

3.8 Visual Resources

This section evaluates the potential long-term effects of the No Build Alternative and the Build Alternative on visual resources. Short-term construction effects are discussed in **Section 3.17** (Construction).

The assessment of reasonably foreseeable effects in this section is based upon the temporal and geographic proximity parameters detailed in **Chapter 3.0** (Introduction).

3.8.1 Affected Environment

3.8.1.1 Study Area and Existing Visual Context

The Study Area for this analysis is approximately 0.5 mile to 2 miles from the guideway centerline, as described in **Section 3.1.1** (Study Area) with a focus on the area within 0.25 mile of the alignment and 0.5 mile of the stations where physical are most likely to occur, such as changes to surrounding land uses. This Study Area reflects the distance within which project features may be visible to viewers depending on topography, land use, and the scale of proposed infrastructure. Regulations for visual resources applicable to the Project are summarized in **Appendix S** (Regulatory Setting Summary).

Existing visual conditions were documented through field reconnaissance, review of aerial imagery, maps, and ground-level photography, which together provide an understanding of how the Study Area is experienced by the public. The Study Area is characterized by a flat, urbanized lowland plain with a built environment consisting of transportation corridors, industrial and commercial uses, residential neighborhoods, utility infrastructure, and scattered landscaping. There are no formally locally designated scenic vistas or scenic highways within the Study Area, nor are there State- or County-designated scenic highways with views of the project area. Depending on location and orientation, distant views of the Monterey Park hillside and San Gabriel Mountains to the north, Puente Hills to the east, and the downtown Los Angeles skyline to the west may be intermittently visible; however, these views are often limited or filtered by intervening development, vegetation, and infrastructure typical of a dense urban setting.

3.8.1.2 Visual Character and Visual Quality

Assessment of visual impacts considers how proposed project features would complement or contrast with the existing visual character and quality. Project elements that are consistent in scale, form, materials, and function with surrounding infrastructure are generally more compatible with the established visual character, whereas features that introduce noticeable contrasts may result in changes to visual character and quality. These may be beneficial or adverse changes, depending in part on viewer perception. In an urban environment such as the Study Area, visual quality is typically shaped by the compatibility of infrastructure and development with surrounding land uses rather than by scenic or natural features.

Visual character: overall visual identity of an area as defined by the arrangement, form, scale, and appearance of natural and built features, including land use patterns, buildings, transportation facilities, vegetation, and other physical elements; reflects how these elements combine to create a recognizable setting that is typical of a community or corridor.

Visual quality: relative level of visual interest, coherence, and visual appeal associated with that character; influenced by factors such as consistency of design, condition and maintenance of features, visual order or complexity, and the presence or absence of visually discordant elements.

3.8.1.3 Landscape Units and Viewsheds

For analytical purposes, the Study Area is divided into a series of landscape units, which are geographic segments that share similar visual character, land use patterns, and viewing conditions. Landscape units are defined based on factors such as changes in land use, roadway configuration, development density, and

transitions between industrial, commercial, residential, and transportation-oriented environments. Use of landscape units allows the analysis to:

- Organize the corridor into visually coherent areas.
- Identify distinct viewsheds and typical public viewing locations.
- Evaluate visual effects in relation to the specific visual character and quality of each unit.

This approach ensures that potential visual impacts are assessed in a context-sensitive manner rather than applying a uniform evaluation across the entire corridor. **Figure 3.8-1** shows the locations of viewpoints within each landscape unit. Figures displaying these viewpoints are provided in **Appendix T** (Landscape Unit Viewpoints). **Table 3.8-1** summarizes the existing visual characteristics of the Study Area by landscape unit. This information establishes the affected visual environment and provides the basis for evaluating potential visual changes and effects associated with the Build Alternative.

3.8.1.4 Visual Change and Noticeability

A visual change occurs when a project feature alters the existing visual environment in a way that can be perceived by viewers. Whether a change is noticeable depends on the physical characteristics of the existing environment, including existing scale, complexity, level of visual clutter, and degree of urbanization.

In highly developed urban settings, noticeable visual change typically relates to:

- Introduction of new structures or infrastructure that differ in height, massing, or form from existing features.
- Changes in visual continuity along transportation corridors.
- Alteration of familiar views experienced by viewers on a regular basis.

A change is considered noticeable when it is readily apparent to an observer under typical viewing conditions, rather than requiring focused attention or specialized vantage points.

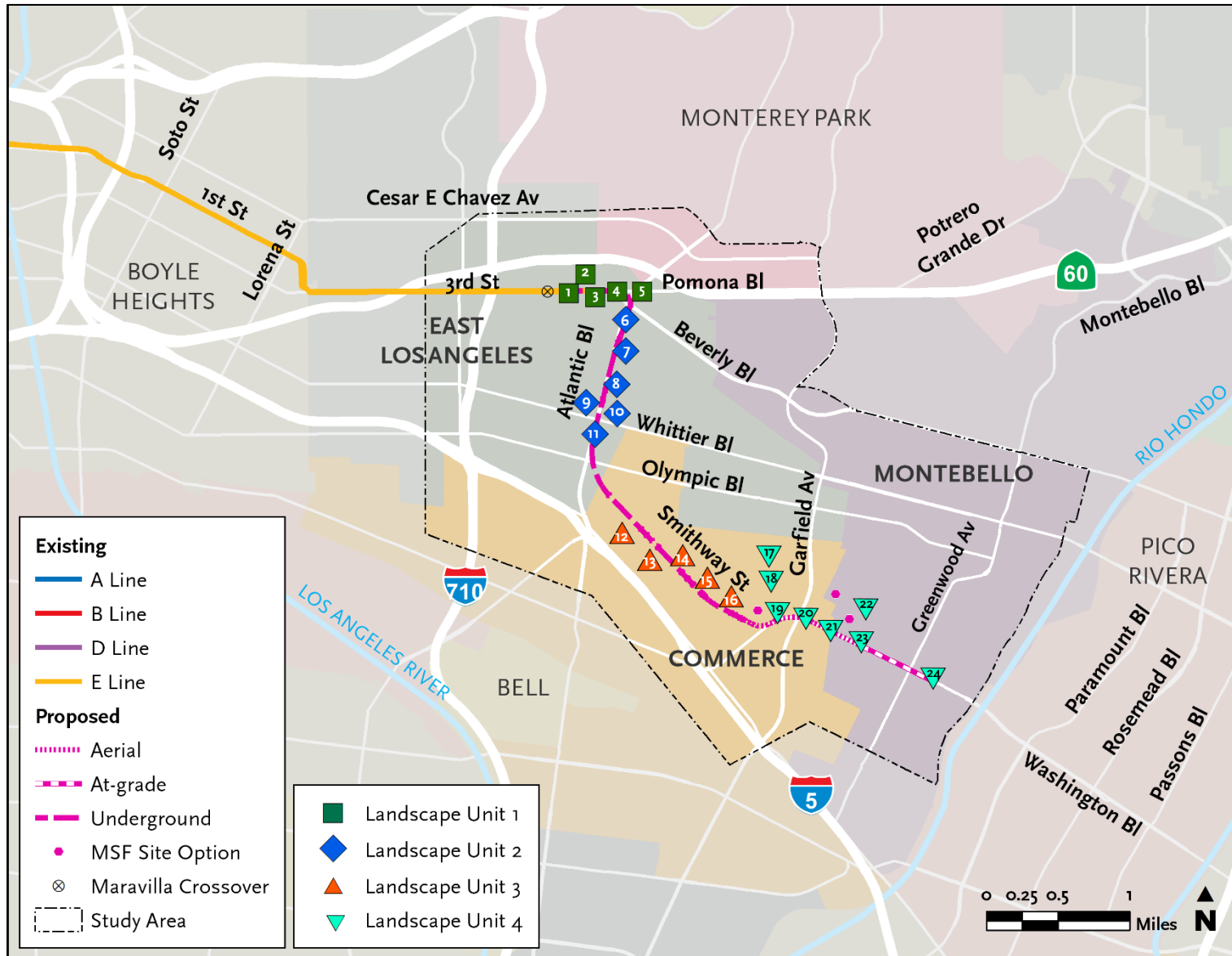
3.8.1.5 Viewers and Viewer Sensitivity

Viewers are individuals or groups who may experience views of the Project, including residents, workers, commuters, pedestrians, bicyclists, and users of nearby public spaces and roadways. Viewer groups are identified based on their location, activity, and frequency of exposure to the visual environment.

Viewer sensitivity reflects the degree to which a viewer group may be concerned with or responsive to changes in visual character and quality. Sensitivity is evaluated qualitatively based on:

- The context of the view (e.g., residential neighborhood versus industrial corridor).
- The duration and frequency of exposure (e.g., daily residents versus transient motorists).
- The expectations of viewers regarding visual conditions in that setting.
- The potential for project features to be perceived as inconsistent with community preferences.

The analysis considers whether project features could reasonably be perceived as visually controversial or likely to raise concerns within the community, such as by appearing incompatible with established neighborhood character or prompting opposition based on visual preferences. This evaluation does not assume opposition but assesses the potential for concern given the existing visual context and community setting.



Source: CDM Smith/AECOM JV 2026.

**Figure 3.8-1 Landscape Units and Locations of Photograph Viewpoints
(Photographs provided in Appendix T)**

Table 3.8-1 Existing Visual Characteristics by Landscape Unit

Landscape Unit	Landscape Unit Description	Land Uses	Key Visual Features	Views and Viewsheds	Primary Viewer Types	Visual Character and Quality	Viewer Sensitivity	Figure Reference
Landscape Unit 1 – 3rd Street (East Los Angeles)	3rd Street/Arizona Avenue east to Atlantic Boulevard/Pomona Boulevard; urban arterial corridor with adjacent civic and recreational uses.	Public facilities, parkland, transit infrastructure, medical uses, surrounding commercial uses.	Belvedere Park Lake/East Los Angeles Civic Center and landscaping; Metro E Line stations with public art and canopies; Edward R. Roybal Comprehensive Health Center façade featuring mosaic artwork and geometric patterns; street trees and landscaping.	Partial and intermittent distant views of the San Gabriel Mountains and Puente Hills; views filtered by development and infrastructure.	Local residents; park users; transit riders; pedestrians; bicyclists; motorists.	Civic- and transit-oriented visual character with integrated public art and landscaping; moderate to relatively high visual quality for an urban corridor.	Viewer sensitivity is moderate due to frequent exposure by residents, park users, and transit riders, and the presence of valued civic spaces and public art. Viewers are more likely to notice changes that affect park settings, station areas, or pedestrian-oriented environments.	Appendix T Figure 2 through Figure 6
Landscape Unit 2 – Atlantic Boulevard (East Los Angeles)	Atlantic Boulevard/Pomona Boulevard south to Goodrich Boulevard/Union Pacific Avenue; major north–south arterial with commercial frontage.	Commercial, institutional, retail, transportation corridor uses.	Saint Alphonsus Catholic Church; former Golden Gate Theater (CVS Pharmacy) with Spanish Churrigueresque-style façade; established commercial buildings and signage.	Limited background views of the San Gabriel Mountains; clearer views of Monterey Park hills to the north along Atlantic Boulevard.	Commuters; motorists; pedestrians; nearby residents; patrons of commercial and institutional uses.	Traditional urban commercial corridor with locally prominent architectural landmarks; visual quality varies along the corridor.	Viewer sensitivity is moderate, reflecting a mix of commuters and local users accustomed to change in a commercial corridor, but with heightened sensitivity near notable architectural and community landmarks.	Appendix T Figure 7 through Figure 12

Landscape Unit	Landscape Unit Description	Land Uses	Key Visual Features	Views and Viewsheds	Primary Viewer Types	Visual Character and Quality	Viewer Sensitivity	Figure Reference
Landscape Unit 3 – Smithway Street (City of Commerce)	Goodrich Boulevard/Union Pacific Avenue southeast across rail corridors to the SCE and BNSF right-of-way; industrial context with localized commercial destination.	Industrial uses; rail and utility infrastructure; regional retail.	Citadel Outlets with themed façade and prominent electronic signage; rail lines; utility infrastructure.	Views are largely internal and dominated by industrial and commercial features; limited scenic or distant views.	Shoppers and visitors to Citadel Outlets; employees; motorists; limited pedestrian activity outside retail areas.	Predominantly industrial visual character with a visually distinctive retail focal point; utilitarian visual quality with localized architectural contrast.	Viewer sensitivity is low to moderate, as many viewers are transient or employees accustomed to large-scale industrial and commercial features; sensitivity may be slightly higher in areas immediately adjacent to the Citadel Outlets where themed architecture establishes a stronger visual identity.	Appendix T Figure 13 through Figure 17
Landscape Unit 4 – Washington Boulevard (City of Montebello)	Saybrook Avenue east to Carob Way; six-lane major truck arterial; industrial and commercial corridor within Montebello.	Industrial uses; rail and utility infrastructure; regional retail.	Large warehouses; railroad crossings; billboards; wide roadway geometry; minimal landscaping.	Partial views of the San Gabriel Mountains and downtown Los Angeles skyline, secondary to dominant industrial features.	Truck drivers; motorists; industrial employees; minimal pedestrian presence.	Strongly industrial and transportation-oriented visual character; low to moderate visual quality.	Viewer sensitivity in Landscape Unit 4 is low because the setting is a utilitarian, industrial corridor where most viewers are transient motorists/truck drivers and industrial employees with limited viewing duration and expectations of transportation- and warehouse-dominated visuals.	Appendix T Figure 18 through Figure 25

Source: CDM Smith/AECOM JV 2026.

3.8.1.6 Assessment Process

The following steps were used to evaluate the existing visual environment and potential visual effects of the Project: (1) identify landscape units that reflect distinct visual character and viewing conditions; (2) identify existing visual resources, public viewpoints, and viewer groups that could experience noticeable visual change; and (3) assess potential visual effects by evaluating how Project features would alter visual character, visual quality, and viewer experience within each landscape unit. This methodology provides a structured, context-sensitive framework for evaluating visual resource impacts consistent with the *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects* (Federal Highway Administration 2015).

3.8.2 No Build Alternative

The No Build Alternative, as described in **Section 2.2** (No Build Alternative) of the EA, would include already planned and funded roadway and transit projects but would not provide a rail transit option for communities in eastern Los Angeles County. As shown in **Table 3.8-2**, the No Build Alternative, including already planned regional transit and roadway projects, would not degrade or enhance the visual character and quality of the Study Area. Therefore, the No Build Alternative would result in no long-term adverse effect on visual resources.

Table 3.8-2 Visual Resources Impact Summary – No Build Alternative

Topic	Impact	Rationale
Visual character and quality	No Adverse Effect	- Planned regional transit projects would generally occur within existing transportation corridors or on individual sites that are associated with transportation - Projects that would be built under the No Build Alternative would be required to undergo separate environmental reviews to determine the individual project's environmental effects and mitigation, as necessary

Source: Metro; CDM Smith/AECOM JV 2026.

3.8.3 Build Alternative

As previously described in **Section 3.8.1**, no scenic vistas are present in the Study Area. As shown in **Table 3.8-3**, the Build Alternative would alter the visual character in some areas, but would not substantially degrade visual quality across any landscape unit. Thus, no adverse visual effects are anticipated.

Table 3.8-3 Long-Term Impacts

Landscape Unit	Key Visual Elements	Effect Description	Conclusion
1	Maravilla Crossover, trench for transition to underground alignment on 3rd Street, Sheriff's Department access road, access plaza for the Atlantic/Pomona station	Visual changes under the Build Alternative would be limited and would not result in long-term adverse effects on visual character, visual resources, visual quality, or viewers. Open Trench: Would create a new visual feature, however, its materials and linear configuration would be visually consistent with the existing transportation-oriented character of 3rd Street, which already contains rail infrastructure, paved roadways, barriers, signage, and other engineered elements. Trench would appear as an extension of the roadway and transit corridor rather than a visually discordant element. Sheriff's Department Access Road and Crosswalk: Would be consistent with the existing visual environment and not substantially alter views or visual continuity. These features are typical of urban transportation corridors and would be perceived by viewers as functional roadway elements rather than incompatible visual intrusions. Station Entries, Plazas, and Related At-Grade Facilities: Would require permanent alterations to select commercial parcels and demolition of buildings. These facilities would be designed to integrate with the surrounding urban context through the use of landscaping, architectural and design elements, and coordinated materials and finishes. Station plazas would be designed to enhance the pedestrian environment and reinforce the civic and transit-oriented character already present. In coordination with Metro Art, efforts would be made, as feasible, to relocate existing artwork from the Atlantic Station to the new Atlantic/Pomona station, maintaining continuity of visual character. Effect: The Build Alternative would not obstruct or substantially alter views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the north or the Puente Hills to the east. Viewer sensitivity in Landscape Unit 1 is moderate due to frequent exposure by residents, park users, and transit riders; however, because the Build Alternative would be visually consistent with the existing transportation setting and include design enhancements, there would be no long-term adverse effect.	Visual character and quality not substantially degraded. No long-term adverse effect.

Landscape Unit	Key Visual Elements	Effect Description	Conclusion
2	Atlantic/Whittier access plaza and underground station, antenna structure	Visual changes from the Build Alternative would be limited and would not result in long-term adverse effects on visual character, visual resources, visual quality, or viewers. Atlantic/Whittier Station: Guideway would be underground, and visual impacts from the Build Alternative would be limited to surface-level station entrances, plazas, and associated features. The station plaza would be consistent with visual character and support a sense of place within the neighborhood commercial area. Emergency egress components and station infrastructure would be designed to minimize visual prominence and would not interfere with existing surface-level features. Would result in permanent alterations to select commercial parcels and demolition of buildings to accommodate station entries, plazas, and related surface-level facilities. These at-grade elements would be designed to integrate with the existing commercial corridor through pedestrian-friendly layouts, landscaping, architectural detailing, and materials compatible with the surrounding land uses. Antenna Structure and Other Project Elements: Would be compatible with the surrounding urban infrastructure and would not alter the overall visual landscape. Effect: The Build Alternative would not substantially obstruct background views of the San Gabriel Mountains or the Monterey Park hills to the north, nor would it result in adverse visual effects on Atlantic Park, Saint Alphonsus Catholic Church, or the historic former Golden Gate Theater. Viewer sensitivity in Landscape Unit 2 is moderate, reflecting a mix of commuters and local users in a commercial corridor; however, given the limited visibility of Build Alternative elements and context-sensitive design of these elements, there would be no long-term adverse effect.	Visual character and quality not substantially degraded. No long-term adverse effect.
3	Commerce/Citadel access plaza and underground station, underground guideway, 60 feet tall antenna structure, outdoor shelter	Visual changes from the Build Alternative would be limited and would not result in long-term adverse effects on visual character, visual resources, visual quality, or viewers. Commerce/Citadel Station: Guideway would be underground. Visual impacts would be limited to surface-level elements station entrances, antenna, and outdoor shelter, and would be compatible with the industrial and commercial context of the area. Would result in permanent alterations to select commercial parcels and demolition of buildings to accommodate station entries, plazas, and related surface-level facilities. Features would be visually cohesive with existing commercial and industrial development and infrastructure and would not disrupt the established visual character. Facilities would integrate with the surrounding urban context through landscaping, architectural and design elements, and coordinated materials and finishes. Effect: The Build Alternative would not result in visual changes to the themed façade of the Citadel Outlets along Telegraph Road or on the Commerce Casino and Hotel along Tubeway Avenue. Viewer sensitivity in this landscape unit is generally low to moderate, as viewers are accustomed to large-scale commercial and industrial features; therefore, the visual effects would not be adverse.	Visual character and quality not substantially degraded. No long-term adverse effect.

Landscape Unit	Key Visual Elements	Effect Description	Conclusion
4	Aerial and at-grade guideway, tunnel portal east of Saybrook Avenue, retaining wall, supporting columns and bents, Greenwood station, MSF site options	Visual changes from the Build Alternative would be limited and would not result in long-term adverse effects on visual character, visual resources, visual quality, or viewers. Aerial Guideway and At-Grade Facilities: Would introduce new permanent visual elements into an area characterized by industrial land uses, large buildings, rail crossings, and other transportation infrastructure. Would represent a noticeable visual change; however, it would be visually consistent with the existing industrial and transportation-oriented character of Washington Boulevard. MSF Site 1 or Site 3: Aerial support columns would be located within the center of Washington Boulevard, reinforcing the corridor's existing role as a major transportation and truck route. MSF Site 2: Aerial structure would be located north of Washington Boulevard within the Pacific Metals Company parking lot. The Pacific Metals Company building would not be physically altered, and the new structure would not affect character-defining features or historic integrity. The introduction of the aerial guideway would not substantially degrade visual quality or public views, given the already industrialized context. See Section 3.5 (Historic, Archaeological, and Tribal Resources) for additional information on the Pacific Metals Company building. New Surface Parking, Electrical Equipment, and Station-Related Facilities: Demolition and replacement of buildings to accommodate the MSF site and facilities associated with the proposed Greenwood station would result in permanent alterations to commercial and industrial parcels. This change would be visually noticeable but consistent with surrounding land uses and infrastructure. The new facilities would be designed to integrate with the industrial corridor through appropriate siting, landscaping, and architectural treatments, minimizing visual contrast. As shown in Figure 3.8-2, the at-grade guideway and Greenwood station would not substantially alter the overall visual character or quality of the surrounding environment. Effect: Minimal views of the San Gabriel Mountains to the north may be slightly obstructed by the aerial guideway; however, these views are already largely limited by existing urban and industrial development. Views of the downtown Los Angeles skyline to the west would not be substantially affected. Viewer sensitivity in Landscape Unit 4 is low due to expectations associated with an industrial corridor; therefore, the visual effects would not be adverse.	Visual character and quality altered but not substantially degraded. No long-term adverse effect.

Source: Metro; CDM Smith/AECOM JV 2026.



Figure 3.8-2 Visual Simulation: Washington Boulevard at Greenwood Avenue
(Looking east)

3.8.4 Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures for the Build Alternative

The measures identified in Table 3.8-4 would be implemented for the Build Alternative in the long term. Construction measures are provided in Section 3.17.

Table 3.8-4 Long-term Avoidance, Minimization, and Mitigation Measures

Topic	Potential Effect	Proposed Measure	Measure Type	Effects After Implementation of Measure(s)
Landscape Unit 1	Visual changes to Landscape Unit 1, including Maravilla Crossover, trench for transition to underground alignment on 3rd Street, Sheriff's Department access road, access plaza for the Atlantic/Pomona station	No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures needed	None	No Adverse Effect
Landscape Unit 2	Visual changes to Landscape Unit 2, including Atlantic/Whittier access plaza and underground station, antenna structure	No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures needed	None	No Adverse Effect
Landscape Unit 3	Visual changes to Landscape Unit 3, including Commerce/Citadel access plaza and underground station, underground guideway, 60 feet tall antenna structure, outdoor shelter	No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures needed	None	No Adverse Effect
Landscape Unit 4	Visual changes to Landscape Unit 4, including Aerial and at-grade guideway, tunnel portal east of Saybrook Avenue, retaining wall, supporting columns and bents, Greenwood station, MSF site options	No avoidance, minimization, or mitigation measures needed	None	No Adverse Effect

Source: Metro; CDM Smith/AECOM JV 2026.