VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT

FOR

DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (DSEIS)
BEACON ISLAND EXPANSION
TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
ALBANY COUNTY
NEW YORK

JULY 2021

UPDATED – OCTOBER 2021

CREATED FOR:

PORT OF ALBANY

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I. Introduction

A. Project Description

This Visual Impact Assessment Report has been developed as part of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) for a proposed development at the Port of Albany. The proposed development is an offshore wind (OSW) manufacturing facility that will produce wind turbine tower components. The Project is situated on 81.62 acres of land at the Beacon Island site, located at the confluence of the Normans Kill and Hudson River. The project also includes development within 4.4 acres of the adjoining parcel owned by National Grid as well as the extension and improvement of Normanskill Street. The project owner, Albany Port District Commission (APDC), is proposing to develop the vacant parcels of land (tax parcels 98.00-2-10.23 and 98.01-2-1.0) to expand the existing Port of Albany in the Town of Bethlehem, Albany County, New York.

The proposed project will include development of an OSW tower manufacturing (Marmen-Welcon) facility consisting of five (5) separate buildings totaling up to 589,000+/- square feet of floor space. The following is a breakdown of the function and size of each building:

- Building A Plate Preparation & Welding (289,931 SF)
- Building B Welding Finishing (99,936 SF)
- Building C Blast Metallization Plant (121,593 SF)
- Building D Internal Assembly finishing (57,898 SF)
- Building E Material receiving (19,600 SF)

Tower production will occur within four (4) buildings (Buildings A-D) at the main facility on the Port Expansion property located in the Town of Bethlehem. The 5th building (Building E) will be located at 700 Smith Boulevard within the existing Port District in the City of Albany. A proposed gated bridge over the Normans Kill will provide a truck transportation route in and out of the main facility, by connecting Beacon Island and the 14.7-acre offsite parcel at 700 Smith Boulevard. In conjunction with the proposed bridge, Normanskill Street is to be extended from its existing end point to the bridge. The existing pavement will be improved to accommodate the proposed trucking route. Employee parking will be situated on the adjoining land owned by National Grid with access from River Road. A proposed 500 LF wharf and associated dredging along the Hudson River will be used to load and ship completed tower sections.

B. Purpose and Methodology

The purpose of this report is to assesses the qualitative and quantitative visual impacts of the proposed development in accordance with the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). In order to do so, the project must be assessed to determine if any potentially significant adverse impact to aesthetic resources will occur. If a significant impact is determined, SEQR further requires that the project either avoid or mitigate such impact to the maximum extent

practicable.

To that end this report will use the DEC Program Policy - Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts (Issued 7/31/200, latest date revised: draft 10/30/2018) and the Federal Highway Administration's, Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of the Highway Projects (January 2015), specifically Chapters 4 through 7. The report will identify the project site's existing visual characteristics; identity any changes that may occur due to the project; identify the visual resources and receptors (particularly sensitive receptor) of any changes; assess the impacts of the changes on those receptors; and finally recommend mitigation, if necessary, to minimize or eliminate the impact of the changes on the receptors.

II. Description of Existing Visual Character

The project site is located on flat land along the western bank of the Hudson River. The area is in a 100-year floodplain, within the Town of Bethlehem. The land beyond the project site rises to the west of NYS Route 144, up toward Bethlehem Center. Consistent with the Hudson River's industrial past, most of the land on this stretch of the river, up to and including the existing Port of Albany and the City of Rensselaer either has an industrial character or was once used for industry.

The Normans Kill, a tributary to the Hudson River, runs through the northern portion of the project site. Across the Normans Kill to the north is the Agway Industrial Park including Port Welding Services, Dawson's Towing, and Scarano Boats; existing buildings include warehouses and silos. Beyond the Industrial Park is the existing Port of Albany with various industrial and maritime buildings. To the immediate south of the project site is the Bethlehem Energy Center, a natural gas power plant owned and operated by PSEG New York (once operated by Niagara Mohawk Power Company), formerly the Albany Steam Station, and before that the coal fired plant that generated the fly ash that now overs a portion of the site. The power plant is a mix of the old coal fired brick buildings and newer gas burning facilities. It creates a strong presence on the river, especially looking toward the project site from the opposite (east) bank of the Hudson River in the Town of East Greenbush.

To the immediate east of the project site is the Hudson River and the eastern shoreline including several Bulk Oil Facilities. To the immediate west of the project site within the Town of Bethlehem are electrical transmission lines, natural gas transmission lines, and some mixed industrial and commercial uses with frontage on NYS Route 144 (River Road). Several residences lie to the west of the transmission lines but have limited views of the project site. See Appendix A, Figure 2 for an aerial of the site and surrounding area.

The project site was formerly used to dump fly ash, a byproduct of the adjacent Power Station, which previously used coal as fuel. Since the early 1970s, the project site has remained unused and today contains a variety of habitats and physical conditions including some hardwood forested areas, areas of exposed fly ash, an unused railroad siding, riprap/artificial lake shore,

and unpaved roads and pathways. See Appendix B for pictures of the existing site.

III. Identification of Viewshed

In order to determine the presence of any potential visual impacts the viewshed must first be identified. The viewshed is the area from which the proposed project can be seen. There are traditionally two types of viewsheds: static viewsheds and dynamic viewsheds. The sum of these two will determine the Area of Visual Effect (AVE). It is from the AVE that the project will be analyzed for its potential impact(s). See Appendix C for photographs of the existing conditions at critical areas of analysis for the AVE.

A. Static Viewsheds:

A static viewshed is what can be seen by a receptor from a single, non-moving viewpoint. In this case a static viewshed would be one seen from a neighboring residence. There are very few residential neighbors to this project site.

There are six residences along Old River Road to the southwest of the project site. These residences are separated from the project site by a freight rail line and a large electrical transmission line. The rail line become cut into an embankment behind these residence creating berms on both sides and there are large hardwood trees on both sides. The site is not visible from these residences.

There are another five residences on the west side of NYS Route 144 to the northwest of the project site. These residences are separated from the project site by NYS Route 144, a series of commercial businesses, the freight rail line, and a large electrical transmission line. In this location, the rail line is at grade and the vegetation is sparser. This is also the location of the project's northern access easement. A potential access corridor extends from the public right of way across the railroad under the high voltage power lines and into the site. The site is potentially more visible from this location.

There is one additional residence on the south side of Glenmont Road as the grade rises to the west where the site could potentially be visible. The residence is elevated above the site and located on a section of Glenmont Road where vegetation has been cleared to create a clear view of the Hudson River valley. Due to the higher elevation and cleared vegetation, the site is potentially visible from this location.

B. Dynamic Viewsheds:

A dynamic viewshed is what can be seen by a receptor as they travel along a corridor. In this case, a dynamic viewshed would be one seen from a vehicle travelling along Old River Road, NYS Route 144, Port Street, or in a boat travelling the Hudson River.

The dynamic viewshed from Old River Road is substantially similar to the static viewshed mentioned above. The site is not visible from Old River Road.

The dynamic viewshed from NYS Route 144 also mirrors the static viewshed mentioned above. The project site is generally more visible from the section of NYS Route 144 that is parallel the northern portion of the site. As you progress south down NYS Route 144 the site is no longer visible. The lone exception to this would be the location of the proposed southern connection of the project's access road to NYS Route 144. At this specific location the berm that shields the project site from NYS Route 144 will be removed to construct the southern access point. While the site will be visible, it will be only for a very brief moment as automobiles pass by that specific location.

The project will be visible from the southern end of Port Street as you approach the project site. Port Street will be extended into the site to create the northern access drive.

The 5th building (building E) will be located within the existing Port District in the City of Albany and will be visible from Smith Boulevard. This area is heavily developed with industrial buildings supporting the existing Port of Albany operations.

In terms of a dynamic viewshed, the place where the project will be most visible is from the Hudson River. As watercraft travel the Hudson River the site will be visible along the western bank of the Hudson in between the Bethlehem Energy Center, a natural gas power plant owned and operated by PSEG New York (formerly the Albany Steam Station) to the south and the Agway Industrial Park including Port Welding Services, Dawson's Towing, and Scarano Boats to the north.

C. Area of Visual Affect (AVE):

Based upon the Static and Dynamic Viewsheds above, the AVE for this report will include six locations: the southern end of Port Street looking south at the project; the northwestern properly line where the grade between NYS Route 144 and the site is flattest; the southwest entrance point to the project; the residence on Glenmont Road where the existing vegetation allows a view of the Hudson valley; the view from the Hudson River; and directly across from 23 Old River Road looking east toward the site. The project's visual effects will be evaluated at these six locations (see Appendix A Figure 3 for the locations).

IV. Identification of Viewer Groups and Scenic Resources (Sensitive Receptors)

An inventory of cultural, historic, and recreational resources was conducted for a one-mile radius around the project site. NYS GIS Clearinghouse and ESRI 2016 data were used to compile a listing of potential resources. See Appendix A, Figure 1 for a plan showing the adjacent cultural, historic, and recreational resources. The following sensitive receptors were identified:

Resource	Type
Glenmont Farms	unidentified
Emmanuel Christian Church	Church (in use)
Beth Emeth Cemetery	Cemetery (not active)
Our Lady Help of Christians Cemetery	Cemetery (not active)
Papscanee Island County Nature Preserve	Nature Preserve / Park
Hudson River	Recreational

The Glenmont Farms was not able to be identified in the field or in any records. The other receptors were analyzed to determine if they would potentially be impacted by the project. See Appendix C for photographs of the existing conditions at critical areas of analysis for the AVE.

The Emmanuel Christian Church located at 31 Retreat House Road, is nearly a mile northwest of the project site and separated by a great deal of vegetation as well a former industrial site that has been converted for use as a garage and staging area by the First Student bus company servicing the Albany School District. The project is not visible from this location (See Appendix C).

The Beth Emeth Cemetery was founded in 1840 and is associated with Congregation Beth Emeth in Albany. No burials have occurred there since the 1950's. The cemetery is located approximately a quarter of a mile northwest of the project site on Retreat House Road directly across from the entrance to the First Student bus company. The First Student office building as well as vegetation along Route 144 and the Normans Kill separate the cemetery from the project site. The project is not visible from this location (See Appendix C).

Our Lady Help of Christians Cemetery is a Roman Catholic cemetery founded in 1874 by Our Lady Help of Christians Church which was located in South Albany. The church officially closed in 2002. The cemetery is located approximately three quarters of a mile up the hill to the west of the project site. The cemetery is over the crest of the hill and bordered on the east side by tall dense hardwood vegetation. The project is not visible from this location (See Appendix C).

Papscanee Island County Nature Preserve is a 156-acre natural area on the east bank of the Hudson River extending from the town of East Greenbush into Schodack. There are approximately 6 miles of walking trails through marsh and woods along the floodplain and banks of the Hudson. Approximately 30 acres of the preserve are actively farmed. The preserve is owned and maintained by Rensselaer County. The preserve is located approximately three quarters of a mile southeast of the project site across the Hudson River. The only publicly accessible portion of Papscanee Island County Nature Preserve that is within a mile of the project is the far northern access to the preserve off of American Oil Road. The site is not visible from this location. The impact of the project on the Preserve was coordinated with NYS OPRHP and is included in section 3.11 of the GEIS. Based upon NYS OPRHP letter dated March 14, 2019 it is their opinion that the project will not adversely affect any properties including archaeological and/or historic resources, listed in or eligible for the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places, including the Papscanee Island Historic District (08303.000130).

After a review of the sensitive receptors identified it was determined that the project would only be visible from the Hudson River which has already been included in the project's AVE. Therefore, the AVE for this project has been determined to be the southern end of Port Street looking south at the project; the northwestern properly line where the grade between NYS Route 144 and the site is flattest; the southwest entrance point to the project; the residence on Glenmont Road where the existing vegetation allows a view of the Hudson valley; the view from the Hudson River; and directly across the street from 23 Old River Road looking east into the site. The project's visual effects will be evaluated at these six locations.

V. Assessment of Viewer Sensitivity

Based upon the above assessment, with the exception of the Hudson River, there are no sensitive receptors from which the proposed project can be seen. The view from the Hudson River is already included in the AVE. Therefore, no additional considerations will be given for Sensitive Receptors of the project.

VI. Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment of Visual Impacts

Based upon the AVE a Qualitative and Quantitative Assessment of the project was conducted. Georeferenced photographs were taken at eye level from the six locations identified as the AVE. The camera locations, heights, and angles were placed into a three-dimensional rendered model of the proposed project.

The rendered project includes the 4 on-site buildings as described in Section I and as generally represented in Concept A of the DSEIS. The height of the buildings are as follows:

- Building A – 100'
- Building B – 72'
- Building C – 83' with a stack height of 110'
- Building D – 93'
- Building E – 43', note: this building is in the City of Albany

As indicated above, buildings A-D will exceed the allowable height by local zoning (60'). A zoning variance for the height of each building is being pursued.

Photo-simulations of the project from the locations defined as the AVE were created. See Appendix A, Figure 3 for the locations of the photo-simulations. The results of the photo-simulations are presented in Appendix D and summarized below:

Location 1: Location 1 is at the end of South Port Street looking south into the site. A portion of the Project can be seen from this location. The northern portion of the project is visible from the road as one approaches the project.

Location 2: Location 2 is the at northwest property line of the Project looking east into the site.

The project is partially visible from this location. The upper portion of some of the buildings can be seen above the existing vegetation.

Location 3: Location 3 is on NYS Route 144 at the proposed southwest entrance to the Project looking east into the Project Area. A portion of the Project can be seen from this location through the cut in the berm for the entrance to the site.

Location 4: Location 4 is from Glenmont Road at the location of cleared vegetation allowing a view of the Hudson valley looking east toward the project. The Project is somewhat visible from this location. The very tops of the buildings can be seen above the existing vegetation.

Location 5: Location 5 is from the Hudson River looking west into the site. The photo simulation was replaced with a video of the 3D model of the project traversing along the eastern shoreline of the Hudson River. The video is located here: https://youtu.be/CKgzYC_sqUI . As shown, only a small portion of the Project is visible from the east side of the river. The existing vegetation to remain along the project shoreline will provide a substantial visual barrier between the Hudson River and the Project.

Location 6: Location 6 is directly across the street from 23 Old River Road looking east into the site. The project is not visible and is completely screened due to the dense existing vegetation and the topography given the site sits approximately 30 feet below Old River Road.

VII. Proposed Mitigation

As mentioned above the buildings will exceed the allowable height and thus will pursue a variance for the height of the buildings. Although the buildings will exceed the allowable height, it is still in keeping with the surrounding area; there are buildings on the adjacent properties to both the north (Agway Industrial Park) and the south (PSEG) that are industrial in nature and contain structures that exceed the allowable 60’ in height and have stacks that extend approximately 200 feet.

Based upon the visualizations created and summarized above the following mitigations are proposed.

Location 1: This viewshed is from the approaching access road through an existing industrial area. The access road is not a heavily trafficked thoroughfare and is only anticipated to be used by people accessing the site; furthermore, it is not practical to screen the project from the access road. No additional mitigation is recommended at this location.

Location 2: This viewshed is within the access easement to the northern portion of the property. The project has chosen not to use this access easement instead leaving the existing vegetation in place to screen the project from both NYS Route 144 and the residence to the northwest. At this location the project is viewed through the high voltage transmission lines originating at the PSEG

plant and the existing railroad bed. The existing vegetation does screen the majority of the project and no further mitigation is recommended at this location.

Location 3: This viewshed is within the right of way of NYS Route 144. The existing berm, screening the project from NYS Route 144, has been retained to the greatest extent possible. While the project can be seen from this location, it is anticipated that a viewer in a moving vehicle would only be able to see the project for the briefest of moments. No additional mitigation is recommended at this location.

Location 4: This viewshed is from Glenmont Road at a higher elevation and west of the project. The project is only slightly visible from this location. The vast majority of the project is screened by existing vegetation with only the very tops of the buildings visible. No additional mitigation is recommended at this location.

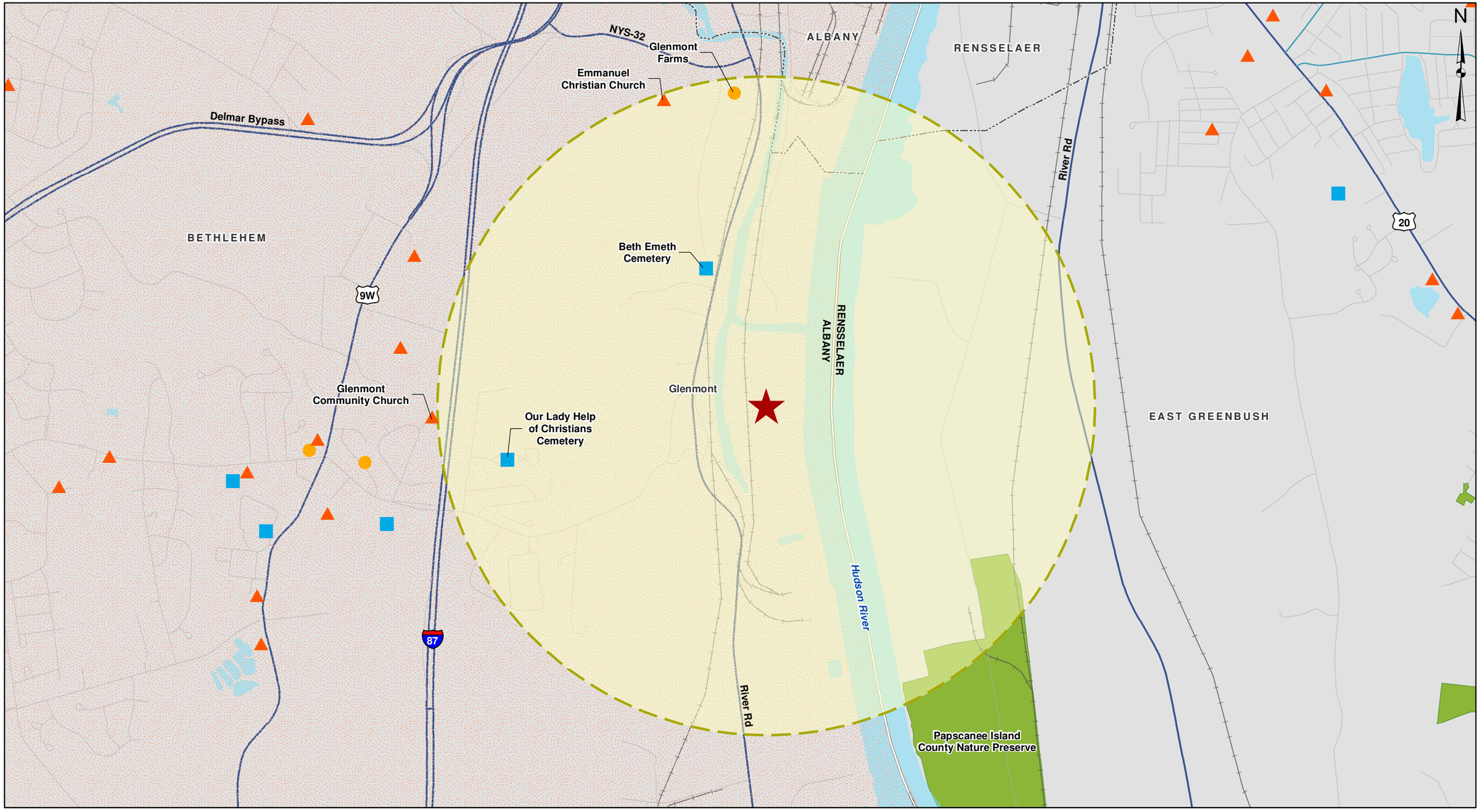
Location 5: This viewshed is from the Hudson River. The eastern side of the project is substantially screened by the existing vegetation to remain as part of the project. In addition, the color of the buildings along this view will be of a light grey, natural color to blend into the surrounding visual landscape. Also, along this stretch of the Hudson, many of the uses with direct river frontage are industrial, and views from the Hudson are already significantly impacted by the presence of these uses, particularly the PSEG to the south. Directly north is a boat marine repair shop, multiple bulk storage facilities and the existing Port of Albany. No additional mitigation is recommended at this location.

Location 6: This viewshed is from Old River Road at a higher elevation and west of the project. The project is not visible from this location as it is screened by dense existing vegetation. No additional mitigation is recommended at this location.

Additional mitigation undertaken to minimize the effects of this project on the surrounding visual landscape are as follows. The northern access easement to NYS Route 144 will not be utilized, so as not to create a visual opening in this area. The building colors will be chosen to blend into the existing surroundings. All lighting on the project will be full cut off, dark sky compliant and will not spill onto neighboring properties.

Appendix A

Figures



Legend

- Project Site
- Cemetries
- Local Cultural Features
- Institutions
- 1-Mile Buffer
- Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor
- NY PAD Parks
- County Boundary
- Municipal Boundaries
- Bodies of Water
- Local Road
- County Road
- State Route & Interstate
- Railroad

0 1,500 3,000
Feet

Data Sources: NY PAD Parks, Mohawk Valley Heritage Corridor, Bodies of Water, Local Road, County Road, State Route & Interstate, and Municipal Boundaries provided by NYS GIS Clearinghouse
Railroad, Institutions, Cemeteries, Local Cultural Features, and County Boundaries provided by ESRI
Project Site and 1-Mile Radius provided by McFarland Johnson

PORT OF ALBANY EXPANSION
ALBANY PORT DISTRICT COMMISSION
BEACON ISLAND, BETHLEHEM, NEW YORK

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCALE :	DATE :	FIGURE :
AS SHOWN	APRIL 2019	1

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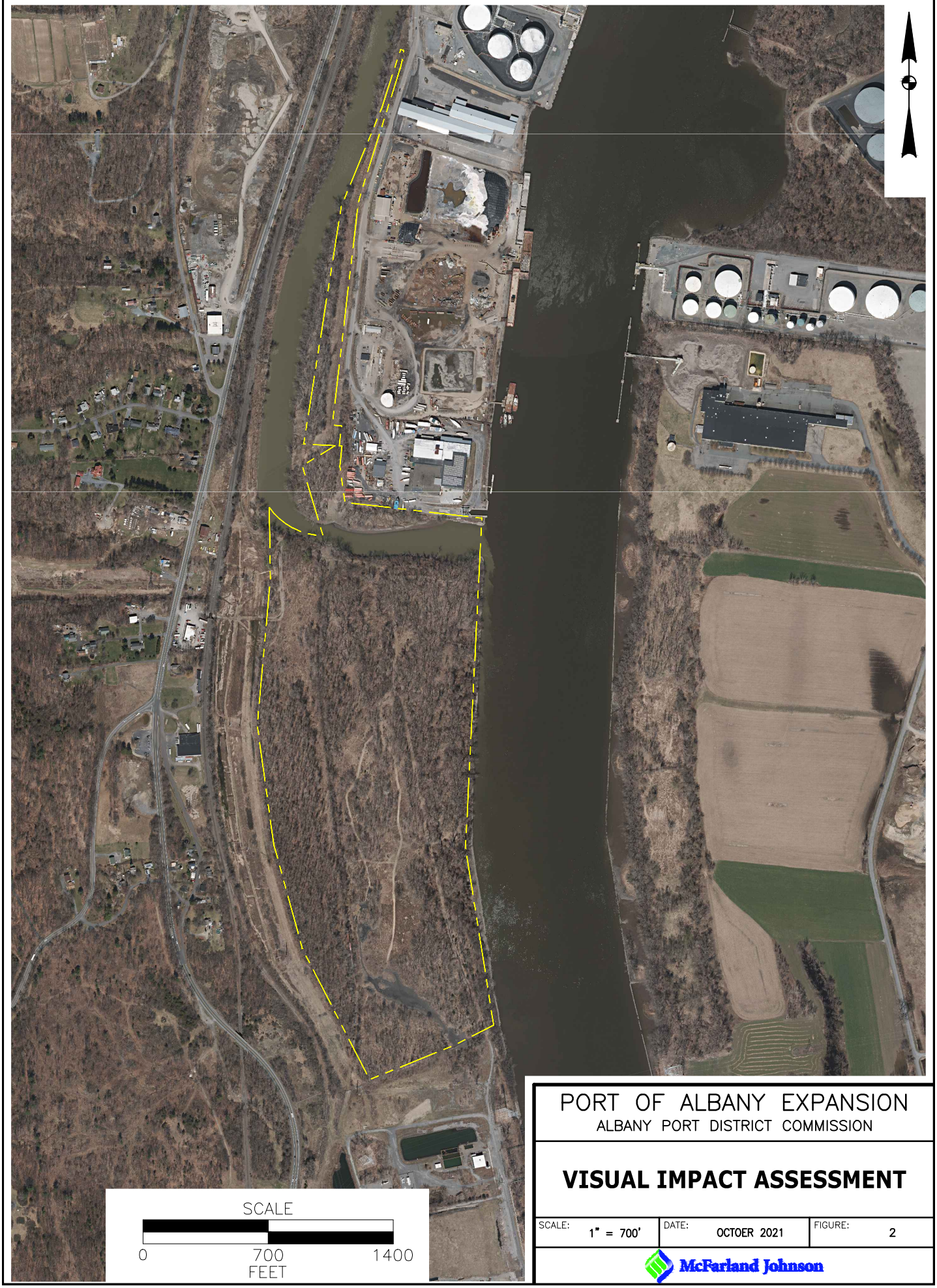

PORT OF ALBANY EXPANSION

ALBANY PORT DISTRICT COMMISSION

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

SCALE:	DATE:	FIGURE:
1" = 700'	OCTOER 2021	2

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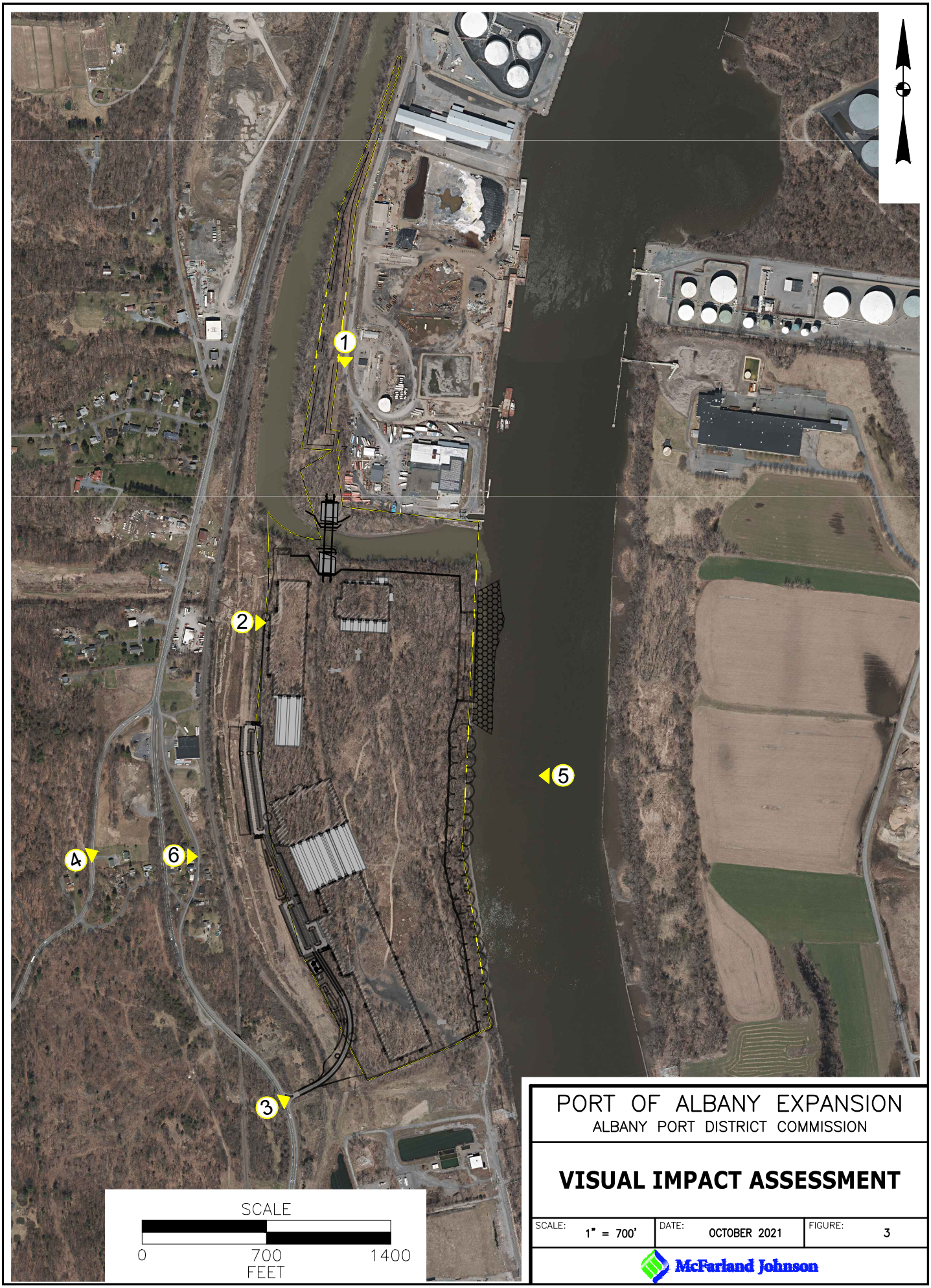

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SCALE:	DATE:	FIGURE:
1" = 700'	OCTOBER 2021	3

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Appendix B

Existing Site Photos

Location A - Northern Boundary, Normans Kill

Location B – Northern Boundary, looking into site

Location C – Northeast Boundary, Outlet of Normans Kill

Location D – Northeast Boundary looking East

Location E – Existing Wharf Along Hudson

Location F – Fly Ash Disposal

Location G – Abandoned Train

Appendix C

Photos Analyzing the AVE

Static View from Old River Road west of the site

Static View from Old River Road west of the site

Static View from Old River Road west of the site

Static View from NYS Route 144 northwest of the site

Dynamic View from South Port Street north of the site
Photo Simulation Location 1

Static View from property boundary in northwest of the site
Photo Simulation Location 2

Dynamic View from NYS Route 144 southwest of the site
Photo Simulation Location 3

Static View from Glenmont Road west of the site
Photo Simulation Location 4

Dynamic View from The Hudson River east of the site
Photo Simulation Location 5

Static View from Old River Road west of the site
Photo Simulation Location 6

View from Emmanuel Christian Church on Retreat House Road

View from Beth Emeth Cemetery on Retreat House Road

View from the northernmost end of Papscanee Island County Nature Preserve

Appendix D

Photo Simulations

Location 1: at the end of South Port Street looking south into the site.

Location 2: at northwest property line of the project looking east into the site.

Location 3: on NYS Route 144 at the proposed southwest entrance to the project looking east into the project site.

Location 4: on Glenmont Road at the location of cleared vegetation allowing a view of the Hudson valley looking east toward the project.

Photo Simulation 5 has been replaced with a video of the 3D model of the project traversing along the eastern shoreline of the Hudson River. The video is located at the following link: https://youtu.be/CKgzYC_sqUI

Location 5: on the Hudson River looking west into the site.

Location 6: directly across the street from 23 Old River Road looking east into the site.

Location 6: directly across the street from 23 Old River Road looking east into the site (building simulations have been circled, as they are not visible).