

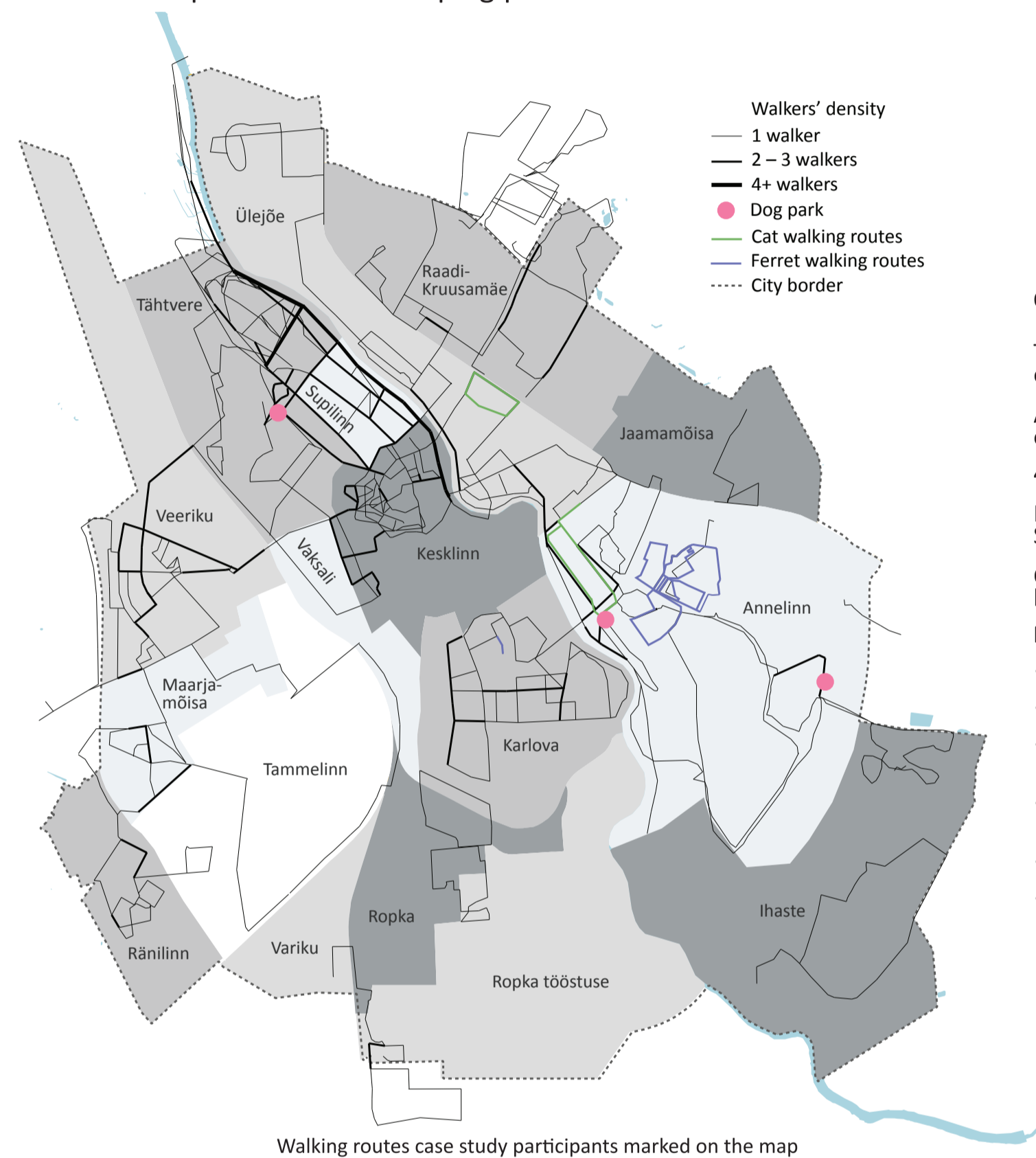
URBAN LANDSCAPE EXPERIENCE OF COMPANION ANIMALS AND THEIR HUMANS / MAIKEN VARDJA / URBAN STUDIES 2020

The aim of this thesis is to research the current situation of companion animals and their guardians in urban public spaces, identify their needs and then offer solutions about how better to integrate them into the urban environment. I started to look at the topic from a wider perspective – how wild animals became companion animals in the first place sharing life with humans from the very first settlements and arriving to current Western cities' companion animal keeping practices to see what has been done in

the cities for companion animals and by whom. It was followed by an overview of the situation in Estonia and analysis of current legislations that deal with companion animals. After that I focused even more specifically to the southern Estonian city of Tartu where I conducted an empirical study. The results of the study show companion animal's caretakers opinions on current situation. Combining the scientific and empirical data I propose walking routes for companion animal guardians to take with their an-

imals to provide the best urban landscape experience for both of them. In addition, I will outline some specific design ideas that could be used in urban design to incorporate companion animal's needs. I claim that the urban environment needs to be looked at from a new perspective – that of a non-human animal. This poster shows the results of the empirical study in Tartu and the wider conclusion that can be made from my thesis. The second poster introduces a real-life intervention for companion animals

and their guardians that I made in Tartu as an extension to the empirical study. The third poster shows the walking routes derived from the empirical study and outlines of more concrete intervention ideas.



OVERALL RESULTS

There were altogether 155 respondents to the empirical study

Answers came from dog, ferret, cat and rabbit owners

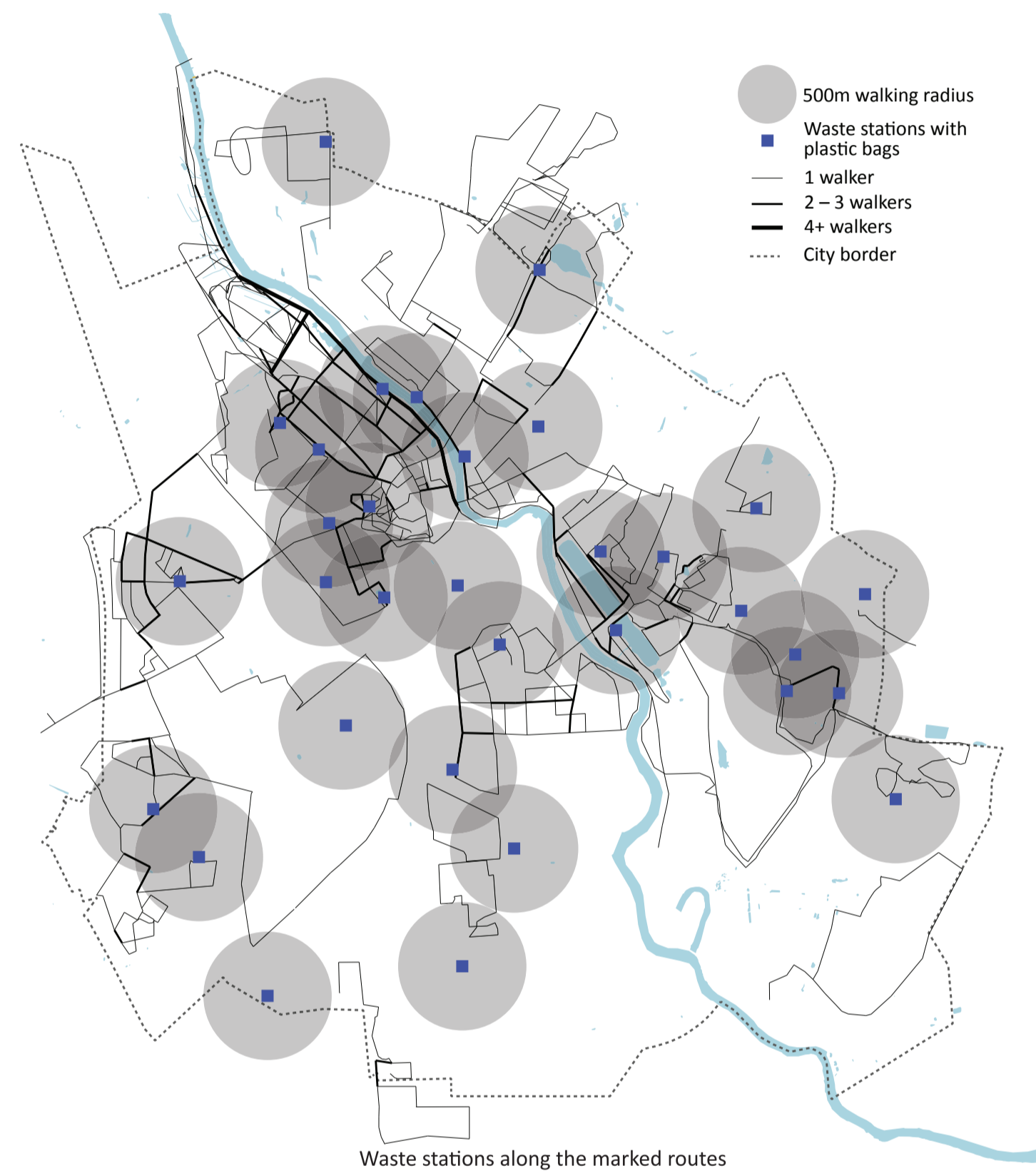
44% of the respondents walk 3-4 times a day

Highest walkers' concentration is in Tähtvere, Suplelinn, Kesklinn, Annelinn

Quite many walking routes went along busy highways

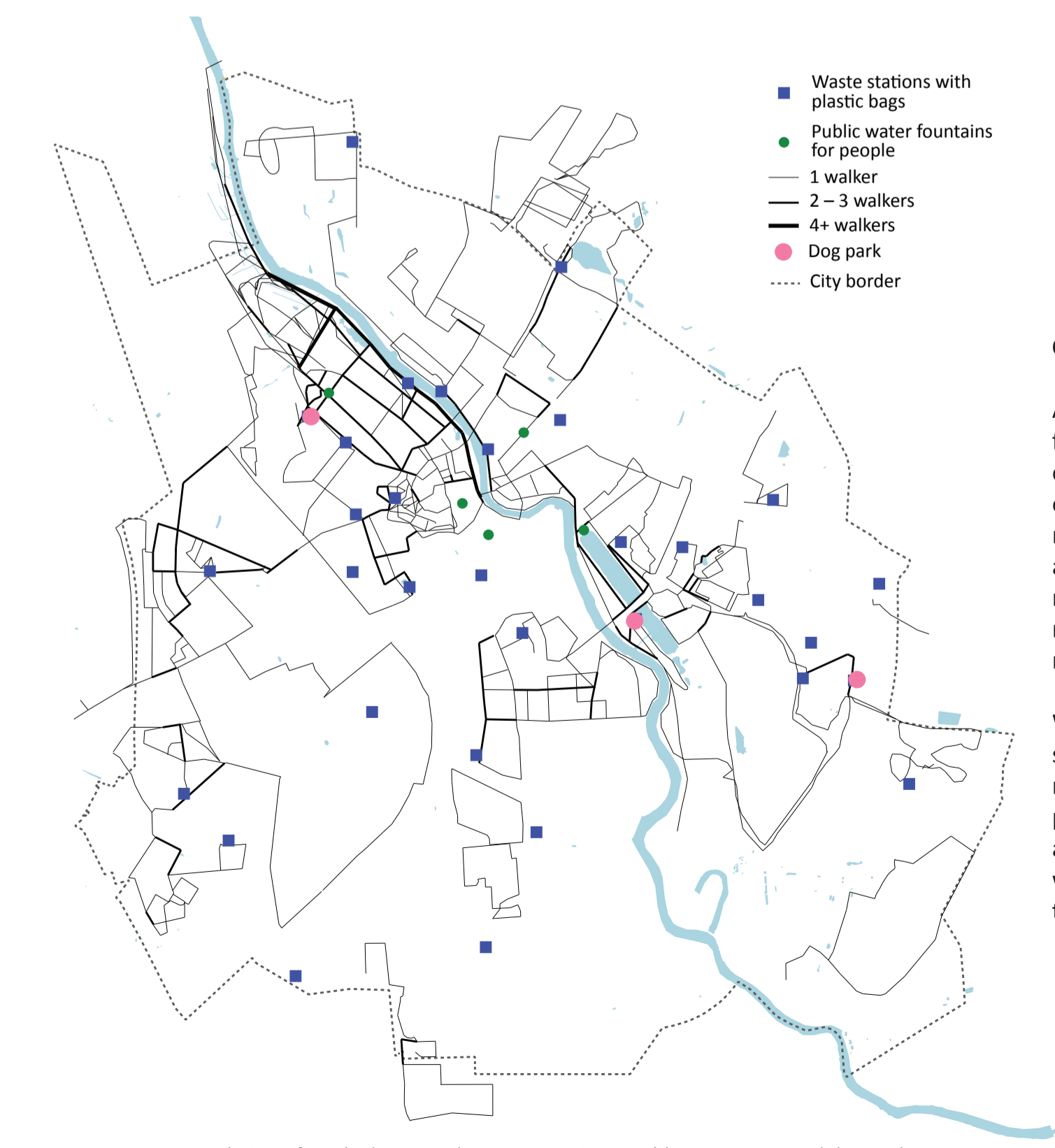
Factors that influence the route selection:

- Time – how much time the guardian has
- Weather
- The mood of the guardian, impulses of the guardian
- Practical aspects – if there is a need to go to the store, visit friends
- Companion animal's decisiveness
- The quality of the infrastructure



ESSENTIAL AMENITIES – WASTE STATIONS

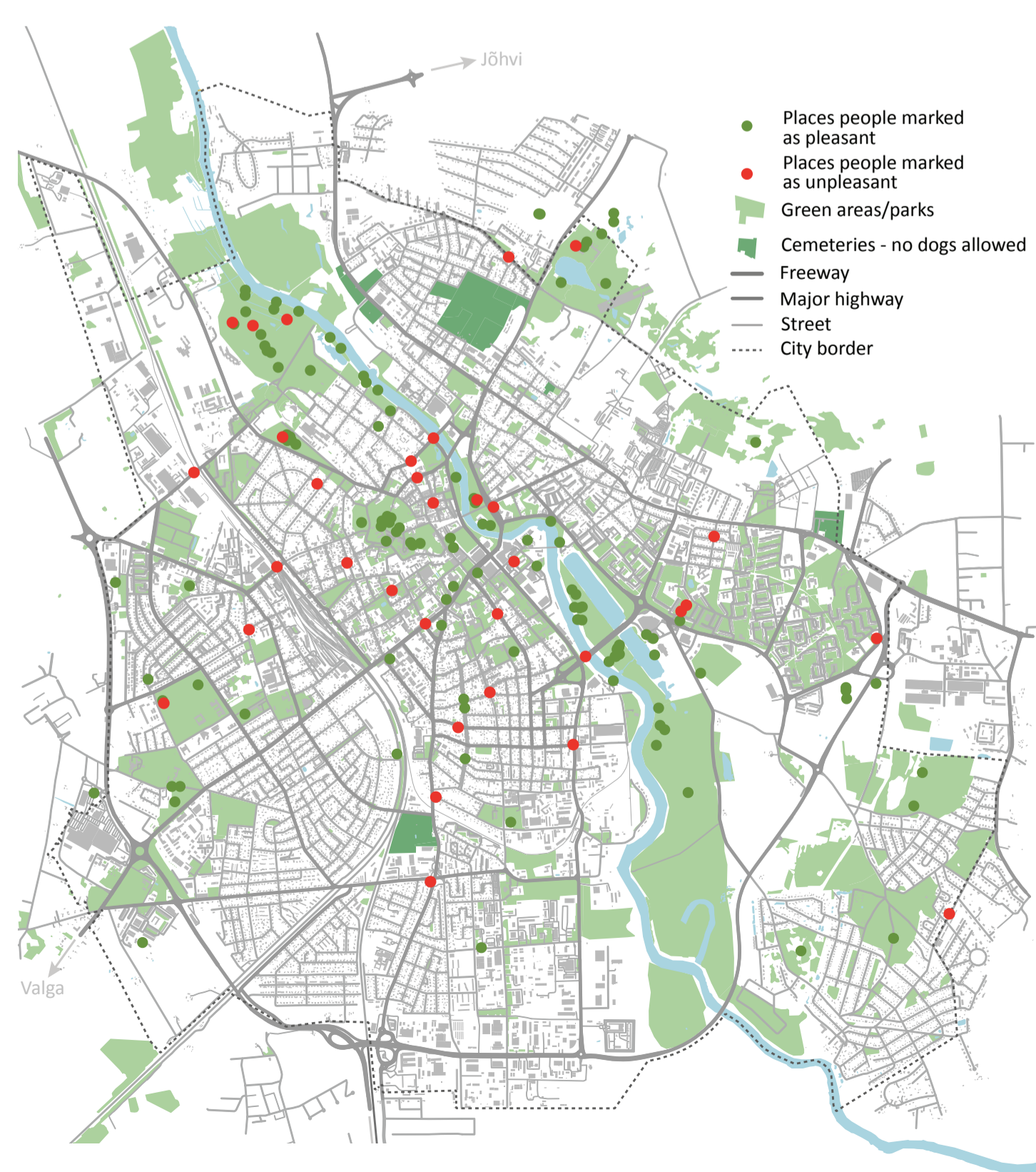
There are no guidelines in Tartu (or any other city in Estonia) that I have found that would establish a reasonable distance between waste stations that would be comfortable for citizens with animal companions. In my questionnaire, the responders mentioned 1km distance would be already very uncomfortable. One company in the USA that specialises in dog waste solutions, states that in the parks, one waste station unit should be in every 152m. When taking an average of that, about 500m would be the maximum distance between the waste stations that would be comfortable for people. When applying this to the map of Tartu, it shows that there are uncovered routes where the distance between waste stations is too long.



CORRELATION WITH EXISTING AMENITIES

As one of the main complaints that came out from the questionnaire was that there are not enough waste stations in the city, I compared the existing infrastructure to the map data I received from the answers to see how basic amenities correlate with the reality of walking routes (are these amenities on popular walking routes, are there enough waste stations in the right places).

While analysing the distribution of waste stations, about 70% of them are directly on the route of the companion animal walkers. When pairing the data from the map and written answers, it can be said that the location of the waste stations also can affect the walkers' route to a certain degree.



PLACES WALKERS LIKE AND DISLIKE

122 likeable places were marked down

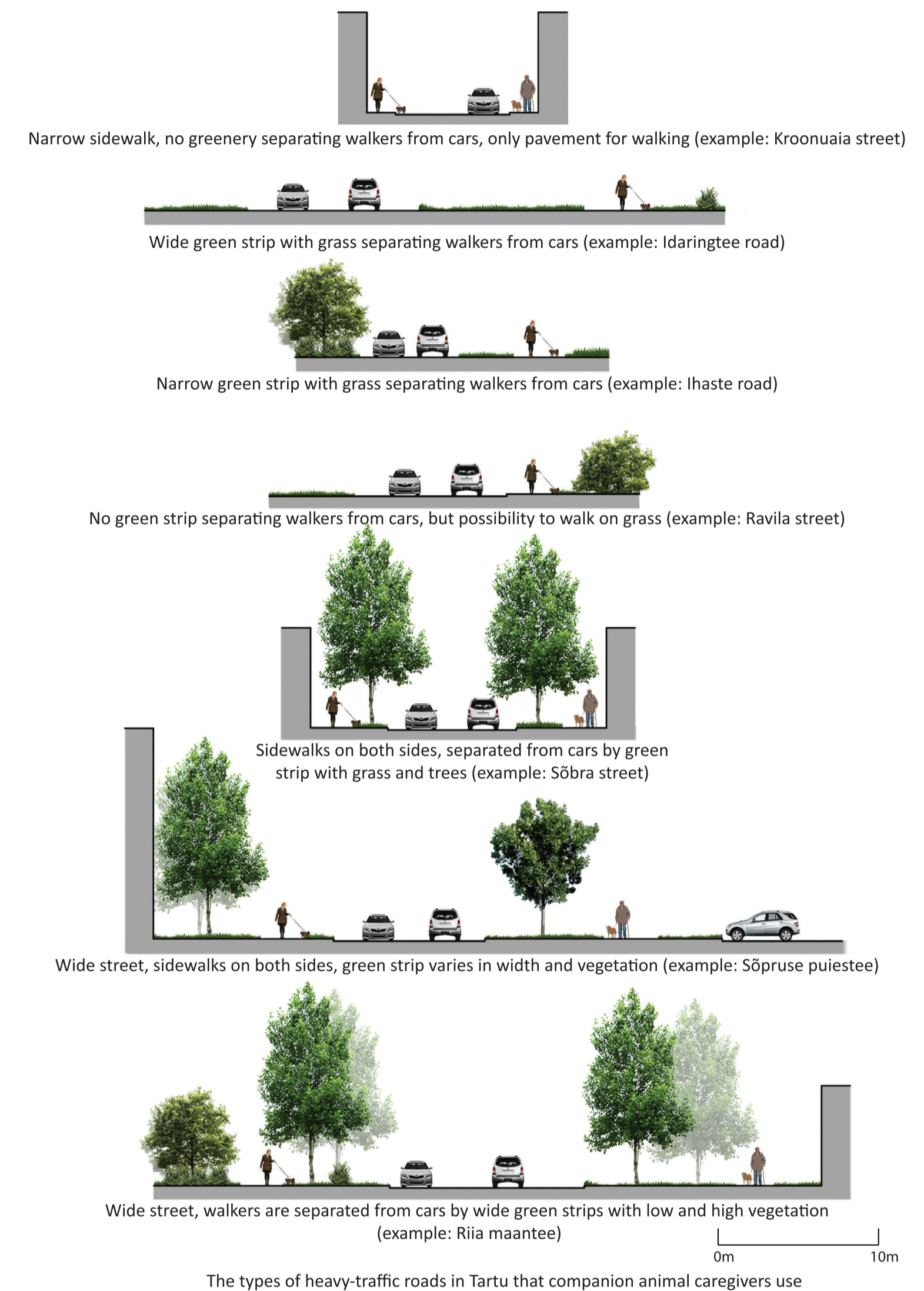
35 disliked places were marked down

Most common reasons for liking a place:

- Possibility to let the dog run free
- Closeness to nature
- Safety – almost none or no traffic
- The presence of a dog park
- Possibility to go for a swim with the companion animal
- Not so many people passing by
- Just a pleasant park, cosy place

Most common reasons for disliking a place:

- Heavy traffic, noise (mentioned more near the city centre)
- Narrow sidewalks (especially in the city centre)
- Lots of litter left behind by humans



The sections above shows the most common street types in terms of greenery that are occurring on the walking routes people marked down in the empirical study. The common nominator is the green strip between the sidewalk and road. It varies, if the green strip is only with grass or also low/high vegetation has been added. I started to further investigate how do these types of roads affect companion animals – for example, greenery is cooler during hot summer days, it acts as a barrier between walkers and the traffic and also helps to reduce stress. These findings also reflect in the proposal of the walking routes.

SUGGESTIONS IN TERMS OF LEGISLATION

The local city government could ensure that companion animals' and their humans' needs are taken into account in city planning matters through legislations. For example, in the city's maintenance rules could be set what kind of new plants to use in city landscaping (non-toxic species to animals, more bushes that are better noise barriers) and also the mowing frequency. Wildlife would benefit from these changes too, because greenery creates habitats for them. Another aspect to think about is road maintenance – during the winter, salt and gravel is used on the main roads against slipperiness that are uncomfortable and damaging to animals' paws. Currently sand, chlorides or granite gravel is allowed on the sidewalks. Only animal-friendly options should be allowed (sand) in order to ensure their well-being.

On a larger scale, including companion animals in our thinking about cities on policy and planning practice level, can have more far-reaching positive effects. Besides companion animals, companion animal-friendly design is also supporting the well-being of all other user groups (humans as well as wild animals and insects).