



# Tools for Determining Community Context: An Introduction to the Place Audit

*Cynthia Nikitin Vice  
President, PPS*

**Designing Transportation Projects  
for People and Places  
July 24 -25, 2008**



Transportation &  
Livable Communities



Public Markets  
& Local Economies

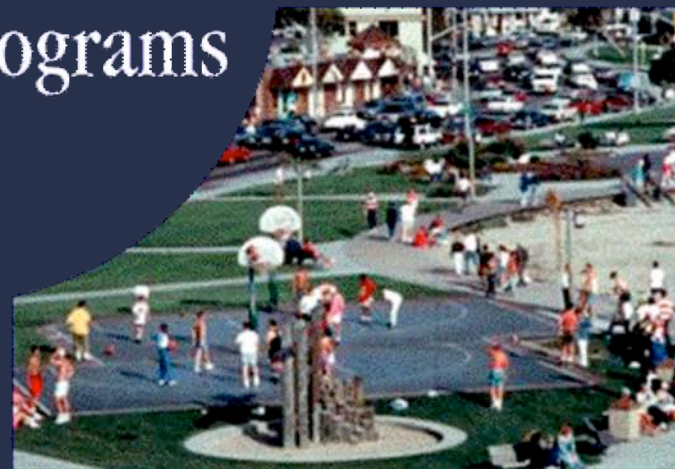


PPS

Current Programs



Public Buildings  
& Civic Design



Parks, Plazas  
& Civic Squares

## Planning & Design



**PPS has completed over 1000 place-based projects since 1975, consisting of:**

- **Community Visioning**
- **Conceptual Designs**
- **User/Needs Analysis**
- **Management Programs**
- **Master Planning & Urban Design**

## Education & Training



**PPS trains over 20,000 people annually. We offer:**

- **Place Game workshops**
- **Context Sensitive Solutions training**
- **Public Markets as Economic Development**
- **“How to Turn a Place Around” seminars**
- **Conferences**

## Research & Outreach



- **Our websites receive more than 30,000 page views per day**
- **We have produced 18 publications & 6 videos**
- **We maintain a slide library of 500,000 images of public spaces**



# William H. (Holly) Whyte



The Organization Man, 1956

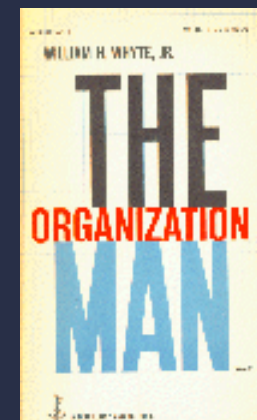
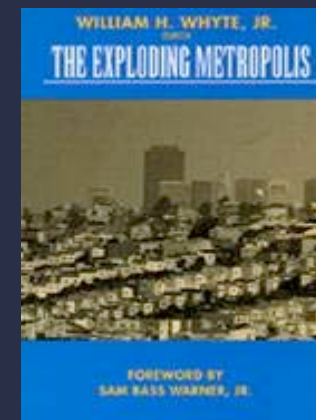
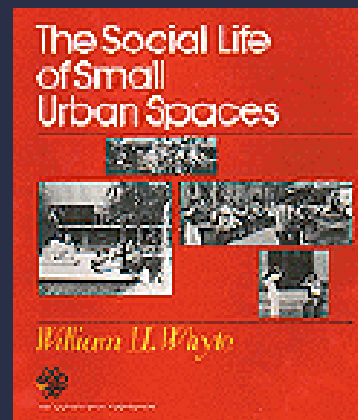
The Exploding Metropolis, 1958

The Last Landscape, 1968

Plan for the City of New York, 1969

The Social Life of Small Urban Spaces, 1980

City: Rediscovering the Center, 1988



What If We Built Our

Streets as Places?



When you design your streets around cars and traffic...you get cars and traffic.

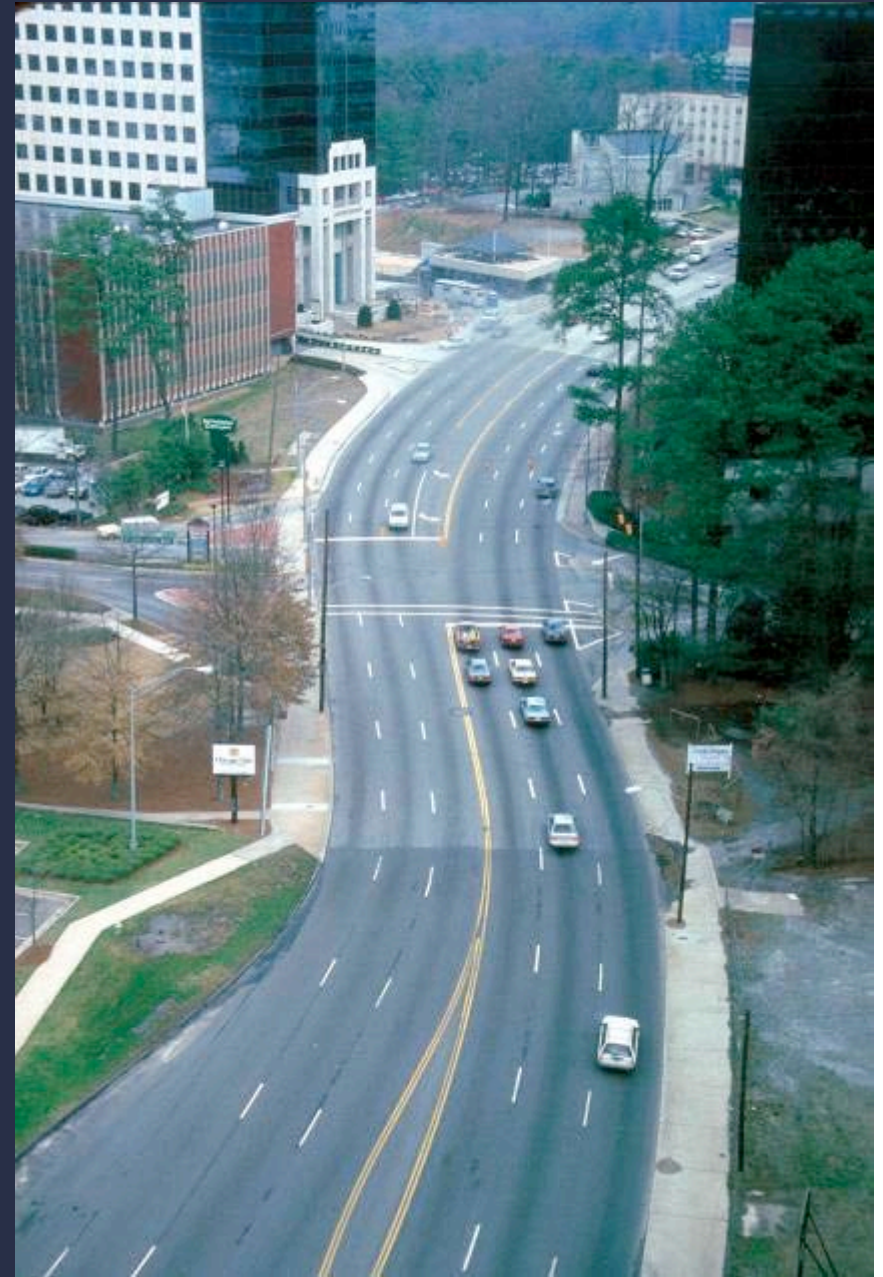




The erosion of cities

by automobiles proceeds as a kind of nibbling. Small nibbles at first but eventually hefty bites. A street is widened here, another is straightened there, a wide avenue is converted to one way flow and more land goes into parking. No one step in this process is in itself crucial but **cumulatively the effect is enormous.**

*—Jane Jacobs, 1954*





A study of three generations of nine year olds found that by 1990, the radius around the home in which children were allowed to play, had sunk to a ninth of what it had been in 1970.

– *Richard Louv*





 **TOYOTA**

THE 4-DOOR TUNDRA DOUBLE CAB.

**SO BIG, IT'S SCARY.**

GET THE FEELING  
 **TOYOTA**



002011

 CLEAR CHANNEL

EXIT  
**45**  
MPH





When you design your streets around people and places... you get people and places





# Qualities of Great Streets

- Attractions & Destinations
- Identity & Image
- Active Edge Uses
- Amenities
- Management:  
Central to the Solution
- Seasonal Strategy
- Diverse User Groups
- Traffic, Transit & the  
Pedestrian
- Blending of Uses and Modes
- Protects Neighborhoods





# Attractions & Destinations

- Curiosity, chaos, choices, with special places, rest spots, - the art of the path.





# Attractions & Destinations

- Clustered activity points of interest.
- 10+ Destinations – including food and markets, local retail, art, play, education, health/recreation.





# Identity & Image

- Showcases local assets
- Businesses, pedestrians, drivers, change their behavior in response to the design of the street and sense of place.





# Active Edge Uses

- Active building bases







# Active Edge Uses

- Active year around uses
- Connections from both sides of street





# Amenities

- Public and private seating options
- Triangulation to support use – clusters of street amenities





# Management - Central to the Solution

- Programming – daily activity generators/cultural, civic and seasonal celebrations





# Seasonal Strategies





# Draws diverse user groups

- No one group or use dominates





# Traffic, Transit & the Pedestrian

- Walkable – Places to go
- Range of transportation options





# Traffic, Transit & the Pedestrian

- Mode Neutral/Modal equality
- Shared Use Streets/Complete Streets





# Flexibility – blending uses & modes

- Ground floors and retail that blur public and private space







# Protects neighborhoods

- Good transitions to local communities
- Neighborhood street character



# How to Evaluate a Street as a Place?

Sociability



Comfort & Image



Place



Access & Linkages



Uses & Activities



# What Makes a Great Street?

- Key Attributes
- Intangibles
- Measurements





# Access & Linkages

Signs of **problems**: automobiles dominate, poorly-marked crosswalks, poor signage, few pedestrians or bicycles.





# Access & Linkages

Signs of **SUCCESS** for a street or road: connected, continuous, legible, walkable, accessible.





# Uses & Activities

Signs of **problems**: empty spaces, underutilized buildings, security problems, one-dimensional.





# Uses & Activities

Signs of **SUCCESS** for a street or road:  
good place for business, active - lots of people walking,  
opportunities for active recreation





# Comfort & Image

Signs of **problems**: unattractive, poor environmental quality, poorly maintained, unsafe.







# Comfort & Image

Signs of **SUCCESS** for a street or road: attractive, fits its surroundings, historic, feels safe.





# Sociability

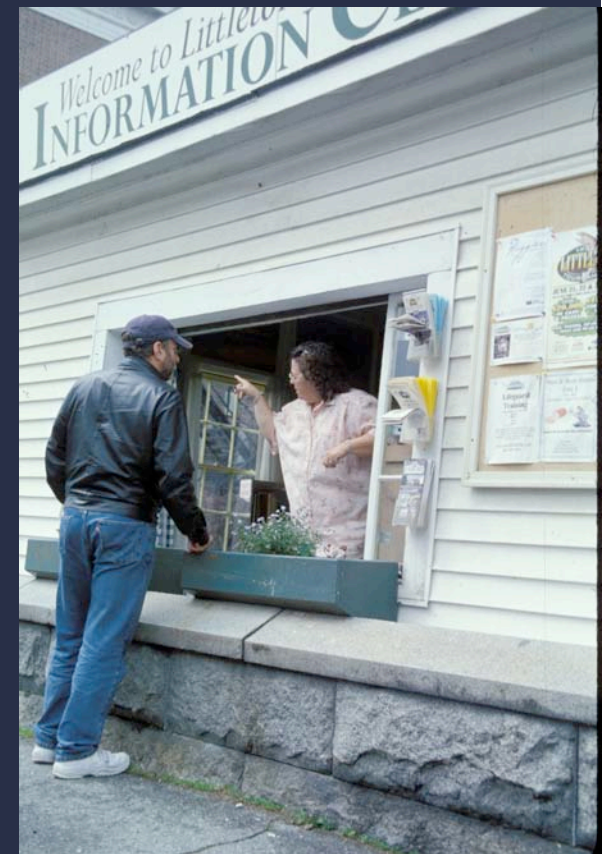
Signs of problems: empty spaces,  
isolation





# Sociability

Signs of **SUCCESS**: neighborliness, opportunities to gather, diverse population.





Designing for People and Places





If we can develop and design streets so that they are wonderful, fulfilling places to be—community-building places, attractive for all people—then we will have successfully designed about one-third of the city directly and will have had an immense impact on the rest

ALAN JACOBS





# Street Audit Evaluation Process



- Break into teams and assign a recorder
- Go to your assigned routes and use the Place Audit form to evaluate, observe, and interview
- Return here at the appointed time to discuss your findings with your team
- Create a mini-presentation to report back to all workshop participants



# What Makes a Great Place?

In evaluating over 2,000 public spaces around the world, Project for Public Spaces (PPS) has found that successful ones have four key qualities: they are accessible; people are engaged in activities there; the space is comfortable and has a good

image; and finally, it is a sociable place: one where people meet each other and take people when they come to visit. PPS developed The Place Diagram as a tool to help people in judging any place, good or bad:



Imagine that the center circle on the diagram is a specific place that you know: a street corner, a playground, a plaza outside a building. You can evaluate that place according to four criteria in the red ring. In the ring outside these main crite-

ria are a number of intuitive or qualitative aspects by which to judge a place; the next outer ring shows the quantitative aspects that can be measured by statistics or research.

# Place Audit



## Streets as Places Training Seminar

This exercise is a tool to evaluate how well the pedestrian environment connects destinations in downtowns. Working in teams, participants will identify short and long term opportunities for improving the safety and attractiveness of streets from the perspective of people on foot.

Project for Public Spaces  
New York, New York

©2005 Project for Public Spaces, Inc. The 'Place Audit' cannot be used without formal, written permission from PPS. If permission is granted, full credit must be given to PPS on all written materials and in any verbal descriptions of the game.

LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_ ROUTE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

## A EVALUATE THE PLACE

After the team has walked the entire assigned route, select (as a group) one site along the route to study. Put yourself in the shoes of someone who lives or works in Trenton, and evaluate how well this site performs as a place.

ACCESS, LINKAGES & INFORMATION		← DISAGREE AGREE →			
Pedestrians can easily walk to and through the place.		1	2	3	4
Pedestrian access is safe and convenient:					
- Sidewalks connect to adjacent areas;		1	2	3	4
- Crosswalks are well marked;		1	2	3	4
- Crossing distances are minimal.		1	2	3	4
Taking transit is easy:					
- Stops and stations are easy to find;		1	2	3	4
- Stops and stations are easy to get to on foot;		1	2	3	4
- Maps and schedules are readily available.		1	2	3	4
Bicycling is easy:					
- Routes are safe and convenient.		1	2	3	4
- Routes are well marked;		1	2	3	4
- Storage is adequate.		1	2	3	4
Automobiles do not detract from the pedestrian experience.		1	2	3	4
There is adequate directional signage, maps and location information.		1	2	3	4
<b>SUM of ANSWERS =</b>					
<b>AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /12) =</b> <input type="text"/>					

COMFORT & IMAGE		← DISAGREE AGREE →			
From a distance, the place projects a positive image.		1	2	3	4
There are choices of places to sit, both in sun and shade.		1	2	3	4
The place is well managed:					
- It is in a state of good repair;		1	2	3	4
- It is neat and clean;		1	2	3	4
- It feels safe;		1	2	3	4
- It is well lighted;		1	2	3	4
- Retail space is leased to the best uses.		1	2	3	4
Amenities are operable, well located and consistent in design:					
- Telephones;		1	2	3	4
- Waste receptacles;		1	2	3	4
- Lighting fixtures;		1	2	3	4
- Seating;		1	2	3	4
High levels of goods and services are available, including:					
- Restrooms;		1	2	3	4
- Newsstand;		1	2	3	4
- Food and beverages		1	2	3	4
<b>SUM of ANSWERS =</b>					
<b>AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /14) =</b> <input type="text"/>					

# The Place Audit

USES & ACTIVITIES		← DISAGREE AGREE →			
The place is busy at other times than rush hour.		1	2	3	4
People are using the spaces in and around the place for many types of activities.		1	2	3	4
There are several "choices" of things to do and it is easy to go from one activity to another.		1	2	3	4
Uses are easily visible and inviting for pedestrians.		1	2	3	4
Continuity of street-level uses makes for a pleasant walking environment.		1	2	3	4
Spaces for a range of activities are provided, including:					
- Shopping;		1	2	3	4
- Dining;		1	2	3	4
- Playing;		1	2	3	4
- Markets;		1	2	3	4
- Community events and exhibits.		1	2	3	4
<b>SUM of ANSWERS =</b>					
<b>AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /10) =</b> <input type="text"/>					

SOCIALITY		← DISAGREE AGREE →			
People use the place regularly by choice.		1	2	3	4
There are places to gather / there is evidence of people in groups.		1	2	3	4
Strangers make eye contact; people smile and display affection.		1	2	3	4
Chance encounters happen frequently, as people tend to run into someone they know.		1	2	3	4
There is a mix of ages, sexes and ethnic groups which generally reflects the community at large.		1	2	3	4
People bring their friends and relatives to see the Place or they point to key elements with pride.		1	2	3	4
<b>SUM of ANSWERS =</b>					
<b>AVERAGE ANSWER (Sum: _____ /6) =</b> <input type="text"/>					
<b>AVERAGE ANSWER OF ALL AREAS</b>					
AVERAGE ACCESS, LINKAGES & INFO		_____			
AVERAGE COMFORT & IMAGE		_____			
AVERAGE USES & ACTIVITIES		_____			
AVERAGE SOCIALITY		_____			
<b>SUM of ANSWERS =</b>					
<b>AVERAGE of ALL (Sum: _____ /4) =</b> <input type="text"/>					

## B Identify the Opportunities of this Place

List below, by category, the opportunities that exist in this place. Add others not mentioned. Include both short-term, low-cost opportunities and long-term changes.

1. What do you like best about this place as a whole?

2. List ten things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot:

3. What 3 changes would you make to this place in the long term that would have the biggest impact?

4. What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.

5. Back in the meeting room, with your group, select the five key potential great places along your route. Pick your top five short- and long-term improvements for these places and report out on them to the whole assembly.

## C INTERVIEW

Ask one or two people in the place you evaluated what they like about the place and what they would do to improve it. If a particular issue from the ratings above has emerged, ask them their opinion about it.

THEIR ANSWER(S):





## **B** Identify the Opportunities of this Place

List below, by category, the opportunities that exist in this place. Add others not mentioned. Include both short-term, low-cost opportunities and long-term changes.

1. What do you like best about this place as a whole?
2. List ten things that you would do to improve this place that could be done right away and that wouldn't cost a lot:
3. What 3 changes would you make to this place in the long term that would have the biggest impact?
4. What local partnerships or local talent can you identify that could help implement some of your proposed improvements? Please be as specific as possible.
5. Back in the meeting room, with your group, select the five key potential great places along your route. Pick your top five short- and long-term improvements for these places and report out on them to the whole assembly.

## **C** INTERVIEW

Ask one or two people in the place you evaluated what they like about the place and what they would do to improve it. If a particular issue from the ratings above has emerged, ask them their opinion about it.

**THEIR ANSWER(S):**





## Place Audit Site Map

Site 1: Speer & Wewatta

Site 2: Speer & Larimer / Lawrence

Site 3: 14th & Lawrence or Arapahoe

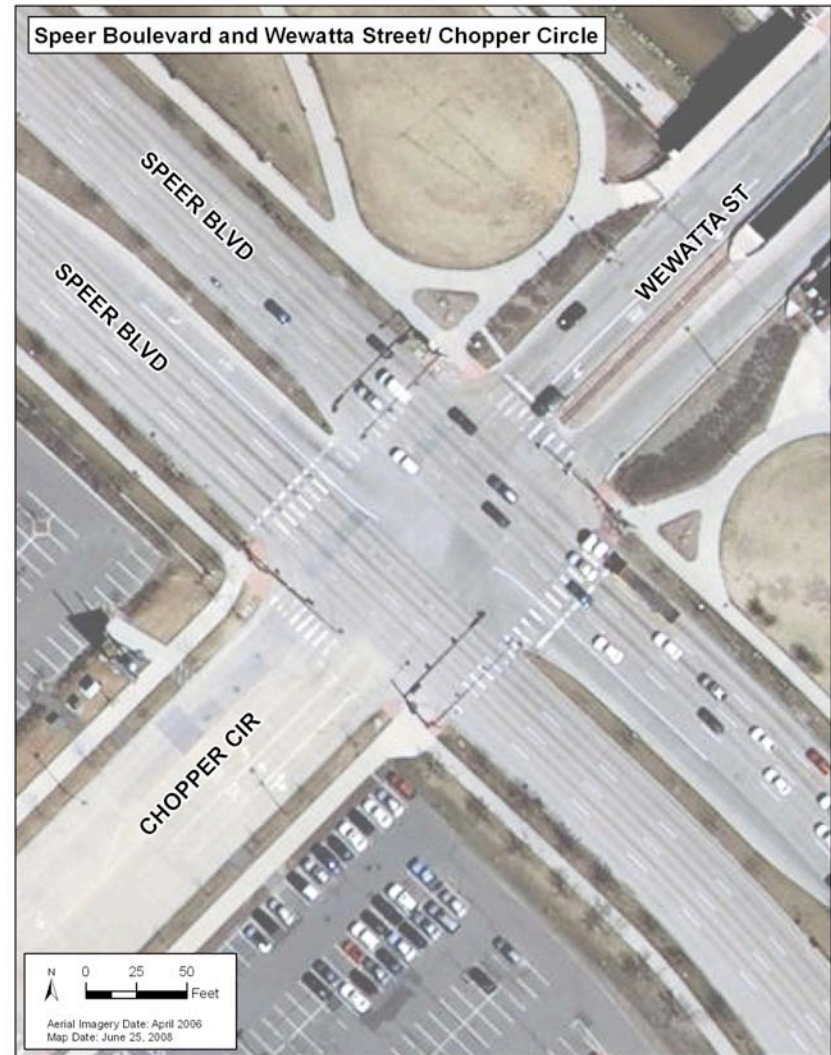
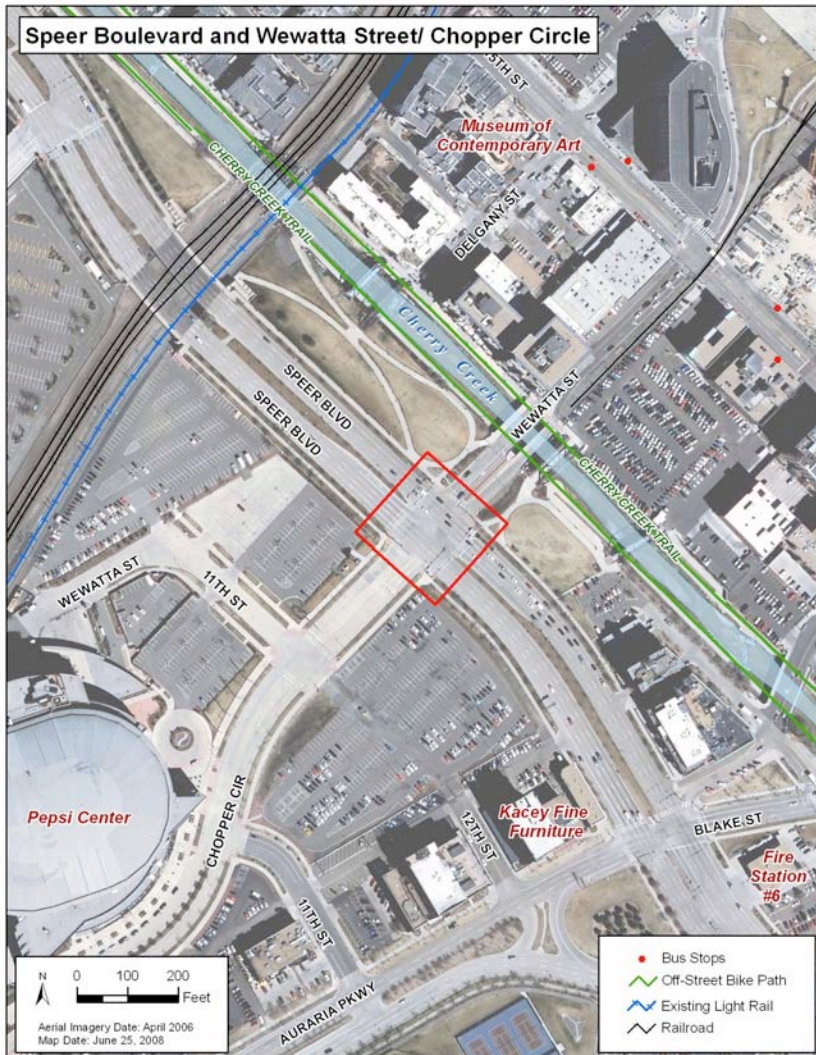
Site 4: 15th & Tremont

Site 5: Colfax at Osage

Star: Hotel

# Place Audit Location #1

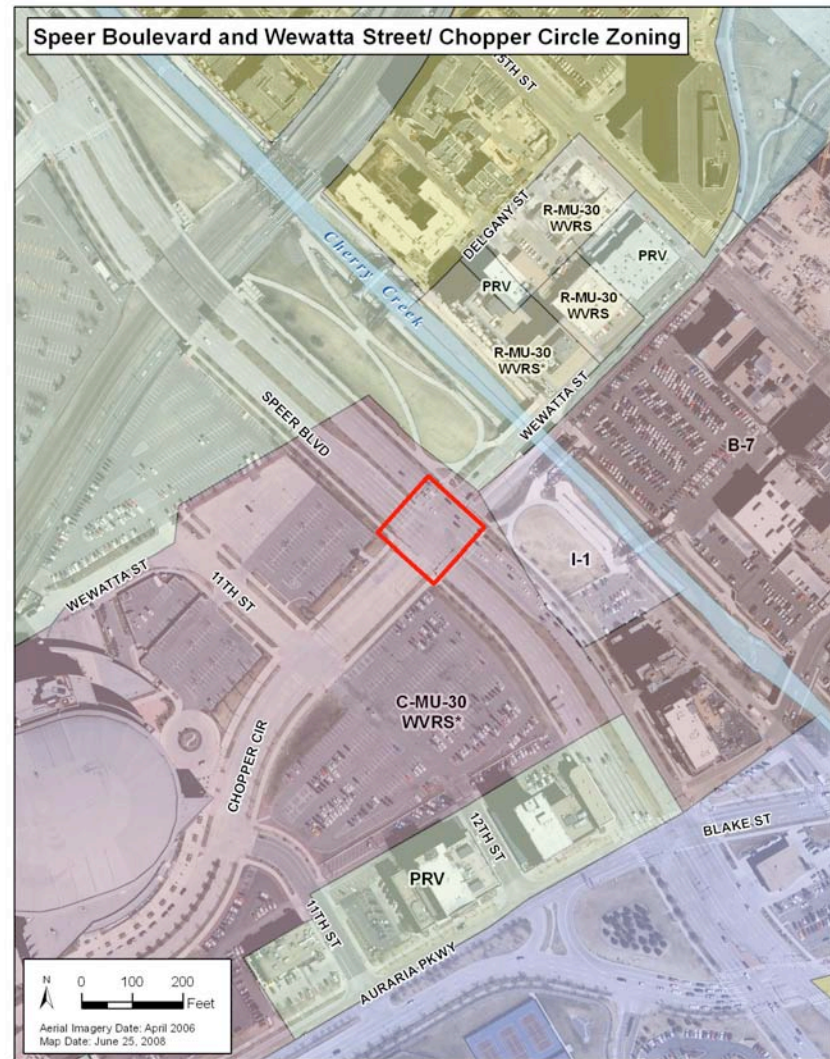
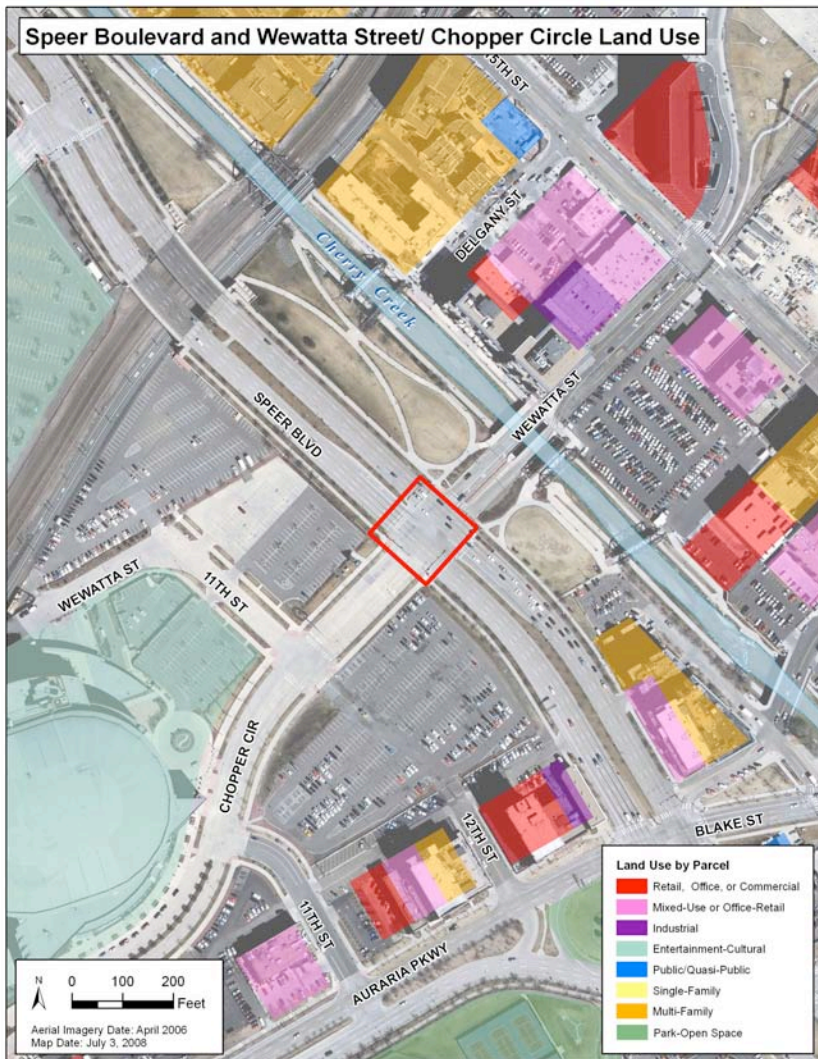
## Speer & Wewatta St. / Chopper Cir.



*Aerials*

# Place Audit Location #1

## Speer & Wewatta St. / Chopper Cir.



*Land Use/ Zoning*

*Location 1:  
Speer & Wewatta*



# *Location 1: Speer & Wewatta*

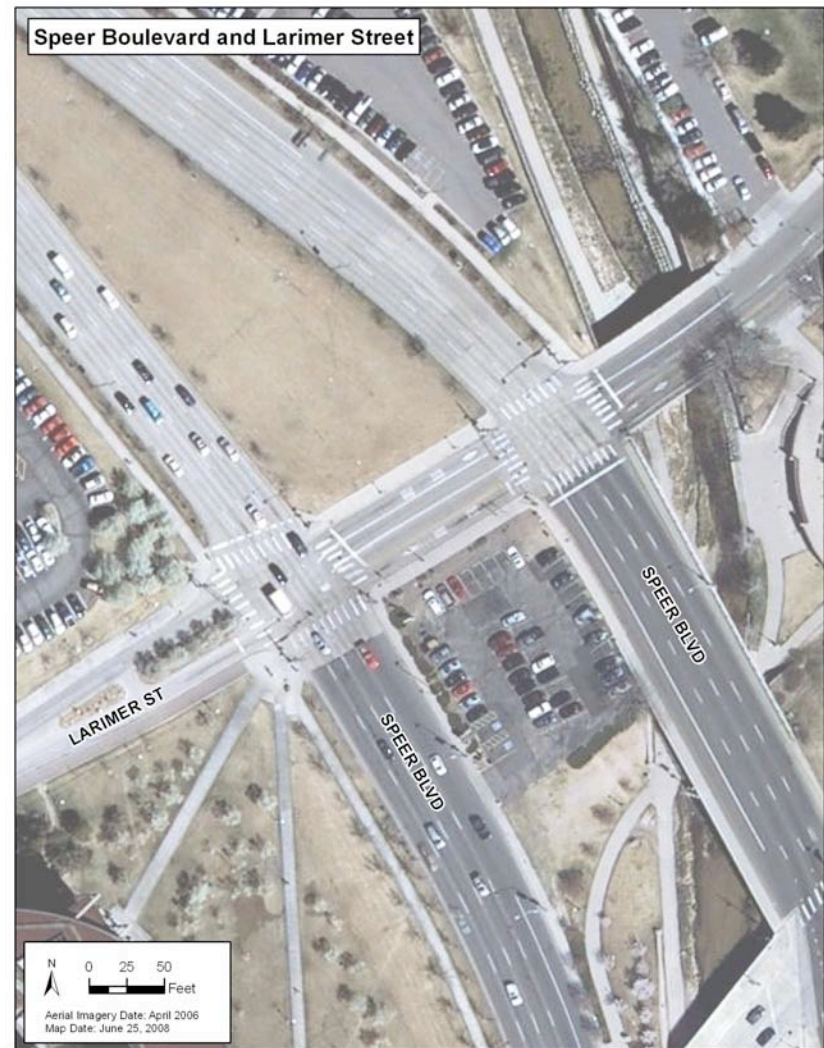
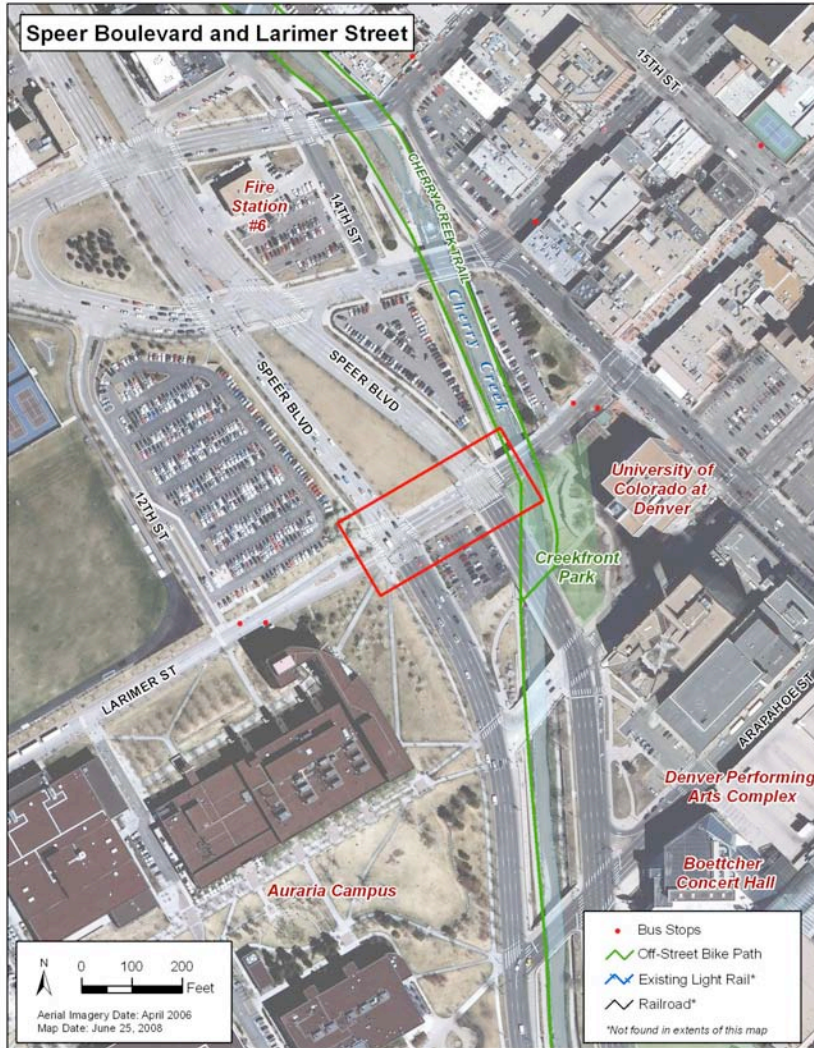


# *Location 1: Speer & Wewatta*



# Place Audit Location #2

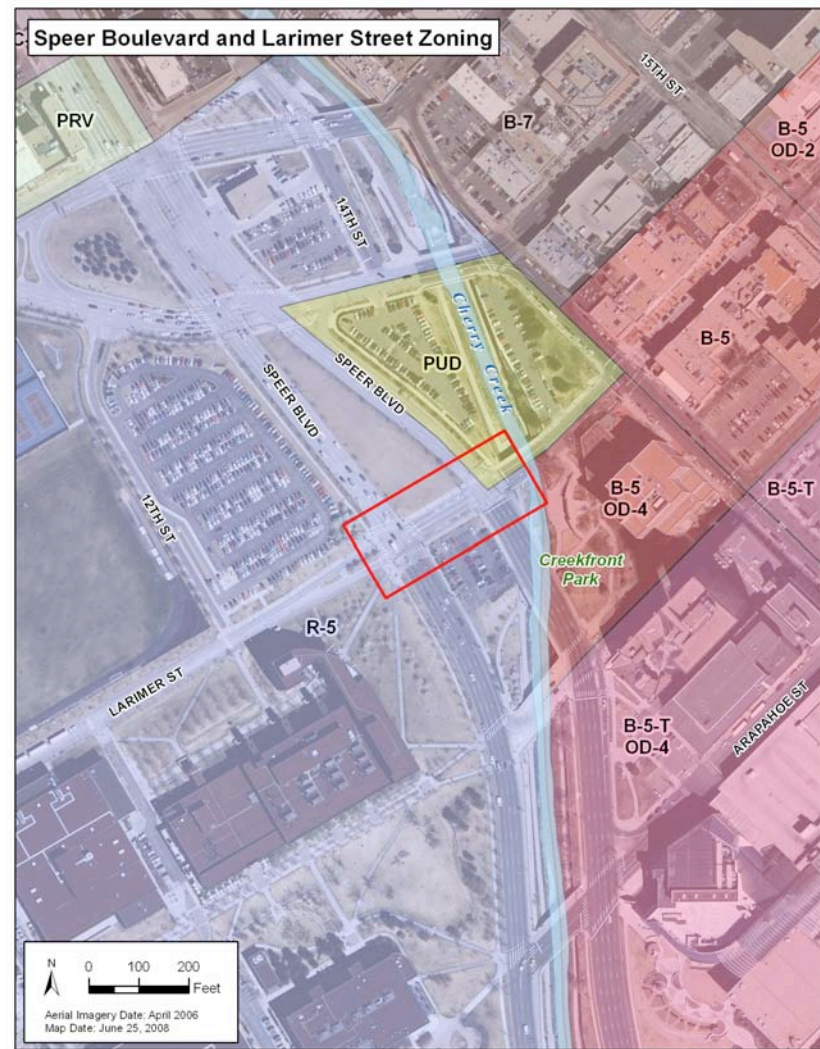
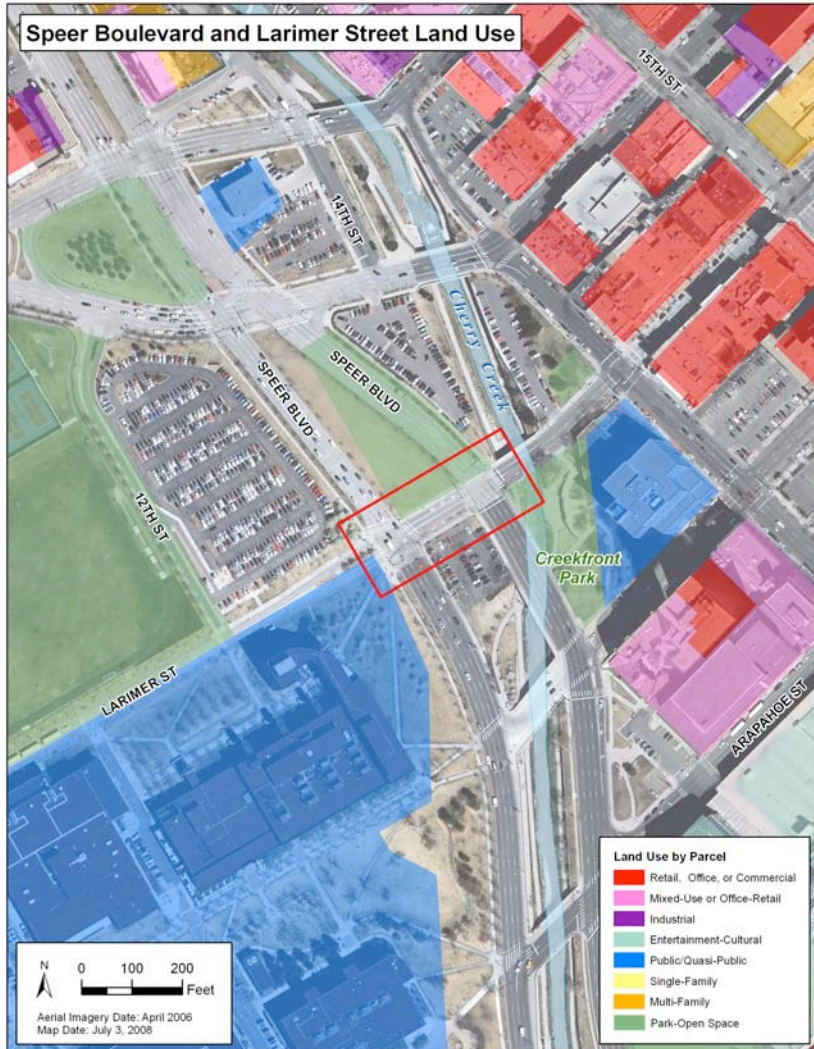
## Speer & Larimer St. / Lawrence St.





# Place Audit Location #2

## Speer & Larimer St. / Lawrence St.



*Land Use/Zoning*

# *Location 2: Speer & Lawrence/Larimer*





*Location 2: Speer &  
Lawrence/Larimer*

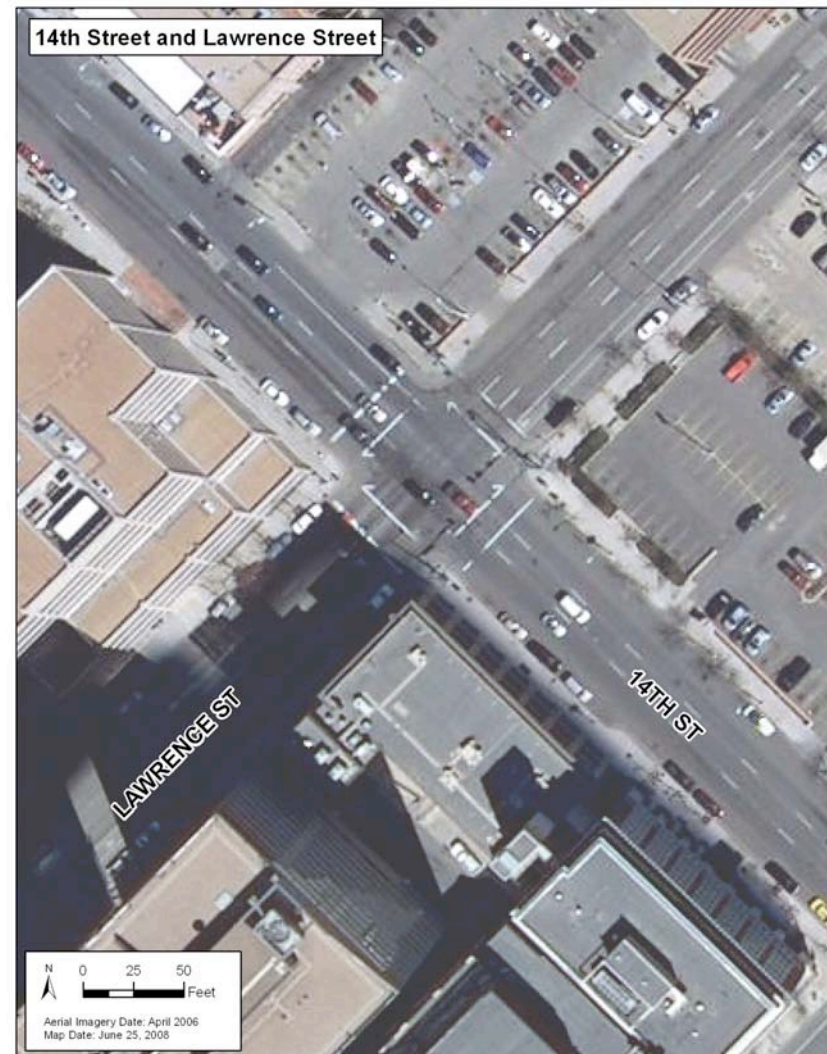


# *Location 2: Speer & Lawrence/Larimer*

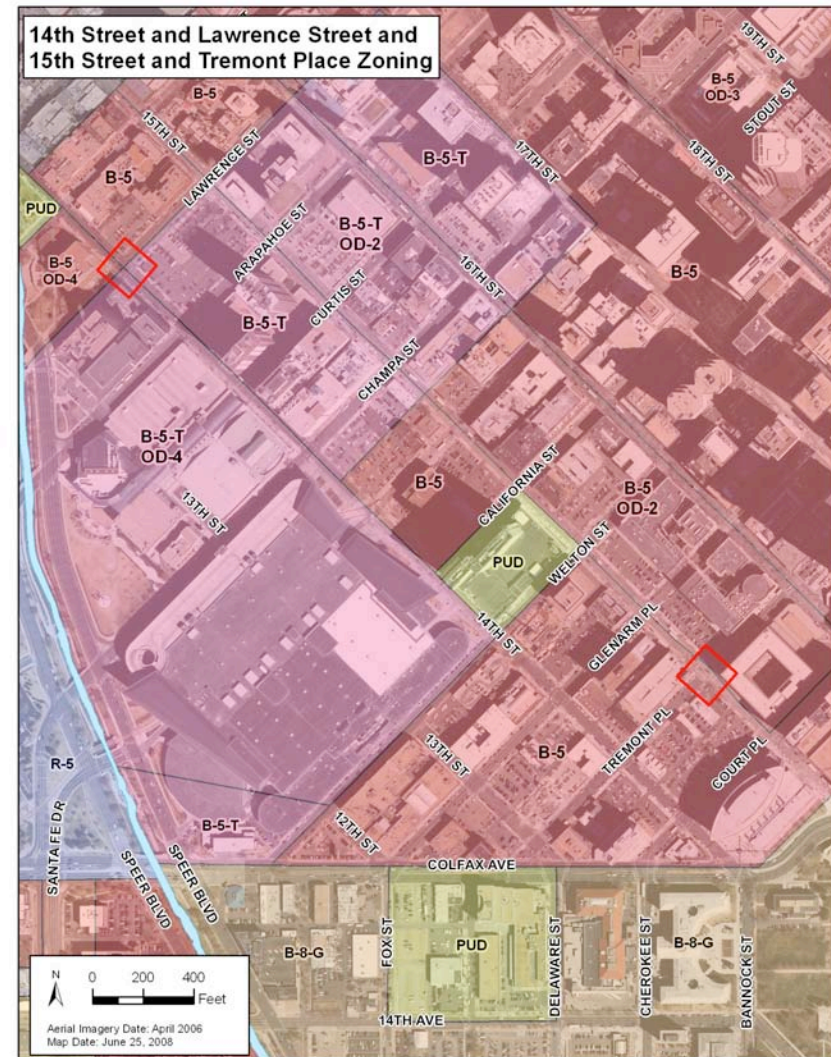
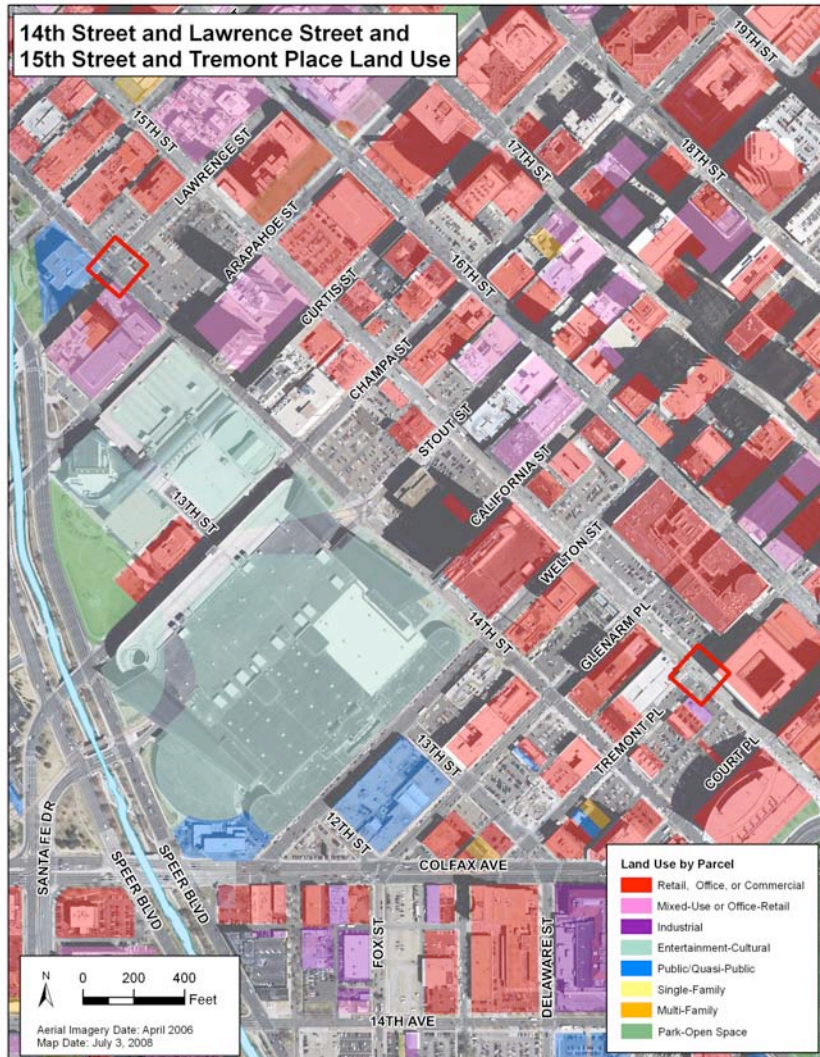


# Place Audit Location #3

## 14<sup>th</sup> & Lawrence or Arapahoe



# Place Audit Location #3 & 4 14<sup>th</sup> & Lawrence and 15<sup>th</sup> and Tremont



*Land Use/Zoning*

# Location 3: 14<sup>th</sup> & Lawrence



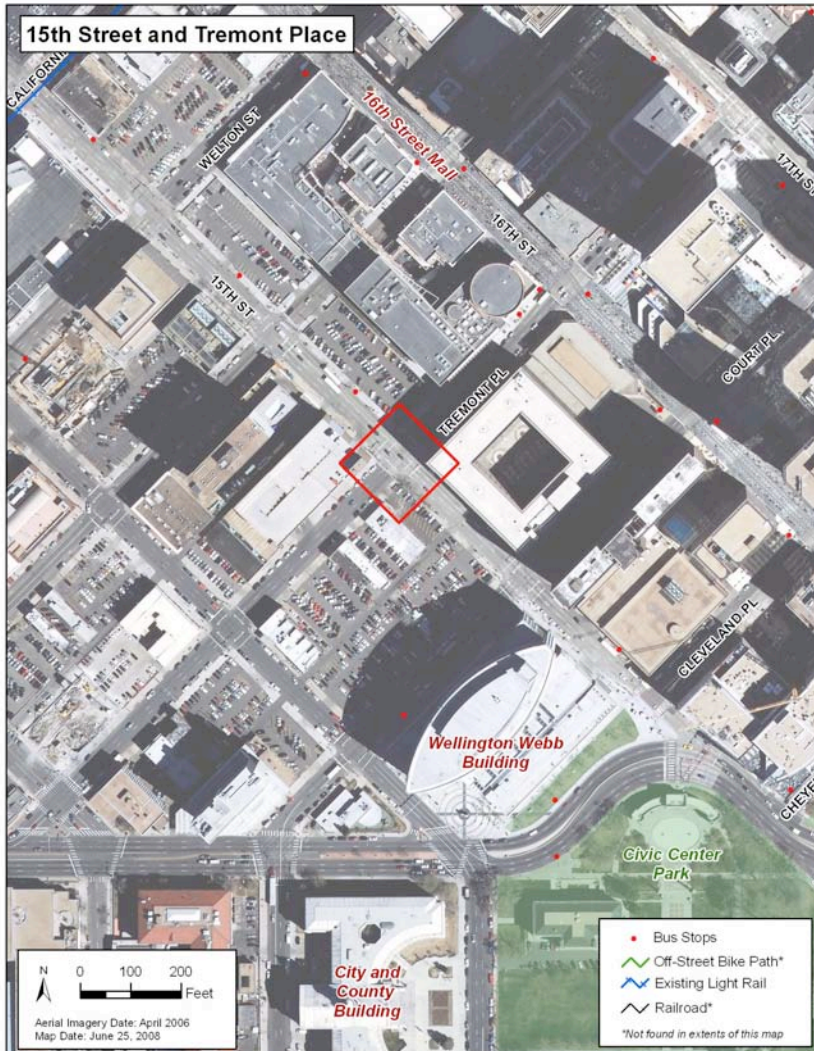
# Location 3: 14<sup>th</sup> & Lawrence





# Place Audit Location #4

## 15<sup>th</sup> & Tremont



*Aerials*

# Location 4: 15<sup>th</sup> & Tremont



# *Location 4: 15<sup>th</sup> & Tremont*

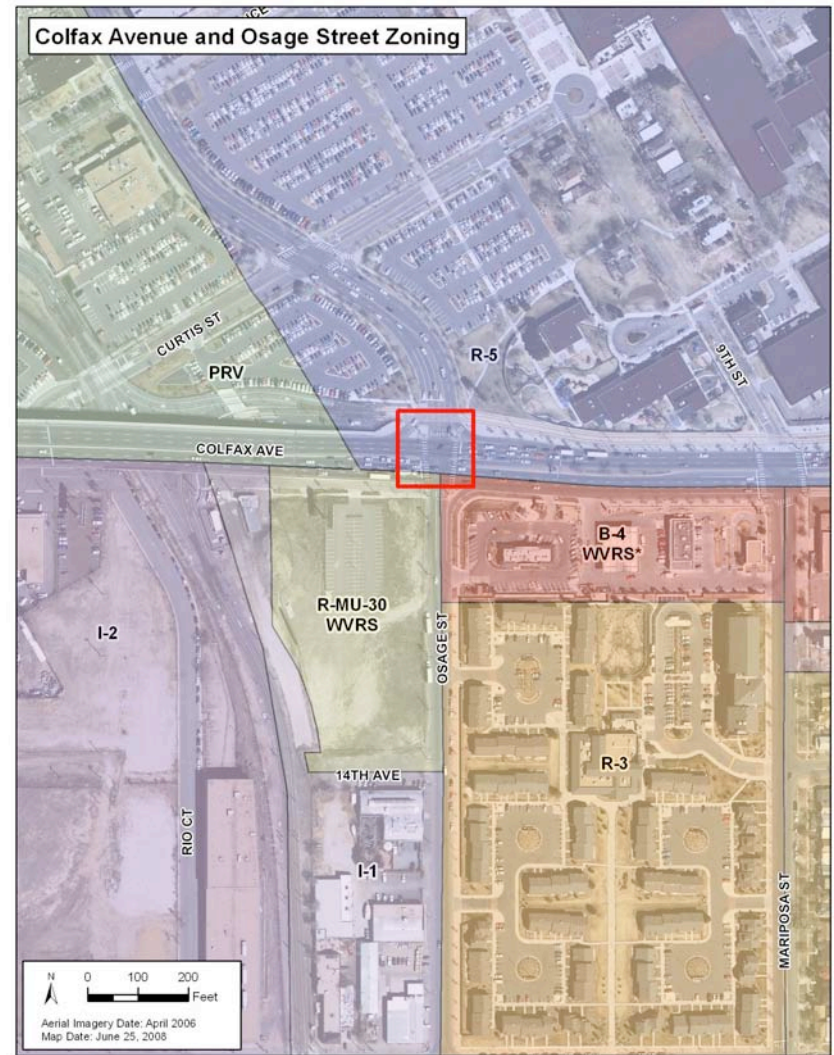
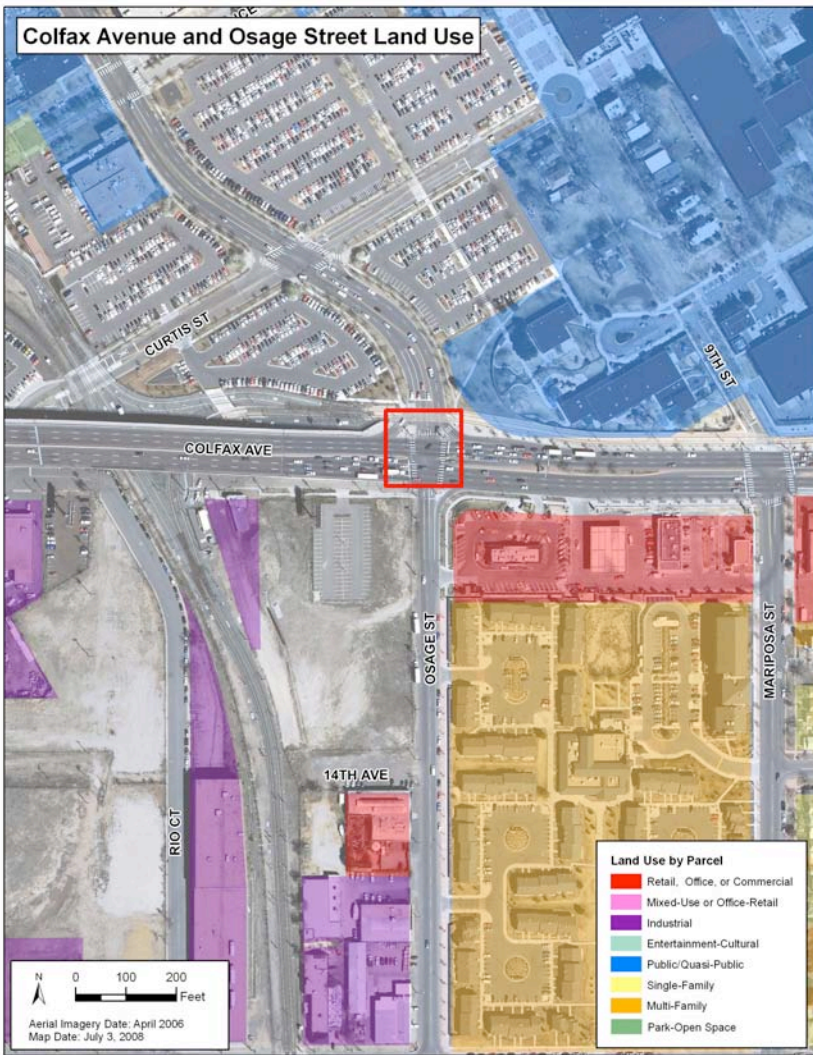


# Place Audit Location #5 Colfax & Osage at Auraria



*Aerials*

# Place Audit Location #5 Colfax & Osage at Auraria



*Land Use/Zoning*

# Location 5: Colfax & Osage & Auraria



# *Location 5: Colfax & Osage & Auraria*



# *Location 5: Colfax & Osage & Auraria*

