

2020 Urban Areas Estimation Exercise

This exercise was undertaken to demonstrate how the proposed criteria for defining Urban Areas in the 2020 Census **may** affect urbanized areas within CDTC's Planning area, and therefore **possibly** federal funding amounts and eligibility.

This exercise only takes into account the following two proposed criteria below:

***Adoption of a Housing Unit Density Threshold for Qualification of Census Blocks** - The Census Bureau proposes adopting a housing unit density threshold of 385 housing units per square mile as the primary criterion for determining whether a census block qualifies for inclusion in an urban area, replacing the use of population density. Housing unit density provides a more direct measure of the densely developed landscape than population density. Housing unit counts are invariant and will reflect the number of housing units enumerated in each block, and thus are a more consistent measure. Both occupied and vacant housing units are included. Housing Units are counted every year, whereas population is only counted every 10 years with the Decennial Census. Using Housing Units as a measure will allow the possibility of updating/defining Urban Areas more frequently than every 10 years.*

***Qualify Urban Areas Based on a Minimum Threshold of 4,000 Housing Units or 10,000 Persons Instead of a Minimum Threshold of 2,500 Persons** -The Census Bureau proposes that an area will qualify as urban if it contains at least 4,000 housing units or has a population of at least 10,000. The proposed increase in the minimum population responds to calls for the Census Bureau to increase its minimum threshold for defining urban areas from the 2,500-person minimum established in 1910. The previous threshold of 2,500 persons did not identify areas that were actually urban. (examples in our region include the Villages of Corinth and Hoosick Falls)*

Please reference the [full proposed criteria for determining Urban Areas for the 2020 Census](#) for more information on all of the proposed changes.

Since population and housing unit data is not yet available for the 2020 Decennial Census, CDTC staff used 2010 Census Block data as a base.

- Using GIS data, CDTC staff calculated Housing Unit Density.
- A new GIS data file was created which represented only Census Blocks meeting the threshold of 385 housing units or greater.
- The data was reviewed and outliers were removed. Outliers include any isolated block meeting the housing unit density or any contiguous blocks meeting the housing unit density, but not meeting the definition of urban as defined as areas containing at least 4,000 total housing units or at least 10,000 total population.

This data was then used to review existing (defined in 2010 Census) Urban Areas and Urban Clusters to determine any possible changes as well as to create a series of maps.

Please note that this exercise is not an exact representation of the 2020 Census designated Urban Areas, due to the following reasons:

- 1) This is based on 2010 data not 2020 data.
- 2) Defining the Urban Core is the first of a multi-step process used to determine the extent of an Urban Area. Once the Urban Core is defined, impervious surfaces (such as parking lots, malls, office parks, etc.,) are added in as well as additional area that is within a certain distance (hops and jumps) from the Urban Core along transportation routes.
- 3) The proposed changes to defining Urban Areas have not yet been finalized/adopted.

Findings

The following is what will likely change from the 2010 Census defined Urban Areas:

Name	2010 Census Designation	Estimated 2020 Census Designation
Corinth	Urban Cluster	Rural
Hoosick Falls	Urban Cluster	Rural
Ravena	Urban Cluster	Rural
Albany-Schenectady	Urban Area	Urban Area
Saratoga Springs	Urban Area	Urban Area
Glens Falls*	Urban Area	Urban Area

*Outside of CDTC Planning Area however, 2010 Saratoga Springs UA and adjusted 2020 Glens Falls UA adjoin. MPO's have the ability to smooth or adjust census defined Urban Areas for transportation planning purposes. Adjusted boundaries must include the original urban area boundary defined by the Census Bureau in its entirety. Adjusted UA's mostly determine Roadway Functional Classification and therefore Federal Aid eligibility.

- All three of the Urban Area's listed above **have the potential** to decrease in size under the proposed 2020 criteria. The "core" displayed in the associated maps is only representative of an estimated base. After the initial urban area core is identified, additional census blocks would be included if adjacent to other qualifying territory and if they meet additional criteria. However, hops and jumps will no longer include low density rural areas located between developed areas in the Urban Area designation. This may result in noncontiguous, disjointed Urban Areas. A reduction in the size of the Urban Areas could result in a decrease in funding to certain programs.
- CDTC anticipates that States and MPO's will still have the opportunity to adjust (expand) the census defined Urban Areas for transportation planning purposes. However, given the proposed 2020 criteria, the adjusted boundaries may not incorporate the same extent of geographic area as in 2010.
- A reduction in the size of the Adjusted Urban Areas could result in changes to the functional classification of roadways. A change from Urban to Rural or Rural to Urban does not necessarily affect federal aid eligibility, but some Rural Functional Classifications are ineligible for federal aid. Roadways within the Urban Clusters of Corinth and Hoosick Falls will remain rural, while those in the Ravena Urban Cluster will likely convert from Urban back to Rural.

Additional Implications

Other proposed criteria for the delineation of 2020 Urban Areas that **may** affect CDTC's Planning area include:

- There will no longer be a distinction between Urban Areas and Urban Clusters (we currently have both types in our region).
- Our 2 separate Urban Areas (Albany-Schenectady and Saratoga Springs) could be merged or segmented/divided differently. Area's that currently are located within one, may become part of another...this has happened in previous years. There are currently 3 towns in Saratoga County (Ballston, Malta & Stillwater) that have area in both defined Urban Areas and it looks like the criteria would make these part of only one Urban Area, using the MCD boundary to determine that. The Census Bureau will be using LEHD (Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics) data to measure commuter flows to determine whether or not separate Urban Areas should be merged or if how they are split should be adjusted.
- The name of Urban Areas may change. Not sure if this only would affect merged or split Urban Areas or if the renaming convention will affect all existing Urban Areas.

Schedule/Next Steps

May 20th, 2021 – Deadline for comments on the proposed criteria

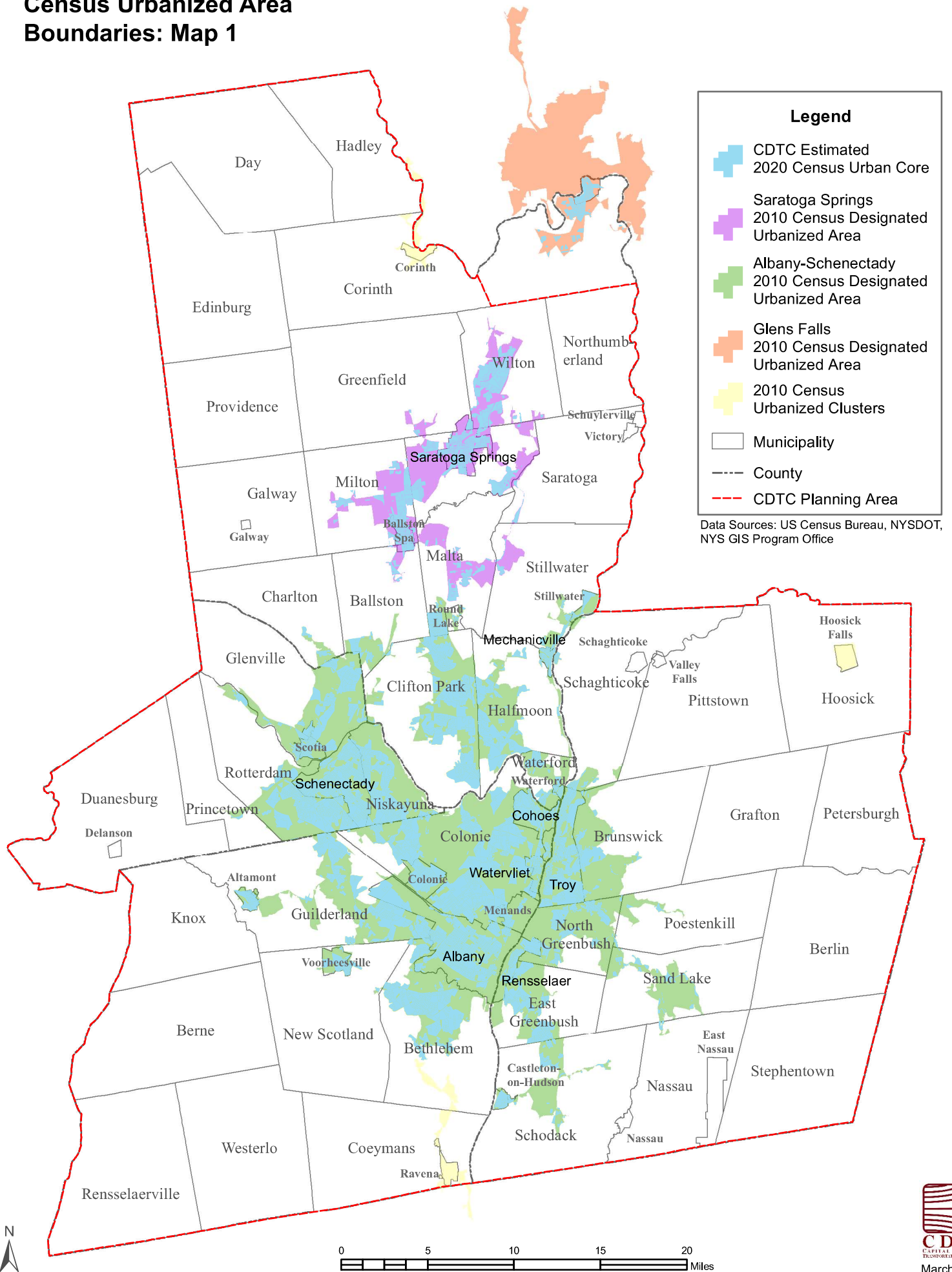
Summer 2021 – Census Bureau review of comments received

Winter 2021 – Census Bureau will publish final criteria in the Federal Register

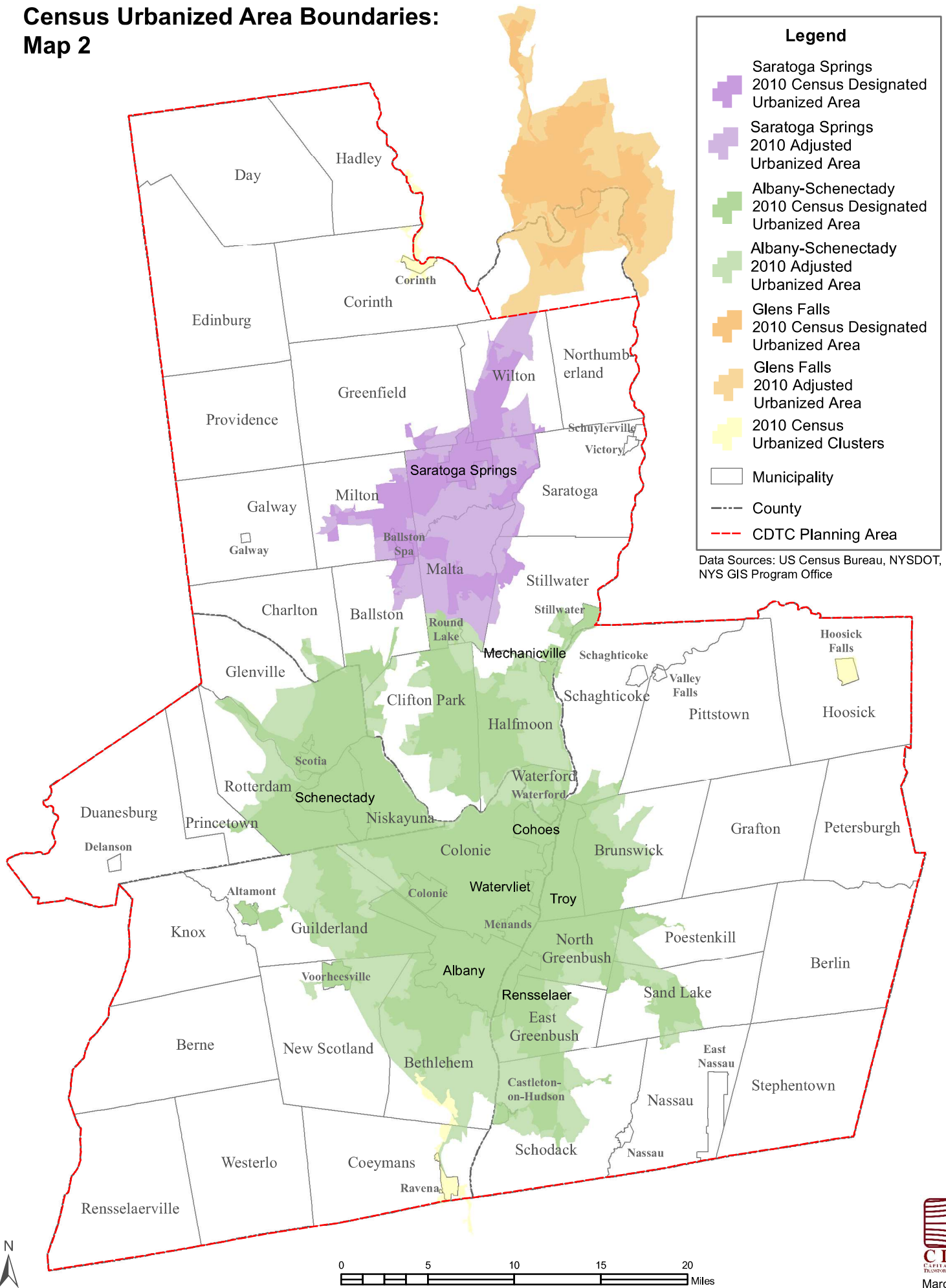
Summer 2022 – Census Bureau will announce qualifying Urban Areas and release geography files (shapefile format)

CDTC will work with our planning partners and MPO associations state and nation-wide to consider submitting comments on the proposed criteria and we will continue to stay informed.

Census Urbanized Area Boundaries: Map 1



Census Urbanized Area Boundaries: Map 2



Census Urbanized Area Boundaries: Map 3

