Chapter 16 : Public Health

I. INTRODUCTION

Consistent with guidance in the *City Environmental Quality Review* (*CEQR) Technical Manual*, this chapter assesses the effects of the Proposed Actions on public health. As defined by the *CEQR Technical Manual*, public health is the organized effort of society to protect and improve the health and well-being of the population through monitoring; assessment and surveillance; health promotion; prevention of disease, injury, disorder, disability, and premature death; and reducing inequalities in health status. The goal of CEQR with respect to public health is to determine whether adverse impacts on human health may occur due to a proposed project and, if so, to identify measures to mitigate such effects.

As stated in the *CEQR Technical Manual*, a public health analysis is not necessary for most projects. Where no significant unmitigated adverse impact is found in other CEQR analysis areas, such as air quality, water quality, hazardous materials, or noise, no public health analysis is warranted. If, however, an unmitigated significant adverse impact is identified in other CEQR analysis areas, such as air quality, water quality, hazardous materials, or noise, the lead agency may determine that a public health assessment is warranted.

As described in Chapter 1, "Project Description," the Applicant is seeking a set of Proposed Actions in the form of discretionary approvals to include zoning map and text amendments, a large-scale general development (LSGD) special permit, a City Map Amendment to re-establish a portion of Beach 52nd Street south of Rockaway Beach Boulevard to reconnect with Rockaway Freeway, and public funding and/or financing from various City and New York State agencies and/or programs related to affordable housing development on the Project Site. The Project Site is located in Queens Community District 14 (CD 14). The Proposed Actions would facilitate the Proposed Project to consist of an approximately 2,371,000 gross square feet (gsf) development on the Project Site, comprised of 11 buildings with approximately 2,200 income-restricted dwelling units (DUs), of which 1,927 DUs would be income-restricted up to 80% of the Area Median Income (AMI), to include approximately 201 DUs set aside for Affordable Independent Residences for Seniors (AIRS) senior housing, with the remaining 273 DUs restricted to income levels not exceeding 130% of AMI. In addition to the residential DUs, the Proposed Project would include approximately 72,000 gsf of retail space, including a fitness center and a supermarket, approximately 77,000 gsf of community facility space, approximately 24,000 square feet (sf) of publicly-accessible open space, and approximately 973 accessory parking spaces.

II. PRINCIPAL CONCLUSIONS

The Proposed Project would not result in significant adverse public health impacts. As described in the relevant analyses of this EIS, the Proposed Project would not result in unmitigated significant adverse impacts in the areas of air quality, water quality, or hazardous materials. However, the Proposed Actions could result in unmitigated construction period noise impacts as defined by *CEQR Technical Manual* thresholds. As such, it was determined that a public health assessment as to noise was appropriate.

Temporary increases in noise levels due to construction activities would occur during the daytime and, occasionally, early evening for some sensitive receptors and construction periods. While during some periods of construction the Proposed Project would result in significant adverse impacts related to noise as defined by CEQR thresholds, the predicted overall changes in noise levels would not be large enough for a sufficient period of time to significantly affect public health.

III. ASSESSMENT

Construction Noise

As described in Chapter 18, “Construction,” increases in noise levels due to construction activities would occur during the daytime and, occasionally, in the early evening. For some sensitive receptors and construction periods, the duration and magnitude of the noise levels may constitute a significant adverse construction-period noise impact. Source and paths controls to reduce or eliminate potential significant adverse construction-period noise impacts are listed in the “On-Site Sources of Noise” section of Chapter 18. Even with these measures, significant adverse construction-period noise impacts would occur at the Peninsula Nursing Home.

Conclusion

The Proposed Project would not result in unmitigated significant adverse impacts on hazardous materials, air quality or water quality. The significant adverse impacts related to construction-period noise at one building near the Project Site would not result in a significant adverse public health impact.

The *CEQR Technical Manual* noise impact thresholds are based on quality of life considerations. These differ from public health considerations, which employ distinct criteria that are appropriate in the public health context. Thus, pursuant to the public health assessment, significance is assessed in terms of the magnitude of noise level and duration of exposure rather than incremental change in noise level. As stated in Chapter 20 of the *CEQR Technical Manual,* these criteria are appropriate because they more closely relate to public health concerns. For example, chronic noise exposure may raise blood pressure and has been suggested to contribute to myocardial infarctions and to interfere with language development in children. Additionally, prolonged exposure to levels above 85 dBA will eventually harm hearing. Moreover, episodic and unpredictable exposure to short-term impacts of noise at high decibel levels may also affect health. Accordingly, it is appropriate to evaluate magnitude of noise level and duration of exposure when examining public health.

Although the *CEQR Technical Manual* thresholds for significant adverse impacts are predicted to be exceeded at certain locations, the criteria used for public health, (i.e., the magnitude and duration of these exceedances) would not constitute a significant adverse public health impact. As discussed above, the *CEQR Technical Manual* thresholds for noise are based on quality of life considerations and not on public health considerations. An impact found pursuant to a quality of life framework does not imply that an impact will exist when the analysis area is evaluated in terms of public health. The predicted absolute noise levels would be below the health-based noise threshold of 85 dBA at all at-grade receptors. During the construction period, some receptors may experience exterior absolute noise levels above 85 dBA at elevations above the first floor at the building façade—especially those receptors that are immediately adjacent to construction sites and above the height of site-perimeter noise barriers. However, these buildings do not include outdoor terraces. As such, residents at these receptors would not experience exterior levels of construction noise. Accordingly, the magnitude and duration of the construction noise would not result in a significant adverse public health impact.