West Harlem Rezoning EIS
CHAPTER 16: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

A. INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct "personality". These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. A neighborhood character assessment under CEQR considers how elements of the natural and built environment combine to create the context and feeling of a neighborhood and how a proposed action may affect that context and feeling. Thus, to determine a project's effects on neighborhood character, a neighborhood's contributing elements are considered together.

An assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of several technical areas that are assessed separately in other EIS sections, or when the project may have moderate effects on several of the elements that define a neighborhood's character. The relevant technical areas are Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy; Socioeconomic Conditions; Open Space; Shadows; Historic and Cultural Resources; Urban Design and Visual Resources; Transportation; and Noise. A significant impact identified in one of these technical areas is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Proposed Action includes zoning map and zoning text amendments affecting an approximately 90 block area within the West Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan Community District 9; it is generally bounded by West 126th Street, West 155th Street, Edgecombe, Bradhurst and Convent avenues and Riverside Drive. A reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDS) for development associated with the Proposed Action has been identified. For environmental assessment purposes, projected developments, considered likely to occur in the foreseeable future, i.e., an approximate ten-year period following the adoption of the Proposed Action, are expected to occur on 24 sites, and potential developments, which are considered possible but less likely, have been identified for 16 additional sites.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The rezoning area and surrounding study area include parts of the Hamilton Heights, Manhattanville, Morningside Heights, Central Harlem, and Washington Heights neighborhoods. As described elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Action would not cause significant adverse impacts regarding land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources, or noise. The scale of significant adverse impacts to shadows, historic and cultural resources, and transportation would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of moderately adverse effects affect a neighborhood's defining features. The Proposed Action would therefore not have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact, as discussed below.

C. METHODOLOGY

The purpose of a neighborhood character preliminary assessment is to determine whether changes expected in specified technical areas may adversely affect a contributing element of neighborhood character. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the assessment should answer the following two questions:

1. What are the defining features of the neighborhood(s)?
2. Does the project have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas?

The preliminary assessment therefore begins with a description of the existing conditions and defining features of the neighborhoods that comprise study area, followed by an assessment of the potential for the Proposed Action to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas. If the assessment results indicate that the anticipated impacts and effects related to those technical areas would not have the potential to adversely affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, then, according to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a detailed analysis is not warranted.

Study Area

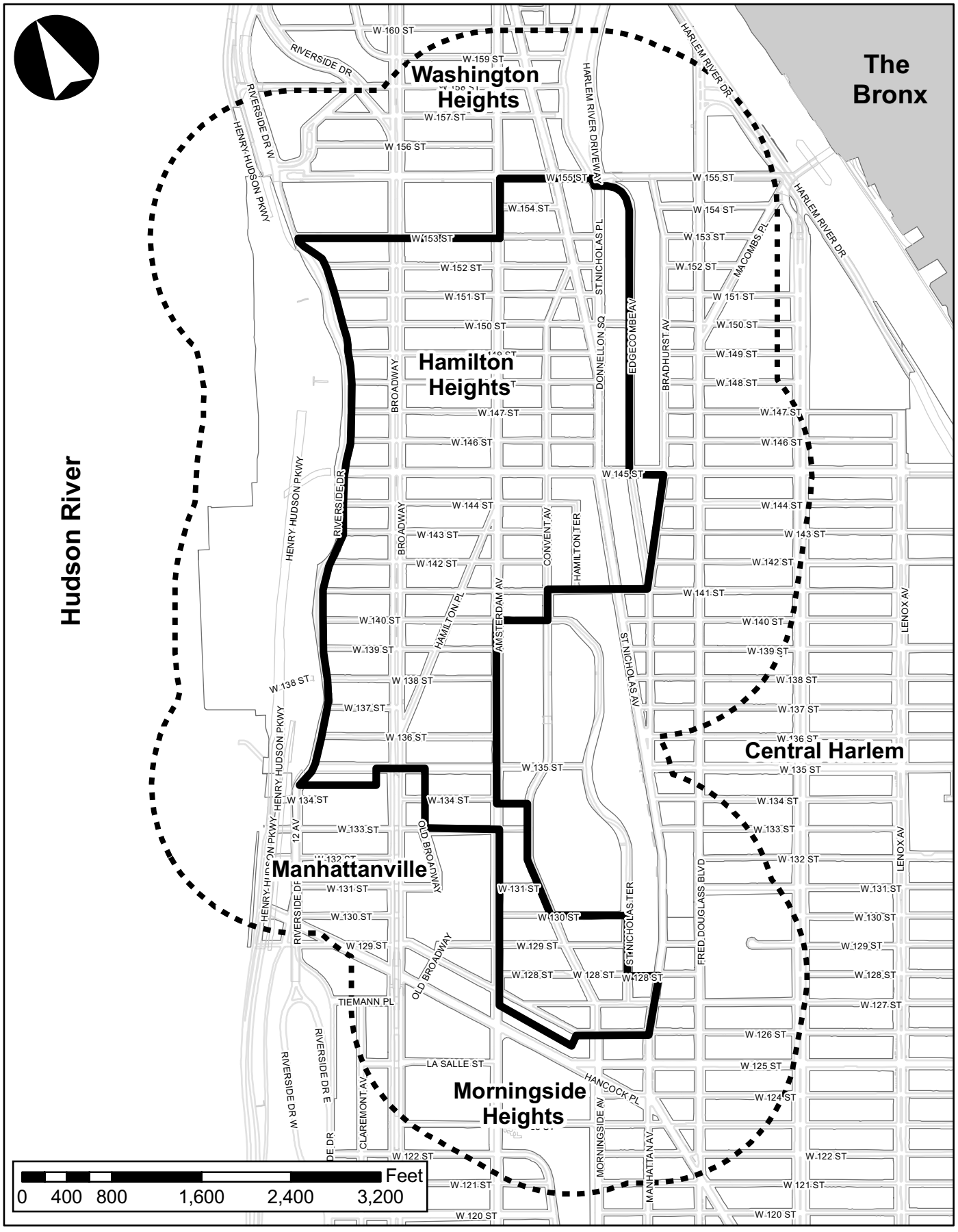
The neighborhood character study area has been delineated in accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* statement that the study area for a preliminary analysis of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. As shown in Figure 16-1, it generally consists of the area within a quarter-mile radius of the proposed rezoning area. The study area boundaries are similar to those used for land use, zoning and public policy, for the preliminary assessment of socioeconomic conditions, and for urban design and visual resources, and they encompass the study areas used for historic and cultural resources, shadows, transportation, and noise.

D. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

Existing Neighborhood Character and Defining Features

For the purposes of assessing neighborhood character, the five neighborhoods that comprise the study area (refer to Figure 16-1) are each discussed separately: (1) Hamilton Heights; (2) Manhattanville; (3) Morningside Heights; (4) Central Harlem; and (5) Washington Heights. As described below, the ¼-mile study area is predominantly residential in character; approximately 60 percent of the total land area in the proposed rezoning area consists of residential-only buildings. As also described below, two of the most defining features of the study area are its topography, and the architectural character of the historic districts in the northeastern section of the proposed rezoning area. Generally, West Harlem has a predominant low-rise brownstone character, with many blocks located within LPC or State-designated historic districts.

Neighborhood Character Study Area



Hamilton Heights

The Hamilton Heights portion of the study area is characterized by a mix of residential, commercial, institutional, and open space uses. This neighborhood, which comprises all of the six LPC-designated historic districts within the proposed rezoning area (refer to Chapter 7, "Historic Resources") is characterized by the historic character of these districts, mostly in the form of intact late 19th and early 20th century residential architecture including row houses and apartment buildings. As such, in the northeastern section of this neighborhood, commonly referred to as Sugar Hill, the residential buildings are typically three- to five-story row houses, the scale of which is preserved by the Hamilton Heights Historic District and Extension and the Hamilton Heights/Sugar Hill and Extension Historic District, which are generally mapped between West 145th and West 155th streets east of Amsterdam Avenue, and set the land use and visual character of this area.

Riverside Drive, which forms the western boundary of the study area, is almost exclusively residential; it is developed with high lot coverage multi-family residential buildings that range from six to 12 stories in height. Between Broadway and Riverside Drive, the study area is developed with residential buildings ranging in height from three to six stories, with most buildings having four to six stories. Commercial uses, typically ground-floor neighborhood retail, are located on Broadway, West 145th Street, and, to a lesser extent, Amsterdam Avenue, and generally include restaurants, small delis, dry cleaners, and other stores serving the residential area. Broadway is developed with residential and mixed residential/ commercial buildings.

There are a number of community facilities and institutions throughout the Hamilton Heights section of the study area, the most notable of which include Our Lady of Lourdes Church, which is a New York City Landmark, St. Luke's Episcopal Church, St. James Presbyterian Church, and the Harlem School of the Arts. The area also includes the Hamilton Grange branch of the New York Public Library, which is a New York City Landmark, the Hamilton Grange Post Office and P.S. 153, the 30th Police Precinct station, the New York City Fire Department's (FDNY) Engine 80/Ladder 23, as well as P.S. 192 and the adjacent Jacob H. Schiff Playground. In addition, the area has the landmark Hamilton Grange National Monument, Alexander Hamilton's clapboard-sided country house.

The North River Wastewater Treatment Plant is located along the Hudson River, between West 137th and West 145th streets. The roof of the plant is occupied by Riverbank State Park, an approximately 28 acre State park and recreational facility, which also offers spectacular promenade views of the Hudson River. Directly south of the North River Wastewater Treatment Plant and Riverbank State Park is the former New York City Department of Sanitation (DSNY) West 135th Street marine transfer station, on the Hudson River at the end of West 135th Street, which is currently inactive.

The few transportation and utility uses in this area include a NYCT substation located on the south side of West 143rd Street between Riverside Drive and Broadway, and a large two-story parking garage on the west side of St. Nicholas Avenue between West 141st Street and West 145th Street, just north of the Harlem School of the Arts.

Manhattanville

Most of Manhattanville lies in a valley oriented toward the Hudson River. The eastern portions of this neighborhood, in addition to Hamilton Heights to the north and Morningside Heights to the south, sit at a higher elevation. Manhattanville has an irregular street grid and blocks of different sizes and shapes, which reflect the changes in elevation; irregularly shaped parks bordering the neighborhood to the east and west; superblock developments throughout the neighborhood; diagonal orientation of the major street

(West 125th Street) leading to and from the river; and interruptions caused by the Manhattan Valley IRT viaduct.

Manhattanville contains a mix of land uses. These include the low-density industrial buildings, medium- to high-density residential development, and a number of institutions, most notably the 35-acre City College (CCNY) Manhattanville campus, prominently located atop a hill overlooking both Central Harlem to the east and the remainder of Manhattanville to the west. Visually, this neighborhood is strongly defined by its elevated transportation viaducts: the Manhattan Valley IRT viaduct along Broadway—which acts generally as a border between the manufacturing and residential areas in this neighborhood—and the viaducts carrying Riverside Drive, the Henry Hudson Parkway, and the Amtrak rail line along the Hudson River. Broadway, West 125th Street, and Amsterdam Avenue, are the commercial corridors that service this neighborhood; however, the commercial character of these corridors is much less intense when compared with these same corridors in adjacent neighborhoods.

Unlike the rest of the study area, this neighborhood has a concentration of light industrial and transportation uses, as a result of the M-zoned district at the southern edge of the proposed rezoning area. The M1-1 district comprises portions of four blocks generally bounded by West 126th and West 129th streets, Convent and Amsterdam avenues. Although zoned for light manufacturing use, this area has a mix of commercial, residential and light industrial uses. In fact, over one-third of the land is developed with industrial and manufacturing uses. The Mink Building complex, which comprises five lots from West 128th to West 129th streets, contains most of this area's light industrial and commercial uses, including space utilized for a building supplies company, non-profit art studios, storage for theatrical props, and office space for a small media company. The area also has several community facilities (e.g., drug treatment center, church). Other uses in the M1-1 district include the MTA-New York City Transit Amsterdam Bus Depot, located at Amsterdam Avenue between West 128th and West 129th streets, which is used for the temporary storage of buses; a one-story structure containing a live poultry retailer is located at the corner West 126th Street and Amsterdam Avenue. Additionally, the area has surface parking lots, auto repair, and a few community facility uses – including houses of worship – interspersed with five-story residential buildings.

Residential use in this area is largely confined to two large residential developments. Directly south of the proposed rezoning area is a large horseshoe-shaped, residential, high-rise (11-to 35-stories) development, the Riverside Park Community, containing 1,190 apartments at 3333 Broadway. It encircles I.S 195 Roberto Clemente Intermediate School and Kipp Infinity Charter School, which front on West 133rd Street. The other large residential development in this neighborhood is the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) Manhattanville Houses, a complex consisting of six Y-shaped 20-story apartment buildings, located on the west side of Amsterdam Avenue between West 129th and West 133rd streets directly east of the study area. The only other residential development consists of residential apartments occupying the upper floors of mixed-use buildings on West 125th Street.

Commercial uses are located sporadically along Amsterdam Avenue, typically on the ground floor of residential buildings. These commercial uses generally include restaurants, small delis, dry cleaners, and other stores serving the residential area. In addition, the area to the west of Twelfth Avenue is mostly commercial. The Fairway Market, a specialty full-service grocery store, and its parking lot occupy the entire block bounded by West 133rd Street, Twelfth Avenue, West 132nd Street and Marginal Street. Accessory parking for Fairway also occupies the majority of the area between West 130th and West 132nd streets to the west of Twelfth Avenue. The Hudson River Café is located at the northwest corner of Twelfth Avenue and West 133rd Street, and the Dinosaur Barbeque restaurant is located at the southwest corner of Twelfth Avenue and West 125th Street.

Further to the west along the Hudson River waterfront is the West Harlem Piers Park, an approximately two acre park that connects West Harlem to the Hudson River Greenway. It features recreational piers, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and landscaped open space. The only other public open space in this subarea is Sheltering Arms Park on West 126th Street at Amsterdam Avenue and the southern portion of St. Nicolas Park, which borders CCNY to the east.

Apart from the CCNY campus, other institutional facilities in this subarea include the New York City Police Department (NYPD) 26th Precinct Station, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) Engine Co. 37/Ladder Co. 40 firehouse, and P.S. 129. Notable religious institutions in the subarea include the landmark St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church (including the parish house and Sunday school); the Church of the Annunciation; and the Old Broadway Synagogue.

Morningside Heights

Like Manhattanville, Morningside Heights is strongly defined by its topography. The Morningside Heights street grid conforms to both the changes in elevation, the irregularly shaped parks that border this neighborhood to the east and west, and superblock developments throughout this neighborhood, resulting in an irregular street pattern and creating blocks of varying sizes and shapes.

The study area includes the northeastern edge of Morningside Heights, which is largely residential and educational/institutional in character. It is dominated by Morningside Gardens, a middle income residential cooperative consisting of six 21-story buildings, and the NYCHA General Grant Houses, which comprise nine 21-story buildings that occupy the two superblocks south of West 125th Street between Broadway and Morningside Avenue. Other residential buildings are generally mid-rise, five to six stories tall, on larger lots, and with interior or side courtyards, with slightly taller structures located along Tiemann Place (West 127th Street).

Broadway is the neighborhood's main thoroughfare, which is lined with ground floor retail shops, restaurants, and services with residential uses located on the upper floors. This subarea also includes a number of community facilities, such as the George Bruce branch of the New York Public Library, the Jewish Theological Seminary, P.S. 36, and P.S. 125.

Morningside Park is located along the southern border of the study area at the eastern edge of the Morningside Heights subarea. In its entirety, it includes approximately 30 blocks and extends from West 110th Street to West 123rd Street between Manhattan Avenue and Morningside Avenue and Morningside Drive. Built on a steep incline, Morningside Park is a New York City Scenic Landmark and features unique views, and recreational amenities.

Central Harlem

The Central Harlem subarea comprises the eastern portion of the study area from roughly West 122nd Street to West 155th Street and east of St. Nicholas Avenue. With the exception of the area near the 125th Street corridor, which is commercial, the Central Harlem neighborhood is largely residential. Community facilities are also prevalent.

125th Street serves as a regional commercial corridor for Harlem continuing as far east as Second Avenue. Commercial uses are typically housed in buildings ranging in height from one to five stories and include clothing stores, restaurants, jewelers, hardware stores, and beauty salons. Most residential development in Central Harlem is characterized by 3 to 6-story multifamily buildings, some with ground floor retail along Bradhurst Avenue and Frederick Douglass Boulevard. The Central Harlem subarea also includes several

NYCHA developments, including: the Saint Nicholas Houses; the Drew Hamilton Houses; and the Harlem River Houses. Other prominent residential developments include the Lionel Hampton Houses (355 dwelling units), a former Mitchell Lama development, at 2450 Frederick Douglas Boulevard between West 131st and West 132nd streets and 410 St. Nicholas Avenue.

Encompassing approximately 10 blocks, Jackie Robinson Park extends from West 145th Street to West 155th Street between Edgecombe and Bradhurst Avenues, and forming the northwestern edge of Central Harlem directly east of the proposed rezoning area. It includes the New York City Landmarked Jackie Robinson Pool and Recreation Center, as well as a number of active and passive recreational amenities.

Washington Heights

Washington Heights comprises the northern portion of the study area and is also predominately residential. Open Space is abundant, and institutional uses are scattered throughout the neighborhood. Commercial uses are found along Amsterdam Avenue, Broadway, and St. Nicholas Avenue – usually in the form of ground floor retail in mixed-use residential buildings. This neighborhood is largely comprised of low-to mid-rise pre-war brick residential buildings, including 3-story rowhouses, 5- to 6-story multifamily elevator buildings, and some mixed-use residential buildings with ground floor retail. At the northeastern corner of the study area are the Ralph Rangel and Polo Ground Towers, which consist of several 14-and 30-story residential buildings containing a total of approximately 2,600 apartments.

Occupying more than 118 acres in the greater Washington Heights neighborhood, Highbridge Park is located to the north of the study area on the north side of West 155th Street between St. Nicholas and Edgecombe avenues. Highbridge Park extends north to Dyckman Street along the northeastern portion of Manhattan on the western bank of the Harlem River. It is known for its important landmarks, including the High Bridge (the City's oldest standing bridge) and Highbridge tower. The park also features open vistas and unusual geological makeup, and numerous recreational amenities. Among the park's strongest features are the magnificent cliffs and large rock outcroppings that dominate the park. Fort Washington Park extends along the west side of northern Manhattan from West 155th Street to West 179th Street in Washington Heights, and includes slightly more than 182 acres. The park offers unobstructed views of the George Washington Bridge and contains the only lighthouse within Manhattan, the Little Red Lighthouse.

Community facilities and institutional uses in this neighborhood include Boricua College, the Fort Washington Post Office at Broadway and, and P.S. 28, which also contains the Orville and Wilbur Playground. Directly north of the proposed rezoning area is the Trinity Church Cemetery, it is divided into two sections by Broadway. It includes two designated New York City Landmarks the Chapel of Intercession and the Vicarage of the Chapel of Intercession, which are located at the southeast corner of Broadway and West 155th Street. In addition, several museums are located in the northern portion of the study area within the Audubon Terrace Historic District, including Audubon Terrace, Dia at the Hispanic Society, Hispanic Society of America Museum, and the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

This area also includes two historic districts: the Audubon Terrace Historic District, which encompasses the majority of the block bounded by West 156th Street, Broadway, West 155th Street, and Riverside Drive; and the Audubon Park Historic District, which encompasses approximately five blocks and is generally bounded by West 158th Street, Broadway, West 156th Street, and Riverside Drive.

Assessment of Proposed Action's Potential Effects on Neighborhood Character

Technical Area Significant Adverse Impacts and Moderate Adverse Effects

The analysis below presents the potential changes in the technical areas comprising the neighborhood character of the study area. As stated above, this analysis focuses on the potential changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in Land Use, Socioeconomic Conditions, Open Space, Shadows, Historic Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Transportation (traffic and pedestrians), and Noise. Detailed technical analyses for each of these areas are presented in their respective chapters. As discussed in greater detail in those chapters, environmental and social changes in the areas with respect to neighborhood character are as follows:

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

No significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects have been identified with regard to land use, zoning, or public policy. All of the land use types that would result from the Proposed Action (residential, retail commercial, and community facility) are found in the study area and would therefore be compatible with them. The Proposed Action includes mapping contextual zoning that would protect the existing built context of West Harlem, while promoting some future development that would blend with the existing urban fabric, as well as be compatible with the existing zoning designations in the surrounding areas. It also includes modest increases in density along portions of West 145th Street – a significant east-west corridor, to incentivize mixed-use development and expand opportunities for affordable housing, as well as directs higher densities to areas that can better accommodate future growth, such as those close to subway lines and in the area currently mapped with a M1-1 district, while mapping lower densities on predominantly residential brownstone blocks to preserve the low-to mid-rise character.

The Proposed Action also expands development opportunities for several blocks currently zoned only for light manufacturing use by providing flexibility to allow a wider range of uses and activities and increasing the allowable density. The proposed rezoning, through density increases, would enable better accommodation of mixed-use throughout the area that is currently zoned M1-1, including retail, arts production uses and exhibition space, offices and other commercial anchors. Certain semi and light manufacturing uses would continue to be permitted, however, given market trends, it is expected that no new industrial development would occur as a result of the Proposed Action. With the projected development anticipated in the proposed MX district, new residential, community facility, and/or commercial buildings constructed as part of the RWCDS would replace under-utilized sites, enlivening the streetscape. The new buildings would be constructed to the bulk and scale common to the neighborhood pursuant to the mandatory streetwall and total building heights. Thus, the character of the southern portion of the study area that is currently zoned M1-1 would be expected to improve due to site-specific improvements, such as the occupancy of vacant buildings and conversion to active uses.

The Proposed Action would also provide support for existing ground floor retail uses by mapping commercial overlays along streets where existing ground floor retail uses exist to encourage the growth of local-scale commercial activity. As such, the Proposed Action directly addresses the community's request for contextual rezoning and provides incentives for much needed affordable housing. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts on land use, but is expected to have a beneficial effect on the built character, context and the range of uses in West Harlem.

Socioeconomic Conditions

As detailed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse direct or indirect residential displacement impacts, nor would it result in significant adverse impacts due to direct or indirect business and institutional displacement. Direct displacement as a result of the Proposed Action would be limited to 11 businesses and institutions located on three of the 24 projected development sites, subject to lease terms and agreements between private firms and property owners existing at the time of redevelopment in the With-Action condition. These 11 businesses/ institutions that could be directly displaced conduct a variety of business activities, including automotive and transportation-related service, wholesale, educational, health and social service, warehousing, and insurance sales. Moreover, the Proposed Action would not result in the direct displacement of any businesses that provide products or services essential to the local economy that would no longer be available in its trade area. Therefore, the direct business displacement resulting from the Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse impact, and no changes to neighborhood character can be expected. Furthermore, it is the intent of the Proposed Action to expand development opportunities for several blocks currently zoned only for light manufacturing use, which would allow a wider range of uses and increase the allowable FAR, thereby furthering the community's officially adopted goal of creating a stable climate for investment, employment retention and new job creation.

Open Space

The Proposed Action would not have a direct impact on any open space resource in the study area. No open space would be displaced and no significant shadows would be cast on any publically accessible open spaces to a degree that would affect their utilization. The Proposed Action would not affect any particular user group, nor would it introduce a population with any unusual characteristics. The Proposed Action would not increase the amount of publicly accessible open space in the study area; however, the proposed contextual zoning districts to be mapped as part of the Proposed Action will require that new residential developments provide on-site recreation space for building residents in accordance with the provisions of the Quality Housing program. This on-site recreation space would help to partially offset the increased residential population's additional demand on the study area's open space resources.

As detailed in Chapter 5, "Open Space," there is a shortfall of total and active open space within the residential study area (an approximate ½-mile radius) under existing, No-Action, and With-Action conditions. However, the combination of the availability of a variety of open spaces – such as recreational areas, spaces for walking and biking, pools, and school playgrounds – and the large regional open space resources in the vicinity of the open space study area all add to the open space conditions under existing, No-Action and With-Action scenarios. Therefore, the increased demand resulting from the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse open space impacts, and would not adversely affect neighborhood character.

Shadows

As discussed in Chapter 6, "Shadows," the incremental shadows from the RWCDS projected and potential development sites would have significant adverse impacts on only one historic resource: St. Mary's Episcopal Church, located at 517 West 126th Street. The remaining open spaces and historic resources in the study area would not be significantly affected or affected at all. The incremental shadows would be cast on the eastern (side) façade of the church, which contains large stained glass windows that are considered a sunlight-sensitive feature, for a duration of approximately 1 hour and 33 minutes on the December 21 analysis day. Measures to mitigate this impact (e.g., special lighting features) will be considered between the Draft and Final EIS. Absent the identification and implementation of feasible and

practicable mitigation measures, the Proposed Action could have an unmitigated significant adverse shadows impact on St. Mary's Protestant Episcopal Church. However, although the shadow impact would have an effect on the visual enjoyment of the eastern leaded glass windows from inside the church, it would not affect the church's exterior façade not its essential functions and visual status in the community. Thus this shadow impact would not create a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources, but has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts to architectural resources.

Although two projected development sites fall within a LPC-designated historic district, and one potential development site falls within an LPC-eligible historic district, those sites are expected to undergo conversion in the future without the Proposed Action, and therefore any conversion of those two sites under the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to those historic districts. In addition, existing structures located on four potential development sites located within the S/NR-listed Sugar Hill Historic District are projected to be demolished and redeveloped in the With-Action condition. However, two of those sites are described as non-contributing buildings in the S/NR nomination report, and therefore projected redevelopment of those two sites would not be considered a significant adverse direct impact. For the remaining two sites, as both sites are expected to be redeveloped in the future without the Proposed Action, any redevelopment of those two sites under the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to historic architectural resources. The Proposed Action and subsequent developments are also not expected to have any direct physical impacts on any designated individual landmarks in the study area, as they would not result in any physical destruction, demolition, damage or alteration to any designated historic property that is an individual landmark.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 7, "Historic Resource," the Proposed Action could result in direct effects to one resource that is eligible for LPC-designation and S/NR-listing (the former Bernheimer & Schwartz Pilsener Brewing Company complex (a.k.a. Yuengling) that encompasses projected development sites 14 and 40, within the area proposed for MX zoning), which could be demolished, either partially or entirely, as a consequence of the Proposed Action. While the identified significant adverse direct impact to this eligible architectural resource could be partially mitigated, as it would not be completely eliminated, it would constitute an unavoidable significant adverse impact on this eligible historic resource.

As discussed above, the Proposed Action would also result in incremental shadows being cast on sunlight-sensitive features of one historic resource, namely St. Mary's Episcopal Church. However, this impact would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

The projected and potential developments to be constructed following implementation of the Proposed Action are also not expected to have significant adverse visual/contextual impacts on existing historic resources in the area. The Proposed Action would change the zoning on all projected and potential development sites to a mix of contextual districts in order to ensure that new development would be sensitive to the established height and scale in the West Harlem neighborhood. As the resultant buildings would be similar in bulk to existing developments in the area, they would have minimal effects on the visual context of the historic resources within and in the vicinity of the rezoning area. The developments resulting from the Proposed Action would not alter the setting or visual context of any historic resources in the area, nor would they eliminate or screen publicly accessible views of any resources. As such, the Proposed Action would not adversely affect the architectural character of the historic districts in the northeastern section of the proposed rezoning area, which is a defining neighborhood feature, and

therefore no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character can be expected in relation to historic resources.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 8) indicates that the Proposed Action would result in positive changes and improvements to urban design conditions of the proposed rezoning area. The most appreciable changes would be seen in the built form of new developments, especially pertaining to building bulk, use, and type, and streetscape elements. The proposed building form controls would guide new development to either complement existing areas with a strong contextual built character, reinforce medium density areas, or, to ensure an appropriate scale and massing for higher-density development.

Generally, the Proposed Action would establish contextual zoning districts for residential and mixed-use buildings that would maintain the scale and character of the existing West Harlem communities while providing appropriate development opportunities. The Proposed Action would preserve the low and mid-rise scale of mid-blocks and avenue frontages with strong built contexts, by creating modest decreases and modest increases in density with contextual zoning districts targeted to these areas. The Proposed Action would further enhance the neighborhood's built form and establish traditional urban design distinctions by allowing moderately higher density contextual development on principal corridors and lower density contextual development on midblocks along narrow streets. The proposed zoning changes would also replace an existing manufacturing district in the southeastern portion of the rezoning area with a mixed use district to encourage new mixed use, residential, institutional, and commercial uses, as well as retain high performance manufacturing and industrial uses.

The Proposed Action would not result in any changes to street pattern, block form, or building arrangement, nor would it affect the study area's unique topography, a defining feature. As new development on the projected and potential development sites would be confined to the existing blocks and lots, it would not affect views to the visual resources from the streets or sidewalks. The context of the visual resources that contribute to the character of the study area would not be significantly or substantially altered by the Proposed Action, given the bulk and massing of new construction which would be compatible with the study area's existing resources and built context. As such, the urban design features of the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character in the study area.

Transportation

The character of the study area, like many neighborhoods in New York City, is in part defined by a wide range of travel modes, with high foot traffic on some sidewalks and crosswalks along major retail corridors (although there are also quieter blocks), a mix of auto/taxi/service traffic on the streets, as well as dense and essential transit services, primarily underground in the subway system, but identifiable where the street entry creates nodes of activity. The greatest volume and most visible travel is by foot, with patterns and timing varying for pedestrian activity associated with residents, students, shoppers, visitors and tourists to the area.

The rezoning area street system consists of urban arterials connecting with an irregular grid network of West Harlem's local streets. The east-west local grid is discontinuous between West 130th and West 141st Streets, while the north-south arterial grid is generally continuous throughout the area. Principal arterials within and in the immediate vicinity of the rezoning area include West 155th Street to the north, Riverside Drive to the west, West 125th Street to the south, and Edgecombe Avenue to the east, as well as Broadway

and Amsterdam Avenue. Local truck routes in the vicinity of the rezoning area include Broadway, Amsterdam Avenue, West 155th Street, West 145th Street and West 125th Street.

The mix of uses projected as part of the RWCDS would add residents, workers, shoppers, and visitors to the area. The travel associated with this population would be spread out and distributed throughout the 90-block rezoning area, although traffic generated by the Proposed Action would be mostly concentrated at the southern portion of the rezoning area, in the vicinity of the existing M1-1 district. The travel associated with the additional population generated by the Proposed Action would increase utilization of the area's transportation facilities and in some cases would result in significant traffic impacts, which would be readily mitigable, as discussed below.

As detailed in Chapter 11, "Transportation," the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on transit or pedestrian conditions or parking availability. However, without mitigation measures, such as changes to traffic signal timing or changes to curbside parking regulations, the additional traffic generated by the RWCDS would cause significant adverse traffic impacts during at least one of the peak traffic hours at five intersections in the Manhattanville neighborhood, at the southern edge of the proposed rezoning area. Those impacted intersections are: West 125th Street at Amsterdam Avenue, West 125th Street at St. Nicholas Avenue, West 126th Street at Amsterdam Avenue, West 126th Street at Morningside Avenue, and West 127th Street at Morningside/Convent Avenues. Proposed mitigation measures at all of those intersections, as described in Chapter 18, "Mitigation," would fully mitigate those impacts and result in traffic conditions at least as good as those under future No-Action conditions. There would therefore be no deterioration of traffic conditions at those intersections and thus no possible adverse effect on neighborhood character. The recommended traffic mitigation plan for the intersection of West 126th Street and Amsterdam Avenue includes changes to curbside parking regulations for 100 feet along the south curb on the West 126th Street approach, which would result in the elimination of approximately three to four curbside parking spaces. However, given the relatively small number of parking spaces displaced and the availability of alternative modes of transportation in this area of Manhattan, any potential parking shortfall resulting from this recommended traffic mitigation would not be considered a significant adverse impact under *CEQR Technical Manual* criteria. There would therefore be no possible adverse effect on neighborhood character as a result of the elimination of these three to four parking spaces.

Therefore, while there would be increased transportation activity as a result of the Proposed Action, the resulting conditions would be similar to those seen in the urban neighborhoods defining the study area and would not result in density of activity or service conditions that would be out of character with the surrounding neighborhoods. Thus, the changes in transportation due to the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Noise

Neither the anticipated new development nor the resulting traffic increases would elevate ambient noise levels at any existing sensitive noise receptor in the study area. As discussed in Chapter 14, "Noise," noise increases as a result of additional traffic that would accompany the RWCDS projected development are expected to be imperceptible in the vast majority of locations throughout the proposed rezoning area. These project-related noise increases are therefore not expected to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

Potential to Affect a Defining Feature of the Neighborhood

If the Proposed Action would have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant

technical areas, then a detailed assessment is required to determine whether the Proposed Action may have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact. Of the relevant technical areas specified in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the Proposed Action would not cause significant adverse impacts regarding land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources, or noise. The potential significant adverse impacts on shadows, historic and cultural resources, and transportation, would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character. Additionally, moderate adverse effects that would affect such defining features, either singly or in combination, have also not been identified. The Proposed Action would therefore not have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

Thus, based on the results of the preliminary assessment, there is no potential for the Proposed Action to result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.