



Growth & Development in Bell County: It Has, It is & It Will Be

D. Blackburn

County Judge

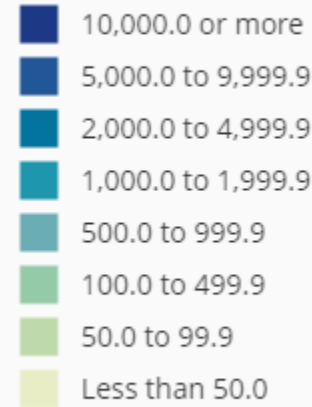
November 17, 2021



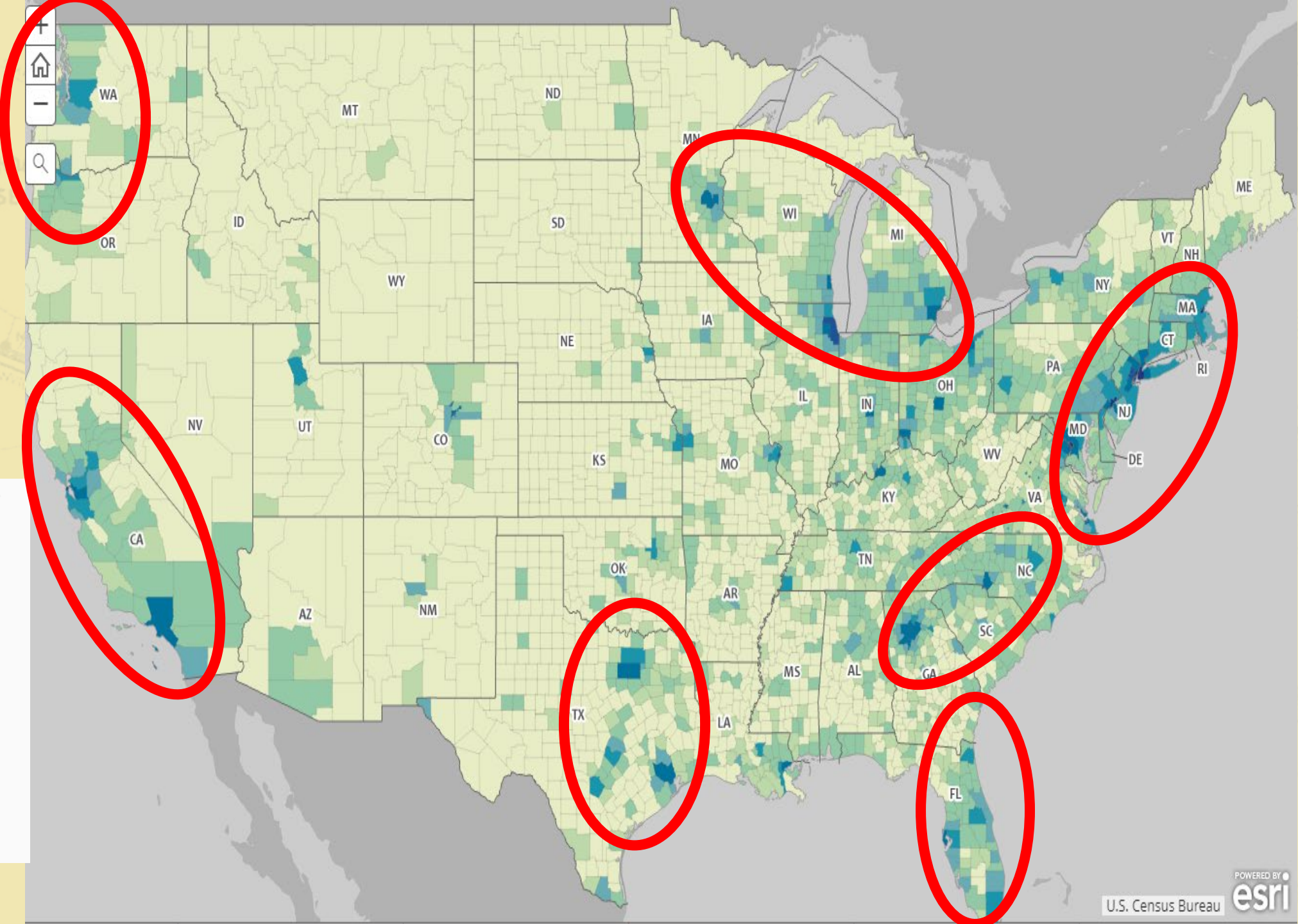
US Population
331,449,281

About 80% 'Clustered'
in 7 geographic areas

Persons per square mile by county (or
county equivalent)



U.S. density = 93.7

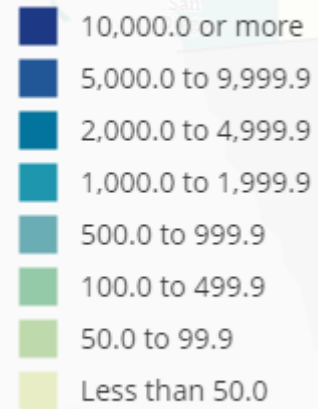




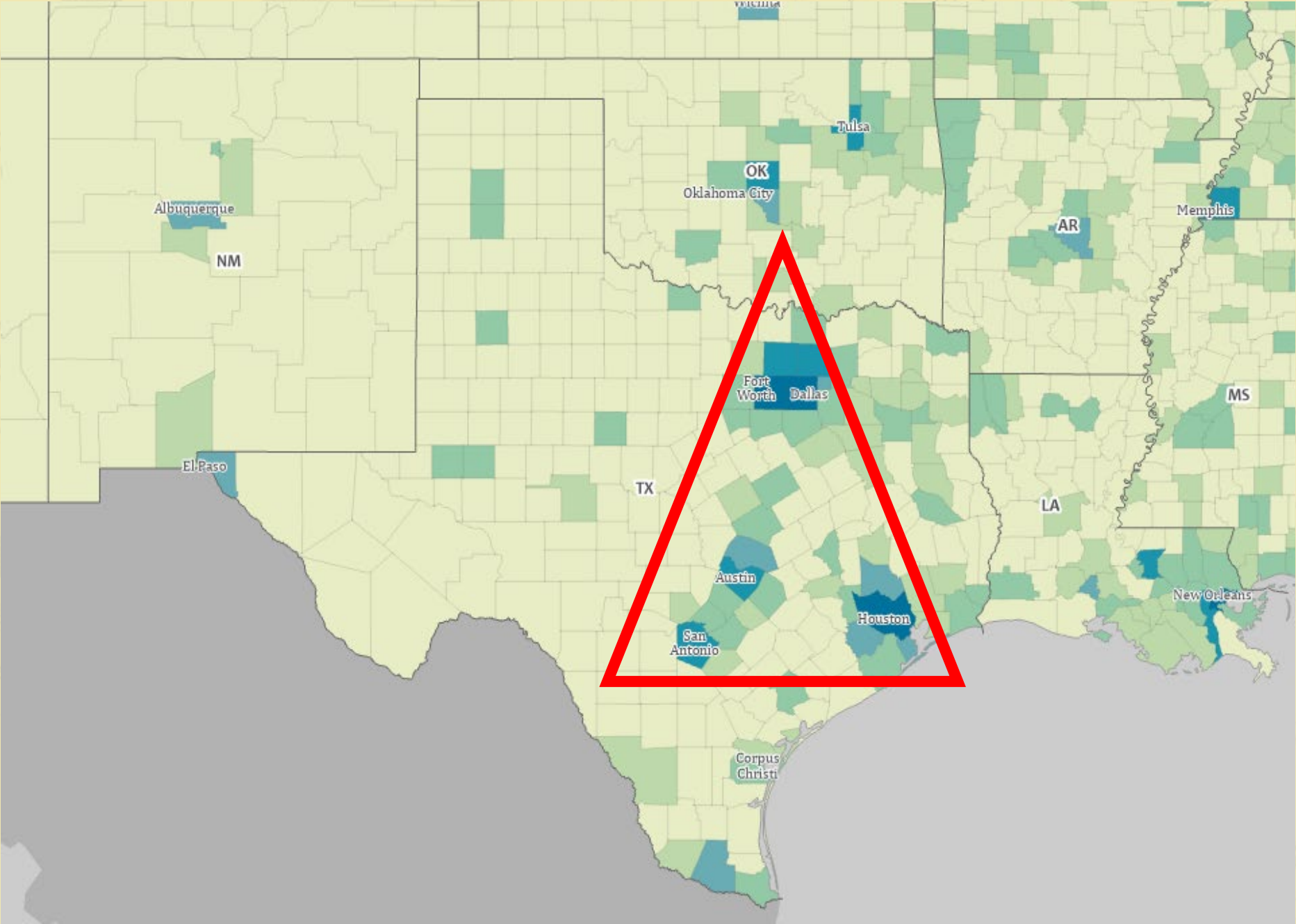
Texas Population
29,145,505

Percent of Tx
Population living
in the Triangle is
about 80%

Persons per square mile by county (or
county equivalent)



U.S. density = 93.7

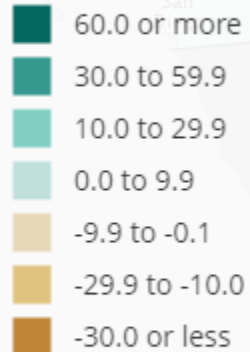




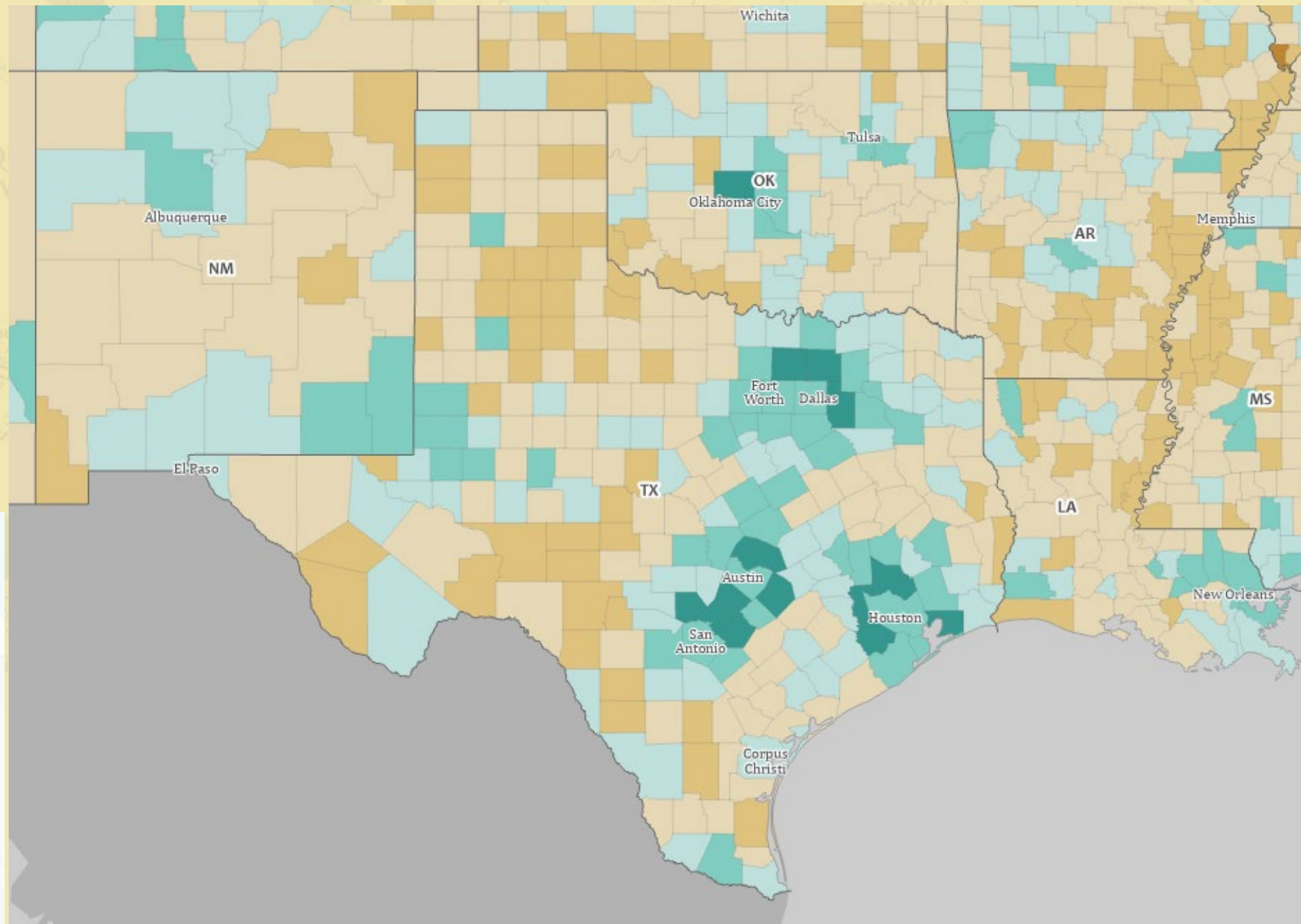
Tx had 12 counties with
30-50% growth rate

Tx had 36 counties with
10-29% growth rate

Percent change by county (or county
equivalent)



U.S. percent = 7.4



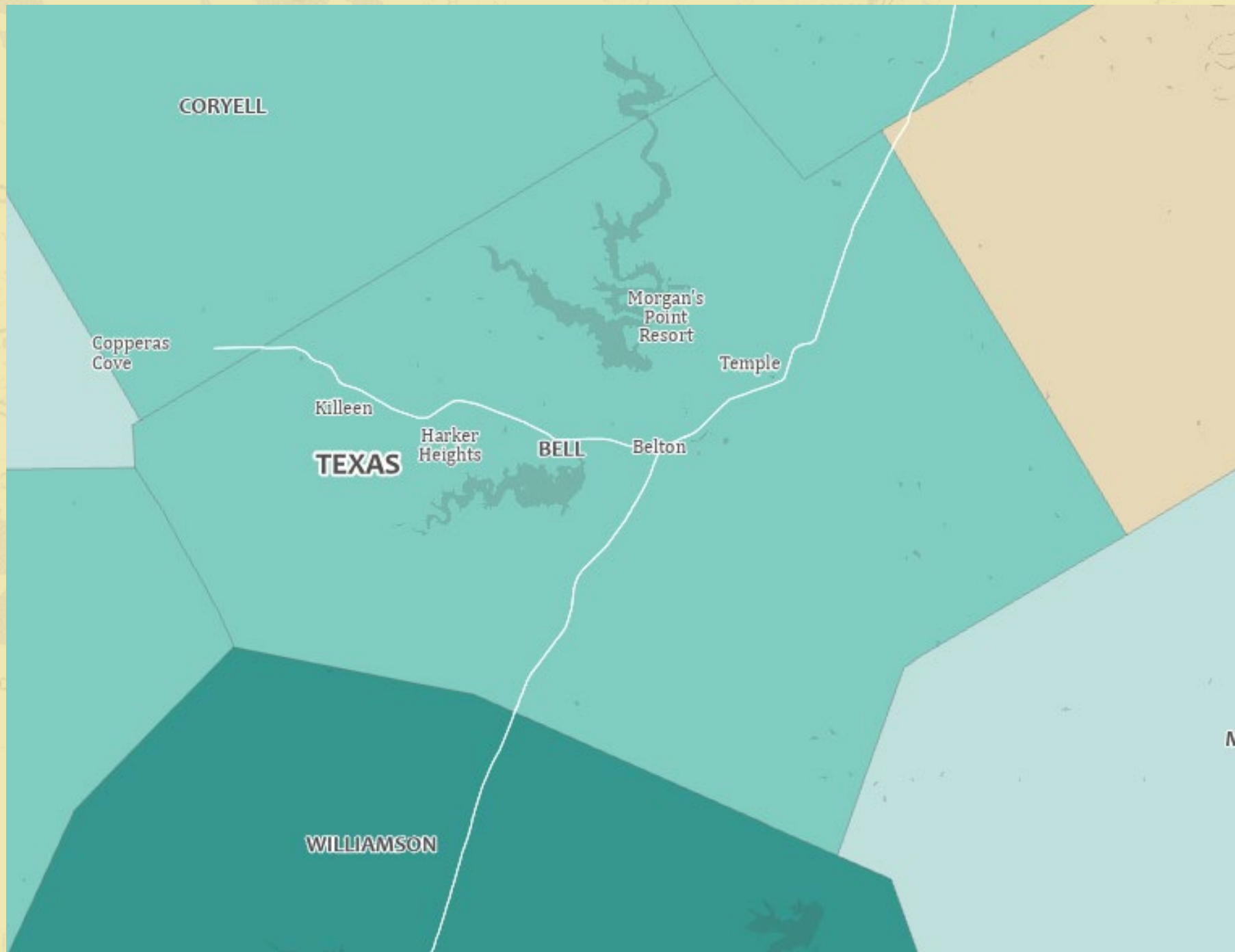


Bell County, Texas (48027)

Percent Change: 19.5

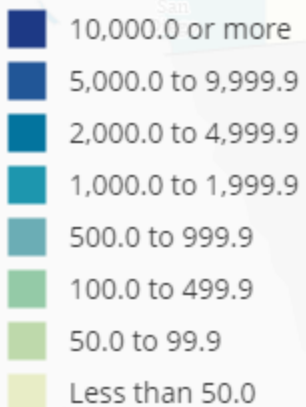
2020 Total Population: 370,647

2010 Total Population: 310,235

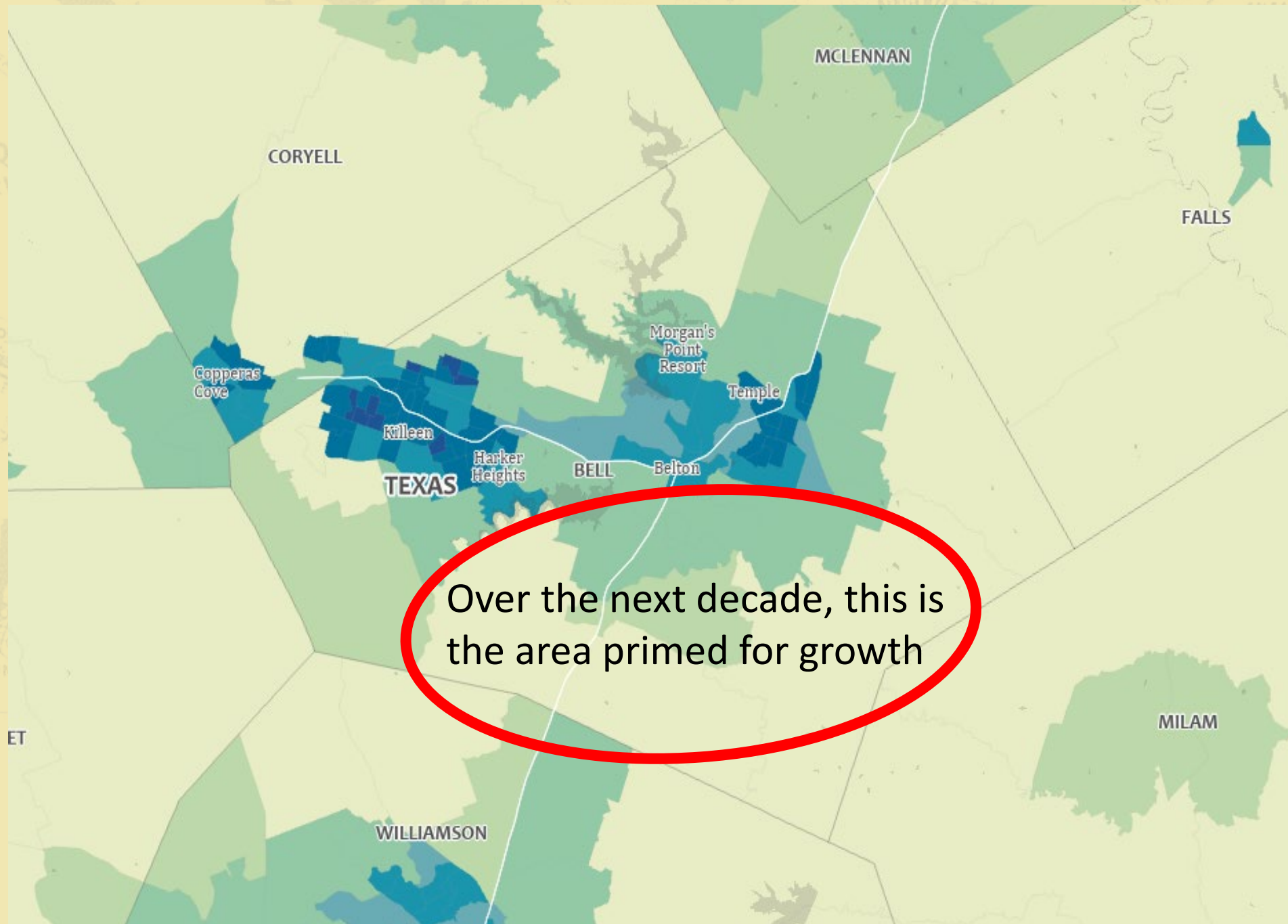




Persons per square mile by county (or county equivalent)



U.S. density = 93.7





Bell County Growth

- Bell County is seeing unprecedented growth and development in the unincorporated areas of the County (the urban areas have been seeing it for years)
- Reasons ? ... at least a couple ...
 - State Laws have changed relative to annexations ... involuntary annexation has pretty much been outlawed by the Legislature ...
 - Immigration from outside the County ...from outside the State and from our sister counties to the South ... these are new businesses, not currently here



Solar Farms, Greenhouses, & Residential Subdivisions

- Bell County has approved agreements with a couple of solar farms
- Solar Farms have large footprints ... 1,000's of acres
 - East Bell County ... both east of I-35
- Locating here due to a couple of factors
 - Perceived need for additional energy generation
 - Proximity to the grid and substations
- Not significant employment generators, but significant capital investments
- Likely more to come



Chillingham Solar Farm

- **PROJECT SIZE**

Approximately 2,300 acres

- **Estimated Capacity**

350 Megawatts per year

- **POTENTIAL JOB IMPACT**

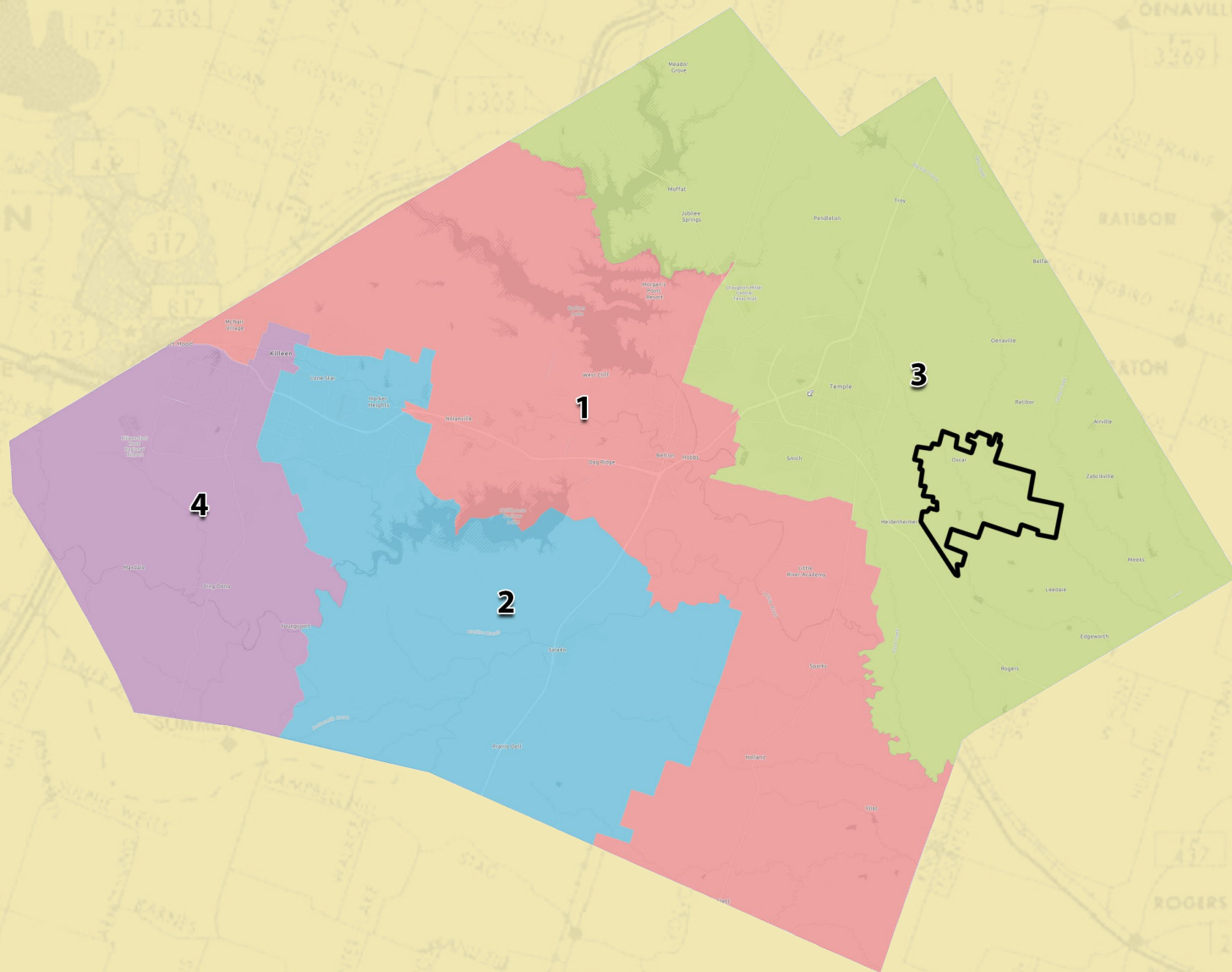
350 direct construction jobs and hundreds of indirect jobs

- **STATUS**

In development; construction expected to begin in 2022

- **OVERALL INVESTMENT**

\$255 Million





Big Elm Solar

- **PROJECT SIZE**

1,400 active acres on 3,000 acre plot

- **Estimated Capacity**

200 Megawatts per year

- **POTENTIAL JOB IMPACT**

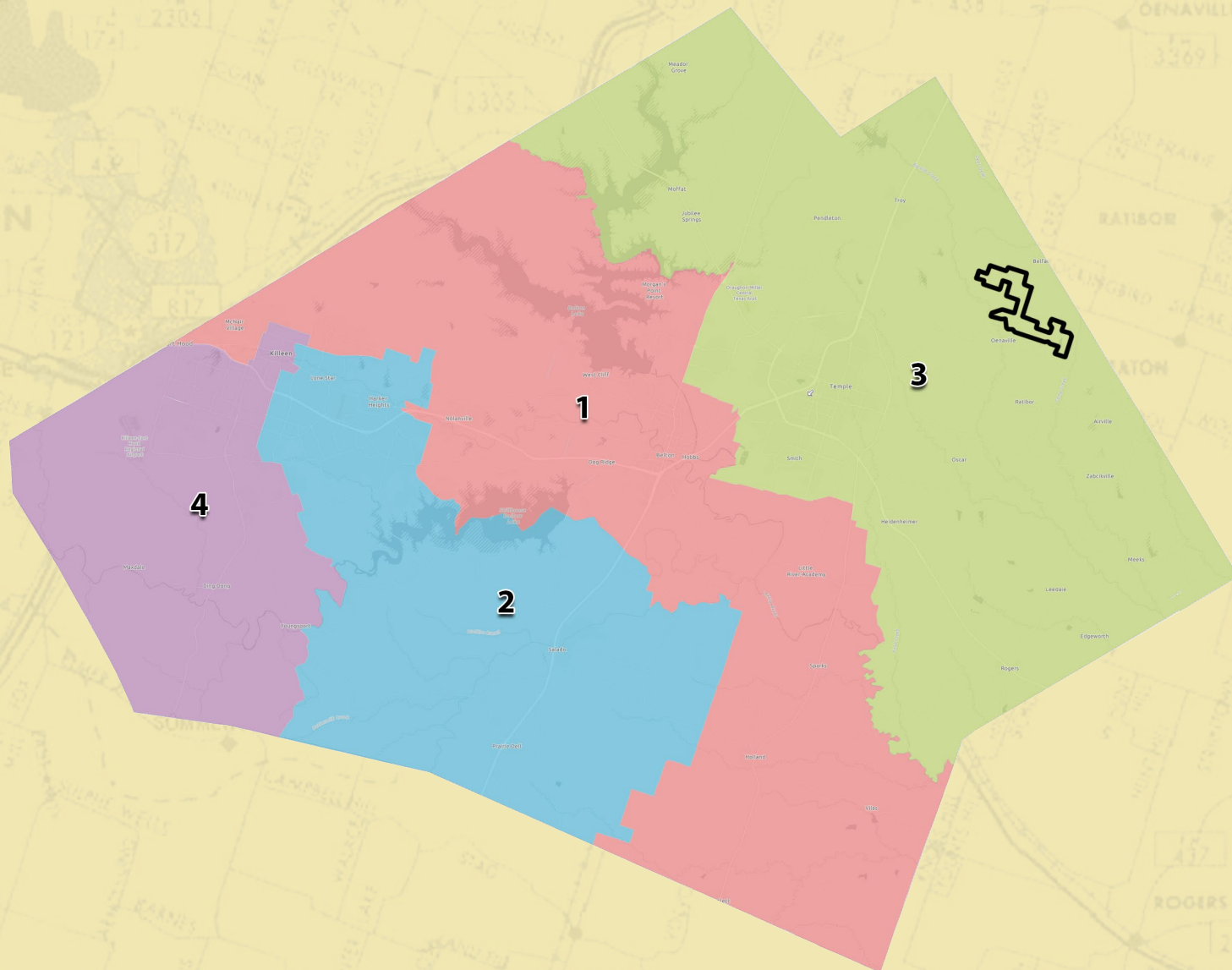
300 construction jobs and 2-3 FTE once complete

- **STATUS**

In development; construction expected to be completed in 2022

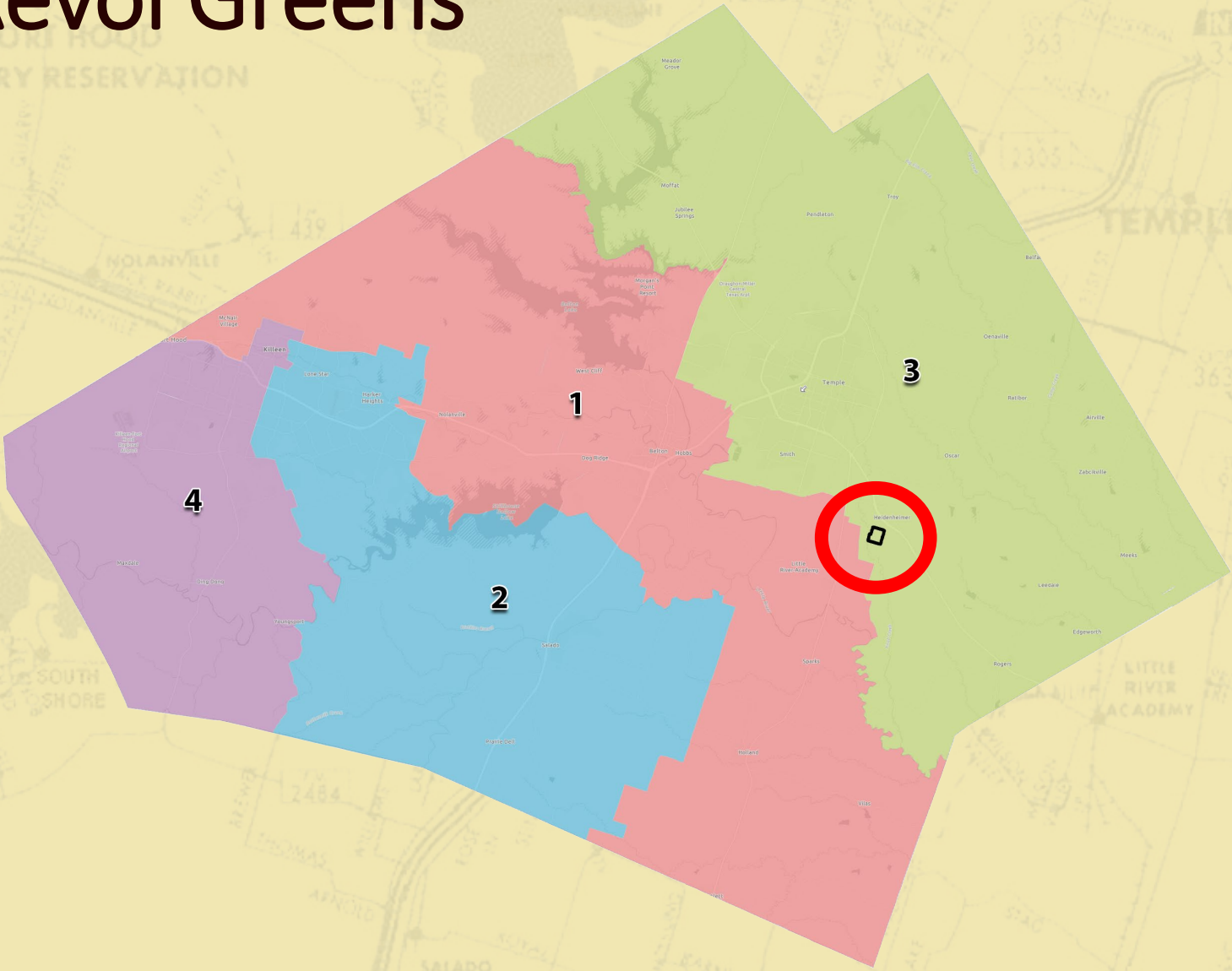
- **OVERALL INVESTMENT**

\$195 million





Revol Greens





Revol Greens

- **WORLD'S LARGEST INDOOR LETTUCE PRODUCER**
- **PROJECT SIZE**
Approximately 40 acres
- **POTENTIAL JOB IMPACT**
150 jobs
- **STATUS**
In development; construction expected to be completed in 2022
- **OVERALL INVESTMENT**
\$110 million



Image: Revol Greens



More to come ...

- Can't disclose anymore than this at the moment , but there are active discussions underway with multiple developers , both for commercial and residential developments, that are very significant
- Significant in both the size of the development and the type of development
- These will make state and national news



What does all this mean for Bell County?

- In a few words ... continued growth
- But, that isn't new to us ... as the Census numbers indicated, we have been experiencing growth for decades
- But, what is new is the pace and type and size and location of this growth and development
- Historic economic growth in the County has been confined, primarily to the urban areas
- This will not necessarily be the case in the decade ahead ... cities will continue to grow, no doubt
- But, the unincorporated areas of the County are going to see commercial and residential growth like never before



What does this mean for Bell County?

- Several things ... but, three things I will mention ...
 - Transportation planning & updating
 - Already begun working with the Central Texas Council of Governments to update our regional thoroughfare plan
 - Subdivision planning & updating
 - Revisions to County subdivision requirements are coming ... looking at the entire set of regulations, to include
 - Approval processes
 - Warranty periods
 - Road specifications
 - Lot sizes
 - Drainage requirements
 - Maintenance responsibilities



And one more area that we are working as it relates to growth and development...

- Environmental Impact Management
- Federal laws (Environmental Species Act for example) have long required environmental assessments for projects
 - Fed's have gotten very active of late
 - Bell County is now on their radar
- Especially for the residential development and development that is going to require infrastructure expansion and/or creation (which include just about everything)



Bell County Adaptive Management Coalition

- Bell County, the Village of Salado, Salado Water Supply Corporation, and Clearwater Underground Water Conservation District formed a coalition several years ago to address US Fish & Wildlife proposed listing of the Salado salamander under the Environmental Species Act
- In September of last year, FWS announced a critical habitat designation and plan that would comprise some 1,500 acres in Bell & Williamson counties
- FWS proposed designation would adversely (and unnecessarily) impact growth and development across both counties
- Coalition is still engaged in this effort

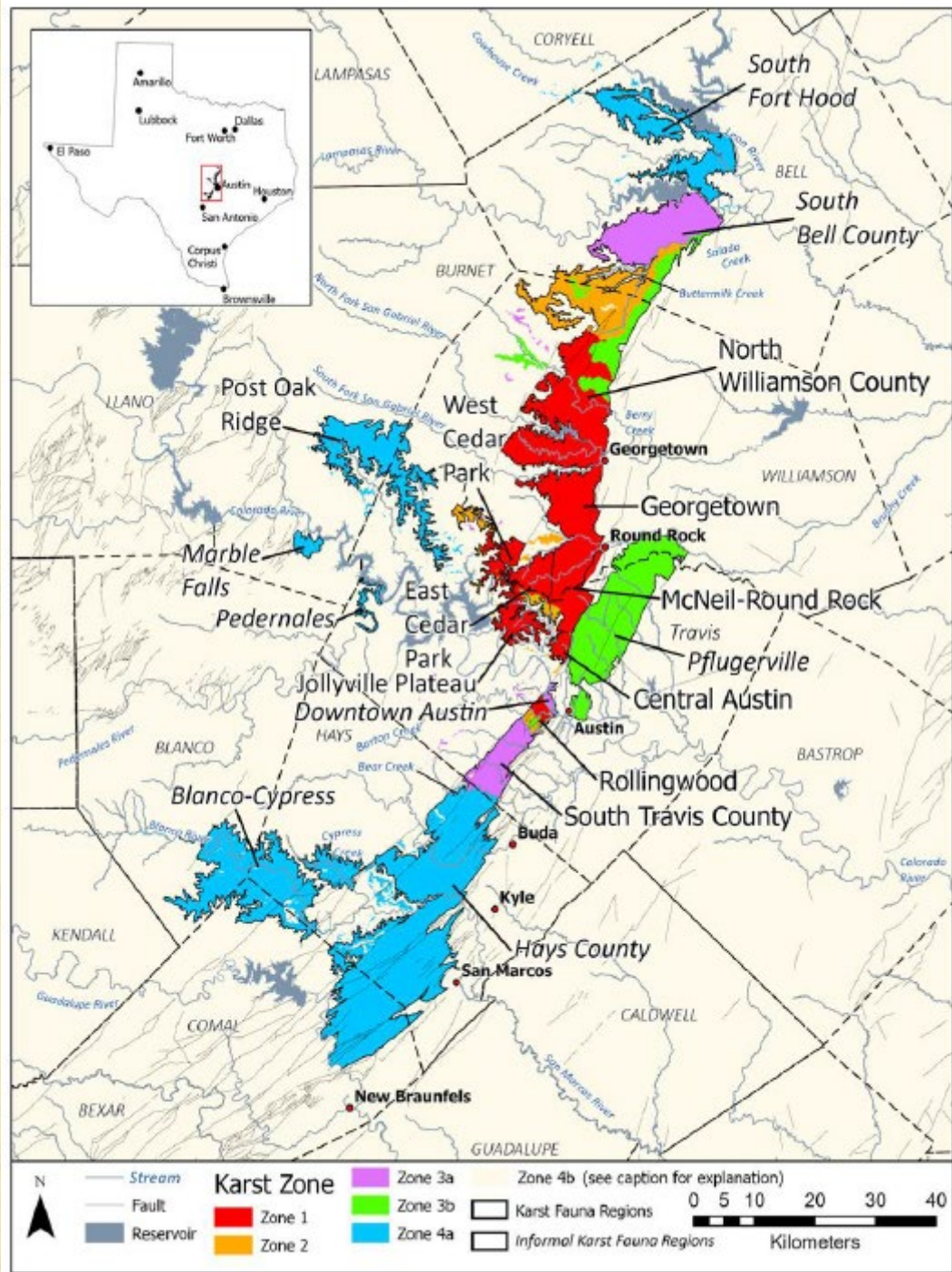
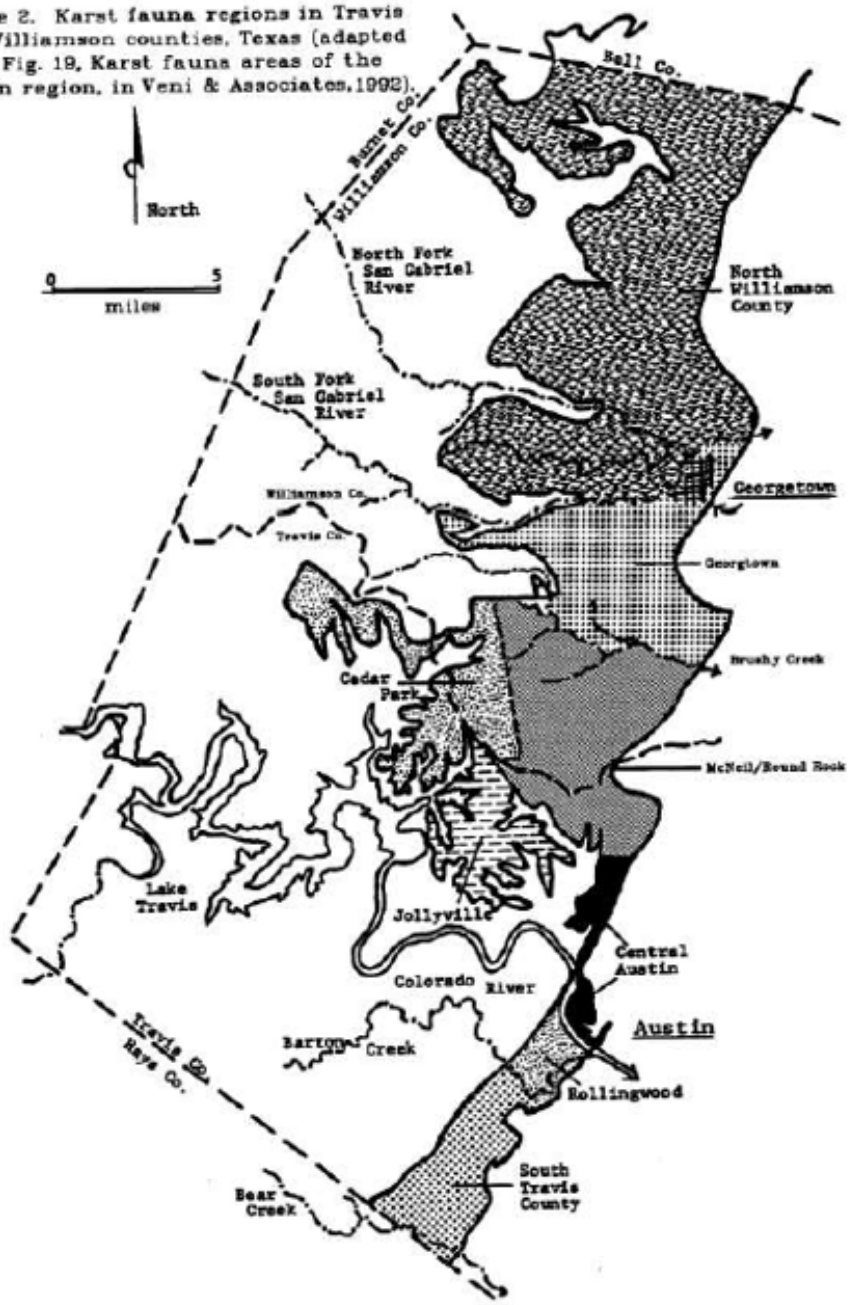


Karst Invertebrates

- In April of this year I received a phone call from US Fish & Wildlife advising that Bell County was now 'a county of interest' as it related to Karst invertebrate that might be located in Bell County
- USFW advised they had updated some maps and there were now regions in Bell County (and Coryell County) that might contain protected species



Figure 2. Karst fauna regions in Travis and Williamson counties, Texas (adapted from Fig. 19, Karst fauna areas of the Austin region, in Veni & Associates, 1992).





Karst Invertebrates

- Multiple entities have been meeting since that April phone call from USFW to discuss how to best address this new issue ...an issue that can be very costly to growth and development across the region
- Currently working with USFW on a potential planning grant application for the development of a regional Habitat Conservation Plan
- There is currently an Interlocal Agreement floating around for at least 13 entities to participate
- Next step in the process is to execute the Agreement and select a consultant to assist in the grant application and development of the regional Habitat Conservation Plan ... anticipate this will be done before Christmas



Takeaway's

- Growth and development are continuing to occur across the County...and not just in the incorporated areas ... not an 'if' question, but a 'when and how fast' question
- What this means for Bell County?
 - Environmental management issues are coming more to the forefront
 - Development rules and regulations are being reviewed and there will be changes coming
- And ... water availability and water management will continue to be at the center of all these issues