

3.10 Neighborhood Character

3.10.1 Introduction

This chapter assesses the potential for the Proposed Project to result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. Neighborhood character is defined by the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual* as a combination of physical and social features that together define a neighborhood's "personality." These elements typically include a combination of land use, socioeconomic conditions, open spaces, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual setting, transportation features, and ambient noise.

To determine the effects of a proposed project on neighborhood character, the defining features of neighborhood character are considered in combination. This assessment below therefore identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and evaluates whether the Proposed Project has the potential to affect those defining features, either through significant adverse impacts or a combination of moderate impacts. This analysis relies on the impact analyses provided in each of the relevant chapters.

3.10.2 Principal Conclusions

The Proposed Project would not adversely alter defining features of the neighborhood or result in a significant adverse impact or a combination of impacts that would adversely impact neighborhood character. Instead, the Proposed Project would provide beneficial impacts to the neighborhood by protecting the neighborhood from flooding and sea level rise and promoting ongoing efforts to improve the resiliency of the waterfront and sustainability within Battery Park City, as well as broader Protected Area of Lower Manhattan. Completion of the Proposed Project would provide design storm protection from coastal surge events and sea level rise while enhancing access to and usability of open space. The Proposed Project would include increased landscaping that would create an engaging pedestrian experience immersed in nature and widened pedestrian paths to improve pedestrian flow. While the Proposed Project would require temporary open space closures during construction, it would be developed in phases to maintain as much public access to the Battery Park City open spaces as possible, and the available open spaces would be supplemented by other public parks in the neighborhood (see Chapter 3.11, "Construction"). Additionally, the Proposed Project has been designed to minimize obstructions to visual corridors and key features of the Study Area. As detailed in Chapter 3.4, "Urban Design and Visual Resources," the views shown in the illustrative renderings are static viewpoints; where illustrative viewpoints are partially obscured by proposed floodwalls and/or plantings, a slight shift in viewpoint could remove the obstructions. Therefore, it is concluded that the Proposed Project would not result in substantial changes to neighborhood character and would promote resiliency and sustainable development throughout the neighborhood.

3.10.3 Regulatory Context

Although there are no special statutes, regulations, or standards that pertain to the analysis of neighborhood character, it is recommended in the *CEQR Technical Manual* that applicable regulations and standards for each technical analysis in a neighborhood character assessment be discussed.

3.10.4 Methodology

An analysis of neighborhood character begins by determining whether a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the technical areas that define neighborhood character or if a project would result in a combination of moderate effects to a number of elements that cumulatively impact neighborhood character. Under the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character assessments consider how elements of the environment combine to create the context and feeling of a neighborhood and how a proposed project may affect that context and feeling. To determine a proposed project's effects on neighborhood character, the elements that contribute to a neighborhood's context and feeling are considered together. As defined by the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is considered to result from a combination of the various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct "personality." These elements may include a neighborhood's land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise.

An assessment of neighborhood character is generally recommended when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any, or moderate impacts on several, of the following technical areas that define a neighborhood's character: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. A "moderate" effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area. When considered together, there are elements that may have the potential to significantly impact neighborhood character. However, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood's character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character.

The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the neighborhood, and then assesses whether the proposed project has the potential to affect these features either significantly or cumulatively. If the preliminary assessment concludes that a proposed project has the potential to affect these defining features, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character should be performed. Given the size of the Proposed Project and the range of potential impacts, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character impacts is provided below.

3.10.5 Existing Conditions

3.10.5.1 Project Area

As described in Chapter 1.0, "Project Description," the Project Area, beginning at the corner of Greenwich Street along the south side of North Moore Street extending west, then turns south on Route 9A/West Street with a connection across Harrison Street before crossing Route 9A/West Street and entering

Battery Park City at the North Esplanade (Reach 2) (see Figure 1-4 in Chapter 1.0, “Project Description”). From here, the alignment is entirely within Battery Park City and continues west along the North Esplanade before turning south and parallel to the west side of River Terrace. The alignment continues southward along the waterfront into North Cove and then runs east, south, and west around North Cove before turning southward and paralleling the upper walkway and street ends at Albany, Rector Place and West Thames streets with the southern terminus of the flood barrier system extending along the upland interior perimeter of South Cove to complete the system and connect with the South Battery Park Resiliency Project at approximately 1st Place.

The northernmost reaches of the Project Area include Tribeca and the blocks where the proposed flood barrier system would “tie-back” to inland flood limits. In addition to the streets, nearby land uses include Hudson River Park, community facility uses (e.g., Stuyvesant High School and Borough of Manhattan Community College), and mixed residential and commercial uses (e.g., the Independence Plaza apartment complex) of various sizes.

A defining open space and natural feature of the Project Area is the Hudson River, a natural feature that extends along the entire Project Area. Upland visual features in the Project Area include its many open space resources, the primary element of which is the Battery Park City Esplanade and its network of open spaces, and major street corridors including the north/south oriented Route 9A/West Street and east- and west-oriented North Moore Street. The Battery Park City Esplanade extends along the Hudson River shoreline for the entirety of the Battery Park City water’s edge and provides a pedestrian/cyclist pathway, landscaping, and seating with several connecting open spaces, including Rockefeller Park, Pumphouse Park, Belvedere Plaza, North Cove, and South Cove, which provide a variety of features such as landscaped and grassy open spaces, plazas, a playground, the North Cove marina, waterfront overlooks, and resource enhancements. Upland in the built structures is the Winter Garden Atrium, a glass-vaulted pavilion that provides public access to the waterfront between West Street and North Cove and includes the landscaped interior public atrium with numerous shops and restaurants. While the Project Area’s southern limit is 1st Place, the Battery Park City Esplanade continues farther south to connect with Pier A and The Battery (this area is currently under construction as part of the South Battery Park City Resiliency project). The Project Area also includes Route 9A/West Street, a major multi-lane throughfare with a landscaped median that runs north/south and is aligned between Tribeca to the east and Battery Park City to the west with overhead pedestrian bridges at West Thames, Liberty, and Chambers Streets that connect Battery Park City to the inland communities.

There are three architectural resources located in the Project Area that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register. One is the Shearwater which is a wooden auxiliary schooner built in 1929 that now docks at the North Cove Marina and is used for sightseeing cruises. The Shearwater was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. Another is the South Cove open space that opened in 1988 at the southern end of the Battery Park City Esplanade. South Cove integrates art, landscape architecture, and architecture in a way that differed from previous modernist approaches to the inclusion of art in architectural projects where the art was an ornamental addition to a designed space. The Postmodernist landscape design has been determined as significant by the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) under National Register Criterion A in the area of community and urban planning, under Criterion

C in the areas of landscape architecture and art, and meets the standard for exceptional significance necessary to satisfy National Register Criterion Consideration G for properties less than 50 years old.

Finally, the Hudson River Bulkhead is a National Register-eligible resource. The bulkhead and its associated structural systems were constructed between 1871 and 1936 by the New York City Department of Docks. The carefully built granite walls created a consistent monumental surface to the waterfront that reinforced an image of the City's commercial prominence. These historic resources together contribute to the area's rich and diverse history, as well as its overall character.

There is also the potential for buried archeological resources in the Project Area that reflect the history and patterns of development of the area, although these resources are not readily visible to the public.

3.10.5.2 Study Area

As described in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary analysis of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas of the relevant technical areas that contribute to the defining elements of the neighborhood. Therefore, the study area for this analysis reflects those considered for the other analyses, which extend from 400 feet up to a ½ mile from the Project Area.

Land Use

As described in Chapter 3.1, "Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy," the land use Study Area is comprised of a small section of Tribeca roughly bound by Lighthouse Point, Hudson Street, Chambers Street, Greenwich Street and Route 9A/West Street and the land uses here are comprised predominately of high-density multifamily buildings with commercial uses, the Borough of Manhattan Community College, and a large open space, Washington Market Park. A small portion of the project area is also within the Tribeca Historic District.

The majority of the Project Area is located in the Special Battery Park City District, which is a special zoning district created to implement master plan for the neighborhood and the Battery Park City community. The concept of the Battery Park City Master Plan and Battery Park City as a whole is a business center flanked by residential neighborhoods to the north and south, with a continuous waterfront esplanade providing public access to and along the Hudson River. The residential neighborhood to the north, generally bounded by River Terrace, Route 9A/West Street, Chambers Street and Murray Street, is comprised of 11 residential buildings with ground-floor uses that range in height from 14 to 42 stories and provide a total of approximately 2,800 units. Supporting the community are three schools including PS 89 and IS 289 (co-located at 201 Warren Street) and Stuyvesant High School at 345 Chambers Street, a stand-alone 10-story building situated at the north end of Battery Park City and adjacent to the North Esplanade and just west of the Hudson River Greenway and Route 9A/West Street. Open spaces integral to the north neighborhood buildings include Teardrop Park, Teardrop Park South, and the Battery Park City Ball Fields.

Battery Park City's commercial and employment center is comprised of eight commercial buildings that range in height from 14 to 54 stories. Together, these buildings provide approximately 11,375,000 gross square feet (gsf) of commercial space, and five of the buildings are within Brookfield Place (formerly

known as the World Financial Center), which includes public spaces such as the Winter Garden atrium, that are interconnected through a shared base and second-floor pedestrian corridors. The tallest building in the central commercial core is the Goldman Sachs Headquarters, located north of Brookfield Place at 200 West Street. Fronting the commercial center is the North Cove marine recreation complex.

The south residential neighborhood is generally defined as the area south of North Cove/Liberty Street and is comprised of 21 residential buildings that range in height from 5 to 44 stories and provide a total of approximately 5,500 units. Many of the residential buildings feature ground-floor retail uses, and there is also one school, the Battery Park City School at 55 Battery Place, and two cultural centers—the Museum of Jewish Heritage at 36 Battery Place and the Skyscraper Museum located on the ground floor of 39 Battery Place. Similar to the north neighborhood, buildings in the south neighborhood are set among leafy open spaces.

The portions of the Study Area located in the Lower Manhattan Central Business District east of Route 9A/West Street are generally characterized by a mix of both old and new residential and commercial buildings, ranging from four-story walkups to supertall skyscrapers, such as the 94-story One World Trade Center office building. Many of the older commercial buildings dating from the late 19th and early 20th centuries have since been converted to residential uses. A central feature to this area is the World Trade Center Memorial Plaza and Oculus transportation hub. There are also several large commercial skyscrapers the most prominent of which is One World Trade Center.

Open Space

There are a variety of open spaces in the study area with a total of approximately 45 resources that provide an estimated 72 acres of open space in the ¼-mile (nonresidential) Study Area with an additional 62 resources in the ½-mile (residential) Study Area for a total of 107 publicly accessible open space resources and a total of 135.70 acres of open space that includes both active (36.68 acres) and passive (99.02 acres) open space. In addition to the large number of open spaces there is a wide variety of open spaces, ranging from small plazas to large parks that offer a wide variety of active and passive features. The largest open spaces are the Battery Park City Esplanade (26.04 acres), The Battery (21.88 acres), Hudson River Park (12.63 acres in the nonresidential Study Area, 17.79 acres in the residential Study Area, 550 acres total), City Hall Park (8.08 acres), and the World Trade Center Memorial Plaza (5.75 acres). Other open space resources include playgrounds, ball fields, cemeteries, plazas, dog parks, and pocket parks. The park areas are well trafficked and used by all age cohorts for their various amenities. Both passive and active open space resources throughout the study area experience high utilization rates and are well maintained and in quality condition, making them a defining element of the neighborhood's character.

Historic and Cultural Resources

The Project Area was determined to have low sensitivity for precontact archaeological resources within deeply buried landforms and portions of the Project Area were determined to have sensitivity for archaeological resources associated with 17th- and 18th-century occupation and with 19th-century landfilling activities. A Phase 1A Archaeological Documentary Study prepared for the Proposed Project recommended a Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation including a geomorphological investigation and

archaeological monitoring to confirm the presence or absence of archaeological resources within the area of potential effect (APE). The Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation of the identified areas of archaeological sensitivity would be finalized and implemented in consultation with SHPO and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), as well as Section 106 Consulting Parties.

There are also three historic architectural resources in the Project Area and several buildings and structures within the 400-foot Study Area that are listed on or eligible for listing on the National Register. Within and along the Project Area these resources include South Cove, which SHPO has determined to be eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR-eligible), the Shearwater (S/NR) vessel that is moored in North Cove, and the Hudson River Bulkhead (S/NR-eligible) which is both buried and exposed. Together these resources reflect the important maritime history of Lower Manhattan. Outside of the Project Area, there are 15 other historic architectural resources located within the 400-foot Historic Architectural APE, including the Tribeca West Historic District, the Harrison Street Houses, and the World Trade Center Site.

Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Project Area is defined by both a prominent natural feature, the Hudson River, and the prominent built features of Battery Park City, Tribeca and the Lower Manhattan business district. The Hudson River waterfront, which is an extensive aesthetic and community resource, provides a visual connection for the community to the water with views of the Hudson River and the prominent historic and cultural features of the harbor the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. The Statue of Liberty National Monument together with Ellis Island is also considered an aesthetic and visual resource that is visible from multiple locations along the Battery Park City Esplanade including the overlook from South Cove. Additionally, the Hudson River Greenway and Hudson River Park are considered to be aesthetic and visual resources that are best seen from within the resource itself or along Route 9A/West Street. Elevated pedestrian bridges and parks, such as Liberty Park, also provide views of the Hudson River Greenway.

There are also the restored historic piers and maritime features that are preserved in Hudson River Park to the north.

Route 9A/West Street, which runs north-south through the Study Area, is also a defining feature separating the waterfront from Lower Manhattan and its tall commercial and residential buildings, the 9/11 Memorial Plaza and One World Trade Center building.

Given their design, size, and distribution, open space resources are prominent in many views. In addition to the Esplanade, there are streets and parks that lead to and connect with the waterfront, such as Rector and West Thames Park, Teardrop Park and Teardrop Park South, the Irish Hunger Memorial, and the Hudson River Greenway. Views of these resources are primarily limited due to distance and intervening buildings and are best experienced from within the resource. Elevated pedestrian bridges also provide views of the Hudson River Greenway.

Transportation

Given that Lower Manhattan is one of the City's two major central business districts and its first to flourish, the area is well served by the convergence of multiple subway and bus lines (both local and express) augmented by interstate travel via the Port Authority Trans Hudson (PATH) trains. The density of development and street network also supports a wide range of alternative travel modes, with moderate to heavy foot traffic on the local sidewalks and crosswalks and a mix of private automobile, taxis, and delivery trucks on the streets. There is significant pedestrian activity associated with Lower Manhattan's workforce, its growing residential population, and the seasonal influx of tourists and visitors. There is also the heavily used Hudson River Greenway, which provides cyclist and pedestrian access through the Study Area to key open spaces north and south of the project area.

Regional vehicle access to the area is largely defined by one major thoroughfare, Route 9A/West Street, which interconnects with many of the side streets. Route 9A/West Street runs north-south through the Study Area and provides four travel lanes in each direction, separated by a landscaped median. Parallel to Route 9A/West Street is the Hudson River Greenway, an extensive bike path/pedway, which begins at the Battery and continues north for 12.9 miles.

The adjacent side streets experience less traffic and serve the neighborhood's residential and office buildings. Within Battery Park City, River Terrace is a quiet, winding two-way street; there are also several east/west oriented roadways that connect to the waterfront, such as West Thames and Albany Streets. The Battery Park Esplanade and the adjacent BPCA parks are accessible from the sidewalks along these roadways, allowing for a number of public points of entry.

Noise

Vehicle noise is the dominant noise source in the neighborhood. In terms of the CEQR criteria, based on monitoring data performed for this EIS, the current noise levels are generally in the "marginally acceptable" and "marginally unacceptable" categories. In terms of United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) criteria, noise levels at all receptors are categorized as "normally unacceptable."

3.10.6 No Action Conditions

In the No Action condition, the existing areas, neighborhoods, and open spaces within the Protected Area would remain at risk from storm surges and severe weather events. The No Action condition would not meet the Proposed Project goals of providing comprehensive coastal flood protection for the Protected Area. There is one project within Battery Park City that would move forward under the direction of BPCA which is comprised of targeted drainage improvements in Rockefeller Park with the objective of repairing and improving the existing drainage system and includes repair and replacement of inlets coupled with the replacement of broken pipes, where needed. These improvements, which include raising seven currently buried/covered inlet structures, restoring full drainage function at four inlets, and cleaning out twenty inlets, would have very limited and targeted areas of disturbance and are expected to be completed in 2025. During a design storm event, the Protected Area would still experience significant flood risk and potential impacts to human health and safety, as well as damage to property and assets.

within Battery Park City and the surrounding areas. Over time, absent the Proposed Project, flooding risk within the Protected Area would worsen.

3.10.7 Proposed Action Conditions

With the Proposed Project, there is a potential for significant temporary impacts to neighborhood character as a result of construction (see Chapter 3.11, “Construction”); however, upon completion, the Proposed Project would restore the open space resources. At project completion, there would only be minor modifications to the existing open space resources necessitated to accommodate the flood barrier system. Therefore, existing features throughout the Project Area would be maintained and overall would not result in any significant adverse impacts on the neighborhood character.

3.10.7.1 Land Use

The Proposed Project would not generate or alter land uses in the Study Area and is compatible with the existing zoning. In addition, the Proposed Project would not result in development contradictory to adopted public policies that apply to the Project Area. Rather, the Proposed Project would be compatible with and support the protection of existing land uses in the Project Area and Study Area through the proposed flood protection measures. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse land use impacts to the Study Area.

3.10.7.2 Open Space

Upon completion of the Proposed Project, the availability of open space resources in the Project Area would remain unchanged and access points along street ends would remain open. Approximately 1,900-sf of passive open space would be added through the expansion of the northern portion of the Esplanade along Stuyvesant High School. The impacts of the temporary closure of open spaces on neighborhood character are discussed in Chapter 3.11, “Construction.” Upon completion of the Proposed Project, the open space resources would be restored and enhanced throughout the Project Area to ensure long-term resilience against future coastal storm events. Given that all open spaces area would be restored, it is concluded that the Proposed Project would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

3.10.7.3 Historic and Cultural Resources

To avoid impacts to potentially sensitive archaeological resources, a Phase 1B investigation would be performed in accordance with CEQR/State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and Section 106 and the requirements of LPC and/or SHPO with the commitment to complete these phases of work. With the completion of the Phase 1B Archaeological Investigation and all subsequent analyses determined necessary in continued consultation with LPC, SHPO, and Section 106 consulting parties as necessary, it is concluded that the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on archaeological resources.

Construction of the Proposed Project is expected within 90 feet of a number of listed and potentially eligible historic resources in the Historic Architectural APE (see Chapter 3.11 “Construction” for additional details). Upon completion, the Proposed Project would not directly affect South Cove (S/NR-eligible) or result in an adverse effect to that historic architectural resource, as the proposed work would be limited to the upland perimeter and the contributing features of the Postmodernist landscape design would be unaffected.

3.10.7.4 Urban Design and Visual Resources

The Proposed Project would not have any significant adverse urban design impacts along the Project Area or the surrounding Study Area. In general, the floodwalls and closure structures would be new features to the public realm but installed in locations where there are existing walls or integrated along and parallel to existing building façades. While the Proposed Project would reconstruct sections of the Battery Park City Esplanade and adjoining parks, it would maintain their urban design features and character, and the reconstructed spaces would respect and complement the design of the existing esplanade and parks through site design including use of materials, and plantings. The Proposed Project would transplant existing trees where possible and plant approximately 390 new trees to account for those removed during construction throughout the Project Area.

The Proposed Project is not anticipated to have any significant adverse impacts on the visual resources of the Project Area and has been designed to maintain connectivity between the waterfront and adjacent inland blocks of Battery Park City and the neighborhood as a whole. The proposed floodwalls are primarily aligned inland from the water’s edge, preserving the waterfront esplanade and the proposed flood barrier system would maintain open views of the waterfront and adjoining parks. Although the flood barrier system would constitute a new urban design feature, it has been strategically aligned to minimize visual impacts on the neighborhood.

The Proposed Project would not adversely affect views of the other parks and open spaces outside the boundaries of the Project Area (e.g., of the Irish Hunger Memorial), nor would it adversely affect views of or along Hudson River Park and the Hudson River Greenway. During coastal storm events, the flood protection system would deploy and the closure structures and floodwall across Harrison Street would partially obscure views to the waterfront from Harrison Street. Additionally, the closure structures and floodwall across South End Avenue, 3rd Place, and 2nd Place would partially obscure views to South Cove; however, this would not result in significant adverse impacts as it would only occur during coastal storm events.

3.10.7.5 Transportation

As a flood protection system comprised of walls and gates, the Proposed Project would not generate any trips and would therefore have no trip generation impacts. In addition, based on targeted transportation analyses, designing the proposed flood barrier structure into existing pedestrian elements and shared pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the Project Area would not significantly impact traffic capacity, displace any on-street parking, or adversely impact any pedestrian or bikeway/walkway elements.

During construction, the Proposed Project is expected to result in some temporary modifications to the existing street widths, sidewalks, and parking lanes that would affect pedestrian and vehicular circulation (see Chapter 3.11, “Construction” for additional details).

3.10.7.6 Noise

Operation of the Proposed Project would not generate any noise. Additionally, the noise generated by the flood barrier system during an extreme storm event or the annual system testing would not rise to the level of significance. Accordingly, there would be no significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character as a result of noise generated by the Proposed Project. Potential impacts due to construction noise are explored in greater detail in Chapter 3.11, “Construction.”

3.10.7.7 Combination of Moderate Effects

The combined effects described above would not result in any significant adverse neighborhood character impacts. The Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, transportation, or noise that would cumulatively result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. The Proposed Project would address the potential neighborhood impacts of future flooding in the coastal zone by incorporating climate change and sea level rise considerations into the design of the proposed flood barrier system and in so doing would support the built uses in Battery Park City and the broader Protected Area. The Proposed Project would also incorporate design features that preserve and enhance the waterfront open spaces and water uses, coupled with green stormwater management measures. The Proposed Project would integrate the flood barrier system into the existing streetscape and waterfront setting and would not substantively alter any urban design features such that the context of the natural and built visual resources of the study area would be substantively impacted. No historic architectural resources would be adversely affected. Upon completion, there would be no significant adverse impacts to transportation systems or noise emissions due to the operation of the Proposed Project. Therefore, it is concluded that the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.