2.R NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

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. The examination focuses on whether a defining feature of the neighborhood's character may be significantly affected.

As described in Chapter 1, Project Description, the Proposed Action is the approval of a package of zoning changes and special permits, including the rezoning of all or part of 11 blocks in the south central Bronx from manufacturing to residential districts and, to a lesser extent, from residential to higher density residential districts. Under the reasonable worst case development scenario (RWCDS) presented in Chapter 1, 49 tax lots would be redeveloped by the 2022 analysis year (as opposed to 2 in the future without the proposed action), with a projected 2,775 housing units and 132,000 square feet of commercial space, an increment of 2,635 housing units and 93,000 square feet of commercial space over the future no-action scenario, plus an approximately 12,000 square foot child care center.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the Proposed Action could have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact if it would have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact in any relevant technical area or through a combination of moderate effects in those technical areas. The Proposed Action would not cause significant adverse impacts regarding land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; shadows; urban design and visual resources, or noise. The significant adverse impacts to open space, historic and cultural resources, and transportation would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of moderately adverse effects affect such a defining feature. The Proposed Action would therefore not have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

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?

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 long, narrow proposed rezoning area is divided between two identifiable neighborhoods. To the north of the Cross Bronx Expressway, it is within West Farms, a neighborhood in Bronx Community District 6. South of the expressway, the rezoning area forms the eastern edge of Crotona Park East, which is in Community District 3. To the east of the proposed rezoning area, south of the expressway, is the Bronx River valley, which is not a neighborhood but rather a linear stretch of riverfront land combining transportation infrastructure, parkland, highway-oriented storage and commercial uses, and unimproved land.

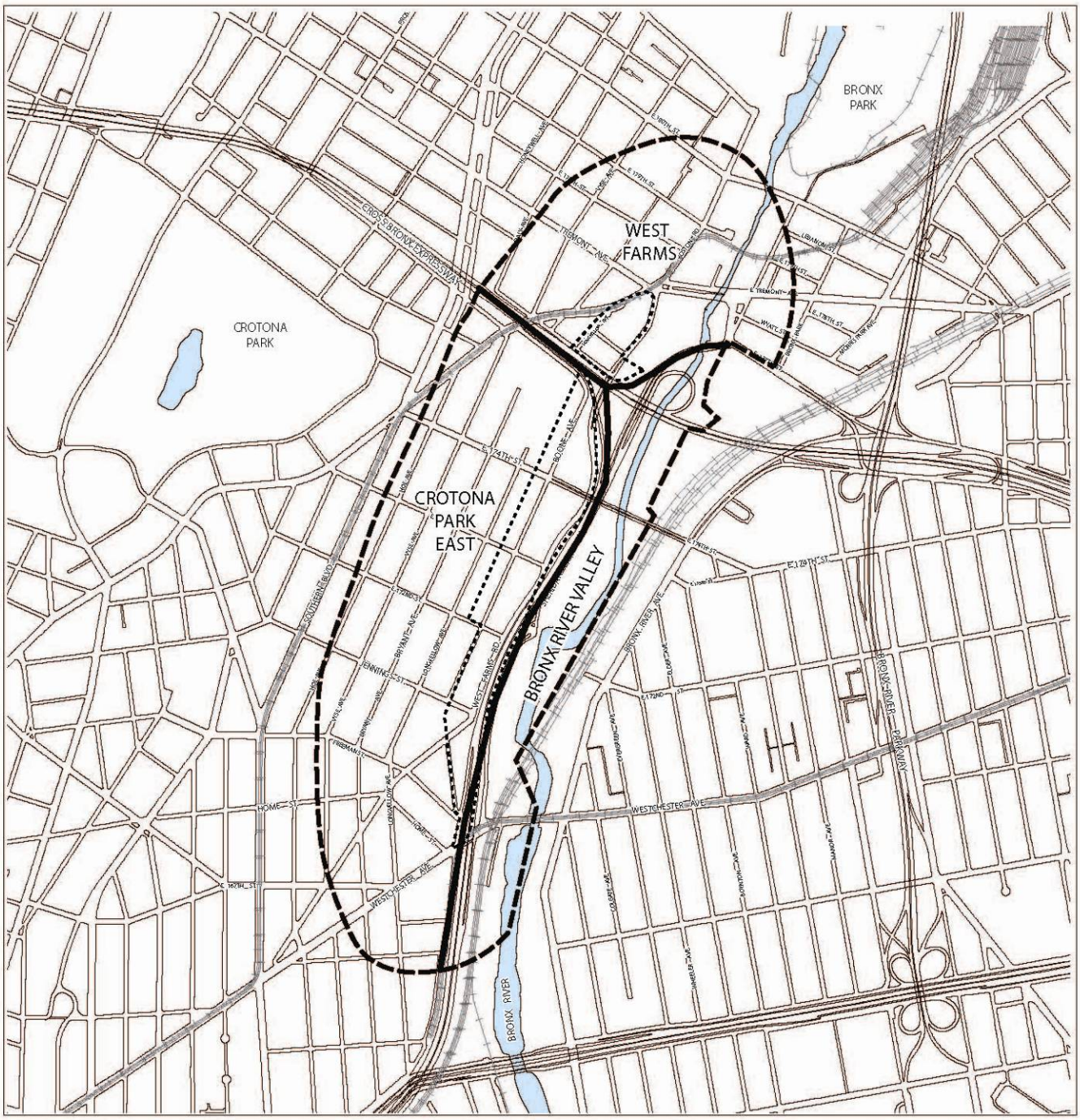
The neighborhood character study area has been delineated in accordance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* statement that the study area for a preliminary analysis of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. As shown in Figure R-1, it generally consists of the area within a quarter-mile radius of the proposed rezoning area. It excludes, however, a narrow strip atop the ridge to the east of the Bronx River valley, which forms the edge of a separate neighborhood that does not constitute a part of the rezoning area's environmental setting for neighborhood character purposes. (It is similarly excluded from the socioeconomic study area addressed in Chapter 2.B.) The study area boundaries are similar to those used for land use and public policy, for the preliminary assessment of socioeconomic conditions, and for transportation, and they encompass the study areas used for historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, and noise.

The assessment begins, under Existing Conditions, with an overview of the proposed rezoning area, the neighborhoods in which it is located, and the way in which the rezoning area relates to those neighborhoods. The information is drawn from the preceding sections of this EIS, but is presented in a more organic, integrated way. Whereas the other sections present all relevant details about particular aspects of the environmental setting, the discussion here focuses on a limited number of salient features that give these neighborhoods their own sense of place and that distinguish them from other parts of the city.

After Existing Conditions is a concise discussion of the changes anticipated within the proposed rezoning area and the study area by the 2022 analysis year in the absence of the Proposed Action, as well as whether the changes would substantially alter the character of the rezoning area or of the portion of Crotona Park East, West Farms, or the Bronx River valley within the study area.

Finally, after briefly reiterating the anticipated redevelopment that would occur by 2022 if the Proposed Action is taken, the analysis concludes with an assessment of whether the anticipated significant adverse impacts and moderate adverse effects regarding the relevant technical CEQR assessment categories would adversely affect any of the defining features of neighborhood character identified under Existing Conditions. The assessment includes a restatement of the significant adverse impacts and moderate adverse effects, if any, that have been identified in the following sections of this EIS:

Figure R-1: Neighborhood Character Study Area



Proposed Rezoning Area

Study Area Boundary

Neighborhood Boundary

CROTONA PARK EAST / WEST FARMS ZONING MAP AMENDMENT

Bronx, New York

2.A Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy;

2.B Socioeconomic Conditions;

2.D Open Space;

2.E Shadows;

2.F Historic and Cultural Resources;

2.G Urban Design and Visual Resources;

2.M Transportation; and

2.P Noise.

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.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Proposed Rezoning Area

The proposed rezoning area is long and narrow, extending linearly in a north-northeast to south-southwest direction for seven blocks, from West Farms Square (at East Tremont Avenue) to the intersection of Freeman Street and Boone Avenue. A multilane, limited access highway flanked by adjacent service roads, the Cross Bronx Expressway, separates the two northernmost blocks from the rest of the area. The east-west local streets dividing the proposed rezoning area are Jennings Street, East 172nd Street, East 173rd Street, East 174th Street, and, north of the highway, Rodman Place. The area is more than eight-tenths of a mile long, but it is only one block to a block and a half in width. The eastern boundary is West Farms Road, except for the southernmost block, where it is an exit ramp from the Sheridan Expressway. At the southern end, the area extends westward one block to Boone Avenue; between 172nd Street and the Cross Bronx Expressway, the western boundary extends half a block further to the midpoint between Boone and Longfellow Avenues. Boone Avenue ends at the expressway; further north, the western boundary is Longfellow Avenue, and Boston Road forms the northwest boundary.

The southernmost portion, from Freeman Street through the northern frontage of Jennings Street, consists of a playground, an adjacent grassy slope, a school staff parking lot, and a public school; it is part of a cluster of three schools and associated open space that extends outside of the proposed rezoning area. A much longer portion, extending from the midblock between Jennings and East 172nd Streets to the Cross Bronx Expressway, is light industrial in character, with expanses of low rise industrial buildings and associated areas of open storage and open parking. The only exception consists of two residential apartment buildings flanking East 174th Street west of Boone Avenue, the one location where the adjacent residential neighborhood to the west intrudes into this part of the proposed rezoning area. The northern portion, between the Cross Bronx Expressway and Tremont Avenue, is mixed in character, with industrial buildings and open storage, a hotel, small residential buildings, mid rise apartment buildings, and vacant lots.

Overall, land uses within the proposed rezoning area are predominantly industrial, automotive, and institutional. Residential development occupies only 6 percent of the 19 acres comprising the rezoning

area (including City-owned schoolyards and playgrounds). There are a total of 143 dwelling units, most of which are located in the two five- and six-story buildings that face each other on opposite sides of East 174th Street on the west side of Boone Avenue and in two five-story buildings on the east side of Longfellow Avenue just north of the Cross Bronx Expressway. There are 32 private businesses in the proposed rezoning area, plus a public school and two Department of Sanitation garages. Most of the businesses are industrial (light manufacturing, a meatpacking plant, warehouses, self-storage, wholesalers, and construction contractors) and automotive (auto repair shops, a tow pound that is a repossession service's storage area for repossessed automobiles, and ambulette services). There is also a considerable amount of vacant formerly industrial space. As of the spring of 2010, approximately 86,931 square feet, 17 percent of the area's privately owned nonresidential floor area, was vacant.

The light industrial enclave is neither as active nor as extensive as it was half a century ago, when the current Zoning Resolution and its map were adopted. During the mid twentieth century, the proposed rezoning area was part of a larger industrial corridor along the Bronx River south of Bronx Park, but a series of public actions has isolated and diminished this light industrial and automotive enclave. The construction of the limited access Sheridan Expressway during the late 1950s and early 1960s directly eliminated part of the industrial corridor and also severed these blocks at the eastern edge of the Crotona Park East residential neighborhood from the larger industrial area to the east and southeast. In 1963 the block bounded by the expressway, Boone Avenue, and West Farms Road was cleared and turned into a playground; it had previously contained a gas station, two warehouses, and a contractor's garage. Later in the 1960s, Boone Avenue was demapped between West Farms Road and Jennings Street; the formerly separate block to its east (which had contained a gas station, several auto repair shops, and a parking garage) was cleared, and it and the former roadbed became the parking lot for a new school that was built to the immediate west on the south side of Jennings Street. In 1985 a cluster of buildings between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road north of Jennings Street, which had been a garment factory, was acquired and renovated to become the Fannie Lou Hamer Freedom High School. These actions further diminished and isolated the industrial area west of the expressway and hemmed it in with a new institutional enclave to its immediate south. At the northern end of the rezoning area, another public school and its playground were constructed on the eastern side of West Farms Road between the Cross Bronx Expressway and East Tremont Avenue in 1976, on a block that had formerly been occupied by a combination of commercial and automotive uses, creating another institutional barrier that separates the proposed rezoning area from commercial uses to the east.

The vitality of the remaining industrial enclave has diminished over time, so that currently 17 percent of the floor area is vacant. Furthermore, much of the occupied space has shifted from manufacturing uses to lower intensity storage and automotive uses: On Block 3009 a former iron works has become a warehouse, and a former metal can factory has become an ambulette garage; on Block 3010 former factories are now a warehouse and an auto repair shop; on Block 3013 a former iron works is now used by the tow pound across the street; and on Block 3015 a former rubber cement factory has become part warehouse and part vacant space, a former factory has become part auto repair shop and part contractor's establishment, a former factory has become a self-storage facility, and a former iron works has become a warehouse.[1]

At present, many of the buildings in the rezoning area are vacant or otherwise underutilized and few streetscape improvements are present. Public sidewalks are in disrepair on many blocks (particularly along East 173rd Street and along Boone Avenue) and devoid of plantings. Cars often park on the sidewalks (particularly on Boone Avenue), and trucks pulling into or out of warehouses further congest

[1] Information on previous uses is drawn from the Hazardous Materials report that Sandstone Environmental Associates prepared for this EIS.

Boone Avenue. On the adjacent private property, vibrant murals brighten some walls, while other walls are in disrepair or marred by graffiti. Utilitarian corrugated metal fencing marks the street lines along several properties. Where open lots are visible behind chain link fencing, they tend to be unkempt and garbage strewn. The auto impoundment facility on the north side of 172nd Street is an unscreened, unlandscaped open parking lot behind a chain link fence topped by razor wire. The poor streetscape conditions, the truck congestion, the presence of vacant and underutilized buildings, and the unkempt condition of much of the property combine to create unwelcoming pedestrian conditions that deter street life.

Aside from land use patterns and the condition of streets and buildings, one of the area's salient features is the adjacency of two multilane, bifurcated, limited access highways, both of which are also major truck routes. As mentioned above, the Cross Bronx Expressway cuts through the proposed rezoning area, separating the two northern blocks from the blocks to the south, and separating the Crotona Park East neighborhood to the south from the West Farms neighborhood to the north. The busy highway, which carries very high traffic volumes, is slightly elevated at this location, crossing over West Farms Road on an overpass and carried on an embankment faced with low stone walls as it crosses the proposed rezoning area, before descending to surface level and then into a trench west of the rezoning area. The slight elevation increases the highway's visual presence. The other highway, the Sheridan Expressway, borders the eastern edge of the proposed rezoning area along the four blocks between Freeman Street and 174th Street and, between 174th Street and Rodman Place, is separated from the rezoning area by the ramps connecting the two expressways and the grassy, barren, unreachable patches of ground within the highway intersection. The Sheridan Expressway terminates at 177th Street, and only at its northernmost end does the proposed rezoning area face eastward to a developed block that forms a part of the urban fabric. The Sheridan Expressway forms a physical barrier as well as a visual edge; the only crossing from the rezoning area is a bridge at 174th Street.

Another piece of transportation infrastructure is the elevated subway line above Boston Road, which abuts the proposed rezoning area's northernmost block on its northwest side. There is a station at West Farms Square, facing the northern end of the rezoning area. Boston Road changes direction at West Farms Square, turning northward, but the elevated line continues on an undulating course northeastward, on a right-of-way that does not follow any street layout. The elevated rail line is a visually dominant feature, but more important is the effect that it has on nearby noise levels. At the northern tip of the proposed rezoning area, facing the elevated line and station, monitored noise levels are in the Clearly Unacceptable range, ranging from 84.6 to 86.1 decibels. (Noise levels elsewhere in the proposed rezoning area are in the Marginally Unacceptable range, which is quite common in much of the city.)

Within the proposed rezoning area, there is a considerable change of grade from east to west. The change is part of a larger topological descent from the high ground to the west of the proposed rezoning area to the Bronx River valley to its east. Near 173rd Street the elevation of West Farms Road is 60 feet lower than that of Bryant Avenue, three blocks to the west. At that point the terrain descends 23 feet from Bryant Avenue to Longfellow Avenue, 20 feet from Longfellow Avenue to Boone Avenue, and 17 feet from Boone Avenue to West Farms Road. Between 172nd and 173rd Streets, the difference in elevation between Boone Avenue and West Farms Road varies from 11 to 20 feet; between 172nd and Jennings Streets, it varies from 12 to 21 feet. North of the Cross Bronx Expressway, there is as much as a 19 foot grade difference between Longfellow Avenue, the rezoning area's western boundary at this point, and West Farms Road, one block to the east.[2]

[2] Elevation figures are from drawings prepared by Dattner Architects.

In addition to the irregularities of grade, the blocks between West Farms Road and Boone Avenue are also irregular in shape and width because West Farms Road follows a curving, meandering path. The avenues to its west have straight rights of way, part of a regular street grid, so that the part of the area west of Boone Avenue has a more regular layout. At the northern end, block form is affected not only by the irregular path of West Farms Road but by that of Boston Road, which slices through the street grid, curving in a generally southwest to northeast direction.

Crotona Park East

Crotona Park East is a predominantly residential neighborhood. Community facilities such as schools, churches, and children's centers are interspersed amid the housing. Small parks have been created on midblock sites.

The portion of the neighborhood to the east of Southern Boulevard (the portion, that is, within the quarter-mile study area) is laid out mainly in a grid of 200 by 600 foot long blocks lined with three predominant types of housing. One type consists of five- and six-story brick apartment buildings, mainly from the 1920s. They have high lot coverage and are built to the street line, but often with front court recesses. Building widths vary but are generally about 100 feet. The second type consists of two- and 2½-story attached row houses, mainly from the 1990s. They tend to be recessed from the street line, sometimes with parking in the front, other times with front yards too shallow for parking. The third type consists of unattached two- to four-story homes with shallow front yards and, generally but not always, narrow side yards. This is the area's oldest housing, from the first decades of the twentieth century, and they are the most varied in architectural style.

The housing is almost entirely rental. Within the census tracts in this part of the neighborhood character study area, 91 percent of all occupied housing units were rental as of the 2010 census. Most of the apartments are in either rent regulated or public housing. A number of buildings are owned and/or managed by the MBD Housing Corporation, a not-for-profit affordable housing provider that has been very active in Crotona Park East.

Incomes and rents both tend to be low. Within the pertinent census tracts, the median household income as of the 2000 census was $18,513 ($24,231 in 2010 dollars), and the median contract rent was $395 ($500 in 2010 dollars).

The neighborhood's largest commercial concentration is the suburban style New Horizons Shopping Center. Elsewhere in the neighborhood, commercial establishments are in the ground floors of apartment buildings rather than in separate buildings. The shopping center is located to the immediate south of the Cross Bronx Expressway, where the neighborhood's prevailing street pattern has been broken by the combination of three blocks to form a superblock, which extends southward to 174th Street and is flanked by Vyse and Boone Avenues. The peripheral parcels along these three streets have been left intact, generally with older buildings remaining on these parcels (including warehouse buildings within the proposed rezoning area along Boone Avenue), except that a large footprint retail building now occupies the northeast corner of 174th Street and Vyse Avenue, where it is likely that apartment buildings once stood. On the interior of the superblock, large one-story retail buildings, divided into numerous stores, form an L pattern along the western and northern edges, and a large parking lot occupies the rest of the space. Vehicular and pedestrian access is from East 174th Street.

The recreational open spaces in the neighborhood are small, and the ratio of open space to population is low; however, one of the borough's largest parks, 127.5 acre Crotona Park, forms the neighborhood's western boundary. Although outside of the study area, the park gives the neighborhood its name, and its proximity is an inherent part of the neighborhood's identity.

Within this part of the study area, the most important open space is Rock Garden Park, occupying most of the midblock between 173rd and 174th Streets on the west side of Longfellow Avenue. A pathway with stairs leads from the street level entrance to higher terrain at the top of the large rock formations that give the park its name. There are trees and other plantings, pathways, seating, picnic tables, playground basketball equipment, and a small waterfall. The park is also the only visual resource identified in the portion of Crotona Park East that is within the study area.

This part of the study area does not have any designated landmarks or historic districts, and no buildings have been deemed eligible for designation.

West Farms

West Farms is considerably more varied in character than Crotona Park East. With regard to land uses, west of the Bronx River, a mix of residential buildings, commercial uses, and schools and other institutional uses line East Tremont Avenue, which is the neighborhood's main thoroughfare. Residential use prevails north of Tremont Avenue, and both housing and churches are located to the south. East of the river, commercial and automotive uses predominate north of Tremont Avenue, and residential and automotive uses are located to its south. With regard to urban design, the street grid is loose and irregular, and blocks have been combined by the closing of Bryant Avenue north of Tremont Avenue. The typical pattern of buildings lining the streets along the periphery of blocks remains intact in some locations, but in others housing complexes have been developed in ways that break with that pattern. Building types are also much more varied than in Crotona Park East.

Two housing complexes occupy the eastern and central portions of the superblocks bounded by Tremont Avenue, Boston Road, 179th Street, and Vyse Avenue. They consist of a mix of 7-, 8- 21-, and 22-story gray brick apartment buildings. There are no continuous street walls, and the tower buildings are located on the interiors of the blocks rather than oriented toward the street lines. Lot coverage is low. A parking lot rather than a building or plaza occupies the corner of Tremont Avenue and Boston Road at West Farms Square, and no buildings front on Boston Road between Tremont Avenue and 178th Street. Low rise commercial buildings occupy the Boston Road frontage between 178th and 179th Streets. A long 8-story building occupies the western part of the Tremont Avenue frontage but does not extend all the way to Vyse Avenue. An open landscaped area occupies the corner of Tremont and Vyse Avenues, north of which is another parking lot facing Vyse Avenue. Clusters of two- and three-story attached row houses, deeply recessed from the street lines, have been built elsewhere on the western portions of the blocks.

Another, very different housing complex is located north of 179th Street. It consists of clusters of attached L-shaped pink brick four- to six-story buildings, with jogs and setbacks and chamfered edges to break up the street wall, wrapping around but not fully enclosing internal courtyards. Between 179th and 180th Streets, clusters are located on the east side of Boston Road (extending to the Bronx River), between Boston Road and a walkway that marks the Bryant Avenue street line, and to the west of the walkway. Between 180th Street and Bronx Park South, a large cluster is located between Boston Road and the Bryant Avenue line. The buildings are set back from streets and walkways and do not follow the blocks' peripheries.

On the north side of Tremont Avenue between Vyse Avenue and Southern Boulevard, and on the south side from Boston Road to Southern Boulevard, there is a mix of five- and six-story apartment buildings and one- and two-story commercial buildings, as well as a five-story brick school and a church complex. Elsewhere, the neighborhood contains an eclectic mix of five- and six-story apartment buildings, smaller four-story apartment buildings, more recent two- and three-story attached row houses, and community facility buildings.

The part of the study area within West Farms is busier, noisier, and more congested than the part within Crotona Park East. Street life is more active, particularly along East Tremont Avenue and Boston Road. As is mentioned above in the discussion of the proposed rezoning area, train traffic along the elevated subway line causes high noise levels, which at West Farms Square are in the Clearly Unacceptable range. At both the West Farms Square intersection and the intersection of East 177th Street and the Sheridan Expressway ramps, traffic operates at unacceptable service levels during peak hours.

As in Crotona Park East, the housing is almost entirely rental. Within the census tracts in this part of the neighborhood character study area, 96 percent of the occupied housing units were rental as of the 2010 census. There are several income- and rent-restricted developments, including a public housing complex on the west side of Boston Road between East Tremont and East 178th Streets and the large, multi-block low income Lambert Houses complex that flanks Boston Road further north. Much of the other housing is rent regulated.

As in Crotona Park East, incomes and rents both tend to be low. Within the pertinent census tracts, the median household income as of the 2000 census was $15,854 ($20,751 in 2010 dollars), and the median contract rent was $317 ($401 in 2010 dollars).

As in Crotona Park East, the recreational open spaces in the neighborhood are small, and the ratio of open space to population is low. However, the neighborhood's northern boundary is Bronx Park, the edge of which is located just outside the study area. It is larger than Crotona Park and is (along with Pelham Bay Park) one of the borough's two premier parks.

No buildings or other structures in this part of the study area have been identified as visual resources. There are no designated landmarks or historic districts, and no buildings have been deemed eligible for designation.

Bronx River Valley

To the immediate east of the proposed rezoning area, south of the Cross Bronx Expressway, are the Sheridan Expressway and, beyond it, the Bronx River and its shorelands. Flanking the river are stretches of fenced barren land (part of which is designated parkland), Amtrak railroad tracks, industrial and automotive uses, and a motor inn. The Bronx River itself is the study area's most important visual resource. This stretch of the riverfront is currently a gap in the Bronx River Greenway, which the City and a private conservancy are working to create.

Relationship between the Rezoning Area and the Rest of the Study Area

At present the proposed rezoning area does not contribute in a positive way to the character of the two neighborhoods in which it is located or to the character of the Bronx River valley. The industrial and automotive uses in the proposed rezoning area directly abut housing and public schools in predominantly residential neighborhoods. Its industrial buildings, many of which have windowless, blank facades and many of which are poorly maintained, and its open storage areas are inconsistent with the built form within the surrounding neighborhoods. Its array of blank walls, fences, and truck bays present an unpleasant streetscape that is not conducive to pedestrian activity. Its trucks clog adjoining streets. South of the Cross Bronx Expressway, the view to the west from the Bronx River is of unappealing industrial and automotive buildings and vacant lots.

THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Within the proposed rezoning area, one property is expected to be redeveloped with a mixed residential and commercial building whether or not the Proposed Action is taken. The site is at the northern tip of the area, fronting on West Farms Square, and is now occupied by a hotel, its accessory parking lot, and a vacant lot. If the development proceeds under the existing zoning, it would be about eight stories tall and would contain approximately 134 housing units above approximately 39,000 square feet of ground floor retail space. No other changes are anticipated by 2022 in the absence of the Proposed Action.

Elsewhere in the study area, approximately a dozen new residential buildings are anticipated in Crotona Park East and West Farms. They will include three adjacent three-family homes, and the rest will be apartment buildings, one of which will also contain medical offices and ground floor commercial space. A small commercial building will also be constructed at the intersection of Boston Road and Southern Boulevard. These new developments will be consistent with the existing neighborhood character.

Aside from this modest amount of new development, the conditions described above are expected to remain in the Crotona Park East and West Farms portions of the study area if the Proposed Action is not taken.

In the absence of the Proposed Action, the most substantial change is anticipated in the Bronx River valley. The land along the west bank of the Bronx River between the levels of 172nd and 174th Streets, which is now mapped but fenced and unimproved parkland known as Starlight Park, will be transformed into a functioning park. The 15-acre park will include a boathouse, a floating dock, native plantings, a fern garden, walking paths, playgrounds, ballfields, and a buffer zone of trees to block views of the Sheridan Expressway. The improvements will transform this derelict stretch of land into an important recreational and visual resource. The park will connect to the Bronx River Greenway, a developing network of public open spaces along the Bronx River.

THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION AND ITS POTENTIAL IMPACT

Redevelopment under the RWCDS

Under the RWCDS the Proposed Action is expected to result in the redevelopment of 49 tax lots within the rezoning area by the year 2022, transforming the character of the rezoning area. In terms of land use, the redevelopment would change what is now a predominantly industrial and automotive area, with a considerable inventory of vacant or underutilized space and with institutional and recreational uses at its southern end, into a predominantly residential area with numerous ground floor commercial and community facility uses and with the existing institutional and recreational uses remaining at the southern end. The Proposed Action would result in an incremental increase of 2,635 housing units (including 923 subsidized units reserved for low and moderate income households), 93,000 square feet of commercial space, and an approximately 12,000 square foot child care center over the future without action condition. The RWCDS would also result in a loss of 385,381 square feet of industrial space, including approximately 302,000 square feet of active warehouse, manufacturing, automotive repair, vehicle storage, and certain types of commercial space and 83,231 square feet of vacant space formerly used for industrial purposes. In terms of urban design, the redevelopment would replace low rise industrial structures and open storage areas with new residential buildings, some of which would have ground floor storefronts. Building heights would range from 3 to 15 stories, with the taller buildings along West Farms Road and lower buildings along Boone Avenue.

Technical Area Significant Adverse Impacts and Moderate Adverse Effects

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 (residential, retail commercial, and community facility) that would result from the Proposed Action are found in the study area and would therefore be compatible with them. The proposed zoning changes would extend residential zoning eastward from an existing residentially zoned area and would provide for an orderly transition from lower to higher density districts. The Proposed Action would be consistent with the 197-a plan that covers a portion of the proposed rezoning area, the Waterfront Revitalization Program (which covers only a small corner of the rezoning area), and PlaNYC's major sustainability initiatives.

Socioeconomic Conditions

No significant adverse socioeconomic impacts have been identified.

Under the RWCDS a total of six households would be directly displaced as a result of new development, which is too small a number to affect the study area's demographic character.

The new market rate housing would have rents that would be beyond the means of the majority of existing households in the predominantly low income study area, and the new population would be substantial enough relative to the study area's anticipated future no-action population for the Proposed Action to have the potential to alter real estate market conditions and lead to rising rents. Nevertheless, most of the study area's renter households live in rent regulated or income- and rent-restricted public or private affordable housing and therefore would not experience precipitous rent increases, and analysis has concluded that a large proportion of the unprotected renter households do not have low enough incomes to be considered at risk of involuntary displacement as a result of rising rents. Because the number of households at risk of displacement (because of a combination of low incomes and the absence of protections against steep rent increases) constitutes less than 5 percent of all study area households, the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact as a result of indirect residential displacement. Although the potential displacement of approximately 2 percent of the study area's households would constitute a moderate adverse effect, the Proposed Action would have a countervailing positive effect as a result of the construction of approximately 923 permanently affordable housing units, a number sufficient to accommodate households who might be displaced from their current apartments.

Under the RWCDS 26 businesses would be directly displaced as a result of redevelopment; but most of the businesses do not have strong connections to the local economy, the small number that do cater to the local community offer services (auto repair and maintenance) that would remain readily available locally, and public policies have not targeted any part of the study area as a place where industrial or automotive establishments should be encouraged. The direct business displacement would therefore not constitute a significant adverse impact. Even if it were to be considered a moderate adverse effect, it would not adversely affect neighborhood character because the presence of these businesses does not contribute a defining element of neighborhood character.

Because the light industrial enclave within the proposed rezoning area has been shrinking and weakening for decades (resulting in a current 17 percent space vacancy rate), because citywide economic trends show persistent declines in the industrial sector, and because the firms facing direct displacement are not important suppliers or customers of other local businesses, the Proposed Action would not lead indirectly to substantial business displacement in the study area.

Open Space

The Proposed Action would have a positive direct effect on open space resources by adding three new publicly accessible open spaces: the tot lot on Boone Avenue north of 172nd Street and the two landscaped mid-block open areas connecting Boone Avenue and West Farms Road on the blocks between

Jennings Street and 172nd Street and between 172nd and 173rd Streets. Nevertheless, the Proposed Action would have an adverse indirect effect by adding population and thus increasing the demand for open space in the area. The overall open space ratios for the residential study area would decrease from 0.75 acres per thousand persons under no-action conditions to 0.70 acres per thousand persons as the result of the Proposed Action, a reduction of 7.0 percent. The active open space ratio in the residential study area would drop from 0.26 to 0.24 acres per thousand users, or a 7.4 percent drop. The passive open space ratio for combined residents and non-residents would drop from 0.49 to 0.46, a 6.8 percent drop. Given the size of the decreases in the active and passive open space ratios, the Proposed Action has the potential to result in a significant adverse open space impact in the residential study area.

The anticipated significant adverse open space impact would not adversely affect neighborhood character. As is discussed under Existing Conditions, the two residential neighborhoods already have low open space ratios, but they are distinguished by their proximity to large parks (Crotona Park in the case of Crotona Park East and Bronx Park in the case of West Farms). The Proposed Action would not alter the neighborhoods' relationships to the two large parks that border them, and residents of both neighborhoods would still have access to the Bronx River Greenway and its linear network of connected open spaces.

Shadows

The Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse shadows impact or moderate adverse shadows effect. Despite extensive resulting redevelopment, the Proposed Action would not result in significant new shadows being cast on any nearby open space during any of the CEQR seasonal analysis periods, with the exception of Boone Slope Park; however, Boone Slope Park, which measures 0.03 acres and is steeply sloped, is not publically accessible, and there are no current plans for its improvement to make it publicly accessible.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse impact or moderate adverse effect on architectural resources since no such resources have been identified within the study area.

The Proposed Action would result in ground disturbance on 8 modern tax lots (14 historical lots) that may contain subsurface archaeological artifacts. Four of the modern lots (10 of the historical lots) are under the control of the project applicant; potential adverse impacts would be avoided at these locations because the applicant has agreed to enter into a restrictive declaration with the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission to follow an approved testing protocol and to recover any artifacts that are found. The other four lots, two of which may contain human remains from a former cemetery and two of which may contain former privies (shafts) in which artifacts may have subsequently been disposed, are not under the applicant's control, and there is no mechanism available to ensure that their redevelopment would not result in unavoidable adverse impacts to these archaeological resources.

Whereas architectural resources may contribute substantially to neighborhood character by serving, as their name implies, as local landmarks, archaeological resources are not defining features of neighborhood character. By their very nature, they are necessarily hidden underground, invisible to neighborhood residents, workers, and visitors. The significant adverse archaeological impact would therefore not constitute a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact or moderate adverse effect on urban design or visual resources. The Proposed Action would lead to the removal of existing buildings and open storage areas that are inconsistent with the built form within the surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed residential street walls, with regular fenestration patterns and some ground floor storefronts,

would create a streetscape that is more pleasing and conducive to pedestrian activity, and more consistent with the residential neighborhoods, than the existing array of blank walls, fences, and truck bays. The new buildings would be taller and larger than existing nearby residential development, except at the northern end of the proposed rezoning area, but the Crotona Park East and West Farms neighborhoods do not have homogeneous urban design features that would be undermined by the scale of the anticipated redevelopment. The anticipated redevelopment would not obstruct existing views to or from Rock Garden Park, the only visual resource identified in the Crotona Park East part of the study area, or existing views to or from the Bronx River or Starlight Park, which will be the area's principal visual resources in the 2022 analysis year (after Starlight Park is completed), and would not diminish any valuable aspects of their visual setting. To the extent that views to the west will be available from Starlight Park, the redevelopment of the proposed rezoning area would replace views of gritty industrial and automotive buildings and rock outcroppings with those of street walls of residential buildings, thereby improving the park's visual setting.

Transportation

The Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse impact on transit or pedestrian conditions or parking availability. Without mitigation measures, such as changes to traffic signal timing or reconfiguration of lanes, the additional traffic generated by the RWCDS would cause significant adverse declines in traffic conditions during at least one of the three daily peak traffic hours at seven intersections. The New York City Department of Transportation (DOT) has agreed to proposed mitigation measures at most of the intersections that would 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. Unmitigatable significant adverse impacts would occur at the West Farms Square intersection and at the intersection of East 177th Street and the Sheridan Expressway. Because the West Farms Square portion of the study area is already characterized by traffic congestion at certain locations during peak traffic hours, and the two intersections already operate at unacceptable levels of service during peak traffic periods, the traffic impacts at these locations would not constitute a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

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. The Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts.

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; shadows; or urban design and visual resources. The potential significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources, transportation, and noise would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character. Moderate adverse effects that would affect such a defining feature, either singly or in combination, have also not been identified. The Proposed Action would therefore not have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.