

III.Q Growth Inducement (GI)

Q. Growth Inducement (GI)**Comment GI-1:**

Regarding the second item, "Potential Displacement" the section dismisses that secondary displacement is an issue due to the City's planning efforts to strengthen the neighborhoods and create additional affordable housing opportunities. The analysis concludes by saying that "while gentrification may not be fully avoidable, it can be minimized by appropriate City planning initiatives".

While efforts on the part of the City will continue, unfortunately these do not guarantee that gentrification will be minimized in any way. The Project has the potential of generating a significant increase in the demand for and therefore the value of properties throughout the surrounding neighborhoods, putting tremendous pressure on the owners to sell and/or market their properties to a more upscale clientele. This is exacerbated by the lack of rent controls on many of these properties, a fact that was ignored in this section of the analysis and attempted to be explained away in other sections of the DEIS and can indeed result in gentrification and secondary displacement.

(Daisy Colon, Dept. of Planning and Development, City of Yonkers, Memo, 5/9/2008)

Response GI-1:

It is not anticipated that the Project will cause significant residential displacement, either direct or indirect. Indirect residential displacement that may be caused by the Project is discussed in the DEIS, beginning on page III.I-16. Indirect residential displacement would be caused if the prevailing rents in the existing housing units increased beyond what the current tenants could afford to pay. As discussed in the DEIS, there are several reasons why significant indirect residential displacement is unlikely to occur. Southwest Yonkers is a very large area, larger than some of the State's small cities. The additional population will result in additional diversity downtown, but it will not completely alter the overall demographic composition of the area to the extent that it would be a significant adverse impact under SEQRA. More specifically, all housing units currently under the control of the Municipal Housing Authority of the City of Yonkers (MHACY) will remain under its control. The rents charged by MHACY will not be affected by this Project. Second, the New York State Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974 regulates the rent increases that are allowable in buildings containing six or more units that were built before 1974. This act protects residents in such buildings from large rent increases. Many buildings in the Study Area are protected by this act. Third, the Applicant has committed to providing new affordable/workforce housing units equal to 10% of the residential units being constructed as part of the Project through new construction and a contribution to an affordable housing fund. Fourth, properties in the project area will not be subject to reassessment simply because their property is located in the redevelopment area. Rather, as discussed on page III.I-19 of the DEIS, the assessed values of properties in the redevelopment area will not be increased unless and until the property is improved. Finally, the Project is a continuation of an existing trend of residential diversification in the Study Area. The population of the Study Area will increase by 7.8% when the Project is completed. Downtown Yonkers will change and become more diverse as a result of this and other proposed project populations. However, this increase is not enough to alone cause a wholesale change in the character of the area.

Comment GI-2:

The analysis also dismisses secondary displacement as being mitigated by the affordable component of the Project, designed to "further diversity new housing opportunities in downtown Yonkers". However, again no explanation is given to the amount of affordable housing to be provided, the income levels, term of affordability and whether the units will be on-site or off-site. Mention is made here of improving the existing housing stock through rehabilitation loans and grants, but again does not discuss the mechanisms available to promote this rehab, which if implemented without proper controls can be counterproductive to efforts to minimize secondary displacement.

(Daisy Colon, Dept. of Planning and Development, City of Yonkers, Memo, 5/9/2008)

Response GI-2:

The DEIS for the Project includes a socio-economic analysis that evaluates potential direct and indirect displacement of residential uses and environmental justice issues. A preliminary screening assessment of potential indirect displacement suggested a potential for impacts. A subsequent detailed analysis determined that no significant indirect displacement is anticipated as a result of the Project.

It should also be noted that any potential impacts would be mitigated by a number of factors. Yonkers is subject to The New York State Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974, which covers all residential buildings of 6 units or more built before 1974. While no exact figures can be discerned from the Census data, given the large proportion of rental buildings in the City (over 42,000), the size of these buildings (38% are more than 5 units) and the fact that over 93% of the multi-family housing stock is pre-1979, it can reasonably be assumed that many of the existing units in the City and project area are subject to the Act and the Westchester rent stabilization guidelines and the tenants are therefore protected from significant rent increases.

The task of identifying populations at risk of displacement by quantifying housing units and/or household income by tenure is not possible with available US Census data, as the rent stabilization criteria do not match the data sets reported by the Census Bureau. For example, those housing units within structures of 5 units or less would be considered at risk since they are not rent-stabilized units; however, the Census identifies housing units within structures with 5-9 units. Moreover, US Census data sets do not provide income data by tenure. However, it is possible that as much as 80% of the existing stock in the project area is old enough to be protected and as much as 75% of housing units is in building types that would be protected.

While no significant indirect displacement is anticipated, it is possible that the implementation of the redevelopment project in an area in which nearly 33% of all lots and buildings are determined to be in "poor" condition could increase surrounding property values and therefore create the potential for project-induced displacement. The likelihood of this occurring in the project area as a result of the Project is minimized by the following factors.

- The vast majority of the land comprising the Project sites is presently vacant and/or underutilized and a significant proportion of parcels surrounding the Project sites (approximately 41.7 acres) are either vacant or underutilized (i.e., partially vacant).

Therefore, if these surrounding parcels were to be improved, there would be minimal primary or secondary population displacement.

- As has been discussed in the previous paragraphs, it is estimated that a significant proportion of the affordable housing in the project area is located in buildings protected by the New York State Emergency Tenant Protection Act of 1974.

While it is recognized that some secondary displacement may occur, it would not be significant given the overall demographics of the project area, and certain mitigation measures to be imposed in connection with the Project, including:

- The provision of affordable/workforce units equal to 10% of the total number of residential units at the Project; new affordable units will be constructed and the Applicant will contribute to an affordable housing fund. With regard to affordable housing in the project area and in the downtown, it should be noted that between 1990 and 1999, 829 affordable units were built and a \$60 million renovation of Parkledge Housing (a 311 unit affordable housing development) on Yonkers Avenue was completed in 2005. The Yonkers Municipal Housing Authority is overseeing a HOPE VI urban redevelopment project along Ashburton Avenue to replace Mulford Gardens (adding a net increase of 225 affordable units) and construct 62 affordable two-family homes. Further, there are approximately 183 new affordable housing units to be provided by other currently planned projects in the Yonkers downtown.
- Continued support by the Applicant for public services organizations. In 2006, Struever Fidelco Cappelli LLC and its related entities funded an extensive number of community organizations in Yonkers that needed assistance in their efforts to address a variety of issues in the City. Among many others, these included the YMCA, YWCA, American Red Cross, Hudson River Museum, Beczak Environmental Education Center, Yonkers Public Schools, Family Service Society, Groundwork Yonkers, Inc. My Sister's Place, Yonkers Community Action Program and Nepperhan Community Center, Inc.
- The Applicant has agreed to work with the City of Yonkers to create a fund to assist existing business owners in the area. This fund could be used to improve the facades and store frontages. Details of this fund will be subject to negotiation with the City of Yonkers as part of the Land Disposition Agreements and final project approval. The Applicant will also consider contribution of funds to assist in the rehabilitation of older housing and/or storefronts in the immediate vicinity of the Project, augmenting the City's ongoing property rehabilitation efforts. The details of this program will be developed in coordination with the City Council as part of the Land Disposition Agreements.

Comment GI-3:

The first section again mentions the Applicant's commitment to providing affordable housing opportunities and also adds the component of a job training program. Again, at this point in the process, the City should be requesting specifics regarding the exact structure of the Applicant's commitment which should be memorialized in this, or perhaps a separate document.

(Daisy Colon, Dept. of Planning and Development, City of Yonkers, Memo, 5/9/2008)

Response GI-3:

Specifics will be developed by the Council as part of the negotiations with the developer on the Land Disposition Agreements. Additional details will be provided on the Environmental Findings Statement.