

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter considers the potential of the proposed Reconstruction of the Allen and Pike Street Malls project to affect the urban design characteristics and visual resources of the project site and study area which has been defined as the blockfronts facing the project site. The project site consists of the 12 existing center malls on Allen and Pike Streets between Delancey and South Streets (see **Figure 2C-1**). The project site also includes the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT)-implemented Interim Plan’s bicycle lanes on the east and west sides of the malls and NYCDOT-implemented plaza connectors at Broome, Hester, and Monroe Streets. As described below, the Proposed Project would involve alterations and improvements to the project site, including doubling the width of the malls and installing new paving, seating, lighting, fencing, plantings, other landscaping elements, and protected bicycle lanes. The reconstructed plaza connectors would also have landscaping and decorative paving.

The technical analysis follows the guidance of the 2001 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*. As defined in the manual, urban design components and visual resources determine the “look” of a neighborhood—its physical appearance, including the size and shape of buildings, and their arrangement on blocks, the street pattern, and the noteworthy views that may give an area a distinctive character. The following analysis addresses each of these characteristics for existing conditions, the future without the Proposed Project, and probable impacts of the Proposed Project by 2011—the Proposed Project’s Build year.

The Proposed Project would physically improve the project site’s urban design character and contribute to better physical and visual access to the Allen and Pike Street pedestrian malls and the surrounding study area, including the East River waterfront. The Proposed Project would be expected to improve the overall visual character along Allen and Pike Streets by repaving the malls and adding trees and other landscaping elements. Therefore, as described below, this analysis concludes that the Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts on the urban design and visual resources of the project site and surrounding study area.

**B. EXISTING CONDITIONS****PROJECT SITE**

The Proposed Project includes the Allen and Pike Street malls between Delancey and South Streets (see **Figure 2C-1**).

*URBAN DESIGN*

The Allen and Pike Street malls that would be affected by the Proposed Project are narrow paved areas with street trees; concrete, stone, and wooden planters; streetlamps; standard street signage; traffic lights; perimeter fencing; and benches (see **Figures 2C-2 through 2C-8**). Trees

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are located at the perimeter of the project site malls except on the two narrow Pike Street malls where trees are located along the center of these malls. Throughout the project site, bicycles and mopeds are locked to bicycle racks and to the perimeter fencing. Curbside parking is not permitted along the east or west side of the project site. Division Street extends east-west through the project site, separating Allen Street to the north from Pike Street to the south. The street grid also shifts at Division Street, with Allen Street following a northeast-southwest trajectory and Pike Street following a more north-south trajectory (see **Figure 2C-1**).

The malls between Delancey and Cherry Streets are approximately 25 feet wide. The two malls between Cherry and South Streets are much narrower, at approximately eight feet in width. The malls vary in length, including both long and short segments. A pair of shorter malls are located parallel to one another on Pike Street between Division Street and East Broadway. In general, the Allen Street malls have squared ends and the Pike Street malls have rounded ends (see **Figure 2C-5**). The project site also contains the 2009 NYCDOT-implemented Interim Plan that includes bicycle lanes on the east and west sides of the existing Allen and Pike Street malls and the three plaza connectors with temporary planters and benches at the former intersections of Broome, Hester, and Monroe Streets (see **Figures 2C-2 through 2C-8**).

The malls are in varying states of repair with the exception of DPR's Demonstration Mall, described below. The Allen Street malls between Broome and Hester Streets have low, cast iron perimeter fencing and contain pavement with large sections that have been repaired with black asphalt. The only seating on the mall between Grand and Broome Streets is a single bench at the mall's south end at Grand Street. The mall between Grand and Hester Streets contains perimeter benches and planters, including several broken Belgian block planters. The malls between Hester and Division Streets have benches and planters at Canal Street, restricting access to these malls. These malls have low fencing, planters, and benches located along their perimeters. Between Division Street and East Broadway, the eastern mall has an approximately six-foot-tall perimeter chainlink fence and includes an art installation piece—an approximately ten-foot-tall curving brown brick wall. The western mall is approximately 20 feet wide and has trees and fence posts but no fence at its perimeter. The mall between East Broadway and Henry Street has a chainlink perimeter fence, broken and displaced pavement, and a large wooden planter restricting access from Henry Street. The Pike Street malls between Henry and Monroe Streets have broken and displaced pavement. The segment of the Pike Street mall between Henry and Madison Streets has approximately six-foot-tall chainlink fencing at its perimeter. The narrow Pike Street malls between Cherry and South Streets have broken pavement. They do not contain any seating or fencing (see **Figures 2C-2 through 2C-8**).

The Demonstration Mall was reconstructed in 2008 by DPR as part of the planning for the Proposed Project. It will be used as a model for further developing the Proposed Project. This redesigned segment contains decorative pavers and curbs, fences, benches, trees and smaller plantings, enhanced street lighting, and a Chinese stone art installation (see Views 1 and 2 of **Figure 2C-2**).

### *VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES*

As described above, the project site malls are in varying states of repair and include paved malls with street trees; concrete, wood, and stone planters; lighting; perimeter fencing; and benches. As such, the project site does not contain visual resources. Views from the Allen Street portion of the project site are generally limited to the surrounding low- to mid-rise buildings that face the project site (see **Figures 2C-2 through 2C-4** and View 15 of **Figure 2C-9**). Some views

also include distant taller buildings and the Manhattan Bridge, described below, which is visible from vantage points as far north as Canal Street.

Views from the Pike Street portion of the project site are longer, with most views including the Manhattan Bridge, a visual resource located in the study area adjacent to—and spanning above—the southern portion of the project site (see **Figures 2C-5 through 2C-8** and View 16 of **Figure 2C-9**). The Manhattan Bridge is an early 20th century two-level steel suspension bridge with blue-painted steel towers. The bridge’s steel towers, approach, and stone piers—including an archway spanning above Cherry Street—are visible in views south and west from the project site between Monroe and South Streets. The bridge’s approach is also visible in views west on Division Street and East Broadway where it spans above these streets.

The project site malls located near the street grid shift at Division Street permit longer north and south views from the Allen and Pike Street malls (see **Figure 2C-1**). Two architecturally distinctive historic resources, described in Chapter 2B, “Historic Resources,” are visible from the project site—the former S. Jarmulowsky Bank Building at 54-58 Canal Street/5-9 Orchard Street and the former Pike Street Synagogue at 13-15 Pike Street (see Views 17 and 18 of **Figure 2C-10**). The S. Jarmulowsky Bank Building, located east of the project site facing Canal Street, is a 12-story neo-Renaissance-style building that is taller than most nearby buildings, making it visible from several vantage points on the project site. The former synagogue is similar in scale to the generally low- to mid-rise buildings that characterize this area but has a distinctive design with two staircases leading to a central raised entrance facing Pike Street. These buildings are considered visual resources.

Other more distant visual resources are located outside the study area but are visible from some vantage points on the project site. The Chrysler Building, on East 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue, is visible in views north from the Demonstration Mall. One of the Williamsburg Bridge’s gray steel towers is visible in views east from the project site near Delancey Street (see View 19 of **Figure 2C-11**). The Municipal Building, on Centre and Lafayette Streets, has a prominent tower that is visible in views west from the project site on Division Street. In addition to the Manhattan Bridge, views south from the Pike Street portion of the project site also include the Brooklyn Bridge, a late 19th century suspension bridge with limestone towers and an intricate cable system. Views south also include South Street and the areas below the elevated Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) Drive. Longer views include the East River and the Brooklyn skyline, both of which are largely obscured by the FDR Drive and are not considered visual resources. The Brooklyn Bridge, East River, and the Brooklyn skyline are also partially visible from limited vantage points near Monroe Street (see View 20 of **Figure 2C-11**). Because of the length of the project site, some visual resources can be seen from certain project site vantage points while the same resources are not visible from other areas of the project site.

Although the project site is a long, linear pedestrian walkway, its entire length is not considered a view corridor as views on the project site are obscured by trees, lampposts, large planters, and changes in the road alignment between Allen and Pike Streets. The northernmost mall—the Demonstration Mall—provides views north for a long distance. The Demonstration Mall includes trees and lighting fixtures oriented along the mall’s perimeter which permit unobstructed northward views within the mall. The Pike Street segment of the project site also serves as a view corridor, with most views south from this part of the project site including the Manhattan Bridge’s piers, towers, and elevated approach (see **Figures 2C-6 through 2C-9**).

### STUDY AREA

#### *URBAN DESIGN*

The study area includes sections of two converging street grids and portions of 23 blocks. The Allen Street portion of the study area is oriented diagonally northeast-southwest, with long blockfronts along Allen Street. The Pike Street portion of the study area is oriented north-south, with the short blockfronts along Pike Street. The southern section of the study area also includes larger, irregularly shaped blocks, including a merged block east of Pike Street between Madison and Cherry Streets with a pedestrian walkway (see **Figure 2C-1**).

The study area includes standard street signage, traffic lights, garbage cans, bus stops and shelters, cobrahead streetlamps, and some street trees. Most streets in the study area carry local traffic and have parallel parking adjacent to the blockfronts facing the project site. A portion of the highly trafficked, elevated FDR Drive is in the study area, immediately south of the project site, extending along the east side of Manhattan. The small portion of the FDR Drive in the study area separates the upland project site from the East River waterfront to the south. Between the project site and the FDR Drive is South Street, an at-grade arterial roadway with a single northbound lane and two southbound lanes with curbside car and bus parking lanes. In the study area, the area below the FDR Drive is characterized by waterfront walkways and bicycle paths.

Natural features in the study area include landscaping near the 14-story residential building north of Hester Street and on the Rutgers Houses property between Madison and Cherry Streets. Outside the study area to the south is the East River. It is not publicly accessible. There are limited views to it from the study area, however, most views are obscured by the FDR Drive.

The blockfronts facing Allen Street and Pike Street between Division and Henry Streets are generally characterized by attached buildings that create a consistent streetwall and include a mix of three- to six-story mid- to late-19th century brick-faced tenement buildings and one- to five-story commercial buildings (see **Figures 2C-2 and 2C-6**). Two tall buildings are located in this part of the study area—a 14-story tan brick-faced residential tower at the corner of Hester Street is a free-standing, cross-shaped building set back from Allen and Hester Streets by landscaping and surface parking and the 12-story former S. Jarmulowsky Bank Building at 54-58 Canal Street/5-9 Orchard Street. Most of the blockfronts facing Allen Street are within historic districts, described in Chapter 2B, “Historic Resources.” These historic districts includes mid- to late-19th century brick-faced tenements with fire escapes, commercial buildings with large window openings, and one-story structures, many of which are additions to the rear of tenements that face Orchard Street (see **Figures 2C-2 through 2C-4** and View 15 of **Figure 2C-9**).

The blockfronts facing Pike Street south of Henry Street include mostly free-standing buildings, some of which are modern and sited on large blocks with paved parking and landscaping. This part of the study area does not have a consistent streetwall. Buildings fronting on Pike Street include Public School 2, a one- to four-story school building with a paved playground; a one-story garage building; two 20-story, slab-like red brick buildings that are part of the Rutgers Houses; four- and five-story tenements; and a large, one-story grocery store with a paved parking lot (see View 10 of **Figure 2C-6**, **Figure 2C-7 and 2C-8**, and View 16 of **Figure 2C-9**). The tallest buildings in this part of the study area are the two 20-story Rutgers Houses buildings on the large block between Madison and Cherry Streets. These two buildings are separated by an east-west paved pedestrian walkway with landscaping and grassy areas. The grocery store is located south of Cherry Street and is set within a paved parking lot. The archways of one of the Manhattan Bridge’s large stone abutments spans over Cherry Street. A small portion of the study

area west of Pike Street below the Manhattan Bridge overpass includes paved ball fields/recreation areas enclosed by chain link fencing. A salt storage shed is also located below the Manhattan Bridge overpass west of the project site near South Street. As described above, the portion of the study area south of the project site includes a portion of the FDR Drive and South Street (see **Figure 2C-11 and 2C-12**).

#### *VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES*

In general, views in the study area are similar to views from the project site. However, Allen and Pike Streets serve as unobstructed view corridors permitting long north-south views on these streets. The two architecturally distinctive resources in the study area—the former S. Jarmulowsky Bank Building and the former Pike Street Synagogue—can be seen from several vantage points near these visual resources, particularly the 12-story bank building due to its height. The shift in the street grid at Division Street also permits longer views to the former synagogue. The study area also provides views to the other visual resources that can be seen from the project site—portions of the Manhattan, Brooklyn, and Williamsburg Bridges, the Brooklyn skyline, and the Chrysler Building.

### **C. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

#### **PROJECT SITE**

In the future without the Proposed Project, the project site would remain in its current condition.

#### **STUDY AREA**

Two development projects are located within the urban design and visual resources study area that are expected to be completed by 2011. The East River Esplanade and Piers project will be constructed south of the project site, along the East River. Portions of this No Build project will be complete by 2012. This project will involve improvements to public open spaces along the East River Esplanade, a two-mile-long, public open space connecting Whitehall Ferry Terminal and Peter Minuit Plaza to the south to East River Park to the north. New amenities will include benches, plantings, lighting, walkways, and bike paths. Fourteen pavilions will also be constructed beneath the FDR Drive. This project may also involve the removal of the Pier 42 pier shed to create an urban beach.

A new seven-story building will be built at 1-3 Orchard Street/2 Allen Street that will include commercial and community facility uses.

### **D. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

#### **PROJECT SITE**

The Proposed Project would improve the project site by doubling the width of the malls and providing landscaping and trees, decorative pavers, seating, lighting, and bicycle lanes and bicycle racks. Although the malls between Hester and Madison Streets have not been designed, it is expected that they would be similar in design to the other project site malls.

## **The Reconstruction of the Allen and Pike Street Malls**

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### *URBAN DESIGN*

The Proposed Project would redevelop the existing Allen and Pike Street malls and the NYCDOT Interim Plan bicycle lanes and intersection plaza connectors with a new linear park linking the Lower East Side, Two Bridges, and Chinatown neighborhoods to the East River. The existing, primarily concrete malls with some trees would be doubled in width, and would include an integrated park walkway and bicycle paths with plantings (see **Figures 1-8 through 1-17** “Project Description”). In general, the Proposed Project would include a central, approximately eight-foot-wide-minimum pedestrian path (the maximum width of which would vary); flanking landscaped areas with seating, each of which would be approximately six feet wide (with varying maximum widths); and a six-foot-wide bicycle path on each side of the landscaped pedestrian malls. Three-foot-wide planted buffers with street lights and curbs would separate the bicycle paths from the adjacent vehicular lanes. The landscaping design would continue the aesthetics of the plantings used for the Demonstration Mall. The plantings would provide visual and noise buffering for the users of the redeveloped malls.

The Proposed Project would also reconstruct the NYCDOT Interim Plan plaza connectors at Broome, Hester, and Monroe Streets. Each reconstructed connector would consist of a paved plaza area, a paved pedestrian walkway at one end through the project site, and a paved lane for emergency vehicle access through the project site. Landscaped areas with curbs would border the central plaza area between the pedestrian walkway and emergency vehicle access corridor. Seating and decorative paving would be located in the central plaza area (see **Figure 1-17** of “Project Description” for the site plan of the reconstructed plaza connector at Broome Street).

The Proposed Project would improve physical and visual connections between the upland neighborhoods and the East River to the south. The walkways and bicycle lanes would continue through the three intersection plaza connectors. Seating would be located throughout the project site and plaza connectors. The pathway geometry between Cherry and South Streets would include a 14-foot-wide multi-use pedestrian and bicycle path that would be flanked by grassy areas. This section of the project site would not include seating or trees.

### *VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES*

The Demonstration Mall would continue to provide long views north to the Chrysler Building. The redevelopment of the Pike Street malls would improve the context of this view corridor, which would continue to provide views to the Manhattan Bridge. The redevelopment of the Allen and Pike Street malls would not obstruct views to any visual resources. The Pike Street malls closest to South Street would be developed in the context of planned improvements to the East River waterfront that are part of the East River Esplanade and Piers project.

## **STUDY AREA**

### *URBAN DESIGN*

The Proposed Project would not alter the height, bulk, form, size, scale, use, or arrangement of buildings in the study area as the Proposed Project would be limited to changes to the existing Allen and Pike Street malls, the NYCDOT Interim Plan Area, and the two intersections at Broome and Hester Streets. The Proposed Project also would not alter the block form or street grid of the surrounding area. The Proposed Project would physically improve the condition of the streetscape in the study area. The changes to the project site would be made in the context of

improvements that will occur as part of the East River Esplanade and Piers project, in the study area south of the project site.

*VIEW CORRIDORS AND VISUAL RESOURCES*

The addition of new seating, bicycle lanes, street trees, plantings, and other landscaping elements to the project site would be expected to improve views of the project site from the surrounding area. These proposed changes would enhance the context of views to visual resources in the study area and visual resources visible from the study area. Further, the reconstructed malls would improve the context of views south on the Pike Street view corridor with new streetscape elements.

Overall, the redevelopment of the project site would improve the physical and visual conditions of the project site. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not be expected to result in adverse impacts to urban design features or visual resources on the project site or in the surrounding area. \*