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Introduction to  
**Census Geographies**



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Fundamentals of

# — Census Geographies —

# Census Geographic Entity Types

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## Legal/Administrative Areas

- Existence and boundaries officially prescribed through legal means to manage various programs
- Census Bureau generally accepts boundaries provided by official local entities

## Statistical Entities

- Created based on the programmatic and analytical needs of data users for situations when geographic coverage of legal entities is inadequate
- Census Bureau cooperates with local entities to establish standards and boundaries

# Census Geographic Entities

Geographic Area	Type	Number
Nation	Legal	1
Regions	Statistical	4
Divisions	Statistical	9
States and Equivalent	Legal	57
Metropolitan Areas	Statistical	362
Urbanized Areas	Statistical	405
Counties and Equivalent	Legal	3248
County Subdivisions and Places	Mixed	60,228
Census Tracts	Statistical	62,276
Block Groups	Statistical	229,192
Blocks	Statistical	7,017,427
Special-Purpose Entities	Legal/Administrative	404,583

# Unique Geographic Entity Codes

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## **Federal Information Processing Standards (FIPS)**

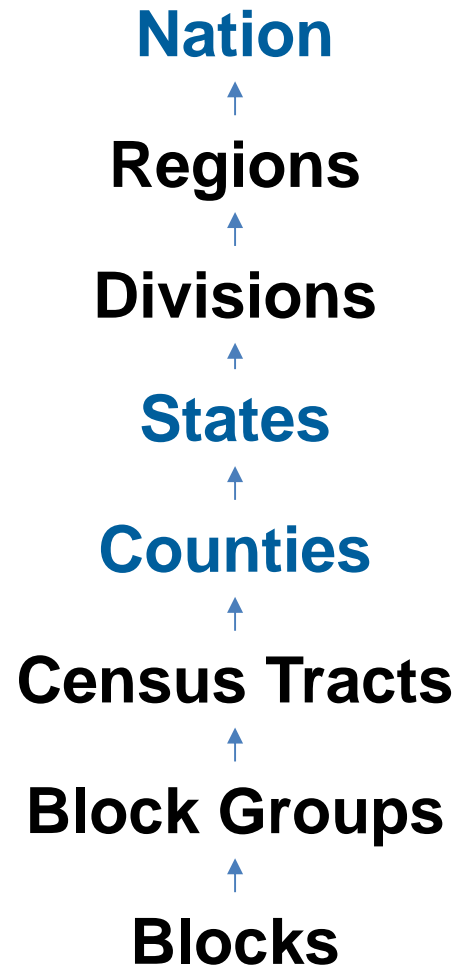
- Issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST)

## **American National Standards Institute Codes (ANSI)**

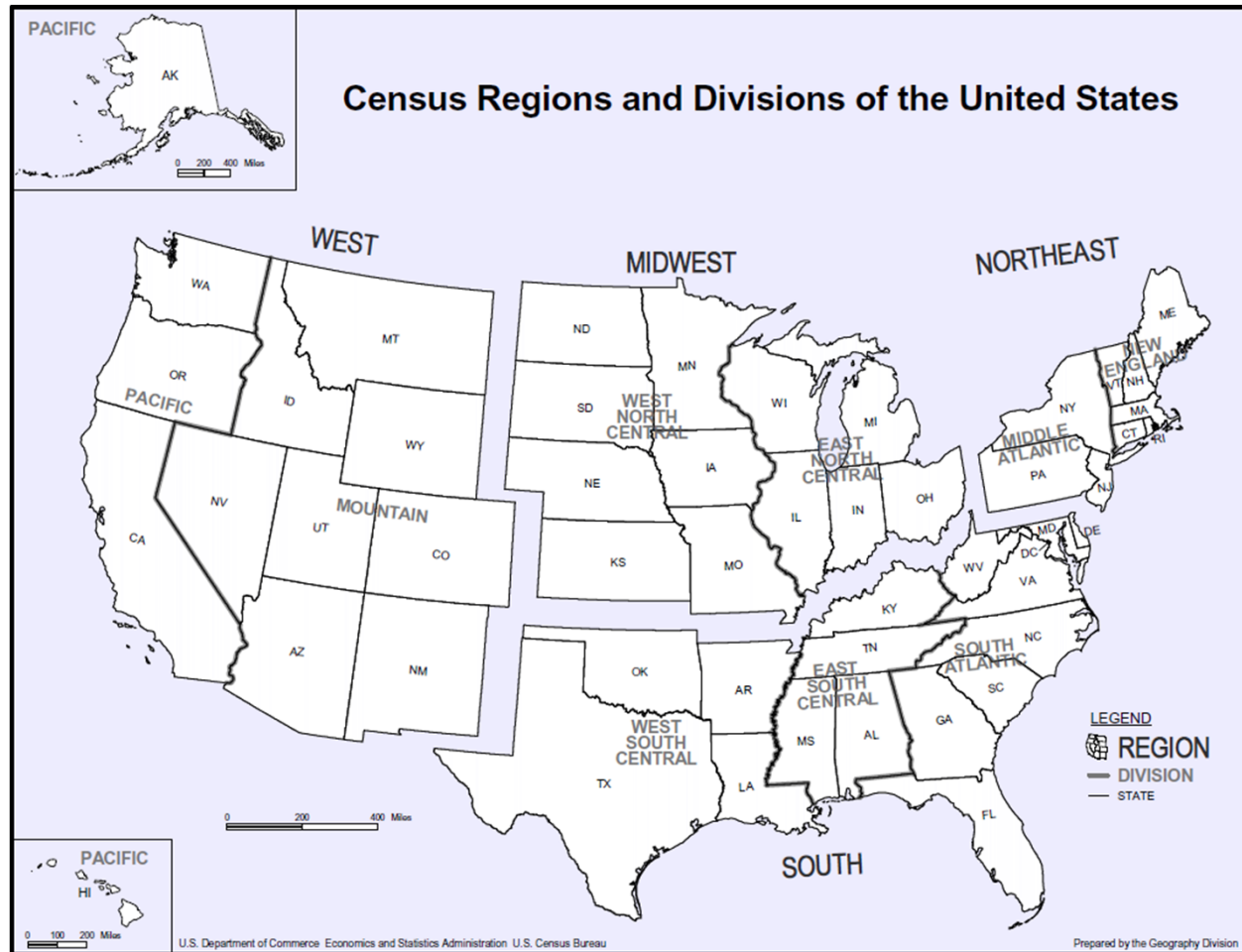
- Issued by the InterNational Committee for Information Technology Standards (INCITS)

# Census Geographic Entities

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# Regions and Divisions



# States and Equivalents

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- Assigned a unique 2-digit code in alphabetical order  
(Texas = 48)

## Statistical Equivalent Entities

- District of Columbia
- Puerto Rico
- American Samoa
- Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
- Guam
- U.S. Virgin Islands



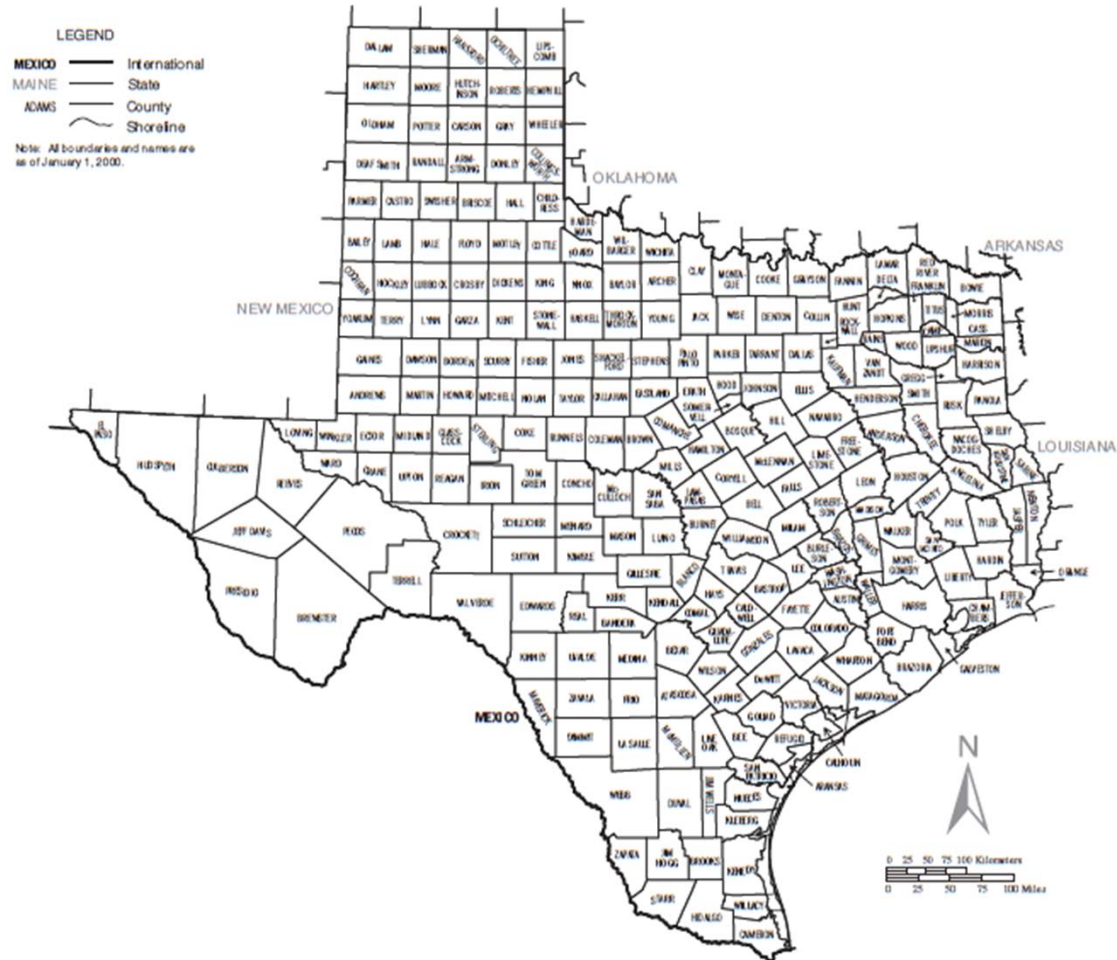
# Counties and Equivalents

- Assigned a unique 3-digit code in alphabetical order within each state

(Harris County = 201)

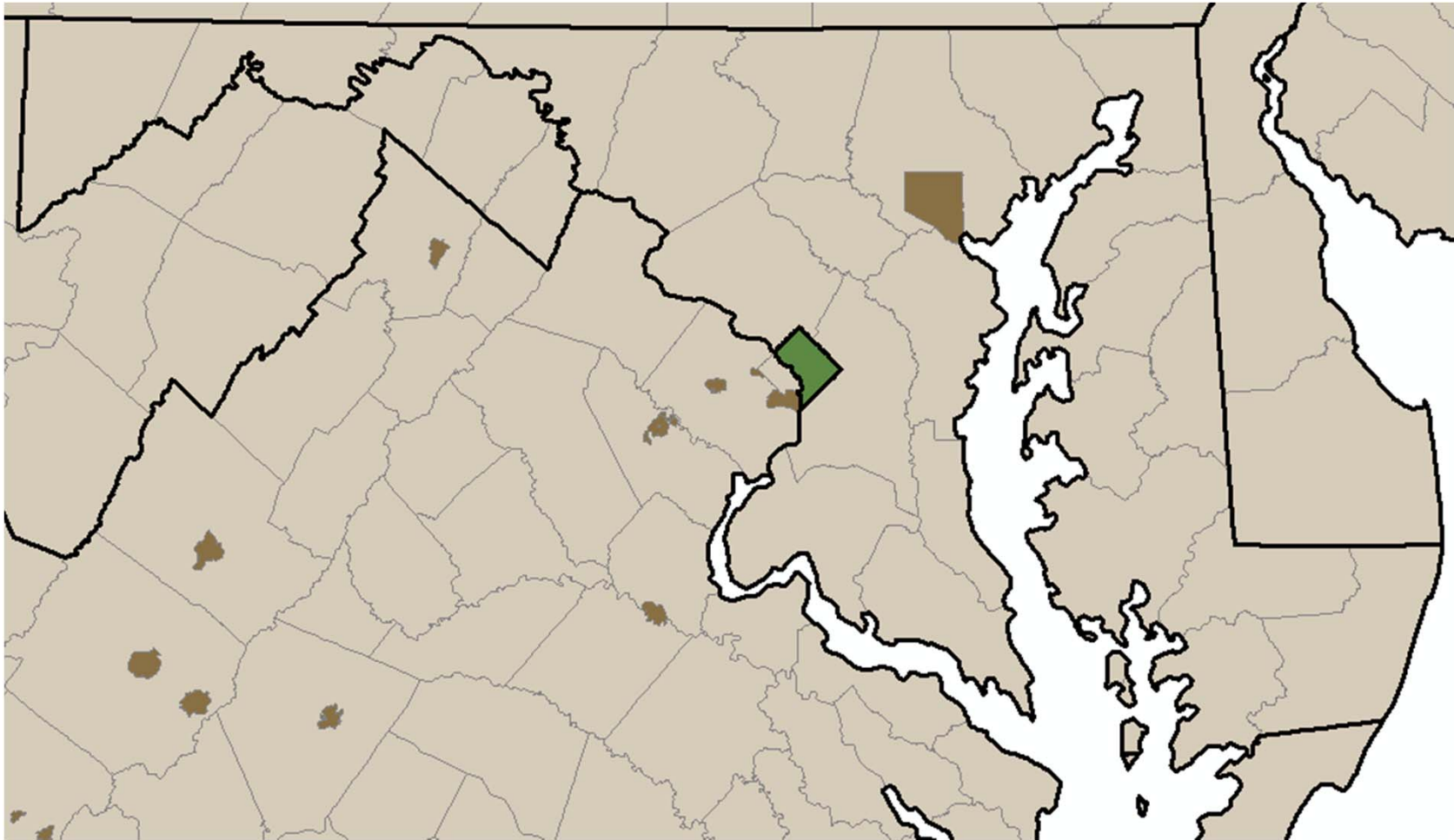
Geographic Entity	Type
Counties	48 states
Parishes	Louisiana
Cities, Boroughs, Municipalities, and Census Areas	Alaska
Incorporated Places	MD, MO, NV, VA
District of Columbia and Guam	No subdivisions
Municipios	Puerto Rico
Islands and Districts	American Samoa
Municipalities	Northern Marianas
Islands	U.S. Virgin Islands

# Counties in Texas



# Counties in Washington, DC Region

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# ==== Census Tracts =====

# Census Tracts

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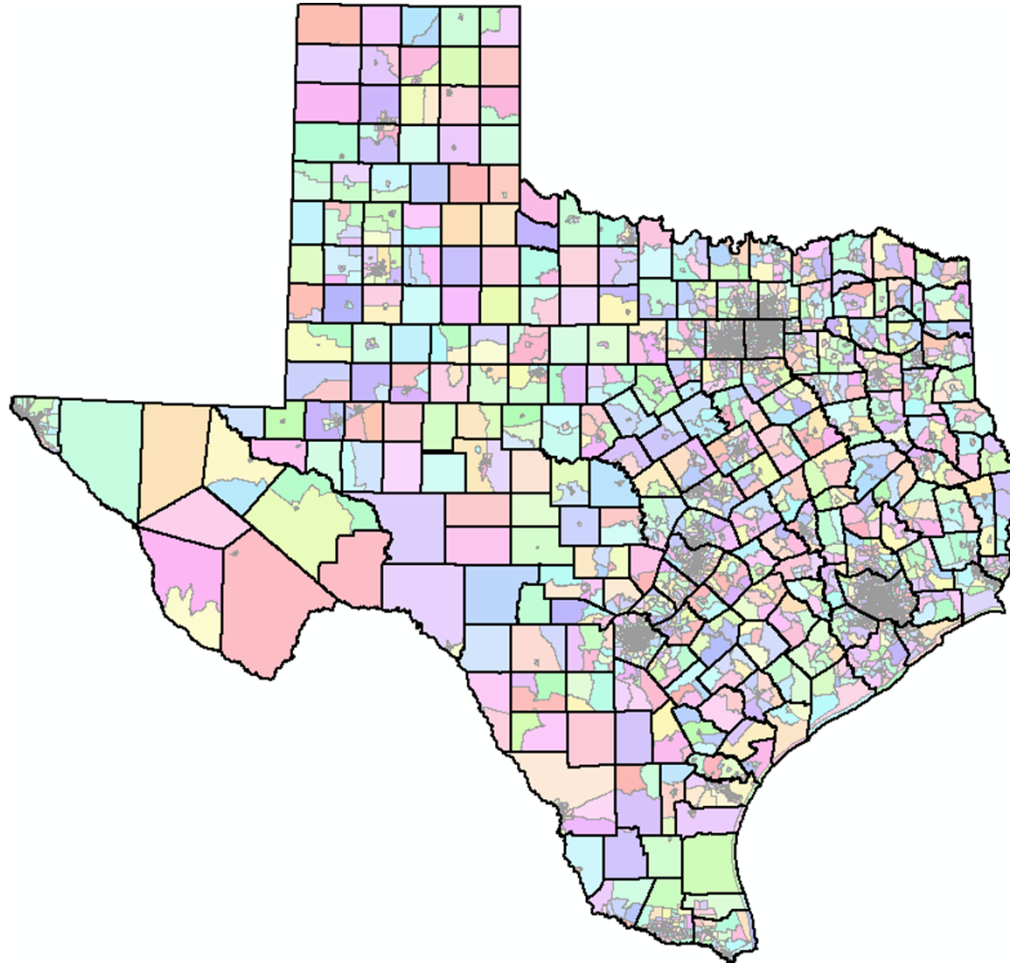
- Small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county
- Uniquely numbered in each county with a 6-digit numeric code `XXXX.XX`

## Target Population

- Optimum population = 4,000
- Minimum population = 1,200
- Maximum population = 8,000

# Census Tracts in Texas

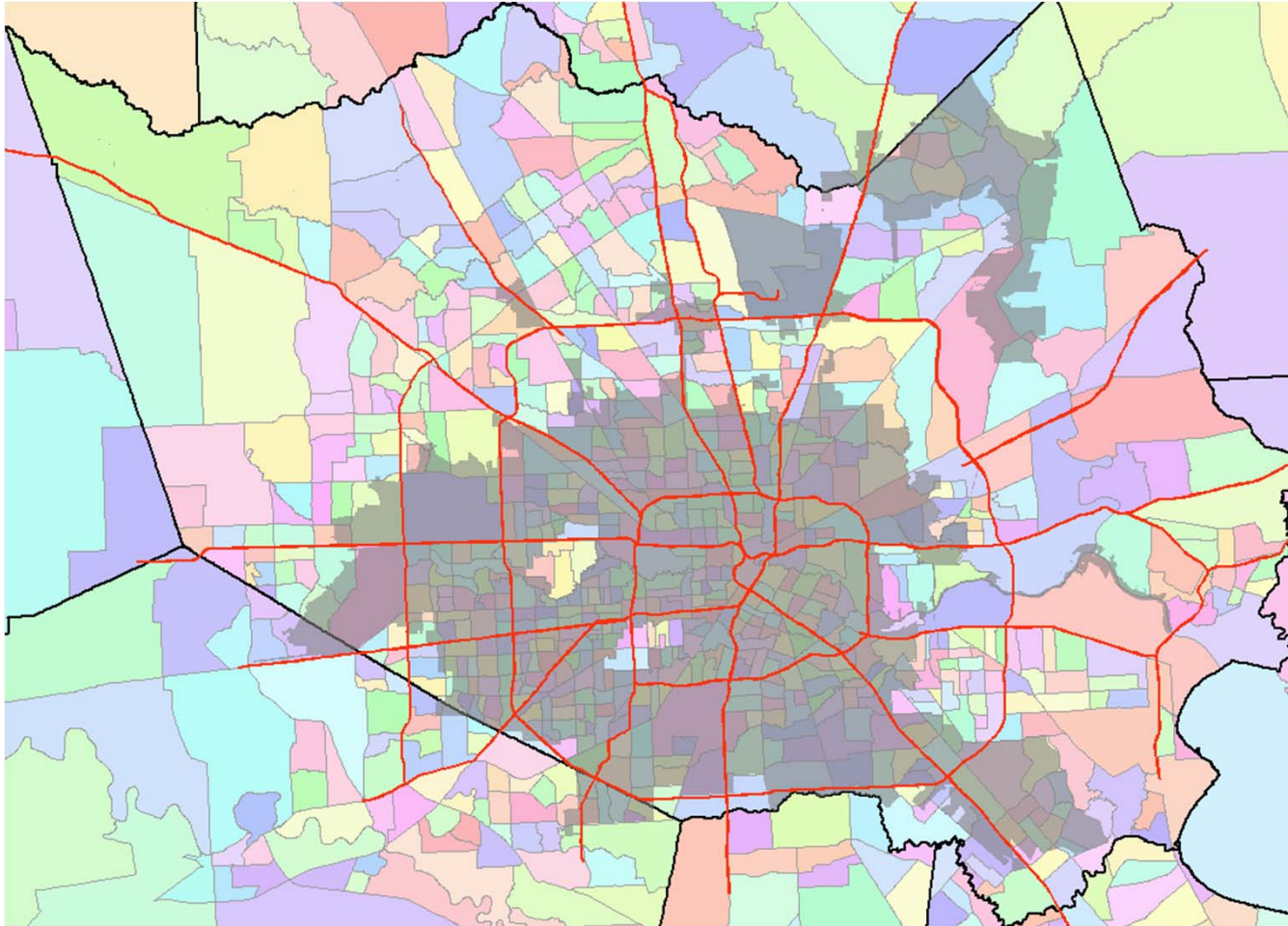
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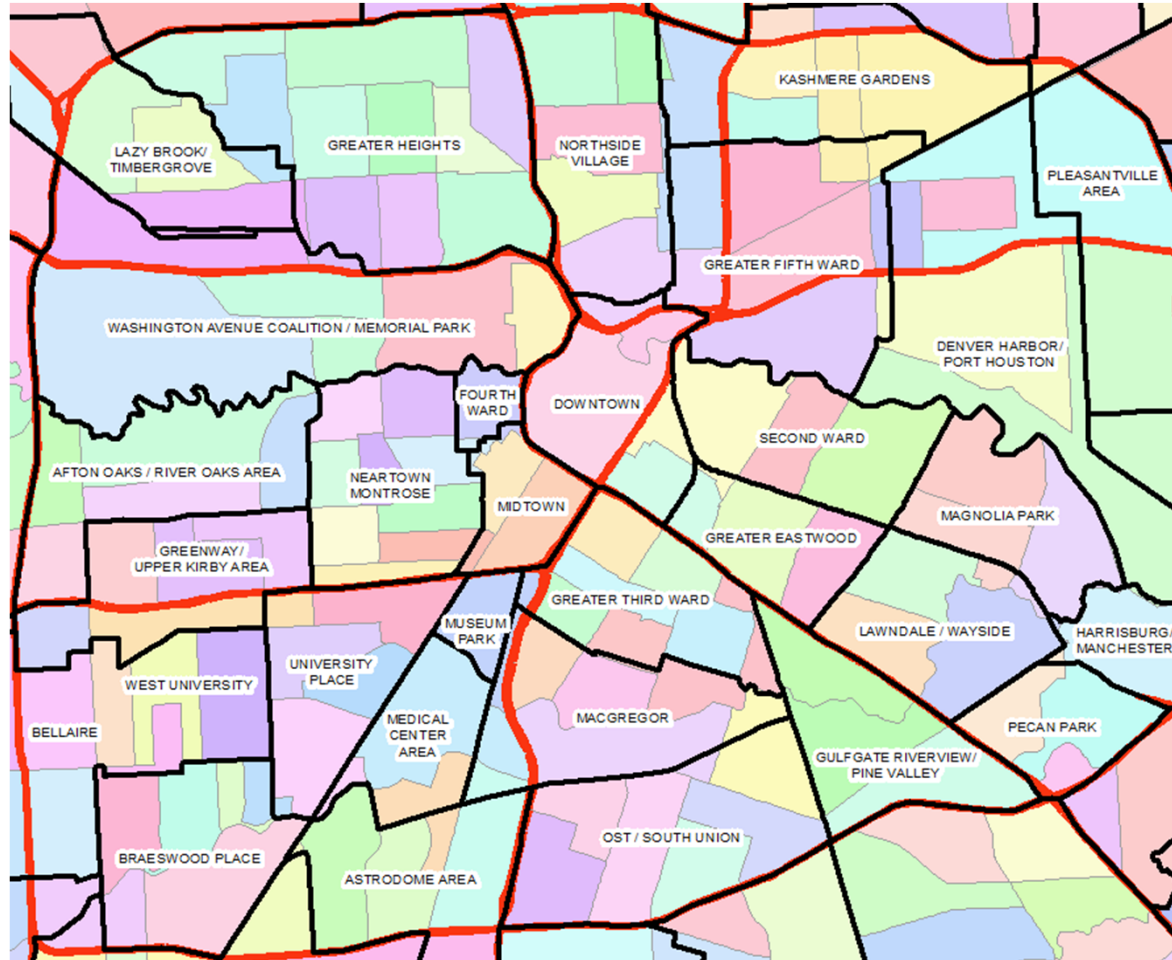


# Census Tracts in Harris County

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# Census Tracts Inside the Loop





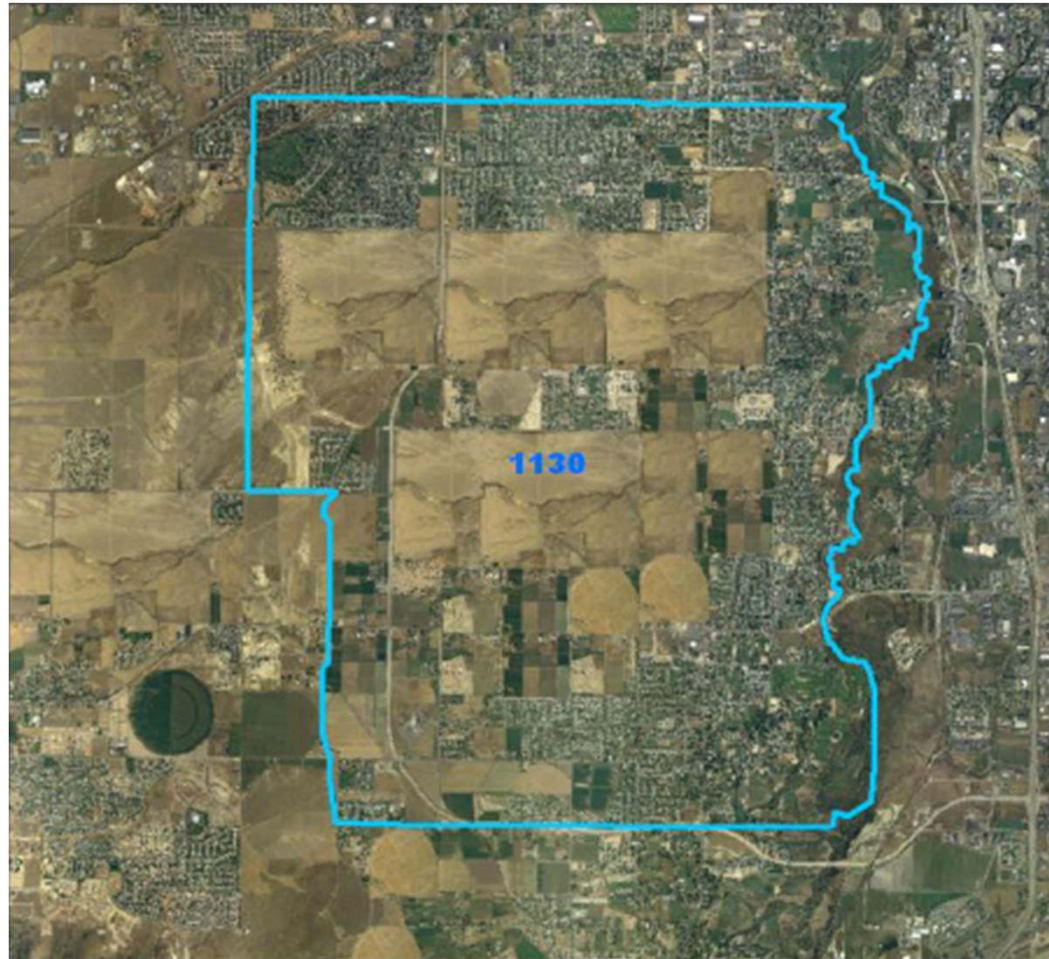
# Updating Census Tracts

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- Updated decennially through the Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP)
- Census tracts  $> 8,000$  are split
- Census tracts  $< 1,200$  are merged
- Small boundary revisions allowed as long as a large amount of the population in the tracts is not affected.
- All changes documented in Census Tract Relationship Files so data can be compared between decades.

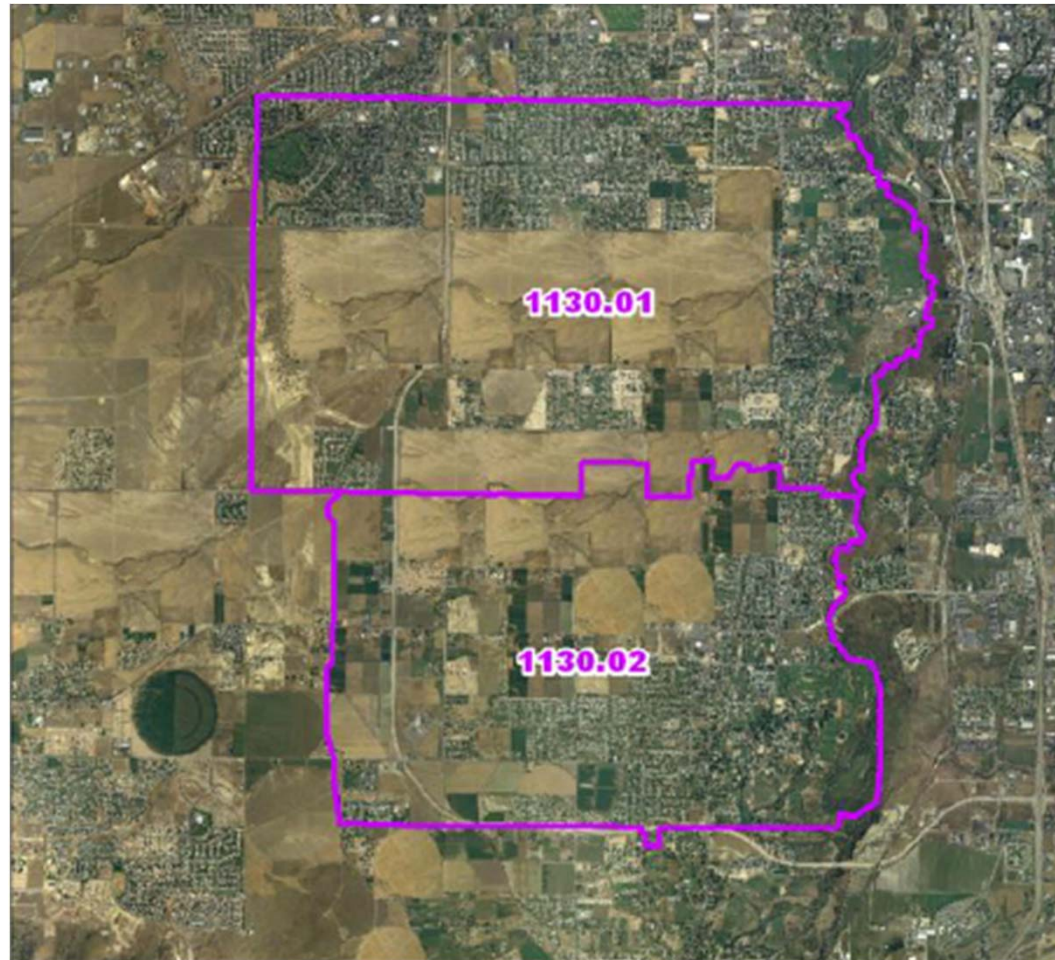
# 1970 Census Tracts

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# 1980 Census Tracts

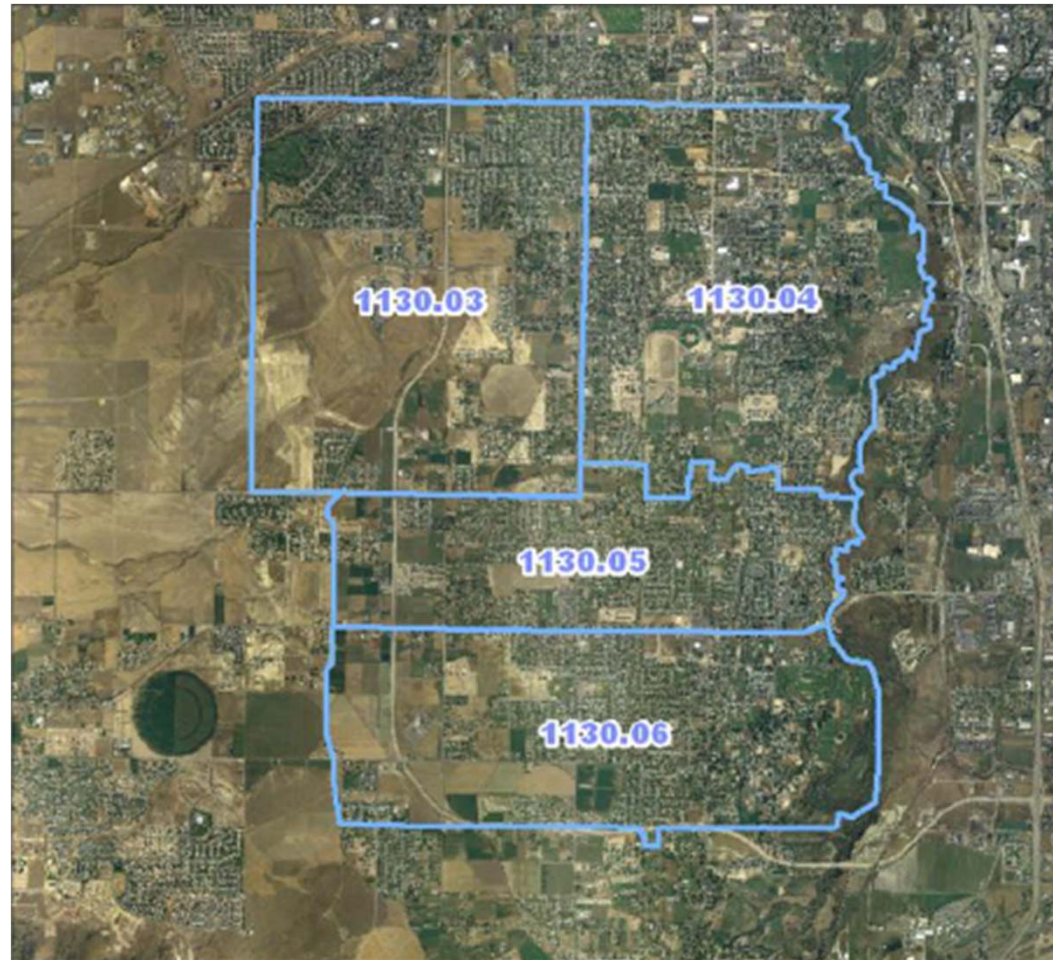
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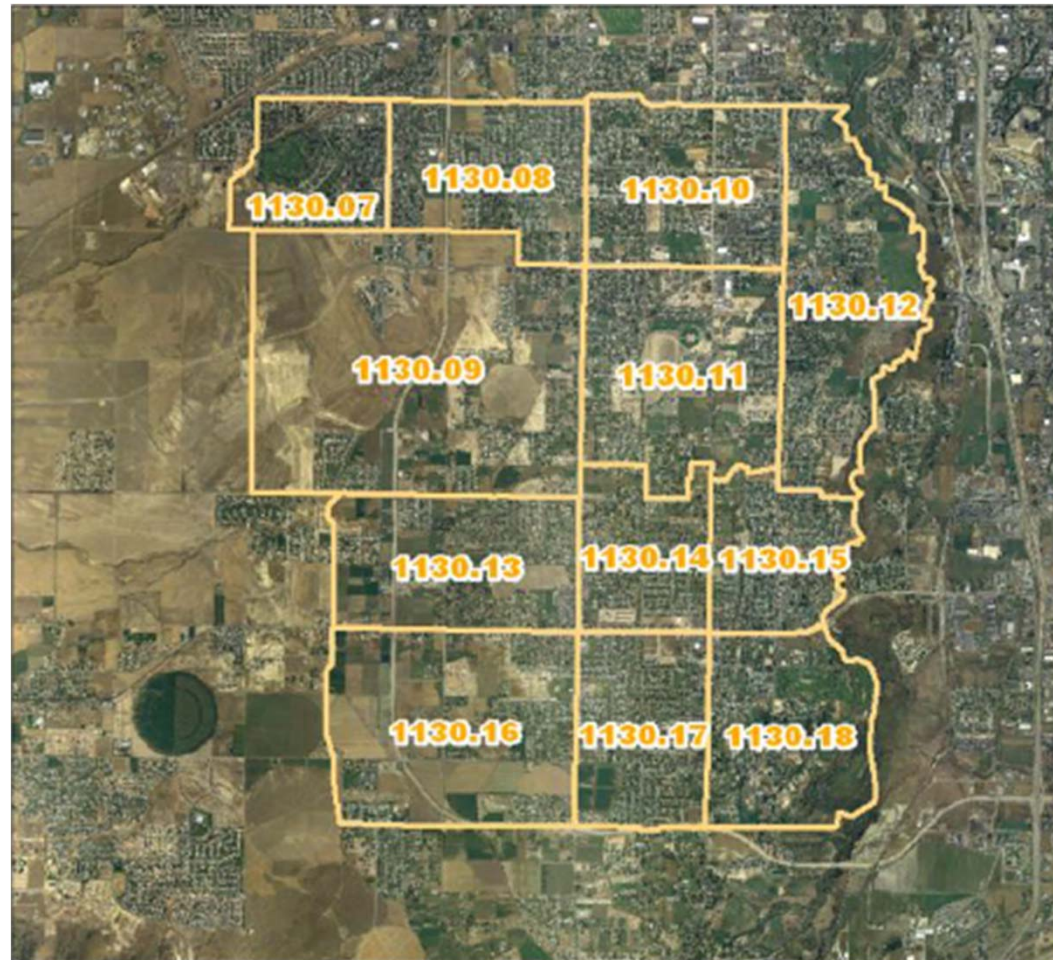
# 1990 Census Tracts

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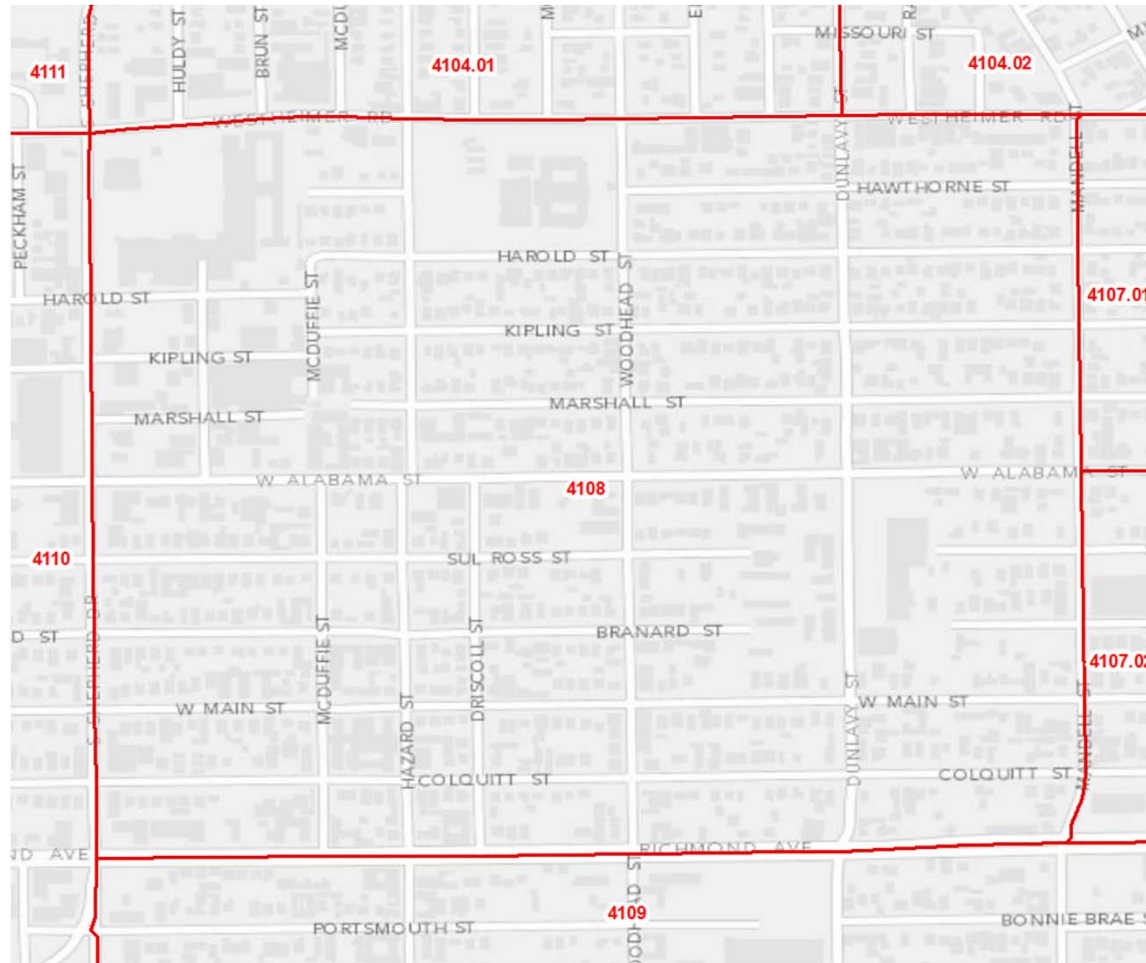


# 2000 Census Tracts

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# Montrose Census Tracts



# == Census Block Groups ==



# Census Block Groups

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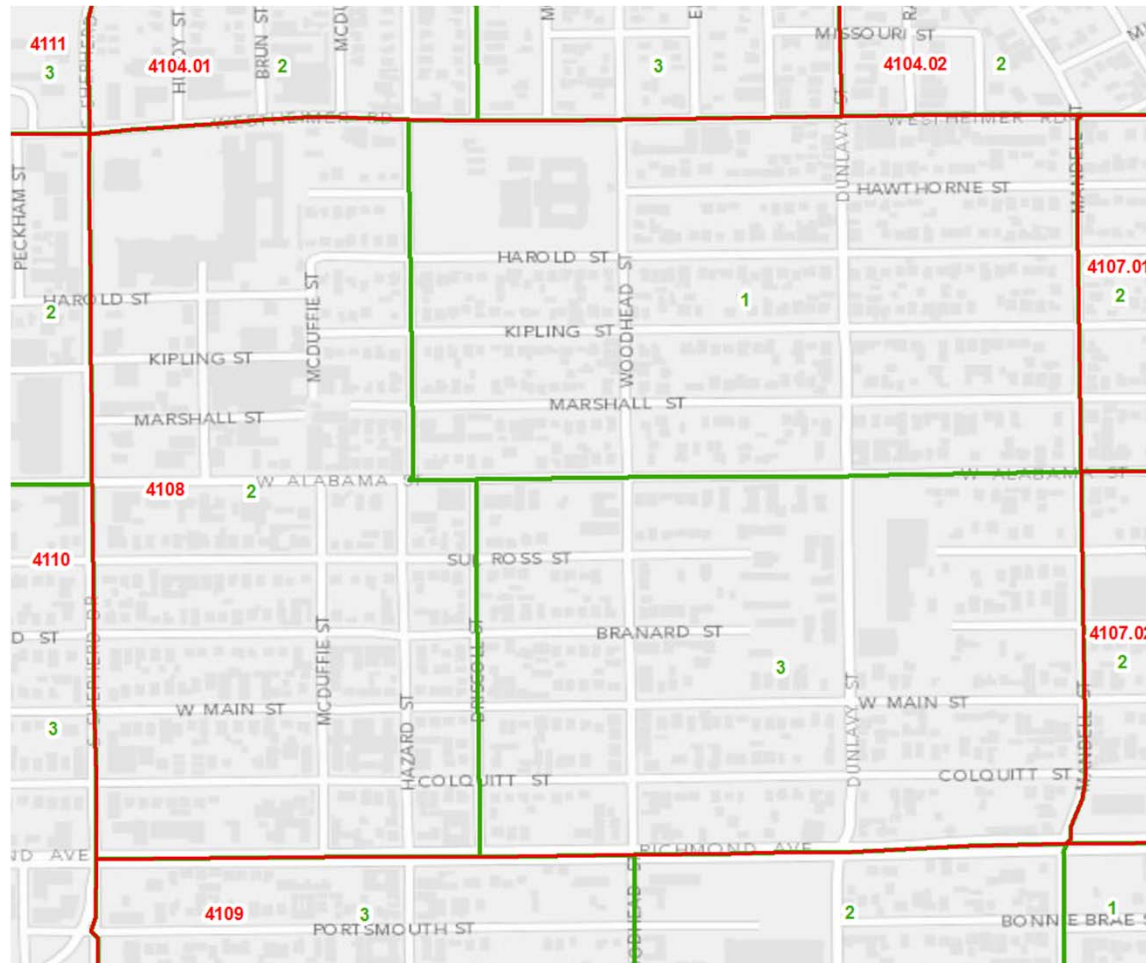
- Statistical subdivisions of a census tract
- Uniquely numbered 0-9 in each census tract

## Target Population

- Optimum population = 1,500
- Minimum population = 600
- Maximum population = 3,000



# Montrose Census Block Groups



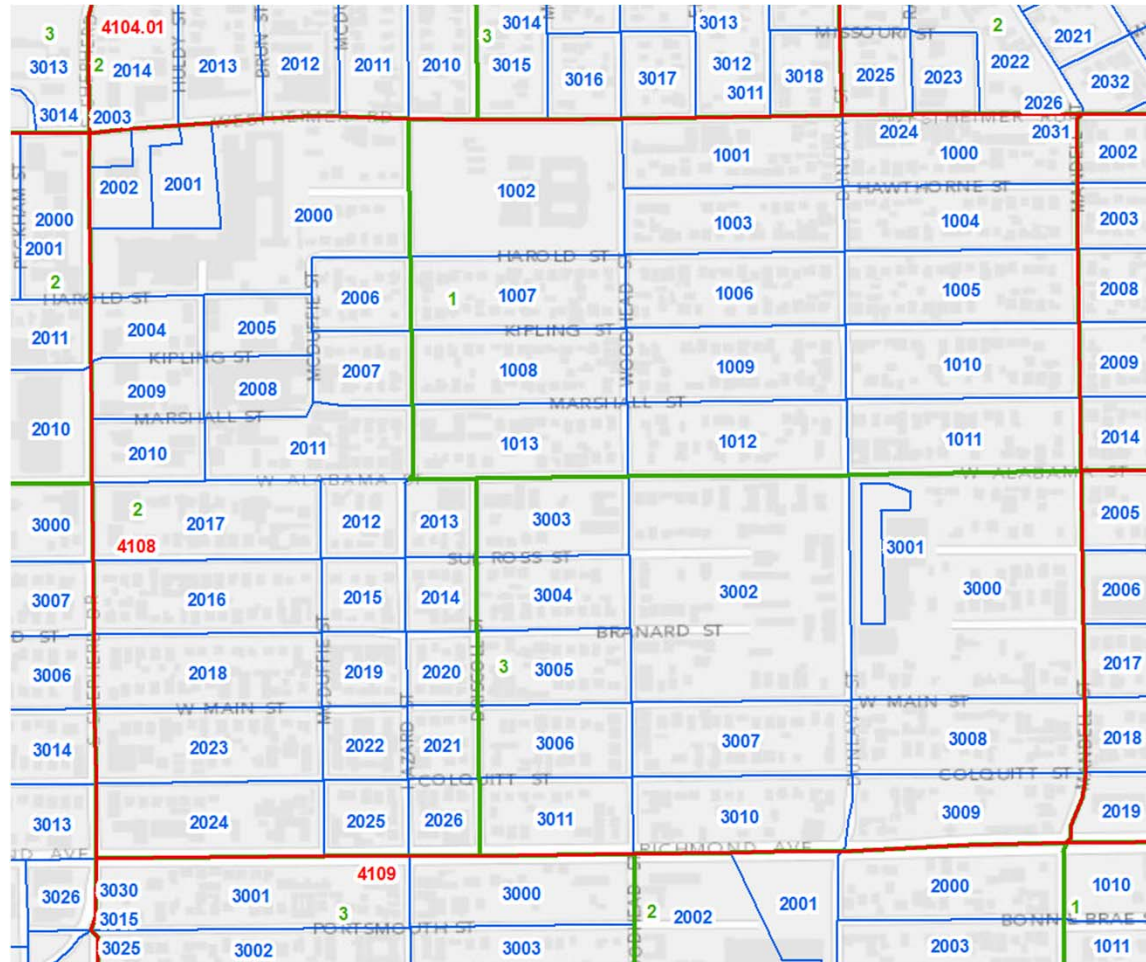
# Census Blocks

# Census Blocks

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- Smallest statistical subdivision
- Bounded by visible features and non-visible boundaries
- Uniquely numbered 0000-9999 in each census tract
- No population requirements

# Montrose Census Blocks



# Example FIPS Codes

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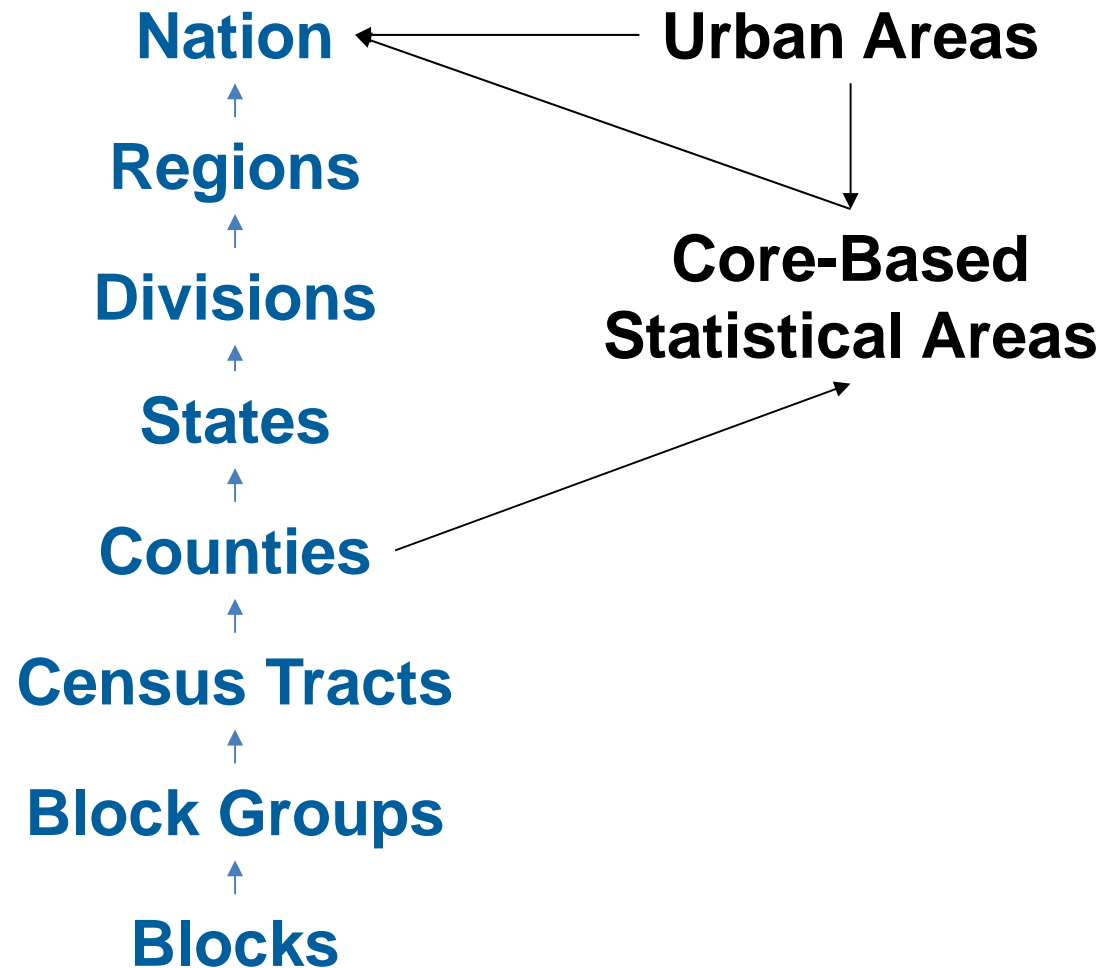
## **GEOID 482014106001018**

- State 48 = Texas
- County 201 = Harris
- Census Tract 4106.00
- Block Group 1
- Block 1018

# == Nation Subdivisions ==

# Census Geographic Entities

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# Urban Areas (UAs)

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## Urbanized Areas (UAs)

- Densely developed territory with 50,000 people or more

## Urban Clusters

- Densely developed territory with 2,500 to 50,000 people

**Titles may contain up to 3 place names**



# Core Based Statistical Areas

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2010 Geographic Entities	Type
Core Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs)	Administrative
Metropolitan Statistical Areas	Administrative
Micropolitan Statistical Areas	Administrative
Combined Statistical Area (CSAs)	Administrative
Metropolitan Division	Administrative

Historic Geographic Entities	Type
Primary Metropolitan Statistical Areas (PMSAs)	Administrative
Consolidated Metropolitan Statistical Areas (CMSAs)	Administrative

# Core-Based Statistical Areas (CBSAs)

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## Metropolitan Statistical Area

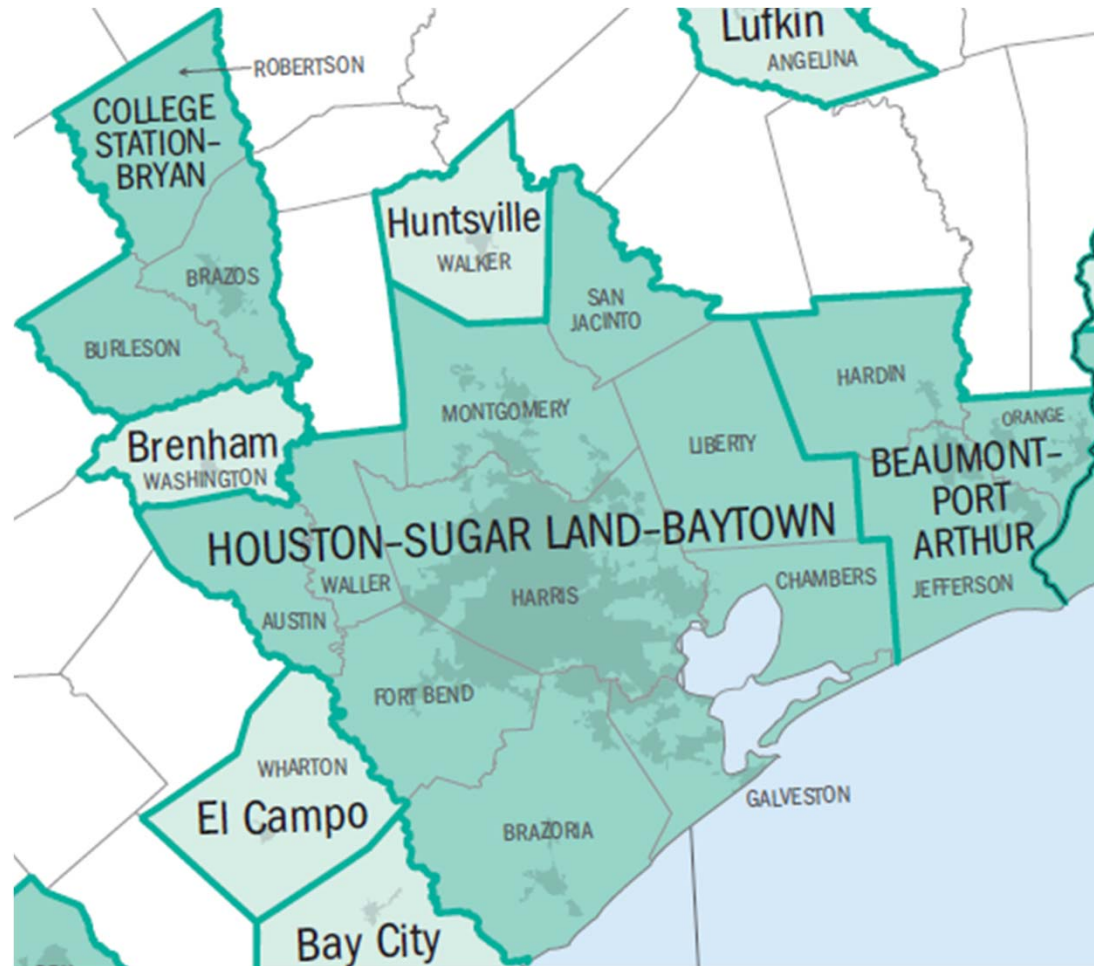
- Contains at least one UA and  $> 50,000$  people

## Micropolitan Statistical Area

- Contains at least one UC and  $> 10,000$  people

# Core-Based Statistical Areas

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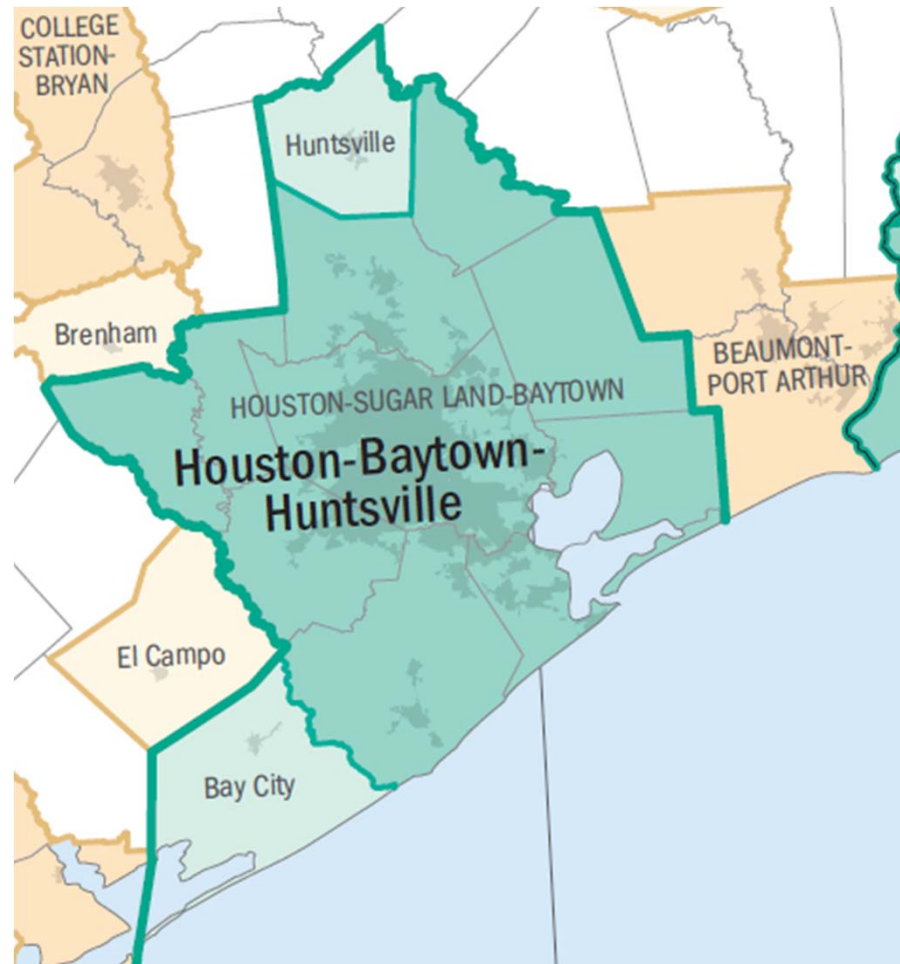
# Combined Statistical Areas (CSAs)

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- Two or more adjacent CBSAs with substantial employment interchange

# Combined Statistical Areas

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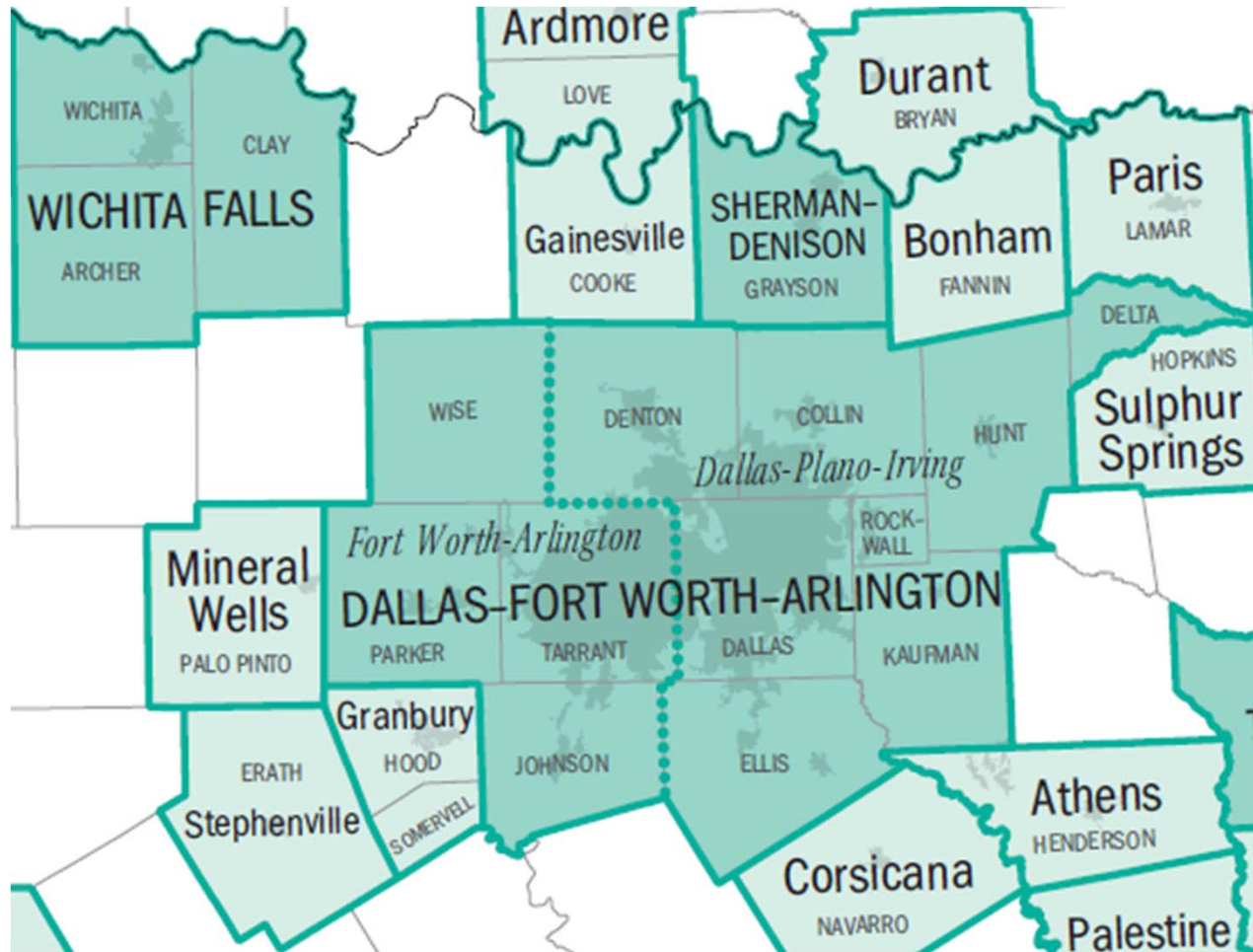


# Metropolitan Divisions

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- Subdivisions of metropolitan statistical areas
- Population greater than 2.5 million

# Metropolitan Divisions

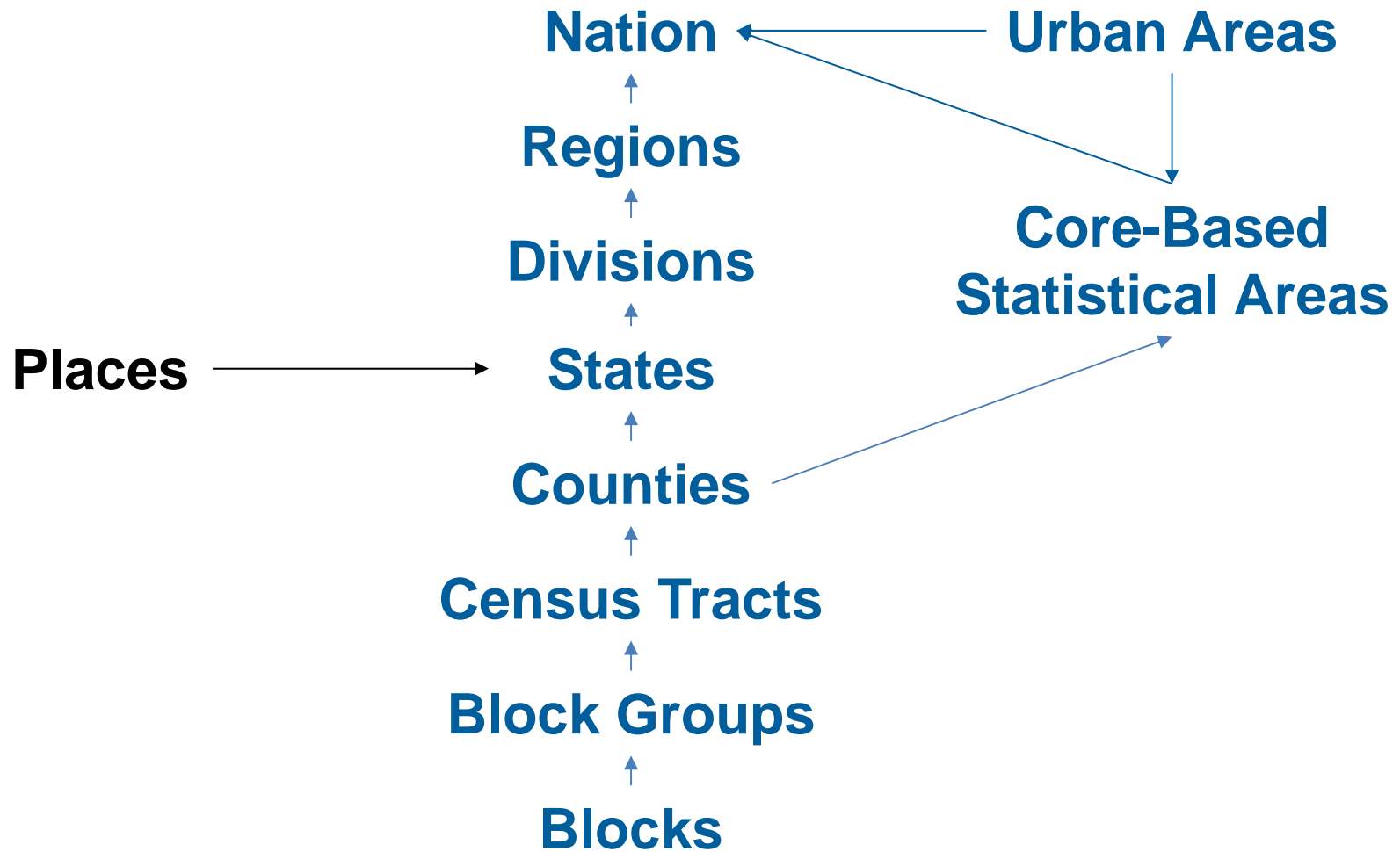


# State Subdivisions



# Census Geographic Entities

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# Places

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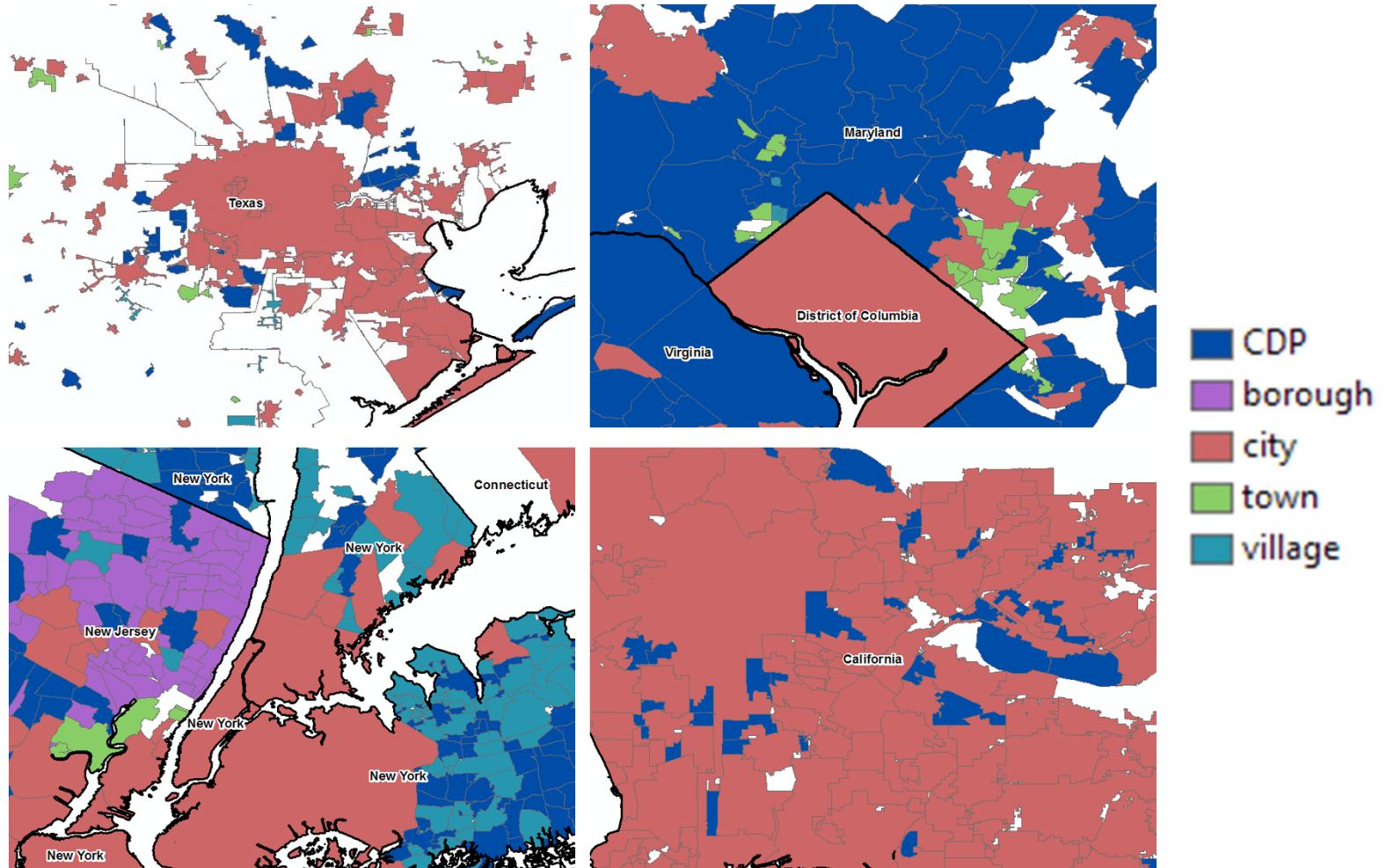
## Incorporated Places

- Legally bounded entities established to provide governmental functions for a concentration of people
- Usually city, town, village, or borough

## Census Designated Places (CDPs)

- Statistical entities derived by the Census Bureau
- Not legal boundaries
- Usually coincide with visible feature or adjacent legal boundaries

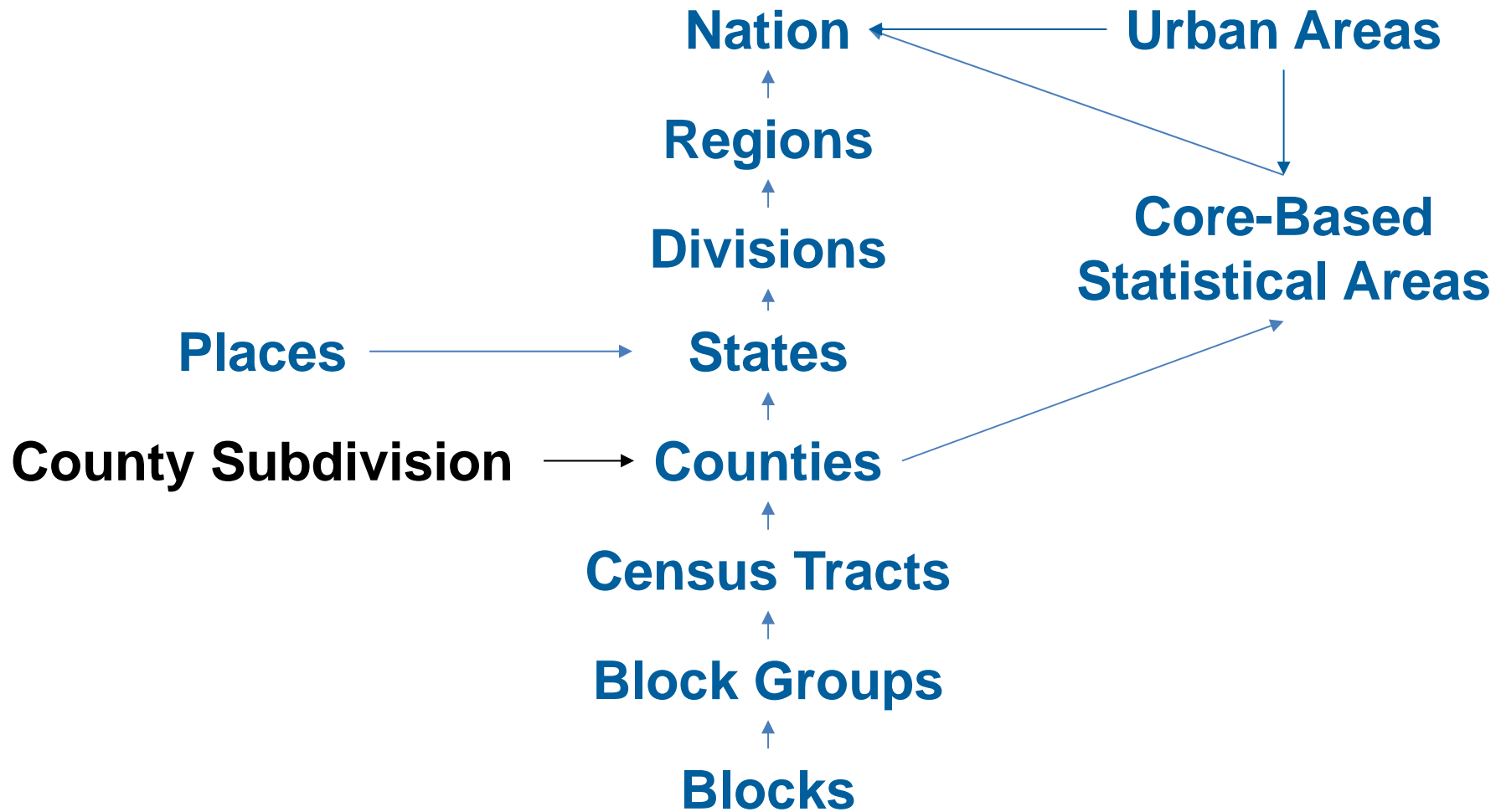
# Places



# County Subdivisions

# Census Geographic Entities

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# County Subdivisions

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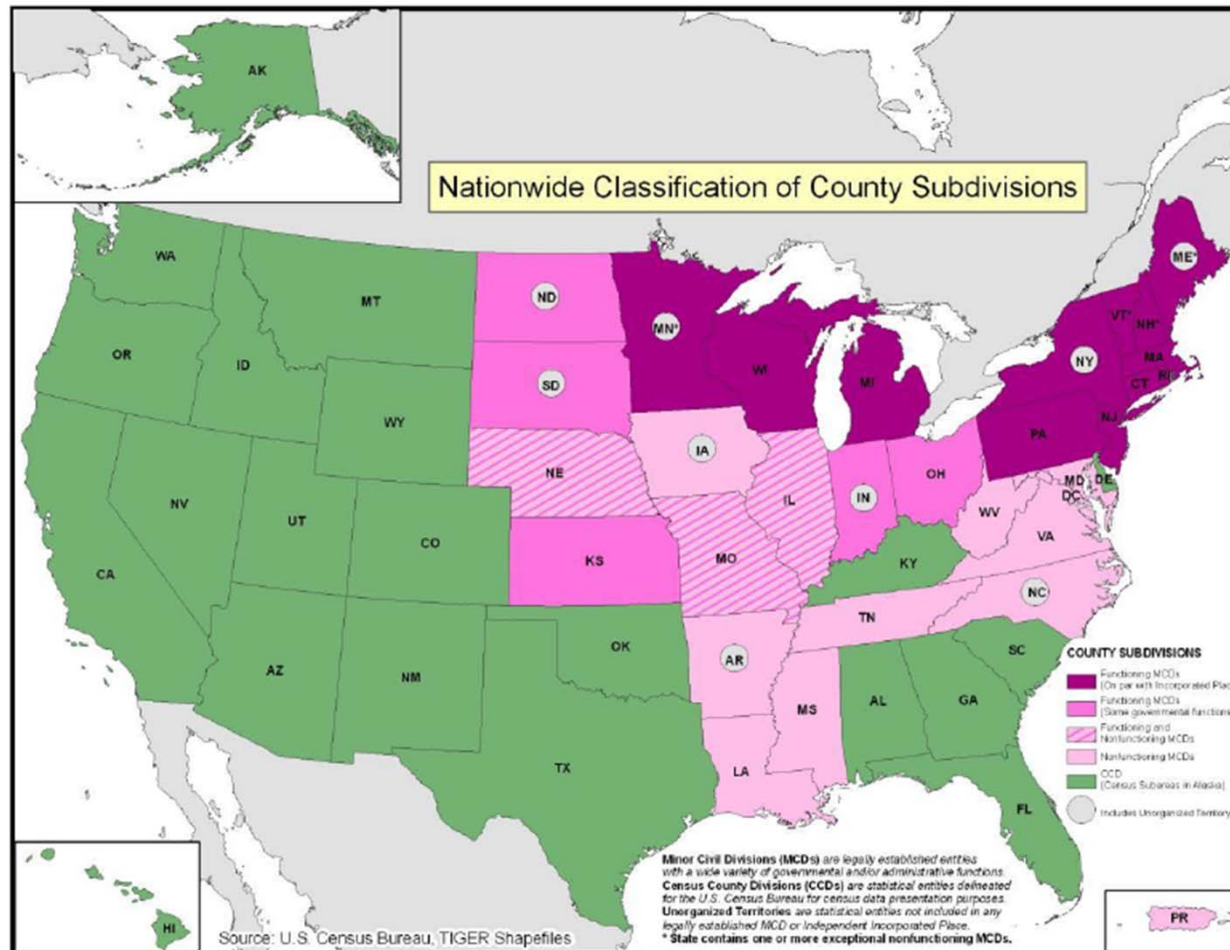
## Minor Civil Divisions (MCDs)

- Legally bounded entities
- In 29 states
- May have a formal government with elected officials

## Census County Divisions (CCDs)

- Statistical entities derived by the Census Bureau
- Not legal boundaries

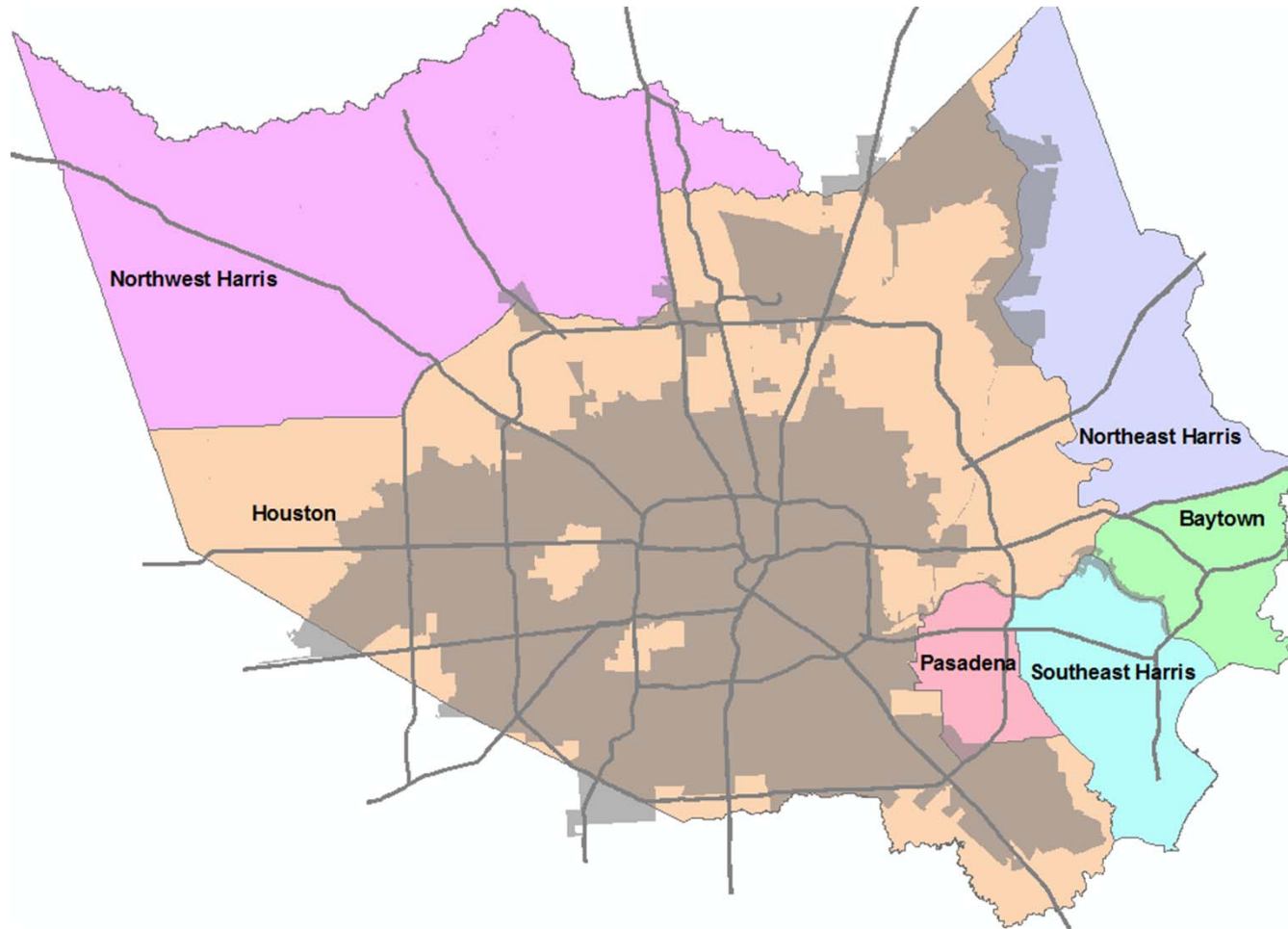
# County Subdivision Classification





# County Subdivisions in Harris County

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# — Special-Purpose Entities —

# Special-Purpose Entities

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Geographic Area	Type	Number
Congressional Districts	Legal	435
Voting Districts (VTDs)	Legal	148,872
School Districts	Administrative	15,274
Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZs)	Administrative	200,000
ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs)	Administrative	40,000