

# CENTRAL MESA LRT EXTENSION

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT



## VISUAL AND AESTHETICS

August 2010





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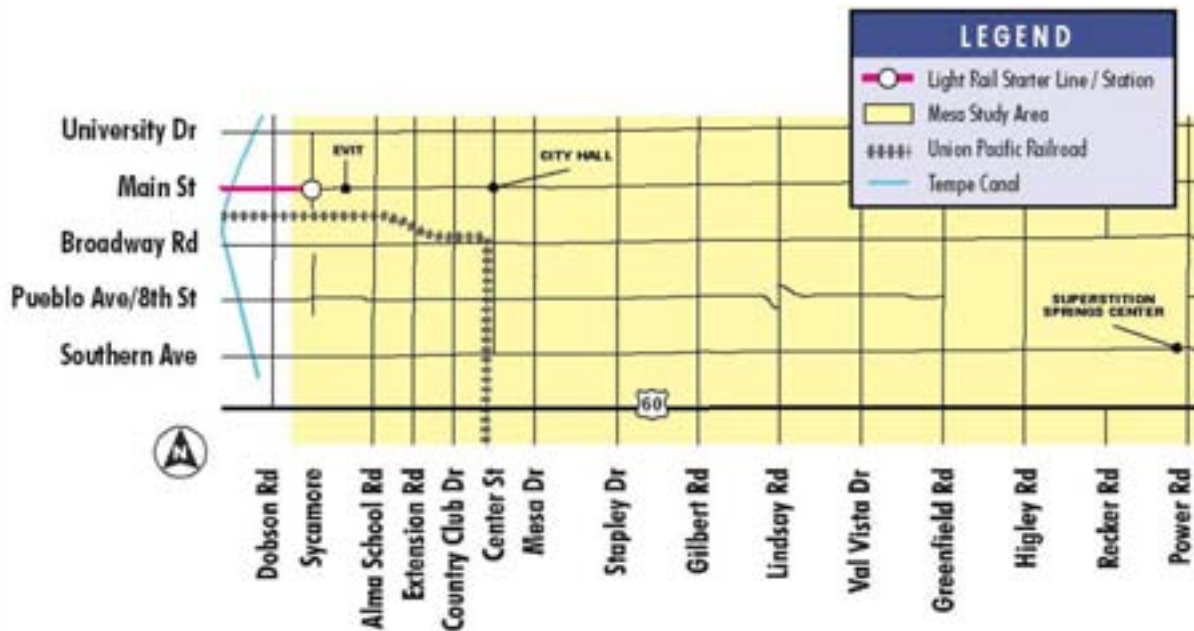
## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Visual Quality and Aesthetic technical report is being prepared to support the Environmental Assessment (EA) for high capacity transit improvements being considered in the study area for the Central Mesa Light Rail Transit (LRT) Extension. This chapter begins with a short background of the study and a description of the alternatives being considered in the EA.

### 1.1 STUDY BACKGROUND

The Central Mesa LRT Extension study area is bounded on the west by the Light Rail Starter Line's eastern terminus at Sycamore/Main Street; University Drive to the north; Power Road to the east; and the Superstition Freeway (U.S. 60) on the south (Figure 1).

**FIGURE 1: CENTRAL MESA STUDY AREA**



Source: METRO (2009).

A two-tiered alternatives development process was implemented to evaluate the Central Mesa Study Area conceptual alternatives. The first phase (Tier 1) included a conceptual level evaluation that analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of the initial list of potential alternatives to address the transportation needs of the study area (see separate *Tier 1 Evaluation of Alternatives Report*, October 2007, for more information). The initial alternatives considered both LRT and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) modes.



All alternatives began at the eastern terminus of the recently opened LRT Starter Line Station at Sycamore/Main Street and extended east to the Superstition Springs Center area via Main Street (with 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue suboptions downtown) and Power Road. Fixed guideway (via LRT or BRT) generally extended east to about Horne (between Mesa and Stapley Drives) with BRT offering limited stop express service further east in existing travel lanes (similar to Valley Metro Link) to Superstition Springs Center. LRT consisted of a dedicated fixed guideway with two tracks (one track in each direction) that ran mostly in the middle of the existing street system. BRT also had a dedicated fixed guideway for a portion of the project as previously mentioned. The initial alternatives were subject to a “fatal flaw” screening at the Tier 1 phase; the most feasible alternatives were identified and retained for further analysis, and the alternatives deemed unresponsive to Tier 1 evaluation criteria were eliminated from continued study.

The alternatives that remained after the Tier 1 analysis and public, agency, and other stakeholder input were then subjected to a more detailed evaluation (Tier 2). The Tier 2 evaluation continued to consider both LRT and BRT build alternatives. The criteria developed to analyze all of the build alternatives in Tier 2 began to quantify ridership potential, capital and operating and maintenance costs, land use and economic development impacts, traffic issues, environmental factors, conceptual engineering, and public preferences. See the complete *Tier 2 Evaluation of Alternatives Report*, December 2008, which defines the Tier 2 alternatives considered and details the results of the evaluation.

Based on the results of the Tier 2 evaluation, public meetings, and agency and other stakeholder input, the recommended build alternative is to advance LRT as the preferred technology and Main Street as the preferred alignment. The locally preferred alternative (LPA) includes a light rail extension on Main Street east to an interim end-of-the-line near Mesa Drive as Phase 1. See the complete *Recommended Alternative Report*, Draft June 2009 for discussion of the rationale for selection of the LPA. The Phase 1 project is scheduled to begin operations in 2016 and is the major focus of the EA being prepared pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The No-Build Alternative will also continue to be considered as specified by NEPA. The Phase 1 project connects logical termini and has independent utility meaning that the project is a reasonable expenditure even if no additional transportation improvements are made in the area.

## **1.2 BUILD ALTERNATIVE**

The LRT Main Street Alternative was selected as the recommended LPA for more detailed analysis in the EA. This LPA recommendation was approved by the City of Mesa City Council (May 2009) and the METRO Board of Directors (June 2009). The LPA has two design options for Main Street in the area east of Country Club Drive: 1) 2 Lanes; and 2) 4 Lanes. The design options are described at the end of this discussion.



Whether to implement the Build Alternative, 2-Lane Option or the Build Alternative, 4-Lane Option will be decided after completion of a series of public workshops, the Draft EA, and receipt of input during the Draft EA public comment period.

The Build Alternative, or LPA, is shown in Figure 2. The Build Alternative includes a double-track LRT guideway that would operate in the center of Main Street from just east of Sycamore to just east of Hobson, a distance of 3.1 miles. LRT is electrically powered and receives its power from overhead power lines within the street right-of-way. LRT operations would include a traffic signal priority system (predictive priority), to allow for faster travel times. The light rail vehicles will be the same as the ones currently being used for the LRT Starter Line. Major operating plan features are listed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1: LRT OPERATING PLANS**

<b>Headways</b>	All day except late evening: Late evening:	10 minutes 20 minutes
<b>Number of Vehicles</b>	42 – LRT Starter Line + Central Mesa LRT Extension 8 – Spare vehicles 50 – Total current fleet	
<b>Line-haul Capacity</b>	2,700 passengers per peak hour per direction (Based on 3 vehicles per train and 150 passengers/vehicle) <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Hours of Operation</b>	Daily = ~20 hours	

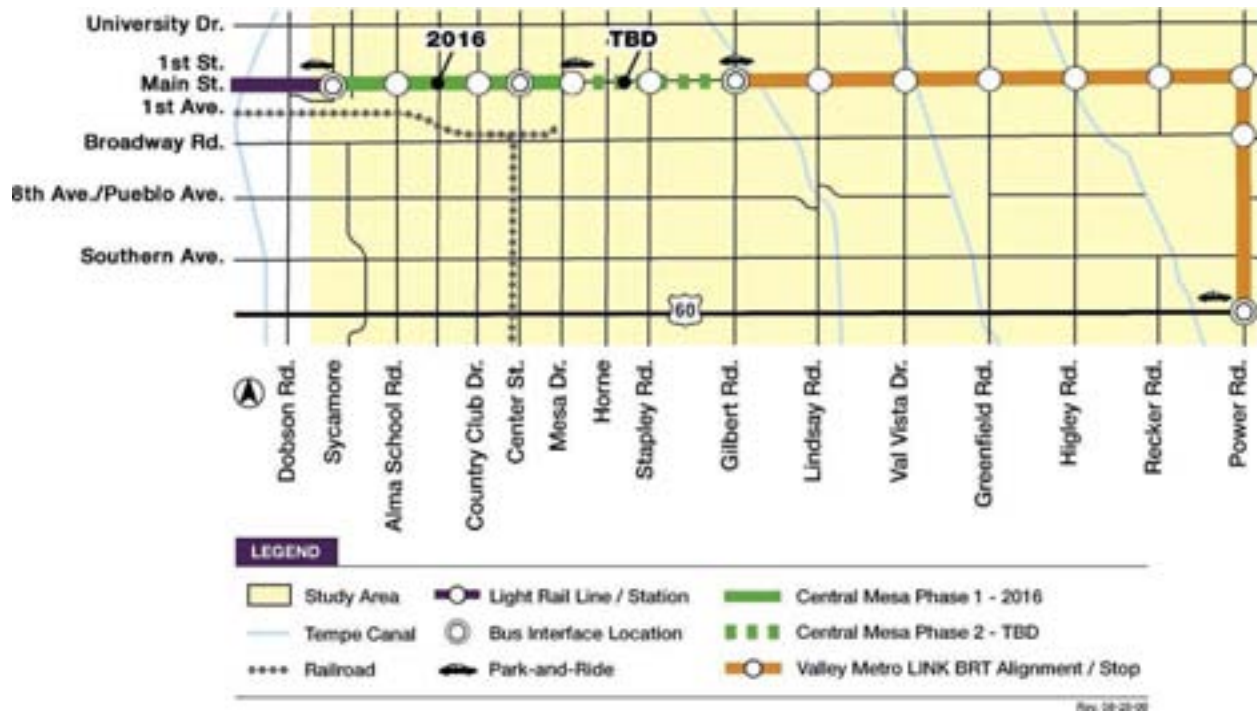
<sup>1</sup>Ultimate capacity. LRT operating plans call for 2-car consists during normal operations with 3-car consists operating only during special events or other high periods of demand.

This alternative is an extension of the LRT Starter Line that opened in December 2008 and would provide a seamless connection (no transfer required) from the current eastern terminus of the LRT Starter Line at Sycamore along Main Street to Mesa Drive. Tail tracks would continue east of the station platform a distance of approximately 425 feet east of Hobson.

East of Centennial Way to Superstition Springs Transit Center, the existing Valley Metro LINK BRT would connect to LRT and operate in mixed traffic as it does today as a skip-stop express service. As a result of the Build Alternative, Valley Metro LINK BRT service would be discontinued along Main Street between Sycamore and Centennial Way to eliminate service duplication, and its operational frequency in the off-peak will increase from 30 to 15 minutes. However, service during peak periods will remain the same as today (15 minutes). Other than that, no other changes to the LINK operations or facilities will be necessary for the Phase 1 LRT extension being evaluated in the EA. LRT stations/LINK BRT stops and park-and-ride locations are identified in Table 2. A new park-and-ride facility would be built near the end-of-line LRT station on the northeast corner of Main Street/Mesa Drive. Each LRT station would serve one or more existing or planned bus routes in the area.



**FIGURE 2: LOCALLY PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE**



Also recommended, as part of the LPA, is a future (Phase 2) extension of LRT to Gilbert Road. This extension would provide enhanced regional transit connections and opportunity for a larger regional park-and-ride facility. At this time, Phase 2 is not identified in the MAG RTP, is unfunded, and is not evaluated in the EA. However, the Phase 2 recommendation has been forwarded to MAG and has been identified as an “illustrative project” for inclusion in the RTP. Should the Phase 2 project move forward as a federal project, it will be subject to NEPA compliance.

Construction of the Build Alternative would include installation of trackwork, an overhead contact system (OCS) for the distribution of electricity to LRT vehicles, traction power substations, and signaling and communication systems.

The LRT transitway would consist of tracks formed of continuously welded rails. The rails would be embedded track supported on a concrete slab.

The OCS would consist of poles, approximately 25 feet tall, installed along the operating right-of-way at intervals from 90 to 170 feet to support the electrical power line. The OCS would be designed to be compatible with visual and aesthetic characteristics of the corridor. The poles would generally be located in the center of the two tracks, wherever possible. In some locations, catenary poles may be located on the side of the LRT trackway with the overhead electrical line suspended over the LRT tracks with head spans.



**TABLE 2: STATION AND PARK-AND-RIDE LOCATIONS**

Station/Stop	Park-and-Ride	Location <sup>1</sup>
<b>LRT Facilities (Stations)</b>		
Sycamore/Main St. (LRT Starter Line End-of-Line Station)	Yes	East of intersection Existing facility and not attributable to LRT extension
Alma School/Main St.	No	East of intersection
Country Club/Main St.	No	East of intersection
Center/Main St.	No	East of intersection
Mesa Dr./Main St.	Yes	Station—East of intersection Park-and-Ride—Northeast of intersection. A 6.4-acre area of interest identified. Park-and-ride would accommodate approximately 500 vehicles and will not likely require the entire 6.4-acre site. Layout to be determined during final design. The park-and-ride site may have potential market value for transit-oriented development sometime in the future.
<b>Valley Metro Link BRT Facilities (Existing Stops—Facilities not attributable to LRT extension)</b>		
Stapley/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	East of intersection
Gilbert/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	West/east of intersection
Lindsay/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	East of intersection
Val Vista/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	West/east of intersection
Greenfield/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	West/east of intersection
Higley/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	East of intersection
Recker/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	West/east of intersection
Power/Main St. <sup>2</sup>	No	West of intersection
Broadway/Power <sup>2</sup>	No	North of intersection
U.S. 60/Power (Superstition Springs Center) <sup>2</sup>	Yes	North of intersection

<sup>1</sup>All LRT stations have a center platform configuration.

<sup>2</sup>Station locations as part of existing Valley Metro LINK BRT project. Station locations and amenities would remain.  
Source: METRO, 2010.

Electricity for LRT operations would be supplied to the OCS from traction power substations (TPSS) located along the proposed LRT alignment. These electrical substations would be enclosed structures approximately 20-by-40 feet (30-by-60 feet including the grounding mat around the substation) located proximally to the LRT alignment. One TPSS would be required for roughly each one to one and a half mile of track. Specific locations will be determined as design is further refined.

LRT vehicles for the Central Mesa LRT Extension would be maintained and serviced at the existing LRT Starter Line Operations and Maintenance Center (OMC), located south of Washington Street between State Route (SR) 143 and Loop 202. The OMC will have sufficient capacity to service LRT vehicles allocated to the Central Mesa LRT Extension, and expansion of the existing facility, or construction of a new facility will not be required.

The existing traffic lane capacity along Main Street would be maintained between Sycamore and Country Club Drive. Typical cross sections are presented in Figure 3. For the segment east of Country Club Drive to the LRT eastern terminus near Hobson (just east of Mesa Drive), two design options are being considered:

- Build Alternative, 2-Lane Option



- Build Alternative, 4-Lane Option

These design options are further described below.

### **1.2.1 Build Alternative, 2-Lane Option**

Main Street's traffic lane capacity would generally be reduced from two lanes in each direction to one lane in each direction from Country Club Drive to Horne. The exception is in the westbound direction only between Mesa Drive and Horne where two through lanes would be available. At the westbound approach to Mesa Drive intersection, one through lane would be trapped into a right turn lane. Single left turn lanes would be maintained at Country Club Drive (double left is removed), Robson, MacDonald, Center Street, Centennial Way/Sirrine Street, Hibbert, Mesa Drive, LeSueur, and Hobson. Acquisition of additional right-of-way along the alignment would be minimal to accommodate the fixed guideway as a result of the reduction of travel lanes. Typical cross sections at various locations along the Build Alternative, 2-Lane Option are shown in Figure 4. The station and park-and-ride locations presented in Table 2 apply to the 2-Lane Option. This option could allow for future conversion, if desired, to 2 lanes in each direction through downtown by eliminating the dedicated left turn lanes and using split-phase traffic signals that would allow through and left-turning traffic to share the same left lane. The conversion would require minor curb revisions and/or parking removal beyond that shown in the current design between Country Club Drive and Robson. Between Mesa Drive and Udall, some additional curb and right-of-way revisions would be needed on the south side of Main Street.

### **1.2.2 Build Alternative, 4-Lane Option**

With the 4-lane option, the current four through travel lanes (two in each direction) would be maintained from Country Club to Hobson. This scenario assumes split-phase traffic signals, and single left turn lanes would only be provided at Country Club Drive and Mesa Drive. All other existing turning lanes would be removed. The bike lane would be eliminated west of Lesueur, and parking would continue to be provided at most locations along this segment where it presently exists. To keep the existing numbers of through lanes will require acquisition of additional right-of-way at the northeast and southeast corners of Main Street and Mesa Drive. Typical cross sections at various locations along the Build Alternative, 4-Lane Option are shown in Figure 5. All of the stations and park-and-ride facility locations are as illustrated in Table 2.

### **1.2.3 Unresolved Issues**

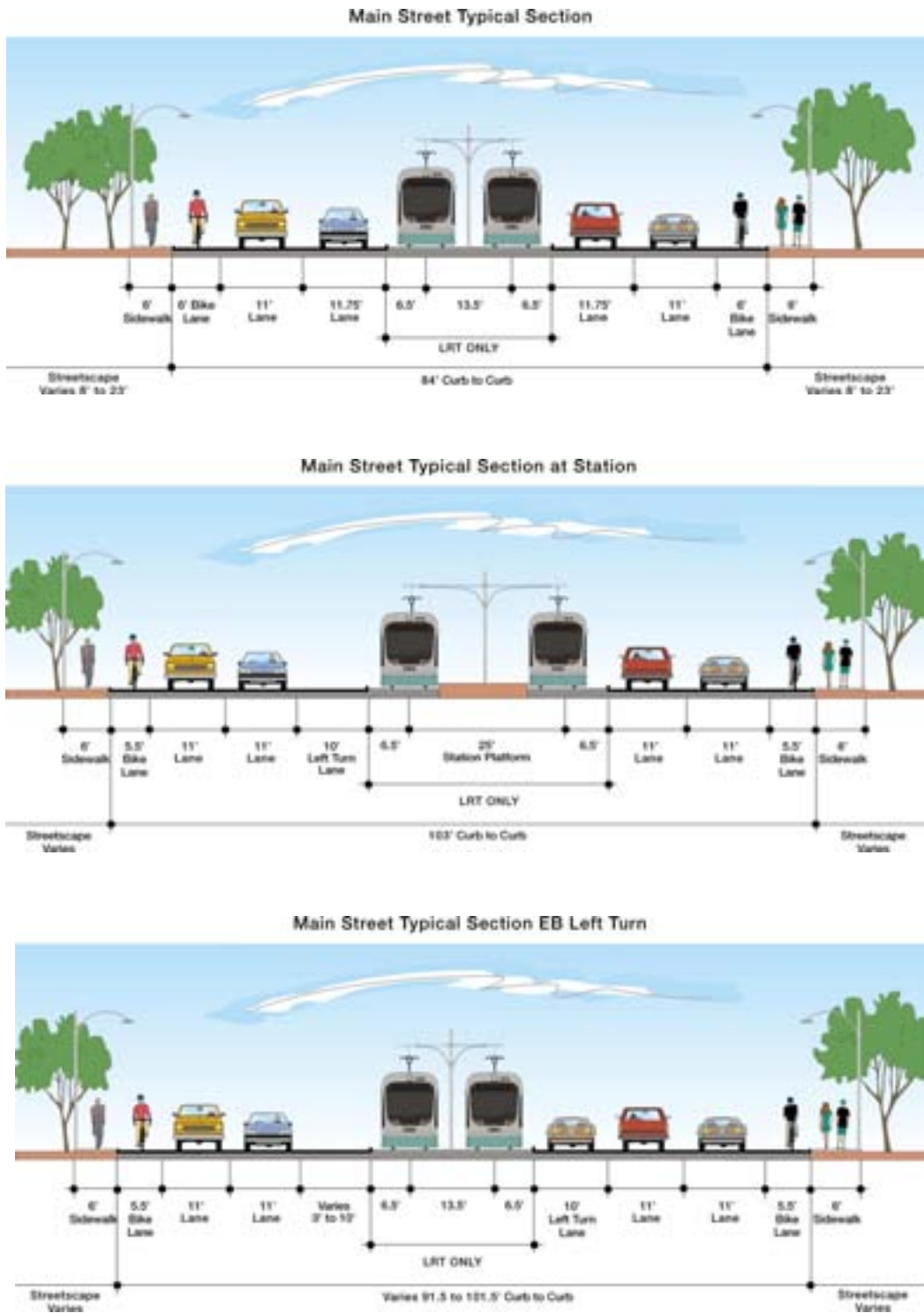
Several issues will be further refined as the EA proceeds and community outreach continues. In addition to the previously discussed optional traffic design configurations downtown, decisions will need to be made about the following:

- TPSS locations

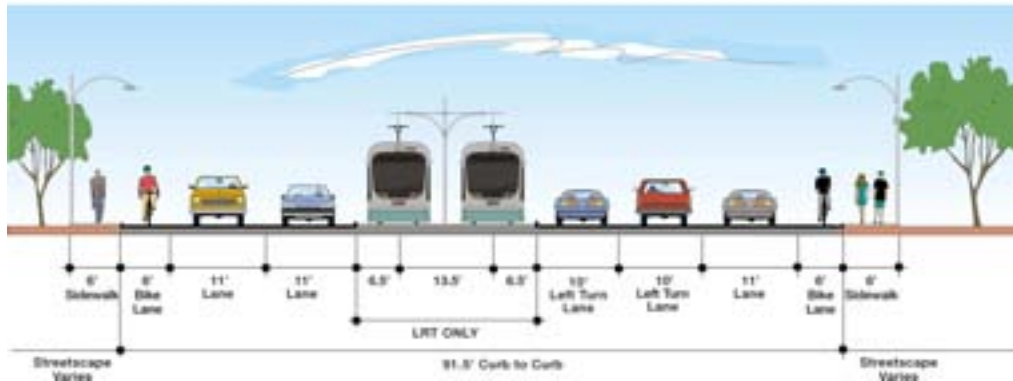


- OCS
- Pedestrian access points
- Park-and-ride sizing, layout and capacity
- Station design
- Urban design/public art
- Refinement of utilities and location
- Construction staging

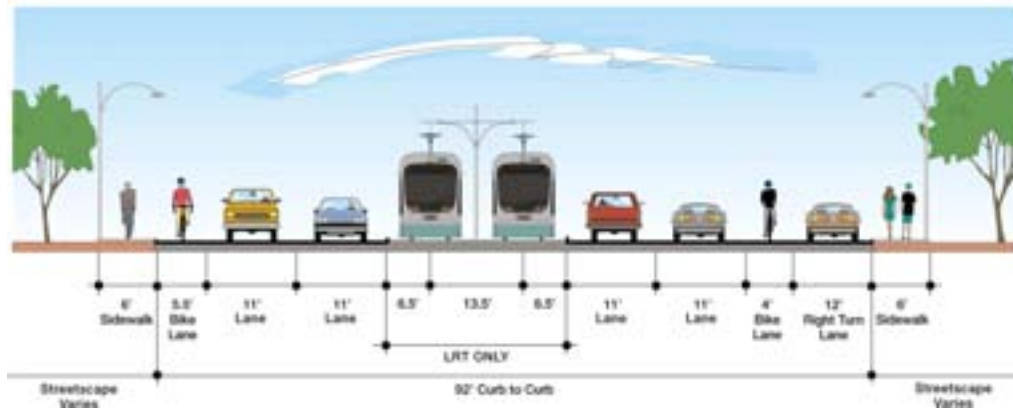
**FIGURE 3: BUILD ALTERNATIVE, SYCAMORE TO COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE**



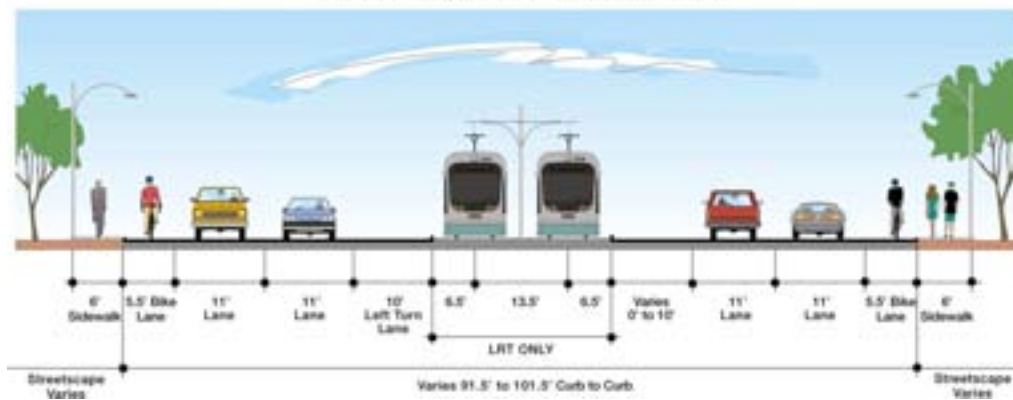
Main Street Typical Section EB Left (Country Club Drive West Leg)



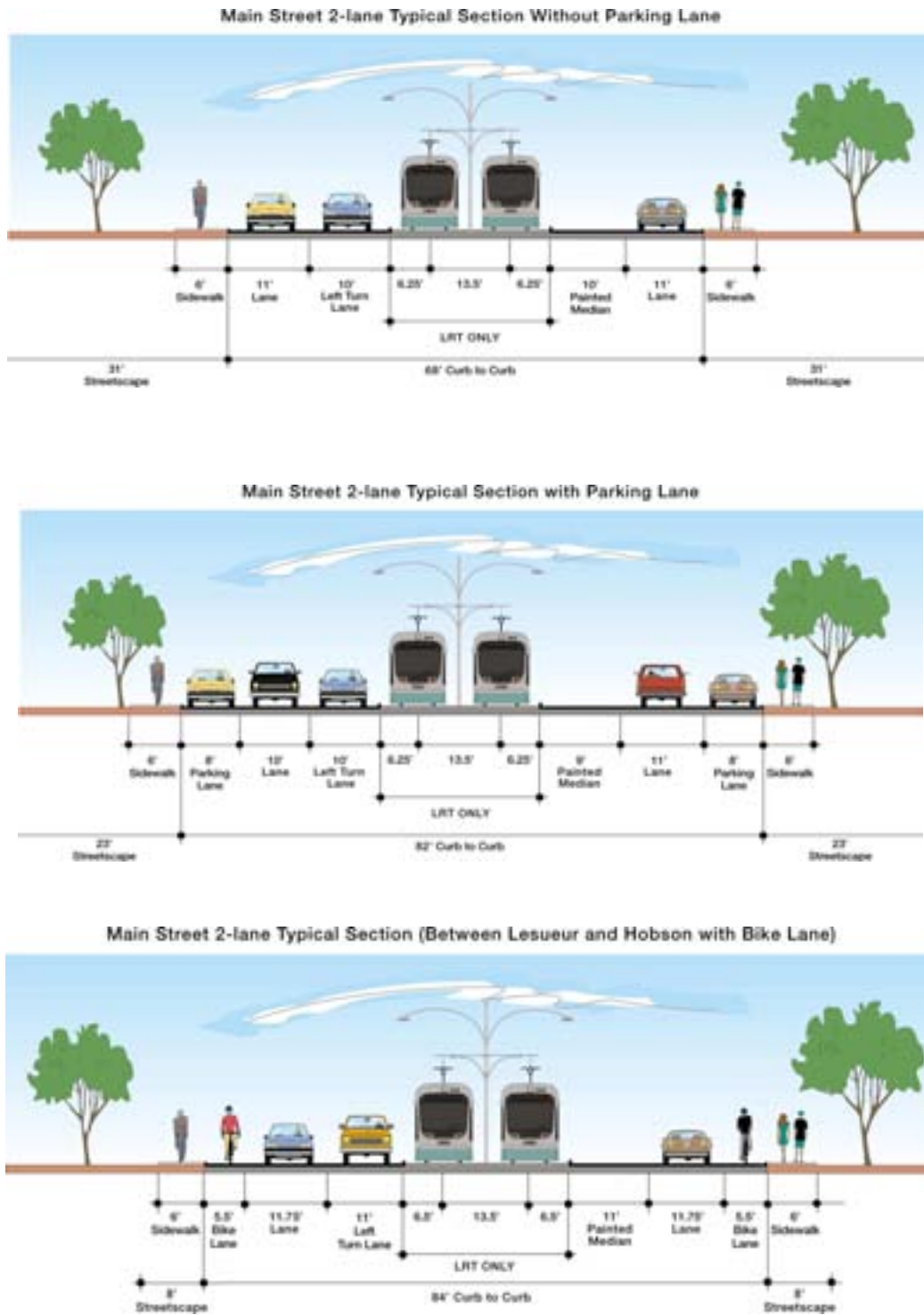
Main Street Typical Section EB Right Turn



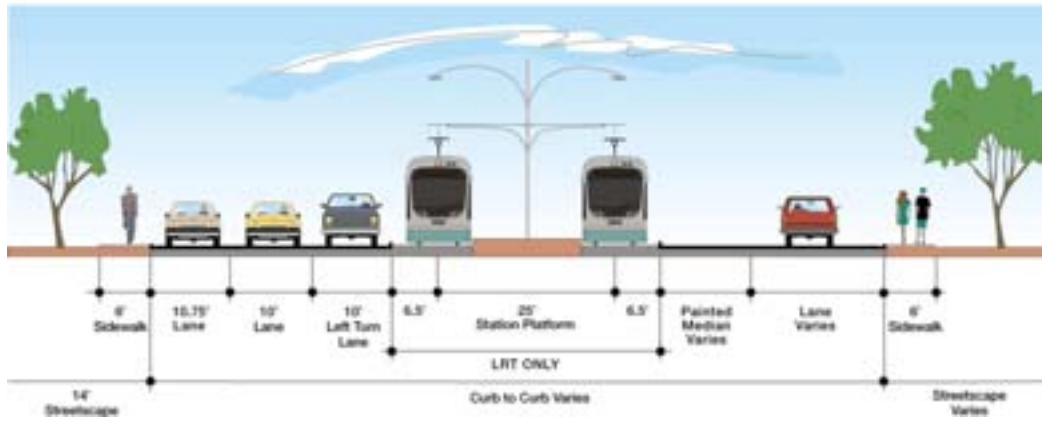
Main Street Typical Section WB Left Turn



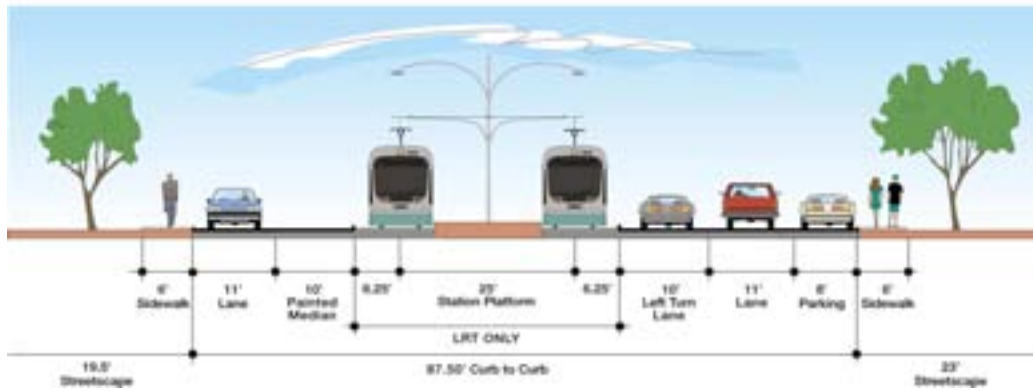
**FIGURE 4: BUILD ALTERNATIVE, 2-LANE OPTION  
COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE TO HOBSON**



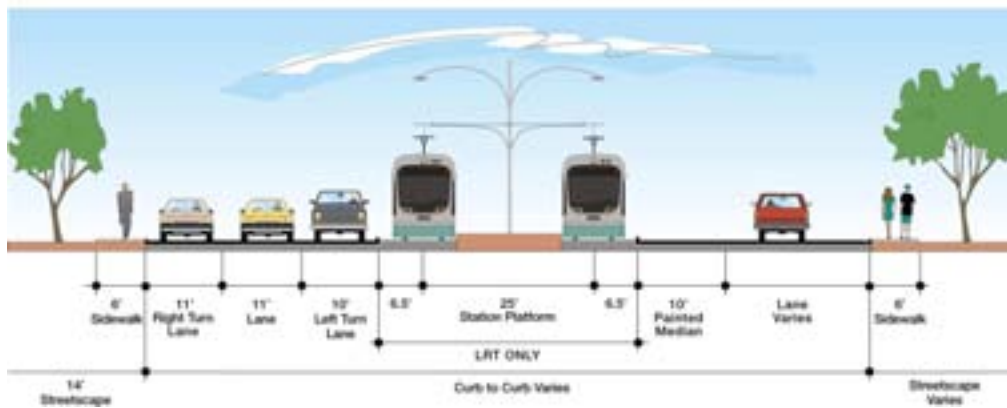
Main Street 2-lane Typical Section at Country Club Drive Station



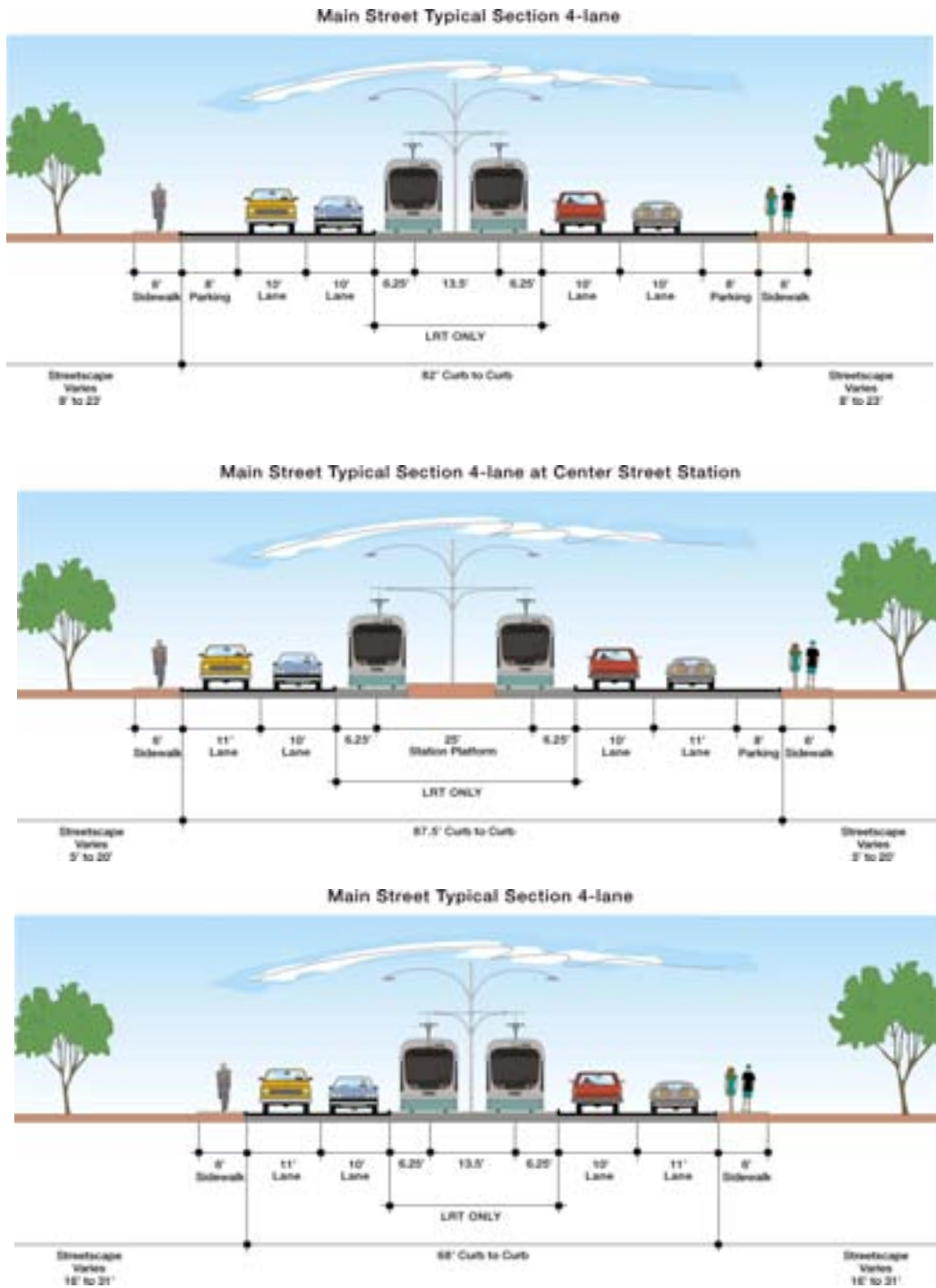
Main Street 2-lane Typical Section at Center Street Station



Main Street 2-lane Typical Section at Mesa Drive Station



**FIGURE 5: BUILD ALTERNATIVE, 4-LANE OPTION  
COUNTRY CLUB DRIVE TO HOBSON**





## 2.0 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### 2.1 REGULATORY SETTING

Regulatory precedent exists for measuring and mitigating effects on the visual and aesthetic quality of the communities through which the proposed project passes. The Shared Vision of the *City of Mesa General Plan (2025)* states that Mesa's future will boast "people-friendly transportation options, ...in the urban core of Mesa. The Downtown area will reveal a renaissance of opportunities, ...supported by an ambiance ...created by the light rail system and pedestrian amenities."

Seven sub-areas of the City have specific features or land use issues identified and addressed in the plan; each sub-area has corresponding land-use and/or zoning overlay district definitions. The proposed project corridor occurs in the Mesa Grande and Central Broadway sub-areas. The corridor runs through Medium and High Density Residential, Mixed Use/Residential, Community Commercial, Public/Semi-Public, and Town Center Land Use areas. The following excerpts of goals, objectives, and policy are taken from the Land Use Element of the General Plan. Words such as "vibrant, lively, livable, and healthy" all embody a desire for a high quality aesthetic and visual environment in which to live and conduct business.

- **Goal LU 1:** Develop a land use pattern throughout the City that creates orderly municipal growth, achieves compatibility with surrounding communities, and is consistent with other plans and programs of the City.
  - **Objective LU 1.2** Encourage urban growth in a planned, orderly manner with high quality development and an innovative and sustainable urban development patterns.
    - **Policy LU-1.2d** Encourage the enhancement of open space, landscaping, and aesthetic design in commercial areas and along major arterial streets.
- **Goal LU 6:** Provide for a diverse and dynamic Town Center within the City of Mesa that exhibits Mesa's historic character, supports the governmental campus, and offers opportunities for reinvesting in neighborhoods and businesses that offer a unique character or history.
  - **Objective LU 6.1** Provide a wide range of land uses that support the character of the Town Center Area in accordance with the Town Center Concept Plan adopted by the City of Mesa.
    - **Policy LU-6.1b** Continue to provide opportunities for innovative design in the Town Center area defined in this element.

The *West Mesa Development Plan* adopted in 2007 makes specific reference to the coming of Light Rail Transit to the corridor. The planning area for this Plan is defined by University Drive on the north, Broadway Road on the south, Country Club



Drive on the east, and the Mesa/Tempe city limits on the west. In anticipation of light rail extending down Main Street through the corridor, a Subarea called the Transit Corridor Development Area (medium density residential and mixed commercial/office) has been established 1320 feet from transit stations and the transit line. The Plan lays out strategies and policies to prepare for transit-oriented development and other changes; some of the key aspirations are summarized below:

- Development must work hand in hand to provide a better ambience and vibrant character along Main Street;
- In order to achieve this, buildings will need to be placed closer to the street frontage to create a pedestrian friendly and attractive environment;

Key Policies that relate to the Visual and Aesthetic environment of the area are:

- HPP7 (Historic Preservation) – Protect and enhance the integrity of the historical atmosphere by supporting the restoration, renovation and adaptive reuse of historic buildings.
- HSP1 – Historic signage should be preserved during redevelopment.
- LUP17 (Land Use) – Station Area Design and Development: an integrated approach...should focus on the design ...to create a welcoming, pedestrian-friendly environment.
- PRP5 (Parks & Recreation) – Besides providing parks in the area, encourage alternative forms of open spaces and recreation in the form of plazas and multi-use paths.
- PRP7 – Sufficient amenities such as shade and fountains should be provided along multi-use paths.

The *West Main Street Plan* was created to “capture the community’s vision...to reflect the potential for redevelopment with the arrival of light rail...” In anticipating change, the community is planning for transit-oriented development and changes to the street environment from new building, adaptive reuse of existing buildings, and providing a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Largely a strategic planning process to guide policies through the coming changes, the Plan mentions the importance of new building scale, mass and height, and the desire for a cohesive streetscape. Policies have been created for maintaining historic integrity of existing historic features, promoting placemaking and urban design, and encouraging street life along Main Street. Land uses should integrate old and new. Policies that provide a context for this report are:

- PMP1: Future development should include elements to enhance sense of place through unique elements.
- PMP2: Efforts should be made to protect and/or build upon those buildings, locations, and events that have a special meaning to West Mesa, in order to enhance the sense of place...
- PMP3: The streetscape along the arterials...in the area should have a high degree of urban design and pedestrian comfort.



- PMP4: An eclectic mix of architecture that reflects the history and cultural diversity of the area should be encouraged.
- PMP5: Venues for community interaction such as parks, open space, and plazas should be developed and maintained to enhance the sense of community.

## 2.2 PROJECT AREA SETTING

Project impacts to existing visual resources and aesthetic character are important to the evaluation of project alternatives. This report examines the project area, analyzing distinct visual units and analyzes impacts of the No-Build and Build alternatives to the visual quality and aesthetic character of each visual unit. This report also identifies distinct visual resources, sensitive land uses (i.e. historic resources, churches, parks, etc.) and noteworthy views, and analyzes impacts to these aesthetic features. Impacts are assessed from two perspectives: 1) the view afforded users of the proposed services and 2) the view of the project from the surrounding environment. Finally, this report offers potential strategies to mitigate negative impacts to existing visual and aesthetic resources.

The No-Build and Build alternatives could affect existing visual resources at several levels. First, they could add, alter, or remove some of the visible features that compose the basic visual resources of the landscape. These features include landforms and topography, vegetation, and commercial structures (including existing transportation facilities). Second, they could change the visual character of existing resources. By assessing the existing visual character of an area, it is possible to identify the extent to which the visual character of a project would contrast with the landscape or, alternatively, be visually compatible with the landscape.

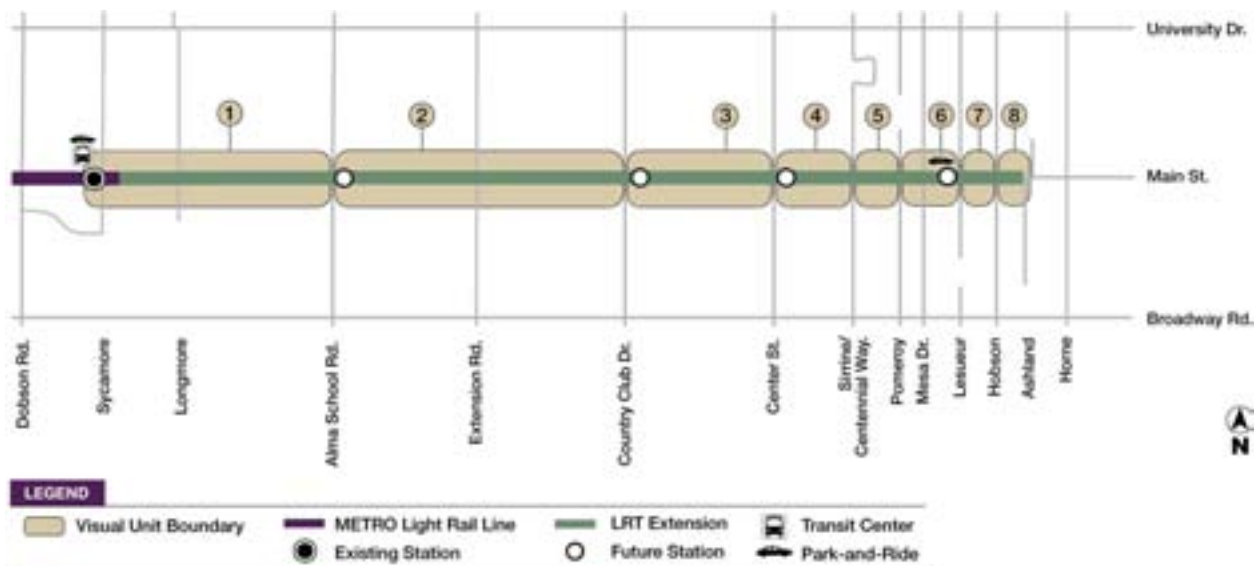
Existing visual resources and elements that define the visual character include the following:

- Landforms—types, gradients, and scale
- Vegetation—types, size and maturity, and continuity
- Land uses—size, scale (apparent size in relation to actual size), and character of associated buildings and ancillary site uses
- Transportation facilities—types, sizes, scale, and directional orientation
- Overhead structures, utilities, and lighting—types, sizes, and scale
- Open space—types (including parks, reserves or greenbelts, and undeveloped land), extent, and continuity
- Viewpoints and views to visual resources— hills and mountains, natural areas, urban landscapes, historic structures, and dramatic skylines
- Apparent grain or texture of visual resources composing the landscape unit
- Apparent upkeep and maintenance

Field surveys were conducted in August through November of 2009 to develop an understanding of the visual and aesthetic qualities of the project corridor. The field

survey focused on areas near and along the proposed project alignment and identified areas, or *visual units*, which display continuity of form, function, or generally homogeneous visual and aesthetic qualities (Figure 6). These visual units were then assessed for direct and indirect impacts on the visual/aesthetic environment that could result from introduction of the proposed transit project. The units have been identified only for the visual analysis and do not apply to other impact discussions.

**FIGURE 6: VISUAL UNITS**



## 2.3 VISUAL UNITS – EXISTING CONDITIONS

Visual features of the project corridor were noted during field surveys. Each unit, of which there are eight, represents an area that is relatively unique in character and visual/aesthetic qualities from adjacent visual units. Distinction of visual units is characterized by land use, built form characteristics, scale, material and vegetation. A brief description of these qualities is presented below for each of the eight visual units. Figures 7, 9, 12, and 17 indicate the locations from where photographs that appear in Figures 8, 10, 11, 13-16, 18-20, and 21 were taken.

### 2.3.1 General Description

The project corridor has a variety of land uses typical of suburban arterial streets as well as an intact Downtown Core. These land uses include vacant lands, automobile/motorcycle sales and service centers, motor lodges/motels, multi-family apartments, mobile home parks, fast food restaurants and convenience stores. Unique to this corridor are education, arts and religious venues, government facilities and two city parks; the project would pass the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT), Mesa City Hall, Mesa Arts Center, the Arizona Temple, Gateway Park, and Pioneer Park.



Notable contrasts between the visual units tend to be the rhythm or pacing of parcel divisions, building setbacks, streetscape and building scale. In general, the corridor and most visual units represent a suburban form of development with the exception of the Downtown Core (Country Club Drive to Mesa Drive). The Downtown Core is differentiated by its enhanced thematic streetscape, variety of land uses, compact building form and lack of setbacks, increased density, and taller building heights.

As a general note, existing on-street parking occurs within the project corridor east of Beverly. On-street parking is unusual in the rest of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area as parking was largely eliminated as streets were widened for more traffic capacity. Existing bike lanes are striped and occur along the entire corridor with only a few areas of interruption to accommodate turn lanes.

### **2.3.1.1 Visual Unit #1 – Sycamore Station to Alma School Road**

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins just east of the existing end-of-line station at Main Street and Sycamore. The unit extends approximately 0.77 miles east on Main Street to the Alma School Road intersection. The visual character of this unit is typical of suburban arterial streets, with low buildings set back from the street. Some areas have parking along the street. Notable is the presence of the EVIT, which has a campus feel, with 2 and 3 story buildings set far from the street. The campus is surrounded by large parking lots but edged in intensive landscaping which help to define the campus limits. Typical viewers include motorists and bicyclists traversing the project area, residents/visitors of the mobile home parks and motels, and students/visitors to EVIT.

#### ***Visual Characteristics***

The major visual characteristic of this unit is the long, regularly spaced trees behind the separated walkway on the south side of Main Street at EVIT. The foreground on this side of Main Street is edged by this streetscape for almost two-thirds of the unit, while the middleground is broad expanses of surface parking. Along the north side, behind attached walkways, the middleground is surface parking at automobile sales/service centers and a vacant commercial strip mall.

The foreground on the north side of Main Street at the same location has little to no vegetation, characterized by large pole signs, including a section of thematic light poles located at a vacant auto dealership and the walkway; the middleground is one-story buildings, motor lodges and motels, fast food restaurants and two large vacant (dirt) parcels.

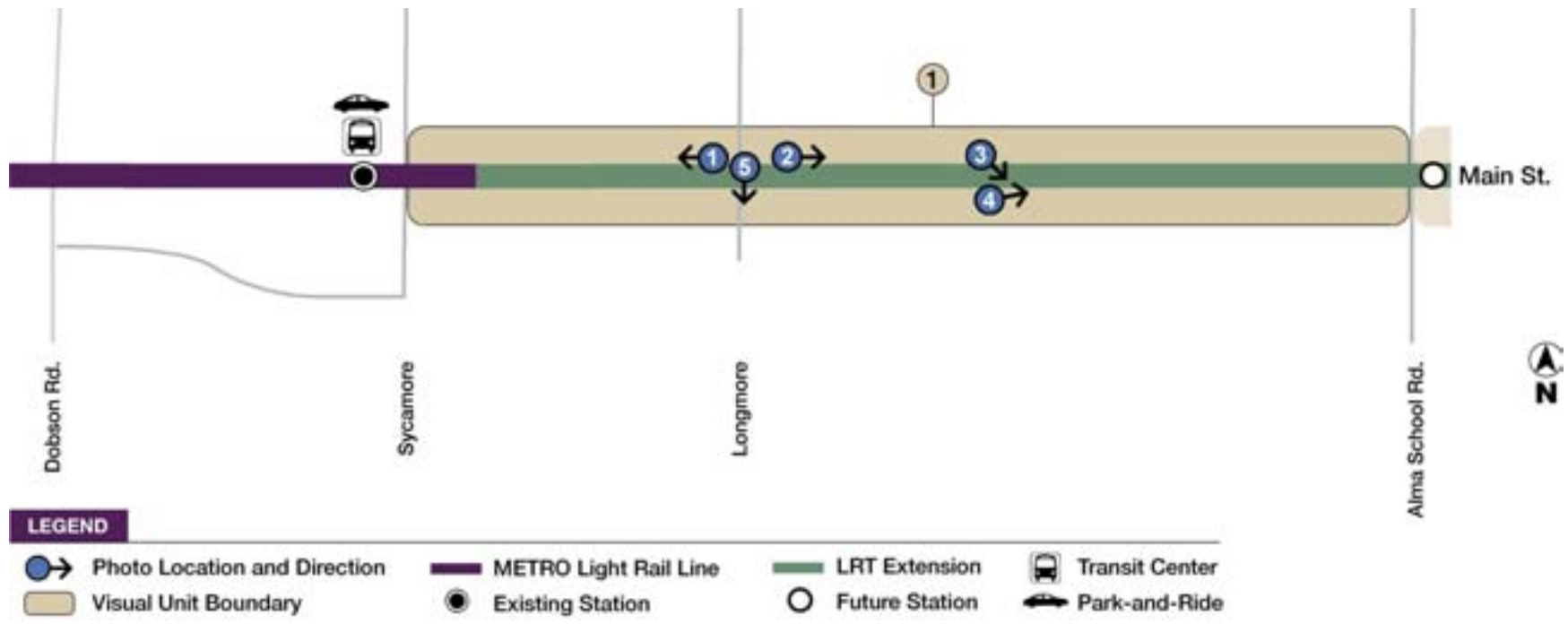
The tail track for the LRT Starter Line is located in the center of the street just east of Sycamore, with overhead catenary system (OCS) poles, guy wires, and barricades. East of the tail track, short sections of median are sparsely landscaped; other sections are paved, at turn lanes and intersections. The streetlights separate four travel lanes, two in each direction with bike lanes on either side of Main Street. The street is visually bisected by tall, double-armed streetlight poles in the center median far into the



distance. These streetlights are a dominant linear feature, as they march toward the horizon. Looking east, in the far distant background, is the silhouette of the Superstition Mountains, which viewers may be able to see on a clear day from either side of the roadway or traveling east.

On the south side of Main Street, a six-foot walkway is separated from the street by a 15-foot landscape buffer of trees and shrubs at EVIT. Monument signs and a digital information board associated with the EVIT are placed within a streetscape of mature Blue Palo Verde (*Parkinsonia floridum*) and Date Palms (*Phoenix dactylifera*) with a variety of colorful xeric shrubs and accent plants. The vegetation and low masonry walls help to screen vast parking lots beyond the right-of-way.

FIGURE 7: PHOTO LOCATIONS – VISUAL UNIT #1



**FIGURE 8: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #1**



PHOTO 1: Existing tail track at Sycamore, looking west



PHOTO 2: Main Street at Stewart Street, looking east



PHOTO 3: Streetscape at EVIT, looking southeast



PHOTO 4: Main Street at EVIT entry, looking east



PHOTO 5: Entry to EVIT, looking south



### 2.3.1.2 Visual Unit #2 – Alma School Road to Country Club Drive

#### **General Visual Character**

This visual unit begins just east of Alma School Road and extends approximately 1.0 mile east on Main Street to the west side of the Main Street and Country Club Drive intersection. The visual character of this unit is a continuation of the suburban arterial street of Visual Unit #1, lined with typical suburban low building forms and parking along the street. However, this section is differentiated by the presence of tall commercial signs and billboards, some built in the late 40's and early 50's when Main Street was a state highway. Somewhat atypical for the Metropolitan Phoenix area is parallel parking along this wide arterial. Typical viewers include motorists and bicyclists traversing the project area, residents/visitors of the apartment complexes, mobile home parks, motels/hotels, and customers of auto dealers, restaurants and thrift store.

#### **Visual Characteristics**

This unit is characterized by a center landscaped median with the same tall, double-armed light poles as described in Visual Unit #1. The light poles continue to bisect the street and form a dominant linear feature. An existing five to six foot attached walkway roughly marks the edge of the right-of-way. A recently constructed BRT station is located on the south side of Main Street near Alma School Road and on the north side near Country Club Drive. General land use is auto-oriented, suburban development. Automobile sales and services, along with mobile home parks, apartment homes and motels/hotels all have expansive driveways and surface parking lots. Tall commercial signs and billboards are more prevalent, and distinguish this Visual Unit from the previous unit, along with the lack of street trees or landscape buffer.

Four notable land uses are the 1955 Mesa Thrift Store (1018 W. Main St.); the 1915 Standage House (960 W. Main St.), the 1925 Landmark Restaurant (809 W. Main St.) and the 1915 Nader House (724 W. Main St.). Each is recommended as eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), constructed at different eras of various materials such as brick and stucco, with the exception of the Landmark Restaurant which is listed on the NRHP.

- The Landmark Restaurant, originally an LDS church, is a striking, large Victorian building of red brick. Unlike most other buildings along the street developed later which are set back for parking, this building is set near to the existing roadway, with a turf area in the setback. A longstanding institution as a restaurant, the building is a well known and visible “landmark” along Main Street.
- The Standage House dates from approximately 1915. A rare surviving example of once common rural estates along Main Street, the 2-story brick bungalow sets back from the street, isolated on its lot and surrounded by green lawn and trees.,
- The 1915 Nader House is entirely surrounded by high vegetation with a small picket fence in front, isolating it almost entirely from the street environment. The Building beyond is a 2-story brick bungalow, another vestige of a former period when Main Street was a prominent residential neighborhood.

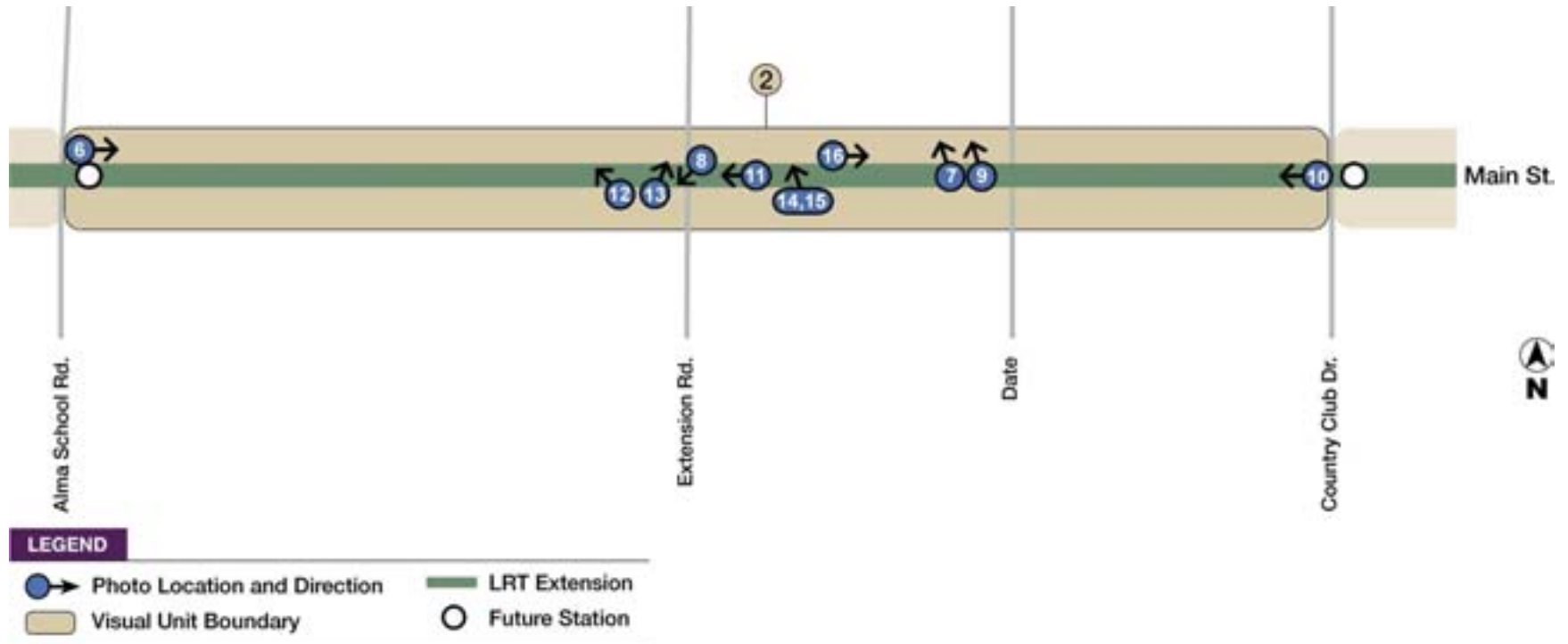


- The Mesa Thrift Store is also noted as a historically eligible property, but is not visually notable as it has been altered by a bold blue canopy and resembles most commercial buildings in the corridor. The building is however sited closer to the street, with parking along the east side.

Traveling east, the foreground on both the north and south sides of Main Street is a typical arterial suburban street, dominated by surface parking lots and one story buildings with minimal landscaping. Large highway scale signs remain along the roadway as a remnant of Main Street from when it was a state highway and its role as the entrance to Phoenix, pre-freeways. Some are considered eligible for the NRHP, as distinctive of that era of signage. Similarly, several of the lodging structures are small auto court-style buildings, u-shaped one story building clusters surrounding a swimming pool or common area, typical of the lodging style from the highway era.

The new BRT stations add unique contemporary architecture to the foreground of this Unit. The middleground in this visual unit continues these building façades and their lighted parking lots. Looking east, the far distant background is the silhouette of the Superstition Mountains, which viewers traveling along and on the street may be able to see on a clear day.

**FIGURE 9: PHOTO LOCATIONS – VISUAL UNIT #2**



**FIGURE 10: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #2**



PHOTO 6: Main Street at Alma School looking east



PHOTO 7: Mesa Royale Mobile Home Park looking northwest



PHOTO 8: Landmark Restaurant at Extension, looking southwest



PHOTO 9: Motel 6, looking north



PHOTO 10: Main Street at Country Club Drive looking west



PHOTO 11: Main Street at Extension looking west

**FIGURE 11: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #2 (CONTINUED)**



PHOTO 12: Mesa Thrift Store, looking northwest



PHOTO 13: Standage House looking north



PHOTO 14: Nader House looking northwest



PHOTO 15: Nader House entry gate detail



PHOTO 16: Main Street mid-block between Extension and Date, looking east



### **2.3.1.3 Visual Unit #3 – Country Club Drive to Center Street (Downtown Mesa)**

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins on the east side of Country Club Drive and extends approximately 0.47 mile east on Main Street to the west side of the Main Street/Center Street intersection. The visual character of this unit is one of transition to, and of, the Downtown Mesa core.

The western end of this visual unit, between Country Club Drive and Morris, is a transition from the suburban patterns of development seen in Visual Units #1 and #2 to a more traditional Main Street downtown development pattern. This transition zone is distinct from Visual Unit #2 due to the Downtown Streetscape elements such as street trees, themed decorative light poles in the median and along the street, the decorative paved walkways and trees, public art and benches in the right-of-way. A new BRT station is located on the south side at Morris, adding to the unique street architecture. This section tapers from the intersection at Country Club Drive to Morris, from a wider cross-section with deep setbacks in front of the two former drive-thru restaurants on either side of the intersection to closely spaced and attached buildings. The presence of the distinctly pale green Palo Brea trees is found consistently through this visual unit. A custom designed, heritage-themed light fixture and poles are painted dark green and located in a landscaped median, making a clear visual distinction from the industrial highway fixtures found in the preceding visual units.

#### ***Visual Characteristics***

Just east of Morris, this visual unit is characterized by the award-winning Downtown Streetscape and tightly spaced structures known as Downtown Mesa. Main Street in the Downtown area has gone through numerous evolutions in design. Many of the original building facades have been altered or modified, but the urban form is compact and very walkable. In the 1980's as part of the Main Street program, a stucco arcade was added on both sides of the street between Robson and Center Street to create a shaded walkway, obscuring many of the historic facades, rendering most of those buildings ineligible for listing on the NRHP. The street was redesigned in the 1990's from a 6-lane arterial to a 4-lane arterial roadway.

The foreground is dominated by the Downtown Streetscape which creates a more pedestrian-friendly place, with street trees, decorative colored concrete paving, benches and custom seating features, on street parallel parking and pedestrian crossings, and new themed street and pedestrian lighting. The streetscape's most recognizable features are consistently spaced and sculptural, pale green Palo Brea trees and tall Date Palms, thematic dark green street lighting in the center median and on the walkways, wide decorative and colored concrete walkways, midblock crosswalks and curb extensions delineating parallel on-street parking. These extensions create space for movable and permanent public art and a plentiful array of benches, both custom and manufactured. The landscape median does have trees and shrubs, but was not redone with the Downtown Streetscape and is not distinctive in theme. The dark green light poles remain a linear street feature but are part of the overall streetscape design

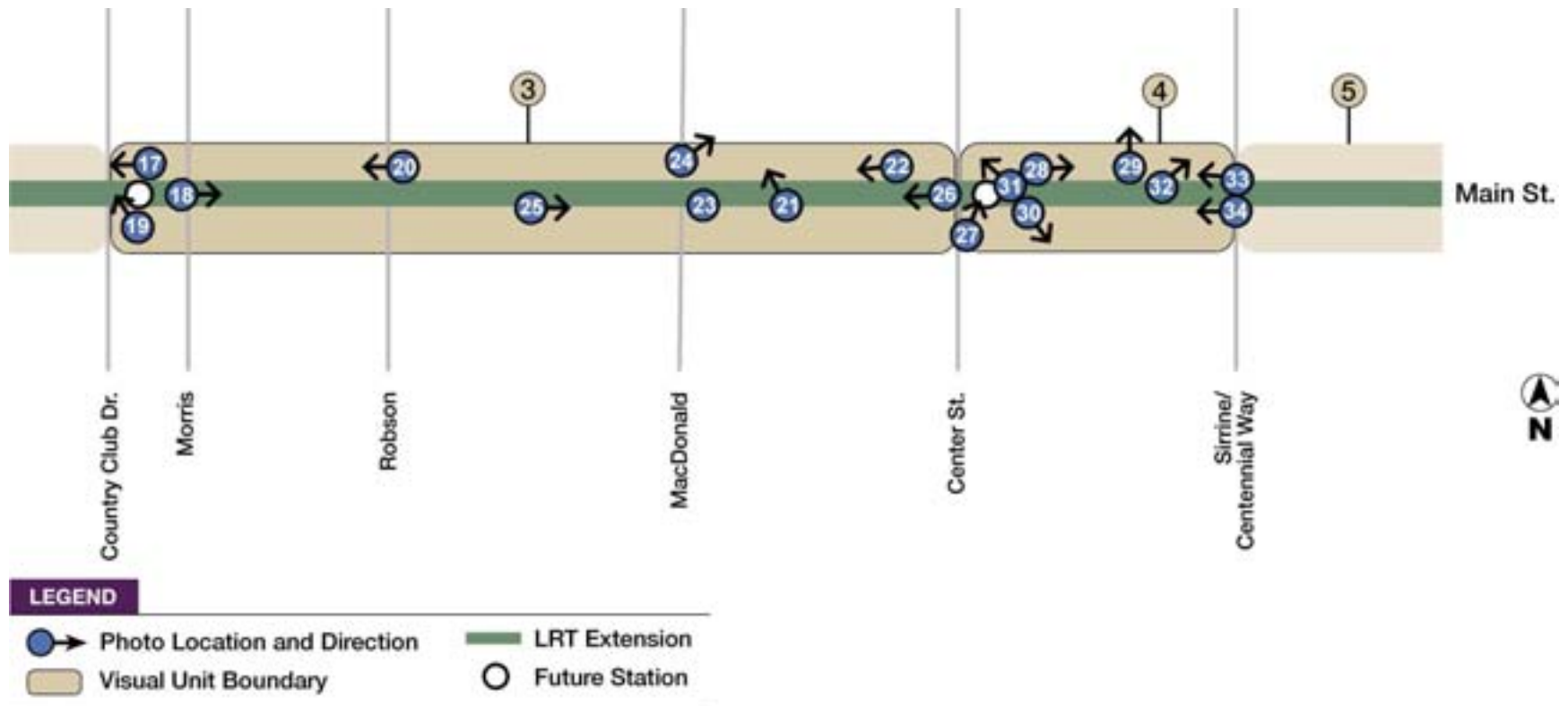


composition. The middleground is tightly spaced retail and office buildings with the stucco arcade/façade in front. One area near MacDonald removed the stucco façade in the 1990's to reveal the historic façade, with awnings replacing the heavy structure of arcade shade.

Typical viewers are motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians traversing the project area, residents/visitors to the many seasonal events and venues, and customers of restaurants, banks, a music store, new and resale clothing and antiques stores, salons, and other small retail shops along the street.

Traveling due east, in the far distant background, viewers may be able to see the Superstition Mountains on a clear day, although not as easily due to the enclosing effect of the street trees.

**FIGURE 12: PHOTO LOCATIONS – VISUAL UNITS #3 & #4**



**FIGURE 13: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #3**



PHOTO 17: The street taper at Morris looking west



PHOTO 18: Morris looking east toward the Downtown Streetscape



PHOTO 19: Taco Bell at NE Corner of Country Club Drive and Main Street looking NW



PHOTO 20: NW Corner of Robson and Main Street looking west



PHOTO 21: Mid-block crossing at One MacDonald Center looking northwest



PHOTO 22: Sidewalk dining at NW corner Main Street and Center looking west

**FIGURE 14: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #3 (CONTINUED)**



PHOTO 23: Public Art on Main Street at Macdonald



PHOTO 24: Northern Streetscape at MacDonald



PHOTO 25: South side Streetscape Mid-Block between Robson and MacDonald, looking east



PHOTO 26: Main Street looking west at Center Street



#### **2.3.1.4 Visual Unit #4 – Center Street to Surrine/Centennial Way (Downtown Mesa)**

##### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins at the east side of the Main Street/Center Street intersection, extending approximately 0.15 mile east to the east side of the Main Street and Surrine/Centennial Way intersection. The visual character of this unit shifts dramatically in scale. The major contrast between this visual unit and Visual Unit #3 is the increase in building height and scale, jumping from one to three story buildings to eight or more story buildings with the Mesa City Hall, the Mesa Arts Center (MAC) and the Mesa Bank building.

Typical viewers are motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians traversing the project area as well as residents/visitors to the many Downtown seasonal events and venues, city offices, Mesa Bank and other offices located within. The MAC is especially popular, recognized for its architecture and public plaza design, public art display, and venue for performing arts

##### ***Visual Characteristics***

The Downtown Streetscape theme continues in various forms from Visual Units #3 through #5, with decorative colored pavement, regularly spaced pale green Palo Brea trees, benches and occasionally, public art in the form of movable statues. While the streetscape elements are much the same, the effect is enhanced given the broad setbacks in front of City Hall and the MAC. These public plazas are specially designed, with seating and landscaping, more permanent sculptures that tell the history of Mesa, and water features, trees and low walls and walkways that curve to entice the visitor into the MAC. A Valley Metro LINK BRT station has been constructed here, with its special architecture and public art contribution. Parallel parking is limited primarily to the south side of the street beyond the MAC. While the south side of Main Street continues the cadence of downtown development patterns, the north side of Main Street, east of City Hall, marks the beginning of the downtown transition back to an arterial suburban street with suburban building forms identifiable by the presence of a large, unscreened, asphalt surface parking lot and a (although heavily landscaped) Jack-In-The-Box restaurant.

Traveling east from Center Street, the visual character of the foreground on both the north and south sides of Main Street is predominately the enhanced median with decorative street lighting and the distinct Downtown Streetscape at the back of curb. Pedestrian plazas in the middleground lead to City Hall and the Performing Arts Center, with their building facades, interrupted by palm trees and traffic lights. Looking due east, in the far distant background, viewers may be able to see the Superstition Mountains on a clear day.

**FIGURE 15: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #4\***

\*Refer to Figure # 12 for Photo locations



PHOTO 27: Center Street looking east



PHOTO 28: City Hall Plaza and streetscape looking east



PHOTO 29: Streetscape at City Hall Parking Lot looking north



PHOTO 30: Mesa Arts Center and BRT stop



PHOTO 31: BRT Stop at NE corner Center Street and Main Street



PHOTO 32: Jack-in-the-Box at NW corner of Serrine and Centennial Way

**FIGURE 16: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #4\* (CONTINUED)**

\*Refer to Figure # 12 for Photo locations



PHOTO 33: Surrine/Centennial Way looking west



PHOTO 34: Mesa Bank building at  
SW corner of Surrine and  
Main Street



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### **2.3.1.5 Visual Unit #5 – Serrine/Centennial Way to Pomeroy Downtown Mesa)**

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins at the east side of the Main Street and Serrine/Centennial Way intersection, extending approximately 0.25 mile east to the east side of the Main Street/North Pomeroy intersection. While carrying forward the Downtown Streetscape design and center median with its dark green light poles, this visual unit commits to a suburban form. Lost is the compactness of the traditional downtown blocks and architectural distinctiveness of the MAC.

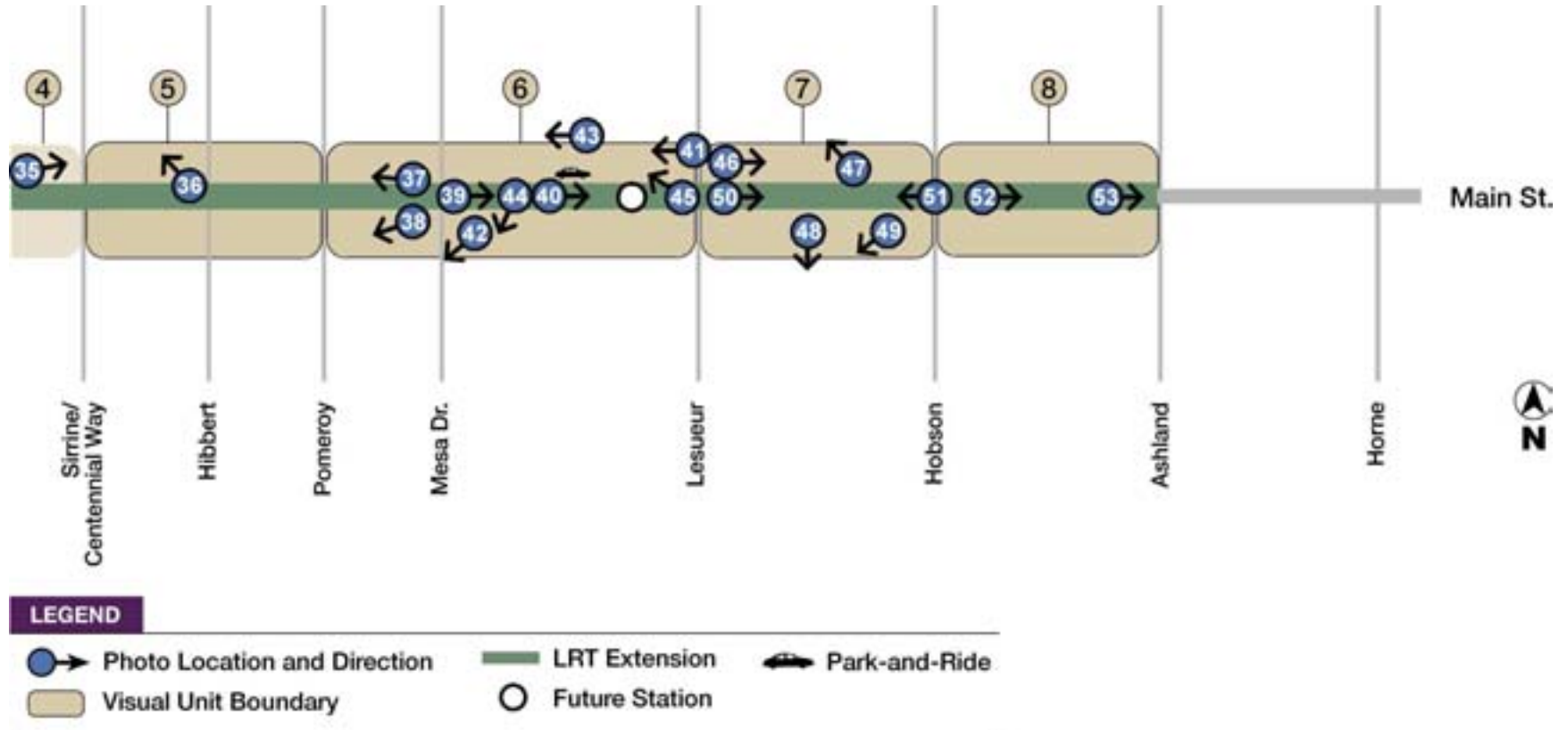
#### ***Visual Characteristics***

Building heights step down to one story, with the exception of a parking structure on the north side. Tall pole signs are re-introduced, and more auto-oriented land use development is accommodated. Parallel parking remains but more driveways appear. Vehicle access is prevalent, from the large surface parking lots that serve strip-mall style retail, to an automotive center. The Brown & Brown Chevrolet dealership has its inventory lot on one side and 2-story vehicle storage facility on the other. While the walkways continue east of Hibbert, the decorative feature of colored concrete as well as the other streetscape features such as benches, public art, and pedestrian lighting are discontinued. Retail is auto-oriented, enticing fewer pedestrians. All these modifications further the quick transition from the enhanced Downtown Streetscape design and compact pedestrian urban form back to an arterial street and the imagery and uses of the former state highway.

Typical viewers include motorists accessing the car dealership and other auto-oriented uses and bicyclists. Pedestrians are much less frequent here.

Traveling east, the visual character of the foreground is predominantly the landscaped median with dark green street lighting, and trees of the enhanced streetscape at the back of curb on both the north and south sides of Main Street. The middleground is surface parking lots with minimal landscaping and parked new and used vehicles for sale. The background is mainly building facades on the north and south, with the Superstition Mountains to the far distant east.

**FIGURE 17: PHOTO LOCATIONS – VISUAL UNITS #5 - #8**



**FIGURE 18: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNITS #5 & #6\***

\*Refer to Figure # 17 for Photo locations



PHOTO 35: Sirrine/Centennial Way looking east to Visual Unit #5



PHOTO 36: Brown & Brown Inventory Garage, NW corner of Hibbert and Main



PHOTO 37: RV Sales at NW corner of Mesa Drive



PHOTO 38: Gateway Park at SW corner of Mesa Drive in Visual Unit #5



PHOTO 39: Mesa Drive looking east



### 2.3.1.6 Visual Unit #6 – Pomeroy to LeSueur

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins at the east side of the Main Street/Pomeroy intersection and extends approximately 0.13 mile east to the intersection of Main Street/LeSueur. The visual character of this unit is of a suburban arterial street, with many vacant lots. One exception is a small section between Pomeroy and Mesa Drive on the southwest corner where a city park (Gateway Park) is sited in front of an office building. This visual unit is distinct from the preceding visual units due to the lack of vegetation in the median, lack of decorative paving on the walkways, and other features of the downtown streetscape back to the standard, suburban treatments of an arterial street.

Typical viewers include motorists and bicyclists traversing the project area. Fewer pedestrians travel here.

#### ***Visual Characteristics***

East of Mesa Drive to Udall, the southern portion of this unit offers views of the one story Quality Bumper retail store and parking lot, followed by a vacant lot from Udall to LeSueur. The north side of the unit contains auto-related service and retail, a billboard, a mini-storage facility, and a vacant lot. Except for the mini-storage facility, the buildings are set at the walkway edge and abutted by large driveways and parking lots.

Traveling east, the foreground is mainly building facades set back from the street, parking lots, vacant dirt lots, and a Valley Metro LINK BRT stop constructed in front of Quality Bumper. The middleground is surface parking lots and parked vehicles for sale. The background is continuing building facades on the north and south, with the Superstition Mountains to the far distant east.

**FIGURE 19: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #6\***

\*Refer to Figure # 17 for Photo locations



PHOTO 40: Mesa Drive looking east



PHOTO 41: LeSueur looking west



PHOTO 42: Quality Bumper SE corner of Mesa Drive



PHOTO 43: Gunnels Tire Service looking west



PHOTO 44: Mesa Drive BRT stop



PHOTO 45: NW corner of LeSueur



### **2.3.1.7 Visual Unit #7 – LeSueur to Hobson**

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins at the east side of the Main Street/LeSueur intersection, extending approximately 0.12 mile east to the intersection of Main Street/Hobson. The visual character of this short one-block unit is unique in its open space and park character, with Pioneer Park on the north and the 1927 Mesa Arizona Temple, a regional facility of the Church of Latter Day Saints (LDS) located on the south side of the street. The southern part of this section is also part of the Temple Historic District which is on the NRHP, of which the Temple is a contributor.

This visual unit stands out from its bordering visual units due to the presence of extensive turf and large trees within Pioneer Park, and the formal landscaping and setting for the Mesa Arizona Temple. This facility is a significant religious assembly building, set in a formal garden-like setting that occupies the full block. The park is a city neighborhood park, also formally designed and occupying the entire block to the north. The park open spaces and Temple front grounds mirror one another, dramatically changing the spatial and aesthetic qualities of the street environment from the urban and suburban character to the east and west. A center landscaped median is similar to that found in Visual Units #3 and #4, with decorative paving at intersections and heritage-themed street lighting.

Typical viewers include motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians traversing the visual unit, and visitors to Pioneer Park and the Mesa Arizona Temple.

#### ***Visual Characteristics***

Traveling east, the foreground and middleground are of large expanses of turf, mature trees, and palm trees on the north and south sides, a green respite from urban and suburban development. The Temple property is bounded by a low masonry planter along the street edge adjacent to the walkway. Looking to the south toward the LDS property, the Mesa Arizona Temple and flagpole are set formally within a landscape of turf and low, manicured vegetation, edged with palms and trees.

To the north, Pioneer Park landscape is a broad expanse of turf and mature trees, with formal diagonal walkways traversing from the corners at LeSueur and Hobson, to the central oval walkway. The park is edged with mature trees and palms, setting it apart from its urban surroundings. A monument of life-like statuary of Mesa pioneers is sited directly in the center of the block, with a prominent flagpole behind it, and walkways and plaza area surrounding it. The background continues to be the Superstition Mountains to the far distant east.

**FIGURE 20: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #7\***

\*Refer to Figure # 17 for Photo locations



PHOTO 46: LeSueur looking east along Main



PHOTO 47: Pioneer Park plaza looking northeast



PHOTO 48: Mesa Arizona Temple grounds and building looking south



PHOTO 49: Street frontage and grounds at Mesa Arizona Temple looking SW



PHOTO 50: Main Street at LeSueur looking east



PHOTO 51: Hobson looking west



### 2.3.1.8 VISUAL Unit #8 – Hobson to Ashland

#### ***General Visual Character***

This visual unit begins at the east side of the Main Street/Hobson intersection and extends approximately 0.07 mile east to the intersection of Main Street/Ashland, which is the terminus of the LPA. The visual character here reflects the suburban pattern of development common to Mesa's arterial streets. While some older building stock on the south side is placed close to the back of the walkway, most buildings are set far enough back to include two rows of parking between the street and the building façade.

Land uses include a day care center, retail shopping centers, and fast food drive-thru restaurants, some of which are eligible for listing on the NRHP. The Dairy Queen restaurant and its sign is an example of a remnant of drive-through restaurant character common along Main Street when it was a state highway. The center median is paved, no longer landscaped. Lighting is now the standard tall, double-armed streetlights similar to Visual Unit #1 and #2. Vegetation is minimal along the roadway, offering few trees or shrubs along the walkway. Parallel parking occurs occasionally.

Typical viewers include motorists traversing the visual unit. As in Visual Unit 6, few pedestrians venture here as there are few destinations to serve them and distances between businesses are too far.

#### ***Visual Characteristics***

Traveling east, the foreground on the north and south is mostly attached walkways, with parking lots behind. This is followed by building façades in the middleground and some taller trees beyond. Looking east, the far distant background continues to reveal the Superstition Mountains on the horizon. Looking west, the background reveals the tall palms of Pioneer Park and the Mesa Arizona Temple with the vegetated streetscape and multi-story buildings of Downtown in the distance.

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**FIGURE 21: PHOTOS OF VISUAL UNIT #8\***

\*Refer to Figure # 17 for Photo locations



PHOTO 52: Hobson looking east



PHOTO 53: End of line looking west back toward Downtown



### 3.0 VISUAL FEATURES

The field surveys revealed several potentially unique, and/or prominent resources that may be particularly sensitive to alteration of the setting around them. The following sites have been identified for this reason, as they are established landmarks important to the social, cultural, and economic dynamics of the corridor (see Figure 22). These resources may require special consideration when determining the design and implementation of major transportation infrastructure improvements.

1. Landmark Restaurant (Visual Unit #2) – This prominent brick structure is located very close to the roadway, with a turf foreground edged in trees and hedged shrubs. Its original context has been radically changed as Mesa urbanized and widened Main Street. Alteration that may affect the setback or the structure would be considered an impact. This property is listed on the NRHP. However, as a visual feature, it stands remarkably different than its surroundings, and a distinctive ‘landmark’.
2. The Nader House (Visual Unit #2) – This house is surrounded by mature vegetation and a small gate with a picket fence that buffers the residence from the busy street environment. The gate, surrounded with vines, closes off the view of the house from the street; the heavy vegetation serves to mark it as private, residential, and distinct from its more commercial and open surroundings. This 1915 vintage house is a remnant of older Main Street estate and farmstead neighborhoods, where houses were set back from the street. The landscaped buffer keeps the residence private; that element, if altered, would be considered an adverse impact. The Nader House is eligible for listing on the NRHP.
3. The Standage House (Visual Unit #2) – Similar to the Nader House in age and setting, this house maintains a large setback from the street yet is open to the street. A mature landscape buffer shields it from adjacent uses, making the perimeter more sensitive to change than the front yard. The Standage House is eligible for listing on the NRHP. The house style and large green front yard present a gracious remnant and reminder of what the neighborhood once was.
4. Vintage Highway Signage (Visual Units #1 and #2; Visual Unit #8) – Considered excellent examples of the Modernist design era and/or the Post World War II expansion of Mesa, these signs identify such locations as the Plainsman Hotel, Rawl’s Motel and Hi-Way Host Motel. These signs are individually eligible for listing on the NRHP. Some of these signs are at the back of the walkway and overhang the right-of-way. Whether eligible as historic or not, these signs are representative of an era of expressive design and a remnant of when Main Street was a state highway, serving as landmarks along the street even today.



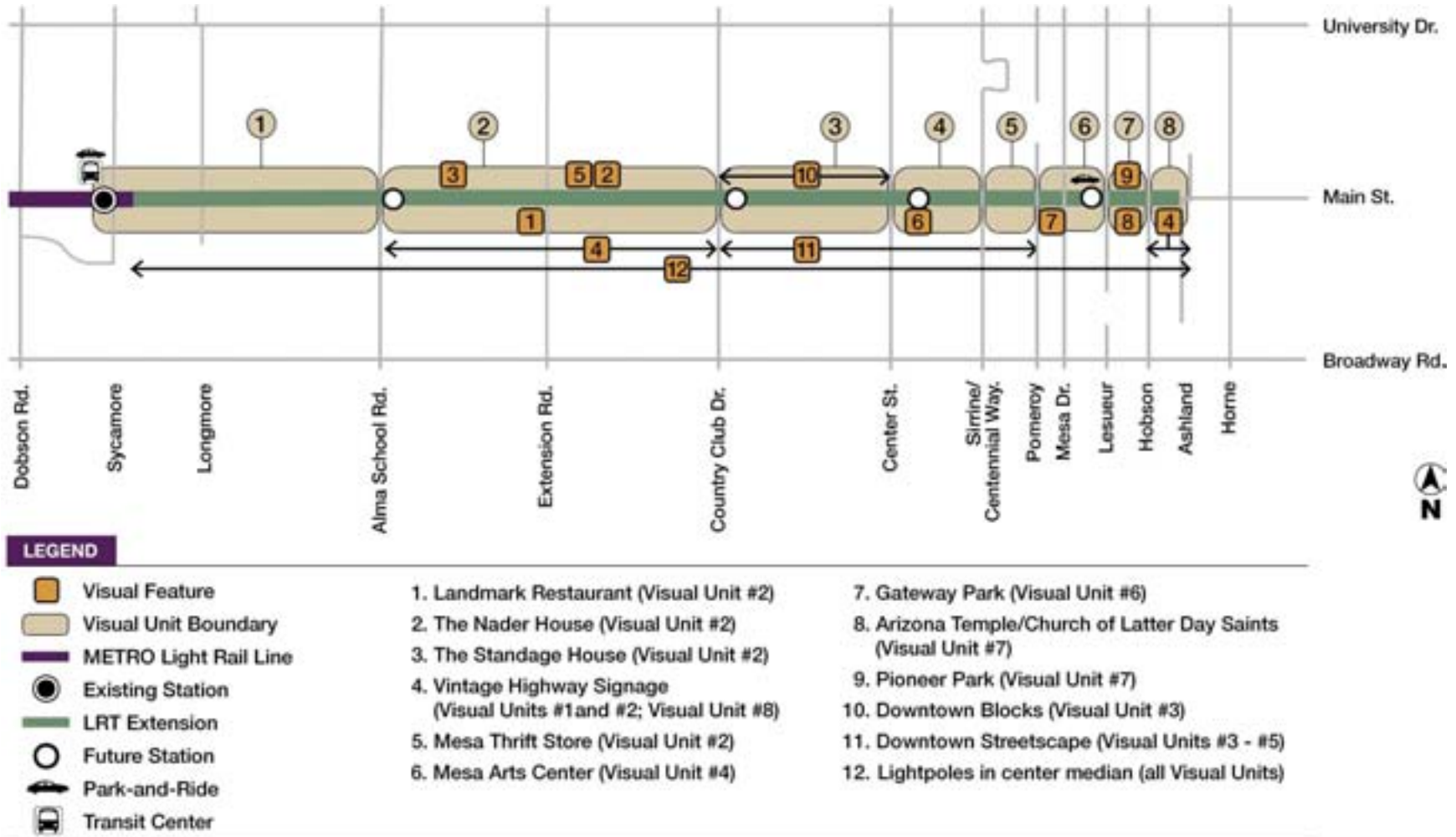
5. Mesa Thrift Store (Visual Unit #2) – The building is eligible for listing on the NRHP and, noted as an example of the expansion of Main Street businesses. The Roman brick stack-bond masonry is a feature of the Post World War II period. The building is set close to the current right-of-way, but is not visually distinctive.
6. Mesa Arts Center (Visual Unit #4) – Built in 2007, this award-winning performing arts complex and award-winning public space represent the most recently constructed facility along Main Street. The complex is a regional, even state, attraction as a performing arts venue. The site and landscape is also a regional cultural attraction due to its public spaces and integrated public art.
7. Gateway Park (Visual Unit #6) – Located at the southwest corner of Main and Mesa Drive, this pocket park appears to the casual viewer as a simple green space with mature trees and benches adjacent to an office building. This park is a place to sit and a respite from urban activity, with mature trees and turf, but without the Downtown streetscape distinction.
8. Mesa Arizona Temple/Church of Latter Day Saints (Visual Unit #7) – This facility is currently the only LDS temple in the Phoenix Metropolitan area, drawing potentially national and international religious followers for religious ceremonies. Its formal appearance and manicured grounds as well as its physical size and cultural stature in the community make it a significant visual and physical landmark. (The Temple is located within the NRHP listed Temple Historic District with the Temple categorized as a contributor to the District.)
9. Pioneer Park (Visual Unit #7) – This large neighborhood park mirrors the Temple site in scale and graciousness of its open space. Formally designed, with turf, mature trees and palms, the park also has a tribute to Mesa's Pioneers with life-like statuary and a plaza with a flagpole adjacent to the street. Like the Temple, its formal design and lush grounds have a significant visual effect on the street.
10. Downtown Blocks (Visual Unit #3) – This section of closely spaced traditional downtown commercial buildings represents one of the most intact downtown/main street core commercial areas of any city in the state. While the facades have been significantly modified from the addition of the stucco arcade, the intactness of buildings and cohesive street presentation makes this section a significant and distinctive visual feature as the middleground/background element along this part of Main Street.
11. Downtown Streetscape (Visual Units #3 - #5) – The pedestrian-friendly landscape created by the award-winning Downtown Streetscape provides



visual cohesion and rhythm along the street, in conjunction with the building facades. Whether the buildings behind it have been modified or are original, the street trees and public spaces created in these blocks is a significant visual, economic and cultural icon for the city. The design has been locally recognized and is regionally well known as an important public space.

12. Street lighting in center median (all Visual Units) – Located in the median in the center of Main Street, the street lighting in Visual Units 1, 2, and 8 are standard “cobra-style” fixtures with double-armed light poles painted green. In Visual Units 3 through 7, the double-armed light poles are designed with a heritage-themed fixture and mast arm, also painted dark green. Whether heritage or industrial in style, this street feature and its relentless linear presence are a distinctive visual element both within Downtown and along the standard arterial street.

**FIGURE 22: VISUAL FEATURES**





## 4.0 METHODOLOGY FOR IMPACT EVALUATION

The process used in this visual impact assessment generally follows FHWA guidelines for assessing visual impacts of transportation projects, as outlined in *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects*, March 1981. This assessment focuses on effects to existing views, streetscape elements, and other roadway or land use features. Potential visual impacts were assessed by identifying project-related changes to existing views and applying criteria for assessing the severity of the associated impacts. Impacts were rated “none,” “minimal,” “moderate,” or “substantial” in accordance with the following guidelines:

- **None** indicates that either the alternative avoids the resource or will have no change in the visual character;
- **Minimal** impact indicates that the visual change will be minor, and transportation facilities are already a part of the visual landscape. For example, if the street already has overhead power lines, the additional presence of contact wires will likely not be noticeable. Mitigation is usually not necessary;
- **Moderate** impact is used when the project will result in noticeable changes to the visual landscape or introduce major new transportation elements. The introduction of contact wires to a streetscape with trees may be considered a noticeable change, even though other power lines may be present. Some mitigation may be applied; and
- **Substantial** impact indicates there will be major changes in the existing visual character or an impact to the viewshed of the resource. For example, removal of large, mature trees will likely change the visual character of views. This condition requires mitigation.

A visual impact on existing views will occur if a visual change will contrast incompatibly or noticeably with the existing character of the area. Views are described as high quality if they contain visual resources such as landmarks, or sensitive views such as those viewed by a sensitive viewer group (i.e., residents, multi-path users, business patrons, etc.) for a significant duration of time. An impact would occur if the view was obstructed by any proposed project element.



## **5.0 POTENTIAL OPERATIONAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION**

### **5.1 IMPACTS**

#### **5.1.1 No-Build Alternative**

The No-Build Alternative would not involve major physical alteration of the built or natural components of the Central Mesa Study Area other than the few roadway and transit capital improvements included in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) which have already been approved for funding. The patterns and trends of land development and socioeconomic activity currently occurring in the corridor would continue to prevail, including a continuing increase in traffic and development/redevelopment actions. Changes would come about through typical market forces and the implementation of various governmental plans for development and redevelopment. The general character of the project area would be expected to remain relatively constant, with some infill occurring. Therefore, neither the existing character of the corridor nor pending changes would be affected with the decision to implement the No-Build Alternative.

#### **5.1.2 Build Alternative**

##### **5.1.2.1 General Impacts**

In general, the corridor is absent of scenic vistas, with the predominant land uses urban and suburban in character; therefore, the LRT facilities are generally visually consistent with or would improve the surrounding existing urban and suburban environment. At each station, an area 350 feet either side of the platform centerline typically becomes an enhance streetscape area, with trees in a buffer area or in tree grates, and a widened walkway of 8 feet per the METRO Design Criteria Manual. Impacts will be greatest where the electrical wires and poles of the overhead contact system could noticeably contrast with the existing landscape; where substantial existing mature vegetation, streetscape elements, bike lanes or on-street parking are removed; or when the station design characteristics are not modified for scale and context through the Downtown Streetscape and traditional building core Downtown.

For Visual Units #1 and 2, from Sycamore to Country Club Drive, the addition of LRT and stations would bring a contemporary architectural element, improved pedestrian access, and cohesive streetscape elements to the street due to enhancements near the station. From Sycamore to Country Club Drive, the curb edge will be affected, with shallow property takes in some areas, and larger takes in others affecting buildings. Station locations especially involve property impacts where widening of the street is anticipated. In these units, the trackway will replace the center median, and street lighting will be relocated from the median to the back of the walkways along the street edge.

Within the Downtown area to Ashland (Visual Units #3 through #8), two options are proposed that are described below. These options affect the Downtown visual features to very different degrees (Visual Units #3 and #4). Beyond the Downtown Core, Visual



Units #5 through #7 are also affected by the options, but to a lesser degree. Four stations are proposed - east of Alma School Road, east of Country Club Drive, east of Center Street, and east of Mesa Drive.

### ***Proposed Options and General Affects***

Through the Downtown Streetscape, the roadway curb to curb largely remains intact with the 2-lane or 4-lane option. The center median would be eliminated to place stations and trackway. Street lighting would remain in the center of the street through Downtown.

The 2-lane Option would **moderately** impact the visual and aesthetic qualities of the project corridor downtown. The LRT trackway, stations and overhead catenary system will be new features in the street, and special care to their design will be needed in the Downtown area to lessen the contrast of these new elements. However, the integrity of the Downtown Streetscape is largely intact, with on street parking. Specific mitigation strategies which will further soften the impact are listed in below.

The 4-lane Option would **substantially** impact the visual and aesthetic qualities of the project corridor within the core of the Downtown area (Country Club Drive to Center), as it removes many mature trees, the signature element of the Downtown Streetscape, by altering the curb edge. The most substantial impact is alteration of the curbs and loss of trees and streetscape in portions of the Downtown.

From Robson to Center, the central core of the traditional Downtown area, the curb remains intact. East of Country Club Drive and east of Center, curb is moved primarily to the north to add the station platforms. The typical buffer area for trees is reduced; therefore, there may not be sufficient area in these locations to replace the trees. The LRT trackway, stations and overhead catenary system will be new features in the street, and special care to their design will be needed in the Downtown area to lessen the contrast of these new elements. Specific mitigation strategies which will reduce the impact of either downtown option are listed below.

### ***Assumptions regarding system design components***

To determine potential impacts to the visual quality of the project corridor, a list of general assumptions was generated regarding the components of the LRT construction. The assumptions include, but are not limited to those listed below:

- The LRT Starter Line elements will be the basis of design for the project, with application of and reference to the *Urban Design Guidelines* and METRO *Standard Design Criteria*.
- All stations will apply the 'kit of parts' used for the LRT Starter Line, including the following:
  - Station supports at 10 feet on center with louvers and vine supports distributed through the station; paint to be low emission/low re-radiation



- factor; color to be determined based on local context; heights of station supports are flexible, to be designed based on station context
- Station length at approximately 279 feet long and elevated 16 inches above street grade
  - Station approaches will vary depending on whether single or double loaded entrances
  - Electrical panel at the rear of the station
  - Benches and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) wheelchair parking distributed through the station
  - One drinking fountain and one map panel per station
  - Ticket vending machines at each station approach
  - Vines on supports and louvers for shade
  - Trees between openings on either side of OCS poles
  - Station canopies will be tensile structures
  - Concrete pavers in colors and patterns will be used for station pavement
  - Tactile warning strip with truncated domes at edge of platform (two feet wide) and at end of approaches at trackway crossings
- Public art at each LRT station; an artist will be associated with each station.
  - Overhead catenary poles will be painted based on local context
    - Poles will be spaced generally between 90 and 110 feet apart
    - Wire supports for the overhead catenary currently deviate from the *Urban Design Guidelines* and are not an integrated mast arm; this element will need further definition in design
  - Trackway will be concrete pavement, approximately 26 feet wide, with OCS poles embedded and edging on either side separating rail from vehicles.
  - Areas where curb is affected by construction, a standard gray concrete walkway of six feet and a planting buffer of minimum four feet will be created to include planting of low shrubs and groundcover.
  - Where existing curb, gutter, and sidewalk is preserved, no landscaping will be added
  - Within 350 feet either side of the station centerline, walkways will be enhanced with a standard gray concrete sidewalk of eight feet wide and a planting buffer minimum width of eight feet or greater to include planting trees and shrubs.
  - Parking lots associated with the Park-and-Ride lots will be planted with trees/shrubs/groundcovers and/or screen walls according to the City of Mesa landscape standards.
  - Station lighting will remain at the current footcandle level, provided by downlight from the station structure and free standing poles along the approach walkways, as needed to achieve the desired and consistent light level.
  - Traction power substations will be planted with trees/shrubs/groundcovers and screen walls according to the City of Mesa landscape standards.
  - Medians constructed between traffic lanes that are wide enough for landscape planting will receive plants that reach a mature height of three feet or less.
  - While cost-to-cure payments are made where partial takes are employed, this may not guarantee full restoration of the property.



- Full property acquisitions will include removal of structures to bare soil. No provisions for redevelopment or revegetation are planned.

#### **5.1.2.2 Impacts to Visual Units with Mitigation Strategies**

Specific impacts within each Visual Unit that occur as a result of construction of the Build Alternative, and potential mitigation strategies to avoid or minimize impacts are discussed for each Visual Unit below. A summary of the findings for each Visual Unit may be found in Table 3. Consideration has been given to existing viewers, such as pedestrians, office building tenants, residents, motorists and patrons of the LRT system. The viewers vary depending on the character and use within the visual units, as noted above.



**TABLE 3: VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT SUMMARY**

Unit	Landscape Unit/Distance	Land Use	Natural Landscape Features	Urban Landscape Features	Visual Impact From Build Alternative (2 lane/4 lane)	Visually Sensitive Resources
1	Main Street - Sycamore Station to Alma School Road (0.77 mile)	Technical college (EVIT) campus, surface parking, auto service, strip mall, motor lodges and motels, fast food restaurants	Sparse landscaping (occasional tree, palm or shrub) except for EVIT street trees, far distant view to Superstition Mountains (east)	EVIT campus street frontage of trees and meandering walkway (south side); vintage highway signs, center street lighting	Minimal	Vintage highway signs potentially eligible for HP
2	Main Street - Alma School Road to Country Club Drive (1.0 mile)	Mobile home parks, multi-family apartments, mid-size shopping centers, motels/hotels; used auto sales lots	Sparse landscaping (occasional tree, palm or shrub), far distant view to Superstition Mountains (east)	Suburban low-rise building form, center street lighting	Moderate	Landmark restaurant, Nader House, Standage House, Vintage highway signs
3	Main Street – Country Club Drive to Center (0.47 mile)	Traditional Downtown urban area, small retail shops, banks, public spaces and public art	Distinctive pale green street trees and date palms of the Downtown streetscape, low colorful shrubs/groundcover	Downtown streetscape elements (benches, corner treatment, lighting, public art, decorative paving), traditional downtown building form	Moderate/ Substantial (Moderate with mitigation)	Downtown blocks; Downtown streetscape and street lighting
4	Main Street – Center to Serrine/Centennial Way (0.15 mile)	Performing arts center, multi-story civic and office buildings, public plazas	Tall date palms and pale green street trees of the Downtown Streetscape, mature Evergreen Elms at City Hall, date palms and varieties of trees & landscaping at MAC	Plazas with public art, multi-story contemporary architecture, tensile shade structures and various fountains at MAC, heritage street lighting in median and at walkways	Moderate/Moderate	Mesa Arts Center, Downtown Streetscape, center street lighting
5	Main Street – Serrine/Centennial Way to Mesa Drive (0.25 mile)	Auto dealership and multi-story vehicle storage, recreational vehicle sales,	Downtown streetscape trees and shrubs	Downtown streetscape trees, walkways w/ corner treatment, heritage street lighting in median and at	Moderate/ Moderate	Downtown Streetscape elements, center street lighting



Unit	Landscape Unit/Distance	Land Use	Natural Landscape Features	Urban Landscape Features	Visual Impact From Build Alternative (2 lane/4 lane)	Visually Sensitive Resources
		commercial strip mall		walkways		
6	Main Street – Mesa Drive to LeSueur (0.13 mile)	Small auto-oriented retail, storage facility, vacant land	Sparse landscaping (occasional tree, palm or shrub), far distant view to Superstition Mountains (east)	Suburban low-rise building form, center street lighting	Moderate/ Moderate	None
7	Main Street – LeSueur to Hobson (0.12 mile)	Large city park and religious center (potentially eligible for HP)	Large expanses of turf grass, large variety of mature trees and palms	One to two story buildings with flagpole, low planter wall at property line (Temple); statuary/public art at park in plaza	Moderate/ Moderate	Mesa Arizona Temple, Pioneer Park, center street lighting
8	Main Street – Hobson to Ashland (0.07 mile)	Small retail shopping centers and individual buildings, fast food drive-through restaurants	Suburban landscaping, far distant view to Superstition Mountains (east)	Suburban low-rise building form, center street lighting	Minimal/ Minimal	Vintage highway signs



## Visual Unit #1 – Sycamore Station to Alma School Road

The first 0.13 mile (620 feet or 17 percent) of this visual unit already contains the tail track from the existing LRT Starter Line. This tail track would be converted to regular track, with barricades and most guy-wiring removed. Introduction of the LRT project to the rest of Visual Unit #1 would result in the replacement of the center median with the light rail guideway and continuation of the concrete trackway and curb edging. Existing overhead double-armed light poles would be replaced with lighting at the curb edge. The OCS poles will continue down the center of the trackway between 90 to 110 feet apart. The roadway would be maintained with 2 lanes in each direction and a bike lane on either side.

The project would result in the relocation of existing vertical curb between Stewart and Alma School Road, reducing the area of landscaped set back at the northwest corner of Alma School Road intersection. The existing overhead high voltage transmission lines may be raised at Main and Extension to accommodate the height of the OCS.

Visual Unit #1 would be **minimally** impacted by the project. The addition of the guideway and station platform would contrast with the existing visual elements, but would add visual interest to an otherwise disjointed visual landscape. The addition of the OCS could add visual clutter; however, visual clutter already exists from existing street lighting in the center of the roadway. At the Alma School station, the addition of the METRO standard streetscape of trees and wider, separated walkway would be a substantial improvement. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

In order to retain the minimal impact, the following is recommended:

- Paint the new street light poles at the curb edge and on the new OCS poles in the center of the street the same as the existing green color (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to retain the existing character of this vertical element.
- Retain the existing landscape buffer of shrubs and groundcover as well as the mature trees back of the walkway at EVIT to keep potential impact minimal, as it is a defining element within this unit.

## Visual Unit #2 – Alma School Road to Country Club

Introduction of the Build Alternative in Visual Unit #2 would include the installation of trackway, OCS poles and wire, station platform and a TPSS (traction power substation) facility, the location and design of which will be determined during preliminary engineering.

To accommodate the trackway in the center of the roadway, widening of the right-of-way would modify the existing curb and sidewalk in the following locations:



### North Side of Main Street

- Alma School Road to Beverly.
- Northwest and northeast corners at Extension.
- Northeast corner at Date Street
- Northwest corner at Country Club Drive

A station platform will be located in the center of the street from Alma School Road to Beverly, just east of the Main Street/Alma School intersection. New landscaping and separated walkways along the curb edge would be per METRO standards for enhanced streetscape at the station area (350 feet east and west of the platform centerline). (See assumptions above.) This will ensure street trees and adequate walkways separated from traffic provide shade, comfort and access for pedestrians traveling to the new station at this intersection.

Modifications are located mainly at larger intersections to accommodate turn lanes. Some buildings would be reconstructed or removed, and a mature shade tree (Palo Brea) would be removed on the north side of Main Street at Extension to make way for the addition of the transit infrastructure. The landscaped area on the south side of Main Street just west of Date would be reduced with the addition of the new walkway.

Where adequate rights-of-way remain, a new landscape buffer containing trees (where possible) and shrubs would be established along the portions of the visual unit where existing vertical curbs would be relocated. Additionally, several stretches of landscaped medians of varying width for shrubs and groundcover are planned on either side of the trackway.

Visual Unit #2 would be **moderately** impacted by the project. Noteworthy impacts would be the vegetated median and replacement of the center street lights with OCS poles down the center of Main Street, the addition of street lighting at the edge of the roadway, and modifications to building facades. While existing vegetation is sporadic, removal of the landscape would leave viewers looking at a gray concrete trackway set in black asphalt, OCS system of wires and poles, and street traffic in both directions, with no vegetative relief. The addition of street lighting as well as OCS would add visual clutter. Modifications to building facades would be consistent with the building structure, with repairs returning the building as close to its original look. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.



1. Paint the new street light poles at the curb edge and the new OCS poles in the center of the street the existing green color (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to retain the existing character of this vertical element.
2. Use the minimum number of OCS poles and wire. Simplify the pole design per the Urban Design Guidelines.
3. Incorporate where possible low shrubs and groundcover into medians at lane tapers and along the trackway, as designed on the Starter Line Section 2 and 4.
4. Create a station design/public art element that is complementary to the context in scale and color; provide sufficient landscape area for trees to shade the station approaches per the METRO standard.
5. Replace landscape and screening that has been removed along the street edges with that of similar character and ultimate growth size. This may require coordination with property owners along the north side of Main Street to replant a buffer of trees behind the sidewalk (on private property). Replacement of the hedge, gate and turf at the Nader House behind the walkway will help restore the front yard character.
6. Evaluate corridor alignment design refinements during project development that preserve existing trees to the extent possible, or provide adequate landscape buffer (minimum 8-foot width) to replace with new trees, or with other vegetation, where the required width for tree plantings cannot be accommodated.

### **Visual Unit #3 – Country Club Drive to Center Street (Downtown Mesa)**

For both the 2-lane and 4-lane options, introduction of the LRT in Visual Unit #3 would include construction of an LRT station platform east of Country Club Drive, a TPSS building, trackway and OCS poles and wiring. The station platform would be located in the center of the street just east of Country Club Drive, with approaches on each side extending to the closest intersections. Current sites identified for a future TPSS are all located on the south side of Main Street, beyond the right-of-way, and would likely not infringe on the visual character of the corridor. The 4-lane roadway option besides altering the lane configuration would also drop the bicycle lanes from Country Club to Hobson. Sections of parallel parking are also removed, depending on the option.

The presence of an LRT station on the east side of Country Club Drive would trigger the application of the METRO enhanced streetscape 350 feet west of the Country Club Drive approach, ensuring street trees and adequate walkways separated from traffic provide shade, comfort and access for pedestrians at this intersection. The Downtown streetscape design will likely set the design precedent for this enhancement. Beginning with this Unit, the OCS and streetlights will be combined in the center of the street to Hobson. Also starting here, the bicycle lanes will be dropped in the 4-lane option, reappearing east of Hobson.

#### **2-Lane Option**

The 2-lane option would remove portions of the existing landscaped center median to accommodate the station platform and trackway; however, some of this median can be



reconstructed as a taper median that would maintain the existing intent of the established landscape. This alternative largely leaves the Downtown Streetscape and existing curb untouched by removing one lane of traffic in each direction. Some small areas are modified slightly.

Visual Unit #3 would be **moderately** impacted by this alternative. The addition of the station platform, trackway, and OCS poles and wire would remove existing landscape. New landscape medians either side of the trackway are proposed, where feasible. The station and medians will improve the aesthetic of the transition area from the arterial street condition to the Downtown Streetscape design.

The addition of the “kit of parts” station architecture may adversely affect the scale of, and compatibility with, the traditional block of buildings and streetscape elements. The LRT architecture is very contemporary in style, compared with the current Downtown core. In the Starter Line sections, each station design reflects the scale and context of their adjacent environment, with modifications in height, color, and individual features such as public art. Adaptation of the station architecture to this intimate Downtown setting needs careful design consideration.

The OCS mast arm will be combined with existing street lighting in the center of the street. This new lighting element would need to be compatible with the existing heritage-themed pedestrian lighting that would be retained at the curb edge. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Replace in kind all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape wherever it may be affected. If insufficient area to replace trees, consider adding vines on supports or other vegetated shade devices to bring back the green element.
2. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications into the existing streetscape environment.
3. Adapt the station architecture to assume a low profile, less architecture/more vegetation style, including vine screens instead of louvers to add back landscaping lost by eliminating the median.
4. Modify the color of the station supports and tensile structure canopies to be more color compatible with the surrounding architecture.
5. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
6. Add color to the trackway concrete to reduce glare and soften the addition of the concrete trackway into the street.
7. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.



8. Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street.

#### 4-Lane Option

Introduction of the 4-lane option in Visual Unit #3 would be identical to that of the 2-lane option including the future TPSS except for the impact to the edges of the street. The entire landscaped median in the center of the street would be removed to accommodate the station platform, trackway, and OCS poles and wire. Additionally, the streetscape along the north side of Main Street from Country Club Drive to Robson would be removed entirely, due to street widening to accommodate the addition of the trackway and keep the existing travel and turn lanes. Half of the visual unit on the north side would be significantly affected due to the loss of street trees, furniture, parking and bike lanes. Insufficient area may be left to reconstruct the existing streetscape character due to existing building locations.

Visual Unit #3 would be **substantially** impacted by this option. The addition of the station platform and infrastructure would have a moderate impact, but the removal of the existing landscape and streetscape elements would affect the existing downtown visual aesthetic by removing part of the signature element – pale green trees – from the gateway to Downtown. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The new street lighting element would need to be compatible with the existing heritage-themed pedestrian lighting that would be retained at the curb edge. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit, improving the rating from Substantial to Moderate.

1. Replace in kind, where possible, all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape. If insufficient area to replace trees, consider adding vines on supports or other vegetated shade devices to bring back the green element.
2. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications into the existing streetscape environment.
3. Adapt the station architecture to assume a low profile, less architecture/more vegetation style, including vine screens instead of louvers to add back landscaping lost by eliminating the median.
4. Modify the color of the station supports and tensile structure canopies to be more color compatible with the surrounding architecture.
5. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.



6. Add color to the trackway concrete to reduce glare and soften the addition of the concrete trackway into the street.
7. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
8. Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street.

#### **Visual Unit #4 – Center Street to Sirrine/Centennial Way (Downtown Mesa/MAC/City Hall)**

Introduction of the Build Alternative in Visual Unit #4 would include the construction of a center LRT station platform, trackway, OCS poles and wire, and reconstruction of an existing mid-block crossing. The station platform would be located just east of the Center Street intersection, with access from both the intersection and a mid-block crossing. The presence of an LRT station would typically trigger the application of the METRO enhanced streetscape on both sides of the street for 350 feet from the center of the platform. This provides for street trees and adequate walkways separated from traffic provide shade, comfort and access for pedestrians within this block. However, the Downtown streetscape design will set the design precedent for this enhancement. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The new street lighting element would need to be compatible with the existing heritage-themed pedestrian lighting that would be retained at the curb edge.

At the MAC, one of the public art elements incorporates free form tensile structures high in the air around the theater buildings. These “clouds” are very similar in material and color to those used for the station canopies. This art element and the station canopies are compatible in form and would tie together visually. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

#### **2-Lane Option**

While the existing landscaped median would be eliminated by the station platform and trackway, landscaped medians would be created on either side of the trackway along the station platform entries, west to Center Street. The existing curb conditions along the south side of Main Street would remain unaffected. At the northwest corner, the curb would be moved north and taper toward the west, removing walkway and corner elements from the streetscape at the corner, and limited area in front of the several businesses. The curb area is moved north in front of the City Hall, removing several street trees and parallel parking, and requiring the Valley Metro LINK BRT station to be relocated. Sufficient area would remain for re-establishing some of the streetscape along this frontage.

Visual Unit #4 would be **moderately** impacted by this alternative. Removal of the landscaped median and its replacement with trackway, OCS poles and wires, and the



station platform would result in a noticeable change to the downtown character. However, the METRO station design with its tensile fabric canopies is consistent with the public art “clouds” element at the MAC. Removal of walkway and street trees from the north side of Main Street at Center Street would narrow the streetscape, especially to the east. Sufficient space remains to reestablish trees and an adequate walkway without affecting the plaza in front of City Hall. Parking at the northwest corner of Main and Center Streets would not be affected; the streetscape could be reestablished.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Replace in kind all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape wherever it may be affected. If insufficient area to replace trees, consider adding vines on supports or other vegetated shade devices to bring back the green element.
2. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications to the streetscape environment.
3. Consider narrowing or closing the driveway entrance to the parking area at the northwest corner of Main and Center Streets when reestablishing the streetscape on this corner in order to provide for trees and corner streetscape elements.
4. Adapt the station architecture to assume appropriate scale and context to the contemporary architecture and dynamic public art features in this section. The design should be compatible with the Downtown Streetscape and the MAC aesthetic.
5. Modify the color of the station supports and tensile structure canopies to be more color compatible with the surrounding architecture.
6. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
7. Add color to the trackway concrete to reduce glare and soften the addition of the concrete trackway into the street.
8. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
9. Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street.

#### **4-Lane Option**

Introduction of the 4-lane option in Visual Unit #4 would be similar to that of the 2-lane option, affecting only the north side of the street. The existing landscape median would be replaced by the trackway and station platform. On-street parking, street trees at the back of curb, and bicycles lanes would be removed; the Valley Metro LINK BRT station would require relocating. Sufficient area appears to be available to re-establish street trees at the back of curb along this frontage, but with reduced pedestrian circulation



area. Without trees, views would open to north to the surface parking lot associated with City Hall.

Visual Unit #4 is **moderately** impacted by the 4-lane option. Removal of the landscaped median, on-street parking and street trees would result in a noticeable change to the downtown character. Removal of the landscaped median and its replacement with trackway, OCS poles and wires, and the station platform would result in a noticeable change to the downtown character. However, the METRO station design with its tensile fabric canopies is consistent with the public art “clouds” element at the MAC.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Replace in kind all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape wherever it may be affected. If insufficient area to replace trees, consider adding vines on supports or other vegetated shade devices to bring back the green element.
2. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications into the Downtown streetscape environment.
3. Adapt the station architecture to assume an appropriate scale to the surrounding building context of contemporary art and architectural expression.
4. Modify the color of the station supports and tensile structure canopies to be more color compatible with the surrounding architecture.
5. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
6. Add color to the trackway concrete to reduce glare and soften the addition of the concrete trackway into the street.
7. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
8. Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street.

### **Visual Unit #5 – Serrine/Centennial Way to Mesa Drive (Downtown Mesa)**

Introduction of the Build Alternative in Visual Unit #5 entails construction of trackway, OCS poles and wire, and turn lanes.

#### **2-Lane Option**

Most of the existing curb would remain unaltered, except along the northeast corner at Centennial Way. Relocation of the curb to the north would eliminate street trees (Palo Brea) and several shrubs installed with the Downtown Streetscape. The center landscape median would be eliminated, and replaced by trackway with OCS poles and



wires. However, new landscape medians would be created on either side of the trackway. Gateway Park is not affected.

Visual Unit #5 would be **moderately** impacted by the 2-lane option. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The new street lighting element would need to be compatible with the existing heritage-themed pedestrian lighting that would be retained at the curb edge. The southwest corner of Mesa Drive in front of Gateway Park and the office building to the west would be enhanced, adding streetscape elements, as part of the station enhancement on the east side of Mesa Drive. (See Visual Unit #6 description.) Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Replace in kind all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape wherever it may be affected. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications into the streetscape environment, based on the existing elements that are retained.
2. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
3. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
4. Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street.

#### **4-Lane Option**

For the 4-lane option, the landscaped median in the center of the street would be removed throughout the entire unit. The existing curb conditions and streetscape on the south side of Main Street would be retained, except at the southwest corner of Main and Mesa Drive in front of Gateway Park. Gateway Park is not affected. The northern curb from Serrine/Centennial Way to Hibbert would be relocated several feet to the north. As in the 2-lane option, on-street parking and street trees installed with the Downtown Streetscape would be removed.

Visual Unit #5 would be **moderately** impacted by the 4-lane option. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The new street lighting element would need to be compatible with the existing heritage-themed pedestrian lighting at the curb edge that would be retained. The southwest corner of Mesa Drive in front of Gateway Park and the office building to the west would be reconstructed, adding back street trees and streetscape elements. The replacement of the existing mature



trees and landscape buffer along the south side of Main Street at Gateway Park would re-establish the Downtown Streetscape, and retain aesthetic continuity. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Replace in kind all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape wherever it may be affected. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for adapting modifications to the streetscape environment, based on the existing elements that are retained.
2. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
3. Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median, especially along the north side of the trackway at Mesa Drive.
4. Replace landscape and screening that has been removed along the street with that of similar character and ultimate growth size.

## **Visual Unit #6 – Mesa Drive to LeSueur**

Introduction of the project to Visual Unit #6 would include the addition of a station platform with approaches at Mesa Drive and LeSueur, trackway, OCS poles and wire, TPSS at a Park and Ride (PNR) lot, and a new traffic signal at the intersection of Main Street and LeSueur. In both options, three buildings would be affected, with either partial or full removal, at the northeast corner of Main and Mesa Drive. (Note: the Downtown Streetscape design (pavement, trees, benches, and pedestrian lighting) ends at Mesa Drive. However, the heritage-themed streetlight poles and fixtures remain in the center median.)

A PNR lot would be built on the north side of Main Street between Mesa Drive and LeSueur intersection. This site has been identified as a Park and Ride Study Area to determine the extent and configuration of the PNR. The PNR lot would include a new landscape buffer along Main Street wide enough for trees and shrubs. The northern PNR would front Main Street with access off LeSueur.

The presence of an LRT station on the west side of LeSueur would trigger the application of the METRO enhanced streetscape 350 feet east and west of the Mesa Drive and LeSueur approaches, ensuring street trees and adequate walkways separated from traffic provide shade, comfort and access for pedestrians at this intersection. The Downtown streetscape design will likely set the design precedent for this enhancement.

## **2-Lane Option**



The 2-lane option would remove the existing paved center median and on-street parking, retaining the heritage-theme street lighting with the OCS poles in the center of the street. Due to the platform, the curb would move north from Mesa Drive to LeSueur and in front of the PNR on the north side of Main Street, likely affecting existing palm trees. New curb from Udall to LeSueur would be built, including a bus pullout. The METRO streetscape enhancement would reconstruct these sections, with the Downtown streetscape likely setting design precedent.

Visual Unit #6 would be **moderately** impacted by the 2-lane option. Addition of the trackway, OCS, TPSS and improved streetscape would establish aesthetic continuity between the Downtown streetscape to the west, and increase visual interest through this block. The PNR lot would improve land currently vacant, adding landscaping and shade where none exists today. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The affected buildings on the north side at Mesa Drive are not distinctive, and could be replaced with redevelopment of the station area. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Adapt the station architecture to assume an appropriate scale to the anticipated station redevelopment context.
2. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
3. Add additional landscape and other screening along LeSueur between the north PNR and Pioneer Park.
4. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for the station area pedestrian enhancement.

#### **4-Lane Option**

The 4-lane option would remove the existing paved center median and on-street parking, retaining the heritage-theme street lighting with the OCS poles in the center of the street. The street would be modified to maintain the current left turn lanes at Mesa Drive. Several buildings and property would be affected at the northwest corner of Mesa Drive and Main Street. The buildings may be partially altered or removed. Existing palm trees at the northwest corner of LeSueur and Main may be affected.

Visual Unit #6 would be **moderately** impacted by the 4-lane option. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The affected buildings on the north side at Mesa Drive are not distinctive, and may be replaced with redevelopment of the station area. The PNR lot would improve land currently vacant, adding landscaping



where none exists today. Eastward views to the Superstition Mountains would not be significantly impacted since the mountain view is very far and low on the horizon.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Adapt the station architecture to assume an appropriate scale to the context.
2. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
3. Add additional landscape and other screening along LeSueur between the north PNR and Pioneer Park.
4. Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for the station area pedestrian enhancement.

### **Visual Unit #7 – LeSueur to Hobson (Mesa Arizona Temple and Pioneer Park)**

Introduction of the Build Alternative in Visual Unit #7 entails construction of trackway, tail track, and OCS poles and wire. The center median with its tall palms and low landscaping, and the on-street parking would be removed. The station platform is located just west of the LeSueur intersection (the station falls in Visual Unit #6), with access at the LeSueur/Main intersection. In both options, the curb is not affected from LeSueur to Hobson.

#### **2-Lane Option**

Introduction of the 2-lane LRT option in Visual Unit #7 would include the construction of trackway, tail track and OCS poles and wire. Existing curb would remain in place. The center median with its tall palms, low landscaping, and on-street parking would be removed. New landscape medians are proposed on either side of the trackway. The heritage-theme street lighting will be combined with the OCS poles in the center of the street.

Visual Unit #7 would be **moderately** impacted by this option. The addition of OCS wires would be noticeable, but would not obstruct eastward views of the Superstition Mountains, or open views to the Temple or Park. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. Landscape medians on either side of the trackway will help mitigate loss of the center landscape median.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly



consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.

2. Create landscape medians in keeping with the Mesa Arizona Temple and Pioneer Park theme to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
3. Space OCS poles as far apart as possible to eliminate visual clutter in the Mesa Arizona Temple viewshed.

#### **4-Lane Option**

Introduction of the 4-lane LRT option in Visual Unit #7 would include the construction of trackway, tail track, and OCS poles and wire. With four travel lanes plus trackway, no landscape buffer would be provided along either side of the trackway.

The center median with its tall palms and low landscaping, and on-street parking would be removed. Existing curbs would not be affected. The heritage-themed street lighting will be combined with the OCS poles in the center of the street.

Visual Unit #7 would be **moderately** impacted by this option. The addition of the trackway would eliminate the landscape median of palms, but the heritage-themed center lighting would be retained. The addition of OCS to the existing street lighting will help reduce clutter. The addition of OCS wires would be noticeable, but would not obstruct eastward views of the Superstition Mountains, or open views to the Temple or Park.

The following mitigation strategies may lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit.

1. Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports, including the green color, (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to be consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
2. Evaluate in project development phase whether landscape medians, in keeping with the Mesa Arizona Temple and Park theme, can be created to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
3. Space OCS poles as far apart as possible to eliminate visual clutter in the Temple viewshed.

#### **Visual Unit #8 – Hobson to Ashland (Terminus)**

Introduction of either LRT Build Alternatives (2-lane or 4-lane) in Visual Unit #8 would include the addition of approximately 750' of trackway and tail track down the center of Main Street to approximately 50 feet west of north Ashland. Additional OCS poles, wire guying and train barricades would be located in the center of the street, similar to those at Sycamore and Main Street. Trains would also be stored here on a regular basis in anticipation of additional capacity needs.



Visual Unit #8 would be **minimally** impacted by the project. This section already has existing lightpoles in the center of the street and is suburban in character, with no distinguishing features. However, the Dairy Queen, Barber Shop, Child Care and Metro Valley Painting buildings and signs, recommended as eligible for NRHP listing, would not be affected by either option.

Mitigation strategies are not needed to lessen the degree of change to the landscape of the unit, since this section has no major Visual Features that will be impacted.

### **5.1.2.3 Impacts to Visual Features**

Table 4 presents a summary of potential visual impacts at each of the visually sensitive resources identified above (see section 3.0). The table identifies the proposed project elements that will create potential impacts relative to these resources. It also identifies the expected level of impact without mitigation, based on the criteria cited above.



**TABLE 4: SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO VISUALLY SENSITIVE RESOURCES**

Visually Sensitive Resource (Visual Unit)	Summary of Visual Elements with Potential Impact	Level of Impact (2-lane) Without Mitigation	Level of Impact (4-lane) Without Mitigation	Determination of Impact on each resource and suggested mitigation strategies to reduce level of impact
Mesa Arizona Temple (Visual Unit #7)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Removal of landscaped median may alter view of the Temple.	Moderate	Moderate	Light poles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape; OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter. Medians on either side of the trackway are proposed.
Pioneer Park (Visual Unit #7)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Removal of landscaped median may alter view of the park.	Moderate	Moderate	Lightpoles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape; OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter. Medians on either side of the trackway should be considered. Additional landscape or other screening should be considered to visually buffer the Park from the Park and Ride lot.
Mesa Arts Center (Visual Unit #4)	Introduction of trackway and OCS poles and wire may add visual clutter. Addition of station architecture may contrast with existing public art elements and the contemporary architecture of the complex. Center landscaped median is eliminated.	Moderate	Moderate	Lightpoles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape. OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter. Medians either side of the trackway should be considered to add back vegetation. The station architecture 'kit of parts' should be adapted to the context and scale of contemporary buildings and art, including station supports, color, and height. Tensile canopies are compatible with MAC public art elements. Additional vegetation should be added to the station platform and/or street where possible to mitigate loss of the landscaped median. Trackway concrete should be colored for less impact.
Landmark restaurant (Visual Unit #2)	Introduction of trackway and OCS poles and wire may add visual clutter. Center median is eliminated.	Minimal	Minimal	Lightpoles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape; OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter. No modification of existing curb anticipated.
Nader House (Visual Unit #2)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Center median is eliminated.	Minimal	Minimal	Lightpoles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape; OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter.



Visually Sensitive Resource (Visual Unit)	Summary of Visual Elements with Potential Impact	Level of Impact (2-lane) Without Mitigation	Level of Impact (4-lane) Without Mitigation	Determination of Impact on each resource and suggested mitigation strategies to reduce level of impact
Standage House (Visual Unit #2)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Center median is eliminated.	Minimal	Minimal	Lightpoles in the center median are part of the existing visual landscape; OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter. No modification of existing curb at property.
Vintage Highway signage (Visual Units 1, 2, and 8)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Modification of curbs may force relocation or elimination of signs closest to street.	Minimal	Minimal	Vintage highway signs can be relocated without effect.
Lightpoles in center median (All Visual Units)	Introduction of trackway and OCS will eliminate existing center median lighting from Sycamore to Country Club Drive and place at curb edge. Heritage-themed lights are affected from Country Club Drive to Hobson.	Moderate	Moderate	OCS poles and lighting will be combined in Units #3 through 6 which will lessen visual clutter and keep the center street visual element. While streetlights are to be placed at curb edge, the OCS poles will replace the center lighting feature as the vertical element in the center of the street. From Country Club Drive east, a heritage theme or architecturally compatible fixture and pole should mitigate this impact.
Downtown Blocks (Visual Unit #3)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Addition of station may conflict with existing architecture and streetscape theme. Center landscaped median is eliminated.	Moderate	Moderate	OCS poles and lighting will be combined in Units #3 through 6 which will lessen visual clutter and keep the center street visual element. The station architecture 'kit of parts' should be adapted to the context and scale of traditional buildings, including station supports, color, canopies, and height. Trackway concrete should be colored for less impact.
Downtown Streetscape (Visual Unit #3)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Addition of station may conflict with existing streetscape theme. Four-lane option removes large portion of existing streetscape at the northeast corner of Main	Moderate	Substantial	OCS poles and lighting will be combined which will lessen visual clutter and keep the center street visual element. Medians either side of the trackway should be considered to mitigate loss of landscape median. The station architecture 'kit of parts' should be adapted to the context and scale of the tree-lined streetscape and hardscape elements, including



Visually Sensitive Resource (Visual Unit)	Summary of Visual Elements with Potential Impact	Level of Impact (2-lane) Without Mitigation	Level of Impact (4-lane) Without Mitigation	Determination of Impact on each resource and suggested mitigation strategies to reduce level of impact
	Street/Country Club Drive to accommodate widening out for station platform that cannot be replaced.			station supports, color, canopies, and height. Additional vegetation should be added to the station platform to help replace the landscaped median; reduce the number of louvers. Trackway concrete should be colored for less impact. With these measures, the impact can be mitigated and reduce the level of impact.
Downtown Streetscape (Visual Units #4, #5)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Addition of station at Centennial Way may conflict with existing streetscape theme. Center landscaped median is eliminated. Four-lane option removes large portions of existing streetscape near Centennial Way to accommodate widening out for station platform.	Moderate	Moderate	OCS poles and lighting will be combined in Units #4 and 5 which will lessen visual clutter and keep the center street visual element. Medians either side of the trackway should be considered to mitigate loss of landscape median. The station architecture 'kit of parts' should be adapted to the context and scale of the tree-lined streetscape and hardscape elements, including station supports, color, canopies, and height. Additional vegetation should be added to the station platform at Center Street to help replace the landscaped median; reduce the number of louvers; trees should be replaced on the south side of Main Street west of Mesa Drive. Trackway concrete should be colored for less impact. Implementation of mitigation strategies would reduce the level of impact.
Gateway Park (Visual Unit #6)	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter. Center median is eliminated.	Minimal	Moderate	OCS poles and lighting will be combined in Units #3 through 6 which will lessen visual clutter and keep the center street visual element. Enhanced streetscape in four-lane option will mitigate loss of street trees in front of the park, especially if Downtown Streetscape design used as precedent.
Mesa Thrift Store	Introduction of trackway and OCS may add visual clutter.	Minimal	Minimal	OCS poles and lighting will be combined in Units #3 through 6 which will lessen visual clutter. No



Visually Sensitive Resource (Visual Unit)	Summary of Visual Elements with Potential Impact	Level of Impact (2-lane) Without Mitigation	Level of Impact (4-lane) Without Mitigation	Determination of Impact on each resource and suggested mitigation strategies to reduce level of impact
(Visual Unit #2)	Center median is eliminated.			modification of existing curb anticipated.

Source: A DYE DESIGN 2010



## 5.2 MITIGATION

A variety of mitigation techniques in concert with the *Urban Design Guidelines (June 2001* and the *Central Mesa LRT Extension Urban Design Guidelines Update* in progress) developed for the LRT Starter Line project will be employed to blend the new features of the LRT project into the existing urban landscape. Mitigation measures would be implemented where **substantial** impacts have been identified. **Moderate** impacts would be mitigated through general mitigation strategies described here and in the previous section. Some of the general mitigation strategies discussed below were further detailed for each of the specific visual units assessed in Section 2.3.

Generally, mitigation for visual and aesthetic impacts include the adoption of aesthetic station and platform elements, and reduction of the impact of contact wires and trackway, where possible. Potential mitigation strategies for this project include:

- Addition of decorative pavement such as concrete pavers for pedestrian access at station entries and platforms
- Aesthetic designs for proposed elements, such as simplified catenary pole design.
- Reduction of the number of catenary poles
- Implementation of the June 2001 *Urban Design Guidelines* recommendations for each urban design element, including any updates that may be adopted prior to construction of this project such as the *Central Mesa LRT Extension Urban Design Guidelines Update* in progress)
- Careful selection of traction power substation (TPSS) sites, placement of buildings with landscape and wall screening
- Adaptation of the 'kit of parts' for each LRT station appropriate to the neighborhood context similar to those of the LRT Starter Line
- Construction of the LRT station area design similar to that constructed for the LRT Starter Line. The station design was developed through an extensive public involvement program and addressed issues such as access requirements (bus, auto, walk, and bicycle); aesthetics; traffic changes volumes and levels of service; safety and security issues; and alternative development/redevelopment scenarios.
- Inclusion of stakeholder meetings for the public art aspect of station design. Each station would include a public art component that would respond to and be unique to that station area, as was done for each of the individual stations of the LRT Starter Line.
- Station area landscaping, including landscape screening of key visual elements and replacement of damaged or removed landscaping
- Choice of compatible and complementary colors for plant material, retaining walls, catenary poles, and other structural features, including using existing streetscape materials, where appropriate, to incorporate the existing character of an area



Mitigation strategies specific to this project are summarized below:

- Where new street light poles are to be located at the curb edge, and the new OCS poles in the center of the street, paint the same as the existing green color (or similarly consistent and distinctive color theme) to retain the existing character of this vertical element.
- Retain the existing landscape buffer of shrubs and groundcover as well as the mature trees back of the walkway at EVIT to keep potential impact minimal, as it is a defining visual element.
- Adapt the station architecture to assume a low profile, less architecture/more vegetation style throughout the Downtown area, including vine screens instead of louvers to add back landscaping lost by eliminating the median.
- Adapt the station architecture at the MAC to assume appropriate scale and context to the contemporary architecture and dynamic public art features.
- Modify the color of the station supports and tensile structure canopies to be more color compatible with the surrounding architecture in the Downtown area.
- Incorporate heritage-themed (or architecturally compatible) street lighting fixtures with the OCS poles and wire supports consistent with the Main Street and Downtown theme.
- Create landscape medians in keeping with the Mesa Arizona Temple and Pioneer Park theme to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
- Space OCS poles as far apart as possible to eliminate visual clutter in the Mesa Arizona Temple viewshed.
- Adapt the station architecture to assume an appropriate scale to the context.
- Add additional landscape and other screening (including screen walls) along LeSueur between the north PNR and Pioneer Park.
- Use the Downtown streetscape design and layout as a design precedent for the station area pedestrian enhancement.
- Replace in kind, where possible, all trees and streetscape features to restore the Downtown Streetscape. If insufficient area to replace trees, consider adding vines on supports or other vegetated shade devices to bring back the green element.
- Create, wherever possible, landscape medians at traffic tapers to mitigate the loss of the existing landscaped median.
- Consider and evaluate using less visually obtrusive traffic control measures than the standard curb edge of the trackway to lessen the linear effect of separating the two sides of the street, especially in the Downtown area.

Of specific importance are areas behind newly constructed walkways resulting from full property and/or partial structure acquisitions. Potential mitigation strategies for this left-over space may include:

- Re-landscape to restore landscape buffer to pre-construction condition and enhance arterial streetscape;



- Include trees and wider sidewalks, where feasible, to increase the amount of pedestrian shade and create more significant connectivity to stations from the adjacent neighborhoods.

Another potential mitigation strategy to create significant pedestrian comfort and connectivity, while also improving visual unit aesthetics, is to develop landscape buffers/esplanades on both sides of the street in some locations, where currently only one side of the street benefits from design improvements. This may be accomplished by the following:

- Collaborate with private or institutional owners to create a landscape easement (e.g. along vacant lots/auto dealerships) and develop a wider buffer.
- Consider reducing the median buffer(s) next to the trackway, thereby allowing expansion of the walkway buffer(s) to a width suitable for one or more rows of trees.



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## **6.0 POTENTIAL CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **6.1 IMPACTS**

Because the construction period for implementation of the project would be short-term, construction impacts would be temporary. Substantial impacts are those that may cause a diminishment of the public enjoyment and appreciation of a resource, or one that impairs the character of quality of such a place.

#### **6.1.1 BUILD ALTERNATIVE**

Short-term visual impacts are expected to occur during implementation of the project. The presence of construction activities (such as roadway excavation, temporary pavement or steel plates, traffic control signs, temporary barriers, etc.) and various forms of equipment (trucks, backhoes, jackhammers, concrete cutters, etc.) would detract from the visual and aesthetic qualities of some areas in the corridor.

Temporary lighting may be necessary for nighttime construction of certain project elements or at certain locations. Examples may include nighttime construction activity in the existing roadway right of way (to minimize disruption of daytime traffic). This temporary lighting could impose impacts on residential areas by exposing residents to uncomfortable glare from unshielded light sources or by increasing ambient nighttime light levels.

Staging areas would be established in the vicinity of the project and would typically be used for storage of construction equipment and other materials. Staging areas and related construction equipment stored through the project duration would likely be located on planned PNR properties or on vacant land in segments of the project where there are no PNR facilities nearby; locations to be determined during final design would be selected to minimize visual impacts to the extent possible.

These visual impacts would be short term and would end as construction is completed in each area along the planned route. Temporary visual effects from construction are likely fugitive dust and the presence of construction equipment.

### **6.2 MITIGATION**

The area affected by construction activities would be contained and minimized to the degree possible relative to the safe and practical requirements of the construction process. Construction easements on parcels outside the right-of-way, if required, would be managed to minimize potential visual impacts. Following construction, trees, shrubs and/or groundcover, landscaping, or related materials would be utilized, as appropriate, to restore or enhance areas to pre-construction conditions or better.



Potential mitigation strategies to minimize short term adverse visual impacts during construction could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Minimizing clearing for construction, construction staging, stockpiling, and storage
- Minimizing impacts to viewpoints and view corridors by placing temporary screening around construction areas
- Protecting existing vegetation (tree canopy and root systems) where possible, by placing temporary fencing and introducing irrigation
- Covering remainder parcels with decomposed granite and provide periodic clean up
- Reducing temporary construction light and glare impacts by aiming and shielding light sources
- Accelerating demolition and construction as much as possible
- Screening views of construction equipment and materials
- Minimizing construction-related fugitive dust via mandated and regulated dust control measures
- Restoring landscapes disturbed by construction-related activities to pre-construction condition as soon as possible after completion of work.



## 7.0 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Cumulative impacts are the impacts on the environment resulting from the addition of the incremental impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency or person undertakes such actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively substantial actions occurring over time.

The visual impacts of the Build Alternative may affect resources in the street rights-of-way and at the station sites. To the extent that other future developments emerge near station sites, the visual characteristics of the corridor may change. The possible formation of transit overlay districts may encourage an increase in building height and density, which may interfere with other visual resources. In many cases, new developments would be reviewed to ensure design compatibility with the surrounding community.

For areas outside of Downtown and the Temple area, the existing visual environment of most of the units is non-distinctive in character. The planned station area streetscape and landscape improvements in those units would increase the quality of the visual experience of all user groups in that part of the corridor. The project would also increase the unity and integrity of the visual environment by creating more visual cohesion in the suburban areas. The addition of OCS and additional traffic signals will permanently increase the clutter of the visual environment.

For the Downtown area, the project presents aesthetic challenges to integrate trackway, OCS apparatus and station design elements into the strong aesthetic of the Downtown Streetscape and new Mesa Arts Center. Modification, simplification and adaptation to context using the standard station elements whether of form, color and/or vegetation will likely mitigate the intrusion of these elements into this visual environment. Using the Downtown Streetscape as a design precedent will lessen degree of change.



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