

CHAPTER 8: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

8.1 Overview

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is considered to be a combination of the various features that make up that the distinct character of a given neighborhood. These features include land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic and noise, as well as other physical or social characteristics that help to distinguish the community. As discussed below, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is typically warranted when an action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following technical study areas: land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrians, or noise. An assessment may also be required when an action would have a more moderate effect on several of these areas combined. As discussed in the *CEQR Technical Manual* potential effects on neighborhood character include:

- *Land Use* – The development resulting from a proposed action could alter the character of a neighborhood if it introduces new land uses, is completely inconsistent with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates significant land use changes.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources* – In built-out areas, changes in urban design characteristics may affect neighborhood character when introducing substantially different size, scale, building bulk, form, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect larger overall patterns such as block forms, street patterns, or hierarchies, and streetscape features such as landscaping, or streetwalls. Changes in visual resources such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features, or block public visual access to/from such features.
- *Historic Resources* – If an action would result in substantial direct changes to an historic resource, or to public views or surrounding context of a resource, or when a historic resources analysis identifies a significant impact on a resource, there is a potential to affect the neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions* – Substantial direct or indirect displacement, or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density would have the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians* – When traffic (or lack thereof) contributes to the character of a neighborhood, and a proposed action changes conditions substantially from the existing condition, a neighborhood character impact can occur. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, such substantial traffic changes can include: substantive changes in level of service (LOS); change in

traffic patterns, roadway classifications or vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or when significant traffic impacts are identified by the technical traffic analysis. Additionally, when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.

- *Noise* – As discussed in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, in order for an action to affect neighborhood character with respect to noise, it needs to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in a CEQR acceptability category of less than three dBA.

The impact analysis in this chapter focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above. The overarching focus of this chapter is a detailed description of existing neighborhood conditions relating to land use, historic resources, visual and urban design dimensions; and the neighborhood's current traffic, noise and socioeconomic conditions as they relate to the experience of the Stapleton neighborhood. These issues are addressed from field visits, and attention to the findings and technical analyses of other sections of this document.

The analysis indicates that the Proposed Action would result in changes to the neighborhood character of the study area, since it would introduce new land uses and building types, new residential and working populations, and increased levels of traffic and pedestrian activity. However, the analysis concludes that these neighborhood character impacts would not be adverse. Rather, the Proposed Action is expected to have a beneficial effect on the neighborhood character exhibited by the study area.

8.2 Methodology

The character of a neighborhood is defined by factors such as land use, visual resources, the presence of amenities or open space, landscaping, urban design, area vitality, traffic, pedestrian activity, presence of historic resources and noise. This chapter assesses factors such as these for the Existing, No Build and Build Conditions. Guidance found in the *CEQR Technical Manual* was used to develop this analysis.

The study area is a one-quarter mile area surrounding the Project Area, as defined in Chapter 1, "Project Description." The definition of the study area reflects the boundaries of the area that would most likely be affected by the Proposed Action with respect to neighborhood character elements described above. This designation captures much of the Stapleton neighborhood to the west, north and south of the Project Area. The quarter-mile-radius study area that defines the neighborhood character study area is depicted in Figure 3-1.

In this chapter, specific focus is given to the various subareas within the overall study area including the Homeport Site, the Project Area, west of Front Street, the Tappen Park area and the Bay Street corridor to the west, as well as portions of the Stapleton neighborhood near Hannah Street in the north and the residential neighborhood near the

Bayley Seton Hospital in the south. Each area is representative of specific elements that help define the neighborhood character of the study area.

The study of neighborhood character was developed through site visits, photography and technical findings developed in other chapters in this DEIS. Stapleton is described through first-hand experience, via observations recorded while walking through the various sections of the study area. The panoramic figures that have been developed in support of the narrative findings allow the reader to ‘see’ the streets, buildings, homes and businesses of Stapleton in the context of the neighborhood.

In Figures 8-1 and 8-2, both the Project Area and study area can be seen in panorama, as well as the Staten Island Railway (SIR) Stapleton station platform. Figure 8-1 details the eastward view looking toward the Homeport Site. Figure 8-2 details the westward view looking away from the Homeport Site, toward the adjacent neighborhood.

8.3 Existing Conditions

8.3.1 Land Use

The Homeport Site is an approximately 35-acre parcel that lies adjacent to the Upper New York Bay on Staten Island’s eastern shoreline. This waterfront parcel is generally characterized by large warehouses, expansive parking areas, and an approximately three-acre, 1,410-foot-long pier (the USS The Sullivans Pier) that extends into the Upper New York Bay. Two manufacturing zoning districts, M2-1 and M3-1, currently regulate the development of the Homeport Site.

The buildings on the Homeport Site contain more than 60,000 square feet of office space, and 200,000 square feet of industrial/warehouse space. Figure 8-3 illustrates the general character of buildings on the Homeport Site, and their relationship to the Front Street corridor. Figure 8-4 illustrates the general appearance of the current Homeport buildings: boxy, concrete and mortar, bereft of architectural distinction and lacking varied land use beyond warehousing and nondescript industrial activity. In its entirety, the Site appears largely vacant, lacking vibrancy and street-level activity. In sum, it is best characterized as a largely inactive industrial site.

In contrast to its current state, the Homeport Site was designed and constructed in the early 1990s to berth and provide support services for a small fleet of Naval vessels. Decommissioned in 1994 as part of a series of base closings nationwide, the facility was subsequently transferred to the City of New York. While many of the warehouse-type buildings on this property are vacant, a few have been utilized temporarily by City agencies. The interim institutional uses housed on the property include the New York Police Department (NYPD) Staten Island Taskforce, Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Marine Company No. 9, New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) Marine Repair Unit, and the Richmond County State Supreme Civil Court. The USS The Sullivans Pier, the north side of which the Navy has berthing rights for at least the next seven years, is also situated on the property.

**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Project Area
Eastward View


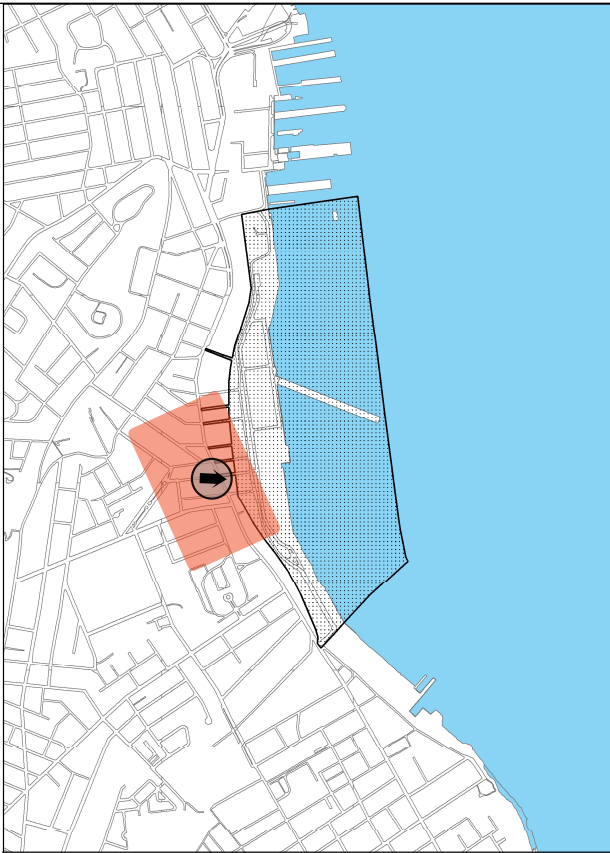
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Figure 8-1



Homeport Site Buildings

Front Street Buildings

SIR Stapleton Station
Platform

 Orientation of Photo

 Location



Project Area- Eastward View



**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Project Area
Westward View


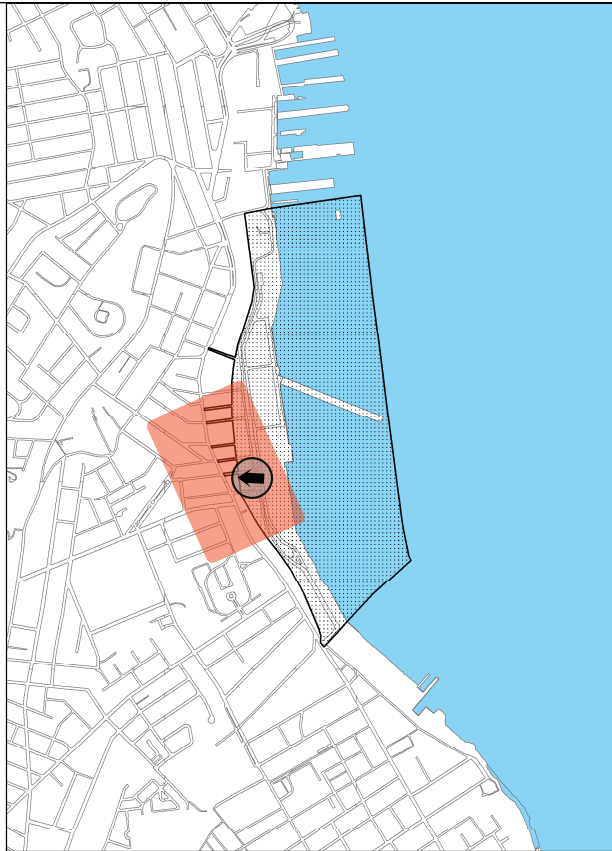


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Figure 8-2



 Orientation of Photo
 Location

Municipal Parking Lot

Paramount Theatre
Central Business Corridor
Bay Street Area

Prospect Street Crossing
Bay Street



Stapleton Study Area- Westward View



Paramount Theatre
Central Business Corridor
Bay Street Area



Prospect Street Crossing
Bay Street



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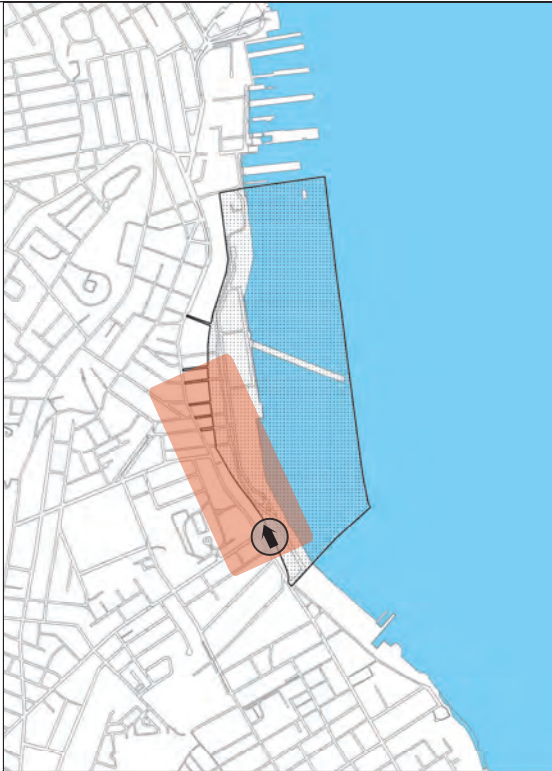
New Stapleton Waterfront Development Plan DEIS

Neighborhood Character:
Homeport Site at Front Street



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Figure 8-3

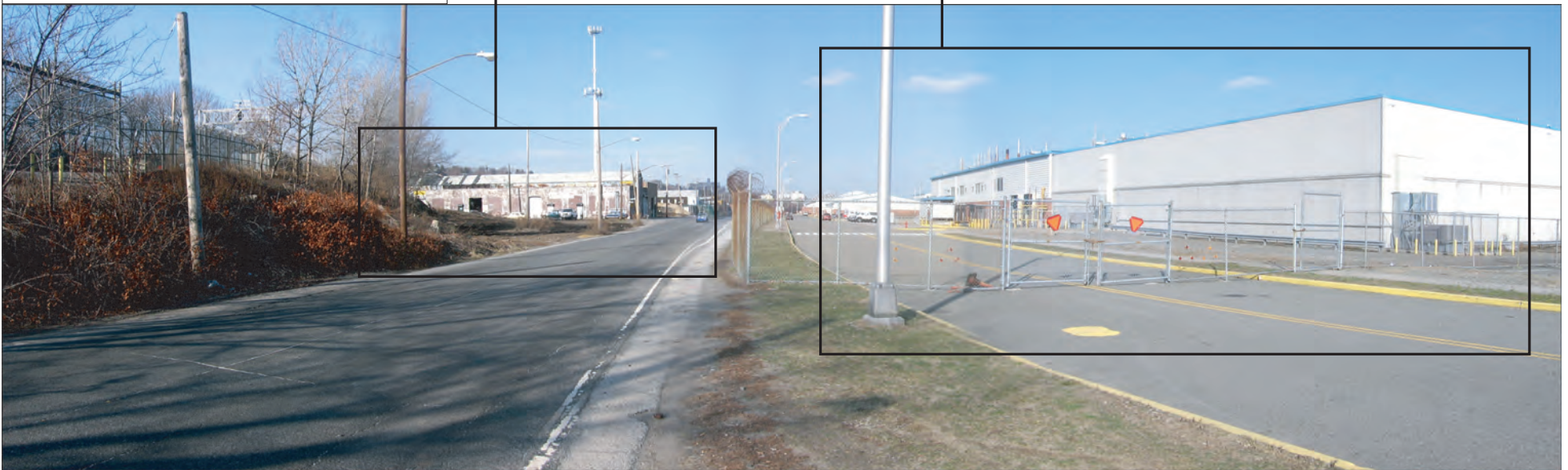


West of Front Street
Current Buildings

Homeport Site
Current Buildings

Orientation of Photo

Location



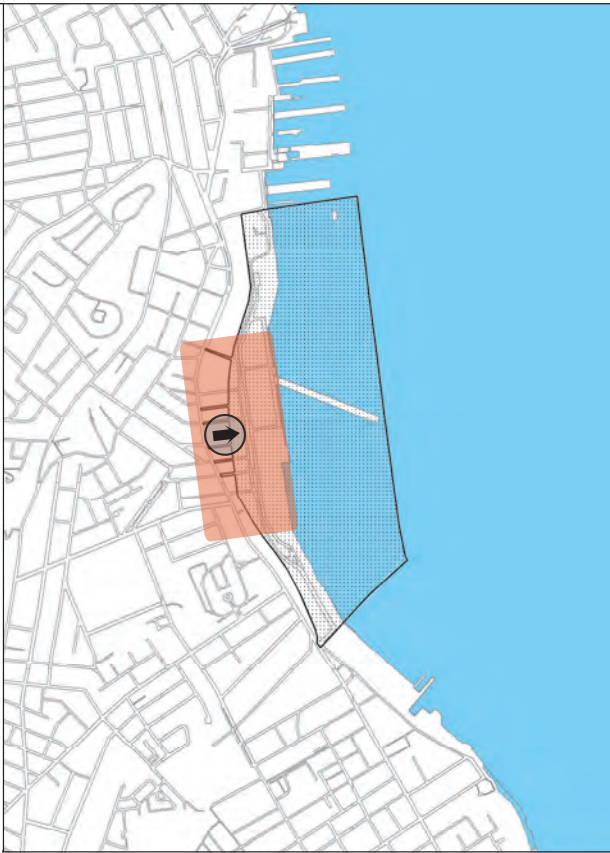
Front Street- Northward View



**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Homeport Site
Building Character

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Figure 8-4



-  Orientation of Photo
-  Location

- Homeport Site Buildings
- Industrial Architecture
- Perimeter Fence
- Slight Vegetation



Homeport Site Buildings- Eastward View

NEW STAPLETON WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The Project Area west of Front Street is comprised of the Projected and Potential Development Sites, as detailed in Chapter 2, “Analytical Framework.” Land uses include industrial, manufacturing and marginal commercial development. The majority of buildings are almost entirely industrial in nature. Exceptions include a furniture store and yacht club located between Prospect and Water Streets, and a pool hall on Wave Street. Some of the businesses in this area are related to automotive and marine repair or iron works, while the others are fabrication facilities for such items as lighting fixtures, or general, industrial warehousing. There are no residential uses in this area, and retail uses are generally limited to a furniture store and a warehouse that also functions as a discounted retail outlet. Figure 8-5 illustrates the proximity of these structures to the Homeport Site, as well as their general land use, design and architectural characteristics.

The central Bay Street corridor stretching outwards from Tappen Park retains fragments of its historical and architectural resources. Once a vibrant town center, this central corridor now features fast food franchises, car dealerships, bulk supply outlets and strip mall development. Traveling in a southerly direction through this central corridor, automobile-related uses predominate as evidenced by car dealerships and repair shops (see Figure 8-6). A significant portion of its commercial enterprise is geared toward the automobile, which counters the traditional, pedestrian modes of circulation through this central corridor. As Bay Street begins to narrow heading toward Tappen Park, these establishments are a poor precursor to the mixed-use context of the Stapleton neighborhood proper.

Buttressed on the north by Water Street, and on the south by Canal Street, Tappen Park lies at the heart of the Stapleton neighborhood, as exhibited in Figures 8-7 and 8-8. It features many retail uses that service the local neighborhood, and exhibits a town center-like feel. These local retail and service uses often occupy the ground floor of mixed-use buildings, which contain residential uses on the upper floors. Other commercial uses, including financial institutions, real estate and insurance firms, also are located in the vicinity of Tappen Park.

In the northern portion of the study area, primary land uses along Hannah Street include clusters of gasoline/service stations and automobile-related uses. As illustrated in Figure 8-9, commercial uses in the northern part of the Bay Street corridor near Hannah Street take the form of car dealerships, rental car lots, and supply outlets.

The southern portion of the study area is largely residential, with a few commercial and mixed uses along Bay Street. The Bayley Seton Hospital, classified as an institutional land use, is also located in this area. Toward the extreme southern perimeter of the study area, this largely residential neighborhood gives way to more industrial uses, especially toward the east near the bay. A large office complex, One Edgewater Plaza, is situated east of Bay Street along the shore. Figure 8-10, which illustrates the intersection of Greenfield and Bay Streets, typifies this attenuation of the southern residential section of the study area, and prepares one for the stark urban environment found near the Clifton Station SIR platform.



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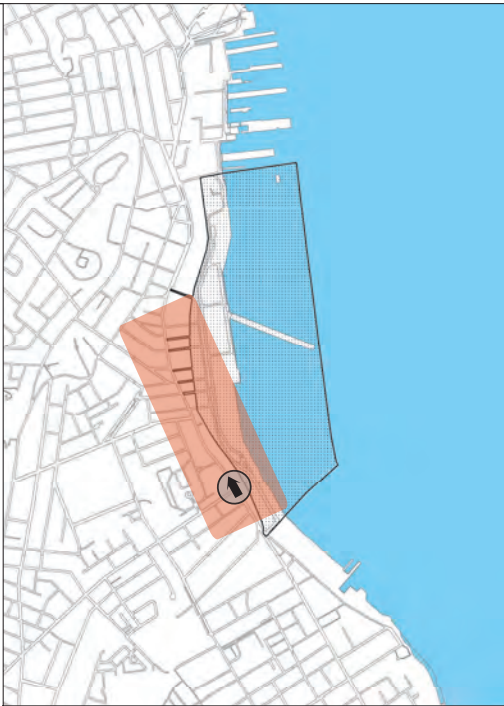
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Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Front Street



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Figure 8-5



-  Orientation of Photo
-  Location

- Front Street Buildings
- Industrial Storage
- Vacant Parcels
- Limited Retail | Commercial Uses

Homeport Site



Front Street | Western Properties



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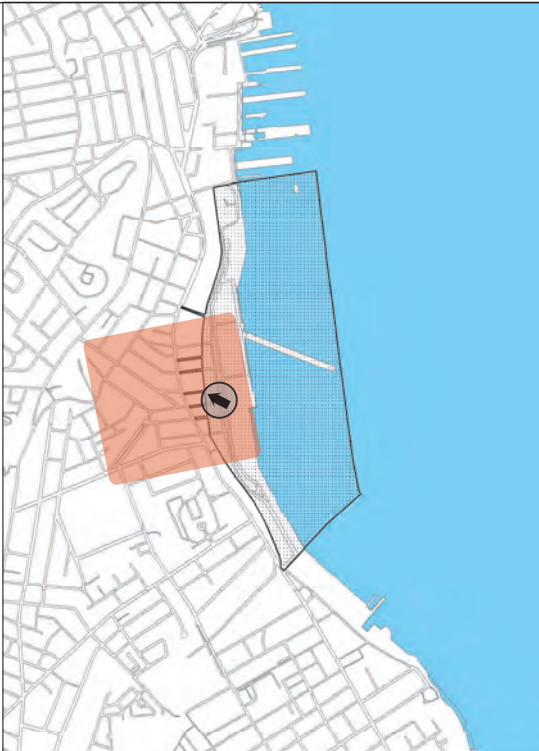
New Stapleton Waterfront Development Plan DEIS

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street Corridor



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Figure 8-6



- Orientation of Photo
- Location

-Predominance of Auto-Related Uses

-Traffic Congestion Consistent with Narrowing of Bay Street



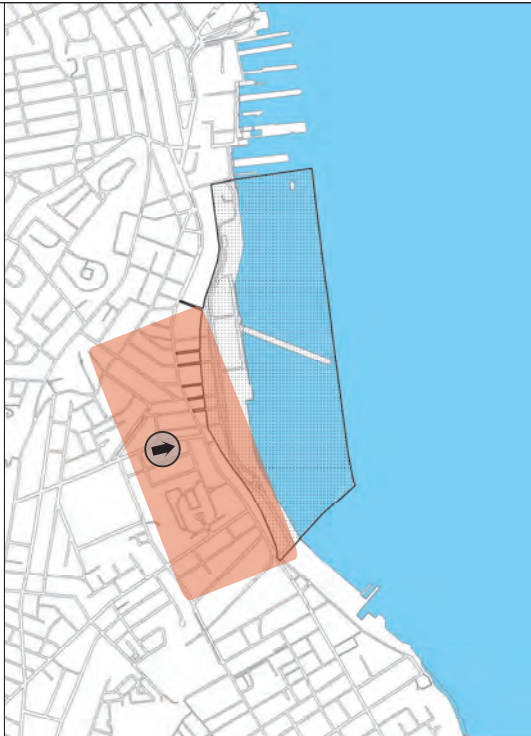
Bay Street Corridor | Central District



**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street Corridor

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Figure 8-7



 Orientation of Photo
 Location

-Architectural Detail

-Water Street View Corridor

-Visual Resource - Upper New York Bay

- Tappen Park-
Northeastern Edge



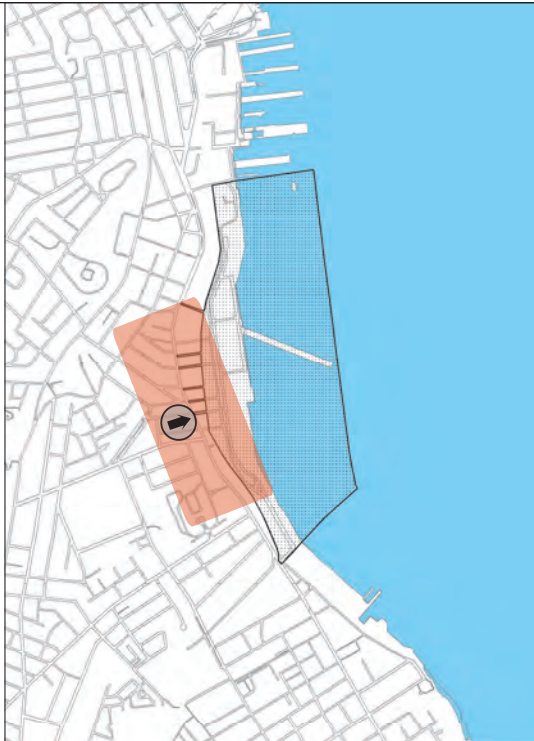
Bay Street @ Water Street | Tappen Park Area- Central District

**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street Corridor

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Figure 8-8




-Tappen Park

-Canal Street View Corridor

-Visual Resource - Upper New York Bay

 Orientation of Photo

 Location



Bay Street @ Canal Street | Tappen Park Area- Central District



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**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

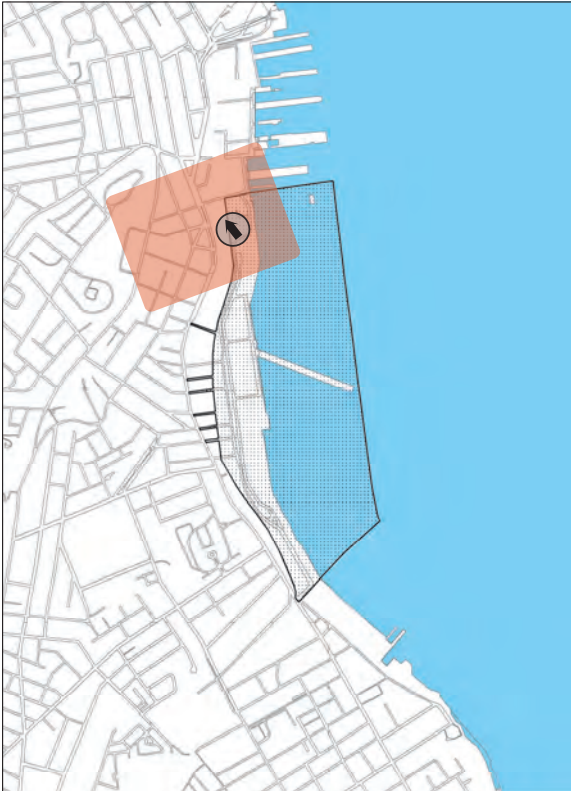
Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Northern Perimeter



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Figure 8-9

- Service Stations
- Wide Curb Cuts
- Congested Traffic Patterns



 Orientation of Photo

 Location



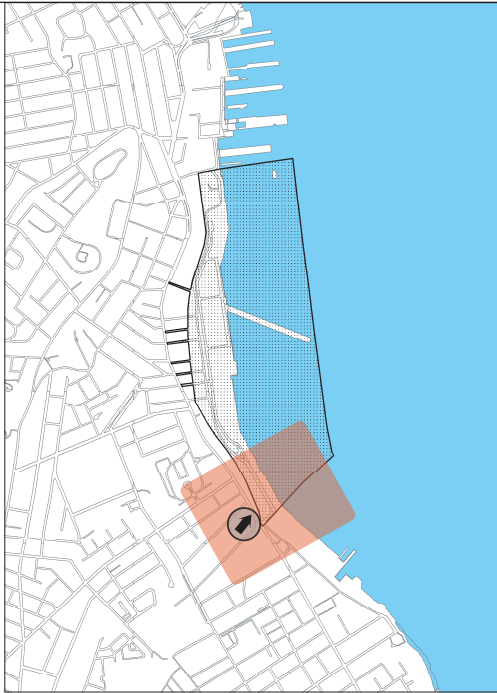
Hannah Street @ Bay Street | Northern Perimeter



**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Greenfield & Bay Street
Intersection

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Figure 8-10



 Orientation of Photo
 Location

- Wide Intersection
- Industrial Character
- Convergence of Land Uses



Greenfield & Bay Street Intersection | Southern Section- Study Area

8.3.2 Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Homeport Site's proximity to the Upper New York Bay, a dominant natural feature, contributes significantly to the character of the area. Decrepit pilings, dilapidated concrete slabs, and rusting pipes that are strewn along the shoreline suggest that the Site's waterfront structures have not been properly maintained. As seen in Figure 8-11, the largely empty Homeport Site and shoreline debris characterize the waterfront environment of the Stapleton neighborhood.

The buildings and layout of the Homeport Site are utilitarian in nature providing warehouse/office support to the Navy fleet. The Homeport Site is separated from the upland area of Stapleton by a fence enclosing the perimeter of the Site, in addition to the SIR tracks. The Site contains buildings, open areas used largely for parking, and a utilities area, as well as the USS The Sullivans Pier. At-grade parking lots surround the buildings and provide parking for interim uses. Given that a majority of the Homeport Site is paved, there is little natural vegetation throughout the site. Most of the existing vegetation is the result of landscaping and some trees around particular buildings.

The buildings on the Homeport Site are generally boxy, low-rise buildings with metal and masonry exteriors. These buildings are arranged in a linear fashion, parallel to the waterfront. The buildings are detached, or semi-detached, and taken together, form a general aesthetic appearance of a vast, underutilized, institutional campus. At both the south and north ends of the Homeport Site, vacant structures and dilapidated infrastructure add to a general character of neglect. Figure 8-12 shows this breakdown of Site infrastructure to the south, and at the northern perimeter. Figure 8-13 illustrates how the Site is used for temporary storage of various materials and equipment.

The isolation of the Homeport Site from the larger neighborhood to the west and the underutilization of its immediate proximity to the waterfront only add to its architectural and design deficiencies. Lacking connections upland to the Stapleton neighborhood, the Homeport Site stand alone, largely vacant and in disrepair.

Situated between the SIR tracks and platform on the west and the Homeport Site to its east, the Project Area west of Front Street is relatively detached from both activities of the Stapleton neighborhood proper, and the isolated Homeport Site. The buildings west of Front Street between Wave and Thompson Streets vary in terms of lot coverage and layout; some are attached while others are separated by driveways or open uses such as storage or parking. Generally the buildings are one to three stories in height with steep roofs and several of them have garage bays that open onto Front Street.

Like the Homeport Site, the western portion of the Project Area is largely underutilized. Its lack of activity and nondescript industrial and commercial uses are underscored by an absence of vegetation, landscaping or amenities lining the streets. The once-paved sidewalks have since deteriorated, and what remains is predominately at grade with Front Street itself. No curb cuts are discernable, and only a few fire hydrants and utility poles interrupt this industrial section of the Project Area.



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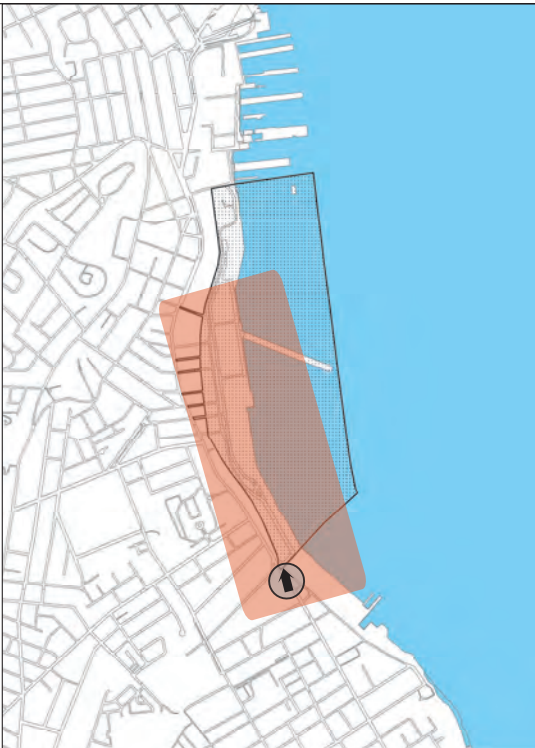
New Stapleton Waterfront Development Plan DEIS

Neighborhood Character:
Homeport Site | Project Area
Shoreline | Northward View



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Figure 8-11



- Orientation of Photo
- Location

-Homeport Site Buildings

-Concrete Pilings

-Chainlink Fence

-Rusting Pipes



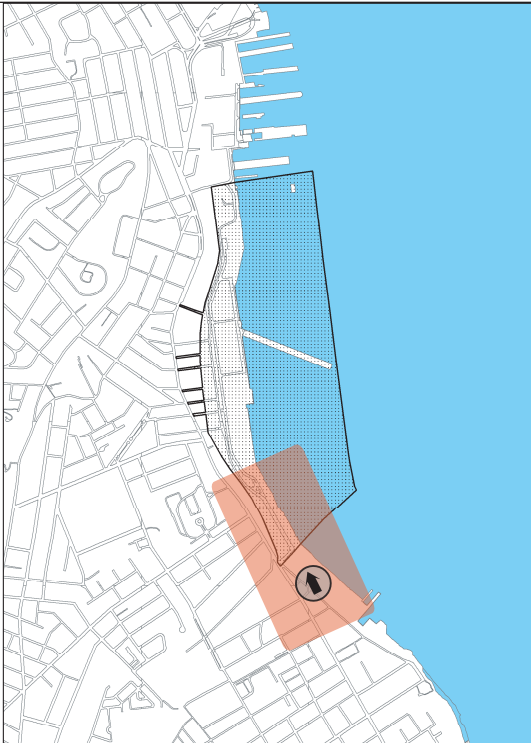
Homeport Site Shoreline | Northward View



**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Homeport Site | Project Area
Southern Perimeter

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Figure 8-12



-  Orientation of Photo
-  Location

- Damaged Infrastructure
- Shuttered Buildings



Homeport Site Perimeter | Southern Section



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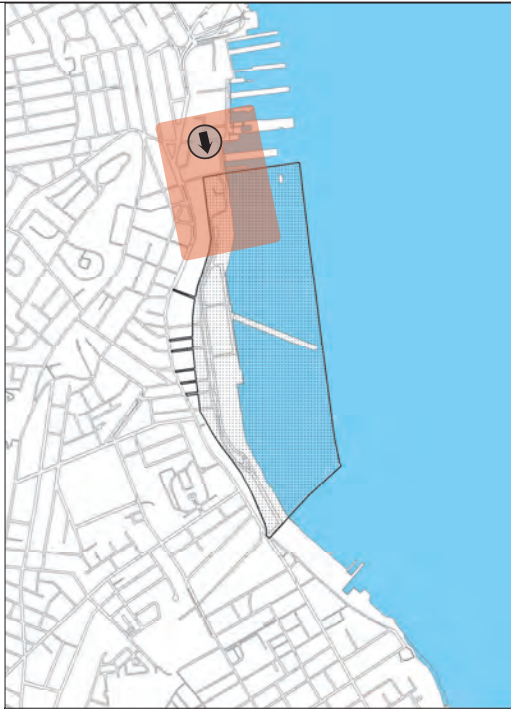
New Stapleton Waterfront Development Plan DEIS

Neighborhood Character:
Homeport Site | Project Area
Northern Perimeter




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Figure 8-13



 Orientation of Photo

 Location

-Chainlink Fence

-Industrial Storage



Homeport Site Perimeter | North Section

-Barbed Wire

-Uninviting Perimeter

-Marginal Land Use



NEW STAPLETON WATERFRONT DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

In terms of street hierarchy, the blocks west of Front Street between Wave and Thompson Streets are rectangular in shape, formed by Wave, Prospect, Water and Thompson Streets intersecting with Front Street at right angles. In Figure 8-14, industrial, manufacturing and vacant parcels are illustrated, as well the intersecting Wave Street. Like Front Street, other east-west intersecting streets offer views of the waterfront and the Homeport Site, and contribute to the flow of activity between Front and Bay Streets.

The primary visual resource in the Project Area is the Upper New York Bay and the views of it that are available from the Project Area and study area. The vantage point generally improves as one approaches the eastern edge of the Homeport Site, where views are optimal. Views of Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge from the Homeport Site shoreline are impressive. However, since the Site is not publicly accessible, Stapleton residents generally do not have the opportunity to enjoy these vistas.

In the portion of the Bay Street corridor near Tappen Park, many nineteenth- and twentieth-century architectural moldings and details are prominent on buildings fronting Bay Street (see Figure 8-15). These largely brick and mortar buildings have great architectural integrity, and they remain excellent visual and design resources for the neighborhood. Although these buildings show signs of neglect, they add to the historical integrity of the neighborhood. For instance, crossing Prospect Street from the north along Bay Street (Figure 8-16), one is greeted by the dilapidated Paramount Theatre (Figure 8-15), an Art Deco building. Its stately facade is echoed on the eastern side of the street by a series of brick and mortar buildings that possess great detail and integrity, and appear to have recently undergone renovation.

Tappen Park is adorned with a comfort station at its western end, which exhibits Romanesque and Gothic architectural styles. Wrought iron lanterns flank the entrance to this building, which features arched windows and a red brick façade. The benches, ornamental brickwork, and streetlamps throughout this park have been designed in a similar style.

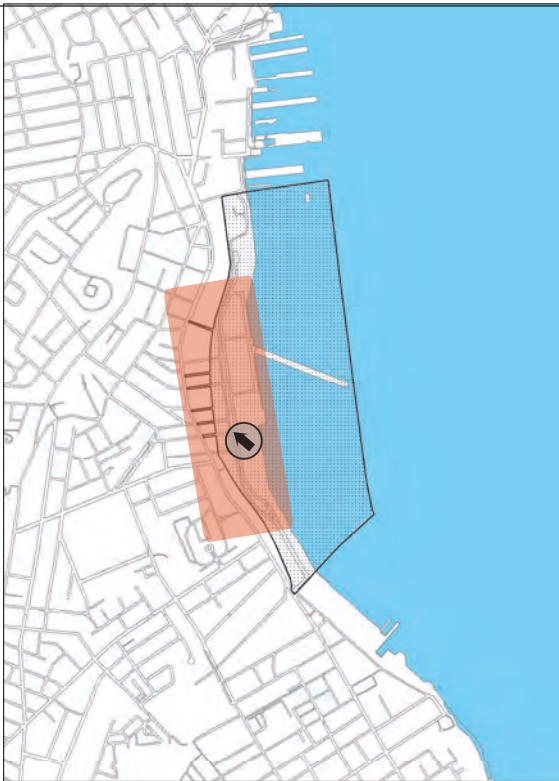
Some vegetation and landscaping (sidewalk trees) exists along the Bay Street corridor, but there is little visual variety in building form and arrangement. Vistas to the east toward the Homeport Site, SIR and Front Street exist; however, they do little to enliven the neighborhood character north and south along the major corridor of Bay Street. This northern section of the study area is disconnected in terms of its built form and urban design from the downtown section of the Stapleton neighborhood that lies several blocks to the south.

**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Project Area
Northwest View

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Figure 8-14



 Orientation of Photo

 Location

-Junk Yard

-Chainlink Fencing

-Vacant, Underutilized Parcel



Front Street | Northwest Project Area Parcels



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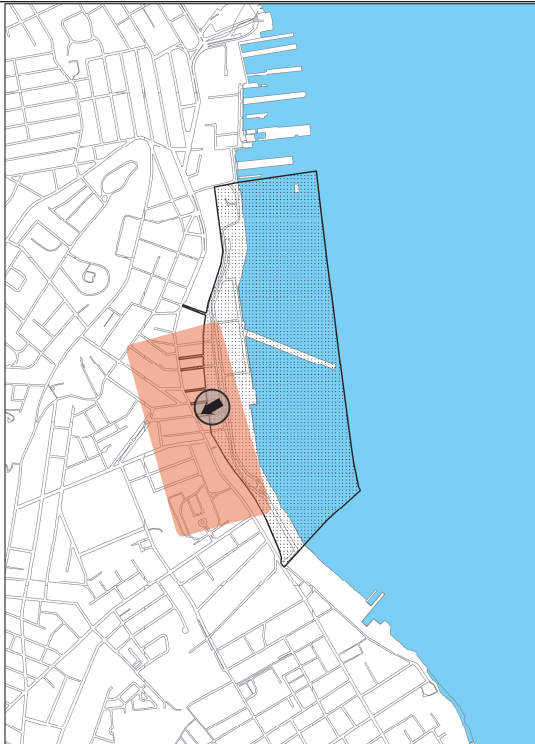
New Stapleton Waterfront Development Plan DEIS

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street Corridor



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Figure 8-15




-Art Deco Building | Paramount Theatre

-Architectural Detail

-Bay Street Corridor Architecture

-Architectural Detail | Brick Buildings

 Orientation of Photo

 Location





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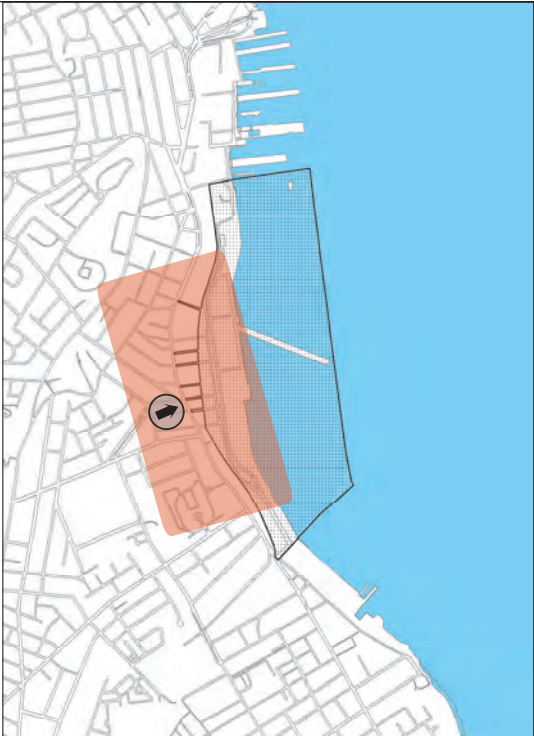
**New Stapleton Waterfront
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Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street Corridor



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Figure 8-16



-Architectural Detail

-Prospect Street View Corridor

-Visual Resource- Upper New York Bay

- Municipal Parking Lot

Orientation of Photo

Location



Bay Street @ Prospect Street | Tappen Park Area- Central District

Looking eastward along both Water and Canal Streets in the vicinity of Tappen Park, one can see the SIR line, and farther to the east the Homeport Site. These eastern vistas toward the bay are enhanced further by the landscaping elements interspersed throughout Tappen Park. Where little vegetation, landscaping and inviting streetscape elements exist only several blocks north and south along Bay Street, in the immediate central corridor of Tappen Park, a more coherent, pedestrian-friendly climate reigns. A general visual continuity and cohesiveness replaces the jarring demeanor of the northern boundary of the study area and the vacant, neglected appearance currently associated with the Project Area.

Both the northern and southern perimeters of the study area possess distinct character attributes. The streets in the northern part of the study area are arranged in an irregular pattern. Combined with high volumes of vehicular traffic, the area is congested during peak periods. Curb cuts are extensive to make way for vehicular traffic.

Interspersed among this cohesive neighborhood are a series of new residential developments, illustrated in Figure 8-17. These new developments are typical of the building styles found in newer Staten Island subdivisions. They are driven by existing market demands in the Stapleton area and only secondarily, if at all, respond to the longstanding architectural integrity of the neighborhood.

Bayley Seton Hospital, a stately medical campus, complements the residential nature of the neighborhood at the southern end of the study area (see Figure 8-18). Architecturally distinct, it is set back from the street and is lined with extensive green space. Near the hospital campus, most streets are tree-lined, creating an inviting environment. The majority of homes in this area are single family detached, as illustrated in Figure 8-19. These homes range in height from one to three stories, and many are recognizably of Victorian, Queen Anne, and Colonial styles. Most of the semi-detached homes are two-stories in height while the detached homes tend to be slightly taller. Parking for residences is typically provided at the front of each house.

8.3.3 Historic Resources

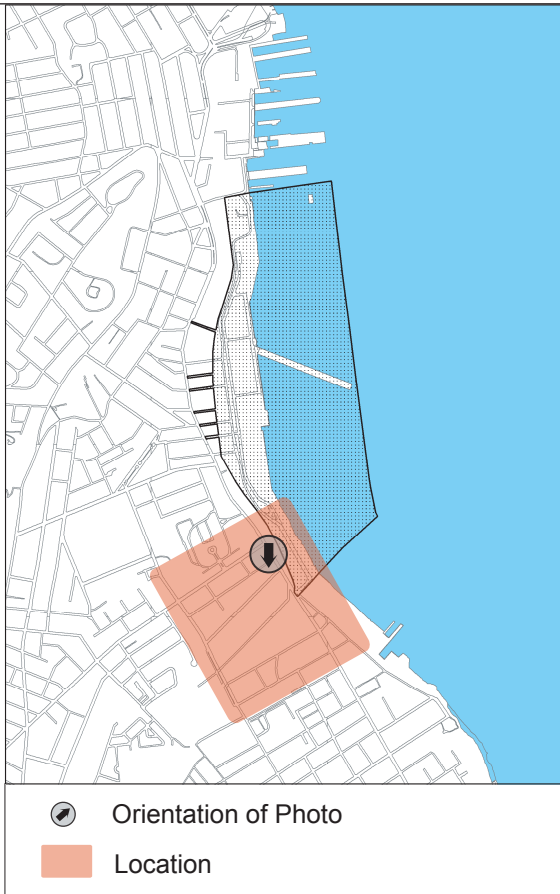
One Project Area property, 144-150 Front Street, is potentially eligible for listing as a New York City Landmark. As indicated in Chapter 10, "Historic Resources," this warehouse building dates to the early 20th century. However, this building is an anomaly and out of context with the other adjacent properties that comprise the Project Area west of Front Street. Historic resources are not a defining element of the Project Area's neighborhood character.

**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street- Southern Sector

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Figure 8-17



- Recent Residential Development
- Extensive curb cuts
- Street-facing garages



New residential development | Southern Section- Study Area



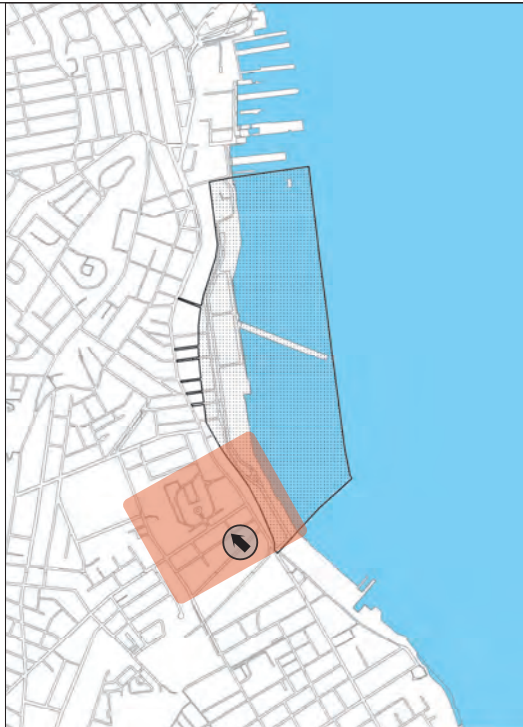
**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**


Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Southern Sector
Bayley Seton Hospital



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Figure 8-18



 Orientation of Photo

 Location

-Stately Hospital Campus

-Extensive Landscaping

- Coherent Street Pattern



Bayley Seton Hospital | Southern Section- Study Area



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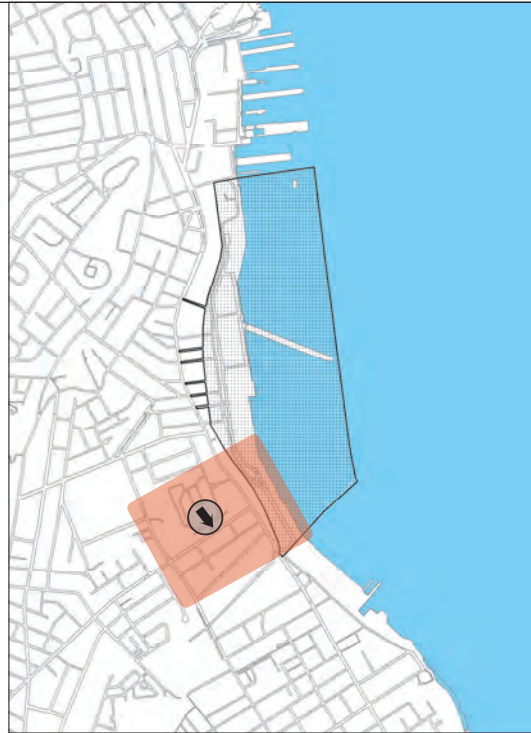
**New Stapleton Waterfront
Development Plan DEIS**

Neighborhood Character:
Stapleton Study Area
Bay Street- Southern Perimeter



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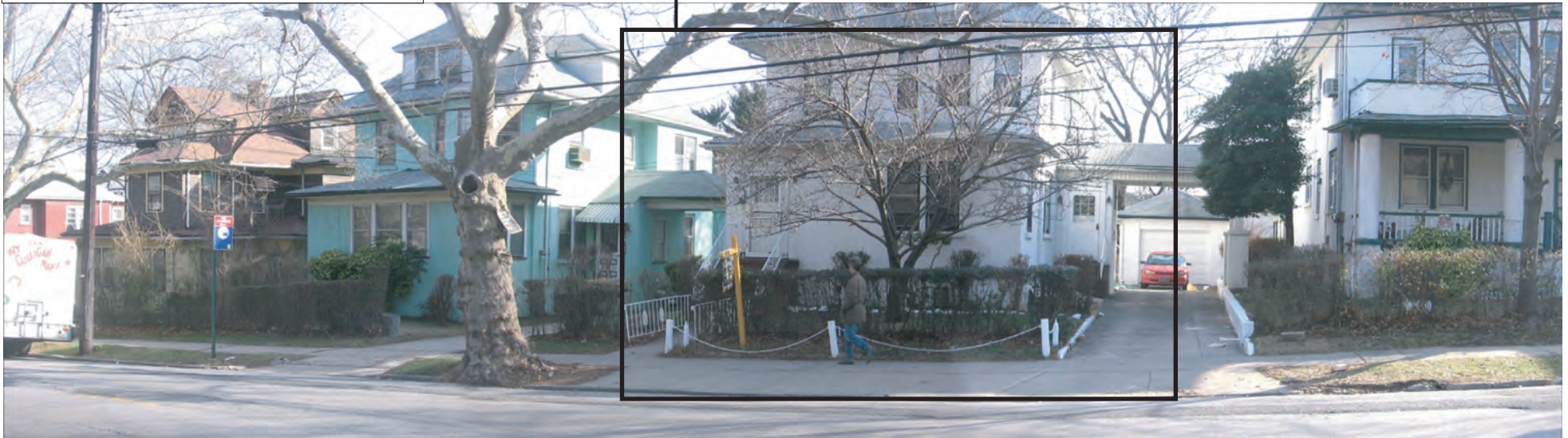
Figure 8-19



Orientation of Photo

Location

- Single-Family Detached Housing
- Extensive Landscaping
- Ample Parking



Residential neighborhoods | Southern Section- Study Area

The study area contains nine historic resources and one historic district. Four Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC)-designated historic properties have been identified west of Bay Street, located along the St. Paul's Avenue/Van Duzer Street corridor. These properties are Public School 15 (Daniel D. Tompkins School) at 98 Grant Street, St. Paul's Memorial Church and Rectory at 17-225 St. Paul's Avenue, 364 Van Duzer Street (house) and 390 Van Duzer Street (house). In addition to their City landmark status, St. Paul's and the houses at 364 and 390 Van Duzer Street are also listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (SR/NR). A portion of the St. Paul's Avenue – Stapleton Heights Historic District, as designated by the City of New York Landmarks Preservation Commission on June 29, 2004, is also situated in this part of the study area (in the vicinity of St. Paul's Avenue between Clinton and Beach Streets).

8.3.4 Socioeconomic Conditions

Historically, the downtown area of Stapleton along Bay Street and around Tappen Park was one of Staten Island's main business and shopping hubs. However, with the commercial and residential growth of other parts of Staten Island over the past several decades, Stapleton and its neighboring communities on the North Shore declined economically and experienced demographic shifts. More recently there have been some encouraging signs of area reinvestment, with new businesses opening and pockets of new development.

The market analysis completed as part of the planning process identified key economic issues facing the downtown area of Stapleton. Retail rental rates were found to be lower than many areas of Staten Island, yet vacancy rates along some stretches of Bay Street have nonetheless historically approached 50 percent. The turn-over rate for businesses was also found to be fairly high, with many surviving only a short time. These indicators point to a struggling commercial area. On the residential side, while Staten Island overall has seen an increase in population, an annual increase in single-family home values and a solid amount of new construction and investment, Stapleton has lagged behind. The housing market in Stapleton has a low homeownership rate, a high vacancy rate and a lower than average median home value.

The residential neighborhoods in the vicinity of the Bayley Seton Hospital and Van Duzer Street are best characterized as anomalies to Stapleton's overall socioeconomic situation. These historically residential neighborhoods tend to more secure and stable, exhibiting higher home ownership rates and median household incomes, than the Stapleton area as a whole.

8.3.5 Traffic

Front Street is classified as a peak-hour collector/distributor street, while Wave, Prospect, Water, Canal and Thompson Streets are classified as local streets. Pedestrians are able to cross any of these streets at grade, and there is no limited access for vehicles. There are no bus routes along Front Street.

Relatively little traffic, either vehicular or pedestrian, is present on the Homeport Site. Vehicular and pedestrian traffic is limited largely to employees of the interim uses located here. Traffic around and within the Homeport Site is very limited outside of peak hours. Similarly, there is little pedestrian activity in the Project Area west of Front Street, mostly due to the lack of street-level retail uses and limited reasons to travel between the Stapleton neighborhood and the Homeport Site. Vehicular traffic on the local streets between Bay and Front Streets also is relatively low.

Bay Street serves as the primary north-south arterial in the study area and has bus service along its length in both directions. The majority of vehicles that access the waterfront travel along or across Bay Street at some point along their route. Bay Street is generally the most congested corridor in the study area. When Front Street experiences elevated levels of traffic, typically in the northern portion, it is generally because motorists are using it as an alternative to the more heavily trafficked Bay Street.

The Bay Street corridor and Tappen Park areas are one of the more active portions of the study area in terms of traffic and pedestrian movements. The highest levels of vehicular and pedestrian traffic were observed in the northernmost part of the study area, which is likely related to the St. George Ferry Terminal situated approximately 1,000 feet north of the study area limits.

According to the traffic analysis that was conducted for the Proposed Action, the overall existing traffic volumes within the study area are considered low. None of the signalized intersections analyzed are operating at overall unacceptable LOS E or F and only one intersection is operating at LOS D. Two specific traffic movements (e.g., left turns from one street to another, through traffic on one street passing through the intersection, etc.) out of approximately 40 total traffic movements analyzed are operating at LOS E.

8.3.6 Noise

The Project Area is relatively quiet. Ambient noise levels at the Homeport Site are low as the Site contains few noise generators except for a small amount of internal vehicular traffic and traffic along Front Street. Similarly, the Project Area west of Front Street is relatively quiet. Noise from the industrial and commercial uses is generally intermittent, and the only other substantial noise generators include vehicular traffic along Front Street and periodic transit-noise associated with the adjacent, elevated SIR route.

The Bay Street corridor and Tappen Park areas have a louder environment, exhibiting noise levels typical for urban shopping strips where vehicular traffic is the main source. Similarly, noise levels in the northern portion of the study area are relatively high, reflecting higher vehicular and truck traffic volumes. By contrast, the southern part of the study area exhibits a much quieter environment that reflects its residential character. Noise levels are generally lower along the residential streets than commercial corridors such as Bay Street or Victory Boulevard.

8.4 No Build Condition

8.4.1 Land Use

Under the No Build Condition, the Homeport Site will be completely vacated of current institutional uses, and the existing structures will be razed. It is anticipated that the existing industrial and marginal commercial uses on the Projected and Potential Development Sites west of Front Street will remain through 2015. As under Existing Conditions, the Project Area will not contain residential uses under the No Build Condition.

Land use patterns in the study area are likely to continue under the No Build Condition. An emergent trend that has been identified in the Stapleton area is the construction of new residential and mixed-use buildings on underutilized and vacant parcels, as evidenced by the identification of four development proposals that would alter land use within the study area. In combination, the planned projects involve the construction of approximately 143,377 square feet of commercial/office space, 218 residential units, and 80,700 square feet of institutional use by 2015. A brief description of each planned development project follows. (See Chapter 2, “Analytical Framework,” for more details regarding the planned development projects and Figure 2-1 for project locations).

Two of the planned developments are situated in the northern portion of the study area. The Point, located northeast of the Victory Boulevard/Bay Street intersection, will include residential units and ground-floor retail. Pier 7, which lies just south of the Hannah Street/Murray Hulbert Avenue intersection, will be reconstructed to accommodate the NYCDOT and FDNY uses that are currently located on the Homeport Site on a temporary basis.¹ One planned project is situated just west of the Project Area, east of Bay Street between Prospect and Cross Streets. The existing municipal parking lot and an adjacent lot will be redeveloped with mixed-income residential units, ground-floor retail, and public parking. The final planned project is located at the southern perimeter of the study area and involves the construction of commercial office and retail space.

While this development trend is likely to continue in the future under the No Build Condition, existing land use patterns also are expected to prevail. In the northern portion of the study area, automobile-related uses will predominate; while in the southern part of the study area, residential uses will continue to be the major use type. Mixed-use development, local retail and service uses, and commercial establishments will remain in downtown Stapleton and the Tappen Park area, alongside underdeveloped and vacant buildings and properties. Vacant buildings and parcels lining Bay Street may attract the attention of developers seeking to deliver market-demand projects such as fast food franchises and strip mall development that suit the No Build Condition.

¹ These uses will be relocated independent of the Proposed Action.

8.4.2 Urban Design and Visual Resources

A vacated Homeport Site will significantly alter the existing character of the Project Area. A relatively large parcel at 35 acres, the Homeport Site without structures will be an immediate reminder of increasing emptiness and isolation.

In the vicinity of the Project Area views of the Upper New York Bay and beyond would be opened up, which would essentially enable a full panorama. For the remainder of the study area, the existing visual resources and urban design are expected to remain the same.

8.4.3 Historic Resources

No changes to the existing historic resources are expected under the No Build Condition.

8.4.4 Socioeconomic Conditions

Under the No Build Condition, the socioeconomic conditions of the Project Area would be similar to existing, with the exception that the Homeport Site will be vacant. This will exacerbate the current isolation of the Project Area, and negatively affect the public perception of the Site (as a working waterfront in particular).

Socioeconomic conditions under the No Build Condition for the remainder of the study area are expected to be similar to Existing Conditions. While the planned projects may encourage other development and likely will have localized economic benefits typically associated with new development and redevelopment projects, it is unlikely that they will result in substantial changes to the overall socioeconomic conditions of the study area.

8.4.5 Traffic

Traffic (and pedestrians) under the No Build Condition generally will be very similar as under Existing Conditions. Within the Project Area, the vacant the Homeport Site is expected to decrease the level of local vehicular and pedestrian traffic. For the remainder of the study area, additional vehicular and pedestrians traffic will be generated by the four planned projects and typical background growth. However, overall traffic and pedestrian activity under the No Build Condition will likely remain similar to existing levels.

8.4.6 Noise

Under the No Build Condition, noise levels within the Project Area will be slightly lower than existing, since the Homeport Site will be vacant. For the remainder of the study area, existing noise levels generally will continue under the No Build. Vehicular traffic and intermittent SIR activity will continue to be the major sources of noise.

8.5 Build Condition

This section discusses potential changes in the character of the Project Area and the surrounding study area by 2015. It focuses on potential changes to neighborhood character that would result from changes in the resource areas of land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, traffic and pedestrians,

and noise. Changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in modifications to neighborhood character, as discussed below.

8.5.1 Land Use

The Proposed Action would result in significant positive land use impacts within the Project Area. The vacant Homeport Site would be redeveloped with a mix of uses and 12 acres of publicly-accessible waterfront open space. The open space, which includes a waterfront esplanade and two central public spaces, would contribute greatly to improving the character of the Project Area. The mix of uses proposed for the Site include 350 residential units, a restaurant and banquet hall, a sports complex, local retail, a farmers market, commercial office space, and accessory use development associated with the open space. As a result of rezoning, it is expected that the marginal commercial and industrial uses occupying the Project Area west of Front Street would be replaced with a mix of residential and ground-floor retail (and/or community facility) uses. Approximately 288 residential units and 43,700 square feet of ground-floor retail/community facility space would be developed here, which would serve to connect this area to the remainder of the upland neighborhood.

The change in land use that would result from the Proposed Action also would affect neighborhood character. Under the No Build Condition, the Project Area will have an industrial character. Under the Build Condition, the Project Area would display residential characteristics due to the presence of approximately 1,208 new residents. The Proposed Action would result in the development of a critical mass of commercial, residential, and recreational uses, which are necessary to create a vibrant waterfront environment for the Stapleton neighborhood. The mix of uses and active street level uses would add a renewed vibrancy to this area, thus resulting in a positive effect on neighborhood character.

Infrastructure improvements, including shoreline stabilization, and street reconstruction and realignment also would result from the Proposed Action. Combined, these land use changes would serve to enhance the Project Area and the Stapleton neighborhood at large, improving neighborhood character.

The land uses in the remainder of the study area would not be expected to change significantly as a result of the Proposed Action. However, the Bay Street corridor in the vicinity of Tappen Park area, situated upland from the Project Area, would likely experience minor changes in land use. For example, marginal commercial uses might be replaced with local retail or service uses that would be more suitable to the Build Condition, and underutilized parcels might be redeveloped. It is expected that these minor land uses changes would result in an improved neighborhood character for Stapleton proper, reflecting its proximity to the revitalized waterfront and new residents. No significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would occur with respect to land use.

8.5.2 Urban Design and Visual Resources

Neighborhood character would be positively affected by changes in urban design and visual resources due to the redevelopment of the Project Area with buildings that respect the zoning and use controls found in the SSWD; the creation of new, publicly-accessible open space; and the enhancement of upland connections to the Stapleton neighborhood. Further, redeveloping the Project Area would provide new buildings that are more visually engaging at the street level as a result of consistent fenestration guidelines (with ground-floor transparency), consistent street walls, and the promotion of street-level retail and/or community facility uses. Additionally, scale, massing and special bulk regulations would encourage new developments to create design and character linkages with the Stapleton neighborhood.

Design guidelines to support the goals of the SSWD would be provided to developers that encourage incorporating “green” or LEED² design principles and goals. These design guidelines, which are currently being developed, are expected to provide clear design direction and unity for new development anticipated within the SSWD limits. The guidelines will also respond to an increased public awareness of environmentally-sustainable construction practices and an increased demand for healthy, high quality living and working environments. They represent a framework of concepts that may be interpreted and refined by the individual developers to achieve the desired results.

The SSWD would regulate streetscape elements throughout the Project Area, such as curb cuts, site screening provisions to limit unsightly uses (e.g., parking and dumpster locations), vegetation coverage, exterior lighting and signage. These streetscape elements would create design linkages with the current Stapleton neighborhood, and provide exemplary design for future developments throughout the study area.

By revitalizing the Stapleton waterfront, the Proposed Action would significantly enhance the design and visual resources of both the Project and study areas. Currently blocked view corridors would be opened, creating impressive views toward the harbor and reconnecting the neighborhood with its historic waterfront. Public access to the waterfront and new open space would be provided by the Proposed Action, replacing the inaccessible conditions currently on the Homeport Site. The Build Condition would offer an important enhancement in visual and physical connectivity, resulting in benefits to neighborhood character.

8.5.3 Historic Resources

As described above, 140-155 Front Street is potentially eligible for listing as a New York City Landmark. This property is situated on Lot 30 on Block 494, and comprises part of Projected Development Site C6. The RWCDs assumes that the property would be redeveloped and this structure demolished. If this were to occur, while it would constitute a significant adverse impact to historic resources, it would not result in a

² The U.S. Green Building Council defines the LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System[®] as “a voluntary, consensus-based national standard for developing high-performance, sustainable buildings.” It is the most widely adopted “green” rating system in the country.

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significant adverse impact to neighborhood character as historic resources are not a defining element of the area's character.

The study area contains nine historic resources and one historic district, as described above. Four of these structures are located in the western portion of the study area, two in the Tappen Park vicinity (including Tappen Park itself), and three in the southern end of the study area near Bayley Seton. None of these resources would be directly affected and no significant impacts to views to or from these facilities, or their overall context would occur.

8.5.4 Socioeconomic Conditions

The Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts associated with direct and indirect residential, commercial and institutional displacement.

The anticipated development associated with the Proposed Action would spur slight to moderate changes in the residential and business composition of the Stapleton neighborhood. The economic growth that would be generated by the revitalization of the Stapleton waterfront would not be confined to the Project Area, but would benefit the study area as well.

The current businesses that occupy the Project Area parcels west of Front Street are likely to encounter development pressure that would result in direct displacement. However, the assorted mix of industrial and marginal commercial uses found here are not unique to the area, and do not add substantially to the character of the neighborhood. The businesses that would be subject to direct displacement under the Build Condition do not define Stapleton in terms of neighborhood character. In the remainder of the study area, there is the potential for indirect displacement of marginal uses that occupy underutilized parcels. However, this would not constitute a significant adverse impact.

Under the Build Condition, the Proposed Action would introduce approximately 638 new residential units and 1,208 new residents to the Project Area, and generate approximately 847 new jobs. Neither the size of the new population nor the number of new units would be large enough relative to the size of the Stapleton neighborhood to result in a significant, adverse impact on the residential population of the neighborhood, or significant indirect residential displacement that would adversely impact neighborhood character.

The Proposed Action would result in the addition of commercial activity, which is expected to help strengthen socioeconomic conditions in the area, while stabilizing and expanding the mixed-use character of the study area. Although overall retail space is expected to increase with the Proposed Action, the additional retail activity that would result from the Proposed Action would help meet the demand of the existing and anticipated future population. Thus socioeconomic conditions under the Build Condition would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

8.5.5 Traffic

The traffic study indicates that out of 16 locations analyzed for the weekday and Saturday midday peak hours, significant impacts would occur at five intersections during the weekday AM and Saturday midday peak hours, six intersections during the weekday midday peak hour, and eight intersections during the weekday PM peak hour. The evaluation of mitigation measures indicated that all significant impacts would be fully mitigated by standard traffic engineering improvements such as the installation of traffic signals, signal timing and phasing modifications, parking prohibitions, and lane re-striping. These measures represent the standard range of traffic capacity improvements that have been proposed and implemented for numerous projects in the City. With implementation of these mitigation measures, while there would be increased levels of traffic, there would be no significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character from traffic.

In terms of neighborhood character, the prospect of greater levels of pedestrian traffic emanating from the Stapleton neighborhood toward the waterfront, and from the Project Area into the upland neighborhood, would be a substantial enhancement. Increased pedestrian traffic would activate the street-level, create a safer urban environment, provide new retail establishments with a steady flow of customers, and create a sense of community and place where currently none exists. The urban design elements that support upland connections would be positively utilized by pedestrians as they access the new waterfront development and environs. Mitigation measures will be implemented to eliminate significant adverse impacts caused by the combination of additional traffic and pedestrians during certain peak hours (see Chapter 18: Transit and Pedestrians for details). With implementation of these mitigation measures, while there would be increased levels of pedestrian activity, there would be no significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character from pedestrians.

8.5.6 Noise

A comparison of noise levels under the No Build and Build Conditions finds that the Proposed Action would result in an increase in the traffic volumes, and thus noise levels. However, increases in noise levels between the No Build and Build Conditions would be minimal, since the noise levels associated with the growth in traffic on local streets would be 1.6 dBA or less for each peak period at the six noise measurement sites and below the CEQR impact threshold. Thus, no significant, adverse noise impacts would result from the Proposed Action, and neighborhood character would not be impacted due to substantial changes in the noise environment.

It should be noted, however, that the noise analysis for the Proposed Action recommends that (E) Designation be placed each projected and potential development site. With an (E) Designation future development on these properties would be required to provide a minimum window/wall noise attenuation of either 30 or 35 dBA (depending on the parcel), to ensure an acceptable interior noise environment. Prior to development on these sites, the New York City Department of Buildings would receive a report from New York City Department of Environmental Protection stating that the environmental

requirements related to the (E) Designation have been met. The use of (E) Designations assures the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse noise impacts.

8.6 Conclusion

On the whole, the Proposed Action would enhance the neighborhood character of Stapleton under the future Build Condition. The isolated Stapleton waterfront would be replaced with a strong sense of place. Increased opportunities for street-level activity and the availability of new waterfront open space, a sports complex, and retail space, would create an area that serves as a destination instead of a place to avoid. By allowing for better connections upland as well as toward the waterfront, the Proposed Action would invigorate not only the Project Area but the study area as well. Visitors and residents alike would experience newfound amenities, open spaces and recreational opportunities in a neighborhood that presently lacks such amenities.

Specifically in terms of land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrians and noise, the following impacts to neighborhood character under the Build condition can be summarized as follows:

- *Land Use* – Marginal commercial and industrial uses within the Project Area would be replaced with mixed-use development. The Homeport Site would be redeveloped with a mix of residential, commercial, recreational and retail uses, including the creation of 12 new acres of publicly-accessible waterfront open space. This revitalization is expected to spur the redevelopment of vacant and underdeveloped parcels elsewhere throughout the study area. The Project Area would contain a substantial residential population, thus affecting neighborhood character.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources*– In the Build Condition, significant changes in urban design and visual quality would occur in the Project Area, delivering to the Stapleton neighborhood much needed design enhancements, open space and visual amenities that would benefit the neighborhood character of Stapleton.
- *Historic Resources* – Although there are several historic resources within the study area, the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts to these resources. While one historic resource has been identified in the Project Area, the potential redevelopment of this property under the Build Condition would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions* – The residential and economic displacements expected to result from the Proposed Action would not significantly impact neighborhood character in an adverse way. With new developments in the Project Area, Stapleton would gain a much needed economic growth project in keeping with its neighborhood character.
- *Traffic* – Peak hour traffic conditions at certain locations in the area are currently relatively heavy in the peak hour. Although impacts from increased levels of traffic (and pedestrians) would occur under the Build Condition, they would be

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mitigated by standard traffic engineering improvements, and would not adversely impact neighborhood character.

- *Noise* – In conjunction with increased levels of traffic, noise levels at study sites would increase, but these increases are expected to be below the three dBA CEQR impact threshold and thus would not significantly impact neighborhood character. Additionally, (E) designating the nineteen lots that comprise the projected and potential development sites would ensure that future uses would be constructed with proper noise attenuation, and interior noise levels of future uses would be acceptable under CEQR.

The preceding analysis indicates that the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. Instead, the Proposed Action would benefit the area, significantly enhancing overall neighborhood character, particularly with respect to land use, urban design, and visual resources. Where many negative neighborhood character conditions currently exist, the Proposed Action would introduce design improvements that support the best of Stapleton's neighborhood character.