Chapter 10: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on neighborhood character on both the project site and in the adjacent area. Neighborhood character is an amalgam of the many components that give an area its distinctive personality. These components can include land use; street layout; scale, type, and style of development; historic features; socioeconomic characteristics; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community. However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few determining elements.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The proposed project would transform the project site from a vacant industrial site to a residential and mixed-use development. The proposed project would create a vibrant new mixed-use development with public waterfront access and open space on a site that is currently vacant and would otherwise be occupied by industrial and commercial uses with no public open space or waterfront access and limited views of the water.

The new waterfront development anticipated with the proposed project would revitalize a large, vacant waterfront site and continue the pattern emerging throughout Greenpoint and Williamsburg of mid- to high-rise waterfront developments transitioning to lower-scale, mixed use upland neighborhoods. It would create a new publicly accessible waterfront open space and reestablish the street network through the project site. Although the proposed project would demolish most of the existing buildings on the project site, it would retain, restore, and adaptively reuse the Refinery complex and incorporate the Domino Sugar sign, two elements of the site that contribute to the character of the surrounding neighborhood by recalling the industrial history of the Brooklyn waterfront. The new development would be visible in the surrounding neighborhood, but would not obstruct any existing significant view corridors. It would also create views of important visual resources that contribute to the existing character of the area.

The proposed project would redevelop the project site with residential, retail, commercial office, and community facility uses, which would be consistent with the mixed-use character of the study area. Although the proposed project would introduce a substantial new population, the mix of market-rate and affordable housing would ensure that a substantial portion of the new population would have incomes that reflect existing household incomes. Further, the proposed retail uses already exist throughout the study area, and it is not likely that they would alter or accelerate existing economic patterns, or result in significant adverse indirect business displacement.

The new development would also result in increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic. This increased traffic would result in significant adverse impacts at a number of intersections and transit control areas during one or more of the peak hours analyzed. However, a variety of mitigation measures could be implemented to address all of these impacts and, therefore, these impacts would not constitute neighborhood character impacts.

The increased traffic in the study area and near the project site would also result in an increase in noise levels. However, at all analyzed locations the increase in noise levels would be barely perceptible, and not significantly adverse to neighborhood character. The area is already experiencing an increase in activity levels that is anticipated to continue in the future without the proposed project (the "No Action" condition).

Overall, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

As described in Chapter 23, "Mitigation," the New York City School Construction Authority (SCA) may locate an approximately 100,000-square-foot public elementary and intermediate school within the community facility space in the Refinery complex. The public school would not result in any new impacts to the component environmental areas of neighborhood character. Therefore, a public school in the Refinery would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

B. METHODOLOGY

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER COMPONENTS

According to the *City Environmental Quality Review* (CEQR) *Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a project would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following areas of technical analysis: land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the project would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- *Land Use:* When development resulting from the proposed project would have the potential to change neighborhood character by introducing a new, incompatible land use; conflicting with land use policy or other public plans for the area; changing land use character; or resulting in significant land use impacts.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement; a substantial increase in population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.
- *Historic Resources.* When a project would result in substantial direct changes to a historic (architectural) resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resources analysis identifies a significant impact, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources:* In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms, street patterns, or street hierarchies, and streetscape elements such as streetwalls,

landscaping, and curb cuts. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.

- *Traffic and Pedestrians*. Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the project. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* such changes can include: changes in level of service (LOS) to C or below; changes in traffic patterns; changes in roadway classifications; changes in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts. In addition, when a proposed project would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Noise*. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* for a project to affect neighborhood character in regards to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category.

STUDY AREA

The analysis of neighborhood character considers the project's effect on neighborhood character in a study area that includes the project site and the area immediately surrounding the site. The study area used for this analysis is the same ½-mile study area used for the evaluation of land use, zoning, and public policy in Chapter 3. As shown in Figure 10-1, the study area extends roughly to the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway (BQE) to the east, North 9th Street to the north, Taylor Street to the south, and the East River to the west. Information from the other chapters of this EIS is used to make the assessment of neighborhood character; when study area boundaries of other analyses do not align precisely with the boundaries of the neighborhood character study areas, approximations are made for purposes of the analysis.

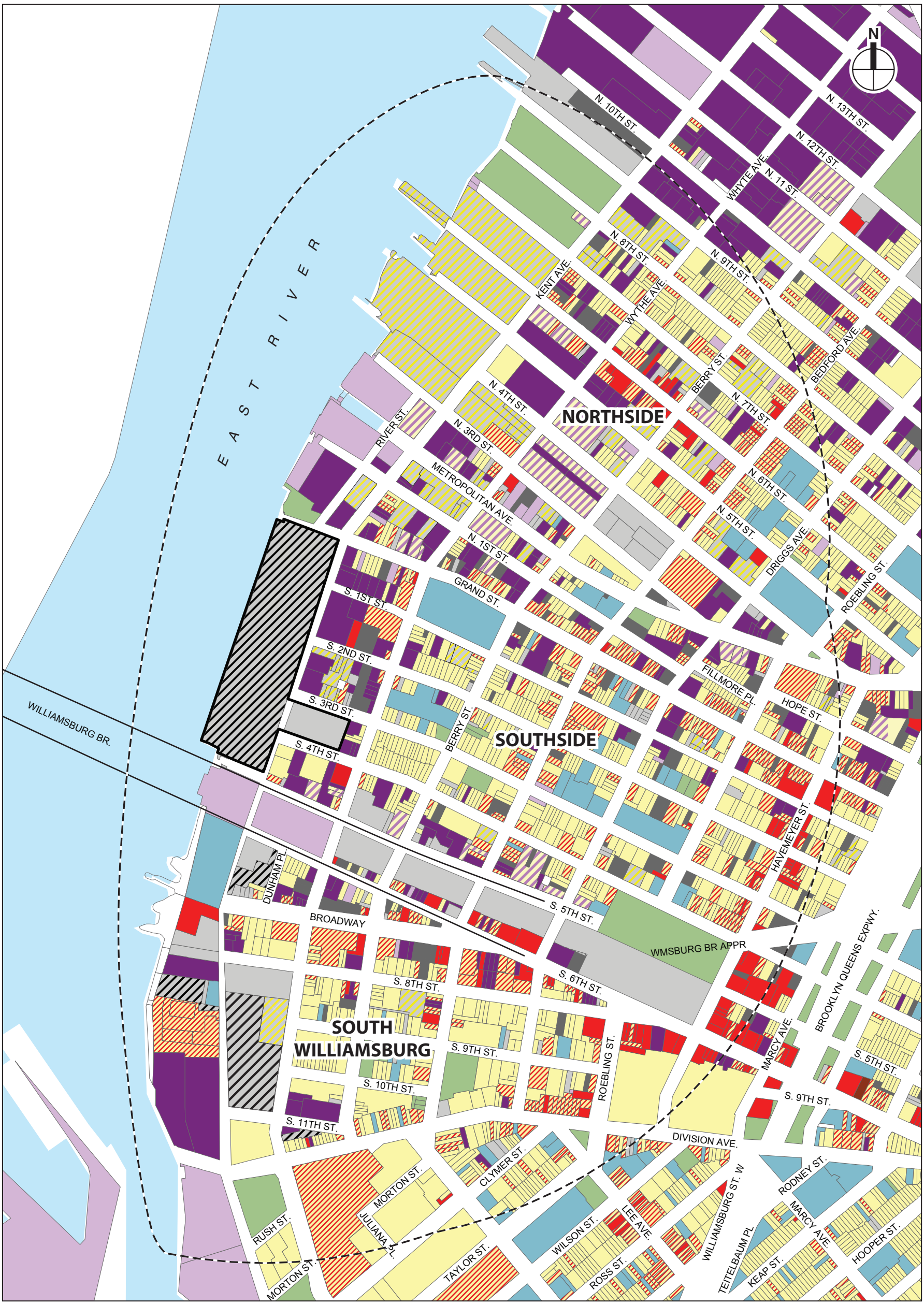
C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT SITE

The project site is located on the East River waterfront in the Southside section of Williamsburg, Brooklyn. As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the project site consists of a waterfront parcel and an upland parcel. The waterfront parcel, which extends from Grand Street to South 5th Street, is occupied by vacant buildings that formerly housed a sugar refinery and associated warehousing and packaging operations. The upland parcel, located east of Kent Avenue between South 3rd and South 4th Streets, is a vacant lot formerly used as a parking lot for the Domino Sugar factory. The entire site is vacant, fenced off, and inaccessible to the public.

The built form of the project site consists of a variety of industrial buildings and other industrial structures, such as cranes and tracks along which cranes used to run. The project site buildings were built over the course of many years ranging from the 1880s to the 1960s and in a variety of styles. Most of the buildings are clad in brick and lack exterior ornament. The waterfront parcel is occupied by former sugar processing and packaging buildings. The buildings on the project site range in height from approximately 26 to 170 feet. In general, the buildings have a lack of

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Project Site
Study Area Boundary
Residential
Residential with Commercial Below
Mixed Residential/Industrial
Hotels
Commercial and Office Buildings
Industrial and Manufacturing
Transportation and Utility
Public Facilities and Institutions
Open Space and Outdoor Recreation
Parking Facilities
Vacant Land
Vacant Building
Under Construction

0 500 1000 FEET
SCALE

Neighborhood Character Study Area
Figure 10-1

openings at the ground floor level, which creates a desolate streetscape along Kent Avenue. The upland parcel is mostly unpaved and unimproved.

As described in Chapter 8, "Historic Resources," the buildings on the former Domino Sugar site have been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR) and the Refinery complex, which includes the Filter House, the Pan House, and the Finishing House, was designated a New York City Landmark (NYCL) on September 25, 2007.

Of the buildings on the project site, the Refinery and the Bin Building contribute most substantially to the overall character of the neighborhood. As noted above, these structures are the two most visually prominent buildings on the project site. The Refinery, particularly the chimney, is visible from parts of the surrounding area and is most prominent in views south along Kent Avenue and southwest from Wythe Avenue. The Bin Building is prominent due to the formerly illuminated "Domino Sugar" sign, its most notable feature, as well as its boxy form and crown of blue-green windows. In comparison, most other structures on the site are not visually prominent and are not a defining characteristic of the surrounding neighborhood.

The configuration of the buildings on the site blocks physical and visual access to the waterfront. There are no publicly accessible streets that run through project site to the waterfront. Although the project site offers views to a number of visual resources, including the East River, the Brooklyn and Manhattan waterfronts, and the Williamsburg and Brooklyn Bridges, none of these views are publicly accessible.

Kent Avenue, which bends to conform to the curve of the shoreline, is located adjacent to the project site and is the primary northbound corridor in the study area. Traffic lights are spaced considerably apart along this corridor, making Kent Avenue a quick connection between downtown Brooklyn and the Williamsburg/Greenpoint area. This corridor is also characterized by higher-than-average commercial traffic since Kent Avenue, a New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) designated truck route, serves as a major connection for the manufacturing and industrial uses along and near the Brooklyn waterfront. Intersections along the project site are unsignalized, with the exception of the intersection of Kent Avenue and South 3rd Street. All of the intersections adjacent to the project site operate at acceptable levels of service.

As described in detail in Chapter 17, "Traffic and Parking," Kent Avenue has recently been configured from two-way north-south operation to one-way northbound operation between Clymer and North 14th Streets since late September/early October 2009. In addition to the traffic flow direction change, new two-way northbound-southbound bicycle lanes were installed on the west side of Kent Avenue in October 2009. Other geometric changes for the reconfigured Kent Avenue include a new loading/unloading lane on the east side of the roadway, followed by a northbound moving lane of traffic and a floating parking lane which separates the moving traffic lane from the bicycle lanes. This FEIS has been updated to include a detailed quantitative analysis of traffic conditions with the reconfiguration of Kent Avenue.

In general, noise levels in the area range from "marginally unacceptable" to "marginally acceptable."

STUDY AREA

As discussed above, the study area has been defined as the surrounding area within ½ mile of the project site, extending generally from North 9th Street to Taylor Street between the East River and the BQE. Overall, this area is a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhood.

Over the past several years, the study area has seen a rapid increase in residential and retail uses. The 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning accelerated this trend. In general, the area west of Wythe Avenue consists of established industrial uses alongside new waterfront residential developments. Blocks of low-rise mixed residential, commercial, and industrial uses are located east of Wythe Avenue.

In the analysis below, historic resources, socioeconomic characteristics, traffic, pedestrian, and transit conditions, and noise levels are discussed for the entire study area. Land use, urban design, and visual resources are discussed for three subareas: the area north of Grand Street (Northside), the area between Grand Street and the Williamsburg Bridge (Southside), and the area south of the Williamsburg Bridge (South Williamsburg).

LAND USE, URBAN DESIGN, AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Southside

The Southside neighborhood, encompassing the area roughly between the Williamsburg Bridge and Grand Street, includes the project site and the surrounding blocks to the east. This area is generally characterized by a mix of residential, industrial, commercial, and institutional uses laid out along a primarily rectilinear street grid.

The blocks immediately adjacent to the project site between Kent and Wythe Avenues contain some residential uses mixed with retail establishments and light industrial uses, such as warehousing, metal working, food distribution, stage design, and construction and electrical contracting. The industrial buildings in this area are primarily clad in brick and are one and two stories in height, with large vehicular openings and minimal exterior details. These structures contribute to the industrial streetscape of the area between Kent and Wythe Avenues, with low-scale buildings with vehicular entrances, sidewalks with multiple curb cuts, and a lack of streetscape elements such as trees.

East of Wythe Avenue, Southside is predominantly a residential neighborhood. This area has a residential streetscape with buildings of similar height and bulk built to the sidewalk line, street trees, small ground floor retail spaces, and pedestrian activity. Residential structures range from three to six stories and are a mix of older brick buildings, some of which have been reclad in modern materials including synthetic siding and stucco. Throughout the Southside area there are a number of former industrial buildings that have been converted into residential buildings. Additionally, some buildings in this area include a mix of industrial uses and residential uses. These buildings are primarily located along South 5th Street, opposite the Williamsburg Bridge, and are bulky, five- to seven-story loft style buildings.

Bedford Avenue, Havemeyer Street, and Grand Street are the major retail corridors in the Southside neighborhood. The retail uses are generally located on the ground floor of residential buildings and include neighborhood retailers such as restaurants and cafes, shops, and small groceries.

The East River and Manhattan skyline are visible from Grand Ferry Park, a waterfront park in the Southside neighborhood. Views across the river are wide and expansive and include the Manhattan and Brooklyn waterfronts, the Williamsburg Bridge, and other East River bridges. In addition, from locations throughout the Southside neighborhood, the east-west streets create view corridors toward Manhattan.

Northside

The northern portion of the study area, extending from Grand Street to North 9th Street, falls within the Northside neighborhood of Williamsburg. This area includes a mix of industrial, residential, retail, and open space uses, with a substantial number of new residential buildings under construction both along the waterfront and in the upland portion of the neighborhood. Much of this development is the result of the 2005 Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning.

The upland portion of the Northside neighborhood includes a mix of light industrial, residential, and retail uses. Residential uses in this area include converted industrial loft buildings, three- to four-story row houses, and new apartment buildings of six to seven stories that are under construction on some blocks east of Kent Avenue. As in the Southside neighborhood, older, attached residences are clad in a variety of materials including brick, shingles, and vinyl siding. New residential buildings under development, including Northside Piers and The Edge, are clad in glass and brick.

Industrial uses, including warehousing and light manufacturing, are scattered throughout the Northside area, particularly on the blocks just east of Kent Avenue. These industrial buildings tend to be low-scale, boxy buildings, clad in brick and generally built to the lot line. Many have large openings on the ground floors for truck loading and unloading areas.

The streetscape of the Northside area is under transition as former industrial buildings are converted to residential buildings and as new residential buildings are constructed. Despite the growing number of residential uses, much of the northern section of the study area retains a mixed industrial and residential character. The industrial streets in the Northside area are developed with continuous streetwalls created by long, mid-scale industrial buildings. In contrast, the east-west streets, with their predominantly residential character, have a consistent streetscape consisting of buildings built to the sidewalk and of similar heights and bulks.

Retail and entertainment uses are found throughout most of the Northside. Some of the main neighborhood commercial strips include Bedford Avenue and North 6th Street, which are lined with bars, nightclubs, restaurants, and shops. Other streets, including North 7th Street, Berry Street, and Wythe Avenue, also have many retail and commercial uses.

Views of the East River, Manhattan skyline, and East River bridges are accessible from East River State Park between North 7th and North 9th Streets. As with the Southside neighborhood, the Williamsburg Bridge is visible from locations along Kent Avenue. In addition, from locations throughout the Northside neighborhood, the east-west streets create view corridors toward Manhattan.

South Williamsburg

The South Williamsburg neighborhood, generally located south of the Williamsburg Bridge, is physically separated from the rest of the study area by the Williamsburg Bridge approach. The area is primarily residential but also includes several large industrial and vacant sites. Residential buildings in the area include small, attached houses, taller brick apartment buildings, and tall, bulky towers. As with the Northside and Southside neighborhoods, there are also a number of residential buildings which are either recently built or anticipated along the waterfront.

The area between the waterfront and Wythe Avenue is characterized by a mix of large residential developments and lower-scale industrial buildings. Schaefer Landing, a 350-unit residential development, is located on the west side of Kent Avenue between South 9th Street

and South 10th Street. The streetscape for the remainder of Kent Avenue is mixed with low-scale industrial buildings, some of which are set back a significant distance from the sidewalk to allow for truck loading areas, vacant properties surrounded by metal chain link fences, and a large masonry power plant. Pedestrian traffic and streetscape elements are limited in these areas, adding to the underutilized feel.

Due to the variety of residential buildings, the streetwalls of the area are mixed. The majority of the residential buildings are constructed to the sidewalk; however they are of different sizes, exterior materials, and bulk, creating a varied streetscape. The east-west streets in the area are lined with attached, three- and four-story residential buildings, many of which are clad in brick with exterior stone or terra cotta ornament. Other residential buildings in the area include larger attached four- and six-story apartment buildings, as well as high-rise apartment buildings in the southern and eastern portions of the neighborhood.

Broadway and Division Avenue are the two commercial streets in the South Williamsburg neighborhood. The retail businesses in this area generally cater to the local residents and include restaurants and specialty food stores. These businesses, along with the presence of the elevated J/M/Z subway line, attract substantial pedestrian traffic along Broadway.

Due to the taller buildings along Broadway and the relatively narrow streets in the neighborhood, the Williamsburg Bridge is not highly visible from the South Williamsburg neighborhood except for views looking north on Kent Avenue north of Broadway and west along South Sixth Street. Views east along Broadway terminate at the former Williamsburgh Savings Bank, a tall building topped with a large dome structure and a pinnacle at Broadway and Driggs Avenue.

HISTORIC RESOURCES

As discussed in Chapter 8, "Historic Resources," there are a number of historic resources in the study area. In addition to the historic structures on the project site, these include 26 known and potential architectural resources located throughout the study area and two historic districts.

The study area's most visually prominent historic resource is the Williamsburg Bridge, located immediately south of the project site. As described above, the Williamsburg Bridge is visible from locations along Kent Avenue throughout the study area.

Many of the architectural resources are industrial structures. Even though a number of these buildings have been converted to residential use, such as the Gretsch Building, they retain their industrial design and contribute to the overall mixed industrial and residential character of the study area. Further, these buildings tend to be visually prominent throughout the area due to their height, bulk, and, in some cases, unique ornament (e.g., the prominent curved cornice on the Austin, Nichols & Co. Warehouse at 184 Kent Avenue). The remaining architectural resources in the study area are a variety of residential, institutional, and commercial structures, reflecting the long-standing mixed-use character of the area.

There are also two historic districts in the study area: the Grand Street Historic District and the Dunham and Broadway Historic District. The Grand Street Historic District contains approximately 70 buildings on the north and south sides of Grand Street between Kent Avenue and Bedford Avenue. The district is significant for its association with the early commercial development of the Williamsburg area and is mainly composed of commercial buildings dating from the mid- to late-19th century. The Dunham and Broadway Historic District includes six commercial buildings built prior to 1887. These structures were among the earliest commercial

development on Broadway in Williamsburg. Both Grand Street and Broadway remain commercial corridors today.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

The study area used for Chapter 4, "Socioeconomic Conditions," encompasses most of the Southside, Northside, and South Williamsburg neighborhoods. As described in Chapter 4, the entire study area had a population of 25,856 residents in the 2000 Census. Since 2000, this population has increased as new residential buildings have been constructed and industrial buildings have been converted to residential use. The 2009 population for the study area is estimated at 28,840 residents, an approximately 11.5 percent increase. This growth rate outpaced the growth of Brooklyn and New York City over the same time period.

According to the 2000 Census, the age distribution of the study area population is similar to that of Brooklyn and New York City as a whole. In 2000, 63.6 percent of the study area was working age (18 to 64), compared to 61.7 percent in Brooklyn and 64.0 percent in New York City. Despite the similarities with respect to the working age population, the study area population is overall somewhat younger than Brooklyn and New York City. Within the study area, 29.0 percent of the population was under the age of 17, compared to 26.9 percent in Brooklyn and 24.2 percent in New York City. A greater proportion of the study area's working age population was aged 18 to 29 (24.3 percent in the study area) compared to Brooklyn (18.3 percent) and New York City (18.5 percent) overall.

As discussed in Chapter 4, median household income has increased notably in the study area since 1989, but it still lags behind Brooklyn and New York City as a whole. In 1999, median household income in the study area was $36,309, compared to $43,289 in Brooklyn and $51,585 in New York City. The study area also has higher poverty rate (35.5 percent) compared to Brooklyn (25.1 percent) and New York City (21.3 percent). The area south of the Williamsburg Bridge has higher concentrations of people with incomes below the poverty level compared to the rest of the study area. In contrast, the northern portion of the study area has poverty rates below 25 percent.

As described above, the study area contains a number of commercial, light industrial, and retail establishments. In 2000, the manufacturing industry accounted for the largest proportion of study area employment (16.6 percent; although manufacturing employment has declined since 2000, especially due to the closure of the Domino Sugar Refinery in 2004), followed by educational, health, and social services (12.6 percent), and construction and retail trade (both with 10.2 percent).

TRAFFIC, PEDESTRIAN, AND TRANSIT CONDITIONS AND NOISE LEVELS

The roadway network around the project site is generally a grid of local streets serving the residential and commercial uses of the study area. Major routes through the area include the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway/Interstate 278 (BQE), which provides north-south access through the boroughs of Brooklyn, Queens, and Staten Island; the Williamsburg Bridge, which links the area with the Lower East Side of Manhattan; and Broadway, which serves as a major commercial route through Brooklyn. As noted above, this area is characterized by higher-than-average commercial traffic since Kent Avenue, a DOT designated truck route, serves as a major connection for the manufacturing and industrial uses along and near the Brooklyn waterfront. As described above, Kent Avenue was recently reconfigured as a one-way northbound street.

Within the study area, Williamsburg Street (the service road on either side of the BQE between Division and Flushing Avenues) and Metropolitan Avenue carry the heaviest traffic volumes during the four peak hours analyzed. Classon Avenue also carries heavy traffic volumes during the four peak hours. Vehicular traffic levels are moderate on Kent Avenue, Broadway, Roebling Street, and Wythe Avenue. All other minor cross-streets carry low traffic volumes in the study area. It should be noted that the reconfiguration of Kent Avenue from a two-way north-south roadway to a one-way northbound roadway has resulted in a significant increase in traffic volumes on Wythe Avenue in the study area. This is due to the fact that Wythe Avenue now serves as an alternate route for traffic traveling in the southbound direction between North 14th Street and Clymer Street in the absence of southbound access on Kent Avenue.

In total, there are two intersections operating with notable service constraints during the AM peak hour; one intersection operating with notable service constraints in the midday peak hour; seven intersections operating with notable service constraints during the weekday PM peak hour; and one intersection operating with notable service constraints during the Saturday midday peak hour.

Currently, pedestrian traffic in the study area is relatively low overall and sidewalks and crosswalks function at acceptable levels. Pedestrian traffic is highest along Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street among the intersections analyzed due to the number of commercial stores and the presence of the Bedford Avenue subway stop.

For public transit, the neighborhood is served primarily by the L subway line, which has a stop at Bedford Avenue, by the J/M/Z subway line at Marcy Avenue, and by the B62, B39, and Q59 buses (the B39 bus will be eliminated in June 2010 as part of the MTA service changes). The Bedford Avenue L subway line stop is located along North 7th Street between Bedford and Driggs Avenues, and the J/M/Z Marcy Avenue stop is located on Broadway between Havemeyer Street and Marcy Avenue. All stairways and control areas (the area with turnstiles, service gates, etc.) at these stations operate at acceptable levels of service. The B39 currently operates within guideline capacities during both peak periods at its peak load points. The eastbound B62 and Q59 also operate within guideline capacity during both peak periods. The westbound B62 operates beyond capacity during the AM peak period and within capacity during the PM peak period and the westbound Q59 operates within guideline capacity during the AM peak period and beyond capacity during the PM peak period.

Noise levels in the study area reflect the level of vehicular activity on the adjacent streets. As such, noise levels are higher on the study area's main thoroughfares than they are on the side streets. In terms of CEQR noise exposure guidelines, existing noise levels range from "marginally acceptable" to "marginally unacceptable."

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT SITE

In the No Action condition, it is assumed that the project site will be developed with uses permitted as-of-right under the existing M3-1 zoning. The project site will be developed into a storage facility on the waterfront parcel between South 3rd and South 5th Streets, a building material storage yard along the waterfront between South 2nd and South 1st Streets, and a new distribution facility along the waterfront immediately south of Grand Ferry Park. On the upland portion of the site, a new two-story building with a catering hall/restaurant on the upper floor

and parking on the ground floor will be constructed. Both the Refinery and the Boiler House will be retained but will remain vacant. All other buildings on the project site will be demolished.

It is expected that the new buildings will be industrial in design and modest in appearance. Absent the proposed project, no waterfront esplanade will be constructed, and the waterfront will remain visually and physically separated from the surrounding area. Without the proposed project's esplanade and open spaces, new views to the Williamsburg Bridge from the East River waterfront will not be created.

The as-of-right development will introduce a substantial number of vehicular trips to the project site and the surrounding area. As a result, three intersections along Kent Avenue adjacent to the project site will experience notable changes in service and will operate with service constraints. Additional truck traffic expected as a result of the as-of-right development will increase noise levels in the area, but they will generally remain in the "marginally acceptable" to "marginally unacceptable" range.

STUDY AREA

In the No Action condition, it is anticipated that the trend toward increased residential and mixed-use development in the study area will continue. There are several large residential projects anticipated or under construction in the study area. Many of these new developments would be a result of the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning that was adopted in 2005 to allow for the construction of tall, mixed-use residential buildings along the waterfront. These new developments are part of a general trend toward residential development in the area.

Residential projects forecast or under construction include several large waterfront projects, including the developments known as The Edge and Northside Piers to the north of the project site, and Rose Plaza on the River and the Kedem Winery site to the south of the project site. These new developments, along with other development under the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, will change the character of the study area by creating more publicly accessible open spaces along the waterfront and connecting the community to the waterfront. New residential development is also anticipated on the upland blocks adjacent to the project site.

New residential developments in the No Action condition will introduce a substantial number of housing units to the study area. The study area is projected to gain approximately 6,093 housing units by 2020 without the proposed project, for a total of 16,936 housing units. Of these units, approximately 1,398 units are expected to be affordable housing units due to the Inclusionary Housing Program of the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning. The 6,093 dwelling units are forecast to introduce approximately 16,148 new residents, increasing the population to approximately 44,988 in 2020, a 56.0 percent increase from the existing population.

Overall, these new developments will change the character of the study area. The area will transition from a lower-scale mixed industrial and residential neighborhood to an increasingly residential area including modern, tower-style, mixed-use developments along the waterfront. New waterfront developments will connect the neighborhood to the waterfront and provide greater opportunities for recreation along the waterfront compared to existing conditions.

New development within the study area would generate increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the study area. Intersections throughout the area will be more congested in the morning, midday, evening, and Saturday midday peak hours. Levels of service will deteriorate at a number of traffic intersections, and at the north and south pedestrian crosswalks at Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street. In addition, subway station control area and stairway operations

will decline under the No Action condition. In the AM peak period, the Manhattan-bound control area at the Marcy Avenue station will operate above its optimum capacity. Bus routes will also become more crowded; the Q59 bus line will exceed guideline capacity during the AM and PM peak hours in both directions. The B62 line will exceed the guideline capacity in both directions during the AM peak period. During the PM peak period, the southbound B62 will exceed guideline capacity and the northbound B62 will operate within guideline capacity. The additional traffic throughout the study area will result in slightly increased noise levels, but they will generally remain in the "marginally acceptable" to "marginally unacceptable" range.

E. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT SITE

The proposed project would introduce residential, retail commercial office, and community facility uses to the project site. Unlike the industrial and commercial development in the No Action condition, it would also allow public access to the waterfront along the entire site and would connect the neighborhood to the water's edge at each public street from Grand Street to South 5th Street.

The proposed project would substantially alter the appearance of the project site by demolishing all of the vacant industrial buildings on the waterfront parcel except for the Refinery. The proposed project would retain, restore, and adaptively reuse the Refinery complex. Further, the Domino Sugar sign, currently located on the Bin Building, would be preserved and relocated to the top of the Refinery addition. As discussed in Chapter 9, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the loss of the Bin Building would constitute an adverse impact on visual resources. However, the demolition of the Bin Building would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character because this building will be demolished in the No Action condition and the proposed project would retain the Domino Sugar sign and locate it on top of the Refinery.

As described in Chapter 8, "Historic Resources," a feasibility study concluded that it would not be possible to retain the other buildings on the project site for residential use while allowing the project to meet its goals and objectives. In a letter dated November 6, 2008, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred that there is no feasible alternative to the demolition of all the structures on the project site except for the buildings that comprise the Refinery. However, the demolition of these structures would not be a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. As noted above, the Bin Building will be demolished in the No Action condition and the proposed project would retain the Domino Sugar sign. The proposed project would also retain, restore, and adaptively reuse the Refinery complex, and all proposed additions to the structure have been reviewed and approved by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC). Further, the other structures on the site are not visually prominent and are not a defining characteristic of the surrounding neighborhood.

Unlike the as-of-right development in the No Action condition, which would result in utilitarian light industrial buildings, the proposed project would result in a group of new mixed-use buildings with a unified design on both the waterfront parcel and on the upland parcel. The proposed buildings would be modern in design and clad in masonry and glass. The lower-scale portions of the new buildings would be located along Kent Avenue, where heights would range from 60 feet to 110 feet; the tallest sections would be located closest to the waterfront, where tower heights would reach up to 300 and 400 feet. The upland parcel would be developed with

buildings similar to those on the waterfront parcel that would range in height from 58 to 148 feet.

The residential FAR of the proposed project would be 4.89, slightly exceeding the FAR of 4.7 approved for waterfront sites under the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning. The overall FAR of the proposed project would be 5.64. The community facility, retail, and office uses included in the proposed project would comprise the difference between the residential FAR of 4.89 and the overall FAR of 5.64.

With the proposed project, the waterfront parcel would be developed as five separate blocks and would reestablish the street grid throughout the project site. Retail spaces would be located on the ground floor spaces along Kent Avenue, along the new upland connections, and at the western edges of the waterfront buildings along the esplanade. The new retail spaces are intended to increase pedestrian activity on the project site, and draw people into the site and towards the waterfront. The proposed office use is also intended to draw activity to the project site and contribute to its mixed-use character. In addition, the proposed project would provide new pedestrian amenities, such as street lights, pedestrian crossings, and benches, on the project site.

The proposed project would create a new approximately four-acre publicly accessible waterfront open space and esplanade. The esplanade would include pedestrian pathways that would extend the length of the site and connect larger gathering spaces and recreational uses. The esplanade would also connect to Grand Ferry Park to the north and to South 5th Street to the south. A central lawn would provide views of the East River and the Manhattan skyline, and would showcase the restored historic Refinery complex. Connections to the open space from Kent Avenue through the extension of every public street onto the site are intended to facilitate public access and views of the waterfront. The proposed project's waterfront open space would represent a major new open space resource for the Williamsburg neighborhood. The proposed open space would serve the existing community as well as residents of the proposed project and other anticipated development projects, many of which are neither required nor are providing public open space.

The proposed project would introduce approximately 6,696 residents to the project site by 2020. Although the proposed project would introduce a substantial new population, the mix of market-rate and affordable housing would ensure that a substantial portion of the new population would have incomes that more closely reflect existing household incomes. The proposed project would also incorporate retail, commercial office, and community facility uses that would attract visitors and workers. As a result of the new residents, workers, and visitors, pedestrian traffic would increase on and adjacent to the project site, and vehicular traffic to the site would also increase.

Overall, the proposed project would transform the project site from a vacant site to a residential and mixed-use development. The proposed project would create a new mixed-use development with public waterfront access and open space on a site that is currently vacant and would otherwise be occupied by industrial and commercial uses with no public open space or waterfront access and limited views of the water.

PUBLIC SCHOOL OPTION

As described in Chapter 23, "Mitigation," SCA may locate an approximately 100,000-square-foot public elementary and intermediate school within the community facility space in the Refinery complex. The public school would not result in any new impacts to the component

environmental areas of neighborhood character. Therefore, a public school in the Refinery would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

STUDY AREA

The new uses introduced by the proposed project would be compatible with the existing and anticipated future mix of residential, retail, and light industrial uses in the surrounding area. The proposed project would complement the upland residential neighborhood and would be an extension of the existing trend in which vacant or underutilized waterfront sites are being redeveloped with housing, retail space, and public open space. The proposed project's retail uses along Kent Avenue would complement the retail uses that currently exist along Grand Street and Broadway, as well as new retail uses that have emerged along Kent Avenue, Wythe Avenue, and South 5th Street. The proposed project's residential and commercial mixed-use character would be in keeping with the mixed-use character of the Williamsburg neighborhood.

The new buildings introduced by the proposed project would be taller and denser than most of the residential and industrial buildings in the study area. However, the tallest buildings on the project site would be located towards the waterfront, and would be consistent in terms of massing and use with other new waterfront buildings in the study area, such as The Edge, Northside Piers, and Schaefer Landing. Moving upland, the proposed project buildings would become lower in scale and would provide a transition between the taller project site buildings and the general context of the residential neighborhood east of Wythe Avenue. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with the existing and emerging urban design patterns that characterize the study area. Furthermore, as noted above, the proposed project would have a residential FAR that would only slightly exceeds the FAR approved for waterfront sites under the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning.

Construction of the proposed project would block some views of the Williamsburg Bridge and the Manhattan skyline, but would also create new views. The proposed project would not obstruct any significant view corridors. As discussed above, the new waterfront esplanade would provide public views of the East River and the Manhattan skyline, and would showcase the restored historic Refinery complex. The proposed project would be visible at locations throughout the study area, including East River State Park, Kent Avenue and Broadway, and the upland neighborhood. Overall, the proposed project would preserve many views that characterize the neighborhood under existing conditions, such as views of the East River, Williamsburg Bridge, Manhattan skyline, and Refinery complex. Further, it would create views of many of these visual resources.

The proposed project would not adversely affect the context of any historic resources nearby, nor would it adversely affect either of the two nearby historic districts. Many resources are located at least a block away from the proposed project, and there will be ongoing residential development occurring near those sites in the No Action condition. In addition, a Construction Protection Plan (CPP) would be prepared prior to construction to protect any nearby historic resources, such as the Williamsburg Bridge and the American Sugar Refinery buildings, from construction-related impacts.

The proposed project would create new shadows in the surrounding study area, which would result in additional shadow falling on the three existing sun-sensitive resources in the area (Grand Ferry Park, the East River, and Public School [PS] 84 William Sheridan Playground). The new shadows on the East River and PS 84 William Sheridan Playground would not cause a

significant adverse shadows impact, nor would they constitute an impact on neighborhood character because the shadows would generally be of short duration and small extent.

The incremental shadow on Grand Ferry Park would be cast by the proposed building on Site A. The proposed building on Site A would result in several hours of new midday shadow on portions of Grand Ferry Park throughout the year. The new shadow from the build-out of Site A would not last for more than about two-and-a-quarter hours on any one particular location, for example, a tree or a bench. The total duration of incremental shadow from its entry at the western edge of the park to its exit at the eastern edge would be about six-and-a-half hours on the March 21/September 21 analysis day and about three-and-three-quarter hours on the June 21 and May 6/August 6 analysis days. The incremental shadow cast on Grand Ferry Park by Site A would cause a significant adverse impact to the users of this open space during the fall, winter, and early spring, and would likely also adversely impact the park's vegetation. However, the proposed project would create approximately four acres of new public open space that would connect to Grand Ferry Park. During all seasons, the new project-created open space would provide sunlit areas during times when Grand Ferry Park is experiencing areas of incremental shadow, thus offsetting the effects of the proposed project's shadows on Grand Ferry Park. Therefore, the shadows impact on Grand Ferry Park would not constitute a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character because the neighborhood would continue to have access to sunlit waterfront open space.

The proposed project would bring a substantial new population to the study area, increasing the residential population by approximately 14.9 percent over the No Action condition. However, as discussed in Chapter 4, "Socioeconomic Conditions," this new population would not be expected to initiate or accelerate the trend toward increased rents in the study areas. There is already a strong trend toward market-rate residential construction in the study area, which is introducing a substantial new population with a high income relative to the existing population. Along with the affordable units that have been, and will continue to be provided as a result of the Greenpoint-Williamsburg rezoning, the proposed project's affordable housing would ensure that a substantial portion of the area's future population would have incomes that more closely reflect existing household incomes.

The proposed project would introduce new residential, retail, commercial office, and community facility uses to the formerly industrial project site. However, these new uses already exist throughout the study area, and it is not likely that they would alter or accelerate existing economic patterns, and they would not result in significant adverse indirect business displacement.

The new uses introduced by the proposed project would increase vehicular and pedestrian traffic throughout the study area. This increased traffic would result in significant adverse impacts at 32 intersections during one or more of the peak hours analyzed. However, a variety of mitigation measures could be implemented to address all of these impacts and, therefore, these impacts would not constitute neighborhood character impacts.

The new population from the proposed project would result in increased pedestrian volumes in the study area. However, all sidewalks and crosswalks in the study area would continue to operate at acceptable levels of service, except for the south crosswalk at Bedford Avenue and North 7th Street. The proposed project would result in a significant adverse impact on the south crosswalk at Bedford and North 7th Street, but this impact could be mitigated by restriping the crosswalk to increase capacity and, therefore, would not affect neighborhood character. The new pedestrians would not result in any significant impacts on subway stair operations at the Bedford Avenue L line stop or the Marcy Avenue J/M/Z line stop, but they would result in significant adverse impacts to the Marcy Avenue station's Manhattanbound control area during the AM

peak period and to the Queensbound control area during the PM peak period. However, these impacts could be mitigated and, therefore, would not constitute a neighborhood character impact. There would be no significant adverse impacts to the Bedford Avenue subway station during any of the analysis peak periods.

Buses would also become more crowded. The proposed project would result in significant adverse impacts to bus line haul capacities on the northbound and southbound B62 and the eastbound and westbound Q59 during both AM and PM peak periods. These significant adverse impacts could be mitigated by scheduling additional buses to increase capacity. Further, bus line haul capacity is not a determining characteristic of the Williamsburg neighborhood.

It is anticipated that the development could also be served by water taxi service and/or shuttle bus service to transit locations, and the implementation of these would be explored as demand is created by the proposed project's development.

The increased traffic in the study area and near the project site would result in an increase in noise levels over conditions in the No Action condition. However, at all analyzed locations the increase in noise levels would be barely perceptible. Overall, the increased noise levels in the future with the proposed project would not significantly affect neighborhood character, as the levels would remain in the "marginally acceptable" to "marginally unacceptable" range typical of urban areas.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed project would revitalize a large, vacant waterfront site and continue the pattern emerging throughout Greenpoint and Williamsburg of mid- to high-rise waterfront developments transitioning to lower-scale, mixed use upland neighborhoods. It would create a new publicly accessible waterfront open space and reconnect the street network through the project site. Although the proposed project would demolish most of the existing buildings on the project site, it would retain, restore, and adaptively reuse the Refinery complex and the Domino Sugar sign, two elements of the site that contribute to the character of the surrounding neighborhood by recalling the industrial history of the Brooklyn waterfront. The new development would be visible in the surrounding neighborhood, but it would not obstruct any existing significant view corridors. It would also create views of important visual resources that contribute to the existing character of the area.

The proposed project would redevelop the project site with residential, retail, commercial office, and community facility uses, which would be consistent with the mixed-use character of the study area. Although the proposed project would introduce a substantial new population, the mix of market-rate and affordable housing would ensure that a substantial portion of the new population would have incomes that more closely reflect existing household incomes. Further, the proposed retail uses already exist throughout the study area, and it is not likely that they would alter or accelerate existing economic patterns, and they would not result in significant adverse indirect business displacement.

The new development would also result in increased vehicular and pedestrian traffic and increased noise levels. At some locations, the increased activity would be noticeable, but not significantly adverse to neighborhood character. The area is already experiencing an increase in activity levels that is anticipated to continue in the No Action condition.

Overall, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character. ✷