

8.3 OPEN SPACE

8.3.1 Introduction

This Section evaluates the potential effects of construction and operation of Shaft 33B at the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site on open space resources. The Study Area is the same as for land use, described above in Section 8.2, “Land Use and Community Facilities, Zoning, and Public Policy,” and consists of the area within 400 feet of the alternative Shaft Site and the potential water main connection route from the alternative Shaft Site along Second Avenue between E. 54th Street and E. 56th Street.

8.3.2 Existing Conditions

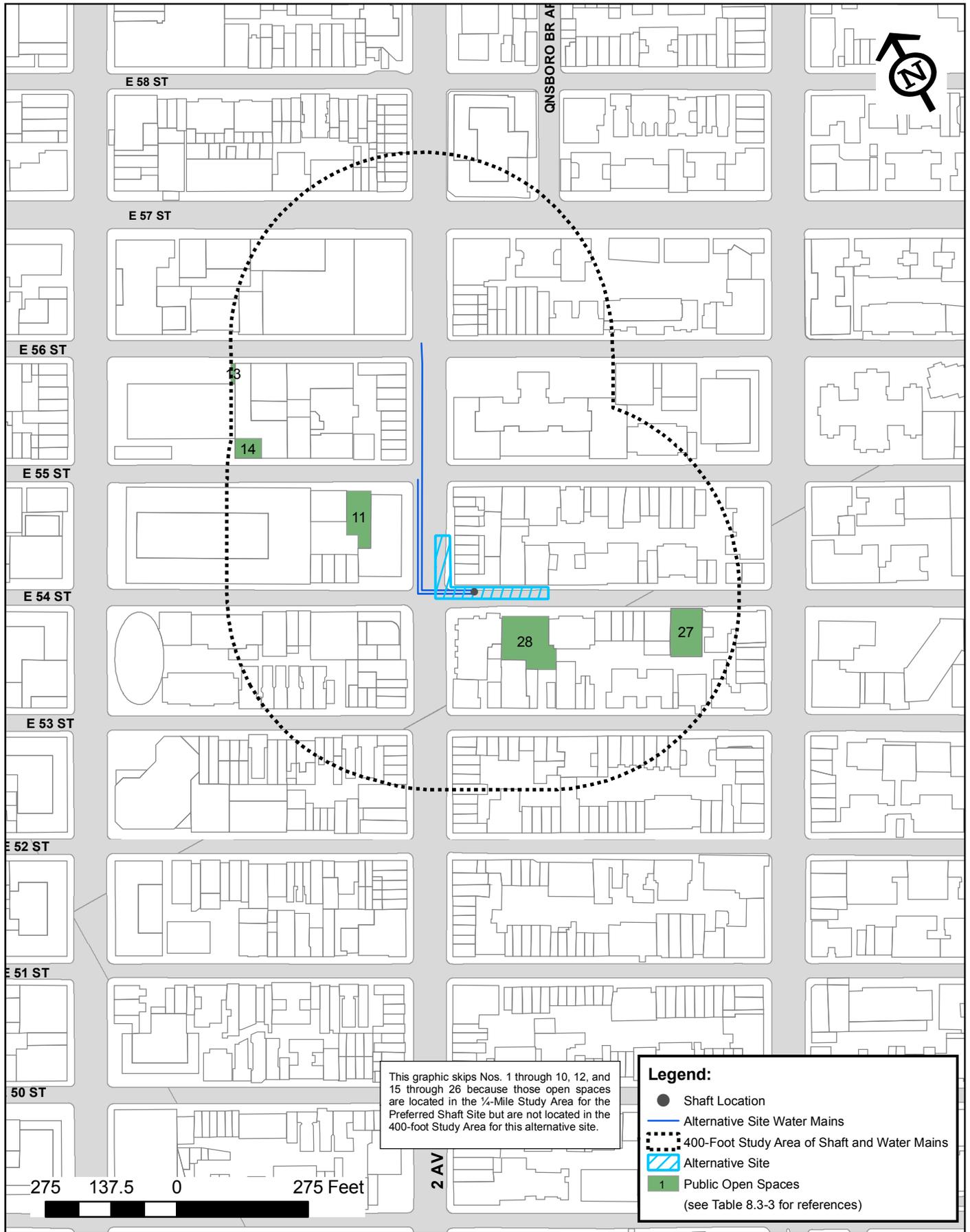
The 400-foot Study Area for the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site encompasses four publicly accessible open spaces. Those open spaces are listed in Table 8.3-1 and shown in Figure 8.3-1.

Table 8.3-1
Open Spaces in the 400-Foot Study Area

Map No*	Name (if any)	Owner	Description/Amenities	Total Open Space Acres	Active Open Space Acres	Passive Open Space Acres
11	Brevard	Private	Residential plaza with bike parking, planting, seating, trees, waterfall	0.21	0.00	0.21
14	919 Third Avenue, E. 55 th Street area	Private	Paved plaza at office building	0.05	0.00	0.05
27	54 th Street Recreation Center	Public	Indoor recreation center with gym, pool, track, programs and activities	0.17	0.17	0.00
28	Connaught Tower	Private	Plaza with sculpture, trees, plantings	0.23	0.00	0.23
Note: * The open spaces listed in the this table only include those located in the 400-foot Study Area for the E. 54 th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site and are therefore not consecutively numbered.						

The E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site is located directly north of a landscaped plaza at the base of Connaught Tower (No. 28), a high-rise residential building on the corner of E. 54th Street and Second Avenue. The approximately 10,000-square-foot (0.23-acre) plaza contains benches, trees, and landscaping, and is heavily used in the daytime by office workers and residents in the area. A brick walkway leads from the plaza to the northern side of E. 53rd Street between Second and Third Avenues.

The 54th Street Recreation Center (No. 27), located east of the alternative Shaft Site on the same block of E. 54th Street, is a publicly owned facility under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR). This facility contains an indoor gymnasium



This graphic skips Nos. 1 through 10, 12, and 15 through 26 because those open spaces are located in the 1/4-Mile Study Area for the Preferred Shaft Site but are not located in the 400-foot Study Area for this alternative site.

Legend:

- Shaft Location
- Alternative Site Water Mains
- ⋯ 400-Foot Study Area of Shaft and Water Mains
- ▨ Alternative Site
- 1 Public Open Spaces
(see Table 8.3-3 for references)

Map Document: (S:\Projects\2175158\GIS_Figures\Shaft_33B\ES_Field_Work\Orig_Site(AKRF).mxd) 9/13/2005 -- 1:58:13 PM



**NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
 PROPOSED SHAFT 33B TO CITY TUNNEL NO. 3
 STAGE 2- MANHATTAN LEG
 E. 54TH STREET/SECOND AVENUE SHAFT SITE
 PUBLIC OPEN SPACES**

FIGURE 8.3-1

and pool facilities, and hosts numerous community events and programs. There are two additional open spaces in the Study Area, both between Second and Third Avenues. One of these is a paved plaza at the base of the Brevard residential building (No. 11) on E. 54th Street, and the other is a paved, landscaped plaza (No. 14) on E. 55th Street, at the base of a high-rise office building located at 919 Third Avenue. All of the plazas in the Study Area consist of passive recreational uses.

8.3.3 Future Conditions Without the Project

As described previously in Section 8.2.3, “Land Use and Community Facilities, Zoning, and Public Policy,” three new residential projects are expected to be completed in the Study Area in the Future Without the Project, resulting in the development of more than 420 new residential units. In addition, the new buildings on E. 54th Street adjacent to alternative Shaft Site and at the corner of Second Avenue and E. 55th Street, just north of the site, will be fully occupied. In addition, the New York City Department of Education is contemplating a project that would result in the demolition and reconstruction of both P.S. 59 and the High School of Art and Design. As part of this project, a residential tower would be constructed above the rebuilt P.S. 59 and High School of Art and Design Buildings. These projects will bring additional population to the Study Area, who will presumably use the area’s open spaces. No significant changes to open spaces in the Study Area are anticipated in the Future Without the Project.

8.3.4 Future Conditions With the Project

Construction

Alternative Shaft Site

No open spaces would be directly affected by construction of Shaft 33B at the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site. Construction activities at the alternative Shaft Site would create some disruption for surrounding land uses, as noted in Section 8.2 (“Land Use and Community Facilities, Zoning, and Public Policy”). Construction equipment would be visible above the construction barrier, and construction-related traffic would arrive at and depart from the alternate Shaft Site. Noise from construction equipment on the site would be audible in the nearby vicinity (for more information on noise, see Section 8.12, “Noise”).

While the 10-foot-high construction barrier around the alternative Shaft Site would buffer the disruption, intrusive noise levels are anticipated at the Connaught Tower plaza across from the site. As discussed in Section 8.12, potential significant adverse noise impacts are anticipated in this open space throughout the construction period.

As noted earlier in the discussion of existing conditions, the Connaught Tower plaza is heavily used during the daytime by office workers from nearby Midtown businesses. It consists entirely of passive recreation features, including seating and landscaping. As an open space in an area with few outdoor seating areas, it is valuable because of its presence and is also a space where users are likely to value the relative quiet the space currently provides. Construction-related

noise could detract from the quality of this open space and make this open space less attractive for open space users. However, many of the open space users likely value the space because of its outdoor seating close to Midtown, rather than because of its quiet. Given the relative dearth of open space resources nearby, this potential adverse effect on the quality of this space during the construction period may result in a potential significant adverse open space impact, but open space users are likely to continue to use the space in any event.

In addition, as described in Chapter 2, “Purpose and Need and Project Overview,” during the initial period when blasting would occur, there would be some limits to access in the area closest to the alternative Shaft Site. For two months using the raise bore method and three months using surface excavation, access and traffic restrictions would be necessary up to two times a day during this period. A warning whistle communication protocol would be used to halt vehicular and pedestrian traffic within 100 to 150 feet of the blast site immediately prior to the blast, for a total anticipated duration of 5 minutes or less. Access to the Connaught Tower plaza, which is within that distance of the alternative Shaft Site, would therefore not be allowed during that period. NYCDEP would seek a whistle waiver from FDNY to allow a shorter blasting sequence to be conducted, which would reduce the duration when pedestrians would be cleared from those spaces to approximately 1 minute. FDNY has indicated that they could issue this waiver.

Construction activities associated with the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site would not affect the 54th Street Recreation Center, an indoor recreational facility. Other open spaces within the Study Area are located on E. 55th Street between Second and Third Avenues and would be buffered from the construction activities by intervening buildings. Construction noise and other construction-related activities for Shaft 33B at the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site would not be noticeable at these open spaces. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impacts to these three open spaces would be anticipated.

Water Main Connections

Construction of the new two-block-long water main connections from the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site along Second Avenue from E. 54th Street to E. 56th Street, where they would meet the First Avenue and Sutton Place water main routes described in Chapter 5, “Water Main Connections,” would also bring some additional temporary construction disruption to the nearby area. This work would last an estimated 12 weeks on each affected block and 10 weeks in each affected intersection. The nearest open spaces to this two-block-long water main segment would be buffered from the construction, which are on E. 56th Street between Second and Third Avenues. Therefore, no potential significant adverse impact on these open spaces is anticipated during construction of this water main segment. Construction of water mains along E. 55th and E. 56th Street between Second and Third Avenues is considered in Section 5.3, “Open Space,” in Chapter 5, “Water Main Connections.”

Conclusions

Overall, construction of Shaft 33B at the alternative Shaft Site and the associated water mains would not occur in, or directly affect, any open spaces. Intrusive noise levels are anticipated at the Connaught Tower plaza across from the site, and this potential adverse effect on the quality

of this space during the construction period may result in a potential significant adverse open space impact. However, it is expected that open space users are likely to continue to use the space given the relative dearth of open space resources nearby. Construction of the water main connections would not result in significant adverse impacts on open spaces, given the short duration of this work as it passes open spaces nearby.

Activation and Operation

Activation and operation of Shaft 33B are not anticipated to have potential adverse effects on any publicly accessible open spaces near the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site. As described in Chapter 2, activation would occur for a very short period of time and would involve limited on-site activity. The Shaft would not be located in any open space, and the completed Shaft would have only limited equipment above grade. Activities associated with operation of the shaft would not result in increased traffic, air pollution, or increased noise or vibration levels at the site. For more information, see Sections 8.6, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” 8.9, “Traffic and Parking,” 8.11, “Air Quality,” 8.12, “Noise,” and 8.13, “Vibration.” Limited on-site activity would occur once the shaft is operational. In addition, NYCDEP would fund and support NYCDPR re-vegetation and greening efforts in the Study Area; these efforts could include the provision of additional street trees or support for other park or open space improvement initiatives intended to benefit the residents of local communities. NYCDEP would work with NYCDPR and the community to identify desired improvements in the general project area. Overall, therefore, operation of Shaft 33B at the E. 54th Street/Second Avenue Shaft Site is not anticipated to result in any potential significant adverse impacts to nearby open spaces.

