

**FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT FOR THE  
CROTON WATER TREATMENT PLANT  
AT THE MOSHOLU SITE**

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## **6.6. NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER**

### **6.6.1. 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 a one-half mile radius around the water treatment plant site has been identified. The methodology used to prepare this analysis is presented in Data Collection and Impact Methodologies, Section 4.6, Data Collection and Impact Methodologies, Neighborhood Character.

### **6.6.2. Baseline Conditions**

#### **6.6.2.1. Existing Conditions**

The water treatment plant site includes the Mosholu Golf Course Driving Range and a portion of the Allen Shandler Recreation Area, which abuts the golf course to the north. The driving range comprises the area of the proposed plant, while a portion of the Allen Shandler Recreation Area would be utilized for clubhouse facilities and access to the existing holes of the Mosholu Golf Course during proposed construction activities. Existing facilities within the golf course portion of the water treatment plant site include a clubhouse, driving range, nine-hole golf course, and a parking lot for approximately 75 cars. Existing facilities within the Allen Shandler Recreation Area portion of the water treatment plant site include asphalt paths, forested area, a comfort station, benches, and a picnic area with grills and picnic tables.

Mosholu Golf Course, which began operation in 1914, is one of two golf courses in Van Cortlandt Park. While a forested buffer surrounds the course to the south, west, and north, the area is not buffered from Jerome Avenue on the east. Although, the course is surrounded on all side by a chain-link fence. Jerome Avenue and the elevated INT No.4 subway tracks are clearly visible from the eastern portion of the water treatment plant site. As a result, the noise and general activity of this area are prevalent in the eastern portion of the golf course and driving range (see Section 6.10, Noise).

The combination of the Mosholu Golf Course, the rest of Van Cortlandt Park, and the Woodlawn Cemetery contribute to the open space character of the area. This character dominates when traveling along Van Cortlandt Park Avenue South, where the transition to residential uses begins. Van Cortlandt Park South marks the transition from the parkland to the more urban residential, commercial, and institutional uses. Jerome Avenue serves the same function to the east of the water treatment plant site. Most of the study area is comprised of open space and residences.

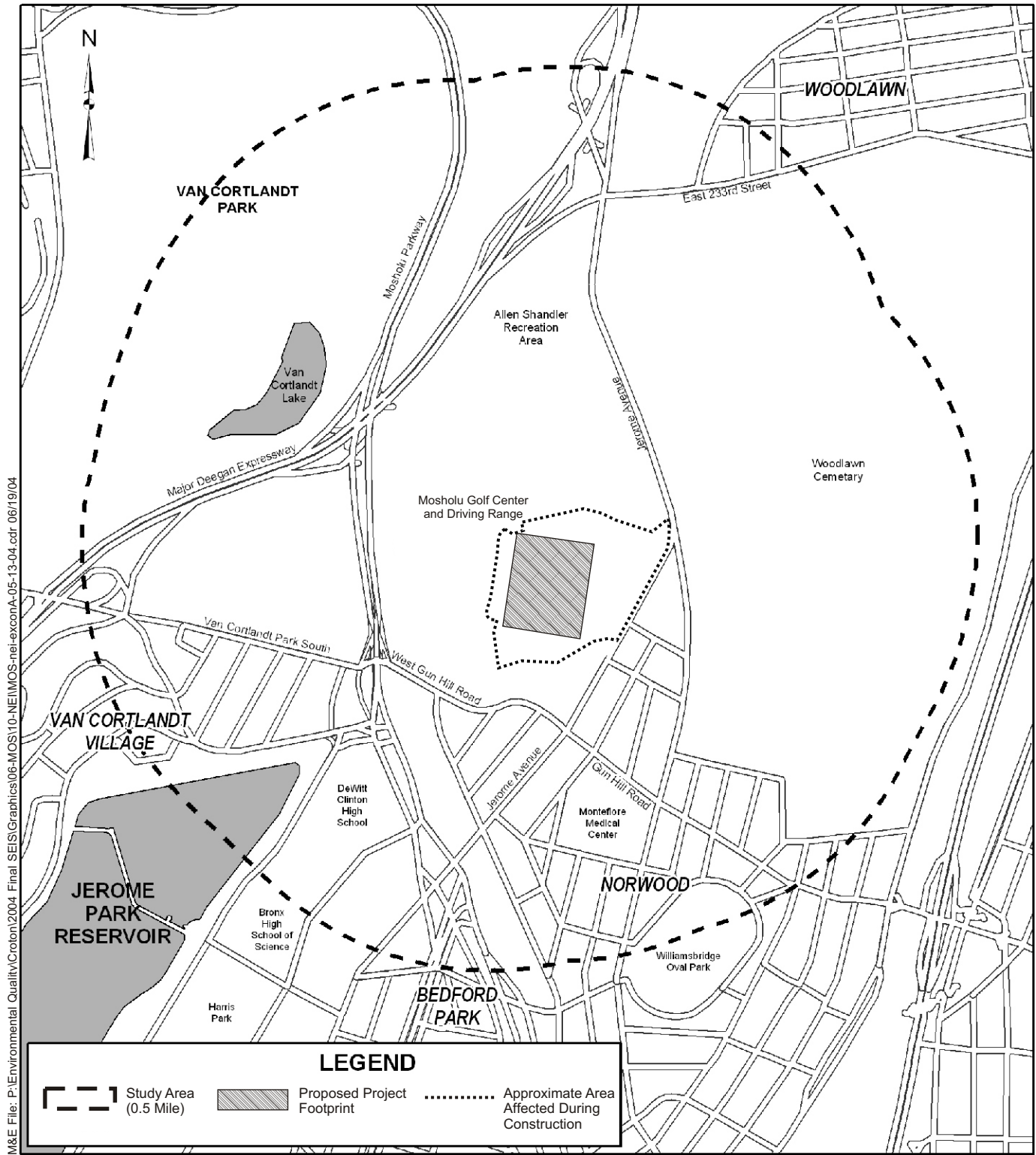
Most of the traffic is concentrated on the major throughways: the Major Deegan Expressway, the Henry Hudson Parkway, the Mosholu Parkway, Van Cortlandt Park East, and Van Cortlandt Park South. Collectors include Jerome Avenue, Van Cortlandt Park East, and Gun Hill Road; these routes are heavily traveled (see Section 6.9, Traffic and Transportation).

The developed portions of the study area are fairly built out. The open space along the Mosholu Parkway separates Norwood from the large residential developments in the southwest portion of the study area (Amalgamated Houses complex and Tracey Towers). The Amalgamated Houses complex, one of the earliest cooperative developments in the country, characterizes the southwest perimeter of the study area. Built in the 1920s, the Amalgamated Houses complex is a well-maintained group of five and six-story apartment buildings with attractive trees and landscaping. Interspersed among the apartments are parks, open spaces, schools, and a few houses. The Tracey Towers are located at the southern limit of the study area, west of the Mosholu Parkway. These towers, constructed in the 1970s, are distinct visual features of the area due to their height above all other surrounding structures. The Tracey Towers consist of two residential dwellings approximately 400 feet tall (Tracey Towers I has 41 floors; Tracey Towers II has 38 floors).




Further east, the character begins to change as the Jerome Avenue overpass and elevated subway platform (Woodlawn Station) cut across this open space. Continuing northeast, but south of East Gun Hill Road, are mid-rise apartments, and the Montefiore Medical Center/Central Bronx Hospital complex. The complex contains towering, modern-looking facilities, while the surrounding apartments retain the overall older character of the study area. The apartment buildings along the northern side of East Gun Hill Road form a continuous streetwall, while the southern side of the road is a discontinuous mix of low, mid, and high-rises. Along the southeast border of the study area is the Williamsbridge Oval Park, which contains a football field, tennis courts, and other playground facilities. This oval park is surrounded by a wall of mid- and high-rise apartments. Single-family houses are also scattered throughout the neighborhood.

Four different neighborhoods are located within the study area. The neighborhood delineations are generally based on those provided by New York City Department of City Planning maps, community board maps, and street maps. The neighborhoods found within the study area are: Van Cortlandt Village, Bedford Park, Norwood, and Woodlawn (Figure 6.6-1).

***Van Cortlandt Village.*** Van Cortlandt Village includes Jerome Park Reservoir, the institutional uses east of the reservoir, and the residential areas immediately west, south, and north of the reservoir, including the Tracey and Scott Towers. The study area encompasses a portion of the northeast section of Van Cortlandt Village, including the northern end of the institutional uses east of the reservoir (commonly referred to as the “Educational Mile”), the northern tip of the reservoir, and some of the residential areas in the northeastern section of the neighborhood.



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LEGEND		
	Study Area (0.5 Mile)	
	Approximate Area Affected During Construction	



## Nighborhood Character Mosholu Site

Croton Water Treatment Plant

Figure 6.6-1

The character of the institutional area directly east of the reservoir is distinct from the rest of the study area. In the nineteenth century, the City planned to extend Jerome Park Reservoir east to Jerome Avenue. Goulden Avenue was planned as a dividing wall between two large basins. At the time of construction of the existing reservoir, this area was excavated but later filled in (for additional details see Section 6.12, Historical and Archaeological Resources). Today, this area accommodates numerous educational and transportation facilities.

Each of the schools along Goulden Avenue faces a different roadway. Bronx High School of Science faces West 205th Street, the Lehman College entrances are on Goulden Avenue and Bedford Park Boulevard, the entrance to DeWitt Clinton High School is on Mosholu Parkway to the north, and Walton High School faces Goulden Avenue. Several grade changes increase the feeling of a discontinuous landscape between the schools. The area around Bronx High School of Science, for instance, is approximately eight feet below street level, while the northern end of Harris Park across West 205th Street, to the south, is about eight feet above street level. The recreational fields associated with this area provide a valuable resource for the educational facilities and the surrounding communities. The southern boundary of this strip of large educational facilities is marked by another large facility, the Kingsbridge Armory, which is located outside of the study area.

The Jerome Park Reservoir and adjacent associated buildings, structures, and sites are listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places. The Jerome Pumping Station, which is located at the southern limit of the study area along Jerome Avenue, has also been designated as a New York City Landmark. The predominant features in the immediate area of the Jerome Pumping Station are the elevated train along Jerome Avenue and the tall barbed wire-topped security fences that surround the industrial uses behind the pumping station.

North of this institutional area are the Tracey Towers, which rise approximately 400 feet above the reservoir, presenting a dominant visual feature of the area. The Tracey Towers are apartment buildings that were built in the 1970s. Nearby is the Scott Tower cooperative apartment building. This apartment building is approximately 15 stories. These towers are prominent on the landscape because of their height and their relatively modern appearance.

Van Cortlandt Park, at the northern border of the study area, provides an open space character. However, Van Cortlandt Park South is a fairly busy road with interchanges to the Major Deegan Expressway and the Mosholu Parkway. The Mosholu Parkway interchange creates a break between the institutional uses east of the reservoir, and the residential areas to the north and west of the reservoir.

The areas to the west and northwest of the reservoir are residential. Directly adjacent to the north basin of the reservoir is Fort Independence Park, where benches face the reservoir. Directly north of the reservoir, the land levels off and the streets conform to a regular grid pattern. This area has a relatively high concentration of older, high-rise apartment buildings including the Amalgamated Housing complex, one of the earliest cooperative developments in the country. Built in the 1920s, the Amalgamated is a well-maintained group of apartment buildings with attractive trees and landscaping. In total, the Amalgamated accounts for twenty-one of the apartment buildings in this area. Interspersed among the apartments are parks, open spaces, schools, and a few houses.

**Bedford Park.** Jerome Avenue forms the western border of this neighborhood, which is overshadowed by an elevated IRT No.4 subway. Jerome Avenue is typically characterized as having substantial traffic. Within the study area, commercial-type uses comprise the west side of the street, while the east side is lined with apartments and businesses. Jerome Avenue is a major thoroughfare with active uses along this roadway; these uses work together to exacerbate traffic conditions. Heading further east, between Jerome Avenue and the Grand Concourse Boulevard, the area continues to be characterized by apartments and neighborhood type businesses, though the congestion in these areas is less than that found on Jerome Avenue and the Grand Concourse Boulevard. The streets in this area form a grid pattern with high-density development giving the area an urban appearance.

Further east the neighborhood becomes predominantly residential, with several well-maintained houses built in the late nineteenth century and a number of newer apartment buildings. The tree-lined Grand Concourse Boulevard is famous for its elegant apartment houses built in the 1930s. The segment of the Grand Concourse Boulevard, located within the study area, is well-preserved with a solid street wall of five- and six-story apartment buildings.

**Norwood.** A section of Norwood is located within the southeast portion of the study area. This section of Norwood is largely defined by the proximity of Van Cortlandt Park and Woodlawn Cemetery; however, the bustling streets are a reminder of the intense development and activity of this area, in general. Built in 1912, Montefiore Medical Center represents a prominent feature of this area. This complex contains towering, modern-looking facilities, while the surrounding development seems to retain the older character of the overall study area. Montefiore is one of the largest employers in the Bronx. Another central feature of the neighborhood, located within the southeast corner of the study area, is Williamsbridge Oval Park. This park was formerly a reservoir built in 1888; however, it became too small for the City's needs and was eventually turned into a park and recreation center. The park provides a valuable resource for the surrounding community. It offers a variety of outdoor recreational facilities including a 22-acre playground, four basketball courts, eight tennis courts, a one-quarter mile outdoor track; indoor community facilities including a fitness room, a playschool room, a senior citizen room, an after school room, and a room for karate; and programs and events available to the public including karate instruction, senior citizen activities, playschool, an after school program, and regularly scheduled special events.

**Woodlawn.** The eastern portion of the study area encompasses a section of the Woodlawn area of the Bronx. This portion of Woodlawn consists almost entirely of closely situated one- and two-family residential dwellings; however, there are a few interspersed multi-family dwellings. Though the on-street parking and the closely-situated nature of the housing in this section of the Bronx creates a heavily-populated feel, the one-way streets limit the amount of traffic that passes through the residential area compared to the bordering busy roadways (East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and Van Cortlandt Park East) (see Section 6.9, Traffic and Transportation). Additionally, the tree-lined streets contribute to the overall character of this area and soften the dense development. A few of the larger buildings create a pronounced contrast to the smaller single- and multi-family dwellings. The largest multi-family dwelling in this area is the Cooper Cooperative Housing building located at the corner of Napier Avenue and Van Cortlandt Park East. Though not a dominating feature within this portion of the study area, there are several

commercial and retail establishments along East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street and Van Cortlandt Park East, including a deli, gas station, bar, and some commercial space. These commercial and retail features add an apparent element of convenience to the surrounding neighborhood.

#### **6.6.2.2. *Future Without the Project***

The Future Without the Project conditions were developed for the anticipated peak year of construction (2010) and the anticipated year of operation (2011) for the proposed project. The anticipated peak year of construction is based on peak truck traffic and the peak number of workers because such inputs to the community would likely cause the most noticeable land use changes.

Various agencies, planning documents, and other sources were contacted and referenced to determine what approved, proposed, or potential changes may reasonably occur in the Future Without the Project. The agencies contacted include the following: New York State Department of Transportation, NYC Department of City Planning (NYCDCP), the NYCDCP Waterfront Division, NYC Division of Real Estate Services, NYC Economic Development Corporation, NYC Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR), NYC Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the Bronx Borough President's Office, the New York Public Library, and Montefiore Medical Center.

The analyses and projections within this section are based on information available at the time of document preparation. Due to the extended dates for analysis (to 2011), and the likelihood that new projects, proposals, and/or plans and policies will surface during this time frame, it is recognized that there is a potential for neighborhood character issues to arise that cannot be reasonably identified at this time. However, it is anticipated that if and when such other proposals are made, they will consider the proposed project in their own analyses.

In the Future Without the Project, it is anticipated that the character of the Mosholu Site would remain largely unchanged from its existing condition. It is anticipated that the Mosholu Golf Course and Driving Range and the Allen Shandler Recreation Area would continue to operate as recreational facilities within Van Cortlandt Park. As noted in Section 6.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy, there are numerous projects and proposals within the study area; however, the majority of the area projects would not be anticipated to alter the character of the neighborhoods. Rather, many of these projects are anticipated to contribute to the existing character of these areas. One exception to this may be the proposed 197-a Plan in the area of Jerome Park Reservoir.

As noted in Section 6.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy, Community Board 8 in the Bronx is pursuing a 197-a plan with numerous proposals for the area of Jerome Park Reservoir. Included in this proposal is the rezoning of residential areas west of the reservoir to reduce permitted densities, the mapping of a scenic district around the reservoir, and the creation of a more park-like setting around the reservoir. If this plan were implemented there is a potential that the neighborhood setting would be enhanced by some of the proposed actions.

### **6.6.3. Potential Impacts**

#### **6.6.3.1. Potential Project Impacts**

The anticipated year of operation for the proposed plant is 2011. Therefore, potential project impacts have been assessed by comparing the Future With the Project conditions against the Future Without the Project conditions for the year 2011.

The water treatment plant site and vicinity are largely characterized by parks and recreational uses (Van Cortlandt Park, Mosholu Golf Course and driving range, Saturn Playground, and Shandler Recreation Area). The proposed water treatment plant would be largely constructed below-grade and the driving range, clubhouse, and other affected facilities would be replaced, thus restoring recreational activities on the site. The proposed above ground facilities include a chemical fill building, an arrival and receiving building, a guard house, and a maintenance building. Although the proposed above ground water treatment plant facilities would displace parkland uses, these facilities would encompass a relatively small area (2.0 acres). None of the existing uses would be altered, as this area is currently unavailable for public access because it is a fenced driving range. After construction, all the existing facilities would be restored and replaced with new facilities (Figure 6.5-2). This project impact would not be anticipated to substantially affect the area's character, public usage of the Golf Course or Park space, or the wildlife values of the nearby vegetated areas (see Section 6.4, Community Facilities, Section 6.5, Open Space Analysis, and Section 6.14, Natural Resources). The proposed project is also anticipated to remain generally consistent with the existing visual character of the Mosholu Golf Course area (see Section 6.3, Visual Character).

As discussed in Section 6.9, Traffic and Transportation, operation of the proposed project is not anticipated to have substantial traffic impacts on the roadways in the study area due to the low number of employees associated with the completed water treatment plant. Deliveries to the water treatment plant facility would introduce medium-sized and tanker trucks to the area; however, these trucks could use routes including the Major Deegan Expressway (I-87), East 233<sup>rd</sup> Street, and Jerome Avenue, which would minimize their possible effect on the surrounding areas. It is anticipated that these additional vehicles would generally blend with the existing high traffic levels found in the area. Therefore, the anticipated increase of traffic due to project-related activities would not be anticipated to affect or alter the character of the surrounding area.

The character of the proposed project site would remain similar to baseline conditions, as it would continue to be utilized as a recreational uses and park-like facility. The residential and park character of areas near the project site would not be significantly affected by the proposed project since the site would be restored to its existing use as a driving range and would remain a park-like use, nor would the proposed project add significant noise or traffic to surrounding areas. Overall, the study area would still be dominated by parkland and open space (i.e., its defining features). Although the proposed project would result in a more open area due to the loss of trees, the site would still retain a park-like and landscaped character. The proposed project would not significantly impact neighborhood character.



### **6.6.3.2. Potential Construction Impacts**

The anticipated year of peak construction for the proposed plant would be 2010. Therefore, potential construction impacts have been assessed by comparing the Future With the Project conditions for the year 2010.

As noted in Section 6.2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy, construction activities associated with the proposed project would render the existing driving range unusable throughout the duration of the proposed construction. Existing facilities at the site that would be displaced during construction activities include the clubhouse, a maintenance facility, and a parking lot for approximately 75 vehicles. As a result, the character of the site would be altered during construction. The existing park-like uses would be temporarily replaced by activities and noises characteristic of a construction site (see Section 6.3, Visual Character, and Section 6.10, Noise). The displaced golf-course facilities would be temporarily relocated to the Allen Shandler Recreation Area during construction in order to facilitate the continued functioning of the golf course (see Open Space, Figure 6.5-3). The relocation of the golf course facilities to the Shandler Recreation Area would not impact the usability of the Shandler Recreation Area or the surrounding Van Cortlandt Park. Active and passive uses within the Recreation Area and Park would remain plentiful and be able to cater all users who currently utilize the park area. Therefore, the character of the park area surrounding the Mosholu Site would retain its park and open space character during construction. However, the temporary displacement of the clubhouse and other supporting golf course facilities to the Shandler Recreation Area would temporarily change the use of that portion of the Recreation Area from a picnic area to a golf course use during construction. Nevertheless, the Recreation Area would retain its park and open space character since the uses relocated to the area would still be park uses and would continue the purpose of the area as a park use, but with a different type of park use. Therefore, the relocation of the golf course facilities to the Shandler Recreation Area would not alter the character of the park surrounding the Mosholu Site.

The neighborhood character of the area surrounding the Mosholu Golf Course including the communities in the area would not be noticeably altered as a result of the construction of the proposed project at the Mosholu Site. An ornamental wall along Jerome Avenue and a noise wall on the north, west, south, and east sides of the construction area would visually screen the construction work at the Mosholu Site from view to the surrounding community. The ornamental wall would provide a vegetated barrier with trellises for ivy or other vegetation to climb, subject to New York City Art Commission approval (see Section 6.3, Visual Character, for further information about the wall). The construction site with screening would alter views of the Mosholu Golf Course from the surrounding area, but these changes would only be a small portion of the viewscape of Van Cortlandt Park and would not present significant changes to neighborhood character. The community surrounding the Mosholu Site would be separated from the proposed construction area by perimeter fencing and vegetation within the Mosholu Golf Course area. The construction and park alienation of the portion of the Mosholu Golf Course within the water treatment plant construction area would not cause potential zoning and land use changes within the surrounding area. The remainder of Van Cortlandt Park would remain a park and would continue to be utilized for park uses. The residential and commercial areas

surrounding the proposed project site would remain the current zoning and uses irrespective of the proposed project.

High traffic volumes associated with the construction activities of the proposed project would be attenuated by mitigation proposed as part of the project. Therefore, given the existing high level of existing traffic volumes in the area and the traffic mitigation measures being implemented as part of the proposed project (Section 9.2, Mitigation of Potential Impacts, Mosholu Site), there should be no significant impacts to neighborhood character as a result of construction traffic traveling through the area.

Construction noise levels emanating from the project site would not be noticeable (not above the 3 dBA threshold of human hearing) in the surrounding area because as part of the project noise barriers would be built to attenuate construction noise before noise intensive construction would commence (i.e. excavation). Therefore, no significant impacts would occur to the neighborhood character of the surrounding area as a result of noise during construction of the proposed project. Refer to Section 6.10, Noise, for a full discussion of anticipated noise conditions during the construction of the proposed plant at the Mosholu Site.

During construction there is a potential for mobile and stationary air quality sources to produce elevated levels of emissions. Mitigation measures would be undertaken during construction (see Section 9.2, Mitigation of Potential Impacts). While there may be slightly elevated levels of air emissions during construction, with implementation of these measures, the elevated levels of air emissions would not substantially alter the air quality environment of the surrounding area and thus would not cause a significant impact to neighborhood character during construction of the proposed project.

Based on the analyses presented above, the proposed Croton project at the Mosholu Site would have no significant adverse impacts on Neighborhood Character. For comparison purposes, this is true of the Eastview and Harlem River sites as well.