

6.6 URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

6.6.1 Introduction

This Section evaluates the effects of construction and operation of the alternative Shaft Site at East 59th Street and Second Avenue on nearby urban design and visual resources. This includes consideration of changes to the streetscape at the alternative Shaft Site, possible effects to the visual quality of the surrounding area, and potential impacts to views of significant visual resources. The Study Area for the analysis of the alternative Shaft Site's effect on urban design and visual resources is the area extending 400 feet from the boundaries of the site and the potential water main connection route that is unique to this alternative Shaft Site (Figure 6.6-1).

6.6.2 Existing Conditions

Urban Design

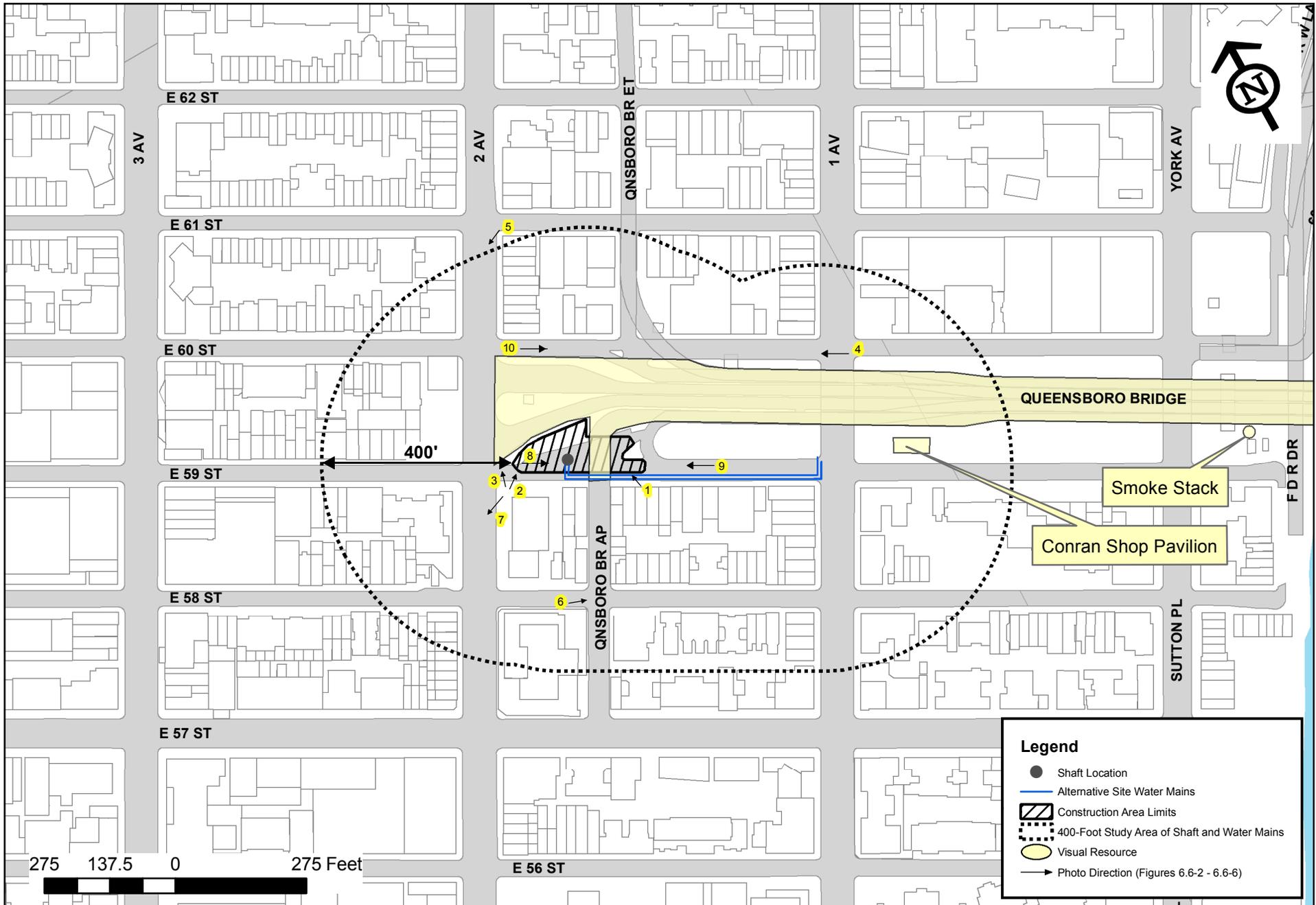
Alternative Shaft Site

The alternative Shaft Site is located on the north side of E. 59th Street east of Second Avenue. It includes a portion of the streetbed of E. 59th Street and a paved area alongside the Queensboro Bridge (Bridge), including an area below and on both sides of the rusticated granite, arched approach viaduct of the Bridge that crosses above E. 59th Street (Figure 6.6-2, Photograph 1). The alternative Shaft Site is adjacent to the south outer roadway of the Bridge. The lower portion of the site is a paved area that is currently surrounded with chain link fencing and concrete barriers. West of the approach viaduct, the paved area is used for parking and staging by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) in connection with NYCDOT's work on the Queensboro Bridge (Figure 6.6-2, Photograph 2). There are no sidewalks on or surrounding the alternative Shaft Site.

Study Area

The urban design of the area surrounding the alternative Shaft Site and its surrounding construction area is dominated by the infrastructure of the Queensboro Bridge. The granite walls of the main approach ramp generally form the northern boundary of the site. Immediately adjacent to the west side of the construction area is the main, street-level approach to the Bridge (from Second Avenue), marked by a decorative oxidized-copper lamppost above a granite pier (Figure 6.6-3, Photograph 3). As described in Section 4.6, "Urban Design and Visual Resources" in Chapter 4, "Preferred Shaft Site," the Queensboro Bridge is a through-type, multi-span cantilever bridge constructed of steel with Beaux Arts granite components and is a historic resource. The Bridge approach rises toward the East River on a rusticated granite base.

The typical rectangular street grid of Manhattan is interrupted in this area by the approaches and exits from the Bridge, which cut through the midblocks between E. 58th and E. 61st Streets and First and Second Avenues. North of E. 60th Street, the exit ramp from the Bridge runs along a



Legend

- Shaft Location
- Alternative Site Water Mains
- ▨ Construction Area Limits
- ⋯ 400-Foot Study Area of Shaft and Water Mains
- Visual Resource
- Photo Direction (Figures 6.6-2 - 6.6-6)

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NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY TUNNEL NO. 3
STAGE 2- MANHATTAN LEG
E. 59TH STREET/SECOND AVENUE SHAFT SITE
VISUAL RESOURCES

FIGURE 6.6-1



View of alternative Shaft Site on E. 59th Street, east of Second Avenue 1



View alternative Shaft Site on E. 59th Street, from Second Avenue 2

Source: Field surveys, spring and summer 2005



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PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 6.6-2



View of Queensboro Bridge approach from **3**
E. 59th Street and Second Avenue



View of Bridge pedestrian and bicycle entrance at **4**
E. 60th Street and First Avenue

Source: Field surveys, spring and summer 2005



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FIGURE 6.6-3

steel viaduct; there is also an exit at street level below the viaduct. First and Second Avenues are major north-south thoroughfares that carry the majority of vehicular traffic through the area. Because the Bridge approaches and exits create intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to access and cross, the pedestrian activity in the area is mainly located on Second and First Avenues and the side streets west of Second Avenue. In addition, large portions of the north side of E. 59th Street and the south side of E. 60th Street between First and Second Avenues do not have sidewalks. However, there is a pedestrian and bicycle entrance to the Bridge at E. 60th Street and First Avenue, identifiable by its surrounding tubular steel railing (Figure 6.6-3, Photograph 4).

The topography of the Study Area slopes gradually downward from Second Avenue to First Avenue, and slightly upward toward the Bridge. There are some street trees along sidewalks throughout the Study Area, including along the south side of E. 59th Street between First and Second Avenues. No street trees are located along the sidewalks surrounding the alternative Shaft Site; however, there are several honey locust trees located in the western portion of the multi-use area adjacent to the alternative Shaft Site. Cobrahead lampposts are used in the Study Area, except at the northwest corner of E. 58th Street and First Avenue, where there is a “long-arm” style lamppost (similar to the bishop’s crook).

There is a large amount of transportation-related signage near the Bridge, as well as typical street furniture (e.g., bus shelters, newspaper bins) throughout the Study Area. The wires and support towers for the Roosevelt Island tram run above E. 60th Street to the 2-story tram station structure at the southwest corner of East 60th Street and Second Avenue (Figure 6.6-4, Photograph 5). The Study Area consists of a mix of low- to high-rise buildings with mainly commercial and residential uses. Buildings within the Study Area are primarily built to the street line; exceptions include the Evansview Condominiums at 303 E. 60th Street and the Landmark Apartments at 300 E. 59th Street, both tower apartment buildings set back behind public plazas. The buildings on the western side of Second Avenue between E. 59th and E. 60th Streets are set back behind a wide, open plaza adjacent to the tram station. In addition to medium- and large-scale apartment buildings, there are a number of 4- to 6-story tenement buildings and garages in the Study Area, and one church, the part Gothic, part Romanesque style All Saints Episcopal Church, on E. 60th Street (Figures 6.6-4 and 6.6-5, Photographs 6 and 7). The buildings are clad in a variety of materials, mostly brick, stucco, and glass.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

As described in Section 4.6, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” in Chapter 4, “Preferred Shaft Site,” the Queensboro Bridge is a visual resource. From the edges of the alternative Shaft Site (on the public side of the fence), various elements of the Queensboro Bridge can be seen, including the approach ramps and viaduct, which are clad in rusticated granite; the Manhattan-side steel tower; and the decorative copper-clad lamppost at the Second Avenue entrance (Figure 6.6-5, Photograph 8). Also visible in views north and east from the alternative Shaft Site are the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure; views east also include a tall, tan brick



Second Avenue, view south from E. 61st Street 5



View east along E. 58th Street, from west of Second Avenue 6



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FIGURE 6.6-4



View south of Second Avenue from E. 59th Street 7



View east from edge of alternative Shaft Site 8

Source: Field surveys, spring and summer 2005



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FIGURE 6.6-5

smokestack, located immediately adjacent to the Bridge near the East River, and the modern glass pavilion of the Terence Conran Shop, set in the Bridgemarket plaza.

Study Area

From the Study Area, the alternative Shaft Site can only be seen within the immediately adjacent area: the area along E. 59th Street on both sides of the Bridge viaduct, and along Second Avenue generally from south of E. 60th Street. Visual resources that can be seen within the Study Area are the Bridge, the Conran Shop pavilion, and the tall brick smokestack (described above), all of which can be viewed along E. 59th Street. Views west along the street are of the granite-clad Bridge viaduct (Figure 6.6-6, Photograph 9). Views east along E. 60th Street are of the Bridge, the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure, and the steel exit ramp of the Bridge above the street (Figure 6.6-6, Photograph 10). Views west along the street do not have any distinguishing features; neither do views north and south along Second Avenue.

E. 58th Street rises from Second Avenue to the Bridge approach, then slopes downward toward First Avenue, and does not include any important views. The residences at 311 and 313 E. 58th Street (between Second Avenue and the Bridge approach ramp), which are New York City Landmarks and are listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, are not considered to be visual resources for the purposes of this analysis as they are not prominent in surrounding view corridors and, furthermore, cannot be seen in views to or from the site. The East River cannot easily be seen from the Study Area.

6.6.3 Future Conditions Without the Project

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

In the Future Without the Project, no changes to the urban design of the alternative Shaft Site are anticipated. The fenced area on the west side of the Bridge viaduct will continue to be used as a parking and staging area, and the streetbed of E. 59th Street will remain in its current condition.

Study Area

Ongoing rehabilitation of the Queensboro Bridge could result in minor changes to the streetscape of the Study Area. Overall, in the Future Without the Project the urban design of the Study Area will remain similar to existing conditions.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

In the Future Without the Project, it is anticipated that the views of surrounding visual resources from the alternative Shaft Site will not change from existing conditions. The ongoing rehabilitation of the Bridge would not be expected to alter existing views.



View west on E. 59th Street to granite-clad Bridge viaduct **9**



View east on E. 60th Street from Second Avenue **10**



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PHOTOGRAPHS OF STUDY AREA

FIGURE 6.6-6

Study Area

There are no projects planned within the Study Area that are expected to significantly change views to surrounding visual resources.

6.6.4 Future Conditions With the Project

Construction

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

During construction, activities and equipment on the alternative Shaft Site would be shielded from view by a 20-foot-high construction barrier. The only equipment visible above the barrier from street level would be a crane and, possibly, a concrete truck enclosure. The barrier would block off the area that is currently fenced as well as a portion of the sidewalk on E. 59th Street. As a streetscape element, this barrier would be similar to, although taller than, the fence that currently encloses a portion of the site, except that it would not allow views through to the site. As there are no sidewalks on the north side of E. 59th Street in this area, the loss of a portion of the streetbed in this area would not represent a significant change from existing conditions for pedestrians.

As described in Chapter 2, “Purpose and Need and Project Description,” some limited construction work would occur on the alternative Shaft Site during the evening. To facilitate this work, lighting would be installed around the site. This lighting would be noticeable from the surrounding area, but would not be substantially different from the lighting that already illuminates the Study Area at night.

Study Area

The project’s construction activities would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. As noted above, the project would use a portion of the nearest travel lane on E. 59th Street. These changes are typical of construction projects in Manhattan, and would not endure beyond the 52-month construction period if raise bore excavation is used or the 65-month construction period if surface excavation is used. Overall, due to the limited nature of the potential changes to streetscape during construction of Shaft 33B at the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site, no potential significant adverse impacts to the urban design of the Study Area are anticipated as a result of construction activities required for the alternative Shaft Site.

Water Main Connections

Construction of the water main connections would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. During construction, the sidewalk area would be reduced, street pavement

would be cut up, and construction equipment would be located in the street. These changes are typical of construction projects in Manhattan.

Every effort would be made to protect and maintain street trees before and during construction. However, it is possible that several street trees along the water main route would be removed.

For street segments that would involve use of a 2-foot-wide strip of sidewalk, all street trees and street furniture located within the affected sidewalk areas may be removed during construction. The trees that could be removed for the three water main routes studied in this EIS from the preferred Shaft Site are described in Section 5.6, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” in Chapter 5, “Water Main Connections.” Use of the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site could increase the number of affected street trees by potentially adding trees along E. 59th Street that would not be affected by water main connections from the preferred Shaft Site. For all three representative water main routes analyzed, it is possible that eastbound traffic on E. 59th Street coming from Second Avenue would be routed to the northern portion of the street to detour around the construction zone. In this case, traffic would be routed through the northern of the two arches beneath the elevated Queensboro Bridge ramp, and then routed to the south side of the street after passing beneath that ramp. This would require removal of the three honey locust trees in the smaller (traffic island) portion of the multi-use area. Following construction, this area would be restored. For the First Avenue and Sutton Place routes, 11 additional street trees along the south side of E. 59th Street could be affected, if the traffic lane is shifted to the south side of E. 59th Street. Detailed information on trees potentially affected is provided in Appendix 6. It is also possible that some additional street trees would be lost in locations where no sidewalk work is proposed, because of the excavation activities close to those trees.

As described in Section 5.6, where possible along the water main routes, the New York City Department of Design and Construction (NYCDDC) would replace any removed street trees in accordance with the requirements of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR), which administers the street tree program in New York City. The replacement trees would in most cases be smaller than the trees that were lost. Depending on the placement of the mains within the streetbed, however, NYCDDC may not be able to replace all street trees in the areas where the water main would be located very close to the sidewalk because sufficient clearance between the tree roots and the water mains must be maintained. In this case replacement trees may be provided in the neighborhood area, rather than in existing tree locations. For more information, see Section 5.6.

The potential elimination of mature street trees, in the numbers described, would have a temporary adverse impact on urban design that would be offset by additional tree planting in the community. The elimination of these trees is not considered to be a significant impact because the urban design and visual resources characteristic of this area is not defined by this element. However, NYCDEP recognizes that street trees to be an important part of a community and will work with NYCDPR in the greening of this community.

Overall, due to the limited nature of the potential streetscape changes, no potential significant adverse impacts to the urban design of the Study Area are anticipated as a result of construction activities required for the alternative Shaft Site and its water main connections.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

Although the construction barrier around the alternative Shaft Site would not allow views through the site to surrounding visual resources, these views are readily accessible from the public side of the construction enclosure. Moreover, a fence currently encloses the alternative Shaft Site today. The Queensboro Bridge's ramp and Manhattan-side steel tower and the brick smokestack would be visible looking east across the alternative Shaft Site above this enclosure. Therefore, the alternative Shaft Site would not have a significant adverse impact on visual resources.

Study Area

During construction, the enclosure surrounding the alternative Shaft Site would be visible along E. 59th Street from east of Second Avenue, and along Second Avenue from the immediately adjacent area. The enclosure and construction equipment and activity on the site would not eliminate views from the Study Area to surrounding visual resources, nor would they become a dominant element of such views. Views of the Queensboro Bridge, the Conran Shop pavilion, and the tall brick smokestack would still be available along E. 59th Street, and the Bridge and the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure would still be available along E. 60th Street. While the construction enclosure, equipment, and related activity would become part of these views, they would be similar in nature to the enclosure, equipment, and activity on the site today and would not adversely affect the views. Therefore, due to the limited nature of the potential changes, the construction activities for the project are not anticipated to result in any potential significant adverse impacts to the visual resources of the Study Area.

Water Main Connections

During construction of water main connections from the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site, the disturbance to the streetbed and sidewalk and construction equipment would be visible from elsewhere in the Study Area, but would not eliminate views from the Study Area to surrounding visual resources; nor would they become a dominant element of such views. As described in Section 5.6, while the construction equipment and related activity would temporarily become part of surrounding views, they would not adversely affect the views. The period of diminished visual quality would be short-term along each street segment. Therefore, no potential significant adverse visual impact would be anticipated to occur during construction of the water main connections from this alternative Shaft Site.

Conclusions

Overall, construction activities for Shaft 33B on the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site and its water main connections on the same block would result in temporary changes to the appearance of the alternative Shaft Site, surrounding block, and water main connection route that would be consistent with the construction activities that are occurring on the Site today. No changes to urban design would result, and no views of visual resources would be blocked. For the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site, all potential water main connections could affect the

three trees located in the traffic island to the east of the site, since these trees would be affected by the traffic detour around the site when water main connections are under construction adjacent to the site. In addition, although every effort would be made to maintain and protect street trees before and during construction, some of the work along the water main routes could result in additional loss of street trees. This would be expected for any water main alignment that uses part of the sidewalk on either an avenue or a side street. The potential elimination of mature street trees, in the numbers described, would have a temporary adverse impact on urban design that would be offset by additional tree planting in the community. As described in Section 5.6, construction of the water main connections would not be anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to urban design or visual character. Overall, therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts on urban design or visual resources are anticipated as a result of construction of Shaft 33B on the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site or its water main connections.

Operation

Urban Design

Alternative Shaft Site

During operation of the project, three permanent above-ground structures would be added to the alternative Shaft Site: a 10-foot-tall, 14-inch diameter air vent and two 3-foot-tall, 6-inch diameter hydrants. These structures would be visible additions to the streetscape, but are relatively unobtrusive and small in size and therefore would not have a potential adverse impact on urban design. In addition, the presence of hydrants near the street edge would be congruous with street furniture that is found surrounding the alternative Shaft Site in existing conditions. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts are anticipated to occur to urban design of the Shaft Site because of operation of the project.

Study Area

The project would not involve any changes to block form; street pattern or hierarchy; topography; natural features; streetscape; or building arrangement, bulk, use, or type within the Study Area. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts on urban design of the Study Area are expected because of the operation of the Shaft 33B at the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site.

Visual Resources

Alternative Shaft Site

There are no visual resources located on the alternative Shaft Site. Views to the Queensboro Bridge, the tall brick smokestack, the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure, and the Conran Shop pavilion from the Shaft Site would not be altered by the introduction of the air vent and hydrants onto the site.

Study Area

Views from the Study Area to the Queensboro Bridge, the tall brick smokestack, the steel towers of the Roosevelt Island tram structure, and the Conran Shop pavilion would not be altered by the introduction of the air vent and hydrants onto the site. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts to visual resources are anticipated to occur as a result of the operation of Shaft 33B at the E. 59th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site.

