

9

Natural Resources

This section assesses the effects of the proposed action on natural resources, which are defined as the City's biodiversity (plants, wildlife and other organisms); any aquatic or terrestrial areas capable of providing suitable habitat to sustain the life processes of plants, wildlife and other organisms; and any areas capable of functioning in support of the ecological systems that maintain the City's environmental stability.

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate the possible effects of the proposed action on natural resources in New York City. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a natural resource is identified as plant and animal species, and any area capable of providing habitat for plant and animal species or capable of functioning in support of the ecological systems that maintain the City's environmental stability. A natural resources assessment considers species in the context of surrounding environment, habitat, or ecosystem and examines a proposed action's potential to impact those resources.

The introduction of a CPC special permit for new hotels in M1 districts could result in shifting hotel development from M1 districts to other locations where they will

continue to be permitted as-of-right but would not otherwise change any rules regulating development in these locations. Thus, the possible effects of a shift in some hotel development from M1 districts in the future No-Action and With-Action conditions will be considered by means of a prototypical analysis. Since the specific location of future development projects is unknown, the natural resources assessment is based on prototypical sites as defined and described in **Chapter 1, "Project Description."**

Principal Conclusions

Analyses were conducted on the prototypical sites to assess natural resources pertaining to the shift from non-hotel use (i.e., a residential or different commercial use) in the No-Action condition to commercial hotel use in the With-Action condition. In accordance with the methodology outlined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a screening analysis was conducted to assess the potential of the proposed action to affect natural resources. The analysis concluded that, although the proposed action is anticipated to shift development to locations outside of M1 zoning districts, the proposed action itself would not induce development on sites where natural resources exist and where development would not have otherwise been possible. Furthermore, the proposed action would not eliminate and/or change the existing state or local protections already in place for natural resources.

Screening Analysis

According to the screening thresholds in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an adverse impact on a natural resource might occur if there is the presence of a natural resource on or near the site of the action and the action involves the disturbance of that resource. The proposed action would create a special permit for hotels within M1 zones, except for areas that are airport property or areas adjacent to airports that are predominantly non-residential. The proposed action is not expected to induce development and affect the amount or type of future hotel development in the City, but it is anticipated to shift the location of where hotels locate.

Because the proposed action introduces a discretionary approval process via a CPC special permit for hotel development within M1 districts, DCP projects less hotel development in M1 districts under the With-Action Condition than the No-Action Condition. Generally, it is projected that the proposed action would restrain the development of some of the hotel rooms slated for M1 districts that are currently in the pre-construction process, and would result in a shift of hotel development to areas where hotel development could still occur as-of-right, in commercial and mixed-use districts within the same geographic submarket. This shift of where hotel development could instead be located outside of M1 districts is represented by the seven hotel prototypical development sites as described in **Chapter 1, "Project Description."**

Although the proposed action may result in additional ground disturbance, it is not expected to induce development on sites where natural resources exist and where

development would not have otherwise been possible. In addition, in many areas where natural resources exist, there are regulations that ensure their protection. These regulations include New York State Department of Environmental Conservation tidal and freshwater wetland regulations, the New York State Coastal Zone Management Program, and special zoning designations including Special Natural Area zoning. The proposed action would not eliminate and/or change these existing protections.

Conclusion

Although the proposed action is anticipated to shift development to locations outside of M1 zoning districts, the proposed action itself would not induce development on sites where natural resources exist and where development would not have otherwise been possible. Furthermore, the proposed action would not eliminate and/or change the existing state or local protections already in place for natural resources.