A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter considers the effects of the proposed project on neighborhood character. The analysis updates changes in background conditions since the 2001 *FEIS* and assesses whether any changed background conditions and the differences in program elements between the proposed development program and those assessed in the 2001 *FEIS* for the project block would result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character that were not addressed in the 2001 *FEIS* findings.

Neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "personality." These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. Not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few defining elements. According to the 2012 CEQR Technical Manual, neighborhood character impacts are rare and it would be under unusual circumstances that, in the absence of an impact in any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood would result in an impact to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character.

As described in greater detail in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed project would introduce a higher density development and a different mix of uses compared with development in the future without the proposed project and the 2001 FEIS. In addition, the proposed project would require rezoning and new and modified special permits. Although the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts not addressed in the 2001 FEIS in any of the technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character, it would have the potential for combined moderate effects on several elements of neighborhood character. Therefore, an assessment of neighborhood character is warranted. This chapter considers the impacts of the proposed project on neighborhood character for both the project area and in the adjacent area. Since many of the relevant technical areas (land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise) are considered in other sections of this Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), this chapter has been coordinated with those analyses.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Based on the methodology of the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual*, a preliminary analysis of the proposed project's effects on neighborhood character was conducted to determine the need for a detailed analysis. The preliminary analysis concluded that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character and that a detailed analysis was not necessary.

As described throughout this SEIS, the change to the 2001 FEIS program would not alter the 2001 FEIS findings that development of the project block would not have significant adverse impacts in any of the technical areas contributing to neighborhood character. Overall, through the creation of new buildings that are consistent with their surroundings, and the revitalization of the project block, the proposed project would be consistent with the key components of the area's character and would, in fact, result in beneficial effects on neighborhood character. The proposed project would not have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood's character, either through a significant adverse impact in a specific technical area or through a combination of moderate effects, and a detailed assessment of neighborhood character is not warranted. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character that were not addressed in the 2001 FEIS.

B. SUMMARY OF 2001 FEIS FINDINGS

The 2001 FEIS assessed potential impacts to neighborhood character within a study area covering the area west of Eighth Avenue between West 50th and West 66th Streets. The 2001 FEIS concluded that development of the project block would not have resulted in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character in the study area. It found that the then proposed project would have a positive effect on the project block, with respect to neighborhood character. The project would have provided an important anchor for the West 57th Street corridor, and would have created a more contemporary look for this west side gateway to midtown. Moreover, improvements to the street, including new sidewalks, street trees, and retail frontages, would have modernized and enlivened the project block and created a much more attractive pedestrian friendly streetscape than existed at the time.

The 2001 FEIS found that the then proposed office and residential ground-level entrances would have enlivened the sidewalk on the entire block. Shade trees at regular intervals would have helped create an accessible pedestrian character on the project block. The 2001 proposal was generally consistent with what was found along West 57th Street east of Tenth Avenue at the time, which was strongly defined by larger residential and office buildings and supporting institutional uses.

It also found that the then proposed project would not adversely affect the surrounding neighborhoods. The proposed buildings would have been consistent with the taller buildings in the area, and would not have adversely affected the Clinton neighborhood. The 2001 *FEIS* found that the form of the proposed project would have been visually compatible with recently completed, under construction, and proposed development in the study area.

No adverse environmental impacts with respect to neighborhood character were expected within the surrounding communities as a result of the 2001 proposed project. While the then proposed project was expected to result in some traffic impacts, those impacts in all cases could have been mitigated. The resulting traffic would also not have significantly affected local air or noise conditions.

While the 2001 development alternatives were expected to increase the on-site populations, it was not expected that the project would overburden community facilities (e.g., schools) or open space. In addition, the 2001 proposed project was not expected to result in secondary displacement of residential tenants.

Overall, the 2001 FEIS did not identify any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character as a result of the development of the project block.

C. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

As discussed in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the analyses in this SEIS compare conditions in the future without the proposed project to conditions in the future with the proposed project. The future without the proposed project scenario in all technical areas assumes that none of the discretionary actions now being sought by the applicant are approved. Absent those approvals, it is assumed that development on the projected development sites would be within the envelope of the development analyzed in the 2001 FEIS, but with a commercial building containing approximately 331,300 gsf of office use, 67,500 gsf of retail use and 239 public parking spaces on projected development site 1. (Absent the approvals, there would be no change in the assumed development of projected development site 2—the existing mini-storage building would remain). The assumption regarding projected development site 1 is based on the fact that the applicant has applied for a building permit for such a building (the permitted building). The permitted building can be constructed under the land use approvals granted in 2001 without further discretionary approvals or actions. It would be smaller than that which is permitted under current zoning, and, accordingly, assuming that development on projected development site 1 as a basis for comparing the impacts of the proposed project to the future without the proposed project is more conservative than using the more fully built out development scenario that was analyzed in the 2001 FEIS.

D. METHODOLOGY

An analysis of neighborhood character begins with a preliminary assessment to determine whether changes expected in other technical areas may affect a contributing element of neighborhood character. The assessment should identify the defining features of the neighborhood, and assess whether the project has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate effects.

NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER COMPONENTS

According to the 2012 CEQR Technical Manual, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the technical areas that define neighborhood character, or when the project may have moderate effects on several elements of neighborhood character. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- Land Use. When development resulting from a proposed project would have the potential to change neighborhood character by: introducing a new, incompatible land use; conflicting with land use policy or other public plans for the area; changing land use character; or resulting in significant land use impacts.
- Urban Design and Visual Resources. In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms, street patterns, or street hierarchies, as well as streetscape elements such as streetwalls, landscaping, curb cuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes have the potential to affect neighborhood character by directly changing visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.
- *Historic Resources*. When a project would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resources

analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.

- Socioeconomic Conditions. Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to
 affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement
 or addition of population, employment, or businesses; substantial differences in population
 or employment density; or if a project results in changes to a unique industry.
- *Open Space*. Changes in open spaces have the potential to affect neighborhood character when a proposed project would result in the overburdening of existing open space facilities or would exacerbate an existing deficiency in open space.
- Shadows. When an action would result in a substantial reduction in the usability of an open space, or in the use, enjoyment or appreciation of the sunlight-sensitive features of a historic resource as a result of increased shadow, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- Transportation. Changes in transportation conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the project. Such substantial traffic changes can include: change in level of service (LOS) to C or below; change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes; substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts, as identified in that technical analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a proposed project would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Noise*. For a project to affect neighborhood character in regard to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability category.

According to the 2012 CEQR Technical Manual, a proposed project can also have a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. Therefore, this analysis also evaluates the potential for the proposed project to affect neighborhood character through a combination of effects.

STUDY AREA

As stated in the 2012 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. The study areas analyzed for the technical areas listed above include areas up to a ½-mile from the project site. Therefore, the neighborhood character study area is defined as up to a ½-mile from the project site, where relevant. The ½-mile area is roughly bounded by West 68th Street to the north, Broadway to the east, West 47th Street to the south, and the Hudson River to the west.

E. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The defining features of the neighborhood include the densely developed urban streetscape, the wide mix of building types and land uses; the rectilinear Manhattan street pattern, and the views of the Hudson River and the New Jersey Palisades that are present throughout the area. These are described below for both the project area and the surrounding neighborhood.

PROJECT BLOCK

The project block is block 1105 in Manhattan Community District 4, bounded by West 58th Street to the north, Eleventh Avenue to the east, West 57th Street to the south, and the Hudson River to the west. Projected development site 1 (Block 1105, Lots 1, 5, 14, 19, 43) is currently vacant; projected development site 2 (Block 1105, p/o Lot 36) contains a 98,500 gross square foot (gsf) building used as a mini-storage facility.

In addition to the two projected development sites, the project block includes The Helena, a 38-story, 597-unit residential apartment building with approximately 12,000 square feet of ground floor retail and 100 accessory parking spaces on the southeastern corner of the block (Lots 23 and 29).

STUDY AREA

The neighborhood character of the study area is defined by a mix of land uses and building types, including commercial uses, mid- and high-rise residential buildings, automobile showrooms and service facilities, parking facilities, institutional uses, utilities, warehouses, office space, and film and television production studios. The area is densely developed, particularly to the north and east, and is mostly composed of recently built residential and mixed-use towers, new and older community facility and institutional buildings, and a large industrial building (the Consolidated Edison Power House). The street pattern in the study area is the typical Manhattan grid system, with wide avenues running north-south and narrow cross streets running east-west. Several superblocks interrupt this pattern, including superblocks associated with DeWitt Clinton Park, Riverside South, and the Amsterdam Houses.

In terms of land use, the northern portion of the study area between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues is characterized by large-scale, high-density residential and retail development, including the Riverside South development, which continues north to West 72nd Street. This development includes 16 residential buildings with up to 5,700 residential units and 25 acres of publicly accessible open space. In contrast, Amsterdam Avenue/Tenth Avenue south of West 58th Street is characterized by a mix of walk-up and newer elevator residential structures with ground floor retail. Local neighborhood retail such as restaurants, bookstores, and grocery stores are common in both building types.

In the northeast portion of the study area, institutional land uses are more prominent, with institutional uses lining Amsterdam Avenue. John Jay College of the City University of New York (CUNY) occupies the block between West 59th Street and West 60th Street. John Jay also has facilities to the west of Amsterdam Ave between West 58th Street and West 59th Street. John Jay also has facilities to the west of Amsterdam Ave between West 58th Street and West 59th Street. John Jay is currently expanding operations on this block, constructing a 13-story, approximately 513,000 gsf building for new classroom, lecture hall and forensic laboratory space that will have frontage along Eleventh Avenue, West 58th Street, and West 59th Street. To the east of Amsterdam Ave, St. Luke's Roosevelt Hospital is located between West 58th and West 59th Streets. In addition, Independence High School is located one block to the south of St. Luke's at 850 Tenth Avenue.

The area between the West Side Highway and Eleventh Avenue from West 54th Street to West 57th Street is characterized by commercial and light industrial uses. A concentration of auto dealerships occupies the western side of Eleventh Avenue from West 54th Street to West 57th Street. A prominent utility use in the study area, the Consolidated Edison Power House, occupies

the entire block between West 58th and West 59th Streets from Eleventh Avenue to Twelfth Avenue.

The western portion of the study area is characterized by open space and recreational uses along the Hudson River. Clinton Cove Park, part of the larger Hudson River Park network, is located along the Hudson River, between West 55th and West 57th Streets. Clinton Cove Park is under the jurisdiction of the Hudson River Park Trust (HRPT), and offers lawn space, benches, waterfront paths for passive recreation, as well kayaking and water access at the Pier 96 Boat House. The Hudson River Park bikeway/walkway runs parallel to The West Side Highway, extending from Battery Park City to 59th Street. At this point, it connects with the Greenway operated by the DPR and continues north along the Hudson River.

In terms of socioeconomic conditions, the study area's character is defined by median incomes higher than both Manhattan and New York City as a whole. An estimated 53,586 residents live within ½-mile of the project area, and the area is considered a well established and strong residential market, with an existing trend toward more costly housing and a higher income population.

The neighborhood character of the study area is also defined by views of the Hudson River and the New Jersey Palisades. View corridors in the study area include Riverside Park South, Hudson River Park, and the elevated portions of Route 9A and Riverside Boulevard, which provide expansive views of the Hudson River and the New Jersey Palisades. Because it is a wide street, West 57th Street also provides a view corridor looking west to the Hudson River and New Jersey. This view is enhanced by the rise in elevation going eastward, particularly in the blocks between Eleventh and Ninth Avenues. Some of the narrower cross streets also provide views west to the river and New Jersey; however, views west on West 56th Street are blocked by the new Department of Sanitation facility, which extends over this street at Twelfth Avenue/Route 9A, and views west along West 59th Street end with the MTS facility on the waterfront. Views west near DeWitt Clinton Park include the piershed buildings and transportation viaducts on Piers 92 and 94.

The Consolidated Edison Power House and its tall brick smokestack are visible throughout much of the study area, particularly from Riverside Park South and Hudson River Park, the elevated portion of Route 9A north of the project block, and along Eleventh/West End Avenue. The smokestack also can be seen from Amsterdam Avenue between West 60th and 61st Streets through the playground of P.S. 191. Views north and south along Eleventh/West End Avenue are long and include modern high-rise buildings. Views north and south along Tenth/Amsterdam Avenue and views east on the east-west streets similarly continue for long distances. Route 9A and the more easterly portions of Hudson River Park provide views to the project site, which can also be seen from Eleventh Avenue and nearby cross streets.

In terms of traffic, levels of service (LOS) at intersections analyzed in Chapter 10, "Transportation," range from LOS B to D in existing conditions. Pedestrian activity is relatively light at the sidewalks, crosswalks, and street corners immediately adjacent to the project block reflecting the project site's location near the western edge of the Manhattan street grid and the absence of major pedestrian traffic generators such as a subway station or a school in the immediate vicinity. Noise levels reflect the volume of traffic on adjacent roadways, which is the dominant noise source at the project block.

F. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT BLOCK

As noted in Chapter 1, "Project Description," in the future without the proposed project none of the discretionary actions currently being sought are approved. In this case, absent those proposed actions, the permitted building will be constructed on the western and midblock portions of the project block. As noted above, this development conforms to the existing zoning and approvals for the project block.

The permitted building will consist of new construction of approximately 331,300 gsf of office use; 67,500 gsf of retail uses; and 239 public parking spaces on projected development site 1. The permitted building would be five stories tall (95 feet) with office uses located on floors 3 through 5 and ground floor retail. Parking would be located on the second floor and in the cellar. Parking would be accessed from a midblock access drive that would extend between West 57th and West 58th Streets and from an additional midblock entrance along West 58th Street. It is assumed that the mini-storage facility would remain in its current use in the future without the proposed project scenario.

STUDY AREA

As described in greater detail in Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," there are a number of developments planned or under construction within the study area.

In addition, the study area will continue to attract a mix of uses in the future without the proposed project. Several residential developments between Tenth and Eleventh Avenues will introduce residential, retail, and auto-related uses. In keeping with existing land use patterns in the study area commercial, industrial, and utility-related projects are also planned for the area. John Jay College of Criminal Justice is expanding to occupy the full block between West 58th and West 59th Streets. Along the Hudson River waterfront, Pier 97 will be redeveloped with open space uses, and on Piers 92 and 94 newly renovated exhibition space and a waterfront esplanade will be constructed pursuant to land use approvals granted in 2009. On Pier 99, the West 59th Street Marine Transfer Station (MTS), which currently processes recyclable paper waste, is proposed to be converted to accept commercial waste, primarily construction and demolition debris. The proposed conversion of the West 59th Street MTS, which will require its own environmental review and approvals, will occur upon completion of the proposed conversion of the Gansevoort Street waste transfer station to a recyclable paper facility.

Taken together, the projects expected to occur in the future without the proposed project would generally be in keeping with the wide range of building types and uses found in the area and are unlikely to significantly change the defining features of the neighborhood. The development projects that would be completed in the future without the proposed project will reinforce the study area's wide mix of uses, and although they will continue to affect the visual character of the area, they are not expected to alter the neighborhood's defining characteristics.

G. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

PROJECT BLOCK

The proposed project would introduce a higher-density development and a different mix of uses compared with development in the future without the proposed project and the 2001 FEIS. As

compared with the future without the proposed project, the incremental increase in development with the applicant's proposed project, in which it intends to build up to 863 residential units (including up to 151 affordable units, or 20 percent of the units on projected development site 1) and 28,000 gsf of community facility space. The proposed project would result in less office and retail space, and 285 more accessory parking spaces and 239 fewer public parking spaces than in the future without the proposed project. In addition, the existing 98,500 gsf of storage facility space would remain in the future without the proposed project, but would be replaced in the future with the proposed project.

The proposed project would change the character of the project block, but this change would result in beneficial effects to neighborhood character. Unlike the permitted building in the future without the proposed project, the proposed project would introduce, in addition to residential uses (including affordable housing), community facility uses to the project site. The proposed project would enliven the site with users of the additional ground-floor retail and the new community facility space, and would enhance the pedestrian experience and restore vitality to the project area. In addition, the proposed project's affordable housing component would help introduce a population with incomes that more closely reflect those of lower income households in the study area. These changes would contribute to an enlivened streetscape and would be an improvement to neighborhood character compared to conditions without the proposed project.

STUDY AREA

Although the proposed project would introduce a higher-density of residential development, a modest increase in overall density, and a different mix of uses compared with the 2001 *FEIS* program and the permitted building, these uses and densities would be compatible with the existing and anticipated land use patterns in the surrounding study area.

The higher-density residential uses would be in keeping with the high-density residential uses located in the study area. Substantial portions of the study area, including portions of Eleventh Avenue/West End Avenue near the project site, are zoned to allow residential uses to a greater FAR (up to 10.0) than the project site. In recent years, several projects have been developed pursuant to the high-density residential zoning, including The Helena and 10 West End Avenue. As noted above, high density residential uses are part of the mix of uses that define the character of the study area.

The proposed project's expanded retail uses would complement the retail uses that currently exist near the project site along Amsterdam Avenue/Tenth Avenue. The retail uses would contribute to the creation of an active mixed-use development on the project site and would serve the growing neighborhood and the surrounding area. In general, the retail and other commercial uses created with the proposed project would allow the project site to function as a mixed-use transition zone between the primarily residential neighborhoods of Riverside South to the north and the more mixed-use and commercial neighborhoods of Clinton to the south. As such, the proposed project would be compatible with the neighborhood character of both areas.

The proposed project's new population would likely have socioeconomic characteristics similar to the existing population. As noted above, the study area is already experiencing an ongoing trend toward more costly housing and a higher income population. The proposed project would represent a continuation of this trend. The up to 712 market-rate units introduced by the proposed project would be offered at rents or sales prices comparable to residential rents and sales prices for other modern, newly constructed market rate units in the surrounding area, while the 151 affordable units intended to be built by the applicant would rent at prices below existing

market-rate rents in the study area and would help introduce a population with incomes that more closely reflect those of lower income households in the study area. Therefore, the proposed project would not add a substantial new population with different socioeconomic characteristics that would adversely affect neighborhood character. The retail space that would be added to the project area would be local retail to serve the neighborhood and would not alter existing economic patterns such that neighborhood character would be adversely affected.

The new buildings' massing and orientation would be in keeping with other taller residential buildings in the study area. Furthermore, the heights of the proposed buildings would be compatible with building heights and densities in the surrounding area. Overall, the proposed project would introduce building forms in keeping with the context of the surrounding neighborhood.

On projected development site 1, the proposed building's north and east façades would consist of a textured, "sawtooth" pattern of glass that would reflect and thus emphasize the decorative features of the Consolidated Edison Power House's façades. The proposed project's tower would not exceed the height of the Consolidated Edison Power House stack, which is approximately 500 feet above grade. The proposed mixed-use building would contribute to the changing visual character of the study area, which includes many modern residential towers and will contain even more in the future without the proposed project.

In the future with the proposed project, expansive views of the Hudson River and New Jersey would remain from Riverside Park South, Hudson River Park, the elevated portions of Route 9A and Riverside Boulevard, and existing east-west street locations. The Consolidated Edison Power House and its tall brick smokestack would remain visible throughout much the study area, particularly from Riverside Park South and Hudson River Park, the elevated portion of Route 9A north of the project block, and along Eleventh/West End Avenue. From certain vantage points within Hudson River Park, the full bulk of this massive building would no longer be visible beyond the development on projected development site 1; however, these through-block views would already be limited in the future without the proposed project and they do not define the overall character of the neighborhood. The proposed mixed-use building would contribute to the changing visual character of the study area, which includes many modern residential towers and will contain even more in the future without the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project would not adversely affect any existing view corridors or visual resources in the study area and the change in views would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse open space impacts, and would off-set project-generated open space demand by including recreational amenities for the project residents. Therefore, the proposed project would not adversely affect open space resources such that it could affect open spaces as a defining feature of the neighborhood. In addition, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse shadows impacts to nearby sunsensitive resources and would not result in potential impacts to neighborhood character due to potential impacts related to shadows.

The proposed project would generate $\frac{2424}{24}$ new vehicle trips per hour (vph) during the weekday AM peak hour, $\frac{1521}{24}$ new vph during the weekday midday peak hour, a loss of $\frac{3935}{24}$ vph during the PM peak hour, and $\frac{7173}{24}$ new vph during the Saturday midday peak hour. As in existing conditions, the study area intersections would have LOS ranging from B to D. The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse transportation impacts, and would not result in potential impacts to neighborhood character due to transportation.

In the future with the proposed project, traffic on roadways near the project site, which is the dominant source of noise at the project site, would increase only slightly due to natural growth and the proposed project itself would not generate sufficient traffic to have the potential to cause a significant noise impact. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in potential impacts to neighborhood character due to noise.

The 2012 CEQR Technical Manual states that even if a project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in a certain technical area, the project may have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. A moderate effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area. The proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design; historic resources; shadows; transportation; or noise; nor would it result in moderate effects in these areas as defined by 2012 CEQR Technical Manual guidelines. Therefore, the proposed project would not have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character.

H. CONCLUSION

Overall, through the creation of new buildings that are consistent with their surroundings, and the revitalization of the project block, the proposed project would be consistent with the key components of the area's character and would, in fact, result in beneficial effects on neighborhood character. The proposed project would not have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood's character, either through a significant adverse impact in a specific technical area or through a combination of moderate effects, and a detailed assessment of neighborhood character is not warranted. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character that were not addressed in the 2001 FEIS.*