Chapter 9: Neighborhood Character

This chapter assesses the potential effects on neighborhood character stemming from the Proposed Actions. As defined in the 2020 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "personality." These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, shadows, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, 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 relevant 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.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the applicant is seeking a zoning map amendment and zoning text amendment (the Proposed Actions) to rezone the western portion of Block 2415 (the Rezoning Area, coterminous with the Project Area) in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, Community District 1. The Proposed Actions would facilitate the development of a nine story mixed-use building (the Proposed Project) on Projected Development Site 1 (Block 2415, Lot 1). The Proposed Actions could result in additional development in the Project Area beyond what is proposed by the applicant for Block 2415, Lot 1. An adjacent lot, Block 2415, Lot 6, which is neither owned nor controlled by the Applicant, is also assumed for development under the Proposed Actions as Projected Development Site 2. No development is assumed for the remainder of the Project Area.

The Proposed Project would consist of an approximately 101,000 gross square foot (gsf), nine-story mixed-use building containing up to 70,000 gsf of office uses (split between 1/3 office use and 2/3 light industrial and manufacturing use for the purposes of CEQR analysis), up to 22,000 gsf of community facility (medical office) uses, and up to 9,000 gsf of retail uses. Development on Projected Development Site 2 would result in an approximately 80,500-gsf, nine-story mixed-use building containing up to 55,000 gsf of office uses, 17,500 gsf of community facility (medical office) uses, and 8,000 gsf of retail uses. Both developments are anticipated to be completed by 2023, the analysis year.

This chapter includes a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character, which was prepared in conformance with 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 the project's Environmental Assessment Statement (EAS) and this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts associated with neighborhood character. As described in the relevant sections of the EAS and this EIS, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources, or noise. Although significant adverse impacts would occur with respect to traffic, transit, and pedestrians, some of the traffic impacts and all of the transit and pedestrian impacts would be mitigated and would not result in a significant overall change to the determining elements of neighborhood character. Further, the anticipated buildings and uses on the Projected Development Sites would further enliven the streetscape at ground level and create a strong, continuous streetwall, enhancing the urban design conditions, provide additional retail opportunities to the local population, and provide additional space for employment in a mix of uses within the neighborhood.

A. 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, shadows, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, 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. The study area for the preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is defined as the area within 400 feet of the Project 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 project or 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. 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 is to change. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater change without experiencing significant impacts.

If there is no potential for the proposed project or action to affect the defining features of neighborhood character, a detailed assessment is not warranted.

B. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

PROJECTED DEVELOPMENT SITES

The Projected Development sites, located on the Kent Avenue frontage of the block bound by South 2nd Street to the north, Wythe Avenue to the east, South 3rd Street to the south, and Kent Avenue to the west, currently contain warehouse uses. Projected Development Site 1 (Block 2415, Lot 1) is currently improved with a single-story warehouse building with a mezzanine that is used as a warehouse/production event space known as "Villain." The windowless building was constructed in 1971 and is approximately 15,296 gross square feet (gsf) in size. Projected Development Site 2 (Block 2415, Lot 6) is currently improved with an approximately 11,334-gsf single-story warehouse building constructed in 1962.

PROJECT AREA

The remainder of the Project Area on which no additional development is anticipated as a result of the Proposed Actions (Block 2415, Lots 10, 7501, 7502, and portions of [p/o] Lots 16 and 38) includes a mix of commercial (currently vacant), residential, and parking uses. Lot 10 is the site of a currently vacant one-story commercial building completed in 2008, Lots 7501 and 7502 contain two four-story condominium buildings completed in 2009 and 2010 with parking for building residents in the rear. Lot 16 contains a private accessory parking lot associated with an adjacent daycare use while Lot 38 contains a four-story residential walk-up building with ground floor retail completed in 1920 and converted to the current use in 2000.

STUDY AREA

The study area surrounding the Project Area includes residential, commercial, industrial, community facility, parking, and open space uses and buildings in the area range from large buildings to single-story structures. The remainder of Block 2415 to the east of the Project Area is composed of one- to five-story buildings containing residential uses with commercial and community facility uses below, fully commercial buildings, and manufacturing/heavy commercial uses. Building ages range from pre-war structures to a new building recently completed at 60 South 2nd Street.

The eastern portion of the study area generally contains multifamily residential walkup buildings, some with commercial uses below, vacant lots, and a 19-story residential apartment building (321 Wythe Avenue) completed in 2018. The area directly to the south of the Project Area includes old and new multi-story residential buildings, and a 16-story residential building with retail uses on the ground floors that is part of the former Domino Sugar Refinery project (325 Kent Avenue). The area south of South 4th Street has a mix of uses including residential, residential with ground floor commercial uses, and industrial uses contained in single-story warehouse and bar buildings, multifamily walkups, and multifamily elevator apartment buildings. The portion of the study area to the north of the Project Area contains a mix of commercial, industrial, residential with ground floor retail, and parking uses. Residential uses are located in multifamily walkups and multifamily elevator apartment buildings, some with ground floor retail, and non-residential uses are located in single-story warehouse buildings and art studios and single-story manufacturing buildings. The two-story brick headquarters of Vice, a media organization, is also located directly to the north of the Project Area fronting Kent Avenue.

The area to the west of the Project Area is dominated by the site of the former Domino Sugar Refinery, and new features stemming from its ongoing redevelopment. The majority of the structures of the former refinery complex have been demolished, but the central building located directly across Kent Avenue from the Projected Development Sites, the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House (a NYC Landmark), has been preserved and is a defining feature of the area. A renovated and reimaged Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House with new commercial uses will serve as the centerpiece of the redeveloped refinery area, which will also contain public open space and four new buildings (two of which have been completed). The public open space, Domino Park, is an approximately five-acre park located on the East River shoreline between Grand Street to the north and South 5th Street to the west of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House to the south that was opened in 2018. The park is in excellent condition, contains numerous passive and active open space features such as playground equipment, beach volleyball, a dog park, lawn areas, and a waterfront esplanade, and is well patronized serving as a new defining feature within the area. Two residential towers with commercial and community facility uses in the lower floors will be located to the north of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House between Kent Avenue and Domino Park, one of which (260 Kent Avenue) was recently completed. An additional public plaza will be located directly to the south of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House (directly to the west of aforementioned and complete 325 Kent Avenue), and the final residential tower of the redevelopment project will be located to the south of this plaza. Though outside of the study area, the Williamsburg Bridge is located just to the south below South 5th Street and is a defining visual presence within the area.

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 following technical areas that are considered in the neighborhood character assessment pursuant to the *CEQR Technical Manual*: 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 uses the findings from the respective attachments of the EAS and chapters of this 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, defining features of the study area's neighborhood character would not be affected either through the potential of any significant adverse impact or in combination with any other moderate effects in the relevant technical areas.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

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

As described in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," no significant adverse impacts related to land use, zoning, or public policy would occur in the Future with the Proposed Actions (the With Action condition).

The Proposed Actions would facilitate the demolition of the existing warehouse use on Projected Development Site 1 and construction of the Proposed Project, a nine-story approximately 101,000-

gsf mixed-use building with office uses (split 1/3 office use and 2/3 light industrial and manufacturing use for the purposes of CEQR analysis), community facility (medical office) uses, and retail uses on the ground floor. The Proposed Actions could also result in the development of a nine-story approximately 80,500-gsf building on Projected Development Site 2 with office uses community facility (medical office) uses, and retail uses on the ground floor. No additional development is anticipated in the remainder of the Project Area with the Proposed Actions.

Development on the Projected Development Sites would be consistent with and strengthen the mixed-use character of the surrounding neighborhood. Local retail uses would be similar to existing local retail uses in the study area. The scale of the Proposed Project and the potential building that could be developed on Projected Development Site 2 would be similar to several existing buildings within the study area and smaller than several existing and proposed buildings within the study area including planned development at the former Domino Sugar Refinery. The anticipated buildings and uses on the Projected Development Sites would further enliven the pedestrian experience, provide additional retail opportunities to the local population, and provide additional space for a wide range of employment opportunities in a mix of uses.

The proposed M1-5 zoning district would increase the potential developable area on the Projected Development Sites, but would not result in new development in the remainder of the Project Area. As stated above, new development on the Projected Development Sites facilitated by the proposed rezoning would be consistent with existing uses in the study area and would not represent a significant increase in built scale as compared to the existing and planned buildings in the study area. The Proposed Actions are therefore consistent with existing zoning in the study area and would not result in a significant adverse impact to land use or zoning.

The Projected Development Sites are located within the City's Coastal Zone and the Proposed Actions were reviewed for consistency with the policies of the City's Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP). The WRP analysis concluded that the Proposed Actions would support the adopted resiliency policies of New York City and would be consistent with the relevant WRP policies (see **Appendix A**).

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 the EAS, the Proposed Actions would not exceed any of the thresholds for analysis of socioeconomic conditions and it has been concluded that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse economic impacts related to direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, indirect residential displacement, indirect business displacement, or effects on specific industries within the study area.

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 chapter.

No publicly accessible open spaces would be physically displaced as a result of the Proposed Actions, nor would any open spaces be adversely affected by new shadows resulting from the

development on the Projected Development Sites. Access to Domino Park and other nearby open space resources would not be affected by the Proposed Actions.

The Proposed Actions would introduce a new non-residential working population that would be anticipated to utilize nearby passive open space resources. As discussed in Chapter 3, "Open Space," though the Proposed Actions would result in a decrease in the passive open space ratio in the study area of more than five percent, the With Action condition passive open space ratio of 0.778 acres per 1,000 non-residents would remain substantially greater than the City's planning goal of 0.15 acres of passive open space per 1,000 non-residents. Ample access to open space would remain, and any impacts to publicly accessible open space resulting from the Proposed Actions, including a reduction in the open space ratio, would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

SHADOWS

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to the potential effects of shadows resulting from development facilitated by the Proposed Action, either singularly, or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter.

As detailed in EAS Attachment D, "Shadows," the Proposed Actions would result in incremental shadows on portions of Domino Park and the East River in certain seasons, but the extent and duration of any incremental shadows would be limited and would not result in a significant adverse impact on either open space or natural resources. Therefore, the incremental shadows resulting from the Proposed Actions would not adversely affect Neighborhood Character.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on historic and cultural resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter.

Archaeological Resources

As discussed in EAS Attachment E, "Historic and Cultural Resources," there are no archaeological concerns for Projected Development Sites 1 and 2, the area in which subsurface disturbance would occur, as determined in comment letters from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) dated April 3, 2019 and August 15, 2019. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse direct or indirect effects to archaeological resources in the study area and would not affect the defining features of neighborhood character.

Architectural Resources

There are four known architectural resources located within the study area as detailed in EAS Attachment E, "Historic and Cultural Resources." These are (1) the aforementioned Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House, a NYC Landmark and defining feature of the neighborhood located directly across Kent Avenue from the Projected Development Sites; (2) four former American Sugar Refinery buildings located to the north of the Project Area that are eligible for inclusion on the State and National Register of Historic Place (S/NR); (3) the former Matchett Candy factory southeast of the Project Area that is S/NR eligible; and (4) the former Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills Company building located north of the Project Area that is S/NR eligible. No architectural resources are located within the Project Area.

The Proposed Actions would not result in the replication of aspects of any of the architectural resources in the study area so as to cause a false historical appearance, the introduction of significant new shadows or significant lengthening of the duration of existing shadows over historic landscapes or structures, or any physical changes to the architectural resources identified above. The former Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House is located within 90 feet of Projected Development Sites 1 and 2. Therefore, to avoid inadvertent demolition and/or construction-related damage to these resources from ground-borne construction period vibrations, falling debris, collapse, etc., it would be included in a CPP for historic structures that would be prepared in coordination with LPC.

The Proposed Actions would not result in the isolation of any architectural resources from its setting or visual relationship with the streetscape, or otherwise adversely alter a historic property's setting or visual prominence, including that of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House, a defining feature of the neighborhood. At nine stories, both the buildings anticipated for Projected Development Sites 1 and 2 would be shorter than the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House across Kent Avenue, and the setting would be further contextualized by the recently completed and planned buildings for the former Domino Sugar Refinery redevelopment.

Furthermore, the Proposed Actions would not introduce incompatible visual, audible, or atmosphere elements to a historic resource's setting, and the proposed uses are compatible with the use of many of the historic and modern buildings in the study area. No significant or publicly accessible views of any architectural resources in the study area would be eliminated or screened as a result of the Proposed Actions, and no significant new shadows or significant lengthening of the duration of existing shadows on historic resources with sunlight-sensitive features would occur to the extent that distinguishing details would be obscured.

In summary, the Proposed Actions would not be anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources in the study area, with the preparation and implementation of the CPP. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse direct or indirect effects to architectural resources in the study area and would not affect the defining features of 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 discussed in EAS Attachment F, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the proposed and projected buildings and their uses would be consistent with existing and new developments in the study area. The heights of the buildings would be consistent with and shorter than the height of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House across Kent Avenue and would be at a smaller scale than other new and planned tower developments in the study area such as 321 Wythe Avenue and buildings of the former Domino Sugar Refinery project.

The new buildings on the Projected Development Sites would be notable in views along surrounding streets, particularly along Kent Avenue and South 3rd Street. However, as noted above, in these views, the height of the proposed and projected buildings would not be inconsistent with the height of existing buildings and would be shorter than existing and planned residential towers nearby. The Proposed Actions would not result in the obstruction or elimination of views to any visual landmarks in the surrounding area. River Street and the adjacent Domino Park would

continue to provide expansive views of the Manhattan waterfront, the East River, the Williamsburg Bridge, and the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House, as would views along Kent Avenue. Views west along side streets would continue to include the brick smokestack of the Havemeyers & Elder Filter, Pan & Finishing House, a defining feature of the neighborhood, and the East River and Manhattan waterfront in the distance. No view corridors or natural or built visual resources would be partially or totally blocked as a result of the Proposed Actions. In conclusion, the Proposed Actions would not significantly adversely affect urban design or visual resources.

TRANSPORTATION

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

Traffic

A detailed analysis of project-generated trips at 13 intersections for the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours concluded that with the Proposed Actions, there would be significant adverse impacts at five intersections during the weekday AM peak hour, four intersections during the weekday midday peak hour, and eight intersections during the weekday PM peak hour. Some of these impacts could be fully mitigated through the measures proposed in Chapter 11, "Mitigation." Overall, the changes in traffic in the neighborhood due to the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Transit

Analysis of bus line-haul conditions on the B32 and B62 buses determined that with the Proposed Actions, the increase in bus ridership would exceed current bus capacity by up to three passengers on the northbound B32 during the weekday AM peak period, and an increase in bus ridership that would exceed current bus capacity by up to one passenger on the northbound B62 during the weekday PM peak period, constituting significant adverse impacts. These impacts could be fully mitigated through the measures proposed in Chapter 11, "Mitigation." Overall, the changes in bus ridership in the neighborhood due to the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Pedestrians

Weekday peak period pedestrian conditions were evaluated at key area sidewalk, corner reservoir, and crosswalk locations. Based on the detailed assignment of pedestrian trips, seven sidewalks, eight corner reservoirs, and three crosswalks were selected for detailed analysis for the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours. Significant adverse impacts were identified for one sidewalk during the weekday midday and PM peak hours in the With Action condition. Potential measures were identified to fully mitigate the pedestrian sidewalk impact, as described in Chapter 11, "Mitigation." Overall, this pedestrian sidewalk impact would not affect overall neighborhood character.

Parking

With Action condition public parking utilization in the study area is expected to increase to 64, 84, 65, and 37 percent of off-street parking capacity during the weekday morning, midday, evening, and overnight time periods, respectively. Since the parking utilization levels for the

Proposed Actions are within the study area's parking capacity, the Proposed Actions are not expected to result in the potential for parking shortfalls or significant adverse parking impacts and changes in parking utilization would not affect overall neighborhood character.

NOISE

The defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential noise effects of the Proposed Actions, either singularly, or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter.

The analysis presented in EAS Attachment I, "Noise," determined that the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts at nearby noise receptors. The Proposed Actions would not generate sufficient traffic to have the potential to cause a significant noise impact from mobile sources, see Chapter 7, "Noise." It is assumed that the proposed and projected buildings' mechanical systems (i.e., heating, ventilation, and air conditioning [HVAC] systems) would be designed to meet all applicable noise regulations and to avoid producing levels that would result in any significant increase in ambient noise levels. Therefore the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts related to stationary sources (building mechanical equipment). Therefore, there would be no noise-related impacts on neighborhood character.

CONCLUSIONS

As shown above, the assessments demonstrate that the Proposed Actions do not have potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either individually through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. ✶