

# New Settlement Patterns in the Catskills: The Impact of Metropolitan Growth in a Non- Metropolitan Area



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# Method

This study utilizes the Catskill Urbanization Scale discussed in Critical Rural Theory (Thomas et al, 2011, see Appendix A). Urbanization is measured in relation to the level of human development in a township. The scale is based on the degree of urban development contained in an individual township, and although we use townships, or minor civil divisions, as the unit of analysis, this scale can in theory be applied to other such units as census tracts or block groups. The scale ranges from 0 to 9, with 0 corresponding to a nearly entirely natural environment and 9 to one that is completely urbanized. Townships were coded by centering on aerial photography of the town center and measuring the type and level of development surrounding the center for five miles in any direction, augmented by site visits to each town in the study area.



0—Natural: A landscape where nearly the entire area is lacking any urban development. A natural environment may have some low density residential development and small pockets of agricultural land, but the vast majority (over 75 percent) of the landscape will be forest, swamp, or some other natural environment.

# Agricultural Towns



Agricultural Towns often have a mixture of different types of landscapes, such as the town of Exeter at right.

1—Light Agricultural: A landscape where agricultural uses are found in major corridors and immediately around the town center, but over half of the land is still devoted to a natural landscape.

2—Heavy Agricultural: A landscape where agricultural uses are widespread enough that the effect is one of pockets of natural landscape.

# Industrial Towns

Industrial towns are characterized by some level of industrialization, but often are surrounded by agricultural and natural areas as well.

3—Light Industrial: A landscape that features secondary sector industrial facilities, normally found in a town center. Although in principle a light industrial town may not be heavily agricultural, towns in the study area tended to be heavily agricultural as well.

4—Heavy Industrial: A landscape that features a grouping of industrial facilities in an urbanized town center. Notice the complex of large factories in Sidney at right.



# Suburbs



Development in Davenport, a rural suburb, is in relation to Oneonta in the distance, not its town center.

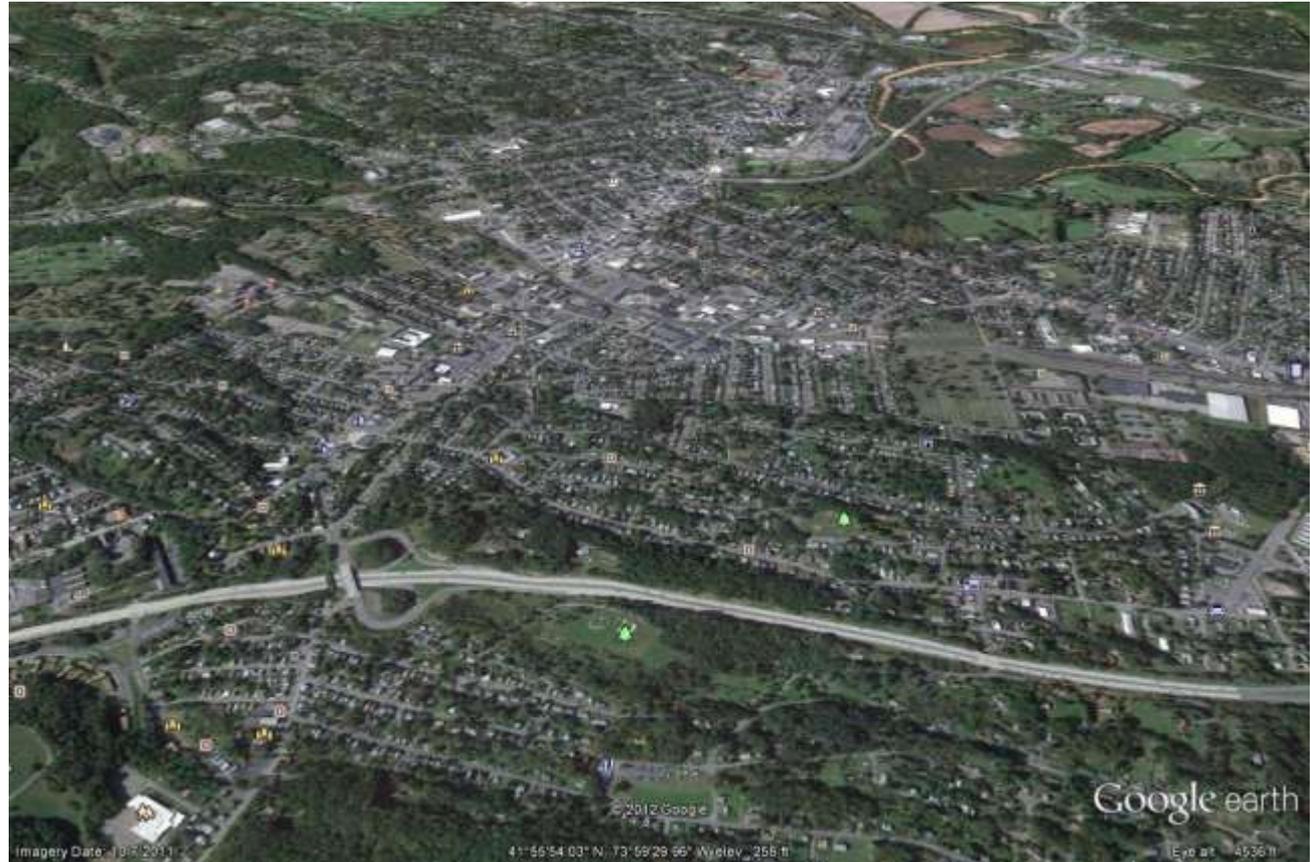
5—Rural Suburb: A predominantly rural (natural or agricultural) town with a town center and a recent development pattern that is not oriented toward the town center. This recent development may be residential or commercial.

6—Minor Suburb: A community in which most development is oriented toward residential purposes most of whose residents must commute elsewhere for employment. Compared to a rural suburb, there is higher population density but most (over half) of the landscape remains rural.

7—Major Suburb: A community in which most development is oriented toward residential development, but over half of the landscape is urbanized.

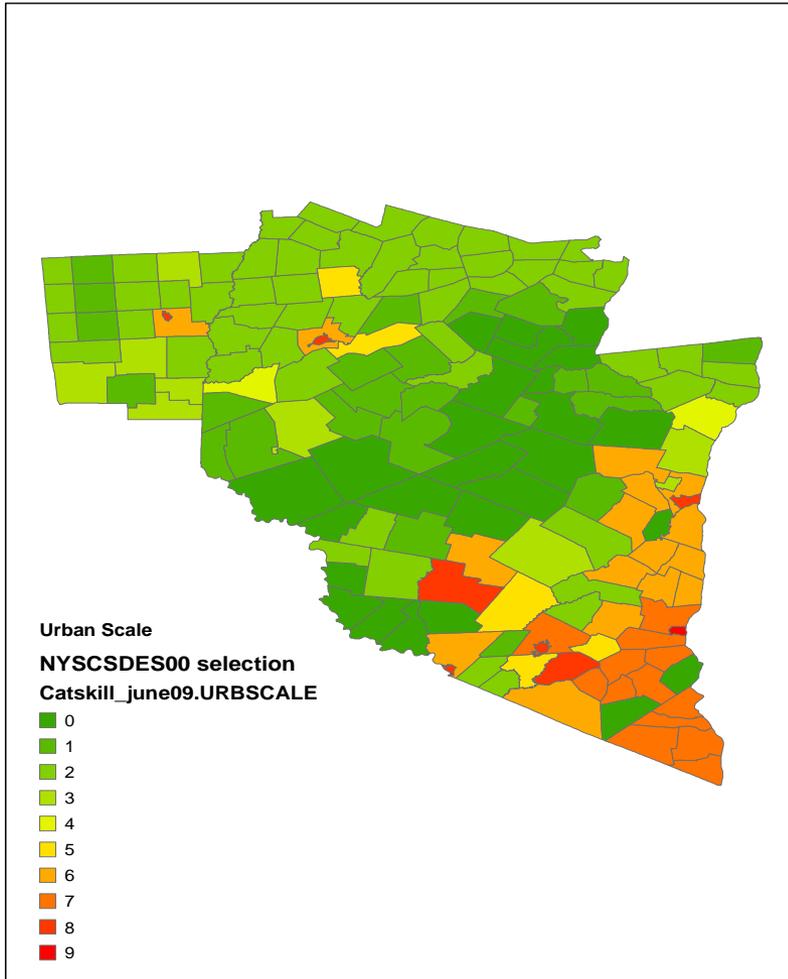
# Urban Centers

8—Minor Urban: A self-contained community with residential, commercial, and industrial functions characterized by detached single- and multiple-family residential structures.



9—Major Urban: A self-contained community with residential, commercial, and industrial functions characterized by a large area of high-density residential development. Above, Kingston.

# Patterns of Urbanization



Utilizing the urbanization scale, a map of the Catskills Region illustrates the diverse nature of the landscape. The southeastern portion of the region is characterized by the expanding suburbs of the New York metropolitan area. The deep greens in the middle represents the least settled townships in and around the Catskill Park, whereas the lights greens to the north and west is the agricultural northern foothills south of Utica.

The “Catskills” originally referred only to the peaks around Tannersville and Windham that saw the first tourists in the early nineteenth century, but by the early twentieth century also included the so called “Borscht Belt” of Sullivan and Ulster Counties (Stradling, 2010). During the 1970s the state began to refer to the region as consisting of the following counties:

Chenango  
Delaware  
Greene  
Orange  
Otsego

Rockland  
Schoharie  
Sullivan  
Ulster

# Patterns of Growth

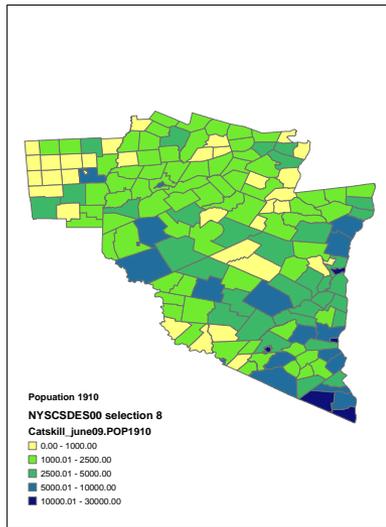
<u>County</u>	<u>1980</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>Change</u>	<u>Percent Change</u>
Chenango	49,344	50,477	1,133	2.3
Delaware	46,824	47,980	1,156	2.5
Greene	40,861	49,221	8,360	20.5
Orange	259,603	372,813	113,210	43.6
Otsego	59,075	62,259	3,184	5.4
Rockland	259,530	311,687	52,157	20.1
Schoharie	29,710	32,749	3,039	10.2
Sullivan	65,155	77,547	12,392	19.0
Ulster	158,158	182,493	24,335	15.4
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>968,260</b>	<b>1,187,226</b>	<b>218,966</b>	<b>22.6</b>

Source: U. S. Census Bureau

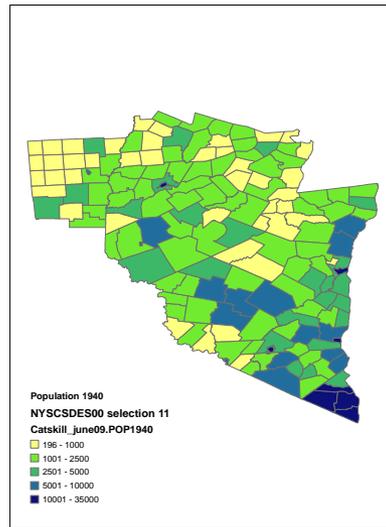
The region as a whole grew 22.6 percent between 1980 and 2010. Overall, eastern counties experienced considerably more growth than western counties. Those counties belonging to the New York Combined Statistical Area—Orange, Rockland, and Ulster Counties—grew the most. Both Sullivan and Greene Counties, both non-metropolitan counties adjacent to the New York CSA counties, also grew considerably. Schoharie County, a rural county nonetheless part of the Albany CSA, grew by ten percent. In contrast, growth in the western counties was largely anemic.

The pattern of this growth is also evident in the map on the next page. The effect of the growth is also evident in the percentage of the region's population that is white.

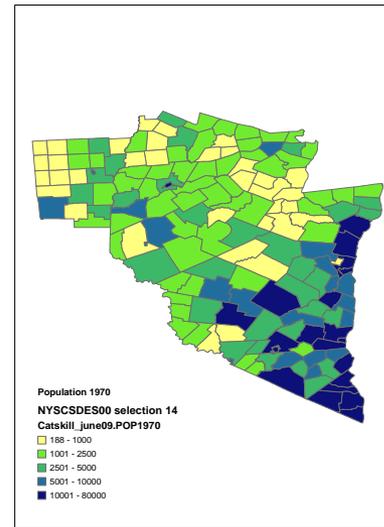
# Regional Growth 1910-2000



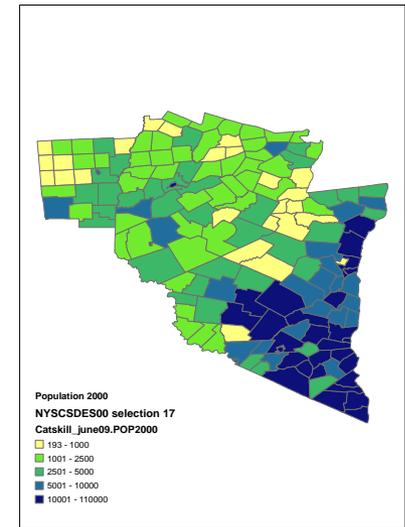
1910



1940



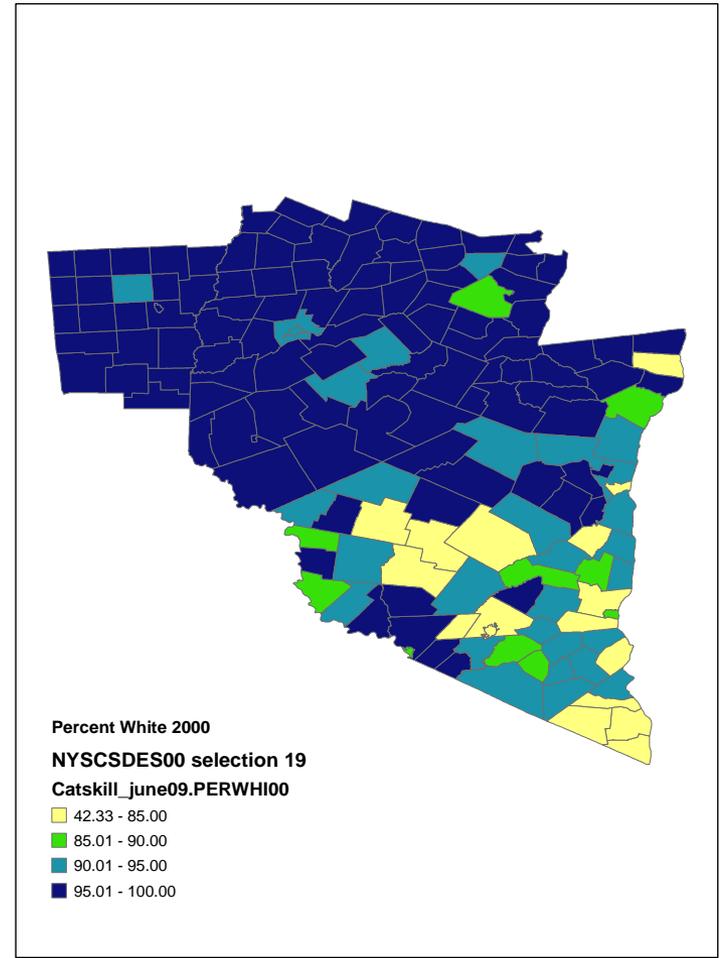
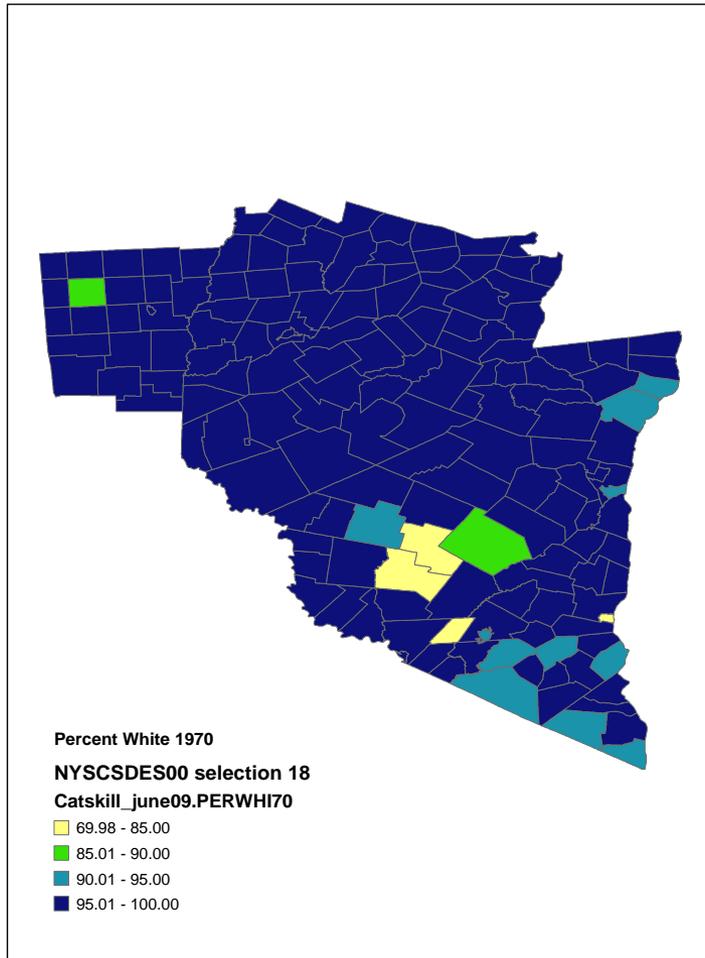
1970



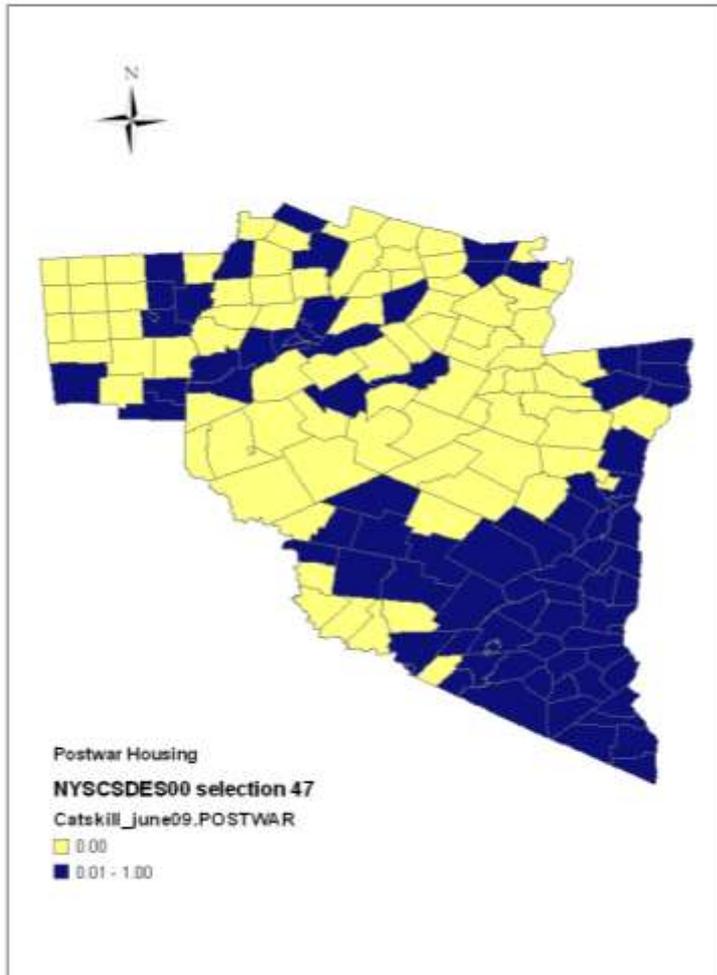
2000

The region has been populated primarily from the southeast.

# Percent White, 1970 & 2000



# Postwar Housing



Postwar housing refers to housing developments built after World War II that follow a roughly traditional development pattern of single-family housing on lots of less than one acre, although newer developments in prosperous communities will frequently have housing lots of up to two acres. Not all communities in the region are home to postwar developments, however, as such developments more likely found in larger communities and the metropolitan southeast corner.

# Postwar Housing



Postwar housing in Hurley, near Kingston. Such historic development patterns are characterized by:

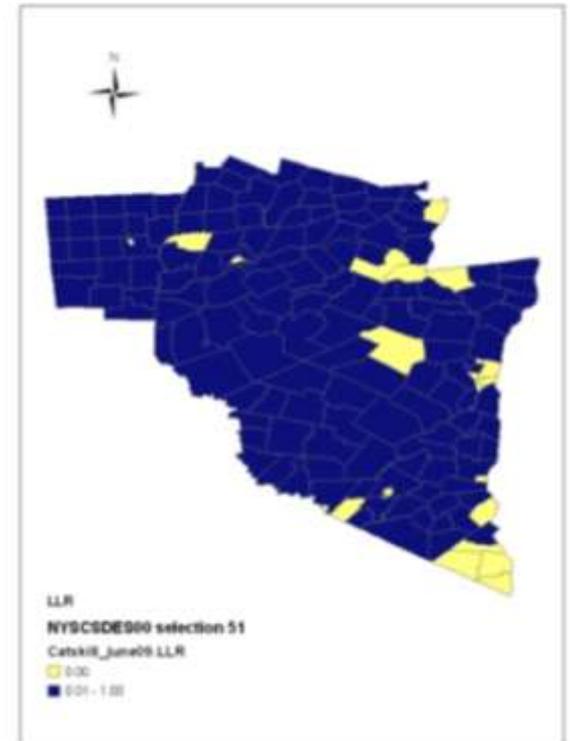
- Efficient municipal service delivery that allows for comparatively low taxes
- Relatively short commutes and minimal traffic congestion with its associated pollution
- Sharp division between city and country; humans and animals stay where they belong

# Recent Development Patterns

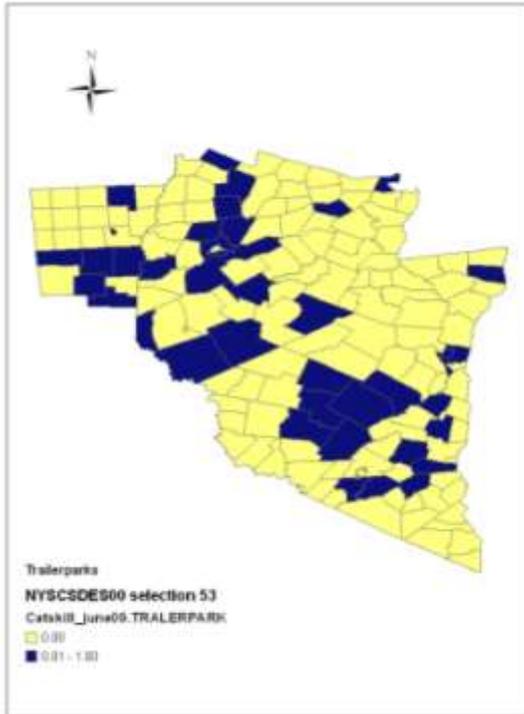


More recent development patterns, particularly in more sparsely settled communities, have emphasized large lot residential development. Housing lots are typically over three acres, and often five to ten acres. At left, a large lot residential area near Oneonta. Such a development pattern is characterized by:

- Large service areas with low populations; taxes must increase to provide municipal services, and many services are often not performed
- Longer commutes and accompanying increased traffic congestion and associated pollution
- “Rurban” areas often have increased human-deer and human-coyote contact

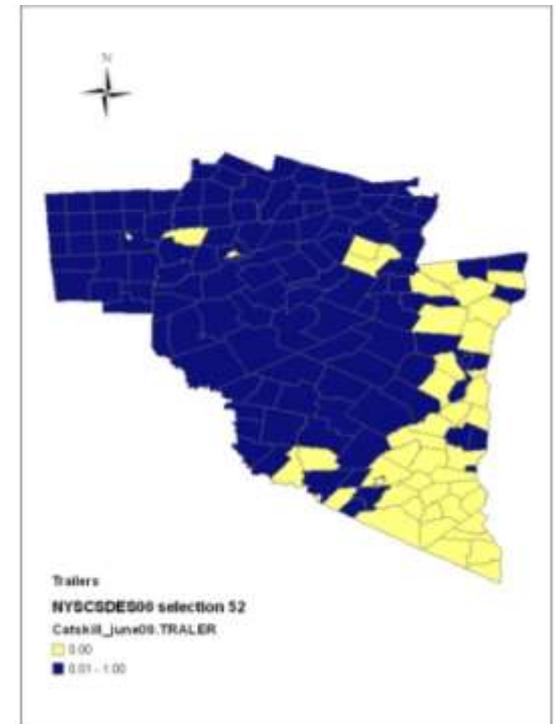


# Recent Development Patterns

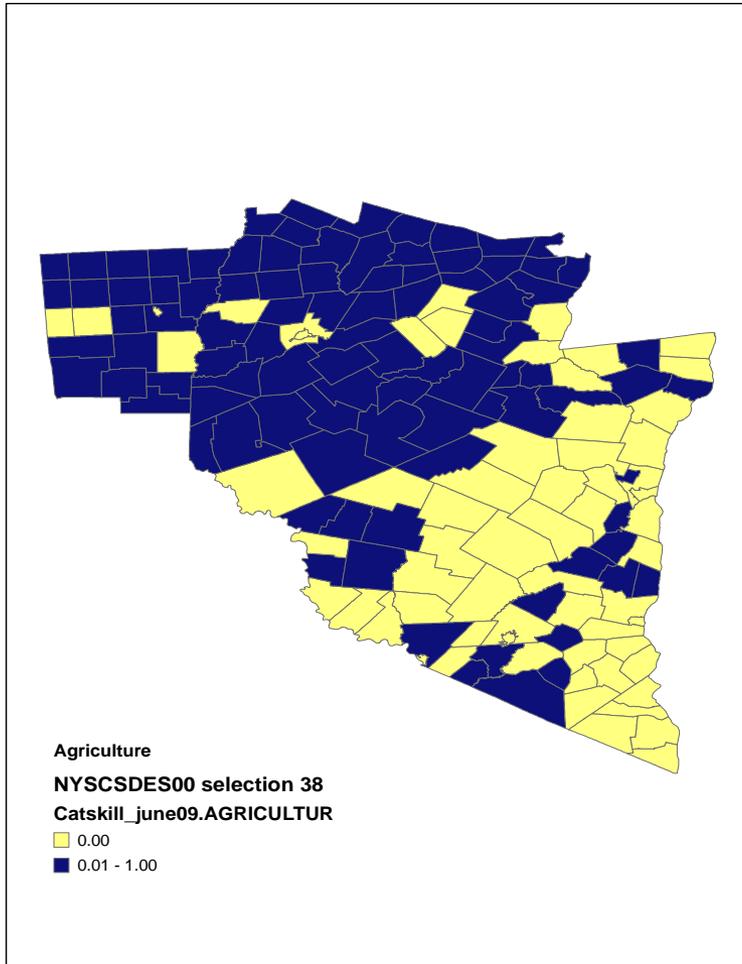


One aspect of the recent development patterns is the location of mobile homes. Mobile home parks, often associated with rural areas, are actually more likely to be found in or near larger communities in the region (Thomas et al, 2010). However, single mobile homes built on large residential lots are more likely in sparsely settled townships where property values are comparatively low.

Across the region, this translates into a sharp dichotomy between the Hudson valley and New York City suburbs where mobile home parks are found but only rarely are single mobile homes are seen, and the more rural areas to the north and west.

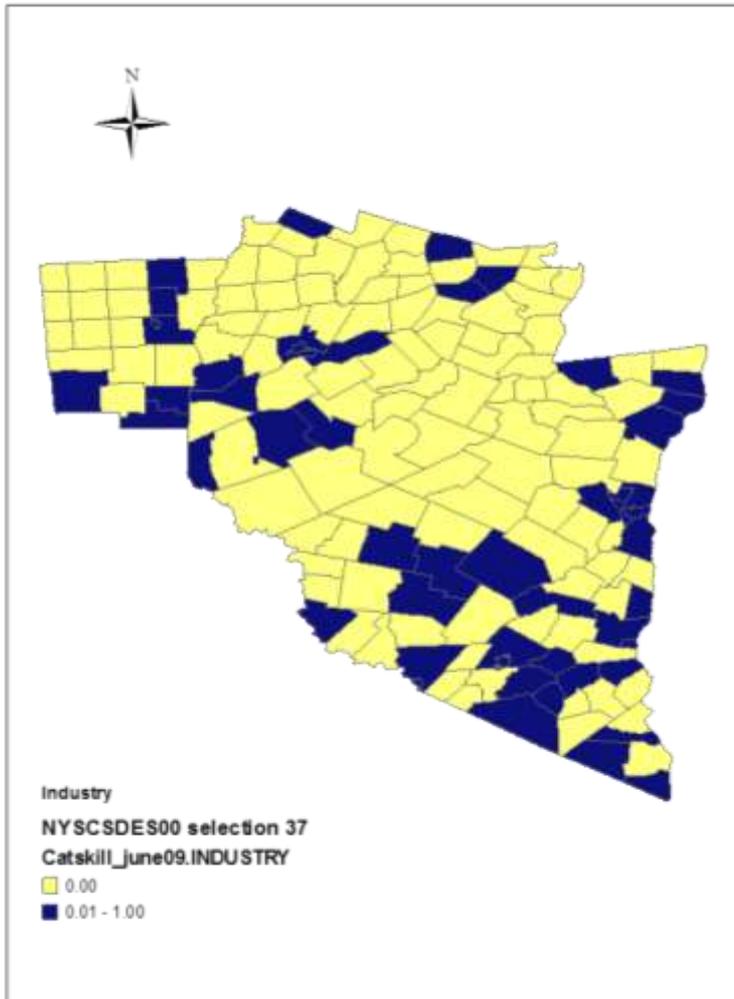


# Agriculture



Despite the stereotype of rural areas having agricultural economies, the Catskills developed a complex economy that relied on agriculture as part of a wider complex. Historically, agriculture was found in the Hudson Valley and north of the Catskills high peaks region in which the Catskill Park is located. Today, suburbanization has chewed up much of the agricultural landscape in the southeast, whereas the mountainous region in the center of the region was never heavily agricultural. As such, it is the north of the region that has the most heavily agricultural character.

# Industry



Just as agriculture has historically been part of a complex regional economic system, manufacturing has long been an important component of the region's economy. As early as the eighteenth century the region was home to tanneries and lumber mills, and the first textile mills developed as early as 1810 (Stradling, 2010; Thomas & Koeddermann, 2012).

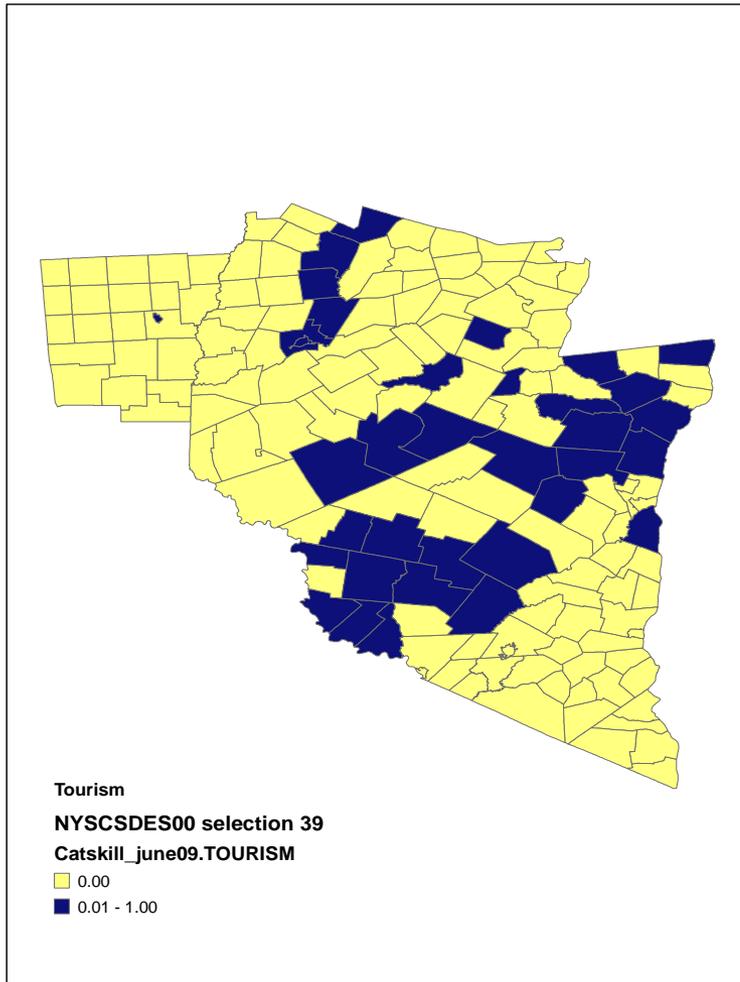
Today, a number of communities of at least some manufacturing facilities, most often in larger villages and the in the region's cities. Notice that the Catskill high peaks—the most rugged and rural of the region—do not have significant manufacturing operations.

# Tourism

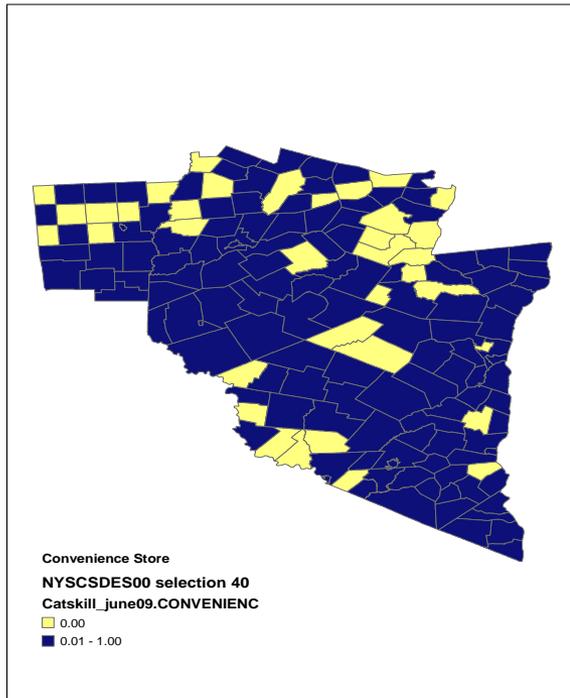
Tourism in the Catskills began with the desire of city-bound New Yorkers to see the mountains rising from the west of the Hudson River early in the nineteenth century. By mid-century, the region attracted world-renowned artists who collectively developed America's first artistic tradition: the Hudson River School. Filled with soaring landscapes and sublime imagery the exaggerated actual Catskill Mountain scenes, this school set the standard for American portrayals of nature to the present day.

Early in the twentieth century, the "Borscht Belt" of Ulster and Sullivan Counties attracted thousands of Jewish immigrants to the mountains each year. The two regions, along with the sparsely settled high peaks (in yellow due to a lack of tourism infrastructure, but nevertheless crisscrossed by trails) forms a band of tourism about a two-hour drive from Manhattan.

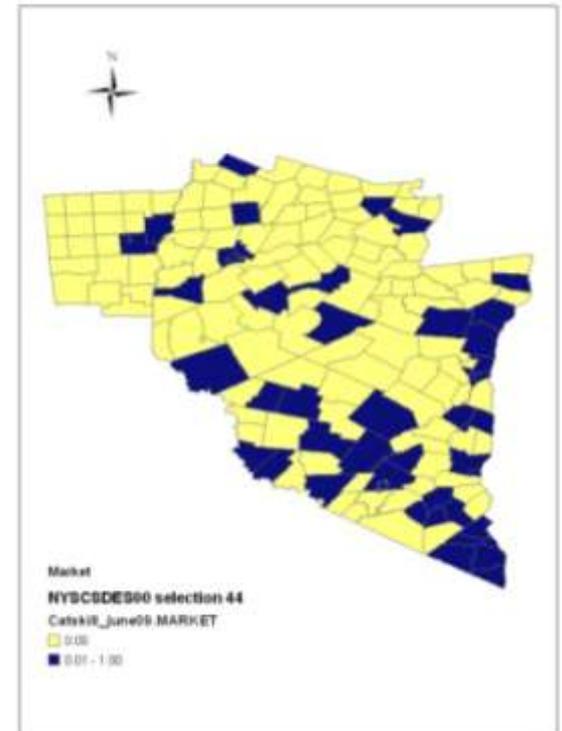
The tourism region to the north is along the northern Susquehanna Valley, home to James Fenimore Cooper. During the 1830s Cooper, followed later by Roxbury's John Burroughs, set the American standard for nature writing in such works as *The Leatherstocking Tales*. Tourism in this region began with wealthy migrants traveling to Cooperstown in order to pay homage at Cooper's grave (Thomas, 2003).



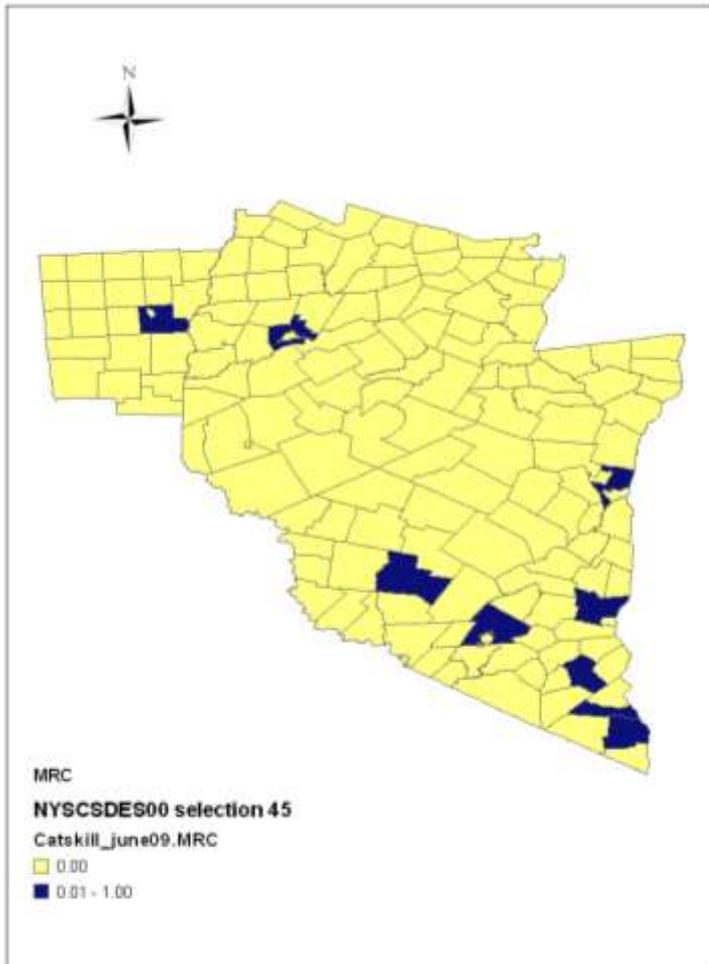
# Basic Shopping



Shopping is important not only for the provision of goods and services, but for the social interaction that promotes social integration. Since World War II the economic base of many smaller villages collapsed as the economy centralized in larger regional centers. For many smaller communities, the convenience store (left) is not only one of the few retail establishments left but also a place to informally congregate. Supermarkets, which tend to sell such items as food less expensively than convenience stores, tend to be found only in regional centers (right).



# Multiple Retail Centers



Although many larger villages assumed the function of a regional center, most are not populous enough to sustain a large number of retail establishments. The result is that large-scale shopping districts with multiple outlets are found primarily in urbanized areas, particularly in suburban locales. This is evident as the places with multiple retail centers are concentrated in the suburban southeast of the region, but the Catskills high peaks lacks any such facilities. In the north, the townships of Norwich and Oneonta are home to retail strips but their central cities do not, replicating in miniature the pattern found in the more urbanized southeast of the region.

# Conclusions

- Given current trends, populations will increase over the next fifty years, but not necessarily over the next twenty
- Given current trends, the development pattern will result in higher costs to municipalities and correspondingly higher taxes
- Given current trends, there will be continued increase in human-animal interactions, followed by a decline as some local populations go extinct

## References:

Aerial Imagery: Google Earth. Download at [www.google.com](http://www.google.com).

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