



## Introduction and Executive Summary

Council Bluffs, Iowa is a community progressively redefining itself for the 21st Century. Reconstruction of the Council Bluffs Interstate System (CBIS) is one of several planning initiatives changing the shape of the city.

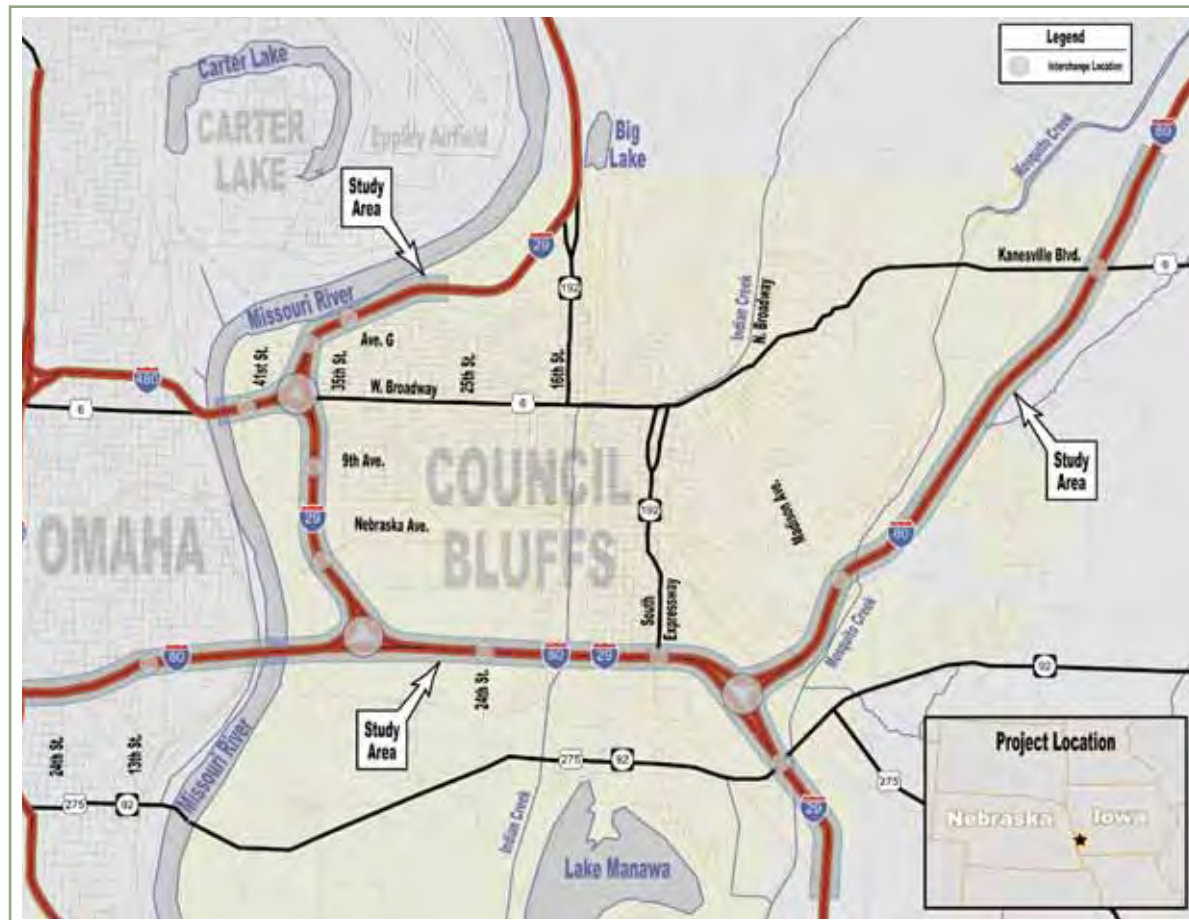
The Iowa Department of Transportation (Iowa DOT) has undertaken a multi-year reconstruction project for the I-29/I-80 corridor and has commissioned HDR to develop an aesthetics master plan to establish a consistent, attractive corridor theme that compliments the character of the existing landscape and incorporates locale-specific details. In order to develop an aesthetics plan that is fully integrated into on-going community planning initiatives and incorporates varying community interests, an Aesthetic Subcommittee (ASC) was formed. Representing key stakeholder groups in Council Bluffs and the State of Iowa, this group met several times over the course of the project to assist in formulating recommendations for aesthetic improvements. Members of the ASC and the groups they represent are shown in the table below.



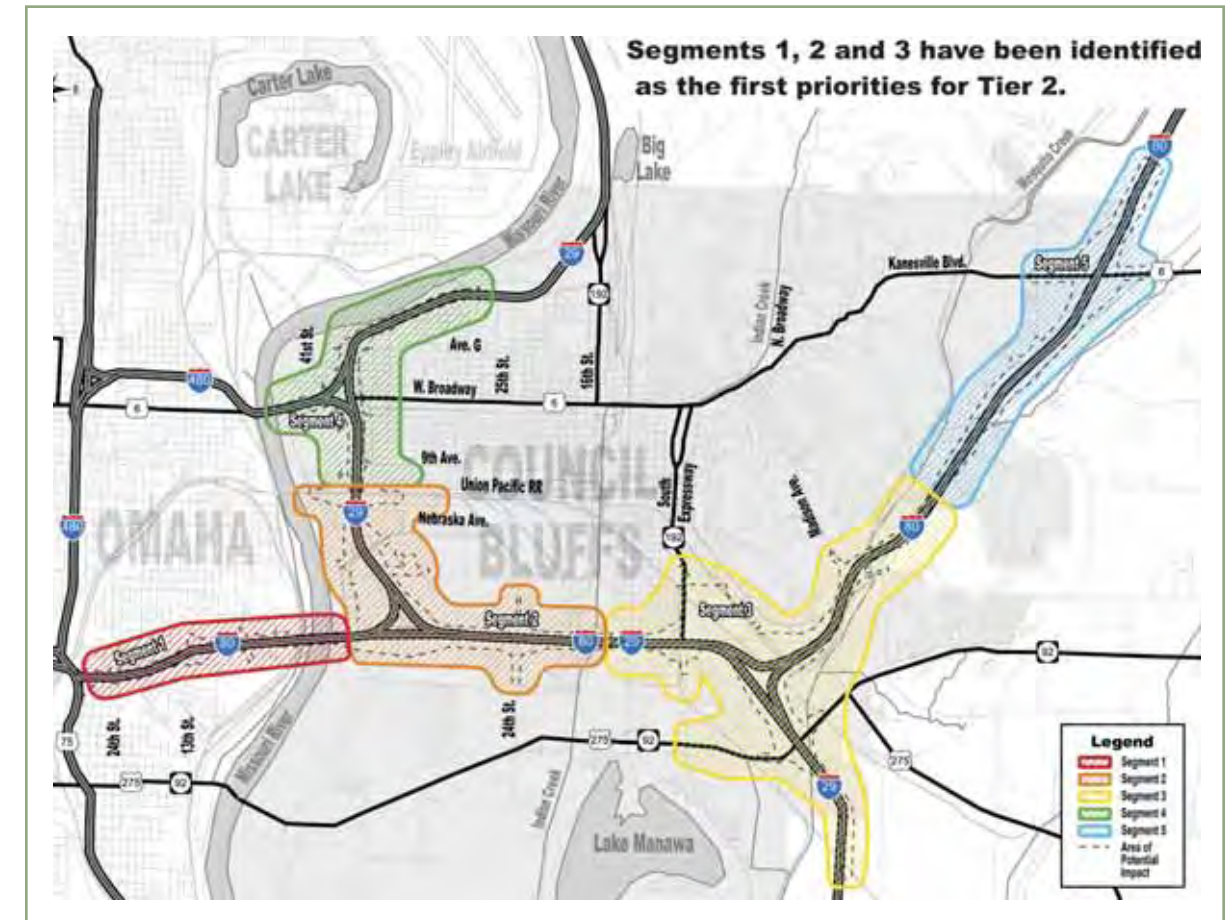
### Aesthetic Subcommittee Members

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Jane Bell, Ameristar Casino</li> <li>▪ Scott Belt, Council Bluffs City Council Member</li> <li>▪ Kathy Fiscus, Council Bluffs Convention and Visitors Bureau</li> <li>▪ Sheryl Garst, Pottawattamie County Growth Alliance</li> <li>▪ Tom Hanafan, Mayor of Council Bluffs</li> <li>▪ Ron Hopp, City of Council Bluffs Parks and Recreation</li> <li>▪ KC Hummel, Western Historic Trails Center</li> <li>▪ Marcia Joffe-Bouska, Local Art Community</li> <li>▪ Gayle Malmquist, City of Council Bluffs Community Development</li> <li>▪ Shannon Meister, Iowa Department of Natural Resources</li> <li>▪ Ken Milford, Council Bluffs Planning Commission</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bob Mundt, Council Bluffs Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>▪ Terry Oswald, Loess Hills Preservation Society</li> <li>▪ Greg Reeder, City of Council Bluffs Public Works</li> <li>▪ Paul Romano, True Value Hardware</li> <li>▪ Loral Ronk, Bluffs Arts Council</li> <li>▪ Mark Shoemaker, Pottawattamie County Conservation</li> <li>▪ Rich Sorich, Iowa West Foundation</li> <li>▪ Mark Vacanti, Harrah's Entertainment</li> <li>▪ Matt Walsh, Council Bluffs City Council Member</li> <li>▪ Roger Williams, Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors</li> <li>▪ Greg Youell, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency</li> </ul> |
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CBIS STUDY AREA - The Aesthetics Master Plan includes only the CBIS reconstruction on the east side of the Missouri River



CBIS Study Area - Construction Segments

**THE COUNCIL BLUFFS INTERSTATE SYSTEM PROJECT**

In 2006, the I-29/I-80 corridor through Council Bluffs carried 20,000-75,000 vehicles per day. By 2030, traffic on I-29/I-80 between the I-29 interchanges is expected to increase to over 120,000 vehicles per day, while traffic on I-29, north and south of I-80, is expected to increase by fifty percent (50%) or more.

In 1997, the City of Council Bluffs and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) conducted a study of the interstate system in Council Bluffs. This study, known as the Council Bluffs Interstate System Needs Study, showed that many of the interstate's features do not meet current design standards, guidelines or operational criteria and do not provide adequate traffic capacity. In light of the findings, the Iowa DOT initiated the Council Bluffs Interstate System (CBIS) Improvements Project in 2002 covering the area shown above.

Construction on the CBIS Improvements Project will be completed in segments as indicated in the graphic above.

- The CBIS Improvements Project is a major effort focused on improving Interstates 80, 29, and 480 within the Council Bluffs metropolitan area. It is intended to improve mobility through the region by upgrading the I-80 and I-29 corridors, improving the condition of the roadways, reducing traffic congestion and crashes and adding capacity. Approximately 18 miles of mainline interstate (I-80, I-29, and I-480) and 14 interchanges (three interstate-to-interstate interchanges and 11 interstate-to-local street interchanges) are included in the study area.
- Construction of the 24th Street Bridge over I-29/I-80 will begin in 2008. Construction of the dual-divided section of I-29/I-80 is planned to begin in 2012. The northern portions of I-29, including the West Broadway system interchange, and the eastern most portions of I-80 are the final segments scheduled for reconstruction.





Aesthetic opportunities within the project area



Preferred locations for aesthetic enhancements throughout the project area



### AESTHETICS MASTER PLAN PROJECT

The CBIS Aesthetics Project calls for the creation of an aesthetics master plan for the I-29/I-80 corridor. Through positive and proactive public involvement, the plan's goal is to establish an attractive and distinctive corridor. In addition to improving the appearance of the corridor, the plan will also consider the safety, ease of maintenance and economy of all aesthetic recommendations.

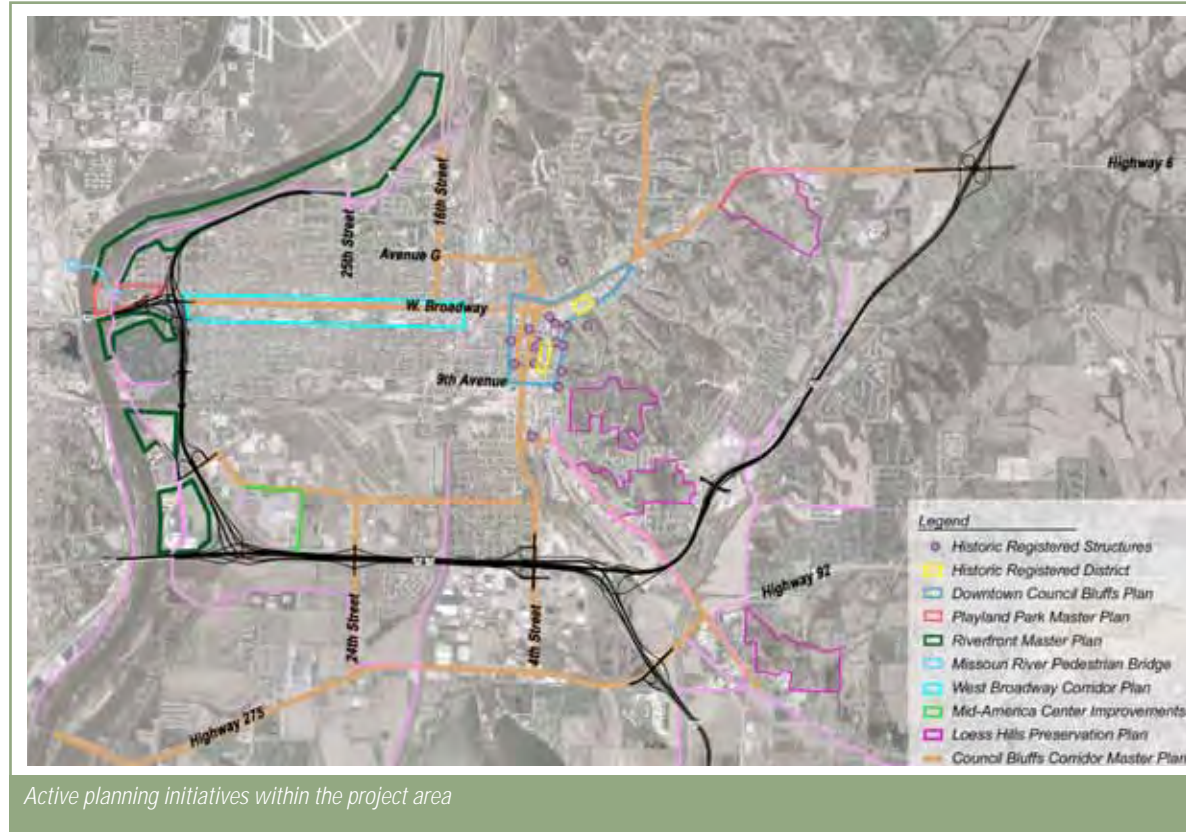
#### Aesthetic Opportunities

The planned reconstruction of the interstate provides many opportunities for aesthetic enhancements including, bridges, retaining walls, sound walls and areas for landscaping. The location of these opportunities is shown above.

Aesthetic enhancements can be incorporated into just about any component of the interstate design. Limited resources, however, require a targeted application of these enhancements. To focus design efforts, the Design Team asked the ASC to identify elements they believed could make the most dramatic aesthetic impact on the corridor.

The ASC identified bridges, landscape design and public spaces/community gateways as the primary elements of interest. Other features also considered were lighting, retaining walls, sound walls, system interchanges, signage and sign structures, stand alone public art pieces, barriers and fencing.

The ASC identified specific locations for aesthetic enhancements. The 24th Street Bridge and South Expressway interchange were identified as providing the best opportunities for improving the aesthetics of the corridor. Interest in other locations was dispersed among the I-80 west entrance, I-480 entrance at Broadway and the Madison Avenue interchange. The image above illustrates the ASC's location preferences for enhancements.



Active planning initiatives within the project area

“In 2015 Council Bluffs will be a prosperous urban area known for its cultural enlightenment and public art collection that is the pride of the community and draws visitors from across the country and around the world. The public art program will be an essential part of the community and a routine element for urban development and planning.”

-Council Bluffs, Iowa Public Art Master Plan 2004

### Active Planning Initiatives

Several active planning initiatives in Council Bluffs helped provide a context for the development of the Aesthetic Master Plan for the corridor. The image above highlights those endeavors. The most relevant plans are briefly summarized below.

#### Council Bluffs, Iowa Public Art Master Plan

The Council Bluffs Public Art Master Plan calls for public art to be located at city gateways, along major transportation corridors, commercial destinations and other locations found along the interstate. Any public art installed as part of the interstate reconstruction or incorporated into the functional and landscape elements of the system will be in accordance with the style, genre and policy recommendations outlined in the Public Art Master Plan.

The plan is also relevant because two of the top ten priority sites for public art installations are within or adjacent to the CBIS project area: Mid-America Center Entry and South Expressway Viaduct.

Other potential locations identified in this plan for public art related to the interstate, include:

- Mid-America Center Gateway at the I-29/I-80 24th Street Exit
- West Iowa Gateway at the I-29/I-80 interchange
- South Expressway Corridor; and Mall of the Bluffs Entry

**Mid-America Center Streetscape Improvement Conceptual Master Plan**

The Mid-America Center (MAC) sits immediately to the north of the combined I-29/I-80 stretch of the corridor. The Streetscape Improvement Conceptual Master Plan intends to establish an attractive image for the MAC area and create a clear and efficient access and circulation system. To accomplish this, the plan addresses visibility and access from the interstate, lighting, way-finding, landscaping, public art and pedestrian connections.

**West Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Plan**

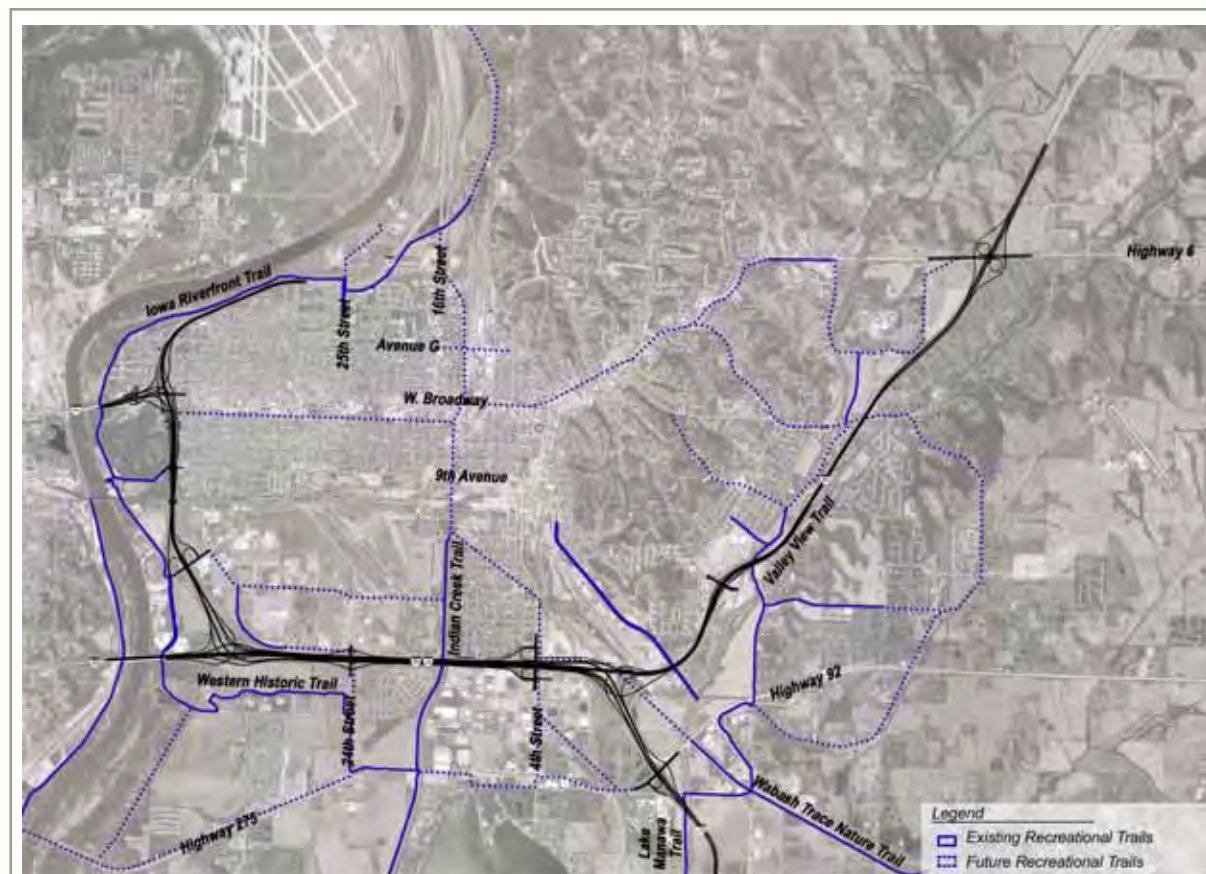
The West Broadway Corridor Redevelopment Plan lays out distinctive gateway features along the corridor, making an attractive and distinctive first impression for those entering the city along Broadway.

The signature Broadway Gateway, shown to the right, is located just east of the I-480/I-29 interchange and has become a recognized icon for the City of Council Bluffs. The entry lighting, monuments and landscaping depict the bluffs and prairie and make a contemporary statement using natural colors and historical forms. Design details from the gateway are repeated along the Broadway corridor in pedestrian scale streetlights, monuments and landscaping.



West Broadway Gateway





Existing and Planned Recreational Trails in the project area

### City of Council Bluffs Trail Plan

The CBIS intersects bike and pedestrian trails at several locations. The reconstruction of interstate and aesthetic enhancements presents opportunities to improve the interaction of these two important transportation systems.

Trails affected by the CBIS reconstruction are:

- Iowa Riverfront Trail - Currently runs along I-29, north of Avenue G to Roberts Park. It passes underneath I-480 and I-80, links to the Western Historic Trail and will eventually run south along the Missouri River levee to Long's Landing Park. A link from the trail, running parallel to Broadway is also planned.
- Western Historic Trail - The trail along the proposed 24th Street Bridge will link the north side of Council Bluffs to the Western Historic Trails Center.
- Indian Creek Trail - Runs under the combined I-29/I-80 portion of the Interstate at the Indian Creek bridge.

- Wabash Trace Nature Trail - Runs under I-80 adjacent to Harry Langdon Boulevard.
- Lake Manawa Trail - Runs under I-29, just south of the Hwy 275 interchange.
- Valley View Trail - Runs adjacent to I-80 and under I-80 at Valley View Drive. A link to the trail is also planned to run under I-80 at McPherson Avenue.



### Proposed Aesthetics Master Plan

The Council Bluffs Interstate System Aesthetics Master Plan outlines a comprehensive design concept for the 18-mile I-29/I-80 corridor running through Council Bluffs. With participation of community representatives and Iowa DOT, the Design Team created a plan that reflects the character and values of the Council Bluffs community.

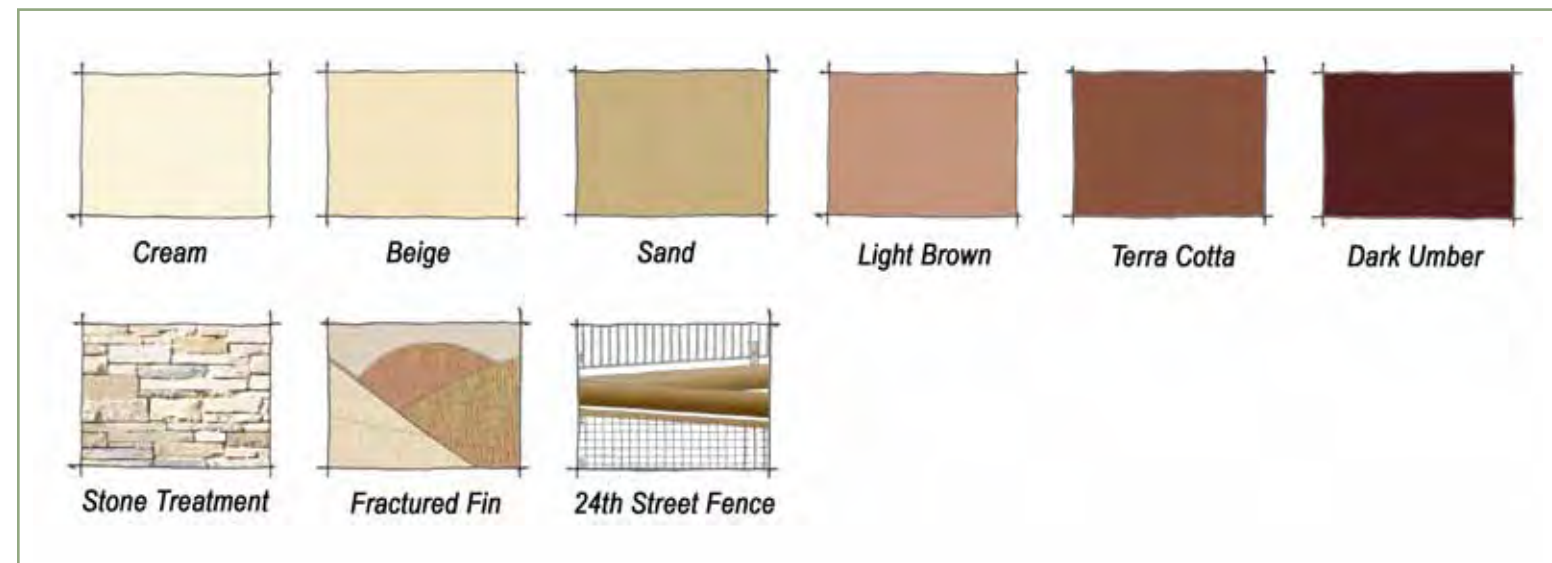
The intent of the Aesthetics Master Plan is to create a cohesive interstate corridor that is attractive and legible for daily commuters as well as first time visitors. In response to community stakeholder input, the Design Team developed a plan that draws heavily on the natural environment, incorporates public art and creates a signature community gateway. The Aesthetics Master Plan integrates these features while taking into account the financial feasibility and maintainability of all the proposed aesthetic enhancements.

The dominant forms of the aesthetic enhancements for the I-29/I-80 corridor are natural curves, intended to represent the rolling hills surrounding the city. Simple curves, in various forms are found in all aesthetic treatments, both in built elements and landscape design. Structures incorporate curved forms reminiscent of the loess hills in warm, natural earth tones to convey the idea of natural materials and to blend into the surrounding countryside. Interchange landscape design picks up the natural theme by layering native prairie grasses, shrubs and trees into a natural, flowing design.

The 24th Street Bridge is the signature element of the CBIS corridor. Its design is representative of both the natural landscape and contemporary values of the City of Council Bluffs. Opportunities for public art are prominently featured. The rolling hills are represented in the wall pier and railing. The bridge's abutments and terrace walls include a limestone treatment with a warm, natural color palette of creams and browns. The proposed landscape design blends native prairie plantings with ornamental grasses, trees and perennials to create a sculptured landscape that distinguishes the bridge as a significant entrance to the city while still reflecting the natural setting.

The 24th Street Bridge represents the highest level of enhancements proposed to the interstate corridor. The remainder of the corridor may incorporate the same design elements and themes in applications appropriate to their location. Other high-traffic interchanges and stretches of the corridor could have similar, but lower maintenance enhancements and fewer custom treatments. The level of enhancements step down incrementally to the rural areas at either end of the corridor which are left as improved natural landscapes.

The Aesthetics Master Plan reflects both Council Bluffs' community values and natural assets to create a distinctive interstate corridor. By doing so, the Aesthetics Master Plan complements the CBIS reconstruction to preserve and enhance the distinctive features that contribute to Council Bluffs' quality of life.



Proposed color palette and texture palette for CBIS aesthetic enhancements



