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Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

Per the *2021 CEQR Technical Manual*, this chapter summarizes a proposed project's impacts on the loss of environmental resources, both in the immediate future and in the long-term. Resources include both man-made and natural resources. Examples of losses include removal of vegetation without replacement, use of fossil fuels and materials for construction, etc. The extent to which a project forecloses future options or involves trade-offs between short-term environmental gains and long-term losses should also be addressed. In considering the trade-offs of a project, it is also possible to compare short-term losses with long-term benefits.

The Proposed Project constitutes an irreversible and irretrievable commitment of the Development Site as a land resource, rendering land use for other purposes highly unlikely in the foreseeable future. The Development Site currently consists of asphalt surface parking lots, roadways and other impervious circulation areas, and the Proposed Project would deliver a variety of environmental improvements and new land uses, including new public open space, that would provide amenities to visitors and residents, are complementary to adjacent land uses, and which also preserve existing uses on site. The Proposed Project would also promote economic development, enhance the visitor experience, increase tourism, and create thousands of quality jobs for area residents. Resources, both natural and built, would be expended in the construction and operation of the Proposed Project. These resources include the materials used in construction; energy in the form of fuel and electricity consumed during construction and operation of the Project; and the human effort (i.e., time and labor) required to develop, construct, and operate various components of the Project. The funds committed by the Applicant to the design, construction, and operation of the Proposed Project under the Proposed Actions are made possible by the economic activity generated by the

development. These commitments of resources and materials are weighed against the benefits of the Proposed Project.

As described in **Chapter 1, Project Description,** the Proposed Actions would facilitate the construction of approximately 3.7 million square feet (sf) of new construction, with destination entertainment that includes a music hall, hotel, a gaming facility,[1] convention and meeting space, restaurant and retail space, and office and community facility space. The Proposed Project would also include public park space—at least 20 acres of the Development Site would be improved with landscaping and other amenities for public recreation—and other public realm improvements as well as structured parking facilities to accommodate up to 13,750 spaces.

The Development Site is approximately 78 acres of land bounded by Seaver Way to the east, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Corona Yard to the south, Grand Central Parkway to the west, and Northern Boulevard to the north. The majority of the Development Site is part of Flushing Meadows Corona Park, though approximately 53 of the 78 acres consists of asphalt surface parking lots (7,423 spaces), while the remainder includes roadways and other circulation areas. The parking lots have been used as such for nearby entertainment uses, which historically have included the World's Fair, Shea Stadium, and now Citi Field.

Currently, use of the surface parking surrounding Citi Field is limited to game days during baseball season (generally April through October), other private events held at Citi Field, and certain other scheduled events in Flushing Meadows Corona Park. The site currently provides limited amenities to the local community, with few opportunities for recreation, dining, or entertainment in the area immediately surrounding Citi Field. Beyond attending events at the existing stadium, the site provides visitors with few options to remain in the area, failing to deliver on the tourism and economic development potential a major sporting facility offers to Queens.

The Queens Future Project is an opportunity to transform these underutilized parking lots into a unique mixed-use recreational, commercial, and entertainment hub with extensive public park space and other amenities for public recreation. The redevelopment would promote economic development, enhance the visitor experience, increase tourism, and create thousands of quality jobs for area residents. New public park space, transit and highway improvements, and other public amenities proposed as part of the Queens Future Project are made possible with the creation of the mixed-use recreational and regional entertainment hub. Furthermore, the Applicant would partner with local suppliers and vendors to create and maximize positive spillover effects into the local and regional economy from visitors to the Queens Future Project, working to maximize local hiring and prioritize opportunities for unemployed or underemployed individuals from the surrounding communities. The future condition with the Proposed Project would fully replace the existing parking onsite while adding a variety of other resources, thereby increasing the utility of the Development Site.

In addition, the creation of significant new public open spaces would provide a major new amenity to residents of surrounding neighborhoods as well as visitors. The replacement of impermeable surface parking with a mix of at-grade landscaped open space as well as photovoltaic panels and softscape on top of floodplain-compliant structures would help reduce stormwater runoff and improve the Development Site's resiliency by enhancing biodiversity and mitigating the heat-island effect.

The proposed realignment of roadways, traffic management measures, and improvements to waterfront pathways would enhance connections to the surrounding neighborhoods and other resources. Replacing an expanse of asphalt surface parking with new open space, dining, and

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

entertainment uses would create jobs and benefit residents, workers, sports fans, visitors, the broader Queens neighborhoods, and New York City as a whole.

Though the Development Site is located to the south of Flushing Bay, a natural resource, the associated habitats, vegetation, and wildlife would not be adversely impacted by the Proposed Project, as it would increase permeable surfaces, incorporate green stormwater management practices (SMPs) that would improve the health of Flushing Creek, and implement a planting plan that would incorporate a diverse flora of native and native-adaptive vegetation, thereby improving habitat conditions and resulting in a net ecological benefit for the Project Area over time. (see **Chapter 9, Natural Resources**). As the quality and quantity of vegetated habitats and trees would increase significantly compared to existing conditions, habitat conditions for resident wildlife in the post-construction Project Area would improve. Due to the overall expansion of vegetated habitat, the existing faunal assemblage of species adapted to landscaped settings within urban areas would continue to utilize the Project Area at increased species population densities.

Additionally, the Proposed Project would be supportive of multiple public policies and initiatives (discussed in detail in **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**) including One NYC 2050, aiming to foster economic growth and resiliency, the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park Strategic Framework Plan, which seeks to improve pedestrian access in and around the park, and the Flushing Creek Study, outlining strategies, such as implementation of green infrastructure, to strengthen the health of Flushing Creek.

In conclusion, the Proposed Actions would not result in an immediate or long-term loss of environmental resources, since the Proposed Project would not negatively affect any nearby natural resources, and the site has been previously developed. The long-term commitment of land resources needed for the Proposed Project would be balanced by the project's beneficial aspects including economic development, job creation, public realm improvements, and resiliency measures in accordance with City policy goals.