



Remote Towns and Rural Fringes: An Overview of the NCES School Locale Framework

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U S C E N S U S B U R E A U

Helping You Make Informed Decisions



Overview

1. What are locale codes and why do they matter?
2. Why did the NCES locale framework need to be changed?
3. What were the primary changes?
4. How did the changes affect schools and districts?
5. How are locales assigned to schools?
6. How are locales assigned to districts?
7. Where to find school district data resources?



What is a locale assignment?

- General indicator of a school's physical location
- Assigned to all schools and districts in the NCES Common Core of Data
- Previous NCES locale framework included:
 - Large City
 - Midsize City
 - Urban Fringe of Large City
 - Urban Fringe of Midsize City
 - Large Town
 - Small Town
 - Rural Outside Metropolitan Area
 - Rural Inside Metropolitan Area



Why do locale definitions matter?

1. Geography is a fundamental organizing feature of public education
2. Locale definitions affect educational research and analysis
3. Research and analysis shapes public conversation and policy
4. Locales are used as a criterion for program eligibility



Why did the old locale framework need to be changed?

1. Overbounded urban fringe

- Urban fringe included all non-city urban territory in metro area.
- Definitions did not allow Towns in metro area.

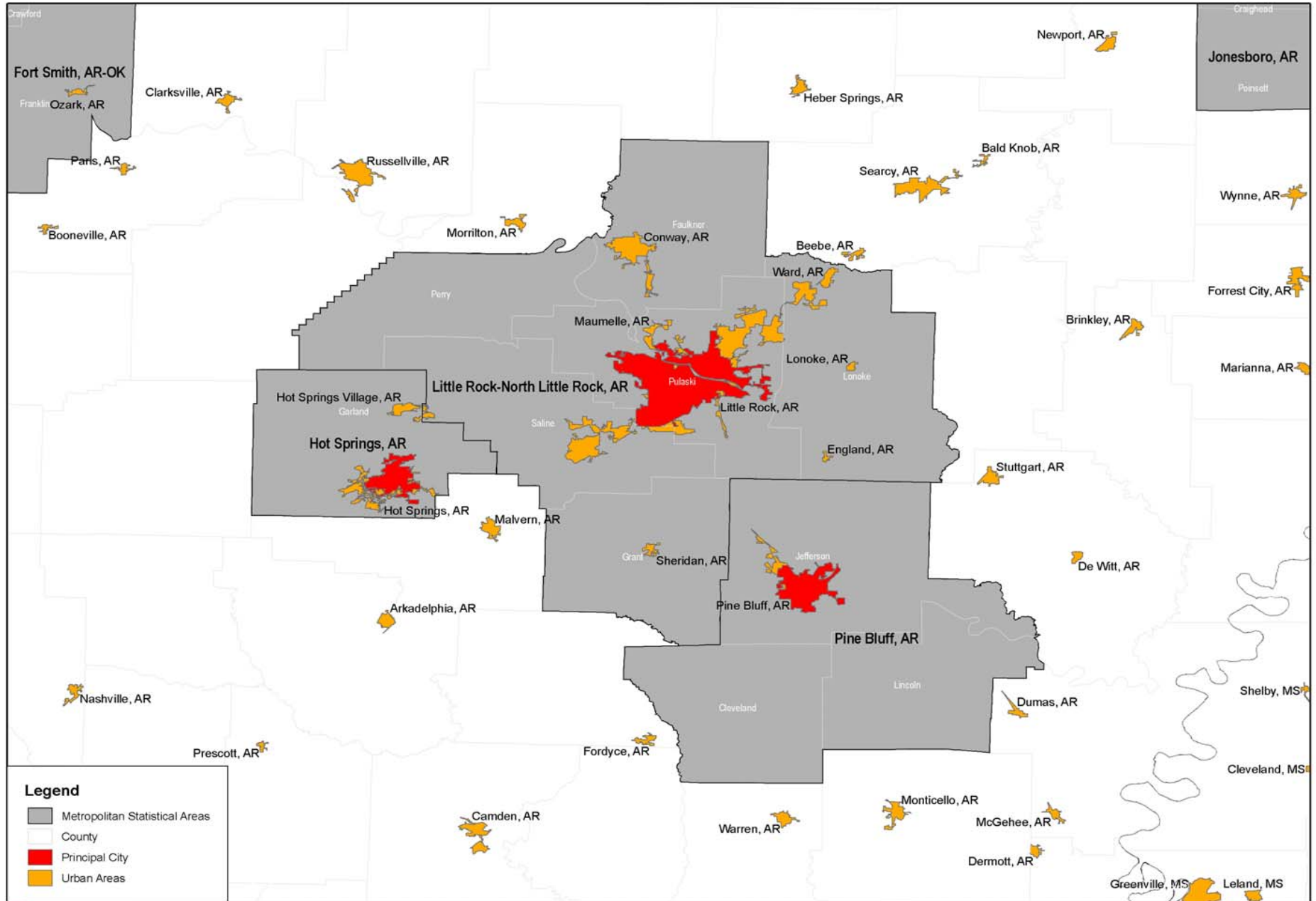
2. Aspatial town distinctions:

- Town delineated by size, not proximity.

3. Rural relativity:

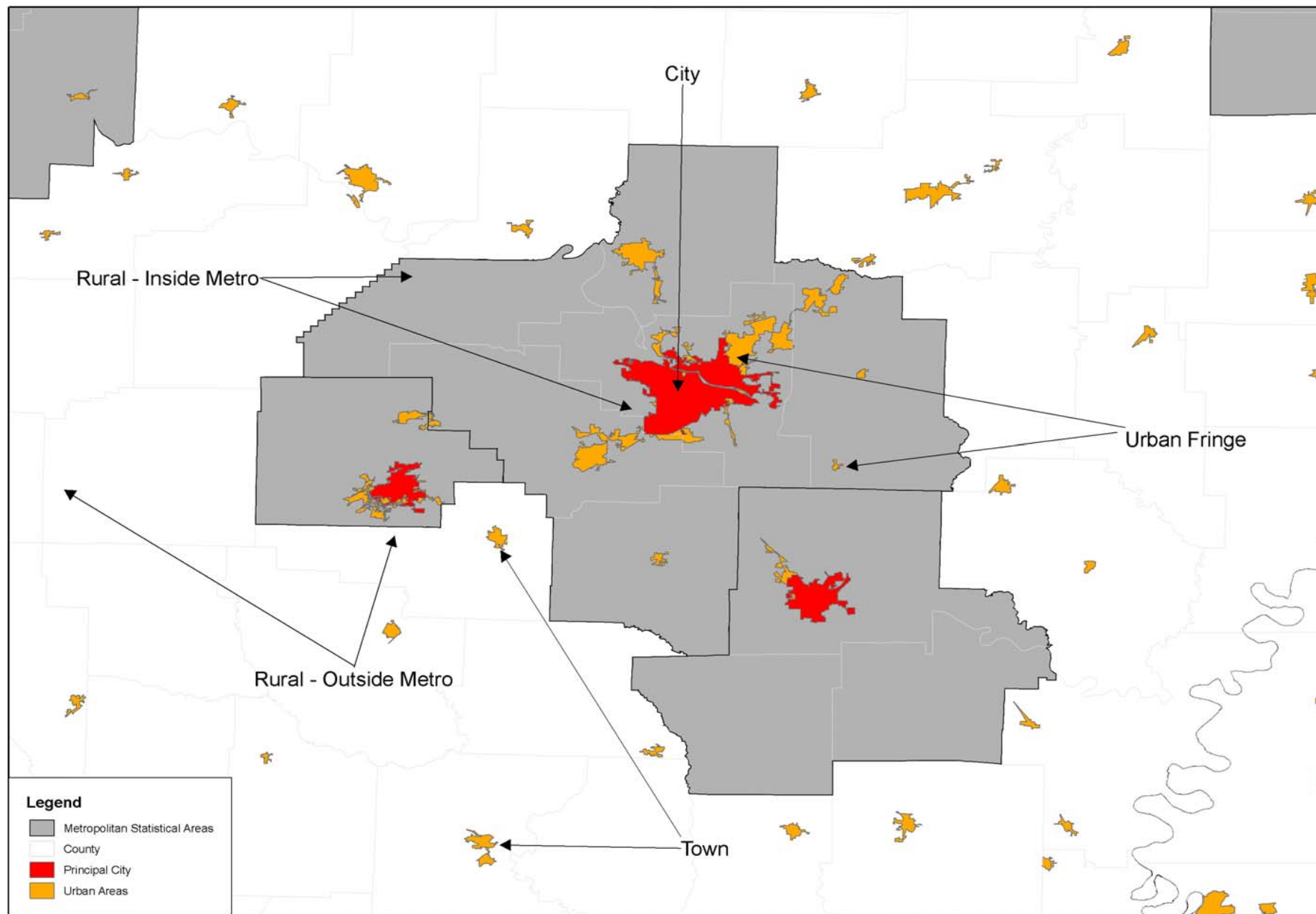
- Metro distinction (outside/inside) not necessarily more/less rural.
- Inability to identify rural areas vis-à-vis urban areas.

Figure 1. Old NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line

Figure 2. Old NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line

Figure 3. Old NCES Locales: Fringe vs. Town Classification

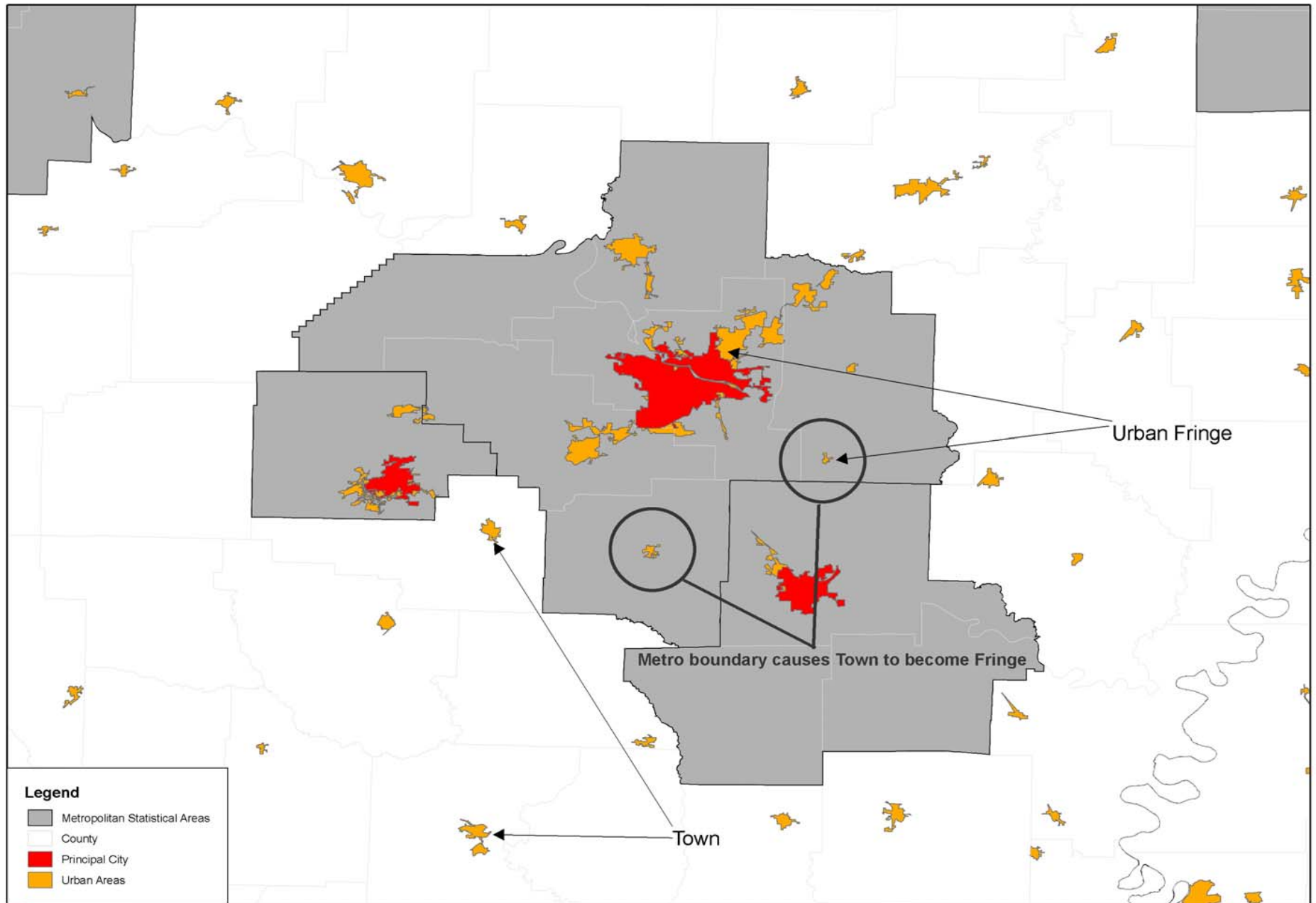
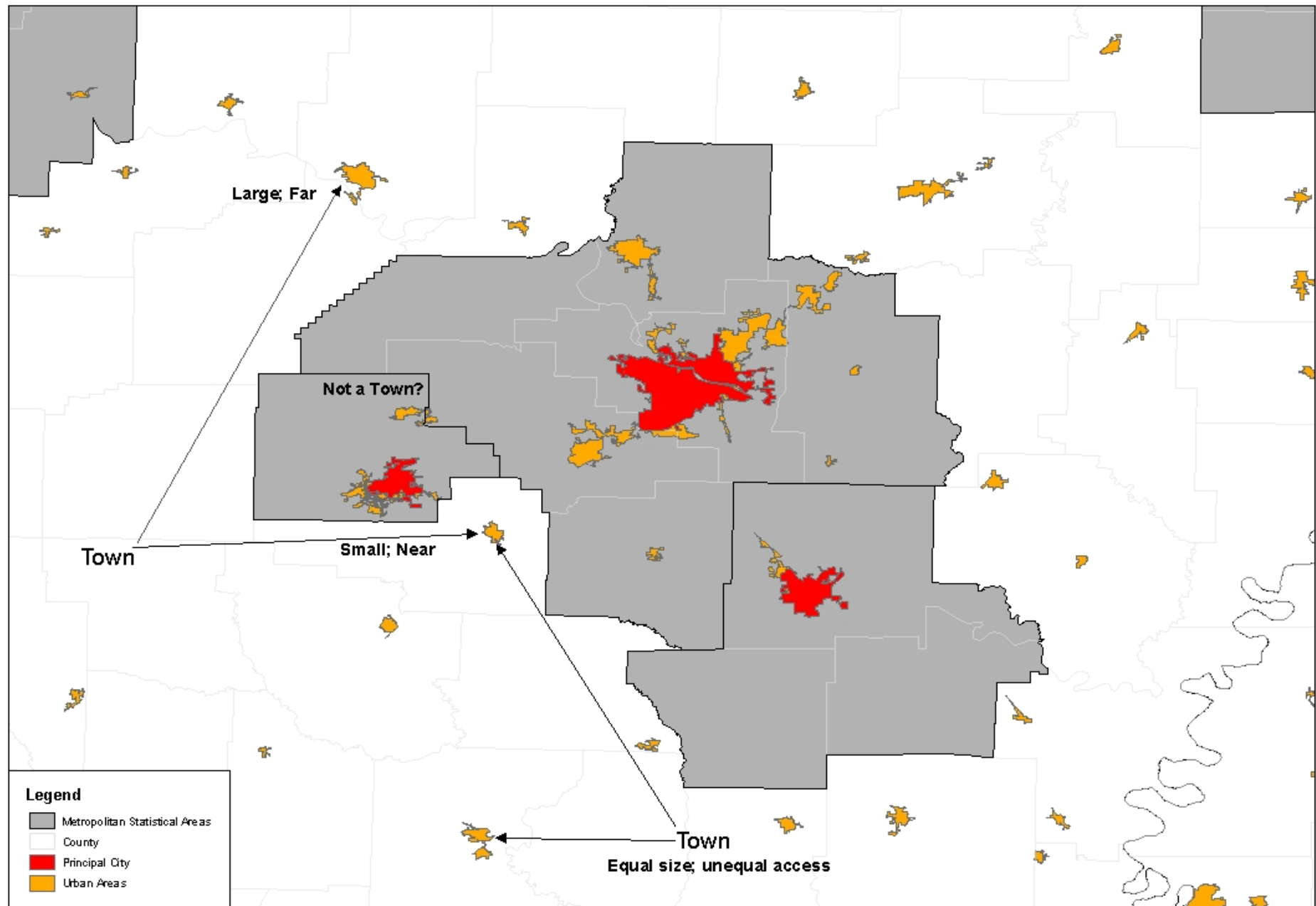
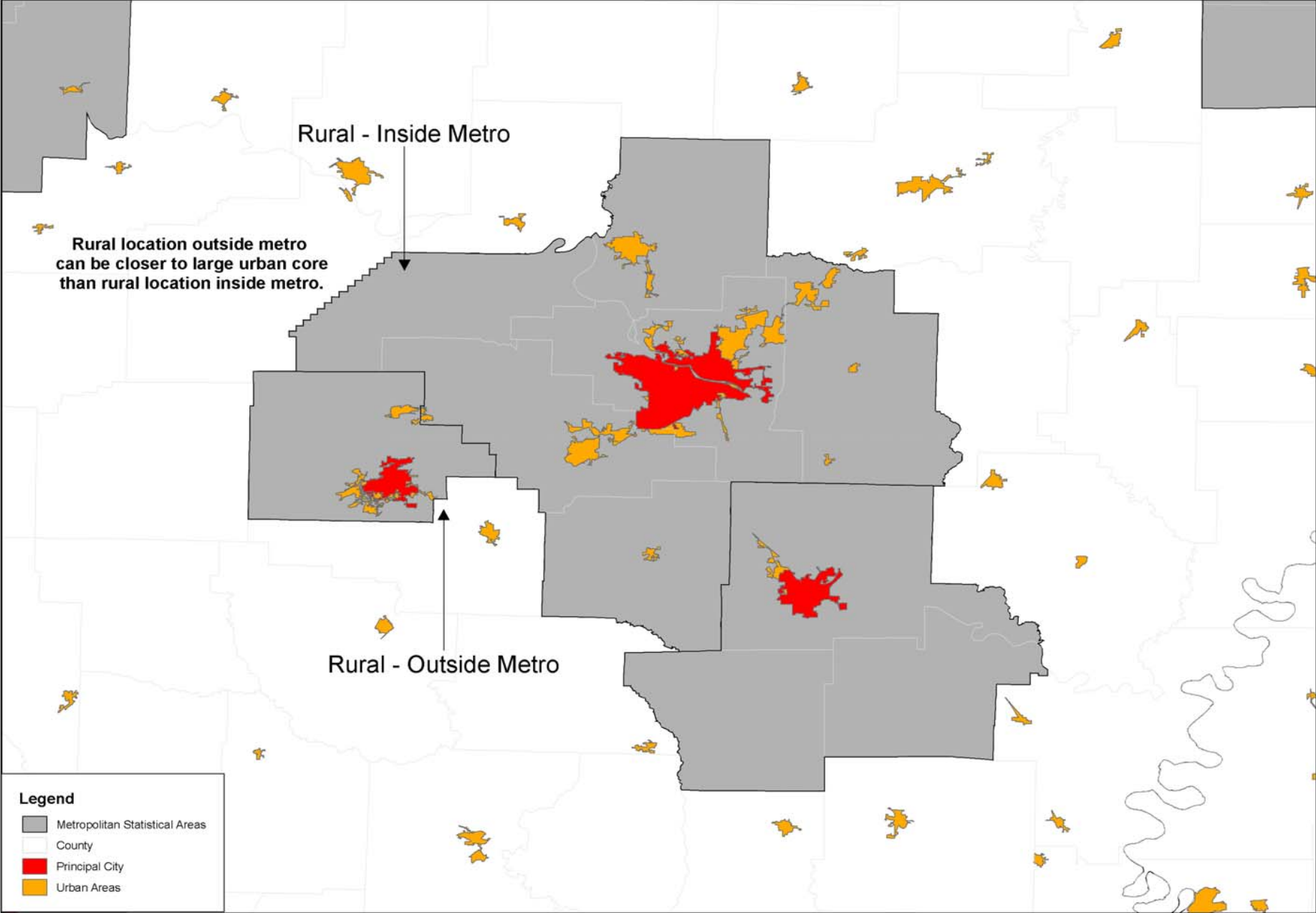


Figure 4. Old NCES Locales: Town Size vs. Proximity to Urbanized Area



Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line

Figure 5. Old NCES Locales: Inside vs. Outside Metro



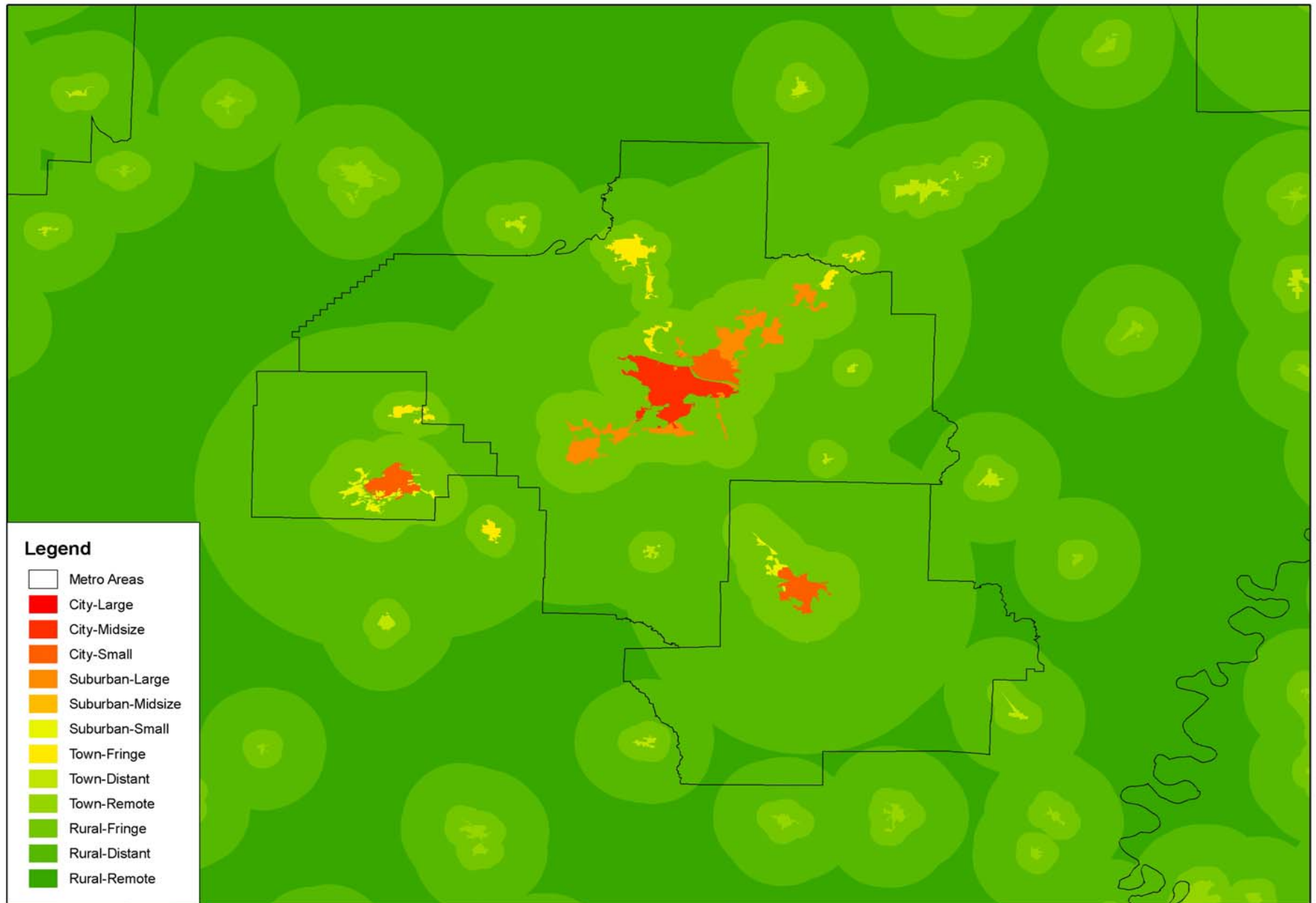
Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line



What were the primary changes?

- Urban-centric rather than metro-centric
- Based on Urbanized Areas (>50,000) and Urban Clusters (< 50,000)
- Twelve categories: Four primary types with three subtypes.
 1. City: Large, Midsize, Small
 2. Suburb: Large, Midsize, Small
 3. Town: Fringe, Distant, Remote
 4. Rural: Fringe, Distant, Remote

Figure 7. New NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas



Source: U.S. Census Bureau TIGER/Line

Figure 8. New NCES Locale Areas in Central Arkansas.

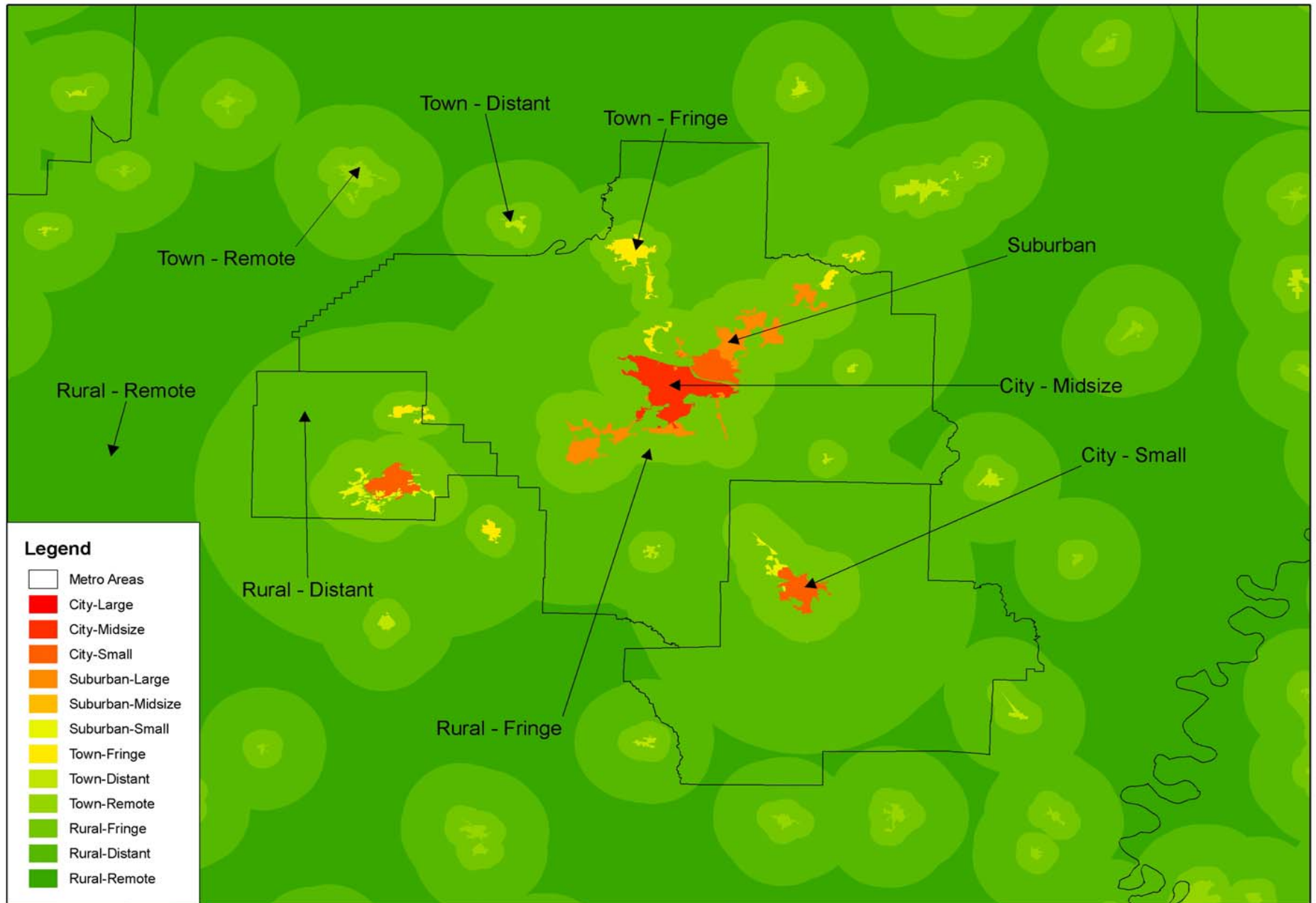
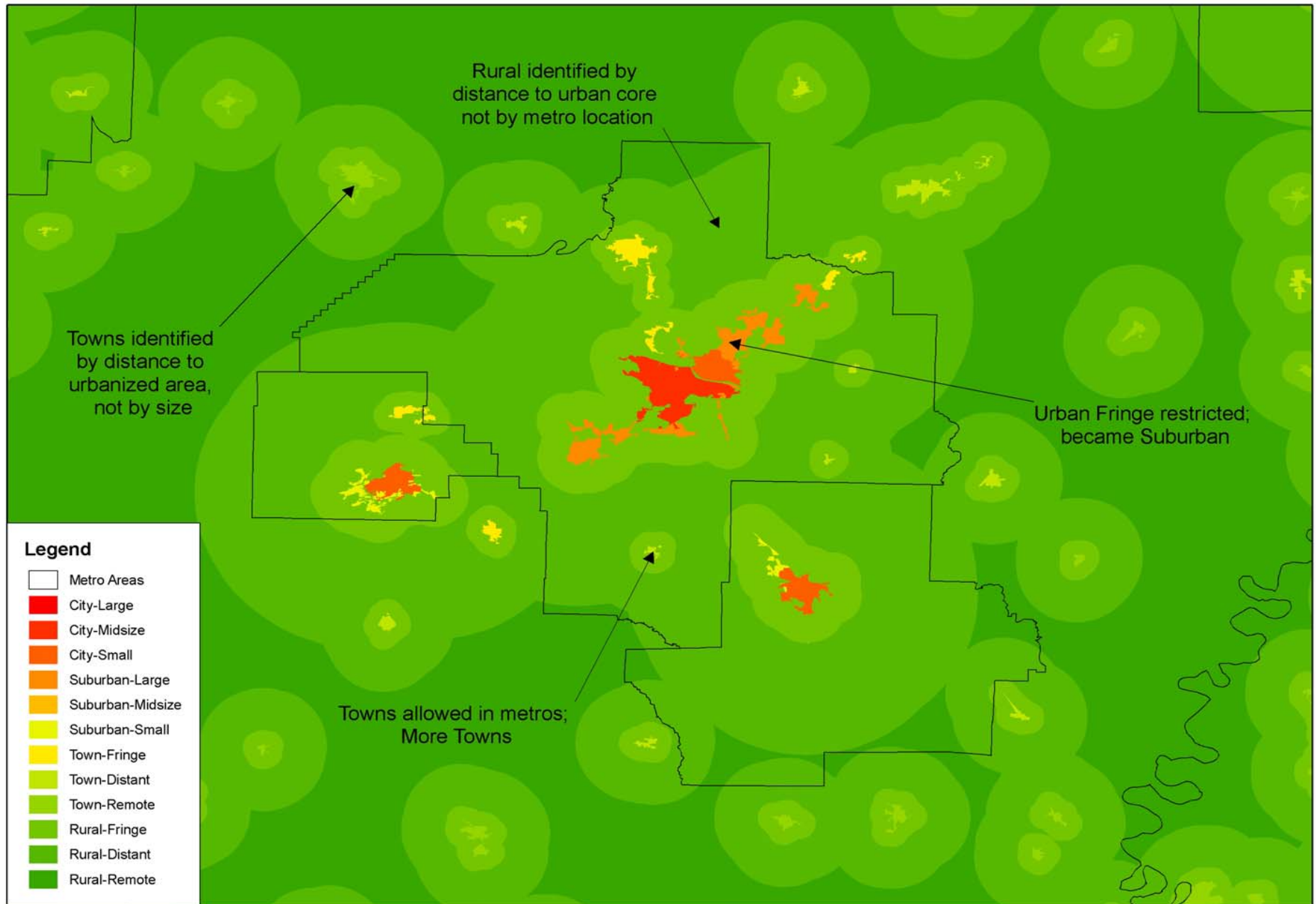


Figure 9. New NCES Locales: Key Changes





The spatial context of new locale framework: demo



How did locale changes affect schools and districts?

- Town
 - 53% increase in Town schools
 - 26% Towns schools located near urban core of 50,000 (≤ 10 miles)
 - 34% Town schools located in remote areas (> 35 miles)
- Rural
 - More schools than any other locale type (due to decline in Urban Fringe)
 - 52% live within 5 miles of a UA or within 2.5 miles of a UC
 - 15% of rural public school students are in remote rural areas



How are locales assigned to schools?

1. Census Bureau classifies all U.S. territory according to locale criteria
2. NCES collects school addresses each year for the Common Core of Data
3. Addresses are reviewed and geocoded – assigned longitude/latitude (XY)
4. School points (XY) are connected to U.S. territory.
5. School receives the locale value that was assigned to that area



How are locales assigned to districts?

- Based on school locale assignments
- Weighted by school enrollment
- Assignment process:
 - Is there a majority sub-type? If not...
 - Is there a majority basic type? If not...
 - Consider all sub-types and assign based on plurality
- Many districts encompass multiple locales
- Small change in school locale may change district assignment



Where to find school district geodemographic data?

- NCES
 - School District Demographic System (<http://nces.ed.gov/surveys/sdds/>)
 - Common Core of Data (<http://nces.ed.gov/ccd/>)
- Census Bureau
 - Title 1 (<http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/saipe/saipe.html>)
 - American Factfinder (<http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html>)
 - Census 2000
 - American Community Survey



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