



Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning - **Approved!**

Overview & Public Review

The Department of City Planning is proposing zoning changes to promote a vibrant mix of housing, light industry, commercial enterprises and cultural activities in Hunters Point, a neighborhood located in Long Island City between the Citigroup office tower at Court Square and Queens West on the East River waterfront. The proposal would create opportunities for about 300 housing units in new buildings that will blend into the established neighborhood scale. While continuing to sustain light manufacturing development in the area, the zoning changes would also allow a broad range of commercial uses, including stores, restaurants, artist studios, small theaters and custom printers more widely throughout the neighborhood. Fostering new residential and mixed-use development in Hunters Point would bring life and foot traffic to this unique, transit-rich, culturally vibrant neighborhood.



View of Hunters Point looking southwesterly along Jackson Avenue.

Mixed-use development has characterized Hunters Point since the middle of the nineteenth century when the area became a major rail transportation hub. Recently, the neighborhood has become known for its cultural resources, such as the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, and for its entrepreneurial activities including building contracting services, custom manufacturing and graphics concerns.

The Department has developed a fine-grained zoning strategy that would enhance the distinctive characteristics and qualities of Hunters Point. In addition to promoting a dynamic mix of uses, zoning controls would set height limits so that new buildings will fit in with their surroundings. New residential and mixed-use development sensitive to the existing built environment will strengthen Hunters Point's sense of place, enhance its street vitality, and contribute to the city's plans for creating a successful business district in the Long Island City core centered around Queens Plaza and Court Square. The neighborhood's fortified identity and lively streetscapes would also help to link Hunters Point and the LIC core to the waterfront and the dynamic development occurring at Queens West.

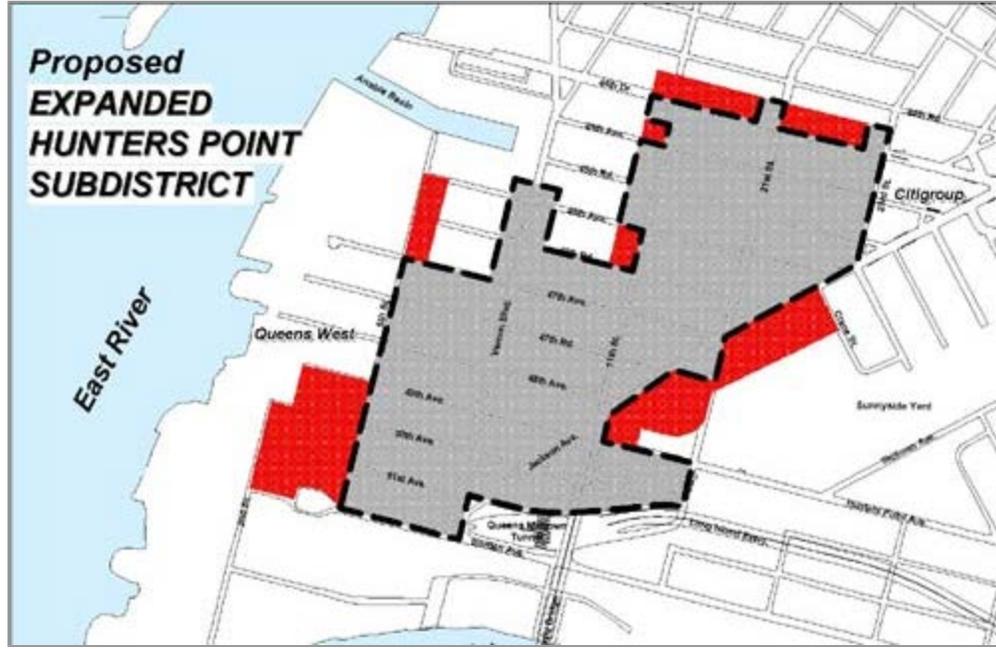


In the Heart of Hunters Point: a westerly view of 47th Avenue with the United Nations visible in the distance.

 [View a pictorial overview of the Hunters Point rezoning \(PDF\)](#)

Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning Area

The area proposed for rezoning is located in the southwest portion of Queens Community District 2 and covers approximately 43 blocks of the Hunters Point neighborhood in Long Island City. The rezoning area encompasses the existing mixed-use Hunters Point Subdistrict of the Special Long Island City Mixed Use District and several adjoining blocks and lots. The proposed rezoning area is bounded by 2nd, 5th and 11th streets on the west, 47th Avenue, 46th Road and 44th Drive on the north, 23rd Street, Jackson Avenue and the Sunnyside Yard on the east, and Borden Avenue and the Queens Midtown Tunnel on the south.



[View larger map in PDF](#)

Public Review

On February 9, 2004, the Department of City Planning certified and referred out the Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) applications for zoning map and text amendments for the Hunters Point Subdistrict. The applications were referred to Community Board 2 for a 60-day review period. During this time, the Board held a public hearing and issued a favorable recommendation with conditions/modifications. Following the Community Board's review period, the Queens Borough President also issued a recommendation to approve the plan with conditions/modifications.

In response to comments received during the public review process, the Department of City Planning revised portions of the proposal on June 15, 2004. The modifications include: 1) removal of the 100-foot deep blockfront on 5th Street between 46th Avenue and Anable Basin from the rezoning area; 2) changing the zoning from M1-4/R7A to M1-4/R6B on two blockfronts along the westerly side of 11th Street between 45th and 46th avenues to thereby reducing the allowed residential density 4.0 FAR to 2.0 FAR to reflect the built character of these blockfronts; and 3) changing the zoning from M1-4/R7A to M1-4/R6A on the easterly blockfront on 11th Street between 45th Road and 46th Avenue and on the northerly blockfront of 45th Avenue 100 feet west 21st Street, thereby reducing the allowable density from 4.0 FAR to 3.0 FAR.

On June 23, 2004, the City Planning Commission approved the revised applications for zoning map and text amendments (read the CPC Reports: [map change](#) and [text amendment](#)). On August 12, the City Council approved the Department's rezoning proposal for Hunters Point.

Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning - **Approved!**

Planning Framework

Background

A mix of housing and industry has long-defined Hunters Point, and the city's planning efforts have repeatedly addressed the area's evolving mixed-use character. Beginning in the 1860s, the area emerged as a transportation hub, a role hastened by construction of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) terminal and reinforced in later decades with development of the Sunnyside Yard and the IRT Flushing subway line. Over time, residential, manufacturing and commercial uses sprang up around these infrastructure projects.

In 1961, despite prevalent concentrations of residences in the neighborhood, manufacturing zoning districts were established throughout Hunters Point to foster the expansion of industrial uses. The *1969 Plan for New York City*, however, recognized the need for special mixed-use zoning classifications that "would permit expansion and improvement of both residential and industrial properties," and it recommended that such mixed-use zoning be developed for Hunters Point.

The Special Hunters Point Mixed Use District was established in 1981 for the area in an attempt to regulate the existing and evolving mix of residential, commercial, and industrial uses in the neighborhood. The special district regulations allowed new manufacturing and commercial uses as-of-right. The provisions also permitted very limited as-of-right enlargements and alterations of existing residential buildings and new infill residential construction.

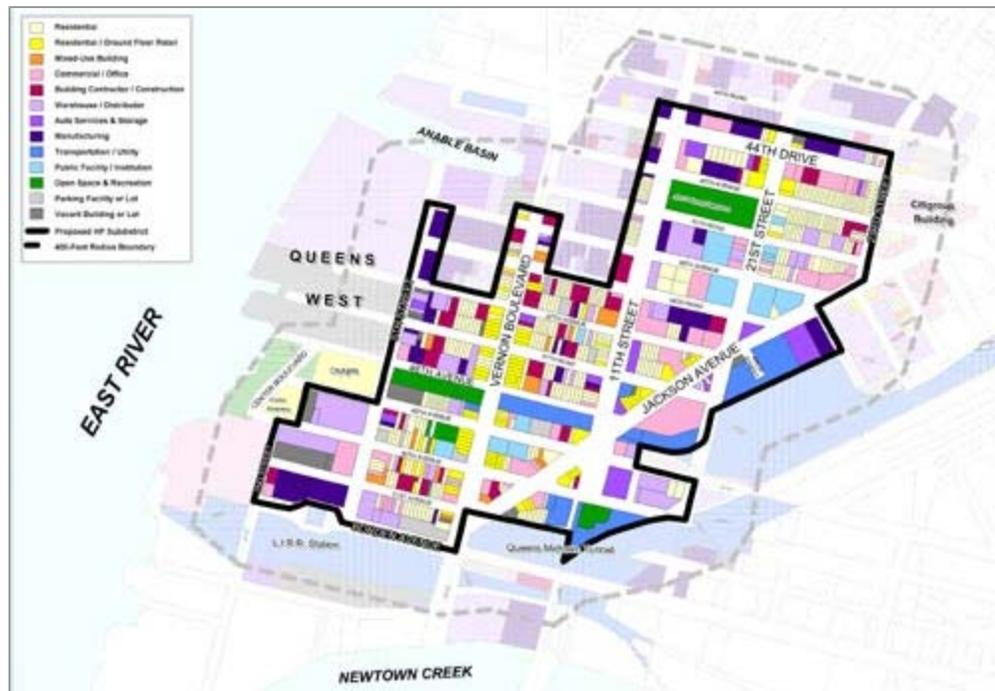
In 1986, the Court Square Subdistrict was created within the special district for a three-block area along Jackson Avenue with access to several subway lines (E, F, and G) to encourage high-density commercial office development. This led to the construction in 1989 of the 50-story Citigroup building and a new free transfer connection between the subway lines.

In 1993, the Department of City Planning published its *Plan for Long Island City: A Framework for Development*. The report recommended further zoning changes for the Special Hunters Point Mixed Use District. These changes were subsequently adopted in 1995, notably rezoning prime corridors in the district such as Jackson Avenue, Vernon Boulevard, and 44th Drive from a light manufacturing district to residential/commercial districts.

The focus of the 2001 zoning changes was to establish the Queens Plaza Subdistrict of a new Special Long Island City Mixed Use District and foster a dynamic, pedestrian-oriented, business district anchored by three subway stations. The new zoning facilitates commercial development at increased densities and allows new residences to mix with commercial and light industrial businesses. In 2001, the Special Hunters Point Mixed Use District and the Court Square Subdistrict became subdistricts of a the new Special Long Island City Mixed Use District. The provisions governing the Hunters Point Subdistrict were unchanged at that time.

Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning - **Approved!** Neighborhood Character & Existing Land Use

Today, Hunters Point remains a patchwork of residences, small businesses, local retail, and public institutions, with many buildings dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A variety of warehouse, industrial service and light manufacturing businesses are interspersed throughout the neighborhood. These include building contractors, elevator repair companies and small graphic printing shops. A mix of uses is found throughout the area; most blocks contain an array of residential, industrial, community facility and commercial uses.



Land Use in Hunters Point

[View larger map in PDF](#)

Vernon Boulevard, Jackson Avenue, and 21st Street serve as the main streets of Hunters Point. These north-south thoroughfares are lined with three- and four-story late nineteenth century brick buildings with restaurants and cafes, convenience and variety stores, offices and small industrial uses on the ground floor with residential uses above.

The traditional center of Hunters Point at the intersection of Jackson Avenue, Vernon Boulevard and 50th Avenue remains a community gathering place. Contributing to pedestrian activity here are the entrances to the Vernon-Jackson Avenues #7 subway station, a tree-planted seating area in the center of Vernon Boulevard, small restaurants and delicatessens and commuter parking lots. The brick and brownstone steeple of St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church presides over this neighborhood hub on Vernon Boulevard at 49th Avenue. Nearby, the neo-Baroque 108th Precinct of the NYC Police Department provides a bold municipal presence.

There are also sizeable clusters of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Romanesque Revival and Greco-Italianate Revival Style row houses and multi-story apartment buildings primarily located on the midblocks, many of which are lined with mature trees. Among the most notable of these residences in the area is a concentration of nineteenth century row houses along 45th Avenue between 21st and 23rd streets comprising the Hunters Point Historic District designated in 1968 by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Other notable land uses in Hunters Point include the former, now vacant Pennsylvania Railroad Power Plant and the adjacent Schwartz Chemical building – Renaissance Revival Style industrial structures located on 2nd Street between 50th and 51st avenues. Important cultural institutions in the neighborhood include the P.S. 1 Contemporary Arts Center, a Romanesque Revival Style former school building on Jackson Avenue converted to galleries and supporting spaces affiliated with the Museum of Modern Art. Most prominent among the area's parks and open spaces is the Hunters Point Community Park on 48th Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard and the John F. Murray Playground which occupies an entire block between 11th and 21st streets, 45th Road and 45th Avenue. The park

includes a children's playground, basketball courts, and open seating areas.

 [View pictorial display of Neighborhood Character and Land Use \(PDF\)](#)

Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning - **Approved!**

Industry: Shifts in Industrial Uses and Employment

Over time, Hunters Point businesses have shifted from manufacturing to an array of semi-industrial and entrepreneurial activities such as warehousing, construction companies and visual arts enterprises. These local conditions reflect trends experienced throughout the city.

Although the buildings in Hunters Point vary widely in age, size, and function, many of the structures in the rezoning area date back to the late nineteenth century and have small floor plates occupying lots measuring less than 5,000 square feet. An aging building stock with inadequate floor plates and poor loading facilities leaves only limited space for industrial expansion. As a result, manufacturing companies have continued to move out of Hunters Point to accommodate their needs for ample, more efficient facilities. In addition, the area's narrow streets are unable to adequately accommodate truck traffic, turning movements and routine loading activities related to modern manufacturing operations.

Using classifications and data provided by the New York State Department of Labor as a basis, the Department of City Planning conducted an in-depth survey of all industrial uses and employment in Hunters Point in 2002. The survey found a total of approximately 3,300 industrially classified jobs in 90 firms.

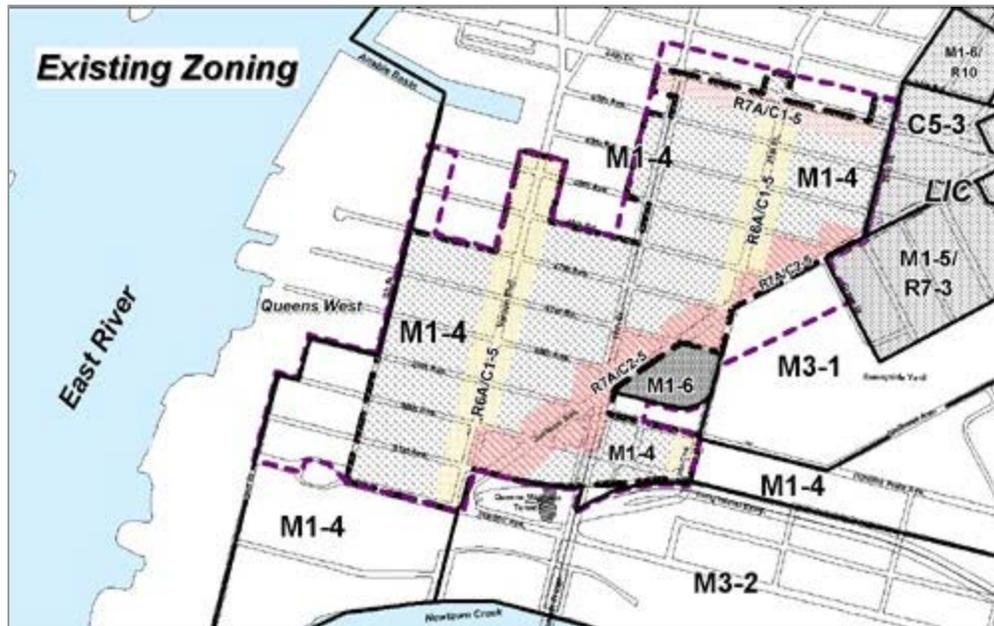
Approximately 73 percent of all industrially-classified activities surveyed in the rezoning area consists of semi-industrial uses. Most notably, building construction and contracting services represent 62 percent of the total industrially-classified employment in the area with 2,055 jobs in 32 firms. These semi-industrial service uses are often housed in buildings with small footprints, many of which operate as central offices while most employees perform contractor services at work sites. Other semi-industrial uses include wholesale, distribution, automotive service and storage uses which account for about 11 percent of the rezoning area's total industrially-classified employment.

Furthermore, there are 890 manufacturing jobs in 26 firms in the rezoning area, accounting for 27 percent of all industrially-classified activities. Typical activities include jewelry production, woodworking, theatrical equipment assembly, wholesale baking, and metal plating and polishing. Generally, these light manufacturing uses in the rezoning area are small-scale and typically occupy one-story buildings with high lot coverage.

Hunters Point Subdistrict Rezoning - **Approved!**

Existing Zoning

Most of the area proposed for rezoning currently lies within the existing Hunters Point Subdistrict, which is part of the Special Long Island City Mixed Use District. Those areas proposed for rezoning outside of, but adjacent to the existing subdistrict boundaries are primarily zoned M1-4.



[View larger map in PDF](#)

The M1-4 district allows a broad range of light industrial, commercial and retail uses, but it prohibits new housing developments. With a maximum floor area ratio (FAR) of 2.0, the M1-4 district generally produces two- to three-story light industrial, warehouse and commercial buildings.

In the Hunters Point Subdistrict, light industrial uses are also generally allowed as-of-right subject to M1-4 bulk regulations, but new commercial uses are only allowed on certain streets, namely, 5th Street, 21st Street, Vernon Boulevard, Jackson Avenue and 44th Drive. With the exception of 5th Street, new housing is also allowed as-of-right on these streets, which are designated with contextual residential zoning districts (and commercial overlay zones) that have maximum floor area ratios of 3.0 or 4.0. A contextual zone having an FAR of 3.0 typically produces five- to seven-story buildings; an FAR of 4.0 typically produces six- to eight-story buildings.

In other portions of the Hunters Point Subdistrict, new housing is allowed as-of-right under very limited circumstances where zoning lots are surrounded by residential, commercial, or community facility uses. In these locations where new residential uses, as well as community facility uses, are allowed, they are subject to R6B contextual bulk provisions. An R6B zone allows a maximum FAR of 2.0, which typically produces four- to five-story buildings. Residential and commercial uses not allowed as-of-right are allowed by special permit of the City Planning Commission.

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Proposed Zoning Changes

The rezoning proposal embodies a flexible zoning strategy that will (1) remove restrictions on residential development and conversions; (2) retain light manufacturing businesses while supporting the growing entrepreneurial activities restricted by current zoning; (3) maintain the existing scale of three- and four-story residential buildings within the neighborhood midblocks; and (4) encourage new residential and mixed-use development at moderately higher densities along wide streets close to public transit and adjoining the LIC core and Queens West. The proposal would generally replace the current Hunters Point Subdistrict zoning regulations with the Zoning Resolution's Special Mixed Use District provisions, and the changes would add certain adjacent areas to the Hunters Point Subdistrict within the Special Long Island City Mixed Use District.

The rezoning proposal would pair a light manufacturing district (M1) and a residence district (R) to regulate uses and building size for each zone within the rezoning area. These paired mixed-use contextual zones would include M1-4/R6B, M1-4/R6A, M1-4/R7A, M1-5/R7X, and M1-5/R8A. For these proposed mixed-use districts, regulations would generally allow a broad range of residential, community facility, commercial, and most light manufacturing uses as-of-right in most circumstances. These contextual zones would also be tailored to insure that new buildings will fit in with their surroundings.



[View larger map in PDF](#)

The west side of 11th Street between 45th and 46th avenues and most of the east-west streets or midblocks of the neighborhood – approximately 40 percent of the rezoning area – would be zoned M1-4/R6B. For this zoning designation, building bulk regulations for residential, light manufacturing and commercial uses would remain unchanged, and existing patterns of development on the midblocks would be reinforced. The allowable FAR for new residential buildings would remain at 2.0 with a height limit of 50 feet. This FAR generally leads to four-story buildings, perhaps with space above for duplex apartments, and yard space at the rear. For industrial and commercial uses, the allowable FAR would remain at 2.0.

The proposed zoning changes would also allow new residential and mixed-use development at moderately higher densities on wide streets and principal corridors close to public transit and as transition buffers to the adjoining Long Island City core and Queens West. For example, portions of two blocks adjacent to the planned commercial core of Queens West between 2nd and 5th streets and 49th and 51st avenues would be rezoned from M1-4 (2.0 FAR) to M1-5/R8A (5.0/6.02 FAR). Notably, this area contains the long-vacant Pennsylvania Railroad Power Plant and the underutilized Schwartz Chemical building with existing heights ranging from 85 feet to 116 feet. For residential buildings, the proposed M1-5/R8A district would require similar maximum street walls of 85 feet and maximum building heights of 120 feet. This change would insure a good transition from the high-rise residential and commercial

development occurring at Queens West to the lower-scale development of the Hunters Point neighborhood. The FAR for industrial and commercial uses on these blocks would be 5.0 allowing similarly scaled six- to ten-story buildings.

Changes in use and bulk are also proposed for Jackson Avenue, a principal street that slices diagonally through the rezoning area. Presently, the westerly frontage of the Jackson Avenue corridor lies within an R7A zoning district (FAR 4.0) with a C2-5 commercial overlay; the easterly frontage of Jackson Avenue generally lies within M1-4 (FAR 2.0), M1-6 (FAR 5.0), and M3-1 (FAR 2.0) zoning districts. An objective of the rezoning proposal is to allow similarly scaled development on both sides of the avenue with a mix of residential, commercial and light manufacturing uses on the eastern frontage that is compatible with the residential and commercial zones along the western frontage.

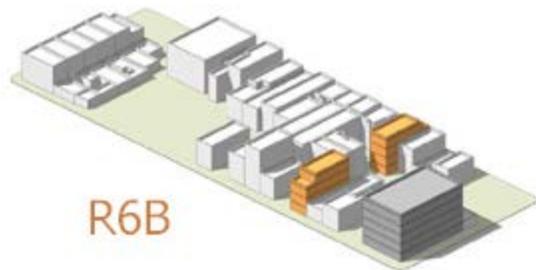
Accordingly, the existing R7A residence district along the westerly frontage of the Jackson Avenue corridor would be replaced with an R7X district, and the existing C2-5 commercial overlay would be retained. This would increase the permitted residential FAR to 5.0. Additionally, an M1-5/R7X (FAR 5.0) zone is proposed along the easterly frontage of Jackson Avenue and along part of Borden Avenue. The proposed M1-5/R7X and R7X/C2-5 zoning districts on Jackson Avenue would allow the tallest new residential and mixed-use buildings in the rezoning area: 10- to 12-story buildings with maximum street wall heights of 85 feet and maximum building heights of 125 feet. These changes would facilitate a strong, defining edge and a cohesive urban form along a wide avenue where such development is appropriate.

M1-4/R7A zoning districts (2.0 FAR for manufacturing and commercial uses, 4.0 FAR for residential uses) are proposed for other principal streets in the area - portions of 11th Street, 44th Drive and the section of 48th Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street that is a "gateway" between Queens West and the Hunters Point neighborhood. To maximize the allowable floor area for residential development under R7A, builders are likely to produce six- to eight-story buildings with maximum street walls of 65 feet. For industrial and commercial uses, the allowable FAR would remain at 2.0 resulting in two-story buildings.

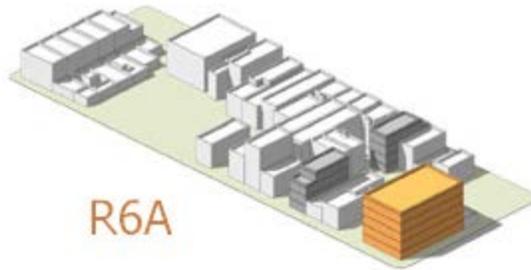
In other areas, the changes in zoning would result in more modest increases in allowable FAR and heights. In particular, an M1-4/R6A zoning district (2.0 FAR for manufacturing and commercial uses, 3.0 FAR for residential uses) is proposed for 5th Street and for the block fronts facing John F. Murray Playground. The allowable FAR for manufacturing and commercial uses would remain at 2.0 resulting in two-story buildings. For residential uses, the modest 1.0 FAR increase in bulk with maximum base heights of 60 feet and maximum building heights of 70 feet would lead to five- to seven-story buildings. This zoning recognizes 5th Street as a "transition zone" between Queens West and Hunters Point and complements the significant open space resource of John F. Murray Playground.

In addition, the zoning governing the midblock frontages along 45th Avenue comprising the Hunters Point Historic District and the westerly frontage of 23rd Street between 45th Avenue and 44th Drive would be changed from M1-4 to R6B. This zoning designation would not change the current FAR and height provisions for residential uses. The R6B district, however, would not allow light manufacturing uses and therefore would be more consistent with the exclusively residential uses characterizing the block fronts.

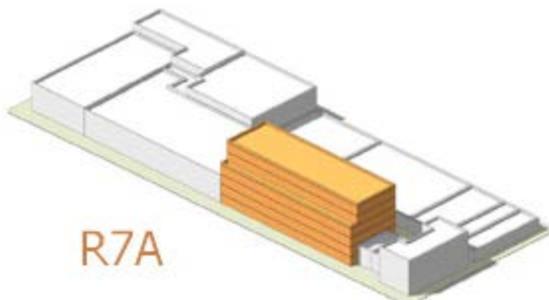
Potential Residential and Mixed-Use Development.



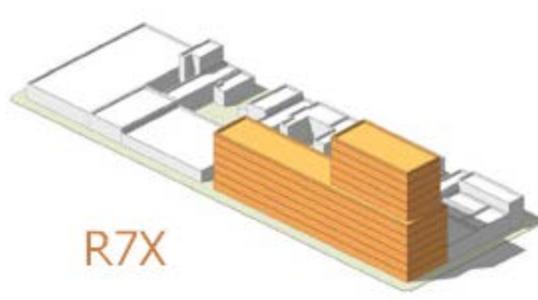
(R6B and M1-4/R6B Zoning Districts)



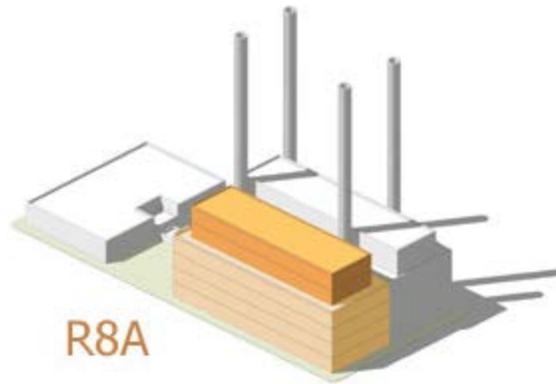
(M1-4/R6A Zoning District)



(M1-4/R7A Zoning District)



(R7X/C2-5 and M1-5/R7X Zoning Districts)



(M1-5/R8A Zoning District)

A zoning text amendment is also proposed that would allow food stores and supermarkets as-of-right with no limitation on floor area per establishment. This provision would support the needs of current and future residents in Hunters Point. A special permit is currently required for food stores and supermarkets exceeding 10,000 square feet.

 View pictorial display of Characteristic Building Types and New Residential Development for: [Midblocks](#) (1 mb) and [Wide Streets and Edge Areas](#) (1 mb)

Related Notes

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