

Allston-Brighton Community Plan Engagement Summary

Published February 2025



City of Boston
Planning Department

Overview



What is a community plan? What's the ABCP?

A Plan guides future development and investment:

- What kinds of changes to the physical environment are desired?
- How will these changes be achieved?
- How can development and investment support these changes for everyone in the community?

The Allston-Brighton Community Plan (ABCP) will build on:

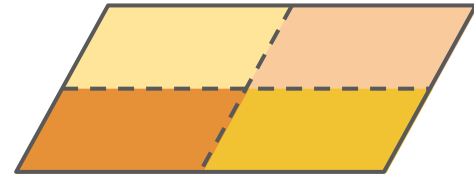
- Community knowledge and feedback
- Community needs and opportunities
- Other plans or development projects that are happening
- Current conditions in land use, transportation, housing, open space, community resources, economic development, and employment

The Community Plan will work across three scales:

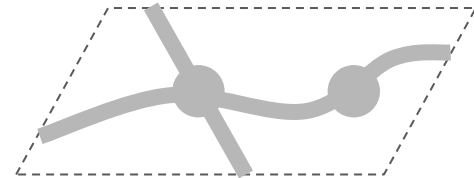


Overall Plan Area

Entire Allston & Brighton Neighborhoods



Sub-areas



Areas of focus

Where we are

2024 | 2025

Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

Public Engagement



Planning & Design

Key Engagement Periods • • • Ongoing Engagement

Context & Analysis

Create a Vision + Design Scenarios

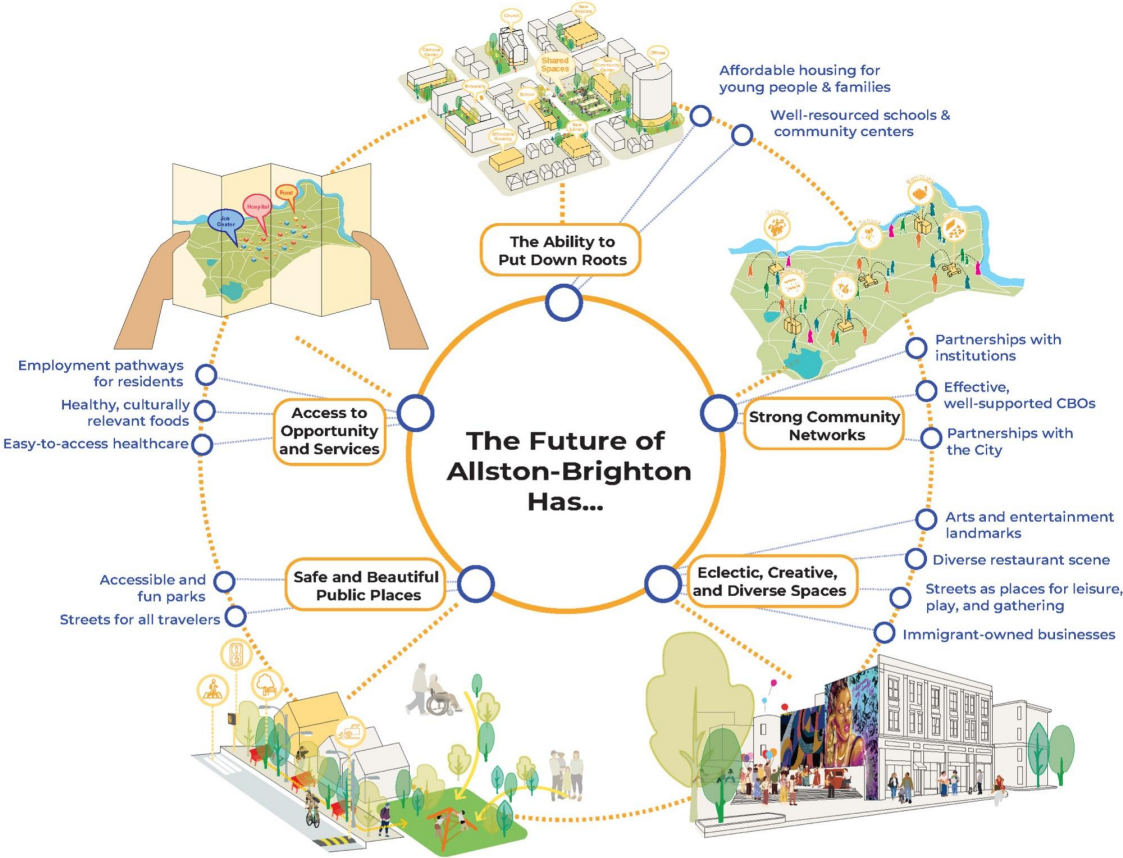
Develop Draft Big Ideas, Frameworks, Concepts + Focus Areas

Identify Zoning Implications

Implementation Strategy & Report

We are here!

The ABCP will work towards a community-driven vision for the future



This phase will focus on physical strategies to realize the vision at three scales

Frameworks

- Topic-based maps of the entire A-B area (land use, open space, mobility, community vitality)

How will these be used?

- Guide zoning, capital projects
- Identify policies needed to support communities

Subarea concepts

- Maps of sub-areas within A-B that bring together different topic recommendations
- There will be one concept per subarea (*subareas are shown on slide 12*)

How will these be used?

- Coordinate cross-department implementation

Areas of focus

- Smaller geographic areas within the subareas
- Most zoomed-in and specific recommendations

How will these be used?

- Guide specific programs, development projects
- Explore potential impacts of Subarea concepts in more specific locations

Engagement Phases: Summer and Winter 2024

Summer 2024 Community Engagement

From June 1, 2024 - August 19, 2024:

500

People directly engaged

1,410+

Community members reached

438+

StoryMap views

17

Events attended by project team

Primary engagement questions:

- Where are the places in Allston-Brighton that you **love**?
- Where are the places in Allston-Brighton that you **rely on**?
- What **question or questions** do you have about the Allston-Brighton Community Plan?
- What would a **successful process** look like to you?



Brighton Farmers Market



Commonwealth Tenants Assoc. Block Party



DCR Adaptive Recreation Fair



ABHC Spring Resource Fair

Winter 2024 Open House Events

From October 24 (Open House) to December 2:

300+

Attendees, survey respondents, direct emails

550+

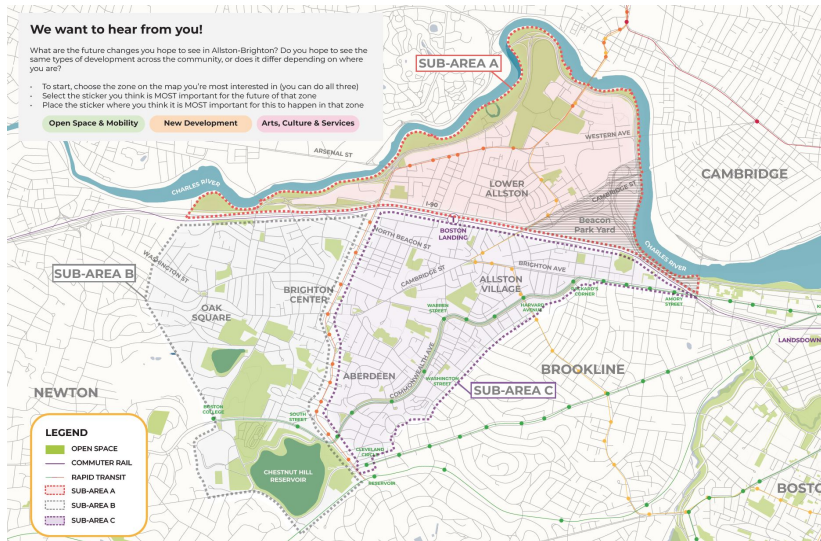
Recorded comments

6

Satellite Open House events hosted by the project team

4

Satellite Open House events hosted by CAB members



Engagement Prompts

- What are the most important changes you want to see across A-B and within sub-areas A, B, and C?
- What general feedback do you have about the scenarios?

Open House participants considered two potential scenarios for development & selected top preferences, mixing and matching ideas from both scenarios

Participants chose ideas from both scenarios:

- **Hop, Skip, and a Jump:** Growth and development **concentrated** in a few areas
- **Just Around the Corner:** Growth and development **distributed** throughout Allston-Brighton


Development Topic Areas

- Open Space & Mobility
- New Development (housing and businesses)
- Arts & Culture

1 SCENARIO 1
A Hop, Skip, and a Jump
Growth and development are concentrated in a few areas within Allston-Brighton.

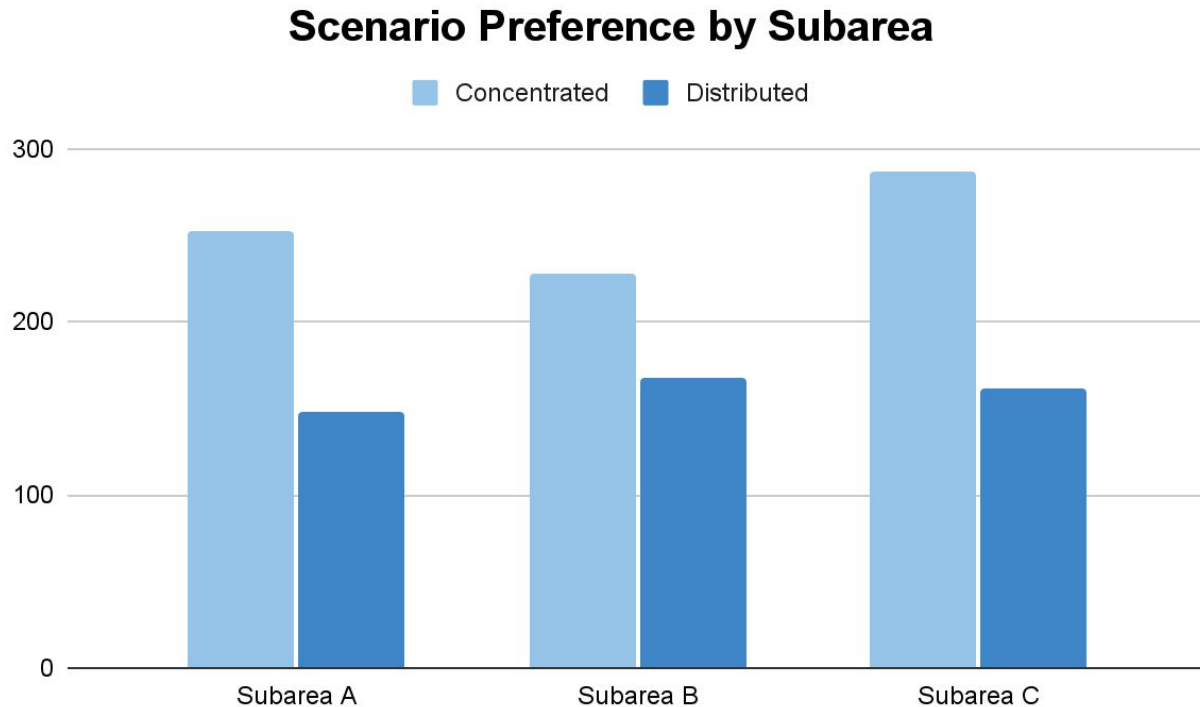
<p>Enhance existing bus and train stops with protected shelters and comfortable seating.</p>  <p>Train Stops</p>	<p>Enhance existing large parks and increase pedestrian and bicycle access with better programming, landscape design, and targeted streetscape enhancement.</p>  <p>Enhance Parks</p>	<p>Improve pedestrian safety and walkability with green boulevards along major streets by introducing separated bus and bike lanes with expanded street trees and rain gardens.</p>  <p>Green Boulevards</p>
<p>Allow additional large-scale (6+ story) housing in areas that already have similar scale buildings such as squares, along main streets, and in areas of high development activity today.</p>  <p>Big Squares</p>	<p>Expand a few existing mixed-use districts to allow taller buildings as well as promoting large, culturally diverse grocery stores (density goes down as you move away from these districts).</p>  <p>Tall Buildings</p>	<p>Concentrate large scale (6+ story) mixed-use business centers with galleries, small businesses, or other public amenities on the first floor.</p>  <p>Mixed-Use</p>
<p>Establish a large cultural district with art galleries, studios, and community art spaces, to support existing cultural organizations and local businesses.</p>  <p>Culture District</p>	<p>Establish a few destination nightlife districts with music venues, restaurants, and bars.</p>  <p>Nightlife District</p>	<p>Identify opportunities for a large community center to host programs and provide working spaces for community-based organizations and people of all ages.</p>  <p>Community Center</p>

2 SCENARIO 2
Just Around the Corner
Growth and development are distributed throughout Allston-Brighton.

<p>Introduce new mini parks and spaces for small gatherings in residential areas that have relatively less green space today.</p>  <p>Mini Parks</p>	<p>Identify and activate under utilized open spaces by partnering with nearby institutions (such as universities, police stations, libraries, churches).</p>  <p>Partnerships</p>	<p>Improve pedestrian safety and walkability in residential areas with speed bumps, well-maintained crosswalks, and pedestrian light signals etc.</p>  <p>Safe Streets</p>
<p>Expand housing while retaining existing neighborhood character and scale by limiting renovations to single family and duplex houses with: 1) smaller housing unit additions (accessory dwelling units), or 2) renovations that result in 3 or 4 units.</p>  <p>Small Scale</p>	<p>Encourage more corner stores, small markets, and cafes in residential areas by providing support for small businesses and entrepreneurs.</p>  <p>Corner Stores</p>	<p>Identify a few 4-6 story buildings with small businesses on the ground floor and work space for specific communities, like artists or students.</p>  <p>Small Biz</p>
<p>Encourage and incentivize small but meaningful expressions of art throughout the community such as murals and temporary exhibitions in existing community spaces.</p>  <p>Public Art</p>	<p>Encourage local restaurants and bars to be distributed throughout Allston-Brighton instead of a few concentrated areas.</p>  <p>Restaurants</p>	<p>Strengthen and expand partnerships with schools and institutions to provide youth and community programs throughout Allston-Brighton.</p>  <p>Partnerships</p>

General preference was for concentrated, with variation by Subarea

- In each Subarea and across A-B, more people indicated a preference for **concentrated** types of development.
- This preference was stronger for all topic areas in Subarea A and Subarea C
- Subarea B saw a more even split.



768
concentrated

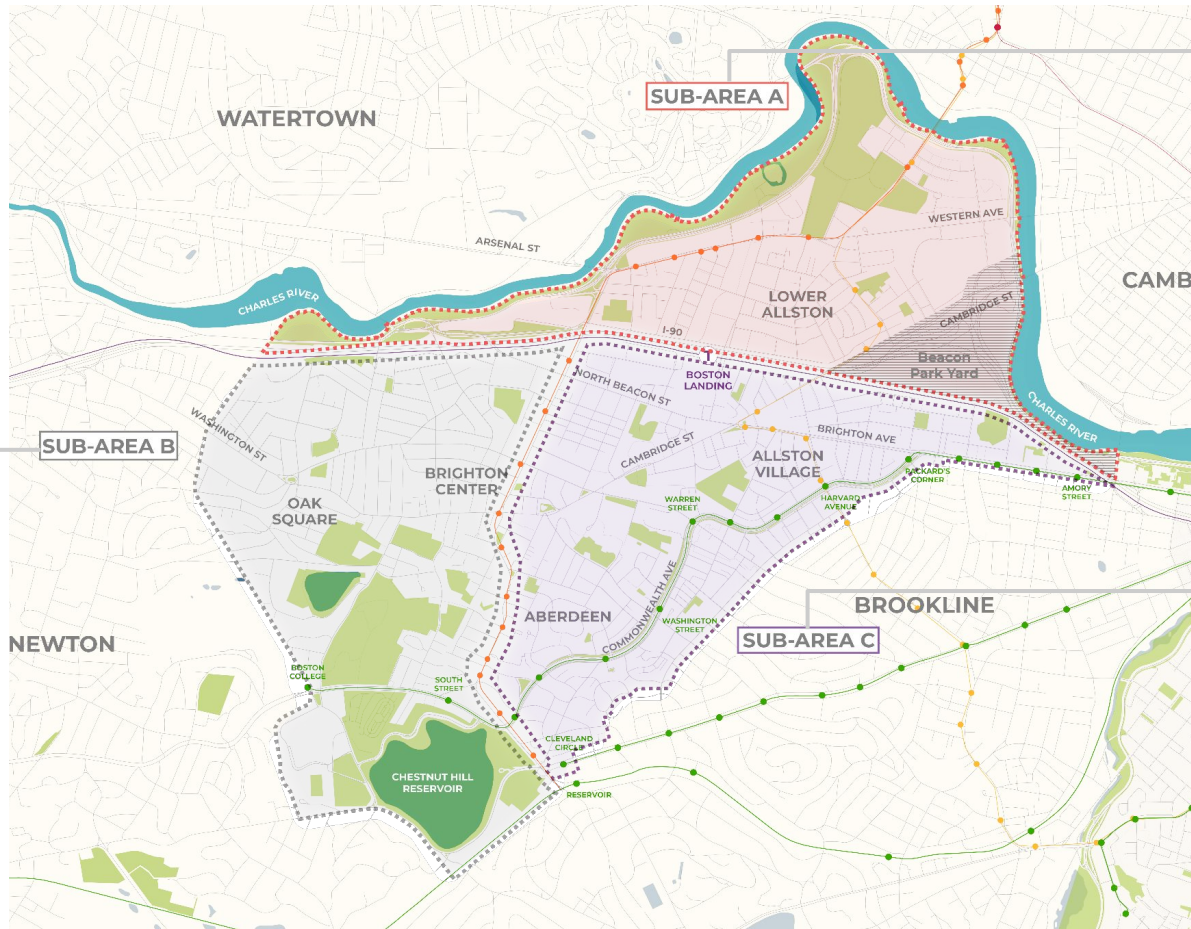
478
distributed

228 conc. **168** dist.

Arts, Culture, Services
69 **62**

New Housing & Biz
71 **61**

Open Space & Mobility
88 **45**



253 conc. **148** dist.

Arts, Culture, Services
83 **50**

New Housing & Biz
79 **51**

Open Space & Mobility
91 **47**

287 conc. **162** dist.

Arts, Culture, Services
108 **50**

New Housing & Biz
90 **59**

Open Space & Mobility
89 **53**

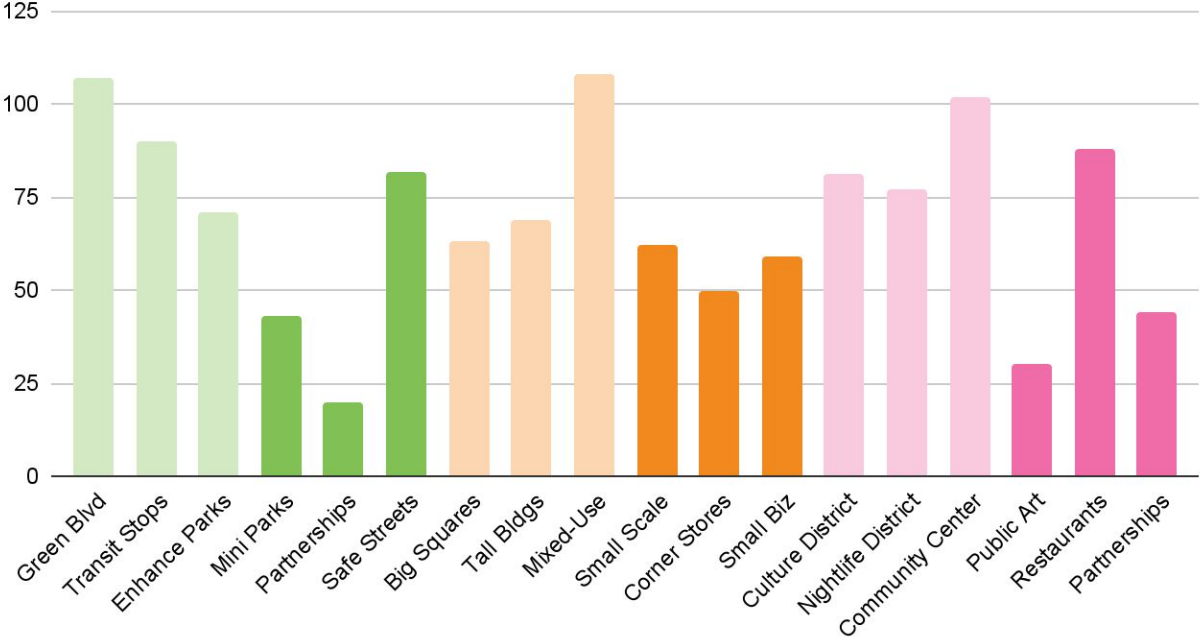
Several comments expressed support for both scenarios

“Please pursue a mix of both of these approaches. All of Allston-Brighton would benefit from corner stores and local small businesses, while we need larger buildings in transit-rich locations to meet the scale of our housing shortage.”

“We should not think of the two scenarios as mutually exclusive. We can have vibrancy across Allston-Brighton, even if some areas can accommodate more development than others.”

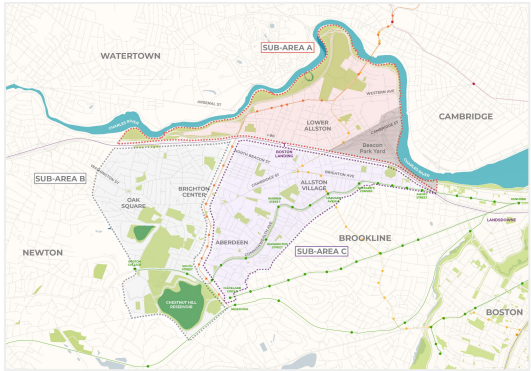
Overall preferred types of development across A-B

Allston-Brighton (All Subareas)



Most commonly selected

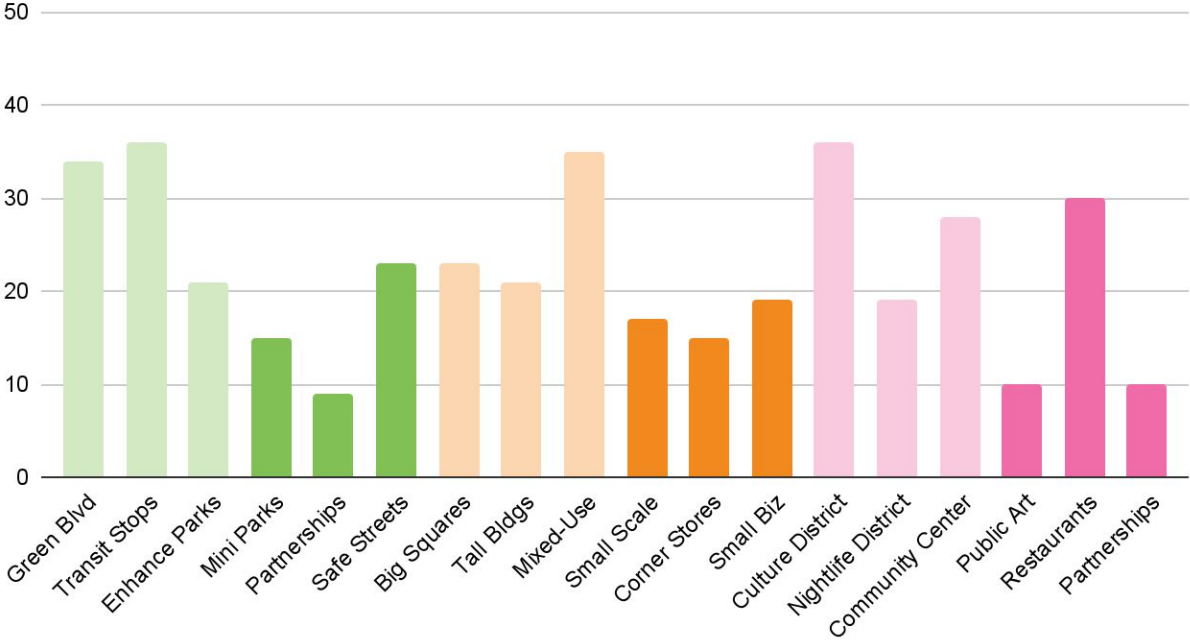
- Arts, Culture, Services
 - Comm. Center, Cultural Dist., Nightlife Dist.
 - Restaurants
- New Housing & Dev
 - Mixed-Use
- Open Space & Mobility
 - Green Blvd, Transit
 - Safe Streets



Subarea A preferred types of development

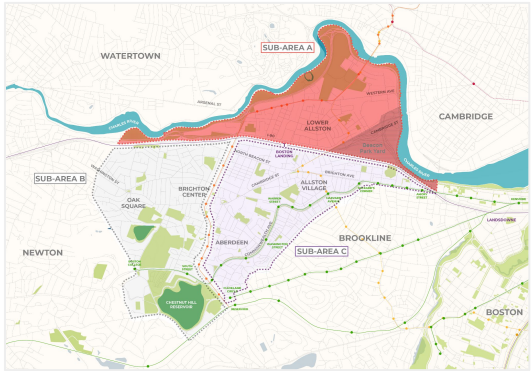


Subarea A



Most commonly selected

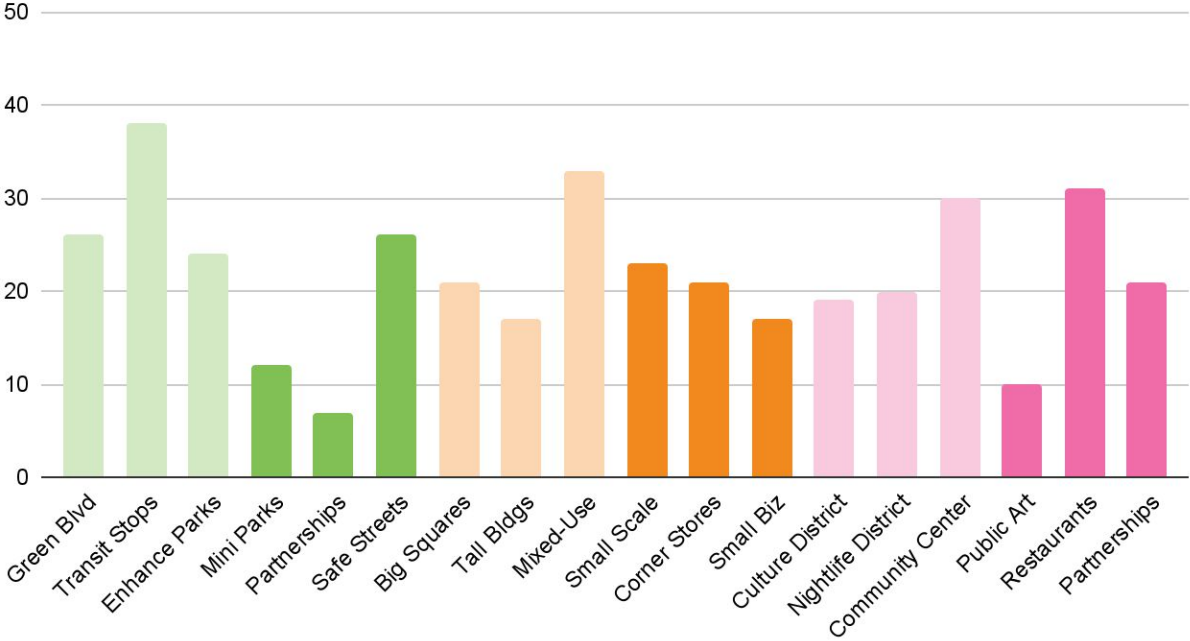
- Arts, Culture, Services
 - Culture District, Community Center
 - Restaurants
- New Housing & Dev
 - Mixed-Use
- Open Space & Mobility
 - Green Blvd, Transit



Subarea B preferred types of development

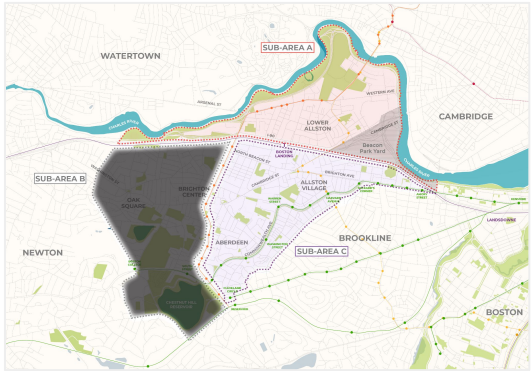


Subarea B

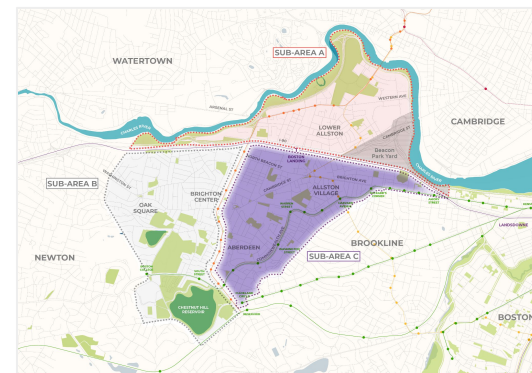
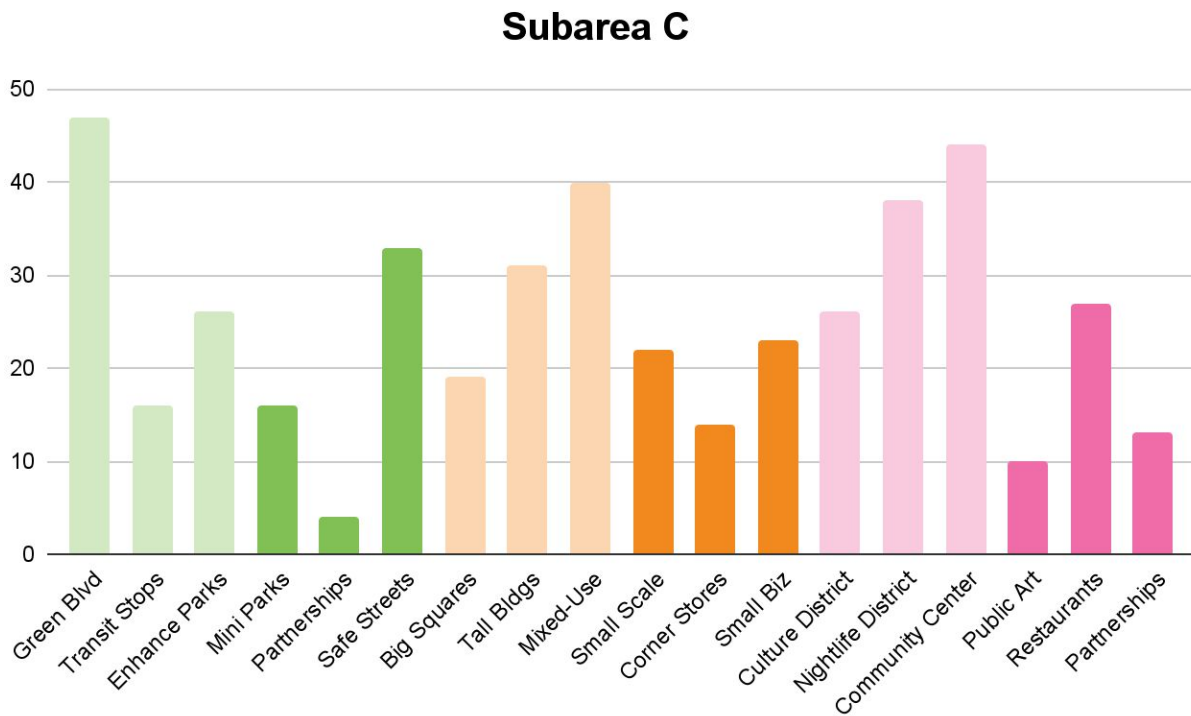


Most commonly selected

- Arts, Culture, Services
 - Community Center
 - Restaurants
- New Housing & Dev
 - Mixed-Use
- Open Space & Mobility
 - Transit Stops
 - Safe Streets



Subarea C preferred types of development



Key Takeaways: Open Space & Mobility

Commonwealth Ave!
Biking there currently
feels very dangerous

Subarea B needs
transit to connect it to
A and C in order for
small businesses to
thrive.

- **Safe Streets, Green Blvds, and Transit Stops** were popular in all subareas.
 - **Green Blvds** and **Safe Streets** were higher in **Subarea C**.
 - **Transit Stops** were highest in **Subarea A** and **Subarea B**.
- Substantial interest in parks, split between **Enhance** existing and **Mini Parks**.
- Comments indicated broad **support for safer, more convenient and comfortable mobility experience**; drivers, cyclists, & walkers have very **different opinions about what that means**.
- Need to outline & communicate **parking strategy for increased development** (for small businesses and for new residential).
- MBTA **service frequency** and **reliability** needs to be addressed, esp. for traveling to Downtown, Longwood, Cambridge, and within A-B.
- Some comments focused on **transit service for late-night workers, physical accessibility** of the Green Line, and **safety on platforms at street level**.
- Concerns about removal of **parking spaces** and **impact on small businesses**.

Key Takeaways: New Housing & Development

- Support for ‘reasonable’ **small-med. density** across A-B, especially along transit.
 - **Concentrated** development like **Tall Buildings** and **Mixed-Use** preferred in **Subarea A** and **Subarea C**.
 - Relatively more interest in distributed development in **Subarea B**.
- Developing **vacant land** a priority (including campus land); in general there were questions about how much land is available to be developed.
- Many commenters want **more residential development**, especially near transit - a few comments named **fears about displacement & neighborhood change**.
- Some concerns about housing density (tall buildings and ADUs) derive from **fears of being priced out** or having **poor maintenance** from absentee landlords.
- Housing policies focused on **anti-displacement (e.g., rent control)** and on addressing ‘**absentee landlord**’ concerns.
- Need to outline & communicate strategies that work in **supporting small businesses** and **encouraging a diversity of new businesses**
- EX: strong **support for grocery store between Brighton Center/Oak Square**; more **restaurants catering to diversity of residents** across A-B; **LGBTQ+ bar**.

The neighborhood should continue to grow upward AND be centered around its squares (read: transit nodes) AND be mixed use.

Key Takeaways: Arts, Culture, & Services

A is sorely lacking community and public space

I think Washington street in Brighton Center is a great option for [a Culture District] - already has a lot of vacant mixed use buildings

Arts, Culture, and Services

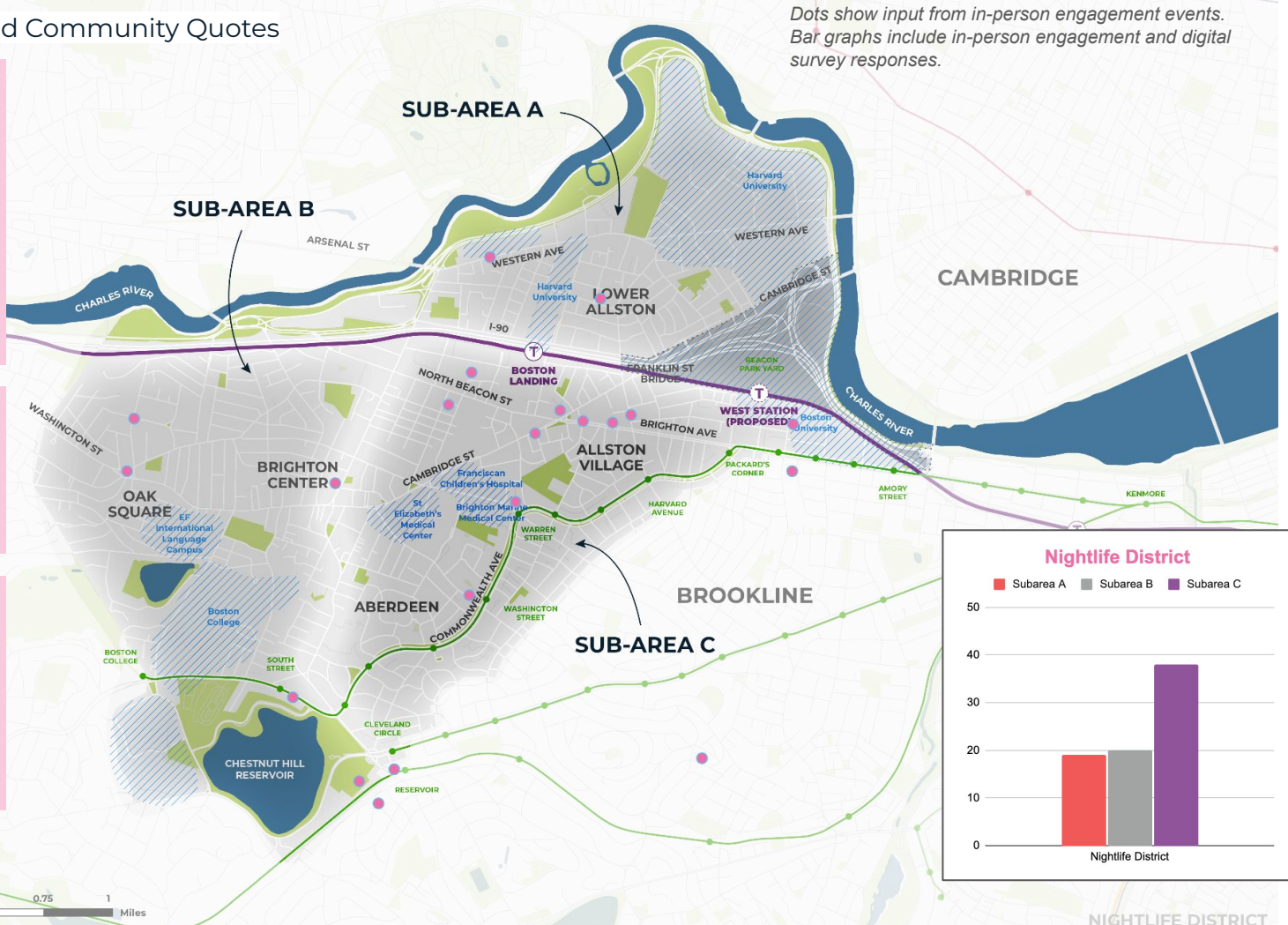
- **Subarea A** - significant preference for concentrated - **Culture District, Community Center, Nightlife District;** and **Restaurants** from distributed.
- **Subarea B** - more evenly split between preference for conc vs. distributed (**Restaurants** most common, with **Community Center** second).
- **Subarea C** - significant preference for concentrated (**Community Center, Nightlife District**).
- Most support for concentrated nightlife in Subareas A and C, with support in Subarea B more focused on Community Center and Restaurants - this may reflect concerns about potential noise in B
- People generally wanted to see more arts and culture organizations across A-B.
- Need to **communicate existing programs** to increase public art and support local musicians, visual artists, theater

Nightlife Districts Selected Community Quotes

I love having the Roadrunner, the Herter Park Amphitheater, and eventually the Repertory Theater in/near Lower Allston, and I think some more community focused music and performance spaces would further cement Brighton as a hub for the arts.

I would love to see the city invest in Allston Village not only as a Nightlife district, but a 24-hour destination.

I think we would benefit from spreading out of the art and cultural services, lots of concentration in Subarea C. I like the Zone 3 initiative in Lower Allston, and we should definitely tap into the universities/artists around!



Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.

Community Centers Selected Community Quotes

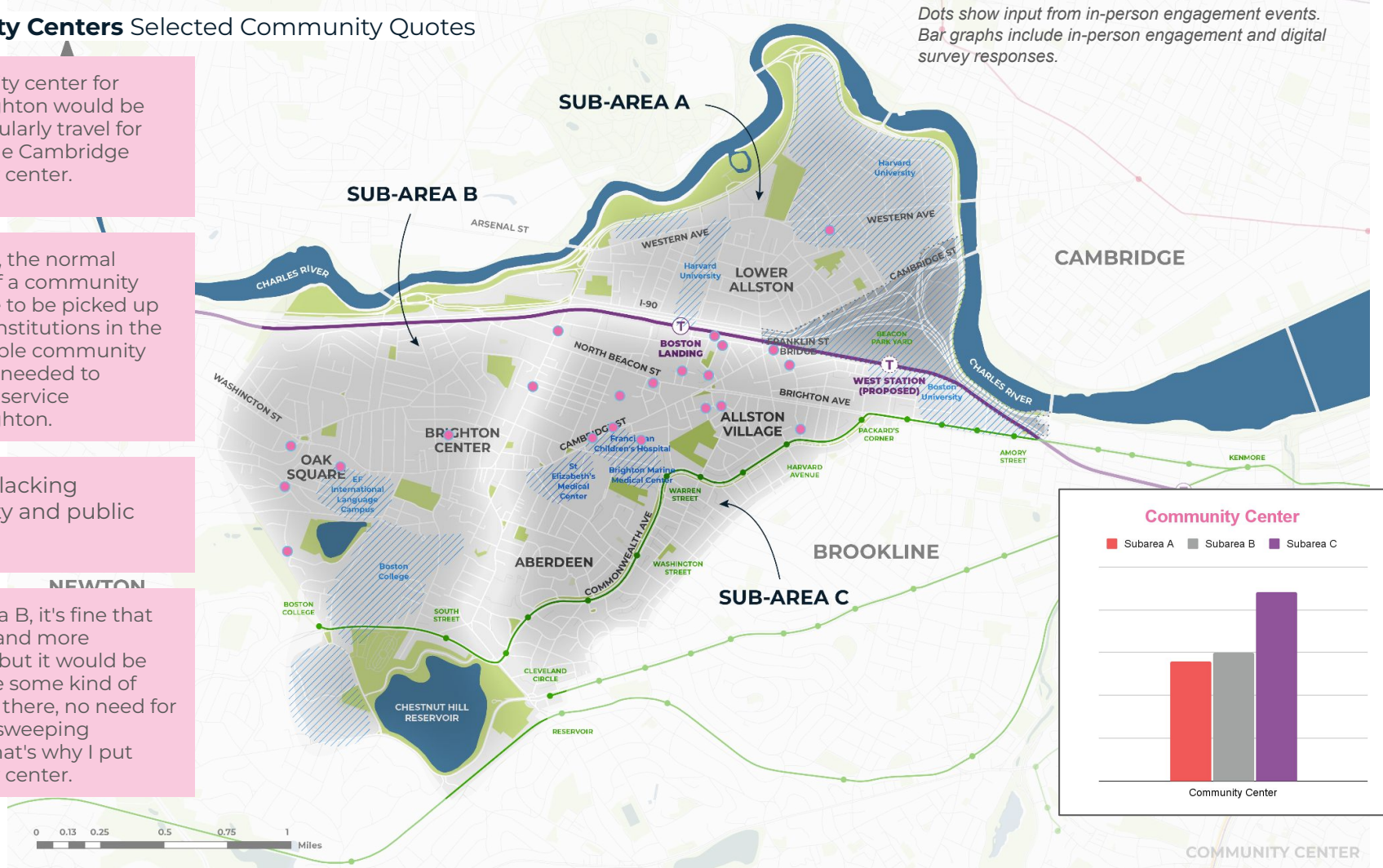
A community center for Allston-Brighton would be huge+ I regularly travel for events at the Cambridge community center.

In Brighton, the normal functions of a community center have to be picked up by various institutions in the area ...Multiple community centers are needed to adequately service Allston-Brighton.

A is sorely lacking community and public space

For sub-area B, it's fine that it's quieter and more residential, but it would be nice to have some kind of destination there, no need for a lot of big sweeping changes. That's why I put community center.

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



Cultural Districts Selected Community Quotes

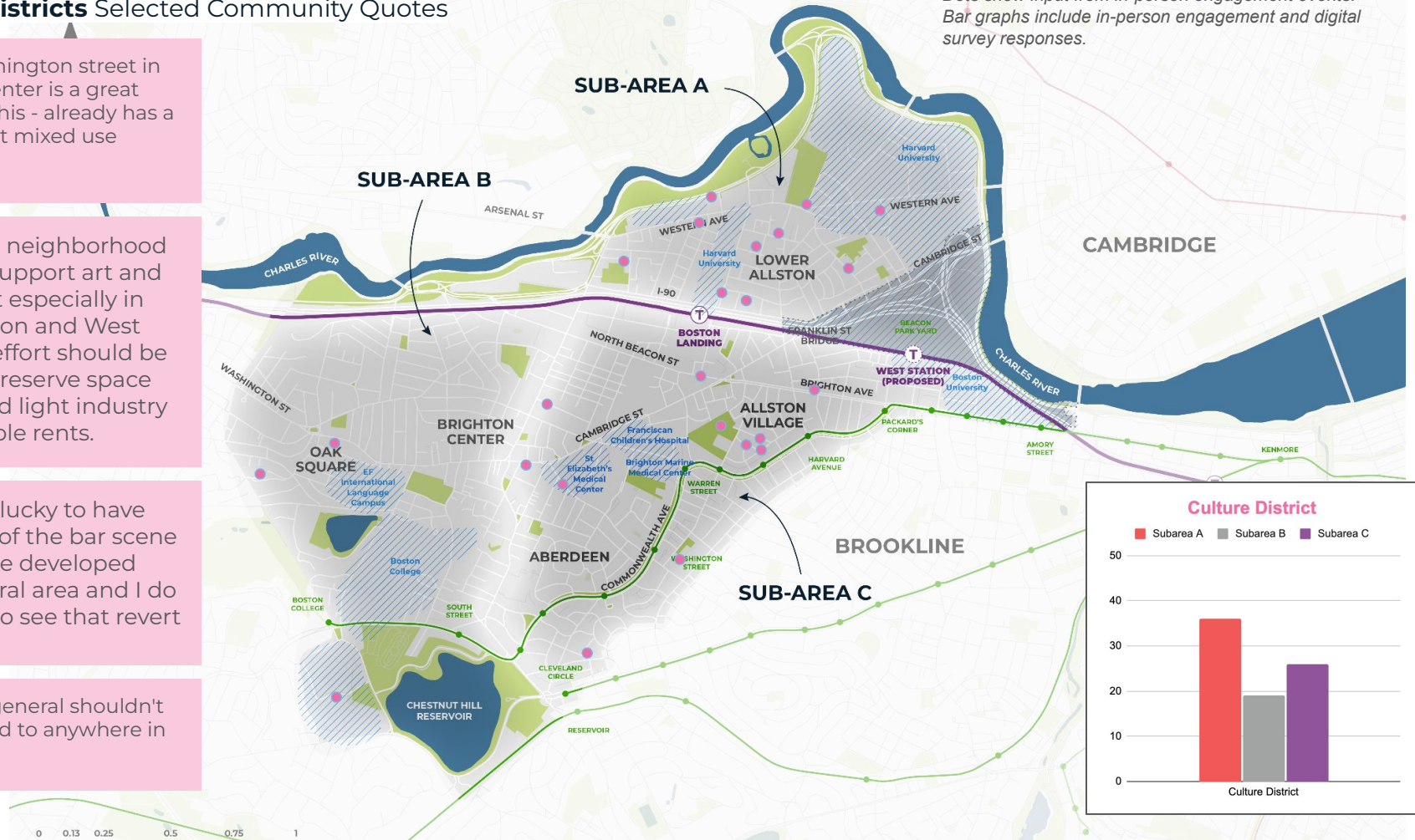
I think Washington street in Brighton center is a great option for this - already has a lot of vacant mixed use buildings

The whole neighborhood needs to support art and artists, but especially in lower Allston and West Brighton effort should be made to preserve space for arts and light industry at affordable rents.

We are so lucky to have come out of the bar scene into a more developed food/cultural area and I do not want to see that revert back.

Culture in general shouldn't be restricted to anywhere in particular

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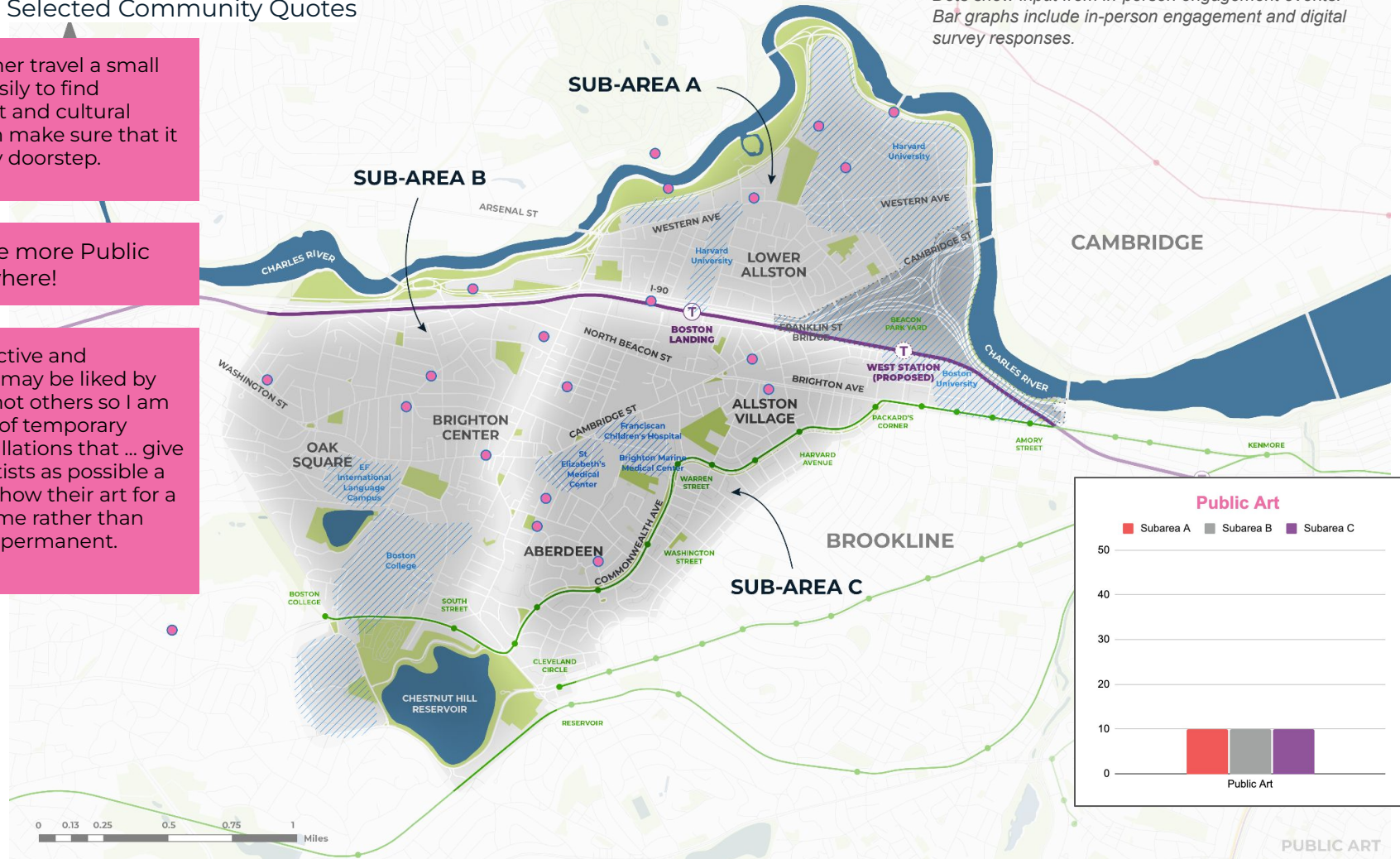
Public Art Selected Community Quotes

I would rather travel a small distance easily to find nightlife, art and cultural events than make sure that it exists at my doorstep.

Would love more Public art everywhere!

Art is subjective and something may be liked by some and not others so I am more a fan of temporary public installations that ... give as many artists as possible a chance to show their art for a period of time rather than something permanent.

Dots show input from in-person engagement events.
Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



Restaurants Selected Community Quotes

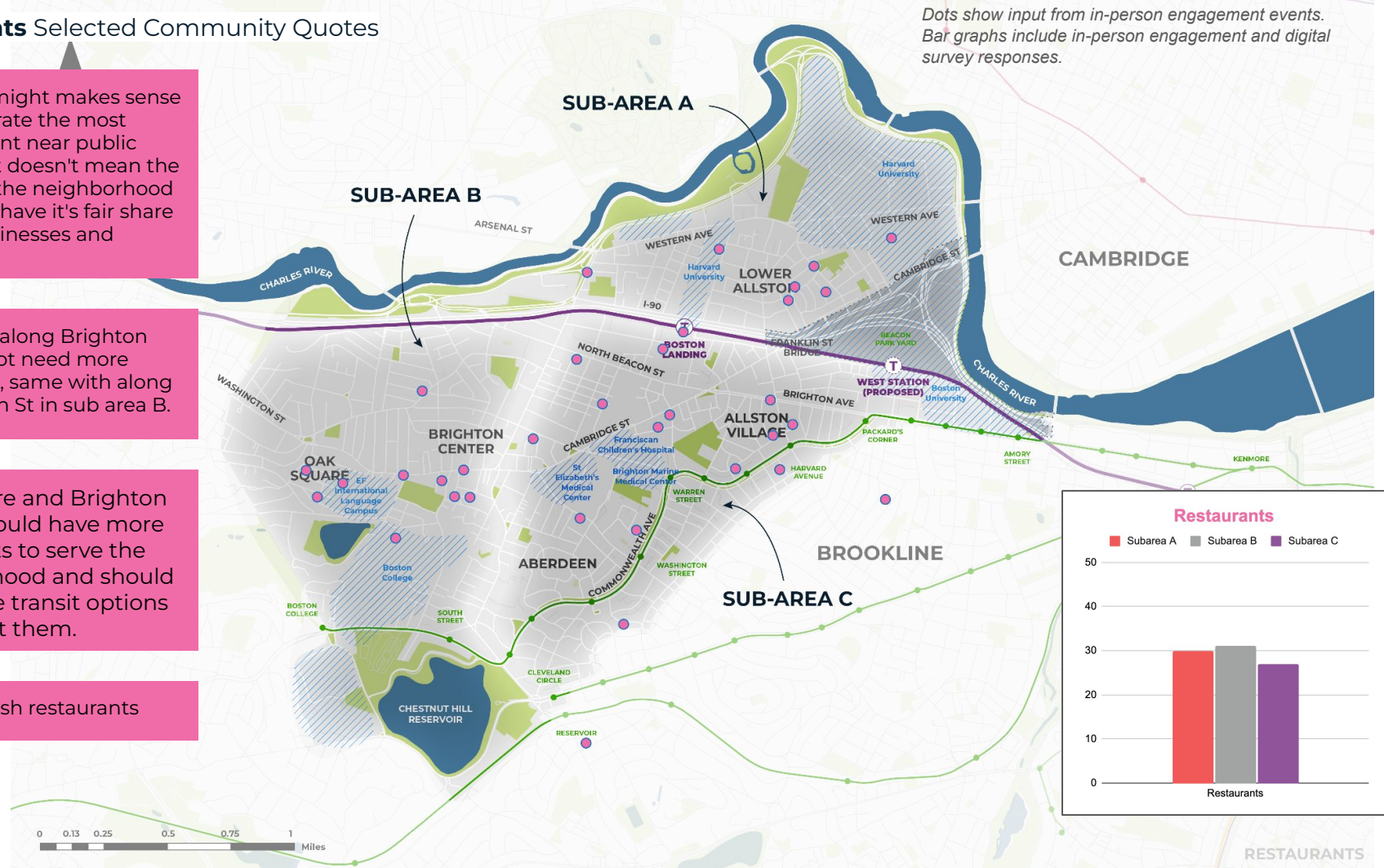
Though it might make sense to concentrate the most development near public transit, that doesn't mean the entirety of the neighborhood should not have its fair share of local businesses and restaurants

Sub area C along Brighton Ave does not need more restaurants, same with along Washington St in sub area B.

Oak Square and Brighton Center should have more restaurants to serve the neighborhood and should have more transit options to connect them.

More Spanish restaurants

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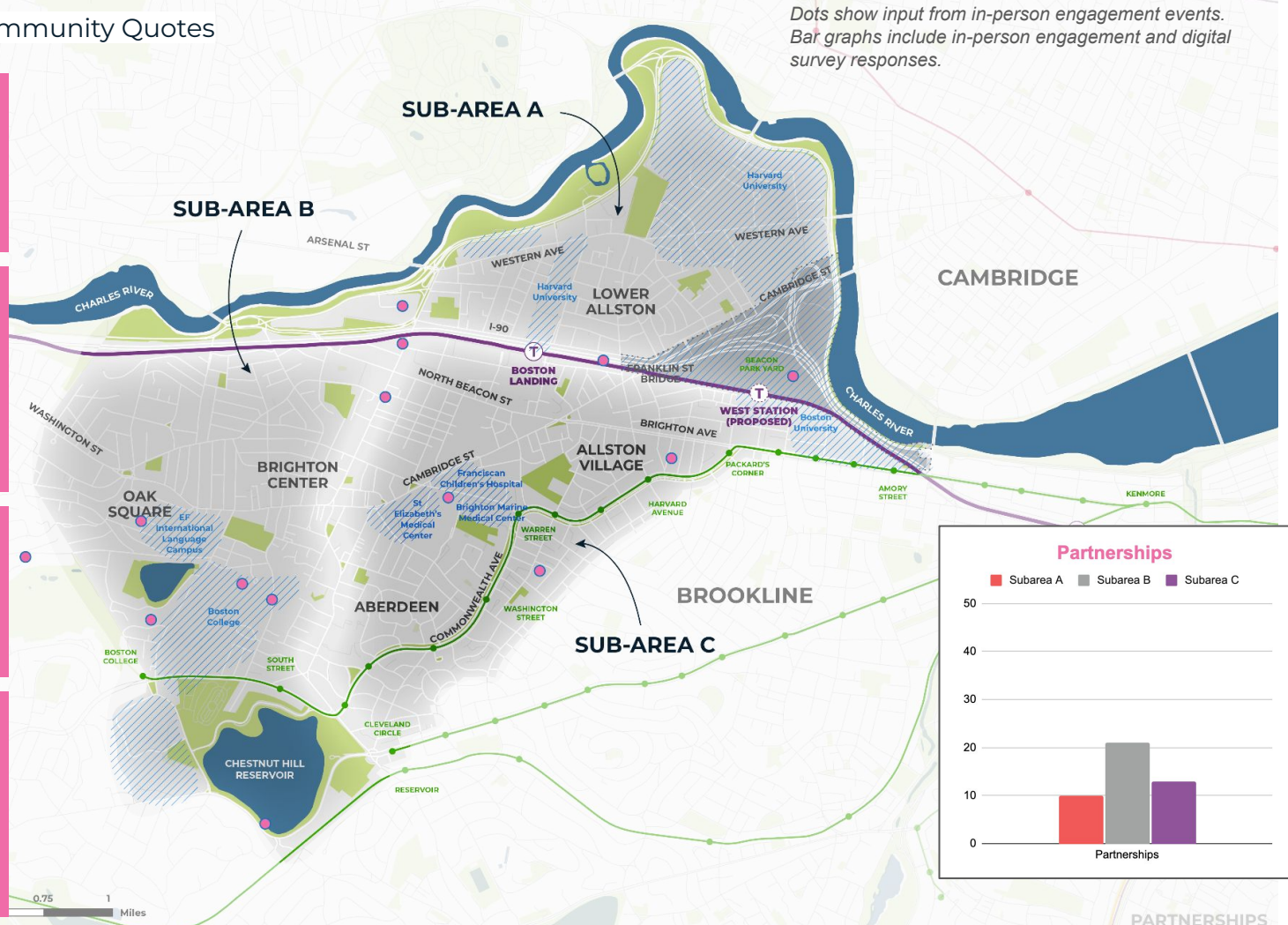
Partnerships Selected Community Quotes

I feel partnerships shouldn't be relied on because it's unreliable to depend on private companies for our public services like community centers.

There can always be stronger partnerships with businesses and institutions in the community but when groups become too politically involved that they overwhelm the voice of the neighborhoods

Area B makes sense for Partnership given the it is home to Boston College, which can work with local community.

Brighton parks, public courts (basketball and tennis) are utilized by programs like the Y or tenacity but those programs do not seem to invest in the property's upkeep.



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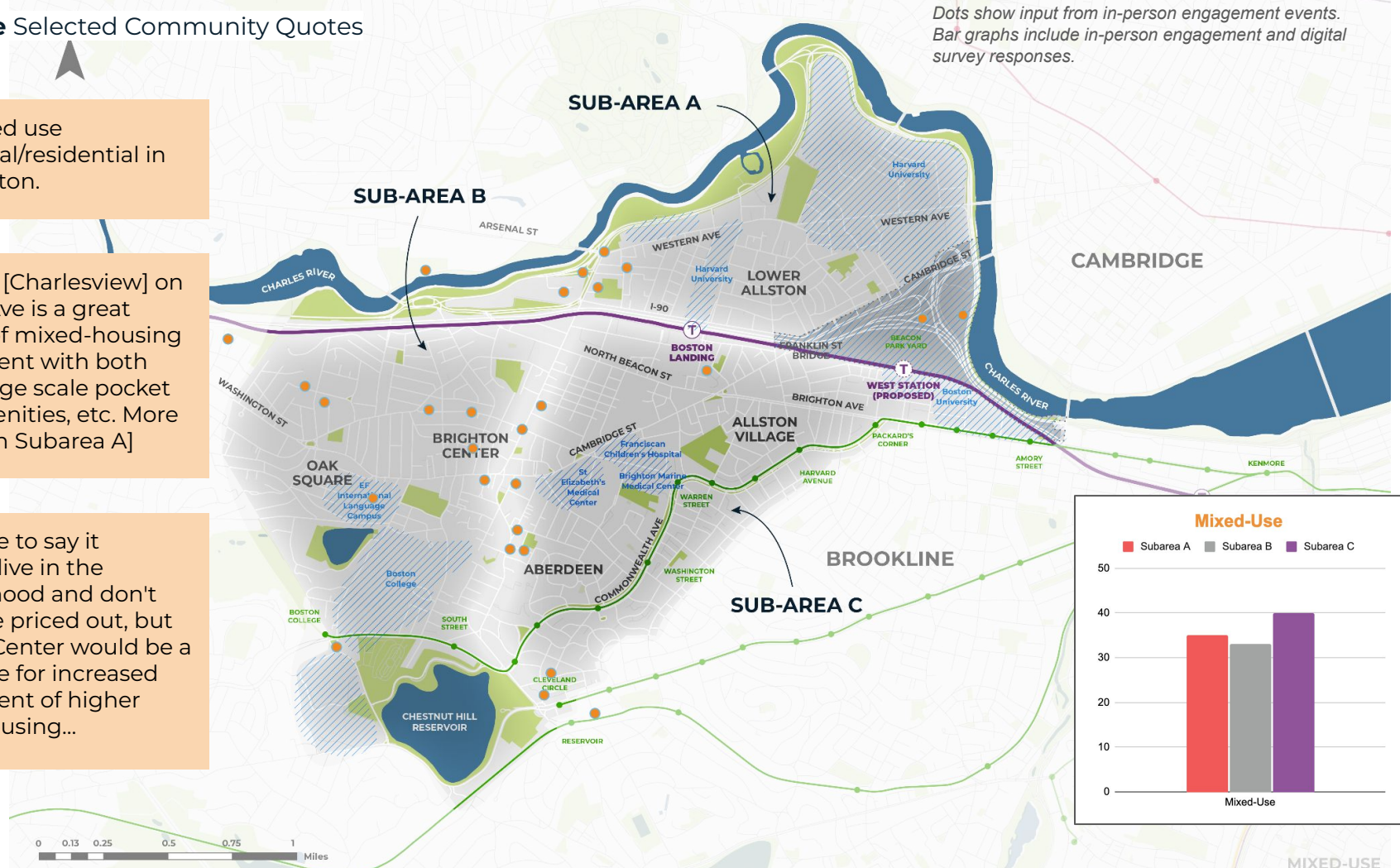
Mixed-Use Selected Community Quotes

More mixed use commercial/residential in Lower Allston.

The "new" [Charlesview] on Western Ave is a great example of mixed-housing development with both small & large scale pocket parks, amenities, etc. More like this. [in Subarea A]

It pains me to say it because I live in the neighborhood and don't want to be priced out, but Brighton Center would be a great place for increased development of higher density housing...

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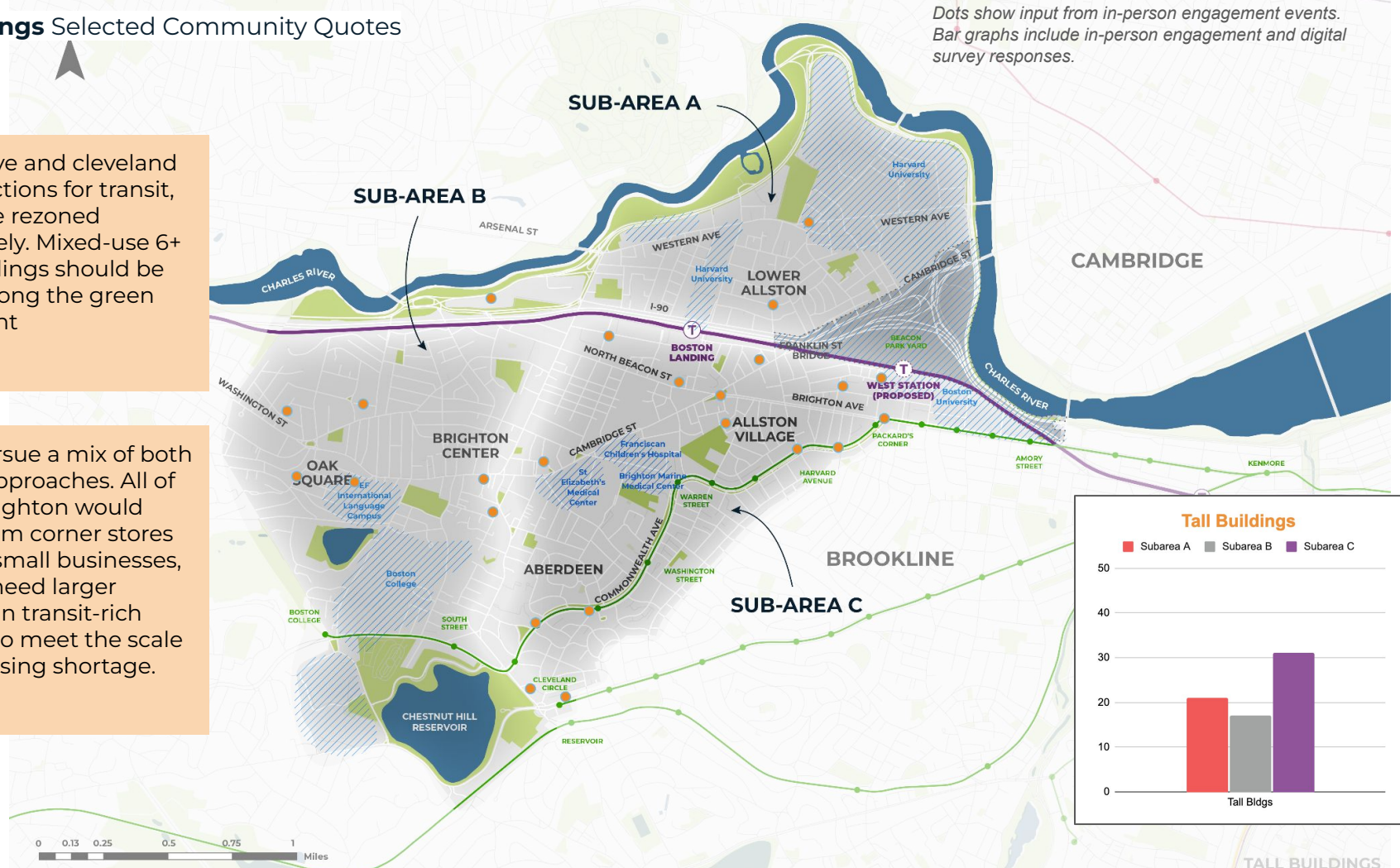


Tall Buildings Selected Community Quotes

Harvard ave and cleveland circle, junctions for transit, need to be rezoned immediately. Mixed-use 6+ story buildings should be allowed along the green line by right

Please pursue a mix of both of these approaches. All of Allston-Brighton would benefit from corner stores and local small businesses, while we need larger buildings in transit-rich locations to meet the scale of our housing shortage.

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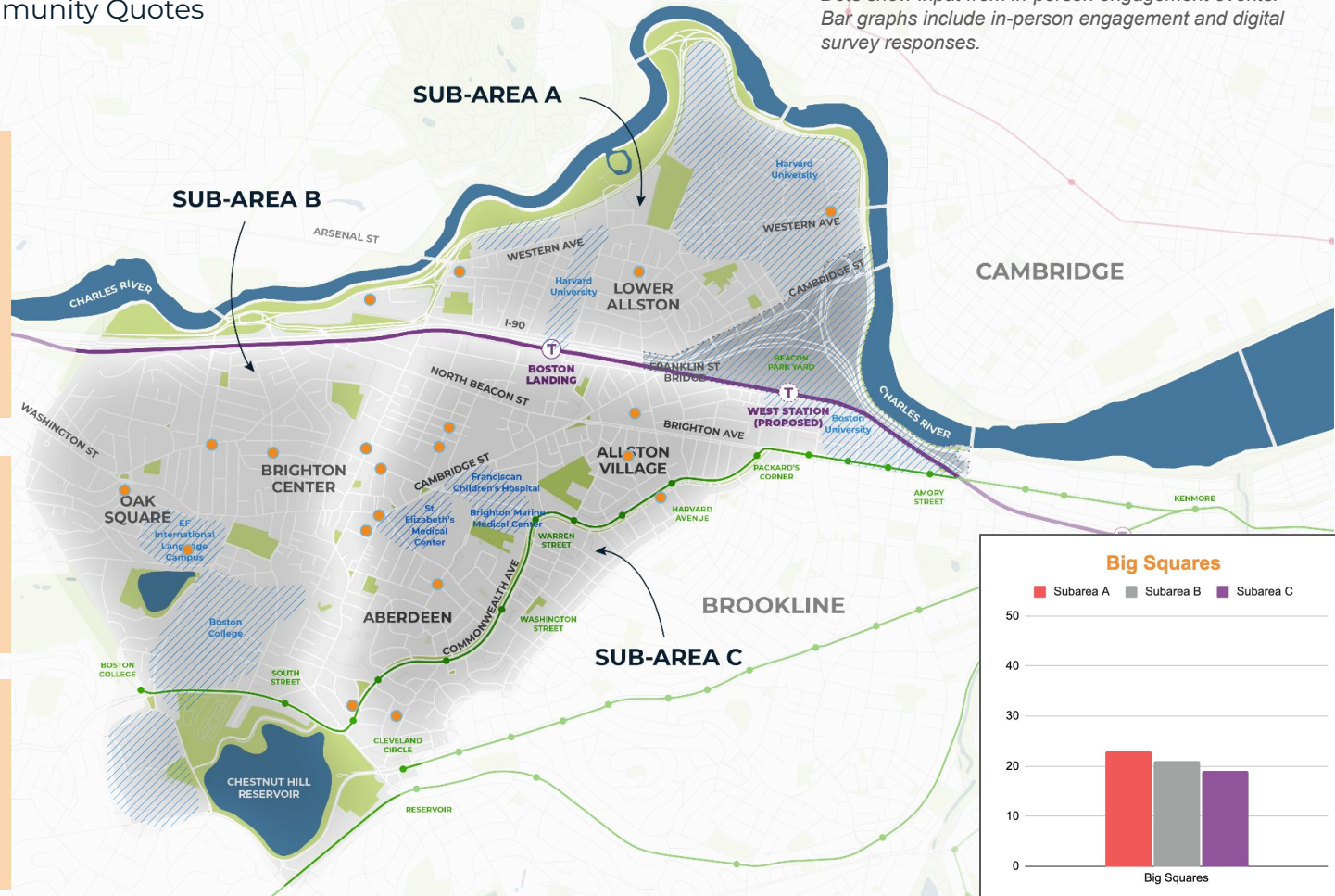
Big Squares Selected Community Quotes

I'd like the "big squares" idea better for sub area B and C if it was 4-6 story development instead, as that fits more with the character of the existing larger buildings in those neighborhoods.

The neighborhood should continue to grow upward AND be centered around its squares (read: transit nodes) AND be mixed use.

Brighton Center and Oak Square should be Big Squares with concentrated density and high activity, supported by increased transit.

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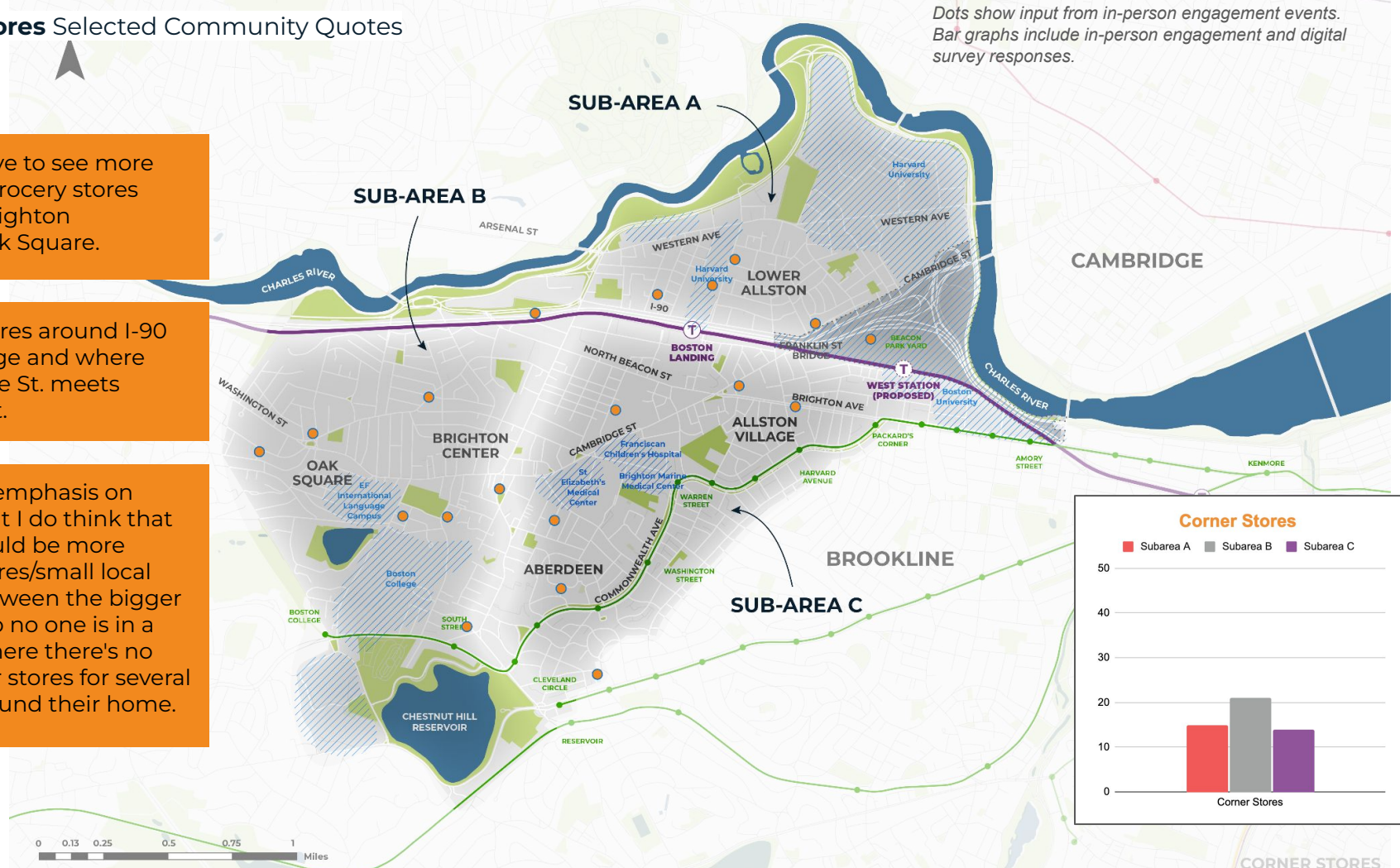
Corner Stores Selected Community Quotes

I would love to see more markets/grocery stores around Brighton Center/Oak Square.

Corner stores around I-90 interchange and where Cambridge St. meets Harvard St.

I love the emphasis on density but I do think that there should be more corner stores/small local places between the bigger districts so no one is in a stretch where there's no services or stores for several blocks around their home.

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.

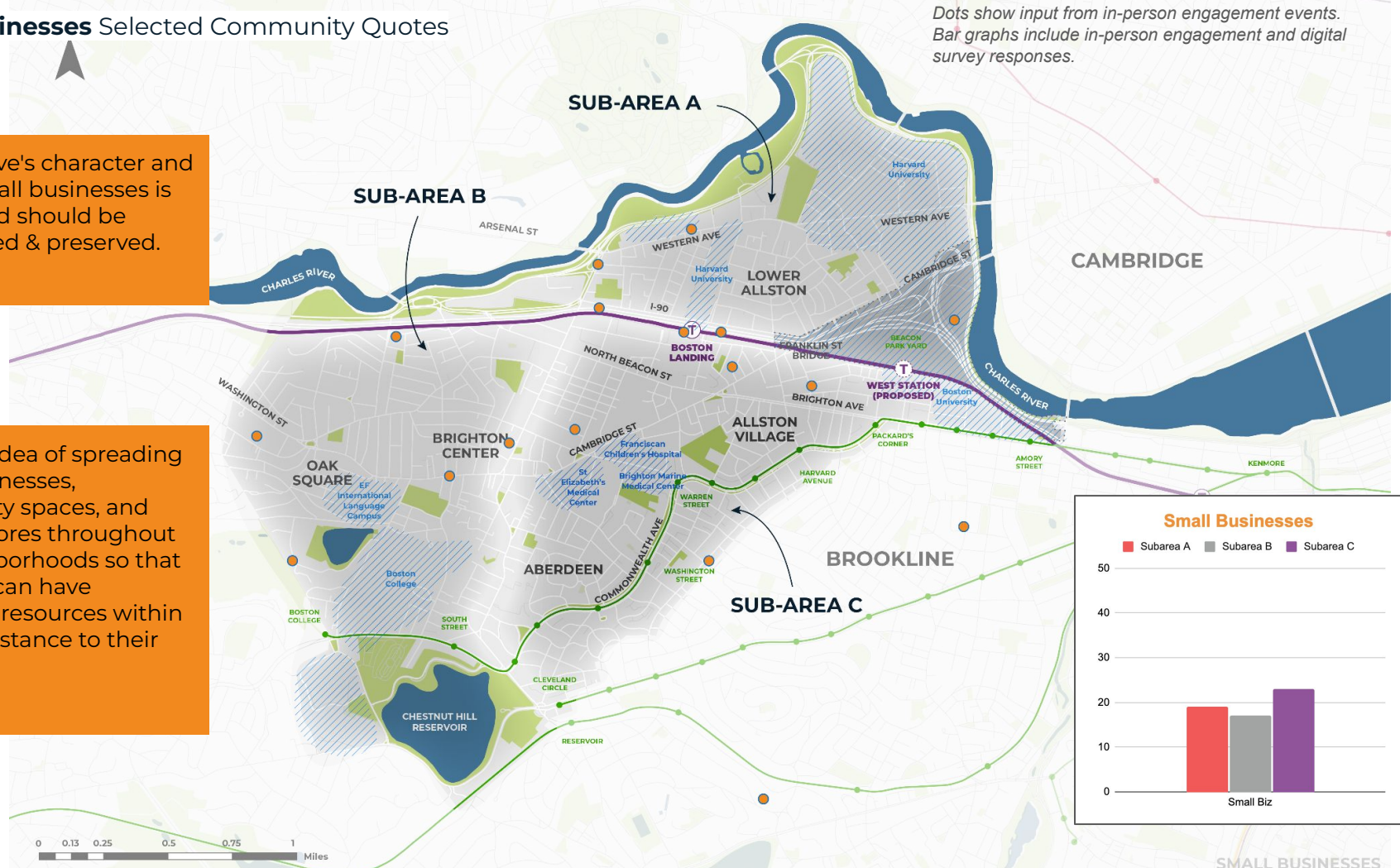


Small Businesses Selected Community Quotes

Harvard Ave's character and hub of small businesses is special and should be encouraged & preserved.

I love the idea of spreading small businesses, community spaces, and grocery stores throughout the neighborhoods so that everyone can have necessary resources within walking distance to their houses.

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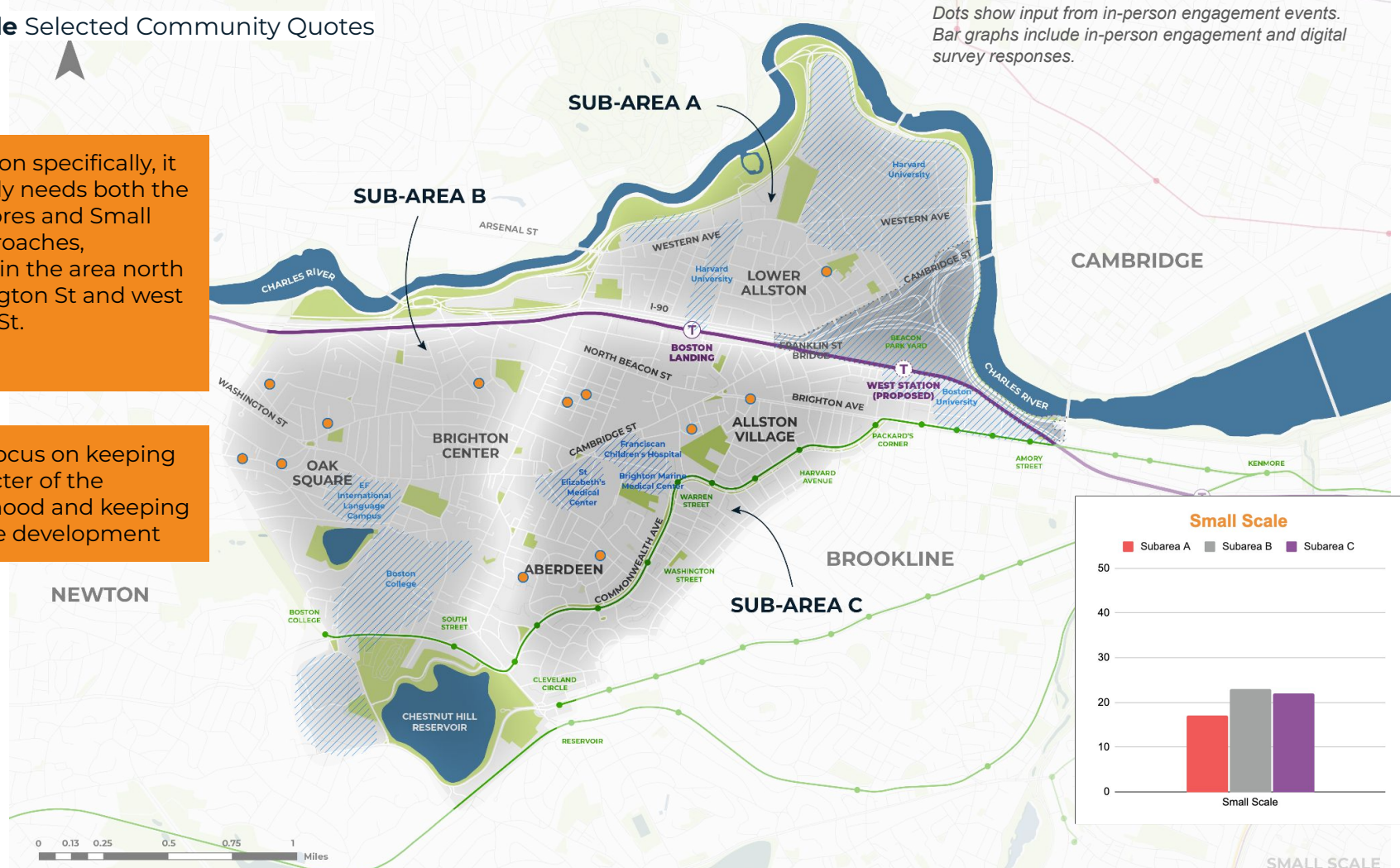


Small Scale Selected Community Quotes

For Brighton specifically, it desperately needs both the Corner Stores and Small Scale approaches, especially in the area north of Washington St and west of Market St.

Love the focus on keeping the character of the neighborhood and keeping small scale development

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



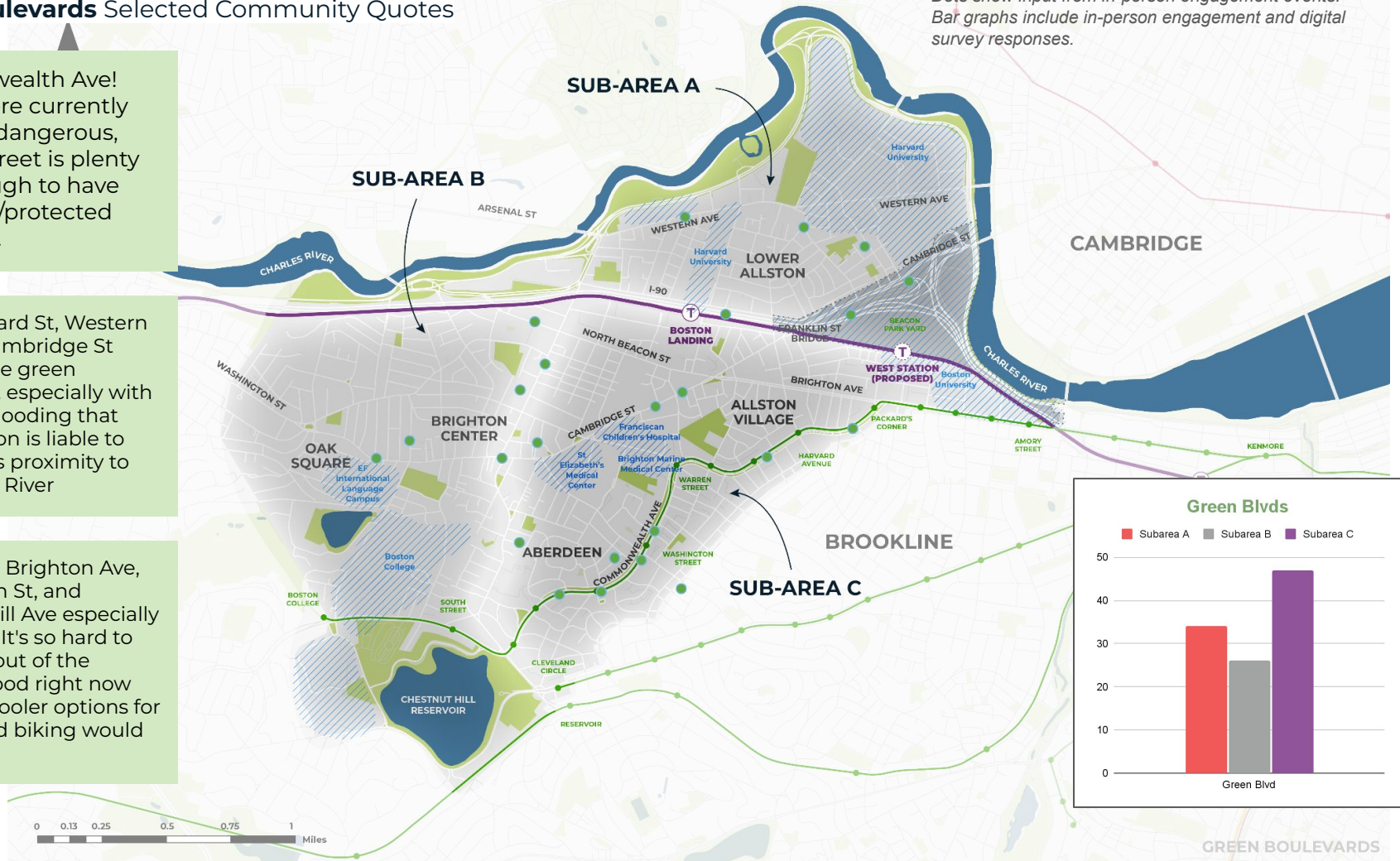
Green Boulevards Selected Community Quotes

Commonwealth Ave!
Biking there currently feels very dangerous, and the street is plenty wide enough to have dedicated/protected bike lanes.

North Harvard St, Western Ave, and Cambridge St should all be green Boulevards, especially with the risk of flooding that Lower Allston is liable to face with its proximity to the Charles River

Comm Ave, Brighton Ave, Washington St, and Chestnut Hill Ave especially need [this]. It's so hard to get in and out of the neighborhood right now and safer, cooler options for walking and biking would help..

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



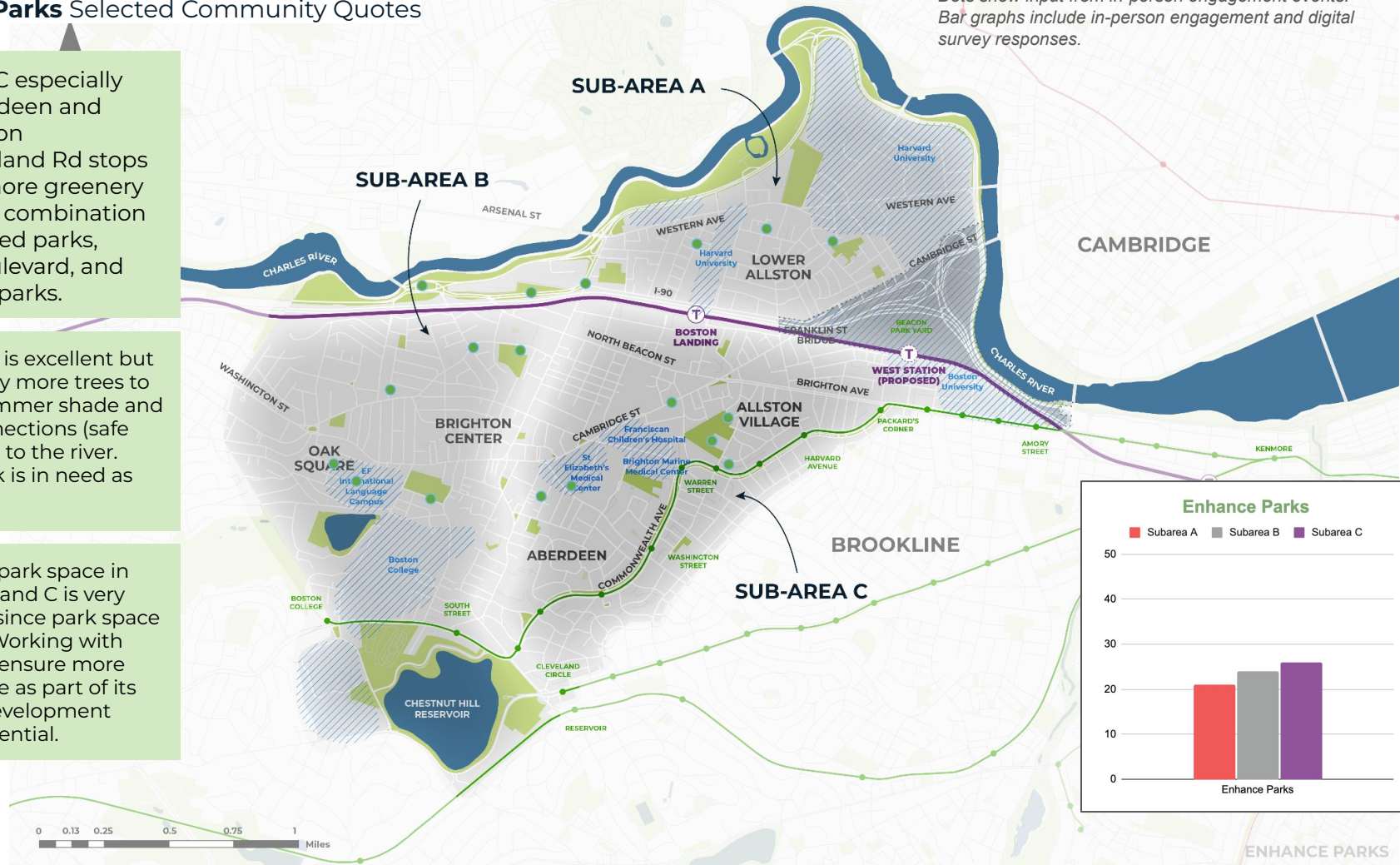
Enhance Parks Selected Community Quotes

Sub Area C especially near Aberdeen and Washington St+Sutherland Rd stops can use more greenery through a combination of enhanced parks, green boulevard, and new mini parks.

Smith Park is excellent but needs many more trees to provide summer shade and better connections (safe crosswalks) to the river. Ringer Park is in need as well.

Improving park space in sub-area A and C is very important since park space is limited. Working with Harvard to ensure more green space as part of its overall redevelopment plans is essential.

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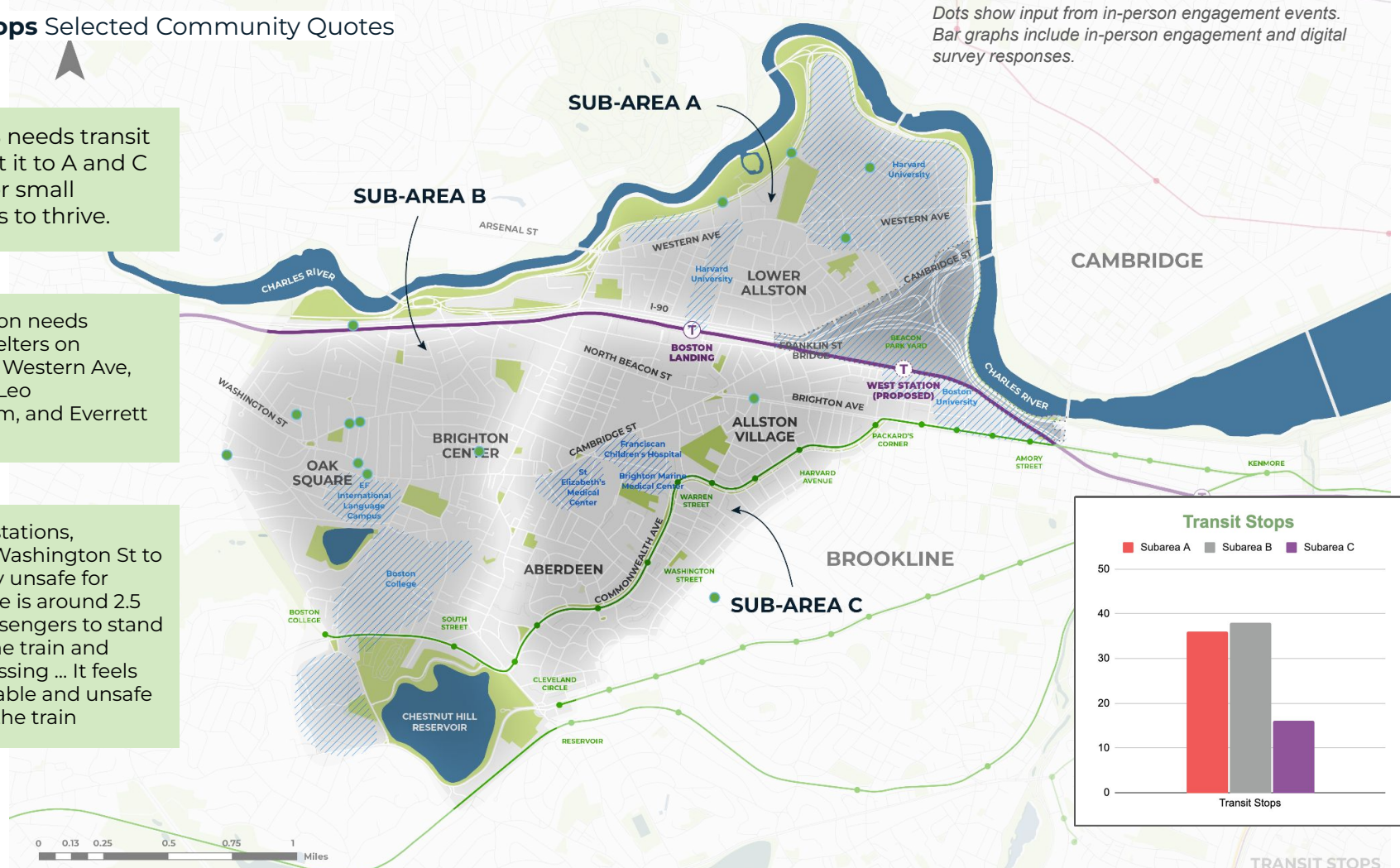
Transit Stops Selected Community Quotes

Subarea B needs transit to connect it to A and C in order for small businesses to thrive.

Lower Allston needs covered shelters on Harvard St, Western Ave, Market St/ Leo Birmingham, and Everett

The B line stations, especially Washington St to BC, are very unsafe for riders! There is around 2.5 feet for passengers to stand between the train and vehicles passing ... It feels uncomfortable and unsafe to wait for the train

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



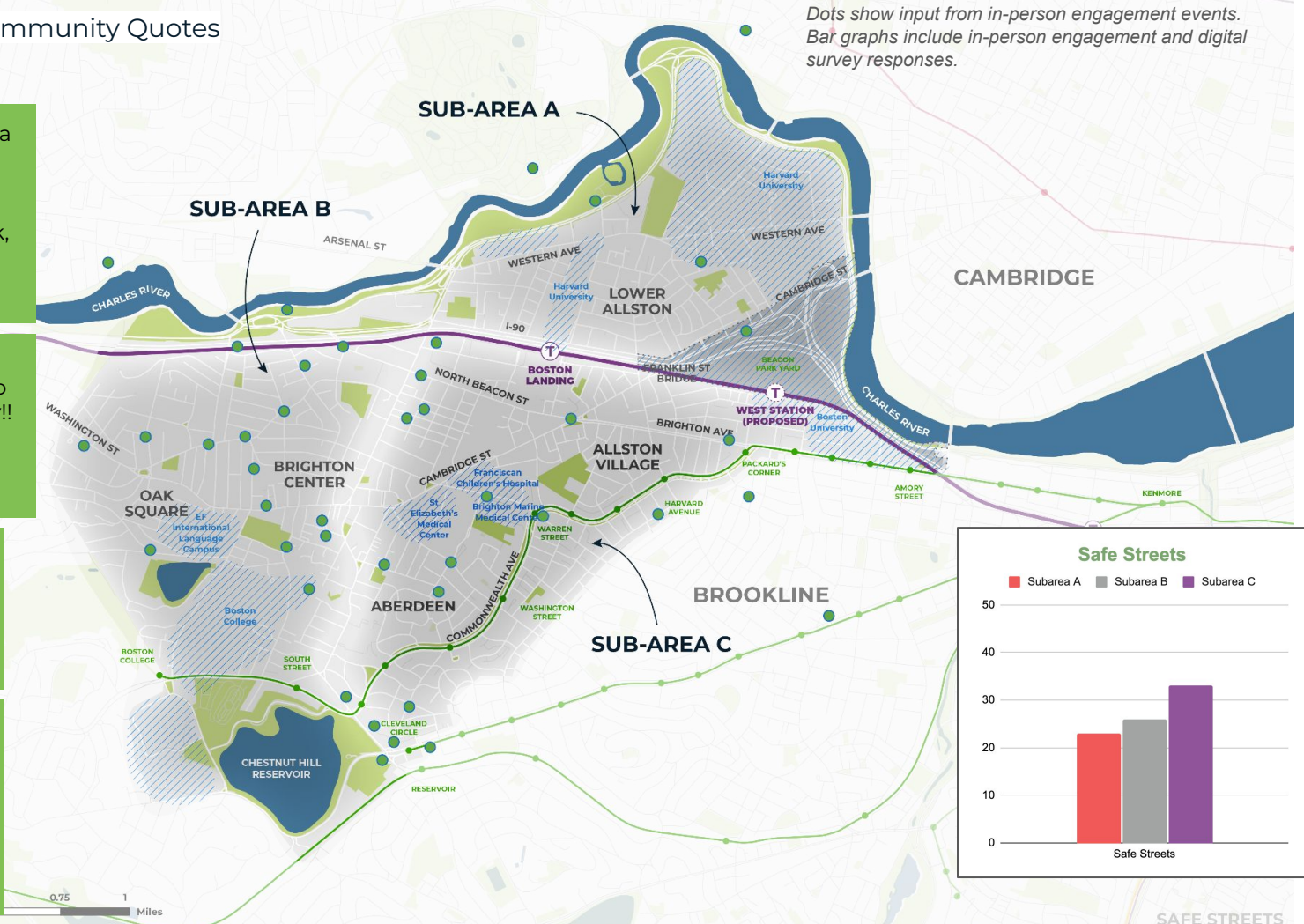
Safe Streets Selected Community Quotes

Cleveland Circle is in need of a lot of love when it comes to walkability. Seems very car-centric for a place with a small transit hub, a large park, shops, a hotel, elder living centers, and lots of dense housing.

Subarea A: street safety around entrances and exits to the bridges over the highway!! Currently v dangerous for pedestrians and cyclists

All three areas need more bike safety infrastructure as well as walkable areas.

...the entire area from Comm to Western Ave...the whole stretch feels very dangerous as a pedestrian as a result of very fast car traffic.



Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.

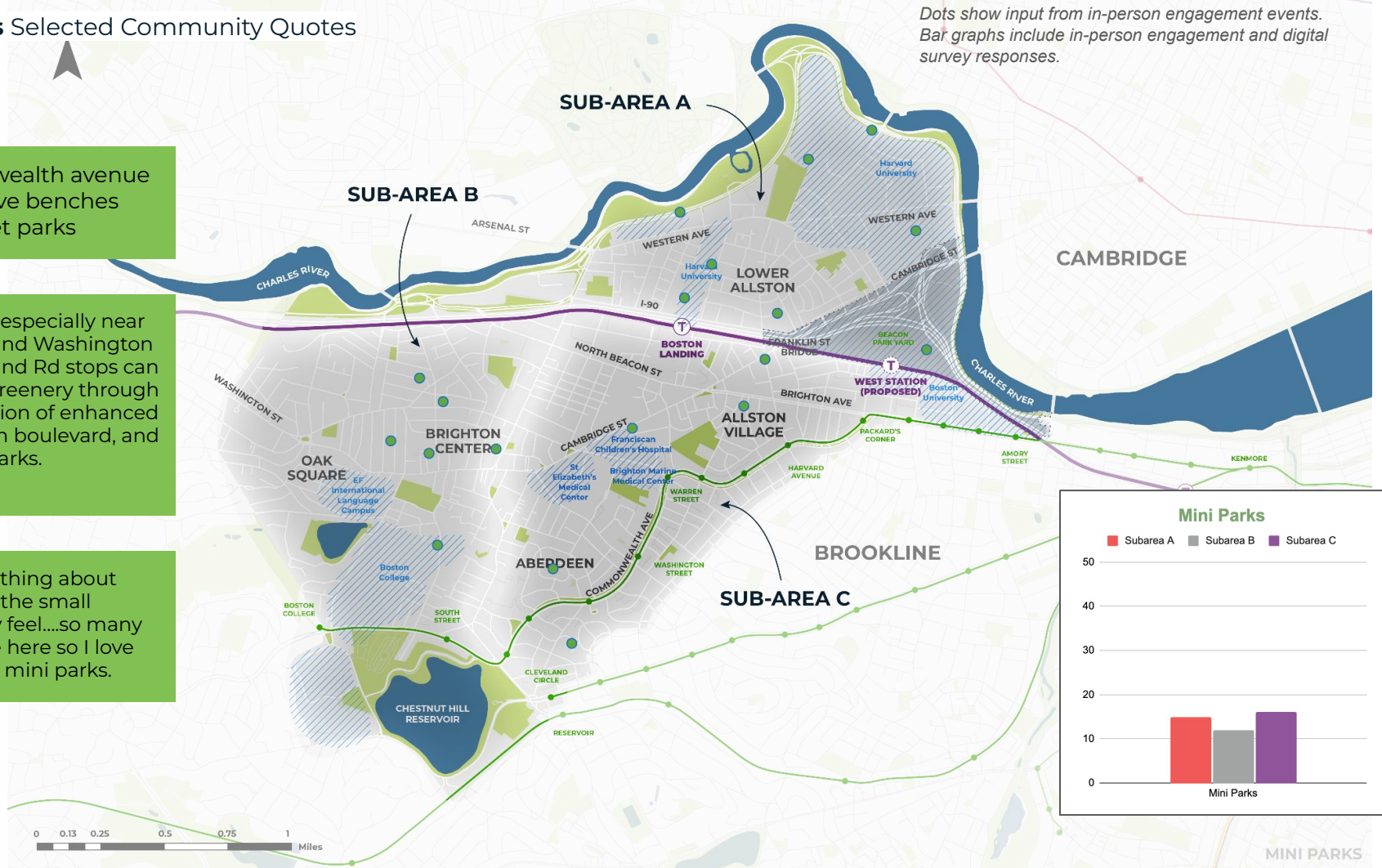
Mini Parks Selected Community Quotes

Commonwealth avenue should have benches and pocket parks

Sub Area C especially near Aberdeen and Washington St+Sutherland Rd stops can use more greenery through a combination of enhanced parks, green boulevard, and new mini parks.

My favorite thing about Brighton is the small community feel....so many families live here so I love the idea for mini parks.

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



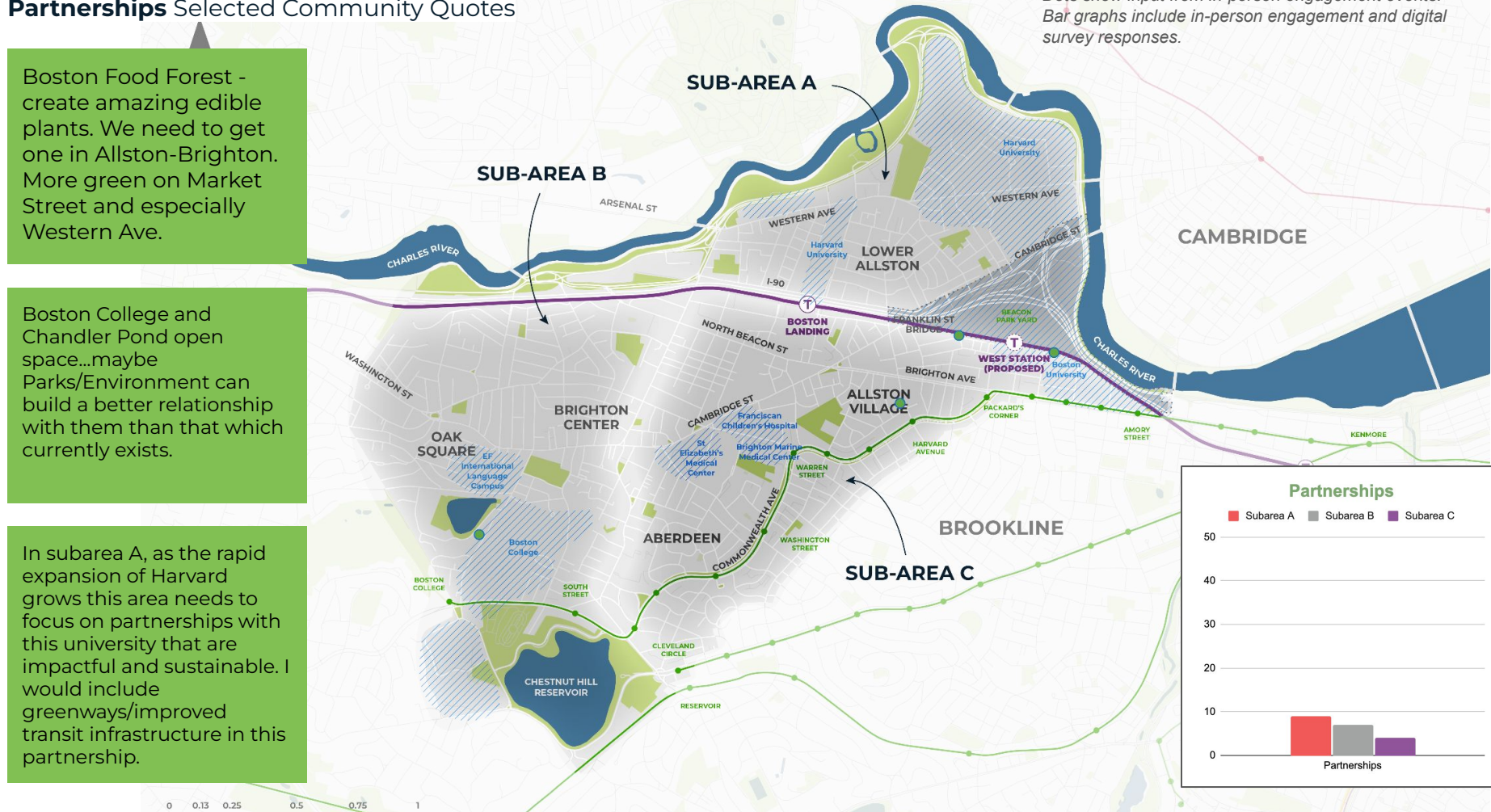
Partnerships Selected Community Quotes

Boston Food Forest - create amazing edible plants. We need to get one in Allston-Brighton. More green on Market Street and especially Western Ave.

Boston College and Chandler Pond open space...maybe Parks/Environment can build a better relationship with them than that which currently exists.

In subarea A, as the rapid expansion of Harvard grows this area needs to focus on partnerships with this university that are impactful and sustainable. I would include greenways/improved transit infrastructure in this partnership.

Dots show input from in-person engagement events. Bar graphs include in-person engagement and digital survey responses.



Key areas of focus (shared priorities)

- **Neighborhood-wide:**
 - More parks, trees, mixed-use, moderate upzoning/gentle density
 - More housing along transit lines (Boston Landing, Packard's, West Station, Cleveland Circle)
 - Traffic calming and safer streets for pedestrians and bikers.
 - Interest in Community Center(s)
- **Commonwealth Ave:** Higher density (“Mixed-use 6+ story buildings should be allowed along the green line [...]”)
- **Boston Landing, West Station:** More density, better connectivity
- **Birmingham Pkwy north of the turnpike:** Mixed-use
- **Oak Square:** Grocery store, better transit connectivity
- **Brighton Center:** Gentle density, diverse businesses, better transit connectivity, reduce empty storefronts; “Some kind of destination there” (not too disruptive or loud)
- **Allston Village:** More public/3rd spaces, safer streets for pedestrians and bikers (and close bike network gaps), “regional hub for artists, not just a local one”
- **High density corridors:** N. Beacon & Brighton Ave., Harvard Ave., Comm. Ave.

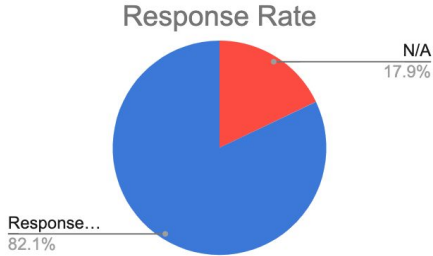
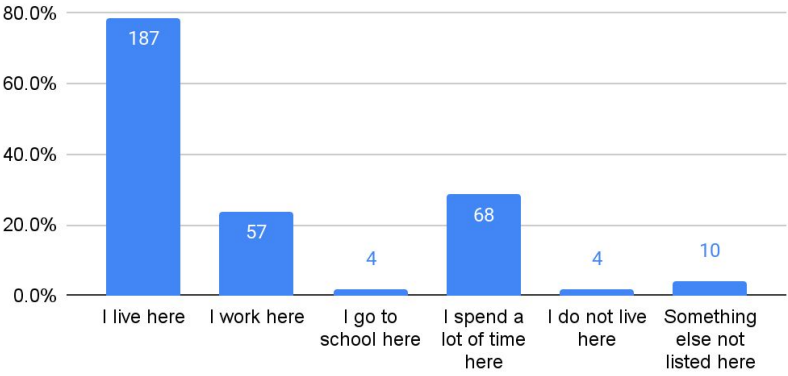
Open House Engagement Stats

Engagement stats

- Includes demographics from Open House (140+) and Online survey respondents (148)
 - NOTE: % are taken as the share of participants who responded to a given question (excluding N/A)
- Many community members surveyed chose to skip one or more demographic questions - this was most common for questions about Hispanic/Latino background (48% skipped) and race (35% skipped).
- **Age:** Survey respondents skewed slightly older than A-B population (Under 34 = 70% of A-B residents, 46% of survey respondents.)
 - Other age groups generally tracked with the population.
- **Race:** Asian respondents were underrepresented (20% of population, 7% of respondents) while White respondents are overrepresented (69% of population, 84% of respondents).
 - Other racial identities generally tracked with the population.
- **Hispanic/Latino background:** The percentage of A-B population who identify as Hispanic or Latino was the same as the survey respondents: 11%
- **Housing Tenure:** About half of survey respondents were renters, and half owners. However, when compared with the resident population, homeowners were overrepresented (19% of residents, 44% of respondents) and renters were underrepresented (81% of residents, 49% of respondents).

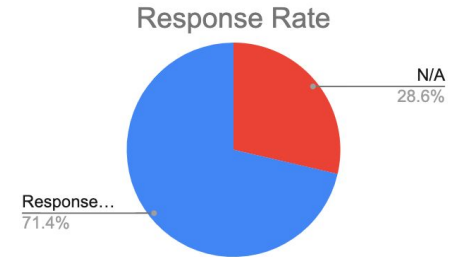
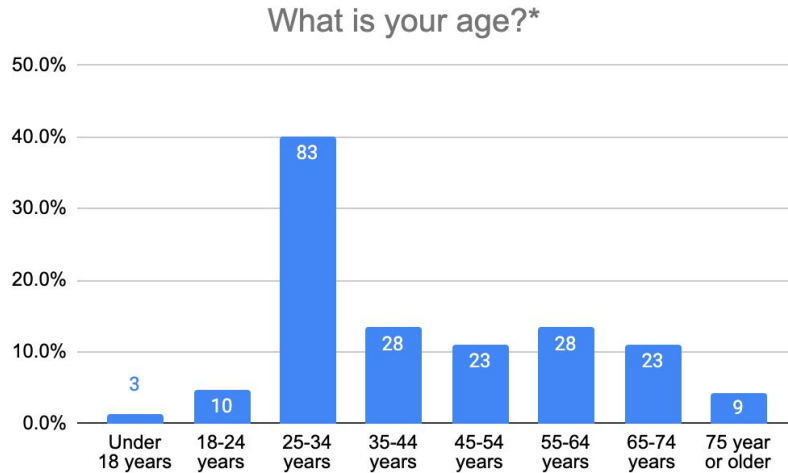
Engagement stats

What is your relationship to Allston-Brighton? (Select all that apply)*



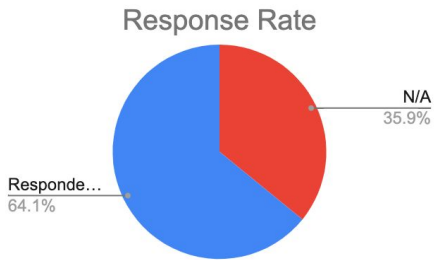
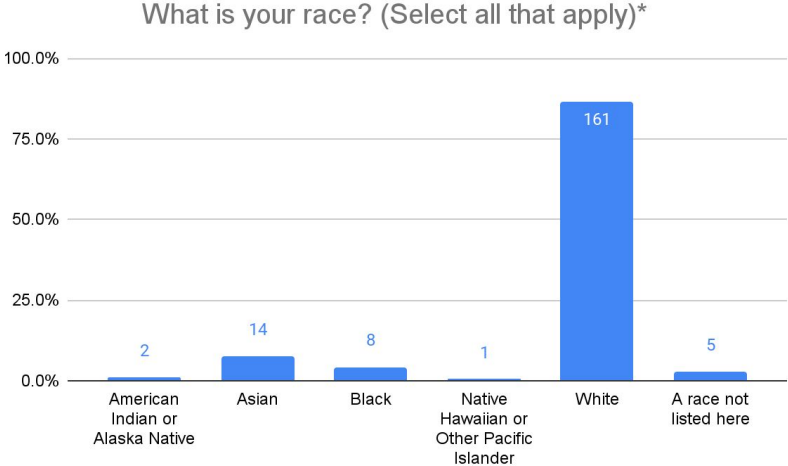
*excludes N/A responses

Engagement stats



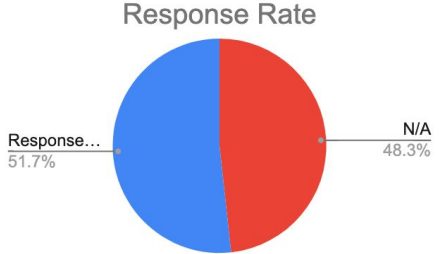
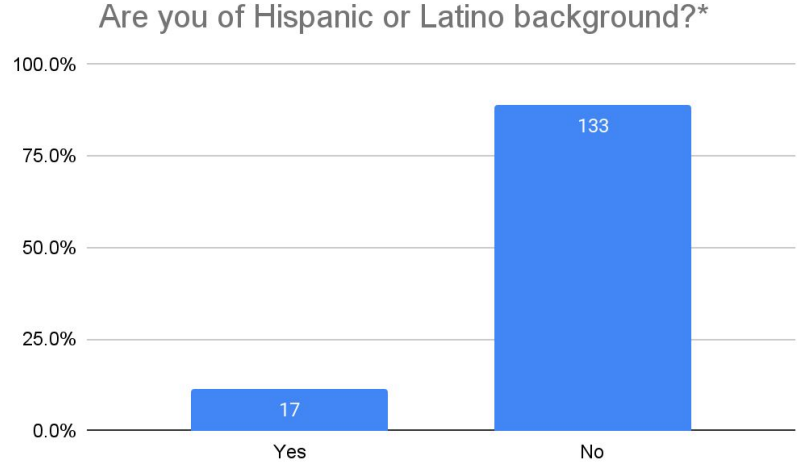
*excludes N/A responses

Engagement stats



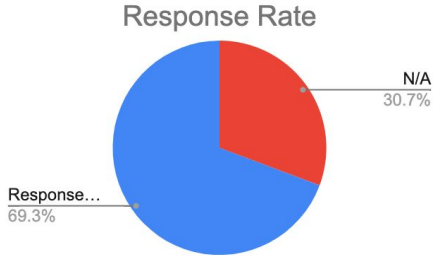
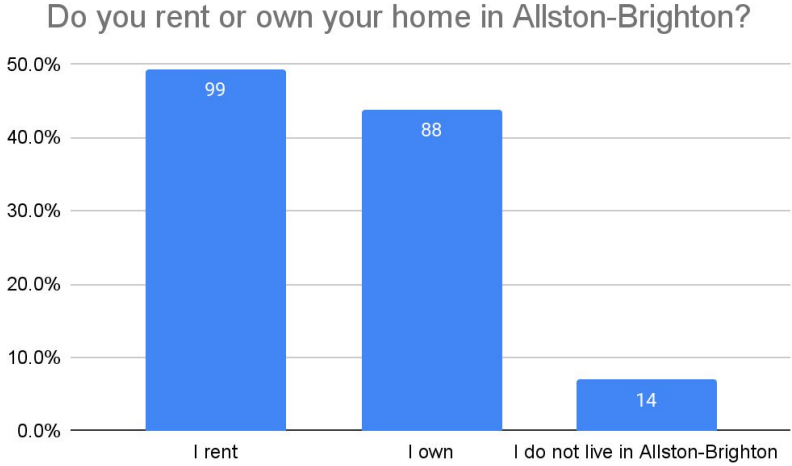
*excludes N/A responses

Engagement stats



*excludes N/A responses

Engagement stats



*excludes N/A responses

Thank you!



City of Boston
Planning Department