SECTION 6.4.3
VISUAL RESOURCES AND AESTHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) was prepared for the Project consistent with the Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects released by FHWA in 2015 (FHWA-HEP-15-029) and NYSDOT visual assessment policy.

The VIA for the I-81 Viaduct Project included the following components:

- Identifying the Project's Area of Visual Effect (AVE), which includes the visual range of proposed project elements under the No Build, Viaduct, and Community Grid Alternatives;
- Mapping the Project's viewshed 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 land use and visual character;
- 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;
- Selecting key views for visual assessment;
- Evaluating potential visibility through visual simulation of proposed components, including design elements being considered for incorporation into the Project;
- Assessing changes to visual quality; and
- 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 data, including existing plans and studies relevant to visual resources within the AVE. Land use, topography, property, and other types of data were acquired from various 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 document existing visual character and quality.

6.4.3.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

STUDY AREA AND METHODOLOGY

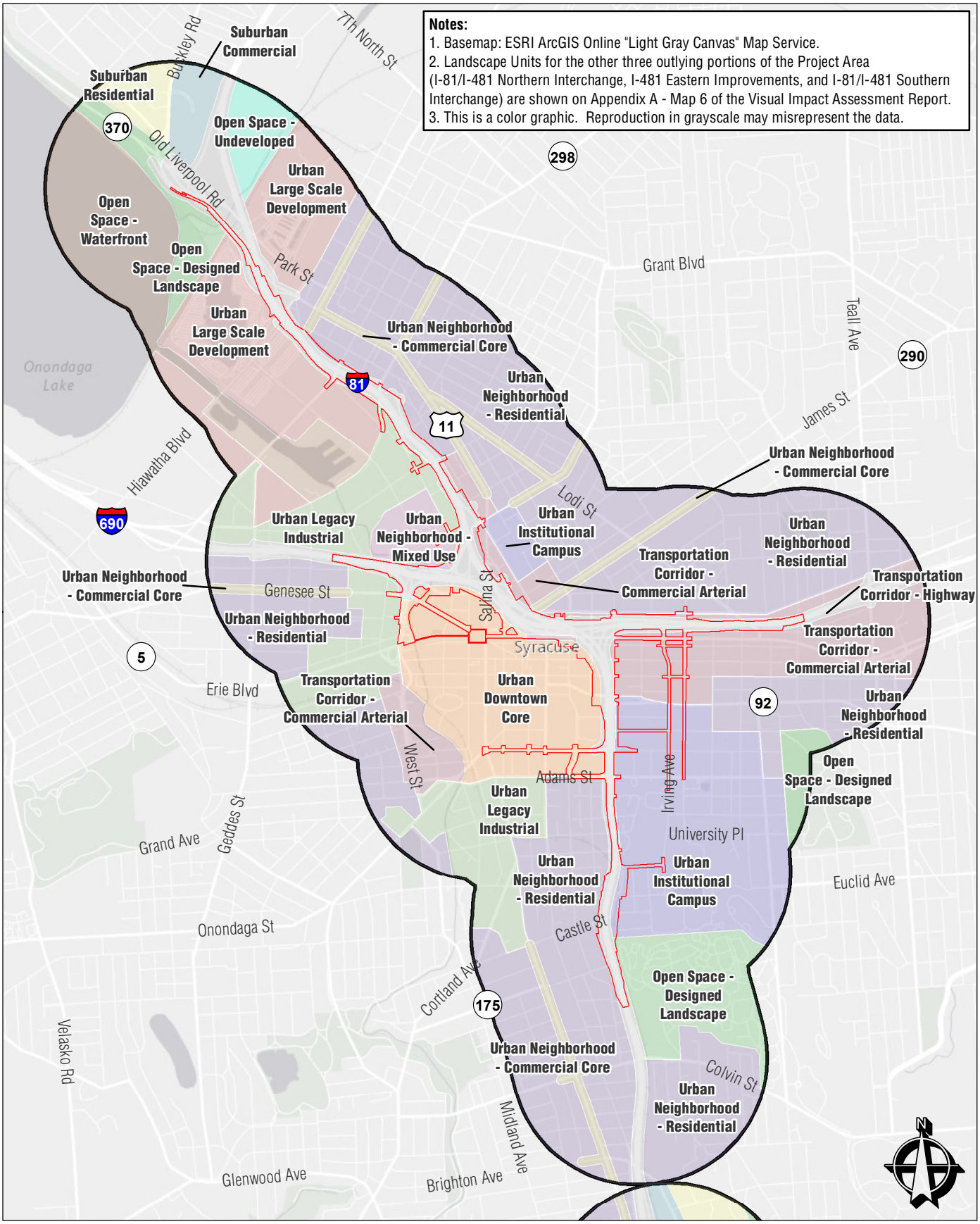
The Project's AVE is defined by areas within a 0.5-mile radius from the Project limits of disturbance in the Project Area. The AVE includes the I-81/I-690 interchange as well as the I-81/I-481 interchange areas in the Town of Cicero north of Syracuse, the Town of Dewitt east of Syracuse, and the Town of Onondaga near the southern portion of Syracuse. The VIA focuses on the viaduct priority area because it includes areas of high viewer sensitivity

and is anticipated to have the most potential for substantial changes in visual quality under the Project's two build alternatives - the Viaduct Alternative and the Community Grid Alternative. The changes to the I-81/I-481 interchanges under the Community Grid Alternative would occur in areas that have low viewer sensitivity. The improvements to these interchanges would be generally compatible with the existing visual environment and have minimal impact on visual quality.

The existing visual character of the AVE is described in the VIA in terms of the affected visual environment, affected viewer population, and the visual quality of the landscape units established to determine baseline visual conditions. Based on existing land use data, 14 landscape units were identified in the AVE (see **Figure 6.4.3-1).** Landscape units are geographic areas that generally correspond to land uses and viewer groups for which effects to visual character, viewer response, and visual quality are assessed. Visual characteristics are generally uniform within a landscape unit. Landscape units may also include distinct visual qualities that provide a unique identity based on visual characteristics. Landscape units within the AVE are summarized in **Table 6.4.3-1**.

Two primary viewer groups (and subgroups of each) are considered in the visual analysis to identify the Project's affected population. Viewer groups are defined as "neighbors," who have views of the Project, and "travelers," who have views from the Project (FHWA 2015). Neighbors are defined as persons located near or adjacent to the transportation project who may see it from locations within a landscape unit and who may not be in immediate proximity to the Project Area. Neighbors may be located anywhere within the AVE if they have a potential view to the Project. Neighbors include persons traveling on non-Project local roadways, but do not include persons traveling on Project interstates or affected surface streets. The types of neighbors are classified by the predominant type of land use where they are located to determine their sensitivity to changes in visual character and quality. Pedestrians and bicyclists are assumed to be potential viewers within the neighbor viewer group in all landscape units.

Travelers make up the second viewer group. Travelers are on Project roadways with views from the interstates or affected streets within the AVE. These viewers remain travelers if they are located on Project roadways, including the viaduct and the I-81/I-690 interchange. This group consists of existing and future users of the Project. Pedestrians, bicyclists, and other non-motorized users may not be considered within this group since they are prohibited on the interstates, but may be considered when traveling on City streets and sidewalks directly affected by the Project. Viewer groups and subgroups are identified by landscape unit in **Table 6.4.3-1**.



Landscape Units

I-81 Viaduct Project

Figure 6.4.3-1

Table 6.4.3-1
Viewer Groups and Subgroups by Landscape Unit

Landscape Units in the Project AVE	Viewer Groups										
	Travelers Group			Neighbors Group							
	Subgroups			Predominant Subgroups							
	Community	Touring	Shipping	Residential	Recreational	Institutional	Civic	Retail	Commercial	Industrial
Transportation Corridor - Highway	X	X	X							
Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial									X	
Urban Downtown Core				X	X	X	X	X	X	
Urban Neighborhood - Residential				X						
Urban Neighborhood - Commercial Core								X	X	
Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use				X	X				X	
Urban Institutional Campus				X	X	X			X	
Urban Legacy Industrial									X	X
Urban Large Scale Development					X			X	X	X
Suburban Commercial									X	
Suburban Residential				X						
Open Space – Undeveloped										
Open Space - Designed Landscape					X					
Open Space – Waterfront					X					

The AVE for the I-81 Viaduct Project is primarily a dense urban cultural environment visually dominated by built forms. These forms include buildings and residences of varying height, use, architectural style, scale, and massing; vertical and horizontal structures, including public utilities (poles and wires) and signage; surface streets and parking lots; pedestrian areas and sidewalks; and elevated interstate highway infrastructure (viaducts and ramps). Topography within the AVE ranges from relatively flat along the interstate corridors Downtown to more varied rolling terrain, with increased elevations, in the outer portions of the corridors and surrounding neighborhoods. This increase in topography is most noticeable in the southeastern neighborhoods of the AVE near the University Hill neighborhood and the City's Northside neighborhood, north of the I-81/I-690 interchange. 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 on the southeast near Oakwood Cemetery in the University Hill neighborhood. West of Syracuse, elevations range from 380 to 600 feet amsl, where undulating landscapes are characterized by till plains, rolling hills and 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 lowlands.

Vegetation, although limited in many areas along the I-81 Viaduct corridor, occurs throughout the AVE, and tree heights, canopy coverage, and density of vegetation typically increase as the distance from Downtown increases. In Downtown, vegetation is mostly

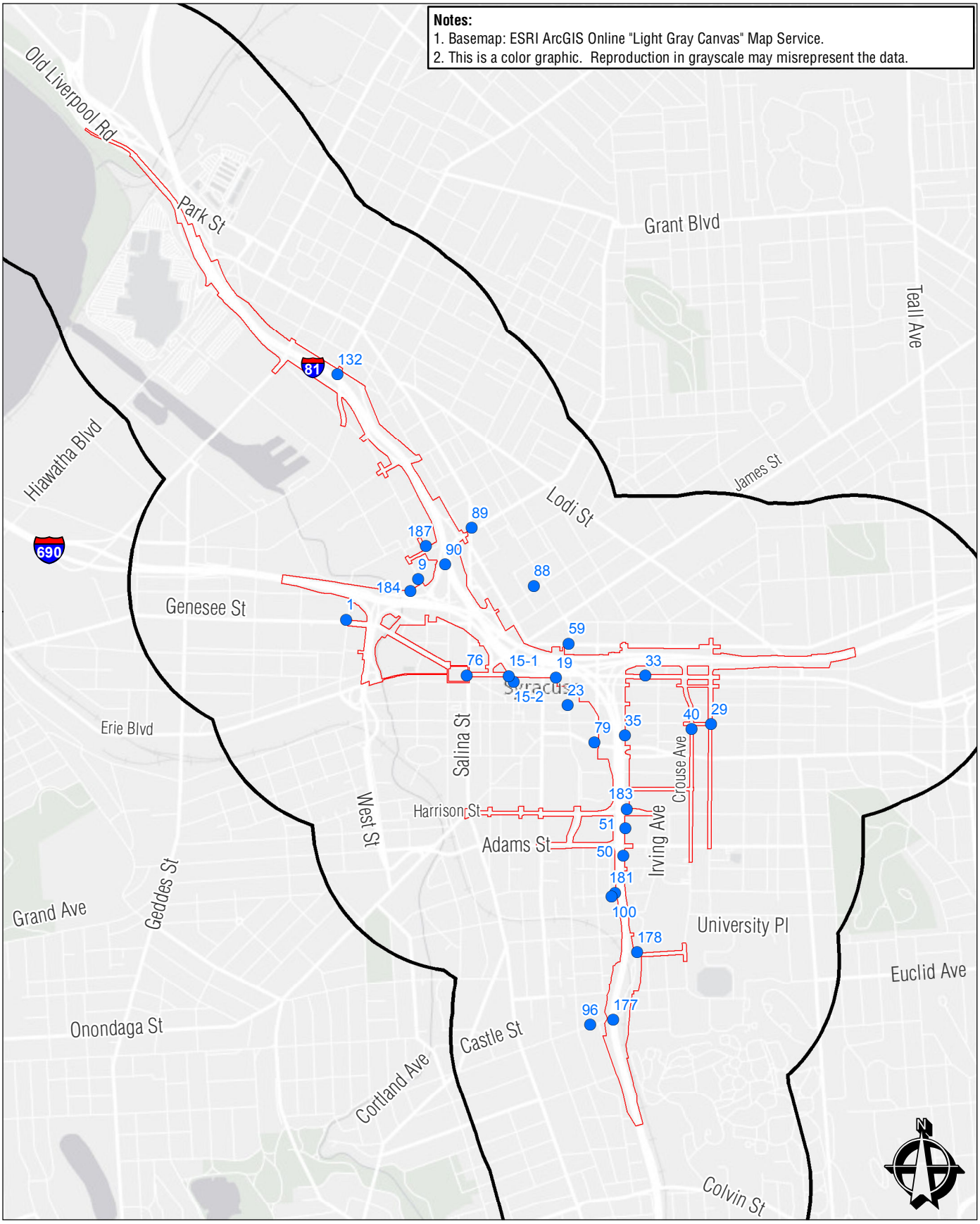
deciduous and includes street trees, some lawn, and landscaped areas in urban pocket and neighborhood parks and on the building grounds of both private and public facilities. Vacant lots typically include some shrub cover and young trees. Outside of the Downtown core, in surrounding residential neighborhoods and commercial areas, vegetation is more abundant, mostly deciduous with some evergreen trees and shrubs. Deciduous vegetation increases visibility from viewpoints throughout the AVE during leaf-off seasons (i.e., late fall, winter, and early spring). Tree species and canopy height and coverage increase outward from the center of the AVE into surrounding urban/suburban neighborhoods. Some neighborhood hilltops and City parks contain dense stands of woodland that create a visible edge on the horizon and in mid-ground and background views outside of the AVE.

Downtown Syracuse is the region's urban center at the intersection of major transportation corridors, including I-81, I-690, and I-90. Many commercial arterials and residential neighborhood streets are organized in grid patterns, particularly where relatively flat topography exists in and around Downtown. Suburban development patterns occur in towns along major transportation routes beyond the urban core. Land use density and the intensity of development, including residential, institutional, civic, commercial, and industrial land uses, are greatest in the Urban Downtown Core and immediately adjacent to the viaduct and I-81/I-690 interchange area.

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Twenty-six (26) key viewpoints were selected to prepare visual simulations for both build alternatives to evaluate potential visual effects and the degree of change in visual quality (see **Figure 6.4.3-2**). The methodology for the preparation of the visual simulations is discussed in Chapter 2 of the VIA Report (see Appendix F). The visual impact analysis for the Project is based on evaluation of the visual simulations showing the alternatives from these 26 key selected viewpoints. This impact analysis considers a variety of factors in comparing the No Build Alternative with proposed changes, including the potential effect of each of the build alternatives on the natural, cultural, and visual environments. The potential visual effect of each Build Alternative is evaluated relative to the existing character and quality of the visual environment. The evaluation is not a comparison in visual quality between the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives. NEPA requires that the Build Alternatives are compared to the Existing/No Build Alternative.

The analysis considers the sensitivity of viewer groups to changes in visual quality by anticipating their response to the alternatives. Existing viewer sensitivity within the affected environment considers viewer exposure (proximity, extent, and duration) and awareness (attention, focus, protection) under the No Build and Build Alternatives (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 evaluation of contrast in visual character 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.



Viewpoint Location Map

I-81 Viaduct Project

Figure 6.4.3-2

Visual quality at each selected viewpoint under the No Build Alternative and Build Alternatives was rated by a panel of registered landscape architects in terms of 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 with a score of 0.1 to 2.0 indicating low to moderately low visual quality; a score of 2.1 to 3.0 indicating moderate visual quality; and a score of 3.1 to 5.0 indicating moderately high to high visual quality.

Viewer sensitivity and overall project compatibility at each of the 26 selected viewpoints are summarized in **Table 6.4.3-2**.

Changes in visual quality resulting from the Viaduct and Community Grid Alternatives were evaluated by assigning scores comparing each of the two Build Alternatives to No Build/Existing Conditions based on photo simulations illustrating project elements under each alternative. Viewer sensitivity and predicted changes in visual character and quality help define the degree of project impact as adverse, beneficial, or neutral. The overall score for each alternative and the degree of impact are summarized by viewpoint in **Table 6.4.3-3** and discussed in following sections.

6.4.3.2 NO BUILD ALTERNATIVE

The No Build Alternative would maintain the I-81 viaduct in its existing configuration with routine maintenance and repairs addressed as part of NYSDOT's ongoing maintenance program. These actions would not substantially change visual character within the AVE. Under No Build 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 6.4.3-2, the existing project is considered incompatible with its visual environment from 15 (approximately 58 percent) of the 26 viewpoints evaluated in this VIA. Examples of locations where viewer sensitivity is high and the existing project is perceived as incompatible include Viewpoint 26 (the western gateway into the City along West Genesee Street), as well as Viewpoints 3, 6, 7, 20, 21, and 22. Under this alternative, no action would result in an increase in project visual incompatibility. This situation can be avoided under either the Viaduct Alternative or the Community Grid Alternative.

Table 6.4.3-2
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	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
2	Urban Downtown Core	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
3	Urban Downtown Core	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
4	Urban Downtown Core	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
5	Urban Downtown Core	Moderate	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
6	Urban Institutional Campus	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
7	Urban Institutional Campus	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
8	Urban Institutional Campus	Low	Incompatible	Compatible	Compatible
9	Urban Downtown Core	Low	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
10	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
11	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Low	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
12	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	Moderate	Incompatible	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	Moderate	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
18	Transportation Corridor - Highway	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
19	Urban Neighborhood - Residential	Moderate	Compatible	Incompatible	Compatible
20	Urban Neighborhood - Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
21	Urban Neighborhood - Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Compatible
22	Urban Neighborhood - Residential	High	Incompatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
23	Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use	High	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
24	Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use	High	Compatible	Incompatible	Incompatible
25	Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use	Low	Compatible	Compatible	Compatible
26	Urban Legacy Industrial	High	Incompatible	Compatible	Compatible

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.

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.

Table 6.4.3-3
Visual Impact Summary for Selected Viewpoints

Viewpoint	Landscape Unit	Change in Visual Quality [1]			Degree of Impact [2]	
		Existing/ No Build	Viaduct	Community Grid	Viaduct	Community Grid
1	Urban Downtown Core	1.8	1.6	1.8	Neutral	Neutral
2	Urban Downtown Core	1.7	1.2	2.3	Adverse	Beneficial
3	Urban Downtown Core	1.4	1.1	2.2	Adverse	Beneficial
4	Urban Downtown Core	2.3	1.5	3.7	Adverse	Beneficial
5	Urban Downtown Core	1.7	1.4	2.2	Adverse	Beneficial
6	Urban Institutional Campus	1.3	1.0	3.6	Adverse	Beneficial
7	Urban Institutional Campus	1.4	1.6	3.2	Neutral	Beneficial
8	Urban Institutional Campus	0.9	2.0	2.8	Beneficial	Beneficial
9	Urban Institutional Campus	2.8	2.5	3.1	Adverse	Beneficial
10	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	1.4	1.3	3.0	Neutral	Beneficial
11	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	1.8	1.6	2.9	Neutral	Beneficial
12	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	1.6	1.3	2.9	Adverse	Beneficial
13	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	1.9	1.9	3.1	Neutral	Beneficial
14	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	2.0	2.0	2.6	Neutral	Beneficial
15	Transportation Corridor Commercial Arterial	1.4	1.9	1.9	Beneficial	Beneficial
16	Transportation Corridor Highway	1.4	1.1	1.1	Adverse	Adverse
17	Transportation Corridor Highway	2.0	2.0	2.0	Neutral	Neutral
18	Transportation Corridor Highway	1.2	1.8	3.3	Beneficial	Beneficial
19	Urban Neighborhood Residential	2.3	1.7	3.2	Adverse	Beneficial
20	Urban Neighborhood Residential	1.1	1.3	3.8	Beneficial	Beneficial
21	Urban Neighborhood Residential	1.6	1.6	3.4	Neutral	Beneficial
22	Urban Neighborhood Residential	0.9	1.0	1.9	Neutral	Beneficial
23	Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use	4.1	1.2	1.4	Adverse	Adverse
24	Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use	2.4	1.0	1.1	Adverse	Adverse
25	Urban Neighborhood Mixed Use	2.2	2.4	2.4	Neutral	Neutral
26	Urban Legacy Industrial	1.4	3.1	3.1	Beneficial	Beneficial

Notes:

1. Visual Quality Rating Intervals:

0.1 to 2.0 Low Visual Quality

2.1 t0 3.0 Moderate (Average) Visual Quality

3.1 to 4.0 Moderately High Visual Quality

4.1 to 5.0 High Visual Quality

2. The evaluation of visual quality compares the Viaduct Alternative to the Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative and the Community Grid Alternative to the Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative. Any positive difference or increase in score for a Build Alternative compared to the Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative of more than 0.2 is considered a beneficial change in visual quality. A negative difference or decrease in score for a Build Alternative compared to the Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative of more than 0.2 is considered an adverse change in visual quality. Any changes in visual quality of 0.2 or less is a “neutral” change or degree of impact.

6.4.3.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE VIADUCT ALTERNATIVE

PERMANENT/OPERATIONAL EFFECTS

The Viaduct Alternative would result in changes in local visual character due to the increased scale, mass, height, and width of elevated sections of the highway. The increased width of the Project right-of-way would result in the need for property acquisitions and the removal of 24 existing buildings and structures. Elevated sections of the new viaduct would be approximately 30 to 35 feet tall, which is an increase in height of about 10 to 15 feet relative to the current viaduct. These changes will alter existing visual character of the Project environment from many areas within the AVE, including a reduction in the density of the built environment adjacent to the Project, the removal of historic 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 includes the construction of new flyover connector ramps between I-81 and I-690, which will be approximately 35 feet wide and up to approximately 45-60 feet above existing grade at their highest point. Changes in visual character and quality would include both adverse and beneficial impacts (see **Figure 6.4.3-3** and **Appendix F**). **Figure 6.4.3-3** includes a photograph from each of 26 selected viewpoints showing the No Build Alternative/Existing Conditions as well as a simulation of the Viaduct Alternative. The comparison of Viaduct Alternative images to the No Build Alternative/Existing Conditions provides the basis for an assessment of the Viaduct Alternative's potential visual effect.

The Viaduct Alternative is incompatible with the context of surrounding areas from 18 (approximately 69 percent) of the 26 viewpoint locations that were selected for impact analysis. These locations are in areas of moderate to high viewer sensitivity. In comparison, the No Build Alternative/Existing Conditions is incompatible with its visual setting from 15 viewpoints (or approximately 58 percent of the 26 viewpoint locations considered in the analysis); therefore, the Viaduct Alternative is considered less compatible with its visual environment relative to existing conditions.

This change in incompatibility is due to several factors, illustrated by visual simulations, including increased project scale, height, mass, and shadowing effects. At some viewpoints, the widening of right-of-way would result in removal of buildings and other landscape features, resulting in more open and prominent views of the Project.

Based on the compatibility evaluation presented in the VIA and in Table 6.4.3-3, adverse visual effects are anticipated at 11 (approximately 42 percent) of the 26 viewpoints selected for analysis. Factors contributing to these adverse effects include the introduction of project infrastructure where it does not currently exist, the obstruction of current views by the Project, the increased scale of project components, and the removal of buildings and/or other existing features. At 10 (approximately 38 percent) of the viewpoints, the visual effect is anticipated to be relatively neutral, indicating that the Viaduct Alternative would not result in a substantial change relative to the existing visual character. At the remaining 5 viewpoints (approximately 19 percent), the Viaduct Alternative is anticipated to result in beneficial effects.

Viewpoint 1: South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East (Clinton Square)

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Viewpoint 2: Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: Northeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 3: Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: Northwest

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 4: East Genesee Street between South McBride Street and Almond Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: East

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 5: South Townsend Street at East Washington Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: Northeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 6: Upstate Medical University Parking Garage on East Adams Street at Almond Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: Northwest

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 7: Harrison Street at Almond Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: West

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 8: Intersection of Renwick Avenue and Van Buren Street.

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: Southwest

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 9: St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage, corner of Prospect and North Townsend Streets

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: Southeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 10: Erie Boulevard East between South State and South Townsend Streets

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: East

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 11: Crowne Plaza Parking Garage, corner of Almond and East Fayette Streets

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 12: Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: West

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 13: East Fayette Street at South Crouse Avenue

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 14: Irving Avenue at Fayette Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 15: North Salina Street at Butternut Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: Southwest

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 16: Butternut Street bridge over I-81

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: South

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 17: Court Street bridge over I-81

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: Northwest

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 18: Almond Street at East Adams Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 19: MLK Jr. East at Dr. King Elementary School

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Direction of View: Northeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 20: Eastern edge of Pioneer Homes adjacent to Highway Ramp

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: North

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 21: Wilson Park Basketball Courts, Jackson Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: Southeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 22: Burnet Avenue at North Townsend Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: South

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 23: Creekwalk sidewalk south of Franklin Square

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: Southeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Viewpoint 24: North Franklin Street at Evans Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: Southeast

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Note: 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.

Viewpoint 25: North Clinton Street and Genant Drive

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Direction of View: South

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Viewpoint 26: West Street at West Genesee Street

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Landscape Unit: Urban Legacy Industrial
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Direction of View: East

Viaduct Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Community Grid Alternative

Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Note: 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.

The evaluations of visual simulations indicate that the most substantial adverse visual effects for the Viaduct Alternative would occur in the Franklin Square neighborhood resulting from the construction of the new flyover ramps. The visual quality ratings from Viewpoints 23 and 24 in Franklin Square indicate a substantial reduction in visual quality due to the introduction of new Project infrastructure as well as its contrast in mass, scale and height in relation to other existing elements in the built environment. In other locations, adverse visual effects are generally associated with the increased scale of the Viaduct Alternative. However, in many instances these adverse effects are considered a relatively minor reduction in visual quality, given the overall visual similarity of the Viaduct Alternative relative to existing conditions. Viewers who would experience these adverse effects include nearby residents, commercial building occupants, business patrons, recreationists, commuters on local streets, and pedestrians. Viewers also include travelers along I-81 particularly, as demonstrated by the evaluation of the visual simulation from Viewpoint 16.

Substantial visual benefits would be realized at several locations as part of the Viaduct Alternative, resulting from the replacement of aging and deteriorated Project infrastructure and streetscaping improvements (see Viewpoints 8, 15, 18, 20, and 26). The visual quality ratings indicate substantial improvements from Viewpoint 26 (West Genesee Street at West Street), due to the removal of the viaduct at this location and improvements to the western gateway to Downtown. Beneficial impacts are also anticipated at Viewpoints 8 (near the intersection of Renwick Avenue and Van Buren Street) and 15 (Butternut Street at North Salina Street), where new roadway configurations and streetscaping improvements are proposed. Beneficial impacts from viewpoints along Almond Street (e.g., Viewpoints 18 and 20) are also anticipated, primarily associated with the improved condition of Project infrastructure, the elevated height of the viaduct (to the degree that it allows for more open views under the viaduct), and streetscaping enhancements that would be installed as part of the Viaduct Alternative.

CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS

Construction effects for the Viaduct Alternative would temporarily changes visual character. Project-related visual effects during construction would include the movement and activity of construction vehicles and personnel; the generation of fugitive dust from demolition, earth-moving, and grading activities; fugitive light created by portable lights and generators, mostly during nighttime construction work; and exposure of ground surfaces, soils, and buildings that were screened from views; and the introduction of equipment and materials into staging areas.

INDIRECT EFFECTS

Indirect visual impacts could result from the Viaduct Alternative where the Project would result in changes in neighborhood land use or future development patterns created by real or perceived adverse impacts to local character. For example, the introduction of new project infrastructure in locations that did not previously contain constructed elements or where undesirable views did not previously exist could influence future land use and development decisions. As discussed in **Section 6.2.1, Land Use**, the Viaduct Alternative is not anticipated to induce additional development beyond what would be expected in the No

Build Alternative. Land use patterns are already influenced by the presence of the existing I-81 viaduct as evidenced by the many vacant or surface parking lots directly abutting the highway. Although the Viaduct Alternative would improve connections between neighborhoods on either side of the highway, the visual and physical barrier would remain, which would not create an environment more attractive or conducive to development types most likely to locate in a downtown given current market trends—residential and mixed-use—as compared to the No Build Alternative. Therefore, the Viaduct Alternative is not anticipated to result in adverse indirect visual effects because changes in neighborhood land use or future development patterns are not expected.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Additional visual effects created by other concurrent large-scale transportation projects in the AVE are not anticipated. The removal of buildings required to construct the Viaduct Alternative would increase the visibility of the Project and simultaneously reduce the density and diversity of the built environment adjacent to the Project. As described in **Section 6.1.2, Land Use**, the Viaduct Alternative would not result in adverse indirect effects on land use and is not anticipated to affect future development patterns in areas adjacent to the Project (relative to the No Build Alternative). Most planned developments within the I-81 Viaduct Study Area are residential and mixed use residential structures located in two clusters—Downtown and University Hill—several blocks from the elevated highway. Under the Viaduct Alternative, the elevated highway infrastructure would continue to present a barrier to residential and mixed-use development in the areas adjacent to the Project. Although bicycle and pedestrian improvements included in the Viaduct Alternative, combined with those planned by the City of Syracuse, would improve connections between neighborhoods on either side of the highway, the replacement viaduct would continue to be a physical and visual barrier.

MITIGATION

Measures to mitigate the visual effects of construction activities would include best management practices during construction, such as minimizing the amount of time between ground disturbance and restoration of staging areas and construction areas; minimizing the illumination of work areas to maintain safe conditions, while preventing the direction of lighting from areas other than work sites; controlling dust and debris from collecting in work areas and along roadways used to transport equipment and materials; and restoring disturbed areas with replacement vegetation and landscaping features as soon as practicable.

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 will 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 materials, and surface design treatments of structures, such as abutments and retaining walls, and pavements. The overall improvements to the visual quality of the Viaduct Alternative in comparison to the No Build Alternative would contribute somewhat to the overall mitigation of adverse impacts.

As part of the Viaduct Alternative, NYSDOT will provide replacement landscaping as overall enhancement and aesthetic improvement efforts for this Project. Streetscape enhancements would be provided along Almond Street and portions of West Street and Erie Boulevard, as well as portions of connecting streets. Streetscape enhancements may include sidewalks, specialty pavements and aesthetic treatments for walkways, site furnishings such as benches and trash receptacles, landscape plantings, and green infrastructure. Streetscape enhancements would be designed to provide an overall sense of visual cohesiveness. The streetscape design would promote safe and effective pedestrian and bicyclist circulation and comfort, and help facilitate social interaction.

The viaduct priority area is spatially confined so mitigation through partial screening of views from adjacent locations to reduce adverse impacts is also highly 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 and 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 support structures may be possible enhancements in some locations. Strategic placement of plantings may soften the appearance of constructed elements in certain locations.

Avoidance of adverse visual impacts, such as in the Franklin Square neighborhood resulting from construction of proposed connecting 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. Given the spatial constraints of the Project and the surrounding urban landscape, no feasible alternatives to these connection ramps (in terms of meeting the purpose and needs of the project) have been identified.

In addition, the Viaduct Alternative provides an opportunity for the enhancement of gateway areas to the City. Important points of entry from the proposed Project to the City's street network may be enhanced as gateways. Gateway enhancements may 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. Gateway opportunities have been identified at the new West Street and Genesee Street intersection, the Clinton Street exit and on Almond Street between the Adams and Harrison on and off ramps.

6.4.3.4 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE COMMUNITY GRID ALTERNATIVE

PERMANENT/OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

Changes in visual character and quality under the Community Grid Alternative would include both adverse and beneficial effects (see **Appendix F**). **Figure 6.4.3-4** includes a photograph from each of the selected viewpoints showing the No Build Alternative/Existing Conditions, as well as a simulation for each viewpoint showing the Community Grid Alternative. The comparison of the Community Grid Alternative images

Viewpoint 1

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: West Street at West Genesee Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Legacy Industrial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 9

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: North Franklin Street at Evans Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Viewpoint 15-1

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 15-2

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Erie Boulevard East at Montgomery Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 19

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Erie Boulevard East between South State and South Townsend Streets
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 23

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: South Townsend Street at East Washington Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 29

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: East Fayette Street at South Crouse Avenue
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 33

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Erie Boulevard East between Forman Avenue and Almond Street
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 35

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Crowne Plaza Parking Garage, corner of Almond and East Fayette Streets
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 40

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Irving Avenue at Fayette Street
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 50

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Almond Street at East Adams Street
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 51

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Upstate Medical University Parking Garage on East Adams Street at Almond Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 59

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Burnet Avenue at North Townsend Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 76

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: South Salina Street at Erie Boulevard East (Clinton Square)
Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 79

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: East Genesee Street between South McBride Street and Almond Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Downtown Core

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 88

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: St. Joseph's Hospital Parking Garage, corner of Prospect and North Townsend Streets
Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 89

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: North Salina Street at Butternut Street
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Commercial Arterial

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 90

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Butternut Street bridge over I-81
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): TBD
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): TBD

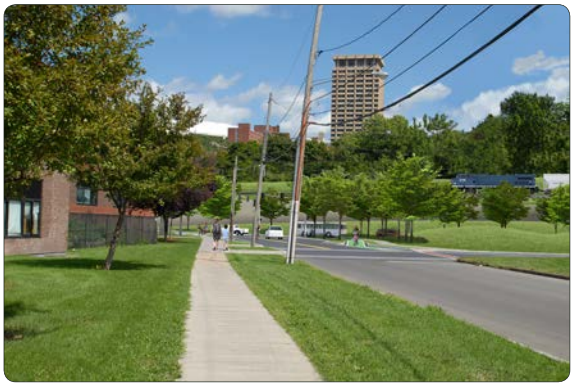
Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 96

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: MLK Jr. East at Dr. King Elementary School
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential

Community Grid Alternative



Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 100

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

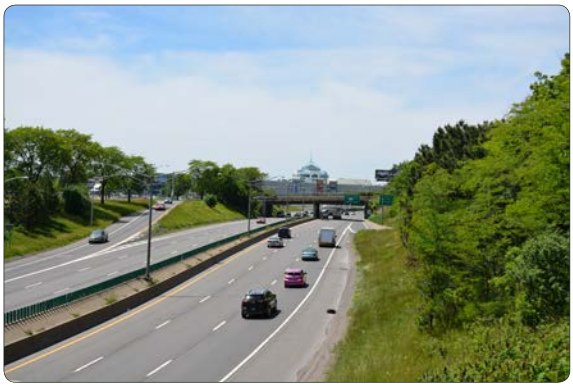
Location: Wilson Park Basketball Courts, Jackson Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 132

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative



Location: Court Street bridge over I-81
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 177

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: View from Intersection of Renwick Avenue and Martin Luther King Jr. Drive.
Landscape Unit: Transportation Corridor - Highway

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 178

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: View from Intersection of Renwick Avenue and Van Buren Street.
Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus

Community Grid Alternative

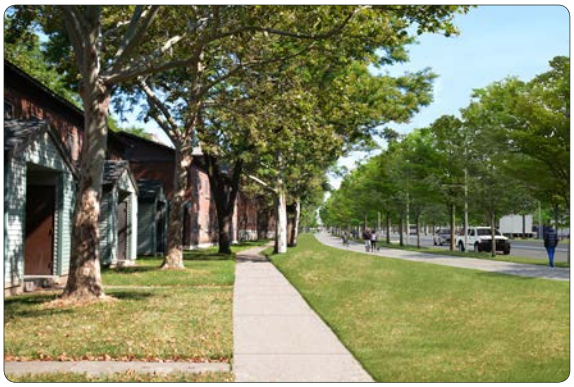
Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 181

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Eastern edge of Pioneer Homes adjacent to Highway Ramp
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Residential

Community Grid Alternative



Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

Viewpoint 183

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Harrison Street at Almond Street
Landscape Unit: Urban Institutional Campus

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): High
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Beneficial

Viewpoint 184

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: Creekwalk sidewalk south of Franklin Square
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Moderate
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Adverse

Viewpoint 187

Existing Conditions/No Build Alternative

Location: North Clinton Street and Genant Drive
Landscape Unit: Urban Neighborhood - Mixed Use

Community Grid Alternative

Existing Viewer Sensitivity (High, Moderate, Low): Low
Degree of Visual Change (Adverse, Neutral, Beneficial): Neutral

Visual Renderings - Community Grid Alternative

to the No Build Alternative/Existing Conditions provides the basis for an assessment of the Community Grid Alternative's potential visual effect.

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 through Downtown Syracuse. The Community Grid Alternative includes the construction of new flyover connector ramps between I-81 and I-690, which would be approximately 35 feet wide and up to approximately 35 and 62 feet above existing grade at their highest point. However, most of the visual changes under this alternative are beneficial. Beneficial changes include creating new views from various viewpoints within the AVE where views are presently blocked by existing interstate infrastructure. These new views provide important opportunities to enhance visual quality and viewer experience.

The Community Grid Alternative would be compatible with the visual environment from 20 (approximately 77 percent) of the 26 viewpoint locations included in the analysis, but would be incompatible from the remaining 6 (approximately 23 percent) of the locations. In general, many of these locations are in areas of high viewer sensitivity. Locations where the Community Grid Alternative is considered incompatible include 6 areas that would feature prominent views of Project infrastructure from Downtown Syracuse (Viewpoints 1 and 5), from I-81 (Viewpoint 16), and residential areas, such as Burnett Avenue and Franklin Square (Viewpoints 22, 23, and 24). In comparison, the No Build Alternative is incompatible with it visual setting from 15 viewpoints (or approximately 58 percent of the 26 viewpoint locations considered in the analysis); therefore, the Community Grid Alternative is considered more compatible with its visual environment relative to existing conditions.

Based on the evaluations presented in the VIA and **Table 6.4.3-3**, the Community Grid Alternative would result in adverse visual effects at 3 (or approximately 11 percent) of the 26 viewpoints selected for analysis. These include Viewpoints 23 and 24 in the Franklin Square neighborhood and Viewpoint 16, looking south along the I-81 corridor from the Butternut Street bridge. In all 3 instances, the adverse effects to the visual environment result from the proposed construction of elevated ramps between eastbound I-690 and existing northbound I-81 and between existing southbound I-81 and westbound I-690. These elevated ramps introduce new, large, elevated transportation infrastructure into these views that require removal of existing vegetation and buildings and create a visual barrier between the viewer and more distant areas of the City. The scale, mass and height of the new connector ramps between existing I-81 and I-690 as part of the Community Grid Alternative would result in substantial adverse visual impacts, particularly in the Franklin Square area.

The visual effect of the Community Grid would be relatively neutral at 3 (approximately 11 percent) of the 26 viewpoints included in the analysis (Viewpoints 1, 17, and 25). In each of these instances the Community Grid would not result in a substantial change in the visibility or appearance of Project infrastructure from these locations.

The Community Gird Alternative would result in beneficial visual effects from the remaining 20 (approximately 77 percent) of the 26 viewpoints selected for analysis. These beneficial

changes to the visual environment include the removal of viaduct structures, creation of new or extended views to surrounding areas, daylighting of areas that are currently cast in shadows from existing highway infrastructure, streetscaping enhancements on affected streets, and removal or replacement of other existing infrastructure that results in improved aesthetics relative to the existing deteriorated condition of some Project elements. The urban landscape would become more visually unified with the exposure of more distant views of Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods that would result from viaduct removal. In addition, the Community Grid Alternative would result in areas of open land adjacent to the Project that is currently occupied by the viaduct. The removal of the existing viaduct and resultant creation of open space around the Project would be a substantial visual change. This may allow for more open views from and of the Project; however, the removal of the elevated structure would generally reduce the visibility of the Project and eliminate the elevated, views currently available to travelers on the viaduct.

Viewers who would be affected by the Community Grid Alternative include neighborhood residents, commercial building occupants, business patrons, recreationists, commuters on local streets, and pedestrians and bicyclists Viewers also include travelers along I-81 near Viewpoint 16. The predominant viewer group affected by adverse changes would be neighbors in the Franklin Square neighborhood, who would be subject to increased viewer awareness and exposure to Project infrastructure. Viewers would be highly sensitive to the contrast in form, scale, color, and materials of the connector ramps relative to existing conditions and surrounding areas.

CONSTRUCTION EFFECTS

Construction effects under the Community Grid Alternative would be short term with temporary changes in visual character. Project-related visual effects during construction would include the movement and activity of construction vehicles and personnel; the generation of fugitive dust from demolition, earth-moving, and grading activities; fugitive light created by portable lights and generators, mostly during nighttime construction work; exposure of ground surfaces, soils, and buildings that were screened from views; and the introduction of equipment and materials into staging areas.

INDIRECT EFFECTS

Indirect visual impacts are expected to result from the Community Grid Alternative due to changes in neighborhood land use or future development patterns, which would change the character of the visual environment in areas adjacent to the Project. As described in **Section 6.2.1, Land Use**, where the highway would be removed and replaced with a surface street, the Community Grid Alternative could result in an indirect benefit to land uses---both current and proposed---in these areas. Specifically, the Community Grid Alternative could potentially result in additional development on parcels that would be created in the former right-of-way of I-81 in Downtown to the east of Almond Street between Erie Boulevard and East Genesee Street. The removal of the highway could also result in redevelopment of parking areas on either side of I-81/Almond Street, as they could be more attractive for residential and mixed use redevelopment due to the absence of noise and the visual barrier created by the highway, as well as the improved connections between existing uses in

Downtown and the Eastside/University Hill. In the Southside near the MLK Elementary School where the Almond Street alignment would shift east, vacant land would become available that could be used for potential development or open space.

The Community Grid Alternative is anticipated to result in beneficial indirect visual effects because changes in neighborhood land use or future development patterns, including development of parcels in the former right-of-way or adjacent vacant/underutilized properties, such as parking areas, are anticipated to result in improved aesthetics and visual environment in the project vicinity. As described in **Section 6.2.2.4**, future development is likely to occur on vacant land that does not displace current uses. Infill development such as residential or a mix of uses that includes residential, office, and ground floor retail would further reconnect existing neighborhoods and would be anticipated to have a positive effect on both neighborhood cohesion and the visual environment within the I-81 Viaduct Study Area.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

Additional visual effects created by other concurrent large-scale transportation projects in the AVE are not anticipated. As described above and in **Section 6.2.1.3**, the Community Grid Alternative would not result in adverse indirect effects on land use, and could produce land use benefits through potential new development opportunities and improved connections between existing neighborhoods. The area would also be attractive to development due to its proximity to, and improved pedestrian and visual connections between, Downtown and University Hill job centers. Future changes in land use in the adjacent areas may include designed open space, new buildings, or other development. Any of these uses would result in beneficial changes to the Project's visual setting.

MITIGATION

Measures to mitigate the visual effects of construction activities will include best management practices during construction, such as minimizing the amount of time between ground disturbance and restoration of staging areas and construction areas; minimizing the illumination of work areas to maintain safe conditions but preventing the direction of lighting from areas other than work sites; controlling dust and debris from collecting in work areas and along roadways used to transport equipment and materials; and minimizing the removal of vegetation and restoring disturbed areas with replacement vegetation and landscaping features as soon as practicable.

The scale of the new ramps between existing I-81 and I-690 as part of the Community Grid Alternative would result in adverse visual impacts. Avoidance of adverse impacts in the Franklin Square neighborhood resulting from construction of proposed connecting ramps between I-81 and I-690 would require the identification of alternative routes or means of connection, which could result in other direct and indirect impacts to other areas. Mitigation would be constrained by the nature of the Project, involving elevated highways in a relatively dense urban landscape that is spatially constrained by existing development and limited right-of-way.

Consistent with its policies, NYSDOT will consider and apply context-sensitive design solutions where practicable. This is anticipated to include planting of street trees and other vegetative screening measures, streetscape improvements, selection of materials, and surface design treatments of structures, such as abutments and retaining walls, and pavements. 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 will 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, and Crouse and Irving Avenues, as well as portions of connecting streets. Streetscape enhancements could include sidewalks, specialty pavements and aesthetic treatments for walkways, site furnishings such as benches and trash receptacles, landscape plantings, and green infrastructure. Streetscape enhancements would be designed to provide an overall sense of visual cohesiveness. Almond Street would include a landscaped median from Martin Luther King Jr., East to I-690, lending a distinctive character to the length of the roadway. The streetscape design would promote safe and effective pedestrian and bicyclist circulation and comfort, and help facilitate social interaction.

Important points of entry from the proposed Project 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 and Genesee Street intersection, the 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, and at the new Martin Luther King Jr., East entrance to the City.