

EAST SIDE COASTAL RESILIENCY PROJECT

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS: WATERFRONT CONNECTIONS

MAY 19,20,&28 2015

SUMMARY REPORT

PROJECT AREA 1 (from Montgomery St to E14th St)

KEY STATISTICS:

05/20 Community Engagement Workshop at Henrietta Szold High School

- 59 sign-ins (counts exclude City & consultant team members but include media (0) and elected officials reps. (2))
- 17 activity sheets collected
- 29 voting ballots collected

05/28 Community Engagement Workshop at Church of St. Brigid

- 102 sign-ins (counts exclude City & consultant team members but include media (1) and elected officials reps. (3))
- 23 activity sheets collected
- 42 voting ballots collected

WORKSHOP FORMAT:

Both workshops focused on the following theme: How can the ESCR project improve access to East River Park? Using activity sheets, participants engaged in small roundtable discussions where they collectively identified the strengths and weaknesses of the five existing access points to East River Park. A second set of roundtable discussions focused on neighborhood connections in Project Area 1.

KEY FINDINGS:

1. Access to East River Park via the elevated pedestrian bridges:

- Safe and inviting access to East River Park (ERP) is the community's number one priority.
- The bridges should announce entry into the park through:
 1. A gently sloping ramp that is ADA accessible;
 2. A generous walkway that accommodates pedestrian and bike circulation in segregated lanes;
 3. Improved lighting (at the east side approach, on the bridge, and at the west side approach);
 4. A variety of plantings integrated into the landscape at the bridge approach and along the walkway;
 5. Appropriate wayfinding signage

2. Community suggestions for programming:

- Participants indicated that the following spaces would significantly enhance ERP:
 - Playgrounds for younger children in the southern portion of the park
 - Outdoor exercise equipment
 - Affordable and healthy concession stands throughout ERP
 - Additional BBQ/picnic areas
 - Unprogrammed open space
- Some groups suggested that the space underneath the bridge ramps could be used for programming

3. Community suggestions for improved bridges:

- Participants expressed that they would like to have access to ERP from Grand St (via a ramp or a new bridge)
- The E6th St table showed some interest in realigning the bridge with the plaza in ERP
- The E10th St table indicated that a ramp extending into the neighborhood would increase the bridge's visibility

4. Neighborhood connections:

- Several groups stressed the need for effective stormwater management in the neighborhood
- Others inquired about access restrictions to the park during construction
- Additional discussion topics included green job opportunities for local residents and pest control

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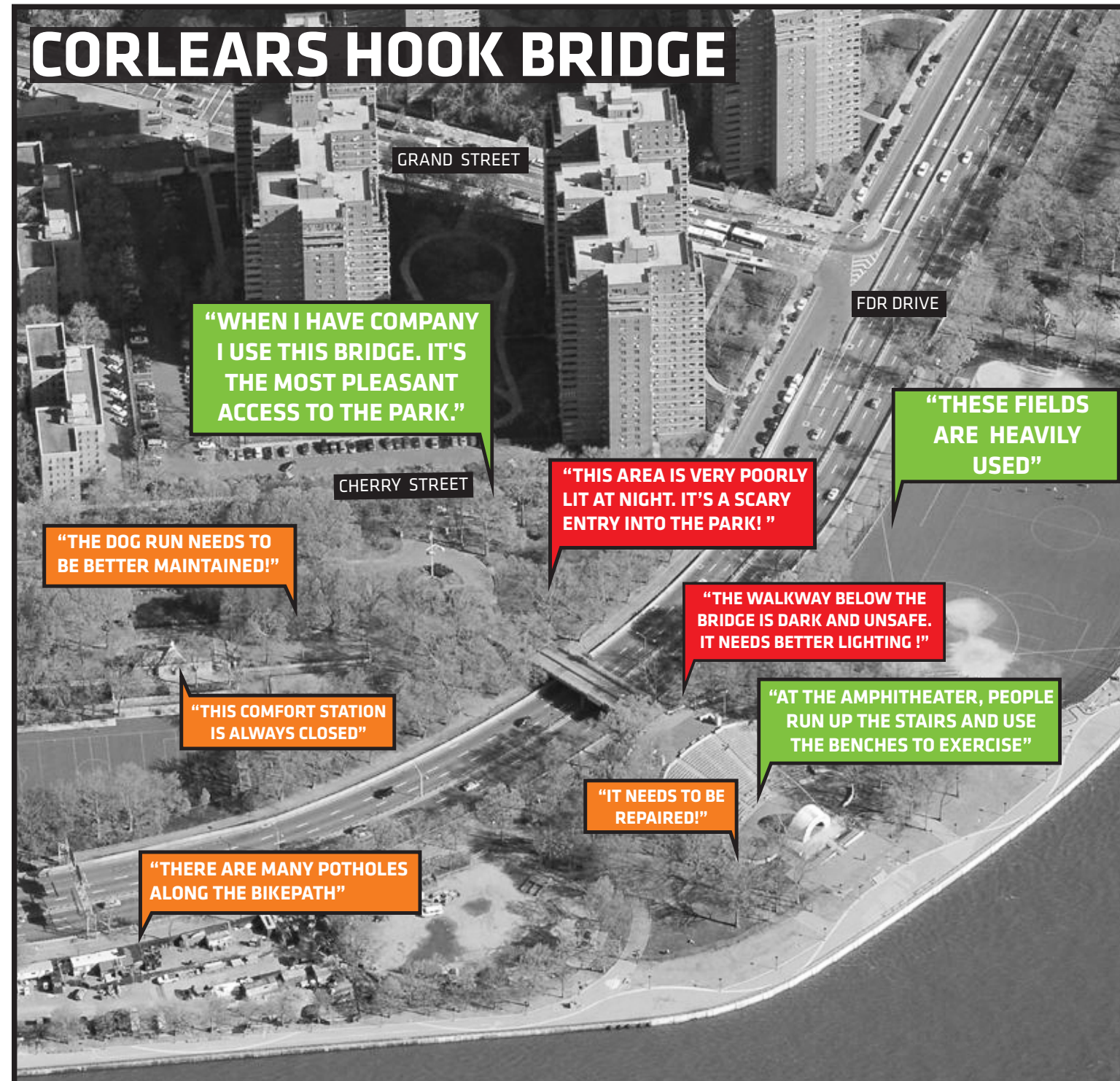
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1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

EXISTING CONDITIONS - CORLEARS HOOK BRIDGE SUMMARY:

Participants stressed that although access to East River Park occurs through a neighborhood park and a generous 30 ft wide walkway, poorly maintained amenities and a lack of adequate lighting make this area feel unsafe at night.



COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO EAST RIVER PARK:

1 ENSURE SAFE CIRCULATION THROUGH SEGREGATED LANES

"The ramp should blend fluidly from the park side into the amphitheater side for bikes and pedestrians."
"Ensure it remains wheelchair friendly and accessible by all."
"Separating bikes and pedestrians is a great idea!"

2 ENHANCE THE BRIDGE CROSSING THROUGH LANDSCAPING

"We need more trees and plants in Corlears Hook Park and on the bridge itself."
"There should be more plantings in the park and on the bridge."
"We like the Seattle Freeway Park example!"

3 IMPROVE SURROUNDING PARK AMENITIES

"We need playgrounds for younger children and more BBQ areas in the south of the park."
"The dog run needs to be better maintained!"
"The comfort station is always closed."

4 ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS BY IMPROVING LIGHTING

"The walkway below the bridge is dark and unsafe. It needs better lighting!"
"This area is very poorly lit at night, it's a scary entry into the park."
"There needs to be more lighting at the bridge."

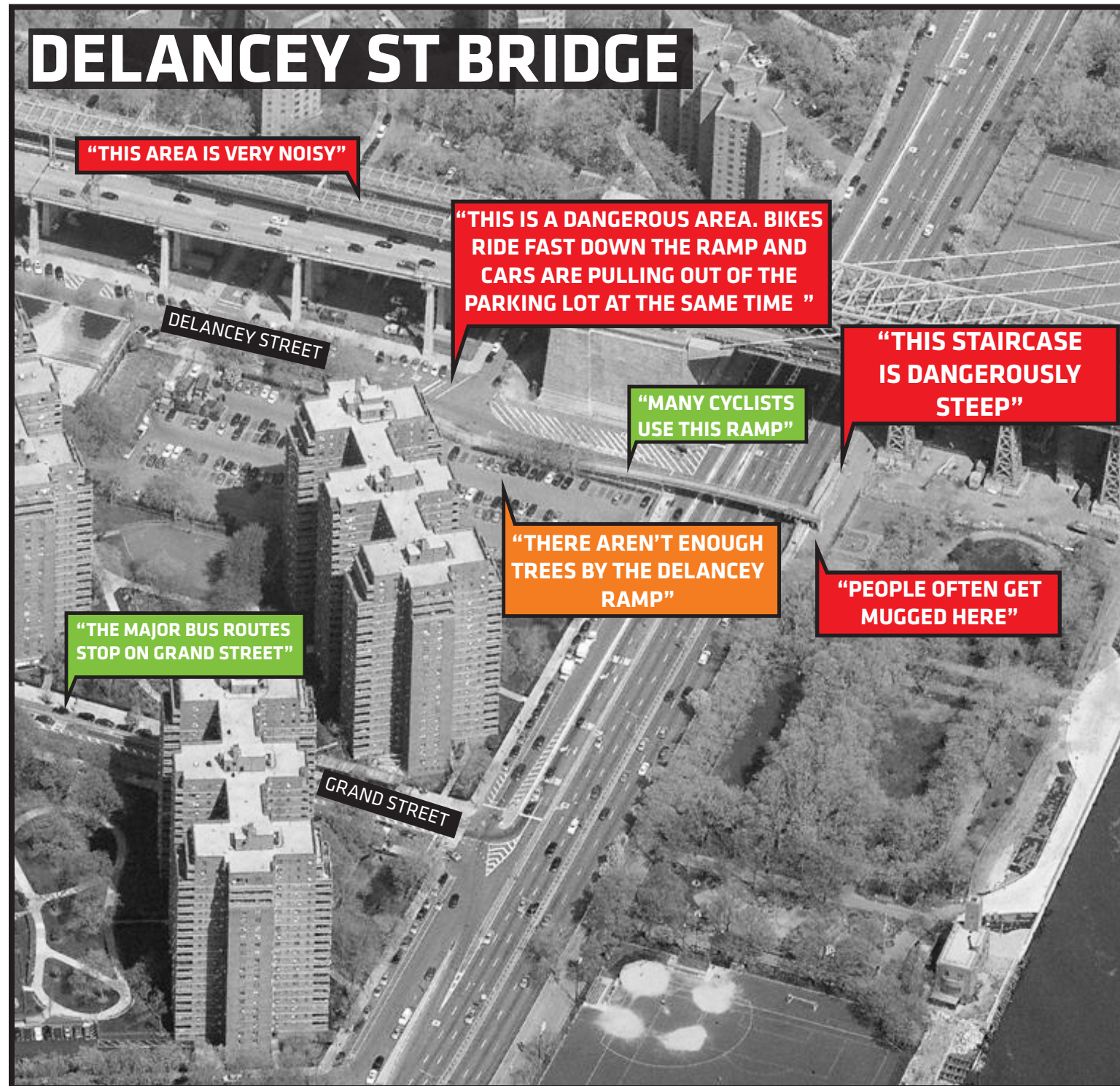
5 INCORPORATE SIGNAGE

"How one gets to the park should be clearer, or it won't matter how much the site itself is improved!"
"People from outside the local area don't use or know about Corlears Hook Park. There should be more signs in the park."

1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

EXISTING CONDITIONS - DELANCEY STREET BRIDGE SUMMARY:

Circulation and vehicular traffic were major concerns at Delancey Street Bridge. The area sees heavy use by taxis, buses, and other automobiles, as well as cyclists, making access difficult and dangerous for pedestrians. Noise off of the Williamsburg Bridge, a lack of trees, and poor lighting contribute to an atmosphere that feels unpleasant and dangerous at night.



COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO EAST RIVER PARK:

1 PROVIDE FLUID ACCESS TO THE PARK VIA GENTLE RAMPS

"The bridge ramps are too steep on both sides."

"Ensure it remains wheelchair friendly and accessible by all."

"This staircase is dangerously steep!"

2 WIDEN THE BRIDGE TO ALLOW FOR MULTIMODAL CIRCULATION

"Widen the Delancey Street bridge to include separate lanes for bikes and pedestrians."

"Bikes and pedestrians should be separated by a green barrier."

"We'd like a wide bridge with separate lanes!"

3 ANNOUNCE ENTRY TO THE PARK THROUGH LANDSCAPING

"We would like benches on the bridge to be able to rest."

"More vegetation on the bridge!"

"It would be nice to see greenery on your way to the park"

4 CREATE A CONNECTION FROM GRAND STREET?

"Build a new bridge at Grand Street and rehabilitate the Delancey Street bridge!"

"We would prefer an entrance at Grand St rather than Delancey."

"A ramp from Grand St would link to the bus stops."

5 ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS BY IMPROVING LIGHTING

"Safety and visibility are key!"

"We need more lighting at night, this is a dangerous area."

"People often get mugged here."

6 INCORPORATE SIGNAGE

"Signage would help visitors"

"We need better wayfinding signage!"

"You could include interesting landmarks too."

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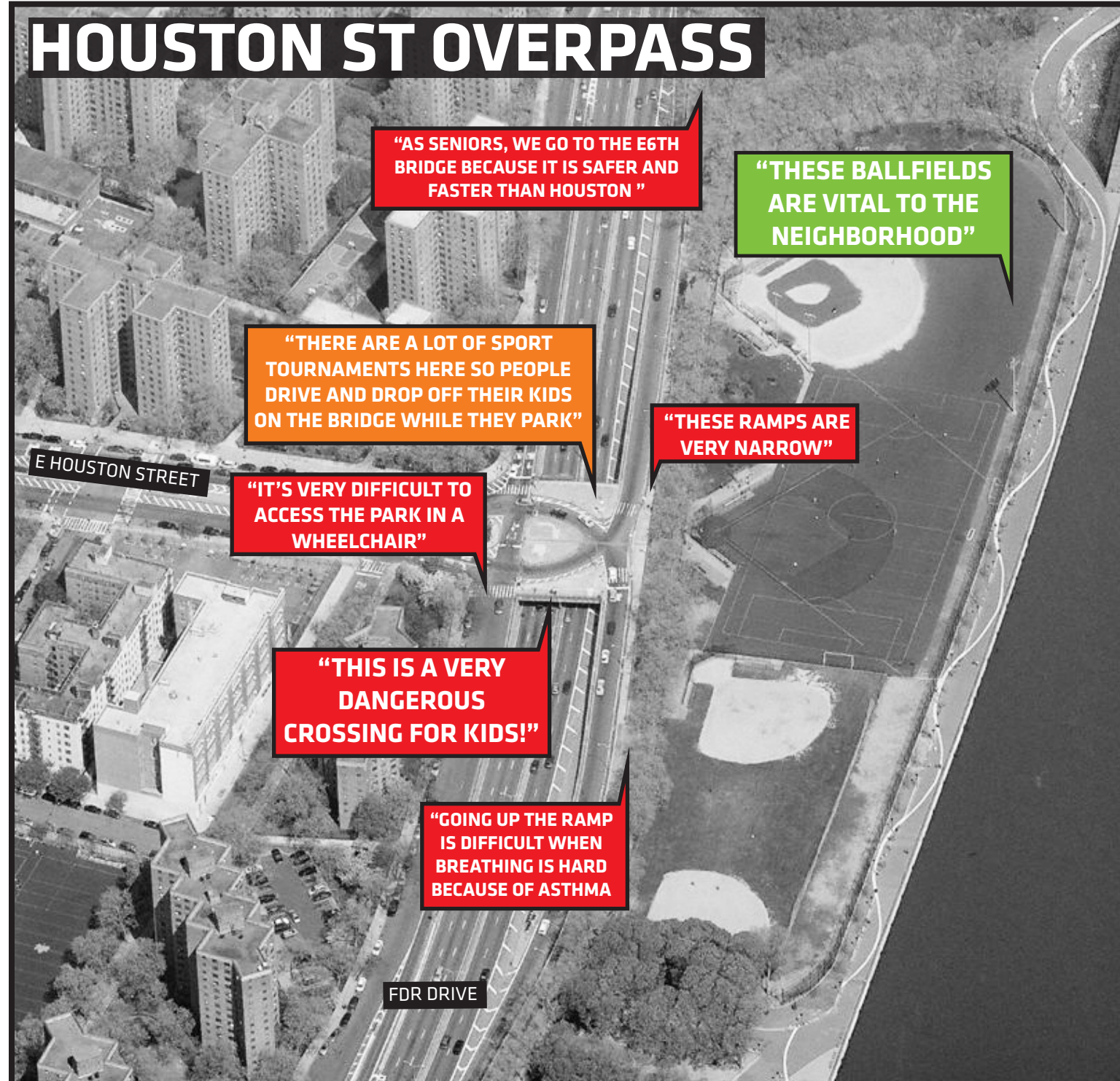
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1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

EXISTING CONDITIONS - HOUSTON STREET OVERPASS SUMMARY:

Participants responded positively to the new circulation pattern proposed by DOT and recognized that it would alleviate some of the current issues relating to pedestrian access, namely the lack of traffic lights and pedestrian crossings. However, multiple groups stressed that the steep and narrow ramps leading up to the overpass present great challenges to those with limited mobility and prevent many residents from accessing the park at this location.



COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO EAST RIVER PARK:

1 CREATE A FAMILY FRIENDLY PEDESTRIAN CROSSING

"We need more child-friendly crossings."
"Ensure bike and family friendly accessibility"
"Traffic lights will do some good!"

2 PROVIDE FLUID ACCESS TO THE PARK VIA GENTLE RAMPS

"It's very difficult to access the park in a wheelchair."
"The transition from the bridge into the park should be improved."
"Gradual sloping ramps are good!"

3 ANNOUNCE ENTRY TO THE PARK THROUGH LANDSCAPING

"The overpass should connect directly with the earthen berm!"
"More trees on the streets!"

4 INCORPORATE SIGNAGE

"Many schools and little leagues use these fields, signage in the neighborhood and along the East River esplanade would help."

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1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

EXISTING CONDITIONS - E6TH STREET BRIDGE SUMMARY:

The majority of comments at E6th Street Bridge pointed to difficulties of access. Respondents stressed overcrowding on the bridge during summertime, the danger of collisions between pedestrians and cyclists, and steep entry ramps causing problems for wheelchairs. However, areas of the park near this bridge were generally liked and well-used.



COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO EAST RIVER PARK:

1 PROVIDE FLUID ACCESS TO THE PARK VIA GENTLE RAMPS

“The ramps are too steep for parents with strollers and older residents.”

“It’s a struggle to cross the bridge in a wheelchair”

“No switchbacks!”

2 WIDEN THE BRIDGE TO ALLOW FOR MULTIMODAL CIRCULATION

“Separate bike and pedestrian lanes to avoid conflicts - especially with younger children.”

“Widen the bridge to allow for bikes and pedestrians to cross”

“Add dividers, like on the Williamsburg bridge!”

3 RELOCATE PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE TO ALIGN WITH PLAZA?

“It would be great to align the bridge with the plaza.”

“It’s a better route!”

4 ANNOUNCE ENTRY TO THE PARK THROUGH LANDSCAPING

“We need more artistic design on the bridge, the fencing could look like the skyline outline!”

“Please add benches on the bridge.”

“We love the vegetated bridge!”

5 ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS BY IMPROVING LIGHTING

“Incorporate the lighting into the fencing!”

“There are a lot of blind spots. Better lighting is key!”

“More lighting is very important.”

6 INCORPORATE MULTILINGUAL SIGNAGE

“Add foreign languages on all of the signage!”

“We need better signage.”

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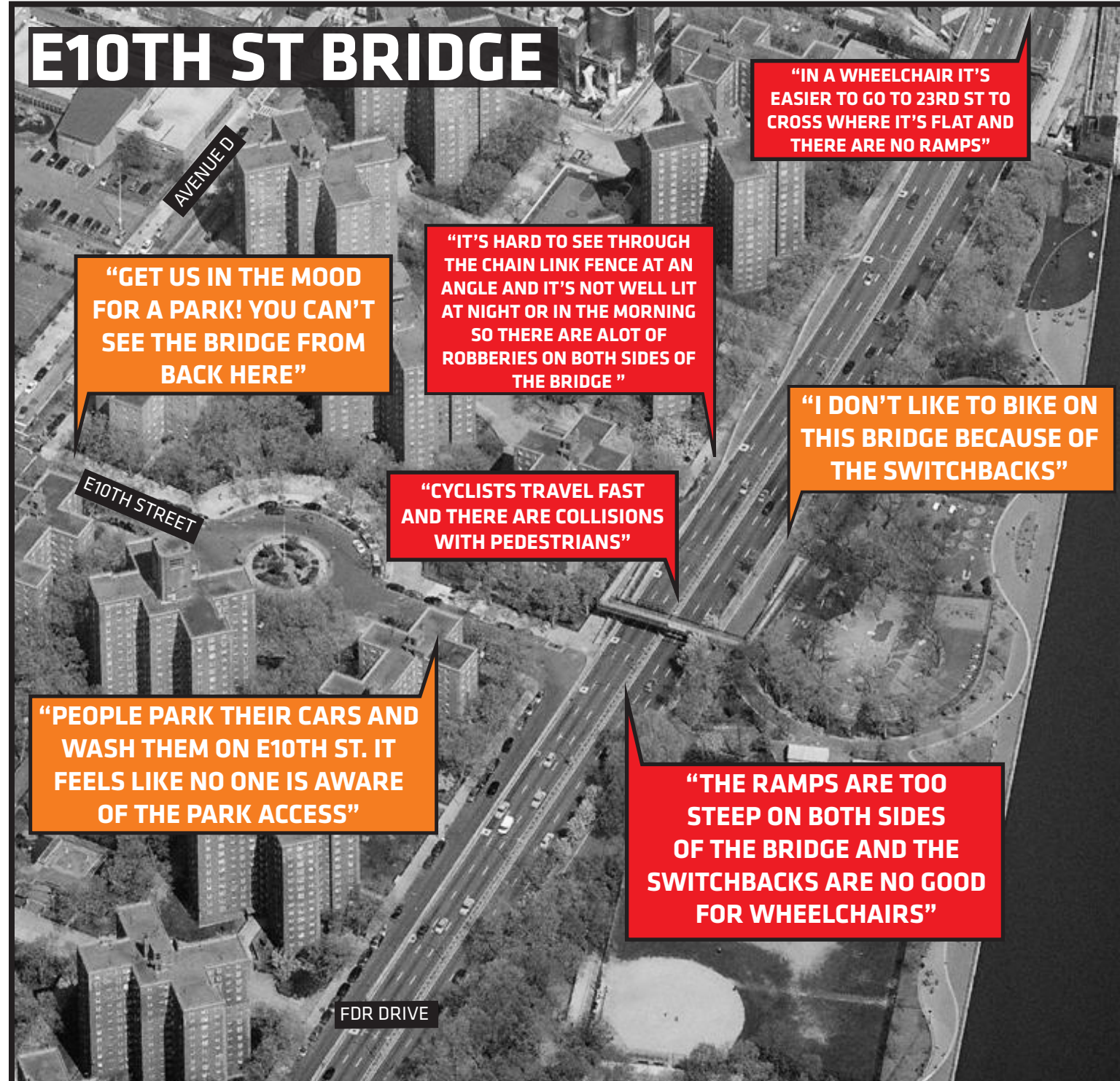
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1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

EXISTING CONDITIONS - E10TH STREET BRIDGE SUMMARY:

Most participants at E10th Street focused on the lack of visibility on both sides of the bridge. Lack of night-time lighting makes for a high incidence of muggings. The chain link fence and flat gradient on the residential side make the bridge difficult to see from a distance, prompting uses of the space that are not conducive to a recreational atmosphere. Additionally, fast cyclists and steep entry ramps make access difficult and sometimes dangerous.



COMMUNITY SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVED ACCESS TO EAST RIVER PARK:

1 PROVIDE FLUID ACCESS TO THE PARK VIA GENTLE RAMPS

"The ramps are too steep, a handrail would help."
"All of the bridges with switchbacks are difficult for bikes."
"An easier grade would be an improvement!"

2 WIDEN THE BRIDGE TO ALLOW FOR MULTIMODAL CIRCULATION

"A wider bridge would be preferable to avoid collisions between pedestrians and cyclists."
"This bridge gets crowded with picnic goers."
"Separate lanes is a great idea!"

3 INCORPORATE PROGRAMMING UNDER THE BRIDGE

"A daycare center would be a great addition!"
"There are no places to get a snack next to the park."
"The underside of the bridge could be used as a rain shelter."

4 ANNOUNCE ENTRY TO THE PARK THROUGH LANDSCAPING

"The Central Park bridges are great, you are never aware of the traffic below."
"Get us in the mood for a park!"
"The bridge isn't visible from the community."

5 ADDRESS SAFETY CONCERNS BY IMPROVING LIGHTING

"I want no hidden points that reveal surprises to the unwary!"
"There are a lot of robberies on both sides of the bridge."
"Safety is key. Better lighting would help!"

6 ADD SIGNAGE AND PARK AMENITIES

"Include areas of interest nearby on the signs too!"
"We need more BBQ/picnic areas!"
"More water fountains!"

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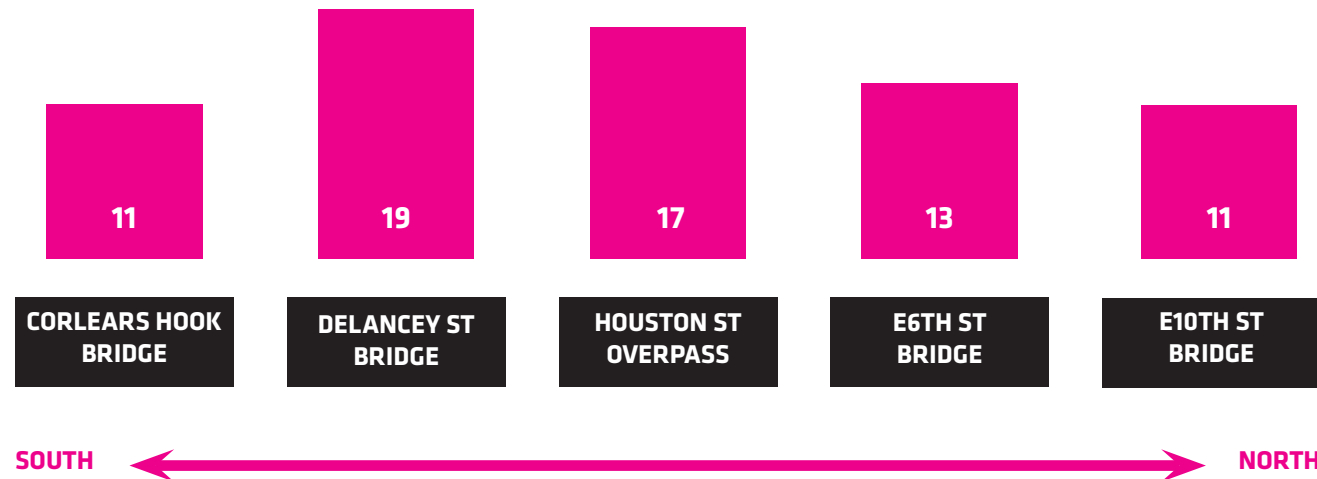
1. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS:

VOTE RESULTS:

At the end of the roundtable discussions, participants were invited to vote and respond to the following question. Please keep in mind that these results represent a small sample size. The ESCR team will take this information into consideration, along with additional data collection from traffic and pedestrian studies.

Question 1: Please rank the pedestrian connections to indicate which of them most need to be improved in order to provide better access to East River Park

Total number of participants who responded to Q1: 71 out of 161 attendees



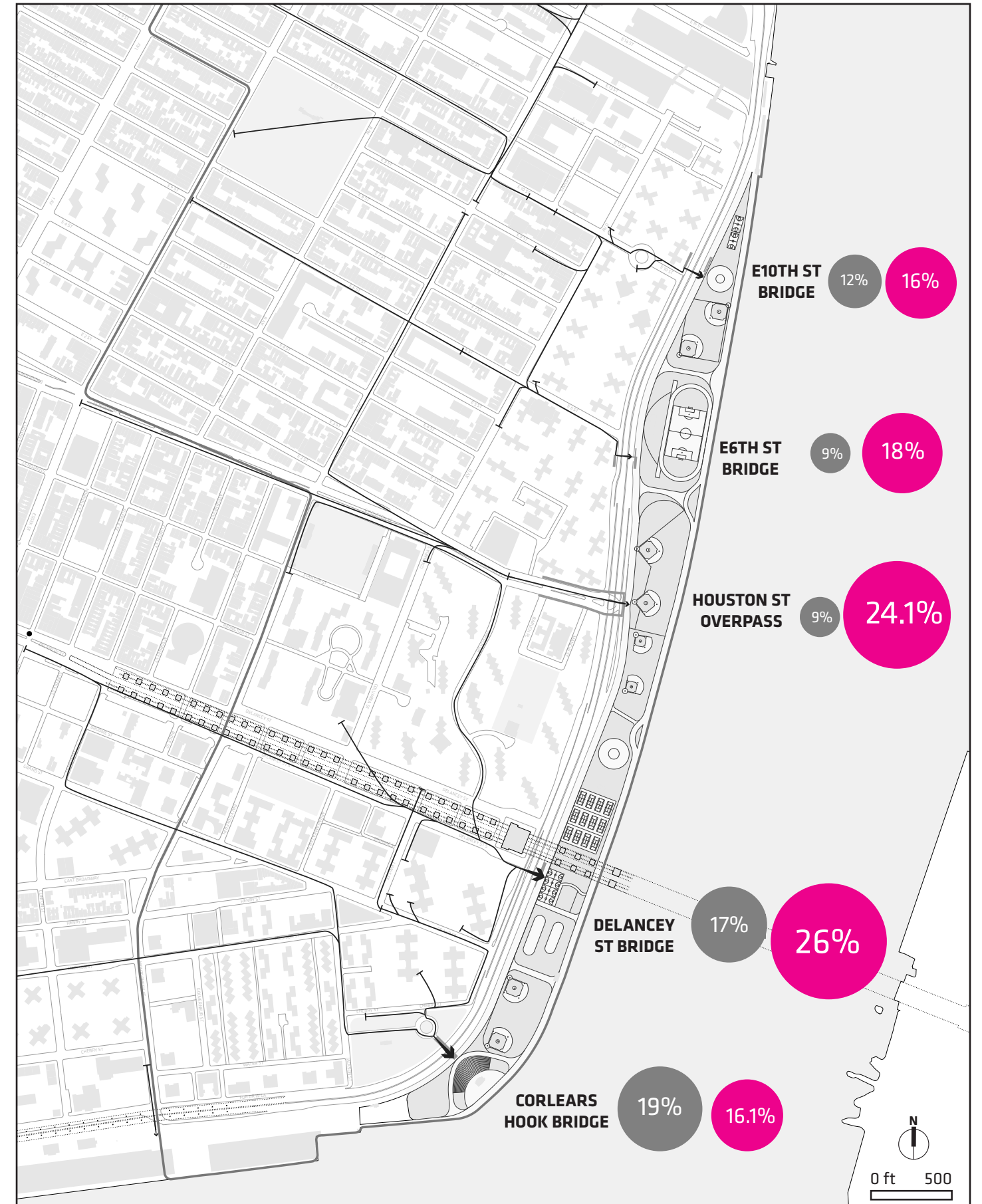
KEY:

x Approximate number of participants who think a given bridge should be improved or replaced

COMMENTS:

Participant feedback shows that improvements to the Delancey Street Bridge and Houston Street Overpass are priorities for the community. However, it is important to keep in mind that:

- Only 44% (71 out of 161) of workshop participants participated in this vote
- Approximately 115,000 residents live in the ESCR Project area
- These results have some discrepancies with the survey responses collected during the March workshops
- Anecdotal reports indicate that the majority of participants may have been more familiar with bridges located in the south of the Project Area 1



KEY:

% percentage of participants who access the waterfront via a given bridge (CE Round I Results)

% percentage of participants who think a given bridge should be improved or replaced (CE Round II Results)

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2. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION FINDINGS: NEIGHBORHOOD CONNECTIONS IN PA1

In addition to participating in discussions which revolved around the five access points to East River Park, participants could choose to join a roundtable which focused on neighborhood connections in Project Area 1. A large neighborhood map highlighting key landmarks was displayed in the center of the table, and participants were prompted to share general positive and negative feedback about access to East River Park. The discussion session also provided an opportunity to discuss other community concerns which relate to coastal flood protection. The key findings, as summarized below, provide additional information on the East Side community's priorities and concerns with respect to the ESCR project.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT:

- Participants highlighted the need for effective stormwater management in the neighborhood
- There was interest in introducing more rain gardens and increasing the number of street trees
- Several participants inquired about the opportunity to integrate community gardens into a larger stormwater management system

LANDSCAPING AND MAINTENANCE:

- Many participants saw an opportunity to replant the trees lost during Hurricane Sandy and introduce salt resistant species
- There were complaints about poor pest control, defective park lights, and broken water fountains
- Several participants suggested that if the maintenance and operations of the park were improved, it would attract more users and become a safer environment
- Workshop participants asked about a green jobs training program for local residents

COMMUNITY IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION:

- Participants were concerned about losing access to the park and the athletic fields during construction
- Several groups noted that two other projects will begin construction around the same time as the ESCR project
- Residents emphasized that they value access to the park, the playgrounds, and the waterfront esplanade

