FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE CROTON WATER TREATEMENT PLANT AT THE EASTVIEW SITE

5.6. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

5.6.1. Introduction

The character of a neighborhood is a composite of different elements, including land use patterns, urban design, visual character, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrian patterns, noise, and air quality. For a project to have a significant impact on the character of a neighborhood, it would have to result in a change in the overall quality of the neighborhood, modifying it substantially from other uses in the area. Such a change would be considered negative if it adversely affected the public's ability to view and enjoy the neighborhood and its visual features. These elements are evaluated individually in other sections of this document; however, an analysis of a neighborhood's character considers how these elements combine and interact to create the context and feel of a neighborhood.

For the purpose of this analysis, a study area with an approximate radius of one-mile has been identified. The methodology used to prepare this analysis is presented in Section 4.6, Data Collection and Impact Methodologies, Neighborhood Character.

5.6.2. Baseline Conditions

5.6.2.1. Existing Conditions

Water Treatment Plant Site. The water treatment plant site is situated on approximately 83 acres[1] of the largely undeveloped City-owned Eastview Site in the Town of Mount Pleasant. Approximately 12 acres of this property would be developed as a result of this project. Grasslands Road/Route 100C (Route 100C), a major east-west arterial road, abuts the site's southern edge and Walker Road, a local roadway, runs along the site's western edge. The site contains a mix of successional field and woodland communities. A stream (Mine Brook) runs through the middle of the site from north to south, creating various wetland communities. Immediately adjacent to both sides of the brook are elevated areas covered with trees.

In addition to these natural features, the historic Hammond House is located on the southern edge along Route 100C. This small wooden clapboard covered house, circa 1835, is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR) and the Westchester Inventory of Historic Places (see Section 5.12, Historic and Archaeological Resources). A connection chamber to the Delaware Aqueduct (Shaft No. 19) is located on the eastern portion of the site. A small, gated driveway lined by tall wooden utility poles leads to the shaft from Route 100C. Not visible from Route 100C, the shaft structure is a small, one-story concrete structure surrounded by a chain-link fence.

Study Area. South of the Eastview Site, across Route 100C is a large, undeveloped property that is also owned by the City of New York. The 66-acre property is heavily wooded with successional fields and woodland communities, including mature upland woods and successional woods and fields. Adjacent to the 66-acre parcel is an additional eight-acre parcel

[1] A four-acre easement was recently provided to Westchester County for the extension of Walker Road along the western boundary of the site; this reduced the acreage from the 87 acres formerly reported.

owned by the City that contains an underground connection to the Catskill Aqueduct, as well as an electrical substation and transmission lines. To the east along Taylor Road is a small residential neighborhood with approximately 13 single-family homes. The remainder of the study area primarily contains institutional uses and offices. The 512-acre Westchester County Valhalla Campus (Grasslands Reservation) lies to the north, west, and east. Grasslands Reservation is a large landscaped campus containing medical facilities, transportation and public safety facilities, and the Westchester County Correctional Complex. The complex's parking structure, penitentiary and telecommunications tower, some of the largest structures in the study area, is visible from many parts of the study area. Farther away from the site, other institutional uses include the Westchester Community College campus, Margaret Chapman School and the Hebrew Hospital Home of Westchester. Cross Westchester Executive Park, a commercial office park, is located to the southwest along Clearbrook Road and Executive Boulevard. Farther to the west across Route 9A is the Landmark at Eastview Office Park, a 268-acre campus along Old Saw Mill River Road, and to the northwest is the Mid-Westchester Executive Park, a 75-acre office park on Skyline Drive.

The study area contains five major roadways, including the Saw Mill River Parkway, the Taconic Parkway, Saw Mill River Road (Route 9A), and the Sprain Brook Parkway, each running in a north-south direction, and the Cross Westchester Expressway (I-287) running in an east-west direction. Route 100C conveys a considerable amount of east-west traffic between the Sprain Brook Parkway and the Saw Mill River Parkway. East of the Sprain Brook Parkway, the study area contains large residential neighborhoods with single-family homes, large institutional properties such as the Westchester Community College campus and Blythedale Children's Hospital, and several large cemeteries. The Route 9A corridor, west of the site, is highly developed with large shopping centers and warehousing facilities, as well as large commercial office parks.

In general, the Eastview Site is located in a part of Westchester County that has experienced substantial growth in commercial development in recent years. The area immediately surrounding the Eastview Site has a relatively low population density, as compared to Westchester as a whole (see Table 5.7-1 in Section 5.7, Socioeconomic Conditions Analysis). This reflects the abundance of non-residential land uses in the study area.

5.6.2.2. Future Without the Project

The Future Without the Project considerations include the anticipated year of peak construction (2008) and the anticipated year of operation (2010) for the proposed project. The anticipated peak year of construction is based on the peak number of workers because such inputs to the community would likely cause the most noticeable land use changes.

The Future Without the Project considers two scenarios: one in which the NYCDEP Catskill/Delaware Ultraviolet (UV) Light Disinfection Facility (Cat/Del UV Facility) would not be located on the Eastview Site and another in which the Cat/Del UV Facility is located on the site, specifically in the southeast corner of the site. This scenario discloses the additional incremental impact of the proposed Croton project if the Cat/Del UV Facility and the other projects planned for the area would be built and assumes that the Cat/Del UV Facility is included

in the site analysis. It should be noted that the Eastview Site is the only location under consideration for the Cat/Del UV Facility. This scenario without the Cat/Del UV Facility is included because that project has not yet received its necessary approvals and its inclusion or not would reflect major changes to the site. By the peak construction year, two additional NYCDEP projects could be located on the Eastview Site, namely a Police Precinct and possibly an NYCDEP East-of Hudson Administration Building[2]. The Police Precinct may be located in the southwest corner of the Eastview Site. The location of the Administration Building is less certain; however, since the Eastview Site is one of several properties currently being evaluated as a possible site for this facility. In addition to these projects, NYCDEP's Kensico-City Tunnel may be under construction at the Eastview Site starting in 2009. All of these NYCDEP projects are analyzed in this Final SEIS to the extent to which information is available. They are all separate actions from the proposed project and will undergo their own independent environmental reviews.

5.6.2.2.1. Without Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

In the Future Without the Project, neighborhood character in the study area is not anticipated to change substantially. The area would continue to experience growth, particularly west of the Sprain Brook Parkway within the Route 9A corridor, where a Home Depot would be constructed and additional laboratories would be built within the Landmark at Eastview Office Park. Development would also occur on the Eastview Site itself, including a police precinct for the NYCDEP and work associated with the Kensico-City Tunnel (KCT) Project. The police precinct would be constructed on the southwestern corner of the site, which would be accessible from Walker Road. The KCT project has undergone a feasibility study, and procurement is underway for its preliminary design. Construction is planned to start in 2009; it is likely that the Eastview Site would be a major staging area for this project. As a result of these projects, traffic levels would increase on the roadways near the site. Further development within Grasslands Reservation would also increase traffic in the vicinity of the Eastview Site. As presented in Section 5.2, Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy, several projects may be implemented in Grasslands Reservation, including replacement facilities, expansions and an entirely new biotechnological center.

Beyond the immediate area of the Eastview Site, a considerable number of development projects would be constructed in the Towns of Mount Pleasant and Greenburgh. These projects, most of which would occur west of the Sprain Brook Parkway, would reinforce the suburban character of the area (see Section 5.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy). Route 9A would receive much of the additional traffic given the proposed developments within the Grasslands Reservation, the Landmark at Eastview Office Park, the Home Depot, and other major projects in the Route 9A corridor. However, New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) anticipates widening Route 9A between 2008 and 2009 to accommodate such growth. In the vicinity of the Eastview Site, a bypass road may be constructed opposite Dana Road and the Route 100C overpass may be reconstructed. For more detailed analyses of the elements contributing to neighborhood character, see Section 5.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy; Section 5.3,

[2] This depends on the results of a siting evaluation which is currently ongoing. The siting decision will be evaluated and discussed as part of a separate independent environmental review.

Visual Character; Section 5.7, Socioeconomic Analysis; Section 5.9, Traffic and Transportation; Section 5.10, Noise; Section 5.11, Air Quality; and Section 5.12, Historic and Archaeological Resources.

5.6.2.2.2. With Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

In the Future Without the Project, New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) proposes to build a two story NYCDEP Police Precinct, an Administration Building, the Cat/Del UV Facility for the Catskill/Delaware Water Supply System, and the KCT Project on the Eastview Site. In addition, structures currently located on the site would remain, including the Hammond House[3] and the Delaware Aqueduct Shaft No. 19. Although the site conditions would change substantially as a result of the additional projects, it is not anticipated that the neighborhood character of the Eastview Site area would be substantially affected. The Future Without the Project neighborhood character conditions associated with location of the Cat/Del UV Facility on the Eastview Site are anticipated to be largely the same as the conditions presented in the Future Without the Project, Without Cat/Del UV Facility at the Eastview Site.

5.6.3. Potential Impacts

5.6.3.1. Potential Project Impacts

The anticipated year of operation for the proposed plant is 2010. Therefore, potential project impacts have been assessed by comparing the Future With the Project conditions to the Future Without the Project conditions for both the With and Without the Cat/Del UV Facility scenarios.

5.6.3.1.1. Without Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

Water Treatment Plant Site. With the implementation of the proposed project, the Eastview Site would be developed with aboveground water treatment buildings and accessory structures, underground structures and conduits, internal roadways, and parking areas. The largely undeveloped character of the site would change and the northwest quadrant of the site would have a developed appearance.

Upon the completion of the construction for the proposed project, a considerable portion of the site's natural landscape would be developed. The finished water treatment plant site would occupy approximately 12 acres in addition to the NYCDEP Police Precinct projects. In addition, a portion of the site would also be cleared as part of the KCT Project. The remaining space would include undisturbed areas such as a portion of the site's wooded areas along Mine Brook, including a wetland system as well as eleven of the mature trees lining Hammond House Road and areas cleared during construction of the proposed projects.

The undeveloped portions of the site would serve as an effective buffer between the proposed development and the historic Hammond House (as noted in Section 5.12, Historic and

[3] NYCDEP is considering the possibility of moving the Hammond House (see Section 5.1).

Archaeological Resources, the Hammond House is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and the Westchester County Inventory of Historic Places).

In general, with the proposed plant, the Eastview Site would have a similar appearance to the Grasslands Reservation and many of the office parks in the study area, which include low-scale utilitarian structures, surface parking lots, internal access roads, loading/delivery areas, landscaping, and areas preserved as open space. In particular, the high level of security required by the proposed project (e.g., vehicle interdiction wall, fencing, guard booths, etc.) would be similar to that of the adjacent Westchester County Correctional Complex. Furthermore, the vehicle interdiction wall and existing vegetation would serve to visually buffer the proposed plant from many of the surrounding properties. The proposed infrastructure use would be compatible with the neighborhood character of the study area, strengthening the non-residential character of the study area west of the Sprain Brook Parkway.

The treatment process and other activities on the site would not interfere with adjacent land uses. As discussed in other sections of this document, no noticeable noise or vibrations would emanate from the proposed plant (see Section 5.11, Noise). Furthermore, air pollutant emissions from the proposed plant would not have any significant adverse impacts on ambient air quality (see Section 5.10, Air Quality).

Overall, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated to occur to the neighborhood character at the Eastview Site as a result of the operation of the proposed plant Since the proposed water supply use of the site, a proscribed use for an OB-2 zoning district, which allows water supply facilities with a special permit, is in character with the existing institutional and commercial character of the surrounding area since the proposed facility is similar in bulk to the existing facilities in the areas such as the Westchester County Correctional Complex, the Eastchester County Laboratory and the Westchester County Medical Center. In fact, the proposed project would be less imposing on the surrounding areas than is the communication tower on the Correctional Complex property or the approximately eight-story Medical Center. Therefore, while the site would change from vegetated and undeveloped to suburban and developed, the change would not be anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on off-site neighborhood characteristics.

Study Area. Several roadways in the study area would experience increased levels of traffic associated with chemical deliveries and sludge removal as a result of the proposed project. A maximum of 41 employees would be working at the proposed plant during the weekdays. However, as discussed in Section 5.9, Traffic and Transportation, operation of the proposed project could cause increases in traffic delays at several intersections on some of the roadways within the study area. These impacts would be fully mitigated to avoid a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character while maintaining safety and efficiency of the roadways in the study area (see Section 9.1, Mitigation of Potential Impacts).

The proposed plant would generate new employment, tax revenues, and other economic activity in the area. Sales may also increase for local businesses as a result of the new worker population on the Eastview Site, particularly at convenience-type businesses such as food establishments and gas stations (see Section 5.7, Socioeconomic Analysis).

Therefore, while the character of the study area would change as a result of the proposed project, the change would not be anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on overall neighborhood character.

5.6.3.1.2. With Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

As discussed above under the Future Without the Project, if the Eastview Site is chosen for the Cat/Del UV Facility, the site would already be developed with aboveground water treatment buildings and accessory structures, as well as underground structures and conduits, internal roadways, and parking areas in the southeast corner of the Eastview Site as a result of the Cat/Del UV Facility. The addition of the proposed Croton project to the site would intensify the water supply use of the site and would further transition the site from a mostly undeveloped natural use to a developed light industrial use.

The addition of the proposed Croton project to the Eastview Site with the Cat/Del UV Facility already located on the site would require the Cat/Del UV Facility to use less area within the Eastview Site for staging because the proposed Croton project would utilize some of the area that the Cat/Del UV Facility would have utilized for staging if it were located on the site alone. Therefore, the incremental effect in terms of space used on site by the proposed Croton project would be minimal. The addition of the proposed Croton project to the northwest corner of the site would change its use from potentially being used as a staging area for the Cat/Del UV Facility's construction to being the main construction area of the proposed Croton project. In addition, existing uses would remain on the site (Hammond House and Delaware Shaft No. 19) and the site's primary wetland system along Mine Brook would be preserved. Therefore, the addition of the proposed Croton project on the Eastview Site already developed with the Cat/Del UV Facility is not anticipated to have a significant impact on neighborhood character.

In terms of incremental changes in noise levels resulting from operation of the proposed Croton project at the Eastview Site with the Cat/Del UV Facility already located on the site, no change would be noticed in terms of noise or vibrations emanating from the site. Furthermore, air pollutant emissions would not result in an incremental change in ambient air quality from either of these facilities during operation.

Although the existing conditions at the Eastview Site would be altered by the operation of the proposed Croton project beyond the change due to the Cat/Del UV Facility, with further intensification of the water supply/light industrial use of the site, it is not anticipated that there would be significant adverse impacts on the neighborhood character of the Eastview Site or within the study area. Similarly, although additional NYCDEP facilities may be built on the Eastview Site, including the Police Precinct, the KCT, and possibly the Administration Building, it is not anticipated that there would be substantial adverse impacts to neighborhood character as a result of any of these proposed projects. The water supply use of the site would be in character with the existing institutional and commercial character of the surrounding area, and the Cat/Del UV Facility and proposed Croton plant would be similar in bulk to the existing facilities in the study area. In fact, these facilities would be less imposing on the surrounding areas, as they would occupy smaller footprints, and they would be lower in height as compared to the nearby

Westchester County Correctional Complex, Westchester Medical Center, and the 490-ft. telecommunications tower. Furthermore, the proposed Croton project and the Cat/Del UV Facility would require fewer employees to operate, and would generate less traffic than other uses within Grasslands Reservation and nearby office parks. Therefore, the change from a mostly vegetated site with a low degree of development, to a light industrial/water supply use and developed site, is not anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on off-site neighborhood characteristics.

In summary, while the character of the project site would change as a result of the proposed Croton project beyond the change resulting from the Cat/Del UV Facility, the change is not anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character in the surrounding study area.

5.6.3.2. Potential Construction Impacts

The anticipated year of peak construction for the proposed project is 2008. Therefore, potential construction impacts have been assessed by comparing the Future With the Project conditions to the Future Without the Project conditions for both the With and Without the Cat/Del UV Facility scenarios.

5.6.3.2.1. Without Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

Water Treatment Plant Site. During construction of the proposed plant, the character of the Eastview Site would change markedly, particularly during the early stages of construction when vegetation is cleared and earth is excavated from the 30-acre construction area. During the peak construction year, there would be a substantial amount of activity on the site with a workforce of approximately 652 employees visiting the site on any given weekday. The sizable construction workforce would have a beneficial socioeconomic effect on the study area (see Section 5.7, Socioeconomic Analysis).

On the site itself, the historic Hammond House would be significantly affected by the construction activity such as an increase in noise levels. The maximum amount of the existing vegetation between the Hammond House and the construction area would be preserved (see Section 5.12, Historical and Archaeological Resources). In general, although the proposed construction would change the existing natural appearance of the water treatment plant site, particularly as seen by viewers along Dana Road and Walker Road, such a change would not be considered a significant adverse impact given the overall non-residential context of the surrounding sites, and the types of viewers who would be affected (employees working inside County buildings and motorists) and the short-term nature of the construction work.

The construction of other NYCDEP proposed projects at the Eastview Site would potentially have a significant impact on the neighborhood character of the area during construction. The construction of the proposed Croton project, the NYCDEP police precinct, and work associated with the KCT Project would have a number of contributing factors leading to this conclusion such as traffic increases, noise level increases, air quality changes, and overall degradation of the visual quality of the land resulting from development of NYCDEP projects.

Study Area. In the study area, land uses surrounding the site would be disturbed from construction activity, as discussed in the Section 5.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy section. However, effects from the construction would not affect many sensitive receptors, e.g. residences, nursing homes, and hospitals. Although noise and vibrations would be generated by construction equipment, potential effects on neighboring County buildings such as the County Laboratory might be fully mitigated by noise barriers to avoid any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character if NYCDEP considers their implementation to be feasible and practicable (see Section 5.11, Noise). Similarly, measures would be employed to reduce air pollutants (dust) that could be released during the excavation process (see Section 5.10, Air Quality). These measures to attenuate air quality and noise level increases would avoid adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

5.6.3.2.2. With Cat/Del UV Facility at Eastview Site

As noted above, the Cat/Del UV Facility may be located on the Eastview Site in the Future Without the Project. The addition of the proposed Croton project to the parcel would change land use on the western side of the north parcel. In addition to the 28 acres that would be utilized by the Cat/Del UV Facility, the proposed Croton project construction would require utilization of an additional 30 acres on the north parcel.

As mentioned above, with the Cat/Del UV Facility occupying the site first, the addition of the proposed Croton project would only result in the removal of vegetation along the treated water conduit route to Delaware Shaft No. 19, since as part of the Cat/Del UV Facility most of the vegetation within the 30 acre staging area to be utilized by the proposed Croton project would have been already removed. With both the Cat/Del UV Facility and the proposed Croton project under construction at the same time, there could be temporary visual effects experienced by the Hammond House during the construction of these facilities. However, construction-related impacts to the Hammond House from drilling and blasting, subsidence, collapse, or other accidental construction damage would not occur as a result of these projects, as the construction limits of both the Cat/Del UV Facility and the proposed Croton project would be located far enough away from the Hammond House that direct construction-related impacts would not be felt.

The potential exists for direct neighborhood character effects on nearby uses from construction-related traffic, noise, and dust, as a result of both projects being constructed at the same time. However, these effects would be temporary and would not occur once the facilities are in operation. Furthermore, measures would be taken to reduce the effects on neighborhood character if NYCDEP considers their implementation to be feasible and practicable.

Impacts from the simultaneous construction of both the proposed Croton project and the Cat/Del UV Facility may be more noticeable off-site in terms of the traffic that would be generated by construction worker vehicles and trucks. The introduction of the proposed Croton project to the site would result in Cat/Del UV Facility construction truck trips greater than the number of the truck trips generated if the Cat/Del UV Facility were under construction alone, because of the reduction of staging area available for the Cat/Del UV Facility with both projects under

construction. As a result, traffic impacts could occur at numerous intersections throughout the study area. Due to constraints involving road geometry, mitigation of these construction-period traffic impacts may not be feasible. Therefore, during construction, temporary adverse impacts to neighborhood character, due to traffic congestion and elevated noise levels, would occur. Traffic impacts during construction would result in widespread congestion in the regional area, resulting in potential temporary inconvenience to commercial, institutional, retail and residential uses, within the surrounding area.

In addition to the intersections that would be negatively affected during the construction period, with concurrent construction of the proposed Croton project and the Cat/Del UV Facility at the Eastview Site, some construction workers would have to park off-site and would be shuttled to and from the site, as there could be inadequate space for parking the entire workforce on the Eastview Site during peak periods. These possible off-site construction worker parking locations, as identified in Section 5.9, Traffic and Transportation, would be able to accommodate the construction worker parking demand, and therefore, no adverse parking impacts would occur. Overall, construction of the proposed Croton project at the Eastview Site with the Cat/Del UV Facility would result in temporary adverse impacts on neighborhood character.