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Chapter 28: Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter identifies those environmental resources that would be irretrievably lost due to the implementation of the Proposed Action and, consequently, would not be available for reuse for another purpose. These include irreversible and irretrievable use of both natural and man-made resources that would be expended during the construction and operation of the Proposed Action, including the irretrievable or irreversible use of building materials, energy, and human effort required to construct and operate the various elements of the Proposed Action. These are considered irretrievably committed, since their reuse for another purpose would be highly unlikely or completely unviable. The extent to which the Proposed Action would foreclose future options or involve trade-offs between short-term environmental losses and long-term gains is also addressed.

B. IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES

As indicated in Chapter 23, “Construction Impacts,” approximately 567,000 cubic yards of concrete, asphalt, sand, and gravel and 3,000 precast concrete segments, approximately 357,000 tons of steel and other construction materials, approximately 9.5 million square feet of glass and dry wall, and approximately \$5.8 billion of funds (2003 dollars) would be irretrievably committed to the No. 7 Subway Extension, the Convention Center Expansion and the construction of the Multi-Use Facility, together with other public infrastructure and relocation of the Quill Bus Depot. The construction of the approximately 40 million square feet of commercial and residential development that would result from the proposed rezoning and related land use actions would also require the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of energy, construction materials, human effort, and funds.

As indicated in Chapter 18, “Energy,” approximately 9.7 trillion BTUs of energy would be needed annually to operate the various elements of the Proposed Action. As described in Chapter 2, “Description of the Proposed Action” and Chapter 18, “Energy,” the commitment of energy from depletable sources during construction of the No. 7 Subway Extension will be minimized through the application of MTA NYCT Design for Environment guidelines, New York State Executive Order No. 111, and other mandated state and city requirements. In addition, as described in Chapter 2, “Description of the Proposed Action” and Chapter 18, “Energy,” both the Multi-Use Facility and the expanded Convention Center would incorporate design measures in accordance with Executive Order No. 111, and other sustainable design measures intended to reduce those facilities’ dependencies on depletable sources of energy.

The land use changes associated with the proposed rezoning and related land use actions would be considered an irretrievable and irreversible loss of resources, since the anticipated development that would be allowed under the Proposed Action would render use of the development sites for another purpose as infeasible. Funds committed to the design, construction, and operation of the various elements of the Proposed Action would not be available for the development of other projects. The fire, safety, educational, and medical public services required to serve the Proposed Action would also constitute a commitment of resources that might otherwise be used for other programs or projects, although the Proposed Action would generate tax revenues needed to fund such services.

C. TRADE-OFFS BETWEEN SHORT-TERM ENVIRONMENTAL GAINS AND LONG-TERM GAINS

Although the Proposed Action would require the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of resources during construction of the No. 7 Subway Extension, the Convention Center Expansion, the development of the Multi-Use Facility, and the development permitted under the proposed rezoning and related land use actions, these commitments would be offset by the long-term gains in public access to the Hudson Yards area and the Hudson River waterfront including Hudson River Park, the economic gains derived from the new and expanded facilities, and the development of a new, vibrant, mixed-use community in the Hudson Yards area of Midtown Manhattan. The extension of the No. 7 Subway would offer improved transportation service and travel time savings for commuters employed in the Hudson Yards area, thereby limiting the use of depletable energy resources that would otherwise be used for motor vehicles. Expansion of the Convention Center would allow New York City to continue to successfully compete with other venues for the highly lucrative convention and tourist-related activities, while construction of the Multi-Use Facility would support activities at the Convention Center, provide a venue for a broad range of sports and entertainment uses that cannot be currently held in New York City because of the lack of a viable venue, and result in increased tourist and entertainment-related revenues to the region. ❖