

ISSUE PAPER SERIES

# Tug Hill Regional Census Data Analysis

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NEW YORK STATE TUG HILL COMMISSION

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The Tug Hill Commission Technical and Issue Paper Series are designed to help local officials and citizens in the Tug Hill region and other rural parts of New York State. The Technical Paper Series provides guidance on procedures based on questions frequently received by the Commission. The Issue Paper Series provides background on key issues facing the region without taking advocacy positions. Other papers in each series are available from the Tug Hill Commission. Please call us or visit our website for more information.



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## Introduction

Availability of U.S. Census and American Community Survey (ACS) data in forms easily used in computer mapping programs has led commission staff to create the following series of maps for the Tug Hill region. Statistics commonly used in community comprehensive plans, as well as other data of potential interest to local officials and residents, have been mapped for all the 41 Tug Hill towns, which includes data for villages that might be located within those towns. This data analysis will be replicated in 10-year intervals, coinciding with the release of the decennial census. That will allow some tracking of how these statistics change over time.

For more information on the U.S. Census and American Community Survey, go to these websites:

United States Census Bureau: [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov)

American Community Survey: [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/)

Additionally, the Comptroller's Office has created an interactive dashboard to engage with census data specifically relating to New York State.

Dashboard: [www1.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/2020-census-interactive-dashboard.htm](http://www1.osc.state.ny.us/localgov/2020-census-interactive-dashboard.htm)

## Data Sources

According to the ACS General Handbook, the main function of the U.S. decennial census is to provide counts of people for the purpose of congressional apportionment, whereas the primary purpose of the ACS is to measure the changing social and economic characteristics of the U.S. population.<sup>1</sup> The Tug Hill Commission uses both data sources to provide demographic information and analysis for the region.

The decennial census is produced every ten years and offers a numeric snapshot of the United States population at a single point in time; ACS, however, is a nationwide, continuous survey designed to consistently provide communities with reliable demographic data in the form of one-year and five-year estimates.

In 2000, the ACS replaced the decennial census long form. Census Bureau specialists have determined that, when comparing census data, ACS estimates are similar to those obtained in past decennial census sample data for most areas and characters, and that in many cases, data users can make valid long-term comparisons.<sup>2</sup> However, differences in residence rules, base reference totals, and reference periods between the two surveys should be taken into account.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, ACS data are derived from a sample of the population and are therefore subject to sampling error.<sup>4</sup> When comparing ACS data, the commission follows Census Bureau recommendations to only compare one-year estimates with other one-year estimates, and five-year estimates with other five-year estimates; further, ACS data is only compared with non-overlapping estimates.

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<sup>1</sup> [Understanding and Using ACS Data: What All Data Users Need to Know \(census.gov\)](http://www.census.gov/acs/generalhandbook/)

<sup>2</sup> ACS General Handbook, p.18

<sup>3</sup> ACS General Handbook, p. 18

<sup>4</sup> ACS General Handbook, p. 71

## Methodology

For the purposes of this paper, village populations have been rolled into their respective towns. The maps on pp. 7-16 display town populations that include the villages that fall within their municipal boundary. Populations for towns with villages whose village boundaries reside entirely within town boundaries are calculated with a simple sum (e.g. the Town of Lowville + Village of Lowville = Lowville Population Total, with the Lowville Population Total being the value represented on the map).

Three villages included in this paper cross boundaries with other municipalities that fall outside the geographic Tug Hill region: Black River, Lyons Falls, and Port Leyden. Due to the membership of these villages in Tug Hill Commission-based Councils of Government (COGs), however, their population data is left intact in overall regional population calculations.<sup>5</sup>

Please note that the methodological changes used in this paper regarding these three villages differs slightly from the way the Tug Hill region population data was tabulated in previous Commission census papers. The inclusion of the intact village populations results in a higher overall regional population calculation. This change does not exceed a three percent increase to regional values.<sup>6</sup>

## Population

The Tug Hill town with the smallest reported population is Montague (Lewis County), with a reported 2020 population of 97. The town of Hastings (Oswego County) has the highest reported population: when including the village of Central Square's population into the town total, Hastings has a population of 9,342; excluding the village population, Hastings remains the most-populated town on Tug Hill with a population of 7,480.

As is consistent with previous decades' reporting, towns within the core region of Tug Hill tend to have smaller populations than towns along the edges. Towns containing villages generally continue to have larger populations than those without a village. The town of Watertown (Jefferson County) is a notable exception to this rule, due to its proximity to the city of Watertown.

## Population Change

In the decade between 2010 and 2020, 11 Tug Hill towns gained population, and 30 towns lost population. The town that gained the most by both net increase and percentage was Watertown (Jefferson County) with an addition of 1,443 people, or a 32.3 percent population increase. The town that experienced the greatest population net loss was Annsville (Oneida County), with a decrease of 373 people, or a 12.4 percent decrease. By percentage, the town that lost the most people relative to its

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<sup>5</sup> For a strictly "regional" population that falls within the geography of the Tug Hill cuesta, Town-outside-village populations is calculated by Census.gov in tables with Estimates Bases. This paper is based on data provided by both the decennial census and five-year American Community Surveys, which is the most accurate. Comingling of the two data sets would mean using two different sources and methods, potentially resulting in less accurate analysis.

<sup>6</sup> This constitutes a 2.72 percent increase for 2010, and a 2.59 percent increase for 2020.



## Tug Hill Regional Census Analysis 2020

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overall population was Worth (Jefferson County) with a net loss of 33 people, or a 14.3 percent population decrease.

Overall, the total Tug Hill population went from 106,783<sup>7</sup> in 2010 to 105,058 in 2020, a drop of 1,725 people, or 1.62 percentage decrease. Statewide, the population of New York has increased by 4.2 percent to a total of 20,201,249 people as of 2020.

### Population Density

Population density refers to the population per square mile, rounded to the nearest whole number. Population density in Tug Hill ranges from one person per square mile in Montague to 212 people per square mile in Hastings. Eight towns have fewer than 15 people per square mile in the core region. Nine towns have a population density of 100 people per square mile or higher.

In general, towns that border larger metropolitan centers (the cities of Watertown, Rome, Utica, and the Syracuse area) or Fort Drum showed higher population density than towns closer to the interior of the Tug Hill region.

With a total area of 2,160 square miles, the overall population density of Tug Hill is approximately 49 people per square mile.

### Context

This paper aims to map decennial census data and provide analysis on 10 different demographic topics. While census data from 2010 to 2020 indicates a net increase in the population of New York State, the Tug Hill Commission is following news reporting and one-year census population estimates that indicate a lowering of the New York State population since 2020.

This does not invalidate the decennial census data, but it is something that the Tug Hill Commission will continue to monitor. The 2030 Census Data will determine a net change by the end of the decade.

### Median Age

According to ACS 2021 five-year survey results, the youngest town-wide median age in the region was in Williamstown at 31, and the oldest median age was in Montague at 62. The median age of the regional population was 44. Comparably, the statewide median age in 2021 was 39.2 years, and nationwide was 38.4 years.

In general, the Tug Hill population has a slightly higher median age as a region when compared to the state and national median.

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<sup>7</sup> This regional value differs from the calculated total in the 2015 census paper due to calculation changes. For more detailed information, refer to “Methodology” on page 3.

### Median Household Income

Most Tug Hill towns have a median household income (MHI) below New York State's median household income of \$75,157, according to the ACS 2021 five-year estimate data. Seven Tug Hill towns had a median household income higher than the median for New York State.

The town of Harrisburg had the highest regional MHI at \$100,104, whereas the town of Montague had the lowest at \$26,929. The median of all Tug Hill towns was \$61,792.

### Percentage of Persons with Income below Poverty Level

According to the 2021 ACS data, the percentage of people with income below the poverty level varied greatly regionwide: the town of Orwell had the highest percentage of persons with income below the poverty level at 21 percent, whereas the town of Pinckney had the lowest percentage of persons with income below the poverty level at two percent. Pinckney has maintained this low poverty rate since our previous paper, which also reported a low of two percent in 2010.

Statewide, approximately 13.5 percent of people in New York State are considered to be below the poverty level. Nationwide, the percentage of persons with income below the poverty level is closer to 12.6 percent.

The median percentage of persons below the poverty level for all Tug Hill towns was 11 percent.

### Household and Ownership Data

The final four maps in this series display Total Households (Estimated), Percent Owner-Occupied Housing Units, Percentage Renter-Occupied Housing Units, and Percent Vacant Housing Units from the ACS 2021. A household is defined by the census as "all the people occupying the housing unit" as their usual place of residence.<sup>8</sup>

Unsurprisingly, towns with smaller populations tend to have fewer estimated households. The town of Montague has the lowest number of households at 68, whereas the town of Hastings has the highest number of households at 3,830.

However, in towns that experience lower population and lower population density (the interior of Tug Hill), a higher percentage of households are owner-occupied, not rented. The towns of Harrisburg and Turin are tied for the highest percentage of owner-occupied households at 96 percent, with Redfield following closely behind at 95 percent. The town of Champion has the lowest percentage of owner-occupied households at 52 percent, which may partially be attributed to its proximity to Fort Drum, where there is a far more transient population.

Towns in the northern portion of Tug Hill are more likely to contain higher percentages of renter-occupied households. Champion, at 48 percent, has the highest percentage of renter-occupied homes;

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<sup>8</sup> [Subject Definitions \(census.gov\)](#)

## Tug Hill Regional Census Analysis 2020

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however, towns like Lowville, Watertown, and Rutland are also on the higher end of the renter occupancy spectrum.

The final map shows a percentage spread of vacant housing in the towns in the region. Towns in the interior of Tug Hill tend to have higher vacancy rates, except for Forestport, the gateway to the southern Adirondack region. Montague has the highest rate of vacant housing at 81 percent, whereas Floyd has the lowest percentage of vacant housing at five percent. It is important to note, however, that both campgrounds and seasonal homes are counted as “vacant housing,” which likely inflates the appearance of available year-round housing.

### Looking Ahead

The goal of this analysis is to better inform communities and staff about trends in demographics, how these trends may affect attitudes reflected in community surveys, and assist commission staff in better understanding the needs of the region’s towns and villages. We will continue to monitor changes in demographics in the coming years. We welcome your thoughts and suggestions about the demographics we have chosen for this paper.

If you have any questions, please contact Taylor McKinney at [taylor@tughill.org](mailto:taylor@tughill.org) or Matthew Smith at [msmith@tughill.org](mailto:msmith@tughill.org), or call the commission office at (315) 785-2380.



# Population 2020 Census

Regional Boundary

Population

97 - 501

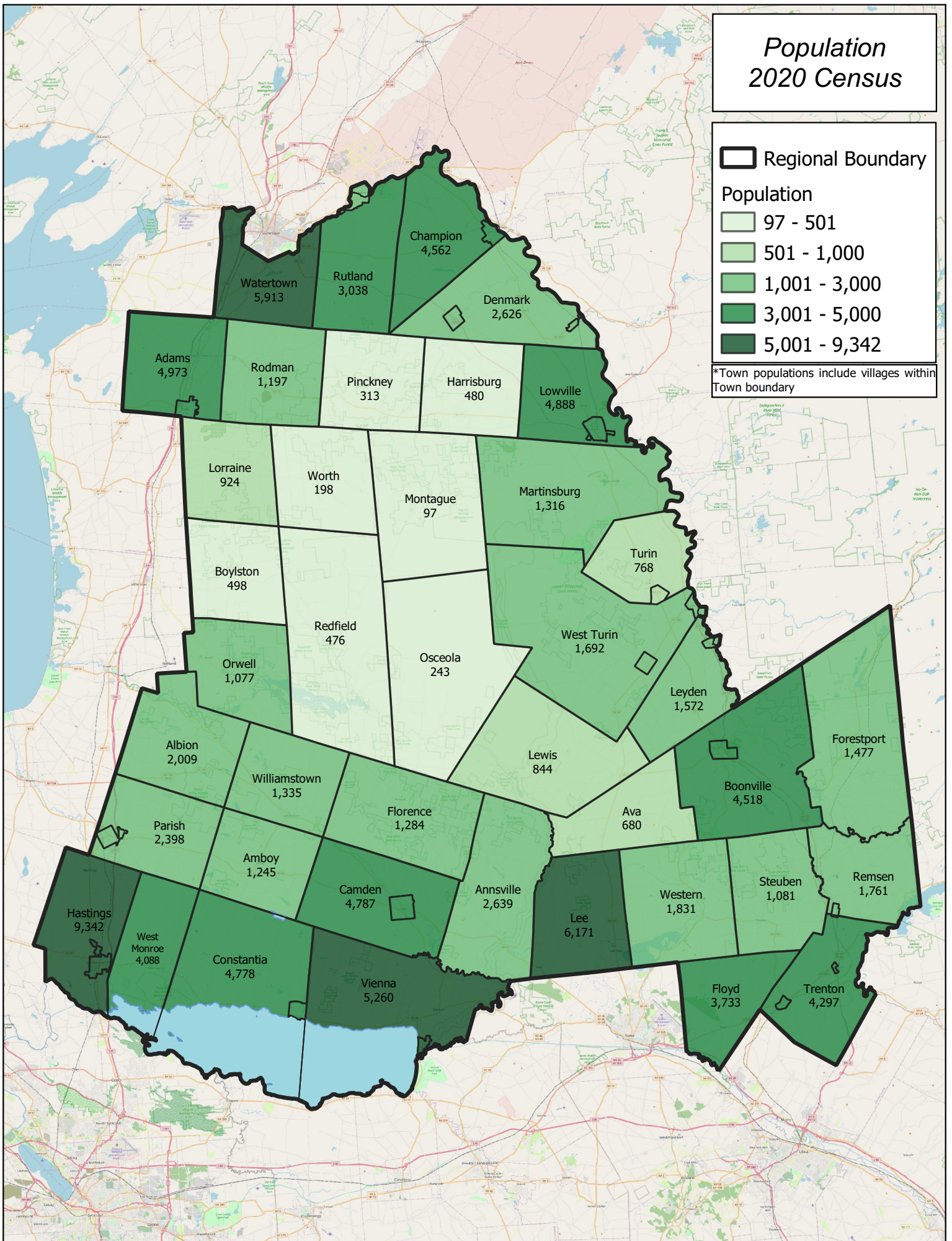
501 - 1,000

1,001 - 3,000

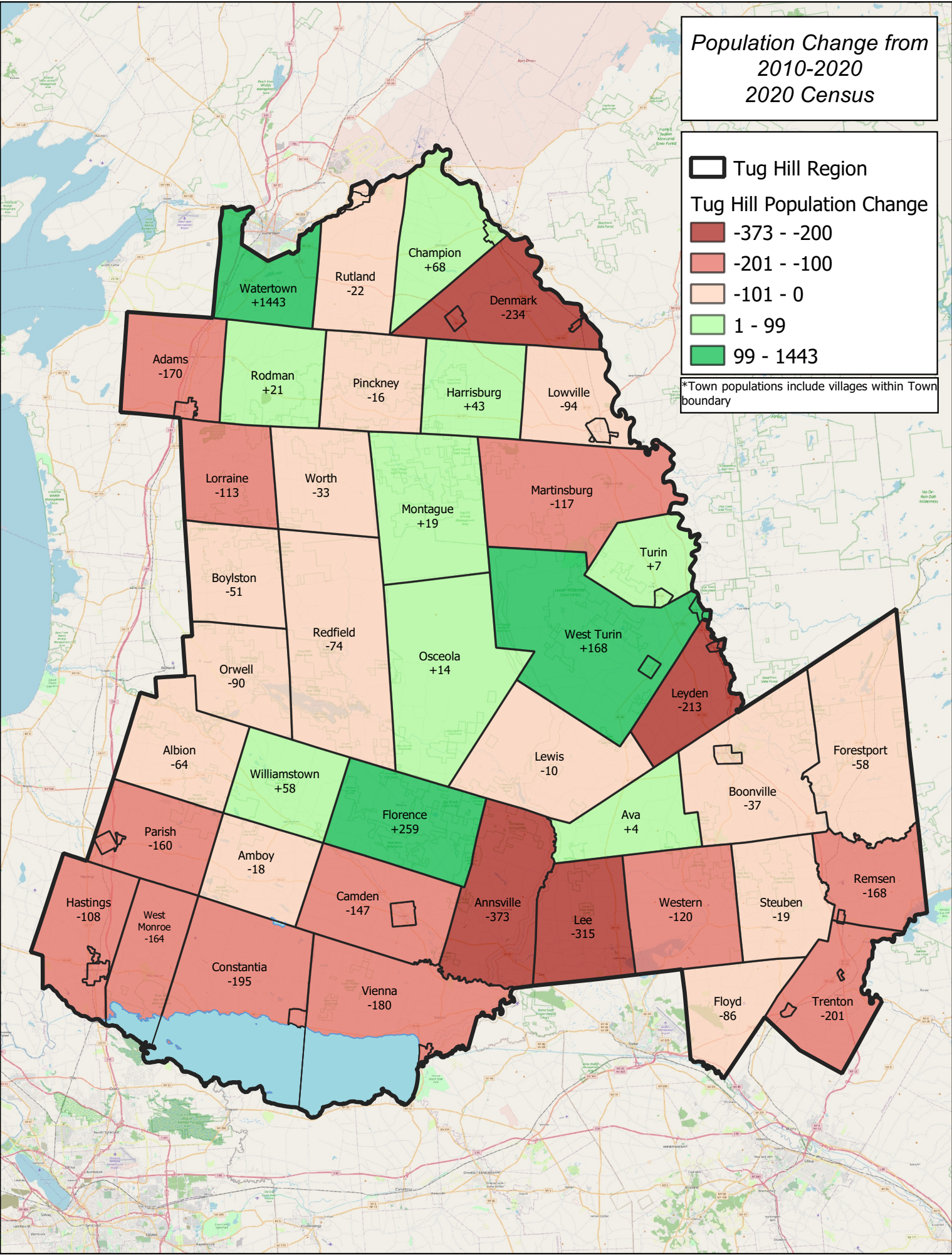
3,001 - 5,000

5,001 - 9,342

\*Town populations include villages within  
Town boundary

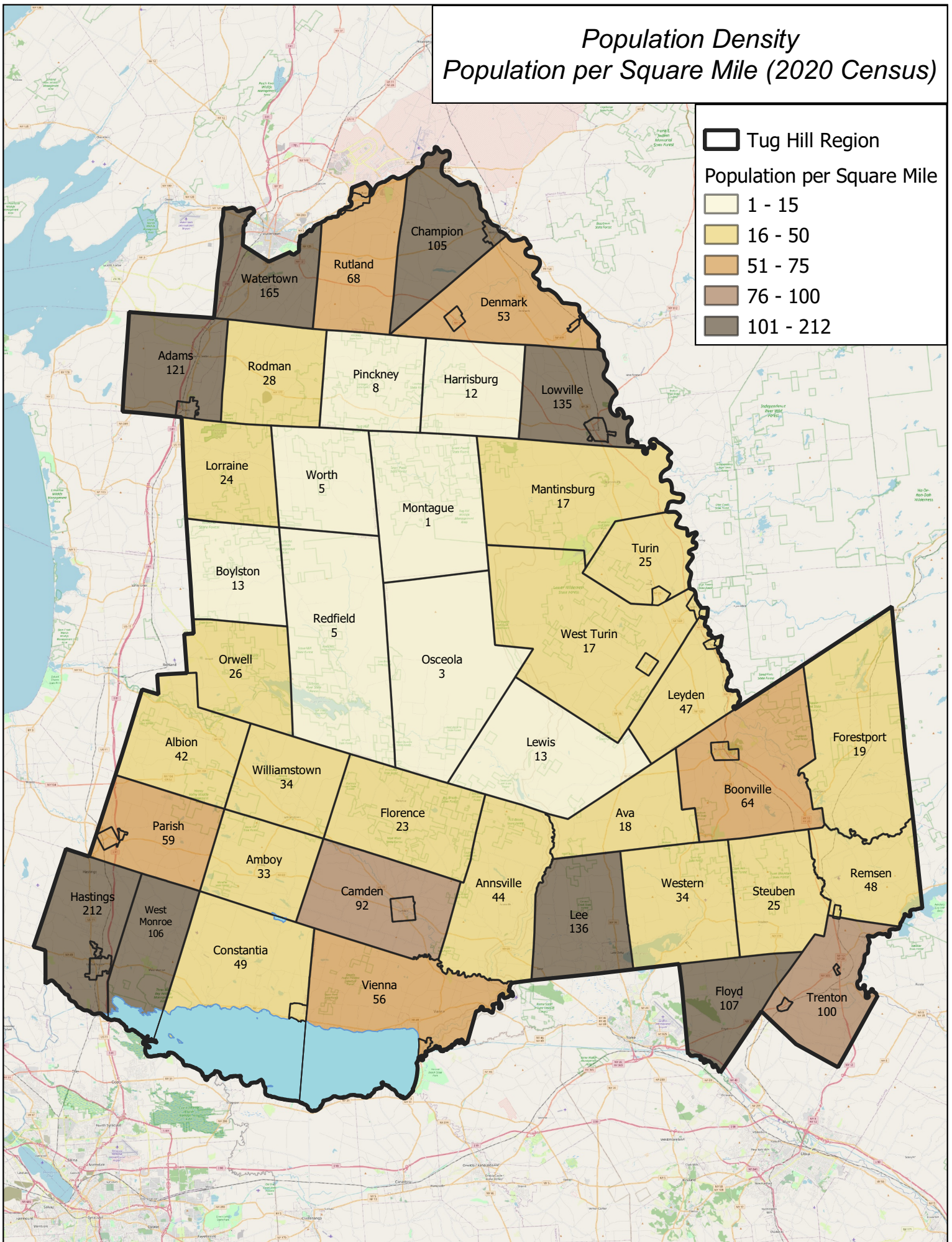
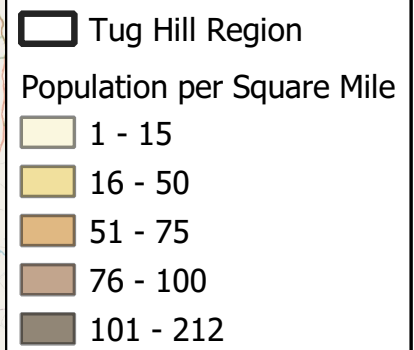








# Population Density Population per Square Mile (2020 Census)







# Median Age 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate

 Tug Hill Region


Median Age


 30 - 35


 36 - 40

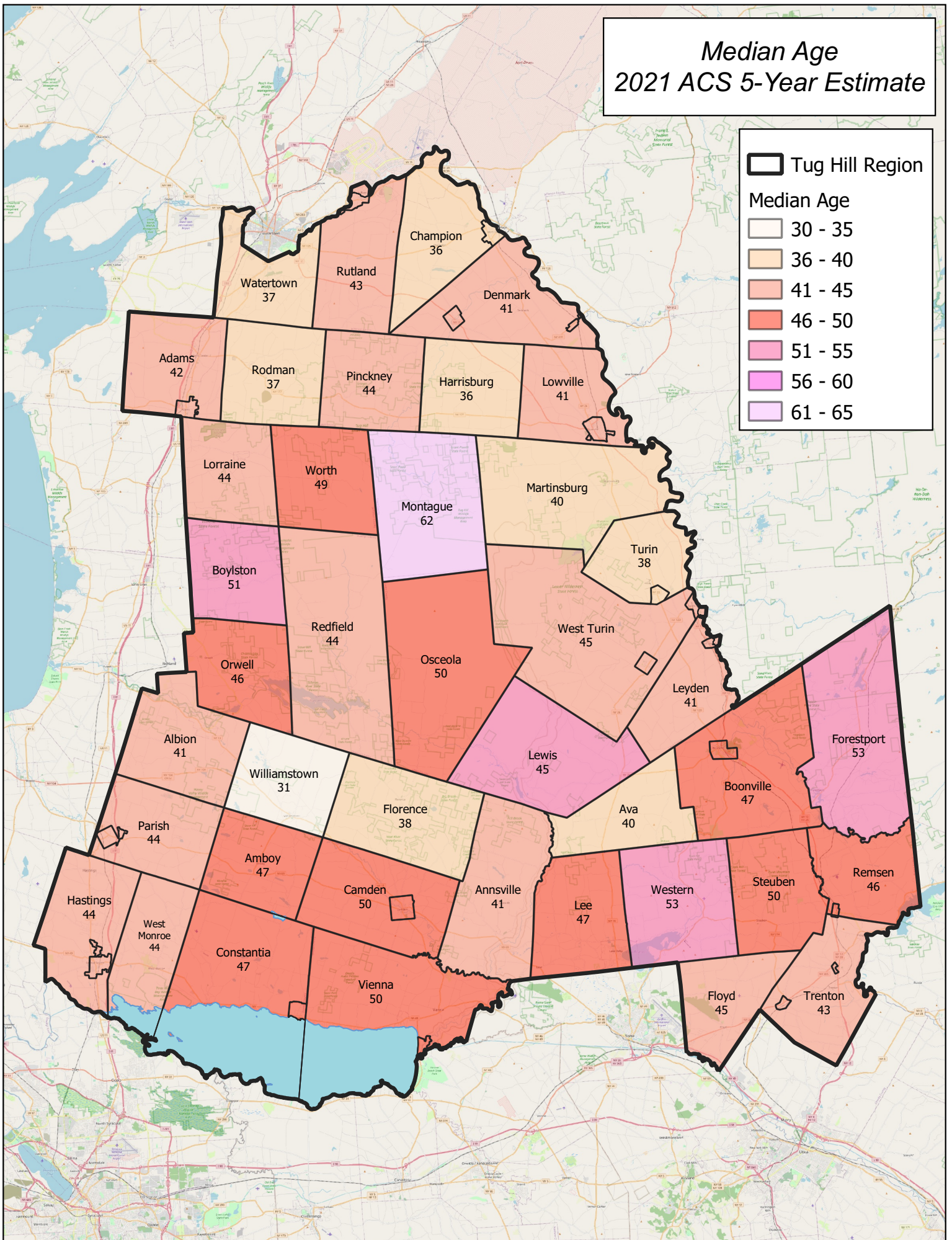
 41 - 45

 46 - 50

 51 - 55

 56 - 60

 61 - 65





## Median Household Income 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Regional Boundary

Median Household Income (dollars)

25,000 - 35,000

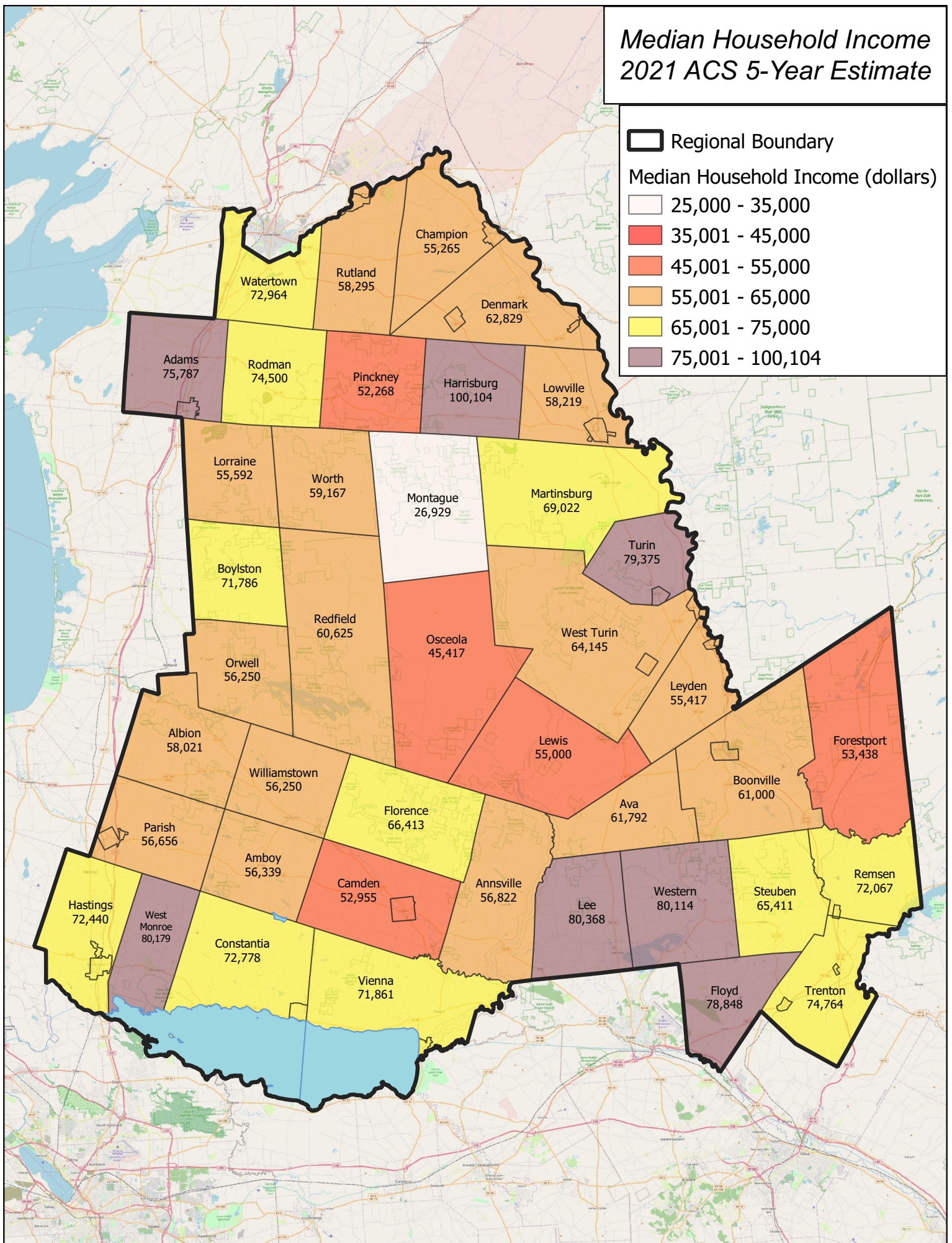
35,001 - 45,000

45,001 - 55,000

55,001 - 65,000

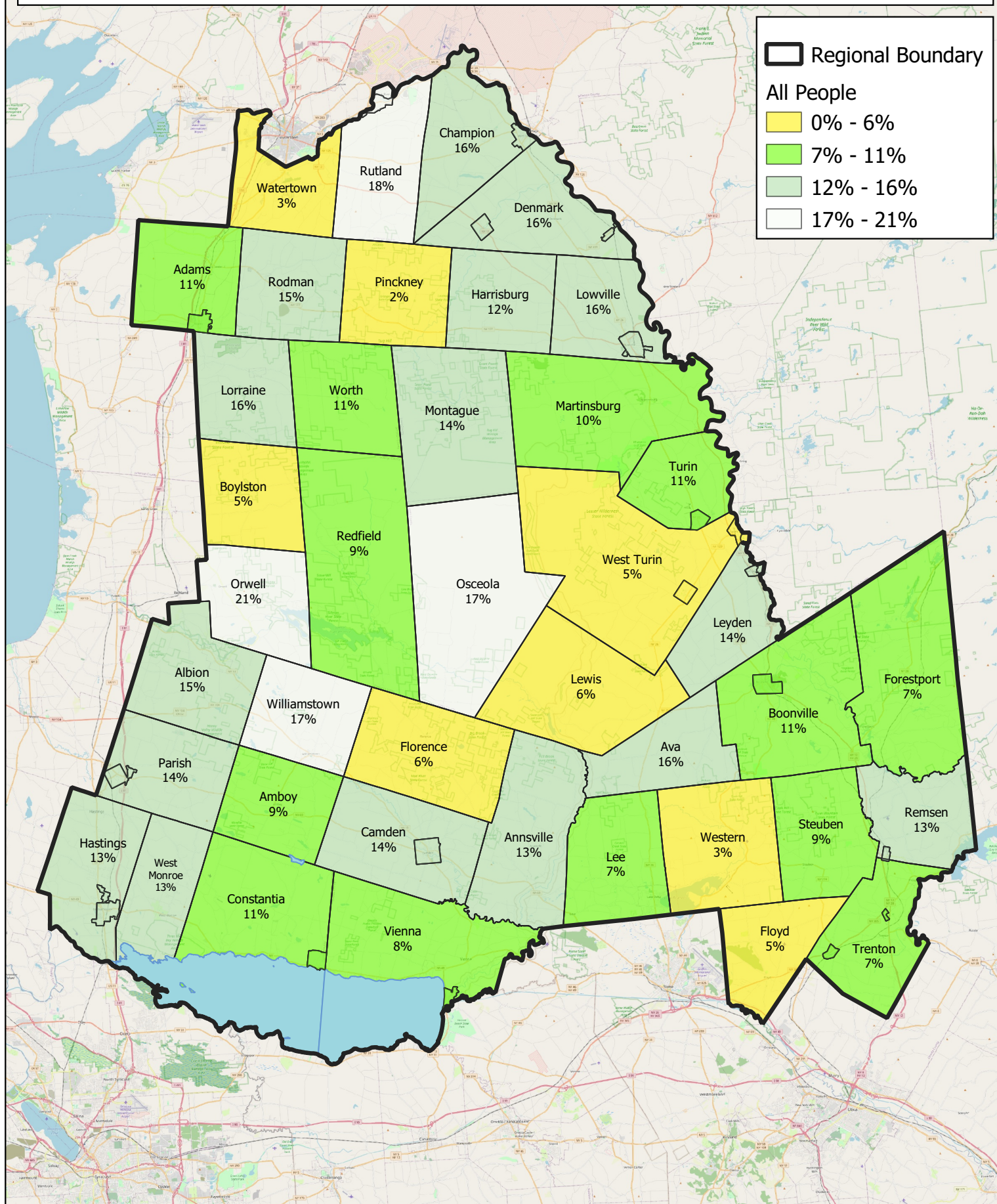
65,001 - 75,000

75,001 - 100,104





*Percentage of All People Whose Income in the Past 12 Months is Below the Poverty Level  
2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate*





# Total Estimated Households 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate

Regional Boundary

Total Households

0 - 50

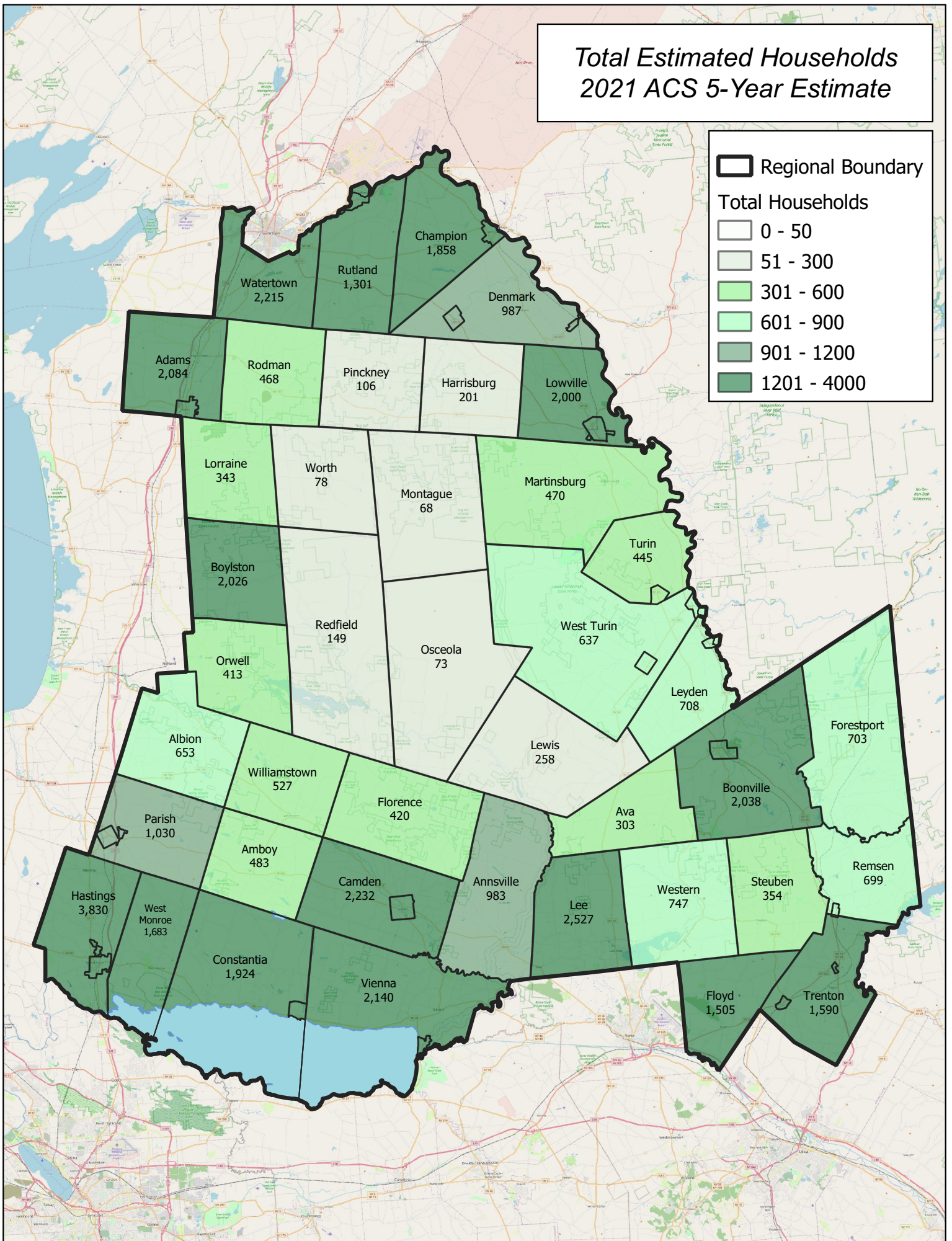
51 - 300

301 - 600

601 - 900

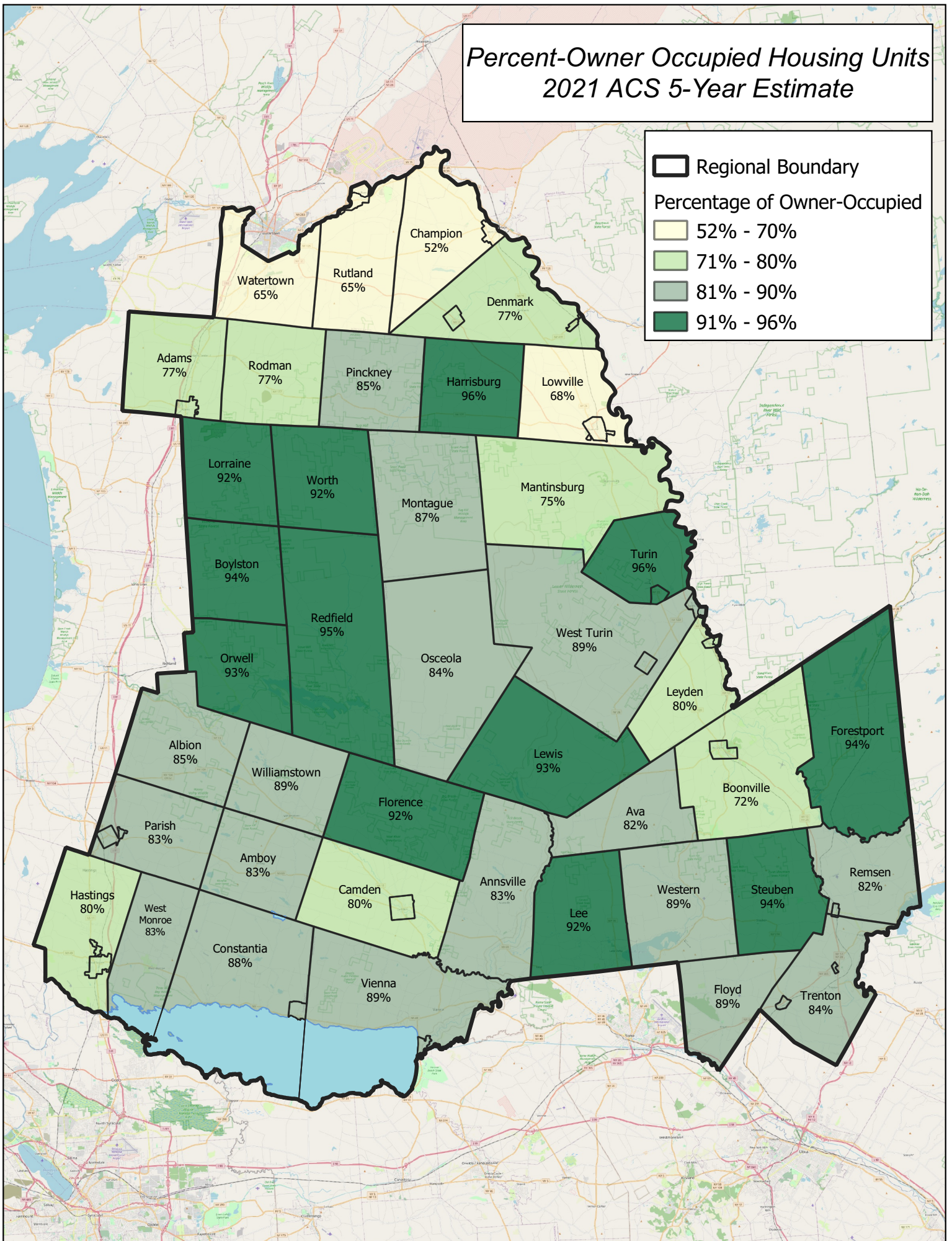
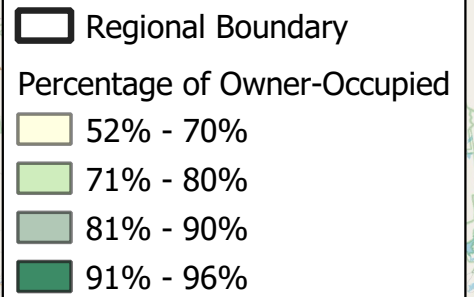
901 - 1200

1201 - 4000



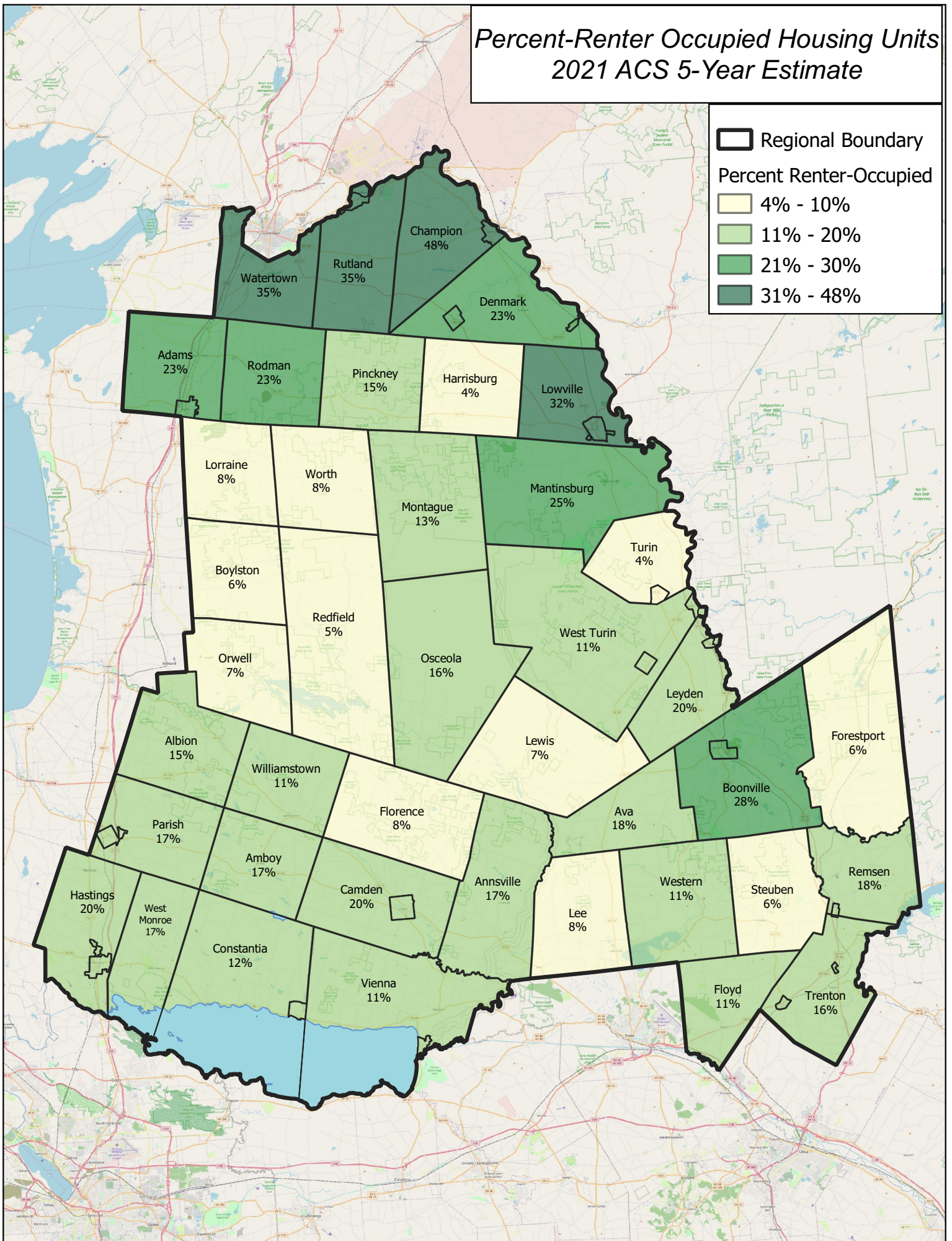
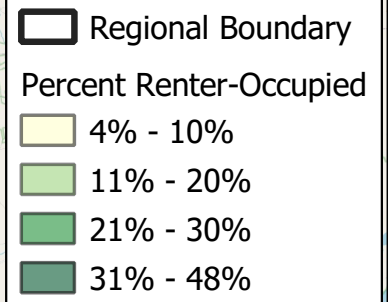


# Percent-Owner Occupied Housing Units 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate





# Percent-Renter Occupied Housing Units 2021 ACS 5-Year Estimate





## Percent Vacant Housing Units 2020 Census

Regional Boundary

Percent Vacant Housing Units

5% - 25%

26% - 50%

51% - 75%

76% - 81%

\*Camps/seasonal dwellings are included in this count

