

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed actions on neighborhood character. As defined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* (January 2012 edition), neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct “personality.” These elements may include a neighborhood’s land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare, and it would be under unusual circumstances that, in the absence of an impact in any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood would result in an impact to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood’s character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character may be significantly affected.

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed actions on the neighborhood character of the study area. The examination focuses on whether a defining feature of the neighborhood’s character may be significantly affected. Since many of the relevant components of neighborhood character are considered in other sections of this Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS), this chapter has been coordinated with those analyses.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Currently, the southern portion of the project site is generally inactive and aesthetically unappealing as it primarily includes surface parking uses surrounded by chain-link fencing. The inactivity in the southern portion of the project site is in stark contrast to the surrounding area, which is generally densely developed with a mix of residential, commercial, community facility and publicly accessible open space uses. In the future with the proposed actions, the character of the neighborhood would improve as the gaps in the streetscape of the neighborhood south of Delancey Street would be filled with new, active development. The proposed mix of local retail and destination retail stores in the RWCDs would complement the existing mix of commercial uses in the study area. The mix of uses would also bring a greater level of pedestrian activity to the project sites, making the neighborhood more inviting and appealing to live in and visit. The increased pedestrian activity that would result from the proposed actions would increase foot traffic and retail demand, benefitting existing retail stores in the area.

In addition to the ground floor retail that would activate the streets, the character of the project site would be improved with new street trees that would shade as well as visually enhance the neighborhood and with new publicly accessible open space on Site 5 that would bring passive and/or active recreational opportunities to the area. Also, the proposed mapping and demapping actions would make the mapped street pattern consistent with the pedestrian’s current experience

of those areas. The pedestrian environment would be further improved by the widened sidewalks adjacent to Sites 1 through 6.

The proposed actions would also enhance neighborhood character by the relocation and expansion of the Essex Street Market. The larger space would create entrepreneurship opportunities for additional vendors and would continue to allow for a variety of vendor price points. A new facility would be an opportunity for capital investment in the market to address many of the physical limitations of the existing facility. The new market facility would have an improved internal layout, better connections with the street and expanded common gathering areas for public seating and market events. In addition, the new facility would be energy efficient, fully compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and have improved storage capabilities, garbage handling, and climate control. The City would give existing vendors the first opportunity to relocate their business to the new market facility, when the new facility on Site 2 is complete and ready for occupancy.

Overall, the analysis concludes that the proposed actions would not create a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. To the contrary, neighborhood character would be improved by replacing underutilized buildings and surface parking lots with new active, mixed-use development.

B. METHODOLOGY

An analysis of neighborhood character begins with a preliminary assessment to determine whether changes expected in other technical areas may affect a contributing element of neighborhood character. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood, and then assesses whether the project has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate effects. If the preliminary assessment concludes that the proposed actions have the potential to affect defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character may be appropriate. If needed, the detailed assessment would use the information from the preliminary assessment as a baseline and the future No-Action and future With-Action conditions are then projected and compared.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER COMPONENTS

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 DGEIS, the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; urban design; or noise. However, the proposed actions would result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of historic and cultural resources and

transportation. Therefore, a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character impacts from the proposed actions is provided below.

As recommended in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for the analysis is consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

PROJECT SITE

The character of the project site differs in the areas north and south of Delancey Street. The character of the project site south of Delancey Street is generally inactive and aesthetically unappealing as it is defined primarily by surface parking uses surrounded by chain-link fencing. There are few retail or other ground-floor building uses to draw pedestrians to the sites; and the streets themselves are unevenly paved, and the striping is faded. There are few street trees or street furniture adjacent to these sites. The concentration of surface parking uses and of the general inactivity in the southern portion of the project site is in stark contrast to the surrounding area, which is generally densely developed with a mix of residential, commercial, community facility and open space uses.

Unlike the character of the project site south of Delancey Street, the character north of Delancey Street is not notably different than the surrounding study area. The northern portion of the project site is active as Sites 9 and 10 have ground-floor uses, and all sites contain structures that are built to the lot line. The ground-floor uses on Sites 9 and 10 bring pedestrian and vehicular activity to Essex Street, which is lined with other ground-floor retail, commercial, and institutional uses. The subway station entrance and exit at Site 9 also brings pedestrian activity to this portion of the project site.

A defining feature of the project site is the Essex Street Market, which has been a commercial focal point in the Lower East Side neighborhood for many years. Originally occupying four buildings, the Essex Street Market is now located in one of the original buildings that were built in 1939. The market has been open since 1940 and it currently houses local merchants specializing in fresh and prepared food items such as fish, meat, cheese, baked goods, as well as general grocery items. In addition to serving the local neighborhood, the Essex Street Market has become a destination for people beyond the local area. The four market buildings also compose one of the two architectural resources located on the project site (the other is a former fire station on Site 5).

STUDY AREA

The study area is generally densely developed and contains a mix of residential, commercial, community facility, and open space uses.

Residential uses are located in walk-up tenements, mid-20th-century high-rise “tower-in-the-park” developments, and new mid- to high-rise apartment buildings. The study area has a substantial affordable housing stock, including the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA)-owned Seward Park Extension development, Baruch Houses, 45 Allen Street, and Lower East Side Infill. Market-rate residential units are also common in the study area. The

Seward Park Mixed-Use Development Project

project site is adjacent to the Seward Park Houses, which voted in 2000 to end their limited equity rules and allow market-rate transactions. More recently, luxury condominiums have been built in the study area, including a 55-unit project at 38 Delancey Street, and the Ludlow, a 23-story luxury rental building at 188 Ludlow Street.

Although residential uses are prominent, the study area is also well known for its commercial uses. Historically, the study area has been home to a range of bustling commercial uses, from garment production to food production and eateries to pushcart vendors. Today, the area contains a broad mix of commercial uses including local delis and tailors; a growing number of restaurants, drinking establishments, art galleries, and fashion boutiques; wholesale and retail restaurant supply and lighting stores; and larger commercial establishments such as clothing stores and banks. Shoppers enjoy the ease of comparison shopping in an area where a large volume of similar products can be found in the space of a few blocks. More generally, retail stores throughout the Lower East Side and adjacent neighborhoods all benefit from the high volumes of foot traffic spurred by the co-location of stores offering similar goods and services that draw shoppers from throughout the region.

The study area also has a growing number of boutique hotels. The largest of these is the 21-story Hotel on Rivington at 107 Rivington Street between Ludlow and Essex Streets. A number of new, tall luxury hotels are currently under construction, including an 18-story mixed-use hotel/residential building at 180 Ludlow Street, the 16-story Allen Street Hotel at 139 Allen Street, the 24-story Hotel Indigo at 180 Orchard Street, and an 8-story Holiday Inn at 150 Delancey Street.

Community facilities are common in the study area. The community facilities include a number of large public schools, day care centers, outpatient medical facilities, and cultural institutions.

Another defining feature of the study area is Sara D. Roosevelt Park, which is a well-utilized 7.85-acre linear park that extends from Canal Street to East Houston Street between Chrystie and Forsyth Streets. This park includes playgrounds, basketball and handball courts, a soccer field, general open recreation areas, seating areas, walking paths, and restrooms.

While the street pattern in the study area is generally a grid system, a defining element of the study area is the presence of several superblocks within the portion of the study area south of Delancey Street. These superblocks, which are directly south of Delancey Street, interrupt the typical Manhattan grid pattern, creating longer walking intervals for pedestrians.

Most of the study area's vehicular and pedestrian traffic is focused in the area along and north of Delancey Street; south of Delancey Street, particularly around Sites 2-6, there is less vehicular or pedestrian traffic. In part, the higher pedestrian traffic north of Delancey Street and west of Ludlow Street south of Delancey Street is due to the greater amount of street-level retail and restaurant uses in these areas and the activity these uses generate. The major thoroughfares through the study area are Delancey, Allen, Essex, Broome, and Grand Streets. Delancey Street runs in an east-west direction and carries vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian traffic to the Williamsburg Bridge, the access point for which is at the eastern edge of the study area around Clinton Street. Today, the Williamsburg Bridge carries over 100,000 vehicles daily on eight lanes of roadway, in addition to the J, M, and Z lines of the New York City Subway, pedestrians and bicyclists.

Delancey, Grand, and Allen Streets, as the widest thoroughfares in the study area, also provide the most expansive view corridors in the study area and are defining views in the study area. Views east along Delancey Street are of the Williamsburg Bridge. Views from Delancey Street

looking south are more expansive because of the general lack of development on Sites 1–6. From this location, the large-scale housing complexes can be seen, as well as other large-scale housing complexes located outside of the study area. From the south side of Delancey Street looking north, views include the Blue Condo. Views north along Allen Street and a portion of Essex Street include the top of the Chrysler Building; views south along Allen Street continue for long distance, with no notable elements. There are few items of note in views along Grand Street, excepting the twin corner towers of St. Mary’s R.C. Church. Views from Essex Street near Grand Street south include the top of the Manhattan-side anchorage of the Manhattan Bridge.

Another defining view in the study area is the view to the project site available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers from the Williamsburg Bridge itself. From this location, viewers get a strong sense of how the visual character of the study area differs north and south of Delancey Street.

The historic districts that regulate development in portions of the study area are defining elements of the neighborhood. Beyond the boundaries of the project site, there are three historic districts and 16 individual architectural resources. The Lower East Side Historic District, which is mapped over the western portion of the study area between Essex Street and Allen Street, is historically significant for its association with immigration in America between 1820 and 1940. The following individual architectural resources are located within the portion of the historic district that falls within the project study area: the Eastern Dispensary; the Provident Loan Society of New York; Substation 409; 141 Ludlow Street; the New York Telephone Company Exchange; the Bank of the United States; the Lower East Side Tenement Museum; the E. Ridley and Sons Department Store; 339 Grand Street; and 345 Grand Street. While most of the buildings in this area are 19th-century, five- and six-story, brick and stone-clad tenements, several recent tall apartment, hotel, and dormitory buildings have been built in this area.

In addition to the Lower East Side Historic District, the potential Orchard Street Historic District overlaps the study area. This historic district is located wholly within the boundaries of the Lower East Side Historic District. Building types within the potential district include 19th-century tenements, 19th- and 20th-century commercial buildings, and a school. The following individual resources are located within the portion of the district that falls within the project study area: the Bank of the United States; the Lower East Side Tenement Museum; the E. Ridley and Sons Department Store; 339 Grand Street; and 345 Grand Street.

The potential Clinton, Rivington, Stanton Street Historic District overlaps with the north-eastern portion of the study area. The district includes 19th-century tenements, synagogues, a factory, a school, and commercial buildings. The following individual resources are located within the portion of the district that falls within the project study area: Public School 160 and Anshe Chesed Synagogue.

At the project site, traffic noise from adjacent streets was the dominant noise source. The highest noise levels in the study area occurred along Delancey Street. However, the levels are not unusual for busy urban corridors and are comparable to noise levels along other heavily trafficked multi-lane streets in New York City. In terms of *CEQR* criteria, the existing noise levels at the receptor location along secondary streets are either in the “acceptable” or “marginally acceptable” categories. The existing noise levels at receptor locations along major thoroughfares are in the “marginally unacceptable category.”

Overall, the study area can be described by a diverse set of elements, including its mix of residential, commercial, community facility, and open space uses. The neighborhood contains a wide variety of residential uses, including walk-up tenements and higher-density residential development. As discussed above, it is well known for its commercial uses, including the growing number of hotels, restaurants, drinking establishments, art galleries, and fashion boutiques. Despite the influx of new residents and uses, the neighborhood continues to include substantial public housing and community facility uses. No one defining feature would be considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. Rather, the various localized features contribute to it.

POTENTIAL TO AFFECT THE DEFINING FEATURES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

LAND USE

The proposed actions would result in the addition of an approximately 1.7 million gross-square-foot mixed-use development. This amount of active new uses and development would result in a noticeable change in the character of the area. By replacing underutilized land that detracts from the character of the neighborhood with active residential (including 450 affordable units), commercial, community facility, and publicly accessible open space uses, the proposed actions would improve land use features that contribute to the neighborhood character. The mixture of uses within the proposed development would complement the study area as the development would provide for housing at a variety of income levels, a range of retail uses, open space, and community facilities. The proposed development would also knit together the area by incorporating a street grid, ground-level activity, and a publicly accessible open space, which would all improve the character of the neighborhood.

As discussed above, the study area has a substantial affordable housing stock. The proposed actions would respond to the community's need for new affordable housing through the provision of 450 new affordable units. Some of the affordable units could be set aside for senior citizen housing, which would also be compatible with existing land uses, and would help meet the growing demand for such housing in this neighborhood. The proposed development would also include 450 market-rate residential units, which would be consistent with the recent market-rate housing development within the study area.

The proposed commercial uses would be supportive of existing commercial uses, as well as consistent with recent development trends. Historically, the study area has been home to a range of bustling commercial uses, from garment production to food production and eateries to pushcart vendors. Today, the study area contains a broad mix of commercial uses, ranging from local delis and tailors, to a growing number of restaurants and drinking establishments, to larger commercial establishments, such as clothing stores, and banks. The proposed mix of local retail and destination retail stores in the RWCDS would complement the existing mix of commercial uses in the study area.

The proposed actions would enhance neighborhood character by the relocation and expansion of the Essex Street Market. The larger space would create entrepreneurship opportunities for additional vendors and would continue to allow for a variety of vendor price points. A new facility would be an opportunity for capital investment in the market to address many of the physical limitations of the existing facility. The new market facility would have an improved internal layout, better connections with the street and expanded common gathering areas for public seating and market events. In addition, the new facility would be energy efficient, fully

compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and have improved storage capabilities, garbage handling, and climate control. The City would give existing vendors the first opportunity to relocate their business to the new market facility, when the new facility on Site 2 is complete and ready for occupancy.

While specific community facility uses are not yet defined, potential uses could include important community amenities such as daycare, educational, or social service functions. These uses would be compatible with existing community facility uses in the immediate area. The proposed publicly accessible open space would complement existing and proposed residential and commercial uses, and provide much needed passive and/or active open space opportunities.

The proposed uses would be expected to benefit the neighborhood character of the study area by replacing underutilized land that detracts from the character of the neighborhood with active residential, commercial, community facility, and publicly accessible open space uses.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

As discussed in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts for any of the issue areas—direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, indirect residential displacement, indirect business displacement, or adverse effects on specific industries.

The project-generated population would represent less than 5 percent of the future study area population, and therefore would not introduce a population that could substantially affect residential market conditions in the study area. In addition, the project’s affordable housing would expand housing options available to the lower-income residents in the study area, and could balance the existing trend toward increased rents in the study area that would exist with or without the proposed actions.

As discussed above, the study area is well known for its commercial uses. There are approximately 40 business and institutional uses with an estimated 188 employees on the project site. As stated in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” with the proposed actions, it is assumed that the existing vendors within the Essex Street Market at the time of the move would have the first opportunity to relocate to the new Essex Street Market facility on Site 2; therefore, with the proposed actions, these businesses would not be directly displaced. In total, an estimated 107 employees at 14 businesses would be directly displaced under the proposed actions. This displacement would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character since the retail, parking, eating and drinking, and health care uses that would be displaced are common in the study area such that businesses and consumers would be able to find similar products and services elsewhere in the study area in the future with the proposed actions. The employment that would be lost would not be substantial, and the proposed actions would introduce many new employment opportunities in similar industry sectors. Although these businesses are valuable individually and collectively to the City’s economy, their displacement from the project site would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

While the possibility of some limited indirect business displacement due to competition could not be ruled out, any displacement that might occur would not jeopardize the viability of any local retail strips, and would not result in adverse changes to neighborhood character. The proposed actions are not expected to alter the number of businesses and services that are located on retail corridors in the ½-Mile Local Trade Area, and vacancy rates are not expected to change

Seward Park Mixed-Use Development Project

in the future. Overall, the proposed actions would introduce new households, workers, and visitors to the area. The combination of new residents, workers, and visitors would increase foot traffic and increase retail demand, benefitting existing retail concentrations in the ½-Mile Local Trade Area.

Therefore, the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character due to socioeconomic conditions.

OPEN SPACE

The neighborhood's open spaces are a defining element that contributes to the neighborhood's character. The new resident and worker populations that would be introduced by the proposed actions would place additional demands on the study area's open spaces. In the residential study area, the open space ratios for the future with the proposed actions, as with existing conditions and the future without the proposed actions, would continue to fall short of the City's recommended open space ratio guidelines. However, the open space ratio for workers in the study area would still remain almost five times over the City's recommended guideline ratio. Because the open space ratios would remain substantially the same in the future with the proposed actions compared to the future without the proposed actions, and since the proposed actions would introduce new publicly accessible open space to partially offset the additional project-generated demand, the proposed actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts on open space resources in the residential study area. Therefore, the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character due to open space.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

As discussed above, one of the defining elements of the neighborhood is the Essex Street Market. Under the proposed actions, the four buildings of the Essex Street Market, which have been determined to be eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), would be redeveloped. Therefore, the proposed development would have a direct significant adverse impact on each Essex Street Market building and on the four-building market complex as a whole, as well as on the former S/NR-eligible fire station on Site 5. Measures that could partially mitigate these significant adverse impacts are described in Chapter 21, "Mitigation Measures."

The historic districts that regulate development in the study area are also defining elements in the character of the neighborhood. While development of the proposed actions could have adverse physical impacts on the Lower East Side Historic District (S/NR), there are mechanisms to protect properties within New York City Historic Districts. *TPPN #10/88* requires a monitoring program to reduce the likelihood of construction damage to adjacent New York City Landmarks and National Register-listed properties (within 90 feet) and to detect at an early stage the beginnings of damage so that construction procedures can be changed. With this required measure, significant adverse construction-related impacts would not occur to the contributing buildings within the Lower East Side Historic District (S/NR) that are located within 90 feet of project construction. Further, if Site 1 were to be developed under the jurisdiction of HPD, Construction Protection Plans to protect historic resources within 90 feet of construction will be likely required to be developed and implemented in coordination with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) by the developer through provisions in the Land Disposition Agreement (LDA) between the City of New York Department of Housing Preservation & Development (HPD) and the developer. In addition, the

proposed development on Site 1 could likely have a significant adverse contextual and visual impact on the Lower East Side Historic District, as it would be taller than the majority of contributing historic district buildings within the study area. Potential mitigation measures for this potential significant adverse impact are discussed in Chapter 21, “Mitigation Measures.” While the proposed development on Site 1 could have a significant adverse contextual and visual impact on the historic district, it would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character, which is characterized by the presence of two other historic districts and numerous individual resources.

The potential Clinton, Rivington, Stanton Street Historic District (NYCL-eligible, S/NR-eligible) and the Williamsburg Bridge are also defining elements of the neighborhood. These are non-designated or listed resources. Construction under the proposed actions could potentially result in construction-related impacts on the resources. The resources would be afforded limited protection under DOB regulations applicable to all buildings located adjacent to construction sites (Section BC 3309); however, since the resources are not New York City Landmarks or listed National Register properties, they are not afforded special protections under *TPPN #10/88*. Additional protective measures afforded under *TPPN #10/88* would only become applicable if the Williamsburg Bridge and the potential historic district are designated or listed in the future prior to the initiation of adjacent construction or if the adjacent sites are developed under the jurisdiction of HPD. Further, for sites that may be developed under the jurisdiction of HPD, Construction Protection Plans to protect historic resources within 90 feet of construction will be likely required to be developed and implemented in coordination with OPRHP by the developer(s) through provisions in the LDA between HPD and the developer(s). If the bridge and potential historic district are not designated or listed and the adjacent sites are developed under the management of the New York City Economic Development Corporation, they would not be subject to *TPPN #10/88* and may, therefore, be adversely impacted by adjacent development resulting from the proposed actions. The effect of the potential adverse impact would generally be limited to these sites, but they would not be widespread enough to affect neighborhood character. Therefore, the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character resulting from its impact on historic resources.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

The proposed actions would improve the urban design features of the study area that contribute to the neighborhood character. The gaps in the streetscape of the neighborhood south of Delancey Street would be filled with new, active development. New street trees would shade as well as visually enhance the experience of walking around the project sites. Greater levels of pedestrian activity generated by the proposed uses on the sites—particularly ground-floor retail uses—would be self-reinforcing, making the project area more inviting and appealing to visit. New streetwalls would be created where they do not currently exist. The proposed actions would preserve existing streets, including those that had been demapped in the 1960s but were never taken out of functional use. In terms of building orientation and access, the projected new buildings would have retail and residential entrances on multiple sides to create pedestrian activity surrounding the sites, provide necessary access, and integrate with the existing neighborhood.

The building heights envisioned would not be out of character for the study area but would relate to the existing form of the neighborhood. Under the proposed actions, the development on each site would be within the limits of the maximum zoning envelope established by the Large Scale Development Plan. With a maximum building height of 24 stories (Sites 2 and 4 only), the

Seward Park Mixed-Use Development Project

proposed development would be compatible with the larger existing buildings in the area, such as the various Seward Park Extension towers. The setbacks of the anticipated towers would permit access to light and air. The lot coverage of the new buildings on Sites 1–6 would be greater than that of other large-scale developments south of Delancey Street, which are mainly set within large, landscaped sites, and would be more consistent with the lot coverage of the existing Essex Street Market buildings, tenements, and other lower-scale buildings in the study area to the north and west. Even though the density is consistent with the surrounding context, the new buildings may appear bulkier than the various existing larger-scale buildings noted above due to the greater lot coverage on these sites. The proposed actions would bring a greater level of active ground-floor uses to the portion of the study area south of Delancey Street and east of Essex Street, where the existing large housing developments currently do not provide many such uses. While the proposed actions would change the urban design of the study area, they are expected to benefit neighborhood character by improving the pedestrian experience and by activating currently underdeveloped and under-utilized sites.

The proposed actions would also allow for a modification of sign regulations. For the sites with the LSGD located in the C2 zoning district, the sign regulations of a C6-1 district may be made applicable for the frontages on Delancey and Grand Streets through CPC authorization. The potential changes in signage regulations would provide for larger and higher placed signage than is currently allowed in the C2 zoning district on Delancey and Grand Streets; however, these are among the main pedestrian and vehicular thoroughfares in the study area and thus are more appropriate locations for larger signage than other, more narrow or residential streets. In addition, this action requires a CPC finding that the modifications will be consistent with the location of commercial uses permitted within the LSGD and will not adversely affect residential uses in adjoining residential districts. Therefore, the modifications to sign regulations would not adversely affect neighborhood character.

In the future with the proposed actions, view corridors and visual resources could be enhanced, thus improving neighborhood character. The Delancey Street view corridor could be enhanced, as it could become more focused on the elements of the Williamsburg Bridge by the new development along the street, which would better frame these views. South of Delancey Street, the new buildings would be anticipated to improve the visual character of these sites, and thus the character of the view corridors, compared to the future without the proposed actions. While the Blue Condo building and large-scale housing complexes in the surrounding area would be less visible from vantage points south of Delancey Street; these developments north of Delancey Street would still be visible in many other study area views, rising above the lower-scale development in this portion of the study area. Views along Grand Street would now include the new development on Site 5, which—at up to approximately 190 feet tall to the top of mechanical bulkhead for the maximum zoning envelope—would be similar to the 187-foot-tall Seward Park Houses on the south side of the street. Views along Allen Street are not anticipated to be affected by the proposed actions.

A defining view of the study area is the view available to pedestrians, bicyclists, and drivers from the Williamsburg Bridge itself. From the Williamsburg Bridge, views to the development sites north of Delancey Street would not be notably different with the proposed actions compared to existing conditions, since these sites are not currently visible from this location and would be developed with smaller-scale buildings. Views to the development sites south of Delancey Street, however, would be notably altered. In many cases, the sites would go from hosting no buildings, to being fully occupied by structures. While significant, this change is not

anticipated to be adverse. The change in views would not obstruct any visual resources, and views from this location are transitory.

Therefore, the proposed actions would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character resulting from urban design and visual resources.

SHADOWS

As discussed in Chapter 6, “Shadows,” the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse shadows impacts. While there would be no significant adverse shadows impacts, several of the study area’s sun-sensitive resources, including the P.S. 142 Playground on Delancey Street, would receive incremental shadow. In addition, the proposed actions would result in incremental shadow impacts on three of the Schiff Mall medians, which are located along the center of Delancey Street and contain rose bushes and other plantings. The buildings that would actually be developed on Sites 1, 2, 3, and 4 would not be as large or bulky as the maximum zoning envelopes analyzed in this conservative study, and so the actual extent and duration of incremental shadow would likely be less than what is described in Chapter 6, “Shadows”, and the roses may not actually be impacted. It has been determined that if a tower is constructed on these sites that would impact the roses, and if the roses are still there at the time of construction, then the roses would be replaced with shade tolerant planting as part of the project. Since these resources are not defining features of the neighborhood with respect to uniqueness or overall characterization of the area, the proposed actions would not create a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character resulting from shadows.

TRANSPORTATION

Vehicular traffic impacts in this neighborhood would be generally limited to Houston, Delancey, and Grand Streets. As discussed above, these major thoroughfares are already heavily trafficked, so that traffic increases would not affect neighborhood character.

While the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts at the Essex Street/Delancey Street subway station during any analysis peak periods, the proposed actions would result in significant adverse impacts on bus line-haul levels on the southbound M9 and the westbound M14A during the AM peak period, and the northbound and southbound M9 during the PM peak period. Potential measures to mitigate the projected significant adverse bus line-haul impacts are described in Chapter 21, “Mitigation Measures.” Since this is not a defining feature of the neighborhood, this would not create a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

Weekday and Saturday peak period pedestrian conditions were evaluated at key sidewalk, corner reservoir, and crosswalk elements at 22 area intersections. Under the RWCDs, significant adverse pedestrian impacts are anticipated for four pedestrian analysis locations at Delancey Street and Essex Street including the west crosswalk during the midday peak period, the east crosswalk during the Saturday peak period, the west sidewalk of Essex Street between Delancey Street and Broome Street during the AM and midday peak periods, and the east sidewalk of Essex Street between Delancey Street and Rivington Street during the Saturday peak period. Measures that can be implemented to mitigate these significant adverse pedestrian impacts are discussed in Chapter 21, “Mitigation Measures.” While there would be increased activity, the resulting conditions would be similar to those seen in the high activity urban neighborhoods defining the study area and would not result in density of activity or service conditions that would be out of character with the study area or surrounding neighborhoods.

Seward Park Mixed-Use Development Project

NOISE

While noise levels in the study area would increase in the future with the proposed actions—from increased traffic and building mechanical equipment—the magnitude of the increases would be generally imperceptible to most listeners and below the CEQR threshold for a significant adverse noise impact. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character with respect to noise.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the proposed actions would result in a positive effect on the neighborhood character in the study area. Instead of underutilized buildings and surface parking lots surrounded by chain link fencing, the surrounding neighborhood would benefit from the new active, mixed-use development that would fill the gaps in the streetscape of the neighborhood south of Delancey Street. The proposed mix of local retail and destination retail stores in the RWCDS would complement the existing mix of commercial uses in the study area. The mix of uses would bring a greater level of pedestrian activity to the project site, making the neighborhood more inviting and appealing to visit. In addition, the increased pedestrian activity that would result from the proposed actions would increase foot traffic and retail demand, benefitting existing retail stores in the area.

The project site would be more inviting and appealing to visit with new street trees that would shade as well as visually enhance the neighborhood and with the new publicly accessible open space on Site 5 that would bring passive and/or active recreational opportunities to the area. The proposed mapping and demapping actions would make the mapped street pattern consistent with the pedestrian's current experience of those areas. The pedestrian environment also would be improved by the widened sidewalks adjacent to Sites 1 through 6. Overall, the combined effect of changes to the defining elements would not create a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. To the contrary, neighborhood character would be improved by replacing underutilized buildings and surface parking lots with new active, mixed-use development. *