# Chapter 3: Open Space

## A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter examines the potential for the Proposed Project to impact open space resources on the Project Site (see **Figure 3-1**). The analysis presents existing conditions, evaluates changes that are expected independent of the Proposed Project through the 2028 analysis year, and identifies and addresses any potential significant adverse impacts. Open space is defined in the 2021 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* as publicly accessible, publicly or privately owned land that operates or is available for leisure, play, or sport, or serves to protect or enhance the natural environment. An open space assessment should be conducted if a project would have a direct effect on open space, such as eliminating or altering a public open space, or an indirect effect, such as when a substantial new population could place added demand on an area's open spaces.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Proposed Project would facilitate 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 and West 65th Streets, 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.

### PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

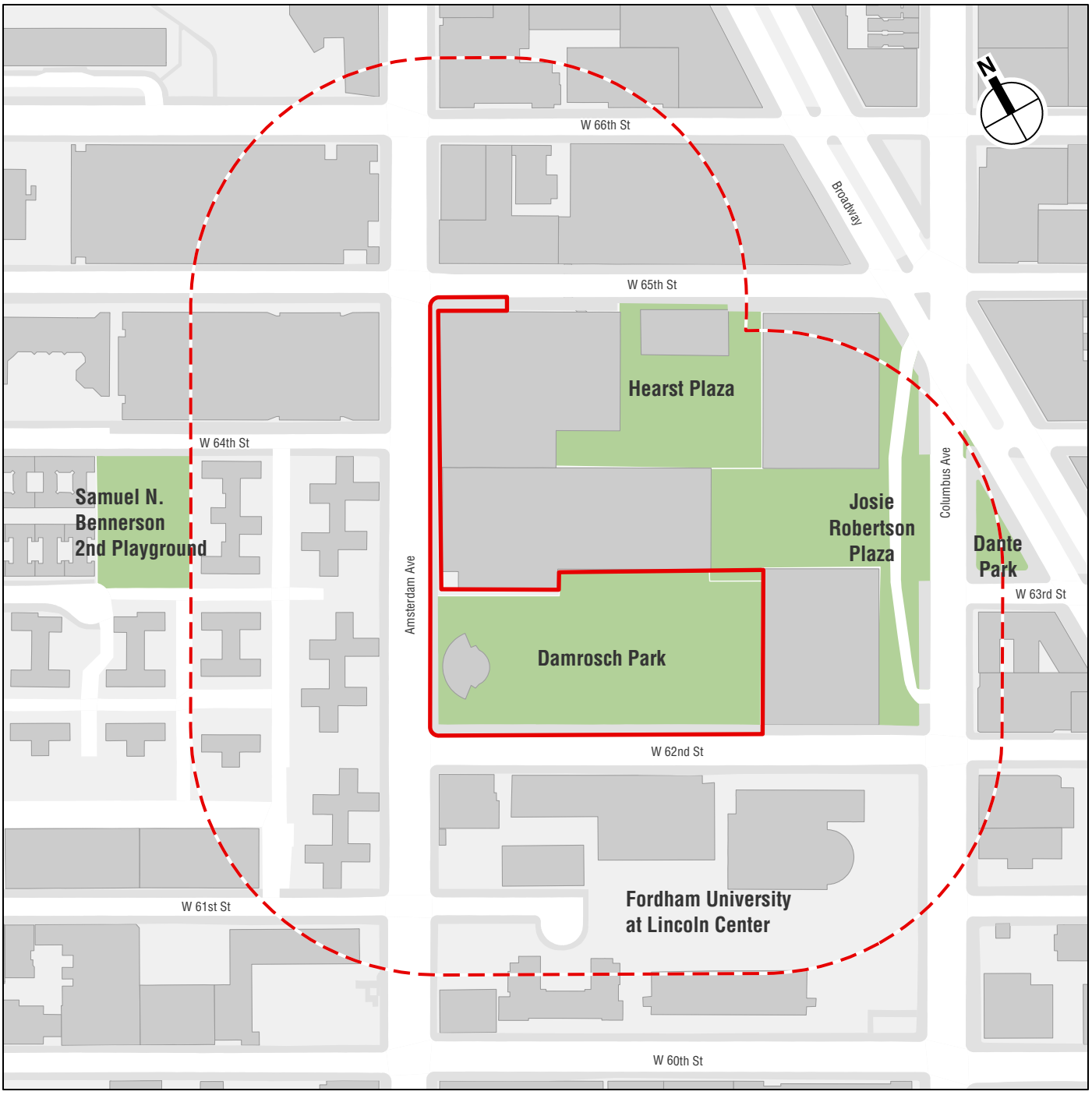
This analysis concludes that the Proposed Project would not result in any potential significant adverse impacts to or conflicts with open space resources on the Project Site or in the surrounding study area. The Proposed Project would not alter the overall acreage of the existing Damrosch Park, although it would redesign the Park layout and improve the user experience. The Proposed Project would enhance the open space resource and allow for greater connection with the surrounding campus and neighborhood. The Proposed Project would not increase the residential or worker population and therefore would not result in any indirect impacts to existing open spaces. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to open space.

## B. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for open space assessments includes a consideration of direct and indirect effects of a proposed project, as described below.

### DIRECT EFFECTS ANALYSIS

Under the guidelines of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a proposed project would directly affect open space conditions if it causes the loss of public open space, changes the use of an open

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space so that it no longer serves the same use population, limits public access to an open space, or results in increased noise or air pollutant emissions, odor, or shadows that would temporarily or permanently affect the usefulness of a public open space. A proposed project can also directly affect an open space by enhancing its design or increasing its accessibility to the public.

The Project Site includes the entirety of the existing Damrosch Park but would not alter the size or acreages of the Park and thus would not result in the loss of any open space acreage. The Proposed Project would reconstruct and redesign the Park to allow for greater connectivity and flow throughout the open space and the broader Lincoln Center campus and surrounding neighborhood. Therefore, this chapter assesses how Damrosch Park would be directly affected by the Proposed Project and describes its features and context within the Lincoln Center campus and surrounding area.

### INDIRECT EFFECTS ANALYSIS

Indirect effects may occur when a population introduced by a proposed project would be sufficiently large to noticeably diminish the ability of an area's open spaces to serve the future population. The Proposed Project would not induce any new residential development and would not generate a substantial new worker or visitor population that would exceed the CEQR thresholds for a detailed indirect effects analysis of open space. As detailed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Proposed Project would slightly decrease the capacity of the main performance venue from approximately 2,400 persons to 2,000 and would not facilitate an increase in the number or frequency of events in the Park as compared to the No Action condition. Therefore, there would be no anticipated increase in visitors for events, nor new workers or residents associated with the Proposed Project.

While the Proposed Project would not directly introduce a new residential or worker population in the study area, the improvements to Damrosch Park as a result of the Proposed Project are anticipated to increase utilization of the park space. There is an estimated increase of approximately 200 park users on non-performance days, which is below the CEQR threshold of 500 nonresidential users.[1] The increase in park goers would be met by the Park as it is currently an underutilized passive open space. The Park is being redesigned to encourage and accommodate an increase in park attendees both during event and non-event hours. It is a goal of the Proposed Project to create a community park that better serves its neighbors.

Therefore, the Proposed Project would not have the potential to result in any significant adverse indirect impacts on open space, and further analysis of indirect effects is not necessary.

## C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

### AFFECTED AREA

Damrosch Park is an approximately 2.4-acre park that is located on the southwest corner of the Lincoln Center campus (see **Figure 3-1**). The Park contains the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Bandshell, a concrete plaza, landscaping along the perimeter of the Park, and a tree grove with seating. Damrosch Park is City-owned parkland under the jurisdiction of the NYC Parks and sits above a parking garage and lower concourse on the Lincoln Center campus. Vehicular access to the parking garage is provided via a driveway along West 62nd Street and from Amsterdam

[1] LCPA collected pedestrian and park user counts as part of an economic impact study. The incremental 200-person visitation estimate is based on the square footages for passive recreation and the average number of users across the Lincoln Center campus.

Avenue. Damrosch Park has entrances along West 62nd Street and from the Josie Robertson Plaza near the northeast corner of the Park.

### SURROUNDING AREA

As detailed in Chapter 4, "Historic and Cultural Resources," the Project Site is located within the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts Historic District, which has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR-eligible). There are several other open space areas located throughout the campus, including the Josie Roberston Plaza and Hearst Plaza. The Josie Robertson Plaza serves as the gateway to Lincoln Center at Columbus Avenue and West 64th Street. The plaza is a large open square surrounded by the frontage of David Geffen Hall, the David H. Koch Theater, and the Metropolitan Opera House, and is complete with a central water fountain. In addition to being a central entrance and public gathering area on the campus, the plaza occasionally is the setting for different events and performances. Hearst Plaza is located on the northwest corner of the Lincoln Center campus, tucked between the Lincoln Center Theater, David Geffen Hall, and the Metropolitan Opera House. The approximately 38,100-square-foot plaza offers seating, landscaping, a tree grove, a water feature, sculptures, and a stepped lawn area. Similar to Josie Robertson Plaza and Damrosch Park, portions of Hearst Plaza have been used for events and performances.

In addition to the open spaces located throughout the Lincoln Center campus, there is Dante Park, a triangular park bound by Broadway, Columbus Avenue, and West 63rd Street. Dante Park is 0.14 acres and offers landscaping and seating. Additionally, the Fordham University campus is located directly south of the Project Site and Damrosch Park. The campus offers a centralized lawn and winding walking paths with landscaping and benches, which are publicly accessible during the day.

Other nearby open space resources include the Samuel N. Bennerson 2nd Playground, a 0.75-acre park with a playground, basketball courts, adult fitness equipment, spray showers, and seating. The playground is located adjacent to the New York City Housing Authority's Amsterdam Houses. Additionally, Central Park is located two blocks east of the Project Site. The 840-acre park has several park entrances along Central Park West. Pedestrian paths wind their way through the park, connecting the nearby Lincoln Center campus and many of the park areas and amenities within Central Park.

## D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

Absent the Proposed Project, the Project Site would remain largely unchanged after major structural and infrastructure upgrades are implemented. Many of the components of Damrosch Park, such as paving, seating, and landscaping, would need to be temporarily removed to allow for maintenance and waterproofing, resulting in abatements to the whole Park, before being restored in-kind. The Guggenheim Bandshell would remain in place and the Lincoln Center campus would continue to lack access points from Amsterdam Avenue. There would be no improvements to the sidewalk or to the NYPLPA entrance at the corner of West 65th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Although there would be necessary maintenance improvements to Damrosch Park, the layout and function of the Park would largely remain unchanged. There would be no changes to the landscaping design and overall acreage of the Park. In addition, no new major developments have been identified that are planned within the immediate area.

## E. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT

In the With Action condition, 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 Guggenheim Bandshell with a newly designed, world-class performance venue in the

southeast corner of the Park. 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. Surrounding the new performance venue would be a flat plaza, which would provide seating during events and would also serve as a public open space during non-performance times. The new performance venue would have an approximately 2,000-person capacity, which is slightly reduced from the 2,400-person capacity at the existing Guggenheim Bandshell. There would be temporary food and beverage facilities and movable seating situated east of the performance venue 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, an area known as the Overlook would serve to provide shaded seating and space for bars, refreshments, and casual seating during performances. In the non-performance seasons, the Overlook would function as a key landscape element for spontaneous daily activities in the Park, while offering elevated views of the lawn, water feature, and landscaped tree groves.

The Proposed Project integrates smaller performance spaces throughout the Park, including a terraced lawn and landscaping, complete with a water feature in the center, to the west of the performance venue. The Fountain will be a main feature of the new Park and was one of the most common requests from the community.

The Proposed Project is expected to 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. The gardens would be distinct with planting and topography. Additionally, there would be an Art Walk which 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 an elevated seating section, accessible via a set of stairs along Amsterdam Avenue to the upper plaza level or via an accessible route next to the lawn, that would cantilever over the garage and concourse entrance below, along Amsterdam Avenue. This section would provide additional seating and overlook the smaller performance areas within the 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. 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.

The Proposed Project is not expected to result in greater utilization levels at the Park during events. However, it is anticipated that the reconfiguration and redevelopment of Damrosch Park would create a more accessible and inviting open space, thereby increasing the number of daily users. The Park is currently underutilized in its current state, with it being predominately vacant during the day during nonevents, but the proposed improvements would encourage more passive activity within the park space. The Proposed Project would expand the Park amenities and features, allowing for greater usage from a wider range of age groups. There would be greater seating opportunities and areas to relax in the shade, as well as a water feature for children to

play in. The daily park visitation is estimated to increase by approximately 200 users during non-event days. However, the proposed improvements would also allow for park access during performances on the western portion of Damrosch Park. While the Proposed Project may increase utilization of the Park in the With Action condition, it would have ample space and amenities to meet these needs and would not result in any significant adverse direct or indirect impacts to open space.

To accommodate the proposed landscape reconstruction and improvements, it is currently anticipated that during construction approximately 118 trees would be removed and replaced from Damrosch Park and adjacent sidewalks and an additional 33 trees would be planted for a total of approximately 151 trees upon completion of construction. Any tree removals would comply with restitution in compliance with Chapter 5 of Title 56 of the Rules of New York (NYC Parks Rules) and Local Law 3 of 2010, and all tree removals and protection would be done in compliance with NYC Parks regulations.

The proposed work would include improvements to the grading and planting of the portion of Damrosch Park along Amsterdam Avenue. Landscape improvements would include the creation of three gardens and a path from street level to plaza level that would allow the public to enter Damrosch Park along the west side, an entrance that does not currently exist. The landscape character that would be implemented in this area includes planting with seasonal interest. The proposed design plan for planting includes the replacement of 118 trees and approximately 33 new trees for the total of approximately 151 trees within the Project Site. This includes increased greenery and shade along the east side of Amsterdam Avenue adjacent to the Lincoln Center campus. Other green spaces include a welcoming lawn surrounded by flowering trees and groves with spaces for sitting, gathering, and resting under the shade of trees.

There would be no new incremental shadows as a result of the Proposed Project that would significantly affect the vegetation or recreational use of the Park. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse shadow impacts on publicly accessible open spaces.

In summary, the Proposed Project would not result in the loss of any parkland. The Proposed Project has been designed to respect the relationship between the Park, the Lincoln Center campus, and the surrounding neighborhood. The Proposed Project is subject to the review and consultation with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and approval by the Public Design Commission to ensure its appropriateness within its context, including the Lincoln Center campus. Additionally, the Proposed Project would result in reconstruction and improvements to Damrosch Park, including a more connected Park, a modernized performance venue, and increased variety of green space. The Park will include a variety of spaces to sit and gather, introduce art and light interventions within the concourse connecting Amsterdam Avenue and the subway entrance on Broadway, and improve pedestrian circulation throughout the Park and along Amsterdam Avenue. The Proposed Project would be redesigned to better serve the local community and create a beautified and inviting park space that is intended to increase visitation to the Park. The approximately 200 incremental park visitors generated by the improvements to Damrosch Park would not exceed the CEQR threshold for an indirect effects analysis; additionally, the Park would have the capacity to accommodate an increase in users due to its current limited usage and proposed design changes. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse direct impacts to open space. ✷