

## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Setting the Context**

**Harlem/Morningside Heights** is located in the northern part of the borough of Manhattan, and is part of what is generally referred to as Harlem. Harlem area is bordered by Hudson River on the west, the Harlem River on the east, 110<sup>th</sup> Street to the south and the Manhattan Expressway which runs into the George Washington Bridge to the north. It is generally circumscribed by the Henry Hudson Parkway, the FDR/Harlem River Drive, 110<sup>th</sup> Street and 181<sup>st</sup> Streets. Harlem includes the communities of East Harlem, Spanish Harlem, Morningside Heights, and Manhattanville. Its proximity to the rivers has facilitated water-related land uses. Hence warehousing, light manufacturing, and terminal related facilities characterize section of the area. The area is also rich in institutional uses with many educational institutions such as Bank Street College of Education, Columbia University, Barnard College, Teacher's College, Manhattan School of Music, Union Theological Seminary, Jewish Theological Seminary, and the City College of the City University of New York. Other associations and institutions are The National Council of Churches, Riverside Church, Grotto of Notre Dame, North River Pollution Control Plant with the Riverbank State Park on its roof, and the St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital Center.

Today, the Harlem area is experiencing enormous pressure for growth with its potential for new developments. In the past few years Harlem has become a center of attention for developers, organizations and public agencies that perceive and recognized the forthcoming economic expansion. Data shows than more than \$1.2 billion has been invested in new and rehabilitated housing since 1994 in Harlem. Big Box retails stores are coming to the area such as CostCo and Home Depot, as well as several smaller stores such as Duane Reade, Rite Aid pharmacies, Blockbuster Video and Starbucks Company.

### **1.2 Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the study is to assess the existing and future traffic and transportation conditions, identify any problems and generate recommendations to develop a package of improvement measures designed to safely accommodate future transportation needs. The study's main objectives are:

- To assess the existing transportation demand and needs of the study area;

- To pay special attention to the 125<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor;
- To project and assess the future (2015) conditions with respect to demographic, land use, traffic, transit, pedestrian and bicycle, parking, and good movement;
- To reduce vehicular congestion, improve safety for all users (vehicular and pedestrian); and
- To encourage the use of public transit / alternative modes.

The assessment will include an analysis in the areas of demographics, land use and zoning, traffic and transportation, parking, pedestrian and bicycle, transit, accidents and goods movement. The Department of City Planning is working on many rezoning initiatives within the study area, therefore land use and zoning will be given special importance.

To accomplish the goals and objectives a series of analyses will be conducted and the study will recommend measures of Transportation Systems Management (TSM) and/or Transportation Demand Management (TDM) to alleviate congestion and improve safety and mobility of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, thereby improving the quality of life of people who live and work in the area. Proposals for addressing the problems will include individual and packages of traffic and transportation measures. These proposed measures will be implemented in the near future and/or over a longer period of time up to the year 2015, which is the horizon year for the study.

### **1.3 The Study Area**

The study area is bounded by 135<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, 116<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, Harlem River to the east, and Hudson River to the west. The street network is more of a regular grid. The main north and south corridors are Broadway, Amsterdam Avenue, Frederick Douglass Boulevard, Lenox Avenue, Park Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, while 125<sup>th</sup> Street and 116<sup>th</sup> Street are the main east and west arteries that service Harlem/Morningside Heights. 125<sup>th</sup> Street runs through the area from river to river in an east/west direction, connecting the Triborough Bridge and the FDR Drive on the east section with the Henry Hudson Parkway on the west side section of the study area. Exhibit 1-1 shows the boundaries of the study area and the insert shows the study area within the metropolitan region.

The Harlem/Morningside study area has experienced blight and decline over the past three decades, a trend that has been reversing in the past 3 to 4 years. The population trends in the study area show an approximately 4.0% decline from 1980 to 1990, and a recovery in 2000 as the population grew by almost 10.0%.

The study area is well-served by major highways and public transit. The major expressways in the immediate vicinity are the Harlem River Drive, FDR Drive and Henry Hudson Parkway. The major public transit operators providing service in the area are MTA's Metro-North and NYC Transit. Exhibits 1-2 and 1-3 show the study area with the subway lines and bus routes.

The study area has been experiencing major commercial/retail developments. The new developments will generate significant vehicle trips requiring an effective traffic and transportation plan to manage the increase in traffic.

The pressure for development is also reflected in some of the studies that are being undertaken in the area. The following highlights some of the studies.

#### **West Harlem Master Plan**

The West Harlem master plan which was prepared by NYCEDC in coordination with the local communities was completed in October 2002. The Master Plan is bounded by 135<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, 125<sup>th</sup> Street/St. Clair Place to the south, Marginal Street to the west and Broadway/Old Broadway to the east. The goals of the Master Plan are to stimulate new economic and cultural activity in the study area and improve access to the waterfront. Other components of the plan include a community center, retail facility and restaurant.

#### **Columbia University expansion/Manhattanville Rezoning**

This proposal is the rezoning of an approximately 35-acre area of Manhattanville in West Harlem in Manhattan. The rezoning supports the planning objectives of NYC EDC's 2002 West Harlem Master Plan. The rezoning would also allow Columbia to realize an Academic Mixed-Use Plan ("Academic Mixed Use Development") on approximately 17 acres within the 35-acre rezoning area.

The development located roughly between Broadway and Twelfth Avenue from the north of West 125<sup>th</sup> Street to north side of West 133<sup>rd</sup> Street would be built over an extended period of time. It would be approximately 6.4 million gross square feet, including academic building, laboratory/research facilities, parking, administrative offices and support space, recreational facilities, student and faculty housing and on site centralized steam and chilled water plant.

### **197-a Plan**

The Manhattan Community Board 9 (CB9) located in the west side of the study area is in the process of preparing a 197-a Plan. The plan which is a tool to address the community's vision for the entire district and be a catalyst in its implementation also provides a framework for collaborative community and property owner development. The issues that are driving the plan are:

- A need to improve the quality of life of its residents;
- A need to preserve historical building patterns and neighborhood scale;
- A need to encourage the creation and development of job intensive business to benefit local residents; and
- A need to allow for population growth

### **125<sup>th</sup> Street River to River Study**

EDC in conjunction with NYC Department of City Planning have launched the 125<sup>th</sup> Street River to River study to explore opportunities for planning and to provide short term and long term solutions and recommendations in the areas of transportation, culture, urban design, environment, and waterfront access.

To this end, an inter agency working group was established and regular meetings are being held. The purpose is to bring to the table all the public and private organizations, city and state agencies that will be involved in the design, planning and implementation of the final recommendations that emerge from the study.

The inter-agency working group is comprised of the following institutions:

NYC Economic Development Corporation

NYC Department of City Planning

NYC Department of Transportation

NYC Department of Parks & Recreation  
MTA NYC Transit Authority  
Upper Manhattan Empowerment Zone  
Cultural Affairs  
Housing Preservation and Development  
NYC Housing Authority  
125<sup>th</sup> Street Business Improvement District and  
Manhattan Borough President's Office

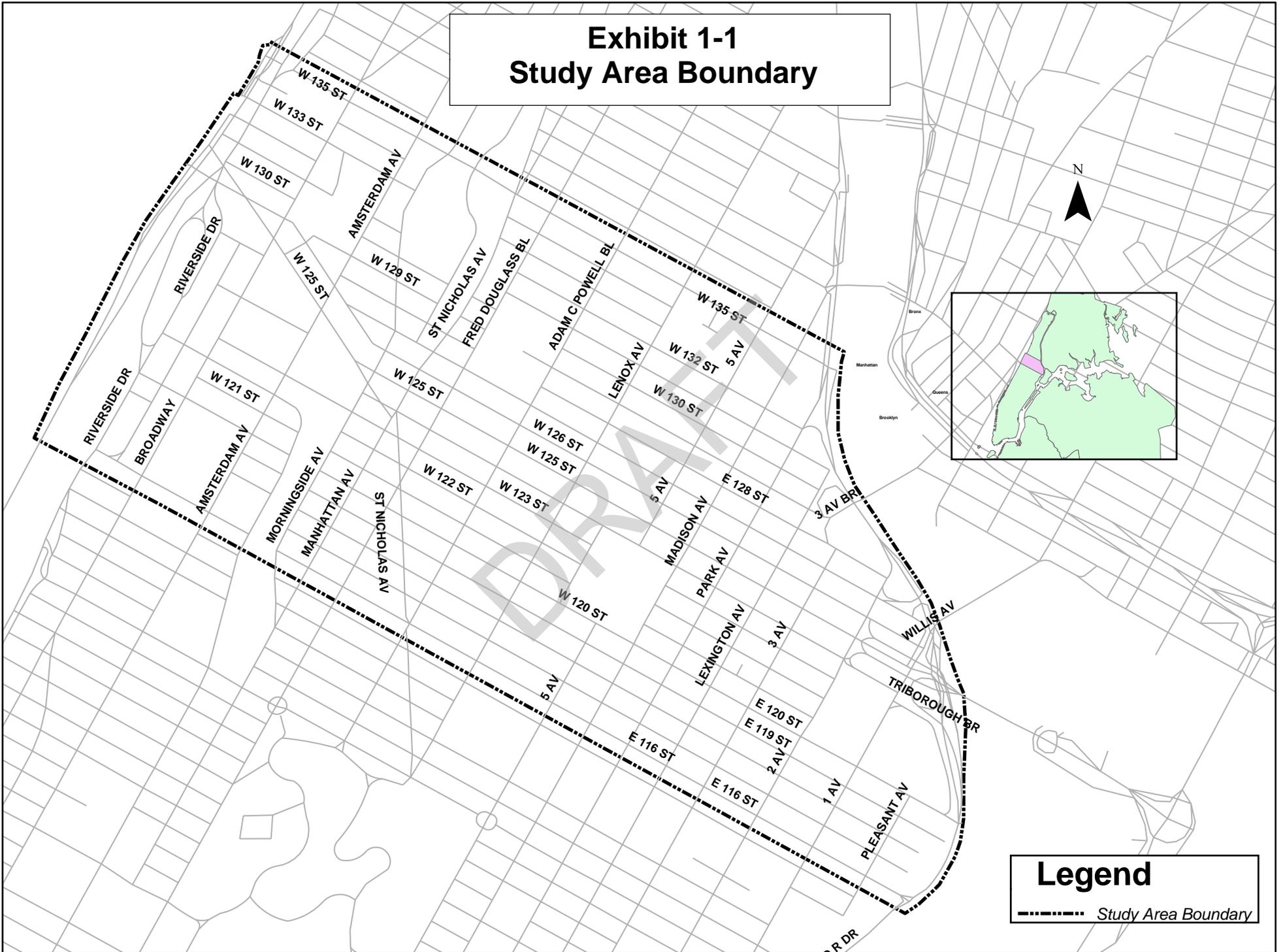
### **Other Projects**

In addition to the planning initiatives mentioned above many other major developments are being undertaken in the area such as the Pathmark Supermarket located on 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue, the Harlem USA movie theater on 125<sup>th</sup> Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard, the Victoria Theater located on the north side of West 125<sup>th</sup> Street between Adam Clayton Powell and Frederick Douglass Boulevards, the Harlem Center project, The Harlem Park Hotel, The Gateway and Gotham Plaza, Mart 125, The Harlem Auto Mall and the Randall's Island water park development.

There were other rezoning initiatives as well such as the Frederick Douglass Boulevard and the East Harlem rezoning. Then there is the reconstruction of the Willis Avenue and the Third Avenue Bridges. Some of these projects have been completed, some are on their way, and others are yet to be initiated. Exhibit 1-4 shows the study area with some of the projects conducted within the study area.

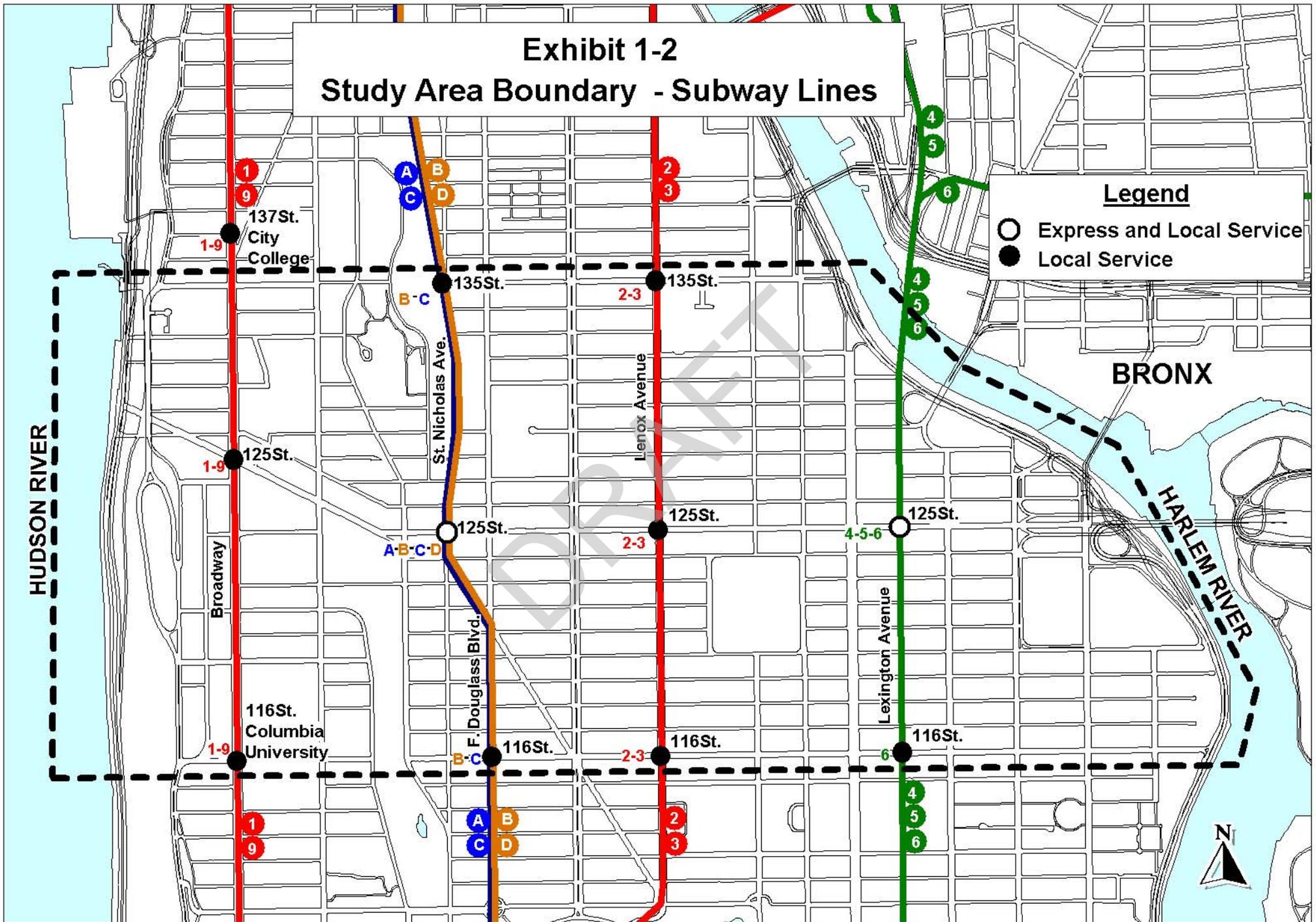
As a result the Harlem Morningside Heights study area will experience substantial changes by 2015, hence the need for a comprehensive analysis of the existing traffic and transportation conditions and reasonable forecasts of the future conditions.

# Exhibit 1-1 Study Area Boundary



**Legend**  
----- Study Area Boundary

# Exhibit 1-2 Study Area Boundary - Subway Lines

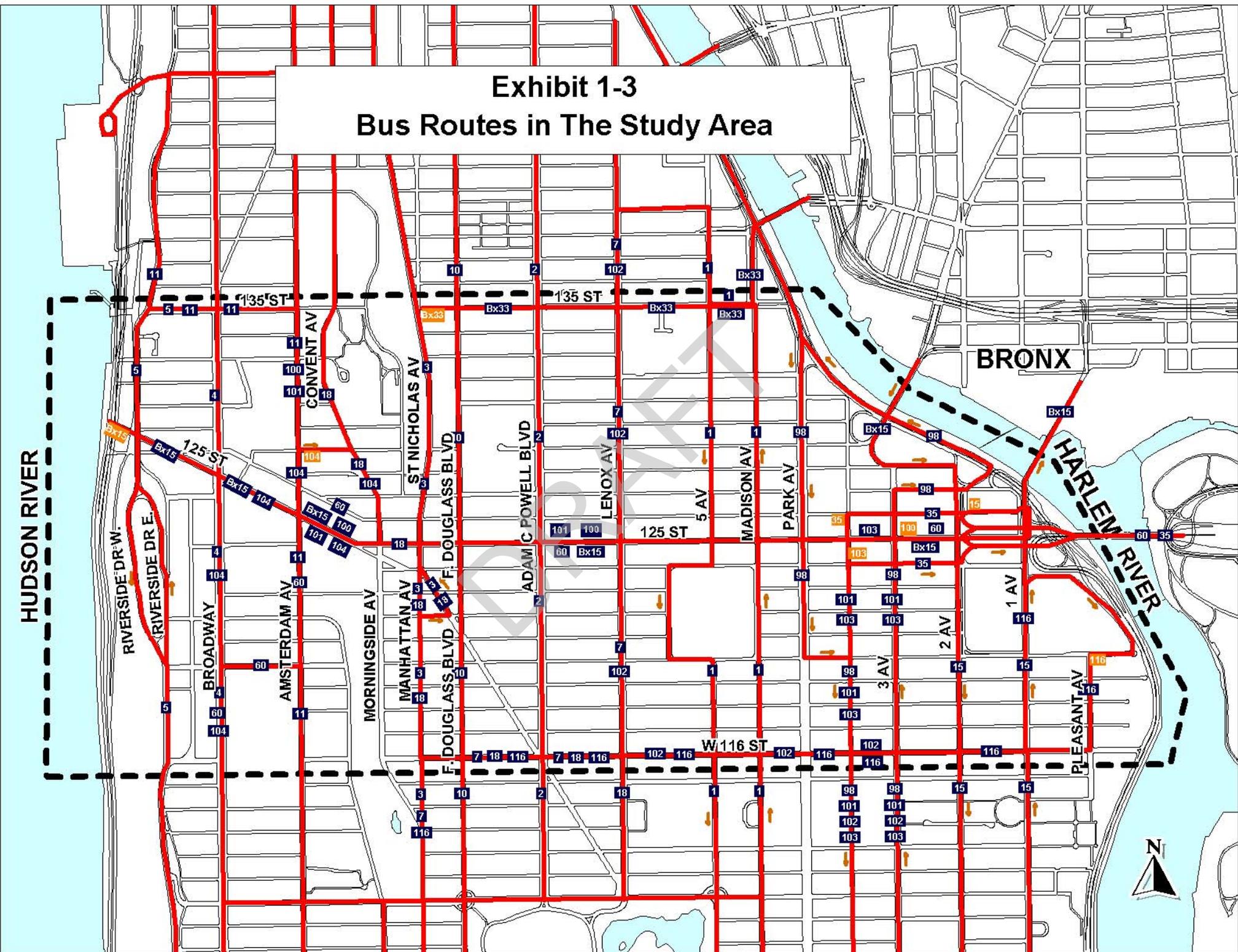


**Legend**

- Express and Local Service
- Local Service



# Exhibit 1-3 Bus Routes in The Study Area



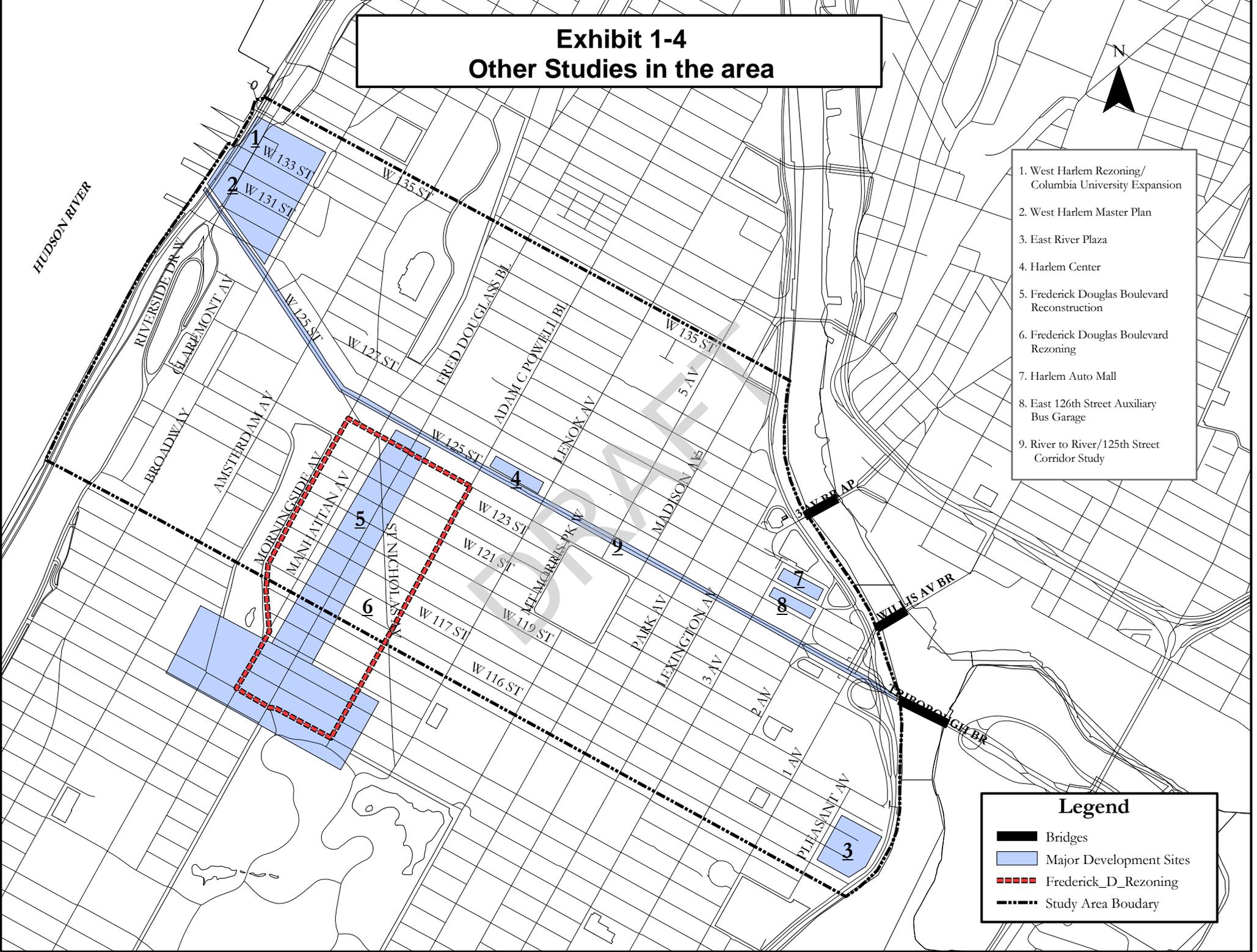
# Exhibit 1-4 Other Studies in the area



1. West Harlem Rezoning/  
Columbia University Expansion
2. West Harlem Master Plan
3. East River Plaza
4. Harlem Center
5. Frederick Douglas Boulevard  
Reconstruction
6. Frederick Douglas Boulevard  
Rezoning
7. Harlem Auto Mall
8. East 126th Street Auxiliary  
Bus Garage
9. River to River/125th Street  
Corridor Study

**Legend**

-  Bridges
-  Major Development Sites
-  Frederick\_D\_Rezoning
-  Study Area Boudary



## **1.4 Project Organization and Methodology**

The organization of the project is reflected in Exhibit 1-5. The project tasks are:

### **Task 1 – Project Organization and Management**

A detailed work program that outlines tasks, subtasks, task products and schedule has been developed including selection of Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) members.

### **Task 2 – Literature Search**

Relevant studies have been obtained from DOT's Environmental Impact Statement Library and from the Department of City Planning and other public and private agencies. Some of the studies reviewed were:

1. West Harlem Master Plan Traffic and Transportation Report, NYCEDC 2002
2. Reconstruction of Frederick Douglass Circle, Cathedral Parkway/West 110<sup>th</sup> Street, NYCDOT February 2003
3. Willis Avenue Bridge Reconstruction (ongoing project)
4. Harlem Center Project, NY Empire State Development Corporation-August 2000
5. Reconstruction of 145<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge over the Harlem River, NYCDOT -May 2001
6. Truck Route Study, NYCDOT (ongoing study)
7. East River Plaza, NY Empire State Development Corporation-August 1999
8. Harlem Auto Mall, Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding-April 2003

### **Task 3 – Data Collection and Identification of Issues**

Data was collected for demographic, land use and zoning, traffic, parking, pedestrians and bicycles, transit, accidents, and goods movement for the study area. Created an inventory of all the information for the existing conditions.

**Task 4 – Analysis of Existing Conditions**

Conducted a comprehensive analysis of the existing conditions (2003) in the areas of demographic, land use and zoning, traffic and transportation, parking, pedestrian and bicycle, transit, accidents and goods movement in the study area. Identified problems and issues based on analysis.

**Task 5 – Draft report for Existing Conditions (Technical Memorandum No.1.)**

**Task 6 – Analysis of Future Conditions**

Conduct an analysis of future (2015) conditions, for all issues studied for the existing conditions (demographics, land-use and zoning, traffic, parking, transit, pedestrian and bicycle, accidents and goods movements.)

**Task 7 – Development & Evaluation of Alternative Improvement Packages**

Generate recommendations and to develop a package of improvement measures designed to safely accommodate future transportation needs resulting from potential development and economic growth.

**Task 8 – Recommendations and Implementation Plan**

**Task 9 – Draft Final Report**

**Task 10 – Final Report**

Incorporate comments of the various agencies and community groups.

# Exhibit 1-5 HARLEM MORNINGSIDE HEIGHTS Process & Issues

## Inventory

## Issues

## Alternatives

## Plan

**Done by: D.O.T.**

**Demographics**

Population  
Characteristics:  
Age, Income,  
Household Size,  
Travel Patterns.

**Accident Analysis**

Collect Accident  
Records from  
NYS DMV, and  
NYS DOT.

**Goods Movement**

Truck Routes  
Locations of Retail,  
Industrial, and  
Manufacturing

**Traffic**

Traffic Network  
Accessibility

**Done by: D.C.P.**

**Land Use & Zoning**

Existing Land Use  
Development  
potentials and  
constraints.

**Parking**

Locations of On-  
Street and Off-Street  
Parking. Utilization  
and Capacity.

**Pedestrian / Bike**

Accessibility

**Transit Network**

Accessibility

Traffic Congestion  
Parking Availability  
Transit Service  
Pedestrian Mobility  
Air Quality/Noise  
Safety

Community Concerns  
CB 9, 10, 11  
and other groups

Coordination with EDC  
and DCP in the 125th  
River to River project

Develop  
Consensus  
IDEAS

Alt. 1

Alt. 2

Alt. 3

Comprehensive  
Transportation  
Plan