

RETAIL ACTIVITY in NYC:

COVID Recovery Across
24 Neighborhoods



Overview

As many businesses along local retail corridors began to reopen during the phased NY Forward program following shelter-in-place rules, the Department of City Planning conducted surveys of neighborhood retail corridors across the five boroughs.

The surveys documented the status of businesses in ground floor storefronts during July 2020, including whether they were open, closed, or vacant, and captured modifications that are occurring to safely operate during COVID-19.

As economic recovery progresses over the coming months, future surveys along the same corridors will help monitor business recovery and guide policy interventions.



Astoria, Queens



New Dorp Lane, Staten Island

Building on Past Research

In 2019, the Department of City Planning released a report analyzing retail trends and storefront vacancy rates in NYC.

The storefront vacancy study used data from the company Live XYZ to assess retail activity across 24 corridors, providing a rich dataset of pre-COVID conditions across the city.

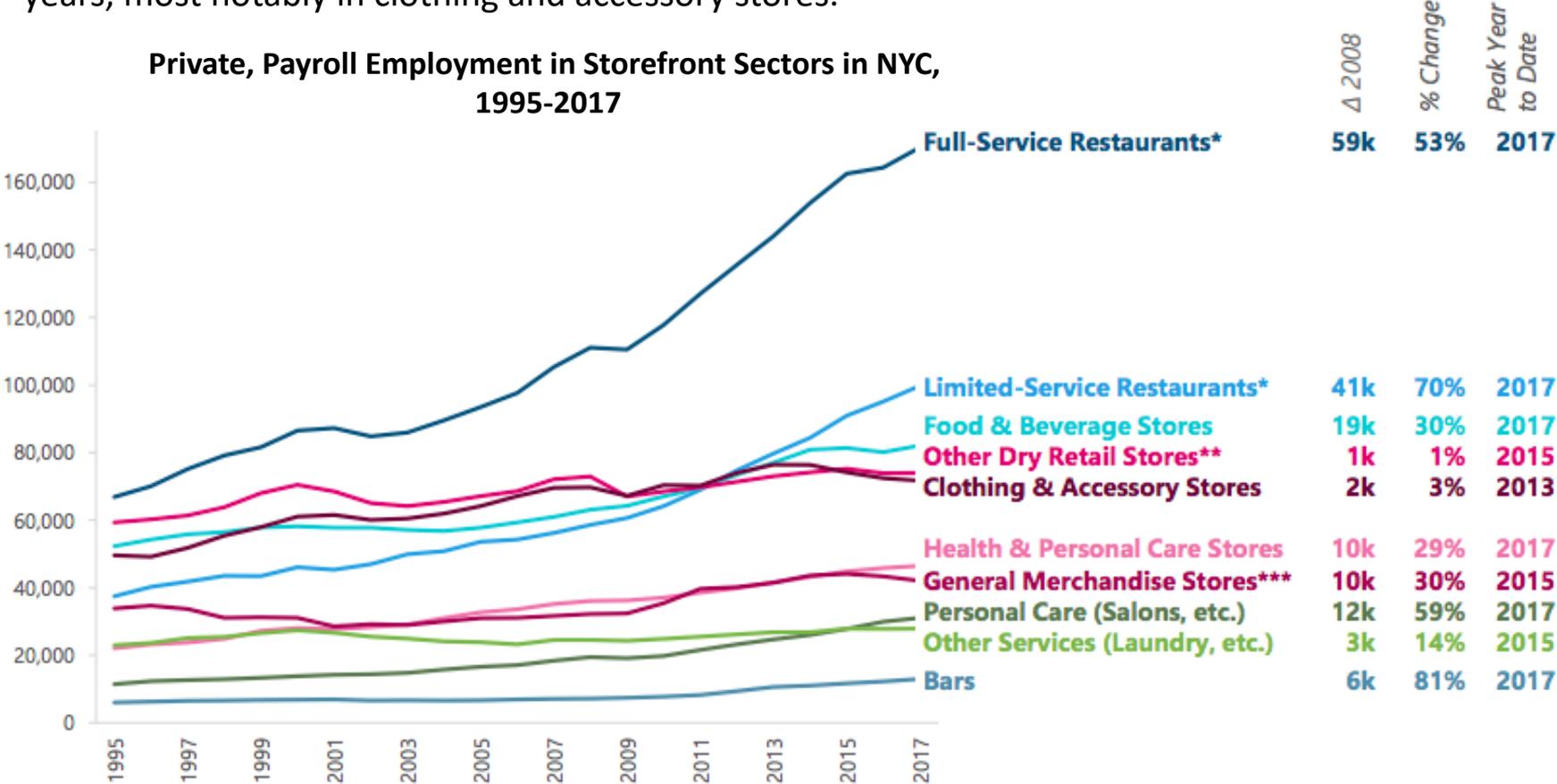
To assess COVID impacts and recovery, DCP conducted surveys in July 2020 across the same 24 neighborhoods.



Pre-COVID Trends for Storefront Uses

- Due to changing consumer preferences and growth of e-commerce, employment in food and beverage has outpaced other storefront uses.
- Services have also grown significantly, led by personal care.
- Many types of dry retail have experienced a slight decline in employment within the last several years, most notably in clothing and accessory stores.

Private, Payroll Employment in Storefront Sectors in NYC, 1995-2017



*In Full-Service Restaurants, food is served to a customer's table. In Limited-Service restaurants, customers pay before eating. (Both may offer carryout.) **Other Dry Retail Stores include dry retail other than Clothing & Accessory, Health & Personal Care, and General Merchandise – such as Electronics and Appliances, Building Materials and Garden Supply, and Furniture and Home Furnishing Stores. ***General Merchandise Stores sell a large variety of goods and include department stores and dollar stores. Source: NYS Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages, 1995-2017. (Single files, annual averages.)

When were the surveys conducted?

2018

DCP's Storefront Vacancy Assessment data collected

2020

DCP Survey data collected July 7 through July 17, weekdays (excluding Mondays) between noon to 5PM.



2020 NYC Phased Reopening

Phase One
June 8

Construction
Manufacturing
Wholesale
Curbside Retail

Phase Two
June 22

Outdoor Dining
In-store Retail
Offices
Hair Salons

Phase Three
July 6

Beauty Salons
Nail Salons
Spas
Massage

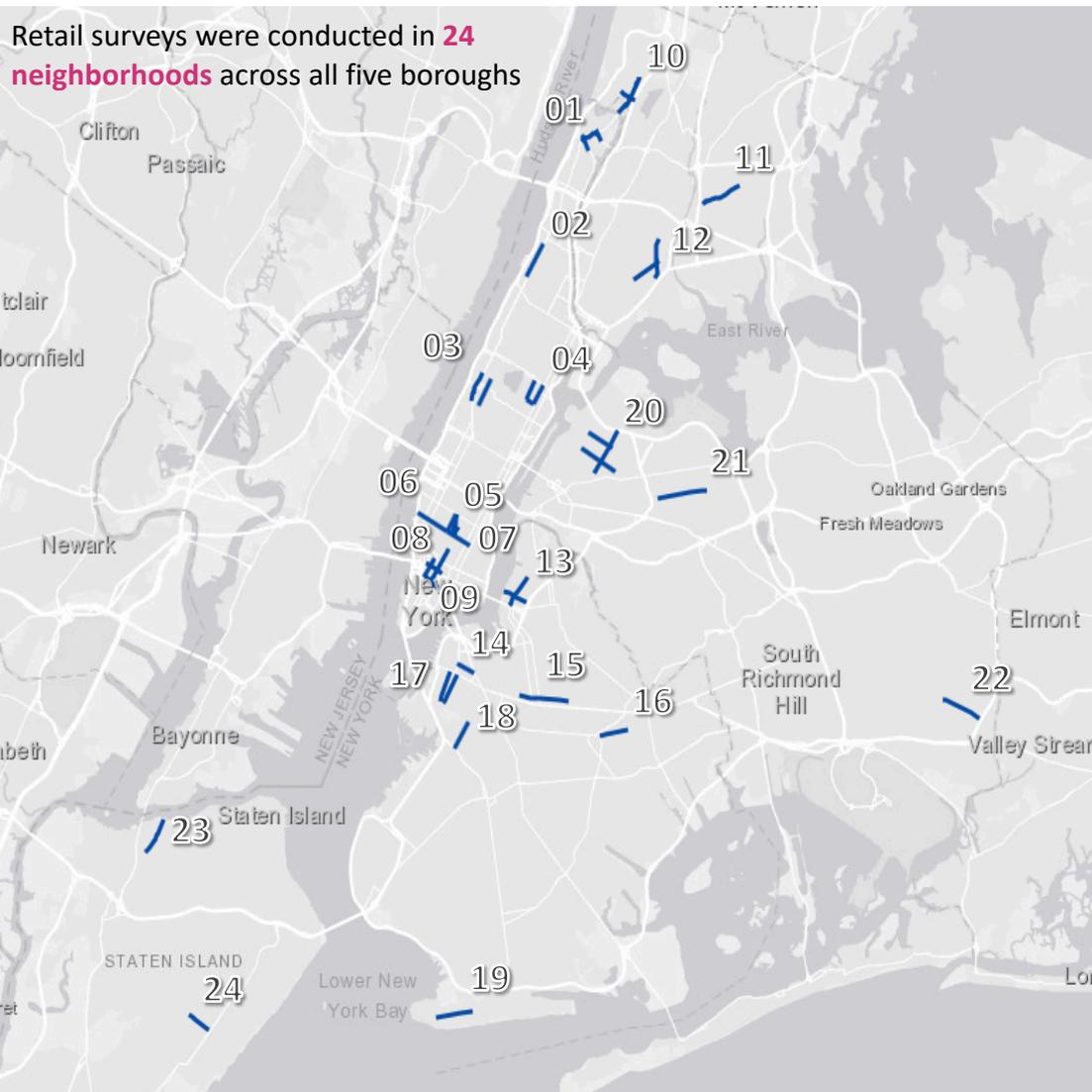
Phase Four
July 20

Outdoor Arts and Entertainment
Film Production
Schools

**Examples of businesses permitted to operate*

Where were surveys conducted?

Retail surveys were conducted in **24 neighborhoods** across all five boroughs



DCP revisited corridors studied in 2018. These 24 corridors represent a cross-section of neighborhood conditions and retail typologies, including demographics, transit access, and density. The study focused on continuous, pedestrian-oriented corridors and excluded shopping malls and auto-oriented corridors.

Manhattan

- 01. Inwood** – Broadway, Dyckman St, 207th St
- 02. Hamilton Heights** – Broadway
- 03. Upper West Side** – Broadway, Columbus Ave
- 04. Upper East Side** – 2nd Ave, Lexington Ave, 86th St
- 05. Flatiron/Union Square** – 5th Ave, Broadway, Park Ave, Union Square West
- 06. West 14th Street**
- 07. East 14th Street**
- 08. SoHo/NoHo** – Broadway, Spring St, West Broadway,
- 09. Canal Street**

Bronx

- 10. Kingsbridge** – Broadway, 231st St
- 11. Morris Park** – Morris Park Ave
- 12. Longwood** – Southern Blvd, Westchester Ave

Brooklyn

- 13. Williamsburg** – Bedford Ave,

Queens

- 14. Fulton Mall**
- 15. Bed-Stuy** – Fulton St
- 16. Brownsville** – Pitkin Ave
- 17. Cobble Hill** – Smith St, Court St
- 18. Park Slope** – 5th Ave,
- 19. Coney Island** – Mermaid Ave

Staten Island

- 20. Astoria** – Steinway, Broadway, 30th Ave
- 21. Jackson Heights** – Roosevelt Ave
- 22. Laurelton** – Merrick Blvd
- 23. Port Richmond** – Port Richmond Ave
- 24. New Dorp** – New Dorp Ln

How were businesses categorized?

Storefront Businesses



Morris Park, Bronx



Upper West Side, Manhattan



Astoria, Queens

Dry Retail

- Clothing stores
- Hardware stores
- Office supplies
- Pharmacies
- Florists
- Book shops

Food & Beverage

- Restaurants
- Coffee shops
- Bars
- Caterers
- Butchers
- Supermarkets

Services

- Medical offices
- Salons
- Daycare
- Gyms
- Houses of worship
- Laundromats

How was the status of businesses captured?

Open



Upper West Side, Manhattan

- Business operations are currently being performed, or
- Signage suggests that the business is currently operating in some capacity (including online sales, takeout, and delivery)

Closed



Astoria, Queens

- The business did not appear to be open when surveyed and there is no indication that the business is currently operating.

Vacant



Morris Park, the Bronx

- There is no indication that a business is currently operating out of this space or has clear plans to return to the space.

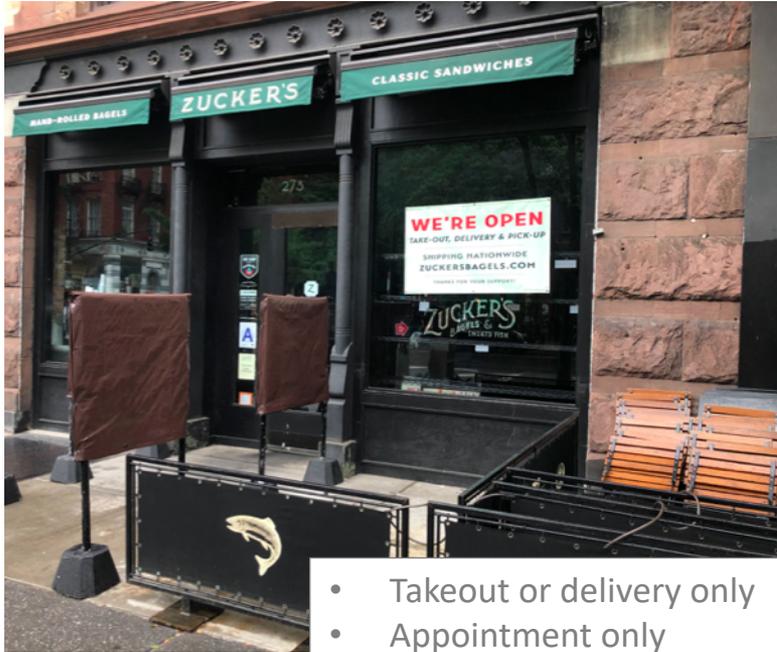
What additional information was collected?

Outdoor Dining



Port Richmond, Staten Island

Other Business Modifications to Adapt to COVID



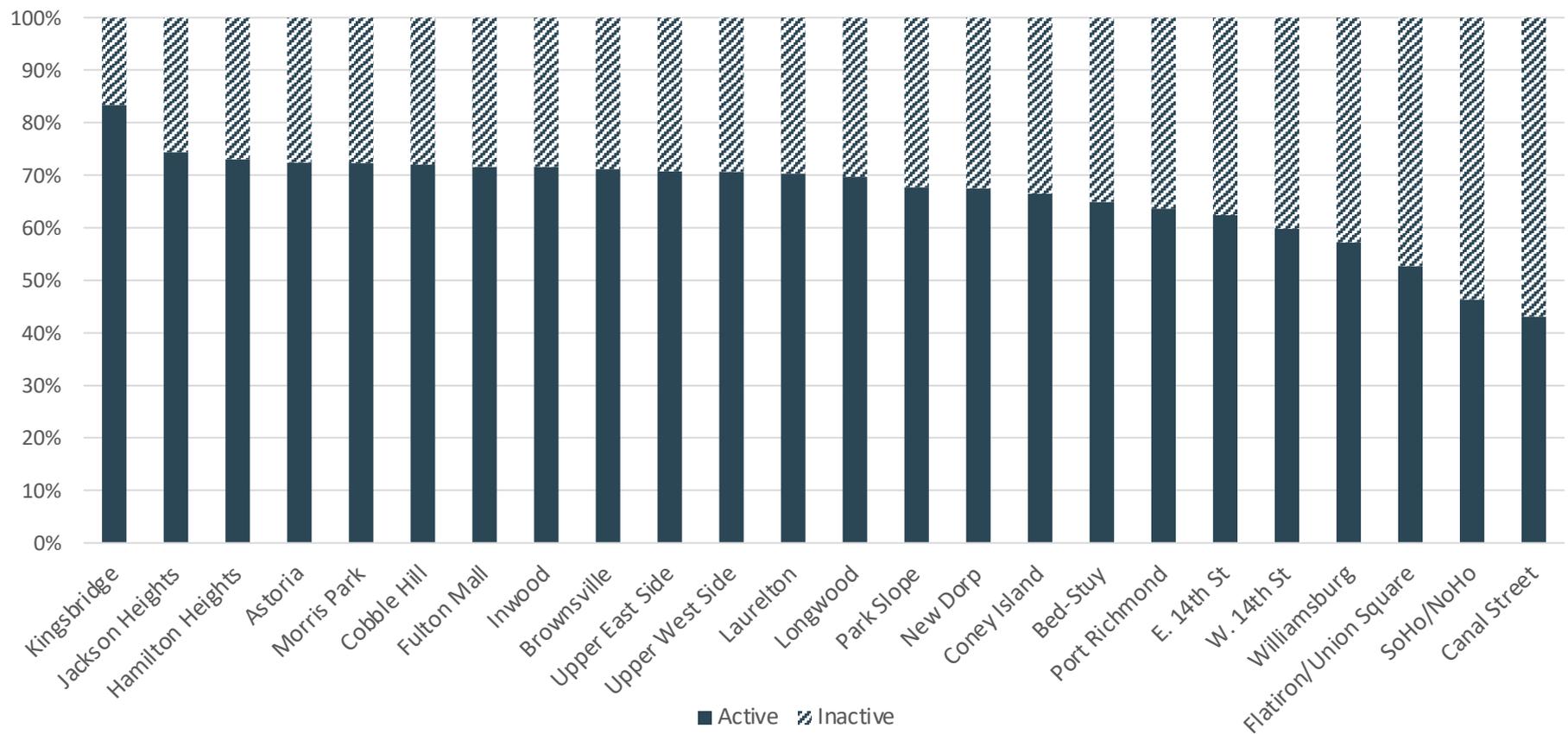
Upper East Side, Manhattan

- Takeout or delivery only
- Appointment only
- Posted capacity limits
- Modified hours
- Temperature checks
- Additional ventilation

Survey Findings

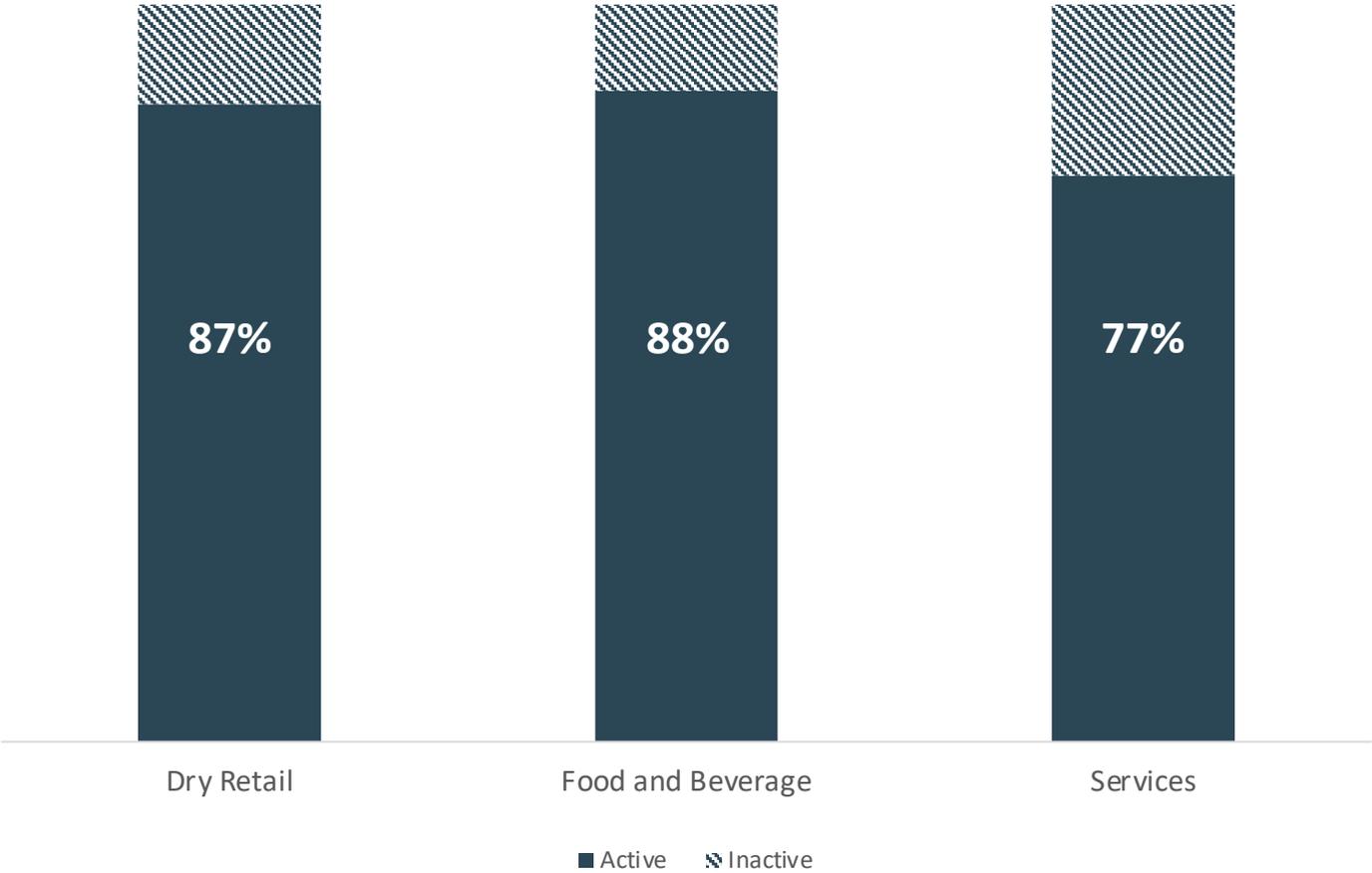
Reopening by Corridor

- Locally-serving retail corridors such as Kingsbridge, Jackson Heights, and Hamilton Heights had a higher proportion of businesses that are open.
- Regional destinations and areas impacted by reduced commuting and tourism, such as Flatiron/Union Square, SoHo/NoHo, and Canal Street, had the lowest proportion of open businesses.



Reopening Status by Sector

- Services, such as salons and dry cleaners, were less likely to be open, while a greater proportion of dry retail and food and beverage businesses were open. Although most services were allowed to operate at the time of the survey, gyms and fitness studios were not yet permitted to open.
- Food and Beverage were the most commonly open businesses, potentially attributed to flexibility in operations, including outdoor dining and takeout services.

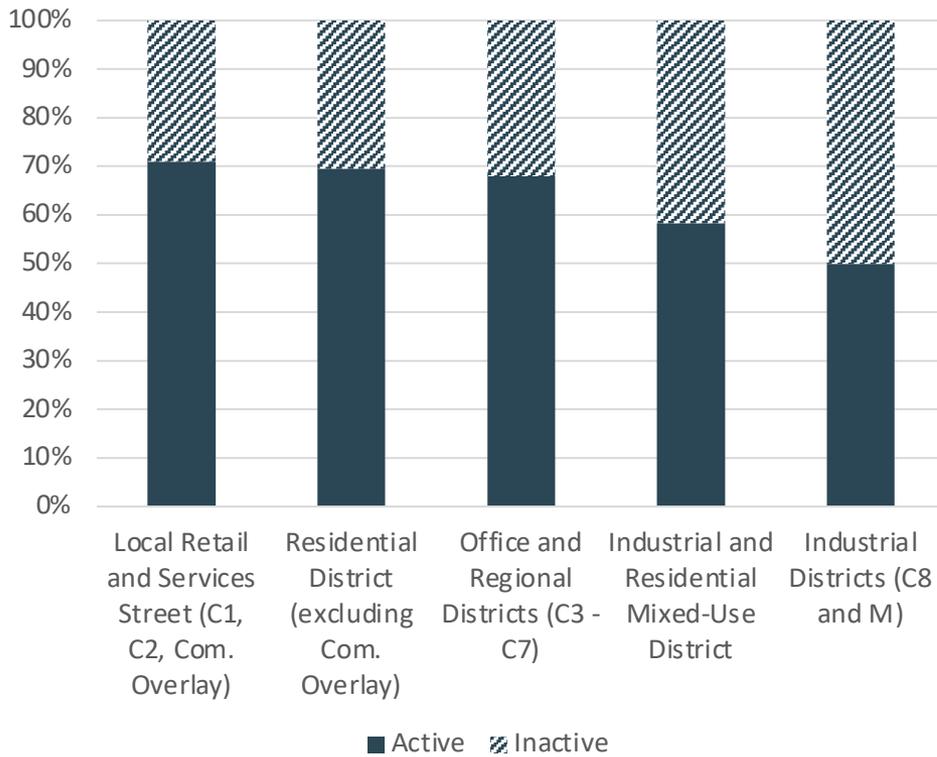


Note: Approximately 1,050 business were identified as vacant and 300 as unknown. While most storefront businesses were permitted to be open when the surveys were completed, gyms and fitness studios – within the services category – were required to remain closed.

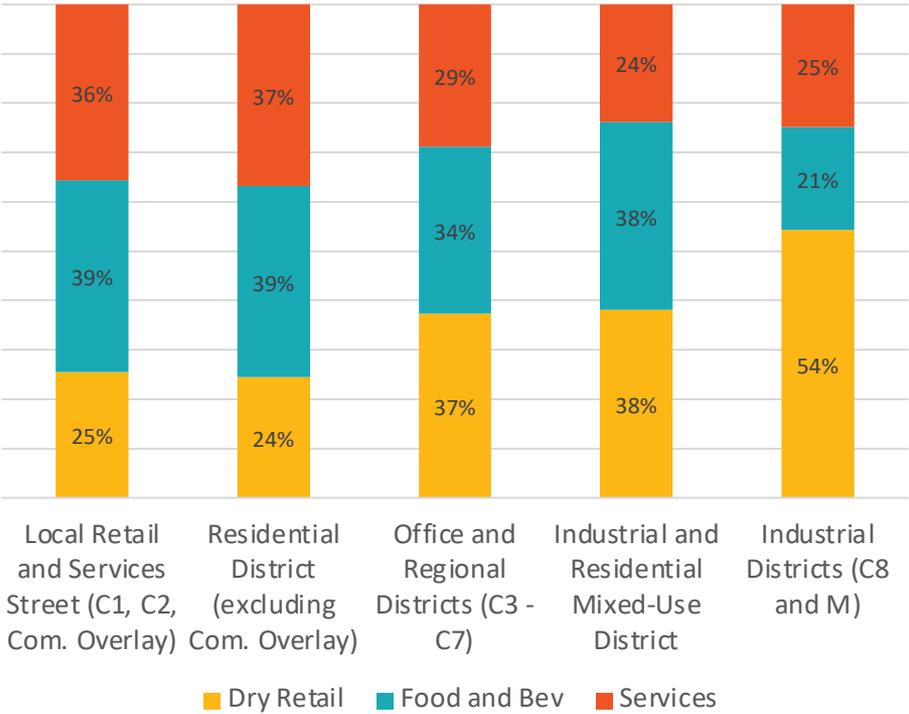
Reopening by Zoning District

- The proportion of active storefront business was highest within commercial overlay districts and residential areas, pointing to the relative strength of locally-serving retail corridors compared with more auto-oriented districts and regional destinations.

Proportion of Active and Inactive Businesses

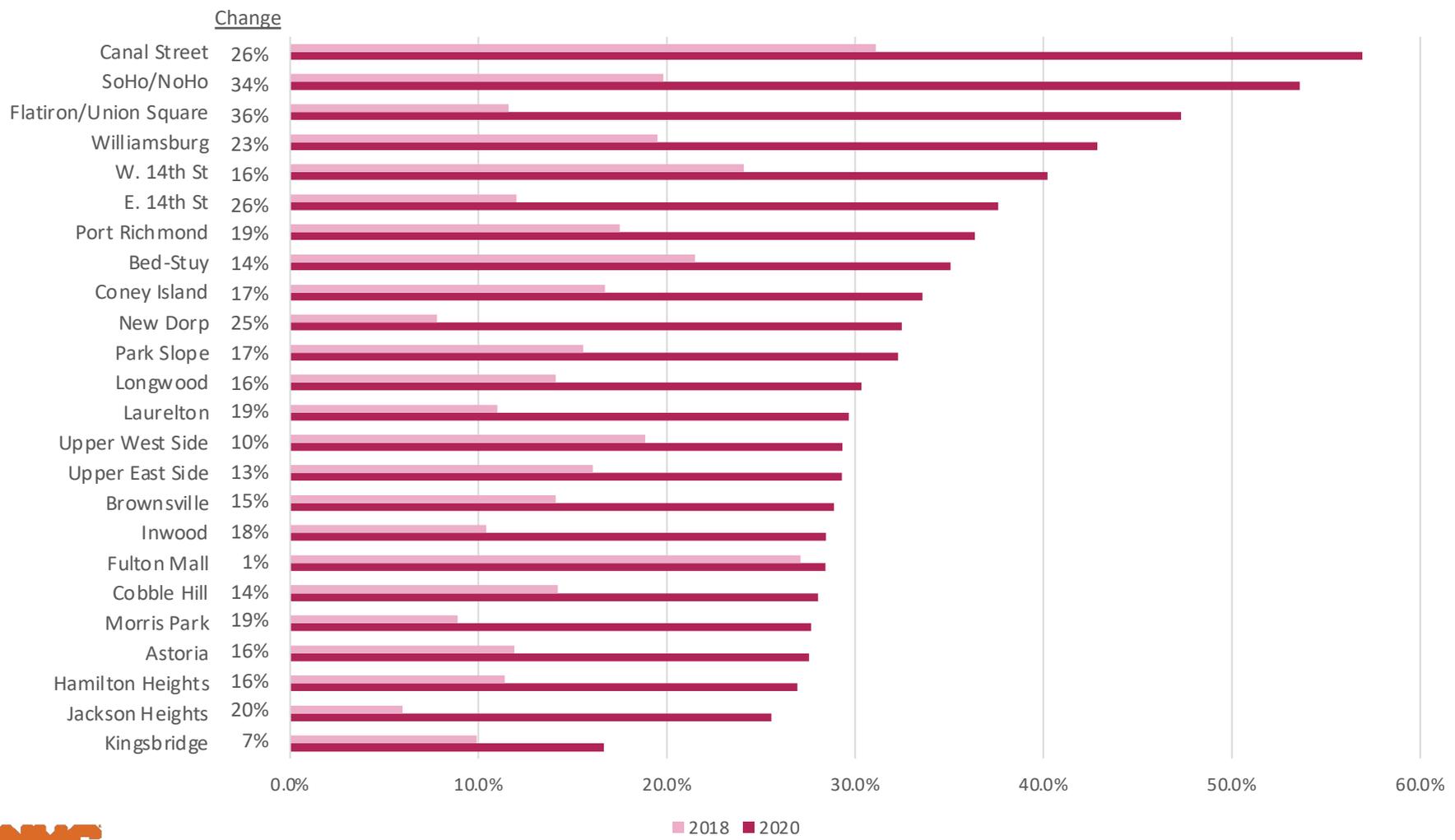


Distribution of Uses Within Active Businesses



Change In Inactive Storefronts by Corridor, 2018 to 2020

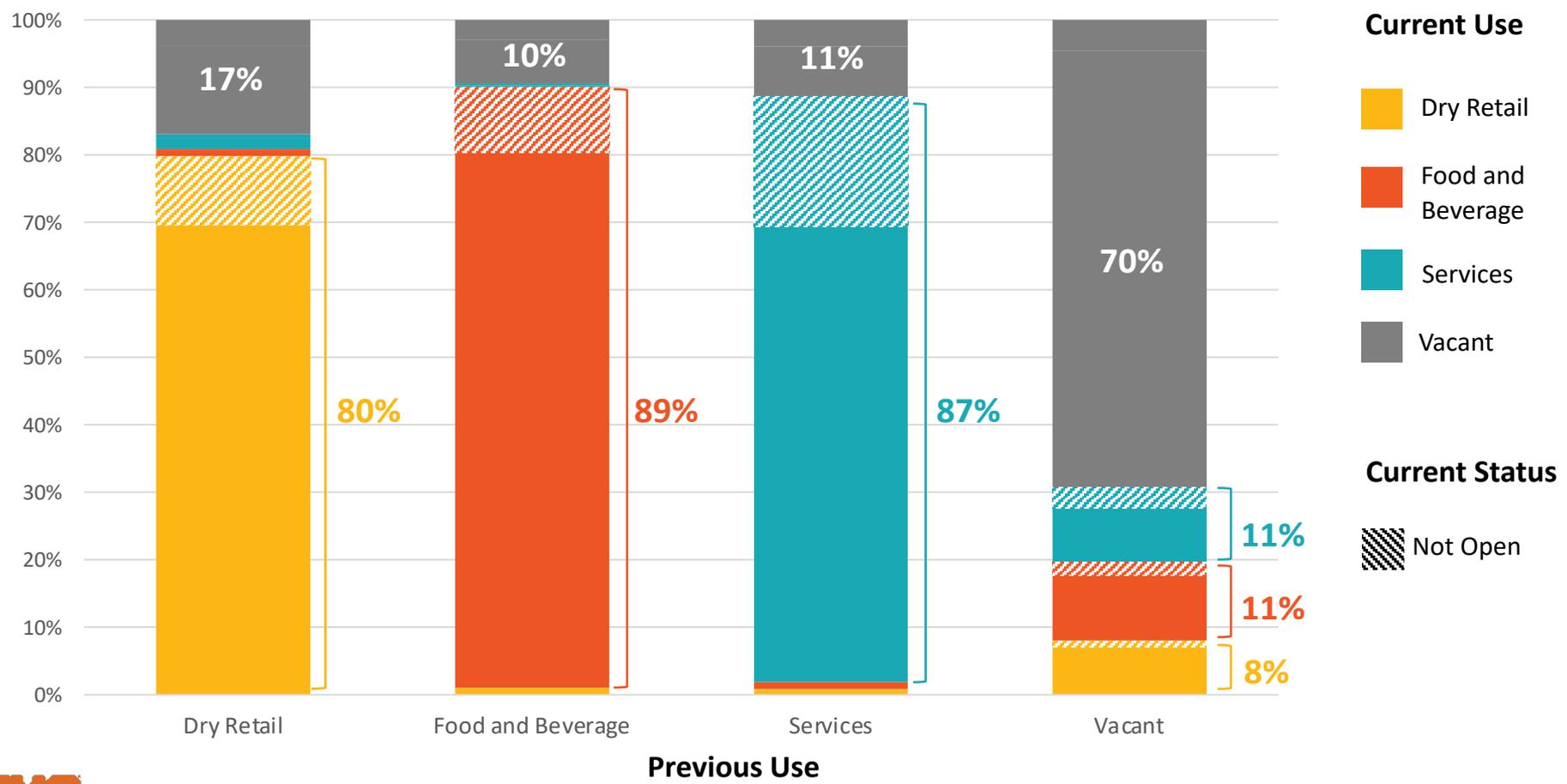
- Across all corridors, businesses categorized as inactive – including those which are closed, vacant, or unknown – grew from 13.6% in 2018 to 32% in 2020.
- Compared with 2018, all corridors saw a higher share of inactive businesses, ranging from 1% to 36% higher.



Note: Active businesses include those that surveyors noted as Open. Inactive businesses include those that surveyors noted as Closed, Vacant, or Unknown.

Business Turnover

- The majority of storefronts that were vacant in 2018 remained vacant in July 2020.
- Spaces occupied by dry retail businesses in 2018 were the most likely to be vacant during July 2020, suggesting a continued contraction of the dry retail sector.
- Food and beverage businesses were more likely to maintain the same use, remain open, and least likely to become vacant.

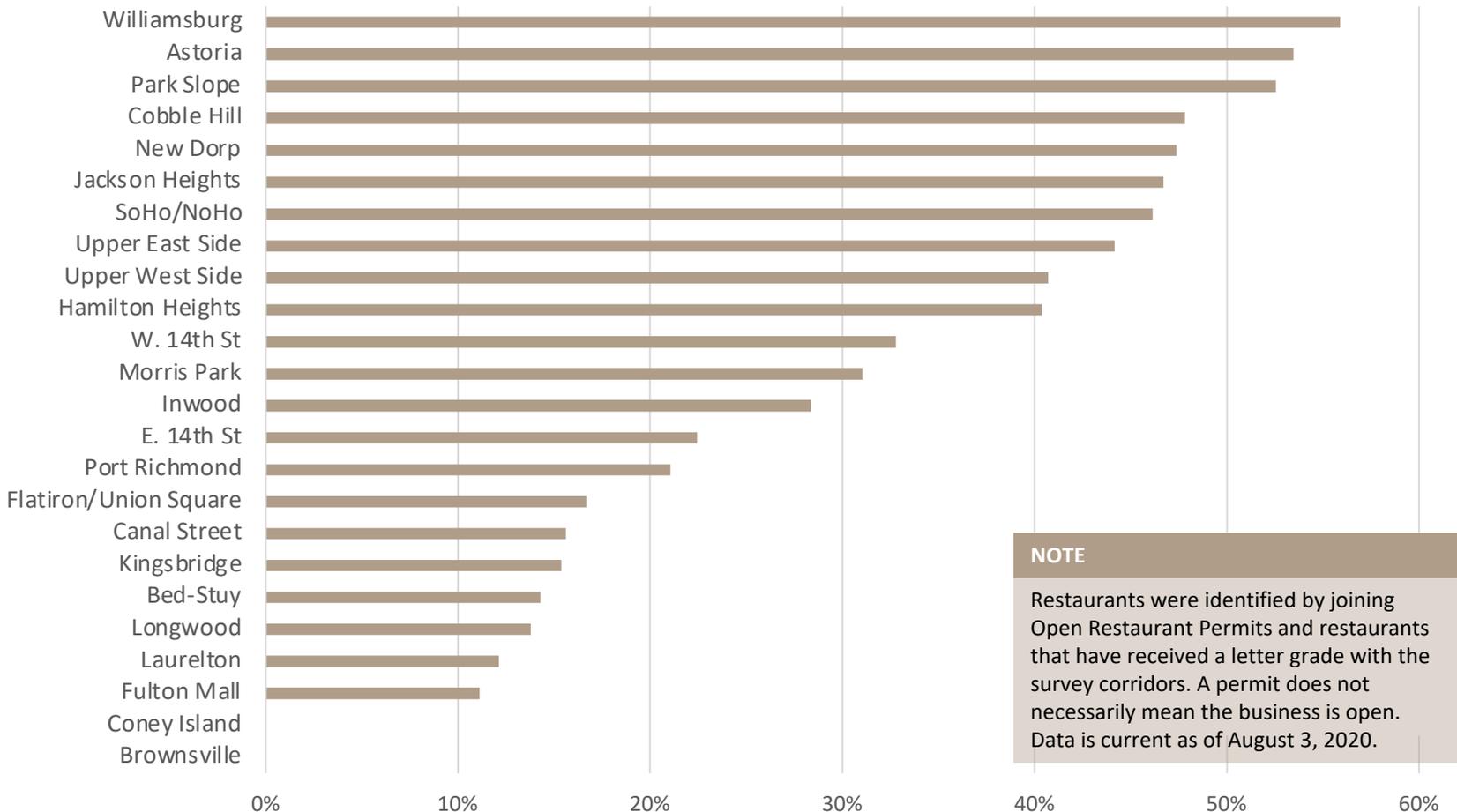


Note: "Not Open" means the surveyor noted the current status of the business as Closed. "Vacant" includes storefronts that surveyors noted as either "Vacant" or "Unknown"

Supplemental Analysis: open streets and open restaurants

Restaurants with Open Restaurant permits

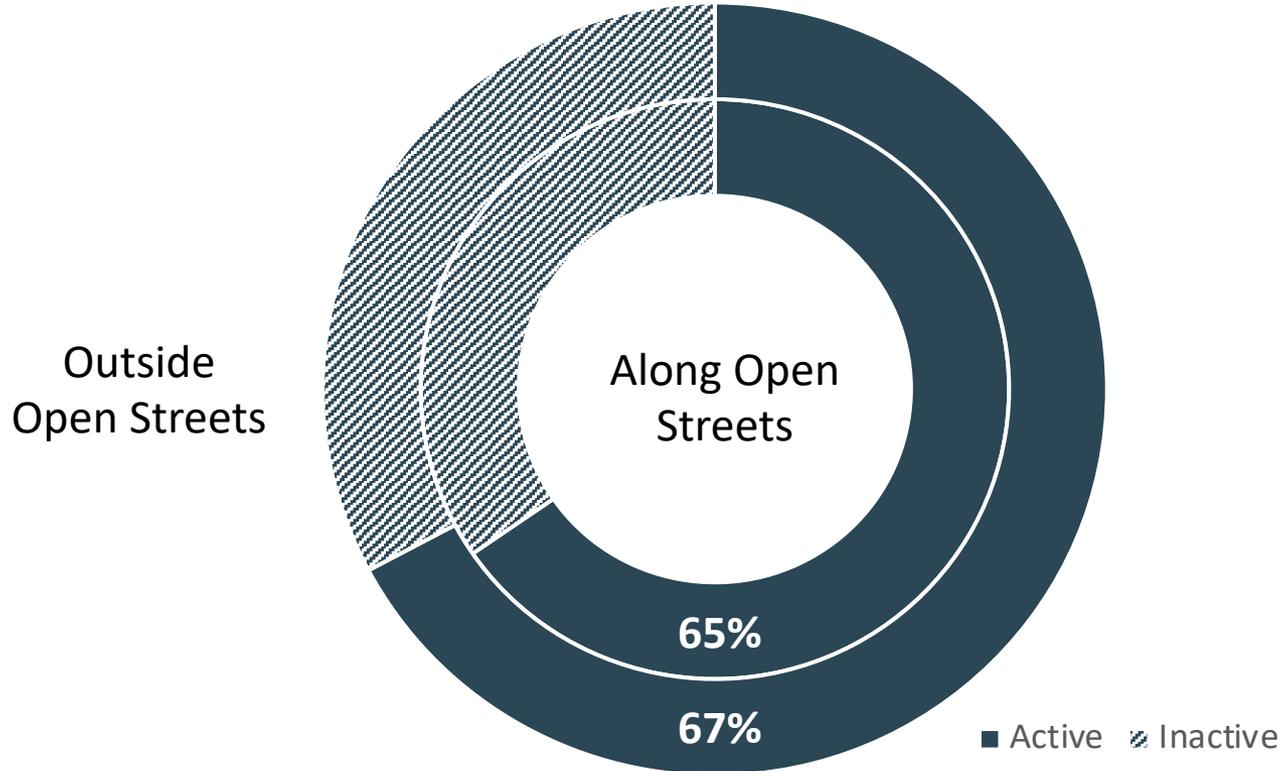
- Outdoor dining varied significantly by corridor, with more than 40% of restaurants having Open Restaurant permits in some neighborhoods and less than 10% in others.
- There are likely many factors influencing participation in the program, including the proportion of full-service vs. limited-services restaurants and reduced pedestrian traffic in office-based districts, as well as access to a ground floor.



NOTE
 Restaurants were identified by joining Open Restaurant Permits and restaurants that have received a letter grade with the survey corridors. A permit does not necessarily mean the business is open. Data is current as of August 3, 2020.

Businesses on Open Streets

- **5% of businesses surveyed were located on Open Streets**, which included portions of 13 of the 24 corridors.
- As of July, there was no meaningful different between the proportion of active businesses along Open Streets and active businesses not located along Open Streets. Future surveys may help evaluate impacts on business activity related to the Open Streets program.



Key Findings

- Locally-serving retail corridors had the highest proportion of businesses that were open, while regional destinations and areas impacted by reduced commuting and tourism had many fewer businesses open.
- Services, such as salons and dry cleaners, were less likely to be open, while a greater proportion of dry retail and food and beverage businesses were open. A portion of the reduction in activity in services is likely attributed to the fact that gyms were not permitted to operate at the time of the survey.
- Compared with 2018, all corridors saw a higher share of inactive businesses—including those that are closed or vacant—ranging from 1% to 36% higher.
- Spaces occupied by dry retail businesses in 2018 were slightly more likely to be vacant during July 2020, suggesting a continued contraction of the dry retail sector.
- Outdoor dining varied significantly by corridor, with more than 40% of restaurants having outdoor dining in some neighborhoods and less than 10% in others. There are likely many factors influencing participation in the program, including the proportion of full-service vs. limited-services restaurants and reduced pedestrian traffic in office-based districts.
- As of July, there was no meaningful difference between the proportion of active businesses along Open Streets and active businesses outside of Open Streets. Future surveys will assess impacts of Open Streets on business activity.

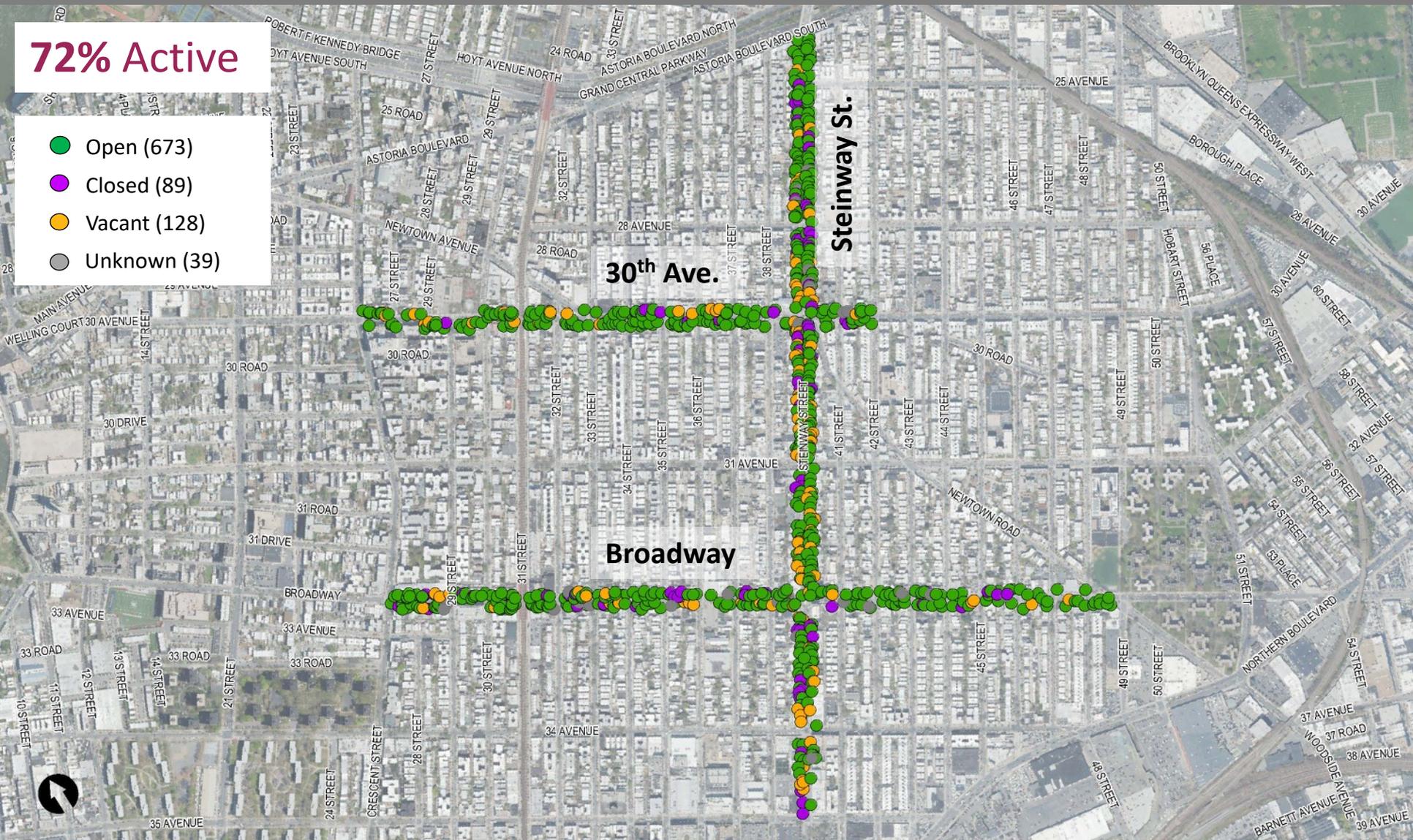


Upper East Side, Manhattan

Astoria Survey Results

72% Active

- Open (673)
- Closed (89)
- Vacant (128)
- Unknown (39)



Bed-Stuy Survey Results

65% Active

- Open (226)
- Closed (25)
- Vacant (86)
- Unknown (11)



Brownsville Survey Results

71% Active

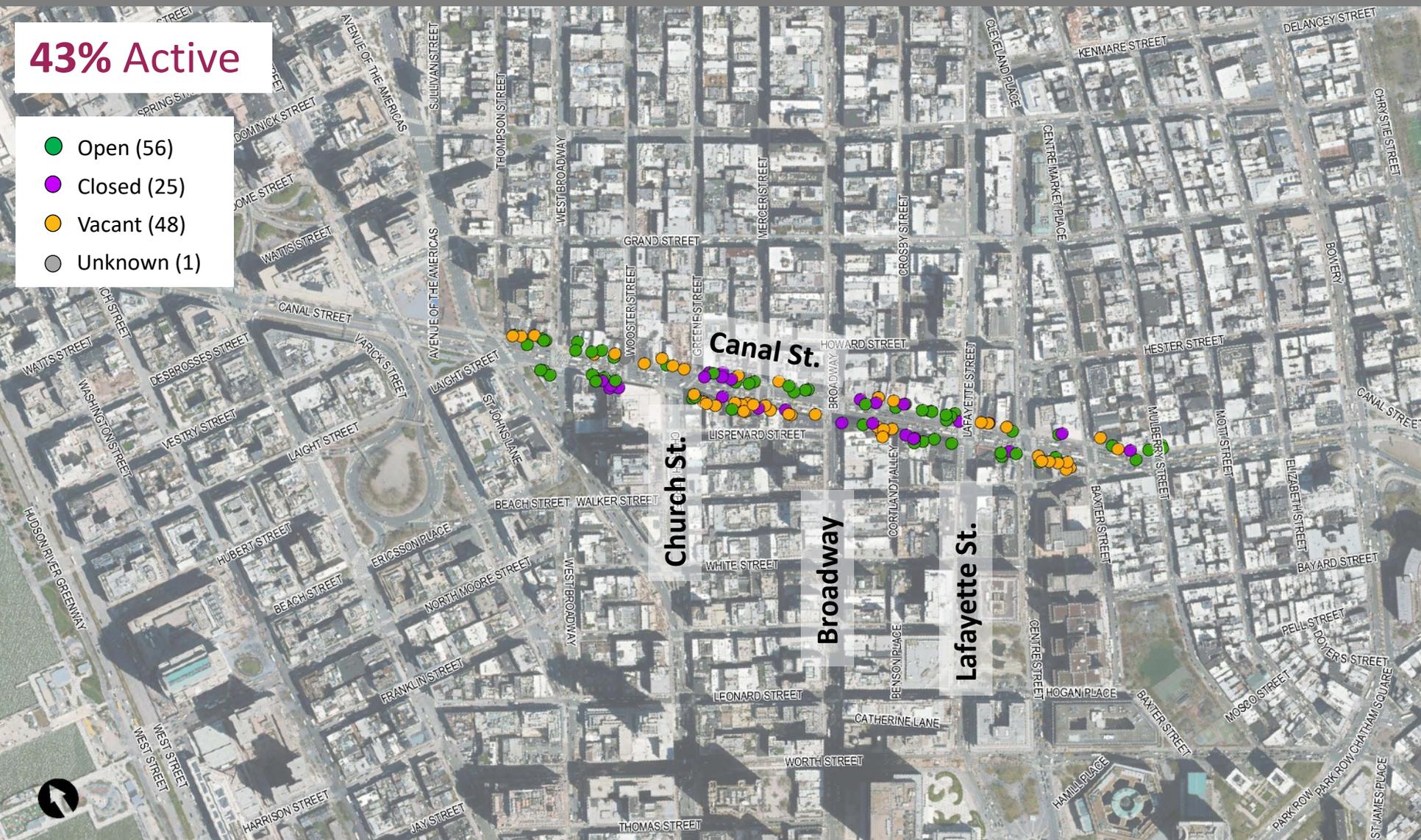
- Open (133)
- Closed (19)
- Vacant (32)
- Unknown (3)



Canal Street Survey Results

43% Active

- Open (56)
- Closed (25)
- Vacant (48)
- Unknown (1)



Cobble Hill Survey Results

72% Active

- Open (285)
- Closed (24)
- Vacant (69)
- Unknown (18)



Coney Island Survey Results

66% Active

- Open (93)
- Closed (24)
- Vacant (17)
- Unknown (6)

Mermaid Ave.



East 14th Street Survey Results

62% Active

- Open (78)
- Closed (16)
- Vacant (20)
- Unknown (11)



Flatiron/Union Square Survey Results

53% Active

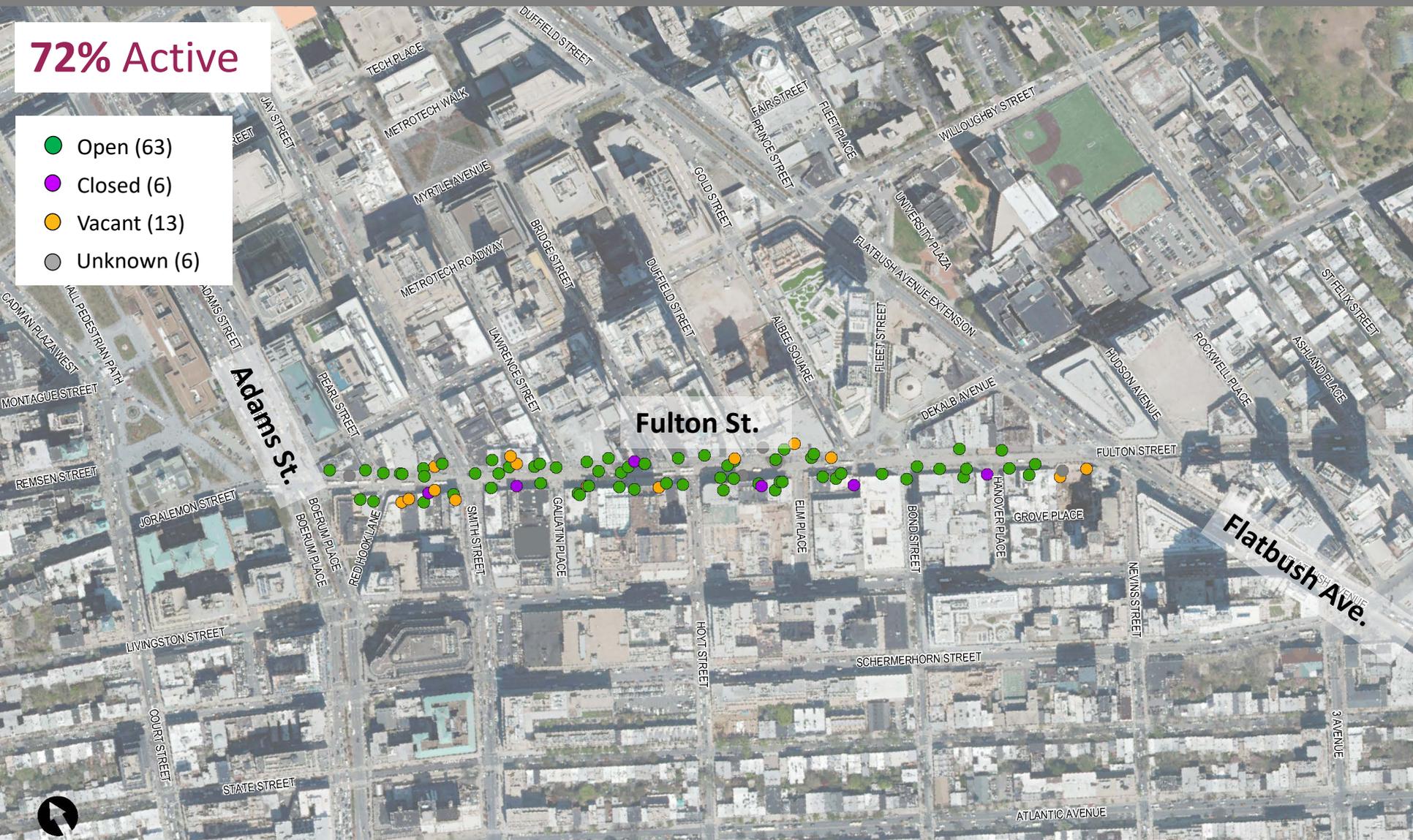
- Open (88)
- Closed (34)
- Vacant (38)
- Unknown (7)



Fulton Mall Survey Results

72% Active

- Open (63)
- Closed (6)
- Vacant (13)
- Unknown (6)



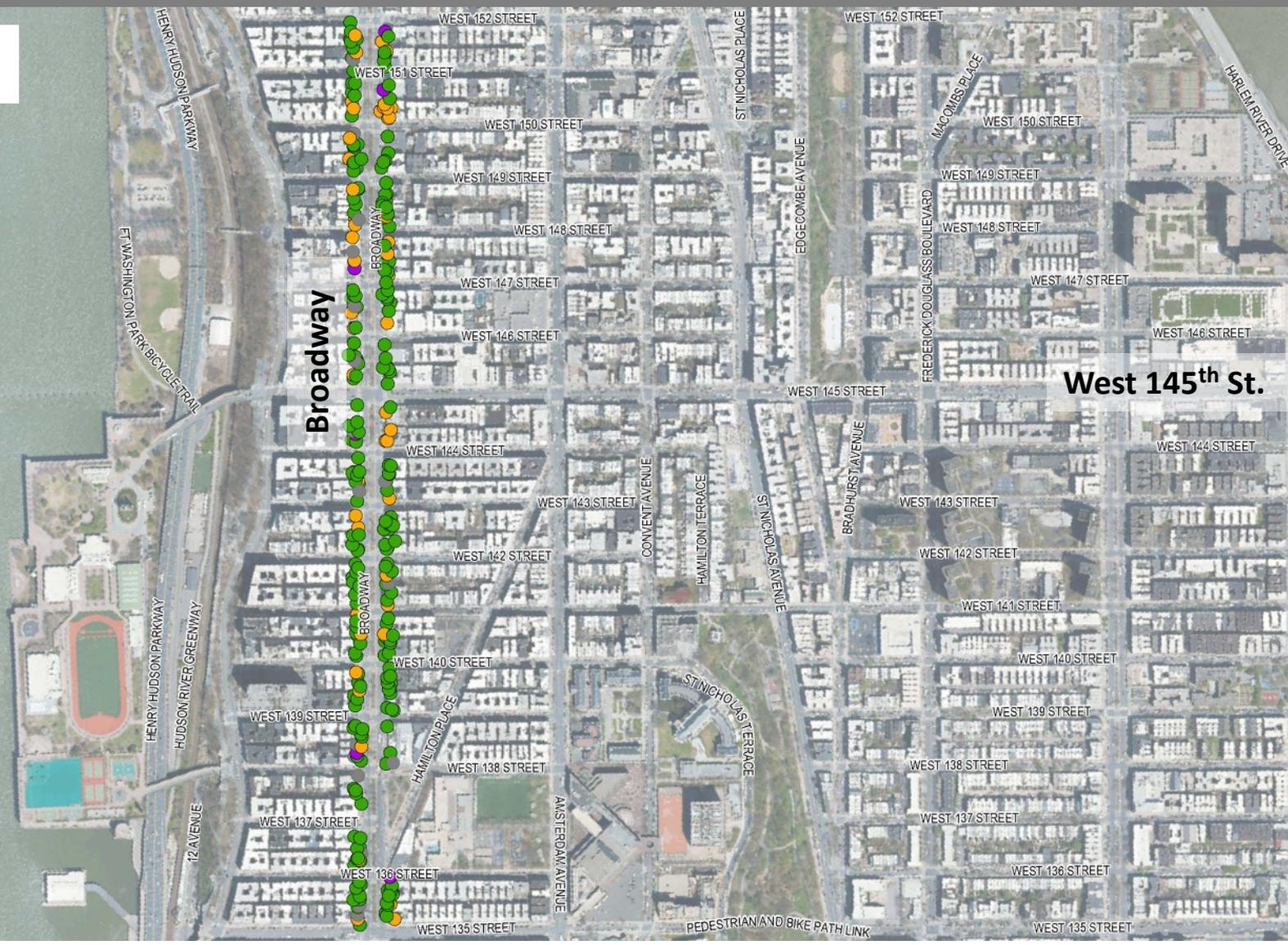
Sources: Live XYZ, Summer 2018 and NYC DCP field surveys, July 2020. Aerial imagery: DOITT, 2018.



Hamilton Heights Survey Results

73% Active

- Open (209)
- Closed (6)
- Vacant (52)
- Unknown (19)



Inwood Survey Results

72% Active

- Open (224)
- Closed (38)
- Vacant (25)
- Unknown (26)



Sources: Live XYZ, Summer 2018 and NYC DCP field surveys, July 2020. Aerial imagery: DOITT, 2018.

Kingsbridge Survey Results

83% Active

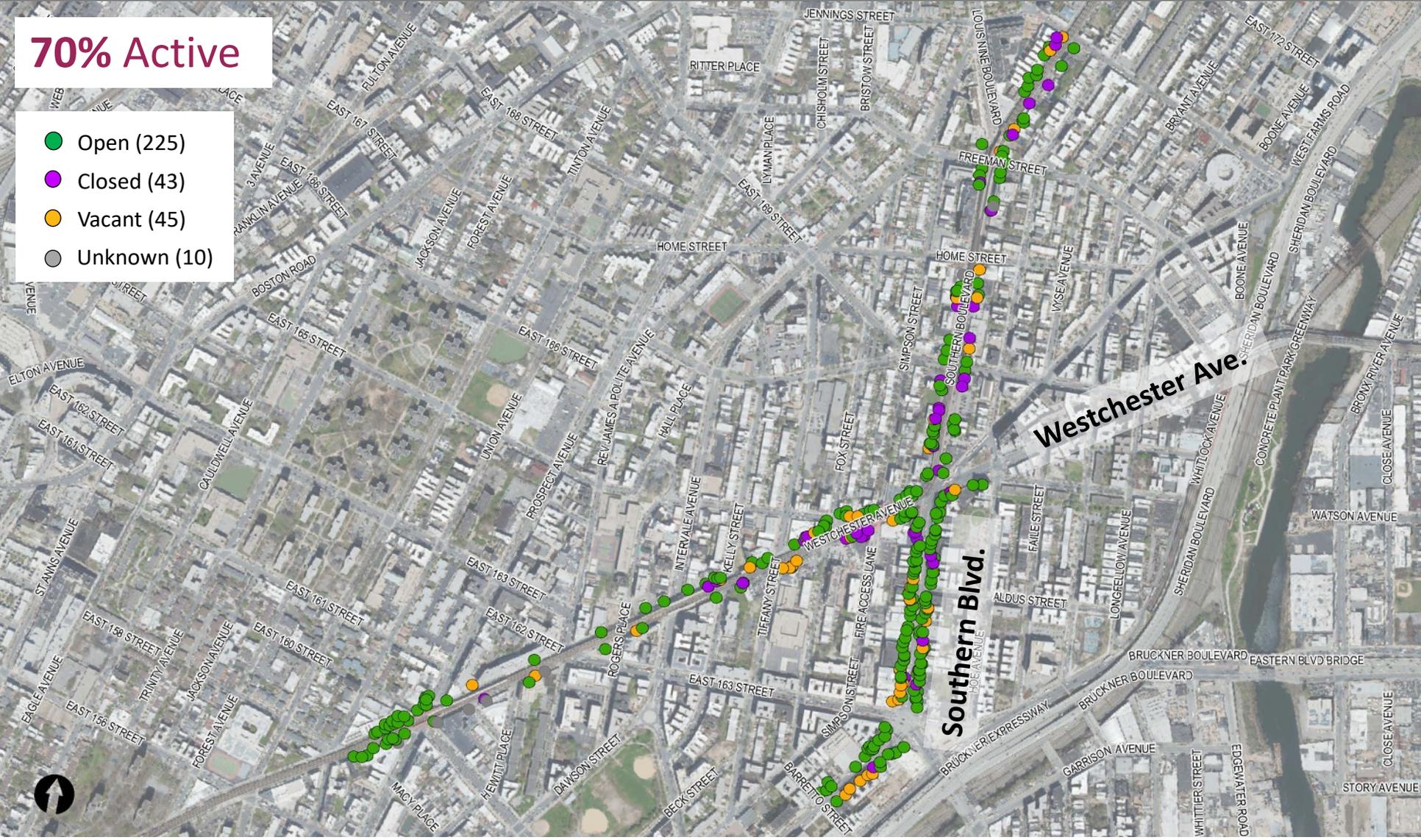
- Open (210)
- Closed (19)
- Vacant (12)
- Unknown (11)



Longwood Survey Results

70% Active

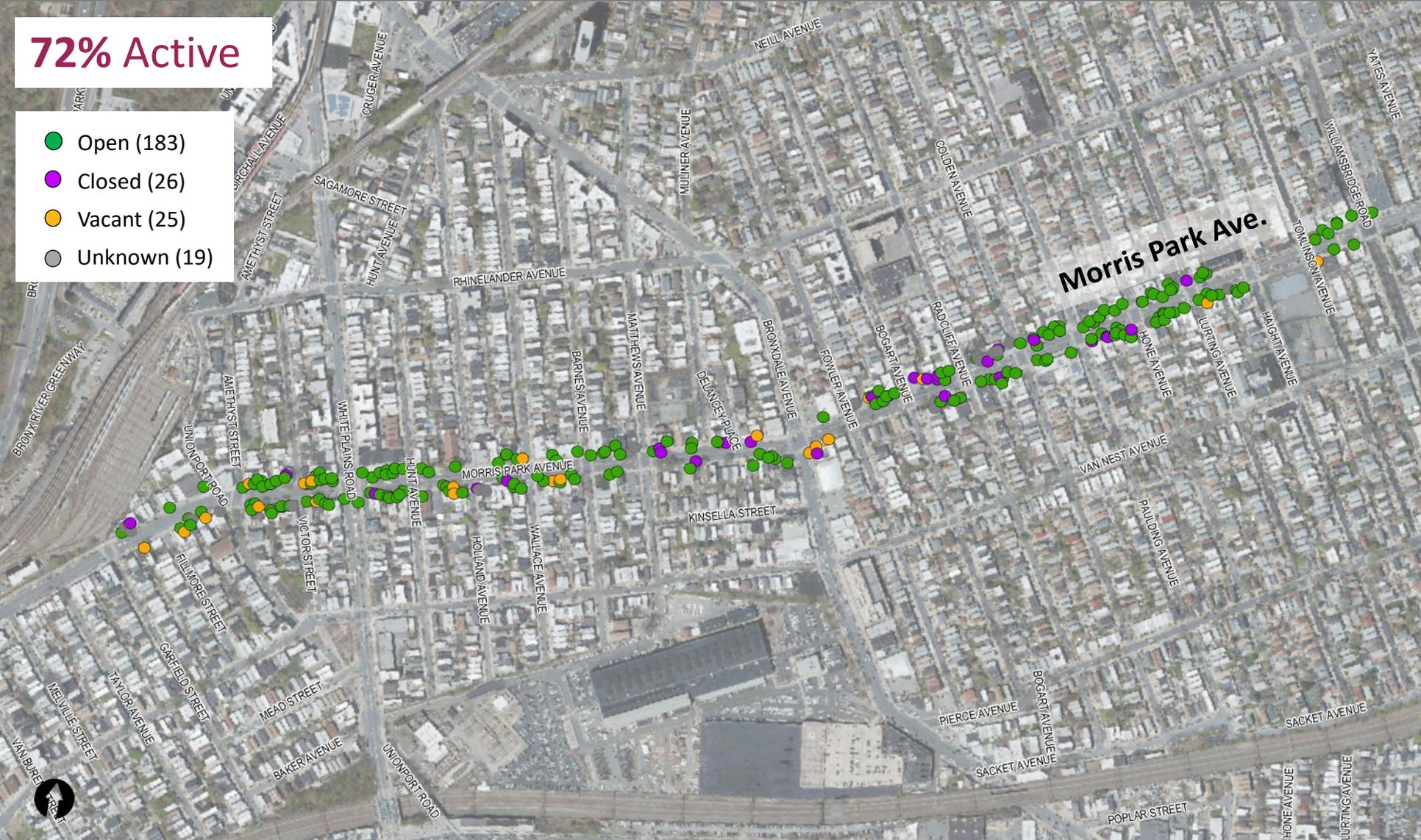
- Open (225)
- Closed (43)
- Vacant (45)
- Unknown (10)



Morris Park Survey Results

72% Active

- Open (183)
- Closed (26)
- Vacant (25)
- Unknown (19)



New Dorp Survey Results

68% Active

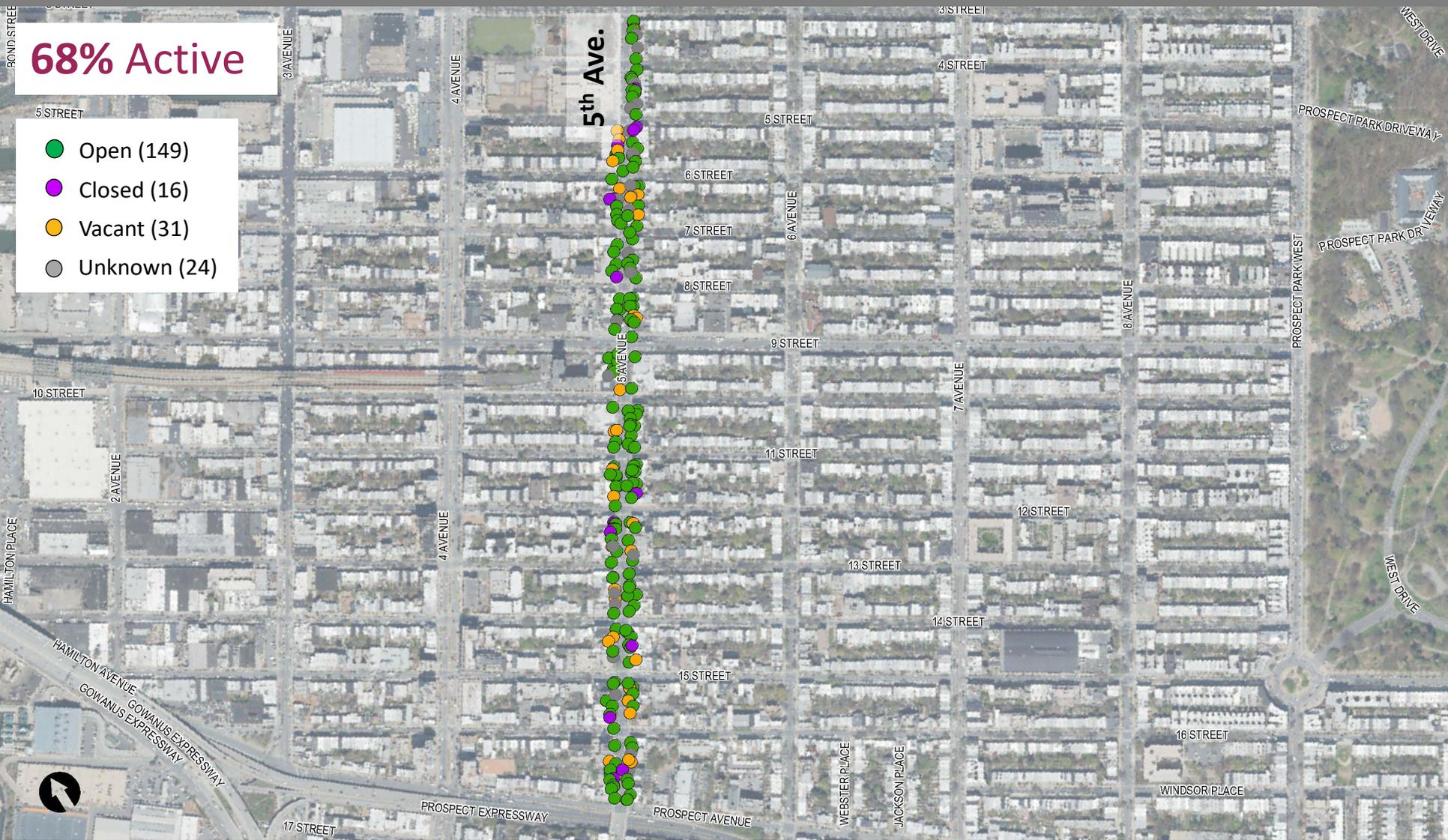
- Open (79)
- Closed (19)
- Vacant (7)
- Unknown (12)



Park Slope Survey Results

68% Active

- Open (149)
- Closed (16)
- Vacant (31)
- Unknown (24)



Port Richmond Survey Results

64% Active

- Open (112)
- Closed (29)
- Vacant (34)
- Unknown (1)



SoHo/NoHo Survey Results

46% Active

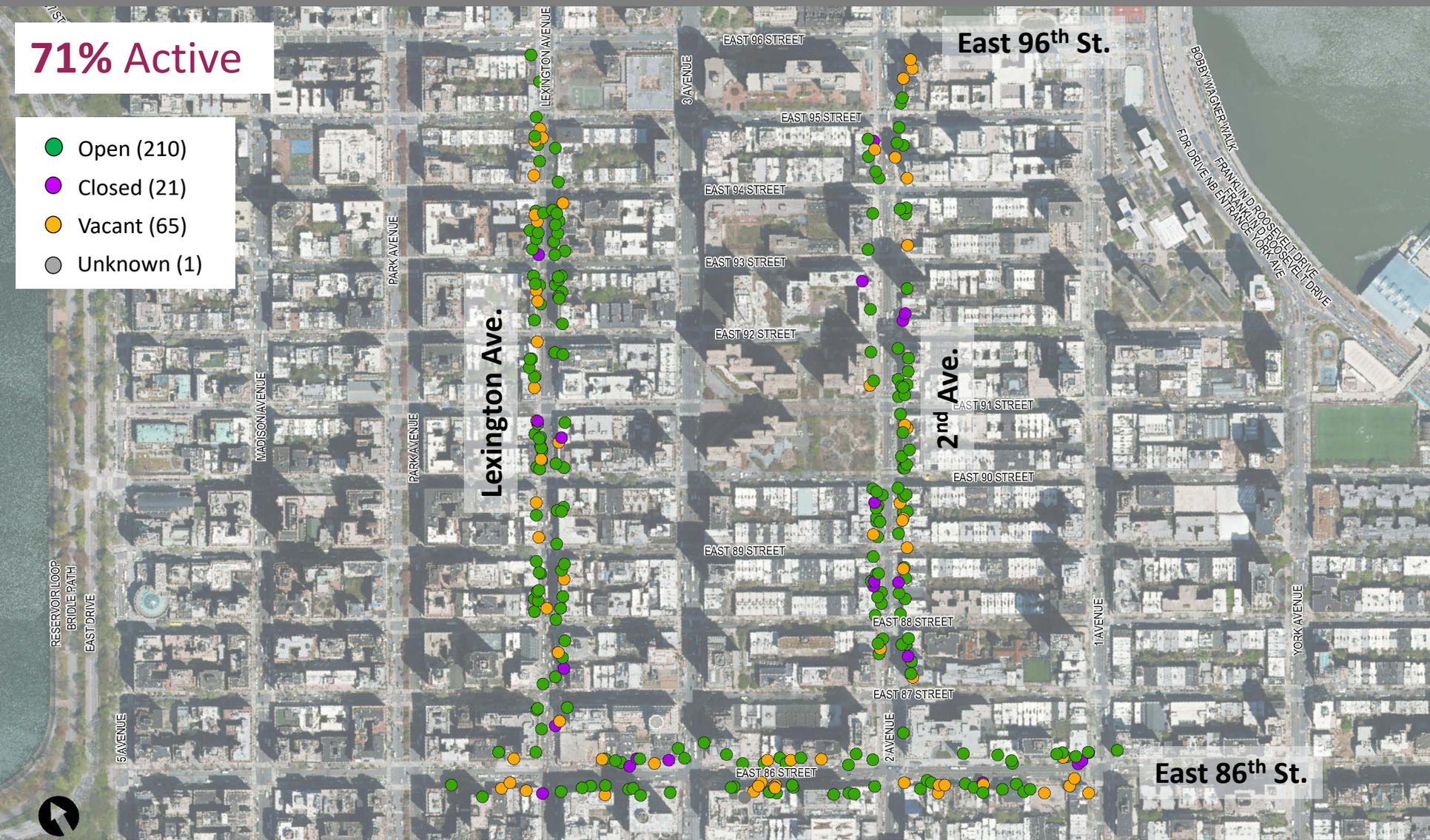
- Open (186)
- Closed (120)
- Vacant (93)
- Unknown (2)



Upper East Side Survey Results

71% Active

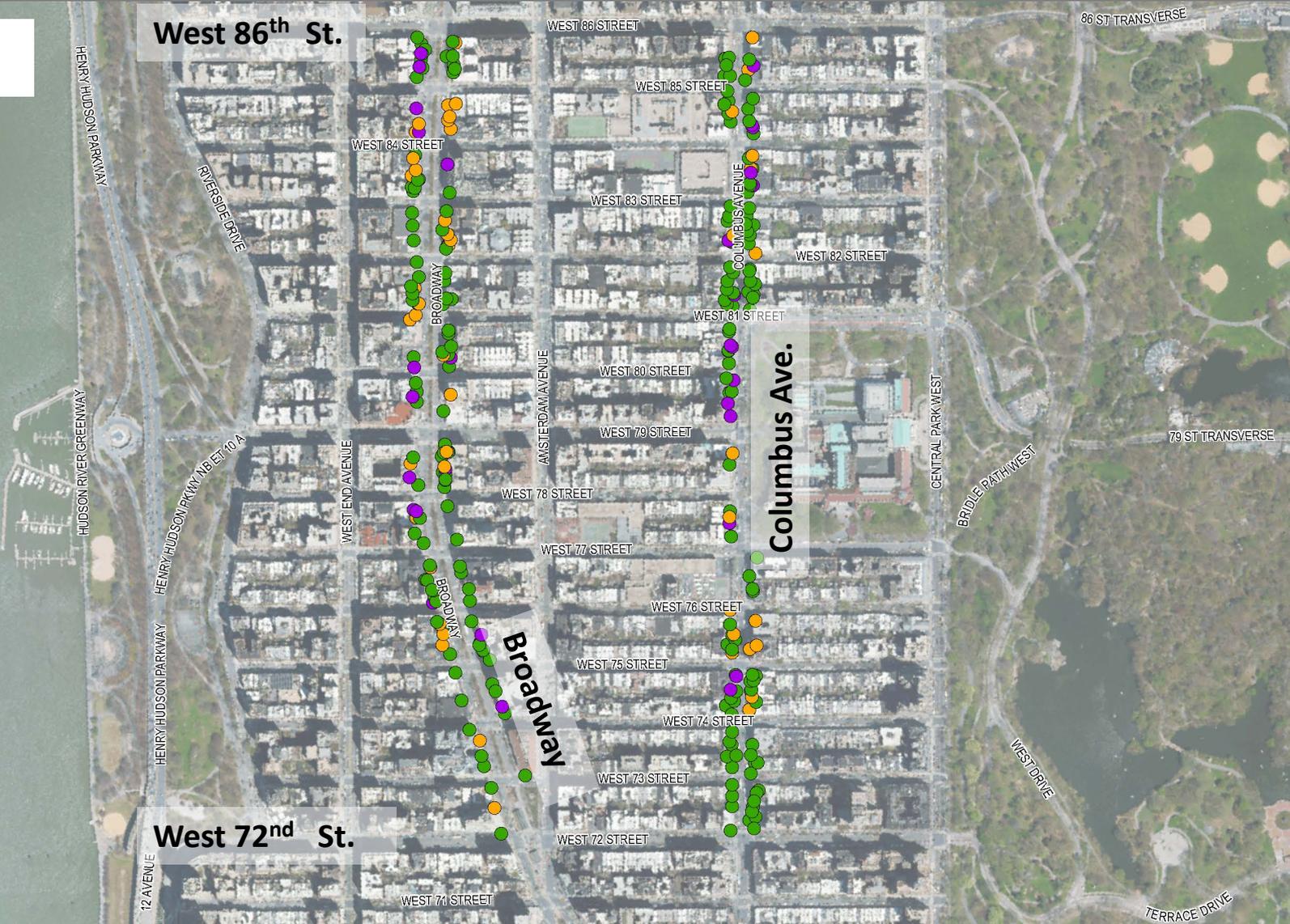
- Open (210)
- Closed (21)
- Vacant (65)
- Unknown (1)



Upper West Side Survey Results

71% Active

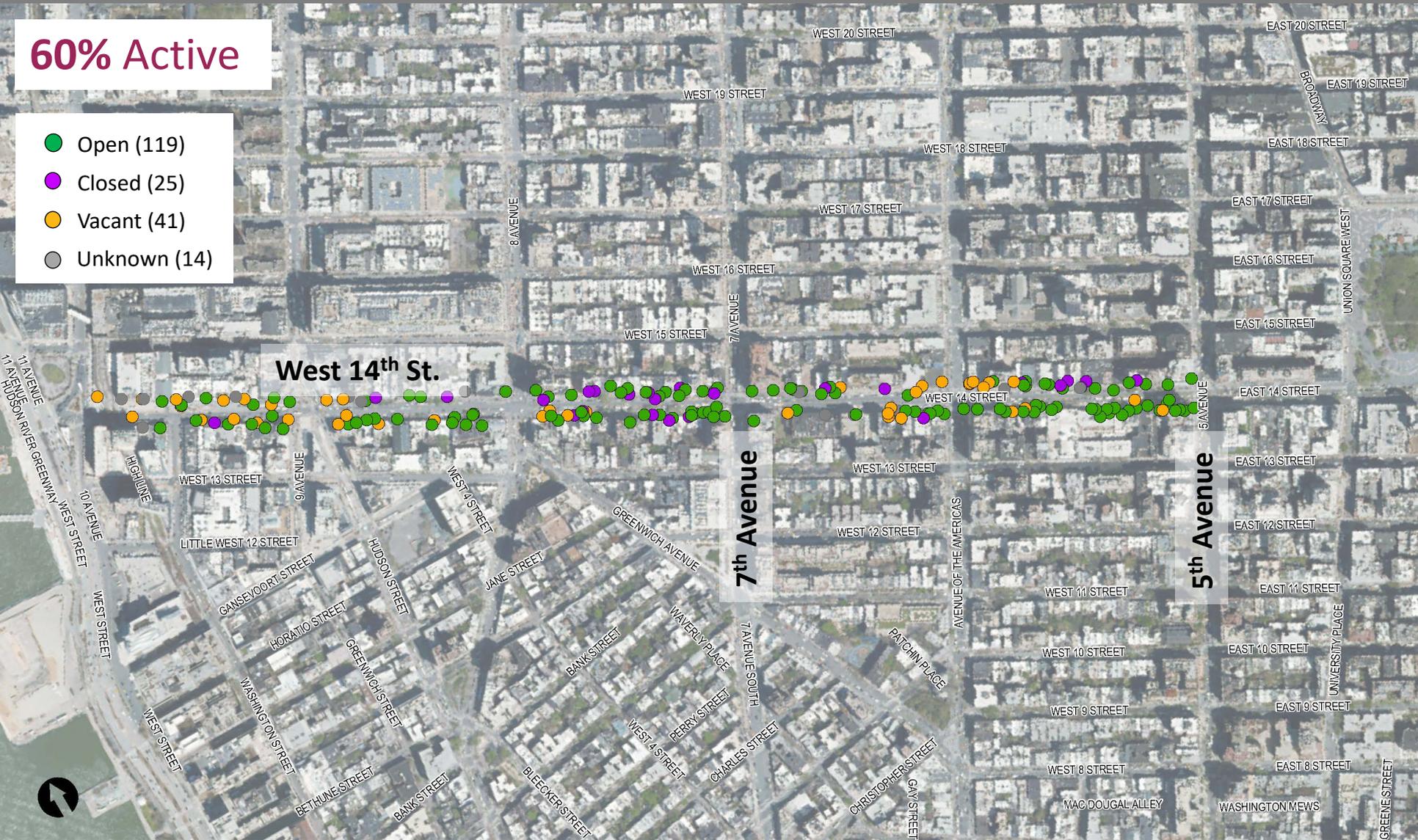
- Open (200)
- Closed (31)
- Vacant (51)
- Unknown (1)



West 14th Street Survey Results

60% Active

- Open (119)
- Closed (25)
- Vacant (41)
- Unknown (14)



Williamsburg Survey Results

57% Active

- Open (176)
- Closed (56)
- Vacant (62)
- Unknown (14)



Use Categorization

Dry Retail	Food and Beverage	Services
Apparel, accessories, luggage, and jewelry stores	Convenience store and bodega	Bank
Beauty supplies, vitamin, and personal care store	Full-service restaurant, bar	Beauty salon, barber, spa, wellness
Electronics store and cell carriers	Limited service restaurant, coffee shop	Check cashing, other financial services
General merchandise, including discount and department store	Liquor store	Daycare (child or adult)
Hardware, home center, and home improvement	Other food and beverage (caterers, etc.)	Education, training, learning center
Home décor, furniture, florist, and framing	Specialty food store (produce, butcher, baker)	Entertainment, culture
Media (books, music, video)	Supermarket, full line grocery, wholesale club	Gym, fitness
Office supplies, stationery, and gifts		Laundromat, dry cleaner, atailor
Mixed dry retail		Medical, dental, optical office
Pawn shop		Mixed services, offices
Pet supply		Printing, shipping, postal
Pharmacy		Professional services
Sporting goods, toy, hobby, craft stores		Religious, community center

NYC Department of City Planning

Leadership

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Surveyors

38 staff members in Borough Offices, Urban Design Division, and Transportation Division at the Department of City Planning

- Businesses were identified using Live XYZ data from Summer 2018. Although efforts were made to survey all ground floor businesses along each corridor, geocoding errors in the source data could have omitted a limited number of storefront businesses in each corridor.
- Although the same 24 corridors studied in the 2019 storefront vacancy report were surveyed for this assessment, five of these corridors were reduced in size in order to be able to conduct the surveys quickly and within the same phase of recovery. These include SoHo/NoHo, Upper West Side, Upper East Side, Jackson Heights, and Park Slope. To compare effectively between the two surveys, the 2018 vacancy rate was recalculated based on the smaller geography.
- Of the more than 6,600 storefronts in the survey, 32 were identified to be demolished or under demolition - including 23 on development sites in Fulton Mall – and were excluded from all calculations in this document.