

A. INTRODUCTION

The FGEIS analysis found that the illustrative development programs evaluated under the 12.0 FAR Rezoning Scenario would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, but that conclusions respecting impacts on neighborhood character may be different with a specific project plan. Therefore, this chapter evaluates whether the development program as proposed would result in significant adverse neighborhood character impacts, and compares the effects of the proposed development program to those anticipated under the Rezoning Scenario assessed in the FGEIS.

The analysis concludes that with the Proposed Actions, development would occur on the project site that would result in new buildings, uses, user populations, and increases to traffic and pedestrian activity. However, these changes would not be substantially different than those disclosed in the FGEIS, and would not constitute significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, as discussed below.

B. METHODOLOGY

As defined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of the many factors that combine to give an area its distinctive personality. These factors include land use, scale, and type of development; historic features; patterns and volumes of traffic; noise levels; and other physical or social characteristics that help define a community. Not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few determining elements.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when the action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following impact categories: land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. A significant impact identified in one of the impact categories that can contribute to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined. Potential impacts on neighborhood character may include:

- *Land Use*: Development resulting from a proposed action 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.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions*. Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to impact neighborhood character when they would result in substantial direct or indirect

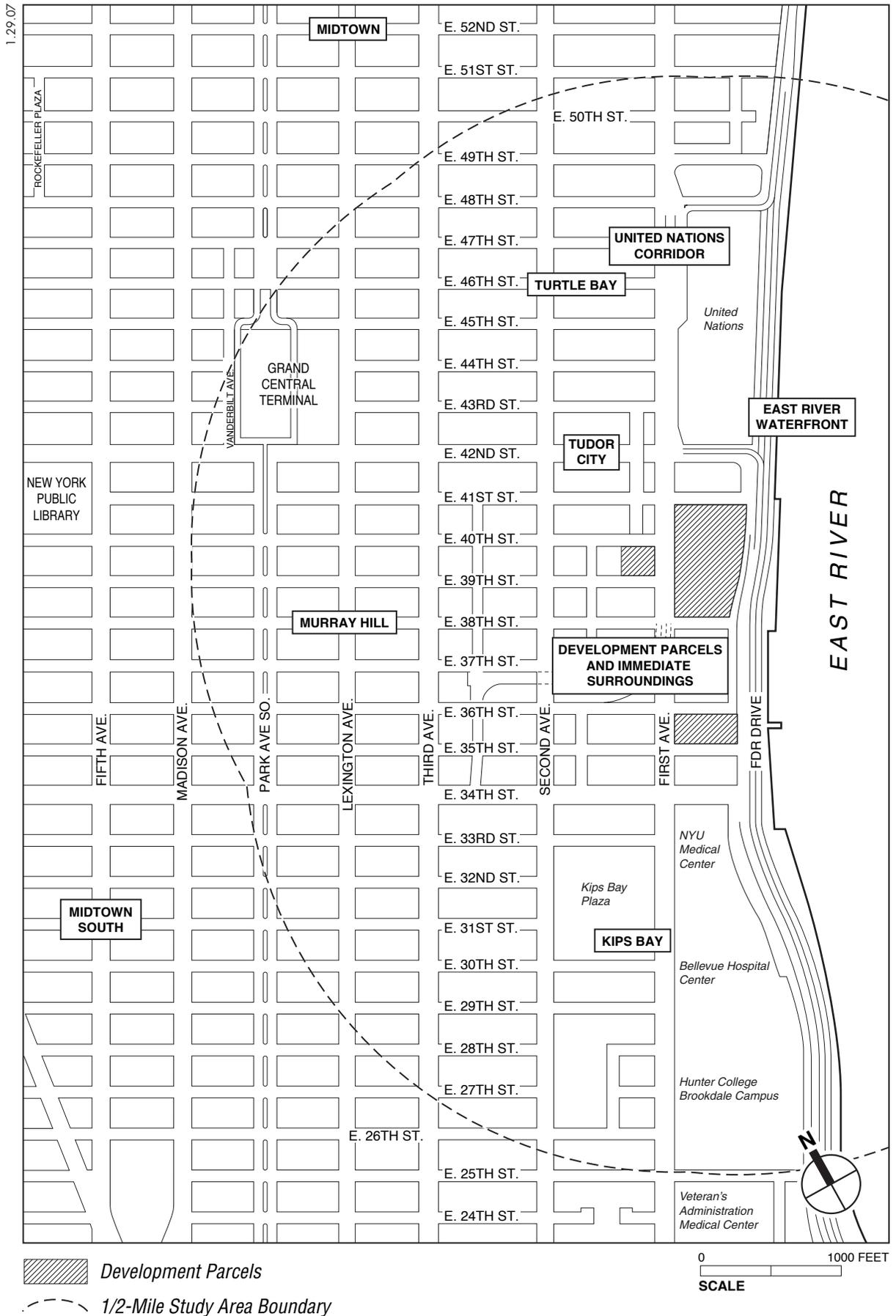
displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density.

- *Historic Resources.* A proposed action has the potential to impact neighborhood character when it 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.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources:* In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to impact 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 street walls, landscaping, curb cuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes have the potential to impact neighborhood character by directly changing visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or public visual access to such features.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians.* Changes in traffic conditions have the potential to impact neighborhood character when a proposed action would result in substantial changes to traffic, and when traffic is a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence). According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, such substantial traffic changes can include: changes from level of service (LOS) A or B to LOS C or below, changes in traffic patterns, changes in roadway classifications, changes in vehicle mixes, substantial increases in traffic volumes on residential streets, or significant traffic impacts as identified in that technical analysis. Changes in pedestrian conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation.
- *Noise.* According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a proposed action has the potential to impact neighborhood character if it would result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in the acceptability category.

This chapter examines neighborhood character within a ½-mile radius of the development parcels (see Figure 9-1). This study area is identical to the combined primary and secondary land use study areas presented in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy.” A smaller neighborhood character study area within the bounds of the larger area also has been defined, to allow the analysis to focus on the immediate vicinity of the development parcels. The full and smaller neighborhood character study areas analyzed in this chapter correspond to the neighborhood character study areas examined in the FGEIS. This chapter’s impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes in these impact categories are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character.

C. SUMMARY OF FGEIS FINDINGS

The FGEIS neighborhood character analysis focused on potential changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes identified in the technical areas of land use, urban design and visual resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrians, historic resources, and noise. The FGEIS determined that the three illustrative development programs under the 12.0 FAR Rezoning Scenario would result in changes to the character of the development parcels, but that those changes would be in keeping with the neighborhood character of the surrounding area and would replace existing uses that are out of character with the surrounding area. The illustrative



Neighborhood Character Context Study Area
Figure 9-1

development programs were found to affect the component environmental areas of neighborhood character in the following ways:

- *Land Use.* The Rezoning Scenario would result in substantial changes to land use on the development parcels; those changes would be beneficial to the character of the parcels, and would not result in significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the study area.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Each of the illustrative development programs under the Rezoning Scenario would result in substantial changes to the residential population and the number and type of jobs on the development parcels. The Residential Program would introduce 651 new jobs to the area and 9,310 residents. The two Mixed-Use Programs would introduce more than 11,200 new jobs to the area and more than 4,400 new residents. These changes to socioeconomic conditions would not result in significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the study area.
- *Historic Resources.* The Rezoning Scenario would not affect historic resources in any way that would result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character in the study area.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* The illustrative development programs under the Rezoning Scenario would result in substantial changes to the bulk, size, and scale of buildings on the development parcels, and would change the visual character of the parcels through the construction of a number of large residential and/or office towers. While those new buildings would change the visual landscape of the development parcels, they would not significantly affect the visual landscape or urban design of the surrounding neighborhoods. However, the FGEIS noted that because the designs considered were illustrative in nature, the possibility remained that the final selected design could result in significant adverse impacts to urban design and visual character in the study area.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians.* The illustrative development programs under the Rezoning Scenario would increase traffic and pedestrian activity in the vicinity of the development parcels, but mitigation would be capable of relieving much of the added congestion. Overall, increases to traffic and street-level pedestrian activity in the area were not found to result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character in the study area.
- *Noise.* Noise increases from traffic added by the illustrative development programs under the Rezoning Scenario would be imperceptible, and thus would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character in the study area.

While the FGEIS found that no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result from the Rezoning Scenario's illustrative development programs, it noted that the final project plan could vary from the development programs considered, and thus might cause different impacts to neighborhood character. Consequently, the FGEIS was unable to completely rule out the potential for significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, particularly in the area of urban design and visual resources.

D. EXISTING CONDITIONS

DEVELOPMENT PARCELS AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS

DEVELOPMENT PARCELS

The project site is composed of four parcels located on three non-contiguous blocks along First Avenue between East 35th and 41st Streets. These parcels are: 616 First Avenue; 685 First Avenue; 700 First Avenue (Waterside); and 708 First Avenue (see Figure 9-1). The 700 First Avenue (Waterside) and 708 First Avenue parcels compose a single superblock, and are one of a number of superblocks east of First Avenue between East 48th and 14th Streets.

616 First Avenue

The 616 First Avenue parcel occupies the entire city block bounded by East 36th Street, the FDR Drive, East 35th Street, and First Avenue. This parcel formerly contained the Kips Bay Steam Generating Station and fuel oil storage facility. These structures have been demolished, and the site is currently vacant.

685 First Avenue

The 685 First Avenue parcel, located between East 39th and East 40th Streets, is the only development parcel on the west side of First Avenue. It is part of a larger zoning lot that includes the Con Edison East 40th Street Substation, a modern, two-story, facility made up of large stone blocks and covered in horizontal metal louvers. This active substation lies immediately to the west of the 685 First Avenue parcel, which is an open area separated from the sidewalk by a metal fence with stone pillars that is currently used for temporary storage and parking for trailers and vehicles associated with the ongoing remediation activities at the development parcels.

700 First Avenue (Waterside)

The 700 First Avenue parcel is bounded by an extension of the northern street line of East 40th Street, the FDR Drive, East 38th Street, and First Avenue. The site was formerly developed with the Waterside Plant, a power generating facility. The Waterside Plant, which was decommissioned in 2005, has been demolished, and the site is currently being remediated.

708 First Avenue

The 708 First Avenue parcel is bounded by East 41st Street, the FDR Drive, the northern boundary of the 700 First Avenue parcel, and First Avenue. The site formerly contained a 10-story office building used by Con Edison; this structure has been demolished and the site is currently vacant.

These four parcels represent the last vestiges of what was once an extensive industrial and manufacturing area along the eastern edge of Midtown Manhattan known as the Gashouse District. Whereas the development parcels were once surrounded by light- and heavy-industrial uses, they now stand apart from their surroundings as vacant sites zoned for industrial use in a high-density residential and commercial area.

IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS

The area immediately surrounding the development parcels is defined as the blocks and streets along First Avenue between East 34th and 42nd Streets. As described more fully in Chapter 2,

“Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy” and Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the character of this area is, for the most part, substantially unlike that of the vacant and formerly industrial development parcels. Most of the lots in this area are fully developed with mid- to high-rise residential and commercial buildings, some with ground-floor retail uses. The Tudor City residential complex, which is a local and national historic district, is located across First Avenue and East 40th Street from the 685 and 708 First Avenue development parcels. Two full-block parks, St. Vartan Park and Robert Moses Playground, are adjacent to the 616 First Avenue and 708 First Avenue development parcels, respectively. Visual resources in the area include St. Vartan Park, some views of the Empire State Building, and the East River Esplanade and views of the river from the esplanade. As described in Chapter 15, “Traffic and Parking,” First Avenue and East 34th and 42nd Streets are busy vehicular thoroughfares, while the side streets are less heavily traveled. During the AM and PM rush hours, streets in the area fill with cars entering and exiting the Queens-Midtown Tunnel (QMT), but at midday hours, the streets are less trafficked.

STUDY AREA

As described above, the neighborhood character study area is defined by a ½-mile radius from the development parcels and is roughly bounded by East 51st Street to the north, the East River to the east, East 25th Street to the south, and Madison Avenue to the west. Within the study area, there are several sub-areas and corridors that represent distinct neighborhoods or land use concentrations. These areas, which are analyzed separately below, include Tudor City, the United Nations (U.N.) Corridor, Murray Hill, Kips Bay, the East River Waterfront, and Midtown Manhattan’s Central Business District (CBD).

GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS

The study area can be broadly described as a high-density residential and commercial area. It represents a diverse urban environment containing a portion of the Midtown CBD, including a major transit hub at Grand Central Terminal; the brownstones of Murray Hill; the residential community of Tudor City; and destination and neighborhood retail strips along First, Second, Third, and Lexington Avenues. The buildings in the study area are a mix of older low-rise buildings located along side streets, tall residential towers (ranging from 20 to more than 40 stories tall) typically found along Second and Third Avenues, and a range of commercial office buildings. Streets in the study area are laid out in the regular Manhattan grid, with wide, straight avenues running north-south, and narrow cross streets running east-west. As mentioned above, the grid pattern is regularly disrupted between First Avenue and the East River by large superblocks.

TUDOR CITY

Tudor City is a residential community comprising 12 apartment buildings constructed in the 1920s. These buildings, located between First and Second Avenues and 40th and 44th Streets, range in height from 10 to 32 stories. Tudor City’s buildings are marked by Tudor Revival architecture and architectural references to English Cottages. The buildings present uniform street walls and are oriented toward the parks and playgrounds found in the center of the complex. Because Tudor City is built at a higher elevation than the rest of the study area, it is somewhat isolated from its surroundings, and has little street and pedestrian relationship with 42nd Street or First Avenue. Access to Tudor City’s buildings comes primarily from interior streets: East 41st Street, East 43rd Street, and Tudor Place, a north-south street that runs between

First Avenue Properties Rezoning Final SEIS

East 40th and East 43rd Streets. Like Tudor City itself, these streets are at a higher grade than the surrounding streets and area, including the more heavily traveled 42nd Street and First Avenue corridors. This isolation gives the Tudor City community a quiet and tranquil character even though it is located at the edge of the busy Midtown CBD. Traffic on Tudor City's interior streets, which are not through streets, is markedly lighter than on streets outside of the complex. These unique geographical and architectural features define the Tudor City community and make it easy to discern from the surrounding area.

THE UNITED NATIONS CORRIDOR

The United Nations Complex

The headquarters of the United Nations (U.N.) is located north of the development parcels along the east side of First Avenue between 42nd and East 48th Streets. The 18-acre U.N. campus contains four main buildings, paved walkways, and open spaces containing lawns. The U.N. Park and views of the U.N. Secretariat building from certain locations are visual resources. At the southern end of the campus is the modern, 3-story, stone and glass Library. Adjacent to the Library is the flat-roofed Conference Building, which cantilevers out over the FDR Drive. North of the Conference Building is the narrow, 41-story Secretariat Building, which functions as an office tower. The rectangular and domed General Assembly Building extends the length of approximately two city blocks just north of the Secretariat Building and east of First Avenue.

The U.N. campus is an international zone belonging to its member states that maintains its own security force, post office, and fire department. As a result, the campus is largely isolated and separated from the surrounding area. In spite of its physical isolation, the U.N. influences surrounding neighborhoods because many nations choose to locate their consulates, diplomatic offices, and missions in close proximity to the campus. Just west of the campus are a number of commercial and residential buildings between First and Second Avenues that house missions and diplomatic residences. Significant pedestrian activity is common to the area, as is moderate to heavy vehicular activity. These uses affirm the character of the U.N. Corridor as a mixed office, residential, and institutional neighborhood.

While blocks west of the U.N. campus retain Manhattan's regular street grid, the U.N. superblock breaks this pattern, as all cross streets from East 43rd Street to East 47th Street terminate at First Avenue. The buildings on the campus create a visual barrier that blocks views to the East River from First Avenue and points west. A tunnel runs under First Avenue from East 41st Street to East 48th Street, allowing through-traffic on First Avenue to bypass the U.N. Corridor. Just south of the campus, at 42nd Street, is an entrance ramp for the FDR Drive.

North of the U.N.

North of the U.N. campus, First Avenue is lined with tenement-style buildings and high-rise residential towers. This area encompasses the residential neighborhoods of Beekman Place and Sutton Place. First Avenue is a busy thoroughfare in this area, used for access to the Queensboro Bridge in the evening rush hour, while cross streets are less heavily traveled.

MURRAY HILL

Murray Hill is a predominantly residential neighborhood roughly bounded by East 40th Street to the north, Second Avenue to the east, 34th Street to the south, and Madison Avenue to the west. Though it contains a variety of residential building types, the neighborhood is best known for its

stately brownstones and mansions. Many of these buildings are considered architecturally significant and distinctive in appearance. Cross-town streets in Murray Hill are generally quiet and tree-lined, lending the neighborhood its residential quality. Newer development in Murray Hill has created a number of larger residential towers along Second, Third, and Lexington Avenues and 34th Street. In addition to residences, Murray Hill also contains some office and institutional uses.

The entrance and exit ramps for the QMT are located in Murray Hill and disrupt the neighborhood's street grid on several blocks. Approach and departure routes to and from the QMT carry substantial traffic volumes and tend to become congested, especially during rush hours. This heavy traffic volume contributes to the high ambient noise levels in Murray Hill. Noise levels due primarily to vehicular traffic tend to be much higher around the QMT than in other parts of the neighborhood. As in many areas of Manhattan, pedestrian activity is high in Murray Hill, though midday pedestrian activity is somewhat lighter than in the Midtown CBD to the north.

KIPS BAY AND ENVIRONS

Kips Bay Proper

Kips Bay lies generally south of the development parcels and is roughly bounded by East 34th Street to the north, the East River to the east, East 27th Street to the south, and Third Avenue to the west. The neighborhood contains a mix of high-density residential and institutional uses. Several modern high-rise residential towers can be found in Kips Bay, particularly between Second and Third Avenues. Most of these buildings include publicly accessible plazas. The street pattern in Kips Bay retains the regular Manhattan grid west of Second Avenue, but is interrupted by superblocks east of Second Avenue.

One of these superblocks contains Kips Bay Plaza, a residential complex bounded by 33rd Street, First Avenue, 30th Street, and Second Avenue that differs substantially from other residential towers in the area. Designed by I.M. Pei and constructed in 1964, Kips Bay Plaza consists of two long, narrow residential buildings with a private open space in the center. The superblock also contains a retail complex and movie multiplex accessible from Second Avenue, and a New York University Medical Center residence hall accessible from First Avenue.

Kips Bay contains several hospitals and related institutional uses. An uninterrupted series of superblocks east of First Avenue between 25th Street to 34th Street is dominated by medical uses associated with the New York University Hospital Center/New York University School of Medicine Campus, the Bellevue Hospital Campus, the Veterans Administration Hospital, and the Hunter Brookdale Campus. The institutional buildings along this nine-block stretch range in height from one to more than 30 stories.

Much of the midday vehicular and pedestrian activity in Kips Bay along First Avenue is due to this concentration of health care facilities. While emergency vehicle traffic and high noise levels are common to the area, this stretch of First Avenue is somewhat less heavily traveled than other avenues in Kips Bay and portions of First Avenue in other parts of the study area.

West of Kips Bay

A small portion of the study area lies just west of what is usually considered Kips Bay. This area, roughly bounded by Park Avenue South and Third Avenue, contains predominantly moderate-density residential buildings with ground floor retail uses along the avenues, and a

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smaller number of office buildings and high-density residential towers. Pedestrian activity in this area is generally lighter than in Murray Hill, and similar to Kips Bay. Vehicular activity, while moderate on side streets, is heavier along Third and Lexington Avenues and heaviest along Park Avenue South. The blocks in this area maintain the regular Manhattan street grid.

EAST RIVER WATERFRONT

The study area includes the East River waterfront between East 25th and East 51st Streets. This stretch of waterfront is largely separated from the neighborhoods to its west by the FDR Drive, which parallels the waterfront for its entire length, and a series of superblocks between First Avenue and the FDR Drive. East of the FDR Drive, along the waterfront, there are a variety of uses, including: the Waterside Plaza residential towers (built on landfill east of FDR Drive between East 25th and East 30th Streets) the Water Club restaurant at East 30th Street, a heliport at East 34th Street, and waterfront esplanades between East 30th and East 34th Streets and East 36th and East 38th Streets. From points west, views to the waterfront are blocked through much of the study area by development on the superblocks and other blocks between First Avenue and the FDR Drive. Furthermore, the FDR Drive, which is elevated from the study area's southern border to approximately 42nd Street, reinforces this visual barrier to the waterfront through much of the study area.

EAST MIDTOWN CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

As shown in Figures 2-3 and 2-4 of Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the Midtown CBD generally begins to the west of Second Avenue and north of East 39th Street. The southeastern portion of the Midtown CBD overlaps with the northwestern portion of the study area. This part of the study area is predominantly made up of high-rise office towers with some residential towers interspersed among these commercial uses. 42nd Street is the primary corridor connecting the Midtown CBD to the development parcels. This street is the main east-west thoroughfare in the Midtown CBD and is characterized by office towers, local and destination retail at the street level, extremely heavy vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and high levels of noise. 42nd Street is a major tourist attraction with many of its street-level shops catering to tourists.

The Midtown CBD is also home to Grand Central Terminal, an architecturally significant building and a historic resource. Grand Central Terminal breaks the regular Manhattan grid pattern for three blocks between East 42nd and East 45th Streets. The Terminal is oriented south toward Park Avenue and its triple archway is a well-known New York City landmark. Due to the confluence of pedestrian activity entering and exiting Grand Central Terminal and vehicular activity on 42nd Street, Park Avenue, and Lexington Avenue, the area immediately surrounding the Terminal is the busiest location in the study area.

In general, vehicular and pedestrian traffic is heavier in the Midtown CBD than in other parts of the study area. From the beginning of the morning rush hour to the end of the evening rush hour, its streets and sidewalks teem with vehicles and pedestrians. This activity generates high levels of ambient noise.

E. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

Neighborhood character in the future without the proposed development has been examined for 2014, assuming that the Proposed Actions are not approved.

In addition to the future conditions in the study area described below, additional impact analyses are included to account for future conditions with the proposed United Nations Development Corporation (UNDC) project on a portion of Robert Moses Playground (see section G, “Future Conditions with the UNDC Project,” below).

DEVELOPMENT PARCELS AND IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS

DEVELOPMENT PARCELS

In the future without the Proposed Actions, it is anticipated that the 616, 685, and 708 First Avenue development parcels would remain vacant. All of the development parcels would be fully remediated by 2014. The character of the parcels would not change.

IMMEDIATE SURROUNDINGS

A 60,000-gross-square-foot (gsf) commercial office development is currently anticipated on the west side of First Avenue between East 34th and East 35th Streets, close to the 616 First Avenue development parcel. While this project may increase pedestrian and vehicular activity in the area, it is not likely to materially change the neighborhood character. No other changes to the blocks immediately surrounding the development parcels are expected to occur in the future without the Proposed Actions (with the exception of the UNDC project, which is discussed separately in Section G).

STUDY AREA

In the future without the Proposed Actions, several residential, institutional, and infrastructure projects are projected to be completed or underway in the study area by 2014. None of these projects are expected to substantially affect the study area’s general characterization as a high-density residential and commercial area, nor would they result in any significant adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, or urban design and visual resources.

In the U.N. Corridor, the United States Mission to the United Nations plans to construct an office building for its operations on the west side of First Avenue between East 43rd and East 44th Streets. This building will be similar in use and character to the many consulates, diplomatic offices, and missions located in close proximity to the U.N. campus. Three blocks north on First Avenue between East 46th and East 47th Streets, a new approximately 285-unit residential building is planned.

In the Murray Hill area, improvements will be made to a bridge over a roadway leading to the QMT. This infrastructure project, along with ongoing work on City Water Tunnel No. 3 (which requires a shaft site adjacent to St. Vartan Park), may cause disruptions during construction, but it is not anticipated that they will permanently affect neighborhood character. In addition, two large residential developments are planned in Murray Hill: a 480-unit building with a U.S. Post Office on Second Avenue between East 36th and East 37th Streets; and a 105-unit residential development on Park Avenue and East 37th Street. While these projects would increase pedestrian and vehicular activity in the area, they are not likely to materially change overall neighborhood character.

Two major medical development projects are expected to be completed in the Kips Bay area by 2014. On the northern portion of the Bellevue Hospital campus, south of East 30th Street, the NYU School of Medicine (NYUSOM) will develop the East River Science Park (ERSP). The

ERSP project will renovate Bellevue Hospital's former Psychiatric Building for medical school use, and create new offices, conference space, and staff housing. This development will also include 1.5 million gsf of biotechnology space in three buildings, and two public plazas. Separately, NYUSOM is constructing a 180,000 gsf medical research building on the school's campus to the west of the FDR Drive at approximately East 31st Street. These developments are likely to reinforce the character of the medical corridor east of First Avenue in Kips Bay.

Along the East River Waterfront, reconstruction of the FDR Drive is contemplated between East 25th and East 42nd Streets, though no specific plan has been selected. Anticipated projects along the waterfront include improvements to the existing heliport and ferry landing, both near East 34th Street. These projects would either maintain the existing character of the waterfront or enhance it by increasing pedestrian traffic east of the FDR Drive and the superblocks that separate the waterfront from inland areas.

East Side Access, a major transportation project that will bring Long Island Rail Road service to Grand Central Station via a new tunnel beneath Park Avenue, is expected to be completed in the East Midtown CBD by 2014. This project may result in greater numbers of commuters traveling to the CBD. As such, it will reinforce the neighborhood's character as a densely-developed, highly-trafficked, busy CBD.

F. PROBABLE IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The Proposed Actions would result in development that would change the character of the parcels, the immediately surrounding area, and to a lesser degree the wider study area. This chapter assesses the potential for significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character as a result of these changes. It focuses on changes to the impact categories of land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and pedestrians, and noise, since changes in these areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character.

- *Land Use.* Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," finds that the proposed development program would result in substantial changes to land uses on the development parcels, but that these changes would be compatible with current land use patterns in the surrounding area. The Proposed Actions would promote development similar to existing conditions in the surrounding area, and would be consistent with the prevailing public policy. The chapter found that no significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, or public policy would occur as a result of the proposed actions. However, the land use changes on the development parcels would result in changes to urban design, visual resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and pedestrians, which in turn, could affect neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* Chapter 3, "Socioeconomic Conditions," finds that the proposed development program would not result in significant adverse impacts due to direct or indirect residential or business displacement, nor would it cause significant adverse impacts to a specific industry. The populations of new residents and workers added to the area would fall within the development envelopes analyzed in the FGEIS, and these populations would be demographically similar to the existing populations in the study area. The amount and types of new retail provided would be in keeping with the existing retail character of the study area and would enhance retail activity along First Avenue.
- *Historic Resources.* Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," finds that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to any known historic/architectural resources and

would not have the potential to impact archaeological resources. As such, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would occur in this impact category.

- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” indicates that while the proposed development program would result in changes in urban design and visual resources on the development parcels, these changes would not result in significant adverse impacts to the study area. The proposed development would not affect the street pattern and hierarchy, block forms, building arrangements, or natural features in the study area. The buildings would be cohesively designed as tall and slender, rectangular towers that would allow for the maximum amount of open space on site and would create new views to the East River waterfront. Further, the buildings would not block existing significant views of any visual resources or obstruct significant views and view corridors.
- *Traffic and Pedestrians.* Chapter 15, “Traffic and Parking,” finds that the proposed development program would result in traffic impacts at a number of intersections in the area. Chapter 23, “Mitigation,” indicates that approximately 75 percent of significantly impacted locations in Manhattan would be fully or partially mitigated with a series of standard traffic engineering measures. Chapter 16, “Transit and Pedestrians,” finds that the proposed development would result in significant pedestrian impacts to some area crosswalks, a staircase in Grand Central Station, and significant impacts to some bus lines. These impacts would be fully or partially mitigated, as described in Chapter 23, “Mitigation.”
- *Noise.* Chapter 18, “Noise,” finds that the additional traffic that would accompany the proposed development would raise noise levels at some locations in the study area. However, it is expected that these changes in noise levels would be barely perceptible and insignificant.

Collectively, the changes anticipated as a result of the proposed development program in the above analysis areas would not be expected to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character in the study area.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

The FGEIS analyzed three illustrative development programs associated under a Rezoning Scenario that assumed a maximum FAR of 12.0. The current Proposed Actions also would rezone the development parcels for high-density mixed-use development at 12.0 FAR. As described in more detail in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the proposed development program analyzed in this SEIS would introduce 3,753,607 gsf of residential use, 1,532,437 gsf of commercial office use, 71,167 gsf of retail use, 119,936 gsf of community facility use, 640,030 gsf of below-grade space for parking and other service requirements (including 945 public parking spaces and 609 accessory parking spaces), and 210,771 sf (4.84 acres) of publicly accessible open space. Table 9-1 compares gsf by use for the three FGEIS rezoning scenarios and the SEIS scenario.

Table 9-1
Comparison of FGEIS and SEIS Development Programs

	FGEIS Rezoning Scenarios (gsf ¹)			SEIS Development Program (gsf) ³
	Residential Development Program	Mixed-Use Development Program	Mixed-Use Development Program with Office on 708 First Avenue	Proposed Development
Residential	5,052,125	2,421,609	2,547,115	3,753,607
Retail	39,243	70,298	65,251	71,167
Commercial Office	0	2,776,122	2,650,175	1,532,437
Community Facility	132,000	132,000	132,000	119,936
Total:	5,223,368	5,400,029	5,394,541	5,477,147
Open Space ²	144,312	144,300	144,300	210,771

Notes: ¹ The FGEIS expressed floor areas in zoning square feet (zsf). For this table, gross square feet (gsf) figures were derived by multiplying residential and retail zsf by 1.03, and commercial office and community facility zsf by 1.10.
² Open space areas are all publicly accessible; amounts expressed in square feet (sf).
³ SEIS proposed development program would also include approximately 640,030 gsf of below-grade space devoted to parking and other service requirements.

The development program now proposed is most similar to the Mixed-Use Development Program with Office scenario presented in the FGEIS. As compared to that scenario, the proposed development program would include more residential space and publicly accessible open space, a similar amount of retail and community facility space, and less commercial office space. The overall gross square footage of both programs would be similar. The proposed development program would result in a different number of buildings with different heights and orientations than the FGEIS Mixed-Use Development Program with Office, as shown in Table 9-2.

Table 9-2
Comparison of FGEIS and SEIS Building Heights and Placements

Development Parcel	FGEIS Mixed-Use Development Program with Office	SEIS Proposed Development Scenario
616 First Avenue	19- and 55-story building; open space along First Avenue	Two buildings (37 and 47 stories); open space in interior of block
685 First Avenue	66-story building fronting First Avenue	69-story building fronting First Avenue
700 First Avenue (Waterside)	52-story building fronting First Avenue at south of parcel; open space fronting First Avenue between 39th and 40th Streets	Three buildings (57, 60, and 66 stories) oriented perpendicular to First Avenue; open space fronting First Avenue at northern portion of parcel and extending into 708 First Avenue parcel
708 First Avenue	36- and 57-story building occupying entire parcel	47-story building at First Avenue and East 41st Street; open space extending south into 700 First Avenue parcel

In general, changes to neighborhood character would occur gradually as development is completed on each of the four parcels (with regard to land use and urban design and visual resources) and each building is occupied (with regard to socioeconomic conditions and traffic and pedestrians).

LAND USE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Land use is an important factor in determining neighborhood character because changes in the way land is used can alter both the look and feel of an area and the levels of activity in that area. Changes to land use can precipitate changes to neighborhood character in the areas of visual resources, urban design, socioeconomic conditions, vehicular and pedestrian traffic, and noise. The proposed development program would not result in changes to land use that would cause significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

The proposed development program would result in land uses and densities similar to those in the surrounding area, but substantially different from those that would occur on the development parcels in the future without the Proposed Actions. As stated above, the proposed development program would create approximately 3.8 million gsf of residential uses, 1.5 million gsf of office uses, 120,000 gsf of community facility space, 71,000 gsf of retail space, 4.84 acres of publicly accessible open space, and parking uses. All of the office uses would be placed on the 708 First Avenue parcel, at the northern end of the project site. The remaining parcels would be predominantly residential, with the community facility uses placed on the 616 First Avenue parcel at the southern end of the project site. The largest publicly accessible open space would be on the Waterside and 708 First Avenue parcels, and smaller open spaces would be created on the 616 and 685 First Avenue parcels. All of the development parcels would include ground-floor retail uses along First Avenue. This pattern of uses would be compatible with land use in the ¼-mile area surrounding the development parcels. The proposed development would acknowledge surrounding land uses by situating dense, mixed-use development near the U.N. to the north and residential uses south of the U.N. along First Avenue. The proposed office building at East 41st Street and First Avenue (on the 708 First Avenue parcel) would relate to and enlarge the dense mixed-use development district near the U.N.

The proposed development program would have a positive effect on the neighborhood character of its immediate surroundings, as it would solidify the neighborhood's high-density residential character along First Avenue, enhance rental activity along First Avenue, and augment its commercial character near 42nd Street. Beyond the project site's immediate surroundings, the changes to land use resulting from the proposed development would not be likely to have a pronounced effect on the character of adjacent neighborhoods.

As compared to the two mixed-use illustrative development programs analyzed in the FGEIS, the proposed development would be most similar to the Mixed Use Development Program with Office on 708 First Avenue. Both of these programs would restrict commercial office use to 708 First Avenue and develop the Waterside parcel as primarily residential. The proposed development program differs in that it includes ground-floor retail on all four parcels and locates all of its community facility space on 616 First Avenue. The FGEIS concluded that the Mixed-Use Development Program with Office would be consistent with prevailing land use trends. The same conclusion would apply to the development program as proposed.

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The Proposed Actions would not result, directly or indirectly, in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts due to residential or business displacement, nor would they cause significant adverse impacts to a specific industry. The proposed development scenario would result in the addition of approximately 7,000 new employees and approximately 6,500 new residents to the area by the year 2014. These new populations fall within the envelope of development analyzed in the FGEIS under the Rezoning Scenario, and they would be

demographically similar to existing populations in the study area. The addition of approximately 6,500 residents to the study area would not result in a socioeconomic impact to its neighborhood character, since the area is already a dense residential community. While new office development would substantially increase the number of employees in the vicinity of the 708 First Avenue parcel, the amount of commercial office space is less than the maximum amounts analyzed under the FGEIS Rezoning Scenario. The addition of thousands of new jobs and residents would cause the area immediately surrounding the project site to become more heavily traveled (see further discussion under “Pedestrians,” below), and would cause its character to become more like a mixed-use office and retail center at its northern extreme (near East 42nd Street).

The additional residents and office workers drawn to the neighborhood as a result of the proposed development program are likely to increase demand for retail and other business and residential services in the area. This increased demand would be met largely by the retail and service components of the proposed development, and is not likely to change the character of the area. Overall, the creation of jobs and housing caused by the Proposed Actions would result in beneficial effects to the socioeconomic character of the study area, increasing the overall economic activity in the study area through the expenditures of the project site businesses and residents.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The proposed development program would substantially change the urban design and visual character of the development parcels, which would in turn affect the neighborhood character of the immediately surrounding area. However, these changes would not constitute significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

The proposed development program, like the illustrative programs analyzed in the FGEIS, would be constructed on existing blocks, and would therefore maintain the existing street pattern, block shapes, and street hierarchy of the study area. Seven mixed-use buildings ranging in height from 433 feet to 721 feet and publicly accessible open space would be developed on the development parcels, replacing vacant land. The buildings would be cohesively designed as slender structures sited and massed to disperse their bulk across the development parcels. They would have narrow tower forms that would provide for a substantial amount of open space on site. The proposed development program would create new views to the waterfront and be compatible with the typical tower form of the tall modern buildings in the immediately surrounding area. All of the development parcels would include publicly accessible open spaces. These spaces would provide the area with new visual and functional amenities, and the open space on the Waterside parcel would provide new, publicly accessible views toward the East River. By providing view corridors through the Waterside parcel along the alignments of East 39th and 40th Streets, the proposed development program would reference the original block and street pattern between First Avenue and the FDR Drive and East 38th and 41st Streets, reinforcing the sense of the Manhattan street grid. The new development would have a positive effect on neighborhood character in the area immediately surrounding the development parcels.

While the new towers would be visible from some adjacent neighborhoods, the proposed development is not likely to affect the urban design and/or visual character of neighborhoods beyond the immediate surroundings of the project site due to dense, intervening development. The urban design and visual character of the neighborhoods beyond the immediate surroundings of the project site—the U.N. Corridor, East Midtown CBD, Murray Hill, Kips Bay, and Tudor

City—are thus not likely to change as a result of the proposed development. Beyond the immediate vicinity of the project site, the East River Waterfront is also not likely to change as a result of the new development, as the proposed buildings would become several of many tall buildings lining the Manhattan shoreline of the East River in the study area.

TRAFFIC AND PEDESTRIAN IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

Additional traffic over No Action levels would be generated by the proposed development, primarily due to the addition of approximately 6,500 new residents and 7,000 new employees. These increases would result in significant traffic impacts throughout the study area, as was also identified in the FGEIS. At all 88 intersections analyzed in Manhattan in this SEIS, significant impacts would occur at 55 intersections in the AM peak hour (compared to 33 in the FGEIS), at 35 intersections in the midday peak hour (compared to 24 in the FGEIS), and at 57 intersections in the PM peak hour (compared to 36 in the FGEIS). The increase in the number of significant traffic impacts is largely attributable to higher baseline traffic vehicles projected for the No Build condition.

The proposed development program would generate 1,494 AM peak hour, 772 midday peak hour, 1,356 PM peak hour, and 1,097 Saturday midday peak hour vehicle trips. These project-generated trips would increase traffic in the project site's immediate surroundings, especially in the AM and PM peak hours. First Avenue between East 34th to 42nd Streets would be more heavily traveled during rush hours, as would east-west streets such as East 34th and East 42nd Streets that would carry traffic to and from the development parcels. There would be 55, 35, 57 and 22 impacted locations out of 88 intersections studied in Manhattan during the AM, midday, PM and Saturday peak hours, respectively. However, the mitigation analysis indicates that 38, 26, 38, and 17 significantly impacted intersection in the AM, midday, PM and Saturday peak hours, respectively, would be fully mitigated with a series of traffic improvements. Overall, there would be either no significant traffic impacts or fully mitigatable traffic impacts at 86 percent of all Manhattan intersections analyzed and another 2 percent could be partially mitigated. Unmitigated increases in traffic at the remaining impacted locations would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, because, as described below, these locations already experience high levels of traffic in the existing and no build conditions.

In the primary traffic study area, significant unmitigated traffic impacts would occur at: the intersection of the FDR Drive Service Road and East 34th Street during the AM, midday, PM, and Saturday peak hours; the intersection of the FDR Drive Service Road and East 35th Street during the AM and PM peak hours and East 37th Street during the AM peak hour; First Avenue and East 34th Street in the Saturday peak hour; First Avenue at East 37th, East 40th, and East 49th Streets during the PM peak hour; First Avenue and East 42nd Street in the AM and PM; Second Avenue at East 34th Street during the AM peak hour; Second Avenue and East 36th Street during the AM and PM peak hours; Second Avenue and East 42nd Street during the AM and midday peak hours; the QMT Exit Street and East 34th Street in the PM and at East 37th Street in the AM; Third Avenue and East 42nd Street in the AM, midday, PM, and Saturday peak hours; Park Avenue at East 34th Street during the AM and at East 42nd Street in the Saturday peak hours; and Madison Avenue and East 42nd Street during the AM peak hour. However, these traffic impacts would not affect the neighborhood character of the study area, as these locations are characterized by substantial volumes of traffic during rush hours in the existing and No Build conditions. Other unmitigated traffic impact locations outside of the local community are projected along Second Avenue at the foot of the Queensboro Bridge, along First

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Avenue at East 52nd and East 53rd Streets, at the intersection of West 34th Street with Sixth Avenue and Broadway, and at Sixth Avenue, Eighth Avenue, and Broadway and West 42nd Street, all of which are heavily trafficked locations under existing and No Build conditions and which would not, therefore, experience significant adverse neighborhood character impacts.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* indicates that neighborhood character may be impacted by a change in traffic level of service (LOS) to C or worse, even if this change does not constitute a significant adverse impact to traffic conditions. The SEIS analyzed LOS at 81 signalized intersections during the AM peak hour, and 82 signalized intersections during the midday, PM, and Saturday midday peak hours. In the No Build condition, 12 signalized intersections during the AM peak hour, 30 signalized intersections during the midday peak hour, 16 signalized intersections during the PM peak hour, and 49 signalized intersections during the Saturday midday peak hour would operate at overall LOS A or B. The remaining signalized intersections during each peak hour would operate at overall LOS C or worse.

In the Build condition, 10 signalized intersections would operate at overall LOS A or B during the AM peak hour, since two additional intersections—First Avenue at 39th and 52nd Streets—would operate at overall LOS C or worse. During the midday peak hour, 28 signalized intersections would operate at overall LOS A or B, since two additional intersections—Second Avenue at 37th Street and the QMT Exit Street at 39th Street—would operate at overall LOS C or worse. During the PM peak hour, 12 signalized intersections would operate at overall LOS A or B, since four additional intersections—First Avenue at 38th, 39th, and 40th Streets and the Queens Midtown Tunnel Approach Street at 38th Street—would operate at overall LOS C or worse. During the Saturday midday peak hour, 47 signalized intersections would operate at overall LOS A or B, since two additional intersections—the QMT Exit Street at 34th Street and Third Avenue and Third Avenue at 41st Street—would operate at overall LOS C or worse. The combined deterioration during all peak hours would constitute less than a five percent increase over the No Build condition in the number of intersections operating at LOS C or worse.

Overall, traffic conditions resulting from the proposed development program would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character for the following reasons: 88 percent of the neighborhood intersections analyzed would either not be significantly impacted or would be fully or partially mitigated. The remaining impacted locations already experience high levels of traffic in the existing and No build conditions; and there would be less than a five percent increase in the number of intersections operating at LOS C or worse.

Pedestrians

The proposed development program would increase pedestrian activity in the immediately surrounding area and in some parts of the larger study area. These increases would result in significant adverse impacts at a total of two crosswalk locations, three MTA bus routes, and one stairway at Grand Central Station. Each of these impacts could be fully or partially mitigated, and no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result. The addition of ground-floor retail uses at each of the development parcels would increase pedestrian activity along First Avenue. This activity would enliven the street, and would have a positive effect on neighborhood character.

NOISE IMPACTS ON NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

The Proposed Actions would raise noise levels in the study area by a barely perceptible margin that would fall below the CEQR threshold for a significant adverse impact. As such, the

Proposed Actions would not result in any noise-related significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the proposed development program would not result in any significant adverse impacts to land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, or noise (during operations). The project would result in significant traffic and pedestrian impacts, but a vast majority of those impacts could be mitigated and would occur at already congested locations. They would not, in turn, cause significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. Furthermore, no significant adverse impacts would result to neighborhood character due to the cumulative effect of moderate changes in the above impact categories. Overall, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result from the Proposed Actions.

G. FUTURE CONDITIONS WITH THE UNDC PROJECT

In the FGEIS, the proposed UNDC project at East 41st Street and First Avenue was considered as part of the baseline condition in the Future Without the Proposed Actions. However, because the UNDC project is complex and requires approvals from the New York State Legislature, the New York City Economic Development Corporation, and possibly other public agencies, including its own environmental review, it is uncertain whether the project will be completed by 2014 or, in fact, ever built. Therefore, the Future without the Proposed Actions section in this document does not include the UNDC project. This section considers an additional future baseline condition in which the UNDC project is constructed.

The UNDC project would create a 35-story, 950,000 square foot office building for United Nations office workers to the immediate south of the existing U.N. campus and across East 42nd Street from the 708 First Avenue development parcel. The UNDC site is currently occupied by Robert Moses Playground, a public park owned by the city. The SEIS chapters for the constituent technical areas that compose neighborhood character reached the following conclusions regarding future conditions with the UNDC project:

- *Land Use.* The UNDC project would add to the existing commercial office uses surrounding the U.N. complex and reinforce the mixed-use character of that area. Its presence on the block immediately north of 708 First Avenue would complement the office use proposed for that parcel in the proposed development scenario. The inclusion of the UNDC building as a background project would not alter the conclusion that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* The inclusion of the UNDC building as a background project would not alter the conclusion that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts.
- *Historic Resources.* The UNDC project would block some views of the Secretariat Building that would otherwise be blocked by the proposed development, and the inclusion of the UNDC building as a background project would not alter the conclusion that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to historic resources.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* Development of the UNDC project would increase the number of tall, modern buildings lining First Avenue in the vicinity of the development parcels. The UNDC building would block some existing views of the Secretariat building that

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would otherwise be blocked by the proposed development. The inclusion of the UNDC building as a background project would not alter the conclusion that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to urban design and visual resources.

- *Traffic and Pedestrians.* The Draft SEIS concluded that with the UNDC building as a background project, the number of intersections that would operate at overall Level of Service (LOS) E or F conditions, the number of movements that would operate at LOS E or F, and the number of intersections that would be significantly impacted would not be substantially different. Therefore, detailed traffic analyses were not re-conducted for this Final SEIS. According to the Draft SEIS, conditions on the FDR Drive would generally not be substantially different with the exception of a deteriorated condition that would result in a significant impact on the southbound FDR Drive at the 34th Street on-ramp merge during the weekday PM peak hour. In addition, conditions on the QMT and on the Queensboro Bridge would not be substantially different. With the UNDC building as a background project, the Proposed Actions would result in significant impacts due to reduced LOS at two stairways in Grand Central Station. Significant adverse impacts would also occur on three MTA bus routes and at multiple pedestrian locations along 42nd Street. Overall, these traffic, transit, and pedestrian impacts that would occur with the UNDC building as a background project would occur at already congested locations and/or could be mitigated and would not result in significant adverse neighborhood character impacts.
- *Noise.* Inclusion of the UNDC building as a baseline project would increase noise by imperceptible or barely perceptible levels, and would not result in significant impacts.

Overall, the UNDC project would reinforce the mixed-use character of the area around the U.N. and would be similar in character to the building proposed for the adjacent 708 First Avenue parcel under the Proposed Actions. The inclusion of the UNDC building as a baseline project would not alter the conclusion of this chapter that the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. *