

3.7 NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

3.7.1 Introduction

This Section describes the methodology used to analyze the proposed project's effects on neighborhood character. Neighborhood character is an amalgam of the many factors that combine to give an area its distinctive personality. These components include land use; scale and type of development; historic features; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community. Not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few determining elements.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when the action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following areas of technical analysis: land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- *Land Use*: When a proposed action would have the potential to change neighborhood character by introducing a new, incompatible land use; conflicting with land use policy or other public plans for the area; changing land use character; or resulting in significant land use impacts.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources*: In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms; street patterns; or street hierarchies; as well as streetscape elements such as streetwalls, landscaping, and curb cuts. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.
- *Historic Resources*: When an action would result in substantial direct changes to an historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when an historic resources analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions*: Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; substantial changes in the overall character of businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians*: Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the action. According

to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, such substantial traffic changes can include: changes in level of service (LOS) to C or below; changes in traffic patterns; changes in roadway classifications; changes in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts, as identified in that technical analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.

- *Noise*: According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, for an action to affect neighborhood character related to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category.¹

At the preferred and alternative Shaft Sites, Shaft 33B is anticipated to result in temporary construction changes to the technical areas discussed above. Therefore, an analysis of neighborhood character was conducted for these sites. The technical analysis follows the guidance of the *CEQR Technical Manual*.

Construction of the water main connections also could temporarily affect one or multiples of the technical areas discussed above. An analysis of the effects of water main construction on neighborhood character was therefore conducted. During operation, the water main connections would have no above-ground features or other associated above-ground operational activities. Therefore, no impacts to neighborhood character are expected to occur as a result of the operation of the water main connections, and a detailed analysis was not conducted.

The Study Areas for the analyses of neighborhood character were the areas within 400 feet of each of the construction areas, including the preferred and alternative Shaft Sites and the water main connections routes.

3.7.2 Existing Conditions Methodology

For each Study Area, data were collected on existing neighborhood character, focusing on those technical areas most relevant to each of the preferred and alternative Shaft Sites. The data for the analysis were collected through field surveys and in coordination with other EIS analyses.

3.7.3 Future Conditions Without the Project Methodology

Information obtained in the analyses of land use and community facilities was used to assess any potential changes to the neighborhood character of Study Areas in the Future Without the Project.

¹ Based on NYCDEP external noise exposure standards, noise exposure is classified into four categories: acceptable, marginally acceptable, marginally unacceptable, and clearly unacceptable (see Table 3R-3 of the *CEQR Technical Manual*).

3.7.4 Future Conditions With the Project Methodology

As discussed in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that can contribute to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character—a significant impact on neighborhood character occurs when one or more of the defining features of the neighborhood’s character would be significantly affected. Conversely, a proposed action may have moderate impacts on a number of defining features that cumulatively may result in a significant impact on neighborhood character. As discussed above, potential impacts to neighborhood character are related to potential project impacts in the areas of land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, visual character, traffic and pedestrians, and noise. Using the technical analyses conducted for the EIS and with the Future Without the Project as a baseline, the project’s effects on neighborhood character were then evaluated.

