

One Police Plaza Security Plan EIS

CHAPTER 6: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

A. INTRODUCTION

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is considered to be an amalgam of the various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct personality. These elements can include land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, transportation and noise, as well as any other physical or social characteristics that help to distinguish the community in question from another.

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 and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, transportation, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. Although the *CEQR Technical Manual* lists historic resources as a neighborhood character element, as the action has not and would not result in a substantial direct change to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, a discussion of historic resources in this chapter is not included. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- *Land Use.* Development resulting from a proposed action could alter neighborhood character if it introduces new land uses, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates significant land use impacts.
- *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; or substantial differences in population or employment density.
- *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 streewalls, landscaping, curbcuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or block public visual access to such features.

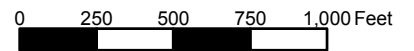
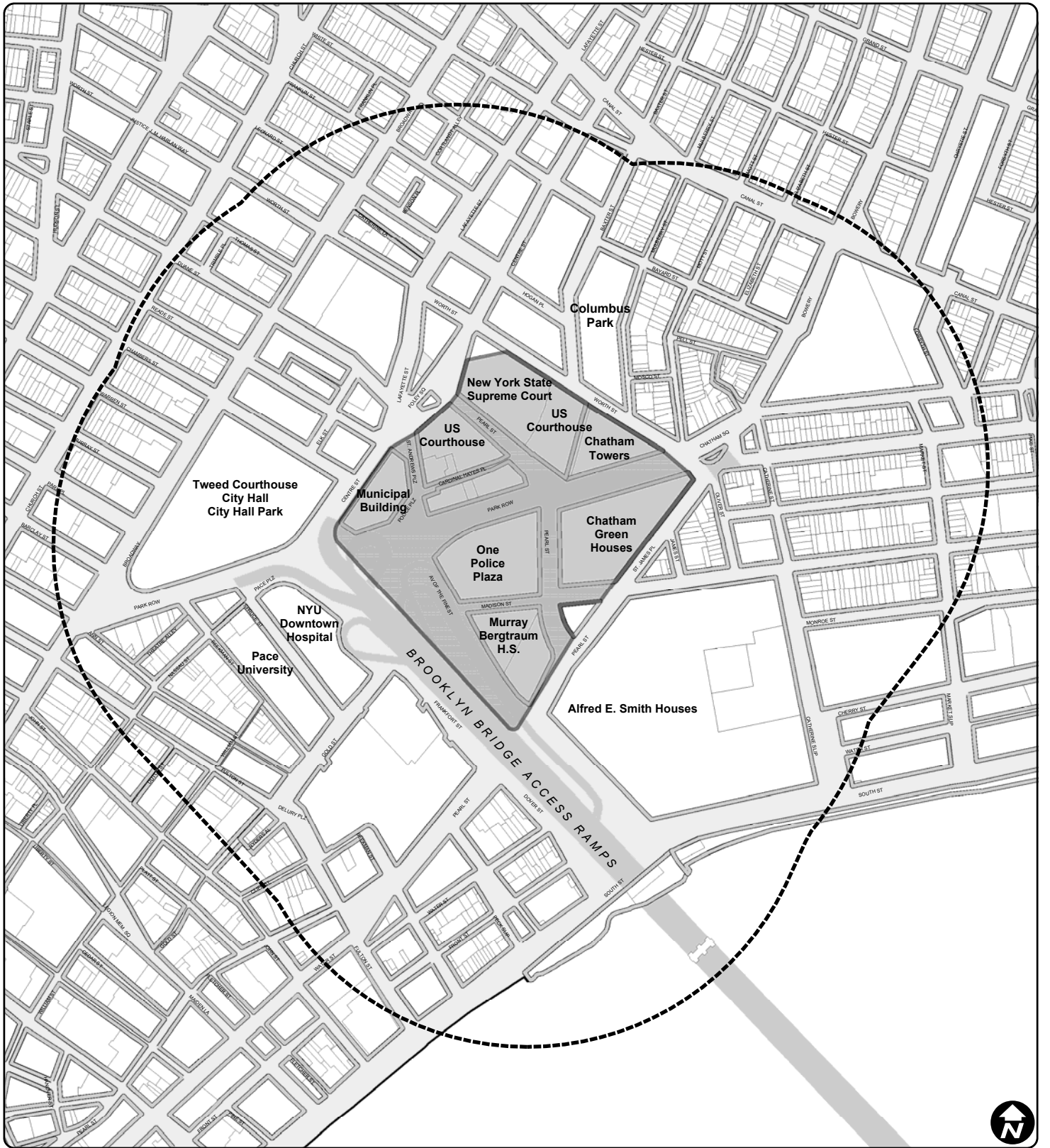
- *Transportation.* Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must 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; change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes, substantial increase in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts, as identified in the technical traffic 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 with respect to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability categories.

This chapter of the EIS examines neighborhood character within the security zone area and its surrounding blocks, and the action's effects on that character (see Figure 6-1 for study area location). The chapter's impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes to these technical areas are most relevant to potential changes in neighborhood character.



B. BASELINE CONDITIONS

As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center resulted in a security plan that included the closure of streets adjacent to the civic facilities located near One Police Plaza (see Figure 6-1 for security zone area). Prior to the attacks, these streets were open to all vehicles, with the exception of several streets that closed in 1999 for security purposes (see Chapter 1, Figure 1-3). As the creation of the security zone was a result of the September 11, 2001 attacks, a description of the neighborhood character that existed in the surrounding area prior to the attacks will help to provide the context for the analysis which follows. Those 2001 baseline neighborhood conditions are discussed in this section.

Neighborhood Character Study Area



Legend

-  Security Zone (Closed to Public Vehicular Traffic after 09/11/2001)
-  Neighborhood Character Study Area (Quarter-Mile Radius)

Security Zone

The With-Action area (the security zone) for neighborhood character analysis is defined as the streetscapes in the area bounded by Worth Street, St. James Street, Pearl Street, Frankfort Street, and Centre Street. The street pattern in this area is irregular and does not follow the formal 1811 grid plan imposed on the majority of the City. As mentioned above, in the baseline condition, streets were open to all commercial and private vehicles and none of the features associated with the action were in place.

The area within the security zone is composed of mainly institutional and residential uses. The courthouses and office buildings draw large volumes of employees and visitors to the area throughout the day and most of the streets surrounding these buildings are congested with government and private vehicles. The existing Police Plaza complex includes an outdoor plaza, and the police headquarters at One Police Plaza. The outdoor plaza, part of the Police Plaza complex, is an open space walkway with trees and benches connecting police headquarters with the Municipal Building at One Centre Street. The 30-story Municipal Building occupies one square block between Centre Street, St. Andrews Plaza, Park Row, and Tryon Row. The Municipal Building has a street-level passageway to Chambers Street and an arcaded south wing that arches above a subway entrance. The United States Courthouse at 40 Foley Square, which houses the U.S. Court of Appeals and U.S. District Court, is a 31-story structure located to the northeast of the Municipal Building. St. Andrews Plaza separates the two buildings. The block bordered by Centre, Worth, Baxter, and Pearl Streets is occupied by the New York County Courthouse, home to the New York State Supreme Court and a second United States Courthouse, containing the U.S. District Court. The Metropolitan Correctional Center is located on the northwestern corner of Park Row and Pearl Street. Murray Bergtraum High School, a public school with student enrollment of approximately 2,790 students, is located on a block bounded by Pearl Street, Madison Street, and Avenue of the Finest. A Verizon telecommunications building is located on the same block as the high school.

Marked and unmarked police vehicles are parked throughout the blocks south of One Police Plaza. Madison Street was used for police parking, as was James Madison Plaza and the covered area under the Brooklyn Bridge. The large number of law enforcement vehicles creates a strong police presence in the area. The Verizon Building and Murray Bergtraum High School also attract large numbers of pedestrians to the area. On weekday mornings, many students and employees arrive at the subway station located under the Municipal Building and then walk across Police Plaza and down the stairs to Madison Street. The streets within the security zone, particularly Park Row, were active through streets connecting the Financial District to Chinatown and the Civic Center area.

Two large-scale housing developments, Chatham Towers and Chatham Green Houses, are also located within the security zone. Chatham Towers is the smaller of the two and is located

between Worth Street, Park Row, and Pearl Street. Chatham Towers consists of two 25-story towers containing 250 residential units with underground parking for residents and the public. Chatham Towers is a sculpted concrete building and was constructed in 1965 by architects Kelly & Gruzen. The Chatham Green Houses cooperative apartment building is a 21-story structure located on the irregularly shaped block bordered by Park Row, St. James Place, Chatham Square, and Pearl and Madison Streets. The S-shaped structure contains 420 residential units. The Chatham Green Houses is set back from the street by landscaping and a parking lot located in the front of the building along Park Row. Access/egress points to and from the parking lot are located along Park Row and Pearl Street. Like Chatham Towers, Chatham Green was designed by architects Kelly & Gruzen and constructed in 1961.

Study Area

Located directly east of the Civic Center area is the Governor Alfred E. Smith Houses which consists of several mid-size residential buildings built around open space. The Smith Houses and Chatham Green form a distinct residential unit along St. James Place. Confucius Plaza, a 44-story subsidized housing building, was built in 1976 and is located on the corner of the Bowery and Division Streets. The statue of Confucius in front of Confucius Plaza is a common meeting place for members of the community.

North and east of these large-scale residential developments is the Chinatown neighborhood. Since the 1840's New York's Chinatown has traditionally been centered in the eight blocks bounded by Canal, Worth, Baxter Streets and the Bowery/Chatham Square. Manhattan's Chinatown owes its dynamic character to its unique mix of physical and cultural characteristics and the myriad activities that take place on the area's principal public places - its streets and sidewalks. Among these activities are the assembly and movement of people, goods, and vehicles on the area's public rights of way - including bus staging, freight deliveries, waste pickups, and the many other activities and services that are essential for the area's daily life.¹ These activities in Chinatown are familiar and contribute greatly to the area's essential character and cultural significance. They are particularly intense in the oldest and most traditional areas of the community where the public rights-of-way are the most heavily utilized and congestion is the greatest.²

Restaurants, fresh food markets, tea and rice shops, gift and souvenir shops, and garment factories are the main businesses in Chinatown, and the area's distinct character and mix of businesses make it a popular tourist destination. The largest Asian community in North America

¹*Chinatown Access and Circulation Study*, prepared by LMDC, 2004.

²*Ibid*

can be found among the narrow streets of Chinatown, a neighborhood which extends north of Canal Street beyond the study area.

In the early 1970's Chinatown began to push out the enclave's historic boundaries, although Mott Street continued to be Chinatown's unofficial "Main Street". Like many streets that predated Manhattan's grid pattern, Mott Street meanders around natural features of landscape rather than running through or over them. Mott Street between Canal Street and Chatham Square is considered the historic heart of Chinatown and is the primary destination for tourists. This stretch of Mott Street is lined with souvenir shops, tea houses and restaurants that cater mostly to tourists. Mott Street and the surrounding sidestreet's sidewalks are crowded with tourists and shoppers, particularly on the weekends. The housing stock within the traditional heart of Chinatown is mostly composed of decrepit and cramped tenement buildings, some of which are over 100 years old.

High concentrations of commercial and mixed-use buildings exist throughout the area, concentrated along Canal Street, between Broadway and Pearl Street, along the north-south streets throughout the area. Canal Street is a bustling commercial district, crowded with open storefronts and street vendors. Tourists as well as local residents pack the Canal Street sidewalks every day to frequent the open-air food stalls and small stores selling items such as perfume, purses, hardware, and industrial plastics at low prices. Some of these goods are grey market imports and notoriously counterfeit, with fake trademarked brand names on electronics, clothing and personal accessories. Pirated CDs and DVDs are also common, offered for sale on the Canal Street sidewalks in makeshift stands and suitcases or laid out bedsheets. Canal Street is a heavily trafficked east-west thoroughfare with vehicles headed west to the Holland Tunnel and east to the Manhattan Bridge.

The Brooklyn Bridge divides the Civic Center/Chinatown neighborhoods from the South Street Seaport and Financial District to the south. The ramps to the Brooklyn Bridge also create a physical and visual barrier to the neighborhoods to the south. The on- and off-ramp system for the Brooklyn Bridge forms a network of segregated roadways that divide the Governor Alfred E. Smith Houses, Verizon, and Murray Bergtraum High School corridor from the area to the east. The South Street Seaport contains many national retail stores and restaurants that attracts tourists and shoppers to the area. The Seaport itself, on Pier 17, operates primarily as a mall and tourism center. Tourists are offered shops and a food court and decks outside allow for spectacular views of the Brooklyn Bridge and Brooklyn Heights. This area was also home to the Fulton Fish Market, a bustling wholesale fish market that operated in the early morning hours along South Street between Peck Slip and Fulton Street. Dover and Water Streets, as well as Peck Slip are characterized by cobblestone streets and their relatively low building height and small-scale historic residential/maritime functions.

North of the South Street Seaport area, the Southbridge Towers residential complex creates its own insular neighborhood with commercial establishments, parking garages, open spaces, and housing towers. The Southbridge Towers complex is distinct from both the South Street Seaport neighborhood to the south and west and from the office buildings to the north. The office buildings located along William, Beekman, Nassau, and Ann Streets are all part of the northern section of the Lower Manhattan business center. Located outside of Manhattan's uniform street grid, these streets are narrow and irregular. They are filled with ground floor retail establishments including restaurants and support services for office workers and businesses above. Pace University and NY Downtown Hospital are located north of the Lower Manhattan business district and form their own neighborhood across Park Row from City Hall across Gold Street from Southbridge Towers. This area attracts many pedestrians during the weekdays.

C. 2006 NO-ACTION CONDITION

For analysis purposes, under the No-Action condition, it is assumed that the security plan implemented by the NYPD after September 11, 2001 that resulted in the above mentioned street closures would not be in place. The roadways would be open with the 1999 street closures and municipal garage closure in place and transportation services would continue as they were prior to September 11, 2001. Under this scenario, all private and commercial vehicles would have access throughout the security zone, with the exception of the streets that were closed in 1999.

Security Zone

In the No-Action condition, without the street closures in place, no significant changes in neighborhood character would have occurred within the security zone from the baseline 2001 year. Land uses within the security zone would remain the same in the No-Action condition as would urban design and socioeconomic conditions. Transportation characteristics of the security zone would also remain unchanged from the baseline 2001 year. As mentioned above, all private and commercial vehicles would have access throughout the security zone, with exception of the streets that were closed in 1999. Prior to September 11, 2001, and the resulting street closures, six MTA New York City Transit bus routes used Park Row in one or both directions, including the M9, M15, M103, X25, X90, and the B51. In addition, the BM1, BM2, BM3, and B4 bus routes also utilized Park Row prior to September 11, 2001. In the 2006 No-Action, with the exception of the M9 route, these buses would remain on their routes along Park Row. One pedestrian corridor along police headquarters was closed as a result of the security plan. In the 2006 No-Action condition, this corridor would be open.

Study Area

In the No-Action condition, the security zone around NYPD headquarters would not be in place, however, security measures implemented throughout the study area at City Hall and various

government and office buildings after September 11, 2001 would continue to be in place. The presence of these other security measures is an additional characteristic of the area compared to the baseline condition. Besides the additional security measures installed within the study area, neighborhood character within the study area would remain the same in the 2006 No-Action condition.

D. 2006 WITH-ACTION CONDITION

Following the events of September 11, 2001, a security plan was implemented that resulted in the installation of attended security checkpoint booths, planters, bollards, and hydraulic delta barriers to restrict the access of unauthorized vehicles from the roadways adjacent to the civic facilities located near One Police Plaza including NYPD Headquarters, the New York State Supreme Court, and the United States Courthouse. The security measures consist of delta barriers, bollards and planters to control vehicle access to police headquarters and other civic facilities in the area. The delta barriers that have been installed at various intersections can be raised and lowered to provide authorized vehicles access to streets within the secure perimeter. With the exception of areas immediately adjacent to the NYPD headquarters at One Police Plaza, pedestrian access within the security perimeter is not restricted. The stairway from Police Plaza to Madison Street that was used by employees and students headed toward Murray Bergtraum High School and Verizon from the subway station at the Municipal Building is now closed. They now must use the stairway from Police Plaza that leads down to Avenue of the Finest to access the school, Verizon, and Pearl Street.

Residents of Chatham Green in vehicles are required to show identification to enter the checkpoint at Park Row and Worth Street before they are able to access their parking lot. Commercial vehicles, such as delivery trucks, are permitted through the barrier with proper identification and after an inspection of the truck. Prior to September 11, 2001, six MTA New York City Transit bus routes used Park Row in one or both directions, including the M9, M15, M103, X25, X90, and the B51. In addition, the BM1, BM2, BM3, and BM4 bus routes used Park Row prior to September 11, 2001. In the With-Action condition, these buses were rerouted around the security zone increasing travel distances and travel times for passengers and adding congestion to the already crowded detour routes.

Private police vehicles were permitted to park along restricted portions of Park Row and the Brooklyn Bridge off ramp leading to Park Row after those roadways were closed. However, police vehicles are currently not permitted to park along this portion of Park Row. They are still permitted to park on the closed Brooklyn Bridge off ramp. In addition, police vehicles that were permitted to park on James Madison Plaza before and after the 2001 baseline year, are not currently permitted to park there.

This section focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas of Land Use, Socioeconomic Conditions, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Transportation, and Noise. Changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character as follows:

- *Land Use.* The Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy analysis (see Chapter 2) indicates that the action has not impacted or changed or would not change the scale and density or type of land use within the study area. As such, the action has not affected neighborhood character in terms of land use.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* The Socioeconomic analysis (see Chapter 4) concluded that although the action has limited accessibility to some parts of the study area, there is no evidence that the limit in accessibility has resulted in any secondary residential displacement. While rents and home values have, in general, increased throughout the study area, these increases appear to be a result of normal economic trends, are consistent with trends throughout Lower Manhattan, and are therefore not directly attributable to the security plan. In addition, while property values have, in general, increased throughout the study area, and commercial rents have slightly decreased, these changes are not unique to the study area and appear to be a result of normal economic trends. As these changes are consistent with trends throughout Lower Manhattan, they are therefore not directly attributable to the security plan. The action, which is limited to streets and sidewalks, does not entail any new development, and does not involve any involuntary displacement of businesses or institutions within the security zone. As no direct, indirect business or institutional displacement would occur as a result of the action, no significant adverse impacts have occurred or are expected on socioeconomic conditions.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 5) indicates that the action has resulted in some changes to the urban design and visual quality of the area, specifically within the security zone. The addition of the security zone features has resulted in a negative modification of the streetscape elements within the security zone boundaries. As such, significant adverse impacts on urban design have resulted from implementation of the security plan. The urban design analysis notes that the urban design impacts would be addressed with operational mitigation measures (see Chapter 11, “Mitigation”). The security plan has not blocked public views to any visual resources, including view corridors, vistas, historic landmarks, historic districts, and open spaces. The installed streetscape elements that comprise the physical elements of the NYPD security plan do not preclude views of visual resources given the low heights of the bollards and modest size of the security checkpoint booths. As such no impacts on visual resources have occurred.

- *Transportation.* The Traffic and Parking analysis (see Chapter 7) indicates that the action has resulted in traffic impacts in a number of locations in the study area. The analysis also notes that most of the identified traffic impacts would be fully addressed with proposed mitigation measures (see Chapter 11). No significant adverse impacts to study area parking conditions have resulted from the With-Action condition. The Transit and Pedestrian analysis (see Chapter 8) indicates that there have been substantial increases in overall travel time for the diverted bus routes, and these increases have resulted in significant adverse impacts on bus operations for the M15 and M103 routes, especially in the AM peak hour and in the southbound direction for all peak hours. In addition, the security plan appears to have resulted in a significant adverse safety impact on pedestrian conditions at the Broadway/Worth Street intersection where increases in pedestrian accidents have occurred. Chapter 11, “Mitigation,” provides mitigation measures to address the bus transit and pedestrian safety impacts identified.
- *Noise.* As discussed in Chapter 10, noise levels within the study area have increased as a result of the diverted traffic. As discussed in the chapter, the action has resulted in noise impacts at two locations along Worth Street.

Security Zone

The terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on September 11, 2001 resulted in greater security measures being implemented all over the City, particularly in Lower Manhattan due to the large number of government offices and financial institutions located there. Security devices such as jersey barriers, French barriers, delta barriers, bollards, and concrete planters, although typically not aesthetically pleasing, have become part of the landscape of the City after September 11, 2001. The area surrounding the New York Stock Exchange and Metro Tech in Brooklyn, for example, have implemented similar security plans where public streets have been closed to unauthorized traffic and features such as delta barriers, jersey barriers, concrete planters, and bollards have been installed. This increase in security presence has altered the character of the City, especially in Lower Manhattan.

As the increased security presence has altered the character of Lower Manhattan, the action has resulted in an alteration of neighborhood character within the security zone area. While there is still pedestrian traffic, vehicular traffic is lighter (within the security zone), and the security presence is an additional characteristic of the area. The area within the security zone has become isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods by the limiting of vehicular access. The streets within the security zone, before they were closed, particularly Park Row, were more active through streets connecting the Financial District to Chinatown and the Civic Center area. This absence of vehicular traffic and activity within the security zone has created an abandoned quality, which is starkly contrasted to the active and lively surrounding area. The closure of

public streets and the addition of the security elements has introduced a forbidding and unaesthetic quality to the area. The action has created a disconnect between the security zone area and the surrounding neighborhood. Despite this negative alteration, these security features are considered necessary to protect potential terrorist targets and these features will remain in place as long as a potential terrorist threat exists.

Study Area

As discussed above, there has been an increase in security within the study area around City Hall and other government and office buildings as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. These security measures include an increase in security officers outside these buildings as well as jersey barriers, bollards, delta barriers, and planters along sidewalks. These security measures have altered the character of the City, particularly in Lower Manhattan. Consequently, the One Police Plaza security plan is not a unique feature that has altered the character of the surrounding area. Although the action has resulted in increases in traffic and noise around the perimeter of the security zone, this has not altered the defining neighborhood characteristics of the study area, as this area has always been heavily trafficked.

E. CONCLUSION

The action has resulted in a change of character within the security zone. As discussed above, the action has resulted in an overall change in the character of the security zone area with respect to urban design and street-level activity. The cumulative effects of the impacts discussed above have negatively impacted neighborhood character within the security zone. While a number of significant adverse traffic impacts were identified, these impacts occur in locations that would already be congested in the No-Action condition. These transportation impacts have not significantly altered neighborhood character within the study area. However, as discussed in Chapter 11, "Mitigation," traffic, transit and pedestrians, and urban design impacts would be fully or partially mitigated and therefore, any impact on neighborhood character would also be mitigated.