

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the potential of the proposed project to affect architectural and archaeological resources on the project site and in the surrounding area. The proposed project would result in redevelopment of the Victoria Theater site, which contains a vacant State-owned theater that has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Victoria Theater comprises two buildings. The South Building fronts onto West 125th Street and contains the original entrance and lobby of the theater. The North Building is located on West 126th Street and contains the former auditorium and other accessory public spaces. The proposed project would retain, restore, and reuse the South Building as part of the proposed project and redevelop the site of the North Building with residential, hotel, commercial, and cultural uses in a new building. Among the objectives of the proposed project is to preserve and foster Harlem's cultural heritage through the retention and restoration, to the extent practicable, of significant elements of the Victoria Theater.

The historic and cultural resources analysis has been prepared in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and under Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. This technical analysis follows the guidance of the 2010 *CEQR Technical Manual*.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS*ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES*

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) has reviewed the archaeological sensitivity of the project site. In a letter dated February 13, 2012, OPRHP indicated that they have no concerns regarding potential impacts on archaeological resources. In comments dated June 21, 2012, LPC concurred that the project site has no archaeological significance (see Appendix A, "Correspondence"). Therefore, the proposed project would have no adverse impact on such resources.

*ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES**Project Site*

Due to the historic significance of the Victoria Theater, the project sponsors have evaluated the potential for retaining and reusing the Victoria Theater in its entirety. As discussed in greater detail in Appendix B, "Historic Resources," meeting the project's cultural, community, and economic development goals and objectives through retention of the entire structure, with or without a new tower built above it, is not feasible. For reasons explained more fully in the alternatives analysis, it was determined that it is feasible to retain and restore the South Building as a major preservation component of the proposed project, but not feasible to retain and reuse

the North Building. Therefore, the project proposes to retain, restore, and reuse the South Building as part of the proposed project and demolish the North Building to construct a new building with cultural, commercial, residential and hotel uses. Demolition of the North Building would constitute an adverse impact on historic resources, requiring that mitigation measures be developed among the project sponsors, the Harlem Community Development Corporation (HCDC), Empire State Development (ESD), and OPRHP. The Alternatives Analysis was provided to OPRHP on February 17, 2012, along with reports that were prepared documenting the conditions of the North and South Buildings. Based upon the review of these materials, OPRHP concurred in a letter dated April 23, 2012 that there are no prudent or feasible alternatives to having an adverse impact on the Victoria Theater.

Proposed mitigation measures would be set forth in a Letter of Resolution (LOR) to be executed among the project sponsors, HCDC, ESD, and OPRHP, pursuant to Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (a draft of the LOR is included in Appendix B.3). Mitigation measures that have been identified through the Section 14.09 process include the retention, restoration, and reuse of the South Building, specifically the restoration of the West 125th Street façade, and restoration or replication of the front entrance doors, vertical blade sign, horizontal marquee, lobby, and foyer; the possible salvage and reuse of the north canvas mural from the balcony level of the auditorium and possible salvage and reuse of the water fountain mosaics located in the North Building; potential salvage and reuse of other architectural elements in the North Building; the use of new lighting that is referential to the theater's original (1917) design; recreation of the theater's former ticket booth on West 125th Street to serve as a signage element; and the installation of educational materials within the proposed project concerning the theater's history and its role as part of Harlem's "Opera Row."

To avoid potential inadvertent construction-related impacts on the South Building during project demolition and construction activities, a Construction Protection Plan (CPP) would be prepared by the project sponsors. The CPP would describe the measures to be implemented during project demolition, excavation, and construction activities to protect the South Building and would be developed in consultation with OPRHP and implemented by a professional engineer.

Study Area

To avoid potential inadvertent construction-related impacts on the Apollo Theater, which is adjacent to the project site, the CPP to be prepared for the project would include measures to protect this resource.

The proposed project would not have any direct, physical or contextual effects to study area architectural resources that would result in significant adverse impacts on those resources. The project would not adversely affect the context or setting of architectural resources or alter the qualities for which they have been determined significant. The project would also not obstruct views to architectural resources or introduce significant new shadows on architectural resources that have sunlight-dependent features (also see Chapter 6, "Shadows").

B. METHODOLOGY

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

The study area for archaeological resources is defined as the area where subsurface disturbance would occur. For this project, the study area for archaeological resources is the site of the Victoria Theater. The North Building is proposed to be demolished and replaced with a new

structure, and it is possible that subsurface excavation also could occur in the area of the South Building, which would be retained and restored. Specifically, the area below the basement of the South Building could be excavated to create more usable space at the basement level.

An initial assessment regarding archaeological concerns for this study area was requested from OPRHP. In a letter dated February 13, 2012, OPRHP indicated that they have no concerns regarding potential impacts on archaeological resources.

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

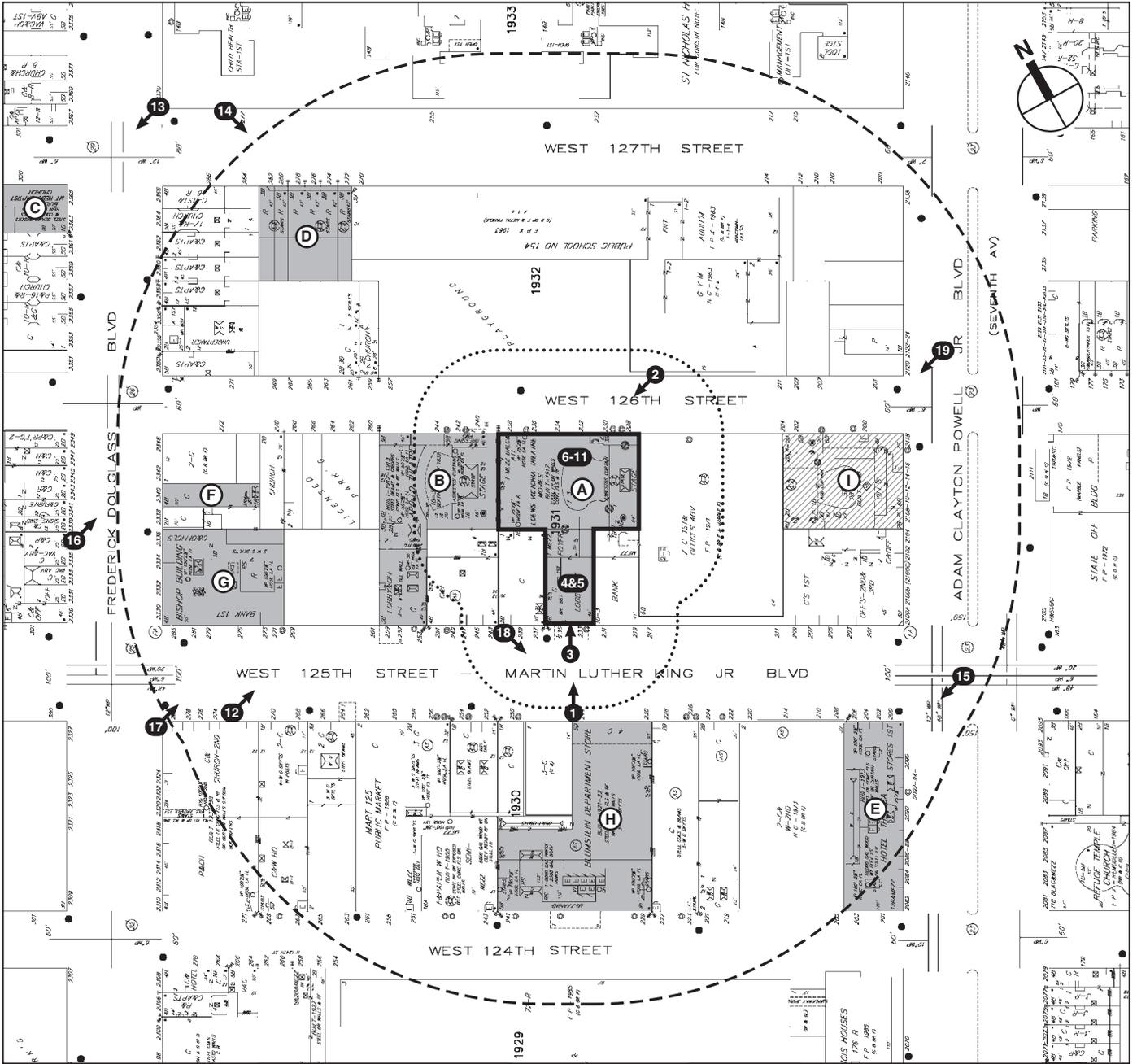
Study areas for architectural resources are determined based on an area of potential effect for construction-period impacts, such as ground-borne vibrations, and on the area of potential effect for visual or contextual effects, which is usually a larger area. The study area for this analysis has been defined as the project site and the area within 400 feet of the project site's boundaries (see **Figure 7-1**). This study area is consistent with the *CEQR Technical Manual's* methodology in developing study areas to assess an action's potential impacts on architectural resources, which indicates that the size of the study area should be directly related to the anticipated extent of the action's impacts.

To assess the potential impacts of the proposed project, an inventory of architectural resources in the study area was compiled. In accordance with CEQR guidelines, the inventory includes all officially recognized architectural resources. These resources ("known architectural resources") are defined as National Historic Landmarks (NHLs); properties or districts listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), or previously determined to be eligible for such listing; New York City Landmarks (NYCLs) and Historic Districts (NYCHDs); and properties that have been considered for designation ("heard") by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) at a public hearing, calendared for consideration at such a hearing ("pending" NYCLs), or found by LPC to appear eligible for designation.

In addition to identifying known architectural resources, an evaluation of the study area was undertaken to identify any "potential architectural resources;" that is, other buildings in the study area that could warrant recognition as architectural resources (properties that could be eligible for S/NR listing or NYCL designation). Properties were evaluated based on site visits by an architectural historian. Identification of potential architectural resources was based on criteria for listing on the National Register as found in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 36, part 60, and the LPC criteria for NYCL/NYCHD designation.

Once the architectural resources in the study area were identified, the proposed project was assessed for its potential to have direct, physical impacts and/or indirect visual or contextual impacts on architectural resources. Direct impacts can include demolition of a resource or alterations to a resource that cause it to become a different visual entity. A resource could also be physically damaged from adjacent construction, either from vibration (i.e., from construction blasting or pile driving), or from falling objects, subsidence, collapse, or damage from construction machinery. Adjacent construction is defined as any construction activity that would occur within 90 feet of an architectural resource, as defined in the New York City Department of Building's (DOB) *Technical Policy and Procedure Notice (TPPN) #10/88*.¹

¹ TPPN #10/88 was issued by DOB on June 6, 1988, to supplement Building Code regulations with regard to historic structures. TPPN #10/88 outlines procedures for the avoidance of damage to historic structures resulting from adjacent construction, defined as construction within a lateral distance of 90 feet from the historic resource.



- Project Site Boundary
- Architectural Resources Study Area (400-Foot Perimeter)
- Resources to be to be Protected by CPP (90-Foot Perimeter)
- Photograph View Direction and Reference Number
- Known Architectural Resource
- Potential Architectural Resources

Known Architectural Resources

- (A) Victoria Theater (S/NR-eligible)
- (B) Apollo Theater (NYCL-interior and exterior, S/NR-listed)
- (C) Former Provident Loan Society of New York Branch Office (S/NR-eligible)
- (D) Rowhouses at 272-282 West 127th Street (S/NR-eligible)
- (E) Hotel Theresa (NYCL, S/NR-listed)
- (F) Amsterdam News Building (S/NR-eligible)
- (G) Bishop Building (S/NR-eligible)
- (H) Blumstein's Department Store (S/NR-eligible)

Potential Architectural Resources

- (I) The Alhambra



Indirect impacts are contextual or visual impacts that could result from project construction or operation. As described in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, indirect impacts could result from blocking significant public views of a resource; isolating a resource from its setting or relationship to the streetscape; altering the setting of a resource; introducing incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to a resource's setting; or introducing shadows over a historic landscape or an architectural resource with sun-sensitive features that contribute to that resource's significance (e.g., a church with stained-glass windows).

The setting of each architectural resource, including its visual prominence and significance in publicly accessible views, whether it has sun-sensitive features, and its visual and architectural relationship to other architectural resources, was taken into consideration for this analysis.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

As detailed above, OPRHP has reviewed the archaeological sensitivity of the project site and indicated that they have no concerns regarding potential impacts on archaeological resources.

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

PROJECT SITE

The project site is occupied by the Victoria Theater, which has been determined eligible for S/NR listing by OPRHP. LPC has also indicated that the Victoria Theater appears eligible for LPC designation in comments dated June 21, 2012. The theater comprises two Neoclassical-style buildings, constructed in 1917 and designed by noted theater architect Thomas W. Lamb (see **Figures 7-2** through **7-7**). The South Building fronts onto West 125th Street and contains the original entrance and lobby of the theater. The North Building is along West 126th Street and contains the former auditorium and other accessory public spaces.

The Victoria Theater is historically and architecturally significant under National Register Criteria A and C, as one of Harlem's surviving vaudeville and motion picture theater buildings.¹ It is one of the few theaters of Lamb's early career remaining in New York City. Originally opened as Loews Victoria, the theater served as a vaudeville and movie house with over two thousand seats. For roughly half a century, it was one of the most celebrated theatres in the area. The Victoria Theater was one of four contiguous vaudeville houses on West 125th Street, along with the Apollo Theater, the Harlem Opera House, and the Alhambra Theater. Together, the four theaters were known as Harlem's "Opera Row." Along with its neighboring theaters, the Victoria contributed to the reputation of 125th Street and Harlem as a world-class entertainment district.

¹ **Criterion A:** Properties that possess integrity and are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history. **Criterion C:** Properties that possess integrity and embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.



Victoria Theater—South Building, view from West 125th Street 1



Victoria Theater—North Building, view from West 126th Street 2



Recessed Entrance on West 125th Street 3



View south within South Building Lobby to W. 125th Street 4



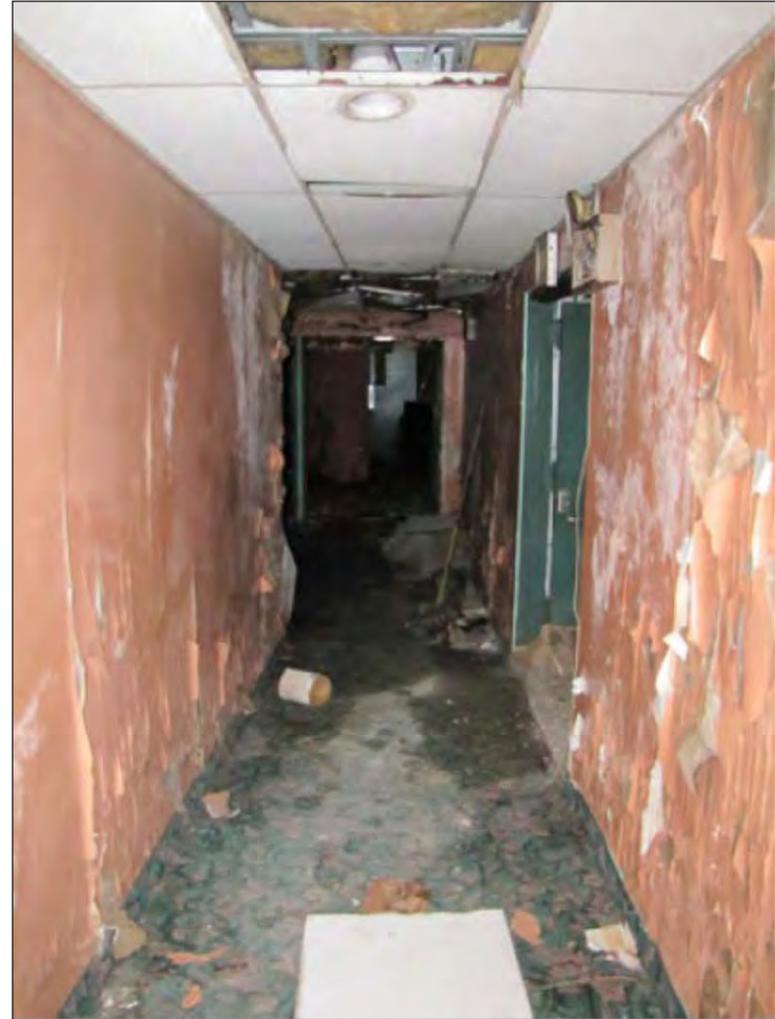
View north in the South Building to the balcony in the foyer. Water infiltration has resulted in the collapse of the ceiling finishes above and below the balcony 5



View within Theater 2 in the North Building, showing stamped metal ceiling of balcony above and original columns, as well as partition walls and new seating dating to the 1980s partitioning of the auditorium 6



Auditorium ceiling at the balcony level, obscured by drop ceiling. Anchors for the drop ceiling have been inserted through the historic plaster. 7



Hallway constructed in the 1980s leading from the foyer to Theater 5 (located in the former backstage area of the auditorium). Water infiltration has resulted in the deterioration of wall and ceiling surfaces. 8



View within Theater 5 in the former backstage area of the auditorium showing partitions and new seating installed in the 1980s during the partitioning of the auditorium. Water damage has resulted in the collapse of ceiling finishes.

9



South hallway on the second floor of the North Building. Water infiltration has led to the collapse of historic and modern finishes.

10



South wall of the auditorium in the location of Theater 3 at the balcony level. The south mural has been removed and a large section of modern wall and ceiling finishes have fallen with the original finishes damaged beneath. **11**

The Victoria Theater continued in use as a film theater until 1977, when Loews determined it was no longer economically viable to operate the theater and put the building up for sale. The Harlem Urban Development Corporation (HUDC), the predecessor to HCDC, purchased the theater in the 1980s and its lessee converted the building into five film theaters. The theater was again renovated in the 1990s for use as live theater. It has been vacant since 1997. Following is a description of the buildings' existing conditions, which are summarized from a conditions assessment report prepared by Building Conservation Associates, Inc. in 2011¹ (see Attachment A of the Victoria Theater Alternatives Analysis study, contained as Appendix B.1 of this EIS). This report constituted an update of conditions that were documented in a conditions report prepared by Page Ayres Cowley Architects in 2008² (see Appendix B.2 of this EIS).

South Building

The South Building has an approximately 5,000-square-foot footprint and is three stories tall. As described above, it contains the main façade of the Victoria Theater fronting on West 125th Street. Above the first floor the façade retains its original white glazed terra-cotta. The façade has three large window bays separated by Ionic pilasters, a frieze, and a denticulated cornice (see View 1 of **Figure 7-2**). The façade is capped with a balustrade parapet. The windows are original wood sash but are deteriorated beyond repair. The terra-cotta cladding also is deteriorated, with cracks, discrete elements missing, and with the steel rod and hook attachments to the structural wall corroded. A number of the balusters at the parapet are also missing and a flag pole, originally centered on the roof, has been removed. The original 1917 marquee has been altered. The vertical blade sign has been removed, and the current marquee is hung from the frame of the original horizontal marquee, with portions of the original marquee's steel frame concealed within the current marquee.

The building has a recessed entrance, vestibule, lobby, and a foyer with a grand staircase that provides access to a balcony lobby. The walls of the recessed entrance and vestibule were modernized in the Art Deco style, most likely in the 1930s (see View 3 of **Figure 7-3**). The original ticket booth—a circular free-standing element centered in the recessed entrance—and a show window to the east of it have been removed. The existing ticket booth, rolling gates, entrance doors, tiled walls and tile floor at the entrance are alterations to the original structure.

The lobby and foyer have had some historic elements removed, though historic finishes have been uncovered beneath contemporary wall and floor treatments. The lobby has a decorative Adamesque ceiling (see View 4 of **Figure 7-3**). The original flooring in the lobby has been removed. Arches containing mirrors were originally located on both the east and west walls; the arches remain behind the current wall cladding, though the mirrors have been removed. The historic doors leading from the lobby to the vestibule and the foyer have been removed; the doors leading to the foyer were of copper with leaded panes. The foyer is a two-story space that retains the original marble staircase, though some of the stair treads and railing balusters have been replaced with wooden elements. The original terrazzo flooring is present beneath the carpeting and much of the imitation stone wall treatment is also assumed to be extant. At the east end of the foyer, a fireplace has been removed. Commercial spaces along West 125th Street

¹ *Victoria Theater Conditions Assessment Update*, prepared by Building Conservation Associates, Inc., December 2011.

² *Victoria Theater, 233 West 125th Street, Harlem, NY Existing Condition Report*, prepared by Page Ayres Cowley Architects, October 10, 2008.

Victoria Theater

flank the lobby to the east and west. While a retail space was originally present west of the lobby, the area east of the lobby was originally a tunnel leading from the interior (and extant) courtyard.

The ceilings at the recessed entrance, vestibule, lobby, foyer, and balcony hallway have been altered through the removal of illuminating panels. The ceiling materials have largely collapsed in the balcony hallway (see View 5 of **Figure 7-4**).

The second and third floors possess little or no historic materials due to previous alterations, and are in very poor condition, with wall and ceiling surfaces having largely collapsed.

North Building

The North Building has an approximately 15,000-square-foot footprint and is primarily occupied by the auditorium, an approximately three-story-high space. The North Building presents a plain brick façade with a fire escape on West 126th Street. Within this building, the auditorium is oriented east-west, with the proscenium at the east end of the building. The auditorium was designed with mezzanine and balcony levels, and the auditorium walls and ceiling were highly ornamented. The auditorium had theater boxes on the north and south walls near the proscenium and two large canvas murals at the balcony level. The 1985 renovations created three cinemas on the ground (orchestra) floor, two in the auditorium (theaters 1 and 2) and one in the stage/backstage area (theater 5), and two on the second (first mezzanine) floor (theaters 3 and 4). See View 6 of **Figure 7-4**, View 9 of **Figure 7-6**, and View 11 of **Figure 7-7**). At that time, the walls were covered in gypsum wallboard and ceilings obscured by dropped ceilings bolted to the original plaster ceiling above. Original fluted columns and the underside of the balcony, which is of stamped metal, are still visible in theaters 1 and 2 (see View 6 of **Figure 7-4**). The theater boxes and first mezzanine seating have been removed and the south mural is no longer extant. Probes undertaken on the north wall of the auditorium indicate that the north mural exists, though it has been damaged by water and metal wallboard anchors and is sagging. Probes also revealed that the decorative plaster ceiling of the auditorium is present but has been damaged by the anchors for the dropped ceiling (see View 7 of **Figure 7-5**).

At the west end of the building on the second floor (the first mezzanine level) is a central oval foyer flanked to the north and south by smaller stair foyers accessed by sets of stairs at the northwest and southwest corners of the building. Though the oval foyer has been substantially altered, it retains a higher degree of integrity than the auditorium. These alterations include the removal of a central opening in the floor (to the floor below) that was surrounded by a balustrade (shown on the original drawings for the theater, though it is not clear if the oval foyer was built with this configuration), removal of a central medallion that had a decorative ventilation grille in the center of the ceiling (replaced by the existing circular portrait), and removal of a small anteroom located on the west side of the oval foyer with access originally provided from this room. This small room also had a fireplace that has been removed. The opening from the oval foyer to the west anteroom was blocked up and this room was incorporated into expanded bathroom facilities. New entries to the bathrooms were created along the west wall in the locations where niches previously contained water fountains. The wall mosaics currently existing in the north and south stair foyers that compose backdrops for the present water fountains were relocated from these niches. In their original locations in the oval room, the mosaics served as backdrops to free-standing water fountains. The mosaics have been altered through the addition of stone basins affixed to the mosaics. The stair foyers have decorative plaster cove ceilings, containing Adamesque motifs. The staircases retain their original decorative metal balustrades.

Alterations to other spaces in the North Building have taken place, including the removal of windows in the west promenade on the third floor, creation of a projection booth in the balcony, construction of bathrooms, removal of the rear portion of the seating on the first floor to create offices, and construction of hallways to access the ground floor cinemas (see photo 8 of **Figure 7-5**).

In general, the wall and ceiling surfaces in the North Building exhibit varying degrees of deterioration (see photo 8 of **Figure 7-5**, **Figure 7-6** and **Figure 7-7**). These include the loss and collapse of wall and ceiling surfaces due to water infiltration and the presence of mold. In particular, the south hallway on the second floor (first mezzanine level) has sustained substantial ceiling collapse and the metal framing above is corroded, rendering passage through this area impossible (see View 10 of **Figure 7-6**). A large section of the wall and ceiling finishes on the south wall at the auditorium balcony level have also fallen (see View 11 of **Figure 7-7**).

STUDY AREA

Known Resources

As described below, there are seven known architectural resources in the study area.

The **Apollo Theater** (S/NR-listed, NYCL-interior and exterior) is located at 253 West 125th Street between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, immediately adjacent to the project site (see View 12 of **Figure 7-8**). Designed in 1913 by George Keister, the three-story four-bay building has a Neoclassical façade clad in white glazed terra-cotta dominated by pilasters, large windows, and a marquee. Originally known as Hurtig & Seamon's New (Burlesque) Theater, the structure contained a café and cabaret in the basement, a burlesque theater and store on the ground floor, a restaurant on the second floor, and meeting rooms on the third floor. Despite remodeling campaigns from the 1930s-1970s, the building retains much of its historic character, including interior features such as its large auditorium with classical ornamentation and rare two-tiered balcony.

The Apollo Theater is significant for its role as a prominent theater in New York City and an important center for African-American culture. According to its S/NR nomination form, the building "became the premier performance hall for black American performers and a symbol of the movement to promote black cultural awareness in the 1930s. Its contribution as a nurturing force and a showcase of black talent ranks it as one of the country's most significant cultural resources." According to former LPC Chairman Kent L. Barwick, the Apollo "is unparalleled in shaping both the careers of major black performers and a variety of forms of American entertainment." The Apollo is still in use today as a performance venue.

The former **Provident Loan Society of New York branch office** (S/NR-eligible) located on the southwest corner of Frederick Douglass Boulevard and West 127th Street, is a one story, Neoclassical style, yellow brick building featuring large windows with decorative terra-cotta pediments and surrounds (see View 13 of **Figure 7-8**). The building is surmounted by a wide bracketed and denticulated cornice. The firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Tucker designed the structure, which was built in 1916. The Provident Loan Society of New York was founded in 1894 in their original location on what is now East 25th Street and Park Avenue South. Provident opened many branches throughout the city from the 1910s through the 1930s, and most of these branches were designed by this firm.

This building, like many of the other Provident branch offices, was sold and adapted for another purpose. The entity that bought this building from Provident in 1943 was the Mount Neboh



Apollo Theater, view north from West 125th Street 12



Former Provident Loan Society of New York branch office 13

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Baptist Church. Since then the building has served as a house of worship, mostly for the Mount Neboh Baptist congregation; currently, the building houses the congregation of the Greater Zion Hill Baptist Church.

The row of six brownstone-clad rowhouses at **272-282 West 127th Street** (S/NR-eligible), along the south side of the street between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, was built ca. 1880 (see View 14 of **Figure 7-9**). Originally part of a rowhouse development that occupied both sides of West 127th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues, these residences were typical of the high-style rowhouse developments that proliferated in Harlem during the last two decades of the 19th century. The rowhouses exhibit elements of the Anglo-Italianate and Renaissance Revival styles. Each residence is three-and-a-half stories in height and three bays wide with a high stoop leading to an off-set entryway. Substantial door and window surrounds with bracketed pediments are decorated with incised ornament. The main doorways are occupied by wood double-doors. The windows have been retrofitted with one-over-one-light double-hung sash. The buildings are surmounted with a heavy bracketed cornice. A projecting full-height bay distinguishes 282 West 127th Street, the westernmost residence. Three of the six rowhouses appear to be vacant, including one rowhouse that has been boarded up with plywood.

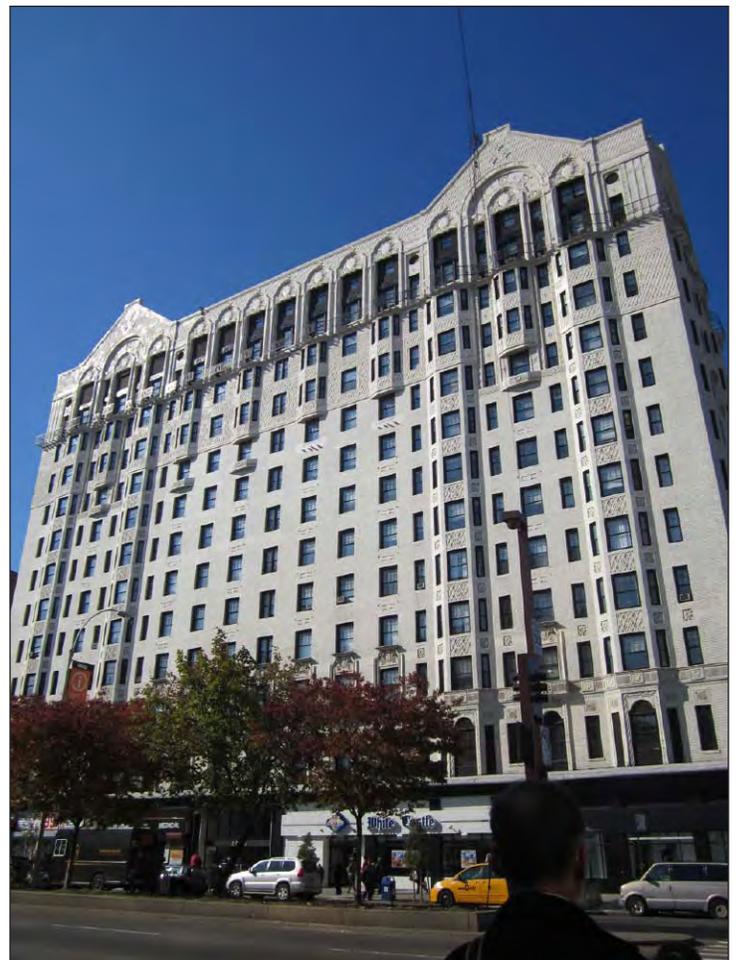
The **Hotel Theresa** (NYCL, S/NR-listed), at 2090 Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard, was constructed in 1912-1913. It is one of the most prominent buildings in Harlem and a major work by the designing firm of George and Edward Blum. Erected as Harlem's most prestigious hotel, the building's white brick and terra-cotta façades are adorned with distinctive geometric ornament (see View 15 of **Figure 7-9**). The Theresa Hotel was a segregated establishment until 1940, when the discriminatory policy was dropped and it began hosting black celebrities and the social events of Harlem's African-American community. The building also contained at one time the offices of A. Philip Randolph's March on Washington Movement and Malcolm X's Organization of Afro-American Unity. In 1960, Fidel Castro stayed at the hotel while he was in New York for the opening session of the United Nations. The building currently has retail uses on the ground floor and mainly office uses above.

Located at 2340 Frederick Douglass Boulevard between West 125th and 126th Streets, the structure now known as the **Amsterdam News Building** (S/NR-eligible) is a four-story four-bay brick rowhouse designed in the Neo-Romanesque style (see View 16 of **Figure 7-10**). The ground story of the main façade consists of a simple glass frontage surmounted by a full-width sign bearing the words "New York Amsterdam News" in antique lettering. There are four round-arch windows on the second story, while the upper story windows have wide flat sills and lintels. Multiple bands of stone and corbelled brick create a textured façade. The building is surmounted by a heavy bracketed cornice.

Built in the late 19th century, the building was most likely constructed as a mixed-use commercial-residential building. The association of the building with the important African-American newspaper, the *Amsterdam News*, began in 1938. The *Amsterdam News* was founded in 1909 by James Henry Anderson. Anderson began printing the paper with almost no capital, out of the basement of his home on West 65th Street, "with six sheets of paper, a lead pencil, and a dressmaker's table" belonging to his wife. The *Amsterdam News* relocated its headquarters and production space to 2293 Seventh Avenue (Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard) in 1916. Following financial troubles that ensued after a labor strike, the owners sold the paper in 1936 to C. B. Powell and William M. H. Savory, and the new owners relocated the newspaper in 1938 to the present headquarters. At the height of its circulation in the 1960s, the circulation of the



Rowhouses at 272-282 West 127th Street 14



Hotel Theresa, view southwest from West 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard 15



Amsterdam News Building, view northeast from Frederick Douglass Boulevard 16



Bishop Building, view north from West 125th Street 17

Amsterdam News was roughly 100,000; it became known as one of the four most important black newspapers in the United States, along with the *Chicago Defender*, the *Pittsburgh Courier*, and the *Afro-American*. In the 1970s, the newspaper was sold to a group of African-American businessmen including Borough President Percy Sutton, financier Clarence Jones, and Wilbert A. Tatum. Historic photographs indicate that the building's vertical marquee has been moved from the north side to the south side of the building, and the shopfront has been altered slightly. The building is still in use by the *Amsterdam News*.

The **Bishop Building** (S/NR-eligible) is a four-story brick office and retail building located on the northeast corner of West 125th Street and Frederick Douglass Boulevard, west of the project site (see View 17 of **Figure 7-10**). The structure was built in 1906 and designed by prominent architect Ernest Flagg in an understated expression of the Beaux Arts style. It has twelve bays on the west façade and fifteen bays on the south façade, with shop fronts along the ground-story. The second story has large windows arranged in groups of three or six and united under projecting stone lintels. The upper two stories of the building have windows arranged in groups of two with simple stone sills and brick lintels with pronounced stone keystones. The windows contain retrofitted one-over-one-light double-hung sash. The structure has a simple projecting stone cornice surmounted by a shallow brick parapet. The easternmost three bays of the building on the south façade are distinguished from the rest of the building under a peaked parapet with a flat stone cap; at cornice level, this section is flanked with small round medallions bearing the letter 'B' for 'Bishop' and ornamented with garlands and other decorative features.

Cortlandt Field Bishop was an art collector and automobile enthusiast who lived in New York City. In 1905, Bishop traveled to France to pursue his interest in flying balloons. In the same year, he helped found the Aero Club America (ACA) and became the organization's European agent. After returning to New York, Bishop became the president of the ACA and threw the weight of his organization into supporting the Wright Brother's efforts to develop their "flying machine." Bishop constructed the building at 2330 Frederick Douglass Boulevard as a commercial and office building, the use in which it remains today. While many of Flagg's best known commissions are more ornate, his use of restrained Beaux-Arts detailing and functional design in the Bishop Building is characteristic of his often utilitarian approach to both tenement and office buildings. Along with the Scribner Bookstore and the Little Singer Building, the Bishop Building appears to be one of Flagg's few surviving commercial/office-use commissions in New York City. Currently, the building has retail uses on the ground floor and office space (currently vacant) above.

Blumstein's Department Store (S/NR-eligible and NYCL eligible), located across West 125th Street from the project site, between Frederick Douglass Boulevard and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, is a five-story, eleven-bay building, designed by Robert D. Kohn and Charles Butler in what Christopher Gray of the *New York Times* describes as "an odd amalgam of late Art Nouveau and early Art Deco" styles (see View 18 of **Figure 7-11**). Completed in 1923, the building has a tripartite façade faced in limestone. The three middle stories are ornamented with extensive and intricate copper detailing and surmounted by a copper awning. The window openings are occupied by one-over-one-light double-hung metal sash. As Gray describes, "Instead of the usual cornice at the roof, the architects installed two flagpoles on bases, reminiscent of the work of the Secessionist movement in Germany and Austria around 1910." The flagpoles are no longer extant. Historic renderings show that a nameplate "L.M. Blumstein" was originally located on the shallow parapet between the two bronze flagpole bases. This was removed and replaced, probably in the 1940s with the current large vertical marquee appended on the east side of the façade bearing the name "Blumstein" in neon block letters. This vertical



Former Blumstein's Department Store, view south from West 125th Street 18



The Alhambra, view southwest from Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard 19

Victoria Theater

marquee is currently covered by signage for Touro College, the tenant of the building's upper floors. The ground story originally had large display windows surmounted by an awning; today it is occupied by four different retailers, each of which has a separate modern storefront.

While Blumstein's Department Store is architecturally distinguished, the building is most important as the largest and most prominent store in Harlem through most of the 20th century and as the setting for several significant events in New York City's civil rights history. During the Depression, Blumstein's was singled out as a target of the "Buy-Where-You-Can Work" boycott, as one of the most important businesses in Harlem. The success of the boycott led to the organization of the Greater New York Coordinating Committee for Employment, and in 1938 an agreement for non-discriminatory hiring practices was achieved with several major businesses including Woolworth's, Kress, and A.S. Beck. By the late 1940s, Blumstein's had reversed its reputation for discriminatory hiring practices and began to distinguish itself as a model for equal employment practices. Under the ownership of Jack Blumstein in 1948, the department store was the first to warrant a "seal of approval" from the Consumer Arbitration Board for fair practices in the sale of merchandise and the employment of African-Americans. It has also been recognized as the first store to have custom-designed black mannequins in its display windows, as well as the first to have black Santa Clauses receiving children at Christmas. In 1958, Blumstein's once again made national news when it became the site for the stabbing of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., during a book signing for *Stride Toward Freedom*. The Blumstein Building was sold by the family in 1976.

Potential Resources

One potential architectural resource has been identified within the project's study area.

The **Alhambra Theatre** (2108 Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard, at the southwest corner of West 126th Street and Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard) opened in 1903 as the Harlem Auditorium. Starting in 1905, it was operated as the Alhambra Theatre by B.F. Keith with mainly vaudeville shows until 1913 when it turned to movies. As described above, the Alhambra was one of four contiguous vaudeville theaters—along with the Apollo Theater, Harlem Opera House, and the Victoria Theater—that became known as Harlem's "Opera Row." The Alhambra later operated as the RKO Alhambra Theatre, the main showcase for RKO movies in the Harlem area. RKO closed the theater from 1931-1934 during the Depression. The building included a dance/music hall (originally called Paradis de Danse) as well as a theater and was the location of performances by Bessie Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, Billie Holliday, and Nina Simone, among others. As of 1965, it was reported to be the new home of the Most Worshipful King Solomon Grand Lodge, AF & AM; however, an article from 1987 notes that the building had been closed for 30 years. In 1988, it was reported that the Lodge was undertaking a renovation of the entire building and would occupy a portion of the structure, and the Department of Motor Vehicles would open a branch office in the basement and bottom two floors of the building. The Department of Motor Vehicles operated a branch office in the building until at least 1996 and possibly as late as 2004. A restaurant that recently operated on the first floor has closed. Currently, a bowling alley operates on the third and fourth floors of the building, and the former dance hall is in use as an event space on the uppermost floors.

The Alhambra Theatre was designed by theater architect John B. McElfatrick. It is faced with red brick above the 2nd floor and masonry below, with neoclassical stone detail (see View 19 of **Figure 7-11**). As of 1913, the building's main entrance was a one-story rectangular element which extended out from the center point of the Seventh Avenue (now Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard) façade. At that time the building also had a vertical marquee spelling out

“Alhambra” and two signs projecting above and below this marquee, all centered above the main entrance. The building appears to have had significant alterations since 1913. A rooftop addition has been developed—possibly as part of the ca. 1988 renovations undertaken by the Lodge—that incorporates a former decorative parapet above the sixth floor. The rooftop addition includes what appears to be an elevator bulkhead along the Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard. A large cornice above the fifth floor and a smaller cornice above the sixth floor have been removed, as have the vertical marquee and two projecting signs and the projecting main entrance element. Building entrances on both façades, and windows on the secondary (West 126th Street) façade have been removed or altered, and the ground floor has been refaced. The theater lobby was renovated ca. 1948, while the building still included that use, and the building’s ca. 1988 renovations for the Lodge and DMV use are likely to have removed other original material from the interior of the building. The current bowling alley use on the upper floors also is likely to have removed original interior building elements, and there are three new projecting signs for this use on the upper levels of the building’s façades.

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT SITE

Absent the proposed project, the Victoria Theater is expected to remain in a vacant and deteriorated state, and there would be no subsurface excavation on the project site. In any case, OPRHP has determined that the site is not sensitive for archaeological resources.

STUDY AREA

None of the developments under construction or planned within the project’s neighborhood are within the 400-foot study area for this analysis.

E. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

OPRHP has determined that the proposed project would not impact archaeological resources on the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would have no adverse impacts on archaeological resources, and no further analysis of such resources is warranted.

ARCHITECTURAL RESOURCES

PROJECT SITE

As described above, the proposed project involves discretionary actions by the State of New York, and thus is subject to review under Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law. Under this law, it is the responsibility of state agencies to avoid or mitigate adverse impacts of their actions to properties listed or determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Every agency with regulatory authority over the project is required to fully explore all feasible and prudent alternatives and give due consideration to feasible and prudent plans which avoid or mitigate adverse impacts on such property.

Victoria Theater

The proposed project would involve the demolition of the North Building and the restoration of the South Building. Since the demolition of the North Building would constitute an adverse impact to a S/NR-eligible property, alternatives to the proposed project were explored that would retain all or portions of the Victoria Theater. This alternatives analysis is provided in Appendix B.

Summary of Alternatives Analysis

The alternatives analysis explored the potential for the Victoria Theater to be retained and reused in its entirety without overbuild; overbuilding the Victoria Theater with new construction, to accommodate the proposed development program; and retaining a small portion of the auditorium or dividing it into smaller spaces. The alternatives analysis concluded that the retention and reuse of the Victoria Theater in its entirety to avoid significant adverse impacts on the historic resource is not feasible due to multiple factors. There is no viable projected use for the auditorium; the size and configuration of the auditorium does not meet the needs of Harlem's cultural community and the space would not be readily adaptable for another use; and the Victoria Theater does not contain sufficient floor area to fit the proposed program. Overbuilding the Victoria Theater with new construction to accommodate the proposed development program was also determined to be infeasible. Any overbuild would require selective demolition within the North Building to accommodate structural supports, which would damage and remove historic architectural elements and also dramatically increase construction costs. Furthermore, the retention of the auditorium, for which no viable use has been identified, the impact its retention would have on the Project's ability to provide essential services for a mixed-use development that includes residential and hotel uses, in addition to the cost premiums associated with the structural overbuild, would render this alternative infeasible. Retention of a small portion of the auditorium or dividing it into smaller spaces would have little preservation value, would not meet the needs of the cultural partners, and would also result in significant additional costs to retain and overbuild the space. In summary, retention and reuse of the South Building and demolition of the North Building has been determined the only feasible and prudent alternative that would meet the project's cultural, community, and economic development goals and objectives while respecting Harlem's cultural heritage and retaining an important component of West 125th Street's historic streetscape.

Demolition of the North Building would constitute a significant adverse impact on historic resources. The Alternatives Analysis was provided to OPRHP on February 17, 2012, along with reports that were prepared documenting the conditions of the North and South Buildings. Based upon the review of these materials, OPRHP concurred in a letter dated April 23, 2012 that there are no prudent or feasible alternatives to having an adverse impact on the Victoria Theater. Therefore, mitigation measures have been developed among the project sponsors, HCDC, ESD, and OPRHP. These mitigation measures would be set forth in the LOR to be executed among the project sponsors, HCDC, ESD, and OPRHP, pursuant to Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (the draft LOR is included in Appendix B.3). The mitigation measures that have been identified through the Section 14.09 process include the retention, restoration, and reuse of the South Building, specifically the restoration of the West 125th Street façade, and restoration or replication of the front entrance doors, vertical blade sign, horizontal marquee, lobby, and foyer and staircase; the possible salvage and reuse of the north canvas mural from the balcony level of the auditorium and possible salvage and reuse of the water fountain mosaics located in the North Building; potential salvage and reuse of other architectural elements in the North Building; the use of new lighting that is referential to the theater's original (1917) design; recreation of the theater's former ticket booth on West 125th

Street to serve as a signage element; and the installation of educational materials within the proposed project concerning the theater's history and its role as part of Harlem's "Opera Row."

Proposed Project Design

The North Building would be replaced with a new 26-story building containing primarily cultural, hotel, and residential uses (see **Figures 7-12** and **7-13**). The South Building would be retained, with the façade, certain first floor spaces, and marble staircase restored to their 1917 appearance (see **Figures 7-14** and **7-15**). This would include recreation of the original vertical blade sign and restoration of the horizontal marquee to its historic appearance. The restored lobby and foyer of the South Building would serve as the public entryway to the cultural events and the hotel. In this manner, the project would retain the original historic purpose of the lobby as the entryway to an entertainment venue.

To meet the cultural programming needs of the Harlem community, cultural program space would be included in the proposed project. This would include a 199-seat black box theater and a flexible 99-seat performing arts space to be located in the new building. These adaptable spaces would include movable seating and allow for a variety of presentations, including in the round. Support spaces would include rehearsal space, dressing rooms, scenery and costume shops, and gallery and exhibition space. Office space would also be provided for the four cultural partners. Retail spaces would be located on the ground floor of the South Building on either side of the historic lobby (in the locations of the current retail spaces, one of which is vacant). There would also be retail uses on the second and third floors of the South Building and on the ground and second floors of the new building on West 126th Street.

The entrance to the residential portion of the new building and a vehicular drop-off area would be provided on West 126th Street (see **Figures 7-16** and **7-17**). A visually transparent, glazed curtain wall with pedestrian entrances would be located between the South Building and the vehicular drop off on West 126th Street, allowing access into the restored foyer and lobby and the cultural events spaces and hotel located in the new building. The presence of ground-floor retail use and the visually transparent wall between the South Building and West 126th Street would activate and significantly improve the streetscape and pedestrian environment on this portion of West 126th Street.

The new building would set back a minimum of 30 feet from the façade of the South Building on West 125th Street. The proposed setback is designed to respect and reflect the height of the historic South Building. The façade of the new building would be clad in glass curtain wall, designed to be light and transparent and as such, not compete visually with the South Building's historic masonry façade. An open atrium would be created along the west side of the new building, setting the bulk of the building away from the adjacent low-rise buildings located to the west on West 125th Street, including the historic Apollo Theater.

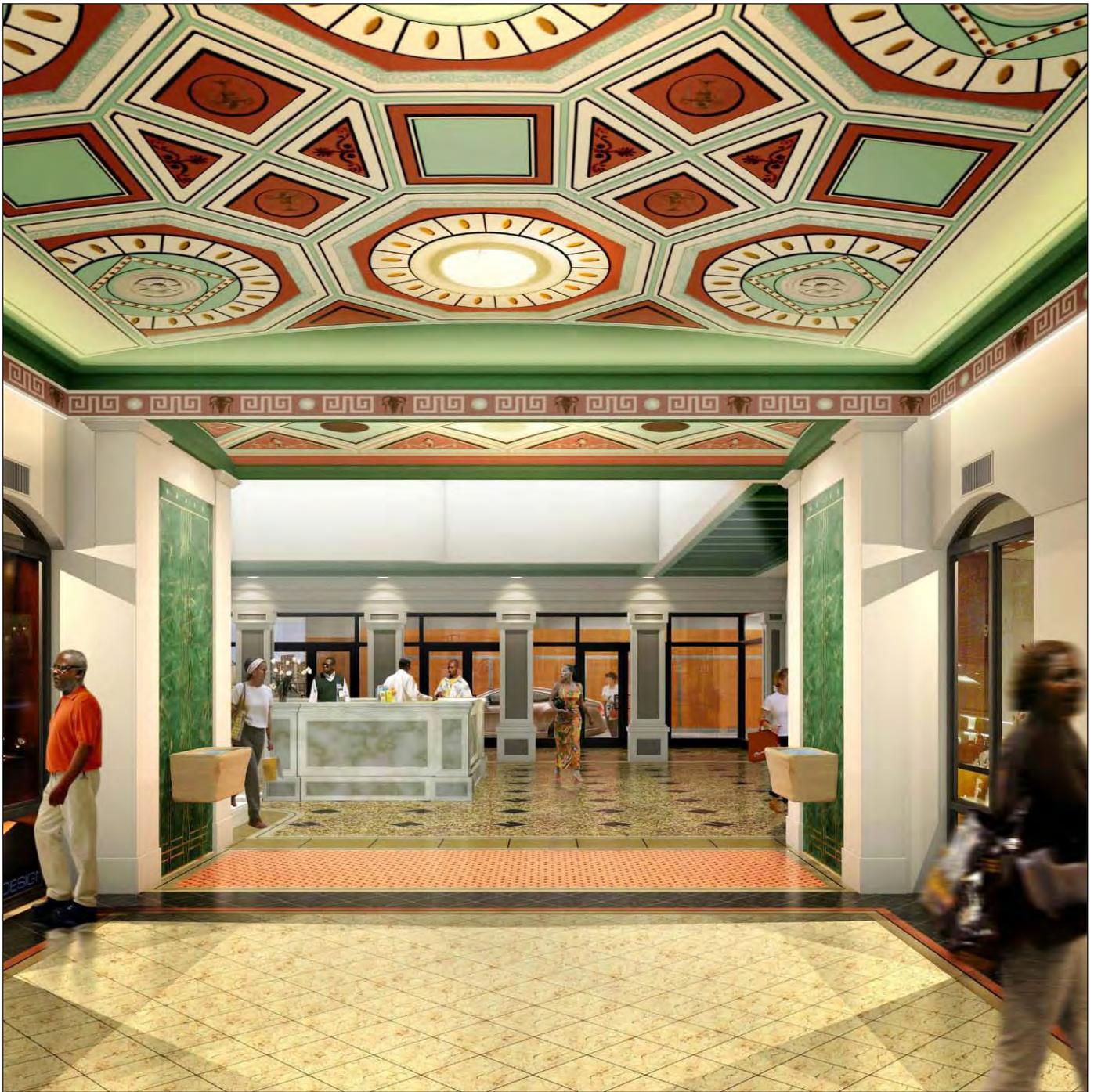
Construction Protection Plan

Since the proposed project would result in new construction and renovation activities at the Victoria Theater, the proposed project would comply with LPC's *Guidelines for Construction Adjacent to a Historic Landmark* as well as the guidelines set forth in section 523 of the *CEQR Technical Manual* and the procedures set forth in DOB's TPPN #10/88. This includes a CPP that will be prepared prior to construction activities and submitted to OPRHP for review and approval.



NOTE: FOR ILLUSTRATIVE PURPOSES ONLY

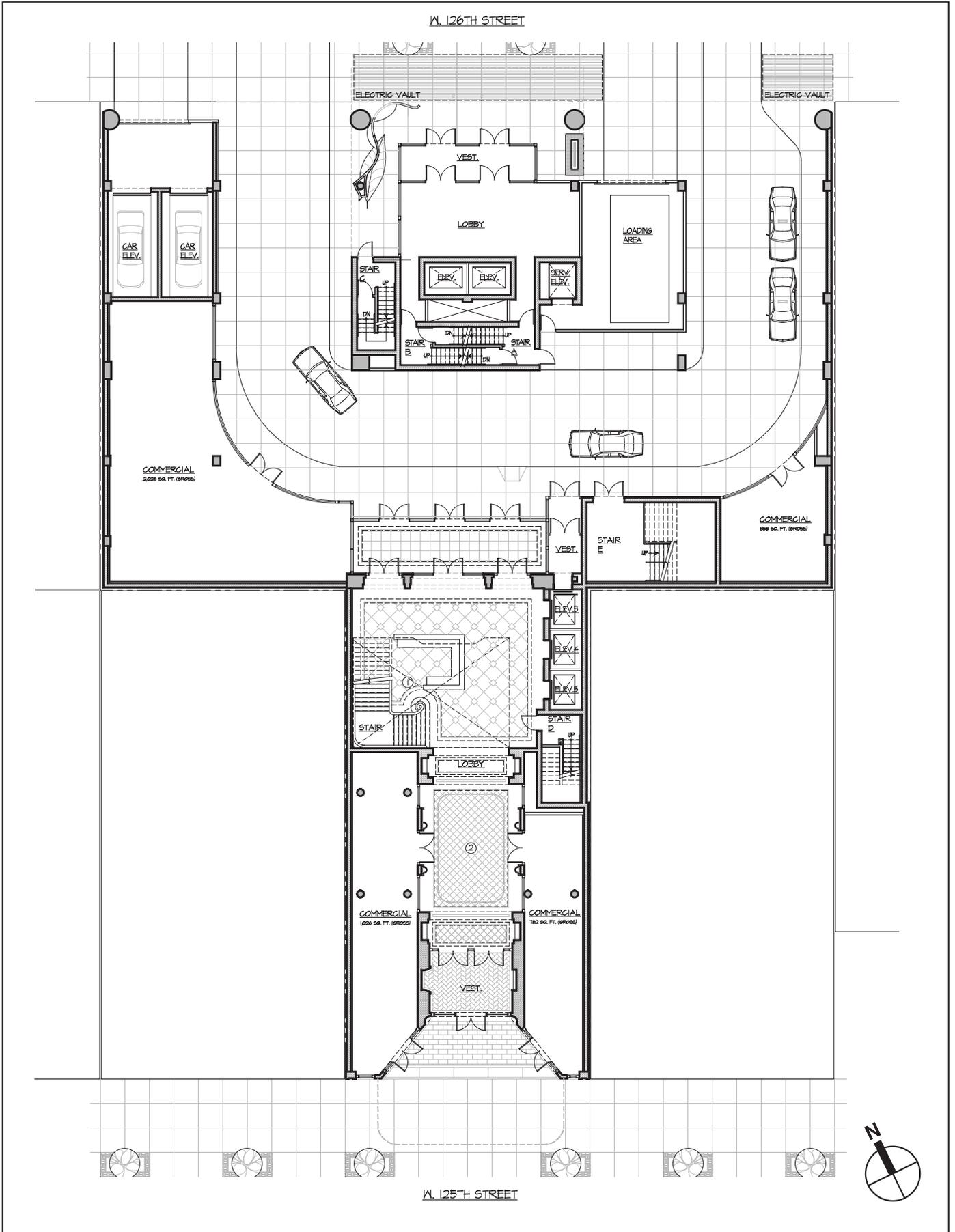




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STUDY AREA

The proposed project would result in construction activities within 90 feet of the Apollo Theater. Therefore, the CPP to be prepared for the proposed project would include measures to ensure that the Apollo Theater is not affected by ground-borne construction vibrations or other potential construction-related activities. None of the other architectural resources in the study area are close enough—within 90 feet—to experience direct, physical impacts from construction of the proposed project.

The proposed redevelopment of the Victoria Theater site would not adversely affect the historic context of architectural resources in the study area. The façade of the South Building—and thus the theater’s main entrance and public viewing point, on West 125th Street—would be restored to its 1917 appearance. This would have a positive effect as it would restore and revitalize an important historic component of West 125th Street. Construction on the site of the North Building would remove the back-of-house façade of the theater on West 126th Street. As described above, this side of the building presents a plain brick façade with a fire escape and is adjacent to the similarly plain back-of-house façade of the Apollo Theater. As the principal façade and entrance of the Apollo Theater are also on West 125th Street, it is not expected that the removal of the North Building would adversely impact the Apollo Theater. There is also no visual relationship between the façade of the North Building and the other architectural resources in the study area (aside from the Apollo Theater described above).

The proposed project would not isolate any architectural resources from or significantly alter their setting or visual relationship with the streetscape, and would not introduce incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to the setting of any architectural resource. As described in greater detail in Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the architectural resources in the study area exist in a built context that includes both short and older structures as well as more recently constructed and taller buildings, including the 19-story State Office Building at the southeast corner of Adam Clayton Powell Jr. Boulevard and the St. Nicholas Houses north of West 127th Street. The project has been designed to step back from West 125th Street, which would respect both the historic 125th Street façade of the Victoria Theater and the low-scale nature of the architectural resources on West 125th Street, including the Apollo Theater. The project would not alter any character-defining features of the architectural resources in the study area. In addition, the proposed project would not eliminate or screen publicly accessible views of any architectural resource. As described in Chapter 6, “Shadows,” the proposed project would not introduce significant new shadows on any historic structures or landscapes with sunlight-dependent features.

Overall, the project would be in keeping with the developing mixed-use character of the study area and would support the needs of the community, including a hotel for the underserved Upper Manhattan market, affordable housing, and affordable performing arts space. As detailed above, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on architectural resources in the study area. *