

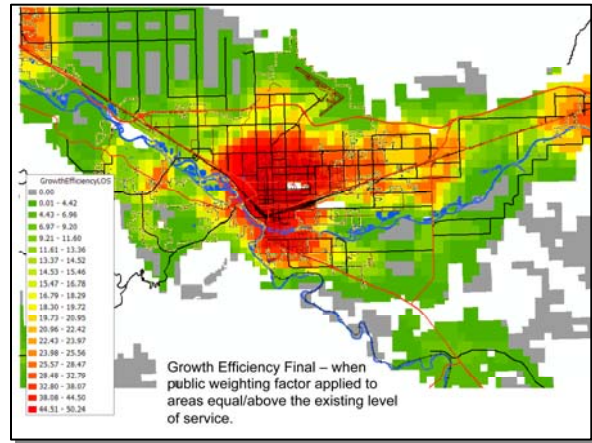
## Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan

Award-winning new plan focuses on livability

**Location:** Grand Junction, Mesa County, Colorado

**Partners:** City of Grand Junction; Mesa County; Winston Associates; Foresee Consulting, Inc.

**Context:** Grand Junction and surrounding Mesa County experienced sustained economic expansion in the latter part of the 20th Century, with natural gas development, construction and real estate, tourism, and retiree migration all energizing growth. Grand Junction itself has become an important regional center. In 2007 the City had a population of some 55,000 residents and all of Mesa County about 142,000, with projections indicating a doubling by 2035. Grand Junction adopted a “Growth Plan” in 1996, but by the mid-2000’s, most of the easily developed parcels within the growth plan boundaries had been developed, primarily for large lot single family uses. When the community was small, large lot development was not an issue, but as the population grew, the City and County began to see the impacts of low density development through increased cost of services, traffic congestion and encroachment into valued landscapes, and affordable housing became increasingly hard to find. City planners realized that under current conditions, most new growth would occur on large lots away from the core, exacerbating emerging problems.



Starting in 2007, the City and County joined forces to collaboratively reset the course and create a new plan. The Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan includes portions of the county beyond city limits that may eventually be developed at urban densities. Project leaders knew that to develop a responsible new plan would require a thorough and extensive planning process. They retained Winston Associates and Foresee Consulting to engage the public throughout the process; to develop, analyze and visualize growth alternatives; and to integrate land use and transportation plans for the area.

**Project Description:** The project team started with a focus on community issues and values, then moved in iterative steps to develop and analyze alternative growth scenarios and ultimately to develop a preferred plan. The public was engaged throughout the process, with six series of public meetings during 2007 and 2008 and a final public open house in 2009.

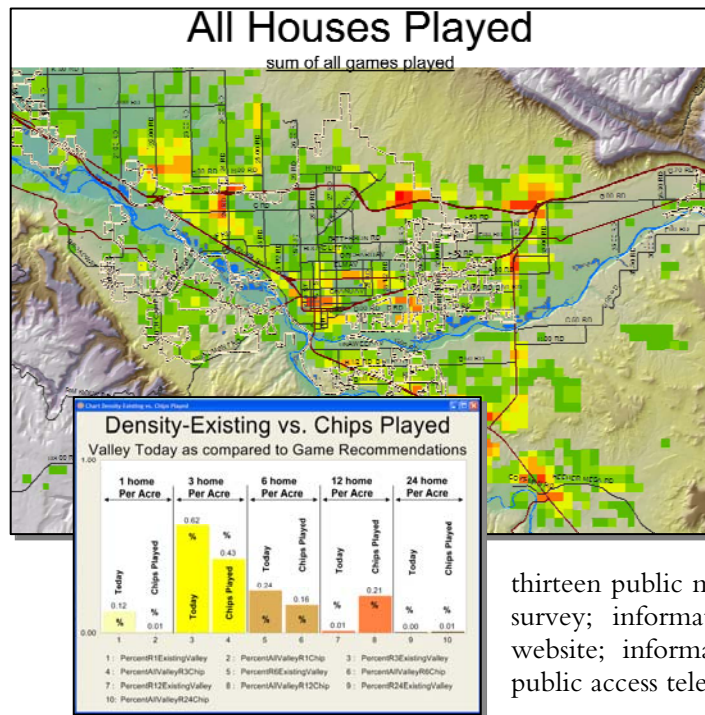
The project team integrated CommunityViz analysis with the public outreach process. The team hosted citizen planner “chip games” at various locations. Through participation in chip games, residents indicated where they would like to see growth, and at what density. Participants provided feedback via keypad polling and in written comments. A total of 27 chip games were played, and the need for compact development was a theme echoed in each game. Key concepts

related to livability emerged from the workshops. These included increasing density in core areas, especially the city center; creating a broad mix of housing opportunities; providing basic services close to where people live; establishing mixed-use centers; establishing parks and open space corridors; transitioning intensity of land uses; maintaining buffer areas between Grand Junction, Fruita and Palisade; and planning for growth and sticking to the plan. Chip game results were collected, digitized and analyzed with CommunityViz, and results of the analyses were shared with the public in subsequent workshops. The iterative process eventually revealed a preferred alternative scenario, and indicated public support for potential policy directions.

*"CommunityViz analysis of the scenarios developed in the chip-game workshops proved to be important in framing the discussion about pros and cons of various plan options."*

- Lisa Cox, Planning Manager,  
City of Grand Junction

Throughout the process as alternative land uses were developed, the team considered how the land use plan would affect transportation and vice versa. Project consultants used CommunityViz to dynamically update information into the Metropolitan Planning Organization's data, allowing them to test iterations of the land use plan expeditiously. The Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan charts a course for Grand Junction to "become the most liveable community west of the Rockies." The Plan was adopted by both the City and the County in February, 2010.



### Technology and Tools:

CommunityViz Scenario 360™, including the Allocator tool; Chip Game and keypad polling; Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Committee meetings; round table meetings for public officials; stakeholder meetings; joint city/county planning commission meetings; two detailed sub-area plans for areas expecting major change; thirteen public meetings and open houses; a mailed community survey; information tables at community events; a project website; information in local newspapers and on radio and public access television stations.

**Outcomes:** The Grand Junction City Council has fully embraced the Plan. Council has asked that any significant proposed municipal action be accompanied by a statement about how the proposal meets the vision and the goals of the Plan. Similarly, the Plan will be used to guide future annexations and development proposals within the Plan area. The Grand Junction Comprehensive Plan was selected as a 2010 APA Colorado Excellence Award in the Category of Outstanding Planning Project because the Plan was an exemplary example of a successful public process that resolved contentious issues through joint meetings, and pointed the City and County in the direction of a sustainable and positive future.

### KEY LINKS

- CommunityViz  
<http://placeways.com/communityviz>
- City of Grand Junction  
<http://www.gjcity.org>
- Mesa County  
<http://www.mesacounty.us>
- Winston Associates  
<http://www.winstonassociates.com>
- Foresee Consulting, Inc.  
<http://www.foreseeconsulting.biz>