

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses whether any changed background conditions or the differences between the reasonable worst-case development scenario (RWCDS) and the program assessed in the 2008 Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS) and subsequent technical memoranda would result in any significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character that were not addressed in the 2008 FGEIS and subsequent technical memoranda.

As defined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct “personality.” These elements may include a neighborhood’s land use, urban design, visual resources, historic resources, socioeconomics, traffic, and/or noise. However, not all of these elements affect neighborhood character in all cases; a neighborhood usually draws its character from a few determining elements.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

Consistent with the 2008 FGEIS and subsequent technical memoranda, this analysis finds that the proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character.

As described in detail below, the study area has diverse characteristics owing to the varied land uses surrounding the project site. No one defining feature would be considered critical to the character of the neighborhood; rather all the various localized features contribute to it. Taking into consideration the effects of the proposed project on the contributing features, the proposed project would not have a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. Rather, the proposed project would result in an improvement in neighborhood character, as it would remediate the area and would represent a significant investment to improve the project area’s infrastructure. The proposed project would allow for a more comprehensive and continuous neighborhood by linking Flushing and Corona, and would transform the area surrounding CitiField into a thriving new neighborhood and regional destination.

B. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS—2008 FGEIS AND SUBSEQUENT TECHNICAL MEMORANDA

The 2008 FGEIS concluded that while the proposed changes to the District would be significant, they would result in an improvement in neighborhood character and would not have a significant adverse impact. The development proposed in the 2008 FGEIS would have dramatically changed neighborhood character in the District, replacing predominantly low-density auto-related, manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, and waste transfer and recycling uses with a new mixed-use neighborhood. The Special Willets Point District regulations were developed to create a dynamic, sustainable community by integrating regional attractions, residential (with

approximately 20 percent affordable housing), retail, and other uses within a network of pedestrian-scaled streetscapes. The 2008 FGEIS also concluded that the proposed convention center and commercial uses would enhance Flushing and Corona's roles as regional economic centers, and would attract visitors to the area. The proposed residential, commercial office, retail, hotel, community facility, open space, and parking uses would be consistent with the uses and character in the surrounding area, particularly those within the dense commercial center of Downtown Flushing. Subsequent technical memoranda also concluded that there would be no significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

C. METHODOLOGY

The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; or noise. Even if a project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in any of the technical areas listed above, an assessment may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a "moderate" effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area.

As described in the relevant chapters of this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), the proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources; shadows; or noise. It would also not result in effects considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact thresholds in those technical areas. However, the proposed project would result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of historic and cultural resources, and transportation. Therefore, a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character impacts from the proposed project is provided below.

The analysis of neighborhood character is addressed in two geographical areas: the project site and adjacent neighborhoods located within a ½-mile area from the boundaries of the project site. A larger secondary study area was not considered necessary for the neighborhood character analysis due to natural and man-made barriers (described below). The uses within the larger study area are too distant from the project site to contribute to the existing neighborhood character and would also not experience effects to neighborhood character as a result of the proposed project.

D. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

PROJECT SITE

The project site is composed of three discrete areas—the Special Willets Point District (the "District"), Willets West, and the South Lot and Lot D on Roosevelt Avenue—which are roughly bounded by Shea Road and Northern Boulevard to the north, the Van Wyck Expressway to the east, Roosevelt Avenue and the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) Corona Rail Yard to the south, and Shea Road to the west.

Special Willets Point District

The District portion of the project site comprises approximately 61 acres, approximately 15.8 acres of which are within public street rights-of-way, approximately 0.6 acres of which are owned by MTA, and the remainder of which is a mix of privately owned land and land owned by the City. It covers most of the Willets Point peninsula, which is itself defined by the Flushing River and Flushing Bay. In addition, the neighborhood is surrounded by a network of above-grade roadways, connectors and viaducts (including the Van Wyck Expressway, Northern Boulevard, and the elevated No. 7 subway line) that form a relatively hard-edged boundary. Auto-related services are the most prevalent use in the District. These services consist of auto-body repair, auto glass, car washes and auto detailing, used and new auto part sales, tire sales, and vehicle towing. There are also a number of car junkyards in the District, which support auto salvage businesses. The District also contains some industrial uses, including construction-related services and materials, and waste transfer and recycling. In addition to the auto-related and industrial uses, a few commercial uses exist in the District to cater to businesses in the area. These include a deli and grocery, and a restaurant. The District contains one institutional use, a private, members-only motorcycle club. Although residential uses are not permitted under the existing zoning, there is one residential unit in the District, located on Willets Point Boulevard.

The District is partially developed in a street grid, although due to the diagonal trajectory of Willets Point Boulevard and the curve of Northern Boulevard, the majority of the blocks are irregularly shaped. Willets Point Boulevard is the main thoroughfare through the District. Starting at 126th Street, it runs on a diagonal that extends northeast to the entrance of the Van Wyck Expressway. There are no streets south of Willets Point Boulevard in the District.

The streetscape of the District is industrial in character. Most of the streets are flanked by paved sidewalks, which are in poor condition and are also used for car parking, auto parts storage, and waste storage. The streets in the District also are in various states of disrepair. Most are partially paved and riddled with potholes. The only streets with designated or marked traffic lanes are 126th Street and Willets Point Boulevard. There are few sidewalk crossings or stop signs. Throughout the District, stormwater drainage is a serious problem, as the area lacks an adequate drainage system and much of the stormwater runoff flows as overland flow and ponds, causing area streets to flood during storm events.

The majority of structures in the District are generally small masonry or metal buildings, temporary metal sheds and Quonset huts, or brick buildings with small footprints. Exterior building materials include corrugated metal, concrete block, and brick. The majority of the buildings have large, projecting advertising signs. Most of the buildings in the District are attached or located close together. In contrast, in the northeast section of the District there are a number of freestanding buildings that are larger and boxier in form. These include the Tully Environmental and Crown Container site, which contains a three-story, boxy red brick building and is surrounded by a metal chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Large trucks and other manufacturing equipment are stored on the site. Also located in the northeastern section of the District is the House of Spices distribution site, which contains an unornamented two-story, boxy concrete building, surrounded by a large paved area and smaller, one-story structures. Another notable building in this portion of the District is the historic former Empire Millwork Corporation Building (see Chapter 7, "Historic and Cultural Resources). This two-story, Georgian Revival-style red brick building is located near the intersection of Willets Point Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway.

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Existing uses and structures in the District are similar to the primarily industrial uses along the Flushing River and Flushing Bay waterfronts from the Whitestone Expressway to approximately 37th Avenue, but contrast sharply with most of the uses and types of development in the nearby communities, such as the higher-density commercial and residential development in Downtown Flushing, and the primarily low- to mid-density residential neighborhood of Corona to the west of CitiField and the Grand Central Parkway. Deteriorated sidewalks, large potholes, corrugated metal building façades, and the widespread use of streets and sidewalks for vehicle parking and storage for adjacent automotive uses contribute to an unappealing streetscape and create uninviting and unsafe pedestrian conditions. Despite its transit-oriented location and proximity to Downtown Flushing and several thriving neighborhoods, Willets Point contains virtually none of the land use characteristics or patterns of its neighbors.

Willets West

The Willets West portion of the project site comprises an approximately 30.7-acre section of the surface parking field adjacent to CitiField, the stadium for the New York Mets. While this portion of the project site is mapped as parkland in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, it does not function as public open space. The property was first developed as a paved parking lot for the 1939–1940 World’s Fair. A 1943 map of the project site area shows it as a large, paved parking lot punctuated by asphalt islands and floodlights. It was occupied by Shea Stadium and associated parking and circulation space beginning in 1964, until it was replaced by CitiField in 2009, and it is now occupied exclusively by surface parking. The area is lit by tall floodlights and there are traffic islands within and around the perimeter of the surface parking area, which are currently planted with trees. There are no structures on this portion of the project site.

Roosevelt Avenue

The Roosevelt Avenue portion of the project site comprises CitiField-related surface parking lots (South Lot and Lots B and D) along Roosevelt Avenue. The South Lot and Lot D are located between Roosevelt Avenue and the MTA Corona Rail Yard, and are separated by the elevated Passerelle Ramp, which extends south from the Mets-Willets Point subway station and comes to grade adjacent to the USTA National Tennis Center. Lot B is located on the north side of Roosevelt Avenue, west of 126th Street; this paved surface parking lot currently serves as VIP/ADA parking for CitiField. These lots are also mapped as parkland, but are occupied exclusively by surface parking. Lot D and South Lot are used for commuter parking and United States Tennis Association (USTA) National Tennis Center (NTC) events when baseball games are not in progress. The parking areas each include a small number of trees at the site perimeter and are lit by tall floodlights. Lot B is surrounded by a decorative metal fence; the South Lot and Lot D are surrounded by chain link fencing. There are no structures on this portion of the project site, except for small temporary structures related to the parking use.

As described in Chapter 7, “Historic and Cultural Resources,” there are no known or potential architectural resources within the Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site. The 2008 FGEIS identified one architectural resource within the Special Willets Point District: the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building at 128-150 Willets Point Boulevard. It has a red brick front section, which faces onto Willets Point Boulevard, and a large, double-height, multi-paned glass section in the rear. As part of the 2008 FGEIS, the structure was determined S/NR-eligible by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP) as a significant early 20th century commercial and industrial building.

As described in Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” there are no visual resources within the District portion of the project site, nor are any visible from its sidewalks and streets. Views to the west are blocked by CitiField. Natural features surrounding the District, including those in Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Flushing Bay, and the Flushing River, are not visually accessible primarily due to the elevated transportation structures to the north, south, and east of the District.

Overall, the project site has no natural features, and its topography is relatively flat. The project site is mostly isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods by several natural and man-made barriers. To the east of the Van Wyck Expressway lies the Flushing River, and beyond that, Downtown Flushing. To the north of Northern Boulevard lies Flushing Bay, with the industrial area of College Point on its northern shore. To the south of the project site are the LIRR tracks for the Port Washington Line, the MTA Corona Rail Yard, and the USTA NTC, and to the west is Grand Central Parkway and the Corona neighborhood.

ADJACENT AREAS

Nearby areas include other parts of the Willets Point peninsula that lie outside the Willets Point Development District, portions of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, Downtown Flushing, the greater Flushing area, and portions of Corona. Directly east of the District is a large undeveloped MTA property located along the Flushing River waterfront, a majority of which is leased to Tully Environmental, Inc., which operates a construction and demolition debris recycling operation on the site. To the north of the District, across Northern Boulevard, is a New York City Department of Transportation (NYCDOT) maintenance and repair facility, and between Northern Boulevard and the Van Wyck Expressway is an asphalt plant. To the northwest of the District, across Northern Boulevard, is the Flushing Bay Promenade, which is within the boundary of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park and is described below. To the south of the District—south of Roosevelt Avenue, near the LIRR tracks—is the MTA Corona Rail Yard. The Corona Rail Yard, which is not part of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, contains a storage area for subway cars as well as repair shops. The Casey Stengel Bus Depot is adjacent to the Corona Rail Yard. Taken together, the uses surrounding the District have an industrial character typical of transit infrastructure, manufacturing zones, and working waterfront uses. While they are the geographically closest sites to the District and contain uses compatible with those found in the District, aside from the MTA property these sites are all buffered from the District by intervening raised roadways and the elevated superstructure of the No.7 subway line.

Primarily to the south and west of the District is the portion of Flushing Meadows-Corona Park that extends from Flushing Bay to just south of the USTA NTC. This portion of the park includes CitiField and its surrounding parking fields. The elevated No. 7 subway line serves the primary study area, with the Mets-Willets Point station located adjacent to CitiField above Roosevelt Avenue. The LIRR also has a Mets-Willets Point station adjacent to the Corona Rail Yard, which operates on baseball game and USTA NTC event days. The Passerelle Ramp, which is for pedestrian use, spans the Yards and connects both stations to CitiField and the USTA NTC.

The USTA NTC contains three stadiums and is host to tennis events year-round, including the U.S. Open. The USTA NTC contains the 23,000-seat Arthur Ashe Stadium, 10,000-seat Louis Armstrong Stadium, a smaller 3,500-seat stadium, and 30 additional tennis courts. The courts are open during the year for tennis clinics and camps, as well as for general public use. There is a

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small parking lot located adjacent to the USTA NTC; however, during the U.S. Open, CitiField lots are also used for parking.

East of the USTA NTC, the park contains a pitch and putt golf center, and a large area available for passive and active recreation, with trees, pathways, and sitting areas. West of the USTA NTC and the Grand Central Parkway, the park includes the New York Hall of Science. There is a large (500-space) parking lot adjacent to the museum. The Olmsted Center, located near the LIRR right-of-way immediately west of the USTA NTC, contains offices for the design and construction supervision divisions of DPR. The Passerelle Building, located under the Passerelle Ramp, contains offices and support facilities for the park. The Allied Building, located on the far-east side of the park south of Roosevelt Avenue and near the Van Wyck Expressway, contains DPR offices and storehouses.

Another part of the park near the project site is the Flushing Bay Promenade, which winds along Flushing Bay for approximately 1.4 miles from LaGuardia Airport to the Willets Point peninsula. The promenade contains many sitting areas and provides access to the World's Fair Marina and a restaurant located northeast of CitiField. There are more than 1,000 parking spaces located to the east and west of the marina, which are also available for parking on Mets game days.

In contrast to the underutilization that characterizes much of the District, east of the District and across Flushing River is the vibrant urban core of Downtown Flushing. Flushing is a thriving business and residential area, as well as a center for ethnic goods and culture. Downtown Flushing and the greater Flushing area contain a substantial Asian population, with large Chinese and Korean communities, and there are many specialty food and retail stores, restaurants, and other services that are utilized not only by the local population, but also serve as a destination for people living outside of the community. Downtown Flushing is also a regional transportation and commercial hub for Queens. While most of the commercial and cultural activity is centered along Northern Boulevard, Roosevelt Avenue, and Main Street, the Downtown Flushing study area (Flushing Subarea A) generally extends between the Flushing River to the west, Northern Boulevard to the north, Bowne Street to the east, and the LIRR tracks located south of Roosevelt Avenue to the south. The predominantly industrial areas in Flushing are generally located along the Flushing River within approximately ½ mile of the District, with some commercial and mixed-uses areas south of 37th Avenue. To the south of the LIRR Port Washington Line (Flushing Subarea B), industrial uses are concentrated west of College Point Boulevard. To the north of Northern Boulevard (Flushing Subarea C), a large industrial district extends east of the Flushing River to Linden Place.

The western portion of the study area includes the Corona subarea bounded by 114th Street to the east, 108th Street to the west, Grand Central Parkway to the north, and 44th Avenue to the south. This portion of the study area is predominantly residential in character and contains a variety of housing types, including detached one- and two-family residences on narrow lots, attached row-houses and multi-family dwelling units, and apartment buildings. Other prominent residential uses include the 301-unit Dorie Miller Cooperative housing development located on 114th Street between Northern Boulevard and 34th Avenue, and the 132-unit Meadow Manor housing development located at 113th Street and 34th Avenue. There is a mix of commercial uses and dense neighborhood retail and office uses along Northern Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue. A few auto-related uses are located on Northern Boulevard, and some light manufacturing uses are located on 111th Street between Northern Boulevard and Astoria Boulevard, including a live chicken wholesale warehouse and storage warehouse. A construction

material distribution warehouse and a few auto-related uses are also located on Roosevelt Avenue. The right-of-way for the LIRR Port Washington Line forms the southern boundary of this subarea, and the Van Wyck Expressway forms the northern boundary. The No. 7 subway line, which is elevated above Roosevelt Avenue, has a station at 111th Street. Notable community facilities in this portion of Corona include the Louis Armstrong School (P.S. 143), Hinton Park, the New York Church of Christ, Mount Horeb Baptist Church, and the Child Center of New York day care center.

As described in Chapter 7, “Historic and Cultural Resources,” there are no known or potential architectural resources located within a 400-foot area surrounding the project site. Beyond the 400-foot historic resources study area, there are a number of known or potential architectural resources, primarily within the Flushing Subarea A, as well as those associated with the 1939–1940 and 1964–1965 World’s Fairs.

As described in Chapter 8, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” there are a number of visual resources in or visible from the study area, including Flushing Bay and its promenade, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and the structures associated with the 1964 World’s Fair.

Noise conditions in the study area are typical of an urban neighborhood adjacent to elevated subway operations and well-trafficked roads. As described in greater detail in Chapter 17, “Noise,” most of the noise affecting the area is from vehicular traffic along area roadways and from the elevated No. 7 subway line that runs above Roosevelt Avenue. Airplane flights from nearby LaGuardia Airport also contribute to background noise levels. Overall noise levels are generally relatively high, and reflect the level of activity in the area.

The project site is within close proximity to primary highways including the Whitestone Expressway to the north and east, the Grand Central Parkway to the west, and the Long Island Expressway (LIE) to the south. This network of highway mainlines and ramp interchanges carries significant traffic volumes and frequently experiences congestion during peak travel periods. Sections of the local street network adjacent to the District, such as Roosevelt Avenue and Northern Boulevard, experience moderate to heavy traffic volumes during peak travel periods, while other sections, such as 126th Street, have substantial amounts of unused capacity during typical weekday and weekend conditions. In addition, the close proximity of the project sites to CitiField results in significant changes to traffic characteristics and operations on roadways in the area before and after Mets home games. With parking lot entrances located along Roosevelt Avenue, 126th Street, and Stadium Road, access and egress to CitiField during pre- and post-game periods significantly affects traffic conditions on both the highway and local street networks near Willets Point.

Overall, the study area has diverse characteristics and is not defined by one element. The project site is mostly isolated from the surrounding neighborhoods by several natural and man-made barriers. The District portion of the project site is predominantly characterized by auto-related services, with generally small masonry or metal buildings, temporary metal sheds and Quonset huts, or brick buildings with small footprints. Most of the sidewalks are in poor condition the streets in various states of disrepair. The Willets West and Roosevelt Avenue portions of the project site are characterized by surface parking lots. The eastern portion of the study area includes Downton Flushing, a thriving business and residential area, as well as a center for ethnic goods and culture. The western portion of the study area includes the Corona subarea which is predominantly residential in character and contains a variety of housing types, including detached one- and two-family residences on narrow lots, attached row-houses and multi-family dwelling units, and apartment buildings. Other defining uses in the study area

include those within the Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, including Citifield to the west of the District, USTA NTC in the southern portion of the study area, and the Flushing Bay Promenade, which winds along Flushing Bay. The study area is heavily trafficked, with noise levels that are relatively high, reflecting the level of vehicular activity on the adjacent streets, the elevated No. 7 subway line, and airplane flights from nearby LaGuardia Airport. No one defining feature would be considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. Rather, all the various localized features contribute to it.

POTENTIAL TO AFFECT DEFINING FEATURES OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

As mentioned above, significant adverse impacts from the proposed project have been identified in the areas of historic and cultural resources, and transportation.

In Phase 2 of the proposed project, it is anticipated that the former Empire Millwork Corporation Building would be demolished. However, as described in the 2008 FGEIS, for a number of reasons, the building does not meaningfully contribute to neighborhood character. Tucked into the northeast corner of the District, the building's primary façade is not visible from most of the District or from most parts of the study area due to the elevated Van Wyck Expressway—the primary views of the building's façade are when driving past it. The building is not particularly tall and therefore is not highly visible from either the District or the study area, and it is not a defining feature of a view corridor or a visual terminating point. As mentioned above, there are also a number of known or potential architectural resources outside of the project site, within the ½ mile study area. The proposed project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to these resources.

As discussed in detail in Chapter 14, "Traffic and Parking," by the full buildout in Phase 2, the proposed project is expected to have significant traffic impacts at 22 of the 31 intersections analyzed for the future With Action condition in the weekday AM peak hour, and 26 of 31 in the weekday midday, weekday PM and Saturday midday non-game peak hours. During the PM pre-game weekday peak hour, 25 of 31 intersections analyzed would have significant traffic impacts, and during the Saturday pre-game and post-game peak hours, 23 of 31 intersections analyzed would have significant impacts. Also by Phase 2, five of six highway mainline locations analyzed (including the westbound Grand Central Parkway, and both directions of the Whitestone and Van Wyck Expressways) and eight of the 12 ramp locations would be significantly impacted during at least one peak hour. However, traffic congestion in the study area would be present even without the proposed project, as the expected magnitude of background development in the No Action condition would generate substantial traffic volumes in the study area mostly along the primary streets in the study area network (including Northern Boulevard, Roosevelt Avenue, Astoria Boulevard, and College Point Boulevard). While the study area will be heavily trafficked, and the proposed project would generate traffic resulting in significant adverse traffic impacts, traffic conditions are not considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. In addition, significant adverse traffic impacts could be fully or partially mitigated at most of the impacted locations with signal timing adjustments and other measures, as described in Chapter 21, "Mitigation". Therefore, these impacts would not substantially affect the character of the neighborhood.

The proposed project would also result in significant adverse transit and pedestrian impacts. These were identified for the street-level stairways on the north side of Roosevelt Avenue at the Mets-Willets Point subway station, line-haul conditions on the No. 7 train, and the Q19, Q48, and Q66 bus routes. Significant pedestrian impacts were identified for the east crosswalk at the

intersection of Northern Boulevard and 126th Street, the north and west crosswalks at the intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and 126th Street, the north, south, and east crosswalks at the intersection of 34th Avenue and 126th Street, the south crosswalk at the intersection of New Willets Point Boulevard and 126th Street, and the north crosswalk at the newly signalized intersection of Roosevelt Avenue and the Lot B driveway. While these significant adverse impacts are predicted to occur, bus capacity and pedestrian conditions at sidewalk/crosswalk locations are not considered critical to the character of the neighborhood. In addition, the significant adverse transit and pedestrian impacts would be mitigated to the extent practicable, subject to approvals of NYCDOT and the MTA. Therefore, these impacts would not substantially affect the character of the neighborhood.

The transportation conditions and historic elements of the study area surrounding are generally unrelated, and therefore the proposed project's effects on these elements would not individually or in combination result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

In addition, as described above, the 2012 *CEQR Technical Manual* states that even if a project does not have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact in a certain technical area, the project may have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character. A moderate effect is generally defined as an effect considered reasonably close to the significant adverse impact threshold for a particular technical analysis area. The proposed project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; urban design and visual resources; shadows; or noise nor would it result in moderate effects in these areas as defined by CEQR guidelines. Therefore the proposed project would not have the potential to result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that cumulatively may affect neighborhood character.

The proposed changes, while significant, would not have a significant adverse impact, but would rather result in an improvement in neighborhood character. As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the proposed project is intended to remediate and transform the area surrounding CitiField, which is largely separated from adjoining neighborhoods by major highways, into a thriving new neighborhood and regional destination. Consistent with the 2008 FGEIS, the proposed project represents a critical step in implementing the 2004 Downtown Flushing Development Framework, a land use and economic planning strategy for the growth of Downtown Flushing, the Flushing waterfront, and adjacent areas. The District would be developed pursuant to the zoning regulations approved in 2008, and the proposed project would advance a number of the Framework's fundamental goals, including the creation of a regional destination that would enhance economic growth in Downtown Flushing; improvement of environmental conditions; and integration of new development with surrounding amenities, including the Flushing Bay Promenade, CitiField, Flushing Meadows-Corona Park, and Downtown Flushing. The proposed project would be consistent with and vital to the advancement of several of the goals of PlaNYC, which aim to create a more sustainable New York by the year 2030.

By providing development spanning both sides of the new CitiField, the proposed project would allow for a more comprehensive and continuous neighborhood transformation linking Flushing and Corona. The environmental degradation of the Willets Point district would be remediated. The commercial components of the proposed project would complement the adjacent sports venue and strengthen economic activity in the neighborhood. The new structures and open spaces are intended to create an active streetscape enhancing the pedestrian experience. The

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proposed entertainment and retail destination of Willets West would complement the anticipated development within the District, and both would connect Flushing to the east with Corona to the west through the creation of an unbroken series of uses along Roosevelt Avenue stretching from east of the Flushing River to west of the Grand Central Parkway. Over 2,000 units of affordable housing would be developed to accommodate a portion of the City's current and future affordable housing needs. The proposed project would represent a significant investment to improve the infrastructure of the project area. Raising the District portion of the project site out of the floodplain would not only minimize the potential loss of life, structures, and natural resources caused by flooding and erosion, but would also protect the new infrastructure investment. By eliminating flooding within the District and improving the quality of the soil substrate, the proposed project would also improve water quality in Flushing Bay. For all of the reasons described above, the proposed project would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. *