

Appendix F

Visual Impact Assessment

Appendix F
Visual Impact Assessment

Part 1 of 4

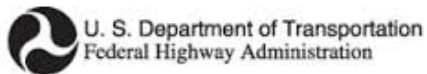


Visual Impact Assessment

I-81 Viaduct Project

City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, New York

Prepared for:



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Visual Impact Assessment

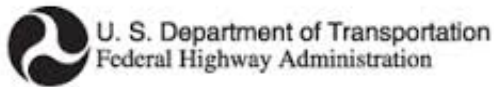
I-81 Viaduct Project

City of Syracuse and Towns of Salina, Cicero, and DeWitt, Onondaga County, New York
NYSDOT PIN 3501.60

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Attachment C: Visual Simulations

Attachment D: Visual Impact Rating Sheets

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Description of the Proposed Action

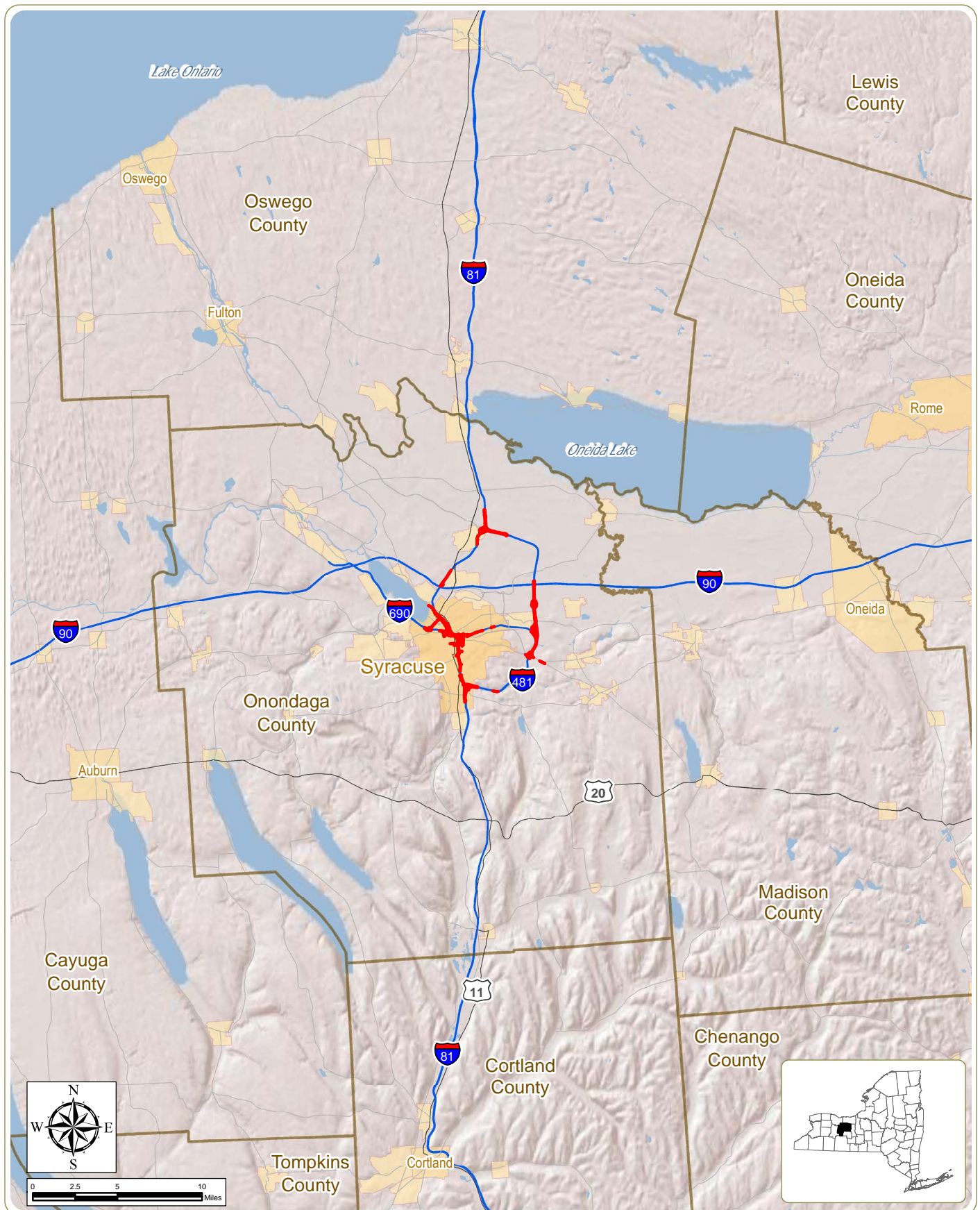
The Interstate 81 (I-81) Viaduct Project (the Project) is being undertaken by the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) to address the structural deficiencies and non-standard highway features in the I-81 corridor through the City of Syracuse, while creating an improved corridor that meets transportation needs and provides the transportation infrastructure to support long-range planning efforts. The Project is in the City of Syracuse and the Towns of Salina, Cicero, and DeWitt, in Onondaga County, New York (see **Figure 1**).

I-81 is a major north-south transportation corridor that extends from Tennessee to Canada, providing links to major cities, such as Washington, D.C., Philadelphia, and New York City, via east-west connections. Within greater Syracuse, I-81 is the principal north-south transportation route for commuters, travelers, and commercial vehicles and provides direct access to Downtown Syracuse. I-690 is the principal east-west arterial in Syracuse also providing direct access to Downtown Syracuse. The I-81/I-690 interchange is in the northern portion of Downtown. The interchange of both interstates and the elevated segment of I-81 through Downtown make up the I-81 Central Study Area that refers to the section of I-81 between East Brighton Avenue and Hiawatha Boulevard West and the portions of I-690 approximately between Leavenworth Avenue and Beech Street and between Hiawatha Boulevard West and Bear Street. It also includes several local roads in proximity to I-81 and I-690 in Syracuse. The Project is considering three alternatives – the No Build, Viaduct, and Community Grid Alternatives – which are described in Section 1.3 of this report.

1.2 Purpose of the Visual Impact Assessment

This Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was prepared as part of review of the Project under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires consideration of the Project's potential impacts on the environment. The primary purpose of the VIA is to inform the public, state and federal regulators, engineers, designers, decision-makers, public officials, and other stakeholders about significant visual resources near the Project and the potential visual effects (or impacts) of the Project's build alternatives (relative to existing conditions). This VIA was prepared in accordance with current NYSDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) visual impact assessment policies, which are consistent with the policies, procedures, and guidelines contained in established methodologies including *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* by the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA-HEP-15-029 2015) and applicable portions of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation 2000 Program Policy: *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts and Aesthetic Impacts* (NYSDEC DEP-00-2, December 2019). The purpose and methodology of the VIA is further described in Section 2.0 of this report.

In 1987, the U.S. Department of Transportation Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) established *Environmental Impact and Related Procedures* (23 CFR §771) for the evaluation of transportation projects and compliance with 23 U.S.C. § 109 (h), which focuses on design criteria. These procedures require that final decisions on Project development are made in the best overall public interest, taking into consideration several socio-economic, engineering, and environmental factors including, specifically, aesthetic values. FHWA satisfies the requirements in 23 U.S.C. 109(h) through the NEPA process described in 23 CFR §771. FHWA Technical Advisory T6640.8A (1987) also identifies visual resources as an item to be included in environmental documents.



I-81 Viaduct Project

Onondaga County, New York

Figure 1: Regional Project Location

2021

■ Limits of Disturbance for
All Project Alternatives

Notes: 1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Shaded Relief" Map Service and ESRI StreetMap North America, 2008.
2. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.



The FHWA's 2015 guidelines represent the agency's current thinking about best practices in visual assessments. These guidelines also recognize that state laws, local laws and ordinances may be applicable to a project. The FHWA guidelines respond to NEPA and to other federal requirements. These guidelines are outlined in transportation funding authorization bills, Presidential Executive Orders related to visual character of federal lands and projects. Additional guidelines are also outlined in FHWA programs and initiatives such as Scenic Byways, Context Sensitive Solutions, and Complete Streets.

The I-81 VIA was prepared pursuant to *NYSDOT Engineering Instruction EI 02-025* and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Program Policy; *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (NYSDEC DEP-00-2). In accordance with these guidelines, the existing visual character and quality of the affected visual environment, as well as the viewer response to visual resources, provide a framework for assessing the change in visual character and quality that would occur because of the Project. The evaluation of the change in visual characteristics is a change from the existing (the present viaduct) conditions.

Locally, the City of Syracuse addresses the protection and enhancement of aesthetics, either directly or indirectly, and related visual resources in its land use policies, plans and regulations. Although FHWA and NYSDOT are not subject to regulation by the City of Syracuse, the Project has taken local policies, plans, and regulations into account during the development of the proposed build alternatives. For instance, *The City of Syracuse Comprehensive Plan 2040* contains a discussion of policy towards implementing 'Complete Streets'. The City of Syracuse Zoning Ordinance emphasizes protection and preservation of landmarks, establishing overlay districts that address urban design along James Street and the Connective Corridor located between Downtown and University Hill. The Syracuse zoning ordinance is undergoing a complete update with revisions based on 'Smart Growth Principles', 'Complete Streets' classification, and form-based codes that will further emphasize visual quality and the built form of the City of Syracuse.

As stated in its Comprehensive Plan 2040, the City of Syracuse recognizes the importance of community character: "It is the policy of the City of Syracuse to cultivate and capitalize on the area's unique character defined by its history while supporting well-designed real estate developments that enhance neighborhoods, lively public spaces, well-maintained infrastructure, and dynamic neighborhoods that are linked by well-planned transportation, all within an exciting, safe, clean environment." The Plan also states, "This will be accomplished through strategic choices in the City's operating budget, land use and design regulations, as well as capital improvements that implement the vision established by the City's Comprehensive Plan. The City's physical environment helps to define the community's character through its land use patterns and urban design, as well as natural, cultural, and historic resources. Developing the City and improving its physical environment through the enhancement of its civic and public facilities has been identified as a major objective of the Comprehensive Plan (City of Syracuse, 2012).

1.3 Description of Alternatives

NEPA requires consideration of reasonable alternatives for a proposed project. The purpose and need for the I-81 Viaduct Project, and reasonable alternatives that have been identified to achieve the purpose and need for the Project, are described and evaluated in this Draft Design Report/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DDR/DEIS). The alternatives described in the DDR/DEIS are the No Build, Viaduct, and Community Grid Alternatives (see **Figure 2: Sheets 1 and 2**). The Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives are collectively referred to as the build alternatives. Each alternative is fully described in the DDR/DEIS, including proposed transportation improvements, construction, traffic, and potential environmental impacts.

This VIA evaluates the visual effect of the No Build, Viaduct, and Community Grid Alternatives. The potential visual effect of each build alternative is evaluated relative to the existing character and quality of the visual environment. The build alternatives, as described below, share some common elements and therefore these elements would have a similar visual character.

Under both build alternatives, pedestrian and bicyclist improvements would be made throughout the Project area. Sidewalks, crosswalks, medians, bike lanes, streetscaping, and pedestrian amenities would enhance pedestrian activity and improve the overall visual character by introducing more human-scale and pedestrian-friendly features into the area. These linear improvements would be consistent with NYSDOT's Complete Street design requirements as described in Section 1.2. The visual character of each build alternative is described throughout this report and illustrated in the photo simulations included in Attachment C.

Descriptions and evaluation of impacts for these alternatives included in the DDR/DEIS that are not relevant to consideration of potential visual impacts are not included in this VIA, but instead are incorporated by reference. Relevant descriptions of each alternative that contribute to potential effects on the visual environment are summarized below.

1.3.1 No Build Alternative

NEPA requires examination of a No Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative serves as the baseline against which the other alternatives can be compared. The No Build Alternative would maintain the highway in its existing configuration, although ongoing maintenance and repairs to ensure the safety of the traveling public would continue. Under the No Build Alternative, large-scale replacement and rehabilitation efforts would not be undertaken, non-standard highway features would not be corrected, and existing interchanges would not be modified. The No Build Alternative would not involve changes in right-of-way (property line).

The Project's visual character under the No Build Alternative and the build alternatives differs substantially. Existing visual conditions within the vicinity of I-81 would remain unchanged under the No Build Alternative as described in Section 3.3 of this report. For the purposes of this analysis, the existing conditions (with respect to the visual environment) are assumed to represent conditions under the No Build Alternative. Under the No Build Alternative, the current visual environment that is influenced by existing I-81 highway infrastructure would essentially remain the same until routine maintenance and repair can no longer keep up with deteriorating conditions. At that point, visual conditions would worsen until future decisions become necessary regarding possible closure of bridges and ramps. Current views of I-81 infrastructure and its influence upon the surrounding visual environment are also described in Section 4.2 and depicted in photographs included in Attachment B of this report.

1.3.2 Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would involve a reconstruction of I-81 between approximately East Colvin Street and Hiawatha Boulevard and of I-690 between Leavenworth Avenue and Lodi Street (see **Figure 2: Sheet 1**). The existing viaduct would be demolished and replaced by a new viaduct, which would typically provide four 12-foot travel lanes, as well as inside and outside shoulders. Along Almond Street, the new viaduct generally would be approximately 10 to 15 feet higher than the existing viaduct, which is approximately 20 feet tall.

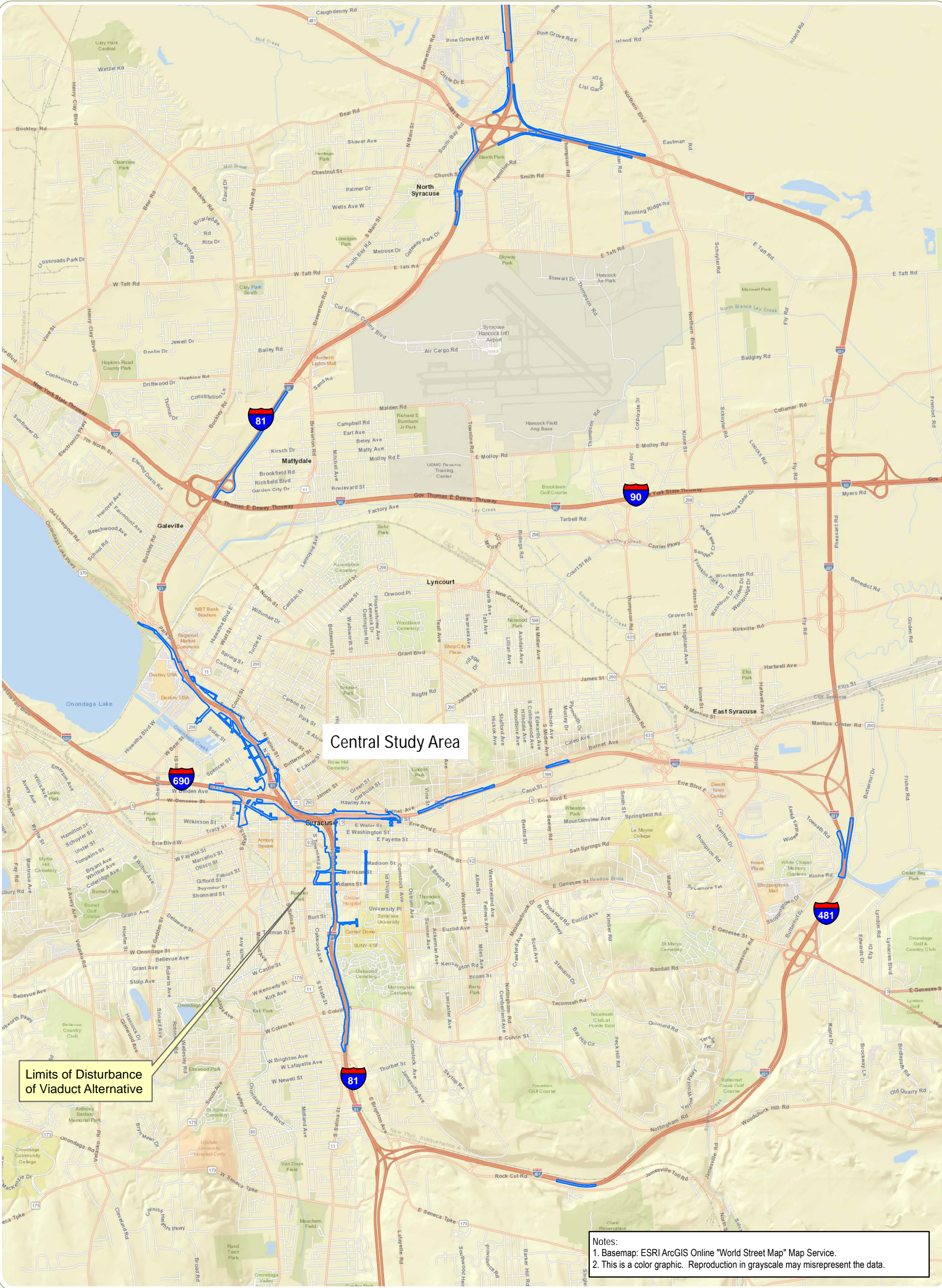
Major elements of the Viaduct Alternative, such as interchange modifications, bridge replacements, and other features, include:

- A new partial interchange, with a northbound exit ramp and a southbound entrance ramp, would be constructed on I-81 at MLK, Jr. East.
- At I-81 Interchange 18 (Harrison/Adams Streets), a second exit lane to Harrison Street from southbound I-81 would be added.
- I-690 would be reconstructed from Leavenworth Avenue to Beech Street. The existing ramps between I-690 and I-81 would also be reconstructed. New ramps would be built to provide direct connections, which are unavailable today. These ramp connections are located between eastbound I-690 and northbound I-81, and between southbound I-81 and westbound I-690.
- I-81 Interchanges 19 (North Clinton Street/North Salina Street) and 20 (North Franklin Street/West Street) would be combined into one partial interchange. This interchange consolidation would involve replacing the existing off-ramps with a single ramp that would serve North Clinton Street, and the existing on-ramps with a single, two-lane ramp at Pearl Street.
- The Butternut Street overpass would be rebuilt in a new location, over existing Genant Drive, to connect to North Clinton and North Franklin Streets, and the existing bridge would be demolished. Existing Butternut Street would be removed from Salt to North Franklin Streets.
- North Clinton Street and portions of intersecting streets would be reconstructed from Bear Street to existing Genant Drive and extended to connect with North Franklin Street. North Clinton Street would continue to provide one lane in each direction, as it does today, until a point north of existing Court Street, where it would widen into a three-lane roadway (with one southbound lane, one northbound lane, and a turn lane in the middle) and then into a four-lane roadway as it approaches Bear Street. In addition, North Clinton would be realigned to connect to the southbound I-81 off-ramp at Bear Street, creating an intersection with the existing I-81 service road.
- The segment of I-81 from I-690 to Hiawatha Boulevard (Interchange 20 to Interchange 24) would be widened to provide four through lanes in each direction.
- Existing I-81 Interchange 21 (Spencer Street/Catawba Street) and Interchange 22 (Route 298, Court Street/Bear Street) would be consolidated into a single interchange at Bear Street. The northbound I-81 entrance and exit ramps would be removed and replaced by new ramps connecting to Bear Street. The southbound I-81 entrance and exit ramps would be relocated to connect to North Clinton Street, just south of Bear Street.
- The Court Street bridge, which is now on a skewed angle over I-81, would be replaced with a new, two-lane bridge that would pass straight over the highway, at a 90-degree angle, and connect to North Clinton Street.
- The Bear Street and Spencer Street bridges would be replaced with new structures.
- The Route 370 (Onondaga Lake Parkway) on-ramp (Interchange 24A) and Old Liverpool Road on-ramp (Interchange 24B) to southbound I-81 would be consolidated into a single ramp.
- I-690 Interchange 11/12 (West Street/West Genesee Street) would be replaced with a new interchange, controlled by a traffic signal on West Street. Just south of the new interchange, West Street would be lowered

to meet West Genesee Street, creating an at-grade intersection. In addition, the ramp from West Street to Herald Place and the ramp from North Franklin Street to West Street would be removed.

- A new path along the west bank of Onondaga Creek between Erie Boulevard and Evans Street would be constructed, providing views, which are now obstructed, of a historic Erie Canal aqueduct and stone bridge over the Creek. Two ramps between northbound West Street and an elevated portion of Erie Boulevard would be replaced with a single connector roadway.
- The westbound exit ramp from I-690 to North Townsend Street, and the existing on-ramp to eastbound I-690 from McBride Street, would be relocated to Catherine Street.
- Construction of 15 noise barriers at locations throughout the Project where traffic noise impacts have been predicted and that meet the criteria for both reasonableness and feasibility for construction of noise abatement measures. Noise barriers will be constructed of concrete in most locations (transparent panels will be utilized on I-690 at the Teall Avenue interchange) and are anticipated to range in height from 12 to 20 feet.

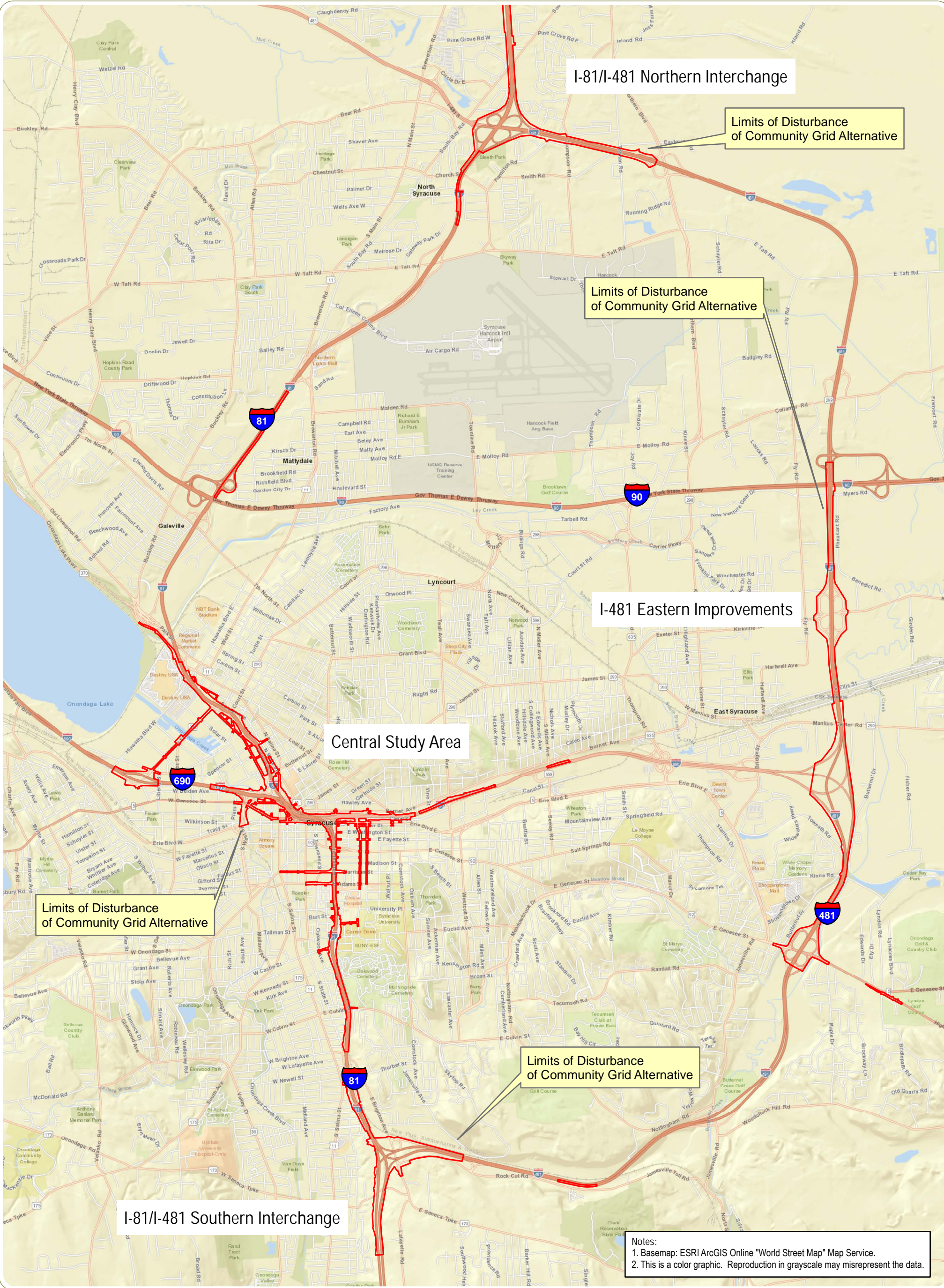
The Viaduct Alternative would include new bicycle and pedestrian facilities to improve connectivity between existing and proposed facilities within the Project limits, as well as specific local street improvements (for more details, refer to **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, of this DDR/DEIS).



I-81 Viaduct Project


Onondaga County, New York

Figure 2: Project Alternatives
Sheet 1: Viaduct Alternative



I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 2: Project Alternatives
Sheet 2: Community Grid Alternative

 Limits of Disturbance of
Community Grid Alternative

1.3.3 Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would involve the demolition of the existing viaduct between the New York, Susquehanna and Western (NYS&W) Railway bridge and the I-81/I-690 interchange, and the replacement of the viaduct with a street-level arterial (see **Figure 2: Sheet 2**). The portion of existing I-81 between its northern and southern intersections with I-481 would be re-designated as a Business Loop of I-81 (BL 81). The section of I-81 between the southern I-81/I-481 interchange (Interchange 16A) and the I-81/I-481 northern interchange (Interchange 29) in Cicero would be de-designated as an interstate, and existing I-481 would be re-designated as the new I-81.

The new I-81 would carry a minimum of four travel lanes (two in each direction) of through traffic. The existing I-81/I-481 South Interchange (Interchange 16A) and I-81/I-481 North Interchange (Interchange 29) would be reconstructed. Other modifications, including the addition of auxiliary lanes, new signage, and renumbered interchanges, would be implemented as part of the re-designation.

Major elements of the Community Grid Alternative, such as interchange modifications, bridge replacements, and other features, include:

- BL 81 would come to grade at MLK, Jr. East.
- A new northbound BL 81 off-ramp to East Colvin Street would be constructed between the highway and the NYS&W Railway bridge. This new connection to East Colvin Street would improve highway access to the southern Southside/Brighton and Outer Comstock neighborhoods and lessen traffic on MLK, Jr. East and Almond Street.
- The existing NYS&W Railway bridge would be reconstructed to accommodate the new alignment of Almond Street/BL 81, which would pass beneath the bridge.
- North of MLK, Jr. East, BL 81 would pass beneath a new bridge carrying the NYS&W Railway and return to street level at Van Buren Street., where a roundabout serving vehicular traffic only would be installed. The roundabout would serve as the main vehicular entrance from the south to University Hill.; pedestrians and bicyclists would not be allowed on the roundabout. Pedestrians and bicyclists wishing to access Van Buren Street from the east would cross at Burt Street, then travel south to Van Buren on the western side of BL 81.
- I-690, including the former I-81/I-690 interchange, would be reconstructed from Leavenworth Avenue to Beech Street. Two of the existing six ramps between former I-81 and I-690 would be reconstructed, and the other four existing ramps would be removed.
- A new, full I-690 interchange would be constructed at Crouse and Irving Avenues where an interchange does not exist today.
- Interchange 13, which consists of an eastbound I-690 entrance ramp from McBride Street and the existing westbound I-690 exit ramp to North Townsend Street, would be removed.
- Pearl Street would be extended from Willow Street to Erie Boulevard East, as it was historically, and Oswego Boulevard would be reconstructed, realigned, and extended to Willow Street as it was historically.
- Existing Interchanges 19 (North Clinton Street/North Salina Street) and 20 (North Franklin Street/North West Street) would be combined into one interchange. The existing off-ramps would be replaced with a single ramp

that serves North Clinton Street and Oswego Boulevard, and the existing on-ramps would be replaced by a single, two-lane ramp at Pearl Street.

- The Butternut Street overpass would be rebuilt in a location just north of the existing bridge, connecting at the same points it does today.
- North Clinton Street and portions of intersecting streets would be reconstructed (including an additional lane on North Clinton) from Bear Street to existing Genant Drive and extended to connect to a new intersection with Butternut Street.
- The westbound I-690 on-ramp from Bear Street would be lengthened, and operational improvements would be made on Bear Street. These improvements include widening of select portions of Bear Street and its intersections, addition of raised medians to prevent turns at some locations (e.g., at Van Rensselaer Street and Liberty Street), addition of left and right turns at specific locations (e.g., Spencer Street and Clinton Street), sidewalk improvements, and relocation of a portion of the planned Empire State Trail connection between Van Rensselaer Street and the Onondaga Creekwalk.
- The segment of BL 81 from I-690 to Hiawatha Boulevard (Interchange 20 to Interchange 24) would be widened to provide four through lanes in the northbound direction; the southbound section would be maintained with three lanes.
- Existing I-81 Interchange 21 (Spencer Street/Catawba Street) and Interchange 22 (Route 298, Court Street, Bear Street) would be consolidated into a single interchange at Bear Street. The northbound BL 81 entrance and exit ramps on I-81 would be removed and replaced by new ramps connecting to Bear Street. The southbound BL 81 entrance and exit ramps would be relocated to connect to North Clinton Street just south of Bear Street.
- The Court Street bridge, which is now on an angle over I-81, would be replaced with a new, two-lane bridge that would pass straight over BL 81 and connect to North Clinton Street.
- The Bear Street and Spencer Street bridges would be replaced with new structures.
- The Route 370 (Onondaga Lake Parkway) on-ramp (Interchange 24A) and Old Liverpool Road on-ramp (Interchange 24B) to southbound BL 81 would be consolidated into a single ramp.
- I-690 Interchange 11/12 (West Street/West Genesee Street) would be replaced with a new interchange, controlled by a traffic signal on West Street. Just south of the new interchange, West Street would be lowered to meet West Genesee Street, creating an at-surface intersection. In addition, the ramp from West Street to Herald Place and the ramp from North Franklin Street to West Street would be removed.
- A new path along the west bank of Onondaga Creek between Erie Boulevard and Evans Street would be constructed, providing views, which are now obstructed, of a historic Erie Canal aqueduct and stone bridge over the Creek. Two ramps between northbound West Street and an elevated portion of Erie Boulevard would be replaced with a single connector roadway.
- Brighton Avenue, from the exiting East Glen Avenue to just south of Rock Cut Road, would be reconstructed.
- A new full interchange with BL 81 will be constructed at East Glen Avenue. East Glen Avenue, from Brighton Avenue to the west side of BL 81, would be realigned south of its existing location and its bridge over existing I-81 would be replaced with a new overpass over BL 81.

- The existing I-481 bridge over the CSX DeWitt Railyard would be widened and reconstructed on its present alignment.
- Existing I-481 would be reconfigured at Exit 3 (New York State Route 5). The existing I-481 southbound to westbound Route 5 off-ramp would be widened and improved to accommodate turns onto both westbound and eastbound Route 5. The existing southbound I-481 to eastbound Route 5 off-ramp would be removed. The improved southbound off-ramp would initially widen from one to two lanes and then transition to four lanes as it approaches Route 5, where a new traffic signal would allow both left and right turns. In addition, the existing I-481 northbound on-ramp from westbound Route 5 would be lengthened substantially to improve vehicular merges. The Route 5 intersection with New York State Route 92 (Lyndon Corners) also would be improved with the addition of a new traffic signal and a right turn lane. The turn lane would begin approximately 600 feet west of the Route 5/92 intersection and end on Route 92, approximately 1,000 feet east of the intersection.
- Construction of 15 noise barriers at locations throughout the Project where traffic noise impacts have been predicted and that meet the criteria for both reasonableness and feasibility for construction of noise abatement measures. Noise barriers will be constructed of concrete in most locations (transparent panels will be utilized on I-690 at the Teall Avenue interchange) and are anticipated to range in height from 12 to 20 feet.

The Community Grid Alternative would include new bicycle and pedestrian facilities to improve connectivity between existing and proposed facilities within the Project limits, as well as specific local street improvements (for more details, refer to **Chapter 3, Alternatives**, of this DDR/DEIS).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 VIA Process

This VIA was prepared for the Project consistent with the *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* released by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in 2015 (FHWA-HEP-15-029¹) and NYSDOT visual assessment policy. The VIA for the I-81 Viaduct Project included the following phases and components, as defined in FHWA-HEP-15-029:

Establishment Phase

- Establishing the Project's regulatory context with respect to visual impacts, per Section 4.3 of the FHWA's *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects*;
- Identifying the Project's AVE, which includes the visual range of proposed Project elements under the No Build, Viaduct, and Community Grid Alternatives;
- Mapping the Project's viewshed while accounting for local topography and visual obstructions;
- Defining the visual character of the Project's AVE by landscape units, or areas that have the same or similar types of visual character and land use;

Inventory Phase

- Inventorying and evaluating existing visual resources and viewer groups, and then considering the relationship between viewers and their environment;
- Describing the appearance and compatibility of the visible components of the Project;
- Establishment of viewer preference;
- Selecting key views for visual assessment and determining visual quality;

Analysis Phase

- Evaluating potential visibility through visual simulation of proposed components, including design elements being considered for incorporation into the Project;
- Assessing changes to visual quality resultant from Project impacts; and

Mitigation Phase

- Describing measures to be implemented, if necessary, to mitigate adverse visual effects and identify opportunities for visual enhancements in the Project Area.

The preparation of the VIA involved collection and review of property data, including existing City of Syracuse comprehensive plans (e.g., City of Syracuse 2012) and land use studies relevant to visual resources within the AVE. Land use parcel data, topography, aerial photographs, and cultural resources information² were acquired from various

¹ FHWA. *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects*.

https://www.environment.fhwa.dot.gov/guidebook/documents/VIA_Guidelines_for_Highway_Projects.asp. January 2015.

² Sources of data reviewed and incorporated into the analyses for the VIA included: 1. AKRF, Inc., 2016. *I-81 Viaduct Project Architectural Resources Survey*. Report prepared by AKRF, Inc., New York, New York on behalf of New York State Department of Transportation, Albany, New York; 2. City of Syracuse, 2012. *Syracuse Comprehensive Plan 2040*. City of Syracuse, Syracuse, New York; 3. City of Syracuse. 2016. *Syracuse Neighborhoods* [shapefile]; 4. National Park Service. 2017. *National Register of Historic Places* [website]. U.S. Department of the Interior; 5. New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (NYSOPRHP). 2017. *National Register of Historic Places listings in New York State* [shapefile]; 6. Onondaga County. 2017. *Onondaga County Parcel Data*. *Syracuse-Onondaga County G.I.S. on the Web* [website]; 7. Onondaga County. 2017. *Building Footprints* [shapefile]; 8. United States Forest Service. 2010. *USFS LIDAR 2010* [GIS dataset]; 9. United State Geological Survey. 2010. *National Elevation Dataset* [GIS dataset].

state and local agency sources for use in project mapping, graphic illustrations, and visual simulations from key viewpoints within the AVE. Site reconnaissance and field investigations were conducted to photo-document existing visual character and quality.

2.2 Area of Visual Effect

The visual setting for the I-81 Viaduct Project is primarily an urban environment that is visually dominated by built forms. These forms include commercial/institutional buildings and residences of varying height, architectural style, scale, and massing. There are vertical and horizontal structures, including public utilities (poles and wires) and signage. Surface streets, parking lots, pedestrian areas, sidewalks, and elevated infrastructure (viaducts and ramps) constitute the remainder of the visually dominant built forms.

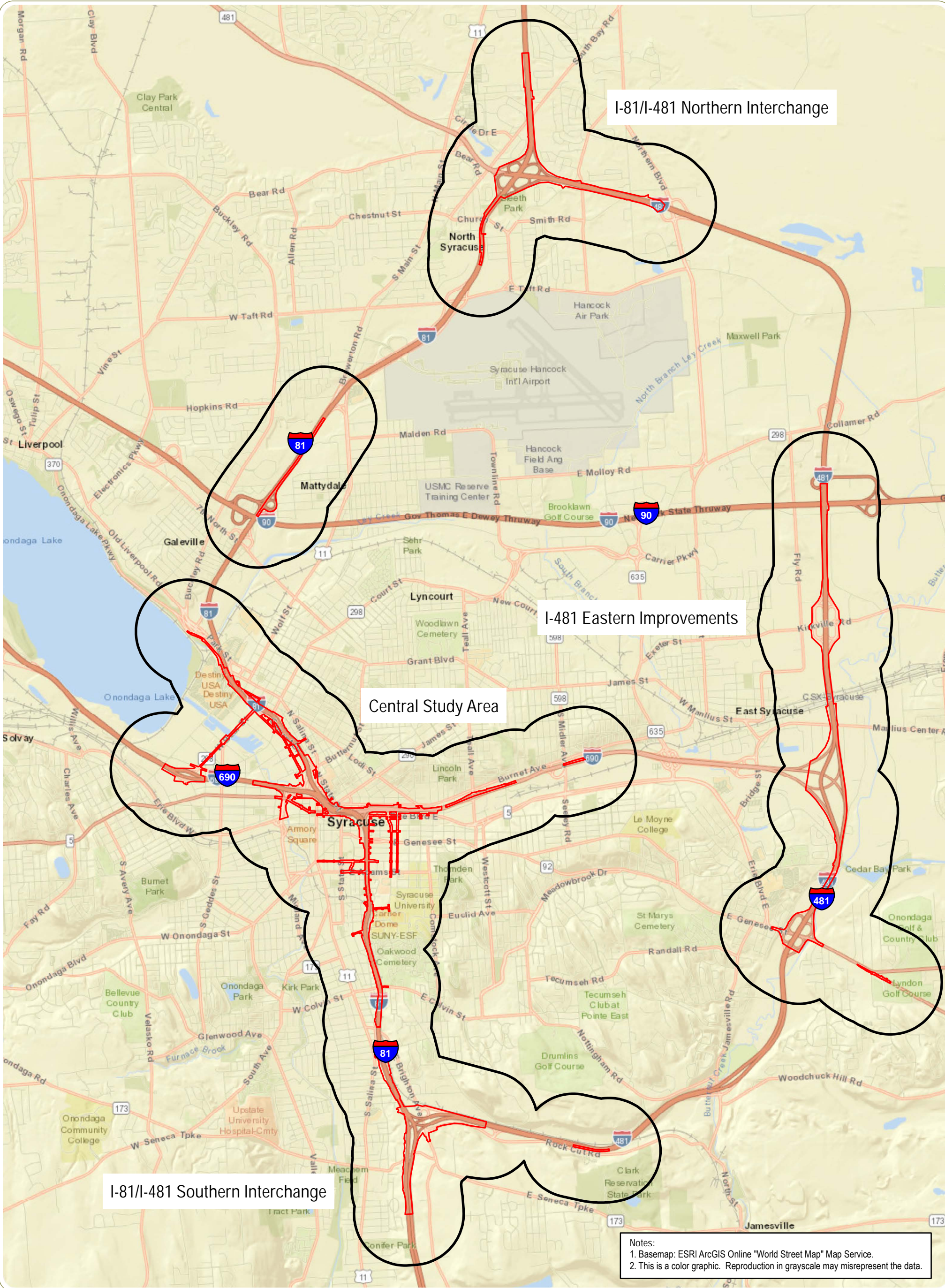
Topography in the Project vicinity ranges from relatively flat along the interstates in Downtown Syracuse to more rolling terrain, with increased elevations, in the outer portions of the surrounding neighborhoods. This increase in topography is most noticeable in the University Hill neighborhood (southeast of Downtown) and north of the I-81/I-690 interchange in the city's Northside neighborhood. Elevations in the Project vicinity range from approximately 390 feet above mean sea level (amsl) on the shore of Onondaga Lake to approximately 485 feet amsl near Oakwood Cemetery in the University Hill neighborhood. West of Syracuse, elevations range from 380 to 600 feet amsl, and undulating landscapes are characterized by till plains, rolling hills, drumlins, outwash plains, and valleys. East of Syracuse, elevations range from 370 to 450 feet amsl and consist of lake-plain topography, low hills, and low lands.

Vegetation, although limited in many areas along the I-81 viaduct, occurs throughout the visual environment surrounding the Project. The tree heights, canopy coverage, and density of vegetation typically increase as the distance from Downtown increases. In Downtown, vegetation is mostly deciduous and includes street trees, some lawn, landscaped areas in neighborhood parks, and on both private and public properties. Vacant lots typically include some voluntary shrub cover and young trees. Outside of the Downtown core, in surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, vegetation is more abundant. Here, the vegetation is mostly deciduous with some evergreen trees and shrubs. During the leaf-off season (i.e., late fall, winter, and early spring), visibility of the Project will increase from areas characterized by deciduous vegetation. Some neighborhood hilltops and city parks contain dense stands of woodland that create a visible edge on the horizon, in mid-ground and background views from the Project and adjacent areas.

The *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA 2015) specify that visual impacts should be assessed within a given project's AVE which is defined as the area of project visibility. The AVE for the Project is the area within 0.5-mile of the project limits for either build alternative (see **Figure 3**). As described in the VIA, viewshed analysis and the results of field review confirm that visibility of the existing Project, and anticipated visibility of the proposed build alternatives, is in most locations limited to distances of less than 0.5-mile from the Project. Therefore, the 0.5-mile AVE represents a conservative study area within which to assess the potential visual effect of the Project.

The VIA is primarily focused on the Central Study Area in Downtown Syracuse, which includes the I-81/I-690 interchange, because it has the greatest potential for substantial changes in visual character and visual quality resulting from the Project alternatives. The changes to the I-81/I-481 northern and southern interchanges as well as the proposed work along existing I-481 under the Community Grid Alternative are in areas that have low viewer sensitivity and, in

general, the improvements to these interchanges will be compatible with the existing visual environment and have minimal impact on visual quality.



I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 3: Area of Visual Effect

- Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives
- Area of Visual Effect

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Federal Highway Administration

2.2 Viewshed Analysis

Geographic Information System (GIS) was used as part of the viewshed analysis of the existing viaduct within a radius of approximately 0.5-mile of I-81 to verify the AVE. The viewshed analysis generated a map (see Attachment A: Map 1) that illustrates the potential visibility of the existing I-81 viaduct and I-81/I-690 interchange based on existing topography, land cover, and the built environment. The viewshed map illustrates the locations with potential views of the existing viaduct, representing both existing conditions and the No Build Alternative.

Viewshed mapping was created using a grid converted from Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR) data to generate a digital surface model (DSM) of Downtown Syracuse. The LIDAR data was produced by the United States Department of Agriculture, US Forest Service in a joint venture with the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. The viewshed analysis is based on an assumed viewer height of 6.5 feet. This viewer height overestimates the typically viewing height for pedestrians, and is representative of the eye-level height of drivers and passengers from taller vehicles (e.g., pick-up trucks, SUVs) for travelers on the interstate. This taller viewer height was selected to ensure that the viewshed accounted for potential visibility for travelers in larger vehicles whose visibility of surrounding areas would not be blocked by the potential visual screening provided by highway medians. Therefore, the assumptions ensure a conservative assessment of potential visibility both of and from the Project and surrounding areas. Based on these assumptions, the viewshed model was created with ESRI ArcGIS® software with the Spatial Analyst extension. The ArcGIS program defines the viewshed by reading every cell of the grid data and determining whether a direct, unobstructed line of sight is available between the Project and potential observation points throughout the 0.5-mile AVE.

2.3 Identification of Landscape Units

The *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA, 2015) emphasize the definition of landscape units, which are geographic areas within which impacts to visual character, viewer response, and visual quality are assessed. Each landscape unit has a distinct visual character, which is influenced by the predominant land use as well as the natural environment (including topography and vegetation) and the cultural environment (including the density, scale, and style of predominant architecture). Landscape units within the AVE were identified based on review of planning and land use documents and maps, oblique aerial photography, and site visits. Land use data that were relied on for the definition of landscape units included the *City of Syracuse Comprehensive Plan*, including the Future Land Use/Character Areas Map (City of Syracuse, 2012) and mapping of City of Syracuse Neighborhoods as delineated by the Office of Neighborhood and Business Development.

Based on review of planning documents, aerial photo interpretation, and field observations, 14 landscape units were delineated within the AVE (see Attachment A: Map 2), which include:

- Transportation Corridor – Highway
- Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial
- Urban Downtown Core
- Urban Neighborhood – Residential
- Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core
- Urban Neighborhood – Mixed Use
- Urban Institutional Campus

- Urban Legacy Industrial
- Urban Large-Scale Development
- Suburban Commercial
- Suburban Residential
- Open Space – Undeveloped
- Open Space – Designed Landscape
- Open Space – Waterfront

2.4 Identification of Visually Sensitive Resources

Visually sensitive resources of statewide and local significance (as defined by NYSDEC Program Policy DEP-00-2; NYSDEC, 2000) were identified and mapped within the AVE (see Attachment A: Map 3). The types of resources identified by NYSDEC's Program Policy DEP-00-2 include: landmark landscapes; wild, scenic or recreational rivers (administered by the DEC pursuant to ECL Article 15 or Department of Interior pursuant to 16 USC Section 1271); forest preserve lands; scenic vistas (specifically identified in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan); conservation easement lands; scenic byways (designated by the federal or state governments), scenic districts, and scenic roads (designated by the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation pursuant to ECL Article 49); Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance; state parks; historic sites, including sites listed on the National or State Registers of Historic Places; areas covered by scenic easements; public parks or recreation areas; locally designated historic or scenic districts; scenic overlooks; and, high-use public areas. These types of resources were identified based on review of publicly available GIS data, as well as review of local planning documents. Aesthetic resources of statewide significance are discussed in Section 3.4 of this report.

2.5 Field Review

Existing conditions and visibility of the Project were documented and photographed during multiple site visits in 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020, and 2021 in locations throughout the AVE. Photographs from 200 viewpoints were taken (see Attachment A: Map 4 and photographs in Attachment B). These photographs document representative views of existing conditions and views of the Project from diverse visual settings within the AVE.

The site visits and photography were conducted in accordance with *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects*, Appendix E: Field Reconnaissance Techniques (FHWA, 2015). Photographs used in the VIA were obtained using Nikon D7100 cameras, which have a minimum resolution of 10 megapixels and a maximum of 24 megapixels. All photographs relied upon for analyses in the VIA were taken with lenses with a focal length between 28 and 35 mm (equivalent to between 45 and 55 mm on a full-frame or standard 35 mm camera). This focal length is the standard used in visual impact assessment because it most closely approximates normal human perception of spatial relationships and scale in the landscape. Viewpoint locations were documented using hand-held global positioning system (GPS) units and high-resolution aerial photographs (digital ortho quarter quadrangles). The time and location of each photo were documented on all electronic equipment (cameras, GPS units, etc.) and noted on field data sheets. Viewpoints typically represented the most open, unobstructed available views to the Project to the farthest extent that was practicable given locational constraints, such as private property, and the urbanized nature of the AVE. Some viewpoints were intentionally selected to provide representative views from certain landscape units or viewer circumstances, including locations where existing vegetation and/or the built environment screen views of the Project.

In addition, some viewpoints were located on the roofs of public parking garages to provide representative examples of elevated views within the urban setting, comparable to views that would be available from, for example, interior areas of tall buildings within the AVE. Viewpoints on bridges and other elevated structures were selected to provide representative views of travelers on the interstate system or roadways affected by the Project.

The field visits and photography were conducted on days with clear or partly cloudy skies to ensure high quality photographs and to provide for a conservative (i.e., “worst case”) assessment of visual quality and existing aesthetic conditions (see photographs included in Attachment B).

2.6 Viewpoint Selection

Key viewpoints were selected to provide representative views of the Project and analyze potential visual changes that would result from each Build Alternative. Thirty-two (32) viewpoints were selected for the preparation of photo simulations and further analysis. These key viewpoints were selected based on multiple factors, including:

- The viewpoints provide open views of proposed highway infrastructure and Project changes (as indicated by field verification), or provide representative views of the screening effects of vegetation and/or buildings from selected area;
- The viewpoints illustrate Project visibility from sensitive areas and resources within the AVE identified by stakeholders and state agencies;
- The viewpoints illustrate typical views from landscape units where views of the Project will be available;
- The viewpoints illustrate typical views of the Project that will be available to representative viewer groups within the AVE; and
- The photos obtained from the viewpoint display good landscape composition, lighting, exposure, and/or representative documentation of existing conditions.

In addition, some viewpoints were located on the roofs of public parking garages to provide representative examples of elevated views within the urban setting. The Project is a prominent feature in many views from tall buildings in Downtown Syracuse. Although views from the roofs of parking garages are not considered to be sensitive, these viewpoints provide open views toward the Project from publicly accessible elevated vantage points that are representative of views that would be available to residents and employees who occupy tall buildings in the areas adjacent to these parking structures. These elevated vantage points provide open, longer-distance, and often panoramic views of the Project in its urban setting that are not generally available from ground-surface vantage points in the visual study area. Therefore, photographs depicting the No Build Alternative/existing conditions and visual simulations depicting the build alternatives from rooftop locations were included to represent the views that would be available to residents, workers, and other building occupants who regularly experience views of the Project from elevated vantage points.

Viewpoints located on bridges and other elevated structures were selected to provide representative views of travelers on the interstate system as well as views of motorists and pedestrians traveling on elevated structures that would be affected by the Project. These elevated vantage points provide longer-distance views of the Project as a transportation corridor within the context of its urban setting that are not generally available from ground-surface vantage points in the visual study area. Therefore, photographs depicting the No Build Alternative/existing conditions and visual simulations depicting the build alternatives from these locations were included to represent the views that would be

available to interstate travelers as well as motorists and pedestrians who regularly experience views of the Project from elevated vantage points.

2.7 Photographic Simulations

Photo-realistic simulations, also known as visualizations, were developed for 32 selected viewpoints to illustrate anticipated visual changes associated with each Build Alternative (see Attachment C)³. The public will be afforded the opportunity to review and comment on the visualizations and the selection of viewpoints during the public review and comment period of the DDR/DEIS for the Project.

High-resolution computer-enhanced image processing was used to create realistic photographic simulations of the Project from each of the 32 selected viewpoints. For each viewpoint, photographs are provided for the existing conditions/No Build, and photographic simulations were prepared for the Viaduct, and Community Grid alternatives.

To develop the photographic simulations, Trimble SketchUp 2016 was used to create a simulated perspective (camera view) to match the location, bearing, and focal length of each existing conditions photograph. A 3-dimensional (3-D) survey of the Project site was brought into the 3-D model space to facilitate aligning the simulated perspective to each photograph. Adjustments were made to camera and target location, focal length, and camera roll to align survey elements with the corresponding elements in the photograph. This assures that any elements introduced to the model space (i.e., the proposed highway infrastructure) will be shown in proportion, perspective, and proper relation to the existing landscape elements in the view. Consequently, the alignment, elevations, dimensions and locations of the proposed Project structures are accurate and true in their relationship to other landscape elements in the photograph.

Computer models of the proposed layouts of both build alternatives were prepared based on preliminary engineering information. Bentley InRoads, AutoCad Civil 3D, McNeel Rhinoceros 5.0, and Trimble SketchUp 2016 were utilized to generate components of the computer models. Using the camera view as guidance, the visible portions of the Project were imported into the model and set at the proper coordinates. Once the proposed Project alternative was accurately aligned within the camera view, a lighting system was created based on the actual time, date, and location of the photograph. Using the Maxwell for SketchUp V3 rendering plugin within the SketchUp 2016 software, light reflection, highlights, color casting, and shadows were accurately rendered on the modeled Project alternative based on actual environmental conditions represented in the photograph. The rendered Project was then superimposed over the photograph in Adobe Photoshop CC 2015, 2019, 2020, and 2021® and portions of the Project that fall behind vegetation, structures, or topography were masked out. Photoshop was also used to remove existing structures or vegetation that are proposed to be demolished or removed as part of the Project.

The visual simulations are representative of design intent and the preliminary layout of site elements. These elements will be further refined as the design progresses for each build alternative. The final selection of site elements such as lighting, planting, and paving, as well as materials, colors, and finishes, will be determined during final design. Trees and plantings are shown in the visual simulations in an established and mature state to allow for a direct, equivalent comparison of each build alternative relative to the No Build Alternative/existing conditions.

³ The photo simulations for the VIA were prepared collaboratively by staff from Environmental Design & Research, Landscape Architecture, Engineering, & Environmental Services, D.P.C. and Trowbridge Wolf Michaels Landscape Architects, LLP.

2.8 Visual Impact Evaluation Methodology

A panel of seven registered landscape architects evaluated the visual quality of the existing visual environment, as well as the potential effect of the Project on the visual environment. Landscape architects have academic and professional training and expertise in aesthetics, design issues and opportunities related to visual quality. The panel of landscape architects who conducted the visual impact rating was made up of registered professionals employed by the firms involved in the preparation of the DDR/DEIS. However, none of the panel members had previous, direct involvement in the design or other aspects of the Project. In addition, the panel included individuals with varying degrees of familiarity with the Project setting, including residents of the City of Syracuse and Onondaga County as well as non-local representatives. The selection of panel members provided for a diverse and unbiased assessment of potential visual quality and visual impacts for the Project alternatives.

The panel's evaluation was based on comparison of the photographic simulations of the Project's build alternatives to photos of existing conditions from each of the 32 selected viewpoints (for the purposes of this analysis, the existing conditions are assumed to represent conditions under the No Build Alternative). These "before" and "after" images, which depict the identical view in every respect except for the different Project components proposed under each alternative as shown in the simulated views, were used to evaluate the effect of each build alternative in terms of its overall compatibility with its surroundings and changes in the visual quality of the urban landscape. Existing conditions, landscape units, viewer groups, and viewer sensitivity to changes in visual quality (resulting from Project elements under each alternative) are considered in the evaluation of potential impacts (see Section 4.0 of this report).

The visual compatibility of the Project was considered by comparing the existing visual character of the AVE to each proposed build alternative. Comparisons were made in terms of the existing natural, cultural, and project environments (see Section 3.1.1 of this report) to the visual character of each build alternative considering its scale, form and materials. The "Project environment" consists of all features and built elements within the public rights-of-way which would be directly affected physically by the Project, including I-81 and affected sections of adjacent surface streets. The Project environment contains both cultural and natural environments. These environments may include pavements, bridges, ramps, walls, signs, signals, plantings, landscaping, grading, and drainage features. The potential visual effect of each build alternative is evaluated relative to the existing character and quality of the visual environment.

The sensitivity of viewer groups to changes in visual quality was considered in anticipating their response. Viewer sensitivity was determined by considering viewer exposure (proximity, extent and duration) and awareness (attention, focus, protection) per the *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA, 2015).

Existing visual quality within the AVE at each of the key viewpoints was rated in terms of vividness, intactness and unity within the viewer's field of vision. Visual quality was assigned a numerical score between 0.1 to 5.0. The lowest level of visual quality ranges from 0.1 – 1.0. The moderate low level of visual quality ranges from 1.1 – 2.0. The moderate level of visual quality ranges from 2.1 to 3.0. The highest levels of visual quality are in the moderate high range from 3.1 – 4.0 and the highest level ranging from 4.1 – 5.0. Changes in visual quality from the No Build for both build alternatives were then rated by the panel based on evaluation of the photo simulations.

The seven visual quality scores for each view (provided by the seven members of the rating panel) were averaged to provide an overall score for each viewpoint. No individual scores were omitted or otherwise not considered in the analysis. This average score ensures that the range of variability among the raters was taken into consideration. The

evaluations/ratings of visual quality for each view were generally consistent among the scores provided by the rating panel. Viewpoint rating sheets are provided in Attachment D.

The evaluation of potential impacts considers several factors that include:

- **Landscape Composition:** The arrangement of objects and voids in the landscape that can be categorized by their spatial arrangement. Basic landscape components include vegetation, landform, water, and sky. Some landscape compositions, especially those that are distinctly focal, enclosed, detailed, or feature-oriented, are more vulnerable to modification than panoramic, canopied, or ephemeral landscapes.
- **Form, Line, Color, and Texture:** These are the four major compositional elements that define the perceived visual character of a landscape, as well as the Project. Form refers to the shape of an object that appears unified; often defined by edge, outline, and surrounding space. Line refers to the path the eye follows when perceiving abrupt changes in form, color, or texture; usually evident as the edges of shapes or masses in the landscape. Texture, often expressed through project materials in this context, refers to the visual surface characteristics of an object. The extent to which form, line, color, and texture/materials of the Project are like, or contrast with, these same elements in the existing landscape is a primary determinant of visual impact.
- **Focal Point:** Certain natural or built landscape features stand out and are particularly noticeable because of their physical characteristics. Focal points often contrast with their surroundings in color, form, scale or texture, and therefore tend to draw a viewer's attention. Examples may include prominent trees, mountains and water features. Cultural features, such as a distinctive buildings or parts of a building such as a steeple can also be focal points.
- **Order:** Natural landscapes have an underlying order determined by natural processes. Cultural landscapes exhibit order by displaying traditional or logical patterns of land use development. Elements in the landscape that are inconsistent with this natural or cultural order may detract from scenic quality. When a new project is introduced to the landscape, intactness and order are maintained through the repetition of the forms, lines, colors, and textures existing in the surrounding built or natural environment.
- **Scenic or Recreational Value:** Designation as a scenic or recreational resource is an indication that there is broad public consensus on the value of protection afforded to that resource. The characteristics of the resource that contribute to its scenic or recreational value provide guidance in evaluating a project's visual impact on that resource.
- **Duration of View:** Some views are quick glimpses while driving along a roadway, walking or hiking a trail, while others are seen for a more prolonged period. Longer duration views of a project, especially from significant aesthetic resources, have the greatest potential for visual impact.
- **Atmospheric Conditions:** Clouds, precipitation, haze, and other ambient air related conditions, affect the visibility of an object or objects. These conditions, particularly from a distance can greatly impact the visibility and contrast of a landscape and project components, and the design elements of form, line, color, texture, and scale.
- **Lighting Direction:** Backlighting refers to a viewing situation in which sunlight is coming toward the observer from behind a feature or elements in a scene. Front lighting refers to a situation where the light source is coming from behind the observer and falling directly upon the area being viewed. Side lighting refers to a

viewing situation in which sunlight is coming from the side of the observer to a feature or elements in a scene. Lighting direction can have a significant effect on the visibility and contrast of landscape and project elements.

- **Project Scale:** The apparent size of a proposed project in relation to its surroundings can define the compatibility of its scale within the existing landscape. Perception of project scale is likely to vary depending on the distance from which it is seen and other contextual factors.
- **Spatial Dominance:** The degree to which an object or landscape element occupies space in a landscape, and thus its mass can dominate landscape composition from a viewpoint.
- **Visual Clutter:** Numerous unrelated built elements occurring within a view can create visual clutter, and a chaotic appearance which adversely impacts visual quality.
- **Movement:** Moving elements of a project, such as vehicles traveling along the interstate, can make them more noticeable.
- **Viewer Awareness:** A measure of attention (level of observation based on routine and familiarity), focus (level of concentration), and protection (legal and social constraints on the use of visual resources). The greater the attention, the more viewers will be concerned about visual impacts.
- **Viewer Exposure:** a measure of proximity (distance between viewer and the visual resource being viewed), extent (the number of viewers viewing), and duration (how long of a time visual resources are being viewed). The greater the exposure, the more viewers will be concerned about visual impacts.

3.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

3.1 Project Setting

The I-81 Viaduct Project is in the approximate center of Onondaga County in Central New York, southeast of Lake Ontario and northeast of the Finger Lakes Region. Existing urban and rural land use patterns in Onondaga County are largely defined by local and regional transportation networks (highways, rail and air). The AVE includes areas of higher intensity commercial and industrial development along and at the junction of major highways, including I-81, I-690 and I-90. The pattern of development is traditional with Downtown Syracuse, as being the dense urban center at the intersection of these highways. Suburban development patterns exist in towns along these areas and other major transportation routes. Rail lines, both passenger and freight, crisscross the entire region. The region's major airport is north of Syracuse near I-90 and I-81. The interstates have influenced the location of employment centers, retail uses, entertainment venues, social/cultural destinations, and residential uses in and around Syracuse.

Onondaga County straddles two physiographic regions, the Erie-Ontario (lake) Plain in the northern portion of Onondaga County and the Allegheny Plateau to the south. These regions are separated by the Onondaga Limestone Escarpment located south of the City of Syracuse. The Project's AVE is located within a physiographic feature known as the Onondaga Trough which resides on the boundary between the Erie-Ontario Plain and the Allegheny Plateau. The Onondaga Trough is a low-lying valley system containing Onondaga Lake and Onondaga Creek. The valleys that make up the Onondaga Trough are partially filled with fluvial sediment deposited as glacial till, approximately 12,000 to 14,000 years ago, making them attractive to historic development of population centers and transportation routes.

Elevations within the AVE range from approximately 390 feet above mean sea level (amsl) on the shore of Onondaga Lake to approximately 485 feet amsl near Oakwood Cemetery. West of Syracuse elevations range from 380 to 600 feet amsl, characterized by till plains, drumlins, outwash plains, and lacustrine deposits. East of Syracuse elevations range from 370 to 450 feet amsl and consist of lake-plain topography, low hills, and low lands.

3.1.1 Visual Environments

Visual environments are defined in terms of three categories to determine potential viewer response to changes in their environment. These categories are natural, cultural, and project-related resources and environments (FHWA 2015):

- A "natural environment" is lacking in built elements and features (both vertical and horizontal forms). Undeveloped open spaces, woodlands, surface water features and farmland are examples of natural environments, although there may be some visible human manipulation of natural features. Resources considered in a natural environment consist of air (atmospheric conditions), water, land, vegetation, and wildlife. Natural environments are the least common of the three categories within the AVE given the Project's highly developed urban setting.
- A "cultural environment" is a built setting, consisting of manipulated features that are situated in urban, suburban, and rural areas. Cultural environments consist of buildings, structures, transportation, various forms of public/private infrastructure, railroads, airports, and designed landscapes (including parks and public spaces). Cultural environments dominate the Project AVE.
- The "project environment" consists of all features and built elements within the public rights-of-way which are being directly affected physically by the Project, including I-81 and affected sections of adjacent surface

streets. The project environment contains both cultural and natural environments. These environments may include pavements, bridges, ramps, walls, signs, signals, plantings, landscaping, grading and drainage features.

3.1.2 Distance Zones

Three distinct distance zones are typically defined in the visual studies. These distance zones are consistent with well-established visual assessment methodologies defined in *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA, 2015) and *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (NYSDEC, 2000). The following defines the distance zones for this VIA:

- **Foreground:** The foreground extends from the viewer out to less than 0.5-mile. At these distances, viewers can perceive details of an object with clarity. Surface textures, small features, and the full intensity and value of color can be seen on foreground (near) objects. The Project's AVE is focused on effects on visual quality within this distance zone.
- **Mid-ground:** The mid-ground extends from the foreground limits (about 0.5 mile) to about 3 to 5 miles. The mid-ground is usually the predominant distance at which landscapes are seen. At these distances, viewers can perceive individual structures and trees, but not in detail. This is the zone where the parts of the landscape start to join individual hills becoming a range, individual trees merge into a forest, and buildings appear as simple geometric forms. Colors will be clearly distinguishable but will have a bluish cast and a softer tone than those in the foreground. Contrast in color and texture will also be reduced. Some views of the Project may be visible from this zone, such as views from hilltops. In most cases, views are screened or obstructed by intervening topography, vegetation, and structures. Because of the dense built environment and low profile of the Project, the Project is generally either not visible or a prominent feature from mid-ground distances.
- **Background:** The background extends from the mid-ground to the limits of visibility. The background defines the broader regional landscape within which a view occurs. Within this distance zone, the landscape has been simplified. Only broad landforms are discernible and atmospheric conditions often render the landscape an overall bluish color. Texture has generally disappeared, and color has flattened, but large patterns of vegetation are discernible in the background. Silhouettes of a land mass set against each other or the skyline are often the dominant visual characteristics in the background. The background contributes to scenic quality by providing a softened backdrop for foreground and mid-ground features. The background provides either an attractive vista, a distant focal point, but details are not discernible. Views of the Project from this zone are likely screened or completely obstructed by distance, atmospheric conditions, topography, and vegetation.

3.2 **Viewer Groups**

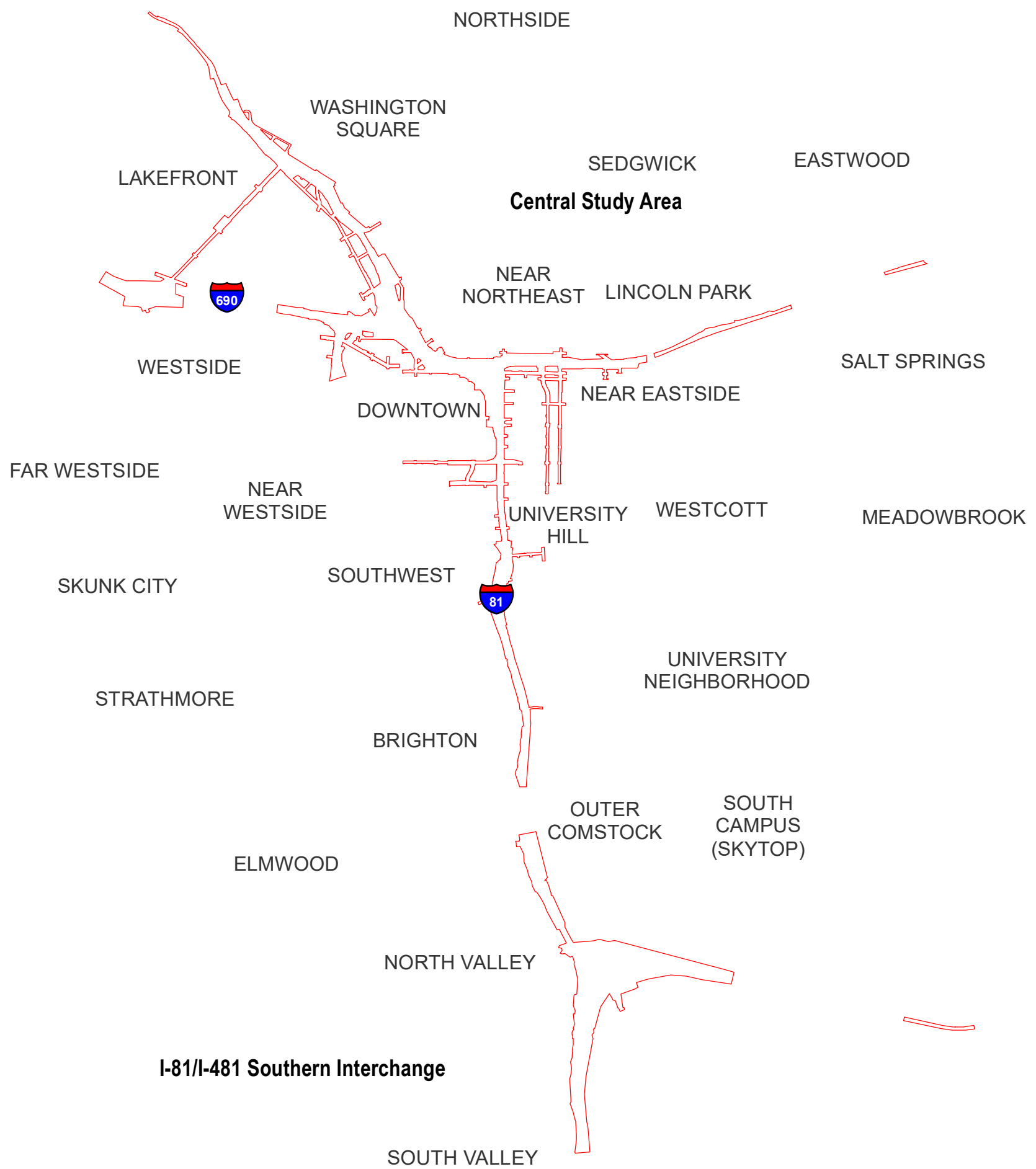
The *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA, 2015) distinguish between two primary viewer groups (and subgroups of each): "neighbors," who generally have views of the project, and "travelers," who generally have views from the project. Each of these viewer groups is described below.

3.2.1 Neighbors Group

Neighbors, who may be located anywhere within the AVE if they have a potential view to the Project, include persons traveling on non-highway local roads, but do not include persons traveling on Project interstates. The types of neighbors are classified by the Landscape Unit where they are located (see Section 3.3 of this report), in order to determine their response and sensitivity to changes in visual character and quality. Pedestrians and bicyclists are assumed to be potential viewers within the neighbor viewer group in areas not directly affected by the Project. The types of neighbors within the Project's AVE are:

- **Residential Neighbors:** Residential neighbors live within viewing distance of the Project. This subgroup consists of owners and renters of single-family homes, multi-family homes, apartments, condominiums, and other dwelling units used primarily by permanent residents. Residential neighbors are the most sensitive viewers. Some important residential areas located adjacent to the Project and within the AVE include Pioneer Homes, Toomey Abbott Towers, Downtown Syracuse/Armory Square, and Franklin Square.
- **Recreational Neighbors:** Recreational neighbors provide for or participate in recreation, such as organized sporting events, indoor/outdoor leisure activities, and cultural events. These viewers would be sensitive to any changes in views to and from recreational facilities as well as bikeways, trails, and pedestrian areas. Creekwalk users would be in this category.
- **Institutional Neighbors:** Institutional neighbors provide or receive services, including social services from various types of institutions. Institutional neighbors include, but are not limited to, places of worship, schools, universities, libraries, and hospitals. This subgroup's users consist of employees, students, and patients of these institutions as well as their clients and visitors.
- **Civic Neighbors:** Civic neighbors provide or receive services from a government organization, such as a federal, state, regional, or local agency. This subgroup consists of employees, service recipients, and visitors.
- **Retail Neighbors:** Retail neighbors are merchants who sell goods and services to the public as shoppers and consumers. They are moderately sensitive to changes in the environment.
- **Commercial Neighbors:** Commercial neighbors occupy numerous business properties within the AVE. Viewers include building occupants, workers/customers in office buildings, warehouses, and other commercial properties.
- **Industrial Neighbors:** Industrial neighbors typically use raw materials, manufacture goods, transport goods, or provide services. Industrial neighbors tend to occupy large properties with limited exposure to the public.

I-81 and I-690 form the boundaries of many City neighborhoods (see **Figure 4**). Each of these neighborhoods include residential and commercial viewer subgroups, although individual neighborhoods may contain certain subgroups in much higher proportions than others.



Notes:
1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Street Map" Map Service.
2. Syracuse Neighborhoods: Provided by City of Syracuse Office of Neighborhood and Business Development.
3. Neighborhoods are not mapped for the the other two outlying portions of the Project Area (I-81/I-481 Northern Interchange, and I-481 Eastern Improvements) because they are outside of the City of Syracuse.
4. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.

I-81 Viaduct Project

Onondaga County, New York

Figure 4: Project Area Neighborhoods

Area of Visual Effect
Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives



3.2.2 Travelers Group

Travelers are on Project highways, including the affected interstates, with views from these roadways within the AVE. This group consists of both existing and future Project users. Travelers may also be subdivided by mode of travel. The types of travelers within the Project's AVE are:

- Community Travelers: These viewers are travelers along the Project route, mostly commuting for short durations between home and work, often as a single occupant in the vehicle.
- Touring Travelers: Tourists travel on the Project highways primarily to get to and from a pre-determined destination for enjoyment. Some trips may require extended travel covering long periods of time over substantial distances.
- Shipping Travelers: Shippers use the highways primarily to distribute raw materials, products, and services using a variety of transport vehicles over varying distances and durations. These trips, which occur along the same Project routes, are considered routine and may be frequent.

3.2.3 Viewer Sensitivity

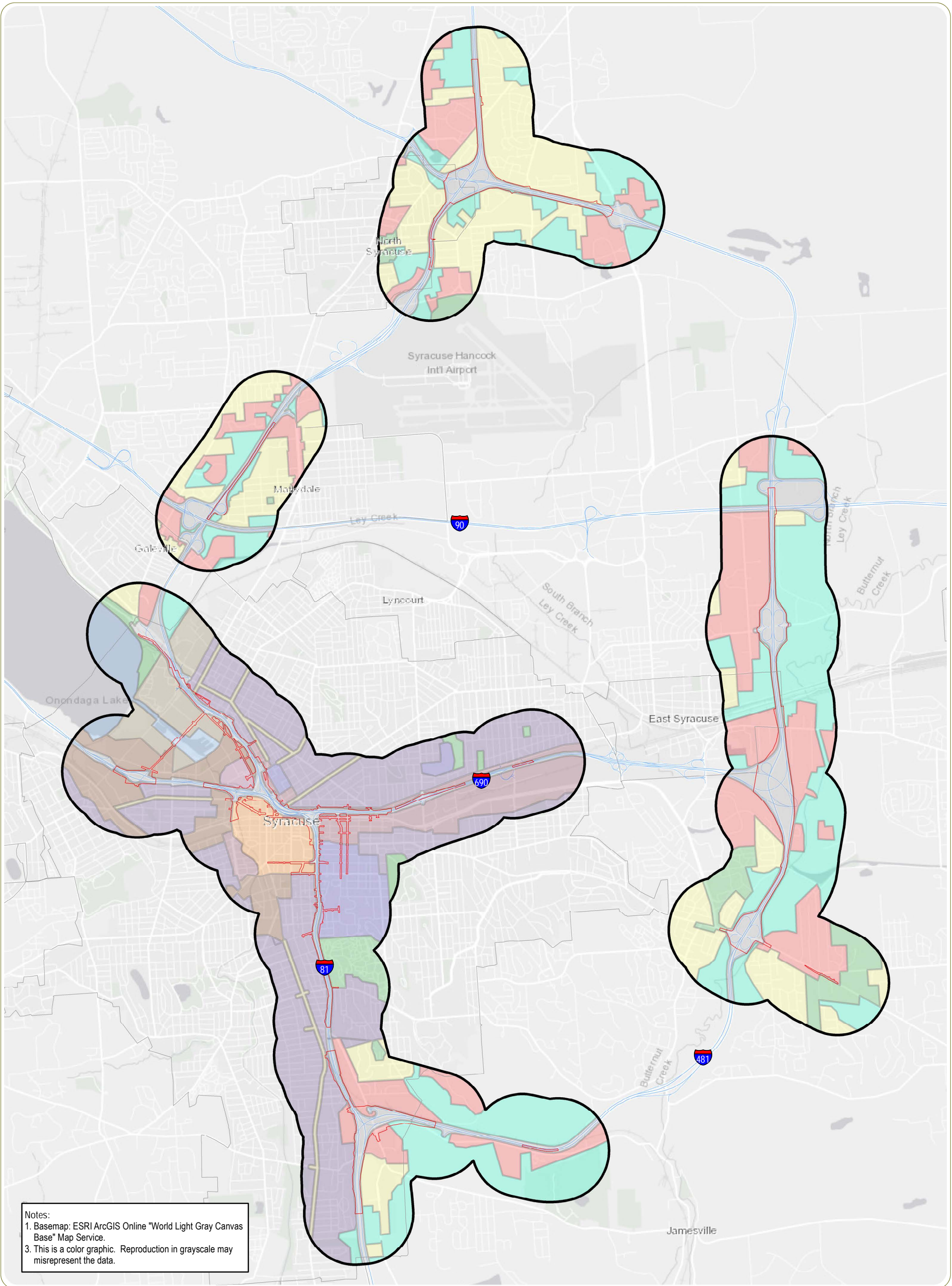
The anticipated sensitivity to changes in the visual environment for the various types of viewer groups within the AVE is summarized below (from FHWA, 2015):

- Residents and building occupants include potential neighbors who live and work within the AVE. They generally view the urban landscape from relatively static locations such as their homes, yards, schools, and places of employment. Building occupants may include business customers and patrons who may temporarily occupy or visit a location with a view to the Project. Except when involved in local travel, residents are likely to be stationary, having frequent and prolonged duration views of the landscape. These viewers may view the urban landscape from ground level or elevated viewpoints, such as the upper floors of buildings. Residents' sensitivity to changes in visual quality is variable. However, it is assumed that residents would be very sensitive to changes in views, both positively and negatively from their homes and yards.
- Commuters are passing through the area from motor vehicles on their way to or from work, home, or other destinations. Commuters are typically moving, have a relatively narrow field of view because they are focused on driving, and are destination oriented. Drivers are generally focused on roadway and traffic conditions ahead of them. Drivers do not have much opportunity to observe roadside and surrounding scenes. Passengers have greater opportunities than drivers for prolonged views and an increased awareness of changes in the visual environment. Commuters' sensitivity to changes in visual quality is variable. It is assumed that regular, local commuters who are familiar with the area may be very sensitive to changes in views that they travel through on a regular basis.
- Tourists and recreationists include both residents and out-of-town visitors involved in cultural, recreational, and entertainment activities. These activities can take place at parks, civic places, historic sites, retail areas, entertainment venues, water bodies, undeveloped open spaces with natural settings (for hiking use), and biking trails. These viewers may be concentrated at such sites within the AVE and can be stationary or mobile. These same individuals may view the landscape as travelers from Project highways, while on their way to these

destinations. Tourists, bicyclists, boaters, shoppers, cultural event participants, and those involved in passive activities (e.g., picnicking, sightseeing) are part of this group. Urban landscapes, such as public venues and event gathering places, may be very important to their experience and sensitivity may be high. Recreational users and tourists may experience continuous views of landscape features over relatively long durations and sensitivities may vary with their activities.

3.3 Landscape Units

As described in Section 2.4 of this VIA, 14 landscape units were identified and mapped within the AVE based on distinct visual characteristics and the dominant type of existing land use (see **Figure 5: Sheet 1** and Attachment A: Map 2). Each landscape unit is described below, accompanied by representative photographs of existing visual character within that unit and a typical cross section depicting the scale, massing, density, and character of distinctive visual elements such as thoroughfares, vegetation, and/or buildings (see **Figure 5: Sheet 2 through Sheet 16**).



Notes:
1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Light Gray Canvas Base" Map Service.
3. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.

I-81 Viaduct Project Onondaga County, New York

Figure 5: Landscape Units
Sheet 1: Landscape Units Map

- Area of Visual Effect
- Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives
- Landscape Units:
 - Open Space - Designed Landscape
 - Open Space - Undeveloped
 - Open Space - Waterfront

- Suburban Commercial
- Suburban Residential
- Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
- Transportation Corridor - Highway
- Urban Downtown Core
- Urban Institutional Campus

- Urban Large Scale Development
- Urban Legacy Industrial
- Urban Neighborhood - Commercial Core
- Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use
- Urban Neighborhood - Residential



Department of Transportation



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration

3.3.1 Transportation Corridor – Highway Landscape Unit

The Transportation Corridor – Highway Landscape Unit consists of the portions of the I-81 and I-690 highways within the AVE. The boundaries of this landscape unit coincide with the right-of-way of each highway. The portions of I-481 included in the Community Grid Alternative are also included in this landscape unit. The interstates are prominent visual features and their boundaries delineate other landscape units in the AVE.

Landscape Type

The interstates follow the relatively flat topography through Downtown Syracuse, thereby avoiding the hills and steeper topography that exist in surrounding areas. I-81 gradually rises in elevation south of Downtown. Areas adjacent to both interstates are typically highly developed paved areas that include local streets, sidewalks, and parking areas under each highway. There are planted medians and scattered trees on highway rights-of-way that include grass embankments between the existing I-81 and I-690 connector ramps. Limited vegetated buffers exist on public property along both sides of each highway. Some of the most mature vegetation occurs south of the Adams Street exit on I-81, where deciduous trees and shrubs line both sides of the highway. Some natural features also exist near West Street, where I-690 passes over Onondaga Creek. Successional fields and some woodland vegetation occurs near each of the I-481 suburban interchanges within the AVE.

Visual Environment and Character

The Transportation Corridor – Highway Landscape Unit is a highly developed urban environment characterized by wide, paved roadways. Along Almond Street, I-81 is an estimated 66-foot-wide, elevated concrete viaduct structure, standing approximately 20 feet high. Elevated portions of both interstates rise above city streets that run parallel to and cross under both highways. Distinctive visual characteristics of this unit include the linearity of the highway corridors, the constant rapid movement of vehicles, transportation structures that include concrete columns, steel girder bridges, entrance/exit ramps, overhead utilities, paved surface streets, and parking areas under each highway. The scale of these large elements, the multi-directional movement of vehicular traffic on surface streets along the highway, and complex sightlines require increased attentiveness by motorists and pedestrians. These elements contribute to a sense that the Project environment is not pedestrian friendly. Viewer groups (see below) at ground level experience views of the underside of existing bridge structures and of the intersecting streets, however, views are blocked by the concrete support columns and several ramp structure abutments.

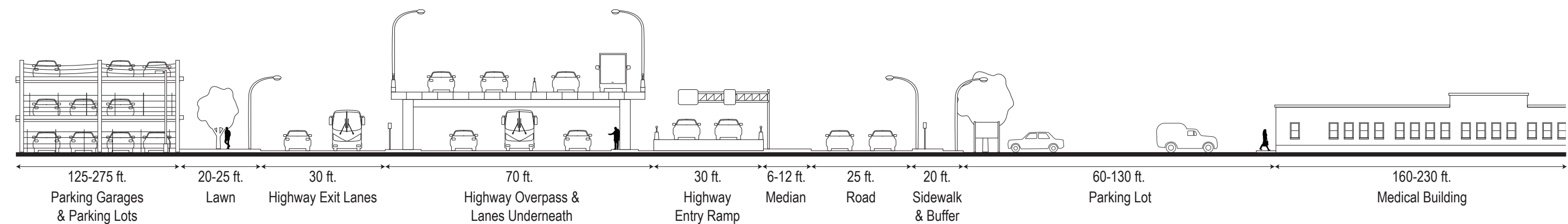
Viewer Groups

Affected viewer groups in this landscape unit are travelers along Project interstates. The highways are used daily by commuters, tourists, and others traveling to local and regional destinations. Businesses and shippers move goods and services into and through this part of the city. Commuters include people in personal vehicles and those using public transit. Tourists use the interstates traveling between cities and surrounding states. The interstates connect to I-90 (New York State Thruway) north and east of the city as well as other local and regional transportation systems accessing Syracuse Hancock International Airport and the William F. Walsh Regional Transportation Center.

Viewers also include local motorists, such as commuters on Almond Street, adjacent to the I-81 viaduct, and non-interstate commuters. Non-interstate commuter destinations are those to and from the University Hill neighborhood, those accessing Downtown, and other centers of local employment. Public transit users and others use these adjacent streets along the interstates to access local businesses and destinations. Bicyclists and pedestrians use Almond Street and connecting streets crossing under and near the viaduct. These ground level viewers include, but are not limited to, students and employees of institutions in the area who work for the local hospitals and educational facilities.

Transportation Corridor - Highway

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



View of the I-81 Viaduct over Almond Street, at Renwick Avenue, View to the North.



View of I-81 from the Butternut Street Overpass, View to the Southeast.

3.3.2 Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial Landscape Unit

The Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial Landscape Unit is located primarily east of I-81 and along Erie Boulevard, an important east-west arterial generally parallel to I-690 through Downtown Syracuse. This landscape unit also occurs along a stretch of North State Street north of the I-81/690 interchange.

Landscape Type

The roadway portions of this landscape unit are relatively wide and designed to move large volumes of local commercial and commuter traffic through the area, providing direct access to businesses and neighborhoods via connecting streets east and northeast of the Downtown core. City streets are generally laid out in a traditional block and grid pattern extending into adjacent residential neighborhoods.

Visual Environment and Character

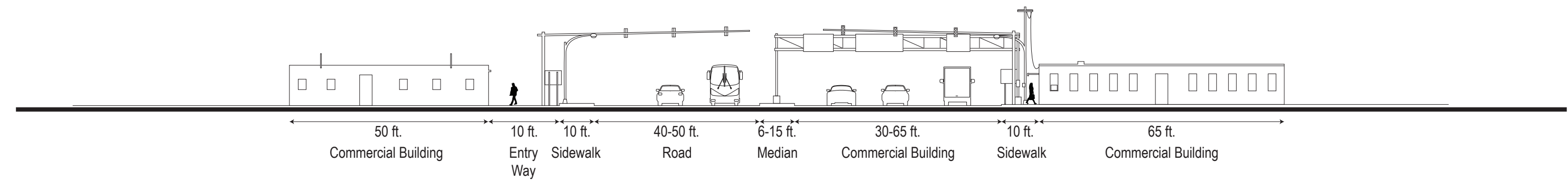
The Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial Landscape Unit is a built urban environment, characterized by wide streets with small to medium scale commercial buildings, which line both sides of the street. Building heights generally range between one to six stories along Erie Boulevard (east of Downtown), with most buildings within a lower range of one to three stories in height. Buildings are typically oriented to face Erie Boulevard. Most buildings house commercial uses and vary in architectural styles spanning many decades, which is typical of long-established commercial corridors in Syracuse. Surface parking areas and scattered vacant lots among groups of buildings are commonplace. Many buildings are traditional, non-descript commercial structures. These structures are constructed of red, red-brown or red-orange brick and concrete materials with flat rooflines. Front facades are close to the street. Materials throughout the area are hard-textured, consisting of concrete pavements, asphalt pavements, metal overhead traffic control devices, above ground utilities, and roadway signage. Natural materials are limited to occasional street trees, low value shrubs and deciduous trees on vacant lots, and some landscaping near commercial businesses. Concrete sidewalks support pedestrian activity.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit include commuters and other motorists using Erie Boulevard, North State Street, and connecting neighborhood streets. Neighbor viewer groups include building occupants, employees/customers of commercial businesses alongside these commercial streets, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists. Views from this landscape unit may be directed towards the Downtown skyline to the south and southwest from both commercial arterials. Elevated portions of the I-81/I-690 interchange and viaduct sections are visible from Erie Boulevard, North State Street, and other streets within this unit. Views of the interstates from ground level may be screened by changes in street alignments, intervening buildings, structures, and street trees.

Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Erie Boulevard at Forman Avenue, View to the West.



South West Street at Gifford Street, View to the North.

3.3.3 Urban Downtown Core Landscape Unit

The Urban Downtown Core Landscape Unit includes the central business district of Syracuse, bounded on the east by I-81, on the north by the I-81/690 interchange, on the west by West Street and on the south by Adams Street. This unit is among the most diverse and concentrated areas of business and social activity within the City.

Landscape Type

The Urban Downtown Core Landscape Unit is characterized by the relatively large scale, height, and massing of buildings, as well as high levels of pedestrian activity and vehicular traffic. This landscape unit contains many of the city's most iconic buildings that comprise the Downtown skyline, as well as significant historic districts and cultural public gathering places. This area is the city's hub of economic and social activity, which has been experiencing a resurgence in residential and business development in recent years. Natural features are rare in this environment, other than Onondaga Creek, which meanders through the area west of I-81, and occasional small parks.

Visual Environment and Character

The Downtown Core is the most architecturally diverse and visually interesting area in Syracuse. This area contains many of the community's most valued and important civic buildings, historic districts, landmarks, public monuments, and public gathering spaces (Clinton Square, Hanover Square, and Columbus Circle). The diverse mix of architectural styles, urban commercial-retail businesses, offices, residential buildings, government facilities, financial services, and other institutions are the primary contributors to visual character in this zone.

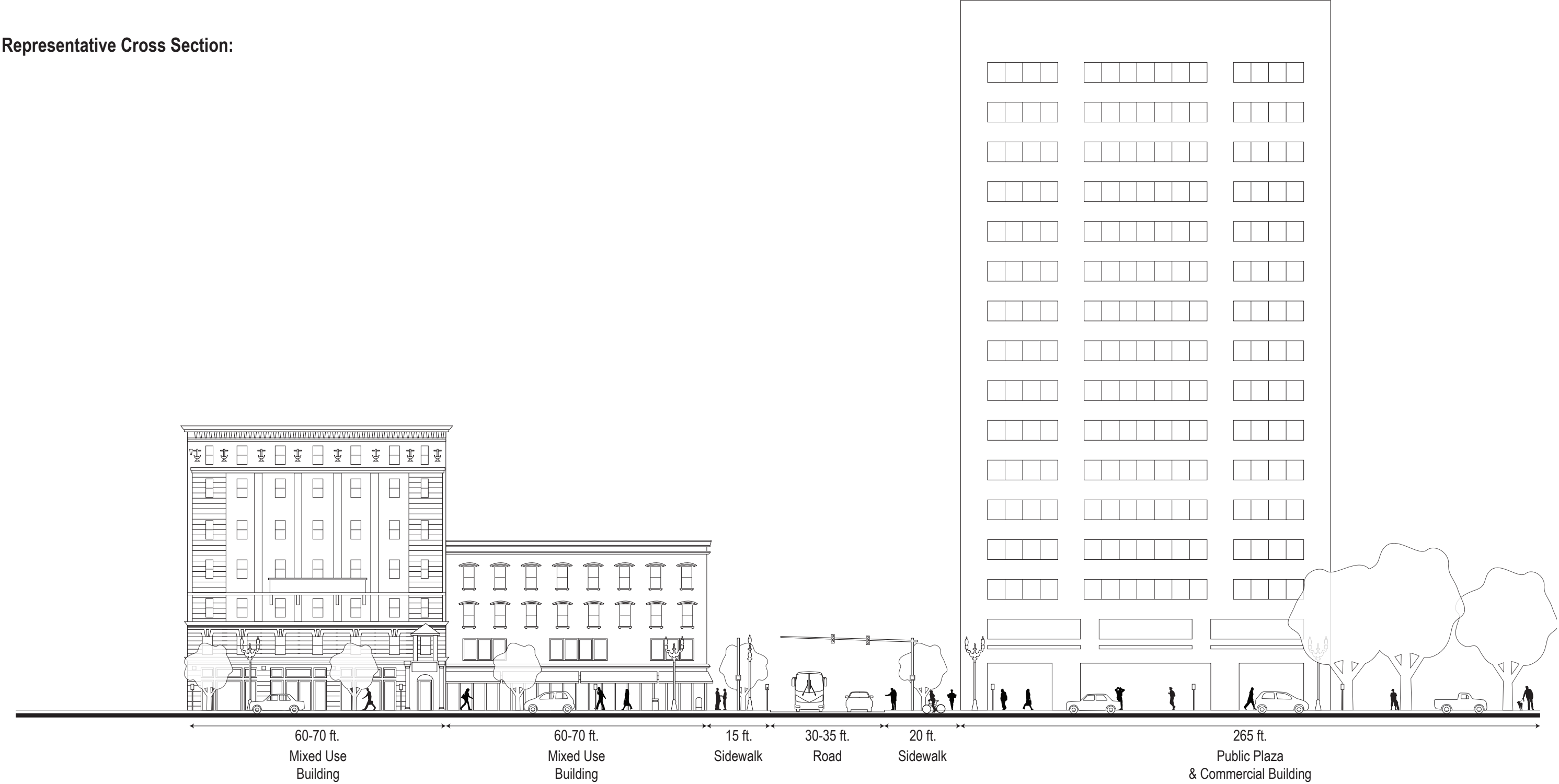
Visual characteristics and views to and from the Downtown Core are substantially influenced by the height, massing, and architectural character of existing buildings. In general, building facades face the street and are set close to the curb with sidewalks and streetscaping elements lining both sides of the street. East Genesee Street includes design elements of the Connective Corridor, which connects Downtown to the University Hill neighborhood. East Genesee Street's design elements include landscaping, enhanced pedestrian amenities, and dedicated bicycle lanes. The buildings and streetscaping within this landscape unit form a nearly continuous street wall, lining the thoroughfares for several blocks through Downtown. Interruption occurs occasionally by surface parking lots, pocket parks, and vacant lots. The density of existing buildings and other vertical forms direct views towards the visual terminus of each street, typically several blocks in the distance. Views into the interior portions of many blocks are obscured by buildings and structures. Views of the interstates may include bridge overpasses and limited views of elevated sections, which may be screened or obscured by the density of development in many areas. Some of the city's tallest buildings are in the Downtown core and a few, such as the State Tower Building and the AXA Towers, exceed 20 stories. Views from these vantage points include the I-81 and I-690 interstates through the city, with extended views of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in the Downtown Core include travelers along I-81 and I-690 and neighbors in adjacent locations. Views of the Project include motorists (particularly commuters using city streets), public transit riders, building occupants, businesses and institutional employees, residents, pedestrians, and bicyclists. The Downtown Core experiences a high amount of pedestrian activity during the day and at night because of an abundance of Downtown businesses, residential locations, evening entertainment, and cultural destinations. There is also a large residential population in the Downtown Core, many of whom live in tall buildings that provide open, elevated views of the Project.

Urban Downtown Core

Representative Cross Section:



Urban Downtown Core

Representative Photographs:



Clinton Square, South Clinton Street, View to the East.



South Salina Street at East Fayette Street, View to the North.

3.3.4 Urban Neighborhood - Residential Landscape Unit

The Urban Neighborhood – Residential Landscape Unit occupies large areas within the AVE. This landscape unit is located adjacent to both I-81 and I-690 within areas that extend toward the edges of the AVE. These neighborhoods (see **Figure 4**) are traditional urban mixed-use areas containing single-family and multi-family dwellings, interspersed with schools, places of worship, parks, small neighborhood retail businesses, and services (corner grocery stores, restaurants, and taverns). These neighborhoods are places of social interaction and recreational activity. Resident demographics and socioeconomic conditions vary greatly within each neighborhood.

Landscape Type

This landscape unit exhibits a balance between the highly built urban areas and non-built environments, although the density of residential development is high and noticeably urban rather than suburban. Natural characteristics are present in most neighborhoods and appear as varied forms of mostly deciduous vegetation. Hillsides contain deciduous woodlands, with mature tree canopies, forming a nearly continuous landscape cover when viewed from a distance. Maintained lawns and landscaped yards are commonplace. Parks are more numerous in residential areas and provide more of a natural setting for many residents.

Visual Environment and Character

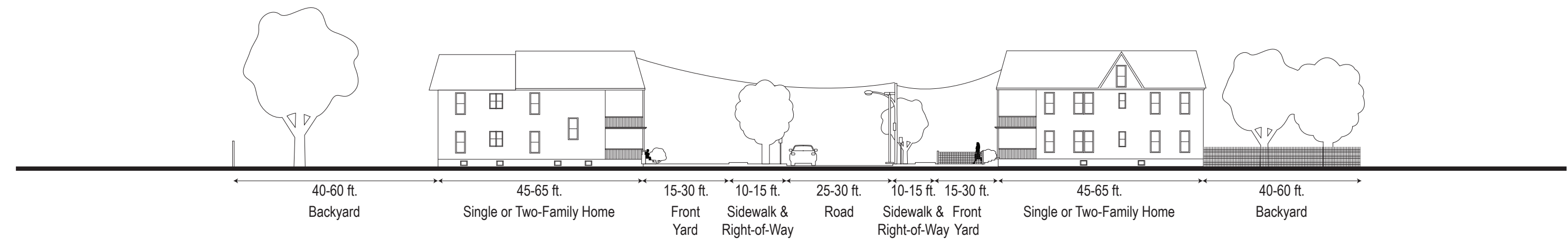
The Urban Neighborhood – Residential Landscape Unit consists of a diverse range in the size and distribution of housing types, architectural styles, and neighborhood densities. Architectural styles of residences include a mix of nineteenth- and twentieth-century styles with variable integrity of materials and design. Although housing types are primarily single- or two-family dwellings, some neighborhoods include apartment buildings, townhomes, mid-rise/high-rise, and mixed-use residential/commercial buildings. Residences typically front local neighborhood streets. In most cases streets are narrower than higher volume collectors and commercial arterials. Street widths are approximately 24 to 30 feet wide, with adjacent sidewalks and planted public rights-of-way containing overhead electrical lines and other utilities. Some neighborhoods have considerable tree canopies stretching over and along the streets. Most residential neighborhoods are considered walkable. Homes are set back from the street at various distances depending on their location, age, and size. Many homes have front yards, porches, and deep backyards. In many neighborhoods, the views of the Project may be screened or obscured. The density of development, including houses, buildings, other structures, and increased amounts of vegetation, obscure views as distance from the city's core increases.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit are primarily neighborhood residents. Typically, residents close to the Project and local commuters using neighborhood collector streets have views of the Project. Views deeper into the neighborhoods farther from the Project are typically screened or obscured by intervening buildings, homes, and vegetation. In some of these areas, existing topography, as the terrain increases in elevation outside of the Downtown core, also obscures views. The number of pedestrians and bicyclists with views of the Project may be high in some neighborhoods and depends in part on viewer activity, their proximity to available services, and local destinations necessitating such travel.

Urban Neighborhood - Residential

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Washington Square Park, View to the Northeast.



West Calthrop Avenue, View to the East.

3.3.5 Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core Landscape Unit

The Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core Landscape Unit includes South Salina (U.S. Route 11), West Genesee, North Salina, Wolf, Court, Lodi, Butternut, and James Streets. These commercial thoroughfares typically pass through and/or define boundaries between residential neighborhoods.

Landscape Type

In some instances, roadways in these landscape units function as informal boundaries between neighborhoods. These commercial strips contain a variety of commercial enterprises and some non-commercial uses. Uses include business and retail establishments, restaurants, car dealerships, places of worship, places of neighborhood social activity, and health and personal care services, among others. Typically, the commercial uses front the primary street. Housing is found behind these uses, in the same block but facing interior neighboring side streets and adjacent blocks. Some commercial businesses may be destinations for people coming from outside of the immediate area.

Visual Environment and Character

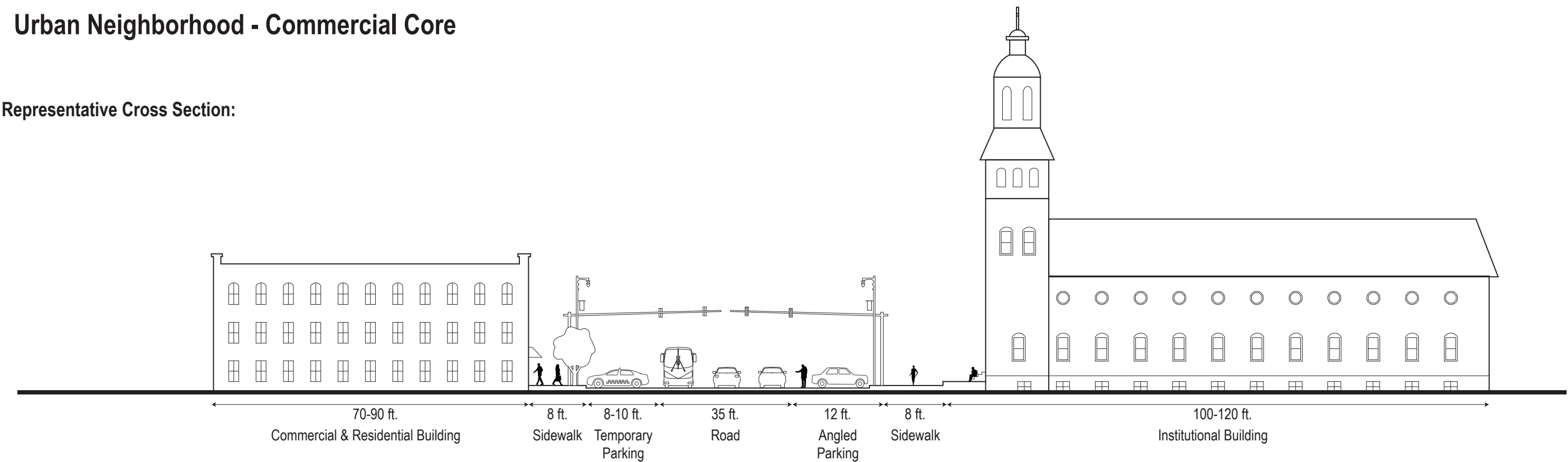
The Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core Landscape Unit is characterized by a diverse mix of commercial buildings fronting on the primary street. Buildings are typically one to four stories high and tightly clustered. Their facades and entrances are located along the sidewalk, which contributes to a traditional neighborhood “Main Street” appearance. Institutional uses, such as places of worship and schools, also exist within this landscape unit. The buildings exhibit a range of late-nineteenth through early-to-mid-twentieth-century architectural styles, often constructed of brick and stone with low sloping or flat roofs. Natural features in business areas are largely absent except for street trees, landscaping, and other urban vegetation. Parking typically includes both on-street and off-street parking scenarios. Off-street parking may also be located to the rear or side areas of lots, with driveways providing access to the street. Pedestrian activity is relatively high because of the diversity of uses and destinations that provide residents of adjoining neighborhoods with daily necessities and services. Residences are typically located along side streets and screened from views of the Project by the buildings that front the commercial streets. Views to the Project are provided along these commercial streets where open views are not obscured by buildings, vegetation, or other objects. Some locations afford views directed toward Project overpasses that run perpendicular to the commercial corridor.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit with potential views of the Project include commuters and other motorists on the primary streets and secondary side streets that provide access into residential neighborhoods. Commercial building occupants also constitute a potentially large viewer group. Other viewer groups may include residents, business employees, and customers. Pedestrians and bicyclists may also make up a considerable share of viewers.

Urban Neighborhood - Commercial Core

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



North Salina Street between Isabella Street and Catawba Street, View to the Southeast.



South Salina Street at West Colvin Street, View to the Southeast.

3.3.6 Urban Neighborhood – Mixed Use Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Urban Neighborhood – Mixed-Use Landscape Unit is in the Franklin Square neighborhood just northwest of the I-81/I-690 interchange. This is a revitalized, well-planned, and designed urban neighborhood. Over the past 20 to 30 years, this area has been transformed from a collection of large, neglected, abandoned, and underutilized industrial properties into a vibrant neighborhood. This neighborhood currently consists of a mix of commercial businesses, restaurants, and professional offices that are located among residential dwelling units (condos, lofts, and apartments). The neighborhood includes many pedestrian amenities, including small parks, trails, and open space.

Visual Environment and Character

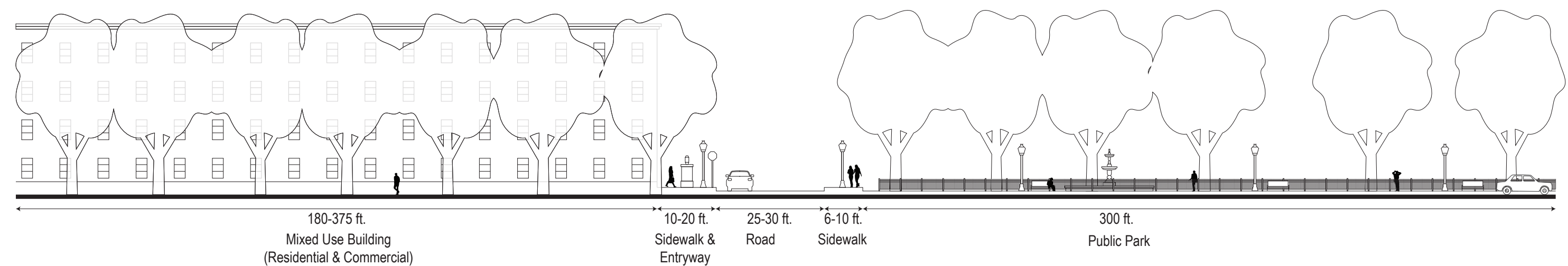
Visually this is a cohesive and relatively compact neighborhood that presents a very distinct urban setting consisting of former industrial, multi-story, brick buildings with a historic character that have been adapted to modern uses. Streets are tree-lined and relatively narrow in comparison to other city streets, which contributes to a very pedestrian-friendly environment that is unique in Syracuse. Streetscaping includes sidewalks with pedestrian amenities, street lighting, landscaped grounds, public parks, and pedestrian bridges that cross over portions of the Onondaga Creek, connecting to the city's Creekwalk trail system. On-street parking is provided as well as surface parking lots. The building grounds are attractively landscaped and not visually intrusive.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit include building occupants such as residents, business employees/patrons, clients, and commercial customers. Pedestrian activity is mostly localized to these same groups although the neighborhood does experience some daily and night time visitor use from outside the immediate area. Potential views to the Project are to the south, southeast, and east of Franklin Square. In some locations, views are screened by buildings and mature evergreen or deciduous trees. Residents and building occupants have views of the Project from the upper floors of some buildings and rooftops.

Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Franklin Square Neighborhood at the Intersection of Plum Street and Solar Street, View to the Northeast.



The Lofts at Franklin Square, 525 Plum Street, View to the Southwest.

3.3.7 Urban Institutional Campus Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Urban Institutional Campus Landscape Unit is in two areas within the AVE. The larger of these is the Syracuse University campus and surrounding areas that encompass the University Hill neighborhood. This area includes many educational, medical, and institutional uses and support services including three hospitals (SUNY Upstate/Upstate Golisano Children's Hospital, Crouse Hospital, and Veterans Administration Hospital) and related health care facilities. This landscape unit is east/southeast of the Downtown Core and because of existing terrain, it essentially overlooks much of the city's landscape and skyline to the north and west.

The second Institutional Campus location is in the immediate neighborhood that encompasses St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center. This complex of health care services is located along Prospect Avenue within the Prospect Hill neighborhood, northeast of the Downtown Core and I-81/I-690 interchange.

Visual Environment and Character

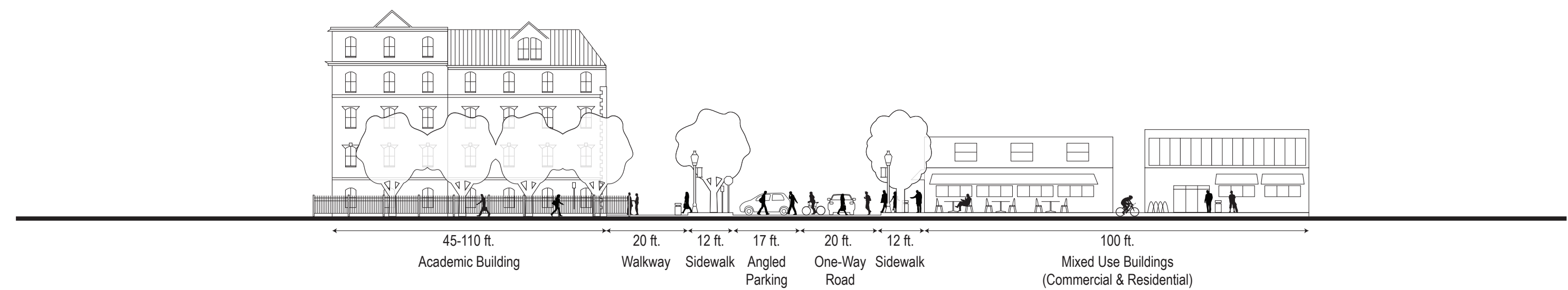
The Urban Institutional Campus Landscape Unit is an area of densely clustered large buildings devoted to higher education and health care. These large, multi-story, institutional buildings, which have a mix of historic and modern architectural styles, are built upon some of the highest elevations near Downtown. Both the University Hill area and the St. Joseph's Health Center are among the region's most important employment centers. As such, both locations are commuter destinations that generate high traffic volumes and the need for large-scale parking garages and surface parking lots. The University Hill area includes iconic buildings and structures known for their architectural details and historic significance to the Syracuse community. The Syracuse University campus includes numerous buildings and sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The St. Joseph's Health Center complex has recently undergone significant redevelopment and reinvestment in the neighborhood as part of the implementation of its recent master plan focused in part on revitalization of the neighborhood. Views of the interstates are available from both locations and, in some cases, are unobstructed due to their elevated topography.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit include commuters destined to both campus locations, building occupants, pedestrians, bicyclists, public transit riders, students, and professionals. Among building occupants are University students, employees of the various institutions, and hospital patients. Views to and from I-81 are commonplace from numerous elevated vantage points afforded by high-rise buildings throughout the landscape unit. Ground level or near ground level views of the Project are typically blocked or interrupted in many locations by intervening topography, vegetation, and particularly by the large number and the size of buildings within this landscape unit. Some high-rise buildings at higher elevations, with facades facing I-81, have unobstructed views for considerable distances to the west and northwest.

Urban Institutional Campus

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Crouse Drive on the Syracuse University Campus, View to the Southwest.



Upstate and Crouse Medical Campuses on Irving Avenue, View to the Southwest.

3.3.8 Urban Legacy Industrial Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Urban Legacy Industrial Landscape Unit includes a large portion of the AVE west of I-81 and the Downtown Core, as well as an area north of I-690. Decades ago these neighborhoods, including the Near Westside and Park Avenue neighborhoods (on the west side of the city), contained many of the area's largest industrial employers and remnant buildings, which still exist. Several important city streets run through these neighborhoods, including West Street, West Fayette Street, Erie Boulevard West, West Genesee Street, and Spencer Street.

Visual Environment & Character

The Urban Legacy Industrial Landscape Unit is characterized by large, former industrial buildings and factories that once lined the streets in these neighborhoods. Today, many parts of this landscape unit, such as along Erie Boulevard West, West Fayette Street, and West Street, are seeing substantial reinvestment and adaptive reuse of many buildings. New uses include offices, residential units, and commercial space. On some of these sites, the large, mostly brick, industrial buildings, many of which were dilapidated, have been demolished and replaced with new buildings. Sites are also being converted to residential and mixed uses. Visually, this landscape unit still retains some of its original industrial character, including existing overhead utility lines, railroad bridges, and rail lines. Views of the Project are provided along primary streets where open views are not obscured by street alignments and other buildings. In some locations views are directed to Project overpasses that run perpendicular to these primary streets.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups include commuters on city streets, occupants of the buildings (including employees), residents, and commercial customers. Although pedestrian and bicyclist activity are increasing with redevelopment of the area, travel remains dominated by vehicular use and public transportation. Portions of this landscape unit are in transition from former industrial uses to more mixed-use environments. Remaining industrial uses and newly developed commercial/residential uses have potential views of the Project. These neighbors are primarily employees, on-site customers, and residents.

Urban Legacy Industrial

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



West Fayette Street at Seneca Street, View to the Southeast.



West Fayette Street at Seneca Street, View to the Southwest.

3.3.9 Urban Large-Scale Development

Landscape Type

The Urban Large-Scale Development Landscape Unit is an area along I-81 in the northern portion of the AVE, east-southeast of Onondaga Lake. This area is experiencing substantial reinvestment, and former underutilized industrial properties are undergoing large-scale redevelopment by both the private and public sectors. The ongoing redevelopment of the Lakefront neighborhood is transforming the general character of the area from its former heavy industrial nature to more tourism/recreation/entertainment destinations.

This landscape unit is focused on properties located along important thoroughfares east-southeast of the Onondaga Lake waterfront. These roadways include Hiawatha Boulevard, West Bear Street, West Kirkpatrick Street, and Park Street. This unit includes noteworthy regional large-scale destinations such as DestiNY USA, the Inner Harbor, NBT Bank Stadium, the Regional Market, and the Regional Transportation Center. Industrial uses also exist in this area including the County's Metropolitan Wastewater Treatment Plant, located along Hiawatha Boulevard.

Visual Environment and Character

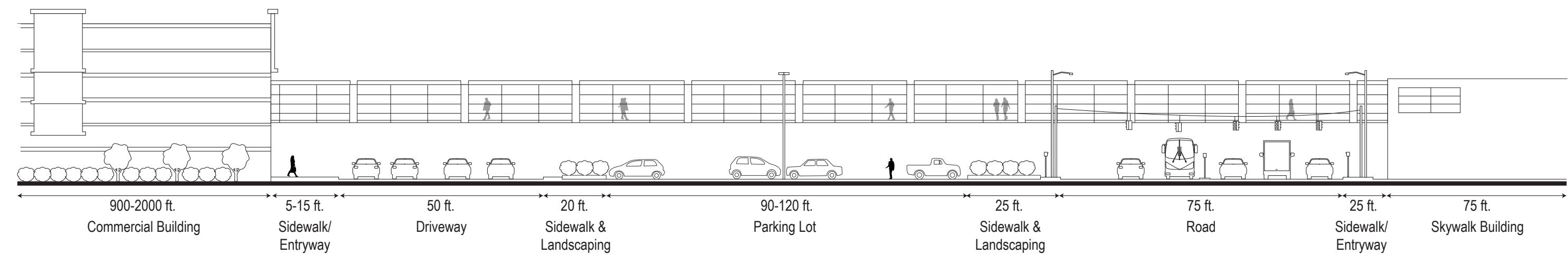
This landscape unit is characterized by alternating views of large-scale, modern, commercial properties and a mix of older commercial and industrial buildings of varying sizes, site conditions, and uses. Many properties still exhibit the remnants of former industrial buildings, structures, and uses. New development is generally focused on destination type land uses, catering to the traveling public. Viewers include tourists, retail shoppers, and entertainment enthusiasts. Buildings are large with large adjacent surface parking lots. Proximity to I-81, which affords the ability to attract visitors from throughout the northeast U.S. and southeastern Canada, is an important factor in much of the reinvestment in the area. Ground level and elevated views of I-81 and the I-81/I-690 interchange are available from several locations including the venues previously mentioned.

Viewer Groups

Shopping and entertainment venues attract visitors from throughout the region, nearby states, and southern Canada. Viewers include travelers along I-81, commuters, and other motorists using surrounding city streets. Pedestrian and bicyclist activity is present and increasing as sites are redeveloped. Pedestrian facilities are provided in many locations where such facilities had not previously existed. These pedestrian areas include segments of the Creekwalk and the Inner Harbor.

Urban Large Scale Development

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



The CNY Regional Market, 2100 Park Street, View to the East.



Destiny USA, 9090 Destiny USA Drive, View to the Southeast.

3.3.10 Suburban Commercial Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Suburban Commercial Landscape Unit is found in several locations within the AVE. These locations include the southeastern and northwestern edges of the AVE near the boundaries of adjoining suburban towns, including the Towns of Onondaga and Salina, with the City of Syracuse. Other areas include the I-481 interchange areas in the Town of DeWitt and the Town of Cicero. These are areas where a variety of commercial uses exist in somewhat lower suburban densities than in many of the commercial areas in the City of Syracuse. These suburban commercial areas are auto-oriented, unlike the commercial pedestrian neighborhoods in the city.

Visual Environment and Character

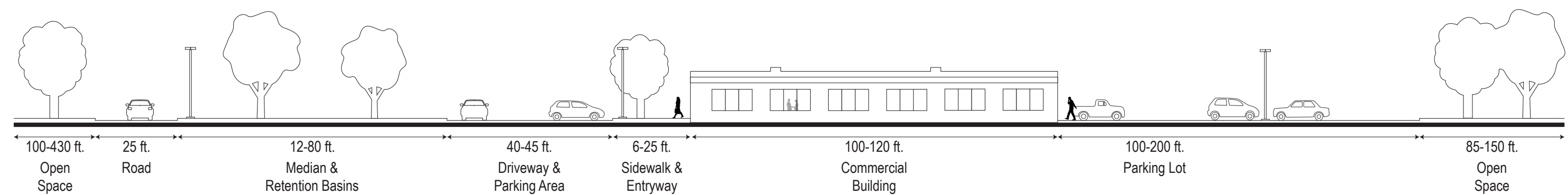
This landscape unit is characterized by a mix of low to moderate density commercial uses located along roadways that carry substantial amounts of traffic to and from adjacent residential neighborhoods. Land uses typically include single-story buildings containing commercial/retail and office uses. Some uses are in business park settings, particularly in the Town of Salina and Town of DeWitt. Parking is in front of many buildings and may range from small parking areas to large lots. Sites are likely to be landscaped, but these areas are auto-oriented and may or may not be destinations for nearby residents. Pedestrian and bicyclist activity is limited, and very often sidewalks and other pedestrian amenities are not provided along thoroughfares.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups are limited to commuters on local roadways, employees, customers of local businesses, occasional pedestrians, and bicyclists. Building occupants may have views of surrounding areas of I-81 and I-481, but views may be screened by buildings, structures, intervening topography, and vegetation.

Suburban Commercial

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



View from Buckley Road of Greenfield Parkway, View to the North.



Ainsley Drive at Jamesville Avenue, View to the West.

3.3.11 Suburban Residential Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Suburban Residential Landscape Unit is located at the outer edges of the AVE to the southeast and northwest of the City of Syracuse near the boundaries of the Towns of Onondaga and Salina. These are areas with a visibly distinct change in character from the more traditional forms of dense, mixed-use urban neighborhoods to more single-use suburban residential forms. This character is expressed through added varied housing styles, increased building setbacks from the street, additional yard space/lawn areas, larger lots, longer driveways, attached garages, and more vegetation in a neighborhood environment.

Visual Environment and Character

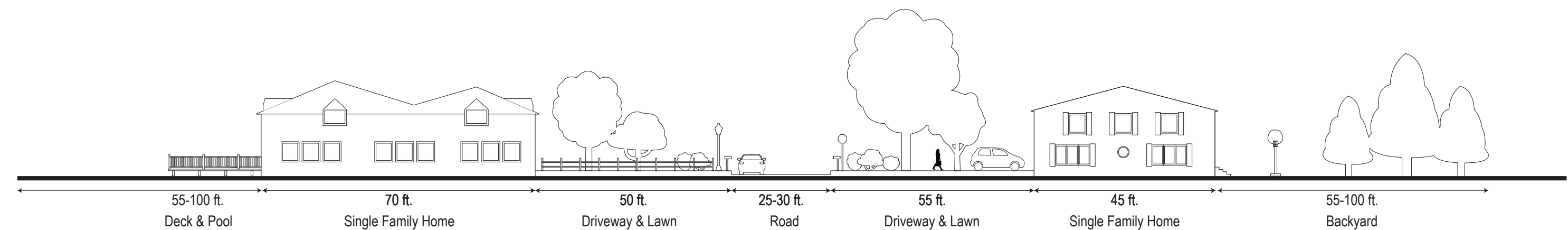
Within this landscape unit, the density and intensity of residential development decrease substantially near the boundaries of the City of Syracuse with adjacent towns. Housing styles may be somewhat more contemporary in these neighborhoods, although still post World War II. Typically, the amount of open space established between neighbors is greater than in urban residential areas. Single-family houses dominate over duplexes and denser forms of residential development found within the city. Increased open space is usually in the form of lawns, maintained yard plantings, vegetated vacant lots, natural buffer areas (along creeks), and wetlands. Neighborhood streets are paved, but typically not curbed. Pedestrian activity may exist, but sidewalks don't exist in many of these areas. Views of the interstates and other highways are typically screened by other residential units, topography, and intervening vegetation.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit are very limited due to its residential setting. Homeowners and commuters make up most viewer groups.

Suburban Residential

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Doehaven Circle at Deer Springs Road, View to the Southeast.



Thurber Street, View to the Southwest.

3.3.12 Open Space - Undeveloped Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Open Space – Undeveloped Landscape Unit is near I-481 in the southeastern portion of the city near the boundary with the Town of Onondaga. A second area is located at the northern edge of the AVE, in the northwestern portion of the city near the Town of Salina. These undeveloped open space areas are usually near the Project in proximity to suburban style commercial development.

Visual Environment and Character

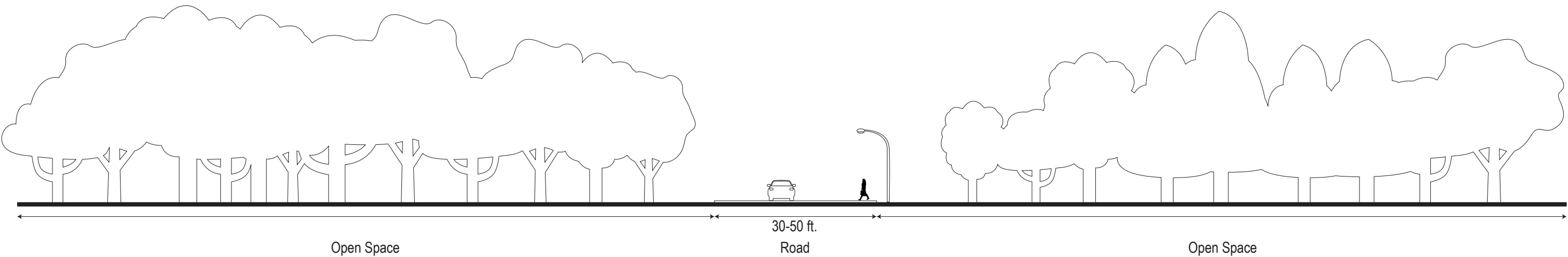
This unit consists of mostly undeveloped lands near I-81 and I-481. Lands include a mix of natural vegetation, ranging from deciduous wooded areas to open fields and shrub lands. Areas in this landscape unit may contain upland characteristics, wetlands, and small areas of open water that function as natural habitats and may not be developed because of their natural constraints.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit are limited due to the lack of development in the immediate area. Viewers mostly consist of commuters, travelers passing by on local roadways, local property owners, occasional pedestrians, and bicyclists.

Open Space - Undeveloped

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Roberts Street, East of the 481-Kirkville Road Interchange, View to the Southeast.



Northern Boulevard at Eastman Road, View to the Southeast.

3.3.13 Open Space - Designed Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

The Open Space – Designed Landscape Unit occurs in four distinct locations within the AVE. From north to south, these locations are Onondaga Lake Park, Lincoln Park, Thornden Park, and Oakwood Cemetery.

Onondaga Lake Park is an Onondaga County-owned Parks and Recreation facility along the shores of Onondaga Lake. The park includes more than 7.5 miles of trails and various venues for a large variety of active/passive recreation and special events. Long-range County plans call for a 12-mile trail system that will eventually loop around the entire lake. The portion of the lake's waterfront that is closest to I-81 is at present the least developed portion of the County's property. This area on the southeastern shore is undeveloped. Views of the Project area looking east from the shoreline of Onondaga Lake Park are generally screened by existing shoreline vegetation.

Thornden Park is a 76-acre City of Syracuse community park, located east of the Syracuse University campus. The park is situated on hilly terrain that overlooks the campus with more distant views of I-81 farther west. The park contains an athletic field, ball courts, and pool and is noted for its rose garden along Ostrom Avenue. Views toward the Project (to the west) are screened by vegetation within the park, as well as intervening vegetation and buildings.

Lincoln Park is a 19-acre City of Syracuse neighborhood park located in the Eastwood neighborhood. The park includes a pool, courts, and playgrounds and is situated on top of a wooded hill with views of the city, including Downtown and I-81 to the southwest. Views toward the Project (to the southwest) are mostly screened by existing vegetation within the park, intervening vegetation, and buildings.

Oakwood Cemetery is a 160-acre privately owned cemetery that is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. This cemetery is located along Comstock Avenue in the City of Syracuse and is immediately adjacent to (east of) I-81 just south of the main Syracuse University campus. The cemetery is noted for its historic, rural cemetery landscape design and architecture. This planned landscape includes internal roads and pathways meandering around burial locations, monuments, public art, and mausoleums. The original entrance and main gate to the cemetery were filled in by the construction of I-81 in the 1960s. Views from the cemetery toward the Project (to the west) are screened from many locations by vegetation and changes in topography.

Visual Environment and Character

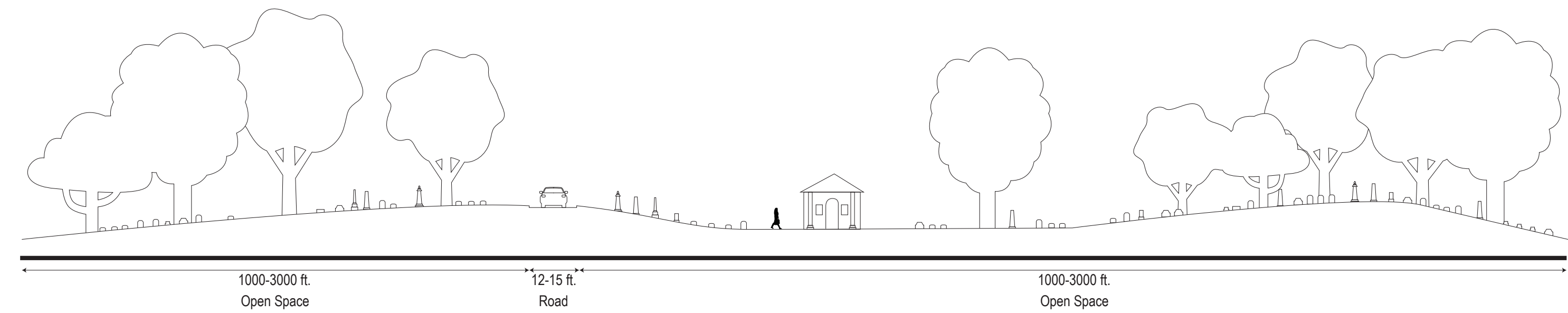
The Open Space – Designed Landscape Unit includes open spaces that have been planned and designed for specific uses including, but not limited to, active and passive recreation. These lands are planned landscapes dominated by areas of natural vegetation including woodland areas consisting of mostly deciduous trees, shrubs, and landscaped lawns. Internal roads are designed to provide access to recreational areas; in the case of Oakwood Cemetery, areas are set aside as burial locations. Although many areas in this unit support active recreation and outdoor activity, some areas are specifically designed for their solitude and peacefulness.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups include park and cemetery visitors, pedestrians, bicyclists, recreationists, hikers, and to a lesser extent, motorists passing by on local access roads. Views vary by season, since some viewpoints may be screened by existing deciduous vegetation.

Open Space - Designed Landscape

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Thornden Park, View to the Southwest.



Oakwood Cemetery, View to the West.

3.3.14 Open Space - Waterfront Landscape Unit

Landscape Type

This Open Space – Waterfront Landscape Unit consists of the surface waters of Onondaga Lake, the Onondaga Creek Outlet, and the Syracuse Inner Harbor. These areas are northwest of the I-81/690 interchange and occur in a triangular area of the city located between I-81 to the east and I-690 to the south. These areas are important because they are existing and future recreational resources whose purpose is critical to the revitalization of the waterfronts of Onondaga Lake, Onondaga Creek, the Inner Harbor, and surrounding neighborhoods. This area is adjacent to the Urban Large-Scale Development landscape unit that is experiencing reinvestment by both the public and private sectors.

Visual Environment and Character

The Open Space – Waterfront landscape unit is characterized by open expanses of water. It is a popular recreational boating area that is likely to grow in use with improving water quality in Onondaga Lake. Waterfront development has historically been industrial, but in recent years this general area has experienced a transformation to less intense and more diverse uses. These uses include recreation, nearby entertainment, retail shopping, nearby mixed-use residential areas, and commercial business development. Recreational development of the waterfront areas is continuing to bring more people into the area for lakeside amenities such as trails and marina facilities along the Onondaga Creekwalk, Inner Harbor, and Onondaga Lake.

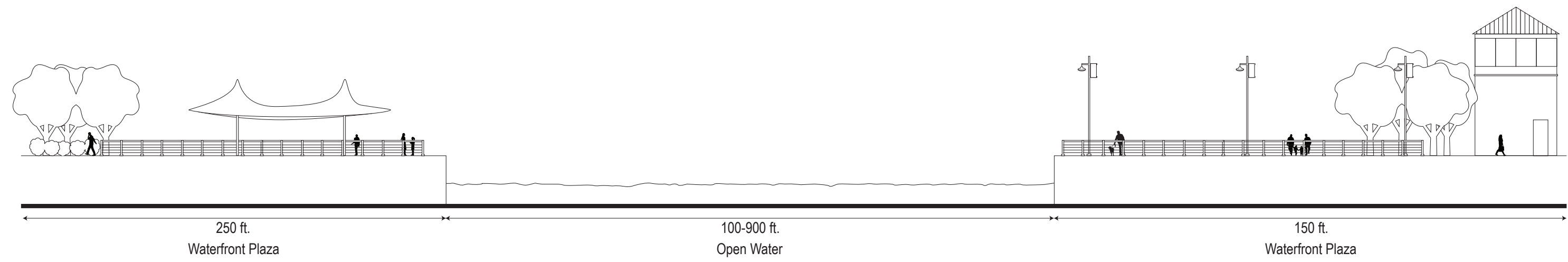
Views of the city's skyline exist from several locations, particularly from Onondaga Lake. The remnants of past industrial uses still exist in some portions of this landscape unit. Vacant lots and underutilized buildings are interspersed among the new development that is occurring throughout this area. In recent years, the southern shore of the lake has attracted large numbers of visitors because it has been a wintering area for American bald eagles, which have been seen roosting and fishing along the shoreline from several nearby vantage points.

Viewer Groups

Viewer groups in this landscape unit are diverse from both nearby land-based and water-based viewpoints. The area is relatively flat so there are few elevated views to or from the interstates. I-81 is visible from locations along the lake, the Creekwalk, and the Inner Harbor. This is an area that is drawing increasing amounts of attention by in-state and out-of-state tourists. Viewing groups include travelers on Project highways who have views to the waterfront areas. Motorists passing by along city streets also have views to these areas, although somewhat distant. These views may be screened by intervening buildings, structures, and vegetation. Commuters, residents of nearby neighborhoods, retail customers, tourists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and boaters at the lake and Inner Harbor are afforded some views of I-81, although views may also be limited and screened at some locations.

Open Space - Waterfront

Representative Cross Section:



Representative Photographs:



Syracuse Creekwalk at Onondaga Lake, View to the Northwest.



Inner Harbor on Solar Street, View to the Northeast.

Table 3-1. Viewer Groups and Subgroups by Landscape Unit

Landscape Units in the Project AVE	Viewer Groups											
	Travelers Group			Neighbors Group								
	Subgroups			Predominant Subgroups								
	Commuting (Commuters)	Touring (Tourists)	Shipping (Deliveries)	Residents (Homes, Apartments, Condos)	Recreationists (Bicyclists, Trail Users)	Institutional (Professionals, Students, etc.)	Civic (Event Participants, Public Services)	Retail (Shoppers)	Commercial (Business Patrons & Workers)	Industrial (Employees)	Motorists and Transit Users	Pedestrians
Transportation Corridor - Highway	X	X	X								X	
Transportation Corridor-Commercial Arterial	X	X	X						X	X	X	X
Urban Downtown Core				X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X
Urban Neighborhood – Residential				X	X						X	X
Urban Neighborhood - Commercial Core								X	X		X	X
Urban Neighborhood – Mixed Use				X	X				X		X	X
Urban Institutional Campus				X	X	X	X		X		X	X
Urban Legacy Industrial									X	X	X	X
Urban Large-Scale Development	X				X			X	X	X	X	X
Suburban Commercial									X		X	
Suburban Residential				X							X	
Open Space - Undeveloped					X							
Open Space – Designed Landscape					X		X					X
Open Space – Waterfront					X		X					X

3.4 Visually Sensitive Sites

As described in Section 2.5 of this VIA, the NYSDEC Program Policy *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (DEP-00-2) requires that all aesthetic resources of statewide significance be inventoried as part of the assessment of visual

impacts. Visually sensitive sites of statewide and local significance include districts/sites listed on the National Register of Historic Places, urban parklands, and other resources within the AVE (see Attachment A: Map 3).

Visually sensitive resources of statewide significance (per the NYSDEC Program Policy for *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* [DEP-00-2]) within the AVE include the following:

- 1) *A property on or eligible for inclusion in the National or State Register of Historic Places [16 U.S.C. § 470a et seq., Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 14.07];*

Properties listed on or determined eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places that may be affected by the Project are identified and described in the Historic-Architectural Resources Survey Report for the Project (AKRF, 2016). The Project's potential impacts to historic resources are also described in **Section 6.4.1, Historic and Cultural Resources**, of the DDR/DEIS. The locations of National Register-listed properties within the AVE are shown in Attachment A: Map 3.

- 2) *State Parks [Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 3.09];*

None

- 3) *Urban Cultural Parks [Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law Section 35.15];*

Portions of the AVE are located within the Downtown Syracuse Heritage Area, which was formerly known as the Downtown Syracuse Urban Cultural Park (see Attachment A: Map 3).

- 4) *The State Forest Preserve [NYS Constitution Article XIV]; Adirondack and Catskill Parks;*

None

- 5) *National Wildlife Refuges [16 U.S.C. 668dd], State Game Refuges and State Wildlife Management Areas [ECL 11-2105];*

None

- 6) *National Natural Landmarks [36 CFR Part 62];*

None

- 7) *The National Park System, Recreation Areas, Seashores, Forests [16 U.S.C. 1c];*

None

- 8) *Rivers designated as National or State Wild, Scenic or Recreational [16 U.S.C. Chapter 28, ECL 15-2701 et seq.];*

None

- 9) *A site, area, lake, reservoir or highway designated or eligible for designation as scenic [ECL Article 49 or DOT equivalent and APA Designated State Highway Roadside;*

None

- 10) *Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance [of Article 42 of Executive Law]1;*

None

11) *A State or federally designated trail, or one proposed for designation [16 U.S.C. Chapter 27 or equivalent];*

None

12) *Adirondack Park Scenic Vistas;*

Not Applicable

13) *State Nature and Historic Preserve Areas; [Section 4 of Article XIV of the State Constitution];*

None

14) *Palisades Park; [Palisades Interstate Park Commission];*

Not Applicable

15) *Bond Act Properties purchased under Exceptional Scenic Beauty or Open Space category.*

None

In addition, visually sensitive sites of local significance within the AVE include the following:

- Forman Park is a 1.3-acre park flanked by the eastbound and westbound lanes of East Genesee Street near its intersection with Almond Street and the I-81 viaduct. The park has benches, a fountain, and a monument, upon which are three bronze statues representing historical figures of Syracuse. The park includes a police and firefighter memorial. Improvements at Forman Park were funded by the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.
- The Empire State Trail is a 360-mile trail following the former Erie Canal alignment and historic rail corridors from Albany to Buffalo. The trail is part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, established in 2000 by the U.S. Congress to recognize the historical importance of the Erie Canal. The trail passes through Syracuse primarily as an on-road path along local streets, including some marked bicycle lanes. Within the AVE, the Empire State Trail travels just south of I-690, primarily along East Water Street, where it intersects the I-81 viaduct, and then continues along Erie Boulevard West. The Old Erie Canal is identified as a resource in Onondaga County, having received funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act.
- New York State Bicycle Route 11 is an on-road signed bicycle route that extends along U.S. Route 11 for 320 miles north-south across New York State from the Pennsylvania border (near Binghamton, New York) to the Quebec border (near Rouses Point, New York). U.S. Route 11 traverses the AVE primarily along South State Street, where it passes below I-690, and then continues along North Salina Street north of I-690. While the route is signed, generally there are no designated bicycle lanes through the AVE.
- The Syracuse Connective Corridor is an on-street pathway consisting of paved green bicycle lanes and several streetscape enhancements such as public art, improved lighting, green infrastructure, and street tree plantings. The Connective Corridor travels primarily along University Place, East Genesee Street (where it crosses Almond Street beneath the I-81 viaduct), and West Fayette Street. The Project was a cooperative planning and development project by the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, and Syracuse University.

- The Creekwalk is an off-road path generally following Onondaga Creek through the City of Syracuse. The completed portion stretches 2.6 miles from Armory Square in Downtown Syracuse northward to Onondaga Lake. The Creekwalk is largely a separated pathway, but it does continue along city sidewalks in some areas. It passes beneath I-690 just east of the West Street interchange. The Creekwalk currently links or will soon link to other existing paths along Onondaga Lake, as well as the Inner Harbor, which includes open space areas and entertainment venues including an amphitheater.
- Bear Trap Creek Trail is a crushed-stone bike path in the Town of Salina. The trail extends 1.6 miles from 7th North Street to the Mattydale Shopping Plaza. The trail runs adjacent to and on the east side of I-81, between the highway and Beartrap Creek. The trail is used by bicyclists, joggers, and walkers.

4.0 IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION

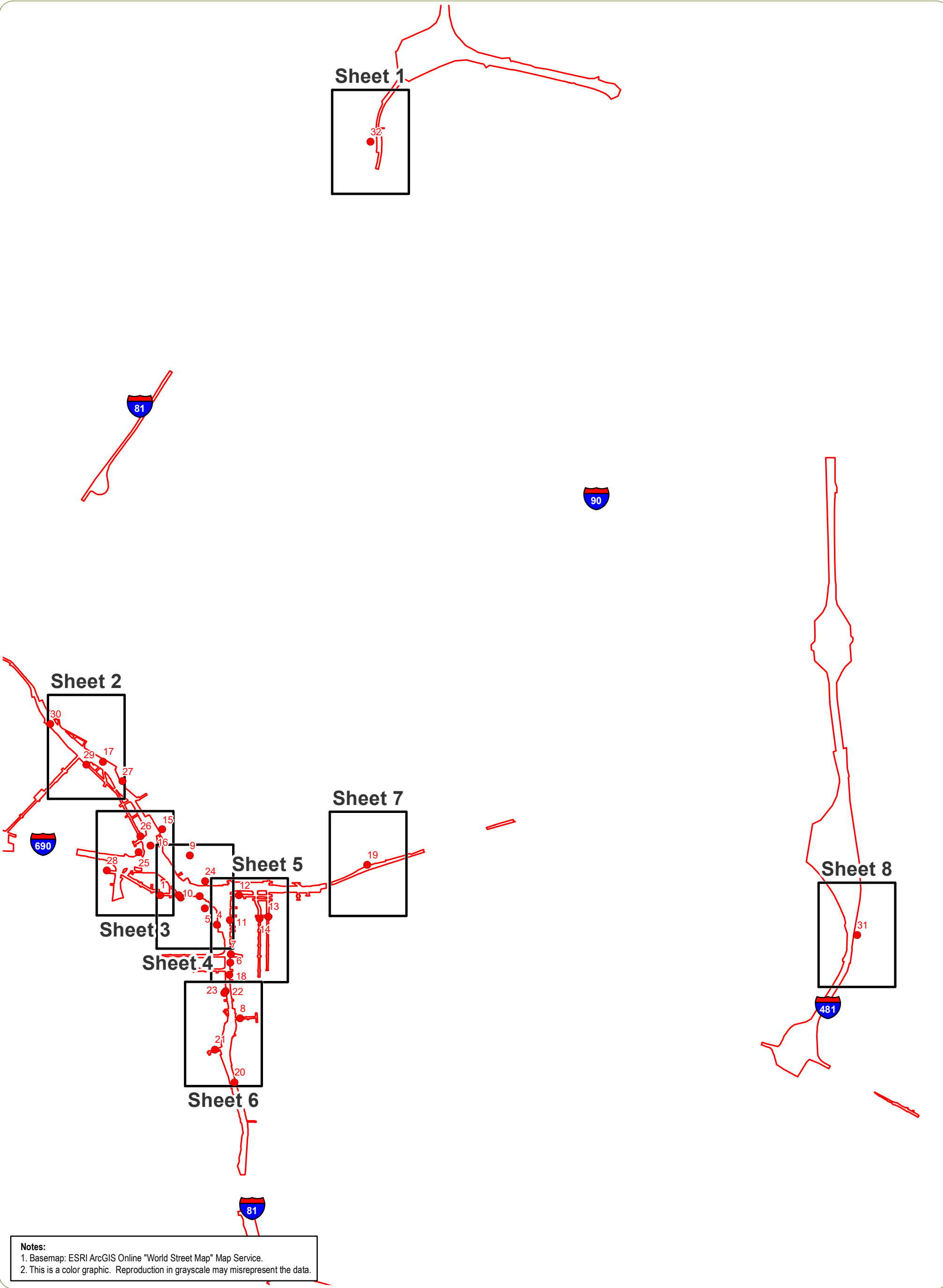
4.1 Visual Impact Analysis Results

Evaluation of visual quality from the 32 key representative viewpoints that were selected for preparation of visual simulations provides a basis for the evaluation of the Project's potential visual effects and the degree of change in visual quality. This impact analysis considers a variety of factors in comparing the No Build and build alternatives, including the potential effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives on the visual environments. The assessment of potential changes in visual character and the visual quality of resources within the AVE includes a determination of impacts upon viewer groups from Project-related changes within a landscape unit as viewed from a specifically selected viewpoint. Photo simulations that illustrate Project design elements proposed under each Build Alternative were created to predict viewer responses to changes in the visual environment at each viewpoint. Viewer groups consist of travelers, neighbors, and subgroups of each, as described in Section 3.2.

As described in Sections 2.6 and 2.7 of this report, 32 representative viewpoints were selected for photo simulation from the 200 viewpoint locations documented during field review (see **Figure 6** and Attachment A: Map 4). As described in Section 2.8, the simulations depict the structural components of the Project, proposed under each alternative, in the accurate location and scale that they would be seen from a potential viewer's field of vision. The simulations include the removal of existing buildings, other structures removal, roadway improvements to affected surface streets, and enhancement of streetscapes. As described in Section 2.8, the photo simulations of the build alternatives are representative of design intent and the preliminary layout of site elements. These elements will be further refined as the design progresses. The final selection of site elements such as lighting, planting, and paving, as well as materials, colors and finishes, will be determined during final design. Trees and plantings are shown in an established and mature state. Photo simulations used in the analysis of potential impacts are provided in Attachment C.

As described in Section 2.8 of this VIA, the impact analysis considers a variety of factors in comparing each Build Alternative to existing conditions. The evaluation of compatibility in visual character considers Project scale, form, color, texture, and materials. In each simulation, an alternative is considered compatible if the environment can absorb the proposed Project and the environment has compatible or similar visual character. The impact analysis also considers the sensitivity of viewer groups to changes in visual quality by anticipating their response to Project alternatives. Viewer sensitivity is determined by considering viewer exposure (proximity, extent, and duration) and awareness (attention, focus, and protection) (FHWA 2015). For instance, viewer sensitivity is considered high if viewer exposure is considered high, if awareness of the changes in visual character is considered prominent, and/or if the viewer would be otherwise perceptive of changes in the visual environment. The potential visual effect of each Build Alternative is evaluated relative to the existing character and quality of the visual environment.

The viewpoint rating sheets that provided the basis for the impact analysis are included in Attachment D. Viewer sensitivity and overall Project compatibility at each selected viewpoint are summarized in Table 4-1.



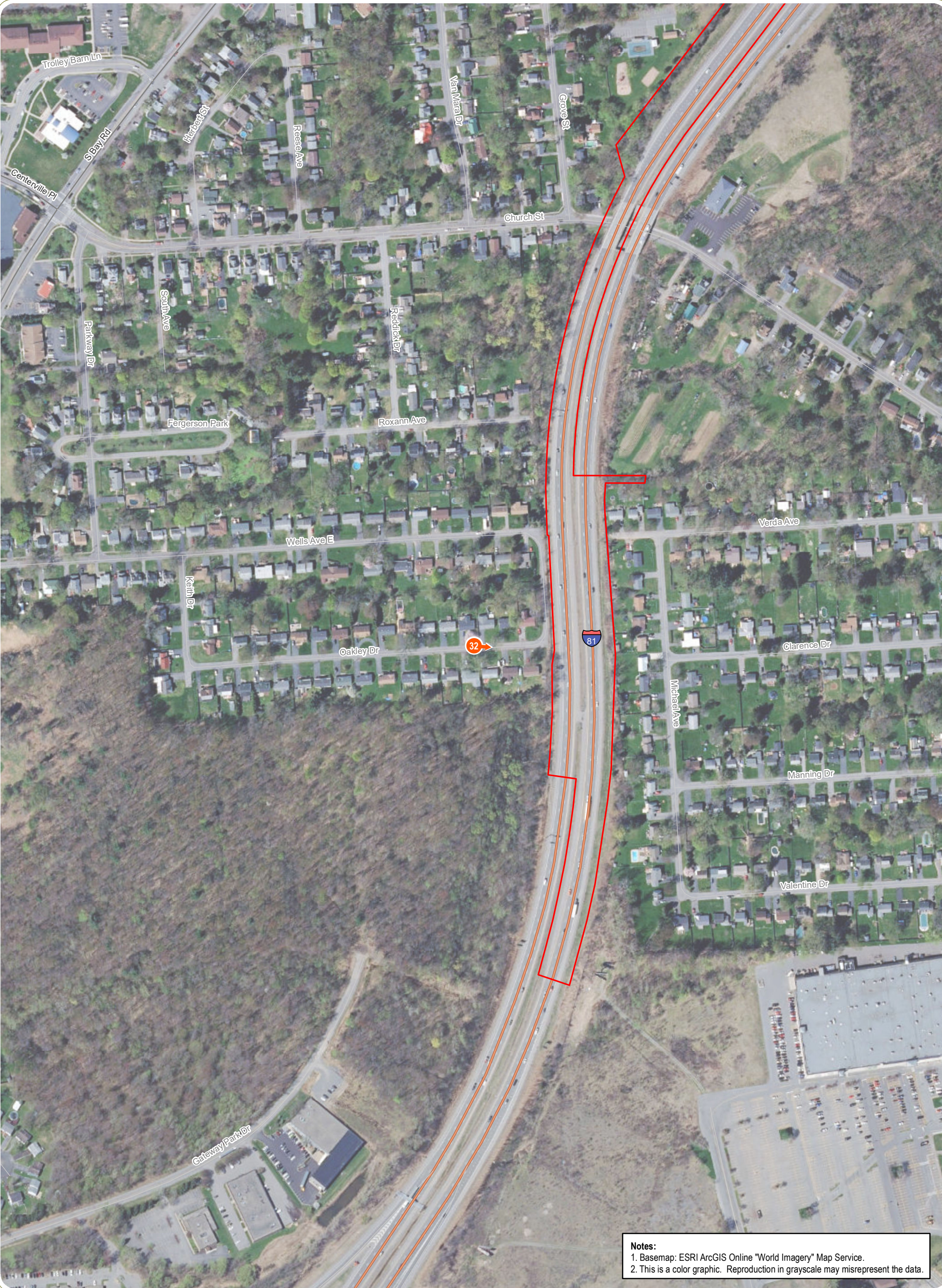
I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet Index

- Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
- Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives

0 1,000 2,000 Feet







Notes:
1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Imagery" Map Service.
2. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.

I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 1 of 8

2021

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives







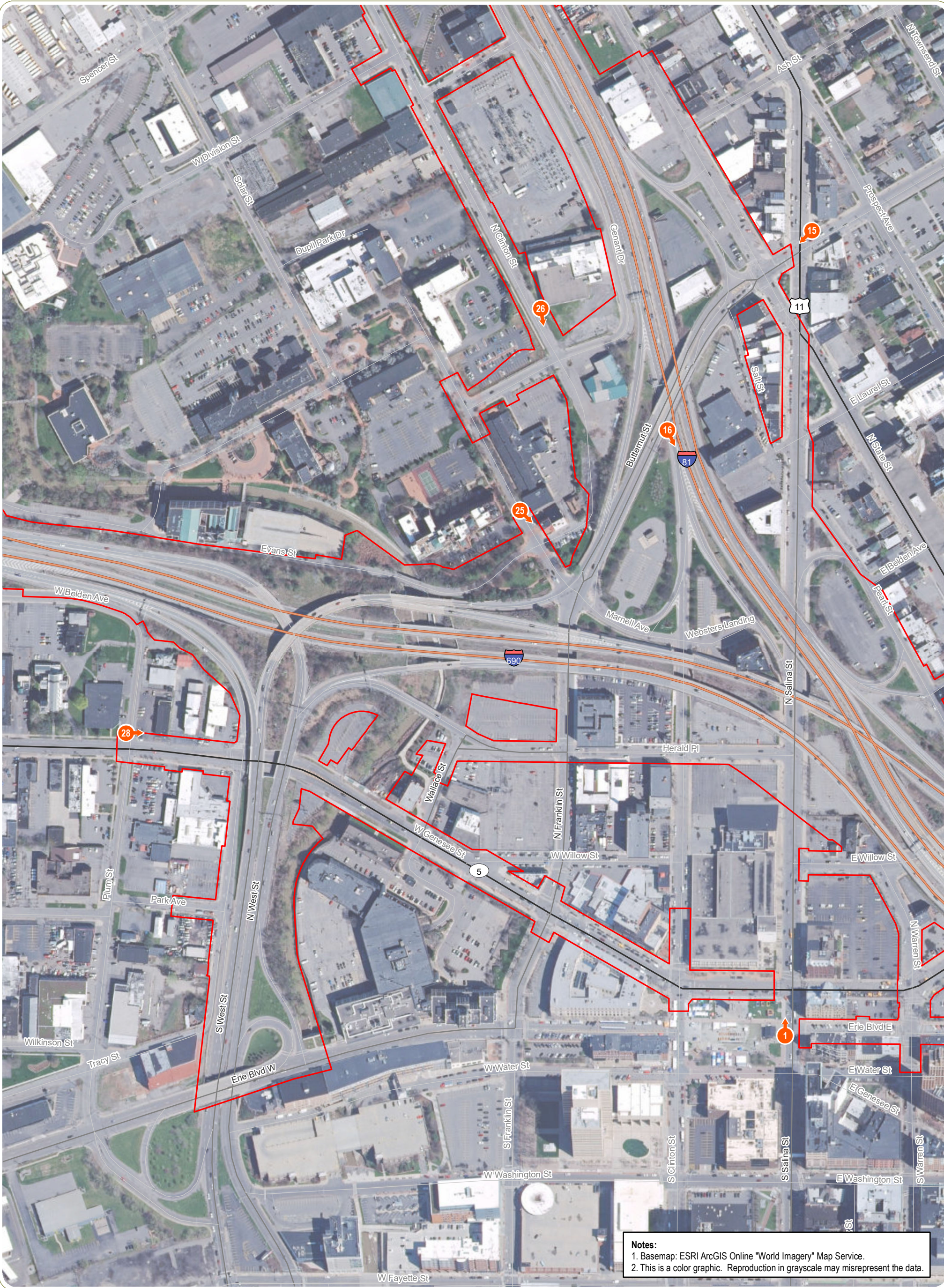
I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 2 of 8

2021

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives







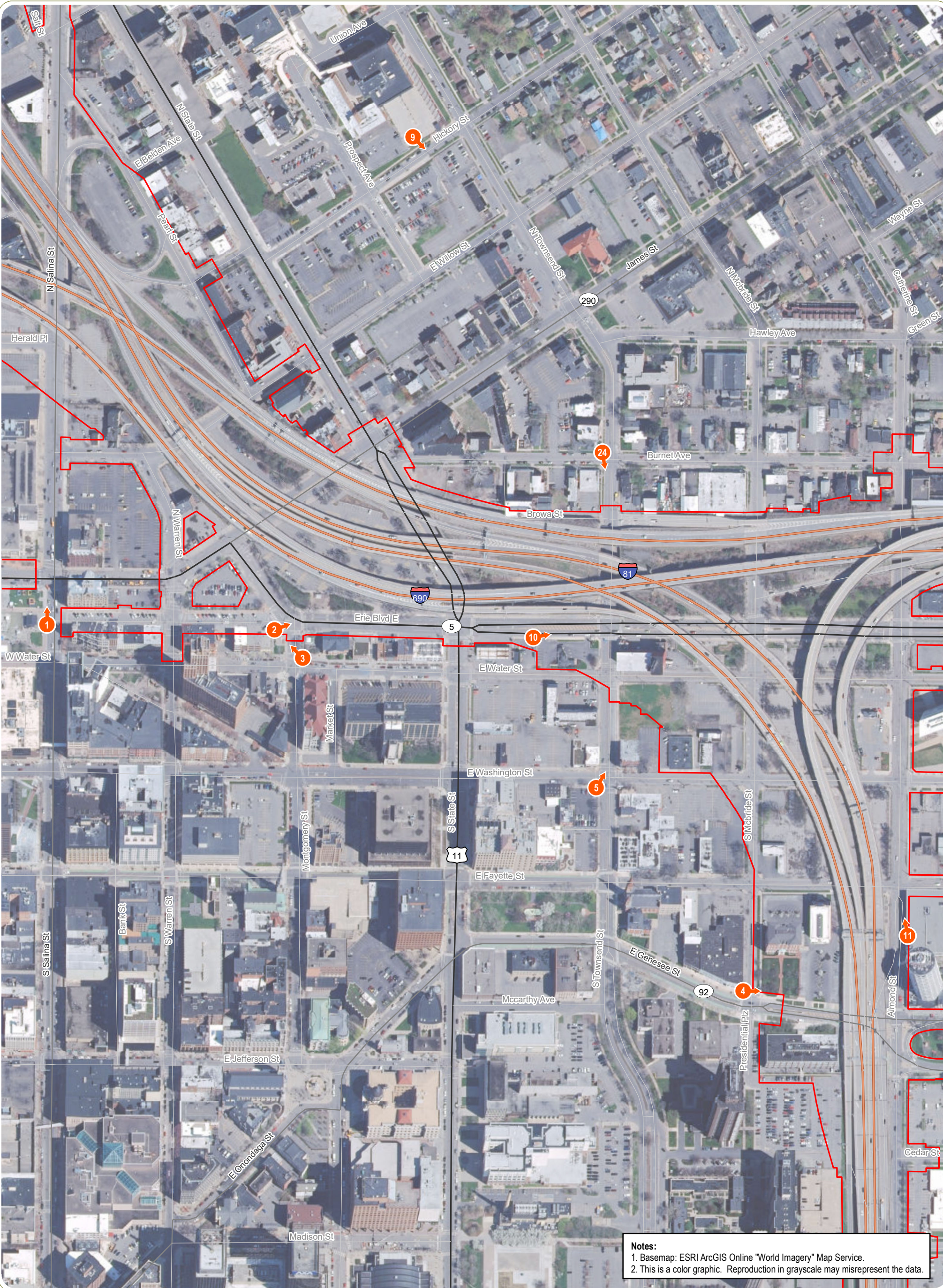
I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 3 of 8

2021

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives






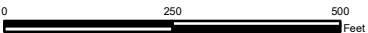




Notes:
1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Imagery" Map Service.
2. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.


I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

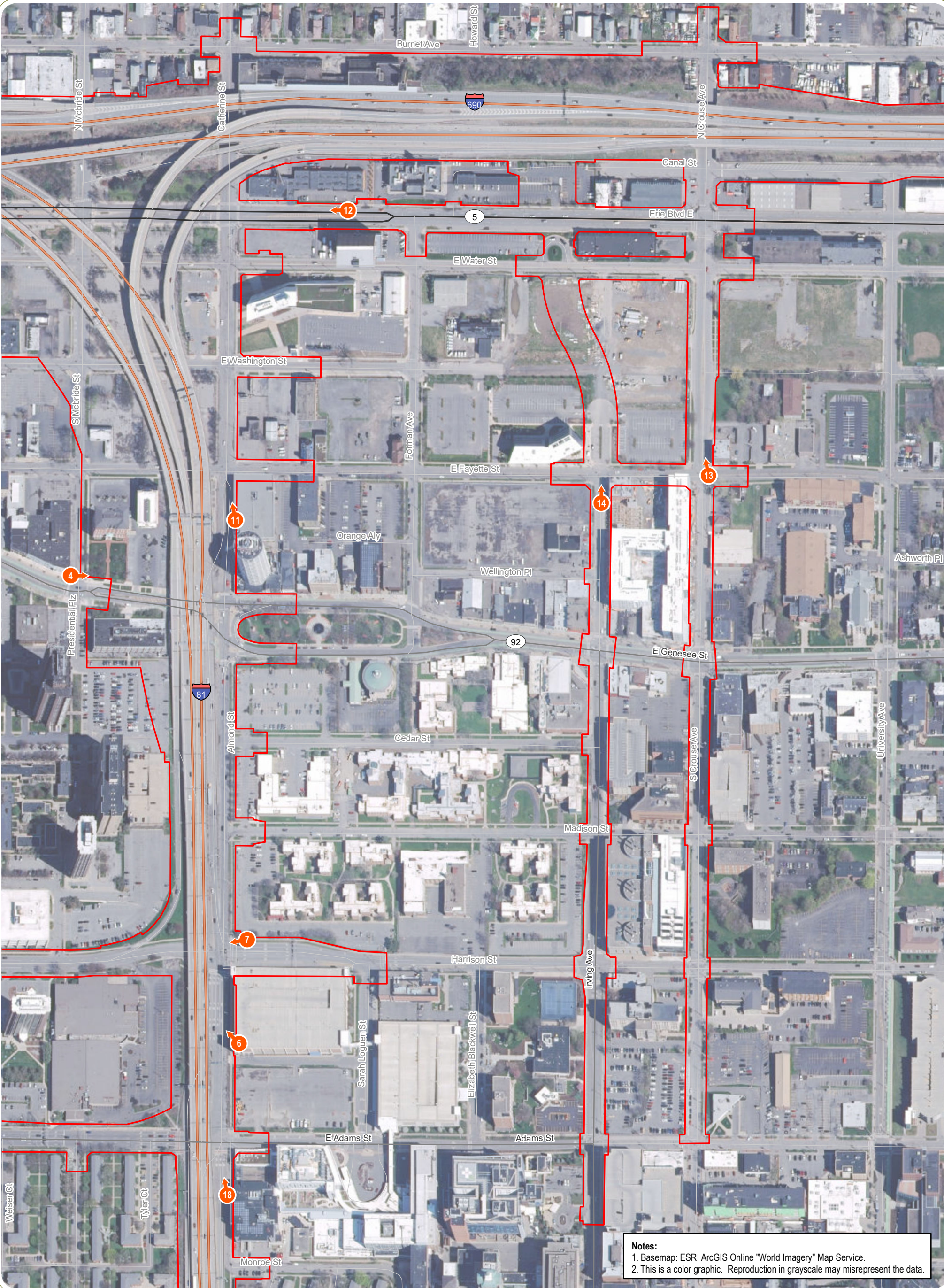
Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 4 of 8

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives











I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 5 of 8

2021

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives






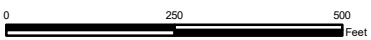




I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York


Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 6 of 8

2020

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives









I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York

Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 7 of 8

2021



Viewpoint Selected for
Simulation



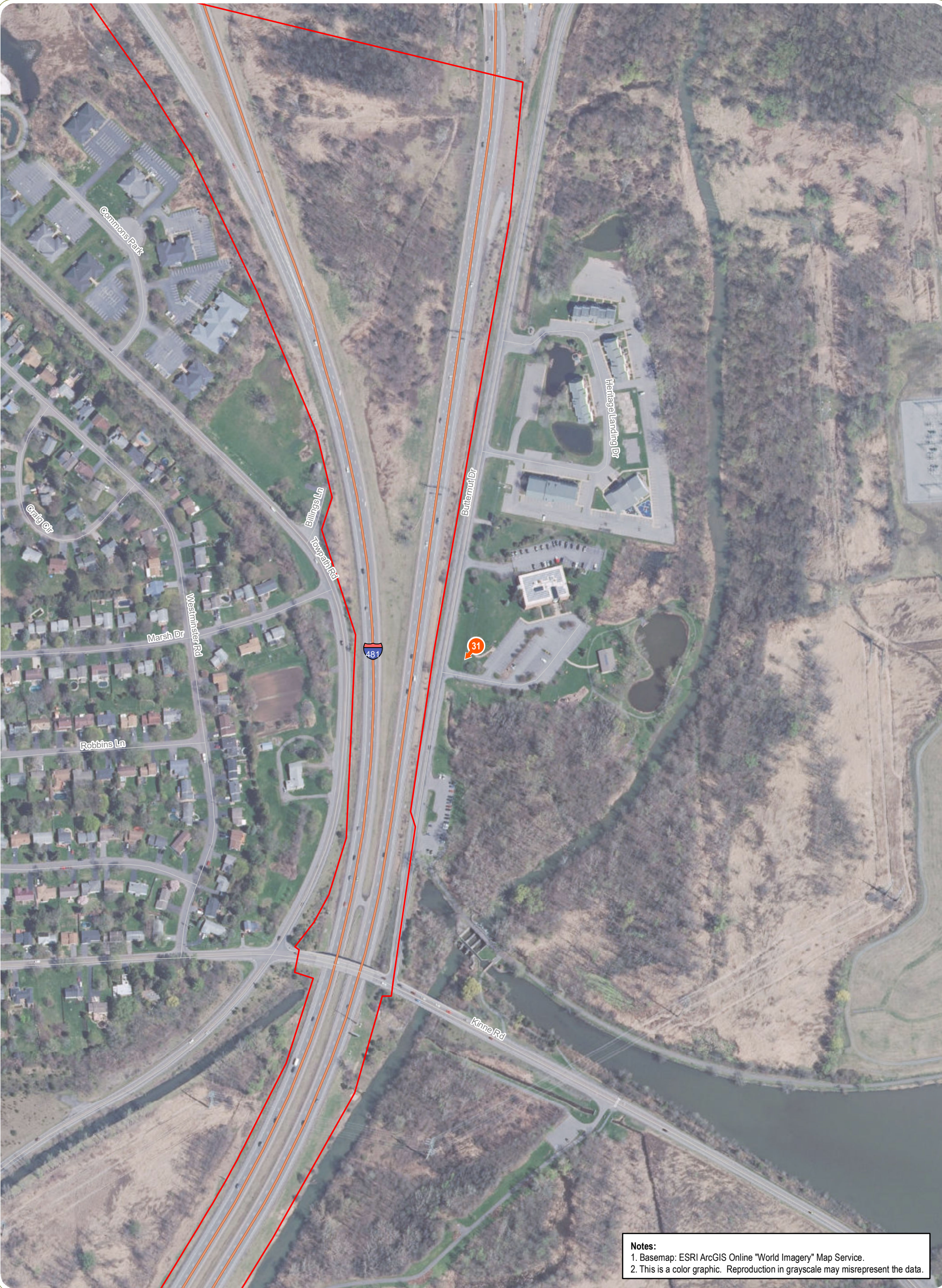
Limits of Disturbance for
All Project Alternatives



**Department of
Transportation**



U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration






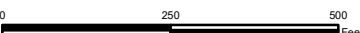
Notes:
1. Basemap: ESRI ArcGIS Online "World Imagery" Map Service.
2. This is a color graphic. Reproduction in grayscale may misrepresent the data.



I-81 Viaduct Project
Onondaga County, New York


Figure 6: Simulation Viewpoints
Sheet 8 of 8

2021

-  Viewpoint Selected for Simulation
-  Limits of Disturbance for All Project Alternatives







As described in Section 2.8, existing visual quality at each selected viewpoint was rated by a panel of Registered Landscape Architects who considered Project vividness, intactness, and unity within a viewer's field of vision based on photographs taken during field reconnaissance. Existing visual quality was assigned a numerical score by the panel, which considered the landscape unit and potentially affected viewer groups for each viewpoint. Visual quality was rated on a scale of 0.1 to 5.0, as listed below:

- 0.1 to 1.0 Low Visual Quality
- 1.1 to 2.0 Moderate Low Visual Quality
- 2.1 to 3.0 Moderate Visual Quality
- 3.1 to 4.0 Moderate High Visual Quality
- 4.1 to 5.0 High Visual Quality

Table 4-1. Summary of Viewer Sensitivity and Project Compatibility for Selected Viewpoints.

Selected Viewpoint	Landscape Unit	Overall Viewer Sensitivity ⁽¹⁾	Overall Project Compatibility ⁽²⁾		
			No Build	Viaduct	Community Grid
1	Urban Downtown Core	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
2	Urban Downtown Core	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
3	Urban Downtown Core	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
4	Urban Downtown Core	High	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
5	Urban Downtown Core	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
6	Urban Institutional Campus	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
7	Urban Institutional Campus	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
8	Urban Institutional Campus	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
9	Urban Institutional Campus	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
10	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
11	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
12	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
13	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Low	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
14	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
15	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
16	Transportation Corridor Highway	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
17	Transportation Corridor Highway	Low	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
18	Transportation Corridor Highway	Moderate	Incompatible	Compatible	Compatible
19	Transportation Corridor Highway	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible

Selected Viewpoint	Landscape Unit	Overall Viewer Sensitivity (1)	Overall Project Compatibility (2)		
			Overall Project Compatibility (2)	Selected Viewpoint	Landscape Unit
20	Transportation Corridor Highway	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
21	Urban Neighborhood Residential	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
22	Urban Neighborhood Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
23	Urban Neighborhood Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
24	Urban Neighborhood Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
25	Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
26	Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
27	Urban Neighborhood Commercial Core	High	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
28	Urban Legacy Industrial	Moderate	Incompatible	Compatible	Compatible
29	Urban Large-Scale Development	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
30	Urban Large-Scale Development	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
31	Suburban Commercial	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
32	Suburban Residential	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
<p>1.) Viewer sensitivity is based on viewer exposure (i.e., proximity, extent, and duration) and viewer awareness of the Project (i.e., attention, focus, protection). Viewer sensitivity is considered high if viewer exposure is considered high, if awareness of the changes in visual character is considered prominent, and/or if the viewer would be otherwise perceptive of changes in the visual environment. Viewpoints with high viewer sensitivity include those within a relatively short distance to the Project, many potential viewers, long duration views, locations from which the Project is a prominent feature or focal point in the view, and/or visually sensitive areas.</p> <p>2.) Compatibility considers Project scale, form, color, and texture/materials. In each simulation, an alternative is considered compatible if the environment can absorb the proposed Project and the environment has compatible or similar visual character.</p>					

Changes in visual quality resulting from the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives were evaluated and assigned scores. These scores were determined by comparing each of the two build alternatives to the No Build Alternative, using photo simulations that illustrate project elements under each alternative. The results of this evaluation are summarized in Table 4-2. The visual quality ratings for each build alternative were compared to the visual quality score for the existing conditions/No Build Alternative in order to determine the degree of potential visual impact for each build alternative. Viewer sensitivity and changes in visual quality help define the degree of project impact as adverse, beneficial, or neutral. In instances where the visual quality score for either build alternative (relative to existing conditions) increased, the degree of impact is noted as minor beneficial or beneficial. In instances where the visual quality score for either build alternative (relative to existing conditions) decreased, the degree of impact is noted as minor adverse or adverse. In instances where there is little or no change (or minor change) in visual quality between existing conditions and either build alternative, the degree of impact is noted as neutral. Impact determination was based on the change in the visual quality score, as listed below.

- 1.0 and over = Adverse Change in Visual Quality
- 0.2 to - 0.9 = Minor Adverse Change in Visual Quality
- 0.1 to + 0.1 = Neutral Change in Visual Quality
- +0.2 to + 0.9 = Minor Beneficial Change in Visual Quality

+1.0 and over = Beneficial Change in Visual Quality

The seven visual quality scores for each view (provided by the seven members of the rating panel) were averaged to provide an overall score for each viewpoint. No individual scores were omitted or otherwise not considered in the analysis. This ensures that the range of variability among the raters was taken into consideration. The evaluations/ratings of visual quality for each view were generally consistent among the scores provided by the rating panel. Copies of the rating evaluation forms completed by the panel are included in Attachment D. The overall visual quality scores and degree of impact for each viewpoint for the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives (relative to existing conditions) are summarized in Table 4-2.

Table 4-2. Visual Impact Summary for Selected Viewpoints

Selected Viewpoint	Visual Quality: Existing/ No Build Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Viaduct Alternative		Community Grid Alternative	
		Visual Quality: Viaduct Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Degree of Impact: Viaduct Alternative (Change in Visual Quality Rating)	Visual Quality: Community Grid Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Degree of Impact: Community Grid Alternative (Change in Visual Quality Rating)
1	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Moderate Low (+1.7)	Neutral (-0.1)	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Neutral (0)
2	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Minor Adverse (-0.8)	Moderate (+2.9)	Minor Beneficial (+0.8)
3	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Minor Adverse (-0.4)	Moderate (+2.3)	Minor Beneficial (+0.7)
4	Moderate (+2.3)	Moderate Low (+1.7)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)	Moderate High (+3.3)	Beneficial (+1.0)
5	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Low (+1.0)	Minor Adverse (-0.4)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Neutral (+0.1)
6	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Neutral (-0.1)	Moderate High (+3.4)	Beneficial (+2.1)
7	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Neutral (+0.1)	Moderate (+2.6)	Beneficial (+1.2)
8	Moderate Low (+1.1)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Minor Beneficial (+0.4)	Moderate (+2.7)	Beneficial (+1.6)
9	Moderate (+2.5)	Moderate (+2.3)	Minor Adverse (-0.2)	Moderate (+2.8)	Minor Beneficial (+0.3)
10	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Neutral (0)	Moderate (+2.5)	Beneficial (+1.2)
11	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Minor Beneficial (+0.4)	Moderate (+3.1)	Beneficial (+1.7)
12	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Moderate Low (+1.1)	Neutral (-0.1)	Moderate (+2.5)	Beneficial (+1.3)
13	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Neutral (0)	Moderate (+2.9)	Beneficial (+1.3)
14	Moderate Low (+1.7)	Moderate Low (+1.7)	Neutral (0)	Moderate (+2.4)	Minor Beneficial (+0.7)
15	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Moderate Low (+1.9)	Minor Beneficial (+0.7)	Moderate Low (+1.9)	Minor Beneficial (+0.7)
16	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Low (+0.7)	Minor Adverse (-0.7)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Neutral (0)

Selected Viewpoint	Visual Quality: Existing/ No Build Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Viaduct Alternative		Community Grid Alternative	
		Visual Quality: Viaduct Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Degree of Impact: Viaduct Alternative (Change in Visual Quality Rating)	Visual Quality: Community Grid Alternative (Visual Quality Rating)	Degree of Impact: Community Grid Alternative (Change in Visual Quality Rating)
17	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Minor Adverse (-0.7)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)
18	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Moderate Low (+1.7)	Minor Beneficial (+0.5)	Moderate (+2.7)	Beneficial (+1.5)
19	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Minor Adverse (-0.2)	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Minor Adverse (-0.2)
20	Moderate (+2.1)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)
21	Moderate (+2.1)	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Neutral (-0.1)	Moderate (+2.7)	Minor Beneficial (+0.6)
22	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Neutral (+0.1)	Moderate (+3.0)	Beneficial (+1.7)
23	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Neutral (0)	Moderate (+2.8)	Beneficial (+1.4)
24	Moderate Low (+1.1)	Moderate Low (+1.2)	Neutral (+0.1)	Moderate Low (+1.5)	Minor Beneficial (+0.5)
25	Moderate (+2.3)	Moderate (+2.1)	Minor Adverse (-0.2)	Moderate (+2.2)	Neutral (-0.1)
26	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Moderate Low (+1.8)	Minor Beneficial (+0.4)	Moderate (+2.2)	Minor Beneficial (+0.8)
27	Moderate (+2.3)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Minor Adverse (-0.9)	Moderate Low (+1.4)	Minor Adverse (-0.9)
28	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Moderate (+2.5)	Beneficial (+1.2)	Moderate (+2.5)	Beneficial (+1.2)
29	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Moderate (+2.6)	Beneficial (+1.3)	Moderate (+2.6)	Beneficial (+1.3)
30	Moderate Low (+1.3)	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Minor Beneficial (+0.4)	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Minor Beneficial (+0.4)
31	Moderate (+2.6)	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)	Moderate Low (+2.0)	Minor Adverse (-0.6)
32	Moderate (+2.4)	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Minor Adverse (-0.8)	Moderate Low (+1.6)	Minor Adverse (-0.8)

4.2 Discussion of Visual Impacts by Landscape Unit and Viewpoint

The potential visual impacts identified for each Build Alternative at each of the 32 selected viewpoints, summarized in Tables 4-2 and 4-3, are discussed below. The descriptions of these viewpoints are organized by landscape unit and include a discussion of the existing conditions and changes to the visual environment (based on evaluation of photographs and simulations) for each landscape unit in which potential visual impacts are anticipated. The photo simulations used in the analysis are included in the following discussion. Larger-scale versions are provided in Attachment C. These visualizations are representative of design intent and the preliminary layout of site elements. These elements will be further refined as the design progresses. The final selection of site elements such as lighting, planting, and paving, as well as materials, colors, and finishes, will be determined during final design. Trees and

plantings are shown in an established and mature state. This enables a better comparison of each Build Alternative to existing conditions under the No Build Alternative.

A discussion of visual quality and potential impacts for each Build Alternative follows in this report. The discussion of impacts is followed by a description of possible measures that could be implemented to mitigate potentially adverse visual impacts (Section 4.4). Mitigation considers avoidance, minimization, compensation, or enhancement in order of priority and preference (FHWA 2015).

4.2.1 Urban Downtown Core

Viewpoints 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Downtown Core Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes the larger scale simulations for Figures 7-11 (Viewpoints 1-5).



Figure 7-a. Viewpoint 1 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Clinton Square - South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East, view to the north.

Viewpoint 1 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 7-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 1 is to the north from the intersection of South Salina Street (U.S. Route 11) and Erie Boulevard East (NYS Route 5), which is at the northeast corner of Clinton Square in Downtown Syracuse. The I-81/I-690 interchange area is a focal point in the view. The view is framed by existing multi-story buildings along both sides of North Salina Street. The linear form and materials of the overpasses contrast with their surroundings, particularly with the color and materials of nearby buildings, but they do not dominate the view. As indicated in Table 4-1, the interstates are compatible with their existing environment. The visual quality in the existing view is moderate low. Viewer groups who are likely to experience this view include commuters, pedestrians, bicyclists, and occupants of nearby buildings including residents and businesses. In addition, this area is used by participants in civic events and celebrations. Clinton Square is a highly used civic space that hosts special events throughout most of the year. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate given that this is an area that receives high public use. Most viewers have relatively short duration views of the interstates in the distance and as they move through this location with their attention focused elsewhere within the vicinity.



Figure 7-b. Viewpoint 1 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Clinton Square - South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East, view to the north.

Viewpoint 1 - Viaduct Alternative

As shown in this visual simulation of the I-81/I-690 interchange area north of Viewpoint 1, the Viaduct Alternative would result in the reconfiguration of elevated segments of connecting ramps between I-81 and I-690. The highest existing ramp, over North Salina Street, which carries eastbound I-690, would be approximately 58 feet above the street, approximately 24 feet higher than it is currently. The larger structures carrying the connector ramps would result in a wider right-of-way and transportation footprint. The overpasses would be located farther south, and thus closer to Clinton Square, than they are today.

The relocation of the overpasses to the south (closer to the viewer) would alter visual character and compatibility, resulting in increased viewer awareness of the scale, form, color, and materials of the transportation infrastructure. As indicated in Table 4-1, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings due to these changes. The highway would be more noticeable in the mid-ground of the view and would contrast more with the existing buildings along North Salina Street. These anticipated changes may be considered more important to some viewer groups (e.g., pedestrians and those attending events at Clinton Square) than to others (e.g., motorists driving by). As summarized in Table 4-2, overall visual quality looking north from this viewpoint would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 7-c. Viewpoint 1 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Clinton Square - South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East, view to the north.

Viewpoint 1 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in the reconfiguration of elevated segments of connecting ramps between BL 81 and I-690. The highest existing ramp, over North Salina Street, which carries eastbound I-690, would be approximately 20 feet higher than it is currently, increasing from approximately 34 feet to about 54 feet above the street. The larger structures carrying the connector ramps would result in a wider right-of-way and transportation footprint. The overpasses would be located farther south, and thus closer to Clinton Square, than they are today.

The relocation of the overpasses to the south (i.e., closer to the viewer) would alter visual character and compatibility, resulting in increased viewer awareness of the scale, form, color, and materials of the transportation infrastructure. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. The highway would be more noticeable in the mid-ground of the view and would contrast more with the existing buildings along North Salina Street. These anticipated changes may be considered more important to some viewer groups (e.g., pedestrians and those attending events at Clinton Square) than to others (e.g., motorists driving by). As summarized in Table 4-2, overall visual quality looking north from this viewpoint would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 8-a. Viewpoint 2 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 2 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 8-a**, Viewpoint 2 captures the existing view along Erie Boulevard East (NYS Route 5) from Montgomery Street near the Erie Canal Museum. This view includes Erie Boulevard lined with commercial businesses on the south side, the I-81 viaduct passing over Erie Boulevard, and I-690 on an elevated berm along the left side of the view. This is an area characterized by hardscape materials (paved streets, sidewalks, and parking lots), roadway signage, lighting, mature deciduous street trees, and the grassed embankments on highway right-of-way along I-690.

Viewer groups are mostly Downtown commuters, pedestrians, building occupants, and patrons of the commercial businesses. Most commuters and pedestrians have frequent, unobstructed, but relatively short duration, views of the viaduct from this location. Building occupants and business patrons in this vicinity may experience longer duration views from north-facing windows and nearby parking areas.

The curvilinear and elevated form of the existing viaduct, in addition to the overhead signage, contrasts with its surroundings and contributes to a moderate low visual quality at this location. Sunlight and shadows tend to highlight the I-81 viaduct at different times of the day, making viewers more attentive to its presence. However, as indicated in Table 4-1, under existing conditions, the viaduct is considered compatible with its surroundings. Viewer sensitivity is rated to be moderate and is heightened due to the proximity to a public interpretive historic site (the Erie Canal Museum).



Figure 8-b. Viewpoint 2 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative
Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 2 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would alter the visual environment and visual quality from this location, due to changes in the viaduct's footprint and location. Under this alternative, the new viaduct would cross over Erie Boulevard west of its present location and closer to the Erie Canal Museum. This alternative would necessitate the removal of buildings on the south side of Erie Boulevard. These buildings contribute to the architectural character of the area. Their removal would reduce the density of the built environment, increasing the Project's incompatibility with its surroundings for affected viewer groups. The removal of buildings would also result in more open views of the viaduct from Erie Boulevard. The removal of mature trees, which provide some screening of the viaduct, would also diminish the overall visual quality in this view. Although the existing trees in this area would be replaced, the screening effect of these trees would be reduced until the trees reached maturity. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. Due to the scale and location of the Project relative to viewers, visual quality would remain moderate low despite the replacement of existing degraded conditions with new materials. The impact to visual quality would be considered minor adverse.



Figure 8-c. Viewpoint 2 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 2 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would substantially change the visual character and visual quality of this area. Removal of the I-81 viaduct along Erie Boulevard would create extended views along the roadway and provide opportunities to enhance streetscaping, particularly on the northern side of Erie Boulevard. I-690 would still parallel Erie Boulevard, but as the street trees mature, they would partially screen the interstate from some locations, such as near the Erie Canal Museum. In addition, the repetition of patterns created by new street trees and light posts would provide a more orderly, cohesive landscape. For these reasons the Project would be visually compatible with its surroundings. The use of new materials for pavements, sidewalks, and crosswalks would improve the appearance of the public right-of-way. Overall, the visual quality of this area would be considered moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 9-a. Viewpoint 3 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

East Water Street at Montgomery Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 3 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 9-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 3 is located along Erie Boulevard East (NYS Route 5) at Montgomery Street, near the Erie Canal Museum looking northwest. Like the area depicted in Viewpoint 2, this area is characterized by hardscape materials (paved streets, sidewalks, and parking lots), roadway signage, and lighting, interrupted only occasionally by scattered street trees. Views to the northwest include the I-81 viaduct and I-690. The existing height of the viaduct is approximately 29 feet above street elevation. Visual quality is rated to be moderate low because there are no visually distinct features in the landscape. Viewer groups are mostly Downtown commuters, pedestrians, building occupants, and patrons of nearby commercial businesses. The viaduct contrasts with and is incompatible with its surroundings. This contrast is softened when the viaduct is cast in shadows and highlighted when it is in sunlight. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate, given the public use of the area and the proximity to a public interpretive historic site (the Erie Canal Museum). It is also considered to be moderate because most commuters and pedestrians have frequent, unobstructed, but relatively short duration views of the viaduct from this location. Building occupants and business patrons in this vicinity facing north may experience longer duration views of the Project.



Figure 9-b. Viewpoint 3 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative
East Water Street at Montgomery Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 3 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would alter views from this location due to changes in the viaduct's footprint and widening of the Project right-of-way. This would necessitate the removal of buildings north of Erie Boulevard near James Street, as shown on the left side of this simulation. The Project's incompatibility with its surroundings would remain the same as under the No Build Alternative, although there would be a slight reduction in distance between the viaduct and the viewer. The removal of buildings (which currently screen more distant views of the viaduct) would also extend views of the Project to the northwest. The increase in scale and mass of the new viaduct and support columns would heighten its contrast with its surroundings, particularly when bright sunlight highlights its vertical and linear form. The height of the viaduct in the center of this view would be approximately 40 feet, an increase of approximately 11 feet from the height of the existing viaduct. The change in visual quality for commuters and pedestrians from this location would remain moderate low. Despite the use of new materials in the viaduct, few improvements would be visible from this viewpoint. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 9-c. Viewpoint 3 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

East Water Street at Montgomery Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 3 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would improve views from this location due to the viaduct's removal. Under this alternative, existing buildings would not be removed and would continue to partially screen views of I-690 to the northwest. The existing I-81 viaduct would be replaced by an off-ramp from the Business Loop 81 (BL 81)/I-690 interchange at Canal Street. Other changes would include modifications to surface streets, enhanced streetscaping, and pedestrian features to the north. Removal of the viaduct would result in increased open space. I-690 would remain visible from this location and continue to contrast with surrounding areas, but it would be screened to some extent by new street trees. The visual quality from this viewpoint would improve from moderate low to moderate as the removal of the viaduct and streetscape improvements would result in a more orderly visual character. The Project would be visually compatible with its surroundings. The impact to visual quality for commuters and pedestrians would be minor beneficial.



Figure 10-a. Viewpoint 4 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 4 - Existing View

Viewpoint 4 is located near East Genesee Street, between South McBride Street and Almond Street. The view in this photograph is directed toward the east and features the I-81 viaduct above East Genesee Street (**Figure 10-a**). The height of the viaduct is approximately 25 feet above the street grade, as seen in the center of the photo. The viaduct contrasts somewhat in form, color, and materials with its surrounding context. These surroundings include the vertical nature of nearby multi-story buildings, particularly the Crowne Plaza Hotel (left side of photo) on East Genesee Street. However, the contrast is muted by the screening effects of vegetation and neighboring buildings, and the viaduct is considered compatible with its surroundings. Overall, this area appears orderly and well maintained, and visual quality is considered moderate. The Connective Corridor's streetscape features appear orderly and in new condition. Viewer groups include pedestrians, bicyclists, building occupants, commuters, transit riders, and others passing through the area, possibly between Downtown, Syracuse University, and University Hill. Viewer sensitivity is considered high due to the extensive public use of this area and the local attention that the community has given to recent streetscape enhancements as part of the Connective Corridor.



Figure 10-b. Viewpoint 4 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 4 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in minor adverse impacts to visual quality due to the required increase in the Project's right-of-way width to accommodate the transportation infrastructure. This increase in scale and width would require removal of the building located on the right side of the existing view (see **Figure 10-a**), which contributes to the area's visual character. Its removal would result in a reduced visual density of the built environment. The height of the viaduct at its highest point in the center of the view would increase by approximately 12 feet to approximately 37 feet above street grade. The increased visibility, greater contrast of form, height, scale, colors, and materials would result in the Project being visually incompatible with its surrounding context. Visual quality would decrease from moderate to moderate low. Affected viewers would include commuters, pedestrians, transit riders, bicyclists, and building occupants. Viewer awareness and exposure would also increase from this viewpoint due to greater attention being drawn to moving traffic along the interstate and the off-ramp, as seen in the foreground of the simulation. Therefore, the impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 10-c. Viewpoint 4 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 4 - Community Grid Alternative

The removal of the I-81 viaduct as part of the Community Grid Alternative would substantially improve views to the east from this viewpoint by removing the visual obstruction of the existing viaduct. This would result in open views of Forman Park across Almond Street, which are at present obscured by the existing viaduct and its shadows. Overall visual quality of the area would improve for all viewer groups including motorists, transit riders, building occupants, bicyclists, and pedestrians. The increase in visibility and longer-distance views along East Genesee Street would result in a greater sense of unity and continuity in the landscape. Greater attention would be focused on existing streetscape features. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually compatible with the surrounding environment. Visual quality would improve from moderate to moderate high. Therefore, the impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 11-a. Viewpoint 5 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)
South Townsend Street at East Washington Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 5 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 11-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 5 along South Townsend Street at East Washington Street includes the I-81 viaduct and I-690 overpasses (at heights of approximately 24 and 47 feet, respectively), north of East Water Street. The elevated interstates are framed by existing buildings along both sides of South Townsend Street, reducing their contrast with surrounding buildings. The architectural character and materials on the exterior of the buildings in the view provide some visual interest that draws viewer attention away from the interstates. The open vacant lot between the existing buildings creates a noticeable gap in the streetscape and along with overhead utility lines results in a moderate low overall visual quality. The existing overpasses contrast in form and materials with nearby buildings and are incompatible with the surrounding environment. Views farther to the north along Townsend Street are blocked by existing highway overpasses. Viewers include Downtown commuters, building occupants, business patrons, and pedestrians. Viewer sensitivity is moderate. The movement of traffic on the interstate attracts viewer attention, resulting in increased viewer awareness of the Project. However, the duration of views is variable and ranges from brief for commuters to longer and more frequent views for building occupants in businesses (with north-facing views).



Figure 11-b. Viewpoint 5 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

South Townsend Street at East Washington Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 5 - Viaduct Alternative

As depicted in **Figure 11-b**, the southward shift in alignment of the Viaduct Alternative in this area would alter visual character relative to the No Build Alternative. Here, the viaduct would be located slightly south of East Water Street, necessitating the removal of one building at the intersection of Erie Boulevard East and South Townsend Street. This change in proximity would increase the viaduct's visual incompatibility with surrounding buildings and areas along South Townsend Street. The height of the viaduct at its highest point over South Townsend Street would be approximately 56 feet, an increase of approximately 9 feet from existing conditions. The removal of the Smith Restaurant Supply building at 500 Erie Boulevard East would extend views of the interstates to the northeast, and the interstates would dominate the views to the north from this location. The introduction of new plantings and other streetscape improvements along Erie Boulevard would help to soften the visual impact of the Project. Several viewer subgroups, including Downtown commuters, pedestrians, and building occupants along South Townsend Street, would have greater awareness of the contrast in scale, form, and materials. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. The existing moderate low visual quality would decline to low quality under the Viaduct Alternative. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 11-c. Viewpoint 5 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
South Townsend Street at East Washington Street, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 5 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would reduce the dense elevated transportation infrastructure in this area. As shown in this simulation, the I-690 overpass would remain north of East Water Street. The overpass would be approximately 28 feet high over North Townsend Street, an increase of approximately 4 feet from existing conditions. Under this alternative, no buildings would be removed along South Townsend Street or Erie Boulevard East. As a result, the overall visual character would improve with removal of the I-81 viaduct. The Project would be visually compatible with its environment. Although some contrast with the I-690 overpass would remain, existing buildings would screen much of the interstate from this location for Downtown commuters, building occupants, and pedestrians. Visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.

4.2.2 Urban Institutional Campus

Viewpoints 6, 7, 8, and 9 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Institutional Campus landscape unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figures 12-15 (Viewpoints 6-9).



Figure 12-a. Viewpoint 6 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Upstate Medical University Parking Garage – Almond Street at Harrison Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 6 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 12-a**, Viewpoint 6 is a representative elevated view of the existing I-81 viaduct and its urban setting looking northwest from the western edge of the University Hill neighborhood (on the SUNY Upstate Medical University campus). This view is representative of views that are available to occupants of the many SUNY medical buildings and other institutional buildings in the neighborhood. Potential viewers include Downtown and University Hill commuters, such as employees, students, and patients at nearby hospitals and medical facilities. The views in this area are dominated by hardscape, including the viaduct, interstate ramps, and surface streets at the intersection of Almond Street and Harrison Street. Views from this location highlight the linear form of the viaduct, but there is not substantial contrast in scale, color, and the hardscape textures in this area. The deep shadows cast by the viaduct, with strong contrasts between alternating areas of light and dark, influence the visual quality. The viaduct is considered visually incompatible with its surroundings. Viewer sensitivity is moderate because of proximity to the interstate. However, due to the elevated location of this view, viewer sensitivity is heightened because of open views of Downtown Syracuse. Therefore, the visual quality is moderate low.

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Figure 12-b. Viewpoint 6 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Upstate Medical University Parking Garage – Almond Street at Harrison Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 6 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would alter the visual character depicted in this viewpoint due to the increased mass and scale of the new viaduct and maintain the incompatibility of the Project with surrounding areas. The new viaduct would increase in width by approximately 28 feet and in height by approximately 14 feet. The effect would increase its visual dominance in foreground and mid-ground views. This alternative would require the removal of several buildings in the mid-ground of the existing view, views of the interstate to the north and northwest. The result would be a reduction to the visual quality of the built environment in Downtown Syracuse for some viewers, especially building occupants. The overall effect of removing these buildings would be moderated to some degree by distance. Surface streets and areas adjacent to the viaduct would experience greater shadowing effects of the viaduct due to its increased scale. The new viaduct would be closer to adjacent buildings and obscure views to ground level in surrounding areas, contributing to its sense of dominance in this view. Despite the replacement of degraded viaduct features with new construction materials, such as new concrete and steel bridge decks and support columns, visual quality would be moderate low, and the adverse changes would be balanced with visually appealing surface street improvements in foreground views. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 12-c. Viewpoint 6 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Upstate Medical University Parking Garage – Almond Street at Harrison Street, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 6 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would substantially alter visual quality with the removal of the viaduct. This alternative would result in a more unified urban landscape, visually connecting areas with the use of similar linear forms, colors, and streetscape materials. There would be a clear visual demarcation between vehicular circulation and pedestrian corridors. The repetition of patterns and the use of vertical elements, such as street trees and light posts, would create greater visual unity and order within the landscape. Surface streets would be visually connected through the use of hardscape textures, natural materials (grassed medians, street trees framing travel lanes), sidewalks, crosswalks, and bike lanes. Viewer awareness and exposure to more distant parts of the City to the north and northwest would be increased with removal of the viaduct, which formerly obstructed those views. The Project would be compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality for building occupants and others would improve from moderate low under existing conditions to moderate high due to greater visual unity. Elements reinforcing greater visual unity include the introduction of compatible natural and hardscape materials that provide colors and character into the urban landscape. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 13-a. Viewpoint 7 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Harrison Street at Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 7 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 13-a**, Viewpoint 7 features the view to the west across and under the I-81 viaduct from the Harrison Street and Almond Street intersection. The height of the viaduct is approximately 25 feet, and its width is approximately 66 feet. Most viewers at this location are commuters traveling to and from the University Hill neighborhood. These commuters include employees, medical patients, and/or students of the neighborhood institutions (local hospitals and Syracuse University). There are also numerous pedestrians, especially around the Upstate Medical University campus, during the daytime. The existing viaduct is a highly visible and spatially dominant part of the environment, and it is visually incompatible with its surroundings. At ground level, the viaduct contrasts with surrounding urban areas due to its elevated and linear form. Viewer sensitivity is high due to the relatively high public use of the area and heightened viewer awareness of the viaduct. The visual character is dominated by the existing viaduct and local thoroughfares. Awareness of the Project is heightened during the day by natural lighting and deep shadows cast by the viaduct. The area lacks any distinguishing characteristics or areas of visual interest, and therefore the visual quality is moderate low.



Figure 13-b. Viewpoint 7 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Harrison Street at Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 7 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in a new, higher viaduct that would be approximately 38 feet high and 90 feet wide at this location. The increase in height is approximately 13 feet and approximately 24 feet in width. These changes in the scale of the viaduct contribute to an increased sense of visual encroachment by the structure at this location and maintain the Project's visual incompatibility with the surrounding area. This alternative would result in some reconfiguration of local streets to improve traffic flow and pedestrian movement along Almond Street and Harrison Street. However, foreground views would be dominated by the viaduct and not these associated improvements. Despite the improvement in the appearance of the viaduct, through use of new construction materials, the overall visual quality for commuters and pedestrians would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 13-c. Viewpoint 7 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Harrison Street at Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 7 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would improve the visual character of the area from this viewpoint. The removal of the viaduct would create visual continuity looking west along Harrison Street. In addition to this, a more focused line-of-sight to the Oncenter conference center and other Downtown venues would be created, as shown in the background of this simulation. The elimination of the viaduct would result in uninterrupted views to the west and create a more unified urban landscape, displaying a balance between vehicle and pedestrian areas with adjacent buildings. Well-defined streetscape treatments would contribute to an improved pedestrian environment. All areas in the view would be naturally lit. The elimination of shadowed areas and the movement of vehicular traffic under the viaduct would result in an improved sense of security for pedestrians. From this viewpoint, this alternative would be compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate for Downtown and University Hill commuters, transit riders, pedestrians, and bicyclists passing through this area. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 14-a. Viewpoint 8 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Van Buren Street at Henry Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 8 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 14-a**, Viewpoint 8 is located near the northwest corner of the Syracuse University campus at the intersection of Van Buren Street and Henry Street, just east of the I-81 viaduct in the University Hill neighborhood. This viewpoint, framed by multi-story residential (student housing) structures, is looking to the west towards the I-81 viaduct, Renwick Avenue, an existing Syracuse Housing Authority (SHA) storage facility and parking area, and the New York Susquehanna and Western Railway (NYS&W) overpass, which contribute to the utilitarian character of the view. This is an area where transportation corridors merge and cross, creating a complex and relatively chaotic visual environment lacking any sense of unity or focus. The transportation infrastructure is visually incompatible with its surroundings. Nearby land uses are mixed with institutional, municipal, transportation and residential uses. Viewer groups are mostly commuting motorists and pedestrians. The viewers include commuters, students, residents, and others in the nearby neighborhoods. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate, but views are of short duration as people generally move through this area. Visual quality is moderate low because there are no visually distinguishing characteristics in this view.



Figure 14-b. Viewpoint 8 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Van Buren Street at Henry Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 8 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would reorganize the surface streets at this location. A partial interchange would be built just south of this viewpoint. This partial interchange would direct additional traffic destined for the south end of the University Hill neighborhood to this area. The design modifications would provide opportunities to incorporate streetscaping and pedestrian amenities within the public right-of-way. New street trees, sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and a shared-use path would substantially enhance the pedestrian and bicyclist environment and improve visual quality in this area. Viewers will have views of the reconstructed viaduct, shared-use bike path, and new plantings. Viewer groups would be mainly pedestrians, bicyclists and the commuting motorist. Viewers would continue to include commuters, students, residents, and others in the nearby neighborhoods who may be passing through this area. The realignment of streets and sidewalks, combined with patterns created by the introduction of street trees, lighting, and other vertical elements, would enhance overall visual quality. The Project is not visually compatible with its surroundings and the visual quality is moderate low. However, the existing SHA storage garage site would be removed, which would contribute to improved visual quality. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 14-c. Viewpoint 8 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Van Buren Street at Henry Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 8 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in the viaduct's removal, the realignment/modification of surface streets including a traffic circle and Van Buren and Renwick Avenue and a reconstructed NYS&W railroad bridge. Additional commuter traffic destined for the University Hill neighborhood, Downtown, or other areas would also travel through this area. The alternative would include streetscaping with new street trees. New pedestrian features would include sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting, and a shared-use bike path. The storage shed, garage, and dumpsters in the foreground of the existing view are removed, which opens views of the grassed embankments of the existing railroad tracks that parallel this portion of the Project. A more formal and intentional visual environment would be created by enhanced streetscaping, balancing hardscapes, and natural vegetation, softening the appearance of this area. Viewer groups would be mainly pedestrians, bicyclists and the commuting motorist. Viewers, including nearby residents, students, and commuters (to and from the University Hill neighborhood), would experience a more visually pleasing environment with compatible roadway and streetscape treatments within the public right-of-way. Visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 15-a. Viewpoint 9 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage – at Hickory Street between Prospect Street and North Townsend Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 9 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 15-a**, this view from St. Joseph's Hospital Health Center in the Prospect Hill neighborhood is representative of elevated views available to residents and employees in nearby tall buildings and within the elevated Northside neighborhood. The view is to the southeast towards the Syracuse University campus and the University Hill neighborhood, which are visible near the southern horizon in this photo. Mid-ground views of the I-81 viaduct show the contrast between the linear form of the interstate and the vertical form of multi-story buildings in surrounding areas. The viaduct is visually incompatible with its surroundings. As seen from this vantage point, I-81 is elevated above tree tops and only partially screened by a mix of intervening vegetation and buildings. The viaduct, at times, is cast in its own shadows when backlit by the sun, which softens its appearance in some locations. Viewer groups include institutional building occupants, commuters, and residents in the Prospect Hill neighborhood. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate. Some viewers from this location may have more frequent and relatively long duration views of the I-81 viaduct, particularly from elevated portions of nearby buildings. The extended views of the City and the architectural features of buildings in the foreground and mid-ground contribute to moderate visual quality from this viewpoint.



Figure 15-b. Viewpoint 9 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage – at Hickory Street between Prospect Street and North Townsend Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 9 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in changes to the visual quality of views overlooking the City from this viewpoint. Visual quality would be altered primarily due to an increase in the elevations of I-81, I-690, and their connector ramps through this area. Visual quality for affected viewer groups (building occupants, commuters, residents) would be altered by the removal of buildings that contribute to the architectural character of the area, the reduced density of the built environment, and the elimination of some existing screening provided by buildings and/or vegetation. Although these changes would not dramatically alter views from this location, the linear form of the viaduct within the context of its vertical surroundings would be slightly more visible and would remain visually incompatible. Visibility and viewer awareness of the Project may be heightened because of the removal of vegetation and buildings that currently screen the viaduct. However, even though the viaduct cuts a linear pathway through this scene it does not dominate this view. The overall effect of removing these buildings is moderated to some degree by distance. Visual quality would remain moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 15-c. Viewpoint 9 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage – at Hickory Street between Prospect Street and North Townsend Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 9 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in the removal of the I-81 viaduct from the landscape and the reconstruction of I-690, which is seen in the mid-ground in this simulation. Surface streets including Almond Street would not be highly visible or dominate views from this viewpoint due to the screening effects of intervening vegetation, topography, and existing buildings. Viewers (building occupants, commuters, residents) may respond in different ways to these changes because, although the viaduct is no longer in the view, areas of open space could be perceived as gaps and voids in the urban fabric of this portion of the City. However, this alternative would be visually compatible with its surroundings. Viewer awareness of the Project would also decrease at this distance. Therefore, visual quality would not change appreciably from this location and remain moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.

4.2.3 Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial

Viewpoints 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Transportation Corridor – Commercial Arterial Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figures 16-21 (Viewpoints 10-15).



Figure 16-a. Viewpoint 10 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Erie Boulevard East between South State Street and South Townsend Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 10 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 16-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 10 is located along Erie Boulevard East (NYS Route 5) between South State Street and South Townsend Street. The view includes the wide corridor of Erie Boulevard. This area is flanked by commercial businesses on the south side of the road, the I-81 viaduct, and I-690 along the north side. Along I-81 and I-690, the area is characterized by hardscape pavements (streets, sidewalks, and paved parking lots), roadway signage, lighting, scattered street trees, and grassed embankments located within the public right-of-way. Viewer groups are primarily Downtown commuters, including those entering and exiting I-690 at Townsend Street. Viewers also include pedestrians and building occupants of nearby commercial businesses. The curvilinear form and materials of the viaduct contrast with its immediate surroundings, and is considered incompatible with its visual environment. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate. Visual quality is considered moderate low due to a general lack of visually stimulating features along this transportation corridor.



Figure 16-b. Viewpoint 10 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Erie Boulevard between South State Street and South Townsend Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 10 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would alter the view from Viewpoint 10 due to changes in the Project footprint. This footprint would place the I-81 viaduct farther to the west of its present location as it passes over Erie Boulevard at an increased height of approximately 29 feet, which is slightly higher than the existing height of approximately 26 feet. The southbound overpass would cross over Erie Boulevard closer to the viewer in the foreground view of this simulation. Viaduct support columns would partially block the views of motorists and pedestrians using Erie Boulevard. The viaduct would also create alternating areas of daylight and shadow that would affect motorists and pedestrians moving through this area. These characteristics of the alternative would result in heightened viewer awareness of the viaduct and contribute to moderate low visual quality. The Project would continue to be visually incompatible with its surroundings. This alternative would necessitate the acquisition and removal of one building on the south side of Erie Boulevard. The removal of the Smith Restaurant Supply building at 500 Erie Boulevard East would reduce the density of the built environment and result in greater visibility of the viaduct from this viewpoint. The proposed removal of buildings would create gaps in the street wall along Erie Boulevard. Downtown commuters and building occupants may become more sensitive to these views because of the increase in viaduct visibility. Aspects of the Viaduct Alternative that would improve visual quality in this view include new materials and design elements that would replace existing degraded infrastructure. These improvements would offset the adverse impacts on the view from the location. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 16-c. Viewpoint 10 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Erie Boulevard between South State Street and South Townsend Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 10 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would alter visual character from Viewpoint 10. Removal of the I-81 viaduct would result in more open views along Erie Boulevard for commuters, pedestrians, and other travelers. Removal of the viaduct would create opportunities to enhance streetscaping and pedestrian amenities within the right-of-way of Erie Boulevard. Therefore, the alternative at this viewpoint would be compatible with surrounding areas. The installation of new street trees and grassed areas would decrease the visual dominance of hardscape materials. This alternative would result in more open views and increased viewer awareness of I-690. Commuters and pedestrians along Erie Boulevard would experience extended views to the east with more of a focused line-of-sight along Erie Boulevard towards the eastern horizon. The impact to visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate and be beneficial.



Figure 17-a. Viewpoint 11 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Crowne Plaza Parking Garage – Almond Street at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 11 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 17-a**, the existing view looks north along Almond Street, just south of the intersection of East Fayette Street. This view includes the elevated segments of the northbound I-81 ramp leading to eastbound I-690 and the westbound I-690 ramp leading to southbound I-81. This view is from the roof of a parking garage located adjacent to the Crowne Plaza Hotel near the Center of Excellence (visible at the right side of the photo). The view is representative of views from elevated vantage points available to occupants of tall buildings in this area. This area is characterized by hardscape pavements (streets, sidewalks, and parking lots), roadway signage, and lighting. Mature deciduous trees are present just east of I-81, as are lawn areas on the landscaped grounds of nearby buildings, including the Center of Excellence. The existing infrastructure is considered compatible with its visual setting. Viewer groups include occupants of nearby tall buildings (Crowne Plaza Hotel and Center of Excellence). These viewers may have frequent and long duration views of the viaduct from this area. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate. The linear form and color of the viaduct's connecting ramps contrast with immediate surroundings such as the vertical forms along the horizon created by buildings near the Hawley Green neighborhood. Visual quality is moderate low.



Figure 17-b. Viewpoint 11 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Crowne Plaza Parking Garage – Almond Street at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 11 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would include the replacement of connecting ramps between I-81 and I-690 with new ramps that would be approximately 63 feet tall, an increase of approximately 12 feet from existing heights. Construction of the Viaduct Alternative, including these new connecting ramps, would require the removal of buildings and vegetation in the foreground of the existing view, resulting in the creation of new areas of open space adjacent to the viaduct. The removal of buildings would eliminate typical built forms and materials that contribute to the density of the urban landscape. Other design elements of this alternative would enhance traffic and pedestrian movement along Almond Street and intersecting streets. These improvements would include reconfigured travel lanes, sidewalks, curb bump-outs, bike infrastructure, streetscaping enhancements, street trees, and lighting. The footprint and configuration of the viaduct, including the connecting ramps as seen from this viewpoint, would become a more dominant part of the visual environment. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. The new ramps would continue to be a visual obstruction to views of neighborhoods to the north. Visual quality would remain moderate low because views of associated streetscape improvements would be offset by increased views of the viaduct. There would be both beneficial and adverse changes to the visual character of this area depending on the focus of a viewer's (building occupant's) attention and interest. Attention may be focused to changes in foreground views and new materials used to construct the viaduct (replacing existing degraded materials). The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 17-c. Viewpoint 11 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Crowne Plaza Parking Garage – Almond Street at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 11 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in the removal of the existing I-81 viaduct and some connecting ramps to I-690 from this viewpoint. The elimination of the viaduct and some of the ramps would substantially improve the visual character of the area by opening background views to neighborhoods along the northern horizon. Although I-690 would remain in place, the highway would become a much less dominant part of the landscape. The grassed embankments of I-690 would provide visual continuity across the mid-ground of the view. Features contributing to improved visual character of the area include reconfigured travel lanes along Almond Street and intersecting streets, new vegetated medians separating northbound and southbound traffic on Almond Street, and new streetscaping enhancements (sidewalks, crosswalks, bike infrastructure, and other pedestrian amenities). These amenities would enhance the pedestrian visual experience by adding human scale elements into the landscape. Viewers, including building occupants, would experience these changes from ground level and from elevated views in nearby buildings. The repetition of street trees and other vertical elements would help unify foreground with mid-ground and background views to the north. The Project would be visually compatible with its visual environment and visual quality would improve from moderate low under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions to moderate under the Community Grid Alternative. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 18-a. Viewpoint 12 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 12 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 18-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 12 is looking west along Erie Boulevard East (NYS Route 5) between Forman Avenue and Almond Street. This viewpoint includes segments of the elevated connector ramps between I-81 and I-690 that pass over Erie Boulevard at heights of approximately 24 feet and 50 feet. The mainline I-81 viaduct is slightly farther to the west of these ramps (and farther from the viewer). Viewers include Downtown commuters, building occupants, some pedestrians, and patrons of commercial businesses along Erie Boulevard. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate, given that most commuters and pedestrians have relatively short duration views of the interstates. However, building occupants facing west experience more prolonged views. This area is characterized by hardscape pavements (streets, sidewalks, and parking lots), roadway signage, utilities, and lighting interspersed with some vegetation. The transportation infrastructure is considered compatible with its visual setting. Visual quality is considered moderate low and typical for this commercial transportation corridor.



Figure 18-b. Viewpoint 12 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 12 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in exposing additional views of the connecting ramps between I-81 and I-690. More structural details, such as the tall concrete support columns, would be added. Compared with existing conditions, the viaduct and ramps would be more visible from this location due to their increased elevations and the increased contrast between horizontal and vertical structures. The increase in height would be approximately 14 feet (from 24 feet to approximately 38 feet) and approximately 8 feet (from 50 to 58 feet). The viaduct's footprint at this location would be enlarged, requiring the removal of vegetation and some buildings on the south side (left of center) of Erie Boulevard. As a result of these changes, awareness of the viaduct would increase from this viewpoint for viewers such as commuters, business patrons, pedestrians, and building occupants. In addition, the removal of certain buildings would reduce the density of the built environment. However, the overall effect on views from this location of removing these buildings would be moderated to some degree by distance. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would remain moderate low from this viewpoint. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 18-c. Viewpoint 12 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street, view to the west.

Viewpoint 12 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in the removal of the I-81 viaduct and its connecting ramps to and from I-690, resulting in open views along Erie Boulevard and more open views of portions of the Downtown skyline. The density and character of architecture in the urban landscape would remain intact. The increased visibility of Downtown buildings and repetition of pattern created by new street trees, without visual conflict from overhead highway elements, would result in a greater sense of unity and order. This alternative would be visually compatible with surrounding areas. Motorists and pedestrians would experience extended views to the west, resulting in greater visual continuity along Erie Boulevard. Visual quality would improve under this alternative from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 19-a. Viewpoint 13 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

South Crouse Avenue at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 13 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 19-a**, Viewpoint 13 is located at East Fayette Street and South Crouse Avenue east of the Urban Downtown Core. The existing view looking north includes the I-690 overpass, running perpendicularly to South Crouse Avenue north of Erie Boulevard East, as seen from this location. This view is typical for this corridor, which intersects with several cross streets including Erie Boulevard East, East Washington Street, and East Water Street. Viewer subgroups include commuters who use Crouse Avenue to and from the University Hill neighborhood, occasional pedestrians, and nearby commercial building occupants. Viewer sensitivity from this location is considered low. Visual quality is moderate low due to the absence of any visual focal points or distinguishing features and the older appearance of this transportation corridor. South Crouse Ave and the I-690 overpass is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 19-b. Viewpoint 13 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative
South Crouse Avenue at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 13 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would have little effect on visual conditions along South Crouse Avenue from Viewpoint 13. Views to the I-690 overpass as seen in the background would generally remain the same. The portion of South Crouse Avenue in the immediate foreground of this view would remain similar to existing conditions under this alternative. However, the areas farther north along South Crouse Avenue, near the overpass seen in the distance, would be restriped and maintained as a two-way street. Project compatibility and viewer awareness of the Project for commuters, pedestrians, and building occupants from this location would not change. Due to the lack of changes to be seen from this viewpoint, visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 19-c. Viewpoint 13 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
South Crouse Avenue at East Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 13 - Community Grid Alternative

Improvements including additional travel lanes along South Crouse Avenue are proposed under the Community Grid Alternative. The avenue would have two northbound and two southbound travel lanes. Streetscaping enhancements in the northern section of South Crouse Avenue would include new street trees, sidewalks, and crosswalks. Commuters, pedestrians, building occupants, and others familiar with this portion of the street would be aware of these corridor improvements. The repetition of patterns created by new street trees would soften the overall appearance of the area, and the Project would be compatible with surrounding areas. Visual quality would improve from moderate low under existing conditions to moderate under the Community Grid Alternative. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 20-a. Viewpoint 14 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Irving Avenue at Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 14 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 20-a**, Viewpoint 14 is located on Irving Avenue at Fayette Street near Wellington Place, approximately three blocks east of the I-81 viaduct and three blocks south of I-690. This view is looking to the north and includes a building located on the north side of East Water Street seen in the middle ground of the photograph. This viewpoint was selected to show an element of the Community Grid Alternative that would extend Irving Avenue from its current terminus at East Fayette Street (shown in the foreground view in the above photo) northward to connect to East Water Street and Erie Boulevard. Viewers include Downtown and University Hill commuters, pedestrians, building occupants, and others who may be passing through this area. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate. Visual quality is moderate low. Irving Avenue and the existing buildings are considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 20-b. Viewpoint 14 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Irving Avenue at Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 14 - Viaduct Alternative

Under the Viaduct Alternative no changes are anticipated to Irving Avenue as seen from this viewpoint. Therefore, there would be no alteration of existing views from this location and visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral. The Project would continue to be compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 20-c. Viewpoint 14 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Irving Avenue at Fayette Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 14 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would include the extension of Irving Avenue northward to connect with East Water Street, Erie Boulevard, and the new I-690 on- and offramps. This alternative includes new northbound/southbound travel lanes with adjacent streetscaping enhancements like new street trees and lighting. These changes would alter the visual character of the area by introducing additional vehicular traffic. These changes would be compatible with the context of the surrounding environment. Commuters, pedestrians, and commercial building occupants would have increased exposure to these changes. The introduction of new streetscaping would improve visual quality from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 21-a. Viewpoint 15 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Butternut Street at North Salina Street, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 15 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 21-a**, this viewpoint provides an open view across the intersection of North Salina Street and Butternut Street looking southwest towards I-81. This view to I-81 is obscured by existing buildings and vegetation. The visual character of this area is typical for a commercial arterial. The view includes some visual clutter created by overhead utilities, roadside signage, and advertising. Viewer groups include commuters, transit riders, pedestrians, and local business patrons. Viewer sensitivity is moderate and existing visual quality is moderate low. The intersection is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 21-b. Viewpoint 15 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Butternut Street at North Salina Street, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 15 - Viaduct Alternative

Project changes under the Viaduct Alternative would include a realignment of Butternut Street west of North Salina Street, including the portion of Butternut Street that crosses over I-81 on an elevated bridge. The alternative would include new pedestrian sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, and other amenities such as improved landscaping within the right-of-way. Opportunities may exist to reduce some visual clutter within the public right-of-way by installation of new roadside signage, traffic control devices, utilities, and other streetscape improvements. These improvements would result in a more orderly landscape and focus attention to distinguishing features, such as the water tower and other built elements in the Franklin Square neighborhood. There also would be improved roadway and streetscape conditions. With the removal of the northbound I-81 on-ramps at this location, commuter traffic seeking interstate access would be reduced. The improvements under this alternative would be visually compatible with surrounding areas. However, visual quality for commuters, transit riders, pedestrians, and local business patrons would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 21-c. Viewpoint 15 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Butternut Street at North Salina Street, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 15 - Community Grid Alternative

This alternative would include a realignment of Butternut Street oriented slightly south of the location of the existing alignment. This view includes the elevated bridge at a height of approximately 29 feet over BL 81 and more distant views to the Franklin Square neighborhood in the background. This alternative also would include new pedestrian sidewalks, dedicated bike lanes, and other amenities, such as improved landscaping within the right-of-way. There are opportunities to reduce existing visual clutter within the public right-of-way using installation of new traffic control devices and signage. There also would be improved roadway and streetscape conditions. With the removal of the existing northbound BL 81 on-ramps at this location, commuter traffic seeking interstate access would be reduced. The improvements under this alternative would be visually compatible with surrounding areas. However, visual quality for commuters, transit riders, pedestrians, and local business patrons would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.

4.2.4 Transportation Corridor – Highway

Viewpoints 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Transportation Corridor – Highway landscape unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figures 22-26 (Viewpoints 16-20).



Figure 22-a. Viewpoint 16 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Butternut Street Bridge over I-81, view to the south.

Viewpoint 16 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 22-a**, Viewpoint 16 is looking south towards Downtown Syracuse, along I-81 southbound from the Butternut Street bridge. This view represents pedestrian and commuter (motorist and transit riders) views from the Butternut Street overpass. Although this view is from an elevated vantage point, it also illustrates the visual setting experienced by travelers (including commuters, tourists and shippers) on I-81. This viewpoint is near the Clinton Street and Salina Street off-ramps and provides an open view to portions of the Downtown skyline. Views from the overpass are frequent, but of relatively short duration. Viewer awareness is focused on the roadway flanked by the different building forms and styles that comprise the urban landscape. Land use and existing vegetation alongside the interstate corridor have adapted to the highway's presence and contribute to some degree of visual compatibility. This section of I-81 essentially functions as a visual gateway for interstate travelers entering Downtown Syracuse. Viewer sensitivity is moderate and visual quality is moderate low. The transportation infrastructure is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 22-b. Viewpoint 16 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Butternut Street Bridge over I-81, view to the south.

Viewpoint 16 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would require a wider right-of-way to accommodate the elevated flyover ramps connecting I-81 and I-690. The flyover ramps are above the northbound I-81 mainline (left of center) and southbound (right of center) through lanes as depicted in this simulation. The highest point in the interchange would occur on the eastbound I-690 to northbound I-81 ramp, which is at approximate elevation of 469 feet amsl, between North Franklin Street and Clinton Street where it crosses over reconstructed I-690. The new ramp would be approximately 44 feet above the existing westbound I-690 bridge over Clinton Street. The approximate height of the flyover ramp as shown in the simulation would range between 30 feet above the future elevation of the I-81 mainline (left side of the simulation) to about 42 feet (right side of the simulation). These heights are above the future mainline of the interstate and do not account for total elevations above surface streets, which would be greater. The eastbound I-690 to northbound I-81 ramp would be the tallest section of infrastructure of the Project, reaching approximately 70 feet above existing grade (ground level) at its highest point.

The increased footprint would necessitate the removal of 11 buildings within the entire I-81/I-690 interchange area north of James Street and vegetation alongside the right-of-way, thereby effectively eliminating any sense of enclosure that is created by those buildings. The variation in form created by the buildings that comprise the city's skyline would be replaced by the more linear forms of the elevated ramps oriented in various directions. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. The elevated ramps and concrete support columns would

obscure I-81 traveler views of the Downtown skyline and other nearby buildings, some of which have distinguishing architectural characteristics. The removal of buildings in this view would detract from commuter views of the architectural character of the area and highlight the reduction of the density of the built environment. However, the adverse effect of removing these buildings may be moderated to some degree for some viewers by the improved condition of new highway infrastructure. The visual dominance of highway infrastructure in this view would reduce visual quality from moderate low to low. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 22-c. Viewpoint 16 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Butternut Street Bridge over BL 81, view to the south.

Viewpoint 16 - Community Grid Alternative

This simulation illustrates a section of roadway between BL 81 and I-690 just north of Downtown. The elevated section of westbound I-690 is shown in the distance as well as westbound I-690 traffic entering northbound BL 81 in the center of the photo. The northbound BL 81 mainline through lanes are located center right in this simulation, between and behind the concrete barriers. Southbound lanes are not visible in this simulation. The southbound BL 81 exit ramp to North Clinton Street is shown in the foreground on the right side of the simulation. Due to the dominance of highway infrastructure in this view, the Project would be visually incompatible with its surroundings. However, the Community Grid Alternative would maintain the sense of enclosure created by the existing neighboring buildings and buildings in the distance that comprise the skyline. Travelers would perceive this location as a gateway to Downtown as under existing conditions. Visual quality under this alternative would not appreciably change from existing conditions and would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 23-a. Viewpoint 17 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Court Street Bridge over I-81, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 17 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 23-a**, the existing view from the Court Street bridge in Syracuse is of the depressed section of I-81 located in the northern portion of the AVE. The view is looking northwest towards the Bear Street overpass and DestiNY USA, which are visible in the mid-ground and center of the view. To the left of the photo is the Inner Harbor area, which is part of the Large-Scale Commercial Development landscape unit. To the right is the Washington Square neighborhood, which is part of the Urban Neighborhood Residential landscape unit. This portion of the interstate is a depressed highway, at a lower elevation than the grade of the surrounding neighborhoods. Here the interstate is flanked by sloped embankments with mowed lawn and mature deciduous vegetation. As a result, views between this portion of I-81 and adjacent areas are screened by topography and vegetation. Views available to commuters and pedestrians overlooking the interstate from the Court Street bridge are of short duration and limited, focused to the north along the highway. The interstate is visually compatible with its surroundings. Viewer sensitivity is low from this location and visual quality is moderate low.



Figure 23-b. Viewpoint 17 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Court Street Bridge over I-81, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 17 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would include reconstruction of the Court Street bridge along a revised alignment, north of (but adjacent to) its current alignment. Safety fencing would be installed along the Court Street bridge, which would partially obstruct visibility of the surrounding visual environment, relative to the photograph that illustrates the No Build Alternative/existing conditions. Changes in highway infrastructure visible from this location include the reconfiguration of the southbound exit to North Clinton Street/Genant Drive, a southbound entrance ramp to I-81, the addition of a travel lane along I-81 in each direction, the widening of shoulders, the addition of a northbound exit ramp to Bear Street with an adjacent noise barrier, the removal of the northbound entrance ramp from Court Street, the removal of trees along the east and west sides of the interstate, and a reconstructed Bear Street bridge. The removal of vegetation along the left side of the simulation (the west side of the highway) would result in more open views of the upper portions of buildings in the developed areas around the Inner Harbor. The addition of the noise barrier on the east side of the highway, and construction of the new bridge, would also require clearing some vegetation and further contribute to the built/urban character of this view. Although the Viaduct Alternative would change the appearance and organization of highway infrastructure from this location, it would not substantially change the character of the existing view for motorists or for pedestrians from the Court Street bridge. The interstate would remain compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 23-c. Viewpoint 17 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Court Street Bridge over BL 81, view to the northwest.

Viewpoint 17 - Community Grid

The Community Grid would include reconstruction of the Court Street bridge along a revised alignment, north of (but adjacent to) its current alignment. Safety fencing would be installed along the Court Street bridge, which would partially obstruct visibility of the surrounding visual environment, relative to the photograph that illustrates the No Build Alternative/existing conditions. Changes in highway infrastructure visible from this location include the reconfiguration of the southbound exit to North Clinton Street/Genant Drive, a southbound entrance ramp to BL 81, the addition of a northbound travel lane, the widening of shoulders, the removal of trees along the west and east side of BL 81, addition of a northbound exit ramp to Bear Street, removal of the northbound Court Street entrance ramp, and a reconstructed Bear Street bridge. The removal of vegetation along the left side of the view (i.e., the west side of the highway) would result in more open views of the upper portions of buildings in the developed areas around the Inner Harbor. Although the Community Grid Alternative would change the appearance and organization of highway infrastructure from this location, it would not substantially change the character of the existing view for motorists and pedestrians from the Court Street bridge. The interstate would remain compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 24-a. Viewpoint 18 – Existing View

Almond Street at East Adams Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 18 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 24-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 18 is shown looking north along Almond Street near Adams Street. The view is focused along the Almond Street roadway. The visual environment is dominated by hardscape materials, including the 25-foot-tall and 66-foot-wide concrete and steel viaduct structure. This viaduct runs parallel to and along the left side of Almond Street. The viaduct is supported by round cylindrical concrete columns. Viewer groups include travelers along I-81, Downtown and University Hill commuters, transit riders, nearby building occupants, and pedestrians. Viewer sensitivity is moderate, and most viewers' attention is focused on roadways and traveling through this area. Viewer awareness of the viaduct, for both motorists and pedestrians, is heightened due to the deep shadow effects of the viaduct, as seen in this photo. The visual environment is cluttered with overhead and roadside signs, traffic control signals, and other items within the highway corridor and adjacent public rights-of-way. The linear and elevated form, scale, color, and materials of the viaduct contrast with surrounding areas, and is visually incompatible with its surroundings. Visual quality is moderate low due to the overall degraded appearance of the viaduct and adjacent areas.



Figure 24-b. Viewpoint 18 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Almond Street at East Adams Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 18 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in substantial changes to the Project footprint, including increased width of the elevated highway, which would emphasize its scale, and linear form as seen from ground level. The enlarged scale, height, and mass of the viaduct intensify its contrast with surrounding areas. Viaduct height would increase from approximately 25 feet to 41 feet, and the width of the viaduct would increase from 66 feet to approximately 82 feet. Viewer groups, including travelers along the viaduct and surface streets, as well as commuters and pedestrians, would experience an increase in awareness of the viaduct. However, the raised height of the viaduct would allow travelers to experience more open views of distant areas from underneath the highway, which would create some continuity in the landscape. The taller structure would allow increased light penetration below the viaduct during part of the day, but the increased width would generate larger shadows than the existing structure. In addition, the new condition of the viaduct and proposed streetscape enhancements such as new sidewalks, crosswalks, and street trees would improve the visual character along the Almond Street corridor. Due to these changes, the Project would be more compatible with its surroundings. Nonetheless, visual quality would remain moderate low due to the dominance of the viaduct at this location. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 24-c. Viewpoint 18 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Almond Street at East Adams Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 18 - Community Grid Alternative

The elimination of the viaduct as part of the Community Grid Alternative would open views along the Almond Street corridor. This alternative would provide open views of adjacent areas, including institutional buildings in the University Hill neighborhood to the east and the commercial, institutional, and residential buildings in and around Downtown to the west. These new views would be a dramatic change in visual character for travelers and neighbors (commuters, building occupants, bicyclists, and pedestrians) along Almond Street. The Community Grid Alternative would create a greater sense of intactness and unity within the urban landscape as viewers become more aware of the context of their surroundings. The Project would be considered compatible with its visual setting. Visual clutter along Almond Street would be reduced. Streetscaping, dedicated bike lanes, sidewalks, crosswalks, human-scale design elements, street trees, and grassed areas would create a more visually appealing environment. The repetition of vertical elements (trees and light posts) would provide visual interest and an improved sense of order. Pedestrian areas versus traffic areas would be well defined with sharp edges. Visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 25-a. Viewpoint 19 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Teall Avenue at Burnet Avenue, view to the south.

Viewpoint 19 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 25-a**, Viewpoint 19 is located on Burnet Avenue at the intersection with Teall Avenue looking south-southwest. The view is focused along Teall Avenue, which extends away from the viewer underneath the elevated structure of I-690. The immediate foreground of the view features the Burnet Avenue/Teall Avenue intersection, which is a wide roadway (Teall Avenue features six lanes at this intersection). A hill with dense tree foliage rises behind I-690 in the distant foreground. The area is characterized by hardscape pavements (streets, sidewalks, and highway bridge structures), roadway signage, lighting, scattered street trees, and grassed embankments located within the public right-of-way. The established strong horizontal and linear form and scale/mass of the I-690 bridge is the focal point of the view. The neat and orderly appearance of the bridge is offset by the sense of clutter created by overhead traffic signals and signage. Viewer groups are primarily local residents and travelers, as well as commuters approaching I-690. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate, existing visual quality is moderate low and the Project is compatible with its setting.



Figure 25-b. Viewpoint 19 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Teall Avenue at Burnet Avenue, view to the south.

Viewpoint 19 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 19 are the same under both the Viaduct Alternative and Community Grid Alternatives. The change in the view under both alternatives would be the installation of a noise barrier along the elevated I-690 bridge and highway structure that extends horizontally across the full extent of the view. The noise barrier consists of two rows of semi-transparent panels. The panels are enclosed in a regular grid of black, narrow, linear support structures. The noise barriers interrupt the view of the hillside that serves as a backdrop of the view; however, the transparent material of the panels allow for partial visibility of the vegetated hillside, which moderates the effect of the barrier. The regular grid arrangement of the panels in the noise barrier contribute to the neat and orderly appearance of the highway infrastructure. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would result in a minor change in visual quality. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 26-a. Viewpoint 20 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

I-81 west of Oakwood Cemetery, view to the south.

Viewpoint 20 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 26-a**, Viewpoint 20 is located on I-81 west of Oakwood Cemetery, looking south. The view is focused along I-81 and the existing tree canopy which provides screening of the adjacent areas to the west. The immediate foreground of the view features the three northbound travel lanes prior to the slated travel lane divider. The southbound travel lanes, road signage, and industrial style cobra head lighting are viewed in the distant foreground. From spring to fall, foliage from mature deciduous trees adjacent to the highway provides a backdrop for the view and screens views of surrounding areas. Viewer groups are primarily travelers, and viewer awareness is focused on the roadway ahead. The area is characterized by hardscape pavements, roadway signage, and lighting offset by the encroaching tree canopy. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate because the viewer's attention is focused on the roadway and the view does not feature other elements of visual interest. Existing visual quality is moderate and the Project is compatible with its setting.



Figure 26-b. Viewpoint 20 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

I-81 west of Oakwood Cemetery, view to the south.

Viewpoint 20 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 20 are the same under both the Viaduct Alternative and Community Grid Alternatives. The change in the view under both alternatives would be the installation of a noise barrier along the elevated I-81 bridge and highway structure that extends across the full extent of the view. The barrier is an opaque wall of medium height and medium-gray hardscape material arranged as a single row of square-shaped panels punctuated by narrow, white, vertical support elements. The regular grid arrangement of the panels in the noise barrier contribute to a neat and orderly appearance. However, the noise barrier interrupts the view of the adjacent trees. The regular grid arrangement of the panels in the noise barrier and the proposed material add to the minimalist hardscape appearance of the highway infrastructure. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting and visual quality would be moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.

4.2.5 Urban Neighborhood – Residential

Viewpoints 21, 22, 23, and 24 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the build alternatives within the Urban Neighborhood – Residential Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figures 27-30 (Viewpoints 21-24).



Figure 27-a. Viewpoint 21 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Dr. King Elementary School – MLK, Jr. East at Oakwood Avenue, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 21 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 26-a**, Viewpoint 21 is located on MLK, Jr. East (formerly East Castle Street) near Oakwood Avenue looking northeast. The I-81 viaduct crosses over MLK, Jr. East on an elevated bridge or overpass. Features in the foreground such as the brick face of Dr. King Elementary School, mature deciduous trees, and grassed lawn areas contribute to the neighborhood character of the visual environment. In this view, the viaduct is considered incompatible with its visual setting. Tall structures in and near the Syracuse University campus rise above the vegetation in the background of the view. The vegetation also frames and partially screens views of the adjacent elevated interstate. Because most of the vegetation that screens the viaduct is deciduous, I-81 and the Syracuse University campus would become more visible from this location during leaf-off seasons. Viewers include neighborhood residents, elementary school students, parents, school employees, commuters, pedestrians, and others passing through this area. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate given that local viewers are accustomed to the Project as a regular, prominent feature in this setting. The duration and frequency of views are greater for residents from their homes and yards than for commuters and pedestrians. Visual quality is moderate.



Figure 27-b. Viewpoint 21 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Dr. King Elementary School – MLK, Jr. East at Oakwood Avenue, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 21 - The Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would reconstruct the existing overpass over MLK, Jr. East with a structured bridge overpass, concrete bridge abutments, and grassed embankments. This would require the removal of existing trees and shrubs near the new overpass, which would result in more open views of the interstate and interstate traffic. The new overpass would be at approximately the same elevation as the current viaduct. Project contrast would increase, however, as changes in colors and materials would become more visible to neighborhood residents, elementary school students, parents, school employees, commuters, pedestrians, and others passing through this area. The Project would continue to be visually incompatible with its surroundings. Viewer awareness of and exposure to the Project would increase under this alternative due to the removal of vegetation that currently screens views of the viaduct. The overall visual quality would be moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 27-c. Viewpoint 21 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Dr. King Elementary School – MLK, Jr. East at Oakwood Avenue, view to the northeast.

Viewpoint 21 - Community Grid Alternative

The removal of the viaduct as part of the Community Grid Alternative would open views to the east towards the Syracuse University campus. Removal of this vegetation would also reveal the reconstructed railroad tracks running adjacent to BL 81, which would increase viewer awareness of the railroad. The Community Grid Alternative would not include a connection between MLK, Jr. East and BL 81, and it replaces the viaduct with the BL 81, streetscaping, and pedestrian improvements. MLK, Jr. East would terminate at the driveway of the Dr. King Elementary School. Pedestrians and bicyclists would have access to the shared use path along the west side of BL 81. Streetscape enhancements such as new sidewalks with mixed-use pedestrian and bike lanes, crosswalks, grass embankments, and street trees would introduce more human-scale elements into this neighborhood landscape. These improvements would enhance visual quality for viewer groups in this area including residents, elementary school students, parents, school employees, commuters, pedestrians, and others passing through this area. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would remain moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.



Figure 28-a. Viewpoint 22 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Pioneer Homes - west of I-81 and Almond Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 22 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 28-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 22 within the Pioneer Homes neighborhood is dominated by the scale and incompatibility of the I-81 viaduct, which is located immediately adjacent to and elevated above many of the homes along the west side of Almond Street. Existing visual character is substantially affected by the linear form and large scale of the viaduct and by the existing concrete columns that block residents' views to the east. Sunlight and shadows affect the intensity of views near and underneath the viaduct depending on the time of day and season of the year. In the morning, residences are cast in deep shadows as the viaduct is backlit by the sun (to the east and right side of the photo), and during the afternoon sunlight tends to highlight the viaduct's structural details and degraded materials. The shadowing effects of the viaduct and its form, color, and materials contrast sharply with the context of the surrounding residential neighborhood. Viewer sensitivity is high given the close proximity of the viaduct to residents and their homes. Residents experience frequent and long duration views of the viaduct from their homes and yards. Due to the scale and proximity of the viaduct, the overall visual quality at this location is moderate low and the viaduct is incompatible with the residential character of the adjacent visual environment.



Figure 28-b. Viewpoint 22 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative
Pioneer Homes - west of I-81 and Almond Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 22 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would substantially decrease visual quality from Viewpoint 22 because I-81 would essentially remain in its current location and may consist of similarly constructed elements. The on-ramp would ascend from street level, as seen in the mid-ground (center) of this simulation, increasing in height to approximately 28 to 31 feet as shown to the right in this simulation. Nearby residents would remain highly sensitive to views of the interstate, and the Project would continue to contrast with the context of the surrounding residential area. Sunlight would continue to cast deep shadows on nearby locations, affecting residential viewers alongside the viaduct and motorists under the viaduct; alternating periods of light would heighten Project details or create darkness. Views would essentially remain the same as experienced at present, and visual quality would remain moderate low. The viaduct would continue to dominate views at this location as it does under existing conditions. The existing visual quality at this location, due to the presence of the existing viaduct, is moderate low and the Viaduct Alternative would not substantially affect this condition. The Project would continue to be visually incompatible with its surroundings. Therefore, the impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 28-c. Viewpoint 22 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Pioneer Homes - west of BL 81 and Almond Street, view to the north.

Viewpoint 22 - Community Grid Alternative

Visual character and visual quality of views from Viewpoint 22 would be substantially altered by the removal of the viaduct and introduction of surface street improvements and pedestrian amenities along Almond Street. The viaduct's removal would provide open views to the east, looking towards a new urban roadway with streetscaping, a new shared use path, new street trees, vegetated medians, and crosswalks. The visual contrast with the surrounding area would be reduced through the introduction of vegetation and more human-scale features such as lighting, signage, and pedestrian amenities. The repetition of street trees would help unify views along this corridor with those to the east. Visual quality from this location for residents and pedestrians would improve from moderate low to moderate, primarily due to the opening of views to the east and north and the introduction of streetscape vegetation. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting (relative to existing conditions). The visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate and the overall impact would be beneficial.



Figure 29-a. Viewpoint 23 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Wilson Park Basketball Courts - Jackson Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 23 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 29-a**, existing views from Wilson Park within the Pioneer Homes neighborhood near Jackson Street are dominated by the presence and visual incompatibility of the I-81 viaduct. Wilson Park, located just south of Jackson Street and west of I-81, includes a paved basketball court that provides open, unobstructed views of the viaduct for the park's recreational users and residents of the adjacent Pioneer Homes neighborhood. The existing viaduct is approximately 30 feet high and approximately 110 feet wide, including travel lanes and on- and off-ramps. The linear form, color, and materials of the viaduct contrast with the context of the park and surrounding neighborhood. High-rise institutional buildings and parking areas within the University Hill neighborhood are visible behind and rising above the elevated highway. Contrast created by the linear form of the viaduct is heightened by the shadowing effects of sunlight and the lack of vegetation other than grassed areas. Viewer awareness of the highway is heightened due to the proximity of the viaduct, its degraded condition, and materials that are apparent. Viewer sensitivity is high due to their proximity to the viaduct, the extent of nearby residential viewers, the frequent and long duration views from homes, yards, and recreational spaces. Visual quality is moderate low, primarily due to the presence of the viaduct. The viaduct is considered incompatible with its visual setting.



Figure 29-b. Viewpoint 23 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative
Wilson Park Basketball Courts - Jackson Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 23 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would include a new, taller viaduct, approximately 38 feet high, which is an increase of approximately eight feet in height from existing conditions. The new viaduct would be brought closer to the existing basketball court and park than it is currently. These changes in the mass, height, and width of the viaduct would increase its visual dominance and contrast with surrounding areas. Sunlight would cast deep shadows in nearby locations during most times of the day, heightening viewer awareness of the viaduct. Trees would be planted along the western side of the viaduct inside Wilson Park, which would soften the appearance of areas under the viaduct and create a more defined vegetative edge to the park. Visual quality for residents and recreationists would remain moderate low despite the replacement of the existing degraded viaduct with one constructed with all new materials. The new viaduct would remain in sharp contrast to its surroundings and viewed as incompatible. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 29-c. Viewpoint 23 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Wilson Park Basketball Courts - Jackson Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 23 - Community Grid Alternative

The viaduct's removal as part of the Community Grid Alternative would dramatically alter the area's visual character by eliminating its visual contrast with its surroundings. Open views to the east would include the institutional high-rise buildings in the University Hill neighborhood. This view would be softened somewhat due to vegetation in the foreground and vegetation that would be installed as part of enhanced streetscaping along the new BL 81. Visual contrast would also be reduced through the introduction of streetscaping vegetation and more human-scale features (pedestrian amenities, lighting, and signage). The street trees along Almond Street would provide a clear separation between the park and the adjacent roadway. Street trees introduce naturalized elements to the view that do not exist under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions and result in a more orderly and appealing visual environment for residents and recreationists. Due to these changes, the Project would be visually compatible with its surroundings. Visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.



Figure 30-a. Viewpoint 24 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue, view to the south.

Viewpoint 24 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 30-a**, the view from Burnet Avenue at North Townsend Street looking south (just north of Downtown) is focused on the I-81/I-690 interchange. This viewpoint location is near the southern edge of the Hawley-Green neighborhood. The view features residential and commercial buildings in the foreground on either side of Townsend Street. The elevated, horizontal lines of the interstates define the horizon and block longer views of Townsend Street and the city in the background. The higher viaduct seen in this photo, carrying westbound I-690, is approximately 46 feet above Townsend Street. The lower infrastructure, carrying eastbound I-690 and northbound I-81, is approximately 21 feet above Townsend Street. The linear form and height of the interchange ramps contrast with nearby one- to two-story residences and commercial buildings. Viewer groups in this area include residents, commercial building occupants, business patrons, pedestrians, and local commuters. Viewer sensitivity is high due to the proximity of residences and businesses to the interchange, as well as the frequency and long duration of focused views to the south from this location. Viewer awareness of highway infrastructure is heightened due to the visual dominance of interchange ramps and bridge overpasses that cross over Townsend Street. The existing interstates are incompatible with the surrounding visual environment due to their contrast and dominance and because they block views to the south. Contrast is also created by the deep daytime shadows cast on the north side of the overpasses. Visual quality is moderate low.



Figure 30-b. Viewpoint 24 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue, view to the south.

Viewpoint 24 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would result in minimal visual change from this viewpoint, although there would be an increase (approximately six to eight feet) in the overall height of the interchange ramps above North Townsend Street. Views for residents, commercial building occupants, business patrons, pedestrians, and local commuters would still be dominated by the horizontal, linear form of the highways, which contrast in scale and materials with adjacent buildings. Project incompatibility and high viewer sensitivity would essentially remain the same as under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions. Visual quality would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 30-c. Viewpoint 24 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue, view to the south.

Viewpoint 24 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would eliminate the existing I-81 connections to I-690 at this location, which would remove one of the elevated overpasses in this view. However, the Project would still be incompatible with the surrounding visual environment. The height of the I-690 overpass over Townsend Street would increase from 21 feet to approximately 26 feet. There would be some reduction in shadows with the elimination of the taller viaduct ramps. Removal of these connecting ramps would also result in more open views to the south. These extended views would provide some continuity to motorists and pedestrians by increasing visibility and their awareness of the urban setting beyond the overpass. Visual quality, despite the improved appearance of the interstate due to use of new construction materials, would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial.

4.2.6 Urban Neighborhood – Mixed-Use

Viewpoints 25 and 26 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Neighborhood – Mixed-Use Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 31 (Viewpoint 25) and Figure 32 (Viewpoint 26).



Figure 31-a. Viewpoint 25 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)
Franklin Square - North Franklin Street at Evans Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 25 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 31-a**, the view from Viewpoint 25 is near the southeastern edge of the Franklin Square neighborhood, near North Franklin Street and Evans Street, looking southeast towards the I-81/I-690 interchange area. The view is oriented along Franklin Street, featuring a brick building with historic character in the immediate foreground, with a black awning and wrought iron fence on the façade oriented toward the street. The sidewalk that extends away from the view parallel to Franklin Street includes areas of brick paving, decorative streetlights, and bordering street trees. These characteristics are representative of the distinct visual character of the Franklin Square neighborhood. The line-of-sight along Franklin Street is interrupted by a concrete retaining wall that supports a portion of I-690. The visible highway infrastructure is compatible with the urban character of this view. Moving traffic on the interstate may attract viewer attention, but the interchange is partially screened from view by the elevated embankment of I-690, as well as mature deciduous trees and shrubs in the foreground of the view. Viewer groups include neighborhood residents, commercial and professional office building occupants, local business patrons, pedestrians, motorists, and visitors. Viewer sensitivity is moderate because residents and commuters in this area are accustomed to the presence

of the nearby interstates. Visual quality is moderate due to the balanced effects of the distinct character of the architecture, streetscape features, utilitarian materials, and form of the adjacent interstate.



Figure 31-b. Viewpoint 25 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Franklin Square - North Franklin Street at Evans Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 25 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would include the construction of new ramps near Viewpoint 25 to provide direct connections for travelers from eastbound I-690 to northbound I-81 and southbound I-81 to westbound I-690. These ramps would be above the existing mainline travel lanes of both interstates. Under this alternative, an elevated ramp would pass over Franklin Street as seen in the foreground of the view. Due to its mass, scale, strong horizontal form, and proximity to the viewer, the ramp would become a focal point in this view. Additional elements of the interchange visible in the midground of the view include a section of elevated highway set on a grassy sloped berm, which would interrupt more distant views, visually isolating the neighborhood. This would be similar to the extent of visibility seen under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions.

The overhead ramps would become prominent features and incompatible with the visual environment. They would be seen from within the Franklin Square neighborhood due to their height. The ramp featured in the foreground of this view is approximately 42 feet tall and has proximity to residents, business owners, employees, as well as commuters. Although the existing visual character of the buildings and streetscape in this area would remain, these ramps would contrast with the context of the surrounding neighborhood due to scale (both the height and width of constructed

elements), mass, form, colors, and materials. Both the Creekwalk and Evans Street in the area would be realigned and reconstructed. Viewer awareness created by the Project's proximity would increase with greater frequency and duration of views (particularly for nearby building occupants, neighborhood residents, pedestrians, and local commuters). For some viewers, these adverse impacts may be offset somewhat by streetscape improvements, such as new sidewalks, crosswalks, and street trees, and the replacement of deteriorated highway infrastructure with new materials. Visual quality would remain moderate. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.



Figure 31-c. Viewpoint 25 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
Franklin Square - North Franklin Street at Evans Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 25 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would realign the existing interchange ramps and embankments. Both the Creekwalk and Evans Street in the area would be realigned and reconstructed. The visible portions of the elevated highway from this location are set on a grassy sloped berm (along the right side of Franklin Street) and concrete retaining wall (left of center) that interrupt more distant views, which would be similar to the extent of visibility under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions. The realigned highway would have the effect of bringing the BL 81 and I-690 overpass closer to viewers, resulting in increased viewer awareness of the Project for neighborhood residents, commercial and professional office building occupants, local business patrons, pedestrians, motorists, and visitors. This change would be offset by an enhanced streetscape and other surface street improvements in this area. Streetscaping treatments, including grassed buffers between sidewalks and travel lanes, would provide clear edges between pedestrian areas and vehicular traffic. The Project is considered compatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would remain moderate. The impact to visual quality would be neutral.



Figure 32-a. Viewpoint 26 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

North Clinton Street at Genant Drive, view to the south.

Viewpoint 26 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 32-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 26 is from the eastern edge of the Franklin Square neighborhood at North Clinton Street and Genant Drive, looking south towards the I-81/I-690 interchange. The interchange is obscured from view by an existing utilitarian industrial-style building to the east at 215 Genant Drive (left side of photo), and overgrown vegetation. The visual character of this location includes surface parking lots, red-brick residential and mixed-use office buildings throughout the neighborhood, and more distant views to parts of the Downtown skyline to the south. The existing brick smokestack structure (right side of the photo) is associated with revitalized office building at 432 North Franklin Street. Viewer groups include neighborhood residents, local business patrons and employees, pedestrians, and motorists who may be visiting the neighborhood. Viewer sensitivity is moderate. Visual quality is moderate low due the sense of isolation from this viewpoint and the degraded conditions of the street in the foreground. The intersection is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 32-b. Viewpoint 26 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

North Clinton Street at Genant Drive, view to the south.

Viewpoint 26 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would create a new intersection at North Clinton Street and Genant Drive, changing the appearance and visual character of this area by introducing new hardscape materials (concrete sidewalks, pavers, and asphalt) and landscaping (lawn and street trees). The view features a typical urban intersection with an orderly arrangement of vehicular traffic lanes, parallel parking, shared lanes for vehicles and bicycles, pedestrian areas, traffic signals, new streetscape features (including street trees), decorative fencing, and ornamental vegetation. This alternative would require the removal of the existing building at 215 Genant Drive (left side of photo) and vegetation, which are shown under the No Build Alternative/existing conditions simulation. Existing buildings and structures to the west (right side of photo) of the intersection would remain. This includes the smokestack structure and the small building with the peaked red roof shown on the right side of the photo, which is a freestanding garage structure associated with nearby businesses. These changes would open views to the I-81/I-690 interchange area and extend background views to the south towards Downtown Syracuse. However, the interchange ramps of I-81 and I-690 in the midground would obscure views of most Downtown buildings. The new street alignment would direct views for neighborhood residents, local business patrons and employees, pedestrians, and motorists to the elevated ramps that comprise the interchange area. The use of new construction materials would improve visual quality. While the impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial, visual quality would remain moderate low. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 32-c. Viewpoint 26 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative
North Clinton Street at Genant Drive, view to the south.

Viewpoint 26 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would reconfigure North Clinton Street at Genant Drive, resulting in a change in grade by lowering the elevation of the intersection. The introduction of new hardscape materials (concrete sidewalks, pavers, and asphalt) and landscaping (lawn and street trees) would change the appearance and visual character of this area. The view features a typical urban intersection with an orderly arrangement of vehicular traffic lanes, shared lanes for vehicles and bicycles, parallel parking, pedestrian areas, traffic signals, new streetscape features, street trees, decorative fencing, and ornamental vegetation. The view under this alternative for neighborhood residents, local business patrons and employees, pedestrians, and motorists would be focused along a new street alignment, which would rise gently in the distance towards Downtown Syracuse, resulting in a greater sense of visual continuity. This alternative would require the removal of the existing building at 215 Genant Drive (left side of photo) and vegetation, as shown in the foreground of the No Build Alternative/existing conditions simulation. Existing buildings and structures to the west (right side of photo) of the intersection would remain. This includes the smokestack structure and the small building with the peaked red roof shown on the right side of the photo, which is a freestanding garage structure associated with nearby businesses. The removal of the utilitarian building in the foreground would result in a less cluttered and more open view. The Community Grid Alternative would provide a sense of order created by the repetition of new street trees and other streetscape treatments. The use of new construction materials would enhance visual quality. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial, improving from moderate low to moderate. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting.

4.2.7 Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core

Viewpoint 27 provides a representative view of the proposed visual effect resulting from construction of proposed noise barriers under both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Neighborhood – Commercial Core Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 33 (Viewpoint 27).



Figure 33-a. Viewpoint 27 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Basin Street at Kirkpatrick Street, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 27 - Existing View

Viewpoint 27 is located on Kirkpatrick Street, looking southwest towards Basin Street. The foreground of the existing view, from left to right, shows the paved intersection, and an urban residential yard. The corner of a single-story home frames the view at the far right. The character of the view includes aging sidewalks, mature shrubs, and a variety of street signs and utility infrastructure. The opposite side of Basin Street is defined by a chain-link fence lined with young trees and scrub growth, which partially screen more distant views of the background. Beyond this tree line, the topography drops away from the viewer and the roofs and upper portions of commercial buildings are visible in gaps in the vegetation; the interstate runs through this low-lying area, although it is not visible in the view. A distant forested hillside on the opposite side of the valley is visible in the gaps between foreground vegetation and defines the horizon in the view. Viewers include neighbors (i.e., employees, residents, and business owners) and the Project is compatible with the existing view. Viewer sensitivity is considered high and the existing visual quality is moderate.



Figure 33-b. Viewpoint 27 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Basin Street at Kirkpatrick Street, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 27 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 27 are the same under both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. The change in the view under both alternatives would be the installation of a noise barrier along the eastern (proximate) side of Basin Street. The noise barrier would be installed in front of the fence and vegetation that currently define the boundary between this neighborhood and the adjacent I-81 right-of-way. The barrier would be a 935-foot-long, 18-foot-tall concrete wall supported by narrow concrete, vertical support posts. The height of the barrier would interrupt views of the foreground vegetation, highway corridor and adjacent commercial buildings, and the distant views of hill on the opposite side of the valley. The upper portions of the nearby trees are visible above the barrier. The Project would be incompatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would be moderate low and the impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.

4.2.8 Urban Legacy Industrial

Viewpoint 28 provides a representative view of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Legacy Industrial Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 34 (Viewpoint 28).



Figure 34-a. Viewpoint 28 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

West Genesee Street at Plum Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 28 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 34-a**, the existing view from Viewpoint 28 is focused on the overpass segments of the West Genesee Street and West Street ramps (Exits 11 and 12 from eastbound I-690). These existing ramps spatially dominate foreground views looking east from West Genesee Street. Downtown Syracuse and Onondaga Creek are obscured from view by the ramps. This location is considered a western gateway into Downtown. The horizontal and linear form, scale/mass of the concrete retaining walls, and ramp embankments contrast and are incompatible with surrounding areas. This situation creates visual obstructions for commuters, including motorists and transit riders, commercial and industrial building occupants, and pedestrians on West Genesee Street. Travelers along eastbound I-690 also have views of the ramps looking southeasterly towards Downtown. The orientations of the ramps create alternating areas of daylighting and shadowing, which intensify the contrast with the nearby areas. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate because this area is a gateway location. Existing visual quality is degraded and moderate low.



Figure 34-b. Viewpoint 28 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

West Genesee Street at Plum Street, view to the east.

Viewpoint 28 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 28 are the same under both the Viaduct Alternative and Community Grid Alternatives. Changes for both include the removal of the ramps and reconstruction of West Street as a surface street, with a new intersection connecting to West Genesee Street. Either alternative would feature an open view along West Genesee Street towards Downtown Syracuse, with the prominent State Tower featured as a focal point in the background of the view. The visual character would be dramatically improved relative to the No Build Alternative/existing conditions and would feature an extended view along an urban boulevard flanked by street trees, buildings with varying heights, crosswalks, and additional sidewalks. The creation of a direct line of sight into Downtown Syracuse would result in a greater sense of unity and continuity in the landscape, visually enhancing the area as a western gateway into Syracuse for commuters, including motorists and transit riders, commercial and industrial building occupants, and pedestrians. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would improve from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial.

4.2.9 Urban Large-Scale Development

Viewpoints 29 and 30 provide representative views of the proposed visual effect of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Urban Large-Scale Development Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 35 (Viewpoint 29) and Figure 36 (Viewpoint 30).



Figure 35-a. Viewpoint 29 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 29 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 35-a**, the existing view along North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street is directed toward Downtown Syracuse. The areas adjacent to this section of North Clinton Street to the southwest (right side of photo) are open, vacant lots that formerly served as large industrial properties. Areas to the east (left side of photo) include parking lots and adjacent commercial businesses. Vegetation in the midground of the view generally screens more distant views, although tall buildings in Downtown Syracuse rise above the horizon in the background. Primary viewers in this area would be motorists along North Clinton Street and occasional pedestrians. Commuters and other travelers may use this area to and from the Franklin Square and Inner Harbor neighborhoods. Viewer sensitivity is moderate. Visual quality is moderate low and the area lacks distinct focal points. Clinton Street is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 35-b. Viewpoint 29 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives
North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 29 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Under both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives, a new partial highway interchange connection to and from southbound I-81/BL 81 would be constructed nearby. The northern area of this viewpoint would experience an increase in use of local roadways by commuters and others destined for Franklin Square and the Inner Harbor. Improvements to North Clinton Street, under both alternatives, would include the widening of the roadway to accommodate an additional southbound travel lane and a clear delineation between vehicle travel lanes and pedestrian areas. Improvements also include the construction of sidewalks and new street trees along both sides of North Clinton Street. These improvements would help to focus views of commuters, commercial and industrial building occupants, and pedestrians down the street, resulting from a repeating pattern of new streetscape elements. These enhancements include new street trees, new sidewalks, and establishment of green space (between curbs and sidewalks), all contributing to a sense of order. The use of new materials and streetscape treatments would improve visual quality from moderate low to moderate. The impact to visual quality would be beneficial. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 36-a. Viewpoint 30 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Hiawatha Boulevard Bridge over I-81, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 30 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 36-a**, existing views from this viewpoint near the Hiawatha Boulevard bridge over I-81 are dominated by highway infrastructure including, from left to right, concrete retaining walls along northbound I-81, the northbound I-81 travel lanes, southbound I-81 travel lanes, the Bear Street exit ramp from southbound I-81, and overhead signage. This vantage point provides an open view of the depressed highway portion of I-81, which is set lower relative to the grade of adjacent areas and flanked by concrete retaining walls and sloped grassy embankments. Viewpoint 30 is provided for context purposes to approximate existing views of highway infrastructure and visual character (although from a slightly elevated viewpoint) for travelers on I-81/BL 81 and other viewers (commuters, pedestrians, building occupants) who are within adjacent locations within this landscape unit. For example, there has been recent development of a hotel associated with Destiny USA located just to the right of this photo location. Existing visual quality has a somewhat degraded appearance due to the advanced age of the highway infrastructure. Viewer sensitivity is moderate. Visual quality is moderate low. The interstate is considered compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 36-b. Viewpoint 30 – Simulation of Viaduct Alternative

Hiawatha Boulevard Bridge over I-81, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 30 - Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would maintain northbound and southbound travel lanes and the exit ramp to Bear Street in the same location with some modifications. The exit ramp for southbound I-81 to Bear Street would be reduced from a two- to one-lane ramp, as shown to the right of center in this simulation. Overhead signage, as seen in the distance along the southbound lanes, would also be modified. The existing concrete retaining wall along I-81 northbound lanes would be replaced by a vegetated embankment with trees and grassed areas. The new northbound entrance ramp from Bear Street would descend and merge with the highway on the left side of the view. Visual quality for interstate travelers and neighbors (commuters, building occupants, and pedestrians) would remain moderate low due to the continued visual dominance of the highway, despite the replacement of a concrete retaining wall with a vegetated berm and the use of new construction materials. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting.



Figure 36-c. Viewpoint 30 – Simulation of Community Grid Alternative

Hiawatha Boulevard Bridge over I-81, view to the southeast.

Viewpoint 30 - Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would maintain northbound and southbound travel lanes and the exit ramp to Bear Street in the same location as the No Build Alternative/existing conditions. The exit ramp for southbound BL 81 to Bear Street would be reduced from a two- to one-lane ramp, as shown to the right of center in this simulation. Overhead signage, as seen in the distance along the BL 81 southbound lanes, would also be modified. North Clinton Street would have a dedicated “exit only” lane as depicted in the simulation along the far-right southbound lane and overhead signage as seen in the distance. The existing concrete retaining wall along the I-81 northbound lanes would be replaced by a vegetated embankment with trees and grassed areas. The new northbound entrance ramp from Bear Street would descend and merge with the highway on the left side of the view. Visual quality for highway travelers and neighbors (commuters, building occupants, and pedestrians) would remain moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor beneficial. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting.

4.2.10 Suburban Commercial

Viewpoint 31 provides a representative view of the proposed visual effect resulting from construction of proposed noise barriers under both of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Suburban Commercial Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 37 (Viewpoint 31).



Figure 37-a. Viewpoint 31 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

DeWitt Town Hall – Butternut Drive, DeWitt, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 31 - Existing View

As shown in **Figure 37-a**, Viewpoint 31 is located near the entrance to DeWitt Town Hall on Butternut Drive, looking southwest towards Interstate 481. The existing view features an open lawn with a sign and formal ornamental landscape plantings flanked by a driveway (the entrance to DeWitt Town Hall and Ryder Park). The open lawn ends at Butternut Drive approximately perpendicular to the viewer in the immediate foreground with I-481 parallel to Butternut Drive in the more distant foreground. Butternut Drive and the interstate are separated by a low chain-link fence and corridor of naturalized vegetation, with more dense vegetation in the background of the view on the opposite side of I-481. The open mowed lawn, style of signage, and ornamental vegetation are typical of commercial businesses and office parks within a suburban setting. The horizontal, linear forms of the paved roadways contrast with the natural forms and greenery of the vegetation. Viewer groups include neighborhood residents, local business patrons and employees, pedestrians, and motorists who may be visiting DeWitt Town Hall or Ryder Park or traveling on local roadways. The interstate is compatible with its visual surroundings. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate. Existing visual quality is moderate.



Figure 37-b. Viewpoint 31 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

DeWitt Town Hall – Butternut Drive, DeWitt, view to the southwest.

Viewpoint 31 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 31 are the same under both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. The change in the view under both alternatives would be the installation of a noise barrier along the eastern (proximate) side of I-481. The noise barrier would be installed at the top of the vegetated embankment on the west side of Butternut Drive. The barrier would be a concrete wall, 2,357-feet long and 12 to 14-feet tall, arranged as a single row of square-shaped panels punctuated by narrow, white, vertical support elements. The regular grid arrangement of the panels in the noise barrier contribute to a neat and orderly appearance. However, the noise barrier obscures visibility of the adjacent highway. The height of the barrier interrupts views of the vegetation that serves as the backdrop of the view, although the canopies of the trees are visible above the barrier. The Project would be incompatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would decrease from moderate to moderate low. The impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.

4.2.11 Suburban Residential

Viewpoint 32 provides a representative view of the proposed visual effect resulting from construction of proposed noise barriers under both of the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives within the Suburban Residential Landscape Unit. Attachment C includes larger scaled simulations for Figure 38 (Viewpoint 32).



Figure 38-a. Viewpoint 32 – Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative)

Wells Avenue East at Oakley Drive, view to the east.

Viewpoint 32 - Existing View

Viewpoint 32 is located on Oakley Drive, looking east towards Wells Avenue East. The foreground of the existing view shows Oakley Drive, a suburban street flanked by front yards and driveways, some with parked cars. One residence representative of this neighborhood can be viewed on the left (northern) side; other residences sit just beyond the frame view. Typical suburban characteristics such as maintained lawns, plantings, mature tree growth, a street-side basketball hoop, and a lack of sidewalks and curbing, are visible. The foreground is backed by mature tree screening, which is dense at both the northern and southern ends of this view but lacking at the central focal point. At the center middle ground, running horizontally, existing I-81 edged with tall grass and wire mesh fencing bisects the view. In the distant background mature green scaping and residential rooftops indicate the continuation of suburban residential areas beyond the intervening roadway. Viewer groups include residents and neighbors. The Project is compatible with the existing view. Viewer sensitivity is considered moderate and the existing visual quality is moderate.



Figure 38-b. Viewpoint 32 – Simulation of Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Wells Avenue East at Oakley Drive, view to the east.

Viewpoint 32 - Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives

Project changes near Viewpoint 32 are the same under both the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. The change in the view under both alternatives would be the installation of a noise barrier along the western (proximate) side of I-81. The noise barrier would be installed along the right-of-way on the east side of Wells Avenue East. The barrier would be a concrete wall, 4,158-feet long and 12 to 14-feet tall, arranged as a single row of square-shaped panels punctuated by narrow, white, vertical support elements. The regular grid arrangement of the panels in the noise barrier contributes to a neat and orderly appearance. However, the noise barrier obscures visibility of the adjacent highway. The height of the barrier interrupts views of the vegetation and continued residential development that serve as the backdrop of the view. The canopies of trees located on the opposite side of the highway are visible above the barrier. The Project would be compatible with its visual setting. Visual quality would be moderate low and the impact to visual quality would be minor adverse.

4.2.12 Landscape Units for which No Simulations were Prepared

From many areas within the AVE, views of the Project would be screened or entirely obscured by existing topography, distance, dense vegetation, buildings, and other structures. This is confirmed by viewshed mapping within the AVE (see Attachment A: Map 1) as well as field review (see Section 2.6 and Attachment B of this report). Therefore, some of the landscape units do not include viewpoints that were selected for photo simulation because they do not provide open views of the Project or may not be considered sensitive to viewer groups. Landscape units for which photo simulations were not prepared include:

- Open Space – Undeveloped
- Open Space – Designed
- Open Space – Waterfront

In general, because of the limited visibility of the Project from the above landscape units, the potential visual effect of either Build Alternative is anticipated to be minimal from these areas:

Open Space – Undeveloped

The Open Space – Undeveloped Landscape Unit, as described in Section 3.3.12 (also see **Figure 5: Sheet 14**), occurs in outlying areas such as the northernmost portion of the AVE northeast of Onondaga Lake, and at the southern edge of the City of Syracuse adjacent to the Suburban Commercial and Suburban Residential Landscape Units. Views of the Project from this landscape unit are generally screened by existing vegetation, distance, and slight variations in topography. In general, these are not developed or highly utilized areas and viewer sensitivity is considered very low. The Project is not a prominent feature in the visual environment from this landscape unit. Under the No Build Alternative, there would be no change in the visibility or visual effect of the Project. For both build alternatives, limited, narrow views of some elements of the Project may be visible from some locations, however, the potential changes to the visual environment are anticipated to be relatively minor.

Open Space – Designed

The Open Space – Designed Landscape Unit, as described in Section 3.3.13 (also see **Figure 5: Sheet 15**), includes Onondaga Lake Park, Thornden Park, and Oakwood Cemetery. Views of the Project are generally very limited at each of these locations due to the screening effects of vegetation (mostly deciduous trees and shrubs), rolling topography, and distance. The Project is not generally a prominent feature in the visual environment from this landscape unit. Under the No Build Alternative, there would be no change in the visibility or visual effect of the Project.

From Oakwood Cemetery, open views of the Project are only available from the western boundary of the cemetery. For the Viaduct Alternative, the Project may be slightly more visible in views from Oakwood Cemetery to the northwest from some locations due to the increased height of the viaduct. However, vegetation within and alongside the cemetery and changes in topography would continue to partially screen I-81 and therefore, potential changes in Project visibility are not anticipated to be substantial. For the Community Grid Alternative, the Project may be less visible in some views to the northwest and this may be perceived as an improvement to the visual environment.

Views from Thornden Park and Onondaga Lake Park would not be dramatically altered under either build alternative. In both locations, the screening effects of distance, vegetation, and topography limit the visual effect of the Project. The visibility and visual effect of the Project are not anticipated to change from these areas for either build alternative.

Open Space – Waterfront

The Open Space - Waterfront Landscape Unit, as described in Section 3.3.14 (also see **Figure 5: Sheet 16**), is along the southeastern waterfront of Onondaga Lake. Distant (approximately 0.5-mile to the east) views of the Project are available from some locations in this landscape unit, although in most locations views are screened by shoreline vegetation and/or intervening buildings. Under the No Build Alternative there would be no change in the visibility or visual effect of the Project. For both build alternatives, limited, narrow views of some elements of the Project may be visible from some locations, however, due to distance, the potential changes to the visual environment are anticipated to be relatively minor.

4.3 Conclusions – Summary of Visual Impacts for Each Alternative

4.3.1 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative would maintain I-81 in its existing configuration. Ongoing maintenance and repairs would be made to ensure the safety of the traveling public, implementing safety measures to the greatest extent feasible and financially practicable. Structural deficiencies and safety considerations would be addressed as part of the NYSDOT's ongoing maintenance program. Routine maintenance efforts would include repairing pavement cracks, patching holes in bridge decks, cleaning drainage systems, and operational considerations (e.g., signage and other low-cost improvements). Under the No Build Alternative, large-scale replacement and rehabilitation efforts would not be undertaken. Non-standard highway features would remain as is, and existing interchanges would not be modified. The No Build Alternative would not involve changes in right-of-way, interstate infrastructure, property acquisition, or removal of buildings and would not provide any of the visual benefits that could be achieved by the build alternatives.

The existing visual quality under the No Build Alternative and from the 32 selected viewpoints evaluated in the VIA is generally considered as moderate low. Approximately 72 percent (23 viewpoints) of these selected viewpoints were evaluated as having low and moderate low visual quality. This is primarily due to the degraded appearance of the existing I-81 highway infrastructure and condition of adjacent areas. Approximately 25 percent (eight viewpoints) of the views possess moderate visual quality. The overall evaluation of visual quality at selected viewpoints throughout the AVE is indicative of the generally degraded visual quality that characterizes most areas adjacent to the existing I-81 viaduct.

Under the No Build Alternative, existing visual character and visual quality within the Project's visual environment and right-of-way would not be substantially affected in the short term. However, at some point routine maintenance of existing Project infrastructure would be unable to keep pace with the deterioration of highway pavements, concrete, steel bridges, and other elevated segments and would result in diminished visual quality over time.

Under No Build (existing) conditions, the I-81 viaduct is generally considered incompatible with its surroundings due (in some instances) to the scale of Project infrastructure and the deteriorated appearance of Project elements. As summarized in Table 4-1, the existing infrastructure is considered incompatible within the context of its visual environment from 13 (41 percent) of the 32 selected viewpoints evaluated in this VIA. Nineteen of the selected

viewpoints (59 percent) of the existing Project were rated as compatible. This compatibility may be the result of decades of land use changes that have adapted to the presence of I-81. In addition, vegetation and other types of screening may reduce I-81's contrast and scale with surrounding areas. Locations where viewer sensitivity is considered high and the existing Project is perceived as incompatible include Viewpoints 7 (Harrison Street at Almond Street), 22 (Pioneer Homes), 23 (Wilson Park Basketball Courts), and 24 (North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue). These locations are within the Urban Institutional Campus landscape unit and the Urban Residential Neighborhood landscape units, where viewer awareness of the Project is heightened by proximity to the interstate. In these locations, viewers are exposed to nearby and frequent views of I-81. Viewpoints 4 (Connective Corridor – East Genesee Street at South McBride Street) and 27 (Basin Street at Kirkpatrick Street) are considered to have a high viewer sensitivity while the existing Project is perceived as compatible. Two viewpoints (6 percent) are associated with low viewer sensitivity, and 24 viewpoints (75 percent) are associated with moderate sensitivity.

4.3.2 Viaduct Alternative

The Viaduct Alternative would replace the elevated sections of the highway with a new viaduct and associated ramps, creating a higher and wider transportation footprint. The increased width of the Project right-of-way would result in the need for property acquisitions and the removal of 24 buildings and one structure (a smokestack). Elevated sections of the new viaduct would vary in height along the alignment, generally ranging from approximately 30 to 35 feet tall. The new viaduct would be approximately 10 to 15 feet higher than the current viaduct along Almond Street. These changes would alter existing visual quality of the Project environment from many viewpoints within the AVE. The result would be a reduction in the density of the built environment adjacent to the Project, the removal of historic/modern buildings that contribute to the aesthetic character of Downtown Syracuse, and an increase in the visibility and scale of transportation-related infrastructure. In addition, the Viaduct Alternative would include the construction of two new flyover connector ramps between I-81 and I-690, each being approximately 35 feet wide. The eastbound I-690 to northbound I-81 ramp would be the tallest piece of infrastructure of the Project, reaching approximately 70 feet above existing grade at its highest point.

The visual quality ratings, conducted as part of the VIA, provide a basis for considering the visual effects of the Viaduct Alternative. As described above in Section 4.3.1, the overall visual quality rating for views of Existing Conditions (No Build Alternative) were generally moderate low. As shown in Table 4-2 the visual quality ratings for simulations showing the Viaduct Alternative range from low (a score of 0.7; Viewpoint 16 - at Butternut Street Bridge overlooking I-81) to moderate (a score of 2.8; Viewpoint 29 - at North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street). In the simulations of the Viaduct Alternative, the simulations from 26 viewpoints (81 percent) were rated as having moderate low visual quality, while two viewpoints (6 percent) were rated as having low visual quality, and four (13 percent) were rated as having moderate visual quality. The Viaduct Alternative simulations and ratings demonstrate an overall neutral (11 viewpoints) to minor adverse (13 viewpoints) change in visual quality in the Project area.

The simulations from 11 viewpoints (or 34 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) depict locations where the Viaduct Alternative would result in neutral visual effects. In these locations, the overall visual effect is considered neutral because the alternative would not result in a substantial change in overall visual quality. In other words, the visual quality rating, such as moderate low, would remain the same as the existing condition. Although the new viaduct would replace the existing deteriorated highway with new infrastructure and use new construction materials, the elevated highway would remain in approximately the same location and the resulting visual quality from these viewpoints would remain relatively low. Elements of the Viaduct Alternative that could be perceived as adverse changes in the visual environment are increased scale and mass of the viaduct and associated transportation infrastructure, removal of

buildings, shadowing of adjacent surface streets and sidewalks, and the installation of noise barriers. These changes would be balanced or offset for some viewers by improvements to the visual environment (improved condition of Project infrastructure and streetscaping enhancements). Therefore, from approximately one-third of the locations evaluated (as part of the contrast rating), the Viaduct Alternative would not change the overall quality of the visual environment. The remaining approximate two-third of viewpoints saw the following impacts: minor adverse (13 viewpoints, 41 percent), minor beneficial (6 viewpoints, 19 percent), and beneficial (2 viewpoints, 6 percent). Generally, the overall quality of the visual environment was considered to be moderate low due to the prominence of transportation infrastructure in these areas.

However, the Viaduct Alternative would result in changes in overall visual quality from approximately two-thirds of viewpoint locations. These changes would result in both minor and more substantial adverse and/or beneficial effects on the visual environment, as further described below.

Based on the visual quality ratings presented in Table 4-2, the simulations depict 11 viewpoints (approximately 34 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) where the Viaduct Alternative would not appreciably change overall visual quality, resulting in a neutral rating. At these locations, for example, the Viaduct Alternative may result in an existing low visual quality rating, remaining low. Simulations that illustrate a neutral change in overall visual quality under the Viaduct Alternative are:

- Viewpoint 1 (Clinton Square - South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East)
- Viewpoint 6 (Upstate Medical University Parking Garage - Almond Street at Harrison Street)
- Viewpoint 7 (Harrison Street at Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 10 (Erie Boulevard East between South State Street and South Townsend Street)
- Viewpoint 12 (Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 13 (South Crouse Avenue at East Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 14 (Irving Avenue at Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 21 (Dr. King Elementary School – MLK, Jr. East at Oakwood Avenue)
- Viewpoint 22 (Pioneer Homes – West of I-81 and Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 23 (Wilson Park Basketball Courts at Jackson Street)
- Viewpoint 24 (North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue)

Based on the visual quality ratings presented in Table 4-2, the simulations from 13 viewpoints (approximately 41 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) depict locations where the Viaduct Alternative would result in a minor adverse change in overall visual quality. In these locations, the visual quality would be reduced from moderate under existing conditions to moderate low (Viewpoint 31) or moderate low to low (Viewpoint 5). At other viewpoints, the change may not be from one category of visual quality to another, but the change within the same visual quality category may be substantial. Simulations that illustrate an adverse or minor adverse change in overall visual quality under the Viaduct Alternative are:

- Viewpoint 2 (Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street)
- Viewpoint 3 (Montgomery Street at East Water Street)
- Viewpoint 4 (Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street)
- Viewpoint 5 (South Townsend Street at East Washington Street)
- Viewpoint 9 (St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage – Hickory Street between Prospect Street and North Townsend Street)

- Viewpoint 16 (Butternut Street Bridge over I-81)
- Viewpoint 17 (Court Street Bridge over I-81)
- Viewpoint 19 (Teall Avenue at Burnet Avenue)
- Viewpoint 20 (I-81 West of Oakwood Cemetery)
- Viewpoint 25 (Franklin Square - North Franklin Street at Evans Street)
- Viewpoint 27 (Basin Street at Kirkpatrick Street)
- Viewpoint 31 (DeWitt Town Hall – Butternut Drive)
- Viewpoint 32 (Wells Avenue East of Oakley Drive)

Factors contributing to adverse effects include the introduction of infrastructure where it does not currently exist, the obstruction of current views because of the Project, increased Project scale (height and mass), shadowing effects, and the removal of buildings and other landscape features. The removal of existing buildings, particularly when these removals are in the foreground of views, would result in more open views of elevated highway infrastructure, contributing to the adverse effect on overall visual quality. This result is seen from Viewpoint 4 (Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street), Viewpoint 5 (South Townsend Street at East Washington Street), and Viewpoint 16 (Butternut Street Bridge over I-81). These changes would result in gaps in the existing urban fabric and character and, in some instances, more open and prominent views of the Project. The Viaduct Alternative also would create adverse effects at Viewpoint 25 in the Franklin Square neighborhood, resulting from the construction of connector ramps between I-81 and I-690 (which do not exist currently). These adverse impacts would typically occur where the new viaduct would dominate foreground views and, to a lesser extent, mid-ground views. In addition, the noise barriers included in the Viaduct Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effects at Viewpoints 19, 20, 27, 31, and 32. Viewers who would experience these adverse effects are mostly within the neighbors' viewer group. The neighbors' viewer group includes nearby residents, commercial building occupants, business patrons, recreationists, commuters on local streets, and pedestrians.

The simulations from 8 viewpoints (approximately 25 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) depict locations that illustrate a beneficial impact on visual quality. Simulations that illustrate a beneficial or minor beneficial change in overall visual quality under the Viaduct Alternative are:

- Viewpoint 8 (Van Buren Street at Henry Street)
- Viewpoint 11 (Crowne Plaza Parking Garage - Almond Street at East Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 15 Butternut Street at North Salina Street)
- Viewpoint 18 (Almond Street at East Adams Street)
- Viewpoint 26 (North Clinton Street at Genant Drive)
- Viewpoint 28 (West Genesee Street at Plum Street)
- Viewpoint 29 (North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street)
- Viewpoint 30 (Hiawatha Boulevard Bridge overlooking I-81)

In the locations listed above, the overall visual effect would be beneficial because the visual quality at these locations would increase, for example, from moderate low to moderate (e.g., Viewpoint 28). Features of the Viaduct Alternative that would result in beneficial changes to the visual environment in some locations include the replacement of aging and deteriorated Project infrastructure with new facilities, new streetscaping, pedestrian-friendly features (such as new sidewalks and crosswalks), bike lanes, and street trees. Additional improvements may include removal/reduction of signage, overgrown vegetation, and other visual clutter. Viewer groups that are likely to appreciate these beneficial changes to the visual environment include commuters on the viaduct itself, who may regard the increased scale of the

roadway as positive in terms of perceived safety or convenience while driving, as well as motorists and pedestrians along surface streets that would be improved under the Viaduct Alternative. Other viewer groups such as pedestrians, commuters, transit riders, and building occupants would experience a positive reaction to the Viaduct Alternative in areas where a sense of visual order and repetition of desirable patterns in the landscape (e.g., street trees, lampposts) would replace a more cluttered, degraded, and chaotic landscape under existing conditions. The creation of discernible patterns and distinct edge treatments between pedestrian areas and vehicular travel lanes, particularly as seen in foreground views, would also be experienced as improvements in visual quality.

The evaluation of potential visual impacts of the Viaduct Alternative indicates that approximately 34 percent (11) of selected viewpoint locations would experience neutral effects, 41 percent (13) adverse effects, and 25 percent (eight) beneficial effects due to localized replacement of degraded transportation infrastructure and enhancement of affected streets. The Viaduct Alternative would replace the existing viaduct along the same established transportation corridor that has adapted and deteriorated visually over the decades to the presence of the current interstate. As a result, existing visual quality is low to at best moderate, within the context of the Project area. An increase in the scale of new transportation infrastructure under this alternative would require removal of historic and other visually prominent buildings that contribute to the architectural character and density of the built environment in the urban landscape. Removing these buildings would create additional voids in the urban and visual fabric of the city. The urban environment is visually dominated by the existing highway's infrastructure, generally perceived as incompatible within its visual context, and that would not change under the Viaduct Alternative.

4.3.3 Community Grid Alternative

The Community Grid Alternative would result in changes in the visual character and visual quality of the Project environment. The most substantial change to the visual environment (relative to existing conditions) proposed under the Community Grid Alternative is the removal of the existing I-81 viaduct and associated infrastructure throughout Downtown Syracuse.

The visual quality ratings conducted as part of the VIA provide a basis for considering the visual effects of the Community Grid Alternative. As shown in Table 4-2, the visual quality ratings for simulations showing the Community Grid Alternative range from moderate low (a score of 1.4 at Viewpoint 16; the Butternut Street bridge overlooking I-81) to moderate high (a score of 3.4; Viewpoint 6 – overlooking Harrison Street and Almond Street from a representative elevated location at the Upstate Medical Parking Garage). The simulations from 12 viewpoints were rated as having moderate low visual quality, while 18 viewpoints were rated as having moderate visual quality, and two were rated as having moderate high visual quality. The Community Grid Alternative simulations and ratings demonstrate an overall minor beneficial or beneficial change in the visual quality in the Project area.

Based on the visual quality ratings presented in Table 4-2, the simulations from four viewpoints (or 13 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) depict locations where the Community Grid Alternative would result in relatively neutral effects on visual quality. In these locations, the overall visual effect is considered neutral because the alternative would not result in a substantial change in visual quality (i.e., the visual quality rating, such as moderate low, would remain the same as the existing condition). Simulations that illustrate a neutral change in overall visual quality under the Community Grid Alternative are:

- Viewpoint 1 (Clinton Square - South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East)
- Viewpoint 5 (South Townsend Street at East Washington Street)

- Viewpoint 16 (Butternut Street Bridge over I-81/BL 81)
- Viewpoint 25 (Franklin Square - North Franklin Street at Evans Street)

Elements of the Community Grid Alternative that could be perceived as adverse changes in the visual environment include the installation of noise barriers and the obstruction of views or removal of mature vegetation. These effects would be balanced or offset for some viewers by improvements to the visual environment resulting from improved condition of Project infrastructure and streetscaping enhancements. Based on the visual quality ratings presented in Table 4-2, the simulations from six viewpoints (approximately 19 percent of the evaluated viewpoints) depict locations where the Community Grid Alternative would result in an adverse or minor adverse change in overall visual quality.

- Viewpoint 17 (Court Street Bridge over BL 81)
- Viewpoint 19 (Teall Avenue at Burnet Avenue)
- Viewpoint 20 (I-81 west of Oakwood Cemetery)
- Viewpoint 27 (Basin Street at Kirkpatrick Street)
- Viewpoint 31 (DeWitt Town Hall - Butternut Drive, DeWitt)
- Viewpoint 32 (Wells Avenue East of Oakley Drive)

Viewpoint 17 would experience a minor adverse change in perceived visual quality due to the obstruction of existing views by safety fencing. In addition, the noise barriers included in the Community Grid Alternative would result in minor adverse visual effect at Viewpoints 19, 20, 27, 31, and 32. However, these adverse impacts to visual quality are restricted to specific areas where more substantial changes to existing roadways or infrastructure are necessary.

From most (69 percent, 22 viewpoints) of the locations included in the evaluation, the Community Grid would result in a minor beneficial (28 percent, 9 viewpoints) or beneficial (41 percent, 13 viewpoints) improvement in overall visual quality. These improvements would be experienced at 22 of the 32 viewpoints evaluated in the VIA (see Table 4-2). In general, the evaluation of visual quality at these representative viewpoints indicate that the Community Grid would result in a substantial improvement in overall visual quality within the AVE. Viewpoints 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13, 18, 22, 23, 28 and 29 have the highest beneficial ratings. Viewpoints with minor beneficial or beneficial effects are:

- Viewpoint 2 (Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street)
- Viewpoint 3 (Montgomery Street at East Water Street)
- Viewpoint 4 (Connective Corridor - East Genesee Street at South McBride Street)
- Viewpoint 6 (Upstate Medical University Parking Garage - Almond Street at Harrison Street)
- Viewpoint 7 (Harrison Street at Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 8 (Van Buren Street at Henry Street)
- Viewpoint 9 (St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage – Hickory Street between Prospect Street and North Townsend Street)
- Viewpoint 10 (Erie Boulevard East between South State Street and South Townsend Street)
- Viewpoint 11 (Crowne Plaza Parking Garage - Almond Street at East Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 12 (Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 13 (South Crouse Avenue at East Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 14 (Irving Avenue at Fayette Street)
- Viewpoint 15 (Butternut Street at North Salina Street)
- Viewpoint 18 (Almond Street at East Adams Street)
- Viewpoint 21 (Dr. King Elementary School - MLK, Jr. East at Oakwood Avenue)

- Viewpoint 22 (Pioneer Homes – west of I-81 and Almond Street)
- Viewpoint 23 (Wilson Park Basketball Courts - Jackson Street)
- Viewpoint 24 (North Townsend Street at Burnet Avenue)
- Viewpoint 26 (North Clinton Street and Genant Drive)
- Viewpoint 28 (West Genesee Street at Plum Street)
- Viewpoint 29 (North Clinton Street between Bear Street and Court Street)
- Viewpoint 30 (Hiawatha Boulevard Bridge over I-81/BL 81)

Beneficial changes to the visual environment include the removal of elevated highway structures, creation of extended views to surrounding areas, the daylighting of areas that are currently cast in shadows from existing highway infrastructure, streetscaping enhancements on Project-affected streets, and removal or replacement of existing infrastructure, which would result in improved aesthetics relative to the existing deteriorated condition of some Project elements. The city's urban landscape would become more visually unified with the exposure of more distant views of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods.

Each of the viewpoints above would experience a substantial increase in visual quality due to the removal of the viaduct, as well as associated improvements to Project-affected surface streets. Other locations would also experience minor improvements in visual quality. Streetscape treatments including new street trees, lighting, sidewalks, crosswalks, greenspace, and a reduction in visual clutter would enhance visual quality. Creating sharp edges between vehicular and pedestrian areas, introducing attractive design features with visually compatible materials, and establishing a repetition of visual patterns would help unify views providing a greater sense of order to the visual landscape. Viewers who would be most affected by the Community Grid Alternative include Downtown and University Hill commuters, pedestrians, neighborhood residents, commercial/institutional building occupants, and local business patrons.

The evaluation of potential visual impact of the Community Grid Alternative indicates that 13 percent (four) of selected viewpoint locations would experience neutral effects, 19 percent (six) adverse effects, and 69 percent (22) beneficial effects. The overall potential visual impact of the Community Grid Alternative would be minor beneficial to beneficial, depending on viewer location and the quality of the visual environment. The Community Grid Alternative would remove the existing degraded viaduct and replace it with modifications to the city's surface street network. Removal of the viaduct would create new views and/or more open views for a variety of viewer groups from both ground level and from elevated locations where existing views are obstructed by existing I-81 transportation infrastructure. Project modifications under the Community Grid Alternative would include new street improvements, bridge reconstruction, other transportation-related improvements, and the creation of a new signalized roadway along Almond Street. Enhanced streetscaping and pedestrian features would also be provided at many locations within the Project area. New gateways into the city would also be created. These gateways provide additional opportunities for design treatments that would contribute to an improved sense of place within the city. The combination of these changes would improve overall visual quality from its current low rating in most areas to moderate and moderate high visual quality within the Project area.

4.4 Mitigation

The consistent application of design features, including new street trees, lighting, pedestrian amenities, and high-quality materials provides a sense of continuity and unity to an urban landscape, which would improve visual quality and enhance viewer experience.

Mitigation of visual impacts may be considered in the Project design phase in the following ways:

- Incorporating vegetated slopes, berms, and terraces where practicable, as space allows, to reduce visual contrast with the scale/mass of bridge abutments, retaining walls, sound walls, and similar structures;
- Exploring opportunities to enhance large concrete surfaces with textured treatments or installation of stone materials at key locations to enhance visual character;
- Establishing standardized streetscape design features within the Project environment, such as wayfinding and other types of signage to enhance viewer experience;
- Applying consistent design features, textures, materials, and colors to structures, lights, and signs throughout the Project environment that are compatible with surrounding development and local neighborhood styles;
- Consolidating wayfinding and directional signage to reduce visual clutter along surface streets adjacent to the Project;
- Burying overhead utilities where possible to improve visual character along commercial arterials;
- Introducing more human-scale elements into the landscape;
- Installation of public art at key intersections and city gateways;
- Consistent use of decorative light poles and cantilevered traffic signals;
- Lighting of underpasses and other areas subject to pedestrian use; and
- Investigating opportunities for access management and consolidation of driveways with right-of-way enhancements to include the installation of new curbs, grassed areas, and planted medians and new signage along commercial arterials.

Vegetation plantings and enhancement can be an effective way to screen and soften contrasts in the appearance of transportation infrastructure. Vegetation can be used to focus viewer interest towards specific locations and frame specific views that are locally significant, such as gateways into the city. The installation of new vegetation, such as new street trees as part of streetscape improvements, would be included as part of both build alternatives. Where possible, areas of mature vegetation would be retained and maintained to the greatest extent practicable within the Project environment to create a strong vegetative edge to soften and screen views of transportation infrastructure and direct views towards visual resources along highway corridors. For instance, the retention of vegetation can enhance and frame foreground/mid-ground views of the Syracuse skyline, landmark buildings, places of historic and/or architectural significance, parks, public spaces, and other locally important resources.

Mitigation is not restricted to vegetation. In some areas of the Project, plantings are not practical. In an urban context, mitigation measures consistent with materials of the built form may be even more important. The use of compatible hardscape materials, colors, textures in the design treatment of bridge abutments, retaining walls, crosswalks, and pedestrian pavements would enhance the visual character of transportation infrastructure and adjacent areas. Lighting below transportation structures would be extremely important under both build alternatives, as a way to visually unify two sides of the infrastructure, as well as to provide visual interest in areas (for example, underneath the viaduct, which might otherwise be cast in shadows during the day or in darkness at night). This type of mitigation would be especially important in areas of pedestrian activity.

4.4.1 Viaduct Alternative

Given the scale of the Viaduct Alternative, some of the adverse permanent/operational impacts are unavoidable and measures to minimize the effects are generally not available. Consistent with its policies, NYSDOT would consider and apply context-sensitive design solutions where practicable. This could include planting of street trees and other vegetative screening measures, streetscape improvements, selection of appropriate design/construction materials, and surface design treatments of structures (abutments and retaining walls) and pavements that would fit the context of the Project's urban setting. The overall improvements to the visual quality of the Viaduct Alternative in comparison to the existing degraded conditions of the No Build Alternative would contribute to the overall mitigation of adverse visual impacts.

As part of the Viaduct Alternative, the NYSDOT would provide replacement landscaping as a part of the overall enhancement and aesthetic improvement efforts for this Project. Streetscape enhancements would be provided on many local streets across the Project area. These streets include Almond Street and portions of West Street and Erie Boulevard, as well as portions of connecting surface streets. Streetscape enhancements may include sidewalks, bicycle facilities, specialty pavements, aesthetic treatments for walkways, site furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, landscape plantings, green infrastructure for stormwater management, and area lighting. Design details and locations for these enhancements would be determined as design for the Project progresses. Streetscape enhancements would be designed to provide an overall sense of visual cohesiveness. The streetscape design would promote safe, effective pedestrian and bicyclist circulation for comfort, facilitating social interaction, consistent with the city's long-range planning efforts.

The Central Study Area is spatially confined. Mitigation through partial screening of views from adjacent locations to reduce adverse impacts is restricted. Some screening of limited views may be possible through the enhancement of streetscapes with additional street trees. In some cases, variation in the style/form of support structures, for example at bridge overpasses, could enhance visual compatibility with the context of surrounding neighborhoods. Surface treatments, such as using native stone materials for concrete columns, abutments, and highway support structures, may be possible enhancements in some locations. Strategic placement of plantings may also soften the appearance of constructed elements in certain locations. Improvements to lighting below overpasses or larger open areas below the viaduct can be added.

Avoidance of visual impacts, such as in the Franklin Square neighborhood resulting from construction of proposed connector ramps between existing I-81 and I-690, would require the identification of alternative routes or means of connection, which would result in other direct and indirect impacts to other areas. Under the Viaduct Alternative, new ramps would be built to provide direct connections, which are unavailable today, between eastbound I-690 and northbound I-81 and between southbound I-81 and westbound I-690. These new direct connections to facilitate interstate-to-interstate movement would be consistent with AASHTO's "A Policy on Design Standards Interstate System" (January 2005), which states, "Interchanges shall be provided between all intersecting interstate routes, between other selected access-controlled highways, and at other selected public highways to facilitate the distribution of traffic. Each interchange shall provide for all traffic movements." Twenty-four buildings and one structure (a smokestack) would be removed under the Viaduct Alternative; eleven of these buildings would be removed in the I-81/I690 interchange area north of James Street. The removals may warrant additional mitigation consideration to offset adverse impacts to local streets, such as a loss of scale, enclosure, and neighborhood character provided by the existing structures.

Important points of entry from the proposed Interstate Highway system to the street network would be enhanced as gateways. Gateway enhancements would be developed to create a distinct and identifiable sense of entry and sense of place. These enhancements include establishment of a consistent theme or motif, use of specialty materials and site elements, historical elements, landscaping, signage, aesthetic earth forms, and sculptural elements to mark the entrance to the city. Gateways have been identified at the new West Street/Genesee Street intersection, the North Clinton Street exit, and on Almond Street (between the Adams and Harrison on- and off-ramps).

The West Street and Genesee Street Gateway would be achieved by the elimination of the elevated highway infrastructure, bringing West Street to surface, and the creation of a normalized intersection. Pedestrian, bicycle, and visual connectivity across West Street would be greatly enhanced. Aesthetic treatments would be used at this intersection to create a heightened sense of arrival into the city. Pedestrian areas at the intersections could be enlarged to accommodate more amenities and for visual impact. Sculptural lighting elements could serve as vertical markers, reinforcing a sense of arrival. Color could be used to enliven and punctuate the space. Sculptural sign walls, landscape seating walls, and enhanced landscaping could all be used to define a gateway area. Design details and locations for these enhancements would be determined as design for the Project progresses. Specialty pavements and patterning could be utilized on sidewalks, for interpretation of the history of the location, and could be incorporated into the pavements and plazas. Signage could orient visitors to the Creekwalk, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods.

The removal of the highway infrastructure in this location also would allow for the creation of shared-use (bicycle and pedestrian) paths along the west side of Onondaga Creek and the creation of an overlook at the historic Erie Canal Aqueduct under Erie Boulevard. A historic canal theme that builds on the Erie Canal aqueduct that would become visible under the build alternatives would provide the basis for the design vocabulary at this location. Canal themed materials could include rustic stone and wood, as well as other industrial themed materials. Consideration of existing Creekwalk elements, such as lighting, interpretive signage, furnishings, and pavement materials, would be included to integrate with existing adjacent Creekwalk segments north and south of the Project Area.

The Clinton Street Gateway is a gateway to the heart of the Downtown business district. Gateway enhancements would include landscape, low site walls, and aesthetic landforms just before passing under the elevated I-690. Other components of the gateway could include lighting and sculptural elements. Aesthetic enhancements to the I-690 bridge would reinforce the sense of gateway and arrival. Gateway enhancements could be continued south to Herald Place on Clinton Avenue to further reinforce the gateway corridor experience and establish a rhythm of street trees and streetlights to transition to the city streets beyond the Project limits.

Almond Street between the Adams Street and Harrison Street exits is a gateway district to Downtown and University Hill. Almond Street beneath the viaduct would be enhanced in this location to create a sense of gateway and arrival. Enhancements could include the use of specialty pavements, signage, and sculptural elements under the viaduct, as well as enhancements to the bridge architecture itself to create a distinct sense of place. Pedestrian areas at the intersections could incorporate similar amenities. Sculptural lighting elements could serve as vertical markers, reinforcing a sense of arrival.

The Northern Gateway along the northern segment of I-81 would be achieved with landscape enhancements and aesthetic treatments to structures. Reconstructed bridges, abutments, and retaining walls would receive aesthetic

treatments. Plantings along the highway would be provided to enhance the travel experience and create a sense of arrival.

Improvements to I-81 between Bear Street and Hiawatha Boulevard would replace an existing concrete retaining wall with a planted embankment adjacent to the highway. The new embankment would allow for the creation of a shared-use (bicycle and pedestrian) path and overlook. The overlook would interpret the history of the site related to the Oswego Canal, industrial past, and Northside neighborhood. Elements such as lighting, interpretive signage, furnishings, and pavement materials would be included to integrate the path and overlook with the adjacent Washington Square Park area.

4.4.2 Community Grid Alternative

Consistent with its policies, NYSDOT would consider and apply context-sensitive design solutions where practicable. These are anticipated to include planting of street trees, other vegetative screening measures, streetscape improvements, selection of materials, surface design treatments of structures (such as abutments and retaining walls), and pavements, which would be compatible with the surrounding context and the urban environment. The overall improvements to the visual quality of the Project under both build alternatives would contribute to the mitigation of adverse impacts.

As part of the Community Grid Alternative, NYSDOT would provide or replace landscaping as a part of the overall enhancement and aesthetic improvements for this Project. Streetscape enhancements would be provided along Almond Street and portions of Erie Boulevard, West Street, Crouse and Irving Avenues, as well as portions of connecting surface streets. Streetscape enhancements would include sidewalks, specialty pavements, aesthetic treatments for walkways, site furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, landscape plantings, and green infrastructure for stormwater management. Design details and locations for these enhancements would be determined as design for the Project progresses. Streetscape enhancements would be designed to provide an overall sense of visual cohesiveness. Almond Street would include a landscaped median from north of Van Buren Street roundabout to I-690, lending a distinctive character along the length of the roadway. The streetscape design would promote safe, effective pedestrian /bicyclist circulation, and help facilitate social interaction, consistent with the City's long-range planning goals.

Important points of entry from BL 81 to the street network would be enhanced as gateways. Gateway enhancements would be developed to create a distinct and identifiable sense of entry and sense of place. These enhancements include establishment of a consistent theme or motif, use of specialty materials, site elements, historical elements, landscaping, signage, aesthetic earth forms, and sculptural elements to mark the entrance to the City. Gateways have been identified at the new West Street/Genesee Street intersection, new James Street exit at Oswego Boulevard through the creation of a new "Canal District," at the new Crouse and Irving Avenues interchange with I-690, at the new Van Buren Street entrance to the City, and at the northern segment of BL 81 between Hiawatha Boulevard and I-690.

The West Street and Genesee Street Gateway would be achieved by the elimination of the elevated highway infrastructure, bringing West Street to surface, and the creation of a normalized intersection. Pedestrian, bicycle, and visual connectivity across West Street would be greatly enhanced. Aesthetic treatments would be used at this intersection to create a heightened sense of arrival into the city. Pedestrian areas at the intersections would be enlarged

to accommodate more amenities and for visual impact. Sculptural lighting elements would serve as vertical markers, reinforcing a sense of arrival. The use of color would be used to enliven and punctuate the space. Sculptural sign walls, landscape and seat walls, and enhanced landscaping would all be used to define a gateway area. Design details and locations for these enhancements would be determined as design for the Project progresses. Specialty pavements and patterning would be utilized on sidewalks, and interpretation of the history of the location would be incorporated into the pavements and plazas. Signage would orient visitors to the Creekwalk, Downtown, and surrounding neighborhoods.

The removal of the highway infrastructure in this location also would allow for the creation of shared-use (bicycle and pedestrian) paths along the west side of Onondaga Creek and the creation of an overlook at the historic Erie Canal aqueduct under Erie Boulevard. A historic canal theme that builds on the Erie Canal aqueduct that would become visible under the build alternatives could provide the basis for the design vocabulary at this location. Canal themed materials could include rustic stone and wood, as well as other industrial themed materials. Consideration of existing Creekwalk elements, such as lighting, interpretive signage, furnishings, and pavement materials, would be included to integrate with existing adjacent Creekwalk segments located north and south of the Project Area.

The Clinton Street Gateway is a gateway to the heart of the Downtown business district. Gateway enhancements would include landscape, low site walls, and aesthetic landforms just before passing under the elevated I-690. Other components of the gateway could include lighting and sculptural elements. Aesthetic enhancements to the I-690 bridge would reinforce the sense of gateway and arrival. Gateway enhancements could be continued south to Herald Place on Clinton Avenue to further reinforce the gateway corridor experience and establish a rhythm of street trees and streetlights to transition to the city streets beyond the Project limits.

Under the Community Grid Alternative, the new interchange at **Crouse and Irving Avenues** would create a new gateway to University Hill's educational and medical facilities. A contemporary theme could be adopted for the design vocabulary at this location, reflecting technology and the progressive nature of the institutions. The design vocabulary could be extended along several blocks of both Crouse and Irving Avenues to create gateway corridors and reinforce the sense of arrival along these streets. The vocabulary would primarily consist of streetscape elements such as lighting, pavements, landscaping, and street furnishings that reflect a dynamic, forward-thinking community. The strategic use of color could underscore the sense of a dynamic environment. The Crouse and Irving Avenues Gateway would be provided only under the Community Grid Alternative.

Martin Luther King Jr., East (MLK, Jr. East) would become the new gateway to the city when arriving from the south under the Community Grid Alternative. A gateway corridor would be developed beginning approximately 1,600 feet south of MLK, Jr. East and extending north to Van Buren Street. South of MLK, Jr. East, landscape plantings along either side of the road would provide a transition from the more rural Tully Valley to the south and would heighten the sense of arrival into the city. Plantings in this zone could also complement traffic calming in this area as the highway comes down to grade. Beginning at MLK, Jr. East, street tree plantings, including a center planted median, would line the corridor. Artistic site walls combined with landscape planting and street lighting could be a signature motif in this gateway corridor. The walls could incorporate local stone, signage, and artistic metal. and they would be repeated, with variation, throughout the corridor. Signage would address both the city as well the universities. The Van Buren Street roundabout would be developed as a gateway to the universities. Reconstruction of the railroad bridge could be considered as part of the gateway experience, incorporating aesthetic treatments to reinforce the sense of arrival. The MLK, Jr. East Gateway would be provided only under the Community Grid Alternative.

The **Northern Gateway** along the northern segment of BL 81 would be achieved with landscape enhancements and aesthetic treatments to structures. Reconstructed bridges, abutments, and retaining walls would receive aesthetic treatments. Plantings along the highway would be provided to enhance the travel experience and create a sense of arrival. Under the Community Grid Alternative, a new exit from the former I-81 south would connect to the northern end of **Oswego Boulevard**, creating an entrance to Downtown that coincides with the historic alignment of the Oswego Canal. One block to the east, Pearl Street would be extended south, re-establishing its historic alignment, and would provide access to a northbound interstate on-ramp from Erie Boulevard. The new on-ramp and off-ramp, combined with a reinstated street grid, provide an opportunity to create a gateway district centered on the historic confluence of the Oswego and Erie Canals. A lumberyard and railroad also occupied the site historically. Their presence, combined with the presence of the canals, suggest the use of industrial themed materials such as stone and wood.

The Erie Canal Museum and mule driver's monument on the historic location of the towpath would be located at the heart of the district. Streetscape improvements along Erie Boulevard, including an interpretive towpath, would connect historic Clinton Square to the museum and to the mule driver's monument across the street.

Low, rustic stone walls that are evocative of the canal could potentially be located along Oswego Boulevard and Erie Boulevard, marking the entrance to the city. One possibility is to use sculptural banners that interpret canal boats at intersections, reinforcing the sense of arrival. There is the potential for a fountain to evoke the historic presence of water on the site, and the incorporation of water in a rustic stone sign wall. An overhead pergola that incorporates supports that are reminiscent of historic structures on the site could define an outdoor event space. The Canal District Gateway would be provided only under the Community Grid Alternative.

Improvements to BL 81 between Bear Street and Hiawatha Boulevard would include the replacement of an existing concrete retaining wall with a planted embankment adjacent to the highway. The new embankment would allow for the creation of a shared-use (bicycle and pedestrian) path and overlook. The overlook would interpret the history of the site related to the Oswego Canal, industrial past, and distant views of the Tully Valley to establish a site design vocabulary. Elements such as lighting, interpretive signage, furnishings, and pavement materials would be included to integrate the path and overlook with the adjacent Washington Square Park area.

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