E 88TH AVE 8800 N

I-76 NB RAMPS TO HIGHWAY 2

VISUAL RESOURCES TECHNICAL REPORT

May 2021

Prepared for:
City of Commerce City

Commerce CITY

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

AVE	Area of Visual Effect
BNSF	BNSF Railway
CDOT	Colorado Department of Transportation
E. 88th Avenue	East 88th Avenue
EA	Environmental Assessment
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
GIS	Geographic Information System
I-76	Interstate 76
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RTD	Regional Transportation District
UDFCD	Urban Drainage and Flood Control District
UPRR	Union Pacific Railroad
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment

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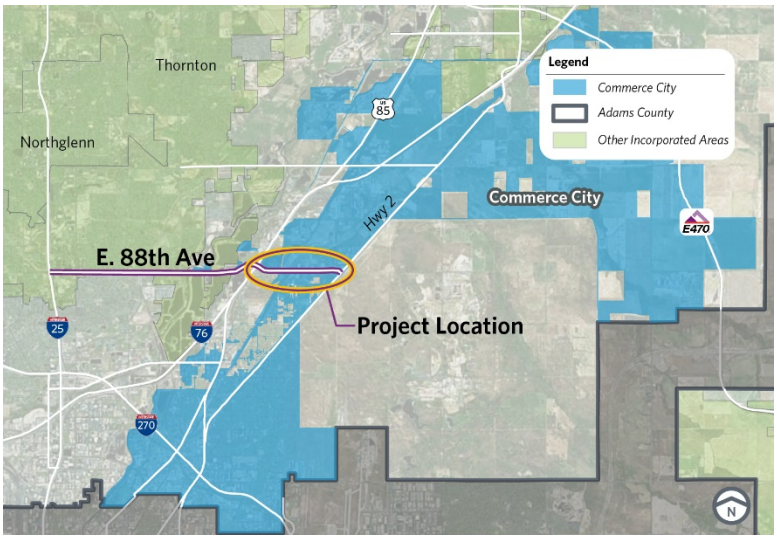
1.0 INTRODUCTION

The City of Commerce City, in consultation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), is proposing to improve approximately 1.6 miles of East 88th Avenue (E. 88th Avenue) between Interstate 76 (I-76) and Highway 2 (Figure 1), and on Rosemary Street between E. 88th Avenue and East 86th Avenue (E. 86th Avenue). The Environmental Assessment (EA) describes the Purpose and Need, alternatives considered, the Proposed Action, environmental effects and mitigation, and the public and agency involvement process for the E. 88th Avenue (I-76 to Highway 2) Project (project).

Figure 1. Project Location Map



The E. 88th Avenue project corridor (the corridor) has one travel lane in each direction with signalized intersections at the northbound I-76 on- and off-ramps, Brighton Road, Rosemary Street, and Highway 2. E. 88th Avenue provides access to adjacent industrial, commercial, and residential land uses. The project study area lacks pedestrian and bicycle facilities and has north- and southbound- bus stops serving north-south Regional Transportation District Route 88 on Brighton Road just south of E. 88th Avenue.

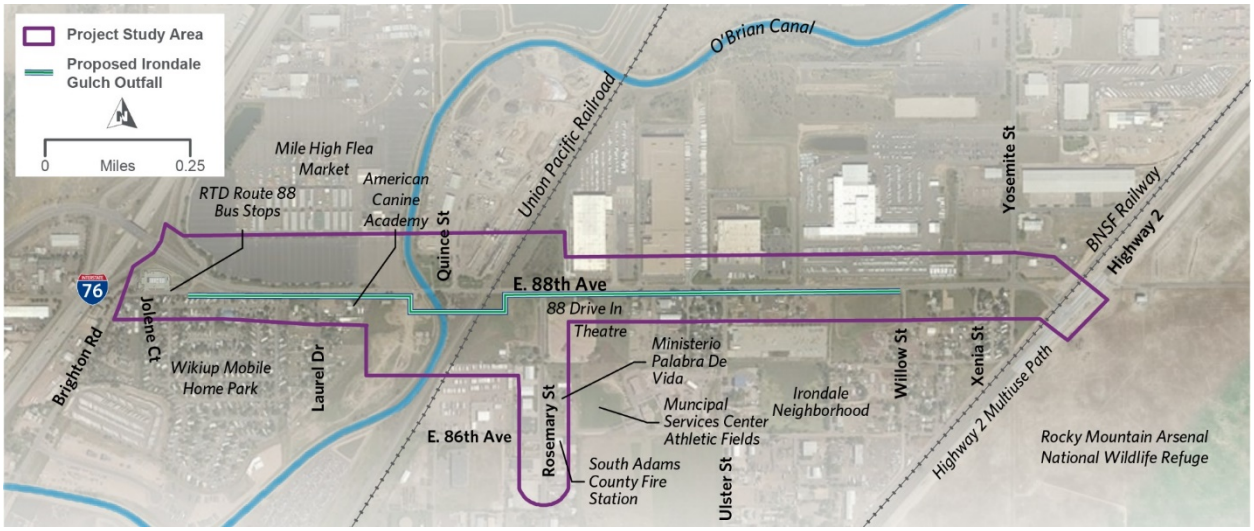
A Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) Memorandum was prepared in support of the EA. The purpose of this VIA Memorandum is to objectively measure the visual impacts of the proposed new construction components of the Proposed Action (See Section 3.0 Description of Alternatives), using guidelines established in the FHWA *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects methodologies* (FHWA, 2015). This measurement is achieved through use of the following resources:

- VIA Scoping Questionnaire (see Appendix A)
- Aerial Photographs
- Field Visit Observations (4-29-19 with CDOT)
- Agency Documents (including Commerce City Comprehensive Plans; Land Use, Development and Zoning Maps; and the Commerce City GIS Open Data Site)

1.1 Study Area

The project study area, shown in Figure 2, extends north and south 200 to 700 feet from the center of E. 88th Avenue. Within the project study area, E. 88th Avenue crosses over the O'Brian Canal on a bridge, crosses a Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) track at grade west of Rosemary Street, and crosses a BNSF Railway (BNSF) tracks at grade west of Highway 2.

Figure 2. Project Study Area



2.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Related Plans and Policies

Local land use decisions and policy within the project study area is governed by Commerce City and Adams County. Commerce City's *C3 Vision Comprehensive Plan* governs land use and zoning (Commerce City, 2010a). Adams County's Comprehensive Plan, *Imagine Adams County*, governs land use and zoning at the county level (Adams County, 2012). Commerce City and Adams County collaborate with DRCOG so that the communities' development and infrastructure are consistent with the overall vision of the Denver region.

E. 88th Avenue between I-76 and Highway 2 is mentioned in several long-term planning documents that set the policy for the project study area. Table 1 summaries long-term planning documents with plans or policies related to land use within the project study area.

Table 1. Existing Long-Term Planning Documents

Plans	Significance of Plan
Irondale Neighborhood and Infrastructure Plan (Commerce City, 2018).	The plan defines the Irondale Neighborhood as south of E. 88th Avenue between The UPRR track and the BNSF/Highway 2 corridor, describes its development history, and discusses the existing land use and infrastructure as well as future land use and infrastructure projects to achieve development/redevelopment in the area.
Commerce City C3 Vision Transportation Plan (Commerce City, 2010b)	The plan identifies constructing a grade separation at E. 88th Avenue and UPRR. The railroad corridors on both the east and west sides of E. 88th Avenue limit east-west connectivity.

Table 1. Existing Long-Term Planning Documents

Plans	Significance of Plan
Walk. Bike. Fit. Commerce City (Commerce City, 2012)	The plan identifies developing multi-use facilities throughout E. 88th Avenue corridor, from the future Regional Transportation District (RTD) light rail station in the City of Thornton to Highway 2. The plan also identifies the project study area as being cut off from existing active transportation networks.
Commerce City C3 Vision Comprehensive Plan (Commerce City, 2010a)	The plan is the guiding policy document for Commerce City. The plan discusses the study area being part of one of the five original Commerce City neighborhoods with goals for better connectivity of public infrastructure, strengthening the industrial areas, rezoning, and encouraging infill development. The Plan identifies future land use on E. 88th Avenue with industrial / distribution.
Imagine Adams County, Adams County Comprehensive Plan (Adams County, 2012)	The plan is the guiding policy document for Adams County. It discusses major goals for the county and municipalities within the county in order to support future anticipated urban growth and development. The plan also highlights some major issues which affects the land use in the project study area. In some cases, such as within the project study area, water and sewer service are only provided to parcels within Commerce City, and not to Adams County parcels surrounded by Commerce City. To gain water and sewer service the parcel must be annexed by Commerce City. This explains the checkerboard of parcels within Commerce City or unincorporated Adams County within the project study area.
2040 Metro Vision Plan (DRCOG, 2017)	The DRCOG MetroVision guides DRCOG's work and establishes a shared aspirational vision for the Denver region. The plan describes freight-related transportation improvements on E. 88th Avenue.

2.2 VIA Methodology

The VIA process is carried out in four phases: Establishment, Inventory, Analysis, and Mitigation.

1. The purpose of the establishment phase is to first define the Area of Visual Effect (AVE). This represents the primary study area as constrained by the physical environment (landform, vegetation) and limits of human sight. These are where the potential impacts may occur as a result of a Proposed Action.
2. The second phase is Inventory where an identification of *visual quality* is from the vantage of different types of viewers and sensitivities.
3. The third phase is to then evaluate the potential impacts of the Proposed Action on the visual quality of the study area. Effects can be categorized as beneficial, adverse or neutral.

4. The final phase defines mitigation measures and enhancement efforts being made to counter adverse or potentially adverse impacts as a result of the Proposed Action.

Using the VIA scoping questionnaire (Appendix A), the E. 88th Avenue project documentation was determined to require a VIA memorandum. The purpose is to assess improvements associated with the Proposed Action to determine compatibility with the existing visual character of the project study area was evaluated on contrast to surrounding context, viewer sensitivity, local concern and anticipated type of mitigation strategies.

2.3 Description of Existing Conditions

2.3.1 Landscape Types

Six landscape types (commercial, residential, industrial, agricultural, public, roadway) define the project study area. It is a composite blend of development—commercial business, public service, industrial distribution, small agricultural plots, low-density residential, and undeveloped land. Land use on the north side of E. 88th Avenue is medium to heavy industrial with commercial (Mile High Flea Market) on the eastern end. The south side of E. 88th Avenue is residential (zoned and unincorporated), commercial (88 Drive-In Theatre), and agricultural. Landscape types along Rosemary Street consist of commercial, light industrial, and public property at the south end of the AVE, described below.

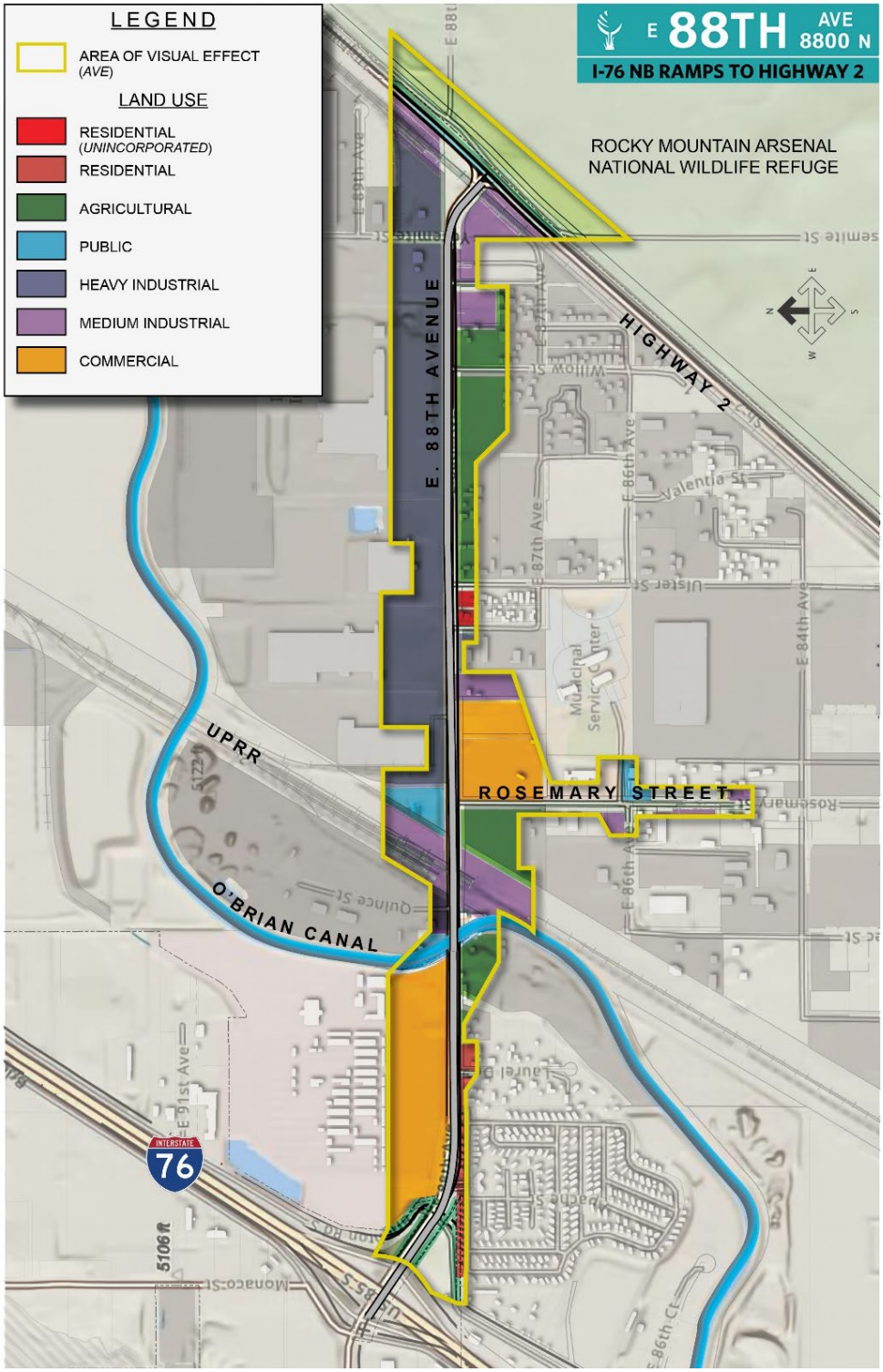
2.3.2 Area of Visual Effect and Landscape Unit

The AVE is the area in which the Proposed Action elements would be visible, including the impact of landform, vegetation, and structures. Figure 3 illustrates the boundary of visibility along E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street, based on field observations and aerial mapping.

Landscape units are spatially defined landscapes with a visually distinctive identity or “sense of place.” A Visual Landscape Unit is defined as a portion of the landscape enclosed and limited by topography, bounding an observer's field of view. That spatial enclosure enables the viewer to accumulate and form a unified impression of his surroundings.

In the project study area, multiple land use types are present, though not all parcels are developed. Views are frequently blocked by mature vegetation, most of surrounding land is flat or nearly flat, and the general low-laying grade of the project corridor creates a similar, restricted feel throughout the corridor, resulting in one landscape unit for all landscape types and viewsheds within the AVE.

Figure 3. Existing Area of Visual Effect



Source: Commerce City. 2010. Comprehensive Plan.

Commercial Development

The Mile High Flea Market (Photo 1) located at the northwestern end of the E. 88th Avenue corridor is the focal point of commercial activity in this area. The market consists of an expansive parking lot on all sides of the site with permanent structures in the center intended for year-round flea market and farmers market activity. Between the Mile High Flea Market parking lot and E. 88th Avenue, there is a narrow-width landscape buffer (20 feet), consisting of irrigated turf, deciduous and evergreen trees, and a few planting beds. Additional commercial properties located along Rosemary Street include the 88 Drive-In Theatre (Photo 2), Now Heating & Air, Motor Car Auto Carriers, and the Ministerio Palabra De Vida.

Photo 1. Commercial Land Use—Mile High Flea Market (Looking northeast from E. 88th Avenue)

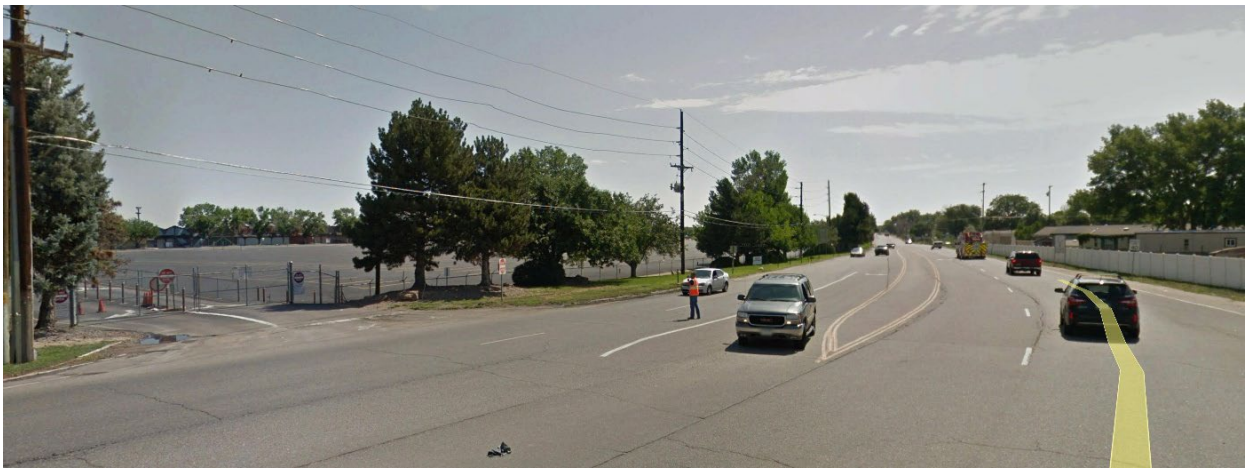
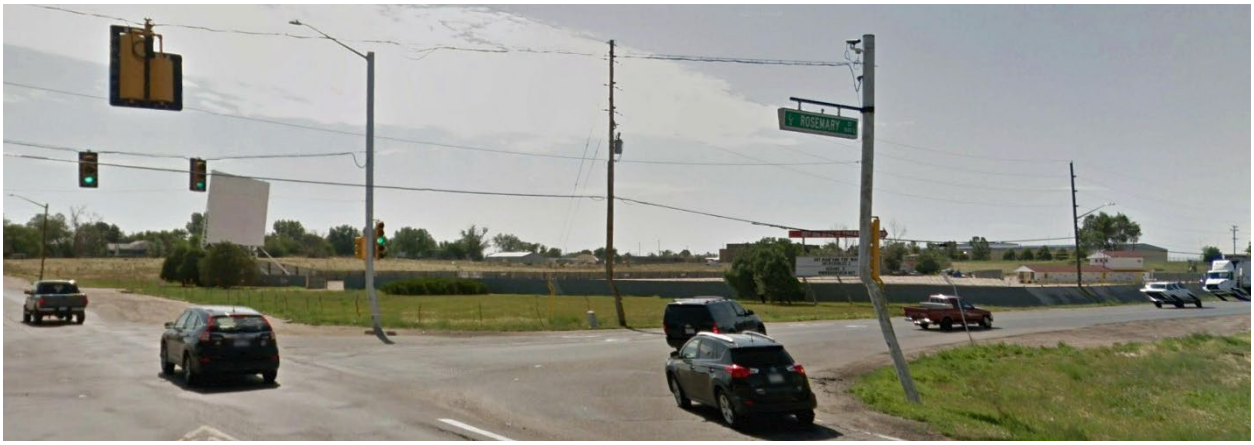


Photo 2. Commercial Land Use—88 Drive-In Theatre (Looking southeast from E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street intersection)



Residential

Residential properties (Photo 3) are situated throughout the project study area, but exclusively on the southern side of E. 88th Avenue. Residential lots are varied in size, shape, and density. Single-story housing is set back 20 to 30 feet from the right-of-way. The Wikiup residential community is located at the western end of the project study area, with housing units located within 5 feet of the existing right-of-way. Residential properties within the project study area contain mature trees, typically 30 to 50 feet in height. Fencing types vary greatly among properties.

Photo 3. Residential Land Use—Unincorporated Adams County (Looking southeast from E. 88th Avenue across from Mile High Flea Market)

Industrial (Medium and Heavy)

Industrial development parcels (Photo 4) are located on the north side of E. 88th Avenue, east of the UPRR right-of-way. These parcels have largely been cleared of original vegetation and have light to modest landscape buffers of evergreen and deciduous trees along the roadway. Most industrial buildings within these parcels are large (100,000 square feet and greater) and are two to three stories in height.

Photo 4. Industrial Land Use (Medium) (Looking northeast from E. 88th Avenue, east of Rosemary Street)

Agricultural

Undeveloped agricultural parcels (Photo 5) within the project study area are on average several acres in size and seeded with a short-grass prairie mix. From the roadway they appear as large, open spaces and extend a minimum of 350 feet off the E. 88th Avenue right-of-way, with some properties extending further. These parcels are fenced with mesh or barbed wire and serve as animal pasture.

Photo 5. Agricultural Land-Use (Looking southeast from E. 88th Avenue, east of Ulster Street)

Public

Two designated public properties occur within the project study area. The first is a wedge-shaped parcel along E. 88th Avenue just north of the Rosemary Street intersection. This area is undeveloped and is primarily populated with native vegetation. It is owned by the BNSF Railway Company. The second is the South Adams Fire Department located on Rosemary Street at E. 8th Avenue intersection with access directly onto Rosemary Street.

Roadway

E. 88th Avenue is a tight and narrow constrained roadway with numerous structures (fencing, walls, and utility poles) occurring within or immediately adjacent to the right-of-way. Utility and lighting poles occur regularly along both sides of the roadway, with several installed directly on the roadway shoulder. A native grass roadside ditch exists along both sides of the roadway but is irregular in occurrence. The O' Brian Canal is a 30-foot channeled waterway passing under E. 88th Avenue between the Mile High Flea Market and the UPRR track. E. 88th Avenue crosses this waterway via a bridge.

2.3.3 General Viewsheds

There are two types of viewsheds—static (such as what neighbors of the road see) and dynamic (what travelers on the road see). The AVE is the summary of the viewsheds from travelers on the road and neighbors viewing the road.

E. 88th Avenue provides a connection between I-76 to the west and Highway 2 to the east. The roadway generally drains from east to west, towards the South Platte River, with a low point at Brighton Road.

West of Brighton Road, the roadway quickly climbs in elevation to the I-76 overpass at the far west end of the project study area. The west and east views are primarily restricted to dynamic views from the roadway due to the orientation of E. 88th Avenue. Properties adjacent to the roadway have limited views in either of these directions due to the constraints of structures and vegetation spaced closely to the roadway corridor.

West Views

Trees and other vegetation are intermittent along the roadway, but most of the existing trees are mature and frequently obstruct views. Travelers heading west have faint views of the Front Range mountains just above the tree line.

Static views from the 88 Drive-In Theatre have a limited western view toward the UPRR, although the focus for most viewers at this property is toward the northeast in the direction of the movie screen.

East Views

Travelers heading east have generally restricted views from dense vegetation, fencing, and other various development until arrival at Highway 2 where expansive views extend into the Rocky Mountain Arsenal National Wildlife Refuge.

North Views

On the west end of the project study area, roadway views to the north are constrained by the Mile High Flea Market, its buildings, parking lot, and landscape buffer. At the center of the project study area, near the Rosemary Street intersection, roadway views to the north are primarily of industrial buildings, distribution silos, and clusters of dense tree vegetation. On the east end of the project study area, roadway views to the north are frequently limited by multiple-story industrial warehouse and distribution buildings.

External views looking north from the Wikiup residential area are narrow and generally focused into the Mile High Flea Market landscape buffer and parking lot beyond. Throughout the rest of the corridor, views from residential and commercial properties on the south side of E. 88th Avenue are typically focused north across the roadway but limited by multiple-story industrial buildings.

South Views

Dynamic roadway views to the south throughout the E. 88th Avenue corridor include residential structures at varying foreground distances from the roadway and open agricultural land views limited by property line vegetation and various other small structures. The 88 Drive-In Theatre can be seen at the southeastern corner of E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street.

Static views looking south from the industrial properties on the north side of E. 88th Avenue tend to be restricted with windowless buildings and minimal exterior activity. Buildings here have few distinctive features and are utilitarian in design.

South-facing views from the Mile High Flea Market are largely captured by the roadway landscape buffer that has mature deciduous and evergreen trees set 5 to 15 feet back off the roadway.

Rosemary Street Views

On Rosemary Street, commercial buildings and mature tree vegetation limit traveler views to the immediate foreground (Photo 6). The roadway elevation rises as travelers head south. Most of the properties in this area are buffered by mature vegetation or landscaping (turf, plantings). The 88 Drive-In Theatre is fenced with a solid corrugated metal, approximately 6 feet high. However, the entire property is still visible over the fence from the roadway elevation. Attendees of the theater can likely see passing traffic on Rosemary, E. 88th Avenue, or both, but theater orientation is directed away from Rosemary Street.

Photo 6. Rosemary Street (Looking south)

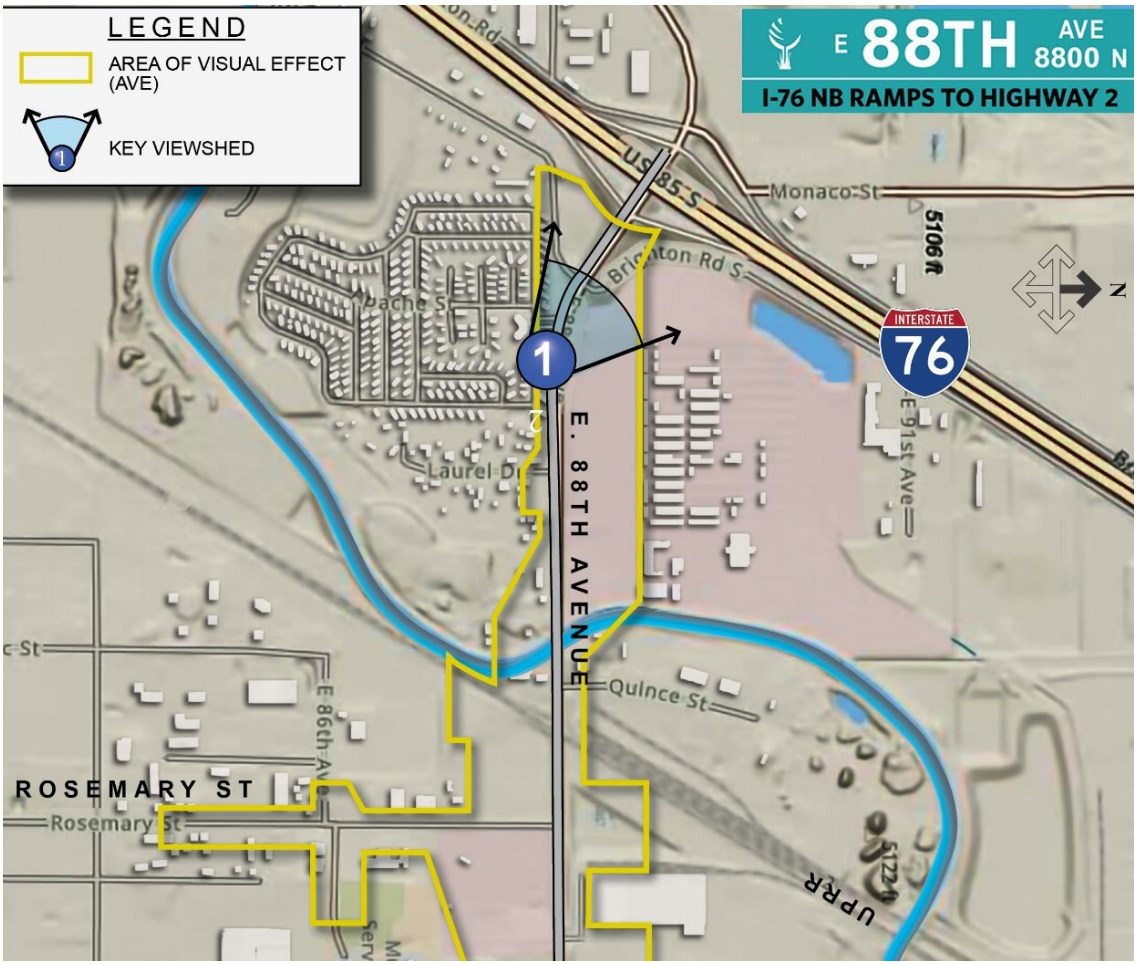
2.3.4 Key Viewshed

A viewshed is defined by what people can see in the environment limited by physical constraints and/or limits of human perception. A key viewshed is a location that captures the existing visual character and visual quality of the project study area to be altered by the Proposed Action. This is typically the view or views that the affected population considers most sensitive to change.

The representative key viewshed for this project is located at the Wikiup entrance on E. 88th Avenue (Photo 7; Figure 4) with viewer orientation to the northwest and the Front Range mountains. Current residents of the Wikiup community adjacent to E. 88th Avenue have static views of the mountains. The Proposed Action recommended noise barrier (10 feet high) would obstruct these views for approximately nine residents.

Photo 7. Key Viewpoint: View from E. 88th Avenue Wikiup looking west

Figure 4. Key Viewshed Map



Source: Goodbee & Associates

3.0 DESCRIPTION OF ALTERNATIVES

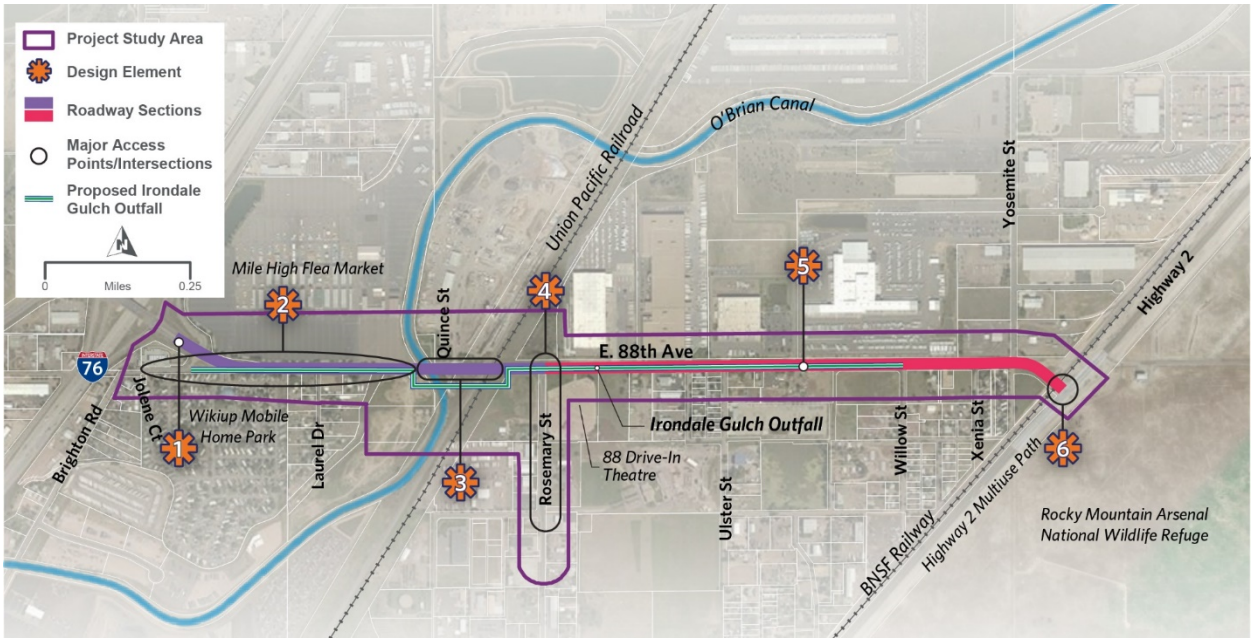
3.1 No-Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, the project study area will remain largely the same as its existing condition, with the exceptions of future implementation of the Irondale Gulch Outfall project, which will require reconstructing a portion of E. 88th Avenue from Brighton Road to Willow Street to construct the regional storm sewer underneath the roadway.

3.2 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would reconstruct E. 88th Avenue just east of the I-76 northbound ramps between Brighton Road and Highway 2 to improve traffic operations and accommodate all users. The locations of the major design elements that comprise the Proposed Action are numbered from west to east in Figure 5.

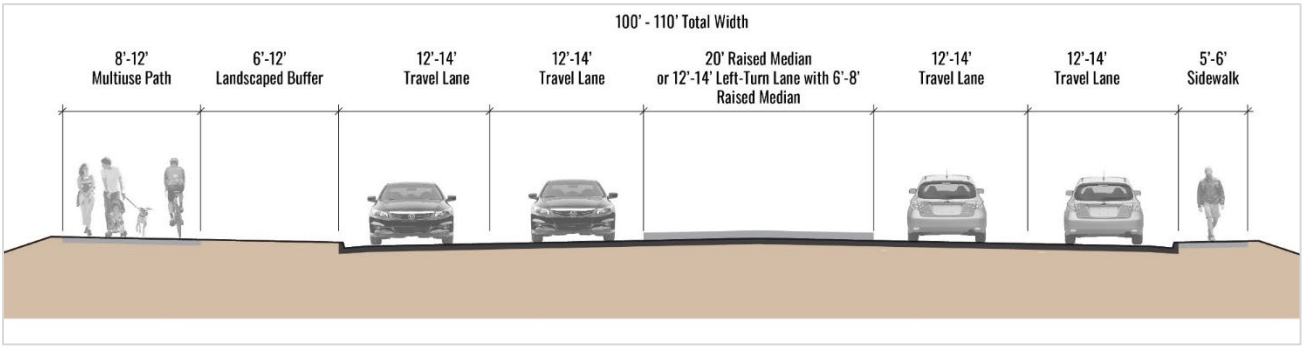
Figure 5. Proposed Action Design Elements



Element 1: E. 88th Avenue between Brighton Road and Rosemary Street. Existing E. 88th Avenue in this area has an approximately 40- to- 50-foot-wide typical section consisting of a through lane in each direction. E. 88th Avenue would be reconstructed as an approximately 100- to 110-foot-wide modified four-lane minor arterial from Brighton Road to Rosemary Street. The four-lane minor arterial typical section is defined in the City of Commerce City's *Engineering Construction Standards, Roadway and Parking Details Typical Sections* (Commerce City, 2017). The modified four-lane arterial typical section uses the basic template of the four-lane arterial typical section, but was modified to best meet the Purpose and Need for the project while reducing impacts along the corridor. The modified four-lane minor arterial has no buffer between the roadway and the sidewalk, and it may have a reduced buffer between the roadway; and the multiuse path may be narrower. The typical section would include an attached 5- to

6-foot-wide sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue, two 12- to 14-foot-wide travel lanes in each direction, an 8- to 20-foot-wide raised median (width narrows at left-turn bays), and a detached 8- to 12-foot-wide multiuse path on the north side of E. 88th Avenue separated from the roadway by a 6- to 12-foot-wide landscaped buffer (Figure 6). The centerline alignment of E. 88th Avenue would be shifted approximately 15 to 18 feet to the north between Brighton Road and Rosemary Street to accommodate the wider typical section. Improvements to E. 88th Avenue would tie into driveways and intersections to maintain access and drainage. 8-foot-tall and 10-foot-tall noise barriers are recommended as mitigation for traffic noise impacts along the south side of E. 88th Avenue in front of the Wikiup Mobile Home Park. The recommended noise barriers would not be built if the Benefitted Receptor Preference Survey results in 50 percent or less support for them. . Texture and color associated with the noise barriers will be determined during final design by the City of Commerce City and CDOT.

Figure 6. Typical Section for E. 88th Avenue between Brighton Road and Rosemary Street

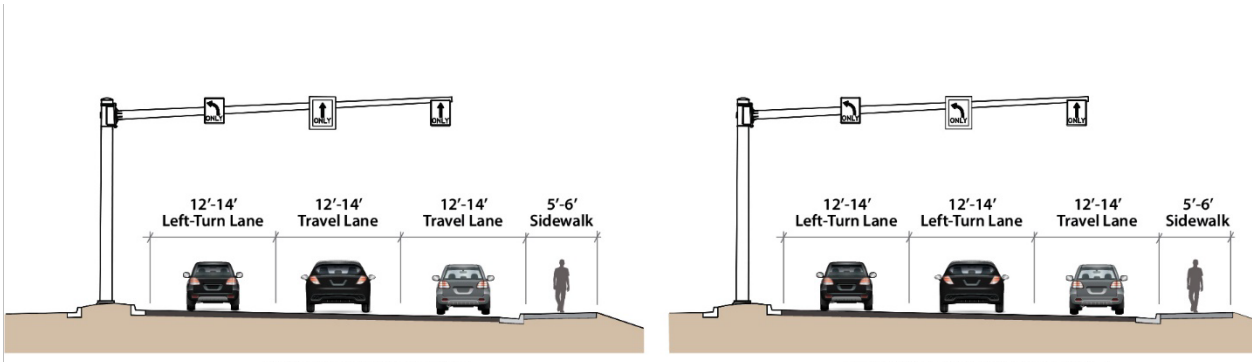


Element 2: Access to E. 88th Avenue between Brighton Road and the O'Brian Canal.
Access to E. 88th Avenue from the Wikiup Mobile Home Park would be limited to right-in and right-out turn movements to and from eastbound E. 88th Avenue. The Jolene Court intersection at Brighton Road would be widened. Signage would be placed on northbound Brighton Road south of the Jolene Court and Brighton Road intersection to notify drivers of cars entering the roadway.

Access to Laurel Drive and the direct driveway connections on the south side of E. 88th Avenue would be improved to maintain access and drainage, and modified to only accommodate right-in and right-out movements. A permitted U-turn movement would be provided at the intersection of Brighton Road and E. 88th Avenue for westbound traffic to access properties on the south side of E. 88th Avenue. The existing exit-only access from the Mile High Flea Market onto E. 88th Avenue would be retained but changed to a right-out only.

The primary access to the Mile High Flea Market on the north side of E. 88th Avenue would be improved with traffic control signals (Figure 7). Access from eastbound E. 88th Avenue to the Mile High Flea Market would have a dedicated left-turn lane at the intersection, which would also allow a permitted U-turn movement. The eastbound travel lane next to the dedicated left-turn lane would be a dynamic lane. The dynamic lane would function as an additional left-turn lane for the Mile High Flea Market during events when there is additional traffic volume, and as a through travel lane during normal roadway operations. The dynamic lane would be controlled by a traffic signal or sign notifying users when the lane is a left-turn lane and when it's a through travel lane.

Figure 8. Left-Turn Lane Assignments for Normal Roadway Operations and Mile High Flea Market Event Operations

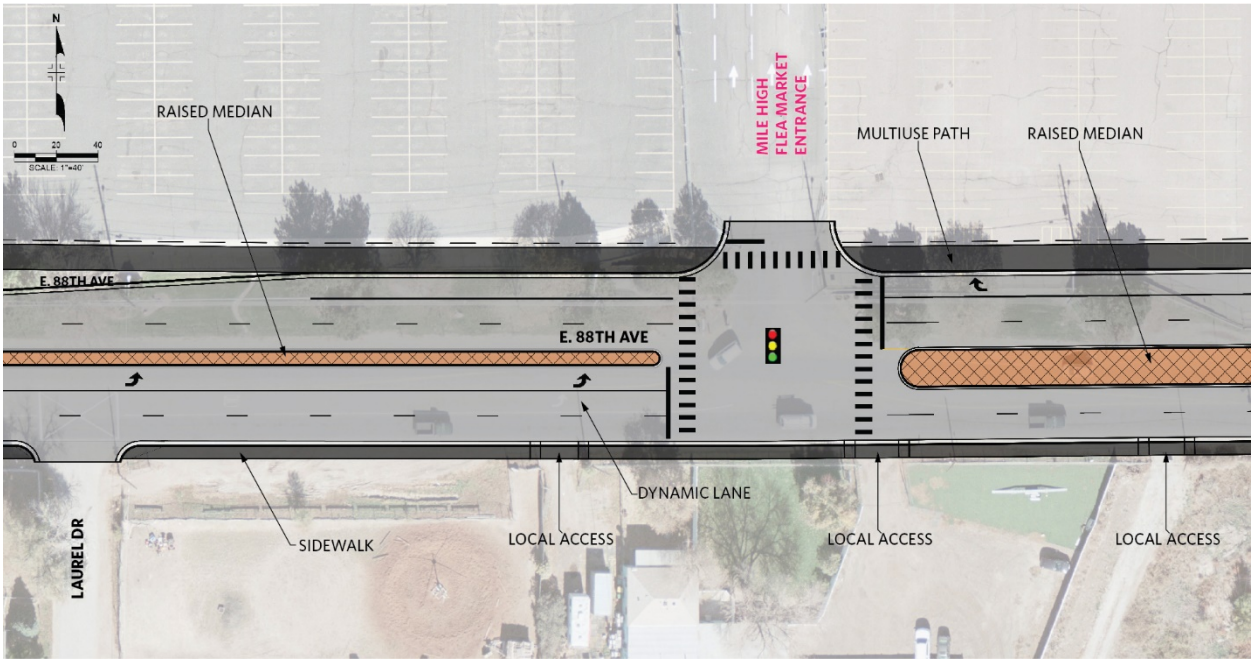


Normal Roadway Operations: Two travel lanes and a single left-turn lane into the Mile High Flea Market entrance.

Mile High Flea Market Event Operations: Single travel lane and a double left-turn lane into Flea Market entrance.

shows how the dynamic lane would function under normal roadway operations and during events at the Mile High Flea Market.

Figure 7. E. 88th Avenue and Mile High Flea Market Entrance Intersection



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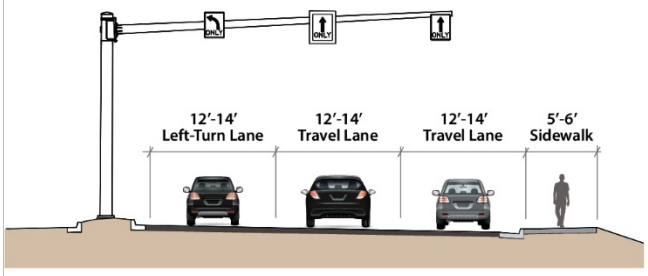
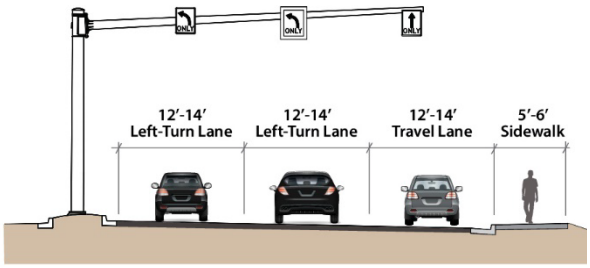


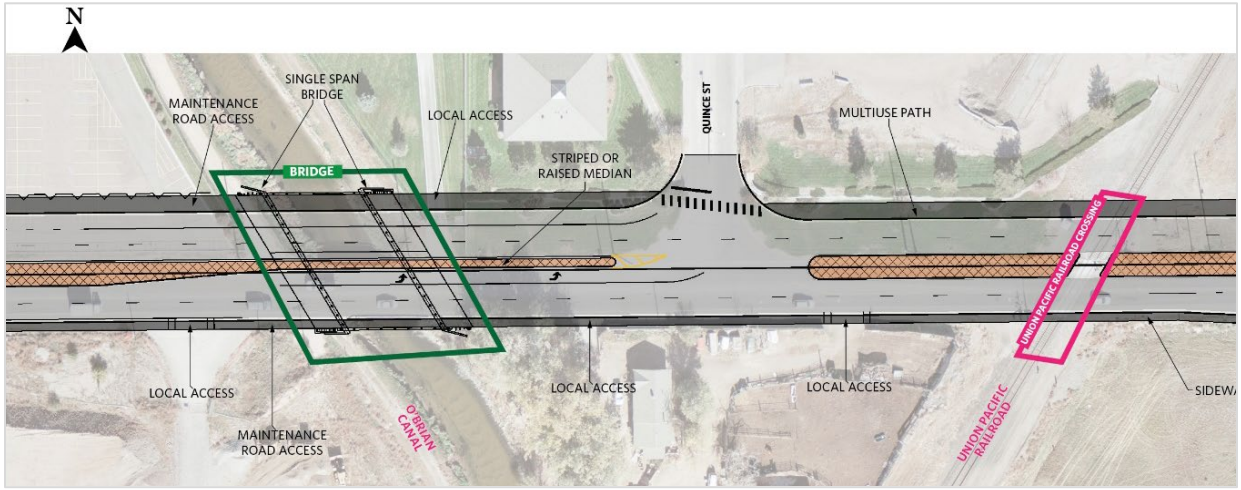
Normal Roadway Operations: Two travel lanes and a single left-turn lane into the Mile High Flea Market entrance.



Mile High Flea Market Event Operations: Single travel lane and a double left-turn lane into Flea Market entrance.

Element 3: E. 88th Avenue bridge replacement, improvements at Quince Street, and UPRR crossing. A new E. 88th Avenue single-span bridge with a widened typical section would replace the existing bridge over the O'Brian Canal. The typical-section would have two travel lanes in each direction and the sidewalk and multiuse path features described under Element 1 (the median may be striped instead of raised), an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, and a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic entering Quince Street; there would be no buffer between the roadway and multiuse path. Improvements to E. 88th Avenue would tie into driveways and Quince Street to maintain access and drainage. The E. 88th Avenue crossing of the UPRR track would be reconstructed to incorporate the wider roadway, multiuse path, and sidewalk (Figure 8). The at-grade railroad crossing with the UPRR would be improved to current railroad standards and coordinated with the Public Utilities Commission. Specific design features, such as signing and striping, crossing arms, flashing-light signals, and bells or other audible devices, would be decided during final design.

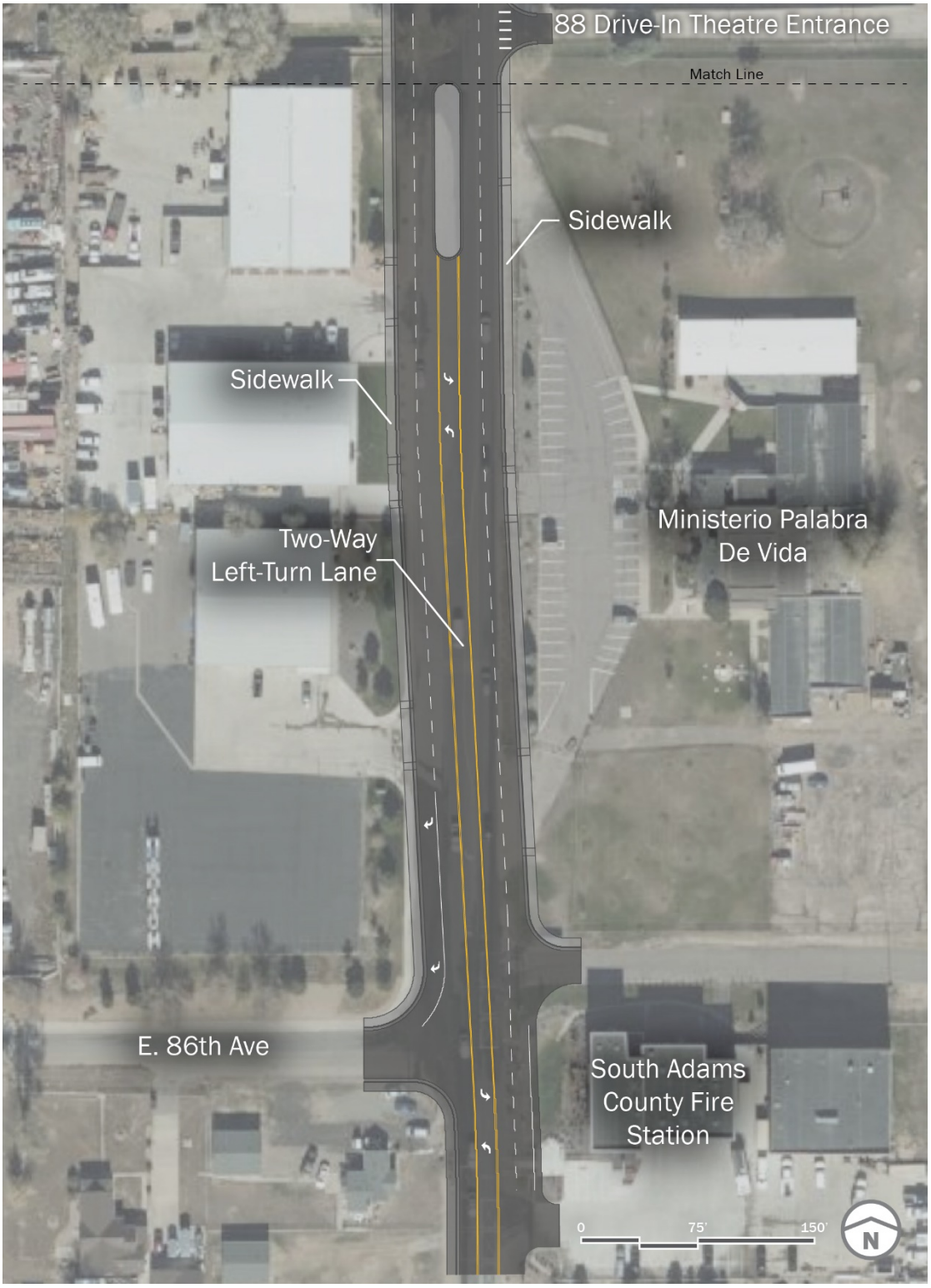
Figure 8. E. 88th Avenue Bridge Replacement, Improvements at Quince Street, and UPRR Crossing



Element 4: E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street intersection. The intersection of Rosemary Street and E. 88th Avenue would remain a three-way "T" signalized intersection. The existing intersection E. 88th Avenue eastbound approach has a through lane and right-turn lane, the westbound approach has a through lane and a left-turn lane, and the Rosemary Street approach has a left-turn lane and right-turn lane. The E. 88th Avenue approaches will be widened to accommodate a double-right turn lane as part of the eastbound approach, and an additional through lane as part of the westbound approach. The Rosemary Street approach to E. 88th Avenue would be widened approximately 25 to 30 feet to the west for approximately 600 feet south of E. 88th Avenue to the 88 Drive-In Theatre entrance to accommodate two northbound left-turn lanes and a right-turn lane, two southbound lanes, 5- to 6-foot-wide sidewalks on each side of the roadway, and curb and gutter. A left-turn lane on southbound Rosemary Street would accommodate event traffic for the 88 Drive-In Theatre. Figure 9 shows the proposed intersection configuration at Rosemary Street and E. 88th Avenue. Between the 88 Drive-In Theatre entrance and E. 86th Avenue, the roadway would include two travel lanes in each direction and a two-way left-turn lane. South of E. 86th Avenue, the improvements would immediately tie into Rosemary Street at the South Adams County Fire Station. Improvements to Rosemary Street would tie into driveways and intersections to maintain access and drainage. The design between the 88 Drive-In Theatre entrance and E. 86th Avenue is shown in Figure 10.

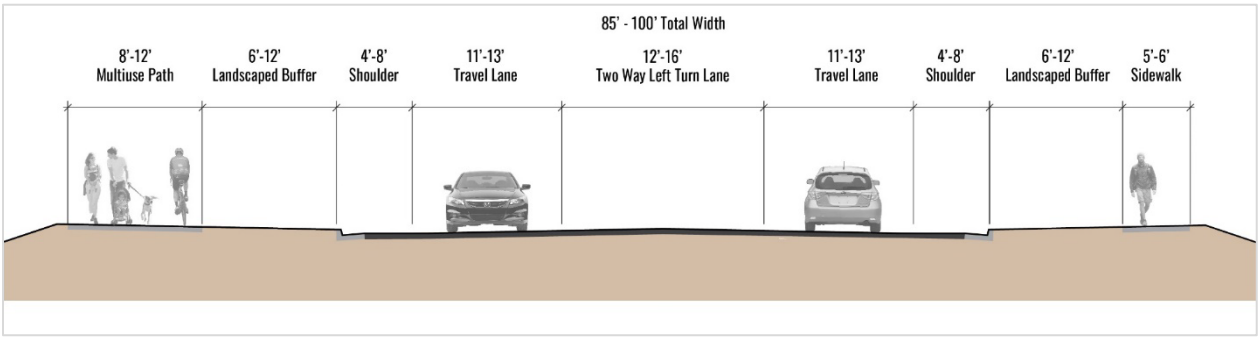
Figure 9. Intersection of Rosemary Street and E. 88th Avenue Intersection of Rosemary Street and E. 88th Avenue (E. 88th Avenue to 88 Drive-In Theatre Entrance)

Figure 10. Rosemary Street from 88 Drive-In Theatre Entrance South to 86th Avenue



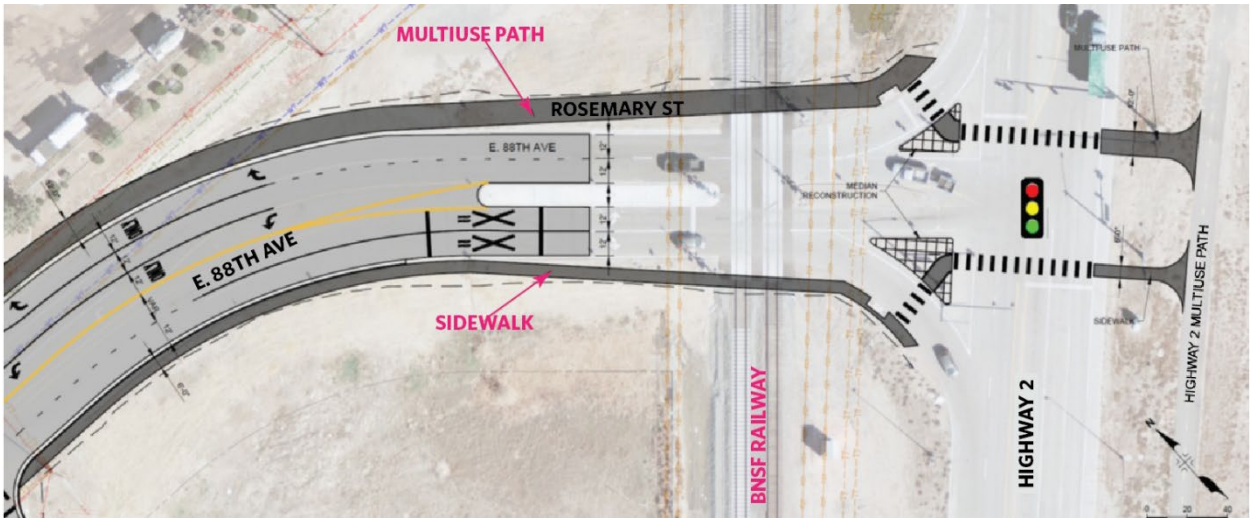
Element 5: E. 88th Avenue between Rosemary Street and Highway 2. E. 88th Avenue would be reconstructed as an approximately 85- to 100-foot-wide modified local industrial collector (Figure 11). The typical section would include one 11- to 13-foot-wide travel lane with an additional 4- to 8-foot-wide shoulder in each direction, a 12- to 16-foot-wide two-way left-turn lane at the center, a 5- to 6-foot-wide sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue, , and an 8- to 12-foot-wide multiuse path on the north side of E. 88th Avenue. Both the sidewalk and multiuse path would be separated from the roadway by a 6- to 12-foot-wide buffer. The alignment of E. 88th Avenue would be shifted approximately 4 to 12 feet to the north to accommodate the wider typical section. Improvements to E. 88th Avenue would tie into driveways and intersections to maintain access and drainage and accommodate future improvements to local roads. Two noise barriers are recommended as mitigation for traffic noise impacts—a 12-foot-tall noise barrier along the south side of E. 88th Avenue east of Ulster Street, and a 12-foot-tall noise barrier along the south side of E. 88th Avenue between Xenia Street and Yosemite Street. The recommended noise barriers would not be built if the Benefitted Receptor Preference Survey results in 50 percent or less support for them. Texture and color associated with the noise barriers will be determined during final design by the City of Commerce City and CDOT.

Figure 11. Typical Section for E. 88th Avenue between Rosemary Street and Highway 2



Element 6: E. 88th Avenue, BNSF Railway tracks, and Highway 2 intersection. The intersection of E. 88th Avenue, BNSF tracks, and Highway 2 was reconstructed in 2018. The Proposed Action would not reconstruct E. 88th Avenue at the intersection. The new multiuse path on the north side of E. 88th Avenue and the new sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue would be extended across the BNSF tracks and Highway 2 (Figure 12). The at-grade railroad crossing with the BNSF would be improved to current railroad standards and coordinated with the Public Utilities Commission. Specific design features, such as signing and striping, crossing arms, flashing-light signals, and bells or other audible devices, would be decided during final design.

Figure 12. Intersection of E. 88th Avenue, BNSF Railway Tracks, and Highway 2



Stormwater Drainage and Water Quality Treatment. The Proposed Action would include construction of a section of the Irondale Gulch Outfall to detain stormwater for E. 88th Avenue (Figure 3). The Irondale Gulch Outfall is a regional drainage facility planned along E. 88th Avenue that will also serve as the storm sewer for the Proposed Action. The Irondale Gulch Outfall is described further in the *Irondale Gulch Outfall Systems Plan Conceptual Design Report* (Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, 2011), attached to the *Water Quality Report* located in Appendix A. The outfall would be sized appropriately for regional and local stormwater runoff. Water quality treatment would be provided using structural best management practices within the proposed right-of-way before the runoff reaches the outfall system. Under the Proposed Action, water detained in the section of the Irondale Gulch Outfall pipe constructed as part of the Proposed Action would be pumped into the existing I-76 CDOT stormwater system at the west end of the project study area. After the Irondale Gulch Outfall is constructed in full, E. 88th Avenue would continue to drain into it and there would be no need to pump into the I-76 CDOT stormwater system.

4.0 IMPACTS EVALUATION

4.1 Evaluation Process and Criteria

This section describes the criteria and evaluation of the visual impacts of the Proposed Action to the visual character, viewers, and visual quality of the AVE. For this analysis phase, the study team evaluated the changes to the visual resources within the landscape unit in three steps, to identify:

1. Compatibility of the Proposed Action with the visual character (compatible or incompatible)
2. Viewer sensitivity to changes (sensitive or insensitive)
3. Degree of impact to visual quality (adverse, neutral or beneficial)
4. Evaluation Criteria

4.1.1 Visual Character

The study team analyzed the compatibility of the Proposed Action with the visual character of natural environmental features (landforms, water bodies, vegetation) and cultural environmental features (buildings, existing and future development, infrastructure, structures) of each landscape type. This includes Proposed Action elements of form, line, color, texture, scale, and materials. Compatibility, or contrast, of the Proposed Action, was categorized at three levels of strong, moderate, or weak within the project study area. A strong level of contrast indicates the Proposed Action will attract attention and now dominate landscape features. A moderate level of contrast may attract attention with the visual setting slightly changed. Alternatively, a weak level of contrast will not attract attention and the visual setting will feel unchanged. Utilizing three levels of contrast, a determination could be made as to whether the project will ultimately be compatible or incompatible with the visual character of the site.

- Compatible—A moderate or weak level of visual contrast to the natural environment and cultural environment features are considered compatible with the visual character of the landscape unit.
- Incompatible—A strong or moderately strong level of contrast to natural environment and cultural environment features are considered incompatible with the visual character of the landscape unit.

4.1.2 Viewer Sensitivity

The study team analyzed the viewer sensitivity of the Proposed Action using three levels of criteria including viewer proximity, extent, and duration. Viewer proximity analyzed the distance to which viewers are exposed to the Proposed Action with increased sensitivity levels at closer proximity zones. Viewer extent considers the quantity of people that will be viewing the Proposed Action. Viewer duration analyzed the length of time that people will view the proposed improvements. Utilizing these three levels of viewer sensitivity, a determination could be made as to whether the public will be sensitive or insensitive to the changes of the Proposed Action.

- Sensitive—Moderate to high quantities of viewers, often at close proximity to the project site, viewing the Proposed Action for extended durations of time.
- Insensitive—Low to moderate quantities of viewers, at varying ranges of visual proximity to the project site, viewing the Proposed Action for brief durations of time.

4.1.3 Visual Quality

The study team analyzed the degree of impact to the visual quality within each of the six landscape types. The process for this incorporates both compatibility of visual character and viewer sensitivity outlined above. Visual quality levels for each landscape type are categorized as beneficial, neutral, or adverse.

- Beneficial—The Proposed Action is compatible with the visual character of the project site and viewers are insensitive to these changes.
- Neutral—The Proposed Action is compatible or incompatible with the visual character of the project site and viewers are insensitive to these changes.
- Adverse—The Proposed Action is compatible or incompatible with the visual character of the project site and viewers are sensitive to the changes.

4.2 Summary of Impacts

4.2.1 No-Action Alternative

No impacts to visual quality are associated with the No-Action Alternative.

4.2.2 Direct Impacts of the Proposed Action

Table 2 summarizes the direct impacts of the Proposed Action. The table is separated into six landscape types (Commercial, Residential, Industrial, Agricultural, Public, Roadway) with each impact weighed against its surrounding context. The ‘details of effect’ column provides further insight into visual character, viewer sensitivity, and resulting visual quality. Results range from beneficial to adverse.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Commercial Development			
Bridge at O'Brian Canal	The current bridge is 40 feet wide and would be replaced with a single span bridge, to preserve the open feeling of the current crossing. The new single-span bridge over the O'Brian Canal would be approximate 77 feet in length and 104 feet in width to accommodate the proposed widening of E. 88th Avenue. The cross-section would include two traffic lanes, a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic, an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, a center median, a multiuse path on the north side of the roadway, a sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue with guardrails. Crash-worthy bridge railing with 42-inch minimum height attachments would be constructed on the outside edge of the sidewalks to protect traffic and multimodal users.	Neutral	Mile High Flea Market: Expansion of the current crossing of E. 88th Avenue with the O'Brian Canal would not alter overall visual character of the area. The bridge would have a weak level of visual contrast with existing visual character. Visitors to the Mile High Flea Market represent a high quantity of viewers at close proximity of the bridge for a reasonably short duration of time. It is unlikely the bridge structure would attract attention; viewer focus is typically directed away from E. 88th Avenue. Short-term viewers would be less sensitive to these changes.
Recommended Noise Barrier	The recommended noise barriers are planned to be 8 to 10 feet high and constructed within the existing right-of-way. There is currently a 5-foot-tall vinyl fence that separates the mobile home park from E. 88th Avenue. This fence would remain in place (Figure 13, page 33).	Neutral	Static views from the Mile High Flea Market would have short-term views of the recommended noise barrier to the south. Viewers will be less sensitive to these changes. Note: Recommended noise mitigation will be reviewed during final design to ensure constructability. The actual height, length, and locations of the recommended mitigation may vary for reasons, such as terrain, utilities, property owner and benefited receptor desires, or easements.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Retaining Walls	There would be new modular block retaining walls along the south side of the Mile High Flea Market parking lot. Walls would face north and be approximate 3 to 4 feet maximum height.	Neutral	Short retaining walls visible from the Mile High Flea Market would have a low visual contrast with existing visual character. It is unlikely the walls would attract attention; viewer focus is typically directed away from E. 88th Avenue. Short-term viewers would be less sensitive to these changes.
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multiuse path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Beneficial	Roadway widening adjacent to commercial land-use is compatible with visual character. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes. Travelers would benefit from improved traffic patterns, turn lanes, multi-use paths and landscape enhancements within the medians and along the roadway.
Residential			
Bridge at O'Brian Canal	The current bridge is 40 feet wide and would be replaced with a single span bridge, to preserve the open feeling of the current crossing. The new single-span bridge over the O'Brian Canal would be approximate 77 feet in length and 104 feet in width to accommodate the proposed widening of E. 88th Avenue. The cross-section would include two traffic lanes, a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic, an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, a center median, a multiuse path on the north side of the roadway, a sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue with guardrails. Crash-worthy bridge railing with 42-inch minimum height attachments would be constructed on the outside edge of the sidewalks to protect traffic and multimodal users.	Neutral	Static views from residences within the project study area would not have visibility of the bridge or its associated wing walls.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Recommended Noise Barrier	Recommended noise barrier heights would be 8 feet on the west side of the Wikiup entrance, 10 feet on the east side of the entrance and 12 feet east of Ulster Street and for the Yosemite residences. Total length of barriers would be approximately 1,700 feet. There is currently a 5-foot-tall vinyl fence that separates the mobile home park from E. 88th Avenue. This fence would remain in place.	Neutral/ Adverse	Wikiup Property: Approximately nine residences would be impacted by the Proposed Action. Residences would gain increased privacy, likely creating a positive level of effect. However, static views to the north and west would be obstructed by the 10-foot recommended noise barrier, likely creating an neutral/adverse impact for homeowners. Ulster Street Property: Approximately three residences would be impacted by the Proposed Action. Residences would gain increased privacy, likely creating a positive level of effect. However, static views to the north and west would be obstructed by the 12-foot-high recommended noise barrier, likely creating a neutral/adverse impact for homeowners. Yosemite Street Property: Approximately five residences would be impacted by the Proposed Action. Residences would gain increased privacy, likely creating a positive level of effect. However, static views to the north and west would be obstructed by the 12-foot-high recommended noise barrier, likely creating a neutral/adverse impact for homeowners. Note: Recommended noise mitigation will be reviewed during final design to ensure constructability. The actual height, length, and locations of the recommended mitigation may vary for reasons, such as terrain, utilities, property owner and benefited receptor desires, or easements.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multiuse path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Beneficial	Views of the improved roadway widening from existing residential areas would be compatible with current visual character. There would be a low quantity of residential viewers that are moderately sensitive. Travelers would benefit from E. 88th Ave. improvements.
Industrial (Medium and Heavy)			
Bridge at O'Brian Canal	The current bridge is 40 feet wide and would be replaced with a single span bridge, to preserve the open feeling of the current crossing. The new single-span bridge over the O'Brian Canal would be approximate 77 feet in length and 104 feet in width to accommodate the proposed widening of E. 88th Avenue. The cross-section would include two traffic lanes, a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic, an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, a center median, a multiuse path on the north side of the roadway, a sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue with guardrails. Crash-worthy bridge railing with 42-inch minimum height attachments would be constructed on the outside edge of the sidewalks to protect traffic and multimodal users.	Neutral	Views of the new structure from the industrial properties would have a weak visual contrast and would remain compatible with visual character of this land-use. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes.
Recommended Noise Barrier	The recommended noise barrier is planned to be 12 feet high east of Ulster Street and at the Yosemite Street property and constructed within the existing right-of-way.	Neutral/ Beneficial	Recommended noise barriers would be compatible with industrial land use. Viewers from industrial land use would be less sensitive to changes.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multiuse path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Beneficial	Views of the improved widened roadway from industrial properties would be compatible with visual character. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes. Travelers would benefit from E. 88th Avenue improvements.
Agricultural			
Bridge at O'Brian Canal	The current bridge is 40 feet wide and would be replaced with a single span bridge, to preserve the open feeling of the current crossing. The new single-span bridge over the O'Brian Canal would be approximate 77 feet in length and 104 feet in width to accommodate the proposed widening of E. 88th Avenue. The cross-section would include two traffic lanes, a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic, an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, a center median, a multiuse path on the north side of the roadway, a sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue with guardrails. Crash-worthy bridge railing with 42-inch minimum height attachments would be constructed on the outside edge of the sidewalks to protect traffic and multimodal users.	Neutral	Views of the widened canal bridge from agricultural properties would be compatible with current visual character. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes.
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multiuse path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Neutral	Views of the improved widened roadway from agricultural properties would be compatible with visual character. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes.
Public			
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multiuse path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Beneficial	Views of the roadway widening from public right-of-would be is compatible with visual character. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes as they are mostly dynamic.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Roadway Improvements			
Bridge at O'Brian Canal	The current bridge is 40 feet wide and would be replaced with a single span bridge, to preserve the open feeling of the current crossing. The new single-span bridge over the O'Brian Canal would be approximate 77 feet in length and 104 feet in width to accommodate the proposed widening of E. 88th Avenue. The cross-section would include two traffic lanes, a left-turn lane for eastbound traffic, an acceleration lane for westbound vehicles from existing Quince Street, a center median, a multiuse path on the north side of the roadway, a sidewalk on the south side of E. 88th Avenue with guardrails. Crash-worthy bridge railing with 42-inch minimum height attachments would be constructed on the outside edge of the sidewalks to protect traffic and multimodal users.	Beneficial	The new bridge would be compatible with visual character of the existing roadway.
Recommended Noise Barrier	The recommended noise barrier is planned to be 10 feet high and constructed within the existing right-of-way. There is currently a 5-foot-tall vinyl fence that separates the mobile home park from E. 88th Avenue. This fence would remain in place.	Neutral	A recommended noise barrier would be compatible with roadway corridors. Viewers would be less sensitive to changes.
Roadway Widening	Widening of roadway, changes to striping, multi-use path, sidewalks, and landscaping.	Beneficial	Roadway widening would be compatible with visual character. Travelers would be less sensitive to changes.
Signage	Sign poles and panels	Neutral	New signage would be compatible with visual character. Travelers would be less sensitive to changes.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

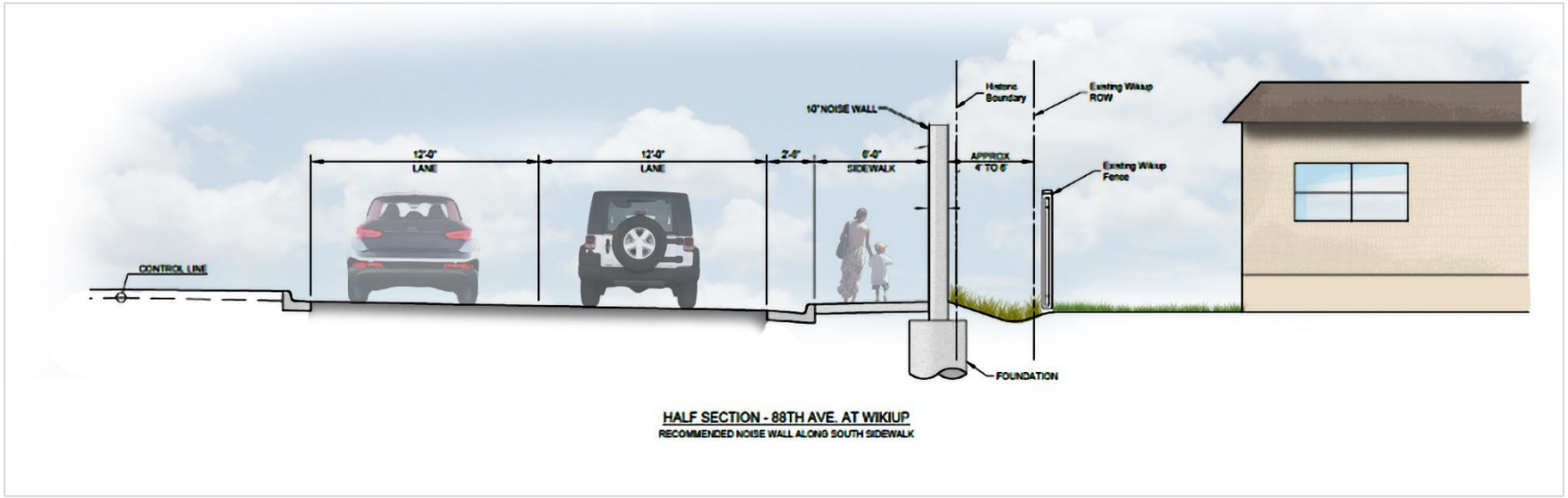
Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Medians	Raised medians on E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street. Medians would be median cover material (concrete).	Neutral/ Beneficial	New medians would have moderate visual contrast but would remain compatible with existing visual character. Travelers and existing residents would benefit from traffic separation and median treatment options.
Landscape	Landscape restoration along roadway	Beneficial	New landscaping would be compatible with visual character. Travelers would benefit from landscape replacement and reseeding of disturbed areas.
Tree Removal	Tree removals from roadway widening	Neutral	The roadway widening would include a multiuse path and sidewalk which would cause approximately 73 tree removals of 2-inch caliper or larger, to occur along the Mile High Flea Market parking lot and at an industrial property landscape buffer near Yosemite Street. Any disturbance to existing vegetation will be avoided and/or minimized to the maximum extent possible. Due to a lack of available space and lack of irrigation, 1:1 tree replacement within the project study area is not practical. Plantings with a vertical element, such as shrubs, will be included in the final design. Replacement tree planting will be provided through five means: (1) replanting within public right-of-way along the corridor, (2) replanting trees on private property as committed to for historic properties, (3) furnishing fruit trees for the Community Garden at Anythink Library, (4) furnishing trees for the City of Commerce City Parks Department for use throughout the City, and (5) furnishing trees to private property owners who will lose a tree as a result of the project. These methods will provide a minimum of 0.33:1 tree replacement.
Pedestrian Amenities	Multiuse path and sidewalk	Beneficial	Sidewalks and multiuse paths along E. 88th Avenue and Rosemary Street would be compatible with visual character. Pedestrian travelers would benefit from safer routes along the roadway.

Table 2. Environmental Impacts of the Proposed Action

Impact	Impact Description	Level of Effect	Details of Effect
Safety	Street lighting along roadway.at 300-foot spacing	Beneficial	Street lighting would be compatible with visual character. Travelers would benefit from additional lighting along the roadway.
Utilities	Overhead utility pole removals	Beneficial	A number of utility poles are located just off the roadway. Removal of these poles would benefit travelers from a safety standpoint and would benefit static viewers with the removal of infrastructure clutter.

Figure 13. Recommended Noise Barrier Cross Section

Existing E. 88th Avenue at Wikiup



Proposed E. 88th Avenue at Wikiup

4.2.3 How Will the Proposed Action Affect Specific Viewer Groups?

Table 2 (Section 4.2.2) illustrated that the Proposed Action would have either a beneficial, adverse or neutral level of effect for the six landscape types indicated. The proposed improvements for the roadway are generally consistent with existing site conditions and compatible with existing land use.

There are three locations where noise barriers have been recommended as part of the Proposed Action. The first location is the Wikiup homeowners along the south frontage of E. 88th Avenue (affecting approximately 9 residences) where the Proposed Action includes a 10-foot-high noise barrier (Figure 14). The second location is immediately east of Ulster Street on the south side of E. 88th Avenue, in front of the existing residences (affecting approximately 3 residences). The third location is adjacent to the residences between Xenia Street and Yosemite Street (affecting approximately 5 residences).

For recommended noise barriers to be implemented, the property owner must agree to the barrier. It should be noted that the property owner may agree to implement a recommended noise barrier, but agreement may not be unanimous for the individual homeowners. Residents at these locations would enjoy increased levels of privacy and reduced traffic noise, likely resulting in beneficial levels of effect. However, the barriers would completely obstruct north and west viewsheds, likely resulting in adverse levels of effect. Several residences also have north and/or west-facing windows, all within approximately 20 feet of the existing fence and recommended noise barriers. It is reasonable to expect that for at least some homeowners, adding both privacy and reduced traffic noise would balance out the adverse impacts of the obstructed viewsheds.

Figure 14. Recommended Noise Barrier at Wikiup Community

4.2.4 Indirect Impacts of the Proposed Action

No notable indirect adverse effects would occur from the Proposed Action. Over time, the visual quality of the Proposed Action would improve as landscaping and other vegetation matures and softens the appearance of new retaining walls and bridge structures.

4.2.5 Temporary Impacts (Construction)

Temporary visual impacts during construction of the Proposed Action would involve an assortment of construction materials, temporary lighting, staging areas with vehicles, equipment, and personnel, dust fencing, traffic control including flaggers, and signage.

5.0 MITIGATION COMMITMENTS

Visual impacts and mitigation are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation

Impact	Mitigation Commitment from Source Document	Responsible Branch	Timing/Phase that Mitigation will be Implemented
Visual impact of roadway widening with medians	Median treatments, including any landscape or hardscape, will be selected to meet City of Commerce City design standards.	City of Commerce City	Pre- Construction
Visual impact of existing tree removals as a result of roadway widening and paths	Any disturbance to existing vegetation will be avoided and/or minimized to the maximum extent possible. Due to a lack of available space and lack of irrigation, 1:1 tree replacement within the project study area is not practical. Plantings with a vertical element, such as shrubs, will be included in the final design. Replacement tree planting will be provided through five means: (1) replanting within public right-of-way along the corridor, (2) replanting trees on private property as committed to for historic properties, (3) furnishing fruit trees for the Community Garden at Anythink Library, (4) furnishing trees for the City of Commerce City Parks Department for use throughout the City, and (5) furnishing trees to private property owners who will lose a tree as a result of the project. These methods will provide a minimum of 0.33:1 tree replacement.	City of Commerce City, Contractor	During Construction
Visual impact of bridge at O'Brian Canal.	Bridge rail fencing will be selected to match similar bridge projects in the City of Commerce City.	City of Commerce City	Pre-Construction
Visual impact of recommended noise barriers.	Colors, textures, and other aesthetic treatments for the recommended noise barriers will be selected during final design.	City of Commerce City	Pre-Construction
Temporary adverse impacts to visual quality due to material stockpiles, high visibility fencing, dust and debris, and staging areas, including at historic properties.	Stockpile areas will be in containers or neatly organized, cleaned and located in less visibly sensitive areas, and whenever possible, not visible from residential areas. Dust mitigation is addressed by mitigation for air quality.	City of Commerce City, Contractor	During Construction

1

6.0 REFERENCES

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Appendix A. VIA Scoping Questionnaire

The following ten questions can be used to determine the appropriate level of effort for assessing the impacts on visual quality that may result from a proposed highway project. The first set of five questions is concerned with environmental compatibility impacts on the visual resources of the affected environment. The second set of five questions deals with the sensitivity of the affected population of viewers to those impacts.

Consider each of the ten questions on the questionnaire and select the response that most closely applies to the project in question. Each response has a corresponding point value. After the questionnaire is completed the total score will represent the type of VIA document suitable for the project.

It is important that this scoring system be used as a preliminary guide only. Although these questions provide some guidelines for determining if a VIA is necessary, it should not, by itself, be considered definitive. If there is any hint that visual issues may be a factor in assessing impacts, it is recommended that a VIA be conducted. Although the total score will direct the user toward a particular level of VIA documentation, circumstances may necessitate selecting a different level of analysis and documentation based on previous experience, local concerns, or professional judgment. This checklist is meant to assist the writer of the VIA to understand the degree and breadth of the possible visual issues. The goal is to develop an analysis and document strategy that is appropriately thorough, efficient, and defensible.

Visual Impact Assessment Scoping Questionnaire

Project Name: 88th Avenue: I-76 NB to SH 2	Site Visit Date: April 12, 2019
Location: Exit 10 NB I-76 heading east Commerce City, CO	Time: 10am to noon
Special Conditions/Notes:	Conducted By: Patti Miers, Adam Barnard

The questionnaire was answered using a design option that included a grade-separated structure. This design option was the conservative choice for determining the level of VIA at the time of project scoping. However, through the alternative screening process an at-grade structure over the O'Brian Canal and at-grade crossing of the Union Pacific Railroad track design option was selected as part of the Proposed Action. The proposed at-grade crossings would not require an increased level of VIA, and the results of the questionnaire are still valid.

Environmental Compatibility

1. *Will the project result in a noticeable change in the physical characteristics of the existing environment?*
(Consider all project components and construction impacts - both permanent and temporary, including landform changes, structures, noise barriers, vegetation removal, railing, signage, and contractor activities.)

☐ High level of permanent change (3)
☒ Moderate level of permanent change (2)
☐ Low level of permanent or temporary change (1)
☐ No Noticeable Change (0)

The 88th Avenue project includes lane widening from 2 lanes to 4 lanes, changing the at-grade railroad crossing to become a grade-separated structure, and sidewalks along both sides of the roadway. Trees will likely require removal along both sides of the roadway with the largest impacts along the Flea Market parking lot buffer on the north side.

2. *Will the project complement or contrast with the visual character desired by the community?*
(Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the surrounding scale of the community. Is the project likely to give an urban appearance to an existing rural or suburban community? Do you anticipate that the change will be viewed by the public as positive or negative? Research planning documents, or talk with local planners

and community representatives to understand the type of visual environment local residents envision for their community.)

☐ Low Compatibility (3) ☒ Moderate Compatibility (2)

☐ High compatibility (1)

The 88th Ave roadway provides an important connection between Interstate 76 and Highway 2. The land is currently zoned medium intensity industrial along the north side with a mix of agricultural land and low density residential along the south side. The setting is urban near I-76, transitioning to a more rural context moving east toward Highway 2. Development feels fragmented with industrial (heavy trucking, railroad, distribution) consistent on the north side and small, scattered residential on the south side. A lane widening and railway overpass will certainly complement the heavy transportation in the immediate vicinity and provide safer general transportation overall with inclusion of new lanes, sidewalks, and traffic signals. Residential along the south side of 88th Ave represents a relatively small contingent of housing along the immediate corridor. These small homes will contrast with the addition of higher traffic volume and noise, but will likely not be concerned with visual impacts due to the nature of their current existing conditions.

3. *What level of local concern is there for the types of project features (e.g., bridge structures, large excavations, sound barriers, or median planting removal) and construction impacts that are proposed?*
(Certain project improvements can be of special interest to local citizens, causing a heightened level of public concern, and requiring a more focused visual analysis.)

☐ High concern (3) ☐ Moderate concern (2)

☒ Low concern (1) ☐ Negligible Project Features (0)

The railway overpass structure and the local road underpass appear to directly impact one of the residential homes on the south side. It is unclear if this home would be able to remain in place. Other project features including new lanes and traffic signal are likely not an issue of local concern. New sidewalks may impact the pine tree buffer adjacent to the Flea Market parking area and a there may be a potential demand to restore the vegetative buffer in some capacity.

4. *Is it anticipated that to mitigate visual impacts, it may be necessary to develop extensive or novel mitigation strategies to avoid, minimize, or compensate for adverse impacts or will using conventional mitigation strategies, such as landscape or architectural treatment adequately mitigate adverse visual impacts?*

☐ Extensive Non-Conventional Mitigation Likely (3) ☐ Some non-conventional Mitigation Likely (2)

☒ Only Conventional Mitigation Likely (1) ☐ No Mitigation Likely (0)

Mitigation is anticipated to be conventional.

5. *Will this project, when seen collectively with other projects, result in an aggregate adverse change (cumulative impacts) in overall visual quality or character?*
(Identify any projects [both state and local] in the area that have been constructed in recent years and those currently planned for future construction. The window of time and the extent of area applicable to possible cumulative impacts should be based on a reasonable anticipation of the viewing public's perception.)

☐ Cumulative Impacts likely: 0-5 years (3) ☒ Cumulative Impacts likely: 6-10 years (2)

☐ Cumulative Impacts unlikely (1)

88th Avenue has been identified within the Commerce City Transportation Plan (2010) as recommended highway widening to provide capacity improvements. Rosemary Street which connects with 88th Ave has also been identified for highway widening. The future land use plan (Commerce City, 2010c) outlines additional industrial zoning and distribution on both sides of 88th Avenue and future roadway improvements will continue to push the visual character of this area in this direction.

Viewer Sensitivity

1. *What is the potential that the project proposal may be controversial within the community, or opposed by any organized group?*
(This can be researched initially by talking with the state DOT and local agency management and staff familiar with the affected community's sentiments as evidenced by past projects and/or current information.)

☐ High Potential (3) ☐ Moderate Potential (2)

☒ Low Potential (1) ☐ No Potential (0)

There is low potential the project will be controversial or opposed by any organized group.

2. *How sensitive are potential viewer-groups likely to be regarding visible changes proposed by the project?*
(Consider among other factors the number of viewers within the group, probable viewer expectations, activities, viewing duration, and orientation. The expected viewer sensitivity level may be scoped by applying professional judgment, and by soliciting information from other DOT staff, local agencies and community representatives familiar with the affected community's sentiments and demonstrated concerns.)

☐ High Sensitivity (3) ☐ Moderate Sensitivity (2)

☒ Low Sensitivity (1)

Viewer groups include 88th Ave motorists who will experience a new railway overpass and traffic signal at Rosemary St. Viewer sensitivity for this group is anticipated to be low. Current industrial employee viewer groups will experience little to no impact and/or low sensitivity as buildings are windowless. Residential viewer groups near the existing railroad and flea market parking will see a new elevated railway overpass. Viewer sensitivity to this structure is anticipated to be low. The project team plans to provide a visual simulation to illustrate the new overpass.

3. *To what degree does the project's aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies or standards?*

☐ Low Compatibility (3) ☐ Moderate Compatibility (2)

☒ High compatibility (1)

The project's aesthetic approach is consistent with future city development plans and in providing a higher degree of transportation safety along a heavily used corridor.

4. *Are permits going to be required by outside regulatory agencies (i.e., Federal, State, or local)?*
(Permit requirements can have an unintended consequence on the visual environment. Anticipated permits, as well

as specific permit requirements - which are defined by the permitter, may be determined by talking with the project environmental planner and project engineer. Note: coordinate with the state DOT representative responsible for obtaining the permit prior to communicating directly with any permitting agency. Permits that may benefit from additional analysis include permits that may result in visible built features, such as infiltration basins or devices under a storm water permit or a retaining wall for wetland avoidance or permits for work in sensitive areas such as coastal development permits or on Federal lands, such as impacts to Wild and Scenic Rivers.)

☐ Yes (3) ☒ Maybe (2)

☐ No (1)

A 404 permit may be required.

5. *Will the project sponsor or public benefit from a more detailed visual analysis in order to help reach consensus on a course of action to address potential visual impacts?*
(Consider the proposed project features, possible visual impacts, and probable mitigation recommendations.)

☐ Yes (3) ☐ Maybe (2)

☒ No (1)

Determining the Level of Visual Impact Assessment

Total the scores of the answers to all ten questions on the Visual Impact Assessment Scoping Questionnaire. Use the total score from the questionnaire as an indicator of the appropriate level of VIA to perform for the project. Confirm that the level suggested by the checklist is consistent with the project teams' professional judgments. If there remains doubt about whether a VIA needs to be completed, it may be prudent to conduct an Abbreviated VIA. If there remains doubt about the level of the VIA, begin with the simpler VIA process. If visual impacts emerge as a more substantial concern than anticipated, the level of VIA documentation can always be increased.

The level of the VIA can initially be based on the following ranges of total scores:

☐ **Score 25-30**
An *Expanded VIA* is probably necessary. It is recommended that it should be proceeded by a formal visual scoping study prior to beginning the VIA to alert the project team to potential highly adverse impacts and to develop new project alternatives to avoid those impacts. These technical studies will likely receive state-wide, even national, public review. Extensive use of visual simulations and a comprehensive public involvement program would be typical.

☐ **Score 20-24**
A *Standard VIA* is recommended. This technical study will likely receive extensive local, perhaps state-wide, public review. It would typically include several visual simulations. It would also include a thorough examination of public planning and policy documents supplemented with a direct public engagement processes to determine visual preferences.

☐ **Score 15-19**
An *Abbreviated VIA* would briefly describe project features, impacts and mitigation requirements. Visual simulations would be optional. An Abbreviated VIA would receive little direct public interest beyond a summary of its findings in the project's environmental documents. Visual preferences would be based on observation and review of planning and policy documents by local jurisdictions.

☒ **Score 10-14**
A *VIA Memorandum* addressing minor visual issues that indicates the nature of the limited impacts and any necessary mitigation strategies that should be implemented would likely be sufficient along with an explanation of why no formal analysis is required.

☐ **Score 6-9**
No noticeable physical changes to the environment are proposed and no further analysis is required. Print out a copy of this completed questionnaire for your project file to document that there is no effect. A *VIA Memorandum* may be used to document that there is no effect and to explain the approach used for the determination.