

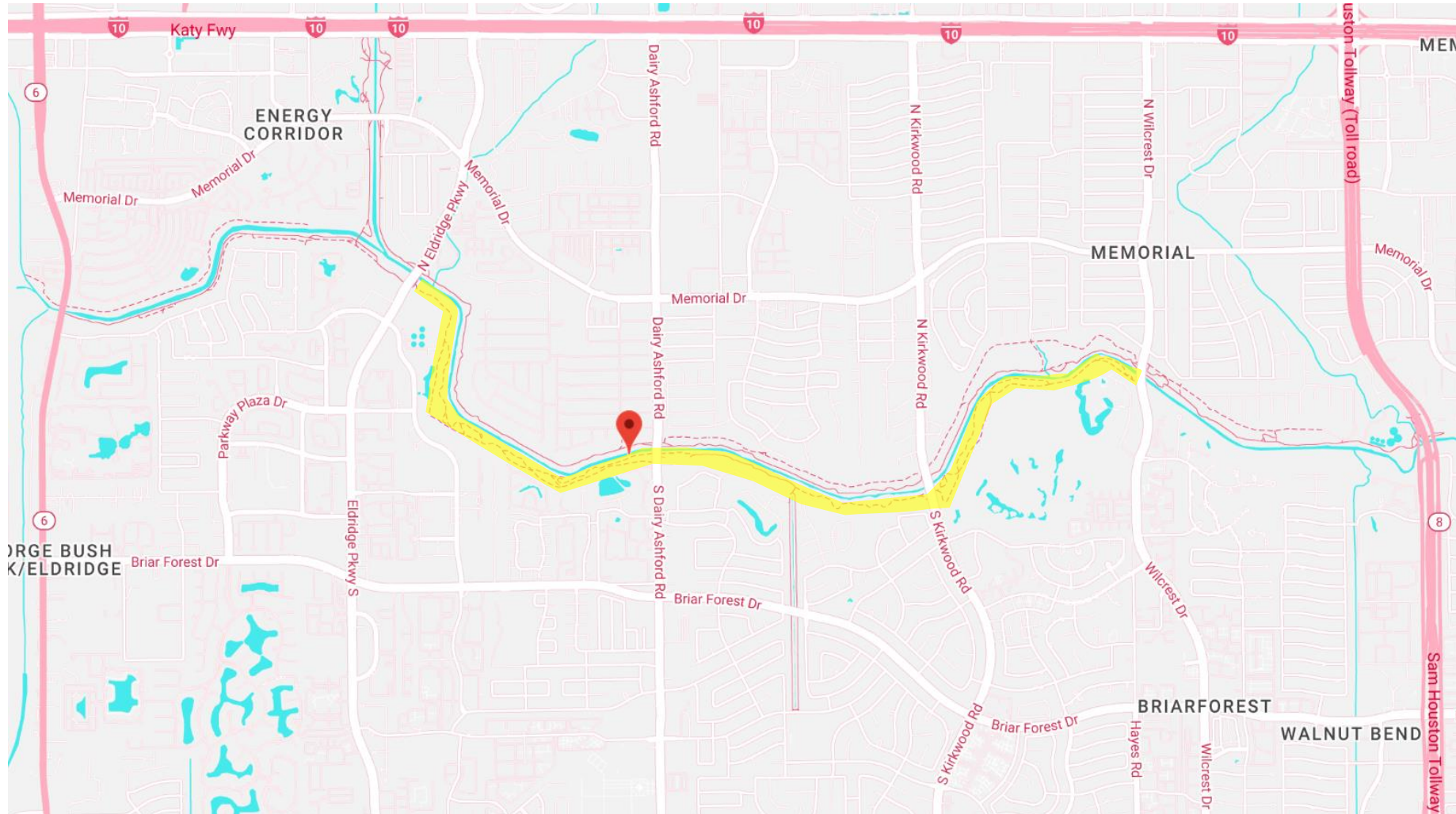


# Buffalo Bayou Natural Trails

26th Sept 2022



# Anthills Hike and Bike Trail







## BACKGROUND

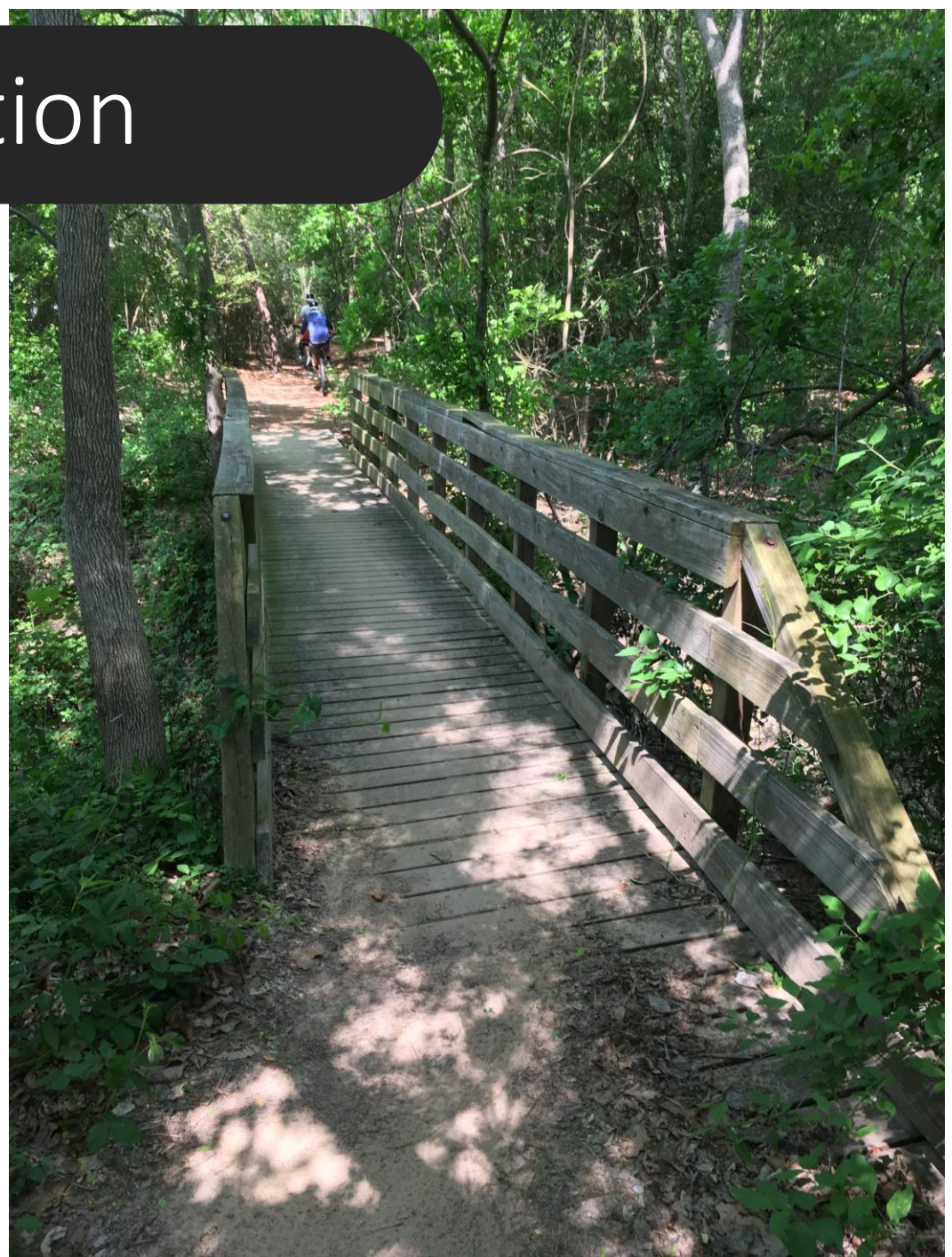
- Natural Path 'Anthills' Hike and Bike Trails are unique in the area
- Greater Houston Offroad Bicycling Assoc (GHORBA) has made a positive impact on the trails pre-2019

## ISSUES since 2019

- Unsanctioned construction
- Loss of Habitat and **reduced natural beauty** (Terry Hershey)
- Discouraging Multi-use (**safety concerns, user conflicts/displacement**)
- Environmental (**Erosion**)
- Risk (**Liability**)



# MTB community contribution





# Artificial bike features









# Natural trails at risk

Feb 3, 2020



Nov 6, 2021



 cement on jumps     dig pits     painted trees     equipment



# Cement used on jumps



Nov 6, 2021



# Dig pits

Apr 11, 2021





# Cut Roots



Feb 11, 2021



Feb 3, 2021



# Trees Cut



Buffalo Bayou South Bank between  
Wilcrest and Kirkwood



20+ trees cut to create one bike  
feature



# Trees Painted





# Signage on trees





# Safety





# Safety





# Bike Park





# Cached Equipment





# Liability

 **Anthills BMX Trails:**  
TRAILS ARE CLOSED WHEN WET!  
Ride at your own risk!!!  
Hand built and maintained by volunteers  
Helmets required  
Safety equipment recommended  
Jumps are tarped to control erosion.

Please:  
No littering  
Do not ride in the mud  
No motorized vehicles  
Dogs must be leashed  
Ride, respect and enjoy



**WARNING**

Texas law (chapter 75, civil practice and Remedies code) Limits the Liability of governmental unit for the damages arising directly from bicycling, in-lines hockey skating, roller-skating, skateboarding, roller-blading, or soapbox derby use on premises that the governmental unit owns, operates, for that purpose.



# Trail user conflict / experience

ATURES | Houston, Texas Mountain Biking | Summer Edition | MTB



ANTHILLS TOP TEN TRAILS & FEATURES | Houston, Texas Mountain Biking | Summer Edition | MTB



0:36 / 14:43 • Intro >





# Temporary Right of Entry (TROE)

The TROE allows for safety-related maintenance of technical features (bike jumps):

Authority for permanent construction or modification of all trails, technical features, and appurtenances upon the District's Lands other than restorative or for safety-related purposes is not permitted.



Before

Modifications

Cement added to jumps

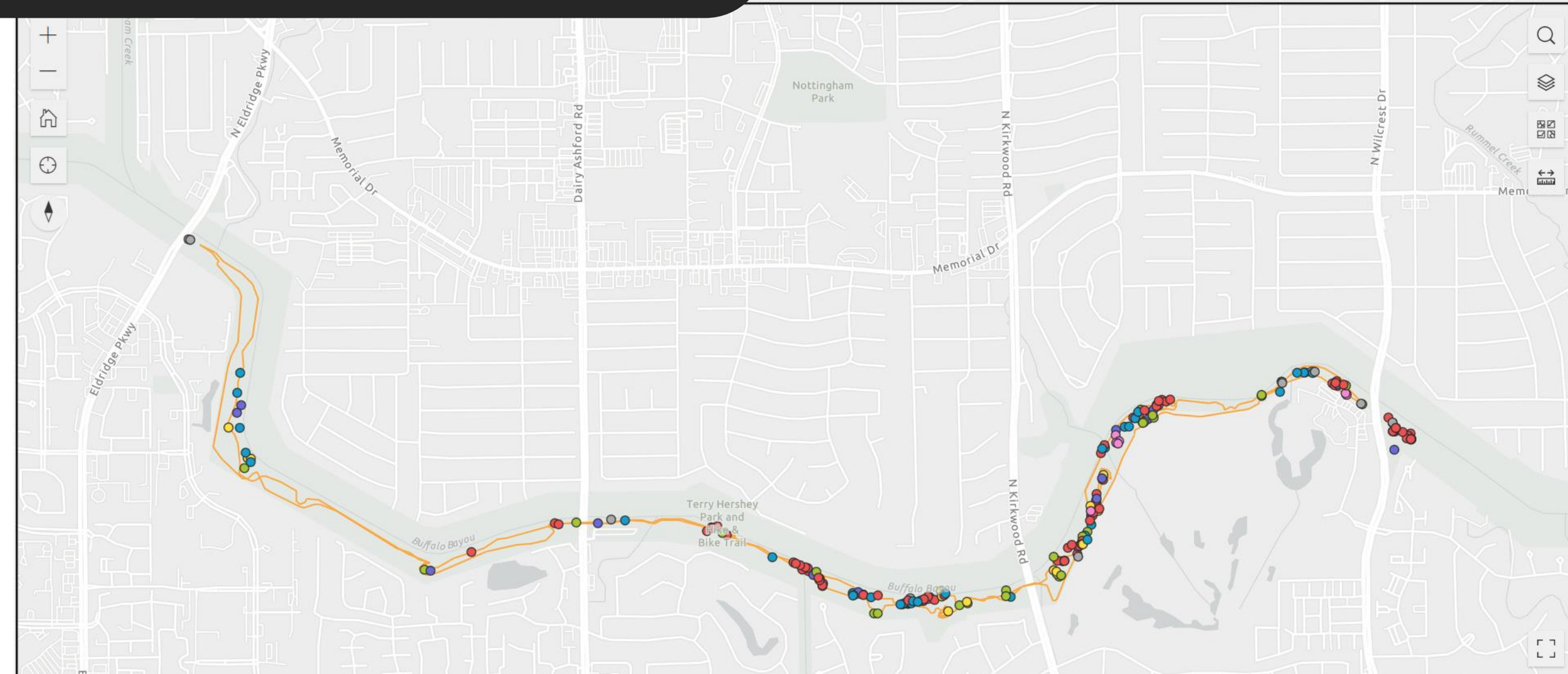


Aug 3, 2022

- Violation of TROE
- Permanent construction of wooden sides on jumps
  - Modification of trail



# Over programmed



The Anthills Hike and Bike Trails have in some areas become overcrowded with technical bike features reducing the enjoyment/safety for other trail users. (Map with displays bike features (circles) along the trails (orange line).



# Multiuse Trail User Advocacy: Educate/Solutions

We have reached out to the following user groups to provide updates and solicit feedback and advice:

- GHORBA
- Harris County Flood Control District
- Harris County Parks Dept Pct 3 & Pct 4
- Harris County Attorney's office
- Anthills Trail User community feedback/comments (+200 trail users)
- Homeowners Associations surveys/presentations
- Houston area non-profits
- American Trails organization
- International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) - IMBA: Guide to Quality Trail Experience (GQTE).
- Trail Alliances/Coalitions



# Feedback from Residents

## Form and Feedback

An online form was used to collect feedback from residence living near the bayou



### Bayou Trail User Feedback

There are current discussions with Harris County Flood Control (HCFC), Precinct 4 and some of the walking/running/biking community on the future of the natural trails south of Buffalo Bayou between Wilcrest and Eldridge.

We would love to hear from more of the neighborhood on their opinion on the trails. These are fantastic trails for all to use and we would like to maintain them in such a way that everyone can enjoy them.

How often do you use the trails

- every day
- a few times a week
- once a week
- a few times a month
- once a month
- less than once a month

Do you live in the neighborhood?

- Yes
- No

Although residents use the trail for a wide variety of activities, there was a common theme on why they appreciated the trails:

- 78% love the natural trails
- 68% mention nature as reason why they love them

I love the trails. I love the animals I can see. I wish people would not leave their trash behind. Maybe a few more trash cans would be helpful! There should not be anymore bike jumps been built.

I like them as is , I'm afraid if they pave the area it will attract more people. There is a paved trail on the north side so I don't see a need for any paving on the south side

Want to keep them as natural as possible

I love the trails, please don't destroy them! I hate the high-speed biking jumps that have been installed pretty much everywhere on the trails. These are very dangerous to pedestrians.

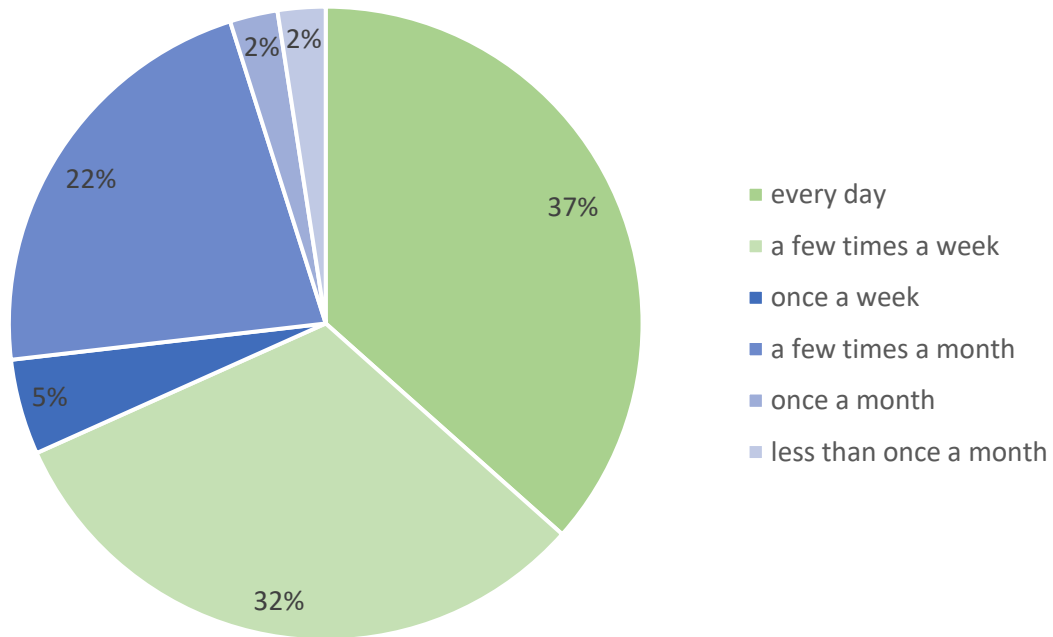
Like the easy access - Bicyclists tent to be careless with pedestrian

Love the ruggedness and pure nature feel. The only area in Houston easily accessible without hearing traffic and great small hikes for kids. I hate the high usage, both people and bikes on weekends. We avoid visiting the area on weekends or holidays and go in the mornings.



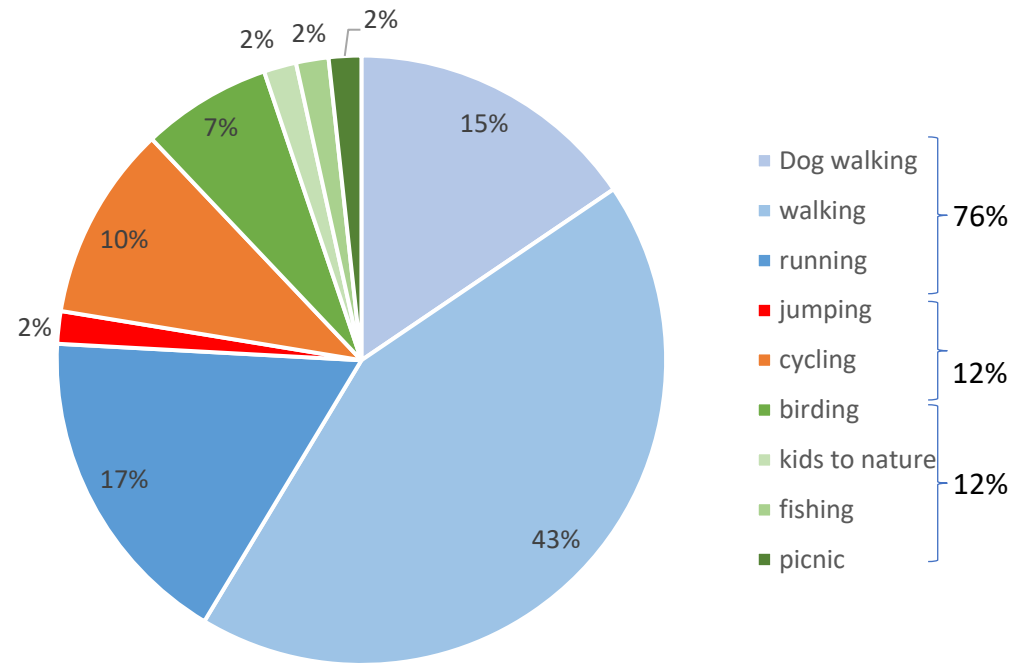
# Feedback from Residents

How often do you use the trails?



69% on the trails a few times a week or every day

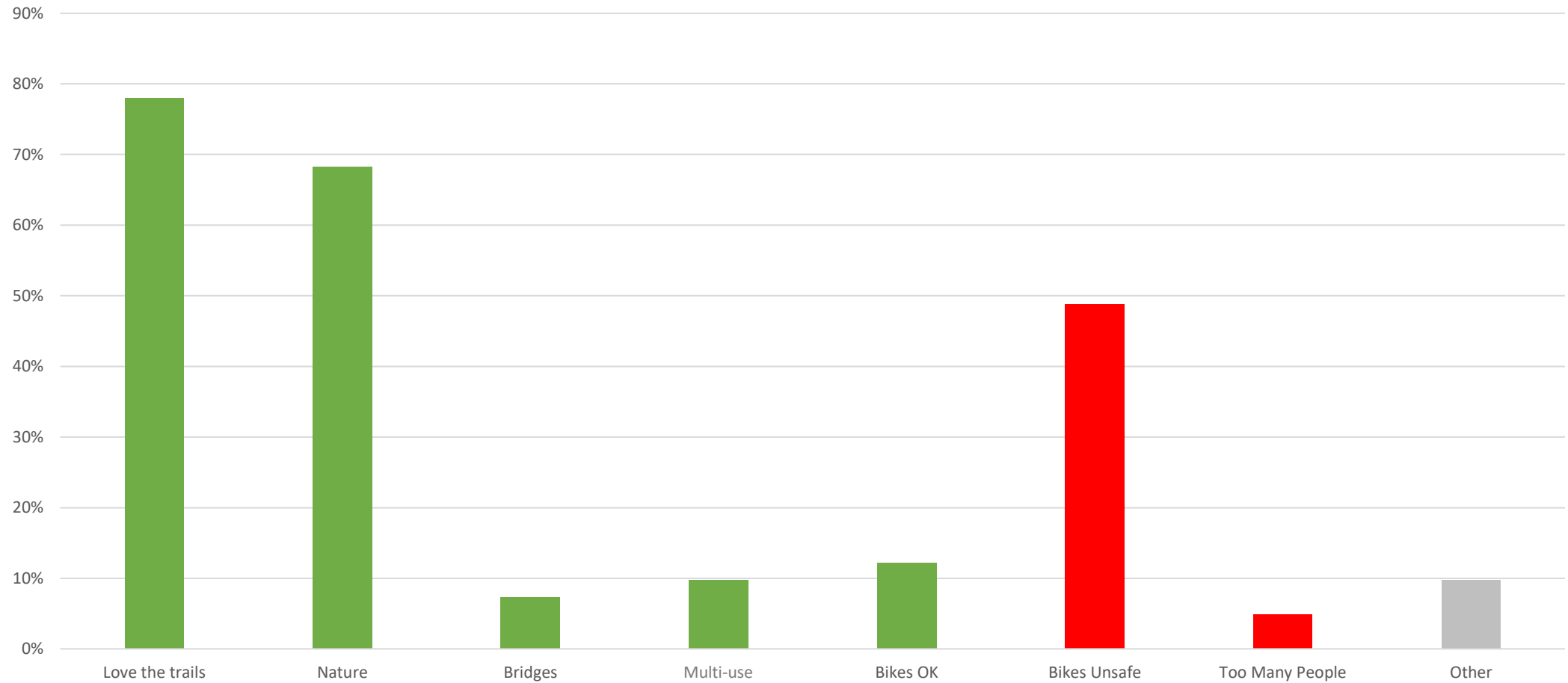
Activities that you use the trail area / bayou for





# Feedback from Residents

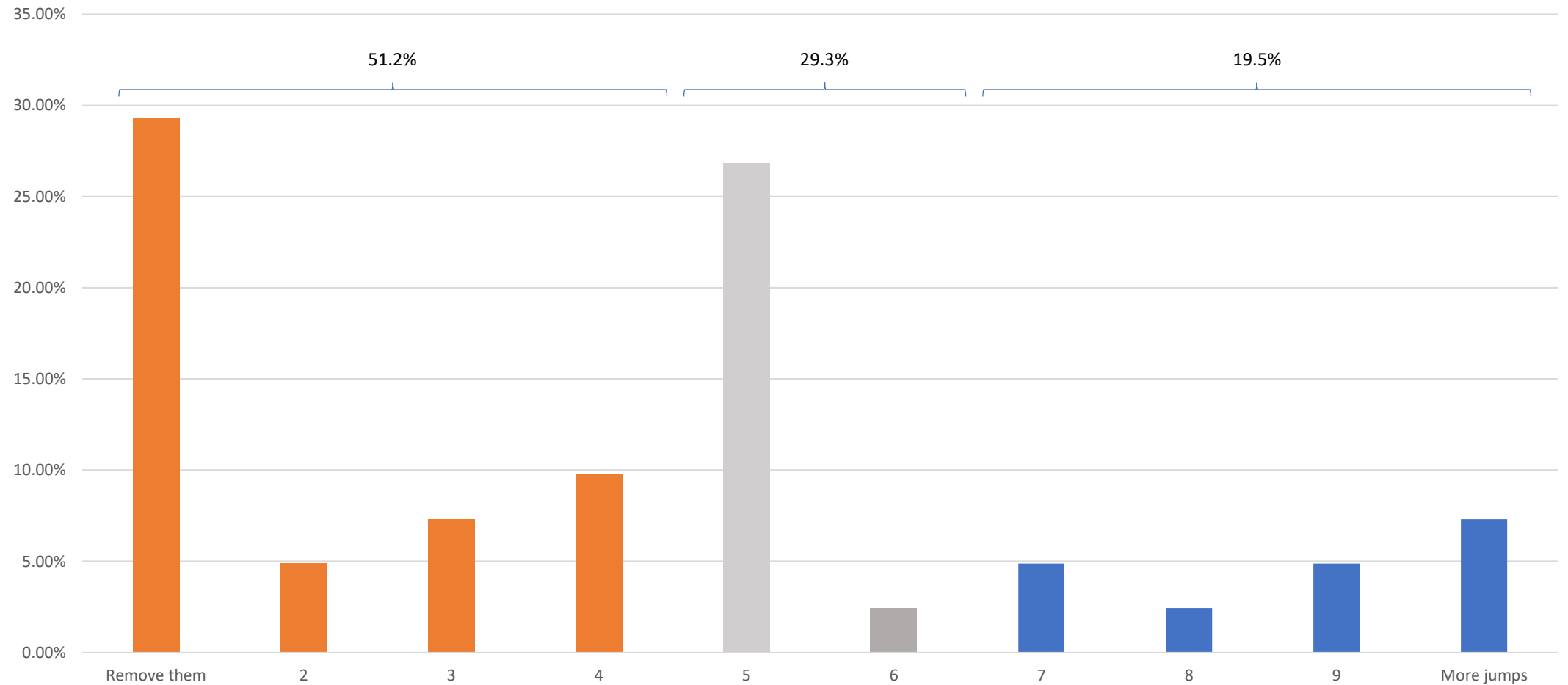
What do you love / hate?





# Feedback from Residents

What are your thoughts on the bike jumps / technical features that have been built?





# Feedback from Residents

## Growing Concern about bikes

- I've seen too many near misses with children and other trail runners and walkers with bikers who adopt a "get out of my way " attitude as they come barreling off the jumps. I don't mind having one area for this type of biking but not along the whole trail. It's dangerous.
- I cannot have a fun walk with my granddaughters there any more for fear of them getting run over by bikers who don't even announce that they are approaching.
- I have also witnessed at least 5 rescues by the paramedics of bikers that fell and could not move. Lots of these men are not experienced and I have seen many children under 12 doing these jumps, some even without helmets.
- It is more dangerous to walk with bikers on the path, than on the highway with cars.
- I do not understand why officials allow construction in a flood control managed area. They should be removed.
- The bike jumps have become hurdles make it difficult to walk even when bikers are around. You always have to look out for bikers raising down the trails wanting to jump over crossing paths and be ready to jump behind a tree when they come racing



# Way Forward ...

Continued discussions with GHORBA, HCFCD, Precinct 4, Residents

- Sustainable (Social, Environmental, Economic)
- Multi-use and Balance
- Trust and Transparency

Anthills Hike and Bike Trail needs a solution to fit it unique needs

TROE until agreement can be reached

Please provide feedback to us at:

<https://www.buffalobayoutrailcoalition.org/>

