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Midtown East Re-Development

A Capstone Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements of the Renée Crown University Honors Program at
Syracuse University

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and Renée Crown University Honors
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Honors Capstone Project in Architecture

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Abstract

Midtown East is an aging part of Manhattan that needs immediate attention from developers, urban planners, and architects alike in order to flourish amongst the other recently blooming districts in both Mid- and Downtown. This part of the city has not seen major redevelopment for over 70 years and is struggling to maintain basic city functions such as high commuter traffic, aging infrastructure, low vacancy rates, and in particular the provision of Class A commercial real estate for big corporate tenants. These are just the most pressing issues, which Midtown East must face.

Fortunately for the special Midtown district, in August 2017, its Steering Committee approved a zoning amendment with modifications that permit drastic and necessary alterations to the district's current urban context. Significantly, the changes include an upzoning amendment that will allow much more built area than before; although this thesis argues that can the increased density can bear a detriment to Midtown East if not handled tactfully. If all goes well, Midtown East will be able to defend its character as a premier global business district.

Notwithstanding the particularities of the current attempt at solving the multiple problems that affect Midtown East, this Capstone anticipates that the broader changes initially suggested must be amplified to properly achieve the goal of restoring Midtown East's previous reputation amongst its competitors. This Capstone suggests a radical urban design, spanning some 10-blocks in Midtown East between Park and Madison Avenues, 46th and 57th Streets. For the envisioned project, both the Department of City Planning and private developers must work unilaterally to reshuffle the organization of public to private real estate at the scale of Midtown East, invite variation to the district's long-time unvaried socio-economy, and transform a previous world-class business district to remain competitive in the twenty-first century.

Executive Summary

Home to Grand Central Station, St. Bartholomew's Cathedral, the Lever House, and other cultural landmarks, Manhattan's core business district Midtown East is severely falling behind other cosmopolitan districts in the race to attract centralized corporate investment for the twenty-first century. Midtown East desperately needs big changes if it wants to improve its status amongst New York City investors. Primarily, poor land valuation most affects the fate of Midtown East, and fundamentally related the manner in which public space was allotted. Since 1961, the Department of City Planning established an incentive zoning program that grants private developers access to construct larger upon providing a public amenity called Privately Owned Public Spaces (POPS). At the time of their creation, these public spaces were hailed as an improvement for civic life; however, nowadays the general attitude has shifted, and POPS are seen as remote, unattractive, and counterproductive. POPS fail everyone: unprogrammed spaces deprive developers of generating larger nor continuous profits; tenants pay higher rent settlements; and users are turned away from outdoor POPS (i.e. < 50%) during the cold months. Midtown East's excessive collection of POPS erode Manhattan's famous urban grid, a blight that segregates members of the civic community and cuts off potential for economic growth. Ultimately, the POPS program represents an unfair and unintelligent compromise between the city and private developers at the expense of the general public whereby stale urban spaces are exchanged for deeper shadows. It is about time that Midtown East resolves its public space issue, for the solution offers higher valued real estate potential and thus a development boom and urgent change. By negotiating the borders of private-public zones, Midtown East serves to benefit as a destination for unique urban design and lively civic experience.

Midtown East deserves a public space that represents both its historic and aesthetic character. Every winter, Rockefeller Center welcomes nearly a million tourists daily who view the grandiose Christmas Tree on display; likewise, every summer, for the past six years, West Chelsea sees millions of tourists visit daily because of the novel, elevated experience offered on the Highline; soon, the Hudson Yards will open a 150-foot tall public centerpiece that offers incredible views of the Hudson River. Midtown East ought to have its very own public space if it intends to compete for attention with these next generation urban developments, which all offer totally unique urban experiences. A 10-block long redevelopment from 46th St. and Vanderbilt Ave. north to 57th St., offers an unprecedented public space in New York City in the form of a grand outdoor gallery. This alternative POPS space comprises three components: a pedestrian street, which extends Vanderbilt Avenue another ten blocks with incorporated green space; retail corridors, which slide covered walkways between the pedestrian street and setback retail shops; finally, cantilevering terraces, which form rooves at second and third floor heights above the retail corridor. Essentially, this multifaceted public zone better connects people from the ground level with those in the towers above thus creating a more fluid, active public to private transitional space where different public uses could exist independently in environments that better suit them. Generating a single space for capturing the various interests of diverse peoples in totally unique ways is a crucial element to this urban design scheme, for it fosters the sort of activity capable of building monumental urban spaces such as Times Square. Ultimately, the fine-tuning of this public space for its respective users adds character, clarity, and use to a culturally significant part of Midtown East that ought to see revitalization.

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Project Introduction

“The East Midtown business district is one of the largest job centers in New York City and one of the highest-profile business districts in the world,”¹ and much to the chagrin of its stakeholders, soon Midtown East may no longer be. This district covers “the area between Second and Fifth Avenues and East 39th and 57th Streets.”² It is famous for its preservation of many historic-cultural monuments from the 20th century such as the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, its unique terminus of the Park Avenue corridor at 46th Street where the Helmsley Building stands, and its concentration of Fortune 500 insurance and law firms, especially from Park to 3rd Avenues. Unfortunately, Midtown East as a location for corporate tenants has become obsolete and is in serious jeopardy of being irreversibly outcompeted for commercial investment by other districts (e.g. the Hudson Yards). Although “East Midtown has been and is still one of the most sought-after office addresses in New York City,”³ the Department of City Planning recognizes several long-term challenges that require immediate attention in order to safeguard it as a leading business center: preserving the historic-cultural character of Midtown East, providing public space that meets the new upzoning constraints, generating capital growth on real estate value, transforming the relationship between public and private development in New York City, and designing a neighborhood environment that fosters socio-economic diversity. This capstone proposes a radical urban design project that will greatly benefit Midtown East by resolving the issues that curtail its development in accordance with the interests of the district Steering Committee.

¹ City Planning Commission, *An Application (N 130247 ZRM) for a Zoning Text Amendment filed by the Department of City Planning* (New York, 2013) 2.

² City Planning, *(N 130247 ZRM)*, 2.

³ City Planning, *(N 130247 ZRM)*, 3.

Evolution of Manhattan Grid

The Commissioners' Plan of 1811, a foundational document that inspired the famous Manhattan grid (i.e. a texture of streets, avenues, and blocks),⁴ found its epitome emerge in Midtown East. A chronological record of Manhattan development from 1811 to 1892 (See *Appendix 1, Figures 1-8.*) shows evidence that Manhattan was built up along the East Side primarily and that through the years many adjustments were made to the original Commissioners' Plan in the East Side as more nuanced decisions favored more desirable urban planning goals. The greatest degree of nuance appears between 14th and 59th Streets along Park Avenue (i.e. Fourth Avenue as it was known then), suggesting that this area offered investors and tenants the best real estate in Manhattan. Hence, from its origin Midtown East was definitely amongst the most desirable areas in Manhattan, especially after Cornelius Vanderbilt buried the Long Island Railroad underground in the 1860s. With that drastic change, New York City's elite moved into houses alongside Park Avenue, which offered Manhattan's widest avenue and Midtown's narrowest blocks. Compounding the effect of containing Manhattan's widest avenue, Midtown East real estate benefitted with the construction of the later incorporated Madison and Lexington Avenues. This alteration contributed to a finer-grain grid where access through blocks, for both individuals and motorists, was improved as a result of there being shorter blocks with more space designated for roads and sidewalks. After these changes, Midtown East became primed with the best residential properties in all of New York City, excepting those properties that face Central Park as that followed the same principle but at a far large scale. Ultimately, improved urban conditions generated the tremendous value that grew Midtown East, and those

⁴ Hillary Ballon. *The Greatest Grid: The Master Plan of New York, 1811-2011*, ed. Hilary Ballon (New York, 2012).

same strategies can be learned from and redeployed to dramatically reverse the district's desperate situation.

In the mid-19th century, prior to the watershed 1961 Zoning Resolution that established the POPS program, New York City constructed almost three quarters of the total development that currently constitutes Midtown East (i.e. approximately 300 of its total 400 buildings).⁵ This wave of development drastically changed the face of Midtown East from that of an amenable residential district with pedestrian walkways and benches provided within wider, greener Park Avenue medians to that of an efficient world-leading commercial district. Since then the mechanism of change in Midtown East came with the onset of POPS's incentive zoning. By the 1940s, blocky residential complexes were replaced with larger commercial buildings, and Park Avenue's wide medians were replaced with more car lanes. From a planning incentive, New York City wanted to allow for Midtown East to better accommodate pedestrian use. Inspired by the design of the Seagram Building and its plaza in front, the city mandated the 1961 Zoning Resolution, which informed the dissemination of POPS throughout Midtown.⁶ Following from this moment, the remaining quarter of buildings in Midtown East (i.e. all 100 of them) largely reflects this development standard, rather unfortunately because these spaces fall short of their previous glory in how they are used today. Currently, developers have better alternatives than POPS for designing public spaces that both increase the profitability of the spaces for their investors as well as their desirability amongst users. An urban design with a large public promenade becoming the northern extension of Vanderbilt Avenue (i.e. an underused 5-block long street) will fulfill the public space requirements that this part of city demands. The other

⁵ "Greater East Midtown," NYC Planning (New York, 2018).

⁶ Michelle Young. "How Zoning Shaped the New York Skyline," *Untapped Cities: Rediscover Your City*, 2011.

elements about this new public space and how they serve the Midtown East community are elaborated in accordance with development standards, site research, and neighborhood building.

Comparables to Urban Design

Within the last two decades Manhattan experienced a massive development boom that since has led to exponential growth for the city at large. While developers add more projects onto the recorded histories of both successful and unsuccessful methods, they become smarter and more intuitive about the results of certain disciplinary practices. All along the West Side, Manhattan sees one successful development scheme following another, and it has everything to do with the current trend of block splicing to improve urban character and in turn real estate value; in particular, the transformation of the High Line from an abandoned, elevated industrial railway to a posh public park stunningly metamorphosed the Meatpacking District starting from Gansevoort Street north through West Chelsea reaching its terminus at 42nd Street in Hudson Yards (See *Appendix 2, Figures 1-3*). Surprisingly these three districts, which even twenty years ago were some of the least valuable real estate in New York City at the time skating by on underground economies,⁷ converted to some of the most valuable real estate overnight, and it has largely to do with the production of novel, public amenities that then attract self-perpetuating investment. From the organizers' end, the Department of City Planning really stepped up its role in altering the zoning code to accommodate certain urban conditions, such as revising the codes on *transfer of air rights* in West Chelsea to create more visible space around the Highline.⁸ Likewise, considering the user experience, tenants and residents both want to work and live close to clean, green public spaces that they can access and ultimately that remind them of their old suburban yards with the bonus of being scaled up in size, life, and beauty. When observing these new development schemes, it is significant to recognize that POPS do not exist anywhere there.

⁷ Jen Carlson. "Photos Compare 1985 and 2013 Meatpacking District," *Gothamist*, 2013.

⁸ Shawn Amsler. "The High Line and Its Transformational Impact on Manhattan's West Side," *In Buenos Cidades: Cidades Em Transformacao*, ed. Edicoes de Janeiro, (Rio de Janeiro, 2014) 176-198.

Grander, more-coordinated urban landscapes set the precedent for public space creation in New York City, and this trend could not have a bigger impact on the growth and appeal of city life. Moreover, large-scale urban projects require more initial investment, which expands the potential for transformation and investor impact thereby optimizing a platform for success with self-inducing profits, and long-term gains.

To the agreement of the urban developers responsible for constructing Madison and Lexington Avenues, the clearing of the middle segments of long urban blocks (i.e. in the north/south direction from street to street) has become the real estate development industry standard for large masterplan developments. There is a very simple reason for the appeal of this method, and it fundamentally deals with real estate property values. By clearing the middle of the block a developer eliminates the least valuable segment of the block while adding value to the already more valuable ends of the block. It is true that the sides of the block that face avenues are generally allowed more Floor Area Ratio (FAR) or building area, making these properties more appealing to investors. It is also true that given the lower FAR values of the middle of the block that the real estate is often cast in shadow; furthermore, given its inability to compete with the block anchors, the buildings in the block middle are older and more costly to restore. Therefore, by clearing these less valuable parts and converting them into verdant public spaces, the block anchors are granted more access to natural daylight and air and public amenities. With access to 360-degree views and positioned between busy avenues and tranquil urban parks, these block anchor properties skyrocket in value. Now applying this rhetoric to a large commercial center (e.g. Midtown East), it is observable that smaller, older structures situated between massive corporate offices on either end of the block truly fail to see a proper realization of potential real estate value. By contrast, incredibly large corporate offices situated along Park

Avenue with views toward Central Park, access to a 15 block long public garden (*See Appendix 2, Figure 6.*), and building attics that puncture the Manhattan skyline see a tremendous fulfillment of Midtown East's real estate potential. Therefore, the strategy to cut the northern extension of Vanderbilt Avenue from the existing urban mass up to 57th Street reads like a valuable modification to a proposed zoning solution, passed in August, that is mostly concerned with low-cost maintenance and low-level involvement from the Department of City Planning to transform the urban experience in Midtown East. Additionally, the Parisian-boulevard character of the new Vanderbilt Avenue will alleviate pedestrian traffic in the area, especially on both local subways and sidewalks that always bear commuter traffic and desperately need repair.

The string of blocks north of Vanderbilt Avenue, currently find themselves trapped between the tight 10-foot wide sidewalks of Madison Avenue and busy 8-lane wide Park Avenue. An urban cut such as the desired extension of Vanderbilt Avenue will facilitate pedestrian traffic to filter beyond the tight sidewalks and away from the chaotic car traffic. The new pedestrian street not only operates to benefit land value but provides a pedestrian street that welcomes more comfortable travel with generous amenities, including vegetation, park benches, fountains, eateries, shopping, and more. By encouraging pedestrian travel, the city can alleviate car traffic on the roads, tourist overcrowding on the sidewalks, and rider congestion in the subways. Additionally, increased pedestrian traffic provides more potential customers to the foreseen retail shops located on Vanderbilt Avenue as well as permits the city infrastructure maintenance crews a better chance to repair haggard subway stations burdened by user-induced chaos. In one fell swoop, a decision to improve public space in Midtown East results in upgraded real estate value, smoother all-around transportation, more active civic life and hence businesses,

and a road toward sustainability in a location that has been and will again become a global leader amongst metropolitan business districts.

Site Analysis for Midtown East

Upon additional site research of Midtown East, as it relates to program, taxable area, building class, zoning, and subway data, the extension of Vanderbilt Avenue as a pedestrian street appears to be better served as an open gallery. Despite the intention to preserve Midtown East as a central business district, the general dearth of other programs in the area surrounding Park Avenue (See *Appendix 3, Figure 2.*) renders the nighttime vitality of the district almost completely null. Midtown East can only transform into a neighborhood-like setting if there is additional residential program introduced within the upzoning changes.⁹ Therefore, the urban design scheme suggests that the breakdown of total program become 70% commercial office, 15% for-sale residential, 10% commercial retail, and 5% rentable residential, which is loosely based on the current conditions and interests of the Midtown East Steering Committee moving forward. The formalization of the program is the same throughout the urban design comprising only the tower-on-a-base typology whereby the tower represents commercial offices and the base comprises both residential and commercial retail programs with the latter type at the bottom (See *Appendix 4, Figure 2.*). An open gallery will better serve the community in that it provides the pedestrian street at the ground level for use amongst both fast and slow modes of foot or bike traffic and also allocates more private, slower paced strata of public space for pedestrians to access as they ascend upward in the building. Retail corridors line the pedestrian street providing colonnades with setbacks for the retail shops to recess from the street wall while cantilevering gardens intended as calm spaces for residents and relaxed visitors extend over these corridors and overlook Vanderbilt Avenue. In total, the gallery forms a three-pronged solution to the

⁹ Jane Jacobs. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York, 1992).

provision of public space and that exists within the separation of the pedestrian street from the retail corridor and the cantilevering gardens. The addition of residential and separation of commercial program within the proposed buildings inform this new mixed-use area in Midtown and encourage an active sequence of public spaces that together form an entirely unique and unprecedented New York City open gallery.

Typically when city planners and architects draw out proposals for large urban schemes in their cities, the primary response from the public becomes a concern about gentrification; however, in this urban design scheme there is no housing in the affected area, and there are no major tenants that will have to relocate. In fact, this urban design proposes the opposite situation of gentrification, namely building a sense of community in a community desert. Currently, the majority of occupants in Midtown East along Park Avenue represent employees of internationally recognized insurance and law firms, but this project suggests a big change to the status quo providing space for resident occupants, including a percentage of inclusionary housing renters, in addition to retail employees (See *Appendix 3, Figure 2.*). By introducing members of lower social classes to the neighborhood, this urban design increases diversity with the interest of optimizing the socio-economy of Midtown East for attracting tourist investment. Given its proximity to major tourist attractions (e.g. Rockefeller Center and Times Square) the Vanderbilt Avenue gallery will capitalize on tourist spending by positioning retail stores at ground level where they are easily accessible. However, while the retail corridor isolates consumers from travelers, the gallery provides space for locals to relax away from the chaos of tourists frantically crisscrossing between ground level zones. As such, the three-part public space scheme effectively operates to organize people from public to less public spaces according to clearly delineated and spatially distinguished zones.

A view of the proposed tax map (See *Appendix 3, Figure 3.*) suggests that the footprint of the buildings comprising the new urban design scheme are only as large as the individual buildings currently situated there now, yet notably those same footprints represent the area constituting the new block sizes. Each of the ten blocks on which the masterplan is proposed will be subdivided along the axis already created by all five existing blocks of Vanderbilt Avenue and separated by a street 60-feet wide at its narrowest width. This urban design decision derives from the same cuts in the grid that historically formed the subdivided blocks between 3rd and 5th Avenues (See *Appendix 1, Figure 3.*) and create block sizes that are approximately a quarter and an eighth respectively of the width of Manhattan's widest blocks, between 5th and 6th Avenues and measure 920-feet wide.¹⁰ Furthermore, the relocation of ground level space, used for creating the Vanderbilt Avenue gallery, to the sky establishes a striking addition to the New York City skyline, which symbolizes the tremendous density of the urban design. Once again, through the process of reprogramming and rezoning, Midtown East alters its bulk configurations to that of even more streamlined towers that redistribute mass from freed-up ground level space upward towards the sky at heights of 800 feet and above. However, the urban design is not as regular as is suggested given its adherence to the Steering Committee's emphasis on preserving historic-cultural monuments of which there are four on the site: Lever House, Racquet and Tennis Club, Villard Houses, and Erdmann House (See *Appendix 3, Figure 4.*). All of the non-landmarked building stock of which most average 70 years old¹¹ are thereby demolished for new construction replacing the standard Classes B and C properties with Class A real estate. Moreover, the landmarked buildings provide pockets of open space for daylight and air to filter into the dense

¹⁰ Gerard Koepfel. *City on a Grid: How New York Became New York* (Philadelphia, 2015).

¹¹ Department of City Planning. *East Midtown Rezoning Overview* (New York, 2017).

urban development while contributing transferred air rights to the surrounding new buildings. Therefore, a masterplan that tends to the wishes of the Midtown East Steering Committee produces a desirable urban condition that is open to the elements despite its substantial density. The combination of old and new real estate (i.e. retail and landmarks) being connected along the same street (See *Appendix 4, Figure 1.*) recalls the successful urban axis in Rome, Italy where the Via del Corso splinters into the Via dei Fori Imperiali along which tourists can see the ancient Roman Forum, the Colosseum, Trajan's market, and other public monuments. This new avenue can link the retail locations to the historic-cultural landmarks in a way that better activates both spaces.

The mass transit system in Midtown East is under immense pressure to perform efficiently despite facing endless adversity caused by heavy traffic and aging infrastructure. The presence of the New York City metro in Midtown East is underwhelming even at Grand Central Station; the underground subways are cramped, dirty, and constantly in need of repair. The Department of City Planning suggests that the private developers who get involved in the reconstruction of private buildings there add subway repair onto the list of incentive zoning bonuses (See *Appendix 3, Figure 5.*). Like in other parts of the city (e.g. the Time Warner Center), the private construction involved with improving the subway situation at Christopher Columbus Circle resulted quite successfully; however, that was a project that was a high-profile one given the unprecedented nature of building an indoor mall in Manhattan and it needed to go well at all cost for the developer so expense was less of an issue compared to achieving good public standing. By contrast, in a urban planning strategy intended for all 73 blocks that comprise the district of Midtown East, it seems that the risks associated with that level of work in improving the subways increases, which is why a unified effort aimed at repairing New York

City subways benefits the city better because the investment money sees proper management and coordination in how it is used and to what goal it is directed to accomplish. Similar to the case of the POPS, the incentive zoning bonuses created by subway repair construction will boost the permitted FAR allowances of all of the buildings involved; permitting that the whole urban design be taken altogether, the average building heights of the new Class A building stock grows upward of the upzoned amounts that already reflect some of the highest in New York City by about +30% thus making private development an even more keen business venture. Average FAR limits of 23+ in Midtown East offer (See *Appendix 3, Figure 5.*) an incredible opportunity for totalizing developments with impact spanning New York City's subways to its skyline, and it ought to benefit the lives of as any people as it can affect.

Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

Appropriate for the enormous scale and expense of this urban design proposal, which intends to catapult Midtown East from a once great global business center to the greatest one in Manhattan, a cosmopolitan ethos is absolutely necessary to achieve. However this globalized environment does not come as a design solution but in the form of greater civic diversity. Midtown East ought to attract arguably the single most significant form of diversity for urban communities (i.e. economic diversity). Currently, however, the monotonous gridlock of Midtown East ensnares its streets, sidewalks, and subways in traffic, prevents people of various economic classes from mixing income streams,¹² and undercuts the overall vitality of a neighborhood with as much character and charm in Midtown as this district. Both spatially and programmatically, this urban design encompasses motley features that challenge normative conditions in New York City, and the project must fulfill that diversity (e.g. in its users) because it essentially forces the Department of City Planning to work together with private developers in ways that the city has seen to be incredibly fruitful. There are compromises of all sorts that both parties have to reach: determining how to balance residential and commercial real estate, deciding on how much inclusionary housing must be provided, limiting incentive zoning because of the particular joint nature of the project, hiring an architect whose design for the gallery meets city requirements and still captures excitement, and the list continues. Indeed every large-scale urban development in New York City should require joint public-private working relationships.¹³ Ultimately, this relationship sees many advantages within the resolution of the urban developments; likewise, it

¹² Vishaan Chakrabarti. *A Country of Cities: A Manifesto for an Urban America* (New York: 2013).

¹³ Chakrabarti. *A Country of Cities* (New York: 2013).

allows the city a privately afforded opportunity at achieving its goals of performing the public good while driving profitability amongst developers and value creation in New York City real estate. Therefore, it is imperative that this urban design be built for a multitude of people with differing socio-economic needs at the very least to establish an advantageous public-private partnership.

Similar to the recent developments around the Highline that permitted all matters of exceptional zoning, this urban design strategy insists upon the Department of City Planning agreeing to make a multitude of zoning exceptions¹⁴ in order to benefit Midtown East and the city at large. By requiring that the urban design cater to the needs of the lower class, the coordination of it insists that the Department of City Planning get involved; simultaneously, by designing a substantial percentage of the urban design for the wealthy, the appeal for private developers to get involved heightens. By allowing these two groups to come together to render the visionary goals of Midtown East, this proposed urban design seems to possess the necessary might to transform the district toward embracing long-term success. Although both building for the poor and the rich seem like worthy enough pursuits for either the city planners or private developers respectively, each group gains tremendous leverage to improve their results by engaging each other in mutual work: the city adds low-cost, high-return potential to its goals of providing for the city's homeless and jobless while private developers find the same potential in building for the metropolitan elite. The aesthetic result is the harmony of both efficiency and elegance in design for a more functional, thriving Midtown East.

¹⁴ Amsler. "The High Line" *In Buenos Cidades: Cidades Em Transformacao*, ed. Edicoes de Janeiro, (Rio de Janeiro, 2014) 176-198.

Project Conclusion

This capstone argues that together the Department of City Planning and the Midtown East Steering Committee are micromanaging where they should be developing plans for grandiose gestures. A radical urban design covering ten blocks from 46th to 57th Streets and between Park and Madison Avenues (See *Appendix 5, Figure 1.*) will supply Midtown East with a proper mode for thinking about and more specifically an attempt at effectively addressing the multiplicitous concerns about directing the future growth of Midtown East. This district will succeed in revitalizing its legacy as Manhattan's central business district when it derives a large urban gesture capable of integrating and solving the concerns raised here: maintaining the historical and cultural identity of Midtown East, offering enough public space that comfortably accommodates the district's new upzoning limits, boosting the revenue collected through real estate value, creating a more fluid relationship between public and private spaces in Manhattan, and articulating the framework of a sustainable neighborhood that promotes socio-economic diversity. The urban design preserves its identity by conforming to the strict language of Manhattan's Grid, as a collection of orthogonal and unaffected streets, avenues, and blocks. The total development offers a 10-block long outdoor gallery as a public space large enough to satisfy the user demand. As an urban plan aimed at nudging Midtown East on a path toward future prosperity, fundamentally the project does so both by creating a public amenity so inviting that it draws investment and by organizing program around people of different social classes thus creating a vibrant district-wide economy. The overall layout of the urban design provides a smooth public to private transition from ground level to the sky by means of a three-pronged public space, including a pedestrian street, retail corridor, and cantilvering gardens. Finally, the project spells out a myriad of ways for promoting diversity and general interaction amongst

members of different socio-economic classes through the allocation of program and distribution of various public spaces relative to each other. Through the utilization of integrated architectural and urban design schema, this project offers the best solution for making Midtown East a competitor again for the title of primary business district in New York City, offering a far more rigorous and thought-through process from a city planning perspective than the one conducted in August of 2017. True to form, there are already design competitions intended to generate ideas about how to properly bring attention to Midtown East¹⁵ (i.e. how the Highline brought attention to West Chelsea); however, these proposals are all low-cost, low-return solutions. Midtown East has the financial capacity to invest in a better future and it should do so now while it is not too late. If the Steering Committee attempts to solve Midtown East's concerns with inexpensive solutions, the future of the district may be riddled with more problems. Midtown East needs to scale-up its thinking and commit to grand ideas, just as all of the other great urban projects of the modern era have done.

¹⁵ "Open Call for Creative Ideas: Reinventing New York City's Park Avenue Medians with Design," *Beyond the Center Line*, 2018.

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Appendix 1: Evolution of Manhattan Grid

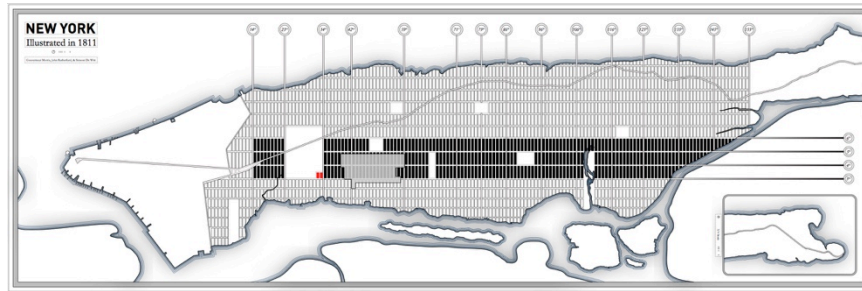


Figure 1
Map of *Manhattan in 1811*

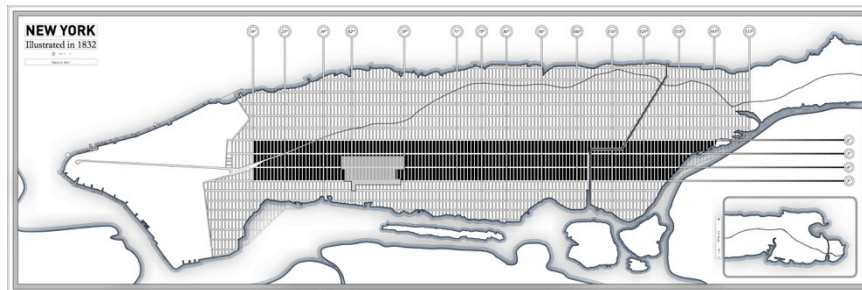


Figure 2
Map of *Manhattan in 1832*

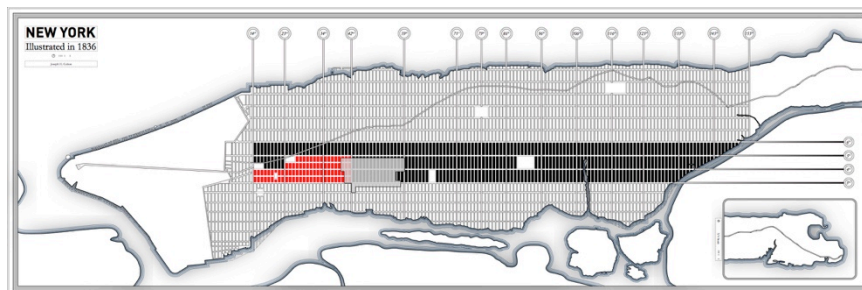


Figure 3
Map of *Manhattan in 1836*

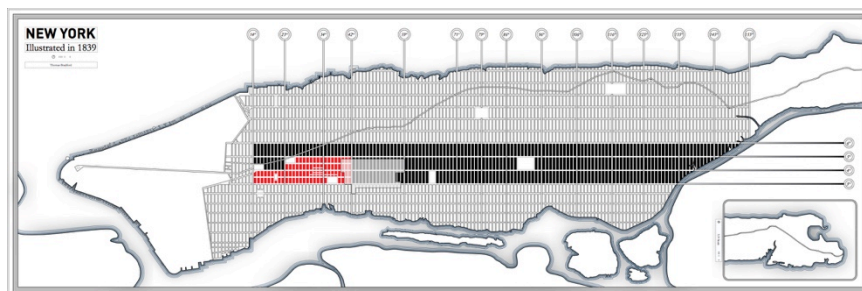


Figure 4
Map of *Manhattan in 1839*

Appendix 1 (continued): Evolution of Manhattan Grid

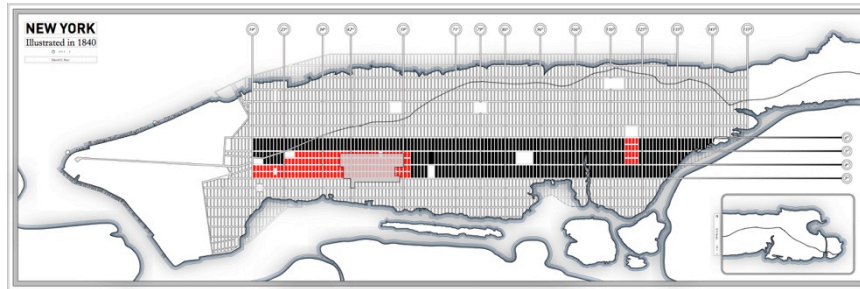


Figure 5
Map of *Manhattan in 1840*

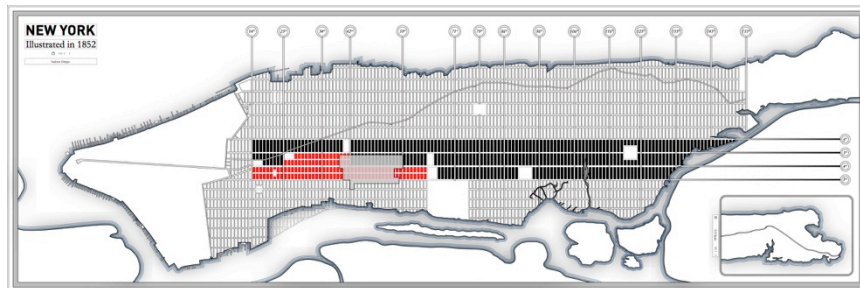


Figure 6
Map of *Manhattan in 1852*

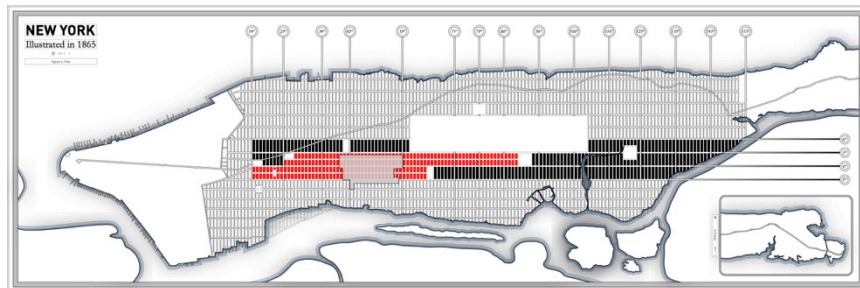


Figure 7
Map of *Manhattan in 1865*

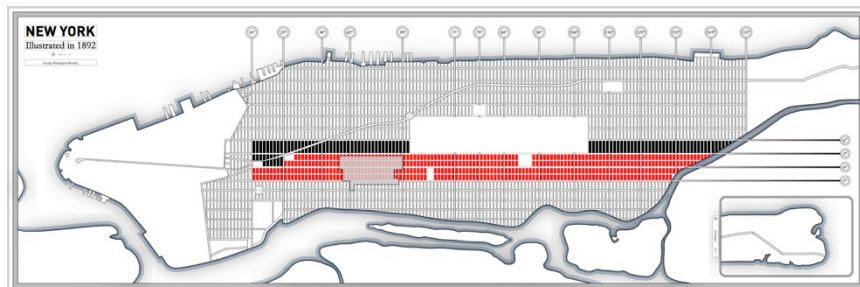


Figure 8
Map of *Manhattan in 1892*

Appendix 2: Comparables to Urban Design



Figure 1
Satellite Image of *Meatpacking District*



Figure 2
Satellite Image of *West Chelsea*



Figure 3
Satellite Image of *Hudson Yards*

Appendix 2 (continued): Comparables to Urban Design



Figure 4
Satellite Image of *Downtown*



Figure 5
Satellite Image of *Battery Park City*



Figure 6
Satellite Image of *Midtown East*

Appendix 3: Site Analysis for Midtown East

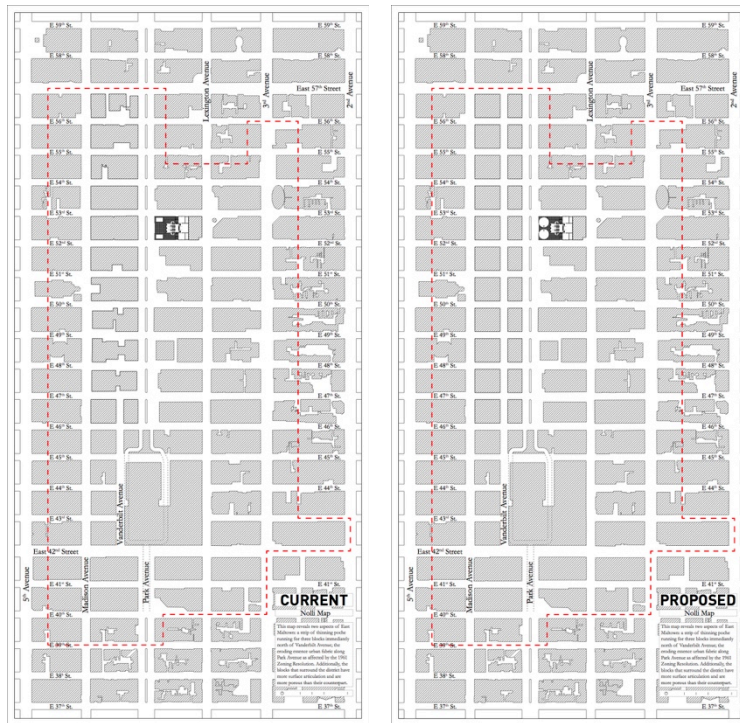


Figure 1
Current and Proposed Private versus Public Space Maps



Figure 2
Current and Proposed Program Maps

Appendix 3 (continued): Site Analysis for Midtown East



Figure 3
Current and Proposed Tax Maps



Figure 4
Current and Proposed Building Stock Maps

Appendix 3 (continued): Site Analysis for Midtown East

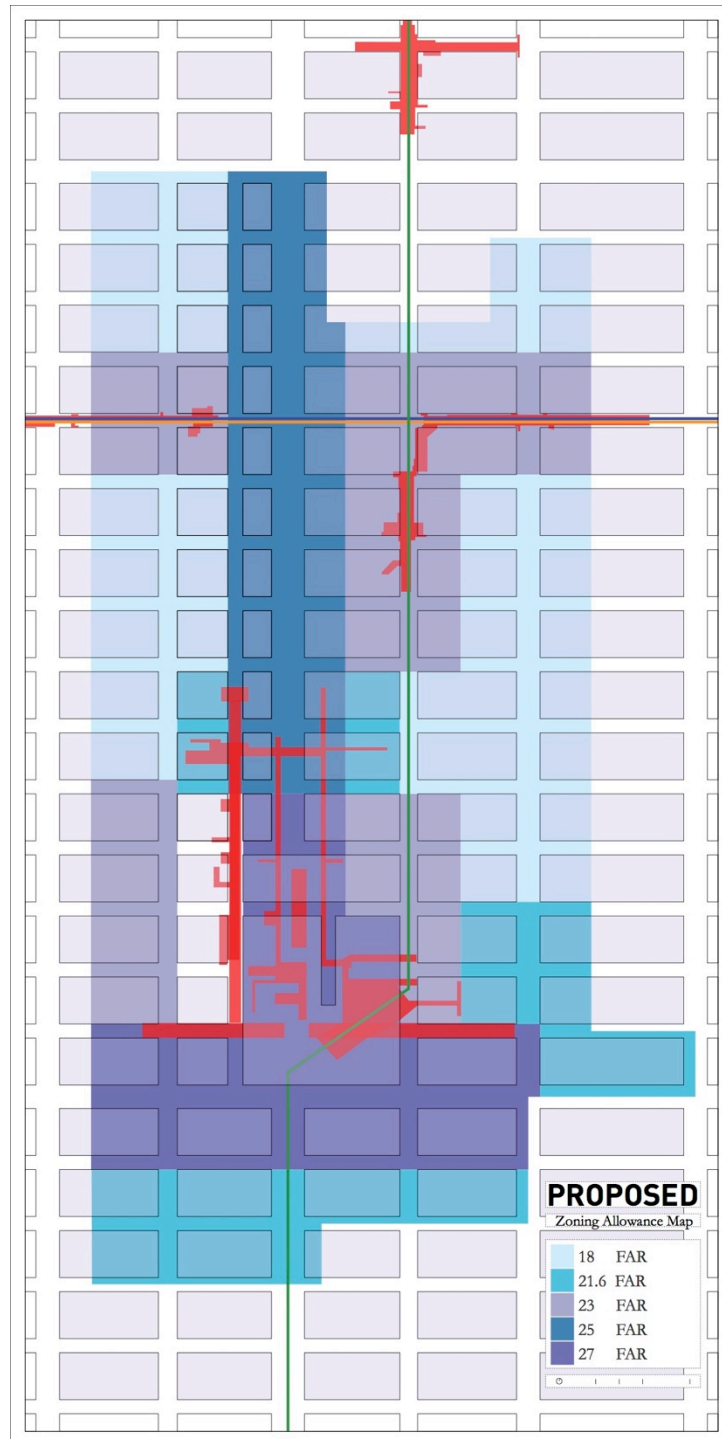


Figure 5
Proposed Zoning Map of August 2017

Appendix 4: Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

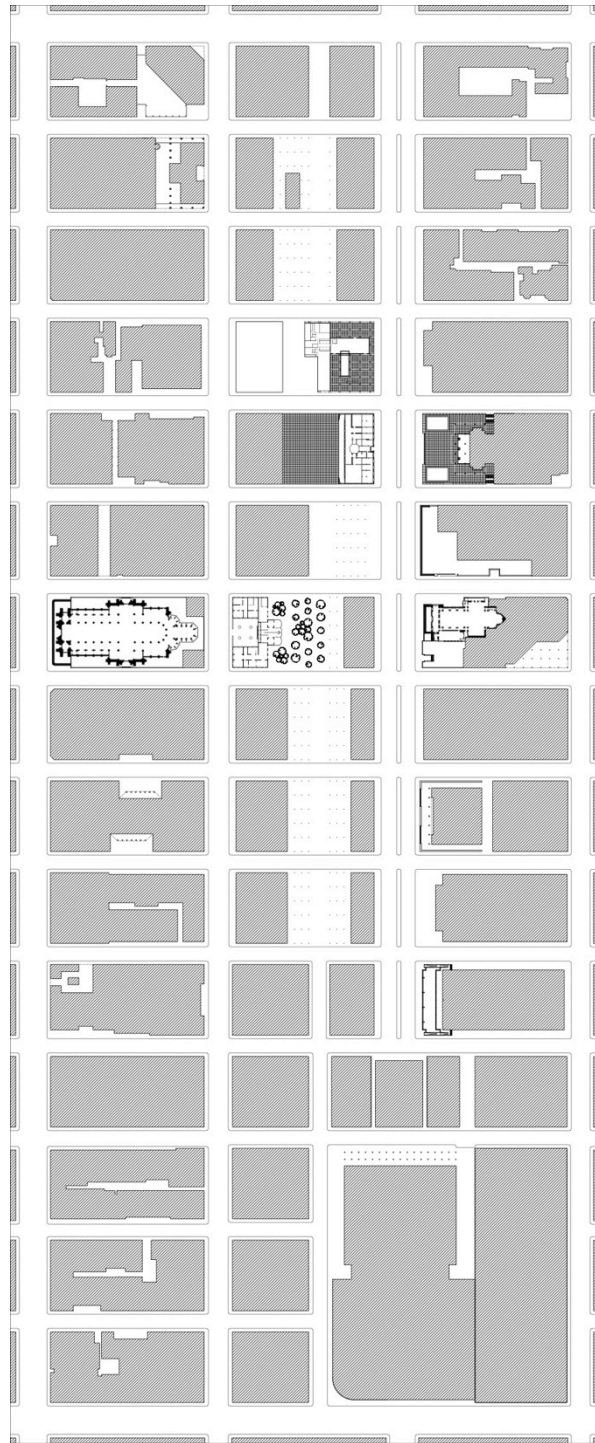


Figure 1
Urban Design Masterplan

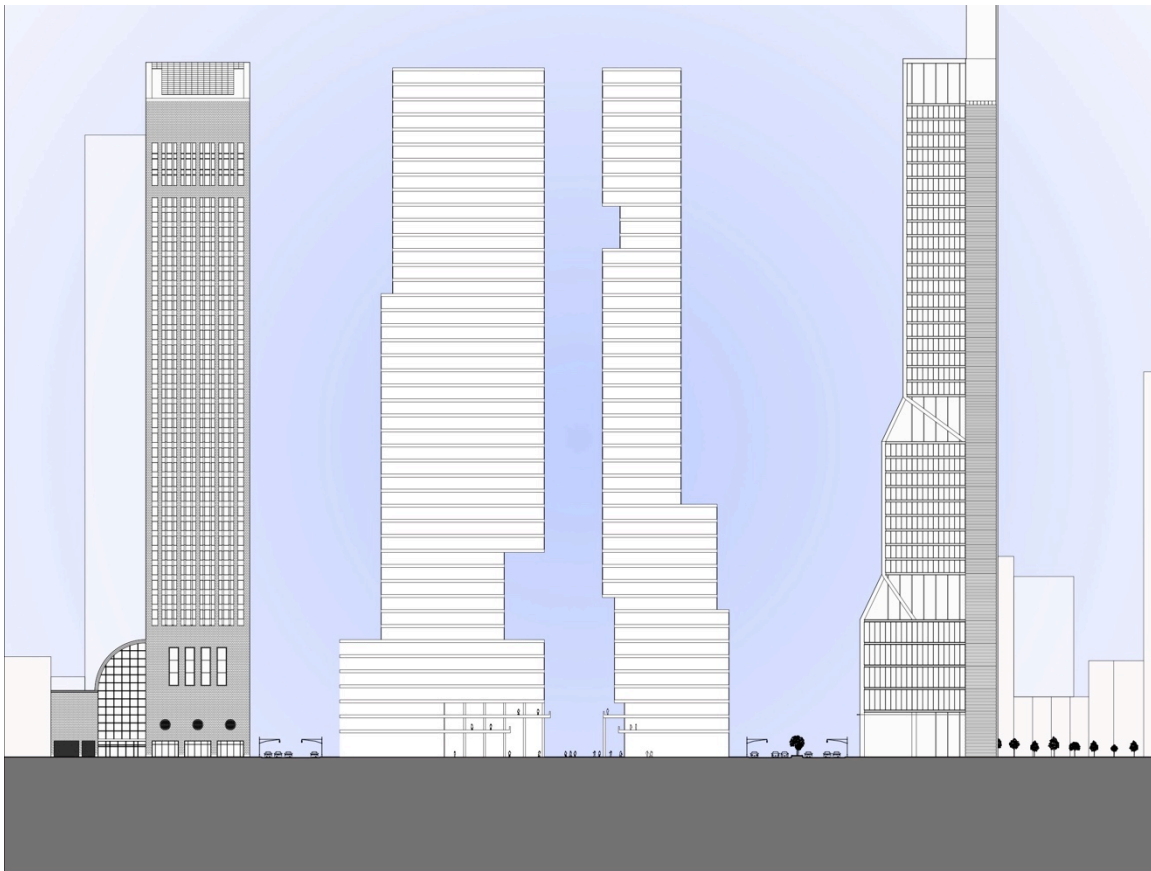
Appendix 4 (continued): Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

Figure 2
Section taken along 55th Avenue facing North

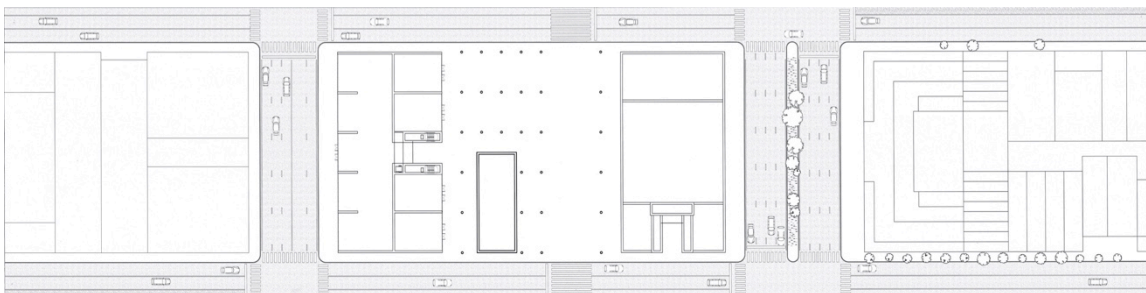


Figure 3
Plan from 55th to 56th Avenues

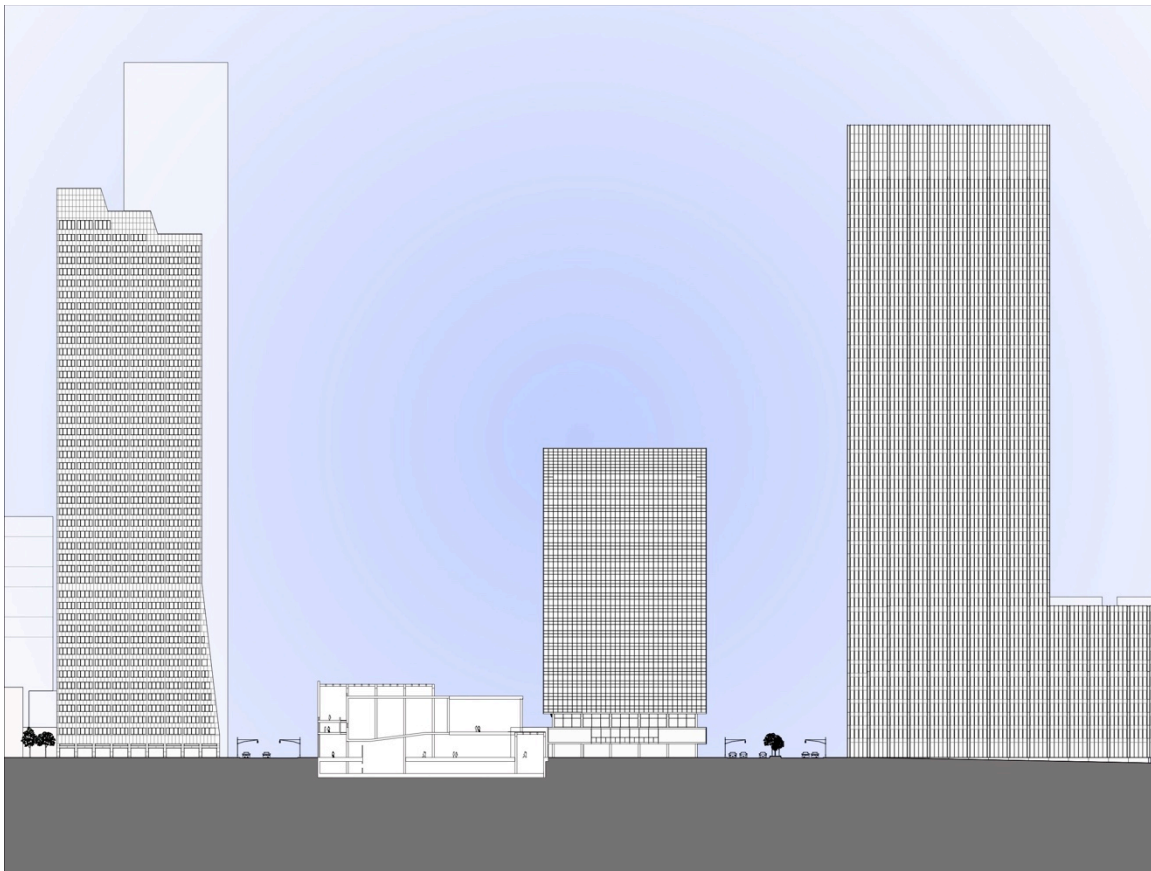
Appendix 4 (continued): Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

Figure 4
Section taken along 53rd Avenue facing North

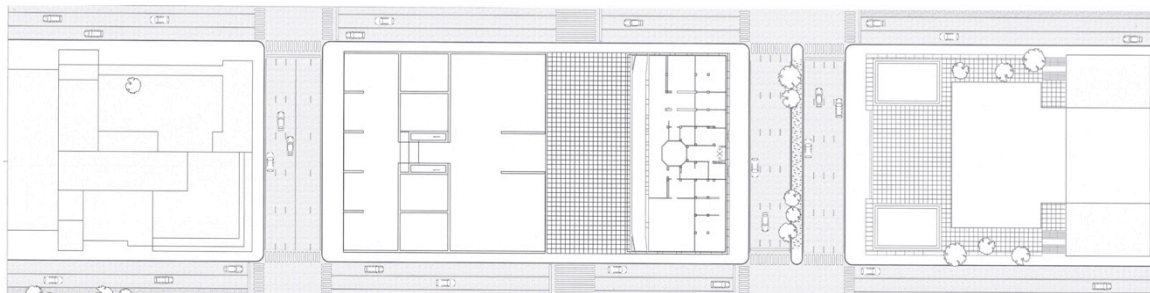


Figure 5
Plan from 53rd to 54th Avenues

Appendix 4 (continued): Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

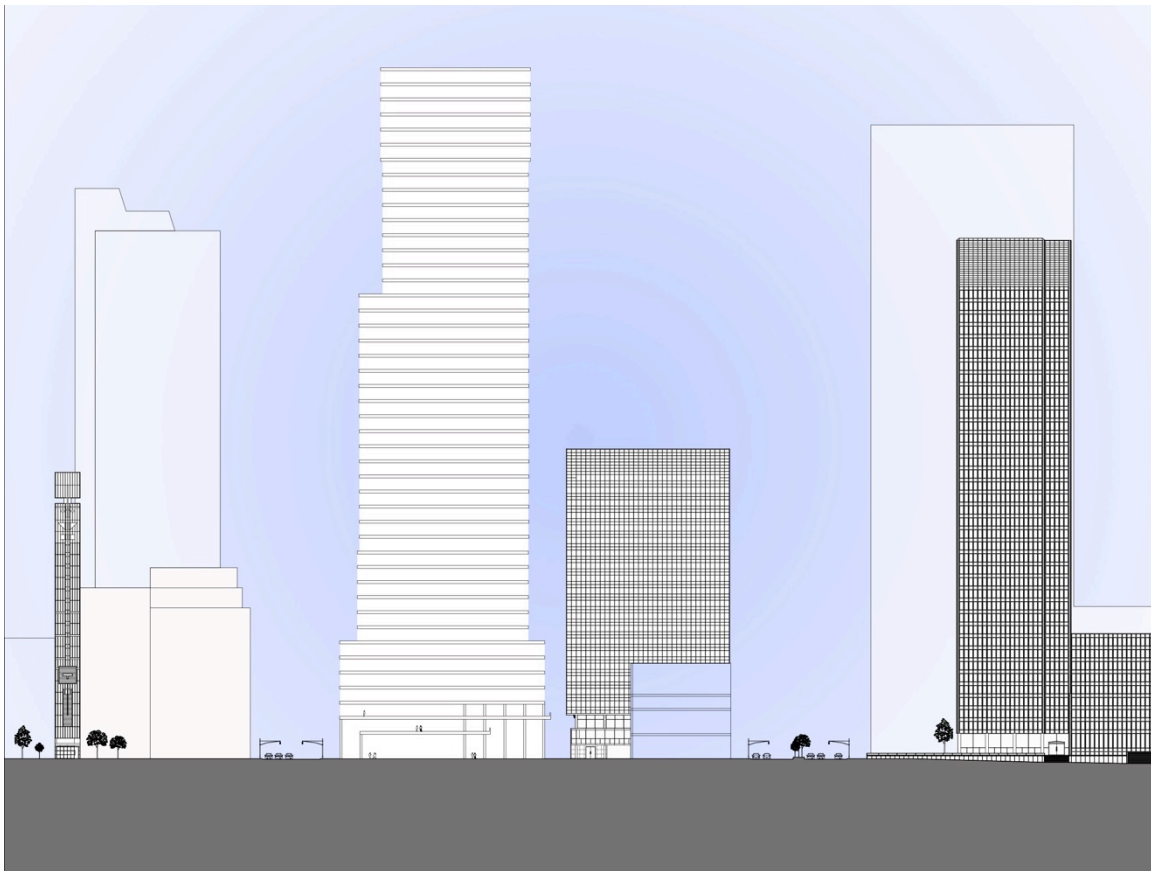


Figure 6
Section taken along 52nd Avenue facing North

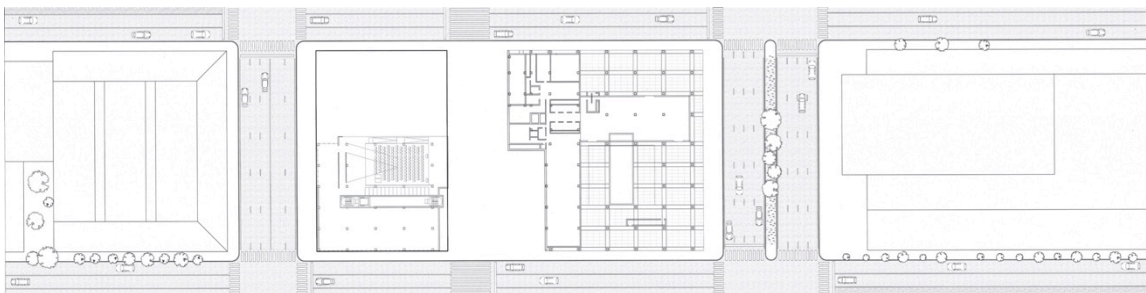


Figure 7
Plan from 52nd to 53rd Avenues

Appendix 4 (continued): Building of Sustainable Neighborhoods

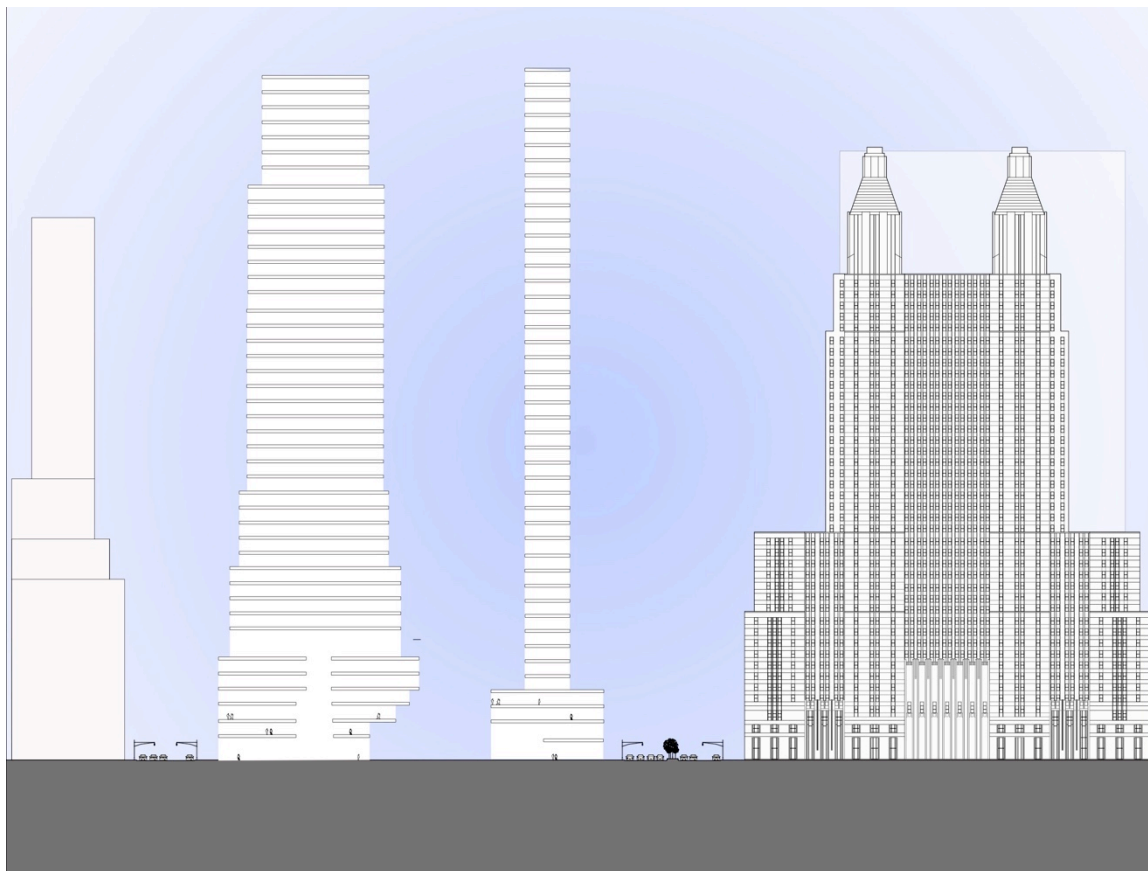


Figure 8
Section taken along 49th Avenue facing North

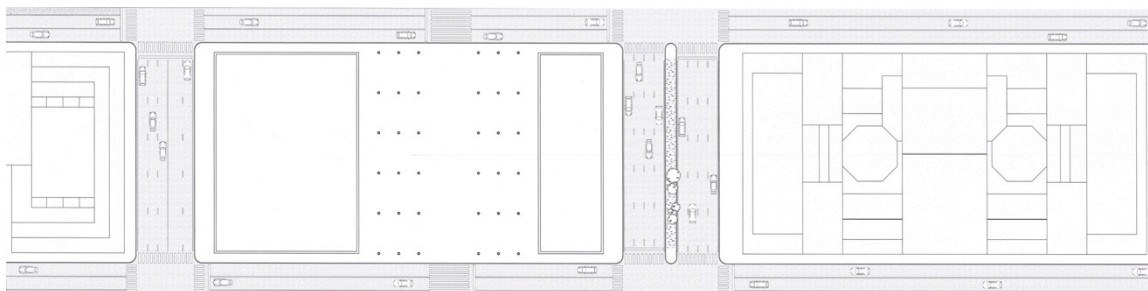


Figure 9
Plan from 49th to 50th Avenues

Appendix 5: Project Conclusion

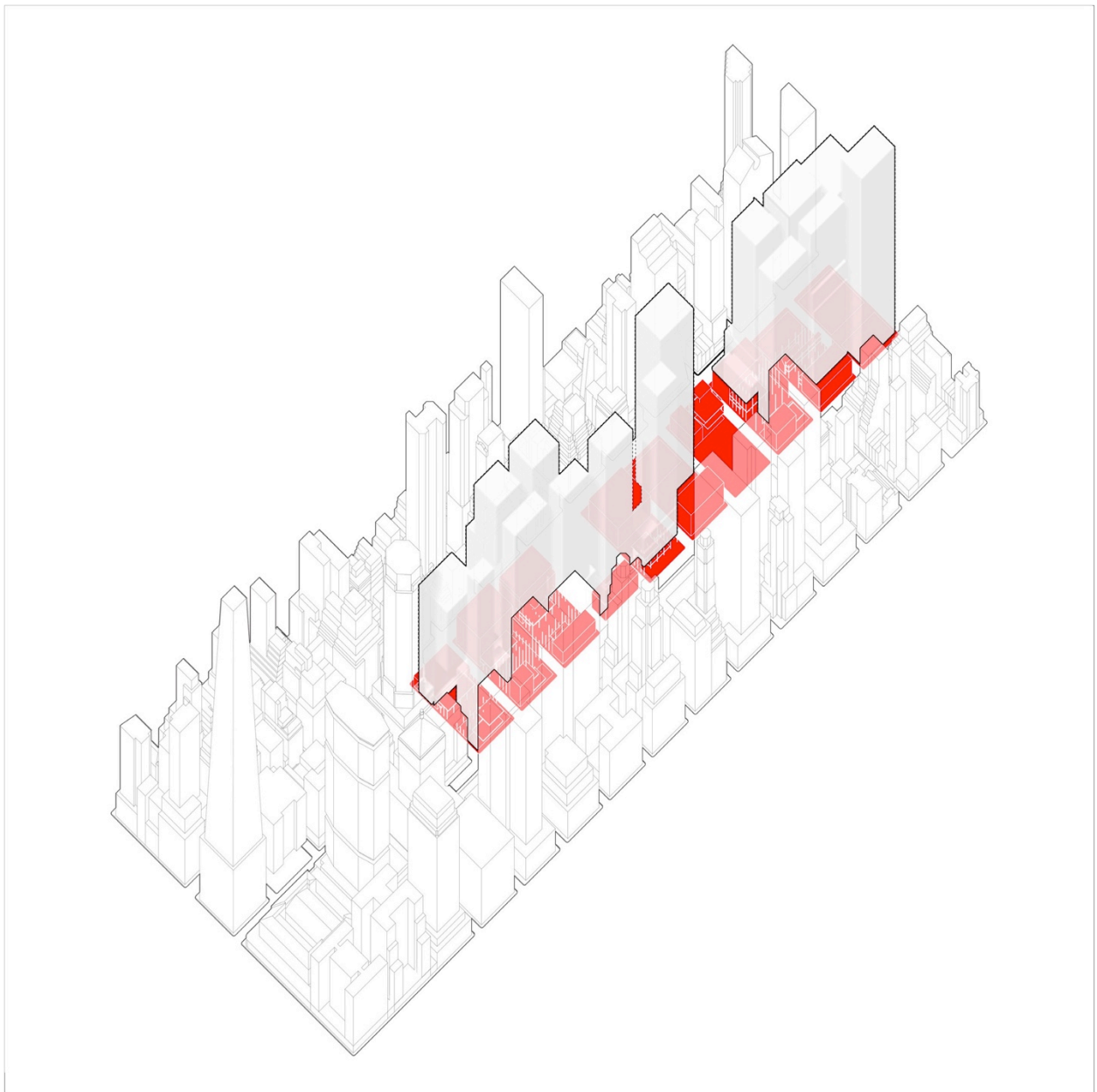


Figure 1
Axonometric Projection of Urban Design