

**Technical Memorandum — TM002**  
**Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt**  
**CEQR Number 14DCP188M**  
**March 27, 2015**

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**A. INTRODUCTION**

On March 20, 2015, the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP), as lead agency, issued a Notice of Completion for the Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The FEIS considered a series of discretionary actions proposed by the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP) and a private applicant—Green 317 Madison LLC (317 Madison)—that would facilitate commercial development between Madison and Vanderbilt Avenues in East Midtown Manhattan, improve pedestrian circulation within Grand Central Terminal and its vicinity, and allow greater opportunity for area landmarks to transfer their unused development rights.

The City Planning Commission (CPC) is now considering several modifications (the “CPC modifications”) to the Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt proposal. These modifications, which were proposed after the Notice of Completion of the FEIS was issued, concern the text amendment provisions related to the requirements for and application of the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit (ULURP No. N150127 ZRM) and updates made to the ground floor plans in 317 Madison’s special permit applications (ULURP Nos. 150128 ZSM, 150129 ZSM, and ULURP No. 150130(A) ZSM) primarily to reflect the relocation of two doors to create direct access from the transit hall and southeast corner retail space onto the public place.. This Technical Memorandum (TM002) describes the CPC modifications and examines whether they would result in any new or different significant adverse environmental impacts not already identified in the FEIS.

The CPC modifications would add to and clarify the requirements for obtaining the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit and would also remove the requirement that the enlargement of a building containing a transient hotel only be allowed with the granting of a special permit under Section 81-65 of the New York City Zoning Resolution. Development of a new hotel would still be subject to the special permit requirement to ensure that any new hotel would be a full service establishment with amenities that complement and support the commercial office district. The revised ground floor plan responds to requests from the Manhattan Borough President and CPC to further improve pedestrian circulation onto the public place. The extents of the Vanderbilt Corridor would not be modified and the City Map amendment to designate the portion of Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd and East 43rd Streets as a “public place” dedicated to pedestrian uses would not be changed.

The CPC modifications would potentially affect the analyses of Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy; Historic and Cultural Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Transportation,

and Greenhouse Gas Emissions presented in the FEIS.<sup>1</sup> In terms of the impact areas assessed in the Conceptual Analysis of the FEIS, all projected developments in the Vanderbilt Corridor would be subject to the additional requirements, and it would be possible to enlarge the Roosevelt Hotel without a ZR Section 81-65 special permit. However, the proposed modifications would not affect the amount of development (30 FAR) that would be allowed to occur within the Vanderbilt Corridor.

This Technical Memorandum concludes that the CPC modifications would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts not already identified in the FEIS.

## **B. DESCRIPTION OF CPC MODIFICATIONS**

The CPC modifications to the proposed text amendment would do the following:

- Require initial plans for the maintenance of the proposed improvements be provided as part of an application for the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement bonus special permit;
- Require lots adjacent to Grand Central Terminal using the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit to receive a report from the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) on the harmonious relationship of the new development with Grand Central Terminal;
- Add special permit findings to the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit regarding consideration of how above-grade improvements would improve pedestrian circulation;
- Change the finding to the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit regarding sustainable design so that projects must ‘meet or exceed’ best practices in sustainable design; and
- Permit enlargements of existing hotels in the Vanderbilt Corridor without a special permit.

The proposed 317 Madison revision to the ground floor plan of the modified special permit application would:

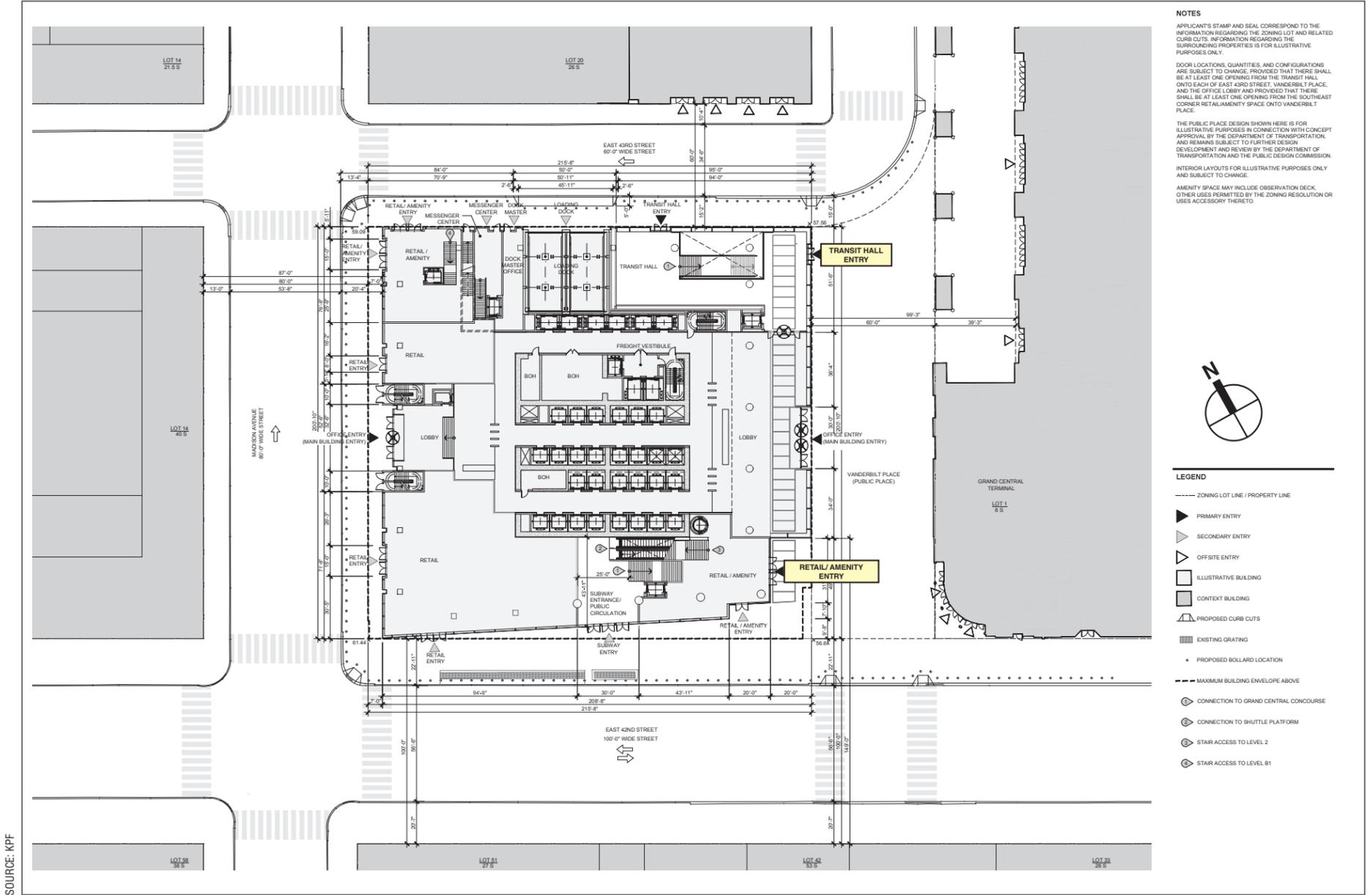
- Relocate a door to the transit hall from West 43rd Street to the public place and relocate a door to the southeast corner retail space from East 42nd Street to the public place (see **Figure 1**).

## **C. POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF THE CPC MODIFICATIONS**

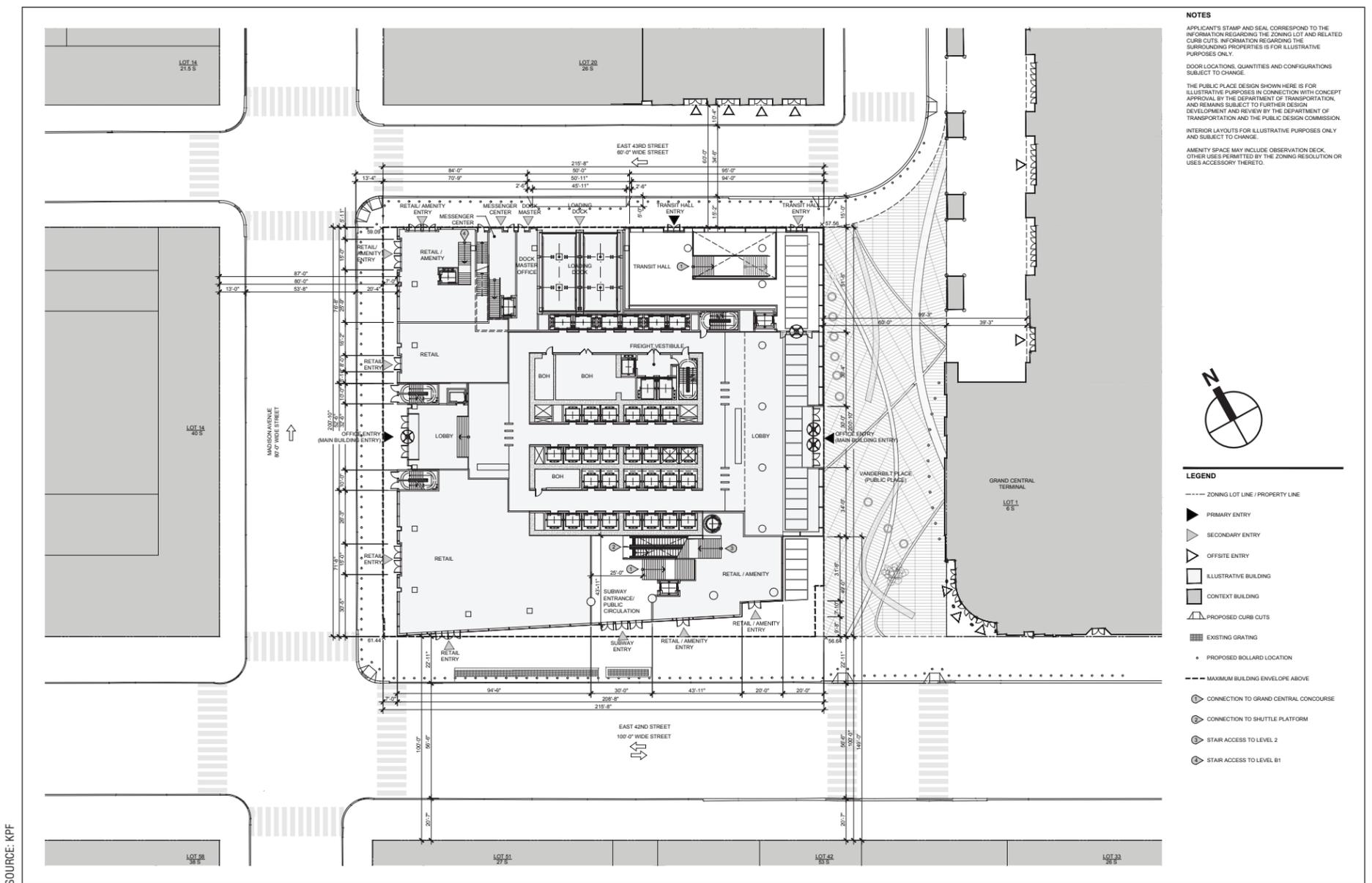
Overall, the CPC modifications would add to and clarify the requirements for the proposed Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus and would allow the only existing hotel in the Vanderbilt Corridor, i.e., The Roosevelt Hotel, to be enlarged without a special permit. In addition, changes to the ground floor of the One Vanderbilt development would be made.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent to the issuance of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Vanderbilt Corridor and One Vanderbilt project, Green 317 Madison LLC (317 Madison) filed a modified special permit application—ULURP No. 150130(A) ZSM—for the proposed One Vanderbilt development to reflect updates to the requested modifications to retail continuity regulations. The modified application was assessed in Chapter 17, “Alternatives to the Proposed Actions” of the FEIS as the Modified Ground Floor Alternative, and it is currently under consideration by the CPC.



Revised ground floor plan of the modified special permit application



Ground floor plan of modified special permit application assessed in FEIS

For the most part with the modified actions, the proposed One Vanderbilt development would be the same as assessed in the FEIS. Although there would be modifications to the ground floor of the modified special permit application, there would be no change to the One Vanderbilt development's bulk, height, overall design, or uses. Therefore, and because the One Vanderbilt development would be in compliance with the additional special permit requirements and the hotel provision would not be applicable, there would be no changes to the conclusions of the majority of impact areas in the FEIS. The impact areas relating to the One Vanderbilt development that could be affected by the proposed modifications are: Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy; Historic and Cultural Resources; Urban Design and Visual Resources; Transportation; and Greenhouse Gas Emissions.

For the other sites within the Vanderbilt Corridor, the total maximum floor area would remain at 30 FAR for the modified actions. Further, the proposed uses within the Vanderbilt Corridor are assumed to remain the same as assessed in the FEIS for all the sites, including the Roosevelt Hotel. Therefore, there would be no changes to the conclusions of the majority of impact areas assessed for the Vanderbilt Corridor in the Conceptual Analysis in the FEIS. The impact areas of the Conceptual Analysis that could be affected by the proposed modifications are: Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy; and Historic and Cultural Resources.

### **LAND USE, ZONING AND PUBLIC POLICY**

The proposed modifications to the text amendment regarding the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit would add to and clarify the requirements for the proposed Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus. Therefore, and because the One Vanderbilt development would be in compliance with the additional special permit requirements and the hotel provision would not be applicable, the proposed modifications would not alter the land use, zoning and public policy conclusions of the FEIS that the proposed text amendment and the proposed One Vanderbilt development would support the goals for the East Midtown area. These goals include maximizing development suitable for modern commercial uses around East Midtown's strong mass transit infrastructure, in particular Grand Central Terminal; providing public infrastructure improvements, particularly pedestrian circulation and mass transit access improvements, around the Terminal; expanding opportunities for transfers of unused development rights from landmarks in the area around Grand Central Terminal to support the preservation of those landmarks; and PlaNYC's sustainability goals, particularly those relating to transit-oriented development, energy efficiency, and public open space. Overall, the CPC modifications would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, or public policy.

### **HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES**

The Historic and Cultural Resources assessment of the FEIS concluded that, while the proposed One Vanderbilt development would alter the visual context of the adjacent Grand Central Terminal, it would not result in a significant adverse visual or contextual impact to the Terminal. By requiring that lots adjacent to Grand Central Terminal using the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus special permit receive a report from LPC on the harmonious relationship of the new development with Grand Central Terminal, the FEIS conclusion in regard to the proposed One Vanderbilt development would remain unchanged.

## URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Chapter 17, “Alternatives to the Proposed Actions” of the FEIS assessed the modified special permit application (ULURP No. 150130(A) ZSM) as the Modified Ground Floor Alternative. That alternative included the relocation of a proposed entrance space to the rooftop observation deck. That analysis concluded that the modified special permit application would not result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources, because it would not alter the overall design of the proposed One Vanderbilt development’s ground floor and podium. The proposed revision to the ground floor plan of the modified special permit application, which would relocate two doors onto the public place, would not alter the conclusion of the FEIS that the proposed actions would enhance the pedestrian experience of the One Vanderbilt development and would not result in any significant adverse impacts on urban design and visual resources.

## TRANSPORTATION

As described in the FEIS, the public place encompasses the roadway segment of Vanderbilt Avenue between East 42nd and East 43rd Streets. Crosswalk areas within the project block at the two adjacent intersections would also be integrated into this space. Since the transit hall in the plan analyzed in the FEIS provided a doorway on East 43rd Street immediately adjacent to its connection with the public place on Vanderbilt Avenue, the pedestrian analyses in the FEIS assumed that pedestrian flow between the transit hall and points east (i.e., Grand Central Terminal) via this access/egress location would immediately traverse the public place. Therefore, relocating this doorway to the building’s public place frontage would provide more direct connection to the public place and would not alter this analysis assumption. Similarly, relocating the door for the retail space to the southeast corner of the building directly fronting the public place would not alter the analysis assumptions presented in the FEIS. Overall, the proposed revision to the ground floor plan of the modified special permit application would not alter the analysis findings presented in the FEIS.

## GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

The FEIS concluded that the proposed One Vanderbilt development would be consistent with the City’s Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) reduction goals, as defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, because 317 Madison committed at a minimum to achieve the prerequisite energy efficiency requirements under LEED and would likely exceed them. The proposed change to the sustainability findings of the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus that would require projects to ‘meet or exceed’ best practices in sustainable design would not change the conclusions of the FEIS and would further ensure that the proposed One Vanderbilt development would be consistent with the City’s GHG reduction goals.

## CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

For the most part, the proposed modifications would not affect the impact areas assessed in the Conceptual Analysis of the FEIS. Affected impact areas are discussed below. As described above, one of the proposed modifications would remove the previously proposed requirement of a special permit pursuant to ZR Section 81-65 for the expansion of a hotel use. This would be applicable to the Roosevelt Hotel site, one of the two additional development sites considered in the Conceptual Analysis of the FEIS. However, removing this restriction is not assumed to alter

the With-Action conditions analyzed for the Roosevelt Hotel site (30 FAR office use with retail on the ground floor).

*LAND USE, ZONING AND PUBLIC POLICY*

The CPC modifications would remove the originally proposed requirement that any expansion of a hotel use within the Vanderbilt Corridor obtain a special permit under ZR Section 81-65. The requirement that any new development of a hotel obtain a special permit under ZR 81-65 would remain part of the proposed text. Removing the proposed restriction on hotel expansions would leave the existing zoning controls in place and permit the Roosevelt Hotel, which currently contains less than the allowable 15 FAR, to be expanded to the full 15 FAR. Because it would not alter existing zoning controls, the proposed modification would not have a significant adverse impact on land use, zoning or public policy. Further, any expansion of the Hotel Roosevelt to 30 FAR could only occur with the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus and additional required discretionary review under CEQR and ULURP.

*HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES*

The added requirement that projects adjacent to Grand Central Terminal and using the Grand Central Public Realm Improvement Bonus obtain a report from LPC on the harmonious relationship of the new development with Grand Central Terminal would ensure the avoidance of contextual impacts on Grand Central Terminal. Therefore, this modification would not have a significant adverse impact on historic and cultural resources, but rather would provide an additional protection to Grand Central Terminal.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The CPC modifications to the text amendment and the proposed revision to the ground floor plan of the modified special permit application would not result in any significant adverse environmental impacts that were not previously identified in the FEIS. The CPC modifications would not affect the majority of the environmental impact areas assessed in the FEIS. For those impact areas that would be affected by the CPC modifications, there would not be any new significant adverse impacts that were not previously disclosed in the FEIS.