

# 17. Neighborhood Character

## 17.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the Proposed Action’s potential effects on neighborhood character. As defined in the *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/or noise conditions; but not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in all cases. For a proposed project or action, a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether the project or action has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in the relevant technical analysis areas. Thus, to determine the effects of a proposed action on neighborhood character, the salient features of neighborhood character are considered together. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare, and it would be unusual that, in the absence of a significant adverse 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, but rather serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Action involves zoning map and zoning text amendments that would affect an approximately 70-block area in the East Midtown area of Manhattan, generally bounded by East 57<sup>th</sup> Street to the north, a point approximately 150 feet east of Fifth Avenue to the west, East 39<sup>th</sup> Street to the south, and Second and Third Avenues to the east. The purpose of the Proposed Action is to protect and strengthen the East Midtown area as a premier commercial district by encouraging commercial development in targeted locations within the proposed rezoning area, as well as improving the area’s pedestrian and built environment. In the Reasonable Worst-Case Development Scenario (RWCDS), 19 sites have been identified as projected development sites that are expected to be developed by the 2033 analysis year, and 20 sites have been identified as potential development sites, which are considered less likely to be developed over the same period. Subject to further analysis and public consultation, the Proposed Action may also amend the City Map to reflect a “Public Place” designation over portions of Vanderbilt Avenue as one potential method to allow for the permanent development of a partially pedestrianized street.

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This chapter includes a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character that was prepared in conformance to the *CEQR Technical Manual*. The chapter describes the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and considers the potential effects of the Proposed Action on these defining features. The assessment relies on technical analyses discussed in other chapters of this FEIS.

### 17.2 PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. As discussed throughout this chapter, the East Midtown area has a varied neighborhood context, and its defining features are the dominance of commercial land uses, the interspersing of older buildings with modern construction, high levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity and associated noise, a primarily high-density built context, and the presence of a number of iconic historic resources, including Grand Central Terminal, the Helmsley Building, the Chrysler Building, St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, the Seagram Building, and Lever House. In the future with the Proposed Action, the East Midtown area would continue to be defined by this combination of features.

Using methodologies outlined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the preliminary assessment evaluated the expected changes resulting from the Proposed Action in the following technical areas: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. The assessment used the findings from the respective chapters of this EIS to identify whether the Proposed Action would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas, and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character.

Of the relevant technical areas specified in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the Proposed Action would not cause significant adverse impacts regarding land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources; or noise. The potential significant adverse impacts on transportation would not affect neighborhood character; while there would be increased activity, the resulting conditions would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, and thus the incremental changes would not constitute significant impacts on neighborhood character.

Potential significant adverse impacts on historic resources would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contributes to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character; while a neighborhood with a uniform and consistent context would typically be sensitive to change, a neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically better able to tolerate greater changes without experiencing significant impacts to its overall character. The significant adverse impact on historic resources would not alter the overall character of East Midtown

as an area characterized by a varied context of older buildings interspersed with modern construction. In addition, the iconic historic structures that are defining features of neighborhood character—Grand Central Terminal, the Helmsley Building, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, the Chrysler Building, the Seagram Building, and Lever House—would not be displaced. The potential significant adverse shadow impacts on stained glass windows at St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, and the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, would not affect the characteristics of those structures, including their architecture, setting and cultural significance, which make them defining features of neighborhood character.

Just as potential significant adverse impacts in the relevant technical areas would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, no moderate adverse effects that would affect such defining features—either singularly or in combination—have been identified.

Therefore, based on the results of the preliminary assessment, a detailed assessment is not warranted, and the Proposed Action would not have a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

### **17.3 METHODOLOGY**

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, or noise. The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that, even if a proposed action does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in any specific technical area(s), an assessment of neighborhood character may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that may cumulatively 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.

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood character. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and then evaluates whether the proposed project or action has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in the relevant technical areas. If there is no potential for the proposed project or action to affect the defining features of neighborhood character, a detailed assessment is not warranted.

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### 17.3.1 Study Area

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. In the context of an area-wide rezoning such as the Proposed Action, the study area boundaries for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character are generally coterminous with those used in the analyses of land use and urban design. As shown in Figure 17-1, the study area for this assessment of neighborhood character comprises an area within a ¼-mile radius of the proposed rezoning area.

## 17.4 PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

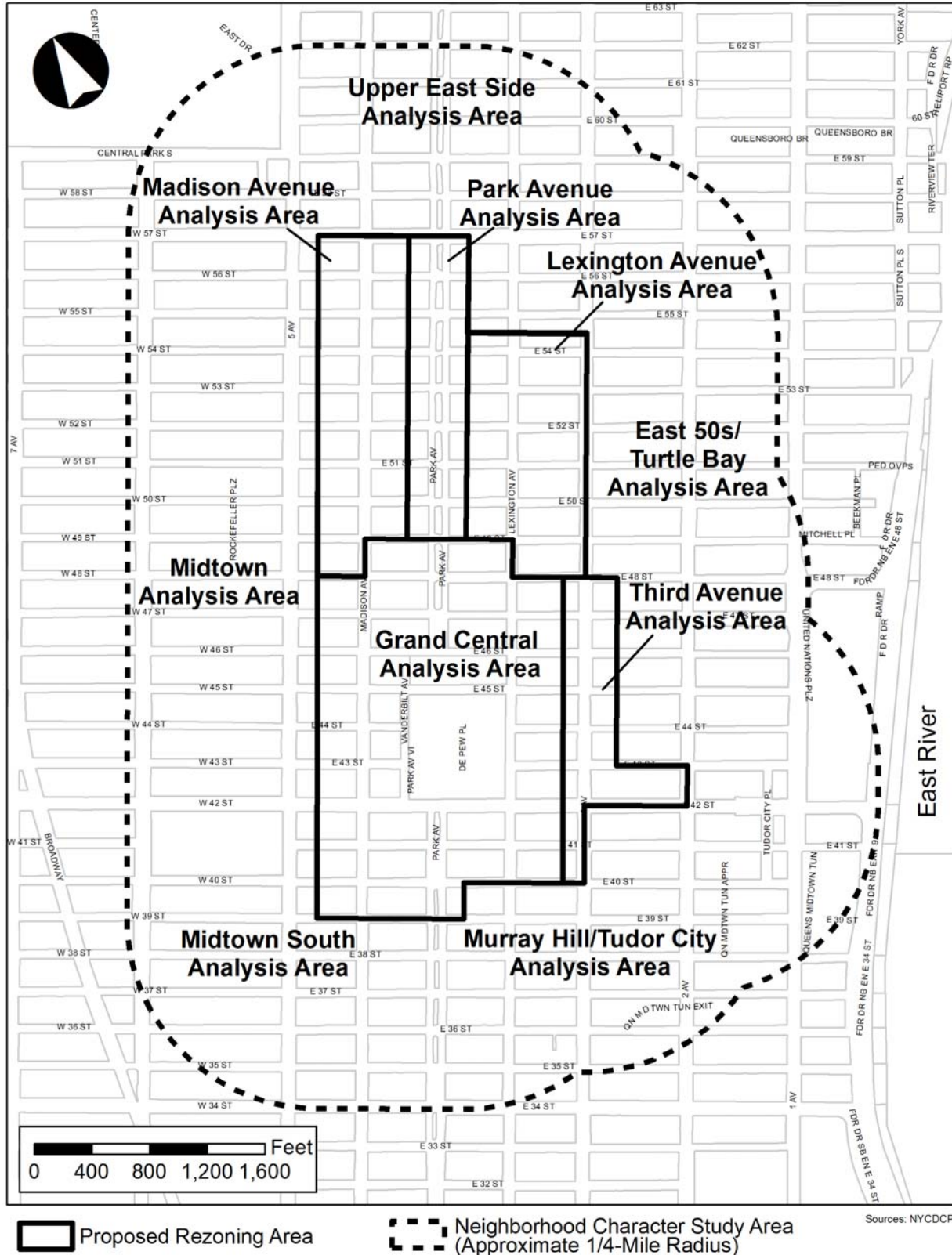
### 17.4.1 Defining Features

The defining features of neighborhood character in the East Midtown study area are the dominance of commercial land uses, the interspersing of older buildings with modern construction, high levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity and associated noise, a primarily high-density built context, and a number of iconic historic structures, including Grand Central Terminal, the Helmsley Building, the Chrysler Building, St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, the Seagram Building, and Lever House. For the purposes of assessing neighborhood character, the study area is divided into 10 distinct analysis areas, five of which are located within the boundaries of the proposed rezoning area, and five of which collectively encompass the surrounding ¼-mile area (Figure 17-1). Each of these analysis areas is discussed separately in the following sections.

#### 17.4.1.1 Grand Central Analysis Area

This analysis area, the largest within the proposed rezoning area, is centered on Grand Central Terminal, one of the City’s major transportation hubs and most prominent civic spaces, and the single most significant defining feature of the neighborhood character of this analysis area. A description of Grand Central Terminal’s historic significance is provided in Chapter 6, “Historic and Cultural Resources.” Development of the area around Grand Central Terminal was a key component of the original Grand Central project and the character of the neighborhood surrounding Grand Central Terminal, while changing significantly over time, has continued to be strongly defined by its relation to the Terminal building. The history of development around Grand Central Terminal, beginning with “Terminal City” and continuing to the present, is further described in Appendix 8.

FIGURE 17-1: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER STUDY AREA



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Remains of the earlier Terminal City buildings are few and generally dispersed throughout the Grand Central area with more-modern structures having been constructed around them. Of the 27 buildings developed as part of the pre-war Terminal City complex, nine remain, including two New York City landmarks. The largest concentration (five) of these buildings are located along Vanderbilt Avenue; however, a number of more-recent structures including 335 Madison Avenue (the rehabbed and reclad Biltmore Hotel), 383 Madison Avenue, and the MetLife building have been built in between them, breaking up any coherent grouping of the older structures.

In addition to Grand Central Terminal, the dominance of high-density commercial uses in the analysis area is a principal defining feature of neighborhood character. This vibrant commercial district and transportation hub is also defined by high levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity. The above- and below-grade pedestrian network in the vicinity of Grand Central Terminal is one of the unique assets of East Midtown; sidewalks near subway entrances serve as nodes of pedestrian activity, although there are also areas of narrow sidewalk width and pedestrian congestion. There is relatively low building bulk in midblock locations compared to avenue frontages, and although there is slightly more variety in the use and scale of buildings along the side streets than along the avenues, the analysis area is predominantly characterized by mid- and high-rise commercial buildings.

Along the eastern and western sides of the analysis area, Lexington and Madison Avenues are lined with commercial buildings that generally have ground-floor retail and upper-level offices. Although there are some low-rise buildings along these corridors, many buildings are taller than 20 stories, with several exceeding 40 stories in height. Some of the high-rise buildings rise to their full height without setback, while others have multiple setbacks. Collectively, these high-rise commercial buildings shape the East Midtown skyline, which is punctuated by the iconic spire of the 77-story brick and chrome Chrysler Building, which a defining feature of this analysis area.

The Park Avenue corridor within the Grand Central Analysis Area is heavily commercial in character, with less ground-floor retail than in the Lexington and Madison Avenue corridors within this analysis area. A number of skyscrapers on Park Avenue serve as corporate headquarters, and the buildings generally have large footprints, with some occupying entire blocks. Unique to Park Avenue is its wide sidewalk, the landscaped median from East 46<sup>th</sup> Street to East 49<sup>th</sup> Street—known as the Park Avenue Malls, which continue north into the Park Avenue Analysis Area—and a number of privately owned public plazas along the street frontage of buildings in the corridor. The Park Avenue corridor is physically divided between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and East 46<sup>th</sup> Streets by the presence of iconic structures that serve as defining features of neighborhood character and that also contribute to a break in the rectilinear street grid, with north-south vehicular traffic using a viaduct along this stretch of the roadway. North of Grand Central Terminal, the Park Avenue corridor is anchored at its southern end by the iconic 35-story Helmsley Building, with its grand pyramidal roof capped by an ornate cupola. At the corner of East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and

Park Avenue, the clock and statue at the apex of the Grand Central Terminal building terminate the avenue's northward vista, with the MetLife Building towering above it.

#### **17.4.1.2 Madison Avenue Analysis Area**

The Madison Avenue Analysis Area, located in the northwestern section of the proposed rezoning area, is similarly characterized by high-density commercial uses, although there is more variety in the use and scale of buildings than in the Grand Central Analysis Area. The buildings within this 10-block corridor and the adjoining side streets primarily comprise mid- and high-rise office buildings with ground-floor retail, but there are also several hotels, smaller-scale mixed commercial/residential buildings. The iconic St. Patrick's Cathedral, which fronts Fifth Avenue, is a neighborhood-defining feature due a combination of features, including its presence on Fifth Avenue, its soaring architecture and cultural significance, and the public space and quietude it offers in the midst of a high-density commercial district. The St. Patrick's Cathedral complex occupies the entire block between Madison and Fifth Avenues, and East 50<sup>th</sup> and East 51<sup>st</sup> Streets. Along East 50<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as Fifth Avenue, the Cathedral is set back and elevated from the streets on a granite plinth.

Within this analysis area, there is great variation in building heights, ranging from less than five stories up to the 51-story New York Palace Hotel. As such, blocks with high-density office towers are interspersed with blocks defined by smaller-scale buildings located adjacent to and often surrounded by high-rise buildings that are characteristic of East Midtown. As with the Grand Central Analysis Area, there is relatively less building bulk in midblock locations compared to avenue frontages. With its primarily commercial character, Madison Avenue serves as a vibrant pedestrian corridor, particularly in the vicinity of storefront retail. Most buildings with frontage on Madison Avenue have high lot coverage and are built to the sidewalk, creating a consistent streetwall along much of the corridor, but the streetwall is broken in several instances by privately owned public spaces in the form of plazas and arcades, as well as by two notable historic resources on both sides of the avenue between East 50<sup>th</sup> and East 51<sup>st</sup> Streets. On the west side of the avenue, the streetwall is interrupted by a landscaped area in front of the rear façade of St. Patrick's Cathedral.

#### **17.4.1.3 Park Avenue Analysis Area**

With a few notable exceptions, the Park Avenue Analysis Area generally consists of high-density commercial buildings that serve as defining features of neighborhood character. Exemplified by iconic structures, including the 38-story Seagram Building (375 Park Avenue) and the 24-story Lever House (390 Park Avenue), the eight-block corridor that encompasses this analysis area is characterized by a number of high-rise glass office towers, some of which have ground-floor retail. Most buildings in the analysis area are taller than 20 stories, and while some buildings rise to their full height without setback, others are massed with numerous setbacks. One noteworthy example of a building configured as a tower with multiple setbacks is the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, which occupies the entire block between Park and

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Lexington Avenues, and East 49<sup>th</sup> and East 50<sup>th</sup> Streets. The gray limestone and brick-clad building is designed in the Art Deco style, with twin beacon-topped vertically massed towers rising to 47 stories.

Sited in a terraced garden amid the office towers of Park Avenue, the iconic Byzantine-inspired St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House complex occupies the blockfront between East 50<sup>th</sup> and East 51<sup>st</sup> Streets. Its Park Avenue entrance consists of a single-story stone-clad structure with a triple-arched entry portal. The setting of the complex—designed with salmon-colored brick facades, large round-arched and rose stained-glass windows, and stone carvings—among the high density commercial buildings along Park Avenue is a defining feature of this analysis area.

### **17.4.1.4 Lexington Avenue Analysis Area**

The Lexington Avenue Analysis Area, located in the northeastern section of the proposed rezoning area, is characterized by a mix of commercial uses, with several post-war, high-rise office buildings and hotels with ground-floor retail. These commercial buildings serve as a defining feature of neighborhood character. Most buildings with avenue frontage are located on large lots and are taller than 20 stories, while a few side streets between Third and Lexington Avenues—most notably on East 49<sup>th</sup> Street—are lined with residential buildings on small lots with heights less than 10 stories, serving as a transition to the residential neighborhoods to the east.

The neighborhood character of this analysis area is also defined by high levels of pedestrian activity. Both Third and Lexington Avenues serve as important pedestrian corridors, particularly in the vicinity of storefront retail, bus stops, and subway stations. Within the analysis area, there are a number of access points to subway stations at East 51<sup>st</sup> Street (6 line) and East 53<sup>rd</sup> Street (E and M lines). The sidewalks along Third Avenue are wider than those on Lexington Avenue, and the narrower Lexington Avenue sidewalks contain a large number of sidewalk grates for ventilation of the subway which inhibit pedestrian movement.

### **17.4.1.5 Third Avenue Analysis Area**

As with the other analysis areas within the proposed rezoning area, the Third Avenue Analysis Area comprises primarily a mix of commercial uses that serve as a defining feature of neighborhood character. Situated in the southeastern section of the proposed rezoning area, the Third Avenue Analysis Area contains several post-war, high-rise office buildings with ground-floor retail. Although no material or pattern of material is dominant, a number of office towers are made of steel and glass. Despite the dominant development pattern of high-density office buildings in the analysis area, there are multiple breaks in this pattern, as pre-war buildings of less than five stories line some of the blocks along the Third Avenue corridor. Both Third Avenue and East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street are important pedestrian corridors, particularly in the vicinity of storefront retail and bus stops in the analysis area.



#### 17.4.1.6 Midtown Analysis Area

The Midtown Analysis Area, located west of the proposed rezoning area, is characterized by many post-war, high-rise commercial buildings. The area also includes several pre-war, low-rise buildings that line the Fifth and Sixth Avenue corridors, as well as the side streets. There is great variation in building height and bulk throughout this analysis area, and there are several distinct neighborhoods or districts within the analysis area, including the Fifth Avenue shopping district, the West 47<sup>th</sup> Street Diamond District, and the West 46<sup>th</sup> Street Little Brazil neighborhood, as well as a few clusters of institutional uses, such as the university clubs along West 43<sup>rd</sup> and West 44<sup>th</sup> Streets. This contributes to a varied neighborhood context in this analysis area.

As noted in the discussion for the Madison Avenue Analysis Area, the iconic St. Patrick's Cathedral is a neighborhood-defining feature due a combination of features, including its presence on Fifth Avenue, its soaring architecture and cultural significance, and the public space and quietude it offers in the midst of a high-density commercial district. Another important defining feature of neighborhood character in this analysis area is Rockefeller Center, which is a major tourist destination. Located across from St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue, the 21 limestone-faced buildings that comprise Rockefeller Center surround the exterior of a superblock bounded by West 48<sup>th</sup> and West 51<sup>st</sup> Streets, from Fifth Avenue to Sixth Avenue. Rockefeller Center consists of a monumental 70-story central building (the General Electric Building, formerly the RCA Building) surrounded by smaller office towers, low-rise buildings on Fifth Avenue, strategically placed open spaces, and a sunken plaza.

#### 17.4.1.7 Midtown South Analysis Area

Although historically defined by the presence of garment-related manufacturing uses, the Midtown South Analysis Area—located southwest of the proposed rezoning area—today has a more varied commercial context that defines the neighborhood character. Limited industrial/manufacturing uses remain along the midblocks in this analysis area, but many buildings that formerly housed these uses have been recently converted into ground-floor retail with offices in the upper levels. Lord and Taylor's New York City flagship store is notable because it occupies an entire block along Fifth Avenue between West 38<sup>th</sup> and West 39<sup>th</sup> Streets. There has also been a recent and continuing influx of hotels in the area, on 36<sup>th</sup>, 37<sup>th</sup>, and 38<sup>th</sup> Streets. The area also includes several institutional uses.

A significant defining feature of neighborhood character in this analysis area is the presence of the Stephen A. Schwarzman Building and Bryant Park, which collectively occupy a superblock from West 40<sup>th</sup> to West 42<sup>nd</sup> Streets between Fifth and Sixth Avenues. The Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, which houses the main branch of the New York Public Library, is a historic resource constructed in the Beau-Arts style of architecture, and the broad front stairs and projecting central pavilion draw the public into the majestic building. The 4.58-acre Bryant Park, located immediately west of the iconic Stephen A. Schwarzman Building, is characterized by a large central lawn (300 feet long by 215 feet wide), formal

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pathways, stone balustrades, allées of London Plane trees, and many monuments, including several bronze statues as well as classical ornaments. More than 6 million people visit this scenic landmark annually to enjoy its amenities, which include two restaurant pavilions and four concession kiosks.

### **17.4.1.8 Murray Hill/Tudor City Analysis Area**

The neighborhood character of this analysis area, located southeast of the proposed rezoning area, is largely defined by a variety of residential uses. North of East 39<sup>th</sup> Street, there is more of a commercial presence, but south of East 39<sup>th</sup> Street, avenues are lined mostly with post-war, high-rise residential buildings with ground-floor retail, while pre-war, low-rise residential brownstones and row houses are found along cross streets. Several large residential buildings with public plazas are located in this analysis area, including the 53-story Corinthian Apartments (330 East 38<sup>th</sup> Street), the 42-story Horizon (415 East 37<sup>th</sup> Street), the 37-story Manhattan Place Condominiums (630 First Avenue), and the 35-story Rivergate Apartments (606 First Avenue). While there are a variety of uses within this analysis area, including commercial, institutional, transportation/utility, and parking, in addition to the presence of vacant land, the analysis area maintains a largely residential character.

The varied residential character is reflected in the presence of three historic districts within this analysis area. The Murray Hill Historic District—located between East 34<sup>th</sup> and East 39<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Park and Lexington Avenues—consists primarily of mid-nineteenth-century row houses along tree-lined blocks; the brownstone-fronted buildings have low stoops with Italianate details. East of the Murray Hill Historic District is the Sniffen Court Historic District, which consists of 10 two-story brick buildings erected on a small court and set perpendicular to East 36<sup>th</sup> Street between Lexington and Third Avenues. The Tudor City Historic District is located at the northeastern edge of the analysis area, north of East 40<sup>th</sup> Street between First and Second Avenues. Tudor City is a complex of apartment houses and apartment hotels with Tudor details, ranging in height from 10 to 32 stories and collectively comprising 3,000 apartments and 600 hotel rooms. The complex has a unique character due to its location on a bluff set apart from its surroundings, the absence of through streets, and the presence of two small parks.

In addition to the predominantly residential land use that defines neighborhood character in this analysis area, another contributing feature is the Queens-Midtown Tunnel ramp network. The entrance and exit to the tunnel are located between East 36<sup>th</sup> and East 37<sup>th</sup> Streets, from First Avenue to Third Avenue, with dedicated north-south side streets providing one-way access to the tunnel. As such, the rectilinear street grid in this analysis area is interspersed with the tunnel ramp network.

### **17.4.1.9 East 50s/Turtle Bay Analysis Area**

The expansive East 50s/Turtle Bay Analysis Area, located east of the proposed rezoning area, is defined by a wide variety of uses and scales of buildings. As such, the neighborhood character is marked by the lack of uniformity in the built context, although certain development patterns can be identified. There are several high-rise commercial buildings on large lots within the analysis area; the 55-story Bloomberg

Tower (731 Lexington Avenue) and the 50-story General Motors Building (767 Fifth Avenue) occupy entire blocks. Additionally, large-scale residential buildings are also present in the analysis area, including the 72-story Trump World Plaza at First Avenue and East 48<sup>th</sup> Street. Yet, many of the midblocks, as well as stretches of the avenue corridors, also contain low-rise buildings on small lots. A prominent example is the Turtle Bay Gardens Historic District—located between Second and Third Avenues, and East 48<sup>th</sup> and East 49<sup>th</sup> Streets—which comprises 20 houses, each four stories in height, with a shared Italian Renaissance-inspired garden in the rear.

The United Nations Headquarters complex is located on a superblock on the east side of First Avenue between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and East 48<sup>th</sup> Streets, at the southeastern boundary of the analysis area. The complex includes four modernist buildings set back from the street, along with a park and paved courtyards. Additionally, a number of former mixed-use and residential buildings in the analysis area now serve as institutional uses for the United Nations. The 1.59-acre Dag Hammarskjold Plaza, located on the south side of East 47<sup>th</sup> Street between First and Second Avenues, provides a visual link to the United Nations Headquarters complex and is also the largest publicly accessible open space in this analysis area.

#### **17.4.1.10 Upper East Side Analysis Area**

The Upper East Side Analysis Area is located north of the proposed rezoning area and comprises a small southern portion of the extensive Upper East Side neighborhood, which generally extends northward up to East 96<sup>th</sup> Street. The analysis area consists of a mix of residential and commercial uses, and there are a number of late-nineteenth-century masonry, mixed commercial/residential buildings and apartment buildings.

Several private clubs and hotels are located in the vicinity of Central Park and Grand Army Plaza, which are key defining features of this analysis area. This southeastern portion of Central Park, which is located within this analysis area, consists mainly of The Pond, the Hallett Nature Sanctuary, trees and planted areas with benches and walking paths, and part of East Drive that provides both vehicular access and a lane for horse-drawn cabs.

Bloomingdale’s department store, a prominent neighborhood fixture, occupies the entire block bounded by East 59<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> Streets, and Lexington and Third Avenues. The 140-foot-wide Park Avenue boulevard, with wide sidewalks, is also a defining feature of this neighborhood.

### **17.4.2 Assessment of the Potential to Affect the Defining Features of the Neighborhood**

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Action in the following technical areas that are considered in a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban

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design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. The assessment uses the findings from the respective chapters of this EIS to identify whether the Proposed Action would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas, and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character. As described below, defining features of East Midtown’s constituent neighborhoods would not be affected either through the potential of any significant adverse impact or combination of moderate effects in these technical areas.

### *a. Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on land use, zoning, and public policy, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. Commercial land uses, a principal defining feature of East Midtown, would be reinforced by new office and hotel development in the future with the Proposed Action.

As described in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” no significant adverse impacts related to land use, zoning, or public policy would occur. The Proposed Action would not directly displace any land use, nor would it generate new land uses that would either be incompatible with surrounding land uses or conflict with existing zoning or public policy. The Proposed Action would facilitate the construction of new commercial buildings in East Midtown to protect and strengthen the area’s preeminence as a premier business district. The creation of a new East Midtown Subdistrict within the Special Midtown District would encourage new, as-of-right commercial development, particularly around Grand Central Terminal and Park Avenue, through a series of zoning mechanisms available to sites that meet specific size and locational requirements. The proposed zoning map amendment would change zoning designations to encourage new commercial development in a portion of the proposed rezoning area, consistent with its existing character and development history. Some of the projected development sites expected to be developed as residential buildings in the future without the Proposed Action would instead be developed as hotels to complement new office development. The predominantly commercial character of East Midtown is its principal defining feature, which would be reinforced by new office and hotel development in the future with the Proposed Action.

### *b. Socioeconomic Conditions*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The Proposed Action would result in a net increase of an estimated 15,703 employees, which would add to the customer base of existing businesses.

As described in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts in this technical area. No direct residential displacement would occur under the Proposed Action, and therefore, the Proposed Action would not result in significant adverse impacts

due to direct residential displacement. An assessment of indirect residential displacement was not warranted because the Proposed Action, under which there would be less conversion of office to residential space, would not induce a trend that could potentially result in changing socioeconomic conditions for the existing residents within the proposed rezoning area.

A number of existing businesses/institutions—which conduct a variety of business activities, including professional service, finance and insurance, real estate, administrative and support service, and waste management and remediation service—could be potentially be directly displaced by the Proposed Action on 12 of the 19 projected development sites. However, these businesses do not provide products or services that would no longer be available to local residents or businesses, nor are they the subject of regulations or publicly adopted plans aimed at preserving, enhancing, or otherwise protecting them in their current location. Moreover, the potentially displaced businesses are not unique to the ¼-mile study area, nor do they serve a user base that is dependent upon their location within the study area, and it is expected that they would likely be able to find comparable space within the study area or elsewhere within the City. Therefore, the direct business displacement resulting from the Proposed Action would not adversely alter socioeconomic conditions in East Midtown to a significant or moderate degree, and no adverse changes to neighborhood character would occur.

Furthermore, the Proposed Action would also not result in significant adverse impacts due to indirect business/institutional displacement. None of the potentially displaced businesses provide substantial direct support to other businesses in the study area, nor do they bring substantial numbers of people to the area that form a customer base for local businesses such that indirect business displacement would result. Although the employees of the directly displaced businesses form a portion of the customer base of neighborhood service establishments (e.g., food and drink establishments, retail), the Proposed Action would increase the overall employment in the rezoning area compared to the No-Action condition. It is anticipated that the Proposed Action would result in a net increase of an estimated 15,703 employees on the projected development sites compared to the No-Action condition, and thus the influx of employees to the study area would add to the customer base of existing study area businesses. Additionally, the Proposed Action would not significantly affect business conditions in any specific industry or any category of business, nor would it indirectly reduce employment or impair the economic viability of any specific industry or category of business. As such, there are no anticipated significant or moderate adverse impacts due to indirect business/institutional displacement or adverse effects on specific industries.

### *c. Open Space*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on publicly accessible open, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The Proposed Action would include the development of a new passive open space resource on Vanderbilt Avenue between East 44<sup>th</sup> and East 47<sup>th</sup> Streets, which would supplement the resource between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and East 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets considered under

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the No-Action condition. The Proposed Action also provides for funding of additional pedestrian improvements through the District Improvement Bonus (DIB) mechanism, which was conservatively not considered in the open space quantitative assessment.

As described in Chapter 4, “Open Space,” the Proposed Action would not result in a significant adverse impact on open space. Construction and operation of the projected developments under the Proposed Action would not cause the physical loss of public open space; would not change the use of any open space so that it no longer serves the same user population; and would not limit public access to any open space. Incremental shadows on open space resources would not be significant, and the Proposed Action would not cause increased noise that would significantly affect the usefulness of any study area open spaces, whether on a permanent or temporary basis. As such, the Proposed Action would not have a direct effect on open space resources.

The indirect effects analysis demonstrated that the Proposed Action, which would introduce additional workers to the area and thus place demands on passive open space resources, would decrease passive open space ratios by 1.47 percent for the non-residential population and 1.03 percent for the combined non-residential and residential population within the open space study area (i.e., an approximate ¼-mile radius around the proposed rezoning area). Although the study area’s existing conditions are characterized by a low open space ratio (i.e., below the citywide average of 0.15 acres of passive open space per 1,000 non-residential users), CEQR guidelines recognize that the goals for open space ratios are not feasible for areas such as Midtown Manhattan, and therefore do not constitute an impact threshold. Based on maps in the Open Space Appendix of the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the open space study area is neither well served nor underserved by open space resources. Consequently, while the acreage of passive open space resources in the study area is and would continue to be deficient in comparison to the CEQR benchmark, the deficiency would not be substantially exacerbated given the small incremental decreases in the open space ratios resulting from the Proposed Action, and the reductions in the open space ratios resulting from the Proposed Action are not considered significant. Therefore, the increased demand resulting from the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse open space impacts, and would not adversely affect neighborhood character.

### *d. Historic and Cultural Resources*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential impacts of the Proposed Action on historic and cultural resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources, historic districts, or individually designated historic resources, but has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts to eligible historic resources. As described in Chapter 6, “Historic and Cultural Resources,” the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) reviewed all of the projected

and potential development sites that could experience new/additional in-ground disturbance and concluded that none of the lots comprising those sites have any archaeological significance, and thus the Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources. Additionally, the projected and potential development sites identified in the RWCDS are not located within any historic districts, nor do they contain any individually designated historic resources, and any development that would be located within 90 feet of a designated historic resource—where new development has the potential to cause damage due to ground-borne construction vibrations—would be subject to the procedures of the New York City Department of Buildings (DOB) Technical Policy and Procedure Notice (TPPN) #10/88, which governs the protection of adjacent historic properties from accidental construction damage. Therefore, the Proposed Action is not expected to result in any direct or construction-related impacts to historic districts or individually designated historic resources.

The Proposed Action has the potential to result in direct impacts to eligible historic resources. Due to their location on projected or potential development sites, the following 11 eligible historic resources could be demolished, either partially or entirely, as a consequence of the Proposed Action: the NYCL-eligible buildings at 16, 18-20, and 22-24 East 41<sup>st</sup> Street; the NYCL- and S/NR-eligible Pershing Square building at 100 East 42<sup>nd</sup> Street; the NYCL-eligible Title Guarantee and Trust Company building at 6 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street; the NYCL- and S/NR-eligible Roosevelt Hotel at 45 East 45<sup>th</sup> Street; the S/NR-eligible Barclay Hotel at 111 East 48<sup>th</sup> Street; the NYCL-eligible Lexington Hotel at 509-511 Lexington Avenue; the NYCL-eligible Shelton Club Hotel at 525 Lexington Avenue; the NYCL- and S/NR-eligible Postum Building at 250 Park Avenue; and the NYCL-eligible Girl Scout Building at 830 Third Avenue. However, these impacts would not alter the overall character of East Midtown as an area characterized by a varied context of older buildings interspersed with modern buildings. In addition, the individual iconic historic structures that are defining features of neighborhood character—Grand Central Terminal, the Chrysler Building, the Helmsley Building, St. Patrick’s Cathedral, St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, the Seagram Building, and Lever House—would not be displaced. Shadows-related impacts on the stained glass windows of St. Bartholomew’s Church and Community House, and the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick’s Cathedral, are discussed in subsection f, “Shadows,” below.

*e. Urban Design and Visual Resources*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on urban design and visual resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse impacts to urban design or visual resources. As described in Chapter 7, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the Proposed Action would improve urban design features of the proposed rezoning area by dedicating a portion of Vanderbilt Avenue to pedestrian use, and would also allow for additional pedestrian improvements through the DIB mechanism. The pedestrianized area along Vanderbilt Avenue—between East 44<sup>th</sup> and East 47<sup>th</sup> Streets—

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would be divided into three 60-foot-wide by 200-foot-long segments, each extending one block in length, and would supplement the pedestrianized area between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and East 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets considered under the No-Action condition. This change in the With-Action condition would increase the amount of street space available to pedestrians and would thereby enhance the urban design of the proposed rezoning area by transforming the stretch of roadway into a signature pedestrian gateway, befitting its location next to Grand Central Terminal. The zoning regulations of the proposed East Midtown Subdistrict would also facilitate qualitative improvements to open space along Vanderbilt Avenue through glazing and active-use requirements. Additionally, the regulations would facilitate enhancement of the pedestrian network within the proposed rezoning area by mandating sidewalk widening on Madison and Lexington Avenues, as well as certain side streets.

The projected and potential developments identified in the RWCDs would primarily comprise high-density commercial uses, including offices and hotels with associated retail, which would conform to the built context of the proposed rezoning area. The building bulk of the With-Action developments would not change the built environment's arrangement, appearance, or functionality, and the height of new buildings would generally be consistent with that of other high-rise buildings in the East Midtown area. The introduction of new buildings would not affect a pedestrian's experience of public space in the proposed rezoning area or in the ¼-mile study area, and the visual character of buildings would not be significantly altered by the development resulting from the Proposed Action. As described in Chapter 7, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," views of certain visual resources would be modified—but not obstructed—by the addition of new buildings along the view corridors. Other views of visual resources would be obstructed from certain vantage points. However, similar views of affected visual resources would continue to be widely available from many other locations. Therefore, there would be no adverse impacts to urban design and visual resources, and similarly no adverse impacts to neighborhood character, as a result of the Proposed Action.

### *f. Shadows*

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential shadows-related effects of the Proposed Action, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

As discussed in Chapter 5, "Shadows," the incremental shadows from the projected and potential developments identified in the RWCDs would result in significant adverse impacts on the stained glass of St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House, and of the Lady Chapel of St. Patrick's Cathedral, adversely affecting the appreciation of stained glass windows from interior spaces. However, this would not lessen the attributes that make St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House, and St. Patrick's Cathedral, defining features of the neighborhood. A significant adverse shadows impact would not diminish the St. Bartholomew's Church and Community House complex's unique setting on Park Avenue among high density commercial buildings. Nor would it diminish St. Patrick's Cathedral's presence on



Fifth Avenue, its soaring architecture and cultural significance, or the public space and quietude it offers in the midst of a high-density commercial district. Therefore, potential shadows impacts would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

*g. Transportation*

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Action on transportation, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

Traffic would increase in the future with the Proposed Action. As described in detail in Chapter 12, “Transportation,” the traffic impact analysis indicated the potential for significant adverse impacts at 57 intersections during the AM, Midday, and/or PM peak hours. Potential mitigation measures are discussed in Chapter 19, “Mitigation.” Overall, the resulting conditions would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, which is already defined by high levels of vehicular activity, and thus the incremental changes would not constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character.

The Proposed Action would also generate additional demand for parking. Although the incremental parking demand would exceed the amount of new parking that would be provided, the parking analysis indicated that the surplus demand could be readily accommodated at off-street public parking facilities within a ¼-mile radius of the proposed rezoning area, and there would be no parking shortfall. The Proposed Action would not affect on-street public parking utilization. As such, the additional demand for parking would not create a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

With respect to transit in the With-Action condition, the assessment identified significant adverse impacts on the M42 local bus service caused by a capacity shortfall in the AM peak hour eastbound service and PM peak hour westbound service. Potential mitigation measures are discussed in Chapter 19, “Mitigation.” Overall, the changes to transit service conditions resulting with the Proposed Action would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, and would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

With respect to pedestrians, the assessment identified 35 pedestrian elements—comprising two sidewalks, 25 crosswalks, and eight corner areas—that would experience significant adverse impacts during one or more peak hours in the future with the Proposed Action. Potential mitigation measures are discussed in Chapter 19, “Mitigation.” The Proposed Action would result in improvements to the pedestrian network. As mentioned previously, three one-block segments of Vanderbilt Avenue—between East 44<sup>th</sup> and East 47<sup>th</sup> Streets—would be dedicated to pedestrian use in the With-Action condition, which would supplement the pedestrianized area between East 42<sup>nd</sup> and East 43<sup>rd</sup> Streets considered under the No-Action condition. Additional pedestrian improvements could be funded through the DIB mechanism. New zoning regulations associated with the Proposed Action would mandate sidewalk widening on

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Madison and Lexington Avenues, as well as on certain side streets, which would further enhance the pedestrian network within the proposed rezoning area. Overall, although it is expected that there would be an increase in the level of pedestrian activity in the future with the Proposed Action, the resulting conditions would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, and thus the incremental changes would not constitute significant impacts on neighborhood character.

*h. Noise*

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential noise-related effects of the Proposed Action, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Action would not result in any significant adverse noise impacts. As described in Chapter 15, “Noise,” the traffic generated by the anticipated new development would not have the potential to produce significant increases to noise levels at any sensitive receptors within the study area. It is anticipated that there would be little or no change in future With-Action noise levels, compared to existing noise levels, for the majority of locations throughout the proposed rezoning area, with noise levels remaining within the CEQR “marginally unacceptable” limits. Therefore, the Proposed Action would not generate sufficient new noise to cause a significant adverse impact. Additionally, with the incorporation of noise attenuation measures, noise levels within the proposed buildings would comply with all applicable requirements. Overall, the noise that is generated by the anticipated new development and the resulting traffic would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, and thus the incremental changes would not constitute significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.