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Community Engagement

Engagement Overview

Each community along the Southwest Corridor Park has a unique history and relationship with their section of the park. Before community engagement began, the team understood it was critical to understand these nuances. It proposed using engagement methods outside of traditional public meetings to be receptive to the various lived experiences of residents and users of the park.

Throughout the process of gathering feedback from community members, the project team was guided by four values that led them towards a comprehensive engagement process. These values are:

Inclusivity: To ensure everyone who wanted to participate in the public process had an opportunity to contribute. This included creating environments where individuals felt comfortable to voice their wants for the park and concerns about the project.

Interactive + Fun: Fostering creative opportunities and events outside of traditional public meetings for users and residents along the Southwest Corridor Park to provide feedback. From using fun graphics on half sheets of paper to creating posters for a community visioning practice – there were multiple moments for the project team to make the engagement process more fun for all.

Consciousness: Recognition that the history between public agencies like the Department of Conservation and Recreation and marginalized communities have not always been the strongest and have been harmful in some cases.

Transparency: Providing clarity with community members and park users about how feedback is being incorporated into both the project and the decision making. This includes clarity around next steps of the project.

Survey Types

To gather feedback from users of the park and residents along the Southwest Corridor the project team created two surveys. The first survey, the general survey, was to collect general information about individual usage of the park, desires for change, and points of frustration about the park. The second survey, the park survey, was location specific, inquiring about different amenities and facilities in the park like the tennis courts, playgrounds, and fields. This survey was important to understand how people used specific sights and if those places needed major updates.

Wake Up the Earth Festival 2023 - May 2023

A festival held by community members to honor the anti-highway organizers' victory in stopping the expansion of I-95 through the City of Boston and the culture of Jamaica Plain and Roxbury. It is held close to Jackson Square.

101 surveys were collected from Wake Up the Earth.

OpenStreets Jamaica Plain - June 2023

For one day the City of Boston made Centre Street in Jamaica Plain car free. This allowed people to walk, bike, roll, and play along the sidewalks and road as they liked. During this event, the project team interviewed people walking along the street and asked them about their relationship with the Southwest Corridor Park.

Community Engagement(continued)

People interacted with the project through a Pinterest Board activity (details below), a bead activity (details below), survey responses, and informal conversations.

146 general surveys were collected from OpenStreets Jamaica Plain 2023.

Community Focus Group - June 2023

The project team selected a group of 15 organizations that represent different users of the park. From Boston Cyclist Union, to Northeastern University, and Mildred Haley Tenant Association – the group gathered in June to help guide the project team to understand concerns they have about the Southwest Corridor Park. The intention with this group is to meet with them two more times throughout the timeline of the project for direct input on designs and feedback on the project.

Mildred Hailey Hot Dog Night - Aug 2023

Mildred Hailey Hot Dog Night is an event organized by Mildred Hailey Tenants Organization for the residents of Mildred Hailey Housing development. Mildred Hailey (formerly known as Mildred C. Hailey Apartments) is a public housing development in the Jamaica Plain neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts and the Hot Dog Night is a way to bring residents together for socialization and community building.

Although the LivableStreets team only received 2-3 surveys from this engagement, they had the opportunity to connect with people working in the Tenant Organization who offered to facilitate future conversations. And the team also met with the

Bridge Church team who organized the Teen Summer Night at Jackson Square. We also did some engagement with the Pinterest Board activity (see details below) at this event.

The Bridge Church Teen Summer Night at Jackson Square - Aug 2023

An event held specifically for teenagers in the community, the Bridge Church's Roller Skating Night was an opportunity for the project team to talk with young adults – an often overlooked population. The team created a half-sheet asking what teenagers wanted the park to look like in the future.

6 teen surveys were collected from teenagers at Bridge Church Teen Summer Night.

Mildred Haley Unity Day - August 2023

Unity Day is an outdoor community event organized by the Mildred Haley Tenants Organization for residents of Mildred Haley Apartments in Jackson Square. LivableStreets and Toole Design staff spoke with residents about the Southwest Corridor Park Action Plan and facilitated the completion of general surveys.

The team engaged with teenagers using the teen specific survey – also used at the Bridge Church Teen Summer Night. Additionally, younger children could provide feedback using a coloring sheet activity where kids were asked to draw their perfect park. Several children wished they had more play equipment on the corridor near Jackson Square and more fun things like colorfully painted sidewalks.

The team received 17 completed general surveys from Mildred Haley adult residents.

Community Engagement(continued)

3 coloring sheets were collected from children at the Unity Day event.

1 teen survey was collected from a teenager at the Unity Day event.

Street Ambassador Deployments - August 2023

Street Ambassador Definition: Conducting one-on-one interviews with people using the Southwest Corridor Park.

Between August 15th and August 27th, the project team deployed Street Ambassadors to administer general and site specific surveys. This was also an opportunity to talk with users about the Action Plan and inform them about the public process. Each day, Street Ambassadors were stationed at a different section of the Southwest Corridor Park to ensure survey collection from different neighborhoods. This method of engagement was specifically helpful in gathering feedback from members of the community who may have been unaware of the project.

100+ general surveys were collected through this process.
45 park surveys we collected through this process.

Mission Hill Farmers Market: Roxbury Crossing - September 2023

The Mission Hill Farmers Market travels to Roxbury Crossing, in front of the T station, every Tuesday and Friday. The farmers market allowed the team to survey residents from the Roxbury section of the Southwest Corridor Park – the portion with the least greenspace. Team LivableStreets set up a table on Sept 5th from 11 am to 2 pm to talk to residents accessing the farmers market. With

this engagement activity limited surveys were collected but we were able to distribute half sheets and get the word out about the project.

1 general survey was collected at the Mission Hill Farmers Market: Roxbury Crossing.

Informal Conversations and Observations

During structured engagement activities, folks would approach the project team to ask about the Engagement Plan. These informal conversations provided insights about the Southwest Corridor that would have been hard to capture without being physically present on the Corridor.

During these interactions, community members shared knowledge that often did not fit into the structure of a survey. These moments of personal narrative and lived experience were captured in notes and used as qualitative data for analysis.

Interactive Mapping

Although surveys are helpful tools, they lack the ability to ground feedback in distinct sites or locations. To literally and figuratively “ground data” the project team created an interactive virtual map where park users could share feedback for specific locations of the Southwest Corridor Park while using the map.

263 pieces of feedback have been provided on the interactive map.

Pinterest Board

Using photos and inspiration from parks and open spaces –

Community Engagement(continued)

nationally and internationally – the project team gave participants the opportunity to cut and paste images to a board. The board was organized in categories similar to the Pinterest website. Participants who agreed with an image that was already on the board could “like” that image by adding a sticker to it.

Community Based Organizations

There are dozens of community and faith-based organizations along the Southwest Corridor that serve as important cultural anchors. The project team found it essential to update these organizations about the Action Plan. The project team narrowed down the list of organizations of interest to include ones that represented populations that might be less likely to participate in traditional public meetings. During Phase I, organizations were contacted to share information about the public meeting and the survey.

Yard Signs

To further increase engagement with the Southwest Corridor Action Plan – particularly with bikers using the park – the project team planted lawn signs in the Corridor. The signs were translated into Spanish and utilized a QR code to link visitors to the general survey and the interactive map.

Newsletter + E-blasts

The project team used newsletters and e-blasts to communicate with park users in another way. The project team used zipcode data to send e-blasts to LivableStreets newsletter subscribers who live near the Southwest Corridor Park. Subscribers were informed about the first public meeting for the project and the general survey. DCR sent out similarly scheduled email updates to

individuals who had signed up for a project email list with DCR. Communication aimed to inform the public about the process and solicit feedback.

Half filled surveys

Surveying people in person provided an opportunity to chat in depth about the Action Plan. However, users of the Park may not be ready or able to take five minutes out of their day to complete a survey. Furthermore, some users may not feel comfortable responding to all questions. For these reasons, not all surveys were completed.

Optional Data

In our general survey, we gave respondents the option of self-identifying their race, gender, and disability status. Our goal in collecting this demographic data was to analyze the dataset for any patterns that might exist around how different demographic groups experience the park (i.e. do certain racial groups feel less safe using the park?). These optional demographic questions were the questions that were most frequently left unanswered. While the project team acknowledges that these questions are sensitive, the demographic questions also reveal nuances about how people move through space and experience the world. Included demographic responses were analyzed for deeper nuance in park usage.

Some People Preferred To Converse

Not all people were interested in filling out surveys. Many preferred to share thoughts and ideas through personal stories, histories, and lived experiences. At times, this verbal feedback supported a survey, while at others it replaced one.

Community Engagement(continued)

histories, and lived experiences. At times, this verbal feedback supported a survey, while at others it replaced one.

These conversations with park users were captured as notes and analyzed for themes similar to the survey data. Stories often trailed into ideas folks have for improving the corridor. While these ideas may not be explicitly captured in Phase I feedback, they are laying the foundation for potential design solutions.

Some Neighborhoods Are Represented More Than Others

The Southwest Corridor Park runs through three prominent neighborhoods of Boston — Jamaica Plain, Roxbury, and the South End. Although these neighborhoods have thriving political and community engagement in their own right, some communities (mainly residents of Jamaica Plain) participated in the general survey more than residents of the other neighborhoods. The project tried to counteract this imbalance by attending events and surveying along the corridor in Roxbury and the South End.

Language Barriers

Neighborhoods that border the Southwest Corridor Park are culturally diverse, representing at least five commonly spoken languages. These include English, Spanish, Haitian Creole, Cantonese, and Mandarin.

In an effort to hear from all users, the team prioritized language accessibility. With a project that spanned through multiple large neighborhoods it was important that the project team had materials such as the surveys, info sheets and signs translated into the languages listed above. Despite translating materials, it was not guaranteed that folks were willing to engage or understand

the content without assistance of someone who spoke the same language. Often, during in-person survey collection, it was difficult to communicate to non-English speakers that translated materials existed and to answer questions while people tried to complete the survey.

Public Meeting and Open Houses

Public meetings were held at key milestones throughout the project allowing DCR to share current thinking and solicit community input.

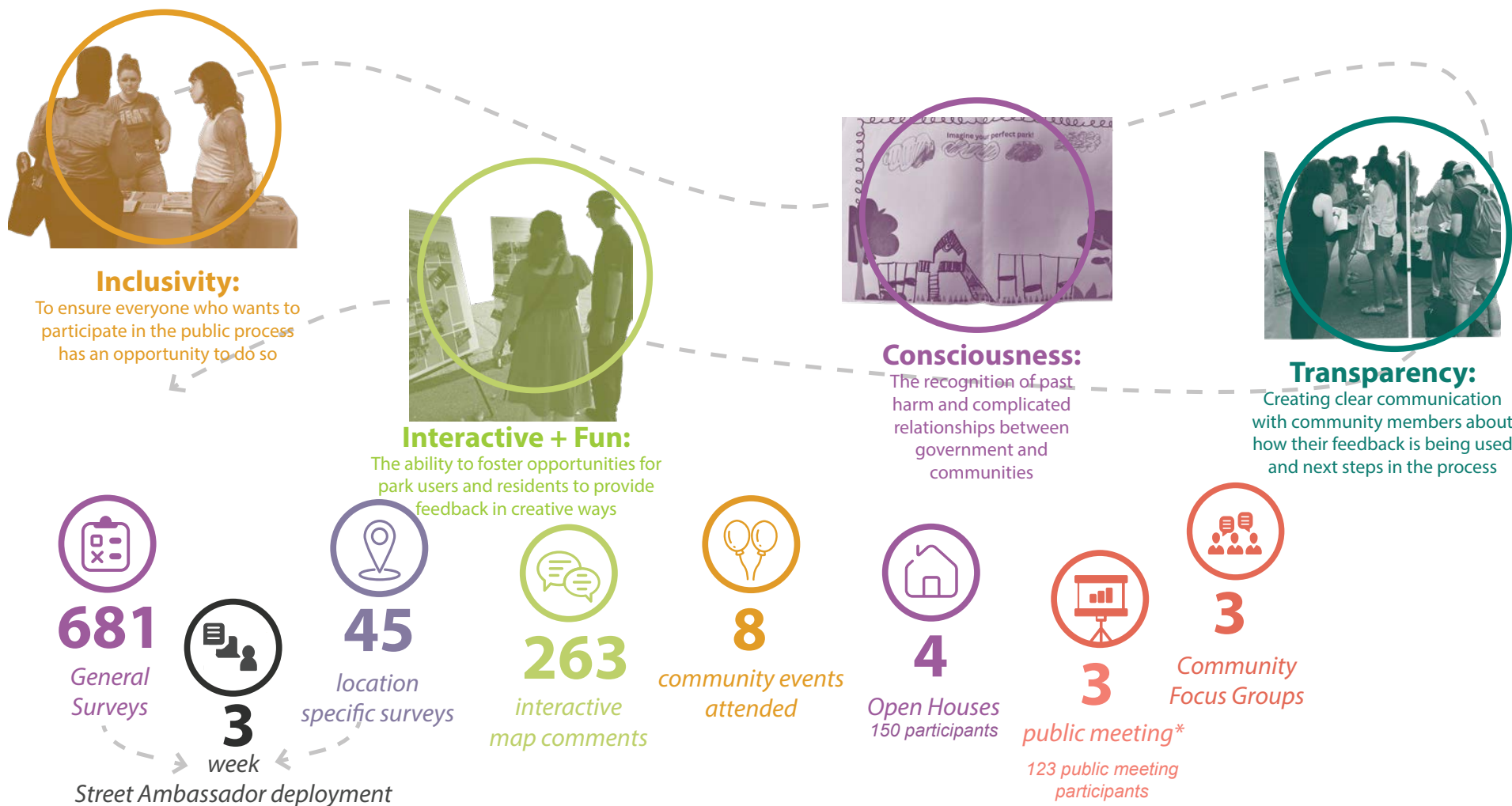
- Public meeting #1 July 2023
(Solicited input on park use, needs, opportunities)
- Public meeting #2 February 2024
(Shared back community input and discussed possible design recommendations)
- Public meeting #3 May 2024
(Shared initial action plan recommendations)
- Public meeting #4 June 2024
(Shared final action plan recommendations, explained project prioritization and phasing)

Open houses (virtual and three in-person neighborhood specific) were held in January 2024 to share back community feedback received to date, and to gather more specific feedback before developing design recommendations.

Engagement Approach

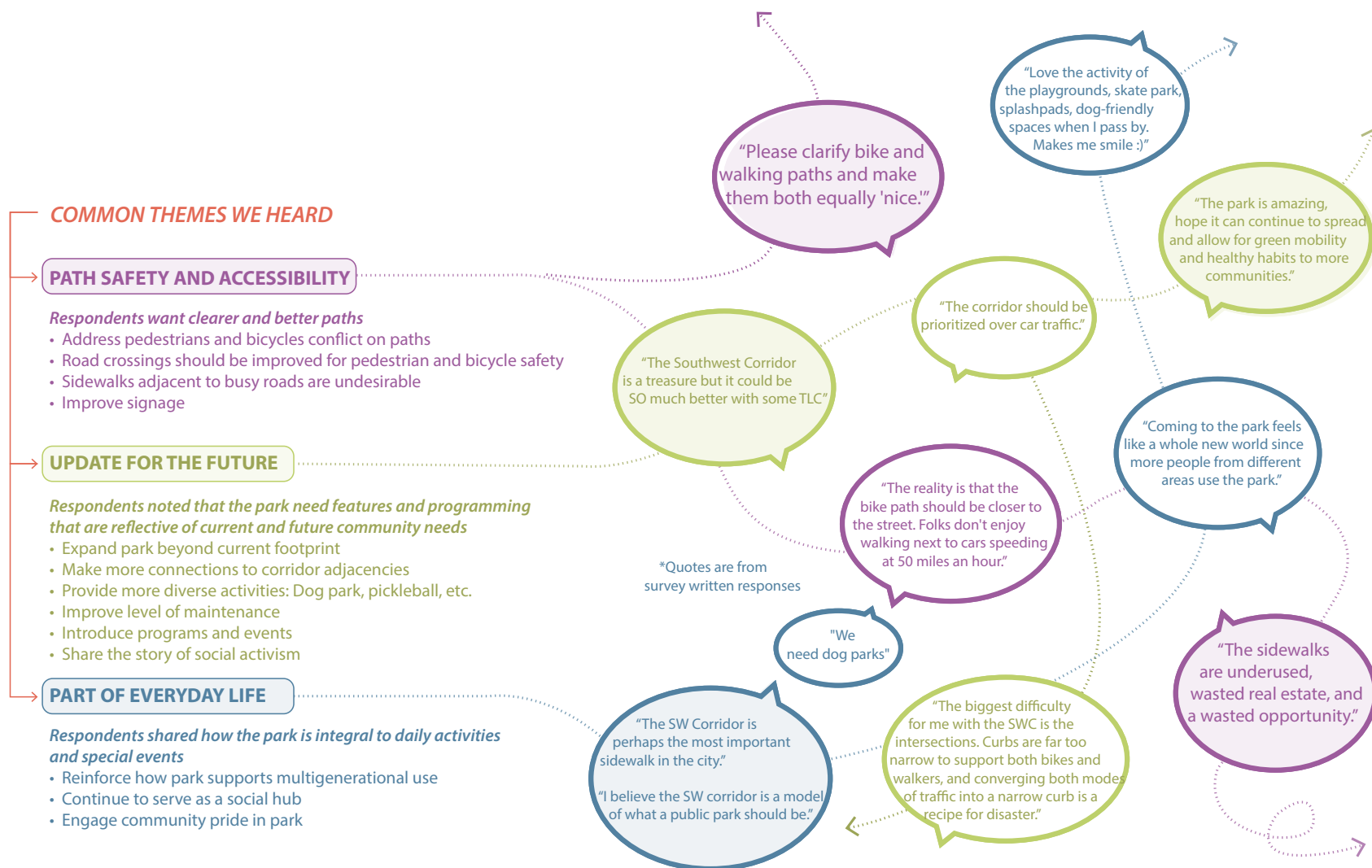
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The engagement process strived to provide an equitable outreach approach that includes a diversity of voices. Outreach strategies included one on one interactions, meetings with government agencies, stakeholders and friends groups, presence at community events, interactive mapping and input surveys.



Community Feedback

From the many community interactions, completed surveys and meetings there are common themes that we heard again and again.



Community Feedback

681 input surveys were completed in multiple languages. Some of these surveys were not completed in full due to various factors. For instance, surveying was sometimes cut short or declining to answer certain questions. A summary of many of the survey questions are included on the next two slides.



681

Survey respondents
4 languages

What makes you proud of your neighborhood?



I use the corridor...

669 respondents, 1,432 votes, 216 written responses

Most people use the park for fun activities and recreation.

How often do you use the Southwest Corridor?

666 respondents, 666 votes

Survey responses indicate that **people used the park multiple times a week or daily.**

If you come here to play, what types of activities do you do?

539 respondents, 1,112 votes

The most popular activities include **hanging out, dog walking, and playing at the courts.**

I wish I could play sports in the park like:

134 respondents, 161 votes

Respondents noted they would like to play **pickleball, tennis and soccer** in the park. Others noted frisbee, basketball, and volleyball.

I wish I could have cultural programs + events in the park like:

259 respondents, 352 votes

Cultural programs like **concerts, festivals, and markets** are **desired**.

I wish I could have food/eateries in the park like:

324 respondents, 420 votes

Food trucks, beer garden and coffee opportunities were food/eateries that people suggested for the park.

How would you like to improve the park?

653 respondents, 2,429 votes

Park improvements highlighted the **need for better bike paths, walkways and street crossings**. People would also like public art, more trees and better signage.

How safe do you feel when using the park?

645 respondents, 702 votes

If you feel unsafe, what makes you feel unsafe?

443 respondents, 676 votes

Generally, people feel safe during the day, but it is the **lack of lighting** in some places that most greatly makes people feel unsafe.

What do you love about the Southwest Corridor?

646 respondents, 2,657 votes

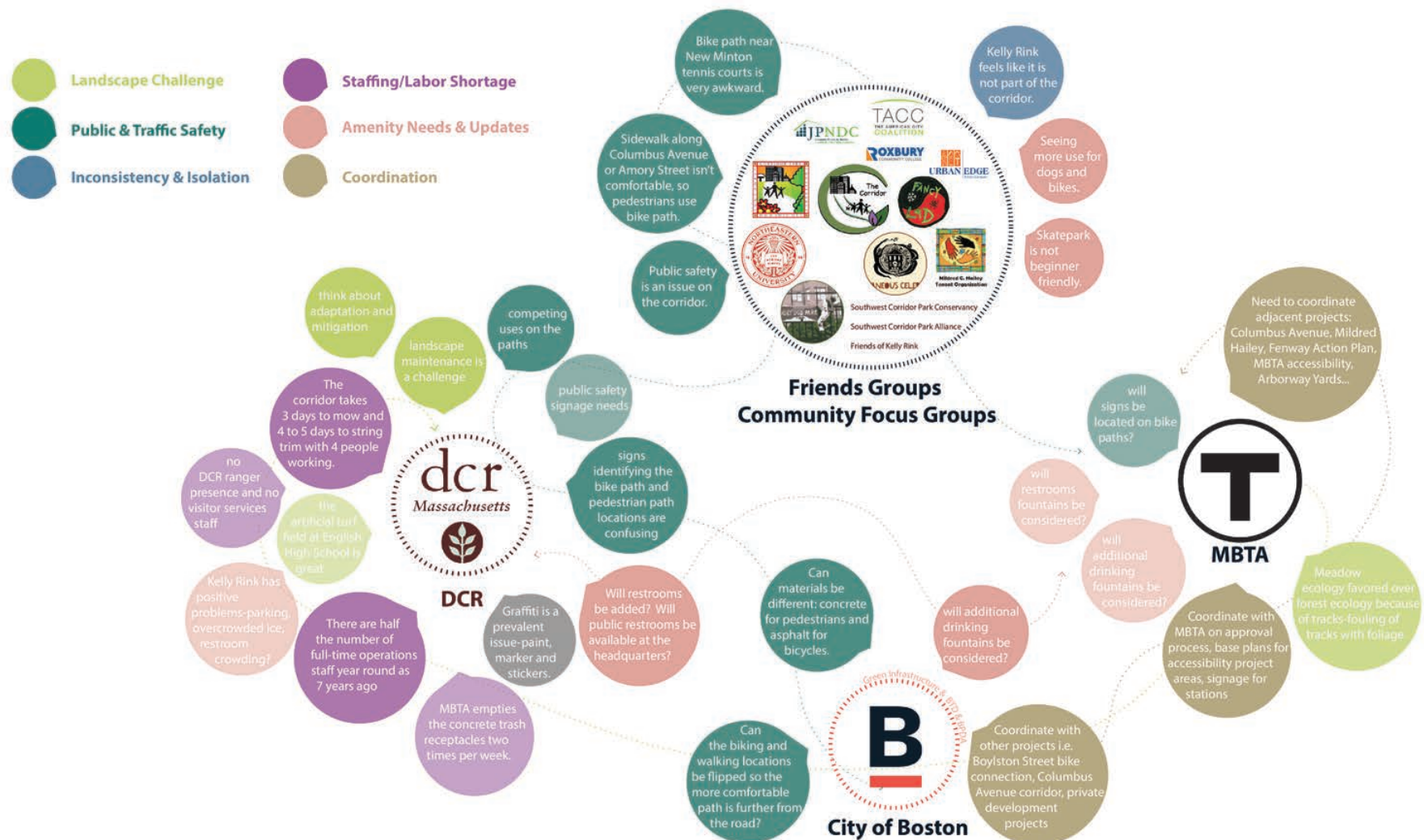
The survey responses listed many reasons to love the Southwest Corridor Park including **easy access to bicycle paths and transit**, natural surroundings, and its close recreational facilities.

Respondents also added written responses about specific issues like **the need for dog parks.**



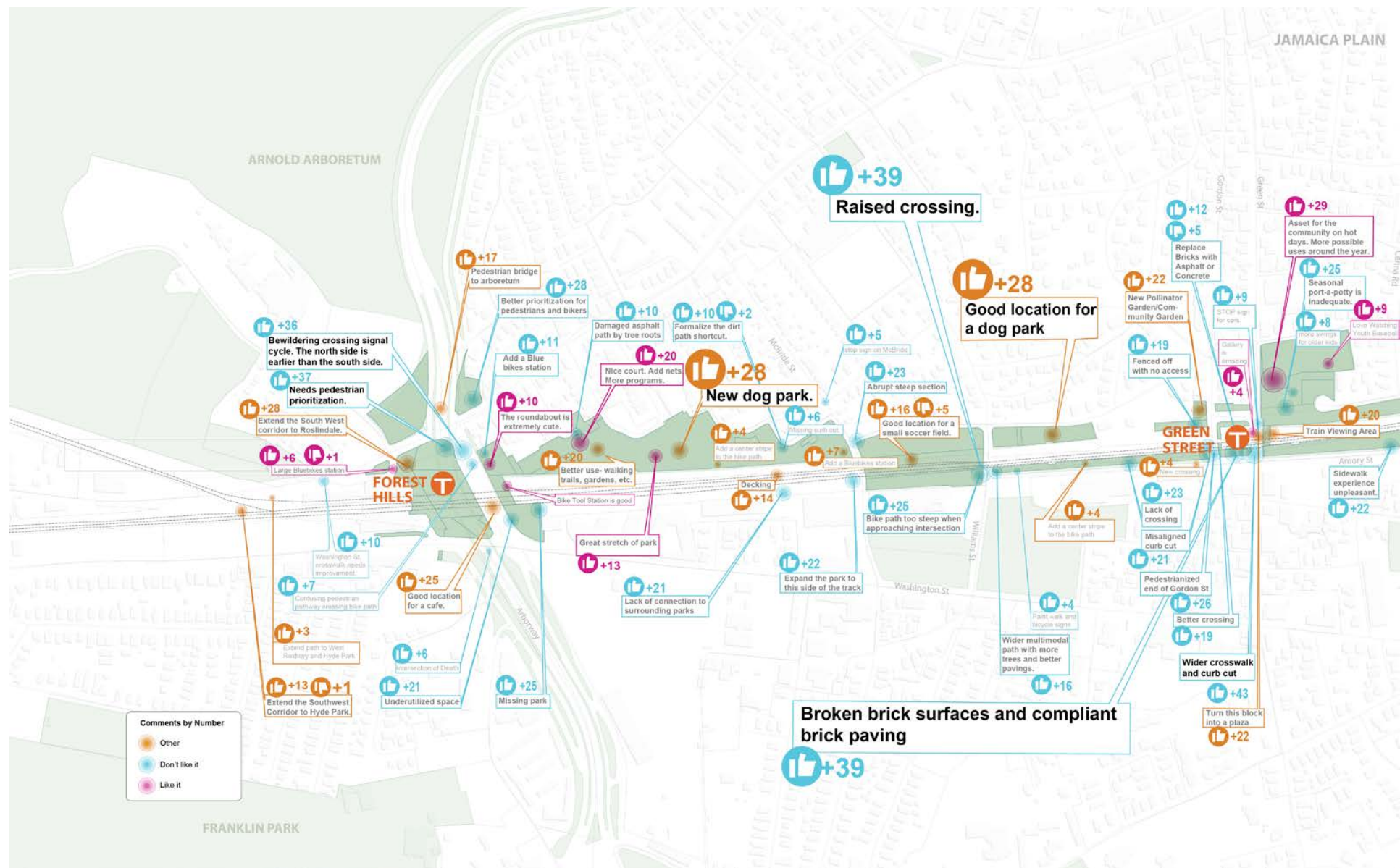
Governmental Agency and Stakeholder Feedback

The project team met with DCR staff from many departments, City of Boston, MBTA, friends groups, a community focus group, and many stakeholders to fully understand the varied viewpoints and issues.



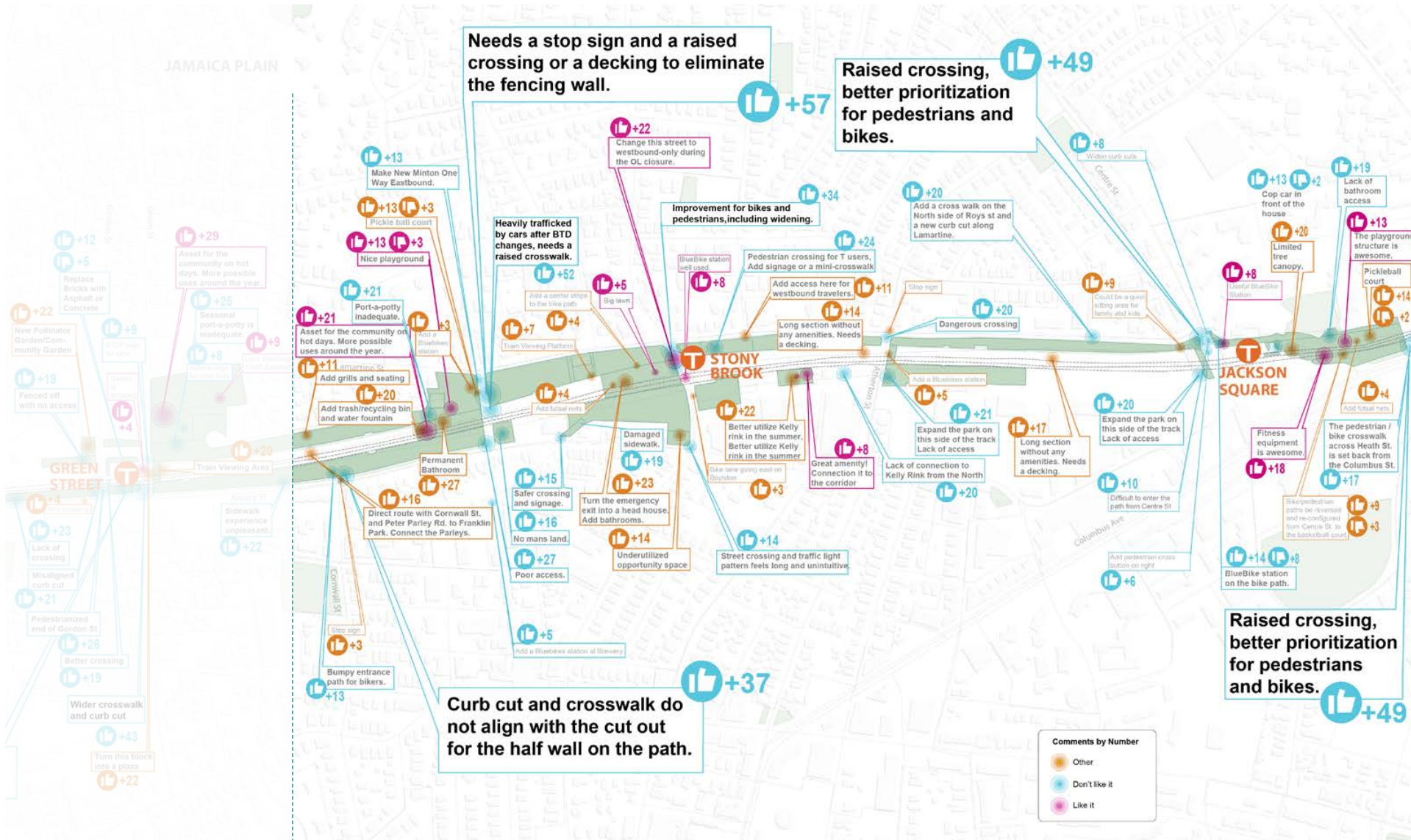
Public Feedback From Interactive Map

Forest Hills To Green Street

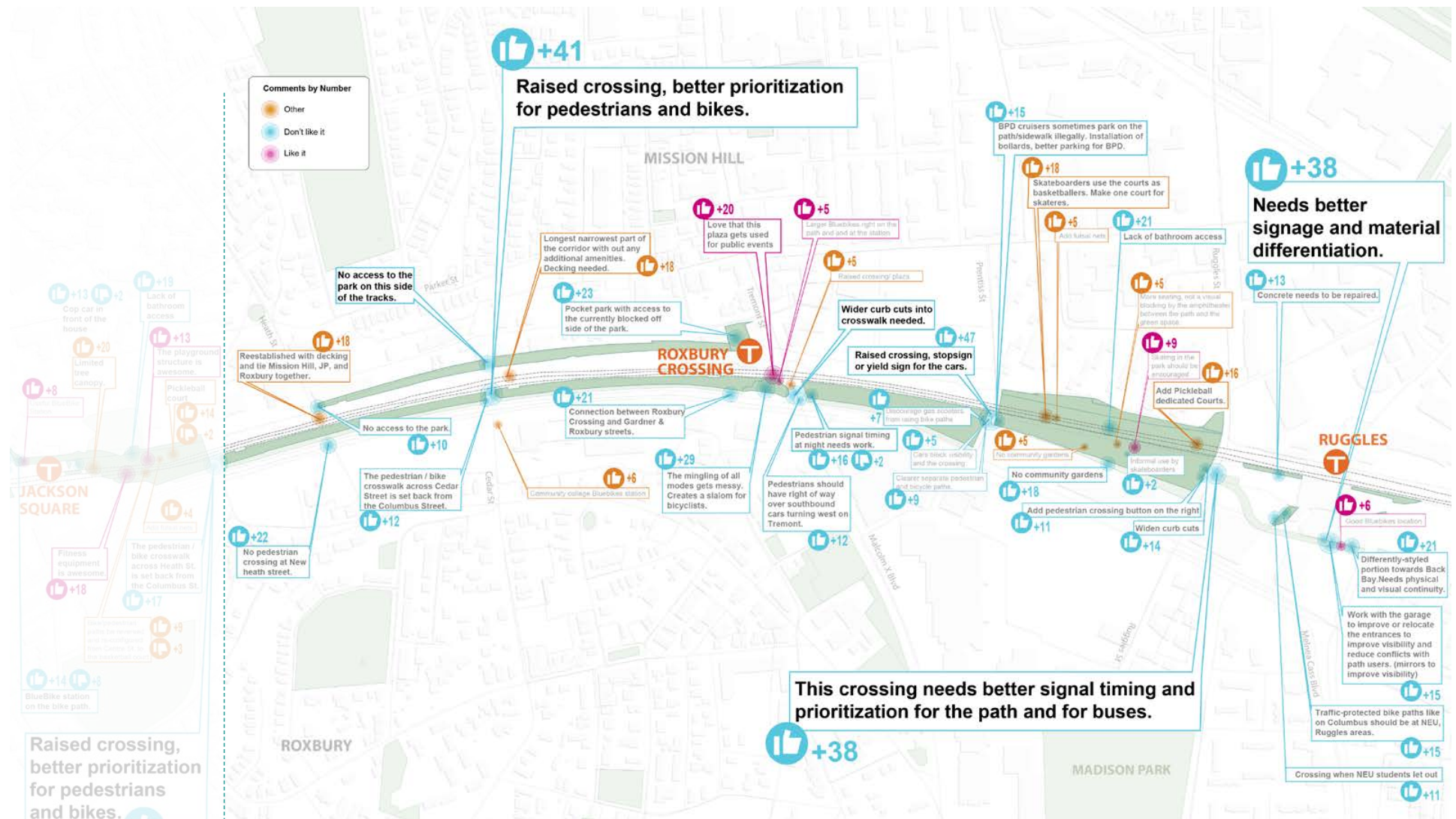


Public Feedback From Interactive Map

Green Street to Jackson Square



Public Feedback From Interactive Map



Public Feedback From Interactive Map

