Methodology to Designate Census Tracts as Geographic Areas of Opportunity

The Multifamily Mapping Application provides a layer showing geographic areas of opportunity areas, which are census tracts designated as two-factor and three-factor tracts by FHFC. At this time FHFC is treating two- and three-factor tracts as equal in applicable Requests for Applications. This concept is applied to all counties.

Variables and Thresholds

Two- and three-factor tracts are census tracts with high indicators of community wellbeing. The designations were developed using three threshold criteria: 1) tract median income greater than the 40th percentile of all census tracts within the county; 2) educational attainment above the median of all tracts in the county, measured as the proportion of adults over 25 years old who have completed at least some college; and 3) tract employment rate greater than the statewide employment rate. Florida Housing applied these thresholds to identify the Geographic Areas of Opportunity. Tracts which meet two but not three of the criteria are two-factor tracts. Tracts which meet all three criteria are three-factor tracts. At this time, two- and three-factor tracts are treated the same by FHFC for funding purposes.

Dataset Methodology

The data is derived from the American Community Survey (ACS). The survey is conducted by the Census Bureau on an ongoing basis. It is the most complete and reliable source of information about the American people. The Census Bureau releases ACS data in 1-year, 3-year, and 5- year averages. One-year data is the most current; however, the 3-year and 5-year averages are more reliable because they are based on a larger sample size. Florida Housing has used the most recent and available 5-year estimates from the ACS, which includes survey data from (2018-2022). In addition, Florida Housing has discarded high margin of error values. Applying these rigorous standards, Florida Housing has based the two- and three-factor designations on accurate data which reflect long term trends.

Some data were suppressed and not used to designate two- and three-factor tracts. Data were suppressed for two reasons. First, tracts with no reported values for a variable were suppressed. This can occur due to sampling problems, or very low population values in tracts which are comprised primarily of water features, institutional land uses (e.g. airports, prisons, military installations, universities), or land under conservation. Estimates suppressed for these reasons were not analyzed and did not affect the denominator used to establish threshold values. Second, estimates for which the Census Bureau reported margin of error yields a coefficient of variation (CoV) greater than 30 were suppressed. The CoV is a ratio of the estimated value and the standard error. It is a measure of the estimate's reliability using a given confidence interval. For each tract, if the CoV for one of the three estimates for a given variable exceeded 30, that estimate was suppressed.

Additional Information

A census tract is a unit of geography utilized by the US Census Bureau. Census tracts are drawn to contain approximately the same population. Consequently, the physical size of census tracts varies based on population density. Although the optimum population is 4,000 people, population size may range from as few as 1,200 to as many as 8,000. In general, the boundaries of census tracts follow physical features such as roadways, railroads, and rivers. Census tracts rarely cross municipal boundaries and never cross county boundaries. Each census tract is identified by an eleven-digit number. The first five digits indicate the state and county. The specific tract is identified by the remaining six digits, with an implied decimal between the ninth and tenth digits. For example, census tract 12011020319 is located in

the state of Florida (12) within Broward County (11). The tract (020319) will often be noted as Broward County tract 203.19.

2020 Geographic Boundary Changes

Every ten years, the U.S. census tract boundaries are re-evaluated to align with any major changes in the US population. Because of this, some census tracts are grouped together, while others are split into multiple tracts to accommodate population growth or new housing built in the past 10 years. As a result of the 2020 decennial census there are now 5,160 census tracts in Florida compared to 4,245 tracts in 2010.

Tracts may change based on the Census results for two reasons: 1) When a census tract's internal population grows over 8,000 persons, it may split into two or more smaller census tracts. 2) When two or more adjacent census tracts experience drastic population decline, they may be combined into one new census tract. Split census tracts typically retain their original tract ID number, but with additional numbers appended to the end. Combined census tracts are new census tracts that are formed by merging two or more established census tracts into single geography. These changes are typically made due to a significant decrease in population across neighboring tracts. These tracts are typically assigned a new tract ID number by the U.S. Census Bureau but are considered distinct from other "new" census tracts. New census tracts are created by merging only portions of established Census tracts into new shapes. These might be the result of a shift in population that is disproportionate across the original geography. Like combined census tracts, new census tracts are typically assigned new tract ID numbers by the U.S. Census Bureau. All changes are recorded in the "Relationship Files" released by the Census Bureau.

The Census Geocoder, provided by the Census Bureau, allows users to find their geographic information, such as the state, county, tract number, block number and block group number: https://geocoding.geo.census.gov/geocoder/geographies/address?form.