

Investigation/Feasibility Study, Risk Assessment). In subsequent phases, the sites would be programmed and tasked by IDOT for PSI, if the site is within IDOT jurisdiction.

If the investigations by the Illinois Tollway indicate the presence of impacts that would require environmental monitoring or special waste soil disposal, it is expected that a Special Waste Provision would be prepared by IDOT or the Illinois Tollway, as appropriate, and executed as part of the construction project. The Illinois Tollway will conduct further studies of sites identified in the PESA as high risk, if the site is within Illinois Tollway jurisdiction. The PSI or Phase II Environmental Site Assessment will be scaled to the degree of risk (e.g., sites with multiple RECs and sites with larger proposed excavation areas), and investigated in greater detail than those high-risk sites with only one REC or minimal proposed excavations. Similar to IDOT, the presence of special wastes, as determined by detailed investigations, would likely require Special Waste Provisions that are included as part of the construction project. The Illinois Tollway will manage contaminated sites with the use of site investigations and on a risk-managed basis. The PESA and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments work will be used to characterize the nature and extent of contamination for specific properties, and preferred methods of removal will be identified. This information will be compiled for inclusion in bid documents to guide perspective bidders. Secondly, the risk-managed approach will develop a protocol for the discovery of contamination during construction. Under these conditions, contamination will be managed to avoid unintended migration of contaminants and protect against potential worker exposures. Impacted material would be screened and characterized on a case-by-case basis and further investigations and remediation determined.

### **3.16.3 Measures to Minimize Harm and Mitigation**

The implementation of a Special Waste Provision, for work let by IDOT, would provide planned mitigation procedures during construction. If contaminated soils or water are encountered during construction, the Special Waste Provision will be implemented, and contaminated materials would be removed in compliance with federal and state policies and procedures for their safe removal, handling, and disposal. If contaminated soils, water, or other abnormal conditions indicate the presence of a regulated substance and are encountered during construction at any other site for which a Special Waste Provision does not exist, the contractor will follow the notification procedures outlined in Section 107.19 of the IDOT Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. Removal and disposal procedures shall follow Section 669 outlined in the Standard Specifications for Road and Bridge Construction. The Illinois Tollway would follow similar procedures as IDOT, particularly for known contamination and the provisions to be included in construction documents. In the case of contaminant discovery during construction, the contractor would follow appropriate procedures for notification, protection of potential worker exposures, and removal and disposal.

## **3.17 Visual Resources**

Visual character and quality of the landscape were considered for the project corridor. Visual quality is inherently subjective; therefore, this analysis is qualitative as opposed to quantitative. Assessing visual quality impacts depends in equal parts on what is seen and who is seeing it. Thus, considering the viewers who may see the project is an important part of assessing its impacts. The viewer might be a motorist using the roadway and looking

onto the adjacent landscape, or it might be a neighboring resident or user of nearby property viewing the facility.

### 3.17.1 Affected Environment

The visual quality and character of the project corridor is a typical mix of urban development with predominantly low-rise commercial and industrial buildings. There is no contrasting landscape or human-built forms that are particularly aesthetically pleasing. Nor does the roadway corridor offer any visual enhancements introduced into the roadway features. The prairie environment that existed before the development of the roadway and the surrounding area is gone from the viewshed; therefore, there is no contrasting landscape that forms a striking and distinctive visual pattern.

From the roadway, the visual character of the area is mostly densely developed commercial and industrial properties with buildings that are large. With the exception of Hamilton Lakes' Development on Thorndale Avenue, little landscaping has occurred on the commercial and industrial properties to increase the attractiveness of the motorists' views. The character of the communities is also largely omitted from the travelers' viewshed. No markers or visual treatments provide motorists with a sense of place. Specific viewsheds along the project corridor are described below.

Along the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway, the viewshed is a mix of trees, industrial and residential properties, and noise walls along portions of the corridor. The downtown Chicago skyline can be seen on clear days from a western portion of the eastbound Elgin-O'Hare Expressway. The view of the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway (see Figure 3-22) from adjacent land uses is obstructed from many locations by mature trees, noise walls, and commercial and industrial buildings. No enhancements have been made to the aesthetic quality of the expressway.



Thorndale Avenue also traverses primarily industrial land uses with some residential areas intermixed. However, mature trees line much of the roadway and cover most of the viewshed (see Figure 3-23). In some locations, commercial and industrial properties are dominant where they are closely positioned to the road. Thorndale Avenue is visible from neighboring properties when mature trees or building adjacent to the



roadway are not obscuring the view. No aesthetic enhancements have been employed to improve the visual quality of Thorndale Avenue.

The views from I-90 and I-294 are characterized as more urban than the view from the Elgin O'Hare corridor (see Figure 3-24). Except in a few locations, the large industrial buildings are closer to the roadway and are more prominent in the viewshed because any foliage between the roadway and the buildings is shorter than the buildings. The buildings are even more visible where the roadway is on structure. The downtown Chicago skyline can be seen on clear days from the portions of I-90 that are on structure. Advertising billboards, overhead power lines, and road signs are prevalent. I-90 and I-294, because they are primarily on structure or on fill, are very visible from the surrounding area. Further, very little foliage obstructs adjacent land user's view of the interstates. Similar to the Elgin-O'Hare Expressway and Thorndale Avenue, no enhancements were incorporated into their design to improve the aesthetic view of the two interstates.



Along York Road and Green Street/Franklin Avenue, the view west and south is primarily of industrial facilities while the view east and north is of O'Hare Airport and Bensenville Yard operations (see Figure 3-25). Both views in this locale are stark. Planes arriving at and departing from O'Hare Airport are visible from the roadways and provide interest. The south leg of the West Bypass is a combination of dense industrial development, the Bensenville Yard, and airport landscape. The overall visual quality of this area is low.



### 3.17.2 Environmental Consequences

The project corridor would not adversely impact the visual quality of the area, rather it is expected that the project could bring visual unity to the area. First, the quality of the roadway improvement would be consistently applied throughout the corridor. The corridor would no longer be the mixture of expressway, arterial, and collector roads. It would be one uniform strip of roadway with uniform standards. The basic form of the roadway would serve as the foundation to develop an aesthetic theme throughout the corridor. Thus, the proposed improvement is a start in developing a sense of place for the area. The roadway can help shape the visual image of the area, with architectural and landscape features along

the right-of-way and at overpasses and interchanges that reflect the values of the communities through which it passes. For reasons of creating pleasing aesthetics in the corridor, the CAAT was formed to develop a set of aesthetic guidelines for the corridor. Their work constitutes the mitigation measures for achieving improved visual quality in the area.

### 3.17.3 Measures to Minimize Harm and Mitigation

The CAAT, consisting of project team members and representatives from communities along the project corridor, was assembled to develop a set of aesthetic design guidelines to apply to the proposed improvements. The team met four times between fall 2010 and winter 2012, and identified guidelines to apply to hardscape and landscape components of the proposed improvements.

At the first meeting, the team discussed the communities' perceptions of the corridor's existing character, as well as their hopes for what that character might be in the future when the improvements are completed. The IDOT and its consultant team took those concepts and developed potential themes for the corridor aesthetics that were then presented to the team at the second CAAT meeting. Attendees at the second meeting identified "Gateway to the Future" as the common theme to be applied to landscape and hardscape features along the proposed improvements. The CAAT members identified bridges and overpasses as the most important visual or aesthetic features and would like signature gateways to each community to be incorporated into the proposed design. At the third meeting, attendees identified their preferences for the specific design elements of the hardscape and landscape features along the corridor (see Figure 3-26 for examples of design enhancements presented at the meeting for consideration). These preferences were then assembled into the complete set of aesthetic design guidelines, which was presented at the last CAAT meeting.

The aesthetic treatment developed for the proposed improvements by the CAAT is consistent with goals established by the Sustainability Working Group of the Governor's Advisory Council. The Sustainability Working Group urged that the historical context of project corridor be incorporated into the design. Landscape and structural items such as bridges, buttresses, and retaining walls should incorporate the aesthetic design guidelines.

