
Chapter 11: Alternatives

11.1 Introduction

In accordance with the *2014 CEQR Technical Manual*, this chapter presents and examines practicable alternatives to the proposed actions that are both consistent with the project's purpose and that could potentially reduce or eliminate significant adverse environmental impacts identified in the preceding chapters.

This chapter considers three alternatives to the proposed actions: the No-Action Alternative, the Reduced Impact Alternative and the No Impact Alternative. Consideration of a No-Action Alternative is mandated by the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and CEQR. The No-Action Alternative is intended to provide an assessment of the environmental impacts should the lead agency choose not to approve the proposed actions. This analysis is formulated to provide an understanding of the consequences of not approving the proposed project and a baseline for the evaluation of potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed project.

This chapter also considers a Reduced Impact Alternative and a No Impact Alternative that would reduce the size of development on the project site such that there would be lesser impacts and no potential for significant adverse impacts. It should be noted that proposed mitigation has been identified to address the proposed actions' significant adverse impacts, which are limited to traffic impacts.

11.2 Alternatives

No-Action Alternative

The No-Action Alternative examines future environmental conditions absent the proposed actions; no discretionary actions would occur and there would be no new development on the project site. The No-Action condition is described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," as the "No-Action Condition." Consideration of the No-Action Alternative is intended to provide the lead agency and involved agencies with an assessment of the expected environmental impacts of taking no action on their part and has been used use in other chapters of this EIS as a baseline against which impacts of the proposed project are measured. Under the No-Action condition, the project site would continue in active use and in the present condition with the existing ten-story transient hotel with 410 total parking spaces, between the existing parking garage and a surface parking lot. The parking structures and the hotel together consist of a total area of approximately 199,010 square feet.

This alternative would avoid the proposed project's significant adverse traffic impacts. However, in this alternative, no additional parking capacity would be added to the site. Instead, the site would continue to operate with its current uses -a hotel and a 410-space accessory parking structure (parking deck and surface parking). Therefore, the No-Action Alternative would not meet the proposed goals and objectives, to provide increased parking capacity in close proximity to LaGuardia Airport to

serve the needs of current and future air passengers.

This section compares the potential environmental impacts of the No-Action Alternative to those of the proposed project. This alternative would not result in significant adverse impacts associated with land use, zoning, and public policy, shadows, urban design and visual resources, hazardous materials, air quality, noise, public health, and neighborhood character. Furthermore, this alternative would not result in a significant transportation impact. The effects of the No-Action Alternative in comparison to those of the proposed project are summarized below.

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

Like the proposed project, the No-Action Alternative would not change the underlying zoning or the existing land uses on the project site and the surrounding area. With the No-Action Alternative, the hotel and parking facilities would remain in their current conditions. Both the No-Action Alternative and the proposed project would be compatible with the existing commercial land use associated with LaGuardia Airport, which follows Ditmars Boulevard. Additionally, the No-Action Alternative and the proposed project are compatible with the 2013 East Elmhurst Rezoning in situating the new development within the present C4-2 commercial district, consistent with adjacent land uses and established building patterns.

The northern portion of the land use study area falls within the New York City Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP) boundaries and will be subject to the March 2012 draft amendment to the WRP, upon its approval by the New York Secretary of State and federal concurrence. Additionally, both the No-Action Alternative and the proposed project will be subject to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMS) in 2015, which indicate that portions of the project site would be situated within the "Zone X" and "Zone AE, Elevation 13" flood zones.

Under the No-Action Alternative and the proposed project, there would be no change of use on the project site. The same can be said of the study area with the exception of the planned improvements at LaGuardia Airport. While these improvements will be ongoing within the study area, they will not be completed by the 2018 build year of the proposed project.

Neither the proposed project nor the No-Action Alternative would result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, or public policy. However, the proposed actions would allow the construction of a public parking garage adjacent to the existing hotel, consistent and compatible with the existing commercial and institutional land uses that define the character of the area.

Shadows

The No-Action Alternative would not result in any new structures that could cast new shadows. As discussed in Chapter 2, "Shadows," the proposed project would create new shadows that would overlap with existing shadows from the hotel building which fall on a small portion of the Greenstreets open space during morning hours. These shadows would not occur with the No-Action Alternative, but the existing shadows from the hotel would still fall on the open space. The open space area does not have any seating and there would be no effect on the health of the vegetation nor the use of the park under the proposed action. Therefore, neither the No-Action Alternative nor the proposed project would result in significant adverse shadow impacts.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

The No-Action Alternative would not result in any new structures that could affect the streetscape and the pedestrian experience. Unlike the proposed project, the No-Action Alternative would not result in any improvements to the pedestrian experience by the project site in terms of additional landscaping, ground-level retail, or other improvements. The proposed project would replace the existing parking facility with a new 547,687 gross square foot parking garage with eight stories along the Ditmars Boulevard frontage with two cellar levels of parking facilities and approximately 600 square feet of ground-level retail space. The proposed parking facility would feature a contemporary design, consistent with other commercial hotel development within the study area.

The project site is located on Ditmars Boulevard, a wide, two-lane, east-west commercial and residential corridor which is largely characterized by commercial uses complementary to LaGuardia Airport. Under the No-Action Alternative, the project site would continue to be developed to contain a hotel and 410-space accessory parking facility due to restrictions of uses on the project site associated with the existing Restrictive Declaration. There are no planned developments within the study area to be completed by the 2018 analysis year. The No-Action Alternative would not alter the existing visual character of the surrounding area. Neither the No-Action Alternative nor the proposed project would have significant adverse impacts on the urban design of the study area.

Hazardous Materials

Under the No-Action Alternative, the project site would continue to be used as an active two-story parking garage, associated surface parking lot and a hotel building. No excavation of soils would be required and groundwater would remain undisturbed. As such, there would be no significant health risks at the project site in the No-Action Alternative. In the future with the proposed actions, the existing parking garage and surface parking lot would be demolished, and the site would be redeveloped with a larger parking garage structure associated with the nearby LaGuardia Airport and adjacent Marriott hotel. Based upon the subsurface investigations identified and summarized in Chapter 4, "Hazardous Materials," determined there were no impacts to groundwater identified on the site and no off-site spills or other adjacent uses were affecting groundwater quality at the site. As groundwater would likely be encountered as part of construction, standard dewatering procedures and permitting would be implemented by the applicant for non-impacted groundwater. The Phase II testing showed no potential for contaminated soils or other hazardous materials and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) reviewed and approved these findings on September 6, 2015. As required by DEP, a Construction Health and Safety Plan (CHASP) will be submitted for DEP approval prior to the start of construction. The CHASP will outline procedures for the handling and removal of calcium-impacted soils in order to minimize any potential exposure to contractors and construction workers. The project would not result in the disturbance of hazardous materials nor would it increase pathways for human or environmental exposure to hazardous materials. Under both the No-Action Alternative and the proposed project, there would be no significant adverse impacts due to hazardous materials.

Transportation

Under the No-Action Alternative, the existing uses on the project site would remain. Although the No-Action Alternative would not generate any new vehicular trips, traffic and pedestrian volumes in the study area would be expected to increase as a result of background growth and planned

developments in the study area. The analysis of the No-Action Alternative was conducted based on an assumed background growth of 0.5 percent per year in accordance with the *2014 CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines for Queens.

Traffic movements generally operate at acceptable levels of service and those that operate at unacceptable levels of service under the No-Action Alternative would also do so under the conditions of the proposed project. The No-Action Alternative would not result in the significant adverse traffic impacts identified for the proposed project, which would occur at Ditmars Boulevard and 94th Street, and at Ditmars Boulevard/111th Street and Astoria Boulevard during the weekday AM peak hour. However, measures to fully mitigate the significant adverse traffic impacts that would occur as part of the proposed project have been identified in Chapter 10, "Mitigation."

Similar to the conditions of the proposed project with mitigation in place, the No-Action Alternative would not result in any significant adverse pedestrian, transit, or parking impacts.

Air Quality

The No-Action Alternative would not result in any new development that would affect air quality. Additionally, as described in Section 2.1 of the Environmental Assessment Statement, dated May 14, 2015, no known projects are anticipated to be developed in the study area by the project's build year (2018) in the future without the proposed actions (No-Action Condition). The air quality impacts from mobile sources associated with the proposed actions would be below the corresponding guidance thresholds and ambient air quality standards. The emissions from the parking facility associated with the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse air quality impacts. Therefore, the No-Action Alternative would have significant adverse air quality impacts on the neighborhood.

Noise

The No-Action Alternative would not introduce new stationary sources of noise, create new sensitive noise receptors, nor introduce new mobile sources of noise. Additionally, as described in Section 2.1 of the Environmental Assessment Statement, dated May 14, 2015, no known projects are anticipated to be developed in the study area by the project's build year (2018) in the future without the proposed actions (No-Action Condition). Similarly, the proposed project would not introduce new stationary sources of noise or new sensitive noise receptors.

The proposed project would introduce new mobile sources of noise. However, the results of the mobile source screening assessment found that noise levels from the parking facility associated with the proposed project would fall far below the screening criteria noise level increase; the increase in sound levels would be unperceivable to human hearing. Therefore, neither the No-Action Alternative nor the proposed actions would have significant adverse noise impacts on the neighborhood.

Public Health

The No-Action Alternative would not result in unmitigated significant adverse impacts in any of the technical areas related to public health (hazardous materials, water quality, air quality, or noise). The project site would continue to be used as an active two-story parking garage, associated surface parking lot and a hotel building. No excavation of soils would be required, groundwater would

remain undisturbed, and there would be no effect on water quality. The No-Action Alternative would not result in any new development affecting air quality. Furthermore, the No-Action Alternative would not introduce any new stationary noise sources, new sensitive receptor, nor new mobile sources of noise. No known projects are expected to be developed in the study area by the project's build year. Therefore, the No-Action Alternative would not have significant adverse impacts on public health.

Neighborhood Character

Similar to the proposed project, the No-Action Alternative would not change the character of the neighborhood surrounding the project site. The character of the study area is primarily defined by commercial use along Ditmars Boulevard, which address the demand for services by LaGuardia Airport users. Beyond Ditmars Boulevard the neighborhood is characterized by low-density residential use. As previously described, the proposed project has the potential to cause significant adverse traffic impacts at the two above-cited intersections within the study area, but these impacts can be fully mitigated by implementing the measures outlined in Chapter 10, "Mitigation." Given that new development would not alter the existing hotel and accessory parking facilities uses, the full mitigation of traffic impacts, and the minimal effects of new shadows, construction, and noise, neither the No-Action Alternative nor the proposed project would affect the essential character of the neighborhood.

Reduced Impact Alternative

The Reduced Impact Alternative considers a parking garage consisting of approximately 525 public parking spaces at the project site. Under this alternative, the total number of public parking spaces would equal 525. With this reduced number of parking spaces, the proposed project would result in fewer significant adverse impacts. As noted earlier, significant adverse impacts are limited to transportation, and can be fully mitigated by the proposed measures identified in Chapter 10, "Mitigation." Specifically, the proposed project would result in significant adverse traffic impacts at the intersection of Ditmars Boulevard and 94th Street, and at the intersection of Ditmars Boulevard/111th Street and Astoria Boulevard during the weekday AM peak hour.

A sensitivity analysis was performed to determine the magnitude of the proposed project that would reduce the number of significantly impacted intersections. The sensitivity analysis determined that a reduction of approximately 1,275 public parking spaces (for a total of approximately 525 public parking spaces) would be needed to eliminate the significant adverse impact at the intersection of Ditmars Boulevard and 94th Street, thus reducing the number of significant impacts from two intersections to one intersection. Both impacted intersections are triggered at a garage size of 525 public spaces, which represents a garage that is approximately 29 percent the size of the proposed project of 1,800 public spaces.

The Reduced Impact Alternative represents a garage that provides a limited number of parking spaces, and according to the Applicant, compromises the overall objective of the proposed project which is to provide sufficient long-term parking capacity in close proximity to LaGuardia Airport to serve the needs of current and future air passengers, and replace parking that will be eliminated from the airport in the future.

No Impact Alternative

The No Impact Alternative considers a parking garage consisting of approximately 125 public parking spaces at the project site. This alternative would reduce the size of the proposed public parking garage on the project site so that significant adverse impacts would be eliminated such that mitigation measures would not be necessary. As noted earlier, significant adverse impacts are limited to transportation, and can be fully mitigated by the proposed measures identified in Chapter 10, "Mitigation." Specifically, the proposed project would result in significant adverse traffic impacts at the intersection of Ditmars Boulevard and 94th Street, and at the intersection of Ditmars Boulevard/111th Street and Astoria Boulevard during the weekday AM peak hour.

A sensitivity analysis was performed to determine the magnitude of the proposed project that would eliminate all significant impacts within the traffic study area. A reduction of approximately 1,675 public parking spaces (for a total of 125 public parking spaces, which is only 7 percent the size of the proposed project), would be needed to eliminate significant traffic impacts at both impacted intersections. The sensitivity analysis concluded that any additional public parking spaces on the proposed site in excess of approximately 125 spaces could result in significant adverse traffic impacts.

The No Impact Alternative represents a garage that provides a limited number of parking spaces, and according to the Applicant, compromises the overall objective of the proposed project, which is to provide sufficient long-term parking capacity in close proximity to LaGuardia Airport to serve the needs of current and future air passengers, and replace parking that will be eliminated from the airport in the future.

11.3 Conclusion

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the With-Action condition would result in two facilities, the first containing approximately 400 spaces accessory to the Marriott hotel and the other containing 1,800 parking spaces available to the public, intended for air travelers from LaGuardia in need of long-term parking. Additionally, there would be an up to 600 sf ground-level retail space along Ditmars Boulevard. The applicant sees a growing need for long-term parking to serve travelers using LaGuardia Airport, which is not well served by existing public transit. There is no direct or one-seat ride to the airport by public transit. The existing near-airport parking supply is nearly 100 percent occupied most days of the week, and by 2018, approximately 1,100 on-airport parking spaces will be permanently removed as part of the terminal redevelopment project. This includes all 921 existing long-term parking spaces and growth is expected to be 30 percent annually, which will increase the impact of the constrained supply of long-term parking spaces.

This chapter considers three alternatives to the proposed actions, the No-Action Alternative, the Reduced Impact and the No Impact Alternative. The No-Action Alternative is presented to provide an assessment of the environmental effects should the lead agency choose not to approve the proposed actions. As discussed above, the No-Action Alternative would not result in significant new or different effects and would avoid the proposed actions' identified significant adverse impact on traffic. However, the proposed actions include measures that would fully mitigate the significant adverse traffic impacts. Additionally, the Reduced Impact Alternative showed that the proposed project's impacts are triggered at a garage size of 525 public spaces. The No Impact Alternative illustrated that any additional parking on the project site in excess of 125 public spaces would result

in significant adverse transportation impacts. Providing only 125 parking spaces or only 525 parking spaces would not meet the Applicant's stated goals / purpose and needs, and therefore neither alternative would appear feasible or viable. Therefore, there is no alternative that could be advanced to completely avoid such impacts without substantially compromising the project's goals and objectives. Neither the No Impact Alternative nor the Reduced Impact Alternative would be considered a viable alternative to the proposed project, which is to provide increased long-term parking capacity in close proximity to LaGuardia Airport to serve the needs of current and future air passengers.