

Transit Oriented Development

Visualizing the community's goals at the station

Location: Westminster, Colorado

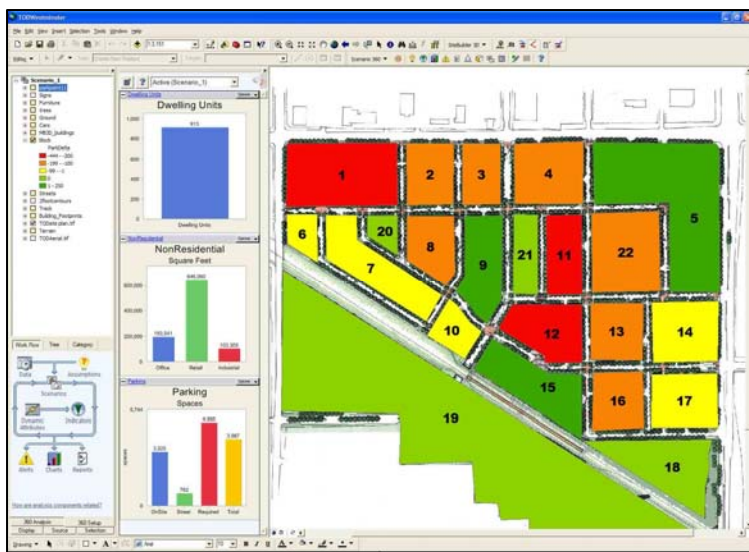
Partners: City of Westminster; Van Meter Williams Pollack, LLP; Donley and Associates, Inc.

Context: The City of Westminster is a northwestern suburb of Denver. With a population of just over 105,000 people, Westminster is a highly desirable place to live and work, but it does not attract the same level of attention as its big brother Denver. Changes are “coming down the tracks” as FasTracks, a new commuter rail, is planned to connect Denver with Boulder to the north, passing through Westminster. A FasTracks station is planned for South Westminster, in what is now an under-utilized industrial/commercial area, ideally located and targeted for redevelopment. The Denver Regional Transportation District (RTD) anticipates opening the line in 2015.



To be proactive in the revitalization of South Westminster, the City's Community Development Department developed a mixed-use transit-oriented plan for the approximately 100-acre site around the station. The plan is intended to help people be able to “see” what is possible on this site within the City's designated urban renewal area, and to attract investment to the area in a way that will meet the community's redevelopment goals.

Project Description: The City retained Van Meter Williams Pollack, LLP to develop a two-dimensional transit-oriented redevelopment plan for the area, and Donley & Associates, Inc. to translate the plan into a detailed three dimensional model. Donley used CommunityViz® to develop the 3D model, available both as static images and for people to “fly-through” the area to see it from different vantage points. Donley also used CommunityViz to develop an impact analysis model to evaluate the proposal in terms of land use, tax revenues and parking requirements. Based on assumptions regarding the initial mix of uses, the development is estimated to generate \$2.3 million annually in taxes to the City.



“The CommunityViz 3D visualizations helped residents and businesses in the surrounding neighborhood to ‘see’ the proposed redevelopment in a realistic, three-dimensional context making them more comfortable and supportive of the intensity of the proposed redevelopment. As a result, about 90% of the people who participated in a series of TOD workshops left in support of the plan. I expect only about half of the workshop participants would have initially supported the plan without utilizing the visualization tool.”

—Tony Chacon,
Westminster Revitalization
Projects Coordinator

The City incorporated the plan and the visualizations into presentations given at public workshops in the neighborhoods surrounding the site, giving residents the opportunity to see and comment on what a mixed-use redevelopment proposal would look like. Similar presentations to City Council and to a variety of other groups are being made, with the intent of attracting the kind of mixed-use transit-oriented development worthy of this remarkable redevelopment site so close to Denver, and beside a FasTracks station. Both the visualizations and the impact analyses can be updated so that the City has a flexible tool for evaluating more detailed development plans as they emerge.

Technology and Tools: Donley & Associates used a digital version of the site development plan to digitize the building footprints using ModelBuilder 3D™; then extruded footprints and applied textures. Donley used CommunityViz SiteBuilder 3D™ to develop the 3D visualization, and CommunityViz Scenario 360™ for the impact analyses.

Outcomes: The City has incorporated the visualizations into informational presentations to the public and to city leaders, and into presentations targeted to prospective developers. The City will use the visualizations on its forthcoming web site devoted explicitly to this transit-oriented re-development opportunity. In the meantime, the Regional Transportation District is refining the design of the FasTracks station, after which the City will use

CommunityViz to evaluate any needed re-development plan adjustments with respect to both visual and economic impacts. According to the Westminster Revitalization Projects Coordinator, "The impact assessment model built in CommunityViz gives us an essential tool with which to estimate costs and benefits of the current plan, while giving the City the capability to analyze development options relative to increasing or reducing density. Through this analytical capability the City will be able to establish optimal development and zoning allowances within the TOD area."



KEY LINKS

CommunityViz
<http://www.communityviz.com>
City of Westminster:
<http://www.ci.westminster.co.us>
Donley & Associates, Inc.:
<http://www.donleyassociates.com>
Van Meter Williams Pollack, LLP
<http://www.vmwp.com>