Chapter 1: Project Description

A. INTRODUCTION

Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts, Inc. (the "Applicant") (LCPA) is seeking New York City and State funding (the "Proposed Actions") to facilitate redevelopment of the Damrosch Park portion of the Lincoln Center campus, as well as additional circulation, streetscape and façade improvements along Amsterdam Avenue (collectively, the "Proposed Project"). Damrosch Park is a public open space located at the corner of West 62nd Street and Amsterdam Avenue in Manhattan Community District 7 (Block 1134, Lot 10 and portion of Lots 1 and 25) (the "Project Site") (see **Figures 1-1 and 1-2**).

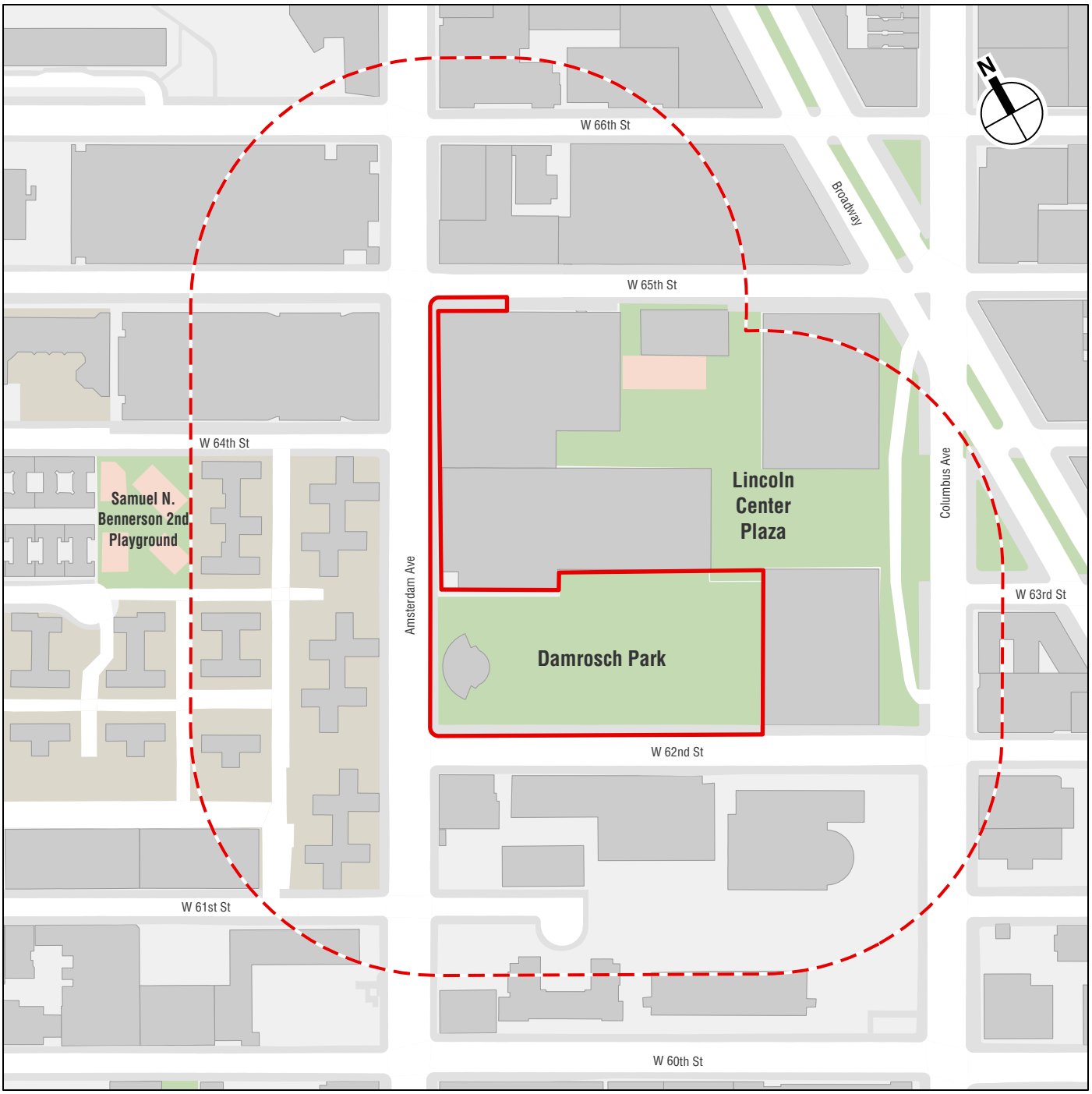
The Proposed Project would include the redevelopment of the approximately 2.4-acre Damrosch Park and replacement of the existing Guggenheim Bandshell with a newly improved and modernized outdoor performance venue. The Proposed Project would reconfigure the layout of the Park, moving the performance venue to the eastern portion of Damrosch Park, allowing for greater connectivity and flow throughout the open space and the broader Lincoln Center campus and surrounding neighborhood. In addition to the redesign of Damrosch Park and new performance venue, the Proposed Project would include sidewalk improvements on the east side of Amsterdam Avenue between West 62nd Street and West 65th Street, the north side of West 62nd Street between Columbus Avenue and Amsterdam Avenue, new seating at the base of the staircase at West 65th Street, and improvements to the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' (NYPLPA) entrance at Amsterdam Avenue.

The proposed funding is a discretionary action subject to environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR). The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks) will serve as the lead agency for the environmental review. The Dormitory Authority State of New York (DASNY), the Trust for Cultural Resources for the City of New York, and the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA) are expected to provide State and City funding and are involved agencies for the project's coordinated environmental review.

B. PROJECT BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

The concept of the Lincoln Center campus was initiated by John D. Rockefeller III, who envisioned a cultural center of unprecedented scale where "the arts are not for the privileged few, but for the many." To this day, LCPA remains committed to this ideal and to building a future where all New Yorkers and visitors from around the world feel welcome.

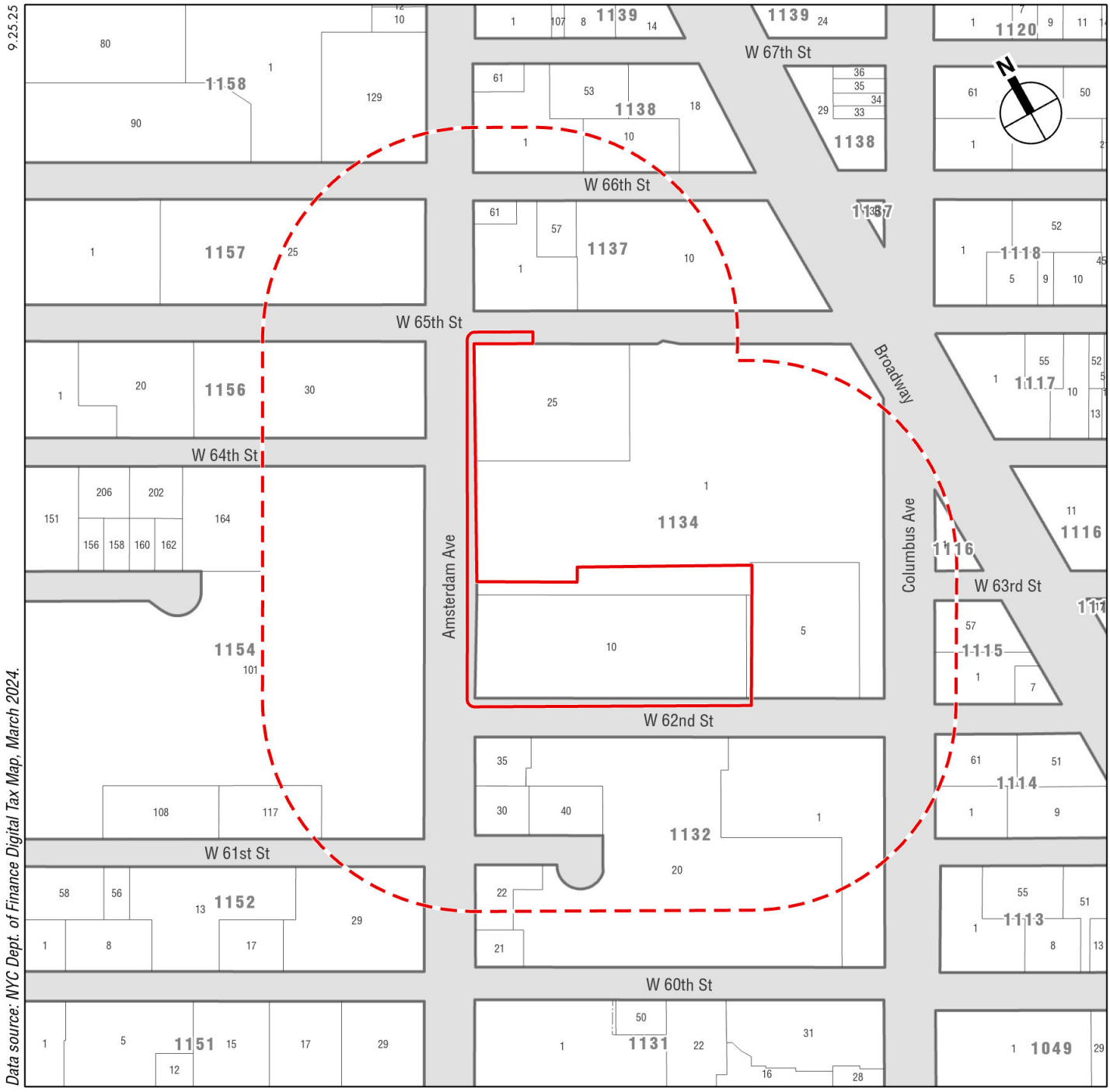
The Lincoln Center campus was originally developed as part of an "urban renewal" project in the 1950s conceived of by Parks Commissioner Robert Moses. The Lincoln Square Redevelopment Project razed a densely populated and mostly residential neighborhood, displacing the thousands who lived there to make way for New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Amsterdam Houses, Lincoln Center, Fordham University, and the Lincoln Towers. The area previously known as San Juan Hill and the broader Lincoln Square area was home to an ethnically diverse and largely working-class community and a hub of artistic creativity. The campus was designed and constructed between 1955 and 1972. Damrosch Park and the Guggenheim Bandshell were constructed by NYC Parks and designed by the landscape architecture firm Darling, Innocenti and



Project Location

LINCOLN CENTER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Figure 1-1



Tax Map

LINCOLN CENTER ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Figure 1-2

Webel in 1969. The Park's design is modernist and rectilinear, influenced by landscape architect Dan Kiley's geometric and gridded approach to the rest of the campus's historic open spaces. Today, the Park generally maintains Kiley's original design intent, although many of the infrastructural systems are well beyond their useful life.

Presently, Damrosch Park and NYPLPA are critical spaces for free programming and public access. Damrosch Park is located on New York City mapped public parkland, under NYC Parks jurisdiction and maintained and operated by LCPA. LCPA has hosted outdoor performances in the Park since its opening in 1969, and all LCPA performances in the Park have been free or choose-what-you-pay since 2020.

As described in more detail below under "Project Purpose and Need," LCPA has evolved over time to welcome new art forms and an increased number of visitors from a range of backgrounds. However, the historic design of the Park turns its back to the neighbors directly across Amsterdam Avenue at NYCHA Amsterdam Houses, with a 10-foot-tall wall and the back of the Guggenheim Bandshell. In order for Damrosch Park to serve as a site for world-class performances and allow for passive recreation by the public, the space is in need of major improvements, including bringing down the wall on Amsterdam Avenue. The Park has limited data/power access; is facing water infiltration challenges; has limited accessible artist accommodations; and has an overall lack of usable green space. The Proposed Project seeks to transform Damrosch Park by prioritizing places for community use and relaxation, improving pedestrian circulation from surrounding streets, and seamlessly connecting the open space to the rest of the campus, all while accounting for the historical and architectural context of the surrounding area.

In June 2023, LCPA publicly launched an ambitious participatory process to reimagine the Amsterdam Avenue side of campus, including Damrosch Park. The process has engaged Lincoln Center's constituents, local neighbors, NYCHA residents, community groups, and all New Yorkers in discussion about how the campus could be more welcoming and eliminate barriers—visual, physical and otherwise. The Project's design team—including Hood Design Studio (landscape architect), Weiss Manfredi (design architect), and Moody Nolan (architect-of-record)—has been informed and guided by the campus' history, and by feedback from more than 6,200 interactions with neighbors, advocates, community groups, faith-based organizations, nearby educational institutions, elected officials, civic leaders, and other New York City residents. Participants have shared their ideas, interests, questions, and feedback through in-person and online surveys and more than 50 different community engagement events, including interactive pop-ups, workshops, community gatherings, interviews, and focus groups.

As part of the overall participatory process, LCPA has also engaged with local preservation advocates including Landmark West!, Docomomo, and Municipal Arts Society, as well as New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to understand the character-defining features of the historic campus' architecture and landscape architecture that should inform the redesign while advancing the overall project goals.

C. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

PROJECT SITE

The Lincoln Center campus occupies approximately 16.3 acres on Manhattan's Upper West Side, in Manhattan Community District 7 within the Lincoln Square neighborhood. It is generally bounded by West 66th Street to the north, Broadway/Columbus Avenue to the east, West 62nd Street to the south, and Amsterdam Avenue to the west, and is bisected by the West 65th Street corridor.

The Project Site includes an approximately 2.4-acre park on a portion of the Lincoln Center campus, along with a portion of the campus running along Amsterdam Avenue between West 63rd Street and West 65th Street. The Project Site is bounded by West 65th Street to the north, Amsterdam Avenue to the west, West 62nd Street to the south, and the David H. Koch Theater to the east. The Amsterdam Avenue frontage along the NYPLPA and the Metropolitan Opera House also comprise the Project Site. Damrosch Park is mapped as a park, while the remaining portion of the Project Site on the Lincoln Center campus is mapped within a C4-7 zoning district and is also located within the Special Lincoln Square District (L).

The existing Damrosch Park site currently has an acoustic bandshell (the Guggenheim Bandshell) with support spaces below-grade, an approximately 2,400-seat audience capacity for outdoor performances, and an underutilized passive park area. In order to host LCPA's free outdoor performances, LCPA must load-in all performance equipment, including the main stage, each year. The Park, therefore, becomes inaccessible to the public for a four-week load-in period while the performance equipment is set up in front of the Guggenheim Bandshell and a four-week break down period after the summer series concludes. Further, individuals cannot use the rest of the Park during performances due to access and security limitations. As a passive park, there are limited places for people to gather under shade. Currently, the Park includes a small tree grove in the eastern portion of the Park with some shaded benches and seating. The majority of the Park consists of concrete pavement with some plantings. Damrosch Park is largely consistent with its original 1969 configuration, including retaining its rectilinear planning (e.g., dance floor, planters) and its more expressive elements (e.g., the Guggenheim Bandshell and wavy patterned terrazzo dance floor), and some other original paving and planter materials. The Park is located within the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Historic District that has been determined State/National Register-eligible (S/NR-eligible) by OPRHP. The performance and audience areas are mostly empty when not used for events. Additionally, there is notable water damage throughout the concrete slab with penetration points into the below grade parking concourse. There is considerable water leakage at these points, among other areas.

Along Amsterdam Avenue is an existing retaining wall that serves as the western edge of Lincoln Center's campus and conceals many back-of-house areas for the campus. The steep topographic drop from West 62nd Street to West 64th Street provides vertical clearance for vehicles to access the concourse level parking garages. Just as David Geffen Hall and the David H. Koch Theater place their backs to the street, so too does the Metropolitan Opera House. In similar fashion, the Guggenheim Bandshell at Damrosch Park turns its back to the street. Farther north, NYPLPA conceals many important programmatic spaces behind the 20-foot-tall wall at the West 65th Street corner of Amsterdam Avenue: an auditorium, galleries, and archival storage. For these reasons, Amsterdam Avenue serves as the side for back-of-house services and is largely inaccessible for the public to enter the Lincoln Center campus. There are limited tree plantings along the eastern side of Amsterdam Avenue (the west side of the Lincoln Center campus). There is a smaller entrance to NYPLPA at street level for the Dorothy and Lewis B. Cullman Center along Amsterdam Avenue; however, the main entrances are at the elevated corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue and from Hearst Plaza within the Lincoln Center campus.

SURROUNDING AREA

The area surrounding the Project Site is within the Lincoln Square neighborhood in Manhattan, which contains a mix of residential and community facility uses, with local retail corridors along Broadway. The rest of the superblock on which the Project Site is located contains other buildings occupied by LCPA and other Lincoln Center constituents, including the Metropolitan Opera House, David H. Koch Theater, and David Geffen Hall. There are a number of public plazas and open space areas, such as Josie Robertson Plaza~~Damrosch Park~~, situated throughout the campus.

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) 66th Street – Lincoln Center subway station is located on the northeast corner of the campus. Open spaces within 400 feet of the Project Site

include Dante Park between Broadway, Columbus Avenue, and West 63rd Street. Central Park is located two blocks east of the Project Site along Central Park West. A newly renovated playground, Samuel N. Bennerson 2nd Playground, is located on the Amsterdam Houses residential campus along West 64th Street. The playground was reconstructed in 2017 and includes basketball courts, playgrounds, spray showers, an adult fitness area, and benches for the community.

The NYCHA development, Amsterdam Houses, located west of the Project Site across Amsterdam Avenue, contains 13 buildings and over 1,000 units. There are several other multifamily residential towers surrounding the Project Site with commercial uses below. The surrounding area is zoned with higher density residential areas, allowing for buildings 12 stories and above.

Immediately south of the Lincoln Center campus is the Fordham University campus, which occupies most of the superblock south of West 62nd Street between Amsterdam Avenue and Columbus Avenue. The university campus is a largely enclosed campus with four academic buildings and one residential hall for students, and a quadrangle courtyard. A number of other academic institutions are located throughout the study area and west of Amsterdam Avenue, including LaGuardia High School and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex, which includes five high schools. Public School (P.S.) 452 is an elementary school serving pre-kindergarten through 5th Grade and is located at 210 West 61st Street.

As previously described, the area is served by the MTA No. 1 train line, which has a station at 66th Street and Broadway, east of the Project Site. MTA bus service is provided within the area along West 65th and West 66th Streets (M66), Broadway (M5, M7, M10, M20, M104, BxM2) and Columbus Avenue (M11).

D. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project consists of the redesign and reconfiguration of Damrosch Park, including a new permanent performance venue and additional flexible performance spaces, as well as improvements along Amsterdam Avenue, such as sidewalk improvements, new seating at the base of the staircase on the corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue, and minor modifications to the façade of the NYPLPA (see **Figure 1-3**). The Proposed Project would introduce an approximately 10,500-gsf performance venue to replace the existing Guggenheim Bandshell.

Damrosch Park would be reconfigured to accommodate the relocation of the performance venue to the southeast corner of the Park. The Proposed Project would replace the existing bandshell with a newly designed, world-class performance venue in the southeast corner of the Park (see **Figure 1-4**). The redesigned performance venue and surrounding pavilion and support space would total approximately 10,500 gsf. The main stage would be designed to include accessible back-of-house spaces (i.e., artist support spaces, storage, audiovisuals, etc.) and to accommodate year-round performances. A flat plaza and tiered seating in front of the stage would provide space for approximately 2,000 seats during events and would also serve as a public open space during non-performance times. The plaza would accommodate audience seats radially configured from the stage on the flat seats at the plaza level with additional seats in the Overlook, an elevated section behind the plaza and described in greater detail below. While the Proposed Project would slightly reduce the overall number of seats from the existing condition, the sightlines for the new seating area would be an improvement to the existing conditions; the last row of audience seating would be 66 feet closer to the stage than in the existing configuration. There is no anticipated change in frequency of events held at Damrosch Park as a result of the Proposed Project.

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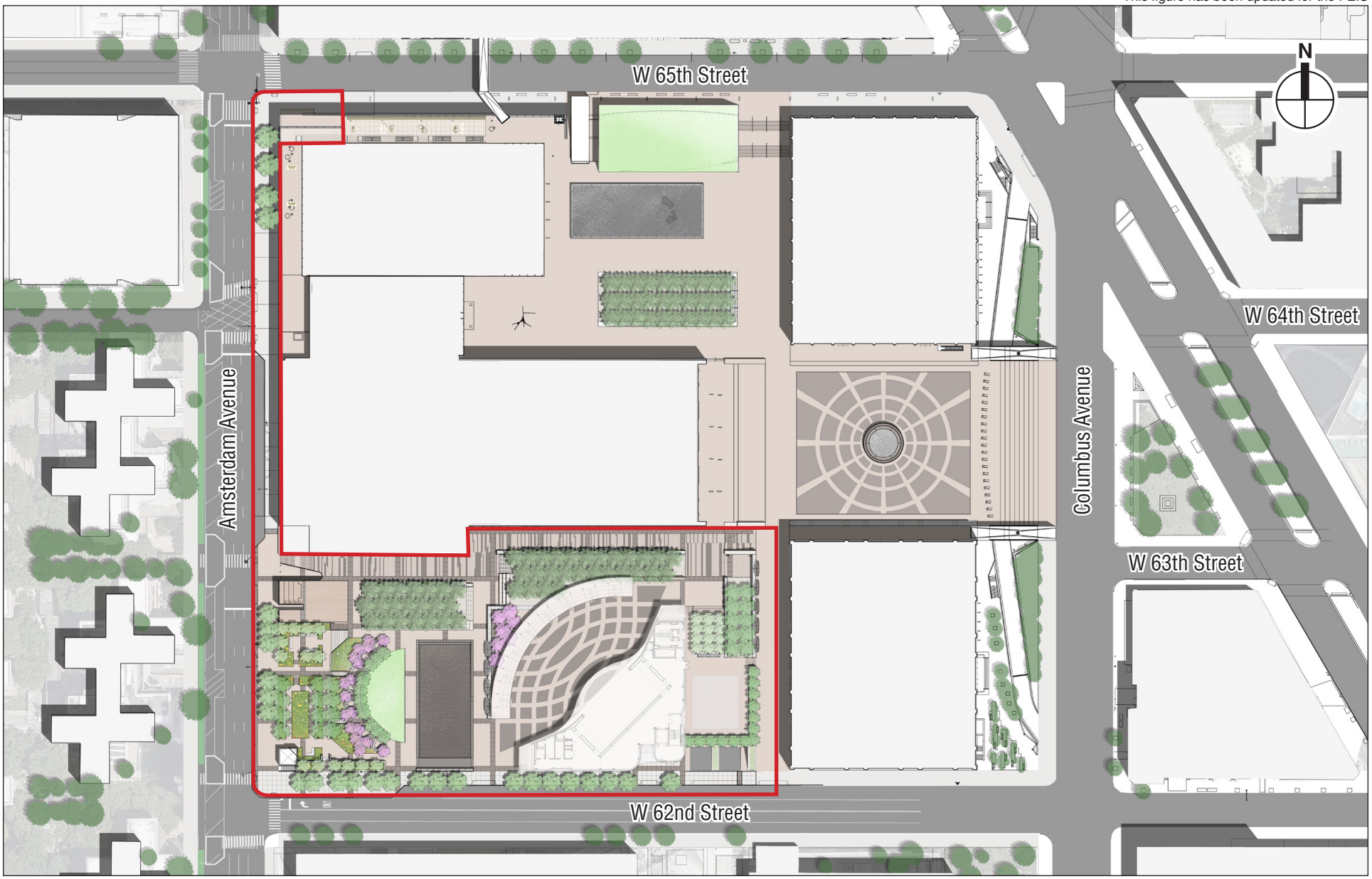

Project Site

NOTE: FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Proposed Site Plan

Figure 1-3



NOTE: FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Proposed Rendering

The Deck and Artists' Grove, which would provide temporary food and beverage facilities and movable seating, would be situated east of the Stage, above the garage entrance along West 62nd Street. The Proposed Project would also provide year-round public amenities for park-goers, including public restrooms on the east side of the Park, separate from the theater building.

Additionally, the Overlook would serve to provide shaded seating and space for bars, refreshments, and casual seating during performances. In the non-performance season, the Overlook would function as a site landscape element for spontaneous daily activities in the Park, while offering elevated views of the Fountain, Lawn, and East and West Tree Groves (see **Figure 1-5**).

The Proposed Project integrates smaller performance spaces throughout the park, including the Lawn and Fountain to the west of the performance venue. The Fountain would be a main feature of the new Park and was one of the most common requests from the community.

The Proposed Project would increase public use of the Park, as Damrosch Park today is currently greatly underutilized. It would also alter the circulation of Damrosch Park, allowing for greater connectivity between the surrounding neighborhood and the Lincoln Center campus. The Proposed Project would remove most of the existing wall surrounding Damrosch Park, including the wall along Amsterdam Avenue, and would incorporate landscaped steps from the street level to the plaza level. The Proposed Project would increase the access points to Damrosch Park, with new entrances along Amsterdam Avenue and 62nd Street. Along Amsterdam Avenue, three gardens would create a path from street level to plaza level and allow for the public to enter Damrosch Park from Amsterdam Avenue (see **Figure 1-6**). The gardens would be distinct with planting and topography. Additionally, an Art Walk would provide direct access for pedestrians from Amsterdam Avenue to the Josie Robertson Plaza along the northern edge of Damrosch Park. LCPA is developing preliminary concepts that pay homage to the history of the San Juan Hill neighborhood and arts community. In addition to the Gardens, there would be a Lifted Terrace, accessible via a set of stairs along Amsterdam Avenue to the upper plaza level or via an accessible route next to the Lawn. The Lifted Terrace would cantilever over the garage and concourse entrance below, along Amsterdam Avenue. The Lifted Terrace would provide additional seating and overlook the Dance Floor within the Park.

In addition to the changes made within Damrosch Park, the Proposed Project would include streetscape and façade improvements along Amsterdam Avenue. The Proposed Project would widen the sidewalk along Amsterdam Avenue by approximately 13 feet, creating additional space for pedestrians. The sidewalk expansion would keep the existing bus stop in its current location, while extending the sidewalk along that area. It would also provide new benches and seating opportunities, along with tree plantings along the avenue. The northeast corner of Amsterdam Avenue and West 62nd Street and southeast corner of Amsterdam Avenue and West 65th Street would be expanded to allow for additional pedestrian circulation and refuge. Additionally, there would be a relocation of two existing curb cuts along the north side of West 62nd Street to enable van and small truck deliveries for loading activity into the Park, as well as new tree pits along the sidewalk.

The Proposed Project would also provide expanded seating options at the base of the staircase at NYPLPA at the corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. This would open up the connection between the campus and the street level. The Proposed Project would also include a façade treatment to the NYPLPA along Amsterdam Avenue, creating a greater street presence for the NYPLPA along Amsterdam Avenue. The removable, reflective panels added to the West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue NYPLPA corner would improve the streetscape and pedestrian experience by creating a more dynamic and welcoming entrance to the Lincoln Center campus rather than the stark corner that exists.



NOTE: FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Proposed Rendering

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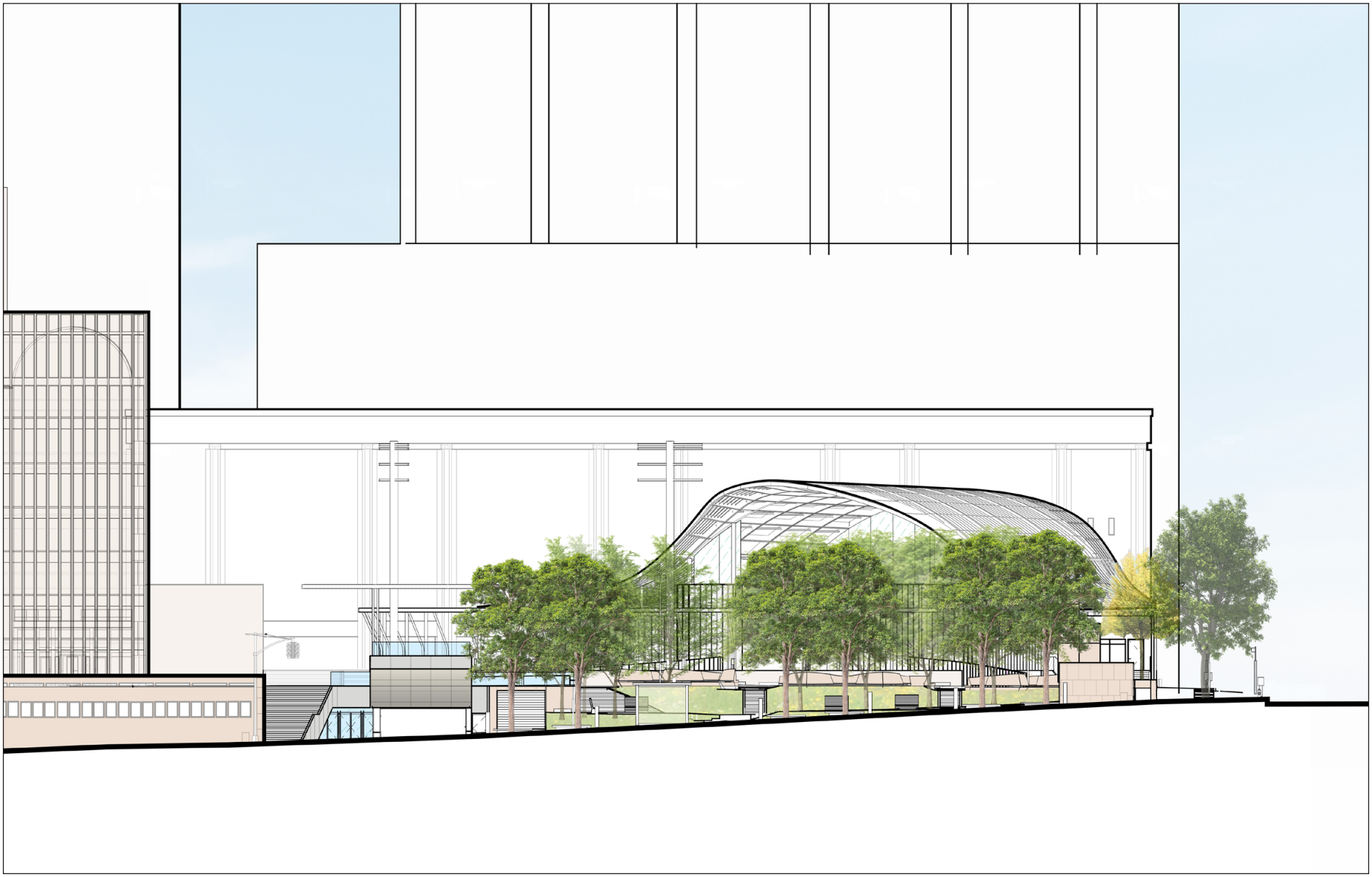

NOTE: FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

Proposed Elevation

Lastly, the Proposed Project would result in a reduction of up to 40 parking spaces to adjust the capacity of the parking garage for current usage trends and allow for wider concourse-level walkways underground between Amsterdam Avenue and the subway at Columbus Avenue.

E. PROPOSED ACTIONS AND OTHER APPROVALS

The Proposed Project is seeking funding through New York City and State to support its construction. This funding, which will be disbursed through DASNY on behalf of the State and DCLA on behalf of New York City, is a discretionary action subject to environmental review; NYC Parks is serving as the lead agency for the project's environmental review. The Proposed Project is also intending to pursue funding through the Trust for Cultural Resources of the City of New York.

In addition to City and State funding, the Applicant is seeking approvals from the agencies identified below. These approvals are not discretionary actions subject to CEQR, but such agencies will be consulted through the CEQR process:

1. NYC Parks and DCLA approval of the Damrosch Park redesign and related below grade work, and the circulation, streetscape and façade improvements along Amsterdam Avenue as required under an existing License Agreement and the Mapping Agreement;
2. Public Design Commission approval of the Damrosch Park redesign and circulation, streetscape and façade improvements along Amsterdam Avenue;
3. New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) approval of the sidewalk improvements;
4. New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)/New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) review of Proposed Project as required for DASNY funding and in accordance with a 2022 Letter of Resolution;
5. Administrative approval of the Director of the Department of City Planning (DCP) to modify Design Controls previously established for the West 65th Street frontage of the Project Site (in connection with LCPA's 65th Street Project that was approved by DCP in 2005 and 2008 and memorialized in and attached to a Mapping Agreement between LCPA and the City, dated May 5, 2008) to reflect the updated design of the corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue; and
6. DCP approval of the final design drawings for the West 65th Street corner to ensure "substantial compliance" with the modified Design Controls, as such term is defined in the Mapping Agreement.

F. PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

The Applicant undertook an ambitious participatory planning process engaging local community members and stakeholders across New York City to reimagine the Amsterdam Avenue side of the Lincoln Center campus. The Applicant is seeking to redevelop the western portion of the Lincoln Center campus to introduce improved performance experiences and create a more accessible, welcoming, and inclusive space. The Guggenheim Bandshell at Damrosch Park is currently used to host a number of outdoor arts programming events throughout the year. The Proposed Project would enhance the Park and improve logistics and usage of the space for more performances and recreation. The redesigned park space and performance venue would allow for a wider range of users and a more integrated network with the campus and surrounding communities along Amsterdam Avenue.

Overall, the purpose of the Proposed Project is to modernize and improve Damrosch Park to allow the Applicant to fulfill its mission of world-class performing arts programming accessible to a broad audience. Specifically, the Proposed Project seeks to:

- Physically transform Lincoln Center's Amsterdam Avenue side by removing the fortress-like wall and welcome communities approaching from the west
- Create world-class performance areas in Damrosch Park that meet artists' and audiences' needs
- Design Damrosch Park as a park not a plaza, in contrast to the other open spaces on campus
- Establish a vibrant community park that better serves close neighbors, including residents of New York City Housing Authority campuses at Amsterdam Houses and Addition, and students at LaGuardia High School of Music and Performing Arts and the five high schools at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Educational Complex
- Celebrate the history and public memory of San Juan Hill and historic Lincoln Square
- Respect the architecture and landscape architecture iconic to Lincoln Center campus

In addition to the Proposed Project's primary goals, a significant priority is also to upgrade aging infrastructure. The Proposed Actions would allow for new and improved heating and cooling systems, power and data distribution, public and back-of-house restroom facilities, and greater access for artists, audiences, and community members. The redeveloped park space and performance venue would be designed to increase efficiency and meet contemporary sustainability standards. The Proposed Project would allow LCPA to enhance free outdoor programming at the newly designed performance venue.

G. ANALYSIS FRAMEWORK

The 2021 *CEQR Technical Manual* will serve as a guide on the methodologies and impact criteria for evaluating the Proposed Project's potential environmental effects. In disclosing impacts, this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) considers the Proposed Project's potential adverse impacts on the environmental setting. It is anticipated that the Proposed Project, if approved, would be built and operational by 2028. Consequently, the environmental setting for comparison is not the current environment, but the future environment in which the project is operational. Therefore, the technical analyses and consideration of alternatives includes descriptions of existing conditions, conditions in the future without the Proposed Project (the No Action condition), and conditions in the future with the Proposed Project (the With Action condition). The incremental difference between the With Action and No Action conditions is therefore the basis for evaluating the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Project.

As detailed in the EAS, and per CEQR guideline thresholds, the following technical areas have been screened out and will not be analyzed in the EIS: socioeconomic conditions; community facilities; shadows; natural resources; water and sewer infrastructure; solid waste and sanitation services; energy; air quality; greenhouse gas emissions and climate change; and noise.

BUILD YEAR

For the purposes of the environmental review, it is assumed that the Proposed Project would start construction in 2026. Construction of the new outdoor performing arts venue is expected to be substantially complete and operational in 2028 in anticipation of the "Summer for the City" program. Therefore, a future build year of 2028 will be examined to assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Project.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT (NO ACTION CONDITION)

The future without the Proposed Project (the "No Action" condition) describes the future baseline against which the changes that are expected to result from the Proposed Project are compared. The Proposed Project has a build year of 2028. Absent the Proposed Actions, the Project Site would remain largely unchanged after major structural and infrastructure upgrades are

implemented. The 2.4-acre footprint of the Park would remain as is and the Guggenheim Bandshell would stay in its current location within the Park. However, many of the components of Damrosch Park, such as paving, seating, and landscaping, would be temporarily removed to allow for maintenance and waterproofing, resulting in abatements to the whole Park, before being restored in-kind. The Lincoln Center campus would continue to lack access points from Amsterdam Avenue and there would be no improvements to the sidewalk or to the NYPLPA entrance at the corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Under the No Action condition, the purpose and need of the Proposed Project would not be met and the reuse and redevelopment of the Project Site would not occur and therefore the No Action condition would not create a cohesive and connected Lincoln Center campus within the broader Lincoln Square neighborhood. Although there would be necessary maintenance improvements to Damrosch Park, the campus would largely remain unchanged. In addition, no new developments are planned within the surrounding neighborhood.

THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT (WITH ACTION CONDITION)

As described in more detail above, in the future with the Proposed Project (the "With Action" condition) by 2028, the Project Site would be developed with a new outdoor performing arts venue and a redesigned Damrosch Park. In addition to the improved and modernized performance venue, the Proposed Project would include sidewalk improvements, new seating at the base of the staircase at West 65th Street, and modifications to the NYPLPA's Amsterdam Avenue entrance. The net change or incremental development assessed in the EIS is the difference between the With Action and No Action conditions, which forms the baseline for environmental analyses. This EIS assesses the potential effects of removing the Guggenheim Bandshell and altering the amount and circulation of publicly accessible open space on the Lincoln Center campus. The overall footprint of the Park would remain unchanged, continuing to provide 2.4 acres of park space to the public in the future with the Proposed Project.

H. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

New York City has formulated an environmental review process, CEQR, pursuant to the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and its implementing regulations (Part 617 of 6 New York Codes, Rules, and Regulations). The City's CEQR rules are found in Executive Order 91 of 1977 and subsequent rules and procedures adopted in 1991 (62 Rules of the City of New York, Chapter 5). CEQR's mandate is to strike a balance between social and economic goals and concerns about the environment. Agencies undertaking, funding, or approving actions interject environmental considerations into their discretionary decisions by taking a "hard look" at the environmental consequences of each of those actions so that all potential significant environmental impacts of each action are fully disclosed, alternatives that reduce or eliminate such impacts are considered, and appropriate, practicable measures to reduce or eliminate such impacts are adopted.

The CEQR process begins with selection of a "lead agency" for the review. The lead agency is generally the governmental agency which is most responsible for the decisions to be made on a proposed action and which is also capable of conducting the environmental review. As described above, NYC Parks is the lead agency for the Proposed Project.

NYC Parks' first charge as lead agency was to determine whether the Proposed Project might have a significant adverse impact on the environment. To make this determination, an environmental assessment statement (EAS) was prepared. Based on its review of the EAS, NYC Parks determined that the Proposed Project has the potential to result in significant environmental impacts and, therefore, pursuant to SEQRA/CEQR procedures, NYC Parks issued a Positive Declaration on May 27, 2025, requiring that an EIS be prepared in conformance with all applicable

laws and regulations, including the SEQRA, New York City's Executive Order No. 91, CEQR regulations (August 24, 1977), and the guidelines of the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

On May 27, 2025, the EAS and Draft Scope of Work for the EIS were made available to the general public, public agencies, and other interested groups, and a public scoping meeting was held on June 26, 2025, at 5:00 PM. To allow for broad public participation options, the public scoping meeting was held remotely. Written comments on the Draft Scope of Work were accepted through July 7, 2025, and all oral comments received at the meeting as well as submitted written comments were considered by the lead agency and summarized in the Final Scope of Work, dated October 29, 2025.

The Draft EIS ~~will be~~was subject to public review, in accordance with CEQR and SEQRA procedures, with a public hearing and a period for public comment. A public hearing ~~will be~~was held on the Draft EIS on December 10, 2025 to afford all interested parties the opportunity to submit oral comments. Written comments ~~will be~~were accepted ~~for ten days~~ following the public hearing until 5:00 PM on January 5, 2026. At the close of the public review period, the~~a~~ Final EIS ~~will be~~was prepared that responded~~s~~ to all substantive comments made on the Draft EIS, along with any revisions to the technical analyses necessary to respond to those comments. The Final EIS ~~will be~~is used by the decision makers to evaluate SEQRA/CEQR findings, which address project impacts and proposed mitigation measures, in deciding whether to approve the requested discretionary actions, with or without modifications. ✷