

# THE ROLE OF VISUAL IMAGES IN THE PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT PROCESS FOR THREE WIND FARMS IN COLORADO: CASE STUDIES - TWO BUILT, ONE DENIED

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## **1 ABSTRACT**

*Visual images are used by developers to inform the public of the impact a proposed wind farm would have on the landscape and could mean the acceptance or rejection of a project. Today's wind farm can easily consist of over 150 turbines with towers reaching over 300' tall topped off with a whirling 250' diameter pin wheel. Preliminary studies have shown that visual impact has been a source of contention in the development of wind farms internationally and in the United States (Ball 2009, Wizelius 2007). This paper compares the use of visual images within the development process of three wind farms in Colorado. The three projects represent early development (Colorado Green completed in 2003), recent construction (Cedar Creek 2006), and recently denied (Silver Mountain 2009). A telephone survey was conducted of county planners involved with each project and submission materials were reviewed. Requirements for approval varied in each county however visual images were used during public hearings and within general impact statements. The focus of this study is on the type of images actually used and the manner and circumstance in which they were presented. This paper is intended to help educators and those involved in wind farm development understand the most effective use of visual images in terms of timing and method within the approval process.*

*Currently there are more sophisticated 3D modeling software packages available than those used by the developers involved in this study.*

### **1.1 Keywords**

wind farms, visual impact, development process