Chapter 19: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the potential effects of the Proposed Actions on neighborhood character. As defined in the *2021 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.

The New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) is proposing zoning changes (the "Proposed Actions") that would affect an approximately 54-block area of Long Island City's East River Waterfront and adjacent upland neighborhoods in Queens. The Project Area is generally bounded by Queens Plaza South and the midblock between 39th and 40th Avenues between 21st and 23rd Streets to the north; the East River, Anable Basin, and 5th Street to the west; 46th and 47th Avenues, 46th Road, and the midblock between 44th Drive and 45th Avenue to the south; and 11th, 23rd, and 24th Streets and the midblock between 24th and Crescent Streets to the east.

The Proposed Actions would update zoning to permit a wider range of uses. The zoning changes would allow residential use in key areas and along major corridors where it is currently not allowed, and facilitate the creation of needed affordable housing through Mandatory Inclusionary Housing (MIH). Further, the zoning changes would expand the types of commercial, light industrial and manufacturing uses allowed in the Project Area, as well as the narrow list of uses allowed in the Long Island City Industrial Business Zone (IBZ). The changes are intended to facilitate residential development, including needed affordable housing and support existing businesses and the creative community, increase local job growth, and improve access to diverse, high-quality jobs.

Absent the Proposed Actions in 2035 (the No Action condition), the existing zoning will continue to produce substantially less housing than surrounding areas of Long Island City and manufacturing districts will continue to be dominated by a narrow range of industrial and commercial uses. As described in detail in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the Project Area will remain largely unchanged from existing conditions. It will see little growth in housing and experience increases in office, retail and warehousing development consistent with existing development trends.

The Proposed Actions would result in an increment of approximately 14,699 units (between 3,245 and 4,867 affordable units through MIH), approximately 570,000 square feet of local retail space, approximately 2.6 million square feet of office space, approximately 42,000 square feet of manufacturing space, and approximately 292,000 square feet of community facility space, along with almost six acres of new waterfront open space. The zoning changes would result in net decreases in other commercial space, warehouse space, and auto-related space.

The assessment of neighborhood character was prepared in accordance with the guidance in *the CEQR Technical Manual*. This chapter describes the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and considers the potential effects of the Proposed Actions on these defining features. This assessment relies on the technical analyses presented in other chapters of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The assessment finds that the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. The Proposed Actions would enhance the neighborhood character of the study area by reinforcing the defining features of the neighborhood, which include the East River waterfront and iconic landmarks, a thriving arts and culture scene, and dynamic, everchanging neighborhoods.

The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; urban design and visual resources; and noise. Although there would be significant adverse impacts with respect to open space; historic and cultural resources; shadows, and transportation, these impacts would not result in a significant adverse impact to the defining elements of neighborhood character.

B. METHODOLOGY

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

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood

character. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and then evaluates whether the proposed action has the potential to affect those defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in the relevant technical areas. If the project has the potential to affect defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character may be appropriate. Conversely, if the project has no potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character, a detailed assessment is not warranted.

The key elements that define neighborhood character, and their relationships to one another, form the basis of determining impact significance; in general, the more uniform and consistent the existing neighborhood context, the more sensitive it may be to change. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater change without experiencing a significant adverse impact related to neighborhood character.

STUDY AREA

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study areas for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character are typically consistent with the study areas identified in the technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. For an area-wide rezoning such as the Proposed Actions, the study area boundaries of the preliminary assessment of neighborhood character are coterminous with those used in the analyses of land use or urban design. As shown in **Figure 19-1**, the study areas for the assessment of neighborhood character comprise the Project Area and an area within a ¼-mile radius of the Project Area.

Primary Study Area

The primary study area is comprised of an approximately 54-block area of Long Island City's East River Waterfront and adjacent upland neighborhoods in Queens. The primary study area is generally bounded by Queens Plaza South and the midblock between 39th and 40th Avenues between 21st and 23rd Streets to the north; the East River, Anable Basin, and 5th Street to the west; 46th and 47th Avenues, 46th Road, and the midblock between 44th Drive and 45th Avenue to the south; and 11th, 23rd, and 24th Streets and the midblock between 24th and Crescent Streets to the east (see **Figure 19-1**). The primary study area is divided into separate subareas generally defined as the Waterfront Subarea, Industrial Subarea 1, Industrial Subarea 2, Inland Subarea 1, Inland Subarea 2, Inland Subarea 3, and Inland Subarea 4.

Secondary Study Area

As shown in **Figure 19-1**, the secondary study area is defined as the area within a quarter-mile radius of the primary study area, terminating in the west at the East River waterfront. The secondary study area generally extends north to 37th Avenue, east to Sunnyside Yards, and south to 51st Avenue. The assessment of potential effects on neighborhood character in the secondary study area is discussed by neighborhood, and considers portions of Hunters Point, Downtown Long Island City, Dutch Kills, Ravenswood, and Queensbridge Houses (see **Figure 19-1**).

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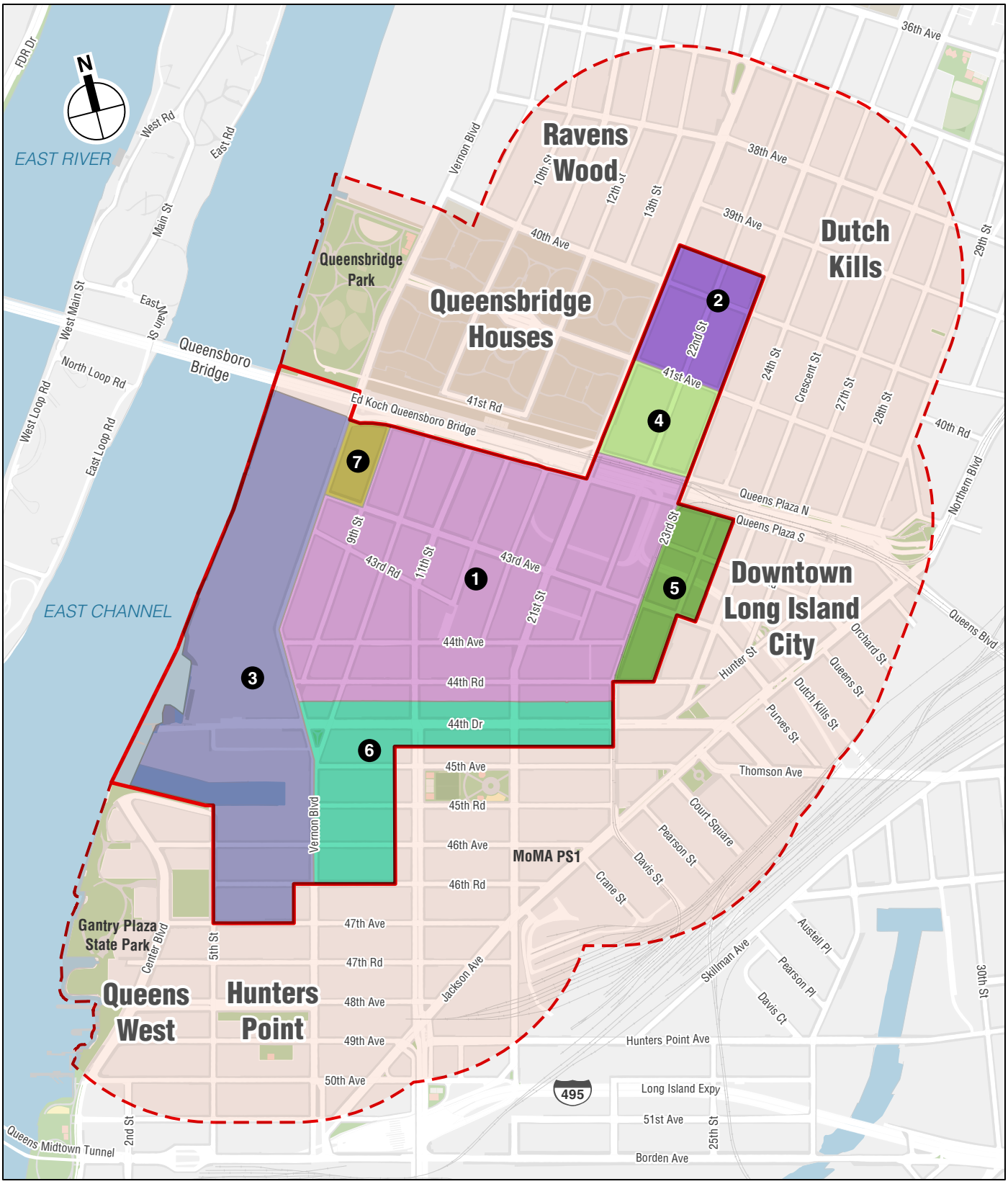

Primary Study Area (Project Area)

Secondary Study Area (1/4-mile perimeter)

Subareas

1 *Industrial 1*

2 *Industrial 2*

3 *Waterfront*

4 *Inland Subarea 1*

5 *Inland Subarea 2*

6 *Inland Subarea 3*

7 *Inland Subarea 4*

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Neighborhood Character

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

The character of Long Island City, long known for its manufacturing, is undergoing a post-industrial transformation. Its character is defined primarily by its East River waterfront, abundance of arts and cultural institutions, and its everchanging neighborhoods that have experienced rapid development and an influx of new residents and businesses, particularly in Downtown Long Island City and in Hunters Point.

EAST RIVER WATERFRONT

The East River waterfront offers stunning views of the New York City skyline, expansive green spaces such as Gantry Plaza State Park, a lively mix of restaurants and bars, with easy access to the East River, and in some places, a well-developed waterfront promenade perfect for walking, running, or biking.

The East River waterfront was originally developed in the mid-to-late 19th century with heavy industrial uses. Ferry connections to Manhattan and the western terminus of the Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) made the area ideal for both industrial and residential growth. The natural shoreline of the river was modified to accommodate development and shipping, notable with the construction of Anable Basin in 1868. Industrial production in Long Island City continued to grow into the middle of the 20th century, but has significantly decreased since the 1970s. Today, the waterfront can be characterized into portions that have been redeveloped with promenades, parks, and residential towers, and portions that remain either industrial or vacant. The waterfront in the primary study area stretches from Anable Basin to the Queensboro Bridge and retains much of the area's industrial past. The area around Anable Basin primarily contains light industrial uses, and the lots along the East River include parking lots, a power plant, a Con Edison training center, and vacant land. The 44th Drive Pier is the only portion of the primary study area's waterfront with publicly accessible open space.

In the secondary study area, much of the waterfront contains parks and promenades. Just north of the Queensboro Bridge is Queensbridge Park, a 20-acre park adjacent to the Queensbridge Houses. In the Hunters Point portion of the neighborhood, the waterfront, from Anable Basin to Newtown Creek, has been redeveloped into public parks as part of the Queens West Project. Gantry Plaza State Park, an approximately 12-acre public waterfront park that features an esplanade and passive amenities such as four piers (including a fishing pier), gardens, a fountain, and restored gantries. Hunter's Point South Park is located south of Gantry Plaza State Park, an approximately 11-acre waterfront park with an esplanade, dog runs, basketball and volleyball courts, playgrounds, lawn areas, and a ferry landing. The parks are popular and highly utilized by residents of Long Island City. The recent construction of Malt Drive Park has begun to extend the open space network from Hunter's Point South Park towards the Newtown Creek shoreline.

Gantry Plaza State Park contains the iconic neon Pepsi sign, refurbished gantries, and the new Queens Public Library at Hunters Point. The Pepsi sign has been a fixture of Long Island City since its installation above the Pepsi bottling plant in 1940. The bottling plant, located along the East River just south of Anable Basin, was demolished for the construction of the Queens West development. The sign was relocated to a lawn in

Gantry Plaza State Park and is visible from Midtown Manhattan, Roosevelt Island, and boats on the East River. Another relic of the waterfront's industrial past are the two gantries at the south end of the park. The gantries, the namesake for Gantry Plaza State Park, were built in 1925 and used to load and unload barges transporting industrial materials between Queens and Manhattan. Both gantries have the words "Long Island" written on their river-facing sides and have cemented the park as a staple of Long Island City. The northern gantry is also frequently used as a venue for concerts and live events.

The Queensboro Bridge is another major feature of the waterfront. The Queensboro Bridge, officially known as the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge (and also known as the 59th Street Bridge) is a two-span, through cantilever truss bridge. The main span bridges the East River from Manhattan to Roosevelt Island; the second span bridges the river from Roosevelt Island to Queens. It was completed in 1908 and opened to the public in 1909 for pedestrian, vehicle, and trolley use. At the time of its completion, it was the longest, largest, and heaviest cantilever bridge ever built. It was also built as a symbol of the unification of City of New York in 1903; the Queensboro, Manhattan, and Williamsburg Bridges were all built soon after unification, all being completed by 1909. Its opening spawned rapid development in Long Island City, further cementing the area as an industrial and manufacturing center. The steel superstructure of the bridge stands on four piers of rusticated granite, one each in Manhattan and Queens and two on Roosevelt Island. The Queensboro Bridge has two levels: an upper level with a pair of two-lane roadways, and a lower level with five vehicular lanes and a walkway/bike lane. The western leg of the Queensboro Bridge is flanked on its northern side by the Roosevelt Island Tramway.

ARTS AND CULTURE

Long Island City is home to a diverse array of arts and cultural facilities, from museums and galleries to performance and rehearsal venues, film production studios, artists' studios, and maker spaces. The diverse range of arts facilities and programming is one of the neighborhood's great assets. The primary study area's extensive supply of industrial and manufacturing lofts has made it a popular location for creative production. The area is home to several major film studios, the most notable of which is Silvercup Studios, New York City's premier full-service commercial film production studio that has been in operation since 1983. Silvercup Studios maintains two locations in Long Island City. The primary facility, located on the full block between 21st and 22nd Streets, Queens Plaza South and the access ramps for the Queensboro Bridge, features 13 sound stages, 57,600 square feet of office space, 55,800 square feet of support space, and a rooftop shooting space with views of the Manhattan skyline. A second studio is located east of the primary study area in Blissville, featuring six sound stages, office, and other support space.

The neighborhood is home to MoMA PS1, one of the country's oldest and largest contemporary art institutions, which features a rotation of installations, films and performances. A few blocks away from MoMA PS1 is the SculptureCenter, which spotlights contemporary art, exhibiting emerging and well-known sculptors.

Artists and the creative community have been drawn to Long Island City for decades, in part because of its close proximity to Manhattan, and also because of its relatively lower rents. In addition to creative industries, the neighborhood is home to several nonprofits that foster arts education, programming, and provide gallery space. Such organizations

include Culture Lab LIC, which supports artists and other nonprofits by providing space and resources. Culture Lab LIC operates out of a converted warehouse that contains art galleries, an 80-seat theater, classroom space, and an 18,000-square-foot outdoor venue. LIC-A is a nonprofit on 47th Avenue east of Vernon Boulevard that sponsors exhibitions and events for visual artists. Art Strong, a studio on 11th Street near 44th Avenue, introduces children to exploratory art making practices including drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture.

DYNAMIC NEIGHBORHOODS

Long Island City's skyline and vibrant neighborhoods are a testament to its dynamic growth, with sleek high-rises and restaurants, galleries and other businesses in converted loft buildings. In the late 19th century, the LIRR moved its western terminus to Long Island City. Soon after, Long Island City became the commercial and civic hub of Queens County, and Long Island City was developed with a concentration of heavy industrial uses—particularly along the bustling working waterfront. Today, much of its industrial past remains in its built form. However, as New York City's industrial economy declined due to rapid globalization, the economy of Long Island City broadened to include other uses. In a span of 20 years, Long Island City transformed from a declining post-industrial neighborhood into the primary central business district for Queens, and the fourth largest in New York City. In addition to new office and residential towers in the Court Square area, the Queens West development revitalized the East River waterfront, adding over a dozen high-rise residential towers and thousands of new residents. Between 2010 and 2020, the population of the census tracts within a quarter mile of the Project Area increased by nearly 100 percent.

While this development has drastically changed the landscape of Long Island City, much of the new development has been concentrated at Queens West and Downtown Long Island City. Throughout the rest of the neighborhood, the changes have resulted in more moderate development. In places like Hunters Point and Dutch Kills, new businesses and cultural uses have moved into industrial buildings. In recent years, the neighborhood has come to be defined by this change, which can at times be subtle, and in other instances bold, as evidenced with the Downtown Long Island City's skyline.

44th Drive is emblematic of the change. The eastern end of the street begins in the bustling downtown area, flanked by some of the tallest buildings in Queens, including the 76-story residential Skyline Tower and 50-story One Court Square. Moving west from 23rd Street, the residential character shifts from primarily higher to lower density, and newer to older buildings. Most of the residential buildings change from more recent seven and eight-story buildings, to three and four-story walk-up apartments, to two-story homes just east of 10th Street. The relative decrease in residential density gives way to a variety of non-residential uses, such as restaurants, bars, supermarkets, even a rock-climbing gym housed in a former warehouse. These uses are interspersed with garages, wholesale stores, and parking lots. Along the waterfront, which has a concentration of industrial uses, there is a fishing pier and a nautical-themed restaurant alongside storage garages and shipping businesses, light industrial uses, and an event space.

The stretch of 12th Street from 43rd Road to 44th Avenue has always been unique due to the large glacial rock outcropping just south of 43rd Road. The area south of the rock used to be flanked by manufacturing businesses in one and two-story industrial buildings and used for accessory parking. In 2019, as part of the New York City Department of

Transportation's (DOT) Street Seats program, the parking lot was redeveloped into a public plaza with tables, seating, and plantings, and was repainted with a bright blue pattern that highlights the glacial rock and signals that the street is now reserved for pedestrians. In less than a decade, the industrial character of this block has changed. The industrial buildings lining the plaza now house uses with active ground floors, including a brewery, restaurants, and a café as well as other commercial uses on the ground and second floors including a ballet school, recording studio, and art gallery. The New York Times' Wirecutter recommendation service has taken over one of the industrial buildings, which serves as the media service's headquarters. The transformation of the block is indicative of the shift happening throughout the IBZ where traditional industrial businesses have given way to other non-residential uses.

PRIMARY STUDY AREA

The primary study area is comprised of an approximately 54-block area of Long Island City's East River Waterfront and adjacent upland neighborhoods in Queens. The primary study area is divided into separate subareas generally defined as the Waterfront Subarea, Industrial Subarea 1, Industrial Subarea 2, Inland Subarea 1, Inland Subarea 2, and Inland Subarea 3.

Waterfront Subarea

The Waterfront Subarea is defined by its proximity to the East River and Anable Basin. The northern portion of the subarea contains several of the largest lots in the primary study area, including a 138,793-square-foot lot with a power plant and a 458,627-square-foot lot with a Con Edison training facility. The southern portion of the subarea consists of the blocks surrounding Anable Basin. This land is primarily industrial/manufacturing with uses such as auto-repair, light manufacturing, and warehouses. In addition to these uses, there is a large, six-story loft building owned and operated by the New York City Department of Education (DOE) (the DOE Building) located on the north side of 44th Drive. At the western end of 44th Drive is a pier (44th Drive Pier) used for recreation and fishing. The former New York Architectural Terra Cotta Works Building is a notable historic structure in the subarea. The two-story building is located just south of Queensboro Bridge and is clad with brick and terracotta and decorated with intricate carvings.

Industrial Subarea 1

Industrial Subarea 1 is coterminous with the southern portion of the IBZ, and generally covers the area bounded by the midblock between 44th Road and 44th Drive, 23rd Street, the Queensboro Bridge, and Vernon Boulevard. It is characterized by low- to mid-rise industrial buildings that are used as distribution and warehousing facilities, garages and auto repair shops, light industrial spaces, and recreation and entertainment spaces. While most structures are non-descript with large loading entrances, there are several single-story buildings with colorful and ornamented facades and loft buildings with ornate carvings which inject unique styles of industrial architecture into the area. Recent development of hotels and the conversion of industrial buildings into retail and commercial uses, has improved the pedestrian experience. This transformation is most evident near the recently pedestrianized section of 12th Street, between 43rd Road and 44th Avenue, where former industrial buildings now contain restaurants, a brewery, and office for a media company.

The subarea contains some of the ramp infrastructure for the Queensboro Bridge. The area west of 21st Street is primarily industrial, while the area east of 21st Street is primarily commercial. Recreational uses that require large, open floor plans, such as an indoor pickleball and an indoor tennis facility, occupy former industrial buildings. The subarea also contains light industrial and commercial uses, such as breweries, and many parking facilities. Silvercup Studios, notable in Long Island City for its large, illuminated sign, is located in a former factory building at the southeast corner of 21st Street and Queens Plaza South.

Industrial Subarea 2

Industrial Subarea 2 is coterminous with the northern portion of the IBZ and is bounded by the midblock between 39th and 40th Avenues, 41st Avenue, and 21st and 23rd Streets. While it also contains a mix of light industrial uses, the buildings in this subarea have smaller footprints, so unlike Industrial Subarea 1, there are no large indoor recreation centers or entertainment production studios. Industrial Subarea 2 has a concentration of industrial loft buildings that reach five- to seven stories in height. Many of these buildings are decorated with simple carvings or colorful paint. For instance, two single-story industrial garages on 10th Street, between 43rd Road and 44th Avenue, have concrete-framed mosaics above their garage doors. Aside from warehouse space, these industrial spaces also include painting, recording, and photography studios. Two entrances to the 21st Street–Queensbridge subway station, serviced by the F train, are located at the northwest corner of 41st Avenue and 21st Street. As compared to Industrial Subarea 1 which has pedestrian amenities, the internal streets of Industrial Subarea 2 are significantly less pedestrian-friendly.

Inland Subarea 1

Inland Subarea 1 consists of two blocks bounded by 41st Avenue, 23rd Street, Queens Plaza North, and 21st Street. The majority of the lot area is vacant land; the entire block east of 22nd Street is vacant. The western block contains two vacant lots, a large storage facility, a two-story industrial building, and nine-story hotel. The 21st Street–Queensbridge station is just north of the area. Inland Subara 1 is not pedestrian-friendly. Half of the subarea consists of a vacant parcel of land, and the industrial buildings have inactive ground floors with blank walls or loading docks. However, the subarea does include a short stretch of the Queensboro Bridge Greenway that runs along Queens Plaza North.

Inland Subarea 2

Inland Subarea 2 consists of the blocks east of Industrial Subarea 1. This subarea is located between the primary study area's largest industrial area and Downtown Long Island City, consisting of residential and commercial high-rises. The subarea contains industrial and manufacturing buildings, vacant land, mixed residential and commercial, and office uses, serving as a transition between the industrial area to the west and central business district to the east. In addition to these uses, the Queensboro Bridge Ramps occupy lots in the middle of the blocks between 42nd Road and 43rd Avenue.

There are two residential high-rise buildings under construction in the subarea: a 37-story building at the southeast corner of 24th Street and 42nd Road, and a 67-story building at the northeast intersection of 44th Road and 24th Street. The completion of these towers will reinforce the character of the adjacent Downtown Long Island City. Currently,

construction activity, vacant land, lack of active ground-floor uses, and the elevated subway and bridge ramps that run through and alongside the subarea have created an unpleasant pedestrian experience.

Inland Subarea 3

Inland Subarea 3 is the largest of the Inland Subareas and occupies the blocks south of Industrial Subarea 1. Similar to Inland Subarea 2, this subarea blends the industrial character of Industrial Subarea 1, with the residential character of the Hunters Point neighborhood, which is contained in the subarea. Inland Subarea 3 is characterized by manufacturing / industrial, residential, commercial, and parking uses. Industrial uses are primarily located north of 44th Drive, and in the interior of the blocks along Vernon Boulevard and include distribution and warehousing facilities, garages and auto repair shops, light industrial spaces, and recreation and entertainment spaces contained in low- and mid-rise industrial buildings.

44th Drive, especially between 11th and 23rd Streets, is pedestrian-oriented, with active ground-floor uses, residential buildings, and street trees. A small triangle-shaped plaza provides a pedestrian amenity at the western end of the street. The remainder of the subarea is less pedestrian-friendly as most streets are lined by fences, blank walls, or large loading entrances. However, scattered residential buildings and retail and restaurant uses provide some interest to the pedestrian.

Inland Subarea 4

Inland Subarea 4 consists of a single block bounded by Queens Plaza South, 9th Street, 43rd Avenue, and Vernon Boulevard. It contains commercial uses, including a hotel, restaurant, and entertainment uses. A former factory complex on the south side of the block has a brick façade covered in ivy, and now houses commercial space and an event venue.

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

The secondary study area extends approximately ¼ mile from the primary study area, terminating in the west at the East River waterfront. The secondary study area generally extends north to 37th Avenue, east to Sunnyside Yards, and south to 51st Avenue. The secondary study area encompasses several subareas, all of which are within Long Island City, including Hunters Point, Downtown Long Island City, Dutch Kills, Ravenswood, and Queensbridge Houses.

Hunters Point

The Hunters Point neighborhood is generally defined as the section of the secondary study area bounded by the East River, Davis Street, and Crane Street. This section of Long Island City is primarily residential and mixed residential and commercial. The waterfront portion of Hunters Point is characterized by large residential towers fronting onto Center Boulevard, Gantry Plaza State Park, the iconic Pepsi-Cola sign and former pier gantries, Hunters Point South Park, the Hunters Point branch of the Queens Public Library, and a NYC ferry landing. The inland portion of the Hunters Point neighborhood contains a diverse mix of uses with residential buildings (largely older two- to four-story walk-up apartment buildings and single- or two-family residences) interspersed between two- to five-story commercial or manufacturing buildings. Notable open spaces in this area include John F. Murray Playground, which occupies the full block bounded by 11th

Street, 45th Street, 21st Street and 45th Avenue, and Hunter's Point Community Park, which occupies the southern side of 48th Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street. Recently constructed high-rise residential towers, similar to those in Downtown Long Island City, can be found on Jackson Avenue, south of Court Square. A notable community facility in this area is the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) PS1 contemporary art museum, located in a former school building near 46th Avenue and 21st Street.

Downtown Long Island City

Downtown Long Island City is defined as the area between the primary study area and Sunnyside Yards, and extends north from Hunters Point to 41st Avenue. This area contains the Court Square section of Long Island City, which is among the most densely developed portions of the secondary study area, with many high-rise residential and commercial buildings, such as the 49-story Citigroup office tower, located on Jackson Avenue near 44th Drive. In recent decades, the neighborhood experienced significant growth, much of it as a result of the 2001 rezoning. Recent development has primarily occurred around Court Square and Queens Plaza, while the side streets are characterized by older residential walkups and light industrial and commercial buildings. The neighborhood has many street trees, and includes several small parks and plazas, including One Court Square Plaza, Court Square Park, McKenna Triangle, Rafferty Triangle, Hunter Street Park, and Sundial Park, which are populated with landscaping, trees, seating, art work, pathways, and other amenities.

Downtown Long Island City is well served by public transportation. The Queensboro Plaza station is served by the N, W, and 7 subway lines, the Court Square station is served by the E, G, M, and 7 subway lines, and the Queens Plaza station is serviced by the E, M, and R subway lines.

Dutch Kills

The Dutch Kills neighborhood is defined as the portion of the secondary study area generally north of the primary study area and east of 21st Street. Dutch Kills has a diverse mix of land uses, including industrial/manufacturing and residential and mixed use residential with ground floor commercial space. Manufacturing uses in Dutch Kills consist of one- to three-story buildings housing distribution and warehousing facilities, garages and auto repair shops, and light industrial spaces, and self-storage and five- to six-story lofts. Residential uses take a wide range of forms including two- and three-story attached row houses, single-family detached homes, and 6- to 10-story apartment buildings with ground floor commercial space. Larger residential buildings are generally found on the east-west avenues, while smaller buildings are found on the north-south streets.

The largest buildings in the neighborhood are on the blocks north of Dutch Kills Green, a 0.33-acre open space located at the intersection of Queens Plaza North, 29th Street, 41st Avenue, and Northern Boulevard. These buildings include a 64-story mixed commercial and office building, a 30-story hotel, and a 24-story residential building. A large Consolidated Edison (Con Edison) substation occupies the entire block between 38th and 39th Avenues and 22nd and 23rd Streets.

Ravenswood

The Ravenswood neighborhood is defined as the portion of the secondary study area north of 40th Avenue and west of 21st Street. The area is predominantly manufacturing, with commercial, residential, parking, and hotel uses scattered throughout.

Manufacturing uses are primarily one- and two- story buildings housing distribution and warehousing facilities, garages and auto repair shops, and light industrial spaces. Residential uses are primarily two- to three-story row houses, or walk-up apartment buildings with ground floor retail. The neighborhood has a high concentration of hotels, with almost every block having one or more hotels. A notable community facility use is the Queens Public Library at Long Island City. The Ravenswood Generating Station, a large, natural gas- and fuel-oil-fired power plant located adjacent to the East River is located just to the west of the neighborhood.

Queensbridge Houses

Queensbridge Houses is a large NYCHA development between Queens Plaza North, 21st Street, 40th Avenue, and Vernon Boulevard. The complex consists of 29 six-story apartment buildings and is the largest public housing complex in New York City. Community facility uses, including the Jacob A. Riis Settlement House and a Police Athletic League facility, and neighborhood retail uses are found at the center of the campus. Queensbridge Park is located to the west of the campus, between Vernon Boulevard and the East River.

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

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Actions in the 2035 analysis year with respect to the following technical areas that are considered in the assessment of neighborhood character: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; transportation; and noise. The assessment relies on conclusions from the respective chapters of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to identify whether the Proposed Actions would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character. As described below, the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to the defining elements of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of effects result in a significant adverse impact to a defining feature.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on land use, zoning, and public policy, either individually or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Actions would further the City's and local stakeholders' long-held vision for Long Island City by facilitating new residential, commercial, community facility, and industrial development in an underdeveloped area of Long Island City. The Proposed Actions would produce new housing and economic opportunities in an area of the City that has excellent transportation access, is near Downtown Long Island City, and has a unique waterfront that would be redeveloped for public open space.

The Proposed Actions would enhance the character of Long Island City's waterfront. As discussed above, some portions of the waterfront have been improved with open space and other stretches remain industrial and closed to the public. While parks such as

Queensbridge Park, Gantry Plaza State Park, and Hunters Point South Park are popular recreational amenities and have come to define the neighborhood's waterfront, the portion of waterfront within the primary study area remains mostly industrial and inaccessible. The new developments facilitated by the Proposed Actions would replace existing commercial buildings and warehouses with primarily high-rise mixed residential and commercial buildings. Projected development sites with existing manufacturing uses around Anable Basin would be developed at some of the highest residential densities in the primary study area. Portions of six development sites directly on the waterfront would be developed with a combined six acres of publicly accessible waterfront open space. These new parks would extend the promenade along the East River waterfront from Gantry Plaza State Park to north of 44th Drive. The Northern Hunters Point Waterfront Access Plan (WAP) would ensure that any future development north of the Projected Development sites would also include waterfront access. The Proposed Actions would positively contribute to the waterfront character of Long Island City by replacing industrial uses with new publicly accessible open space.

Long Island City's arts and culture would also benefit from the Proposed Actions. The Proposed Actions would maintain the industrial character of the IBZ while permitting a greater variety of industrial and commercial uses. Further, the Proposed Actions would protect existing cultural spaces in converted industrial buildings and allow for the development of new buildings that can accommodate maker spaces, studios, and other arts and cultural spaces.

The Proposed Actions' mixed-use zoning and protection of industrial uses in the IBZ would also maintain the dynamic character of Long Island City. New high-density mixed residential and industrial zoning would expand residential uses around Queens West and Downtown Long Island City and would connect the two areas along 44th Drive. The IBZ would be rezoned to allow greater densities and a greater variety of non-residential uses. The expansion of the Special Long Island City Mixed Use District (LIC Special District) would allow new developments to permit a variety of non-residential uses, further contributing to and protecting the neighborhood's unique mixture of uses.

With respect to public policy, the Proposed Actions would create new market-rate and affordable housing, which furthers the City's goals related to the provision of affordable housing for New Yorkers. The increase in density and the expansion of allowable non-residential uses in the IBZ supports public policies to foster industrial retention, new and innovative industries, and promote job growth. The creation of waterfront open space would further the City's goals with respect to a resilient waterfront.

Therefore, the benefits associated with the Proposed Actions would reinforce the defining features of neighborhood character.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts related to direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, indirect residential displacement, indirect business displacement, or effects on specific industries.

The preliminary assessment found that the average household income of the new population would be higher than the average household incomes in Long Island City. In the portion of the study area north of Queensboro Bridge, the potentially vulnerable residents as a percentage of the population exceeded five percent, further increasing the risk of displacement. While the analysis found that while the Proposed Actions would add a substantial new population with higher incomes to Long Island City, the Proposed Actions are expected to introduce more affordable housing in the future as compared to the No Action condition, potentially slowing trends of increasing rents and maintaining a more diverse mix of incomes within the subareas. Additionally, market rate rents in both subareas are already unaffordable to low-income households. Given the high rental housing costs in the area, it is expected that most low-income renters reside in protected rental units and would not be vulnerable to indirect residential displacement as a result of the Proposed Actions.

While the primary and secondary study areas have well-established residential, retail and office, and manufacturing markets, market conditions throughout the study area have already incentivized a shift away from manufacturing and light industrial uses toward residential and commercial development. Recent developments in the study area have mirrored these larger trends and irrespective of the Proposed Actions, these trends are expected to continue. Additionally, some businesses will be displaced from the projected development sites, however the potentially displaced businesses are not essential to the local economy and their goods and services would continue to be provided by nearby businesses. The Proposed Actions would add residential and commercial uses that would expand the potential consumer base of many local businesses and strengthens the ability of these businesses to alter or expand operations in response to changing market conditions.

Although some businesses may be displaced from the Long Island City IBZ, the potentially displaced businesses do not individually or collectively shape the overall character of IBZ or the broader study area. The Proposed Actions would facilitate development that supports future office, community facility, and industrial tenants within the study area, including new industrial, business services, and retail uses within the IBZ.

Therefore, the effects on socioeconomic conditions would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

OPEN SPACE

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on publicly accessible open space, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Actions would result in beneficial effects to open space with the addition of new open space on the development sites along the East River and Anable Basin. The Proposed Actions would result in up to six acres of new publicly accessible waterfront open space, greatly improving access to the waterfront north of Gantry Plaza State Park.

The new open space would provide a substantial amenity for residents and workers in the neighborhood. The new publicly accessible open space on the waterfront sites would consist of an esplanade and landscaped areas, walking paths, seating areas, and plazas. The new open space would expand the network of open spaces that span the East River

from Newtown Creek to Anable Basin. Waterfront zoning regulations could potentially extend the esplanade to Queensbridge Park, creating a continuous network of waterfront open space that exceeds one and a half miles in length.

The new waterfront open space would potentially expand the neighborhood's popular waterfront parks and would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

SHADOWS

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential shadows-related effects of the Proposed Actions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. Although the Proposed Actions would result in a significant adverse shadow impact to three open space resources, this impact would not constitute a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

The detailed analysis of shadows concludes that new shadows created by the development under the Proposed Actions would be extensive enough to cause significant adverse impacts to three open space resources in Long Island City: several Greenstreet medians in Queens Plaza South between Vernon Boulevard and 13th Street; Gordon Triangle, a small public open space located on 44th Drive between Vernon Boulevard and 10th Street; and the 44th Drive Pier, a public open space located at the western end of 44th Drive. Neither Gordon Triangle nor the Greenstreet medians significantly contribute to Long Island City's character and shadows on these open spaces would not affect neighborhood character.

The 44th Drive Pier is on the East River waterfront. While projected development would cause a significant adverse shadow impact, the impact would not affect neighborhood character. The pier is used for passive recreation and fishing, and offers stunning views of the Manhattan skyline. The pier would be partially or entirely shaded by the projected development sites to its immediate east and south intermittently from early morning until midday. Total durations of morning incremental shadow would range from two and a half hours in winter to between four and five hours in the spring, summer, and fall. The Proposed Actions would cast shadows affecting the use of the space in the spring, summer, and fall; however, the pier would remain in sun throughout the afternoon in all seasons and is expected to be utilized in the afternoons and evenings, particularly in the summer when days are longer. Therefore, the shadow impact on the pier would not significantly alter the character of the waterfront and this would not result in a significant impact to neighborhood character.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Proposed Actions would not eliminate or substantially obstruct important public views of architectural resources, as significant elements of these historic resources would generally remain visible in view corridors on public streets. In addition, no incompatible audible or atmospheric elements would be introduced by the Proposed Actions to any historic resource's setting. However, the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts associated with direct impacts and construction related impacts to historic and cultural resources.

As discussed in Chapter 7, “Historic and Cultural Resources,” there are 20 known architectural resources, including one historic district, located in the primary study area. Six of these known resources are located on projected and potential development sites. In addition, there are two known architectural resources located in the study area. The Proposed Actions would result in the demolition of some contributing utilitarian former industrial buildings, most of which are one-story garages, auto shops, or storage buildings, and a former power substation.

Five out of the six architectural resources which would be demolished for projected development are in the IBZ. These buildings would be replaced with new industrial and commercial buildings. Furthermore, the construction of new buildings on the development sites could change the setting of some architectural resources, and the historic district, but overall, the change in context would not result in an impact to neighborhood character. Because the Proposed Actions are projected to result in the preservation of industrial use, and in some cases, the adaptive reuse of industrial buildings in Long Island City, the demolition of a subset of contributing industrial buildings would not affect neighborhood character. In addition, the manufacturing zoning and industrial buildings in the portion of the IBZ in the secondary study area, north of the primary study area, will remain in place.

The Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact related to the disturbance of archaeologically sensitive resources. Although five industrial building would be demolished, the historic industrial character associated with Long Island City would be maintained. Therefore, these impacts would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on urban design and visual resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in more detail in Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the Proposed Actions would result in beneficial effects related to urban design by facilitating new mixed-use developments with open space on the waterfront, improving walkability with active ground floors and streetscape improvements, and facilitating architecturally contextual development throughout the primary study area.

The zoning changes provide for flexibility and a variety of building envelopes that account for the unique conditions in Long Island City, such as Anable Basin and the East River waterfront, appropriate transitions between lower and medium density adjacencies, the creation of new waterfront open space, and enhanced pedestrian-oriented sidewalk conditions and lively, active streets. The Proposed Actions would also encourage a range of heights and building forms, allowing sufficient flexibility for building heights to achieve the many goals for development in the area.

The projected developments in the primary study area would be compatible with existing uses while continuing the existing trends of residential and commercial development. The proposed height and setback requirements would create consistent street walls and buildings with massed with towers set back above mid-rise bases. In addition, the projected mixed-use buildings in the Waterfront Subarea would be in keeping with the tall residential buildings in the Queens West development south of Anable Basin, the

projected buildings in Inland Subarea 3 would provide transitional medium-scale buildings between the upland neighborhoods and the new large-scale buildings constructed around Anable Basin, and the projected tall mixed-use buildings in Inland Subarea 2 and Industrial Subarea 2 would be in keeping with the height and form of existing buildings in Inland Subarea 2 and Downtown Long Island City, located immediately to the east of the primary study area. The projected buildings would also enhance the pedestrian experience by providing active ground floors in areas with limited retail and by replacing vacant land and parking and storage areas enclosed by chain-link fencing and one- and two-story industrial and commercial buildings with street-facing façades and entrances.

Most waterfront properties in the primary study area are privately owned, limiting public views to the East River. The proposed modifications to the WAP would facilitate the creation of a shore public walkway that would run from Gantry Plaza State Park around the southern, eastern, and northern edges of Anable Basin and then north along the East River shoreline, connecting with the existing 44th Drive pier, to the northern end of the Waterfront Subarea and Queensbridge Park in the secondary study area. The WAP would also include three upland connections to the shore public walkway around Anable Basin and three upland connections west from Vernon Boulevard to the East River shoreline. Overall, the modified WAP would expand the neighborhood's public space amenities with the development of up to 6 acres of new open space, facilitate vibrant public spaces, improve coastal resiliency and local ecology, and address the unique character of Anable Basin. The proposed changes to the City Map, including widening portions of 45th Street, narrowing portions of 44th Drive, and mapping a new street along the waterfront, would further enhance connections to the waterfront, facilitate the creation of new publicly accessible waterfront open space, and improve pedestrian circulation.

The Proposed Actions would enhance pedestrian conditions by activating the ground floors of new mixed-use buildings and supporting the mixed-use character of the neighborhood by creating special use, floor area, and bulk regulations for waterfront and non-waterfront blocks. The Proposed Actions would promote the mix of uses currently found in the study areas but at higher densities and facilitate new development in a comprehensive manner near well-served transit nodes. The Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

TRANSPORTATION

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential transportation-related effects of the Proposed Actions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in Chapter 14, "Transportation," the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts to vehicular traffic at 42 intersections; and significant adverse impacts to transit, at: (a) eight subway stairs,(b) three escalators and one fare array at two stations, (c) subway line haul conditions on three subway routes, (d) bus line haul conditions on one bus route, (e) ferry line haul conditions on one ferry route, (f) ferry landing conditions on one ferry landing, and (g) pedestrians at 25 sidewalks, 17 crosswalks, and 10 corner areas. Although there would be significant adverse transportation impacts, transportation is a not a defining feature of neighborhood character; therefore, the impacts would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

NOISE

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential noise-related effects of the Proposed Actions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

As discussed in Chapter 17, "Noise," up to 44 dBA window/wall attenuation would be required at all projected/potential development sites to achieve acceptable interior noise levels per the *CEQR Technical Manual* noise exposure guideline at residential and community facility uses, in accordance with an (E) designation (E-848). For development City-owned sites, attenuation measures would be required through a Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) or comparable institutional control. As noise levels are not a defining feature of neighborhood character, this would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. ✷