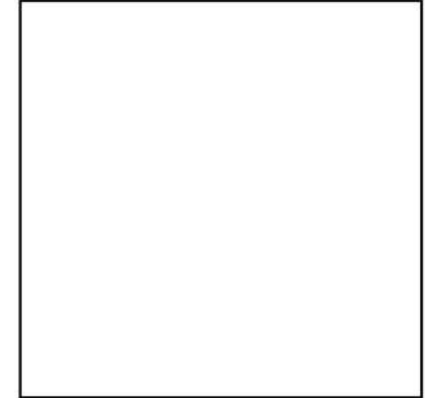
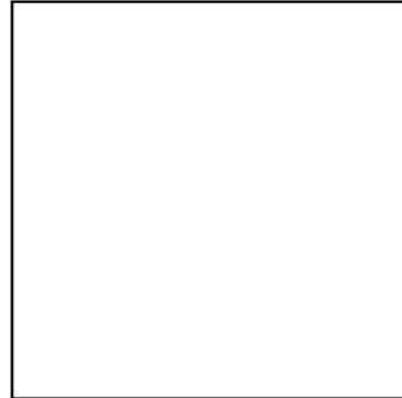


Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building Plaza

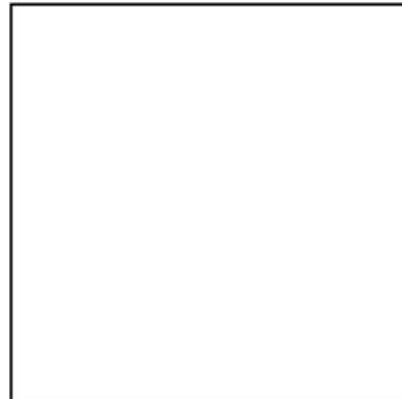
Planning and Design Study: African Square



Final Report

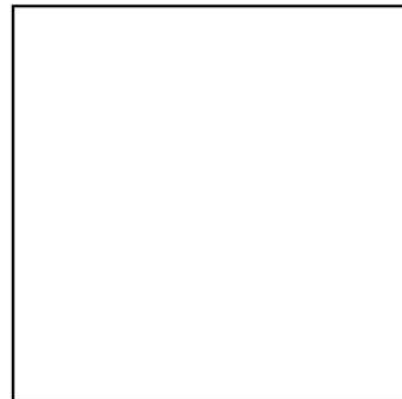
Sponsored by

Manhattan Community Board 10
Harlem Community Development Corporation
New York State Office of General Services



Prepared by

Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP)
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Fall 2006

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Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building Plaza



I. INTRODUCTION

Overview

This planning and design study by the Urban Technical Assistance Project (UTAP), Columbia University, focuses on envisioning a new image for the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building Plaza, located at the intersection of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard and 125th Street in Central Harlem. When the State Office Building was inaugurated 32 years ago, little attention was given to the Plaza's spatial potential and historical significance. As it exists today, the Plaza does not adequately address the spatial and functional needs of the community. Redesigning the Plaza, therefore, is an opportunity to turn a void into a vibrant cultural and civic center celebrating the community's history.

The Plaza is located at a crossroad that is charged with historical memories. African Square, as the intersection of 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard is now officially called, was known as Harlem Square or Speakers' Corner. Many of Harlem's major politicians and activists have addressed the community from stepladders and soapboxes at this crossroad. Micheaux's famous National Memorial African Bookstore was nearby. In addition, most community celebratory parades marched down Seventh Avenue. Although the Plaza is used today for numerous temporary activities, it does not adequately address the spatial and functional needs of the community nor does it give recognition to its historical roots. It is perceived as a void in Harlem's urban fabric rather than the focus of public activities, entertainment and celebration.

Creating a design for the Plaza is a unique opportunity for Harlem residents to renew their ownership of the historical legacy embedded within the site. Thus the idea of a Plaza celebrating the community's collective memory. Building from the intersection's name as African Square, the proposed design borrows the principles of an African village public space to frame the new distribution of spaces on the site. Just as the placement of walls, markets, gathering spaces, sacred places and historical markers interpret the African village's cultural memory, so will the new plaza's spaces incorporate and interpret the story of

Harlem. Thus, building from historical memories and African roots, the Plaza will become a relevant historical marker. It will also restore the State Office Building as the civic and cultural center of Harlem's public life.

Based on the site's past history and its renewed significance, ensuring the participation of the community throughout the process of designing the Plaza was essential. Manhattan Community Board 10 took leadership in establishing and coordinating a group of stakeholders: the Plaza Working Group. The Working Group provided critical feedback over the course of strategic visioning sessions. To inform the process, briefing documents covering the inventory of existing conditions, site analysis, historical research and preliminary design concepts, were provided. In addition, an opinion survey of Plaza's users and State Office Building tenants broadened the range of community concerns considered in the planning of the Plaza. The input of both Working Group and users has become an integral part of the project presented here.

The sponsors of this project are Manhattan Community Board 10, which facilitated the participation of the community, assembled the working group, and hosted workshops and public forums to solicit feedback, Harlem Community Development Corporation, and the New York State Office of General Services – Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building.

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building Plaza Timeline



STATE OFFICE BUILDING AT 125TH ST. AND 7TH AVE.
Governor Rockefeller agrees to a State Office Building, at the corner of 125th Street and 7th Avenue, to house offices of public officials and state agencies serving the community.

1966

DEMOLITION OF BLOCK BEGINS
Site clearance starts. 300 families and 90 businesses are forced out.

WORK IS HALTED
Pressure from residents & political leaders led Governor Rockefeller to stop work on site

1968



SQUATTERS FORCIBLY REMOVED
Some violence broke out at the site. Six people incurred injuries

CONSTRUCTION BEGINS
Construction begins while the eastern half of the site is cleared. Many hope that this portion will be for community facilities.

1970

STATE OFFICE BUILDING INAUGURATION
The SOB is dedicated in May 1974. The eastern portion of the site is a parking lot.

1974

MUNICIPAL PARKING GARAGE OPENS

1984

HARLEM CENTER TO COMPLETE THE SITE
Abyssinian Development Corporation and Forest City Ratner undertake the commercial development of the Malcolm X Blvd. side of site.

2001

HARLEM CENTER OPENS
The 126,000 sq.ft. development, including Staples, Marshall's and CVS opens. A 2-story H & M next to the Plaza completes the development.

2002

CROSSROADS
The intersection of 125th Street and 7th Avenue is the center of the community. Commerce and entertainment line 125th Street, while the Avenue is the parade and strolling ground.

SPEAKERS CORNER
The intersection is also a place for public speaking and discussion of current political events. Among many other leaders, A. Philip Randolph, Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and Malcolm X have spoken there.

1960 WORLD TRADE CENTER IN HARLEM?
To a proposal of a World Trade Center in Lower Manhattan, Whitney Young suggests to move the site to Harlem, where the construction of public offices could stimulate the neighborhood redevelopment. This vision was not realized.

1967 OPPOSITION BEGINS
The approved budget for the State Office Building eliminates the cultural and civic centers that were to share the site with the SOB.

1969 SQUATTERS OCCUPY SITE IN PROTEST
A group called the Community Coalition begins squatting at the site. They argue for a development with housing and services needed by the community. The Governor offers for UDC to finance the development of the cultural and civic center.

COMMUNITY CONVENTION TO DECIDE FATE OF SITE
A convention of community groups looks at alternate development proposals. Overwhelmingly, they opt for housing, educational and cultural services and reject the SOB. The community plans are ignored



THIRD WORLD TRADE CENTER PROPOSED
HUDC presents plan for the development of a Third World Trade Center, with offices, hotel and retail space, at the eastern end of the site. Financing for the project falters.

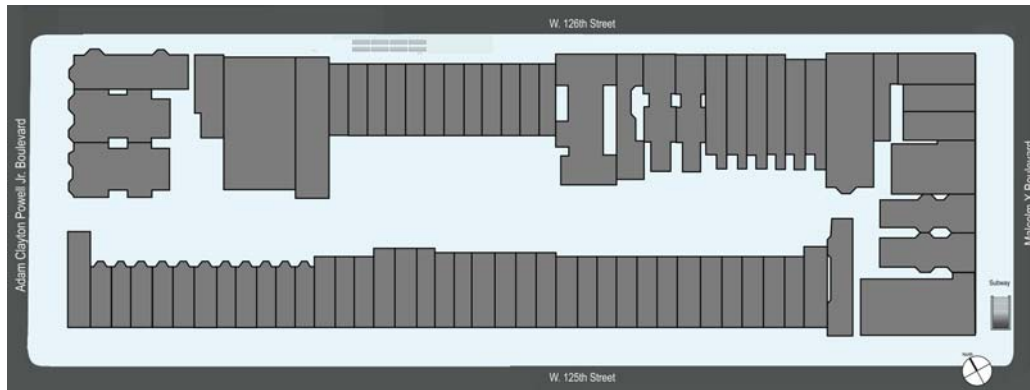
1997 SUMMER STAGE PROGRAM STARTS
Programming of cultural events throughout the summer.



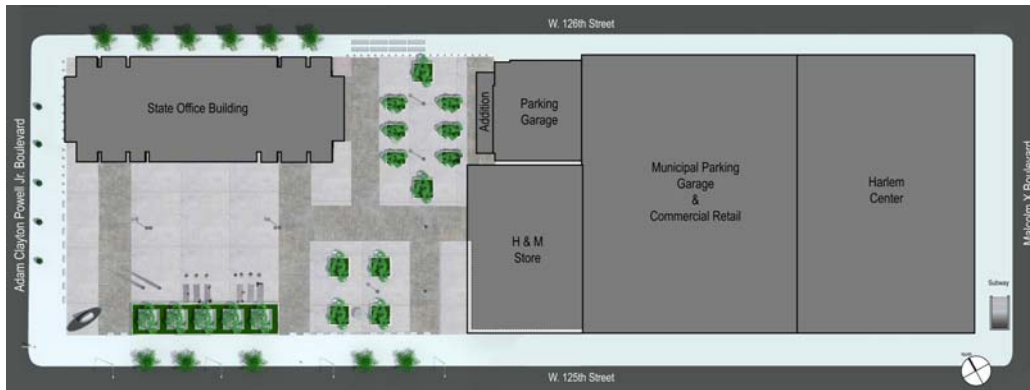
2006 PLAZA DESIGN RECONSIDERED
Community Board 10, HCDC and NYS Office of General Services undertake a study for the redesign of the Plaza.

Development of the Plaza Since 1964

1964



2006



II. CONTEXT AREA

A study of the area surrounding the Plaza, prominently located at the junction of 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard, provides an understanding of its physical context. To capture the streets bounding the Plaza and the significance of 125th Street and Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard, the boundaries of the Context Area extend from St. Nicholas Avenue to Fifth Avenue on West 124th, 125th Street and 126th Streets. Streetfront lots on Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. Boulevard were included between West 123rd and 128th Streets. Physical characteristics analyzed within the Context Area included occupancy, physical conditions, building heights, land use and zoning.

Land Use

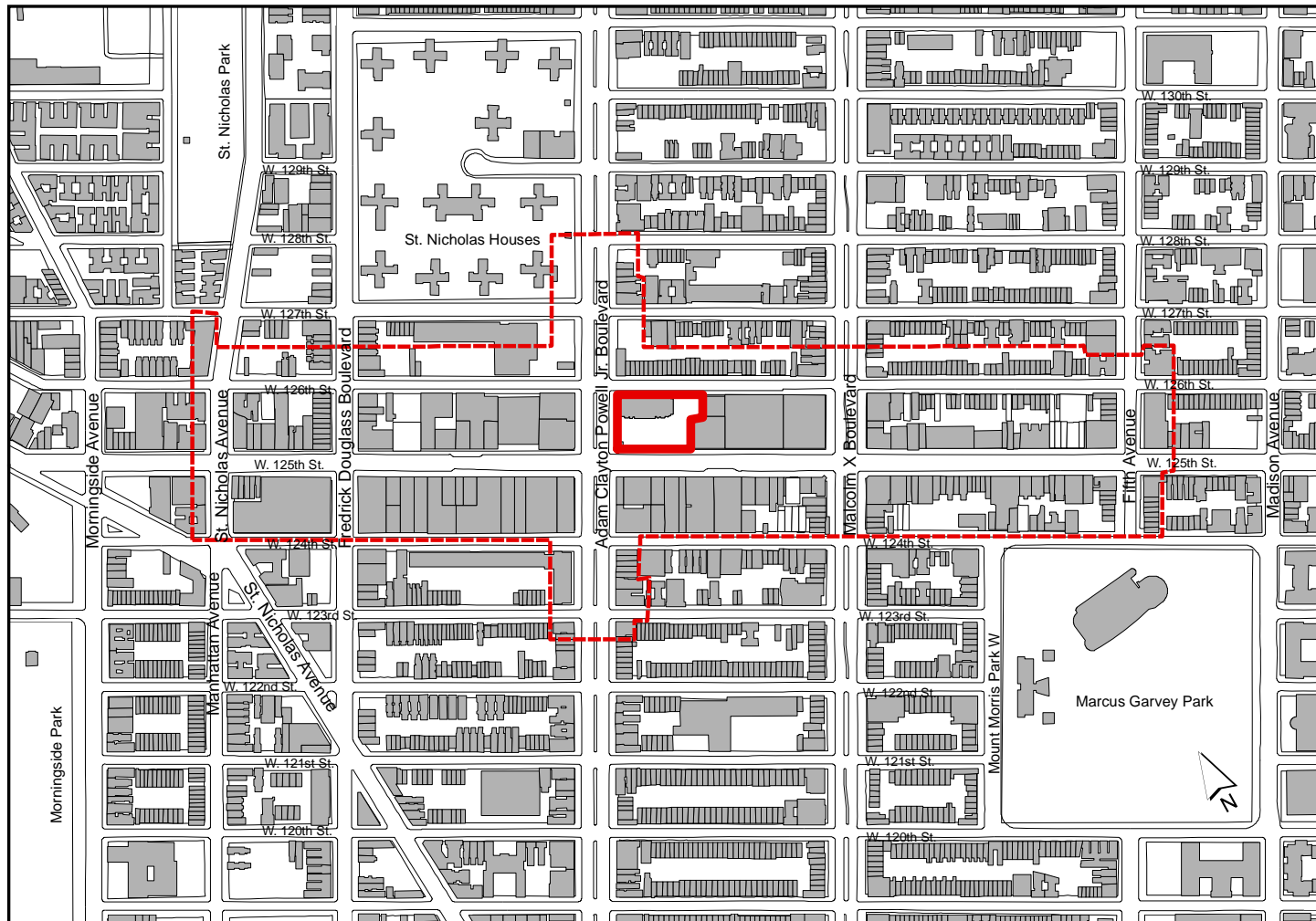
Land use in the context area is diverse with commercial, residential, and institutional buildings. 125th Street is largely comprised of commercial spaces with several institutional buildings, including the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building, Apollo Theater, and the Studio Museum of Harlem.


Neighborhood Context

The Neighborhood Context map identifies commercial, cultural and institutional landmarks within the context area. Many institutions in the area prior to 1960 such as Apollo Theater, Metropolitan Church and Lenox Lounge are still present and have maintained their original use. Landmark buildings such as Hotel Theresa and the Alhambra Ballroom still exist but do not serve their original function any more. Then there are institutions such as Victoria Theater, Loews's Theater and Micheaux Bookstore which are not present today, but the void is filled to an extent by newer institutions like the Magic Johnson Theater, National Black Theater, New York Public Library Branch, and the Hu Man Bookstore.

Map 1.1: Context Area

 Context Area  Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building Plaza



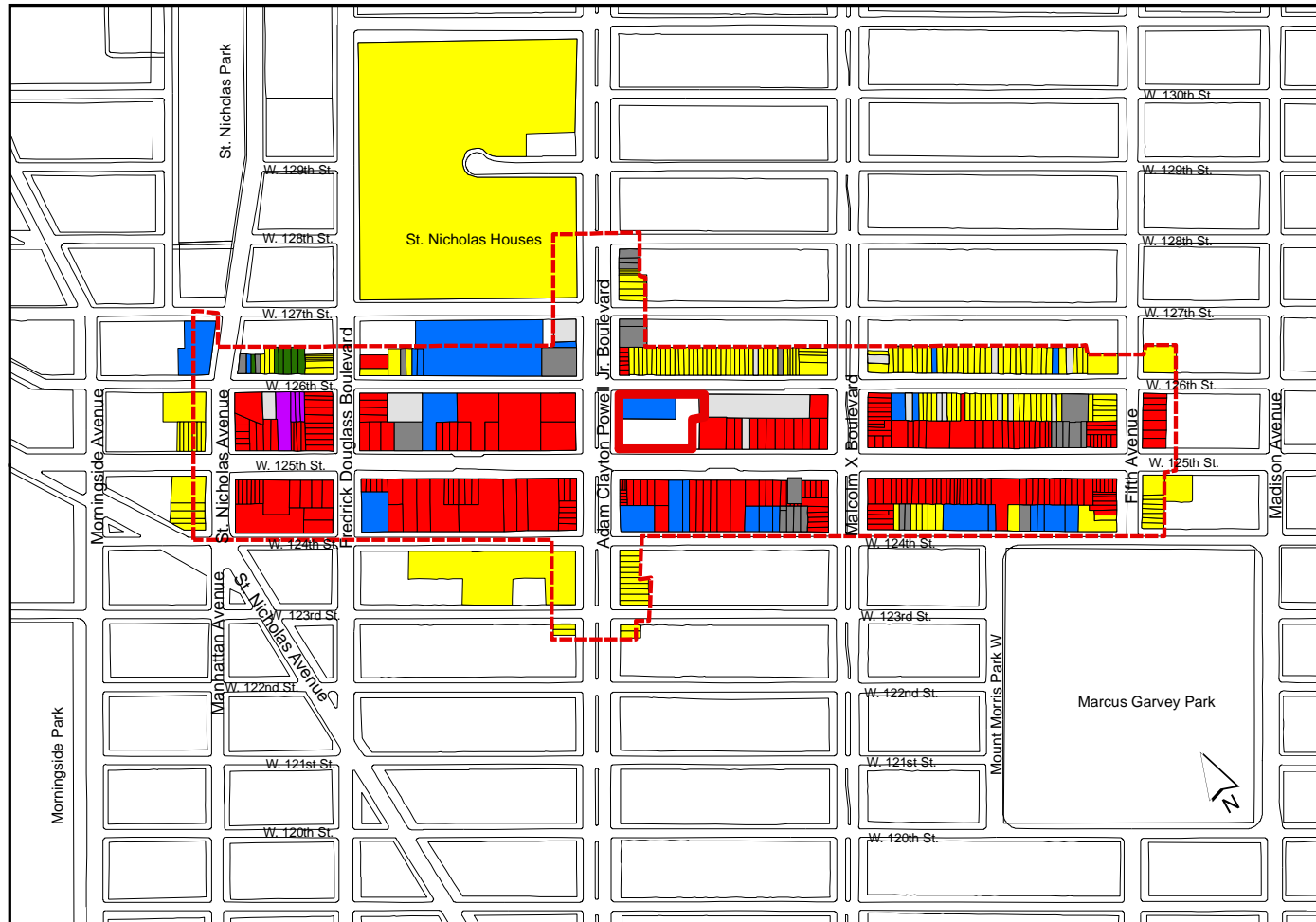
0 250 500 Feet


Source: NYC DoITT, January 2005

Map 1.2: Land Use

- Commercial
- Manufacturing
- Vacant Lot
- Residential
- Institutional
- Community Gardens
- Parking Facilities

- Context Area
- Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building Plaza



0 250 500 Feet

Data Source: Urban Technical Assistance Project Site Survey (Building and Storefront), Summer 2006

Map 1.3: Neighborhood Context – Prior to 1960



Map 1.4: Neighborhood Context – Present 2006



Zoning

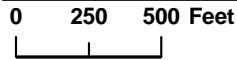
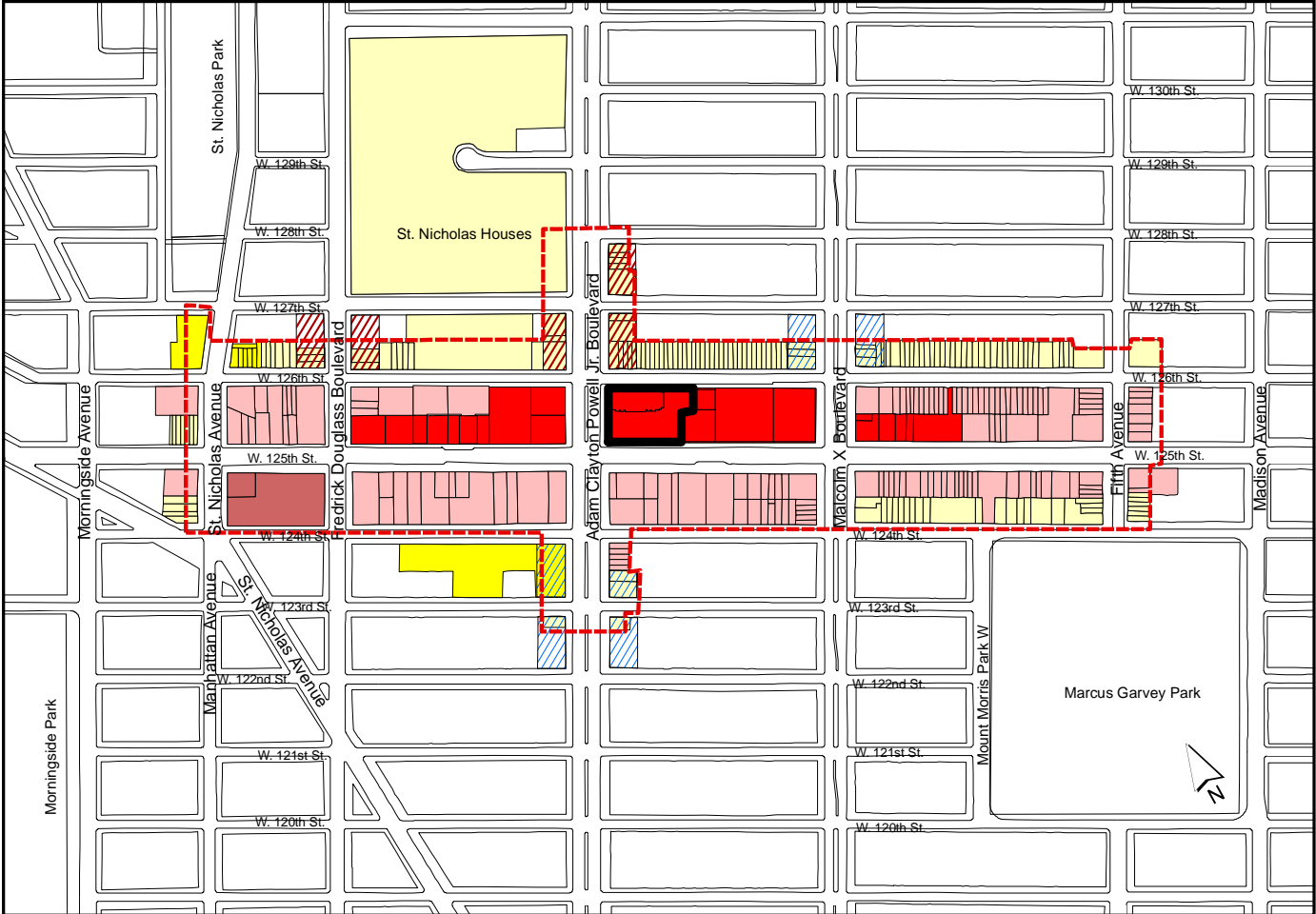
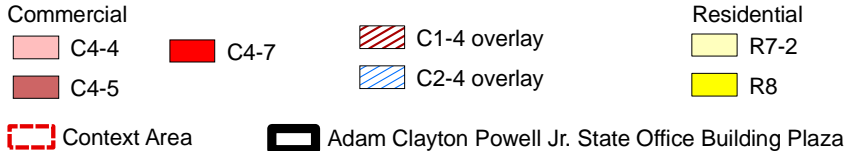
C4-4 is the predominant zoning in the Context Area, along 125th Street, with the maximum allowable FAR of 3.44. The Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building Plaza Block is zoned C4-7 with a maximum allowable FAR of 12. On designated portions of West 126th Street, C4-4A contextual zones are proposed by the New York City Department of City Planning to reduce the permitted building density from a FAR of 10 to 4. On West 124th Street, the creation of a C4-4D zone is proposed to allow a FAR of 4 for commercial buildings, 6 for community facilities, and 7.2 for inclusionary housing. On the south side of 125th Street, a C6-3 zone is proposed which would allow a FAR of 6 for commercial buildings, community facilities, and residential buildings (up to 8 with the inclusionary housing bonus).

Building Heights

The Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building is the tallest building in the context area, standing at 23 stories, composed of a double-story lobby, 17 floors for office space, 2 floors for the mechanical space and a 2-floor high parapet.

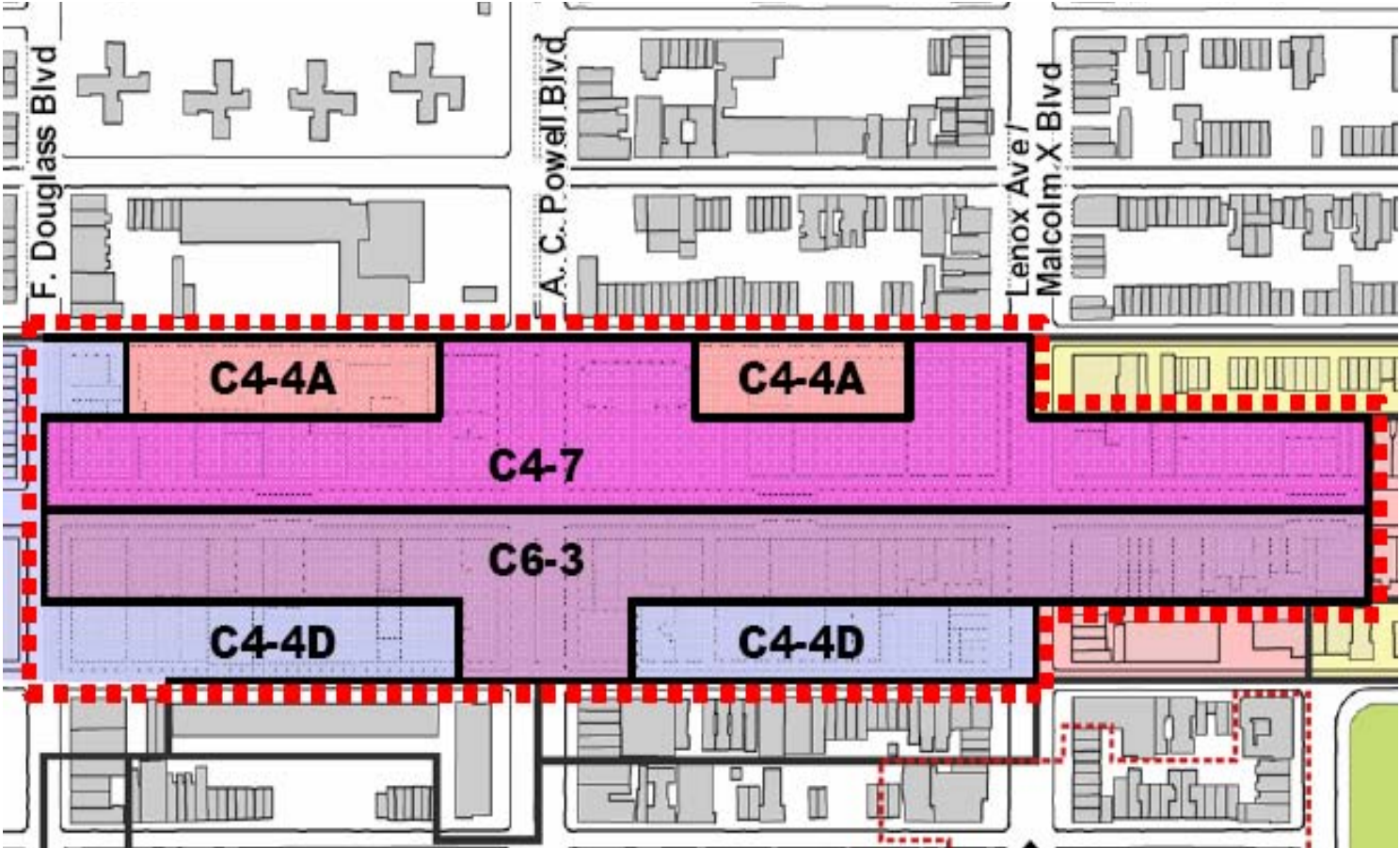
The remaining buildings within the context area are primarily within the range of 1-7 stories. Exceptions are Hotel Theresa, The Ennis, St. Nicholas Houses and two office buildings east of the plaza on 125th Street, all of which range from 10-15 stories.

Map 1.5: Existing Zoning



Data Source: MapPLUTO NYC Department of City Planning, January 2005

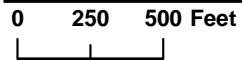
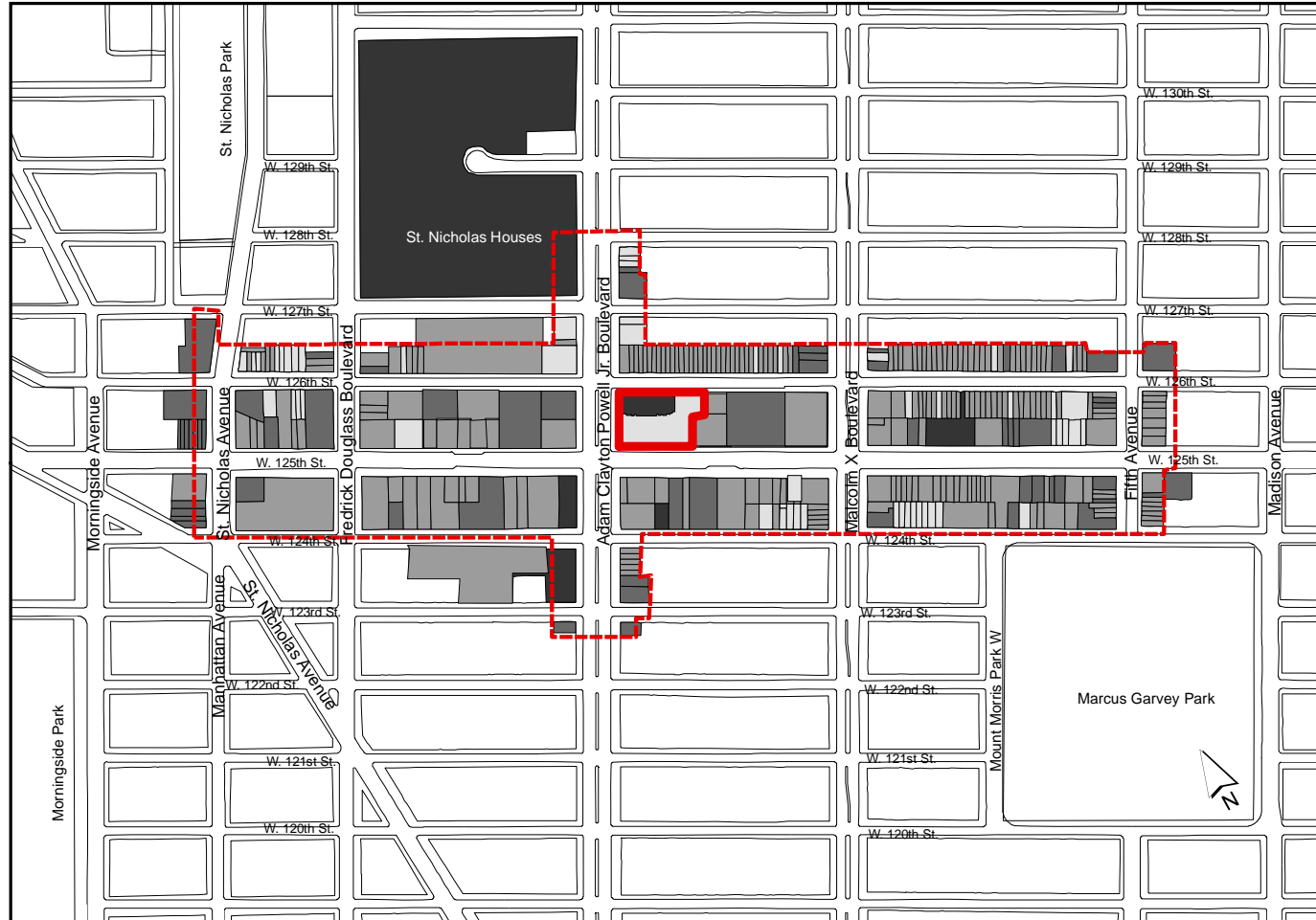
Map 1.6: Zoning Proposed by the New York City Department of City Planning



Map 1.7: Building Heights



Context Area Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building Plaza



Data Source: MapPLUTO NYC Department of City Planning, January 2005