Chapter 5: Open Space and Recreational Facilities

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter relies on the analysis from the *Fresh Kills Park Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FGEIS)* and summarizes the conclusions drawn from that analysis. No additional analysis was warranted for this SEIS as it pertains to Chapter 5, "Open Space and Recreational Facilities."

According to the guidelines of the *City Environmental Quality Review (CEQR) Technical Manual*, an open space analysis is advised when an action would result in the physical loss of public open space or the introduction of 200 or more residents or 500 or more workers to an area. The proposed project analyzed in the FGEIS is the development of a 2,163-acre park with both active and passive recreational uses, including a system of park roads. Because these park roads would pass through existing mapped parkland (portions of the project site are already mapped parkland), a State legislative action was approved for the alienation of parkland along these segments of proposed road corridors (Chapter 659 of the 2007 Laws, State of New York). However, the proposed project would still represent a major increase in the area's residential and open space supply, and would also increase the number of employees working in the area. Therefore, this chapter in the FGEIS identifies potential impacts that would result in the future with the proposed project, accounting for the increased open space supply provided by a major new waterfront park, as well as the increased demand from the new worker population.

B. METHODOLOGY

STUDY AREAS

The analysis of open space in the FGEIS was conducted based on methodologies contained in the *CEQR Technical Manual*. According to CEQR guidelines, the first step in conducting an open space analysis is to establish study areas appropriate for the new population(s) to be added as a result of the proposed actions. The study area is based on the distance a person is assumed to walk to reach a neighborhood open space. Workers typically use passive open spaces and are assumed to walk approximately 10 minutes (about a ¼-mile distance) from their places of work. Residents are more likely to travel farther to reach parks and recreational facilities. They are assumed to walk about 20 minutes (about a ½-mile distance) to reach both passive and active neighborhood open spaces. Because of the large size of the proposed project, two study areas are evaluated—a commercial study area based on a ¼-mile distance from the project site, and a residential study area based on a ½-mile distance.

OPEN SPACE USER POPULATIONS

Demographic data were used to identify potential open space users (residents and workers) within the open space study area. To determine the number of residents located within the study area, data were compiled from the 2000 Census for the study area tracts. The number of

employees in the study area was determined based on journey-to-work data from the 2000 Census Transportation Planning Package (CTTP).

INVENTORY OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

All publicly accessible open spaces and recreational facilities within the study area were inventoried to determine their size, character, and condition. Public spaces that do not offer useable passive or active recreational areas were excluded from the quantitative analysis, as were open spaces that are not accessible to the general public. The information used for this analysis was gathered through field studies conducted in November, 2006 and data from the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR). At each open space, active and passive recreational spaces were noted. Active open space facilities are characterized by activities such as jogging, field sports, and children's active play. Active open space features typically include basketball courts, baseball fields, or play equipment. Passive open space facilities are characterized by activities such as strolling, reading, sunbathing, and people-watching. Some spaces, such as lawns, public esplanades, and dog runs, can function as both active and passive recreation areas.

ADEQUACY OF OPEN SPACE RESOURCES

COMPARISON TO DCP GUIDELINES

To assess the adequacy of the quantity of open space resources, open space ratios are compared against guideline values set by the New York City Department of City Planning (DCP). Although these open space ratios are not meant to determine whether a proposed action would have a significant adverse impact on open space resources, they are helpful in understanding the extent to which an impact can occur. The following guidelines are used in this type of analysis:

- For non-residential populations, a guideline of 0.15 acres of passive open space per 1,000 non-residents is typically considered adequate.
- For residential populations, a guideline of 2.5 acres per 1,000 residents is considered adequate. Ideally, this is comprised of 0.50 acres of passive space and 2.0 acres of active open space. For large-scale actions such as that analyzed in the FGEIS, the City seeks to attain a planning goal of a balance of 80 percent active open space and 20 percent passive open space.
- For the combined resident and non-resident population, a target open space ratio is established by creating a weighted average of the amount of open space necessary to meet the DCP guideline of 0.50 acres of passive open space per 1,000 residents and 0.15 acres of passive open space per 1,000 non-residents.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The assessment of potential significant adverse impacts on open space is both quantitative and qualitative. The assessment considers nearby destination resources and project-created open spaces or private/quasi-private recreational facilities not available to the general public. It is recognized that DCP open space planning goals are not feasible for many areas of the city, and they are not considered impact thresholds. Rather, they are benchmarks indicating how well an area is served by open space.

C. CONCLUSIONS

The FGEIS concluded that the proposed Fresh Kills Park project would add a significant amount of new publicly accessible parkland totaling about 2,163 acres. It would be a new regional park that is expected to be used by residents of the borough, the City, visitors to the City, and residents of the region. Thus, the proposed Fresh Kills Park would be a major new recreational resource that would also dramatically increase the recreational opportunities along and adjacent to the waterfront. Although the project would add new worker populations to the area, the amount of new open space acreage, for both passive and active use and extensive new habitats would more than offset this demand. It is therefore concluded that the proposed project would result in significant quantitative and qualitative open space benefits and in significant positive open space impacts for local residents, the Borough, and the City as a whole.

These conclusions also apply to this SEIS. ✷