



4.5 Visual and Aesthetic Resources

Regulatory Setting

Title 24, Part 50 of the Code of Federal Regulations state that the regulations issued by CEQ establishing the basic procedural requirements for compliance with NEPA also apply to all HUD policy actions. NEPA was enacted to provide safe, healthful, productive, and aesthetically and culturally pleasing surroundings for Americans, as clearly stated in Section 101. Section 102 further instructs that the members of the CEQ must be exceptionally well qualified “to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs and interests of the Nation”.

As such, visual and aesthetic resources have been evaluated for this project where Resist features may impact waterfront, streetscape, or other neighborhood views.

4.5.1 Methodology- Waterfront Visual Impact Assessment

The Guidelines for Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) published by the FHWA (January 2015) were used as a guide in structuring this evaluation because the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has not published guidance on conducting a visual impact assessment. Although RBD-HR is not a transportation project, the FHWA guidance can still be applied and provides a thorough evaluation process for analyzing visual impacts to important views (key views). In addition, the Visual Resources Assessment Procedure (VRAP) Visual Impact Assessment Procedures for the USACE (March 1988) was also a helpful reference for evaluating landscape-scale impacts.

A brief description of the visual character of each alternative is provided within the Environmental Consequences section below. Urban design

workshops were conducted in the community as part of an extensive public outreach effort, where citizens were given the opportunity to voice their preferences in terms of the Project’s appearance (see Section 7, Consultation and Coordination). However, at this time the exact material, color, and texture of the Resist features are not defined. This would be determined by NJDEP with involvement from the community, as part of the Project’s final design stage. In addition, an important consideration of the Project includes landscaping and native plantings as part of the urban design component, the final designs of which have yet to be developed.

A review of existing regulatory documents that have the potential to influence the design of the Project was also conducted. The existing conditions were determined by first establishing an area of visual effect (AVE) and then inventorying the visual resources and determining the affected population within the AVE.

The key views and viewer preferences were established based on the public involvement approach, as described in the VIA Guidelines as well as field visits. During Project Scoping and Conceptual Design presentations in 2015 and 2016, a number of verbal and written public comments were received documenting key views within the Study Area. During public meetings, subject matter experts engaged the community in workshop settings where specific viewpoints were discussed and noted on maps. Based on this public involvement, key views were established within the Study Area to further analyze the compatibility of the Project with the visual character of the environment based on viewer sensitivity. The DSD features associated with the Project are not expected to impact views and are not evaluated in this section; however, they are described further under Section 4.8.

4.5.1.1 Other Regulatory Considerations

The following regulatory considerations would also shape the final design of the Project:

FEMA Accreditation

In order for the Project to be certified by FEMA, the Resist structure must meet certain design criteria at 44 CFR 65.10. These criteria dictate the height requirements for the Resist structure. FEMA certification is anticipated to reduce the cost of flood insurance for properties receiving flood risk reduction benefits under the Project.

Hudson River Waterfront Area Rule and Walkway

The Hudson River Waterfront Walkway is an 18.5-mile public access walkway along the Hudson River

between the George Washington Bridge in Bergen County and the Bayonne Bridge in Hudson County. Construction of the walkway began in the 1980s and continues today. Developers along the Hudson River are required to construct a section of the walkway on their waterfront sites. The Hudson River Waterfront Area Rule (N.J.A.C. 7:7E-3.48) requires all owners of property within this area who desire a NJDEP waterfront development permit to comply with the following, without compensation: 1) construct and maintain, at the owner’s expense, a 30-foot wide walkway along the entire waterfront of the property, to be built to standards specified in NJDEP regulations; 2) convey to NJDEP a conservation restriction for the walkway; and 3) allow perpendicular public access to the walkway. Any waterfront components of the

Project would need to comply with this rule.

City of Hoboken Re-examination Report and Master Plan

According to the 2010 Re-examination Report of the 2004 City of Hoboken Master Plan, major themes among Hoboken residents include establishment of more recreational acreage and ensuring that the entire waterfront is accessible to the public for both active and passive uses. The Report reiterates the goal of increasing the acreage of parks in Hoboken to, “encourage water-dependent and water-oriented recreational uses on the waterfront; limit commercial uses in waterfront areas to support activities;” and also limit development on piers.

The open space element of the Report calls for the creation of more waterfront recreational facilities such as floating pools, fishing, and boating to serve all ages and segments of the population. The open space plan map provided in the appendix of the Report indicates “planned/possible new parks and recreation” along the Weehawken Cove area.

4.5.2 Affected Environment

4.5.2.1 Area of Visual Effect

The Hoboken waterfront offers panoramic views of both the natural character of the Hudson River and the cultural landscape of the Manhattan skyline. As noted previously, providing open access to the waterfront is of paramount importance to the City of Hoboken. As a result, there are many parks located along



Photograph 4.36 Field Reconnaissance, August 2016

the waterfront positioned to take advantage of this resource. As such, the waterfront area is the focus of this analysis because it offers the most desirable and unobstructed views of the Manhattan skyline and the Hudson River to the public (see **Photograph 4.36**).

Viewers of the Hudson River may enjoy the flowing water, boat activity, and/or occasional wildlife sightings, while viewers of the cultural landscape enjoy the buildings and skyscrapers of the Manhattan skyline from Times Square and Midtown to the Financial District in the south. Viewers may appreciate both landscapes or prefer one over the other.

Certain architectural features are valued by some people more than others; however, the Manhattan



Figure 4.52 Key Map of Visual Photographs



Photograph 4.37 Viewpoint 1: Looking East at Lincoln Harbor, Weehawken



Photograph 4.38 Viewpoint 2: Looking East from 1600 Park Avenue, Hoboken

skyline is constantly evolving and the “iconic” status of buildings are subject to change and personal opinion. For example, the Hudson Yards Development (to be completed in 2025) covers 28 acres on the west side of Chelsea and the modern design of its glass skyscrapers will be highly visible from the Hoboken waterfront. It is important to note that in addition to the physiological limitations of human sight, views beyond one mile east are limited by the height of buildings in Manhattan.

A reconnaissance of the Study Area was conducted in August 2016 in order to photo document the AVE. Tree foliage was dense during the time of the reconnaissance, which does impact views but will vary throughout the year with the change of seasons.

4.5.2.2 Affected Population

The affected population is based on land use, as suggested by the 2015 FHWA Guidelines. The affected population includes recreational users, retail and commercial users, and residents to the extent they are living, working, or visiting the waterfront.

In order to analyze the impacts of the proposed project on viewpoints within the AVE, it was necessary to select a limited number of locations (viewpoints), as described below. These points are mainly located in publicly accessible areas along the waterfront and are considered to represent a typical viewer location, typical viewer activities, typical viewer expectations, and potential Project visibility (see **Figure 4.52**).

4.5.2.3 Key Views

Viewpoint 1: Lincoln Harbor, Weehawken

This viewpoint is located at approximately 1000 Harbor Boulevard in Weehawken; specifically consisting of the green space and walkway located in front of the Shops at Lincoln Harbor. Lincoln Harbor can be seen in the main foreground view, with the Manhattan skyline in the background (see **Photograph 4.37**). During a site visit in August 2016, the space was occupied by many users taking walks, eating lunch, and enjoying passive recreation.

Viewpoint 2: 1600 Park Avenue, Hoboken

This viewpoint is located at the athletic fields at 1600 Park Avenue. The principal views from this location are of Midtown Manhattan, visible from the southern portion of the athletic field (see **Photograph 4.38**). Views are limited in the northern end of the field due to the climbing elevation of Park Avenue. Looking east, the viewer sees the new Hudson Yards Development (generally between W 30th and W 34th Streets and 11th and 10th Avenues), One Penn Plaza (209 W 38th Street), the spire of the Bank of America Tower (One Bryant Park) and the spire of the New York Times Building (620 8th Avenue). The Empire State Building (350 5th Avenue) is also slightly visible from this location.

Views of the Weehawken Cove were obscured at the time of the site visit (August 2016) due to construction fencing and preparation of vacant lots that are adjacent to the Cove. This location is part of a master plan for additional park space along the Cove,



Photograph 4.39 Viewpoint 3: Looking Northeast from Hudson Tea Building Park, Hoboken



Photograph 4.41 Viewpoint 5: Looking East on Sinatra Drive, Hoboken



Photograph 4.40 Viewpoint 4: Looking East from Shipyard Park Waterfront, Hoboken

including a boathouse. The exact details of this park space are still under development, but is envisioned to work with the urban design components of the Resist structure along the Cove to serve as a unified park space.

Viewpoint 3: Hudson Tea Building Park, Hoboken

This viewpoint includes the view from the park space immediately to the west of the Hudson Tea Building accessed from 15th Street or the Waterfront Walkway (see **Photograph 4.39**). During the alternatives development process, the community indicated that this park and the space around the Hudson Tea Building is a valuable and frequently accessed viewpoint, not only for the residents of the Hudson Tea Building itself, but for the community at large. From this point, viewers observe Weehawken Cove, Lincoln

Harbor, and midtown Manhattan.

Viewpoint 4: Shipyard Park Waterfront, Hoboken

This viewpoint is located at Shipyard Park, along Sinatra Drive between Louis DePascale Constitution Court and Walter Barry Independence Court in Hoboken. Looking east, the Hudson River Park in Manhattan is viewed first, with the skyline of Midtown rising beyond it. Observable buildings from this area include the new Hudson Yards development, Empire State Building, One Penn Plaza, the Chrysler Building, Bank of America Tower, and New York Times Building in Midtown. Also visible directly ahead are the Chelsea Piers (along the Manhattan waterfront, between W 22nd and W 17th Streets), the Metropolitan Life Clock Tower (5 Madison Avenue), and the New York Life Insurance Company building (51 Madison Avenue).

Visible to the north are buildings along Times Square and the new 432 Park Avenue residential building (currently the third tallest building in the country and the tallest residential tower in the world). From the waterfront, the viewer can see the neighborhoods of TriBeCa and the Financial District when looking south (see **Photograph 4.40**).

Viewpoint 5: Sinatra Drive between 2nd and 3rd Streets, Hoboken

This viewpoint is located on Sinatra Drive, midway between 2nd and 3rd Streets in Hoboken. Restaurants in this area offer views of Manhattan for patrons both indoors and outdoors (seasonally). Viewers see the Hudson River Park (Manhattan) with the skyline of Chelsea, the Meatpacking District, and Greenwich Village rising beyond it. The skyline in this area is characterized by shorter buildings, typically between 10 and 20 stories in height (see **Photograph 4.41**). Visible from this location are The Standard, the Whitney Museum of American Art (99 Gansevoort Street), and the Metropolitan Life Clock Tower. To the south, several buildings in the Financial District and Battery Park City are visible, including One World Trade Center.

4.5.3 Environmental Consequences

According to FHWA’s Guidelines, the compatibility of the impact and the sensitivity of the viewers to the impact result in the degree of the impact to visual quality. FHWA defines the degree of impact as either a beneficial, adverse, or neutral change to visual

quality. For the purposes of this assessment, neutral change will be described as “negligible”. The Project may benefit the visual quality by either enhancing or creating better views of those resources and improving the experience of the viewers. Conversely, it may adversely affect visual quality by degrading visual resources or obstructing or altering desired views.

Recreational users of the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway include both passive and active users. A variety of businesses are located along the waterfront on Harbor Boulevard and Sinatra Drive, some of which may depend on views of the water for drawing in business. For this assessment, restaurants are considered to be more sensitive than other types of businesses (for example: dental offices) because many restaurants advertise seating that affords views of the Hudson River and the skyline. In general, visits to other businesses are of limited duration, with less focus on the view and more attention on the business purpose, which makes them less sensitive than residential and recreational users.

Five renderings have been developed in order to aid in the discussion of visual impacts. These renderings are conceptual graphics only and are based on preliminary engineering and urban design elements that are subject to comment and approval by the appropriate regulatory agencies. The renderings were developed to represent the Resist structure proposed under Alternative 1, except in the case of rendering #2 (1600 Park), which can be used to represent the concept for all three Build Alternatives. Note that all references

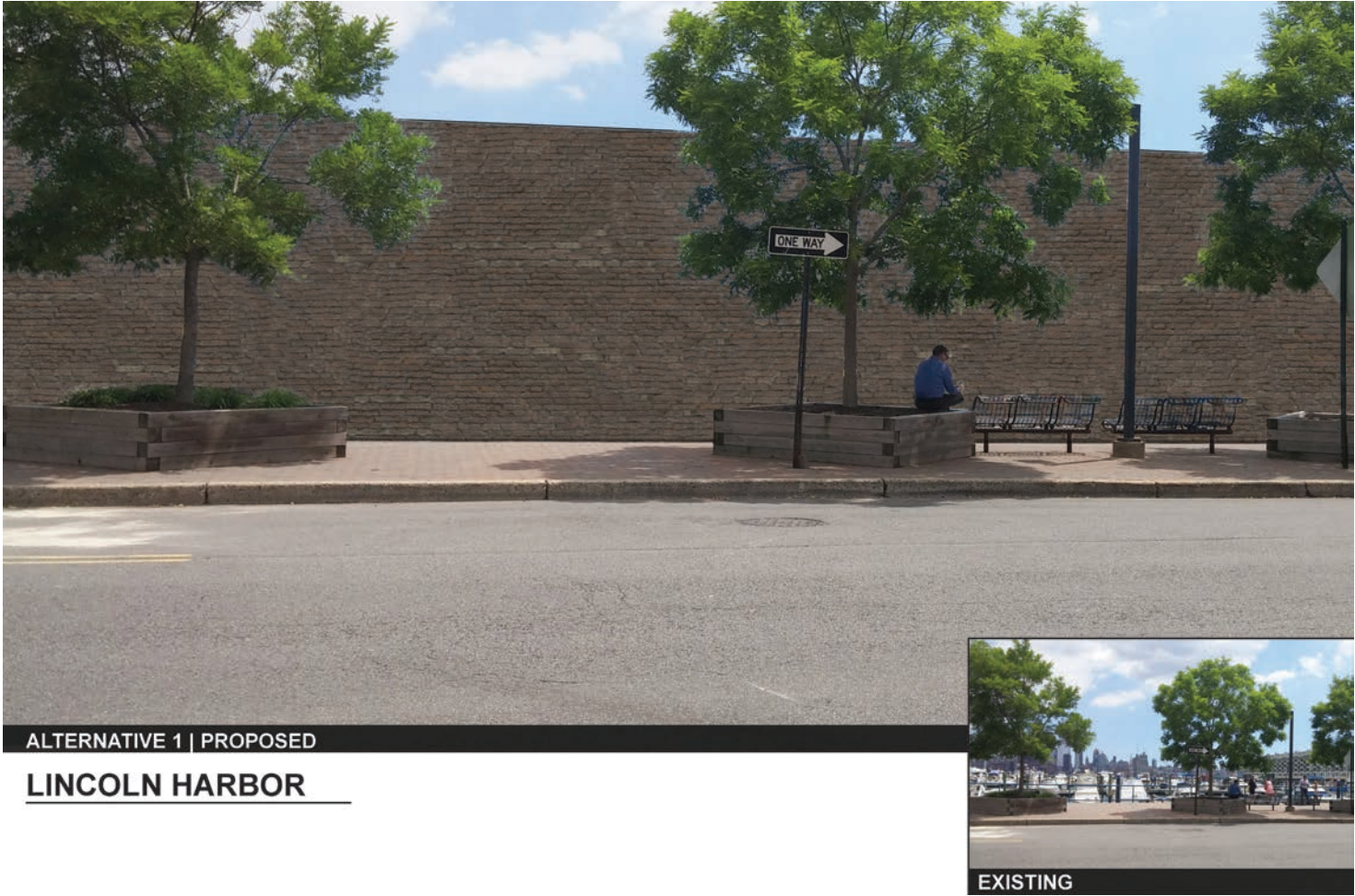


Figure 4.53 Viewpoint 1: Rendering Number 1, Lincoln Harbor, Weehawken

to Resist infrastructure height are in relation to height above ground level and may vary slightly.

Common Elements

For each alternative, it is envisioned that a boathouse will be incorporated into the structure at Weehawken Cove. This is a separate, alternatively-funded project, but has been considered in this analysis.

The DSD elements of the Project are the same for each alternative. The DSD element of the Project consists of over 60 sites that would include new and/or improved stormwater management techniques

designed to complement other efforts by the City of Hoboken. The DSD elements were not considered to represent potential impacts to the AVE. In addition, each Build Alternative also includes two different options for Resist structures in the south of the Study Area along Observer Highway. This area is not considered to be a sensitive viewing area but is discussed further under aesthetic considerations.

Alternative 1

The Resist structure in Alternative 1 generally follows the waterfront from the Lincoln Tunnel in Weehawken south to Weehawken Cove. The alignment continues



Figure 4.54 Viewpoint 2: Rendering Number 2, 1600 Park Avenue, Hoboken

around the waterside of the Hudson Tea Building and heads south in front of Maxwell Place. The Resist structure continues south along the waterfront to the intersection of Sinatra Drive North and Frank Sinatra Drive, just south of Maxwell Place Park, where the ground elevation of Castle Point begins to rise and the wall tapers down. The Resist structure also has a component along Sinatra Drive from 4th Street to 1st Street in South Hoboken.

Viewpoint 1: Lincoln Harbor

The Resist structure is proposed to be approximately 15 feet in height along the waterfront at Lincoln

Harbor. This would create a long-term, adverse impact for viewers utilizing the green space in front of the Shops at Lincoln Harbor, as the harbor would no longer be visible from the ground and the view of the skyline would be impacted. **Figure 4.53** shows the existing and proposed conceptual image of the Resist structure at this location.

Viewpoint 2: 1600 Park Avenue

The Resist structure in this part of the Study Area is proposed to be approximately nine feet in height running along the east side of Park Avenue at the back of the Cove. The nine foot rise would serve



Figure 4.55 Viewpoint 3: Rendering Number 3, Hudson Tea Building Park, Hoboken

as the “spine” of Cove Park and other city-funded amenities planned for this location, such as the boathouse (alternatively funded). Current users of the athletic fields at 1600 Park would experience minimal disruption of views looking east. The overall impact at this location is expected to be negligible. **Figure 4.54** shows the existing and proposed concept for the Resist structure in this area of the cove, including the boathouse.

Viewpoint 3: Hudson Tea Building Park

The Alternative 1 Resist structure is proposed to be approximately 12 feet high and located on top

of the walkway. Due to engineering requirements, the structure must be placed directly on top of the walkway. The Resist structure would result in a long-term, adverse impact in this area for ground-level recreational and residential viewers as the structure would impact their view of Manhattan, the Hudson River, and Weehawken Cove. As currently anticipated, the structure would incorporate design amenities to compensate for the loss of walkway space and views to recreational users such as elevated viewing platforms. **Figure 4.55** shows a conceptual design of the 12.3-foot high structure in this location, with a walkway located on the top of the structure.



Figure 4.56 Viewpoint 4: Rendering Number 4, Shipyard Park, Hoboken

Viewpoint 4: Shipyard Park

The Resist structure in this location is proposed to be approximately eight and a half feet high running along the waterfront. This would completely eliminate views of the Hudson River for the viewer at the street level, resulting in a long-term, adverse impact to the park users as well as ground-level residential, retail, and commercial users at this location. The structure would be placed on the outside (east) of the walkway and is intended to be designed as a raised park in this area. It is anticipated that the structure can be designed in such a way as to create a new viewpoint for users at this location, which could mitigate impacts

to recreational users of the walkway. However, the current at-grade waterfront access to the area would be altered. **Figure 4.56** provides a conceptual image of an eight-and-a-half-foot high structure at this location, incorporating the walkway on top and seating elements within the structure.

Viewpoint 5: Sinatra Drive between 2nd and 3rd Streets

As currently proposed, this structure would rise 1-2.5 feet above the current ground level, resulting in a negligible impact in this viewpoint location. The views of the river and the skyline would not be impacted for

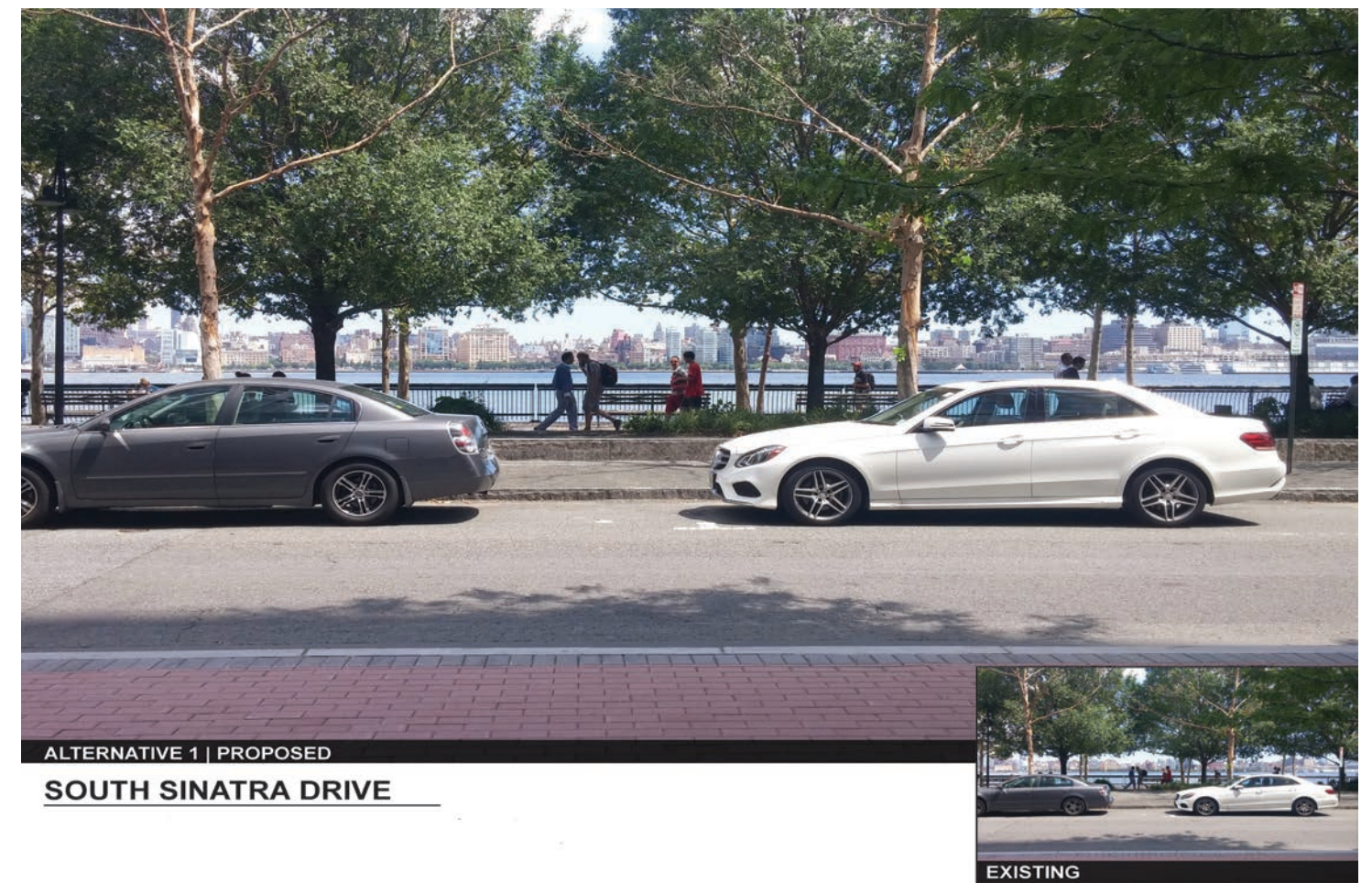


Figure 4.57 Viewpoint 5: Rendering Number 5, Sinatra Drive, between 2nd Street and 3rd Street, Hoboken

the restaurant patrons along Sinatra Drive. **Figure 4.57** provides a conceptual image of a 1.5-foot Resist feature at this location.

Under Alternative 1, there would be a long-term, adverse impact on views at three of the five key viewpoints; Lincoln Harbor, Hudson Tea Building Park, and Shipyard Park.

Alternative 2

The Alternative 2 Resist structure begins near the Lincoln Harbor Light Rail Station in Weehawken, travels down 19th Street to Harbor Boulevard, and then south along Weehawken Cove. The structure

continues to 15th Street and travels east from the northern end of Garden to Washington Streets and then south along Washington Street. There is no Resist feature along the Hudson River waterfront proposed under this alternative, except in the Weehawken Cove/Lincoln Harbor area.

Viewpoint 2: 1600 Park Avenue

The Resist structure in this part of the Study Area is proposed to be approximately nine feet in height running along the east side of Park Avenue at the back of the Cove. The nine-foot rise would serve as the “spine” of Cove Park and other city-funded

amenities planned for this location such as the boathouse (alternatively funded). Current users of the athletic fields at 1600 Park would experience minimal disruption of views looking east. The overall impact at this location is expected to be negligible. **Figure 4.54** shows the existing and proposed concept for the Resist structure in the area of the Cove.

Because the majority of its route is located inland, away from the waterfront, Alternative 2 does not pose any impacts to views of Manhattan from viewpoints 1, 3, 4, or 5 and has negligible impacts on the views from viewpoint 2.

Alternative 3

The Alternative 3 Resist structure also begins near the Lincoln Harbor Light Rail Station traveling south along the light rail tracks and then continuing south along Weehawken Cove towards Garden Street. A Resist structure would then travel down the east side of Garden Street and continue down the alleyway midway between 15th and 14th Streets from Garden to Washington Streets. The structure would then head south along Washington Street ending between 14th and 13th Streets. There is no Resist feature along the Hudson River waterfront under this alternative, except in the Weehawken Cove area.

Viewpoint 2: 1600 Park Avenue

The Resist structure in this part of the Study Area is proposed to be approximately nine feet in height, running along the east side of Park Avenue at the back of the Cove. The nine-foot rise would serve as

the “spine” of the Cove Park and other city-funded amenities planned for this location such as the boathouse (alternatively funded). Current users of the athletic fields at 1600 Park would experience minimal disruption of views looking east. The overall impact at this location is expected to be negligible. **Figure 4.54** shows the existing and proposed concept for the Resist structure in the area of the Cove.

Because the majority of its route is located inland, away from the waterfront, Alternative 3 does not pose any impacts to views of Manhattan from viewpoints 1, 3, 4, or 5, and has negligible impacts on the views from viewpoint 2.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would have no impact on key viewpoints.

4.5.3.1 Mitigation Measures and Best Management Practices (BMPs) Contained in Alternatives 1, 2, and 3

Urban design would be incorporated into the Project where possible to minimize any incompatible features and maintain harmony with the visual environment, thereby maximizing compatibility. Prioritization will be given to adapting the use of structures in a way that provides urban amenities and landscape enhancements. While no visual impacts were identified associated with the DSD portion of the project, the design of DSD components would also include the urban design considerations that are described in this section.

In locations where this is not structurally possible or feasible from an engineering perspective, the intent is for the Resist structure to be incorporated into the landscape in a way that restores full use of the walkway and corresponding views. Under Alternative 1, where adverse impacts are expected (viewpoints 1, 3, and 4), it is anticipated that the structure can be designed in a way that creates new viewpoints on top of the structure, which can partially mitigate impacts to recreational users of the walkway.

Visual impacts resulting from the implementation of Alternative 1 can potentially be mitigated through the use of BMPs as follows:

- Design Resist structure with recreation trails on top so that the river corridor can be viewed by the recreating public, particularly for areas where access is currently available
- Provide amenities within the Resist feature such as seating and lighting
- Incorporate form, line, color, and texture aspects of the existing landscape into the design of flood risk management elements to reduce the contrast effect
- Incorporate elements of existing and historical design
- Incorporate bioengineered bank stabilization methods where possible and allow for vegetation to grow amongst bank stabilization materials
- Include native plantings

- For concrete structures, incorporate sealants that allow for effective removal of graffiti

4.5.4 Aesthetic Considerations

4.5.4.1 Methodology

As described in the VIA, the five key views were selected based on public input during scoping and community meetings and those five key views were evaluated using a Visual Impact Assessment. The following evaluation considers the other portions of the Study Area that may also experience aesthetic changes based on the placement of the Resist features. The upland features evaluated within this section represent areas that the municipalities have identified as being important.

4.5.4.2 Affected Environment

The Study Area contains a mix of land uses including residential, commercial, industrial, public, and institutional uses. The Study Area is largely fully developed with a population of approximately 50,000. The waterfront area includes residential buildings and several parks connected by the Hudson River Waterfront Walkway. Many buildings in Hoboken exhibit the creative re-use and redevelopment of former industrial warehouse buildings for residential and/or business uses.

Washington Street is Hoboken’s major commercial corridor, extending 16 blocks from 15th Street to Observer Highway. North of 7th Street, Washington Street is largely residential, interspersed with

commercial uses on the ground floor. The southern portion of the corridor, south of 7th Street, is largely commercial on the ground floor with residential units on the upper floors.

At the southern end of the Study Area is the NJ TRANSIT Hoboken Terminal, a major transportation hub that includes connections to the PATH system, the HBLR, and ferries operated by NY Waterway. The rail tracks that lead into Hoboken Terminal run west from a tunnel through the Palisades into the Hoboken yard. The Jersey City northern municipal boundary is located just north of these tracks.

Based on the proposed improvements a few upland areas have been selected to be discussed below. In addition, following these upland locations a Visual Impact Assessment was performed for several viewpoints along the waterfront.

City of Hoboken

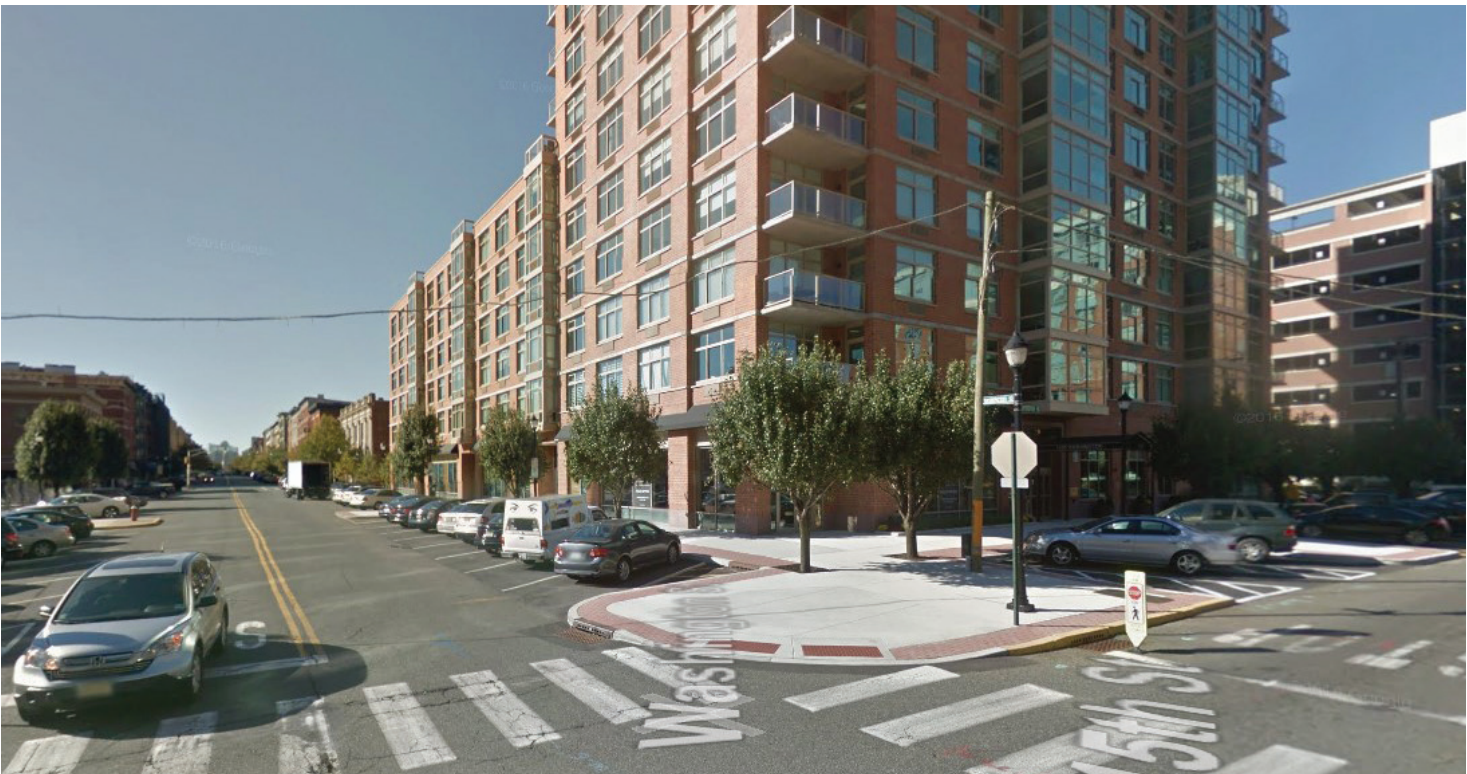
North

The first street that runs east to west, south of Weehawken Cove is 15th Street. North of 15th Street and to the east of Harborside Park is Harborside Lofts and the Hudson Tea Building. A small park is located between the two buildings. Impacts to the views of the Hudson River from this park are analyzed in the Waterfront Visual Impact Assessment. The park connects to the lawn of the Hudson Tea Building. Park and Garden Apartments and 1450 Washington at Hudson Tea are located on the south side of 15th Street and a multi-level municipal parking garage is

located between the two buildings (see **Photograph 4.42**).

The first building on the west side of Washington Street (1450 Washington) consists of commercial use on the ground floor (“Cork” Wine and Spirits) and residences above. This block has a wide sidewalk and there are several diagonal parking spaces located in front of the building. The next building to the south is the Hudson Reporter building. The opposite side of Washington Street contains a large new residential building and a TD Bank. Between the 1450 Washington Street building and the Hudson Reporter building is an alleyway that runs east to west between Garden and Washington Street. The alleyway between Garden Street and Washington Street is finished with brick pavers and bollards to prevent vehicle access. The portion between Bloomfield and Washington Streets is wider with trees, planters, and benches. The narrower portion of the alleyway between Garden and Bloomfield contains lighting only.

One block to the south there are two restaurants located at the corner of 14th Street and Washington (see **Photograph 4.43**). These restaurants, Madison Bar & Grill and Bin 14 (wine bar), offer sidewalk dining. The remainder of the block consists of five-story residential buildings, with diagonal parking along the street. On the eastern side of Washington Street, there are commercial uses on the first floor including Las Olas Sushi Bar and Grill and a medical office. There are four residential stories above. Engine Company Number 2 fire house is located to the south, followed



Photograph 4.42 Looking southwest on Washington Street from the Hudson Tea Building; Source: Imagery © 2017 Google, Map data



Photograph 4.43 Looking south on Washington Street and 14th Street; Source: Imagery © 2017 Google, Map data



Photograph 4.44 Looking northeast on the corner of Observer Highway and Washington Street; Source: Imagery © 2017 Google, Map data



Photograph 4.45 Looking southwest along Observer Highway; Source: Imagery © 2017 Google, Map data

by 1301 Hoboken-North Hudson YMCA building at the corner of Washington and 13th Street.

South

The east side of the southernmost block of Washington Street consists of a one-story CVS Pharmacy, a seasonal retail store, a medical office, and a parking lot (see **Photograph 4.44**). The opposite side of Washington Street consists mainly of five-story residential buildings. Looking southbound on Washington Street, the main focus is the Newport Development in Jersey City. Both sides of Washington Street include wide sidewalks and parallel street parking.

The southeastern portion of Hoboken is dominated by the Hoboken Terminal and rail yard. The rail yard consists of tracks; catenary; and other supporting electrical, mechanical, and maintenance equipment and buildings serving NJ TRANSIT, PATH, Metro North, and the Hudson Bergen Light Rail. The Terminal also provides bus and ferry service making the area highly trafficked by pedestrians and vehicles. Observer Highway runs along the north side of the rail yard to Marin Boulevard where it becomes Newark Street and a new bike path that has recently been installed on its south side (see **Photograph 4.45**). The rail yard is separated from the roadway by fencing and the facades of buildings along the perimeter of the yard. The portion of the rail property that is within Hoboken comprises the Hoboken Yards Redevelopment Plan, which includes a mixed use and transit-oriented development.

Jersey City

In the southwestern portion of the Study Area where the HBLR jogs south, there is a small NJ TRANSIT owned park area bound by Coles Street to the west, the southern edge of the NJ TRANSIT property, Jersey Avenue to the east, and NJ TRANSIT trestle to the north. Included in the park area is a bike path that runs parallel to 18th Street from Coles Street and under the tracks to Observer Highway continuing to the north. A small seating area is located between the two overpasses near an access road to a parking lot used by NJ TRANSIT. This property is included in the Jersey Avenue Park Redevelopment Area.

4.5.4.3 Environmental Consequences

The following section describes the potential aesthetic impacts that may be experienced in each of the areas selected for evaluation.

The DSD elements of the Project are the same for each build alternative and consist of over 60 sites that would include new and/or improved stormwater management techniques designed to complement other efforts by the City of Hoboken. Much of these improvements are at or below grade and are not anticipated to have a visual impact; therefore, they do not require evaluation.

Alternative 1

The Alternative 1 Resist feature runs along the waterfront in Weehawken and Hoboken. The aesthetic impacts of the waterfront alignment have been further evaluated in the Waterfront Visual Impact

Assessment. Alternative 1 does not impact 15th Street, north Washington Street, or Garden Street in Hoboken.

In the southern portion of Hoboken, a Resist feature would run along the eastern side of the southernmost block of Washington Street, in front of the CVS, retail store, and parking lot. The feature would be approximately six feet high where Washington Street meets Observer Highway and taper down to existing ground level as it travels north towards Newark Street. The aesthetic impact in this area is considered minor because of the retail uses on this side of the street.

Alternative 1 includes two options (common to all of the Build Alternatives) described below that would be located near the Hoboken Terminal.

Option 1

Option 1 involves a Resist feature that would be located in the Hoboken rail yard. The feature would be approximately 12 feet high and would be visible to the occupants of the buildings along the north side of Observer Highway. Because it would be set back from the roadway at least 125 feet, the impact would be somewhat less conspicuous, as the feature would appear to be part of the rail yard and there would be other intervening features such as fencing, other buildings in the yard, or any future redevelopment that may occur at the yard.

Option 2

Option 2 consists of a Resist feature that would run along the south side of Observer Highway at the

edge of the Hoboken rail yard. The feature would be approximately 11 feet high in this area. It would significantly change the view of the rail yard for pedestrians and other travelers on Observer Highway as well as occupants of the first two to three floors of the buildings on the north side of Observer Highway. Depending on the viewer’s preference, the obstruction of views of the rail yard may be considered adverse or beneficial.

In the southwestern part of the Study Area within Jersey City, Alternative 1 travels east to west along the south side of the tracks and crosses Jersey Avenue with a gate. The Resist feature then travels south along Jersey Avenue under the HBLR tracks and then east paralleling the HBLR, utilizing the gravel area between the tracks and the bike path (see **Figure 4.58**). The Resist feature would be approximately nine feet high in this location and would be visible from the south. The bike path running along Jersey Avenue would need to be relocated to reconnect to Jersey Avenue near the seating area. The seating area would be impacted and would require reconfiguration because of the space required for the Resist feature and the storage of the moveable Jersey Avenue gate. The Resist feature would be designed to complement the existing open space that has been created in this area. Several design considerations can be incorporated here including provisions for seating, bike parking, lighting, murals, wayfinding, and landscaping.

Alternative 2

Alternative 2 approaches 15th Street through



Figure 4.58 Visual depiction of Resist feature along HBLR, southwest portion of Study Area

Harborside Park. It runs along the north side of 15th Street for approximately 180 feet, where it ties into the Hudson Tea Building lawn. A grassy berm is envisioned at this point and then the feature would continue south along the west side of 15th Street for two blocks, including removable gates across the streets. The average height of the Resist feature would be approximately five feet. A variety of contextual solutions have been presented to the community so that the Resist feature blends seamlessly into the landscape and the neighborhood. These solutions include shrub planters, artwork, and murals, as well as vegetation and green walls. Lighting, wayfinding, and seating can be incorporated in areas where the community determines it is appropriate.

The Hudson Tea Building would experience a minor

change to the view on the south side of the building and to the west where a five- to seven-foot berm is proposed (see **Figure 4.59**). The berm would be incorporated into the existing lawn space using urban design elements. Because this alternative also proposes a Resist structure running down Washington Street on the west side at an average height of five feet, it would change the view looking down Washington Street for those at the Hudson Tea Building. The Resist feature would include landscaping elements such as terracing; designed to work with the existing character of the neighborhood and still allow for passive recreational opportunities on the lawn of the Hudson Tea Building. The consistent use of natural and vegetative materials would reduce the minor aesthetic impacts for viewers in the area



Figure 4.59 Visual depiction of Resist feature on south side of Hudson Tea Building



Figure 4.60 Visual depiction of Resist feature and urban amenities along Washington Street

because they are accustomed to viewing a raised green space here.

At the north end of Washington Street, there is a liquor store and the Resist feature would be located in the place of several existing diagonal parking spaces in front of this building (see **Figure 4.60**). Aesthetic impacts are expected to be minimal in this location due to the commercial use along this side of the street. Because the Resist feature would replace parking spaces, pedestrians would enjoy additional gathering spaces along this side of the street. The Resist feature would be approximately five to six feet in height at this location and may include seating, vegetation, and lighting.

Continuing south on Washington Street, there are two restaurants located at the corner of 14th and Washington Street that currently utilize the sidewalk for outdoor dining. The remainder of the block consists of five-story residential buildings, with diagonal parking along the street, which would be impacted. The outdoor dining experience of these patrons would be impacted by the Resist feature. It may be possible to incorporate additional seating into the Resist feature to provide a benefit to these restaurants. Likewise, the residents living along the remainder of this side of the street would experience a moderate aesthetic change in their daily surroundings. The Resist structure would be tapering down at this point from three feet to ground level. However, amenities such as bike storage could help to alleviate some of the aesthetic impacts experienced by the residents.

On the south end of Washington Street, the Resist feature would run along the eastern side of the southernmost block of Washington Street, in front of the CVS, retail store, and parking lot. The feature would be approximately six feet high where Washington Street meets Observer Highway and taper down to the existing ground level as it travels north towards Newark Street. The southern portion of the Resist feature would connect to either Option 1 or Option 2. Aesthetic impacts would be the same as those described under Alternative 1 for Option 1 and Option 2.

In the southwestern part of the study area in Jersey City, the Resist feature runs east to west along the south side of the HBLR tracks. A gate is proposed across Jersey Avenue. The Resist feature would intersect the bike path and continue east through the gravel area just south of the HBLR and north of the bike path. The Resist feature would be approximately nine feet high in this location and its alignment would require the bike path to be re-routed to connect to the Jersey Avenue sidewalk. This is the only alternative that does not impact the seating area along Jersey Avenue. Several design considerations can be incorporated here including additional seating, bike racks, lighting, and wayfinding. A variety of materials, color treatments, textures, and plantings can be utilized to blend the Resist structure with the surrounding park space. The aesthetic impact is expected to be minimal to visitors, travelers and nearby residents.

Alternative 3

Alternative 3 crosses over 15th Street at Harborside Park and travels south along Garden Street on the east side, turning east into the alleyway (see **Figure 4.61** and **Figure 4.62**). There would be no use of the Hudson Tea Building lawn under this alternative. The Resist feature at this point would be approximately 3-4 feet in height and would travel through the alleyway on the south side and incorporate planters and vegetation. A variety of contextual solutions have been presented to the community so that the Resist feature blends seamlessly into the landscape along these two streets. These solutions include shrub planters, art work, and murals, as well as vegetation and green walls. Lighting, wayfinding, and seating can be incorporated in areas where the community determines it is appropriate. The Resist feature would then travel down Washington Street with the same impacts described under Alternative 2.

On the south end of Washington Street, the Resist feature would run along the eastern side of the southernmost block in front of the CVS, retail store, and parking lot. The feature would be approximately six feet high where Washington Street meets Observer Highway and taper down to the existing ground level as it travels north towards Newark Street. The southern portion of the Resist feature would connect to either Option 1 or Option 2. Aesthetic impacts would be the same as those described under Alternative 1 for Option 1 and Option 2.

In the southwestern part of the study area in Jersey

City, Alternative 3 travels east to west along the south side of the tracks and crosses Jersey Avenue with a gate. The Resist feature then travels south along Jersey Avenue under the HBLR tracks and then east paralleling the HBLR, utilizing the gravel area between the tracks and the bike path. The Resist feature would be approximately nine feet high in this location and would be visible from the south. The bike path running along Jersey Avenue would need to be slightly realigned to continue north under the rail overpass. The seating area would be severely impacted by the Resist feature and by the storage area needed for the moveable gate. The seating area would need to be reconfigured and the Resist feature would be designed to complement the existing open space that has been created in this area. Several design considerations can be incorporated here including provisions for seating, bike parking, lighting, murals, and wayfinding.

No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would have no aesthetic impact.

4.5.4.4 Mitigation

Building on the numerous urban design charrettes that have occurred thus far, various design considerations have been developed with the public. These design considerations, which were presented during the design charrettes, can be used to mitigate aesthetic impacts resulting from each alternative by applying placemaking and service based solutions. Depending on the location, design considerations can include shrub planters, art work and murals, vegetation



Figure 4.61 Visual depiction of Resist feature in the alleyway, Bloomfield Street in the background



Figure 4.62 Visual depiction of Resist feature in the alleyway, Washington Street in the background

and green walls, seating, bike racks, lighting, and wayfinding. A variety of materials, color treatments, textures, and plantings can be utilized to incorporate the Resist structure into the surrounding environment.

Mitigation would be developed through continued coordination with the affected community, including elected officials, and would be on going during final design and construction. Additionally, context-sensitive solutions would be incorporated into the final design of the Resist features and final design would maintain bike and pedestrian path connectivity.

Additionally, in order to address historic property or historic district impacts, consultation with the NJHPO would occur. The mitigation measures developed would need to be in keeping with the intent of The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (36 CFR Part 68). As the RBD-HR Project design advances, proposed plans would be submitted to the NJHPO for review.