Chapter 5.10: Neighborhood Character

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on neighborhood character. As defined in the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct "personality." These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, 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 effects are rare, and it would be under unusual circumstances that, in the absence of an effect in any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood would result in an effect to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant effect identified in one of the technical areas that contributes to a neighborhood's character is not automatically equivalent to a significant effect on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character may be significantly affected.

This examination focuses on whether a defining feature of the neighborhood's character may be significantly affected by the proposed project. Since many of the relevant components of neighborhood character are considered in other sections of this Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), this chapter has been coordinated with those analyses.

STUDY AREA

The neighborhood character study area (study area) mirrors the study area used for the socioeconomic analysis, shown on Figure 5.2-1. The northern boundary of the study area is East 34th Street between First Avenue and the East River. The western boundary of the study area is First Avenue between East 29th and East 34th Streets; Third Avenue between East 3rd and East 29th Streets; and Allen, Clinton, Norfolk, Essex, and Pike Streets between East 3rd Street and South Street. The East River is the eastern and southern boundary of the study area. The study area includes portions of Manhattan Community Districts 3 and 6, and the following neighborhoods: Lower East Side, East Village, Alphabet City, Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Gramercy Park, and Kips Bay.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Principal conclusions for each of the alternatives evaluated are summarized below. Additional details on these alternatives are provided in Chapter 2.0, "Project Alternatives."

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 1)

The No Action Alternative assumes that no new comprehensive coastal protection system is installed in the proposed project area. As described in **Appendix A1**, there are a number of projects planned or currently under construction in the project area, including the Pier 42 project and the Solar One Environmental Education Center project in Stuyvesant Cove Park (No Action projects). During a coastal storm event similar to the design storm, the protected area could experience

effects similar to Hurricane Sandy. Targeted resiliency measures may reduce the effects of storms in certain locations, but they would not provide protection for the larger protected area.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 4): FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM WITH A RAISED EAST RIVER PARK

The Preferred Alternative proposes to move the line of flood protection further into East River Park, thereby protecting both the community and the park from design storm events, as well as increased tidal inundation resulting from sea level rise. The Preferred Alternative would raise the majority of East River Park. This plan would reduce the length of wall between the community and the waterfront to provide for enhanced neighborhood connectivity and integration. A shared-use pedestrian/bicyclist flyover bridge linking East River Park and Captain Brown Walk would be built cantilevered over the northbound Franklin Delano Roosevelt East River Drive (FDR Drive) to address the narrowed pathway (pinch point) near the East River Dock between East 13th Street and East 15th Street, substantially improving the City's greenway network and north–south connectivity in the project area.

This alternative would not result in significant adverse effects to neighborhood character within the study area. The Preferred Alternative would provide flood protection, increased access, and enhanced and reconfigured open spaces. The Preferred Alternative would provide additional resiliency measures necessary to protect the majority of East River Park from coastal surge events and periodic inundation as a result of sea level rise. These resiliency measures would enhance park public access, operations, functionality, and usability during pre- and post-storm periods. These additional resiliency measures would not negatively alter or affect current uses or other features that define the character of neighborhoods within the study area but would enhance the long-term resiliency of a critical neighborhood asset. Therefore, the Preferred Alternative is not expected to result in substantial changes to neighborhood character.

OTHER ALTERNATIVES

The Flood Protection System on the West Side of East River Park – Baseline Alternative (Alternative 2), the Flood Protection System on the West Side of East River – Enhanced Park and Access Alternative (Alternative 3), and the Flood Protection System East of FDR Drive Alternative (Alternative 5) would similarly not result in significant adverse effects to neighborhood character within the study area. These alternatives deviate from the Preferred Alternative in the extent to which they enhance open space and access to open spaces and in the exact alignment of the flood protection, but none of these alternatives would significantly adversely affect any of the various elements that contribute to the character of the neighborhood.

C. REGULATORY CONTEXT

Per the *CEQR Technical Manual*, there are no special statutes, regulations, or standards that control the study of neighborhood character. Regulations and standards for each of the technical areas that may contribute to neighborhood character are discussed in Section 700 of the appropriate *CEQR Technical Manual* chapters.

D. METHODOLOGY

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an analysis of neighborhood character evaluates whether a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse effects in any relevant technical area (land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise), or if a proposed project

would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively affect neighborhood character. If so, a preliminary assessment is undertaken. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood that comprises the study area, followed by an assessment of the potential for the proposed project to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas. If the preliminary assessment concludes that the proposed action has the potential to affect defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character may be warranted. If needed, the detailed assessment would use the information from the preliminary assessment as a baseline and then project and compare the future No Action and With Action conditions.

Since the EIS includes analyses of several environmental impact categories that are relevant to neighborhood character, a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character has been prepared. The preliminary assessment describes the defining features of the neighborhood and then assesses the potential for the proposed project to impact these defining features.

E. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

PROJECT AREA ONE

Project Area One consists primarily of the FDR Drive right-of-way and East River Park. Additionally, the Montgomery Street (South Street to Water Street) right-of-way is located within Project Area One. The FDR Drive, a multi-lane roadway, traverses the full extent of Project Area One through its western edge. South of the project area, the FDR Drive runs on an elevated viaduct. Within Project Area One, the FDR Drive crosses above Montgomery Street (this provides access to Pier 42 and the southern end of East River Park), and then returns to grade at approximately Gouverneur Slip East. East River Park, which is operated by New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYC Parks), is approximately 45.88 acres and is located between the FDR Drive to the west and the East River to the east, Jackson Street to the south, and East 13th Street to the north. Neighborhoods in or adjacent to Project Area One include the Lower East Side, East Village, and Alphabet City. Large residential developments that include New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and private housing developments are located adjacent to Project Area One's west side. East River Park contains a variety of passive and active recreation spaces, including a waterfront esplanade and athletic fields, and is accessible via several bridges along the western side of the park. See Chapter 5.3, "Open Space," for a detailed description of East River Park amenities. At Cherry Street, a wide bridge connects Corlears Hook Park to East River Park. Moving northward, a bridge at Delancey Street provides access from the Lower East Side neighborhood to East River Park. At East Houston Street, pedestrians can access East River Park from ramps at the overpass over the FDR Drive. Bridges over the FDR Drive at East 6th Street and East 10th Street provide access to East River Park for residents of the East Village and Alphabet City neighborhoods.

Throughout the week, community members utilize picnic and barbecue areas of East River Park for various social gatherings. Fields and courts are available for permitted games, and when unoccupied, may be used for informal (pick up) games. The East River Greenway runs north to south along the eastern side of the FDR Drive, and is utilized daily by joggers and cyclists for commuting and recreation. The Lower East Side Ecology Center utilizes a former Fireboat House near the Williamsburg Bridge for programming activities and has a composting center at the southern end of the park. East River Park also contains an amphitheater used for various events (e.g., City Parks Foundation SummerStage) near the bridge leading to Corlears Hook Park.

Corlears Hook Park was closed to the public following Hurricane Sandy due to tree damage within the park.

PROJECT AREA TWO

Project Area Two extends north and east from Project Area One, from East 13th Street to East 25th Street. In addition to the FDR Drive right-of-way, Project Area Two also includes Asser Levy Playground and East 25th Street from the FDR Drive to First Avenue. The FDR Drive runs at grade in the southern portion of Project Area Two to just east of Avenue C, where it rises to run on a viaduct before declining back at-grade on East 25th Street. South of Avenue C and west of the FDR Drive is Murphy Brothers Playground.

Neighborhoods in or adjacent to Project Area Two include the East Village, Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Gramercy Park, and Kips Bay neighborhoods. At the southernmost point of Project Area Two, the Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk runs for 0.5 miles, serving as a combined walkway and bikeway. The walkway is adjacent to the East River Dock, which is located east of the walkway on the East River's edge. The East River Dock is used for fuel and oil deliveries for the portion of the East River Complex located on the west side of the FDR Drive. At this location, the combined bikeway and walkway narrow, with the FDR Drive barrier wall on the west, and fencing belonging to the East River Substation and East River Dock on the east. The Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk provides expansive river views that include the Queens waterfront, Roosevelt Island and the Ed Koch Queensboro Bridge, and Midtown Manhattan. At the northern end of the Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk, the walkway/bikeway continues into Stuyvesant Cove Park, under the jurisdiction of the New York City Department of Small Business Services (SBS).

Stuyvesant Cove Park is a small and narrow waterfront park located on the east side of the elevated FDR Drive between East 20th and East 23rd Streets. Pedestrian ingress and egress locations to the park are via crosswalks at East 20th and East 23rd Streets across Avenue C and underneath the elevated FDR Drive. The park contains a waterfront esplanade and a landscaped interior section with soft-surfaced paths, benches and fixed tables, vegetation, and pergolas adjacent to the East River Bikeway that runs along the western side of the park. The northern end of the park consists of a large, paved area with a small building used for performances and educational programs. North of Stuyvesant Cove Park, a gas station is located at the waterfront, and a landscaped Greenstreets median is located on the west side of the FDR Drive at East 23rd Street. At the foot of East 23rd Street and adjacent to Project Area Two is the Marine and Aviation Building, which contains a parking garage, a landing base for seaplanes, and berthing spots for pleasure boats. North of East 23rd Street between East 23rd and East 25th Streets is the Asser Levy Playground. Between the FDR Drive and First Avenue, East 25th Street is lined on the north by Hunter College and City University of New York (CUNY) buildings and on the south by the Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Health Care Center (VA Medical Center).

Project Area One and Project Area Two contain a total of four known architectural historic resources that have been determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR): the FDR Drive, Williamsburg Bridge, and the Former Marine Engine Co. 66 Fireboat House. With the exception of the FDR Drive, which runs through both Project Area One and Project Area Two, these resources are all located in Project Area One.

STUDY AREA

The study area, which extends inland from Project Area One and Project Area Two, includes portions of Manhattan Community Districts 3 and 6. The Lower East Side, East Village, and Alphabet City neighborhoods, which are located within the study area, are located in Manhattan

Community District 3; the Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Gramercy Park, and Kips Bay neighborhoods, also within the study area, are located in Manhattan Community District 6.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the study area had a population of 160,138 residents and contained 77,596 households in 2010–2016. Between 2000 and 2010, the growth rate of both population and number of households was lower for the study area as compared with Manhattan. According to 2012–2016 American Community Survey (ACS) data, the median household income for the study area was $59,272, which was lower than the median household income in Manhattan of $75,513. Between 1999 and 2012–2016, the median household income in the study area decreased by 1.4 percent, which contrasts with Manhattan (7.9 percent increase), although the change is smaller than the decrease for New York City as whole during that period (-3.1 percent). The study area includes predominantly multifamily mid-rise buildings and tower-in-the-park developments. In 2012–2016, there were approximately 82,724 housing units in the socioeconomic study area, of which approximately 15.5 percent were in NYCHA developments[1] and 10.0 percent were in privately owned subsidized rental developments. The percentage of renters in the study area's residential units was 79.9 percent in 2012–2016, compared with 66.8 percent and 61.9 percent in Manhattan and New York City, respectively.

Lower East Side

A portion of the Lower East Side neighborhood is in the southern section of the study area between East Houston Street to the north, and Clinton, Norfolk, Essex, and Pike Streets between East 3rd Street and South Street to the west. This neighborhood is predominantly residential and is characterized by higher-density residential and multifamily buildings. Higher density buildings in the Lower East Side include public housing complexes such as NYCHA's Baruch Houses, Vladeck Houses I and II, LaGuardia Houses, Rutgers Houses, as well as several smaller NYCHA developments. Privately owned housing complexes include the East River Housing Cooperative Village, and the Gouverneur Gardens Housing Cooperative complex. The neighborhood's largest commercial concentrations are located along Grand Street from Pitt Street to Madison Street, and along Clinton Street between East Broadway and Henry Street. Many of the stores are in mixed-use residential buildings that consist of commercial uses on the ground floor, and residential uses above, which include eating and drinking establishments, grocery stores, hair/nail salons, delis, laundromats, bike shops, and banks.

Major eastbound-westbound roadways in the Lower East Side that provide direct access into and out of the neighborhood are Montgomery Street, Grand Street, Delancey Street and East Houston Street. Major northbound-southbound roadways that run through the neighborhood include South Street, Montgomery Street (which turns into Pitt Street north of Grand Street), and the FDR Drive. The Williamsburg Bridge, which is a steel suspension bridge that traverses East River Park at Delancey Street and spans the East River, connects Delancey Street on the Lower East Side of Manhattan to Marcy Avenue in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. In many parts of the Lower East Side, including Montgomery Street, South Street, Gouverneur Slips East and West, and the linear parks of the Vladeck Houses, views toward the waterfront are limited by the FDR Drive and the pier shed structure on Pier 42, although the Pier 42 shed is being demolished as part of the redevelopment of Pier 42 as an open space. Views of the waterfront are found in the Lower East Side around Corlears Hook Park and on Grand Street, as this area is slightly elevated compared to the FDR Drive and the waterfront.

[1] NYCHA website (www.nyc.gov/nycha; accessed September 2015).

Throughout the Lower East Side, there are public facilities and institutions, religious facilities, open spaces, parking, and commercial and office space. Located between East Houston Street and Stanton Street, Hamilton Fish Park provides the Lower East Side community with active recreation amenities that include fitness equipment, basketball courts, handball courts, outdoor pools, playgrounds, and spray showers, as well as educational programming. Corlears Hook Park, which is located at the intersection of Jackson and Cherry Streets along the FDR Drive, provides expansive views and active recreation park amenities that include baseball fields, playgrounds, a dog park, and spray showers. The largest open space resource in the Lower East Side is East River Park, which is located east of the FDR Drive and outside of residential areas in the Lower East Side. East River Park provides the neighborhood with a variety of active and passive recreation park amenities and is accessible to the Lower East Side community via the Corlears Hook Bridge, Delancey Street Bridge, and the Houston Street overpass.

East Village and Alphabet City

Located in the center of the study area north of East Houston Street is the East Village neighborhood. The Alphabet City neighborhood is located within the East Village, and is identifiable by its streets, which are the only ones in Manhattan with single letter names. The East Village and Alphabet City neighborhoods are largely residential. Except for a few large developments (e.g., NYCHA Lillian Ward Houses and Jacob Riis Houses), residential buildings in these two neighborhoods are typically four to six stories. The East Village and Alphabet City also contain a variety of commercial establishments, many of which are located on the ground floor of residential buildings. These businesses are largely concentrated along Avenue C and Avenue D, and include delis, grocery stores, restaurants, pharmacies, laundromats, and hair/nail salons.

Waterfront views are varied in the East Village and Alphabet City. There are limited view corridors from within the Lillian Wald Houses in the southeast portion of the East Village, but more expansive views of East River Park and Brooklyn available at East 6th Street and East 10th Street. Major eastbound-westbound roadways in the East Village and Alphabet City that provide direct access to and from Project Area One and Project Area Two include East Houston Street, East 10th Street and East 14th Street. Major northbound-southbound roadways that run through the neighborhood include First Avenue, Avenue C, and the FDR Drive.

Open spaces within the East Village and Alphabet City neighborhoods consist of a number of community gardens managed by neighborhood residents, and three NYC Parks-managed parks, including Tompkins Square Park. Located approximately three blocks west of the northern portion of East River Park, Tompkins Square Park provides programming opportunities, passive recreation spaces, and active recreation spaces that include basketball courts, a dog park, handball courts, playgrounds, fitness equipment, outdoor pools, and spray showers. Similar to the Lower East Side, the East Village and Alphabet City neighborhoods are separated from East River Park by the FDR Drive. East Village and Alphabet City residents can access the park via the Houston Street overpass, the East 6th Street Bridge, and the East 10th Street Bridge.

Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village

Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village are large private residential developments located from First Avenue to Avenue C, and East 14th to 23rd Streets. The Stuyvesant Town–Peter Cooper Village neighborhood is characterized by residential housing, with playgrounds and lawns that are interspersed throughout, and a few street-level commercial uses. The majority of commercial establishments are located along First Avenue, where delis, restaurants, laundromats, hair/nail

salons, banks, clothing stores, and grocery stores cater to Stuyvesant Town and Peter Cooper Village residents. The neighborhood is adjacent to Stuyvesant Cove Park, which is accessible via crosswalks at East 20th and East 23rd Streets across Avenue C and underneath the elevated FDR Drive.

At this end of the study area, wide view corridors along East 20th and East 23rd Streets provide views of Stuyvesant Cove Park and Brooklyn. However, views are partially obscured by the elevated FDR Drive, and the East River is not visible. Major eastbound-westbound roadways in the East Village and Alphabet City neighborhoods providing direct access to and from Project Area Two include East 14th Street, East 20th Street, and East 23rd Street. Major northbound-southbound roadways that run through the neighborhood include First Avenue, Avenue C, and the FDR Drive.

Gramercy Park

A portion of the Gramercy Park neighborhood, between First and Third Avenues and East 14th and East 23rd Streets, is located within the study area. Gramercy Park is defined as the neighborhood surrounding Gramercy Park, which is a small, private park bordered by East 21st Street, East 20th Street, and Gramercy Park East and West (and between Third Avenue and Park Avenue). The neighborhood is bound by Stuyvesant Town-Peter Cooper Village to the east, the Flatiron District to the west, Union Square to the southwest, Stuyvesant Square to the south, Rose Hill to the northwest, and Kips Bay to the northeast. Gramercy Park is primarily a residential neighborhood, consisting of mixed residential and commercial buildings, one- and two-family buildings, and multifamily elevator/walk-ups. Commercial establishments within the neighborhood are concentrated along First Avenue and Second Avenue, and the Beth Israel Medical Center constitutes a major public facility and institutional use within this neighborhood. Open spaces within this neighborhood include Augustus St. Gaudens Playground and Peter's Field. Major eastbound-westbound roadways in the Gramercy Park neighborhood that provide direct access to and from Project Area One and Project Area Two include East 14th Street, East 20th Street, and East 23rd Street. Major northbound-southbound roadways that run through the neighborhood include First Avenue and Second Avenue.

Kips Bay

A portion of the Kips Bay neighborhood, located between East 23rd Street and East 34th Street, is located within the study area. Part of Manhattan Community Board 6, Kips Bay is bordered on the north by Murray Hill; on the west by Madison Square; on the south by the Gramercy Park neighborhood and the Peter Cooper Village apartment complex; and on the east by the East River. The portion of the Kips Bay neighborhood located in the study area is primarily characterized by the VA Medical Center, and Asser Levy Playground, which is located along the FDR Drive between East 23rd Street and East 25th Street. Asser Levy Playground provides year-round programming, and a variety of active recreational park amenities that consist of basketball courts, football fields, indoor and outdoor pools, playgrounds, fitness equipment, a recreation center, and a running track.

F. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS

NO ACTION ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 1)

The No Action Alternative is the future condition without the proposed project and assumes that no new comprehensive coastal protection system is installed in the proposed project area. As described in **Appendix A1**, there are a number of projects planned or currently under consideration

in the project area, including the Pier 42 project and the Solar One Environmental Education Center project (No Action projects).

At the southern end of Project Area One, NYC Parks plans to reconstruct Pier 42 by converting a former industrial maritime site on the East River into new waterfront open space. Phase 1 of the project, which is anticipated to be complete by 2021, would include demolition of a pier shed and replacement of the existing upland parking area with a new public park, introducing approximately 2.93 acres of new passive open space to the study area. This landscaped open space would feature an entry garden in the western section of the open space, a grassy knoll, solar powered safety lighting, and access from the shared-use path along the FDR Drive service road or Montgomery Street. The Pier 42 project would enhance the pedestrian experience by activating the site with new, public uses, and reestablishing public access to the waterfront at this location.

To help prevent damage due to flooding, NYCHA has proposed site-specific resiliency measures at its Bernard Baruch, Lillian Wald, Campos Plaza II, and Jacob Riis and Jacob Riis II Houses, which are located within the Lower East Side and East Village neighborhoods. At the Bernard Baruch Houses, NYCHA proposes to install a floodwall along the west side of Baruch Drive, individually floodproof the buildings east of Baruch Drive, construct an electrical annex to each building east of Baruch Drive, and construct a new boiler plant in the center of the housing complex. At the Lillian Wald and Jacob Riis and Jacob Riis II Houses, NYCHA proposes to floodproof each building and construct an electrical annex to each building. At Campos Plaza II, NYCHA proposes to floodproof the building and install stand-by generators. Site restoration would also be undertaken at each housing complex.

Improvements to open spaces are proposed at P.S. 184 Shuang Wen School, located at Cherry Street and Montgomery Street, and P.S. 2 Meyer London, located at Madison Street and Pike Street. These improvements would include installation of a mini soccer field and new playgrounds as well as green infrastructure to absorb stormwater runoff and reduce heat island impacts. Playground and green infrastructure improvements at these sites would be administered through The Trust for Public Lands and the NYC Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) with funding from the Housing and Urban Development's Natural Disaster Resilience Grant. Installation of the mini soccer field would be funded through a public-private partnership between the Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC, the U.S. Soccer Foundation, the New York City Football Club, Etihad Airways, and adidas as part of the New York City Soccer Initiative.

In Project Area Two, which includes the East Village, Stuyvesant Town, Peter Cooper Village, Stuyvesant Square, Gramercy Park, and Kips Bay neighborhoods, one of the planned projects is the development of the new Solar One facility in Stuyvesant Cove Park. Located at the northern end of Stuyvesant Cove Park, the Solar One Environmental Education Center is proposed to be rebuilt.

Collectively, these planned projects to enhance open space resources, provide targeted neighborhood resiliency measures, and improve access to parkland and other parts of the City are consistent with the current neighborhood uses, and are not expected to create any substantial change in neighborhood character. However, the neighborhoods within the study area would continue to be susceptible to coastal flooding during storm events, and the potential for adverse socioeconomic effects within these neighborhoods due to a storm surge would remain.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 4): FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM WITH A RAISED EAST RIVER PARK

The Preferred Alternative proposes to move the line of flood protection in East River Park into the park, thereby protecting both the community and the park from design storm events, as well as protecting the Park from increased tidal inundation resulting from sea level rise. The Preferred Alternative would raise the majority of East River Park and limit the length of wall between the community and the waterfront to provide for enhanced neighborhood connectivity and integration. A shared-use pedestrian/bicyclist flyover bridge linking East River Park and Captain Brown Walk would be built cantilevered over the northbound FDR Drive to address the narrowed pathway (pinch point) near the East River Dock between East 13th Street and East 15th Street, substantially improving the City's greenway network and north–south connectivity in the project area.

With the addition of the resiliency features included in Preferred Alternative, open space within Project Area One would be improved beyond the enhancements included in Alternatives 2 and Alternative 3. The proposed resiliency features would allow for use of East River Park to resume more quickly following a storm event, which would benefit residents of neighborhoods within the study area that frequent the park.

The open space enhancements within Stuyvesant Cove Park are not anticipated to affect the Solar One Environmental Education Center. The shared-use pedestrian bridge proposed between the northern portion of East River Park and Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk would improve connectivity and improve its use as a space for passive and active recreation. Flood protection measures proposed under the Preferred Alternative involve changes to park elements and minor changes to streets where floodgates are proposed. These changes would be located east of the FDR Drive and outside of residential areas and would not be expected to alter or disrupt elements within the surrounding neighborhoods themselves. Open spaces within Project Area One and Project Area Two, including East River Park, would remain as key resources for the surrounding communities.

There is the potential for temporary effects to neighborhood character under the Preferred Alternative over multiple analysis years due to the extent of displacement of recreational facilities and open space amenities in Project Areas One and Two over the 3.5-year construction period. However, once completed, the Preferred Alternative would directly affect East River Park, Stuyvesant Cove Park, Murphy Brothers Playground and Asser Levy Playground in a positive manner, by enhancing their design and increasing their accessibility to the public. The proposed project under the Preferred Alternative would also enhance the resiliency of open space and protect park resources from future design storms. Additionally, potential on-site or off-site measures to mitigate the temporary construction effects to the greatest extent practicable are being explored by the City. Details of these potential mitigation measures are described in Chapter 6.2, "Construction—Open Space." As discussed above, the neighborhoods within the study area would continue to be susceptible to coastal flooding during storm events, and the potential for adverse socioeconomic effects within these neighborhoods due to a storm surge would remain if no new comprehensive coastal protection system is installed in the proposed project area.

Since the proposed flood protection system may result in some modifications of the existing street widths and directions, sidewalks, and crosswalks, a detailed traffic and pedestrian analysis of potential effects was conducted at those affected locations. The analysis concludes that significant adverse transportation effects are not anticipated with the Preferred Alternative. Additionally, the Preferred Alternative would be consistent with existing and planned land use, zoning, and public policies applicable to the study area. Construction of the Preferred Alternative is anticipated to

result in temporary traffic effects; however, these effects could be mitigated by implementing traffic mitigation measures, including signal timing changes at affected intersections, and the development and a rerouting plan for users of the East River bikeway/walkway. Therefore, it is not anticipated that features of the neighborhood would be significantly affected by traffic effects associated with construction of the Preferred Alternative.

Similarly, it is not expected that the flood protection features associated with the Preferred Alternative would have adverse urban design effects in the study area. Under this alternative, the majority of East River Park would be raised and some existing features in East River Park would be reconfigured and replaced, such as the amphitheater, a picnic area, soccer field, basketball courts at Delancey Street, the water play area at Grand Street, tennis courts north of the Williamsburg Bridge, and the existing grill and picnic area at the northern end of the park. However, the reconstructed park, including replacement of these key active and passive recreation components and an improved, integrated park landscape would ensure that these changes do not result in adverse urban design effects to East River Park. In addition, the completely reconstructed bridges at Corlears Hook, Delancey, and East 10th Streets would provide improved park access. Additionally, adverse effects due to tree removal throughout the East River Park and Stuyvesant Cove Park would be lessened by new tree plantings included in the landscape plan for this alternative. Although the proposed floodwalls and closure structures would constitute new urban design features, they would largely be strategically located in areas where there are existing fences and walls, and where the FDR Drive is elevated on a viaduct.

There is the potential for temporary effects to neighborhood character under the Preferred Alternative over multiple analysis years due to the temporary adverse visual effects associated with construction of the Preferred Alternative. It is anticipated that the entirety of East River Park would be fenced off for construction to keep the public out of the working areas. The closed and fenced East River Park during construction would obstruct views from the FDR Drive and the upland neighborhood towards the East River. In addition, the pedestrian experience in the vicinity of the existing bridge landings would temporarily be adversely affected during construction and views of the East River would be temporarily blocked. Murphy Brothers Playground, Stuyvesant Cove Park, Asser Levy Playground, and a portion of Captain Patrick J. Brown Walk would also be closed and temporarily fenced off during construction. Closure of these open space resources would detract from the experience of pedestrians in the immediate vicinity and would also cause temporary adverse effects on the urban visual context. However, upon completion the Preferred Alternative would maintain views to East River Park, and because the park would slope down to the grade of the FDR Drive and there would be no floodwalls along the park's western edge; these alternatives would also improve accessibility to the park.

The construction of floodwalls and closure structures would directly affect the FDR Drive, which is identified as an S/NR-eligible historic resource. However, these alterations are not expected to adversely affect the historical integrity of the FDR Drive, which has been continually modified over time, or result in a change in scale, visual prominence, or visual context to the structure. Similarly, construction of the Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to adversely affect the historic or architectural resources of the neighborhood, as no other identified historic or architectural resources would be affected by the Preferred Alternative. For construction work that could occur in the vicinity of identified architectural resources, Construction Protection Plans (CPPs) would be developed and implemented for these resources to avoid inadvertent construction-period damage.

Potential environmental effects related to noise are anticipated during the construction period; however, these conditions are not anticipated to affect the neighborhood character of the surrounding area under the Preferred Alternative. Source or path controls beyond code requirements would be considered and implemented during construction of the proposed project to minimize the effects of noise. At other receptors near the project area, including open space, residential, school, and hospital receptors, noise resulting from construction of the proposed project may at times be noticeable, but would be temporary and would generally not exceed typical noise levels in the general area and so would not rise to the level of a significant adverse noise effect. Long-term operation of the proposed project both during storm and non-storm conditions would have no effect on noise and therefore would not change the long-term character of the neighborhood.

As described in Chapter 5.2, "Socioeconomic Conditions," while the flood protection and open space enhancements provided by the Preferred Alternative could result in increases in market-rate residential and commercial rents within the study area, potential increases in property value attributable to this alternative are not expected to cause significant residential or commercial displacement pressures within the study area. A significant portion of housing units in the study area and within the flood zone are forms of rent-protected housing and would be protected from local market forces. This rent-protected housing includes NYCHA housing developments, and some units within Peter Cooper Village and Stuyvesant Town, as well as affordable residential units in privately owned subsidized developments. For housing in the study area and within the flood zone that is not rent-protected, recent market trends show this housing to already be well above rents affordable to low- and moderate-income households. Rents for this housing are increasing at a higher rate compared to all of Manhattan, and this trend is expected to continue with or without the Preferred Alternative.

Since the Preferred Alternative would not introduce a wholly new use that would have the potential to fundamentally alter real estate values, no adverse effects to socioeconomic conditions are expected in study area neighborhoods due to this alternative. As a result of the flood protection provided by the Preferred Alternative, businesses located in the study area may experience enhanced property values. This effect would be limited to businesses located within the flood zone and would not have the potential for significant effects to neighborhood businesses throughout the study area. As discussed in Chapter 5.2, "Socioeconomic Conditions," of this FEIS, most commercial uses within the study area are located outside of or on the outskirts of the protected area. Also, there is an existing trend toward market-rate commercial development in the study area. Therefore, any potential for indirect business displacement from storm-related influences on rent would be limited to businesses within the protected area and would not have the potential for significant effects throughout the overall study area. Even in a future without flood protection scenario, potential flooding is not expected to dissuade the food service and retail establishments that compose the majority of neighborhood businesses within the flood zone from operating, given the infrequency of major storm events. Since businesses are expected to continue to locate in the study area regardless of flood protection, a scenario in which implementation of the Preferred Alternative would attract the volume of new business necessary to substantively affect neighborhood character is not anticipated.

Similarly, construction of the Preferred Alternative is not anticipated to adversely affect socioeconomic conditions in study area neighborhoods, therefore the features of the neighborhood are not anticipated to be affected. Construction would not directly displace businesses, nor would they require the temporary closure of businesses within or surrounding the project area, including businesses on routes of access to/from construction sites. Construction activities would, at times,

affect pedestrian and vehicular access in the immediate vicinity of construction activities. However, construction activities in the project area are located far enough away from businesses such that access to businesses would not be impeded. Lane and/or sidewalk closures and construction staging areas would not obstruct entrances to any existing businesses, or obstruct major thoroughfares used by customers. Businesses would not be significantly affected by any temporary reductions in the amount of pedestrian foot traffic or vehicular delays that could occur as a result of construction activities.

The Preferred Alternative would not be expected to alter or disrupt elements within the adjacent neighborhoods themselves. Thus, the flood protection measures, open space enhancements, and improved park resiliency measures proposed under the Preferred Alternative would not be expected to create any substantial change in neighborhood character.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 2): BASELINE FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM ON THE WEST SIDE OF EAST RIVER PARK – BASELINE

Alternative 2 would not introduce any changes to land use, zoning, open space, socioeconomic conditions, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, and transportation that would result in effects to neighborhood character not described above for the Preferred Alternative. Alternative 2 would not be expected to alter or disrupt elements within the adjacent neighborhoods themselves. Open spaces within Project Area One and Project Area Two, including East River Park, would remain as key resources for the surrounding communities. Alternative 2 would not change the amount of open space in the study area, although it would affect some East River Park and Stuyvesant Cove Park features, and it would include only minimal provisions for open space improvements. This alternative would moderately enhance passive recreation and landscaped spaces within East River Park and Stuyvesant Cove Park.

Alternative 2 would involve less construction in City parkland (e.g., East River Park), resulting in less temporary displacement of recreational facilities. Therefore, the temporary significant adverse direct and indirect open space effects under Alternative 2 would be less than the Preferred Alternative. However, Alternative 2 would result in fewer resiliency and enhanced park and access benefits it would not provide flood protection to East River Park; would not reconstruct and improve the landscapes, recreational fields, playgrounds, and amenities within East River Park; and would not redesign and reconstruct the Murphy Brothers and Asser Levy Playgrounds. Additionally, under Alternative 2, a new raised and landscaped park-side plaza landing would not be created at the entrance to East River Park from the East Houston Street overpass.

Since Alternative 2 is expected to yield comparable worker and truck estimates during peak construction as the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 2 would have the potential to result in similar significant adverse traffic effects at certain intersections. However, these significant adverse effects could be fully mitigated with the implementation of signal timing changes. This alternative would not have any significant adverse transit, pedestrian, or parking effects. Therefore, it is not anticipated that neighborhood features would be significantly affected by traffic effects associated with construction of Alternative 2.

Some features of this alternative would likely block existing views of the waterfront and East River potentially resulting in significant adverse view corridor effects at distinct locations. While potentially significantly adverse, these likely blocked views would not be expected to result in any adverse effects to neighborhood character. Construction of Alternative 2 would have temporary adverse visual effects during construction. Since the flood protection and enhanced park and access features for this alternative are expected to be completed over a 5-year construction period

as compared to the 3.5-year period for the Preferred Alternative, the temporary adverse visual effects during construction would be longer for Alternative 2.

Construction would directly affect the FDR Drive, which is identified as an S/NR-eligible historic resource. However, these alterations are not expected to adversely affect the historical integrity of the FDR Drive, which has been continually modified over time, or result in a change in scale, visual prominence, or visual context to the structure. Construction of Alternative 2 is not anticipated to adversely affect the historic or architectural resources of the neighborhood. For construction work that could occur in the vicinity of identified architectural resources, CPPs would be developed and implemented for these resources to avoid inadvertent construction-period damage.

Potential environmental effects related to noise are anticipated during the construction period; however, these conditions are not anticipated to affect the neighborhood character of the surrounding area. Source or path controls beyond code requirements would be considered and implemented during construction of the proposed project to minimize the effects of noise. At other receptors near the project area, including open space, residential, school, and hospital receptors, noise resulting from construction of the proposed project may at times be noticeable, but would be temporary and would generally not exceed typical noise levels in the general area and so would not rise to the level of a significant adverse noise effect. However, long-term operation of the proposed project both during storm and non-storm conditions would have minimal effect on noise and therefore would not change the long-term character of the neighborhood.

Construction of Alternative 2 would be similar to the Preferred Alternative in that it would not directly displace businesses, nor would it require the temporary closure of businesses within or surrounding the project area, including businesses on routes of access to/from construction sites. Overall, construction activities associated with Alternative 2 would not generate significant adverse socioeconomic effects or adversely affect features of the neighborhood.

Alternative 2 would introduce flood protection elements designed to integrate into the existing parkland and streets of Project Area One and Project Area Two, while modestly enhancing open space and access to open space for residents of neighborhoods within the study area. These flood protection measures and open space enhancements would be primarily located at the waterfront, separated from the edge of the surrounding neighborhoods by the FDR Drive, and would not result in disruption that would disconnect or alter the neighborhood fabric. Thus, Alternative 2 would not be expected to create any substantial change in neighborhood character.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 3): FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM ON THE WEST SIDE OF EAST RIVER PARK – ENHANCED PARK AND ACCESS

Alternative 3 would not introduce any changes to land use, zoning, open space, socioeconomic conditions, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, and transportation that would result in effects to neighborhood character not described above for The Preferred Alternative. Alternative 3 would not be expected to alter or disrupt elements within the adjacent neighborhoods themselves. Open spaces within Project Area One and Project Area Two, including East River Park, would remain as key resources for the surrounding communities. Specifically, under Alternative 3, the total amount of open space in Project Area One and Project Area Two would remain the same, but passive recreation and landscaped spaces would be improved within East River Park and Stuyvesant Cove Park beyond what is proposed with Alternative 2. Some amenities within East River Park would be relocated or reconfigured to facilitate enhanced neighborhood connections and operations and maintenance, and certain park features would be

rebuilt and expanded, including the playground and picnic and barbecue areas near East 10th Street. Thus, the flood protection measures, open space enhancements, and improved park resiliency measures proposed under Alternative 3 would not be expected to create any substantial change in neighborhood character.

Alternative 3 would involve a similar level of temporarily displaced open space as the Preferred Alternative and would therefore result in a similar significant adverse effect to open space as compared to the Preferred Alternative for the 2020 to 2023 analysis years. However, Alternative 3 would involve a longer construction duration, resulting in prolonged significant adverse effects. Therefore, the temporary significant adverse direct and indirect open space effects under Alternative 3 would be greater than the Preferred Alternative. In addition, Alternative 3 would result in fewer resiliency benefits and would not provide flood protection to East River Park.

Similar to the Preferred Alternative, temporary significant adverse traffic effects were identified. However, these effects could be fully mitigated with measures including signal timing changes at affected intersections, and the development and a rerouting plan for users of the East River bikeway/walkway. Therefore, it is not anticipated that neighborhood features would be significantly affected by traffic effects associated with construction of Alternative 3.

As with the Preferred Alternative, Alternative 3 would affect urban design features and existing waterfront views; however, these effects would not significantly alter the existing neighborhood character. During construction, temporary adverse visual effects could be experienced under Alternative 3. Since the flood protection and enhanced park and access features for this alternative are expected to be completed over a 5-year construction period as compared to the 3.5-year period for the Preferred Alternative, the temporary adverse visual effects during construction would be longer for Alternative 3.

As under the Preferred Alternative, construction of Alternative 3 is not anticipated to adversely affect the historic or architectural resources of the neighborhood. For construction work that could occur in the vicinity of identified architectural resources, CPPs would be developed and implemented for these resources to avoid inadvertent construction-period damage.

Potential environmental effects related to noise are anticipated during the construction period; however, these conditions are not anticipated to affect the neighborhood character of the surrounding area. Source or path controls beyond code requirements would be considered and implemented during construction of the proposed project to minimize the effects of noise. At other receptors near the project area, including open space, residential, school, and hospital receptors, noise resulting from construction of the proposed project may at times be noticeable, but would be temporary and would generally not exceed typical noise levels in the general area and so would not rise to the level of a significant adverse noise effect. However, long-term operation of the proposed project both during storm and non-storm conditions would have minimal effect on noise and therefore would not change the long-term character of the neighborhood.

Construction of Alternative 3 would be similar to the Preferred Alternative in that it would not directly displace businesses, nor would it require the temporary closure of businesses within or surrounding the project area, including businesses on routes of access to/from construction sites. Overall, construction activities associated with Alternative 3 would not generate significant adverse socioeconomic effects or adversely affect features of the neighborhood.

Alternative 3 would introduce flood protection elements designed to integrate into the existing parkland and streets within the project area and would provide enhancements to open space and access to open space for residents of neighborhoods within the study area. These flood protection

measures and open space enhancements would be primarily located at the waterfront and along the edge of the surrounding neighborhoods and would not result in disruption that would disconnect or alter the neighborhood fabric. Thus, Alternative 3 would not be expected to create any substantial change in neighborhood character.

OTHER ALTERNATIVE (ALTERNATIVE 5): FLOOD PROTECTION SYSTEM EAST OF FDR DRIVE

Alternative 5 would improve emergency access during storm events and allow for use of the roadway to resume more quickly following a storm event, lessening the storm-related effects to local infrastructure in neighborhoods within the study area. As described in Chapter 5.5, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the floodwall along the east side of the raised portion of the FDR Drive would obscure some existing views to the East River from the FDR Drive between East 13th and East 18th Streets. However, there are no view corridors to the waterfront between East 13th and East 18th Streets, therefore, the elevated northbound FDR Drive and the flyover bridge would not block any views for residents within the study area. Otherwise, Alternative 5 would not introduce any changes to land use, zoning, open space, socioeconomic conditions, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, and transportation that would result in effects to neighborhood character not already described above for the Preferred Alternative. Potential effects to neighborhood character during construction of Alterative 5 would be the same as those described above under the Preferred Alternative, but would involve a longer construction duration of five years. Alternative 5 would not be expected to alter or disrupt elements within the surrounding neighborhoods themselves, and open spaces within Project Area One and Project Area Two, including East River Park, would remain as key resources for the surrounding communities. Thus, the open space enhancements and flood protection measures proposed under Alternative 5 would not be expected create any substantial change in neighborhood character. ✶