

Central Planning District

The Central Planning District is the heart and soul of the City and the region. It is here John Young landed and drafted the original plan for Youngstown, and the streets he laid out in 1796 still define the Downtown neighborhood. From this core, Youngstown spread out in all directions, and as it did, it built a true downtown that included some of America's early skyscrapers as the men that designed New York and Chicago also worked in Youngstown. This built environment in the core cannot be duplicated in a sprawl driven suburban economy and provides unique opportunities for redevelopment.

The Central Planning District encompasses five neighborhoods that encircle the Downtown neighborhood. These are the Arlington, Mahoning Commons, Riverbend, Smoky Hollow and YSU neighborhoods. The neighborhood names tell the story of the history and locational advantage of the Central District. Each has unique assets and liabilities, and each needs a neighborhood plan of its own beyond the Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan.

Location

The Central Planning District is unique among Youngstown's planning districts in that it is defined by the built and not the natural environment. The central freeway system borders the Central District. I-680 is the southwestern border, the East River Crossing defines the southeast and the Madison Avenue Expressway rings the north. In this case the major water courses, the Mahoning River, Crab Creek and Mill Creek, don't define the district, they run through it.

Neighborhoods

1. Arlington

The Arlington neighborhood grew as a strong working class area with strong Victorian influences. Large boarding houses and smaller single family residences shared a Victorian architectural style that was so prevalent that the neighborhood eventually was listed on the National Inventory of Historic Places as the Arlington Heights Historic District. Unfortunately designation on its own saves nothing and this asset slipped away as speculation, disinvestment and eventual University expansion led to the almost total removal of the historic structures that made this neighborhood unique. This is a neighborhood that needs its own plan to find its place among the planned neighborhoods that surround it.

2. Downtown

The Downtown is John Young's original plat. Originally a classic Western Reserve agricultural village, farming and Pastoralism were replaced by iron and steel. The floodplain grew mills, the river was cut off from the community, corporate headquarters, financial institutions and businesses grew vertically and the placid village became an industrial era shock city.

Like most of its American Industrial Belt shock city brethren, Youngstown struggled with deindustrialization. Downtown lost its mills, its corporate headquarters, commercial activity suburbanized and many financial institutions were absorbed by national conglomerates. It was not alone in its decline, but slower than most to give up on its industrial past and use its remaining assets to build a new economy.

Downtown managed to hold onto most of its core built environment. It managed to maintain its financial, governmental and cultural functions. And for the first time since the age of iron and steel, it began to realize that the river was an asset.



Many groups are doing many positive things as Downtown begins to revitalize. The Convocation Center is being built, Federal Street is reopened and people are investing their own money in redevelopment projects. With all this activity there is still a lack of cohesiveness. The Downtown needs its own comprehensive plan to capitalize on the energy that is enabling its rebirth.

3. Mahoning Commons

The Mahoning Commons neighborhood grew up on the relatively narrow flood plain on the south side of the Mahoning River. This neighborhood historically was a transportation and small industrial area with residential scattered throughout. It is the home of the City's original water works, the historic B&O railroad station and the Western Reserve Transit Authority, located on the site of its predecessor, the Youngstown Transit Company.

Mahoning Commons was the site of Youngstown's major flour processing entity, Baldwin's Mill. Some of the mills foundation works and the waterfall that provided power to the mill still exist. There are several small industries and supply companies in the Commons as well as the old Isaly Dairy Company processing plant, now a U-Haul rental and storage facility, and the Ward Baking Company building, now home to small businesses and artist lofts.

Mahoning Commons has an active business association and a development plan has been discussed on several occasions but never formally pursued. This is another Central District neighborhood with unique assets that would benefit greatly with a neighborhood comprehensive plan.



4. Riverbend

Riverbend is an industrial district that straddles the Central and North Side Planning Districts. Once the home of extremely poor and blighted housing stock (slums) mixed in with heavy and light industry, this district was home to one of Youngstown's first Urban Renewal projects.

The Crescent Street Industrial Park (aka the Riverbend Industrial Park) was created in this cleared area as was built coincidentally with the Madison Avenue Expressway. The park, built in the 1960s and 1970s would qualify as green industry. The adjacent foundries, fire works factories and metal fabricators would not.

5. Smoky Hollow

Smoky Hollow has a long history as an entry point neighborhood for immigrants coming to work in the mills and factories along Crab Creek Downtown. First Irish and the Italian, this neighborhood remained viable through the 1960s when it fell to suburban sprawl, University expansion and the real estate disinvestment and speculation that traditionally take place around the edges of urban universities.

Most of the neighborhood disappeared with the exception of some long time residents and the MVR, a popular local bar/restaurant. Smoky Hollow then became the seminal example in Youngstown of how to organize and create a neighborhood comprehensive planning process.

Institutions along Wick Avenue, the Hollow's western boundary, businesses along Andrews Avenue, the Hollow's eastern boundary and business and residents within the Hollow formed Wick Neighbors, obtained a non-profit community development corporation status and created an accepted neighborhood plan.

6. YSU

Youngstown State University is one of the co-conveners of the Youngstown 2010 planning process. The reason for the University's interest in the City is that it is simultaneously undertaking the University Centennial Master Planning process.

Since YSU is adjacent to Downtown, Smoky Hollow, Arlington and the Wick Park neighborhoods, it is essential that Youngstown 2010 and the YSU Centennial Master Plan blend together seamlessly. YSU staff participated as members of Youngstown 2010 planning team, and city staff was on the YSU Centennial Plan executive committee.

This unprecedented level of City/University cooperation yielded numerous collaboration opportunities between the entities not only around the outside edges of the traditional campus core and continuing through the Downtown area toward the river.

Conditions

Population

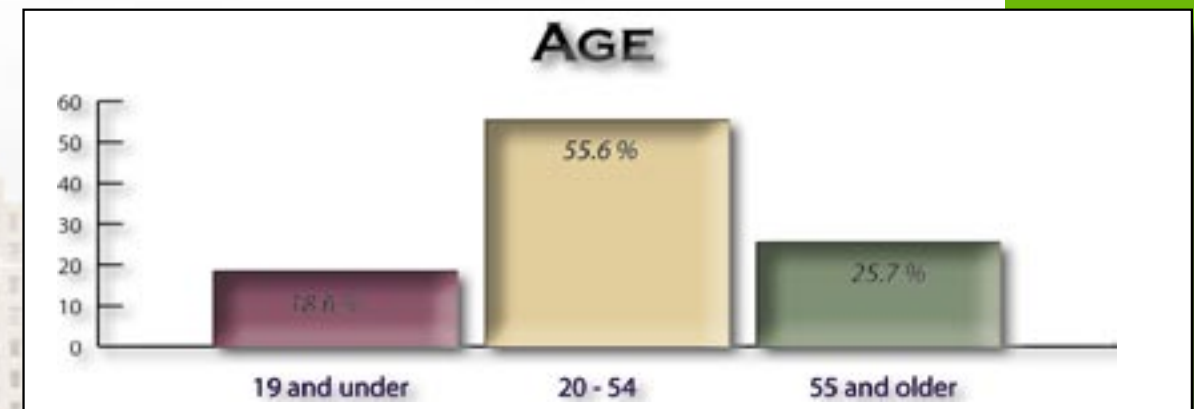
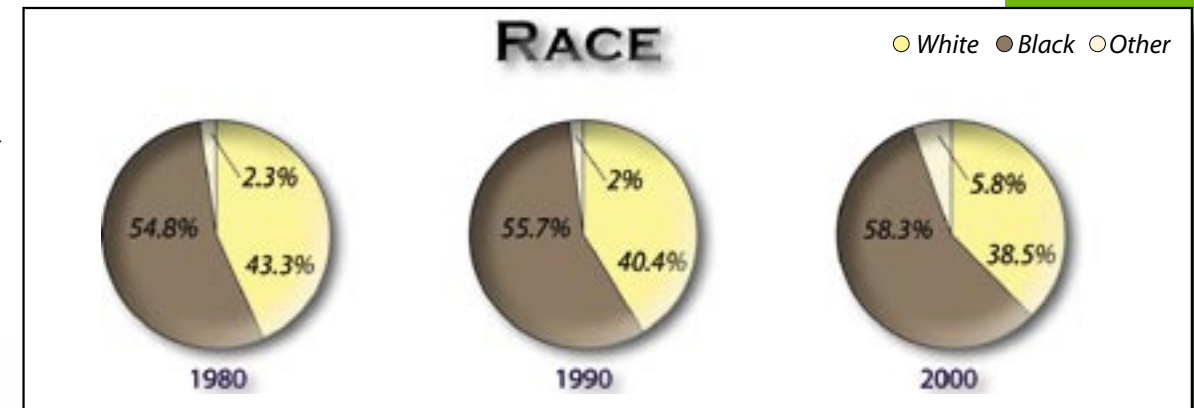
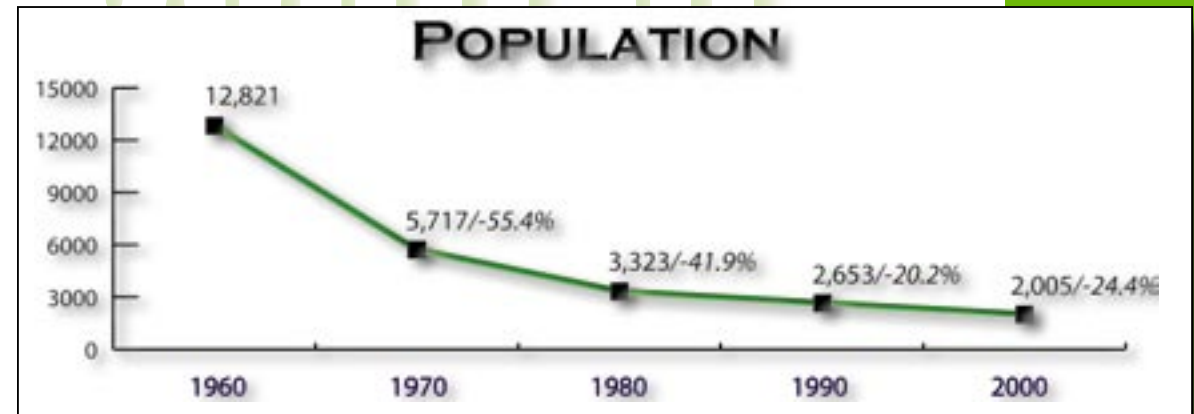
The Central area of the City of Youngstown is the least densely populated area of the City. It has experienced an average of 35.5% population decline every ten years for the past 40 years and lost over six times its total population.

Race

The racial make up the Central City has remained relatively unchanged over time compared to the rest of the City. Black population has historically made up the majority of the population in the Central District, the City's oldest neighborhood.

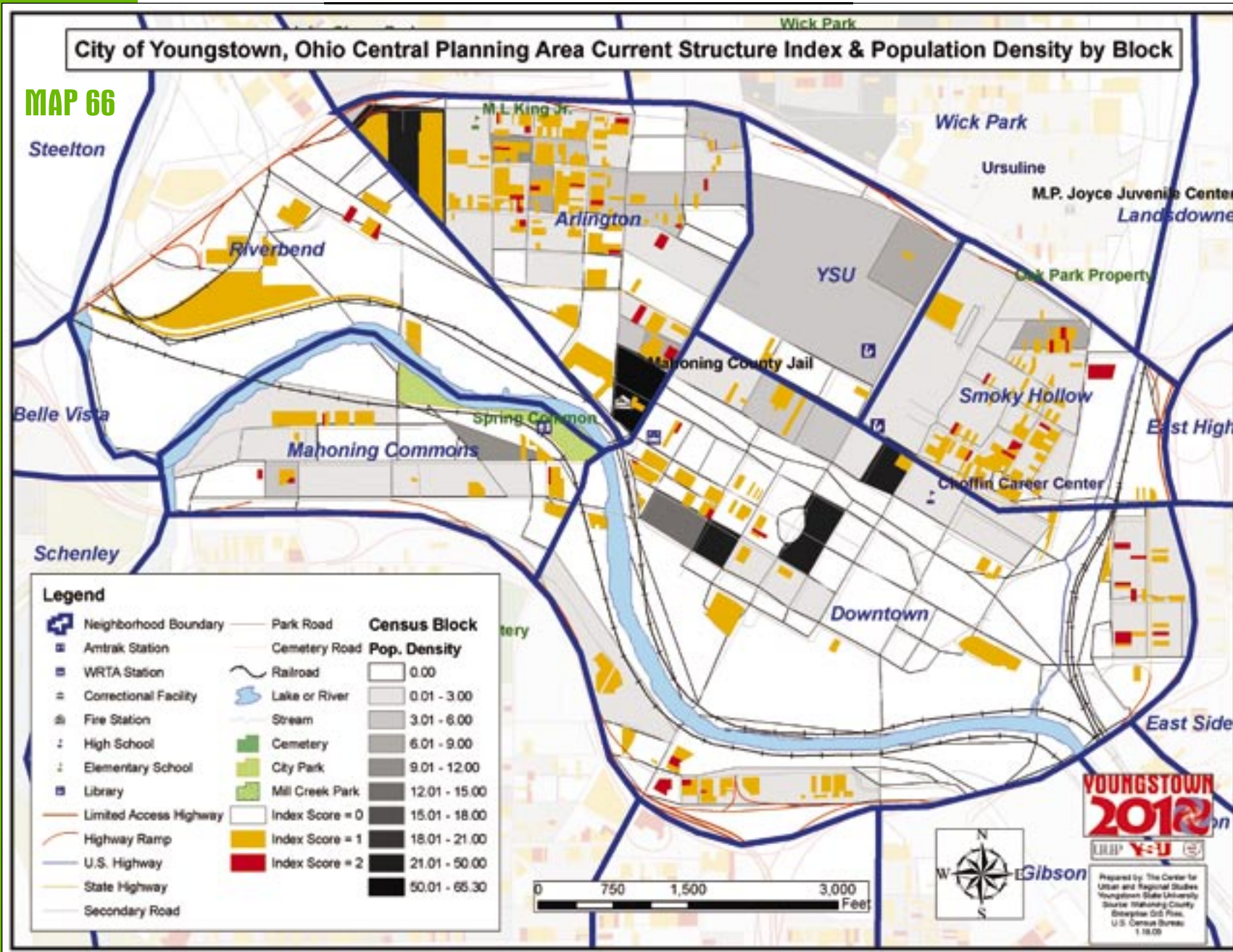
Age

The majority of the population of the Central District is between 20 and 54 years old. The smallest segment of the population is 19 and under.



Housing, Vacant and Abandoned Properties

MAP 66



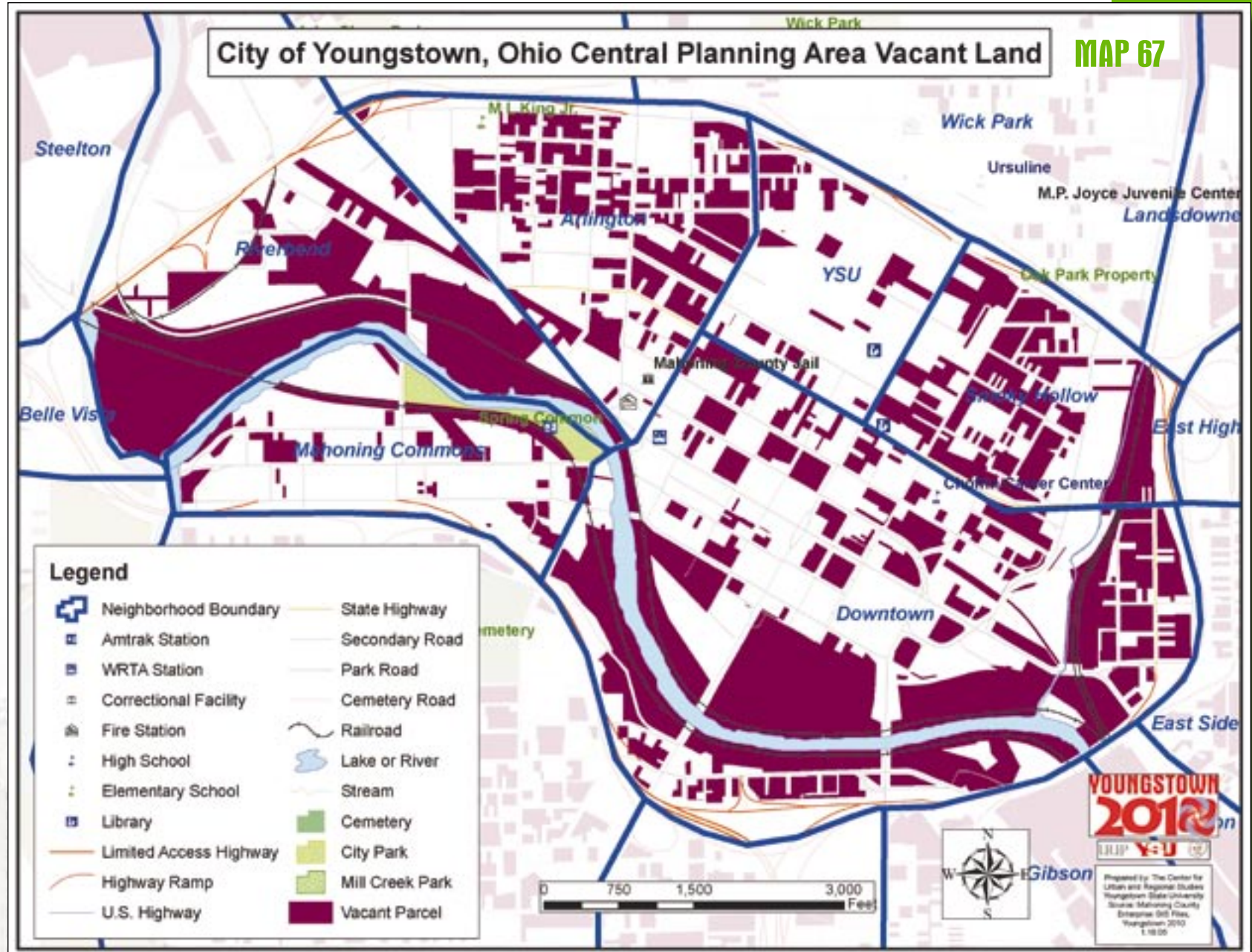
Chapter 4 chronicles what has been left behind by suburban flight and deindustrialization. Housing has been particularly impacted, as housing stock that once held in excess of 170,000 people now contains only 82,000 (see section 4.4 Housing). Excess housing is both a liability to existing neighborhoods and an opportunity to find alternative uses for surplus residential land.

Over time many units have been removed from the City's housing stock, but removal has lagged behind the rate of disinvestment and abandonment. Youngstown has been left with nearly 3,500 housing units in excess of what the current population can support. This agglomeration of economically nonviable housing induces further blight and abandonment. Patterns of blight and disinvestment are not geographically uniform.

Neighborhoods have been impacted dramatically differently. The Central District (see Map 66) is unique in many respects. It does not contain much traditional housing, and what little is left in the Arlington Heights and Smoky Hollow neighborhoods is generally blighted. Blight is also widespread on the older structures of Federal Streets West End. The Downtown neighborhood area between Crab Creek and the East River Crossing also demonstrates some serious blighting problems.

PLANNING

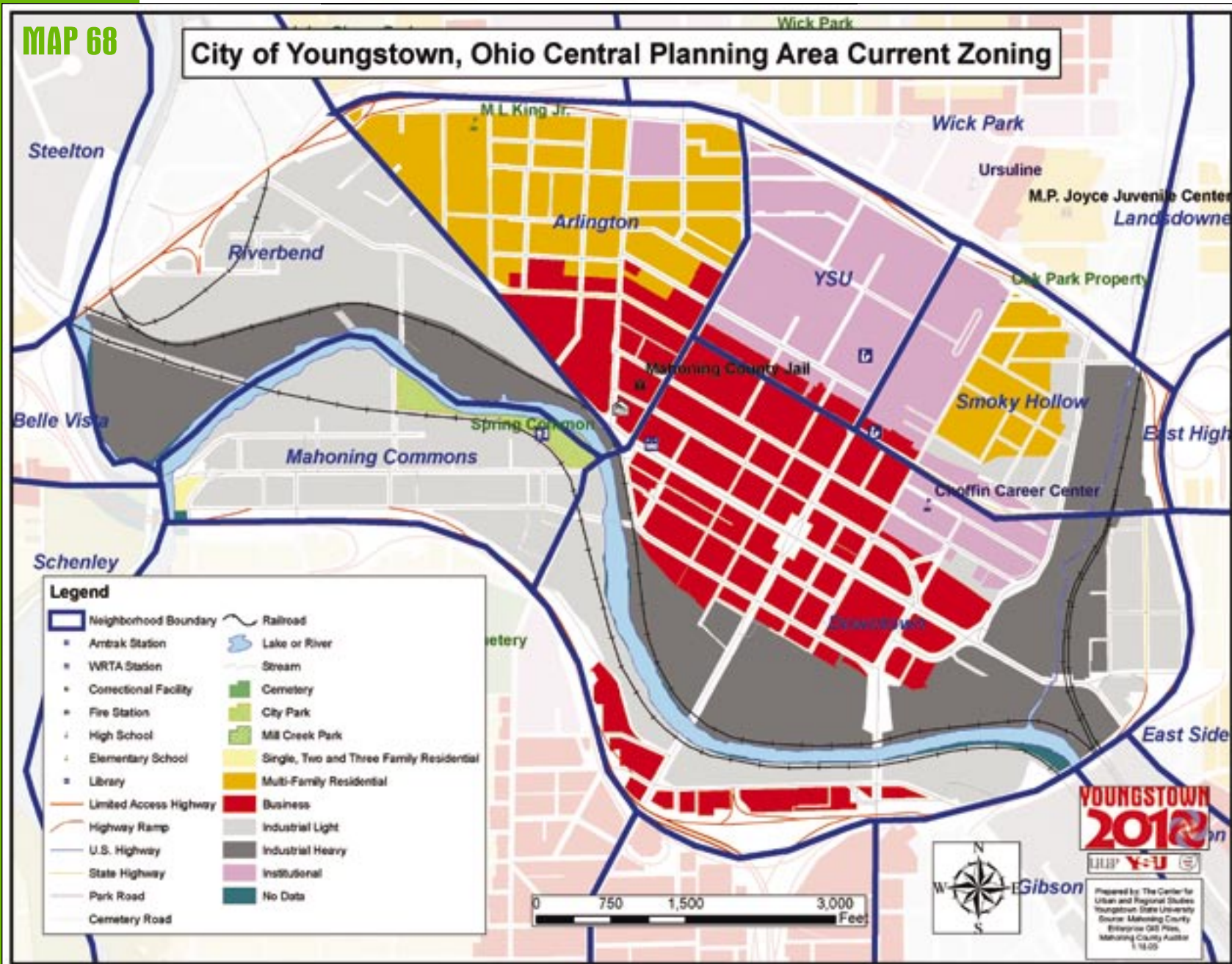
There is an abundance of vacant land in the Central District (see Map 67) thanks to the demise of the steel industry. Much of the Downtown brownfield land is being incorporated into the Convocation Center project. The remainder of the brownfield and other open space in the district leaves room for greenspace, commercial and residential developments that can take advantage of the compact core aesthetics.



Current Land Use Plan

The current zoning map of the Central Planning District (see Map 68) still demonstrates the sensibilities of the 1951 and 1974 plans. The river was set aside for industry that in many cases has been gone since the 1960s. The core of Downtown and the area surrounding the south landing of the Market Street Bridge were zoned commercial. Riverbend was properly zoned industrial. Arlington was zoned for a mixture of commercial, dense residential and institutional uses. Smoky Hollow was a mix of dense residential, institutional, light and heavy industry and commercial. The YSU neighborhood was then and is now institutional.

The 1951 and 1974 plans were well aware of the special characteristics of the Central Planning District, and during their time period, their assumptions and plans were logical. Throughout the City, but especially in this core area, new times require new ideas and new plans.



CENTRAL

Assets and Resources

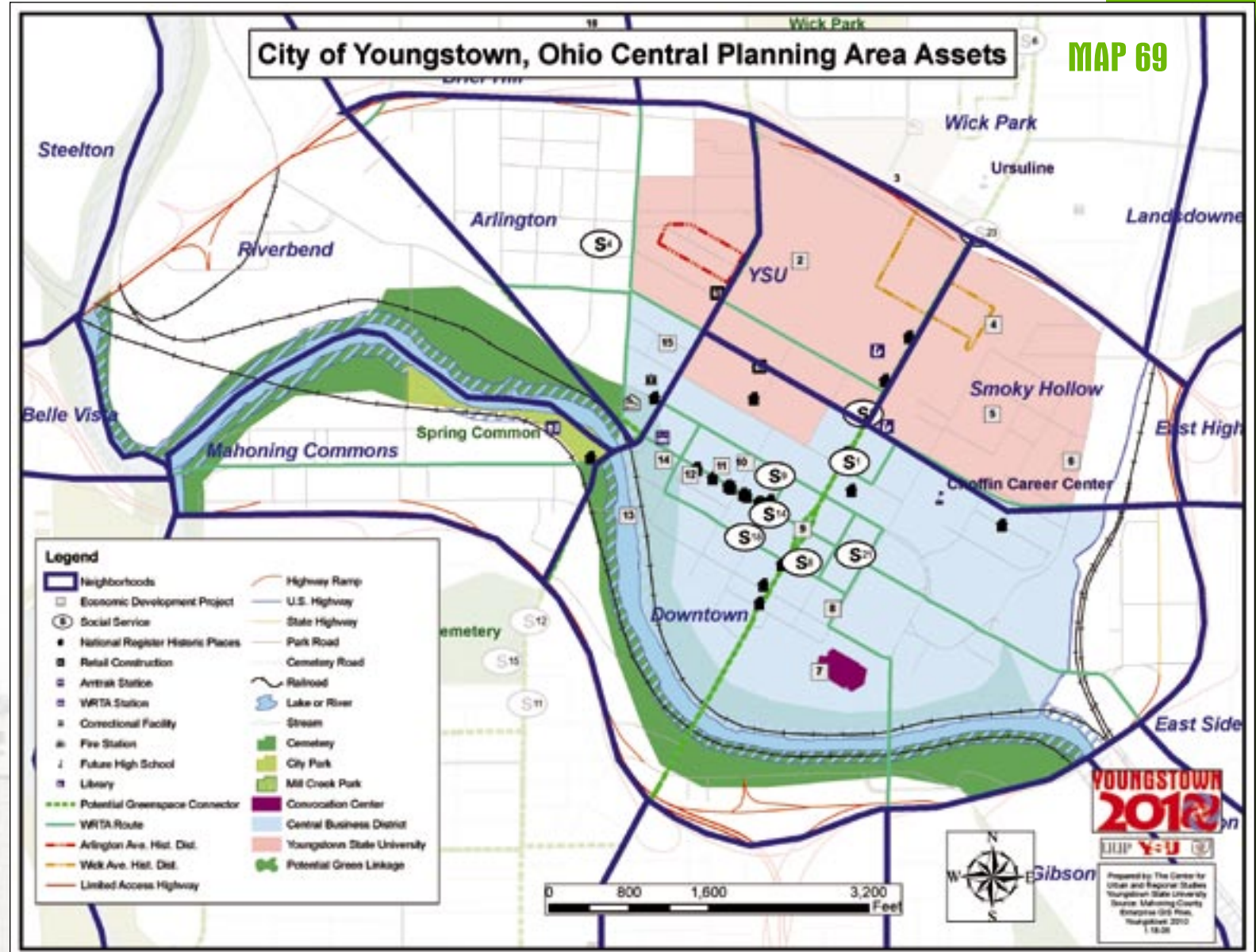
The Central Planning District has a plethora of existing assets and resources (see Map 69). The buildings surrounding the historic square area are irreplaceable, and their mixed use value is starting to be realized. The 'main street' ambiance of Federal Street, Market Street and Wick Avenue are beginning to attract new investors. The compactness and walkability of the whole central core are not available in suburban areas. All the previous assets combine to give a big city feeling to a mid-sized Ohio city.

A big city character is not the end of Central Planning District assets. The Mahoning River, Mill Creek and Crab Creek are primary water courses that quenched the heat of the shock city phase of development and are now available to take their place in the cleaner and greener stage of Youngstown's future. The water courses, long under the control of the industrial barons, are returning to public domain.

The Central District also contains a number of key governmental facilities. There are two new Federal Court Houses downtown. The State of Ohio has located many of its regional offices and services in the new George Voinovich State Office Building. The Seventh District Court of Appeals is constructing a new court house on West Federal Street, across from the Voinovich Building.

Youngstown is the Mahoning County Seat and the Mahoning County Court House and Administration Building are located on Market Street between Front and Boardman. The Mahoning County Justice Center is located on Fifth Avenue, and the County Misdemeanor Jail is located across Fifth fronting on Commerce Street.

The City of Youngstown City Hall is on the Corner of South Phelps and West Boardman. City Hall houses most City departments, the Police Station and Municipal Court. The Water Department is housed in new offices in the renovated Water Works structure on West Avenue. The Fire Department is headquartered at Station #1 on West Federal between Belmont and Fifth. The Youngstown City School District is headquartered in the historic Rayen School at Wick and Rayen Avenue.



In addition to various government assets there are numerous artistic resources in the Central District. Powers Auditorium, the home of the Youngstown Symphony Society, is the restored original Warner Brothers Theater and a State Historical landmark. The new hall being constructed adjacent to Powers in conjunction with YSU will be the new recital home of the Dana School of Music. The YSU SMARTS program (Students Motivated by the Arts) is also located in Powers Auditorium.

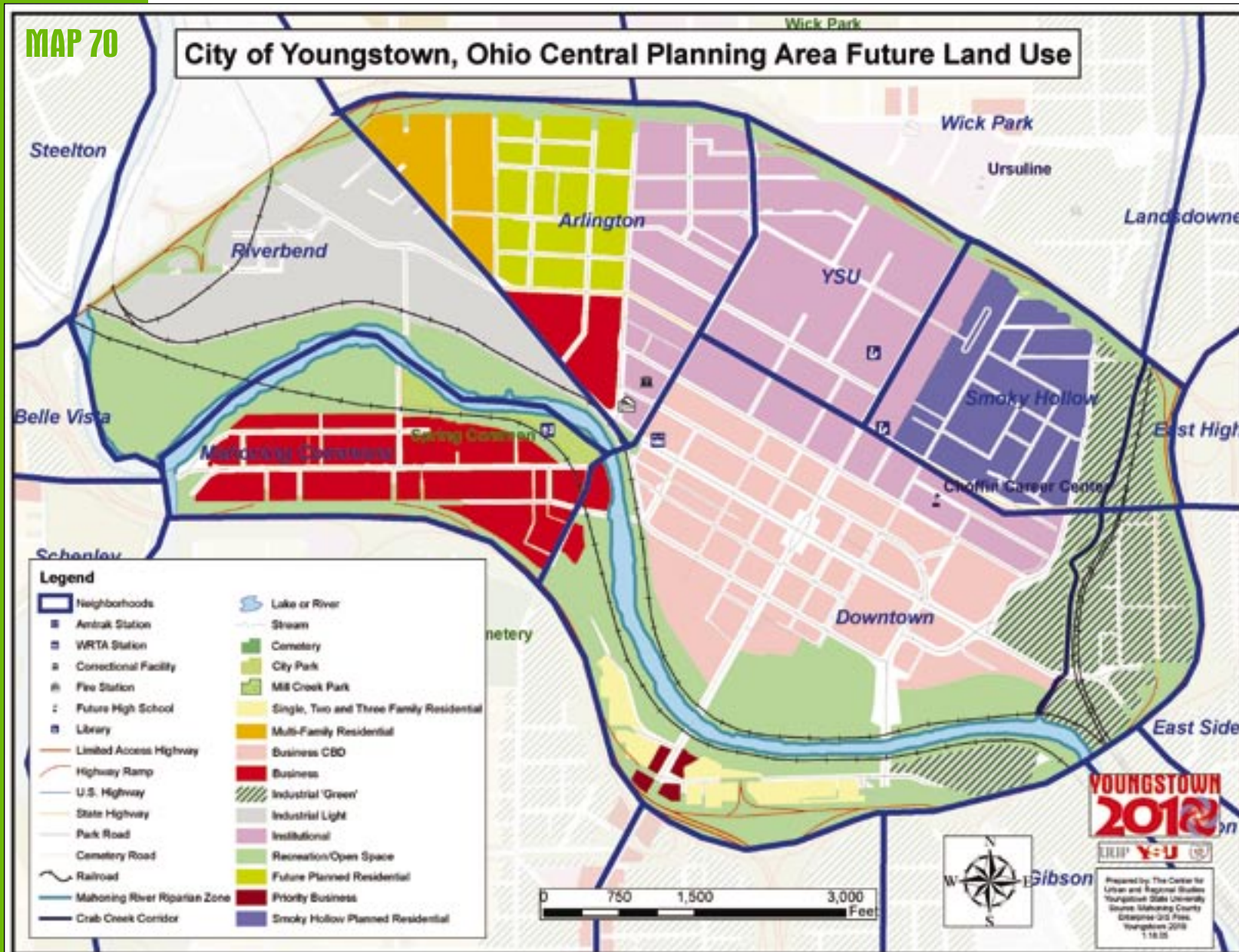
The Paramount Theater, long vacant but still structurally sound, has an active preservation society attempting to bring it out of mothballs. The Oakland Theater group and the Ballet Western Reserve are located in the Morley Center for the Performing Arts. Various local artists maintain loft studios and storefront sales locations throughout the Central District.

The YMCA offers a variety of fitness and wellness activities at its downtown branch on Champion Street and the YWCA offer various programs from its historic building on Rayen Avenue. There are numerous historic ethnic churches dispersed in the Central District.

The Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan

The Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan strives to resolve the land use and planning issues caused by deindustrialization in the Central Planning District. All of the land use themes presented at the plan unveiling, Green Network, Competitive Industrial Districts, Viable Neighborhoods and Vibrant Core are contained in the Central District.

The Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan recognizes the land use changes that have taken place since the 1951 and 1974 plans and brings the Central District into the cleaner and greener new reality (see Map 70). The Mahoning River is removed from the heavy industry of the past and treated as a community asset. There are new neighborhoods planned for vibrancy. The plan takes advantage of the compact core.



CENTRAL

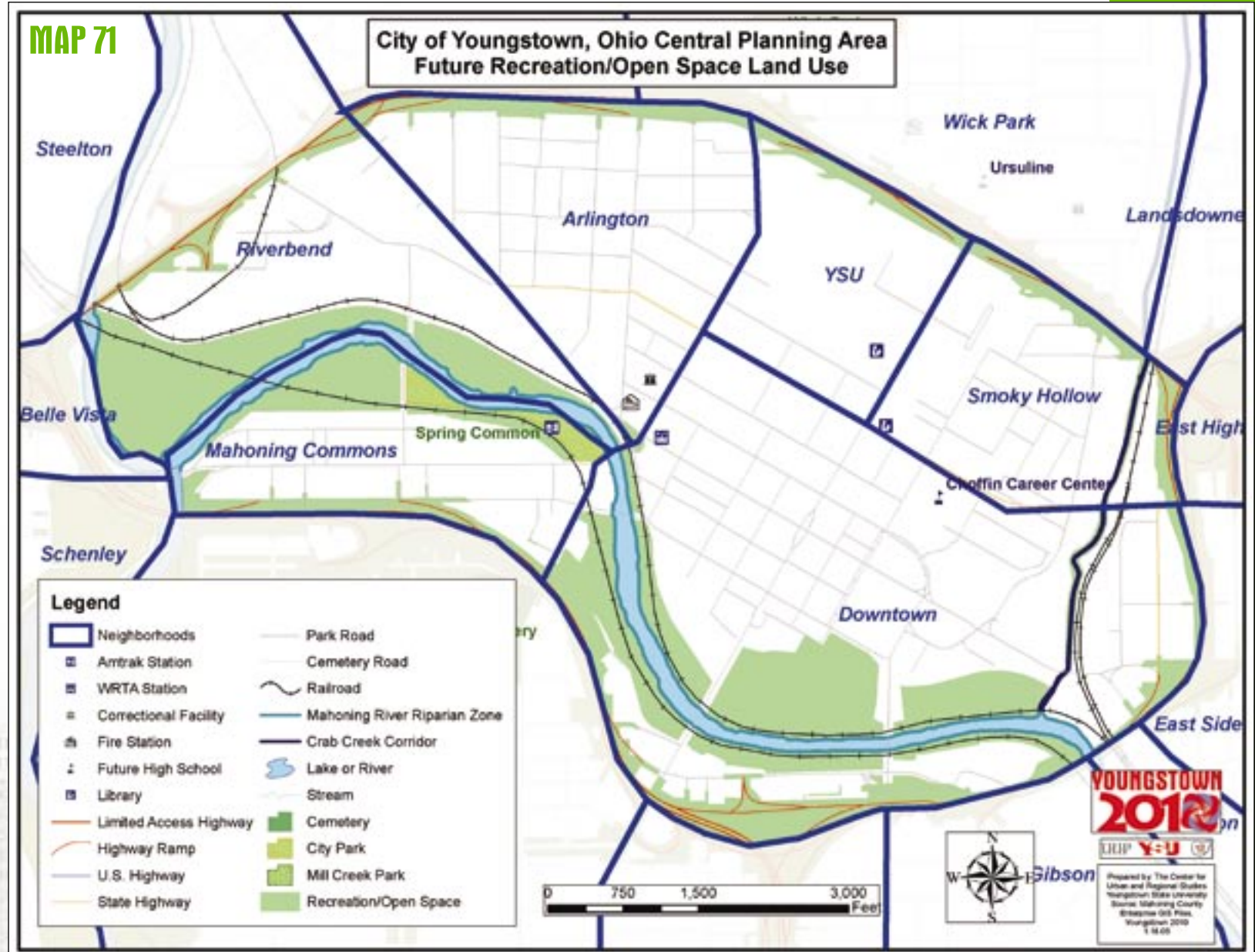
Recreation and Open Space

The establishment and extension of recreation and open space is crucial to the cleaning and greening of the Central District, and the Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan recognizes this (see Map 71).

The entire length of the Mahoning River inside the Central District is out of heavy industrial designation and put into recreation and open space. This will allow for land between the new convocation center and the river to be utilized for recreational purposes. Access will be available to the river from downtown for the first time in over 100 years. After the Mahoning River restoration project is complete, a full range of water-based activities will be available to regional residents.

The plan also calls for the cleaning and greening of the various freeway right-of-ways that define the Central District. The Ohio Department of Transportation in cooperation with the City and YSU is undertaking a major renovation and cleanup project along the Madison Avenue Expressway. It is essential that similar upgrades be carried out not only along the Central District boundaries, but along all freeway right-of-ways in the City.

The Mill Creek Metropolitan Park District, in cooperation with the City and YSU has begun the process of obtaining funds to link the Park with the City's Spring Common Park at the B&O Station as part of the creation of a regional green network. The link will continue as YSU seeks bike/hike clearance to allow access from its new Andrews Wellness Center to the B&O Station via Fifth Avenue.



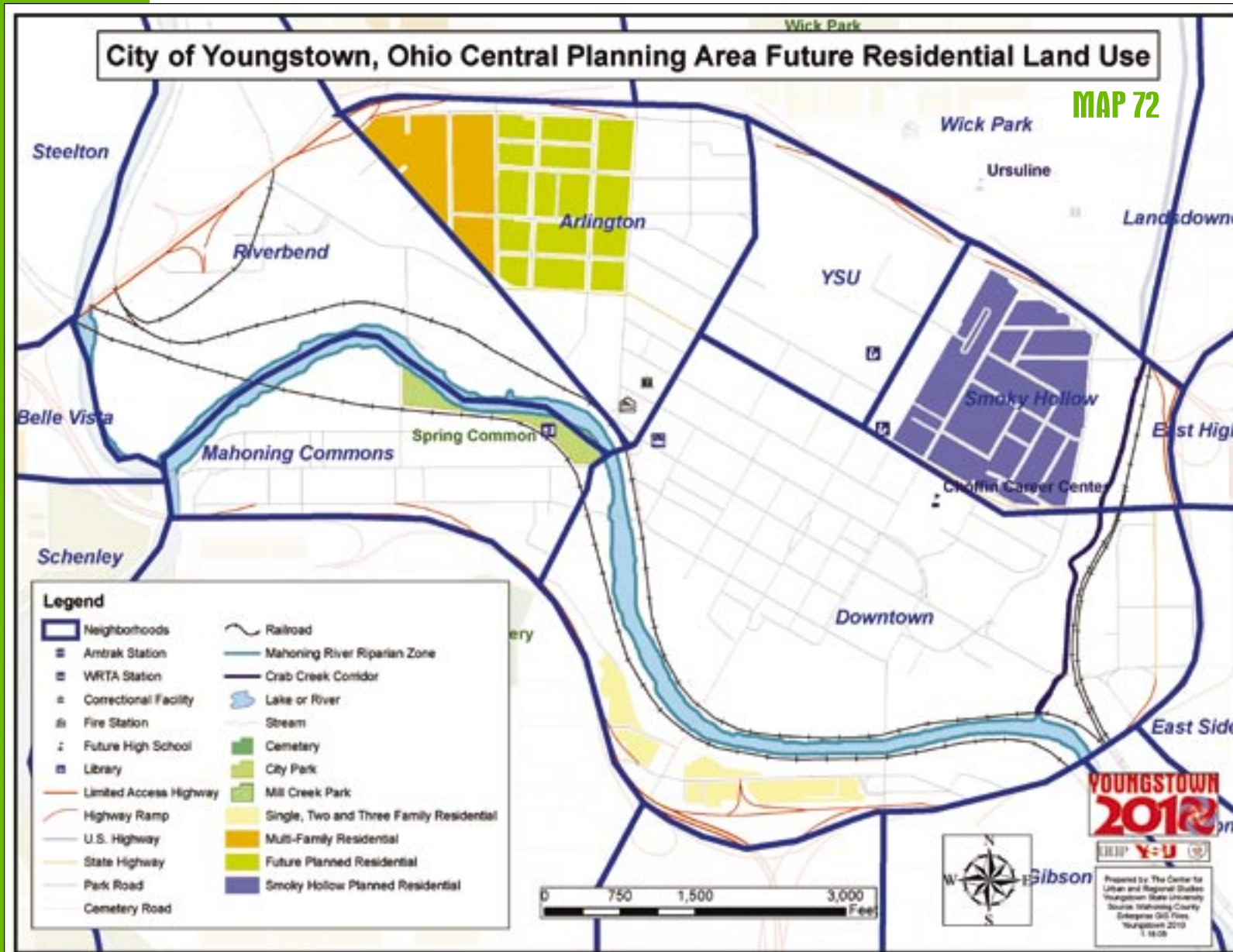
Central

Residential

Residential inside the Central Planning District comes in the form of two planned residential districts and a new scenic view residential area overlooking downtown (see Map 72). The area east and west of the south landing of the Market Street Bridge set back off of a new priority business cluster on property that is either empty space or requires extensive demolition is now residential. As this space is cleared, taking advantage of the ridge will offer an opportunity for residences with a spectacular view of the new convocation center and the entire downtown.

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The Arlington neighborhood is currently a neighborhood without direction and is in need of an approved development plan to determine its future. It is classified as residential, but as of now that is at best alternative. At the western edge of the Arlington neighborhood are the remnants of the YMHA Westlake Apartments. This area is covered under the Hope VI Plan, which was covered on the North Side.

Other residential in the Central District will be above the ground floor in the Downtown and Mahoning Commons District. The upper levels of the Downtown commercial high rises are screaming for adaptive reuse, and residential is a logical fit. There is some residential in existence in Mahoning Commons, but future development will probably be loft oriented. Here again, overlay zoning will allow an approved mixed use plan to be laid in the Commons.

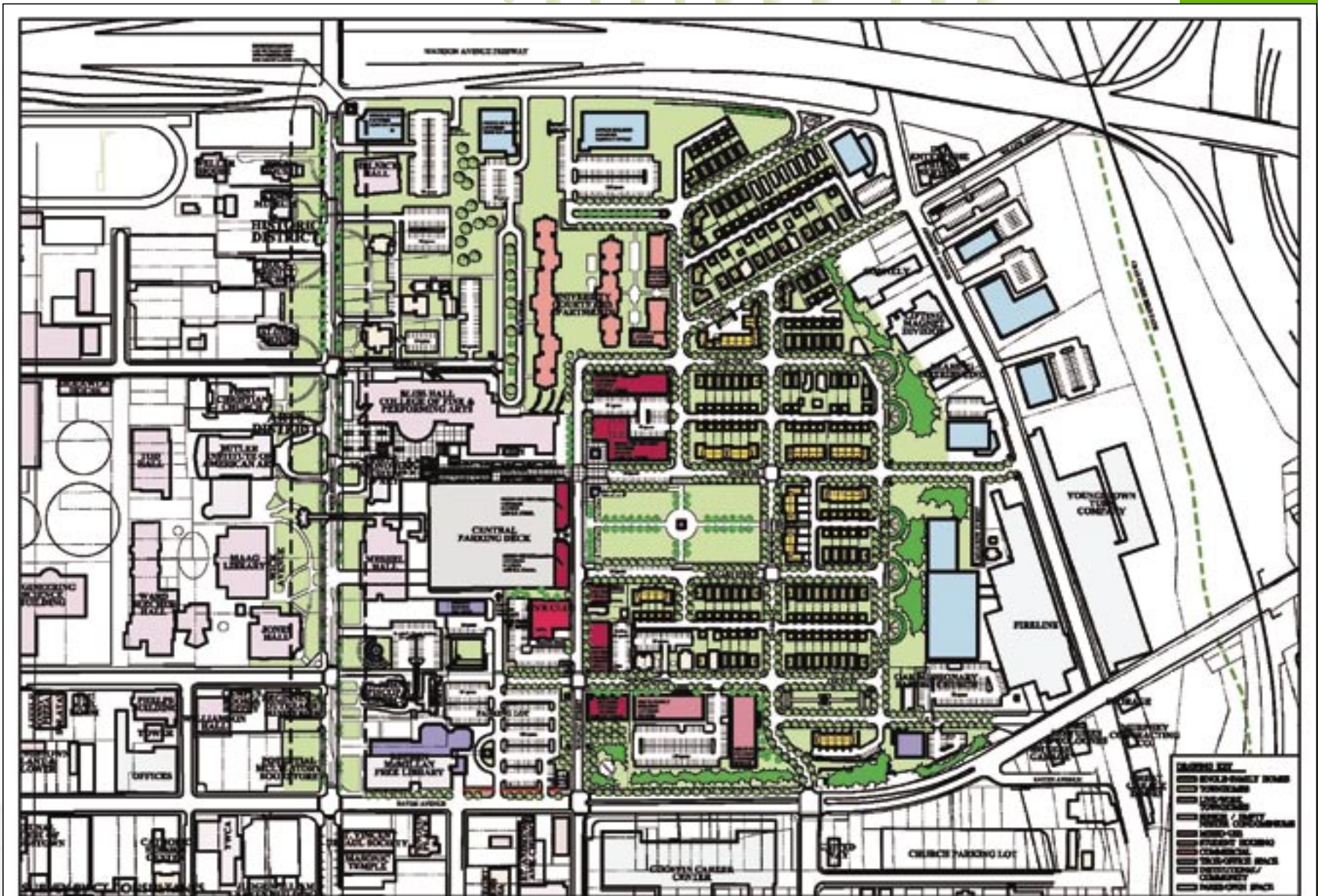


FIGURE 4

WICK DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT PLAN
CONCEPT SITE PLAN



WICK NEIGHBORS, INC.
 CITY ARCHITECTURE

Institutional

Institutional use in the Central Planning District is expanded to reflect the 21st Century reality (see Map 73). It contains the educational, governmental and ecclesiastical expanses outside of the historic central business district. Institutional uses exist and are permitted in the central business district.

The entire YSU neighborhood is institutional and the YSU Centennial Master Plan fills the neighborhood and surrounding area (see Figure 5). The YSU properties, mental health facilities and governmental land uses at the eastern edge of the Arlington neighborhood are designated institutional. Properties of YSU, the Diocese of Youngstown, YWCA, The Board of Education and various social service and church agencies between Rayen and Wood are all classified institutional. The same designation covers the Public Library, St. John's Episcopal Church and the YSU structures along the east side of Wick Avenue.

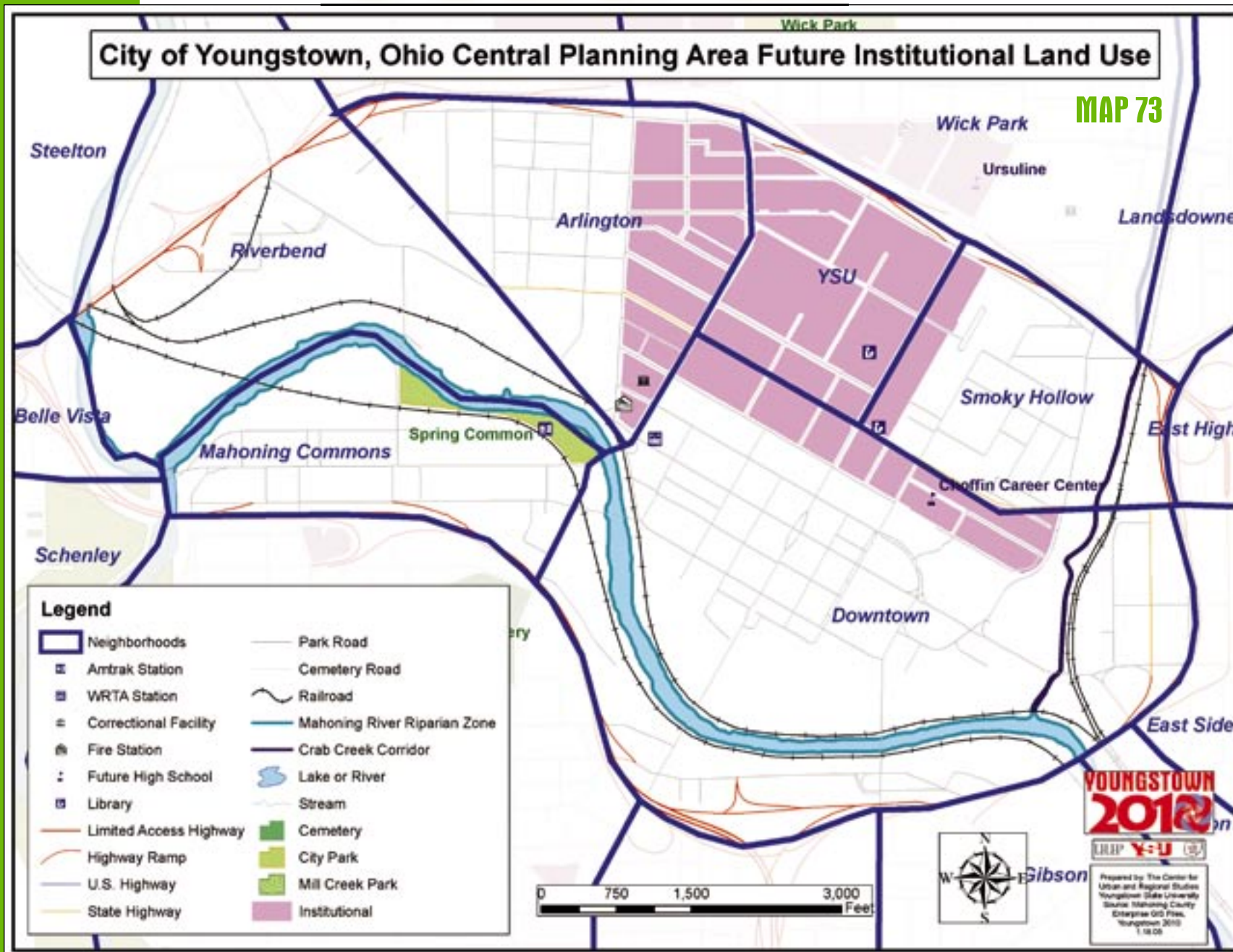
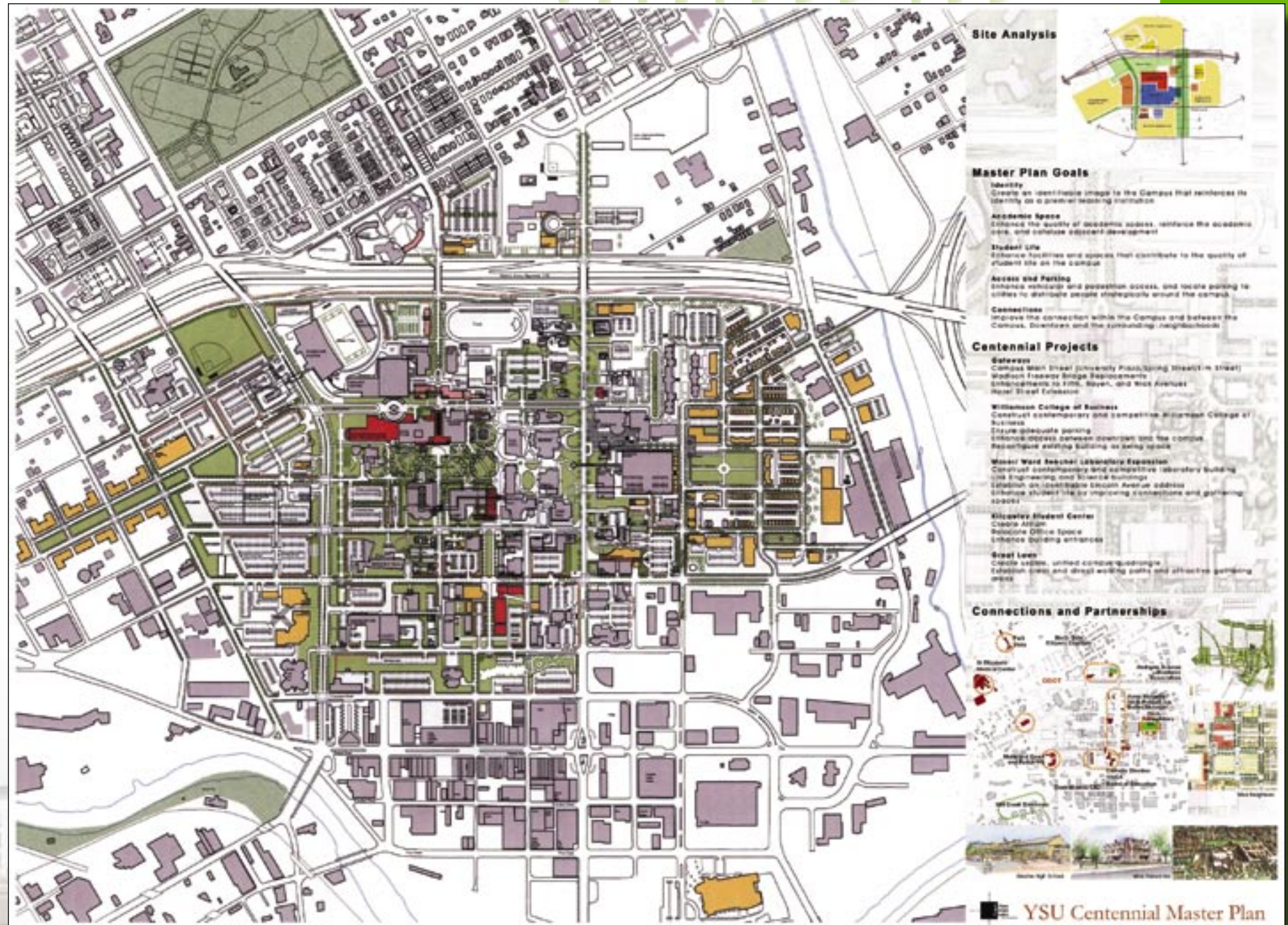


FIGURE 5

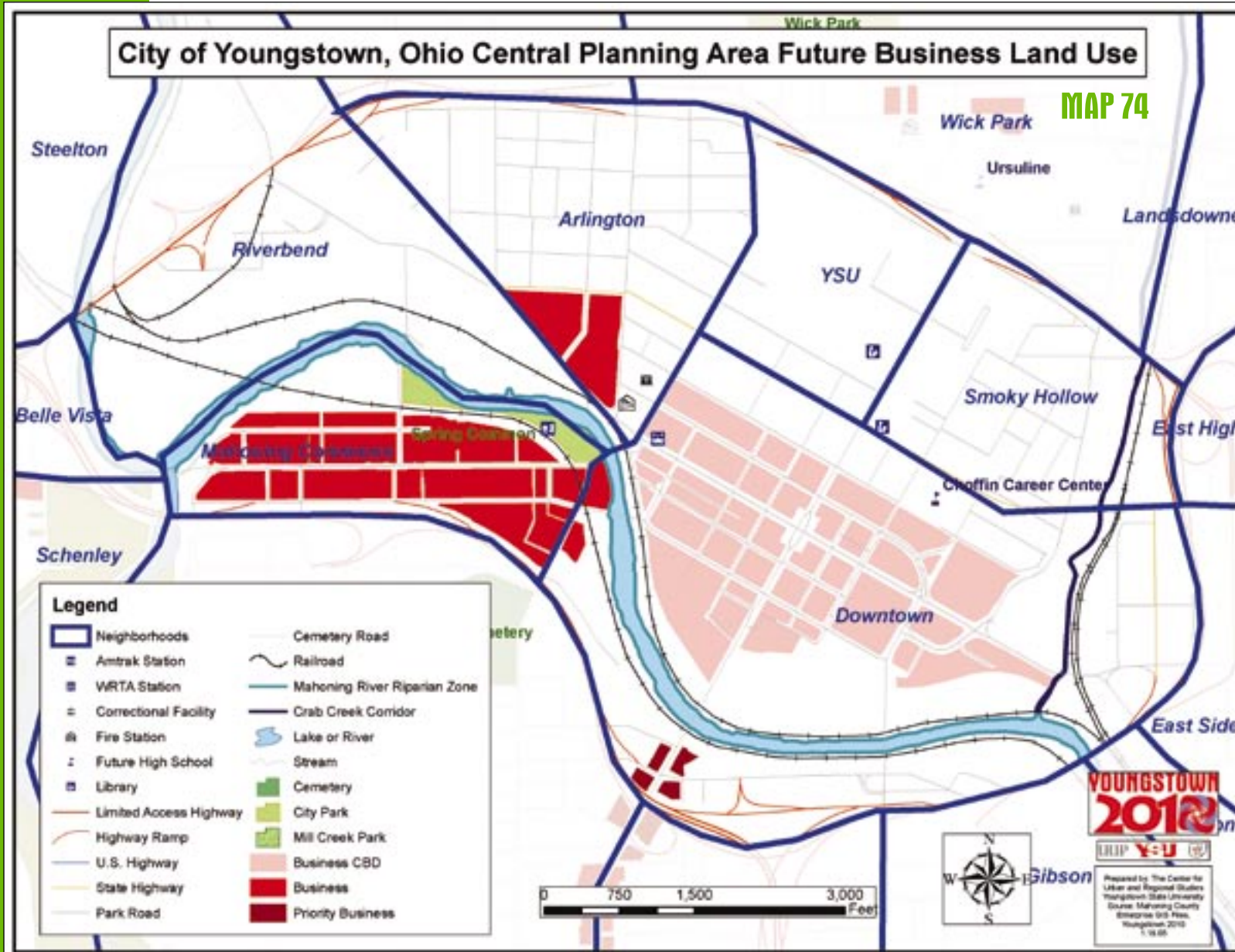


Commercial

Commercial has always been a major function and will still be under the Youngstown 2010 Citywide Plan (see Map 74). The Central Business District (CBD) retains that classification and other areas are shifted in and out of commercial use. The CBD classification allows a myriad of mixed uses, but first floors are generally required to be commercial.

CBD classification is also for the convocation center project (see Figure 6). The construction of the Seventh District Court of Appeals (see Figure 7), technically institutional, is permitted in the CBD district.

The Mahoning Commons neighborhood is taken out of light industrial and designated for commercial use. Existing light industrial can continue under the new classification, but the long range use will be predominantly commercial, capitalizing on the large daily traffic flow in and out of Downtown along Mahoning Avenue. The district along Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard across from B.J. Allen/Phantom Fireworks remains commercial as the section to its immediate east shifts to institutional.

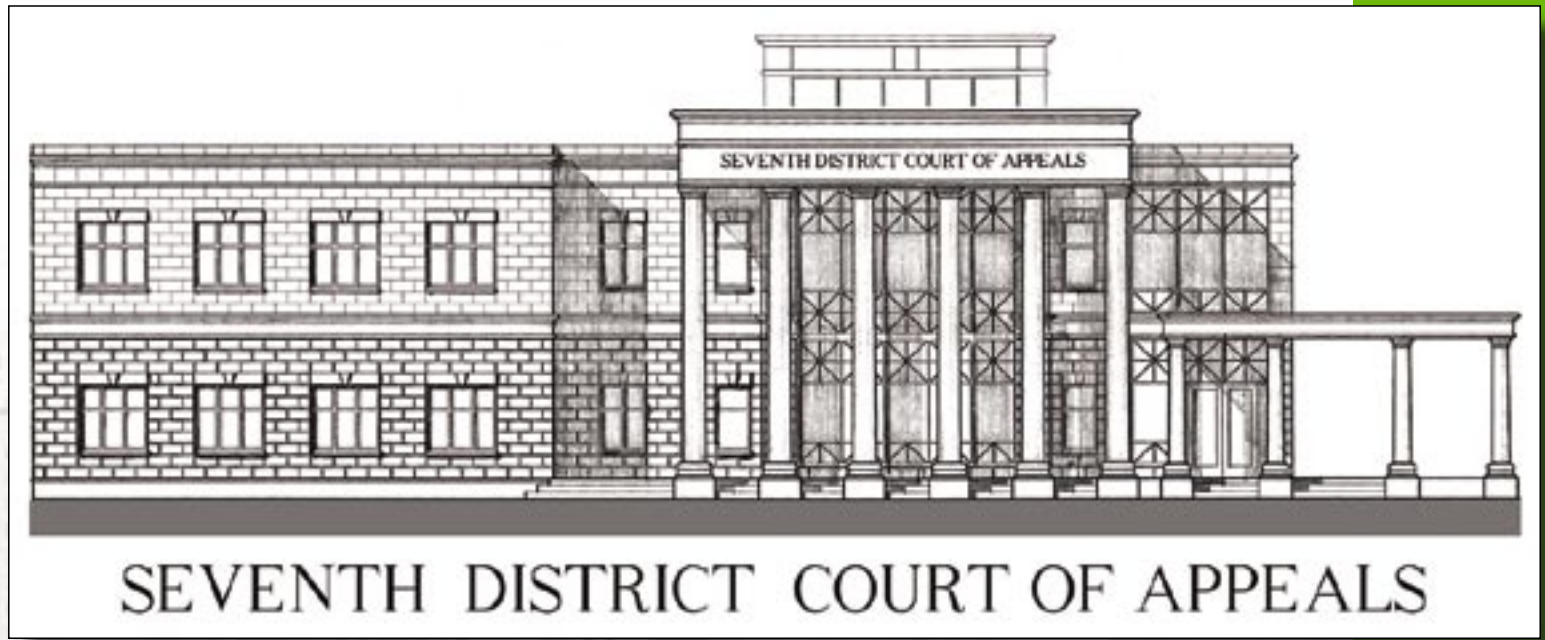


Central

FIGURE 6



FIGURE 7



Industrial

The most notable change in industrial use in the Central Planning District is that along the Mahoning River, it no longer exists (see Map 75). Green space in the form of recreation and open space along the river leverage the investments of the convocation center and the reopening of Federal Street, and enhances the sustainability of the entire Central District.

Any city with as rich an industrial heritage as Youngstown will always be home to viable industry. While industrial use has been removed from the river, it is active in the Central District. The Riverbend district, even with its newer greener sections remains classified as light industrial in deference to the industries located there that have survived deindustrialization.

The Crab Creek corridor has been designated as industrial green. Currently, there are industries that stretch the classification to its limit and beyond, but a cleaned and dredged Mahoning River requires clean and green tributaries. The greening of the corridor is essential for Mahoning River sustainability and for attracting cleaner and greener industries into the corridor.

