

Planning and Design for Healthy Child Development:

Mapping Places of Prey and Play with Denver Kids

In this study, aerial maps were used to investigate Denver neighborhoods through children's eyes. This community-based research project taught inner-city children about the power of mapping and voicing preferences and concerns. Using aerial maps, hand-drawn maps, photographs, and other methods of exploration, children created maps of school grounds and surrounding neighborhoods, revealing quantitative and qualitative data in a creative and informative way. This research serves to empower students and to educate city officials about the benefits and deficits of inner-city living for Denver youth. Special emphasis was placed upon places of play and physical activity, as well as on places of prey and gang activity.

This project was conducted with assistance from Denver Public Schools and Denver Scores, a local nonprofit organization that runs after school programs focused on soccer, writing, and community service. The students presented their maps to the neighborhood watch group, local business leaders, Denver Public Schools, and all of the youth at the Denver Scores end of season event Shout! in an effort to raise awareness. Safe houses were identified throughout the neighborhood as a result of this project.

"We mapped where we feel safe and where we don't."
"This is where I walk to go home...and then there's the short cut through the park"
"If I walk through the projects someone might take me..."



"I don't like walking this way because of this dog, so I go around on another street instead or sometimes through the alley but that doesn't feel very safe either."
"I don't know anyone who lives along the way I go home."
"It looks scary, like lots of cars and stuff, so I don't like to go there." - student talking about Federal Boulevard
"Yea, there's a drunk guy who lives there. He yells at us kids and stuff." "Yea, I know that house!" "Yea, he's mean!"

