

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on neighborhood character. According to the 2014 *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its 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 noise. Not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few defining elements.

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the proposed project would result in the demolition of approximately 290,100 gross-square-feet (gsf) of the existing Hylan Plaza Shopping center and construction in its place of approximately 386,705 gsf of new retail structure, a new parking configuration, and landscaping improvements to the project site. This analysis considers the impacts of the proposed project on the neighborhood character of the study area, and relies in part on the analyses of the components of neighborhood character as analyzed elsewhere in the ~~Draft~~ Final Environmental Impact Statement (~~D~~FFEIS).

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

As detailed below, the proposed project would not substantially change the character of the neighborhood. The character of the study area is primarily defined by its large concentration of destination retail uses. In addition, residential use and their supporting private open spaces and community facility use also contribute to the neighborhood character. With the exception of transportation, the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts on any of the technical areas that could impact neighborhood character (including land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, urban design and visual resources, and noise). As the study area already experiences high volumes of visitors due to its large concentration of destination retail uses, the proposed project would not affect the essential character of neighborhood. Mitigation measures would be implemented to reduce the effects of the significant adverse transportation impacts. While some of the significant adverse traffic impacts would not be fully mitigated, the unmitigated effects would not be substantial enough to adversely impact neighborhood character. In addition, the proposed project would not result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively impact neighborhood character. Overall, the proposed project would be consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood, and would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

B. METHODOLOGY

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an analysis of neighborhood character begins by determining whether a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any relevant technical area (land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and

cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and noise) or if a project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively impact neighborhood character. If the answer is yes, 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 project 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 DFEIS includes environmental impact categories that are relevant to neighborhood character (i.e. land use, transportation, and noise), 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.

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

As stated in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary analysis of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. Therefore, the study area for this analysis is consistent with Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” which includes areas up to 400-feet from the project site. The character of the study area is primarily defined by its large concentration of heavily-trafficked, regional commercial and destination retail uses. Hylan Plaza Shopping Center is a regional shopping center with numerous retail shops, including: K-mart, Toys“R”Us/Babies“R”Us, a United Artists Movie Theater, a Modell’s sporting goods store, and a CVS pharmacy.

In addition to the Hylan Plaza Shopping Center, other commercial uses within the study are located to the north and south of the project site. Retail uses within the study area includes a mix of large commercial and retail uses with national chain retailers, convenience goods, neighborhood services, and restaurants. South of the project site is, between Ebbitts Street and Tysens Lane, is a shopping mall, including: Petland Discounts, HomeGoods, UPS Store, Starbucks and a Super Stop & Shop grocery store. North of the project site, is another small shopping mall, which includes: a Municipal Credit Union, a US Post Office, a Starbucks and a T.J. Maxx.

Aside from retail uses, residential uses and supporting private open spaces contribute to the neighborhood character within the study area. There are many single and several multi-family apartment buildings in proximity to the project site; as the project site is located in the residential neighborhood of New Dorp. In addition, the main public institution use within the neighborhood is New Dorp High School, which is located at 465 New Dorp Lane.

The project site is not located within reasonable walking distance from any rail line; however, service to the site is provided by multiple bus lines, including, but not limited to, the S78, S79-

SBS, X1, X2, X3, and X9. Additionally, visitors are brought to the project site via major roadways, namely Hylan Boulevard, which is located directly west of the project site.

Overall, the study area is primarily shaped by its major concentration of destination retail uses. The neighborhood character is also affected by the residential neighborhood that contains some supporting private open space use; and is affected by the New Dorp High School.

POTENTIAL TO AFFECT THE DEFINING FEATURES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The *CEQR Technical Manual* recommends that, after the defining features of a neighborhood are identified, the potential for the project to affect the defining features of the neighborhood should be examined, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas.

The proposed project, as described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” would demolish an approximately 290,100 gsf portion of the existing commercial structure and construct in its place approximately 386,705 gsf of new retail structures, a new parking configuration with an overall increase of 239 spaces, and landscaping improvements to the project site. The proposed project would be developed on existing shopping center property and parking areas that are considered by the Applicant to be underutilized.

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” technical areas were screened out that would not have the potential for significant adverse environmental impacts as a result of the proposed project. The screened technical areas include historic and cultural resources, socioeconomic conditions, open space, and urban and visual resources; which typically contribute to neighborhood character. These screened technical areas would not have the potential to substantively affect the defining features of the neighborhood. Therefore, the following sections discuss potential changes resulting from the proposed project in the remaining technical areas (in italics below) that are considered in a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy, as described in Chapter, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy.” Compared to the future without the proposed enlargement of the shopping center, the proposed project would introduce uses generally consistent with those that currently exist on the project site. The proposed project would include destination retail, a supermarket, and a cinema, all of which would exist on the project site in the future without the proposed actions. While the proposed project could include in a health club, which is a use not present on the project site, this use would be compatible with other uses and would not result in any land use conflicts. The proposed development of a new parking configuration would enhance underutilized parking areas and would provide convenient parking for shopping center users. Overall, changes to study area land use associated with the proposed project would not adversely impact the existing character of the neighborhood. Instead, changes to land use, zoning, and public policy associated with the proposed project would complement the existing large concentration of destination retail uses in the area—which is a defining feature of the neighborhood’s character.

TRANSPORTATION

As described in Chapter 4, “Transportation,” the transportation analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse transit, pedestrian, or parking impacts.

The Boulevard at Hylan Plaza

However, the traffic impact analysis identified the potential for significant adverse impacts at five intersections in the weekday midday peak hour, ~~six~~ seven in the weekday PM peak hour, and seven in the Saturday midday peak hour. As detailed in Chapter 8, "Mitigation," standard signal timing changes were proposed to mitigate these significant adverse traffic impacts; these are considered to be readily- implementable measures as per the *CEQR Technical Manual*. With these mitigation measures in place, three of five of the weekday midday peak hour intersections identified as having the potential for significant adverse traffic impacts could be fully mitigated; ~~three~~ four of the ~~six~~ seven impacted intersections in the weekday PM hour could be fully mitigated; and ~~six~~ five of the seven impacted intersections in the Saturday PM peak hour could be fully mitigated.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a significant adverse impact in a technical area that contributes to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, the assessment should determine whether a significant change to one of the defining features of neighborhood character would occur due to a project. As noted above, a defining characteristic of the study area is the large concentration of regional commercial and destination retail uses in the area. The proposed project would not affect the essential character of the study area, as the study area already experiences high volumes of visitors due to the presence of the shopping center and other destination retail uses, the proposed project would not affect the essential character of the study area. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character with respect to transportation.

NOISE

The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts (see Chapter 6, "Noise"). While noise levels in the study area would increase due to increased traffic and building mechanical equipment associated with the proposed project, the magnitude of the increase would be generally imperceptible to most listeners and below the CEQR threshold for a significant adverse noise impact. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character with respect to noise.

CONCLUSION OF PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

The proposed project would not substantially change the character of the neighborhood. With the exception of transportation, the proposed project would not result in any potential significant adverse impacts in the areas that shape neighborhood character. With respect to traffic conditions, since the study area already experiences high volumes of visitors due to the existing large concentration of destination retail uses, the proposed project would not affect the essential character of the study area. In addition, mitigation measures have been identified to reduce the effects of the significant adverse traffic impacts. While not all of the impacted intersections would be fully mitigated, these impacts would not be significant enough to adversely affect neighborhood character. The proposed project would not be expected to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that could cumulatively impact neighborhood character. Overall, the proposed project would be consistent with the existing character of the neighborhood and would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character. *