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Neighborhood Character

This section considers how the proposed action 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 chapter assesses the proposed action's potential effects on neighborhood character. The *CEQR Technical Manual* defines neighborhood character as an amalgam of the various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct personality. These elements can include land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise, but 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 to the neighborhood would result in an impact to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character

is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character, but rather serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

Principal Conclusions

An analysis of neighborhood character evaluated the prototypical sites to assess expected changes resulting from 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 the following technical areas that comprise the elements that make up neighborhood character: land use, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, socioeconomic conditions, transportation, and noise. The assessment used the findings from the respective chapters of this EIS to identify whether the proposed action would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas, and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character. Of the relevant technical areas, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions nor result in adverse effects to the other technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character. Therefore, the proposed action does not have the potential for significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character, and no further analysis is warranted.

Methodology

The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that an assessment of neighborhood character is needed when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; or noise. An assessment may also be appropriate if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a "moderate" effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area.

The proposed action is a generic action, and there are no known potential or projected development sites. Due to its broad applicability, it is difficult to predict the sites where development would be facilitated by the proposed action. 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. To produce a reasonable analysis of likely effects of the proposed action, seven representative development prototypes have been established to assess the potential for significant adverse impacts in those technical areas mentioned above. As described in the relevant chapters of this EIS, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions nor result in adverse effects to the other technical areas

that contribute to neighborhood character. Although the proposed action would not result in adverse effects on land use, the preliminary screening analysis considers the proposed action's impact on land use to most appropriately assess the combination of effects on relevant technical areas.

Preliminary Screening

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. The Designated Areas are composed of only M1 districts, which allow industrial and manufacturing uses, most commercial uses, and some community facility uses. New residential development is not allowed within M1 districts. Although the neighborhood character varies across M1 districts, many of the businesses generate truck traffic, noise, odors or emissions, require relatively large sites, and are incompatible with residential and high density commercial or community facility development.

As described in **Chapter 1, "Project Description,"** the proposed action would affect zoning regulations in M1 districts by creating a CPC Special Permit for the development of hotels in these districts. The proposed action would not affect the underlying zoning M1 districts on airport property or areas adjacent to airports that are predominantly non-residential. The proposed action would not introduce new land uses that would conflict with the existing land uses or change the neighborhood character, but rather, it would help ensure that job-intensive industrial uses that currently exist in M1 districts are able to remain. Therefore, the proposed action would not change the character of neighborhoods within M1 districts.

It is expected that the proposed action would not change the number of hotel rooms in NYC or in the geographic submarkets but instead would result in a shift of a portion of future hotel development from M1 districts to areas where hotel development could still occur as-of-right (commercial and mixed-use districts).

As described in **Chapter 2, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,"** land uses in the other as-of-right districts are more mixed-use in character than M1 districts, and generally include commercial, residential, and community facility uses. The existing development patterns affecting land use conditions within the other as-of-right districts are expected to continue in the future With-Action condition; however, these districts will gain an increasing share of hotel development as a result of the proposed action. As projected by the Consultant Report, that share would include approximately 1,150 more hotel rooms, a six percent increase, citywide compared with the future No-Action condition.

This projected increase is not generally expected to affect land use conditions, especially since hotels are already permitted as-of-right and fit the existing land use mix of the other as-of-right districts. In addition, the increase in hotel development, and an associated shift from residential and other types of commercial uses on those particular sites, would be spread throughout the geographic submarkets.

Conclusion

The analysis of the effects to neighborhood character resulting from the proposed action at the prototypical sites concluded that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions nor result in adverse effects to the other technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character. Therefore, the proposed action does not have the potential for significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character, and no further analysis is warranted.