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## CHAPTER 9: NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

### A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter addresses the neighborhood character of the proposed project for existing, future condition without the proposed actions and the future condition with the proposed actions. As suggested in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the primary study area for neighborhood character is the same as that used by the land use analysis. A secondary study area will extend one-quarter-mile around the perimeter of the primary study area.

The proposed project encompasses approximately 70 acres and is generally bounded by 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, Northern Boulevard to the east, 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the south, and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the west. Located northwest of Sunnyside Yards and north of Queens Plaza and the Long Island City central business district, the proposed project would allow within the Dutch Kills neighborhood an increase in the permitted residential density; a decrease in the permitted commercial and light industrial density; and would bring existing residential developments into compliance. As these actions may have the potential to affect existing neighborhood character; this chapter will ascertain if there would be any significant impacts to neighborhood character as a result of the proposed project.

### B. OVERVIEW

This chapter examines the potential affects of the development that result from the proposed actions upon the neighborhood character of the study areas. This evaluation follows analysis guidelines established in the *CEQR Technical Manual*. As defined in the manual, an assessment of neighborhood character is typically warranted when an action would exceed preliminary thresholds with respect to one of the following elements that contribute to neighborhood character: land use, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomic conditions, traffic and noise. An assessment also may be required if an action would result in moderate affects on several elements that influence neighborhood character, which, when combined, may impact the overall character. As discussed in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, affects on neighborhood character could occur when an action would result in any of the following conditions:

- *Land Use* – The development resulting from a proposed action could alter the character of a neighborhood if it introduces new land uses, is completely inconsistent with land use policy or other public plans for the area, changes land use character, or generates significant land use changes.
- *Urban Design and Visual Resources* – In built environments, changes in urban design characteristics may affect neighborhood character if a proposed action results in a substantially different building bulk, size, form, scale or arrangement. Urban design changes may also affect larger overall patterns such as block forms, street patterns or hierarchies, pedestrian activity and circulation, or streetscape features such as landscaping or streetwalls. Changes in visual resources such as unique and important public view corridors and vistas could affect neighborhood character if they directly alter key visual features or block public visual access to/from such features.
- *Historic Resources* – If an action would result in substantial direct changes to a historic resource, or to public views or surrounding context of a resource, or when a historic resources analysis

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identifies a significant impact on a resource, there is a potential to affect the neighborhood character.

- *Socioeconomic Conditions* – Substantial direct or indirect displacement or addition of population, employment, or businesses; or substantial differences in population or employment density would have the potential to affect neighborhood character.
- *Traffic* – When traffic (or lack thereof) contributes to the character of a neighborhood, and a proposed action changes conditions substantially from the existing condition, a neighborhood character impact can occur. Substantial traffic changes can include: substantive changes in level of service (“LOS”); change in traffic patterns, roadway classifications or vehicle mixes; considerable increases in traffic volumes on residential streets; or when significant traffic impacts are identified by the technical traffic analysis.
- *Noise* –If an action results in a significant adverse noise impact and a change in a *CEQR* acceptability category (predefined threshold of change), it may affect neighborhood character with respect to noise.

### **C. METHODOLOGY**

The impact analysis in this chapter focuses on changes to neighborhood character that could result from changes in the defining elements of neighborhood character, as discussed above. The overarching focus of this chapter is a detailed description of existing neighborhood conditions relating to land use, historic resources, visual and urban design dimensions, socioeconomics, and traffic and noise levels, as they relate to the experience and character of the Dutch Kills neighborhood.

As the land use study areas, both primary and secondary, delineate the area where the proposed project will occur and influence land use patterns, and, hence the various aspects of neighborhood character, this chapter will consider neighborhood character utilizing these same study areas. In Figure 9-1 the primary and secondary study areas that will be used in this chapter are depicted.

To establish existing conditions, and anticipate future conditions related to neighborhood character, information gathering focused on neighborhood characteristics that may change as a result of the proposed project. As the proposed project includes the rezoning of a largely light manufacturing and mixed-use area to include a designated mixed-use district known as the Dutch Kills Subdistrict—an extension of the Special Long Island City Mixed-Use District—as well as establish Inclusionary Housing, characteristics of the built environment will be emphasized, as well as potential changes in socioeconomic conditions that may result from land use changes. Consideration of land use, urban design and visual resources, and socioeconomic conditions will be especially important in determining any significant impacts of the proposed project.

Like the urban design and visual resources analysis, several site visits were made to both the primary and secondary study areas, and extensive photo documentation has been utilized to aid the discussion of resources. As shown in Figure 9-2, the primary study area has been divided into several Subareas to aid the discussion of differences in the neighborhood character of the existing conditions. Using a panoramic photo format for existing conditions in conjunction with the discussion of land use, historic resources, visual and urban design dimensions, socioeconomics, traffic and noise levels, as they relate to the experience of the Dutch Kills neighborhood, this chapter will establish a comprehensive base for existing and future conditions. From this base an analysis of the neighborhood character will follow, and potential impacts of the development resulting from proposed actions will be determined.



**Legend**

 Primary Study Area  
(Resoning Area Boundary)

 Neighborhood Character  
Secondary Subareas



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**Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan**

Neighborhood Character  
Primary Study Area and Secondary Study Subareas



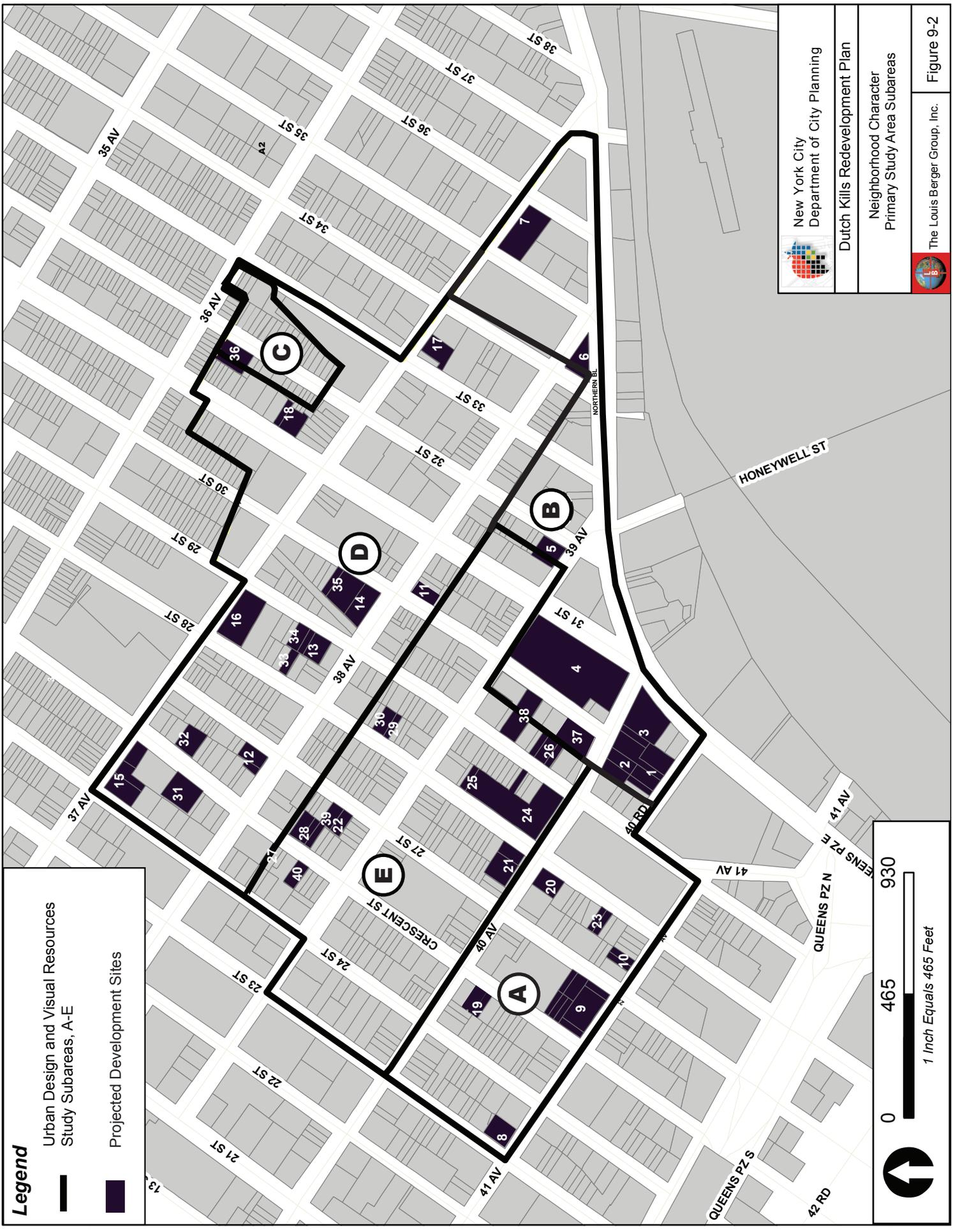
The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-1



0 1,150 2,300 Feet  
1 inch equals 1,150 Feet

Source: MapPluto, NYCDP.



**Legend**

-  Urban Design and Visual Resources Study Subareas, A-E
-  Projected Development Sites



New York City  
Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan  
Neighborhood Character  
Primary Study Area Subareas



The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-2

Source: MapPluto, NYC DP.

**D. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

For the purposes of assessing neighborhood character, this chapter, as in Chapter 7, “Urban Design and Visual Resources”, describes the primary study area with the aid of five Subarea designations, giving equal weight to the characteristics of each Subarea. Discussion of the secondary study area will utilize the land use secondary Subareas as shown in Figure 9-2.

**PRIMARY STUDY AREA**

Within the primary study area, Subarea “A”, located at the southern edge of the proposed project, bounded generally by 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue to the south, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the east and 30<sup>th</sup> Street to the west, and is in close proximity to Queens Plaza, a major transportation hub. The second Subarea “B” is generally bounded by 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south, Northern Boulevard to the east and 30<sup>th</sup> Street to the west. Immediately adjacent to the Sunnyside Yards and related rail facilities, this Subarea also features an elevated subway platform extending from Queens Plaza toward Northern Boulevard. Subarea “C” located at the northeastern tip of the primary study area, is bounded by 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north and 37<sup>th</sup> Avenues to the south, and 33<sup>rd</sup> Street to the east and 31<sup>st</sup> Streets to the west. The smallest of the Subareas, this study area abuts 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a vibrant and diverse mixed-use business corridor serving the Dutch Kills neighborhood. Subarea “D” located in the northern section of the primary study area is bounded by 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, the southern edge of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south, 34<sup>th</sup> Street to the east and 24<sup>th</sup> Street to the west. This Subarea features a significant portion of the interior of the primary study area. Subarea “E” is bounded by the southern edge of 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the north, 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the south, 32<sup>nd</sup> Street to the east and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to the west. Like Subarea “D”, this Subarea contains a significant portion of the interior of the primary study area.

Accompanying each one of the subareas, a series of panoramic photo figures and maps will be notated by the Subarea letter followed by a sequential number. In conjunction with a narrative description, these figures will help describe existing conditions and serve as aid in analyzing the future condition without the proposed actions and the future condition with proposed actions. The location and direction of each photo within the respective Subareas “A-E” is ascertained by a key map located in the right hand corner of each figure.

***SUBAREA A, NORTH OF QUEENS PLAZA***

This southwestern portion of the rezoning area is located in close proximity to Queens Plaza, a major transportation hub. However, the robust character just south of the rezoning boundary that defines Queens Plaza quickly gives way to more sedate, rectangular, traditional streets lined generally with low-rise light industrial businesses interspersed among residential buildings. The continuous heavy traffic that spans eight lanes at the base of the Queensboro Bridge, and an extensive elevated subway network above, quickly recedes in an uphill, northerly direction from 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue towards 40<sup>th</sup> Avenue spanning across 23<sup>rd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Land use characteristics in this area are generally synonymous with the larger Dutch Kills neighborhood. The variety of land uses which include residential, light industrial, manufacturing and transportation-related uses and parking facilities create a somewhat disjointed visual experience throughout this Subarea as seen in Figure 9-3. Even as the noise level and traffic patterns appear calm respective of Queens Plaza to the south, residential units of various ages and conditions dramatically abut and juxtapose nondescript, industrial brick buildings resulting in a disjunctive character. Further, auto-body shops, often with work

Queens Plaza located south of Sub-Area A

Residential Use abutting  
Industrial Uses; varied  
Street Walls



A1: 27th Street at 40th Avenue

Academy of American Studies, a New York City Department of Education High School



A2: 28th Street between 40th Avenue and 41st Avenue



Projected Development Parcels



Photo Direction and Location



New York City  
Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan

Study Area Photographs



The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-3

overflowing onto sidewalks, industrial activities occupying partially vacant lots, and a lack of coherent and purposeful signage all lend weight to the neglected, incoherent impression of this portion of the Dutch Kills neighborhood.

One exception to the mixed-use and light-industrial land uses of this Subarea can be found east of 28<sup>th</sup> Street bounded by 41<sup>st</sup> and 40<sup>th</sup> Avenues at the south and north, and shown in Figure 9-3. Located here is a stately early twentieth-century school building currently occupied by the Academy of American Studies, a New York City Department of Education High School. Abutting the back side of the school building is an expansive parking lot utilized by school employees during operation hours.

Reflecting general land use patterns, urban design in the this Subarea is determined in part by a mixture of primarily short one- to three-story light industrial buildings; small, low-rise residences with front porches and narrow front yards; a scattering of four- to six-story row house and tenement buildings; various gas stations and auto-body shops with parking and storage lots often spanning across more than one parcel with numerous curb cuts. The resulting streetwall is extremely varied with abrupt changes in both building heights and façade materials as seen in Figure 9-4. Sidewalks vary in width and condition from extremely wide and well-kept in front of industrial and storage buildings to narrow and aged along more local, residential streets situated parallel to the east-west collector-distributor avenues. Traffic through the area is relatively light due to the intermittent residential uses; exceptions are delivery trucks originating from and servicing the area's light industrial facilities, as well as sporadic traffic patronizing various auto-related services in the area.

As this portion of the rezoning area is upland from Queens Plaza to the south, as well as the secondary study area to the west and northwest, significant views of Manhattan and Queens Plaza can be found, especially along 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Avenues as shown in Figure 9-5. These long views outward, coupled with relatively low levels of traffic and noise, add to the impression of an underutilized and detached neighborhood.

No historic structures eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea A.

### *SUBAREA B, ADJACENT TO THE SUNNYSIDE YARDS*

Adjacent to Subarea A on the east, Subarea B differs dramatically from Subarea A across land use, urban design, traffic and noise and visual resources. Where Subarea A appears underutilized, this eastern section of the rezoning area gains its robust character from the busy, expansive Northern Boulevard, a major arterial running through this portion of the Queens borough. Further, the elevated subway structure that runs adjacent to the boulevard reinforces the impression of a heavily utilized transportation and business corridor running towards Queens Plaza.

Traveling east from Subarea A, streets incline towards the foot of Northern Boulevard. Light industrial, one- to three-story buildings are still prevalent, but auto-related businesses including hotels and parking garages replace pockets of residential uses which are more prevalent upland. Distinct street furniture remains in short supply; instead chain-link fencing and aluminum siding surrounds many of the parking facilities and gaps between buildings as shown in Figure 9-6. Open spaces between sidewalks and building facades are often surrounded by barrier fencing.

At the foot of 40th Road and Northern Boulevard as shown in Figure 9-6, the elevated subway structure which is oriented north to south along 31<sup>st</sup> Street dominates the streetscape. Noise levels and traffic

Varied Land Use and Urban Design features

Neglected, overgrown, often vacant lots



A3: Crescent Street at 41st Avenue

Predominance of delivery trucks during daytime hours

Varied Land Use and Urban Design features

Auto-Related land uses



A4: 23rd Street At 41st Avenue



Projected Development Parcels

Photo Direction and Location

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Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan

Study Area Photographs

The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-4

Auto-Related land use

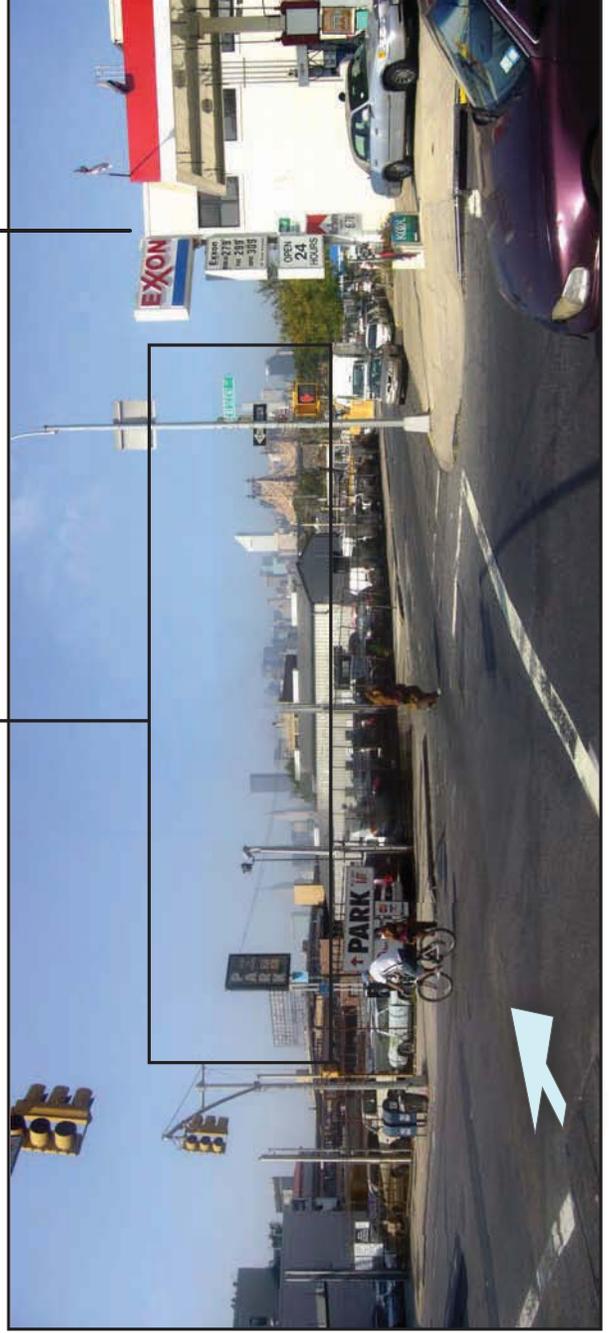
Views from Sub-Area towards Queens Plaza



A5: Crescent Street at 41st Avenue

Views from Sub-Area towards Manhattan

Auto-related land use



A6: Crescent Street at 41st Avenue



Projected Development Parcels

Photo Direction and Location



New York City  
Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan

Study Area Photographs



The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-5



patterns become loud and dense with significant increases in vehicular and subway traffic in and around the Northern Boulevard corridor.

With the presence of transportation uses and structures, dense, bulky street walls typify the streetscape and dwarf the pedestrian experience of this corridor as shown in Figure 9-7. Land uses here are related to servicing this transportation corridor, and the historical relationship with the Sunnyside Yards to the immediate east reinforces the transportation nature of this section of the neighborhood.

Traveling in a northerly direction along Northern Boulevard the area is marked by a continuation of transportation uses, but these become markedly commercial in nature. Gas stations, car dealerships and long term storage facilities become prevalent. As the streetwall continues to loom over Northern Boulevard at the eastern edge of Sunnyside Yards, it frames views toward Manhattan in a southwestern direction wherein the Empire State Building can be seen in the far distance as shown in Figure 9-7.

As land uses, urban design, traffic and noise are given over to quickly traversing this corner of the Dutch Kills neighborhood, there are few features that serve to reinforce the mixed-use character of the larger Dutch Kills neighborhood. As such, this eastern section of the neighborhood is an anomaly incongruent with more pedestrian, mixed-use, residential and light industrial characteristics found upland in the interior of the proposed project area.

Two historic structures eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea B. The Pierce-Arrow Building (Harrolds Motor Car Company, NYCL eligible, April 2008) (Block 376, Lot 1) is a relatively intact and representative example of the multi-story auto-related industrial buildings that were a dominate fixture in this section of Long Island City during the 1910s and 1920s. This building is considered significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of transportation (automobile service and sales) and architecture. The A. Garside & Sons Shoe Factory (Block 337, Lot 13) is a prime example of the types of industrial buildings associated with the Long Island City area and was designed by a prolific and innovative engineer of the period. This building is considered significant under Criteria A and C in the areas of industry and architecture/engineering.

### *SUBAREA C, ADJACENT TO 36<sup>th</sup> AVENUE*

As shown in Figure 9-8, the streetscape in Subarea C is marked by trees and street furniture that enhance the pedestrian experience of the streets surrounding the subway stop at 31<sup>st</sup> Street and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Further, mixed-use buildings that feature restaurants and neighborhood business establishments at ground floor, line 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and reinforce the pedestrian friendly character of this Subarea.

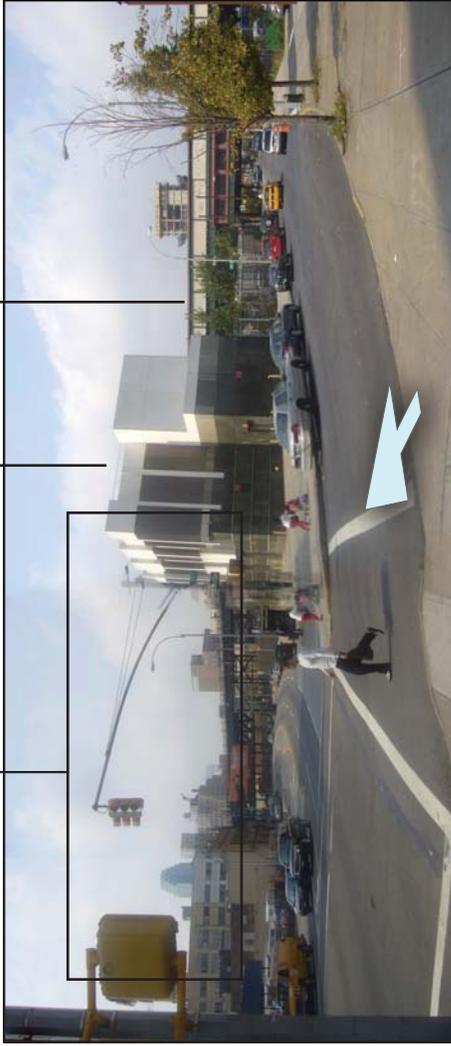
The traffic volume and pattern here can best be described as a busy but relatively uncongested two-lanes of traffic found on rectangular grid streets typical of the Dutch Kills neighborhood. Street parking is readily available to the businesses that line 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue, as well as 31<sup>st</sup> Street located under the elevated subway structure. Although the prevailing streetwalls in this area are not overbearing, few opportunities for views outside the Subarea are available, largely due to the elevated subway platform along 31<sup>st</sup> Street as shown in Figure 9-8.

In its entirety, Subarea C serves as a commercial and transportation hub of the larger neighborhood marked by significant pedestrian traffic. A diverse mixed-use sector, this Subarea serves as a highlight of the Dutch Kills neighborhood with an inviting and lively street presence that is aged but well maintained.

Viewshed Towards Queens Plaza and Manhattan

Bulky transportation structures

Elevated subway platform



B3: 39th Road at Northern Boulevard



Projected Development Parcels



Photo Direction and Location

Dense, bulky streetwall adjacent to Sunnyside Yards

Commercial, transportation land uses



B4: 35th Avenue At Northern Boulevard



New York City  
Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan

Study Area Photographs



The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-7

Mixed-use land uses

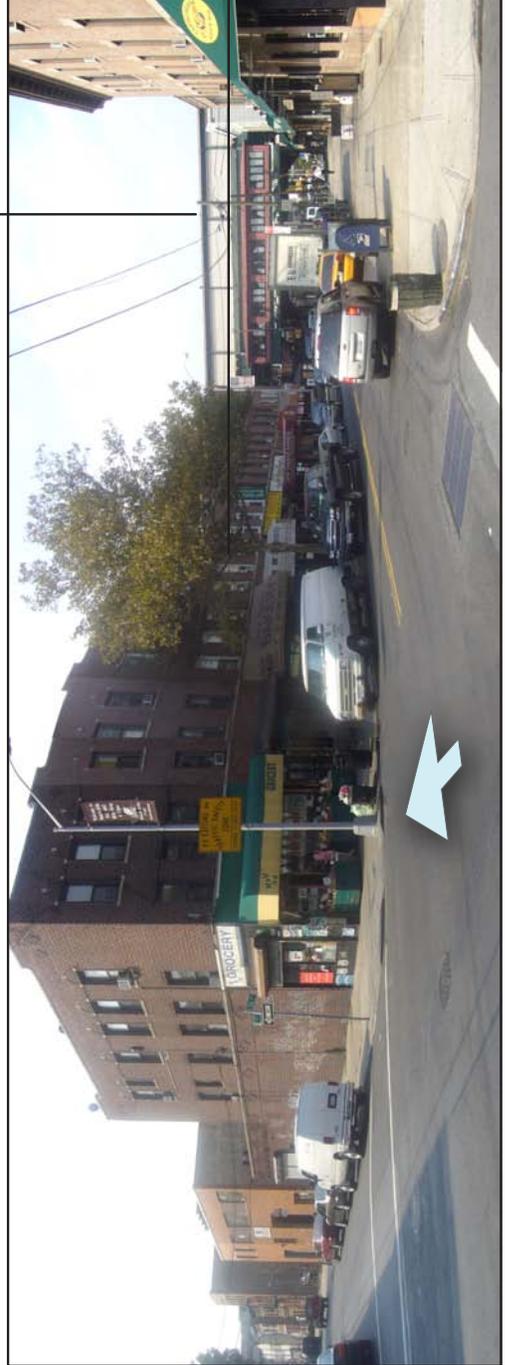
Elevated Subway Platform



C1: 31st Street, southwest view from sub-area C.



C2: 33rd Street at 36th Avenue



C3: 32nd Street at 36th Avenue



Projected Development Parcels



Photo Direction and Location

Well kept, attractive sidewalks and mixed-use land uses

Elevated subway platform

Mixed-use land uses

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Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan	
Study Area Photographs	
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Figure 9-8	

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No historic structures eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea C.

### *SUBAREA D, NORTHERN INTERIOR CORRIDOR*

Traveling south from Subarea C into Subarea D, the northern interior sector of the Dutch Kills neighborhood sits atop a modest plateau that remains upland from southern, western and eastern portions of both the primary and secondary study areas. Here typical conditions of the larger study area are to be found across land use, urban design, traffic, noise and visual resources. Avenues running east to west bisect north to south local streets at predictable intervals and perpendicular angles. Traffic flow and associated noise levels are light at the western edge and center of this Subarea, and become more pronounced to the east near the Northern Boulevard corridor.

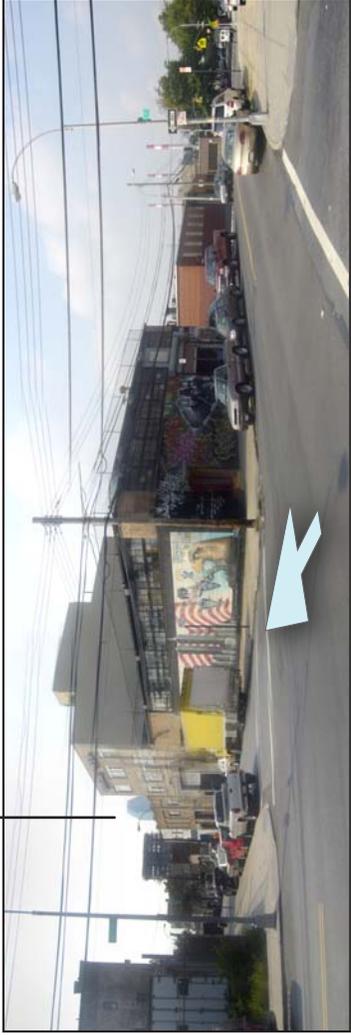
37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenues, both major collector/distributor streets, bisect this Subarea and carry traffic to and from the Northern Boulevard corridor to the east. As shown in Figure 9-9, local streets from 24<sup>th</sup> to 34<sup>th</sup> Street are generally oriented perpendicular to 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenues; this pattern emphasizes the rectangular block form and building arrangements wherein larger industrial and storage buildings line the two avenues offset by more varied street facades and land uses found along the local streets. Along the avenues, one- to five-story large commercial, industrial and storage buildings loom large, creating dramatic view corridors west towards Manhattan. However, these views are found across most of the avenues in the study area and do not feature historical or landmark buildings.

Across all local streets from 24<sup>th</sup> to 34<sup>th</sup> Street, views south toward Queens Plaza are available but do not contain historical or landmark buildings, or a scenic vista. At times dramatically framed by long, bricked-lined streetwalls as seen in Figure 9-10, these north-south local streets feature light industrial and mixed-use land uses typical of the Dutch Kills neighborhood. In this northern Subarea, auto-related land uses appear less prevalently than in other Subareas and are replaced by numerous non-descript, boxy, low-rise brick storage and light industrial buildings. Residential uses appear less prominent along some of the local streets, especially toward the Northern Boulevard corridor to the east.

Although this Subarea generally appears more vibrant and active across its light industrial land uses, aged and neglected buildings that line streets largely devoid of pedestrian activity give the impression of an underutilized neighborhood. A lack of coherent signage coupled with numerous non-descript brick industrial buildings reinforce the neighborhood's sense of detachment, and long view corridors outwards from the Subarea towards Manhattan imply a sense of disconnection and distance.

One historic structure eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea D. The New York Consolidated Card Company building (Block 601, Lot 1), was constructed in 1914, and was considered one of the largest buildings of its type in Long Island City and also as an innovation in the successful use of large-scale reinforced concrete construction techniques. The New York Consolidated Card Company factory is significant under Criterion C in the area of engineering and design.

Varied street walls and businesses along local streets



D2: 30th Street at 37th Avenue

Varied street walls along local streets



D1: 37th Avenue at 34th Street

37th Avenue; collector/distributor street central to sub-area D



Projected Development Parcels



Photo Direction and Location



New York City  
Department of City Planning

Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan

Study Area Photographs



The Louis Berger Group, Inc.

Figure 9-9

Brick-lined, severe street walls



D3: 30th Street at 37th Avenue

Brick-lined, severe street walls



D4: 28th Street at 38th Avenue



D5: 29th Street at 37th Avenue

Mixed-use buildings typical of the Dutch Kills neighborhood



Non-descript, boxy, low-rise brick storage and light industrial buildings

	New York City Department of City Planning
Dutch Kills Redevelopment Plan	
Study Area Photographs	
	The Louis Berger Group, Inc.
Figure 9-10	

***SUBAREA E, SOUTHERN INTERIOR CORRIDOR***

Located immediately south of Subarea D, Subarea E features a higher percentage of residential land uses and a corresponding decrease in light industrial and manufacturing uses. The general street pattern here remains similar to Subarea D, with 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue bisecting local streets from 23<sup>rd</sup> Street to 32<sup>nd</sup> Street. The vibrant but aged industrial corridors of 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenues take on a more residential demeanor found along 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue as shown in Figure 9-11. With increased residential uses, this portion of the study area appears less detached and neglected than other portions of the rezoning area, imparting a more favorable neighborhood quality to its local streets.

Unlike Subarea D, where building types and land uses are somewhat differentiated along the avenues relative to local streets, here the mixed-use, a more residential land use pattern prevails across all streets. Detached houses with front and side yards are interspersed with one- to four-story condominium and tenement buildings of various ages. As seen in Figure 9-12, mixed-use buildings with markets and convenience stores line many street corners adding to a more local neighborhood feeling to this Subarea.

With the increase in residential uses, daytime traffic and resulting noise levels are less pronounced. Even as 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue acts as a collector/distributor street across the Subarea, truck traffic is less evident. Further, auto-related businesses are scarce, resulting in less traffic that would otherwise patronize gas stations and convenience stores. As a result, this Subarea is more uniform and calm, typical of the more residential sectors of the primary and secondary study areas.

Predominating building forms and types are typical of the more residential character of the Subarea. Detached homes, often with front and side yards enclosed by fencing of various materials abut pre-war tenement and rowhouse buildings as well as more recent condominium buildings. Although some larger condominium towers are currently under construction to the south and east as shown in Figure 9-12, few residential buildings taller than five-stories now occupy this Subarea. Light industrial and mixed-use buildings do exist amongst the predominance of residential buildings, but they are generally unified by material and bulk, and do not contrast dramatically with adjacent structures.

As the streetwalls and facades of the Subarea are less severe than those found in Subarea D, and shown in Figure 9-12, resulting views framed in and through the Subarea are less dramatic. Even as view corridors exist to the west towards Manhattan from the western portion of 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue, these views are not unique within the primary or secondary study areas. In conjunction with more subtle streetwalls, attractive trees, relatively well kept sidewalks and clean streets, the calm residential character of this Subarea is further underscored, and the neighborhood appears more unified and less detached from its surroundings.

No historic structures eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea E.

**SECONDARY STUDY AREA**

The secondary study area for neighborhood character is coterminous with the secondary study area for land use, as well as urban design and visual resource analyses—a one-quarter-mile area around the rezoning boundary. Like the discussion of the primary study area, the secondary study area is divided into Subareas “1-5”.

Subarea 1 is dominated by a rail yard known as the Sunnyside Yards. Utilized by Amtrak and NJ Transit, a portion of it is planned for redevelopment. Land





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uses in this area take advantage of the twentieth-century rail infrastructure wherein storage facilities and utilities requiring large parcels line Northern Boulevard along its eastern edge. The pedestrian experience in this Subarea is truncated by the large buildings that line Northern Boulevard where views eastward across the Subarea are virtually nonexistent except across a bridge spanning Honeywell Street found in the middle of the Subarea. Uncharacteristic of the larger Dutch Kills neighborhood, this Subarea is dominated by the vacated Sunnyside Yard creating an empty, uninviting expanse devoted to a bygone era of rail transportation.

Subarea 2, located north of the Sunnyside Yards and primary study Subareas B, C and D, is a light industrial and manufacturing sector that contains land use patterns generally similar to those found in the primary study Subarea D. Buildings are generally low-rise, non-descript brick structures in fair but aged condition. Like Subareas found in the primary study area, a neglected, aged and detached feeling pervades this Subarea.

Located adjacent to Subarea 2, Subarea 3 differs significantly across land uses and built environment features. Where Subarea 2 is marked by light industry, here mixed-uses and residential uses dominate. Like Subarea C in the primary study area the mixed-use and residential context results in a pedestrian friendly neighborhood that features lower traffic density and noise levels and well-kept streetscapes and sidewalks. Although natural features and visual resources are limited due to its centralized, upland location away from view corridors and geographic features; the immediate street environment is vibrant and diverse along mixed use avenues and quiet and attractive along local residential street.

Westward of the primary study area, Subarea 4 is marked by variable land uses across an irregular street pattern. Unlike the majority of the Dutch Kills neighborhood, terrain is marked by rolling hills and proximity to the East River west towards Manhattan. Two superblocks are found at the southern and northern edges of the Subarea and the street grid is less uniform than that found upland in the primary study area. Bounded by the East River on the west and the upland plateau of primary study area on the east, this Subarea is somewhat detached from the larger Dutch Kills neighborhood. With light traffic and noise levels and little vibrant street life, this Subarea appears isolated and underutilized.

Subarea 5, located south of primary study area Subarea A, contains the Queens Plaza transit hub, a heavily traveled corridor where vehicular traffic and subway lines converge to and from Manhattan via the Queensboro Bridge. Marked by looming subway platforms and a multi-lane arterial avenue, land use and building patterns are devoted to both local and commuter traffic. General noise levels are extremely high due to both dense traffic and the built environment constructed of looming steel platforms that refract rail and road traffic noise through the Subarea. The pedestrian experience in and around this transportation hub is chaotic, rushed and unpredictable.

## **E. FUTURE CONDITION WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTIONS**

Absent the proposed actions, current zoning trends within the primary study area are anticipated to continue apace resulting in slight increases in residential, commercial, industrial and community facility floor area. These increases will likely result in little or no changes in the neighborhood character of the primary study area.

Specific increases include an estimated total of 22 new residential units, 277,900 square feet of commercial space, 81,000 square feet of community facility space and 183,000 square feet of industrial space. According to zoning requirements, a total of 724 parking spaces will accompany these future

developments. Further, current land use trends that favor low-density residential, commercial and industrial uses will remain in affect. Generally, current restrictive zoning regulations will prohibit industrial and commercial conversions, maintaining the present light industrial, mixed-use characteristics prevalent throughout the Dutch Kills neighborhood.

In addition to the general continuation of zoning and land use trends in the future condition without the proposed actions, ~~9~~ several known development projects<sup>1</sup> are anticipated to reach completion by 2017. ~~All~~ Such projects are hotels between 6 and 12 stories, and range from 16 to 128 rooms. The locations of these known development projects can be seen in Figure 1-5 ~~9-13~~.

### SECONDARY STUDY AREA

Traveling in a counterclockwise direction originating in Subarea 5, each Subarea, although unique, is expected to experience major land use changes over the 10-year analysis period due to the increased demand for residential and commercial development, planning initiatives and infrastructure improvements and a general trend towards dense, mixed-use development in and around the areas significant transportation hubs. These land use changes will significantly influence the neighborhood character found in the secondary study areas.

The Sunnyside Yards, which consumes the vast majority of Subarea 1, is likely to undergo significant redevelopment which would include up to 35,000 housing units in conjunction with new schools, parks and a transportation facility featuring MTA, LIRR, Amtrak and bus services. New open spaces and a redesigned roadway with streetscape improvements is further planned for portions of the Subarea lining Jackson Avenue. The Long Island City Rezoning Initiative applies to this section of the Subarea, allowing up to 12.0 FAR for redevelopment which is anticipated to feature dense mixed-use developments. These developments would significantly improve the vacant, underutilized character of this Subarea and create transportation service connections with Queens Plaza to the southwest.

Fewer development initiatives are planned for Subarea 2 than Subarea 1, especially between 36<sup>th</sup> and 37<sup>th</sup> Avenues where residential develop is not permitted, and commercial and light industrial uses predominate. Blocks between 34<sup>th</sup> and 36<sup>th</sup> Avenues will likely retain their mixed-use demeanor with infill development taking place as revitalization in surrounding neighborhoods gains momentum. Although no significant development initiatives are planned for this Subarea, the general trend toward revitalization and redevelopment found in surrounding neighborhoods and Subareas will likely influence this Subarea and improve its current aged, underutilized character.

Like Subarea 2, there are no development initiatives designed to enhance Subarea 3. However, the general trend towards revitalization will spur some residential infill development capped by the 1.25 FAR allowance that spans this low-density, residential neighborhood. The favorable residential and mixed-use character that currently defines this Subarea will likely continue and may be further enhanced by new infill development.

Located west of the primary study area, Subarea 4 is different from other secondary Subareas in that it is unlikely to experience revitalization and development trends both currently afoot and planned throughout the secondary study area. Here the M1-3 zoning district that contains industrial and transportation/utility

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<sup>1</sup> Prior to publication of the FEIS, DCP learned that certain development sites within the rezoning area are being developed for hotel use (see footnote on page 1-15).

uses is not anticipated to be rezoned, and the larger NYCHA housing complexes located at the southern and northern edges of the Subarea will continue to anchor present neighborhood characteristics.

Subarea 5 containing the Queens Plaza transit hub, is projected to undergo significant strategic development that will deliver infrastructure improvements, new Manhattan-style office buildings replacing several parking lots and lower-scale buildings and redevelopment upgrades to existing industrial buildings. Further, new open spaces are proposed as well as transit access and infrastructure improvements. This new investment and development activity will spur this Subarea into a regional employment and residential destination significantly transforming its current dilapidated, irregular and chaotic character.

## **F. FUTURE CONDITION WITH THE PROPOSED ACTIONS**

### **NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER ANALYSIS BY TECHNICAL AREA**

The analysis below presents the potential changes in the neighborhood character of the study area by 2017 with the proposed actions taken into consideration. Potential changes in neighborhood character would result from changes in land use, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, traffic, pedestrians and noise. Detailed technical analyses for each of these areas is presented in Chapters 2, 3, 7, 8, 15, 16, and 18, respectively. As discussed in greater detail in those chapters, environmental and social changes in these areas with respect to neighborhood character are as follows:

#### *LAND USE*

Land use is often 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 an area (e.g., traffic and pedestrian flows). Land use changes are also the foundation of 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 2) concludes that new development resulting from the proposed actions would be compatible with existing residential, commercial, community facility, and industrial land uses currently found in the rezoning area, only at varying densities. The proposed actions would provide a framework that would allow a range of residential, community facility, commercial and light industrial uses-as-of-right, consistent with adjacent areas of the Special Long Island City Mixed-Use District. In general, the proposed zoning would accommodate existing trends by providing as-of-right residential opportunities, retain existing light industrial businesses and support the continued growth of other business opportunities in a mixed used commercial and light industrial community. An exception to this accommodation is the preclusion of hotel development taking place under existing conditions. With the proposed actions, this type of development would be restricted.

With the RWCDs, the highest density residential development would occur near Northern Boulevard within proximity to Queens Plaza and the existing Long Island City commercial core, and near various mass transit options. The proposed Inclusionary Housing zoning text amendment covering this same area (Subarea D1) would provide real estate developers with strong incentives to build affordable units within their developments in this Subarea.

#### *SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS*

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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, direct business displacement, effects on specific industries, and indirect business displacement in the rezoning area or study areas. Conclusions related to indirect residential development, as outlined in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, are summarized below.

Based on the 2000 average household size for the study area (2.61), the proposed actions would allow up to 4,061 residents to the study area by 2017, an increase of 11.1 percent compared with the 2017 future without the proposed actions population. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, indirect displacement of a residential population most often occurs when an action increases property values and thus rents throughout a study area, making it difficult for some existing residents to continue to afford to live in the community. Although the *CEQR Technical Manual* does not suggest thresholds for determining the significance of indirect residential displacement impacts, it does say that an impact could generally be considered significant and adverse if “households or individuals would be displaced by legal means...they would not be likely to receive relocation assistance, and, given the trend created or accelerated by the proposed actions, they would not be likely to find comparable replacement housing in their neighborhood”. While there is the potential for limited indirect displacement as a result of the proposed actions, such displacement would not have the potential to adversely affect socioeconomic conditions in the study area. This detailed analysis of the potential for indirect residential displacement impacts estimate that the study area contains approximately 177 units (533 residents) in Census Tracts 27, 29, 43 and 157 that could be at risk of indirect displacement if their rents were to increase. This would account for approximately 1.7 percent of units in the study area under the proposed actions in 2017.

As discussed in Chapter 3 “Socioeconomics”, the following details the reasons why the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse indirect residential displacement impacts:

- There is an existing trend toward increased rents that is expected to accelerate in the future without the proposed actions. Recent data show that there is already an existing trend toward rent increases due to post-2000 development. As evidenced through conversations with local real estate brokers, asking rents for rental units within the study area are considerably higher, particularly with respect to rental units closer to Long Island City—a neighborhood that in recent years, has experienced an influx of new residential development consisting of market-rate and luxury rental units. Market pressures have in effect, spread to adjacent neighborhoods such as Dutch Kills. Census Tracts 27 and 29, located in the southern portion of the study area (containing 107 at-risk units) are located closest to Long Island City. Given their close proximity, it is likely that vulnerable units have already been displaced as a result of these existing market pressures. By virtue of these same pressures, it is also likely that recent development in Astoria—mostly in the form of property conversions and upgrades to existing properties, has influenced rental increases in Tract 157 (containing 48 units).
- The proposed actions would encourage a mix of market-rate and affordable housing. The proposed actions would introduce 1,555 units to the study area. As determined by the RWCDS, 187 units (12.0 percent) would be affordable under the Inclusionary Housing Program. The new residential population would mirror the economic diversity of the existing population in the study areas and would likely be more diverse than the population that will be introduced to the study areas in the future without the proposed actions. As detailed below, this diverse new population may even serve to dampen the trend toward increased rents in the study areas, rather than accelerate it.

- The proposed actions could serve to relieve, rather than increase market pressure in the study area. Presently, there is a high demand for housing in the surrounding area due to its proximity to Manhattan.

Overall, the analysis finds that the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse impacts due to indirect residential displacement. As such, no significant impacts to neighborhood character are expected as a result of socioeconomic changes.

### *HISTORIC RESOURCES*

As discussed in Chapter 7, “Historic Resources”, the proposed project could result in a significant adverse impact to the following historic properties determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers.

- The A. Garside & Sons Shoe Factory (Block 377, Lot 13)
- The Pierce-Arrow Building (Harrolds Motor Car Company) (Block 376, Lot 1)

The A. Garside & Sons Shoe Factory is located on a projected development site (Projected Site No. 7). The Pierce-Arrow Building (also NYCL eligible) is located on a potential development site (Potential Site No. 155). Since both of these structures may be demolished as part of the development under the RWCDs, the proposed action could result in a direct significant adverse impact to these historic resources. The proposed action may also result in indirect impacts to historic resources through changes to the area’s setting and scale.

The demolition and/or loss of these buildings would not constitute a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character, however, given that these buildings are not part of a distinct district, are not visually connected, and are not representative of area architecture.

### *URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES*

As discussed in Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources”, the proposed actions are not anticipated to significantly impact the urban design and visual resources of the primary and secondary study areas. Under the new zoning regulations, residential development would be encouraged and industrial, commercial and community facilities would become better balanced in terms of street wall heights and building bulks so as to compliment residential development and to reflect the existing context. Street walls and setbacks within the study area would generally undergo some unification and would benefit the urban design of the Dutch Kills neighborhood. As visual resources within the study area include views west and southwest towards Manhattan, there is a potential for some partial blocking and interruption of these view corridors from taller, new developments. However, these views are not unique or rare thus partial interruption would not pose a significant impact. Under the guidance of the proposed zoning designations, the proposed actions would enhance the general urban design and visual resources of the Dutch Kills neighborhood.

### *TRANSPORTATION*

Chapter 15, “Traffic and Parking”, analyzes the effects of the proposed actions on traffic and parking. As a result of the RWCDs, vehicle trips would be most concentrated at intersections along the principal arterials providing access to, from and within the rezoning area – primarily Northern Boulevard, 31<sup>st</sup>

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Street and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue. A total of nine signalized intersections along these corridors were selected for analysis based on the assignment of project-generated traffic. The traffic impact analysis examines conditions during three weekday peak hours (7:30-8:30 AM, 12-1 PM and 4:30-5:30 PM), and one Saturday peak hour (12:30-1:30 PM).

Under the proposed actions' RWCDs, the study area would see a net reduction of 61 inbound vehicle trips and a net increase of 111 outbound vehicle trips in the weekday AM peak hour (auto, taxi and truck combined), 47 new inbound and 43 new outbound vehicle trips in the weekday midday, 143 new inbound and six new outbound vehicle trips in the weekday PM peak hour, and 114 new inbound and 87 new outbound vehicle trips in the Saturday midday peak hour.

A total of four signalized intersections (all along Northern Boulevard) would have significant adverse impacts as a result of project-generated traffic during one or more peak hours. The weekday PM peak hour would have the highest number of impacted intersections with four, followed by the weekday midday with three, and the weekday AM and Saturday midday with two each. Chapter 21, "Mitigation" of this DEIS provides a description of measures taken to mitigate traffic impacts identified in the analysis. As discussed in Chapter 21, the proposed mitigation measures would mitigate the traffic impacts with the exception of the intersection of Northern Boulevard and Steinway Street/39<sup>th</sup> Street in the weekday PM peak hour. The traffic movements that would be affected by unmitigated impacts are the eastbound left-turn on Northern Boulevard and the northbound left-turn from the 39<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge. At these locations, use of the range of mitigation measures that are often allied to offset impacts, including signal timing changes, and changes in on-street parking regulations to allow additional travel lanes could not fully mitigate the anticipated impacts of the proposed project. Thus, these are unmitigated significant adverse impacts of the proposed project with respect to traffic. The intersections at which traffic impacts would not be fully mitigated are generally characterized by high levels of traffic currently, and the additional traffic resulting from the proposed actions would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

With respect to pedestrian activity, Chapter 16, "Transit and Pedestrians", concludes that the proposed actions will not result in significant adverse impacts to sidewalks, corner areas or crosswalks. The proposed actions would generate new pedestrian demand on analyzed sidewalks, corner areas and crosswalks by 2017. This new demand would include trips made solely by walking, as well as pedestrian trips en route to and from subway station entrances and bus stops. As shown in Table ES-4, the proposed actions are expected to generate a net total of 262 walk-only trips in the weekday AM peak hour, 247 in the midday and 532 in the weekday PM peak hour. Trips en route to and from area subway stations and bus stops would account for an additional 205, 292 and 333 new pedestrian trips during the weekday AM, midday and PM peak hours, respectively.

In the future with the proposed actions, all analyzed sidewalks would continue to operate at an acceptable LOS A or B under platoon conditions in all peak hours. As all analyzed sidewalks would continue to operate with flow rates of less than 13 PFM in all analyzed peak hours, no significant adverse sidewalk impacts are anticipated to result from the proposed actions. With the implementation of the proposed actions, all analyzed corners and crosswalks would continue to operate at an acceptable LOS A or B in the weekday AM, midday and PM peak hours. As all analyzed corners and crosswalks would continue to operate with an average occupancy of more than 20 square feet per pedestrian in all analyzed peak hours, no significant adverse impacts to corner areas or crosswalks are anticipated.

Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character with respect to transportation.

*NOISE*

In the future with the proposed actions, the maximum increase would be less than 1 dBA. Increases of this magnitude would be imperceptible and, according to CEQR criteria, insignificant. As a result, there is no potential for the Proposed Actions to result in a significant adverse noise impact. At some locations during certain time periods the noise levels would be less in the future with the proposed actions than the future without the proposed actions. This is due to changes that would occur in truck routes that would occur with the proposed actions. Therefore, there would be no significant adverse impact on neighborhood character with respect to noise.

**NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER ANALYSIS BY AREA***PRIMARY STUDY AREA**Subarea A, North of Queens Plaza*

Within this Subarea, six projected development sites have been ascertained. As seen in Figure 9-2, these sites are numbered 8, 9, 10, 19, 20 and 23. Generally clustered in the center of the Subarea, new developments would likely infuse the existing residential and light industrial areas with new residential buildings towards the center of the Subarea, as well as the northern edge of the Subarea. Along the southern edge of the Subarea which abuts the Queens Plaza, future residential, industrial and community developments would likely be taller and larger in keeping with the existing conditions found near Queens plaza.

No historic properties were determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers within Subarea A.

The socioeconomic analysis finds that the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts to this Subarea. The number of residents who would be displaced represents a small fraction of the total persons living in the Subarea and do not represent a substantial or unique population within the study area. The businesses that would be directly displaced do not have substantial economic value to the city or regional area as defined by CEQR, and would not have great difficulty relocating. The potential at-risk population to indirect displacement is limited and will face increased rent pressures in the future with or without the proposed actions. Similarly, some businesses facing rent pressure in the study area will continue to face increased rents in the future with or without the proposed actions; the incremental pressure generated by the proposed actions would not result in significant indirect displacement impacts.

As the urban design and visual resources in this Subarea are marked by distinct variations in land uses and street walls on both avenues and bisecting streets, it is likely that the proposed project would result in uniformity through new construction on currently underutilized and vacant lots. Current light traffic and noise conditions would likely continue apace with more robust traffic patterns and elevated noise levels close to the Queens Plaza and Northern boulevard corridors.

*Subarea B, Adjacent to the Sunnyside Yards*

Within this Subarea, seven projected development sites have been ascertained. As seen in Figure 9-2, these sites are numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7. Generally clustered towards the southern portion of the

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Subarea, these sites are in immediate proximity to neighborhood transportation hubs. With an influx of new, tall residential building the general character of this Subarea could undergo significant change creating a more vibrant, walkable neighborhood. As such, it would be likely that these new developments would favorably influence streetscape elements creating a more pedestrian-friendly neighborhood character.

Two historic structures have been identified within Subarea B. The A. Garside & Sons Shoe Factory (Block 377, Lot 13) is located on a projected development site (Projected Site No. 7). The Pierce-Arrow Building (Block 376, Lot 1) is located on a potential development site (Potential Site No. 155). Both of these historic structures may be demolished as part of projected or potential development under the RWCDs. The demolition and/or loss of these buildings would not constitute a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character, however, given that these buildings are not part of a distinct district and are not representative of area architecture.

The current busy traffic and noise conditions found along the Northern Boulevard corridor will continue apace.

### *Subarea C, Adjacent to 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue*

Within this Subarea, two projected development sites have been identified. As seen in Figure 9-2, these sites are numbered 36 and 37. Generally located toward the eastern edge of the Subarea, these sites are in immediate proximity to neighborhood transportation hubs. As the projected development in this Subarea is relatively conservative, it is anticipated that the proposed project would not pose significant impacts in this Subarea in terms of land uses, socioeconomic conditions, historic resources, urban design and visual resources, transportation and noise.

### *Subarea D, Northern Interior Corridor*

Within this Subarea, 11 projected development sites have been determined. As seen in Figure 9-2, these sites are numbered 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 31, 32, 33 and 34. Generally clustered in the western portion of the Subarea, these sites are situated amongst existing one- and two-story homes concentrated on blocks bounded by 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> Avenues. Development allowed by the proposed actions would compliment this existing residential character of the western portion of the study area, and would infuse the industrial corridor towards Northern Boulevard on the east with more residential units, creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Two historic structures eligible for listing on the State and National Registers have been identified within Subarea D. These structures are not located on or adjacent to projected or potential development sites and as such, no direct adverse impacts are expected to occur as a result of the proposed actions. Indirect impacts would be minimal and would not constitute a significant impact to neighborhood character.

The socioeconomic analysis finds that the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts to this Subarea. The number of residents who would be displaced represents a small fraction of the total persons living in the Subarea and do not represent a substantial or unique population within the study area. The businesses that would be directly displaced do not have substantial economic value to the city or regional area as defined by CEQR, and would not have great difficulty relocating. The potential at-risk population to indirect displacement is limited and will face increased rent pressures in the future with or without the proposed actions. Similarly, some businesses facing rent pressure in the study area will continue to face increased rents in the future with or without the proposed

actions; the incremental pressure generated by the proposed actions would not result in significant indirect displacement impacts.

As the urban design and visual resources in this Subarea are marked by distinct variations in land uses and street walls on both avenues and bisecting streets, it is likely that the proposed project would create uniformity by new construction on currently underutilized and vacant lots. Current traffic and noise conditions would likely continue apace with more robust traffic patterns and elevated noise levels close to the Northern Boulevard corridor.

### *Subarea E, Southern Interior Corridor*

Within this Subarea, 12 projected development sites have been ascertained. As seen in Figure 9-2, these sites are numbered 21, 22, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 38, 39 and 40. Generally clustered in the northwest and southeast portions of the Subarea, development under the proposed actions would be compatible with existing one and two-story homes in the north and the more mixed-use environment found in the southeast.

The socioeconomic analysis finds that the proposed actions would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts to this Subarea. The number of residents who would be displaced represents a small fraction of the total persons living in the Subarea and do not represent a substantial or unique population within the study area. The businesses that would be directly displaced do not have substantial economic value to the city or regional area as defined by CEQR, and would not have great difficulty relocating. The potential at-risk population to indirect displacement is limited and will face increased rent pressures in the future with or without the proposed actions. Similarly, some businesses facing rent pressure in the study area will continue to face increased rents in the future with or without the proposed actions; the incremental pressure generated by the proposed actions would not result in significant indirect displacement impacts.

No historic structures or properties were determined eligible for listing on the State and National Registers within Subarea E.

As the urban design and visual resources in this Subarea are marked by distinct variations in land uses and street walls on both avenues and bisecting streets, it is likely that the proposed actions would create uniformity by new construction on currently underutilized and vacant lots. Current traffic and noise conditions would likely continue apace with more robust traffic patterns and elevated noise levels to the east near the Northern Boulevard corridor.

### *SECONDARY STUDY AREA*

As discussed in the future condition without the proposed actions, a majority of the secondary study area is expected to experience major land use changes over the 10-year analysis period. Although these changes will significantly influence the neighborhood character found in the secondary study area, these changes are not anticipated to be the result of the proposed project within the primary study area.

## **G. CONCLUSION**

Based upon the preceding considerations of the existing, future condition without the proposed actions and future condition with the proposed actions, the development of the RWCDS is not expected to cause a significant adverse impact to the neighborhood character of the primary and secondary study areas.

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As the proposed actions will influence the build characteristics of development projects largely through changes in the zoning requirements of the primary study area, the majority of anticipated affects are limited to the size and type of future buildings, and do not significantly affect other components of the built environment. As future development projects will be influenced by the larger project goal of creating transit oriented mixed-use and residential neighborhoods, the future build condition would enhance the general neighborhood character of the Dutch Kills neighborhood.