

## 8.0 URBAN DESIGN & VISUAL RESOURCES

### 8.1 Introduction

The study area for urban design and visual resources is within a 400-foot radius of the project site.

The CEQR Technical Manual (Section 3G-200) states:

*“When a proposed action would result in any of the following conditions, an assessment of urban design is generally appropriate:*

- *Building. If the action would result in a building or structures substantially different in height, bulk, form, setbacks, size, or arrangement than exists (such as the construction of a tall, slender office tower in a manufacturing area).*
- *Street. If the action would change block form (such as would occur with the creation of a super-block) or would demap an active street; would map a new street, or would affect the street hierarchy, street wall, curb cuts, pedestrian activity, or other streetscape elements.”*
- *Visual Resources. “When an action would result in aboveground development or would change the bulk of new aboveground development (such as with a zoning change) and is proposed in an area that includes significant visual resources, an analysis of visual resources may be appropriate.”*
- *Natural Features. If the action would result the elimination of natural features that are enjoyed by the community or are designated as special resources in the Zoning Resolution or would obstruct the public’s ability to enjoy natural features (by blocking views or access), an analysis of natural features may be appropriate.*

### 8.2 Existing Conditions

The existing facility at the Hospital for Special Surgery consists of the 8-story and 4-story West Wing of the Main Hospital, the 7-story East Wing of the Main Hospital, constructed on a platform in the air space over the FDR Drive between East 70<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> Streets; the 8-story Caspary Research Building; and the 39-story Belaire Building.

An existing pedestrian bridge at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor level over East 70<sup>th</sup> Street connects the West Wing of the Main Hospital Building to New York Presbyterian Hospital. There is additional access from HSS to New York Presbyterian Hospital through the cellar level. An existing pedestrian bridge at the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor level over East 71<sup>st</sup> Street connects the West Wing of the Main Hospital Building to the Caspary Research Building. An existing public pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive on the north side of East 71<sup>st</sup> Street provides access to East River Esplanade along the waterfront area, which was constructed in accordance with the terms of the 1973 Agreement, as amended, and the previous approvals.

The waterfront area along the East River Esplanade is a visual resource that was identified within the 400-foot radius study area of the project site.

Some views of the waterfront from various perspectives are partially blocked by the support columns for the East Wing's platform over the FDR Drive, by the East Wing, and by the existing pedestrian bridges (see View Corridor Photos with Index - Figure 8.1 Photos 1-13).

### **8.3 The Future Without the Proposed Project - 2010**

The future without the proposed project involves the renovation of the existing HSS facility and new construction permitted under the Agreement, as amended. No buildings would be demolished in the future without the proposed project.

The future without the proposed project involves no changes from existing conditions to building form, setbacks, size, arrangement, block form, other streetscape elements, curb cuts, visual resources or natural features.

No other development projects in the study area are planned that would have an effect on the urban design and visual resources.

### **8.4 The Future With the Proposed Project - 2010**

The future with the proposed project involves new construction, the installation of support columns in-between the two (2) parts of the switchback ramp immediately east of the FDR Drive that connects to the pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive, the addition of floors 9 to 11 on the East Wing of the main hospital building, and the construction of a new pedestrian bridge at the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor level over the FDR Drive at East 71<sup>st</sup> Street to connect the East Wing of the Main Hospital Building to the new River Building.

No buildings would be demolished as a result of the proposed project. The proposed project would not remove any of the existing pedestrian bridges. However, the support columns for the new River Building would be placed between the two portions of the switchback ramp.

#### **8.4.1 Building**

The existing facility at the Hospital for Special Surgery consists of the 8-story and 4-story West Wing of the Main Hospital, the 7-story East Wing of the Main Hospital, constructed on a platform in the air space over the FDR Drive between East 70<sup>th</sup> and 71<sup>st</sup> Streets; the 8-story Caspary Research Building; and the 39-story Belaire Building. An existing public pedestrian bridge over the FDR Drive on the north side of East 71<sup>st</sup> Street provides access to East River Esplanade along the waterfront area. With the project the East Wing building would be 10-stories and the new River Building would be 12-stories including four (4) approximately 9,600 SF and eight (8) 7,600 SF floor plates. These forms and envelopes are consistent with development throughout the area including development on the platform to the south of HSS.

The proposed project would result in new construction of a building that is compatible with others in the surrounding area in terms of height, bulk, form, setbacks, size, and arrangement.

The Agreement, as amended, provided for the expansion over the FDR Drive of certain non-profit institutions along with the Hospital to encourage development away from neighborhoods to the west. The proposed enlargement is consistent with the Agreement and that of their other neighboring health institutions that have also expanded in accordance with the Agreement.

#### **8.4.2 Streetscape Elements**

No changes would be made to alter the existing grid pattern and large superblocks of the study area. The proposed project would change block form by constructing a platform in the air space that would be elevated 21 feet over the FDR Drive. This change in block form is consistent with the blocks to the south, where platforms over the FDR Drive have created similar blocks. This is the form contemplated and authorized by the 1971 legislation and Agreement. The proposed project would require street eliminations, discontinuances, closings and conveyances from the City of New York to erect columns and footings on the East River Esplanade. The placement of the support columns for the proposed River Building would meet the requirements of the Agreement, in that their placement would not interfere with pedestrian use and enjoyment of the Esplanade, restrict light and air to the esplanade, detract from the visual quality of the waterfront area, or impede vehicular use of the FDR Drive, E. 70<sup>th</sup> Street or E. 71<sup>st</sup> Street. The proposed project would not affect street hierarchy, the street wall or other streetscape elements and would not introduce any new curb cuts. In addition, the proposed building would be similar in design aspects, such as platform placement, height, arrangement, and column placement, to the other developments located to the south of the site above the FDR Drive. However, the new River Building, would include an additional sense of openness along the East River Esplanade, due to the design of the support columns and integration of them into the existing East 71<sup>st</sup> Street Pedestrian Bridge with an open structural framework connecting to the Building platform. In addition, and as exemplified by the distinctive 2007 Special Recognition Award for the proposed design plan for the Hospital of Special Surgery awarded to HSS by the Art Commission of the City of New York, the proposed additions to the HSS campus are setting a new standard for institutional facility design, making the proposed additions to the HSS campus distinctive in design and visually appealing. Based on the above, the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts to the streetscape of urban design.

#### **8.4.3 Visual Resources**

The waterfront area along the East River Esplanade is a visual resource within the study area. The support columns for the River building's platform would partially block views of the East River waterfront from various perspectives on the East River Esplanade when standing to the west of the public pedestrian bridge ramp. However, the V-shaped design of the columns would ensure visibility, light and air, and accessibility to the East River Esplanade as required by the Agreement. The incrementally blocked views would be minimal and would not be significant.

Additionally, visual access to the waterfront would be incrementally impeded looking north from atop the public pedestrian bridge where it crosses over the FDR and when looking south from the East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Overlook. The views to the east, west, and north would not be affected. Views of the waterfront from the East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Overlook are already partially blocked by the East Wing

of the existing hospital building and the public pedestrian bridge from East 71<sup>st</sup> Street over the FDR Drive. Moreover, views to the south will remain accessible from other public locations within the immediate area, such as on the East 71<sup>st</sup> Street pedestrian bridge and the Esplanade. The incremental reduction of visual access from this location is minimal and therefore not significant.

The addition of a pedestrian bridge from the proposed River Building to the East Wing of the existing main hospital building would additionally partially block views when looking east from East 71<sup>st</sup> Street. However, it would not additionally block the views of the water and would not result in significant impacts. The public pedestrian bridge from East 71<sup>st</sup> Street over the FDR Drive would continue to provide access to the East River Esplanade would provide additional pedestrian views of the East River and attract the public to the waterfront.

The Queensboro Bridge that extends over the East River at 59<sup>th</sup> Street is a designated New York City landmark. The views of the Queensboro Bridge when looking south along the FDR Drive from the project site would be affected. However, this view is already somewhat obstructed by the East Wing of the main hospital building. As noted, views of the Bridge from other accessible locations nearby would continue to be provided. Based on the foregoing, in addition to the fact that the view of the Bridge from the East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street Overlook Park is not a complete or the predominant view from the Overlook, the loss of the incremental view would not be a significant adverse impact to historical or visual resources. See Figure 8-7.

The historic bridges over the East River and Harlem River, which include the High Bridge and Washington Bridge, are too far to the north to be seen from the project.

Views of the New York City skyline from Roosevelt Island, or as would be observed by water transportation passengers in the East River, would not be altered significantly by the proposed project (see Figure 8.2 - Rendering, Northeast Elevation).

#### **8.4.4      *Natural Features***

The proposed project would not affect natural features, as none are located on the project site (see Chapter 10 “Natural Resources”).

**Figure 8-1. Photos of Visual Resources.**



1. View looking north along the esplanade.



2. View looking north along the esplanade showing footing columns for the East Wing.



3. View looking south along the esplanade.



4. Another view looking south along the esplanade.



5. View looking south along the esplanade showing footing columns for the East Wing.



6. View looking north along the FDR Drive from the public pedestrian bridge.

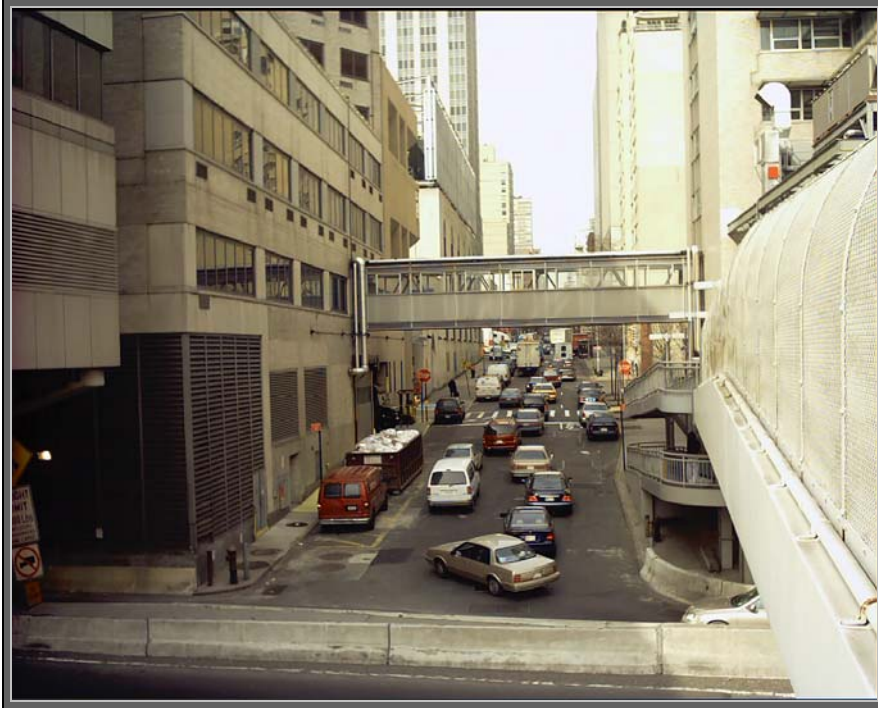


7. View looking south along the FDR Drive at the East Wing and at the public pedestrian bridge that provides waterfront access.



8. View looking east from the location of the proposed River Building on the FDR Drive between E. 71<sup>st</sup> Street and E. 72<sup>nd</sup> Street





9. View looking west along East 71<sup>st</sup> Street showing the existing pedestrian bridge



10. View looking east along East 71<sup>st</sup> Street from York Avenue showing the existing pedestrian bridge between the West Wing and the Caspary Building.





13. View looking south from the East River Overlook at East 72<sup>nd</sup> Street.

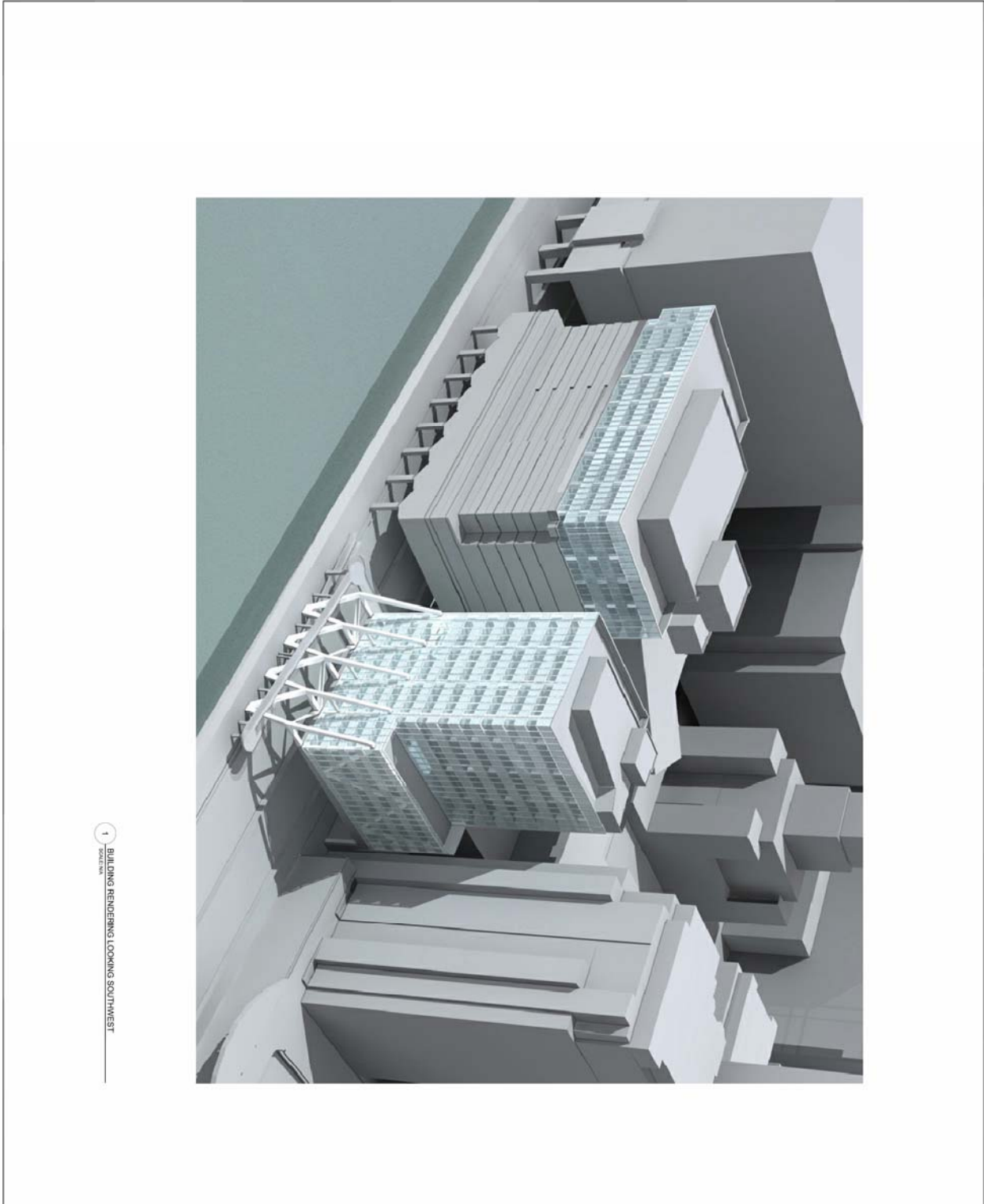


Figure 8-2. Building rendering looking southwest. Aerial View.



1 BUILDING RENDERING LOOKING SOUTHWEST  
SCALE: 1/8"

**Figure 8-3. Building rendering looking southwest. River View.**



**Figure 8-4. Rendering, West Elevation.**

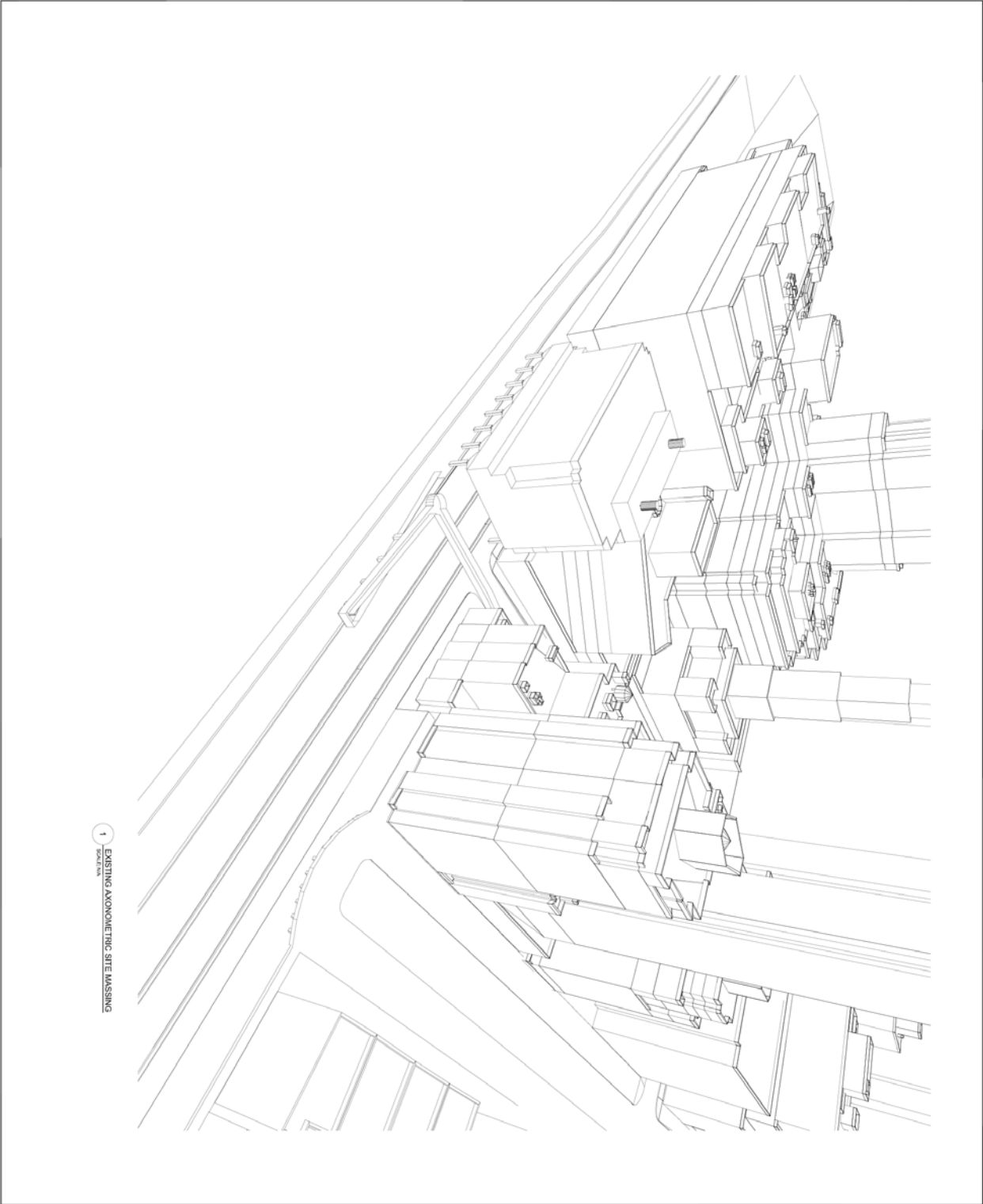
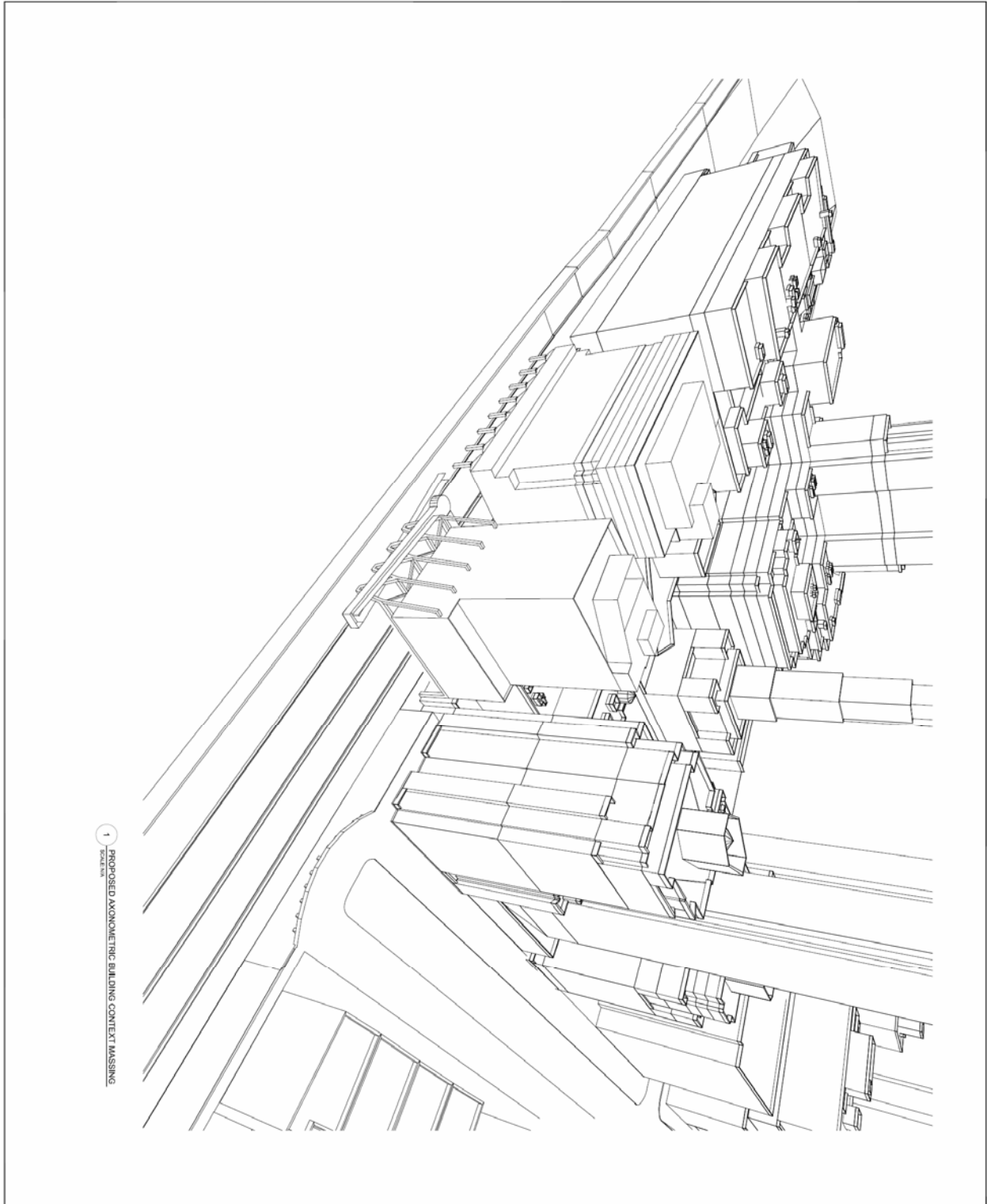


Figure 8-5. Existing Site Massing.



**Figure 8-6. Proposed Site Massing.**





**Figure 8-7. View to the South from the East 72nd Street Overlook Park to the South**