

## **A. INTRODUCTION**

This chapter assesses the potential of the proposed project to affect historic and cultural resources. The analysis updates changes to the proposed project and background conditions since the 2008 FGEIS and assesses whether any changed background conditions or differences in elements between the development program analyzed in the 2008 FGEIS and the proposed project would result in significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS or subsequent technical memoranda.

This chapter provides an assessment of existing and future conditions without and with the proposed project for the project site and a study area surrounding the site, which are described in detail below.

As part of the 2008 FGEIS and the 2001 *Shea Stadium Redevelopment FEIS*, the project site was reviewed for its potential archaeological sensitivity by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) (Special Willets Point District only). LPC and OPRHP have determined that the project site is not sensitive for archaeological resources (see **Appendix B**, “Agency Correspondence”). Thus, this analysis focuses on standing structures only.

## **PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS**

This analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts related to historic and cultural resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS or subsequent technical memoranda. Consistent with the findings in the 2008 FGEIS, the development that would occur within the Special Willets Point District during Phase 2 of the proposed project would have a significant adverse effect on the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building.

## **B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS—2008 FGEIS AND SUBSEQUENT TECHNICAL MEMORANDA**

The 2008 FGEIS analyzed the potential of proposed development within the Special Willets Point District and on Lots B and D on Roosevelt Avenue to have significant adverse effects on historic and cultural resources. The 2008 FGEIS concluded that the Willets Point Development Plan would require the demolition of the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building, which has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places, and thus would have a significant adverse impact on historic resources. The 2008 FGEIS documented substantial challenges inherent in retaining the historic building and incorporating it into the proposed plan. The FGEIS recommended consulting with OPRHP to develop mitigation measures, such as recording the building through a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)-level photographic documentation and accompanying narrative.

No other architectural resources were identified within the District or Lots B and D on Roosevelt Avenue.

### C. METHODOLOGY

Study areas for architectural resources are determined based on an area of potential effect for construction-period impacts, such as ground-borne vibrations, and on the area of potential effect for visual or contextual effects, which is usually a larger area. The study area has been defined as the project site and the area within 400 feet of the project site's boundaries (see **Figure 7-1**). This study area is consistent with 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology in developing study areas to assess an action's potential impacts on architectural resources, which sets forth that the size of the study area should be directly related to the anticipated extent of the action's impacts.

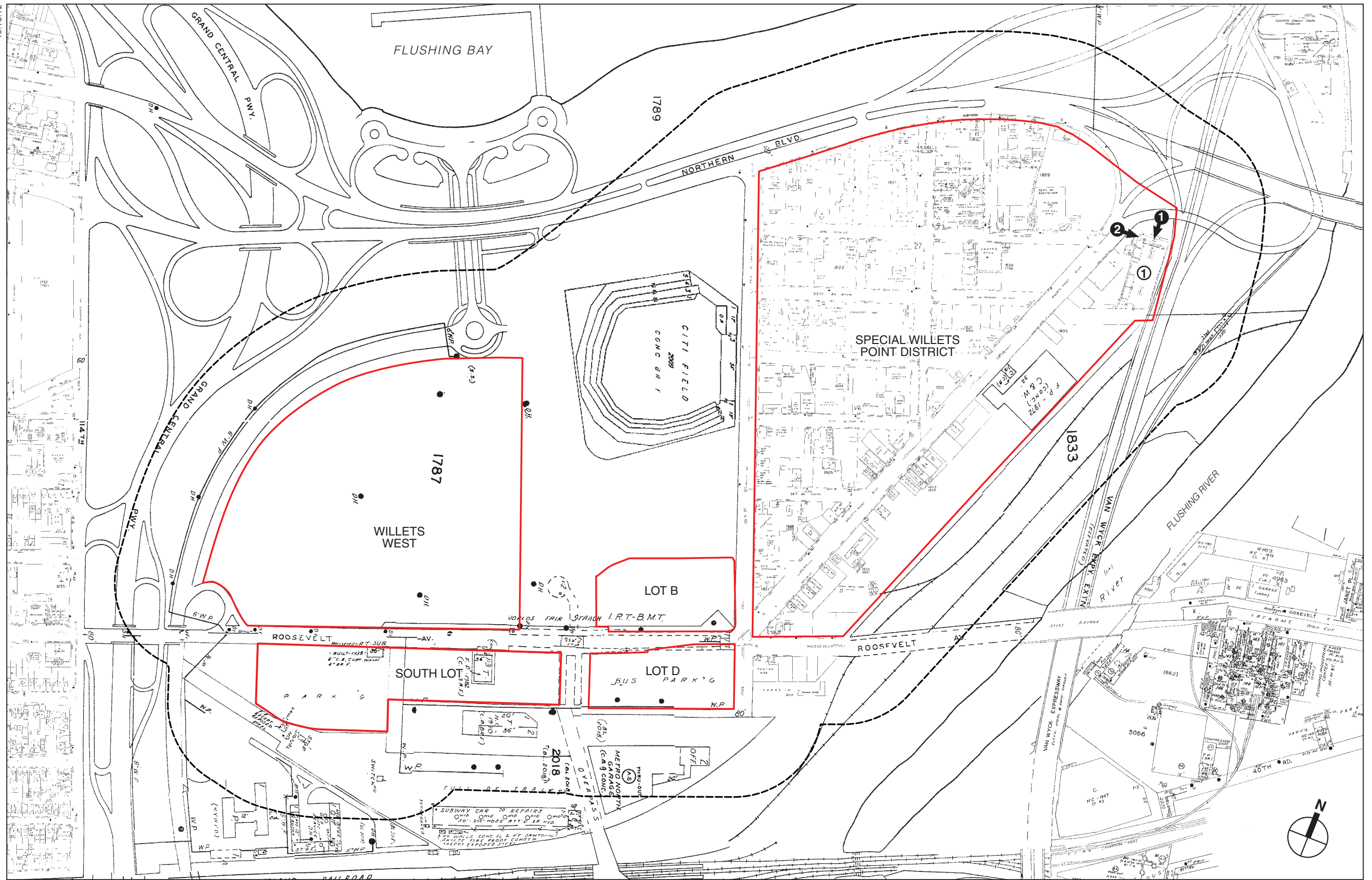
To assess the potential impacts of the proposed project, an inventory of architectural resources in the study area was compiled. In accordance with CEQR guidelines, the inventory includes all officially recognized architectural resources. These resources ("known architectural resources") are defined as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs); properties or districts listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), or previously determined to be eligible for such listing; New York City Landmarks (NYCLs) and Historic Districts (NYCHDs); and properties that have been considered for designation ("heard") by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) at a public hearing, calendared for consideration at such a hearing ("pending" NYCLs), or found by LPC to appear eligible for designation.

In addition to identifying known architectural resources, an evaluation of the study area was undertaken to identify any "potential architectural resources"; that is, other buildings in the study area that could warrant recognition as architectural resources (properties that could be eligible for S/NR listing or NYCL designation). Properties were evaluated based on site visits by an architectural historian and the review of prior studies of the study area.

Once the architectural resources in the study area were identified, the proposed project was assessed for its potential to have direct, physical impacts and/or indirect visual or contextual impacts on architectural resources. Direct impacts include demolition of a resource, and alterations to a resource that cause it to become a different visual entity. A resource could also be physically damaged from adjacent construction, either from vibration (i.e., from construction blasting or pile driving), or from falling objects, subsidence, collapse, or damage from construction machinery. Adjacent construction is defined as any construction activity that would occur within 90 feet of an architectural resource, as defined in the New York City Department of Building's (DOC) *Technical Policy and Procedure Notice (TPPN) #10/88*.

Indirect impacts are contextual or visual impacts that could result from project construction or operation. As described in the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, indirect impacts could result from blocking significant public views of a resource; isolating a resource from its setting or relationship to the streetscape; altering the setting of a resource; introducing incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to a resource's setting; or introducing shadows over a historic landscape or an architectural resource with sun-sensitive features that contribute to that resource's significance (e.g., a church with stained-glass windows).

The setting of each architectural resource, including its visual prominence and significance in publicly accessible views, whether it has sun-sensitive features, and its visual and architectural relationship to other architectural resources, was taken into consideration for this analysis.



- Project Site
- Study Area Boundary (400-Foot Perimeter)
- Photograph View Direction and Reference Number
- Former Empire Mill Works Building (S/NR Eligible)

## D. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### PROJECT SITE

The project site is composed of three discrete areas, roughly bounded by Shea Road and Northern Boulevard to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, the MTA Corona Rail Yard to the south, and Shea Road to the west (see **Figure 7-1**). The three portions of the project site are defined as the Special Willets Point District, Willets West, and Roosevelt Avenue. The Special Willets Point District is the triangular area bounded by 126th Street, Northern Boulevard, and the Van Wyck Expressway. The Willets West portion of the project site is a 30.7-acre section of the surface parking field west-adjacent to CitiField. The Roosevelt Avenue portion of the site consists of three CitiField-related surface parking lots along Roosevelt Avenue, South Lot and Lots B and D.

There are no known or potential architectural resources within the Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site.

The 2008 FGEIS identified one architectural resource within the Special Willets Point District: the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building at 128-150 Willets Point Boulevard (see **Figure 7-2**). As part of the 2008 FGEIS, the structure was determined S/NR-eligible by OPRHP as a significant early 20th century commercial and industrial building.

The former Empire Millwork Corporation Building, built in 1938 prior to the Van Wyck Expressway and facing Flushing Bay, has a large landscaped lawn in front. It was constructed from plans by Sugarman & Berger, Stanford D. Rossin, and Arthur Hamburger. Hamburger, an industrial engineer, was president of Wheeler Engineering Company, which built the building. The building was constructed for the D. Ginsberg and Sons Company, a millwork company which was started in 1921 by Hyman Ginsberg. The company later became the Empire Millwork Corporation and then the Empire National Corporation.

The two-story, Georgian Revival-style building has a symmetrical red brick façade with flanking bays, which terminate with gently curving sections. The front section was originally used as an office space for the company, and the exterior decorations are a reflection of the millwork business. The central bay projects slightly and features a center doorway topped with arched transom windows and a broken pediment. Above the door is a large Palladian window with a circular clock under the central arch. The central bay is topped with a large front gable with a wood denticulated cornice and cornice returns. Small octagonal windows decorate either side of the central entryway. The flanking sections are five bays wide. Each bay has arched wood windows with tracery on the first level and 6-over-6 double-hung wood windows on the upper level. A denticulated cornice line runs the length of the bays. Both bays end with curved sections; these sections have large 12-over-12 double-hung windows separated by double height wood pilasters. The side bays have small, double-hung and octagon-shaped windows. A short parapet runs along the flanking bays and sides. The remainder of the building is a two-story warehouse structure which extends back approximately 300 feet. It has large factory-style, multi-pane glass windows.

There are no other known or potential architectural resources located within the Special Willets Point District portion of the project site.





Former Empire Millwork Corporation Building, front facade 1



Former Empire Millwork Corporation Building, view southeast 2

### *STUDY AREA*

There are no known or potential architectural resources located within the 400-foot study area. A portion of the Olmsted Center in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park falls within the study area boundary. While this one-story modular building was built as the 1964-65 World's Fair Corporation's administrative offices, it is not considered to be a potential architectural resource.

## **E. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **PROJECT SITE**

Without the proposed project, in all three analysis years it is expected that the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building will continue in its present use.

### **STUDY AREA**

Absent the proposed project, two projects are expected to be built within the study area by 2018. One is a one-story guard/monitoring booth for the industrial site located at 32-11 Harper Street. The second, located at 39-14 114th Street, is development that will contain 23 dwelling units, 18,638 square feet of commercial space, 4,794 square feet of community facility space, and 31 parking spaces. No additional projects are anticipated to be built within the study area by 2028 or 2032. As described above, there are no known or potential architectural resources within the study area.

Changes to the architectural resource identified above or to its setting could occur irrespective of the proposed project. The S/NR-eligible architectural resource could be listed on the Registers, or determined eligible and designated as a NYCL. Future projects could also affect the setting of the architectural resource. It is possible that the architectural resource could deteriorate, or could be restored. In addition, future projects could accidentally damage the architectural resource through adjacent construction.

Historic resources that are listed on the S/NR or that have been found eligible for listing are given a measure of protection under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act from the effects of projects sponsored, assisted, or approved by federal agencies. Although preservation is not mandated, federal agencies must attempt to avoid adverse effects on such resources through a notice, review, and consultation process. Properties listed on the Registers are similarly protected against effects resulting from projects sponsored, assisted, or approved by state agencies under the State Historic Preservation Act. However, private owners of properties eligible for, or even listed on, the Registers using private funds may alter or demolish their properties without such a review process, assuming no state or federal approvals are required. Privately owned properties that are NYCLs and in NYCHDs are protected under the New York City Landmarks Law, which requires LPC review and approval before any alteration or demolition permits can be issued, regardless of whether the project is publicly or privately funded. Publicly owned resources are also subject to review by LPC before the start of a project. However, LPC's role in projects sponsored by other city or state agencies generally is advisory only.

## **F. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT**

### **PROJECT SITE**

As described above, there are no architectural resources located within the Willets West or Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site. Therefore, there would be no impacts to architectural resources from the development of these areas in Phases 1A, 1B, or 2 of the proposed project.

Phases 1A and 1B of the proposed project would not impact, physically or contextually, the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building. The new development that would occur in these phases in the western half of the District would alter the context of this resource, but the new development is anticipated to improve the physical environment and thus surrounding views. Views to the resource from 34th Avenue and Willets Point Boulevard would not be obstructed. The anticipated Van Wyck Expressway ramp configuration—which would be constructed by 2028—would not adversely affect the building.

In Phase 2 of the proposed project, it is anticipated that the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would be demolished, consistent with the 2008 FGEIS. Demolition of this historic resource would constitute a significant adverse impact on architectural resources.

The development in the District in Phase 2 would be guided by the special district regulations and the Willets Point Urban Renewal Plan (URP) adopted in 2008. One of the key aspects of the special district regulations and the URP is to allow for flexibility of uses and building locations within the District. Retaining the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would limit this flexibility. In addition, retaining the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would be challenging from a site grading and engineering perspective. The District is below the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) 100-year floodplain level of 14 feet above mean sea level (AMSL), and up to seven feet of fill would be required in some locations to grade and raise the entire District to an elevation of between 14 and 17 feet AMSL. If the City were to provide new infrastructure—including new roadways, sidewalks, and storm and sanitary sewer lines—at the existing grade, potential future development could be subject to flooding on the lower floors. As such, the City plans to raise the District and require that any new development be raised above the 100-year floodplain level. The site of the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would require up to 3.4 feet of fill to conform to the future grade of the District.

As the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building is at the District's existing grade and located near the Flushing Bay inlet, it is presumed that it is subject to flooding on the lower floors and would remain so in the future without the proposed project. If the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building were not raised it would be significantly more vulnerable to flooding, both because it is below AMSL, and because the surrounding topography would be raised, directing water runoff into lower areas. Raising the grade in a majority of the District while maintaining the existing grade on the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building site would require special engineering measures to protect the building during site preparation and construction to prevent future flooding on the site, and to visually and functionally integrate the building with the rest of the District despite the differences in grade.

In a letter dated May 30, 2008, OPRHP stated that the demolition of the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would constitute an adverse impact, and that all alternatives to demolition have not been explored. The substantial challenges inherent in retaining the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building as part of the proposed project are detailed above.

## Willets Point Development

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Furthermore, retention of the structure would not advance the goals and objectives of the approved Willets Point Development Plan, including the improvement of environmental conditions and the development of affordable housing, community facilities, and public open space.

A developer for Phase 2 has not yet been selected, and the Queens Development Group, LLC (QDG) may or may not be selected as the designated developer for Phase 2. Before the development of Phase 2, the selected developer will consult with OPRHP and LPC to evaluate any remaining potential alternatives to demolition. If none are identified, measures to fully or partially mitigate this adverse impact have been developed, as discussed in **Chapter 21, "Mitigation."** As discussed in the 2008 FGEIS, these would include consultation with OPRHP to develop mitigation measures, such as recording the building through a Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS)-level photographic documentation and accompanying narrative.

### *STUDY AREA*

As there are no architectural resources in the study area, there would be no impacts on such resources in the future with the proposed project.

In summary, this analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts related to historic and cultural resources that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS. \*