3.8 NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

INTRODUCTION

The principal effects of the proposed action related to neighborhood character would be the introduction of mixed-use development in an area that is now characterized by industrial, institutional and commercial land use patterns, and a high degree of vacant building space despite its transit accessibility and proximity to Manhattan, major commercial centers, and the waterfront. Development facilitated by the proposed action would bring new activity, increases in traffic, and increases in the built density of the area. No significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are anticipated.

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual,* neighborhood character is considered to be an amalgam of the various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct personality. These elements can include land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, and noise, as well as any other physical or social characteristics that help to distinguish the community in question from another. In the case of the proposed action, although it would allow new residential development that would change the land use composition of this area, new mixed-use development on inland blocks would be required to build along the streetwall in a contextual envelope and would reflect the built context of four- to-six-story multi-story loft buildings. Such development is expected to activate the area's streetscapes and introduce a substantial residential population to the area with associated round-the-clock activity. Projected development on waterfront blocks would consist of tower-on-a-base type development west of Exterior Street, which would be appropriate for these waterfront locations**.**

The Lower Concourse Rezoning and Related Actions project is also expected to alter neighborhood character in a positive way by supporting the ongoing revitalization of the South Bronx and encouraging desirable development with needed amenities. These would include the creation of new parkland and publicly accessible open space, and facilitating the development of new food stores and affordable housing.

METHODOLOGY

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

- *Land Use.* Development resulting from a proposed action could alter neighborhood character if it introduces new land uses, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates 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 or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.

- *Historic Resources.* When an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resource analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, 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, as well as streetscape elements such as street walls, landscaping, curb cuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or block public visual access to such features.

- *Transportation*. 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 action. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* such substantial traffic 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, as identified in the technical traffic analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a proposed action 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 an action to affect neighborhood character with respect to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impacts and a change in acceptability categories.

This chapter examines neighborhood character within the area to be rezoned and its surrounding blocks, and the proposed action's effects on that neighborhood character. The chapter's impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes to these technical areas are most relevant to potential changes in neighborhood character. The analysis concludes that neighborhood character would change with new land uses and building types, increases in residents and employees, and increases in traffic and pedestrian activity. However, effects of the proposed action on these elements would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character, as discussed below.

3.8.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The assessment of neighborhood character is divided into, as with Chapter 3.7, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," a rezoning study area contiguous with the proposed rezoning area and a primary study area that extends ¼-mile from the proposed rezoning area boundary.

Primary Study Area

As suggested in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for neighborhood character is coterminous with the ¼-mile land use study area. As shown in Figure 3.8-1, the primary study area extending outward for ¼-mile is generally bounded by the Harlem River on the south and west, Willis Avenue on the east, and 154th Street on the north. It extends between two and four blocks to the north and east of the proposed rezoning area.

The primary study area is largely comprised of residential land uses in its eastern portions between Morris Avenue and Willis Avenue, with industrial uses predominating to the west of Gerard Avenue and south of the Bruckner Expressway. As reflected in the Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Mexican restaurants and storefronts found in the primary study area such as those along Third Avenue and East 138th Street, the area has a large Latino population. In addition, it has a high proportion of black residents. Mott Haven, a predominantly low income community that is part of the poorest congressional district in the nation, has -- like the rest of the South Bronx -- experienced revitalization and socioeconomic change in recent years. Major new construction has expanded the campus of Hostos Community College, and upgrading of brownstones on East 139th Street, Morris Avenue and Alexander Avenue has occurred more recently. The Port Morris area just to the south has seen a commercial renaissance with the emerging "Antique Row" of the South Bronx and conversion of industrial lofts for artist housing. These include The Clocktower, a former knitting factory in Port Morris that contains 75 lofts. Major new retail development is occurring just north of the primary study area with the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market which will bring more than 1,000,000sf of new retail to the area.

Residential development in the primary study area varies between large scale apartment and public housing complexes, and smaller row houses built on narrow lots. With over 2,500 apartments in three of its largest New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) complexes, much of the area to the east of the rezoning area comprises tower-in-the-park style development from the 1950s and 1960s, including the six-to-13-story Patterson Houses between East 139th Street and East 145th Street, the 17-to-20-story Mitchel Houses between East 135th Street and East 138th Street, and the 19-to-29-story Mott Haven Houses located between East 140th Street and East 144th Street. In between these superblocks of public housing is the historic, small-scale architecture of the Mott Haven Historic District, which contains 19th century residential development and notable institutional architecture including St. Jerome's Catholic Church (circa 1898), the Mott Haven Public Library (circa 1905), and the 40th Precinct (circa 1924). Brownstone row

houses with a similar scale and period of development can be found to the north of the rezoning area in the primary study area on East 150th Street and East 152nd Street, and around Walton Avenue.

The northeastern-most blocks in the primary study area include western portions of The Hub Third Avenue retail district. This bustling commercial center is the retail heart of The Bronx and has an array of signage and awning types. Its crowded sidewalks are centered around the intersection of East 149th Street and Third, Westchester, Willis and Melrose avenues. The Grand Concourse also contains nonresidential development in the primary study area, including several restaurants and convenience retail stores. The large, one-story Bronx General Post Office is located at East 149th Street and the Grand Concourse. Its arched façade and row of flag poles on the Grand Concourse are prominent features of the local streetscape and signal the important civic functions of this part of the primary study area. The Post Office abuts the Mott Haven Yard Junction, a former rail yard that extends further to the north considerably below its surrounding grade. Most of its rail yard facilities are no longer operational, though it still contains the "Y" split of the Harlem and Hudson Line Metro North Railroad tracks.

Mixed industrial, residential and retail development occupies the remainder of the primary study area. Waterfront areas to the north and their adjacent blocks contain the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market retail complex, which is now under construction. It consists of four newly constructed buildings and one restored historically-significant building that, together, will house approximately one million square feet (sf) of retail space including a mix of brand name national retailers and smaller, neighborhood-oriented establishments and street-level restaurants. With a building height of 96 feet, the scale of this development that is evident in its partially completed state contrasts with the smaller buildings in its vicinity within the primary study area. This area also contains parking lots associated with Yankee Stadium, and some older industrial buildings on River Avenue. A residential enclave of four blocks of row houses on narrow lots extends between East 149th Street and East 151st Street on Walton Avenue.

South of the rezoning area in the primary study area is the Port Morris community and industrial waterfront areas south of the Major Deegan Expressway. This portion of the primary study area covers eight blocks and a portion of the Harlem River Yards, and is part of the Port Morris Special Mixed Use District. The area has historically been a mixed-use neighborhood with residential, commercial, and light industrial uses, and that trend has continued as manufacturing has left the area, and following the 1997 rezoning of the area as the city's first mixed-use district. The initial Port Morris Special Mixed Use District covered a five-block area along Bruckner Boulevard and was a catalyst for strengthening the area's emerging Antiques Row on Bruckner Boulevard, and for revitalizing the upper floors of buildings, including residential conversions. The Department of City Planning extended the Port Morris Mixed Use District in 2005 to eleven surrounding blocks, including those within the Lower Concourse neighborhood character primary study area that were not included in the initial Port Morris Special Mixed Use District. The new mixed-use zoning allows for medium density residential,

commercial and community facility use and covers blocks that are now occupied by industrial development and a new self storage facility, among other uses.

Industrial uses on East 132nd Street adjacent to the Harlem River Yards include warehouses, construction material and supply stores, auto repair shops, and manufacturing businesses. A mixed-use district of residential and industrial uses extends for several blocks north of Bruckner Boulevard between Willis Avenue and Lincoln Avenue, where four-story residential buildings with ground-floor retail are part of the area's antiques district. Newly constructed self storage facilities are located on the waterfront on the western side of the subarea. The Port Morris subarea is physically isolated from its surrounding blocks in the study area due to the presence of the elevated Major Deegan Expressway and the Willis Avenue Bridge. Though largely industrial in character, Port Morris has experienced new investment in its limited housing stock, and commercial revitalization of its storefronts on Bruckner Boulevard.

The proposed zoning map and text amendments would affect 30 blocks in the Mott Haven neighborhood at the base of the Grand Concourse Boulevard in The Bronx. The area proposed to be rezoned is generally bounded by East 149th Street and East 144th Street to the north, the Major Deegan Expressway and Park Avenue to the south, Morris Avenue to the east, and the Harlem River to the west (see Figure 3.8-1).

For the purpose of studying neighborhood character, three of the six subareas defined in Chapter 3.7, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," are evaluated in detail in this chapter. These three subareas approximate the rezoning area, including: 1) the Grand Concourse subarea; 2) the Canal/Rider subarea; and 3) the Waterfront subarea. (The 149th Street/Concourse Village subarea, Mott Haven subarea, and Port Morris subarea, each of which is described in greater detail within Chapter 3.7, are located outside the proposed rezoning area. Each of the three subareas was found to have a distinct character due to the presence of important built features, the physical barriers of the Major Deegan Expressway and the Metro North right-of-way, and anticipated conditions in the future with the proposed action.

Industrial areas along the waterfront are located west of the Major Deegan Expressway, while streets to the east of the Grand Concourse and the Metro North right-of-way contain older light industrial buildings and lofts, some commercial development, and limited residential uses. The rezoning area abuts residential areas to the east and northeast, including mid-rise public housing, and has a strong ethnic Latino character that is evident in the area's demographic composition and in the types of storefronts that are present.

Rezoning Area

Grand Concourse Subarea

The portions of Mott Haven that fall within the proposed rezoning area are primarily non-residential, with low-to-mid-rise buildings. In the center of the proposed rezoning

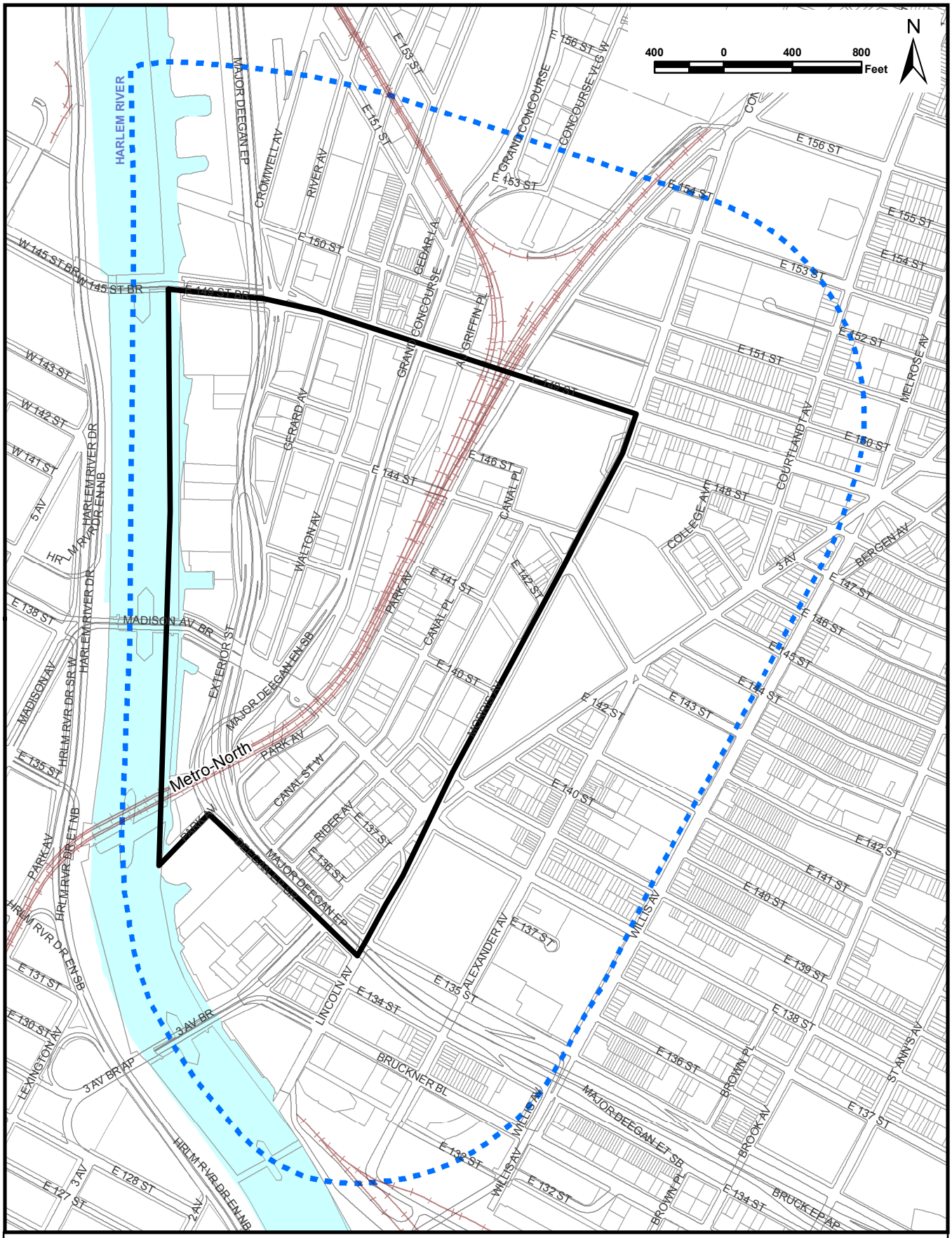
area is the Grand Concourse subarea, which is notable for the large educational institutions present in its northern portion, including Hostos Community College (also known as Eugenio María de Hostos Community College). The Grand Concourse subarea extends for the length of the rezoning area, from Exterior Street to the Metro North Railroad right-of way.

The larger Grand Concourse that extends north of the rezoning area is a wide, tree-lined boulevard that is one of the most prominent thoroughfares in the Bronx. The larger Grand Concourse is characterized by predominantly residential Art Deco Buildings built in the 1930's and 1940's. These buildings are typically 6-8 stories at the street and 12 stories maximum in height. While the dozen blocks in the Grand Concourse subarea are in close proximity to, and associated with the larger Grand Concourse, neighborhood character is vastly different in this area. The northern portion of this area contains relatively bulky educational facilities generating a high degree of pedestrian activity, including modern buildings of Hostos Community College that are extend over several blocks. In its southern portion, this subarea contains a prevalence of auto-related uses, including low-rise, developments with frontage along the Grand Concourse, as well as highway and rail infrastructure that creates hard edges to the neighborhood, separating it from other areas to the west, east and south.

The commercial character of the Grand Concourse where it crosses the proposed action area is primarily industrial, with a mix of business types, including franchises and independent businesses. The corridor is occupied with automotive uses along the Grand Concourse and other manufacturing and industrial uses on the side streets, with some local retail serving daily needs of employees. The intersection of the Grand Concourse and East 149th Street comprises a civic hub, with its convergence of three subway lines, concentration of educational facilities, and nearby retail and governmental uses. There are several small low-rise residential buildings and several mid-rise, tenement-style, mixed-use buildings located around East 144th Street and the Grand Concourse. Residential development is otherwise absent in this subarea.

Bulky industrial lofts surround Walton and Gerard Avenue. Though several contain a high degree of vacant floor area, some of the older industrial buildings that are present give the western portions of this subarea a unique quality that reflects the industrial growth of the Borough of The Bronx. Mott Haven Control House located on Grand Concourse and 149th Street is listed by the National Register. Several blocks to the south is Public School 31, a designated New York City landmark and listed on the National Register. A prominent building, it is a good example of late 19th century Collegiate Gothic public school architecture and is representative of the rich architectural history of this area.

The highest ambient noise levels in this area are associated with existing noise sources including the Major Deegan Expressway, Metro North Railroad, and high vehicular volumes on major streets including East 138th Street, East 149th Street, and the Grand Concourse.



Legend

Proposed Rezoning Area

Primary Study Area (1/4-Mile Radius around Proposed Rezoning Area)

Source: NYC Department of City Planning MapPLUTO 2006; STV Incorporated

Figure 3.8-1: Neighborhood Character Study Area

Lower Concourse Rezoning and Related Actions EIS

NYC Department of City Planning

Canal/Rider Subarea

The proposed rezoning area is divided from north to south by Park Avenue and its adjacent Metro North Railroad right-of-way, which runs in a deep cut north of East 138th Street. The Canal Rider subarea comprises rezoning area blocks located to the east of the Metro North Railroad right-of-way. Land uses in this subarea generally include low-rise industrial buildings. Most of these are older, high lot coverage buildings. Lincoln Hospital, the single largest health care provider in the South Bronx, occupies the northeastern portion of the large block extending from East 144th Street to East 149th Street. Concentrations of parking lots and auto-related uses are located on the area's southern blocks abutting the Major Deegan Expressway, which forms the southern boundary of the rezoning area. A small number of low-scale and mid-rise residential buildings exist on blocks located just south of the Hospital, between Canal Place and Morris Avenue. P.S. 203 and its newly constructed playground are also found in the northeastern portion of this subarea. Only two roadways -- East 138th Street and East 149th Street – fully extend through the rezoning area from east to west, both providing subway and bridge access to Manhattan.

This subarea is relatively isolated from the larger Mott Haven community to the east and the Port Morris community to the south. Surrounding visual barriers include several public housing complexes on the east side of Morris Avenue, the partly elevated Major Deegan Expressway on the south and west, and Mott Haven Junction, or former Mott Haven Yards, on the north. As a result, the nearby Mott Haven Historic District and the Port Morris Special Mixed Use District, which both have a strong sense of place and historic neighborhood character, are mostly separated from this subarea from a visual perspective.

The Canal/Rider subarea contains the most solidly industrial portions of the study area. The proposed rezoning area and its immediate surroundings have historically been known for their important role in industry, particularly iron works and piano manufacturing, and industries that were located around the adjacent rail yard (the extant Harlem River Yard) and a former industrial canal (the Mott Haven Canal, which extended into this subarea). The area played an important role in the growth of commerce in The Bronx when it was a thriving district of factories and mills. Although some of the major industrial businesses have since left, this subarea still contains an enclave of light industrial uses with some heavier industry still present, though many properties have been reused for storage, auto-related businesses, and office space. The remnants of its early industrial history give the subarea a unique character, with examples of 19th century industrial architecture along streets such as Rider Avenue, Canal Place and Third Avenue, including the North Side Board of Trade building, a Neo-Classical loft building located at Third Avenue and East 137th Street that has been officially determined as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Due to the strong industrial presence in this area and the complication of the Metro North Railyard, several blocks just east of the Metro North Rail and Park Avenue will remain M1-2.

Forming the Canal/Rider subarea's northern boundary is East 149th Street. Just to the east of this subarea, East 149th Street transitions into The Hub Third Avenue retail district, a busy discount retail center that draws patrons from throughout the borough and region who traverse this subarea, making East 149th Street a heavily traveled pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfare. Other commercial uses in the area are locally oriented, or entail auto-related services.

The highest ambient noise levels in this area are also associated with Metro-North Railroad, the Major Deegan Expressway, as well as streets with high vehicular volumes such as East 138th Street and East 149th Street. North-south and cross streets in the center of this subarea have relatively less noisy conditions.

Waterfront Subarea

The Waterfront subarea comprises several longitudinal blocks facing the Harlem River and extending west of Exterior Street and the elevated Major Deegan Expressway. The Grand Concourse is the main north-south thoroughfare of the proposed rezoning area, where it forms the southern gateway to The Bronx. Rail and highway infrastructure frame the edges of the proposed rezoning area and the Waterfront subarea. The Major Deegan Expressway is an interstate highway that mostly runs on an elevated viaduct, affecting the appearance of Exterior Street and abutting land uses, and separating upland areas from the waterfront.

Some of the highest ambient noise levels in the rezoning area are found in the Waterfront subarea, associated with noise effects of the Major Deegan Expressway, the Park Avenue Railroad Bridge, the Oak Point Rail link, and bridges over the Harlem River with high vehicular volumes such as the Madison Avenue Bridge and the West 145th Street Bridge (at East 138th Street and East 149th Street, respectively).

The tracks of the Oak Point Rail Link run on piers parallel to the shoreline in the Harlem River, precluding access to the river for water-dependent uses. The Oak Point Rail Link cuts off access from the water therefore limiting the utilization of these sites which are largely used for parking or storage facilities, or sit vacant. A large concrete manufacturing plant with outdoor material storage is located on the northern end of the Waterfront subarea. Bus parking and storage facilities are examples of the types of land uses present in the waterfront subarea.

Three bridges over the Harlem River extending from the proposed rezoning area (the Madison Avenue Bridge, the West 145th Street Bridge and the Park Avenue Railroad Bridge) establish a rhythm of crossings of the Harlem River that continues further to the north with the Macombs Dam Bridge, and to the southeast with the Third Avenue Bridge and Willis Avenue Bridge. The West 145th Street Bridge and the Madison Avenue Bridge, both designed by the engineer Alfred P. Boller around the late 19th and early 20th centuries, have an historic quality with ornamental ironwork that is typical of other spans over the Harlem River from that period.

3.8.2 FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

In the future without the proposed action, it is anticipated that the zoning regulations in the rezoning area that exist presently would remain in place. As discussed in Chapter 3.1, "Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy," DCP has identified likely new development on the projected development sites within the rezoning area that would be expected to be completed in the future without the proposed action (2018). Given the current zoning and commercial and residential housing trends in the area, it is anticipated that the proposed project area would experience nominal growth in office, industrial, and community facility uses. Most of the projected growth is expected to include office space, including 598,351 sf of additional office space. An additional 53,990 sf of community facility space is also projected by 2018, among other development and redevelopment.

In addition, some development as a result of new construction of educational, housing and retail facilities is expected to occur in the future without the action. As discussed in this section, the two major new construction projects are The Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market, which overlaps with the northeastern portion of primary study area near the waterfront, and the Mott Haven School Campus, also at the northern edge of the study area, but on its eastern side. Subsidized residential, parkland and transportation improvement projects are also anticipated in, and just north of, the neighborhood character study area. Land use and socioeconomic changes associated with major new retail construction within The Gateway Center retail complex would improve neighborhood character in the primary study area, as would the conversion of vacant land to active educational and open space uses at the Mott Haven School Complex site.

Rezoning Study Area

The proposed rezoning area is generally bounded by the Major Deegan Expressway and East 138th Street on the south, East 149th Street on the north, Morris Avenue on the east, and the Harlem River on the west. Moderate levels of growth are anticipated by 2018, either through reuse of existing space or through new construction. New market rate housing development has not occurred within the rezoning area and new residential development is not expected to occur without the proposed rezoning.

In the RWCDS, DCP has identified 31 projected developments sites within the rezoning area. In the future without the proposed action, as-of-right development totaling 2,195 sf of retail space, 598,351 sf of office space, 216,653 sf of industrial space, 53,990 sf of community facility space, and a total of 104 parking spaces would be expected to occur on 14 of these sites. Most of the projected growth under the RWCDS is expected to include further development of self-storage facilities, drive-through restaurants, gasoline station/convenient stores, office uses, and warehouses. The projected developments are possible under the current zoning regulations, and are in no way

dependent upon the proposed action.

The largest of the projected expansion or new construction projects on RWCDS sites would occur on RWCDS Site #4, located on the waterfront north of the Madison Avenue Bridge, where vacant industrial space would be replaced with over 109,000 sf of industrial space. While the majority of the other RWCDS reuse, expansion and new development sites would entail added industrial or office space, over 78,000 sf of new community facility space would be expected through the consolidation of existing community facility space and vacant building area on RWCDS Site #7, located on Walton Avenue between East 144th and East 146th Streets.

Construction and building reuse on RWCDS sites under future conditions without the action would be expected to be consistent with existing development trends, reflecting the predominantly non-residential character of the area, and constructed without the provision of waterfront public access or pursuant to building bulk or other design features that recognize the importance of the area as a gateway to the Borough of the Bronx, or as an historic industrial area with notable industrial buildings that are suitable for residential and commercial conversion and reuse.

Adverse effects on the views of historic resources such as PS 31 and the North Side Board of Trade or the resources themselves would not be expected in the Future Without the Proposed Action.

Some increases in noise effects would be expected with the additional traffic associated with the anticipated No-Action developments, although it would not be expected to have significant adverse effects on the limited number of residents living in the area.

While substantial residential development is not expected, socioeconomic business conditions would experience some change under the No-Action scenario, which assumes the conversion of industrial and vacant space to office space by 2018. An estimated 2,622 employees would be expected with the development of nearly 600,000 sf of office space under future No-Action conditions. Manufacturing employment would also be likely to continue to decrease in the future without the proposed action consistent with borough and city-wide employment trends.

Future 2018 traffic levels on study area roadways absent the proposed actions are expected to increase due to the future development both within and outside the study area as well as due to overall anticipated growth in the borough. In addition, several improvements and alterations to traffic and roadway conditions are anticipated, with plans underway to alter portions of East 149th Street, the Major Deegan Expressway; various signal timing changes are also anticipated, as are improvements to implement the New York City Department of Transportation's bicycle program (see Chapter 15).

During the 2008 to 2018 period, it is also expected that transportation demands in the study area would change due to development projects in the area associated with the RWCDS, as well as general background growth over time. Overall, increased

congestion and reductions in levels of service would be expected at intersections under the No Action scenario.

Specifically, some traffic projected to be generated by the Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market project, the Mott Haven Campus development and the East 161st Street rezoning action would also be expected to utilize roadways within the rezoning area. Roadway modifications focusing on Exterior Street and the Major Deegan Expressway as part of the improvements associated with the Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market project, and through NYSDOT improvements to the Major Deegan Expressway, are also anticipated under future conditions without the proposed action. Regarding traffic intersection Levels of Service (LOS), notable deteriorations in AM Peak Hour LOS in comparison to existing conditions are expected for 15 study area intersections compared to existing conditions, although not to the extent that would be expected with the proposed action.

The utilization of both off-street and on-street parking facilities in the study area would increase due to the area's background growth (5.0 percent over existing demand by 2018). Additionally, in the future without the proposed action, the as-of-right retail, office, warehouse/manufacturing and academic related development will further increase daytime parking demand.

With regard to future No-Action condition subway station operations, passenger volumes are expected to increase minimally at the 138th Street/Grand Concourse station, while levels of service would remain unchanged from existing conditions. However, passenger volumes are expected to increase appreciably at the 149th Street/Grand Concourse station by 2018 due to the additional development projected to occur within this station's service area. Peak 15 minute passenger volumes are projected to increase by approximately 35 percent and 60 percent during the AM and PM peak hours. Levels of service are projected to deteriorate to LOS D and LOS C at the fare control turnstiles and during the AM and PM peak hours, respectively.

Primary Study Area

In addition to the RWCDS sites in the rezoning study area, other known projects have been identified that are expected by the No-Build year of 2018 in the primary study area. These include retail, parkland, residential and institutional developments located to the north of the proposed rezoning area, with some being located just north of the primary study area. These will increase the built density of the northern Mott Haven and Concourse Village environs, and bring additional visitors, shoppers, residents and students to the area. The Future Without the Proposed Action, including construction on known development sites, reflects the ongoing trend of revitalization and redevelopment of the South Bronx, and improvement of economic conditions in the Mott Haven community that has been underway for several decades. New open space that is proposed would make the area more attractive as a civic center and residential neighborhood.

The major retail and educational construction projects that are anticipated in the primary study area would result in more intensive development and a more active waterfront area to the north of the rezoning area. New mid-rise residential and residential rehabilitation projects and parkland projects that are also primarily proposed for the northern portions of the primary study area would benefit neighborhood character through the reuse of vacant land and upgrading of vacant buildings. An increase in traffic and associated noise effects is expected, particularly from major new retail development.

Major development projects in the area include The Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market retail project ("Gateway Center"). Located north of East 149th Street and west of Cromwell Avenue, Gateway Center will include four newly constructed buildings and one restored building housing approximately one million sf of retail space. A new park on the Harlem River to be developed by the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation was initially included as an off-site parcel as part of the Gateway Center project and will connect open space planned as part of the Yankee Stadium project to the north. The Bronx Terminal Market Waterfront Park will include the conversion of Piers 1 through 4 on the Harlem River. A 250-room hotel is proposed as part of a second phase of the Gateway Center project.

The Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market retail development would alter neighborhood character by introducing a major retail destination to an otherwise underutilized industrial area, including the adaptive reuse of Building D of the Bronx Terminal Market, which is National Register eligible. These changes are expected to be beneficial for neighborhood character in the study area. As indicated in the *Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market* (New York City Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding, December 7, 2005, CEQR #04DME017X), while the buildings at Gateway Center would be larger and squarer in form than the existing buildings in the area, its more modern appearance and intensive array of commercial uses would be complementary to the area's neighborhood character as it would create a major retail facility that would serve the residents, workers and visitors of surrounding communities and Yankee Stadium. It would also create a western retail anchor along East 149th Street less than ten blocks west of the 149th Street / Third Avenue Hub retail district, reinforcing the role of East 149th Street as a retail destination. Landscaped passageways between buildings, new street lighting and trees, and opening up views from the Gateway Site to the Harlem River as well as views of the waterfront from newly created waterfront parkland proposed as part of the project, would also result in beneficial effects on neighborhood character.

While socioeconomic conditions would change as a result of the increase in residential and commercial development, this change would be consistent with the current trend towards residential and commercial development and revitalization in Mott Haven.

Planned residential developments in the vicinity of the study area include the Morris Avenue Apartments, an eight-story, 209-unit housing development planned by the Housing Development Corporation, located at 645 Morris Avenue/3000 Park Avenue.

This new construction project would be consistent with the neighborhood character of the area, providing a transitional scale of development between the high-rise housing to the east and the lower-scale planned school complex to the west.

Other anticipated residential development will strength urban design conditions with the addition of modern, mid-rise residential development, or rehabilitation of existing residential buildings, some of which will replace vacant land that detracts from the appearance of existing streetscapes and the continuity of building streetwalls in the area.

Proposed open space improvements will benefit neighborhood character with the addition of landscaping improvements, enhanced open space, and associated streetscape improvements. Three parkland projects are expected to occur by 2018 in the primary study area in addition to the above-described Bronx Terminal Market Waterfront Park.

Absent the proposed action, it is expected that economic trends within the primary study area will be similar to recent trends in The Bronx, which experienced an 19 percent decline in manufacturing employment between 1990 and 2000, and growth within the retail and services industries. Given these trends, it is likely that manufacturing and industrial employment will continue to decline at similar rates, replaced with office-based employment in the services industries as well as retail employment.

3.8.3 FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section discusses potential changes in the character of the rezoning area and primary study areas by 2018. This section focuses on potential changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas of Land Use, Socioeconomic Conditions, Historic Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Traffic and Pedestrians, and Noise. Changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character as described below.

- *Land Use.* The Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy analysis (see Chapter 3.1) indicates that the rezoning proposal would change the area's underlying zoning from manufacturing to mixed-use with residential and commercial uses, while preserving the existing light industrial uses in the area. The proposed action would modify the area's zoning to include C4-4, C6-2A, MX (M1-4/ R8A), MX (M1-4/ R7X), MX (M1-4/ R7A), MX (M1-4/ R6A), and M1-4 zoning districts. In addition, a new C2-4 commercial overlay would be mapped on waterfront lots within a proposed R7-2 district, where a Special Harlem River Waterfront District (SHRWD) is proposed. These changes would bring about related changes to urban design, visual resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, shadows, and pedestrians, which would affect neighborhood character.

- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* The Socioeconomic Conditions analysis (see Chapter 3.2) indicates that the proposed action would have the beneficial

socioeconomic effect of expanding the housing supply to address strong local and citywide housing demand. The proposed action is not expected to result in significant adverse impacts related to direct or indirect residential displacement, direct or indirect business displacement, or adverse effects on specific industries.

- *Historic Resources.* The analysis in Chapter 3.6, "Historic Resources," indicates that the proposed action would not result in direct significant adverse impacts to resources on projected development sites. No demolition of listed, eligible or potentially eligible historic resources is anticipated. One potentially eligible historic resource, the North Side Board of Trade building, located at 2514 Third Avenue, may be impacted by a potential conversion of the existing structure. In addition, potential development site #64 is located adjacent to the south of the North Side Board of Trade.

- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 3.7) indicates that the proposed action would result in changes to the urban form of the proposed rezoning area. The proposed action would modify existing bulk and density regulations in the rezoning area in order to achieve more contextual bulk controls, while new opportunities for residential development would be created. The proposed building form controls would guide new development to either complement existing areas with a strong contextual built character such as Rider Avenue, or ensure an appropriate scale and massing for higher-density development such as on the waterfront.

- *Transportation.* The Traffic and Parking analysis (see Chapter 3.15) indicates that the proposed action would result in levels of service similar to those projected for the future without the proposed action, though some intersections would experience added levels of congestion and unmitigated traffic impacts. The increases are not expected to result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. Although passenger volumes are forecast to increase due to background growth and bus trips generated by specific developments, the analysis indicates that all routes will remain under capacity at their peak load point. Pedestrian activity is anticipated to remain similar to existing condition, with all sidewalks operating at high levels of service, although there will be deteriorations in pedestrian space levels at crosswalks at the East 149th Street and Grand Concourse intersection.

- *Noise.* The proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts related to noise. As described in Chapter 2.0, "Project Description," it would generate new, medium to high density residential and commercial uses in an area historically occupied primarily by industrial uses. As part of the proposed action, (E) designations would be placed on the zoning map for all projected and potential development sites where there is the potential for significant adverse noise impacts. Residential, commercial and community

facility development on lots mapped with an (E) designation would be required to provide sufficient noise attenuation to maintain interior noise levels of 45 dBA or lower. The (E) designations on the projected and potential development sites would preclude the potential for the proposed action to result in significant adverse noise impacts.

Rezoning Area

Land Use Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The land use in the proposed rezoning area is the strongest factor in determining the character of the area because changes to land use would alter the "look and feel" of the area, and the levels of activity in the area. Land use changes would spur changes to neighborhood character in the area of visual resources, urban design, socioeconomic conditions, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

In the future with proposed action, there would be no significant adverse impacts anticipated related to land use in the rezoning area or areas within ¼-mile of the rezoning area (primary study area). The proposed action would change zoning designations within the proposed rezoning area in a manner that would encourage new residential and commercial development, restrict light manufacturing uses to certain areas, and encourage the development of the Harlem River waterfront. The proposed zoning regulations would also provide opportunities for the development of new grocery stores and affordable housing. The proposed rezoning is expected to encourage mixed-use residential and commercial development and enhance the waterfront in this area of the South Bronx. The proposed action would be consistent with zoning and public policies in the rezoning area and adjacent areas.

The proposed rezoning would foster housing (including affordable housing) and commercial development at higher densities in an area with excellent transit and highway access. The new residential and commercial development in the rezoning area would further expand investments being made in the area surrounding the Lower Concourse. The rezoning is consistent with the overall goal of providing new opportunities for redevelopment and economic growth within the South Bronx.

The new park along the Harlem River waterfront and the connecting public walkway would enhance and upgrade the waterfront area in the South Bronx. The proposed action would create an approximately 2.26-acre open space for area residents, and a new waterfront esplanade along the Harlem River waterfront. The proposed park would complement the Lower Concourse's new residential and commercial development with a new open space. The new public park would connect to new waterfront parks to the north and south, providing public waterfront access along the Harlem River waterfront.

The proposed action would provide increased opportunities for new housing development in an area where there is underutilized and vacant land and a need for

housing. Given the proposed developments' compatibility with residential and mixed-use development in the surrounding neighborhoods, the land uses generated by the proposed action would not be expected to result in significant adverse land use impacts. As such, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character can be expected related to land use changes resulting from the proposed action.

Socioeconomic Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 3.2, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the proposed action would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts on direct residential displacement, indirect residential displacement, direct business displacement, effects on specific industries, and indirect business displacement in the proposed rezoning area or the larger Lower Concourse socioeconomic study area. The proposed action would have the beneficial socioeconomic effect of expanding the housing supply to address strong local and citywide housing demand and would bring new mixed-use development that is expected to strengthen economic conditions. Conclusions related to each of the five areas of potential socioeconomic impact, as outlined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, are summarized below.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a direct displacement impact may be significant if the persons being displaced represent more than five percent of the study area population, and a population with a similar profile would not be able to relocate within the neighborhood (Chapter 3, Section B-331). It is estimated that the proposed action would directly displace only five residents. Based on the guidelines in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the direct displacement of these residents would not result in a significant adverse impact because they do not represent a significant proportion of the proposed action area population and they are not likely to have socioeconomic characteristics that differ markedly from the study area population as a whole.

It is estimated that approximately 15 firms and 126 employees could be directly displaced under the With-Action scenario, not including those that might also leave under the No-Action scenario. While all businesses contribute to neighborhood character and provide value to the city's economy, CEQR seeks to determine whether displacement of a single business or group of businesses would rise to a level of significance in terms of impact on the city's or the area's economy or the character of the affected neighborhood. Although the potentially displaced firms each contribute to the city's economy and therefore have economic value, the products and services they provide are widely available in the area and the city; the locational needs of these firms could be accommodated in the area and in other manufacturing districts, which are widely mapped throughout the borough and the city.

According to the guidelines of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the proposed action would not have an adverse impact on a specific industry because it would not significantly impact the business conditions for any industry or category of businesses within or outside of the study area, nor would it indirectly reduce employment or impair the

economic viability of a specific industrial sector or business category.

According to the guidelines of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse indirect residential displacement impacts. The action would increase the population of the study area by more than five percent and introduce residents with socioeconomic characteristics that are significantly different from the characteristics of residents in parts of the study area; however, an in-depth analysis reveals that the study area contains a population that is unlikely to be vulnerable to displacement pressures.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* suggests that a population increase of five percent or more could be large enough to trigger a socioeconomic change that would negatively affect a population at risk of displacement. The proposed action would introduce 8,267 residents to the area, approximately 8,262 more than anticipated under No-Action conditions. This would represent a population increase of 14 percent in primary study area over the 2008 population estimate of 61,361.

In total, it is estimated that approximately 1,766 residents in 577 households in Tracts 17, 25, 39, 43, 49 and 69 in the Lower Concourse study area could be subject to indirect displacement pressures under the proposed action. These people are living in approximately seven housing units located in the proposed action area, and 577 households in the primary study area. The largest concentration of vulnerable residents likely live in 513 unprotected units in Census Tracts 39 and 41, at the far eastern portion of the proposed action area. The proposed action area contains just under 20 people – a number estimated based on the average household size and the 7 vulnerable units in the area - who may be at risk of displacement under the proposed action. These residents are concentrated in Census Tract 49. These are estimates of the general size and location of a vulnerable population based on currently available data.

Although the *CEQR Technical Manual* does not suggest thresholds for determining the significance of indirect residential displacement impacts, it does say that an impact could generally be considered significant and adverse if "households or individuals would be displaced by legal means…they would not be likely to receive relocation assistance, and, given the trend created or accelerated by the proposed action, they would not be likely to find comparable replacement housing in their neighborhood." There is the potential for this to be true for low- and moderate-income residents living in unprotected housing units in certain census tracts within the proposed action and primary study areas – a population estimated to be about 1,766 individuals or 577 households, according to currently available data and conditions.

As stated earlier, the total population estimated to be vulnerable to direct and indirect displacement represents only 2.93 percent of the primary study area's population. These residents are dispersed throughout the primary study area, and in many can be expected to occupy some of the 591 affordable housing units projected to be developed under the proposed action. HPD has been very active in the primary study area and wider surrounding area in constructing affordable and market-rate housing targeted for low-

and moderate-income residents. Between 1995 and 2007, 816 new housing units were built by HPD within the primary study area, indicating an ongoing commitment to providing housing for existing residents.

Nearly 600 of the new units projected in the proposed action area are expected to be affordable, providing some mitigation to the potentially displaced residents. Further, many of the residents living in unprotected housing may not be at high risk of indirect displacement as a result of the proposed action. Migration rates are fairly high in the proposed study area, and residents have a tendency to move frequently.

For these reasons, it has been determined that the proposed action would not result in a significant adverse indirect residential displacement impact.

According to the guidelines presented in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the proposed action would not cause significant indirect business displacement impacts.

The total development that is expected to occur would result in a net increase of 571,162 sf of new retail space, 164,285 sf of new hotel space (combined for a total of 735,447 sf), 63,700 sf of community facility space, and a net reduction of 598,351 sf of office space. While regional retail is anticipated on large lots along the Grand Concourse and on large lots along the waterfront where proposed zoning districts would allow grocery stores, the proposed action would not significantly alter existing regional economic patterns.

There are several substantial retail centers just outside the primary study area. The Hub, at the intersection of Third Avenue, Willis Avenue, and 149th street, and along Third Avenue up to 156th street, is a historically strong retail center that continues to expand. The New York City Economic Development Corporation has helped to add hundreds of thousands of retail and office square footage in recent years. Additionally, the Bronx Terminal Market and Gateway Center, next to the site of the new Yankee Stadium at 161st Street and Grand Concourse, is creating over one million sf of new retail space. Both sites are set in the context of a growing South Bronx retail community, and the amount of retail and commercial square footage in the surrounding neighborhoods is already drawing customers from the greater area.

Any development projected to occur in the Lower Concourse proposed action area would augment existing retail in nearby areas. Further, excellent transit access and the neighborhood's proximity to several highways make this a desirable location for supporting additional regional retail. The proposed text amendment would also allow grocery stores as-of-right within the proposed M1-4 zoning district, primarily created to serve the local community and new residents. New local retail is projected at the base of all new residential construction.

The proposed action would not alter existing regional economic patterns or add to the concentration of a particular sector enough to alter trends. It would directly displace "blighted" uses or properties enough so that commercial rents would increase; however, there is a dearth of commercial property in the proposed action and primary study areas

currently, and the proposed rezoning is intended to attract new commercial and retail businesses. The proposed action would not directly or indirectly displace uses or people that support businesses in the area or form the customer bases for existing businesses. In addition, it would not introduce a land use that would offset positive trends in the study area or impede efforts to attract investment. On the contrary, the proposed action is expected to attract new investment by providing retail and commercial facilities to meet projected demand induced by proposed residential development.

New households expected to locate in the proposed action area under the proposed action would bring spending power that would be available for capture by proposed retail and service establishments. Because the anticipated growth in number of households and household spending is large and the amount of commercial development expected under the proposed action is modest, it can be assumed that household demand for retail and neighborhood services would reasonably support new neighborhood goods and service shops expected under the proposed action.

Historic Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The proposed action would not result in direct significant adverse impacts to resources on projected development sites. No demolition of listed, eligible or potentially eligible historic resources is anticipated. One potentially eligible historic resource, the North Side Board of Trade building, located at 2514 Third Avenue, may be susceptible to impact resulting from potential conversion of the existing structure as part of the proposed action; additionally, potential development site #64 is located adjacent to the south of the North Side Board of Trade. Because this resource is not a designated New York City landmark and has not been calendared for designation, any significant adverse impacts from such a conversion would be unmitigated other than through limited protection under DOB regulations applicable to all buildings located adjacent to construction sites. Mitigation could be initiated by calendaring the North Side Board of Trade building for consideration as a New York City Landmark by the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. If this resource were deemed to be landmark eligible, then further protection for redevelopment of this site may be afforded.

In addition to the North Side Board of Trade, inadvertent construction-related damage could potentially occur to one listed resource, Public School 31 (Resource #2), located at 425 Grand Concourse**.** However, with the protections afforded by the New York City Building Departments' *TPPN 10/88* to listed historic resources, in addition to other Building Code protections, significant adverse impacts to Public School 31 are not expected.

Projected and potential development anticipated as a result of the proposed rezoning is not expected to result in adverse shadow impacts or indirect impacts on historic resources within the proposed rezoning area, or 400-foot study area. The visual context of area historic resources would not be expected to experience significant adverse impacts as a result of such development facilitated by the proposed action. Physical upgrading of adjacent and nearby parcels with new contextual development would

provide a more suitable visual environment for these structures, without impacting views of them. The urban design context of the area's historic resources would be improved with new mixed-use development, enhancing streetscape conditions in the vicinity of resources in the rezoning area. As such, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character can be expected in relation to historic resources.

Urban Design and Visual Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 3.7) indicates that the proposed action would result in positive changes and improvements to urban design conditions of the proposed rezoning area. These improvements would markedly contribute to improvement in overall neighborhood character conditions as well.

Urban design conditions would be improved with new contextual building forms and replacement of vacant land and underutilized parcels with new mixed-use development. The proposed action would not affect street hierarchy, street patterns, block form, natural features, or topography in the study area, with the exception of the reconfiguration of a waterfront block into three block portions south of east 149th Street, with the middle portion containing the proposed Harlem River Waterfront Park. In addition, the contextual building forms would create a more uniform streetscape throughout the rezoning area.

Projected development along the waterfront is expected to establish a varied and pleasing skyline, an attractive pedestrian environment, and a network of publicly accessible open spaces, particularly so with the mapping of the two-acre Harlem River Waterfront Park. Waterfront esplanade (Shore Public Walkway) requirements for future development on waterfront blocks would facilitate the creation of a 40-foot wide esplanade with lighting, seating, planted buffers and two upland connections to Exterior Street. Building arrangement is anticipated to become more homogeneous, given the opportunities to consolidate individual lots into single developments, and the minimums and maximums required for streetwall buildings, with upper stories set back to frame the street and the pedestrian environment. Under a buildout scenario, this change would transform the urban design context of the waterfront in the rezoning area from a largely low-rise existing context to one of towers above mid-rise building bases, with 60-85 foot building bases forming a consistent streetwall at the edge of a waterfront esplanade. As the Shore Public Walkway is developed in increments on individual development parcels, this new promenade/linear open space would enhance visual conditions and access to visual resources, and would serve the larger South Bronx community and visitors to regional attractions in the area.

In most cases, with the exceptions of waterfront blocks and the Lincoln Hospital block, the proposed zoning districts would include contextual districts that reflect the urban design features of the area such as the width of the Grand Concourse and other wide avenues. The contextual regulations encourage higher coverage buildings built at or near the street line with the maximum base heights and maximum building heights.

Visual resources in the study area include three individual designated landmarks, the above-mentioned Harlem River views, and area parks and playgrounds. Publicly accessible views to historic resources and area parkland are generally only available at the nearby sidewalks and streets, and significant views of these resources would not be affected by changes in building height and form resulting from the proposed action.

The proposed action would not result in directs significant adverse impacts to visual resources within either the rezoning study area or the primary study area. The context of the area's visual resources would not be significantly or substantially altered by the anticipated increase in development on RWCDS sites, given the bulk and massing of the new construction that would be compatible with existing resources, and which would not result in loss of significant views of any resource. The nature of the public views to visual resources would be unaltered, as the adjacent streets and sidewalks would be unaltered with the proposed action.

Overall, the transformation of this older industrial area into a vibrant, mixed-use, mixed-income community with new housing, waterfront open space, and an array of retail services, would benefit urban design conditions, enhance the surrounding context of the area's existing visual resources, and create new opportunities for the public to enjoy the visual resources of the Harlem River waterfront, including through proposed visual corridors as a result of the proposed Harlem River Waterfront Access Plan. Altogether, these benefits to urban design and visual resources comprise a similar improvement to neighborhood character, particularly in terms of aesthetic conditions.

Transportation Impacts on Neighborhood Character

Increases in traffic, transit, and pedestrian levels in the study area as a result of the proposed action would also affect neighborhood character. Traffic would increase over future No-Action levels as a result of the new residential and commercial development in the proposed rezoning area. Likewise, transit ridership would also increase. While there would be some unmitigated traffic impacts, there would be no resultant significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. Similarly, parking shortfalls that currently exist or would exist in the future without the proposed action would increase, though without impact to neighborhood character. Increases in transit ridership would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, as subways and buses will accommodate the increased number of passengers resulting from the proposed action. Pedestrian safety issues would be addressed. No significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result from changes to traffic, parking, transit, or pedestrian conditions with the proposed action.

Traffic and Parking

Chapter 3.15, "Traffic and Parking," analyzes the effects of added traffic and parking demand from projected development sites on the street network during the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours. The maximum weekday increment of approximately 290 vehicle trips would occur during the PM peak hour, but the highest net increase in

vehicle trips above No Build levels would occur during the Saturday peak hour when approximately 944 additional vehicle trips would be generated. The maximum increment in vehicle trips occurs on Saturday due to the relative low level of travel generated on Saturday by the displaced land uses in the rezoning area under No Build conditions and the projected Saturday trip patterns of the residential and retail components of the proposed action.

A reduction in net vehicle trips is indicated on certain roadways during certain time periods. The greatest net changes in vehicle trips, either positive or negative, are projected to occur on the Major Deegan/Bruckner Expressway, the four Harlem River Bridges, (e.g., the two-way 145th Street and Madison Avenue Bridges, the one-way Bronx-bound Willis Avenue Bridge and one-way Manhattan-bound Third Avenue Bridge), on the Grand Concourse and along East 149th Street.

Significantly impacted locations were identified and summarized by peak analysis period, as follows. During the AM peak hour, the proposed future action would result in nine significantly impacted lane groups at seven intersections. In the midday, nine lane groups at seven intersections would experience significant adverse impacts. During the PM peak hour, there would be 21 significantly impacted lane groups at 13 intersections and on Saturday, there would be 14 significantly impacted lane groups at nine intersections.

The 2018 midday parking shortfall would be reduced by approximately 350 spaces under the proposed action. Overnight demand would increase by 785 spaces, but it is projected that approximately 225 spaces would be available. Thus, the analysis indicates that additional off-street parking supply is needed in the study area with or without the proposed action.

As discussed above in Section 3.15.2 and in Chapter 16, four intersections in the study area experienced between 20 and 25 accidents over the most recent three year period and two intersections experienced five pedestrian related accidents. While it is not apparent from this accident history that significant safety related issues are present in the study area, certain pedestrian safety and traffic control measures will need to be considered in the future. Increased pedestrian levels in the study area that would be generated by the proposed action, especially in areas that today exhibit little or no pedestrian activity, such as along Exterior Street, will require crosswalks and consideration of the installation of traffic signals as may be appropriate. Also, as pedestrian levels increase in existing commercial areas, such as along East 149th Street, pedestrian safety measures such as lead pedestrian intervals will also need to be considered.

Transit and Pedestrians

Chapter 3.16, "Transit and Pedestrians," analyzes the effects of added travel demand from projected development sites on subway stations, local bus services and pedestrian facilities within the study area during the AM and PM peak hours. The proposed action would generate a maximum of approximately 1,320 additional subway trips during the PM peak hour, and a maximum of approximately 800 additional bus trips during the midday peak hour. The results of the analyses show that subway passenger volumes would increase, with deteriorated service at entry/exit turnstiles at the 149th Street/Grand Concourse station (southwest station fare control area), though not to a level considered a significant impact.

Passenger loads on the transit bus routes serving the study area would increase with the proposed action, but all routes would continue operate below capacity at the peak load point.

All sidewalks will continue to operate at high levels of service (LOS A or LOS B). However, the projected increase in pedestrian activity at the southwest corner of the intersection of East 149th Street with the Grand Concourse, which is largely due to trips to and from the subway station, would cause pedestrian space levels to deteriorate from LOS D in the future without the proposed action to LOS E during the midday peak hour and from LOS C to LOS D during the PM peak hour. Likewise, operations of the west and south crosswalk would also operate at LOS D during the midday peak hour. However, as discussed in Chapter 3.16, this deterioration in level of service under build conditions would not be considered a significant impact.

Pedestrian activity would be expected to increase at the intersections of East 149th Street with Courtlandt Avenue and East 149th Street with Morris Avenue as a result of the proposed action. However, these intersections are well outside the area where most significant increases in pedestrian levels of activity would be expected to occur under the proposed action, and hence, pedestrian exposure to unsafe conditions as it may relate to these two intersections would not be expected to increase significantly. In such cases where pedestrian activity increases, particularly along East 138th Street, Exterior Street and on other street segments of the rezoning area with very little pedestrian activity today, measures will be required to be implemented by NYCDOT to provide for the level of pedestrian protection and control.

Noise Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 3.18, "Noise," increases in noise levels as a result of the additional traffic that would accompany the proposed action are expected to be imperceptible at all monitoring sites. As discussed in detail in Chapter 3.18, in order to ensure an acceptable interior noise environment, new residential development must provide a closed window condition with a minimum of 35 or 40 dBA window/wall attenuation in order to maintain an interior noise level of 45 dBA. In order to maintain a closed-window condition, an alternate means of ventilation includes, but is not limited

to, central air conditioning or air conditioning sleeves containing air conditioners. However, since these attenuation measures would not pertain to the existing noise sensitive environment, no adverse impacts to neighborhood character as a result of noise would be expected.

CONCLUSION

The proposed action would result in a change in the character of the study area in general; however, were the proposed action not to change the character of the area, it would fail to achieve the project's goals. Moreover, an analysis of potential impacts to neighborhood character concludes that changes related to land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, transportation and noise—while affecting certain aspects of neighborhood character to a limited extent and together comprising a substantial change in neighborhood character—would not result in significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the study area.

The proposed action would provide opportunities for new mixed-use development, while preserving light-industrial uses in the area, encouraging greater access and new waterfront development along the Harlem River, and establishing the Lower Concourse as a new gateway to both Manhattan and the northern Grand Concourse.

The Lower Concourse area is surrounded by redeveloping neighborhoods and commercial districts. Redevelopment would make this area a livelier and potentially safer destination, and would improve connections between adjacent communities. New residential and commercial uses would create an active community for neighborhood residents and workers in the area. Waterfront development would connect adjacent neighborhoods and commercial destinations along the Harlem River. New mixed-use development -- including the conversion of vacant space in warehouses to lofts and new commercial and residential opportunities while preserving light industrial uses -- would help to provide street vitality. Increasing the residential population would enliven the area after business hours as well.

A significant portion of projected new residential development would consist of permanent affordable housing under the Inclusionary Zoning program, thus addressing the need for affordable housing in the South Bronx and the city as a whole. At the same time, the proposed rezoning would also encourage high-profile redevelopment, which would ultimately create a visible symbol of the South Bronx's continued resurgence. Proposed zoning along the Lower Concourse would encourage new development, which would be more consistent with the historic character of the Grand Concourse to the north. The proposed waterfront park would encourage redevelopment on the Harlem River in a manner more appropriate to this gateway entrance to the borough.

South Bronx residents have long been cut off from the Harlem River waterfront in the rezoning area by industrial development on the waterfront and highway and rail infrastructure. This is beginning to change with the construction of a new waterfront park directly north of the proposed rezoning area. The Lower Concourse Rezoning and

Related Actions project aims to link this new parkland to areas to the south by encouraging new waterfront development with required publicly-accessible waterfront open space. Proposed esplanade requirements would facilitate the creation of a continuous promenade along the Harlem River that would connect the parkland to the north with the existing Port Morris community to the south.

Proposed new waterfront parkland would consist of two Harlem River waterfront blocks extending between the Harlem River and Exterior Street, south of East 149th Street and north of the Metro North Railroad Bridge over the Harlem River. New open space initiatives would seek to provide a continuous network of open spaces along the Harlem River waterfront, enhancing the pedestrian environment and providing a varied and attractive skyline along the Harlem River waterfront.

A summary of improvements to neighborhood character parallels the aims of the new "Special Harlem River Waterfront District" (SHRWD). Goals of the new Special District include maintaining and reestablishing physical and visual public access to, and along, the waterfront; preserving and strengthening the pedestrian orientation of ground floor uses in appropriate locations; encouraging well-designed new development that complements the built character of the neighborhood; providing flexibility of architectural design within limits established to assure adequate access of light and air to the street, and thus encouraging more attractive and economic building forms; and, promoting the most desirable use of land and building development for the Harlem River Waterfront to conserve the value of land and buildings and thereby protect the City's tax revenues.

With the proposed action the neighborhood character of the study area would markedly improve, and no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result.