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Neighborhood Character

This chapter considers how the Proposed Actions would affect neighborhood character, which is defined as the elements of the environment that combine to create the context and feeling of a neighborhood.

Introduction

This analysis of neighborhood character follows the guidelines set forth in the *2020 City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*. As defined within the manual, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods a distinct “personality,” including, land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, shadows, historic resources, urban design, transportation, and noise. Not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few defining elements. For a proposed project, a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether the project has the potential to affect these defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical analysis areas. Thus, to determine the effects of a proposed project on neighborhood character, the salient features of neighborhood character are considered together. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare and occur under unusual circumstances. Moreover, a significant adverse impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood’s character is not automatically equivalent to a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character, but, rather, serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

This section includes a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character; the assessment was prepared in conformance with the *CEQR Technical Manual* using information from the technical analyses presented in other relevant chapters of this EIS.

Principal Conclusions

The Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of East Midtown. The study area contains numerous iconic large-scale commercial buildings which historically have shaped the East Midtown skyline. The study area is characterized by dense, commercial development, which is reinforced by recent actions, including the Vanderbilt Corridor rezoning in 2015 and the Greater East Midtown rezoning in 2017. The goal of the Greater East Midtown rezoning was to replace older commercial building stock with new commercial development to maintain the subdistrict as a globally competitive business district. The Both the Proposed Project fulfills and the All Office Scenario would fulfill the goal of the Greater East Midtown Rezoning, as a tall commercial tower in keeping with the predominant use and building form that defines the study area. The Proposed Project and the All Office Scenario would incorporate a number of proposed public realm improvements, including new public open space on the second floor of the building as well as significant transit improvements such as the construction of a new transit hall and reconstruction and upgrades to the existing 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue Grand Central passages. These public realm improvements improve several defining features of the neighborhood, contributing to the active and vibrant pedestrian activity and circulation network that facilitates the area's function as a central transportation hub for New York City. In addition, the ~~Proposed Project~~ proposed building has been designed to complement and support surrounding iconic buildings. The proposed second-floor open spaces and tapered form above the second floor would create new and unique sightlines to Grand Central Terminal, the Chrysler Building, and the other defining buildings of the neighborhood.

As detailed in the relevant chapters of this EIS, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts in the contributing technical areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; or noise. Significant adverse impacts were identified in the transportation technical area (traffic and pedestrian impacts), however per *CEQR Technical Manual* guidelines this is not necessarily equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Although it is expected that there would be an increase in the level of pedestrian activity and traffic volumes in the future With-Action condition, the resulting conditions would not be out of character with the East Midtown area, which is already defined by high volumes of vehicles and pedestrians. Therefore, the identified impact would not affect the defining features of the neighborhood and would not constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character. Overall, the Proposed Actions would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character, either from a significant adverse impact identified in a singular technical area or from the combined effect of changes to the defining elements.

Methodology

A neighborhood character assessment is generally needed, per the *CEQR Technical Manual*, when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in certain

technical areas (land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; transportation; or noise) or when the project may have moderate effects on several of the elements that define a neighborhood's 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.

In the absence of an impact on any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood could result in an impact to neighborhood character. A significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character is not necessarily equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Therefore, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally appropriate if a proposed project has the potential to result in any significant adverse impacts in the technical areas listed above. Examples of possible changes in those technical areas that could result in an adverse effect on neighborhood character, should those technical areas be defining features of the neighborhood, are as follows:

- › **Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy:** If development resulting from a proposed action would conflict with surrounding uses, conflict with land use policy or other public plans for the area, or change land use character, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Socioeconomic Conditions:** If a proposed action results in direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Open Space:** If an action would result in a reduction or displacement of an open space or result in additional population that would place a substantial demand on open space, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Shadows:** If a proposed project would cast an incremental shadow on sun-sensitive resources, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Historic and Cultural Resources:** If a proposed action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a historic resource, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Urban Design and Visual Resources:** If a proposed action would result in substantially different building form, size, scale, or arrangement; block form, street pattern, or street hierarchy; streetscape elements; or substantial direct changes to a visual feature, such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas, or to public visual access to such a feature, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Transportation:** When a proposed project would result in a change in traffic patterns or would substantially increase traffic volumes on residential streets, neighborhood character could be affected.
- › **Noise:** When a proposed action would substantially increase noise levels in an area, neighborhood character could be affected.

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood character. As part of a neighborhood character analysis, the defining features of the neighborhood are identified and then a determination is made as to whether a project has the potential to

adversely affect these defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater change without experiencing significant adverse impacts. If the assessment concludes that a proposed project has the potential to adversely affect defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed analysis is undertaken to determine whether the project would result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

The neighborhood character analysis draws from the technical assessments listed above. As recommended in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for the neighborhood character analysis is consistent with the study areas in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. As such, the study area for neighborhood character is consistent with the 400-foot study area used for the analysis of land use, zoning, and public policy.

As detailed in the relevant chapters of this EIS, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant adverse impacts in the technical areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions¹; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual character; or noise. The Proposed Actions would result in significant adverse impacts in the transportation technical area. Therefore, a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character impacts is provided below. The analysis begins with the identification of the defining features of the neighborhood and then assesses whether the Proposed Project or All Office Scenario would adversely affect those defining features within the framework of the above technical areas.

As discussed in **Chapter 1, Project Description**, for conservative analysis purposes the EIS considers the two building program options to determine the With-Action reasonable worst case development scenario (RWCDs) for each density-based technical area: the Proposed Project with a mix of hotel, commercial office, local retail, and publicly accessible space; and the All Office Scenario, based on the same overall building square footage and building massing as the Proposed Project but comprised of approximately 2,561,770 gsf of office space, retail, and no hotel. In each chapter, where applicable, the EIS analyzes the scenario with the greater potential for impacts. Since the overall building massing and design would be the same in both program options, this chapter evaluates the With-Action condition including the hotel space, as described above, because it represents the Proposed Project.

Preliminary Assessment

Defining Features

Grand Central Terminal

Grand Central Terminal, located adjacent to the Development Site, is one of New York City's major transportation hubs and most prominent civic spaces. The landmark building, reflecting the French Beaux-Arts style, features three great windows on its southern façade flanked by columns. The building was designed on an axis with Park Avenue; the clock and

¹ An assessment of socioeconomic conditions was not warranted as part of this EIS as no changes to socioeconomic conditions are anticipated as a consequence of the Proposed Actions, and so that technical area is excluded from this analysis.

statue of Mercury affixed at the apex of the building terminate the avenue's northward vista, as viewed from points south of East 42nd Street.

Grand Central Terminal is a central transportation hub, carrying several subway lines as well as commuter rail service, connecting East Midtown to the rest of the City and to the larger regional transportation system. In addition, the building itself is a tourist attraction, bringing visitors, residents, and workers alike to the East Midtown neighborhood.

Though Grand Central Terminal is shorter than most buildings in East Midtown, its location on a superblock between Vanderbilt Avenue, Lexington Avenue, East 42nd Street, and East 45th Street increases nearby visibility of this landmarked building. From vantage points south of Grand Central Terminal, the 59-story concrete, steel, and glass MetLife Building directly north of the street-level Grand Central Terminal building towers above the historic train station. Views of the western façade of Grand Central Terminal are available from Vanderbilt Avenue, while views of the eastern façade are largely blocked from view by the existing Hyatt Hotel. The Park Avenue Viaduct wraps around the Terminal, providing vehicular access north-south across the superblock.

For these reasons, Grand Central Terminal is a visual and functional defining feature of East Midtown Manhattan.

Iconic Commercial Skyscrapers

As a central business district, East Midtown and the study area are defined by the density of mid- to high-rise commercial buildings, and is one of the most densely-developed areas in the City. Buildings in the study area generally have large floor area ratios (FARs), ranging from 10 to 30 FAR in the immediate vicinity of the Development Site, and many exceed 40 stories in height.

As detailed in **Chapter 6, Urban Design and Visual Resources**, there are several prominent and iconic buildings within the study area. The 56-story Chanin Building (374 Lexington Avenue) is a prominent and early example of a skyscraper with a solid base, setback massing, and a buttressed crown. The 77-story brick and Nirossta steel Chrysler Building, whose iconic spire is a focal point of East Midtown, is located across Lexington Avenue from the Development Site. South of the Chrysler Building stands the 42-story, stainless steel Socony-Mobil Building, which is flanked by 13-story wings. Just north of the Development Site is the 30-story, art-deco, tan brick and limestone Graybar Building.

Collectively, these iconic commercial skyscrapers have shaped what has been an evolving skyline that has come to define East Midtown. Recent actions, including the Vanderbilt Corridor rezoning in 2015 and the Greater East Midtown Rezoning in 2017, have enabled higher-density development within the study area. The goals of the Vanderbilt Corridor and Greater East Midtown Rezonings were to enable the development of new, modern office buildings, to preserve and maintain landmarked buildings, to facilitate public realm improvements, and to maintain key physical characteristics of the area, including active retail corridors and the streetwall character of the area around Grand Central Terminal. The actions will facilitate new skyscrapers that will continue to reshape the skyline in the coming years.

As an example, One Vanderbilt between Vanderbilt and Madison Avenues along 42nd Street on the southern-most block of the Vanderbilt Corridor, is indicative of a neighborhood trend toward greater height and density. A 67-story glass building, One Vanderbilt is already a

defining building within East Midtown. The building, which occupies the entire block, rises to 1,414 feet (1,514 feet to the top of the spire), with a tapered form almost from top to bottom and a glass facade. 270 Park Avenue is also located to the north of the study area between Park Avenue and Madison Avenue from 47th Street to 48th Street. Anticipated to be built in 2024, the new building would contain approximately 2.4 million gsf of commercial office space for the world headquarters for JP Morgan Chase Bank and rise to 1,425 feet.

These iconic commercial skyscrapers that have historically and will continue to shape the East Midtown skyline are some of the most visual features of the area and therefore are a defining feature of the neighborhood.

Building Form

As detailed above, one of the goals of the recent rezonings in the study area was to preserve and reinforce the key physical characteristics of the East Midtown neighborhood, including the consistent streetwall and ground floor retail space, which was documented in **Chapter 6, Urban Design and Visual Resources**. As detailed, the west side of the study area, Madison Avenue and Vanderbilt Avenue are lined primarily with a mix of mid- and high-rise office buildings, with ground floor retail primarily included along Madison Avenue. Building heights along these avenues within the study area range from 20 to 40 stories, and are generally built to the lot line, reinforcing the uniform streetwall; several buildings provide multiple setbacks above the base height while others have a consistent massing with no setbacks. To the west of Grand Central Terminal is the Vanderbilt Corridor, characterized by commercial uses, including office and hotel uses. Most buildings within the Vanderbilt Corridor have ground-floor retail. For the most part, streetwalls are consistent throughout the Vanderbilt Corridor, and buildings tend to rise flush from the sidewalk with setbacks at the upper floors.

On the east side of the study area, Lexington Avenue comprises a mix of mid- and high-rise commercial buildings, mostly with ground-floor retail and upper-level offices. The buildings along Lexington Avenue within the study area range in height from 18 to 68 stories and are built to the lot lines; many buildings in this area have setbacks above the building base.

These features, as particularly highlighted in the stated goals of the recent rezoning efforts, are central and defining features of the urban design characteristics in East Midtown.

Pedestrian Activity and Circulation

The East Midtown neighborhood is a vibrant commercial area and transportation hub with both an above- and below-grade pedestrian network connecting residents, workers, and commuters from East Midtown to the City and larger region.

As detailed in **Chapter 2, Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**, retail uses are located on the ground floor of many of the study area buildings along both the streets and avenues, as well as along both the Grand Central Terminal's 42nd Street and Lexington Avenue passages. The presence of restaurants and other retail uses enliven the streets of the study area and contribute to activity and vitality of the East Midtown central business district. Pershing Square, located directly south of Grand Central Terminal, also includes a restaurant below the Park Avenue viaduct.

East Midtown pedestrian amenities include well-maintained sidewalks, walking signals, and crosswalks, which together facilitate the movement of a large volume of pedestrians. In addition to these amenities, the study area also contains pedestrian plazas and curb bump outs/sidewalk extensions. Two pedestrian plazas are located between East 41st Street and East 42nd Street on either side of the Park Avenue Viaduct. As part of the Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt project, Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd Street and East 43rd Street is currently under construction and will be a pedestrian plaza once completed. As part of New York City Department of Transportation's Shared Street project, several curb bump outs/sidewalk extensions have been installed along East 43rd Street between Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue, providing a wider pedestrian right-of-way where pedestrian volumes are typically high and sidewalk widths are insufficient to accommodate the pedestrian demand.

Below grade, Grand Central Terminal was designed to facilitate efficient passenger flow to and from the transit center. The Grand Central-42nd Street station is the City's major commuter hub, providing access to subways and commuter rail service. A series of below grade passageways facilitate movement within Grand Central Terminal and out to the surrounding streets. Various buildings surrounding the terminal, including the Development Site, contain access points and passageways to transit facilities, radiating out from the Grand Central Terminal main concourse.

This pedestrian activity and movement, critical to the functioning of a central business district and transportation hub, is a defining feature of the study area.

Potential to Affect the Defining Features of the Neighborhood

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Actions in the following technical areas that are considered in a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR: land use, zoning, and public policy; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; transportation; and noise. The assessment uses the findings from the respective chapters of this EIS to identify whether the Proposed Actions 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 the study area would not be affected either through the potential of any significant adverse impact or combination of moderate effects in these technical areas.

Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy

The defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on land use, zoning, and public policy, either alone or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter.

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 Actions would not directly displace any land use, nor would they introduce new land uses that would be incompatible with surrounding land uses or conflict with existing zoning or public policy. With the Proposed Actions, zoning regulations within the study area would change in a manner that is aligned with the recent Greater East Midtown Rezoning, which had the stated goal of protecting

and strengthening East Midtown's status as one of the world's premier business districts, while preserving and improving the area's existing iconic pedestrian and built environments. The construction of a new high-rise office tower would strengthen the predominantly commercial character of East Midtown, adding to the mix of commercial skyscrapers that have shaped the East Midtown skyline and are a defining feature of the neighborhood.

Open Space

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on publicly accessible open space, either alone or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter. As described in **Chapter 3, Open Space**, the Proposed Actions would not result in a direct or indirect significant adverse impact on open space. Construction of the Proposed Project or the All Office Scenario would not result in the physical loss or direct displacement of publicly accessible open space or shadows that would affect the usefulness of a public open space.

The Proposed Project and the All Office Scenario would introduce three new, publicly accessible open spaces as part of the proposed public realm improvements. The new open space would be located on the second floor ~~of the Proposed Project~~ and would include three terraces that run the length of the Development Site from north to south, and one that runs from east to west along the northern portion of the site. The "Chrysler Terrace" would provide an overlook onto Lexington Avenue and East 42nd Street, and a unique vantage point for viewing the Chrysler Building and other surrounding buildings. It would feature trees, plantings, and multiple seating options. The "Grand Central Terrace" on the west side of the ~~Proposed Project~~ Development Site would provide new visibility for the currently obstructed eastern façade of Grand Central Terminal. It would be improved with trees, planting, seating, and skylights that would bring light to the proposed transit hall to be situated below. The terraces would be connected by the "Graybar Terrace" which would feature a diverse typology of seating, flexible space that could be used for activities, and could feature some retail use.

These proposed open spaces were specifically designed to improve visibility and access to the defining features of the East Midtown neighborhood and study area. They provide direct views to the eastern façade of Grand Central Terminal, an area that has been largely obstructed from view by the existing Hyatt Hotel. These spaces would also provide a separate and safe passive open space away from the busy surroundings, contributing to the limited number of pedestrian plazas and open spaces currently provided in the study area. This would contribute to the existing network of pedestrian amenities and continue to support an area that is active and vibrant, and reliant on a high-functioning pedestrian circulation network.

Shadows

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

As discussed in **Chapter 4, Shadows**, new shadows on nearby sunlight sensitive resources would be limited in extent and duration and would typically only occur in one or two seasons. The limited duration of new shadow that would fall on most affected resources

would not substantially reduce the quantity of direct sunlight and would not significantly alter the utilization of the resources or the variety of vegetation supported within. No publicly accessible open spaces or historic resources would experience significant adverse shadow impacts as a result of the Proposed Actions. Therefore, shadows effects would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

Historic and Cultural Resources

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

As discussed in **Chapter 5, Historic and Cultural Resources**, the Proposed Actions would not result in any significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources, historic districts, or individually designated historic resources. ~~The Proposed Project~~ Construction on the Development Site would remove the existing structure ~~on the Development Site~~, which is neither a New York City Landmark, nor an eligible or listed State/National Registers of Historic Places property.

It is not expected that the development of the Proposed Project or the All Office Scenario would result in any contextual impacts on architectural resources, as it would not adversely change the scale, visual prominence, or visual context of any surrounding historic buildings or screen or eliminate publicly accessible views of any architectural resources that will not be screened or eliminated in the No-Action condition. The shadows analysis presented in **Chapter 4, Shadows**, concluded that though the development facilitated by the Proposed Project Actions would cast incremental shadows on the east windows of Grand Central Terminal's main concourse, these new shadows would be limited in extent, duration, and effects and would not result in any significant adverse shadow impacts. This effect would not alter the overall character or functional use of Grand Central Terminal.

Overall, the both the Proposed Project and All Office Scenario would improve visibility and access to surrounding historic resources. The proposed second-floor open spaces and tapered form above the second floor would create new and unique sightlines to Grand Central Terminal, the Chrysler Building, and the other defining historic buildings within the study area.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

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

As described in **Chapter 6, Urban Design and Visual Resources**, the development facilitated by the Proposed Project Actions has been designed to reflect its location among the group of iconic and historically significant buildings within the study area and larger East Midtown neighborhood. The proposed building would have a massing with multiple setbacks, honoring the style of the classic Manhattan skyscraper.

The ground floor of the Proposed Project development would provide an active streetfront consistent with the defining features of East Midtown, providing upgraded retail and access to a new transit hall that would contribute to better functioning of the Development Site and

Grand Central Terminal as a central transportation hub. The Proposed Actions would also facilitate significant improvements in the pedestrian experience within and around the Development Site in the form of the new publicly accessible open space and transit circulation improvements.

While the Proposed Actions would facilitate an increase in density on the Development Site, the ~~Proposed Project~~resulting building would be a high-rise mixed-use building typical of East Midtown and consistent with the zoning framework set by the recent Greater East Midtown Rezoning, which put in place various zoning mechanisms to increase density. Though taller than buildings in its immediate surrounding context, the ~~Proposed Project~~proposed building would sit within the context of the densely developed and continuously evolving East Midtown skyline, including One Vanderbilt and 270 Park currently under construction.

The Proposed ~~Project~~Actions would also facilitate many on-site benefits and improvements to the building design, particularly at the base level, that would improve visual conditions on the Development Site. The proposed building form would taper inward along the western, southern and eastern facades, in order to provide increased visibility to surrounding landmarks, and to create improved public and green spaces at the base. However, as viewed from further distances along the avenue and street view corridors within the study area, the ~~Proposed Project~~proposed building would still maintain the consistent streetwall that has come to define the area. Overall, the building's design would be well-integrated within its context and would not adversely affect the defining features of East Midtown.

Transportation

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

Traffic would increase in the future with the Proposed Actions. As described in detail in **Chapter 9, Transportation**, the traffic impact analysis indicated the potential for significant adverse impacts at 15 intersections during one or more analyzed peak hours; potential mitigation measures are discussed in **Chapter 16, Mitigation**. Even with these identified impacts, the overall effects of traffic 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 Actions would also generate additional demand for parking. However, no significant impact is anticipated in the transit-rich study area. Any anticipated changes to transit service conditions resulting from the Proposed Actions would not be out of character with the East Midtown area and would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Of the 15 pedestrian elements analyzed, the Proposed Project would result in significant adverse impacts at one pedestrian element during the AM and PM peak hours, and five pedestrian elements during the midday peak hour. Mitigation measures that could be implemented to mitigate the potential significant adverse pedestrian impacts are discussed in **Chapter 16, Mitigation**.

In addition to the potential mitigation measures, the Proposed Project would also provide the following transit and public realm improvements to improve the pedestrian experience and reduce congestion at Grand Central Terminal and the Grand Central – 42nd Street subway station:

- › The subway entrance at East 42nd Street would be redesigned and expanded, providing a direct connection to 42nd Street from the subway.
- › A new transit hall containing retail, information screens and booths, and connections to the Terminal would be constructed at the ground floor level on the western side of the Development Site: and would expand pedestrian circulation space in the area of Grand Central Terminal's 42nd Street passage.
- › Improvements to the subway entrance on Lexington Avenue and below-grade mezzanine would be constructed to help ease crowding and backups at the entrances.
- › The proposed building would be set back from Lexington Avenue to allow for increased sidewalk widths and enhanced views to adjacent landmarks. Sidewalk widths along both Lexington Avenue and 42nd Street would be increased by five feet.
- › The Lexington Passage entrance would be redesigned to make it legible and inviting to pedestrians; the Passage would be refinished, and its ceiling height would be increased to improve the pedestrian experience.
- › Girders would be removed from the subway mezzanine level to improve circulation and enhance sightlines.
- › A "Short Loop Connection" would be constructed to provide direct access through Grand Central from the lower-level Metro North trains and East Side Access to the Subway mezzanine level.

Overall, although it is expected that there would be an increase in the level of traffic and pedestrian activity in the future with the Proposed Actions, 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.

Noise

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Actions on noise, either alone or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this chapter.

As described in detail in **Chapter 12, Noise**, mobile source noise levels would change by up to 0.23 dBA or less due to traffic generated by the Proposed Actions. Therefore, there would be no potential for significant adverse noise impacts due to mobile sources. The design and specifications for the ~~Proposed Project's~~ proposed building's mechanical equipment would incorporate sufficient noise reduction devices that would enable the ~~Proposed Project~~ building to comply with applicable noise regulations and standards, including the standards contained in the revised New York City noise control code.

Based on the noise modeling detailed in **Chapter 12, Noise**, the With-Action noise conditions would be Clearly Unacceptable on the south façade and Marginally Unacceptable on the east, north, and west facades for new sensitive receptors. According to the CEQR Noise Exposure Guidelines, and a minimum window/wall sound attenuation of 38 outdoor-

to-indoor transmission classification (OITC) on the south façade, and 35 OITC on the east, north, and west façade would be required to meet an interior noise condition of 45 dBA for residential and community facility spaces and 50 dBA for commercial office spaces.

With this commitment to minimum window/wall sound attenuation requirements, neither the Proposed Project nor the All Office Scenario would ~~not~~ result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character due to effects on noise conditions.