

19 Neighborhood Character

Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential effects from the Proposed Actions on neighborhood character. The *CEQR Technical Manual* defines neighborhood character as an amalgam of the various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct personalities. Elements can include land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation and/or noise, although not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in all cases. For neighborhood character, CEQR considers how those elements combine to create the context and feeling of a neighborhood and how an action would affect that context.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare, and it would be unusual that, in the absence of a significant, adverse impact in any of the relevant technical areas, a combination of moderate effects on the neighborhood would result in an impact on neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character, but rather it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

Principal Conclusions

The Proposed Actions would not result in significant, adverse impacts on neighborhood character. A screening analysis of neighborhood character concludes the Proposed Actions would not result in significant, adverse impacts on any of the applicable technical areas, including land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and noise. While the Proposed Actions may result in significant, adverse impacts with respect to historic resources, the effects would not introduce the potential to significantly affect neighborhood character. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not affect any defining features of neighborhood character nor would a combination of moderately, adverse impacts affect the study area's defining features. Overall, the Proposed Actions are intended to

strengthen neighborhood character through the preservation of unique topography and ecological conditions within the study area. Based on the results of the screening analysis, there is no potential for the Proposed Actions to result in any significant, adverse impacts on neighborhood character; therefore, further analysis is not warranted.

Methodology

The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that an assessment of neighborhood character is needed when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant, adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, or noise. The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that, even if a proposed action does not have the potential to result in a significant, adverse impact in any specific technical area(s), an assessment of neighborhood character may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that may cumulatively affect neighborhood character. A “moderate” effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant, adverse impact threshold for a particular analysis area. Based on the methodology provided in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a screening analysis was conducted to determine the Proposed Actions’ effects on neighborhood character.

Screening Analysis

Land Use

Development resulting from a proposed action could alter neighborhood character if it introduces new land uses, conflicts with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates significant land use impacts. As described in **Chapter 1, Project Description**, the Proposed Actions would affect zoning regulations on an area-wide basis and create a hierarchy of natural resource preservation rules based on the proximity of private property to the most ecologically sensitive areas; however, the Proposed Actions would not change the underlying zoning or permitted uses, create land uses or structures that would be incompatible with the underlying zoning or permitted densities, or conflict with public policies applicable to the affected districts or surrounding neighborhoods. The Proposed Actions would not introduce new land uses that would conflict with the existing land uses or change the land use character. The proposed text and map changes would not affect the neighborhood character but would encourage the protection and enhancement of the City’s most ecologically sensitive resources that contribute to neighborhood character.

Socioeconomic Conditions

Changes in socioeconomic conditions have the potential to affect neighborhood character when they result in substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density. As described in **Chapter 3**, *Socioeconomic Conditions*, the Proposed Actions would not displace any existing residents or businesses compared to the No Action scenario. The Proposed Actions would also not affect real estate market conditions in a way that would result in indirect displacement of residents or businesses. The proposal is intended to be development neutral. As a result, the sites that are developed under both the With Action and No Action scenarios are likely to be the same. While the Proposed Actions may change the configuration of certain developments, the differences from a socioeconomic standpoint would be minimal. Therefore, socioeconomic conditions under the With Action scenario would not affect neighborhood character.

Open Space

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, for a proposed action to affect neighborhood character with respect to open space, it would need to result in the encroachment and loss of open space, or the imposition of noise, air pollutant emissions, odors, or shadows on public open space that may alter its usability. As described in **Chapter 5**, *Open Space*, although the Proposed Actions would reduce the amount of private open space, they would not result in direct physical loss of public open space resources nor would they result in significant increases in demand that would diminish the ability of the public open space to serve existing and future populations. Although incremental shadows could be cast on sunlight-sensitive features of existing open space resources, shadows are expected to be limited to small areas in the immediate vicinity of development sites and would not significantly affect neighborhood character.

Shadows

As described in **Chapter 6**, *Shadows*, the Proposed Actions could result in incremental shadow coverage on sunlight-sensitive resources. Because incremental shadows are expected to be limited to small areas in the immediate vicinities of development sites, the potential for significant, adverse impacts on sunlight-sensitive resources is low. Therefore, the Proposed Actions are not expected to affect neighborhood character with respect to shadows.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Proposed Actions could result in significant, adverse impacts on archaeological resources. As described in **Chapter 7**, *Historic and*

Cultural Resources, the Proposed Actions would eliminate discretionary review procedures on certain small sites, which would allow development to occur as-of-right, compared to the No Action scenario. While the extent of ground disturbance is unknown at this time, any impacts on archaeological resources would be limited to subsurface areas and would not have the potential to result in significant, adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

The Proposed Actions would not result in any direct or indirect effects on architectural resources or changes to public views of an architectural resource. However, as described in **Chapter 6, *Shadows***, the Proposed Actions could result in incremental shadow coverage on sunlight-sensitive features of architectural resources. Because incremental shadows would be limited to small areas in the immediate vicinity of development sites, the potential for significant, adverse impacts on architectural resources is low. Therefore, the Proposed Actions are not expected to affect neighborhood character with respect to architectural resources.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

In developed areas, urban design changes could affect neighborhood character by introducing substantially different building bulk, form, size, scale, or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect block forms, street patterns, or street hierarchies, as well as streetscape elements such as street walls, landscaping, curb cuts, and loading docks. Visual resource changes could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas or block public visual access to such features.

The Proposed Actions are unlikely to disturb the vitality, walkability, or the visual character of the study area and would not promote new development that is inconsistent with existing uses, density, scale, and bulk. The Proposed Actions are not expected to result in buildings or structures that would be substantially different in character or arrangement than those that currently exist in the special district. Therefore, new developments or enlargements are not expected to result in any substantial changes to the built or natural environment that would affect neighborhood character.

Transportation

Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood conditions in several ways. For traffic to affect neighborhood character, it must be a contributing element to the character of the neighborhood (either by its absence or its presence), and it must change substantially as a result of the action. As described in **Chapter 14, *Transportation***, the Proposed Actions are only expected to result in small incremental increases to travel demand that would not exceed the minimum

development densities for dwelling units in Table 16-1 of the *CEQR Technical Manual*. Furthermore, the Proposed Actions are not expected to result in changes to traffic patterns or changes in roadway classifications. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not affect neighborhood character with respect to transportation.

Noise

As described in **Chapter 17, Noise**, the primary noise source under the Proposed Actions is traffic. Because the Proposed Actions would generate low levels of new traffic, and vehicles would be spread throughout the study area, it is unlikely that any development sites would experience an increase of 3 dBA or more, and neighborhood character would not be affected.

Conclusion

The Proposed Actions would not result in significant, adverse impacts on land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, shadows, urban design and visual resources, transportation, or noise. While the Proposed Actions may result in significant, adverse impacts with respect to historic resources, the effects would not introduce the potential to significantly affect neighborhood character. Therefore, the Proposed Actions would not result in significant, adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

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