5.4 SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

5.4.1 Introduction

Following the methodology described in Section 3.4, "Socioeconomic Conditions" of Chapter 3, "Impact Methodologies," this Section evaluates whether the construction of the water main connection along either the First Avenue, Sutton Place, or E. 59th Street/E.61st Street route would result in adverse socioeconomic impacts. Potential socioeconomic impacts include direct and indirect displacement. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, direct displacement is the involuntary displacement of residents, employees, and businesses from the site of a proposed action, while indirect displacement is the involuntary displacement of residents, employees, or businesses due to changes in living conditions or costs that could potentially result from the project.

The water main connections would be located within City streets and, therefore, would not result in the direct displacement of businesses or residents. Therefore, this Section focuses on potential indirect displacement due to, for example, noise, vibration, and traffic and pedestrian circulation impacts resulting from the project. As discussed in the technical Sections of this Chapter of the EIS, construction of the water mains has the potential to result in temporary noise, vibration, traffic and circulation effects on nearby residents and businesses. These effects would be most noticeable to those residents and businesses that face the potential water main routes and therefore, the assessment focuses on those residents and businesses facing the route.

Another potential socioeconomic effect could result from the cost to construct the project that would be borne by water and sewer ratepayers. The costs and socioeconomic impacts of the water main connection are discussed in the socioeconomic assessments for each of the potential Shaft Sites so that a combined cost for the project as a whole could be provided. Therefore, no assessment of impacts on water and sewer ratepayers is provided in this Section.

5.4.2 Existing Conditions

Residents and Businesses in the Vicinity of the Water Main Routes

As discussed in Section 5.2, "Land Use and Community Facilities, Zoning, and Public Policy," the potential First Avenue route and E. 59th/E. 61st Street route are located in a densely populated residential and commercial neighborhood with a high ground floor retail presence. As described in Section 4.3, "Open Space," in Chapter 4, "Preferred Shaft Site," according to Census 2000, a total of nearly 27,000 people live within approximately ¼ mile of the alternative Shaft Site, in the area generally extending from E. 54th to E. 64th Streets, east of Third Avenue. The residences and businesses that face these two routes also face onto a high trafficked corridor that includes First Avenue, E. 61st Street, E. 59th Street, E. 56th Street, and E. 55th Street. The residential buildings include a mix of high rise and low rise buildings. The occupied commercial space that lines these routes consists of many small retail businesses and restaurants located in the ground

floor of the residential buildings. The residences and businesses that face these routes also face onto a high trafficked streets and/or the Queensboro Bridge (Bridge). The Sutton Place portion of the Sutton Place route is located in a quieter residential area, while the E. 59th, E. 56th, and E. 55th Streets portions of the route also include retail and other businesses.

5.4.3 Future Conditions Without the Project

Residents and Businesses in the Vicinity of the Water Main Routes

As discussed in Section 5.2, "Land Use and Community Facilities, Zoning, and Public Policy," the only planned residential or commercial project that faces the water main routes is the conversion of the Sutton Hotel on E. 56th Street between First and Second Avenues to residential units. In addition, the New York City Department of Education is contemplating redevelopment of the E. 57th Street Educational Campus on Second Avenue between E. 56th and E. 57th Streets, which houses the High School of Art and Design and P.S. 59M, with a high-rise residential building and two rebuilt schools. Overall, with these two developments, conditions in the Study Area would be expected to be comparable to those currently existing in the immediate vicinity of the water main routes.

5.4.4 Future Conditions with the Project

Residents and Businesses in the Vicinity of the Water Main Routes

Construction

Residents and businesses facing the water main construction would experience noticeable noise and possible vibration effects. On any given block, construction would typically last 12 weeks for the street segment and another 10 weeks for each intersection. Construction on one or two blocks for each of the potential water main routes could last a few weeks longer (see Section 5.1, "Project Description," for more details on these durations).

The noise and vibration levels from construction activities will be noticeable and, at times, intrusive and annoying to certain residents, business owners, and customers of local businesses along the water main route. However, they would not be expected to prevent the conduct of routine activities. The existing environment surrounding the water main routes is very noisy resulting from high traffic volumes and/or its urban setting. Therefore, retail and other businesses in the immediate area are accustomed to elevated noise levels and traffic congestion. The noise from the construction site may make several of these businesses, especially the restaurants, less attractive to customers, particularly during intense construction activities. Restaurants with sidewalk café areas or grocers that display food or flowers on the street would be temporarily impacted. Other businesses, that are not highly dependent on the environment outside their stores, would be expected to be minimally affected.

In addition, many pedestrians, and therefore potential customers, may choose to avoid walking along the east side of First Avenue to avoid the construction site. These effects could lower sales

to these businesses for a temporary period. Although many existing restaurants and shops on First Avenue have a stable customer base, the relative abundance of such business in the area, may encourage customers to take their business elsewhere during periods when construction is most intense. However, several businesses are neighborhood-based destinations and it is unlikely that customers would change shopping habits or would travel longer distances to do business that could otherwise be done in their neighborhoods.

Access to the residents and businesses would be maintained throughout the construction period in accordance with procedures to be put in place by the New York City Department of Design and Construction (NYCDDC) which would be constructing the water main connection (see Section 5.8, "Infrastructure and Energy" for details on these procedures). As detailed in Section 5.9, construction activities would result in an increase in congestion along the selected water main route and immediate area. Depending on the route selected, this congestion could last as many as 76 weeks in total, although most intersections would not be affected for that long. An aggressive mitigation plan will be in place to manage traffic congestion, in coordination with the New York City Department of Transportation (NYCCDOT) Office of Construction Mitigation and Coordination (OCMC). Overall, nearby businesses would continue to receive and make deliveries, and customers would continue to be able to access the businesses. With implementation of the traffic mitigation plan for the construction zone, the potential increase in traffic congestion along the selected water main route would not be anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to nearby businesses.

No significant environmental impacts on these businesses or residents would occur. Construction activities along any street segment would be short-term and temporary. Although local economic conditions in the immediate vicinity of the construction site could decline somewhat during intense construction periods, the net effect on the area's economy would be negligible. It is very unlikely that businesses or residents would relocate from the area as a result of construction of the water mains. Overall, the effects of the construction of the water main connections are not unlike the effects from other major construction in Manhattan that involves the use of heavy construction in close proximity to residential and commercial uses. Given the potential routes' locations in a well-established neighborhood of Midtown Manhattan, large-scale neighborhood character or socioeconomic changes would not be expected to occur. Therefore, it is not anticipated that water main construction would result in the potential for significant adverse socioeconomic effects during construction.

As noted in Section 4.4, "Socioeconomic Conditions," in Chapter 4, "Preferred Shaft Site," construction activities at the Shaft Site are not anticipated to result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts to nearby businesses. Some of these businesses would be subject to increased noise levels, but this additional noise would not be expected to result in significant adverse effects to customers' shopping habits. When the effects of construction for both the Shaft Site and the water main connections are considered together, no potential cumulative significant adverse effects are expected. Sections 5.9, 5.10, 5.11, and 5.12 consider the combined effects of construction of the shaft and its water mains in terms of traffic and parking, transit and pedestrians, air quality, and noise, respectively. Those analyses conclude that in combination, the

construction projects would result in temporary traffic and noise impacts to the immediate area. Few businesses would experience construction-related effects from activities at the Shaft Site, since these activities would be largely contained on the site and the overlap of construction between the shaft and water mains is expected to be relatively short-term in the vicinity of the Shaft Site. As noted earlier, most of the businesses in the immediate area are neighborhood-based destinations that would be expected to maintain their customer base during construction, although those nearest to the construction activities, especially restaurants or others dependent on the environment outside their shops, may experience short term decreases in revenue, especially when construction activities occur closest to their shops.

Operation

Once constructed, the water mains would not be visible. Short-term maintenance and repair activities could occur at the site on occasion. These activities would not result in long term adverse noise or other environmental impacts. Therefore, it is not anticipated that operation of the water mains would result in potential significant adverse socioeconomic impacts on residents and businesses.

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