



THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
OFFICE OF THE MAYOR  
NEW YORK, N. Y. 10007

**POSITIVE DECLARATION**

**NOTICE OF INTENT TO PREPARE  
DRAFT GENERIC ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**NOTICE OF PUBLIC SCOPING MEETING**

<b><u>PROJECT:</u></b> Willetts Point Development Plan Borough of Queens CEQR: 07DME014Q ULURP: PENDING	<b><u>LEAD AGENCY:</u></b> Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding 253 Broadway, 14 <sup>th</sup> Floor New York, New York 10007
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**DATE ISSUED:** March 30, 2007

**TYPE OF ACTION:** Type I

**NAME, LOCATION, AND DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

Willetts Point Development Plan.

Approximately 61 acres on the Willetts Point peninsula, generally bounded to the east by the Van Wyck Expressway and an undeveloped lot owned by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, to the south by Roosevelt Avenue, to the west by 126th Street, and to the north by Northern Boulevard (the "Willetts Point District").

The Willetts Point Development Plan is the proposed redevelopment of the Willetts Point District in Flushing, Queens, into a mixed-use project containing residential, retail, hotel, convention center, entertainment, commercial, office, cultural, community facility, open space, and parking uses. The project site is located in Queens Community District 7.

The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding, as lead agency, in coordination with the Department of Housing Preservation and Development and the Department of City Planning, is proposing an initiative by the City of New York to rezone from an M3-1 to a C4-4 district, create an urban renewal area, and implement a comprehensive development plan in a portion of Willetts Point, Queens. The goals of the proposed actions are to develop a land use plan consistent with public policy; improve environmental conditions in the Willetts Point District; provide new affordable and market-rate housing; promote economic growth and job creation; create a regional destination; and improve the quality of life for area residents. The proposed program is expected to include a mix of uses, including residential, retail, hotel,

convention center, entertainment, commercial, office, cultural, community facility, open space, and parking.

The Proposed Project involves a number of discretionary actions, as follows:

- Creation of a Willets Point Urban Renewal Plan
- Rezoning of the Willets Point District from the existing M3-1 to a C4-4 zoning special district.
- The demapping of all streets within the Willets Point District, including:
  1. 126<sup>th</sup> Place between Northern Boulevard and 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
  2. 127<sup>th</sup> Street between Northern Boulevard and Willets Point Boulevard;
  3. 127<sup>th</sup> Place between Northern Boulevard and 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue;
  4. 34<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  5. 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  6. 36<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  7. 37<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  8. 38<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  9. 39<sup>th</sup> Avenue between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Willets Point Boulevard;
  10. Willets Point Boulevard between 126<sup>th</sup> Street and Northern Boulevard.
- Possible construction of new stormwater outfalls. Should the proposed development necessitate the construction of new stormwater outfalls into local surface waters, a State Pollution Discharge Elimination Systems (SPDES) and Tidal Wetlands permit would be required from the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC); permits from the Army Corp of Engineers (ACOE) would also be required.
- Acquisition of property in accordance with the Urban Renewal Plan.
- Possible condemnation of property pursuant to the Eminent Domain Procedure Law (EDPL).
- Disposition of property within the District for development in accordance with the Urban Renewal Plan.
- Approval of the business terms of the disposition.

The proposed project would also require a Determination of No Hazard to Air Navigation from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

### **STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECT:**

In accordance with Executive Order 91 of 1977, as amended, and the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review, found at Title 62, Chapter 5 of the Rules of the City of New York (CEQR), the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding, in the Office of the Mayor, lead agency for the project, has determined that the proposed project may have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, an

Environmental Impact Statement is required to evaluate and disclose the extent to which impacts may occur. Aspects that may require evaluation of potential environmental impacts include:

- 1) The potential for substantial impacts related to land use and zoning;
- 2) The potential for substantial socioeconomic impacts;
- 3) The potential for substantial impacts to community facilities and services;
- 4) The potential for substantial open space impacts;
- 5) The potential for substantial impacts as a result of shadows;
- 6) The potential for substantial impacts related to historic resources;
- 7) The potential for substantial urban design/visual resource impacts;
- 8) The potential for substantial impacts related to natural resources;
- 9) The potential for substantial impacts related to hazardous materials;
- 10) The potential for inconsistency with the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program;
- 11) The potential for substantial impacts related to infrastructure, solid waste and sanitation services, and energy;
- 12) The potential for substantial impacts related to traffic, parking, transit and pedestrians;
- 13) The potential for substantial impacts related to air quality;
- 14) The potential for substantial impacts related to noise;
- 15) The potential for substantial construction impacts;
- 16) The potential for substantial impacts related to neighborhood character; and
- 17) The potential for substantial public health impacts.

**Statement in Support of Determination:**

The above determination is based on the finding that:

- 1) The proposed project would directly affect the existing land uses and zoning within the Willets Point District. These actions and the anticipated development would result in a major change in land use and zoning on the project site, and therefore warrant a detailed assessment.
- 2) The proposed project would directly displace one residential unit and approximately 250 businesses that are currently located within the Willets Point District. Pursuant to the *CEQR Technical Manual* methodology, the preliminary assessment, and detailed analyses if necessary, will consider the potential for direct residential displacement, direct business displacement, indirect residential displacement, indirect business displacement, and effects on specific industries.
- 3) The proposed project is expected to generate more than 50 elementary and intermediate school students. The analysis of community facilities and services will include detailed analyses for public schools, libraries, outpatient health care facilities, and day care centers.
- 4) Since the proposed project is expected to bring more than 500 employees and 200 residents to the project site, it would have an effect on the utilization of open space and recreational facilities in the surrounding area, including any new publicly accessible, privately owned open space to be created. Therefore, a detailed assessment of the proposed project's effect on open space will be provided.

- 5) The proposed project could result in new buildings that would be greater than 50 feet in height. Therefore a screening level analysis will be performed to identify the project's potential to have shadow impacts on any publicly accessible open spaces, historic resources with significant light dependent features, historic landscapes, and significant natural features and a more detailed analysis will be conducted if appropriate.
- 6) The proposed project may affect historic architectural and archaeological resources, either directly through construction activities or indirectly by altering the context in which the resources are located. In comments dated February 7, 2007, the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC) indicated that no archaeological resources and architectural resources have been identified on the project site or within 400 feet of the project site. Therefore, the analysis will be limited to identifying whether there are any properties that may appear to meet eligibility criteria for listing on the State/National Registers of Historic Places or for designation as New York City Landmarks ("potential architectural resources") that have not yet been identified in the study area, as set forth in the *CEQR Technical Manual*.
- 7) The proposed project would result in a building or structure substantially different in height, bulk, form, setbacks, size, scale, use, or arrangement than existing buildings or structures, would change block form, would demap active streets, may affect the street hierarchy, street wall, curb cuts, pedestrian activity, or other streetscape elements; and would result in above-ground development or would change the bulk of new above-ground development. The proposed project meets this threshold for analysis, and therefore would be expected to affect the urban design character of the site and of the surrounding area.
- 8) The proposed project potentially involves the disturbance of natural resources, including surface water bodies and groundwater and wetland resources, therefore triggering the threshold for further analysis. An analysis will be done of any new stormwater outlets to Flushing Creek that may be required to handle stormwater runoff from the proposed project. In addition, since the Willets Point District is partially located within the 100-year floodplain, an analysis will also be done of design criteria and constraints pursuant to floodplain regulations, including methods to flood-proof or raise habitable structures above the floodplain in accordance with New York City regulations.
- 9) The proposed project is expected to require excavation for new in-ground construction activities. Since the Willets Point District has been occupied by auto-related and manufacturing uses that may have used, stored, or produced hazardous materials, and because excavation is required for the construction of new structures and installation of new utilities, an analysis of hazardous materials on the project area will be included in the EIS.
- 10) The proposed project is located within the boundaries of the State and City's Coastal Zone. Therefore, an assessment of the proposed project's consistency with the City's Waterfront Revitalization Program will be provided.
- 11) The proposed project would result in substantial new development and would create new drainage patterns over the project site. Therefore, the EIS will provide an analysis of the potential demand on water supply and generation of wastewater

associated with the proposed project and will describe and account for any changes in drainage associated with the project. An assessment of the potential impacts of the project's solid waste generation on the City's collection needs and disposal capacity, and an assessment of projected changes in the demand for energy and effect on existing supply systems will also be provided.

- 12) The proposed project would exceed the CEQR threshold, which requires traffic and parking assessments for any proposed action that would result in development greater than the levels shown in Table 3O-1 (see 2001 *CEQR Technical Manual* page 3O-2), and consequently could have significant traffic impacts. Therefore, a detailed analysis of the potential traffic and parking impacts of the proposed project will be required. As described in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a detailed analysis of transit and pedestrian trips should be provided if a proposed action is projected to result in more than 200 rail or bus transit riders in the peak hour. The proposed project would exceed this threshold, and consequently could have significant transit and/or pedestrian impacts. Therefore, a detailed analysis is warranted.
- 13) The proposed project may affect air quality. The air quality studies will include both mobile and stationary source analyses. The stationary source air quality impact analysis will include an assessment of the potential for impacts on project users from existing industrial/manufacturing uses in the area, and the effects of the project's heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems' emissions. The mobile source air quality impact analysis will include an assessment of the potential for impacts from emissions resulting from vehicle trips expected to be generated by the project.
- 14) The proposed project is in an area where existing noise levels immediately adjacent to the project site are relatively high and reflect the level of activity (particularly vehicular and rail activity) in the area. Autos and trucks along with noise generated by aircraft flyovers from LaGuardia Airport, Long Island Rail Road (LIRR) activity, mechanical equipment, and people going about their normal business all contribute to the total ambient noise levels. Therefore, a noise analysis of potential effects on project users as well as from noise sources that will be created by the project is warranted and will be performed.
- 15) The proposed project has the potential to create impacts related to traffic, air quality, and noise, among other areas, during the construction period. The construction assessment for the proposed project will generally be qualitative, focusing on areas where construction activities may pose specific environmental problems. The analysis of construction impacts will focus on traffic and parking, air quality, historic resources, hazardous materials, infrastructure, and noise. As appropriate, other technical areas will be assessed for potential construction-related impacts.
- 16) The proposed project would change the Willets Point District's land use and would involve a change in the scale of development and urban design. The project would also result in the direct displacement of businesses. In addition, the extent of new development would potentially affect traffic and noise conditions in the area. Therefore, the proposed project could have neighborhood character impacts, and a detailed analysis of neighborhood character will be prepared.

17) While the proposed project is not anticipated to create any major public health impacts (i.e., the project does not include any facilities of a community health concern), in conformance with the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a screening level of assessment of the proposed project will be undertaken for public health impacts.

Accordingly, the Office of the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding directs that a Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement be prepared in accordance with 6 NYCRR 617.9(b) and Sections 6-08 and 6-09 of Executive Order No. 91 of 1977, as amended. All analyses will be conducted in accordance with the methodologies described in the *CEQR Technical Manual* insofar as appropriate.

**Public Scoping:**

Public Scoping is a process whereby the public is invited to comment on the proposed scope of analysis planned for the Draft EIS. A Draft Scoping Document has been prepared outlining the proposed content of the Draft EIS.

The Public Scoping meetings will be held on Tuesday, May 1, 2007, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM and from 5:30 – 7:30 PM in the:

Flushing Branch of the Queens Public Library  
41-17 Main Street  
Flushing, New York

A copy of the Draft Scoping Document may be obtained by any member of the public from:

Ms. Asma Syed, Planner  
New York City Economic Development Corporation  
110 William Street  
New York, New York 10038  
Telephone: (212) 618-5789  
Fax: (212) 312-3989

or:

Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination  
253 Broadway, 14<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, New York 10007  
Telephone: (212) 788-9956

The documents are also posted on the websites of the New York City Economic Development Corporation and the Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination: [www.nycedc.com](http://www.nycedc.com) and [www.nyc.gov/oec](http://www.nyc.gov/oec).

Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 P.M. on Monday, May 14, 2007, and may be submitted at the public scoping meeting or to Ms. Asma Syed at the above address.

The Positive Declaration has been prepared in accordance with Article 8 of the Environmental Conservation Law.



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Robert R. Kulikowski, Ph.D., Assistant to the Mayor  
For the Deputy Mayor for Economic Development and Rebuilding

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Notice is hereby given pursuant to Section 5-07(b) of the Rules of Procedure for City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) that a public scoping meeting will be held to hear comments from the public regarding the proposed scope of work for a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for the Willetts Point Development Plan project. Two Public Scoping meetings will be held on Tuesday, May 1, 2007, from 3:00 – 5:00 PM and from 5:30 – 7:30 PM in the:

Flushing Branch of the Queens Public Library  
41-17 Main Street  
Flushing, New York

The purpose of the scoping meetings is to provide the public with the opportunity to comment on the Scope of Analysis proposed to be included in the DEIS for the referenced project. A copy of the Draft Scoping Document for the project may be obtained by any member of the public from:

Ms. Asma Syed, Planner  
New York City Economic Development Corporation  
110 William Street  
New York, New York 10038  
Telephone: (212) 618-5789 Fax: (212) 312-3989

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