



WINTER STREET: COLOR FLOWS

Impact Study



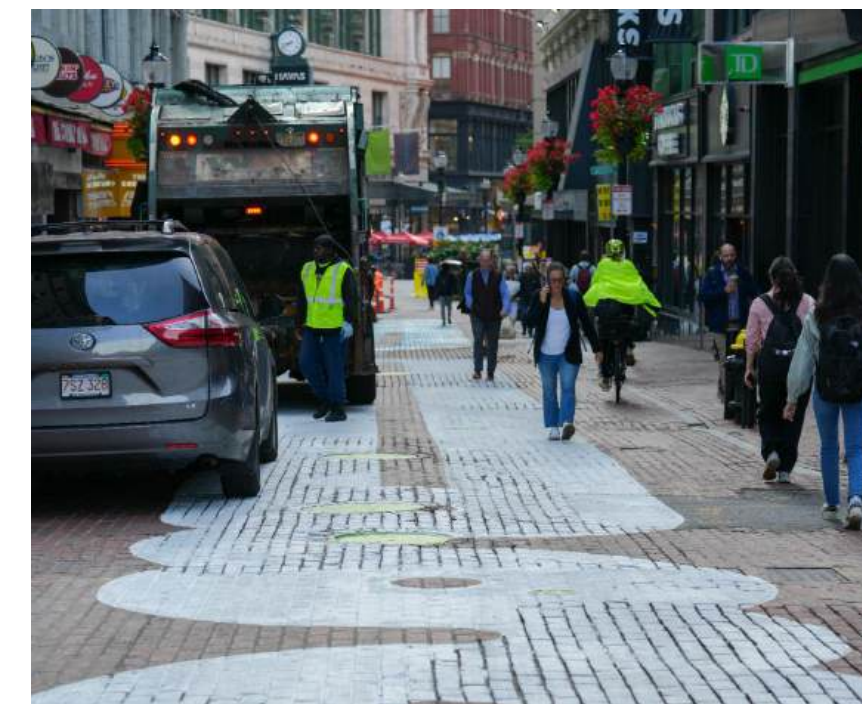
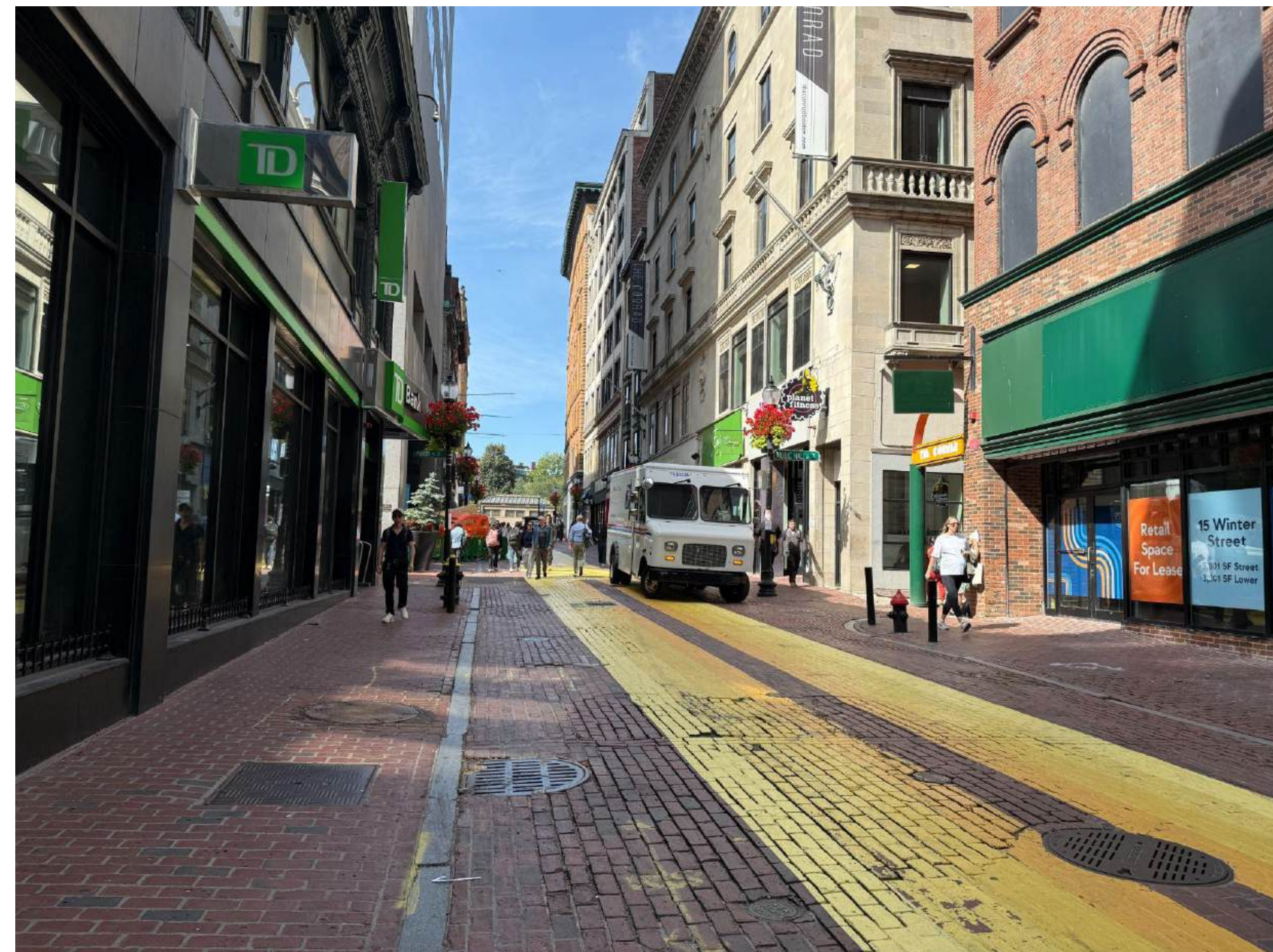
AGENDA

- Context (Shin-pei)
- Brief overview of data sources (Anna)
- Findings (Anna)
- Discussion (Everyone)

WINTER STREET BEFORE:

A street designed for pedestrians
that discouraged social life

- Unpredictable behavior, seen as unsafe, heavy police presence
- Used as a passthrough for commuting, not a place to slow down and linger
- Pedestrian focus wasn't recognized, many cars would drive through



PROJECT GOAL:

To test the City of Boston's [Design Vision](#)! Specifically, how does this intervention impact social life, perception of safety, and the diversity of people using the space.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

- Can we create a sense of safety to invite people to linger and socialize on Winter Street?
- Can we get commuters to break their routine and engage with the space directly?
- Can we encourage more positive behavior?
- Can we invite new people to Winter Street who otherwise don't visit?



TIME FRAME:

- Pre-intervention: 9/30 - 10/10
- During intervention: 10/11 - 11/16
- Post-intervention: 11/17 - 11/29

PROGRAMMING DATES:

- Color Flows Outdoor Market: 10/11 12-6pm
- Color Flows Family Fest: 10/25 12-6:30pm
- Color Flows Closing Block Party: 11/15 3-9pm
- [Additional activations by DBA](#)
- [Food Truck Schedule](#)



[Placer.ai](#)
Mobility
data

Online
Survey

Intercept
Survey

On-site
observations

Neighborhood
Survey

Business
Survey

MBTA
Stop
Counts

Mastercard
Swipes

Vendor
Survey

SAFETY

MOBILITY

DIVERSITY

SOCIAL LIFE

ECONOMIC



A NOTE ABOUT METHODS

- The impact of the activation did not appear as strong in the large quantitative datasets (Placer.ai, Mastercard data)
 - *Large events (ex: Boston Marathon) are better suited for these datasets*
- Qualitative data contributed to many of our most important insights as it gets to the “why” of people’s behaviors
- While some datasets might be larger than others, that doesn’t mean it’s more valuable or representative - they are all tools that highlight unique findings!

FOUNDATIONAL SITE STRATEGIES:

Static & Large-scale items that remain in position throughout the activation duration

EVENT & PROGRAMMING LAYERS:

Mobile and temporary features, experiences and site elements that are additive to the foundational strategies





**THE COLOR FLOWS
ACTIVATION LED TO
MORE POSITIVE
BEHAVIORS ON
WINTER STREET**

The addition of furniture, art, and programming encouraged more playing, socializing, and lingering



Before activation

- Mostly used as a passthrough
 - “Man on skates,” “Seeing very few people stopping,” “Person on e-bike”
- Economic insecurity and unregulated markets
 - “Gentleman selling drugs,” “Panhandling”
- Deterrents to pedestrian activity
 - “USPS truck drove down street,” “Loud classical music playing”



During activation

- Lounge seating and bench seating supported different types of socializing
 - “Sitting for a smoke,” “Couple sitting with dogs”
- Artwork attracted social media influencers and admirers:
 - “Taking selfie,” “Deciding where to film a project,” “Family taking photos of the street”
- Furniture, programming and vendors increased variety of social activity
 - “2 young men sitting at a table,” “5 people drinking and eating at JM Curley”
- Games invited play
 - “3 friends playing connect 4,” “Family playing, re-stacking Jenga”

Art and furniture made people feel safe and encouraged new people to walk through

Before:

“It’s unpredictable, people have issues here and unpredictable behavior”
- Visitor

“Tough crowd at night”
- Visitor

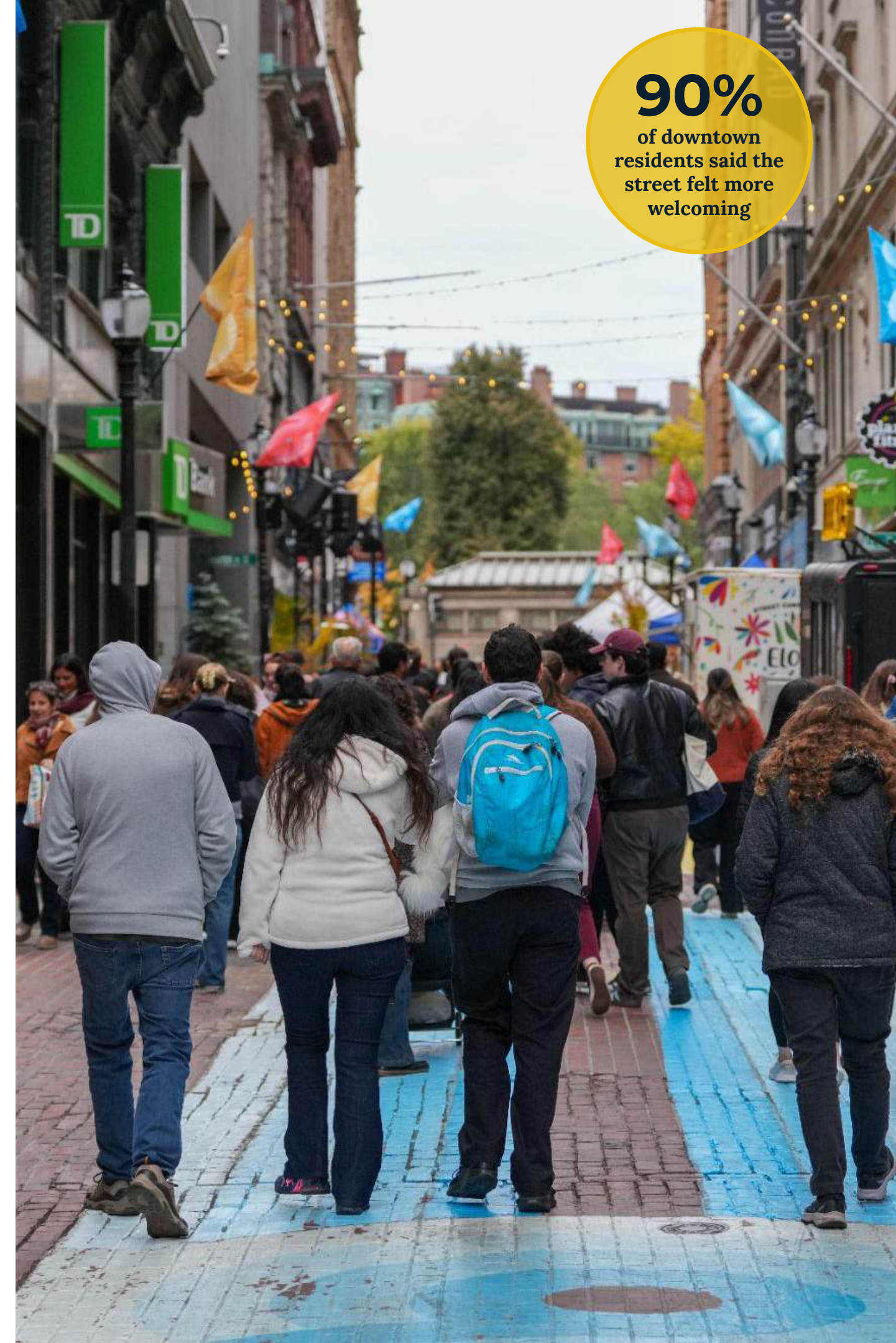
During:

“Felt more up to date, pleasing and safe. I had avoided the street before”
-Commuters

“I heard about the new changes and wanted to come check it out! I’ve been a few times now”
- Visitor

“Shockingly inviting”
- Visitor

90%
of downtown residents said the street felt more welcoming



The furniture and programming made it feel like a real pedestrian space and fewer cars drove down

Before:

“It’s usually unclear to me what roads in this area are open to cars and there’s a lack of ambience. Perhaps music, lighting, or fully pedestrianizing the area would make it feel safer”
- Local Resident

During:

“It was great to have the car rule enforced”
- Business Owner

“I was glad to see the activity. The art was cool and I loved that there was a car barrier at certain times”
- Local Resident





**THE NEW USE OF
WINTER STREET
MADE PEOPLE FEEL
SAFER**

**AND LED TO THEM
INTERACTING WITH
MORE OF THE SPACE**

Families naturally gathered by the design features, games, and food trucks

Observations:

- “Family playing, re-stacking Jenga”
- “Family playing bags/cornhole”

“Walking home from school, my seven-year-old daughter said; ‘let’s go the colorful way,, there’s less homeless drug addicts,’”
- Visitor

“1000% better, lively and festive. Even just the paint on the street made it energetic. All of a sudden you saw kids and families on the street!”
- Business Owner



Business owners felt the activation improved behavior and customers felt safer

*"There were fewer aggressive people following people on Winter Street."
- Business Owner*

*"Safer because of how busy the street was"
- Business Owner*

*"Activation helped hinder aggressive behavior near ATMs. Clients commented about safety too and feeling safer."
- Business Owner*

80%
businesses of reported customers felt safer

*"Usually there's a lot of bad sh*t happening on this street, but was pretty safe."
- Business Owner*





**COLOR FLOWS
ATTRACTED MORE
VISITORS TO WINTER
STREET,**

**INVITED IN PEOPLE
WHO USUALLY DON'T
SPEND TIME THERE,**

**AND LED TO PEOPLE
STAYING ON WINTER
STREET FOR LONGER**

Color Flows brought more young people to Winter Street

27%

of attendees were people age 14-29 *before* the activation

57%

of attendees were people age 14-29 *during* the activation



"I want to be apart of the community and have fun with my friends! I'm young but I want to be more involved with my community"

- Visitor



Programming attracted a more racially diverse group of people than before

24%

*of attendees identified as non-white **before** the activation*

54%

*of attendees identified as non-white **during** the activation*

Color Flows attracted people who don't usually come to Winter Street regularly and the makeup of visitors became less commuter heavy

41%

of visitors came to Winter Street outside their daily or weekly schedule **before** the activation

52%

of visitors came to Winter Street outside their daily or weekly schedule **during** the activation

The percentage of commuters among the visitors on Winter Street **decreased** during Color Flows from

24% to **7%**

52%

of visitors came to Winter Street outside their daily or weekly schedule **after** the activation



"I love seeing the city create more things to do within the Downtown"
- Commuters + Workers

More people stayed longer Winter Street during Color Flows, even after it ended

54%

people spent more than 20 minutes on Winter Street *before* the activation

80%

people spent more than 20 minutes on Winter Street *during* the activation

59%

people spent more than 20 minutes on Winter Street *after* the activation



“Heard it was bumping”



**OPENED BUSINESSES
ON WINTER STREET
SAW TANGIBLE
IMPROVEMENTS**

**AND ASKED FOR
MORE EVENTS LIKE
THIS IN THE FUTURE**



Businesses reported an increase in sales

60%
businesses of
reported an
increase in sales

“Color Flow was an unexpected but truly appreciated event that helped my small businesses book my calendar with vending opportunities during what would have otherwise been my slow months. This helps not only my small businesses but the employees it employs stay employed. Can’t wait to do it again next year.”
- Vendor

“I thought this was an amazing way to help small businesses. It came at a time of year where I didn’t have many events booked and being able to fill my November schedule was very helpful.”
- Vendor

100%
of food vendors
were local, small
businesses and/or
minority owned
businesses

Businesses saw an increase in foot traffic

80%

businesses of reported an increase in foot traffic

*“Worth any inconvenience”
- Business Owner*

*“November is a slow month for food trucks and this helped bridge the truck season and holiday season perfectly. Make sure to invite me again next year :)”
- Vendor*

100%

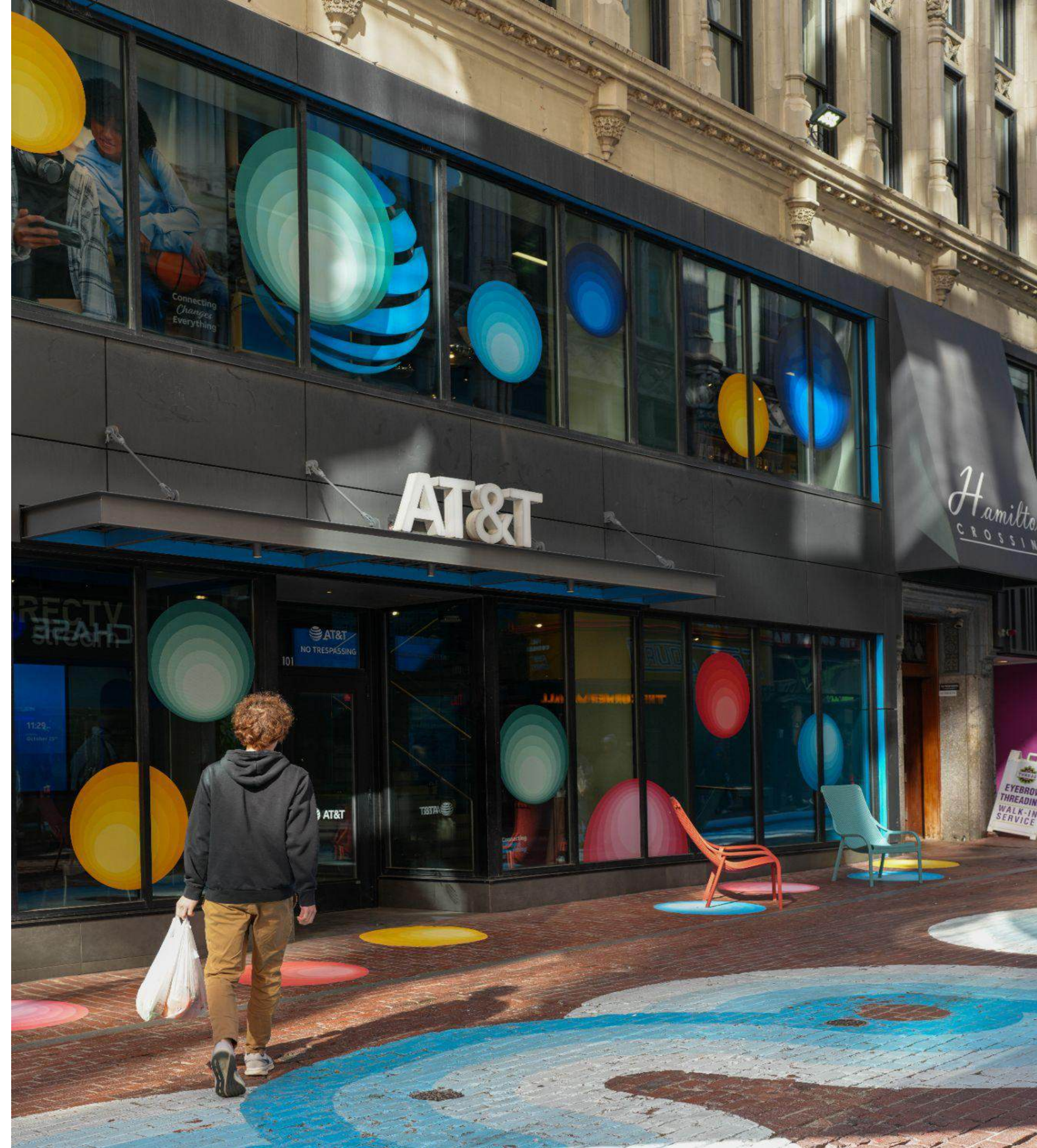
of businesses would support more activations in the future



**EVEN AFTER REMOVING
THE ACTIVATION,**

**THERE WERE LASTING
POSITIVE IMPACTS**

**AND CHANGES IN
PEOPLE'S BEHAVIORS**



Use of design elements spiked during the activation and continued even after Color Flows ended

81%
of visitors during Color Flows interacting with the arts programming, public art, or seating

There was a

175%

increase in use of seating and public art from before to after the intervention



People felt less negative about Winter Street during and even after the intervention compared to before

46%

people reported negative associations with Winter Street **before** the activation

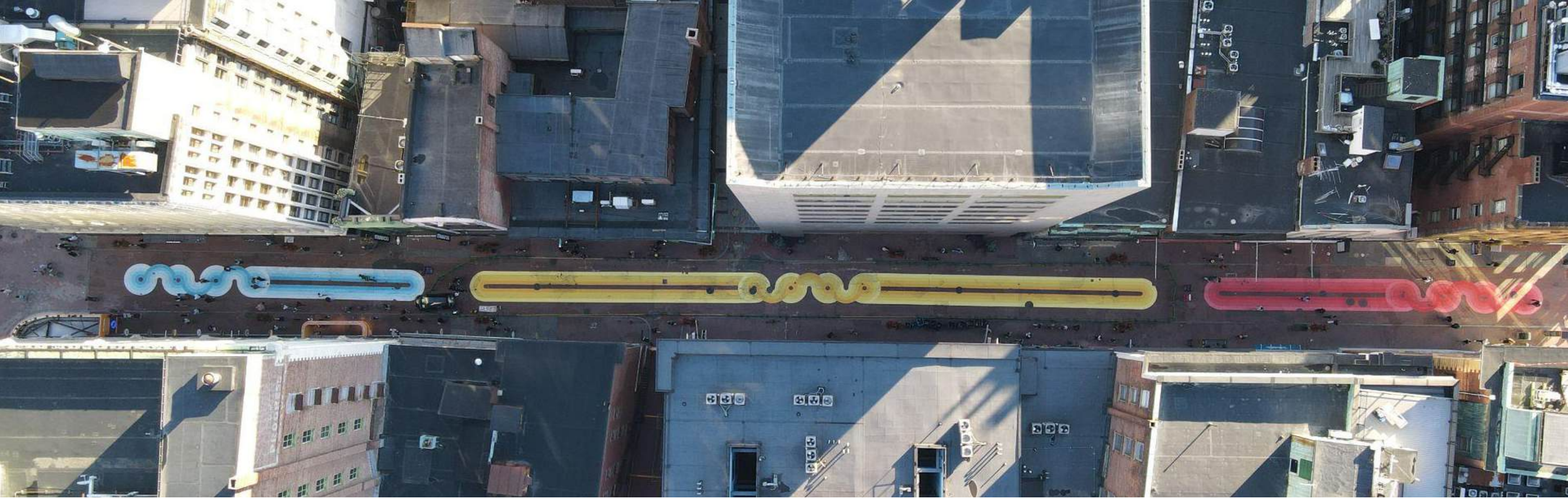
5%

people reported negative associations with Winter Street **during** the activation

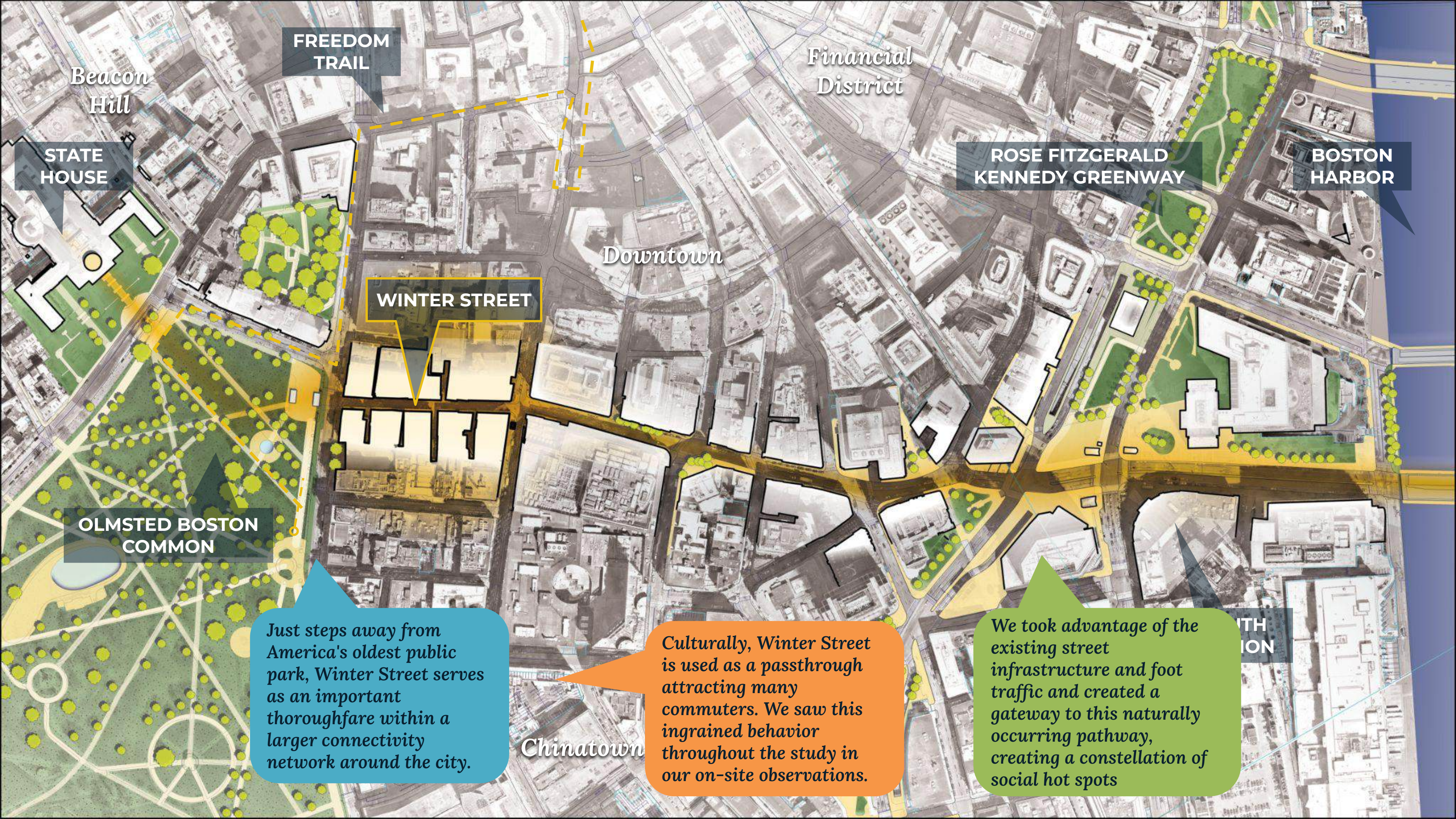
30%

people reported negative associations with Winter Street **after** the activation





**ZOOMING OUT:
THINKING BEYOND
WINTER STREET**



Beacon Hill

FREEDOM TRAIL

Financial District

STATE HOUSE

ROSE FITZGERALD KENNEDY GREENWAY

BOSTON HARBOR

Downtown

WINTER STREET

OLDMSTED BOSTON COMMON

Just steps away from America's oldest public park, Winter Street serves as an important thoroughfare within a larger connectivity network around the city.

Culturally, Winter Street is used as a passthrough attracting many commuters. We saw this ingrained behavior throughout the study in our on-site observations.

We took advantage of the existing street infrastructure and foot traffic and created a gateway to this naturally occurring pathway, creating a constellation of social hot spots

Chinatown

WITH ION



LESSONS LEARNED

- By implementing design interventions, we changed the culture of the street to encourage pedestrian and social activity
- The increase in social activity made the area feel safer for people of all ages and backgrounds
- The activity on the street led to positive economic impacts
- We identified a suite of research methods to measure social life and its impact on the area



DISCUSSION