

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on neighborhood character. As defined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct “personality.” These elements may include a neighborhood’s land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its character from a few determining elements.

As described in detail below, the study area has diverse characteristics owing to the varied land uses surrounding the project site. No one defining feature would be considered critical to the character of the neighborhood; rather all the various localized features contribute to it. Taking into consideration the effects of the proposed project on the contributing features, the proposed project would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

B. METHODOLOGY

The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; or noise. Even if a project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in any of the technical areas listed above, an assessment may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a “moderate” effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area.

As described in the relevant chapters of this Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS), the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; or noise. It would also not result in effects considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact thresholds in those technical areas. However, the proposed project would result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of historic and cultural resources, traffic, and bus service. Therefore, a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character impacts from the proposed project is provided below.

As recommended in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for the preliminary analysis includes the project site and the area within 400 feet of the project site boundaries.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

The study area for the preliminary assessment contains a mix of residential, institutional, light industrial and manufacturing uses, and open space.

The project site consists of the Admirals Row section of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard, located at the northeast corner of Nassau Street and Navy Street in the Vinegar Hill neighborhood of Brooklyn. The project site has been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR) as a historic district. The site is characterized by 20 structures that have been unused for over 20 years, which include 10 three-story residential buildings that formerly served as officers' housing. The yards of each residence on the site are overgrown with trees, vines, and underbrush. The boundaries of the project site are marked by a tall brick wall along Navy Street, a tall brick wall and a wrought iron fence along Nassau Street, and a chain link fence to the north and east. In addition to these walls and fences, there are currently no curb-cuts providing access from the public streets into the project site.

The northeastern portion of the study area is within the boundaries of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard. The approximately 300-acre former Navy Yard, which is bounded by Wallabout Bay, and Navy, Flushing, and Kent Avenues, has also been determined to be an S/NR-eligible historic district by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). Currently, the majority of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard complex functions as a City-owned industrial park under the management of the Brooklyn Navy Yard Development Corporation (BNYDC). Industrial park structures within the project study area are set back from Nassau Street/Flushing Avenue and range in height from approximately 1 to 15 stories. Access to the Brooklyn Navy Yard industrial park is provided through several gated entrances, including one immediately north of the project site at the intersection of Sands and Navy Streets, where the Sands Street roadway continues east as a private industrial park street and connects to a network of internal private roadways. The next closest entry/exit point to the industrial park is located at Cumberland and Flushing Avenues. Access by vehicles or pedestrians is controlled and limited to those having business in the Navy Yard industrial park.

The western portion of the study area is characterized by the Farragut Houses, a New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) development consisting of ten 14-story buildings contained in three large blocks. These structures are also set back from Nassau Street/Flushing Avenue and within landscaped grounds. Other large NYCHA public housing complexes are located just outside of the study area to the south and southeast (the Ingersoll Houses and Whitman Houses). A 2008 study conducted by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene determined that the study area was underserved by grocery stores offering a full line of grocery products, including fresh fruits and vegetables, fresh meats, dairy, and other food and nonfood products.

Commodore Barry Park is located in the southern portion of the study area across from the project site, along Nassau Street. To the west is a three-story brick structure housing P.S 287 and the Khalil Gibran International Academy, and the Madison Square Girls and Boys Club is located in a two-story brick structure further west on the same block.

The project site is located on the edge of the public street-grid system along Nassau Street to the south and Navy Street to the west. These are the two main public streets that run through the study area. Within the study area, the intersections of Nassau Street and Navy Street, and Sands

Street and Navy Street are both currently congested in the AM and PM peak hours. The project site is served by three bus routes—the B57, B62, and B69. The B57 bus provides local service from Flushing Avenue and 61st Street in Queens to Boerum Place and Schermerhorn Street in Brooklyn; in the vicinity of the project site, it operates east-west along Nassau Street/Flushing Avenue and Sands Street, and north-south along Gold Street and Navy Street. B57 buses currently operate with available capacity in the peak direction during the three analyzed peak hours (weekday midday, weekday PM, and Saturday midway). The B62 bus provides local service between Queens Plaza in Queens and Livingston Street in Brooklyn; the major streets of operation near the project site are Park Avenue, on which it runs east-west, and Navy Street and Gold Street, on which it runs north-south. B62 buses currently operate with available capacity in the peak direction during the three analyzed peak hours. The B69 bus provides local service between Cortelyou Road and Jay Street in Brooklyn; in the vicinity of the project site, it operates north-south on Vanderbilt Avenue, and east-west on Nassau Street/Flushing Avenue and Sands Street. B69 buses currently operate with available capacity in the southbound peak direction in both the weekday midday and PM peak hours; there is no weekend service for the B69 bus.

Overall, the study area has diverse characteristics and is not defined by one element. Historic resources in the study area include the project site itself, which has been determined to be eligible as an S/NR historic district and is an overgrown parcel occupied by vacant and deteriorated buildings, and the much larger, former Brooklyn Navy Yard. The project site is a portion of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard, which is also an eligible S/NR historic district and mostly comprises the Brooklyn Navy Yard industrial park. Other defining buildings and uses in the surrounding area are the large NYCHA residential towers to the west, institutional uses to the southwest, the large Commodore Barry Park to the south, and the active industrial uses of the Brooklyn Navy Yard industrial park to the north and west. The study area is heavily trafficked, with noise levels that are moderate to relatively high, reflecting the level of vehicular activity on the adjacent streets. No one defining feature would be considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. Rather, all the various localized features contribute to it.

POTENTIAL TO AFFECT DEFINING FEATURES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

Demolition of the historic structures on the project site (with the exception of Building B and the Timber Shed) would result in a direct, significant adverse impact to the Admirals Row historic district. In addition, the proposed project would result in a significant adverse contextual impact to the historic significance of the former Brooklyn Navy Yard, as it would demolish buildings that have been part of the development and history of the Brooklyn Navy Yard since the mid-19th century. As part of the ongoing, independent consultation process under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, mitigation measures have been identified that would partially mitigate this adverse impact. These mitigation measures include an update of the existing Historic American Buildings Survey Level II documentation report; architectural salvage; a site commemoration plan; and preservation of existing, mature trees on the project site along Nassau Street where possible. In addition, BNYDC is committed to the retention, reuse, and rehabilitation and/or reconstruction of Building B and the Timber Shed as mitigation measures and have incorporated both buildings into the design for the proposed project. BNYDC also would require that the developer to be designated by BNYDC pursuant to a Request for Proposals create a design that relates to and respects the design of Building B and the Timber Shed as partial mitigation for the proposed project's impacts on architectural resources.

The historic nature of the project site and the former Brooklyn Navy Yard to the north and east of the project site contribute to the character of this portion of the study area. While many

Admirals Row Plaza

structures on the project site would be demolished, the proposed project would rehabilitate and/or reconstruct and reuse two historic buildings and preserve existing, mature trees along Nassau Street, thereby partly maintaining the historic character of the project site. The rehabilitation of Building B would retain the oldest and largest of the Admirals Row residences. It also would retain the residence that has the highest level of surviving interior detail. Rehabilitation or reconstruction and reuse of the Timber Shed would retain the earliest structure on the Admirals Row site, an early Naval brick masonry and heavy timber industrial building that is the only surviving example of its type at a naval installation in the country. Both of these buildings would become prominent features of the proposed project. Also, as stated above, the project would be designed to relate to and respect the design of Building B and the Timber Shed as partial mitigation. The study area would also continue to retain its historic character through the presence of the remainder of the 300-acre former Brooklyn Navy Yard, which contains a diverse array of historic resources and was determined to be an S/NR-eligible historic district by SHPO. Therefore, removal of most of the buildings on the 6.08-acre project site, while rehabilitating and/or reconstructing and reusing two of the historic project site buildings, in the context of the remaining large Brooklyn Navy Yard historic district, would not substantially affect the overall historic character of the neighborhood in this part of the study area.

The two intersections analyzed for potential traffic impacts within the 400-foot neighborhood character study area were Sands Street and Navy Street and Nassau Street and Navy Street. Both of these intersections were found to be congested in existing conditions, and would be further congested in the future without the proposed project (No Action condition). As presented in Chapter 9, "Transportation," the proposed project would result in significant adverse traffic impacts at these two intersections. However, as discussed above, while the study area is generally heavily trafficked and the proposed project would generate traffic resulting in significant adverse traffic impacts at two intersections within the study area, traffic conditions are not considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. In addition, all significant adverse traffic impacts could be mitigated with minor signal timing adjustments. Therefore, these impacts would not substantially affect the character of the neighborhood.

As discussed in Chapter 9, "Transportation," the proposed project is predicted to result in a shortfall of capacity for seven passengers on the B62 bus in the weekday PM peak hour, which would be considered a significant adverse impact. However, this small shortfall on one of the three bus lines serving the project site during just one of the three peak periods would not affect the character of the neighborhood, which is not defined by bus capacity. In addition, the New York City Transit Authority will determine, at the time the project is operational, the need to implement specific mitigation measures to address the significant adverse impact.

The traffic and bus service conditions and historic elements of the neighborhood surrounding the proposed project are generally unrelated, and therefore the proposed project's effects on these elements would not individually or in combination result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

In addition, as described above, the 2010 *CEQR Technical Manual* states that even if a project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in a certain technical area, the project may have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. A moderate effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area. The proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy, socioeconomic conditions, open

space, shadows, or noise, nor would it result in moderate effects in these areas as defined by CEQR guidelines. Therefore the proposed project would not have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. *