

Chapter 7: HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

7.1 Introduction

Consideration of potential impacts to historic and cultural resources is appropriate for projects that include or are located adjacent to historic resources, or projects that require in-ground disturbance. As explained in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, historic and cultural resources include architectural resources, such as buildings, structures, objects, sites, and districts of historical importance, as well as archaeological resources, which typically are subsurface physical remains associated with previous human activity on the project site and in the vicinity, such as from prehistoric (or “precontact”) Native American occupation. Historic resources in New York City may include any property designated, or calendared for consideration as a New York City Landmark (“NYCL”) by New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (“NYCLPC”). Historic resources may also include properties listed in, or eligible for listing in, the New York State Register of Historic Places (“State Register,” or “SR”) and/or the National Register of Historic Places (“National Register,” or “NR”). In order to identify the potential for archaeological resources that may be present on the project site, and to examine the potential for significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources that could potentially result from the proposed action, Empire State Development (“ESD”) has consulted with New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (“OPRHP”).

7.2 Principal Conclusions

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

The project site does not contain any SR- and/or NR-listed historic resource, nor any NYCL, or any built element eligible for such listing. Further, no historic architectural resource has been identified within approximately ½-mile of the project site, nor are any potential historic architectural resources slated for consideration by NYCLPC within that area. As such, the proposed action would not result in any significant adverse impact on historic architectural resources.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The project site is located within an “archaeologically sensitive area,” as determined by OPRHP. The Area of Potential Effect (“APE”) for archaeological resources, i.e., the physical extent of anticipated ground disturbance associated with the proposed action, is limited to areas where the proposed action would result in excavation. OPRHP has determined that, given factors associated with previous disturbance of the project site and depth to ground water, the likelihood of recovering significant pre-contact period archaeological resources on the project site is low. Therefore, OPRHP has determined that the proposed action would have no significant adverse impact on archaeological resources listed or eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places (see State Historic Preservation Office (“SHPO”) correspondence in Appendix D). As such, the proposed action would not result in any significant adverse impact on archeological resources.

7.3 Methodology

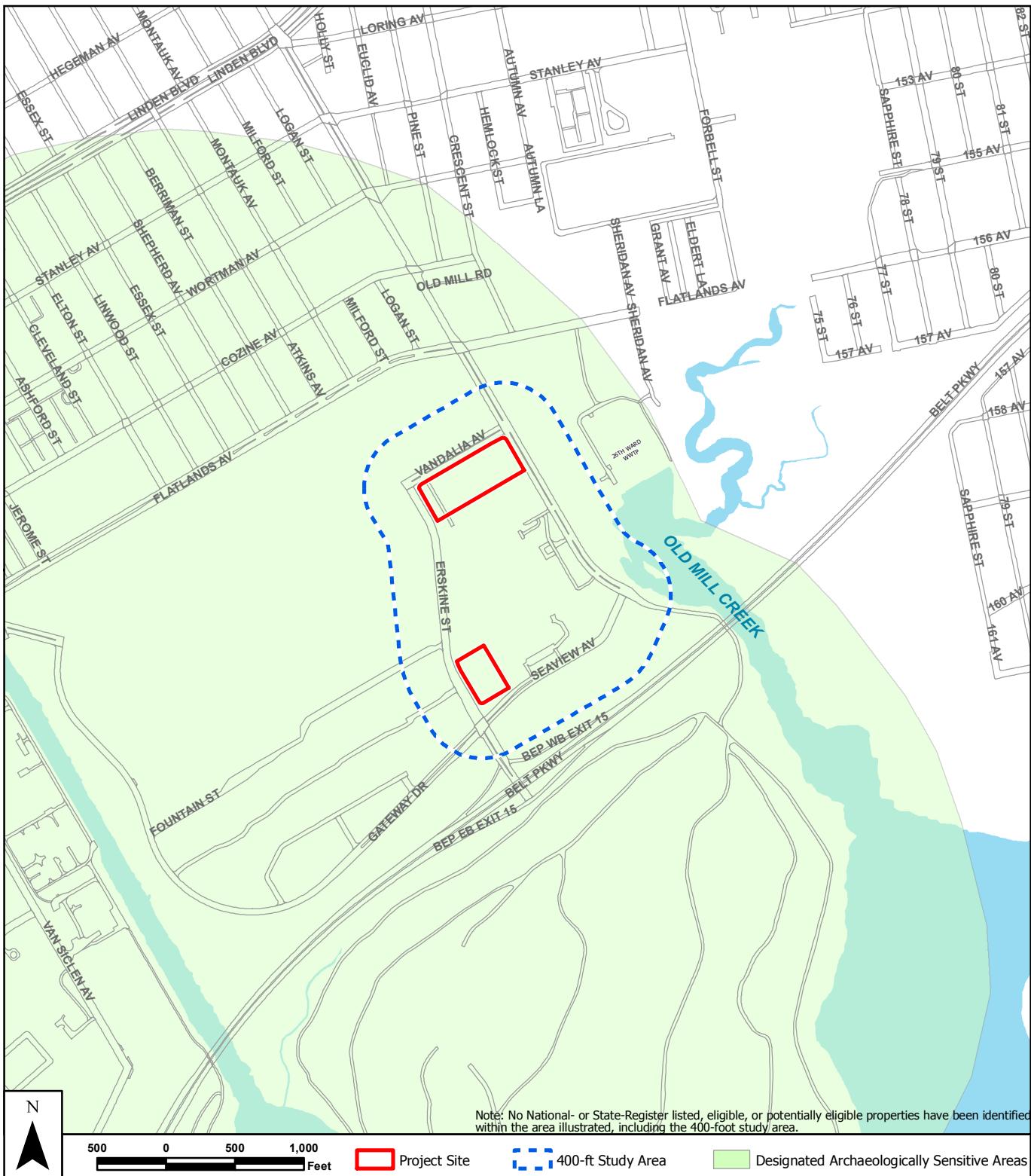
ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

Per the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for the assessment of potential effects to historic architectural resources is delineated according to a 400-foot radius. The study area, therefore, includes the project site and all area within 400 feet of it, equivalent to the study area for land use, zoning, and public policy, as described previously in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy.” In this manner, the assessment of historic and cultural resources considers the potential for direct effects to any identified on-site architectural resources, as well as potential indirect effects to off-site architectural resources.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

In accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines, archaeological resources are assessed only in areas where excavation is likely and would result in new in-ground disturbance. As discussed below, the project site is located within an area designated as “archaeologically sensitive,” according to the OPRHP online Cultural Resource Information System (“CRIS”). (Please refer to Figure 7-1, “Cultural Resources.”) In addition, review of historical documents and site investigations confirm that the project site includes historic landfill, which in some cases may lie above or contain significant archaeology. A Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study, was prepared for the project site in July 2014, concluding that the project site parcels exhibited moderate precontact period archaeological sensitivity. (Please refer to Appendix E.) Soil boring data, collected in August 2014 in support of the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (Appendix F), are reviewed by archaeologists in tandem with the preliminary design information available for the proposed action in December 2015; consultation with OPRHP was formally

initiated in October 2015 and concluded in March 2016. (Please refer to OPRHP correspondence provided in Appendix D.)



Source: New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), Cultural Resource Information System, 2015

Figure 7-1
CULTURAL RESOURCES

**Fountain Avenue Land Use
Improvement and Residential Project**



**Empire State
Development**

7.4 Architectural Resources

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project site does not contain any SR- and/or NR-listed historic resource, nor any NYCL, or any built element eligible for such listing. No historic architectural resource has been identified within the 400-foot study area; moreover, there are no listed historic architectural resources present within the approximate ½-mile vicinity of the project site shown on Figure 7-1, “Cultural Resources.”

The nearest eligible resource is P.S. 224, located approximately just over ½-mile northeast of the project site at 755 Wortman Avenue. The nearest S-/NR-listed resource is the New Lots Reformed Cemetery, located approximately one-mile to the northwest at 630 New Lots Avenue.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION (“NO ACTION” CONDITIONS)

There are no proposed historic districts or other historic resources in the vicinity of the project site that are pending NYCLPC review. As no new designations are anticipated in the vicinity of the project site in the future without the proposed action, conditions on the project site and surrounding environs are anticipated to remain the same as existing conditions with regard to architectural resources.

THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION (“WITH ACTION” CONDITIONS)

Given there are no historic architectural resources on the project site, or in the immediate vicinity, and no new historic designations are anticipated within the study area, no significant adverse impacts to historic architectural resources are anticipated with the proposed action; therefore, no further analysis of historic architectural resources is warranted.

7.5 Archaeological Resources

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Development Background

From what is known of precontact period settlement patterns in New York City, most habitation and processing sites are found in sheltered, elevated sites close to wetland features, major waterways, and

with nearby sources of fresh water. Prior to landfilling in the area, the project site parcels were situated within a large marshy area bordering Betts Creek (which may have crossed the northeast corner of Parcel B) and Mud Creek, located southeast of Parcel A. Native Americans would have been drawn to these creeks and marshlands for their aquatic life, wild game, and vegetation. (Please refer to the Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study, which is summarized in this chapter and provided in its entirety in Appendix E.) In addition, wetlands provided peat that could be used for fuel and a number of plants that served as materials for clothing, basketry and weaving, and medicinal purposes.

Precontact period sites, primarily from the Woodland Period, have been documented along the Jamaica Bay shoreline in proximity to the marshlands. In some cases, extensive shell middens (the equivalent of precontact garbage heaps) extended into the marshlands. Defined as deposits of shells, gravel, sand and silt and, in some cases, other cultural remains, shell middens occur either as distinct cultural events or in association with habitation sites. Along some areas of Jamaica Bay, these shell middens have been found under layers of modern fill, but on top of marshland soils.

Additionally, prior to the creation of Jamaica Bay and its marshlands following the last Ice Age, the project site parcels would have been dry land. It is possible that precontact period archaeological sites from this period, dating from the Paleo Indian period through the parts of the Archaic period, could have remain capped by later marshland soils that accrued after the sea level rise between approximately 2000 and 4000 years ago.

Based on the current site elevations of approximately 10 feet above mean sea level, it is assumed that there is about 10-12 feet of introduced fill, likely including refuse, beneath the existing ground surface on the project site. Beneath the fill, if not disturbed during placement of the fill, there may be layers of marshland soils, possibly including layers of peat or organic silts under the water table. Peat, in particular, can act as a preservation agent, allowing soils under the peat to remain intact. The identification of sediment types and attendant faunal remains (animal-related remains) in these deposits could provide valuable information on the evolution of coastal landscapes that were used by precontact groups occupying the area.

The project site parcels were covered with marshland until being landfilled in the 1960s and brought up to their present elevation at that time. All the soil within the parcels consists of introduced fill, likely including refuse, dating to the 1950s and 1960s. (Please refer to the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment, which includes soil boring data, provided in Appendix F.) The parcels have never been developed. Therefore, there is no historic period archaeological sensitivity for either project site parcel, and no further consideration of the historic period is warranted in support of this EIS.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION (“NO ACTION” CONDITIONS)

In the absence of the proposed action, no new construction or excavation is expected on the project site that would disturb any of the project site, neither the landfill nor the natural soils that may potentially

contain archaeological resources. Therefore, conditions on the project site are anticipated to remain the same as existing conditions with regard to potential archaeological resources.

THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION (“WITH ACTION” CONDITIONS)

As described previously, there is no historic period archaeological sensitivity for either parcel A or B. Therefore, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to historical period archaeological resources, and no further consideration of this period is warranted.

Four soil borings were completed on Parcel A and six soil borings were completed on Site B (see Appendix F for detailed discussion of findings). The borings on Parcel A indicated an upper stratum of fill material, ranging from approximately 11 feet to 17 feet below grade, with the water table recorded at a depth of approximately 8 feet to 11 feet. The approximately 14-foot deep construction would be expected to penetrate beyond the fill material only in the southeast corner of Parcel A, where the depth to fill and the depth to water table were determined to be approximately 9 feet below grade; therefore, all natural soils within the area of potential construction impact are presumed to be waterlogged. All borings on Parcel B indicated an upper stratum of fill material, ranging from approximately 17 feet to 27 feet below grade, with the water table recorded at 8 feet to 12.5 feet below grade. None of the planned construction would penetrate the depth of fill on Parcel B.

ESD has consulted with OPRHP with regard to potential impacts to prehistoric (precontact) archaeological resources that may be present on the project site beneath the landfill of the 1960s. (Please refer to the consultation letters provided in Appendix D.) ESD recommended that archaeological testing in the southeastern quadrant of Parcel A would be logistically difficult due to the amount of fill that would need to be removed (in excess of 11 feet) and the presence of the water table, which could cause instability in potential trenches and require additional measures such as shoring, pumping, and water screening, and that the likelihood of recovering significant precontact period archaeological resources in the approximately two feet of waterlogged soil beneath the fill would be low.

OPRHP determined that, given factors associated with previous disturbance of the project site and depth to ground water, the likelihood of recovering significant pre-contact period archaeological resources on the project site is low. Therefore, OPRHP recommends that the proposed action would have no impact on listed or eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic Places, and so no further analysis of potential significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources is warranted.