Understanding “Place” in Census Bureau Data Products

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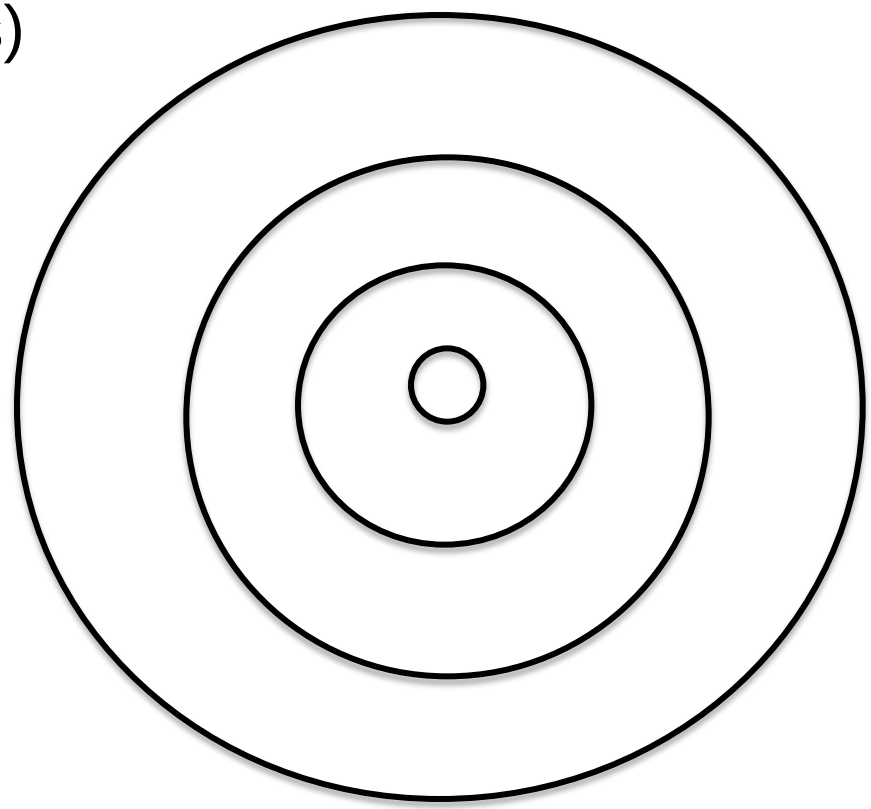
What is a place?
What do we mean by “place?”

- Municipality, city, town, village, borough
- Town/township
- Community
- Neighborhood
- Postal place/ZIP Code
- Populated place
- Named locations that appear as points on maps
- Areas associated with a specific name

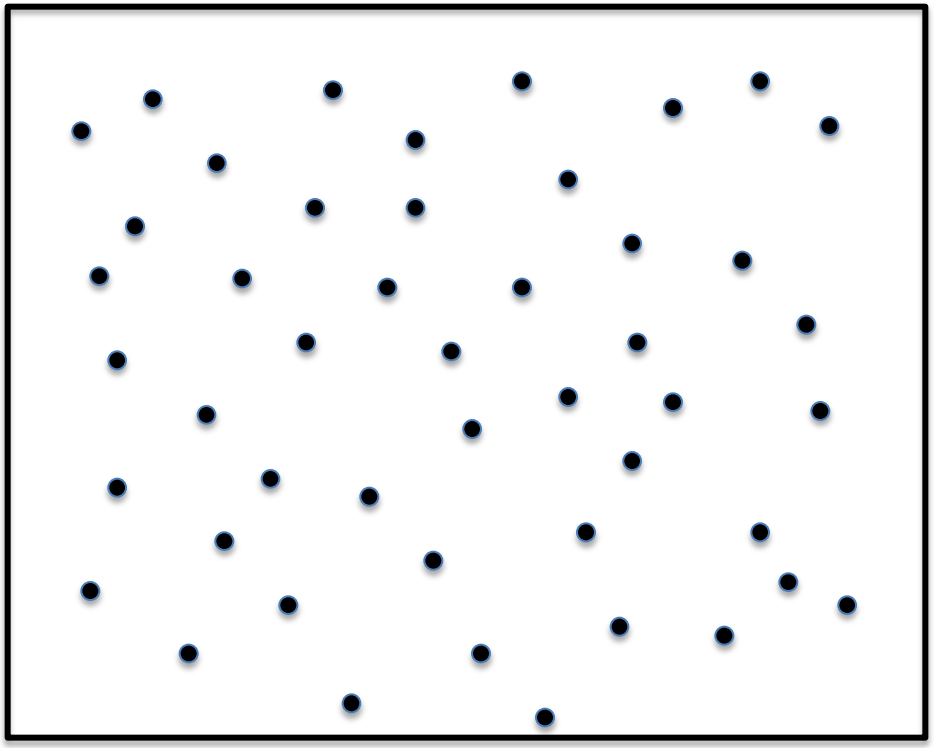
Census Bureau Place Concept

- Places are “organic”— they expand (or contract) over time as population and commercial activity increases (or decreases)

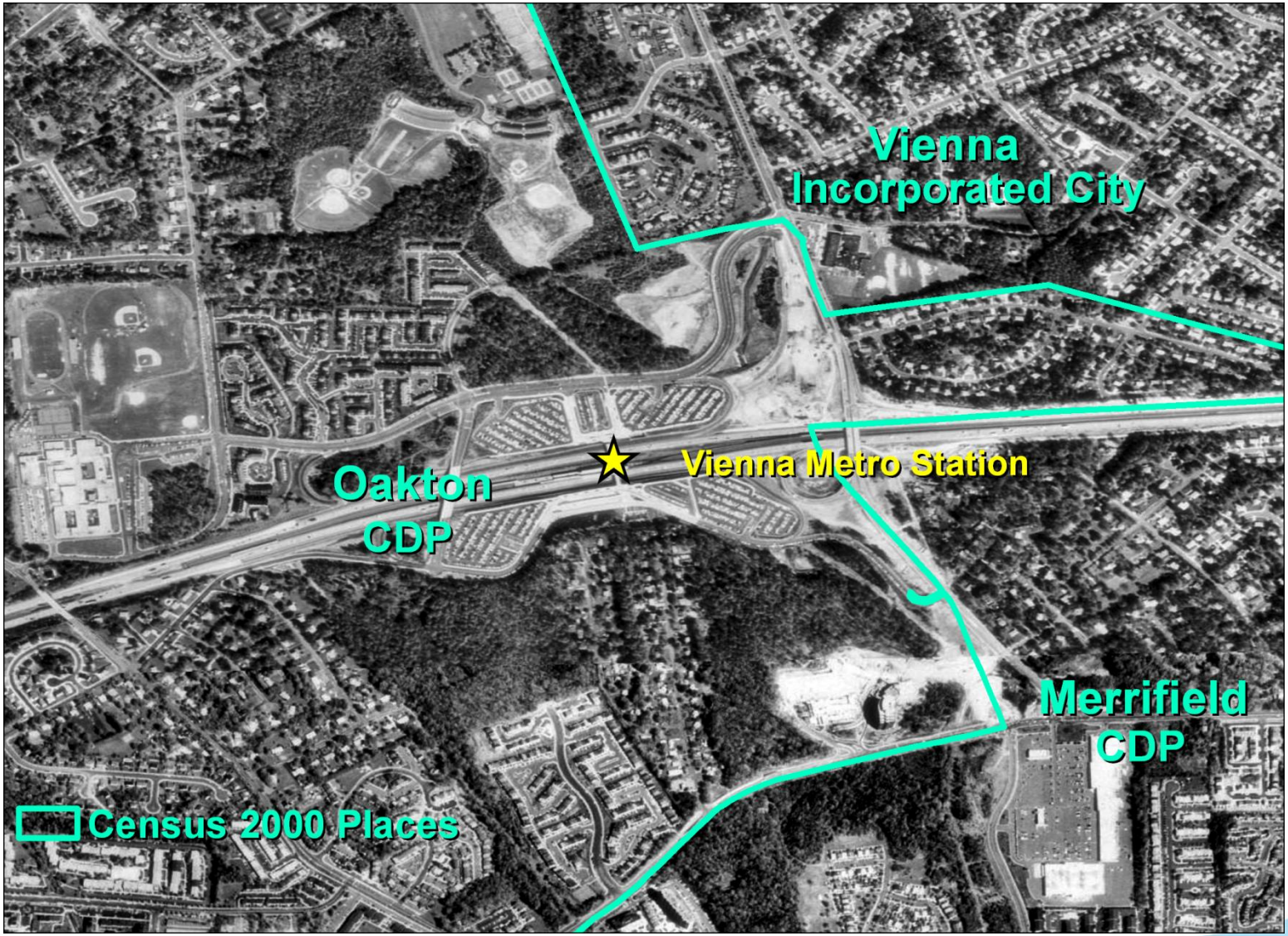


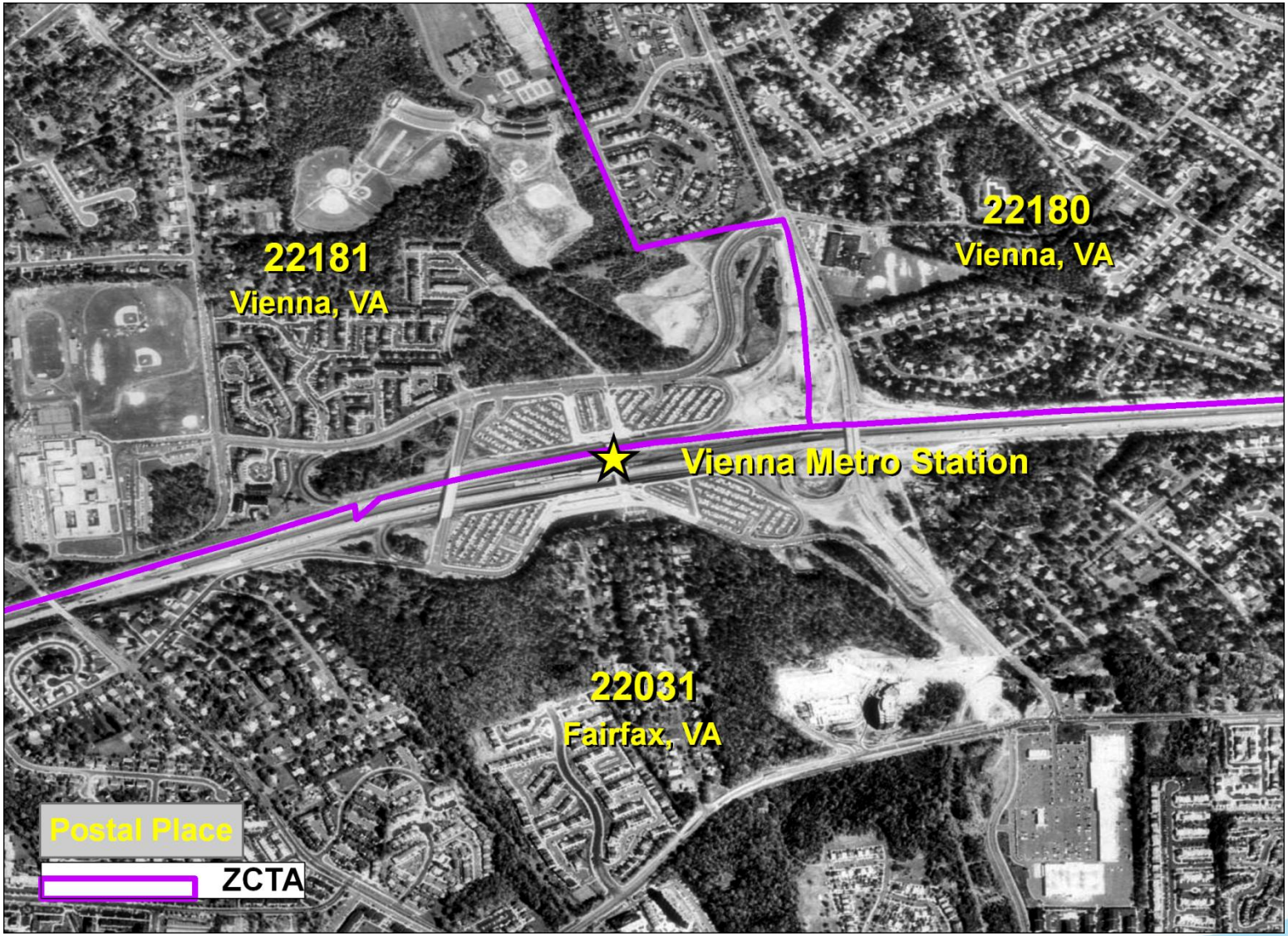
United States Census Bureau

Towns/townships are administrative areas; boundaries remain relatively constant as population changes.



United States Census Bureau


Vienna
Incorporated City
Vienna Metro Station
Oakton
CDP
Merrifield
CDP
Census 2000 Places



United States Census Bureau

Census Bureau Places

Incorporated Places

- Legally bounded entity
- Cities, boroughs, towns, or villages, depending on the state
- Over 19,000 incorporated places

Census Designated Places (CDPs)

- Statistical entity
- Unincorporated community, concentration of population, housing, and commercial structures, identifiable by name, but not within an incorporated place
- Nearly10,000 CDPs for 2010 Census

Incorporated Places

Includes:

- Cities
- Towns (except in the six New England states, New York, and Wisconsin)
- Villages
- Boroughs (except in New York and Alaska)

Does not include:

- Towns/townships in the Northeast and Midwest

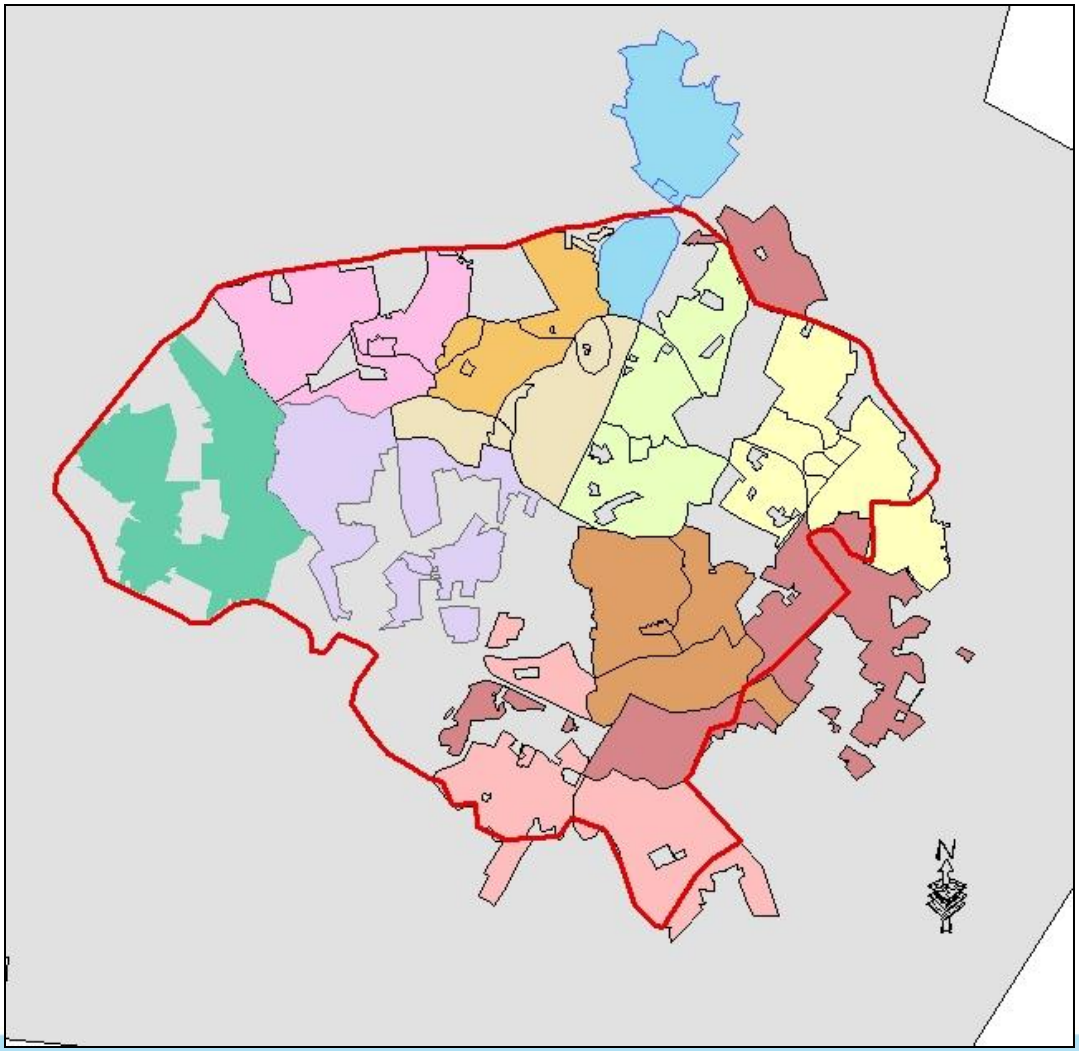
CDPs encompass a variety of places:

- Places with same range of social and economic activities as incorporated places, but lack governments: Silver Spring, MD
- Special taxation areas: Paradise, NV and other “unincorporated towns” in Nevada
- Towns/townships in the Northeast and Midwest that were defined as “whole town” CDPs: Framingham, MA
- Village centers within towns/townships: Amherst Centre, MA
- Administrative centers/county seats
- Communities with unique characteristics and needs for data: colonias in TX, NM, AZ, and CA

Census Designated Places

- The distinction between “legal” and “statistical” as well as incorporated and unincorporated can be fuzzy for some CDPs:
  - Nevada’s unincorporated towns have legal status, legally defined boundaries, and have a mayor and town council
  - “Whole town” CDPs in the Northeast and Midwest are coextensive with towns/townships, which are recognized as municipalities, have legal boundaries and governments
  - Some CDPs (for example, Columbia, MD; Reston, VA) are defined around large associations, incorporated under state law.

Columbia, MD CDP (1990 Census) with "village" boundaries



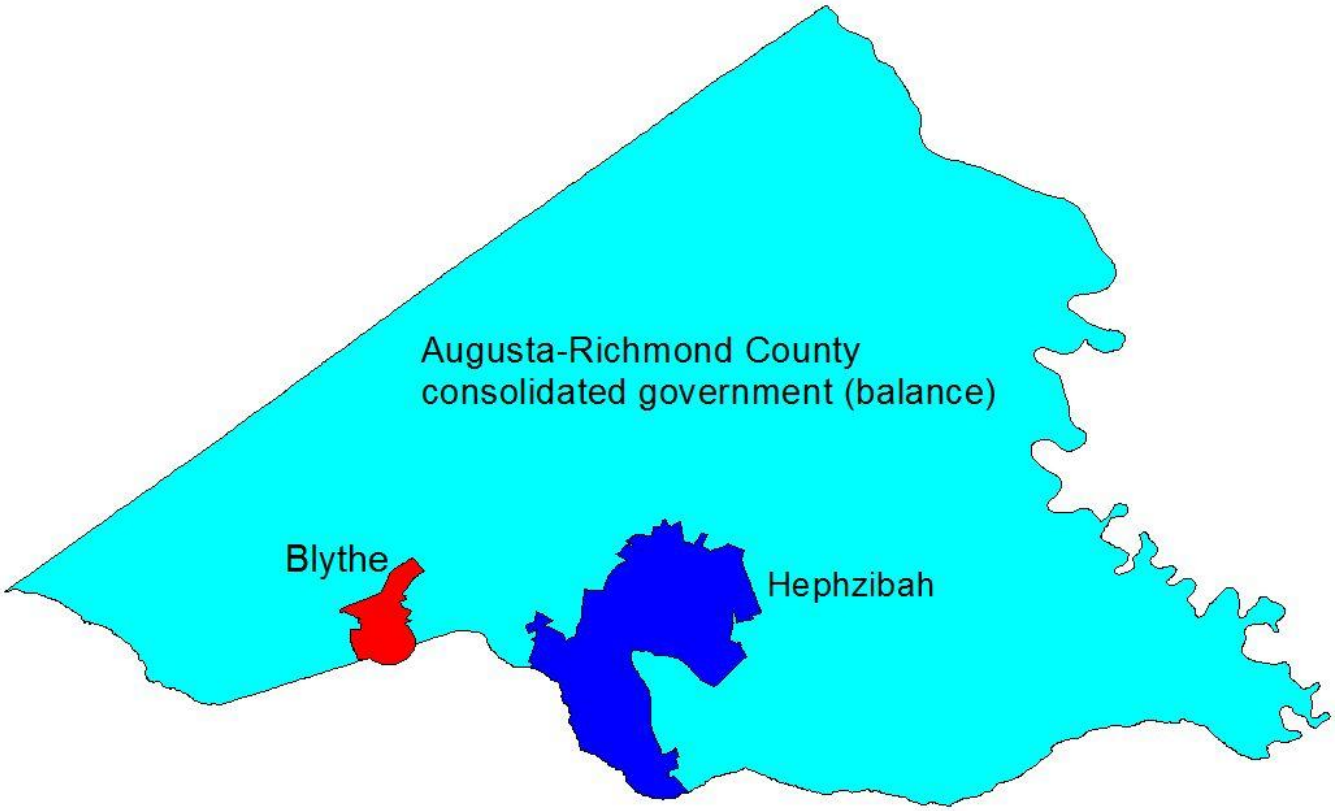
The Columbia Association is a homeowners' association incorporated under the laws of Maryland. The association has an elected council, as does each village.

Consolidated Cities

- Within each consolidated city, a “balance” entity is defined, encompassing the area of the original city and the area outside the “dependent” incorporated places

- Augusta-Richmond County consolidated government
  - Augusta-Richmond County (balance)
  - Blythe city
  - Hephzibah city

Augusta-Richmond County consolidated city



County Subdivisions

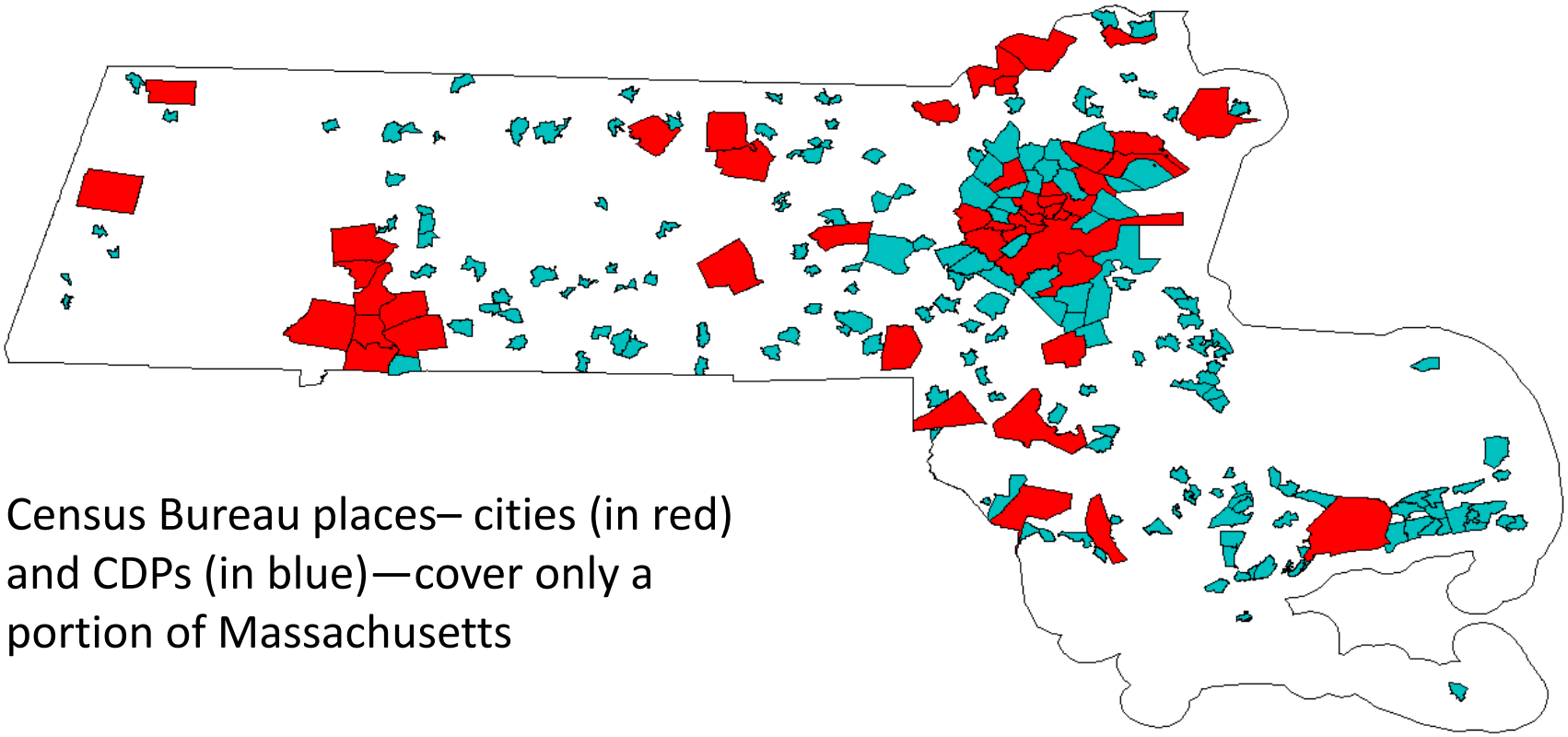
Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs)

- Legal entity in 29 states, DC, and Puerto Rico, and the Island Areas
- May have a formal government with elected officials
- Over 30,000 MCDs for the 2010 Census

Census County Divisions (CCDs)

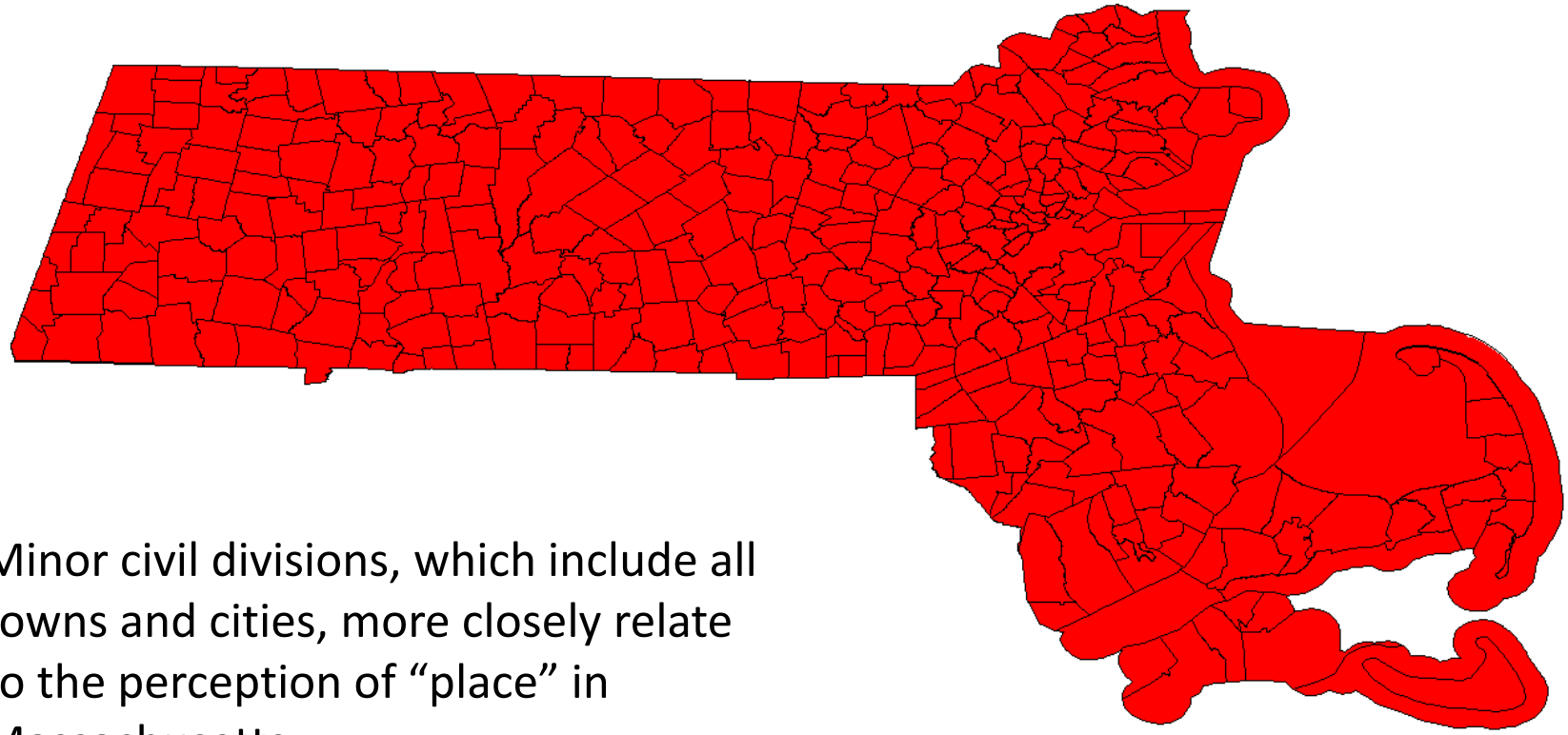
- Statistical entity in 21 states
- Stable boundaries, recognizable names
- Over 5,200 CCDs for the 2010 Census

Massachusetts Places (Census Bureau definition)



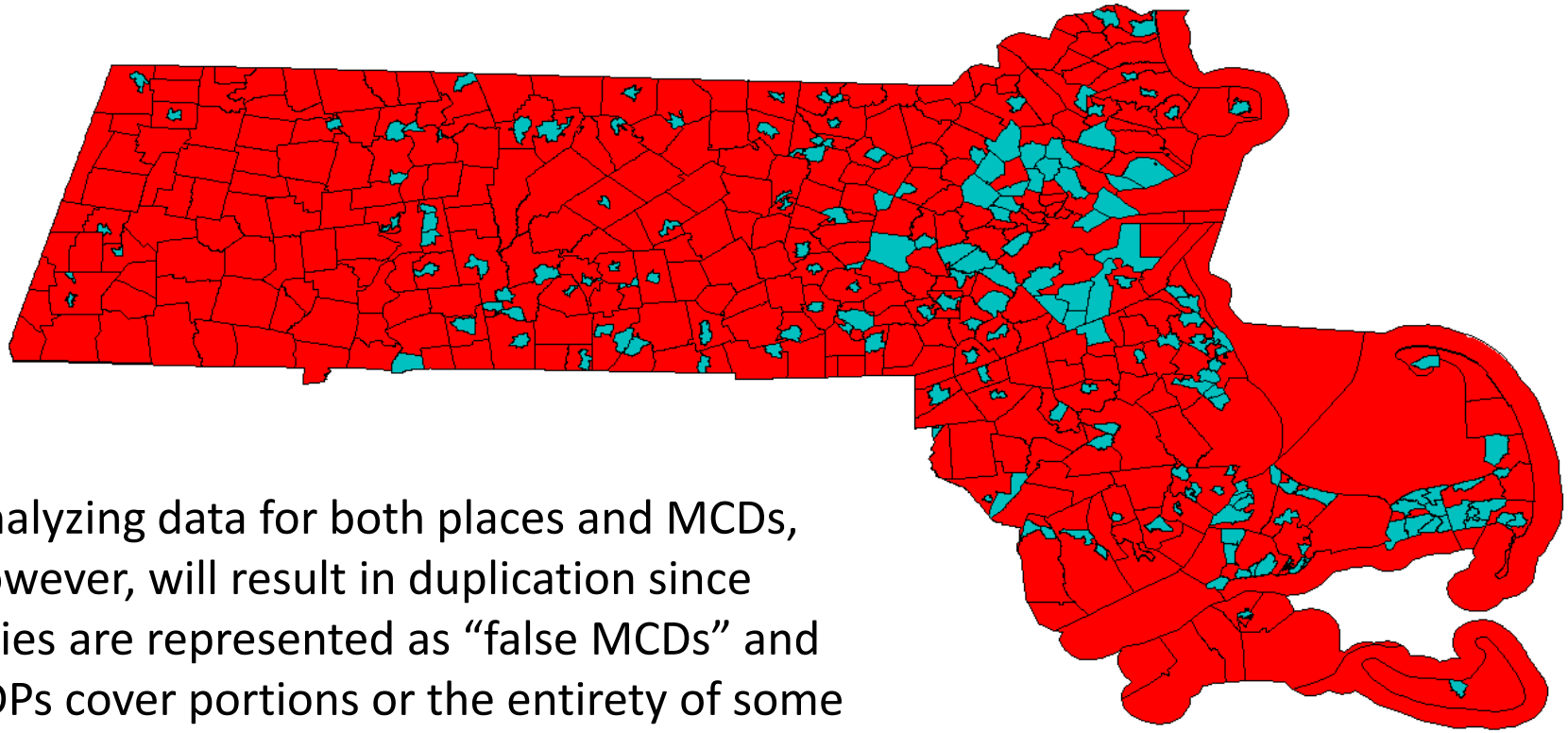
Census Bureau places– cities (in red) and CDPs (in blue)—cover only a portion of Massachusetts

Massachusetts Towns and Cities (Census Bureau MCDs)



Minor civil divisions, which include all towns and cities, more closely relate to the perception of “place” in Massachusetts.

Massachusetts places and MCDs



Analyzing data for both places and MCDs, however, will result in duplication since cities are represented as “false MCDs” and CDPs cover portions or the entirety of some towns.

“Whole town” CDPs in Massachusetts

State County County Subdivision Place	Total population
Hampshire County—Con.	
Pelham town	1 403
Plainfield town	589
Southampton town	5 387
South Hadley town	17 196
Ware town	9 707
Ware CDP	6 174
Westhampton town	1 468
Williamsburg town	2 427
Worthington town	1 270
Middlesex County	1 465 396
Acton town	20 331
Arlington town	42 389
Arlington CDP	42 389
Ashby town	2 845
Ashland town	14 674
Ayer town	7 287
Ayer CDP	2 960
Fort Devens CDP (part)	266
Bedford town	12 595
Belmont town	24 194
Belmont CDP	24 194
Billerica town	38 981
Pinehurst CDP	6 941
Boxborough town	4 868
Burlington town	22 876
Burlington CDP	22 876
Cambridge city	101 355
Carlisle town	4 717
Chelmsford town	33 858
Concord town	16 993
West Concord CDP	5 632
Dracut town	28 562
Dunstable town	2 829
Everett city	38 037
Framingham town	66 910
Framingham CDP	66 910
Groton town	9 547
Groton CDP	1 113

Economic Place Concept

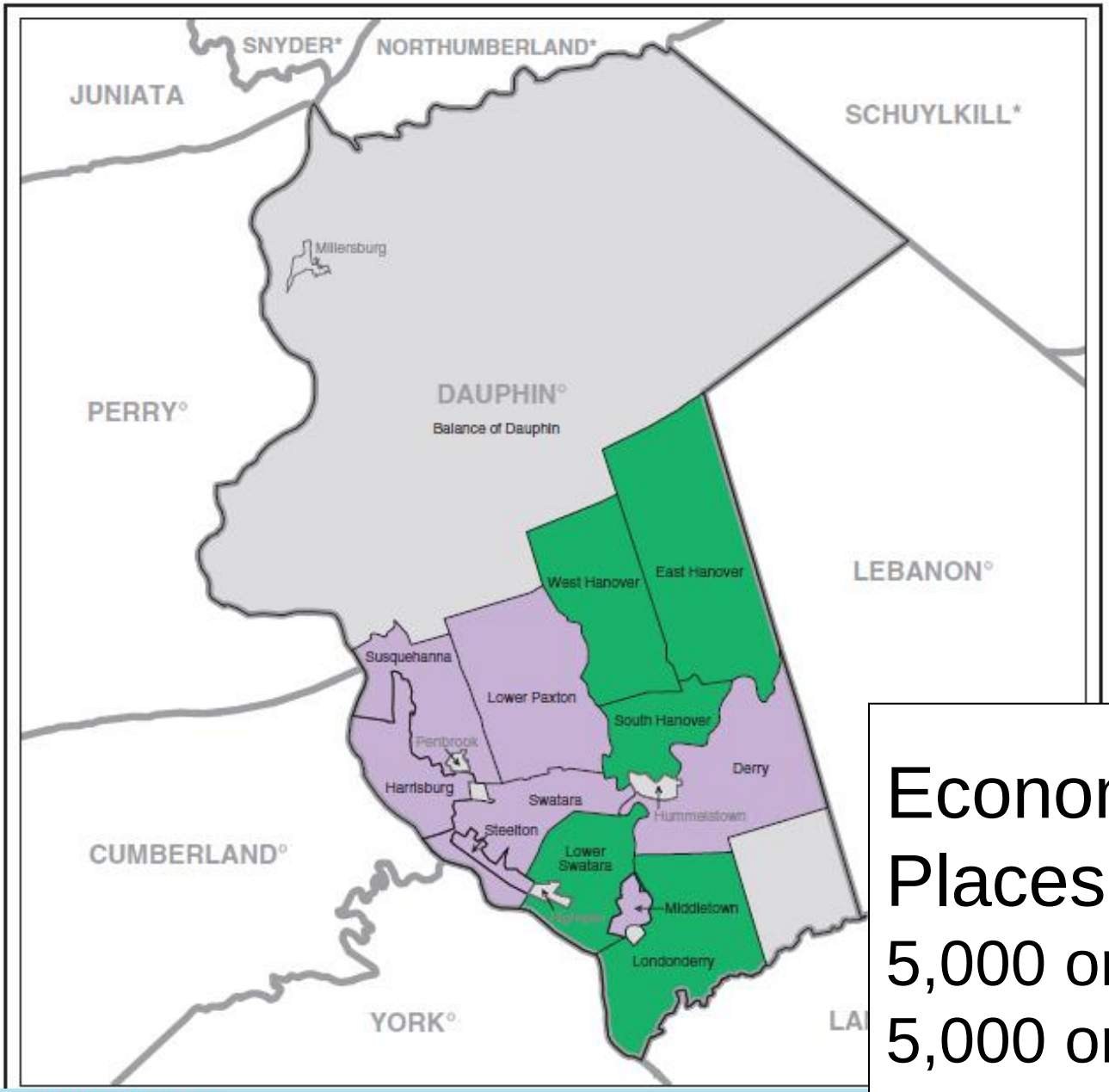
Includes:

- Incorporated places
- Census designated places
- Towns/townships in the Northeast as well as Michigan, Minnesota, and Wisconsin
- Balance of town
- Balance of county

Places must encompass either

- 5,000 or more people, or
- 5,000 or more jobs

Dauphin County, PA – Economic Places



Economic Census Places:

5,000 or more people, or 5,000 or more jobs

Not all places/communities appear in Census Bureau products

- Places or communities within larger incorporated places
  - Georgetown, within Washington, DC
- Unincorporated places for which boundaries are not provided
  - La Mesa, NM (for Census 2000; La Mesa is defined as a CDP for the 2010 Census)

Data for Places and County Subdivisions

	Decennial Census	American Community Survey	Population Estimates Program	Economic Census
Incorporated Places	All	All, in 5-year estimates	All	5,000 or more persons/jobs
Census Designated Places	All	All, in 5-year estimates	Not included	5,000 or more persons/jobs
MCDs	All	All, in 5-year estimates	20 states only	12 states only
CCDs	All	All, in 5-year estimates	Not included	Not included

Questions? Comments?

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