Chapter 18: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Actions on neighborhood character. As defined in the 2020 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is a combination of elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "personality," which may include land use, socioeconomic conditions, 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 every case.

Under CEQR, an analysis of neighborhood character identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether a proposed project has the potential to affect the defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in the aforementioned technical analysis areas. To determine the effects of a proposed project on neighborhood character, the defining 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 contributes to a neighborhood's character does not necessarily constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character, but rather serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Applicant is seeking a series of land use actions, including zoning map amendments, zoning text amendments, and special permits (the Proposed Actions) to facilitate the Applicant's intended development and programming. The area subject to the Proposed Actions is the five city blocks bounded by 35th Avenue to the north, 43rd Street/Northern Boulevard to the east, 36th Avenue to the south and 37th Street to the west (the "Project Area"; see Figure 1-1 in Chapter 1, "Project Description") in the Astoria neighborhood of Queens in Community District 1. The Project Area (Blocks 641, 668, 669, 670, and 671) contains 43 lots, of which 21 are controlled by the Applicant (the "Development Site") while the remaining lots are controlled by others. With the Proposed Actions, the Applicant-controlled lots would be controlled by a Large Scale General Development (LSGD) Special Permit and would contain the Proposed Development (referred to as the "Development Site"). The 22 lots outside of the Development Site that are not controlled by the Applicant would be rezoned with approval of the Proposed Actions (referred to as the "Additional Affected Area")

The Proposed Development, (branded as the Innovation QNS project), would redevelop the Development Site with a series of mixed-use buildings and publicly accessible open spaces. The Innovation QNS project is intended to create a series of arts and cultural venues including a multi-purpose arts and culture center, a re-envisioned multiplex movie theater that would provide a state-of-the-art cinematic experience, galleries, artists' workshops and tech and general office space. In addition to art and cultural venues, the project would include eating and drinking establishments,

a grocery store and world market and other local retail, service and community facility uses to support the new residential population, the existing business and residential community and provide a strong anchor for the Steinway Street and 35th Avenue commercial corridors. Residential towers and lower rise buildings would house approximately 2,843 new residential dwelling units (DUs) offering a wide range of housing options for a varied population. Pursuant to the Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH) Option 1 program, 25 percent of the residential floor area would be permanently affordable units (estimated at approximately 711 DUs), a portion of which would be senior affordable housing units (subject to the availability of existing programs). The commercial space in the Proposed Development would also potentially include one or more Physical Culture Establishments (PCEs), i.e., a gym or fitness center. A series of outdoor spaces (totaling 2.17 acres) would link the blocks and were designed pursuant to community input with art exhibits, a children's play area adjacent to a day care center, and covered outdoor seating serving the world market, performances, and events. Parking would be provided in below grade parking facilities on each of the project blocks. In total, the Proposed Development would contain approximately 2.9 million gross square feet (gsf) of space.

In addition to the Proposed Development, the Proposed Actions would facilitate the redevelopment of several projected development sites in the Additional Affected Area that are not controlled by the Applicant. These additional developments would include approximately 800,000 gsf of residential and commercial space, similar to the Proposed Development. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would facilitate the development of a total of approximately 3.7 million gsf in the Project Area.

For each of the key technical areas related to neighborhood character, this chapter describes existing conditions, future conditions without the Proposed Actions, and conditions with the Proposed Actions. In addition, in accordance with the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, this analysis considers the potential for the Proposed Actions to affect neighborhood character through a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

A preliminary neighborhood character analysis determined that the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

As described below and elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; or noise. While the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts in the contributing technical areas of open space, shadows, and transportation, these effects would not be of such a degree that they would result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. The Proposed Actions would also not be expected to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively impact neighborhood character.

The Proposed Actions would activate the Development Site and Additional Affected Area, which currently primarily contain low-scale commercial, manufacturing, and parking uses, with new mixed-use buildings containing residential apartments, open space, arts and cultural uses, retail, and community facility spaces. In particular, the Proposed Actions would introduce a large amount of residential space, including affordable housing, and would extend the residential portion of the Astoria neighborhood to the Project Area. The Proposed Actions would support the Kaufman Arts District, enhancing the existing concentration of arts, cultural, film, television, and educational uses near the Project Area. Furthermore, the Proposed Actions would introduce open space in the

Project Area that would complement the existing Playground Thirty Five XXXV and would offer amenities to a wide variety of users in the neighborhood, including immersive playscapes for children, a plaza for the community to gather, inviting courtyards surrounded by local cafes and restaurants, and landscaped pedestrian pathways for families to stroll. Overall, the Proposed Actions would be consistent with the existing character of the study area, maintaining and enhancing the current arts and culture uses within the surrounding neighborhood, while simultaneously providing essential commercial, community facility, and open space uses for an expanded residential population in the future.

B. METHODOLOGY

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual,* an analysis of neighborhood character begins with a preliminary assessment to determine whether changes expected in other technical areas may affect an element that contributes to neighborhood character. The assessment should identify the defining features of the neighborhood, and assess whether a project has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate effects. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include the following:

- *Land Use.* When development resulting from a project would have the potential to change neighborhood character by introducing a new, incompatible land use; conflicting with land use policy or other public plans for the area; changing land use character; or resulting in significant land use impacts.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; substantial differences in population or employment density; or if a project results in changes to a unique industry.
- *Open Space.* Changes in open space have the potential to affect neighborhood character when a project would result in the overburdening of existing open space facilities or would exacerbate an existing deficiency in open space.
- *Shadows.* When a project would result in a substantial reduction in the usability of an open space, or in the use, enjoyment, or appreciation of the sunlight-sensitive features of a historic resource as a result of increased shadow, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Historic and Cultural Resources.* When a project would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resources 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 streetwalls, landscaping, curb cuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.
- *Transportation*. Changes in transportation conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the project. Such substantial traffic

changes can include a change in level of service (LOS) to C or below; change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts, as identified in that technical analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a project would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.

- *Noise*. For a project to affect neighborhood character in regard to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category.

As detailed in relevant chapters of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts in the contributing technical areas of open space, shadows, and transportation. Potential mitigation measures to address these impacts are detailed in Chapter 20, "Mitigation."

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a project can also have a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively affect neighborhood character. A "moderate" effect is generally defined as an effect that is reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area. A combination of moderate effects that could affect defining features, may occur, for example, with a proposal for a large office complex in an area characterized by quiet residential streets with limited pedestrian and vehicular traffic. Therefore, this analysis also evaluates the potential for the Proposed Actions to affect neighborhood character through a combination of effects.

STUDY AREA

As described in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary analysis of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. Therefore, the study area for this analysis reflects those considered for the other analyses, which generally extend ¼-mile to ½-mile from the Project Area.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

EXISTING CONDITIONS

LAND USE

As described in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the Project Area and ¼-mile land use study area are defined by a diverse mix of land uses and building types. The Project Area consists of five blocks with primarily commercial, manufacturing, and parking uses with some residential uses bounded by 35th Avenue to the north, 36th Avenue to the south, 37th Street to the west, and Northern Boulevard to the east. The ¼-mile study area consists of a mix of land uses: manufacturing and auto-related uses are concentrated in the southern portion of the study area, and residential uses are more prominent in the northern portion of the study area. Steinway Street is the primary walkable commercial corridor and Northern Boulevard is a busy car thoroughfare with destination retail uses. The study area also contains several prominent community facilities. There is a concentration of arts, cultural, and educational uses near the Project Area. In particular, the area west of Steinway Street contains the Kaufman Arts District, which is a collaboration of several local organizations involved in the creative arts that anchor the area as a cultural destination and a center for the creative industries. The study area is well served by mass transit:

subway service in the area includes the E, M, and R subway lines at the Steinway Street Station on the northeast and southwest corners of Steinway Street and 34th Avenue and the 36th Street Station at the intersection of Northern Boulevard and 38th Avenue (just outside the study area). The N and W subway lines also serve the study area, with the 36th Avenue station located at 31st Street (immediately west of the study area). The Q101 Bus runs along Steinway Street and the Q66 Bus runs along 35th Avenue.

Land uses within the immediate Project Area include commercial (retail and restaurant uses), manufacturing (warehouse and auto-related uses), parking lots, several multi-family residential uses, and Playground Thirty Five XXXV, a recently renovated playground owned by NYC Parks. Buildings within the Project Area generally range from one to four stories.

The Project Area is located at the intersection of and is a transition point between four distinct areas which make up the larger study area. The area to the north is a low- to mid-density residential neighborhood. The area to the northwest is a commercial and arts district centered around Kaufman Astoria Studios. The area to the southwest primarily contains low-scale, one- to -two story light manufacturing, auto-related, and warehouse uses. The Long Island City (LIC) high-density mixed-use district is located to the south.

The entire Project Area, with the exception of the block faces on Steinway Street, is located in an M1-1 manufacturing district. The block faces on Steinway Street are located in a C4-2A district. The larger study area contains a more diverse range of zoning districts, including residential (R6A and R6B), manufacturing (M1-1 and M1-5), mixed-use (M1-2/R6A, M1-2/R6B, M1-3/R7X) and the Special Long Island City Mixed Use District, which is mapped in the southeast corner of the study area.

Therefore, in consideration of the variety of land uses and zoning districts within the study area, there is no individual type of use which defines the character of the area. Rather, the area is primarily defined by a mix of land uses, particularly residential, commercial, and arts and cultural uses, as well as by a mix of building types and densities.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the population of the study area as of the 2020 Census is 36,569. As of 2019, the average annual household income within the study area was $95,687, similar to that of Queens but lower than that of New York City overall. The median annual household income within the study area was $76,472, similar to that of Queens and New York City. Average monthly rents in the study area range from $1,622 for studio units to $2,909 for three-bedroom units, however, recently built residential buildings in the study area are renting at higher prices than average in the study area.

There are an estimated 20,554 jobs in the socioeconomic study area, representing 2.8 percent of Queens' total employment (729,323) and 0.5 percent of employment in all of New York City (approximately 4.6 million) as of 2019. The industry with the highest employment is retail trade, comprising 14.6 percent of the jobs in the study area. Health care and social assistance is the industry with the second highest share of jobs in the study area at 13.5 percent of total employment. Accommodation and food service employment comprises 9.5 percent of employment in the study area. Construction, wholesale trade, and transportation and warehousing represent 24.5 percent of jobs in the study area. Transportation and warehousing employment in the study area includes jobs at Sunnyside Yard. Arts, entertainment, and recreation employment comprises 1.4 percent of employment in the study area, although employment in this sector may not reflect many of the

jobs created by Kaufman Astoria Studio's television and film productions, such as jobs performed by independent contractors or those employed by agencies or production companies based outside the study area. Therefore, the study area is primarily defined by a mix of industries and businesses, and no individual industry or group of industries defines the character of the area.

OPEN SPACE

As described in Chapter 5, "Open Space," there are two publicly accessible open spaces—Playground Thirty Five XXXV, on 35th Avenue between Steinway Street and 41st Street, and Astoria Residents Reclaiming Our World (ARROW) Field House, at 35-30 35th Street—located within the non-residential (worker) ¼-mile study area, providing a total of 0.51 acres, of which 0.38 acres is active recreation and 0.13 acres is passive recreation. There are three additional publicly accessible open spaces—Dwyer Square at the intersection of Northern Boulevard and 34th Avenue between 47th and 48th Streets, Torsney/Lou Lodati Playground on Skillman Avenue between 41st and 43rd Streets, and Sean's Place park at 38th Street between 31st Avenue and Broadway—located within the ½-mile study area. Therefore, in the ½-mile study area, there is a total of five open spaces, providing a total of 3.37 acres, of which 2.73 acres is active recreation and 0.64 acres is passive recreation. There are also several open space resources just outside the ½-mile study area that are available to residents of the community. These include the following: Dutch Kills Playground, P.S. 151 Playground, Windmuller Park, Dutch Kills Green, Doughboy Park, Astoria Heights Playground, I.S. 010 Horace Greeley Intermediate School, Ravenswood Playground, and the Queensboro Bridge Greenway. Combined, these open space resources offer an additional 15.30 acres of open space, including a substantial amount of active space (9.89 acres).

As noted in Chapter 5, "Open Space," the passive open space ratios for the non-residential study area is below the City's planning goals; in addition, the total, active, and passive open space ratios in the residential study area are below the City's planning goals.[1] Therefore, open space is not a defining feature of neighborhood character in the study area.

SHADOWS

As described in Chapter 6, "Shadows," the longest shadows that could be cast by the new structures introduced by the Proposed Actions were calculated; using that radius as the shadow study area, potential sunlight-sensitive resources were identified. Within the study area, several publicly accessible open spaces, including Playground Thirty Five XXXV and Triangle Thirty Seven XXXVII, were identified for detailed analysis.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources," there are no known architectural or archaeological resources on the Development Site. Within the Additional Affected Area, there are five rowhouses at 35-47 to 35-55 38th Street, together with the mixed-use building at 35-57 38th Street, which form a partial streetfront of early 20th century buildings that appear to meet historic

[1] As discussed in Chapter 5, "Open Space," the City's open space planning goals are often not feasible for many areas of the City, and they are not considered a threshold for a significant adverse effect. Rather, they are used as benchmarks to represent how well an area is served by its open space resources. Under *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines, a large part of the study area, including a portion of the Project Area, is identified as underserved by open space.

and architectural criteria as a historic district.[2] Historic resources are not a defining feature of the study area's neighborhood character.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 8, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the urban design study area is characterized by a mix of building typologies. Development in the northern portion of the study area is generally characterized by a range of residential and commercial uses, ranging from single-story commercial, to mixed-use five-story buildings along mixed-use commercial corridors. Residential buildings range from two- to three-story rowhomes to six-story apartment buildings. West of the Project Area, buildings along 35th Avenue are taller and include the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts with a modern glass curtain wall and brick façade and Kaufman Astoria Studios, with an older stone and stucco-clad façade. The southern portion of the study area west of Northern Boulevard is generally characterized by one- to four-story brick warehouses. The southeastern portion of the study area is characterized by the elevated LIRR tracks, Sunnyside Yard, and large paved parcels adjacent to the railyard used for construction material storage and parking.

Visual resources in the study area include the Paramount Studios Complex (which includes Kaufman Astoria Studios and the Museum of the Moving Image), a nine-building complex of low-scale, historic buildings located to the west of the Project Area, with frontages along 35th Avenue (see Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources"), and the Art-Deco style Most Precious Blood Roman Catholic Church at 32-40 37th Street, north of 34th Avenue. Long views are available along Northern Boulevard within the study area and include the Long Island City towers in the distance. The Standard Motor Products building also can be seen in views east on 37th Avenue, south on 38th Street, and along Northern Boulevard. In the southern portion of the study area, the LIRR is visible to the south, as a raised berm.

TRANSPORTATION

The character of the study area, like that of many neighborhoods in New York City, is in part defined by the levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity that exist in the study area. While the Project Area itself is not as densely developed, the surrounding study area contains a greater concentration of workers, residents, and visitors. As noted in Chapter 13, "Transportation," the neighborhood generally has relatively light to moderate pedestrian flows during peak periods, with the heaviest flows found along retail corridors such as Steinway Street and corridors providing access to area subway stations and bus routes. Vehicular traffic volumes are high along the major roads in the study area, such as Northern Boulevard, Steinway Street, Broadway, Queens Boulevard, and Greenpoint Avenue.

NOISE

As noted in Chapter 16, "Noise," the dominant source of noise in the study area is from vehicular traffic on adjacent roadways based on field measurements and monitoring. Measured noise levels are generally "acceptable," "marginally acceptable," and "marginally unacceptable" and reflect the level of vehicular activity on proximate major roadways, such as Northern Boulevard and Steinway Street.

[2] In a comment letter dated January 28, 2022, LPC stated that the potential 38th Street historic district was not of interest to LPC at this time for landmark designation.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," in the future without the Proposed Actions (the No Action condition), portions of the Development Site are anticipated to be redeveloped with new as-of-right buildings that would not require any discretionary approvals requiring environmental review. In the No Action condition (inclusive of the new grocery store, retail, and warehouse facilities on Projected Development Sites C and D), the Projected Development Sites would contain a total of approximately 423,000 gsf of space, with approximately 265,000 gsf of commercial uses (retail, the cinema, and the grocery store), approximately 151,000 gsf of manufacturing uses (warehouses and auto related facilities), and approximately 7,500 gsf of residential space (the existing small multi-family homes on Projected Development Sites A and F, with a combined total of 9 DUs). The No Action condition would also include an approximately 29,000 sf parking lot for the grocery store on Projected Development Site C. The Applicant would not seek to redevelop the more active existing uses on Projected Development Sites A, B, and E (the Regal Cinemas, the P.C. Richard & Son retail store, and the Harley Davidson Motorcycles dealership, respectively) absent the Proposed Actions. Likewise, the remaining Projected Development Sites not controlled by the Applicant (Sites F, G, H, I, J, and K) are expected to remain in their current condition. As development in the No Action condition within the Project Area would be limited, there would not be any impacts to neighborhood character.

In addition, a number of other planned development projects are expected to be completed within the surrounding study areas by 2032; these planned development projects will further contribute to the study area's neighborhood character. The projects expected to be developed in the No Action condition would not significantly alter the study area's neighborhood character. Rather, these projects represent a continuation of the ongoing trend towards mixed-uses in Astoria, a result of the area's diverse employment opportunities and increasing amenities.

ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL TO AFFECT THE DEFINING FEATURES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

Pursuant to the guidelines in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the Proposed Actions' effects on the following technical areas are considered in assessing the potential for the Proposed Actions to result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise.

In the future with the Proposed Actions, the Projected Development Sites (inclusive of the Proposed Development in the Development Site and the sites in the Additional Affected Area) would contain approximately 3.7 million gsf of space, including a total of approximately 3.1 million gsf of residential space (approximately 3,652 DUs, of which 914 would be permanently affordable pursuant to MIH), approximately 542,985 gsf of commercial space (retail, eating and drinking establishments, grocery store, PCEs, and the relocated cinema and potential automotive showroom), approximately 107,720 gsf of community facility space (e.g., day care, community center, and arts and cultural center), and approximately 1,633 parking spaces. The With Action condition would also include the 2.17 acres of publicly accessible open space to be constructed in 8 proposed locations across the Development Site: this includes 7 Public Access Areas (PAAs) on the northern and mid-block portions of the Development Site and the additional PAA planned at the southern end of the Development Site. The Proposed Development would also include private open space for residents and expanded pedestrian circulation space near the building entrances. The principal goal of the Proposed Actions is to transform the five city blocks in the Project Area

into a vibrant, mixed-use community offering a wide variety of housing options, office space for the creative industries, neighborhood-serving healthcare facilities (e.g., local medical offices), retail, a state-of-the-art multiplex cinema, a full-service grocery store, and thoughtfully programmed publicly accessible open spaces throughout.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

As described in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the Proposed Actions would provide for mixed uses within the Project Area that would be consistent with and supportive of the existing uses within the Study Area. In addition, the massing and scale of the Proposed Development has been designed to serve as a transition between the low- and mid-rise areas to the north and west, the heavily trafficked commercial area centered on the Northern Boulevard corridor and the higher-density mixed LIC area to the south. The proposed land uses would generally be compatible with the existing land use character of the Project Area (which includes residential uses, mixed residential and commercial uses, and open space) as well as land uses in the study area, which is mixed-use in nature, with residential, commercial, light manufacturing, and community facility uses. The increase in residential uses in the With Action condition would be consistent with the trend toward higher-density residential development seen in the study area as well as recent developments that have brought mixed residential and commercial uses to the Northern Boulevard corridor. Furthermore, the Proposed Development's arts and cultural spaces would add to the existing concentration of these uses in the study area and strengthen the Kaufman Arts District.

The proposed Special Mixed-Use District would be compatible with the mixed-use character of the study area and consistent with the Long Island City Special Mixed-Use District in the southwest portion of the study area. The proposed LSGD and special permits for the Proposed Development would also facilitate comprehensive site planning and create a cohesive development in the Project Area.

With respect to public policies, the Proposed Actions would support the goals and principles of: *Housing New York* by including developing affordable housing on underused public and private sites and creating more homes for seniors; *ONENYC* by creating a thriving neighborhood; and the Kaufman Arts District (KAD) by creating a series of arts and cultural venues, including a multi-purpose arts and culture center, a re-envisioned multiplex movie theater that would provide a state-of-the-art cinematic experience, galleries, artists' workshops, and tech and general office space. In particular, the Proposed Development would add to the existing cluster of arts and cultural uses in the area and strengthen the KAD's identity. The proposed Actions would also support Vision Zero to improve pedestrian safety by creating a cohesive, walkable development and increasing pedestrian space; the New York City Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) Program by facilitating the creation of new ground-floor commercial space along key corridors such as Steinway Street, therefore enabling an opportunity for new neighborhood grocery stores to be located on other Projected Development Sites within the Project Area; the Steinway Astoria Partnership's goal of strengthening the identity of the Steinway Street retail corridor by extending the mixed-use nature of Steinway Street to the Project Area; and the Long Island City Industrial Business Zone (IBZ) by supporting the continued industrial character of the IBZ. In addition, by facilitating new mixed-use development in a developed area with excellent access to public transit and incorporating sustainability measures that result in lower GHG emissions, the Proposed Development would be consistent with policies that promote sustainable land-use planning and smart-growth strategies to reduce the carbon footprint of new development (discussed in Chapter

15, "Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change"). The Proposed Actions would not conflict with any applicable public policies.

As noted above, the neighborhood character of the area is primarily defined by a mix of land uses, particularly residential, commercial, and arts and cultural uses, as well as by a mix of building types and densities. The Proposed Actions would support new housing and jobs in an area with access to transit and strengthen the existing cluster of arts and culture uses in the study area. In addition, the Proposed Actions would support the development of affordable housing and publicly accessible open space. Overall, the uses and densities introduced by the Proposed Actions would be consistent with the mix of uses and densities in the area, and the Proposed Actions' effects on land use, zoning, and public policy would not result in any significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the study area.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

As described in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," a screening-level assessment of direct residential displacement; preliminary assessments of direct business displacement, indirect business displacement, and adverse effects of specific industries; and a detailed assessment of indirect residential displacement determined that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts related to socioeconomic conditions.

- *Direct Residential Displacement.* The Proposed Actions could directly displace an estimated 20 residents living in nine DUs by 2032. The nine DUs in the Project Area that would be displaced are located on Projected Development Sites A (six DUs) and F (three DUs). According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, direct displacement of fewer than 500 residents would not typically be expected to substantially alter the socioeconomic character of a neighborhood. The potentially displaced residents represent less than one percent of the estimated 36,569 residents within the socioeconomic study area; therefore, this potential direct displacement would not substantially alter the socioeconomic character of the neighborhood.
- *Direct Business Displacement.* The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts due to direct business displacement. Projected development generated by the Proposed Actions by the 2032 Build Year could directly displace an estimated 20 businesses on projected development sites and an estimated 170 jobs associated with those businesses. The 20 businesses do not represent a majority of study area businesses or employment for any given industry sector. While all businesses contribute to neighborhood character and provide value to the City's economy, there are alternative sources of goods, services, and employment provided within the socioeconomic study area; therefore, the potential displacement of these businesses does not constitute a significant adverse impact on the socioeconomic conditions of the area as defined by CEQR. None of the potentially displaced businesses are within a category of business that is the subject of regulations or publicly adopted plans to preserve, enhance, or otherwise protect it.
- *Indirect Residential Displacement.* The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts due to indirect residential displacement. The primary concern of indirect residential displacement analyses is the introduction of a higher income population that could cause increased rents in the study area and could displace low-income renters in unprotected housing. By 2032, the Proposed Actions would introduce a total of 3,652 DUs (including 2,843 DUs in the Proposed Development and 809 DUs in new developments in the Additional Affected Area). As compared to the No Action condition, this would result in 3,643 incremental DUs and approximately 8,123 incremental residents. Currently, approximately

8.8 percent of the study area population is potentially vulnerable to indirect residential displacement if their rents were to increase. However, this population would be vulnerable to displacement in the future with or without the Proposed Actions. Rents are already rising in the neighborhood and are expected to continue to rise as there is new market rate development occurring without the Proposed Actions. The Proposed Actions would increase the supply of market rate housing, but would also add affordable housing that would otherwise not exist absent the Proposed Actions. The Proposed Actions would be the largest MIH project in Queens and would add affordable units in the community for those of moderate means. This housing would serve to preserve a more diverse mix of incomes in the study area as compared with the No Action condition. Therefore, the Proposed Actions do not have the potential to alter or significantly accelerate trends, and no significant adverse impacts related to socioeconomic conditions are anticipated.

- *Indirect Business Displacement.* The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts due to indirect business displacement. The Project Area and broader study area have well-established residential, retail, and office markets such that the Proposed Actions would not introduce new economic activities to the projected development sites or to the study area and would not add to a concentration of a particular sector of the local economy enough to significantly alter or accelerate existing economic patterns. The demand for goods and services from existing residents has already established a strong commercial market such that the influence of new residents would not markedly increase commercial property values and rents throughout the study area. There is an existing trend of retail development in mixed-use residential and commercial buildings in the study area. The retail added in the With Action condition would not be enough to alter or accelerate ongoing trends. In terms of office uses, the study area already has a strong commercial office market, particularly in the southwest portion of the study area in the Long Island City neighborhood. The office space in the With Action condition would connect the Project Area to Long Island City and would not alter or accelerate trends. The community facility and office uses in the Proposed Development would be targeted toward arts-related uses (e.g., studio space, flexible office space, and an arts and cultural center), which would strengthen the existing cluster of arts and cultural uses found in the study area, as well as neighborhood-serving healthcare facilities (e.g., local medical offices). In addition to arts-related uses, the community facility space in the With Action Condition would include English classes for speakers of other languages, health and wellness uses, and after-school programs.

  The Proposed Actions would not directly displace uses that provide substantial direct support for businesses in the area or that bring people into the area that form a substantial portion of the customer base for local businesses. The Proposed Actions would result in increased economic activity in the study area. The residential and worker population generated by the Proposed Actions on the projected development sites would become new customers at many of the existing retail businesses in the study area.

- *Adverse Effects on Specific Industries*. A preliminary assessment determined that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts due to adverse effects on specific industries. An analysis is warranted if a substantial number of residents or workers depend on the goods or services provided by the affected businesses or if an action would result in the loss or substantial diminishment of a particularly important product or service within the industry. The Proposed Actions would not significantly affect the business conditions in any industry or any category of business within or outside the study area. By 2032, the Proposed Actions could directly displace an estimated 20 businesses and 170 employees in several

economic sectors. The businesses that could be displaced do not represent a critical mass of businesses within any City industry, category of business, or category of employment. The goods and services offered by potentially displaced uses can be found elsewhere within the socioeconomic study area, within a broader trade area, and within the City as a whole. The products and services offered by potentially displaced businesses are not essential to the viability of other businesses within or outside the study area. The Proposed Actions would not result in significant indirect business displacement, and therefore would not indirectly substantially reduce employment or have an impact on the economic viability in any specific industry or category of business.

Therefore, with respect to any changes to socioeconomic conditions, there would be no related effects on neighborhood character, including moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

OPEN SPACE

As described in Chapter 5, "Open Space," the Proposed Actions would result in an increase in total open space ratio of approximately 30 percent, to 0.105 acres per 1,000 residents; the active open space ratio would decrease by approximately 15 percent, to 0.055 acres per 1,000 residents; and the passive open space ratio would increase by approximately 221 percent, to 0.050 acres per 1,000 residents. The Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse indirect impact to total and passive open space. However, the Proposed Actions would result in a significant adverse impact to active open space from the added residential demand placed on active open space resources in an area that has limited availability. In the With Action condition, the active open space ratio in the residential study area would decrease by approximately 15 percent.

The Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to open space in the non-residential study area.

The Proposed Development would result in beneficial direct effects to open space in 2032 with improvements to the Project Area and the addition of publicly accessible open space, where there is currently limited open space. The Proposed Development would provide a large publicly accessible open space to complement Playground Thirty Five XXXV and a series of primarily passive open spaces that would link the blocks in the Project Area. The amenities proposed to be provided could include various forms of public seating (i.e., occupiable public art, raised seating decks, movable tables, and chairs); multipurpose lawns; water features; landscaped areas, large planters, and shade trees; a dog park; promenades and pavilions; interactive public art; and temporary recreational features (e.g., cornhole, seesaws, adult swings). Other amenities could include an immersive playscape for children, open markets, kiosks, public art installations, sculptures, and enhanced streetscapes. These spaces have been designed and programmed as publicly accessible open space, pursuant to community input.

Although the Proposed Development would result in a significant adverse indirect impact to active open space in the residential study area based on the quantitative analysis, the Proposed Development would include private residential amenities as well as one or more Physical Culture Establishments (PCEs), i.e., a gym or fitness center, which would support active recreation for both existing and future residents of the study area and would partially offset the expected open space demand from the new resident population. In addition, the Proposed Development's open space is intended to be flexible and provide for a wide variety of activities, including active recreation; for example, the largely passive courtyards would provide space for fitness or yoga classes. Overall, these qualitative factors partially offset the expected demand from the new

resident population. However, there remains a significant adverse indirect impact for active open space in the residential study area. Potential mitigation measures to address this impact are detailed in Chapter 20, "Mitigation." In particular, the Proposed Development would include an approximately 10,000 sf area at the southern end of Block A (along 36th Avenue) that may be additional publicly accessible open space. This potential publicly accessible open space may include active uses to provide partial mitigation for the significant adverse impact to active open space by providing an additional resource for active recreation for residents of the study area, where there is limited active open space.

Open space is not a defining feature of the neighborhood, as the Project Area currently contains a limited amount of open space. Furthermore, the Proposed Development would result in beneficial direct effects to open space in 2032 with improvements to the Project Area and the addition of 2.17 acres of publicly accessible open space (including the potential publicly accessible open space on Block A that is proposed as mitigation). Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

SHADOWS

As described in Chapter 6, "Shadows," development resulting from the Proposed Actions would result in a potential significant adverse shadows impact on Playground Thirty Five XXXV. The shadows on Playground Thirty Five XXXV would be cast throughout the day in all seasons, covering large areas of the playground and at times, eliminating much or all of the remaining sunlight in the park—particularly in the fall, winter, and early spring—and causing significant adverse impacts to the user experience in all seasons. Trees and plantings in the park would continue to receive adequate direct sunlight through the May to August heart of the growing seasons, but those in the southern part of the park would receive up to an hour less than generally required in the March and September "shoulders" of the growing season, potentially impacting the health of those trees or plantings. The Proposed and Projected Developments would not cast significant shadows on any other sunlight-sensitive resources.

Open space is not a defining feature of neighborhood character, and the potential effect on this one open space would not change the character of the neighborhood as a whole. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 20, "Mitigation," mitigation for the potential significant adverse shadows impact on Playground Thirty Five XXXV is being explored by the Applicant in consultation with DCP and NYC Parks. In particular, the potential additional active publicly accessible open space at the southern end of Block A (discussed above) would also provide partial mitigation for the significant adverse shadows impact to Playground Thirty Five XXXV by providing an additional active resource, which may include children's active play space, in an area that would receive less shadow. This additional publicly accessible resource would serve residents of the study area seeking sunny active space. The potential mitigation measures may include replacing vegetation and additional maintenance of the features at Playground Thirty Five XXXV, or dedicated funding for improvements or enhanced maintenance at another existing open space in the vicinity of the Project Area. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character resulting from new shadows or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

As noted in Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources," the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to historic and cultural resources. There are no known or potential architectural resources on the Development Site, and thus the Proposed Actions would not result in any adverse impacts to such resources on the Development Site.

With regard to construction, the new development on Projected Development Sites A, D and E would be constructed within 90 feet of the potential historic districts as described in Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources." To avoid any inadvertent construction-related impacts to these resources, the Applicant would develop and implement a Construction Protection Plan (CPP) for those architectural resources located within 90 feet of Projected Development Sites A, D, and E.

The Proposed Actions would result in the construction of a number of new buildings within the Project Area, including buildings that would be larger and taller than the known and potential architectural resources within the study area. In particular, the Proposed Development would include new buildings of varying heights, from 8 stories to up to 27 stories tall: this would include three taller towers (20 to 27 stories) along Northern Boulevard on Projected Development Sites D and E, one 27-story tower on Projected Development Site C, 19- to 22-story buildings on Projected Development Site B, and mid-rise buildings (10 to 13 stories) on Projected Development Site A, closer to the residential areas to the north and west of the Project Area. This would be a notable change to the context of these resources, which are all between two and four stories tall. However, the massing and articulation of the proposed buildings is intended to minimize the perceived scale of the new development. Development resulting from the Proposed Actions would not obstruct public views of any known or potential architectural resources in the study area, and would not introduce incompatible visual, audible, or atmospheric elements to a historic resource's setting. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to historic and cultural resources.

The Proposed Actions would not result in substantial changes to the historic character of the neighborhood or surrounding study area. Further, historic and cultural resources are not a defining feature of neighborhood character. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character with regard to historic and cultural resources or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

As described in Chapter 8, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," with the Proposed Actions, the urban design of the Development Site and Additional Affected Area would change. The land uses of the Development Site would be predominantly residential, with additional office, other commercial, and cultural/community facility uses, in comparison to the warehouse, auto-related, and commercial uses on the Development Site in the existing and No Action conditions. The new land uses within the Additional Affected Area would be residential with ground-floor retail. The mix of land uses in the Proposed Development and the Additional Affected Area would be compatible with one another and in the Applicant's opinion, would create a cohesive neighborhood. The proposed arts and cultural venues, including the multi-purpose arts and culture center, re-envisioned multiplex movie theater, galleries, and artists' workshops, would complement the existing Kaufman Arts District. The proposed eating and drinking establishments, grocery store and world market, and other local retail, service and community facility uses would support both the new residential population and the existing business and residential communities.

The proposed publicly accessible open spaces would link the blocks in the Project Area. The proposed open space on Block C would augment the existing Playground Thirty Five XXXV by surrounding it with a large, civic-oriented public open space. The amenities proposed to be provided at the other proposed open spaces, pursuant to the Public Access Area (PAA) drawing packages, include a plaza, courtyards, and landscaped pedestrian pathways; additional amenities could include playscapes for children, open markets, kiosks, public art installations, sculptures, and enhanced streetscapes.

The built FAR of the Development Site and the Additional Affected Area would increase. The Projected Development Sites in the Development Site currently have built FARs ranging from 0.43 to 1.14; in the With Action scenario, these sites would have built FARs ranging from 5.47 to 10.58. (As proposed, the blended FAR of the Development Site would be 7.1). The Projected Development Sites in the Additional Affected Area currently have built FARs ranging from 0.39-1.06; in the With Action scenario, these sites would have built FARs ranging from 6.60 to 11.73.[3] The buildings that would be developed in the Project Area in the With Action condition would be substantially taller than the surrounding built context. However, the massing and scale of the Proposed Development reflects the guiding design principles described above, and the Proposed Development has been designed to serve as a transition between the low- and mid-rise areas to the north and west of the Project Area, the heavily trafficked, commercial-centered Northern Boulevard corridor, and the higher-density mixed-use Long Island City area to the south. Land uses, lot coverage, and street patterns in the surrounding study area would not change. The proposed variation in streetwall heights and in building footprints, interspersed with new publicly accessible open spaces, would also give the Proposed Development a varied form that would be consistent with the urban design of the western portion of the study area, which is developed with an array of different building forms, sizes, and heights.

The Project Area does not contain any visual resources, views along the north-south streets within the Project Area are limited by mature street trees, and views south along these streets end at the buildings along Northern Boulevard. These factors would be expected to limit the visibility of the Proposed Development along north-south streets. With the Proposed Actions, views toward the Project Area from the area's view corridors would change. The new development in the Project Area would be most visible along Northern Boulevard, 35th Avenue, and 39th Street as it crosses over Sunnyside Yard. The tallest buildings of the Proposed Development would be prominent in these views; however, this change would not adversely affect these view corridors. With respect to visual resources, the Proposed Development would not block views to the Most Precious Blood Roman Catholic Church, and it would not affect the public's enjoyment or use of the resource. The Proposed Development would be visible along 35th Avenue, and thus could change the context of views to the Paramount Studios Complex buildings along this corridor; however, the Proposed Actions would not obstruct any views to the buildings, and the changed context of views

[3] On Projected Development Site F (Block 668, Lots 1 and 2), the new development is assumed to be part of a combined zoning lot with adjacent parcels that would not be redeveloped as a result of the Proposed Actions but would be rezoned to a M1-4/R9 district (maximum FAR of 8.0). As a result of the rezoning, the additional lots would have unbuilt floor area that would be transferred to the new development, therefore, the new development would exceed the maximum FAR generated by the development lots alone. However, in the With Action condition, the FAR for the overall zoning lot on that portion of the block would be 8.0; in addition, the new development on Projected Development Site F would be limited by the zoning envelope permitted by the M1-4/R9 district, and would be of a similar scale to the Proposed Development's buildings on the remainder of the block.

along 35th Avenue would not be expected to diminish the pedestrian's experience of this visual resource. The Proposed Development also would not obstruct any important visual resources or block any view corridors.

Although there would be changes to the urban design character within the Project Area, there would be no significant adverse impacts to urban design or visual resources and development would be in keeping with the mix of building typologies that define the character of the area. Therefore, any urban design and visual resource changes resulting from the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse neighborhood character impacts or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

TRANSPORTATION

As described in Chapter 13, "Transportation," the Proposed Actions have the potential to result in significant adverse impacts to: a) vehicular traffic at 24 signalized intersections during one or more analyzed peak hours, b) subway line haul conditions on southbound N/W trains in the AM peak hour, and c) pedestrians at three sidewalks and two crosswalks. The Proposed Actions would not result in any other significant adverse impacts to transportation.

- Traffic conditions were evaluated for the AM, midday, and PM peak periods, as well as the Saturday midday peak period at 42 intersections in the traffic study area where additional traffic resulting from the Proposed Actions would be most heavily concentrated. The traffic impact analysis indicates the potential for significant adverse impacts at 24 intersections (all signalized) during one or more analyzed peak hours. Significant adverse impacts were identified to 33 lane groups at 20 intersections during the weekday AM peak hour, 24 lane groups at 16 intersections in the midday peak hour, 32 lane groups at 19 intersections in the PM peak hour, and 25 lane groups at 16 intersections during the Saturday peak hour. (Many of these intersections would be congested in the No Action condition irrespective of the Proposed Actions.)
- The Project Area is directly served by four NYCT subway routes—M and R trains operating on the Queens Boulevard Line and N and W trains operating on the Astoria Line. The peak direction of travel is typically Manhattan-bound (southbound) in the AM peak hour and Queens-bound (northbound) in the PM peak hour. In the With Action condition, southbound N/W trains are expected to be operating over capacity in the AM peak hour, and would experience an average incremental increase of 5.56 persons/car during this period, just above the five persons/car *CEQR Technical Manual* impact threshold. Therefore, southbound N/W service would therefore be considered significantly adversely impacted by the Proposed Actions in the AM peak hour. All other analyzed subway routes are projected to operate below capacity in the peak direction in both the AM and PM peak hours and would therefore not be significant adversely impacted by the Proposed Actions in either period.
- Peak hour pedestrian conditions were evaluated at 138 pedestrian elements where new trips generated by projected developments are expected to be most concentrated. These elements—40 sidewalks, 65 corner areas, and 33 crosswalks—are primarily located in the immediate vicinity of the Project Area and along corridors connecting the Project Area to nearby subway station entrances. Based on CEQR Technical Manual criteria, three sidewalks and two crosswalks would be significantly adversely impacted by the Proposed Actions in one or more of the analyzed peak hours, and there would be no significant impacts to any corner areas.

Potential improvement measures that may be implemented to mitigate these impacts are discussed in Chapter 20, "Mitigation." The assessment finds that, with the proposed traffic mitigation

measures, in total, impacts to one or more lane group(s) would remain unmitigated in one or more peak hours at 12 intersections; in addition, the pedestrian impacts at the three impacted sidewalks would remain unmitigated.[4]

While the Proposed Actions may result in unmitigated traffic and/or pedestrian impacts, the increased presence of vehicles and additional pedestrians in the area resulting from the Proposed Actions would not be such that there would be a significant change to the overall character of the neighborhood and any increase would not be out of character for the densely built neighborhood. The Project Area already includes moderately busy pedestrian corridors and heavily trafficked vehicular thoroughfares, such as the intersections located at Northern Boulevard and Steinway Street. Therefore, the increased traffic and pedestrian volumes resulting from the Proposed Actions would not result in an overall impact to neighborhood character or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

NOISE

With respect to mobile source noise, the maximum increase in noise levels for the With Action condition would be less than 2 dBA at all noise analysis receptors, with the exception of one receptor with 4.2 dBA (there are no existing noise-sensitive land uses along 41st Street between 35th and 36th Avenues, where this receptor is located). With Action noise levels would range from "marginally acceptable" to "marginally unacceptable." Window/wall attenuation would be required to reduce interior noise levels at noise-sensitive land uses along 41st Street between 35th and 36th Avenues. As described in Chapter 16, "Noise," up to 33 dBA window/wall attenuation would be required to achieve acceptable interior noise levels per the *CEQR Technical Manual* noise exposure guideline at residential and community facility uses. To implement the attenuation requirements at the development sites, an (E) Designation or equivalent mechanism for noise would be applied specifying the appropriate window/wall attenuation. By meeting the design guidelines specified in the Noise (E) Designation or equivalent mechanism, buildings developed as a result of the Proposed Actions would provide sufficient attenuation to achieve the *CEQR Technical Manual* interior noise level guidelines of 45 dBA L_{10} for residential or community facility uses and 50 dBA L_{10} for commercial office uses. With the proposed (E) Designation, there would be no significant adverse impacts with respect to noise.

As interior noise levels would be attenuated with an (E) Designation and incremental mobile source noise levels would largely remain minimal, this would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character or contribute to a combination of moderate effects with the potential to affect defining features of the neighborhood.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the Proposed Actions would not substantially alter the character of the neighborhood and would likely have beneficial effects on a number of the defining features of the neighborhood. While the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts in the contributing

[4] As discussed in Chapter 20, "Mitigation," pedestrian flow along the three impacted sidewalks is constrained by the presence of outdoor dining areas. As these sidewalks are outside the boundaries of the LSGD and are not under the control of the applicant, the significant adverse sidewalk impacts would remain unmitigated under the conservative assumption that it is not possible to relocate or reconfigure the outdoor dining areas.

technical areas of open space, shadows, and transportation, these effects would not be of such a degree that they would result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

The Proposed Actions would also not be expected to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively impact neighborhood character. Overall, the Proposed Actions would be expected to result in revitalization that would improve the existing character of the neighborhood; as a result, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character. ✷