

Background

After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) implemented a security plan to protect a group of buildings in the Civic Center that primarily includes its headquarters at One Police Plaza, as well as Federal and State Court buildings, and the Metropolitan Detention Center. The security plan established checkpoints and installed provisional booths and vehicle interdiction devices, closing several streets to general traffic. Because part of Park Row was closed as part of this plan, a north-south connection between Chinatown and the Civic Center was no longer available to through traffic and vehicular access for residents of the Chatham Towers and Chatham Green residential complexes was constrained.

A series of legal challenges were mounted against the security plan, which resulted in the preparation of a detailed Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) by the NYPD. The EIS identifies significant impacts in several areas including: traffic, noise, air, and visual resources and urban design. The environmental review process recommended implementation of two major mitigation measures in order to address these significant adverse impacts: the reconfiguration of Chatham Square and the creation of pedestrian promenade on Park Row. Even with these mitigation measures, however, the EIS indicated that not all significant adverse impacts would be mitigated.

The existing Chatham Square intersection was built in 1999, when it was aligned to facilitate the north-south movement between the Bowery and Park Row. When Park Row was closed, north-south traffic was shifted to St. James Place, sending motorists along a serpentine path through the square. Pedestrians crossing through Chatham Square must contend with long crossings, inadequate sight lines and multiple simultaneous turning movements through crosswalks. These conditions have made Chatham Square a challenging environment for pedestrians and motorists.

Chatham Square Reconfiguration

Based on a new design proposed and reviewed as part of the EIS process, the City intends to reconfigure Chatham Square in order to improve traffic and pedestrian conditions and create a substantial new public open space.

The planned reconfiguration will re-align both the north-south and east-west movements through Chatham Square: the Bowery will flow directly into St. James Place while Worth Street will flow directly into East Broadway. The realignment will essentially simplify the existing complicated intersection by creating two smaller ones. Crosswalks will be shorter and visibility will improve for pedestrians and motorists. The new configuration will feature fewer overall lanes for vehicle movement, which the analysis shows will have a calming effect on traffic and further benefit pedestrian safety. Despite the reduction in travel lanes, we expect that the improved efficiency of the new configuration will alleviate current congestion conditions experienced at Chatham Square. Traffic analysis conducted as part of the EIS process showed a marked improvement in traffic movements.

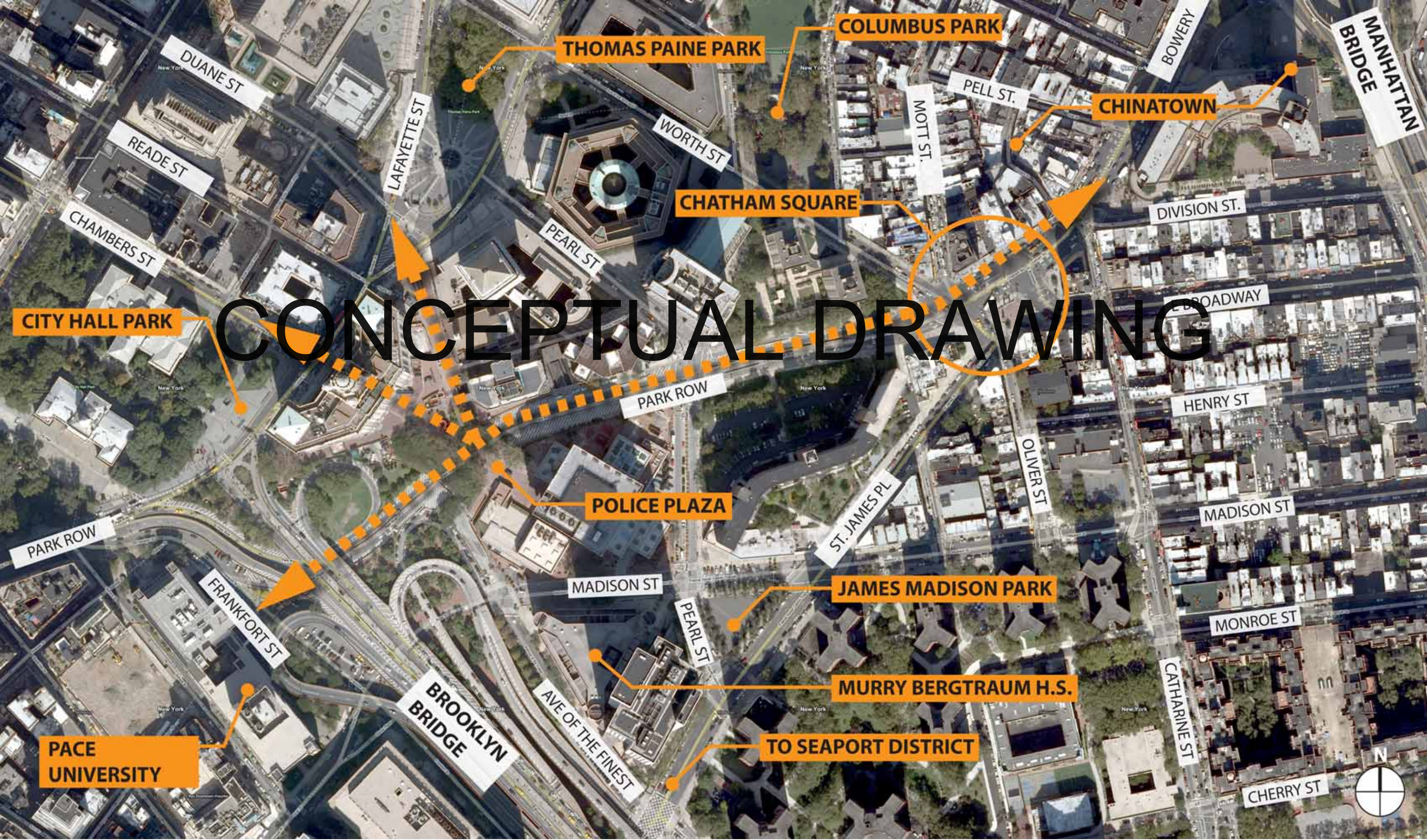
City officials have been meeting with local residents, business owners, Community Boards and other stakeholders to explain the plan and gather feedback. These meetings led to a number of valuable improvements to the plan. The Police and Fire Department have both favorably reviewed the plan. New York City Transit (NYCT) has also reviewed the new alignment and stated that they believe it will reduce bus travel times through the area.

The reconfigured intersection also significantly increases available public open space in the area. The City has engaged landscape architects Stantec and Thomas Balsley Associates to design this space in conjunction with the Departments of Parks and Recreation, City Planning, Design and Construction and Transportation. The plaza will feature a dedicated space for the existing Kimlau Memorial Arch as well as programmable space for a variety of passive public uses.

Park Row Promenade

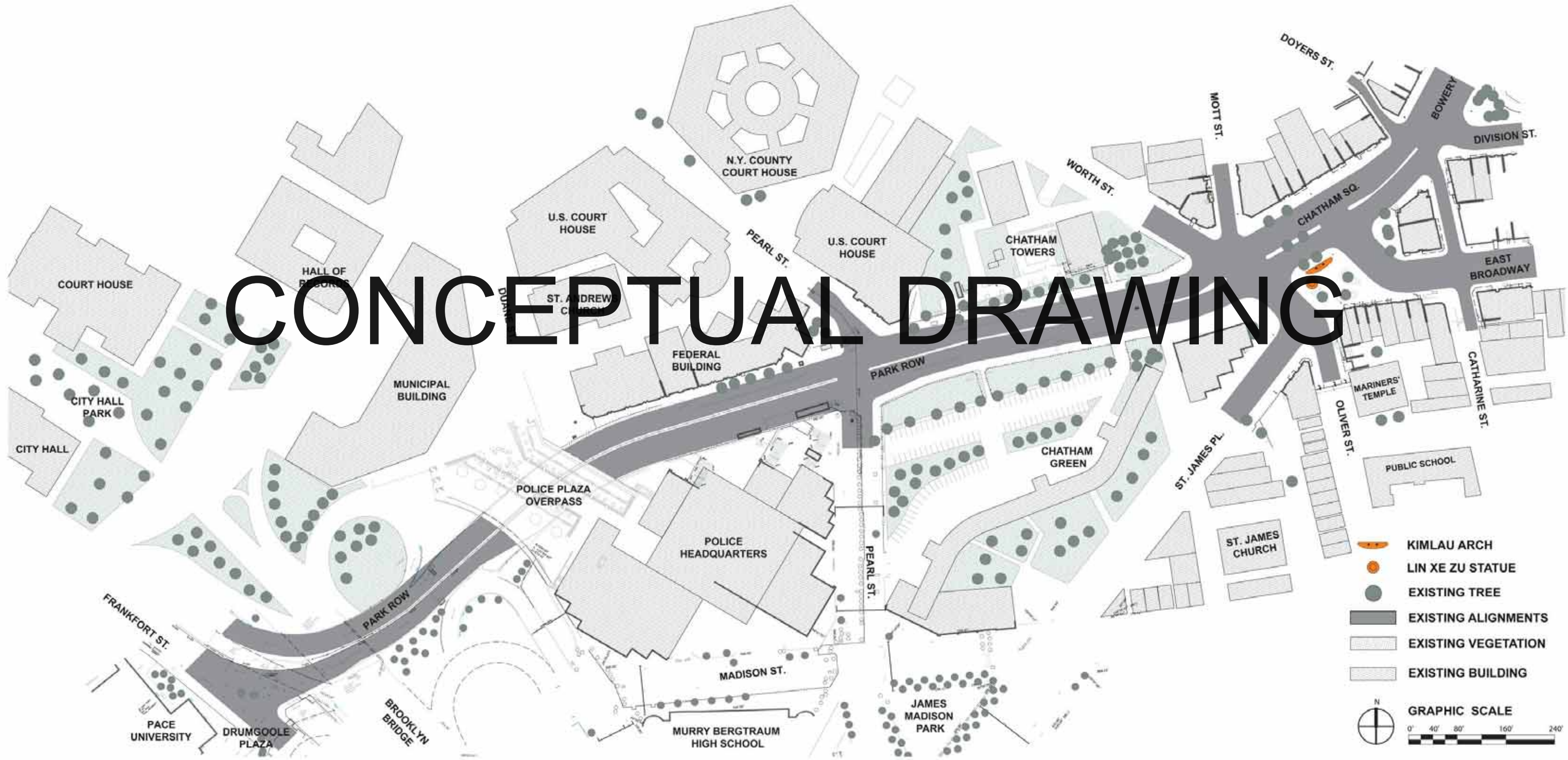
The existing configuration of Park Row permits two lanes of through traffic plus a parking lane in each direction. Now that Park Row is limited to authorized vehicles (local residents, NYPD vehicles, NYCT buses and emergency services), this roadway is underutilized. Nearly half of the right-of-way for vehicles is planned for conversion as a landscaped promenade for pedestrians and bicyclists. The promenade will feature appropriate plantings, passive recreation space, and a new location for the Commissioner Lin Xe Zu statue at Chatham Square. The promenade will provide an attractive and seamless connection between Chinatown, the Civic Center and Lower Manhattan, as well as connections with existing parks at Brooklyn Bridge Plaza and Drumgoole Plaza.

The plan for Park Row also features improvements to the existing sallyport security configuration at its northern entrance. A new alignment has been designed that will minimize delays for MTA busses and residents of Chatham Green while providing for a secure environment in which to screen vehicles entering the One Police Plaza campus. Additionally, all security booths and barriers will be upgraded. Existing installations will be replaced with state-of-the-art devices that offer improved functionality and reduce visual and noise impacts. -



CONCEPTUAL DRAWING

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