

## A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the Proposed Project’s potential effects on neighborhood character. As defined in the 2021 *City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual (CTM)*, neighborhood character is an amalgam of various elements that give neighborhoods their distinct “personality.” These elements may include a neighborhood’s land use, socioeconomic conditions, community facilities, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and/or noise conditions; but not all of these elements contribute to neighborhood character in all cases. Per *CTM* guidance, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that may contribute to neighborhood character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined. If that examination determines that one of the defining features<sup>1</sup> of the neighborhood's character would be significantly affected, then a significant neighborhood character impact may occur. In a neighborhood character assessment under CEQR, one considers how elements of the environment combine to create the context of a neighborhood and how a project may affect that context. Thus, to determine a project’s effects on neighborhood character, the elements that contribute to a neighborhood’s context are considered together.

As discussed in **Chapter 02.0, “Project Alternatives,”** there are three feasible alternatives under consideration for implementation of the Proposed Project. These include: Alternative 2 – the Rezoning Alternative; Alternative 3 – the Non-Rezoning Alternative; and Alternative 4 – the Midblock Bulk Alternative. A discussion of Alternative 5 – Rehabilitation and Infill Alternative, which has been determined to be infeasible, is presented in **Chapter 05.22, “Rehabilitation and Infill Alternative Analysis.”** Refer to **Chapter 04.0, “Analysis Framework,” Table 04.0-4,** for information on the analysis approach for the three feasible alternatives for each technical area.

This chapter includes a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character, which was prepared in conformance with the *CTM*. This chapter describes the defining features of the existing neighborhood character and considers the potential effects of the Proposed Project on these defining features. This assessment relies on the technical analyses presented in other chapters of this EIS.

## B. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts related to neighborhood character under the Rezoning Alternative, Non-Rezoning Alternative, or the Midblock Bulk Alternative. The neighborhood character of the study area is defined by a few key components,

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<sup>1</sup> According to the *CTM*, “defining features” are the salient or major characteristics of a neighborhood in relation to the area’s overall character. As described in more detail below, defining features of a neighborhood may include geography and topography, land use and density, historic features including buildings or other signifiers of the past, cultural features of a neighborhood, transportation patterns, and natural features.

including its mix of land uses and building types, open space resources, and the street system. As described elsewhere in this EIS, the Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse impacts in the impact categories of land use, zoning, and public policy (**Chapter 05.01**) socioeconomic conditions (**Chapter 05.02**); community facilities (**Chapter 05.03**); open space (**Chapter 05.04**) or urban design and visual resources (**Chapter 05.07**). As discussed in **Chapter 05.06, “Historic and Cultural Resources,”** the demolition of the State/National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR)-eligible Elliott-Chelsea Houses has been identified as a significant adverse impact on architectural resources. However, it is not expected to result in a significant adverse impact with respect to neighborhood character as the existing design and construction of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses is not consistent with the surrounding Chelsea neighborhood, nor would its demolition affect any defining feature of neighborhood character. In addition, the demolition would facilitate the redevelopment of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site with new buildings that would include replacement of all existing New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) residential units and community facility uses. The significant adverse transportation impacts that have been identified and described in **Chapter 05.13, “Transportation”** would not affect any defining feature of neighborhood character, nor would a combination of moderately adverse effects affect a defining feature. Additionally, as described in **Chapter 05.16, “Noise Abatement and Control,”** window-wall attenuation will be required to ensure an acceptable interior noise level for the Proposed Project. These requirements will be memorialized in a legally binding document between NYCHA and the PACT Partner. In addition, as discussed in **Chapter 05.05, “Shadows,”** the Proposed Project is expected to result in significant adverse impacts with respect to shadows. These impacts would not affect neighborhood conditions to the degree that they would singularly or in combination result in significant adverse neighborhood character impacts. Therefore, the Proposed Project would not result in any significant adverse neighborhood character impacts related to shadows, historic and cultural resources, transportation, or noise.

## C. METHODOLOGY

As detailed in the *CTM*, New York City’s neighborhoods are organic and dynamic places, often identified as much by a long-established character as they are by their changes over time. Such changes are often brought on by factors independent of a proposed project, such as increases and decreases in population, local, regional, and global economic forces, and shifts in demographic patterns. An assessment of neighborhood character is generally recommended when a project has the potential to result in significant adverse impacts in the following technical areas: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; community facilities; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; or noise; or when a project may have moderate effects on several of the elements that define a neighborhood’s character.

As noted in the *CTM*, neighborhood character impacts are rare. Only under unusual circumstances would a combination of moderate effects to the neighborhood result in an impact to neighborhood character, in the absence of an impact in any of the relevant technical areas. Moreover, a significant impact identified in one of the technical areas that contribute to a neighborhood’s character is not automatically equivalent to a significant impact on neighborhood character. Rather, it serves as an indication that neighborhood character should be examined. The examination focuses on whether a defining feature of the neighborhood’s character may be significantly affected. The *CTM* further

advises that because a neighborhood's character is perceived and contextual, this judgment may be more subjective than in other technical areas.

A preliminary assessment of neighborhood character determines whether changes expected in other technical analysis areas may affect a defining feature of the neighborhood and its character.

The assessment should answer the following two questions:

- What are the defining features of the neighborhood?
- Does the project have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood, either through the potential for a significant adverse impact or a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas?

The key elements that define neighborhood character, and their relationships to one another, form the basis of determining impact significance. Usually, a significant change to one of the determining elements of neighborhood character would result in a significant impact on neighborhood character. In general, the more uniform and consistent the existing neighborhood context, the more sensitive it is to change. A neighborhood that has a more varied context is typically able to tolerate greater changes without experiencing significant impacts. If there is no potential for a project to affect the defining features of a neighborhood, a detailed assessment is not warranted. Pursuant to the *CTM*, the preliminary assessment evaluates the expected changes resulting from the Proposed Project in the relevant technical areas using the findings from other chapters of this 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.

### **Study Areas**

According to the *CTM*, the study area for a preliminary assessment of neighborhood character is typically consistent with the study areas utilized in the relevant technical areas assessed under CEQR that contribute to the defining features of the neighborhood. Therefore, the study area for this analysis is the same as those used in land use and urban design assessments. As shown in **Figure 05.01-4 in Chapter 05.01**, the ¼-mile secondary study area for the assessment of the Proposed Project on neighborhood character is generally bounded by lots fronting 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue to the east, W. 31st and W. 33rd Streets to the north, West Street and the Hudson River to the west, and Gansevoort and Horatio Streets to the south. It encompasses substantial portions of the Chelsea neighborhood and the Meatpacking District, as well as the southern portion of the newly developed Hudson Yards.

## **D. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

### **Defining Features**

#### **Project Sites**

The Project Sites consist of the two separate public housing campuses owned and maintained by NYCHA: Fulton Houses and Elliott-Chelsea Houses. They are located approximately a ¼-mile from each other and are part of the Chelsea neighborhood of Manhattan's Community District 4. They are described in detail in **Chapter 04.0**, specifically Section C, "Project Sites" which is incorporated herein by reference.

#### **¼-Mile Secondary Study Area and Surrounding Neighborhood**

For the secondary study area overall, predominant land uses are residential and commercial uses, reflecting a mixed-use condition found on most blocks. Other uses include public facilities and institutions, such as the General Theological Seminary occupying a portion of the block bound by W. 21st Street, 9th Avenue, W. 20th Street, and 10th Avenue; and transportation/utility uses, namely the US Postal Service Manhattan Vehicle Maintenance Facility at 201 11th Avenue. There is very little vacant land, which is limited to only 11 of 1,138 lots equating to 4 percent of the total lot area in the secondary study area. Overall, on most blocks east of 10th Avenue and north of W. 16th Street, residential uses are more prevalent than commercial and other uses, though a few blocks are entirely or substantially occupied by public facilities and institutional uses, such as the Intermediate School 70 building on a midblock through-lot at 333 W. 18th Street, between 9th and 10th Avenues. West of 10th Avenue, on most blocks, there is a more heterogeneous pattern primarily distributed among commercial, residential, and mixed commercial-residential buildings.

There are also a few concentrated enclaves where a single use predominates. This includes a residential area between 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenues and W. 16<sup>th</sup> and W. 28<sup>th</sup> Street, encompassing four major housing complexes (London Terrace, Penn South, Elliott-Chelsea Houses, and Fulton Houses). These are mostly multi-family residential uses, with some open spaces (tower-in-a-park configurations on the Project Sites and Penn South). One block south of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site is the London Terrace market-rate apartment complex, with its fourteen 17- to 19-story towers and approximately 1,700 DUs. The Penn South affordable housing cooperative, formally known as the Mutual Redevelopment Houses, is located directly east of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site. Covering most of the land on the blocks from W. 23<sup>rd</sup> to W. 29<sup>th</sup> Streets between 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Avenues, Mutual Redevelopment Houses consists of ten, 22-story towers and a total of approximately 2,800 DUs. Besides these large residential developments, the secondary study area's residentially concentrated blocks also include smaller scale residential buildings, including those found in the Chelsea Historic District (refer to **Chapter 05.06**) located north of the Fulton Houses Project Site. These buildings include brick and brownstone rowhouses at 437 to 459 W. 24<sup>th</sup> Street, which have 15-foot deep setbacks from the street, which is atypical for this area. Furthermore, there are also mixed commercial-residential buildings, including many of the newer apartment buildings along the High Line such as The Caledonia at 450 W. 17<sup>th</sup> Street and Ten23 at 500 W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.

In partial contrast to the heavily residential character of many study area blocks, W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street has a mixed land use pattern, with a high proportion of mixed commercial-residential and commercial only buildings. It is one of Chelsea's main retail corridors extending almost continuously east from 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

Directly south of the Fulton Houses Project Site, the Meatpacking District and some nearby blocks have a distinct land use concentration. It is predominantly comprised of commercial retail and office buildings, formerly occupied by industrial and manufacturing uses, along with a few mixed commercial-residential buildings as well as parking facilities. The two blocks between W. 15<sup>th</sup> and W. 16<sup>th</sup> Streets from 10<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues are occupied by Chelsea Market west of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Google offices east of 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There are no other major concentrations of commercial and office buildings in the study area, though there are individual buildings dispersed across various locations, including in the northwestern part of the study area, mostly on Blocks 672, 696, 697, 698, 702, and 729. Block 729 is partially occupied by the newly developed 2 Manhattan West, aka Two Manhattan West or 2MW (but 2 Manhattan West is used for consistency in subsequent references), an office building located at 401 W. 31st Street. This 60-story office building was completed in 2023, is pending full occupancy, and forms part of a larger development that covers the two-block area bound by W. 33rd Street, 9th Avenue, W. 31st Street, and 10th Avenue.

The area is very well served by public transit and other modes of transportation that provide alternatives to private auto travel. These include the 14<sup>th</sup> Street (A, C, E, and L lines) and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (C and E lines) subway stations on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, the 18<sup>th</sup> Street (1 line) and 28<sup>th</sup> Street (1 line) subway stations on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue, 23<sup>rd</sup> Street (F and M lines) subway station on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and bus routes including the M11 (9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> Avenues), M12 (11<sup>th</sup>/12<sup>th</sup> Avenues and W. 14<sup>th</sup>/W. 18<sup>th</sup> Streets), M14 SBS (W. 14<sup>th</sup> Street), M20 (7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup> Avenues), and M23 SBS (W. 23<sup>rd</sup> Street). The area is also served by Citi Bike and accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists via the City's expanding bicycle lane network. Additionally, it is an area with a well-developed urban fabric of local businesses and services that encourage travel by foot.

Generally, the “defining features” of a neighborhood may be considered its amalgam of the characteristics described herein. Although there are predominant elements in Chelsea, such as continuous street walls found on most blocks, the local retail corridors found along most wide street frontages, and the mixed land use pattern, the variation of the neighborhood is as much a defining meta characteristic as any specific building typology. The area contains a range of building heights, density, architectural styles, and demography. The mix of uses and lot sizes likewise ranges across the neighborhood, with very finely grained conditions in some parts and a larger scale mixture in others. Apart from the High Line public open space and the Hudson River waterfront, which are signature features, the area is as notable for its variety rather than any specific neighborhood-wide characteristics.

Indicative of this, the Project Sites do not on their own constitute a “defining feature” of the neighborhood as defined in the *CTM*. They are one of many components in the area's heterogeneous composite, but they do not constitute a major element of the area's overall character, i.e., they do not typify a characteristic that helps the define the neighborhood's identity and give the area its “personality.” They are outliers relative to the predominant character of the area, due to their towers-in-a-park configuration in contrast to the area's more prevalent “traditional built form” identified in the Community Board 4 Chelsea 197-a Plan (refer to description in **Chapter**

**05.01).** At the same time, the Project Sites are not widely considered to be unique icons that define Chelsea's identity and character. This is in contrast to, for example, the High Line public open space, or the Flatiron Building in the nearby Flatiron District, which are generally considered to be major neighborhood features due to, and not in spite of, their singular and prominent attributes. Although the Project Sites are important as housing developments, they are not unusually distinctive as part of neighborhood geography, topography, land use, density, cultural features, transportation patterns, or natural features. Their provision of a significant amount of public housing may be considered a contributing factor to neighborhood character. However, given that the Proposed Project would retain and improve the existing public housing units for current residents and increase the number of affordable housing units, the Project Sites' contribution to the character of the neighborhood would be strengthened under Rezoning Alternative, Non-Rezoning Alternative, or Midblock Bulk Alternative, unlike the No-Action Alternative.

Regarding historic features, while the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) determined that the Elliott-Chelsea Houses are eligible for listing on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (S/NR), SHPO did not cite their place within the larger neighborhood as a defining feature or reason for their S/NR eligibility. Instead SHPO cited specific criteria related to their social history, political/governmental importance, site plan, and architecture. The Fulton Houses, lacking such notable historical characteristics, were determined by SHPO to not to be S/NR eligible. Additionally, it should be noted that none of the Project Sites are eligible for listing as New York City Landmarks (NYCLs) by the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC).

## **E. ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS**

The sections below discuss potential changes resulting from the Proposed Project for each of the alternatives analyzed in this assessment in the following technical areas that are considered in the neighborhood character assessment pursuant to the *CTM*: land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; community facilities; open space; historic and cultural resources; urban design and visual resources; shadows; transportation; and noise. The assessment uses the findings from the pertinent chapters of this 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, defining features of the study area's neighborhood character would not be adversely affected either through the potential of any significant adverse impact or in combination with any other moderate effects in the relevant technical areas.

### **Alternative 1 – No-Action Alternative**

As the Project Sites would not experience development under the No-Action Alternative, there are no anticipated significant adverse impacts to the neighborhood character of the surrounding area pertaining to land use, zoning, and public policy, socioeconomic conditions, community facilities, open space, historic and cultural resources, urban design and visual resources, shadows, transportation, and noise.

## **Alternative 2 – Rezoning Alternative and Alternative 4 – Midblock Bulk Alternative**

### **Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative on land use, zoning, and public policy, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 05.01**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk alternative would not result in significant adverse impacts related to land use, zoning, or public policy. The Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative would result in land use changes on the Project Sites, with increased residential and community facility density and the introduction of commercial uses. However, such uses are already present in the neighborhood and a neighborhood such as Chelsea, with a varied context of uses and densities, is typically able to tolerate greater changes without experiencing significant impacts, as the *CTM* notes.

### **Socioeconomic Conditions**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative on socioeconomic conditions, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As discussed in **Chapter 05.02**, initial screening-level assessments of direct residential and direct business displacement, indirect business, and adverse effects of specific industries, and a preliminary assessment of indirect residential displacement determined that the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in significant adverse impacts related to socioeconomic conditions. Likewise, the effects under these alternatives related to socioeconomic conditions would not adversely affect the character of the neighborhood.

### **Community Facilities and Services**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative on community facilities, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

As discussed in **Chapter 05.03**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not have a direct impact or displace any public schools, libraries, childcare facilities, health care facilities, or police and fire protection services, in terms of resulting in a temporary or permanent closure. One existing community facility, the Hudson Guild Elliott Center, would need to be temporarily relocated to a nearby location before it is subsequently relocated to a permanent new location on the Elliott-Chelsea Project Site. The Hudson Guild Children's Center and Fulton Community Center, also currently located on site, would remain on site and in operation until the on-site replacement community facility and neighborhood center space is developed. Despite the temporary relocation of the Hudson Guild Elliott Center to a nearby site, all three community facilities located on the Project Sites would, in general, remain operational throughout the

construction process with only minimal disruptions. Therefore, there are no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character under the Rezoning and Midblock Bulk Alternatives as it pertains to community facilities and services.

### **Open Space**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative on publicly accessible open space, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

As discussed in **Chapter 05.04**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in any direct effects related to encroachments on or loss of public open space, or changes in open space such that it no longer serves the same user population. As detailed in **Chapter 05.04**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in a significant indirect adverse impact to open space due to the introduction of new residents. There would be an increase in the amount of accessible and useable accessory open spaces from 1.692 acres of useable accessory open space under existing conditions to 2.588 acres and 2.619 acres of useable accessory open spaces under the Rezoning and Midblock Bulk Alternatives, respectively. The accessory open spaces would be transformed into community hubs, featuring new amenities such as dog walks and community gardens for urban gardening. Active areas like playgrounds and splash zones would provide enhanced play opportunities, while passive spaces with shaded trellises and benches offer spots for relaxation. Programmable lawns would host resident events, from summer movie nights and lawn games, to annual holiday tree lightings.

Additionally, as discussed in **Chapter 05.05**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would result in significant adverse shadows impacts to two open space resources – Chelsea Park and PS 33 Playground. However, as neither resource is a defining feature of the neighborhood,<sup>2</sup> the impacts to these resources would not constitute neighborhood character impacts per *CTM* guidance. In turn, the cumulative effects of shadows impacts would not significantly impact the overall experience of pedestrians. Accordingly, shadows generated by the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not, singularly or in connection with potential impacts from other technical areas, result in a neighborhood character impact.

As such, there would be no neighborhood character impact under the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative as it pertains to open space.

### **Historic and Cultural Resources**

Defining features<sup>3</sup> of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to the potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative on

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<sup>2</sup> As the two parks are not defining features of the neighborhood, which contains several parks and pedestrian corridors along public streets, the neighborhood character effects of shadows on these open spaces would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

<sup>3</sup> As described above, defining features of a neighborhood are its salient or major characteristics in relation to the area's overall character. Examples of a defining historic feature could include a historic district, landmark, or significant historic building, such as a church or institutional building.



historic and cultural resources, either individually or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

Although demolition of the S/NR-eligible Elliott-Chelsea Houses has been identified as a significant adverse impact on historic resources (refer to **Chapter 05.06**), it is not expected to result in a significant adverse impact with respect to neighborhood character. The buildings of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses currently exhibit deteriorated brick facades and the continued deterioration of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site would likely diminish many of the attributes that qualify its listing on the S/NR. Moreover, the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site is not typical or characteristic of the surrounding neighborhood, as it exhibits a different style and site planning. With the deterioration of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site, its demolition would not create a significant change in the overall context or cohesion of the neighborhood character, given the heterogenous nature of the majority of the study area's built environment. This is particularly due to the site's style and site planning, which is defined by cost-effective construction features and tower-in-the-park configuration. The Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative is expected to improve the neighborhood character through the development of buildings oriented towards the streets with active ground-floor uses, complementing the predominantly mixed-use commercial and residential nature of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative would replace all existing 2,056 NYCHA Section 9 public housing DUs with new Section 8 Project-Based Voucher (PBV) DUs in new buildings with better quality housing for existing neighborhood residents. This would enable existing NYCHA residents to remain in the area with better housing conditions than would exist under the No-Action Alternative. This would be beneficial to neighborhood character. There is not a feasible alternative that would both avoid the significant adverse historic resources impact and address the substandard housing conditions on the Project Sites that are detrimental to neighborhood character. As such the demolition of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses would not result in a significant adverse neighborhood character impact.

### **Urban Design and Visual Resources**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative 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 in **Chapter 05.07**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would result in improved streetscape, building, and open space conditions more consistent with the surrounding secondary study area. The existing character of the neighborhood's varied built environment allows it to tolerate the significant changes that would occur under the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative without experiencing significant adverse impacts.

While the specific arrangement of bulk under these two alternatives on the Fulton Houses Project Site would differ and were analyzed discretely for the urban design and visual resources assessment in **Chapter 05.07**, the impact determination provided in that chapter concluded that neither alternative would result in significant adverse urban design and visual resources impacts. As such, in this assessment of neighborhood character effects, the Rezoning Alternative and the Midblock Bulk Alternative would be qualitatively similar in that they would have the same project

boundary, the same overall density, and similar building heights. For example, the tallest building on the Fulton Houses Project Site would be 385.5 feet tall under the Rezoning Alternative and 399.9 feet tall under the Midblock Bulk Alternative (heights are inclusive of rooftop bulkhead). Such differences are minimal compared to the overall scale of proposed development and would not be easily discernible with respect to pedestrian experience and vantage point. The Midblock Bulk Alternative was developed in response to comments provided by Manhattan Community Board 4 and others on the Draft Scope of Work for the EIS to study an alternative that, with respect to the Fulton Houses Project Site, reduces height and density on the avenues and moves it toward middle of the blocks.

The Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in a significant adverse impact to urban design and visual resources. Likewise, the effects under these alternatives related to urban design and visual resources would not adversely affect the character of the neighborhood.

### **Shadows**

As discussed in **Chapter 05.05**, the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would result in incremental shadow coverage on several open space resources. This includes incremental shadows cast on Chelsea Park and PS 33 Playground, both located adjacent to the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site. The coverage and duration of incremental shadows on these two open space resources would cause significant adverse impacts to the user experience in Chelsea Park and PS 33 Playground. Chelsea Park is mostly filled with an artificial turf play field and asphalt ball courts, both of which are generally used for active recreational purposes. PS 33 Playground, part of the Schoolyards to Playgrounds program, features basketball court, running tracks, playgrounds, and soccer fields, and is generally used for active recreation purposes. Incremental shadows are expected to significantly affect the usability of these open spaces since they would result in a near-total loss of direct sunlight for substantial periods during all four seasons. Therefore, there would be significant adverse shadow impacts to two sunlight-sensitive elements of these resources under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative. As described in **Chapter 05.21**, although mitigation measures have not been identified at this time, potential mitigation measures will continue to be explored in consultation with NYC Parks and will be published in the FEIS, if identified. If practicable measures to fully mitigate the impacts cannot be identified, then impacts would remain as unavoidable adverse impacts. As discussed above, since neither Chelsea Park nor PS 33 Playground is a defining feature of the neighborhood, the shadow impacts to these resources would not constitute neighborhood character impacts per *CTM* guidance. In turn, the cumulative effects of shadows impacts would not significantly impact the overall experience of pedestrians. Accordingly, shadows generated by the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in a neighborhood character impact alone or in combination with potential impacts from other technical areas.

### **Transportation**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative on transportation, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 05.13**, these alternatives would result in

significant adverse traffic and pedestrian impacts. These alternatives would not result in significant adverse transit (subway and bus), citywide ferry service, and parking impacts. As discussed in **Chapter 05.13**, except as noted in the following sentence, the significant adverse traffic and pedestrian impacts could be fully mitigated by standard traffic engineering measures that would be subject to review and approval by NYCDOT. There would be unavoidable significant adverse traffic impacts at two lane groups at one intersection in the weekday PM period, one unavoidable significant adverse pedestrian impact at one crosswalk in the weekday PM peak hour, and unavoidable significant adverse sidewalk impacts at five, two, four and five sidewalks during the weekday AM, midday, and PM peak hours, and Saturday peak hour, respectively. In addition, other transportation impacts would be unavoidable significant adverse impacts if the proposed mitigation measures are deemed infeasible (refer to **Chapter 07.0, “Unavoidable Adverse Impacts”** for more information. Additional mitigation measures will be further explored in consultation with the Lead Agency and NYCDOT between the DEIS and FEIS. If no feasible and practicable measures are identified for these locations, the impacts would remain unmitigated. The locations at which these unmitigated traffic and pedestrian impacts would occur are generally characterized by high vehicular and pedestrian volumes currently and the resulting conditions with the Proposed Project would be similar to those already found in this and other high density urban neighborhoods. As such, the unavoidable adverse transportation impacts under the Proposed Project would not be notable or alter the neighborhood character. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result from the transportation effects of the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative.

### **Noise**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential noise effects of the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or the Midblock Bulk Alternative, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 05.16**, these alternatives would not result in unmitigated significant adverse noise impacts.

Based on the noise analysis, outlined in **Chapter 05.16**, buildings facades under these alternatives would require that window-wall attenuation is provided for the new buildings on the Project Sites so that that residential and community facility spaces maintain an interior noise level of 45 dBA or lower in conformity with CEQR and HUD guidelines.

The Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative would not result in any significant adverse operational noise impacts<sup>4</sup> related to building attenuation requirements. The noise levels in proximity to the Project Sites are typical of many neighborhoods in New York City and would remain so in under these alternatives with relatively minor changes in noise levels. Low noise is not a defining feature of the neighborhood as indicated by existing exterior noise levels in which some locations are categorized as marginally unacceptable under CEQR guidance (see **Chapter 05.16**) and the incremental increase in noise levels resulting from these alternatives under operating conditions would be considered barely perceptible and not significant according to *CTM*

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<sup>4</sup> Per *CTM* guidance, the Neighborhood Character analysis considers only operational noise and excludes construction noise. For a detailed analysis of construction noise, see **Chapter 05.19, “Construction”** and **Chapter 05.17, “Public Health.”**

guidance. Therefore, project-generated noise under the Rezoning Alternative and the Midblock Bulk Alternative would not constitute a significant adverse impact on neighborhood character.

### **Potential for Combined Effects on Neighborhood Character**

As stated in the *CTM*, if a project would have the potential to affect the defining features of the neighborhood through a combination of moderate effects in relevant technical areas, then a detailed assessment may be required.

Though the Proposed Project under the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative would result in significant adverse impacts to several technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character, i.e., shadows, historic resources, and transportation, as discussed above, these effects would not constitute significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. This is because the locations affected by these technical area impacts are not defining features of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the combination of these effects on neighborhood character would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. These alternatives would facilitate development that would activate the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontages of the Project Sites with retail, supermarket, community center, and daycare space. This would improve the pedestrian experience of these existing commercial corridors in a manner and use consistent with most secondary study area avenue block frontages. The new buildings of the Project Sites would be built out to the lot lines, creating cohesive street walls that mimic the established built form of most of the surrounding secondary study area. In turn, the new development would eliminate the Project Site's current built form where towers are substantially setback, lack a defined street wall and, in the case of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site, are not orientated towards the street. In addition, the Rezoning and Midblock Bulk Alternatives would enhance the streetscape experience adjacent to the Project Sites by introducing new concrete sidewalks, lighting, and street trees.

Thus, based on the results of the preliminary assessment, there is no potential for the Rezoning Alternative or Midblock Bulk Alternative to result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, and further analysis is not warranted.

### **Alternative 3 – Non-Rezoning Alternative**

The conclusions provided in the section above also pertain to the Non-Rezoning Alternative in the technical areas of land use, zoning, and public policy; socioeconomic conditions; community facilities and services; historic and cultural resources; shadows; and noise. The remaining technical areas are discussed in more detail below.

### **Open Space**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be adversely affected due to potential effects of the Proposed Project under the Non-Rezoning Alternative on publicly accessible open space, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section.

As discussed in **Chapter 05.04**, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would not result in any direct effects related to encroachments on or loss of public open space, or changes in open space such that it no longer serves the same user population. As detailed in **Chapter 05.04**, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would not result in a significant indirect adverse impact to open space due to the introduction of new residents. There would be an increase in the amount of accessible and useable accessory open spaces from 1.692 acres of useable accessory open space under existing conditions to 2.071 acres of useable accessory open spaces under the Non-Rezoning Alternative. The accessory open spaces would be transformed into community hubs, featuring new amenities such as dog walks and community gardens for urban gardening. Active areas like playgrounds and splash zones would provide enhanced play opportunities, while passive spaces with shaded trellises and benches offer spots for relaxation. Programmable lawns would host resident events, from summer movie nights and lawn games, to annual holiday tree lightings.

Additionally, as discussed in **Chapter 05.05**, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would result in significant adverse shadows impacts to two open space resources – Chelsea Park and PS 33 Playground. However, as neither resource is a defining feature of the neighborhood, the impacts to these resources would not constitute neighborhood character impacts per *CTM* guidance. In turn, the cumulative effects of shadows impacts would not significantly impact the overall experience of pedestrians. Accordingly, shadows generated by the Non-Rezoning Alternative would not, singularly or in connection with potential impacts from other technical areas, result in a neighborhood character impact.

As such, there would be no neighborhood character impact under the Rezoning Alternative and Midblock Bulk Alternative as pertains to open space.

### **Urban Design and Visual Resources**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be significantly adversely affected due to potential effects of the Non-Rezoning Alternative on urban design and visual resources, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. The existing character of the neighborhood's varied built environment allows it to tolerate the significant changes that would occur under the Non-Rezoning Alternative without experiencing significant adverse impacts.

As discussed in **Chapter 05.07**, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would result in improved streetscape, building, and open space conditions more consistent with the surrounding secondary study area. As such, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would not result in a significant adverse impact to urban design and visual resources. Likewise, the effects under the Non-Rezoning Alternative related to urban design and visual resources would not adversely affect the character of the neighborhood.

### **Transportation**

Defining features of the neighborhood would not be significantly adversely affected due to potential effects of the Non-Rezoning Alternative on transportation, either singularly or in combination with potential impacts in other relevant technical areas discussed in this section. As described in **Chapter 05.13**, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would result in significant adverse

traffic and pedestrian impacts. The Non-Rezoning Alternative would not result in significant adverse transit (subway and bus), citywide ferry service, and parking impacts. As discussed in **Chapter 05.13** except as noted in the following sentence, the significant adverse traffic and pedestrian impacts could be fully mitigated by standard traffic engineering measures that would be subject to review and approval by NYCDOT. There would be an unavoidable significant adverse traffic impact at one lane group at one intersection in the weekday PM period and unavoidable significant adverse pedestrian impacts at four, two, three and five sidewalks during the weekday AM, midday and PM, and Saturday peak hours, respectively. In addition, other transportation impacts would be unavoidable significant adverse impacts if the proposed mitigation measures are deemed infeasible (refer to **Chapter 07.0** for more information). Additional mitigation measures will be further explored in consultation with the Lead Agency and NYCDOT between the DEIS and FEIS. If no feasible and practicable measures are identified for these locations, the impacts would remain unmitigated. The locations at which these unmitigated traffic and pedestrian impacts would occur are generally characterized by high vehicular and pedestrian volumes currently and the resulting conditions with the Proposed Project would be similar to those already found in this and other high density urban neighborhoods. As such, the unavoidable adverse transportation impacts under the Proposed Project would not be notable or alter the neighborhood character. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character would result from the transportation effects of the Non-Rezoning Alternative.

#### **Potential for Combined Effects on Neighborhood Character**

Though the Non-Rezoning Alternative would result in significant adverse impacts to several technical areas that contribute to neighborhood character, i.e., shadows, historic resources, and transportation, as discussed above these effects would not constitute significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. This is because the locations affected by these technical area impacts are not defining features of the neighborhood. Furthermore, the combination of these effects on neighborhood character would not result in any significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character. The Non-Rezoning Alternative would facilitate development that would reactivate the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue frontages of the Project Sites with retail, supermarket, community center, and daycare space. This would improve the pedestrian experience of these existing commercial corridors in a manner and use consistent with most secondary study area avenue block frontages. The new buildings of the Project Sites would be built out to the lot lines, creating cohesive street walls that mimic the established built form of most of the surrounding secondary study area. In turn, the new development would eliminate the Project Site's current built form where towers are substantially setback, lack a defined street wall and, in the case of the Elliott-Chelsea Houses Project Site, are not orientated towards the street. In addition, the Non-Rezoning Alternative would enhance the streetscape experience adjacent to the Project Sites by introducing new concrete sidewalks, lighting, and street trees.

Thus, based on the results of the preliminary assessment, there is no potential for the Non-Rezoning Alternative to result in significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character, and further analysis is not warranted.