Marketing Systems Group

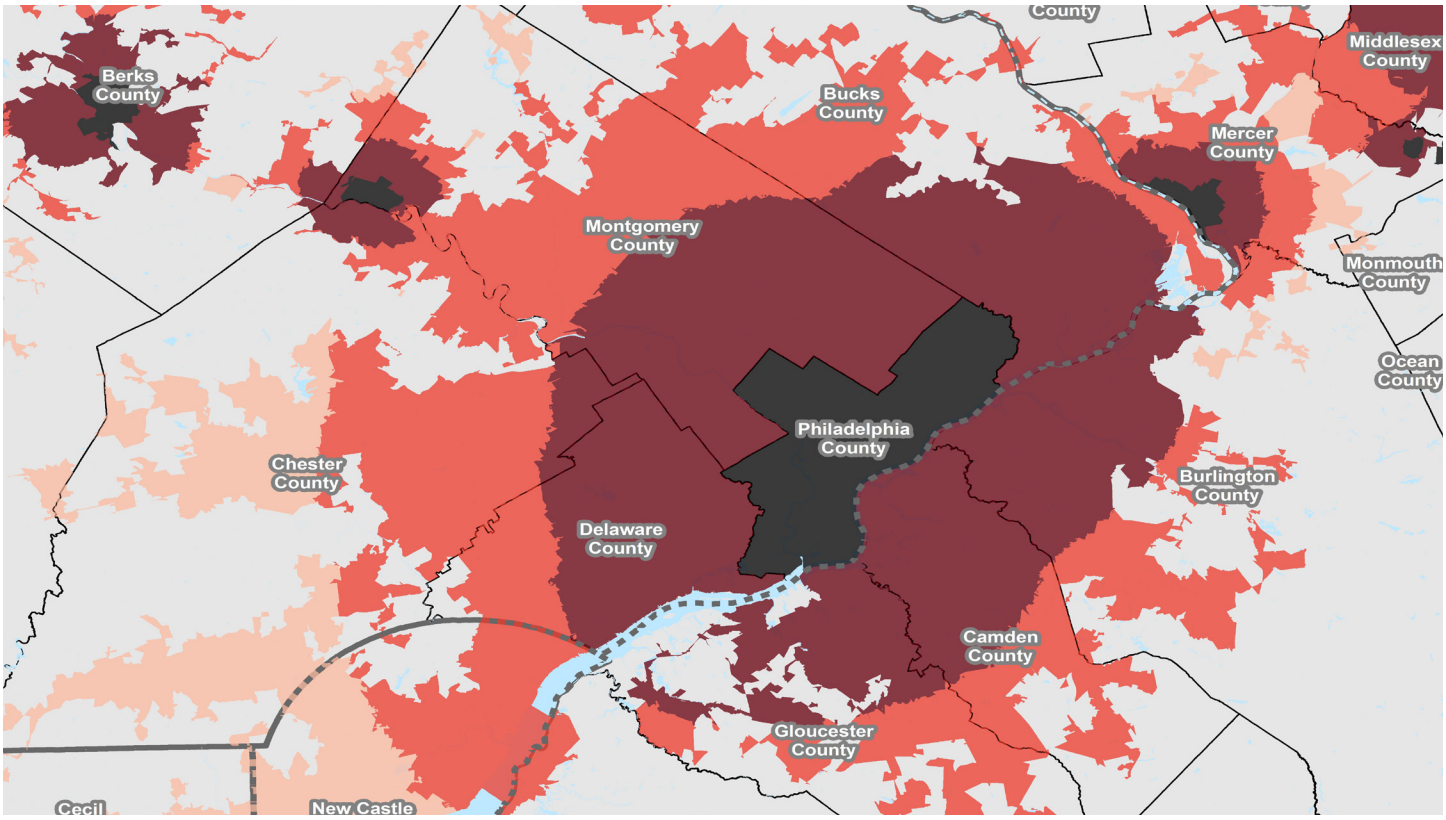
GIS

Defining Suburban Geography

Suburban geography has always been a colloquialism in the GIS world. While a common term used every day, there is no real geographic definition for "suburbs". Even the US Census doesn't have a definition for suburban geography. The US Census only classifies a unit of geography as being either urban or rural – which changes with each decennial census. Marketing Systems Group has developed a methodology that accurately defines three levels of suburban zones surrounding the urban core of each urbanized area in the country. These three distinct zones area classified as: S1 – Inner Suburbs, S2 – Mid Suburbs, and S3 – Outer Suburbs.

Suburban geography is defined at the census block level of geography. A census block must be completely within an urbanized area in order to qualify as a suburban candidate. Census blocks classified as suburban are then assigned to one of the three suburban zones.

The zone assignment for each suburban block is determined by a formula which takes into account a number of factors such as the size of the urbanized area, the number of suburban blocks within the urbanized area, and the distance of the block centroid to its urban core. Because each urbanized area is processed separately, the size or coverage of each zone will vary from one urbanized area to the next. As a result, suburban blocks from different urbanized areas having the same distance from their urban cores may not fall into the same zone.



Contact us for more information about Suburban Sample at 215.653.7100.