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Population Density

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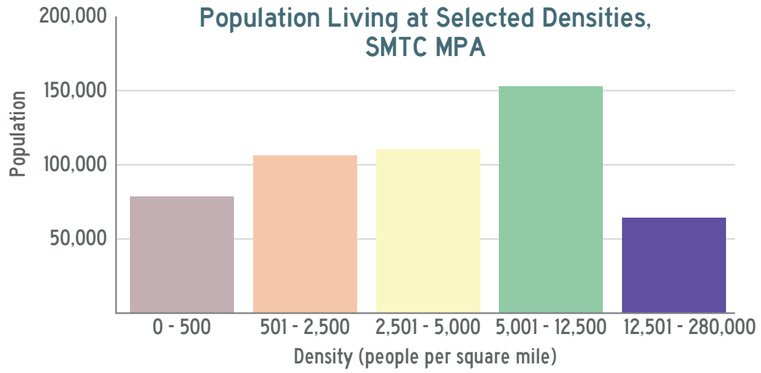
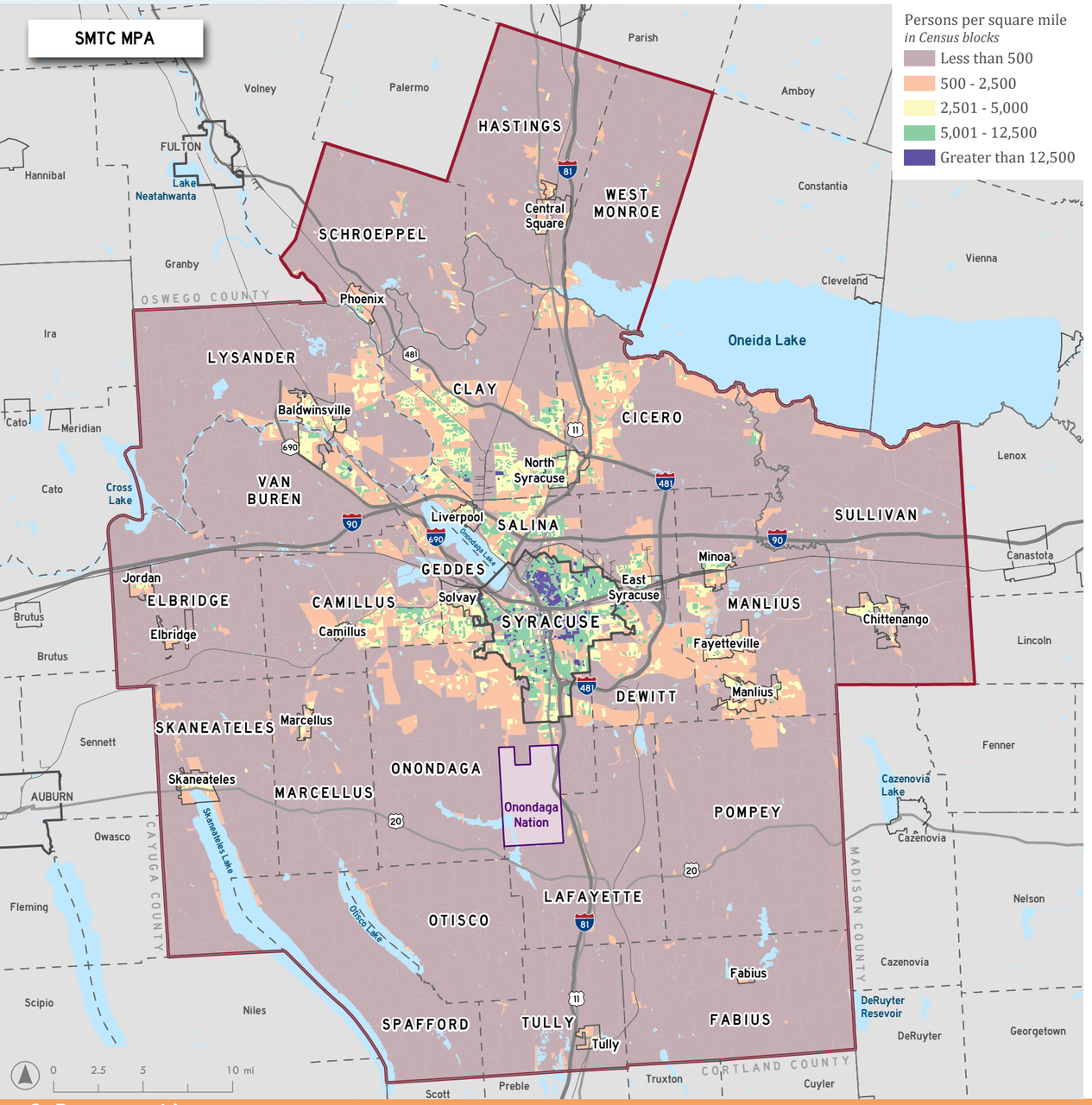
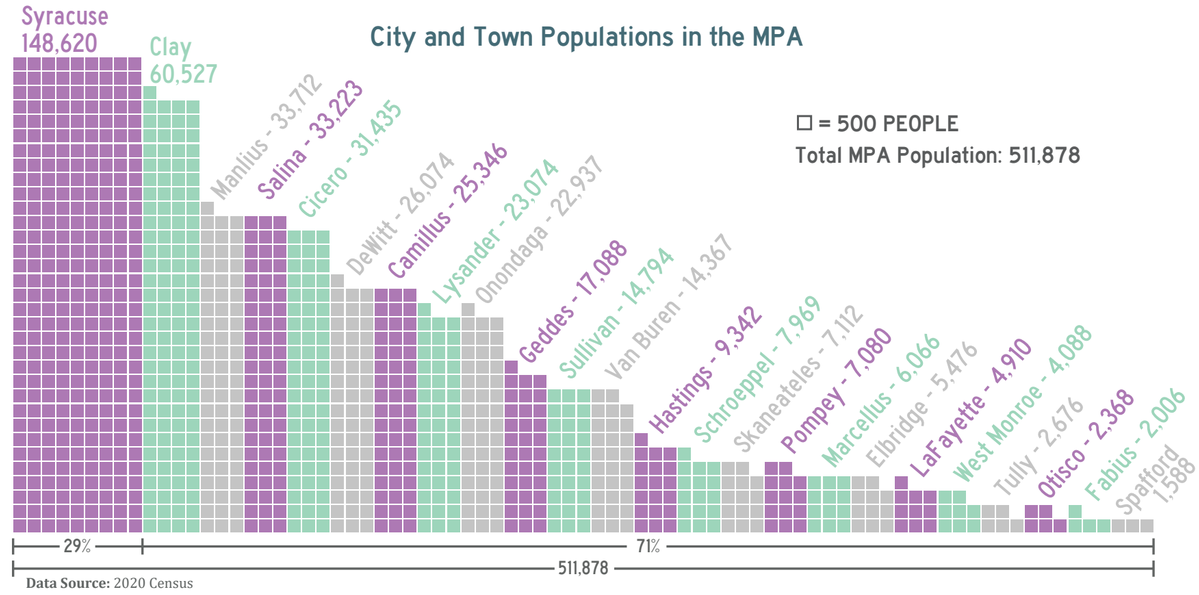
Our MPA's densest parts are in the City of Syracuse and in villages.

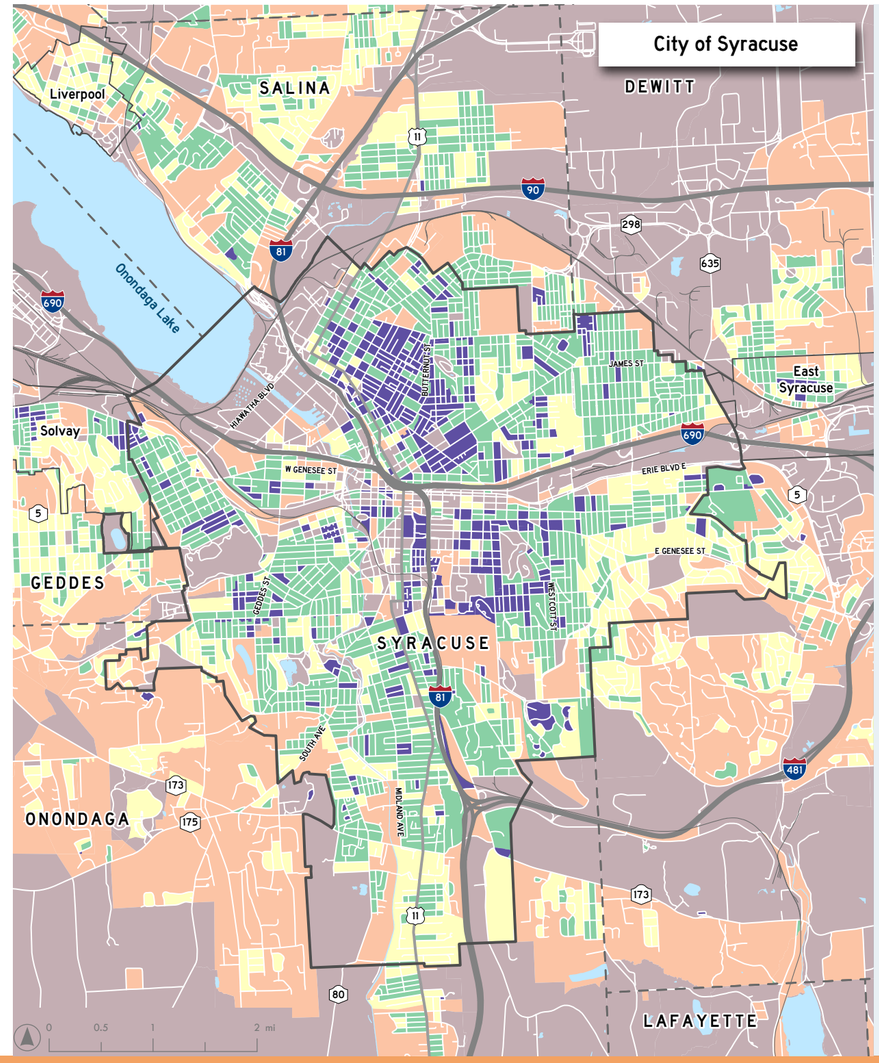
The greatest proportion of people in our MPA live in a place with densities ranging from 5,000 - 12,500 people per square mile.







Data Source: 2020 Census



Just under 30 percent of the total population of our Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) lives in the City of Syracuse according to the 2020 Census, making the City of Syracuse's population greater than any other single town within the MPA. The second most populous municipality within the MPA is the Town of Clay, with 60,527 people or 11.8 percent of the MPA's total population. Towns immediately north and east of the City are generally more populous and denser than towns to the south and far west. Even in towns with a more rural character, pockets of density can be found in the numerous villages throughout the area.

Within the City of Syracuse, the highest population density is found on the north side. Some areas of the City show very low population density, but these areas are generally occupied by special non-residential land uses, such as large City parks, Destiny USA, the NBT Bank Stadium/Regional Market/ Regional Transportation Center complex, Syracuse University's main campus, or retail uses such as the Erie Boulevard East corridor. Recent residential growth in Downtown Syracuse is reflected in pockets of very high density surrounded by more moderate density in most of this area.

Population Change

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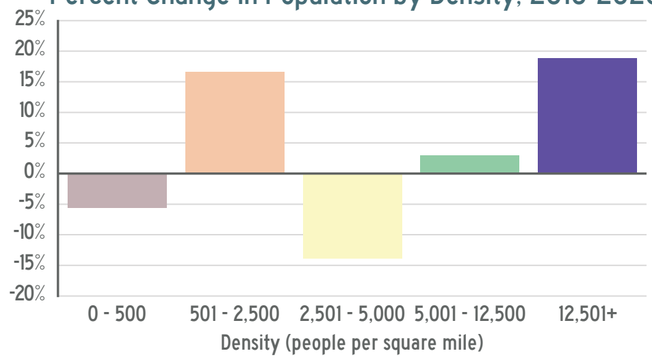
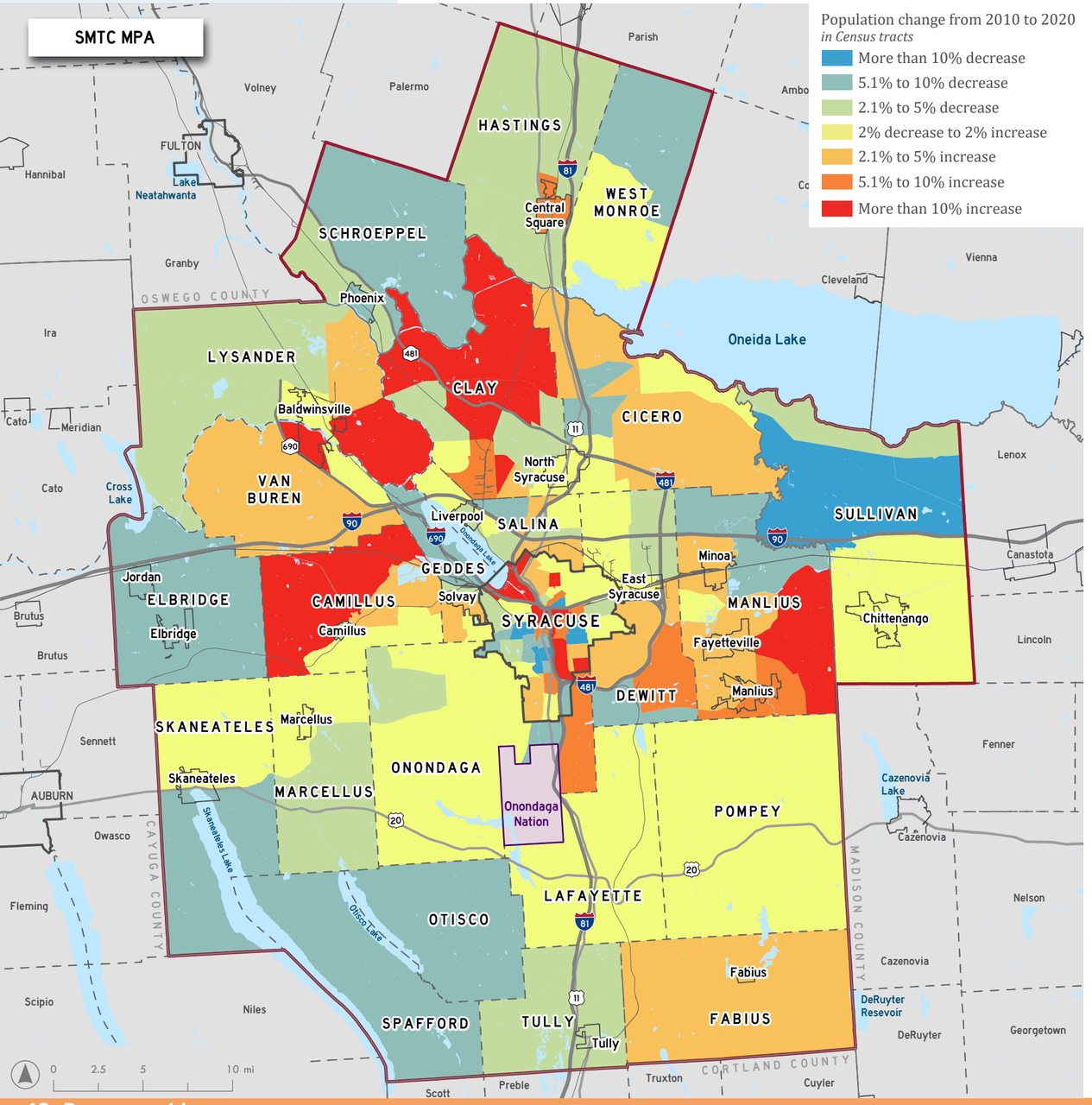
From 2010 to 2020, the City of Syracuse grew in population for the first time since 1970.

Onondaga County's population peaked in 1970 and has remained relatively stable since then.

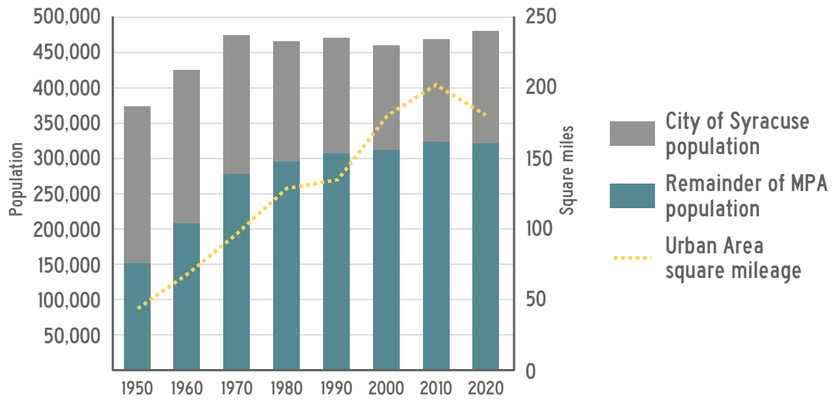
While the total population of Onondaga County has remained stable, the population of the City of Syracuse has declined from 1960 to 2010.

Percent Change in Population by Density, 2010-2020

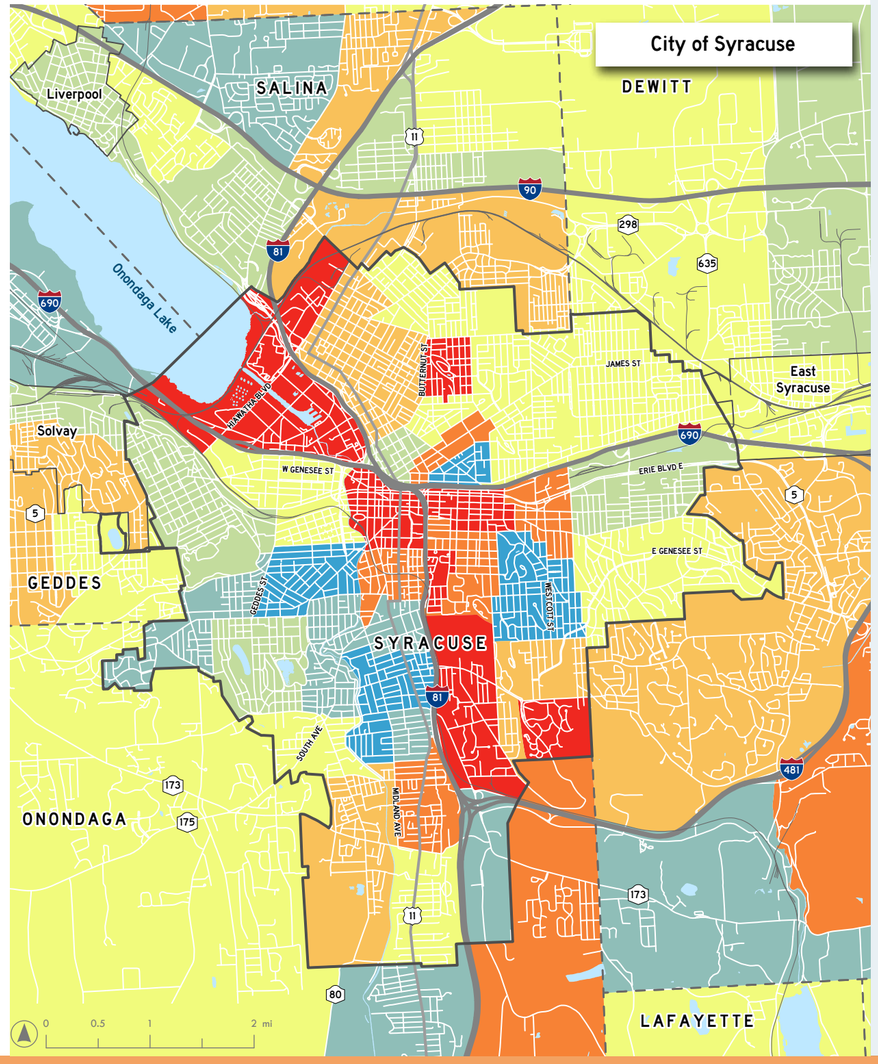




Population of City of Syracuse and Onondaga County with Square Mileage of Urban Area, 1950 to 2020



Data Source: US Census



The total population of the MPA has increased from 504,100 in 2010 to 511,878 in 2020. This is a total increase of 1.54 percent over the 10-year period. The County's population peaked in 1970 and has remained fairly stable since that time. However, the City of Syracuse saw its population decline from over 220,000 people in 1950 to 145,170 people in 2010. When the County's population peaked in 1970, over 40 percent of the County's total population resided in the City of Syracuse. In 2010, the City's population accounted for just over 30 percent of the County's total population. The most substantial population loss for the City of Syracuse occurred between 1970 and 1980, when the City population declined by nearly 14 percent.

For the first time since 1970, the City saw a population increase with 2.4 percent more people in 2020 than in 2010. This growth in the City was concentrated in Franklin Square, Downtown, and Outer Comstock as well as in the Northside and Valley neighborhoods. The Urban Area (see SMTC Metropolitan Planning Area page) has consistently expanded since 1950; coupled with a stable County population, this indicates a decentralizing and sprawling population. In 2020, the urban area contracted due to a redefining of an 'Urban Area' by the US Census.

Outside of the City, areas to the northwest of Syracuse have experienced the most population growth, including northern Clay, the Lysander peninsula, and the Town of Camillus. Though many rural towns such as Sullivan, Spafford, and Schroeppel experienced significant population loss since 2010, other areas like Central Square and Fabius grew.

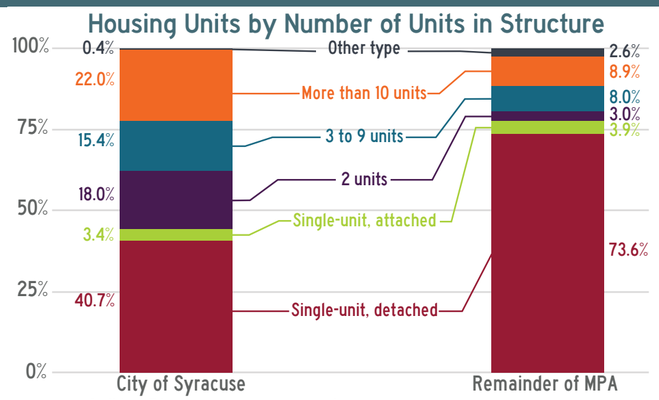
(Note: As a policy, Onondaga Nation does not participate in the US Census, so all Census data published about Onondaga Nation have been removed from this Atlas.)

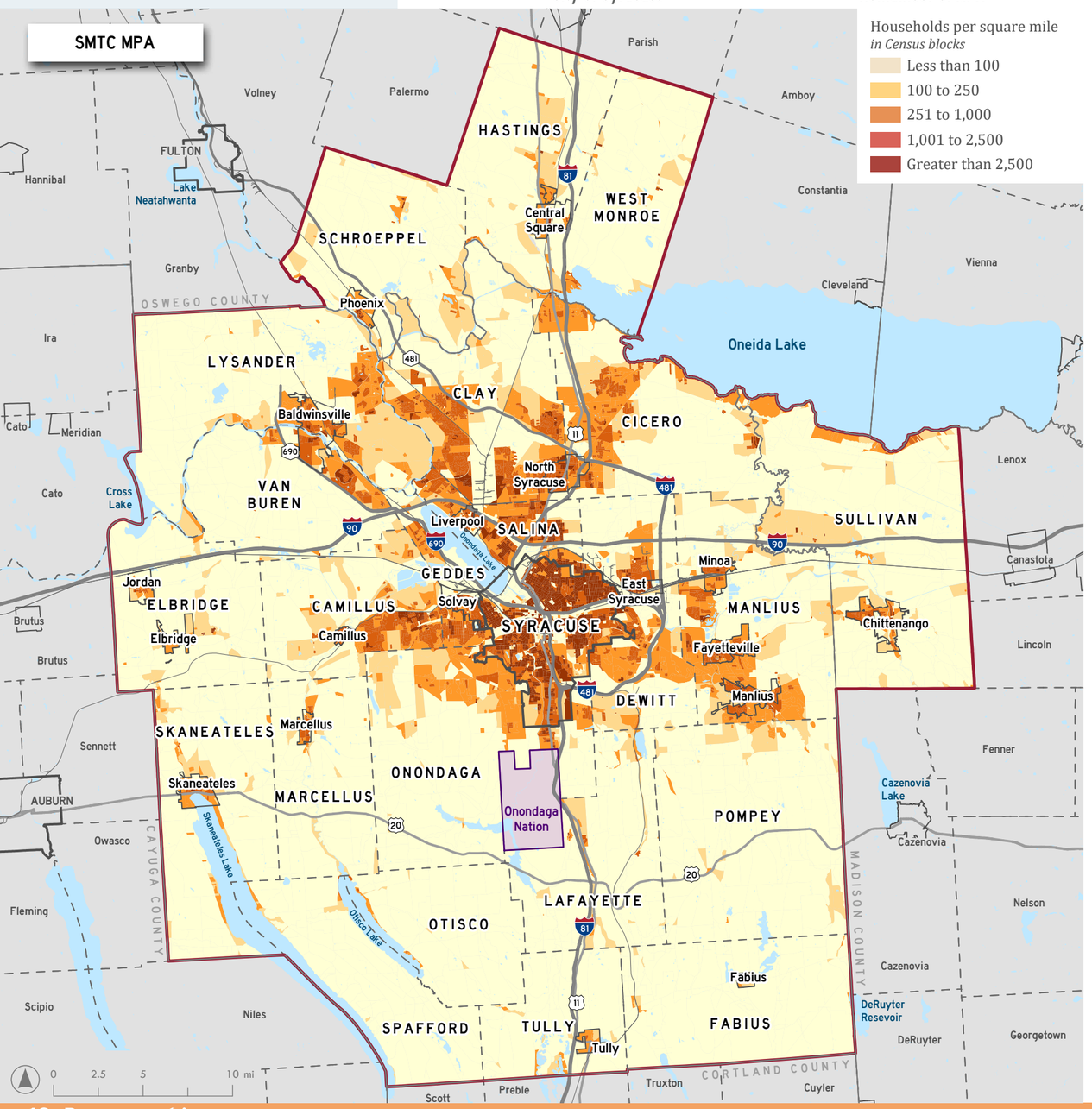
Households

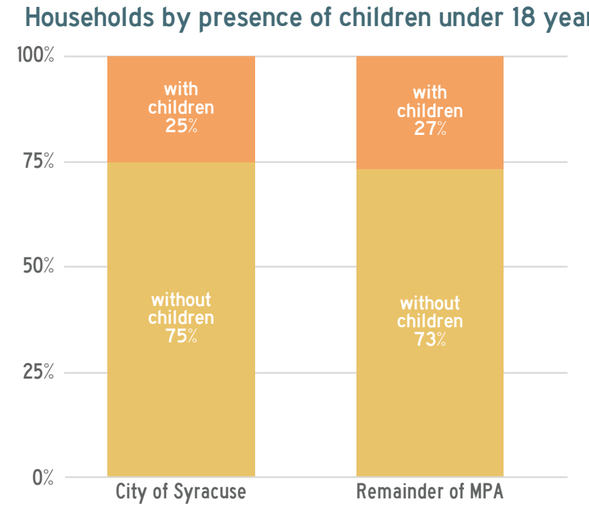
The average household size in the MPA is 2.35 people, less than the US average of 2.54.

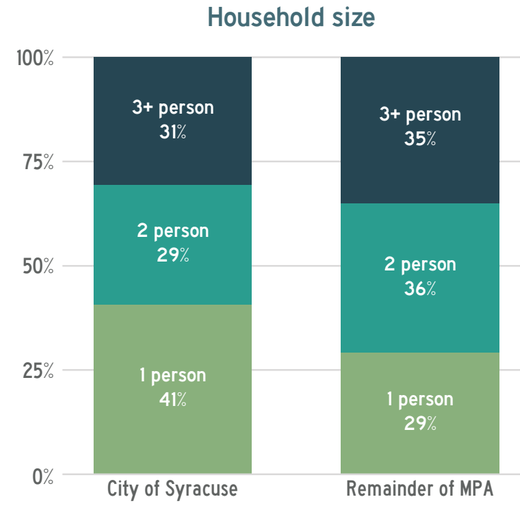
Single-person households are more common in the City of Syracuse compared to the rest of the MPA.

Housing units in the MPA outside of the City are dominated by the single-unit detached style.

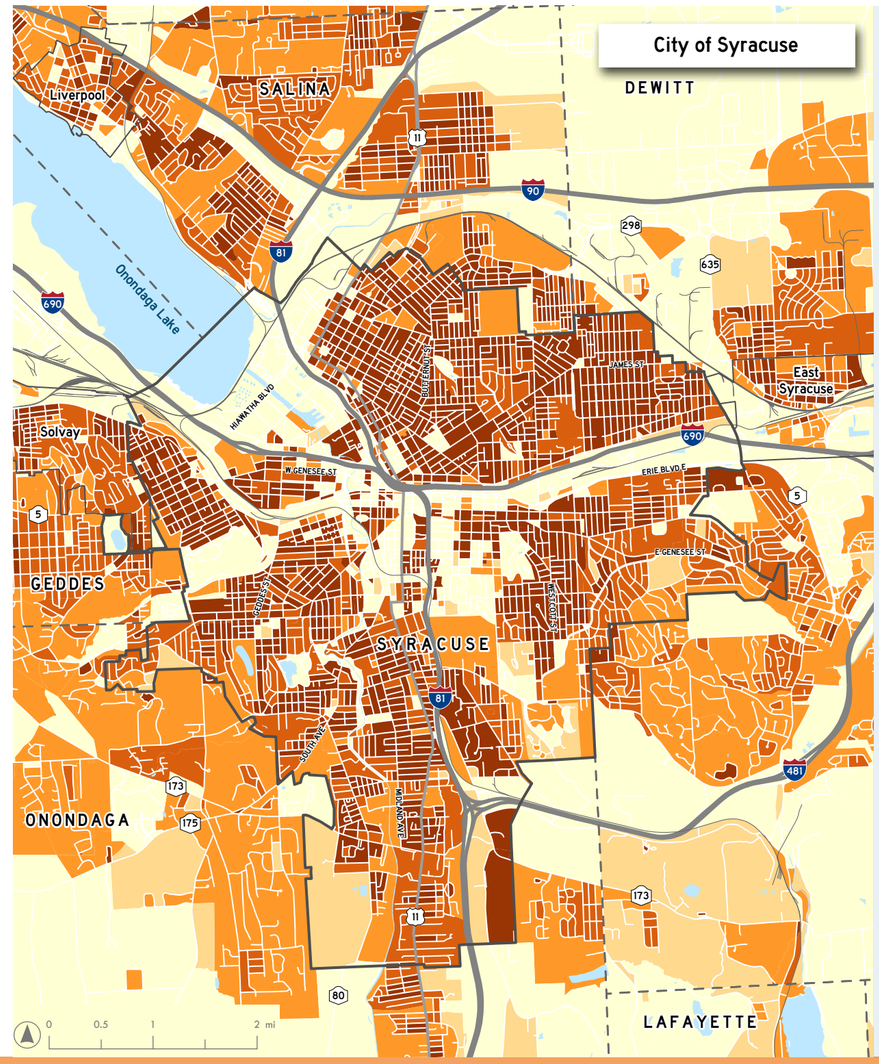








Data Source: 2020 Census



The patterns of household density across our MPA are similar to population density. The highest density of households is located in the city of Syracuse, immediately adjacent suburbs, and villages. According to the 2020 Census, there are 209,988 households in the MPA, an approximately four percent increase from 2010. The average household size in the MPA as a whole is 2.35 people, lower than the U.S. average of 2.54. Household sizes in the MPA outside the City are nearly evenly split between one-person, two-person, and three-or-more-person at 29%, 36%, and 35%, respectively. The City has a larger share of one-person households at 41%.

Although different from households, the distribution of housing units in the MPA tells a story of historical development patterns in our community. The City's units are distributed across structure types, whereas the remainder of the MPA is dominated by the single-unit detached structure. In the denser City, only 41% of housing units are single units detached from any other structure. The common "two-family house" in the City, where nearly one in five housing units are located, is nearly non-existent in the MPA outside of the City – where only 3% of housing units are located in a two-unit structure.

Change in the Number of Households

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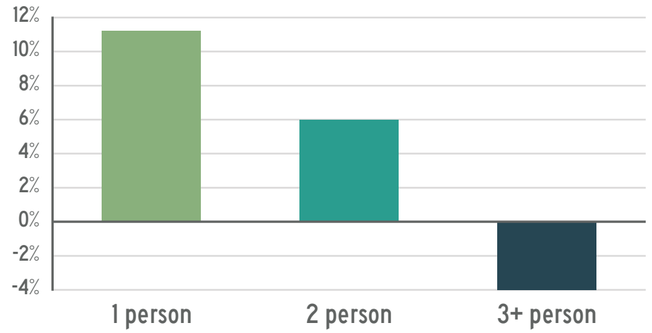
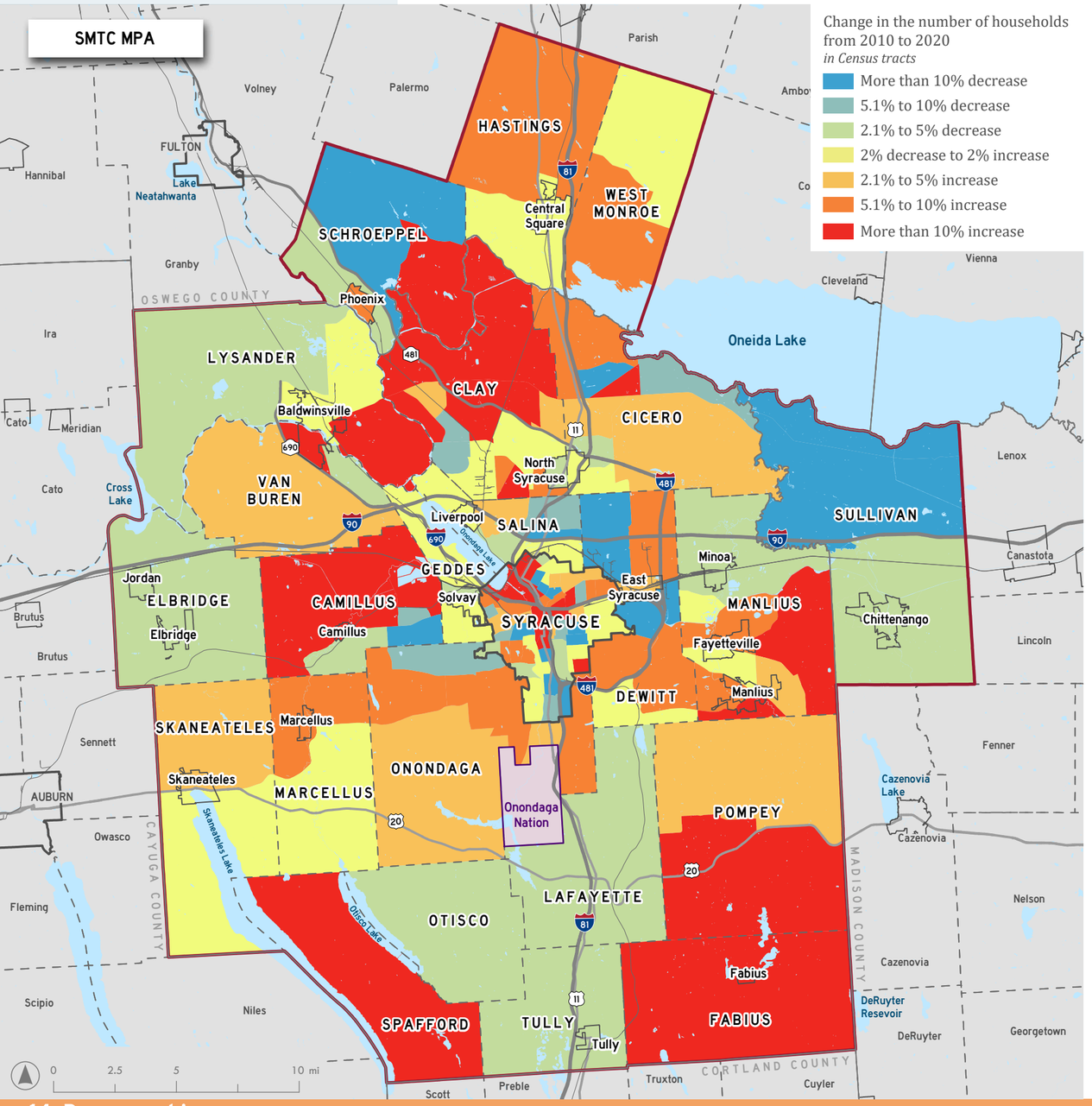
Household growth has outpaced population growth in our MPA.

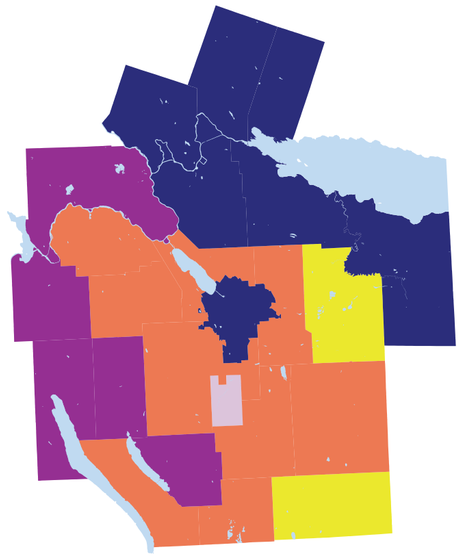
As population has increased, household size has stayed the same or decreased in most of our MPA.

The number of one-person households has increased by 11% from 2010-2020.

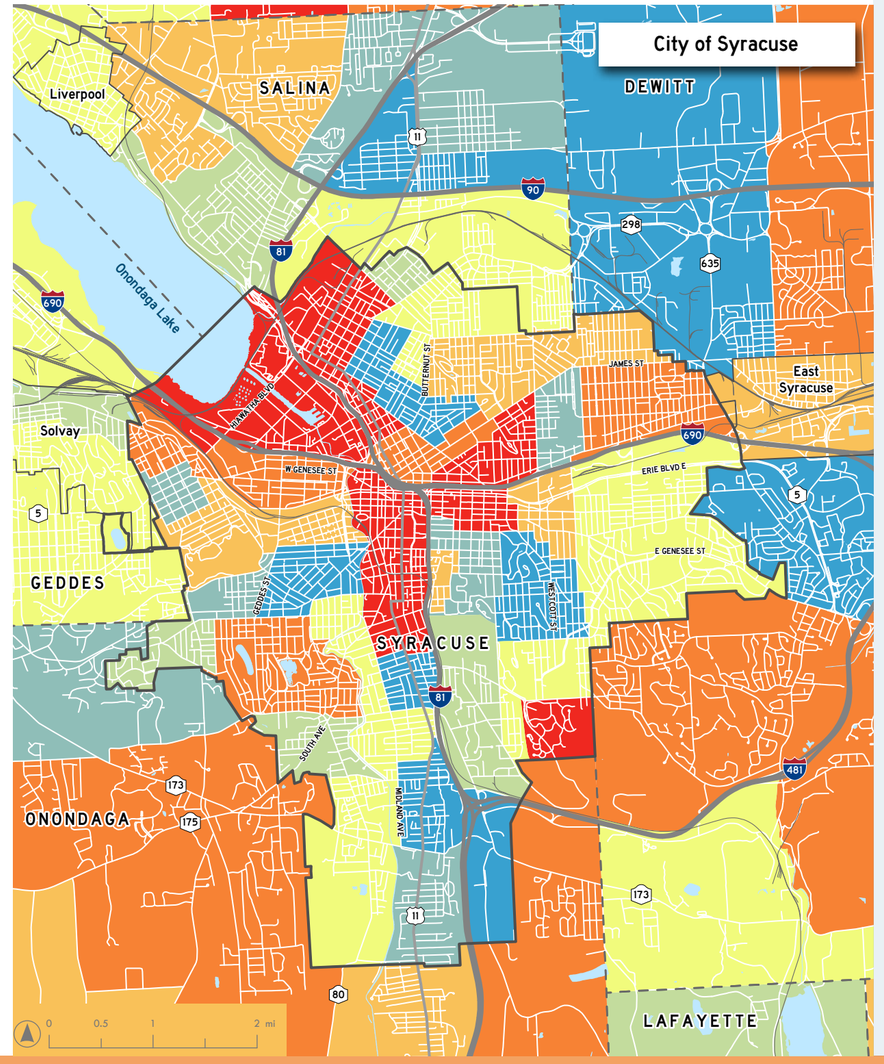
Percent Change in Number of Households by Size 2010 - 2020







Data Source: 2010 and 2020 Census



Between 2010 and 2020, the number of households in the MPA increased from 202,151 to 209,988. As shown by the maps at left, this growth in households primarily occurred in two places: the towns at the edge of Onondaga County and the neighborhoods in the urban core of Syracuse. Exceptions include the Towns of Camillus and Onondaga, each experiencing an increase in the number of households. Many parts of the MPA saw a near constant number of households over this decade (2% decrease to 2% increase) such as the towns of Geddes and Skaneateles and the City's Meadowbrook and Salt Springs neighborhoods.

Household change should be considered alongside the change in population. In our region, the increase in households has outpaced the increase in population. The growth in the population of the MPA between 2010 and 2020 was only 1.54 percent, while the number of households increased 3.88 percent over the same period. One part of this disproportionate growth can be traced to changes in household sizes. As shown in the mini-map, average household sizes have decreased in every municipality in the MPA, with small exceptions in Fabius and Manlius. This decrease was most significant in northeastern and western towns, and in the City of Syracuse. As shown in the figure to the top left, large households in the MPA have become less common and small households have become more frequent, with an over 11% increase in one-person households.

Age of the Population

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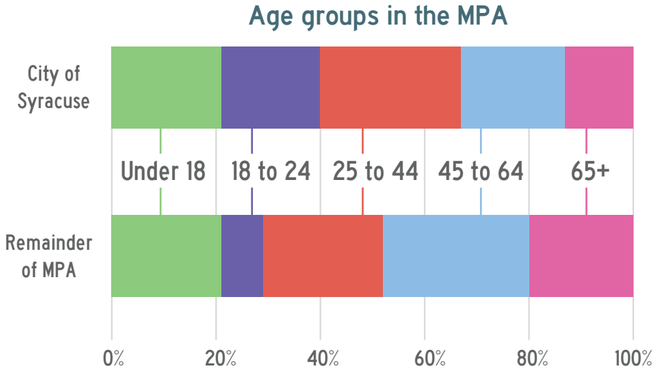
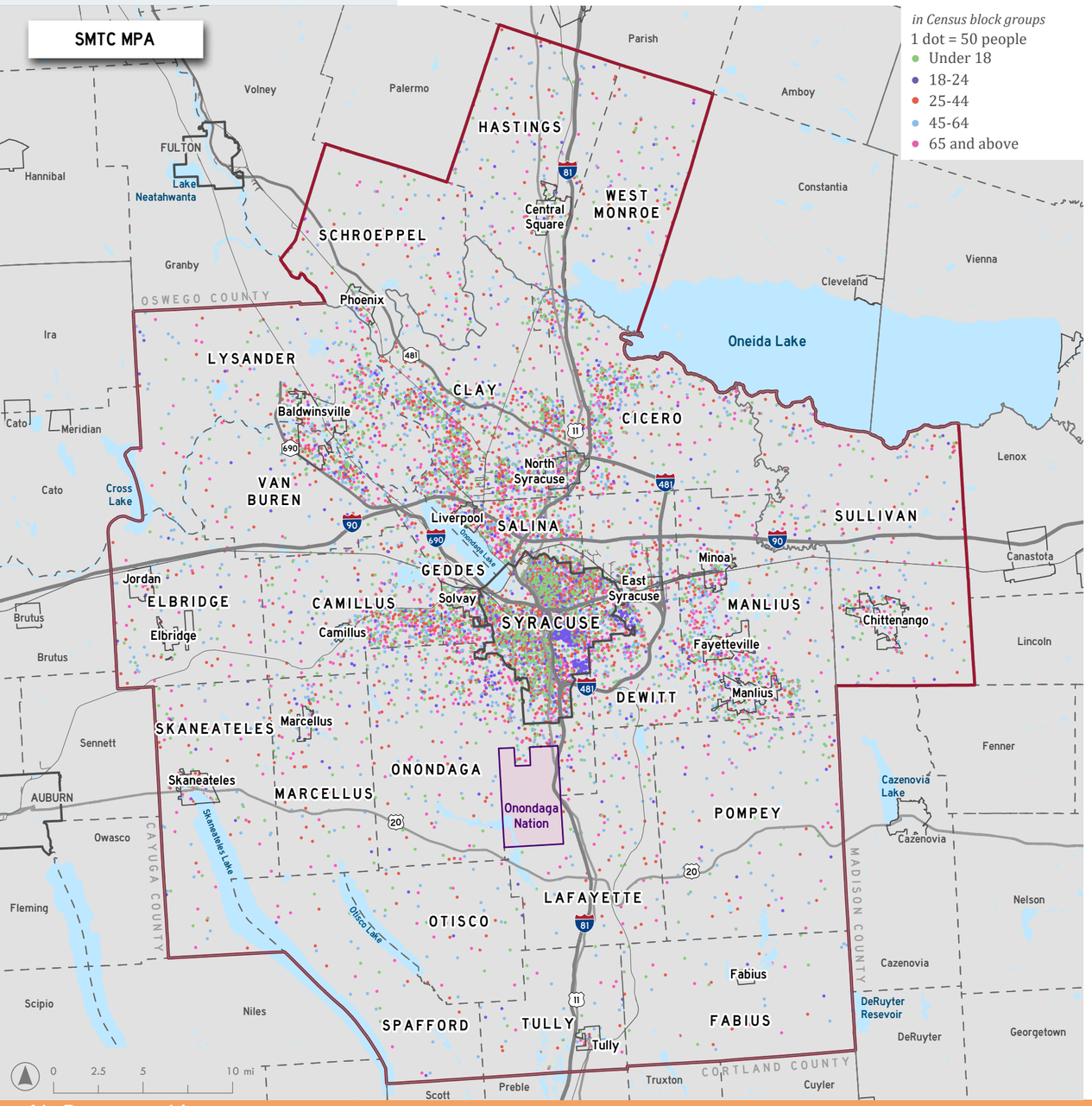
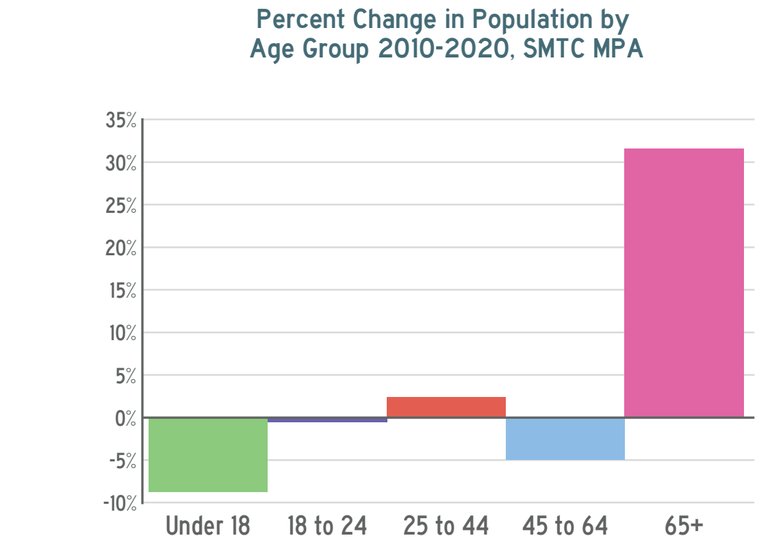
The number of people aged 65 and older represents the largest age cohort increase from 2010-2020.

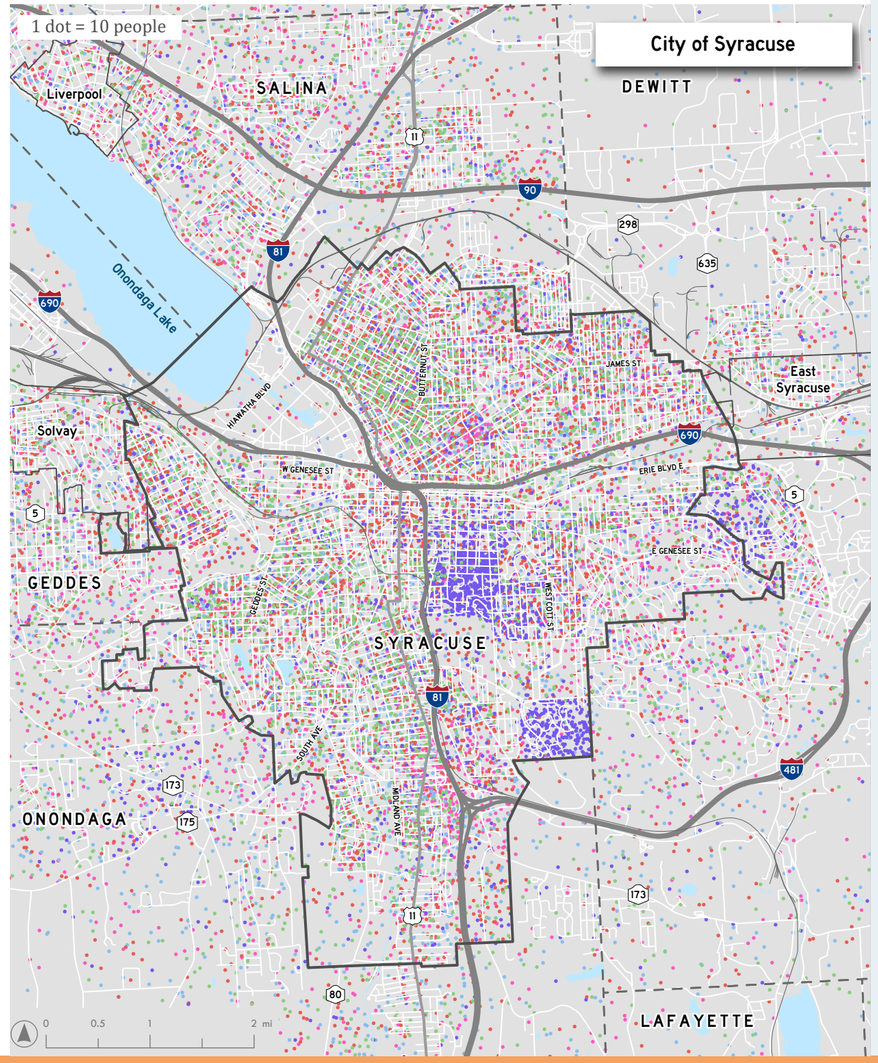
The median age in Onondaga County is 39.2.







Data Source: 2010 and 2020 Census



Age impacts the mobility needs of a group of people. People under 18 years of age make up 21% of the MPA's population. This group is either legally too young to drive or still very likely to be dependent on adults for transportation. Eleven percent of the MPA's population falls into the 18-24-year-old category, which likely includes many college students who may not have access to their own vehicle or, if they do have their own vehicle, do not follow typical commuting patterns. Taken together, the 25-44-year-old group and the 45-64-year-old group constitute the core of the workforce – and thus commuters – and account for half of the MPA's population. People of age 65 or older make up 18 percent of Onondaga County's population. Many of these people are likely retired. This group may also have physical mobility limitations.

Although over 80 percent of the MPA's population is under the age of 65, trends show the region continues to have an aging population, which could indicate a future shift in mobility needs and commuting patterns. The median age of Onondaga County climbed from 29.7 in 1980 to 39.2 in 2020 according to the decennial Census. The aging of the population is more pronounced outside of the City of Syracuse.

Between 2010 and 2020, the City of Syracuse experienced a 5 percent decrease in the number of residents under 18, while the remainder of the MPA saw a 10 percent drop. The only age bracket with significant growth was those 65 and older (the large "Baby Boom" generation), with a 26 percent increase in the City of Syracuse and a 33 percent increase in the remainder of the MPA.

Poverty

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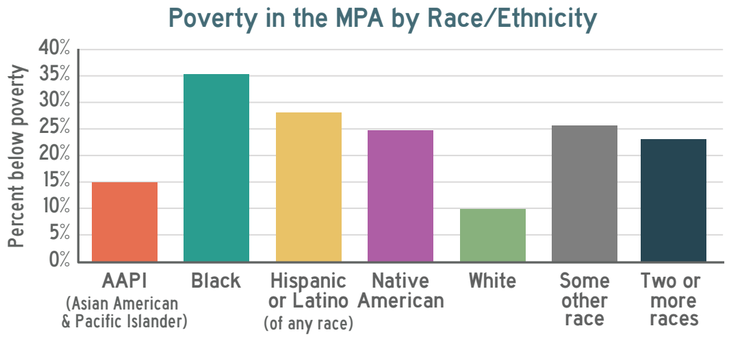
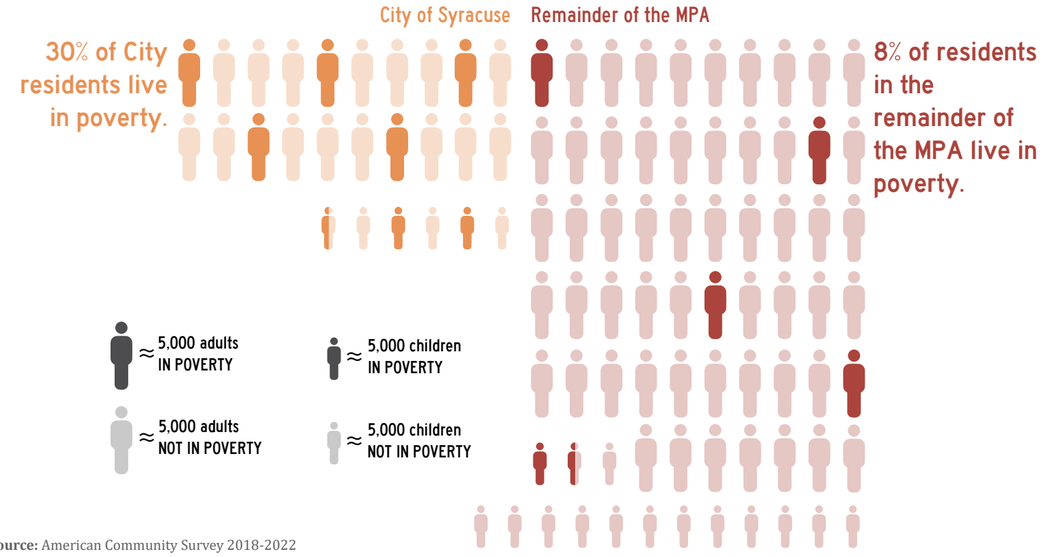
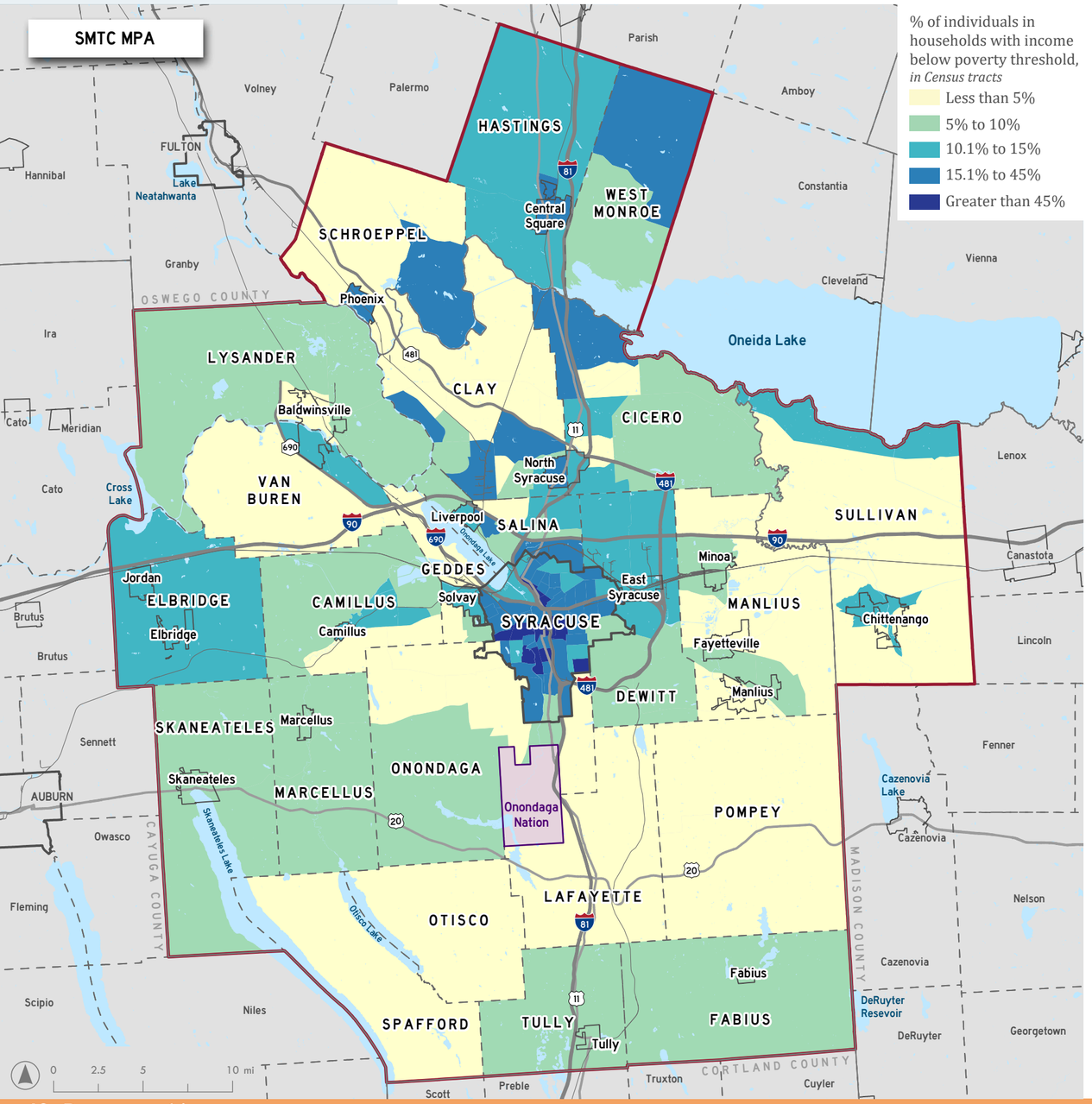
Poverty rates vary significantly throughout our MPA, but rates are highest in the City of Syracuse.

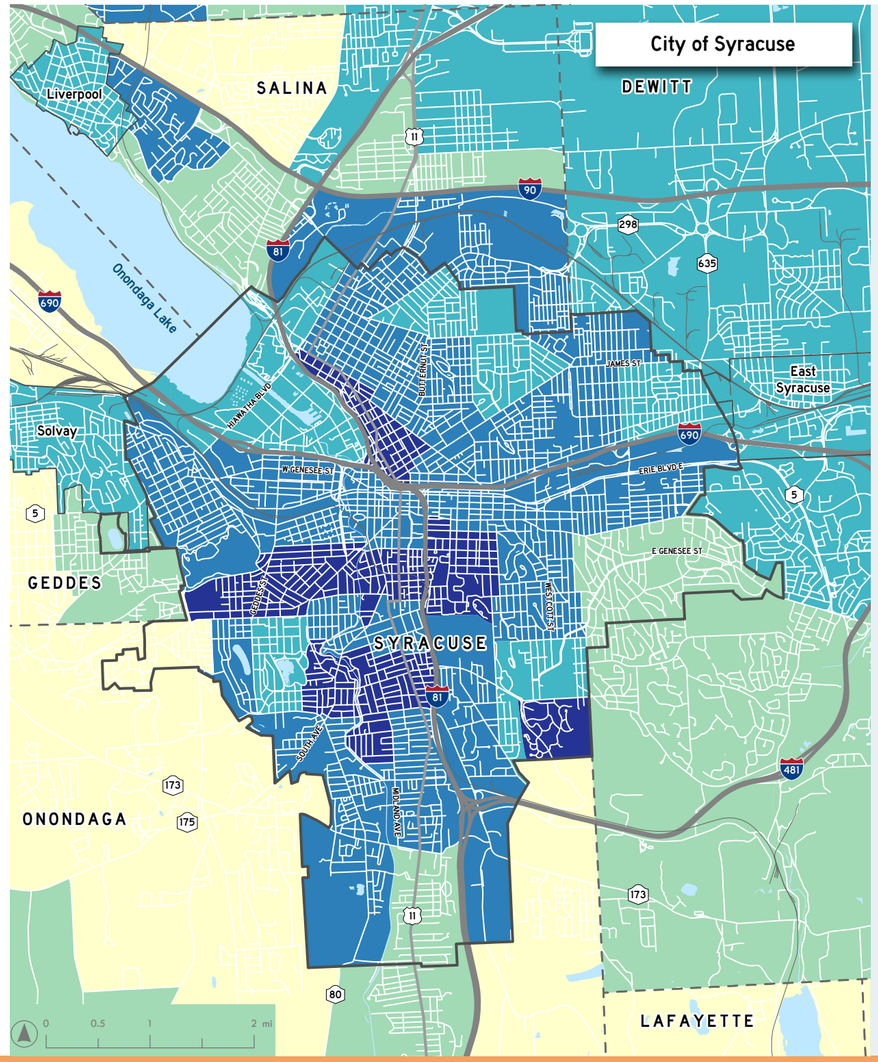
Poverty rates are higher among children than among adults.





Data Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022





Poverty rates vary significantly across our region. The MPA map at left shows large areas of the MPA with very low poverty (less than 5 percent); these areas are found in a variety of settings, including historic village centers, rural communities, and suburban developments. In contrast, many of the inner ring suburbs and northern towns have poverty rates ranging from 5 percent to 20 percent. The poverty rate in the MPA overall is 14 percent, while the poverty rate in the City of Syracuse is 30 percent. As the map shows, in some areas of the City the poverty rate exceeds 45 percent. There are roughly 67,000 individuals that live in poverty in our MPA, including over 22,000 children under the age of 18. The poverty rate is higher for children than for the general population in both the MPA and the City, with 21 percent of children in the MPA living in poverty and 46 percent of children in the City of Syracuse living in poverty.

Note: These statistics rely on the 2018-2022 American Community Survey Data for poverty status in the last 12 months, with percentages [rates] based on the Census-defined "population for whom poverty status is determined," which does not include people living in college dormitories and institutional group quarters. The ACS uses set dollar value thresholds that vary by household size and composition and adhere to the standards specified by the Office of Management and Budget Statistical Policy Directive 14.

Race & Ethnicity

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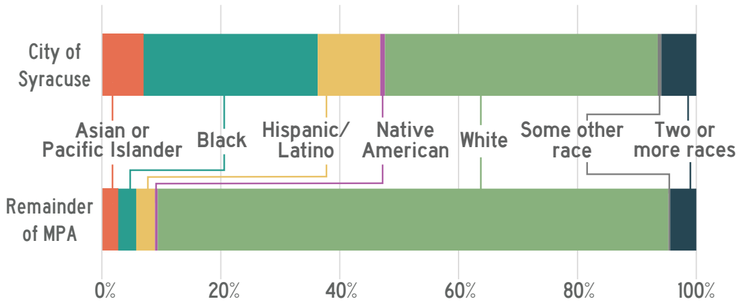
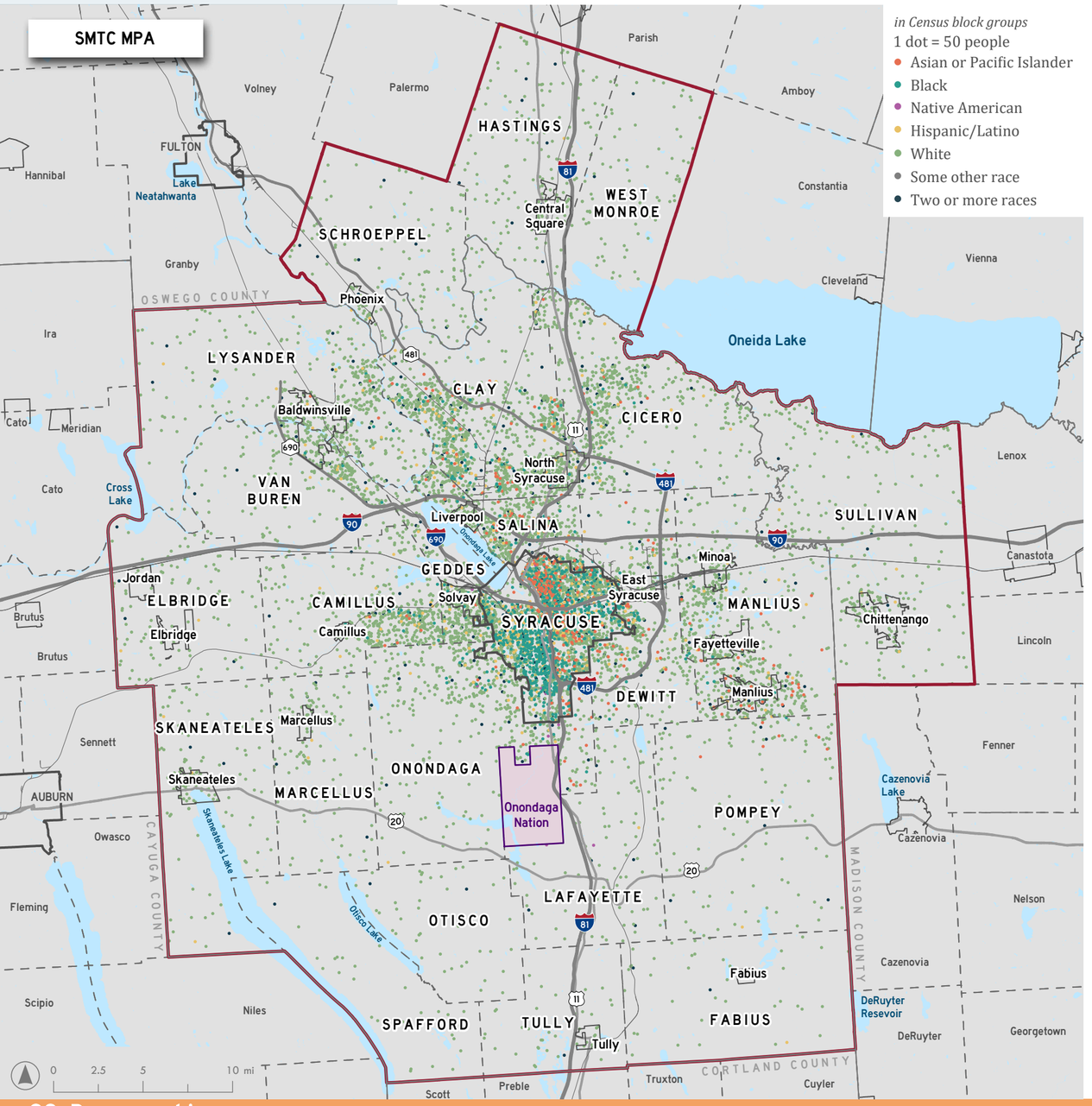
Racial and ethnic diversity has in the City of Syracuse has increased significantly over the last 50 years.

74% of the MPA's total population is white and 48% of the City's population is white.

Race and Ethnicity in the MPA

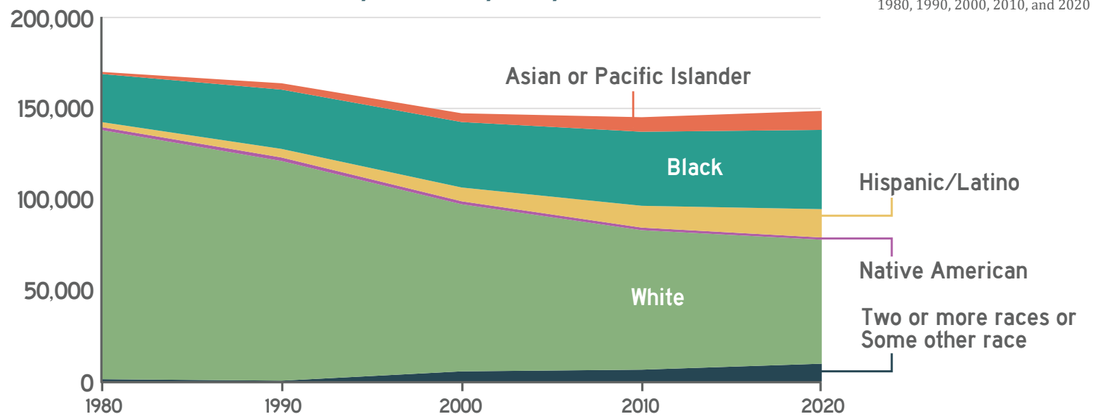


Data Source: US Decennial Census 2020



Race and Ethnicity in the City of Syracuse over Time

Data Source: US Decennial Census 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010, and 2020



Note: Race and ethnicity data for 2020 were organized using two questions from the decennial Census, one for race and one for ethnicity. Respondents of any race who are of Hispanic/Latino origin were visualized in these maps and figures as Hispanic/Latino. Non-Hispanic/Latino respondents were visualized by their race. Persons who identified as Asian or Pacific Islander were visualized together. Respondents indicating multiple races were visualized as 'two or more races.' All other respondents were shown by their respective race. People of 'two or more races' and those of 'some other race' were combined to be consistent with the 1980 and 1990 Censuses. As a policy, Onondaga Nation does not participate in the US Census, so all data reported by the Census on "Onondaga Nation Territory" have been excluded from this atlas.

There are notable differences between the racial makeup of the City of Syracuse population and the rest of the MPA. While people of color now make up over 50 percent of Syracuse residents, people of color are less than 15 percent of the remainder of the MPA. City neighborhoods show comparatively more racial diversity than the towns outside of the City; however, within the City, racial groups are not evenly distributed across neighborhoods.

The City of Syracuse map shows Black residents clustered primarily in neighborhoods south of downtown and west of I-81, Hispanic/Latino residents clustered in neighborhoods west of downtown, and Asian residents primarily clustered in northside and University neighborhoods.

The racial and ethnic diversity in the City of Syracuse has increased consistently over the last half century. In 1980, only 20 percent of City residents were people of color. As of the 2020 Census, this has more than doubled to 52 percent.

(Note: As a policy, Onondaga Nation does not participate in the US Census, so all Census data published about Onondaga Nation have been removed from this Atlas.)

Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

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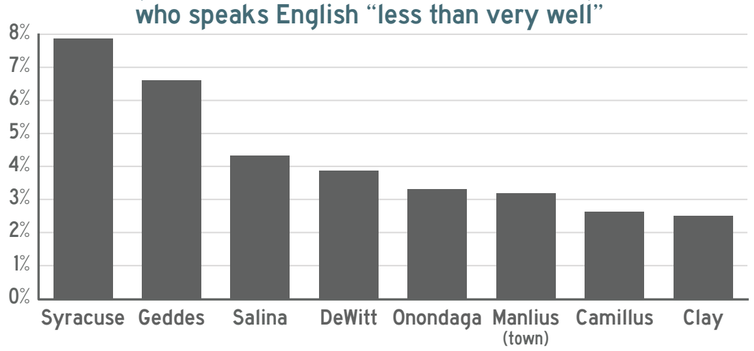
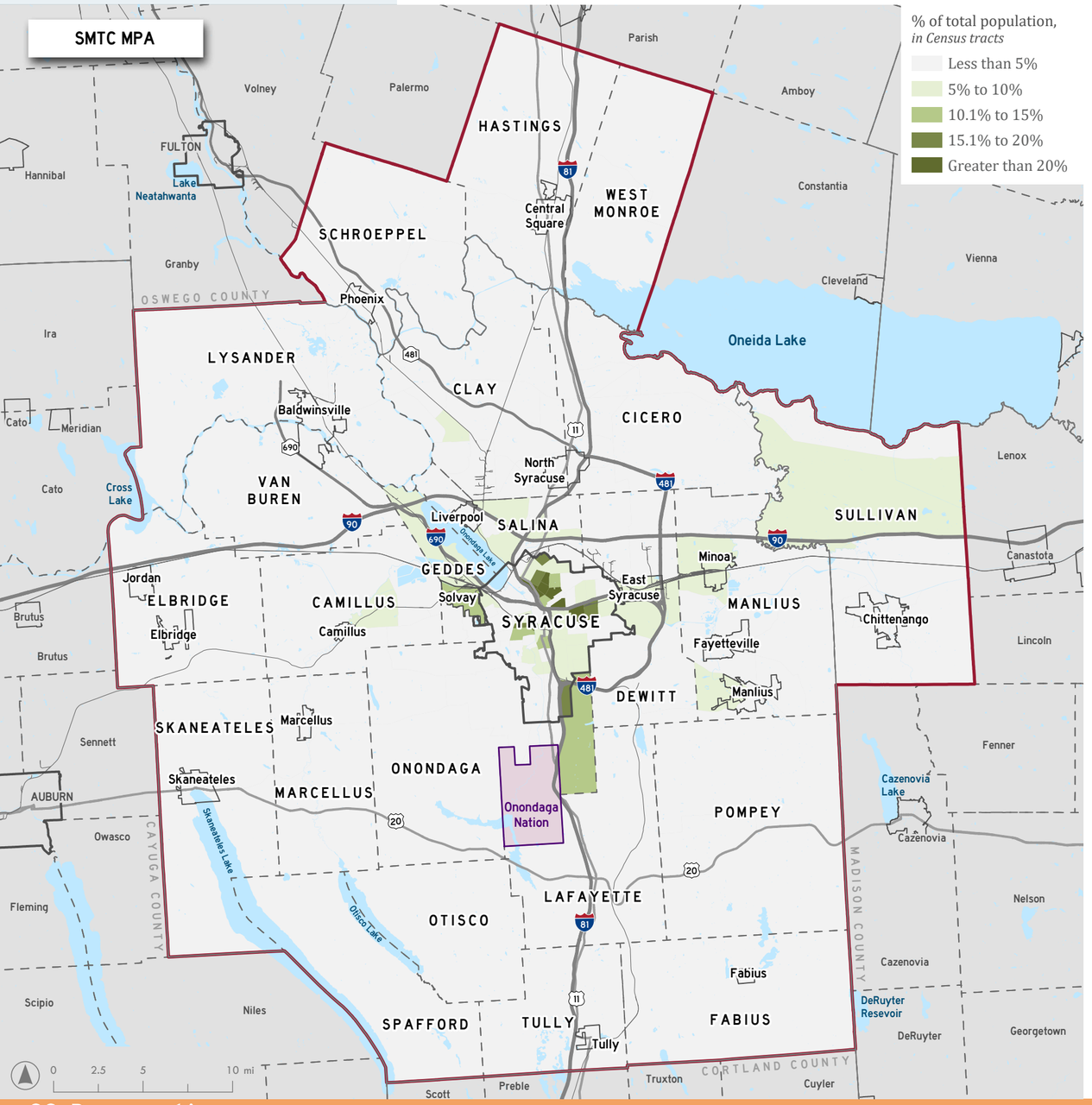
At about 10,400 people, the City of Syracuse is home to more people who speak English 'less than very well' than the rest of the MPA, at about 8,700 people.

While Spanish is the most popular language spoken in the MPA besides English, numerous additional languages are spoken in the MPA.

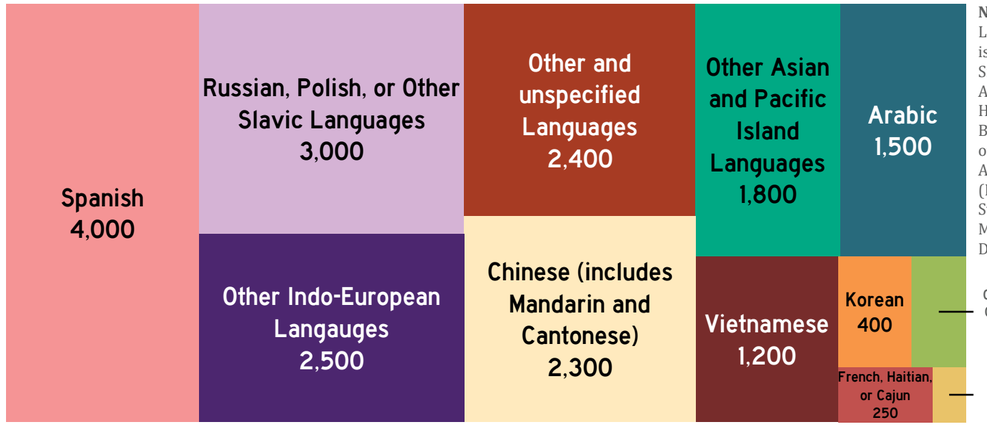
Municipalities with the Greatest Percent of Population who speaks English "less than very well"





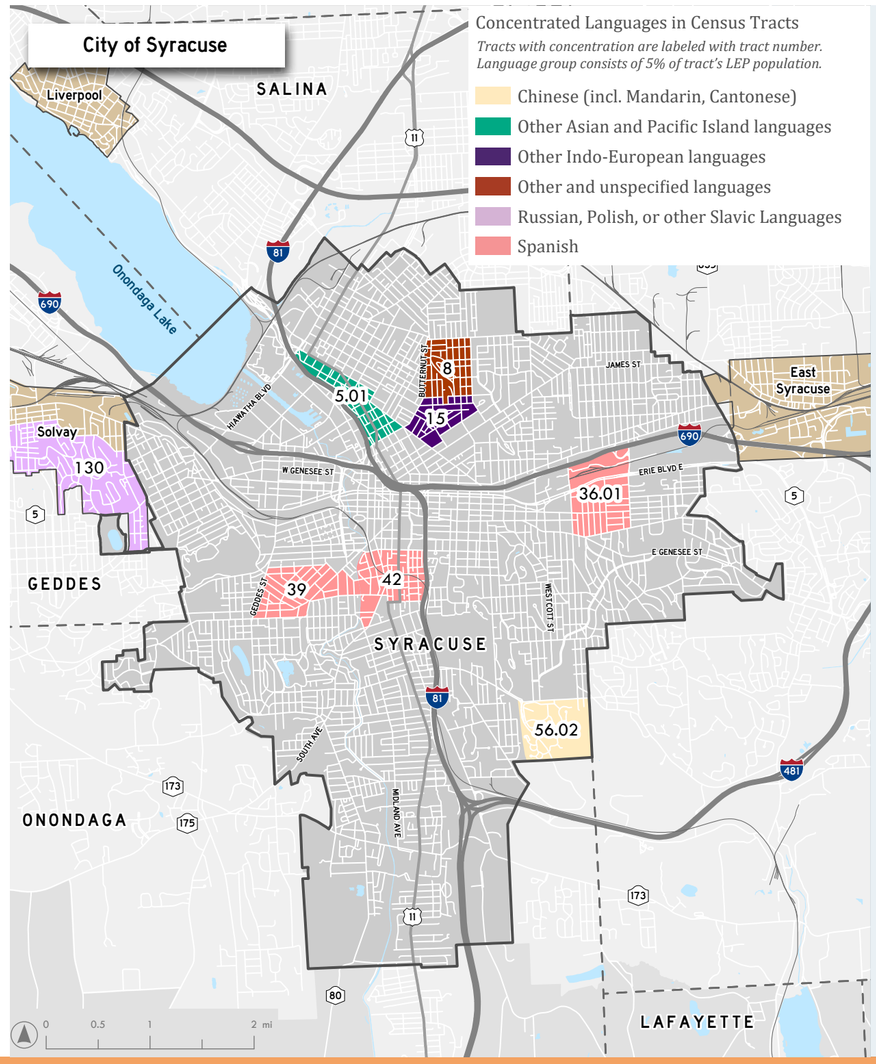
Languages Spoken by the LEP Population in the SMTC MPA

Approximate number of people who report speaking English less than "very well" and speak one of the languages below:



Note: "Other Indo-European Languages" may include (but is not limited to): Italian, Sicilian, Portuguese, Greek, Armenian, Persian, Gujarati, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Nepali, Marathi, other Indic languages, Albanian, Lithuanian, Pashto (Pushto), Romanian, Swedish, Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada, other Dravidian languages.

Data Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022, Table C16001: Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Over.
Note: The margins of error for the American Community Survey can often be prohibitive to meaningful data analysis. Many times, data at the tract level, even with the 5-year estimates, are unreliable as the margins of error are incredibly high. This is a common occurrence in the C16001 table.



The American Community Survey asks about the language spoken at home and the ability to speak English. Individuals who speak a language other than English at home and also speak English less than "very well" are considered to have Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Just over 4 percent of speakers are classified as LEP in the SMTC MPA. The greatest concentration of the LEP population is in the City of Syracuse, where nearly 8 percent of speakers fit these criteria. The LEP population is concentrated in the northern part of the city, where many New Americans live.

There are many languages spoken in our MPA, and not all are reflected in the data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau. However, concentrations of LEP speakers of a single language exist and can be identified in our MPA. The map on the right shows Census tracts where a single LEP language group constitutes at least 5 percent of the tract's population.

Spanish is the most common language spoken by the LEP population in our area. Nearly one quarter of the LEP population in the City - and one fifth of the LEP population in the MPA - speak Spanish at home.

Household Income

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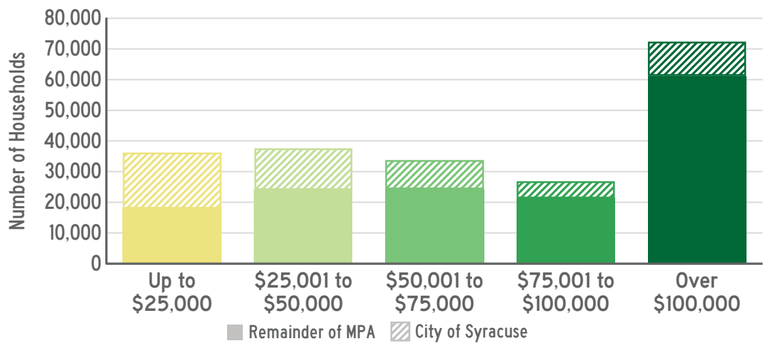
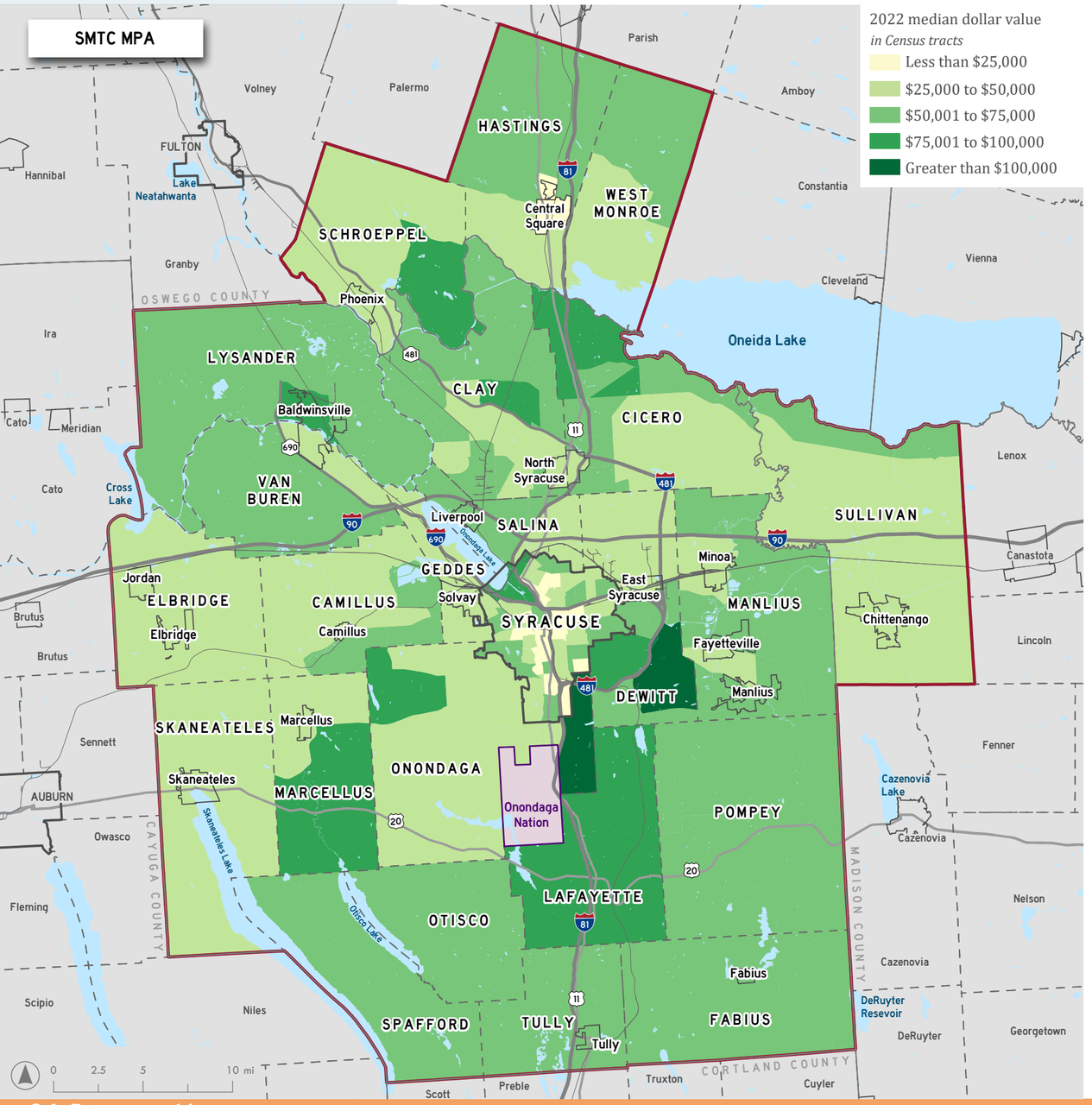
The median household income in Onondaga County is $70,968.

Amongst towns, Skaneateles has the highest median household income with $105,813 and Elbridge has the lowest with $59,810.

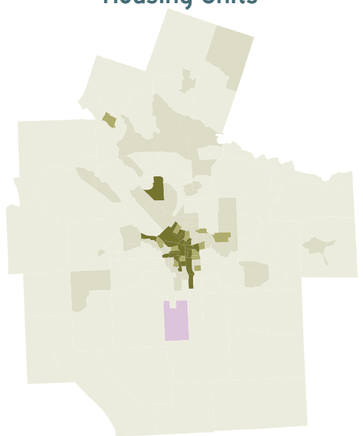
The City of Syracuse has a median household income of $43,854.

Number of Households by Income (in 2022 dollars)

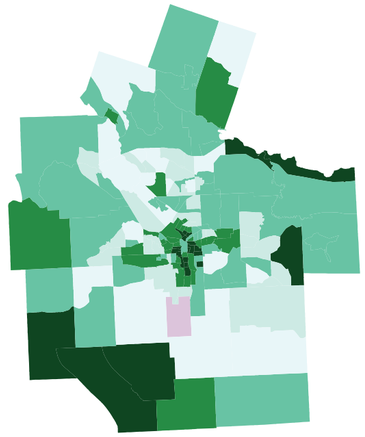




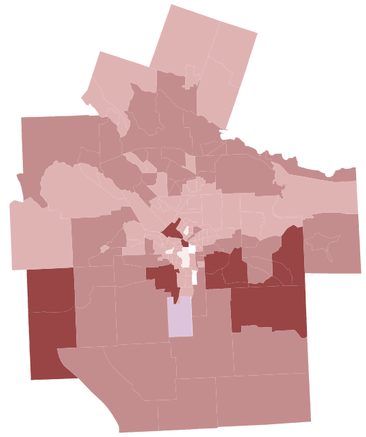
Percent Renter Occupied Housing Units



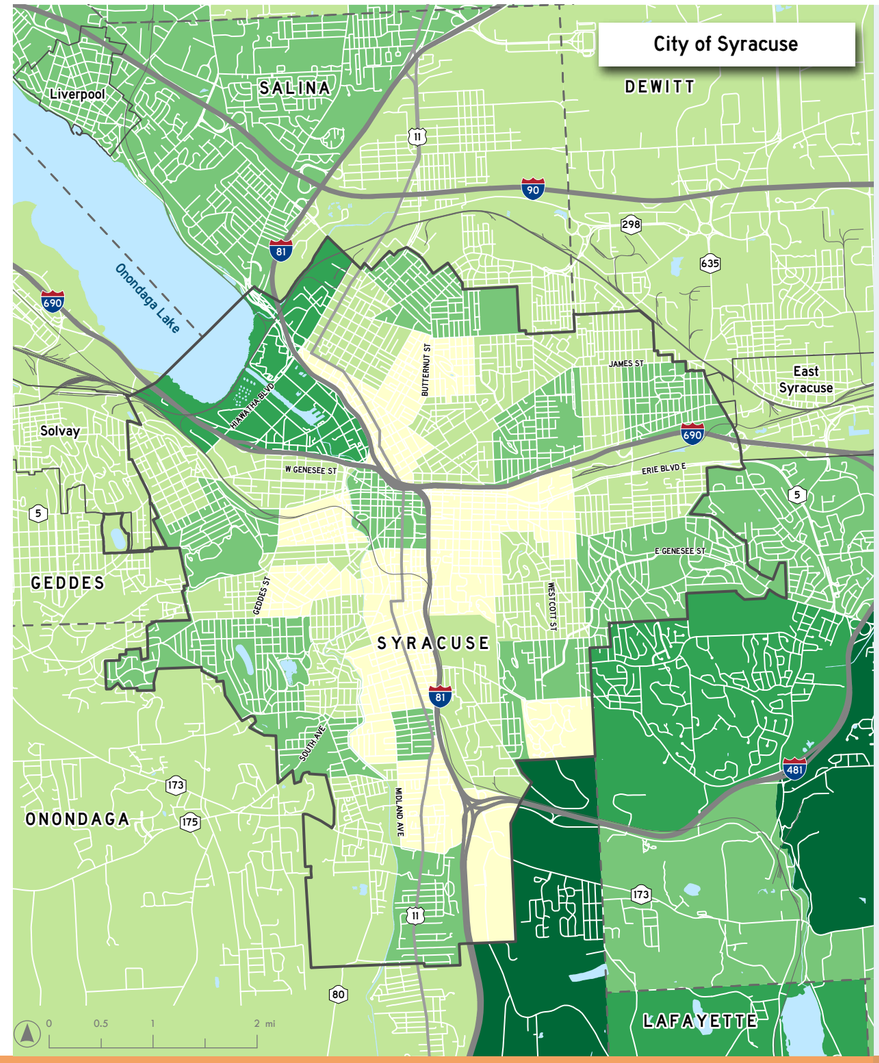
Percent Vacant Housing Units



Median Home Value



Data Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



The median household income in the City of Syracuse is around $43,900 while the median household income in Onondaga County is approximately $71,000. However, of the 19 towns in Onondaga County, only four towns have median household incomes less than the County-wide median. Within the MPA, the Town of Skaneateles has the highest median household income, at $106,000, the Town of Elbridge has the lowest median household income at $60,000, excluding the City.

The small maps above show other household characteristics that are often associated with income. The highest levels of renter-occupied housing are generally found in areas with lower household income, with the exception of downtown Syracuse and Franklin Square area, which boast higher median incomes than most tracts with a large renter population. Renters are concentrated in the city and in the southwestern portion of the Town of Clay, where many apartment complexes are located. Vacant housing is concentrated within the lowest-income areas of the City. As would be expected, the areas with the highest median household income and highest median home value generally coincide with each other.

Employment

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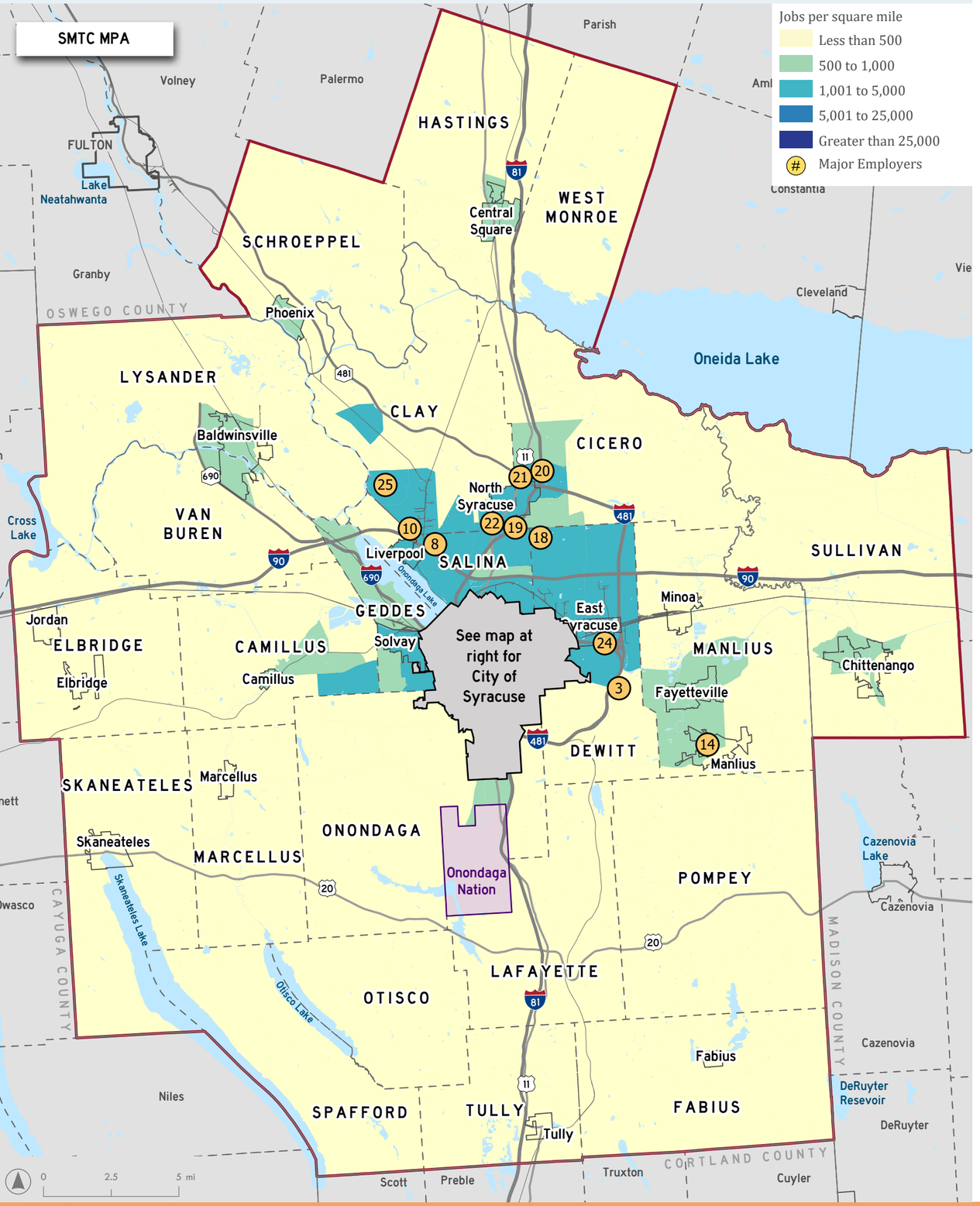
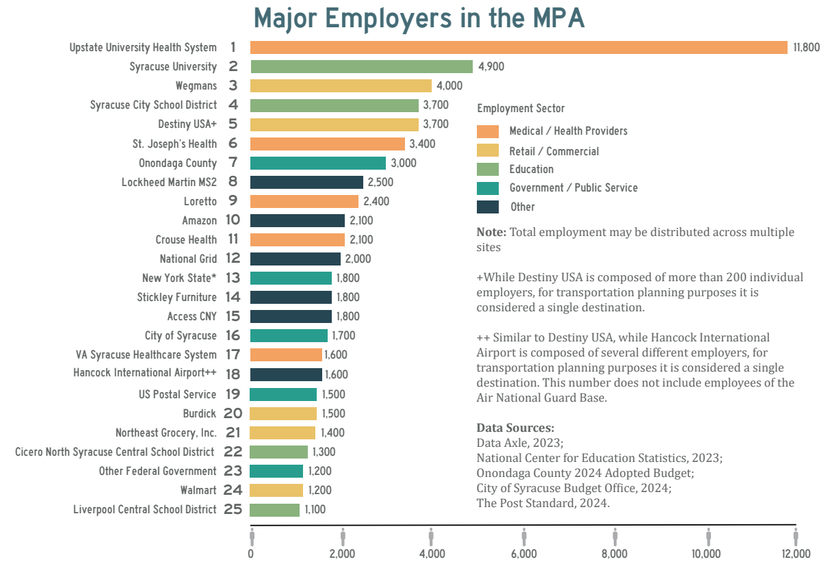
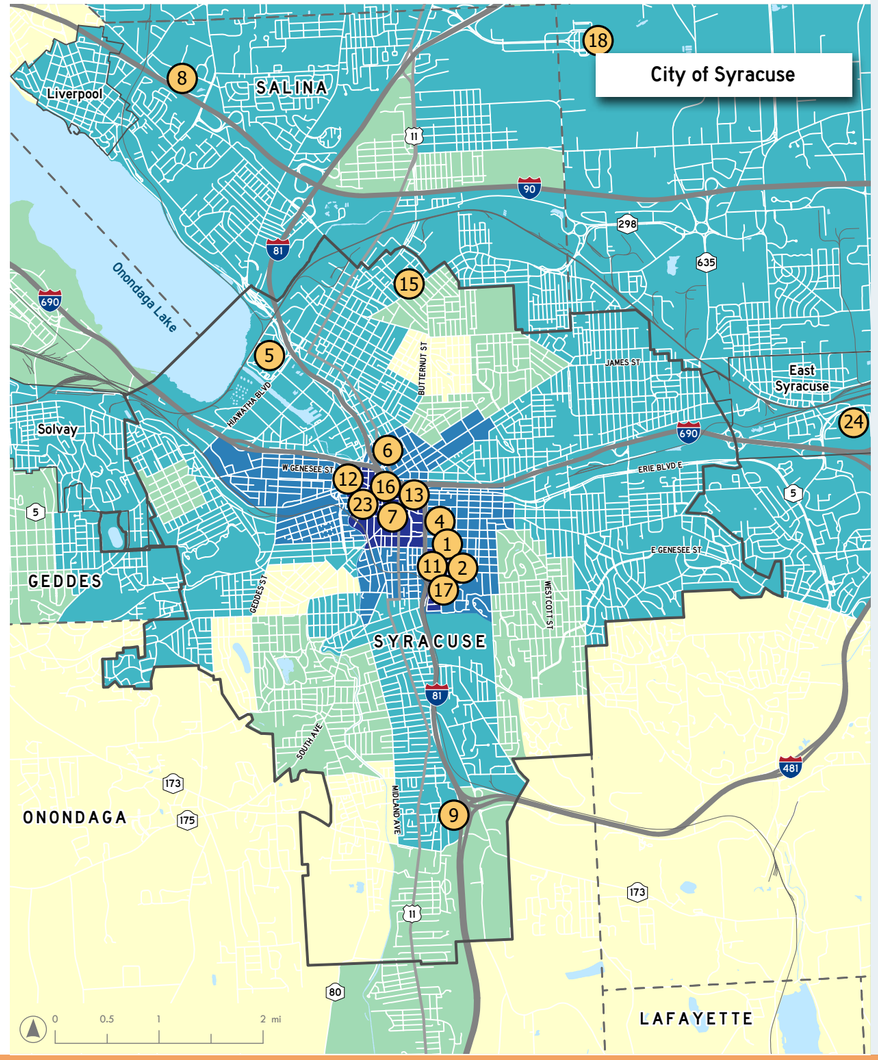
Total regional employment is approximately 280,000. Seventy-nine percent of the region's total employment is located in the City of Syracuse and the five most populous towns (DeWitt, Clay, Salina, Cicero, and Manlius).







The employment density maps for the Metropolitan Planning Area (far left) and City of Syracuse (left) illustrate the importance of Downtown Syracuse, University Hill and the inner-ring suburbs to the regional economy. Four of the region's twenty-five largest employers (Upstate University Health, Syracuse University, Crouse Hospital and the VA Medical Center) are located on University Hill and a fifth (St. Joseph's Hospital) is located just north of Downtown.

The City of Syracuse is the region's economic core, with over 106,000 jobs (38 percent of the region's total). Approximately 25,000 of these are in Downtown Syracuse and another 25,000 are located on University Hill. Put another way, 18 percent of the region's total employment is packed into a pair of districts totaling just over one square mile. While several of the region's largest employers are in these two parts of the city, it is worth noting that over half of the jobs in Syracuse (56,000 jobs, or 53 percent of the city's total) are at smaller employers distributed throughout the city.

Taken together, the Towns of DeWitt, Clay, Salina, and Cicero are home to nearly as many jobs as the City of Syracuse, with employment density (number of jobs per square mile) greatest near the city. Lockheed Martin (Salina), Amazon (Clay and DeWitt) and Hancock International Airport (DeWitt) are among the region's top employers. As the Metropolitan Planning Area map shows, employment centers radiate out from the city to the west, north and east along rail lines and major roadway corridors.

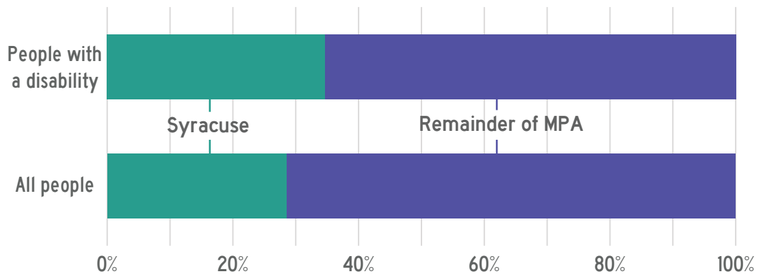
The region's villages and hamlets, many of which are located at the junction of major roads, also play an important role economically and are focal points for shopping, small businesses, and manufacturing.

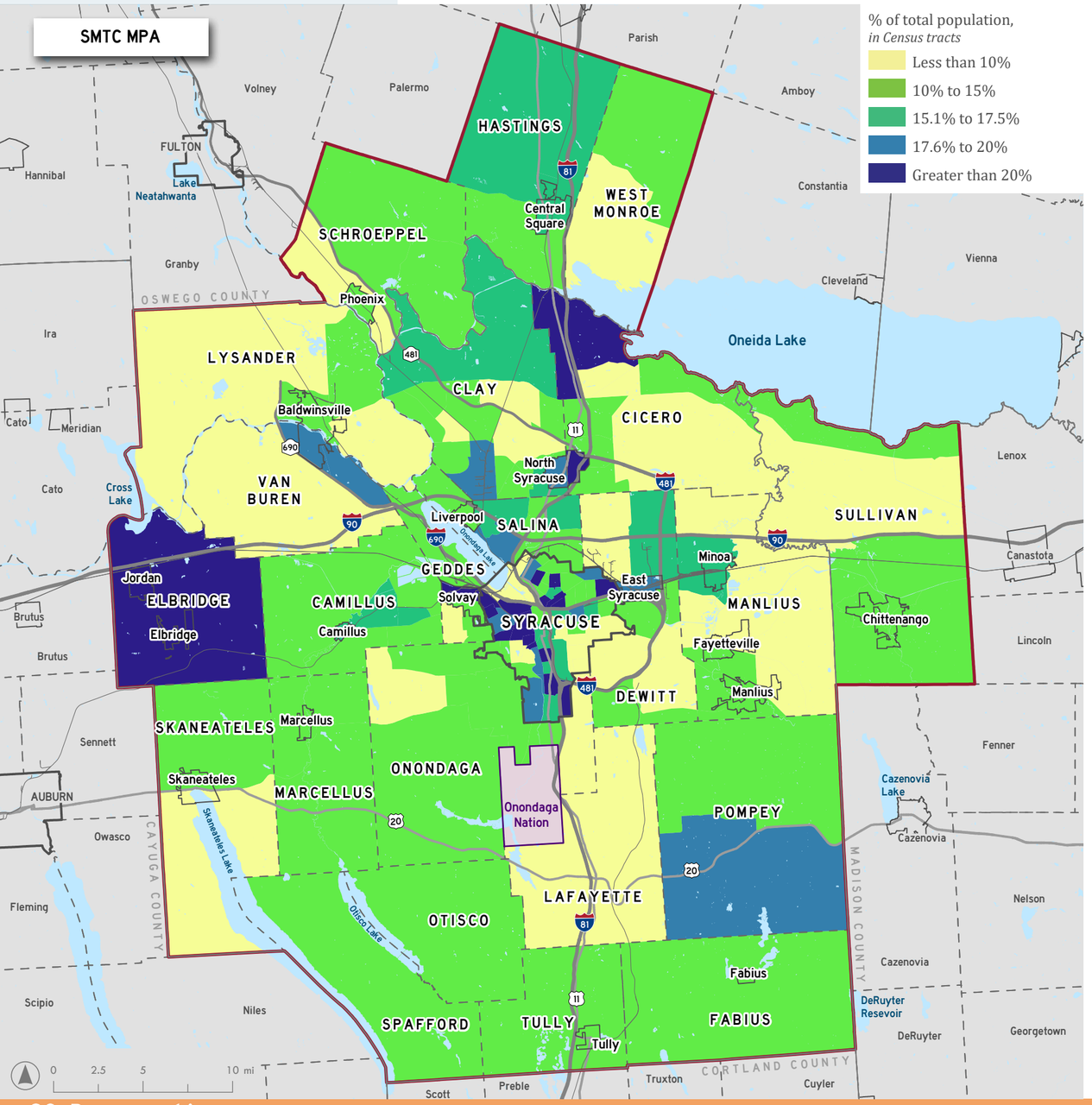
Disability

Nearly 70,000 residents of the MPA are estimated to be living with a disability.

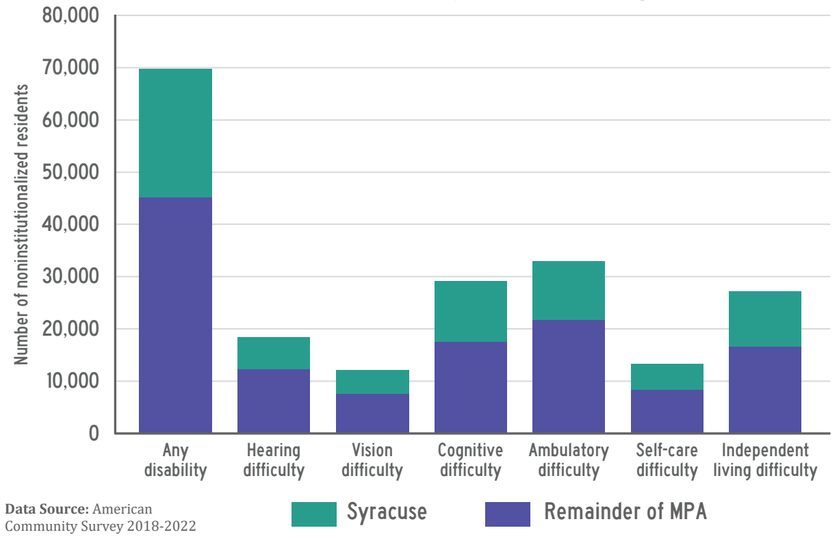
While the City of Syracuse has more residents with a disability than any town in the MPA, most people with a disability reside outside city limits.

Location of People with a Disibility in the MPA

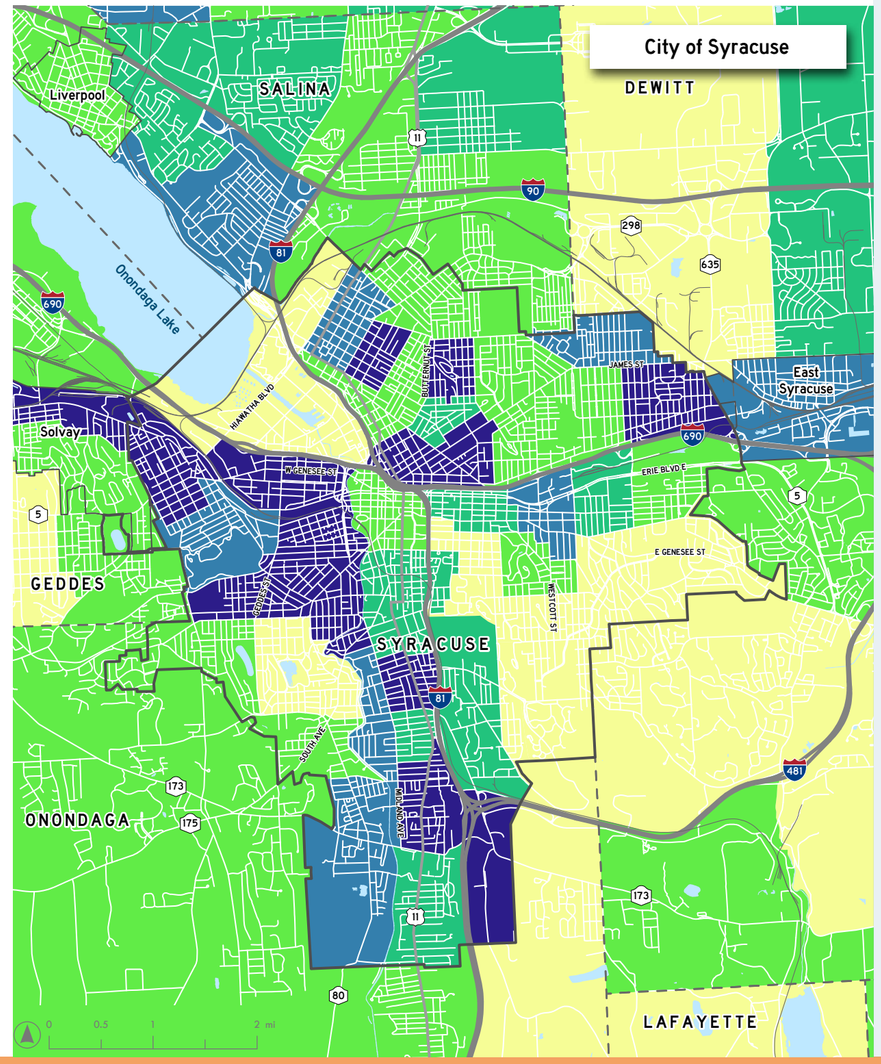




MPA Residents Living with a Disability



Data Source: American Community Survey 2018-2022



The American Community Survey defines disability in six ways, as represented in the vertical bar chart to the left. Someone with 'cognitive difficulty' is defined as having serious difficulty concentrating, remembering, or making decisions. People with 'ambulatory difficulty' have serious difficulty walking or climbing up stairs. This includes people who occasionally need a cane to those who require a wheelchair at all times. People with 'self-care difficulty' have difficulty dressing or bathing. 'Independent living difficulty' includes people with difficulty doing errands alone, such as visiting a doctor's office or shopping. For children under five, only hearing and vision disabilities are considered. Additionally, "independent living difficulty" is only applied to adults. While people can report multiple disabilities, living with just one can severely limit a person's mobility options.

In the maps, the deeper blue shows Census tracts with the greatest percentage of people living with disabilities. Outside the City, four tracts show high concentrations of people with disabilities (Brewerton, Elbridge, Solvay, and eastern North Syracuse). A cluster of tracts with high percentages of people with disabilities can be seen in the City of Syracuse, largely on the west side of the City.

Nearly 70,000 residents of the MPA live with a disability. While the City of Syracuse has more residents with a disability than any town in the MPA (about 23,000 or 34 percent of all people with a disability in the MPA), most people with a disability reside outside city limits.

While the ACS estimates 16.3% of City residents live with a disability, two towns in the MPA has a greater estimated percentage of residents with a disability: the Towns of Elbridge and Hastings with 21.0% and 16.4% of town residents living with a disability, respectively.