

Chapter 9 : URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

A. INTRODUCTION

This section considers the potential of the Proposed Action to affect urban design and visual resources. As defined in the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space. A visual resource can include views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings, and natural resources. Since the Proposed Action could result in the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond what is allowed by existing zoning, a preliminary assessment of urban design and visual resources is warranted.

Per the 2014 *CEQR Technical Manual*, the analysis for this chapter should focus on where the Proposed Action may influence land use patterns and the built environment. Because the proposal is a citywide action that would impact a variety of areas and contexts, this analysis addresses urban design and visual resources by examining prototypical cases in the context of example neighborhood study areas, the Future without the Proposed Action (the No-Action condition) and the Future with the Proposed Action (With-Action condition) in the 2025 analysis year.

The Proposed Action would result in changes to the use, bulk and parking regulations for residential uses and specified community facilities in certain zoning districts in the Zoning Resolution on a city-wide basis with the objective of improving the design quality of buildings and lowering the cost of housing. This would have the result of improving urban design considerations throughout the city, by providing architects and designers more opportunities to articulate buildings in a manner similar to the historic context. Existing zoning controls limit overall design flexibility and often result in buildings that do not include design and streetscape-improving elements that are typical of older apartment buildings in the city's residential neighborhoods. The proposed zoning changes that would provide additional flexibility to these regulations to generally facilitate housing development and enhance the quality of both new housing and street-level commercial activity. Thus the Proposed Action is intended to reinforce and improve existing neighborhood character citywide through additional growth opportunities and improved regulations for street walls, courtyards, and ground floor transparency.

The following components of the proposal are analyzed for their effects on urban design and visual resources.

General bulk controls

- Adjust height controls in moderate- and high-density districts
- Create more-efficient building setback rules
- Remove unnecessary corner lot coverage restrictions
- Provide a more balanced building transition rule
- Enhanced building envelopes for inclusionary and affordable senior housing
- Update floor area ratio maximum for Affordable Independent Residences for Seniors and long-term care facilities
- Permit residential accessory uses on ground floors in rear yards
- Remove narrow lot restrictions
- Create a new non-contextual building envelope for affordable housing (R6-R10A)
- Create new lower-density bulk envelope for affordable senior housing and care facilities (R3-R5)

Encourage variety and better design flexibility

- Provide greater clarity and design opportunities in street wall regulations
- Match line-up provision requirements to intent
- Provide more-useable court regulations
- Remove or modify unnecessary window regulations
- Clarify use location provisions
- Modernize density factor and unit size requirements

- Encourage elevated residential ground floors
- Eliminate Quality Housing study areas

Flexibility for constrained lots

- Provide improved yard and coverage regulations for shallow lots
- Rationalize street wall requirements for acutely-angled sites
- Provide additional flexibility for irregular topography
- Update outdated distance between buildings regulations
- Create a new discretionary action for unforeseen site circumstances

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action would promote new development that is consistent with existing uses, density, scale and bulk, and would not result in buildings or structures that would be substantially different in character or arrangement than those that currently exist in the neighborhood.

The Proposed Action would result in new buildings that are taller than would be permitted under the existing framework. Buildings without affordable housing in high density areas (R6 and higher) would be permitted 5 to 15 feet of additional height, or up to one additional story, to accommodate design best practices and allow for more flexibility in terms of building layout. Senior housing, and buildings qualifying under the existing voluntary Inclusionary Housing or future Mandatory Inclusionary Housing program would be permitted an additional height generally of 1 or 2 stories, except in R10A districts on narrow streets, which would be permitted up to an additional 4 stories. The increase in permitted height for buildings with certain types of affordable housing is proposed in order to accommodate their full permitted floor area as well as the better design standards promoted for all buildings. The provision to remove unnecessary corner lot coverage restrictions would increase the likelihood of development on corner lots with larger building footprints, resulting in an increased potential for additional in-ground disturbance in the future.

Where only 5 feet of additional height is proposed, the height would be permitted only for buildings providing at least 13 feet between the ground floor and the 2nd floor; in districts where more than 5 feet is proposed, the building may only achieve the full proposed height by building a qualifying ground floor. This ensures that the taller buildings are offset by better ground floor retail spaces and an improved sidewalk experience, with increased building articulation, including attributes like elevated ground floor residential lobbies, courtyards, and limited setbacks that allow for more planting along the sidewalk. In combination, the proposed changes are expected to result in more interesting buildings for pedestrians on the sidewalk, and better living spaces for building residents.

The Proposed Action would result in very little new development that would not have occurred in the future without the Proposed Action, with the exception of infill development permitted on the existing parking lots accessory to affordable senior housing. Even where some additional FAR is being permitted in the Future with the Proposed Action, the increase is not expected to be great enough to change local development markets. It is not possible to determine where the effects of the Proposed Action would result in a slight increase in development that would not have otherwise occurred without the Proposed Action.

Therefore, no significant adverse impacts related to urban design and visual resources are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Action.

C. METHODOLOGY

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, urban design is the totality of components that may affect a pedestrian's experience of public space and this analysis considers the effects of the Proposed Action on the experience of a pedestrian in the rezoning and study areas. Urban Design assessments focus on those project elements that have

the potential to alter the built environment, or urban design, of the rezoning area, which is collectively formed by the following components:

- Street Pattern and Streetscape—the arrangement and orientation of streets define location, flow of activity, street views, and create blocks on which buildings and open spaces are arranged. Other elements including sidewalks, plantings, street lights, curb cuts, and street furniture also contribute to an area’s streetscape.
- Buildings—building size, shape, setbacks, pedestrian and vehicular entrances, lot coverage and orientation to the street are important urban design components that define the appearance of the built environment.
- Open Space—open space includes public and private areas that do not include structures, including parks and other landscaped areas, cemeteries, and parking lots.
- Natural Features—natural features include vegetation, and geologic and aquatic features that are natural to the area.
- View Corridors and Visual Resources—visual resources include significant natural or built features, including important views corridors, public parks, landmarks structures or districts, or otherwise distinct buildings.

Given that this is a citywide text amendment, natural features, built or natural visual resources, according to the definitions in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, may exist in areas affected by the Proposed Action. However, the Proposed Action would not affect the street hierarchy or reconfigure blocks. Therefore, this chapter analyzes the urban design characteristics of prototypical example buildings in the context of specific study areas, which include the streetscape, buildings, open spaces.

D. STUDY AREAS

In accordance with the *2014 CEQR Technical Manual*, the analysis begins with a preliminary assessment to determine whether the changes to the pedestrian environment are sufficiently significant to require greater explanation and further study in the form of a detailed analysis. Examples include projects that would potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alterations to the streetscape of an area by noticeably changing the scale of buildings.

The Proposed Action would permit moderate increases to the allowable residential bulk in limited areas for inclusionary housing, affordable senior housing and long term care facilities, and small increases to the allowable residential bulk in limited areas for general residential uses. Since these increases consist primarily of medium- and high-density residential districts, the focus for the preliminary assessment was therefore limited to study areas of this type.

Because the nature of a generic action precludes the analysis of a Primary and Secondary study area as are typically assessed in this chapter, 5 prototypical neighborhoods were created as study areas in order to examine the effects the Proposed Action would have on the urban design character on representative areas of the city. These prototypical neighborhoods include: a prototypical R7A neighborhood, a prototypical R8A neighborhood, a prototypical R10A neighborhood, a prototypical C6-4A (R10A Equivalent) neighborhood, and a prototypical R4 neighborhood. Each study area was selected on the basis that the Proposed Action would allow an increase in height, a shift in building footprint, or a wholly new development, which could have the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond what is allowed by existing zoning.

Since the urban design and visual resources analysis is a site specific-based technical analysis, the anticipated development on prototypical study areas forms the basis for this preliminary assessment.

E. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary assessment is appropriate when there is the potential for a pedestrian to observe, from the street level, a physical alteration beyond that allowed by existing zoning, including the following: (1) projects or actions that permit the modification of yard, height, and setback requirements; and (2)

projects or actions that result in an increase in built floor area beyond what would be allowed as-of-right or in the Future without the Proposed Action. Beyond a preliminary assessment, a detailed analysis may be needed for projects or actions that potentially obstruct view corridors, compete with icons in the skyline, or make substantial alteration to the streetscape of a neighborhood by noticeably changing the scale of buildings. Detailed assessments are generally appropriate for all area-wide rezonings that include an increase in permitted floor area or changes in height and setback requirements. Therefore, a detailed assessment is provided below.

F. DETAILED ASSESSMENT

Prototypical neighborhoods

Study Area A consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in medium density areas. In these areas, R7A districts are typically mapped along wide avenues and narrow street sections are typically mapped with lower density districts such as R3, R4 and 5 districts. Some R7A districts are mapped along narrow street sections that are build-out with large and high lot coverage buildings predating the 1961 Zoning Resolution. The bulk and density of these older residential buildings are similar to those permitted under R7A bulk regulations. Prototypical buildings 1, 3 and 11 are modeled as development sites in this neighborhood. Study Area A is assumed to have been recently rezoning, and Prototype 11 assumes that an existing Non-profit Residences for the Elderly was constructed under the non-contextual bulk regulations of R7-2 districts, making the existing building a legal non-complying building. Surrounding larger buildings predates the 1961 Zoning Resolution but their bulk and density is similar to those permitted under R7A bulk regulations.

Study Area B consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in medium to high density areas outside of Manhattan. In these areas, higher density districts are mapped along a wide street and narrow street sections are typically mapped with low to medium density districts such as R6B and R7B districts. In this prototypical neighborhood, a high density R8A district is mapped along both sides of a wide north-south avenue and areas beyond 100 feet from the avenue is mapped with lower density R6B districts.

Study Area C consists of the same generic high-density residential neighborhood typically seen in Manhattan. In these areas, R10A districts are typically mapped along wide avenues and narrow street sections are typically mapped with moderate density districts such as R8B districts. Some R10A districts are mapped along narrow street sections that are build-out with large and high lot coverage buildings predating the 1961 Zoning Resolution. These areas along narrow streets mapped with R10A districts are most likely be fully build-out with large residential buildings.

Study Area D consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in high density commercial areas in Midtown and Lower Manhattan. To assess potential Urban Design impacts from the proposed height and setback changes for an Inclusionary Housing development in contextual R10A district along narrow streets, where the largest incremental height change is proposed under the Proposed Action, it was necessary to assemble a high density contextual neighborhood such as an area mapped with C6-4A districts. As described in Prototypical Neighborhood C, residential R10A districts are primarily mapped along wide street and when they are mapped in an area along narrow street beyond 100 feet from a wide street, they are most likely be build-out and it is not reasonable to project or assume a development in these areas. High density contextual commercial districts that are R10A equivalent districts are mapped along narrow streets in wider (but still very limited) areas and contain some potential residential development sites.

Study Area E consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in low density areas. R4 districts allow detached and multi-family housing that typically produces buildings with two stories, plus a third under a pitched roof.

Existing Condition

Study Area A: R7A zoning district

Description

This prototypical R7A neighborhood is populated by a mix of housing types. Many older residential buildings were built prior to a recent rezoning from R7-2 to R7A. Examples of R7A neighborhoods include Bedford Stuyvesant, Prospect Park South, and Flatbush, in Brooklyn. In order to model the effects of the proposed change to the transition rule, this Prototypical Neighborhood has been modelled adjacent to an R4A residential district. This study area models the effect of developments based on Prototypes 1, 3 and 11.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Under existing conditions, there are no issues with pedestrian and vehicular flow. The neighborhood is laid out in a standard city grid pattern, comprised primarily with one-way streets, and with sidewalks on both sides.

Buildings

Under existing conditions, there are a variety of building types existing within the R7A neighborhood. The majority match the use and bulk that defines an R7A district, and are contextual buildings built pursuant to Quality Housing regulations, which are mandatory in R7A districts. Most are 7 or 8 story buildings with high lot coverages, built to the street wall. Buildings are typically up to 80 feet tall, with a base height of 40 to 65 feet tall before setting back (10 feet on a narrow street, 15 feet on a wide street) to achieve their maximum height. These bulk regulations result in a building envelope that is tight for the permitted FAR. As a result, sacrifices to the building design are often made in order to fit all of the permitted density.

These sacrifices include sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. Along corridors where there is a commercial overlay, the ground floor commercial spaces tend to have low floor-to-ceiling heights, in order to accommodate all permitted FAR within the relatively tight building envelope. Along residential side streets with no commercial overlay, ground floor residential uses are at-grade, resulting in windows on the sidewalk that are often closed with blinds or shades to provide privacy for residents within. Furthermore, in order to fit all permitted floor area, building facades typically lack the articulation and design features common on older, historic buildings, despite the Quality Housing contextual intentions of better integrating new buildings into the existing fabric. While the regulations require that all open areas between the street wall and the street line be planted, a tight envelope forces many buildings onto the street line, leaving no open space between the street wall and the street line.

Because of the tight building envelope, many of the compliant buildings are boxy and provide little articulation or ground floor setback, because such design treatments would consume portions of the building envelope that would otherwise be allocated for housing. These sacrifices result in fewer planted spaces between the street wall and street line, and produce buildings that, despite their contextual zoning, have bland facades that are conspicuous among the more historic buildings in the neighborhood.

Open Space

The neighborhood has a large park occupying half a full block, across the street from a historic resource (church) and two development sites. There is another smaller park across the street from an existing parking lot for an affordable senior housing building. Adjacent to the affordable senior housing building is a large parking lot, accessory to the housing.

Natural Features

There are no unique natural features defining the overall visual character of this neighborhood.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

There is one historic resource in this neighborhood, a church location on the same block as two of the development sites. There are no other significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources in this neighborhood.

Study Area B: Prototypical R8A Neighborhood

Description

This prototypical study area is an R8A zoning district mapped for Inclusionary Housing, adjacent to an R6B district. This neighborhood represents a likely scenario in the city where there is a great degree of difference between the permitted building forms of two adjacent zoning districts. An example of this condition occurs along Fourth Avenue, in Brooklyn's Park Slope neighborhood. This study area models the effect of development based on Prototype 17.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Under existing conditions, there are no issues with pedestrian and vehicular flow. The neighborhood is laid out in a standard city grid pattern, comprised primarily with one-way streets, and with sidewalks on both sides.

Buildings

Under existing conditions, the R8A zoning district is mapped primarily along wide streets, with developments in this district occurring on both wide and narrow streets. Midblock sections beyond the mapped R8A district are zoned R6B.

Buildings in R8A districts have contextual Quality Housing bulk regulations, typically resulting in high lot coverage 10-12 story apartment buildings set at or near the street line. Limitations on the base height and maximum building height of new buildings ensure compatibility with existing buildings on the street.

The FAR in R8A districts is 6.02, with a bonus for Inclusionary Housing that allows up to 7.2 FAR. Buildings are permitted a base height of 60 to 85 feet, with a maximum height of 120 feet regardless of whether they provide Inclusionary Housing. Above the base height, buildings must be set back to a depth of 10 feet on a wide street, and 15 feet on a narrow street. On wide streets, the street wall must extend along the entire width of a zoning lot, and at least 70 percent of the street wall must be within eight feet of the street line.

The transition rule requires that any portion of an R8A (or other high density) building built within 25 feet of a building in an adjacent R6B district must comply with R6B height and setback regulations. This has the effect of profoundly reducing the geographic applicability of the R8A district in this prototypical neighborhood for all buildings abutting the R6B district, limiting the portion of the building within 25' of this district to a maximum height of 50 feet and forcing the bulk elsewhere on site.

The transition rule exacerbates the existing condition of a building envelope that is too tight to fit the permitted FAR allowed under the Inclusionary Housing program, resulting in low participation rates in the IH program among new developments.

Open Space

There are no public or private areas such as parks, yards, cemeteries, parking lots, or privately owned public spaces in this study area.

Natural Features

There are no unique natural features defining the overall visual character of this study area.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

There is one historic resource in this neighborhood, a house of worship typically seen in New York City's medium to high density areas outside of Manhattan. This house of worship has historic significance and contains architectural features including stained glasses and other sunlight-sensitive architectural design elements.

Study Area C: Prototypical R10A Neighborhood

Description

Study Area 3 consists of a high-density residential neighborhood typically seen in Manhattan. In these areas, R10A districts are typically mapped along wide avenues and narrow street sections are typically mapped with moderate density districts such as R8B districts. Some R10A districts are mapped along narrow street sections that are build-

out with large and high lot coverage buildings predating the 1961 Zoning Resolution. These areas along narrow streets mapped with R10A districts are most likely be fully build-out with large residential buildings. This study area models the effects of development based on Prototypes 13 and 15.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Under existing conditions, there are no issues with pedestrian and vehicular flow. The neighborhood is laid out in a standard city grid pattern, comprised primarily with one-way streets, and with sidewalks on both sides.

Buildings

Under existing conditions, the R10A zoning district is a contextual district with a Quality Housing requirement. The district typically produces substantial apartment buildings set on the avenues and wide streets of high density areas. Towers are not permitted in this district.

Quality Housing contextual regulation produce large, high lot coverage buildings set at or near the street line, maintaining the high street wall found along Manhattan's major streets and avenues. On the wide streets, the base height is 125 or 150 feet, with a maximum building height of 210 feet. On the narrow streets, the base height before setback is 60 to 125 feet, with a maximum height of 185 feet.

This prototypical neighborhood is modelled with primarily wide streets, and most buildings are thus assumed to achieve a maximum height of 210 feet.

This results in a relatively tight building envelope, resulting in sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. Along corridors where there is a commercial overlay, the ground floor commercial spaces tend to have low floor-to-ceiling heights, in order to accommodate all permitted FAR within the relatively tight building envelope. Along residential side streets with no overlay, ground floor residential uses are at-grade, resulting in windows on the sidewalk that are often closed with blinds or shades to provide privacy for residents within. Furthermore, in order to fit all permitted floor area, building facades typically lack the articulation and design features common on older, historic buildings, despite the Quality Housing contextual intentions of better integrating new buildings into the existing fabric. While the regulations require that all open areas between the street wall and the street line be planted, a tight envelope forces many buildings onto the street line, leaving no open space between the street wall and the street line.

Residential and mixed residential and commercial buildings can receive a residential floor area bonus for the creation or preservation of affordable housing, on-site or off-site, pursuant to the voluntary Inclusionary Housing Program, granting them an FAR of up to 12.0. No extra height or other bulk modifications are associated with this IH FAR bonus.

Additional constraints apply to narrow lots, under the 'Sliver Law'. On lots with a width of less than 45 feet, this provision limits the height of the building to the width of the street or 100 feet, whichever is less. However, if a narrow lot is adjacent to a lot with a building that exceeds these heights, the narrow lot is permitted to develop to a height that matches its neighbor. These narrow lot restrictions predate contextual zoning districts and were, at the time of their establishment, a reasonable means to ensure predictable development in areas with strong neighborhood character. As a result, there are a handful of buildings in the existing condition that are substantially shorter than the majority of buildings in the neighborhood, and which may only be redeveloped as taller buildings when their adjacent neighbor achieves more height.

Because of the tight building envelope, many of the compliant buildings are boxy and provide little articulation or ground floor setback, resulting in fewer planted spaces between the street wall and street line, and producing buildings that, despite their contextual zoning, have facades that stand out in their blandness from the more historic buildings in the neighborhood.

Open Space

The neighborhood has a large park occupying half a full block. There are no other public or private areas such as parks, yards, cemeteries, parking lots, or privately owned public spaces in this study area.

Natural Features

There are no unique natural features defining the overall visual character of this study area.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

There are no significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources in this neighborhood.

[Study Area D: Prototypical C6-4A Neighborhood](#)

Description

This study area consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in high density residential neighborhoods in Manhattan. In these areas, R10A equivalent districts are typically mapped along wide avenues and narrow street sections are typically mapped with moderate density preservation districts such as R8B districts. Some R10A districts are mapped along narrow street sections that are build-out with large and high lot coverage buildings predating the 1961 Zoning Resolution. However, these areas along narrow streets mapped with R10A districts are most likely be fully build-out with large residential buildings. This study area models the effect of development based on Prototype 14.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Under existing conditions, there are no issues with pedestrian and vehicular flow. The neighborhood is laid out in a standard city grid pattern, comprised primarily with one-way streets, and with sidewalks on both sides.

Buildings

Under existing conditions, this R10A zoning district equivalent is a contextual district with a Quality Housing requirement. The district typically produces substantial apartment buildings set on the avenues and wide streets of high density areas. Towers are not permitted in this district.

Quality Housing contextual regulation produce large, high lot coverage buildings set at or near the street line, maintaining the high street wall found along Manhattan's major streets and avenues. On the wide streets, the base height is 125 or 150 feet, with a maximum building height of 210 feet. On the narrow streets, the base height before setback is 60 to 125 feet, with a maximum height of 185 feet.

This prototypical neighborhood is modelled with primarily narrow streets, and most buildings are thus assumed to achieve a maximum height of 185 feet.

This results in a relatively tight building envelope, resulting in sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. Along corridors where there is a commercial overlay, the ground floor commercial spaces tend to have low floor-to-ceiling heights, in order to accommodate all permitted FAR within the relatively tight building envelope. Along residential side streets with no overlay, ground floor residential uses are at-grade, resulting in windows on the sidewalk that are often closed with blinds or shades to provide privacy for residents within. Furthermore, in order to fit all permitted floor area, building facades typically lack the articulation and design features common on older, historic buildings, despite the Quality Housing contextual intentions of better integrating new buildings into the existing fabric. While the regulations require that all open areas between the street wall and the street line be planted, a tight envelope forces many buildings onto the street line, leaving no open space between the street wall and the street line.

Residential and mixed residential and commercial buildings can receive a residential floor area bonus for the creation or preservation of affordable housing, on-site or off-site, pursuant to the voluntary Inclusionary Housing Program, granting them an FAR of up to 12.0. No extra height or other bulk modifications are associated with this IH FAR bonus.

Because of the tight building envelope, many of the compliant buildings are boxy and provide little articulation or ground floor setback, resulting in fewer planted spaces between the street wall and street line, and producing buildings that, despite their contextual zoning, have facades that stand out in their blandness from the more historic buildings in the neighborhood.

Open Space

There are no public or private areas such as parks, yards, cemeteries, parking lots, or privately owned public spaces in this study area.

Natural Features

There are no unique natural features defining the overall visual character of this study area.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

There is one historic resource in this neighborhood, a church located across the street from one development site. There are no other significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources in this neighborhood.

[Study Area E: Prototypical R4 Neighborhood](#)

Description

This study area consists of a generic neighborhood typically seen in low density areas of the city. The contextual zoning district allows one- and two-family detached residences, and is characterized by houses with two stories and an attic beneath a pitched roof. This study area models the effect of a development based on Prototype 24.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

Under existing conditions, there are no issues with pedestrian and vehicular flow. The neighborhood is laid out in a standard city grid pattern, comprised primarily with one-way streets, and with sidewalks on both sides.

Buildings

This prototypical neighborhood is in a lower-density multifamily housing district, with an FAR of 0.75 plus a 20% attic allowance for space under the pitched roofs commonly found in an R4 district. Buildings are typically 3 stories tall (including the attic space), with a perimeter wall of up to 25 feet before being set back to the maximum building height of 35 feet. Front yards must be 10 feet deep or, if deeper, a minimum of 18 feet to accommodate parking in the front within a side lot ribbon. Detached houses must have two side yards that total at least 13 feet and each must be at least 5 feet wide. Semi-detached buildings need one side yard with a minimum width of 8 feet. The maximum street wall length of a building on a single zoning lot is 185 feet.

Non-profit residences for the elderly have bulk requirements that make it difficult to construct as of right. The sloped roof envelopes of the city's lower density districts limit the ability of non-profit residences for the elderly to be accommodated in a cost-effective way. A City Planning Commission Authorization under Section 23-631 may be obtained to modify the height and setback regulations for these facilities, provided that the neighborhood character is not impaired by the additional height, and the Authorization is frequently utilized. The impractical building envelope, resulting in the need to obtain a CPC Authorization, represents a bureaucratic hurdle that inhibits the development of non-profit residences for the elderly. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis, an Affordable Independent Residence for Seniors is assumed to exist at this site but is unable to build to its full FAR as-of-right.

Open Space

There is a full-block park across the street from the development site modelled in this study area.

Natural Features

There are no unique natural features defining the overall visual character of this study area, in addition to the previously mentioned open space.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

There are no significant natural or built features, including views of the waterfront, public parks, landmark structures or districts, otherwise distinct buildings or groups of buildings, or natural resources in this neighborhood.

The Future without the Proposed Action (No-Action Condition)

Images illustrating the Future without the Proposed Action are depicted in Section G of this chapter.

Study Area A: Prototypical R7A Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no change to the street pattern or streetscape would be expected.

Buildings

In the Future without the Proposed Action, development sites within the study area would be expected to be developed pursuant to existing zoning regulations, with new buildings constructed to similar heights and bulks as other recently developed buildings. There would be no change to the shape, type, size or location of buildings would be expected. Two developments would be expected.

In the No-Action scenario modelling Prototype 1, the 40,000 sq. ft. of zoning floor area permitted by the zoning district is accommodated in the existing building envelope, but doing so requires sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. The building façade is flat with no articulation in order to allow for the maximum amount of floor area to fit within the envelope. The building is 60' deep and has a base height of 65' and a total height of 80', or 8 stories.

In the No-Action scenario modelling Prototype 3, the development utilizes the existing building envelope and additionally adheres to the current transition rules that require buildings be significantly lowered and set away from specific lower density districts. The development is able to fit its permitted floor area in the existing building envelope, but doing so requires the building to pack as many dwelling units as possible into the existing envelope, by providing sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. The building is 60' deep and has a maximum height of 80', or 8 stories, with the portion of the building abutting the R4A district limited to 35', and built to 30' in this model to conform with the floor to ceiling heights found throughout the rest of the building. In order to fit all permitted floor area, all the available zoning building envelope must be filled and upper stories must be reduced to less than desirable height for dwelling purposes.

In the No-Action scenario modelling Prototype 11, the affordable senior housing continues to require 24 parking spaces. In order to minimize costs, the required parking is provided unenclosed on the zoning lot. Much of the surface parking lot is underutilized, as only approximately 9 residents likely have cars.

From a pedestrian standpoint, buildings would continue to be built to the street wall with little façade articulation and few ground floor setbacks with plantings. The parking lot associated with the affordable senior housing would continue to detract from streetwall continuity.

Open Space

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

Study Area B: Prototypical R8A Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no change to the street pattern or streetscape would be expected.

Buildings

In the Future without the Proposed Action, development sites within the study area would be expected to be developed pursuant to existing zoning regulations, with new buildings constructed to similar heights and bulks as other recently developed buildings. There would be no change to the shape, type, size or location of buildings would be expected. One development site would be expected in the foreseeable future.

In the No-Action scenario modelled on Prototype 17, the development utilizes the existing building envelope and additionally adheres to the current transition rules that require buildings be significantly lowered and set away from specific lower density districts. The development is able to fit its permitted floor area in the existing building envelope, but doing so requires the building to pack as many dwelling units into the existing envelope, by providing sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. The building is 60' deep and has a maximum height of 120', or 12 stories. Because the lot is 10,000 sq. feet or less in an R8A district, no parking is required. The majority of the building's bulk is concentrated on one side of the lot.

From a pedestrian standpoint, buildings would continue to be built to the street wall with little façade articulation and few ground floor setbacks with plantings.

Open Space

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

[Study Area C: Prototypical R10A Neighborhood](#)

Street Pattern and Streetscape

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no change to the street pattern or streetscape would be expected.

Buildings

In the Future without the Proposed Action, development sites within the study area would be expected to be developed pursuant to existing zoning regulations, with new buildings constructed to similar heights and bulks as other recently developed buildings. There would be no change to the shape, type, size or location of buildings would be expected. Two development sites would be expected.

In the No-Action scenario, the building, modelled on Prototype 13, participates in the IH program, has 12 FAR and 132,000 sq ft of gross floor area permitted by the zoning district and a maximum height of 210'. This floor area is accommodated in the existing building envelope, but doing so requires sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. The building façade is flat with little articulation in order to allow for the maximum amount of floor area to fit within the envelope. The building is 70' deep and has a base height of 150' and a total height of 210'. No parking would be expected, as parking may be waived in R10A districts on zoning lots of 10,000 sq ft or less.

In the No-Action scenario, development modelled on Prototype 15 is restricted to the width of the adjacent wide street (in this case, 100 feet) because the lot is less than 45 feet wide and is located next to buildings that are less than 100 feet in height. The development takes part in the Inclusionary Housing Program but is not able to fit its permitted floor area, even with sub-optimal floor-to-floor heights and less-efficient residential units. No parking would be expected, as parking may be waived in R10A districts on zoning lots of 10,000 sq ft or less

From a pedestrian standpoint, buildings would continue to be built to the street wall with little façade articulation and few ground floor setbacks with plantings.

Open Space

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

Study Area D: Prototypical C6-4A Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no change to the street pattern or streetscape would be expected.

Buildings

In the Future without the Proposed Action, development sites within the study area would be expected to be developed pursuant to existing zoning regulations, with new buildings constructed to similar heights and bulks as other recently developed buildings. There would be no change to the shape, type, size or location of buildings would be expected.

One development site would be expected. In the No-Action scenario, the building, modelled on Prototype 14 and participating in the IH program, has 12 FAR and 120,000 sq. ft. of gross floor area permitted by the zoning district and a maximum height of 185'. This floor area cannot be accommodated in the existing building envelope, even with sub-optimal floor to floor heights, particularly on the ground floor. The building façade is flat with little articulation in order to allow for the maximum amount of floor area to fit within the envelope. The building is 70' deep and has a base height of 125' and a total height of 185'. No parking would be expected, as parking may be waived in R10A districts on zoning lots of 10,000 sq. ft. or less.

From a pedestrian standpoint, buildings would continue to be built to the street wall with little façade articulation and few ground floor setbacks with plantings.

Open Space

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

Study Area E: Prototypical R4 Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no change to the street pattern or streetscape would be expected.

Buildings

In the Future without the Proposed Action, development sites within the study area would be expected to be developed pursuant to existing zoning regulations, with new buildings constructed to similar heights and bulks as other recently developed buildings. There would be no change to the shape, type, size or location of buildings would be expected. On development site, an affordable independent residence for seniors, would be expected to be developed.

In the No-Action scenario, the affordable senior housing development, modelled on Prototype 24, is not able to fit the existing floor area permitted for the use in this zoning district even when utilizing sub-optimal building practices including lower floor-to-floor heights. Even with that, nearly half of the permitted floor area cannot be constructed on the site, in a building limited to 25' base height and 35' total height. The development would be permitted to apply for a discretionary approval from the City Planning Commission for a modified building envelope to permit the floor area. There would be a 35 percent parking requirement, resulting in parking that likely exceeds demand based on an analysis of car ownership rates.

From a pedestrian standpoint, the building would be shorter than its neighbors, as the attic allowance is not functional for this type of development. As a result of the restrictive building envelope, the building would be flat and have little façade articulation to provide visual interest.

Open Space

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future without the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

The Future with the Proposed Action (With-Action Condition)

Images illustrating the Future with the Proposed Action are depicted in Section G of this chapter.

Study Area A: Prototypical R7A Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

No changes are expected to the street pattern or streetscape as a result of the Proposed Action.

Buildings

The prototypical neighborhood demonstrates the urban design impacts associated with the Proposed Action by modelling a study area using the prototypes discussed in Chapter 2H.

Three sites would be redeveloped in the Future with the Proposed Action. These sites are modelled after Prototypes 1, 3, and 11, and include a residential building on a 100' x 100' lot on a narrow street, a residential building on a 100' x 100' corner lot on wide and narrow streets, adjacent to a lower-density R4A district, and an Affordable Independent Residence for Seniors on a 200' x 200' through lot on wide and narrow streets, with a parking lot that gets redeveloped under the With Action Scenario.

In the With-Action scenario modelling Prototype 1, the floor area permitted by the zoning district is also accommodated, but the modified building envelope allows the use of contemporary best practices for residential uses, including more desirable floor-to-floor heights for residential units, while also permitting and encouraging a modest ground floor setback and a range of building articulation so the streetwall can provide some variety. The building is 60' deep and has a maximum base height of 75' and a total height of 85', or 8 stories.

In the With-Action scenario modelling Prototype 3, the development utilizes the modified building envelope regulations and additionally adheres to the modified transition rules that permit buildings to develop up to their permitted base height adjacent to specific lower density districts. With the expanded envelope, the development is able to fit its permitted floor area while utilizing best practices for residential buildings and a range of building articulation. The building is 60' deep and fits its allowable floor area with a height of 95', or 9 stories, although a maximum height of 105', or 10 stories, is permitted. The portion of the building abutting the R4A district rises to 65', more reflective of the R7A height allowance. The Proposed Action results in a building that is 25', or one story, taller, with higher quality ground floor lobby space.

Under the Proposed Action, residential buildings developed pursuant to Prototypes 1 and 3 would achieve 5 additional feet over the Future without the Proposed Action, for a total height of 85 feet, or 8 stories. From the sidewalk, these 5 additional feet are imperceptible. The pedestrian experience is improved through the construction of greater floor-to-ceiling heights in ground floor retail space, resulting in a better look and feel upon entering a store, and larger windows. In residential buildings, ground floor units are elevated a couple of feet above grade, resulting in windows that are higher than would be expected in the future without the Proposed Action. This allows for more privacy for the residents within, and a more interesting and varied streetscape for pedestrians who no longer find closed blinds and curtains. Buildings are also set back slightly from the street with required planting between the street wall and the street line, and facades may be better articulated, as a result of a more flexible building envelope. The Proposed Action, in combination, are expected to have a beneficial effect on how buildings

interact with pedestrians on the sidewalk. The additional height at the top of the building is offset by improvements on the ground that promote a more active and dynamic streetscape.

Under the Proposed Action, an existing affordable independent residence for seniors is permitted to redevelop its parking lot for additional housing, demonstrating the effects of one of the few development-inducing components of this proposal. The removal of parking frees up that portion of the lot for development utilizing the remaining unused floor area, resulting in the construction of approximately 339 affordable senior housing units within a 10-story building. While this building achieves a height that is still less than the adjacent senior housing building, it is 20 feet, or 2 stories, taller than the residential buildings developed pursuant to the contextual R7A zoning.

The extra height affords the development the room to provide more affordable units for seniors, while also allowing for optimal floor to ceiling heights and façade articulation that enhances the pedestrian experience at the sidewalk level. Setbacks require planting, and where there was a parking lot in the Future without the Proposed Action, there is now a building to provide visual interest for passersby.

Open Space

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

[Study Area B: Prototypical R8A Neighborhood](#)

Street Pattern and Streetscape

No changes are expected to the street pattern or streetscape as a result of the Proposed Action.

Buildings

In the Future with the Proposed Action, existing development sites would be redeveloped and utilize the changes in allowable height and bulk. There would be no change in the number or location of development sites expected in the Future with the Proposed Action.

One site would be redeveloped in the Future with the Proposed Action. This site is modelled after Prototype 17, a residential building on a 100' x 100' lot on a wide and narrow street adjacent to a lower-density R6B district.

In the Future with the Proposed Action, the FAR in R8A districts remains at 6.02. General residential buildings are permitted a base height of up to 105 feet, or 10 stories, with a maximum height of 125 feet, or 12 stories. Buildings that include Inclusionary Housing or AIRS are permitted a base height of up to 140 feet, with a maximum height of 145 feet, or 14 stories, in order to fit their permitted FAR within the building envelope.

In the Future with the Proposed Action, the transition rule requires that any portion of an R8A building built within 25 feet of a building in an adjacent R6B district must “step up” to the full R8A height and setback, with a proposed transition height of 75 feet, or 7 stories, before achieving the maximum 95 feet, or 9 stories, permitted in an R8A district under the proposal.

The Proposed Action results in a building that could be 25', or two stories, taller, with higher quality ground floor lobby space. Because the lot is 10,000 sq feet or less in an R8A district, no parking is required. The majority of the building's bulk is concentrated on one side of the lot.

The pedestrian experience is improved through the construction of greater floor-to-ceiling heights in ground floor retail space, resulting in a better look and feel upon entering a store, and larger windows. In residential buildings, ground floor units are elevated a couple of feet above grade, resulting in windows that are higher than would be expected in the future without the Proposed Action. This allows for more privacy for the residents within, and a more interesting and varied streetscape for pedestrians who no longer find closed blinds and curtains. Buildings are also set back slightly from the street with required planting between the street wall and the street line, and facades

may be better articulated, as a result of a more flexible building envelope. The Proposed Action, in combination, are expected to have a beneficial effect on how buildings interact with pedestrians on the sidewalk. The additional height at the top of the building is offset by improvements on the ground that promote a more active and dynamic streetscape.

Open Space

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

Study Area C: Prototypical R10A Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

No changes are expected to the street pattern or streetscape as a result of the Proposed Action.

Buildings

In the Future with the Proposed Action, existing development sites would be redeveloped and utilize the changes in allowable height and bulk. There would be no change in the number or location of development sites expected in the Future with the Proposed Action.

Two sites would be redeveloped in the Future with the Proposed Action. These sites are modelled after Prototypes 13 and 15. Prototype 13 models a residential building with Inclusionary Housing on a 100' x 100' interior lot on a wide street; and Prototype 15 models a residential building with Inclusionary Housing, on a 40' x 100' interior lot on a wide street.

In the With-Action scenario modelling Prototype 13, the building, participating in the IH program, continues to have 12 FAR but the maximum height is increased to 235'. This modified building envelope allows the use of contemporary best practices for residential uses, including floor-to-floor heights, while also permitting a range of building articulation. The building is 65' deep and has a maximum base height of 155' and a total height of 235', or 23 stories.

The With-Action scenario allows an incremental increase of 25 feet, but no additional square footage or residential dwelling units. Although no additional gross square footage or FAR is accommodated on the lot, the changes to building design facilitated by the Proposed Action enable the utilization of more efficient construction techniques while resulting in a better pedestrian experience at the sidewalk.

In the With-Action scenario modelling Prototype 15, the narrow lot development takes part in the Inclusionary Housing Program and is therefore permitted to be developed to the height permitted by the underlying zoning district, regardless of the width of the adjacent wide street or height of the adjacent buildings. The development is able to construct its permitted floor area, utilizing best practices for residential buildings.

This facilitates in an incremental height increase 135 feet in a district where such heights would be permitted as of right on a wider development site. The development is able to fit the floor area associated with the R10A zoning district, 48,000 sq ft.

For both developments under the With Action scenario, the pedestrian experience is improved through the construction of greater floor-to-ceiling heights in ground floor retail space, resulting in a better look and feel upon entering a store, and larger windows. In residential buildings, ground floor units are elevated a couple of feet above grade, resulting in windows that are higher than would be expected in the future without the Proposed Action. This allows for more privacy for the residents within, and a more interesting and varied streetscape for pedestrians who no longer find closed blinds and curtains. Buildings are also set back slightly from the street with required planting between the street wall and the street line, and facades may be better articulated, as a result of a more flexible

building envelope. The Proposed Action, in combination, are expected to have a beneficial effect on how buildings interact with pedestrians on the sidewalk.

The additional height at the top of the building is offset by improvements on the ground that promote a more active and dynamic streetscape. In the case of Prototype 13, the additional height is almost imperceptible from the sidewalk, and does not fundamentally alter the look or feel of the skyline. The height increase permitted under Prototype 15 is more substantial, but is again in relative context to the neighborhood character. Where under the No-Action scenario the building is forced to maintain a height that is substantially lower than other buildings in the study area, under the With-Action scenario is permitted to achieve a height that is in keeping with the neighborhood context.

Open Space

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

[Study Area D: Prototypical C6-4A Neighborhood](#)

Street Pattern and Streetscape

No changes are expected to the street pattern or streetscape as a result of the Proposed Action.

Buildings

In the Future with the Proposed Action, existing development sites would be redeveloped and utilize the changes in allowable height and bulk. There would be no change in the number or location of development sites expected in the Future with the Proposed Action.

One site would be redeveloped in the Future with the Proposed Action. This site is modelled after Prototype 14, which depicts a residential building with Inclusionary Housing, on a 100' x 100' interior lot on a narrow street.

In the With-Action scenario, the building, modelled on Prototype 41 and participating in the IH program, continues to have 12 FAR and 120,000 sq ft of gross floor area, but the maximum height is increased to 235'. This modified building envelope allows the use of contemporary best practices for residential uses, including floor-to-floor heights, while also permitting a range of building articulation. The building is 65' deep and has a maximum base height of 155' and a total height of 235', or 23 stories. Assuming an average unit size of 850 sq ft in a very high density zoning district, the development would be expected to generate 124 market-rate units and 31 affordable units. No parking would be expected, as parking may be waived in R10A districts on zoning lots of 10,000 sq ft or less.

The With-Action scenario allows an incremental increase of 55 feet, 6 market rate units, and 2 affordable units, and 7,259 additional gsf overall. Changes to building design facilitated by the Proposed Action enable the utilization of more efficient construction techniques while resulting in a better pedestrian experience at the sidewalk.

The pedestrian experience is improved through the construction of greater floor-to-ceiling heights in ground floor retail space, resulting in a better look and feel upon entering a store, and larger windows. In residential buildings, ground floor units are elevated a couple of feet above grade, resulting in windows that are higher than would be expected in the future without the Proposed Action. This allows for more privacy for the residents within, and a more interesting and varied streetscape for pedestrians who no longer find closed blinds and curtains. Buildings are also set back slightly from the street with required planting between the street wall and the street line, and facades may be better articulated, as a result of a more flexible building envelope. The Proposed Action, in combination, are expected to have a beneficial effect on how buildings interact with pedestrians on the sidewalk. The additional height at the top of the building is offset by improvements on the ground that promote a more active and dynamic streetscape.

Open Space

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

Study Area E: Prototypical R4 Neighborhood

Street Pattern and Streetscape

No changes are expected to the street pattern or streetscape as a result of the Proposed Action.

Buildings

In the Future with the Proposed Action, existing development sites would be redeveloped and utilize the changes in allowable height and bulk. There would be no change in the number or location of development sites expected in the Future with the Proposed Action.

One site would be redeveloped in the Future with the Proposed Action. This site is modelled after Prototype 24, which depicts an Affordable Independent Residence for Seniors on a 150' by 100' interior lot on a narrow street, outside the Transit Zone.

In the With-Action scenario, the affordable senior housing development is able to fit the existing floor area permitted for the use in this zoning district utilizing the Enhanced non-contextual envelope controls afforded to buildings providing senior housing in lower-density non-contextual zoning districts. The development is able to utilize best practices for residential buildings for floor to floor heights and is also able to set the building off the property line and provide a variety of building articulation options. The development would not require a discretionary review from the City Planning Commission, allowing as of right building to achieve up to 65' in height (although this scenario is able to fit the floor area with only 45' height). The with-action scenario would facilitate a building that is 19,350 square feet, or roughly 31 senior housing units. Assuming this development occurred far from transit, there would be a 10 percent parking requirement, resulting in 4 parking spaces that closely resemble parking demand based on car ownership rates.

Incremental changes as a result of the with-action scenario include 30' of additional allowable height, 4 fewer parking spaces, 16 additional affordable senior dwelling units, 8,032 additional gsf, and a modified building footprint on the lot. Changes to building design facilitated by the Proposed Action enable the utilization of more efficient construction techniques while resulting in a better pedestrian experience at the sidewalk.

Open Space

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to open space would be expected.

Natural Features

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to natural features would be expected.

View Corridors and Visual Resources

In the Future with the Proposed Action, no changes to view corridors or visual resources would be expected.

CONCLUSION

As described above, and as shown in the accompanying images, the current streetscapes, existing buildings and land uses within the prototypical study areas are varied, and represent the typical variation in neighborhoods citywide. New development under Proposed Action would not alter an entrenched, consistent urban context, obstruct a natural or built visual corridor or be inconsistent with the existing character and building forms typically seen in the area. The Proposed Action would not alter block forms, and would encourage enhanced streetscapes and a better

pedestrian experience overall. The potential new development would allow design flexibility to all residential buildings for the variation and texture of articulation that typify older buildings throughout the city, and enhance the urban design character of New York City's neighborhoods. Clarified regulations for street walls, greater flexibility with courts, and consistent transparency and design requirements at the ground floor would improve general urban design character and would promote pedestrian friendly street environment.

It is not expected that the Proposed Action and projected and potential development pursuant to the Proposed Action would have significant adverse impacts on the urban design and visual resources. There would be no changes to the topography, natural features, street hierarchy, block shapes, or building arrangements. Consequently, the Proposed Action is not expected to have a significant adverse impact on urban design and therefore no further analysis is necessary.

G. STUDY AREA IMAGES



Study Area A

View 02 – No Action



Study Area A

View 02 –With Action



Study Area A
View 04 – No Action



Study Area A
View 04 – With Action





Study Area C

View 03 – No Action: With IH



Study Area C

View 03 – With Action: With IH



Study Area D

View 01 – No Action



Study Area D

View 01 – With Action



Study Area E
View 01 – No Action



Study Area E
View 01 – With Action

