A. INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

This environmental justice (EJ) analysis has been prepared to identify and address any potential adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations that could result from the proposed Willets Point Off-site Sewer Improvement Project. The Willets Point Off-site Sewer Improvement Project is proposed to improve the sewer infrastructure and capacity of the Willets Point area, address existing chronic flooding issues, to provide new sanitary sewer infrastructure to the Willets Point area, and to support redevelopment of the Willets Point Development District (the "District"), which was the subject of a Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) that was completed by the City of New York in September 2008. The concept of performing an environmental justice analysis is related to the establishment of Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations* (February 11, 1994). Certain state agencies, such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), have developed their own policies for incorporating environmental justice concerns into environmental review. This EJ analysis will serve to assist NYSDEC in its permit review process since the proposed project would require a state pollutant discharge elimination system (SPDES) permit for dewatering and discharge of water pumped during excavation for the proposed sewers (storm and sanitary). Specifically, New York City Economic Development Corporation (NYCEDC) is seeking a *State Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (SPDES) Industrial Application Form NY-2C For New Permits and Permit Modifications to Discharge Industrial Wastewater and Storm Water* from NYSDEC for the construction of the new sanitary and storm water sewers. In addition, this EJ analysis will serve to assist NYSDEC, as Lead Agency, in its review of the proposed permit action under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).

METHODOLOGY

This EJ analysis follows NYSDEC's guidance and methodology for incorporating environmental justice concerns into environmental review. On March 19, 2003, NYSDEC issued *Commissioner's Policy (CP)-29 Environmental Justice and Permitting* (the Policy), to address environmental justice concerns and ensure community participation in the NYSDEC permit review process and the NYSDEC application of SEQRA. The Policy is intended to encourage meaningful public participation by minority or low-income communities in the environmental review process and to assist NYSDEC in addressing any adverse impacts on minority and low-income communities.

As set forth in the Policy, "Environmental justice means the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. Fair

treatment means that no group of people, including a racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from industrial, municipal, and commercial operations or the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies."

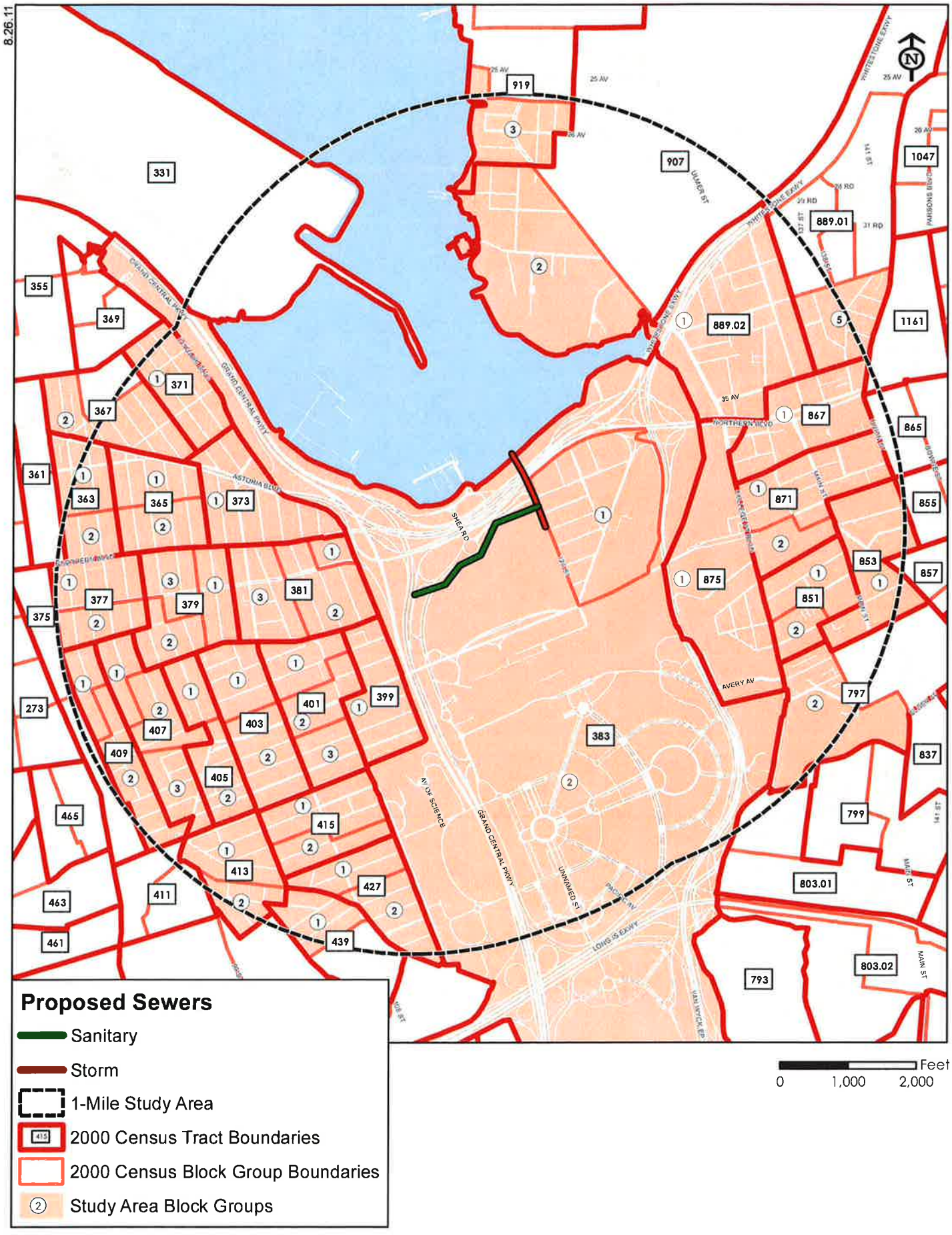
Following NYSDEC guidance, this EJ analysis involved identifying potential adverse environmental impacts and the area to be affected by the proposed permit action (i.e., establishing a study area) and determining whether potential adverse environmental impacts are likely to affect a potential environmental justice area (i.e., assessing whether low-income and/or minority communities are present in the study area). In addition, in accordance with the Policy, existing sources of pollution or similar facility types in the study area were analyzed in order to establish the baseline conditions against which project impacts were assessed. The proposed project was reviewed for any potential significant adverse impacts and the additional burden of any significant impacts on a potential environmental justice area was evaluated. Consistent with SEQRA and the Policy, any potential significant adverse impacts will be avoided or minimized to the greatest extent practicable. The Policy also requires that public outreach be conducted to the affected communities to ensure meaningful and effective public participation. Therefore, a summary of the project's public participation program to date is included at the end of this chapter.

DELINEATION OF STUDY AREA

The study area for this EJ analysis was defined to include all census block groups substantially within 1 mile of the proposed sewer locations, or the area where any potential adverse impacts resulting from the proposed permit action could occur (see **Figure 1**). The proposed storm outfall is located beneath 126th Street extending from Flushing Bay to approximately 125-feet south of 35th Avenue. The proposed sanitary sewer extends from 126th Street west to an existing sewer about 300 feet east of the Grand Central Parkway; the sewer runs along the northern frontage of Citi Field in its northern Parking Lot. The study area includes portions of the following Queens neighborhoods: College Point in the northern portion, Downtown Flushing on the east, a small portion Queensboro Hill in the southeastern corner, and Corona on the west. The proposed sewer locations are immediately surrounded by waterways, roadways, Citi Field, and Flushing Meadow Park. A substantial portion of the study area in the center is occupied by Citi Field and Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Residential uses are generally limited to locations west of 114th Street in the Corona portion of the study area and east of College Point Boulevard and south of Roosevelt Avenue in Downtown Flushing, and in the Queensboro Hill portion of the study area. From the proposed sewers, these residential areas are located across the Flushing River and Van Wyck Expressway to the east and across the Grand Central Parkway to the west. The Willets Point Development District, which includes mostly auto-related and industrial uses and one residence, is located immediately east of the proposed 126th Street storm outfall.

IDENTIFY POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AREAS

The next step in the analysis was to determine whether low-income or minority communities ("potential environmental justice areas") are present in the study area. Following NYSDEC's methodology, to identify significant minority and low-income populations within the study area, demographic information was obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's *Census 2000.* Demographic data such as total population, race and ethnicity, and poverty status were compiled at the census block group level for each census block group in the environmental justice study



Environmental Justice Study Area
Figure 1

area, and aggregated for the study area as a whole. In addition, data were compiled for Queens and New York City as a whole to allow for a comparison of study area characteristics to larger reference areas.

According to the Policy, potential environmental justice areas include minority or low-income communities. Those communities are defined as follows:

- *Minority communities:* NYSDEC's policy defines minorities to include Hispanics, African-Americans or Black persons, Asians and Pacific Islanders, and American Indians. This EJ analysis also considers minority populations to include Alaskan Natives as well as persons who identified themselves as being either "some other race" or "two or more races" in *Census 2000*. Following NYSDEC guidance, a minority community is a census block group, or contiguous area with multiple census block groups, having a minority population equal to or greater than 51.1 percent of the total population in an urban area and 33.8 percent of the total population in a rural area. The EJ study area is within an urban area, as established by the U.S. Census Bureau. Therefore, any census block group with a minority population equal to or greater than 51.1 percent was considered to be a potential environmental justice area.
- *Low-income communities:* The Policy defines a low-income population as a population with an annual income below the poverty threshold as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. For each census block group in the study area, data were compiled on the percentage of persons living below the poverty threshold. In accordance with the Policy, this EJ analysis defines a low-income community to be a census block group, or contiguous area with multiple census block groups, where the low-income population (i.e., persons living below the poverty threshold) is equal to or greater than 23.59 percent of the total population.

B. IDENTIFICATION OF POTENTIAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AREAS WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Using the methodology described above, all but 1 of the 48 census block groups within the study area (listed in **Table 1**, below) are considered potential environmental justice areas, as shown above in Figure 1. All of the potential environmental justice areas include minority communities, and 18 also include low-income communities. Census Tract (CT) 907 Block Group (BG) 2 in the northern portion of the study area in College Point is the only non-minority and non-low-income community in the study area, containing 60 residents. CT 383 BG 1 in the Willets Point Development District contained the least number of residents (one resident); this block group is also adjacent to the proposed sewer outfall.

As discussed above, this EJ analysis identifies minority communities where the total minority population exceeds NYSDEC's 51.1 percent threshold for identifying minority communities in urban areas. All of the potential environmental justice areas in the study area are considered minority communities, with minority population percentages ranging from 52.2 to 100.0 percent. Meanwhile, the study area as a whole has a minority population of 93.0 percent, compared with 67.1 percent in Queens and 65.0 percent in New York City as a whole. Of the minority populations in the study area, the Hispanic population accounts for the greatest proportion of the total population in the study area (59.5 percent), followed by Asian populations (17.7 percent) and then by Black or African American populations (13.0 percent of the study area population). A significant number of Black or African American residents are represented by the New York

Table 1
Study Area Population and Economic Characteristics

Census Tract Block Groups	Population (2000)												Economic Profile (1999)
		Race and Ethnicity*											
	2000 Total	White	%	Black	%	Asian	%	Other	%	Hispanic	%	Total Minority (%)	Individuals Below Poverty Level (%)**
CT 363 BG 1	1,214	22	1.8	708	58.3	39	3.2	29	2.4	416	34.3	98.2	24.47
CT 363 BG 2	965	23	2.4	376	39.0	29	3.0	12	1.2	525	54.4	97.6	31.22
CT 365 BG 1	1,395	32	2.3	614	44.0	52	3.7	67	4.8	630	45.2	97.7	20.65
CT 365 BG 2	1,789	22	1.2	620	34.7	89	5.0	44	2.5	1,014	56.7	98.8	24.25
CT 367 BG 2	1,990	37	1.9	1,293	65.0	39	2.0	94	4.7	527	26.5	98.1	15.67
CT 371 BG 1	1,394	43	3.1	979	70.2	16	1.1	55	3.9	301	21.6	96.9	9.31
CT 373 BG 1	2,157	45	2.1	969	44.9	28	1.3	72	3.3	1,043	48.4	97.9	18.38
CT 377 BG 1	1,945	29	1.5	494	25.4	8	0.4	38	2.0	1,376	70.7	98.5	26.39
CT 377 BG 2	1,634	53	3.2	438	26.8	19	1.2	46	2.8	1,078	66.0	96.8	30.34
CT 379 BG 1	1,658	29	1.7	395	23.8	42	2.5	40	2.4	1,152	69.5	98.3	22.07
CT 379 BG 2	1,620	31	1.9	239	14.8	18	1.1	34	2.1	1,298	80.1	98.1	29.45
CT 379 BG 3	1,353	27	2.0	269	19.9	10	0.7	28	2.1	1,019	75.3	98.0	30.38
CT 381 BG 1	531	12	2.3	442	83.2	1	0.2	13	2.4	63	11.9	97.7	19.48
CT 381 BG 2	1,888	30	1.6	588	31.1	45	2.4	57	3.0	1,168	61.9	98.4	31.79
CT 381 BG 3	2,879	47	1.6	446	15.5	43	1.5	77	2.7	2,266	78.7	98.4	30.92
CT 383 BG 1	1	0	0.0	1	100.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	100.0	N/A
CT 383 BG 2	2,135	829	38.8	330	15.5	432	20.2	131	6.1	413	19.3	61.2	9.63
CT 399 BG 1	3,589	135	3.8	197	5.5	439	12.2	97	2.7	2,721	75.8	96.2	21.11
CT 401 BG 1	2,126	59	2.8	138	6.5	46	2.2	22	1.0	1,861	87.5	97.2	17.51
CT 401 BG 2	2,247	48	2.1	73	3.2	199	8.9	79	3.5	1,848	82.2	97.9	20.09
CT 401 BG 3	2,385	122	5.1	16	0.7	431	18.1	62	2.6	1,754	73.5	94.9	21.02
CT 403 BG 1	2,818	133	4.7	66	2.3	159	5.6	38	1.3	2,422	85.9	95.3	26.22
CT 403 BG 2	3,594	100	2.8	44	1.2	495	13.8	54	1.5	2,901	80.7	97.2	34.27
CT 405 BG 1	1,901	73	3.8	101	5.3	81	4.3	17	0.9	1,629	85.7	96.2	13.62
CT 405 BG 2	1,402	49	3.5	10	0.7	58	4.1	21	1.5	1,264	90.2	96.5	28.11
CT 407 BG 1	1,646	29	1.8	200	12.2	49	3.0	35	2.1	1,333	81.0	98.2	14.61
CT 407 BG 2	3,083	89	2.9	91	3.0	85	2.8	94	3.0	2,724	88.4	97.1	22.69
CT 407 BG 3	3,175	130	4.1	27	0.9	331	10.4	93	2.9	2,594	81.7	95.9	23.40
CT 409 BG 1	1,833	75	4.1	195	10.6	83	4.5	40	2.2	1,440	78.6	95.9	18.85
CT 409 BG 2	3,365	143	4.2	56	1.7	346	10.3	87	2.6	2,733	81.2	95.8	21.99
CT 413 BG 1	2,531	277	10.9	8	0.3	391	15.4	85	3.4	1,770	69.9	89.1	27.18
CT 413 BG 2	1,005	119	11.8	10	1.0	130	12.9	33	3.3	713	70.9	88.2	22.63
CT 415 BG 1	2,239	316	14.1	26	1.2	408	18.2	71	3.2	1,418	63.3	85.9	18.15
CT 415 BG 2	1,365	208	15.2	28	2.1	149	10.9	26	1.9	954	69.9	84.8	21.43
CT 427 BG 1	1,453	248	17.1	23	1.6	264	18.2	24	1.7	894	61.5	82.9	19.00
CT 427 BG 2	2,369	364	15.4	30	1.3	263	11.1	18	0.8	1,694	71.5	84.6	18.21
CT 439 BG 1	1,768	288	16.3	29	1.6	113	6.4	38	2.1	1,300	73.5	83.7	12.70
CT 797 BG 2	1,213	116	9.6	4	0.3	917	75.6	73	6.0	103	8.5	90.4	26.70
CT 851 BG 1	4,403	151	3.4	282	6.4	2,527	57.4	223	5.1	1,220	27.7	96.6	24.38
CT 851 BG 2	2,630	108	4.1	164	6.2	1,158	44.0	79	3.0	1,121	42.6	95.9	29.36
CT 853 BG 1	5,861	467	8.0	125	2.1	4,272	72.9	193	3.3	804	13.7	92.0	26.79
CT 867 BG 1	867	20	2.3	8	0.9	642	74.0	25	2.9	172	19.8	97.7	13.52
CT 871 BG 1	612	17	2.8	15	2.5	436	71.2	12	2.0	132	21.6	97.2	21.04
CT 871 BG 2	1,163	89	7.7	411	35.3	180	15.5	37	3.2	446	38.3	92.3	37.76
CT 875 BG 1	385	43	11.2	25	6.5	248	64.4	18	4.7	51	13.2	88.8	19.82
CT 889.01 BG 5	2,608	194	7.4	409	15.7	957	36.7	68	2.6	980	37.6	92.6	25.67
CT 889.02 BG 1	602	81	13.5	39	6.5	311	51.7	27	4.5	144	23.9	86.5	20.91
CT 907 BG 2	60	46	76.7	5	8.3	2	3.3	0	0.0	7	11.7	23.3	0.00
CT 919 BG 3	2,038	974	47.8	145	7.1	445	21.8	86	4.2	388	19.0	52.2	7.08
Study Area	94,884	6,622	7.0	12,201	12.9	17,525	18.5	2,712	2.9	55,824	58.8	93.0	22.89
Queens	2,229,379	732,895	32.9	422,831	19.0	389,303	17.5	127,745	5.7	556,605	25.0	67.1	14.57
New York City	8,008,278	2,801,267	35.0	1,962,154	24.5	780,229	9.7	304,074	3.8	2,160,554	27.0	65.0	21.25

Notes: * The racial and ethnic categories provided are further defined as: White (White alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Black (Black or African American alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Asian (Asian alone, not Hispanic or Latino); Other (American Indian and Alaska Native alone, not Hispanic or Latino; Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, not Hispanic or Latino; Some other race alone, not Hispanic or Latino; Two or more races, not Hispanic or Latino); Hispanic (Hispanic or Latino; Persons of Hispanic origin may be of any race).
** Percent of individuals with incomes below established poverty level. The U.S. Census Bureau's established income threshold for poverty level defines poverty level.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, *Census 2000.*

City Housing Authority Bland Houses in CT 871 BG 2 at the southeastern corner of College Point Boulevard and Roosevelt Avenue. Other concentrations of African American or Black persons reside in the neighborhood of North Corona, north of Roosevelt Avenue and west of the Grand Central Parkway. A notable concentration of Asian residents exists in the Downtown Flushing neighborhood, east of College Point Boulevard in CT 797 BG 2, CT 851 BG 1 and 2, CT 853 BG 1, CT 867 BG 1, and CT 871 BG 1.

In addition, as discussed above, low-income communities were identified where the low-income population exceeds NYSDEC's 23.59 percent threshold. Low-income communities in the study area have low-income population percentages ranging from 24.25 to 34.27 percent. The low-income population in the study area as a whole is 22.89 percent—just under DEC's 23.59 threshold—compared with 14.57 percent in Queens and 21.25 percent in New York City overall.

The proposed sewer locations are located in CT 383 BG 2. While this block group is considered a potential environmental justice area, the majority of the block group is occupied by Citi Field and Flushing Meadows Corona Park, with most of its residents concentrated along Ditmars Boulevard in the northwestern portion of the study area.

C. ANALYSIS OF EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL BURDENS IN THE STUDY AREA

In accordance with the Policy, existing sources of pollution in the environmental justice study area should be considered in order to establish the baseline conditions against which impacts of a project are assessed. This section identifies existing sources of environmental pollution not related to the proposed project that may be a burden on the community. Potential environmental burdens in the study area are summarized below. Since the potential effects of the proposed project would be primarily construction effects, the focus of this section is on other construction projects expected to be going on in the area at the same time, as well as existing sources of traffic and noise.

The study area includes a number of regional highways and transportation infrastructure including Northern Boulevard in the central portion, Grand Central Parkway along Flushing Bay in the northern portion and cutting north-south through the central portion of the study area, the Whitestone Expressway in the northeastern portion, the Long Island Expressway in the southern portion, and the Van Wyck Expressway in the eastern area. These highways and infrastructure are known to contribute to traffic congestion and noise associated with traffic in the study area.

The study area includes a number of industrial and auto-related uses, including potentially contaminated properties, particularly in the College Point Industrial Park area in the northern portion, in the Willets Point Development District, and in portions of Downtown Flushing.

D. ANALYSIS OF THE POTENTIAL FOR SIGNIFICANT ADVERSE IMPACTS IN THE STUDY AREA

The proposed permit action is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts. Most of the project's potential effects, including new truck trips and odors, would be temporary, associated with construction, and contained within the area of the proposed sewers, including Citi Field and the Willets Point Development District, which is mostly composed of auto-related and industrial uses, and would not significantly affect the residential populations in the study

area, including minority and low-income populations. Any potential effects would not be significant.

As discussed above, the study area includes portions of the following Queens neighborhoods: College Point in the northern portion, Downtown Flushing on the east, a small portion Queensboro Hill in the southeastern corner, and Corona on the west. The proposed sewer locations are immediately surrounded by waterways, roadways, Citi Field, and Flushing Meadow Park. A substantial portion of the study area in the center is occupied by Citi Field and Flushing Meadows Corona Park. Residential uses are generally limited to locations west of 114th Street in the Corona portion of the study area and east of College Point Boulevard and south of Roosevelt Avenue in Downtown Flushing, and in the Queensboro Hill portion of the study area. The Willets Point Development District, which includes mostly auto-related and industrial uses and one residence, is located immediately east of the proposed 126th Street storm outfall.

The proposed sanitary sewer would be a City sewer under the jurisdiction of DEP. The sewer will be at least 36-inch diameter and will run from approximately 100-feet south of the intersection of 34th Avenue and 126th Street near the District westward across Flushing Meadows Corona Park (the northern frontage of Citi Field) to an existing manhole just east of the Grand Central Parkway. The proposed new sanitary sewer will provide new public service for the Willets Point area, and is necessary to accommodate existing and future flows from parcels throughout this drainage area, as well as the entire District, assuming development per the Special District zoning. The proposed sewer will connect to an existing 24-inch gravity sewer which crosses beneath the Grand Central Parkway and will convey flow, ultimately to the existing pump station. Upgrades to the existing pump station and 24-inch gravity sewer are not proposed at this time. The sewer could be pile supported, micro-tunneled/directionally drilled, or jacked, as approved by DEP. Work related to the sanitary sewer construction includes, maintaining, protecting and/or relocating existing Citi Field utilities (and any other public/private utility infrastructure); restoration in-kind of pavement, curbs, lighting, landscaping, etc; sheeting, shoring and dewatering of sewer trenches; maintenance of traffic on existing Flushing Meadow Park Service Road, 126th Street, and adjacent streets/ramps; and maintenance of Citi Field access. The work will also include heavy cleaning and relining of the existing 24-inch diameter sanitary sewer from the park service road west to 114th Street.

There is an existing storm sewer beneath 126th Street between Roosevelt Avenue and the Flushing Bay. A portion of the sewer and the outfall are not sized appropriately to address the existing localized chronic flooding that affects parts of the drainage area, or to accommodate future flows from this drainage area, inclusive of the District (assuming development per the Special District zoning). In order to accommodate existing and future storm water flows and to alleviate chronic flooding from within the District, the existing storm sewer and outfall must be reconstructed from approximately 125-feet south of 35th Avenue to the Flushing Bay (downstream of the initial stage of development). The reconstructed sewer would connect to the existing storm sewer beneath 126th Street near 35th Avenue near the northwest corner of the Phase 1 development area. The reconstructed storm sewer would be a pile supported 7.5-feet wide by 5-feet high box culvert type and would include associated chambers/structures. Work related to the sewer construction includes: construction of a concrete headwall and rip rap apron; removal and reconstruction in-kind of a portion of the Flushing Bay esplanade; curb, sidewalk and pavement restoration; sheeting, shoring and dewatering of the sewer trench maintenance and protection of traffic per New York City Department of Transportation Office of Construction Management and Coordination (OCMC) and New York City Department of Parks and

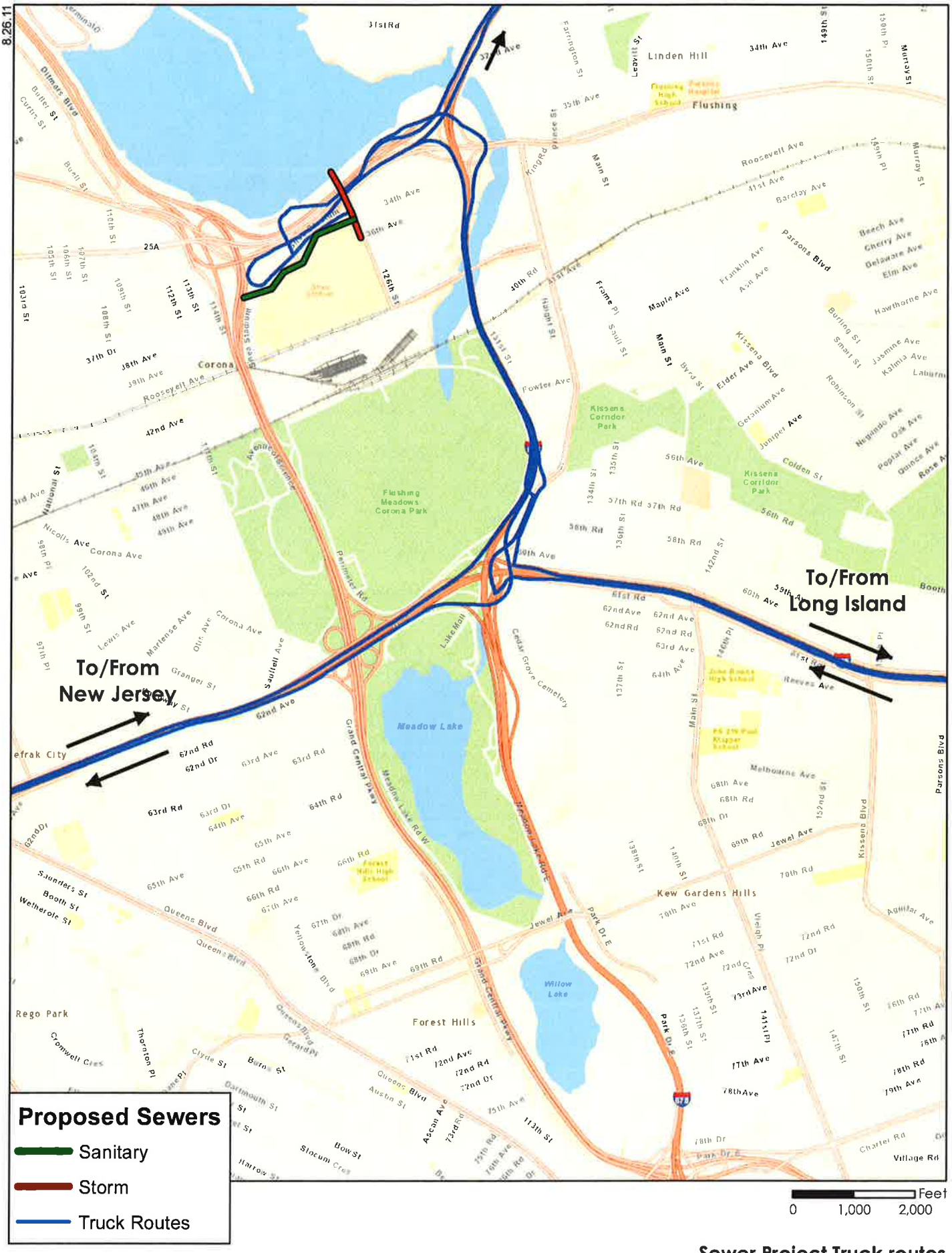
Recreation (DPR) stipulations; replacement of existing adjacent water main; and abandoning and hydraulically filling the existing 60-inch diameter sewer. The project will also include coordination with and maintenance and protection of existing ConEdison, Verizon, and National Grid utilities within the project construction limits.

The types of equipment anticipated to be used for the construction of the sewers is typical for this type of construction project, and include back hoes, pile driving equipment, dump trucks, jack hammers, bulldozers, air compressors, front loaders, pumps, and possibly micro-tunneling equipment, and cranes for moving large sections of pipe.

It is estimated that there would be an average of 20-25 workers on the storm sewer project and approximately 20 workers on the sanitary sewer cut and cover project. This could increase to as much as 40 daily workers depending on the chosen construction method. There would also be about 12 to 15 trucks per day for each sewer project (a total of 24 to 30 total trucks per day) for materials deliveries (cement, asphalt, precast pipe sections, etc.) and for removal of excess soil excavated from the site. The construction contractors are expected to dispose of soil in New Jersey (or possibly on Long Island). All truck traffic for materials delivery and disposal of excess soil would access/egress the site at 126th Street (via Shea Road/34th Avenue) using the adjacent regional highway network; traveling between the Whitestone Expressway (I-678) to points north, and the Van Wyck Expressway (I-678) and the Long Island Expressway (I-495) to or from destinations in New Jersey or on Long Island. The anticipated truck routes to and from the construction sites are shown in **Figure 2**. Worker vehicle traffic would be expected to use these same routes, as well as possibly using the adjacent highway system connections to/from the Grand Central Parkway.

Since the proposed sewer locations are easily and directly accessible via the area's regional highway system, including Northern Boulevard, Shea Road, and the connecting roadways between the Grand Central Parkway and I-678 to the north, the Grand Central Parkway to the north and west, the Long Island Expressway to the south, and the Van Wyck and Whitestone Expressways to the east, trucks associated with construction are not likely to pass through the potential environmental justice areas to access the proposed sewer locations. In addition, the small numbers of daily trucks anticipated to be traveling to and from the site on the highway system during the construction period will be insignificant in comparison to the existing volumes of vehicles (trucks and autos) that are found on these highways.

Construction equipment noise is regulated by EPA noise emission standards for construction equipment. These federal requirements mandate that (1) certain classifications of construction equipment and motor vehicles meet specified noise emissions standards; and (2) construction material be handled and transported in such a manner as not to create unnecessary noise. The New York City Noise Control Code contains sound-level standards for motor vehicles, air compressors, and paving breakers; requires that all exhausts be muffled; prohibits all unnecessary noise adjacent to schools, hospitals, and courts; and limits construction activities to weekdays between 7 AM and 6 PM. These regulations allow for variances from the Commissioner of DEP. In addition, where feasible, appropriate low noise-emission-level equipment would be used and operational procedures implemented. Construction of the sewers would be required to follow these regulations and standards. In addition, because the locations where these sewer improvements would be constructed are in an isolated area, generally well away from residential uses, any potential noise or air emissions from on-site construction equipment would likely dissipate before reaching the minority and low-income residents located farther away (across the Flushing River and Van Wyck Expressway to the east and across the



Sewer Project Truck routes
Figure 2

Grand Central Parkway to the west). Therefore, no significant impacts would be expected from construction of the sewers on area EJ communities.

E. SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL BENEFITS OF THE PROPOSED ACTIONS

The goals of the Willets Point Off-site Sewer Improvement Project include improving the sewer infrastructure and capacity of the Willets Point area; improving water quality by constructing sewers which will collect and convey storm and sanitary flows from the Willets Point neighborhood; allowing for treatment of sanitary flows by conveying flows to a treatment plant; alleviating chronic flooding; and supporting the City's efforts to redevelop the District. The project supports *PlaNYC*'s goal of improving the quality of the City's waterways and its guidance to pursue upgrades to sewer infrastructure by optimizing the existing sewer system and expanding the sewer network.

The proposed sewer mains will provide new public sanitary sewer service for the Willets Point area, and will replace an inadequately sized storm water sewer and outfall to help alleviate chronic flooding that occurs in the Willets Point District. In addition, the project will support the redevelopment of the Willets Point Development District, which was the subject of an FGEIS completed by the City of New York in September 2008. Certain infrastructure improvements are necessary to support the approved redevelopment including construction of a sanitary sewer and reconstruction of an existing storm sewer and outfall.

The Willets Point Development Plan offers an opportunity to transform a 62-acre, underutilized area with superior connections to the entire tri-state area, into a new destination that provides significant socioeconomic and environmental benefits to the Borough of Queens and New York City as a whole. The City's Development Plan for the Willets Point Development District contemplates the creation of a vibrant mixed-use neighborhood, including retail and residential space, a new entertainment district adjacent to the new CitiField stadium, a new full-service hotel and convention center, public parks, plazas, open space, a new elementary school, and community and cultural space. Preliminary estimates show redevelopment would create approximately 5,300 permanent jobs. The project received City Council approval on November 13, 2008.

EDC has recently solicited proposals from Developers regarding the initial stage of redevelopment which is anticipated to include the following program: up to 680,000 square feet of retail space, up to 400 units of mixed income housing, up to 387 hotel rooms, not less than 2.08 acres of open space, and accessory parking pursuant to zoning. The responses were received on September 9, 2011.

There are currently no sanitary sewers serving the Willets Point neighborhood. The proposed sanitary sewer would ultimately convey flow from the neighborhood to a DEP treatment facility, and is necessary to accommodate future flows from the entire District, assuming development per the Special District zoning, as well as from adjacent parcels in this drainage area.

There is an existing storm sewer beneath 126th Street between Roosevelt Avenue and the Flushing Bay, however; a portion of the sewer and the outfall are not sized appropriately to accommodate the storm water from the District. In order to accommodate future flows from the District, assuming development per the Special District zoning, as well as from adjacent parcels in this drainage area and to alleviate chronic flooding from within the District, the existing storm

sewer and outfall must be reconstructed from approximately 125-feet south of 35th Avenue to the Flushing Bay (downstream of the initial stage of development.

The proposed dewatering and discharge of water pumped during excavation for the proposed sewers (storm and sanitary) would result in overall water quality improvement by allowing for modern sewer infrastructure to collect and convey storm water, as well as collect and convey sanitary sewage to a treatment plant from the Willets Point Development District which is currently not done because there are no existing sanitary sewers in the District at present.

F. CONCLUSIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Based on the Policy and the methodology described above, certain portions of the environmental justice study area have been determined to be a potential environmental justice area, because of the presence of low-income and minority populations higher than the thresholds provided in DEC's Policy. As discussed above, the proposed project will be occurring in an isolated area surrounded by highways, rivers, and other waterbodies and is not expected to result in any significant adverse impacts. This conclusion includes consideration of other existing pollutant sources located in the area (as described above in section C).

Overall, the proposed permit action would not result in significant adverse impacts on potential environmental justice areas.

G. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

As part of the DEC permit process, public participation will be sought from the affected communities, in accordance with the Policy. A draft Public Participation Plan has been developed and is being submitted to DEC in conjunction with the required permit application. A public outreach program to the affected communities, including minority and low-income populations in the study area, will be implemented, providing these groups with ample opportunity to have any of their concerns addressed. The proposed project's draft Public Participation Plan includes a number of activities and tasks that will be undertaken to inform stakeholders about the proposed action and the permit being sought from DEC, and to encourage dialogue and solicit input from all stakeholders involved. For example, stakeholders in the proposed action will be identified and will include known community groups. In addition, written information on the proposed action and the environmental permit review process will be prepared for posting and distribution to the public and other stakeholders. Selected project materials will also be translated into Spanish, as necessary. Easily accessible document repositories will be established within the study area. Also, a public information meeting will be held to provide information about the proposed facility and the associated NYSDEC permitting process. With implementation of the draft Public Participation Plan, the proposed project will be consistent with the public participation requirements of the Policy. ✷