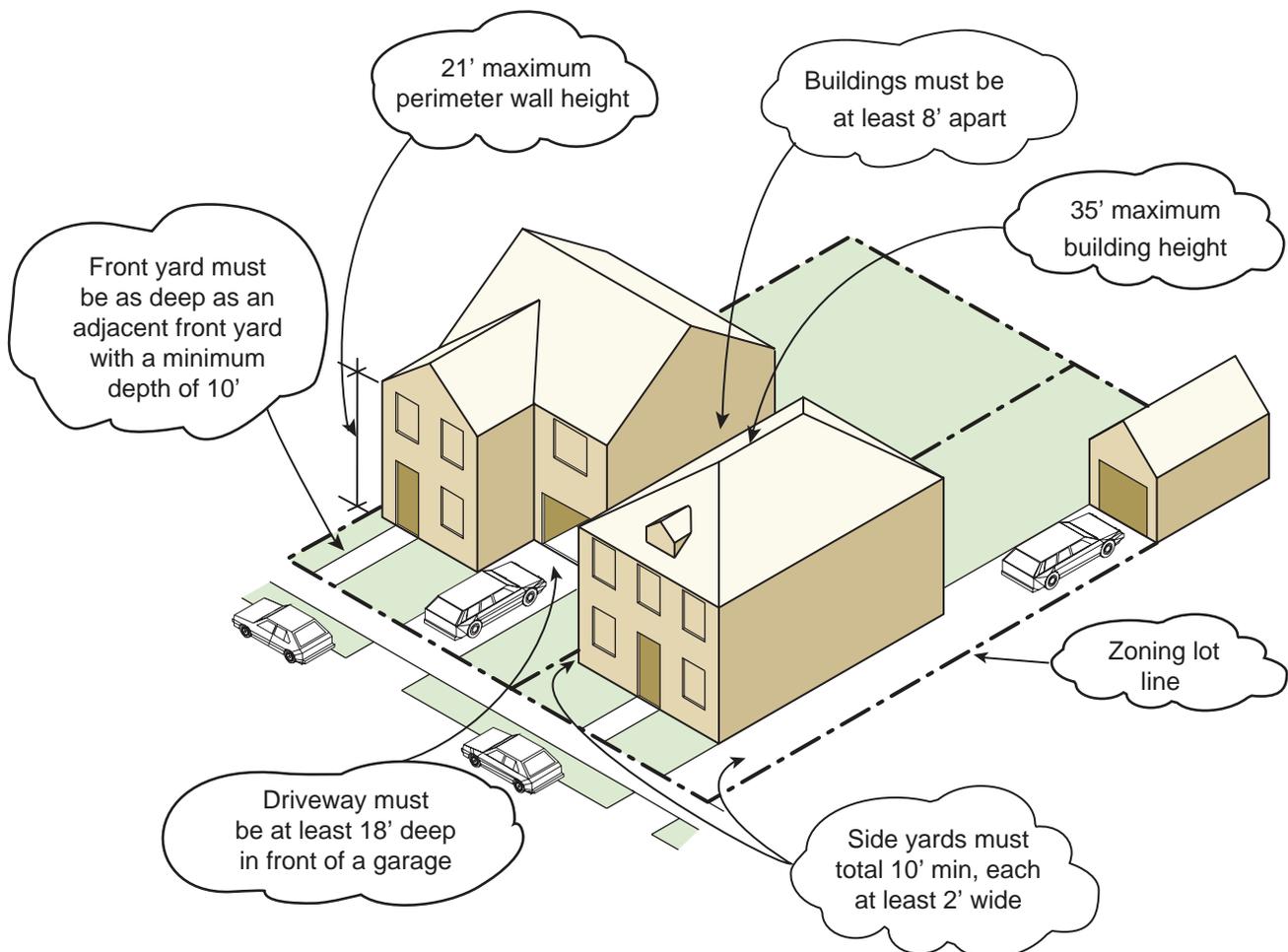
The proposed actions are not expected to have any significant adverse impacts on the visual resources of the project area—Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard, Rufus King Park and House, the view of two church steeples on Parsons Boulevard, the Queens County Superior Court Building, and the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex. All of those resources exist in settings made of up a wide variety of buildings.

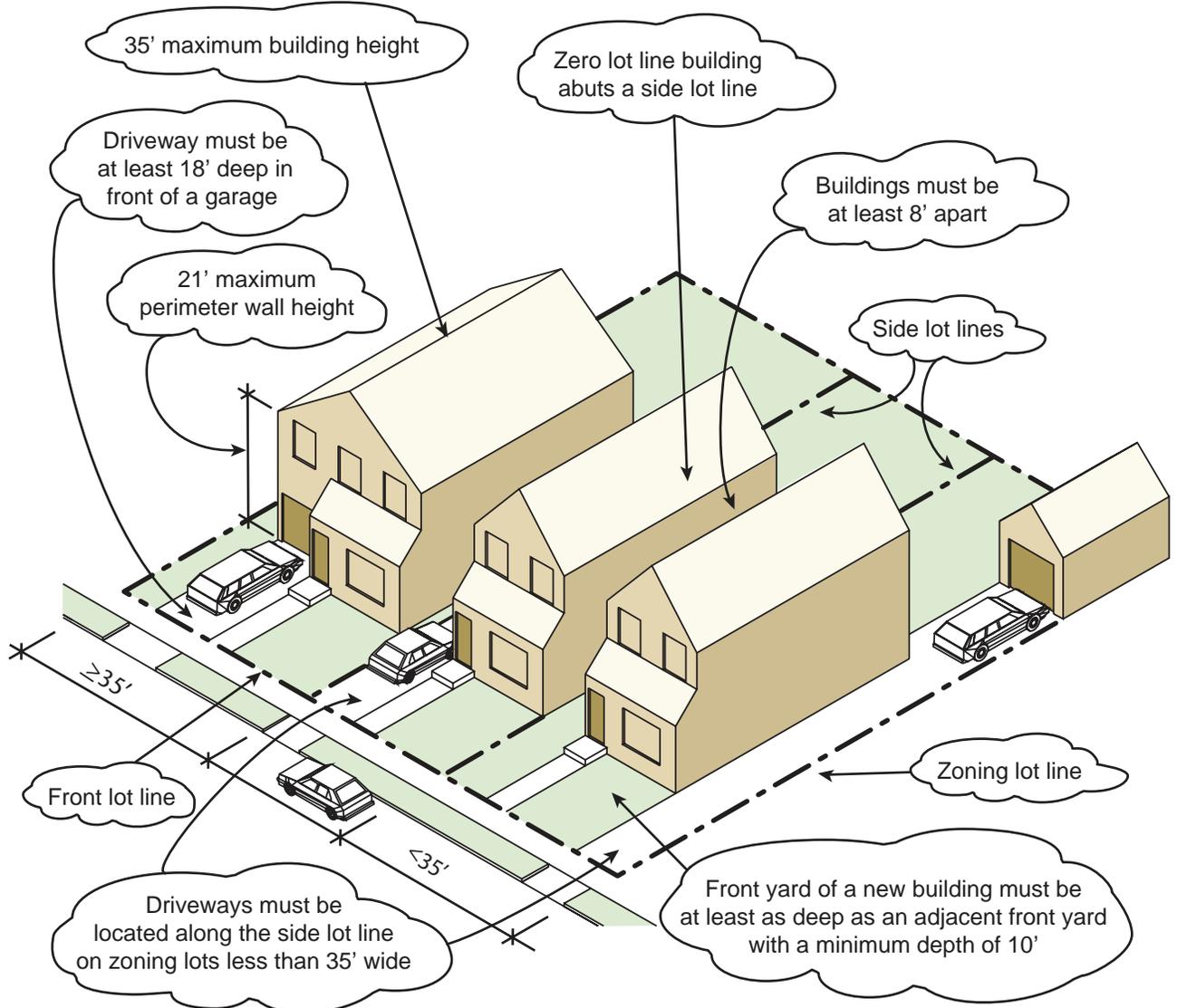
Constructed on existing blocks and lots, new buildings would not block any significant view corridors and views of visual resources or limit access to any visual resources. Pursuant to the proposed actions, there would be limited development of modestly-sized buildings in the immediate vicinity of Grace Episcopal Church and Graveyard, Rufus King Park and House, the view of two church steeples on Parsons Boulevard, and the Queens County Superior Court Building. Therefore, the settings and views of those resources would not be expected to change dramatically. Although the setting of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex would change from one characterized primarily by low-rise industrial and commercial buildings to an area of tall and bulky mixed-use buildings, there would not be any significant adverse impacts to the transportation complex. It would still be visible in the adjacent view corridors of Sutphin Boulevard and Archer Avenue, and the new surrounding mixed-use buildings would improve the visual resource's setting, and visually and programmatically reinforce its importance as a major transportation hub. Further, new development along Sutphin Boulevard and Jamaica and Archer Avenues would frame views to and from the transportation complex and create visual connections to it from the major area corridors.

Views along the area's major corridors would change, as the corridors could be developed with new buildings of greater bulk than is currently allowed. The greatest changes would occur to the views corridors of Hillside, Jamaica, and Archer Avenues and Sutphin Boulevard. Although numerous tall buildings could line all of those corridors, there would not be significant adverse visual impacts to them. Views along the corridors would not be blocked and new buildings would frame existing views, which often tend to be of indistinct character, as along Hillside Avenue. Further, the width of those corridors would minimize the loss of the area's visual openness created by a general low-rise character through the project area. On other streets, where new development would be expected, views could change but they would continue to be of mixed-use urban neighborhoods that contain a variety of building types exhibiting a wide range of heights, styles, massing, and bulk. In the southern portion of the project area, views along the Sutphin, Guy Brewer, and Merrick Boulevard view corridors would be improved, as new, low-rise residential buildings would largely replace parking lots and non-descript industrial and automotive-related buildings. From the southern portion of the project area, it is expected that tall buildings constructed along Jamaica and Archer Avenues pursuant to the proposed actions would be visible, but they would be seen as background objects, similar to the existing taller buildings in the Jamaica Center CBD that are currently visible over the LIRR tracks from the south.









F. CONCLUSION

Overall, it is not expected that the proposed actions—zoning map and text amendments, designation of the JGURA, creation of the SDJD, demapping of a street, and the disposition of City property—and projected and potential development pursuant to the proposed actions would have significant adverse impacts on the urban design and visual resources of the project area. There would be no changes to topography, natural features, street hierarchy, block shapes, or building arrangements. Although there would be a minor change to the street pattern by demapping a block-long segment of 148th Street, that action would not affect the overall street pattern of the project area and there would be no significant adverse impact to this urban design feature.

The proposed actions and any subsequent development would affect the streetscape and building use, bulk, and type of the project area. In general, it is expected that the streetscape would be improved throughout the project area by projected and potential development. For the most part, new development would replace parking lots, one- and two-story non-descript commercial and industrial buildings, and vacant lots. In the residential neighborhoods throughout the project area, most new development would be infill buildings that would reinforce existing residential streetscape patterns. Similarly, new industrial buildings would conform to the streetscape of existing industrial areas. Within the proposed SDJD, urban design provisions would: create lively, visually transparent ground-floors through glazing and use regulations; create consistent street walls that would frame views along major corridors; improve the existing incoherent streetscape of blank ground-floors, storefronts, and jumbled signage that characterize many of the major streets; and provide pedestrian amenities in specified locations that would include widened sidewalks, lighting, seating, and street trees. Along the major corridors outside of the SDJD—Hillside Avenue, Guy Brewer Boulevard, and Merrick Boulevard—new mixed-use buildings would enhance the streetscape by mostly replacing low-rise, non-descript retail and automotive-related buildings with new residential buildings that also contain retail and community facility uses.

Although the proposed actions would facilitate the construction of new buildings that would be larger than most surrounding existing buildings, it is not expected that there would be any significant adverse impacts to building bulk, use, and type. The densest development would be limited to the proposed SDJD around the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex and within the Jamaica Center CDB where there are already some tall and bulky buildings. In addition, new buildings constructed to the maximum FARs of 8.0, 10.0 and 12.0 would be primarily located on the major wide streets—Jamaica and Archer Avenues and Sutphin Boulevard. The vicinity of the transportation hub and the center of the Jamaica Center CBD are compatible locations for the construction of tall and bulky mixed-use buildings. Throughout the area of the proposed SDJD, there is an existing wide array of buildings, which include monumental courthouses and hospital buildings, tall, boxy apartment buildings, two-story detached houses, small churches, one-story retail taxpayers, and mid-rise office buildings. Along Hillside Avenue, new apartment buildings of up to twelve stories would alter the urban design of that corridor, but they would be located on a wide street and there are already some tall apartment buildings located on the avenue. Outside of the proposed SDJD, new buildings, while somewhat larger than existing surrounding buildings, would be moderately scaled to reflect the residential and industrial settings in which they would be constructed. Throughout the entire project area, the mix of building types and uses that would likely result from the proposed actions would be in keeping with the diverse

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array of existing building types and uses that define Downtown Jamaica and the adjacent residential neighborhoods of South Jamaica, Hollis, and St. Albans.

The proposed actions are not expected to have any significant adverse impacts on the visual resources of the project area. Constructed on existing blocks and lots, new buildings would not block any significant view corridors and views of visual resources or limit access to any visual resources. There would be limited development of modestly-sized buildings in the immediate vicinity of most of the visual resources, which exist in settings made up of a wide variety of buildings. Therefore, the settings and views of those resources would not be expected to change dramatically. Although the setting of the Jamaica Station/AirTrain complex would change considerably, there would not be any significant adverse impacts to the transportation complex, because it would still be visible in the adjacent view corridors, and the new surrounding mixed-use buildings would improve its setting. Overall, views along the area's major corridors would change, as the corridors could be developed with new buildings of greater bulk than is currently allowed, but views along those corridors would not be blocked, new buildings would frame existing views, which often tend to be of indistinct character, and views throughout the project area would continue to be of mixed-use urban neighborhoods composed of a wide array of buildings of various heights, sizes, uses, and styles. *