

**10.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) presents the evaluation the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) and the New Jersey Transit Corporation (NJ TRANSIT) conducted of the potential effects of the Preferred Alternative on visual and aesthetic resources in the surrounding area. It considers the effects of visible construction activities as well as permanent Project elements. The Port Authority of New York and New Jersey (PANYNJ), in its role as Project Sponsor, has accepted and relied on the evaluations and conclusions of this chapter.

This chapter reflects the following changes made since the Draft EIS (DEIS) for the Hudson Tunnel Project:

- The chapter incorporates design modifications related to the permanent features of the Project (e.g., modifications to surface tracks and tunnel alignment) and changes to construction methods and staging.
- The chapter is updated to describe current conditions in the affected environment and any related updates to the analysis of potential impacts.

This chapter contains the following sections:

- 10.1 Introduction
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  - 10.2.2 Analysis Techniques
  - 10.2.3 Study Areas
- 10.3 Affected Environment: Existing Conditions
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**10.2 ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY**

During development of this EIS, FRA and NJ TRANSIT developed methodologies for evaluating the potential effects of the Hudson Tunnel Project in coordination with the Project's Cooperating



and Participating Agencies (i.e., agencies with a permitting or review role for the Project). The methodologies used for analysis of visual and aesthetic resources are summarized in this chapter.

### **10.2.1 REGULATORY CONTEXT**

FRA's *Procedures for Considering Environmental Impacts*<sup>1</sup> call for environmental reviews to consider a proposed project's effect on the aesthetic environment and scenic resources, including any significant changes likely to occur in the natural landscape and in the developed environment. The FRA procedures also require that the analysis discuss the consideration given to design quality, art, and architecture in project planning and development by the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) Order 5610.4 and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Circular 9400.1A.

Following completion of the DEIS, the PANYNJ became the Project Sponsor for the Hudson Tunnel Project (see Chapter 1, "Purpose and Need," Section 1.1.2, for more information). Consistent with the roles and responsibilities defined in Section 1.1.1 of that chapter, as the current Project Sponsor, the PANYNJ will comply with mitigation measures and commitments identified in the Record of Decision (ROD).

### **10.2.2 ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES**

FRA and NJ TRANSIT assessed visual impacts by evaluating the compatibility of the Preferred Alternative with the surrounding context, sensitivity of the viewers, and degree of impact. The assessment of compatibility comprised consideration of the Preferred Alternative's visual effects in relation to such elements as scale, form, materials, visual character, and distance between the viewer and the visual resource.

In the absence of FRA-specific guidance for assessment of visual impacts, this analysis was prepared in accordance with the *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (January 2015) prepared by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), as appropriate and applicable to the Hudson Tunnel Project. As the guidance prepared by FHWA is designed to address the evaluation of visual impacts of highway projects, many key components are applicable to the visual analysis methodology for the Hudson Tunnel Project, and those components are included in this analysis. Although this project is not a highway project, it is similar to one in that it involves new work on a linear transportation corridor and therefore many of the components in the guidance were relevant to the analysis. Such elements as effects on neighborhood character; viewer groups and viewer sensitivity are included in the visual assessment.

In accordance with the FHWA guidelines, the visual impact assessment consists of four phases: (1) the establishment phase, in which the study area is defined and the Area of Visual Effect identified; (2) the inventory phase, in which the existing visual quality and the components of the affected environment and populations are examined; (3) the analysis phase, in which potential impacts on visual quality are evaluated and the degree of impact assessed; and (4) the mitigation phase, in which measures to minimize and lessen any negative effects or impacts are identified.

The establishment phase of the analysis process involves examination of supporting documentation, such as the project description, purpose and need, scoping document, conceptual designs and preliminary engineering, comprehensive plans or municipal ordinances and field observation and recording. The Area of Visual Effect is determined by the project information and the visibility of project features through landform, land cover, atmospheric conditions, and limits of sight.

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<sup>1</sup> 64 Federal Register 28545, May 26, 1999.

Once the Area of Visual Effect has been identified, the inventory phase involves identifying and describing the existing visual character and existing conditions of the affected environment and the affected population. Visual character is a “description of the visible attributes of a scene or object...”<sup>2</sup> Views that are available to the affected population are identified and the quality of those views is described in this phase.

During the analysis phase, the impacts of the alternatives are identified and described, and the compatibility of the impact with the surrounding area is determined and the sensitivity of viewers to the impact is evaluated; all of these factors help in assessing the degree of impact on visual quality. Visual quality is defined as “what viewers like and dislike about visual resources that compose the visual character of a particular scene. Different viewers may evaluate specific visual resources differently based on their interests in natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence. Neighbors and travelers may, in particular, have different opinions on what they like and dislike about a scene.”<sup>3</sup>

Viewer sensitivity is “defined by the ability of viewers to see and care about a project’s impacts. The sensitivity to impact is based on viewer sensitivity to changes in the visual character of visual resources. Viewers are either sensitive or insensitive to impacts.”<sup>4</sup> A key view is a “location from which a viewer (traveler or neighbor) can see either iconic or representative landscapes, with or without the highway (facility), of the project corridor.”<sup>5</sup> The impact on visual quality may be beneficial, adverse, or neutral. A proposed project may benefit visual quality by enhancing visual resources, creating better views of certain resources, and improving the experience of the viewers. Alternatively, it may adversely affect visual quality by degrading visual resources or obstructing or altering desired views.

Upon completion of the analysis phase, mitigation may be recommended for design impacts or for construction impacts or both. The mitigation phase identifies potential measures to avoid or minimize the effects of adverse visual impacts. Mitigation measures may include screening or blocking of undesirable views, or enhancing the visual quality of project elements.

### **10.2.3 STUDY AREAS**

As described in Chapter 4, “Analysis Framework,” for the analyses in this EIS, the Project site consists of areas where the Preferred Alternative would have permanent features or where construction activities for the Preferred Alternative would occur. The analysis of visual and aesthetic conditions considers the effects of the Preferred Alternative on the area around the Project site from which elements of the Preferred Alternative may be visible. This area is the Area of Visual Effect. The Area of Visual Effect is established based on the specific features of the Preferred Alternative and the characteristics of the surrounding area that create or block views of the Project site. For visual components, views may be obscured by obstructions, landforms, vegetation, structures, or diminished by distance or environmental conditions.

FHWA guidance identifies types of viewsheds. A viewshed is “what people can see in the environment, which is a result of the intersection between the physical constraints of the environment and the physiological limits of human perceptions.” The guidance defines “static viewsheds” as “what neighbors of the road see from a stationary location. Dynamic viewsheds are

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<sup>2</sup> FHWA, *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects*, January 2015, p. A-3.

<sup>3</sup> FHWA, pp. A-3, A-4.

<sup>4</sup> FHWA, p. A-3.

<sup>5</sup> FHWA, p. A-2.



what travelers ... see as they move through the landscape. The Area of Visual Effect is the sum of the viewsheds of all travelers with views from the road and all neighbors with views of the road.”

For this Project, the analysis identified viewsheds using aerial mapping, field verification, and information about the design of the Preferred Alternative. Field visits were conducted in October 2016 and February 2017 and updated in April 2021.

The Area of Visual Effect is depicted in **Figures 10-1a and 10-1b**. As shown in **Figures 10-1a and 10-1b**, it includes the following areas:

- Areas with views of the Project site in the Meadowlands between County Road and Tonnelle Avenue (U.S. Routes 1 and 9). In this area, the landscape is relatively flat; therefore, visibility of the Project site and Preferred Alternative from the surrounding neighborhoods is limited. Vistas from the slope and top of the Palisades in North Bergen and Union City may provide some views of the Project site.
- Areas with views of the Project site on and near Tonnelle Avenue. The Tonnelle Avenue corridor is a busy commercial arterial notable for the steep grade changes on either side. Views of the Project site are available from limited locations along Tonnelle Avenue and Paterson Plank Road above.
- Area of Weehawken and Hoboken with views of the Hoboken fan plant site. The Hoboken shaft site and fan plant site is visible from the immediate area and from limited locations in Union City on top of the Palisades.
- Area of the Hudson River where in-water construction activity would occur. This area would be approximately 600 feet from the water's edge in Manhattan (i.e., 600 feet from the bulkhead) and therefore would be most visible from the immediate area in New York.
- Area with views of the Project site in Manhattan. The analysis of visual impacts in New York focused on the block between Twelfth Avenue (also referred to as Route 9A) and Eleventh Avenue from West 29th to West 30th Street (Manhattan Block 675), where intensive construction activity and a permanent above-grade structure are proposed. In addition, a small area around the site of the Tenth Avenue fan plant was also evaluated.

Views from within and views of the new Hudson River Tunnel portion of the Preferred Alternative, as well as views within and of the North River Tunnel were not assessed in this visual assessment as they would be below ground and not visible to the public, other than train passengers within the tunnel, who have very limited views of the side walls of the tunnel as they pass by. **Figures 10-1a and 10-1b** also contain a location key for the photographs of the Project site described below in Section 10.3 and shown in **Figures 10-2 through 10-14**.

## **10.3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **10.3.1 NEW JERSEY**

#### *10.3.1.1 COUNTY ROAD TO TONNELLE AVENUE*

##### *10.3.1.1.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

Between approximately County Road and Tonnelle Avenue, the Project site is a narrow, linear area between the existing embankment and railroad tracks of the Northeast Corridor (NEC) and a series of warehouses. At the eastern end of this segment of the Project site, close to Tonnelle Avenue, the Project site is located in a flat, open wetland area.

The western portion of the Meadowlands Project area consists of a mix of wetlands around Penhorn Creek and a light industrial and manufacturing area. In this portion of the Area of Visual

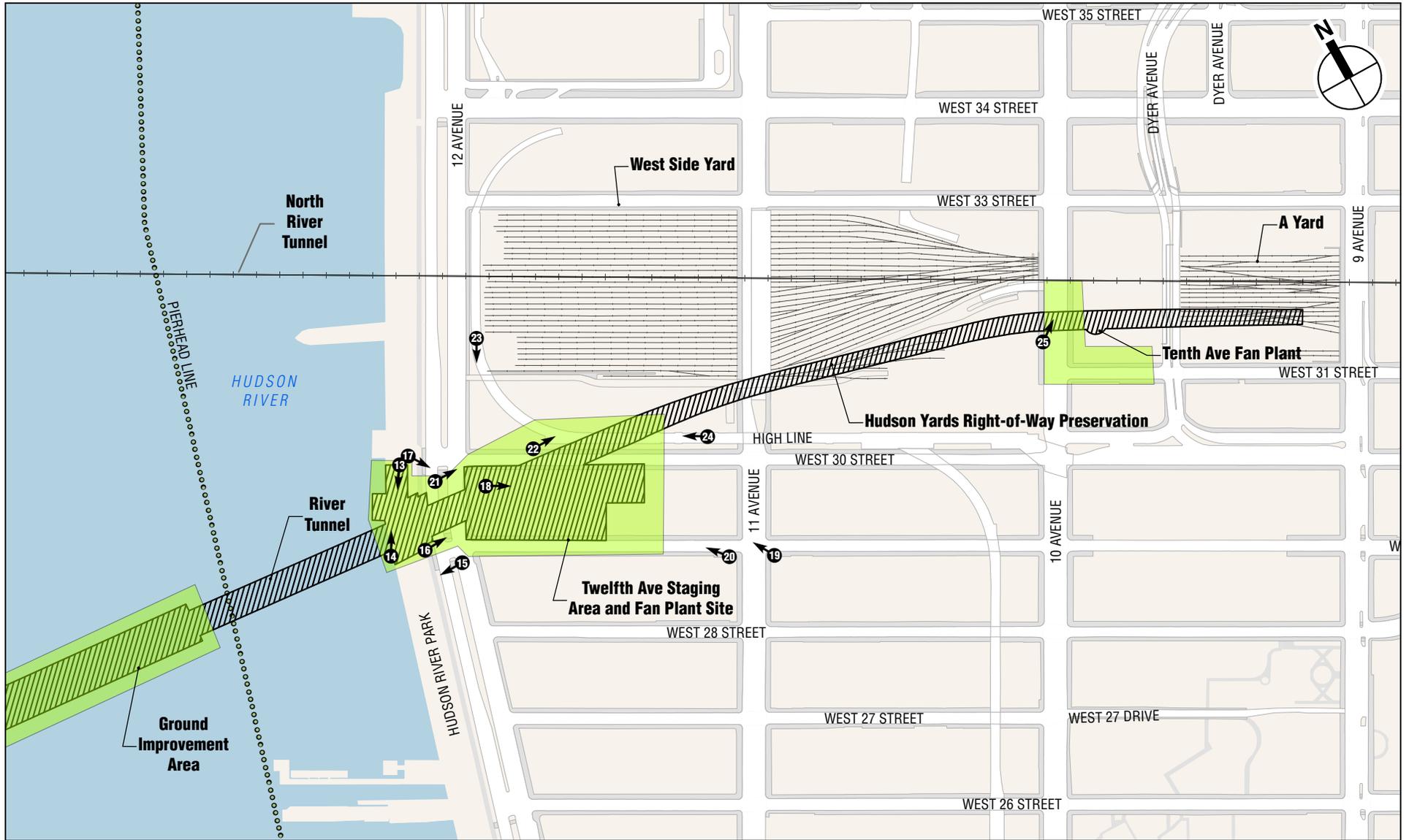


-  Project Site
-  Area of Visual Effect
-  Municipal Boundaries
-  Photograph View Direction and Reference Number

0 2,000 FEET



New Jersey  
Area of Visual Effect and  
Photo Key Plan  
**Figure 10-1a**



-  Project Site
-  Existing Northeast Corridor
-  Area of Visual Effect

 Photograph View Direction and Reference Number

0 500 FEET




New York Area of Visual Effect and Photo Key Plan  
**Figure 10-1b**



NEC embankment at 901 Penhorn Avenue Parking lot/loading docks, facing west 1



NEC embankment from parking lot behind 901 Penhorn Avenue, facing east 2



Tonnelle Avenue, facing north 3



Tonnelle Avenue overlooking staging area, facing west 4



Paterson Plank Road, looking south with residences on Grand Avenue uphill on left **5**



View to Tonnel Avenue staging area from Paterson Plank Road, looking west **6**



Hoboken fan plant site from West 18th Street in Weehawken, facing south 7



Hoboken fan plant site from West 18th Street in Weehawken, facing west 8



Hoboken fan plant site from West 18th Street in Weehawken, facing southwest  
(Note: Photograph is from 2017 and trees have since been cleared on the hillside)

9



Residences along West 18th Street in Weehawken  
across from Hoboken fan plant site, facing west

10



Residences along West 18th Street, across from Hoboken staging area, facing east 11



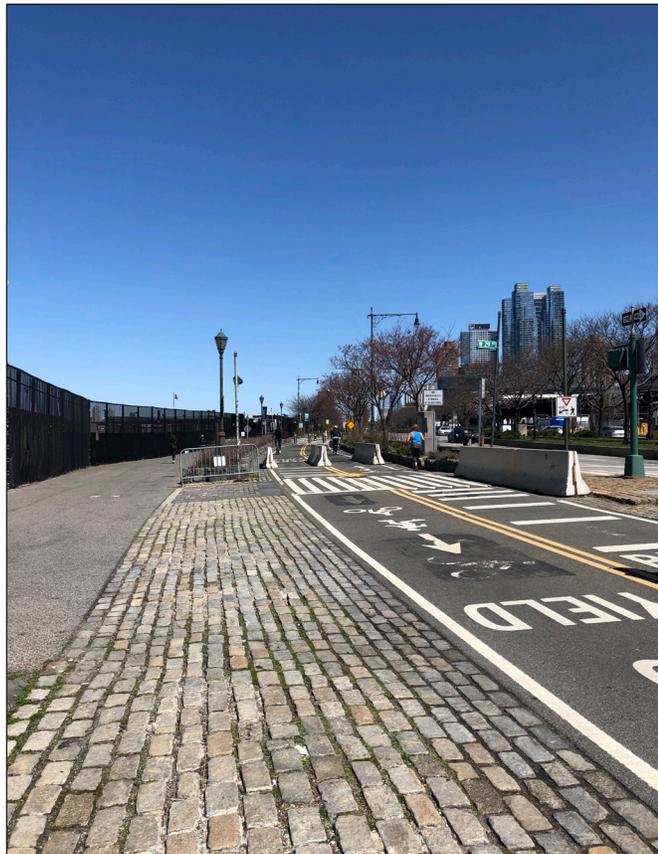
Bird's Eye View



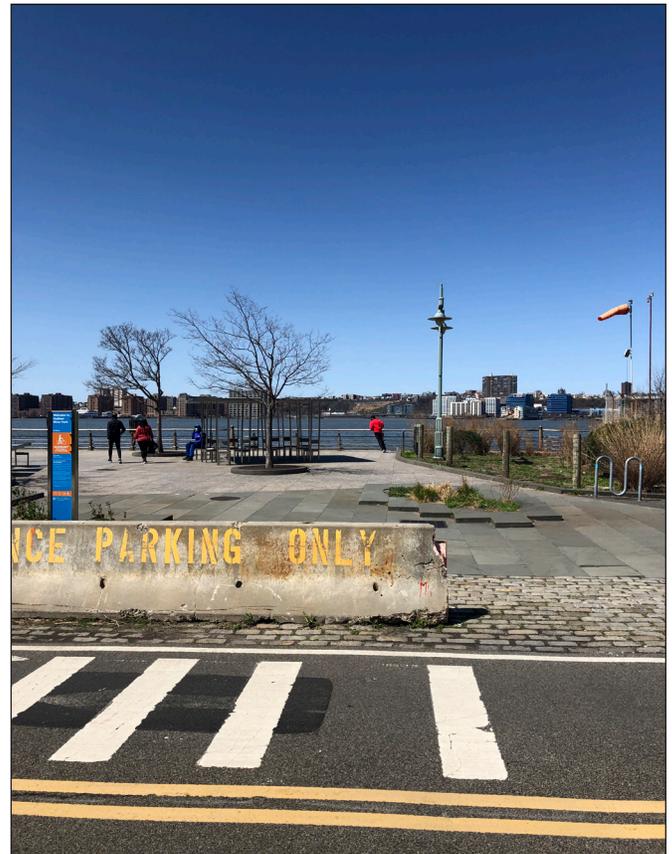
Photograph Date: 2017

View northeast from top of Palisades to proposed fan plant site (behind trees) 12

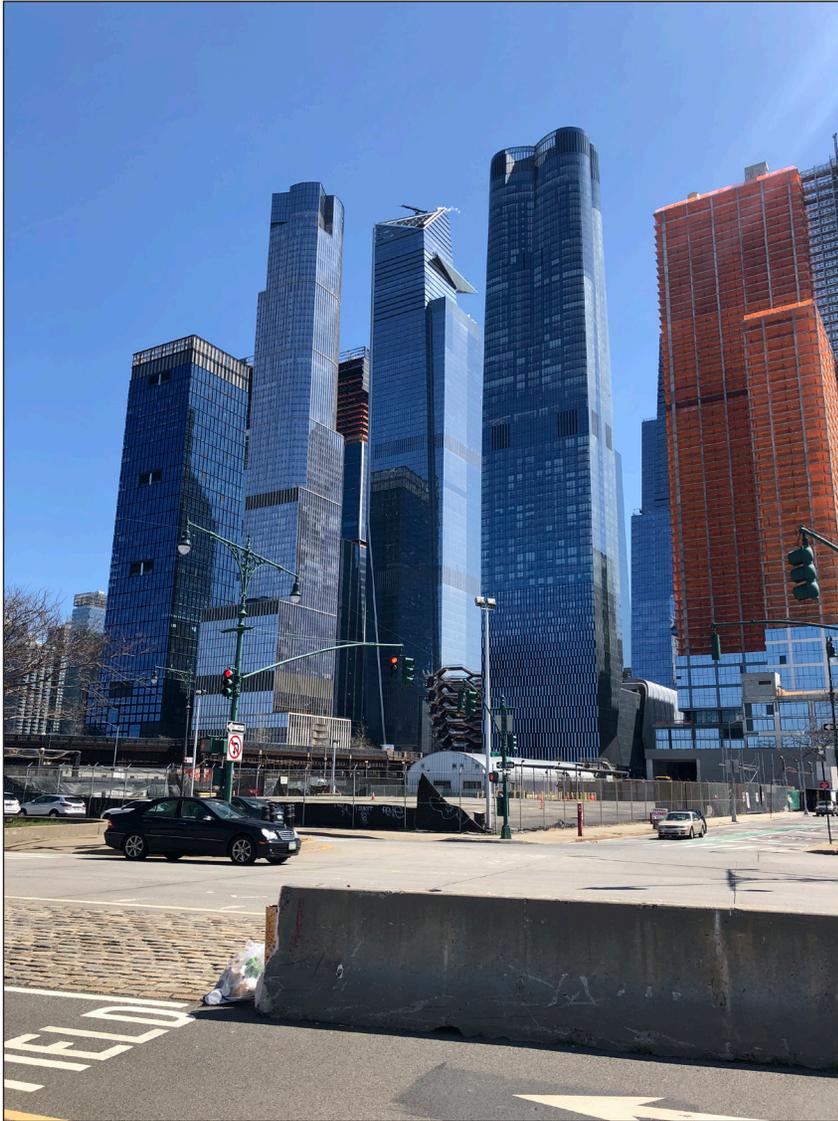
West 30th Street Heliport 13



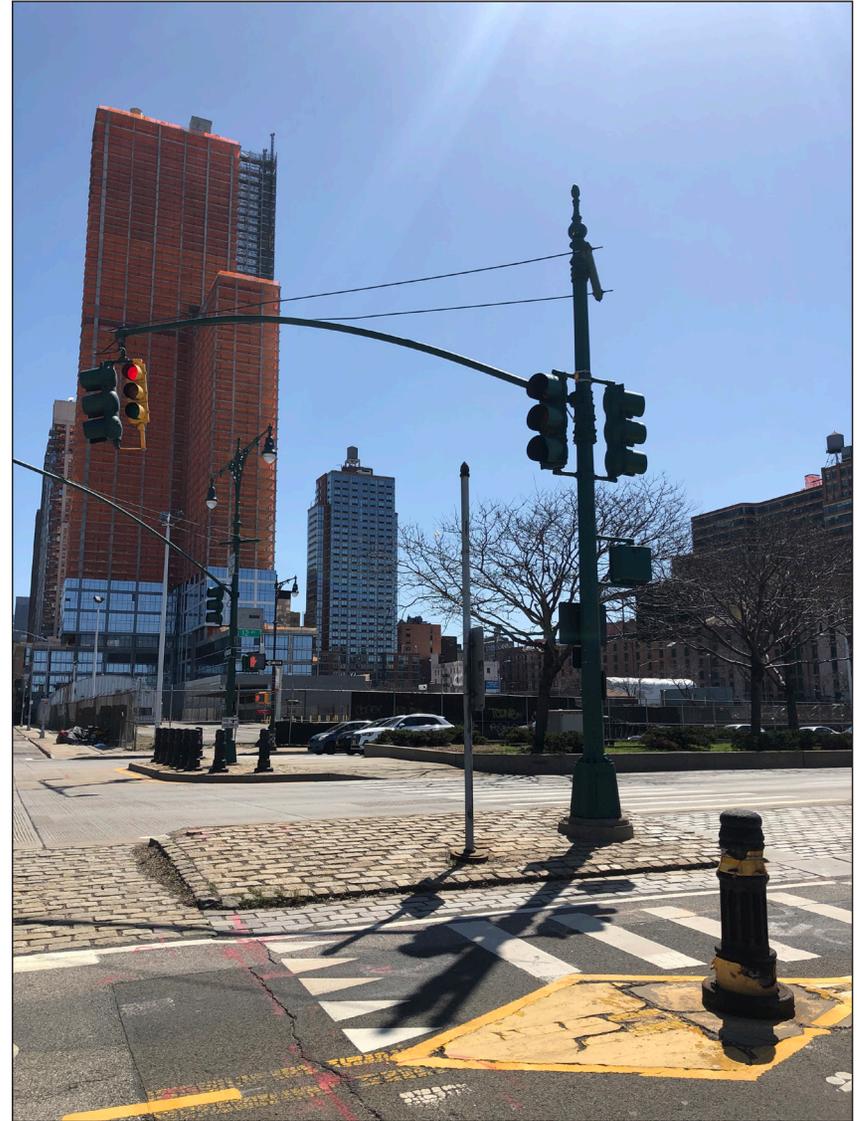
Walkway and bikeway, facing north 14



Hudson River Park from Twelfth Avenue, facing west 15



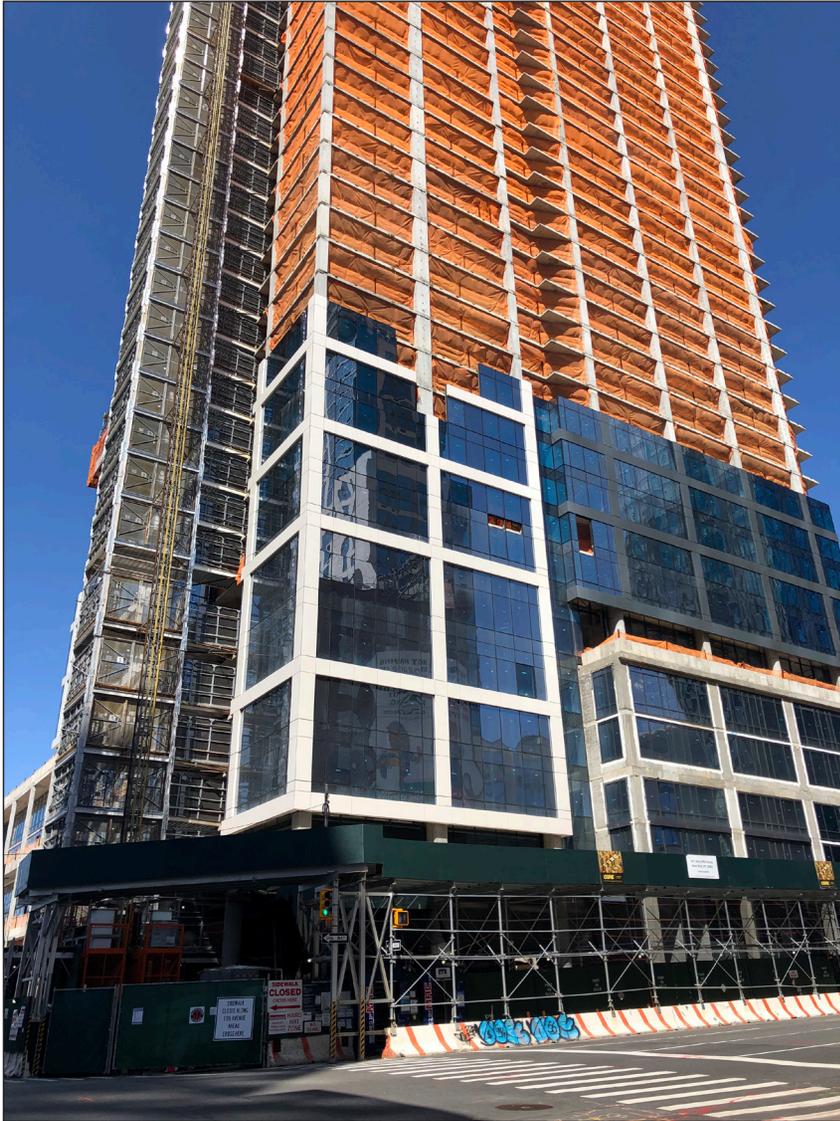
Corner of Twelfth Avenue and West 29th Street **16**  
from Hudson River Park, facing northeast



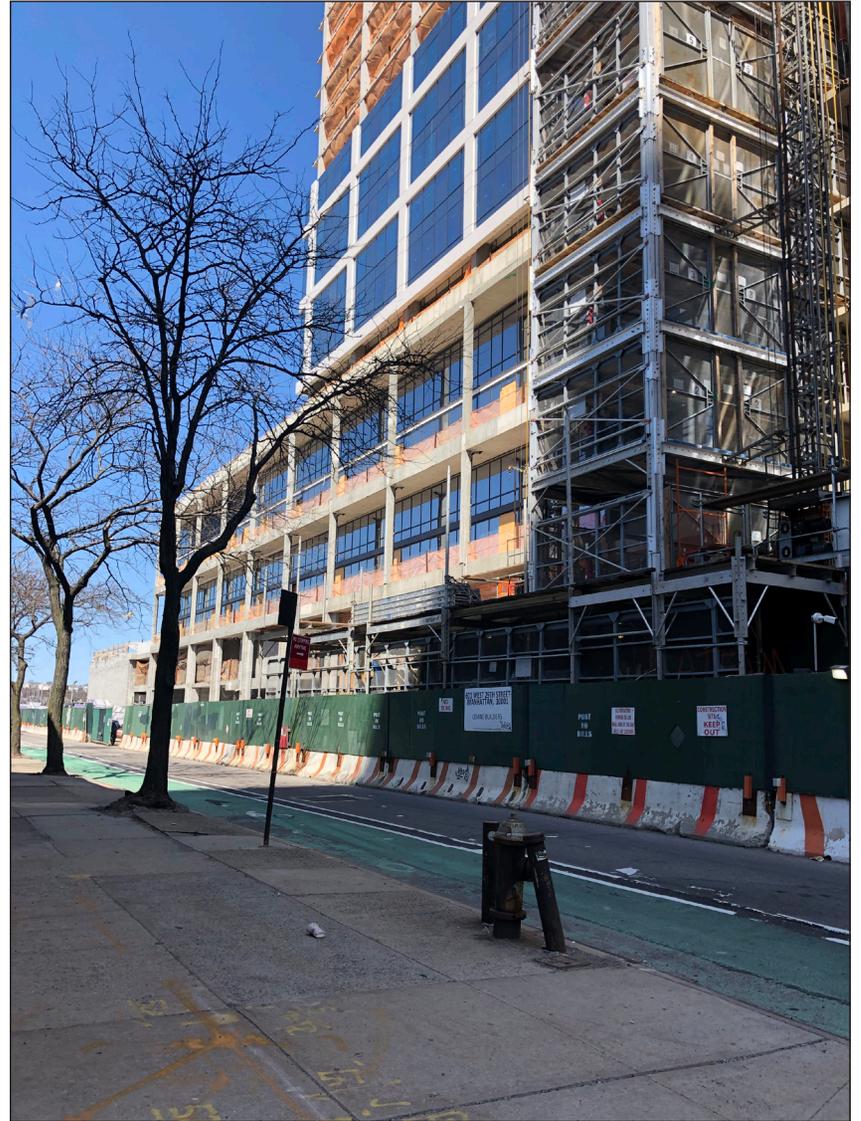
Twelfth Avenue fan plant site from Hudson River Park, **17**  
facing southeast



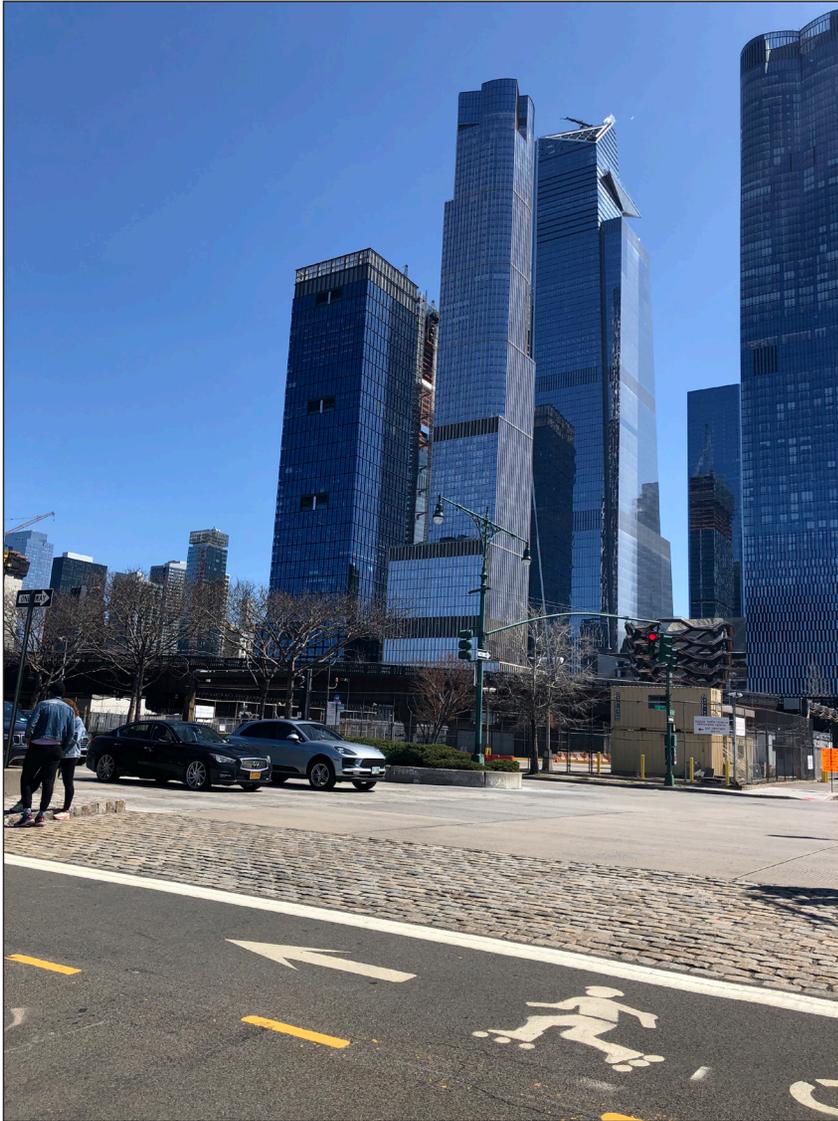
Twelfth Avenue Fan Plant site, facing east 18



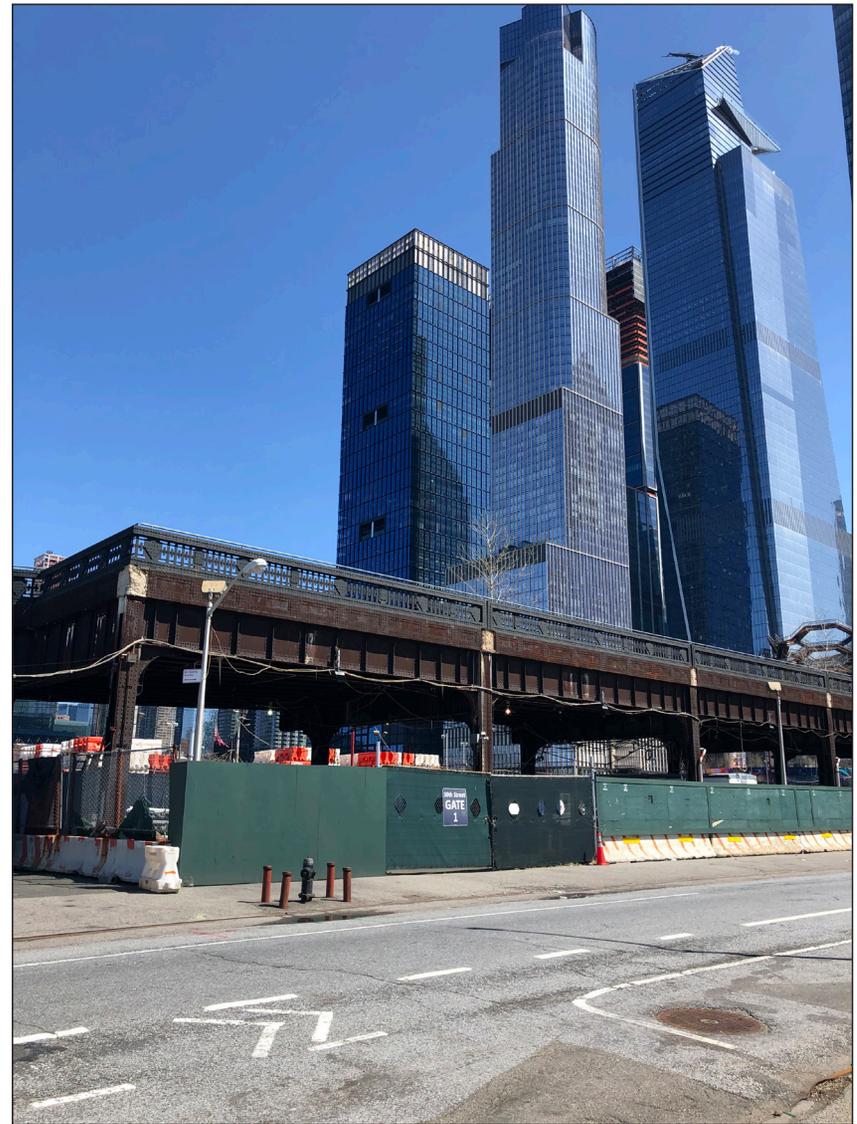
New Development along Eleventh Avenue, facing west 19



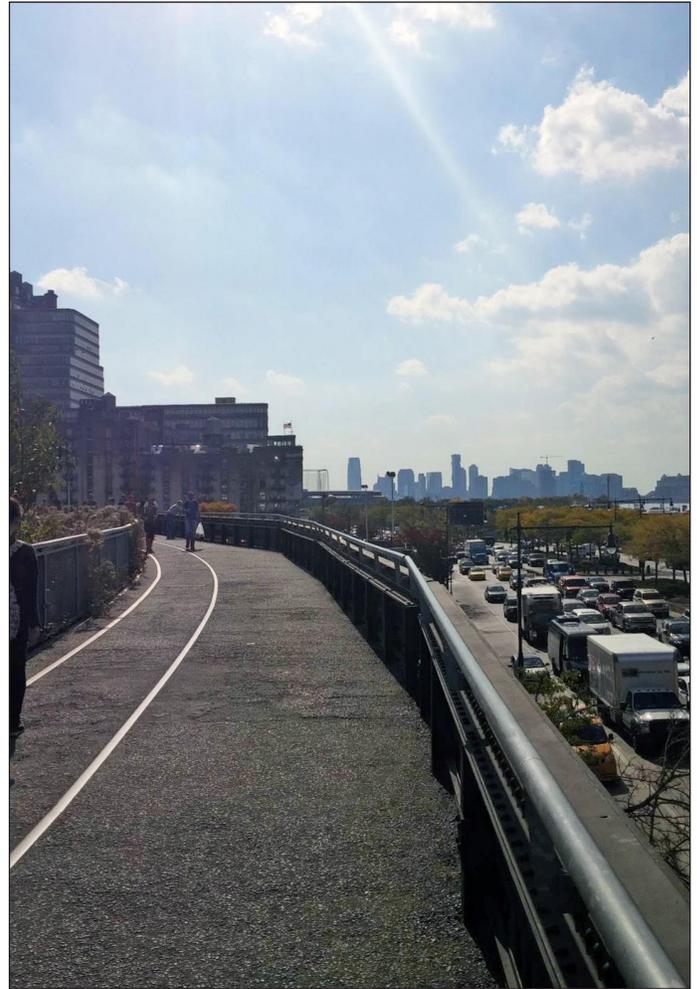
New Development along West 29th Street, facing west 20



Hudson Yards Development with High Line in the foreground from Twelfth Avenue at West 30th Street, facing northeast 21



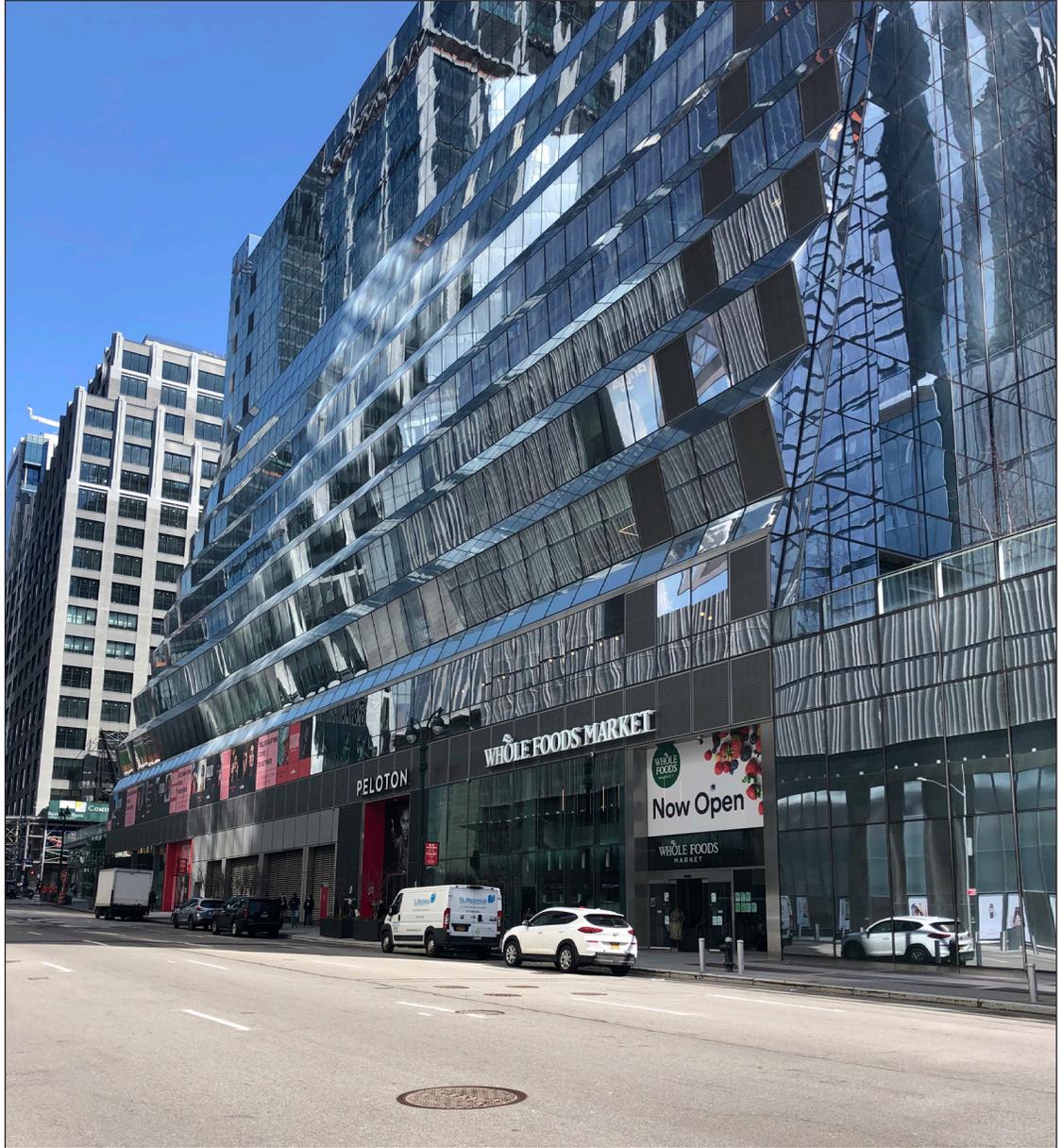
High Line with Hudson Yards Development in the background from West 30th Street near Twelfth Avenue, facing northeast 22



The High Line along Twelfth Avenue near West 30th Street, facing south 23



The High Line along West 30th Street, facing west 24



Building at 450 West 33rd Street 25

Effect, the NEC comprises two tracks on a raised embankment between a mixed wetland/light industrial area to the north and light industrial facilities to the south. The light industrial buildings south of the NEC tracks front on streets to the south of the NEC tracks, such as Penhorn Avenue or 16th Street, with their parking lots or loading docks facing the NEC tracks. Therefore, the buildings block most views of the NEC tracks, but the tracks are visible from the paved areas behind those buildings. The buildings are low-scale warehouse and back office box structures with trucks and trailers in their parking lots. **Figure 10-2** provides views of the Project site in this area.

East of Secaucus Road, the NEC and nearby Project site pass an industrial area accessible from Secaucus Road and 16th Street and a wetland area. Along the south side of the NEC, light industrial and warehousing properties have low-scale buildings and expansive parking areas with hundreds of tractors and trailers stored on the site. From the parking lot of the industrial properties, the NEC tracks on embankment are visible. Along the north side of the NEC tracks is a large undeveloped tract of wetland with three large, conspicuous utility towers. In this area, the NEC tracks curve southward as they approach Tonnelle Avenue.

#### *10.3.1.1.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

The affected population in the Meadowlands area is limited to employees and visitors at the industrial and warehousing businesses to the south of the Project site and railroad passengers, who may have limited views from the train.

#### *10.3.1.2 TONNELLE AVENUE AREA*

##### *10.3.1.2.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The Tonnelle Avenue portion of the Area of Visual Effect, just east of the Meadowlands wetlands area, extends from the Conrail and New York Susquehanna & Western Railway (NYSW) freight rail tracks to the west of Tonnelle Avenue to the western face of the Palisades on the west, including Paterson Plank Road and Grand Avenue on the slope of the Palisades. The Conrail and NYSW tracks serve as a boundary between the Meadowlands wetlands area and a commercial/light industrial corridor to the east along Tonnelle Avenue. Just east of Tonnelle Avenue, the topography rises steeply; the partly vegetated and partly developed steep slope of the Palisades marks the eastern boundary of the Tonnelle Avenue corridor.

Tonnelle Avenue is a heavily trafficked arterial roadway with a speed limit of 40 miles per hour (mph) and two travel lanes in each direction, separated by a concrete barrier. The road is lined with industrial and commercial businesses, such as gas stations, fast food, and self-storage. A sidewalk is present on portions of the roadway, but it is not continuous. Views outward from this location are intermittent, and blocked by fences and buildings. **Figure 10-3** illustrates views along Tonnelle Avenue.

Two streets are parallel to, but above, Tonnelle Avenue on the western slope of the Palisades: Paterson Plank Road and Grand Avenue above it. Paterson Plank Road is midway up the western slope of the Palisades, approximately 75 feet higher than Tonnelle Avenue at the Project site. The road carries local traffic, with a speed limit of 25 mph and one travel lane in each direction with a sidewalk and parking lane along its east side. Along its west side, no sidewalk exists and a metal roadway railing, a narrow paved utility strip, and a chain link fence separate the southbound roadway from the steep, vegetated and rock embankment to the west of the roadway. From Paterson Plank Road, westward views are partially obscured by fencing and plant and brush growth; however, there are intermittent views of the Tonnelle Avenue area. Within the Area of Visual Effect, the northern portion of the west side of Paterson Plank Road is generally undeveloped with a steep slope down to Tonnelle Avenue. To the south of that vacant slope, a recently constructed park and new apartment complex (Hudson Mews) are at the top of the slope overlooking Tonnelle Avenue. Several apartment buildings are on the east side of Paterson Plank

Road in the Area of Visual Effect: one apartment building is at approximately 19th Street; other apartment buildings are between approximately 22nd and 23rd Streets. Between those two areas, additional apartment buildings are on Grand Avenue, offset from Paterson Plank Road. South of 19th Street, a recently constructed Wyndham Garden Hotel is on the east side of Paterson Plank Road across from the new park.

Above Paterson Plank Road, Grand Avenue is a narrow, dead-end street that is generally one-way (except the final, dead-end block). It has apartment buildings and houses on its west side overlooking Paterson Plank Road and Tonnelle Avenue. **Figure 10-4** illustrates views along Paterson Plank Road, including the residences on Grand Avenue. Views from the apartments on these two roads and the park and hotel on Paterson Plank Road, as well as from the roads themselves, are wide vistas of the Meadowlands and NEC; views directly downward to Tonnelle Avenue itself are less dominant and blocked by vegetation and fencing.

The portion of the Project site on the east side of Tonnelle Avenue is currently vacant with some vegetation and stacks of concrete beams being stored on the site. On the west side of Tonnelle Avenue, the Project site is lower than the roadway. Views of the Project site are of a vacant industrial lot in the foreground, filled with parked buses, and the Meadowlands in the background.

#### *10.3.1.2.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

The Project site on Tonnelle Avenue is visible to pedestrians and some motorists along Tonnelle Avenue. As there are few pedestrians, viewer groups would be generally limited to motorists.

#### *10.3.1.3 WEEHAWKEN AND HOBOKEN*

##### *10.3.1.3.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The Hoboken staging area and fan plant site is currently vacant, with remaining foundation slabs of previously demolished buildings and some volunteer vegetative growth (i.e., vegetation that has not been intentionally planted) along the surface, as illustrated in **Figure 10-5**.

The fan plant site is in a light industrial area that borders a residential neighborhood known as the Shades. The Shades neighborhood is a small area of single-family and multifamily residences and townhouses that is non-contiguous with other residential neighborhoods. It is bounded on the west and north by the steep slope of the Palisades, which is largely vegetated except for a property adjacent to the fan plant site that was recently cleared for a new development (see Section 10.4). The fan plant site is bounded on the south by an industrial neighborhood (including the Project site) and on the east by busy roads including the Willow Avenue viaduct. **Figures 10-6a and 10-6b** show views in the Shades neighborhood near the fan plant site. East of the Shades, the Area of Visual Effect also includes a 10-story residential building and a new complex of 15-story residential buildings.

The fan plant site is bordered on the south by the tracks of the Hudson-Bergen Light Rail (HBLR) right-of-way, which run through the area at grade. The area south of the HBLR is an industrial area of Hoboken that includes the North Hudson Sewerage Authority's wastewater treatment plant, a utility substation, and a self-storage facility.

Views of the Project site are available from the Shades neighborhood on the north; limited views are also available from locations on top of the Palisades, looking down at the site. While the main focus for viewers on the top of the Palisades ridge is the Manhattan skyline, the Hoboken fan plant site is slightly visible, but highly obscured by buildings along the east side of Manhattan Avenue and Palisade Avenue in Union City, mature trees, and dense vegetation and brush.

#### *10.3.1.3.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

The affected population consists of residents residing along West 18th Street and in the Shades neighborhood and industrial workers in the area. HBLR passengers also have some limited views of the Project site.

Firefighters' Memorial Park offers panoramic views of the Manhattan skyline from a platform atop the Palisades ridge. Visitors to Firefighters' Memorial Park at the top of the Palisades in Union City, approximately 600 feet south of the Hoboken fan plant site and approximately 200 feet higher in elevation, have limited views of the Project site from the park's eastern edge (see **Figure 10-7**).

### **10.3.2 HUDSON RIVER**

#### *10.3.2.1.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The Hudson River is wide (almost a mile across from shore to shore at the Project site). Views of the river and opposite shoreline are available from waterfront areas on each side. Varying levels of boating activity occur on the river, depending upon time of year and weather conditions; recreational boating activity is particularly high during certain holidays, such as July 4th and Labor Day and may be low during winter months.

#### *10.3.2.1.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

Views of the Project site area where in-water construction work would occur would be available primarily to people using Hudson River Park in New York and to boaters on the river. Limited views may also be available for people on the High Line, an elevated park in New York, and to motorists passing the site on Twelfth Avenue.

### **10.3.3 NEW YORK**

#### *10.3.3.1 WATERFRONT AREA*

##### *10.3.3.1.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The waterfront area of the New York Area of Visual Effect includes Hudson River Park, Twelfth Avenue, and the blocks immediately east of Twelfth Avenue. This area on the west side of Manhattan is characterized by the rapidly developing, mixed urban environment of Manhattan, the Hudson River Park, and the natural environment of the Hudson River.

Hudson River Park is a linear, waterfront greenspace and hardscape park along the West Side of Manhattan from Battery Place to 59th Street, bounded on its west side by the Hudson River and on its east side by Twelfth Avenue, a New York State arterial roadway/boulevard (Route 9A). In the immediate vicinity of the Project site, Hudson River Park includes a fenced heliport (the West 30th Street Heliport), a paved walkway and adjacent paved bikeway, seating, and plantings (see **Figure 10-8**). The heliport is a paved asphalt area surrounded by a chain link fence with a mesh screen that limits public access and blocks views of the heliport and helipads.

Twelfth Avenue (Route 9A) is a heavily trafficked arterial roadway with northbound and southbound travel lanes separated by a raised planted median and pedestrian refuge area, and pedestrian intersections and crossings. Near the Project site, the roadway has three southbound lanes and four northbound lanes, plus a northbound parking lane and sidewalk on the eastern side of the road. The speed limit on Twelfth Avenue is 40 mph.

The Twelfth Avenue fan plant site is a vacant, undeveloped, paved lot that until recently was used for midday storage of buses and support space for the PANYNJ (see **Figures 10-9 and 10-10**). Surrounding land uses include:

- A tall new residential building under construction on the east end of the same block as the Twelfth Avenue fan plant, with frontage along Eleventh Avenue and West 29th Street (see **Figure 10-11**);
- A Con Edison storage and staging area and natural gas vehicle fueling station on the block immediately south of the Twelfth Avenue fan plant site;
- The West Side Yard, a large rail storage yard, to the north;
- Recently constructed high-rise buildings and new public open space associated with the Hudson Yards area development between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues and 30th and 34th Streets (see **Figure 10-12**), including:
  - 10 Hudson Yards (52 stories; approximately 900 feet tall);
  - 15 Hudson Yards (88 stories; approximately 900 feet tall) and attached arts center called the Shed;
  - 30 Hudson Yards (103 stories; approximately 1,300 feet tall) with an observation deck on the 100th floor;
  - 35 Hudson Yards (92 stories, approximately 1,000 feet tall);
  - 55 Hudson Yards (51 stories; approximately 780 feet tall);
  - An open space public plaza with an elaborate curved staircase attraction called the Vessel;
  - A seven-level indoor shopping mall.
- The Chelsea Terminal Warehouse between West 27th and West 28th Streets two blocks south of the site (approximately 100 feet tall);
- The Starrett-Lehigh Building between West 26th and West 27th Streets, three blocks south of the site (approximately 300 feet tall);
- A number of tall buildings on the east side of Eleventh Avenue (south of Hudson Yards), including:
  - 260 Eleventh Avenue (between West 26th and West 27th Streets, approximately 140 feet tall);
  - 270 Eleventh Avenue (between West 27th and West 28th Streets, approximately 65 feet tall);
  - 282 Eleventh Avenue (known as Avalon West Chelsea, between West 28th and West 29th Streets, approximately 330 feet tall);
  - 541 West 29th Street (between West 29th and West 30th Streets, approximately 130 feet tall);
  - 312 Eleventh Avenue (known as Ohm, between West 29th and West 30th Streets directly across from Block 675, approximately 350 feet tall).

#### *10.3.3.1.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

Recreational users of Hudson River Park and motorists along Twelfth Avenue can view the Project site from the west, although some views are slightly obscured by trees and shrubs in the roadway median between the northbound and southbound lanes of Twelfth Avenue. There is a public seating area located across from the Project site.

To the north of the Twelfth Avenue fan plant site is the High Line, an elevated public park on a former freight railroad viaduct. The High Line begins at the sidewalk grade at West 34th Street and ramps up in elevation as it heads west toward Twelfth Avenue, where it reaches approximately 20 feet above grade as it loops around the western end of the West Side Yard, and then bends east on West 30th Street. **Figure 10-13** shows views from the High Line. Near the Project site,

the High Line is predominantly paved, with limited plantings and some seating areas; an adjacent area of former rail tracks and volunteer vegetation between the tracks is intentionally preserved beside the walkway. Since it is currently located higher than the undeveloped Project site on its south and the open rail yard on its north, the High Line today offers wide vistas of Hudson River Park and the Hudson River beyond. Views inland to Manhattan include numerous construction sites with the structures of high-rise buildings being erected. The High Line continues through the Chelsea District and terminates at Washington and Gansevoort Streets. The High Line has many visitors throughout the year, providing many opportunities for views of the surrounding area. Portions of the Project site—and particularly the Twelfth Avenue fan plant site directly to the south across West 30th Street—are visible from several locations along the High Line.

From the area east of the Twelfth Avenue ventilation facility site, views of the site are severely restricted by the presence of large buildings, although views are available from within those tall buildings.

### **10.3.3.2 TENTH AVENUE AREA**

#### **10.3.3.2.1 Visual Character and Key Views**

Near Tenth Avenue, the Project site includes the street-level façade of the building on the east side of Tenth Avenue between West 31st and West 33rd Streets at 450 West 33rd Street (see **Figure 10-14**). This building recently underwent façade renovation. On its Tenth Avenue façade at sidewalk level, there is a building entrance and an adjacent entrance to a supermarket. Next to those entrances, are sidewalk-level ventilation louvers and a blank door that is not accessible to the public—these louvers and door constitute the visible portion of the Project site at this location. Across Tenth Avenue, the building faces buildings of the Hudson Yards development described above in Section 10.3.3.1.1.

#### **10.3.3.2.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity**

Viewers of the Tenth Avenue façade of 450 West 33rd Street are limited to pedestrians on the sidewalks adjacent to the building. There are also viewers from 10 Hudson Yards and 30 Hudson Yards, which front on Tenth Avenue. The indoor mall has a façade on Tenth Avenue, but there are limited views from inside the mall to Tenth Avenue. Motorists passing the building on Tenth Avenue have only limited views of the façade as they pass.

## **10.4 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT: FUTURE CONDITIONS**

No notable changes will occur to most of the Area of Visual Effect in New Jersey by the 2033 analysis year in the absence of the Preferred Alternative. However, a new residential development is under construction on the hillside of the Palisades adjacent to and to the west of the Hoboken fan plant site. The new development will include four buildings with 55 residential units that will be accessed from Manhattan Avenue on top of the Palisades. The new buildings will comprise 11 stories, about half of which will step down the hillside below Manhattan Avenue.<sup>6</sup>

In New York, as described in Chapter 6A, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” Section 6A.4.3.1, extensive redevelopment is occurring in this portion of the Area of Visual Effect as a result of recent public policy initiatives in the area. A number of high-rises, retail, and plazas and parks have recently been constructed and many sites continue to undergo construction with high-density developments. This condition is the baseline against which the impacts of both the No Action and Preferred Alternatives are compared.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://hobokenheights.com>; accessed May 11, 2021.



The Hudson Yards redevelopment is directly north of the Twelfth Avenue fan plant site and includes three major redevelopment projects resulting in a new high-rise neighborhood built on platforms above the rail yard (individually referred to as the Eastern Rail Yard, Western Rail Yard, and Manhattan West projects). As these projects are completed, the large below-grade railyard that previously dominated the character of the neighborhood is becoming invisible and large-scale buildings with public plazas and other public amenities are instead becoming the primary neighborhood feature. The redevelopment between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues known as the Eastern Rail Yard project is largely complete and described in Section 6.3.3.1.1 above. One additional tower (50 Hudson Yards) is under construction along Tenth Avenue between West 33rd and West 34th Streets, for completion in 2022. The Western Rail Yard project between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues is in the planning and design stage and will include eight towers 30 to 75 stories tall as well as lower buildings and public open space. In addition, the Manhattan West project between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, to the east of the building at 450 West 33rd Street, is partially complete with two towers (62 and 67 stories high) and a lower building (13 stories high) recently constructed. Another 58-story tower and 21-story hotel are under construction, as well as public open space.

High-rise residential development is also occurring on the Project site block between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues (Block 675). At the eastern end of the block, along and close to Eleventh Avenue, two residential buildings are currently under construction, for completion in 2022. One building, which will occupy the blockfront on Eleventh Avenue, will be approximately 600 feet tall; the other will be on West 30th Street close to Eleventh Avenue and will be approximately 520 feet tall. In addition to these residential developments, a private developer has proposed an approximately 25-story commercial building on the lot at the western end of the block, along Twelfth Avenue, which is part of the Project site.<sup>7</sup>

## **10.5 IMPACTS OF NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE**

No new passenger rail tunnel across the Hudson River would be constructed in the No Action Alternative and the North River Tunnel would not be fully rehabilitated. For purposes of analysis in this FEIS, FRA and NJ TRANSIT have assumed that with the No Action Alternative, the existing North River Tunnel would remain functional and in operation at least through the FEIS analysis year of 2033, with continued maintenance as necessary to address ongoing deterioration to the extent possible. Visual and aesthetic conditions in the Area of Visual Effect will remain unchanged from the future affected conditions described above in Section 10.4.

## **10.6 CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

### **10.6.1 OVERVIEW**

The Preferred Alternative would include construction activities throughout the Project site. This section evaluates the following above-ground, visible components of the Project for their temporary visual impact during construction, as follows:

- Construction of surface track (approximately 1.7 miles) adjacent to the NEC from County Road to Tonnelle Avenue, including embankments and viaducts.
- Construction activities on staging sites on both sides of Tonnelle Avenue at the Project site.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.commercialcafe.com/blog/georgetown-1msf-office-tower-chelsea>.

- Construction staging on the Hoboken fan plant site, including new truck routes providing access to the site.
- Construction staging on the Twelfth Avenue fan plant site and other construction activities nearby in New York.

## **10.6.2 NEW JERSEY**

### *10.6.2.1 COUNTY ROAD TO TONNELLE AVENUE*

During construction of the Preferred Alternative, construction activity would be visible in the Meadowlands in the area between County Road and Tonnelle Avenue for approximately seven years. Construction of the new tracks and accompanying infrastructure would be visible from the parking lots and loading docks at the rear of the adjacent industrial buildings and from trains using the adjacent NEC. Given the limited viewers and industrial nature of this part of the Area of Visual Effect, the construction activity in the Meadowlands would not result in adverse visual impacts. Residences and the new park on Paterson Plank Road, Grand Avenue, and other locations on the slope or top of the Palisades may also have views of the construction area, but at a long distance, where construction would generally be a small element in wide views.

### *10.6.2.2 TONNELLE AVENUE AREA*

The construction staging areas on the Tonnelle Avenue corridor would have intensive, visible construction activity at the staging sites and at the existing tunnel portal when rehabilitation of the North River Tunnel is under way. Construction at the Tonnelle Avenue staging areas would last for approximately 11 years. Visible activities would include workers at the staging areas, trucks arriving at and departing from the sites, stockpiled materials at the sites, and the visible elements of the Project under construction, including the new Hudson River Tunnel's below-grade tracks and tunnel portal.

These construction activities would be partially visible at a distance from vehicles passing by the sites on Tonnelle Avenue. For these viewers, given the existing industrial and commercial nature of Tonnelle Avenue, the views of construction would not be adverse.

Views of the construction could also be visible from some of the residences, park, and hotel along Paterson Plank Road and residences along the west side of Grand Avenue; however, the area is not visible from the Grand Avenue sidewalks or street bed. From this vantage above the construction staging areas, views directly down to the site are partially blocked by vegetation and fencing and less dominant than the wide vistas of the Meadowlands beyond. During periods when trees and plants are in leaf, many of the views would be blocked. During the off-leaf periods, some of the plant branches and brush would filter views; however, they would not fully obscure views.

Construction lighting at the Tonnelle Avenue staging area would be visible during nighttime hours from the adjacent residential neighborhoods along the top of the Palisades ridge with a view of the site. The Project Sponsor will design construction lighting to minimize light pollution affecting these adjacent residential areas, with targeted and downward-directed, shielded lighting.

### *10.6.2.3 WEEHAWKEN AND HOBOKEN*

The Preferred Alternative would result in similar intensive, visible construction activities at the Hoboken staging site for approximately seven years. This would include workers at the site, construction equipment stored on the site, trucks arriving and departing, and the visible Project elements under construction here: the ventilation shaft followed by the fan plant. Residents of the Shades and the new development on the adjacent hillside (once completed) would be highly sensitive to the visual effects of construction staging and construction activities.



A temporary noise barrier would be erected along the north, west, and east sides of the Hoboken staging area, which would block some views of construction activities from the residential neighborhood along West 18th Street. The noise barrier could be up to 25 feet high and would cast shadows northward onto and across West 18th Street during the midday.<sup>8</sup> This barrier would remain in place for the duration of construction at the site, approximately seven years. The barrier would be set back from West 18th Street approximately 10 feet, providing enough space for street parking and landscaping in front of the wall. Some people may perceive the presence of a noise wall as unattractive, while others may see it as a positive visual element, as it would block views of construction activities. The Project Sponsor will determine the height of the noise wall at the Hoboken staging area in consultation with representatives of the local community and work with the local community to maintain the wall in an attractive visual condition. The Project Sponsor will landscape the area in front of the temporary noise wall to soften views of the wall. In addition, the Preferred Alternative includes construction truck routes close to the HBLR tracks, to shift traffic away from the majority of the Shades neighborhood.

The noise barrier would not shield views of the staging site for residents of the new development (once completed) on the adjacent hillside. However, the main focus for viewers from these residences would likely be the Manhattan skyline, and these views would not be impeded during construction.

Construction lighting at the Hoboken staging area would be visible during nighttime hours from the Shades community and adjacent residential neighborhoods along the top of the Palisades ridge and on the adjacent hillside with a view of the site. The Project Sponsor will design construction lighting to minimize light pollution affecting these adjacent residential areas, with targeted and downward-directed, shielded lighting to minimize potential light pollution from the site. If the noise wall around the site is 25 feet high, the lighting would not be higher than this wall. In addition, there would be minimal site lighting after construction hours.

### **10.6.3 HUDSON RIVER**

The Preferred Alternative would include a small work zone within the Hudson River for a period of about 13 months. At the closest point, the work zone would be about 600 feet from the Manhattan shoreline. This construction zone would include an in-water work zone enclosed by a cofferdam (i.e., barrier) extending above the waterline, and barges anchored around the barrier from which work would be conducted. Viewed from the shoreline or from nearby boats, this work zone would appear similar to other equipment barges periodically moored along the Manhattan shoreline. Given the large expanse of the Hudson River and the distance from the shore, this temporary construction activity would not notably affect views from New Jersey or Manhattan.

### **10.6.4 NEW YORK**

Construction activities relating to the staging activities and subsequent construction of the fan plant on the Twelfth Avenue site would be visible from the surrounding streets, the two new high-rise developments on Block 675, Hudson River Park, and the High Line over a period of approximately seven years (estimated at 2022 to 2029). The two new high-rise residential buildings on Block 675 would block views of the site from the tower at 15 Hudson Yards. Heavy

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<sup>8</sup> NEPA does not require analysis of shadows. However, the New York *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* calls for analysis of shadows from new structures of 50 feet or taller that may affect parks, natural resources, and sun-sensitive features of historic resources (such as stained glass windows). The *CEQR Technical Manual* does not consider residential buildings as sunlight-sensitive resources, and a shadows analysis is not required for new shadows cast on these structures.

truck activity would also be visible from the surrounding areas. Construction sites can be visually unappealing to sensitive viewers. However, the area around the Twelfth Avenue staging site is currently largely industrial in context. While two parks are located in this area, they are within a larger industrial setting. In the future, in the same period while the Preferred Alternative is under construction, extensive construction will also be occurring in the surrounding area and particularly at the Western Yards site across West 30th Street from the Twelfth Avenue site. Some new residential buildings will be completed and occupied in the Area of Visual Effect during that timeframe, but construction will continue on many other sites nearby.

With the Preferred Alternative, a noise wall would surround the Twelfth Avenue staging site, which would also serve to block views into the site. Taller equipment would be visible above the wall, as would the fan plant structure as it is erected. People on the High Line would have views over the wall into the site. Overall, construction activities may result in an adverse visual impact but this effect would be temporary. Some construction activities would also occur in Hudson River Park as the new tunnel is constructed beneath the park. As discussed in Chapter 3, "Construction Methods and Activities," Section 3.3.6, ground improvement is required in this area, which would result in visible construction activities at the surface over a period of approximately 1.5 years. During this time, equipment would be located in the southern portion of the West 30th Street Heliport. This construction equipment would be visible to people in nearby areas of Hudson River Park. Construction barricades would be installed to block views of the construction zone for park users. Some views of construction activity could distract from the enjoyment of park activities. Construction fencing would be clad with aesthetically attractive or artistically enhanced fabric.

Construction activities for the Tenth Avenue fan plant would occur largely within the building at 450 West 33rd Street and the track area below and would not be visible to the surrounding area.

Construction lighting at the Twelfth Avenue staging area and at Tenth Avenue would be visible during nighttime hours from nearby streets and from nearby residential uses. The Project Sponsor will design construction lighting to minimize light pollution affecting adjacent residential areas, with targeted and downward-directed, shielded lighting, and minimal site lighting after construction hours.

## **10.7 PERMANENT IMPACTS OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**

### **10.7.1 OVERVIEW**

The Preferred Alternative for the Hudson Tunnel Project would include five permanent above-ground components that are evaluated for their visual impact as follows:

- Surface track (approximately 1.7 miles) adjacent to the existing NEC between County Road in Secaucus, New Jersey, and the new portal, through the Meadowlands and under Tonnelle Avenue. Some of the track would be situated on embankment and some would be on a viaduct or bridge structure.
- Portal to the new Hudson River Tunnel in the western face of the Palisades in North Bergen, New Jersey.
- A fan plant on West 18th Street in Hoboken, New Jersey.
- A fan plant on the block between Twelfth Avenue (Route 9A) and Eleventh Avenue, West 29th and West 30th Streets in Manhattan, New York (Block 675).
- Modifications to the existing ventilation louvers at the sidewalk level on the façade of the building at 450 West 33rd Street in New York for the Tenth Avenue fan plant.



## **10.7.2 NEW JERSEY**

### *10.7.2.1 COUNTY ROAD TO TONNELLE AVENUE*

#### *10.7.2.1.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The new surface tracks through the Meadowlands would be located on an embankment and viaduct along the south side of and at the same elevation as the existing NEC. Since the DEIS, design refinements have resulted in a longer section of the Preferred Alternative's surface alignment on a viaduct structure; this structure would be constructed at the same elevation as the previously proposed embankment. An access road for maintenance vehicles would run along the south side of the new tracks where they curve through the wetlands area east of Secaucus Road.

As there are currently NEC tracks on an embankment through this part of the Meadowlands (with a viaduct over Secaucus Road), the new tracks (including the additional section of viaduct) would not introduce a totally new land use or element, but would appear as an expansion of the existing tracks. The tracks would not differ in any substantial way from the appearance of the existing tracks, and therefore would not adversely affect the area's visual character when viewed from nearby or farther away.

#### *10.7.2.1.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

The Preferred Alternative would result in a slightly different view from the trains on the NEC for current and future rail passengers, but would not be visible itself to passengers on the trains. The new surface tracks, retaining walls, and permanent access roadways to the tracks would be visible to workers and visitors to the industrial properties along the NEC the Meadowlands area. These features may also be visible to viewers on the slope or top of the Palisades, but generally would blend in with the existing NEC so as not to be noticeable.

### *10.7.2.2 TONNELLE AVENUE AREA*

#### *10.7.2.2.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The new tunnel approach in a cut below the level of the roadway and the new tunnel portal in the slope of the Palisades would be in a light industrial area along Tonnelle Avenue and would be similar in character to the existing North River Tunnel portal nearby. Key views would be views of the new tracks, the underpass and open cut between Tonnelle Avenue and the western face of the Palisades below Paterson Plank Road, and the new tunnel portal below Paterson Plank Road.

#### *10.7.2.2.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

Motorists along Tonnelle Avenue, and the occasional pedestrian, would have a view of the new rail viaduct and embankment approaching from the west through the Meadowlands and the vacant industrial lot located adjacent to (and below) Tonnelle Avenue. Motorists' and rail passengers' views would be of limited duration and it is unlikely that they would have great awareness or sensitivity to changes in the visual environment. Tracks between Tonnelle Avenue and the face of the Palisades beneath Paterson Plank Road would likely not be clearly visible to motorists from the roadway, given the grade difference. The new tunnel portal would also not be clearly visible from Tonnelle Avenue, but may be slightly discernable, due to the grade difference, distance from Tonnelle Avenue and buildings, structures, and vegetation that would obscure views. The completed Project elements would also not be visible from Paterson Plank Road or Grand Avenue.

### 10.7.2.3 WEEHAWKEN AND HOBOKEN

#### 10.7.2.3.1 Visual Character and Key Views

The new Hoboken fan plant would introduce a new fan plant close to the eastern slope of the Palisades. Based on preliminary design, the fan plant would occupy a footprint of approximately 250 to 300 feet by 150 to 200 feet and would be approximately 65 to 80 feet tall. The shape, size, and design treatment of the fan plant will be further refined during advanced engineering. **Figure 10-15** illustrates the potential massing of the Hoboken fan plant. The Project Sponsor, in cooperation with the other Project Partners, would design the Hoboken fan plant to be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding area and will coordinate with the local community and seek input in determining the appropriate design for the visible portions of the fan plant.

The bulk and scale of the fan plant would be characteristic of a light industrial building. The impact is expected to be neutral in consideration of the current condition of the lot, which is vacant and contains remnants of the previous structures that were demolished.

The scale and form of the Hoboken fan plant would be consistent with the visual character of other light industrial buildings nearby, including low-rise industrial buildings along Willow Avenue to the north and the wastewater treatment plant immediately to the south beyond the HBLR right-of-way.

From the Shades neighborhood and along West 18th Street, residents looking south would be able to view the fan plant, which would be in the foreground with the black cylindrical tanks of the wastewater treatment plant in the background. Workers in the industrial area to the immediate east of the site would also have views of the building.

From areas to the south, views of the fan plant would be obscured by the wastewater treatment plant and other industrial buildings. From the elevated position of the Willow Avenue viaduct, the ventilation facility could be slightly visible from some vantage points.

The Palisades ridge would limit views of the building from the west, with the exception of the new development that is under construction on the hillside adjacent to the site. While the main focus for viewers from this new development (once completed) and from on the top of the Palisades ridge would likely be the Manhattan skyline, the fan plant site would be visible from the new development but only slightly visible from other areas on the ridge, highly obscured by buildings along the east side of Manhattan Avenue and Palisade Avenue in Union City, mature trees, and dense vegetation and brush. Firefighters' Memorial Park offers panoramic views of the Manhattan skyline from a platform atop the Palisades ridge. The ventilation facility would be slightly visible in the foreground from this vantage point.

#### 10.7.2.3.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity

Residents of the local community in Weehawken would be highly sensitive to changes in the visual environment related to the fan plant. The current visual character of the proposed fan plant site is one of a vacant lot surrounded by a chain link fence, which is not highly compatible with residential uses. However, the proposed fan plant site is also located within a group of light industrial structures. The new fan plant would be similar in shape and character to the adjacent light industrial uses. It would also be compatible with the residential character of the neighborhood to the north. Therefore, it would have a neutral aesthetic impact on the residential community that borders on the light industrial community. Ultimately, the design of the exterior of the new fan plant and the design of the surrounding site features, including any landscaping, would affect the aesthetic perception of the site by nearby residents.

Park visitors at Firefighters' Memorial Park would be sensitive to views from this area, but the fan plant would be highly obscured and consistent with the visual character of the adjacent light industrial land uses and would not likely appear exceptional or out of context in its height or its



*Note: Images are illustrative and conceptual,  
and are subject to change as design advances*



form. Visitors at Firefighters' Memorial Park viewing the landscape from the overlook would likely generally focus towards the horizon with a standard cone of vision, facing the Hudson River and Manhattan skyline; should a park visitor look downward toward the fan plant, the new building would not be greatly noticeable, nor would it differ substantially from the surrounding uses and buildings. Its presence would not introduce a negative impact on visual quality.

### **10.7.3 HUDSON RIVER**

There would be no above-ground or above-water-level visual components of the Preferred Alternative in the Hudson River.

### **10.7.4 NEW YORK**

#### *10.7.4.1 WATERFRONT AREA*

##### *10.7.4.1.1 Visual Character and Key Views*

The new Twelfth Avenue fan plant would be a major new element in the landscape, located at or slightly east of Twelfth Avenue between West 29th and West 30th Streets (Manhattan Block 675). The preliminary design for the Hudson Tunnel Project does not identify a specific location, massing, bulk, or height for the Twelfth Avenue fan plant, to retain flexibility for future coordination with the owner of the property (Manhattan Block 675, Lot 1). Two possible locations for the fan plant on Lot 1 would be: a corner site at Twelfth Avenue and West 30th Street, and a midblock site on West 29th Street east of Twelfth Avenue.

The fan plant could potentially be incorporated within a future building constructed at the site as part of a separate development, such as the commercial building that a private developer has proposed for the site, or it could be developed independently on the property. The shape, size, and specific location of the Twelfth Avenue fan plant will be refined during advanced engineering. The Project Sponsor will seek to coordinate the design of the new fan plant with any private development proposed for Lot 1.

In any location on Lot 1, the Twelfth Avenue fan plant may be developed with its tunnel fans oriented vertically or horizontally, and could be freestanding, adjacent to, or integrated with a development built by another party as a separate project. A configuration with the tunnel fans oriented vertically would require a footprint of approximately 120 feet by 130 feet and a maximum height of approximately 150 feet. Figure 2-11 in Chapter 2, "Project Alternatives and Description of the Preferred Alternative" illustrates the potential massing of the Twelfth Avenue fan plant in a vertical configuration. A configuration with the tunnel fans oriented horizontally would result in a lower building with a larger footprint; the specific dimensions would depend on how much equipment is included on each floor of the building. In either of those configurations, the fan plant could be freestanding or adjacent to or integrated with a commercial or residential development built by another party as a separate project. The Project Sponsor will refine the shape, size, and design treatment of the fan plant during advanced engineering.

Regardless of the fan plant's location and configuration, the Project Sponsor, in cooperation with the other Project Partners, will design the Twelfth Avenue fan plant to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area. The Project Sponsor will coordinate with the New York City Department of City Planning (NYCDP) and Manhattan Community Board 4 regarding the design of visible elements of the fan plant during advanced engineering.

As discussed above in Section 10.4, the Area of Visual Effect around the Twelfth Avenue fan plant is currently undergoing substantial redevelopment. By 2033, when the Preferred Alternative would be complete, the block where the fan plant site is located (Block 675) will be developed with two tall towers at Eleventh Avenue. On the large blocks to the north between Eleventh and Twelfth

Avenues, many high-rise buildings and mid- to low-rise buildings will be present as part of the ongoing Hudson Yards development, in addition to the numerous high-rise buildings recently constructed east of Eleventh Avenue. A high-rise commercial building may also be developed on the same lot as the fan plant. Overall, this area of the Far West Side will be transformed into a densely developed neighborhood of large and bulky buildings.

The Twelfth Avenue fan plant would be similar in bulk and height to many of the mid-rise buildings that will be present in the surrounding area and much shorter than the high-rise buildings that will be located on the same block and on the blocks to the north, as well as numerous existing buildings to the south and east, as described above in Section 10.3.3.1.1.

Depending on the disposition of its final design (i.e., what portions of the building are exposed to the street front), the Twelfth Avenue fan plant would be visible from several of vantage points and to several viewer groups. The actual configuration of the structure, its level of exposure to the surrounding streets, and its relationship with the surrounding buildings would contribute to the final determination of the effect of the fan plant on the visual environment.

Views of the new fan plant from the east would be restricted by the presence of large buildings that will be built there in the future. The extent to which the fan plant would be visible from the Hudson River Park and from Twelfth Avenue would depend on the final location and configuration. A fan plant at the corner of Twelfth Avenue and West 30th Street would generally be more visually prominent due to its location along a major arterial roadway and across the street from two public parks. A fan plant at this location could interfere with vistas of Hudson River Park and the Hudson River beyond for viewers on the High Line; however, since most of the viewers on the High Line would be walking rather than sitting, any interference with these vistas would be limited. A midblock fan plant on West 29th Street east of Twelfth Avenue would preserve these views and would generally be less visually prominent due to its location away from Twelfth Avenue. Overall, the visual prominence of the fan plant would be dependent on the design of any subsequent private development project undertaken on the fan plant site.

The Twelfth Avenue fan plant would have a neutral to slightly adverse effect on the visual quality of the area. Once other surrounding buildings are completed, the effect of the facility on the visual quality of the area would be neutral to slightly adverse, depending upon the disposition of the final design. Plans for the ongoing Hudson Yards development include buildings that are far taller than the proposed fan plant (the tallest of which is about 1,300 feet high) and therefore the facility would not be out of context with the bulk or height of the surrounding buildings. The fan plant would be consistent with the neighborhood character of the existing industrial area and with the future planned developments. Much of the character of the facility can be shaped in final design to be consistent with the architectural treatment and facade typical of the area.

#### *10.7.4.1.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity*

The ventilation facility may be visible from nearby areas of Hudson River Park, although some views may be obscured by plantings in the median of Twelfth Avenue. Visitors to Hudson River Park would be moderately sensitive to changes in the visual environment across from the park. Views of the fan plant would exist from parts of the High Line that are in close proximity to the ventilation facility. Pedestrians walking along Twelfth Avenue would be able to see the facility and may be moderately sensitive to its effect. Motorists along Twelfth Avenue and on the streets surrounding who would be able to observe the ventilation facility from the roadway would be minimally sensitive to visual effects.



## 10.7.4.2 TENTH AVENUE AREA

### 10.7.4.2.1 Visual Character and Key Views

The new Tenth Avenue fan plant is proposed for a location beneath the building at 450 West 33rd Street (on Tenth Avenue between 31st and 33rd Streets). This building currently has ventilation louvers at street-level along its Tenth Avenue façade, which may be replaced with different louvers as part of the Preferred Alternative. This would not result in a notable visible change.

### 10.7.4.2.2 Affected Population and Viewer Sensitivity

If new louvers are placed on the Tenth Avenue façade of 450 West 33rd Street, pedestrians on the street may notice the change, but the change would not be substantive.

## 10.8 MEASURES TO AVOID, MINIMIZE, AND MITIGATE IMPACTS

The Project Sponsor will implement a number of measures to avoid or minimize adverse impacts related to visual and aesthetic considerations. The lead Federal agency will be responsible for ensuring that the Project Sponsor implements these measures, which will be identified in the ROD. These will include the following:

- The Hoboken staging site will have a temporary noise barrier up to 25 feet high along the north, west, and east sides of the site to buffer the nearby residential neighborhood on the north side of West 18th Street from construction noise (see Chapter 12A, “Noise,” Section 12A.9). The wall will be set back from West 18th Street by about 10 feet, to allow enough room for parking on the south side of the street and landscaping. The Project Sponsor will determine the height of the noise wall at the Hoboken staging area in consultation with representatives of the local community and will work with the local community to maintain the wall in an attractive visual condition. The Project Sponsor will landscape the area in front of the temporary noise wall during the construction period to soften views of the wall.
- For construction sites in New York, site enclosures or temporary noise barriers will block views into the construction sites (see Chapter 12A, “Noise,” Section 12A.9). At the cut-and-cover construction site at Tenth Avenue, there will be temporary barriers along the curbside to block views of the construction area from the surrounding neighborhood. The Project Sponsor will work with the local community to maintain the walls in an attractive visual condition.
- Construction fencing will be clad with aesthetically attractive or artistically enhanced fabric.
- At all construction sites, the Project Sponsor will design construction lighting to minimize light pollution affecting adjacent residential areas, with targeted and downward-directed, shielded lighting, and minimal site lighting after construction hours. At the Hoboken staging area, if a 25-foot-high noise wall is constructed, the lighting will be no higher than that temporary barrier.
- The Project Sponsor, in cooperation with the other Project Partners, will design the Hoboken fan plant and surrounding site to be compatible with the visual character of the surrounding area. Such elements as the façade of the structure within the site, planting, pavement, and fencing will be designed in a manner that is sensitive to the neighboring residential community. The Project Sponsor will coordinate with the local community and seek input in determining the appropriate design for the visible portions of the fan plant.
- The Project Sponsor, in cooperation with the other Project Partners, will design the Twelfth Avenue fan plant to be compatible with the character of the surrounding area and will coordinate with NYCDOP and Manhattan Community Board 4 regarding the visible elements of the fan plant. \*