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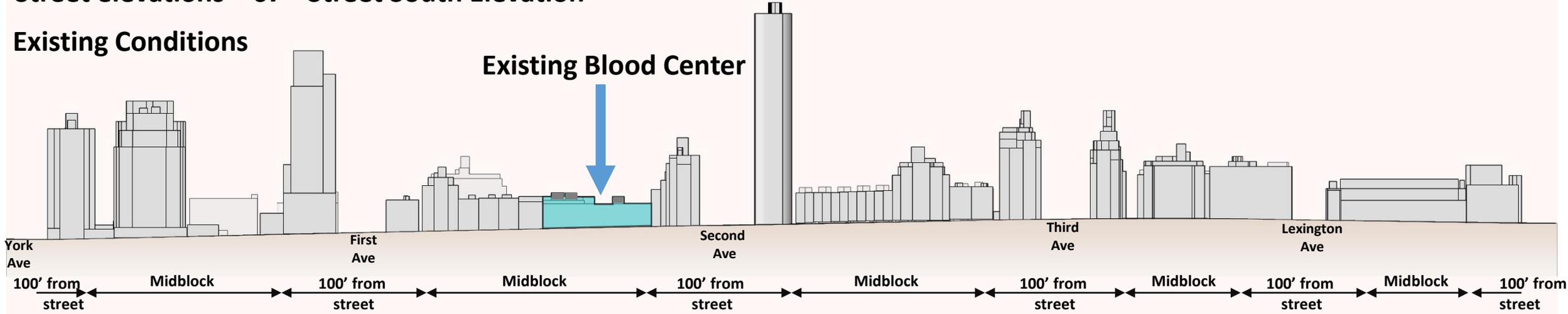
NY Blood Center Application

George M. Janes, AICP
5/12/2021

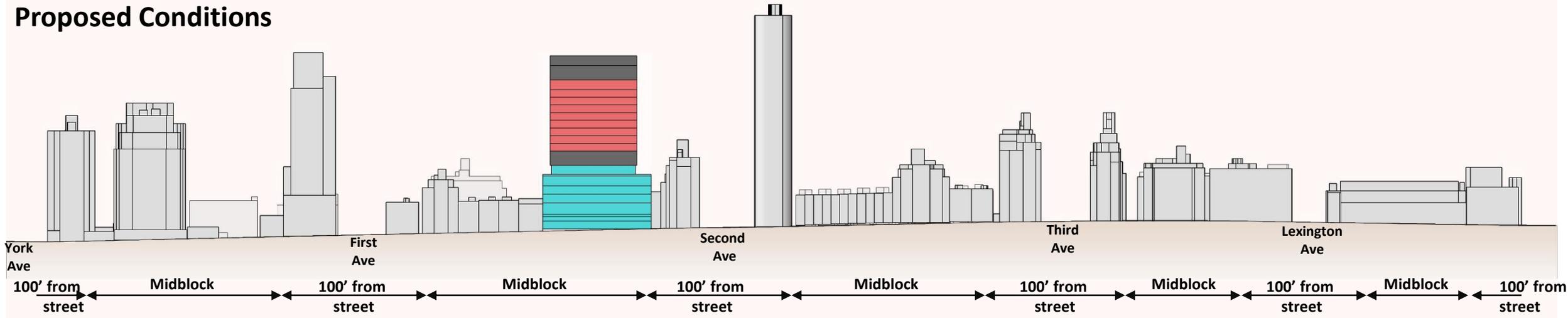
Tall and large buildings are found on the UES, but not usually in the midblocks

Street elevations – 67th Street South Elevation

Existing Conditions

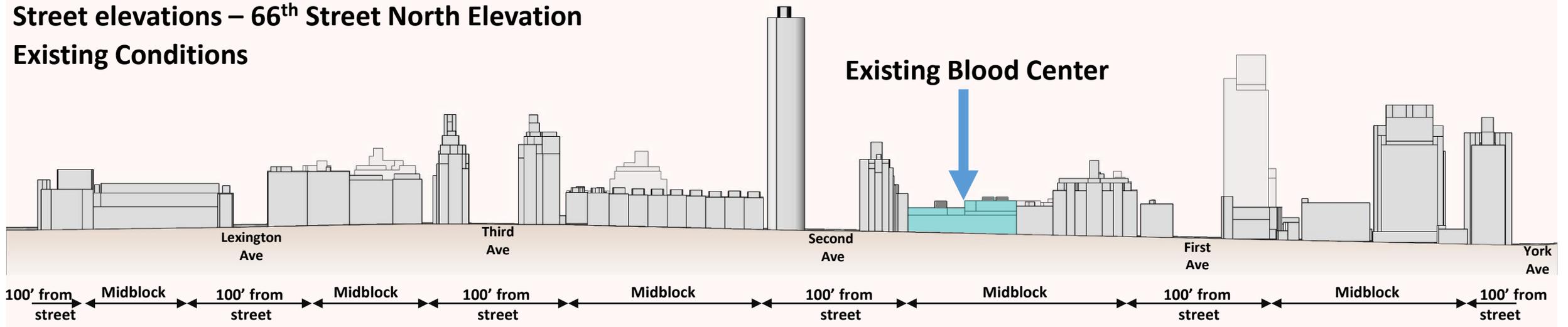


Proposed Conditions

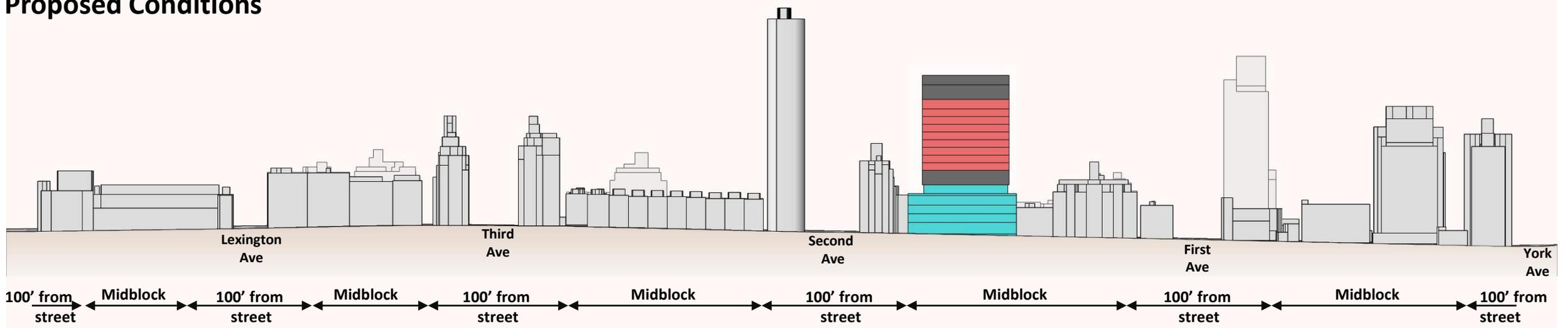


Tall and large buildings are found on the UES, but not usually in the midblocks

Street elevations – 66th Street North Elevation
Existing Conditions

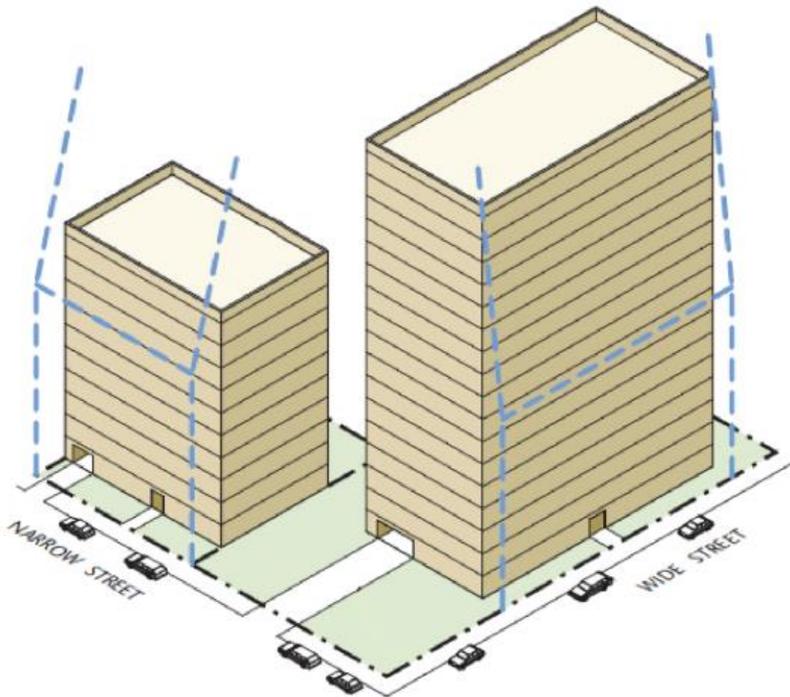


Proposed Conditions



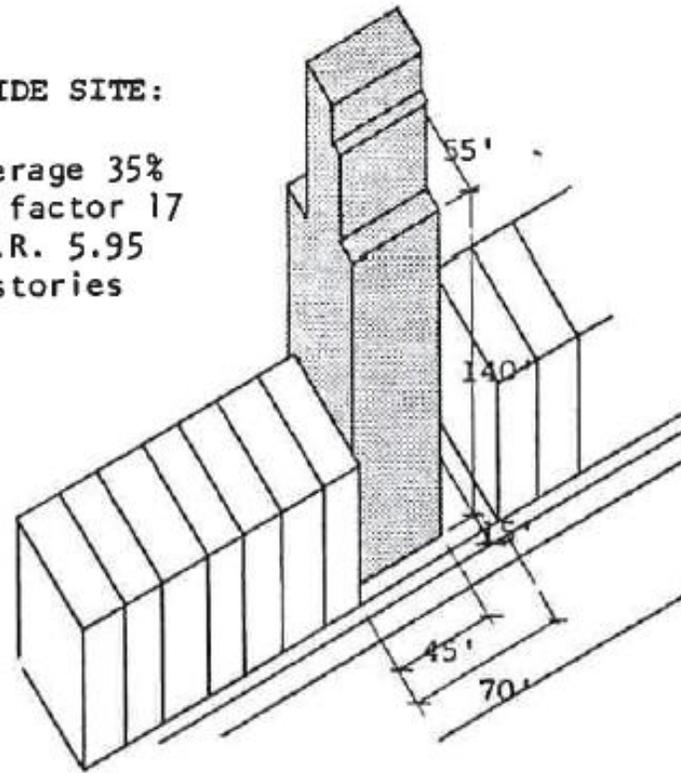
And that's because of the R8B zoning, which has been in place since 1985

- From 1961 to 1985 most midblocks were zoned R8
- R8 is a district that prioritizes open space: The taller the building the more open space it had to provide



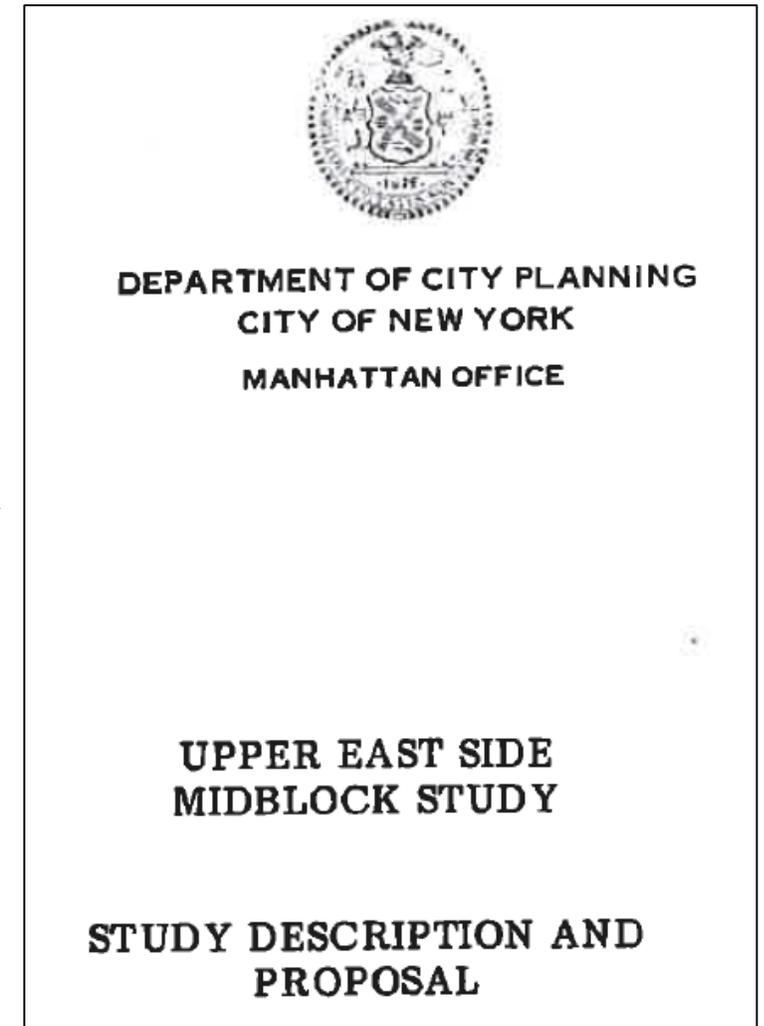
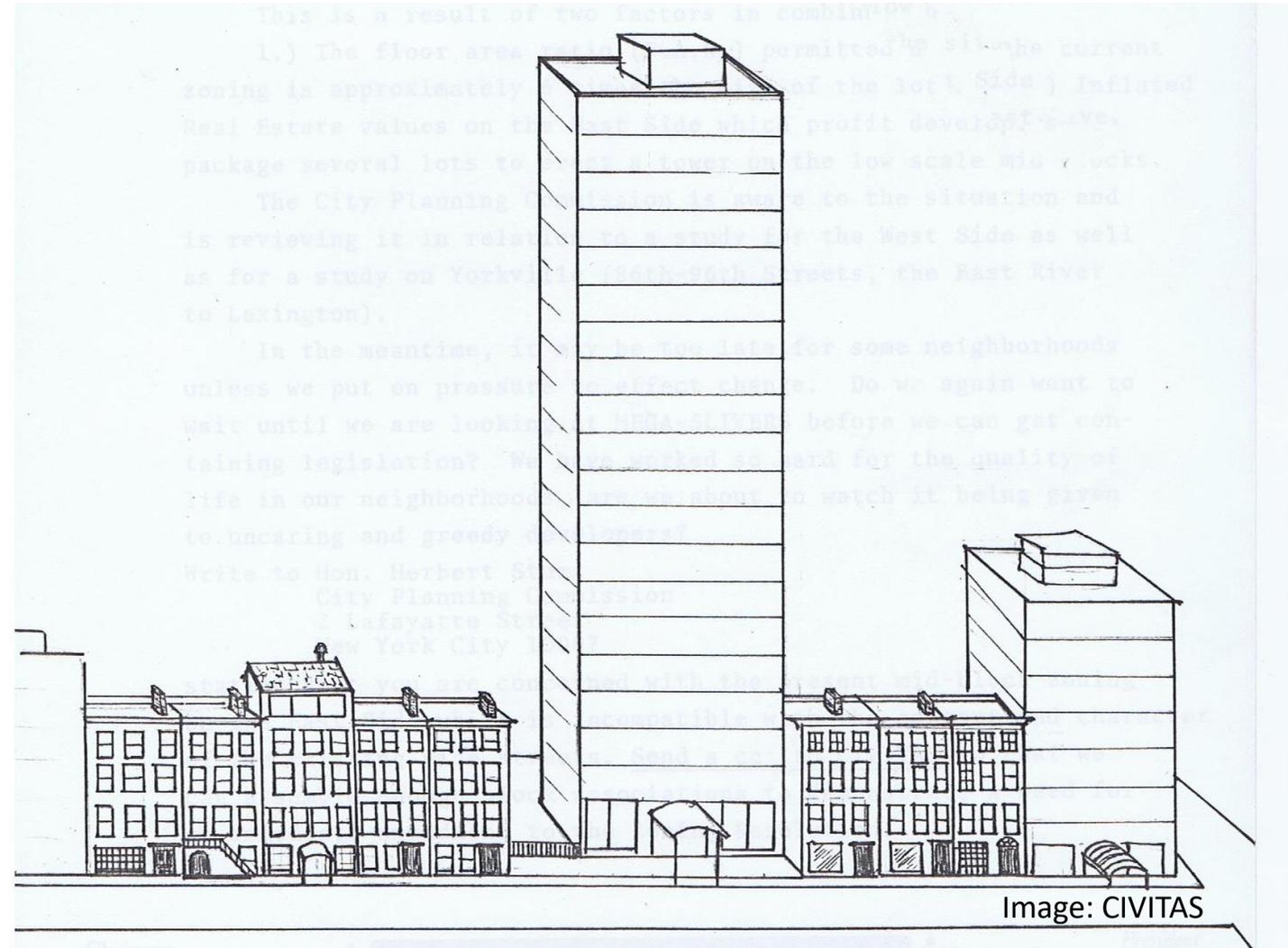
WIDE SITE:

average 35%
coverage factor 17
A.R. 5.95
stories

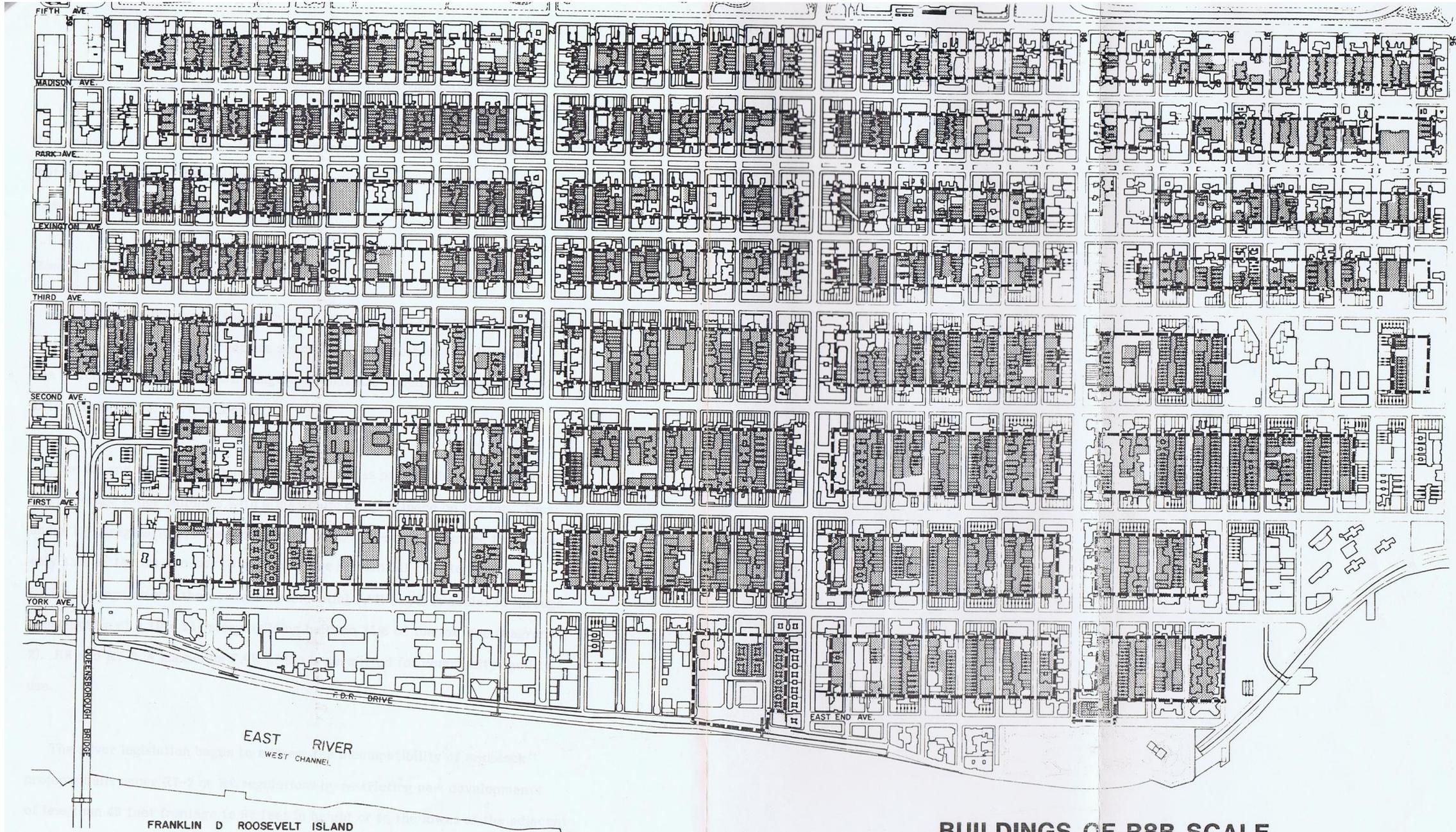


Backed by community advocates, The City studied the midblocks in 1985

- Community advocacy (below) led to the City's study:



They looked at every building on every street, identifying buildings of R8B scale



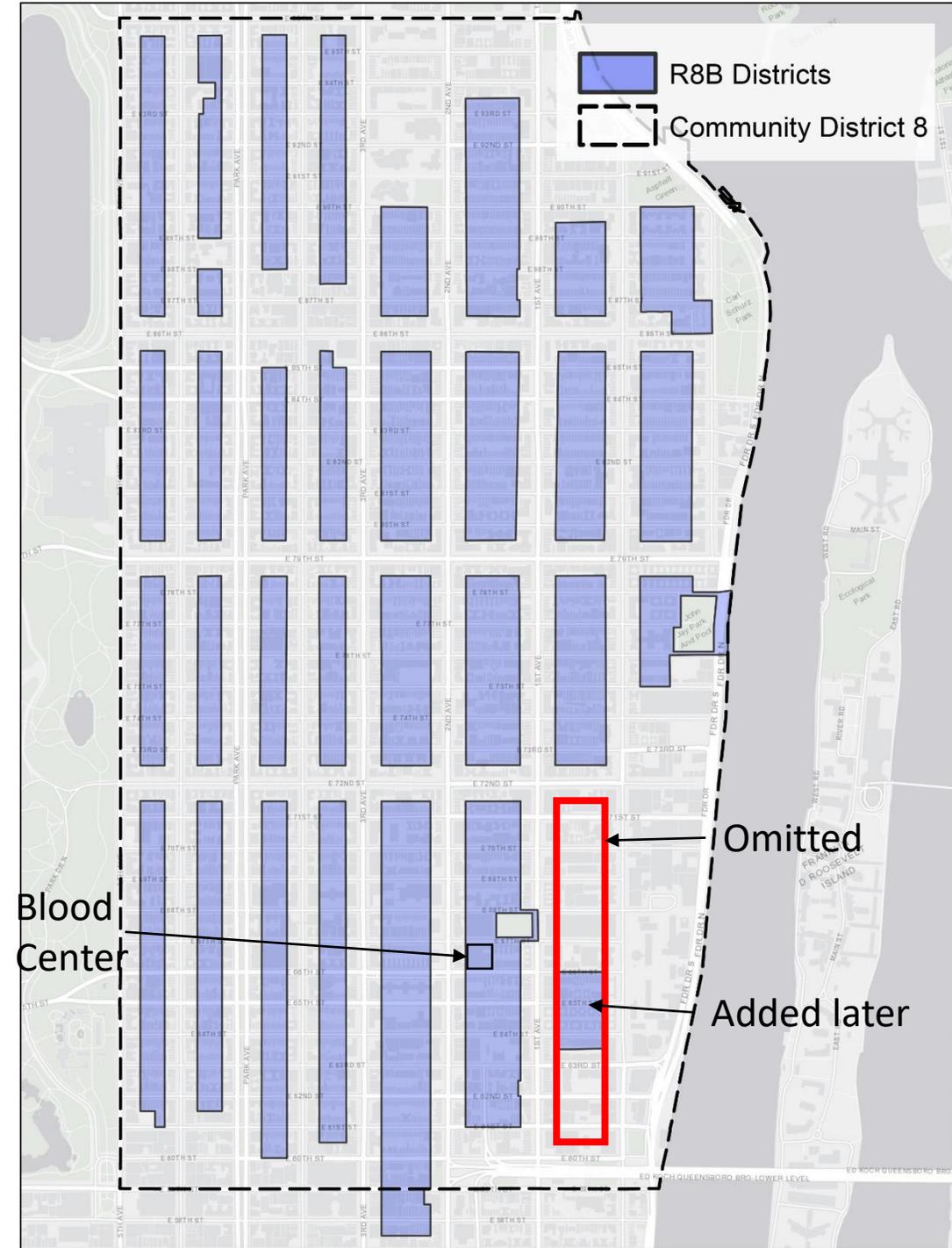
DCP's study made several important findings

- “The balancing of high-density zoning on the avenues by low-scale development in the midblocks has been a policy upheld consistently by the City Planning Commission.”
- “The midblocks on the Upper East Side have a strong and identifiable sense of enclosure, scale and coherence. They form enclaves within the larger community and offer quiet refuge from the busier avenues.”
- “[The R8 district], while maintaining a lower scale on narrow streets than on the avenues, encourages 150-190-foot high towers set back from the street that would be incompatible with the existing context of 55-60 foot high continuous streetwall townhouses and walkups.”
- “[R8B zoning] is applicable to the East Side midblocks in that over 90% midblock structures in the study are compatible with the R8B building prototype.”

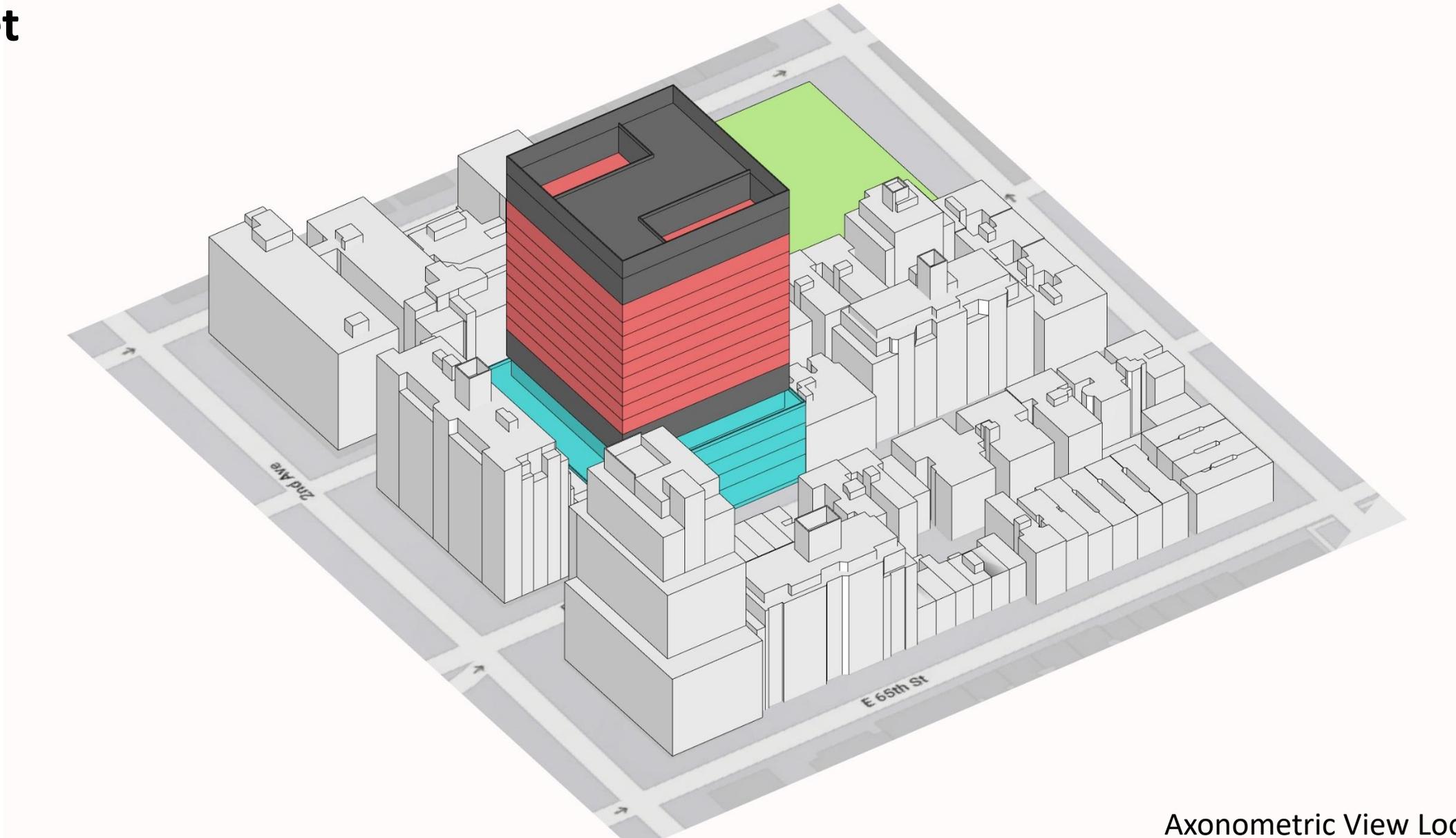
Every R8B district mapped in 1985, is still R8B

- R8 was left south of 72nd Street between York and First Avenue, “because of the number of larger institutional and residential buildings in the area between First and York . . .”
- Some areas were added, like the blocks between 66th Street and 64th Street between First and York

The UES R8B zoning is land use policy based upon a well-considered plan



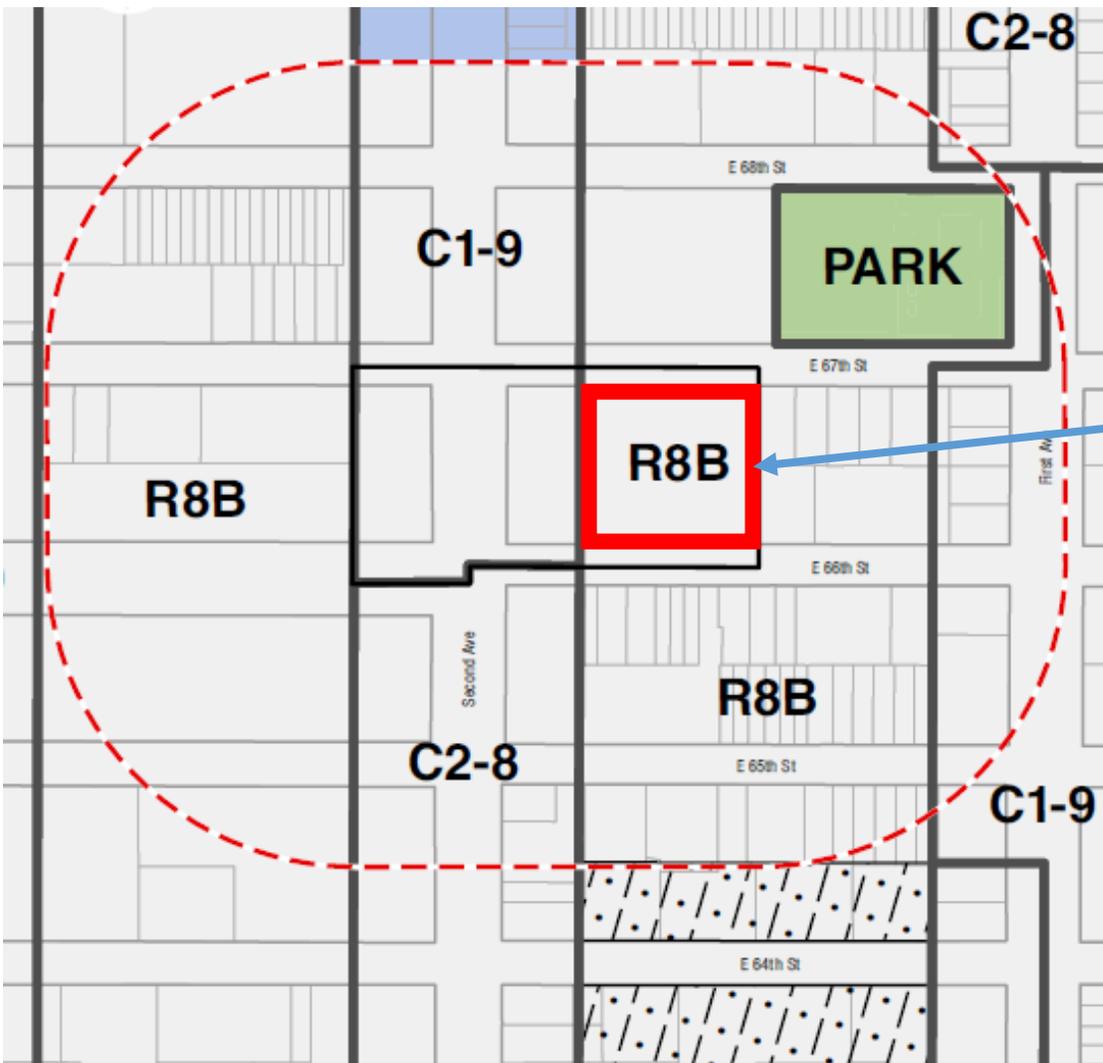
The current proposal calls for a building 334 feet to its highest point. The R8B has a 75 foot height limit and an allowance for mechanicals up to 100 feet



Axonometric View Looking North

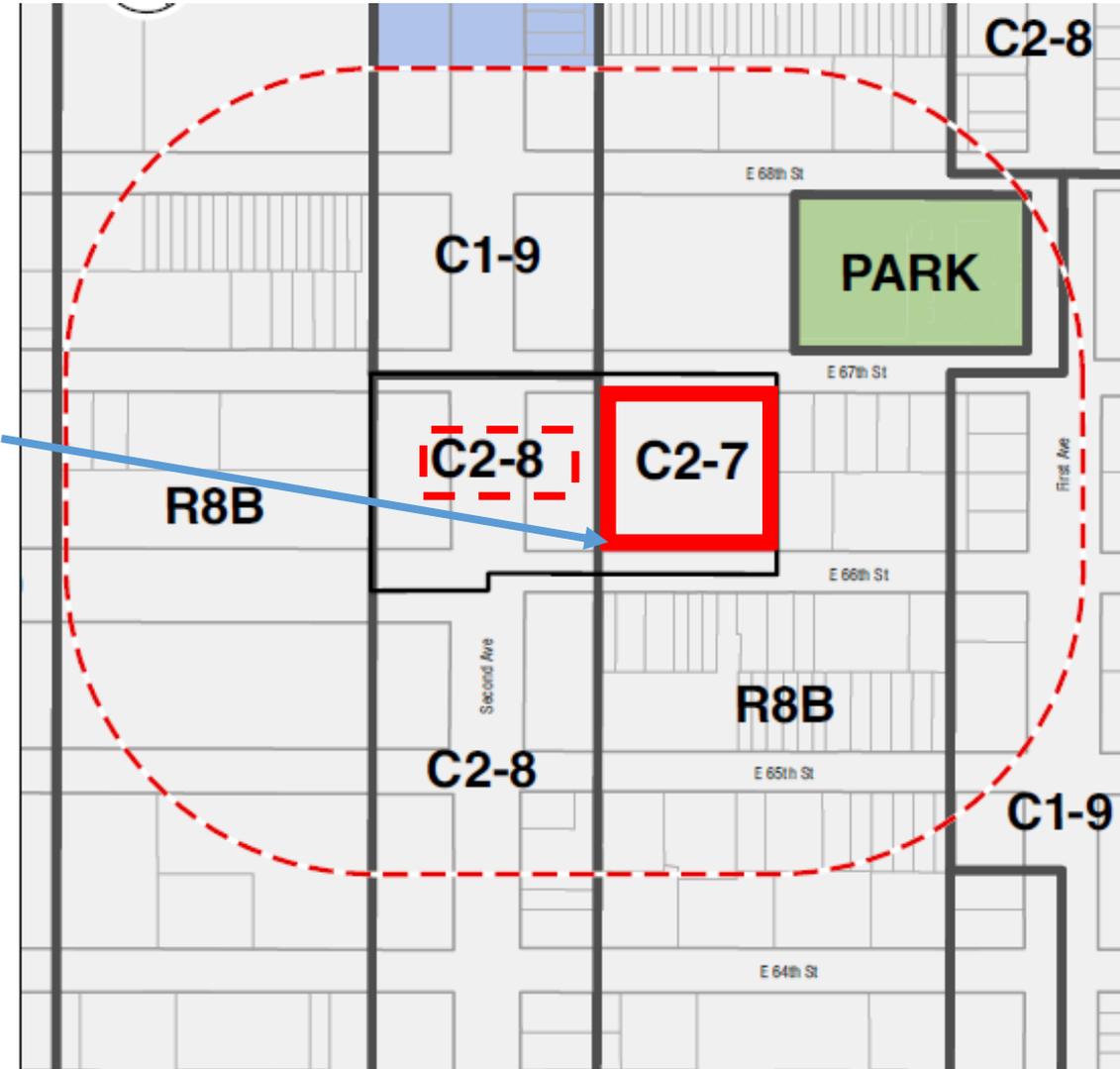
The spot zoning to facilitate this is supported by a simple planning rationale:
1) The wants of the Blood Center, and 2) a generic strategy of the City to grow the life sciences industry

Existing zoning



NY Blood Center site outlined in red

Proposed zoning



In my opinion, the planning rationale for the change is weak

- The wants of the Blood Center should not be a reason for a spot rezoning (or at least not one so contrary to long-standing land use policy)
- While the City can set strategic policy, the rationale for a life sciences hub at this location is weak
- The City already identified sites where this use would be appropriate

A 2018 RFEI identified three City-owned sites where this use could go

- None were midblock sites
- None were bounded by only narrow streets
- None were contextual districts
- None were solely residential zoning

Site 1 – East Harlem Site (Site A East)

- Fully entitled; adjacent to NY Proton Center



Site 2 – Kips Bay Site (Public Health Lab)

- Located within East Side Medical Corridor

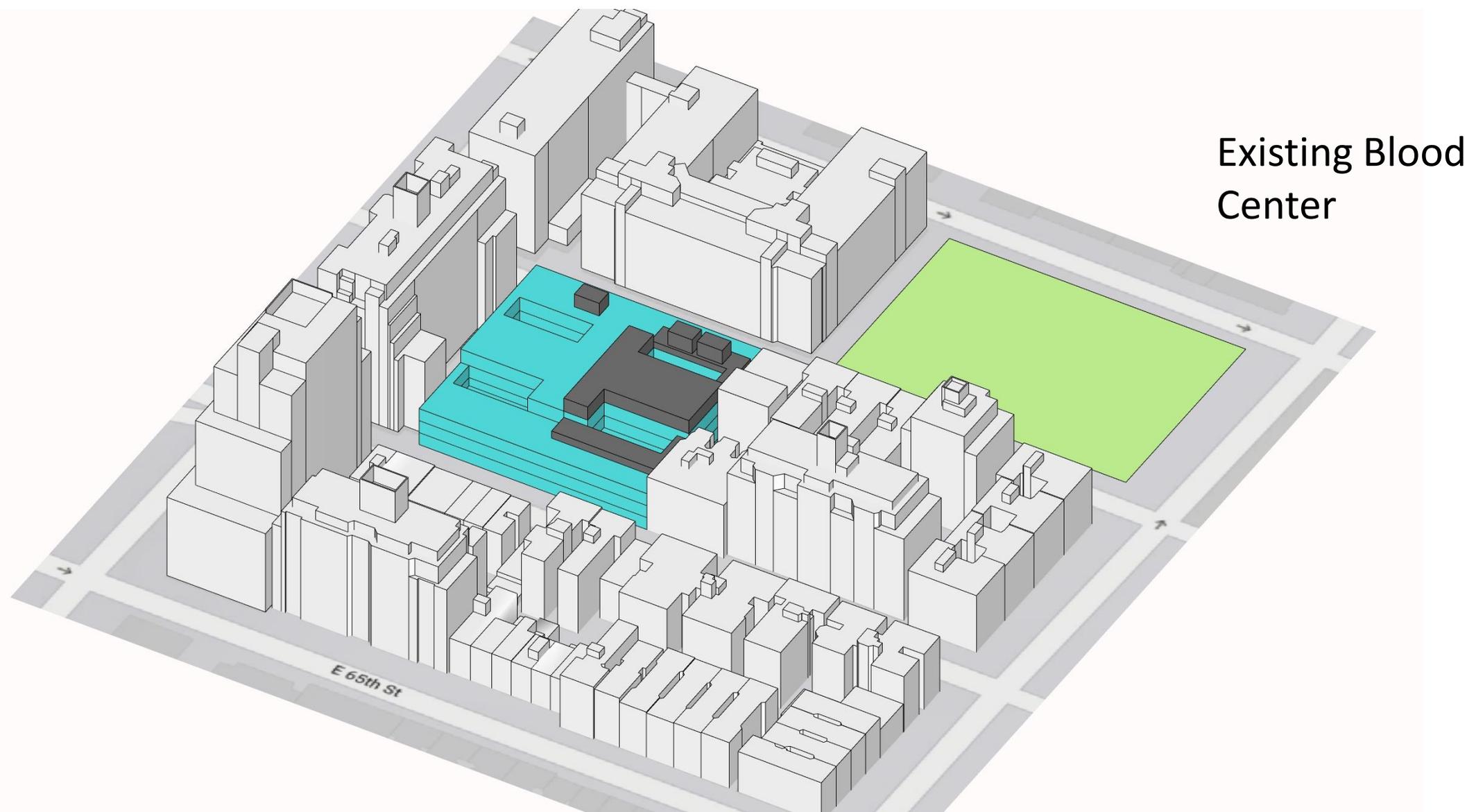


Site 3 – Long Island City Site (DOE)

- Fully entitled; suitable for life science conversion

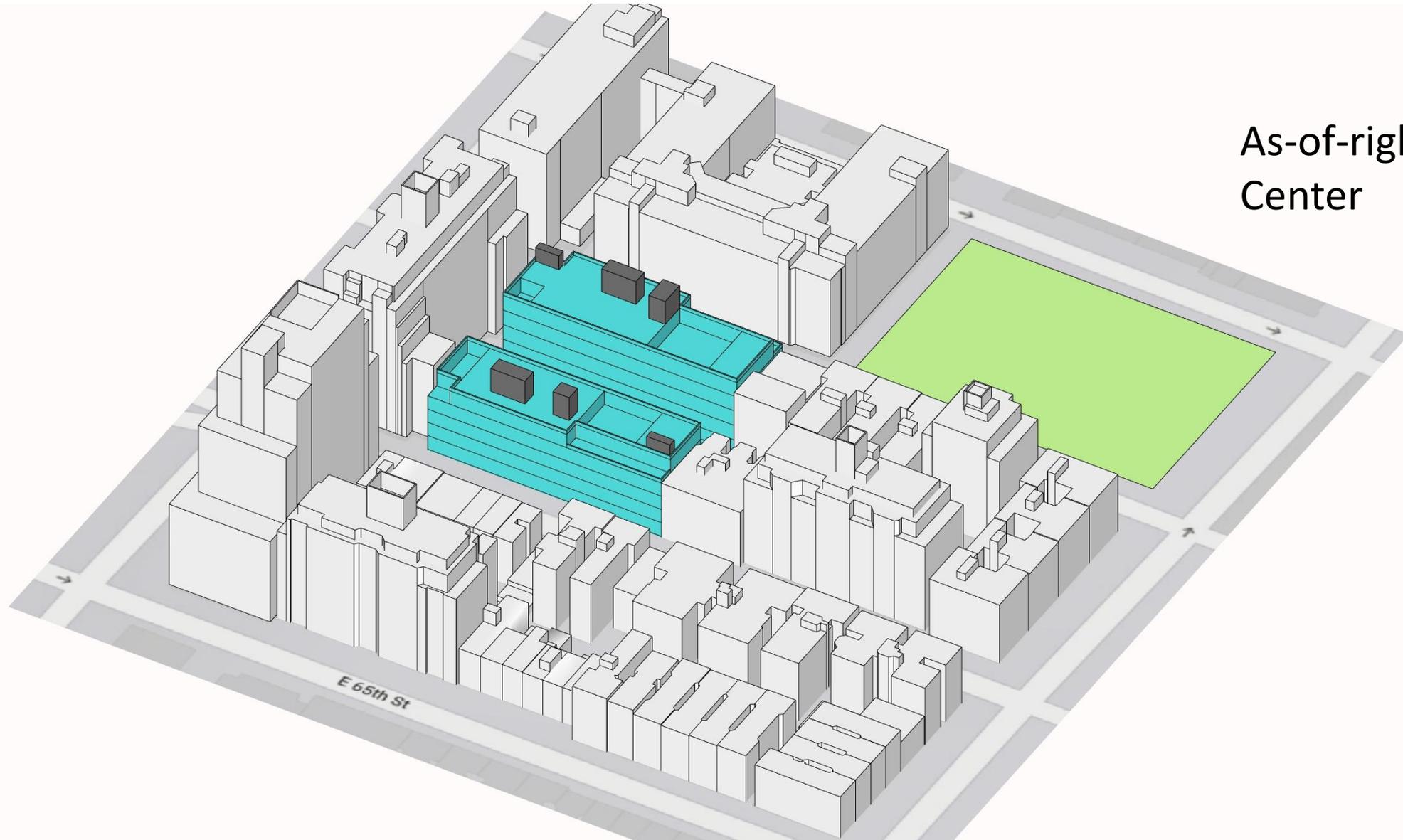


Nevertheless, it is possible to develop an alternative that grows and modernizes the Blood Center, while keeping the R8B scale



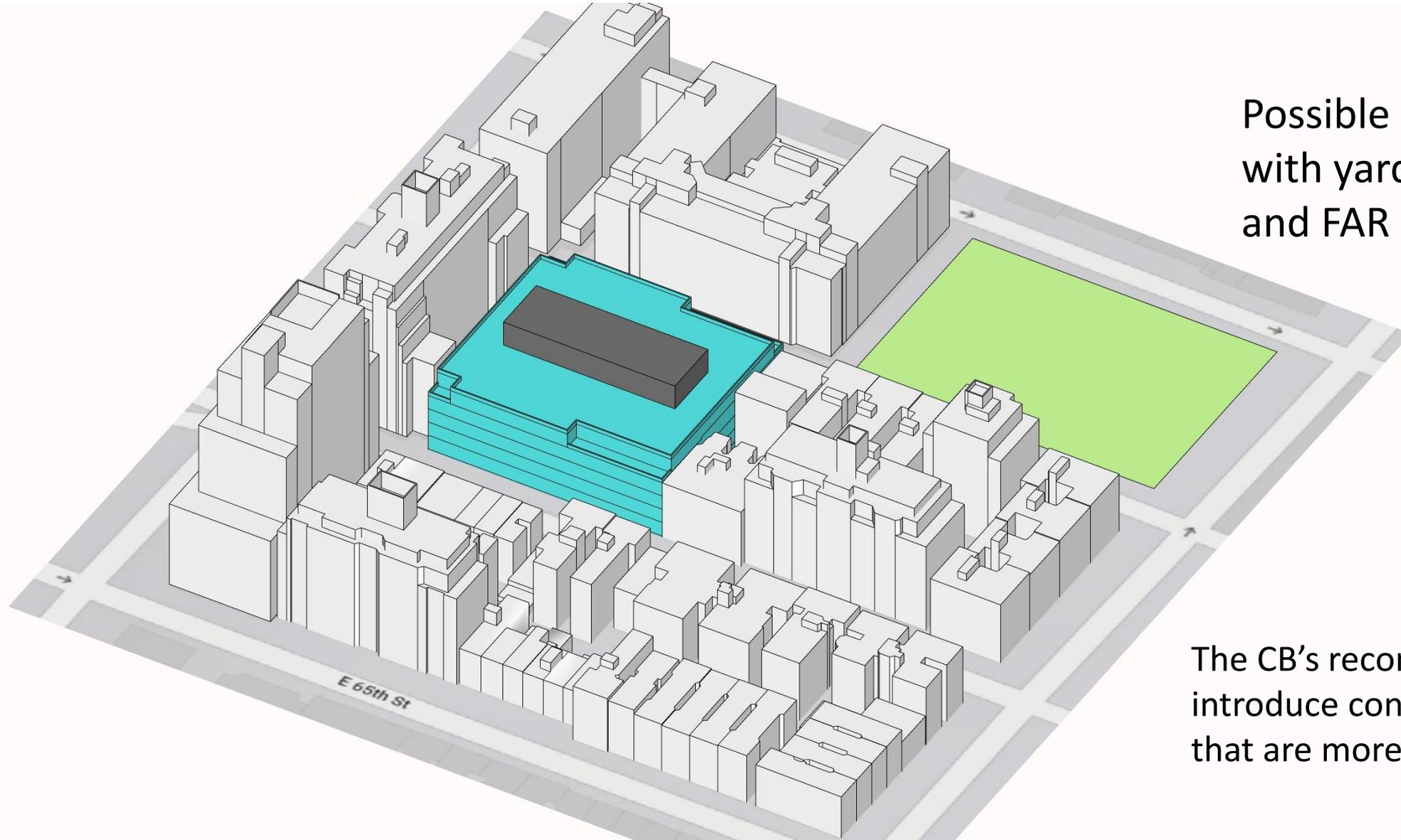
Existing Blood Center

The as-of-right Blood Center from DEIS is R8B scale, but split into two wings due to yard and coverage requirements



As-of-right Blood
Center

Possible Blood Center with coverage, yard and FAR restrictions waived, but keeping R8B scale



Possible alternative with yard, coverage and FAR waivers

The CB's recommendation can introduce concepts or alternatives that are more acceptable

The application includes the DEIS and supporting documentation

- It discloses only two significant environmental impacts
 - Shadows on St Catherine's Park
 - Construction noise
- There are no significant impacts to transportation, largely due to assumptions made in the as-of-right scenario
- It also claims no significant impact on land use and zoning policy, despite the change it introduces

Download the materials here:

<https://zap.planning.nyc.gov/projects/2019M0430>

Technical comments on the DEIS are NOT due with your recommendation

- Comments on the DEIS are normally due 10 days after the CPC public hearing
- Likely late August or early September
- Comments on an DEIS are answered in an FEIS
- Comments and responses build a record, and may be important in future legal disputes

Finally, DOHMH has recently added to the discussion of BSL-3 labs

- The presence of a BSL-3 lab in the proposal was disclosed after scoping
- A few years ago DOHMH required these facilities register with the City because accidents “could have catastrophic consequences,” so they needed to know where they were
- After the BSL-3 lab was disclosed, I FOIL’ed the registry. I wanted to know where and how they were sited
- The DOHMH rejected my FOIL stating: **“If released, the information you have requested could endanger the life or safety of any person ”** and
“To release the names and addresses of these facilities would constitute an untenable security risk, particularly after a year of living through the deadliest global pandemic in a century.”

The applicant has stated that there is a BSL-3 Lab in the Blood Center already

- But not all BSL-3 labs need to register. The Blood Center presumably has a blood and tissue lab, which is exempt from registration, likely because it won't cause "catastrophic consequences" or "endanger life and safety"
- If BSL-3 labs requiring registration are too dangerous to disclose, I submit they are too dangerous for a C2 zoning district. Research laboratories have historically been limited to M or, with a special permit, C6 districts
- The Community Board could recommend that no laboratory that requires registration with DOHMH be allowed on this site as a restrictive declaration, or similar



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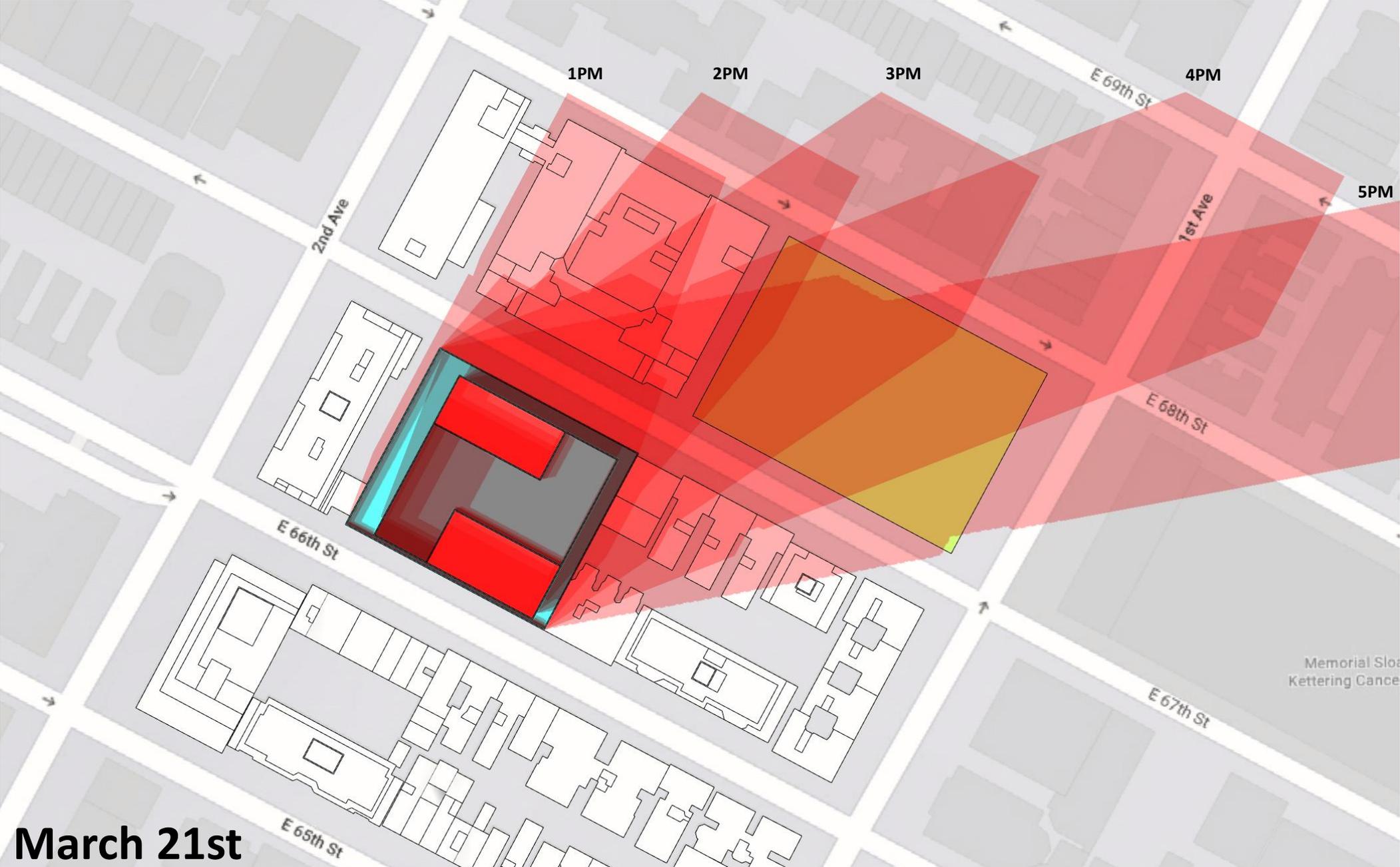
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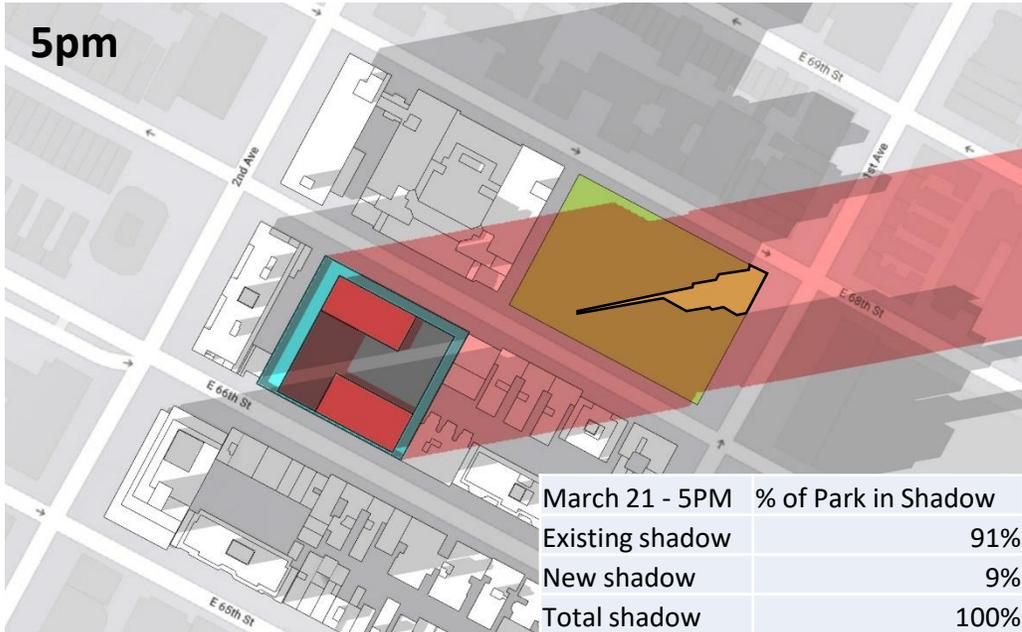
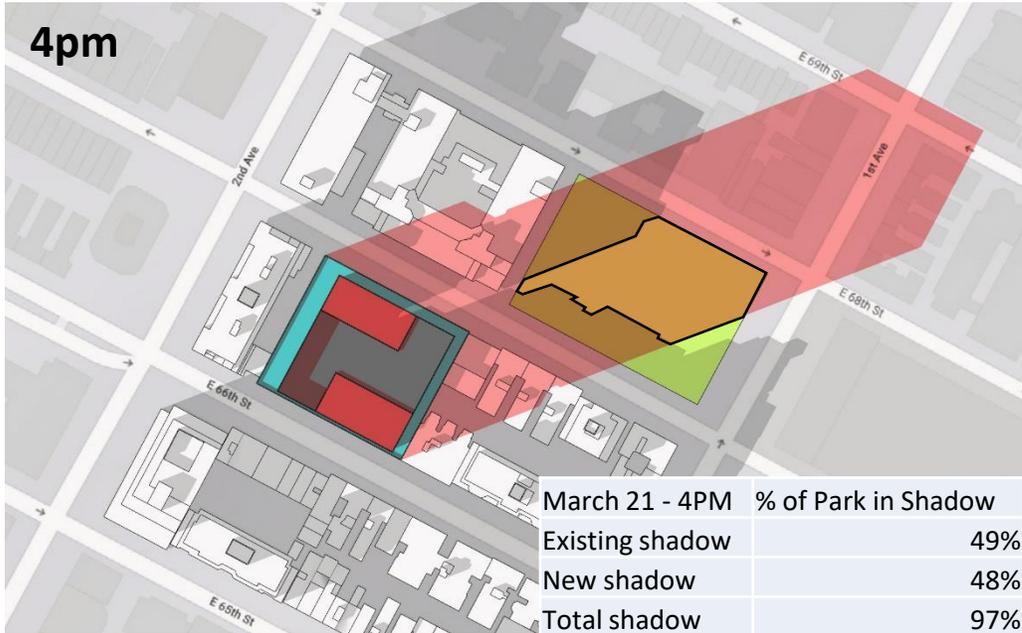
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The proposed building will cast huge afternoon shadows on the park

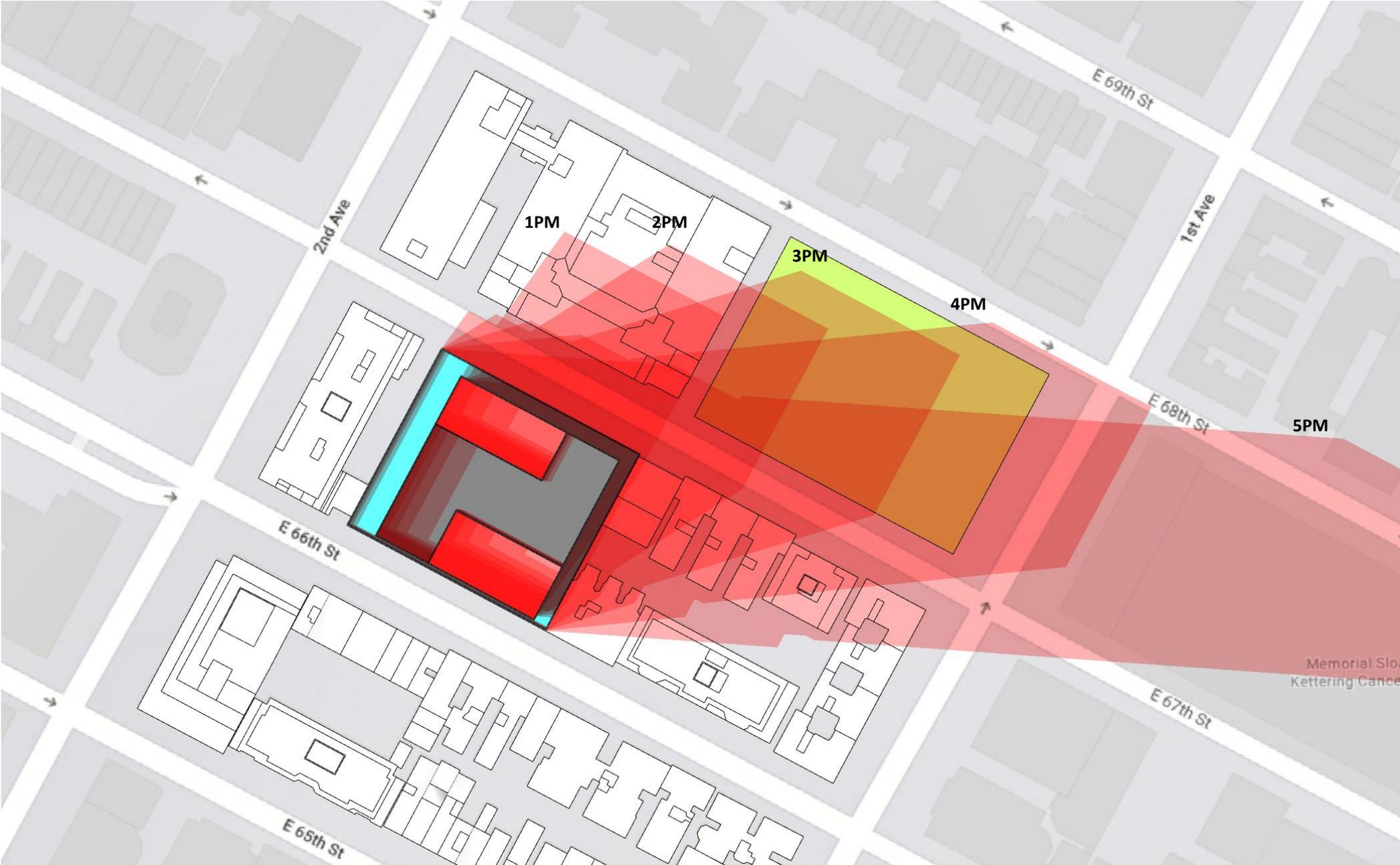


March 21st

New shadow from the building would be substantial in the afternoons



May 6th shows a more substantial impact



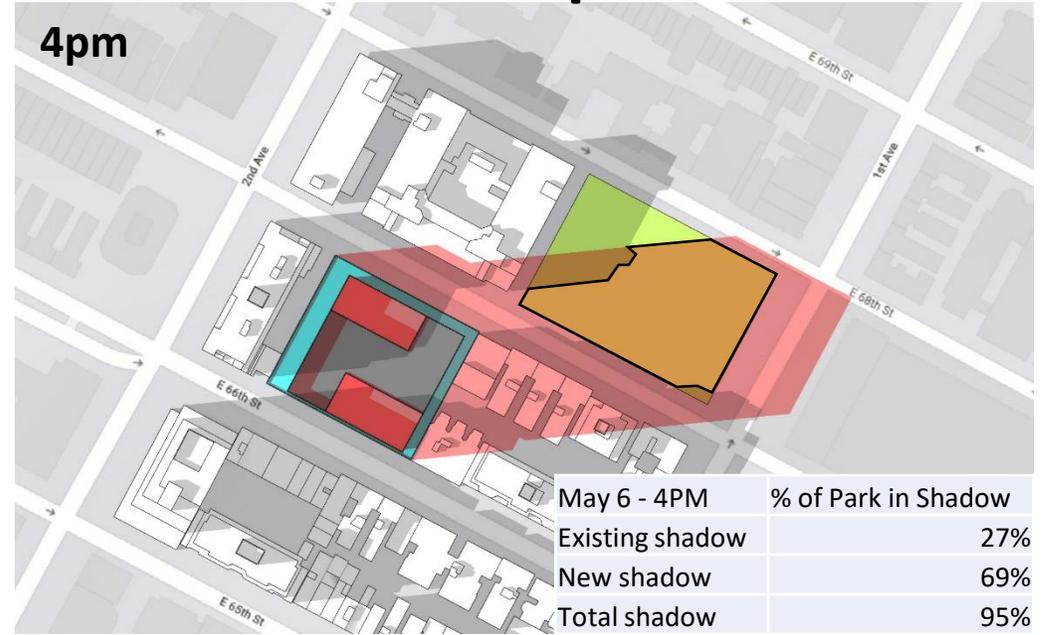
New shadow casts most of the park in shadow from 3 to 5pm

2pm

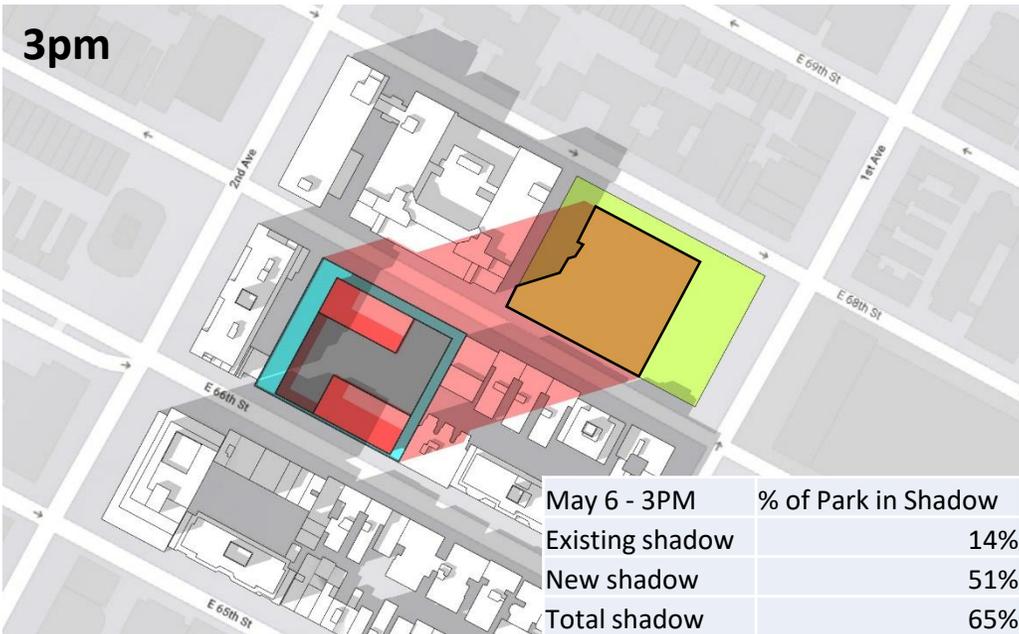


May 6th

4pm



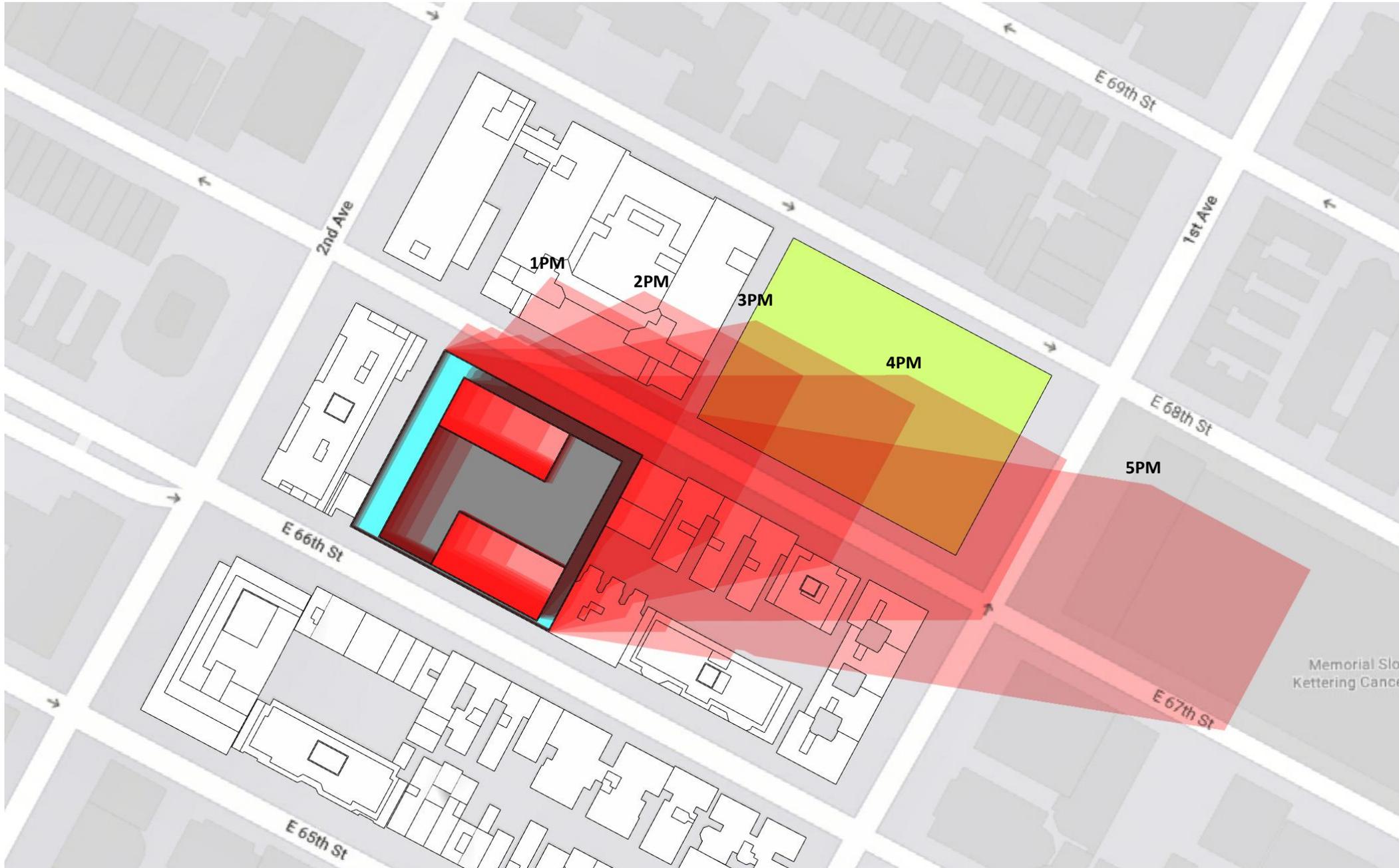
3pm



5pm



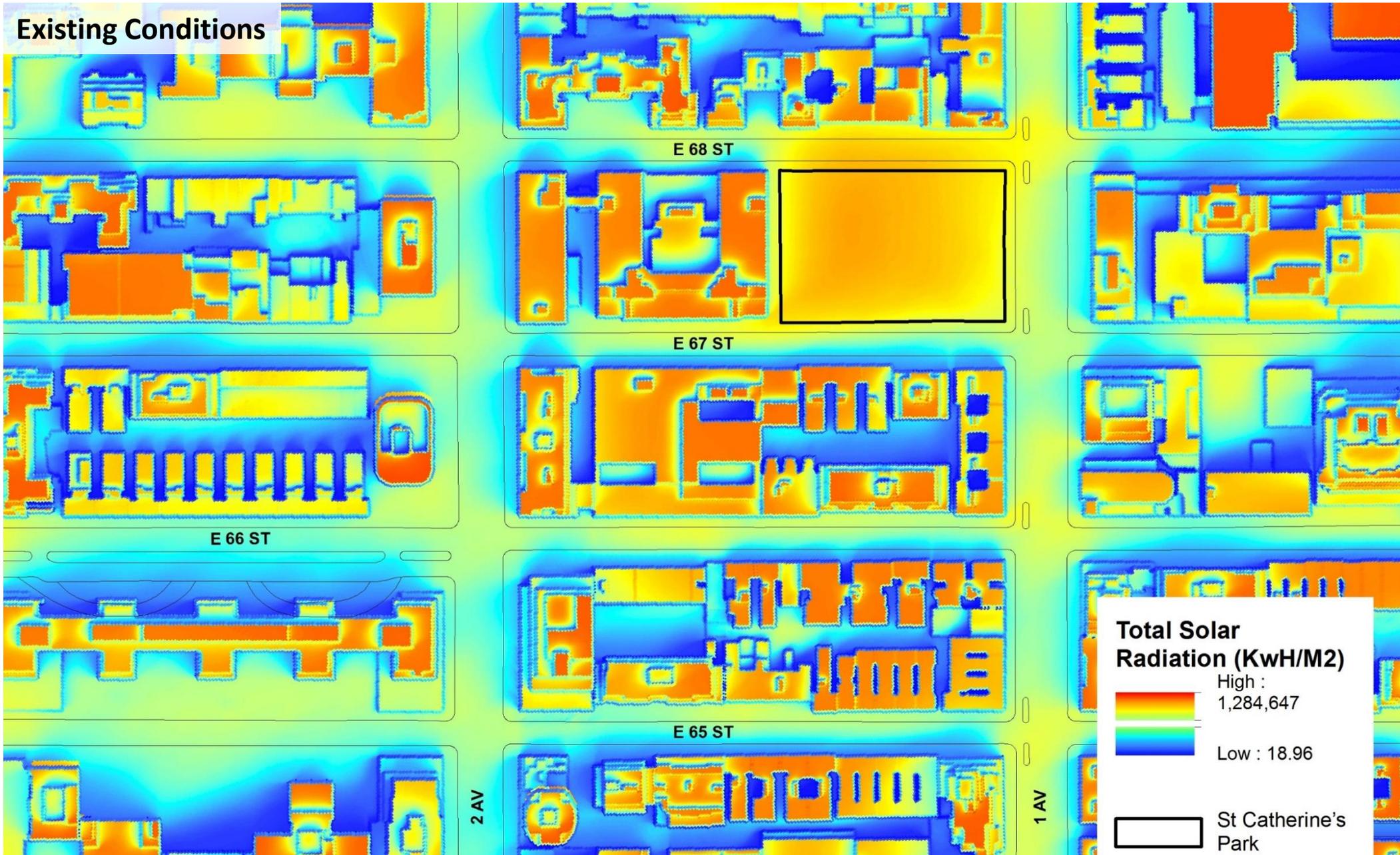
June incremental impact is not as large on the park, but heavily impact 67th St.



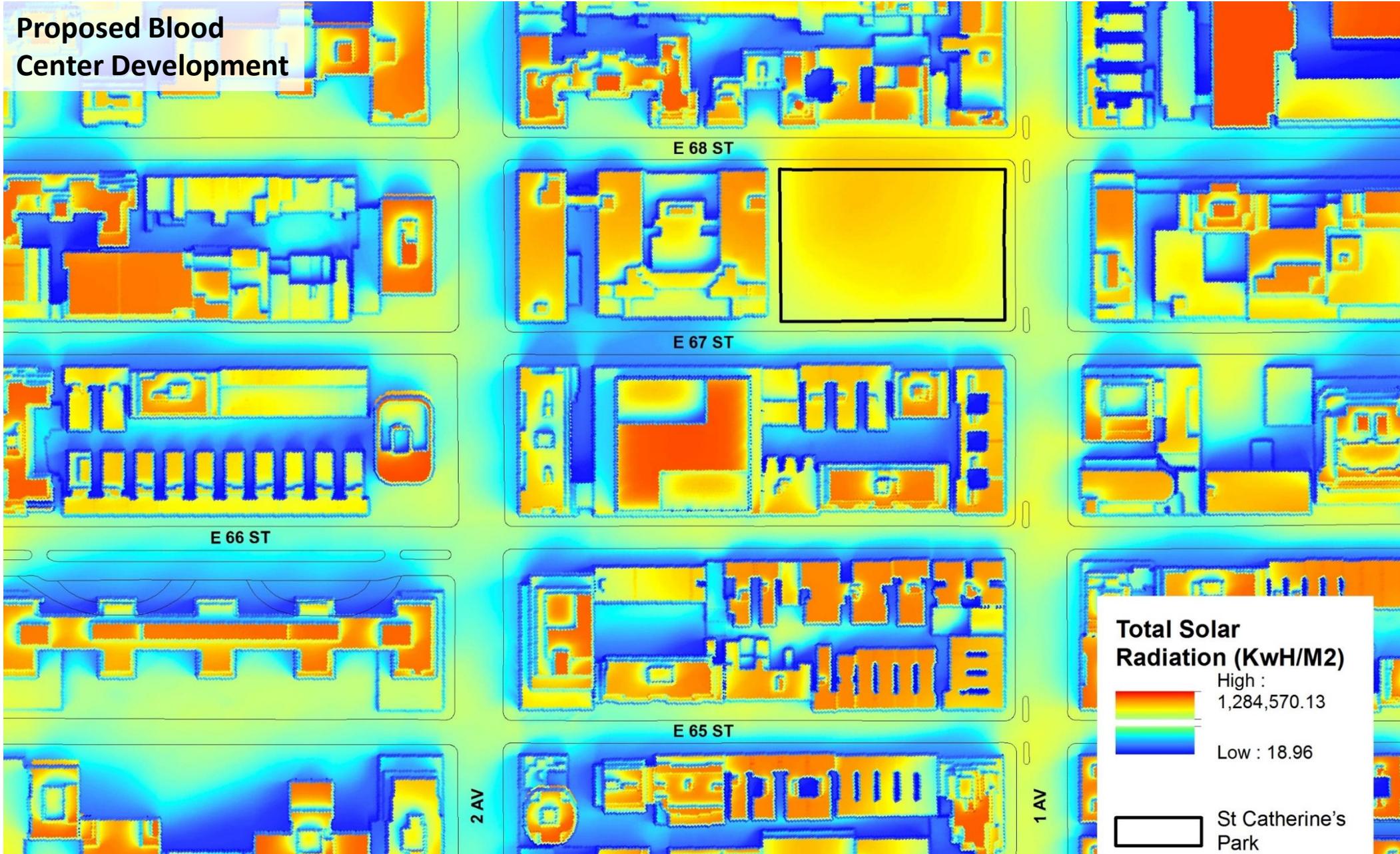
But there is still substantial new shadow impact, even in June



Shadows show direct sun, but we can also measure the change in all natural light



Shadows show direct sun, but we can also measure the change in all natural light



Difference between existing conditions and proposed Blood Center development

