

# CROWDSOURCING STREET IMPROVEMENTS: RE-IMAGINE WEST COLFAX

Denver, CO

As cities invest heavily in new transit systems, residents can still get left behind. In the busy neighborhood of West Colfax, Denver, crowdsourcing and pop-up demonstrations helped residents and leaders identify critical improvements for walkability and transit access.

## Skills and Capacity

Data analysis, design, meeting facilitation, tactical urbanism

## Partners

West Colfax BID, Placematters, WalkDenver, University of Colorado Denver, Denver Planning Department, Groundwork Denver

## Issues

Mobility  
Economic Security  
Health and Well-Being

## Tools

WALKscope, WalkShops, charrettes, keypad polling, pop-up demonstrations

## Empowering Residents to Improve Mobility



Walkshop event (Kayla Gilbert)

The City of Denver and many partners have invested heavily in transit and transportation improvements. But it is the “first and final mile”—the sidewalks, bike lanes, crosswalks and intersections that connect homes and businesses to transit stops—that can make or break transit accessibility. When pedestrian infrastructure is inadequate, it can pose significant barriers to opportunity, making it harder for people to access jobs, stores or other resources. Adjacent property owners typically manage Denver’s sidewalks, so the city has little data about variable conditions.

In 2015, the West Colfax Business Improvement District teamed with Radian | Placematters and other partners to launch “Re-Imagine West Colfax”—a process to engage neighborhood residents, gather data on first and final mile infrastructure and then test and prioritize improvements. One effort focused on the West Colfax Business Improvement District, where Placematters used a mobile app called WALKscope and a series of WalkShops (walking workshops) to crowdsource data and ideas from residents. After analyzing the data, they organized a design charrette to develop potential improvements. Finally, they showcased pop-up versions of those improvements in a public event, where more than 600 people gave input and helped prioritize permanent changes.

## Tool Spotlight

### WALKscope

This user-friendly mobile app allowed hundreds of neighborhood residents to collect data points about sidewalk quality, crosswalk safety and more.



### WalkShops

“Walking Workshops” are a powerful way to bring people out to collect data about their streets and neighborhoods, then discuss it together.

### Design Charrettes

With community priorities and needs in hand, design charrettes bring together professional architects, designers and engineers to sketch and create solutions for community review.

### Pop-Up Demonstrations

Once designed, street improvements can be tested through pop-up demonstrations. These temporary events allow people to experience and weigh in on potential designs.



Produced by PlaceMatters, with support from Enterprise Community Partners and The National Center for Smart Growth Research and Education at the University of Maryland.

## A Process Built on Resident Engagement

Planners and municipalities need data to support decisions and investments. Residents need to ensure that decisions reflect their actual needs and priorities. This process, driven by crowdsourcing and participation, offered both.

### PARTNER

Project leaders built a diverse team from the beginning, involving all groups that would play a role in implementation:

- City planners, public works and the Department of Health, which could prioritize and fund actions
- Schools and neighborhood groups, which could reach and engage residents
- University students and professors, who could help with data collection and provide expertise

### ASSESS

This project involved assessment at every stage:

- University students used WALKscope to collect data on street conditions.
- The public experienced and assessed design ideas in the pop-up event.
- The team used keypad polling and surveys to assess public opinions.

### ACT

The clear designs and neighborhood support provide Denver with important tools to make the case for investment, allocate resources and funding, and start making improvements. Having participated in the process, residents are also ready to advocate for change.

### PARTNER

### ACT

### ASSESS

### ENGAGE

### ENGAGE

The team developed multiple touchpoints to involve a variety of community members:

- WalkShops and meetings for residents to explore and talk about their neighborhoods
- A design charrette to help people to engage with expert designers and share local insights
- Polling and surveys to gather substantive public opinions on design choices
- A pop-up demonstration day with beer, vendors, games and demonstrations of the street designs
- Chalkboard walls to let people share visions and ideas in a public setting

## Impacts for Opportunity

Re-Imagine West Colfax brought together hundreds of local and citywide stakeholders to collectively focus on a critical neighborhood asset: first and final mile street infrastructure. The process collected essential data, empowered residents to advocate for their needs and tested solutions that work locally.

The community tested six major design prototypes during a two-day street festival. The resulting feedback highlighted three priority intersections that were currently unsafe; restricted walkability and bikeability; or limited access to transit, parks or other amenities. The final report also detailed nine general recommendations to improve the whole neighborhood, from traffic calming to landscaping. With designs and data in hand, community leaders can easily integrate these improvements into future construction efforts .

## Mobility

Early data showed that the worst sidewalks and streets were also those most heavily used by people walking or biking to transit stops. Addressing these high-priority stretches will create safer and more efficient access to transit, allowing people to access jobs, stores, services, cultural events, parks and green spaces.

## Health and Well-Being

Safe streets, bike lanes, sidewalks and crosswalks are important for more than accessibility. When people can walk and bike safely, they also choose active transportation more often, leading to significant health improvements.

**More information:** [West Colfax BID](#), [WALKscope.org](#), [Radian-Placematters.org](#)



Pop-up pedestrian crosswalk (Jill Locantore)

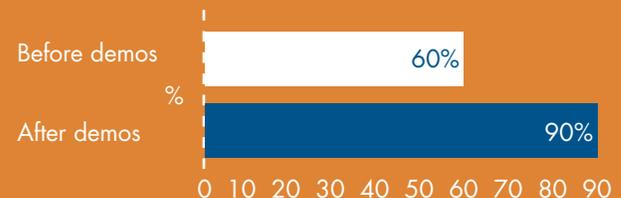
## By the Numbers



### Implementation Success

The Re-Imagine process has helped the West Colfax Business Improvements District raise 25% of the \$20M needed for improvements for Colfax.

### % of People Supporting Bike Lanes...



6

concepts for major street improvements, created by designers.



610

people came to a day-long pop-up demonstration.



209

people filled out surveys about their experience.



3

priority sites emerged for improving walkability and transit access.

