

Niles Downtown Inventory

INFRASTRUCTURE
BUSINESS
INVENTORY
OCCUPANCY

2019

YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY



*Economic Development,
Community Planning,
and Research Services*

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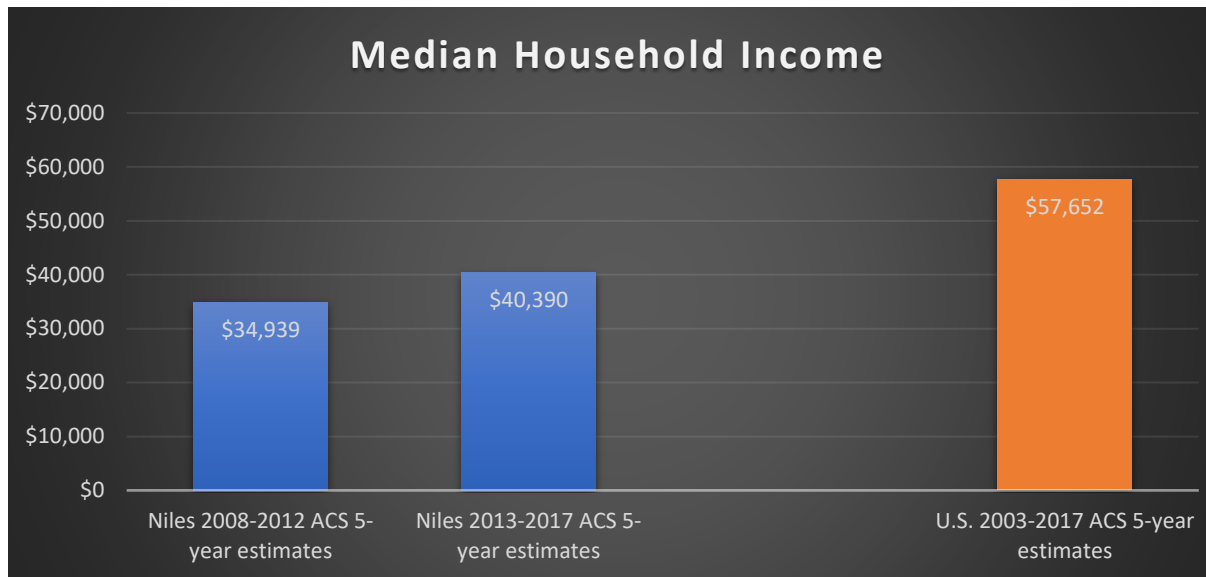


This report presents an overview of the inventory taken of the infrastructure, business type, and street-level business occupancy of the downtown study area. The City of Niles now has a foundation from which specific initiatives and tasks can be prioritized, and a way to measure progress as new incentives and programs are created. This report is intended to serve as a catalyst for further planning efforts through which community stakeholders can envision an improved downtown district with strong redevelopment strategies that reflect the heritage of the city and reestablishes downtown as an economic and cultural attraction for residents and visitors.

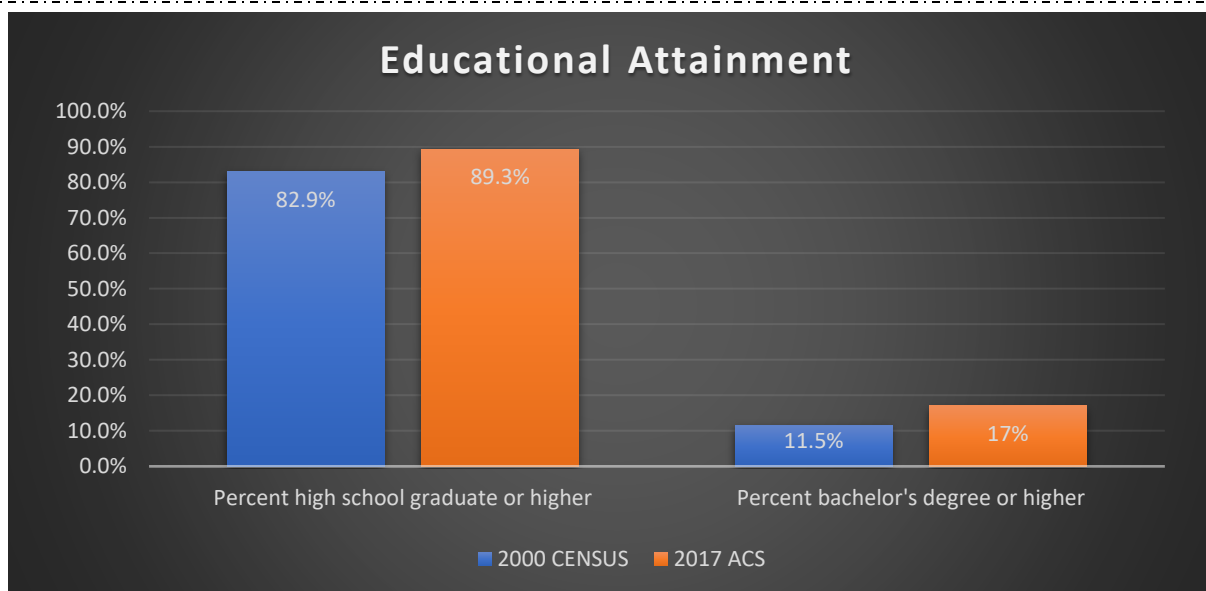
DATA



Understanding the demographic profile of the community and region allows for a greater understanding of the characteristics of businesses that are likely to thrive in an area. Household income impacts how much purchase power exists in the community, and which types of goods and services are likely to meet local demand.



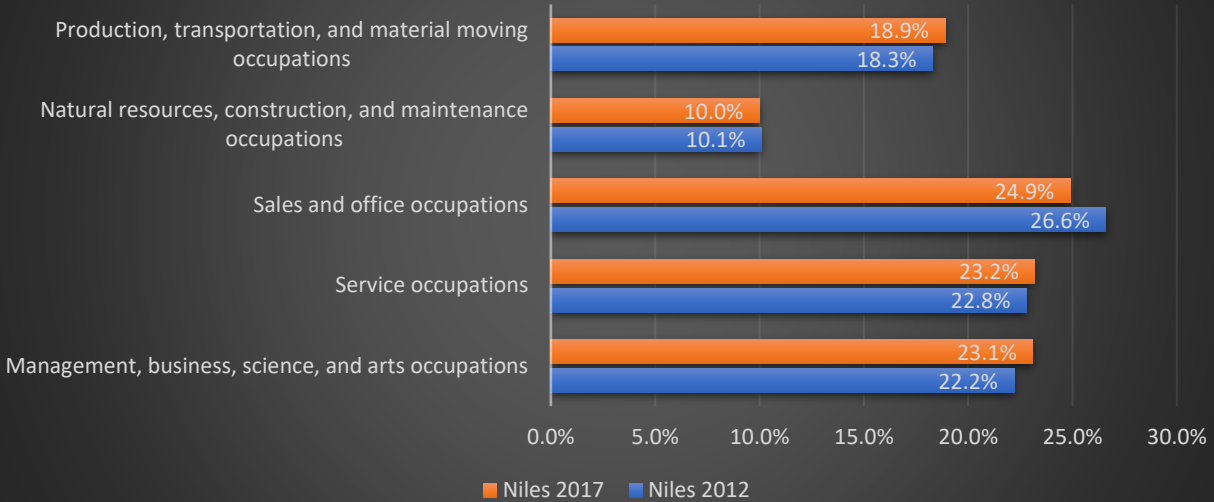
Median Household Income in Niles has risen steadily, however, it remains only 70% of the Median Household Income in the United States (\$57,652).



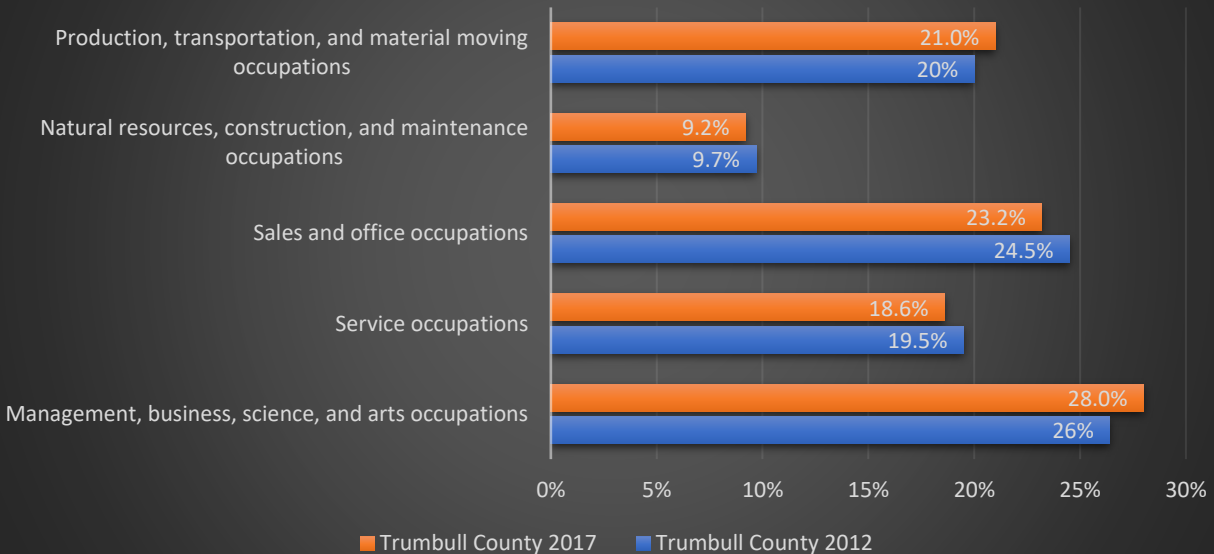
Educational attainment in Niles has been increasing over the past two decades. Post-secondary degree attainment has risen 65% since the 2000 Census.

In Niles, sales and office occupations capture the highest percentage of workers. In Trumbull County, the highest percentage of workers are in the management, business, science, and arts occupations; this is an occupational sector which is gaining employees in Niles.

Occupations in Niles



Occupations in Trumbull County



Ohio Department of Transportation conducts vehicular traffic counts along state routes at strategic locations on an ongoing basis, and Eastgate Regional Council of Governments completes traffic counts by request on local roads. Data was gathered from both sources for locations within the downtown.

Throughout most of the early 2000's, traffic volume along SR 46 was decreasing, but began increasing slightly or stayed unchanged until 2018 when counts began decreasing again. SR 46 is a high-volume corridor, very heavily traveled by semi-tractor trailers servicing urban areas long the state route. Street design and the volume of traffic, specifically semi-tractor trailer traffic, acts as a deterrent for community gathering and a pedestrian environment.

SR 46 (North Main St.) south of Robbins Ave.

Year	Count	Annual Growth
2018	10,936	-2%
2017	11,212	0%
2016	11,212	2%
2015	10,981	2%
2014	10,780	-5%
2011	12,581	0%
2008	12,490	-3%
2005	13,800	-2%
2002	14,530	-2%
2000	15,170	8%

Location	Date	Count
East Church Street (West of state street)	2017	1,701
East State Street (South of Robbins)	2015	9,774

INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY



46



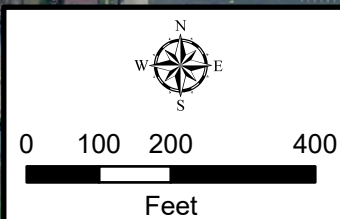
A detailed inventory and analysis of the current conditions in downtown Niles was taken in October 2019. The visual and structural conditions of the public infrastructure and streetscape components were recorded and mapped. This inventory will form the basis for a more comprehensive downtown plan and will drive incentive programs such as a façade renovation program and the creation of a Community Reinvestment Area.

The four maps presented on the next pages detail the current conditions on a comprehensive map (page 10), and on maps which separate the downtown study area into smaller blocks (pages 11-13). All maps in this report are presented in this way: a comprehensive map of the data followed by block level maps.



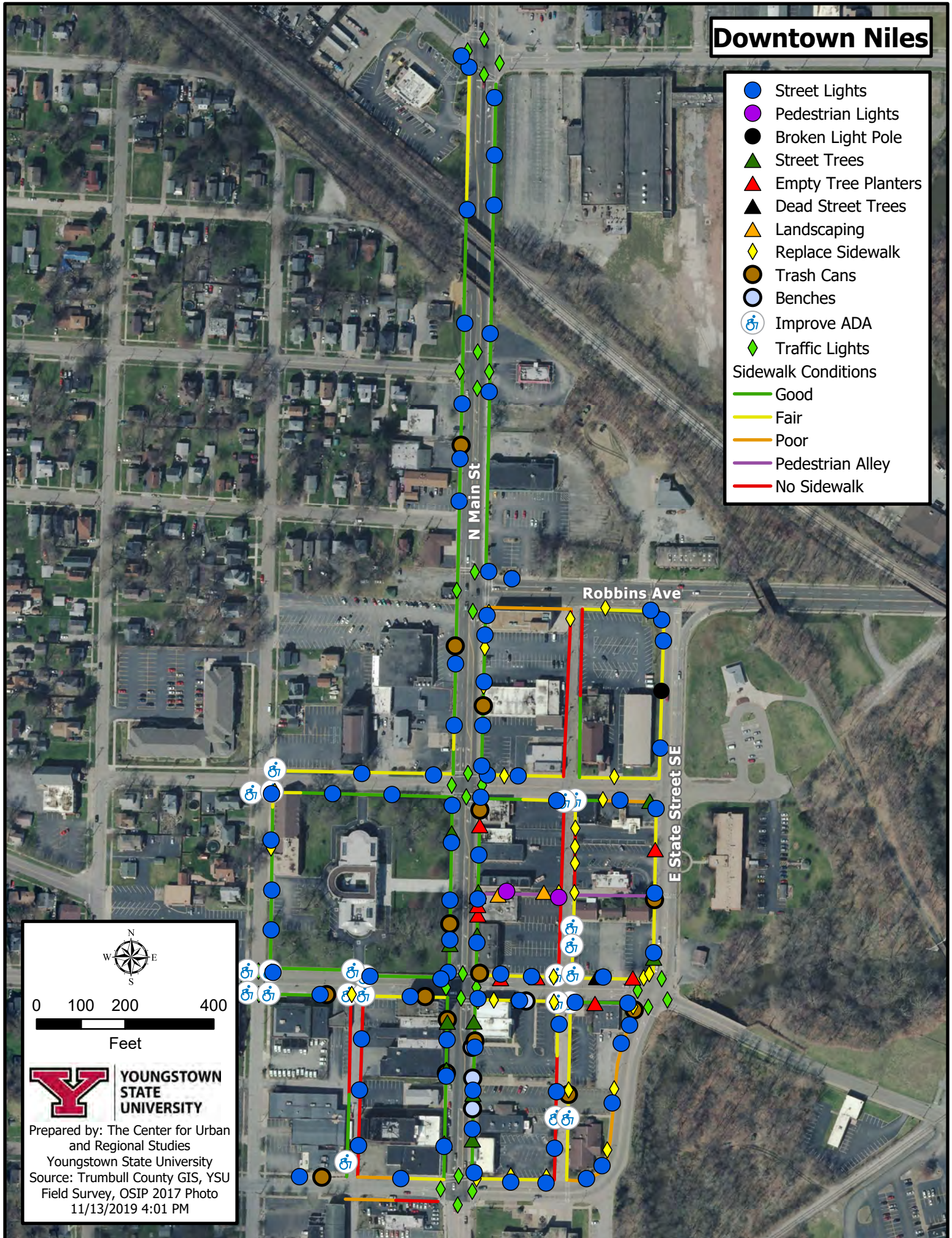
Downtown Niles

- Street Lights
 - Pedestrian Lights
 - Broken Light Pole
 - ▲ Street Trees
 - ▲ Empty Tree Planters
 - ▲ Dead Street Trees
 - ▲ Landscaping
 - ◆ Replace Sidewalk
 - Trash Cans
 - Benches
 - Improve ADA
 - ◆ Traffic Lights
- Sidewalk Conditions
- Good
 - Fair
 - Poor
 - Pedestrian Alley
 - No Sidewalk



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South Main Street State Street to Park Avenue

W Park Ave

S Main St

E State St SE



0 20 40 80

Feet



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South Main Street Park Avenue to Church Street

W Church St

S Main St

E P



0 20 40 80

Feet



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East State Street SE Pine Alley to Church Street

E Church St

E Park Ave

Pine Alley SE

E State Street SE



0 35 70 140

Feet



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CURRENT URBAN LANDSCAPE

Overgrown trees



Decayed benches



Empty tree planters



Curb detoriation



No sidewalk



Sidewalk in need of repair





Competing signs (above) are a traffic and pedestrian hazard.

Empty newspaper boxes along the sidewalk should be removed by the owner, if the business exists, or by the city.

Refuse dumpsters and clothing donation boxes line the street below. A city ordinance can be enacted to mandate they are enclosed or screened sufficiently to remove from view.





Signage Recommendations

A solution to combat the cluttered feel throughout the study area is to enact and enforce stringent signage ordinances. Sign regulations are used to control and reduce unsightliness, confusion, conflicts, and degradation of the community character. Pictured are examples from the study area: empty sign structures, broken signs, unused portable signs, and haphazard sign placement. These are all visually unappealing and should be remedied through city code.



Deferred Maintenance Issues

Much of the commercial building stock in downtown Niles needs maintenance. Some issues may be resolved through power-washing the building to remove dirt, attention to overgrown landscaping, or façade upgrades. Visible structural issues should be identified by city building officials and addressed by property owners.

Property maintenance is critical to attract new businesses downtown and to entice visitors to get out of the car and spend time exploring what Niles has to offer.



Examples of deferred maintenance issues downtown include buildings blackened by dirt, overgrown landscaping, cracked facades, and torn canopies.





New investment



Streetscape beautification

Downtown Assets to Highlight and Build Upon

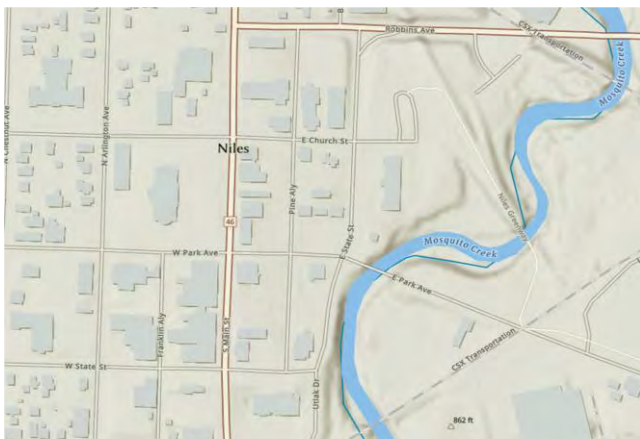
There are many positive components of downtown Niles from which to build.

New investment is happening on East Church Street which can be a catalyst for additional investment.

The city has invested in the beautification of downtown with seasonal flower boxes on the decorative light posts along Main Street. This is a great start from which to build more streetscape improvements throughout the study area.



Pedestrian Space



Greenway and park access



History

Downtown Assets to Highlight and Build Upon

The pedestrian space, or alleyway, between the flower shop and the vacant building to its north is an opportunity for placemaking through outdoor dining or community space.

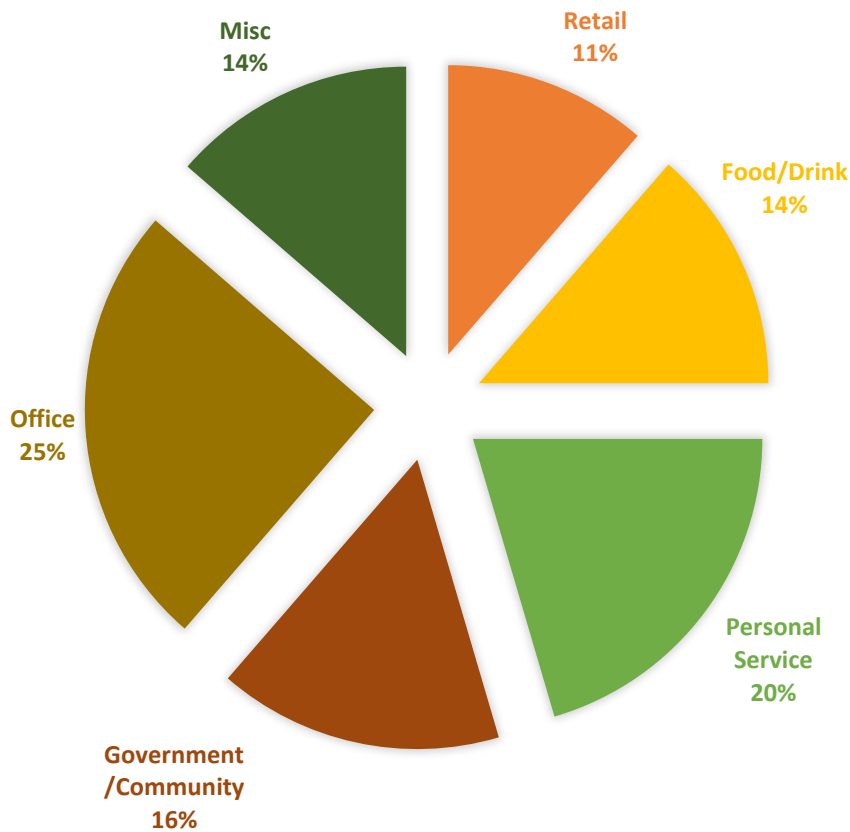
The Niles Greenway allows bicyclists, walkers, and runners access to a paved trail which extends south to Mahoning County. This asset should be more prominently celebrated with signage and transportation improvements to invite more active transportation around and in the downtown.

Downtown Niles is rich with history. Create festivals and events to take advantage of the historic assets and draw people downtown.

BUSINESS INVENTORY



CURRENT MIX OF DOWNTOWN USES



A downtown which is mostly occupied with office and government/community uses does not produce the foot traffic needed for a vibrant downtown. Over 40% of businesses at the street level in downtown Niles fall in the office and government/community uses.

These uses should be limited to second story (and higher) spaces. Street level commercial space should be reserved for businesses which attract foot traffic. Also, encouraging uses which expand traditional business hours is important, otherwise the downtown “dies” after 5:00.

The following maps detail the uses of all businesses in the study area. The building address is identified on each parcel.

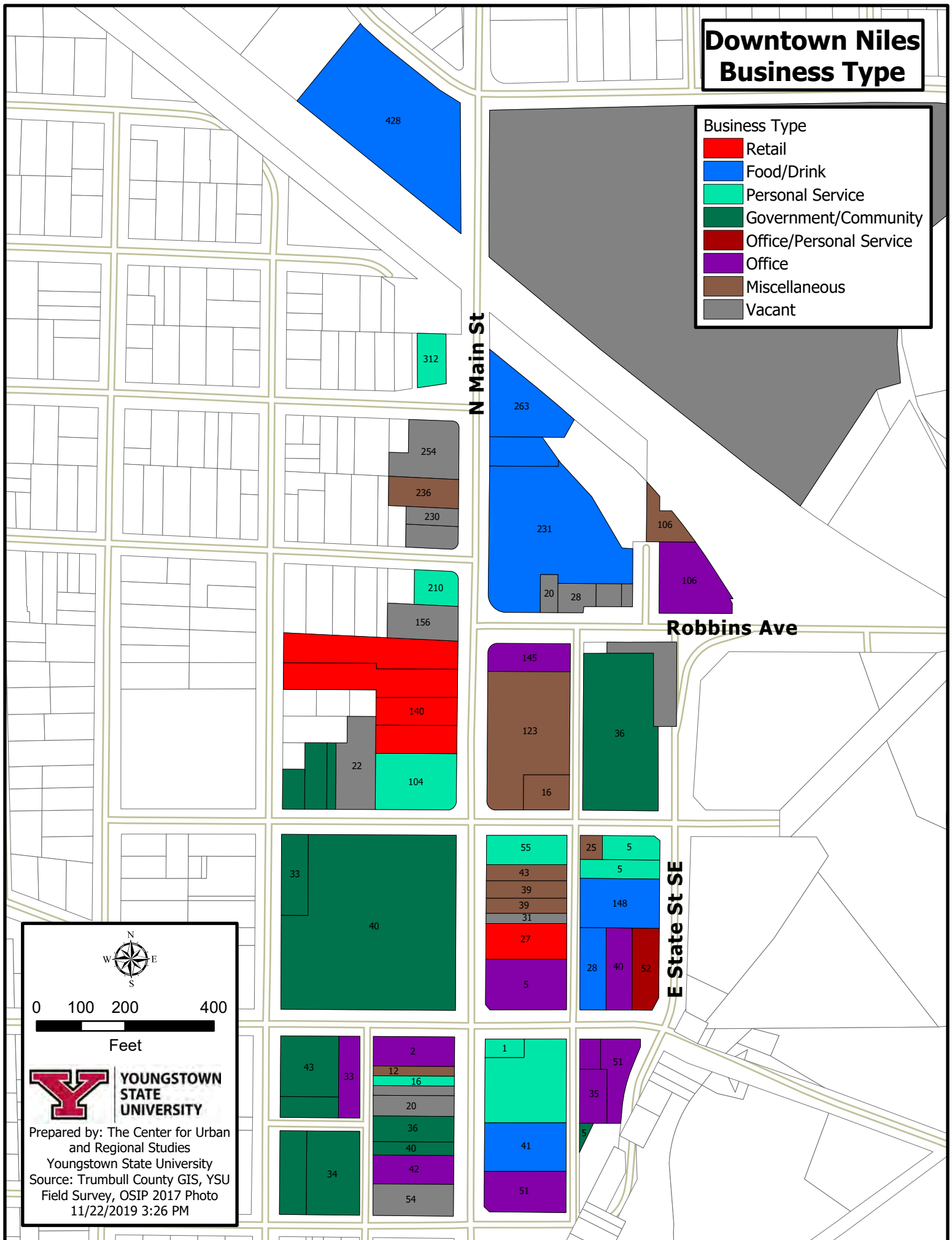
Business diversity

Focusing on businesses which attract a stream of customers during the day AND night is critical in achieving a vibrant downtown. Unless the downtown will be branded as having a specialty focus—an arts district, or an entertainment corridor, for example—recruiting businesses which fall under three categories will increase foot traffic during business hours. Focus on attracting **retail**, **personal service**, and **food & drink** establishments to drive downtown visits.



Business Type

- Retail
- Food/Drink
- Personal Service
- Government/Community
- Office/Personal Service
- Office
- Miscellaneous
- Vacant



0 100 200 400

Feet



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40

W Park Ave

2

12

16

20

36

40

42

54

S Main St

South Main Street State Street to Park Avenue Business Type

Business Type

- Retail
- Food/Drink
- Personal Service
- Government/Community
- Office/Personal Service
- Office
- Miscellaneous
- Vacant

1

41

51

E State St



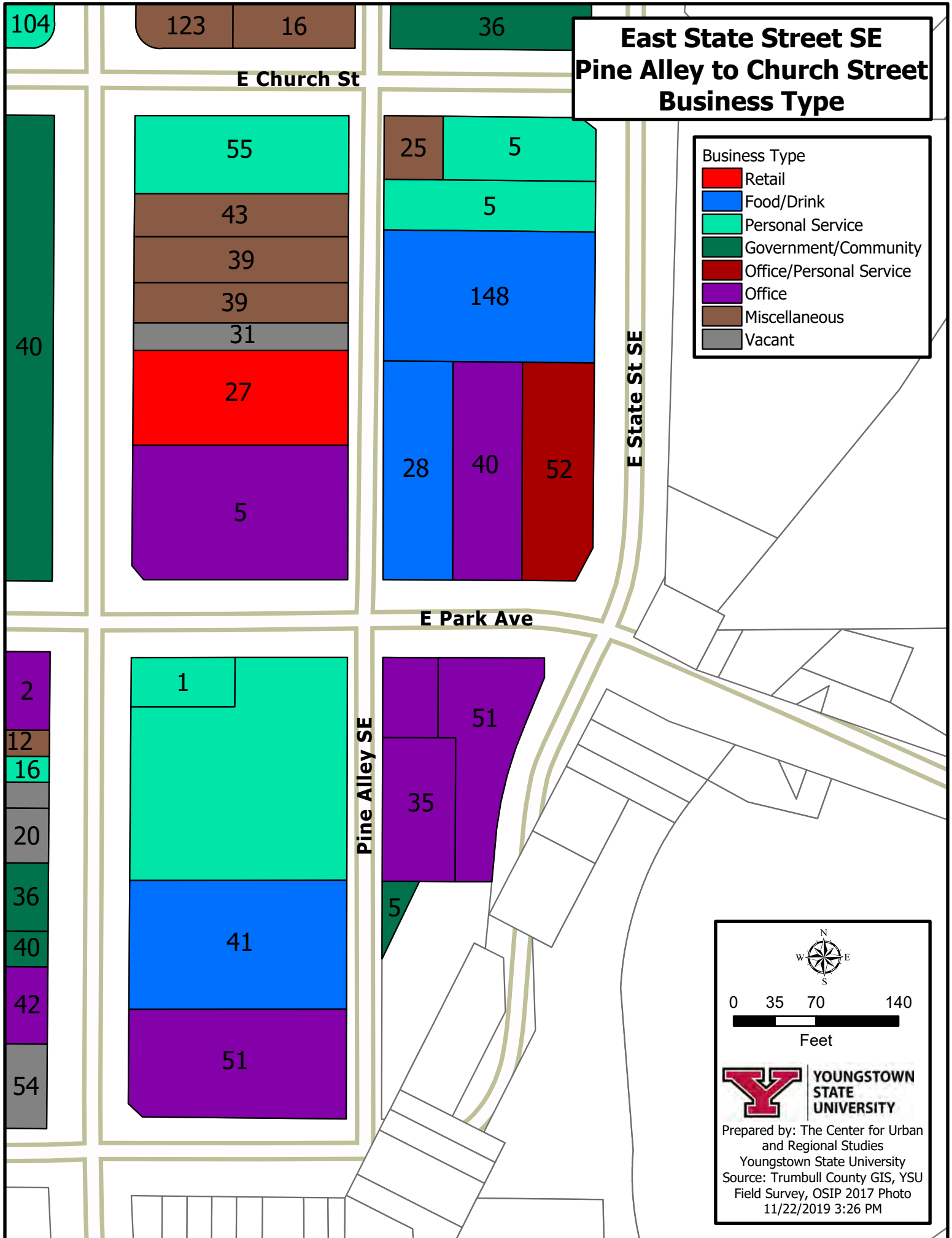
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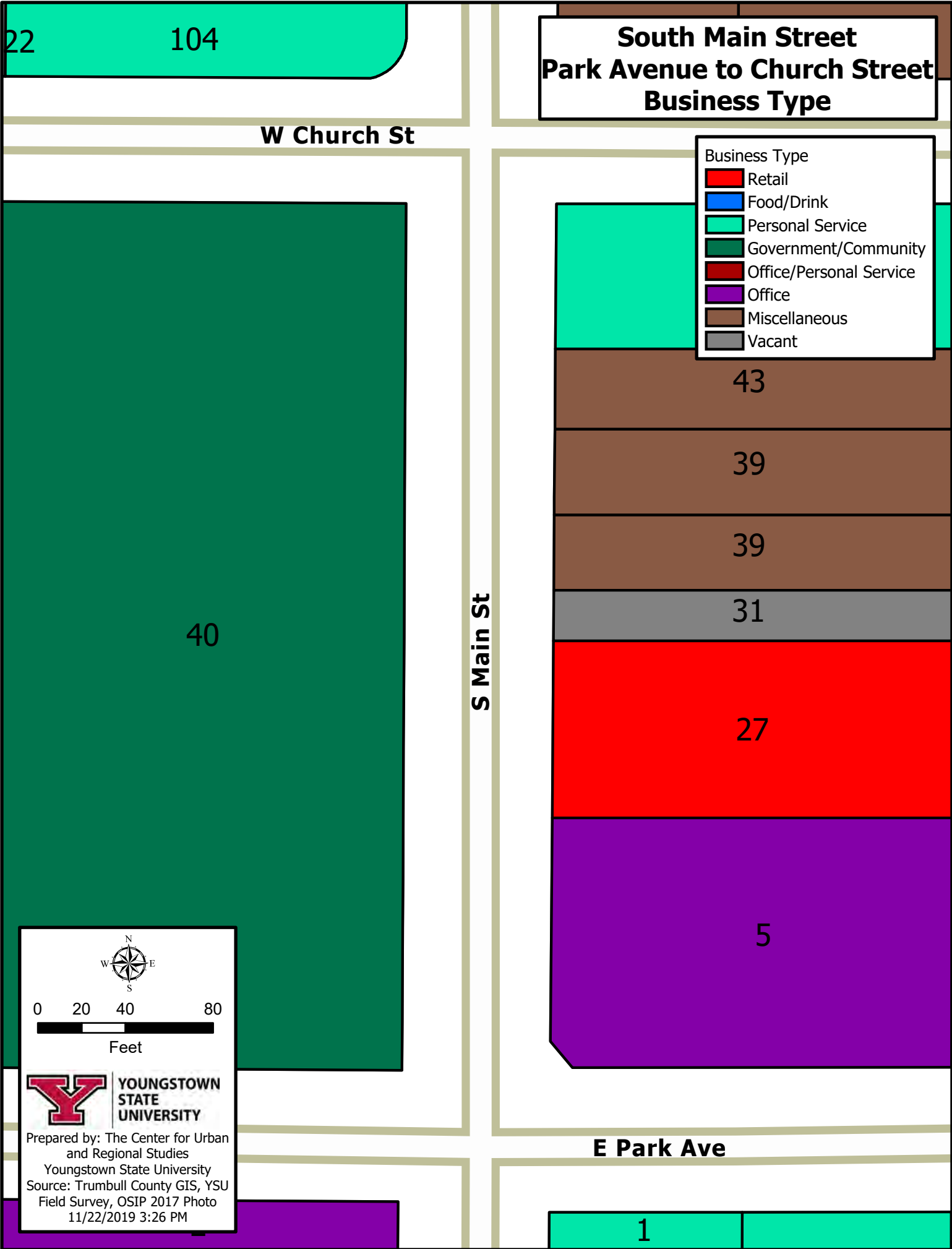
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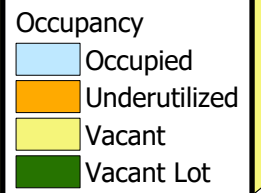
OCCUPANCY



In the study area, 70% of storefronts are occupied. As discussed in the previous chapter, the use of the businesses in the study area are not always compatible with a vibrant downtown. Filling the 30% vacant storefronts with a healthy mix of retail, restaurants, and services should be the focus of business attraction efforts. The following maps detail where the occupied, vacant, underutilized (meaning only partially occupied), and vacant lots are in downtown Niles.



Downtown Niles Occupancy



N Main St

Robbins Ave

E State St SE



0 100 200 400

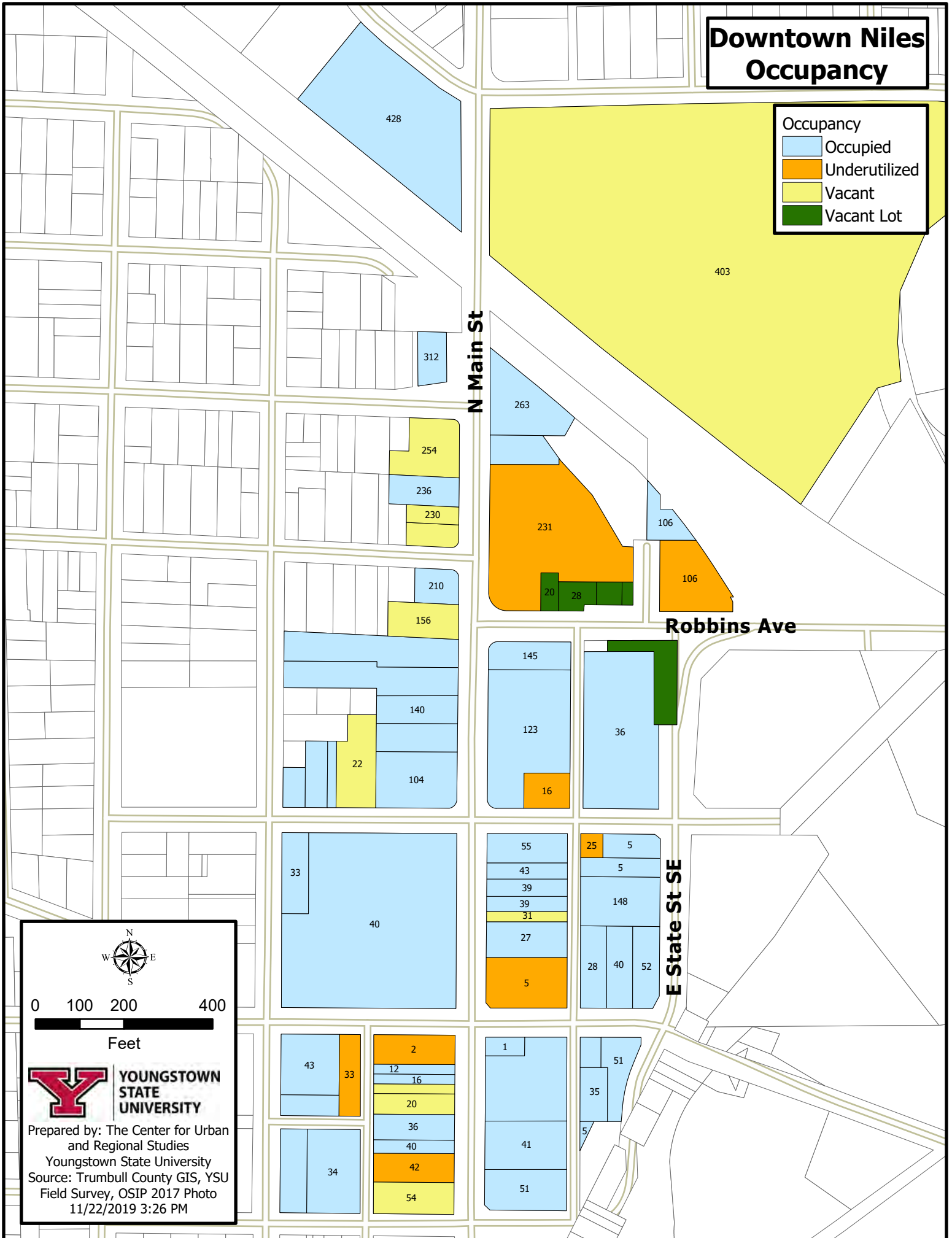


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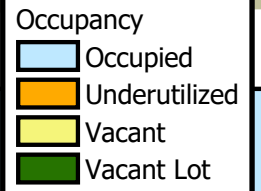
40

42

54

S Main St

South Main Street
State Street to Park Avenue
Occupancy



1

41

51

E State St SE



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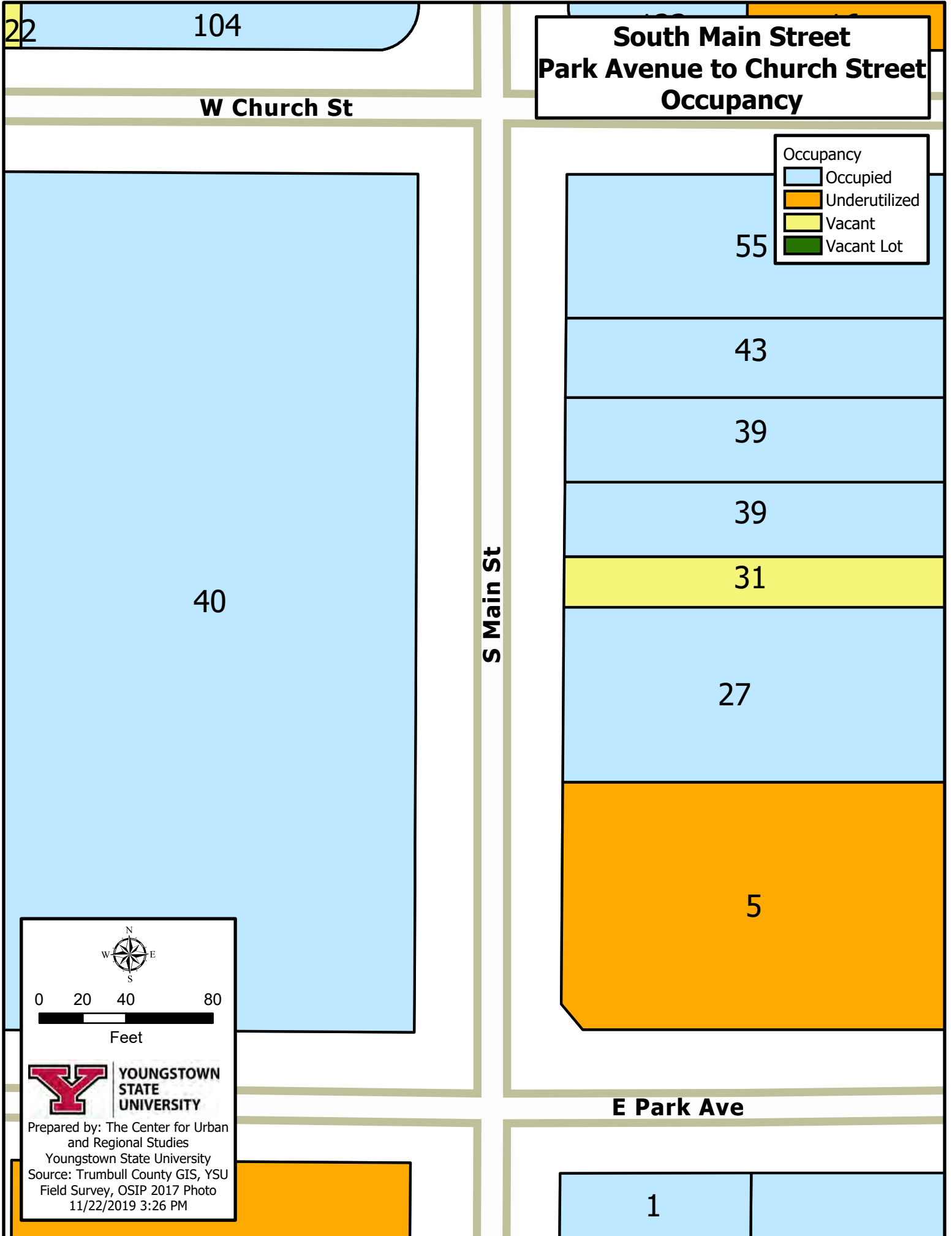
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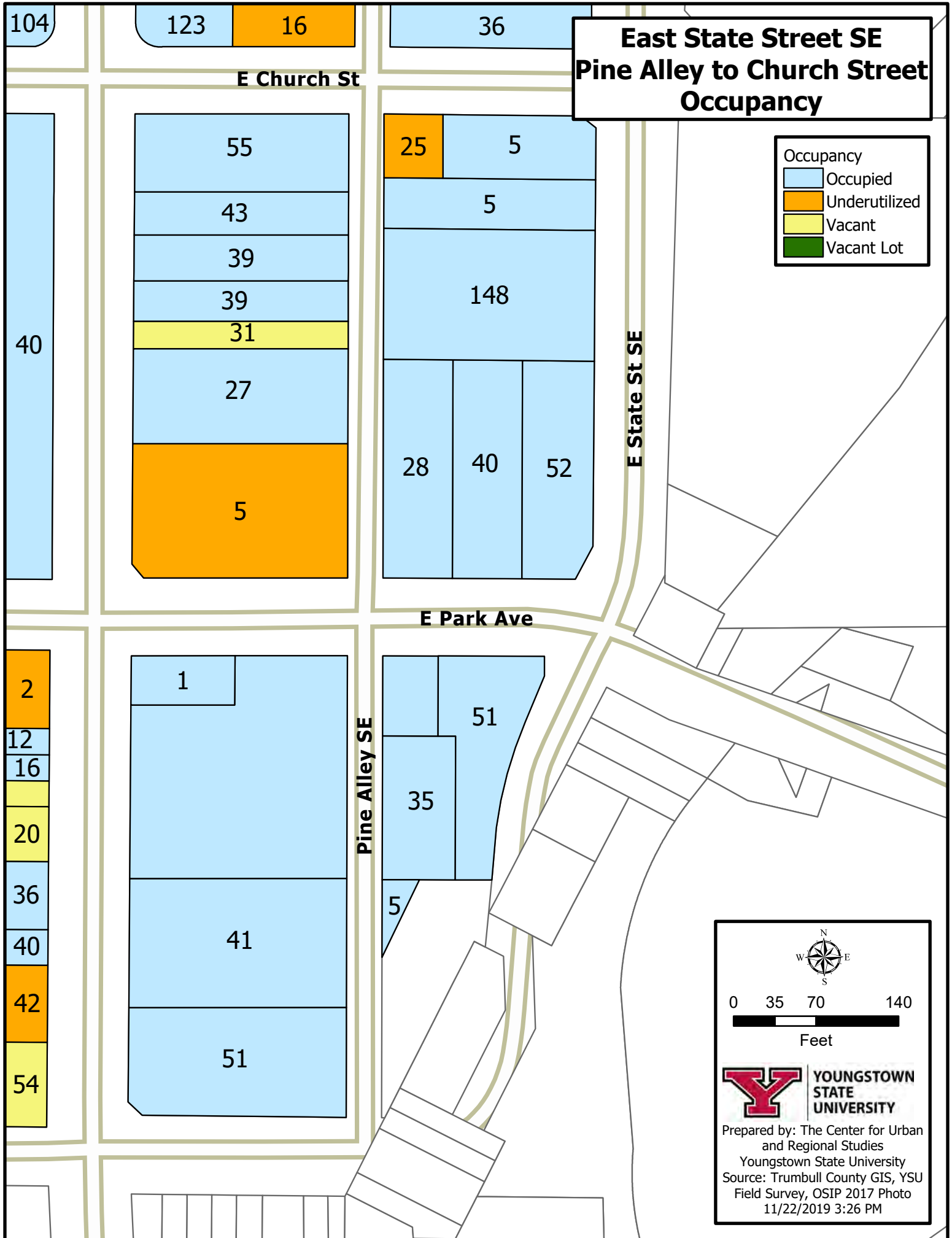
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0 20 40 80

Feet





East State Street SE Pine Alley to Church Street Occupancy

Occupancy

- Occupied
- Underutilized
- Vacant
- Vacant Lot

0 35 70 140
Feet

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INFRASTRUCTURE

- Sidewalk and curb repairs
- Poor placement of street signs overlapping crosswalk signs
- No gateway recognition for downtown
- Overgrown street trees
- Focus on infrastructure improvements for active transportation around the greenway
- Empty tree planters
- Traffic issues (noise, not designed for all users)
- Empty newspaper boxes
- Wooden benches city-wide are decaying
- Faded, unreadable signage along city streets

ORDINANCES

- Sign ordinance: window decals/signage—limit window decals/signs to 30% or less of front window; broken and abandoned signage should be taken down immediately; vacant buildings should not have old signage remaining on the property
- Dumpsters and charity drop boxes should be hidden from view
- Landscaping in public ROW and private property is overgrown, unattractive
- Broken lights (public and private) should be removed or fixed promptly

BUSINESS

- Vacancy
- Poor mix of desirable business types
- Storefront façade issues

