Chapter 19: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the Proposed Project's potential effects on neighborhood character. As defined in the 2014 *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, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise conditions, but not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in every case.

Under CEQR, an analysis of neighborhood character identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether a proposed project has the potential to affect the defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in 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 City is proposing a series of actions (the "Proposed Actions") to implement land use and zoning recommendations in the East Harlem Neighborhood Plan (EHNP). The directly affected area comprises approximately 96 blocks of the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan, Community District 11. The Proposed Actions seek to facilitate a vibrant, inclusive residential neighborhood with a wide variety of local and regional commercial activities, job opportunities, and attractive streets that are safe and inviting for residents, workers, and visitors. The intent of the Proposed Actions is to facilitate the development of affordable housing, create new commercial and manufacturing space to support job creation, and preserve existing neighborhood character.

By the 2027 Build Year, the Proposed Actions are expected to result in a net increase of approximately 3,488 dwelling units (DUs), a substantial portion of which would be affordable; 122,500 square feet (sf) of commercial space (which includes local retail, destination retail, grocery, and restaurant use); approximately 105,000 sf of community facility space; and 132,400 sf of manufacturing space. The Proposed Actions are also expected to result in net decreases of approximately 10,600 sf of auto-related space, 33,000 sf of hotel use, and 57,600 sf of warehouse/storage space. 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 this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

As discussed below, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts associated with neighborhood character. The Project Area and surrounding study area encompass the entirety of the East Harlem neighborhood of Manhattan. As described elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources; and noise. Although significant adverse impacts would occur with respect to historic resources, shadows and transportation, these impacts would not result in a significant change to one of the determining elements of neighborhood character.

B. METHODOLOGY

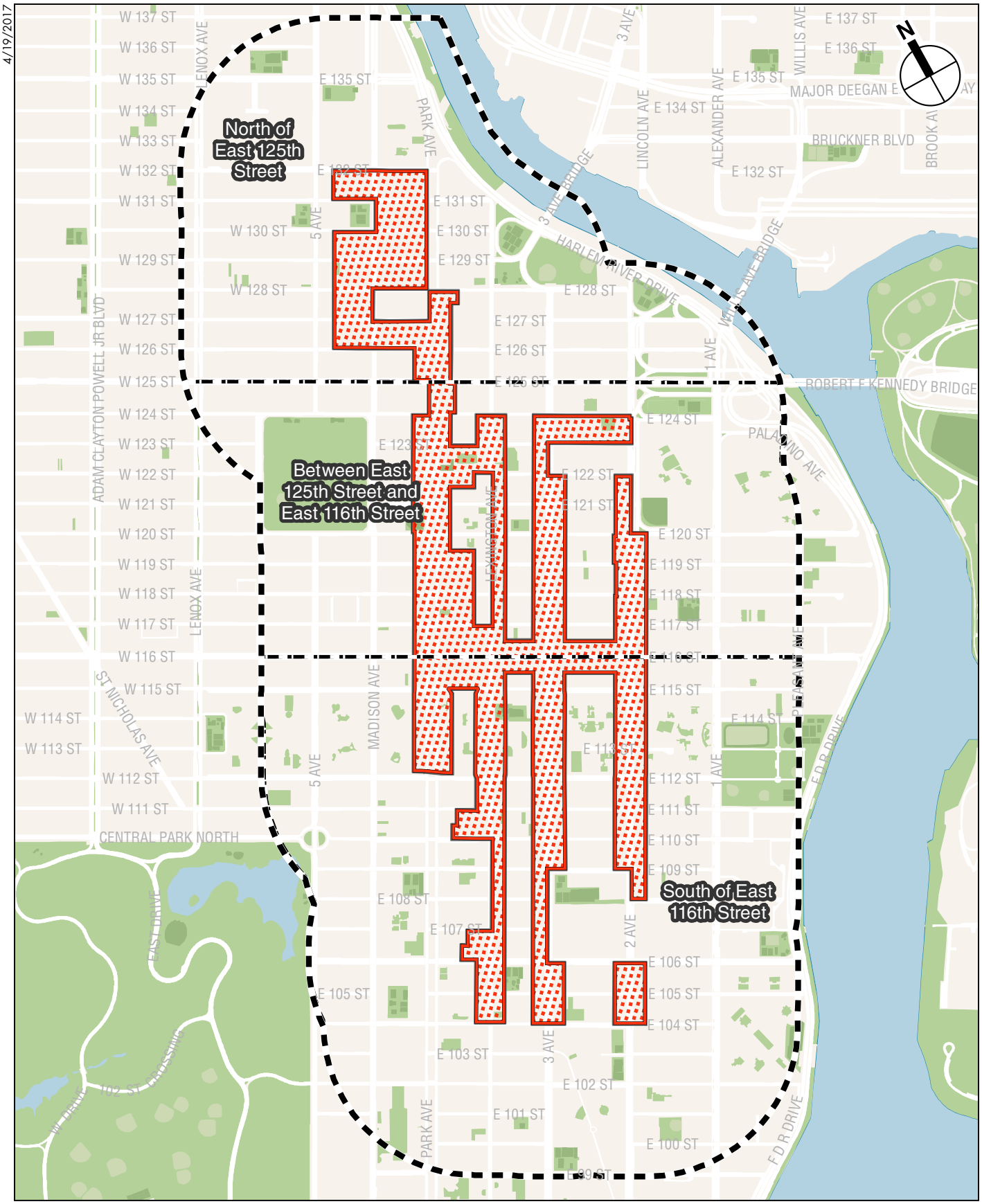
According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources,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

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood character. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and then evaluates whether the proposed 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.

STUDY AREA

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. In the context of an area-wide rezoning such as the one envisioned with the Proposed Actions, the study area boundaries of the preliminary assessment of neighborhood character are generally coterminous with those used in the analyses of land use and urban design. As shown in **Figure 19-1**, the



Project Area

Study Area

Study Area Subareas

EAST HARLEM REZONING

Neighborhood Character Study Area

Figure 19-1

study area for the assessment of neighborhood character comprises an area within a ¼-mile radius of the Project Area.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

The study area is characterized by a dense neighborhood developed around the typical Manhattan grid system of north-south avenues and east-west cross streets. The primary north-south corridors serving the study area include First, Second, Third, Lexington, Park, Madison, Fifth, and Lenox Avenues. Major cross streets include East 125th, East 116th, and East 106th Streets. The predominant land use within the study area is residential and mixed residential with ground-floor commercial space, followed by commercial and office space and public facilities and institutional use. Traffic is congested at several intersections, which experience a Level of Service (LOS) F during at least one peak hour. Noise levels throughout most of the study area are due to vehicular traffic and are typical for Manhattan, ranging between 70 decibels (dBA) to 77 dBA. Noise levels along the Park Avenue corridor are greater due to the elevated Metro-North Railroad, which generates noise levels ranging between 80 dBA and 87 dBA. The Metro-North Railroad viaduct, which runs along Park Avenue, is the most distinctive transportation feature of East Harlem.

The neighborhood is relatively well-served by transit, which includes Metro-North service at East 125th Street, New York City Transit's (NYCT) Lexington Avenue subway line, and the recently opened Second Avenue subway, with access at East 96th Street. Small parks, playgrounds, and community gardens are found throughout East Harlem. Larger parks such as Marcus Garvey Park, Thomas Jefferson Park, and Central Park are found along the periphery of the neighborhood.

East Harlem is a vibrant neighborhood with a rich cultural history. Several factors have played a role in shaping the character of East Harlem, including waves of immigration, construction of the elevated rail lines in the late 19th century, the development of tenement housing that extended into the early 20th century, and the large-scale urban renewal projects of the mid-20th century. The extension of Third Avenue through Upper Manhattan and into the Bronx and the railroads along Second and Park Avenues contributed to making the neighborhood among the most accessible in the City. Around the same time, immigrants were migrating to the neighborhood from other parts of the City. The new transportation connections sparked real estate speculation and construction that would attract working-class families for years to come.

East 116th Street evolved into a dense commercial corridor serving the neighborhood's multi-ethnic populations. Under the Park Avenue viaduct between East 111th and East 116th Streets, pushcart vendors congregated to sell goods. The Great Depression, World War II and the advent of air travel brought the first waves of Puerto Rican migrants to New York City. As East Harlem began its transformation into Spanish Harlem in the 1940s, the Park Avenue Retail Market became known as "La Marqueta." After World War II, East Harlem was also known as Spanish Harlem. The continued arrival of newcomers, not only from Puerto Rico but elsewhere in the Caribbean and Latin America, made this area the predominant Spanish-speaking community in the United States outside of Puerto Rico. The new residents replaced many of the Irish, German, and Italian populations who settled in the neighborhood in the decades before.

By the 1940 and 1950s, the federal government's urban renewal policies led to the demolition of substantial amounts of housing. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) replaced the housing with new "tower-in-the-park" high-rise developments surrounded by landscaped open spaces. New housing development accelerated in the years after World War II, replacing large tracts of tenements, brownstones and smaller commercial buildings. East Harlem was devastated during the City's fiscal crisis of 1970s, when New York City grappled with urban flight, substance abuse, and gangs. In the aftermath of the social upheaval of the 1970s, East Harlem was marked by community organization and advocacy.

The East Harlem of today is a neighborhood that is proud of its heritage, as indicated by the dozens of community gardens in the study area that are dotted with Puerto Rican flags and its murals that depict political heroes, social movements, salsa musicians, or simply tell the story of day-to-day living in "El Barrio" through colorful imagery. As it has been throughout its history, East Harlem continues to be a primarily working-class neighborhood. As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," the average annual household income in the study area is lower than the average household income in Manhattan, and in New York City as a whole. At the same time, the neighborhood is experiencing an increase in market-rate housing and an influx of new residents earning higher incomes.

The study area contains a mix of market-rate residential development and a significant amount of affordable housing, with NYCHA operating over 20 public housing developments in the study area. While East Harlem has experienced investment in affordable housing, thousands of existing units of affordable housing are set to expire from current affordability restrictions. This is happening at a time when East Harlem is experiencing an increase in market-rate housing construction. Although East Harlem continues to produce new rent-stabilized units, it is losing older units from rent stabilization at a faster rate than it produces new ones.

The study area is generally bounded by East 99th Street to the south, East 137th Street and the Harlem River Drive to the north, Pleasant Avenue and the FDR Drive to the east, and Fifth and Lenox Avenues to the west. East Harlem is a vibrant neighborhood but the study area includes parts of the neighborhood that can be characterized as underutilized, with some areas occupied with boarded-up buildings, vacant lots, and parking lots. Defining features of the study area include transportation infrastructure, such as the Metro-North Railroad viaduct, and noise generated by the elevated railroad. The viaduct bisects the study area for its entire length, before entering the Park Avenue Tunnel below East 97th Street. Ramps and infrastructure associated with the Triborough Bridge are prominent east of Second Avenue at 125th Street.

Another major feature of the study area is the numerous large superblocks occupied by public housing and associated accessory open space maintained by NYCHA. The presence of the NYCHA superblocks results in the termination of certain east-west cross streets. East 125th, East 116th, and East 106th Streets are the primary commercial cross streets in the study area. The predominant land use within the study area is residential and mixed residential with ground-floor commercial space, followed by commercial and office space, public facilities and institutional use, and pockets of manufacturing. The mid-blocks are generally lined with four- to six-story residential buildings with ground-floor commercial or community facility space. Taller apartment houses (some with commercial and community facility space on the lower floors) are found along the avenues and within NYCHA developments.

The study area is relatively well-served by transit, which includes Metro-North service at East 125th Street, and the NYCT Lexington Avenue subway line with stations at East 103rd Street, East 110th Street, East 116th Street, and East 125th Street. Access to the recently opened Second

Avenue subway is located just outside the study area with a station at Second Avenue and East 96th Street. The study area is generally defined by a series of north-south corridors, with East 125th Street dividing the north and central sections and East 116th Street dividing the central and southern sections. For purposes of assessing neighborhood character, the study area is divided into three subareas: (1) north of East 125th Street; (2) between East 125th Street and East 116th Street; and (3) south of East 116th Street (refer to Figure 18-1). Each of these subareas is discussed below.

NORTH OF EAST 125TH STREET

The subarea north of East 125th Street is primarily characterized by residential development and community facility uses, with retail uses, including big-box retailers, concentrated along the north side of East 125th Street. Because of the commercial nature of 125th Street and the transit nodes at Lexington, Park, and Lenox Avenues, the 125th Street corridor generally west of Third Avenue is characterized by heavy pedestrian activity. Manufacturing and auto-related uses, including parking, are generally found along both sides of Park Avenue from East 126th Street to East 131st Street, and interspersed in areas east of Park Avenue and north of East 125th Street, with a concentration of vehicle storage and auto-related uses along the north side of East 125th Street east of Third Avenue. As discussed in Chapter 14, "Transportation," Fifth and Madison Avenues, East 125th Street, and the portion of East 128th Street between Second and Third Avenues are designated truck routes. The heaviest traffic congestion occurs along East 125th and East 127th Streets at Second Avenue, which operates at LOS F during certain peak hours. Other congested intersections include East 125th Street at Lexington Avenue and East 128th Street at Park Avenue.

Much of the subarea is comprised of residential developments of three- to six-story apartment buildings on smaller lots and NYCHA developments on larger lots. The blocks west of Park Avenue are primarily residential in character and contain four- to six-story apartment houses, schools, houses of worship, and open spaces along quiet, tree-lined streets. Ground-floor retail space is contained in some of the buildings along the avenues and is most prevalent along Lenox Avenue.

There are several NYCHA developments in the area, including the Abraham Lincoln Houses at East 135th Street and the Harlem River Drive and the Jackie Robinson Houses at East 128th Street and Lexington Avenue. A recently constructed mixed-use affordable housing development known as Harlem River Point is located along Park Avenue between East 131st and East 132nd Streets. In general, bulkier buildings can be found in this area, especially west of Third Avenue and north of East 125th Street. Large residential apartment buildings located in this area include the 1775 Houses, an 11-story apartment complex that fronts on East 126th Street between Lexington and Park Avenues. Three-story rowhouses are located just to the west of the 1775 Houses. A 189-unit, mid-rise NYCHA development, Robinson Houses, takes up the much of the block from East 128th to East 129th Streets between Park and Lexington Avenues. North of Robinson Houses is an abandoned vacant lot, a Con Edison substation, and eight- to-nine-story residential buildings on the corner of Lexington Avenue and East 129th Street. NYCHA's Lincoln Houses includes 14 buildings containing 1,286 units between East 132nd and East 135th Streets and Fifth and Park Avenues.

At 136th Street and Lenox Avenue is the New York City Health and Hospitals Harlem Hospital Center, a large institutional use within the subarea. The Salvation Army and the East End Job Center (including an associated playground for toddlers) are located on Third Avenue. Other

institutional and community facility uses include public schools and charter schools, including the Harlem Children's Zone and Promise Academies I and II at the northwest corner of East 125th Street and Madison Avenue and Promise Academy at Lexington Avenue and East 127th Street. Several institutional uses are located along Third Avenue, including the Church of God, Salvation Army, P.S. 30, and Kings Academy.

The existing storage and auto-related uses along Park Avenue, along with the presence of the Metro-North viaduct and associated noise from the elevated rail structure and vehicle parking beneath it, give the Park Avenue corridor an industrial character that is somewhat different than other parts of the subarea. Parking is prevalent under the viaduct, with parked vehicles blocking access to crosswalks at some intersections. The areas to the east of Park Avenue contain a mix of uses including parking, transportation and utility, residential, industrial, vacant land, and open space. A substantial amount of transportation infrastructure exists in this area including the entrance ramps to Harlem River Drive, the Third Avenue Bridge, the Willis Avenue Bridge, and the Triboro Bridge. A former Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) bus depot occupies the full block east of Second Avenue between East 126th and East 127th Streets.

Several irregular-shaped open spaces can be found east of Lexington Avenue and south of the Harlem River Drive, including open space associated with the Triborough Bridge, Crack is Wack playground located east of Second Avenue at East 127th Street, and Harlem River Park located between the entrance ramps to the Third Avenue Bridge and Harlem River Drive. Vacant land is found east of Second Avenue between East 124th and East 125th Streets. Residential use east of Park Avenue is limited to the blocks along Lexington Avenue, which include NYCHA's Robinson Houses and 1775 Houses and several mid-rise residential buildings located along East 126th Street east of Second Avenue.

BETWEEN EAST 125TH AND EAST 116TH STREETS

The subarea between East 125th and East 116th Streets extends to Lenox Avenue to the west and Pleasant Avenue to the east. It contains a mix of uses and more commercial development than the other subareas. The primary commercial corridors are East 125th and East 116th Streets and Madison, Lexington, First, Second, and Third Avenues. Pedestrian activity is heaviest along East 125th and East 116th Streets and along the north-south avenues (with the exception of Park Avenue, which has relatively lower pedestrian activity due the presence of the Metro-North viaduct, the prevalence of parking lots along Park Avenue and a relative lack of retail activity). Lexington, First, and Third Avenues and East 116th and East 125th Streets are designated truck routes. The heaviest traffic congestion occurs at East 125th Street and Second Avenue, which operates at an LOS F during the morning peak hour as traffic heads towards the Harlem River Drive. The intersection of East 119th Street and Park Avenue experiences congestion during the morning, evening, and Saturday peak hours.

Several buildings along the avenues contain sealed doorways and boarded-up windows on the upper stories of commercial and mixed residential and commercial buildings. Streetwall and retail continuity are disrupted along the east side of First Avenue north of East 120th Street due to the presence of NYCHA's Wagner Houses. Non-residential ground floor space in the mid-blocks occurs with more frequency than it does north of East 125th Street. Ground-floor uses include retail spaces, such as delis and beauty salons, and community facility uses, such as houses of worship, medical offices, and social service providers. Pleasant Avenue contains mostly four- to six-story residential buildings with comparatively less ground-floor retail than is

found along other nearby corridors like First and Second Avenues. Consequently, there is less pedestrian activity on Pleasant Avenue.

The area under the Metro-North viaduct is occupied by retail/market space and parking. The commercial space, known as La Marqueta, is administered by the New York City Economic Development Corporation and extends between East 116th and East 118th Streets. Underutilized market space was recently converted and modernized, giving way to added retail space as well as fully-equipped kitchen facilities that have enabled food businesses to grow at La Marqueta. The portion within the subarea is occupied by a garden center. North of East 118th Street, the space beneath the viaduct is occupied by parking (some of it used by the New York Police Department's [NYPD] nearby 25th Precinct). Mixed-use buildings with ground-floor retail and community facility space are found along both sides of Park Avenue from East 117th Street to East 119th Street. Residential and mixed-use buildings are located along Madison Avenue from East 117th Street north to East 125th Street. The midblock areas between Madison and Lexington Avenues contain four- to seven-story multifamily residential buildings.

Community facilities include several houses of worship, including St. Paul's Roman Catholic Church, a New York City Landmark, located on the north side of East 117th Street between Park and Lexington Avenues. The NYPD's 25th Precinct House is located at 120 East 119th Street, between Park and Lexington Avenues. The New York City Health and Hospitals Corporation operates the Henry J. Carter Specialty Hospital and Nursing Facility, which is located at East 121st Street and Madison Avenue. Open spaces in the subarea include small parks and playgrounds, such as the Eugene McCabe Field, an approximately 0.8-acre park with a playground and handball courts, located on the west side of Park Avenue between East 120th and East 121st Streets. Located at the northeast corner of Madison Avenue and East 121st Street is Marcus Garvey Park, an approximately 20-acre open space containing playgrounds, slides, pools, fountains, and an amphitheater.

The subarea contains numerous NYCHA developments, the largest of which is Wagner Houses, located between Second Avenue, the Harlem River Drive, East 120th, and East 125th Streets. Wagner Houses contains 2,162 units in 22 buildings. NYCHA's Upper Park Avenue Community Association (UPACA) Sites 5 and 6 are located between Park and Lexington Avenues and East 119th and East 122nd Streets. The UPACA developments provide a total of 350 units of senior housing. Its Park Avenue-East 122nd/123rd Streets development consists of two, 6-story buildings providing a total of 90 units between East 122nd and East 123rd Streets, and Park and Lexington Avenues.

SOUTH OF EAST 116TH STREET

The subarea extends from the south side of East 116th Street to East 99th Street. East 116th Street is a two-directional street and serves as East Harlem's main street. The corridor is lined with four- to six-story residential buildings with ground-floor retail space, single-story commercial buildings and two- to three-story buildings with commercial and community facility space. Lexington, First, Second, and Third Avenues are characterized by four- to six-story apartment houses with ground-floor retail space interspersed with community facility buildings such as houses of worship and single-story retail buildings.

Lexington, First and Third Avenues and East 116th Street are designated truck routes. The intersection of East 116th Street and Madison Avenue is heavily congested, as it operates with an LOS F during the morning, evening and Saturday peak hours. Similarly congested

intersections include East 111th Street at Park Avenue, East 112th Street at Third Avenue and East 106th Street at First and Second Avenues.

Several buildings along the avenues contain sealed doorways and boarded-up windows on the upper stories of what appear to have been mixed residential and commercial buildings (only ground-floor retail space remains). Due to the mixed-use nature of these corridors, pedestrian activity is prevalent along these avenues. However, the continuity of the avenues is broken up by NYCHA superblocks between East 115th and East 112th Streets and again along portions of the east side of Third Avenue south of East 108th Street. In these areas, landscaped open spaces line the avenues and there is very little, if any, retail activity.

Some of the tallest buildings in the study area are located along and/or between Fifth and Madison Avenues, including two 34-story residential towers at East 111th Street and Fifth Avenue; a 43-story residential tower on the south side of East 102nd Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues; and a 24-story residential building at the corner of East 107th Street and Madison Avenue. Park Avenue has a distinctly different character than the other north-south corridors in the subarea due to the presence of the viaduct and noise from the Metro-North Railroad. Buildings along Park Avenue are set back and parking lots are prevalent on both sides of Park Avenue. There is limited retail activity along Park Avenue and consequently little pedestrian activity in comparison to other corridors in the subarea. A notable presence along Park Avenue is the block bounded by East 111th and East 112th Streets and Park and Madison Avenues. The block is primarily under City ownership and occupied by five, well-maintained GreenThumb community gardens (Villa Santurce, Friendly Garden, Chenchita's Community Garden, Mission Garden and Little Blue House Garden), a former baseball field and one out parcel (not under City ownership) that contains a four story building with eight units and a deli on the ground floor. The former baseball field was previously used by the East Harlem Little League.

The area south of East 116th Street is characterized by a prevalence of large NYCHA developments, which include Carver Houses, Dewitt Clinton Houses, Woodrow Wilson Houses, Lehman Houses, Jefferson Houses, and the James Weldon Johnson Houses. The largest open space is Thomas Jefferson Park, located on the east side of First Avenue between East 111th and East 114th Streets and the FDR Drive. The approximately 16-acre park is across the street from NYCHA's Jefferson Houses and includes amenities such as a recreation center, outdoor pool, spray showers and athletic fields. Interspersed between the residential superblocks are institutional uses. Several notable community facility and institutional uses that are located between Fifth and Madison Avenues and south of East 106th Street, include El Museo Del Barrio, the Museum of the City of New York, and Mt. Sinai Hospital. The northwest corner of Central Park is also located within the subarea.

The largest NYCHA development in the subarea is the Thomas Jefferson Houses, which contains approximately 1,500 units housed in 18 buildings ranging between 7 and 14 stories tall. The development occupies over 17 acres between First and Third Avenues, and East 112th and East 115th Streets. The James Weldon Johnson Houses provides 1,310 units in ten 14-story buildings. The development occupies 12 acres between East 112th and East 115th Streets, and Third and Park Avenues. George Washington Carver Houses contains 1,246 units and consists of 13 buildings ranging between and 6 and 15 stories in height. The development occupies almost 15 acres between East 99th and East 106th Streets, and Park and Madison Avenues. DeWitt Clinton Houses contains 749 units in six buildings between Park and Lexington Avenues, and East 104th, East 106th, East 108th, and East 110th Streets. Woodrow Wilson

Houses provides approximately 400 units in three 20-story buildings between East 105th and East 106th Streets, First Avenue, and the FDR Drive. Herbert H. Lehman Houses contains 622 units in four 20-story buildings located between Madison and Park Avenues, and East 106th and East 110th Streets.

NYCHA's East River Houses provides 1,170 units in 10 buildings between East 102nd and East 105th Streets, and First Avenue and the FDR Drive. The nearby Metro-North Plaza development contains 275 units in three buildings occupying the area between East 101st and East 102nd Streets and First and Second Avenues. The Wilson Houses, between East 105th and East 106th Streets, First Avenue, and the FDR Drive, provide approximately 400 units.

A recently completed subsidized housing development at the north east corner of East 99th Street and Second Avenue provides 176 supportive housing units designed for low-income disabled and elderly persons. Another publicly subsidized development known as El Barrio Artpsace's PS 109 is located on the north side of East 99th Street between Second and Third Avenues. PS 109 contains 89 units of affordable live/work housing for artists, resident gallery space and 10,000 sf of non-residential space for arts and cultural organizations on the ground floor and lower level of a rehabilitated former historic public school building.

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; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. The assessment uses the findings from the respective 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 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. The Proposed Actions would facilitate a mix of residential, commercial, community facility, and light-industrial development that would be consistent with the mixed-use character of the neighborhood.

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. Overall, the Proposed Actions would encourage land uses that support the revitalization of East Harlem, a neighborhood with excellent transit accessibility, encouraging mixed-use higher-density development along key corridors, while providing for appropriately scaled residential development along the low-rise residential side streets and mid-blocks.

The Proposed Actions would promote the development of permanently affordable housing and facilitate mixed-income communities by requiring affordable housing units to be included in any new residential development, which is not required by the current zoning. Zoning changes included under the Proposed Actions would designate much of the Project Area a Mandatory Inclusionary Housing Area (MIHA), requiring new residential development to include an affordable component. This would ensure that new market-rate development would facilitate mixed-income communities.

Under the With Action Condition, the RWCDS projection associated with the Proposed Actions includes approximately 5,960 DUs, 507,551 sf of retail space, 219,771 sf of office space, 112,437 sf of community facility uses and 155,171 sf of industrial use. The projected incremental (net) change between the No Action and With Action Conditions that would result from the Proposed Actions would be a net increase of 3,488 DUs; 122,542 sf of retail space; 105,042 sf of community facility space; and 132,394 sf of industrial space; and net decreases of 10,592 sf of auto-related space; 32,974 sf of hotel space; and 57,614 sf of commercial storage space.

Most of the new development would occur along Park, Third, and Second Avenues, which present the greatest opportunity for the development of affordable housing. The width of the streets, access to transit, and the presence of a number of significant sites with potential for redevelopment provide these corridors with the capacity to support significant growth. Zoning changes to allow residential development at higher densities would enable the construction of affordable apartment along these corridors and would expand the neighborhood's supply of affordable housing.

Mid-block portions of the Project Area reflect the neighborhood's historic built character with well-maintained, mid-rise row houses and brownstones. Zoning changes in these areas would be contextual, provide a greater level of protection for the existing built context, and would discourage teardowns and the development of out-of-scale buildings.

The Proposed Actions seek to create new commercial opportunities in East Harlem, particularly in the vicinity of Park Avenue and East 125th Street and along major corridors such as East 125th Street, East 116th Street, and Third Avenue, which are currently fragmented and disconnected. The land use changes expected under the Proposed Actions would generate a net increase of approximately 110,100 sf of retail space and 138,320 sf of new office space. Although the 2003 East Harlem Rezoning and the 125th Street Rezoning in 2008 were both aimed at increasing the commercial capacity of these key corridors, the amount of commercial development envisioned for these areas has not yet been realized. Given the potential Second Avenue Subway terminus and the existing Metro-North Railroad Station at East 125th Street and Park Avenue, these key corridors have the potential for becoming a center for local and regional commercial and economic development activity.

Although Third Avenue and East 116th Street each has a strong local retail corridor, the Proposed Actions would strengthen the opportunities along these corridors and better situate them economically. The C1-5 commercial overlay would be expanded along East 116th Street. The proposed C4-6 district along Third Avenue would allow department stores, theaters, and other commercial and office uses that serve a larger region. The proposed C6-4 district along Park Avenue between East 122nd and East 126th Streets would allow greater commercial and residential densities. Park Avenue, north of East 116th Street, has growth potential that can accommodate new economic development opportunities like life sciences, office space, and commercial uses without precluding residential development. Growth in this area would activate

the Park Avenue corridor and facilitate the transformation of this underutilized corridor to accommodate expected residential growth.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly, or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," it is concluded that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts on direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, indirect residential displacement, indirect business displacement and effects on specific industries in the rezoning area or larger ½-mile secondary study area.

The surrounding ½-mile study area includes a considerable number of residential households that could be at-risk of indirect displacement if their rents were to increase. Given the trends experienced in surrounding neighborhoods, the limited housing stock and overall high demand for housing, it is likely that rents in the study area would potentially increase significantly without the Proposed Actions. The Proposed Actions' provision of affordable housing, which includes a substantial amount of permanently affordable housing, would expand housing options available to lower-income residents in the study area, and could help relieve rather than increase market pressure in the Project Area and surrounding area, balancing the upward momentum toward increased rents that would occur with or without the Proposed Actions.

In addition, the Proposed Actions would not result in a trend toward indirect business displacement. While the Proposed Actions would facilitate substantial redevelopment within the Project Area, none of the anticipated uses would be new types of economic activity in the study area that would introduce a new trend that could substantially alter economic patterns. It is the intent of the Proposed Actions to balance preservation and growth in the area. The proposed zoning changes are intended to promote affordable housing development, encourage economic development and create pedestrian-friendly streets. There is already a trend toward a conversion of the area's manufacturing uses to other uses, including the conversion of industrial lofts to warehousing/self-storage uses. The proposed retail space is expected to be primarily local retail that would largely support the local resident and worker populations and strengthen the existing commercial corridors and expand shopping and service options. The new land uses that would result in the future with the Proposed Actions are foreseen as a continuation of current established land use trends in a manner sensitive to the surrounding land uses and built form. The area would retain its mixed-use character and create opportunities for new investment on underutilized sites.

OPEN SPACE

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on publicly accessible open space, either singularly, or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse open space impacts. The reduced sunlight as a result of the Proposed Actions would impact the usability of the soccer field at Eugene McCabe Field and threaten the viability of vegetation at the two gardens. Although the significant adverse shadow impacts would reduce the utility of the open spaces, the open spaces would continue to be available and provide for passive or active open space uses and therefore would not be a direct significant adverse open space impact.

In the future with the Proposed Actions, ratios of open space would continue to be lower than planning guidelines recommend. However, as discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, "Open Space," the population anticipated to be generated by the Proposed Actions is expected to have a somewhat higher percentage of young people than Manhattan and New York City as a whole. A larger population of pre-teens and teenagers would place a higher demand on both active and passive open space resources. Active open spaces appropriate for pre-teens and teenagers would feature playgrounds, basketball courts, and ball fields for field sports. Within the residential study area, just over half (or approximately 53 percent) of the open space resources are programmed with active open space features, and of those resources, nearly all (approximately 97 percent) contain at least 50 percent active open space. In addition, the NYCHA population residing within the residential open space study area represents approximately 20 percent of the existing residential population and approximately 17 percent of the future with the Proposed Actions residential population. In particular, the open spaces within these NYCHA housing developments provide 14.46 acres of open space (12.67 acres of active space). These open space resources are solely for the use of NYCHA residents. With approximately 13 of the 18 NYCHA resources within the residential study area programmed with mostly active open space features, young people living in NYCHA developments would continue to have access to active open space facilities. For these reasons, significant adverse open space impacts are not expected.

SHADOWS

The RWCDS associated with the Proposed Actions would result in new development that would cast new shadow within the vicinity of the rezoning area. Most of this new shadow would not reach sunlight-sensitive resources due to existing and future intervening structures. However, new shadows originating from the Proposed Actions would reach 43 resources that are sensitive to sunlight and could potentially be significantly impacted by incremental shadows. Of these resources, 37 are open space resources and 6 are historic resources with architectural features sensitive to shadow. The affected open space resources include publicly accessible open spaces, community gardens, greenstreets, and recreational areas within NYCHA housing complexes.

The affected architectural features are found on New York City landmarks and other potentially historic buildings. As discussed in detail in Chapter 6 "Shadows," incremental shadows would shade portions of six known and potential architectural resources with sunlight-sensitive features. However, these incremental shadows would be limited in duration and extent and would not result in a significant adverse impact to any architectural resource.

Most of the affected sunlight-sensitive open space resources would experience only short durations of new shadow from the Proposed Actions, and would not impact the character of the neighborhood. Some resources experience longer durations of new shadow, but the detailed analysis found that the new shadow would not significantly alter the utilization of the open space, the vitality of plant life within the resources, or the public's enjoyment of architectural features on historic resources.

Of the 43 resources affected by new shadow, the detailed analysis found that El Catano Garden, Eugene McCabe Field, and Jackie Robinson Garden would be significantly impacted by new shadow. The reduced sunlight as a result of the Proposed Actions would impact the usability of the soccer field at Eugene McCabe Field and threaten the viability of vegetation in the El Catano and Jackie Robinson Gardens. The duration or extent of incremental shadow cast on these open spaces would be great enough to significantly impact the use of the open space or its ability to support vegetation. However, the significant adverse shadow impacts would not result in an

impact on neighborhood character because there are many other parks and gardens in East Harlem that would continue to be sunlit and function in the same way as the affected open spaces. Residents and workers who would be less inclined to use the three shadow-impacted open spaces could use other comparable open spaces in the neighborhood in a similar manner.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

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

The Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse construction-related impacts to four S/NR-Eligible architectural resources: St. Paul's Rectory and School; Chambers Memorial Baptist Church; Former stable at 166 East 124th Street; and the Park Avenue Viaduct. The affected historic resources are not defining elements of neighborhood character; therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would occur.

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. The Proposed Actions would result in beneficial effects related to urban design by reinforcing the street wall, enlivening the streetscape with new activity and enhancing pedestrian conditions in the Project Area. As discussed in Chapter 8, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the study area contains a prevalence of murals, some of which could be removed under the Proposed Actions through development on projected and/or potential development sites. The removal of these murals would not result in a significant adverse visual resources or neighborhood character impacts. The Proposed Actions would allow for new residential and mixed-use developments at a greater density than what is currently permitted as-of-right in the primary study area. The Proposed Actions would allow for new housing, including affordable housing, along key corridors, particularly Park, Third, and Second Avenues. The increased density would expand the customer base in the area, which would sustain existing and new businesses. While the buildings that could be built under the Proposed Actions could be much taller than the existing buildings in the area, the developments would be concentrated along major avenues and the low-rise character of the smaller cross streets would be maintained, particularly North of East 125th Street where contextual zoning would be applied to ensure that new infill development complements the existing residential character by promoting consistent building height and size.

The Proposed Actions would also establish a Special District that would improve the pedestrian experience by promoting non-residential active ground floors, and establish urban design controls such as minimum and maximum base heights, lowering the amount of required parking, and eliminating plaza bonuses. The Proposed Actions would seek to encourage new commercial development and growth potential along the fragmented and underutilized corridors of East 125th Street, East 116th Street, Third Avenue, and Park Avenue by encouraging development on vacant sites.

The study area contains many large, colorful murals spray painted onto the sides of buildings. The murals are unique to East Harlem and although they are not considered visual resources under CEQR, the murals contribute to the neighborhood character of the study area. The murals are concentrated along Lexington Avenue, south of East 125th Street. The murals pay tribute to East Harlem's Latino culture and heritage, and include portraits of famous salsa musicians such as Celia Cruz, or contain political statements or conceptual work. The murals were painted by both internationally known artists such as James De La Vega (also known as "De La Vega") and local community members. In the subarea between East 125th Street and East 116th Street, some murals could be lost due to the development on adjacent development sites. This could alter neighborhood character in the immediate vicinity of the lost murals, however, the loss of the murals would not be considered a significant impact. The murals are temporary in nature and new murals are continuously added to the area. Most murals are temporary artwork intended to make blank walls more attractive until the adjacent lot becomes developed. Murals are subject to being painted over or otherwise lost to the discretion of a building owner. In addition, it should be noted that murals could be lost in the absence of the Proposed Actions by development expected under the No Action Condition. For these reasons, the loss of the murals would not result in a significant adverse to neighborhood character.

Overall, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to the urban design character or visual resources in the Primary or Secondary Study Areas.

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 chapter. As described in Chapter 14, "Transportation," the Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse traffic, transit (bus and subway) and pedestrian impacts. With implementation of bus and pedestrian mitigation measures outlined in Chapter 21, "Mitigation," the identified significant adverse transit/bus and pedestrian impacts would be fully mitigated.

The Proposed Actions would result in a significant adverse pedestrian impact would occur on the south sidewalk along East 126th Street where an existing curbside tree pit constrains pedestrian flow. The impacts at this single location would have not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

Completion of three new subway stations in proximity to the Project Area under the Second Avenue Subway Phase II would substantially reduce demand at existing Lexington Avenue Line stations as well as provide new and/or expanded entrances and pedestrian circulation spaces at the 125th Street Lexington Avenue Line station. The Proposed Actions would also generate fewer peak hour trips at analyzed Lexington Avenue Line stations as it is anticipated that a substantial number would instead utilize the three new Second Avenue Line stations. Therefore, it is anticipated that some, if not all of the Proposed Actions' significant peak hour stair impacts at Lexington Avenue Line subway stations would not occur with implementation of Phase II of the Second Avenue Subway. In the absence of the Second Avenue Subway Phase II or mitigation measures applicable to these specific station elements, the Proposed Actions' significant impacts to one street stair at the 103rd Street subway station, one street stair at the 116th Street subway station and two street stairs and two platform stairs at the 125th Street subway station would remain unmitigated. In the event the impact remains unmitigated, this

would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character because subway station stairs are not defining elements of neighborhood character.

Significant adverse traffic impacts would be fully mitigated at all but seven lane groups at two intersections during the weekday AM peak hour, eight lane groups at three intersections in the weekday PM peak hour, and one lane group at one intersection during each of the weekday midday and Saturday peak hours. In total, impacts to one or more approach movements would remain unmitigated in one or more peak hours at four intersections. These unmitigated impacts would generally occur along East 125th Street at First Avenue (Willis Avenue Bridge), Second Avenue (RFK Bridge), East 125th Street at Lexington Avenue, and East 126th Street at Second Avenue (RFK Bridge exit). As the intersections at which these unmitigated traffic impacts would occur are generally characterized by high levels of traffic currently, while there would be increased transportation activity as a result of the Proposed Actions, the resulting conditions would be similar to those seen in the urban neighborhoods defining the study area and would not result in density of activity or service conditions that would be out of character with the surrounding neighborhoods. Thus, the changes in transportation due to the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on 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. As described in Chapter 17, "Noise," the analysis finds that the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts at nearby noise receptors. As a result, there would be no noise-related impacts on neighborhood character. ✷