

West 108th Street WSFSSH Development

Chapter 14: Alternatives

A. INTRODUCTION

As described in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, alternatives selected for consideration in an environmental impact statement are generally those that are feasible and have the potential to reduce, eliminate, or avoid adverse impacts of a proposed project while meeting some or all of the goals and objectives of the project. As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Actions consist of a series of land use actions that would facilitate the redevelopment of Block 1863, Lots 5, 10, 13, and 26 (the “Development Site”) with affordable and supportive housing and community facility uses. Specifically, the Proposed Project would consist of two buildings: the Western Development (“Building 1,” on Lots 5, 10, and 13) would consist of a 193,000 gross square foot (gsf) building with 195 affordable housing units and 37,400 gsf of community facility uses (including 110 shelter beds and 6,400 gsf of other community facility uses); and the Eastern Development (“Building 2,” on Lot 26) would consist of a 45,000 gsf building with 82 affordable housing units.

This chapter considers the following alternatives to the Proposed Project:

- A No-Action Alternative, which is mandated by CEQR and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and is intended to provide the lead and involved agencies with an assessment of the expected environmental impacts of no action on their part.
- A No Unmitigated Significant Adverse Impacts Alternative, which considers a development scenario that would not result in any identified significant, unmitigated adverse impacts.

B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative examines future Project Area conditions, but assumes the absence of the Proposed Project (i.e., none of the discretionary approvals proposed as part of the Proposed Actions would be adopted). Under the No-Action Alternative, Block 1863, Lots 5, 13, and 26 would remain City-owned (under the jurisdiction of the City of New York – Department of Housing Preservation and Development (HPD)) and would continue to operate with three off-street public parking garages (a total of approximately 675 parking spaces); Lot 10 would remain under the project sponsor’s ownership and continue to operate as a transitional shelter for older adults (92 shelter beds). The technical chapters of this EIS have described the No-Action Alternative as “the Future without the Proposed Project.”

The unmitigated significant adverse construction noise impact anticipated for the Proposed Project would not occur under the No-Action Alternative. However, the No-Action Alternative would not meet the goals of the Proposed Project. The benefits expected to result from the Proposed Project—including providing much needed affordable and supportive housing, transitional housing, and community facility uses to address the City’s housing needs, as well as creating new jobs in a location close to public

transportation—would not be realized under this alternative, and the No-Action Alternative would fall short of the objectives of the Proposed Project.

No Unmitigated Significant Adverse Impacts Alternative

The No Unmitigated Significant Adverse Impacts Alternative examines a scenario in which the density and other components of the Proposed Project are changed specifically to avoid the unmitigated significant adverse impacts associated with the Proposed Project. As presented in Chapter 13, “Mitigation,” and Chapter 15, “Unavoidable Adverse Impacts,” while the level of construction noise would be reduced with the project sponsor’s commitment to provide substantial noise control measures (including the provision of a 15-foot-high perimeter fence), there is the potential for the Proposed Project to result in unmitigated significant adverse construction noise impacts. Given the proximity of existing sensitive receptors to the Development Site, any development involving below-grade excavation and multi-year construction would likely have the potential to result in temporary unmitigated significant adverse construction noise impacts. Furthermore, any significant adverse construction noise impacts at these nearby receptors could not be reasonably or feasibly mitigated; as noted above, the project sponsor’s commitment to provide substantial noise control measures would reduce the level of impacts, but would not fully avoid the identified significant adverse impacts. To avoid construction noise impacts at these nearby sensitive receptors, no construction of structure(s) of a size sufficient to accommodate an affordable and supportive housing program could occur on the Development Site. Therefore, there is no feasible No Unmitigated Significant Adverse Impact Alternative that would meet the purpose and need of the Proposed Project while avoiding an adverse impact.

C. NO-ACTION ALTERNATIVE

The No-Action Alternative assumes that the Proposed Project is not implemented. Specifically, under the No-Action Alternative, no disposition of City-owned property and no changes to zoning or land use would occur within the Project Area. Block 1863, Lots 5, 13, and 26 would remain City-owned (under the jurisdiction of HPD) and would continue to operate with three off-street public parking garages (a total of approximately 675 parking spaces); Lot 10 would remain under the project sponsor’s ownership and continue to operate as a transitional shelter for older adults (92 shelter beds). Conditions under this alternative are similar to the “Future without the Proposed Project” described in the preceding chapters, which are compared in the following sections to conditions under the Proposed Project.

The effects of the No-Action Alternative in comparison to those of the Proposed Project are provided below.

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

Neither the Proposed Project nor the No-Action Alternative would result in significant adverse impacts on land use, zoning, and public policy.

In the 2025 future without the Proposed Project, no disposition of City-owned land and no changes to land use or zoning would occur within the Project Area. Lots 5, 13, and 26 on Block 1863 would remain under the jurisdiction of HPD and would continue to operate with three public parking garages, and Lot 10 would remain under the project sponsor’s control and continue to operate as a shelter. In comparison to the future with the Proposed Project, under the No-Action Alternative there would be no residential

or community facility uses on Lots 5, 13, and 26. The public parking uses on these lots (which would remain under the No-Action Alternative) are non-conforming uses under the existing R8B zoning that would be less appropriate for the Development Site than the Proposed Project's land uses, with approximately 45.9 percent of the floor area in the primary study area and approximately 35.0 percent of the floor area in the secondary study area comprising multi-family residential uses. The Proposed Project would enhance and reinforce these existing study area land uses.

Under the No-Action Alternative, no changes to zoning would occur in the Project Area, which would continue to be zoned R8B. While the No-Action Alternative R8B zoning district would be consistent with zoning in the surrounding area, the Project Area is a midblock site that does not have the typical five- and six-story residential walkup buildings of R8B districts. Unlike the Proposed Project, the No-Action Alternative would not expand development opportunities for affordable housing by increasing the permitted residential FAR to allow for an increased number of affordable housing units.

Open Space

Similar to the Proposed Project, the No-Action Alternative would not result in significant adverse impacts on open space resources. With regard to the open space ratios, the No-Action Alternative would have slightly higher ratios with respect to overall open space, as well as passive and active open space. Specifically, under the No-Action Alternative, the total, passive, and active open space ratios for the residential study area would be approximately 0.6 percent higher than in the future with the Proposed Project. However, the open space benefits that would occur in the future with the Proposed Project, including the replacement of auto-oriented uses with pedestrian-oriented residential and community facility uses appropriate for a site adjacent to a playground, as well as the provision of restrooms in Building 1 that would be accessible to users of the neighboring Anibal Aviles Playground, would not occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Shadows

Unlike the Proposed Project, under the No-Action Alternative, the existing Development Site buildings would continue to occupy the Development Site, and, therefore, no incremental shadows would be cast. Similar to the Proposed Project, no significant adverse shadow impacts would occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

As under future conditions with the Proposed Project, no significant adverse impacts to urban design and visual resources would occur in the No-Action Alternative. In the No-Action Alternative, it is anticipated that the existing Development Site uses would remain. As such, the urban design and visual resource conditions of the Development Site would not change from existing conditions, and the urban design improvements associated with the Proposed Project would not occur in the No-Action Alternative. Notably, under the No-Action Alternative, the existing auto-oriented public parking garages would remain on Lots 5, 13, and 26 of the Development Site, and the streetscape improvements associated with the redevelopment of the Development Site with new pedestrian-oriented residential and community facility uses would not occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Hazardous Materials

As under the Proposed Project, the No-Action Alternative would not result in significant adverse hazardous materials impacts. Under the No-Action Alternative, the Development Site would continue to be occupied by three off-street public parking garages and a transitional shelter for older adults. As there are two spill numbers associated with the Development Site (Spill Numbers 1603624 and 603667), these spills would need to be remediated in the No-Action Alternative, under the oversight of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). Specifically, in the No-Action Alternative, the extent of contamination would be further investigated and a Remedial Action Plan (RAP) would be developed and approved by the NYSDEC. While the scope of the RAP would be dependent on review and approval of the NYSDEC, the remediation would likely involve the removal of associated tanks and contaminated fill; all spill remediation work would be completed without demolition of the existing Development Site buildings. As the buildings would not be demolished, the existing asbestos-containing material (ACM) and lead-based paint (LBP) present in the buildings would remain; the ACM and LBP removal that would occur in the future with the Proposed Project would not occur under the No-Action Alternative.

Transportation

Neither the No-Action Alternative nor the Proposed Project would result in significant adverse transportation impacts. However, unlike the Proposed Project, under the No-Action Alternative, the existing public parking garages on Lots 5, 13, and 26 of the Development Site—which contain a combined 675 spaces—would remain. As a result, unlike conditions in the future with the Proposed Project, there would be available off-street public parking capacity within a ¼-mile and ½-mile radius of the Project Area during both the weekday midday and overnight peak periods. In terms of on-street parking, as under conditions with the Proposed Project, on-street parking demand within a ¼-mile and ½-mile radius of the Project Area would exceed capacity during both the weekday midday and overnight periods.

It should also be noted that, under the No-Action Alternative, existing commuting patterns in the study area are not expected to change appreciably and would, therefore, continue to exhibit a relatively low auto commuting mode share (eight percent), with the majority (75 percent) traveling to and from work by public transit. In addition, the current utilization patterns of the Development Site public parking garages would not change substantially under the No-Action Alternative, and the garages would continue to be utilized primarily for vehicle storage, with most of the facilities' monthly parking subscribers continuing to travel to work via public transit, predominantly.

Air Quality

Neither the Proposed Project nor the No-Action Alternative would result in significant adverse air quality impacts.

Noise

Under the No-Action Alternative, traffic patterns and volumes are expected to differ slightly from their existing conditions, which would affect ambient noise levels. Specifically, noise levels in the vicinity of the Project Area would increase by 0.07 dBA and would remain in the "Marginally Acceptable" CEQR noise exposure category. As in the future with the Proposed Project, noise levels in proximity to the Development Site would fall within the Marginally Acceptable CEQR noise exposure category under the

No-Action Alternative. Neither the Proposed Project nor the No-Action Alternative would result in significant adverse noise impacts.

Public Health

As the No-Action Alternative would not result in an unmitigated significant adverse impact in the areas of air quality, noise, water quality, hazardous materials, or construction, no significant adverse impacts on public health would result. While unmitigated significant adverse construction-related noise impacts would occur under the Proposed Project (unlike the No-Action Alternative), as outlined in Chapter 10, “Public Health,” these construction-period noise impacts would not constitute a significant adverse impact on public health.

Neighborhood Character

The Manhattan Valley neighborhood (within which the Project Area is located) is characterized by the diversity of its urban design and socioeconomic makeup, as well as its proximity to significant public assets, including open space, public transportation, and public institutions. While neither the Proposed Project nor the No-Action Alternative would result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character, the benefits associated with the Proposed Project would not be realized under the No-Action Alternative. Notably, under the No-Action Alternative no new affordable or supportive housing would be constructed on the Development Site, and, as such, the benefits of supporting the economic diversity of the neighborhood, which would occur in the future with the Proposed Project, would not occur under the No-Action Alternative. In addition, the Development Site would continue to be occupied by auto-oriented uses that are out of character with the land uses and urban design of the surrounding area, which is largely characterized by the presence of residential and community facility uses.

Construction

In the No-Action Alternative, no new construction would occur on the Development Site, which would continue to be occupied by the existing Development Site buildings. As such, no significant adverse construction impacts would occur under the No-Action Alternative; the significant adverse construction noise impacts anticipated in the future with the Proposed Project would not occur under the No-Action Alternative.

D. NO UNMITIGATED SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS ALTERNATIVE

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, when a project would result in unmitigated significant adverse impacts, it is often CEQR practice to include an assessment of an alternative to the project that would result in no unmitigated impacts. Based on the analyses presented in other chapters of this EIS, there is the potential for the Proposed Project to result in unmitigated construction noise impacts; no other significant adverse impacts would occur in the future with the Proposed Project. As discussed in more detail below, the co-applicants have determined that there is no affordable and supportive housing development at the Development Site that would avoid the significant adverse construction noise impact that would occur with the Proposed Project. Therefore, there is no feasible No Unmitigated Impact Alternative.

Given the proximity of existing sensitive receptors to the Development Site, even accounting for the types of measures incorporated into the Proposed Project to reduce construction noise, any development involving below-grade excavation and multi-year construction would likely have the potential to result in significant adverse construction noise impacts. Furthermore, any significant adverse construction noise impacts at these nearby receptors could not be reasonably or feasibly fully mitigated. To avoid construction noise impacts at these nearby sensitive receptors, no construction of structure(s) of a size sufficient to accommodate an affordable and supportive housing program could occur on the Development Site. Therefore, there is no feasible No Unmitigated Significant Adverse Impact Alternative that would meet the purpose and need of the Proposed Project while avoiding an adverse impact.