

# Visual Impacts Discipline Report

## **East-West Corridor**

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Yakima County, Washington

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## **Acronyms**

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BMP	Best Management Practices
BNSF	Burlington-Northern Santa-Fe
DBH	Diameter at Breast Height
EA	Environmental Assessment
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
IJR	Interchange Justification Report
LOS	Level of Service
LWD	Large Woody Debris
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RM	River Mile
ROW	Right of Way
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SPCC	Spill Prevention Control and Countermeasures
SWPP	Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan
UGA	Urban Growth Area
VIA	Visual Impacts Assessment
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation
YVCOG	Yakima Valley Conference of Governments

## Executive Summary

This study analyzes existing and predicted future visual quality effects in the vicinity of the proposed East-West Corridor. The project involves the construction of a transportation corridor from the intersection of North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and East H Street in the City of Yakima, Washington to the eastern terminus at the Roza Canal Wasteway #2 in the Terrace Heights neighborhood in unincorporated Yakima County, WA. The proposed East-West Corridor consists of roadway alignments and the addition of sections of a 5-lane roadway with two vehicular travel lanes in each direction, and a center turn lane or median as appropriate, sidewalks and a shared use path, curbing, gutters, and illumination. Two bridges: both combined vehicular and pedestrian bridges, one over the Yakima River and the other over the Roza Canal Wasteway #2, will be included. In addition to roadway and bridge construction, the proposed project will involve improvements to Interstate 82 (I-82) to include new overpass bridges over the East-West Corridor. This project would also involve restoration and levee work along the Yakima River floodplain including removal and/or setback of levees and floodplain habitat restoration. This proposed project is located within Sections 13, 17, and 18 of Township 13N and Ranges 18E and 19E. Existing land use along the proposed corridor is mostly undeveloped land and includes a multi-use trail providing recreational opportunities, residential zoned areas with some Light Industrial west of I-82, and private residences and commercial business east of I-82. However, the proposed alignment would impact mostly vacant, undeveloped land with little to no vegetation. Refer to the Vicinity Map; Figure 1.

The existing conditions were analyzed by visiting the project vicinity and the surrounding areas. During these site visits, potential viewers, visual resources, and viewsheds were all documented. Key viewpoints at select locations were photographed during the site analysis. Subsequently, additional background materials such as maps, aerial photographs, and Yakima County planning and policy documents were reviewed. Comments from public meetings gathered during the scoping phase were reviewed, for consideration to be given to community concerns.

Visual effects were analyzed from two viewpoints: the view from the corridor and the view toward the corridor. The analysis describes both the character of the visual experience along the East-West Corridor as well as the effect of the proposed action upon the viewer. Visual quality is by nature subjective. The No Build alternative was essentially used as a baseline to compare the project effects to, as under the No Build no activities would take place, and the status quo is assumed to be maintained.

The Build Alternative will result in permanent changes to the visual environment for motorized users, residences and commercial businesses, and pedestrians and bicycles. The Build Alternative will provide long term benefits consistent with regional and local plans, such as improved mobility and creation of additional crossings of the Yakima River and Roza Canal. As with any new roadway and bridge, new views to and from the structures will be created. There is no way to avoid this impact; however, minimization measures will be employed at every viable location.

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to document and analyze the visual impacts in the vicinity of the proposed East-West Corridor (the Proposal). Per the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) *Environmental Procedures Manual*, Section 459, “Visual Impacts” visual impacts, such as aesthetics, light, glare, and night sky impacts, will be considered by evaluating the views from the corridor and the views toward the corridor that will be in existence during construction and operation (WSDOT 2021).

This report is prepared to be in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), which requires all major actions sponsored, funded, permitted, or approved by federal agencies, and the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) which requires all major actions sponsored, funded, permitted, or approved by state and/or local agencies to undergo planning to ensure that environmental considerations such as impacts related to aesthetics and visual quality are given due weight in decision-making. The findings and recommendations in this report will be used in the project Environmental Assessment (EA).

## 1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the proposed project is to reduce congestion and connect the growing neighborhood of Terrace Heights to the City of Yakima (as stated in the Purpose & Need for this project, dated March 22, 2022):

- Provide an alternative Yakima River crossing for east-west travel between the City of Yakima and Terrace Heights.
- Increase mobility, by decreasing travel delay, and relieving traffic congestion at the I-82/Yakima Avenue Interchange and on Terrace Heights Drive and Yakima Avenue.
- Construct the local road corridor which would allow for the consideration of construction of the recommended alternative for an interchange with I-82 identified in the WSDOT I-82/Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive IJR.
- Provide bicycle and pedestrian facilities including a connection to the Yakima Greenway Trail.
- Serve the existing approved transportation and land use planning along the roadway corridor as documented in the Yakima Valley Conference of Governments (YVCOG) 2020-2045 Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Plan.

The needs for the project include the following (as stated in the Purpose & Need for this project, dated March 22, 2022):

- **Congested Corridor** –The current road network cannot support the growth anticipated in the area under the current comprehensive plan. The Terrace Heights neighborhood lies just to the east of the City of Yakima. The neighborhood, an unincorporated part of Yakima County, has grown considerably over the last five decades, with its population increasing fivefold in the 30 years between 1970 and 2000, to a 2019 total of 8,507. Redevelopment of the Boise Cascade Mill Site consistent with the planned land use in the current City of Yakima Comprehensive Plan is also anticipated to increase traffic demand within the City of Yakima.

The level of service (LOS) on the Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive corridor has been getting steadily worse and by 2035 it is expected to have multiple turning movements operating at LOS E or F. LOS is a letter grade corresponding to the amount of congestion a road has when completed to a standard. LOS A is the best or the least congested grade. LOS F indicates failure because the demand for a road is more than its capacity.

The current LOS along the Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive corridor has triggered Yakima County's concurrency requirements, which limits new development permits along the corridor. In order to relax the restrictions, the County must either increase the capacity of the existing corridor or divert sufficient traffic volume onto another route. Right-of-way constraints along the existing Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive route prevent widening of the existing roadway. The future LOS at the Yakima Avenue interchange is also anticipated to cause back-ups onto the I-82 mainline.

- **Emergency Response** – The Yakima River poses a natural barrier to travel between Yakima and Terrace Heights. Historically, east-west traffic in the project vicinity has had only one option to travel between these two locations: the Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive corridor. A new corridor is needed to provide an alternative redundant route to Terrace Heights during any future closures of the Terrace Heights Bridge as well as an additional route for emergency services.
- **Lack of pedestrian and bicycle connectivity** – Access to the Greenway Trail is limited as it travels between I-82 and the Yakima River. The existing East H Street corridor does not include sidewalks or bike lanes and there is no access for pedestrians to the Greenway Trail from the surrounding residential neighborhood.



### *1.3 Project Description/Alternatives*

#### **Project Description/Preferred Alternative**

Yakima County is proposing to construct an East-West Corridor in the City of Yakima and unincorporated Yakima County, Washington from North 1st Street and East H Street on the west side of Interstate 82 (I-82) in the City of Yakima to the eastern terminus on the east side of the Roza Canal Wasteway #2 in the community of Terrace Heights. This corridor will connect with Yakima County's Phase 1 of Cascade Mill Parkway (currently under construction) which will continue to Butterfield Road and North Keys Road. The project would include construction of three separate streets:

- **East H Street** –The existing road would be extended to the east from the current terminus at North 7<sup>th</sup> Street where it would connect to Bravo Company Boulevard as the road turns to the south. The existing portion from North 1<sup>st</sup> Street to North 7<sup>th</sup> Street would be widened. A new signal would be installed at the intersection with North 1<sup>st</sup> Street.
- **Bravo Company Boulevard** – An extension of Bravo Company Boulevard connecting to East H Street would be constructed which would turn south and connect to the current terminus near Fair Avenue. A roundabout intersection with Cascade Mill Parkway would be constructed along with one additional roundabout intersection to connect to an existing access road to the adjacent properties.
- **Cascade Mill Parkway** –Cascade Mill Parkway would connect to Bravo Company Boulevard at a roundabout intersection and then continue east beneath I-82 and across the Yakima River and Roza Canal Wasteway #2.

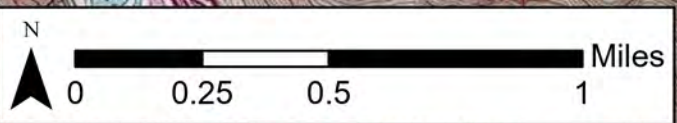
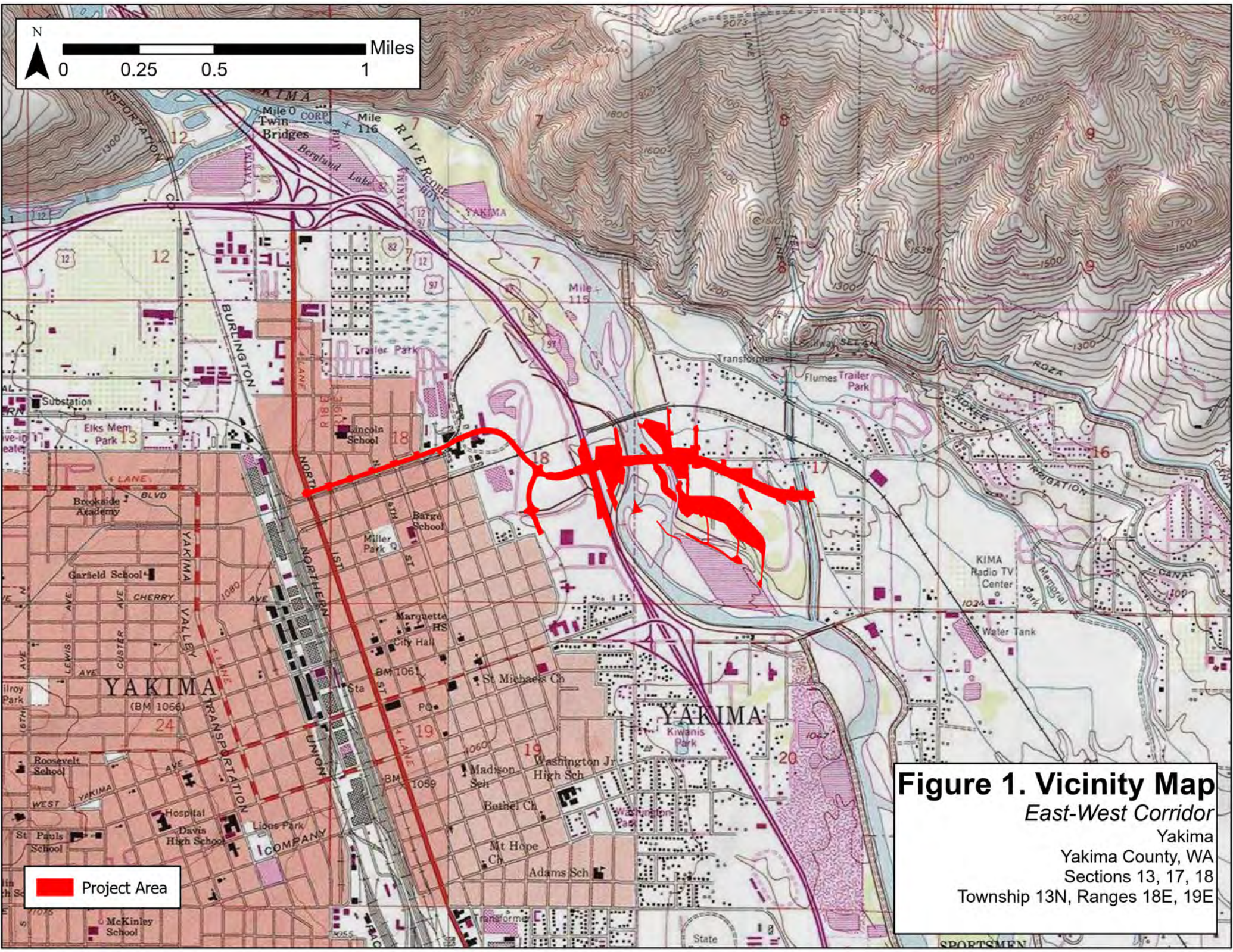
The East-West Corridor project will involve improvements to existing roadways, including transforming East H Street from a residential street to a free-flowing arterial between North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and North 7<sup>th</sup> Street; the building of new connections and roundabouts; non-motorized facilities including bike lanes, sidewalks, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) ramps, crosswalks, and a shared-use path that will connect to the Yakima Greenway Trail; and construction of four bridges: two to carry I-82 over the proposed roadway, one over the Yakima River, and one over the Roza Canal Wasteway #2. This project will also involve restoration and levee work along the Yakima River floodplain including removal and/or setback of levees and floodplain habitat restoration.


#### **No Build**

NEPA requires that the No Build alternative be included and evaluated in this discipline report. This approach is used to establish an existing and future baseline for comparing the effects associated with the Build Alternative. The No Build Alternative is assumed to maintain good operating conditions: routine activities such as road maintenance, repair, and safety improvements would occur within the corridor. However, the level of service (LOS) on the current roadway network must be diverted, regardless of whether or not the project is built.

The No Build Alternative does not include improvements that would increase roadway capacity or reduce congestion on the Yakima Avenue/Terrace Heights Drive corridor.

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 Project Area

**Figure 1. Vicinity Map**  
*East-West Corridor*  
Yakima  
Yakima County, WA  
Sections 13, 17, 18  
Township 13N, Ranges 18E, 19E

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## 2.0 Methodology

This study follows the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (FHWA 2015). The existing conditions were analyzed by visiting the project vicinity and the surrounding areas multiple times. Visual impacts were evaluated for the view from the corridor and the view toward the corridor. During site visits, potential viewers, visual resources, and viewsheds were documented. A photographic log of the affected viewshed at key viewpoints is part of that documentation. Google Earth was utilized to further assess the visual character of the project landscape. The City of Yakima (2017a) *Yakima Comprehensive Plan 2040* was used to understand public values as related to visual quality. Comments from public meetings gathered during the scoping phase were reviewed, for consideration to be given to community concerns.

Upon establishing a study area, key viewpoints were selected and photographed that best represent the project's visual resources and viewshed. Viewers (the affected population) were documented as those who have views from within and toward the corridor. Visual quality is by nature subjective. The result of the interaction between the affected population and the visual resources defines the visual quality of the environment. For an objective evaluation, FHWA (2015) designates three types of visual perception, distinguished by landscape characteristics, used to describe visual quality:

- Natural Environment: Viewers evaluate the natural harmony of the existing scene and determine if the composition is harmonious or inharmonious. A landscape devoid of built elements (vertical and horizontal construction) is a natural environment.
- Cultural Environment: Viewers evaluate the scene's cultural order in its built form and determine if the composition is orderly or disorderly. A landscape manipulated to contain buildings, structures, and artifacts is a cultural environment.
- Project Environment: Viewers evaluate the coherence of the project components and determine if the project's composition is coherent or incoherent. The landscape in which project elements will be constructed is the project environment.

This assessment analyzes how the changes made to the environment and its visual resources will affect visual quality, and therefore, visual perception. Conclusively, the assessment analyzes the compatibility of the changes made to the project environment on the existing visual resources with due weight given to the sensitivity of the viewers to establish the degree of visual impact of the Proposal. This is done by evaluating the project scale, form, and materials. Mitigation measures were identified to enhance visual quality and minimize adverse effects. The four stages of the visual impact assessment (VIA) process are:

1. Establishment: The location of the project was defined as well as the physical attributes of the corridor's constructed elements by identifying the landscape characteristics and physiological limitations on human sight that constrain the visual environment.
2. Inventory: The visual resources and viewer types were identified. Representative viewpoints were selected, and existing visual quality was described for each viewpoint based on natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence, as defined earlier.
3. Analysis: The project effects were evaluated by analyzing changes to natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence as a result of the proposed improvements.

4. Mitigation: Ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate for adverse impacts were identified and beneficial changes were described that might reduce or eliminate any undesirable visual effects from the project.

## **3.0 Affected Environment**

### *3.1 Study Area*

The study area is defined as roughly the areas surrounding the Proposal. This would be drawn as the end of E H Street where it meets with N 1<sup>st</sup> Street to the west, the existing BNSF railway until it meets with Roza Canal to the north, Terrace Heights Dr east of Roza canal to the east, and between Industrial Rd and the end of Horgan Rd west of Roza Canal to the south. This area was selected as the study area because direct and indirect effects of the Proposal, during construction and operation, could occur there. The existing road network is fragmented, while the Proposal would create a linear highway.

The area studied in this VIA is referred to as the project viewshed: visual experience that those traveling the proposed East-West Corridor can see from the corridor and the surrounding areas with views toward the corridor. The general character and physical attributes of the East-West Corridor area include undeveloped, cleared land, waterways, and distant urban terrain areas that transition to more urban views of residences and roadway. The region climate is desert and dry, so views of brown landforms and vegetation and gray road, with sparse green riparian vegetation are standard. The northern portion rises abruptly through a series of terraces to form the Yakima Ridge. Existing roadways consist of two lanes with little to no shoulder and damage to the concrete (crocodile cracking). I-82 within the project area consists of four travel lanes and a bare median. The Yakima River flows from north to south through the project area, at approximately river mile (RM) 114.2. The Roza Canal Wasteway #2 flows through the project area near the eastern terminus, north to south. The Yakima River floodplain area is characterized by large patches of vegetation and deteriorating habitat and levees.

A reasonable number of key views were selected within the study area to identify and compare the visual effects of the Build Alternative with the No Build Alternative. Four primary criteria for selecting the viewpoints were used:

- The view is typical of other similar landscape profiles and is a public location that has a number of sensitive viewers nearby.
- The view represents moderate to high changes to visual quality or character of scenic views, historic buildings, designated viewpoints, or view corridors and is a location where there are sensitive viewers.
- The view is what a person walking, driving, or riding will see.
- A substantial portion of the roadway study area is visible from the viewpoint. This criterion does not include partial views of the transportation structure unless that partial view is visually dominant to the viewer.

Key viewpoints include one view from west of I-82, one from the Greenway Trail, and one view from east of I-82. Additional views are evaluated from I-82 within the project area and at both the westmost and eastmost termini of the Proposal. Refer to Figure 2. Viewpoints, for locations of key viewpoints and additional photo points.



**Figure 2. Viewpoints**  
*East-West Corridor*  
Yakima  
Yakima County, WA

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### 3.2 Views

**Photo 1: Westmost terminus- existing condition, facing northeast**



This view looks northeast from the East H Street and North 1<sup>st</sup> Street intersection at the west terminus of the project. East H Street is currently a narrow local access road which is not adequate for additional traffic. This location is where the road would be transitioned into a free-flowing arterial, along with the addition of sidewalks. The foreground, middle ground, and background contain uniform views of residences lining both sides of the street, with a sparse vegetative buffer on one side, paved road in the middle, and existing ditches on the shoulder, with intersections and a few shoulders intermittently throughout. The project would widen, extend, and grade the roadway. Streetlights would create visibility. These changes would beneficially impact project coherence, with neutral effects to the cultural order as no structures would be built or demolished. Natural harmony would be lowered.

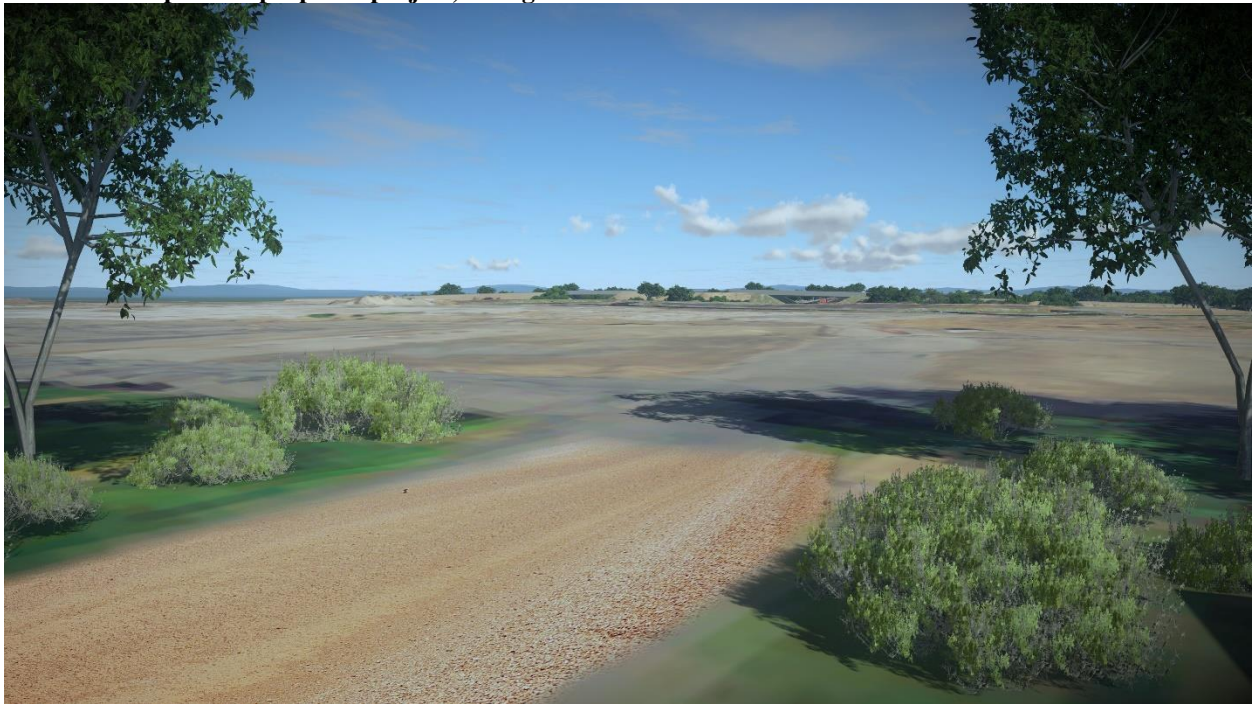
Once the road is transitioned into a free-flowing arterial, the primary and most sensitive viewers are residences along the road to heightened levels of traffic. Motorists travelling through this area experience greater visibility and views of pavement. The view would remain uniform, with less natural environment and the possible addition of street fences by the residents.

**Photo 2: Viewpoint 1- existing condition, facing east**



This view looks east toward the Cascade Mill redevelopment area. The foreground and middle ground are similar with natural harmony and sparse vegetation. The few built structures add to the low cultural order. The background is characterized by views of the Yakima Ridge. The foreground demonstrates the low visual quality and crocodile cracking of the existing road.

**Photo 3: Viewpoint 1- proposed project, facing east**



This view looks east toward proposed roadway in the Cascade Mill redevelopment area, and the proposed Yakima River bridge. This view overlooks the location of the proposed new roadway construction of roundabouts, sidewalks, medians, and shared-use path (the Bravo Company Boulevard). North of this view would be the extended E H Street. The foreground view contains a small amount of vegetation, with the overall view being flat. The background views are of the proposed Yakima River bridge and the Yakima Ridge, distantly. These changes would lower natural harmony and beneficially impact project coherence. Cultural order would be lowered as well, but City plans would develop the commercial business footprint in this view in the future.

The primary viewers are the residences located behind where the viewpoint is located, and motorists travelling through the area.

**Photo 4: Intersection-82- existing condition, facing northeast**



This view looks northeast traveling northbound on I-82 near exit 33A. This location is approximately where the eastbound and westbound overpass bridges will be constructed. Users experience natural harmony in the middle and background, with vegetation and steep ridge slopes. Yakima River and the railway can be viewed in the middle ground but at posted speeds of 60 miles per hour, these views are fleeting.

Along with the overpass bridges, adding to cultural order, roadway would be constructed in the existing natural area between I-82 and the Yakima River, as part of the Cascade Mill Parkway. This project would grade and pave the area which would enhance project coherence. This project would connect the Greenway Trail to the roadway with a shared-use path. During construction, the area shown in this view would be used as a staging area.

Once the bridges and roadway are constructed, the most sensitive viewers are the motorists themselves. Those traveling north and southbound will now have an obstructed view for a short amount of time. This view would be filled with views of pavement and bridge structures, lowering natural harmony. These changes would be most noticeable during peak rush hour.

**Photo 5: Intersection-82- existing condition, facing west**



This view looks west from southbound I-82 across the exit 33A offramp. This location is approximately 200 feet south of where the eastbound and westbound overpass bridges will be constructed. The project would construct roadway and roundabouts in the middle ground view by grading and paving within the Cascade Mill redevelopment area, connecting the Bravo Company Boulevard and Cascade Mill Parkway. The foreground contains sparse, fleeting views of vegetation, while the middle ground is currently natural environment. The background has views of ridges and vegetation.

Once the construction activities have concluded, the most sensitive viewers are motorists commuting along the I-82. Although posted speeds are at 60 MPH, views to the west will still be comprehensible, especially during peak rush hours. Natural harmony of the redevelopment area will be lowered. Addition of road will beneficially impact the project coherence. The new overpass bridges themselves will benefit cultural order.

**Photo 6: Intersection-82- existing condition, facing north**



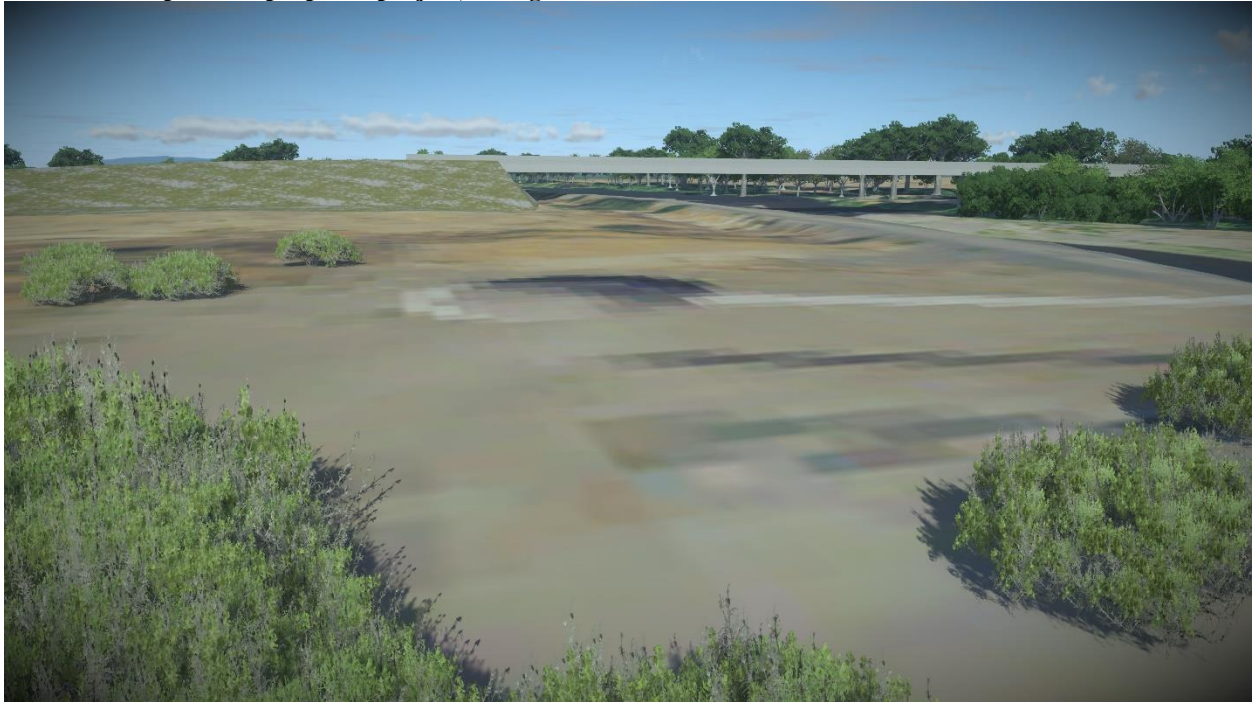
This view looks north from the southbound lanes of I-82 adjacent to the exit 33A offramp approximately 350 feet south of the proposed eastbound and westbound overpass bridges and proposed roadway modifications.

**Photo 7: Viewpoint 2 - existing condition, facing northeast**



Along the Greenway Trail from the Sunrise Rotary Park, pedestrians and cyclists have views of the trail and the Yakima Ridge and River. The foreground, middle ground, and background present natural environment. Natural harmony is high at this location, compared to the rest of the project area. Cultural order is evident in the structure behind this viewpoint used for recreation. Viewers experience little to no project environment from this view.

**Photo 8: Viewpoint 2 - proposed project, facing northeast**



This view looks northeast toward the proposed Yakima River bridge. The project would raise and create embankments from the ground for the bridge and retaining walls would be included. The foreground view remains natural. The constructed proposed bridge would be visible in the entire middle ground. The Yakima Ridge view would be obstructed for those travelling along the Trail. An additional planting area would be installed across the river east of this view. But natural harmony would overall decrease for this viewpoint.

#### Yakima River bridge

Once the bridge has been placed, the primary viewers are recreational users and motorists travelling across the bridge and toward the bridge from the trail. Pedestrians and cyclists will be impacted the most because they move the slowest. This installment of the Yakima River bridge creates a new route otherwise unavailable.

#### Greenway Trail

Trail users will experience new views of and from the new structure.



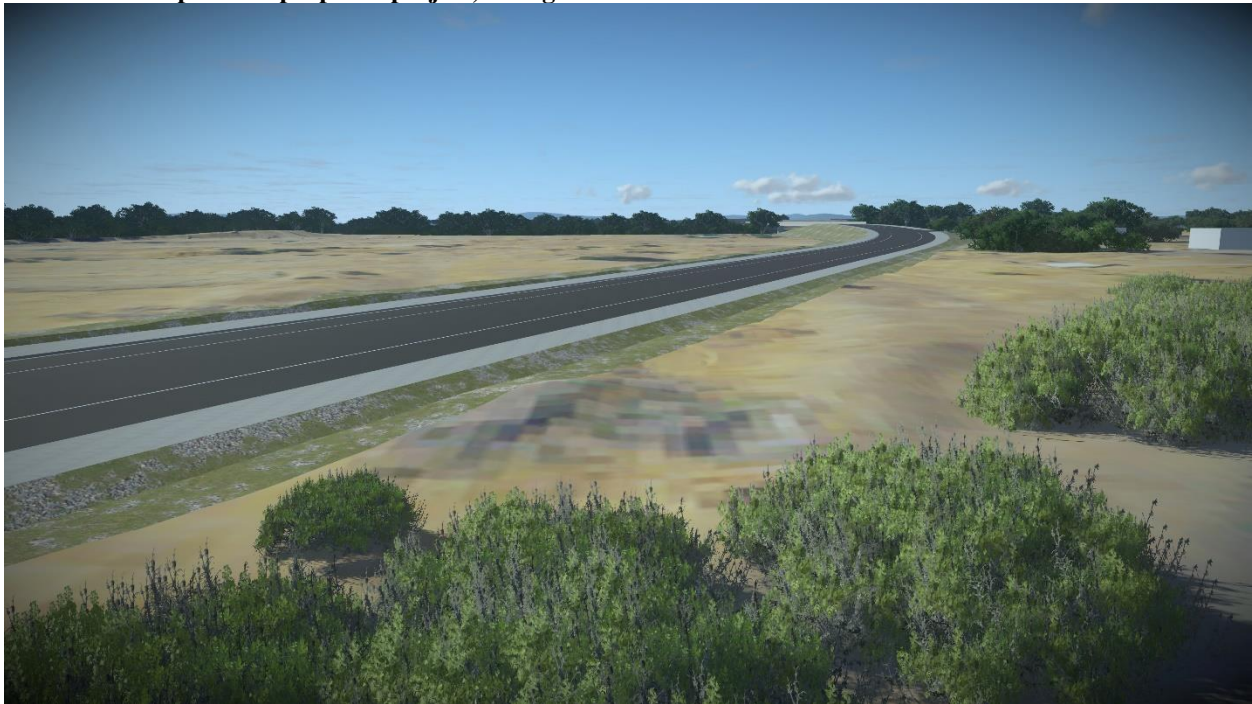
**Photo 9: Viewpoint 3 - existing condition, facing south**



This view looks south across the southern floodplain area toward the proposed Cascade Mill Parkway roadway on the east end of the project. This view overlooks the approximate location of the proposed new roadway that will curve southeast to meet with the Roza Canal. The new roadway would grade and pave the area, with the addition of a shared-use path. The edge of Hartford Road is in the foreground, while much of the view is natural environment, with the exception of the residential home in the middle ground.

Once the new roadway is placed, the primary viewers are the residences and motorists traveling along the area. Residences are most sensitive to these changes, as their views are static and frequent. Project coherence will be beneficially impacted from grading for a new road and shared-use path. Floodplain backchannels will enhance the quality of the environment southwest of the view. Natural harmony will be overall lowered. Cultural order will be lowered, too.

**Photo 10: Viewpoint 3 - proposed project, facing west**



This view looks west toward the proposed modifications made to Hartford Road and further in the background, the proposed Yakima River bridge. The proposed project would add a shared-use path to the road and grade and widen the road. During construction viewers may experience views of the staging area. The project would include a planting area and floodplain mitigation in the vicinity of the middle ground of this view. Natural harmony fills the majority of the view, while project coherence is benefited from roadway modifications.

#### Hartford Road

Once the roadway is modified, the most sensitive viewers will be the residences. Currently, Hartford Road is a two-lane suburban road extending until it transitions into Butterfield Road. The street is lined by residential homes. Impact on visual quality is neutral.

**Photo 11: Eastmost terminus- existing condition, facing south**



This view looks south toward the approximate location of the proposed Roza Canal Wasteway #2 bridge, from the existing Hartford Road crossing. Viewers from this point experience natural harmony throughout. The project would construct the bridge approximately 0.12 miles down the canal. Roadway on each side of that bridge would be constructed as well for the Cascade Mill Parkway.

Once the bridge has been built and roadway installed, the most sensitive viewers will be the residences on the west side of the viewpoint. The natural harmony would lower, with project coherence beneficially impacted from the graded and paved roads.

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## **4.0 Potential Effects**

### *4.1 Viewers*

In order to determine potential effects, it is important to properly identify groups (or viewers) who will experience changes to their views and visual quality, and how sensitive these groups will be to the changes. Viewers were broken down into the following separate categories.

#### **Street and Freeway Users**

One of the largest groups of the proposed project will be motorists along the project roadways and bridges. The new route is intended for commuters, and frequent viewers will include local residents, commuters, and tourists. As the road will be brand new, it has not been traveled frequently, and likely after the first few months the roadway is open, viewers using the roadway will possess a high visual sensitivity to their surroundings. At roadway speeds posted on average at 35 miles per hour views are of short duration and roadway users are fleetingly aware of their surroundings, including traffic, road signs, and other visual features. Therefore, these viewers are generally considered to have medium visual sensitivity at upon opening of the corridor and decreasing to low sensitivity as commuters and residents travel the road daily. Addition of roundabouts slows the posted speed to 25 miles per hour, increasing motorist dynamic viewsheds. Commuters would be moderately sensitive to visual quality in the study area because they are regularly traveling and spending more time in the study area during peak traffic flow. Visual sensitivity is generally higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure, such as tourists, and passive motorists, such as vehicular passengers. Motorist recognition increases where change in the landscape character occurs. All individual views from the roadway last a relatively short time due to the movement and speed of the viewer. However, view duration varies with the season and climatic conditions.

#### **Residents**

Residents in the study area are most likely to be affected by the proposed project. Most residents in the area may have moderate to high sensitivity to changes to the roadway, given proximity and location of the proposed roadways. Residents in the area are likely accustomed to relatively small amounts of residential traffic and the sight of the Yakima River and riverbanks. Residential viewers typically have extended viewing periods and are concerned about changes in the views from their homes; generally residential viewers are considered to have high visual sensitivity.

#### **Pedestrians and Bicycles**

Pedestrians and bicyclists who will view the proposed project are more likely to regard the natural and built surroundings as a seamless visual experience. These users travel at slower speeds, have an awareness of details, will have longer viewing sequences, and will be accustomed to the traffic, sight of the vegetated right of way, and the views of the roadway. Pedestrians and bicyclists travelling along the proposed bridge and new shared use path will have extended views of the Yakima River and roadways from a perspective that was previously not available. Hikers and boaters at the Yakima River's edge will have a view of a new, large structure where previously there was none. Persons engaging in recreational activities, such as hiking or biking, tend to have higher viewer sensitivity, given the speed with which they move through their environment. Within the study area, pedestrians and bicyclists will be sensitive to visual changes because proposed views to and from the corridor are brand new and unique.

#### *4.2 Direct Effects*

The Build Alternative will result in permanent changes to the visual environment for street and trail users, residents, and pedestrians and bicycles. The potential effects on views associated with the Build Alternative will be as follows.

- Increased views of pavement and roadway due to the creation of a bridge and new travel lanes and roundabouts.
- Greater visibility from new roadway sections and particularly crossing the bridges due to the view never being possible before.
- Increased sensitivity due to light pollution from new streetlights and heightened traffic in new areas.
- Increased views for pedestrians and bicycles with the addition of sidewalks and shared-use paths.
- Views of retaining walls along the roadway and bridge structures.
- Distant views to visual resources such as the Yakima River and the Roza Canal Wasteway #2 will be seen easier from the proposed bridges. The increased mass and pavement of the bridge will be visible, re-vegetation will take place, minimizing any substantial visual effects.
- Construction-related activities involving construction equipment, workers, staging areas, bridge construction activities, removal of vegetation, and nighttime lighting will create temporary effects to visual quality.
- Enhanced views from landfill-clean-up related activities at the southern floodplain area.
- Views of floodplain mitigation including levee removal, backchannel construction, and ELJ installation.
- High visibility from grading and removal of existing vegetation and acquired properties.

Temporary construction effects on users of adjacent properties and the local street system can be caused by noise, dust, vibration, glare, traffic detours, traffic delays, and visual disturbance. The severity of the effects depends on the duration and intensity of the construction. Traffic disruptions that affect viewers may be caused by temporary construction equipment placement, vegetation removal, and detour routing to allow for construction.

This project will have unavoidable short-term effects on viewers from construction and construction staging. The project may limit business or enjoyment of outdoor activities or events due to increased noise levels from construction equipment, changes in access to individual properties, increased dust from vegetation removal/grading, and work zone traffic control measures. Staging areas would be located within private property and rights-of-way.

#### **No Build Alternative**

The No Build Alternative would not change existing visual quality in the study area.

#### *4.3 Indirect Effects*

Indirect effects are defined as "effects caused by the proposed action that are later in time or farther removed in distance but still reasonably foreseeable" (40 CFR § 1508.8). The Build Alternative would not produce adverse effects other than those already described in this report. The proposed bridge which will provide direct access to the Terrace Heights neighborhood on

the east side of the Yakima River, could result in a further increase in development. As the area becomes more developed, it may result in increased night sky impacts.

Over time, the visual quality of the study area will improve as landscaping and other vegetation matures and softens the appearance of retaining walls and other structures associated with the project, and screens various project features from affected viewers.

### **No Build Alternative**

The No Build Alternative would not change existing visual quality in the study area.

#### *4.4 Impact Analysis*

The proposed project design intends to enhance rather than detract from the original views. This study evaluates the ability of the proposed project to be compatible with the existing environment by accomplishing the proposed project's goals. The project would result in long-term visual impacts with varying levels of impact, based on the sensitivity of different viewer groups. Project impacts occur mainly on undeveloped, flat land, so the scale of the project elements would be especially noticeable. Constructed proposed bridges pose as obstructions but also create new perspectives otherwise unavailable. Roadway modifications and installation of sidewalks and shared-use paths are appropriate for visibility, access, and safety. Project form was designed based off the need to create accessibility that will last long-term. The materials used are environmentally stable, to enhance first impressions of the community and create social unity amongst residents. The most sensitive viewers along the proposed corridor are the residential neighborhoods whose views are adversely impacted. Motorists' views would be benefited, while recreational users may experience neutral impacts. The project would enhance the floodplain areas and create and preserve additional planting areas.

The proposed corridor creates varying impacts on visual quality by reducing the natural character of the corridor and shifting it to a more urban condition. However, cultural order would be incorporated through proposed bridge structure construction, while the community would be beneficially impacted from a shared-use path and most importantly, better access between the city and unincorporated Yakima. The most noticeable impacts are found in the neighborhoods, where residents are disturbed by light and heightened traffic levels and the natural environment is for the most part eradicated. The purpose of the proposed project is to reduce congestion and connect the growing neighborhood of Terrace Heights to the City of Yakima, whereas some residents are reluctant of the development. Floodplain restoration and landfill cleanup would create natural harmony in the project area. The City of Yakima has been assigned as an Urban Growth Area (UGA) by Yakima County, and the Proposal enhances accessibility and project coherence and aligns with future plans that would benefit the cultural order of the area.

### **No Build Alternative**

Under the No Build Alternative, the Project would not be constructed, and viewer experiences would remain the same.

## **5.0 Mitigation**

The Build Alternative will provide long-term benefits consistent with regional and local plans.

As with any new roadway, new views to and from the roadway will be created. There is no way to avoid this impact; however, minimization measures will be employed at every viable location.

Yakima County will ensure landscaping and screening for illumination is included in the proposed project. Temporarily impacted areas will be replanted with native vegetation as an appropriate planting plan covering 6.9 acres has been proposed along the proposed floodplain mitigation.

In addition, new retaining walls will most likely have customized aesthetic design treatments to soften the look and feel of these new structures. Light and glare from streetlights will be minimized by directing the light towards the roadway. Other examples of treatments that will be employed to avoid or minimize negative effects include shielding light fixtures to minimize glare, applying texture and color to concrete walls to reduce apparent scale, restoration of staging areas once decommissioned, design contours to mimic natural terrain, use of native grass and wildflower species in erosion control grassland seed mix, and implementation of roadside landscaping. Any temporary fills shall be removed and the ground restored to its original condition.



## 6.0 References

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