A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the Proposed Action's potential effects on neighborhood character. As defined in the *2021 City Environmental Quality Review* (CEQR) *Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "personality." These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, socioeconomic, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise conditions; but not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in all cases. For a proposed project, a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether the project has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical analysis areas. Thus, to determine the effects of a proposed project on neighborhood character, the salient features of neighborhood character are considered together. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare, and it would be unusual that, in the absence of a significant adverse impact in any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood would result in an impact to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant adverse impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character is not automatically equivalent to a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character, but, rather, serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

As outlined in **Chapter 1, "Project Description,"** the Proposed Action would facilitate the construction of a new 23-story, 352-foot tall (roof height; 392-foot tall with bulkhead) commercial building (the "Proposed Project") in the South Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn Community District (CD) 2. For conservative analysis purposes, the reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDS) anticipates that the Proposed Project would be developed with an approximately 684,242 gross square foot (gsf) development containing approximately 598,442 gsf of office space and 21,233 gsf of retail space. It would also contain approximately 49,453 sf of waterfront public open space, including a shore public walkway and supplemental public access area. There would also be 14,301 sf of accessory open areas for building occupants. Additionally, there would also be approximately 234 public parking spaces (64,567 gsf) and two loading berths. Under the RWCDS the Proposed Action is expected to result in a net increase of 540,442 gsf of commercial office space, 21,233 gsf of retail space, and 49,453 sf of waterfront public open space, as well as a net reduction of 181,401 gsf of warehouse space and 45 parking spaces.

This chapter includes a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character, which was prepared in conformance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*. This chapter describes the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and considers the potential effects of the Proposed Action on these defining features. This assessment relies on the technical analyses presented in other chapters of this EIS.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts related to neighborhood character. The neighborhood character of the study area is defined by a few key components, including its mix of land uses and building types, open space resources, including waterfront access, and industrial land uses. As described elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts in the impact categories of land use, zoning, and public policy (**Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy"**); socioeconomic conditions (**Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions"**); open space (**Chapter 4, "Open Space"**); shadows (**Chapter 5, "Shadows"**); urban design and visual resources (**Chapter 7, Urban Design and Visual Resources"**); or noise (**Chapter 15, "Noise."**) The significant adverse transportation impacts that have been preliminarily identified and described in **Chapter 12, "Transportation"** would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of moderately adverse effects affect such a defining feature. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse noise or transportation impacts.

C. METHODOLOGY

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, or noise. The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that, even if a proposed project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in any specific technical area(s), an assessment of neighborhood character may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that may cumulatively affect neighborhood character. A "moderate" effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area.

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood character. The key elements that define neighborhood character, and their relationships to one another, form the basis of determining impact significance; in general, the more uniform and consistent the existing neighborhood context, the more sensitive it is to change. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater change without experiencing significant adverse impacts. If there is no potential for a proposed project to affect the defining features of neighborhood character, a detailed assessment is not warranted.

Study Area

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. Therefore, the study area for this analysis is the same as that used for the analysis of land use, zoning, and public policy, which extends quarter-mile from the Project Area's boundaries, which is generally bound by Broadway to the north, Bedford Avenue to the east, Ross Street to the south, and the Wallabout Channel to the west. Southwest of the project area, a portion of the Brooklyn Navy Yard (BNY)

lies within the study area between Ross Street and Wallabout Bay; approximately 12 percent of the entire BNY is within the study area.

D. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Defining Features

Proposed Project

The 115,244-sf Project Site, which consists of one tax lot (Lot 10) on Block 2023, is an irregularly-shaped, waterfront property and corner lot bound by the Wallabout Channel (an artificial inlet of the East River) to the west, Division Avenue to the north, Kent Avenue to the east, and the Brooklyn Navy Yard's Nassau Gas Works site to the south. The lot, which is currently vacant, has approximately 227 feet of frontage on Division Avenue, approximately 372 feet of frontage on Kent Avenue, and approximately 528 feet of shoreline along Wallabout Channel. It was occupied by power generating plants from the late nineteenth to early twenty-first centuries. In 1959, Consolidated Edison (Con Edison) acquired the property from the City of New York. Con Edison continued to operate the power plant until shuttering it in 1999 and subsequently demolished the plant buildings in 2009. Con Edison performed environmental remediation which was completed in 2014 under New York State Department of Environmental Conservation supervision through the Voluntary Cleanup Program. The Project Site has been vacant since 2009 and the applicant acquired it from Con Edison in 2019 with the intent of redeveloping it.

Study Area and Surrounding Neighborhood

The Project Site is located in the southwestern portion of the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn and is immediately northeast of the Brooklyn Navy Yard, which is now an industrial park with many adaptively reused older structures and some new buildings. As presented in **Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,"** predominant land uses in the study area include low-, mid-, and high-rise apartment multi-family residential and mixed-use buildings, commercial uses, industrial properties, and vacant land. Generally, there has been a trend of redevelopment of vacant land and underutilized and unoccupied properties formerly occupied by industrial and general service uses with new higher density residential and commercial development, particularly along the waterfront. There are several notable buildings within the surrounding area. These include Schaefer Landing, a waterfront apartment complex located 0.2 miles north of the Project Site completed in 2006 that consists of three apartment buildings and contains a total of approximately 350 DUs, of which 140 DUs are affordable housing units, approximately 10,000 gsf of retail, and approximately 146 accessory parking spaces. Also on the waterfront, 0.3 miles north of the Project Site is 420 Kent Avenue, an apartment complex with two separate buildings. The development, completed in 2019, has a total of 857 DUs, of which 186 DUs are affordable housing units, 15,867 sf of commercial space, and 429 accessory parking spaces. Additionally, 470 Kent Avenue, directly to the north of the Project Site, is the latest development along the Brooklyn Waterfront; the future mixed-use, five-building complex will total 981 DUs, 23,053 gsf of local retail space, 394 parking spaces and 0.75 acres of publicly accessible open space. Phase 1 of the development (which has a build year of 2024) will introduce 571 DUs, 22 parking spaces, and 0.75 acres of publicly accessible open space. Notable institutional uses including Beikvie Hatzion and Ohel Sura Schools. As discussed in **Chapter 4, "Open**

Space," there are several public open spaces in the study area. Open space resources including Roberto Clemente Ballfields, located across the street from the Project Site, Jacob's Ladder Playground, located one block southeast of the Project Site, Schaefer Landing Park, and 420 Kent Avenue waterfront public open space. Bedford Playground is located three blocks northeast of the Project Site; it is one acre and has basketball courts, handball courts and playgrounds. There are also several privately owned open spaces and others that are accessory, i.e., not formally open to the public, such as those belonging to the NYCHA Taylor Street-Wythe Avenue apartments and the Kent Village Apartments.

The Project Site and the adjoining area to the south is in the Brooklyn Navy Yard Industrial Business Zone (IBZ). The designation of an IBZ seeks to foster high-performing business districts by creating competitive advantages over locating in areas outside of New York City. The IBZs are supported by tax credits for relocating within them, zone-specific planning efforts, and direct business assistance from Industrial Providers of NYC Business Solutions Industrial and Transportation. In light of the purpose of IBZs, residential rezonings are generally not supported. Unlike other properties in this IBZ, the Project Site is privately-owned and was not historically part of the Brooklyn Navy Yard.

The Project Site is well served by public transit. The Marcy Avenue J/M/Z subway station (to the northeast at the intersection of Broadway and Williamsburg Street) is located approximately 0.7 miles from the Project Site. In addition, the B67 (connecting Williamsburg Bridge Plaza and Long Island City) runs along Kent and Wythe Avenues, the B62 (connecting Downtown Brooklyn/Fulton Mall and Long Island City) runs along Wythe and Kent Avenues, and the B32/Q59 (connecting Lefferts Gardens/Prospect Park and Greenpoint) run along Broadway. The South Williamsburg landing on the NYC Ferry service (which replaced the previous East River Ferry route) is located less than 0.3 miles to the north of the Project Site at the western terminus of S. 10th Street. The site is served by bike lanes on Kent and Wythe avenues. The bike lane on Kent Avenue will eventually be a part of the Brooklyn Waterfront Greenway, a long corridor of bike lanes connecting open space along the waterfront in Brooklyn. There is also a Citi Bike station located at Kent Avenue and S. 11th Street, 300 feet to the north of the Project Site.

Assessment of the Potential to Affect the Defining Features of the Neighborhood

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Action in the following technical areas that are considered in the neighborhood character assessment pursuant to the *CEQR Technical Manual*: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. The assessment uses the findings from the respective chapters of this EIS to identify whether the Proposed Action would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character. As described below, defining features of the study area neighborhood would not be affected either through the potential of any significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate effects in these technical areas.

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on land use, zoning, and public policy, either singularly or in combination

with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The Proposed Action would facilitate the development of a development project with office, local retail, and open space uses.

The Proposed Action would allow new commercial development at a scale and density that is compatible with some of the existing zoning designations in the surrounding areas, particularly along the waterfront. While the affected area is currently zoned for manufacturing uses, it is located within an area that is largely characterized by residential and commercial uses, with manufacturing uses mostly comprise of light industry within the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The affected area contains a vacant lot, where residential uses are not permitted per the existing zoning. The Proposed Actions would ensure that the zoning designation more accurately reflects the area's development trends of large-scale development. The proposed commercial and office uses would be comparable to existing and planned developments in this area of Brooklyn, including the BNY, which is experiencing several commercial developments.

As described in **Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,"** no significant adverse impacts related to land use, zoning, or public policy would occur in the future with the Proposed Actions. The Proposed Action would not directly displace any land uses so as to adversely affect surrounding land uses, nor would it generate land uses that would be incompatible with land uses, zoning, or public policies in the surrounding area. The Proposed Action would not result in land uses that conflict with surrounding land uses or public policies applicable to the Projected Development Site or the secondary study area.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in **Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions,"** the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts.

The only socioeconomic area that warrants an assessment is indirect business displacement. As discussed in the chapter, there is already an existing and future trend in the study area toward business development. Several local retail uses can be found throughout the study area, including in proposed developments north of the Project Site. Additionally, the BNY to the south is recognized as a center of urban manufacturing, creativity, and innovation; it contains over 450 business and employs more than 11,000 workers, artists, and artisans in the entirety of the BNY. This trend is expected to continue in the future without the Proposed Action, especially in the BNY. As the Project Site is currently vacant, it would not displace any businesses or workers. The commercial and office uses added by the Proposed Actions would be compatible with the existing and future uses within the study area and would not alter the character of the neighborhood.

Open Space

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on publicly accessible open space, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in **Chapter 4, "Open Space,"** the Proposed Action would not have a direct impact on open space

resources in the study area nor would it result in the physical loss of existing public open space resources or significant adverse shadow, air, noise, or other environmental impacts that would affect the usefulness of any study area open space. The detailed analysis determined that the Proposed Action would result in a decrease in the passive open space ratio for workers of over five percent, but the passive open space ratio for workers with the Proposed Action (0.796) would remain well above the optimal level (0.15) and the passive open space ratio for workers and residents would improve by 21 percent with the proposed action. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to open space. Additionally, the Proposed Action would result in the creation of new publicly accessible open space and waterfront esplanade that would contribute to the open space character of the neighborhood.

Shadows

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential shadow effects of the Proposed Project, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in **Chapter 5, "Shadows,"** the incremental shadows from the Proposed Project would result in incremental shadow coverage on three open space resources: Roberto Clemente Ballfield, Epiphany Playground, and public housing grounds within the NYCHA Independence Towers, and one natural resource, the East River including its associated waterbody Wallabout Channel. All these sunlight-sensitive resources would continue to receive a minimum of six to eight hours of direct sunlight throughout the growing season. Additionally, project-generated shadows would not have any adverse impacts on the aquatic biota in the East River and its associated waterbody Wallabout Channel.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on urban design and visual resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

Street Pattern and Streetscape

The street pattern grid in the study area is generally an irregular grid south of Division Avenue and regular north of Division Avenue. The BNY, which is directly south and southwest, has streets that conform to the existing docks, piers, and buildings, which is incongruous with the neighboring grid pattern outside the BNY. The Proposed Action would facilitate the development of a building on a corner of Kent Avenue and Division Avenue with the Wallabout Channel/East River to the west and would conform to the existing street pattern. In addition, streetscape improvements, ground floor retail space, and a public waterfront walkway along the public corridors would enhance the pedestrian realm, making the surrounding area more active and inviting.

Building

As described in **Chapter 7, "Urban Design and Visual Resources,"** the Proposed Action would result in a significant change to the urban design character of the Project Area. The Proposed Project would include a 23-story building with a maximum height of 352 feet tall. The height and bulk of the proposed building would be substantially taller than the vacant site within the Project Area and the 74-foot tall development that would occur on the site under No-Action conditions.

Compared to the future without the Proposed Action, the visual appearance, and thus the pedestrian experience of the area, would change considerably, with lower-density development pursuant to as-of-right zoning replaced with a mix of uses with a taller and denser built character.

The With-Action development would be consistent with existing and planned developments in southwest Williamsburg, particularly along the waterfront. The Proposed Project's height and bulk would be in keeping with the redeveloping waterfront. To the north of the Project Area lies 416, 420 440, 446, and 450 Kent Avenues, a corridor of residential and mixed-use buildings ranging in building heights of 14 stories (135 feet tall) to 24 stories (234 feet tall). Immediately north of the Project Area, the future development at 470 Kent Avenue is expected to include multiple buildings up to 225 feet tall. To the east and southeast of the Project Site are the NYCHA Independence Towers and Taylor-Wythe residential housing complexes, which contain towers ranging from eight-stories to 25-stories. The Projected Project, by comparison, would include one 23-story building with a maximum building height of 352 feet, with a higher building height than neighboring buildings due to higher floor heights for offices as compared to apartments. The Proposed Project would therefore create continuity along the waterfront and the neighborhood, as it would be similar in size to existing and future developments.

Development of the Proposed Project would contribute to the urban design character of the neighborhood from the pedestrian perspective by creating a continuous streetwall and visual connectivity. Instead of a stretch of moderate density/mid-rise industrial and manufacturing buildings, the pedestrian experience of the area would include new buildings with active ground floor uses and a publicly accessible waterfront esplanade. Therefore, the proposed height of the Proposed Project and the overall massing of the new development would result in changes to the urban design and visual resources of the study area but do not constitute significant adverse impacts.

Natural Features and Open Space

Additionally, the Proposed Project would include approximately 1.14 acres (49,453 sf) of publicly accessible waterfront open space connected directly to Division and Kent Avenues. These pedestrian areas and pathways would also improve access to the waterfront and circulation on the Project Site, as well as providing a cohesive transition and connection between the Project Site and surrounding open space resources including a direct seamless connection to waterfront public open space at the 470 Kent development site. The public walkway would help to enhance the pedestrian experience under future conditions with the Proposed Action.

Visual Resources and View Corridors

The Proposed Action would result in the construction of a large-scale structure on a currently vacant lot enclosed by fencing. In the future without the Proposed Action, the site would be redeveloped as-of-right with a use that does not trigger waterfront zoning public open space and visual corridor requirements. Development facilitated by the Proposed Action would be constructed so as to establish new visual corridors, opening up new views to the west along the improved Division Avenue and on the project site. The view corridors are currently obstructed by fencing and could remain obstructed in the No-Action condition. As such, the Proposed Action would open up views of visual resources in the surrounding area, including Wallabout Channel/East River, the Manhattan skyline, the Williamsburg Bridge, and the BNY. As such, the

Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse impact to visual resources and view corridors within the primary study area.

Wind

As discussed in **Chapter 7**, a wind analysis is screened out for the Proposed Action and therefore no significant adverse impacts related to wind would occur.

Overall, the Proposed Action would result in an improved street pattern and streetscape more consistent with the surrounding secondary study area, the construction of buildings consistent with the city's goals of development along the waterfront, and the continuation of existing and planned open space in the surrounding area. As such, the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to urban design and visual resources.

Transportation

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on transportation, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 12, "Transportation,"** the preliminary results show that the Proposed Action would result in significant adverse traffic and pedestrian impacts. The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse transit (subway and bus), citywide ferry service, and parking impacts. As discussed in **Chapter 19, "Mitigation,"** the preliminary significant adverse traffic and pedestrian impacts could be fully mitigated by standard traffic engineering implemented, if implemented by NYC DOT.

As noted above, the character of the study area, like that of many neighborhoods in New York City, is, in part, defined by the levels of pedestrian activity that exist. The Proposed Action would result in increases to pedestrian volumes. The analysis indicates that with the implementation of standard mitigation measures sidewalks in the surrounding area have sufficient capacity to absorb new pedestrian users and analyzed sidewalks would continue to operate under slightly restricted conditions or better and would not represent a significant adverse impact on the character of the neighborhood. The introduction of new vehicle volumes, despite the preliminary anticipated impacts that are disclosed in **Chapter 12**, would also not represent a significant adverse impact on the character of the neighborhood. As noted above, all of the traffic impacts could be fully mitigated, further reducing the potential to result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result.

Noise

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential noise effects of the Proposed Project, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 15, "Noise,"** the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse noise impacts.

The noise levels in proximity to the Project Area are typical of many neighborhoods in New York City and would remain so in the With-Action condition; noise is not a defining feature of the

neighborhood, and the incremental increase in noise levels resulting from the Proposed Action would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.