6. Visual Resources

This chapter evaluates the potential effects of the Proposed Project on the visual character of the surrounding area. This assessment includes existing conditions, the No Action Alternative, and potential effects of the Proposed Project.

6.1 KEY CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Project would have no adverse impacts to visual resources. Key conclusions from this analysis include the following:

- All Proposed Project elements would be within or immediately adjacent to the existing railroad right-of-way and thus would not create any visual resource impacts beyond the HGL Corridor.
- Project elements, including new stations, pedestrian overpasses, platforms, substations, bridges, and new catenary, would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor and would be designed to be aesthetically compatible with the existing context.
- Overall, the Proposed Project would not be visually prominent and would not constitute an adverse visual effect.

6.2 METHODOLOGY

This chapter uses guidelines for visual analyses prepared by the FHWA,[1] including *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (January 2015). Although the Proposed Project is not a highway project, it shares similar components, including a linear transportation corridor that can be evaluated using the same methodology. In addition, pursuant to the FTA Circular 4220.1F, "Third Party Contracting Guidance," FTA recommends certain principles for procuring art works for transportation projects, including incorporating participation from the community surrounding the future facility.[2]

Visual resources typically include parks and recreation facilities; historic resources; other protected or iconic cultural resources such as scientific or natural areas, scenic byways, routes, and vistas; and vegetation, wildlife, ecological communities, and protected landscapes (e.g., wetlands, wildlife refuges, farmland). Viewer groups include residential and park uses along the HGL Corridor, pedestrians and motorists using the roadways near the HGL, and rail passengers. Pedestrians and motorists in the study area who travel along the streets near the HGL have views of the right-of-way. In general, pedestrians have longer view durations, because they are traveling at slower speeds, while motorists and rail passengers traveling at faster speeds have shorter view

[1] FHWA. January 2015. Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects. Accessed at: https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/env_topics/other_topics/VIA_Guidelines_for_Highway_Projects.aspx

[2] Chapter IV, Subsection 4.g; Accessed at: https://www.transit.dot.gov/sites/fta.dot.gov/files/docs/Third%20Party%20Contracting%20Guidance%20%28Circular%204220.1F%29.pdf

durations. In addition, residents have stationary views of the right-of-way. Rail passengers on the corridor have brief views of the right-of-way.

This analysis considers the effects of the Proposed Project on locations from which it would be visible; therefore, the study area for visual resources is defined as 500 feet around the HGL Corridor and ¼ mile around the proposed stations areas. Given the highly developed nature of the surrounding area and the presence of intervening structures, the Proposed Project elements would unlikely be visible from beyond those distances.

6.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The HGL Corridor study area and four station areas comprise a mix of land uses, including transportation, residential, utilities, public facilities/institutions (e.g., colleges, hospitals), and open spaces. Moving from south to north, the corridor is very dense and highly developed in the residential neighborhoods of Queens. The corridor crosses the East River into Randall's and Wards Islands, which contain predominantly open space resources and utility uses, and crosses the Bronx Kill into industrial areas of Port Morris in the Bronx. The areas surrounding the Parkchester-Van Nest and Morris Park areas are also highly developed mixed-use areas. The study area then transitions into the less dense areas of Co-op City and suburban, residential areas of Westchester County.

6.3.1 Segment 1 (Corridor)

6.3.1.1 Existing Visual Character

The predominantly residential neighborhoods of Astoria, which comprise mostly one- and two-family dwellings as well as multifamily apartment buildings, and low-density commercial and industrial uses along the corridor in Woodside, characterize Segment 1. The existing HGL right-of-way is elevated throughout much of Segment 1; therefore, views of the tracks are obscured and not visible (Photo 6-1; see Figure 6-1 for a photo key map). The corridor crosses the East River into Randall's and Wards Islands, which contain predominantly open space resources and utility uses, and crosses the Bronx Kill into industrial areas of Port Morris in the Bronx. The Hell Gate Bridge, which is a steel through-arch rail bridge connecting Queens to Randall's Island, is a visually prominent feature in the study area (Photo 6-2). The Randall's Island Connector crosses the Bronx Kill and links the Bronx and Randall's Island (Photo 6-3). No single building type or scale is visually dominant along the Segment 1 Corridor. The elevated HGL railroad itself acts as a visually dominant feature within the study area.

6.3.1.2 Visually Sensitive Resources

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources along the Segment 1 Corridor include Astoria Park, Ralph Demarco Park, Wards Island Park, and Randall's Island Park. Each of these parks has views of a portion of the HGL right-of-way. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," no visually sensitive historic resources are adjacent to the Segment 1 Corridor.

Figure 6-1. Photo Key Map: Segment 1 (Corridor)

Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Photo 6-1. Segment 1: View of elevated tracks looking east from Northern Boulevard

Photo 6-2. Segment 1: View of Hell Gate Bridge looking northwest from Astoria Park

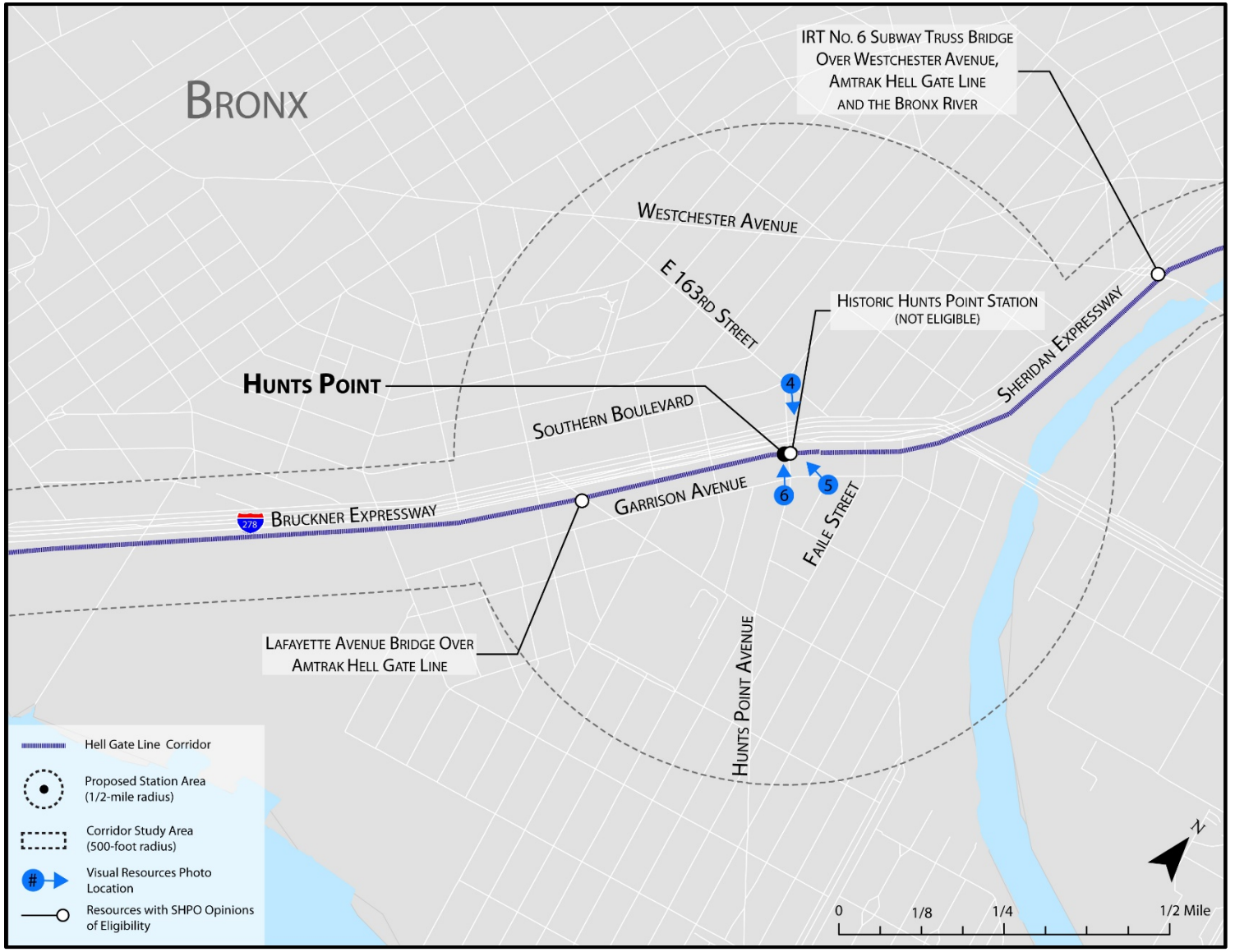
Photo 6-3. Segment 1: View of Randall's Island Connector looking northeast from Randall's Island Park

6.3.2 Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

6.3.2.1 Existing Visual Character

Land uses along the Segment 2 Corridor predominantly include transportation and utility uses, with some commercial uses. Beyond uses immediately adjacent to the right-of-way, the Hunts Point Station area comprises a mix of land uses, including one- and two-family residential, multifamily residential, commercial, mixed commercial/residential, public facilities/institutions, industrial, and transportation/utilities uses. No single building type or scale is visually dominant. To the north of the proposed Hunts Point Station, the NYCT Hunts Point Avenue No. 6 Line subway station is at Monsignor Raul Del Valle Square and includes an open public plaza area surrounded by multilane roadways. The elevated Bruckner Expressway, which bisects the station area directly above Bruckner Boulevard and parallel to the HGL right-of-way (Photo 6-4), defines the Hunts Point Station area. (See Figure 6-2 for a photo key map.) Several low-density commercial and industrial uses are immediately south of the railroad right-of-way (Photo 6-5). Residential uses are on the south side of Tremont Avenue. In this portion of the corridor, the HGL Corridor is below street level and is not visible from the street level (Photo 6-6).

Figure 6-2. Photo Key Map: Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Photo 6-4. Segment 2: View looking southeast along Hunts Point Avenue from Monsignor Raul Del Valle Square

Photo 6-5. Segment 2: View looking northwest along East Tremont Avenue from residences

Photo 6-6. Segment 2: View looking northwest along Hunts Point Avenue from Garrison Avenue

6.3.2.2 Visually Sensitive Resources

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources along the Segment 2 Corridor study area and Hunts Point Station area include Monsignor Raul Del Valle Square, Martin Luther King Triangle, Julio Carballo Fields, Bryant Hill Garden, Mildred T. Rhodebeck Garden, Hoe Garden, Lyons Square Playground, Printers Park, Long Fellow Garden, Concrete Plant Park, and Daniel Boone Playground; however, none of these open spaces have views to the railroad right-of-way. As described in Section 6.3.2.1, "Existing Visual Character," the Bruckner Expressway is a large and highly visible structure, blocking views from the north to the railroad right-of-way. In addition, multistory buildings to the south block views from any open spaces within the study area to the south. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," no visually sensitive historic resources are adjacent to the Segment 2 Corridor.

6.3.3 Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)

6.3.3.1 Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area

EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER

The Parkchester-Van Nest Station area comprises the ¼-mile radius around the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing right-of-way, parallel to East Tremont Avenue, with station access provided near Dogwood Drive. The Parkchester-Van Nest Station area generally extends to Kinsella Street to the north, Bronxdale Avenue to the east, Metropolitan Oval to the south, and Thieriot Avenue to the west. The corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest Station area comprise predominantly transportation and utility uses, as well as residential uses. To the north of the proposed station and north of East Tremont Avenue, the Con Edison Van Nest Maintenance Facility occupies a substantial portion of the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area; this facility contains two electrical transformers, two large industrial structures, and a parking lot (Photo 6-7). (See Figure 6-3 and Figure 6-4 for a photo key map.) North and west of the Con Edison Van Nest Maintenance Facility is the Van Nest neighborhood, which comprises lower-density residential uses and public facilities/institutions (e.g., colleges, hospitals).

South of the proposed station location, East Tremont Avenue runs parallel to the HGL right-of-way. Adjacent to the right-of-way are commercial and auto-related uses. The area in the immediate vicinity of the proposed new station contains no unique aesthetic elements or visual resources. South of East Tremont Avenue, high-rise residential uses associated with the Parkchester Condominium complex dominate the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area and have views of the HGL right-of-way. These residential buildings are uniform in style with similar heights and brick facades (Photo 6-8). The southwestern portion of the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area is predominantly one- and two-family residences with some commercial uses.

In this portion of the study area, the vertical profile of the existing railroad tracks is depressed and is not visible from most pedestrian vantage points. Vegetation blocks the views to the railroad right-of-way from Dogwood Drive, where station access is proposed (Photo 6-9). Immediately west of the proposed station, the Unionport Road and White Plains Road bridges pass over the railroad right-of-way. The bridges are lined with metal sheeting along the sides, blocking views toward the proposed station and the surrounding area (Photo 6-10).

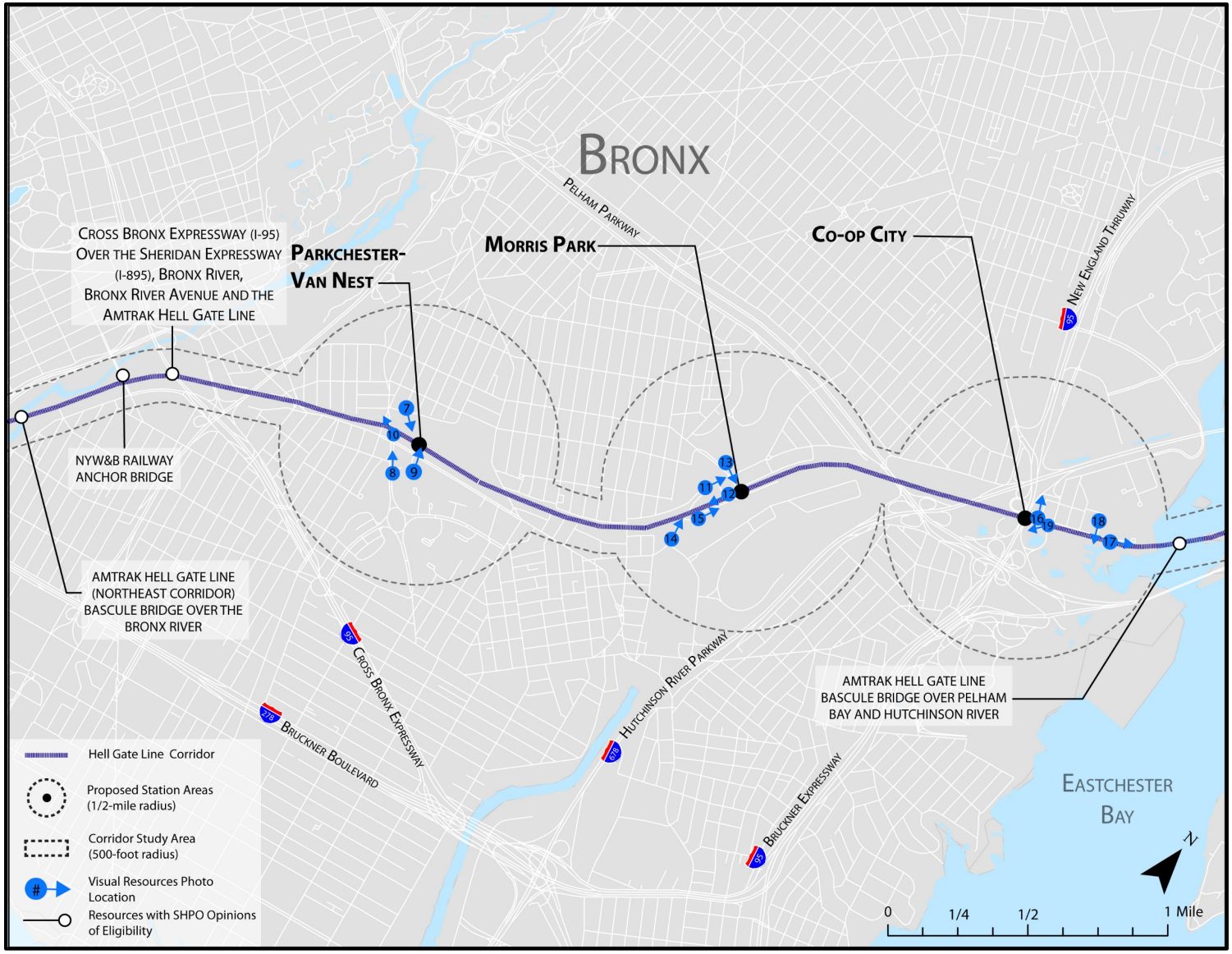
VISUALLY SENSITIVE RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources along the Segment 3 Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest Station area include Starlight Park, Noble Playground, Bronx River Parkway, Young Park, Van Nest Park, two Greenstreets,[1] and Metropolitan Oval Park. However, due to distance, intervening structures, and the depressed tracks in this area, these open space resources do not afford views of the HGL right-of-way.

As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," two New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)-eligible bridges are in the Segment 3 Corridor (see Figure 6-3). In addition, the Parkchester Apartment Complex is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places within the Parkchester-Van Nest Station area. However, none of these resources are categorized as a visually sensitive historic resource.

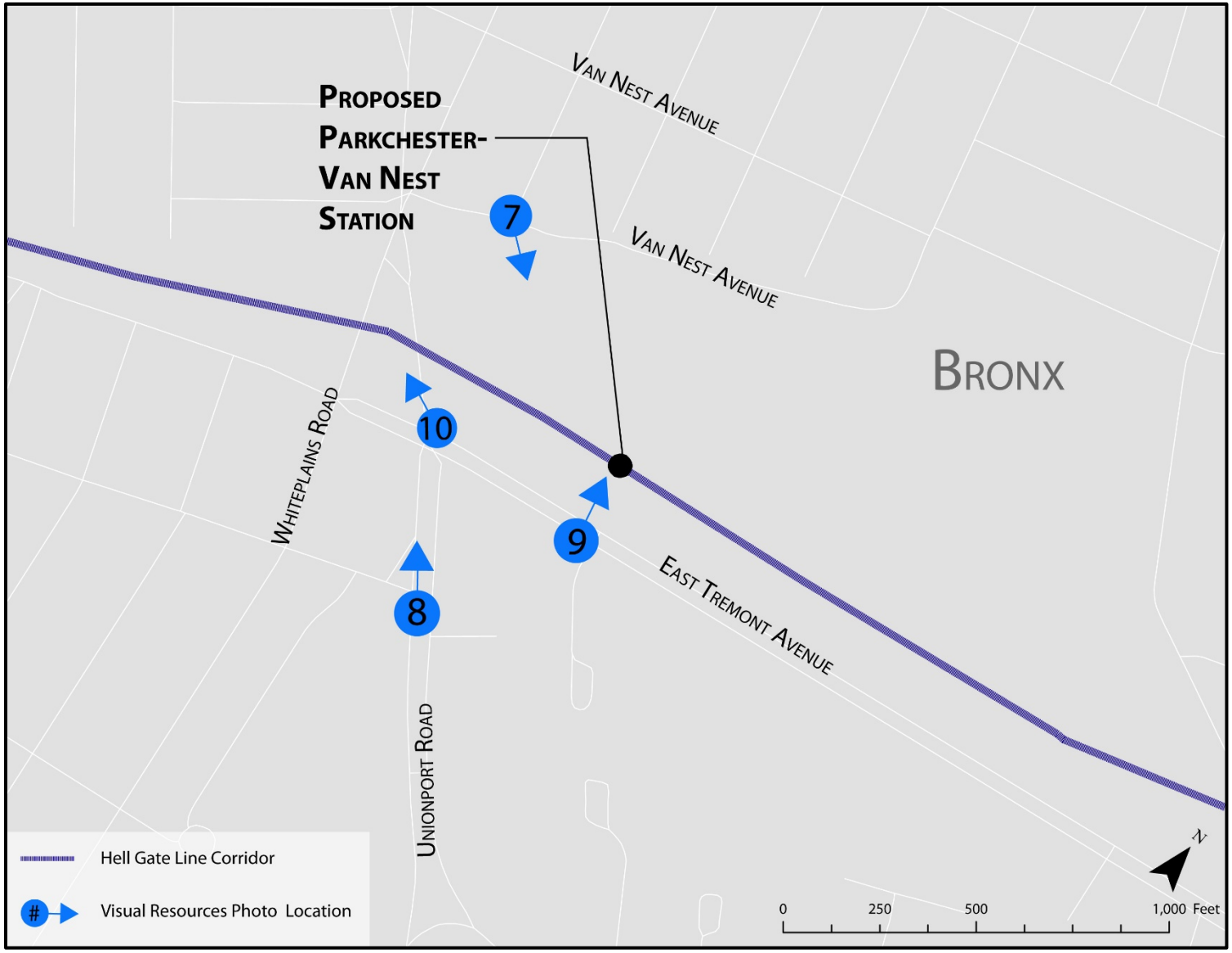
[1] The Greenstreets Program—administered by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection—converts paved, vacant traffic islands and medians into green spaces filled with trees, shrubs, and groundcover in an effort to capture stormwater.

Figure 6-3. Photo Key Map: Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester – Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Figure 6-4. Photo Key Map: Segment 3 (Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Photo 6-7. Segment 3: View looking southeast of Con Edison Van Nest Maintenance Facility

Photo 6-8. Segment 3: View looking northeast on Unionport Road

Photo 6-9. Segment 3: View looking north at Dogwood Drive

Photo 6-10. Segment 3: View looking north on Unionport Road Bridge

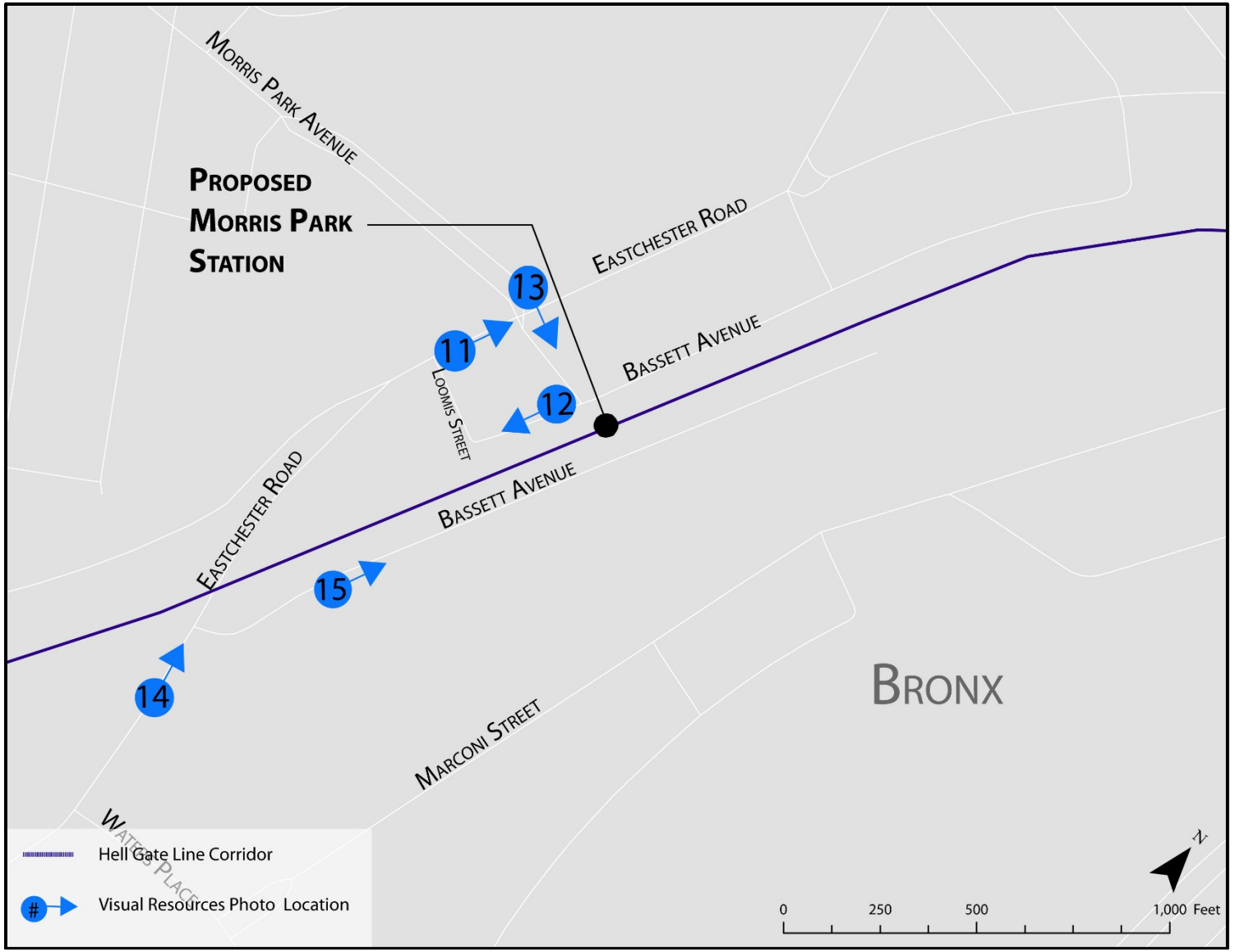
6.3.3.2 Morris Park Station Area

EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER

The Morris Park Station area comprises the ¼-mile radius around the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing railroad right-of-way parallel to Bassett Avenue near Morris Park Avenue. Seminole Street to the north, the Bronx Psychiatric Hospital to the east, Waters Place to the south, and Hering Avenue to the west generally bound the station area. While large public facilities/institutions (e.g., colleges, hospitals) primarily characterize the Morris Park Station area, a variety of building types and scales are throughout the station area.

To the west of the right-of-way and west of Eastchester Road, the campus of Yeshiva University - Albert Einstein College of Medicine includes several academic buildings, residence towers, and the affiliated Jack D. Weiler Hospital. The academic buildings, hospitals and residence towers affiliated with the Yeshiva University - Albert Einstein College of Medicine are the dominant visual elements in this portion of the station area (see Photo 6-11). See Figure 6-5 for a photo key map. These buildings rise above the intervening commercial and light industrial uses on the west side of Bassett Avenue and likely have views of the railroad right-of-way.

Figure 6-5. Photo Key Map: Segment 3 (Morris Park Station Area)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Photo 6-11. Segment 3: View looking north on Eastchester Road toward Yeshiva University - Albert Einstein College of Medicine

Photo 6-12. Segment 3: View looking southeast on Bassett Avenue toward right-of-way

Photo 6-13. Segment 3: View looking east on Morris Park Avenue toward right-of-way

Photo 6-14. Segment 3: View looking north on Eastchester Road toward rail bridge

Photo 6-15 Segment 3: View looking north on Bassett Avenue from Calvary Hospital

In the immediate vicinity of the proposed station location, mostly light industrial uses are along Bassett Avenue and the east side of Eastchester Road (see Photos 6-12 and 6-13), as well as several commercial uses and Yeshiva University - Albert Einstein College of Medicine campus near the intersection of Morris Park Avenue. Across the railroad tracks, the Metro Center Atrium is to the east of Basset Road. To the east of the railroad right-of-way are also the Calvary Hospital and the Bronx Psychiatric Hospital complexes, which includes three primary facilities as well as several baseball fields. No unique aesthetic elements or visual resources are in the immediate vicinity of the proposed station.

In the Morris Park Station area, the railroad tracks are at grade, except at Eastchester Road, where the railroad right-of-way passes above the road. The Eastchester Road rail bridge at this location is a prominent feature within the pedestrian sightline (see Photo 6-14). In addition, a vegetated buffer, featuring small trees and shrubs, is along Bassett Avenue to the east of the railroad right-of-way, across from the Calvary Hospital and the Metro Center Atrium (see Photo 6-15).

VISUALLY SENSITIVE RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources in the Morris Park Station area include a Greenstreet and open spaces associated with the Pelham Bay Parkway and Hutchinson River Parkway. However, because of distance and intervening structures, these open space resources do not have views of the existing railroad right-of-way. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," no visually sensitive historic resources are within the Morris Park Station area.

6.3.3.3 Co-op City Station Area

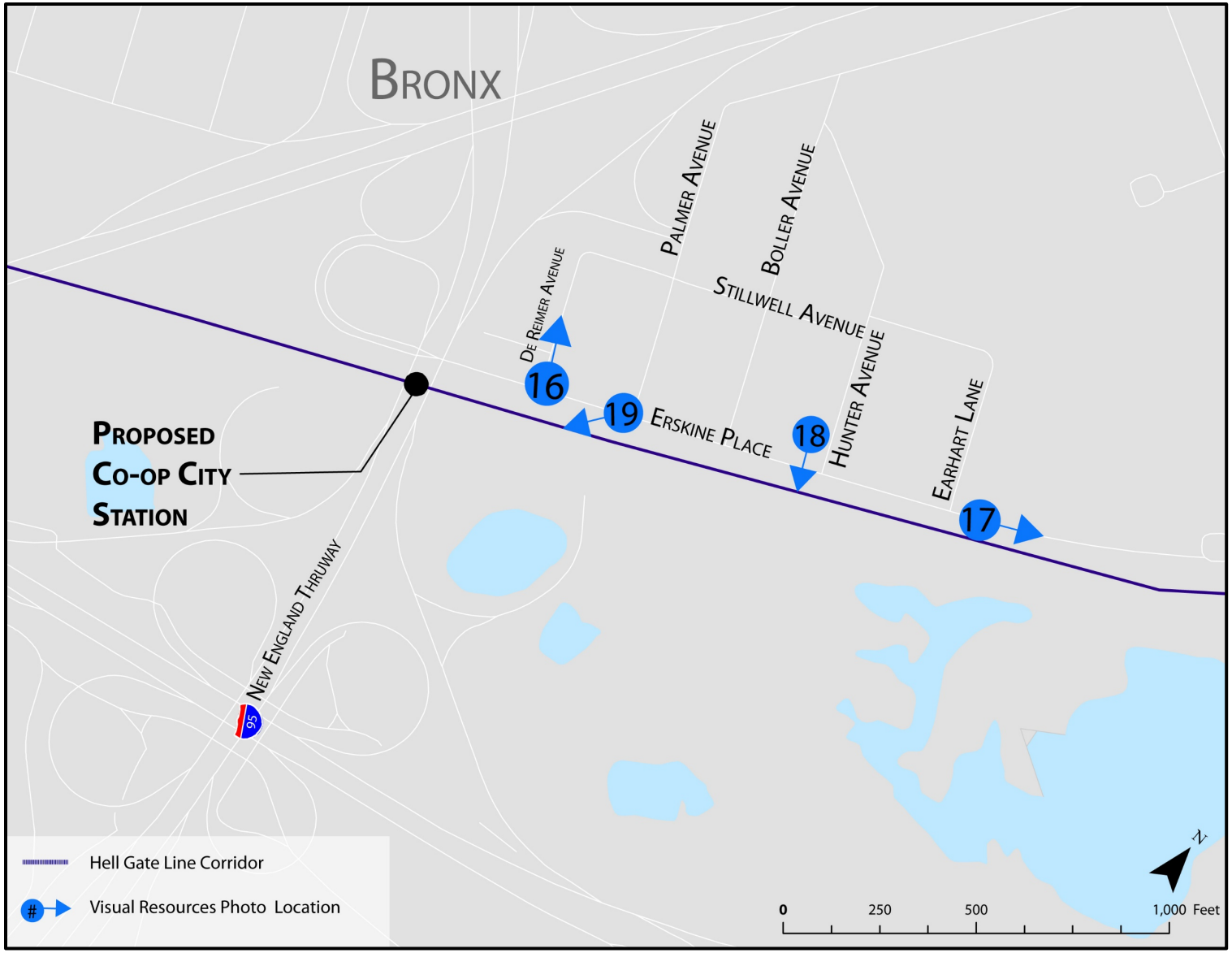
EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER

The Co-op City Station area comprises the ¼-mile radius around the proposed Metro-North station, which would be within the existing railroad right-of-way parallel to Erskine Place and north of Pelham Bay Park. The Co-op City Station area generally extends to the Hutchinson River Parkway and Baychester Avenue to the north, Hutchinson River to the east, and the Bronx and Pelham Parkway to the south. Residential uses to the north and open space uses to the south primarily characterize the Co-op City Station area.

Low-rise one- and two-story residential buildings on the side streets (Boller Avenue, Hunter Avenue, Palmer Avenue, and De Reimer Avenue) along Erskine Place are the predominant land uses to the northwest of the proposed station (Photo 6-16; see Figure 6-6 for a photo key map). High-rise residential uses associated with Co-op City define the northeastern portion of the station area, which are a dominant visual element in the station area (Photo 6-17). Pelham Bay Park is the dominant visual feature to the south of the existing right-of-way, serving as a unique aesthetic and visual resource (Photo 6-18). Pelham Bay Park is the largest park in New York City and provides numerous amenities for active and passive recreation.

In this portion of the station area, the rail tracks are largely at grade. The HGL Corridor splits the study area between residential uses to the north and Pelham Bay Park to the south. Trees as well as vegetation and fencing that line the south side of Erskine Place at the edge of the rail right-of-way partially obstruct some views toward the corridor and Pelham Bay Park. West of the proposed station, the I-95 overpass above Erskine Place creates a visually dominant feature (Photo 6-19). The Pelham Bay Bridge crosses the Hutchinson River and acts as a dominant visual feature in the station area.

Figure 6-6. Photo Key Map: Segment 3 (Co-op City Station Area)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning and WSP, 2019

Photo 6-16. Segment 3: View looking northeast on Erskine Place at De Reimer Avenue

Photo 6-17. Segment 3: View looking northeast on Erskine Place at Co-op City

Photo 6-18. Segment 3: View looking south on Erskine Place at Pelham Bay Park

Photo 6-19. Segment 3: View looking southwest on Erskine Place at I-95 overpass

VISUALLY SENSITIVE RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources in the Co-op City Station area include Pelham Bay Park and portions of Hutchinson River Parkway. Private recreational facilities associated with Co-op City also have views of the right-of-way. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," the Pelham Bay Park Historic District is a visually sensitive historic resource within the Co-op City Station area.

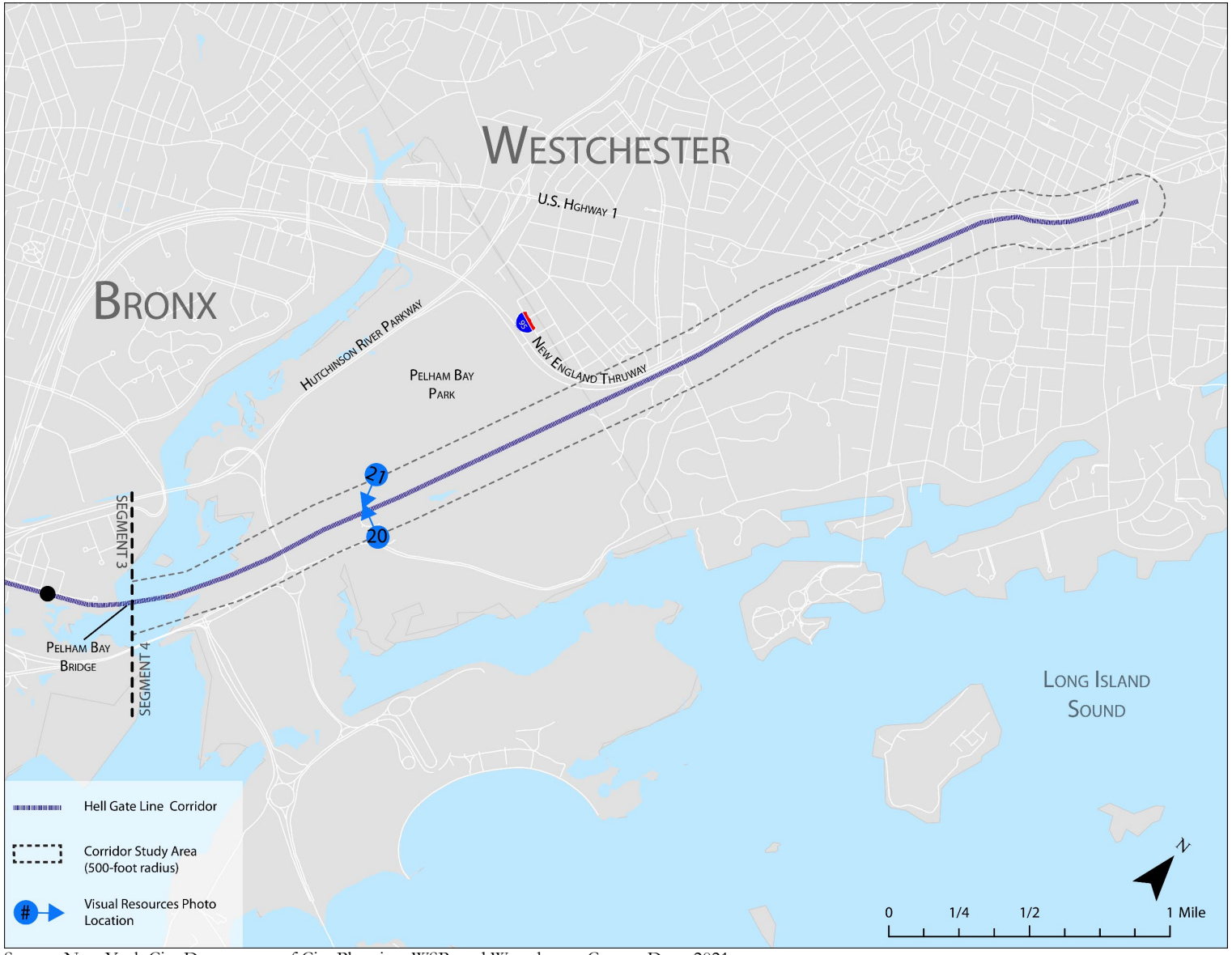
6.3.4 Segment 4 (Corridor)

6.3.4.1 Existing Visual Character

The Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses, which are part of the National Register-eligible Pelham Bay Park Historic District, characterize the western portion of the Segment 4 Corridor. Within the park, the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge is a National Register-eligible resource. The corridor then passes through a suburban, residential community in Pelham Manor of Westchester County. Farther east, the corridor transitions into a mixed-use area with a range of residential, commercial, transportation/utility, and industrial uses.

Along Segment 4, the railroad right-of-way begins at-grade near Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses and gradually elevates above street level, with several roads passing underneath. Photos 6-20 and 6-21 show Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge, within the natural setting of the Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses. (See Figure 6-7 for a photo key map.)

Figure 6-7. Photo Key Map: Segment 4 (Corridor)



Source: New York City Department of City Planning; WSP; and Westchester County Data, 2021

Photo 6-20. Segment 4: View looking northwest at Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge

Photo 6-21. Segment 4: View looking southeast at Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge

6.3.4.2 Visually Sensitive Resources

As described in Chapter 7, "Public Open Space and Recreation," open space resources along the Segment 4 Corridor include Pelham Bay and Split Rock Golf Courses, Pelham Bay Park, Sycamore Park, and Library Green. However, Sycamore Park and Library Green do not have views of the railroad right-of-way, because they are obstructed by vegetation, I-95, and multistory apartment buildings. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Historic Resources," the Pelham Bay Park Historic District and the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge are visually sensitive historic resources adjacent to and within the Segment 4 Corridor, respectively.

6.4 NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE

Under the No Action Alternative, the HGL Corridor will continue to operate as it does today. The No Action Alternative will not provide new passenger rail service. Populations near the proposed stations and within the study area will not receive the transportation benefits from enhanced transportation access to and from PSNY and destinations north of the city. Without the proposed stations and the addition of Metro-North service, residents and employees in the study area will continue to use transportation options currently available to them, including subway, bus, and private vehicles. Under the No Action Alternative, the proposed stations will not be built and will not change the visual character of the study area. In addition, no visual change will be experienced along the HGL Corridor.

As described in Chapter 3, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," by 2025, while MTA anticipates no programmed and committed development projects within Segment 1, MTA does anticipate five within Segment 2, six within Segment 3, and two within Segment 4. The planned development projects consist of primarily residential and mixed-use projects. In addition to these real estate development projects, several programmed and committed transportation capacity and enhancement projects will be implemented by 2025 (see Chapter 2, "Project Alternatives"). MTA anticipates that none of these projects will result in substantial changes to visually sensitive resources or change the visual character of the area. However, the future construction of the proposed new Pelham Bay Bridge could alter views from the Co-op City Station area over the Hutchinson River.

6.5 PROPOSED PROJECT

The Proposed Project includes several major infrastructure elements. The Proposed Project would construct new passenger tracks along a 15-mile segment of the railroad right-of-way and construct four new passenger stations. The Proposed Project is in the early stages of design; however, at the time of preparation of this EA, MTA anticipates that each station would include an island (center) platform that can serve trains of up to 10 rail cars of similar lengths (875 feet). Each station would have standard platform amenities and a passenger overpass with stairs and ADA-compliant elevators for access to/from the nearest sidewalk adjacent to or above the HGL tracks. The new station infrastructure would be a similar height or lower than the existing surrounding buildings. Figure 6-8 provides example renderings of a typical Metro-North station and pedestrian overpass.

Figure 6-8. Sample Renderings of Station and Pedestrian Overpass

Source: Metro-North, 2018

MTA would have to upgrade the electrical power system to accommodate the additional tracks and future increased train traffic on the HGL, which would include the following:

- Constructing up to two DC substations and two AC distribution substations
- Upgrading the AC distribution station at Amtrak's Bowery Bay (Queens)
- Replacing one new AC supply substation at New Rochelle
- Replacing one existing AC supply substation at Van Nest

Figure 6-9 depicts an example of a proposed substation. In addition, the Proposed Project would upgrade the signal system and linearly expand Metro-North's New Rochelle Yard in Westchester County for the Proposed Project's train equipment storage. The Proposed Project would replace existing catenary for existing tracks and interlockings, and install new catenary for the new tracks and interlockings. The Proposed Project would also rehabilitate or replace bridges at Bronxdale Avenue, Eastchester Road, and Pelham Lane within Pelham Bay Park; rehabilitate the bridge at the Bronx River; and construct a new two-span bridge over the Bronx River.

Figure 6-9. Typical Substation

Source: Metro-North, 2018

All Proposed Project elements would be within or immediately adjacent to the railroad right-of-way or on Amtrak property. Project elements would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor. The design of each would be consistent with the existing character of the surrounding neighborhoods. The Proposed Project would include new pedestrian overpasses and would be designed to be consistent with the existing railroad infrastructure. MTA would construct new platforms in a manner consistent with the aesthetic of the existing platforms elsewhere along the corridor. The proposed stations would be an attractive addition to the study area. MTA would design the substations to be consistent with the existing railroad infrastructure. Any new catenary would be in keeping with height of other catenary poles along the corridor. Overall, the Proposed Project would not be visually prominent and would not result in any adverse visual effects.

6.5.1 Segment 1 (Corridor)

Although MTA and the design-builder would refine the exact locations with advanced design, the Proposed Project would include two potential DC substation locations (Gate and Woodside) along Segment 1. The Proposed Project would also upgrade the existing Bowery Bay AC Substation to power the catenary. The construction of the Gate Substation and access road would require the removal of a large number of trees along

the railroad right-of-way. The trees are currently only visible by rail passengers on the HGL and by the adjacent distribution center; therefore, the new substation would not be visible from nearby neighborhoods. As described in Section 6.3.1, "Segment 1 (Corridor)," the elevated HGL railroad acts as a visually prominent feature within Segment 1 and would obscure views of the proposed tracks and the new project elements from the surrounding neighborhood. In addition, these project elements would be consistent with the existing visual character of the area. Therefore, MTA anticipates no adverse visual effects from the Proposed Project along Segment 1.

6.5.2 Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)

In Segment 2, the Proposed Project would construct two new interlockings (Leggett and Young Interlockings), a new Oak AC Substation, the proposed Hunts Point Station, and a new two-span bridge over the Bronx River, as well as rehabilitate the existing Bronx River Bridge. MTA and the design-builder would confirm the location of the proposed Oak AC Substation during final design but the substation would generally be west of Oak Point Yard and East 149th Street in an area of commercial and industrial development. Because the Oak AC Substation would be within the floodplain, MTA would either elevate the substation on a platform or protect it with flood walls. Such protective measures would make the proposed substation more visually prominent; however, the design would be consistent with the surrounding area and existing land uses. MTA would locate Leggett Interlocking to the south of Oak Point Yard, and would include a signal house and catenary poles that the design-builder would design to be consistent with the existing railroad infrastructure and surrounding area. MTA would locate Young Interlocking just west of Hunts Point Avenue and the proposed Hunts Point Station and would include infrastructure similar to the Leggett Interlocking.

MTA would construct Hunts Points Station in the existing railroad right-of-way below street level, parallel to Bruckner Boulevard and the elevated Bruckner Expressway, with station access from street level at Hunts Point Avenue. While MTA would design the new pedestrian overpass to be consistent with the aesthetics of the existing context, as described in Section 6.3.2, "Segment 2 (Corridor and Hunts Point Station Area)," the Bruckner Expressway is a prominent visual feature in the study area that would limit views to the proposed station and overpass. Because the right-of-way is below street level, MTA anticipates that no adverse visual effects from the proposed Hunts Point Station.

The Proposed Project would repair and strengthen the Bronx River Bridge to carry additional train traffic. All rehabilitation work would occur within the existing footprint of the Bronx River Bridge. From a pedestrian view, the design of the bridge would remain largely the same; therefore, rehabilitation of the bridge would unlikely result in adverse effects on visual and aesthetic conditions. MTA would locate the proposed new bridge, which would be a lower height and smaller bulk than the existing bridge, over the Bronx River close to the existing bridge. Residential areas to the north and west by the Sheridan Expressway and to the east by the existing Bronx River Bridge would block views of the new bridge. Users of Starlight Park, particularly from Phase II, which is currently under construction, could view the new bridge; however, the bridge would be consistent with the existing bridge and railroad infrastructure. Therefore, the new bridge would unlikely result in adverse effects on visual and aesthetic conditions.

6.5.3 Segment 3 (Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest, Morris Park, and Co-op City Station Areas)

In Segment 3, the Proposed Project would replace the existing Van Nest AC Substation. The new substation would be immediately adjacent to the railroad right-of-way, within an existing parking lot along East Tremont Avenue on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from the existing Con Edison Van Nest Maintenance Facility. As with the proposed Parkchester-Van Nest Station (discussed below), the substation would be fully visible only to residents of the Parkchester Apartment Complex. The project element would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor and would not be out-of-scale with the existing 7- to 13-story-high Parkchester Apartment Complex buildings. The proposed Van Nest AC Substation would not have visual effects on the Parkchester Apartment Complex because, the design-builder would incorporate contextually sensitive design elements into the substation facade, as appropriate based on community input. Chapter 9, "Historic Resources" discusses this further.

MTA would construct a new Co-op City AC Substation, requiring MTA to remove a number of trees along the right-of-way. The proposed Co-op City AC Substation would be within the floodplain, requiring MTA to either elevate the substation on a platform or protect the substation with flood walls. Such protective measures would make the proposed substation more visually prominent; however, the design would be consistent with existing infrastructure and the surrounding area. MTA would construct one new interlocking (Tremont Interlocking), and would reconfigure the Pelham Bay Interlocking. The design-builder would design substations and interlockings, including the signal house and catenary poles, to be consistent with the existing railroad infrastructure, which would not constitute an adverse visual effect.

In addition, along Segment 3, the Eastchester Road and Bronxdale Avenue rail bridges could be rehabilitated or replaced, depending on the decision of the design-builder. MTA would rehabilitate or place the rail bridges within the existing footprints of each bridge. Both the Eastchester Road and Bronxdale Avenue rail bridges have the potential to carry six tracks but currently only have three tracks. Therefore, the Proposed Project would realign the tracks and replace the existing superstructure. While the design-builder would refine details during final design, MTA does not anticipate that changes to the rail bridges would result in any changes to height or bulk. From a pedestrian view, the design of the bridges would remain largely the same; therefore, work on these bridges would unlikely result in adverse effects on visual and aesthetic conditions.

6.5.3.1 Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area

The proposed Parkchester-Van Nest Station would be constructed along East Tremont Avenue, east of White Plains Road, with station access at a location approximately across from Dogwood Drive. In this portion of the study area, the vertical profile of the existing track bed gradually depresses below street level from east to west. Because of this gradual depression, the proposed station would be only partially visible at street level along East Tremont Avenue and fully visible only to residents of the Parkchester Apartment Complex. Metal-sheet siding on the Unionport Road Bridge would block views of the station from the bridge, and the Con Edison Van Nest Maintenance Facility's buildings and expansive parking area would limit views of the station from the Van Nest neighborhood. As described in Section 6.3.3.1, "Corridor and Parkchester-Van Nest Station Area," project elements would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor. The Proposed Project would not have visual effects on the Parkchester Apartment Complex because, the proposed station design would celebrate the local community character by incorporating contextually sensitive design elements into the station architecture, as appropriate and consistent with Metro-North standards. Chapter 9, "Historic Resources" discusses this further.

6.5.3.2 Morris Park Station Area

The proposed Morris Park Station would be constructed along Bassett Avenue, with station access at Morris Park Avenue and Bassett Avenue. The proposed Morris Park Station could be visible to public facilities/institutions (e.g., educational and medical facilities) in the area. A vegetated buffer to the south would block some views, particularly at pedestrian level. As described in Section 6.3.3.2, "Morris Park Station Area," project elements would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor. While the overpass and station canopy would be new visual features, the design-builder would design these features to complement the visual character of the existing transportation infrastructure; therefore, MTA anticipates no adverse visual effects.

6.5.3.3 Co-op City Station Area

MTA would construct the proposed Co-op City Station at street level, along Erskine Place. In this portion of the station area, the vertical profile of the existing track is largely at grade; therefore, the proposed Co-op City Station, would be visible from Erskine Place and from limited locations within the immediate residential community. The proposed station and pedestrian overpass could alter views from some locations within the residential uses to Pelham Bay Park, located to the south of the right-of-way. However, fencing and vegetation along Erskine Place already obstruct some views. Because the station would be primarily underneath the I-95 overpass, with an entrance at De Reimer Avenue, only a small number of residences would have a visual impact from the new station. Project elements would be in keeping with railroad infrastructure already present throughout the corridor and the design-builder would design these project elements to complement the existing visual character. In addition, as advanced design progresses and to the extent feasible, the design-builder would consider the accommodation of views toward the park in the design plans for the station canopy, platform, and pedestrian overpass. The proposed station would alter views from the south from Pelham Bay Park. Those views already comprise a built, urban environment of the rail right-of-way, low-rise residential structures, and the elevated highway with a backdrop of high-rise apartment buildings. In addition, because public access to Pelham Bay Park is on the distant southern side of the park, the proposed station's pedestrian overpass would not be visible to most park users; therefore, MTA does not expect the proposed station to create any adverse visual effects.

6.5.4 Segment 4 (Corridor)

The Proposed Project would not result in substantial visual changes along the Segment 4 Corridor. In most areas along the Segment 4 Corridor, vegetation and trees obscure views to the right-of-way; therefore, many views of project elements would not be visible. The key project elements in this segment would include constructing a new Bronx Interlocking, rehabilitating or replacing the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge (depending on the decision of the design-builder), and expanding the New Rochelle Yard. Similar to the Eastchester Road and Bronxdale Avenue rail bridges, MTA would repair and strengthen (or potentially replace) the Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge decks and girders to accommodate additional train traffic.

The Pelham Lane Pathway Bridge is eligible for listing on the National Register and is located on a section of the railroad right-of-way that passes through Pelham Bay Park and Pelham Bay Park Historic District. While the design-builder would refine the design as the Proposed Project progresses, MTA does not anticipate that strengthening the rail bridge would result in any modifications to the height or bulk of the bridge structure. The bridge may be viewed by users of Pelham Bay Park, particularly golfers and horseback riders that utilize the pathways that cross underneath the bridge; however, the rehabilitated or new bridge would be consistent with the existing bridge and railroad infrastructure. In addition, following the process outlined in the Draft

Programmatic Agreement (Appendix G, "Historic, Archaeological, and Cultural Information"), SHPO would review and approve the design of the rehabilitated or new bridge to ensure the design-builder incorporates visual and aesthetic elements compatible with the existing historic bridge. The Proposed Project would not have adverse visual effects on the Pelham Bay Historic District because, the proposed bridge design would incorporate historically-sensitive design elements, as appropriate. Chapter 9, "Historic Resources" discusses this further.

New Rochelle Yard is within a commercial area of New Rochelle, just east of New Rochelle Station. The proposed linear expansion of the yard would include the following:

- Three stub-end tracks with overhead catenary power
- Additional track for maintenance-of-way vehicles
- New employee-welfare facilities

Retaining walls would be constructed to protect the yard space from the main line tracks and to separate the yard from adjacent land uses. The expansion would be consistent with the existing yard and would not block existing views from the adjacent area. The alterations would not likely result in adverse effects to visual and aesthetic conditions; therefore, MTA anticipates no adverse visual effects from the Proposed Project along the Segment 4 Corridor.

6.6 CONCLUSION

Overall, the Proposed Project would not be visually prominent. The new stations would be consistent with the height of existing surrounding buildings. Similarly, other project elements, such as substations, would be consistent with the existing surrounding transportation and utility uses. The Proposed Project elements would largely be within the existing railroad right-of-way and would be consistent with the existing development; therefore, the Proposed Project would have no adverse impacts to visual resources.