

**Downtown Access.** Offsetting the displacements would be new opportunities for improving downtown access and for encouraging business locations and development along the access routes into downtown. Besides a new interchange at Valley View, the other new I-581 interchange designs are expected to actually improve traffic flow in the interchange areas and also improve access into and out of downtown (compared to year 2020 “No Build” conditions; see Appendix C). That improved access can be beneficial for encouraging visitors to downtown, as well as for encouraging employment growth in the downtown area. The greater additional pass-by traffic can also generate more visitors to the City, as current surveys show that already 1/3 of visitors to the City’s attractions are passing through on the way to other destinations. (See Appendix B.)

The extent to which any of this occurs will depend on VDOT’s final designs, how they are implemented and coordinated with the City, and how the City makes improvements to local access roads and takes action to encourage new development along them. The reduction in numbers of interchanges and the widening of the highway are also expected to improve safety along the road.

**Other Risks.** Other risks include traffic encroachment into central city neighborhoods. Some of these impacts can be minimized with appropriate improvement of feeder routes into I-581, including Routes 419 and 460 and Elm Avenue. These changes should go hand-in-hand with improvement and promotion of public and other modes of transportation, as well as continued improvements to the pedestrian environment in the downtown area. Efforts should be made to minimize displacement of businesses and to relocate displaced businesses and residents.

The Central Corridor alignment can increase demand for inner city sites with highway access, raising commercial property values in the corridor. In the longer term, city sites in the vicinity of the interchange may have potential for development for higher-density commercial uses. Planning and funding for redevelopment of key under-used sites in the Central Corridor would be needed for this to occur.

**Options for the Southern Part of the Central Corridor.** If the Central Alignment is selected, there are a couple of options for the route south of the Elm Avenue interchange. The advantages and disadvantages of each option are summarized in Table 3-2 at the end of this chapter. The options are:

- **Central West Option** – Under this option, I-73 would continue south of Elm Avenue on the current I-581 and then continue down US-220. It then has two routing variations: one would stay on this route with 3 more interchanges along the current US-220 route within the city limits, and have four more interchanges south of the City in Roanoke County. The interchanges within the City limits could spur investment by commercial and traffic-serving businesses located along the collector/distributor road system that would serve this high traffic area, although the proposal would also involve some displacement of existing businesses on US-220. However, the four interchanges south of the city in