

10.0 NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Neighborhood character is defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual* as an “amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct ‘personality’...including land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic and noise.” An assessment of the Proposed Action’s potential impacts to neighborhood character involves the consideration of how these elements combine to create the context and feeling of a neighborhood. A significant adverse impact on neighborhood character may occur if one or more of the defining features of neighborhood character would be significantly affected, or if there are moderate impacts on a number of defining features that cumulatively may produce a significant adverse impact.

The Proposed Action would introduce an expanded garage use in a new building along West Street/Route 9A with additional frontage on Spring Street and Washington Street. The new MN 1/2/5 Garage would house a base of operations for three garages that service Community Districts 1, 2 and 5 in Manhattan. The existing MN 1 Garage located immediately to the south of the new garage, would be demolished and a salt shed would be constructed and operated at the site. The new garage and the salt shed are permitted uses under the existing manufacturing district zoning. Visually, the local environment would change with the presence of the new garage building of ~~less than 120~~ approximately 140 to 150 ft in height on a currently undeveloped parcel of land, the UPS Equipment Staging Lot. Vehicle traffic would be added to some road segments in the local area and, to some extent, noise would increase because of their movements. There would be additional traffic in the No Build, as well.

As noted elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, socioeconomics, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, or noise. Significant traffic impacts predicted at three intersection locations would be fully mitigated (~~Section~~Chapter 17.5.6).

10.2 METHODOLOGY

The study area for the analysis of neighborhood character includes a 400 ft radius primary area and a one-quarter mile radius secondary area from the Proposed Action sites, similar to the land use, socioeconomics and community facilities study areas. The one-quarter mile study area is generally bounded by Morton Street to the north, Varick Street to the east, Laight Street to the south and the Hudson River to the west.

Since details on existing conditions for the defining components of neighborhood character are described elsewhere in this EIS, they are not repeated in this section; rather, a general characterization of the area is presented. The impact assessment in this chapter however, addresses all the components of neighborhood character, as applicable.

10.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The two project sites are located in an area where the predominant land uses are a mixture of transportation, industrial/commercial, residential/commercial and residential uses. The western sector of the study area is dominated by West Street and the developing Hudson River Park. The center of the study area is dominated by existing transportation and commercial uses. The existing UPS Package Distribution Facility (and truck maintenance garage and fueling station), Federal Express Distribution Center (two buildings), and the St. John’s Center (with over one million sq ft of space) that houses numerous tenants, commercial and industrial (some with trucking operations) are all in the immediate

vicinity of the two project sites. The northern and southern portions of the study area include mixed residential/commercial and residential uses (community facility uses are also present in the northern sector). Canal Park and the Holland Tunnel Plaza and Holland Tunnel Land Ventilation Building are located in the south/southeastern portion of the study area. Commercial and mixed industrial/commercial land uses along major streets like West Houston, Hudson Street and Varick Street, predominate the eastern sector.

Each of the two sites is in an M2-4 Manufacturing Zone and their current uses are permitted under the existing zoning.

The built character of the study area is varied, ranging from low-rise buildings to full lot coverage, high density loft buildings, some more than 200 ft tall. Many buildings in the eastern sector of the study area are more than 125 ft in height. Building heights south of Canal Street area are predominantly low to mid-rise (30 to 85 ft). The study area has experienced substantial growth in the past few years, with an increasing residential component. The new residential buildings that have been recently built and/or approved are in the 11 to 14 story range of height (e.g., the 12 story Urban Glass House at 330 Spring Street; 505 Greenwich Street at 14 stories; 497 Greenwich Street at 11 stories; 255 Hudson Street at 11 stories). The recently approved North Tribeca Rezoning will allow for residential towers of up to 150 ft in height (similar in height to the Proposed Action).

There are several historic structures in the study area, the nearest ones being the James Brown House at 326 Spring Street, diagonally across from the UPS Equipment Staging Lot and the Holland Tunnel Land Ventilation Building, adjacent to the existing MN 1 Garage (Chapter 8). Portions of the study area overlap portions of the Charlton-King-Vandam Historic District, the Greenwich Village Historic District (and the Greenwich Village Historic District Extension), and the Tribeca North Historic District. Neither of the two sites is within the boundaries of any historic district; the existing MN 1 Garage is not a structure that is deemed eligible for listing on the City, State or National Registers of historic properties.

The majority of streets in the vicinity of the UPS Equipment Staging Lot and the MN 1 Garage handle moderately heavy traffic volumes. However, arterials that provide direct access to other neighborhoods throughout the borough of Manhattan process significantly higher volumes, in particular Canal Street and West Street/Route 9A. Average two-way daily traffic volumes on West Street/Route 9A range from about 69,000 up to 100,000 vehicles. Generally, traffic volumes were found to be greater during the mid-afternoon than in the morning peak period. Weekend traffic is generally lower than the weekday and follows the same general traffic patterns of the weekday.

Overall, neighborhood intersections function at acceptable levels of service (LOS), marginally acceptable LOS D (Chapter 17). However, a number of individual movements experience problems at various times of the day. Both Canal Street and West Houston Street westbound operate near or at capacity (LOS E or F) at their intersections with West Street/Route 9A during the morning weekday peak hour. During the weekday afternoon peak period hours, the ~~east~~^{north}bound movement at the intersection of Spring and Hudson Streets ~~West Street/Route 9A and Canal Street (south roadway)~~ operates at LOS ~~FE~~ due to heavy congestion. Several movements at the intersection of West Houston Street and Canal Street at West Street/Route 9A experience heavy delays as well. During the Saturday peak periods, traffic conditions are substantially lighter with all study intersections operating at an overall LOS DC or better. Only the westbound movement at the intersection of West Houston Street and West Street/Route 9A and at Spring and Hudson Streets experiences moderate delays due to insufficient green light time during that time period.

Similarly, noise conditions in the study area are strongly influenced by the presence of motor vehicles, including trucks (see Chapter 20). In addition to the designated through truck routes (Canal and

West Street/Route 9A) and the local truck routes in the area, the trucking operations of UPS, DSNY and Federal Express contribute to the local ambient noise conditions on and near neighborhood roadways. Measured daytime noise levels along West Street/Route 9A and Hudson River Park were 71 dBA (L_{eq}) and 75 dBA (L_{10}); Spring Street in the vicinity of the two sites had an L_{eq} of 67 dBA and a L_{10} of 70 dBA; Greenwich Street (between Charlton and Vandam) with a greater residential component had daytime noise levels of 64 dBA (L_{eq}) and 65 dBA (L_{10}). At and in the immediate vicinity of the two project sites, monitored daytime noise levels are generally consistent with the applicable New York City Noise Code Standards.

10.4 FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION (FUTURE NO BUILD)

Under the Future Without the Proposed Action Condition, the MN 2 and 5 Garages would remain at Gansevoort/Pier 52 and the MN 1 Garage would remain at 553 Canal Street; however, the UPS Equipment Staging Lot site would be developed with an as-of-right commercial use above UPS staging operations that would take place on the ground level of the structure.

UPS operations on the Equipment Staging Lot site would be expected to continue with some level of activity occurring 24 hours per day, six days per week; peak activity would continue to be from 1 AM to 8 AM, as at present. The MN 1 Garage would remain at its current location and would operate the same way as it currently does. DSNY vehicles and equipment would be parked on the local streets around the garage (e.g., Spring Street, West Street, Washington Street).

The new commercial building would be up to 165 ft in height, would cover an “L-shaped” portion of the Equipment Staging Lot site and provide about 347,250 sq ft of commercial office space in addition to UPS truck staging. Development of the commercial building would bring a daytime worker population to the area of approximately 1,389 people.

Current land use trends and general development patterns would be expected to continue. These trends can be characterized by a decline in industrial and manufacturing uses and a continued shift to residential and commercial development. However, the shift to residential uses would occur outside the existing M2-4 zoning district which prohibits new residential uses (and community facilities). New residential development is also excluded from M1 Districts as well, except for:

- Joint living-work quarters for artists in M1-5M and M1-5B Districts.
- Dwelling units in M1-5M and M1-6M Districts.
- Dwelling units in M1-1D, M1-2D, M1-3D, M1-4D and M1-5D Districts, where authorized by the CPC.

None of the manufacturing districts that allow residential uses exist in the study area. The existing M1-5 and M1-6 zones (Figure 3-2) that prohibit residential uses cover more than half the land area of the study area (excluding Hudson River Park). In its 2002 report entitled *Hudson Square Rezoning*, the NYCDPC, Manhattan Office, recommended that the M1-6 zoning in this area be retained and that the M2-4 zoning of the lands that include the two project sites be retained. (An area in the northern portion of the study area was recommended to be rezoned from M1-6 to C6-2A that would have allowed residential use, was not ultimately adopted). Therefore, unless the current zoning was changed or variances granted by BSA, new residential development would be expected to occur primarily in the southern portion of the study area that includes the southern portion of the Hudson Square Rezoning area (C6-2A) and the special Tribeca Mixed Use District located south of Canal Street.

As described in Section Chapter 3.4, there would be a projected 1,280 additional residential units within one-quarter mile of the UPS Equipment Staging Lot and the MN 1 Garage site in 2012. A total of 16 buildings would be constructed.

The configuration of West Street/Route 9A as a main north-south thoroughfare would likely remain similar to the current conditions – multiple travel lanes in both directions (four northerly and three southerly with two turning lanes at Canal Street), median barrier, traffic control lights at Canal Street and West Houston Street, etc. Segment 3 of the Hudson River Park would be completed. The plan for this segment in the study area calls for the complete reconstruction of Piers 25 and 26 located between approximately Franklin and Hubert Streets, construction of upland park and public esplanade and the construction of various park buildings to support park programs. Hudson River Park is scheduled to be complete by 2013, excluding Gansevoort/Pier 52, providing a total of 550 acres of open space and recreational space (150 acres of uplands) to the public.

The commercial building would be an as-of-right use under the existing M2-4 zoning. Given that the building would be as-of-right, consistent with zoning, compatible with respect to its commercial use, and generally comparable building scale, there would be no significant adverse neighborhood impacts from its development.

10.5 FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION (FUTURE BUILD)

The new garage would replace the existing UPS open-air parking area (Equipment Staging Lot) with a multi-level parking garage. From a land use perspective, the new garage would be consistent with the historical and current use of the property for trucking/transportation. The salt shed would replace the DSNY's MN 1 Garage; the use would be new but related to the DSNY presence at the site since the 1920's. The proposed uses are as-of-right uses in the M2-4 zone where both parcels are located. As previously noted, the Manhattan Office of the NYCDCP in 2002 recommended that the M2-4 zoning of the lands that include the two project sites be retained; it also recommended that the surrounding manufacturing-zoned areas (M1-6) be retained as well. An area in the northern portion of the study area was recommended to be rezoned from M1-6 to C6-2A that would have allowed residential use; however that recommendation was not ultimately adopted by the CPC. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not conflict with land use policy or other public plans. The two project sites would have new buildings on them but they would be consistent with the historical and current land uses in their immediate vicinity.

As discussed in Chapter 9, the MN 1/2/5 Garage building would be constructed within the allowable FAR of the M2-4 zone. It would be constructed to a height of less than 120~~about 140 to 150~~ ft, a height that is generally comparable to recent residential development in the study area. Future residential buildings in the study area would be from about 90 ft to 210 ft (up to 20 stories) in height (Section ~~Chapter~~ 3.4). The proposed residential hotel (condo-hotel) on Spring Street would be 45 stories tall (and an estimated 450+ ft). The new garage would require special permits for relief from street wall height limit requiring a setback at 85 ft above curb level (Section 43-43 & 74-74 of the New York City Zoning Resolution) and for a rear yard waiver (Section 74-74). With respect to recent rezonings in the vicinity of the study area, the recent rezoning of portions of the Special Tribeca Mixed Use District has allowed a maximum building height of 150 ft along West Street/Route 9A and a street wall height of 102 ft. The rezoning of portions of the far western part of the West Village (the Far West Village) allowed for buildings with a height of up to 120 ft on West Street/Route 9A. Therefore, by the build year of 2012, there would be an increasing number of buildings in the study area (and just outside of it) that would be comparable to the height of the proposed MN 1/2/5 Garage. The length and width of the proposed garage would be compatible with the large, bulky structures nearby including the St. John's Center (between West and Washington Streets) and the UPS Package Distribution Facility (between Washington and Greenwich Streets). Therefore, the street form and building arrangement of the affected blocks would not be adversely affected. Like the commercial building projected for the Future No Build condition, the new garage would limit views toward the Hudson River from several locations, including the newly constructed Urban Glass House (the north, northwestern building faces). However, there would be no substantial direct changes to a visual feature, such as a unique and important public view corridor and

vista, or to public access to such a feature. In sum, the Proposed Action would not alter neighborhood character significantly through changes to urban design and visual resources.

As discussed in Chapter 8, potential archaeological resources would be protected by the commitment by DSNY to perform archaeological monitoring of the garage site; current neighborhood character is unaffected by any such resources. No such resources are presumed to exist at the salt shed site given its history of development and prior site disturbance. Existing nearby historic resources would be protected from construction impacts by an evaluation of vibration impacts prior to construction. There would be no direct impacts on known study area historic resources. The Holland Tunnel Land Ventilation Building, part of the Holland Tunnel's designation as a NHL, would have a small portion of its lower façade (on its western wall) exposed for the first time since its construction when the existing MN 1 Garage would be demolished in preparation for the salt shed. Precautions would be taken to prevent any disturbance to the ventilation building's façade during demolition of the MN 1 Garage. The MN 1 Garage is not a structure deemed eligible for listing as an historic resource. The new salt shed would not touch the ventilation building, but would be offset from the structure by about 30 ft. Therefore, no adverse direct impacts would result. Incremental shadows (of about eight ft cast in the afternoon hours of the winter months) would be cast by the new salt shed onto the western wall of the ventilation building. Impacts on historic resources would not be significantly adverse and therefore, would not adversely affect this aspect of neighborhood character.

As discussed in Chapter 4, impacts from the Proposed Action upon socioeconomic conditions, would not be significant. There would be no increase in local employment to operate the MN 1/2/5 Garage and Salt Shed. About 158 existing employees from MN 1, 2 and 5 would work at the new facility on a peak day. The Proposed Action would not cause any substantial direct or indirect displacement of population, employment or business. UPS operations would be temporarily relocated off site for about 18 months while the ground floor of the new garage was being constructed. Operations would continue from their adjoining facilities and would not be adversely affected during this time period. Once completed, UPS would permanently occupy the ground floor of the new garage.

The majority of streets in the vicinity of the proposed MN 1/2/5 Garage and Salt Shed handle moderate to high traffic volumes during the studied peak hours. Canal Street and West Street/Route 9A process significantly higher volumes. As discussed in Chapter 17, significant traffic impacts from the Proposed Action would occur at ~~two~~^{three} study area intersections (an additional intersection would be affected by the proposed mitigation). These impacts, however, could be readily mitigated by shifting the existing allotments of green time and/or adjusting DSNY service routes (~~Section~~^{Chapter} 17.5.6). DSNY vehicles and equipment would be stored and parked in the new garage and not on local streets. In addition, pedestrian access to crosswalks and sidewalks would be expected to be improved with the elimination of DSNY parked vehicles, equipment, and employee vehicles from the local street network. There would be no significant effects on the bus or subway ridership as a result of the Proposed Action.

As discussed in Chapter 20, noise increases from the additional traffic that would accompany the Proposed Action are not significant, and generally would be imperceptible at the sites monitored. Increases in noise would be expected at those locations and along those routes where the greatest number of increased trips take place. Ambient noise conditions of the study area are heavily influenced by local traffic on Canal Street, West Street/Route 9A and the adjoining roadways. Trucking operations of DSNY, UPS and Federal Express operations, all located in proximity to the two sites, contribute to the local noise environment. As noted in Chapter 20, to ensure an acceptable interior noise environment, especially in areas with elevated outdoor noise environments due to vehicular traffic and other stationary sources, some new residential development in the study area have "E" designations requiring noise attenuation. These measures include the provision of a closed window condition with a minimum of 30, 35 or 40 dBA window/wall attenuation on all façades to maintain an interior noise level of 45 dBA.

In general, there would be some additional localized noise from additional vehicles on certain streets during times when they are comparatively less traveled. However, the noise was found not be significant. Therefore, no adverse impacts to neighborhood character resulting from noise are expected.

In consideration of all of the elements considered as part of neighborhood character and their impacts, there would not be an aggregation of moderate effects resulting in a significant adverse impact. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts either individually or cumulatively, on the characteristics of neighborhood character.