

*Improvements to*  
**COPLEY SQUARE PARK**

**PHASE 1 FEEDBACK SUMMARY AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES**  
**FEBRUARY 11TH, 2021**

**BOSTON PARKS AND RECREATION**

**SASAKI**



# Online Survey Results



# Many Community Touchpoints...



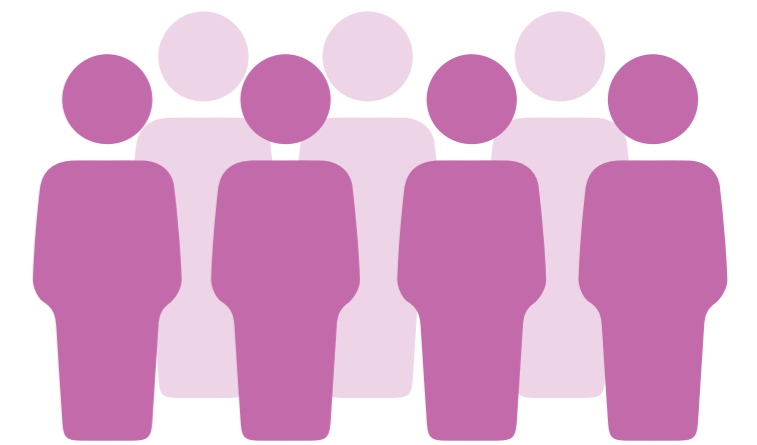
**1,244**

Online Survey Responses



**16** Steering Committee Members

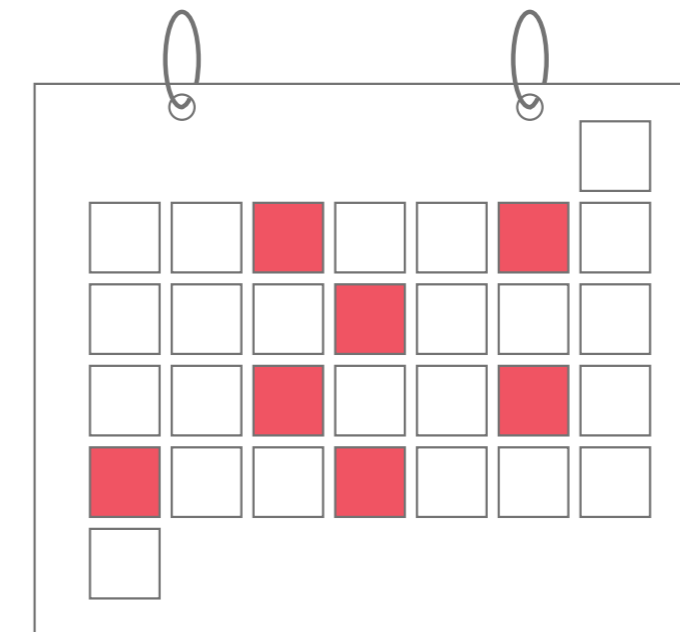
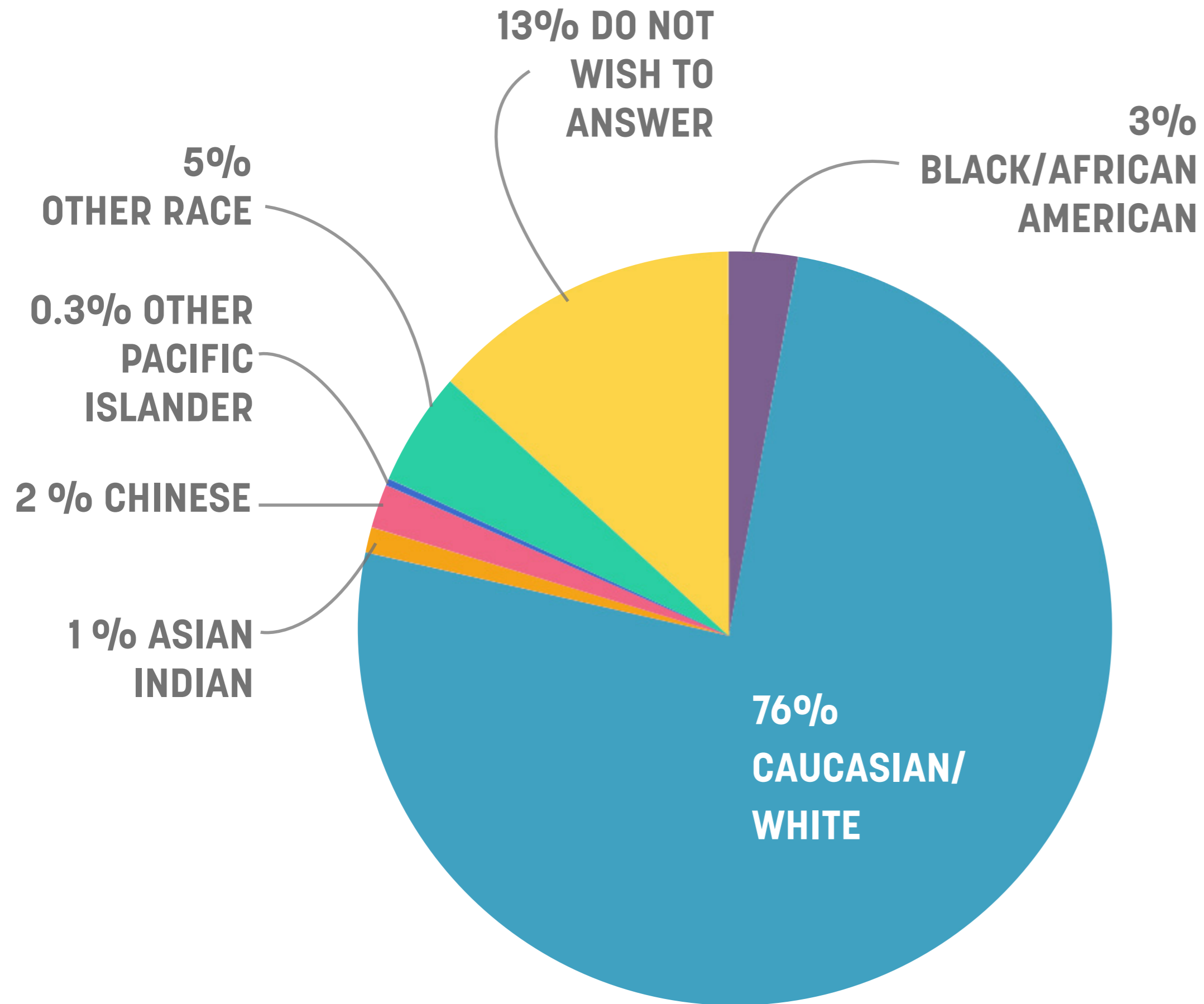
**12** Meetings with Parks Staff



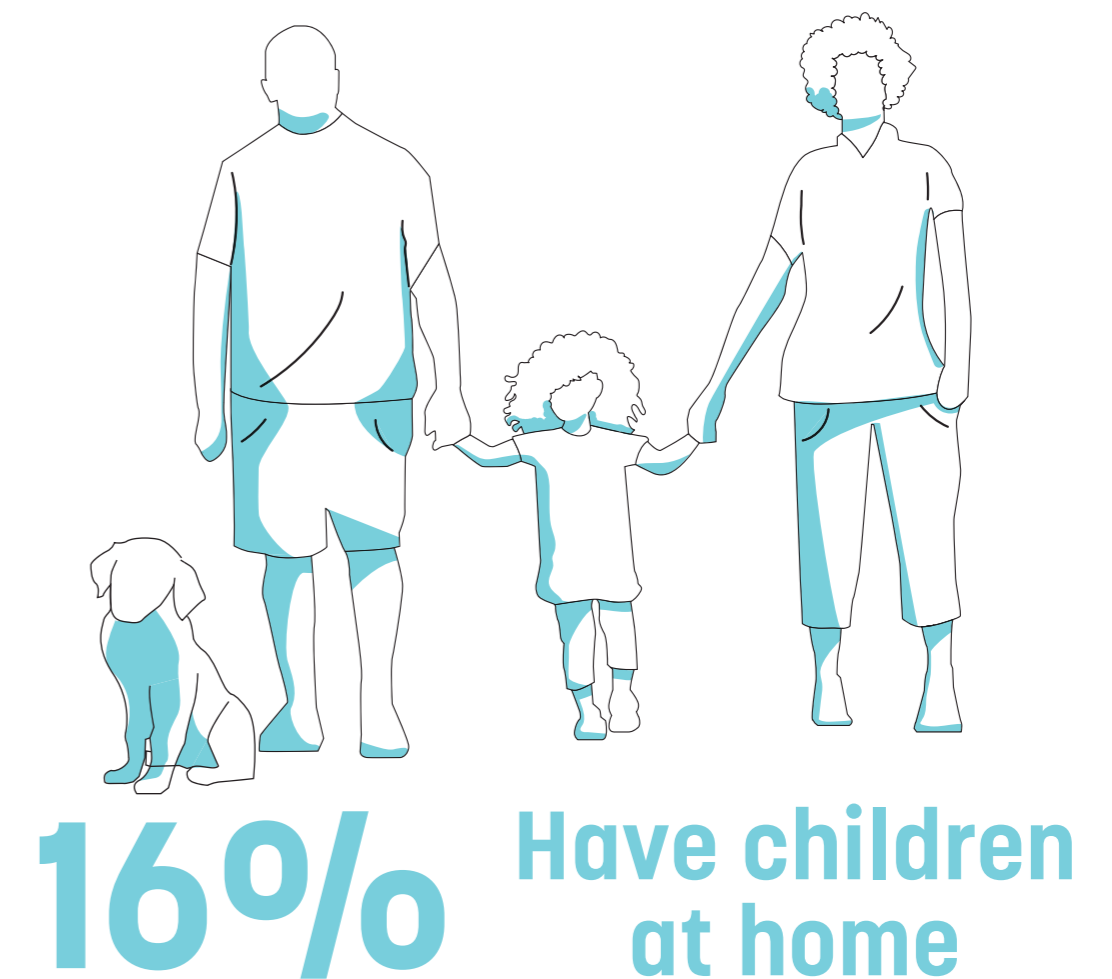
**85**

Attendance at Public Forum

# A Diversity of Contributing Voices...



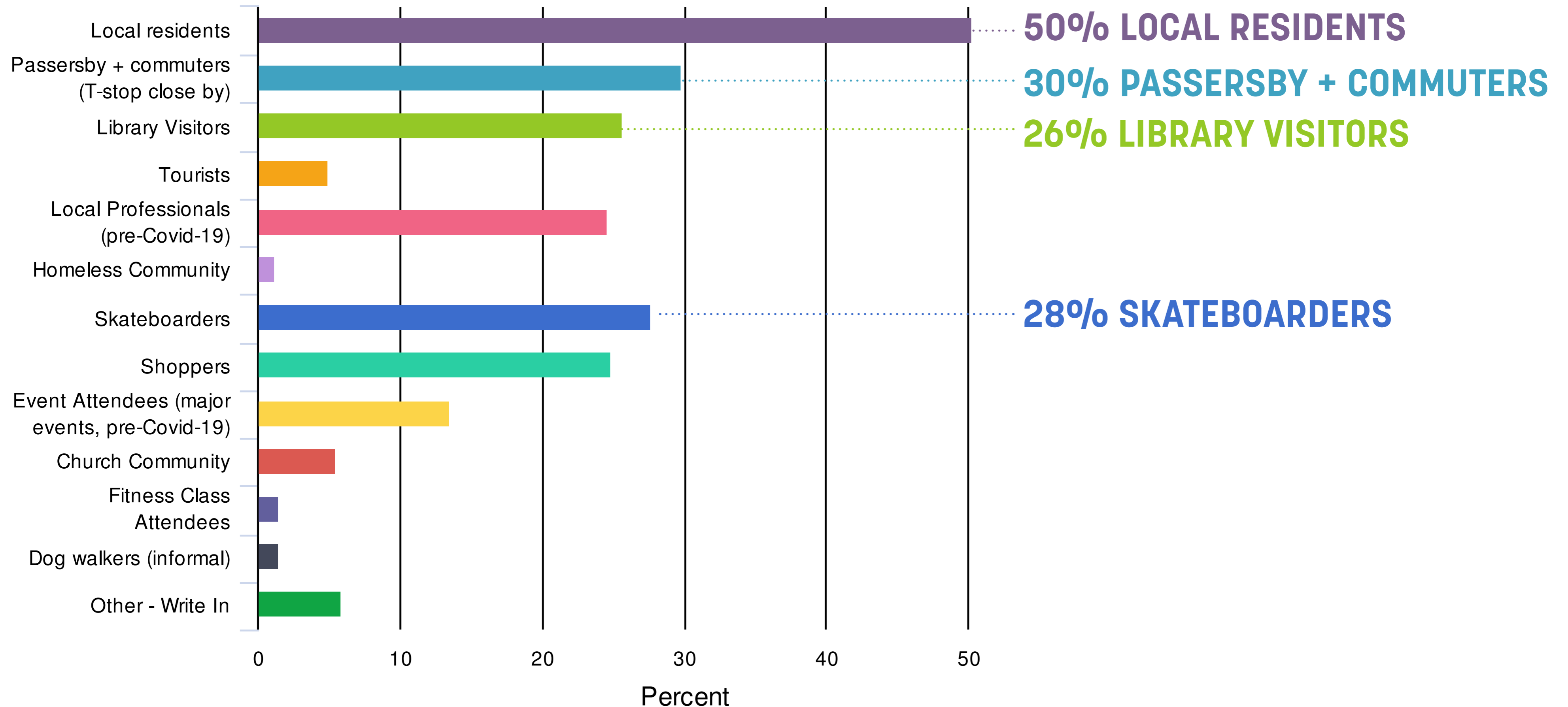
**54%**  
**VISIT DAILY  
OR WEEKLY**



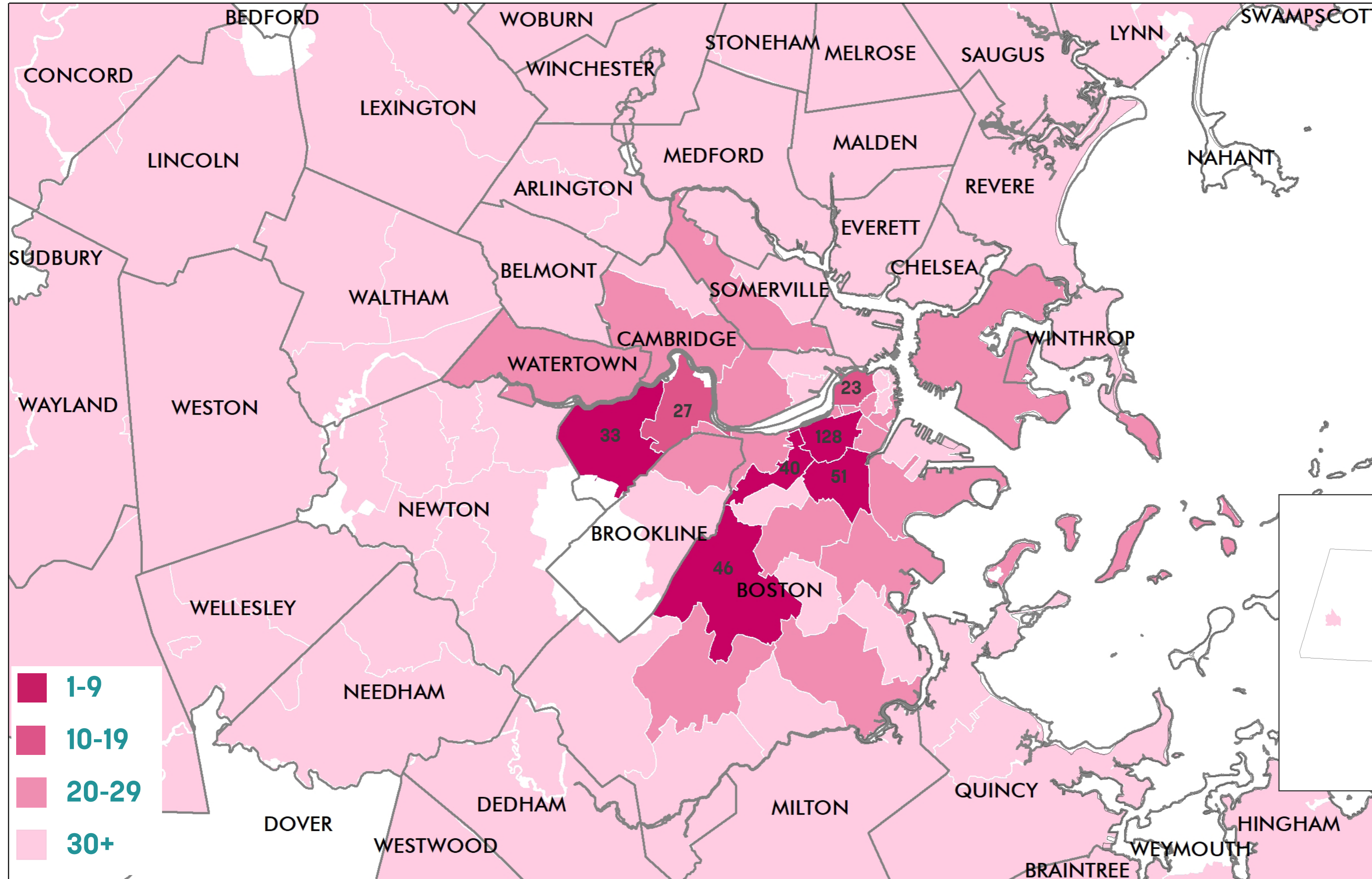
# Identifying with Many User Groups...

\*Respondents could choose up to 3 user groups

*Top four groups users identified with...*



# Representing the City and Beyond...



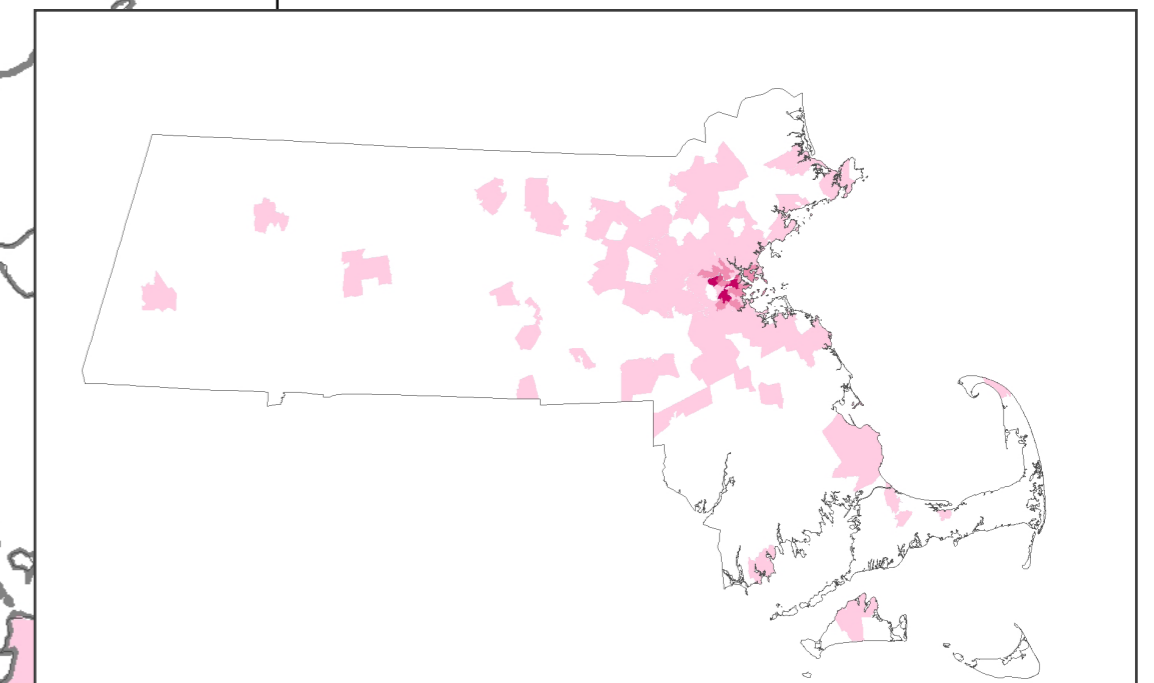
BASED ON ZIP  
CODES PROVIDED BY  
RESPONDENTS

**59%**

BOSTON RESIDENTS

**97%**

MASS RESIDENTS



# Many Things to Many Respondents

## OPEN AIR MARKET

*"I love the farmer's market and think it would be great to have a rotation of vendors on a weekly basis."*

## SKATEBOARDING SPOT

*"Copley Square has been a beacon for skateboarding in Boston for decades."*

## LUNCH HANGOUT

*"Great place to bring your lunch and relax and be entertained by skateboarders"*

## RELAXING PARK

*"It is wonderful to have a place where one can go to relax (walk, sit) amid the hustle and bustle of the city"*

## HISTORIC ICON

*"The beauty of the Square is in the harmony of historic architecture"*



# Key Takeaways

The top 3 priorities for physical improvements were consistent across most respondent groups.

10. Knowing that it is the Parks Department's goal to improve Copley Square as a whole, in your opinion, what physical improvements should be top priorities to address in this renovation? (Rank your top three choices)

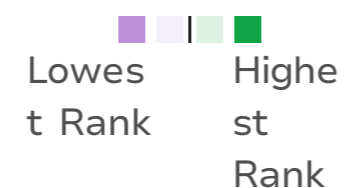
Item	Overall Rank	Rank Distribution	Score	No. of Rankings
Enhance/sustain the tree canopy	1		1,556	636
Update benches and seating opportunities	2		929	511
Improve the pavement	3		851	411
Improve or update the fountain	4		639	327
Upgrade the lighting	5		617	317
Improve the lawn	6		614	325
Provide better infrastructure connections for events (electric, water, gas)	7		268	154
Other	8		117	59

**ENHANCE/SUSTAIN TREE CANOPY**

**UPDATE BENCHES/SEATING**

**IMPROVE THE PAVEMENT**

Results shown for all respondents.

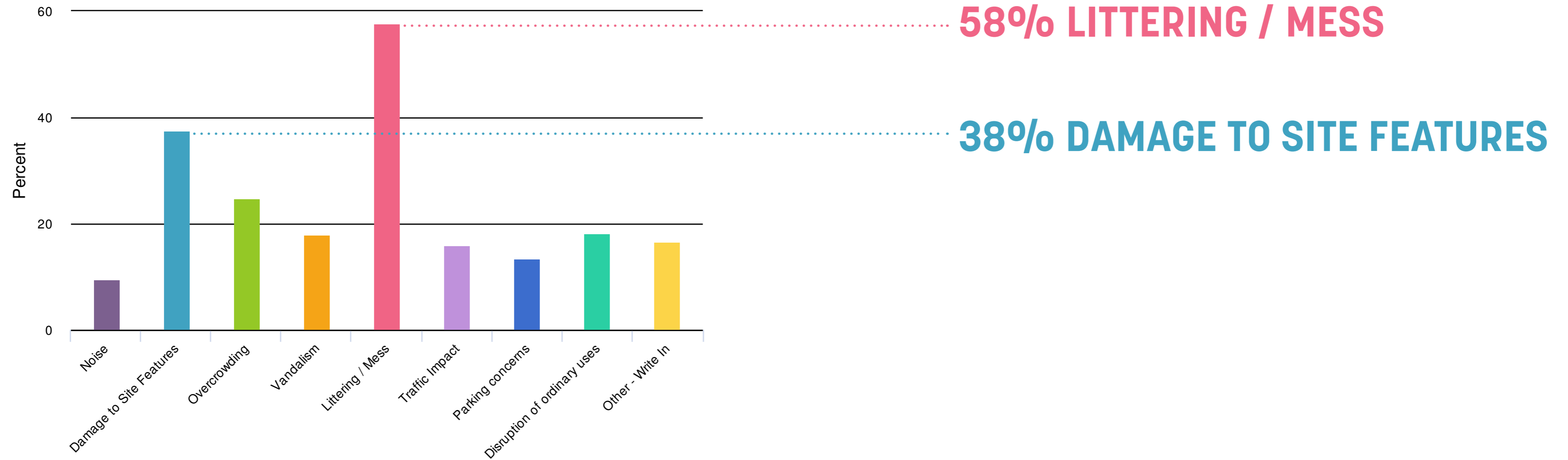




# Key Takeaways

Top two concerns with activities and events were consistent across most respondent groups

5. What are your top concerns with events and activities on the Square (pre-Covid-19)? (Choose up to three)

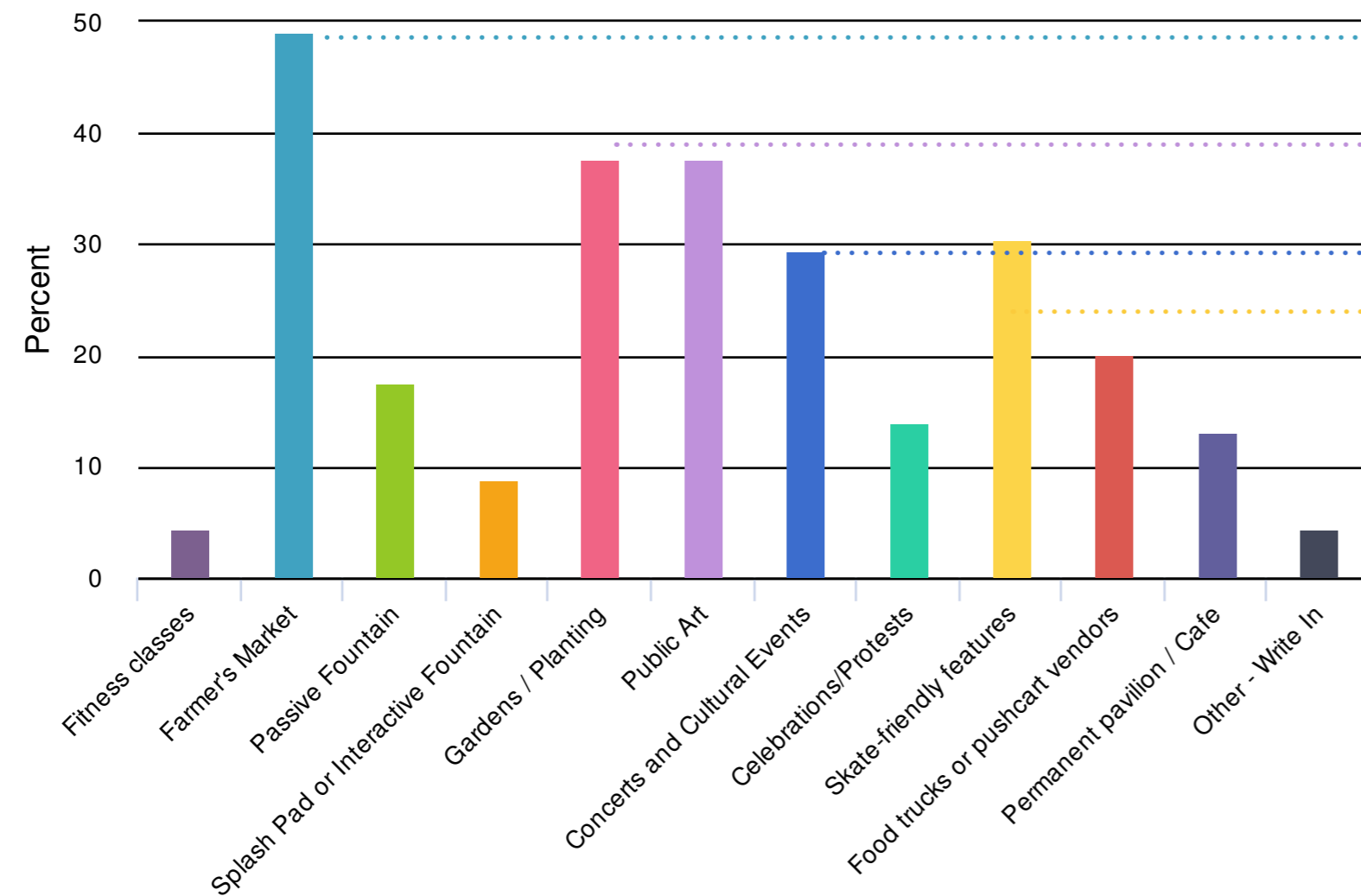


Results shown for all respondents.

# Key Takeaways

Top four programs and activities respondents would like to see in the future were consistent across most respondent groups

6. What programs and activities would you like to see the Square host in the future? (Choose up to three)



**49% FARMER'S MARKET**

**38% GARDENS/PLANTING**

**38% PUBLIC ART**

**29% CONCERTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS**

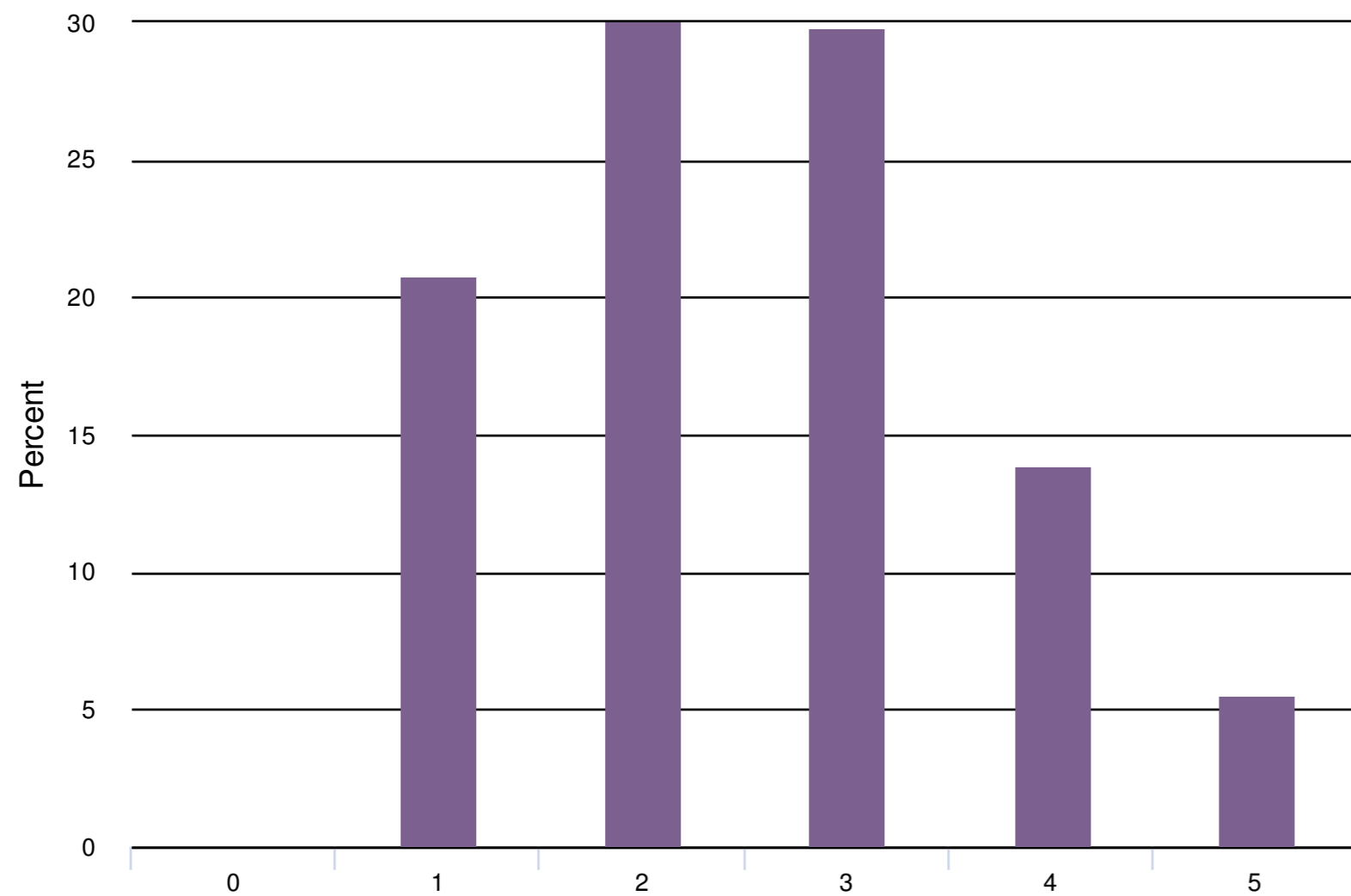
Results for Skate-friendly features varied dramatically between respondents who identified as skateboarders (95% in favor) and those who did not identify as skateboarders (5% in favor).

Results shown for all respondents.

# Key Takeaways

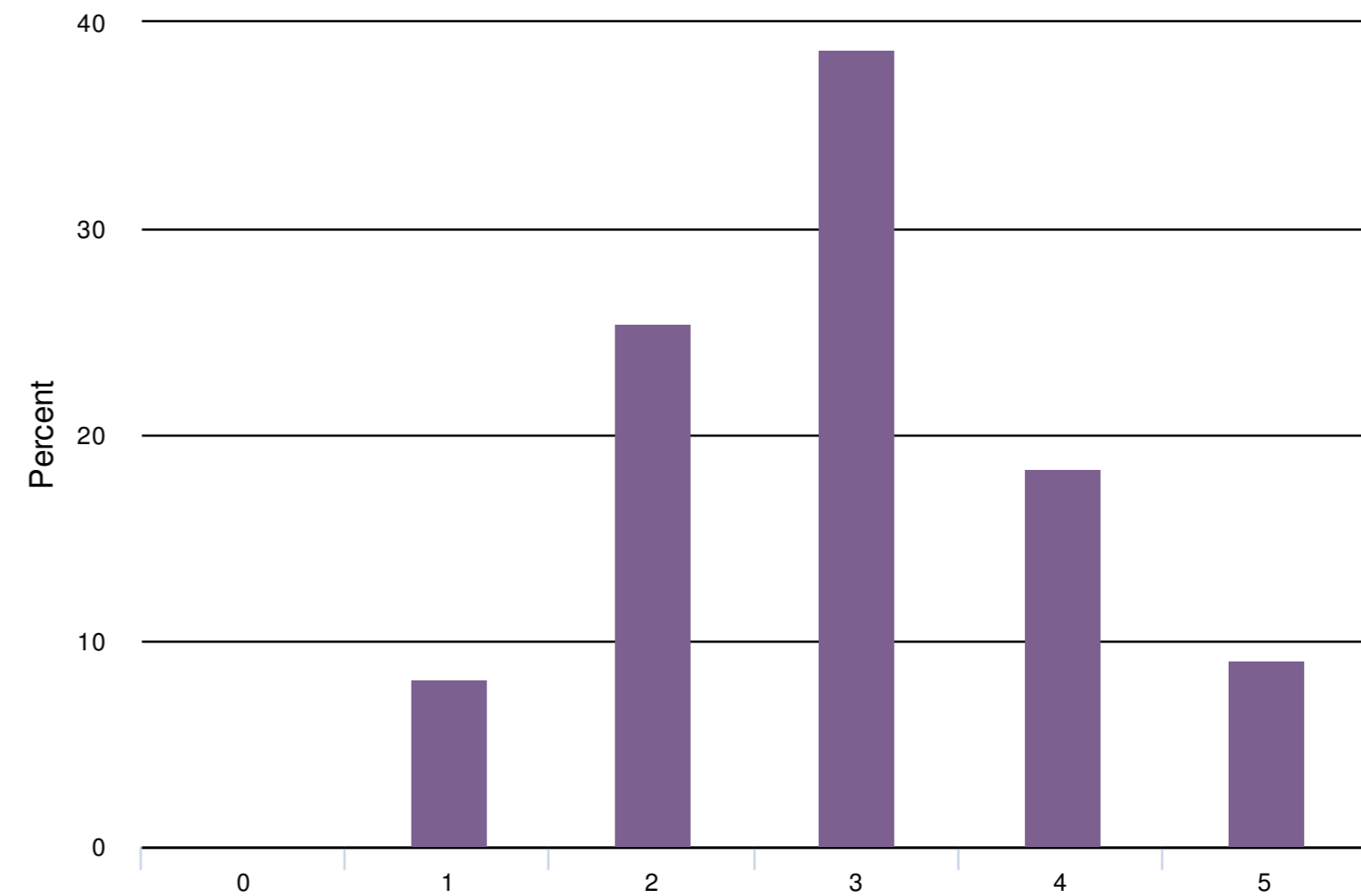
Respondents across most major groups said the square should have a similar feeling.

11. Tell us your vision for how the Square should feel on the following scale (Rank 1-5 between the ends)



**MORE GREEN THAN PAVED**

13. Tell us your vision for how the Square should feel on the following scale (Rank 1-5 between the ends)

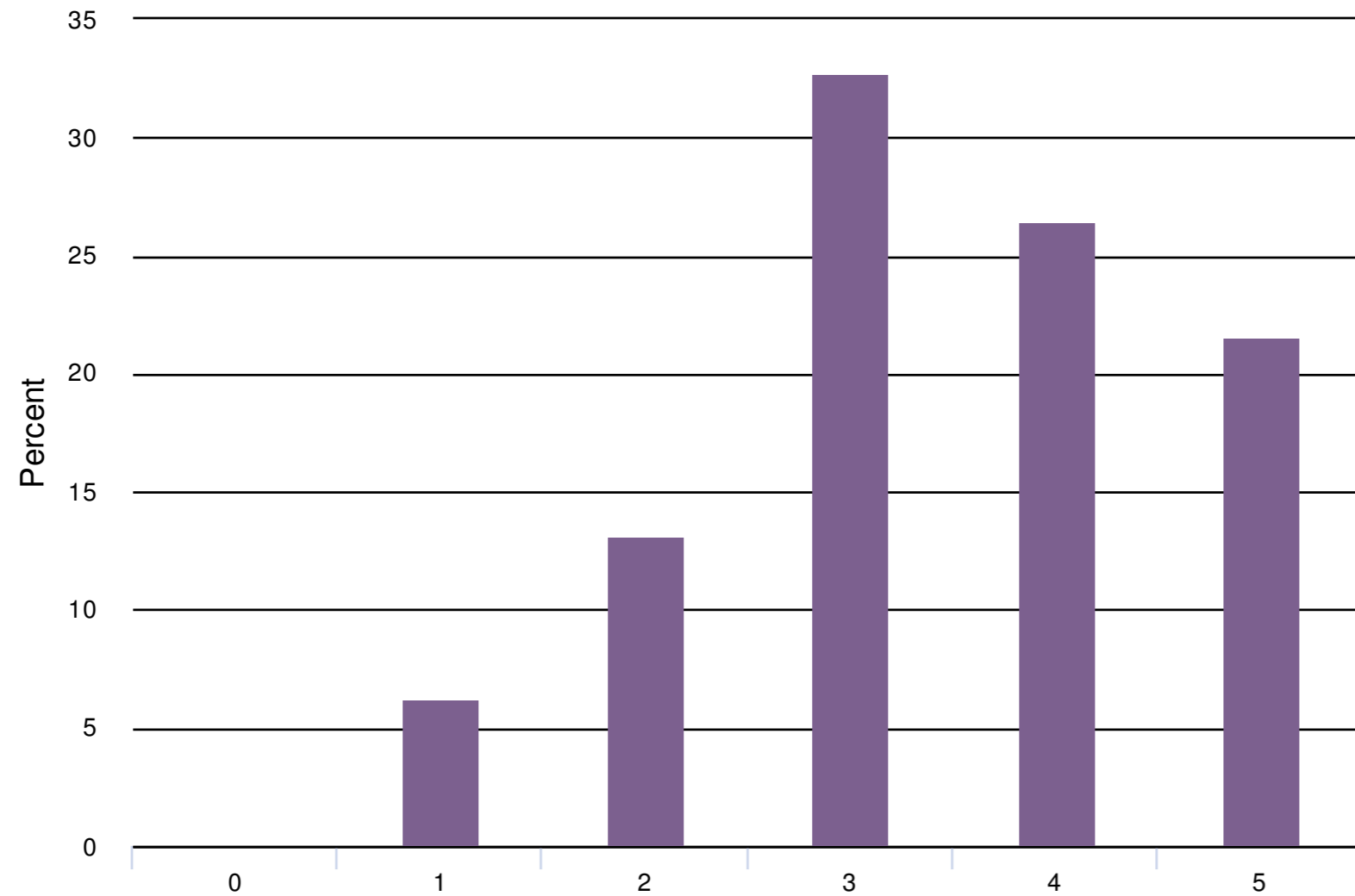


**BALANCE QUIET AND ACTIVE/SOCIAL**

# Key Takeaways

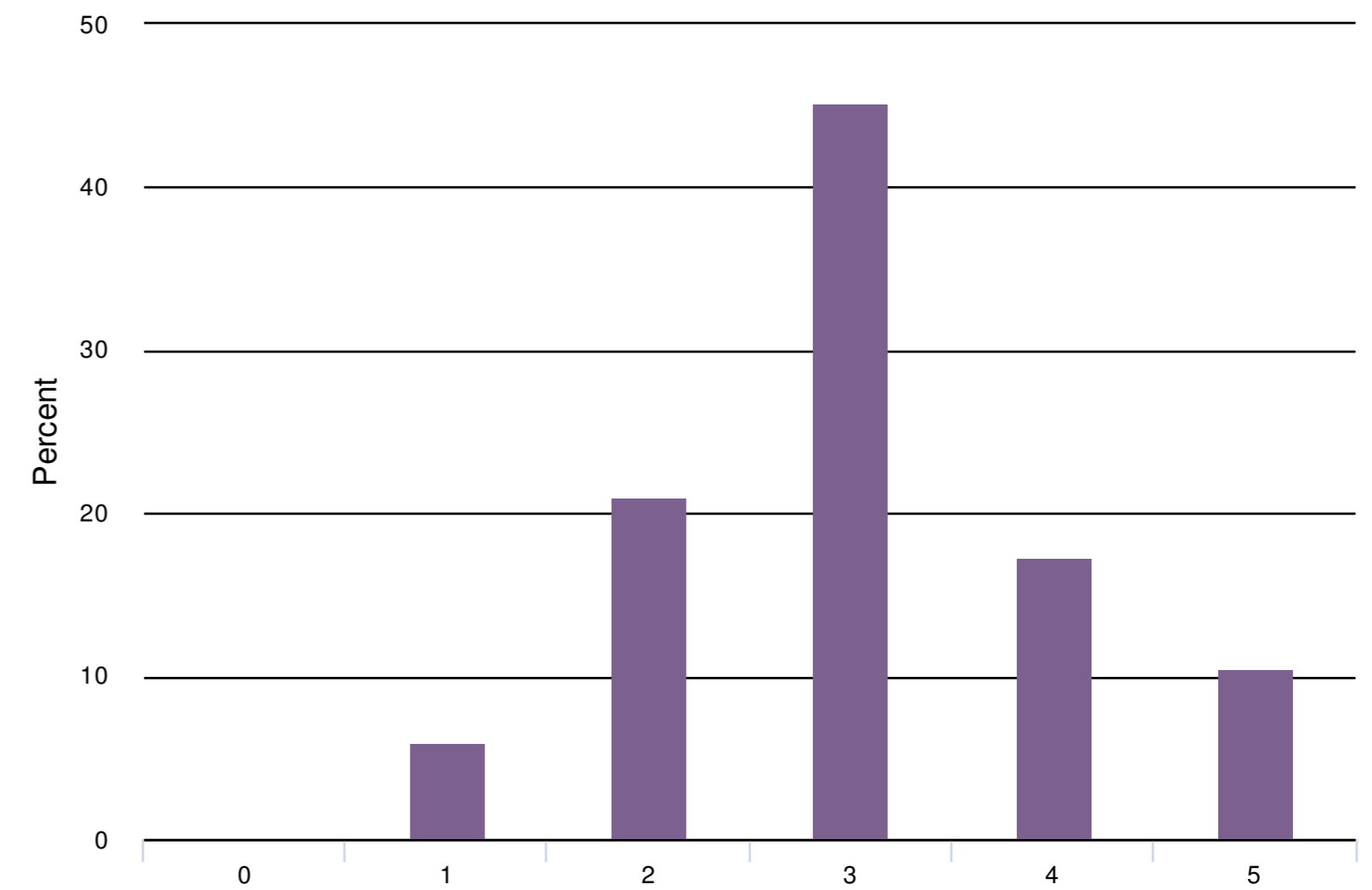
Respondents across most major groups said the square should have a similar feeling.

15. Tell us your vision for how the Square should feel on the following scale (Rank 1-5 between the ends)



**MORE INWARD THAN OUTWARD ORIENTED**

17. What do you think the identity of the Square should be on the following scale (Rank 1-5 between the ends)



**BALANCE HISTORY AND FUTURE**

# Key Differences

A few responses stood out from certain subsets of respondents

## AMONG THOSE WHO IDENTIFIED AS FEMALE

Only 4% also identified as skateboarders

Nearly 2x as likely to be brought to the square by the farmers market (63% v. 32%)

Nearly 2X as likely to want to see gardens and planting as future programs (53% v. 29%)

## AMONG THOSE WHO IDENTIFIED AS SKATEBOARDERS

2x as likely to want to upgrade the existing square (39% v. 19%), as opposed to redesign or reimagine

Pavement and lighting are the top physical improvement priorities (followed by tree canopy and benches, top priorities for other respondents)

# Perspectives on Improving the Square

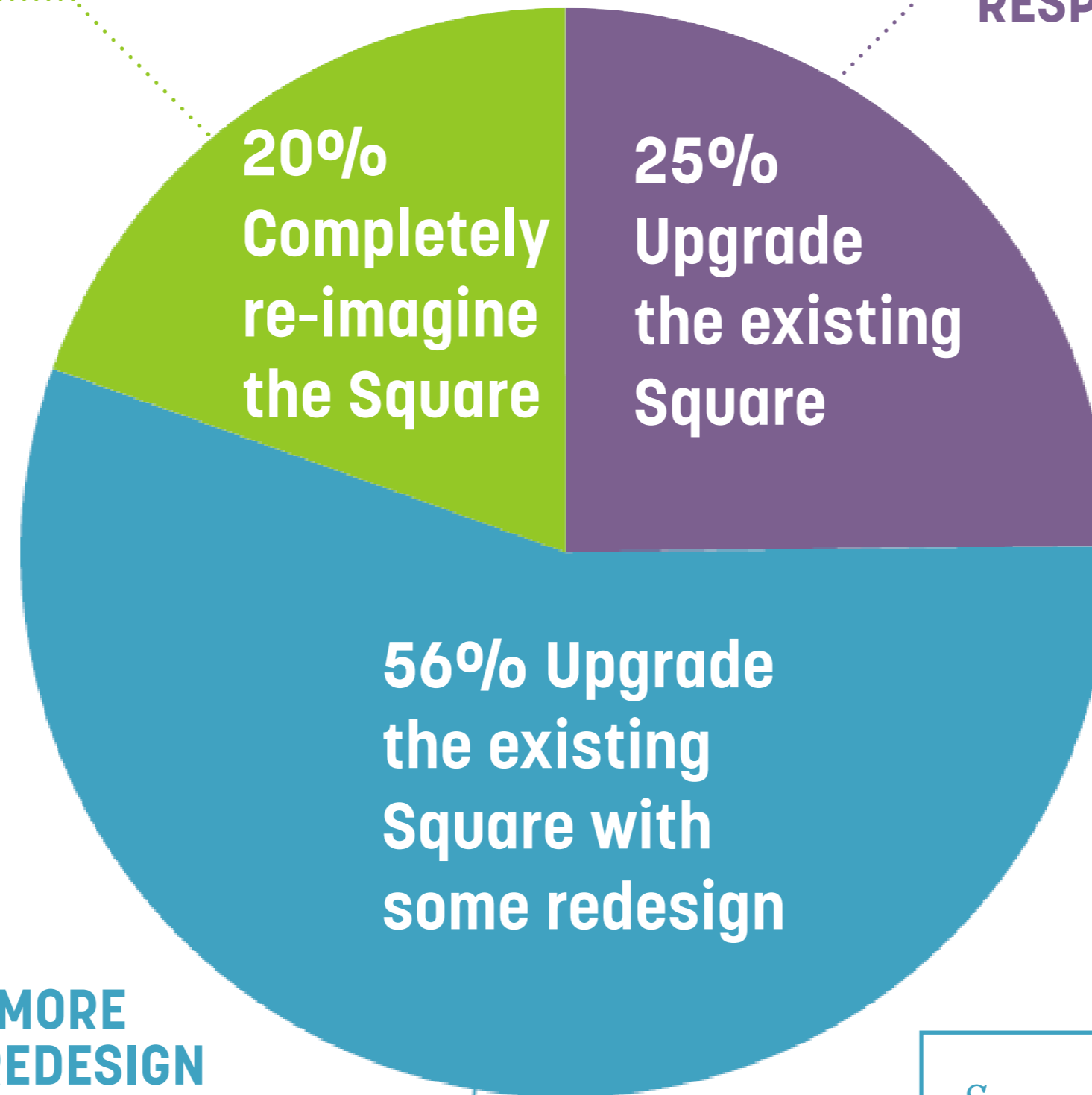
**RESPONDENT GROUPS MORE LIKELY TO CHOSE RE-IMAGINE**

**DOG WALKERS, LOCAL PROFESSIONALS, EVENT ATTENDEES**

*"The potential is high. The bar is low. Make this an incredible place. Bring it into the next half century."*

**RESPONDENT GROUPS MORE LIKELY TO CHOOSE SOME REDESIGN**

**TOURISTS, FITNESS CLASS ATTENDEES, SHOPPERS, EVENT ATTENDEES**



**RESPONDENT GROUPS MORE LIKELY TO CHOOSE TO UPGRADE...**

**39% SKATEBOARDERS**

**40% WEEKLY USERS**

*"Keep it the same, the history of skateboarding there shouldn't be disrupted, it means too much to the skaters who call that place their second home."*

*Some parts of the existing park are successful, including plantings, farmers market, food truck, gardens.*

# Upgrade the Existing Square...

## Good Balance

"The park has struck a good balance by providing a peaceful space for solitude and open space for activities"

"Current mix of paved space and green space seems about right."

## Maintenance is Key

"The Square is popular and attractive as is. Maintenance is the key."

## Needs a Face-lift

"Copley Square is historic, it doesn't need to be reimaged but it could use a face-lift"

## Preserve History

"This site holds immense cultural and historical value to our skateboarding community!"

# Upgrade the Existing Square with Some Redesign...

## Address Fountain

The fountain could be changed - the design seems to lack meaning, and takes up a lot of space.

## Needs a Heart & Attractions

"Modernize; make it so people stay and don't just walk through; make it an oasis; art friendly; family friendly."

## More Seating

I would like to see more seating and space for people to meet

## More Trees & Plantings

"I like the general setup of the Square but would love more greenery + seating areas for accessibility."

## Modern Infrastructure

"The square needs to have the materials and infrastructure to be a vital part of the neighborhood and host events."



# Completely reimagine the Square...

## Modernize

"Its very dated in design. It would be great to see it redesigned in a way that is culturally inclusive and environmentally friendly."

## Needs a Heart & Attractions

While the history here is important, I would love to have a space that showcases the beauty, the arts, the intelligence that Boston offers.

"Make the square the feature, not just what's left in the middle"

## More Trees & Plantings

"Make it more of an oasis in the city"

## Better use of Space

"The use of the space isn't great--the wide sidewalks bordering the Square take up a lot of real estate, and the current fountain and plantings cut off the rest of it, making the usable portion small"

# Guiding Principles



# CHARACTER

Keep the existing balance of paved space to green space

Balance modern amenities and styles with historic charm of Back Bay

Celebrate the surrounding historic and iconic architecture

## Key Takeaways

Be flexible for future event and activation types and styles

Improve accommodations for large annual or weekly events like the Marathon, First Night and the Farmer's Market

Provide comfortable and social spaces for daily activation

# PROGRAM

# PEOPLE

Balance needs of diverse constituent groups

Universal access

A landscape that feels welcoming to all

Showcase sustainability through materials and strategies

Sustain + enhance the existing tree canopy

Prioritize ease of maintenance, inspiring stewardship

# ENVIRONMENT

**An Iconic Landmark at  
the Heart of Back Bay**

**An Inclusive Bostonian  
Gathering Place**

**CHARACTER**

**PEOPLE**

**CORNERSTONES OF  
A SUCCESSFUL  
COPLEY SQUARE**

*Project Guiding Principles*

**PROGRAM**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**A Vibrant Destination  
within the Hub**

**A Durable and  
Sustainable New  
England Landscape**

*NOTE: More detail on the project guiding principles, including detailed goals, can be found on the project website.*

# Character

*"It's one of the nicest small parks in Boston with immense character. **The church view, fountain, sitting area, green, and John Hancock reflections.**"*

**I like the general setup of the Square but would love more greenery + seating areas for accessibility.**

*"**Copley Square has a unique iconic history** - a rare quality in an evolving city - that warrants preservation and respect."*

Of Survey Respondents...

**81%**

**Prefer upgrade the existing square or upgrade with some redesign**

**80%**

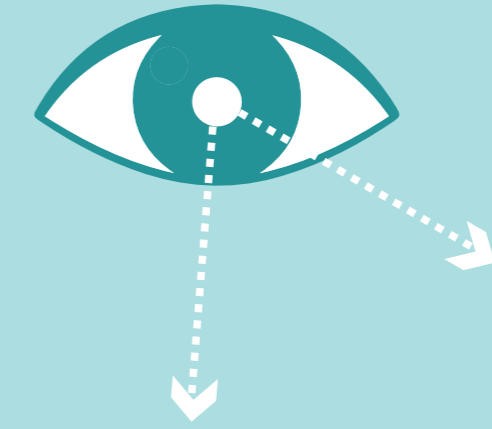
**Want to keep or increase the amount of green space**

**81%**

**Want Copley to be more inward facing than outward facing or a balance of both**

# Character Principles

- **Preserve and frame views of the historic architecture surrounding Copley Square.**
- **Weave the fabric of Copley Square and Back Bay together, through the materials and planting.**
- **Enhance celebrated features of today's Copley Square, including the tree canopy, public art pieces and the fountain.**
- **Integrate recognizable public art into the experience of Copley Square.**



**An Iconic  
Landmark  
at the  
Heart of  
Back Bay**



# People

*"I think it has great potential to be **a community space for more people enjoy** and with some improvements it can see a lot more foot traffic other than normal commuters walking through."*

**"How can it become more interactive rather than a place for observers, passersby? How can the community be invited to maintain or improve it?"**

**"I'd invite some activity that allows us to people in Boston to engage with others and the square, and stick around on a lovely day!"**

*"The design needs to take the needs of the homeless community into consideration as well. It is vital to have amenities that address their needs, or at the very least do not actively prevent the use of the park by the homeless community."*

Of Survey Respondents...

**60%**

**Visit Copley Square daily or weekly**

## Top User Groups

Local Residents

Passersby + Commuters

Skateboarders

Library Visitors

Shoppers

Local Professionals

# People Principles

- Create a gathering space that welcomes people of all backgrounds, and reflects the diversity of Boston.
- Ensure universal accessibility to all features and elements of the square.
- Balance the priorities of the diverse user groups and the varied intensities of use they desire.
- Provide a Boston experience for tourists from all regions.



An  
Inclusive  
Bostonian  
Gathering  
Space



# Program

*"Skateboarding! The fountain and library steps are **cultural landmarks for the skate community.**"*

**I love having that space and seeing people eating lunch, visiting the farmers market and relaxing in the city. It is a beautiful space**

*"The square needs to have the materials and infrastructure to be a vital part of the neighborhood and host events."*

## Of Survey Respondents...

**What brings people to the square today**

- Passing through 62%
- Farmer's Market 44%
- Special Events 34%
- Meeting People 31%
- Relaxing on lawn and benches 31%

## Top Future Programs

- Farmer's Market 49%
- Public Art 38%
- Gardens/Planting 38%
- Skate-friendly features 31%
- Concerts and Cultural Events 29%
- Food trucks/Vendors 20%

## Program Principles

- Comfortably accommodate everyday passive and social visits to the heart of Back Bay.
- Provide a flexible platform for active programming, including a diversity of events, big and small.
- Provide infrastructure to support Copley Square's current and future programming.



## A Vibrant Destination Within The Hub



# Environment

It is messy in the fall, winter and spring, with the lawn almost unusable. Making it more all-season would make it more welcoming.

*"I hope that the city can update benches and seating opportunities, **add more trees in the green space**, preserve the fountain, fix the walkways/ground, and integrate more skate-friendly obstacles into the square."*

*"I believe the bricks and walking areas in many locations throughout the square could use a **rebuild/redesign** as there are many potential falling hazards for people walking through."*

## Of Survey Respondents...

### PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

#1

Enhance/  
Sustain the  
tree canopy

#2

Update  
benches  
& seating  
opportunities

#3

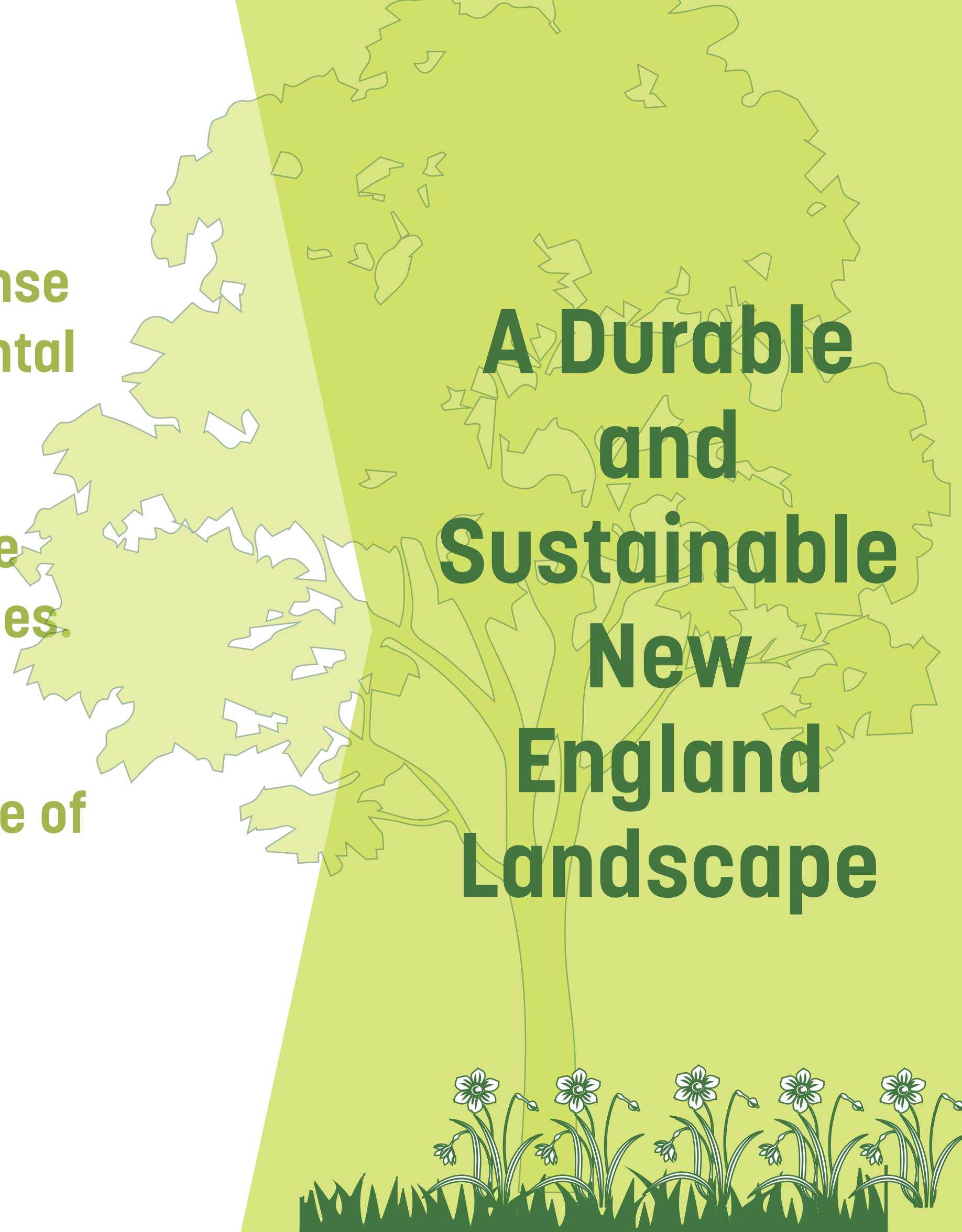
Improve the  
Pavement

#4

Improve or  
update the  
fountain

## Environment Principles

- Integrate materials that are resilient to intense urban use while reflecting the city's environmental values.
- Promote groundwater infiltration through the integration of stormwater management strategies.
- Incorporate strategic infrastructure and material detailing to ease everyday maintenance of the park and inspire community stewardship.
- Reduce urban heat island effect and create comfortable micro-climates.



**A Durable  
and  
Sustainable  
New  
England  
Landscape**

# REVITALIZING COPLEY SQUARE: Bringing New Energy to Boston's Original Art Square

*Draft Guiding Principles*

**An Iconic Landmark at  
the Heart of Back Bay**

**CHARACTER**

**An Inclusive Bostonian  
Gathering Place**

**PEOPLE**

**CORNERSTONES  
OF A SUCCESSFUL  
COPLEY SQUARE**

**PROGRAM**

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within the Hub**

**ENVIRONMENT**

**A Durable and  
Sustainable New  
England Landscape**

# Questions?

**B Chatfield**

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**Survey** → [bit.ly/copley-survey-2](https://bit.ly/copley-survey-2)

**Project Website** → [bit.ly/copley-boston](https://bit.ly/copley-boston)

