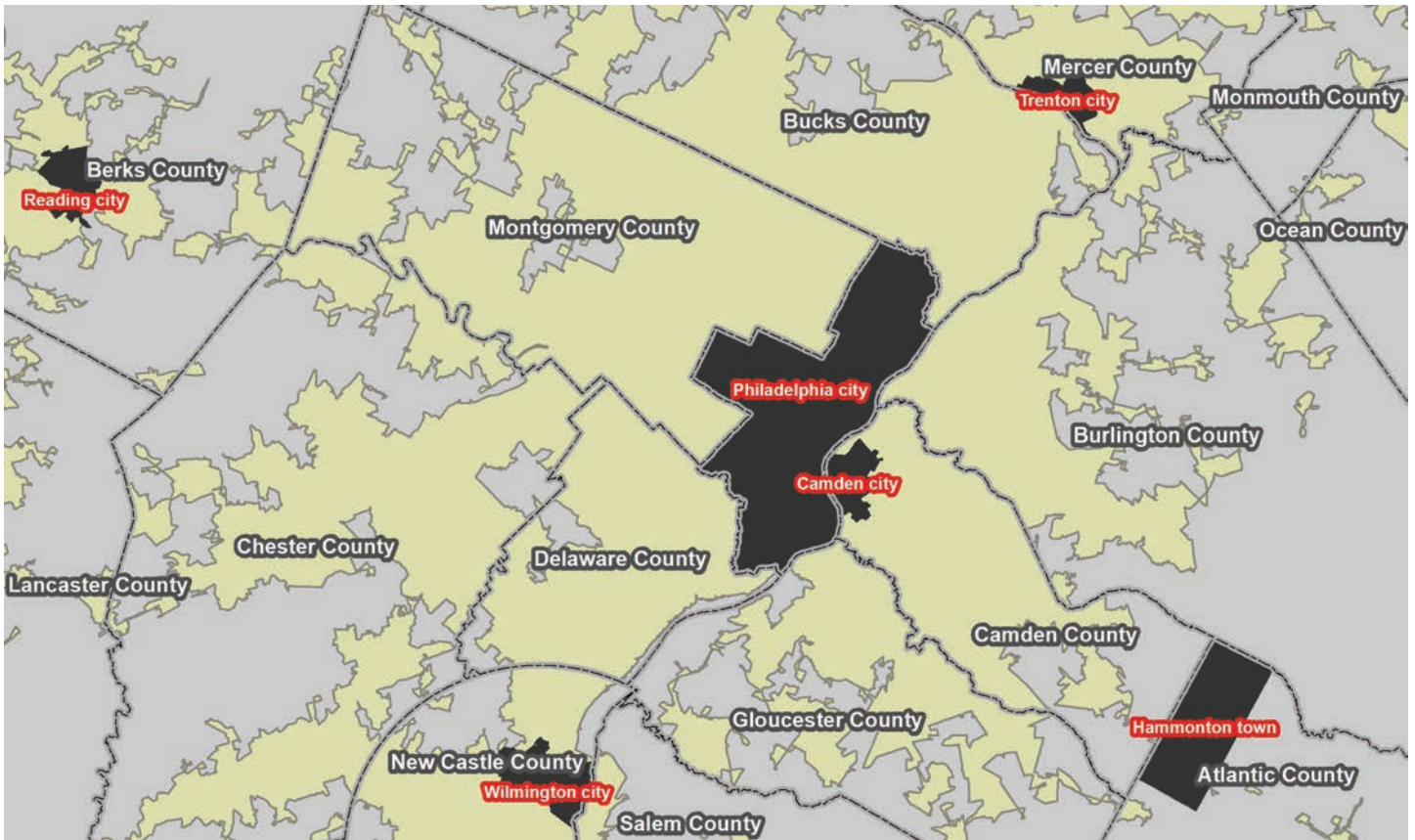


Defining Suburban Geography



Overview

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 are only updated with each decennial Census.

Marketing Systems Group has developed several methodologies that help identify areas that can be considered suburban. These methodologies use current definitions of CBSA Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas as the basis. Simply put, “suburban” can be classified as “the urbanized area located outside and surrounding Metropolitan Cities.” Unlike the Census Urban/Rural definitions, the geography defining CBSA’s change nearly every year. Suburban geography is initially constructed at the census block level, but the definitions can be rolled up to other geography levels including Block Group, Census Tract, and ZIP Code.

Methodologies

1. The default methodology adheres to the definitions of CBSA Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSA) and their Principle City(s).
 - All census blocks inside the Principle City(s) of an MSA are coded “Urban”
 - All Census classified urban blocks outside of the Principle City(s) but inside a component county of an MSA are coded “Suburban”
 - All remaining blocks including those in non MSA counties are coded “Rural”
2. The second more inclusive methodology adheres to the definitions of both CBSA Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas and their Principle City(s).
 - All census blocks inside the Principle City(s) of a Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area are coded “Urban”
 - All Census classified urban blocks outside of the Principle City(s) but inside a component county of a Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area are coded “Suburban”
 - All remaining blocks including those not in either a Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Area are coded “Rural”
3. US Census definitions for Urban and Rural can be provided at multiple levels of Geography starting at the Census Block level.
4. Custom methodologies for defining Suburban Geography can be also developed depending upon the need and objectives of a given project.