

3.2 NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

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 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.
- *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 the proposed action's effects on neighborhood character within the area to be rezoned and a study area defined by a 1/4-mile radius around the rezoning area, coterminous with the land use study area (See Appendix A - Chapter 3.1, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy"). The impact analysis focuses on changes to neighborhood character resulting from changes in the technical areas listed above as follows.

3.2.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

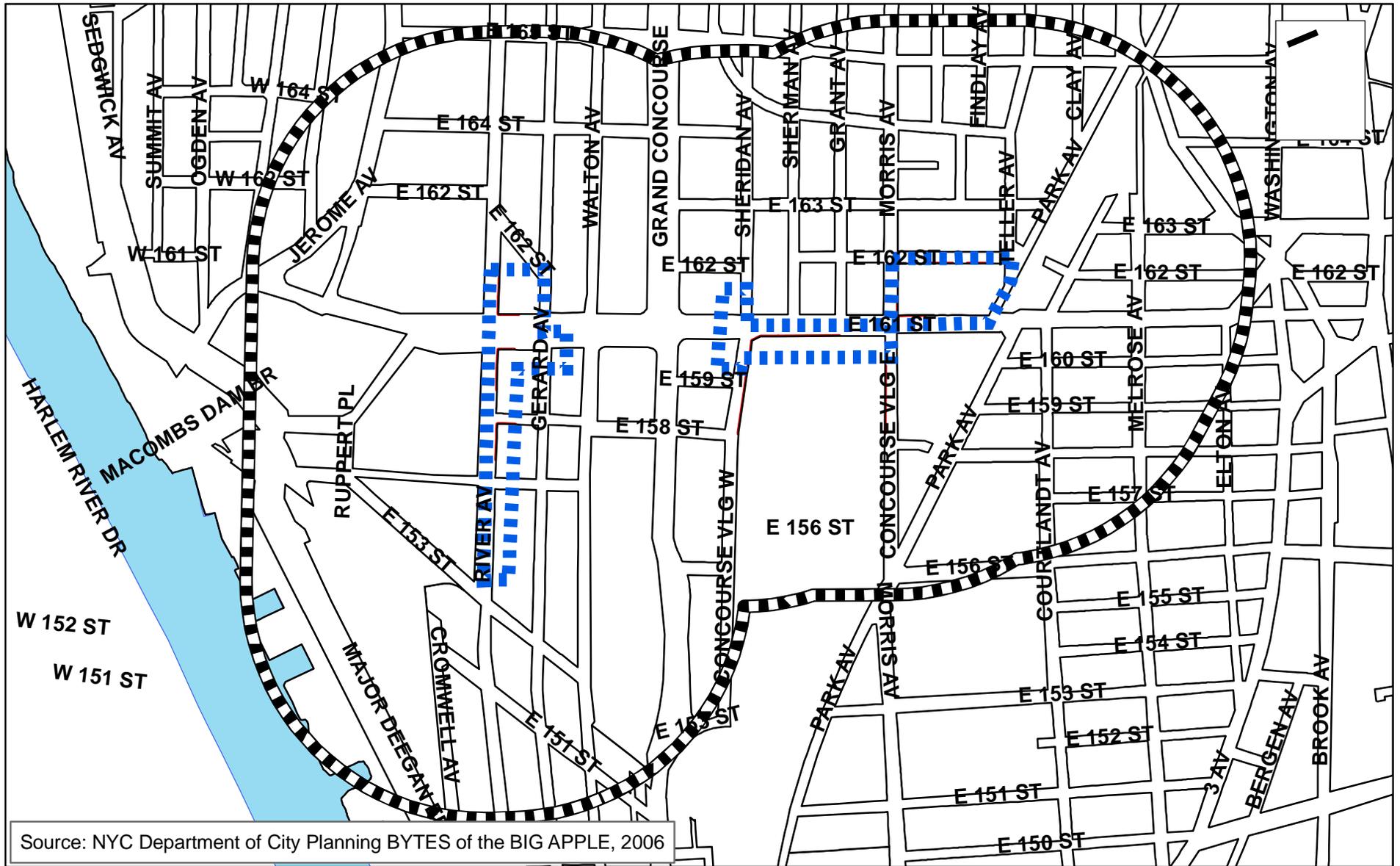
The proposed rezoning area consists of 8 blocks along the East 161st Street corridor in the Concourse Village section of the Bronx. The rezoning study area is generally bounded by River Avenue on the west, East 162nd Street on the north, Park Avenue on the east, and East 161st Street on the south. (see Figure 3.8-1).

For the purposes of studying neighborhood character, the subareas defined in the Appendix A - Chapter 3.7, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," are used in this chapter. This chapter will discuss the study area in three distinct nodes: 1) the Transit Node; 2) the Civic Node; and 3) the Residential Node. Due to the presence of important built features and the conditions in the future with the proposed action, each node was found to have a distinct character.

Primary Study Area

Transit Node

The Transit Node is generally bounded by East 162nd Street to the north, Gerard Avenue to the east, East 153rd Street to the south, and River Avenue to the west. The Transit Node is centered on a transit hub that includes an elevated train, a subway line and buses, and the area is characterized by low-rise commercial uses, surface and enclosed parking, and the existing and future Yankee Stadiums. Commercial land uses are predominant within the Transit Node. Many of the commercial uses, including sports bars, souvenir shops and clothing apparel shops, are geared towards crowds from Yankee Stadium and several are seasonal. Additional commercial uses in this node include pharmacies, banks, and eating establishments, including Crown's Diner



Source: NYC Department of City Planning BYTES of the BIG APPLE, 2006

Figure 3.2-1 - Neighborhood Character Study Area

Legend

-  Proposed Rezoning Area
-  1/4-Mile Radius Around the Proposed Rezoning Area

0 330 660 1,320
 Feet

and a McDonald's. There are also three enclosed and surface parking facilities within the Transit Node catering to Yankee Stadium.

The buildings found in the Transit Node are predominantly comprised of one- to two-story commercial buildings fronting River Avenue or East 161st Street. The structures in this node have FARs within the range of 0.26 to 3.0, and most buildings feature retail uses. There is also one indoor parking garage. Structures are built to their lot lines in this node, with the parking areas along River Avenue, on either side of East 157th Street, being the only exceptions.

While there are no designated or potential historic resources within the Transit Node, several resources exist directly outside the primary study area. These include the Bronx County Courthouse (NYCL and NR listed), now also known as the Mario Merola Building, which was built in the Neo-classical style and is located at 851 Grand Concourse. This imposing, monumental civic edifice was designed by the architects Max Hausle and Joseph H. Freedlander and constructed between 1931 and 1934. This resource is not immediately adjacent to any projected or potential development sites. Furthermore, the Grand Concourse Historic District (NYCL eligible and NR listed), added to the National Register in 1987, is located at 730-1000, 1100-1520, 1560, and 851-1675 Grand Concourse, falling partially within the Civic Node. The district encompasses the Bronx County Courthouse and is characterized by its mix of residential and institutional buildings. The historic district spans approximately 500 acres

As discussed in Chapter 3.3, "Traffic and Parking," intersections within the Transit Node operate at levels of service consistent with the other nodes. The eastbound and westbound approaches at East 161st Street at River Avenue both currently operate at LOS "B" during the weekday AM, midday and PM peak hours and in the Saturday midday peak hour, while the northbound and southbound approaches currently operate at LOS "A" during those periods. The eastbound and westbound approaches at East 161st Street and Gerard Avenue both currently operate at LOS "A" during the weekday AM, midday and PM peak hours and in the Saturday midday peak hour, and the northbound approach currently operates at LOS "C" in the three weekday peaks and LOS "A" in the Saturday midday peak hour.

Civic Node

The Civic Node is generally located along East 161st Street, between Concourse Village East and Concourse Village West. The Civic Node is characterized by the corridor's civic uses, most notably the Bronx Criminal Court Complex and the new Bronx Hall of Justice, as well as by a mix of office buildings, low-rise commercial uses and surface parking. These proposed zoning changes would result in a change in uses allowed in the civic heart of the Bronx, and would facilitate new development of retail uses and office space. The proposed zoning would allow high-density, mid-rise towers for residential, commercial and community facility uses.

The Civic Node consists almost entirely of commercial and mixed land uses. Commercial uses include a couple of multi-level office buildings located across the street from the new Hall of Justice and part of the Bronx Criminal Court Complex. The 11-story office building located on the corner of Concourse Village West and East 161st Street and the 10-story office building

located on the corner of Concourse Village East and East 161st Street are primarily occupied by city government departments and social service organizations, contributing to the civic nature of the node. Other commercial uses in this node include local eating establishments and law offices located within mixed use buildings, which are found on the west side of Concourse Village West. This node also has several parking areas, including a portion of the parking lot serving the Concourse Plaza Shopping Center, and a three-story residential building.

On Sheridan Avenue, north of East 161st Street, there is a two-story mixed-use building and a three-story, narrow residential building, both of which are built to the lot line and have full lot coverage. On the south side of 161st Street, there are four two- to three-story mixed-use, commercial and residential buildings of various styles. Whereas the commercial building is rectangular and constructed from brick, the other buildings are residential and with a vinyl façade.

The portion of the Civic Node fronting East 161st Street experiences a relatively large amount of pedestrian traffic. As a result, adaptive streetscape elements include food carts, a book vendor, trashcans, newspaper bins, and a few street trees. There are also streetlamps located along this portion of the node. While the octagonal, galvanized steel posts with cobra-head luminaire varieties are most common, several streetlamps exhibit an embellished, historic flair. These are located primarily along the East 161st Street median between River and Walton avenues. The parking lot for the Concourse Plaza Shopping Center disrupts the street wall fronting East 161st Street, with a large wrought-iron fence at the perimeter. The small parking area on the portion of the node fronting Concourse Village West also disrupts the street wall on that block, which is otherwise consistent. Signage is found on retail frontages along buildings fronting Concourse Village West, as well as in front of the plaza parking lot.

The Civic Node is centered on one major arterial road, 161st Street, which provides transit access to and through this subarea. The NYCT Bx6 and Bx13 buses provide local service with numerous stops along 161st Street. Traffic movements through the intersections in this node currently operate at LOS “C” or better during all four of the peak hours analyzed, except the southbound approach at 161st Street and Sherman Avenue, which operates at LOS “D” during the Weekday PM peak hour.

The two blocks in the node to the west of Concourse Village West have regular blockforms. The large office buildings, and the parking lot for the Concourse Plaza Shopping Center, are located on a superblock which interrupts the rectangular street grid in this node. The street pattern consists of one arterial (East 161st Street) intersected by a collector/distributor street (Concourse Village West).

Residential Node

To the west of the Civic Node lies the Residential Node, which is generally bounded by East 162nd Street to the north, Park and Teller Avenues to the east, East 161st Street to the south, and Morris Avenue to the west.

The Residential Node consists primarily of two- to five-story residential buildings, which vary considerably in style. Several of these residential buildings that have ground-level retail uses. There are also several institutional uses in this node, including the Montefiore Medical Group (305 East 161st Street), the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah's Witnesses (866 Morris Avenue), the Bronx Gospel Hall (899 Teller Avenue), and Sendu de Justicia (the intersection of Teller and Park avenues). Other uses within the Residential Node include commercial uses, such as local eating establishments and pharmacies, parking facilities, and vacant buildings.

There is only one block in the Residential Node. It is slightly irregular, with the diagonal run of Park Avenue disrupting the rectangular form of the block. The block length is generally consistent with others within this node and the rezoning area. Within the Residential Node, the streetwalls are discontinuous. Building uses alternate between concentrations of commercial buildings, residential buildings, and institutional buildings. Heights range from two to five stories; however, these differences are sometimes exacerbated by parking areas and side lawns between buildings. Commercial, mixed-use, and institutional uses are dominant building forms, while residential buildings are set back further from the street and contain less bulk. Buildings within the Residential Node are generally rectangular. However not all buildings, particularly the two- and three-story residential buildings on the northern blockface of 161st Street between Morris and Park avenues, are built to the lot lines.

Traffic movement within the Residential Node is consistent with the majority of the study area, with levels of service generally within the "C" or "D" range. However, the northbound approach at East 161st Street and Morris Avenue operates at LOS "E" during the weekday AM period, with the southbound approach operating at LOS "E" during the weekday AM and PM periods.

Street trees are positioned sporadically throughout this node, and exist primarily in front of residential buildings. Street lighting fixtures are generally of the octagonal, galvanized steel posts with cobra-head luminaire varieties. While several street benches line the perimeters of the local parks in other nodes, these street furnishings are absent in the Residential node. Overall, streetscape elements are minimal in this node.

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 3.8-1, the secondary study area covers an area bound at its outer limits by East 165th Street on the north, East 151st /East 156th Street on the south, Woodycrest Avenue on the east, and Washington Avenue on the west, and includes portions of the surrounding Highbridge and Melrose neighborhoods.

The secondary study area contains a variety of uses; however, residential uses predominate. A number of large public facility buildings are also located in the study area, including several public schools, such as P.S./M.S. 31 William Garrison School, P.S. 35 Franz Sigel School and J.H.S. 145 Arturo Toscanini School, and judicial buildings, such as the Bronx County Courthouse, the new Hall of Justice, and the Bronx Criminal Court Complex. The judicial buildings are largely concentrated along East 161st Street. A number of large open spaces, including Franz Sigel Park, Joyce Kilmer Park, and Mullaly Park, are also located in the secondary study area, particularly to the west of the Grand Concourse. Other land uses in the secondary area include parking facilities, mixed residential/commercial uses, commercial retail and office uses, transportation and utility uses, industrial and manufacturing uses, and vacant land.

Within the secondary study area, to the north of the rezoning area, the predominant land use is residential, including one- and two-family residences, walk-up multi-family residences, and high-rise elevator apartment buildings. Sizes of residential buildings range from two-stories to ten-stories, with the majority of the larger apartment buildings located west of Sherman Ave and the majority of smaller residences located east of Sherman Avenue. Other uses in this portion of the secondary study area include mixed use buildings, public facilities, including P.S. 35 Franz Sigel School and J.H.S. 145 Arturo Toscanini School, and open space resources, such as Joyce Kilmer Park.

To the east of the rezoning area, residential uses are again most prevalent; however, there are also many industrial uses and vacant lots. Residential uses prevail along the blocks south of East 160th Street, and industrial uses and vacant lots are most common east of Melrose Avenue. There are also a few public facilities, including a Department of Corrections facility located on East 161st Street, which falls partially within the eastern boundary of the secondary study area, and a Salvation Army center.

South of the rezoning area, the primary land use is also residential. Two large New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) developments are located south of the rezoning area: the Andrew Johnson Houses, located on the block bordered by Park and Courtlandt Avenues to the west and east and East 158th and East 156th Streets to the north and south, and the Morrisania Air Rights Housing, which line Park Avenue between East 162nd and East 156th Streets, straddling over Metro-North train tracks. Other notable land uses include Franz Sigel Park, an open space resource located between Walton Avenue and the Grand Concourse from east to west and East 158th and East 151st Streets from north to south, and public facilities, the Marshall England Early Learning Center and the former site of P.S. 156 Benjamin Banneker School (The Performance School and the Bronx Global Learning Institute for Girls will be opening in its place).

To the west of the rezoning area, land uses are predominantly open space, industrial, and parking. The majority of this area is dominated by the existing Yankee Stadium, bordered by East 161st Street to the north, River Avenue to the east, East 157th Street to the south, and Ruppert Place to the west, and the future Yankee Stadium, which is currently under construction. The future stadium is being constructed across the street from the existing stadium on East 161st Street, comprising of land that was previously part of Macomb's Dam Park and Mullaly Park.

Open space resources in this area consist of the portions of Macomb's Dam Park and Mullaly Park that were not disturbed by construction, as well as the Interim Track and Field facility located on Jerome Avenue. Industrial and parking facilities are mostly located south of East 157th Street and west of River Avenue.

3.2.2 FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

In the future without the proposed action, the existing zoning controls would remain in place. It is expected that the rezoning area would continue to experience growth in retail establishments centered on 161st Street, while outside the rezoning area, market rate and affordable residential housing would continue to be developed.

DCP has developed a scenario of as-of-right development that would reasonably be expected to occur within the rezoning area in the future without the proposed action (No-Action). In order to derive the incremental difference between the future without the proposed action and the future with the proposed action, this Reasonable Worst Case Development Scenario (RWCDS) will be analyzed for the year 2018 – the length of time over which developers would likely act on the change in zoning and the effects of the proposed action would be felt. The RWCDS is comprised of projected and potential development sites.

The development expected in the future without the proposed action would be dictated by the use and build controls of the existing zoning regulations. The East 161st Street corridor is primarily zoned with medium-density residential zoning districts. A smaller portion of the corridor is zoned with a high-density commercial zoning district that permits automobile use and does not allow residential uses. The development expected to occur in the future without the proposed action would not be compatible with the specific characteristics and needs of the area, nor would it provide a plan for responsible development and growth in an area of the Bronx that is very well served by mass transit and functions as the civic heart of the Bronx.

Primary Study Area

In the future without the proposed action, it is expected that the current land use trends and general development patterns within the rezoning area would continue. Existing development trends are characterized by limited, discrete residential, commercial, and mixed-use development, in accordance with existing zoning. There is only one known development site located within the proposed rezoning area that is expected to be in place by 2018 and occur independently of the proposed action. As part of the Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project, two small parks are scheduled for construction along the east side of River Avenue; one park located on the north side of East 157th Street, and one located on the south side. Both of these sites are currently used as parking areas. The new parks would consist of a total of 0.68 acres, all of which would be passive space. The parks will not be located on any projected or potential development sites related to the proposed action.

In the RWCDS, DCP has identified nine sites within the rezoning area that are projected to be developed in the future without the proposed action. These as-of-right developments are

expected to result in a total of 299 dwelling units (DUs), 21,550 sf of retail, and 11,720 sf of community facility space. Affordable housing units are not expected to be developed on any of the projected development sites in the future without the proposed action.

Absent the proposed action, some development could reasonably be expected to occur on seven of the 11 potential development sites by 2018, as identified by DCP. These potential developments would be as-of-right pursuant to existing zoning. In the future without the proposed action, as-of-right development totaling 356 dwelling units (DUs), 51,730 sf of retail, and 1,500 sf of community facility space would be expected to occur. These projected developments are possible under the current zoning regulations, and are in no way dependent upon the proposed action.

During the 2008 to 2018 period, it is also expected that transportation demands in the study area would change due to specific development projects in the area, as well as general background growth over time. In order to forecast these future demands without the proposed rezoning action, an annual growth rate of 0.5 percent was applied to the existing traffic volumes and traffic volumes associated with the specific development projects (“soft sites”) were added to the adjusted traffic volumes. Overall, increased congestion and reductions in levels of service were present at most intersections under the No Action scenario.

Secondary Study Area

In addition to the anticipated developments in the rezoning area, there are other actions and development projects expected in the secondary study area in the future without the proposed rezoning. The following is a synopsis of the future developments located within a quarter-mile of the proposed rezoning area expected to be in place by 2018:

Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area Sites

There are several sites expected to be developed in the future without the proposed action as part of the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan. The Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan was adopted in May, 1994 and governs development in a 34-block area, generally bounded by East 163rd Street to the north, Brook and Third Avenues to the east, East 156th and East 159th Streets to the south, and Park and Courtlandt Avenues to the west. The plan’s goals are to replace vacant land and substandard structures with new residential, commercial, and community facility uses, and to restore the area’s residential character by providing new low-income housing. At the time of adoption, the area had experienced substantial disinvestment and over half of the land in the Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Area (URA) consisted of vacant lots and vacant buildings. The original Melrose Commons Urban Renewal Plan called for the construction of 1,714 new residential units.

Within the secondary study area, 786 total residential units are expected to be developed on seven different sites as part of the urban renewal plan. The largest planned URA development within a quarter-mile radius of the rezoning area is Courtlandt Corners II, which is expected to develop 252 DUs and approximately 15,600 sf for other uses. Other URA developments that are planned for the secondary study area are: Melrose Commons site 64, which will develop

approximately 176 DUs; Melrose Commons site 62, which will develop approximately 163 DUs; Melrose Commons sites 52, 53, and 54, which will develop approximately 92 DUs; Courtland Corners I, which will develop approximately 71 DUs; Melrose Commons site 15, which will develop approximately 16 DUs; and Melrose Commons sites 23 and 31, which will also develop approximately 16 DUs.

El Jardin

El Jardin, a residential project currently under construction and scheduled for completion in 2010, will develop approximately 84 dwelling units on a site located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Melrose Avenue and East 158th Street.

3160 Park Avenue

This private residential development, scheduled for completion in 2012, will provide approximately 178 dwelling units at the following addresses: 3160 Park Avenue, 3164 Park Avenue, and 853 Courtlandt Avenue. The site of the future residential development is currently vacant land.

946-50 College Avenue

This residential project, currently under construction and scheduled for completion in 2008, is expected to develop approximately 61 dwelling units. The project site is located on Findlay Avenue, between East 163rd and East 164th Streets.

580 River Avenue

This project, located at 580 River Avenue, is anticipated to develop approximately 500 residential units.

Plaza 163 Site

This development will be located on the block bounded by East 164th Street, Brook Avenue, East 163rd Street, and Washington Avenue. Currently, the block is occupied by industrial uses and vacant land. The developer has explored building residential on the site, which has delayed the construction. The developer is going forward with a commercial development of 30,000 sq ft with a build year of 2011.

Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project

The Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project, scheduled for completion by the fall of 2011, will replace the existing Yankee Stadium with a new stadium. In addition to the construction of the new 53,000-seat stadium, scheduled for completion by the spring of 2009, the project will involve the construction of four new parking garages for a net increase of 3,315 off-street parking space, the development of new and replacement open space resources for a net increase of 4.63 acres, and the development of a new Metro North Train Station.

The stadium is being constructed on land that was previously part of Macomb's Dam Park and the southernmost portion of Mullaly Park. The site of the existing stadium will be redeveloped into Heritage Field, an active open space resource. Additional open space resources that will be developed as new or replacement facilities include: the Rooftop Park, located on top of one of

the new parking garages; Bronx Terminal Market Waterfront Park; Ruppert Plaza; permanent ballfields at P.S. 29; permanent ballfields at the West Bronx Recreation Center; and the aforementioned River Avenue Parks, located within the proposed rezoning area. Overall, the project will result in the development of much-needed active space in the area, in addition to passive space resources.

Mott Haven Campus

The Mott Haven Campus development of four school facilities on over eight acres of vacant land located at 3001 Concourse Village East, directly south of P.S. 156 and I.S. 151. The project will develop two 550-seat high schools, one 575-seat combined intermediate and high school, and one 550-seat charter school that will accommodate fifth through eighth grades. The project will also provide space for approximately 100 special education students. The total building area for the four schools will be approximately 280,000 square feet. One high school is scheduled for occupancy in the fall of 2009 and the remaining schools are scheduled for occupancy in the fall of 2010.

The Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market

The Gateway Center at the Bronx Terminal Market, scheduled for completion in 2009, will construct four new buildings and restore one historically-significant building. One of the buildings will be a 2,600-space parking garage, and the remaining buildings will offer a variety of national and local retail shops, generating a total of approximately one million square feet of retail space. The project, which will be on land currently occupied by industrial uses, will be bordered by East 153rd Street, Major Deegan Expressway, and Cromwell Avenue.

Widening of Major Deegan Expressway

This project will improve and widen the Major Deegan Expressway, which has advanced deterioration and other structural and safety concerns. The project will be developed in two phases to accommodate the nearby Yankee Stadium and Gateway Center developments.

Overall, the wide range of future no-action developments expected within a quarter-mile study area of the proposed rezoning by 2018 suggests that the area surrounding the 161st Street corridor is vibrant and experiencing growth and expansion in a variety of land uses.

3.2.3 FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

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, Transportation (traffic and pedestrians), and Noise in the future with the proposed action conditions by 2018. As discussed in greater detail in those chapters, environmental and social changes in these technical areas are most likely to result in changes to neighborhood character. In sum, the proposed action would bring about changes to urban design, socioeconomic conditions, traffic, and pedestrians, which would affect neighborhood character. Overall, the proposed action is expected to result in beneficial effects on neighborhood character, and would not result in a significant adverse impact. In addition, the proposed action would help preserve portions of the area with a strong built character and existing residential uses.

Land Use

Land use is the strongest factor in determining the character of the area because land use creates changes that can alter the “look and feel” of the area, as well as the levels of activity in it (e.g., traffic and pedestrian flows). Land use changes are also the foundation for neighborhood character elements such as urban design and visual character, socioeconomic conditions, and vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy analysis (see Chapter 3.1) indicates that the proposed action would not result in significant adverse land use impacts in the rezoning area. By 2018, much of the rezoning area would be occupied by a diverse mix of commercial, residential, institutional and residential buildings with retail generally located on the ground floor.

In general, land uses trends that characterize the existing and no-action conditions would be continue in the future with the proposed action. The substantial change in land use would be the elimination of the potential for heavy automotive and light industrial uses along a portion of East 161st Street. In the future with the proposed action, zoning along this portion of East 161st Street would allow residential uses, which are not permitted under existing and no-action conditions. This change in land use is compatible with surrounding land uses and land use trends, as the East 161st Street corridor has increasingly become more residential and less industrial. Other land uses would remain the same, although in the future with the proposed action higher density residential and commercial developments would be encouraged in the proposed rezoning area. Higher-density land uses will strengthen the identity of the East 161st Street corridor and activate the street level. The growth and expansion of these land uses within the rezoning area are consistent with existing and no-action land uses and is appropriate for an area that is very well served by public transportation. The proposed action would complement trends that have already been established in the rezoning area, where residential and commercial developments are encouraged.

The proposed rezoning districts and the changes in land use associated with them would be compatible with the ongoing revitalization of the civic node in the Bronx, providing opportunities for greater commercial and residential developments along the transit-rich East 161st Street corridor. Along most of the corridor, the land uses would remain the same; however, the proposed action would facilitate a reasonable growth strategy that is compatible with surrounding residential and civic uses. As the proposed rezoning action is expected to have a beneficial effect on the context and range of uses along East 161st Street, no significant adverse land use impacts are anticipated in the rezoning study area.

Socioeconomic Conditions

The Socioeconomic Conditions analysis (see Appendix A - Chapter 3.2) indicates that by 2018, the proposed action would not result in direct residential or business displacement, and indirect residential or business displacement would be minimal. However, this would not result in a significant adverse impact, and no changes to neighborhood character can be expected.

Historic Resources

The analysis in Appendix A - Chapter 3.6, “Historic Resources,” indicates that two historic resources have been identified in the 400-foot study area around the proposed rezoning area: the Bronx County Courthouse (NYCL and NR listed) at 851 Grand Concourse and the Grand Concourse Historic District (NYCL eligible and NR listed). Neither of these two historic resources are located on or adjacent to projected or potential development sites. Thus, the development expected to be generated by the proposed rezoning is not anticipated to directly affect the historic resources located in the study area. Further, the proposed and potential development sites identified as part of the RWCDS of the proposed rezoning would all be more than 90 feet from the identified historic resources in the study area. Construction activities associated with the projected and potential development would therefore not indirectly affect historic resources in the study area.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Urban Design and Visual Resources analysis (see Appendix A -Chapter 3.7) indicates that the proposed action would result in positive changes and improvements to urban design conditions of the proposed rezoning area. The new residential and commercial development allowed by the proposed rezoning would replace many of the area’s underutilized lots with new buildings with a coherent building form. The respective characters of the transit, civic and residential nodes would be expanded and enhanced through new housing development and an increased capacity for office and commercial space. The new uses would provide essential services to the area’s existing and new residents and would enhance the area’s streetscape through the strengthening of the streetwall and placing an emphasis on the corner locations near train stations. East 161st Street has recently experienced a number of public and private investments that include residential and commercial uses. This trend of development is expected to continue in the future without the proposed action. In the future with the proposed action, higher-density residential and commercial developments are intended along the East 161st Street corridor.

As new development on the projected and potential development sites would be confined to the existing blocks and lots, it would not affect views to the visual resources from the streets or sidewalks. The context of the visual resources that contribute to the character of the rezoning area would not be significantly or substantially altered by the proposed action, given the bulk and massing of new construction which would be compatible with the study area’s existing resources and built context.

Traffic

The analysis of traffic conditions presented in the Traffic and Parking Chapter (Chapter 3.3) indicates that the proposed action would result in some intersections experiencing added levels of congestion and one intersection with unmitigated traffic impacts. The proposed mitigation measures described in the Traffic and Parking Chapter (Chapter 3.3) would mitigate all of the

operational impacts associated with the proposed action, with the exception of the following intersections where unmitigated impacts would remain under the Action condition:

- E. 149th Street at River Avenue/Exterior Street/ MDE (I-87) Northbound Off-Ramp. Despite the improved geometry and widening proposed by the Gateway Center at Bronx Terminal Market EIS, which are discussed in Chapter 3.3 (Traffic and Parking), significant traffic impacts remain which are identified below:
 - E. 149th Street westbound left-turn movement during the weekday PM peak hour
 - Exterior Street northbound left-turn movement during the weekday PM peak hour
 - MDE northbound off-ramp during the Saturday midday peak hour

Traffic analyses indicate that any mitigation favoring any one of the above impacted movements would inevitably cause new impacts on one of the other movements. In other words, there is no spare capacity at the above intersection in the Future Action condition. The unmitigated impact at this intersection is not expected to lead to a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

Noise

As discussed in the Noise Chapter (Chapter 3.6), noise increases as a result of additional traffic that would be generated by the proposed rezoning is expected to be imperceptible in the vast majority of locations throughout the proposed rezoning area. These noise increases are not expected to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

Shadows

The proposed action would not result in significant adverse shadow impacts on the four identified sunlight-sensitive resources: Renovated Macomb's Dam Park and Heritage Field, Macomb's Dam Triangle, New Yankee Stadium and Joyce Kilmer Park. While these resources would receive incremental new shadows as a result of the proposed action, these shadows were not found to generate significant adverse impact on these resources. The analysis found that during the four analysis time periods, December 21st, June 21st, May 6th and March 21st, the duration of the shadows would still allow for sufficient sunlight during the growing season and the proposed action would not result in a substantial reduction in sunlight to any sun-sensitive uses or features. As such, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse shadow impacts on the four open space resources analyzed.

Primary Study Area

Transit Node

The new C6-3D zoning district, mapped in the Transit Node on three blocks located along River Avenue and along three blocks along East 161st Street between River and Walton Avenues, would allow for high-density residential, commercial, and community facility uses with no height limits. Three projected and six potential development sites exist within this node. The

goal of the new zoning district is to facilitate development adjacent to an elevated train, addressing both the assets and liabilities associated with the location.

As noted in the Traffic and Parking Chapter (Chapter 3.3), in the future with the action, during days when the New York Yankees do not have a home game, the eastbound and westbound approaches at East 161st Street and River Avenue would both operate at LOS “B” or “C” during the weekday AM, midday and PM peak hours and in the Saturday midday peak hour, and the northbound and southbound approaches would operate at LOS “A” during all four peak periods with the exception of the Saturday midday peak, when the northbound approach would operate at LOS “D.” When the Yankees are playing a game, the westbound approach during the PM peak hour is projected to operate at LOS “D.”

As discussed further in Chapter 3.4, “Transit and Pedestrians”, the proposed action is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts to subway stations or to subway line haul conditions. There would be no adverse impacts on shadows, historic resources, urban design, or socioeconomic conditions

Civic Node

The Civic Node contains one projected development sites and three potential development sites that could be developed in the future with the proposed action by the 2018 analysis year. The proposed C6-2 zoning district, mapped in the Civic Node on portions of three blocks on East 161st Street between Grand Concourse and Concourse Village West, would replace C8-3, C4-6, and R8 zoning districts. The C6-2 zoning district would allow high-density residential, commercial, and community facility uses.

During days when the Yankees are not playing a home game, traffic movement within the Civic Node (in the future with the action) is generally within the LOS “B” and “C” range. However, the northbound left movement at East 161st Street and Sherman Avenue operates at LOS “D” during the weekday PM period and the southbound approach at this intersection operates at LOS “F” during the weekday PM period. When the Yankees are playing a game, the southbound approach at this intersection operates at LOS “F” during the weekday PM peak hour.

No other impacts to neighborhood character are expected as a result of the proposed action.

Residential Node

The Residential Node contains seven projected and two potential development sites. In the future with the proposed action the Residential Node would be rezoned to R8A with a continuous C2-4 overlay. The zoning change would result in a change in uses allowed in the section of the 161st Street corridor that connects the civic heart of the Bronx with the Melrose Metro-North station and Melrose Commons to the east, and would facilitate new development of retail and residential uses. This area includes a mix of residential densities, including mid-rise apartment buildings, semi-detached and detached houses, and one-story retail uses. The proposed

R8A zoning designation would allow high-density development with a contextual envelope that would match existing and proposed buildings in the Melrose Commons area.

As a result of the proposed action, the built environment of the Residential Node would change to be more in context with its adjacent uses. Several development sites are expected and the character of the existing residential development along the 161st and 162nd Street blockfaces would be reinforced by the change in zoning. Buildings would be created with a contextual reference to the existing structures of the node. Streetwalls would be maintained and reinforced.

Traffic movement within the Residential Node, in the future with the action, is generally within the “C” or “D” range during days when the Yankees are not playing a home game. However, there are some notable exceptions. The eastbound *defacto* left turn and the northbound and southbound approaches operate at LOS “F” at East 161st Street and Morris Avenue during the AM weekday peak hour. At the same intersection, during the PM peak hour, the eastbound through movement, the westbound and southbound approaches operate a LOS “F,” while the northbound approach operates at LOS “E.” At the 161st Street and Park Avenue intersection, in the future with the action, all intersections generally operate between LOS “B” and “C,” with the exception of the southbound approach which operates at LOS “E” during the weekday AM period and at LOS “F” during the weekday PM period. When the Yankees are playing a game, at East 161st Street and Morris Avenue during the PM peak hour, the through movement operates at LOS “E,” while the westbound and northbound approaches operate at LOS “F.” At 161st Street and Park Avenue, the northbound approach operates at LOS “F,” during the peak hour.

No adverse impacts to pedestrian or transit conditions are expected in this subarea as a result of the proposed action. Higher density development in the form of residential and retail are expected to have an overall positive effect on conditions within the subarea, with no adverse impacts to socioeconomic conditions or traffic.

Secondary Study Area

The proposed action is not anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts upon the urban design of the areas surrounding 161st Street. The residential areas to the north of the study area would be unaffected by the proposed action. To the south of the 161st Street corridor, the mixed commercial and industrial areas would continue, and would complement the redevelopment of 161st Street within the larger area.

In general, the mixed use, residential, commercial, and community facility uses expected as a result of the proposed action would be compatible with the predominantly residential and institutional uses found in the secondary study area. Most of the future no-action developments to the east of the proposed rezoning will be residential developments, including several large-scale residences, which are compatible with the residential uses that are projected to be developed as a result of the proposed action. To the south of the proposed action, the largest future no-action development is the Mott Haven Campus, which is also compatible with the increased residential uses that are expected to result from the proposed rezoning. To the west of the proposed rezoning, the future no-action developments in the secondary study area are largely

commercial developments (i.e., the Gateway Center) and open space development (i.e., the Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project). The mixed-use and commercial developments expected as a result of the proposed action are compatible with anticipated retail uses generated by The Gateway Center, and the residential developments expected as a result of the proposed rezoning are compatible with the development of new and replacement open space resources expected as part of the Yankee Stadium Redevelopment Project. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character are expected to result from the proposed action on the blocks surrounding the proposed rezoning area.

CONCLUSION

The proposed action would result in changes to the general neighborhood character of the rezoning area. The proposed action would result in an overall change in the character of the proposed rezoning area with respect to land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, traffic, shadows and street-level pedestrian activity. In addition, the proposed action would not affect historic resources in ways that would affect neighborhood character.

Overall, the proposed action would not result in significant adverse land use impacts in the rezoning or secondary study areas. The proposed rezoning would foster mixed-use, residential, and commercial development compatible with development trends and ongoing commercial and residential investments in the area, and would add to the vitality of the street life in the rezoning area by increasing the residential population and encouraging ground floor retail uses. Furthermore, the proposed rezoning will encourage the growth and expansion of existing land uses in an area of the Bronx that is appropriate for such growth, as it is very well-served by mass transit and functions as the civic heart of the borough.

As a result of the proposed action, the respective commercial, civic and residential characters of the 161st Street corridor are expected to be improved. In addition, the proposed action would complement the neighborhood character of the secondary study area and would not result in significant adverse impacts. The new development within the rezoning area would be complementary to the development expected independent of the proposed action to the east and west of the rezoning area.

The proposed action is anticipated to result in changes to the neighborhood character of the 161st Street corridor. These changes are considered to be beneficial to the overall character of the corridor and would not constitute significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.