Chapter 9: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions on neighborhood character on the project sites and in the adjacent areas. Neighborhood character is an amalgam of the many components that give an area its distinctive personality. These components can include land use; street layout; scale, type, and style of development; historic features; socioeconomic characteristics; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community. However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few determining elements.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions would dramatically transform Site A and Site B from low-density, industrial and commercial sites to a high-density development of residential buildings with retail and community facility uses. Together with the ongoing development at Queens West, the primary study area would have a band of high-rise residential development with a public waterfront park along the entire East River shoreline. Development of Site B would continue the high-density residential neighborhood eastward across 2nd Street, consistent with ongoing development trends in the primary study area (an example of which is the conversion of the PowerHouse).

The new development on Site A would be connected to the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood to the east by its new east-west streets; Site B would be connected by 2nd Street, a north-south street. From locations to the east, the development's towers would be visible in the distance. View corridors to the waterfront and Manhattan skyline beyond would remain between the new buildings, including the existing view corridors down 50th and 51st Avenues toward the Empire State Building.

The proposed actions would almost double the study area's population. However, the proposed actions' mix of affordable and market-rate housing could serve to relieve rather than increase residential market pressure in the study area. Additionally, given the very strong trend already in place in the neighborhood, the new population at Sites A and B would not be expected to introduce or accelerate a trend toward increased market rents in the study area that might cause significant indirect residential displacement. The redevelopment of Site B would introduce new residential uses to the Long Island City industrial area south of Borden Avenue. It is possible that the introduction of this residential use could lead to some limited indirect business displacement because of increased rent pressures. However, the potential for indirect displacement resulting from increased rent pressure is limited, and would not result in significant adverse indirect displacement impacts.

The proposed actions would substantially increase the amount of pedestrian activity and vehicular traffic on the study area's sidewalks and roadways. The increased activity and traffic would be clearly noticeable, but not necessarily adverse. In most locations, significant adverse traffic impacts could be mitigated.

Overall, the effects to neighborhood character would be noticeable but not adverse.

B. METHODOLOGY

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER COMPONENTS

According to the 2001 *City Environmental Quality Review (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, traffic and pedestrian conditions, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas that in combination could have an effect on neighborhood character. A significant impact identified in one of the impact categories that can contribute to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- ***Land Use:*** Development resulting from a proposed action would have the potential to change neighborhood character when it introduces a new, incompatible land use, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or causes 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; a substantial increase in population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.
- ***Historic Resources:*** When an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic (architectural) resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resources analysis identifies a significant impact, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- ***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, and streetscape elements such as streetwalls, landscaping, and curb cuts. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features, such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.
- ***Traffic Conditions:*** Changes in traffic 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 changes can include: changes in level of service (LOS) to C or below; changes in traffic patterns; changes in roadway classifications; changes in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic

impacts, as defined in that technical analysis. Although the *CEQR Technical Manual* does not specifically call out pedestrian or transit conditions, when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation or access to public transportation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.

- ***Noise:*** According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a change in noise levels can affect neighborhood character when that change constitutes a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category, as defined by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) external noise exposure standards.

The following analysis describes existing neighborhood character in the study area, future changes to that character expected in the future without the proposed actions, and the effects of the proposed actions on future neighborhood character. The preliminary thresholds above are used in this assessment. In addition, the *CEQR Technical Manual* states that several moderate changes, none of which rises to the level of a significant impact, could combine to create a significant impact on neighborhood character. Therefore, where appropriate, the effects of changes are also looked at cumulatively to determine whether, taken together, they would result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. Information from the other chapters of this EIS is used to make the assessment of neighborhood character.

STUDY AREA

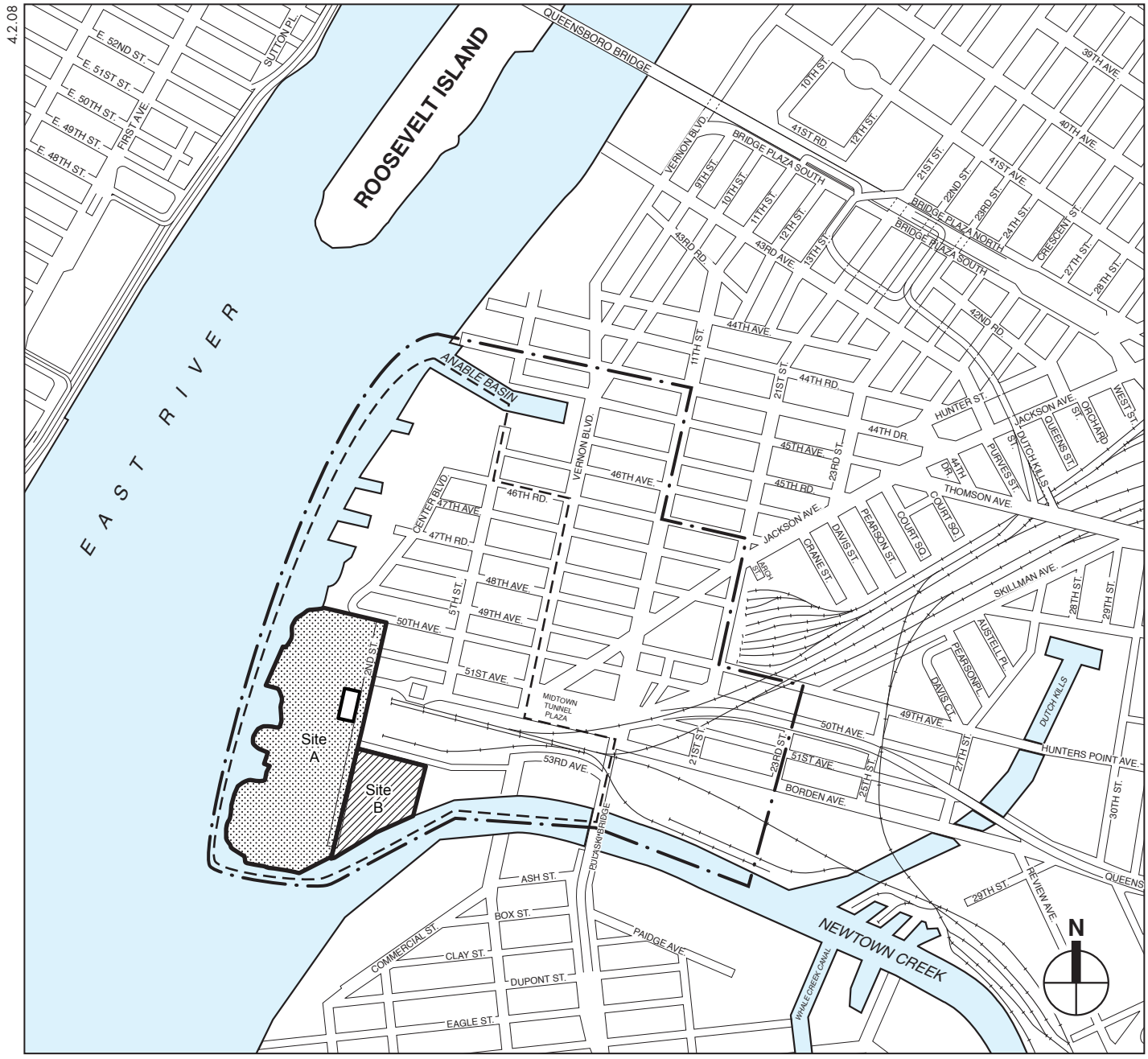
The analysis of neighborhood character considers the project's effect on neighborhood character in a study area that includes the project sites and the area immediately surrounding the sites. The study areas used for this analysis were the same study areas used for the evaluation of land use, zoning, and public policy in Chapter 2. These included a primary study area, which is the area roughly within ¼ mile of the project sites where the actions' influence would be greatest; and a secondary study area, which is the area generally within ½ mile of the project sites. As shown in **Figure 9-1**, the primary study area extends generally to Vernon Boulevard on the east and to Anable Basin on the north. The secondary study area encompasses the area to the east and north of the primary study area, extending as far north as 44th Drive, with an eastern boundary at 11th Street (between 44th Drive and 46th Road), 21st Street (between 46th Road and 49th Avenue), and 23rd Street (south of 49th Avenue). The southern boundary of both study areas is Newtown Creek. Information from the other chapters of this EIS is used to make the assessment of neighborhood character; when study area boundaries of other analyses do not align precisely with the boundaries of the neighborhood character study areas, approximations are made for purposes of the analysis of neighborhood character.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS

PROJECT SITES

Site A and Site B are located at the southwestern corner of the Hunter's Point neighborhood. Site A fronts mostly on the East River, except for its southern boundary, which fronts on Newtown Creek; Site B fronts solely on Newtown Creek. Both sites are large parcels at the end of the study area's street grid. They are industrial sites that are located at the edge of a mixed residential and industrial neighborhood (described below), and they are generally isolated from the residential and mixed-use portions of the study area to the north and east.

Site A is partially occupied by commercial uses in low-rise structures with paved parking areas. In general, the active uses on Site A are in the northern half of the site. These uses include



Neighborhood Character
Study Areas

HUNTER'S POINT SOUTH REZONING AND RELATED ACTIONS

Figure 9-1

Tennisport, a private tennis club with accessory parking; and the Water Taxi landing, Water Taxi Beach, and paved surface parking lots. The buildings at the Tennisport facility include a white quilted tennis "bubble" and two large metal shed-like buildings with peaked roofs, as well as several smaller buildings including the small brick and stone former Queens County Savings Bank on 2nd Street. This building provides a reminder of the area's past as a commercial hub at the terminus of the train and ferry connections between Long Island and Manhattan, but the building has been substantially altered over time.

South of the Tennisport facility on Site A, the New York Water Taxi landing consists of a pier, adjacent trailer, and surface parking lot. From May to December, the Water Taxi provides weekday commuter service from Hunter's Point to Manhattan and to locations in Brooklyn. The water taxi service makes additional stops on the weekend. The Water Taxi Beach, next to the ferry landing, provides seasonal recreation at a sand-covered picnic area where a concession stand offers food and drink. From the ferry landing and parking area, wide views of the waterfront are available.

The southern half of Site A is predominantly undeveloped. A portion is used as a paved parking lot by the business on adjacent Site B (discussed below). The rest is fenced and vacant and is currently being used as temporary storage and staging for a construction contractor working off-site.

Site A is bounded on the east by 2nd Street, an existing street that extends from 50th Avenue south to Newtown Creek. South of 54th Avenue, 2nd Street is used by the business on Site B; a guard booth and signage indicate that this street is not open to the public. From the street and parking areas on Site A, wide views of the waterfront are available.

Site B is fully developed with a complex of low-rise industrial buildings and paved parking and loading areas that front on 2nd Street and on 54th Avenue. The site is occupied by two active businesses, a beverage distribution operation for Anheuser-Busch and a warehouse building used by NBC for storage, office, and studio-related uses. Behind the buildings and paved areas, the southern boundary of Site B is the Newtown Creek waterfront, but the waterfront is not accessible to the public.

Second Street and 54th Avenue are both unsignalized and used predominantly by the adjacent businesses. Some portions of the project sites are relatively quiet, while areas close to the active businesses on Site B are fairly noisy because of traffic.

PRIMARY STUDY AREA

The primary study area, extending generally to Vernon Boulevard and up to Anable Basin (see **Figure 9-1**) is a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial neighborhood. The center of the primary study area consists of new, large-scale residential development along the waterfront. Blocks of low-rise mixed residential and industrial uses are located east of the waterfront; within this area, several new condominium buildings have been developed, resulting from zoning changes adopted in 2004. Heavy industrial uses are concentrated south of Borden Avenue and north of 47th Avenue (extending to the east and north into the secondary study area, discussed later in this chapter).

QUEENS WEST

Land Use, Urban Design, Visual Resources, and Historic Resources

Along the East River waterfront north of 50th Avenue, the primary study area is being developed with the high-rise residential project known as Queens West. As of early spring 2008, five residential buildings have been completed. These buildings are located between 5th Street and the waterfront, and generally face a new curving street, Center Boulevard, being built alongside a new waterfront park. The Queens West buildings completed to date have a five- to eight-story base (depending on the building), above which they rise in wide rectangular towers with few setbacks. When completed, Queens West will have a total of 11 residential buildings of up to 42 stories in height. Today, however, the area north of 47th Avenue is a large construction site, inaccessible to the public. Public streets have not yet opened there and the area is active with construction workers and vehicles on weekdays. In the construction zone but visible from nearby, the large, neon Pepsi-Cola sign is a historic resource remaining from the Pepsi-Cola bottling plant once on the site now faces toward Manhattan.

The new waterfront park at Queens West is completed between 50th Avenue and 47th Road and provides wide vistas of the East River, Manhattan skyline, and East River bridges. In the park, historic former railroad car float gantries from the site's industrial past have been restored close to Center Boulevard between 48th and 50th Avenues. North of 48th Avenue, the park is separated from Center Boulevard by a large vacant site that is to be developed with a new building that will house the planned Queens West Branch library.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Buildings at the Queens West development have been opening for occupancy one at a time, beginning in 1998 when the first building (Citilights) opened. For this reason, little data on the population of Queens West are available from the 2000 Census. The five buildings completed as of early spring 2008 have a total of 2,420 apartments, of which 80 are reserved as senior housing. Based on an average household size for the study area of 1.95 persons per household (see Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions"), the current population at Queens West is estimated at 4,719 people.

In terms of businesses, the Queens West portion of the primary study area includes ground-floor businesses (e.g., retail space and community facility space) in the new buildings as well as P.S. 78 (the Robert F. Wagner School).

Traffic, Pedestrian, and Transit Conditions and Noise Levels

The Queens West portion of the study area currently has light traffic on its few streets. Center Boulevard and 5th Street are unsignalized and Center Boulevard is currently only four blocks long. The intersections here operate without congestion during the peak hours. Noise sources in this portion of the study area consist of vehicular traffic, which is light, the heliport across the East River, and construction activities. Noise levels are typical of an urban setting with moderate to low levels of adjacent vehicular activity.

PORTION OF HUNTER'S POINT MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD, WEST OF VERNON BOULEVARD

Land Use, Urban Design, Visual Resources, and Historic Resources

The rest of the primary study area north of Borden Avenue (generally between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard from Borden Avenue to 46th Road) is a mixed-use and generally low-rise neighborhood. The two north-south spines through the area are Vernon Boulevard and 5th Street.

Vernon Boulevard is the primary commercial street in the primary study area. With the exception of two vacant lots used for surface parking, Vernon Boulevard is lined on the west side with three- and four-story buildings that have active ground-floor retail stores. The most active retail presence is in the blocks close to 50th Avenue, where the Vernon Boulevard-Jackson Avenue subway station (the No. 7 train) is located. Businesses along Vernon Boulevard include restaurants, an antique store, realtors and sales offices for new developments, and an artists' cooperative space. In the past five years, a number of vacant storefronts have been occupied with new retail uses, bringing a new sense of activity to the street.

Fifth Street, the other north-south street through the primary study area, is lined with a mix of land uses and building types. As noted above, the west side of 5th Street north of 50th Avenue is occupied by the new buildings of Queens West. The low-rise (five- to eight-story) portions of these buildings are along 5th Street, including multi-level parking garages on two blocks. Buildings on the east side of 5th Street include diminutive, one-story rowhouses, taller rowhouses, and such light industrial uses as auto mechanics and metal works. They also include several newly constructed, mid-rise residential buildings that range in height between five and eight stories: Fifth Street Lofts, currently under construction at 48th Avenue; the Gantry at 49th Avenue, and the Galaxy at 50th Avenue.

Between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard, this portion of the primary study area is a mix of small-scale residential, commercial, and industrial buildings, typically one to four stories tall. Most blocks have a mix of two- and three-story rowhouse-type residential buildings and 5,000 to 10,000 square-foot one- and two-story industrial or commercial uses, including plumbing suppliers, manufacturers, auto repair, etc. Some blocks have rows of residential buildings that are not separated by commercial uses, while others have a more mixed nature. Residential and non-residential buildings are typically older; some are well maintained and others are not. At the north end of this portion of the study area, 47th Avenue is predominantly industrial and is characterized by one- and two-story warehouse-type buildings. Two public parks and one public open space are located in this portion of the primary study area: the approximately ½-acre Andrews Grove, which contains play equipment, a tree-planted surface play area, and picnic tables; the nearby public community garden on the south side of 49th Avenue that provide a green break between buildings; and Hunters Point Community Park, a public park occupying the entire south side of 48th Avenue between Vernon Boulevard and Fifth Street and consisting of paved surfaces with play spaces (basketball, handball, etc.) and seating.

The three blocks west of 5th Street between 49th Avenue and Borden Avenue are occupied by a mix of low-rise, warehouse-style industrial buildings and two new residential buildings currently under construction, a 5-story residential building on Borden Avenue and 5th Street (the Foundry) and the PowerHouse. As described in Chapter 7 ("Historic Resources"), the PowerHouse is a conversion of a large former power plant to residential use with the adjacent demolition of the former Schwartz Chemical Building. In addition, a new 12-story residential

building is currently under construction on the north side of Borden Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard. These new residential buildings along Borden Avenue are shifting the character of that portion of Borden Avenue from purely industrial to mixed-use (for more on Borden Avenue, see the discussion below).

From locations throughout the mixed-use portion of the primary study area, the east-west streets create view corridors toward the Manhattan skyline. Forty-eighth Avenue, a wide street, affords a panoramic view of the Manhattan skyline for pedestrians and park users.

This portion of the primary study area has one recognized historic resource, the 108th Police Precinct Building on 50th Avenue near Vernon Boulevard. In addition, a group of rowhouses on 51st Avenue between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard have been identified as potential historic resources.

Socioeconomic Conditions

The primary study area used in the analysis of socioeconomic conditions in Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," includes the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood both west and east of Vernon Boulevard. It also includes the Queens West neighborhood (described above) and the Long Island City industrial area west of 11th Street, discussed below. Most of the population of the primary study area in 2000 (which is the population reported in Census 2000) resided in the central portion of the study area, rather than at Queens West or in the industrial area south of Borden Avenue. As described in Chapter 3, the primary socioeconomic study area had a population of 2,182 residents in 2000. This population has been increasing as new residential buildings have been constructed in the area, and the 2006 population is estimated at 3,091 residents. This is almost a 150 percent growth in the area's population since 1990. As the population has grown, it has also shifted in character, with a greater percentage of working adults rather than children or retirees.

According to the 2000 Census, the characteristics of the primary study area's population are notably different from Queens and New York City as a whole in terms of age and income. In 2000, 74.6 percent of the study area was working age (18-60), with 12.2 percent children up to age 17 and 13.2 percent age 60 or older. In contrast, Queens and New York City as a whole each have smaller percentages of their population at working age (59.2 percent for Queens and 59.5 percent for the whole city) and much larger percentages of children (21 percent for Queens; 23 percent for the City) and adults age 60 or older (19.8 percent for Queens and 17.5 percent for New York City). As detailed in Chapter 3, the median and average incomes of the study area have also risen notably since 1990 and are now substantially higher median than in Queens and New York City overall.

Most of the new housing added to the socioeconomic primary study area between 1990 and 2000 was owner-occupied units rather than rental units, which has notably shifted the character of the housing stock in the neighborhood. In 1990, 16 percent (85 units) were owner-occupied and the rest (84 percent, or 457 units) were rentals, but in 2000 nearly half (47 percent, or 533 units) were owner-occupied and the rest (52 percent, or 598 units) of the total housing units were rentals.

This portion of the primary study area also has many small commercial, manufacturing, and retail businesses. These businesses include restaurants, an antique store, realtors and sales offices for new developments, and an artists' cooperative space along Vernon Boulevard, and auto mechanics, metal works, plumbing suppliers, and manufacturers throughout the study area.

Traffic, Pedestrian, and Transit Conditions and Noise Levels

The roadway network around the project sites is generally a grid of local streets serving the residential and commercial uses of the primary study area. Vernon Boulevard, a north-south street, is an important corridor in the study area because it continues northward outside the study area and allows connections to Borden Avenue and the Queens-Midtown Tunnel on the south. The other north-south street in this portion of the primary study area, 5th Street, is unsignalized and less traveled because it does not continue far outside the study area.

Borden Avenue is the primary east-west roadway in the study area. It provides connections to many key roadways in Long Island City and serves as the service road for the Queens-Midtown Expressway. North of Borden Avenue, the east-west streets in the study area are used by local traffic related to the residences and businesses on these side streets.

The vast majority of the streets in this portion of the primary study area are currently only modestly trafficked and typically uncongested. All intersections operate at acceptable levels of service, even during the morning, midday, and evening peak hours. Two intersections on Vernon Boulevard have some noticeable congestion in the peak hours (LOS C), although operations are still acceptable.

Pedestrian volumes are also relatively light in the study area and sidewalks, corners, and crosswalks are uncongested even during the peak hours. For public transit, the neighborhood is served primarily by the No. 7 train, which has a stop at Vernon Boulevard (the Vernon-Jackson stop, located at 50th Avenue and Vernon Boulevard) and by the Q103 and B61 buses. The No. 7 train operates between Flushing, Queens, and Midtown Manhattan. NYCT data indicate that the No. 7 train currently operates within guideline capacity during the weekday AM and PM commuter peak periods. The Q103 route begins at Vernon Boulevard and runs north with relatively infrequent service, while the B61 runs north-south through the neighborhood on its route between Brooklyn and the Court Square area. Q103 buses are uncrowded in the morning as they begin their route in the study area, but crowded in the evening; B61 buses are crowded at both times.

Noise levels in this portion of the primary study area are moderate to high, and reflect the level of vehicular activity on the adjacent streets. As such, noise levels are higher on the study area's main thoroughfares than they are on the side streets. In terms of CEQR noise exposure guidelines, existing noise levels range from acceptable to marginally unacceptable.

LONG ISLAND CITY INDUSTRIAL AREA, WEST OF 11TH STREET

Land Use, Urban Design, Visual Resources, and Historic Resources

The portion of the primary study area south of Borden Avenue is dominated by low-rise industrial and transportation uses. Notable among these uses are the Long Island Rail Road's Long Island City train yard and Long Island City passenger station, which together occupy a superblock parcel on the south side of Borden Avenue extending from 2nd Street to 11th Street under the Pulaski Bridge. There are no pedestrian or vehicular crossings over the rail yard. South of the railyard, industrial uses line both sides of 54th Avenue and the south side of 53rd Avenue in this portion of the primary study area. The industries along 54th and 53rd Avenues include warehousing and distribution businesses and a woodworking business.

This portion of the primary study area also includes a ventilation structure for the Queens-Midtown Tunnel, located in the middle of Borden Avenue between 5th and 2nd Streets. This

boxy, gold-brick, Art Deco-style structure is a historic resource and a notable visual resource that can be seen from many locations in the study area.

Socioeconomic Conditions

No residents live in this portion of the primary study area. This portion of the primary study area is occupied entirely by transportation infrastructure and commercial and manufacturing businesses. These businesses include manufacturing, commercial, transportation, parking and storage uses.

Traffic, Pedestrian, and Transit Conditions and Noise Levels

As noted earlier, Borden Avenue is the primary east-west roadway in the study area. South of Borden Avenue, the only streets in the primary study area are 54th Avenue, which runs between 2nd Street and an extension of Vernon Boulevard south of the railyard; and 53rd Avenue, which continues from that Vernon Boulevard extension to 11th Street beneath

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

Similar to the primary study area, the secondary study area consists of a mixed residential, commercial, and industrial core surrounded by industrial areas to the north and south.

PORTION OF HUNTER'S POINT MIXED-USE NEIGHBORHOOD, EAST OF VERNON BOULEVARD

The central portion of the secondary study area, generally between Vernon Boulevard and 21st Street from approximately Jackson Avenue to 46th Road, is a mixed-use and generally low-rise neighborhood. It is similar in land use to the mixed-use neighborhood west of Vernon Boulevard, except that the blocks along the local east-west streets in this subarea are more diverse in character, with more industrial uses dispersed among residential and commercial uses. This portion of the study area has also experienced new residential development resulting from zoning changes adopted in 1995 and 2004.

The east side of Vernon Boulevard north of 50th Avenue, like the west side, is a neighborhood commercial street and includes the historic St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church at the southeast corner of 49th Avenue. South of 51st Avenue, however, the east side of Vernon Boulevard does not have buildings, because of the wide diagonal intersection with Jackson Avenue and the below-grade entrance plaza for the Queens-Midtown Tunnel. The other north-south streets in this subarea, 11th Street and 21st Street, continue well beyond the boundaries of the subarea. Eleventh Street is a wide street divided by a median that connections the Hunter's Point neighborhood to Greenpoint, Brooklyn via the Pulaski Bridge. Another major neighborhood arterial, Jackson Avenue, extends diagonally through this subarea, beginning at 51st Avenue and extending to the northeast to Queens Boulevard, after which it becomes Northern Boulevard. The Jackson Avenue/Northern Boulevard corridor extends into and through Long Island City and functions as a major traffic route along an important commercial strip.

As discussed earlier in the description of the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood west of Vernon Boulevard, the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood has been experiencing notable growth in population in the past decade. As the population has grown, it has also changed in character, with a large proportion of working-age adults rather than children or seniors, and with higher income levels. The portion of the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood north of 47th

Road, which falls within the secondary study area analyzed for socioeconomic conditions in Chapter 3, has experienced the same trend.

Most east-west streets in this portion of the secondary study area are currently only modestly trafficked. Vernon Boulevard, 11th Street, and Jackson Avenue, which are important north-south connectors, see more traffic. As a result, some intersections along these streets currently experience some congestion (LOS C) during peak hours, and the intersection of 11th Street and Jackson Avenue operates at LOS D during the morning and evening peak hour.

ANABLE BASIN AND MANUFACTURING AREA

North of 46th Road, the secondary study area (which is the area between 11th Street and the East River) is predominantly industrial, occupied generally by low-rise manufacturing buildings housing many different kinds of industries. Small rows of low-rise residential uses line 11th Street and are scattered on Vernon Boulevard in this subarea, however. As described earlier, Vernon Boulevard and 11th Street are the main thoroughfares through the subarea, and 11th Street is a wide roadway divided by a median.

While this area is predominantly industrial, there is one residential project—Casa Vizcaya—currently under construction, and additional projects that are currently in the planning stages. These projects, which contemplate residential development, are indicative of the continuing interest in new development in this portion of the study area.

LONG ISLAND CITY INDUSTRIAL AREA, EAST OF 11TH STREET

South of the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood, the secondary study area incorporates a portion of the Long Island City industrial area east of 11th Street. This subarea is almost entirely industrial, and is divided by the sunken Queens-Midtown Tunnel entrance plaza near Vernon Boulevard; the Queens-Midtown Expressway, which rises from the toll plaza to become an above-grade roadway; and as well as railroad infrastructure, including portions of a larger railyard, local track connections to industrial buildings, and the Hunterspoint Avenue station beneath 49th Avenue.

West of the Queens-Midtown Expressway, the small area bordered on the north by Jackson Avenue and on the south by the highway and a large below-grade railroad yard has a mix of uses including an 11-story office building fronting on 21st Street and two new residential buildings being constructed along the east side of 11th Street as it ramps down from the Pulaski Bridge. South of the expressway, the Long Island City industrial area includes low-rise warehouses, distribution facilities, and other industrial uses; several mid-rise (8- to 10-story) industrial loft buildings; and a shelter for veterans along Borden Avenue. Borden Avenue and 53rd Avenue provide connection between the southern portion of this subarea and the rest of the neighborhood character study area.

D. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

PROJECT SITES

In the future without the proposed actions, it is assumed that the project sites will remain in approximately their current condition and that no new buildings or streets will be created.

PRIMARY STUDY AREA

In the primary study area, construction of Queens West along the East River waterfront will be completed by 2017 consistent with the General Project Plan that governs the site. Once completed, this complex of high-rise residential towers above low-rise bases will occupy the entire area between 5th Street and the East River between 49th Avenue and Anable Basin, as well as a portion of the block between 49th and 59th Avenue west of 5th Street. The high-density Queens West project will have a mix of ground-floor uses with residential uses above, and an extensive waterfront park along the site's shoreline. It will also include an additional park, an active play field.

The mixed-use Hunter's Point neighborhood west of Vernon Boulevard will continue to evolve in the future without the proposed actions consistent with the area's zoning. As described in the discussion of existing conditions, this neighborhood has seen development of many new residential buildings in the past decade, and this trend is expected to continue, contributing to the mix of different uses on the east-west streets in the subarea. By 2017, residential buildings that will be completed and occupied include the PowerHouse residential development on 2nd Street and 51st Avenue, the 12-story residential building on the north side of Borden Avenue across from the LIRR railyard, and several other smaller buildings that are currently under construction throughout the neighborhood.

The portion of the Long Island City industrial area south of Borden Avenue and west of 11th Street is expected to remain much the same in the future without the project.

More than 5,000 new apartments are anticipated to be constructed in the primary neighborhood character study area by 2017, including completion of the residential development at Queens West and many other mid-size residential buildings throughout the immediate area. Almost 11,000 new residents are expected in the primary study area as a result of this new construction activity.

As the primary study area (and the secondary study area, discussed below) becomes more densely developed, traffic and pedestrian volumes will increase noticeably from the current levels. Intersections throughout the area will be more congested in the morning, midday, and evening peak hours. The intersections that currently experience some congestion on Vernon Boulevard will be noticeably more congested, with some levels of service D and even LOS E and F, indicating high to unacceptable delays. In addition, other intersections along Vernon Boulevard in the primary study area will also have moderate to high congestion in the peak hours. On the east-west avenues in the area near the project sites (i.e., 48th, 49th, 50th, and 51st Avenues) traffic volumes are expected to increase slightly.

Pedestrian volumes will also increase in the future without the proposed actions, but sidewalks, corners, and crosswalks will generally continue to operate at acceptable levels. The crosswalk across Vernon Boulevard on the north side of 50th Avenue will, however, become noticeably congested during the morning peak hour, as people cross to enter the subway station there. This crosswalk will operate at LOS D and the subway stair closest to the corner (Stair S8) will operate at LOS E. Buses serving the primary study area will also be noticeably more crowded.

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

Most of the new residential development occurring in the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood is in the area west of Vernon Boulevard (the primary study area for neighborhood character, discussed above), but a number of new residential projects have recently been

completed or are under construction in the secondary study area as well. Many of these are located close to Jackson Avenue. Seven new buildings with a total of approximately 250 apartments will be completed in the near future in this subarea. In addition, another 220 new apartments in three other buildings will be completed just outside this subarea in the rest of the secondary study area (one on 46th Road and the other two on the east side of Jackson Avenue). The addition of these residential buildings to the mixed use neighborhood will be consistent with the varied nature of the blocks in this subarea.

The industrial portions of the secondary study area (Long Island City Industrial Area east of 11th Street) are expected to remain relatively unchanged in the future without the proposed actions while the industrial area located around Anable Basin could see some residential redevelopment.

With the addition of almost 500 new apartments, almost 1,000 new residents will be added to the secondary study area, increasing the residential density of the area. These new residents, together with the residents of the primary study area, will bring more traffic and higher pedestrian volumes to the area's streets and sidewalks. The intersections that currently experience some congestion on Vernon Boulevard and Jackson Avenue will be noticeably more congested, with some levels of service D and even LOS E and F, indicating high to unacceptable delays. In addition, other intersections along the Vernon Boulevard and Jackson Avenue corridors throughout the study area will also have moderate to high congestion in the peak hours. As noted above, the subway station at Vernon Boulevard-Jackson Avenue will be noticeably more crowded, as will buses serving the area.

E. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

PROJECT SITES

The Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions would allow Site A and Site B to be redeveloped with largely residential buildings with building components ranging in height from 40 to 400 feet. Ground floors would include local retail, lobby, and community facility uses. On Site A, a network of new streets, sidewalks, and bikeways would be developed, creating seven new city blocks from the single 30-acre parcel it is today. Center Boulevard would be continued southward onto Site A and would connect to the rest of the street network. On Site B, it is anticipated that a new publicly accessible private road and open space would roughly bisect the site.

The new residential buildings would vary in height, with bases ranging in height from 40 to 70 feet and high rise elements ranging in height from 250 to 400 feet. Nine towers would be developed on Site A, and four towers would be developed on Site B. Ground floors would be occupied by local retail and other commercial uses and community facility uses. A new public school would serve the residents of the buildings and the surrounding neighborhood and create a varied and active streetscape.

In addition, a new public waterfront park would be developed along the East River and Newtown Creek frontages of Site A and a shore public walkway would be developed along the Newtown Creek frontage of Site B. An additional linear public park would also be developed on the south side of 55th Avenue between Center Boulevard and 2nd Street, and a similar public open space would be developed on the south side of the publicly accessible private road on Parcel B, creating a wide boulevard on that street. The new waterfront parks and open spaces on Sites A and B along the East River and Newtown Creek waterfronts would provide greatly

increased public access to waterfront views. Wide views of the waterfront and Manhattan would be available from locations throughout the park.

Overall, the proposed actions would change the character of Sites A and B from a commercial and industrial neighborhood to a residential neighborhood. This new residential neighborhood would incorporate retail and park uses that would attract visitors. On both Site A and Site B, pedestrian activity and vehicular activity would increase substantially over existing conditions.

PRIMARY STUDY AREA

The new development at Site A would be consistent with and a continuation of the high-rise residential buildings being developed at Queens West. When both are completed, the primary study area would have a band of high-rise residential development with a public waterfront park along the entire East River shoreline. Development on Site B would continue the new high-rise residential development east of 2nd Street, and would be consistent with other residential development currently occurring east of 2nd Street (such as the PowerHouse, The Foundry, and One Hunters Point).

The new buildings would be of higher density and taller than the buildings in the existing neighborhood east of 5th Street and the buildings currently under construction east of 2nd Street, but they are being designed to create a transition to the existing low-rise neighborhood to the east. The massing for the buildings on Site A, and particularly in the northern parcels of Site A, has been designed to step down to meet the height of the neighboring buildings, to create a compatible transition between the new buildings and the existing neighborhood.

With the new east-west streets and publicly accessible private road to be created at Sites A and B, the proposed actions would connect the project sites to the street grid of the surrounding neighborhood. From locations east of 5th Street, the new development would be visible down 50th Avenue, 51st Avenue, and Borden Avenue. The development's towers would also be visible in the distance from locations along Vernon Boulevard. View corridors to the waterfront and Manhattan skyline beyond would remain between the new buildings, including the existing view corridors down 50th and 51st Avenues toward the Empire State Building. (This is in contrast to the previously approved project for Site A, which would have blocked the 51st Avenue view corridor.)

The redevelopment of Site B would introduce new residential uses to the Long Island City industrial area south of Borden Avenue. It is possible that the introduction of this residential use could lead to some limited indirect business displacement because of increased rent pressures. However, the potential for indirect displacement resulting from increased rent pressure is limited, and would not result in significant adverse indirect displacement impacts.

The new development on Sites A and B would not adversely affect the context or setting of the industrial historic resources nearby (the LIRR gantries, Pepsi-Cola sign, and Queens-Midtown Tunnel vent building), particularly in light of the extensive residential development already occurring near those resources in the future without the proposed actions. It would also not adversely affect the context or setting of other historic resources in the primary study area, which are several blocks or farther from the project sites.

The proposed actions would bring a substantial new population to the primary study area, almost doubling the residential population of the primary study area. Nonetheless, the new population at Sites A and B would not be expected to introduce or accelerate a trend toward increased market rents in the study area. These is already a very strong trend in the primary study area for the

development of new market-rate housing, which has substantially increased the population of the study area over the past 15 years and has been gradually shifting the socioeconomic characteristics of the study area. The proposed actions' mix of market-rate and affordable housing could serve to serve to relieve rather than increase market pressure in the study area.

The increase in activity on the project sites would also bring an increase in activity to streets in the primary study area. Sidewalks in the area would have more pedestrians, particularly along routes between Site A and Vernon Boulevard (e.g., 50th Avenue, 51st Avenue, and Borden Avenue), and the primary study area's streets would also see substantially more traffic. With the increased traffic, congestion levels would increase at many of the intersections in the primary study area during the peak periods. At most locations in the primary study area, mitigation could be implemented to avoid significant adverse traffic impacts; however, a significant adverse impact at 5th Street and 51st Avenue could only be partially mitigated, and the intersection of Center Boulevard and 49th Avenue would remain unmitigated.

With the new population resulting from the proposed actions, the sidewalks in the study area would also be noticeably busier, although they would generally continue to operate with acceptable levels of service. Crowding would be most noticeable on Vernon Boulevard near the subway station entrances and would result in significant impacts to pedestrian conditions during the AM, midday, and PM peak hours closest to the subway entrance (including the sidewalk on the west side of Vernon Boulevard between 50th and 51st Avenues, the northwest corner at Vernon Boulevard and 50th Avenue [AM and PM only], the crosswalk across Vernon Boulevard on the north side of 50th Avenue, and the west crosswalk on 50th Avenue at Vernon Boulevard). Additional impacts would also occur on the west crosswalk of Vernon Boulevard and 51st Street (PM only), and at the crosswalks of 2nd Street and Borden Avenue (AM and PM impacts on the east crosswalk, and midday and PM impacts on the west crosswalk). During the morning peak hour, the new pedestrians would also result in a significant adverse impact on the subway stair closest to the northeast corner of the intersection, and during the evening peak hour, there would be a significant adverse impact on the subway stair at the southwest corner of the intersection. Buses would also become much more crowded, and if no new buses are added to the Q103 route, these buses would operate well over capacity. B61 buses in the peak direction (north in the morning, south in the evening) would also be well over capacity. At the same time, however, if new bus service is added to meet the demands of other future developments and development on Site A and Site B, this would significantly improve transit service to the Hunter's Point neighborhood.

The increase in traffic on neighborhood streets would result in an increase in noise during the weekday PM time period on 51st Avenue west of Vernon Boulevard. Although the predicted noise increase would be barely perceptible, it would be large enough to be considered a significant adverse impact based on the impact criteria set forth in the *CEQR Technical Manual*. Noise levels on this street would remain in the same noise exposure category as defined by NYCDEP for use in CEQR, "acceptable," which is not unusual for New York City residential areas.

Overall, the new waterfront development anticipated on Site A as a result of the proposed actions would continue the pattern being created at Queens West of high-rise residential development along the river's edge transitioning to the low-rise, mixed-use neighborhood to the east. Development on Site B would continue the high-rise residential development and creation of a new residential neighborhood east of 2nd Street. The mixed-use Hunter's Point neighborhood between 5th Street and Vernon Boulevard would remain in place and the existing

trend of new construction of residential buildings on mixed-use blocks is expected to continue. In the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood, the new development at Sites A and B would be visible in the distance, and would be noticeable because of the increased pedestrian and vehicular activity on local streets. This would not result in significant adverse impacts to the character of the mixed-use or industrial neighborhoods, particularly because the area is already experiencing an increase in activity levels that is expected to continue in the future without the proposed actions as well.

SECONDARY STUDY AREA

The secondary study area is farther from the project sites than the primary study area and therefore would be less affected by the new development at Sites A and B. The new high-rise buildings along the waterfront might be visible in the distance from some locations, but otherwise the new development would be too far away to be noticeable.

The increased traffic resulting from the proposed actions would be noticeable on streets in the secondary study area. In particular, most intersections along Jackson Avenue would be noticeably more congested during the peak hours. Several of these intersections would have significant adverse impacts that could not be fully mitigated. In addition, the increased pedestrian activity along Vernon Boulevard (discussed above) and at the Vernon Boulevard-Jackson Avenue subway station would also be noticeable. Overall, however, the increase in activity levels in the secondary study area would not result in significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the area.

F. CONCLUSIONS

The Hunter's Point South Rezoning and Related Actions would dramatically transform Site A and Site B from low-density, industrial and commercial sites to a high-density development of residential buildings with retail and community facility uses. Together with the ongoing development at Queens West, the primary study area would have a band of high-rise residential development with a public waterfront park along the entire East River shoreline. Development of Site B would continue the high-density residential neighborhood eastward across 2nd Street, consistent with on-going development trends in the primary study area (an example of which is the conversion of the PowerHouse).

The new development on Site A would be connected to the Hunter's Point mixed-use neighborhood to the east by its new east-west streets; Site B would be connected by 2nd Street, a north-south street. From locations to the east, the development's towers would be visible in the distance. View corridors to the waterfront and Manhattan skyline beyond would remain between the new buildings, including the existing view corridors down 50th and 51st Avenues toward the Empire State Building.

The proposed actions would almost double the study area's population. However, the proposed actions' mix of affordable and market-rate housing could serve to relieve rather than increase market pressure in the study area. Additionally, given the very strong trend already in place in the neighborhood, the new population at Sites A and B would not be expected to introduce or accelerate a trend toward increased market rents in the study area that might cause significant indirect residential displacement. The redevelopment of Site B would introduce new residential uses to the Long Island City industrial area south of Borden Avenue. It is possible that the introduction of this residential use could lead to some limited indirect business displacement

because of increased rent pressures. However, the potential for indirect displacement resulting from increased rent pressure is limited, and would not result in significant adverse indirect displacement impacts.

The proposed actions would substantially increase the amount of pedestrian activity and vehicular traffic on the study area's sidewalks and roadways. The increased activity and traffic would be clearly noticeable, but not necessarily adverse. In most locations, significant adverse traffic impacts could be mitigated.

Overall, the effects to neighborhood character would be noticeable but not adverse.

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