TECHNICAL MEMORANDUM
Manhattanville in West Harlem Rezoning and Academic Mixed-Use Development
CEQR No. 06DCP032M

A. INTRODUCTION

The Notice of Completion for the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Manhattanville in West Harlem Rezoning and Academic Mixed-Use Development project was issued on November 16, 2007. On November 26, 2007, the City Planning Commission (CPC) approved Uniform Land Use Review Procedure (ULURP) Application Nos. C070495 ZMM and N070496 ZRM, which together refer to the establishment of the Special Manhattanville Mixed-Use Zoning District. The approved actions are largely described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," and Chapter 29, "Modifications to the Proposed Actions," of the FEIS. After issuance of the FEIS, CPC made additional modifications, which were assessed in a Technical Memorandum issued January 26, 2007. That memorandum concluded that the CPC modifications would not result in significant adverse environmental impacts not already identified in the FEIS. The New York City Council approved the ULURP Applications on December 19, 2007.

In addition to the rezoning, implementation of the Academic Mixed-Use Development plan would entail the adoption of a General Project Plan (GPP) and subsequent acquisition of certain property within the Academic Mixed-Use Area by the New York State Urban Development Corporation (doing business as the Empire State Development Corporation [ESDC]). Columbia University now proposes a modification as it relates to the proposed creation of publicly accessible open space on Block 1996, Lot 1 (development Site 5 of the Illustrative Plan), which is currently occupied by the Cotton Club. The site was rezoned pursuant to the Special Manhattanville Mixed-Use Zoning District but is now proposed to be removed from the GPP Project Area. This Technical Memorandum describes the proposed modification and examines whether the Proposed Actions with the proposed modification would result in any new or different significant adverse environmental impacts not already identified in the FEIS.

The analysis concludes that the Proposed Actions with the proposed modification would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts not already identified in the FEIS.

B. DESCRIPTION OF MODIFICATION

As described in Chapter 23, "Mitigation," of the FEIS Columbia University agreed to create publicly accessible open space on Block 1996, Lot 1, a triangular site on West 125th Street at Twelfth Avenue, as partial mitigation for the project's significant adverse indirect passive and active open space impacts. As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Illustrative Plan identified this site—currently occupied by the Cotton Club—for development of commercial and/or retail space. Columbia proposed to acquire Block 1996, Lot 1, through either: (a) negotiation with the Cotton Club and relocating the Cotton Club within the immediate area (if

reasonable terms can be agreed upon); or (b) through the subsequent discretionary exercise by the New York State Urban Development Corporation (doing business as the Empire State Development Corporation [ESDC]) of condemnation of such lot, subsequent to the adoption of a General Project Plan (GPP) and compliance with the Eminent Domain Procedure Law. With CPC's modification, assuming that the site were to be acquired by Columbia, and subject to the approval of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR), Columbia would convey the site to the City. The new publicly accessible open space would be constructed and open by 2015, subject to acquisition of the site by Columbia.

With the proposed modification to the GPP, although the Cotton Club site would remain in the Special Manhattanville Mixed-Use Zoning District, it would not be redeveloped by Columbia University as Site 5 of the Illustrative Plan for commercial and/or retail space (approximately 10,969 square feet), nor would it be redeveloped as 6,300 sf of public open space. No public action would be taken on the Cotton Club site. This Technical Memorandum assumes that the site would remain in its current ownership and use.

C. ANALYSES

With the Cotton Club site remaining in its current use, the Proposed Actions, as modified by the GPP, would result in less development than that analyzed for the Illustrative Plan and the reasonable worst-case development scenarios in the FEIS. Therefore, for any of the technical studies in the FEIS, the Proposed Actions as modified by the GPP would have equivalent or slightly lower impacts compared to the Proposed Actions studied in the FEIS. In particular, the reduction of 10,969 sf of commercial use in the quantified analysis of passive open space (see Chapter 6, "Open Space," in the FEIS) would not substantially increase the passive open space ratios in the future conditions with the Proposed Actions to eliminate the significant adverse indirect impact. Thus, in this comparison, there would be no adverse environmental consequences of the GPP's proposed modification.

However, the proposed land use on the Cotton Club site was modified from new commercial use to public open space when CPC approved the ULURP application. This open space (6,300 sf) would have partially mitigated the significant indirect open space impacts of the Proposed Actions identified in the FEIS. By leaving the site in its current use, the modification proposed for the GPP would remove this partial mitigation. Open space conditions with the GPP modification would therefore be the same as those analyzed in the FEIS: the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts on passive and active open space, which would be partially mitigated by improving existing open spaces in the study area to increase their utility, safety, and capacity to meet identified needs in the study area. Specifically, Columbia has agreed to contribute $500,000 per year, increasing at 3 percent annually, for the West Harlem Waterfront park (currently under construction) for a period of 25 years. This funding is intended to allow DPR to hire dedicated staff and to provide services to promote the attractiveness of the space for increased usage, access, convenience, safety. Thus, although the modification proposed for the GPP would remove a partial mitigation, it would not introduce a new significant impact or create a condition different from that studied in the FEIS. It would not change the conclusions of the FEIS with regard to indirect open space impacts. ✷