

CHAPTER 8: PUBLIC OPEN SPACE AND PARKLANDS

8.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the potential impacts on the quality, use, and maintenance of public open space, where impacts may result from the construction and operation of the emergency ventilation plant. For the purposes of this analysis, the “public open space” definition in the *CEQR Technical Manual* is used and is as follows: publicly owned parkland, privately owned space available for public use, and “Greenstreets,” which are traffic islands that have been landscaped by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR).

This chapter uses methodologies, and follows and supplements the guidelines set forth by SEQRA; when matters arise and SEQRA guidance is non-existent, other relevant and reasonable guidance is being used such as the New York City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) guidance on open space. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, indirect effects to open space could result from a proposed action if it were to introduce population to an area, as either permanent residents or employees, which would be sufficient to noticeably diminish the ability of the area’s open space to serve the existing or future population. The *CEQR Technical Manual* suggests that when substantial numbers of new residents (200 or greater), new workers (500 workers or greater) or similarly substantial numbers of users, such as temporary users introduced by the development of a large shopping area, then an assessment of indirect effects would likely be warranted. The proposed emergency ventilation plant, however, would introduce no new residential or worker population. The number of workers employed during construction of the project, estimated to be 40, would not be substantial, according to the *CEQR Technical Manual*. Therefore, this analysis does not assess potential indirect impacts to open space.

The analysis is focused, instead, on determining whether the construction or operation of the emergency ventilation plant at any of the three alternative sites could result in *direct effects* to open space. Such direct effects could be temporary construction-related impacts related to noise, dust, airborne pollutants, traffic, and access, during construction (2010-2013/2014), which could affect their use and enjoyment. Potential long-term direct effects to public open space resulting from ventilation plant operations (beginning 2013/2014) are also considered.

8.2. CONTEXT AND KEY ISSUES

There are three public open spaces, and only one private open space (St. Vincent’s Hospital Garden), that could be affected by construction or operation of the emergency ventilation plant at any of the three alternative sites. These four open spaces are the focus of this analysis. There are no known capital plans in place at the time of this analysis for the enhancement of these open spaces or for the development of new open spaces in the study area.

One issue pertinent to the analysis, however, is related to Alternative P1 for development as the emergency ventilation plant site. Specifically, Community Board 2 has expressed interest in developing this property as a public open space. If it were selected for the emergency ventilation plant, MTA NYCT has indicated that a portion of the site may be set aside as a publicly accessible open area, the function and design of which would be explored after the site selection. Per discussions with Community Board 2, should Alternative P1 be selected as a preferred alternative, MTA NYCT stated in a letter to local representatives “ ... *that a limited area adjacent to the above-ground structure may be available for public use. While it is too early to commit to providing public space in conjunction with this project, it would be our intention to reserve a portion of the site for community use.*” (Note: MTA NYCT, in response to elected officials and community representative concerns for open area, has also evaluated

three below-grade design configurations options for Alternative P1. The details of this evaluation are presented in Appendix E; these options were found to be infeasible as explained in Appendix E.) As stated on Page 1 of Appendix E “MTA NYCT will continue to address various engineering, economic and related constraints on the selected alternative site as well as further opportunities to minimize environmental impact”. In addition, MTA NYCT will continue to work with Government and Community Relations to assure consideration of community views and concerns as the design process evolves.

8.3. CONCLUSIONS

As illustrated in Table 8-1, because the emergency ventilation plant would not introduce new residents or workers to the study area with any of the three alternatives, there would be no indirect impacts to open space during its operation, beginning in 2013/2014. Likewise, the few workers introduced to the study area during construction do not meet CEQR thresholds for analysis, since they would not be expected to stress the capacity of local open spaces. In fact, no open spaces in the study area are suited for casual lunchtime use, (i.e., by project construction workers) as they either do not provide seating or do not allow food to be brought in.

The construction and operation of the emergency ventilation plant would cause no direct impacts to open space resources in the study area. No unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to air quality would result from any of the three alternatives, either during construction or during operation.

Since Alternative P1 has been selected as the Preferred Alternative, a portion of the respective site would be reserved for future public use, allowing community accessibility. Actual formal design and development of such an open area would be undertaken following the completion of the EIS process.

8.4. STUDY AREA

The study area comprises an approximate 800-foot radius around the Preferred Alternative, Alternative SB1, and Alternative SB5 sites (see Figure 8-1). This boundary was selected to encompass all public open spaces that could potentially be affected by the emergency ventilation plant.

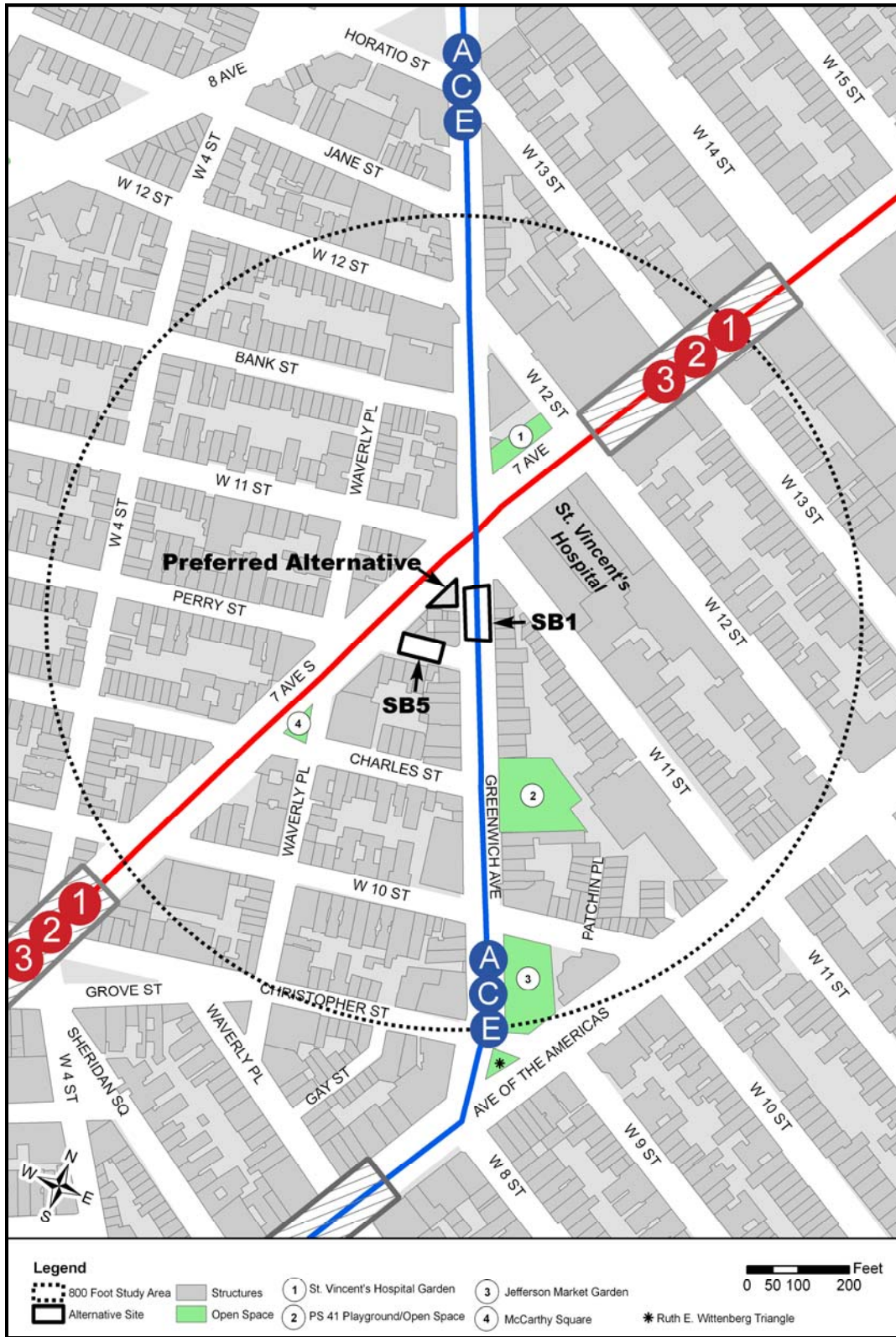
8.5. METHODOLOGY

To assess the potential for impacts to public open space, an inventory of all public parks, privately owned public spaces, temporary pedestrian street-malls, and NYCDPR Greenstreets was compiled for the study area. An evaluation was then made of potential impacts of the construction and operation of the emergency ventilation plant on these public spaces.

TABLE 8-1: SUMMARY OF COMPARISON OF ALTERNATIVES: OPEN SPACE

Alternative	Description	2010-2013/2014 (Construction)	2013/2014 (Operation)
No Action	No emergency ventilation plant is constructed. The three alternative sites remain unchanged from future conditions without the project	No impact	No impact or benefit to existing or new parks.
<u>The Preferred Alternative</u>	Construction of emergency ventilation plant at 61 Greenwich Avenue	No impact Construction activities will be limited in extent and duration wherever possible.	Above-ground ventilation building. Portion of site to be developed into public open area.
Alternative SB1	Construction of emergency ventilation plant in the Greenwich Avenue streetbed, just south of Seventh Avenue.	No impact Construction activities will be limited in extent and duration wherever possible.	No impact In-streetbed ventilation structure, with new and expanded ventilation grates and access panels in nearby sidewalks.
Alternative SB5	Construction of emergency ventilation plant in the Perry Street streetbed, between Seventh Avenue and Greenwich Avenue.	No impact Construction activities will be limited in extent and duration wherever possible.	No impact In-streetbed ventilation structure, with new and expanded ventilation grates and access panels in nearby sidewalks.

FIGURE 8-1: OPEN SPACE STUDY AREA AND RESOURCES



8.6. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

Three public open spaces and one private open space are located within the study area. The four open spaces within the study area are the focus of this analysis. Together, they total less than one acre, and though few in number, they represent a range of open space uses, though no Greenstreets. One is a privately held viewing garden (St. Vincent's Hospital Garden); one hosts a well-maintained community garden (Jefferson Market Garden); one is a memorial triangle (McCarthy Square); and one is an elementary school playground, with public access limited to occasional weekends. A fifth open space (Ruth E. Wittenberg Triangle) is located just outside the study area to the south at the intersection of Greenwich Avenue, Christopher Street, and Avenue of the Americas. Because of that close proximity to the study area limit, it was mentioned for reference but not included for analysis.

McCarthy Square, the memorial triangle, is located about 300 feet southwest of the sites on Seventh Avenue, while the other open spaces are located on Greenwich Avenue. St. Vincent's Hospital Garden is located on the east side of Greenwich Avenue at Seventh Avenue, directly northwest of the project sites, separated from them by the intersection of Greenwich Avenue, West 11th Street, and Seventh Avenue. Jefferson Market Garden (located within the Womens House of Detention Park) is located about 750 feet south of the sites, on the east side of Greenwich Avenue, north of its intersection with the Avenue of the Americas (Sixth Avenue); the PS 41 playground is also located on Greenwich Avenue, about 350 feet south of the project sites, and is not open to the public except for weekend Green/Flea Markets. Aspects of these open spaces are given on Table 8-2.

TABLE 8-2: OPEN SPACES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Name	Location	Open Space	Amenities	Acres
St. Vincent's Hospital Garden	Greenwich Avenue, Seventh Avenue and West 12 th Street	Viewing Garden	Fruit trees	0.15 (approx.)
PS 41 Playground	Greenwich Avenue and Charles Street	Playground	Basketball hoops	0.30 (approx.)
Jefferson Market Garden	Greenwich Avenue, West 10 th Street, Christopher Street and Avenue of the Americas	Seasonal Community Garden	Seating, Botanical Collections/Displays, Shade Trees	0.36
McCarthy Square	Seventh Avenue, Charles Street and Waverly Place	Memorial	Flagpole, inscribed base	0.04

Source: NYCDPC, 2007.

8.7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

8.7.1. INTRODUCTION

Because the emergency ventilation plant would not introduce new residents or workers to the study area with any of the three alternatives, there would be no indirect impacts to open space during its operation, beginning in 2013/2014. Likewise, the few workers (during construction and operation) introduced to the study area do not meet CEQR thresholds for analysis, since they would not be expected to stress the capacity of local open spaces. In fact, no open spaces in the study area are suited for casual lunchtime use, as they are either do not provide seating or do not allow food to be brought in. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a proposed action's effects on open space may be either direct or indirect. Direct effects occur when the proposed action would encroach on or cause a loss of open space, the imposition of noise, air pollutant emissions, odors, or shadows on public open space. Indirect effects may occur when the population generated by the proposed action overtaxes the capacity of existing open

spaces so their service to the existing or future population of the affected area would be substantially or noticeably diminished.

The construction and operation of the ventilation plant would cause no direct impacts to open space resources in the study area. No unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to air quality would result from any of the three alternatives, either during construction or during operation. Potential significant adverse impacts may occur as a result of noise and vibration, and traffic operations during construction. MTA NYCT will implement measures in the CEPP to minimize these impacts.

Since Alternative P1 has been selected as the Preferred Alternative a portion of the respective site would be reserved for future public use, if at all practicable, allowing community accessibility. Design and development of such an open area would be undertaken upon completion of the EIS process.

8.7.2. ANALYSIS YEAR 2010 – 2013/2014 (CONSTRUCTION)

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the emergency ventilation plant would not be constructed and there would be no change in open space conditions in the study area associated with the proposed project. MTA NYCT's property would remain in its current condition and continue to serve as a storage and parking facility for MTA NYCT operations.

THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would introduce approximately 40 construction workers between 2010-2013; therefore, resulting in no indirect impacts to open space resources.

Construction of the Preferred Alternative would result in no unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to air quality, pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area. Potential significant adverse impacts may occur as a result of noise and vibration, and traffic operations during construction. MTA NYCT will implement measures in the CEPP to minimize these impacts.

ALTERNATIVE SB1

Construction of Alternative SB1 would introduce approximately 40 construction workers between 2010-2014; therefore, resulting in no indirect impacts to open space resources.

Construction of Alternative SB1 would result in no unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to air quality, pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area. Potential significant adverse impacts may occur as a result of noise and vibration, and traffic operations during construction. MTA NYCT will implement measures in the CEPP to minimize these impacts.

ALTERNATIVE SB5

Construction of Alternative SB5 would introduce approximately 40 construction workers between 2010-2014; therefore, resulting in no indirect impacts to open space resources.

Construction of Alternative SB5 would result in no unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to air quality, pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area. Potential significant adverse impacts may occur as a result of noise and vibration, and traffic operations during construction. MTA NYCT will implement measures in the CEPP to minimize these impacts.

8.7.3. ANALYSIS YEAR 2013/2014 (OPERATIONAL)

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the emergency ventilation plant would not be constructed and there would be no change in open space conditions in the study area. MTA NYCT's property would remain in its current condition and continue to serve as a storage and parking facility for MTA NYCT operations.

THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The Preferred Alternative would result in the development of an above-ground building that would occlude up to approximately 85 percent of the property area. Since Alternative P1 has been selected as the Preferred Alternative, MTA NYCT has agreed to set aside an undeveloped portion of the site as an open area that would be developed in the future in conjunction with community input and subject to NYSHPO acceptance. Similarly, the "9/11" memorial tiles removed from existing fence and managed appropriately based on consultation with the community. (Note: MTA NYCT, in response to elected officials and community representative concerns for open area, has also evaluated three below-grade design configurations options for Alternative P1. The details of this evaluation are presented in Appendix E; these options were found to be infeasible as explained in Appendix E.) As stated on Page 1 of Appendix E "MTA NYCT will continue to address various engineering, economic and related constraints on the selected alternative site as well as further opportunities to minimize environmental impact". In addition, MTA NYCT will continue to work with Government and Community Relations to assure consideration of community views and concerns as the design process evolves.

The operation of the Preferred Alternative would introduce no new residents or employees to the study area; therefore, no indirect impacts to open space resources are expected to occur.

The operation of the Preferred Alternative would also result in no temporary or lasting, unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to noise, air quality, traffic and pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area.

ALTERNATIVE SB1

Alternative SB1 is an *in-streetbed* alternative. The emergency ventilation plant would be located below ground, and aside from the expansion of certain existing sidewalk grates in the vicinity, as well as the introduction of certain new ones, there would be no significant adverse impacts to open spaces in the study area.

The operation of Alternative SB1 would introduce no new residents or employees to the study area; therefore, no indirect impacts to open space resources are expected to occur.

The operation of Alternative SB1 would also result in no temporary or lasting, unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to noise, air quality, traffic and pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area.

ALTERNATIVE SB5

Alternative SB5 is an *in-streetbed* alternative. The emergency ventilation plant would be located below ground, and aside from the expansion of certain existing sidewalk grates in the vicinity, as well as the introduction of certain new ones, there would be no significant adverse impacts to open spaces in the study area.

The operation of Alternative SB5 would introduce no new residents or employees to the study area; therefore, no indirect impacts to open space resources are expected to occur.

The operation of Alternative SB5 would also result in no temporary or lasting, unmitigatable significant adverse impacts related to noise, traffic, air quality, pedestrian safety or shadows on or in close proximity to open space resources in the study area.