

**A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Actions on open space and recreational resources located at Belmont Park and in the surrounding communities. The assessment considers two distinct ways in which a project can affect open space conditions: 1) direct effects, which could occur as a result of the elimination or creation of open space resources, or noise generated within close proximity to existing open spaces; and 2) indirect effects, which could occur as a result of the incremental demand the Proposed Project's workers and visitors would place on the area's open space resources. Project-specific influences are as follows:

**DIRECT EFFECTS:**

- The Proposed Project would not directly displace any New York State (NYS)-designated open space, conservation area, or parkland meeting the definition of "open space" pursuant to New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) guidelines.<sup>1</sup> However, the Proposed Project would directly displace a substantial portion of the approximately 7-acre State-owned, privately operated recreational resource—the Belmont Park "Backyard"—used by Belmont Park employees and New York Racing Association (NYRA) invitees who pay the entry fee to access the Backyard to participate in betting and other racing-related activities in a family-oriented green space setting.
- As part of the Proposed Project, New York Arena Partners, LLC (NYAP, or the Applicant) would develop approximately 5.75 acres of new passive, publicly accessible open space and recreational areas on the Project Sites.
- NYAP intends to contribute to the improvement of an existing off-site community park in the surrounding area.
- The Proposed Project would generate traffic and noise within close proximity to specific open space and recreational resources.

**INDIRECT EFFECTS:**

- The Proposed Project would introduce new visitor and worker populations who would utilize open space resources at Belmont Park, and possibly in the areas immediately surrounding Belmont Park.

This chapter considers the potential for significant adverse impacts to open space and recreational resources from these direct and indirect effects for the 2021 analysis year, when the Proposed Project would be fully operational.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/90206.html#Open\\_Space](https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/90206.html#Open_Space), last accessed on May 10, 2018.

## **PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**

This analysis finds that the Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts on publicly accessible open space or recreational resources. The following summarizes the analysis findings in terms of both direct and indirect effects.

### *DIRECT EFFECTS*

The Proposed Project would introduce new publicly accessible open spaces to Belmont Park, including approximately 2.0 acres of hard- and soft-scaped plazas on Site A, and an approximately 3.75-acre landscaped open space with walking paths on Site B, along the southern and eastern boundary.

In addition to the proposed on-site open space, NYAP has committed to working with ESD and local officials and community stakeholders, including the Town of Hempstead, to make improvements to existing open space in the nearby community. Elmont Road Park in the Town of Hempstead is currently under consideration.

While the Proposed Project would displace approximately 5 acres of the existing “Backyard” space within Belmont Park, the plazas contemplated for Site A—with sitting areas, gathering spaces for on-site events, and programming—as well as the passive open space proposed for Site B would offset the loss of this space, and would meet the recreational space needs of existing Backyard patrons and new workers and visitors. The proposed, approximately 2.0 acres of hard- and soft-scaped plazas would be located outside the main entrance of the proposed arena, and would flow into the remaining portion of the Backyard and existing Belmont Park Paddock. The newly created plaza spaces would be open to the public free of charge, and would not require an entry fee which is currently required to access the Backyard. The NYRA events currently held within the Backyard space are largely expected to continue in the future with the Proposed Project, utilizing the remaining Backyard space, or may otherwise relocate to other parts of the Belmont Park property.

Based on a review of other technical analyses included in this DEIS, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on open space resources including from air quality, noise, or shadows, either during construction or during event- and non-event day operations. In addition, the Proposed Project would not preclude the ongoing use of existing open space resources at Belmont Park by Floral Park Memorial High School students.

### *INDIRECT EFFECTS*

While the Proposed Project would introduce substantial new worker and visitor populations to the Project Sites, due to the campus-like nature of Belmont Park and the distance workers would travel to exit Belmont Park, it is unlikely that these workers or visitors would utilize open spaces within the communities surrounding Belmont Park, preferring to utilize on-site space at Belmont Park. To accommodate the new on-site populations, as well as the existing Backyard patrons and surrounding communities, new open spaces would be created as part of the Proposed Project, which would offset the incremental demands that the new workers and visitors would place on the existing recreational areas at Belmont Park.

Open spaces directly adjacent to Belmont Park—including the Belmont Bench Spread, Belmont Ball Park, and Hendrickson Avenue Park—may experience some increased utilization by Belmont Park workers and visitors as a result of the Proposed Project. However, the increase is unlikely to be substantial, as access to these spaces from Belmont Park is limited along Hempstead Turnpike, and the proposed on-site amenities would support the recreational needs of workers and visitors.

## **B. METHODOLOGY**

### **ANALYSIS APPROACH**

Open spaces and recreational resources in this chapter are identified as publicly accessible areas that can be utilized by the community on a regular basis, including during designated periods, for active or passive recreation. Publicly accessible open spaces can be under government control or owned by a private entity, so long as they allow public access to the property. Open spaces and recreational resources may include local, city, state, or federal parklands, school athletic fields, as well as recreational facilities that provide access to the public at no cost or for a nominal fee (e.g., Belmont Park). Private open spaces not included in this analysis include cemeteries, residential yards, and other facilities, such as health clubs, which are only accessible to a limited population.

### **STUDY AREAS**

The first step in assessing the effects of a project on open space and recreational resources is the identification of an area or areas in which the effects of a project on open space and recreational resources are most likely to be experienced. For the purposes of this analysis, two study areas have been identified: 1) a ½-mile primary study area (see **Figure 4-1**), within which the Proposed Project would add new open spaces (on the Project Sites), and where there would be the greatest potential for adverse direct and indirect effects from the Proposed Project; and 2) a 1-mile secondary study area (see **Figure 4-2**), which, while having less potential for adverse direct and indirect effects, contains additional open spaces utilized by the residential population within the primary study area, and is where there is potential for NYAP investment in improvements in an existing community park.

### **DATA SOURCES**

Open space data such as location, condition, and utilization was collected through field surveys of open space and recreational facilities located within the primary and secondary study areas. Field surveys of the open space and recreational resources within the primary and secondary study areas were performed by AKRF staff on January 17th, April 19th, May 4th, and September 27th, 2018. In addition, data was collected from the NYC Parks Capital Construction Tracker application, long-range planning reports produced by the Town of Hempstead and Nassau County, and other online resources including the NYRA website, and Newsday Online. These resources provided information regarding the future capital plans for the open spaces in the study areas. AKRF also consulted with the Floral Park-Bellerose Union Free School District to confirm utilization of the Floral Park-Bellerose School athletic field and to inquire about any future plans, and with the Sewanhaka Central High School District for information on utilization of the Belmont Park property by high school students.

### **IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The direct and indirect impact assessments are based on evaluation of how the Proposed Project would modify the character and utilization of publicly accessible open spaces. Direct impacts may result from the direct reduction, addition, or improvement of publicly accessible open space. These direct changes have the potential to modify the types of activities that can occur on, or age groups who can utilize open space and recreational resources. Direct impacts can also come as a result of other activities which directly impact the usability of open spaces, such as traffic or noise produced by a project. Further, according to *The SEQR Handbook, 3rd edition – 2010*, the public benefits, or positive impacts, of an action should be included within an EIS to allow the involved agencies to make a determination of balance between environmental impacts and social and economic

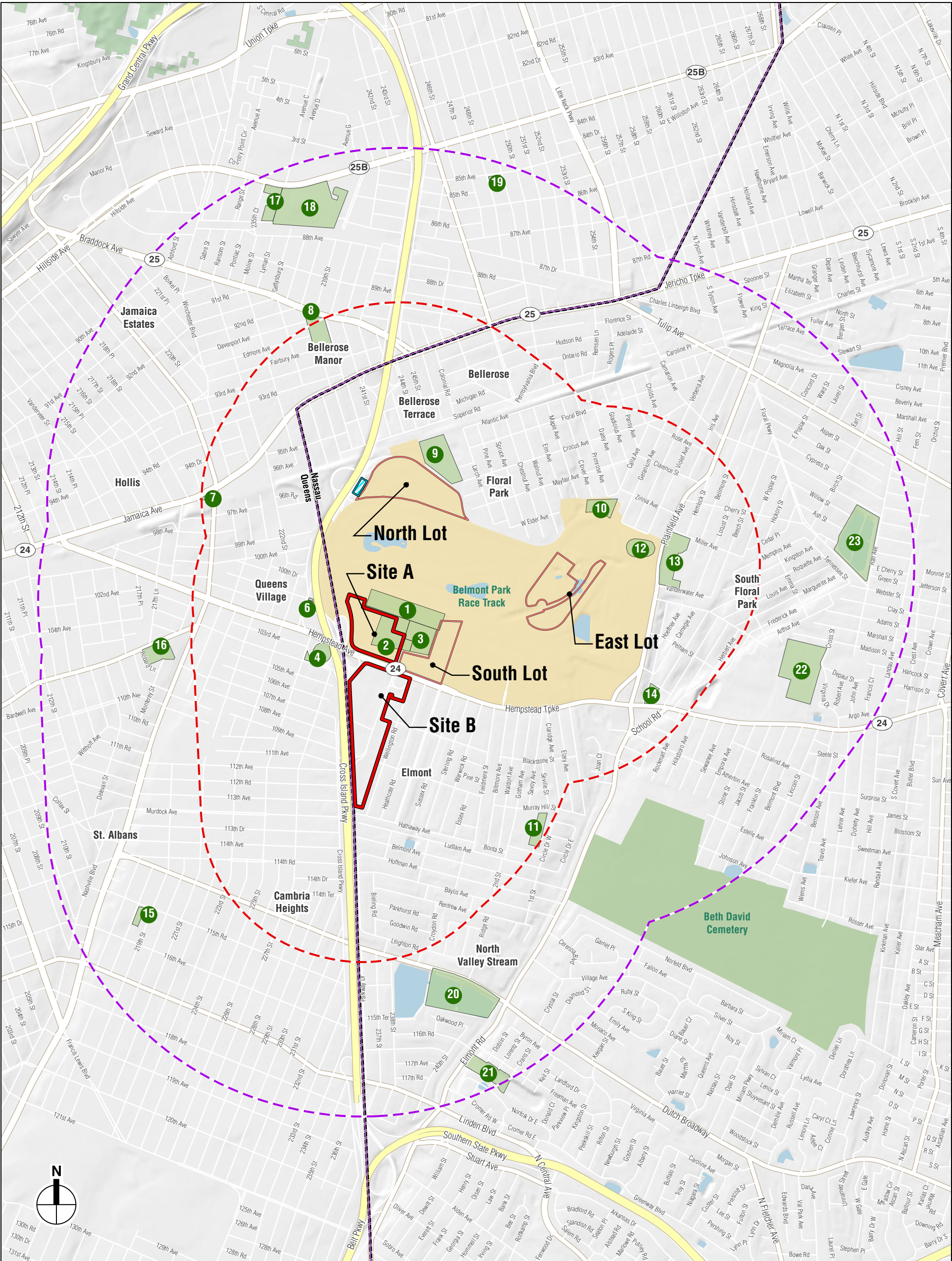


- Project Sites
- North, South, and East Parking Lots
- Proposed Belmont Electrical Substation
- Primary Study Area (1/2-mile radius)
- Long Island Rail Road (LIRR)
- Open Spaces in Primary Study Area

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Open Space and Recreational Resources  
in the Primary Study Area  
**Figure 4-1**





- Project Sites
- North, South, and East Parking Lots
- Proposed Belmont Electrical Substation
- Primary Study Area (1/2-mile radius)
- Secondary Study Area (1-mile radius)
- Open Spaces in Primary or Secondary Study Area

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Open Space and Recreational Resources  
in the Primary and Secondary Study Areas

considerations. Positive impacts may include creating additional open space and recreational resources or contributing to the improvement of open space and recreational resources such as through the creation of an open space improvement fund.

Indirect impacts may result from the increased utilization of open spaces as a result of additional user populations (in this case, workers and visitors) introduced to a study area, to the point that open space and recreational resources are overutilized, damaged, or can no longer adequately serve the study area population.

## **C. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **PRIMARY (1/2-MILE) STUDY AREA**

The primary study area comprises the restricted recreational portions of Belmont Park that are accessible to the public (either at no cost with permission from NYRA or for a nominal fee) and all public open spaces and recreational facilities located within ½ mile of the Project Sites. As shown in **Figure 4-1**, a total of 14 publicly accessible open spaces or recreational resources are located within the primary study area. Five are located on the Belmont Park grounds, while nine are located off the property. Of the nine off-site open spaces and recreational resources, six are public parks, and three are school athletic facilities open to the public during non-school hours. **Table 4-1** provides an inventory of all the open spaces and recreational resources found within the ½-mile primary study area, including their operator, total size, facilities and utilization.

#### *BELMONT PARK*

Belmont Park is a restricted-access recreational resource that is used by a variety of user groups, including daytime and residential worker populations, patrons, and high school athletic groups. In the existing condition, approximately 3,000 visitors attend normal race day activities hosted at Belmont Park. In addition, the Belmont Stakes attracts approximately 60,000 to 100,000 attendees to the property; other graded stakes races during the Spring and Fall Meets generate higher-than-average attendance, but do not draw as many as the Belmont Stakes. Belmont Park includes workers in a variety of positions, employed by a number of organizations including NYRA, various horse stables, and concessionaires. During the racing season, Belmont Park houses approximately 1,000 to 1,200 “backstretch” workers (stable hands, trainers, etc.) on-site.

Belmont Park is considered a restricted-access recreational facility, accessible to the public either at no cost with NYRA’s permission (e.g., Floral Park Memorial High School students’ use of ballfields) or for a fee (for racetrack facilities such as the Backyard). Five specific areas of Belmont Park are publicly accessible (either at no cost or for a nominal fee), and are therefore assessed in the open space analysis. As identified in **Figures 4-1 and 4-2**, and described in detail below, these areas are: The Grandstand (Location 1 in figures), the Backyard (2), the Paddock (3), the Training Track North Field (10), and Pony Track Infield (12).

**Table 4-1**  
**Open Space and Recreational Resources in the Primary Study Area**

Map No.	Name	Type	County	Operator	Acres	Facilities	Condition/Utilization
1	Belmont Park Grandstand	Restricted-Access Recreational Resource	Nassau	NYRA	9.03	Betting facilities, covered and uncovered seating and spectating areas, restrooms, auxiliary facilities, concessions	High during race meets, low other times
2	Belmont Park Backyard	Restricted-Access Recreational Resource	Nassau	NYRA	7.45	Picnic tables, betting tent, concession stands, bar, children's play area, restrooms, seating areas, televisions, man-made water feature	High during race meets and special events, low other times
3	Belmont Park Paddock	Restricted-Access Recreational Resource	Nassau	NYRA	4.70	Stables, white pine tree, chaplain's monument, horse walking area	Moderate during race meets, low other times
4	Hempstead Ballfield	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	1.94	Baseball field	Poor quality with highly limited access due to its location within cloverleaf of exit ramp
5	Hempstead Bench Spread	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	0.27	Landscaped area and seating areas	Well maintained, but not easily accessible
6	Pat Williams Playground	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	0.51	Basketball court, fitness equipment, and children's play structures	New children's play structure and basketball court, difficult to access area due to location
7	Queens Village Veterans Plaza	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	0.32	Seating area	Well maintained
8	Breiner Park	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	3.4	Children's play structures, basketball court (x1), handball court (x6), restrooms, concrete playfield, open green space, seating areas	Moderately maintained, high concrete coverage
9	Floral Park-Bellerose School Athletic Field	School Facility	Nassau	Floral Park-Bellerose UFSD	7.59	Baseball field and large grass playfield, children's play equipment	High during school year, moderate during other times
10	Belmont Training Track North Field	Restricted-Access Recreational Resource by Permission	Nassau	NYRA	2.71	Basketball court, baseball field, other athletic field	Moderate during race meets, low other times
11	Gotham Avenue School Athletic Field	School Facility	Nassau	Elmont USFD	2.53	Children's play area and equipment, large grass playfield and baseball backstop	High during school year, moderate during other times
12	Belmont Park Pony Track Infield	Restricted-Access Recreational Resource by Permission	Nassau	NYRA	2.87	Baseball field, open athletic field	Moderate during race meets, low other times
13	Floral Park Memorial High School Athletic Field	School Facility	Nassau	Sewanhaka CHSD	6.51	Baseball fields, running track, multipurpose sports field, additional open space and fields	High during school year, low during other times
14	Hendrickson Avenue Park	Public Park	Nassau	Town of Hempstead	1.03	Basketball court (x4), handball court (x2), children's play equipment, seating area, and restrooms	Medium-sized recreational park with large concrete playfields, a children's play area and areas for sitting

**Sources:** NYC Parks Department 2017, NYC MapPLUTO 2017, Town of Hempstead Department of Parks and Recreation, ESRI, NYC Department of IT and Technology, Floral Park Conservation Society, and NYRA. Field surveys by AKRF in January, April, and May 2018.



### *The Grandstand (1)*

The Belmont Park Grandstand serves as the main spectating area for visitors attending thoroughbred horse racing at Belmont Park. The Grandstand is the largest grandstand (in size) used in thoroughbred racing and has a capacity of approximately 33,000. The Grandstand includes a range of amenities for visitors including concession stands, betting stations, bars, television viewing areas, trackside spectating areas, and restroom facilities. In addition to the public amenities, the Grandstand structure includes the Clubhouse restaurant (only accessible for an additional fee), and several other ancillary facilities necessary to the operation of Belmont Park including staff offices, television broadcast facilities, a security office, and other facilities. Utilization of the Grandstand is high during racing meets, as this area is the focal point of race-related activities at Belmont Park.

### *The Backyard (2)*

The “Backyard” area of Belmont Park is an approximately 7-acre area (privately operated by NYRA) located directly south and to the rear of the Grandstand and Clubhouse. The majority of the Backyard area is located within Site A.

Use of the Backyard is restricted to paid invitees at Belmont Park on racing days, NYRA invitees attending commercial and private events hosted by NYRA, and NYRA employees and other on-site workers. The Backyard serves as the main private open space area for NYRA invitees attending NYRA’s Racetrack events. At present, the Backyard’s official capacity is 18,000, based on occupancy permit filings for Belmont Stakes Day activities (this permit includes Backyard, colonnade, standees rail adjacent to the Paddock, and marquee tent). The Backyard serves as an alternative space for NYRA’s Racetrack invitees who participate in racing-related activities at Belmont Park; the area includes betting venues (e.g., the marquee tent and another structure where several booths for placing bets are located), numerous televisions that broadcast live racing, a bar, open areas with tables, and restrooms (see **Figure 4-3**). The Backyard includes amenities such as a small man-made (concrete and paver) water feature located near the Red Road entrance to Belmont Park, shaded seating areas, mature trees, and a playground providing recreational space for the children accompanying NYRA’s Racetrack invitees. Thus, the Backyard provides a private family-oriented green space setting for NYRA’s adult Racetrack invitees to participate in betting and other racing-related activities.

Further, NYRA hosts in the Backyard various festivals and trade shows, charity fundraising, and special days (e.g., College Day and NY Showcase Day.) Outside of organized racing meets, a variety of events also are hosted by NYRA in the Backyard, including: about 5-6 weddings or other large private events annually, a micro-brewing and beer festival, as well as car shows and car swap meets held on the Red Lot (the western portion of Site A). In addition, traveling carnivals are occasionally permitted by NYRA to use the Backyard and Red Lot.

### *The Paddock (3)*

The Belmont Park Paddock is located to the south of the Grandstand and to the east of the Backyard. While connected directly to the Backyard, a small fence divides the area, and the majority of the space is restricted access. The Paddock is approximately 2.6 acres in size and serves as the hub of pre-race activity at Belmont Park. This is the area where horses are shown and walked before races, and where jockeys saddle their horses. At the center of the Paddock area is Belmont Park’s iconic white pine tree, and adjacent is the Four Chaplains memorial, honoring four army chaplains who died during the sinking of the USAT *Dorchester* in 1943. While many who utilize the Paddock area are horsemen and not necessarily members of the general public,





public visitors do gather around the area as part of the race day attraction. Reflective of this use, the Paddock area also includes a variety of amenities for the public including a patio and seating overlooking the Paddock, and the large standees rail, which surrounds the Paddock for guests to view the horses before the race.

#### *Other Belmont Park Recreational Resources (10, 12)*

In addition to the spaces described above, which are open to the general public as part of admission to Belmont Park for racing or other events, there are other areas at Belmont Park that are utilized by members of the public with permission from NYRA. To the north of the Belmont Park Training Track there is an additional open space (identified as the North Field) that includes a basketball court, and an open field with a baseball backstop and soccer goal posts. According to NYRA, this open space is utilized primarily by the backstretch workers, but is also accessible to and used by local residents. In addition, in the northeastern portion of the property along Plainfield Avenue, NYRA permits the public access to the Pony Track infield, which provides for a large open space for recreational activities. There is a long-standing agreement between NYRA and the Floral Park Memorial High School which allows school athletic teams to utilize the infield for practice.

#### *OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES OUTSIDE OF BELMONT PARK*

As shown in **Figure 4-1**, there are nine open spaces and recreational resources located outside of Belmont Park within the primary study area. Belmont Park's location directly adjacent to the Nassau-Queens border means the primary study area includes open spaces both within the City of New York and Nassau County (the Town of Hempstead). Open spaces within New York City are operated by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks), and tend to be smaller neighborhood parks, while open spaces within the Town of Hempstead are operated by the Town of Hempstead Department of Parks and Recreation (Hempstead DPR); these parks tend to be larger "town parks." In addition to public parks, the primary study area includes a number of school athletic fields, including the Floral Park Bellerose School athletic field (9), and Gotham Avenue School athletic field and playground (11), which provide public access during specified hours. These fields are operated by local school districts. As shown in **Table 4-1**, open spaces within the primary study area include a variety of facilities ranging from handball courts and children's play areas, to large athletic fields.

#### *School Facilities*

Within the ½-mile primary study area, there are a number of school athletic fields that also serve as public open spaces. While these open spaces are primarily used for school-related athletic activity, they also provide recreational space for the community, either through open hours after school or other arrangements such as organized sporting events and summer access while school is out of session.

Located to the north of Belmont Park and adjacent to the North Lot is the Floral Park-Bellerose School athletic field. This approximately 7.3-acre site serves as the main playfield for students at the Floral Park-Bellerose School, providing active recreation opportunities during school hours as well as space for organized sports activities, and a playfield for neighborhood children during off hours. The field includes two baseball diamonds and space for a variety of other athletic activities. A children's play structure is located in the southernmost portion of the field along with some benches and picnic tables.

Located to the south of Belmont Park, the Gotham Avenue School provides public access to its athletic fields and playground when school is not in session. The athletic fields include a children's play area, basketball courts, a baseball field, and large grass playfield.

The Floral Park Memorial High School athletic field (13) is located east of Belmont Park, across Plainfield Avenue. The approximately 6.5-acre athletic field includes two baseball diamonds and a sports stadium, housing a running track, football and soccer field, and a variety of other field sports facilities. This open space is primarily utilized by Floral Park Memorial High School students and lacks any direct public access from the street. The athletic fields are open to the public during high school sporting events, where spectators utilize the open space to watch high school athletic competitions.

### *Public Parks*

Six public parks are located within the primary study area. Five of these are located within the Borough of Queens, operated by NYC Parks. With the exception of Breininger Park to the very north of the primary study area, these parks are small (fewer than 2 acres), but all provide a variety of active and passive amenities. As described in **Table 4-1**, the Queens Village Veterans Plaza and Hempstead Bench Spread are primarily passive open spaces with seating areas, while Breininger Park and Pat Williams Playground provide facilities for active recreation including play equipment and basketball courts. In addition to these spaces, the 2-acre Hempstead Ball Field serves as a large open space for baseball and other active recreation, although its location within a cloverleaf of the Cross Island Parkway lends itself to low utilization.

## **SECONDARY (1-MILE) STUDY AREA**

The 1-mile secondary study area reflects an area where additional open spaces accessible to the communities surrounding Belmont Park are located. While these spaces are a distance away from the Project Sites and are unlikely to experience adverse direct or indirect effects, they are spaces that are utilized by community residents within the primary study area. The Proposed Project would include the improvement of an existing community park in this area. Elmont Road Park is currently under consideration. As shown in **Figure 4-2**, within the secondary study area, there are a total of nine publicly accessible open spaces or recreational resources, which include public parks and school grounds. As in the primary study area, open spaces within the secondary study area are operated by a variety of entities, including NYC Parks, Hempstead DPR, and Village of Floral Park. In addition, the Padavan and Preller Fields (18) are owned by the Hollis, Bellaire, Queens Village, and Bellerose Athletic Association (HBQVB), a non-profit athletic organization supporting youth sports in eastern Queens. As detailed in **Table 4-2**, open spaces in the secondary study area provide a wide range of amenities for public use.

As shown in **Figure 4-2** and **Table 4-2**, the 1-mile secondary study area includes open spaces and recreational facilities in both Queens and Nassau County, which serve residents of the communities surrounding Belmont Park. These include larger "town park" style open spaces located within the Town of Hempstead, such as the 15.13-acre Dutch Broadway Park, and 9.26-acre Elmont Road Park, and smaller neighborhood parks including the 2.55-acre Wayanda Park in Hollis, Queens.

**Table 4-2**

**Open Space and Recreational Resources in the Secondary Study Area**

Map No.	Name	Type	County	Operator	Acres	Facilities	Condition/Utilization
15	East Springfield Playground	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	1.15	Children's play structure, restrooms, basketball court (x4), handball court (x4), and large concrete playfield	Well used and moderately maintained. Located adjacent to a school. High levels of utilization. High concrete coverage
16	Wayanda Park	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	2.55	Open green space with planted areas, benches and sitting areas, basketball court (x6), handball court (x4), children's play structure, and restrooms.	Well maintained play areas and open planted space
17	Detective William T. Gunn Park	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	2.72	Children's play structures, restrooms, seating area, concrete playfield with baseball backstop, basketball court (x2), handball court (x6)	Well maintained with new concrete play field, high concrete coverage
18	Padavan and Preller Fields	Private Park	Queens	HBQVB Athletic Association	16.82	Baseball field (x9), football field	Well maintained community-owned sports facility
19	Bellerose Playground	Public Park	Queens	NYC Parks	1.00	Concrete playfield, handball court (x2), children's play structures, restrooms, and seating area	Moderately maintained, high concrete coverage
20	Dutch Broadway Park	Public Park	Nassau	Town of Hempstead	15.13	Grass ball field (x2), walking path, concession building and restrooms, seating area, small parking lot	Low maintenance, large open space playing fields with little shade or other amenities
21	Elmont Road Park	Public Park	Nassau	Town of Hempstead	9.26	Seating areas, children's play structures, restrooms, basketball court (x2), handball court (x4), football field, and parking lot	Moderately maintained park with large number of recreational facilities
22	Alva T. Stanforth Sports Complex	School Facility	Nassau	Sewanhaka CHSD	17.26	Baseball, softball, lacrosse, soccer, and football fields	Well maintained with new facilities; moderately utilized
23	Centennial Gardens	Public Park	Nassau	Village of Floral Park	12.68	Open space and bird sanctuary; walking paths, small gardens, seating areas, and memorial garden	Well maintained; moderately utilized
<b>Sources:</b> NYC Parks Department 2017, NYC MapPLUTO 2017, Town of Hempstead Department of Parks and Recreation, ESRI, NYC Department of IT and Technology, Floral Park Conservation Society, and NYRA. Field surveys by AKRF in January, April, May, and September 2018.							

Utilization of open spaces within the secondary study area vary; parks such as Wayanda Park and East Springfield Playground are heavily utilized as they are adjacent to schools and used by children during the school day and after school hours. Other parks such as Dutch Broadway Park were not utilized during field observation, but are likely to have high utilization during organized athletic activity at the park.

Amenities found within the open space study area serve users of all ages, with many open spaces suitable for various age groups. The larger “town park” style open spaces found within Nassau County tend to include a wide variety of amenities including larger football and sports fields, as well as children’s play areas, basketball courts, and handball courts. Smaller open spaces found

within Queens tend to provide fewer facilities, and most lack larger grass sports fields given their smaller size. These facilities include a variety of play areas, blacktop surfaces, play structures, and other court game facilities. Almost all open spaces within the study area provide opportunities for passive recreation and include benches and other seating areas.

## **D. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS**

### **½-MILE PRIMARY STUDY AREA**

#### *BELMONT PARK*

In the Future without the Proposed Actions (the No Action condition), it is anticipated that NYRA will seek to make renovations to the Belmont Park facility. NYRA is planning the following improvements to Belmont Park that for purposes of analysis are assumed to occur by the 2021 analysis year:

- Rebuilding of the outer dirt track, and existing turf tracks within their current footprint to provide greater safety, improved drainage and irrigation.
- Installation of LED lighting around the dirt and turf courses to provide for possible future night racing at Belmont Park.
- Within the existing Grandstand structure, expansion of the Clubhouse (a limited-access area).
- Potential installation of high-definition video boards in the Paddock and Backyard areas.

#### *OPEN SPACE AND RECREATIONAL RESOURCES OUTSIDE OF BELMONT PARK*

Beyond improvements articulated by NYRA at Belmont Park, there are no known improvements planned for public open spaces within the primary study area by the 2021 analysis year. Moreover, there are no major developments planned that would be expected to influence existing open space conditions in the study area (see Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Community Character”). It is anticipated that all of these open spaces would remain as described in the existing condition.

### **1-MILE SECONDARY STUDY AREA**

It is expected that the open spaces found within the secondary study area would remain as described above in the existing condition by the 2021 analysis year.

## **E. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS**

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Project includes the development of a new entertainment complex, centered on a new approximately 18,000-seat multi-purpose arena. In addition to the arena, a 250-key hotel and 435,000 gsf of retail, dining, and entertainment uses, as well as other smaller uses and parking, would be developed within the grounds of Belmont Park. As part of the redevelopment plan, the Proposed Project would also create approximately 2 acres of hard- and soft-scaped plazas on Site A that would include sitting areas and gathering spaces, and approximately 3.75 acres of publicly accessible, natural landscaped open space on Site B. The plazas on Site A would flow into the remaining portion of the Backyard and the existing Belmont Park Paddock, providing access for Belmont Park visitors including both Proposed Project and Racetrack patrons. Public open space on Site B would be accessible from the retail village planned for the site, as well as from 109th Avenue just west of Wellington Road. In addition, NYAP intends to provide funding for improvements to an existing community park located off-site.

## **½-MILE PRIMARY STUDY AREA**

### *DIRECT EFFECTS*

#### *New Open Spaces on Sites A and B*

The Proposed Project includes the construction of new open space amenities to be built in conjunction with the construction of the planned multi-use arena and retail village. The planned open space would include approximately 2.0 acres of hard- and soft-scaped plaza spaces on Site A, adjacent to the proposed arena, and approximately 3.75 acres of natural green spaces on Site B, including open space areas that would serve as a buffer between the retail and parking uses and the neighboring Elmont residential community. As shown in **Figure 4-4**, the Proposed Project is anticipated to include publicly accessible plaza and passive open space, including a vegetated buffer, on Sites A and B.

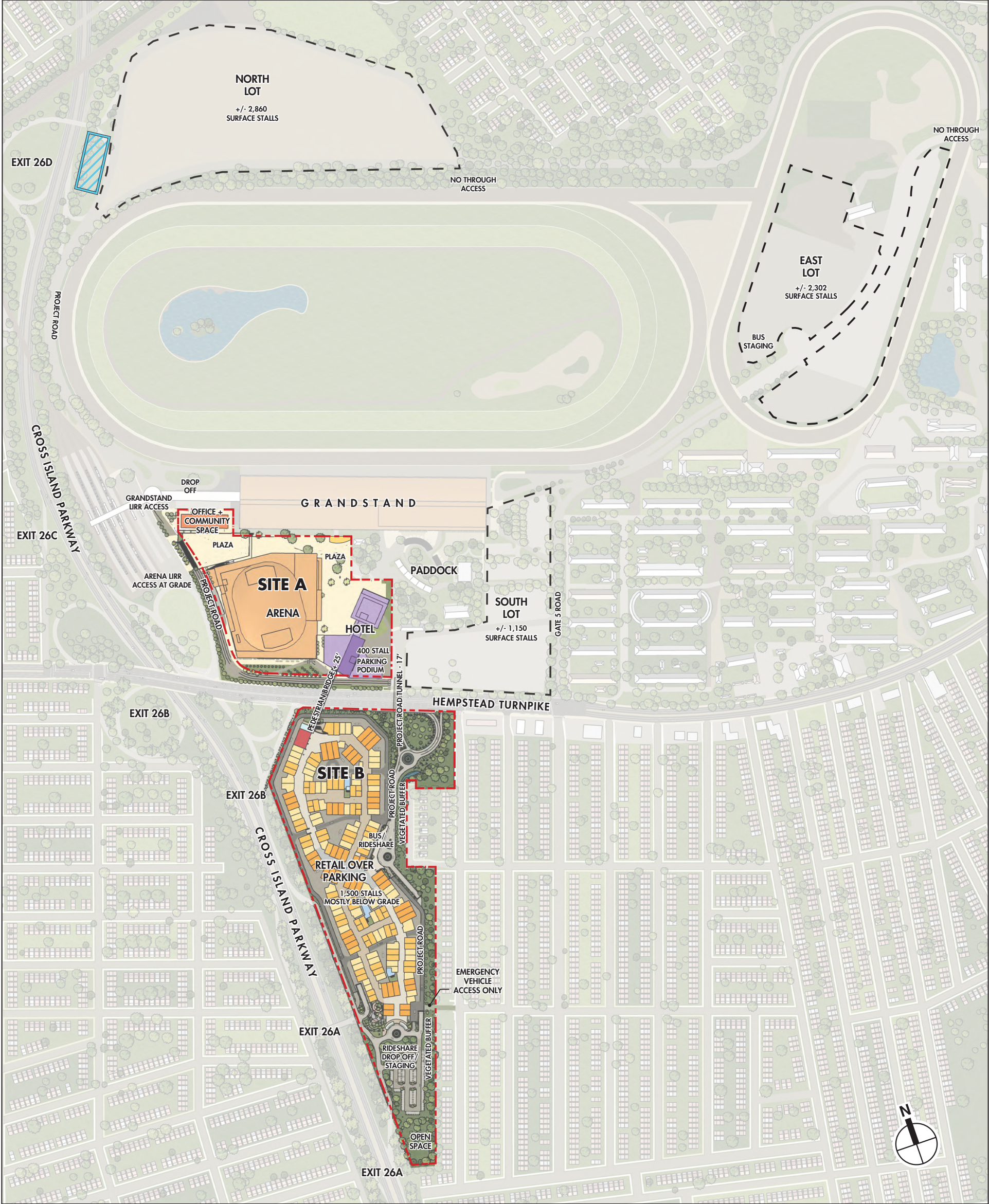
The plaza spaces on Site A would include seating areas, gathering spaces for on-site events, and programming. Regarding light and shadows, the new plaza spaces would be mostly or completely in direct sun during the morning and into the mid-afternoon on spring, summer, and fall days, while in winter it would be partially in sun and partially in shadow from the adjacent proposed structures. Later in the afternoon, in all seasons, the plazas would be partially in shadow from the arena, becoming mostly shaded near sunset.

The passive open spaces with walking paths on Site B would be located primarily along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site. In addition to the passive open space, a 10,000-sf children's playground would be integrated into the southern portion of the retail village. The playground would be within the confines of the retail village, would not be accessible, nor visible, from the outside, and would benefit from 24/7 security coverage. The Cross Island Parkway, the walls of the retail village, and the landscaped open space on Site B would all serve to buffer nearby residences from any potential noise from the playground. With only low-rise structures or open land adjacent to them, the Site B open spaces would receive minimal shading throughout the year.

#### *The Backyard*


As shown in **Figures 4-5a and 4-5b**, the new open space on Site A would be located between the proposed arena and the Belmont Park Paddock, within what is currently the Backyard area. The 2-acre hard- and soft-scaped plaza spaces on Site A would be located outside of the proposed arena's main entrance and would flow into the remaining portion of the Backyard and the existing Belmont Park Paddock. The Proposed Actions would result in the removal of a substantial portion of the Backyard recreational space. Based on NYAP's preferred site plan, the Proposed Project would remove up to approximately 5 acres of the existing Backyard. As depicted in **Figure 4-5a**, Site A includes the majority of the western portion of the Backyard, including the children's play area, part of the picnic area, betting tent, and a portion of the man-made water feature. As shown in **Figure 4-5b**, as a result of the Proposed Project, the Belmont Park Backyard area would be substantially removed and replaced with the new plazas on Site A. The children's play area, betting tent, and the man-made water feature would be eliminated, while the size of the picnic area would be substantially reduced. In the future with the Proposed Actions NYAP, in coordination with NYRA, intends to make landscaping improvements to the remaining Backyard and Paddock areas in order to provide a seamless transition between Site A and NYRA uses. Regarding sun and shadows, the remaining portion of the Backyard as well as the Paddock would continue to be mostly in sun throughout the day in all seasons. No project-generated shadow would fall on the Backyard in the morning. Shadow from the proposed hotel would fall on an adjacent portion of the Backyard in the afternoon but the extent of the shadow would remain small and would move





FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

0 1,000 FEET

- Project Sites
- North, South, and East Parking Lots
-  Proposed Belmont Electrical Substation





Site A



Area of Backyard Disturbed by Proposed Project

0 200 FEET







east and clockwise over the course of the afternoon. No new shadow from the proposed structures would be long enough to reach the Paddock area at any time or in any season, with the exception of winter when shadow from the hotel would reach a small area of the Paddock within an hour of sunset.

### *Other Direct Effects*

The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts on open space resources, including from air quality, noise, or shadows, either during construction or during event- and non-event day operations. Project-generated shadows would not be long enough to reach the Racetrack at any time of year. The Proposed Project would not result in any substantial shading on the other open space resources in the study area at any time of year. Also, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant noise impacts on open space. The projected noise level increases at any of the open space locations analyzed during any of the analyzed peak hours would be “barely perceptible” (i.e., less than 2 dBA) or not perceptible (see Chapter 13, “Noise”). Therefore, noise levels from the Proposed Project would not affect the usability of the Floral Park-Bellerose School athletic field or any of the other study area open spaces. In addition, the Proposed Project would not preclude the ongoing use of existing open space resources at Belmont Park by Floral Park Memorial High School students (see Chapter 11, “Transportation,” for the pedestrian analysis).

### *INDIRECT EFFECTS*

The Proposed Project would result in the introduction of new worker and visitor populations to Belmont Park. The Proposed Project is anticipated to add an additional 2,300 direct permanent jobs to the study area, and attract approximately 8,000 daily visitors and up to 19,000 attendees for arena events.<sup>2</sup> Due to the campus-like nature of Belmont Park, the difficulty of accessing additional open spaces outside of Belmont Park from the Project Sites, and the addition of new open space on-site as part of the Proposed Project, it is unlikely that project-generated guests and workers would utilize public open spaces located off Belmont Park property. Instead, visitors and workers are likely to remain on-site for arena events and shopping, utilizing the existing and project-generated open spaces and amenities. Specifically, the Proposed Project’s workers and visitors would utilize the newly constructed open space plazas on Site A for passive recreation. As there would be no barriers between Project Site A and any remaining Backyard area and Paddock, it is anticipated that these guests would also use these existing areas for recreation. In addition, the Proposed Project’s visitors and workers, particularly related to the proposed retail village on Site B, would access the proposed new open space on Site B.

Open spaces directly adjacent to Belmont Park—including the Belmont Bench Spread, Belmont Ball Park, and Hendrickson Avenue Park—may experience some increased utilization by Belmont Park workers and visitors as a result of the Proposed Project. However, the increase is unlikely to be substantial, as access to these spaces from Belmont Park is limited along Hempstead Turnpike, and the proposed on-site amenities would support the recreational needs of workers and visitors.

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<sup>2</sup> Daily visitor projections based on anticipated arena capacity (18,000) plus preliminary traffic demand projections provided for the retail village and other project components.

**1-MILE SECONDARY STUDY AREA***DIRECT EFFECTS*

As part of the Proposed Project, NYAP intends to improve a local community park. These improvements are intended to enhance existing open space utilized by residents of the nearby community surrounding Belmont Park. Elmont Road Park is currently under consideration.

*INDIRECT EFFECTS*

As the vast majority of additional workers and visitors to Belmont Park that would be introduced by the Proposed Project would remain on-site utilizing existing and new amenities provided at Belmont Park, it is unlikely that open spaces within the secondary study area would experience overcrowding or overutilization as a result of the Proposed Project. Therefore, no indirect effects are anticipated on open spaces within the secondary study area.

**IMPACT ASSESSMENT***1/2-MILE PRIMARY STUDY AREA**Direct Impacts*

As a result of the Proposed Actions, up to approximately 5 acres of the total Backyard area would be substantially changed or replaced with new plazas. In the existing condition, the area that would be displaced includes a variety of amenities provided for Belmont Park guests including the man-made water feature; children's play area, betting tent, and picnic area. The removal of these areas would place additional strain on the existing recreational spaces within Belmont Park. However, the potential effects as a result of this loss of recreational space would be offset by the new 2-acre hard- and soft-scaped plaza spaces on Site A, which would replace a portion of the lost Backyard space and is intended to be accessible by Belmont Park patrons, as well as the 3.75-acre publicly accessible passive open space and children's playground (part of the retail village) proposed on Site B. The hard- and soft-scaped plazas would provide open space amenities including seating and gathering space and would be accessible to new workers and visitors introduced by the Proposed Project, as well as existing Belmont Park visitors. Moreover, it is anticipated that certain activities currently held on the Site A parking lot may not be able to continue in the future with the Proposed Project, such as amusement park and food truck activities that occur on certain days of the year, although it is possible that these events could continue in the North or South Lots, outside of the racing periods. NYAP is willing to work with NYRA to explore the possibility of relocating Backyard events that may be displaced by the Proposed Project, and the possibility of creating a playground on Site A to replace the one currently serving racetrack patrons and their families in the Backyard. Based on analysis in other technical areas, project-generated effects such as air quality, noise, and shadows would not result in significant adverse impacts to primary study area open space resources.

Specific to the Floral Park-Bellerose School athletic field, traffic and noise generated by increased utilization and activities in the North Lot would not be disruptive to recreational activities on the field. North Lot utilization is anticipated to be low during school hours, when the open space is most heavily utilized, and no significant adverse impacts are expected. In addition, a buffer consisting of evergreen trees is proposed between the North Lot and the athletic field. This landscaped vegetated buffer would substantially reduce any visual connection between the spaces (see Figure 6-69 in Chapter 6, "Visual Resources," for photo-simulation of the view of the North Lot from the athletic field). The buffer also would serve to reduce light pollution on athletic field activities that may occur at dusk. As detailed in Chapter 15, "Construction," construction noise



reaching the athletic field may be readily noticeable at times, but during even the worst-case construction activity would not exceed 65 dBA, which is considered acceptable for sensitive uses by NYSDEC, and therefore, construction of the Proposed Project would not result in any significant noise impacts at this open space resource.

### *Indirect Impacts*

The Proposed Project is expected to bring in an additional 2,300 direct workers and approximately 8,000 visitors to the open space study area daily (and up to 19,000 attendees for arena events). Due to the timing of events both seasonally and by time of day, it is unlikely that the new populations introduced by the Proposed Project would substantially interfere with the utilization of Belmont Park as described in the No Action condition, as 75 percent of the approximately 200 annual arena events would be held at night, and a substantial portion would be held during winter months, when the Racetrack is closed. Plans for night racing, identified in the No Action condition, increase the potential for overlapping events, but NYAP and NYRA would agree to coordinate long-term schedules such that major events would not occur concurrently (if nighttime horse racing receives approval and becomes authorized by the New York State Legislature). Non-hockey arena events could be scheduled on the same evening as long as the aggregate attendance for both events does not exceed the maximum attendance level for a sold-out hockey game (18,000 seats). NYAP and NYRA would also agree to coordinate to avoid scheduling a full-house arena event (i.e., a hockey game or concert with a maximum capacity of 18,000 or more attendees) on a Saturday afternoon or a holiday afternoon at the same time as daytime horse racing. In addition, incremental demand for open space introduced by the Proposed Project would be offset by additional open space created as part of the Proposed Project. Therefore, based on the analysis above, the Proposed Project would not generate significant adverse indirect impacts to open space within the ½-mile primary study area.

### *1-MILE SECONDARY STUDY AREA*

#### *Direct Impacts*

Anticipated offsite improvements to publicly accessible open space within the secondary study area, provided by NYAP in consultation with ESD and the local community, would improve the condition and utilization of a specific, existing open space in the study area. It is anticipated that these improvements would provide enhanced open space within the community for enjoyment by local residents. These improvements would result in a positive direct impact to open space within the secondary study area.

The Proposed Project would not generate traffic or other conditions near open spaces within the 1-mile secondary study area that could result in significant adverse impacts due to noise, air quality, or shadows.

#### *Indirect Impacts*

As the vast majority of visitors and workers of the Proposed Project are anticipated to remain within the Belmont Park grounds and not utilize other publicly accessible open spaces in the surrounding area, no indirect impacts to open space and recreational resources would occur within the 1-mile secondary study area as a result of the Proposed Project. \*