



Growing Up Boulder 15 Minute Neighborhood Project

October – December 2015: 4 sessions

English Language Development Third Grade Classes
Whittier International Elementary School

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Growing Up Boulder

15 Minute Neighborhood Project

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Background

Thirteen third graders in English Language Development classes taught by Tamar van Vliet and Alysia Hayas came together to participate in three 15-Minute Neighborhood activities led by Growing Up Boulder volunteers, followed by a session to present their ideas to city staff. All 13 came from families that speak Spanish at home. Most live in San Lazaro Mobile Home Park at 55th Street and Valmont. They met from 8:15-9:00 on three mornings to engage in the following activities:



Whittier Neighborhood Walk

- I. **Children as Experts:** Each child drew and talked about his or her current neighborhood.
- II. **Neighborhood Walk:** In three groups, children conducted a walk audit of neighborhood elements they liked and didn't like near their school.
- III. **Ideal Neighborhood:** In small groups, children selected icons of neighborhood elements that would be part of an ideal neighborhood and placed them on a map of the blocks near their school.

These two classes belong to a Roots and Shoots Club of the Jane Goodall Institute, which involves them in learning about animals and their needs and taking action to care for animals and create wildlife habitats. Therefore in the second and third activities, they were asked to think about what creates a good neighborhood for people, animals and the environment.

Activity I: Children as Experts

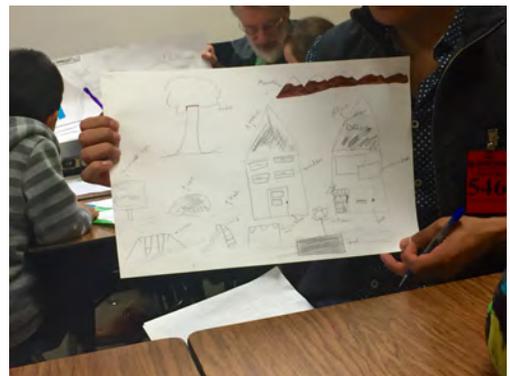
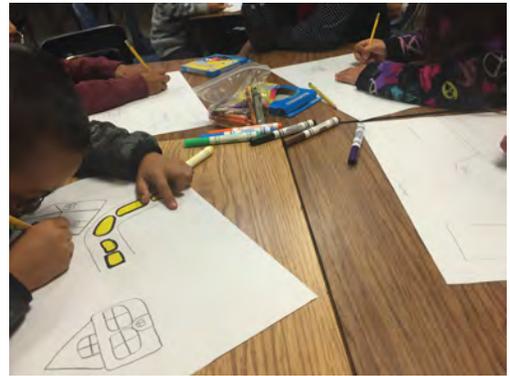
October 5, 2015

Tables were pushed together in the computer room to create blocks of tables for three groups of children and volunteers. Each set of tables was supplied with multicolored magic markers and an 11 x 17 sheet of paper for each child.

The volunteer team introduced themselves and briefly explained the purpose of their visits: to gather children's perspectives about what makes a good neighborhood so that city government can apply their ideas in future neighborhood planning. The children introduced themselves. (10 minutes)

The teachers assigned the children to three groups of four. They were asked to take a seat and draw "their home, street, and places they go in their neighborhood alone, with friends and with family." Volunteers divided themselves among the groups and listened and asked questions. Rather than prompting the children to draw specific places such as playgrounds or streets, they were encouraged to ask neutral questions such as, "Where do you go to play?" "To see friends or family?" "Do you do errands? Where do you go?" (25 minutes)

In the end, each child had a minute to hold up his or her drawing and identify a few elements on it. (10 minutes)



Common drawing elements:

Social Elements	The children highly valued nearby homes of friends and family where they could go on their own.
Streets	Each child drew streets, often as the first element. There is little traffic in San Lazaro so children who lived there talked about biking and playing in the streets.
Playground	Playground elements: slides, monkey bars, soccer fields
Mailboxes	Gathering location and mail collection is some children's responsibility
Mountains & Trees	Grounding elements and visual organization
Parks	The Valmont dog park and bike park near San Lazaro
Swimming Pool	San Lazaro Pool – until they turn 12 their families have to take them
Manager's Office	At San Lazaro – focal point for children
Candy Store	Candy store in a house in San Lazaro, ice cream and soda stores in walking distance
Mixed Use Neighborhood	Mixed use neighborhood: One child who lived on Pearl Street included more elements in his drawing: Pearl Street, community gardens, Lolita's grocery, creek, mountains, hills, trees. It contrasted with the other children who lived in single use mobile home parks comprised of houses, streets, and small parks/playgrounds.

Reflections: *Students looked at each other's drawings and some copied what others had started to draw. They talked as they drew, with the volunteers and with each other—as many shared the same mobile home park. They appeared to enjoy the activity and it was a comfortable way for the children and volunteers to get to know each other.*

Activity II: 15-Minute Neighborhood Walk

October 26, 2015



GUB volunteers brought cardboard frames painted red on one side and green on the other side and recording sheets for clipboards. The sheets had three columns: one with labeled icons of neighborhood elements such as “bus stops,” “bike lanes,” “mixed use” and “residential streets”; one labeled “Why I Like It”; and one labeled “Why I Don’t Like It.” Volunteers explained that the children would frame neighborhood elements around their school that they liked with the green side of the frames and elements they didn’t like with the red side, while someone took a picture and someone else wrote down reasons for their likes and dislikes. The children were assigned to three groups.(10 minutes)



The intention of the activity was for each group to begin by walking 15 minutes in one direction in order to understand how far the radius of a 15-minute neighborhood extends. Because the session was limited to 45 minutes, groups walked only as far as Pearl Street in order to leave more time for the return walk and their “like” and “dislike” choices and discussions. Groups converged at the haunted house on Pearl Street, which has a large front yard covered in Halloween decorations, and then framed neighborhood elements in red or green on their return trip. (25 minutes)

On returning to the classroom, groups reported back on the neighborhood elements they liked and disliked as a teacher recorded their ideas on the board. (10 minutes)

Likes	Dislikes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic controls to keep people safe • Yield to pedestrians signs • Stop signs • One way signs • Traffic lights • Crossing buttons to push • Crosswalks • Buildings • Houses, windows • Restaurants • Haunted house--fun • Ceramic shop • Brightly painted walls • Exterior stairs with landings • Spiral staircase • Trees • Flower gardens: pretty & good for bees & other insects • Bee Safe Neighborhood sign in a garden—protecting bees • Pathway lined with trees & bushes • Bike lanes and bike racks • Buses • Benches & chairs on the sidewalk • Newspaper stands • Pay-to-park kiosks to give the city money • Fences to keep dogs in 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alley without speed bumps or stop sign • Lots of traffic on Pearl Street making it hard to cross the street • Beer cans, dog poop bags & other litter • Graffiti • Haunted house—might scare babies • Car parked on grass • Store window too high for children to see inside • Balconies—people or toys might fall off

Reflections: *One group of four children talked repeatedly about safety: they liked features that kept people safe. All three groups appreciated crosswalk signs and lights to keep pedestrians safe. They were hesitant to step into the zebra crossing—if they saw cars coming, they didn't know if the cars would really stop. Two children showed fear reflexes when they were in the crosswalk and noticed that cars were coming, even though the cars were far away.*

A jewelry store had frosted glass until adults' eye level. The children asked what the store was. At their level, it was opaque to them. Consider Kevin Lynch and Stephen Carr's work on visible cities, suggesting windows and peep holes at all levels so that even young children can see into the interior workings of building.



Likes – Trees



Dislike - Cracks



Activity III: Ideal Neighborhood

November 17, 2015



In advance of the GUB volunteers' visit, the teachers were sent 33 labeled icons of possible elements in an ideal neighborhood. They reviewed the icons with their classes and taught the icon vocabulary and the concept of an ideal neighborhood.

When the volunteers arrived, the children divided into four groups of three to four at tables with large maps of the blocks surrounding Whittier. Only streets and a few landmarks were labeled, to give the children a grid to work with where they could project elements of an ideal neighborhood, with just enough landmarks identified to give them a sense of scale and direction. The children took turns selecting an icon, explaining why they

thought this element belonged in an ideal neighborhood, getting their classmates' agreement, and then gluing it down on a spot of their choice on the map. There were some blank squares so that they could draw additional icons.

Each group held up its completed map for all to see and each child had a chance to point to a few icons that he or she had contributed and reasons why.

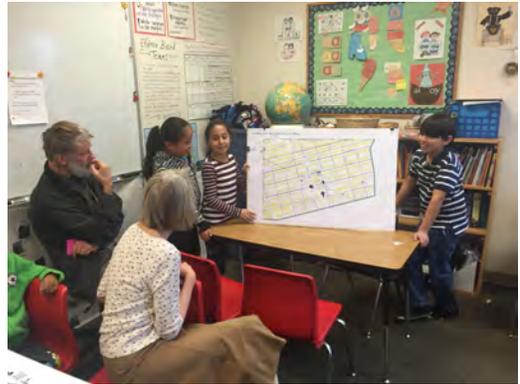


Icons that groups selected (# of times each was selected)

Gardens (6)
Trees (4)
Tree houses (4)
Drinking fountain (4)
Restaurants (4)
Coffee shop (3)
Ice cream shop (3)
Play equipment, including climbing structure with slide (2)
Skateboard ramps (2)
Library (2) –
Music venue (2)
Bench around tree (1)
Playground (1)
Soccer field (1)
Maze (1)
Hill (1)
Gymnastics school (1)
Aquarium (1)
Bird house (1)
Animal watching (1)
Water slide at Spruce Pool (1)
Spurting play fountains (1)
Swings (1)
Picnic table (1)
Food truck (1)
Bike lanes & bike racks (1)
Parking lot on Pearl Street (1)
Trash cans (1)
One group placed a cluster of icons near the creek:
Tall grass
Grove of trees
Ditch with water and rocks for building a dam
Planter with flowers

***Reflections:** The map composed of only streets and faint rectangles for buildings encouraged the children to think about an “ideal neighborhood” in an abstract way. If an aerial map had been used, the children would have needed to integrate the icons with the neighborhood’s existing structure.*

The students clustered icons in a few locations: on the Whittier school block, 3 tree houses, 2 gardens, trees, skateboarding, and a music venue; near Casey Middle School, a garden, an ice cream shop, and a cluster of icons to create a park with amenities; on 16th Street, a park with amenities; added gardens, trees, and food sources on Pearl Street; and elements for nature play and appreciation by the creek. One group wanted a library beside a tree house so that kids could check out books and read them in the tree house.



General Reflections:

Teachers prepared their students for each session by teaching the relevant vocabulary and discussing basic concepts such as “your neighborhood,” “15-minute neighborhood” and “ideal neighborhood.” During sessions, they clarified questions and rules and served as time keepers. Their enthusiasm for this project and facilitation were essential for the activities’ success.



Participants

Whittier teachers for English Language Development classes:

Alysia Hayas

Tamar van Vliet

Participating students:

List the students' names?

Growing Up Boulder volunteers:

Danica Powell (Trestle Strategy Group)

Oscar Saucedo (GO Boulder, Division of Transportation)

Caitlin Zacharias (Planning, Housing + Sustainability)

Louise Chawla & Willem van Vliet (Program in Environmental Design, CU Boulder)

Intern support: Morgan Huber (Program in Environmental Design)

Photographer for Session 2: Stephen Cardinale (Program in Environmental Design)