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Effects on Disadvantaged Communities

This chapter assesses the potential of the Proposed Actions to cause or increase a disproportionate pollution burden on disadvantaged communities. Impacts identified by this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) are weighed against the benefits that would result from the Proposed Actions in assessing whether they would cause a disproportionate burden on the affected communities.

Introduction

Section 8-0109(2)(k) of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law requires that future Environmental Impact Statements include a statement of the effects of the Proposed Actions on disadvantaged communities, including whether the action may cause or increase a disproportionate pollution burden. The *2021 CEQR Technical Manual* does not provide guidance regarding the scope of this analysis. On January 29, 2025, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) proposed a rule that provides additional considerations regarding this new statutory provision[1]. This assessment of effects on disadvantaged communities considers the impacts identified using *CEQR Technical Manual* guidance.

As described in **Chapter 1, Project Description**, the Proposed Project would result in the redevelopment of approximately 78 acres of underutilized, largely asphalt surface parking areas adjacent and accessory to Citi Field with a major mixed-use development. The Queens Future Project is anticipated to comprise up to approximately 3.7 million square feet of new construction, with destination entertainment that includes a music hall, hotel, gaming facility,[2] convention and meeting space, restaurant and retail space, and office and community facility space. The Proposed Project would also include public park space—at least 20 acres of the Development Site would be improved

[1] State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) Regulatory Revisions - NYSDEC

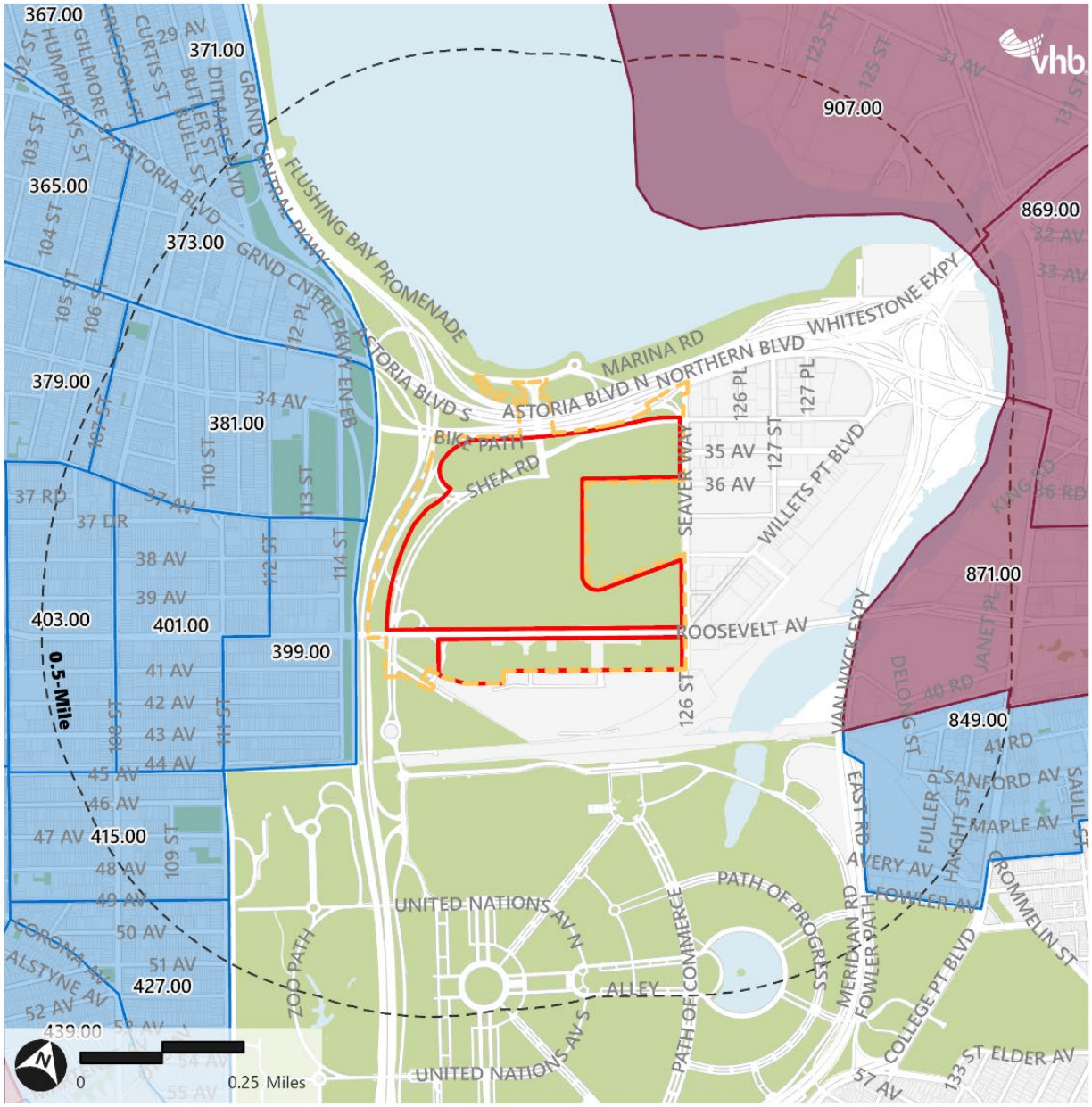
[2] The inclusion of a gaming facility is contingent upon receiving a gaming license from the New York State Gaming Commission.

with landscaping and other amenities for public recreation—improved connections to the Mets-Willets Point NYCT No. 7 Train Subway Station (referred to as the Mets-Willets Point Subway Station for the purposes of this chapter), and other public realm improvements as well as structured parking facilities to accommodate up to 13,750 spaces.

Disadvantaged communities (DAC) in New York State were identified based on criteria adopted in 2023 by the Climate Justice Working Group (CJWG), a group composed of representatives from State Agencies and Environmental Justice groups across the State. The CJWG used 45 indicators to identify 35 percent of Census Tracts within New York State as DACs. The criteria include multiple indicators that represent the environmental burdens or climate change risks within a community, or population characteristics and health vulnerabilities that can contribute to more severe adverse effects of climate change[3]. As shown in **Figure 26-1**, while the Development Site is not located in a DAC, Census Tracts identified as DACs are present within a half-mile study area surrounding the Development Site. While the majority of Census Tracts identified as DACs in the study area have comparatively lower burdens and vulnerabilities, there are three Census Tracts intersecting the study area boundary that were found to have comparatively higher burdens and vulnerabilities; these Census Tracts are located east of the Development Site in the Flushing neighborhood.

[3] NYSDEC (2025), https://climate.ny.gov/resources/disadvantaged-communities-criteria/

Figure 26-1 Disadvantaged Communities Study Area



Source: ESRI, DOITT GIS, NYSERDA, NYSDEC

Disadvantaged Communities Assessment

The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the following technical areas analyzed in this EIS: Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy, Socioeconomic Conditions, Community Facilities and Services, Open Space, Shadows, Historic and Cultural Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Natural Resources, Hazardous Materials, Water and Sewer Infrastructure, Solid Waste and Sanitation Services, Energy, Air Quality, Greenhouse Gas Emissions and Climate Change, Noise, Public Health, and Neighborhood Character. Furthermore, the EIS does not disclose the potential for the Proposed Project to cause any combination of moderate effects which together result in an impact. As such, the Proposed Project would not cause a disproportionate effect on DACs with respect to any of these technical areas, including cumulative effects from multiple technical areas.

The EIS identified the potential for the Proposed Project to result in significant adverse impacts on local and highway traffic, bus, and pedestrians, of which some of the traffic and pedestrian impacts would be unmitigable, per *CEQR Technical Manual* guidance.

The Proposed Project would incorporate improvements to the transportation network infrastructure serving the Development Site and its surroundings, that would have beneficial effects on transportation conditions in the study area. These include accessibility improvements to the Mets-Willets Point NYCT No. 7 Train Subway Station, providing ADA access, for the first time, to the No. 7 subway station as well as Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, highway access improvements for Grand Central Parkway, and other roadway improvements along Shea Road and Seaver Way. Additionally, the Proposed Project would include improvements to bike and pedestrian infrastructure, including new promenades, pathways, and bike lanes, a new pedestrian bridge over Shea Road, and a new pedestrian/bike bridge. The pedestrian experience along Roosevelt Avenue in particular would be improved with widened sidewalks and new landscaping. As noted above, three Census Tracts identified as DACs with comparatively higher burdens and vulnerabilities are located within a half-mile of the Development Site, Census Tracts 907, 869, and 871 (see **Figure 26-1**). These Census Tracts are located in the Flushing neighborhood east of the Development Site. Transit and pedestrian improvements introduced by the Proposed Development would benefit these communities by supporting infrastructure improvements to the No. 7 subway line and increasing connectivity between Flushing and Corona by way of the Development Site.

This EIS discloses that the Proposed Project has the potential to result in significant adverse traffic impacts at certain local intersections and highway segments. It should be noted that the Proposed Project would not cause noise or air quality impacts, including impacts from mobile sources (i.e. vehicles). As traffic itself does not constitute pollution, the Proposed Project would not cause a pollution burden on DACs.

While the Proposed Project would lead to increased traffic on nearby highways and thus result in significant adverse traffic impacts under certain conditions, these impacts would not have a disproportionate effect on DACs. The arterial highways and highway network found within the study area are designed to and currently carry large numbers of vehicles and would continue to do so in the No-Action condition. The arterial highways studied in **Chapter 14, Transportation,** i.e., the Grand Central Parkway and the Van Wyck and Whitestone Expressways, are characterized by heavy utilization as they are regional networks designed to carry large numbers of vehicles between neighborhoods and cities, and by definition bypass local roads and traffic. Traffic generated by the Proposed Project on these highways would be distributed among areas that are DACs and areas that

are not DACs. A maximum of five highway segments would be impacted within a DAC during a given peak hour; most of the impacted segments are located entirely outside of a DAC for all of the peak hours analyzed. Thus, the identification of significant adverse impacts on the highway network and an increase in utilization on arterial highways would not have a disproportionate effect on DACs.

The anticipated traffic impacts to the local roadway network would not have a disproportionate effect on DACs. As discussed in detail in **Chapter 21, Mitigation**, many of the local roadway impacts would be fully or partially mitigated through interventions such as signal timing changes or installation of new traffic signals, which are standard traffic capacity improvements that are typically implemented by the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT). Of the impacts that could not be fully mitigated, local traffic impacts would occur both in areas identified as DACs and outside of DACs. These impacts would be concentrated on busy commercial thoroughfares (as opposed to residential streets), such as Roosevelt Avenue, which are characterized by high traffic volumes under existing conditions and would continue to do so in the No-Action condition. In particular, by the future analysis year, local traffic conditions would reflect other major development projects (Willets Point Phase 1 and Phase 2) in the area. Accordingly, traffic congestion along local thoroughfares would be present even without the Proposed Project, due to background development in the No-Action condition that would generate substantial traffic volumes along these primary streets serving the local network. As such, traffic impacts on these intersections during one or more peak periods would not disproportionately affect DACs.

Bus and pedestrian impacts identified in the EIS would not have a disproportionate effect on DACs. The anticipated bus line capacity impacts to the Q48 route would be fully mitigated by increasing service frequency. Pedestrian impacts to between one and nine elements (depending on peak hour) are anticipated to occur; however, these impacts would occur entirely outside a DAC, and their effects would be further offset by the project improvements described below.

The Proposed Project would provide improvements to transit, the pedestrian network and the bike path network surrounding the Development Site. The Proposed Project would incorporate improvements to the MTA station that would strengthen connections to and from the Development Site and provide ADA access, for the first time, to the No. 7 subway station as well as Flushing Meadows-Corona Park. Specifically, modifications to the station structure would enhance the connection between the Development Site north of Roosevelt Avenue, and the Passerelle structure south of Roosevelt Avenue, thereby enhancing the pedestrian connection from the southern portion of Flushing Meadows Corona Park to the Development Site and the waterfront beyond. As a key benefit of these enhancements, the station would be made fully ADA accessible. Pedestrian and bike infrastructure improvements would include the construction of new promenades and pathways including a protected bike and pedestrian way under the Whitestone Expressway, a new pedestrian bridge over Shea Road, a pedestrian/bike bridge over the highway ramps replacing the existing at-grade crosswalk at the ramp from the westbound Grand Central Parkway to the eastbound Whitestone Expressway, numerous additions and improvements to sidewalks along Shea Road and Roosevelt Avenue, and crosswalks connecting the north and south sides of Roosevelt Avenue. Lighting improvements and a protected zone for bikes and pedestrians along Roosevelt Avenue under the elevated No. 7 Subway tracks would also be included to improve pedestrian experience and safety. The proposed 20 acres of public park space would include bike lanes and pedestrian pathways, further strengthening connections to and from the Development Site. While these improvements would occur in an area not identified as a DAC, residents of the surrounding residential neighborhoods that are identified as DACs would benefit from transit upgrades and a general improvement to the pedestrian streetscape surrounding the Development Site.

Residents of higher-burden DACs in Flushing east of the Development Site would benefit from improvements to infrastructure supporting the No. 7 subway line, which connects the Development Site to the Flushing neighborhood. Pedestrian and traffic improvements introduced by the Proposed Project would also indirectly benefit residents of this area by increasing pedestrian access between the Flushing and Corona neighborhoods and diverting highway traffic away from residential streets.

Based on the foregoing assessment, the Proposed Project would not disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities, nor would it cause or increase a disproportionate pollution burden. While the EIS discloses transportation impacts, their effects would not disproportionately affect disadvantaged communities, and the Proposed Project would incorporate proposed pedestrian and transit improvements.