# Varaždin - Mapiranje prostora za urbanu transformaciju

Participatory mapping campaign · findings report | Izvještaj o nalazima

REPORT BY CITY LAYERS

Generated 2026-07-13 · Mapping session 11 June 2026 · Location: Ulica Ivana Cankara i Trg Slobode ·

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# 1. Executive summary

This campaign invited participants to map how they experience the area comprising Ulica Ivana Cankara and the adjoining Trg Slobode, two connected public spaces in central Varaždin facing potential redesign. Rather than a survey, it took the form of a live mapping exercise: participants dropped location pins and wrote, in their own words, what they experienced, noticed, valued or wanted changed. It was run by City Layers as a hands-on workshop as part of the conference "Od planiranja do prakse" (From planning to practice) in Varaždin, with the mapping itself taking place on 11th June 2026.

Forty-six people contributed 154 map-based contributions in a single on-site mapping session of roughly one hour (about 14:45 to 15:40 local time). These voices are best read for what they are: most participants were encountering the space for the first time (73%), and only two are residents, so the data collected represents an informed, first-encounter reading of the area rather than a study of how local residents experience the site daily. The sentiment was close to evenly split between criticism and praise, a pattern that points to a space with real underlying qualities that nonetheless falls short of fulfilling the spatial needs of the community that uses it.

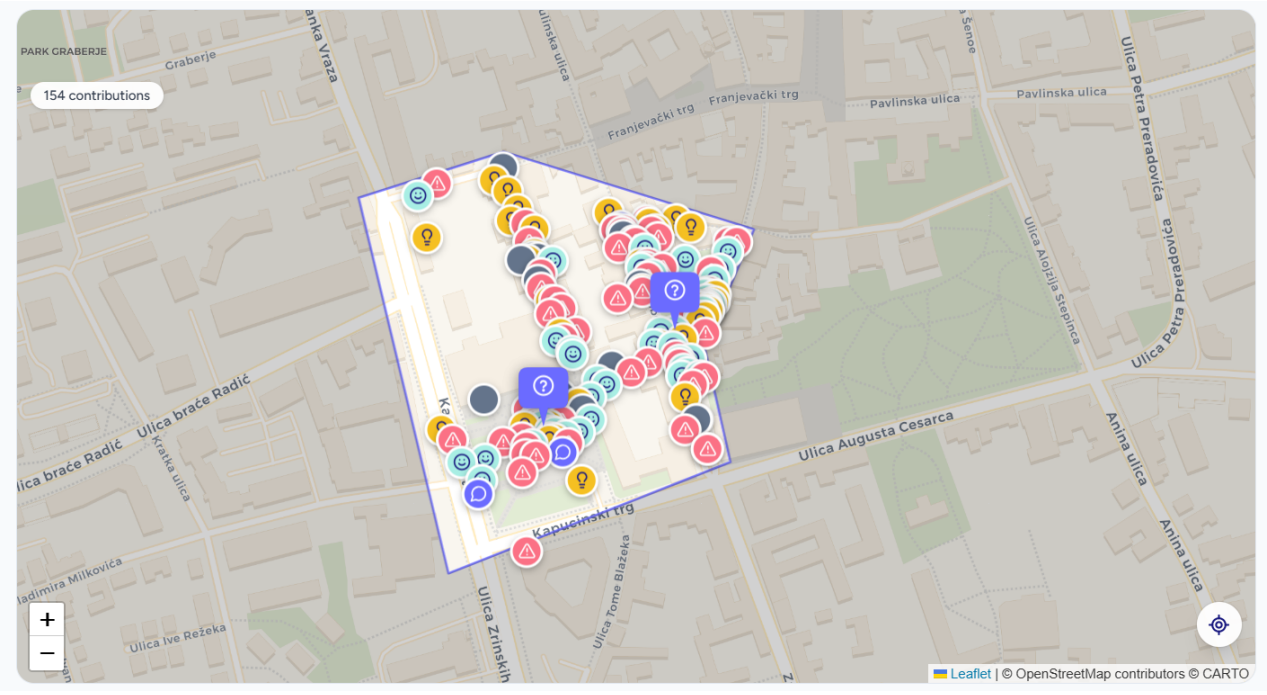



*fig. 1 The live map overview.*

## Sažetak (HR)

Četrdeset i šest sudionika ostavilo je 154 komentara na karti u sklopu jedne terenske aktivnosti datuma 11. lipnja 2026. Obuhvaćene teme uključuju klimatsku otpornost, mobilnost i uključivost obuhvaćenih javnih površina. Doprinosi se odnose na urbane toplinske otoke i sugestijama ozelenjavanja, potrebe za biciklističkom infrastrukturom, nedostatak klupa i urbane opreme, stanje kolnika i nogostupa te želju za oživljavanjem prostora ("art ulica", uređenje oko crkve Sv. Nikole). Većina sudionika na području obuhvata bila je prvi puta (73%), a samo dvoje sudionika su stanovnici, stoga rezultati predstavljaju prvi dojam posjetitelja, a ne reprezentativno mišljenje stanovnika.

### Headline findings

- Large paved surfaces along with potential summer heat are the dominant concern. Frequently raised theme was a shortage of greenery and shade: participants describe large concrete and asphalt areas that overheat in summer causing urban heat islands (toplinski otoci) and ask, repeatedly, for more trees and high vegetation, above all across the exposed square.
- Cycling infrastructure is present but uneven. The spiral racks near the church are considered to be non-functional and intrusive with lanes being unmarked, yet the separated lane at the southern end is singled out for praise, suggesting the model works where it is properly built.
- People highlight the need for reasons to stay across the whole area, not only to pass through. Requests for seating, modern benches and better lighting recur throughout, and are consistently tied to the demand for shade, since a bench is only usable where there is somewhere cool to sit.
- Walkability and access have specific, locatable weak points. Damaged cobbles and kerbs are described as difficult and at times unsafe, particularly for wheelchair users and prams, and cluster in the northern part of the corridor.
- There is a clear desire for identity and activation. Certain contributions imagine the street corridor as an "art street" with modular furniture and planters as well as a calmer, pedestrian-first setting around the church, framing these less as complaints and more as opportunities.

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## 2. Background & objectives

### The decision this campaign informs

This campaign supports planning and design decisions for the potential transformation of Ulica Ivana Cankara and Trg Slobode, a linked street-and-square corridor beside the church of Sv. Nikola in central Varaždin. Participatory mapping was used to gather place-based evidence directly from people moving through these spaces, so that any future proposals can be grounded in lived experience before design options are fixed.

### The event this campaign was part of

The campaign was run as a live City Layers mapping session at the conference "Od planiranja do prakse: mobilnost, javni prostori i glas građana" (From planning to practice: mobility, public spaces and the voice of citizens), held in Varaždin from 9 to 11 June 2026 within the 13th annual assembly of the CIVINET Slovenia-Croatia-SEE network (secretariat ODRAZ). City Layers presented digital methods for involving citizens in the planning of public space and mobility as an example of good practice and led the accompanying workshop.

The mapping itself took place on 11th June during Workshop III, "Rad s alatom City Layers u praksi" (Working with the City Layers tool in practice), a guided on-site visit to locations in Varaždin facing transformation. Almost all contributions, 152 of 154 pins, were made in that single hour. This origin

matters for interpretation: the conference framing around sustainable mobility and public space is likely to have shaped which concerns came to mind, and the participants were, for the most part, first-time visitors rather than residents.

### Level of participation (IAP2)

On the IAP2 spectrum of **Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate and Empower**, the exercise sits at Consult, moving toward Involve. The promise implied at this level is that the input gathered will be genuinely weighed in the redesign and that participants will be informed how it shaped the outcome, without any commitment that every contribution becomes a design decision. Section 9 sets out how that loop can be closed.

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## 3. Methodology

Participants contributed through a public City Layers live map, dropping one or more pins along the corridor and reflecting upon the guiding questions using free text. Each contribution corresponds to a single participant's activity within the City Layers platform, where they could pin contributions to specific spots, as well as interact (react/comment) with other participants' contribututions.

The mapping was a single on-site session on 11th June 2026, part of the conference workshop, lasting about an hour (roughly 14:45 to 15:40 local time). Sampling was on-site and self-selected, open to workshop participants and passers-by in Croatian or English, a design that shapes how the results should be read (see Limitations, Section 8).

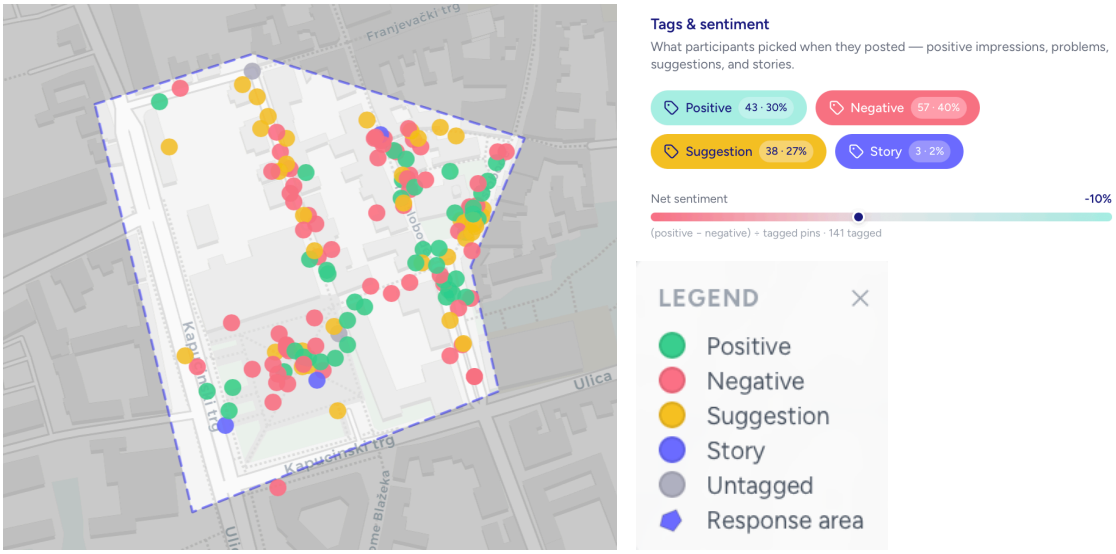



*fig. 2 Map-based contributions with sentiment tags*

Free-text comments were grouped into themes by meaning and each was given a sentiment tag. These classifications are computed signals used for orientation, and are described here qualitatively rather than treated as precise measurements.

**Method note:** *Promotion channels, languages actively offered, and any in-person or targeted outreach should be recorded here by the campaign owner. That context determines who had a realistic chance to take part.*

## 4. Participation & reach

"Contributions" account for sessions that produced at least one mapped answer, where one contribution corresponds to one participant.

| Metric | Value |
|---|---|
| Contributions (participants) | 46 |
| Mapped comments (pins) | 154 |
| Average pins per participant | 3.3 |
| Mapping session | 11 June 2026 (~1 hour, on-site) |

Contributing participants were highly active, leaving 3.3 pins each on average, which suggests a participant group that was motivated and engaged with the mapping site.

## 5. Participant profile & representativeness

The figures below record the **indicative** (rather than actual) demographics of the participants.

By design, City Layers processes contributions on the basis of participant consent (GDPR Art. 6(1)(a)) and applies data-protection and data minimisation (Art. 5(1)(c)): no logins, names, IP addresses or device identifiers are collected, and participation cannot be linked to an identified individual. Accordingly, participant figures are approximate and session-based rather than a verified headcount, and demographic fields are optional and self-reported. Demographic breakdowns are indicative of respondents only and do not constitute a verified population record. Results are published in aggregated, non-identifiable form; data is retained until project completion and then deleted or fully anonymised.

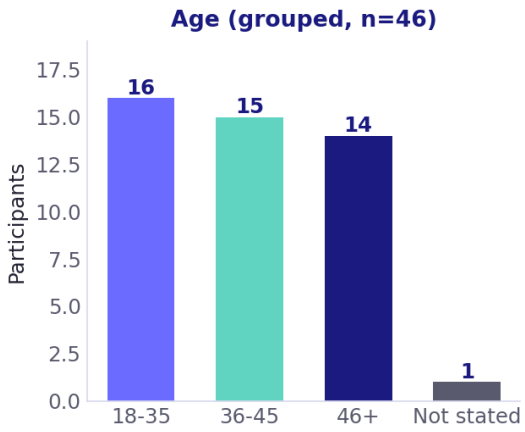



*fig. 3 Age of participants*

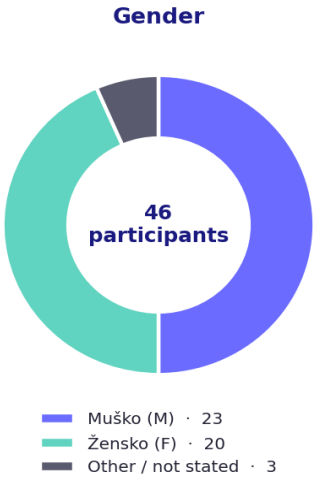



*fig. 4 Gender of participants.*

## Age

| Age band | Participants | Share |
|---|---|---|
| **18–25** | 1 | 2% |
| **26–35** | 15 | 33% |
| **36–45** | 15 | 33% |
| **46–55** | 9 | 20% |
| **56–65** | 3 | 7% |
| **66+** | 2 | 4% |
| **Not stated** | 1 | — |

## Gender

| Gender | Participants | Share |
|---|---|---|
| **Muško (male)** | 23 | 50% |
| **Žensko (female)** | 20 | 43% |
| **Drugo (other)** | 1 | 2% |
| **Not stated** | 2 | 4% |

## Relationship to the place

Participants were also asked how they relate to this space, through the question "I am here as…". This is an important lens for reading the findings. Thirty-two of the 44 who answered the question, just under three quarters, were there for the first time, and only two identified as residents. The mapping therefore captures a largely first-encounter, visitor and professional reading of the corridor, rather than the accumulated daily experience of those who live and work along it.

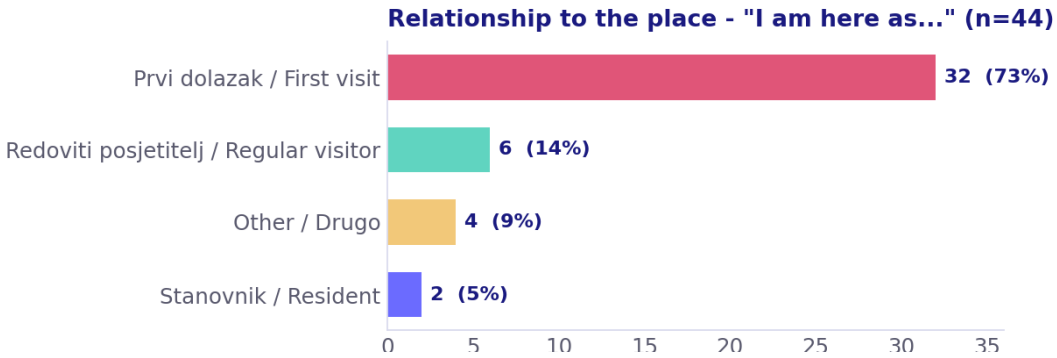



*fig. 5 Relationship to the place, from the "I am here as…" question (n = 44).*

| Relationship | Count | Share |
|---|---|---|
| **First visit (Prvi dolazak)** | 32 | 73% |
| **Regular visitor (Redoviti posjetitelj)** | 6 | 14% |
| **Other (Drugo)** | 4 | 9% |
| **Resident (Stanovnik)** | 2 | 5% |

### How to read these figures

- Participation was voluntary and on-site, so the results reflect those who happened to be present at the workshop and are indicative rather than statistically representative of Varaždin residents.
- Because participants self-selected, the findings should not be read as population prevalence, and the absence of comment from a group should not be taken as agreement.
- The profile is weighted toward working-age adults, with the 26 to 45 age groups accounting for 30 of 46 participants. Together with the first-visit majority, this points to a conference and visitor audience more than a resident one.
- The gender balance is close to even, at 23 male and 20 female, which is a genuine strength of an otherwise small sample.
- With only two residents among the participants, the material is a valuable outside, first-encounter reading of the corridor, useful for what strikes fresh eyes, but not a substitute for a resident consultation, which would need to be run as a separate and more targeted round.

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## 6. Questions Breakdown

The campaign featured six guiding questions posed on-site prior to the participatory mapping exercise. The participants were able to attach their contributions to one of the six posed questions / themes, or simply add their open thoughts and ideas.

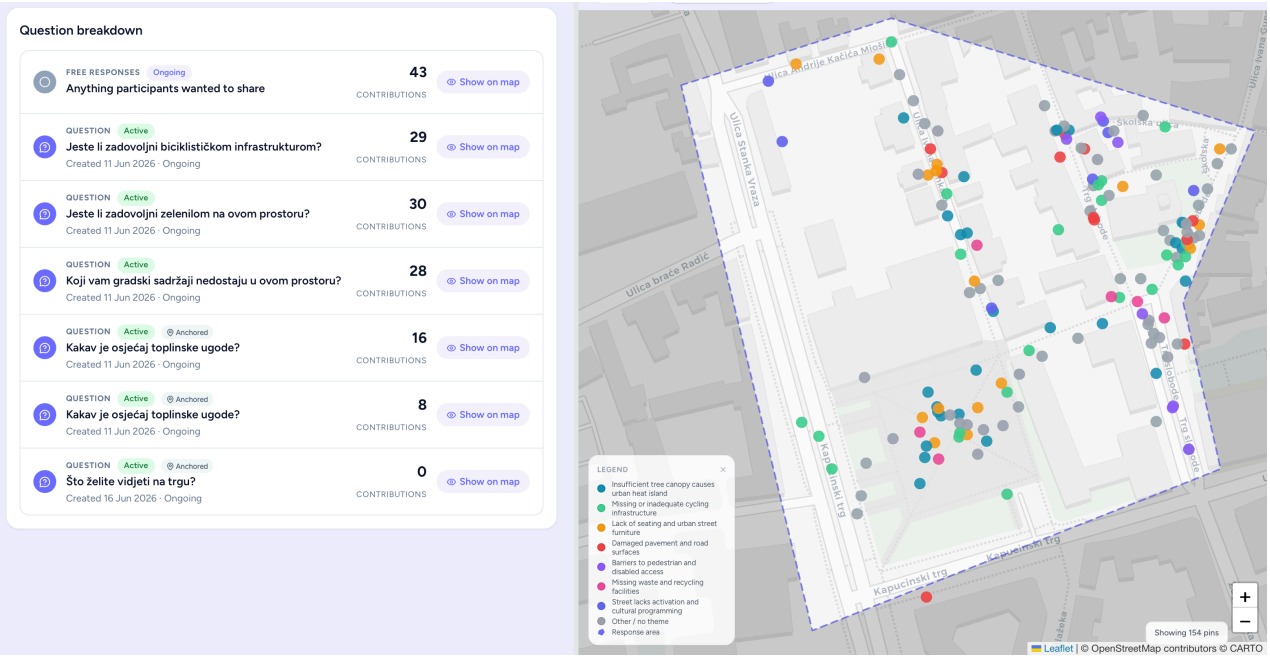



*fig. 6 The questions-responses breakdown and map-based contributions categorised into themes*

## 6. Findings by theme

The platform classifier grouped the comments into five main themes. The counts that follow are descriptive context for how often a concern surfaced, not a measure of its importance or a vote. Verbatim quotes are withheld at the HIGH anonymisation level, and the Croatian phrasing given in parentheses is paraphrased.

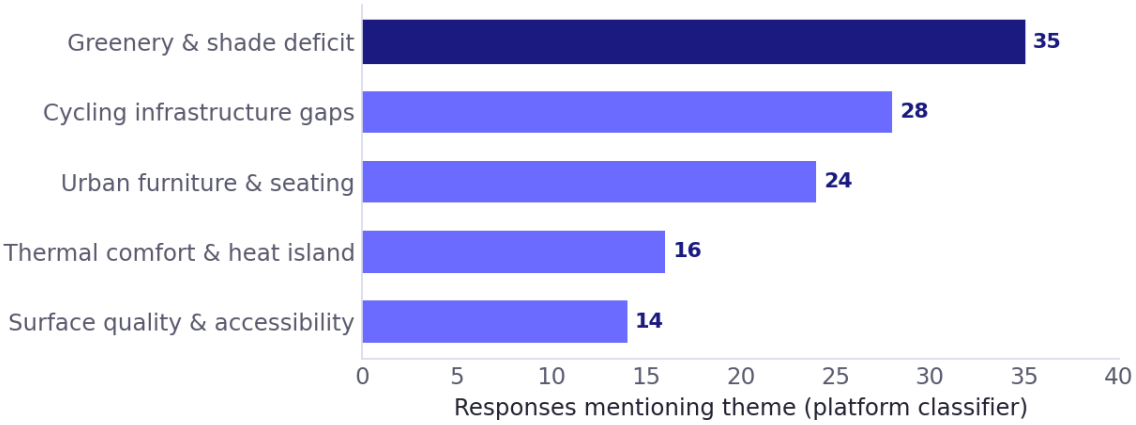



*fig. 7 Recurring themes raised by participants and their frequency*

### 1. Greenery & shade deficit

*Nedostatak zelenila i hlada* **35 responses · 34%**

The most frequently raised concern, by some margin, was a shortage of greenery and shade. Participants describe both spaces, and above all the open expanse of Trg Slobode, as potentially uncomfortably exposed during high temperatures, and call repeatedly for more high vegetation e.g. continuous tree rows to provide relief ("povecati broj stabala kako bi se ljeti osigurao hlad"). Greenery is valued where it already exists, notably the linden tree (lipa) and the flower meadow near the church, and its absence is felt most keenly across the square and the northern stretches of the street. The consistency of these comments suggests a shared, lived experience rather than an abstract preference.

### 2. Cycling infrastructure gaps

*Nedostaci biciklisticke infrastrukture* **28 responses · 27%**

Cycling provision emerged as one of the most consistently raised mobility concerns. Participants describe a network that is present but incomplete: lanes are unmarked or non-compliant and shared-space rules unclear ("biciklisticke zone moraju biti ucrtane"), while the spiral racks near the church are felt to be both non-functional and visually intrusive ("neadekvatni stalci"). Notably, the physically separated lane at the southern end is singled out for praise ("fizicki odvojena biciklisticka staza, sjajno"), which suggests the problem is less an absence of will than an inconsistency of execution, and that the model works where it has been properly implemented.

### 3. Urban furniture & seating

*Urbana oprema i sjedenje* **24 responses · 23%**

A lack of places to sit and rest was a recurring theme, and one closely bound up with the concerns about heat. Seating is described as both too scarce ("fale klupe") and poorly conceived, with metal benches that overheat and become unusable in summer ("metalni dio na klupi se ljeti jako ugrije i ne

moze se sjesti") and existing furniture that does little to invite people to linger. Bins and waste facilities are felt to be missing at key points, and the northern end near the church is noted as lacking furniture altogether. Where participants look forward, they imagine better-placed and more comfortable seating, potentially including smart benches with charging capabilities.

### 4. Thermal comfort & urban heat island

*Toplinska ugoda i toplinski otok* **16 responses · 15%**

Closely related to both greenery and furniture, thermal comfort was raised as a distinct concern in its own right. Direct sun, expanses of asphalt and concrete, and a general lack of shelter are described as making the space difficult to use in warm weather ("asfaltne povrsine = toplinski otok", "ljeti neugodno van sjene stabala"). Because the remedy participants ask for is shade, this theme reinforces the case for treating tree canopy and seating as a single, coordinated intervention rather than as separate work packages.

### 5. Surface quality & accessibility

*Kvaliteta povrsina i pristupacnost* **14 responses · 13%**

A smaller but pointed set of comments concerns the quality of surfaces and the accessibility of the corridor. Cobblestones are described as difficult to walk on and damaged kerbs as actively hazardous for wheelchair users and cyclists ("rubnjaci su osteceni i to moze biti opasno za ljude u kolicima i bicikliste", "neprikladno za osobe smanjene pokretljivosti"). Specific weak points, including an unsignalled staircase and a protruding building edge in Skolska ulica, cluster in the northern part of the corridor, suggesting that basic maintenance and step-free movement are live, locatable issues rather than diffuse complaints.

## Additional themes

Beyond the five dominant themes above, several additional concerns recur.

- Activation and culture (12 comments): proposals to give the street an identity, including an "art street" with murals and modular furniture, a child-friendly "school street", and a small sports and recreation zone ("napraviti art ulicu", "fasade bi mogle sadržavati murale").
- Waste and recycling (7): a straightforward, low-cost request for bins and sorting points, felt to be missing at several spots ("bins are missing", "nedostaje kanti za odlaganje smeća").
- Traffic calming and vehicle access (around 5): shared-space treatments, chicanes and retractable bollards to slow or remove through-traffic ("shared space ulica sa šikanama", "usporavanje prometa").
- Facades and buildings (around 5): tidying and thermally upgrading the building frontages along the street ("srediti fasade i energijski ih utopliti").
- Drinking water (3): a call for public drinking fountains ("nema slavina za pitku vodu").
- Signage and wayfinding (3): clearer street markings and signs ("nedovoljno znakova", "bolje označiti").

The remaining comments, roughly 24, are mostly short evaluative reactions, either general praise ("super", "iznimno sam zadovoljna", "lijepo uređeno šetalište") or general dissatisfaction and calls for a full redo ("potrebna je kompletna obnova ulice", "nedovoljna uređenost"), alongside a few holistic

observations about the square and a handful of off-topic remarks. A residue of this kind is normal for open-ended mapping and does not signal missing analysis.

### Overall sentiment

When contributing, participants could tag their own pin as positive, negative, an idea or a story. These self-declared tags are close to evenly balanced between criticism and praise, at 40% negative and 37% positive, with a further 18% tagged as ideas and 3% as stories. Because participants chose the tags themselves rather than having them inferred, the split carries more weight than an automated sentiment estimate would, and the 18% of ideas is telling: it points to a group not simply registering dissatisfaction but actively proposing solutions. The near-even split is itself a finding, describing a space with genuine strengths, such as its greenery and the closed pedestrian section, alongside clear and consistently named gaps in shade, cycling clarity and furniture.

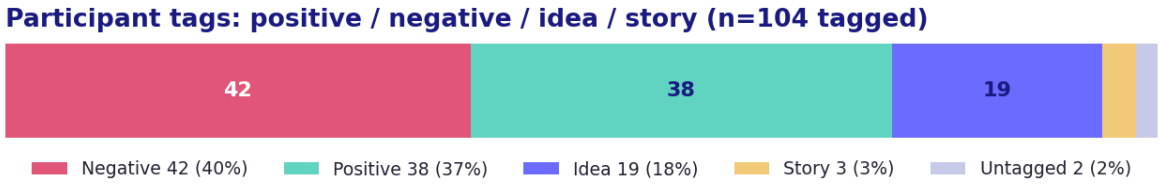



fig. 8 *Participant self-tags: positive, negative, idea, story (n = 104 tagged).*

**Method note** *The theme grouping is AI-generated by the platform analytics; the sentiment split is from participant self-tags. Neither field is in the pin export analysed here, so both are taken from the platform totals. The AI theme grouping in particular is a probabilistic signal, so validate a sample by hand where a decision depends on the exact split.*

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## 7. Spatial findings

Separating the pins by sentiment reveals a legible geography. Appreciation concentrates around the church and the northern part of Ulica Ivana Cankara, where the trees, planters and the closed pedestrian section are valued, and the separated bike lane at the far southern end draws praise of its own. Problems, by contrast, are heaviest at Trg Slobode, the open square described as a heat island with somewhat inadequate seating, and along the northern transitional stretch near Školska ulica, where cycling infrastructure, surface quality and kerbs are repeatedly flagged.

The platform records 38 positive and 51 problem pins across the corridor. Tellingly, the two clusters overlap through the middle, where the same central stretch attracts both appreciation for its atmosphere and criticism of its missing bike lanes and insufficient benches. That overlap identifies it as the highest-priority zone for intervention, the place where improvement would build on an existing strength rather than start from nothing.

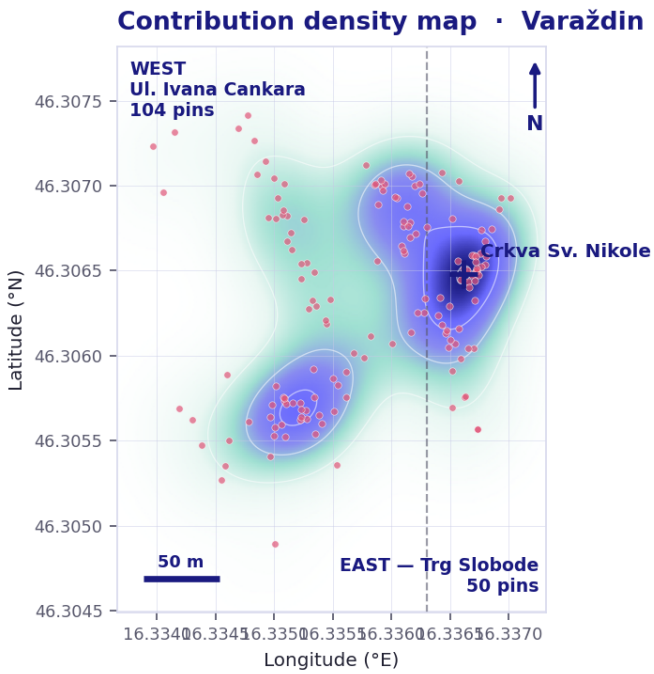



*Figure 9. Contribution density. The densest single cluster sits by the church of Sv. Nikola (east).*

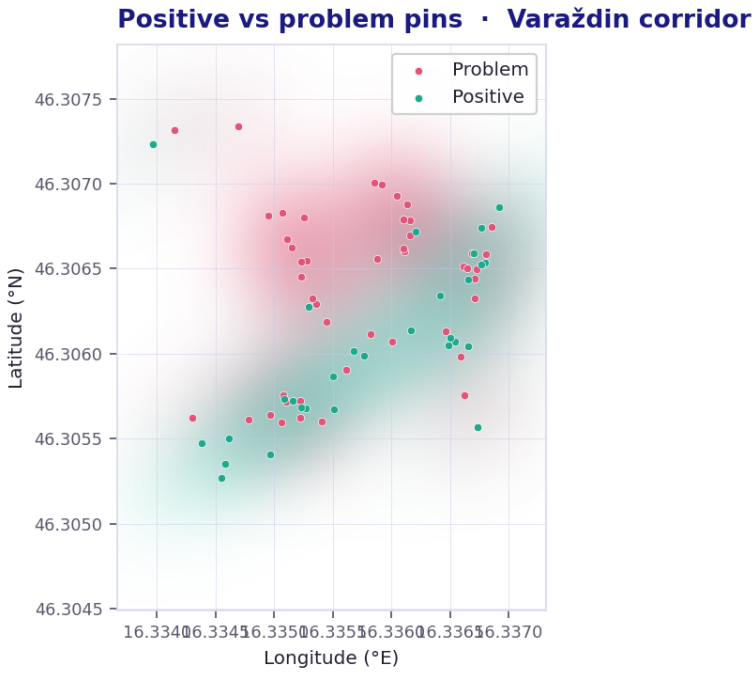



*fig. 10 Positive vs problem pins. Indicative split over the full 154-pin export; platform totals are 38 positive and 51 problem.*

**Method note** *The map shows an indicative positive/problem split derived from the 154-pin export; neutral and story pins are omitted from the two density layers. In production this overlays your Leaflet basemap using the map-capture helper. A density pattern carries no statistical significance and should be described qualitatively.*

## 8. Limitations

- Self-selection and setting: participants opted in and were mostly present for a conference workshop, so the results capture an engaged, largely visitor audience rather than a representative cross-section of the city.
- A single short session: collection took place in about an hour on 11 June, which captures a moment in time and the people present that afternoon rather than sustained or seasonal input. Summer heat, in particular, is likely to have been front of mind.
- Not a resident sample: with 73% of participants visiting for the first time and only 5% resident, the findings represent a visitor and professional reading of the space rather than resident lived experience.
- Digital and language access: an online, on-site tool under-represents those without digital confidence and those facing language or accessibility barriers.
- Small subgroups: several demographic cells contain only a handful of participants, so their shares are indicative rather than stable proportions.
- Spatial bias: people tend to map the places they know or notice, so coverage across the corridor is uneven.

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## 9. Recommendations for spatial redevelopment

Six directions follow from the findings, ordered by priority in the matrix at the end. They are offered as a basis for the campaign owner to confirm with the city, and are best paired with a short "you said, we did" response so that participants can see how their contributions were carried forward.

### 1. Climate-responsive greening, prioritising the square

- Plant high-canopy trees across Trg Slobode for thermal relief, and extend the existing tree row (drvored) northward.
- Replace mown grass near the church with a wildflower meadow, which several participants explicitly support.
- Add planter boxes and potted greenery at building facades and corners where in-ground planting is not feasible.
- Consider a pergola or lightweight canopy at the centre of the square as an interim shade measure.

### 2. Completing and standardising the cycling network

- Mark cycling lanes clearly along the full corridor: the width already exists, the demarcation is missing.
- Replace the non-compliant spiral racks with standard inverted-U stands at key stops, especially near the church.
- Add covered bicycle parking (nadstresnice) at the northern end, and a marked bicycle crossing at the southern junction.
- Extend the physically separated lane northward where the right-of-way allows.

### 3. Upgrading and multiplying urban furniture

- Replace or retrofit metal bench components with wood or composite that does not overheat.
- Increase bench count, particularly on the northern stretch and at the square, and add waste and recycling bins at regular intervals.
- Pilot smart benches (charging and shade) to draw dwell time from working-age visitors, and use modular, moveable furniture for seasonal reconfiguration.

### 4. Targeted accessibility fixes

- Repair or reconstruct damaged kerb stones at all pedestrian crossings, flagged immediately as a safety hazard.
- Install tactile paving and signage at the unsignalled staircase, and mark the protruding building edge on Skolska ulica.
- Audit the cobblestone surface for wheelchair and pram passability, and consider smooth inlay strips along the main desire lines.

### 5. Activating the street with identity and programming

- Commission murals on available facades, where community appetite is confirmed.
- Designate Skolska ulica as a "school street" with child-oriented paving art, play elements and reduced vehicle hours.
- Enable temporary weekend closures (retractable bollards) for markets and events, and pilot a tactical-urbanism intervention to test activation before permanent investment.

### 6. Rethinking vehicle access on key segments

- Introduce a 10 km/h shared-space zone or full pedestrianisation on the section between the church and the square.
- Use chicanes formed by planters or tree rows to slow through-traffic without a full closure.
- Formalise the already-praised asphalt-free closed section as a permanent pedestrian zone.

### Priority matrix

| Intervention | Impact | Effort | Priority |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Mark cycling lanes** | High | Low | Immediate |
| **Fix damaged kerbs** | High | Low | Immediate |
| **Add benches & bins** | High | Low | Immediate |
| **Plant trees on the square** | High | Medium | Short-term |
| **Replace bike racks** | Medium | Low | Short-term |
| **Canopy / shade structure** | High | Medium | Short-term |
| **Murals & cultural content** | Medium | Medium | Medium-term |
| **Extend separated bike lane** | High | High | Medium-term |
| **Smart benches pilot** | Medium | Medium | Medium-term |
| **Full pedestrianisation** | High | High | Long-term |

**Method note** *Immediate, low-cost wins such as lane markings, kerb repairs, and benches and bins can restore confidence quickly, while a coordinated greening and mobility strategy will determine long-term livability. These should not be published as commitments until the city has confirmed them, and are best accompanied by a milestone timeline.*

## Appendix: Data protection & method notes

This report was produced at the HIGH anonymisation level. Demographic breakdowns are shown in full to match the platform participant details; cells below about five participants should be read as indicative. Raw participant coordinates are not published, and the map shows aggregated patterns only.

Stripping names and identifiers is pseudonymisation, not anonymisation. Free text and precise location can still re-identify a person, so quotes here are paraphrased and generalised. Any comment should be reviewed for identifying detail, and consent obtained, before it is published verbatim.

On the counts: participation and pin figures (46 participants, 148 sessions, 154 pins) come from the full campaign export. The theme grouping is AI-generated by the platform analytics and the sentiment split comes from participant self-tags; both are taken from the platform totals (104 tagged comments) and are not present in the pin export. Demographic shares are computed at participant level, one row per person.

Machine-readable data (CSV and GeoJSON) is available via the Export & Report panel. The campaign question and any materials shown to participants should be attached alongside this report.