

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the potential for the Proposed Project to result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. As defined in the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give a neighborhood its distinct “personality.” The elements to consider in determining whether a neighborhood character assessment is appropriate include a neighborhood’s land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and/or noise. However, not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in every case; a neighborhood usually draws its distinctive character from a few defining elements. The temporary neighborhood character effects associated with construction of the Proposed Project are discussed in Chapter 20, “Construction.”

An analysis of neighborhood character identifies the defining features of the neighborhood and then evaluates whether a proposed project has the potential to affect the defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical analysis areas. To determine the effects of a proposed project on neighborhood character, the defining features of neighborhood character are considered together. According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, neighborhood character impacts are rare, and it would be unusual that—in the absence of a significant adverse impact in any of the relevant technical areas—a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood would result in an impact to neighborhood character. Moreover, a significant adverse impact identified in one of the technical areas that contributes to a neighborhood’s character does not necessarily constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character, but rather serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined.

As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Project is a comprehensive redevelopment initiative to create a revitalized, transit-oriented commercial district centered around Penn Station. The area of the Proposed Project is generally bounded by Sixth and Ninth Avenues to the east and west, and by West 30th and West 34th Streets to the south and north in Midtown Manhattan, Community Districts 4 and 5 (the Project Area). The Project Area includes all or portions of nine Manhattan tax blocks—Blocks 754, 755, 780, 781, 783, 806, 807, 808, and 809—that encompass Penn Station, Madison Square Garden (MSG), the Farley Office Building and Moynihan Train Hall, and surrounding blocks.

The primary components of the Proposed Project include the creation of a transit-oriented commercial district, support for improvements to and expansion of Penn Station, and the introduction of public transportation and public realm improvements to the area. To facilitate the Proposed Project, the New York State Urban Development Corporation d/b/a Empire State Development (ESD) is proposing a General Project Plan (GPP) that would, among other things, authorize ESD to override provisions of the New York City Zoning Resolution and other local laws. The GPP would facilitate the construction of approximately 20 million gross square feet

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(gsf) of new Class A commercial office space, retail, and hotel space on eight development sites within the Project Area. The new developments would provide new entrances and connections for both Penn Station and the subway system. The proposed commercial developments would generate financial support for the expansion of Penn Station and would be designed and constructed to accommodate an integrated below-grade expansion of tracks and platforms south of the existing Penn Station. As currently proposed, the expansion of Penn Station would encompass Block 780 immediately to the south (bounded by Seventh and Eighth Avenues and West 30th and West 31st Streets), the western portion of Block 806 on the east side of Seventh Avenue, and the eastern portion of Block 754 on the west side of Eighth Avenue.

The Proposed Project would include public transportation improvements consisting of improvements to passenger rail facilities at Penn Station and transit facilities at area subway stations. ESD, through the GPP and in collaboration with Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA), would require the completion of certain public transportation improvements as part of certain new building construction in the Project Area. It is anticipated that transit improvements would be implemented at the 34th Street–Penn Station–Eighth Avenue (A, C, and E); 34th Street–Penn Station–Seventh Avenue (1, 2, and 3); and 34th Street–Herald Square–Sixth Avenue (B, D, F, M, N, Q, R, W, and Port Authority Trans-Hudson [PATH]) subway stations. Above-grade public realm improvements in the Project Area would be implemented in connection with the proposed developments. The above-grade public realm improvements include sidewalk widenings, new passive open space, enhancements to existing open space, the creation of shared streets, and the installation of protected bike lanes.

PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. As discussed in this chapter, the defining features of neighborhood character are a mixture of several high-density commercial buildings and lower-scale (and, in some cases, historic) commercial buildings and transportation infrastructure; high levels of pedestrian and vehicular activity and associated noise; and a varied neighborhood context with smaller buildings interspersed among taller buildings and iconic New York City landmarks. The assessment concludes that the Proposed Project is expected to enhance existing neighborhood character by reinforcing these defining features while improving pedestrian facilities and transit accessibility. As described in Chapter 1, “Project Description,” the Proposed Project would address substandard conditions in the Project Area by facilitating redevelopment to create a cohesive, transit-oriented commercial district, introducing much-needed public transportation and public realm improvements in the area, and supporting the reconstruction and expansion of Penn Station.

The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; or urban design. Although there would be significant adverse impacts with respect to open space, historic resources, shadows, visual resources, transportation, and noise, these impacts would not result in a significant adverse impact to the defining elements of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of effects result in a significant adverse impact to such a defining feature. Overall, the Proposed Project is expected to result in positive effects to neighborhood character by addressing substandard and insanitary conditions and transforming the area around Penn Station into a revitalized, modern transit-oriented commercial district. As discussed below, the new development and the public realm and public transportation improvements introduced with the Proposed Project would unify the area around Penn Station, making it a more attractive and inviting neighborhood.

B. METHODOLOGY

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, an assessment of neighborhood character is generally needed when a proposed action has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any of the following technical areas: land use, socioeconomic conditions, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, or noise. The *CEQR Technical Manual* states that even if a proposed action does not have the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in any specific technical area(s), an assessment of neighborhood character may be required if the project would result in a combination of moderate effects to several elements that may cumulatively 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.

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of neighborhood character. The preliminary assessment first identifies the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and then evaluates whether the proposed action has the potential to affect those defining features, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in the relevant technical areas. If the project has the potential to affect defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed assessment of neighborhood character may be appropriate. Conversely, if the project has no potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character, a detailed assessment is not warranted.

The key elements that define neighborhood character, and their relationships to one another, form the basis of determining impact significance; in general, the more uniform and consistent the existing neighborhood context, the more sensitive it may be to change. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater change without experiencing a significant adverse impact related to neighborhood character.

STUDY AREA

According to the *CEQR Technical Manual*, the study area for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is generally consistent with the study areas in the technical areas that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. In the context of an action affecting several blocks, such as the area affected by the Proposed Project, the study area boundaries for the preliminary assessment of neighborhood character are generally coterminous with those used in the analyses of land use, zoning, and public policy and urban design.

This chapter identifies a study area encompassing the Project Area and the area within a ¼-mile of the Project Area. The study area for the assessment of neighborhood character is generally bounded by West 39th Street to the north, West 25th Street to the south, Madison Avenue to the east, and Eleventh Avenue to the west (see **Figure 19-1**).

C. PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

DEFINING FEATURES

PREDOMINANCE OF COMMERCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

The study area is characterized by a predominance of commercial development—including high-rise office buildings, major retailers, hotels, and entertainment facilities—and transportation infrastructure, largely below-grade, associated with Penn Station and the City’s subway system. The

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prevalence of these features is the result of the area's historic development as a commercial hub. The original Penn Station was built by the Pennsylvania Railroad and opened in 1910. It was a classic Beaux-Arts style building designed by the famed architecture firm of McKim, Mead, & White that covered the superblock from West 31st to West 33rd Streets and Seventh to Eighth Avenues. In addition to the Penn Station superblocks, the Pennsylvania Railroad purchased the two blockfronts on the east side of Seventh Avenue, from West 31st to West 33rd Streets. The railroad opened the Hotel Pennsylvania in 1919. At the time of its opening, the Hotel Pennsylvania was the largest hotel in the world with 2,200 rooms. The railroad sold the other parcel on the east side of Seventh Avenue (present day 11 Penn Plaza) in 1921, which was developed with a 22-story office building.

A decade after Penn Station opened, the Gimbels Brothers opened the New York City branch of their department store at West 33rd Street and Sixth Avenue, which was converted to the present-day Manhattan Mall and office building above (Site 8). Upon its opening in New York, Gimbels grew increasingly popular with shoppers and soon rivaled Macy's, whose flagship store was located one block to the north between West 34th and West 35th Streets—its present day location. Below Gimbels were underground passageways that took subway and PATH riders directly to the store's entrances, including the Gimbels passageway running from Seventh Avenue to Herald Square. The 34th Street corridor has endured over the years as one of the City's most popular shopping districts and a tourist destination. Macy's flagship store on 34th Street is a defining feature of neighborhood character.

In the 1950s, the declining Pennsylvania Railroad sold the air rights to the property and reduced the size of the railroad station. In 1963, the above-ground train station was demolished. Over the next nine years, the below-grade concourses and waiting areas were reconstructed, creating the Penn Station that commuters and visitors use today, while MSG and the high-rise office buildings at 1 Penn Plaza and 2 Penn Plaza, between West 31st and West 34th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues, were constructed above. The current station has three underground levels: concourses on the upper two levels and train platforms on the lowest. A total of 11 platforms and 21 platform tracks are shared by Amtrak, Long Island Rail Road (LIRR), and NJT. The platform tracks are connected to a network of tracks to the east and west. On the west, Amtrak and NJT trains enter and leave the station using the two tracks of the existing North River Tunnel; Amtrak trains from the Empire Line serving Albany and points north also connect into Penn Station on the west.

The study area includes the iconic Moynihan Train Hall and MSG—defining features of neighborhood character—as well as large office buildings like 1 Penn Plaza, 2 Penn Plaza, and 11 Penn Plaza. The landmark Farley Post Office Building, located on the block bounded by West 31st and West 33rd Streets and Eighth and Ninth Avenues, has been transformed into the Moynihan Train Hall, retail space, and corporate offices. The Moynihan Train Hall provides additional concourse space and new entrances to Penn Station. Moynihan Train Hall provides wayfinding and amenities for LIRR and Amtrak passengers, access to nine platforms and 17 tracks (of the total 11 platforms and 21 tracks), and a direct connection to the Eighth Avenue [A, C, and E] Subway Line.

The north and east portions of the study area—the Garment District and Midtown South—are dominated by commercial uses. To the northeast is Herald Square, a major retail destination that includes Macy's flagship store and other national brands. The blocks between West 31st and West 33rd Streets, Broadway, and Fifth Avenue are known as Koreatown and are occupied by mainly 12- to 17-story commercial buildings with first- and second-story retail uses. The upper floors often also contain restaurant, retail, and service uses rather than traditional commercial office uses.

North of Koreatown, on the eastern end of the block bounded by West 33rd and West 34th Streets, Broadway, and Fifth Avenue, is the landmarked Empire State Building, a defining feature of neighborhood character and a major tourist destination. The Empire State Building is a 102-story Art Deco skyscraper that contains primarily commercial office uses. The Garment District, located north of 34th Street, consists of mainly commercial uses, with some industrial and manufacturing uses that have remained from its history as a fashion manufacturing center.

Because the study area is well-served by transit and located near major tourist destinations, hotels are common (see **Figure 19-2**). Hotels are located on Sites 1, 3, and 7, and to the west of Site 4 on 33rd Street north of Moynihan Train Hall. Beyond the Project Area, hotels are mainly found east of Seventh Avenue in Midtown South, Chelsea, and along Broadway. A relatively recent trend has been the development of hotels in the Flower District on West 28th Street, between Sixth and Seventh Avenues. Recent hotel development has resulted in the displacement of some of the flower shops; however, a concentration of flower shops still remain on the block. Hotels are also prevalent west of Eighth Avenue in Hell’s Kitchen. Compared to other neighborhoods in the study area, the Garment District has relatively few hotels. Residential and community facility uses are more common in portions of the study area that are farther from Midtown—generally west of Eighth Avenue and south of West 31st Street (see **Figure 19-2**). Several houses of worship are located in the study area: among them are St. John the Baptist Church on West 30th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues; the Church of the Holy Apostles on West 28th Street and Ninth Avenue; the Church of St. Michael on West 34th Street between Dyer and Ninth Avenues; Congregation Beit Simchat Torah on West 30th Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues; the Hudson Yards Synagogue on West 34th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues; and the Masjid Awliya of Allah Mosque on West 37th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues.

Other community facilities include the Clinton Community Center on West 37th Street between Dyer and Tenth Avenues and several graduate schools that are part of the Touro College and University System’s West 31st Street campus between Eighth and Ninth Avenues. The Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), part of the State University of New York, occupies the entire block bounded by West 27th and West 28th Streets and Seventh and Eighth Avenues. The FIT Art Museum is located on West 27th Street within the FIT campus. As discussed in more detail in Chapter 5, “Community Facilities,” the study area also includes community facilities that serve the homeless, including the Olivieri Center, on West 30th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues and the St. Francis of Assisi Breadline (part of the St. Francis of Assisi Church complex) on West 31st Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues.

Chelsea is located in the southern half of the study area, to the south of Sites 1, 2, and 3. As shown in **Figure 19-2**, residential uses are most prevalent west of Eighth Avenue and commercial and mixed-use buildings predominate in the blocks between Sixth and Eighth Avenues. Residential use east of Eighth Avenue is generally contained in mixed-use buildings that include retail or other commercial space. Higher-density commercial buildings are typically located along the avenues, such as the office building at 350 Seventh Avenue between West 29th and West 30th Streets, and the office building at 330 Seventh Avenue (on the southwest corner of West 29th Street and Seventh Avenue). Commercial buildings in the midblocks are smaller and generally constructed to lower densities.

To the west of the Project Area is Hudson Yards—a high-density mixed-use neighborhood largely constructed above the MTA John D. Caemmerer West Side Yard that spans the superblocks between West 30th and West 33rd Streets and Tenth and Twelfth Avenues. The yard opened in 1986 for LIRR train storage; prior to this it was used as a train depot for the Hudson River Railroad.

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Hudson Yards was designed in conjunction with New York City Transit's (NYCT) No. 7 Subway Line extension to 34th Street/Hudson Yards, pairing high-density development with transit access and improvements.

The development on the Eastern Rail Yard site opened in 2019 with almost 12 million sf of mostly commercial development in four office buildings, a shopping mall, an arts center (the Shed), and an art installation known as the Vessel. Among the notable commercial buildings in Hudson Yards are 10 Hudson Yards, a 48-story office building; the Shops and Restaurants at Hudson Yards, a seven-story retail shopping mall; and 30 Hudson Yards, a 68-story office building.

South of Hudson Yards, the 6.73-acre High Line Park traverses the southwest portion of the study area, terminating at Gansevoort Street in the Meatpacking District. The 1.45-mile-long park was created from a repurposed railroad viaduct that has become a popular destination for residents and tourists. When it was last used for rail purposes, the High Line transported meat, dairy, and produce to markets to the south along the west side of Manhattan. In 2019, a spur of the elevated viaduct that extends east along West 30th Street, terminating at Tenth Avenue, was converted to open space and incorporated into the park.

The blocks west of Penn Station are occupied by substantial transportation infrastructure located below-grade, including approach tracks that provide access to and from Penn Station. These tracks are used for cross-Hudson rail service to the station for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line, NJT lines, LIRR's rail connections to John D. Caemmerer West Side Yard, and is used by LIRR for midday train storage and light maintenance. Tracks east of the station proceed eastward to the four-track East River Tunnel, which provides a continuing connection for Amtrak's Northeast Corridor Line to New England, and for LIRR's rail lines to Queens and Long Island. The East River Runnels also provide access to Sunnyside Yard in Queens, a large Amtrak train storage and maintenance yard that is also used for midday train storage by NJT.

Penn Station has two levels of passenger space above the tracks and platforms. The main passenger hall, Amtrak ticketing and waiting area, and NJT concourse are located on the upper passenger level. The upper level also provides connections to street level. The lower passenger level consists of LIRR's concourse in the station, with connections to the Seventh and Eighth Avenue subway lines and NJT passenger access to its platforms.

Unlike Penn Station's infrastructure, most of which is below-grade, traversing the western portion of the study area is Dyer Avenue and the Lincoln Tunnel Expressway. The Lincoln Tunnel Expressway is a mostly depressed, four-lane, north-south arterial road between the portals of the Lincoln Tunnel at West 38th Street to the north and West 30th Street to the south. Dyer Avenue is an at-grade roadway that runs parallel to the Lincoln Tunnel Expressway. Dyer Avenue serves traffic entering and leaving the expressway and the tubes of the Lincoln Tunnel. Just beyond the study area to the north is the Port Authority Bus Terminal (PABT)—among the busiest bus terminals in the world—and a network of access and egress ramps.

PEDESTRIAN AND VEHICULAR ACTIVITY

The character of the study area is defined by high levels of pedestrian activity and vehicular traffic, which in turn contribute to relatively high ambient noise, typical of dense urban areas and central business districts. Major streets and avenues—such as West 34th Street and Sixth, Seventh, and Eighth Avenues—serve as important pedestrian corridors, particularly in the vicinity of storefront retail, bus stops, and subway stations. Along Broadway at the north end of the study area, the pedestrian plazas known as Broadway Boulevard Plazas are located along the east side of Broadway; they contain seating and planters and include areas dedicated for use by bicyclists and

pedestrians. Dedicated bike lanes—separated by pavement striping and in some locations, protected from adjacent vehicular traffic with planted traffic islands, jersey barriers, and parking—extend along a number of the avenues in the study area, including Broadway, the west side of Eighth Avenue, and the east side of Ninth Avenue north of West 33rd Street.

Pedestrian flow varies along study area sidewalks as pedestrians tend to crowd near subway entrances, bus stops, store entrances, and newspaper kiosks—particularly during the morning and evening peak hours—causing sidewalk congestion. Pedestrian congestion can also occur where adjacent crosswalks account for much of the walkway’s pedestrian volume. The study area contains a number of access points to subway stations at 34th Street–Herald Square and 34th Street–Penn Station on the Seventh and Eighth Avenue lines, as well as bus stops for several local bus routes and numerous inter-borough express bus routes. In addition, the study area contains numerous access points for the 33rd Street PATH Station, Penn Station, and PABT. Pedestrian flow in the vicinity of these transit facility entrance and egress locations tends to be heavy, particularly during the morning and evening peak hours.

As discussed in Chapter 14, “Transportation,” a level of service (LOS) analysis is used to indicate the quality of pedestrian movement and comfort. LOS analyses are used to measure sidewalk, crosswalk, and corner reservoir capacities. The *CEQR Technical Manual* specifies acceptable mid-LOS D or better in central business districts such as the study area. Sidewalks, crosswalks, and corner reservoirs perform at LOS D or worse in the weekday AM, Midday, and PM peak hours in several locations: along portions Eighth Avenue, generally north of 35th Street; Seventh Avenue in the vicinity of 2 Penn Plaza; and the west side of Sixth Avenue near Herald Square (see Figures 14-18a through 14-18c in Chapter 14, “Transportation”). At approximately 20 feet wide, West 34th Street has the widest sidewalks in the study area. Locations such as West 34th Street and Broadway (adjacent to Greeley and Herald Squares) are characterized by high levels of pedestrian activity, but these sidewalks and walkways have a greater effective width to accommodate pedestrian activity.

Traffic on area streets is also a contributing element to neighborhood character. Streets in the study area are characteristically busy, carrying cars, buses, delivery trucks, and emergency vehicles. The most congested intersections in the study area are West 34th Street and Ninth Avenue and West 31st Street and Broadway. Roadway traffic is the dominant noise source in the study area. The noisiest locations are West 34th Street between Seventh and Eighth Avenues and West 32nd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, where noise levels generally range between 75 dBA and 80 dBA. In addition to the area’s busy streets, construction activity, sirens, and other sources of urban noise contribute to neighborhood character.

VARIATION OF BUILDING FORMS

Buildings in the study area can vary considerably in terms of height and form. The interspersing of smaller buildings alongside more modern high-rise towers is a defining feature of neighborhood character. An intermixture of several high-density commercial buildings and lower-scale (and, in some cases, historic) commercial buildings is a predominant feature of the study area.

As discussed in Chapter 9, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the study area contains a variety of building uses, types, and arrangements. Two Penn Plaza, which shares the superblock with MSG, was built in 1967 and is a 30-story, approximately 412-foot-tall office building. It fills the Seventh Avenue frontage between West 31st and West 33rd Streets, occupying approximately one-third of the superblock on which it is located and serving as the visual terminus of West 32nd

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Street. It rises without setbacks. Large recessed entrances to MSG (and associated digital MSG signage) are located along the Seventh Avenue façade.

MSG, built in 1968, is an indoor arena located above Penn Station. MSG occupies approximately the western two-thirds of the superblock shared with 2 Penn Plaza. This building has a circular plan and is clad primarily with precast concrete panels with projecting glazed extensions that contain escalators. MSG rises to a height of approximately 145 feet. A shorter section of the building with a flat, windowless façade and with sections of ventilation louvers fronts along Eighth Avenue. There are no retail or pedestrian amenities along this stretch of Eighth Avenue, except for a restaurant at West 33rd Street. Prominent digital signage is affixed to the MSG façade at the corners of West 31st and West 33rd Streets and along the midblock portion of the MSG overlooking Eighth Avenue, across from Moynihan Train Hall.

One Penn Plaza is located one block north of 2 Penn Plaza and MSG. The 57-story, approximately 750-foot-tall office tower is set in the center of multiple paved plaza areas above the street level. The glass- and metal-clad building sets back at the seventh and 12th floors before rising uninterrupted to its full height. The block also includes two one-story retail buildings along Seventh and Eighth Avenues.

The block north of the Farley Building and Moynihan Train Hall, between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and West 33rd and West 34th Streets, contains several buildings of varying heights. A 24-story office building occupies the Eighth Avenue frontage. Adjacent to this development at 316 West 33rd Street, in the midblock, is a 33-story mixed-use commercial and residential building. Further west along 33rd Street, the block contains a 22-story hotel, an 18-story office building, a 14-story residential building with ground floor retail space, and a 4-story mixed use residential and commercial building (at the corner of Ninth Avenue). Further north in the Garment District, relatively newer residential developments stand alongside smaller, older commercial and residential buildings. A 27-story (approximately 300-foot) residential building at 352 West 37th Street, constructed in 2008, is adjacent to 3- and 4-story residential buildings. The southeast corner of Ninth Avenue and West 37th Street contains a 1-story retail building. Across the street at 335 West 37th Street, stands a 24-story mixed-use building and two 6-story residential buildings. Eleven Penn Plaza, a historic resource built in 1926, occupies the east side of Seventh Avenue between West 31st and West 32nd Streets. This 26-story, approximately 390-foot-tall office building contains 1.1 million gsf and is built to the sidewalk on Seventh Avenue and its cross streets with an approximately 200-foot-by-275-foot footprint. The building is designed with a three-story stone base with a two-story arched entrance centrally located on the Seventh Avenue façade, ground-floor stores with large plate glass windows, and with upper stories clad in brick. The building initially steps back from the cross streets at the 15th floor with additional setbacks along Seventh Avenue, West 31st, and West 32nd Streets. Immediately to the east of 11 Penn Plaza is the St. Francis Roman Catholic Church Complex, a historic resource that includes a church and an adjacent 5-story monastery. The St. Francis Church Complex is located between substantially taller neighboring buildings—11 Penn Plaza to the west, and to the east at 132 West 32nd Street, a through-block, 59-story mixed-use residential and commercial development that has a 5-story commercial component along West 31st Street and a residential tower set back from the street.

Several commercial and residential buildings of varying height occupy the north side of 31st Street between Broadway and Fifth Avenue in Midtown South. A 40-story commercial building known as NoMad Tower, constructed in 2014, occupies the east side of Broadway between West 31st and West 32nd Streets, and further east along 31st Street is a 41-story residential building

constructed in 2004. Located between the two buildings are several older and substantially shorter mixed-use commercial and residential buildings ranging between 5- and 16-stories in height.

Commercial office and ground-floor retail uses dominate much of the neighborhood north of 30th Street, and are located in former loft and manufacturing buildings and office towers. The western portion of the study area, generally west of Ninth Avenue, has experienced large scale development in recent years. The Manhattan West development is a six-building, seven-million-sf, mixed-use development set on an eight-acre superblock that includes the newly completed free standing glass towers at One Manhattan West; a 67-story glazed tower with rounded corners containing approximately 2.1 million sf that rises without setbacks at Ninth Avenue and West 33rd Street; and the Eugene at 435 West 31st Street, a 62-story, L-shaped glazed residential tower that rises just east of the Dyer Avenue/Lincoln Tunnel approach roadways. Diagonally across from the Eugene (and not part of the Manhattan West development) at the southeast corner of West 31st Street and Dyer Avenue is 12-story commercial building. Across Dyer Avenue to the east is a 4-story residential building with commercial space on the ground floor. Further east along 31st Street is a 16-story dormitory for the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT).

One Manhattan West sits across Ninth Avenue from the Farley Building. Five Manhattan West, a recently renovated, glass-clad office building with stepped façades, was originally built as an exposed concrete building in the 1960s as the Westyard Distribution Center. This 16-story, approximately 260-foot-tall office building occupies the full east frontage of Tenth Avenue between West 31st and West 33rd Streets. Also part of the Manhattan West mixed-use development is an existing 14-story masonry building containing office space at 424-434 West 33rd Street adjacent to One Manhattan West. In addition, a proposed 58-story, approximately 850-foot-tall, 1.9-million-sf office tower at Two Manhattan West is under construction at Ninth Avenue and West 31st Street, as is the Pendry Manhattan West Hotel, a 28-story, approximately 250-foot-tall luxury hotel on the south side of West 33rd Street between the Dyer Avenue/Lincoln Tunnel approach roadways, and the office building at 242-434 West 33rd Street. This building has a small rectangular footprint and rises without setbacks, with an undulating glazed façade.

As noted above, the development on the Eastern Rail Yard site includes almost 12 million sf of development. This development includes 10 Hudson Yards, a 48-story glazed office tower of approximately 880 feet in height with an asymmetrical massed tower that largely rises without setbacks, terminating with a pyramidal roof at the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and West 30th Street; the Shops and Restaurants at Hudson Yards to the north, a seven-story retail shopping mall that has a primarily glazed sidewalk frontage with metal clad upper stories; and 30 Hudson Yards, an approximately 2.6-million-gsf office building at the southwest corner of Tenth Avenue and West 33rd Street. This approximately 1,300-foot-tall glass and steel tower has a contemporary asymmetrical massed design with a projecting, cantilevered observation deck, and is among the tallest buildings in New York City. Other recent development in Hudson Yards includes the commercial office tower under construction at 50 Hudson Yards, which will occupy the full city block bounded by Tenth Avenue, Hudson Boulevard, and West 33rd and West 34th Streets, which will be an approximately 1,010-foot-tall glass- and stone-clad building containing 2.58 million sf; and the Spiral at 66 Hudson Boulevard, a 65-story, approximately 1,030-foot-tall glass office tower under construction, to be articulated with a series of exterior cascading landscaped terraces that will contain 2.55 million sf and will occupy the full block bounded by Tenth Avenue, Hudson Boulevard, and West 34th and West 35th Streets.

Tenth Avenue south of West 30th Street has been recently developed with new residential towers, including the 37-story glazed residential tower (507 West Chelsea) at 507 West 28th Street

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occupying most of the west Tenth Avenue frontage between West 28th and West 29th Streets built in 2017, and Abington House at 500 West 30th Street, a 33-story, approximately 370-foot-tall brick-clad residential building designed with an L-Plan, a number of setbacks, and built in 2013, occupying most of the west Tenth Avenue frontage between West 29th and West 30th Streets. The residential towers south of 30th Street stand in contrast to the United States Postal Service (USPS) Morgan Processing and Distribution Facility, which occupies the superblock between Ninth and Tenth Avenues and West 28th and West 30th Streets. The Morgan Facility is a lower-scale development with heights varying between 5-, 8-, and 10-stories. The tall buildings constructed in the second half of the 20th century, and particularly those built within the past 20 years, tend to have more contemporary designs, such as glass and metal curtain wall and façades designed with continuous strips of windows at each floor rather than more traditional masonry façades with single or grouped punched window openings. Other buildings with more contemporary façades, of a lower scale, are located throughout the study area; these include, among others, a 25-story building at 112 West 34th Street with a glass and metal curtain wall façade across from Macy's built in 1954 and the Hollingsworth, a 24-story residential building at 70 West 37th Street built in 1986 that occupies the blockfront along the east side of Sixth Avenue between West 36th and West 37th Streets, which was designed with a four-story base with rounded corners and with a tower with projecting balconies above. Other smaller-scale buildings in the study area have glazed façades including older buildings that have been re-clad or redesigned, such as a number of commercial buildings along West 34th Street; the nine-story Herald Center commercial building that houses a large clothing retailer at 1311 Broadway, occupying the west side of Sixth Avenue/Broadway between West 34th and West 35th Streets;

Residential buildings include smaller tenement-style buildings, taller apartment houses, and much taller, more recently built residential towers. West 30th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues and the area south in Chelsea contain primarily residential buildings, including low-scale buildings on West 29th and West 30th Streets, and the taller 22-story Penn South residential complex farther south. The shorter three- to six-story buildings along West 30th Street on Block 754 (on which Site 1 is located) exist in a mixed context with other adjacent, relatively large, bulky buildings closer to Ninth Avenue, including a 17-story, approximately 240-foot-tall office building at the southeast corner of Ninth Avenue and West 31st Street, and a 12-story, approximately 135-foot-tall residential building constructed in 2000 at the northeast corner of Ninth Avenue and West 30th Street.

ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL TO AFFECT THE DEFINING FEATURES OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Project in the 2028 and 2038 analysis years with respect to the following technical areas that are considered in the assessment of neighborhood character: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; open space; shadows; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; transportation; and noise. The assessment relies on conclusions from the respective chapters of the EIS to identify whether the Proposed Project would result in any significant adverse impacts or moderate adverse effects in these technical areas and whether any such changes would have the potential to affect the defining features of neighborhood character. As described below, the Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to the defining elements of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of effects result in a significant adverse impact to a defining feature.

LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on land use, zoning, and public policy, either individually or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to land use, zoning, and public policy.

2028

In the 2028 With Action condition, Site 7 would be developed with a mix of office and retail space—the same uses expected on the site in the future without the Proposed Project (No Action condition), but developed at a higher density. The proposed uses and density would be compatible with and would complement the existing commercial and transportation-related uses in the study area. Development on Site 7 would be consistent with the other high-density commercial office buildings in the Project Area, such as the commercial office uses at 1 Penn Plaza and 2 Penn Plaza. The new commercial development on Site 7 would contribute to the creation of a cohesive, high-density commercial district surrounding Penn Station.

In addition, the proposed expansion of Penn Station is assumed to be completed by 2028. The Proposed Project would support the extension of transportation infrastructure to the blocks south of the existing station. The reconstruction of the existing Penn Station would improve conditions for transit users, and likewise be supportive of the trend towards high-density commercial development by further improving transit access to the area. As noted in Chapter 20, “Construction,” upon completion of the proposed expansion of Penn Station, Sites 1, 2 and 3 would be mostly vacant, and surrounded by construction fencing at-grade. The effects of the long-term construction activity on Sites 1, 2, and 3 on neighborhood character are discussed in Chapter 20, “Construction.”

2038

By 2038, it is assumed that the eight sites would be developed with a mix of Class A office space, retail space, hotel space. The Proposed Project would increase commercial density and would be consistent with broader land use trends of high-density commercial development in adjacent areas of Manhattan and capitalize on the area’s unparalleled transit access. The Proposed Project would enhance the public realm and generate revenue for much-needed public transportation improvements at Penn Station and area subway stations. The Proposed Project would support the planned expansion of Penn Station, which would serve New York’s future transportation needs. Overall, the Proposed Project would reinvigorate the Project Area by creating a modern, transit-oriented commercial district centered around Penn Station and would help create a corridor of high-density, predominantly commercial developments linking the Midtown Central Business District, Penn Station, and Hudson Yards.

As shown in **Figure 19-2**, the blocks south of West 30th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues are the most residential blocks within the study area, with no other land uses except for open space and a few retail businesses along Eighth and Ninth Avenues north of 29th Street. As discussed in Chapter 2, “Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy,” the Proposed Project would introduce higher density commercial development on Site 1; however, significant adverse impacts with respect to the predominantly lower-scale, residential character of the blocks south of 30th Street in Chelsea are not expected to occur. The juxtaposition of existing smaller-scale residential buildings relative to the proposed office building on Site 1 along Eighth Avenue and the midblock hotel along West 31st Street would be consistent with the prevailing pattern of development on the portion of the

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block closer to Ninth Avenue, and the common juxtaposition found in other parts of the study area of taller buildings on avenues and smaller buildings in the midblock area of cross streets.

The override of existing use, bulk, and density regulations would be necessary to achieve the goals and objectives of the Proposed Project, and permit the densities and bulk that would further public policies to support high-density development in areas well-served by public transit. The commercial densities permitted with the GPP would be consistent with higher densities allowed in parts of Hudson Yards and Midtown (near Grand Central Terminal). As shown in **Figure 19-2**, approximately half of the study area is occupied by office and hotel uses. The Proposed Project would reinforce the commercial and transportation-related character of the study area and support the City's economy by providing jobs and the space for firms to locate or expand into. The Proposed Project would not directly displace any land uses so as to adversely affect surrounding land uses, nor would it generate land uses that would be incompatible with surrounding land uses, zoning, or public policies.

SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Project would generate substantial economic benefits for New York City and New York State and would not result in significant adverse socioeconomic impacts for any of the five areas of analysis considered in accordance with *CEQR Technical Manual* guidance: (1) direct residential displacement, (2) direct business and institutional displacement, (3) indirect residential displacement, (4) indirect business and institutional displacement, and (5) adverse effects on specific industries.

2028

In Phase 1, the Proposed Project would directly displace an estimated 206 residents living in 128 residential units, and 3,747 employees at 353 firms. The displacement would not result in significant adverse direct residential or business and institutional impacts in the study area. The directly displaced residents do not represent a significant portion of the study area population, and they do not have socioeconomic characteristics that differ markedly from the study area population as a whole. The potentially displaced businesses and institutions provide goods and services that would still be found within the study area and would continue to be available to local residents and businesses. None of the businesses or institutions serve a customer base that is uniquely dependent upon their location within the study area, nor are they subject to regulations or publicly adopted plans aimed at preserving, enhancing, or otherwise protecting them in their current location.

2038

As described in Chapter 4, "Socioeconomic Conditions," all of the direct residential displacement due to the Proposed Project would occur by 2028—no additional direct residential displacement is expected to occur in the 2038 analysis year. In Phase 2, an estimated 5,390 additional employees at 120 firms would be displaced. The potentially displaced businesses and institutions provide goods and services that would still be found within the study area and would continue to be available to local residents and businesses. None of the businesses or institutions serve a customer base that is uniquely dependent upon their location within the study area, nor are they subject to

regulations or publicly adopted plans aimed at preserving, enhancing, or otherwise protecting them in their current location.

The study area is a well-established commercial center with a mix of residential, commercial, and institutional uses, such that the Proposed Project would not introduce a new economic activity or add to a concentration of a particular sector of the local economy enough to significantly alter or accelerate existing economic patterns. The Proposed Project would not directly displace uses that provide substantial direct support for businesses in the area (such as ambulance services for hospitals) or that bring people into the area who form a substantial portion of the customer base for local businesses. The Proposed Project would not directly or indirectly displace residents, workers, or visitors who form a substantial portion of the customer base of existing businesses in the study area. The Proposed Project would increase the number of daytime workers and visitors relative to existing numbers who live in and visit the study area.

Overall, many of the types of services displaced would eventually be re-introduced into the Project Area in newer spaces and with greater capacity for expansion. Potentially displaced businesses would also be able to find comparable space within the study area or the City at large. While the potentially displaced establishments and jobs are valuable individually and collectively to the City, the Proposed Project would provide modern office, retail, and hotel space in an area of the City where the commercial building stock is aging and in need of revitalization. The Proposed Project would strengthen the City's economic base by providing new, modern office space in Manhattan's central business district. In addition, the Proposed Project would create new retail options to meet the needs of local residents, workers, and visitors. The Proposed Project is necessary to maintain the Project Area's competitiveness and connectivity as a business district within the City and region. Although the Proposed Project would directly displace a total of 9,137 employees, it would support 59,300 new permanent jobs within the study area. Existing businesses could capitalize on new demand from the worker population such that an increase in sales and services rendered could offset potential increased rents.

The Proposed Project would increase the density and capacity for additional businesses and firms through new commercial spaces within the Project Area. The new commercial spaces within the Proposed Project would support greater business activity for current and new establishments located in the study area. Additionally, the improved transportation infrastructure would allow for greater rail and transit capacity, as well as improved accessibility for commuters, facilitating job growth within the study area and in New York City. The Proposed Project would provide substantial new high-density and commercial development proximate to Penn Station. The generation of new, permanent direct and indirect jobs would produce ongoing fiscal benefits for both New York City and New York State, including income and sales tax revenues. The economic benefits expected with the Proposed Project would support the commercial character of the of the study area and would not result in an impact to neighborhood character.

OPEN SPACE

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on publicly accessible open space, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in Chapter 6, "Open Space," the Proposed Project would result in a significant adverse open space impact, which is due primarily to the addition of new office workers to the study area. While the Proposed Project would result in a significant adverse impact, open space is not a defining feature of neighborhood character. Further, the Proposed Project would result in a net increase of more than a half-acre of new passive open space over No Action conditions.

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2028

In 2028, the Proposed Project would introduce improvements to Plaza 33 on the west side of Seventh Avenue in the bed of West 33rd Street. The Proposed Project would improve the plaza with trees, planters, moveable seating, and new paving. The improvements to Plaza 33 with the Proposed Project would provide an enhanced environment for passive recreation, programming, and pedestrian circulation. No other changes are anticipated by 2028 and no significant adverse impacts would result in Phase 1.

2038

The Proposed Project would eliminate the through-block east plaza that is part of the 1 Penn Plaza privately owned public space (POPS) with the development of Site 5. The elimination of the plaza represents a reduction of approximately 0.16 acres of passive open space, which would result in a direct significant adverse impact. As discussed in Chapter 7, “Shadows,” the Proposed Project would cast incremental shadows on six open space resources, including the MSG POPS, Plaza 33, Herald Square Park, Chelsea Park, the Penn South open spaces, and the Farley Building’s Eighth Avenue steps; however, the shadows that would be cast on these open spaces would not result in an impact to neighborhood character because open space is not a defining feature of the neighborhood’s character.

With respect to the indirect effects of the Proposed Project, the introduction of a substantial new worker population associated with the commercial development on the eight sites would result in a decrease in the passive open space ratio of approximately 8.87 percent. Taking into account the combined residential and worker populations within the study area, there would be an 8.17 percent decrease in the combined open space ratio. These decreases would exceed the *CEQR Technical Manual* threshold of a five percent decrease for a potential indirect open space impact. Notwithstanding the significant adverse open space impact, the Proposed Project would result in a net increase in passive open space with the inclusion of a public plaza on Site 2. The plaza would be approximately 30,800 sf (0.71 acres) and would be developed with a variety of hard and soft scape features to support passive recreation use, as well as midblock pedestrian access between West 30th and West 31st Streets. Although detailed designs for the proposed plaza have not yet been prepared, it is expected that it would include a variety of seating options and a mix of paved and planted areas, with planted areas.

Under existing conditions, the study area exhibits a shortage of passive open space. The study area contains a total of 7.58 acres of passive open space. The non-residential (worker) population typically uses passive open space during the day, so the passive open space ratio is the most relevant ratio for consideration. With an estimated worker population of approximately 250,000, the worker study area has a passive open space ratio of 0.030 acres per 1,000 workers. This is below the City’s goal of 0.15 acres of passive space per 1,000 workers. The combined passive open space ratio of 0.028 acres per 1,000 workers and residents is also below the goal of 0.17 acres of passive space per 1,000 workers and residents.

The lack of open space in the study area indicates that open space is not a defining feature of neighborhood character, but the introduction of new and enhanced plazas would provide an amenity for the residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, as well as commuters and visitors to the area. The new and enhanced plazas would add functional passive open space and make the area around Penn Station more attractive. Furthermore, coupled with other public realm improvements planned for the area, such as wider sidewalks and potential shared streets, the plazas would serve to unify the area around Penn Station with the neighborhoods that surround it.

SHADOWS

Defining features of neighborhood character would not be adversely affected due to potential shadows-related effects of the Proposed Project, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

2028

The Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse shadow impact in 2028. In Phase 1, the Proposed Project would cast incremental shadows on 33 sunlight-sensitive resources. However, the new shadows would be of limited extent and duration and would not cause any significant adverse shadow impacts.

2038

The Proposed Project would result in significant adverse shadow impacts to the following sunlight-sensitive resources: MSG POPS, Plaza 33, Herald Square Park, Chelsea Park, the Penn South open spaces, the Farley Building, St. Michael's Roman Catholic Church, St. Francis of Assisi Church, and the former Greenwich Savings Bank.

As noted above, open space is not a defining feature of neighborhood character. While incremental shadow may affect the usability of the six open spaces (including the steps of the Farley Building), the shadow impacts would not constitute a significant impact to neighborhood character because these open spaces do not contribute substantially to the existing character of the study area.

Of the four architectural historic resources that would experience a significant adverse shadow impact, the Farley Building is the only resource that is a defining feature of neighborhood character. The Farley Building, a New York City Landmark (NYCL) and State- and National Register (S/NR)-listed structure, has multiple elements identified as sunlight-sensitive: the front steps of the building on Eighth Avenue (which are often utilized by workers and visitors for lunch-time seating and people watching); the monumental colonnade at the entrance at the top of the steps (the architectural significance of which depends partly on the interplay of light and shadow), and the skylights (including the large skylight providing daylight to the new Moynihan Train Hall).

In the winter, the Proposed Project would eliminate most or, at certain times, all the direct sun that would otherwise be available to the Moynihan Train Hall skylight. In the fall and early spring, similarly but to a lesser degree, project-generated shadow would eliminate part or sometimes all direct sun from the skylight intermittently throughout the day. In the late spring and summer months, the effect of incremental shadow on the Moynihan Train Hall skylight would be less severe, eliminating all sunlight briefly in the mornings but remaining limited for the rest of the day in these seasons, allowing some or all of the skylights to be in sun for most of the day.

In all seasons, the large central skylight would continue to receive ambient daylight throughout the day. The skylight could also potentially receive reflected sunlight at times from the tall glassy buildings to the north, east, and west. The incremental shadow cast on the skylight would adversely affect the appreciation of the interior of the new train hall, particularly in the fall, winter, and early spring.

Incremental shadow would fall on large portions of the Eighth Avenue colonnade for long periods of the day in the fall, winter, and early spring. In the late spring and summer months, incremental

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shadow would eliminate sun briefly in the morning, then shade portions of the colonnade intermittently in the late morning and midday. Incremental shadow would fall on large areas of the steps for much of the day in all seasons.

The incremental shadows would affect the appreciation of the colonnade and recessed entrance under the portico and affect the public's use of the steps as an open space resource. However, the shadows would not significantly diminish the Farley Building's unique context and its imposing presence on Eighth Avenue, which contributes to the overall character of the neighborhood. The Farley Building would continue to occupy the full superblock between West 31st and West 33rd Streets and would be across the street from MSG, which is also a relatively lower-scale building, located among the higher density buildings of Hudson Yards and the Project Area. Therefore, the potential shadow impact to the Farley Building would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

HISTORIC AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential impacts of the Proposed Project on historic and cultural resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

The Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse impacts to archaeological resources, but it has the potential to result in significant adverse direct impacts on six architectural resources that would be removed to allow for the development of the Proposed Project. In addition, indirect or contextual impacts would occur one historic resource.

2028

In Phase 1, the Proposed Project would result in significant adverse direct impacts on five architectural resources located on Sites 2 and 3 that would be removed for the proposed below-grade expansion of Penn Station, and one architectural resource on Site 7 that would be demolished to allow for new commercial development on Site 7. The resources are presented below.

- Penn Station Service Building, 236-248 West 31st Street (S/NR-eligible, NYCL-eligible);
- Fairmont Building, 239-241 West 30th Street (S/NR-eligible);
- St. John the Baptist Roman Catholic Church Complex, 207-215 West 30th Street (S/NR-eligible, NYCL-eligible);
- Penn Terminal Building, 370 Seventh Avenue (S/NR-eligible)
- Stewart Hotel, 371-377 Seventh Avenue (S/NR-eligible, NYCL-eligible); and
- Hotel Pennsylvania, 401 Seventh Avenue (S/NR-eligible).

The removal of these historic buildings would not alter the overall character of the study area, as the study area exhibits a varied context of older, smaller buildings interspersed with taller, modern buildings. It would also not change the predominant commercial and transportation-related character of the neighborhood surrounding Penn Station. In addition, the individual iconic historic structures that are defining features of the study area's neighborhood character—the Farley Building, R. H. Macy & Company Store (also known as Macy's), and the Empire State Building—would not be displaced. Shadow-related impacts on the Eighth Avenue façade of the Farley Building are discussed in "Shadows," above. The remaining resources affected by shadows are not defining elements of neighborhood character.

2038

In Phase 2, the Proposed Project would result in significant adverse visual impacts on the Empire State Building from certain vantage points. These potential impacts would not affect neighborhood character.

As discussed in Chapter 9, “Urban Design and Visual Resources,” the Proposed Project would obstruct certain prominent views of the Empire State Building from the western portion of the study area, resulting in a significant adverse visual impact from certain vantage points. Views would be blocked along West 34th Street, west of Sixth Avenue, by the proposed development on Site 6. West 34th Street is a wide view corridor that provides prominent and largely unobstructed views. In addition, portions of the Empire State Building visible in views northeast along the western portion of West 28th Street between Eighth and Ninth Avenues, northeast from the south side of the Ninth Avenue and West 28th Street intersection, and northeast from the passive recreation portion of Chelsea Park along Ninth Avenue would be fully obstructed by the proposed developments on Site 2 (although some views would be available from this portion of Chelsea Park in leaf-off conditions).

The obstruction of some views looking east and northeast to the Empire State Building would not constitute an impact to neighborhood character, because views would continue to be available from other street-level, publicly accessible locations in the study area. Views of the Empire State Building would be unobstructed from other locations in the study area, such as views looking east along West 33rd Street. More proximate and complete views of the Empire State Building would remain unaffected in views from the north and south on Fifth Avenue, from vantage points east of the Empire State Building looking west, and in views looking east from areas east of Sixth Avenue. Furthermore, although not considered in the *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology for assessing impacts to visual resources, views of the Empire State Building would also be visible from the upper levels of taller buildings in the study area, including buildings in the west portion of the study area. The obstruction of views to the Empire State Building from a limited number of vantage points in the neighborhood would not result in a significant impact to neighborhood character.

URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project on urban design and visual resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed below, the Proposed Project would introduce improvements to the public realm that are expected to enhance neighborhood character.

2028

The Proposed Project would result in demolition of the Church of St. John the Baptist on Site 2, which would result in a significant adverse visual resource impact. However, the Church of St. John the Baptist is not a defining feature of neighborhood character. Therefore, its demolition would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. The commercial development on Site 7 would result in wider sidewalks, seating, and landscaping. The new building on Site 7 would be designed with a base and setback tower, anticipated to be of contemporary designs, and would contain office and retail uses. The uses and design features of the Proposed Project would be consistent with the urban design characteristics of the study area, and the ground-floor retail uses would provide visual interest to the pedestrian. Plaza 33, in the bed of West 33rd Street west of Seventh Avenue, would be enhanced with, among other

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improvements, trees, fixed planters, moveable seating, and new paving. The improvements to Plaza 33 would provide an enhanced environment for passive recreation, programming, and pedestrian circulation, and are intended to create an inviting open space amenity with a clear hierarchy and organization of space that carefully balances the pedestrian circulation and passive recreation functions of the plaza. The Proposed Project would enhance neighborhood character by making the public realm more attractive and improve pedestrian facilities.

2038

The Proposed Project is assumed to be completed by 2038, including construction on all development sites, all public transportation and public realm improvements, and the reconstruction and expansion of Penn Station. A visual impact attributed to the obstruction of views of the Empire State building from certain vantage points would occur in 2038; however, as discussed above in “Historic and Cultural Resources,” the visual impact would not alter neighborhood character. The development of Site 8 would result in the demolition of the copper skybridge spanning from Site 8 across West 32nd Street, causing a significant adverse visual resource impact, but its removal would not change neighborhood character because the skybridge is not a defining feature of the neighborhood.

In addition to the development completed by 2028 on Site 7, development between 2028 and 2038 would include new buildings on Sites 1 through 6 and 8 and their associated public transportation and public realm improvements, including construction of a new plaza on Site 2 and wider sidewalks at all sites adjoining City streets.

As part of the GPP, ESD would prepare Design Guidelines for the Proposed Project, which would specify the parameters for permitted development in lieu of zoning. The Design Guidelines would set forth building bulk and massing parameters, including establishing tower setbacks and maximum base heights, as well as tower coverage controls to encourage varied tower forms that would result in a varied skyline. The Design Guidelines would also set forth requirements for active ground floor uses to foster an active street experience for the pedestrian. In addition, The Design Guidelines would permit advertising signage on building frontages along the Seventh Avenue corridor from West 34th to West 30th Streets and on the portions of east-west streets within 100 feet of Seventh Avenue and would stipulate that advertising signage be incorporated into the building architecture to avoid having billboards rising from the rooftops of buildings on metal framing structures. The area already contains large-scale advertising signage including on Seventh Avenue and in other locations, and, therefore, signage at the development sites would not result in neighborhood character impacts.

The Proposed Project would revitalize the study area by creating a revitalized, transit-oriented commercial district centered around Penn Station. The proposed developments, consisting of base and tower configurations, would be consistent with the urban design of the study area—particularly the larger, taller, and more recently constructed buildings. The proposed developments would introduce much needed public transportation and public realm improvements, including new public open space that would enhance the pedestrian experience, activate the area, and create an attractive environment in which to shop, work, and visit.

Public transportation improvements would be implemented in connection with new building construction. It is anticipated that transit improvements, including wider platforms, new stairs, and entrances, would be provided at the 34th Street–Penn Station–Eighth Avenue [A, C, and E], 34th Street–Penn Station–Seventh Avenue [1, 2, and 3], and 34th Street–Herald Square–Sixth Avenue [B, D, F, M, N, Q, R, W, and PATH] subway stations. In addition, an east–west underground

corridor connecting the 34th Street–Herald Square and the 34th Street–Penn Station–Seventh Avenue Subway Stations would be provided in connection with development of Sites 7 and 8.

A new through-block open space would be created on Site 2 between West 30th and West 31st Streets. The proposed open space would be a public plaza constructed in connection with the commercial buildings on Site 2. The plaza would provide a variety of hard- and soft-scape features to support passive recreation and provide a midblock pedestrian connection between West 30th and West 31st Streets. The plaza is expected to include access and egress points to the expanded Penn Station. The proposed public plaza would provide new open space amenities directly above a modernized and expanded Penn Station, and would serve the new commercial district surrounding Penn Station and the adjacent neighborhoods.

The Proposed Project envisions the future provision of shared streets to enhance the pedestrian realm and provide space for functional elements such as seating, plantings, and furniture. With shared streets, a roadway is converted to a full-time configuration that allows pedestrians and cyclists to share space with slow-moving vehicles. Shared streets are designed to accommodate high pedestrian volumes and low traffic volumes and speeds. These corridors are contemplated along West 32nd Street between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, and West 33rd Street between Sixth and Ninth Avenues. The Proposed Project would allow for the enhancement of existing bicycle lane infrastructure along Seventh and Eighth Avenues and—in connection with the development of Sites 1, 2, and 3—would accommodate bicycle lanes between Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, and Ninth Avenues along West 31st Street.

The public realm and public transportation improvements introduced with the Proposed Project would unify the area around Penn Station and the surrounding neighborhoods with an integrated, multi-modal circulation plan that includes a network of walkways, sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and plazas above-grade, and improved passenger circulation and wayfinding below-grade. The changes to the public realm would make the area more attractive and inviting. New entrances to Penn Station and area subway stations would be provided in connection with the commercial developments. Wider subway platforms and below-grade concourses would help accommodate the flow of visitors and workers to the area. The urban design benefits of the Proposed Project would enhance neighborhood character in the study area.

Compared to conditions in the future without the Proposed Project, in which conditions that detract from the overall visual character of the neighborhood would be expected to remain, the improvements brought about with the Proposed Project would address substandard and insanitary conditions, and make the area more attractive. The Proposed Project would include active ground-floor uses that would enliven the streetscape of the study area. These project components, and the other improvements discussed above, would enhance the pedestrian experience in the Project Area and in the surrounding neighborhood. Overall, the Proposed Project would provide benefits to neighborhood character by enhancing urban design conditions and would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character.

TRANSPORTATION

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the proposed project on transportation, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The study areas for the traffic, transit, and pedestrian analyses are determined on assigned incremental trips and not dependent on a specified distance, such as a ¼-mile from the boundaries of the Project Area. As discussed in Chapter 14, “Transportation,” the Proposed Project would result in traffic and subway line-haul

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impacts at certain intersections and subway lines, respectively, in Manhattan that are beyond the neighborhood character study area. However, these impacts would not constitute an impact to neighborhood character in these neighborhoods because traffic congestion and crowded subway trains would not be out of character in other built up Manhattan neighborhoods, including parts of Midtown.

2028

Traffic would increase in the future with the Proposed Project. As described in detail in Chapter 14, “Transportation,” the traffic analysis indicates the potential for significant adverse impacts at 71 intersections during one or more analyzed peak hours. Potential mitigation measures are discussed in Chapter 22, “Mitigation.” However, even with mitigation measures in place, there would still be some significant adverse traffic impacts that could not be fully mitigated. Even with these unmitigatable impacts, the overall effects of traffic would not be out of character with the study area, which is already defined by high levels of vehicular activity; therefore, the incremental changes would not constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character.

With respect to transit, the Proposed Project would incorporate the following public transit improvements by 2028:

- Establishing an east–west underground corridor connecting the 34th Street–Herald Square Station with the 34th Street (Seventh Avenue)–Penn Station and the Penn Station concourse, as well as access into the lobby of Site 7;
- Site 7 – Widen the uptown local No. 1 platform between West 32nd and West 33rd Streets; new West 32nd Street subway entrance just east of Seventh Avenue; new West 33rd Street subway entrance just east of Seventh Avenue and add a new ADA-compliant elevator adjacent to this entrance; and add new express No. 2/3 platform stairs at the south end of the station. These improvements would be made to the 34th Street–Penn Station (Seventh Avenue) Subway Station.

The analysis found no significant adverse impacts to bus service, but significant impacts would occur at the 34th Street–Herald Square and 34th Street–Seventh Avenue subway stations. Two stairways would be impacted at each station and two escalators would be impacted at 34th Street–Herald Square. Overall, the changes to these subway station elements resulting with the Proposed Project would not be out of character with the study area, and would not result in significant adverse impacts on neighborhood character.

The analysis of pedestrian conditions identified 16 pedestrian elements—comprising two sidewalk and 14 crosswalks—that would experience significant adverse impacts during one or more peak hours. Among these impacted elements, one sidewalk and one crosswalk would experience significant adverse impacts that could not be fully mitigated. Potential mitigation measures are discussed in Chapter 22, “Mitigation.” Additionally, the Proposed Project would result in wider sidewalks adjacent to Site 7 on Seventh Avenue and West 33rd Street as compared to the future No Action condition, potentially improving pedestrian flow.

2038

The proposed developments are assumed to be completed and in operation by 2038. Significant adverse traffic impacts would occur at 102 intersections during one or more analyzed peak hours. The number of impacted intersections is largely associated with the baseline traffic and reduced roadway capacity along several corridors. Vehicle trips generated by other as-of-right and planned development projects and changes to the roadway network would result in increased congestion

in 2038 absent the Proposed Project. Even small increases in incremental traffic attributed to the Proposed Project at some of the congested intersections would result in significant adverse impacts under the *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology that could not be fully mitigated during one or more analysis peak hours, and almost any new development in the Project Area could result in unmitigated traffic impacts. Potential measures to mitigate these impacts include signal timing changes, restriping, and changes to parking regulations. These measures are described in Chapter 22, “Mitigation.” However, even with mitigation measures in place, there would still be significant adverse traffic impacts that could not be fully mitigated. Like conditions in 2028, the effects related to traffic conditions would not be out of character with the study area, and the incremental changes would not constitute a significant impact on neighborhood character.

By 2038, the Proposed Project would incorporate the following public transportation improvements:

- Sites 1, 2, and 3 (Block 780 and portions of Blocks 754 and 806) – New Penn Station connections with publicly accessible in-building connections on Seventh and Eighth Avenues.
- Site 4 – New Penn Station entrance at the corner of Eighth Avenue and West 33rd Street incorporating a new West 33rd Street subway entrance; new West 34th Street subway entrance; and widening of the uptown local C/E platform between West 33rd and West 34th Streets. These improvements would be made to the 34th Street–Penn Station (Eighth Avenue) Subway Station.
- Site 5 – New Penn Station entrance on West 34th Street; new West 34th Street subway entrance (possibly incorporated in the new Penn Station entrance); new West 33rd Street subway entrance; and widen the downtown local No. 1 platform between West 33rd and West 34th Streets. These improvements would be made to the 34th Street–Penn Station (Seventh Avenue) Subway Station.
- Site 6 – Widen the uptown local No. 1 platform between West 33rd and West 34th Streets and new West 33rd Street subway entrance and new West 34th Street subway entrance. These improvements would be made to the 34th Street–Penn Station (Seventh Avenue) Subway Station.
- Site 8 – Construct new street level stairs at West 32nd and West 33rd Streets and Sixth Avenue, plus additional escalators and/or other vertical circulation elements as needed in consultation with MTA and NYCT; reconstruct two mezzanine stairs connecting the N/Q/R/W and B/D/F/M Subway Lines; reconfigure the fare control area at the B/D/F/M mezzanine level; and replace the PATH-related elevator in the new building on Site 8. These improvements would be made to the 34th Street–Herald Square Subway Station.

With respect to transit, the Proposed Project is not expected to result in any significant adverse bus impacts. However, the Proposed Project would result in numerous impacts at subway station elements (vertical circulation elements, control areas, and subway platforms) at the 34th Street stations on the Seventh and Eighth Avenue lines and 34th Street–Herald Square. These significant adverse impacts would be attributed to a combination of the development associated with the Proposed Project, and ridership growth from the various regional rail improvements. As discussed in Chapter 22, “Mitigation,” measures could be implemented to reduce or eliminate some of the impacts; however, some impacts would remain unmitigated due to existing station constraints, resulting in congestion at unmitigated subway station elements.

The Proposed Project includes an east–west underground corridor between Sixth and Seventh Avenues, which could be located in a rebuilt and expanded Gimbels passageway beneath West

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33rd Street or a new southward connection under Sites 7 and 8. A proposed mitigation measure being contemplated by the Penn Station Master Plan that calls for the provision of a north–south, below-grade concourse on the east side of Seventh Avenue (between approximately West 30th and West 34th Streets) could make available new and enlarged paths to redirect some of the pedestrian volumes away from certain impacted station elements, most of which are within and adjacent to the 34th Street–Seventh Avenue Station, potentially reducing the number and/or level of the impacts at station elements.

The Proposed Project would cause significant adverse subway line haul impacts, potentially resulting in crowded subway trains on the following lines that serve area subway stations: southbound 2 and 3, southbound A and D, northbound M, northbound 1, and northbound 2 and 3 subway lines. Potential mitigation measures for the subway line haul impact include the addition of more trains during the affected peak hours to increase service frequency, subject to NYCT’s operational constraints. It should be noted that, as stated in Chapter 14, “Transportation,” NYCT may provide additional guidance on the anticipated distribution of future subway ridership along the various subway lines serving the study area. Accordingly, some of the subway line haul analysis results and potential mitigation measures identified may change for the Final EIS.

Significant adverse pedestrian impacts were identified at 28 sidewalks (21 during the AM peak hour, five during the midday peak hour, and 20 during the PM peak hour), 16 corners (10 during the AM peak hour and 13 during the PM peak hour), and 60 crosswalks (53 during the AM peak hour, 33 during the midday peak hour, and 55 during the PM peak hour). Many area pedestrian elements would be operating at congested levels irrespective of the Proposed Project. Mitigation measures for sidewalk impacts typically involve the relocation of obstructions, such as trash receptacles, tree pits, and food/newspaper vendors, to increase the capacity of the sidewalk to handle pedestrians. Measures to mitigate impacts at crosswalks generally include widening the crosswalks and shifting signal time between “Walk” and “Don’t Walk” phases. Mitigation measures for pedestrian impacts at corners typically involve extending the corner to accommodate pedestrian volumes.

As described above, the north-south below-grade concourse system being contemplated by the Penn Station Master Plan is expected to facilitate travel by a substantial number of Penn Station rail riders and area subway riders along desired lines that are more direct and uninterrupted by intersection signals and surface-level vehicular and pedestrian congestion and conflicts. While the Gimbels passageway would provide substantial relief to pedestrian flow between Penn Station and the 34th Street–Herald Square Station, surface-level congestion would still be the most severe across Seventh Avenue adjacent to Penn Station from West 31st to West 34th Streets. With the underground concourse and a more effective east–west underground corridor, pedestrian volumes crossing Seventh Avenue during commuter peak periods would be substantially reduced, with those traveling to locations north of 34th Street gaining direct access to the wide north sidewalk of West 34th Street on the south side of Macy’s. The shift in pedestrian demand on Seventh Avenue could also eliminate many of the crosswalk impacts identified during the commuter peak periods between West 31st and West 34th Streets. However, the redistribution of pedestrians to the underground corridor could concentrate pedestrian volumes at other elements in the pedestrian network, such as the north sidewalk of West 34th Street on the south side of Macy’s and the east side of Seventh Avenue north of 34th Street, resulting in greater congestion at those locations.

Penn Station is the busiest passenger transportation hub in North America, and offers unmatched connectivity between intercity rail service, commuter rail service, and local subway service. As described above, the avenues and cross streets in the study area generally carry a substantial

amount of pedestrian and vehicular traffic. The thoroughfares, transit elements, and sidewalks in the study area are already heavily trafficked, and this would continue in the No Action condition. While the Proposed Project would result in incremental increases in traffic, transit, and pedestrian activity, the resulting conditions—even if unmitigated—would be substantially similar to conditions that presently exist in the study area. After considering the resulting conditions and the relevant improvements to transportation facilities such as Penn Station, subway station entrances and platforms, sidewalks, and shared streets, the changes in transportation due to the Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

NOISE

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential noise-related effects of the Proposed Action, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

2028

Phase 1 of the Proposed Project would not have the potential to result in any significant adverse impacts, as the predicted increases in noise levels would fall below the applicable *CEQR Technical Manual* significant adverse impact threshold (3.0 dBA).

2038

Due to traffic generated by the Proposed Project, significant adverse noise impacts would occur in the 2038 analysis year. The greatest predicted noise increments would occur along West 30th and West 31st Streets, primarily due to project-generated trucks traveling on these streets. West 30th and West 31st Streets are eastbound and westbound truck routes, respectively, and all trucks traveling eastbound and westbound in this area must travel along this corridor. Noise-sensitive land uses, such as residential buildings, with frontage along these streets would experience clearly noticeable increases in noise during hours of peak truck traffic. Mitigation measures to address the noise impact include the installation of double-glazed/storm windows and alternative ventilation at no cost to owners/occupants of the residences to the extent the measures are not already in place on the affected portions of the West 30th and West 31st Street façades. Noise-sensitive uses associated with the Proposed Project include hotel uses on Sites 1 and 4. Appropriate window-wall attenuation would be provided at these developments. In addition, the Proposed Project would result in noise levels at the newly introduced open space at Site 2 that would exceed the 55 dBA $L_{10(1)}$ noise level for outdoor areas requiring serenity and quiet. However, the existing noise levels at these locations are currently in the low- to mid-70s dBA, exceeding the acceptable threshold, and the predicted levels at the proposed plaza would be comparable to those at many open spaces in New York City. As noted above, relatively high levels of ambient noise are characteristic of the study area and noise increase due to the Proposed Project would not result in a significant adverse impact to neighborhood character. The noise levels in proximity to the Project Area are typical of many neighborhoods in New York City and would remain so with the Proposed Project; noise is not a defining feature of the neighborhood, and the incremental increase in noise levels resulting from the Proposed Project would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character. *