

A. INTRODUCTION

As defined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is considered to be an amalgam of the various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct personality. These elements can include land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, and noise, as well as any other physical or social characteristics that help to distinguish the community in question from another.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when the action would exceed preliminary thresholds in any one of the following areas of technical analysis: land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, transportation, or noise. An assessment is also appropriate when the action would have moderate effects on several of the aforementioned areas. Potential effects on neighborhood character may include:

- *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.
- *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.
- *Historic Resources.* When an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource or substantial changes to public views of a resource, or when a historic resource analysis identifies a significant impact in this category, there is a potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* In developed areas, urban design changes have the potential to 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 streetwalls, landscaping, curbcuts, 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.

- *Transportation.* Changes in traffic and pedestrian conditions can affect neighborhood character in a number of ways. For traffic to have an effect on 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. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, such substantial traffic changes can include: changes in level of service (LOS) to C or below; change in traffic patterns; change in roadway classifications; change in vehicle mixes, substantial increase in traffic volumes on residential streets; or significant traffic impacts, as identified in the technical traffic analysis. Regarding pedestrians, when a proposed action would result in substantially different pedestrian activity and circulation, it has the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Noise.* According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, for an action to affect neighborhood character with respect to noise, it would need to result in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in acceptability categories.

This chapter of the EIS examines neighborhood character within the area to be rezoned and its surrounding blocks, and the proposed action's effects on that character. The chapter's impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas discussed above, since changes to these technical areas are most relevant to potential changes in neighborhood character. The analysis concludes that neighborhood character would change with new land uses and building types, increases in residents and employees, and increases in traffic and pedestrian activity, but the change would not be adverse, as discussed below.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

Primary Study Area

The proposed action area consists of 13 whole and 2 partial blocks in West Chelsea. The action area is generally bounded by W. 30th Street, W. 17th Street, Tenth Avenue and Eleventh Avenue (see Figure 9-1). The proposed action also includes the site selection and acquisition of the High Line to create a publicly accessible 6.7 5.9-acre open space. This includes the High Line from a point at approximately Eleventh Avenue and W. 30th Street to its southern terminus at Gansevoort Street, as well as the Post Office spur extending east of Tenth Avenue at W. 30th Street.



West Chelsea's neighborhood character is defined by the eclectic mix of uses which includes art galleries, parking lots, auto-repair facilities, manufacturing and storage uses, and bars and nightclubs.

Art galleries are the predominant commercial use in the primary study area, located both on the ground floor in converted garages, and in the upper floors of converted loft buildings. Galleries are located on nearly every block (with the exception of the block bounded by W. 18th and W. 19th Streets), with a concentration of gallery uses on the two blocks between W. 24th and W. 26th Street, and W. 24th and W. 26th Streets. Other commercial uses include restaurants, bars, nightclubs, and

Figure 9-1
Neighborhood Character Study Area



LEGEND

-  Quarter Mile Radius
-  Rezoning Area

Scale: 1 inch = 900 feet



photo and film production studios. The number of galleries and nightclubs, in particular, has increased over the last few years. Nightclubs are generally found in the midblock areas between W. 27th and W. 29th Streets; however, these uses are also found in the midblock areas along W. 18th and W. 21st Streets. Bars, typically smaller than nightclubs, are located along Tenth Avenue north of W. 23rd Street, Eleventh Avenue between W. 20th and W. 24th Streets and along W. 27th and W. 29th Streets.

Warehouse and storage uses continue to remain in some of the area's loft buildings. These uses are scattered throughout the primary study area, generally north of W. 20th Street, with most of these uses located between W. 27th and W. 30th Streets. Parking lots, garages, and auto-repair facilities are common throughout the primary study area, but are primarily located along Tenth Avenue, under the elevated High Line (discussed below) and in the midblocks south of W. 20th Street and north of W. 25th Street. The entire block bounded by W. 17th and W. 18th Streets is occupied by parking.

Residential use is increasingly prominent in West Chelsea. Residential uses are found along the west side of Tenth Avenue, between W. 21st and W. 30th Streets and along W. 17th Street east of Tenth Avenue. In addition to walk-up tenements located on Tenth Avenue, three new 14-story residential buildings have been constructed along W. 23rd Street. Three loft buildings on W. 22nd Street were also converted to residential use in the late 1990s. Within the primary study area, the heaviest concentration of residential use occurs in the midblocks between W. 22nd and W. 23rd Streets.

In addition to the land uses described above, the primary study area also contains a number of community facility uses, including houses of worship and museums. There are seven community facility buildings within the rezoning area. A Pentecostal church is located at 534 W. 29th Street. The Guardian Angel Roman Catholic Church is located at the corner of W. 21st Street and Tenth Avenue and its rectory is located on the adjacent parcel immediately to the north of the church on Tenth Avenue. Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses is located at 512 W. 20th Street. The Chelsea Art Museum and the Dia Chelsea Museum are located on adjacent parcels on W. 22nd Street. The New Museum is temporarily using 7,000 sf within the Chelsea Art Museum until its new building is completed in the Bowery. Additionally, the Flemister House is located at 527-531 W. 22nd Street. This facility is an outpatient medical clinic and provides residences for people with HIV.

One institutional use is located within the primary study area. The 8-story Bayview Correctional Facility, a New York State Department of Corrections facility, is located at W. 20th Street and Eleventh Avenue. As discussed in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," the building is an eligible historic resource. It was constructed in 1931 as the Seaman's House YMCA, where sailors stayed while their ships were docked at the nearby Chelsea Piers. The facility has housed a women's general confinement program since 1978.¹

One of the most defining characteristics of the West Chelsea neighborhood is the elevated High Line which is located generally 25 feet above grade and traverses 15 blocks within the primary study area,

¹ Online: www.geocities.com/motorcity/downloads/3548/facility/Bayview.html. "Bayview." Last updated 2004. Viewed on 9/1/2004.

from W. 16th Street to W. 30th Street. South of W. 16th Street, the High Line crosses Tenth Avenue, and travels at approximately 100 feet west of Tenth Avenue to W. 30th Street, where it curves to the west to enter into the rail yards.

Parking and auto-repair are the predominate land uses beneath the High Line between W. 16th W. 30th Streets. Generally, the High line runs from W. 34th Street, along the edge of the Hudson River, through West Chelsea, and into the Meat Packing District to its terminus at Gansevoort Street. Unused since 1980, the 1.45 mile elevated railway has been essentially untouched, resulting in a rail bed that is now overgrown with grass and small shrubs.

The proposed action area has evolved from its former manufacturing origins to an area that is an intricate mixture of uses. Galleries have emerged as a significant presence in recent years, as have office uses, while manufacturing uses are no longer a predominant land use.

Secondary Study Area

As suggested in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for neighborhood character will be coterminous with the 1/4-mile land use study area. As shown in Figure 9-1, the secondary study area covers an area bound at its outer limits by W. 35th Street on the north, Eighth Avenue on the east, Gansevoort Street on the south, and the Hudson River on the west and includes portions of the surrounding Midtown, Chelsea, West Village and Clinton neighborhoods.

The secondary study area contains a variety of uses; however, residential uses predominate and are generally located east of Tenth Avenue in Chelsea. A large concentration of transportation/utility uses are located in the northern portion of the secondary study area, north of W. 30th Street. Other land uses in the secondary area include mixed residential/industrial, commercial retail and office, public facilities and institutions, parking facilities, open space and outdoor recreation, and vacant land.

Directly north of the rezoning area, within the proposed Special Hudson Yards District, transportation and utility uses predominate, including the Long Island Rail Road John D. Caemmerer West Side Yard in the area bounded by Tenth and Twelfth Avenues between W. 30th and W. 33rd Streets. The Lincoln Tunnel ramps and its associated roadways are located between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. Other uses include the Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, located north of W. 34th Street between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues, the James A. Farley US Post Office, and several parking facilities.

To the east, the predominant land use is residential, including walk-up multifamily dwellings and high-rise elevator apartment buildings. The latter includes the Chelsea/Elliott Houses and the Robert Fulton Houses, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments, as well as the Penn Station South Houses, a limited-equity co-operative and rental apartment complex, and London Terrace Apartments, a market-rate co-operative complex. There are also several public facilities and institutions, among these are the USPS Morgan General Mail Facility, General Theological Seminary and church (covering the entire block between W. 20th and W. 21st Streets), several churches, and

several schools. The area east of Tenth Avenue is also occupied by commercial uses including retail, hotels, bars and nightclubs. A recent addition is the Maritime Hotel, on W. 16th Street and Ninth Avenue. The site of this recent commercial conversion was formerly occupied by a maritime union hall. Chelsea Park is located on the full-block between Ninth and Tenth Avenues, south of W. 28th Street, and features a mix of passive and active recreation.

South of West Chelsea, the Meat Packing District (actually part of the West Village), contains a mix of residential, commercial and manufacturing and warehouse uses. As its name implies, the Meat Packing District is known for the historic presence of wholesale meat distributors and slaughterhouses. The few remaining uses are located south of W. 14th Street and west of Washington Street, and, more generally, south of the secondary study area. The predominant land uses south of W. 14th Street include mixed residential and retail buildings located along W. 14th Street, east of Ninth Avenue. The area bounded by W. 14th, Hudson, Washington and Gansevoort Streets contains a mix of commercial and residential uses, including hotels, boutiques, bars, restaurants and apartment buildings. The 187-room Gansevoort Hotel, at Ninth Avenue and W. 13th Street, opened in the spring of 2004.

To the west, the blocks between Eleventh and Twelfth Avenues are occupied by commercial, industrial, and transportation/utility uses, with the exception of the Chelsea Waterside Park at W. 23rd Street. West of Route 9A, along the waterfront is Hudson River Park, which is currently under development, including several piers which expected to be redeveloped for park use, and the Chelsea Piers Sports and Entertainment Complex, a privately owned facility.

C. THE FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

Primary Study Area

In the future without the proposed action, the existing zoning controls would remain in place. It is expected that the West Chelsea area would experience nominal growth in light manufacturing uses, continued commercial conversions in warehouses and loft buildings and the High Line would remain in its current unused state. Expected growth by 2013 would include commercial conversions and new construction, including the continued development of gallery and office space, as well as hotel development. Residential growth is expected to occur along W. 23rd and W. 24th Streets.

In the future without the proposed action, it is expected that the current land use trends and general development patterns would continue. These trends are characterized by an overall decline in industrial and manufacturing uses, a continued shift to commercial development, and limited residential growth due to the prohibitive M1-5 zoning mapped over much of the primary study area. The continued underutilization of land in the future without the proposed action is primarily due to the existing zoning, which permits commercial and manufacturing uses but prohibits residential use. As-of-right commercial development, in the form of new construction and conversions and enlargements of existing warehouse and loft buildings would likely persist, as opportunities for

residential uses would generally not be provided in the primary study area. The existing trend of commercial conversions is expected to continue in the future without the proposed action, as galleries and nightclubs are expected to locate in the midblock area from W. 20th Street to the north side of W. 22nd Street, as well as the midblocks between W. 24th and W. 27th Streets. Five Several planned as-of-right developments are currently underway, or have been granted building permits within the primary study area. Approximately 160,000 sf of office space, including 23,000 sf of accessory parking space and 5,000 sf of ground floor retail is planned on Eleventh Avenue between W. 18th and W. 19th streets. At 520 W. 27th Street, a new commercial development with 48,000 sf is expected to replace the existing commercial/industrial uses on the site. This building is to include 24,000 sf of art gallery/retail space, 12,000 sf of office space, and 12,000 sf of other commercial/art studios. Another new development, currently under construction, is expected at 543 W. 25th Street, a new building with approximately 100,000 sf of art gallery space. This is to include 50,000 sf of art gallery/retail space, 25,000 sf of office space, and 25,000 sf of other commercial/art studios.

As a result of the existing M1-5 zoning, the predominant residential land uses found to the east of Tenth Avenue in Chelsea, would not penetrate the West Chelsea area. Absent the proposed action, residential uses would be limited to the area along W. 23rd and W. 24th Streets. A ~~338~~ 337-unit mixed-use residential development on the block bound by W. 23rd and W. 24th streets and Tenth and Eleventh avenues, and a 24-unit mixed-use residential development on Tenth Avenue, between W. 23rd and W. 24th streets, containing approximately 51,000 sf of residential space and 2,000 sf of ground floor retail, are currently under construction. Additionally, two smaller as-of-right residential developments, that are not considered qualitatively, are expected to add a total of ~~22~~ 17 new residential units along the 23rd Street corridor. Moreover, it is anticipated that the High Line would remain inaccessible to the public in the future without the proposed action, and no new open space would be provided within the primary study area.

In addition to the ~~five~~ planned developments described above, as summarized in Chapter 1, "Project Description," additional development is expected to occur as-of-right in the future without the proposed action on 9 of the 25 projected development sites. In addition, if development does not occur on the projected development sites, the same overall amount of development could occur instead on some or all of the potential development sites. In the future without the proposed action, such development could occur on ten of the 29 sites and no development is likely on 18 of the potential development sites. This potential development could occur as-of-right, pursuant to existing zoning in the future without the proposed action.

~~Four additional residential developments within the rezoning area have been issued building permits (see Table 3-12 in Chapter 3).~~ These developments are located within the MX district along the 23rd Street corridor, and as such, could occur as-of-right in the future without the proposed action. Approximately ~~384~~ 378 new dwelling units would result if all projects were constructed as planned (see Table 3-12 in Chapter 3). Recent trends in the area have been towards residential development along the 23rd Street corridor. On a wider scale, the overall pattern for the area in recent years has been one of adaptively reusing the former manufacturing buildings for gallery and office space. The

trends have been moving steadily away from manufacturing and industrial uses and towards commercial and residential uses.

Secondary Study Area

There are several other actions and development projects expected to occur in the surrounding secondary study area by the 2013 analysis year. As shown in Table 2-3 in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, & Public Policy,” the anticipated development in the secondary study area in the future without the proposed action is expected to consist of a total of 1,683,291 sf of residential floor area; ~~237,779~~ 565,557 sf of retail space along with 26,674 sf of restaurant space; ~~5,449,065~~ 5,914,065 sf of office space; ~~477,000~~ 727,000 sf of hotel space; ~~340,000~~ 260,783 sf of convention floor area and 75,000 seats in a multi-purpose sports and entertainment facility; 563,241 square feet of community facility and institutional space; and 468,000 square feet of auto use (housing an NYPD tow pound, NYC Department of Sanitation garage, and/or a bus garage); 111,203 sf of ballroom, dance studio, and art studio space; and a 24-slip marina.

The anticipated developments in the secondary study area would be consistent with the current land use trends in the West Chelsea area. However, it is possible that because demand for housing is growing throughout Manhattan, residentially zoned areas surrounding the primary study area may see additional pressure for residential development in the future without the proposed action that would otherwise be accommodated in the primary study area under the proposed action.

In the future without the proposed action, there are ~~two~~ three major land use changes expected to occur in the secondary study area by 2013: development induced by the planned Special Hudson Yards District rezoning, and the redevelopment of Pier 57 to the southwest of the primary study area, and the reuse of the General Post Office (Farley Building) with an expanded Pennsylvania Station (aka, Moynihan Station) and commercial space.

The Hudson Yards rezoning would result in several significant changes to the secondary study area by the 2013 analysis year. The City has proposed a comprehensive rezoning initiative for the far west side of Manhattan, generally encompassing the area bounded by W. 43rd Street on the north, Hudson River Park to the west, W. 28th and W. 30th Street on the south (southern boundary varies), and Seventh and Eighth Avenues on the east (eastern boundary varies). The proposed zoning is intended to ensure the future growth of the City through redevelopment of the Hudson Yards area, provide transit services to support such development, and maintain or improve environmental conditions as part of the overall development plan. The main components of the project are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, & Public Policy.”

~~In September 2003, the Hudson River Park Trust (the Trust) issued a Request for Expressions of Interest (RFEI) for Pier 57. By January 2004, the Trust received eight responses to the RFEI. The Trust has recently selected two proposals which most substantially complied with the RFEI for final consideration and will choose a final project by December 2004. The scenarios analyzed herein are preliminary estimates which were used for the purposes of the RFEI for the Trust. As no final~~

development program has been selected for Pier 57, both of the final proposals were considered for analysis purposes throughout this EIS. As discussed in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, & Public Policy,” both of the Pier 57 redevelopment plans would introduce a wide variety of retail, cultural, recreational and dining facilities to the southwest of the proposed action area.

In connection with the ongoing development of Hudson River Park, the Hudson River Park Trust designated a developer to redevelop Pier 57, located at the foot of W. 15th Street. The program for “the Leonardo at Pier 57,” as selected includes plans for 26,674 sf of restaurant space; 80,338 sf of retail floor area; 98,703 sf of ballroom floor area; 25,000 sf of office space; 50,783 sf of health club facilities; 43,885 sf of cultural facilities; and a 24-slip marina. Full build-out of Pier 57 is expected to occur by fall 2007. This project, located adjacent to Chelsea Piers, would likely increase the amount of activity in West Chelsea and add to the appeal of the overall area.

The Pennsylvania Station Redevelopment Project involves the adaptive reuse of the James A. Farley US General Post Office by expanding train operations from the neighboring Penn Station and locating new commercial uses. The site is located on the superblock bounded by W. 33rd and W. 31st streets, Eighth and Ninth avenues and the trains tracks and platforms used by the Long Island Rail, Road, NJ Transit, and Amtrak are located beneath the building. Approximately 300,000 sf of the 1.4 million sf building will be programmed for train operations. The first phase of this project involving the existing building is expected to be implemented by 2010. The program for this project, which was tentative at the time the FEIS was prepared, consists of approximately 162,000 sf of retail space targeted toward passengers and 163,000 sf of destination retail, for a total of 325,000 sf of retail space, and 425,000 sf of office space. This program may be revised subsequent to the preparation of the FEIS. Some existing US Postal Service operations are expected to remain at the site, including the retail lobby. A later phase involving new construction on the site is not expected to be implemented until after 2013 and therefore is not considered in this EIS.

Although outside the secondary study area, the recently approved Ladies’ Mile Rezoning is recognized for its significant implications to the area east of the proposed Special West Chelsea District. Ladies’ Mile rezoned 5 ½ blocks in the Flatiron District. The area is located on the midblocks between Fifth and Sixth avenues, from the centerline between 16th and 17th streets to the south, to 22nd Street on the north. Except for two properties in its southwest corner, the entire Rezoning Area is located within the Ladies’ Mile Historic District. The rezoning is intended to: update the zoning to reflect the current mixed-use character of the area; allow for residential development on underutilized lots; and to strengthen and preserve the area’s built character. The new C6-4A zoning would reflect the evolution of the area from one dominated by manufacturing uses to one with a wide mix of uses, including a significant residential presence.

The new zoning would allow for much-needed new housing construction, including the potential for affordable housing, in an appropriate building form that respects the existing building context of the area. Specifically, the proposed rezoning is estimated to facilitate the development of approximately 900 new apartments on six underutilized sites over the next ten years. These buildings would put currently underutilized land into productive use and would make a meaningful contribution to the City’s efforts to address its affordable housing shortage.

As the Ladies' Mile rezoning is outside the study area, the individual developments that are expected to result from the rezoning are not considered quantitatively herein. Likewise, the proposed action would not result in any adverse impacts on the Ladies' Mile rezoning area, nor would Ladies' Mile have any adverse impacts on the study area.

D. THE FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

This section discusses potential changes in the character of the proposed action area and the surrounding study area by 2013. This section focuses on potential changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas of Land Use, Socioeconomic Conditions, Historic Resources, Urban Design and Visual Resources, Traffic and Pedestrians, and Noise. Changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character as follows:

- *Land Use.* The Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy analysis (see Chapter 2) indicates that the proposed action would change the scale and density of land use within the proposed action area while maintaining the current mix of residential, light industrial, retail, and community facility uses. These changes would bring about related changes to urban design, visual resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, and pedestrians, which would affect neighborhood character.
- *Socioeconomic Conditions.* The Socioeconomic Conditions analysis (see Chapter 3) indicates that by 2013, the proposed action could result in the direct displacement of approximately 20 residents and an estimated ~~83~~ 81 businesses and 2 government offices with 1,023 1,063 private sector employees and 290 public sector employees, respectively. However, the direct displacement would not result in a significant adverse impact.
- *Historic Resources.* The analysis in Chapter 7, "Historic Resources," indicates that the proposed action would result in significant adverse impacts due to new incremental shadows on two architectural resources. Construction-related significant adverse impacts could result from the proposed action as ~~four~~ five eligible historic resources are located within 90 feet of action-induced development. Additionally, ~~three~~ two resources could be demolished as a consequence of the proposed action. Demolition of an eligible historic resource would constitute a significant adverse impact. In addition, ~~three~~ one resources would be converted to residential use, which would not constitute an impact, but would also be expanded, which could result in significant adverse impacts ~~on these resources.~~ These impacts are unmitigable. However, these impacts would not result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources.* The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Chapter 8) indicates that the proposed action would result in considerable changes to the urban design and visual quality of the area. These would include substantial changes to building bulk, form, size, and scale, as well as enhancements to streetscape elements.

The proposed action would foster development in line with the current trends of retail, residential, and commercial development that currently exist in the area, but would also regulate the bulk of future developments in a manner that is responsive to the scale and uses of surrounding areas as well as the presence of the High Line elevated rail. The intermittent vacant lots located along Tenth and Eleventh Avenue would be replaced by residential and street-level retail development, complimenting the vibrant art gallery district that is currently located along the area's midblocks. There would also be a decrease in automotive uses, which are generally incompatible with neighboring residential or retail uses. The continuation of residential and retail uses along W. 23rd Street would maintain it as a major pedestrian connection between the waterfront and upland areas.

- *Transportation.* The Traffic and Parking analysis (see Chapter 16) indicates that the proposed action would result in traffic impacts in a number of locations in the study area. The analysis also notes that all of the identified traffic impacts would be fully ~~or partially~~ addressed with operational mitigation measures (see Chapter 22, "Mitigation"). In terms of parking, although some of the vehicles associated with new residential development would not be accommodated in accessory off-street parking in the future with the proposed action, it is expected that overflow demand would occupy the available on-street curbside parking overnight. No significant adverse impacts to study area parking conditions would therefore result from the proposed action. The Transit and Pedestrian analysis (see Chapter 17) indicates that demand from projected development sites would ~~not~~ significantly impact one bus route. As discussed in Chapter 22, following standard practice this would be addressed by NYC Transit and no action-initiated mitigation is required for the proposed action. There would be no other significant adverse impacts on transit and pedestrian facilities in the area.
- *Noise.* As discussed in Chapter 19, noise increases as a result of additional traffic that would accompany the proposed residential developments are expected to be imperceptible in the vast majority of locations throughout the proposed action area. These noise increases are not expected to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. In addition, due to existing noise levels buildings constructed in the area would be required to attenuate noise to achieve acceptable interior noise levels.

Primary Study Area

Land Use Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The land use in the proposed action area is the strongest factor in determining the character of the area because changes to land use would alter the "look and feel" of the area, and the levels of activity in the area. Land use changes would spur changes to neighborhood character in the area of visual resources, urban design, socioeconomic conditions, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The proposed action would spur changes in the area's land use patterns, with new, larger-scale developments on a number of sites in the proposed action area. The proposed action would allow the redevelopment of vacant and underutilized lots that have been subject to a steadily declining demand for parcels zoned for manufacturing and industrial use. In addition, developments under the proposed action would help create the critical mass of commercial, institutional, residential, and open space uses which is often necessary to help create a more vibrant community that is active for a greater portion of the day and night.

Most of West Chelsea is currently occupied by a mix of gallery space, parking lots, auto-repair facilities, manufacturing/industrial uses, storage uses, bars and nightclubs. The limited amount of residential land use in West Chelsea is found along W. 23rd and the south side of W. 24th Street. By 2013, with the proposed action, West Chelsea would be transformed into a mixed-use community, with much of the area occupied by primarily residential buildings with commercial space, including retail and gallery uses, community facilities such as museums and a new linear open space on the High Line.

As discussed above, manufacturing uses in West Chelsea, and Manhattan in general, have been declining. The bulk of commercial redevelopment has taken the form of galleries, bars and nightclubs, which have located in converted warehouses and loft buildings that were formerly occupied by manufacturing and industrial uses. The trend of commercial conversions is expected to continue in the future with and without the proposed action (generally in the midblock areas between W. 20th and W. 27th Streets).

The new residential population generated by the proposed action would support the ground-floor, neighborhood retail uses along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues in West Chelsea, which in turn would enhance pedestrian activity and contribute to the overall cohesion of the various neighborhoods located in this part of Manhattan. While the underlying manufacturing district would be retained in the primary study area, it is not expected that manufacturing uses would locate in this area. The commercial uses anticipated in these midblocks would be compatible with the mixed residential and commercial development expected as a result of the proposed action.

The planned conversion of the High Line to public open space would create an amenity for residents of and visitors to West Chelsea and the City as a whole. The site selection and acquisition actions would generate approximately 6 acres of new open space for residents and visitors. The High Line would integrate West Chelsea's industrial past with an innovative new open space, linking the Clinton and Hudson Yards neighborhoods to the north with the Meat Packing District and the West Village to the south. See Chapter 5, "Open Space and Recreation," for a detailed description of the proposed High Line open space.

The proposed action would provide increased opportunities for residential and mixed-use development where there is currently a need for housing. Given West Chelsea's proximity to and compatibility with residential and mixed-use commercial development in the surrounding neighborhoods, the land uses generated by the proposed action would not be expected to result in significant adverse land uses impacts.

Socioeconomic Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” it is concluded that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts on direct residential displacement, indirect residential displacement, direct business displacement, effects on specific industries, and indirect business displacement in the proposed action area or the larger West Chelsea study area.

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a direct displacement impact may be significant if the persons being displaced represent more than five percent of the study area population, and a population with a similar profile would not be able to relocate within the neighborhood (Chapter 3, Section B-331). The 12 households in four buildings expected to be directly displaced as a result of the proposed action represent slightly over one percent of the total households in the primary study area as of the 2000 Census. Given the small size of the displaced population, and that the displacement would be gradual, taking place over a 10-year period, it is not expected that the direct displacement would significantly change the demographic or socioeconomic characteristics of the primary study area, or result in the loss of a significant population group in the neighborhood. As discussed in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” the proposed action is not expected to result in significant indirect displacement impacts in either the primary or secondary study areas. In addition, the proposed action is not anticipated to displace enough of one or more components of the population to significantly alter the socioeconomic composition of the study area.

As discussed above, 83 businesses (including two government offices) and ~~1,023~~ 1,353 employees within the primary study area would be displaced as a result of the proposed action. The proposed action directly displaces mostly businesses in the retail, construction, wholesale, business, legal and professional services and auto service sectors. These businesses do not constitute a significant or unique economic value to the City or region and could be relocated within and outside Manhattan; they are not subject to regulations or publicly adopted plans to protect them; and except for commercial art gallery and nightlife establishments, they do not constitute a defining element of neighborhood character. As the art gallery and nightlife establishments are a defining characteristic of the West Chelsea neighborhood, a brief discussion about the impacts of directly displacing these industries is provided below.

As discussed in Chapter 3, “Socioeconomic Conditions,” approximately 19 art galleries, employing 91 people, and ~~5~~ 3 large capacity cabaret nightlife establishments, employing ~~120~~ 340 people, would be directly displaced. However, the proposed action is also not anticipated to measurably diminish the viability of the art gallery and nightlife/cabaret establishment industry in West Chelsea. Although the proposed action would allow for residential and commercial uses in the proposed action area, which are not currently permitted as-of-right, the core of the West Chelsea art gallery district would retain its existing M1-5 zoning designation and preserve the core of the West Chelsea art gallery district. Most of the newly constructed residential buildings on W. 22nd, W. 23rd, and W. 24th streets contain galleries on their ground floor spaces. Accordingly, it is expected that galleries would likely occupy some of the projected ground and second floor retail spaces. In addition, as art galleries are permitted as of right within proposed C6 zoning district, they would be able to locate

within the ~~564,254~~ 574,128 sf of ground and second floor retail spaces anticipated to be developed on the projected development sites.

In the future with the proposed action cabarets and all other nightlife/cabaret establishments would also be allowed as-of-right under the proposed C6 zoning. In addition, the new residents in the primary study area would constitute a new pool of patrons for the cabarets in the area. Although residential uses and nightlife establishments, especially large capacity cabarets are not highly compatible uses, they can coexist with the proper regulations. The City of New York has laws in place that regulate noise and any type of disorderly conduct that may be associated with these types of drinking and dancing establishments. It is expected that a properly operated cabaret should not be a nuisance to its surrounding neighborhood and should not have compatibility issues with residential uses.

Historic Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

The analysis in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources,” indicated that the proposed action would result in significant adverse impacts to eight historic resources, including the demolition of two eligible resources, the E.R. Merrill Spring Company Building and the Manufacturing Building from development on Potential Development Sites 38 and 30, respectively, and the conversion of one resource, the Otis Elevator Building, to residential use (Projected Development Site 7). These significant adverse impacts would be unmitigated because development activity on these eligible resources would occur as-of-right.

Inadvertent construction-related damage could potentially occur to five eligible resources including: the Wolf Building and Annex; the Cornell Ironworks (aka Standard Oil Building); the Reynolds Metal Building (#15); the B&O Terminal; and the Nabisco Complex (Chelsea Market). These significant adverse impacts would be unmitigated because development activity on these eligible resources would occur as-of-right. With respect to construction-related impacts, the five resources would be afforded limited protection under DOB regulations applicable to all buildings located adjacent to construction sites; however, since the resources are not S/NR-listed or NYLPC-designated, they are not afforded special protections under DOB’s *TPPN 10/88*. The resources would be provided a measure of protection from construction as Building Code section 27-166 (C26-112.4), which requires that all lots, buildings, and service facilities adjacent to foundation and earthwork areas be protected and supported in accordance with the requirements of Building Construction Subchapter 7 and Building Code Subchapters 11 and 19.

As described above, significant adverse shadows impacts would occur on two historic resources, Church of the Guardian Angel and the General Theological Seminary.

The impacts on the above mentioned resources would not result in significant impacts to neighborhood character, as these eligible historic structures are not representative of the neighborhood character of the area. The projected and potential developments to be constructed subsequent to the proposed action are also not expected to have significant adverse indirect impacts

on existing historic resources in the area. As such, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character can be expected in relation to historic resources.

Urban Design and Visual Resources Impacts on Neighborhood Character

In the 2013 future with the proposed action, substantial development would occur in the proposed Special West Chelsea District as a result of new zoning. The proposed action would facilitate development in line with the current trends of residential, and commercial development that currently exist in the area, but would also regulate the bulk of future developments in a manner that is responsive to the scale and uses of surrounding areas as well as the presence of the High Line elevated rail. The intermittent vacant lots along Tenth and Eleventh Avenue would be replaced by residential and street-level retail development, complimenting the art gallery district located along the midblocks. There would also be a decrease in automotive uses, which are generally incompatible with neighboring residential or retail uses. The continuation of residential and retail uses along W. 23rd Street would maintain it as a major pedestrian connection between the waterfront and upland areas.

The site selection and acquisition of the High Line would allow the creation of a unique open space, reacquainting residents and visitors with a historic rail structure that has long been a passive feature of the West Chelsea area. The proposed action also includes provisions that would ensure that adjacent developments enhance the High Line, including the transfer of development rights away from the High Line, and bulk and use controls.

Overall, the proposed action is not anticipated to affect the street hierarchy, street pattern, block form, natural features, nor topography in the primary and secondary study areas. Building arrangement is anticipated to become more uniform, given the decrease of automotive uses and lots with small, low-coverage buildings of varied placement.

Transportation Impacts on Neighborhood Character

Increases in traffic, transit, and pedestrian levels in the study area as a result of the proposed action would also affect neighborhood character. Traffic would increase over future No-Action levels as a result of the new residential and commercial development in the proposed action area. These increases would result in significant traffic impacts throughout the area. Additionally, bus and subway ridership demand would increase as a result of the proposed action.

Traffic and Parking

Chapter 16, “Traffic and Parking,” analyzes the effects of added traffic and parking demand from projected development sites on the West Chelsea street network during the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours. The results of the analyses show that demand generated by the proposed action would create significant adverse traffic impacts at ~~10~~ 11 intersections in the AM peak hour, 18 intersections in the midday, and ~~15~~ 16 in the PM peak hour. Impacts along Route 9A were distributed among various intersection movements, while impacts within the street grid were concentrated on the

cross-street approaches. Chapter 22, “Mitigation,” of this EIS provides a description of measures developed to mitigate the traffic impacts identified in the traffic analysis. As discussed in Chapter 22, all of the identified traffic impacts would be mitigated. As the traffic impacts in the area would be fully mitigated, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are anticipated in relation to traffic.

Although the proposed action would result in a shortfall in the supply of public parking in the vicinity of projected development sites, no significant adverse parking impacts were identified based on *CEQR* criteria. No significant adverse impacts to study area parking conditions would therefore result from the proposed action. As such, while on-street parking demand would increase slightly as a result of the proposed action, the increase would not have significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

Transit and Pedestrians

Chapter 17, “Transit and Pedestrians,” analyzes the effects of added travel demand from projected development sites on subway stations, local bus services and pedestrian facilities within West Chelsea during the AM and PM peak hours. The results of the analyses show that demand from projected development sites would significantly impact the combined M16/M34 local bus route would be significantly adversely impacted in the ~~eastbound~~ westbound direction in the PM peak hour. As standard practice, NYC Transit monitors bus ridership and increases service where operationally warranted and fiscally feasible. As such, the capacity shortfall on the M16/M34 crosstown route would be addressed by NYC Transit, and no action-initiated mitigation is required for the proposed action. New pedestrian demand would not, however, result in any significant adverse impacts to analyzed sidewalks, corner areas or crosswalks in either peak hour. Chapter 22, “Mitigation,” provides a description of measures to be developed to mitigate the transit impacts identified in this chapter.

The increased pedestrian activity would have a beneficial effect on neighborhood character. An increase in foot traffic could help create a safer urban environment and improve economic activity by increasing the customer base for area retail stores, including art galleries.

Noise Impacts on Neighborhood Character

As discussed in Chapter 19, noise increases as a result of the additional traffic that would accompany the proposed action are expected to be imperceptible at all monitoring sites. As discussed in detail in Chapter 19, in order to ensure an acceptable interior noise environment, new residential development must provide a closed window condition with a minimum of 30, 35 or 40 dBA window/wall attenuation on all facades in order to maintain an interior noise level of 45 dBA. In order to maintain a closed-window condition, an alternate means of ventilation includes, but is not limited to, central air conditioning or air conditioning sleeves containing air conditioners. In general, while there would be some additional localized noise due to additional vehicles on streets that are currently lightly traveled, the character of these streets is not defined by traffic levels and additional traffic

would not, in and of itself, redefine the character. Therefore, no adverse impacts to neighborhood character as a result of noise can be expected.

Secondary Study Area

While some additional residential and retail and service establishments may develop outside the borders of the proposed action area due to the proposed action, these new residential buildings and businesses should not cause significant changes in the character of these neighborhoods. Moreover, by increasing the supply of housing in the future, the proposed action could have the effect of accommodating demand that would otherwise be focused on existing housing, and ameliorating the upward pressure on unregulated residential rents. The new population introduced by the proposed action would not be expected to have different socioeconomic characteristics compared to the size and character of the existing population in the proposed action area. Furthermore, the proposed action would not introduce a substantial amount of a more costly type of housing, compared to existing housing and No-Action housing anticipated to be built in the primary study area by the time the action is implemented. These new residential developments would likely increase traffic and noise in the area, although these increases are not expected to impact neighborhood character.

In addition, as mentioned above, the socioeconomic characteristics of the population living in the proposed action area is already changing and is likely to continue to change over the next several years. As such, while socioeconomic conditions would change as a result of the proposed action, it would be consistent with the current trend towards residential and commercial development. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are expected to result from the proposed action on the blocks surrounding the proposed action area.

E. CONCLUSIONS

The proposed action would result in a change in the character of West Chelsea in general, however, were the proposed action not to change the character of the area, it would fail to achieve the project's goals.

A close examination of the future No-Action condition, compared to the analyses of conditions as projected in 2013 resulting from the proposed action, indicates that the action would result in an overall change in the character of the proposed action area with respect to land use, urban design and visual resources, and street-level pedestrian activity. While a number of significant adverse traffic impacts were identified, these impacts occur in locations that would already be congested in 2013 in the absence of the proposed action. It is expected that these transportation impacts would not significantly alter neighborhood character. The neighborhood character of the area would not be impacted by noise increases resulting from the proposed action. In addition, the proposed action would not affect historic resources so as to affect neighborhood character.

Overall, the proposed action would alter neighborhood character in beneficial ways, by creating opportunities for new housing development on underutilized and vacant land formerly used for manufacturing and auto-related uses. The new residential population generated by the proposed action would support the ground-floor, neighborhood retail uses along Tenth and Eleventh Avenues in West Chelsea, which in turn would enhance pedestrian activity and contribute to the overall cohesion of the various neighborhoods located in this part of Manhattan. In addition, the art gallery industry, which has a strong presence in West Chelsea, would continue to remain a strong presence under the proposed zoning through increased opportunities for new commercial development.

The proposed action would also facilitate the development of new buildings that respond to the existing built character of West Chelsea and the surrounding neighborhoods. Streetwalls would be required throughout the Special District, ensuring that new development compliments the area's many high streetwall loft buildings and walk-up apartment buildings. Height limits would also be required throughout much of the Special District to compliment the existing building scale, including the lower-scale Chelsea Historic District. Slender tower developments would be permitted at the edges of the Special District, providing a transition to the higher density development proposed for Hudson Yards to the north, and along Eleventh Avenue to the south of W. 22nd Street, allowing light and air to reach the midblocks.

In addition, the site selection and acquisition of the High Line would facilitate the development of a new open space for West Chelsea. . The High Line is a defining characteristic of the West Chelsea neighborhood. Currently inaccessible to the public, the proposed action would facilitate the implementation of an open space master plan, and new public access points. As a result, the High Line would be transformed into an elevated, linear open space unique to the City. The Special District would also include floor area transfer mechanisms and bulk regulations that would preserve light, air and views along the length of the High Line, and regulations that would allow compatible uses.

The proposed action is expected to have many beneficial effects on neighborhood character and significant adverse impacts to overall neighborhood character are not expected.