

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Social conditions are defined for purposes of this EA as those components of a community that influence its character. These conditions include the population and economic base, land uses and the public policies that support those land uses, municipal facilities, parks, the architectural design and streetscape, traffic and pedestrian conditions, and noise. The introduction of street stairs at the north end of the station could affect some of these components of neighborhood character, either temporarily (during construction) or permanently (during operation). This chapter assesses existing social and economic conditions potentially affected by the Proposed Project, focusing on the characteristics of the neighborhood. Future conditions common to both the No-Build Alternative and the Proposed Project are presented, followed by a discussion of potential impacts during operation of the station, and if applicable, a description of mitigation measures to ameliorate any adverse impacts that are identified. Potential construction impacts are presented in Chapter 13.

Specifically, this chapter addresses the following topics:

- Land Use, Zoning and Public Policy
- Business Impacts and Socioeconomic Conditions
- Community Facilities and Services
- Open Space
- Urban Design and Visual Resources, including shadows
- Public Health
- Neighborhood Character
- Environmental Justice

The study area for the analyses of potential project-related impacts to the resource categories examined in this chapter derive from the nature and scale of the project and the areal extent to which the project could influence conditions. Considering that the project would not introduce new populations to the area, would not substantially increase ridership on the 6 Line or at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station, would not substantially change land use in the area and would not substantially alter the economic conditions, a study area consisting of the project site and, depending on the resource category being evaluated, up to six blocks surrounding the project site was selected. The study area is generally bounded on the south by East 67th Street, on the north by East 70th Street, on the west by Park Avenue and on the East by Third Avenue.

## 3.2 LAND USE, ZONING, AND PUBLIC POLICY

### 3.2.1 METHODOLOGY

Information on existing land use and zoning was obtained from datasets maintained by the New York City Department of City Planning (NYCDCP). Public policies potentially applicable to the Proposed Project were reviewed, including PlaNYC, the Community Board 8 Fiscal Year 2016 District Need Statement, and the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council's Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

The analysis is guided by the methodologies and criteria provided by the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual.<sup>11</sup> In general, a project could result in a direct effect to land use and zoning if it conflicted with adopted plans and goals of the community, or if it would result in a substantial alteration to the present or planned land use of an area. If a project would result in substantial new development or prevent such development elsewhere, it could have a significant indirect effect.

### **3.2.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### **3.2.2.1 Land Use**

The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is situated in the Upper East Side neighborhood of Manhattan. The Upper East Side comprises Manhattan Community Board 8, the boundaries of which extend from the north side of East 59th Street to the south side of East 96th Street, and from Fifth Avenue to the East River, and includes Roosevelt Island and Mill Rock, both of which are islands located in the East River.

The Upper East Side is laid out in a rectangular grid, with relatively broad avenues running north-south and narrow streets running east-west. The neighborhood is densely developed with residential, commercial, and institutional land uses, containing approximately 6.7 million square feet of commercial office and retail space.<sup>12</sup> The neighborhood is characterized by high-rise apartment buildings interspersed with areas of smaller row houses, generally three to six stories in height, commercial retail establishments, educational institutions, and concentrations of large museums and medical institutions (Figure 3-1). Commercial uses often occupy ground-level floors in buildings located along the avenues.

Within the study area, institutional uses (Hunter College and several schools and religious facilities) occupies all or portions of three blocks immediately surrounding the station, multi-family residential (Imperial House Apartments located east of the project site) and mixed commercial, residential at the northern end of the study area. Medical institutions are located east of the study area and cultural institutions (Museum Mile) are located along the west of the study area.

#### **3.2.2.2 Zoning**

The site of the Proposed Project is located in an area zoned for residential use and designated R9X. The Zoning Resolution designates 10 basic residence districts: R1 through R10. The numbers refer to permitted bulk and density (with R1 having the lowest density and R10 the highest) and other controls such as required parking. A second letter or number in some districts signifies additional controls. Unless otherwise stated, the regulations for each district apply to all subcategories within that district.

R9X contextual districts are governed by Quality Housing regulations. With a floor area ratio and height limit substantially greater than other R9 districts, R9X regulations produce the taller, bulkier 16- to 18-story apartment buildings characteristic of the study area and other Manhattan neighborhoods.

---


<sup>11</sup> New York City Mayor's Office of Environmental Coordination, City Environmental Quality Review Technical Manual, 2014.

<sup>12</sup> MTA NYCT, Second Avenue Subway in the Borough of Manhattan, New York County, New York, Final Environmental Impact Statement, April 2004.



Source: <http://www.oasisnyc.net/map.aspx>

 **Project Site**       **Study Area**

0      feet      1000  


Land Use  
**Figure 3-1**

The Quality Housing Program (referred to by the X) encourages development consistent with the character of many established neighborhoods. Its bulk regulations set height limits and allow high lot coverage buildings that are set at or near the street line. The Quality Housing Program also requires amenities relating to interior space, recreation areas, and landscaping.

### **3.2.2.3 Law and Public Policy**

Public policies include Urban Renewal Plans, 197-a Plans, Industrial Business Zones, the Criteria for the Location of City Facilities ("Fair Share" criteria), the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act, Business Improvement Districts, the New York City Landmarks Law, the Waterfront Revitalization Program (WRP) and Sustainability, as defined by PlaNYC. Some of these policies have regulatory status, while others describe general goals. They can help define the existing and future context of the land use and zoning of an area. These policies may change over time to reflect the evolving needs of the City, as determined by appointed and elected officials and the public.

The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is not located within a designated Business Improvement District or in an area covered by a 197-a Plan or an Urban Renewal Plan. The station is not located within the coastal zone applicable to the WRP.

The New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act (2010) is intended to "augment the state's environmental policy by declaring a fiscally prudent state policy of maximizing the social, economic and environmental benefits from public infrastructure development through minimizing unnecessary costs of sprawl development including environmental degradation, disinvestment in urban and suburban communities and loss of open space induced by sprawl facilitated by the funding or development of new or expanded transportation, sewer and waste water treatment, water, education, housing and other publicly supported infrastructure inconsistent with smart growth public infrastructure criteria." Within the body of the Act are ten goals, as they relate to public infrastructure:

1. Use, maintain or improve public infrastructure
2. Locate public infrastructure within municipal centers
3. Promote development projects in developed areas or in areas identified for development in a comprehensive plan, local waterfront revitalization plan or brownfield redevelopment plan.
4. Protect, preserve New York State resources
5. Foster mixed land uses and compact development
6. Provide for mobility through a variety of transportation choices including improved public transportation
7. Coordinate between state and local governments
8. Promote community-based planning and collaboration
9. Ensure predictability in land use codes
10. Strengthen existing communities so as to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

The Proposed Project is either consistent with or not applicable to the ten goals of the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act. The project improves public transportation infrastructure within a developed area, and through provision of ADA-compliant station access ensures mobility choices for all persons. Smart Growth policies related to land use development

are not applicable because the project involves changes to existing transportation infrastructure, not land use or zoning decisions. By supporting public transit, the project is supportive of greenhouse gas emissions reduction (goal #10).

The Manhattan Community Board 8 Fiscal Year 2016 District Need Statement indicated the need for subway service improvements on the Lexington Avenue Line, and encourages the continued development of the Second Avenue Subway project. The Need Statement cites the overcapacity nature of service on the Lexington Avenue Line, and supports development of measures to address the subway congestion.

The Proposed Project is included in the current 2014-2018 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – PIN number ST04-6951 – developed by the New York Metropolitan Transportation Council (NYMTC), the designated entity responsible for coordinating transportation planning and decision-making in the New York City metropolitan region. The applicable goals of the 2014-2040 Regional Transportation Plan, include “providing convenient, flexible transportation access” regardless of ability and the desired outcomes of the Regional Transportation Plan include increased transit ridership and safety improvements.

As described in Chapter 1: Purpose and Need, MTA NYCT policy includes provision of ADA access to Key Stations in the City’s subway system. The 68th Street/Hunter College Station is one of the Key Stations identified in this policy.

### **3.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

#### **3.2.3.1 No-Build Alternative**

According to government agencies contacted regarding planned development in the study area (see Appendix B: Agency Correspondence), no major development projects are planned that would substantially change land use in the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Project or in the study area. No-Build condition projects considered in terms of effects on future transportation conditions are discussed in Chapter 5: Transportation and Pedestrian Circulation.

The No-Build Alternative would not affect land use at the Project Site or in the study area. The No-Build Alternative would be consistent with existing zoning, but would be inconsistent with public policies such as the Manhattan Community Board 8 Fiscal Year 2016 District Need Statement (indicating the need for subway service improvements on the IRT Line); the Regional Transportation Plan goals related to accessible transit; and MTA NYCT goals for Key Stations.

#### **3.2.3.2 Proposed Project**

##### **Direct Impacts**

The majority of the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would consist of improvements to underground subway infrastructure that would have minimal effect on aboveground land use. The aboveground elements of the Proposed Project, such as the elevator head house, new entrance stairs north of East 68th Street and the modifications to existing stairs, would be consistent with the existing land uses in the study area, which already include numerous transportation elements that are common throughout New York City (roadways, sidewalks, parking, subway entrances, and bus stops). The Proposed Project would not substantially alter the present or planned land uses for the study area. The Proposed Project is consistent with existing zoning and would not require City Map or Zoning Map changes. Therefore, no impacts related to land use and zoning from the Proposed Project are anticipated.

Because the Proposed Project would promote the use of mass transit, it is consistent with PlaNYC and with the relevant criteria in the New York State Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Policy Act.

The Proposed Project is consistent with the Manhattan Community Board 8 Fiscal Year 2016 District Need Statement and would advance the goals of the 2014-2018 Regional Transportation Plan. Finally, the Proposed Project would advance MTA NYCT's goal of completing development of this Key Station.

The improvements to the subway station would bring benefits to the neighborhood it serves by relieving overcrowding at the 68th Street/Hunter College Station. Persons with mobility constraints would have access to Hunter College and cultural attractions in the area, such as museums and events at the Park Avenue Armory. Residents of the neighborhood with mobility constraints would gain access to many destinations via the new connection to MTA NYCT's Key Stations, including transportation options to JFK Airport, Amtrak and New Jersey Transit via New York Penn Station, and others.

### **Indirect Impacts**

The potential for the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* to induce development or impact land values is very low because the Proposed Project would improve an existing facility that has been operational for almost a century and the project is located in a fully built-out urban environment. The station improvements would be located at the same location as the existing station, and would continue to serve the area in its present function, albeit in a more convenient, safe, and functional manner. The new and modified station entrances would not change accessibility to the subway line to a degree that would appreciably influence development patterns. The area surrounding the station is well developed and any notable development activity in the area would consist of redevelopment driven primarily by regional economic forces. For these reasons, it can be concluded that the Proposed Project would not generate measurable secondary development or related impacts.

#### **3.2.3.3 Impacts of Street Stair Options**

##### **Street Stair West of Lexington Avenue**

The Proposed Project would place a street stair on the south sidewalk adjacent to Thomas Hunter Hall. Installation of street stair would change the land use by widening the sidewalk and adding a street entrance to the subway adjacent to an institutional facility.

##### **Street Stair East of Lexington Avenue**

The Proposed Project would install a single street stair within a retail space in the Imperial House Apartments. This option would change approximately 1,960 square feet of retail space to a transportation use (270 square feet at ground level and 1,690 square feet in the basement).

The Proposed Project *with Option E1* would place a single street stair on the south sidewalk adjacent to the Imperial House Apartments. Installation of the street stair would change the land use by widening the sidewalk and adding a street entrance to the subway adjacent to retail land use.

#### **3.2.3.4 Mitigation**

Neither the Proposed Project nor the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would cause significant adverse impacts to land use, zoning or public policy. No mitigation measures would be warranted.

### **3.3 BUSINESS IMPACTS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS**

#### **3.3.1 METHODOLOGY**

Existing street-level businesses (including street vendors) were identified through field visits to the project area. The impacts to businesses were assessed considering the methodologies and criteria in the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual: A project could have an adverse effect on businesses if it would displace businesses essential to the local economy that would no longer be available in its “trade area” to local residents or businesses due to the difficulty of either relocating the businesses or establishing new, comparable businesses; or the displaced businesses are subject to special policies designed to protect and enhance them.

#### **3.3.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The existing 68th Street/Hunter College Station includes stairs leading from the station to the street level that are located at the four corners of the intersection of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street (Figure 1-1). The entrances to the stairs on the north side of East 68th Street are located on the sidewalk, and the entrances to the stairs on the south side of the street are located on property controlled by Hunter College. A kiosk that is licensed to a flower vendor is located adjacent to the existing stair on the southeast corner of the intersection, on property controlled by Hunter College. The flower kiosk is privately owned and operates on the property through an agreement with Hunter College.

On the east side of Lexington Avenue north of East 68th Street are ground floor retail shops with a tall apartment building (Imperial House) above, and south of East 68th Street is the East Building of Hunter College followed by apartment buildings. On the west side of Lexington Avenue, Hunter College buildings occupy the blocks between East 67th Street and East 69th Street. Food carts and street vendors are often located in the vicinity of the Proposed Action, including those located on the sidewalks of East 68th Street and East 69th Street on either side of Lexington Avenue. Depending on the time of day, two street vendors operate near the northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 68th Street, one near the northwest corner of the intersection, and three operate near the southwest corner of the intersection. Two street vendors operate near the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and East 69th Street.

#### **3.3.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

##### **3.3.3.1 No-Build Alternative**

Under the No-Build Alternative, no impacts to businesses and socioeconomic conditions are anticipated.

##### **3.3.3.2 Proposed Project**

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would require acquisition of Hunter College property to increase the width of the stair on the southeast corner of Lexington Avenue and to install the ADA-compliant street elevator. The placement of the elevator would require the displacement of the flower kiosk, potentially displacing one job. MTA NYCT would compensate the owner of the florist kiosk and provide relocation assistance in accordance with the Federal Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act. The displacement of the flower kiosk would not constitute a significant adverse business displacement impact because flowers would continue to be available throughout the study area and flowers are not a protected business type.

The locations of street vendors would not be affected by the Proposed Project (see Chapter 13: Construction for information on temporary impacts to street vendors).

### **3.3.3.3 Impacts of Street Stair Options**

#### **Street Stair *West* of Lexington Avenue**

The street stair west of Lexington Avenue would not affect businesses or socioeconomic conditions.

#### **Street Stair *East* of Lexington Avenue**

The Proposed Project would use commercial space within the Imperial House Apartments building offered to MTA NYCT specifically for the purpose of a new street stair. The existing commercial tenant is moving from that retail location to another retail space within the Imperial House Apartments building.

The Proposed Project *with Option E1* would not involve modification of the Imperial House Apartments building commercial space. Instead, it would include a new street stair in the sidewalk on the south side of East 69th Street.

### **3.3.3.4 Mitigation**

Neither the Proposed Project nor the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would cause significant adverse impacts to businesses or socioeconomic conditions. No mitigation measures are warranted.

## **3.4 COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES**

### **3.4.1 METHODOLOGY**

An inventory of existing community facilities in the study area was prepared based on NYCDOP databases, and the potential for the Proposed Project to directly or indirectly affect community facilities was assessed. According to the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual, impacts on community facilities and services (i.e., schools, daycare centers, hospitals, libraries, and police, fire, and emergency management services) could occur if a Proposed Project would: (1) physically displace or alter access to a facility that provides such services, or (2) introduce a substantial number of new residents or employees that could overburden the provision of such services.

### **3.4.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

Community facilities in the study area include the Park East Synagogue, located mid-block on East 67th Street between Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue, adjacent to which is the Fire Department of New York (FDNY) Engine Company 39, followed to the west by New York Police Department (NYPD) 19th Precinct and the Kennedy Child Study Center (Table 3-1). On the south side of the street, across from the synagogue, is the Tajikistan Embassy. The Park Avenue Armory is located on the south side of East 67th Street between Lexington Avenue and Park Avenue, and on the north side of this block is the West Building of Hunter College.



**Table 3-1:  
Schools and Public Facilities in the Study Area**

Name of Facility	Address
Kennedy Child Study Center	151 East 67th Street
NYPD 19th Precinct	153 East 67th Street
FDNY 16 Ladder/39 Engine Companies	159 East 67th Street
Park East Synagogue	163 East 67th Street
Hunter College	695 Park Avenue
Saint Vincent Ferrer High School	151 East 65th Street
Rabbi Arthur Schneier Park East Day School	164 East 68th Street
Dominican Academy	44 East 68th Street
Manhattan High School For Girls	154 East 70th Street
Julia Richman Education Complex	317 East 67th Street

### 3.4.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

#### 3.4.3.1 No-Build Alternative

The No-Build Alternative would not affect community services and facilities at the Project Site or in the study area.

#### 3.4.3.2 Proposed Project

MTA, on behalf of NYCT, would enter into an agreement with Hunter College for a permanent easement for the street elevator and a ventilation fan that would vent to the air/light well located between Thomas Hunter Hall and the sidewalk. Depending on the needs of the construction contractor, MTA may also enter into either (1) an agreement for a temporary construction easement (for the duration of the construction) or (2) a “permit to enter” for construction activities associated with the elevator. MTA NYCT would also secure approval from Hunter College for the use of additional space for the stair widening and for the easement required for the ventilation fan. Depending on the final design regarding the location of the elevator machine room, if the room is on Hunter College property rather than under the street, MTA would include space for the machine room in the permanent easement area. MTA would also enter into an access easement to maintain, repair and replace the elevator as required.

The Proposed Project would not physically displace or alter access to any community facilities and would not introduce new residents. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts to community facilities are anticipated.

#### 3.4.3.3 Impacts of Street Stair Options

##### Street Stair Options *East and West of Lexington Avenue*

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would place a street entrance to the subway adjacent to a community facility – Hunter College. Placement of a stair or pair of stairs would not block or restrict access to the facility.

#### 3.4.3.4 Mitigation

Neither the Proposed Project nor the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would cause significant adverse impacts to community facilities and services. No mitigation measures are warranted.

### 3.5 OPEN SPACE

#### 3.5.1 METHODOLOGY

Open space is defined as publicly or privately owned land that is publicly accessible and operates, functions, or is available for leisure, play, or sport, or set aside for the protection and/or enhancement of the natural environment. New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (NYCDPR) parks, street trees (which are within the jurisdiction of NYCDPR) and other publicly-accessible open space resources were identified through review of available mapping and field review. Impacts were assessed at a screening level consistent with the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual by comparing the availability of open space with and without the Proposed Project. Given the minor nature of the impacts discussed below, detailed analysis and calculation of change in open space ratios was not warranted.

#### 3.5.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The nearest NYCDPR park is Central Park, located approximately 0.28 mile west of the project site. A survey of street trees conducted in June 2013 identified the trees located on the sidewalks along East 68th Street and East 69th Street between Park Avenue and Third Avenue. The survey did not include those trees located on private property (Imperial House Apartments) or in the courtyard entrance to the North Building of Hunter College. The numbers of trees are identified in Table 3-2.

**Table 3-2:**  
**Street Trees on East 68th and 69th Streets between Third and Park Avenues**

	Between Lexington Avenue and Park Avenue	Between Third Avenue and Lexington Avenue
East 68th Street	18 Trees	15 Trees
East 69th Street	22 Trees	27 Trees

A public open space is located in the area surrounding the entrance to the subway station on the southwest corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue. The plaza includes seating and a sculpture, and the stairwell includes one tree. Entrances to the Hunter College West Building open to this area. The plaza is owned by Hunter College.

Additional open space is located on the median between the northbound and southbound lanes of Park Avenue, one block west of Lexington Avenue. The Park Avenue median, approximately 20 feet wide, extends from East 46th Street to East 97th Street.

#### 3.5.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

##### 3.5.3.1 No-Build Alternative

No impacts to parks or public open space are anticipated under the No-Build Alternative.

##### 3.5.3.2 Proposed Project

No parks are located within 0.25 miles of the Proposed Project and therefore no impacts to NYCDPR parkland are anticipated. The plaza at the southwest corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue would remain unchanged.

Street trees are located in the immediate vicinity of the proposed location of the street stairs on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street and the proposed location of the reconfigured street stair on the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue. Consequently, the Proposed

Project would require the removal of one tree located west of the avenue on East 69th Street, and one street tree located on the north sidewalk of East 68th Street east of Lexington Avenue (Figure 2-7).

NYCDPR has authority over all trees in any park, or any other property under its jurisdiction and generally over all trees in any street as defined in Section 18-103 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York. Such trees are an integral part of the health, beauty and vitality of the City, and provide important benefits for its residents by absorbing gaseous air pollutants, capturing particulate matter, providing for cooler summer temperatures, and beautifying neighborhoods. Trees under the jurisdiction of NYCDPR may not be removed without a permit pursuant to Title 18 of the Administrative Code of the City of New York. Chapter 5 of Title 56 of the Rules of the City of New York establishes rules for valuing trees that are approved for removal in order to determine the appropriate number of replacement trees. Any person or contractor wishing to remove a tree or trees, or perform work on a tree or trees under the jurisdiction of NYCDPR is required to obtain a permit from NYCDPR. Issuance of such permits follows a review process that may entail the submission of documentation and/or modification or alteration of the work plan.

MTA NYCT would obtain the appropriate permit to remove trees affected by the Proposed Action, and would protect, according to permit requirements, any tree within 50 feet of construction activity related to the Proposed Project. Replacement trees for the two street trees that would be removed from the sidewalks east and west of Lexington Avenue as a result of the Proposed Project, would be planted in locations to be determined in coordination with the NYCDPR. Due to the small number of trees affected, (less than three percent of the total identified above) and the provision of mitigation (replacement trees), no significant adverse impacts related to street trees would occur.

### **3.5.3.3 Impacts of Street Stair Options**

#### **Street Stair West of Lexington Avenue**

The proposed street stair west of Lexington Avenue would not affect open space; however, it would require removal of one street tree on East 69th Street.

#### **Street Stair East of Lexington Avenue**

Under the Proposed Project, the street stair east of Lexington Avenue at 931 Lexington Avenue would not require removal of street trees on East 69th Street and would not affect open space.

The Proposed Project *with Option E1* would require the removal of two street trees on East 69th Street but would not significantly affect open space.

### **3.5.3.4 Mitigation**

Street trees removed for the Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would be replaced in coordination with NYCDPR. No further mitigation for street tree removal is warranted. Neither the Proposed Project nor the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would cause significant adverse impacts to open space. No mitigation measures are warranted.

## **3.6 URBAN DESIGN AND VISUAL RESOURCES**

### **3.6.1 METHODOLOGY**

The assessment of urban design and visual resources focuses on the components of a Proposed Project that may have the potential to alter the arrangement, appearance, and functionality of the

built environment. Existing conditions in the study area were characterized through field review and impacts were assessed qualitatively. According to the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual, a project could result in adverse visual impacts if it would negatively affect a pedestrian's experience of the area. Shadow impacts could occur if shadows cast on open space or historic resources substantially reduce or eliminate natural sunlight.

### **3.6.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The Proposed Project is located within an existing urban area, characterized by a commercial, institutional and residential streetscape. The existing station is located predominantly below ground, with the only visible components being the four existing stairway entrances, the sidewalk pedestals indicating a subway entrance, and sidewalk grating, all typical of NYC subway entrances. The stairwell on the southwest corner emerges to a courtyard of the Hunter College West Building. The stairwell supports a large tree and surrounding the stairwell is public seating and a large sculpture. The stairwell on the southeast corner is situated under a cantilevered portion of the Hunter College East Building and is similar in appearance. Seating is provided here and a vendor of flowers operates from a kiosk adjacent to the stairs. Both sets of stairs on the northeast and northwest corners are typical of older subway stairs found throughout the City.

### **3.6.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

#### **3.6.3.1 No-Build Alternative**

Under the No-Build Alternative, the urban nature and the visual characteristics of the area would remain unchanged.

#### **3.6.3.2 Proposed Action**

The visible components of the Proposed Project would consist of a subway street entrance situated on the sidewalk and one entrance in an indoor commercial space, sidewalk grates and an elevator head house. These elements would cast no or insignificant shadows. As such, the study area for visual resources consists of the areas within visual contact of the above ground elements. The Proposed Project would have minimal effect on the visual context of the study area. The southwest and northwest corners of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue would not be affected by the Proposed Project. The southeast corner would have an elevator head house and a wider stair, and the subway improvements at this corner would require the removal of the florist kiosk.

On the northeast corner of East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue, the existing five-foot-wide stair would be enlarged and relocated to a position approximately 30 feet east of its current position to allow improved circulation at the corner. The installation of the stair at this location would require the removal of a street tree on East 68th Street east of Lexington Avenue. The tree would be replaced with one or more trees in the same vicinity or at a different location, depending on consultation and agreement with NYCDPR. (See Section 3.5.3.2, above)

The Proposed Project would also provide new street stairs located at the north end of the station and leading to East 69th Street on the west side of Lexington Avenue and to the mid-block location on the east side of the avenue. These stairs would be similar in appearance to subway stairs recently installed throughout the City. The appearance of the street would change with the addition of a bulb out—the widening of the sidewalk on the south side of East 69th Street on the west side of Lexington Avenue. The new stair on East 69th Street would require the removal of one street tree west of Lexington Avenue. All removed trees would be replaced according to an agreement with NYCDPR. (See Section 3.5.3.2, above.)

### 3.6.3.3 Impacts of Street Stair Options

#### Street Stair West of Lexington Avenue

The proposed street stair west of Lexington Avenue would be visible from the immediate vicinity of the stair. At street level, the stair would be visible from the south sidewalk but would be largely blocked from view by parked cars from vantages across East 69th Street. The stair would be visible from the upper floors of the residential buildings on the north side of the street. Signage and a typical pedestal indicating a MTA NYCT Subway entrance would be visible from the vicinity of the entrance.

#### Street Stair East of Lexington Avenue

The proposed street stair east of Lexington Avenue would be visible from Lexington Avenue directly in front of the location, with the subway identification globe visible up and down the block. The entrance in the commercial space in the Imperial House Apartments would slightly change the appearance of the front of the building by replacing the existing windows with an opening to access the new stair. The affected portion of the building face would be approximately 12 feet wide and extend from the sidewalk to the roof of the one-story commercial space. Signage and a typical pedestal indicating a MTA NYCT Subway entrance would be visible from north, south, and west of the entrance.

The Proposed Project *with Option E1* would be visible from the immediate vicinity of the stairs. At street level, the stair would be visible from the south sidewalk but would be largely blocked from view by parked cars from vantages across East 69th Street. The stair would not be visible from inside the Imperial House Apartments or the associated retail spaces; however, it would be visible from the upper floors of the residential buildings on the north side of the street.

### 3.6.3.4 Mitigation

The subway's visible elements, including station entrances, the elevator head house and ventilation grates, are all common features of Manhattan streetscapes, and would not be incongruous to the visual environment. Moreover, the design of the station entrances would be sensitive to the surrounding architectural context; they would not disturb views in the study area, nor would they change the study area's urban design. No urban design and visual resource impacts would result from the placement of such facilities and no mitigation would be warranted.

## 3.7 PUBLIC HEALTH

According the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual, a public health analysis would be necessary when a significant unmitigated adverse impact is identified in other CEQR analysis areas, such as air quality, water quality, hazardous materials, or noise. No such significant unmitigated impacts were identified and therefore, a public health assessment is not warranted for the project and was not conducted for this EA.

## 3.8 NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

According the 2014 CEQR Technical Manual, a neighborhood character analysis would be appropriate when a significant unmitigated adverse impact is identified in one or more of the CEQR analysis areas listed:

- Land Use, Zoning, and Public Policy
- Socioeconomic Conditions

- Open Space
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Urban Design and Visual Resources
- Shadows
- Transportation
- Noise

Alternatively, a significant adverse neighborhood character impact could occur due to a combination of moderate impacts in several of the topic areas listed above. Visual impacts could result if the street stairs were located on the north sidewalk of East 69th Street because they would be situated in front of residential windows. Additional impacts to community character could result from increased noise and increased pedestrian traffic on the street adjacent to the new street stairs. The following sections evaluate the potential for such impacts.

### **3.8.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The neighborhood in the vicinity of the Proposed Project is a vibrant area that generates pedestrian activity from early morning to late evening. Retail shopping establishments, which occupy the ground floors of many buildings in the area, especially along Lexington Avenue north of East 68th Street, generate sidewalk activity along the avenue and side streets. Retail shops along Lexington Avenue include a liquor store, clothing stores, a beauty shop, an ATM bank branch, a coffee shop among others. Many of these remain open until 8:00 and 9:00 PM and later. The presence of Hunter College attracts large and diverse population of students who, in addition to attending classes from early morning into the evening, gather on the sidewalks and the plaza near the college entrances. The Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College offers various entertainment programs, often ending at 10:30 PM.

### **3.8.2 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

The location of street stairs at the north end of the station would likely generate more pedestrian traffic on East 69th Street, especially to the east of Lexington Avenue. However, the percentage of pedestrians currently using East 69th Street to travel between the 68th Street/Hunter College Station and points to the east is already substantial.

According to an intercept survey conducted to evaluate the effects of the Proposed Project on East 69th Street (see Section 8 of Appendix C), of the total pedestrians on East 69th Street between Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue, the percentage of subway riders on the north side of the street was observed to be 42.9 percent, 29.4 percent, and 58.3 percent during the peak 15-minute AM, midday, and PM periods, respectively. The percentage of subway riders was observed to be higher on the south side of East 69th Street, with percentages of 79.6 percent, 43.5 percent, and 50.5 percent during the peak 15-minute AM, midday, and PM periods, respectively. Although the overall percentage of subway riders in the sample was high, the actual percentage of pedestrians coming from or heading to the 68th Street/Hunter College subway station was probably higher, since it was observed that a large percentage of the pedestrians who could not be surveyed (talking on cell phones or wearing head phones) were observed by the surveyors to be coming from or going to the subway.

In order to evaluate the potential increase in sidewalk volumes due to the Proposed Project, MTA NYCT calculated existing pedestrian volumes on East 69th Street and projected future volumes with the Proposed Project. Using the projected 2020 East 68th Street subway stair volumes and the results of the intercept survey, future pedestrian volumes were calculated for East 69th Street

between Lexington Avenue and Third Avenue for a 12-hour period from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM (see Appendix C). The study showed that overall, the pedestrian sidewalk volumes increased on the south side of the street and slightly decreased on the north side of the street.

As demonstrated in Chapter 7 of this EA, operation of the subway with new entrances at the north end of the station is not expected to result in noise impacts. Furthermore, sounds attributable to subway riders are not expected to increase noise levels in the area of the stairs, as riders are generally in transit from an origin to a destination and do not linger at or near the subway entrances.

Under the Proposed Project, the new street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street west of Lexington Avenue would be visible from vantages along the street and from residences located on the north side of the street, it would not block views out of residential windows, would not disturb views in the study area and would not be incongruous with the visual environment. The new mid-block entrance would be visible from pedestrians on Lexington Avenue but would not disturb views in the study area and would not be incongruous with the visual environment.

The Proposed Project *with Option E1*: the new street stair on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue would be visible from vantages along the street and from residences located on the north side of the street; it would not block views out of residential windows, disturb views in the study area, or be incongruous with the visual environment.

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would not alter the number or patterns of people using the neighborhood for shopping or attending events and would not alter the hours when people use the neighborhood. The project would slightly increase the number of pedestrians on the south sidewalk of East 69th Street east of Lexington Avenue. The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would be consistent with the character of development in the area. No neighborhoods would be divided or altered, and the cohesion of the community would not be affected by the Proposed Project. Community outreach regarding the Proposed Project has included several meetings with Community Board 8 during 2011 and 2012. The community outreach effort is described in Chapter 14.

No significant adverse impacts to neighborhood character due to the Proposed Project are anticipated. No mitigation would be warranted.

### **3.9 ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE**

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of federal laws, regulations, policies, programs, and projects. Environmental justice requirements seek to avoid environmental discrimination.

There are three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and/or low-income populations;
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process;
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The framework for the evaluation of potential environmental justice impacts is provided by existing statutes, executive orders and agency-specific policies. These include Title VI of the Civil Rights

Act of 1964 (which addresses discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin, but not income), Executive Order 12898 (which applies to minority as well as low income populations) and U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5610.2 (which describe Department of Transportation environmental justice policies).

In August 2012 FTA issued Circular 4703.1: Environmental Justice Policy Guidance for Federal Transit Administration Recipients. The Circular does not establish new requirements, but rather provides guidance to incorporate environmental justice principles in projects and planning. The Circular addresses (1) how to fully engage environmental justice populations in the transportation decision-making process, (2) how to determine if environmental justice populations would be subject to disproportionately high and adverse impacts as a result of a project/plan, and (3) how to avoid, minimize or mitigate these effects (FTA, 2012c).

Under FTA environmental justice policies, a significant adverse environmental impact must occur for there to be the potential for “disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects.”

The Proposed Project and the Proposed Project *with Option E1* would improve passenger circulation, provide ADA-compliant access, allow for enhanced emergency egress, and reduce sidewalk congestion at East 68th Street and Lexington Avenue. No single racial/ethnic group would be denied the aforementioned benefits anticipated by the Proposed Action, and no racial/ethnic or low-income group would experience disproportionately high or adverse effects from the Proposed Action. The area of the Proposed Action is not identified as a Potential Environmental Justice Area on NYSDEC Potential Environmental Justice mapping. Additionally, according to EPA’s EJSCREEN data (see Appendix E), persons with minority status comprise 13 percent of the study area population and low income persons comprise 9 percent of the study area population. Based on the nature of the Proposed Project and the study area, and surrounding region demographics, no environmental justice impacts are anticipated to result from the construction or operation of the Proposed Project. The Proposed Action would not have significant adverse environmental impacts, and there would be no disproportionate impacts to environmental justice communities as a result of the Proposed Action. No mitigation measures would be warranted.