

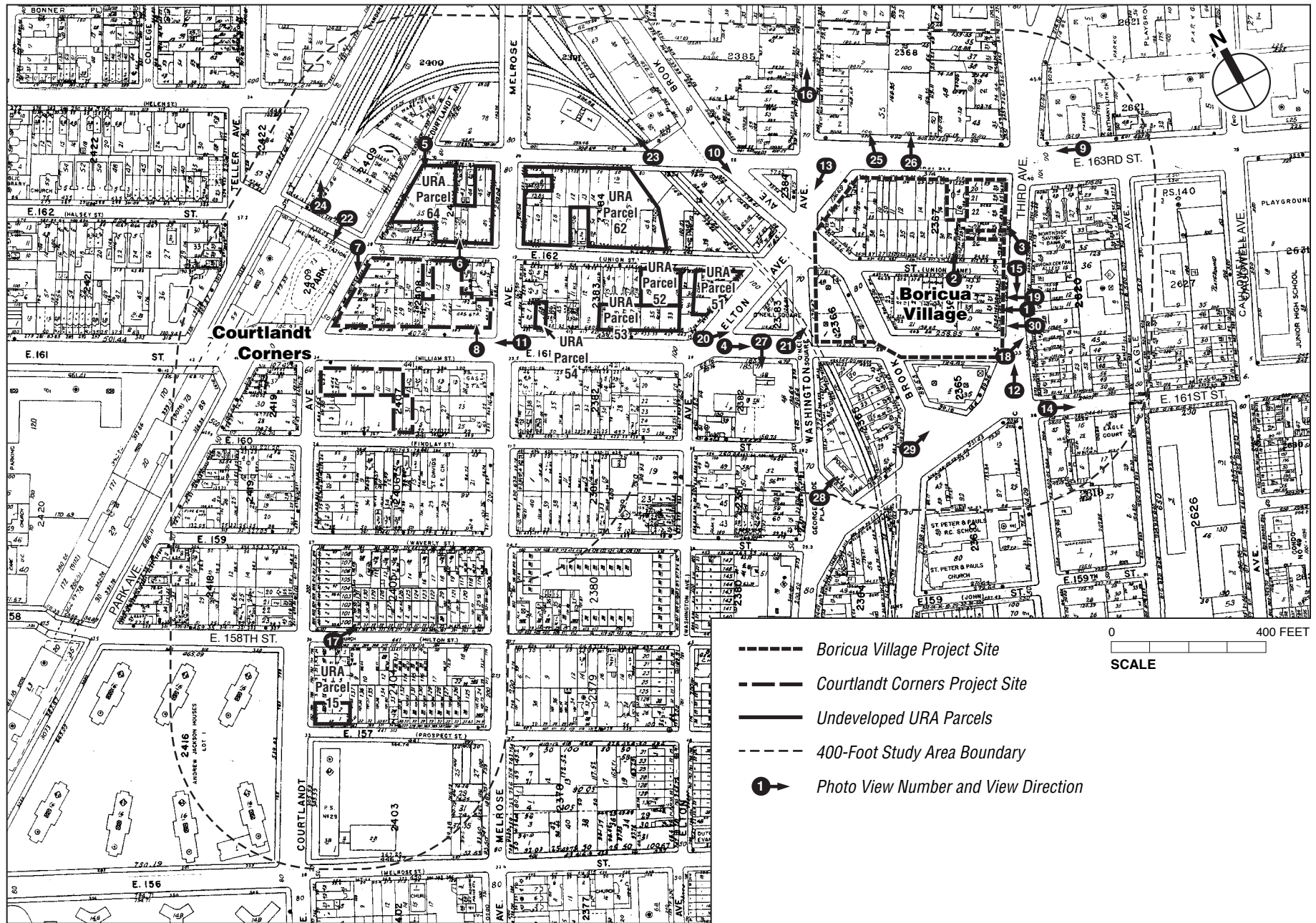
A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential for the proposed and future actions to affect the urban design characteristics and visual resources of the development sites located in the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area (URA) and the surrounding area. The proposed and future actions would facilitate the full build out of the URA, and include changing the land use designation for some sites in the URA and removing building height and street wall regulations throughout the URA.

The Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan (URP) was adopted in 1994 and guides development in the approximately 33-block URA. While this chapter focuses mainly on the proposed development sites: the Boricua Village project, the Courtlandt Corners project, and the undeveloped sites in the URA, it also discusses how the proposed and future actions could impact the entire Melrose Commons URA. For the purpose of this analysis, the study area is an area approximately 400 feet from the Boricua Village and Courtlandt Corners sites and the other undeveloped sites in the URA (15, 51, 52, 53, 54, 64, and 62). Figure 8-1 depicts the location of the proposed and future development sites, the study area boundaries, and a key to the locations of the photographs while Figures 8-2 through 8-16 present views of the proposed and future development sites and the study area.

As defined in the 2001 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, urban design components and visual resources determine the “look” of a neighborhood, or its physical appearance, including the size and shape of buildings, their arrangement on blocks, the street pattern, and noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis addresses each of these characteristics for existing conditions and the future without and with the proposed and future actions.

The following analysis concludes that the proposed and future actions would not have a significant adverse effect on the area’s urban design and visual resources. The proposed and future actions are expected to facilitate new development in the URA, including new residential, commercial, and institutional facilities as well as new community gardens, and, therefore, improve the urban design of the undeveloped sites in the URA and surrounding area by replacing primarily vacant land and deteriorated buildings with new buildings that will enliven the neighborhood. The proposed and future actions would create new open spaces with walkways, introduce street lighting and landscaping, and improve the visual appearance of the undeveloped sites in the URA and the surrounding area. In addition, under the proposed and future actions, new community gardens and open spaces would be created. While the proposed and future actions would remove the building height limits established in the Melrose Commons URP, new development arising from the proposed and future actions would not block significant views of any visual resources or obstruct important views and views corridors. Therefore, the proposed and future actions would be expected to have a beneficial impact on the urban design and visual resources of the development sites and the study area.



Urban Design and Visual Resources
Figure 8-1



Buildings on east side of Third Avenue, between East 161st Street and East 162nd Street, view northwest

1



Abandoned building on East 162nd Street

2



Buildings located on Third Avenue, view northwest. The 5-story building on the left is not on the project site

3



View of Bronx Municipal Court, Second District Building, view from Elton Avenue and East 161st Street

4



Courtlandt Corners North, view south from Courtlandt Avenue and East 163rd Street

5



Courtlandt Corners North, view north from East 162nd Street

6



Courtlandt Corners South, view south from East 162nd Street

7



Courtlandt Corners South, view northeast from Melrose Avenue and East 161st Street

8



East 163rd Street, view west

9



View southeast of Brook Avenue and East 163rd Street. The project site is on the left

10



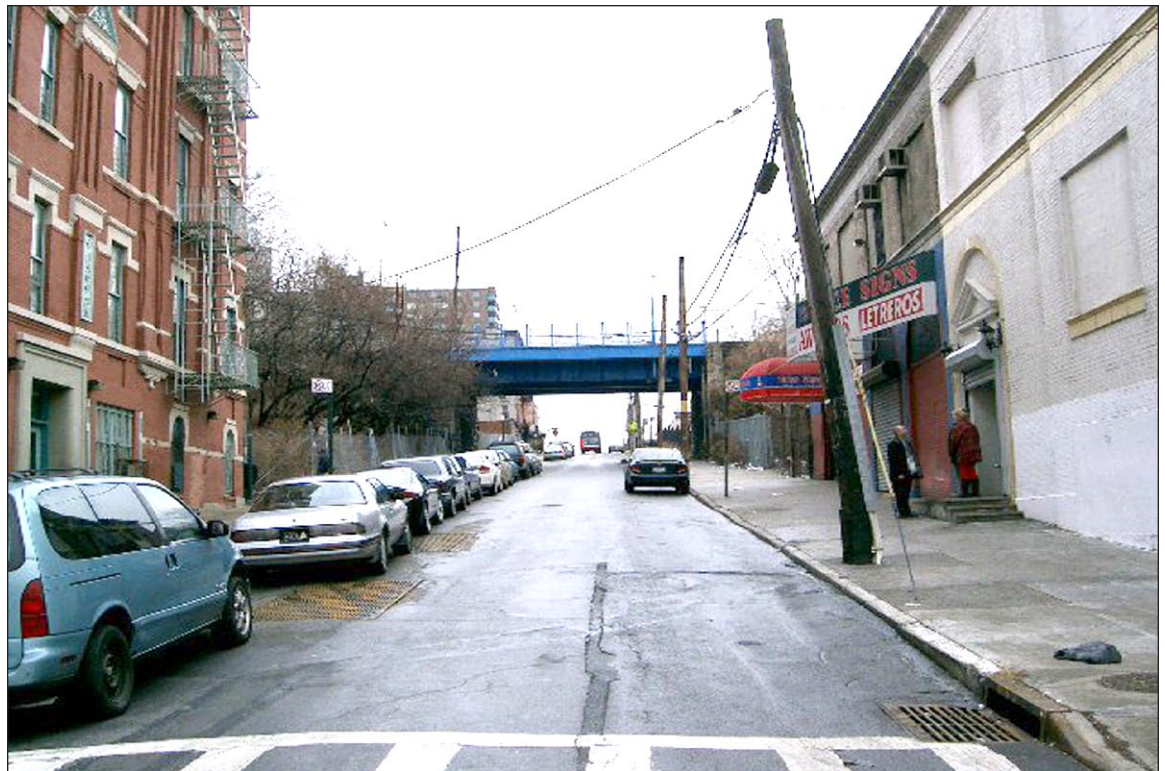
View east from Courtlandt Corners South, 11
view east from East 161st Street and Melrose Avenue



View north on Third Avenue from the corner of Third Avenue, 12
Saint Ann's Avenue and East 161st Street



Triangular-shaped lot at the intersection of East 163rd Street, Brook Avenue and Washington Avenue, view southeast **13**



View east of East 161st Street from Third Avenue. Eagle Avenue crosses East 161st Street on bridge **14**



Third Avenue, view south 15



Washington Avenue near East 163rd Street 16



New residential development in southern section of the Urban Renewal Area 17



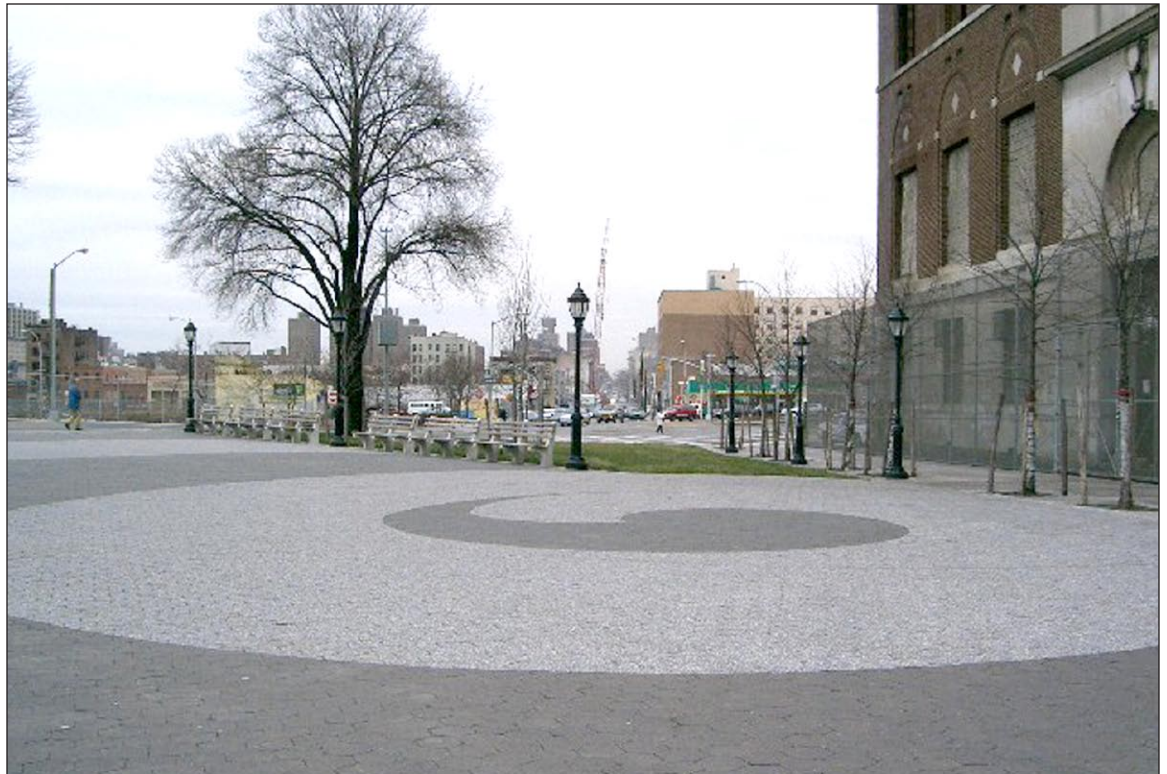
Residential and commercial buildings, east side of Third Avenue between East 161st and East 162nd Streets 18



Third Avenue and East 162nd Street, view west 19



O'Neil Square, view east. The project site is on the left 20



Stone pattern on O'Neil Square and the demapped section of Washington Avenue 21



Railroad Park, view south from East 162nd Street 22



Sunken railroad tracks view west from East 163rd Street 23



Sunken Metro-North tracks and vacant lots, view north from East 162nd Street 24



New retail store along East 163rd Street 25



New commercial development along East 163rd Street 26



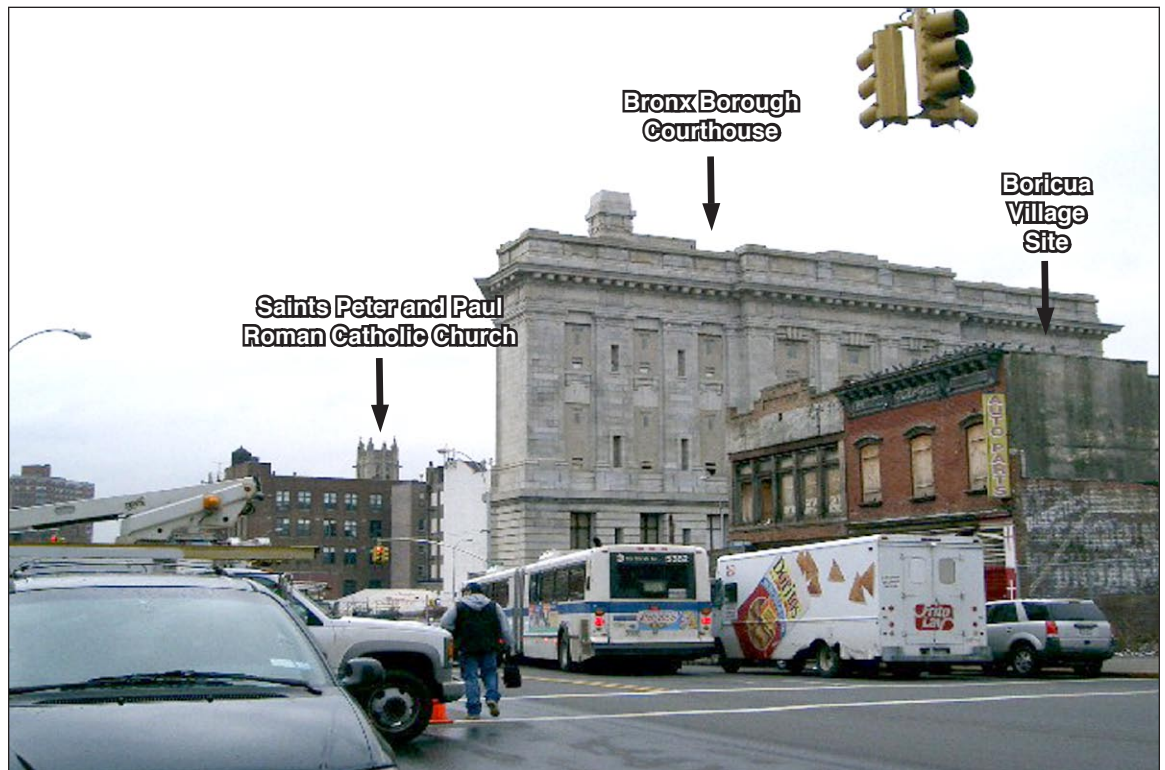
Former YMCA Building 27



46th Precinct Police Station 28



Bronx Borough Courthouse view from the intersection of Brook and Third Avenues looking northeast **29**



View of Bronx Borough Courthouse and Saints Peter and Paul Roman Catholic Church tower from Third Avenue, view southwest. The project site is on the right. **30**

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROPOSED AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SITES

URBAN DESIGN

The Boricua Village project site is on the northeastern corner of the Melrose Commons URA and consists of sites 48, 49, 59, and 60, which correspond to Block 2366 and most of Block 2367 (excluding Lots 17, 18, and 25) (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1, “Project Description”). The Boricua Village project site is bounded by East 163rd Street to the north, Third Avenue to the east, East 161st to the south and the intersection of Washington, Elton, and Brook Avenues to the west (see Figure 8-1). A portion of East 162nd Street, a street demapped as part of the URP, runs through the project site and is currently used for parking. Demapped portions of East 161st Street and Brook Avenue also run through the project site.

The majority of the Boricua Village project site is composed of abandoned buildings and vacant lots enclosed by metal chain-link fences. The lots are covered with garbage and other debris, while the buildings are abandoned and in a deteriorated condition. The ten buildings range in height from one- to four-stories (see Photographs 1 and 2 of Figure 8-2 and Photograph 3 of Figure 8-3). The former Bronx Municipal Court – Second District Building is located on a lot bounded by East 162nd and East 161st Streets to the north and south, Brook Avenue to the east, and Washington Avenue to the west. This four-story red brick building occupies the majority of the lot (see Photograph 4 of Figure 8-3).

Located two blocks to the west of the Boricua Village project site is the future proposed Courtlandt Corners project site. The Courtlandt Corners site consists of URA sites 45 and 46 located on most of Block 2408, URA sites 56 and 57 on the northwestern corner of Block 2407, and two vacant lots on the southern edge of the same Block (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1, “Project Description”). These development sites are bounded by East 162nd Street to the north, Melrose Avenue to the east, East 160th Street to the south, and Courtlandt Avenue to the west. East 161st Street separates the two blocks and the Courtlandt Corners project site is divided into Courtlandt Corner North and Courtlandt Corner South. The Courtlandt Corner North site is composed of two vacant three-story buildings, a gas station, vacant lots, and a community garden (see Photographs 5 and 6 of Figure 8-4). Courtlandt Corner South is composed of a gas station, a parking lot, and empty lots (see Photographs 7 and 8 and Figure 8-5). The majority of the buildings in the Courtlandt Corners project site are vacant and deteriorated in appearance, and the vacant lots are scattered with debris, both of which detract from the visual appearance of the area.

In addition to the two proposed project sites described above, there are a number of undeveloped sites in the URA that would be developed in the future with the proposed and future actions (see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1, “Project Description”). These sites, namely sites 51, 52, 53, 54, 62, and 64, are located on the blocks between the proposed Boricua Village site and the future proposed Courtlandt Corners site. On Block 2383 are sites 51, 53, and 54, all of which are vacant lots while site 52, located on the same block, is developed with a one-story industrial building. Located on the majority of Block 2384 is site 64, the largest of the undeveloped sites in the URA, which contains two vacant three-story residential buildings, a parking lot, vacant lots, and a community garden. Site 64, which occupies the majority of Block 2408, is mainly developed with vacant one-story former industrial buildings, three-story former residential buildings, and

vacant lots. Site 15, located in the southern section of the URA, is composed of a vacant three-story building and a vacant lot.

The east-west streets which bound the development sites are arranged in a regular pattern with East 163rd, 162nd, and 161st Streets running parallel to each other. Melrose, Elton, Washington and Third Avenues run parallel in a north-south direction, while Brook and Courtlandt Avenues run at angles, creating irregularly shaped blocks.

The topography around the development sites is relatively flat and for the most part the sidewalks are relatively well maintained. One exception is along the western end of the Courtlandt Corner South site, which has a steep slope south of East 162nd Street. In some places, such as along East 162nd Street between Elton and Melrose Avenues, and other areas where industrial activity occurred, the sidewalks are poorly maintained with cracked pavement, weeds, and scattered debris. There is little or no landscaping or other streetscape elements, such as trees, lampposts, and street furniture. Due to the numerous vacant sites and deteriorated buildings as well as the lack of landscaping and streetscape elements, the projected development sites have an abandoned and degraded appearance. One exception is Melrose Avenue, which has tall, historic looking lampposts lining both sides of the Avenue.

VISUAL RESOURCES

As described above, the development sites are primarily composed of deteriorated, vacant buildings and vacant sites that do not contain visual resources. While the four-story Bronx Municipal Court – Second District Building is the most visually prominent building on any of the development sites, it is vacant and currently surrounded by metal chain-link fencing with the windows on the bottom two floors bricked over and the windows on the top two floors open. Therefore, this building does not contribute positively to the visual quality of the Boricua Village project site.

Generally, views from the development sites take in the various buildings and vacant lots that line the streets. East 163rd Street begins to slope upward east of Brook Avenue, limiting any views in this direction. Views west along East 163rd Street extend further but do not contain any significant urban design or visual resources (see Photograph 9 of Figure 8-6). Views south from East 163rd Street include the Bronx Borough Courthouse Building, a prominent turn of the century stone building, which is a visual resource, and the surrounding public park (see Photograph 10 of Figure 8-6). Views east from East 162nd and East 161st Streets terminate at Third Avenue (described below in “Study Area”) and to the west the views extend indefinitely. From East 161st Street, along the southern portion of the development sites, views include the abandoned and vacant lots, the deteriorated buildings on the project site, the Bronx Municipal Court–Second District Building, and the Bronx Borough Courthouse. Views west from the Courtlandt Corners project site include the depressed Metro-North train tracks, Railroad Park, and the Melrose Houses, a group of large residential towers which range in height from 19 to 26 stories. Views south and east from this site, along Courtlandt and Melrose Avenues, are long but do not contain any visually significant features (see Photograph 11 of Figure 8-7).

STUDY AREA

The study area for urban design and visual resources is defined as the area within an approximately 400-foot radius from the development sites, an area roughly bounded by Eagle Avenue to the east, East 159th and East 160th Street to the south, Park Avenue to the west, and the mid-blocks of Park and Third Avenues to the north (see Figure 8-1). The discussion below

focuses first on the area's urban design—its basic layout and structures—and then describes its visual resources.

URBAN DESIGN

Street Pattern, Block Shapes, and Natural Features

Park, Courtlandt, Brook, and Elton Avenues run on a diagonal to the east-west streets, creating irregularly shaped blocks, notably the Bronx Borough Courthouse block, the block immediately to the east of this Courthouse, and the smaller blocks along Courtlandt Avenue north of East 159th Street. At East 161st Street, Elton Avenue runs on a diagonal and terminates at East 163rd Street, creating irregular shaped blocks and the triangular block that is O'Neil Square. Brook Avenue also runs at an angle and intersects with Third Avenue, creating small triangular blocks. There are four of these triangular shaped blocks in the study area, all of which are minimally landscaped with trees, benches, and low shrubs (see Photograph 12 of Figure 8-7 and Photograph 13 of Figure 8-8). Washington Avenue from East 161st Street to East 162nd Street and East 161st Street between Washington and Elton Avenues are already demapped and redeveloped as pedestrian walkways. These streets form the eastern and southern boundaries of O'Neil Square. Park and Courtlandt Avenues, in the eastern section of the study area, are separated by the depressed Metro-North railroad tracks and run on a diagonal, also creating smaller, irregular blocks. East 162nd Street dead ends with a cul-de-sac between Melrose and Elton Avenues.

Natural features in the study area are limited to two small parks and the hilly topography. Two parks, O'Neil Square and Railroad Park, both described below, provide some trees and plantings in the study area. There is also unkempt vegetation in the area around the abandoned railroad tracks. The topography of the study area is hilly, such as at East 161st Street east of Third Avenue where the land slopes dramatically upward. Third Avenue also slopes upward after intersecting with St. Ann's Avenue, and East 163rd Street slopes upward east of Brook Avenue. Due to this sloping topography, Eagle Avenue is elevated at East 161st Street (see Photograph 14 of Figure 8-8 and Photograph 15 of Figure 8-9). East 163rd Street also slopes dramatically west of Washington Avenue and, as described above, Courtlandt Avenue slopes south of East 162nd Street.

Streetscape

The streetscape of the study area is urban in character. The area immediately surrounding the development sites is also vacant and deteriorated in appearance. The streets are paved and for the most part flanked by concrete sidewalks in varying states of repair. The portion of the study area north of East 163rd Street has an underused and derelict quality to it, and has little street life due to the industrial buildings and vacant lots. Along the north side of East 163rd Street between Brook and Melrose Avenues, a large industrial site is enclosed with a solid metal barrier, creating an uninviting streetwall. The businesses are mostly related to automobile repairs while the streets (see Photograph 16 of Figure 8-9) lack amenities, such as trees, streetlamps, benches, and bus shelters.

East 162nd Street has limited pedestrian activity and street life mainly due to the dead-end created by the cul-de-sac. The lot at the end of the block is vacant, surrounded by a broken chain link fence and covered with garbage and other debris. The street is further lined with small, residential buildings, the rear of buildings that run along East 161st Street, and vacant lots.

East 161st Street west of Elton Avenue has a more active streetscape. The street is lined with two- to six-story buildings in various states of repair. On the southwest corner of Elton Avenue and East 161st Street, an eight-story residential building is under construction. In addition, two lanes of traffic run in each direction, and two New York City Transit bus lines run along the street, further increasing the pedestrian traffic in the area.

East 160th Street is lined with a combination of new construction and vacant and deteriorated buildings and vacant lots. There is little pedestrian activity or street life.

The southern section of the study area, between East 157th and East 159th Streets, is largely developed with new residential structures that were built under the guidelines of the Melrose Commons URA. For the most part, the side streets are lined with three-story residential buildings faced in red-brick with projecting bays of tan stone. They are set-back a short distance from the street and have high stoops (See Photograph 17 of Figure 8-10). The avenues are mostly lined with taller residential buildings—some with ground floor commercial spaces—which are faced with a combination of stone and modern materials, and have few exterior details. Also located in the southern section of the study area are the Andrew Jackson Houses, a group of tall residential towers placed at an angle to the street.

Third and Melrose Avenues, along with East 161st and 163rd Streets are the major thoroughfares in the study area; both of which have two lanes of traffic running in each direction. Third Avenue also has bike lanes running in each direction (see Photograph 18 of 8-10 and Photograph 19 of 8-11). Both avenues are served by city buses, which increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Eagle Street and the streets south of East 161st Street are more residential streets and are mostly developed with multi-family residences, though there are some empty lots remaining.

There are two open spaces in the area: O'Neil Square and Railroad Park. O'Neil Square is a small open space situated on a lot bounded by East 162nd, Elton Avenue, and the demapped sections of East 161st Street and Washington Avenue. This park is landscaped with a lawn, rows of trees, park benches, streetlamps, and wide walkways paved in stone. The eastern paved portion is set with a decorative stone pattern (see Photograph 20 of Figure 8-11 and Photograph 21 of Figure 8-11). In the western section of the study area, near the depressed Metro-North tracks, is Railroad Park, located on the eastern end of a block bounded by Courtlandt and Park Avenues and East 162nd and East 161st Streets. This approximately ¼-acre park features play equipment, landscaping, paved areas, a flagpole, and a one-story comfort station (see Photograph 22 of Figure 8-12). Interspersed between the vacant lots and deteriorated buildings are community gardens both in the study area and in the larger URA. These community gardens have a variety of features, including small houses, play equipment, landscaping, and seating areas.

Sunken railroad tracks run through the study area and are visible from Elton Avenue near 162nd Street and East 161st Street near Washington Avenue (see Photograph 23 of Figure 8-13). These tracks are no longer active and are overgrown and covered in garbage and other debris, adding to the industrial and abandoned feel of the study area. Along the eastern edge of the study area are the sunken Metro-North tracks, which are surrounded by a large vacant lot (see Photograph 24 of Figure 8-13).

Building Uses, Bulk, and Arrangements

The study area contains a mix of building uses and sizes, including a variety of churches, residences, commercial buildings, light industrial buildings, and three schools. In the northern

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end of the study area, there is a mix of new and old buildings. Along East 163rd Street on the block between Washington and Third Avenues is a gas station and a new convenience store set back from the block, and a new one-story commercial building with restaurants and small businesses, which is also set back from the block and has parking in front (see Photographs 25 and 26 of Figure 8-14). Further east along East 163rd Street are large, industrial buildings that continue north along Washington and Melrose Avenues.

Third, Courtlandt, and Melrose Avenues are more built-up and developed with one- to six-story buildings, mostly with ground floor commercial space with residential uses on the upper stories. Third Avenue is lined with somewhat deteriorated older buildings, while Melrose and Courtlandt Avenues are lined with more modern buildings.

The southern part of the study area is more developed and actively used. Along Washington Avenue, south of East 161st Street, are two building uses of note. The former YMCA building, located at the southwest corner of East 161st and Washington Avenue and just south of O'Neil Square, is currently a jail. This four-story, red brick structure is well maintained, occupying most of the block bounded by East 161st Street, Washington Avenue, and East 160th Street (see Photograph 27 of 8-15). Further south along Washington Avenue, at the intersection of Washington and Third Avenues, is the 46th Precinct Police Station and the George Meade Plaza. This building generates pedestrian and vehicular traffic and creates congested parking areas to accommodate the patrol cars (see Photograph 28 of Figure 8-15).

As described above, the southeastern section of the study area has almost completely been built out under the Melrose Commons URA. Along the side streets are smaller-scale residential buildings that are set back from the street, and along the avenues are taller residential and commercial buildings.

There are also a number of religious buildings in the study area. The Church of Saints Peter and Paul and its school and rectory are the most prominent and are located in the southern portion of the project site. The church is five stories, with the main façade facing west onto Brook Avenue. It is built in stone with pointed arched windows, a large rose window, and an eight story, square tower. The tower is visible from all points of the study area. There are a number of smaller churches in the study area, most of which are either one-story in height or in buildings converted from other uses.

There are three schools in the study area: PS 140, PS 29, and the school associated with the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. The school associated with the Church of Saints Peter and Paul sits on the same lot as the church. The ground floor has entrances with pointed arches and decorative spandrels marked "GIRLS" and "BOYS," which are flanked by shields with crosses. The upper three stories are faced in tan brick, with stone quoins on the outer bays. The windows are capped with short, decorative moldings. The short parapet wall has "St. Peter and St. Paul" engraved in it and is topped with a cross. PS 140 is four stories and is covered in tan brick with large and fixed windows; it sits on the corner of East 163rd Street and Eagle Avenue. PS 29 is three stories, covered in dark brick, and has bands of fixed windows.

VISUAL RESOURCES

Visual resources in the study area include the Bronx Borough Courthouse and the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. The Bronx Borough Courthouse is the most prominent visual resource and can be seen from almost all parts of the eastern end of study area (see Photograph 29 of Figure 8-16). It is located immediately to the south of the Boricua Village site on an irregularly shaped

block bounded by East 161st Street to the north, Third Avenue to the east and to the south, and Brook Avenue to the west. While this Courthouse is also vacant, the exterior remains in good condition with a wide variety of classical stone ornamentation including a large statue of Justice. The vacant lots and nearby deteriorated buildings of the project site detract from this visual quality of this resource. The Courthouse is visible from Eagle Avenue, though are they are sometimes obscured by the residential developments. Views of the Courthouse from the southern and western parts of the study area are obscured by the developments on the intervening blocks.

The Church of Saints Peter and Paul is also a visual resource in the study area. While the church is built to the lot line and the base is similar in height to the surrounding buildings, the Church's square, stone tower is eight stories in height and is visible from many points in the study area, including Third Avenue and East 163rd Street (see Photograph 30 of Figure 8-16), though it is also blocked from views in the west and southwest sections of the study area by existing buildings.

C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED AND FUTURE ACTIONS

PROPOSED AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SITES

In the future without the proposed and future actions the development sites are assumed to remain in their current condition with vacant and deteriorated buildings, a gas station, empty lots, and small community gardens.

STUDY AREA

As described in the Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," it is expected that approximately 1,331 housing units and 81,420 square feet of commercial space would be constructed on sites within the URA absent the proposed and future actions. A number of residential projects, some with ground floor retail space, are expected to be completed along Courtlandt, Melrose, Elton, and Third Avenues. On the eastern edge of the block bounded by East 161st and East 162nd Streets and Elton and Melrose Avenues, an eight-story residential building is currently under construction.

Additionally, several parks and open spaces are expected to be developed within the Melrose Commons URA in the future without the proposed and future actions. These include a playground along the west side of Melrose Avenue between East 156th and East 157th Streets, a park along the eastern side of Melrose Avenue between East 159th and East 160th Streets, and a new public open space on the west side of Elton Avenue between East 162nd and East 163rd Streets that will be located on the previously demapped portions of Brook Avenue, East 162nd Street, and East 163rd Street. This park will be located on the vacant lot at the end of the East 162nd Street cul-de-sac and extend to the north side of East 163rd Street and extend east to include a portion of Brook Avenue and a small triangle at the intersection of Brook, Washington and Elton Avenues. This will change the street grid by creating a new street which will run north-south between East 163rd and East 161st Streets.

D. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED AND FUTURE ACTIONS

PROPOSED AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT SITES

The proposed and future actions would allow the full buildout of the Melrose Commons URA and facilitate the proposed and future projects. The Courtlandt Corners and Boricua Village projects would substantially alter the appearance of the development sites by replacing the dilapidated structures and vacant lots currently on the project sites with residential, commercial, and educational buildings. The proposed and future projects would also add new courtyards, open spaces, and a pedestrian plaza. As described below, the proposed and future projects would improve the urban design of the project site.

URBAN DESIGN

The proposed Boricua Village project includes the demolition of the remaining project site buildings and the construction of eight buildings; including seven residential buildings ranging in height from 6 to 13 stories and one 14-story educational facility (see Figures 1-7A through 1-7G in Chapter 1, “Project Description”). The proposed Boricua Village project would also include a courtyard located behind the East 163rd Street buildings as well as landscaping for the public plaza on the already demapped portions of East 161st Street, East 162nd Street, and Brook Avenue.

The majority of the buildings on the Boricua Village project site would range in height from 75 to 85 feet, with setbacks rising up to an additional 40 feet. On the site of the former Bronx Municipal Court – Second District Building, a new college facility would be constructed which would have a 14-story building consisting of a 3-story base with a tower above. The proposed residential buildings would be faced in red brick with a concrete block base and setbacks. They would also feature retail spaces on the ground floor along Elton Avenue, East 163rd Street, and Third Avenue.

The proposed Boricua Village project would change the appearance of the project site from one of derelict and abandoned buildings and vacant lots to a cohesive group of brick and glass buildings. The proposed project would improve the streetscape of the project site by introducing new vitality in form of commercial, residential, and educational uses that would generate street level activity and enliven the area. It would also create new walkways and introduce street lighting and trees to improve the visual appearance of the project site. Therefore, the proposed Boricua Village project is expected to have a positive effect on the urban design of the proposed project site.

The future Courtlandt Corners project would result in the demolition of the vacant buildings on the project site, and the construction of two new residential buildings. The Courtlandt Corner North building would range from six to twelve stories tall while the Courtlandt Corner South building would be nine to twelve stories in height. A new open space would be created along the north side of East 160th Street between Melrose and Courtlandt Avenues. The proposed Courtlandt Corners project would not alter the existing block shapes or street pattern of the Courtlandt Corners project site and would replace the vacant and dilapidated buildings with new, actively used buildings. Similar to the proposed Boricua Village project the Courtlandt Corners project would have a positive effect on the urban design on the proposed project site.

The proposed and future actions include the removal of the URP’s regulations governing building and street wall height in the URA. New development would be subject to the height and

setback regulations of the New York City Zoning Resolution. It is expected that new residential buildings on URA sites 52, 53, 62, and 64 would be developed under the Quality Housing Program, which imposes height limits and street wall requirements and requires the planting of street trees. Site 52 could be developed with a new residential building of up to 60 feet with an additional setback rising to 75 feet. On site 53, a residential building with ground floor retail space could be developed; it could be 85 feet with additional setbacks rising to a total of 120 feet. A one-story commercial building is expected to be developed on site 54 and a one- or two-story community facility is expected to be developed on site 51. On site 62, a residential building with a street wall height of up to 65 feet and a total building height of up to 80 feet. Site 15 would be developed with a residential and commercial building 60 feet in height with an additional setback which would rise to a total of 75 feet in height. A residential building with a street wall height of up to 85 feet and a total height of up to 120 feet could be constructed on site 64. Though these buildings would have setbacks greater in height than what is currently in the URA, the streetwalls would be similar in bulk, form, and massing as existing buildings in the URA. The setback portions would not be visible from the streets, especially the narrow streets such as East 163rd and East 162nd Streets.

VISUAL RESOURCES

There are no visual resources on any of the potential development sites, the Boricua Village site or the Courtlandt Corners site. The 13-story buildings would be taller than any surrounding buildings. The glass tower of the College building would be a prominent building in the area and, therefore, create a new visual landmark on the project site and in the surrounding area. The proposed Boricua Village project would also create new open spaces on the project site and a new amenity for viewing the visual resources in the surrounding area.

The proposed Boricua Village project might block some views of the Bronx Borough Courthouse from East 163rd Street and Third Avenue; however, this is not a principal viewing location nor is it a view corridor to the main facade. The streets surrounding the Courthouse would be developed with a new public open space allowing for improved views of the Courthouse. Therefore, the proposed Boricua Village project would not have an adverse effect on the visual resources of the study area.

The proposed Courtlandt Corners project and any new developments on the remaining URA sites would not block views to any visual resources nor create any new visually prominent buildings. The new developments would replace the dilapidated and abandoned buildings on the proposed project sites; the buildings would be similar in bulk, form, massing, and exterior detail to similar buildings in the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed Courtlandt Corners project and any new developments on the remaining URA sites would not have a significant adverse effect on the visual resources in the surrounding area.

STUDY AREA

URBAN DESIGN

Street Pattern, Block Shapes, and Natural Features

The proposed Boricua Village project would alter the block shape by building on the already demapped portions of East 162nd Street and Brook Avenue. It would create a group of residential and commercial buildings along with a new open space, some of which would rest on existing streets. However, these streets are underutilized and deteriorated and the proposed

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project would bring new and active uses to this area of the URA. The proposed and future actions would not alter the natural features of the study area or the Melrose Commons URA.

Streetscape

The proposed and future projects would contribute toward revitalizing the streets in the study area by introducing new residential, commercial, and educational uses that would generate pedestrian activity in the study area. The new developments would improve the streetscape by creating new buildings consistent with those in the study area and the URA, and replace the vacant and deteriorated buildings and lots. They would further improve the appearance of the streetscape by adding street lighting and landscaping. In addition, new community gardens and open spaces would be created with the proposed and future projects. Therefore, the proposed and future projects would have a positive effect on the streetscape of the study area and the Melrose Commons URA.

Building Uses, Bulk, and Arrangements

The proposed and future projects would introduce a group of buildings that would be greater in height than the surrounding buildings. However the difference in height is not significant enough to have an adverse impact on the urban design features of the study area. The buildings of the proposed Boricua Village and future Courtlandt Corners projects would be sited in a way that is consistent with the current configuration (i.e., maintains streetwalls along the main avenues). The new buildings would be faced with stone and brick, two materials found in the study area, and, therefore, would be in keeping with surrounding buildings. The proposed Boricua Village project would also result in the construction of a glass tower, which would introduce a new and interesting building to the study area.

VISUAL RESOURCES

The proposed Boricua Village project would have a beneficial impact on visual resources within the study area. The new buildings, street lighting, and landscaping would improve the visual appearance of the project sites from the surrounding area, and the new open spaces would create new viewing opportunities of the Bronx Borough Courthouse. Views of the Bronx Borough Courthouse and the tower of the Church of Saints Peter and Paul from the northern edge of the study area would possibly be blocked by the new 13-story tower. However, this is not a significant viewing area and the building would itself become a visual resource in the study area. The proposed and future projects would not eliminate any significant views or view corridors. As views to these resources are blocked by intervening developments, the proposed and future projects would not block any significant views in the western and southern sections of the study area.

The proposed and future projects would also improve the streetscape and surrounding area with landscaping and new pedestrian walkways that would open up views of the Courthouse and improve the visual surroundings of the Courthouse and the overall visual appearance of the study area. Therefore, no significant adverse effects to the visual resources of the study area are expected from the proposed and future projects.

Overall, the proposed and future projects would have a beneficial impact on the urban design and visual resources of the study area and larger URA. They would replace the vacant and deteriorated buildings, the empty lots, and the community gardens, with new residential, commercial, and educational buildings. In addition, the proposed and future projects would

improve the streetscape by replacing the vacant lots with new buildings that would be consistent in bulk, form, and massing with the existing developments in the study area and URA, and would provide new streetscape elements, such as trees. The new developments would enliven the area by bringing new residential, commercial, and educational uses to the area, which would increase pedestrian activity in the area. Finally, they would not block any significant views to visual resources and would create new parks and open spaces from which to view the Bronx Borough Courthouse and the Church of Saints Peter and Paul. *