



2020 Census Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP) Quick Reference: Census Designated Places

Census designated places (CDPs) are statistical geographic entities representing closely settled, unincorporated communities that are locally recognized and identified by name. They are statistical equivalents of incorporated places, with the primary differences being the lack of both a legally defined boundary and an active, functioning governmental structure, chartered by the state and administered by elected officials. The purpose of CDPs is to provide meaningful statistics for well-known, unincorporated communities. The U.S. Census Bureau uses CDPs in the tabulation and presentation of data from the decennial census, the American Community Survey (ACS), the Economic Census, and the Longitudinal Employer-Household Dynamics (LEHD) Program.

Census Bureau criteria and guidelines¹ specify that CDPs:

- Constitute a single, named, closely settled center of population.
 - Multiple communities may be combined to form a single CDP, with a hyphenated name, when the identities of the communities have become so intertwined that the communities are commonly perceived and referenced as a single place.
 - Two communities with separate identities may be combined to form a single CDP, with a hyphenated name, when there are no distinguishable or suitable features in the landscape that can be used as a boundary between the communities.
- Consist of a contiguous cluster of census blocks comprising a single piece of territory and containing a mix of residential, nonresidential, and commercial uses. Some predominantly residential communities, such as colonias, small rural communities, and unincorporated resort and retirement communities may also be recognized as CDPs.
- Cannot be located partially or entirely within an incorporated place or another CDP.
- Can be located in more than one county but cannot cross state boundaries.
- Contain at least some population or housing units.
- Cannot have both zero population and zero housing units. The Census Bureau may request a justification for CDPs delineated with fewer than ten housing units.
- Boundaries should follow visible features.
 - Exception is when the boundary is coincident with the nonvisible boundary of a state, county, American Indian area (AIA), or incorporated place or minor civil division (MCD) in states where those boundaries tend to remain unchanged over time.
 - Or, the boundary may follow other nonvisible features in instances where reliance upon visible features would result in overbounding of the CDP in order to include housing units on both sides of a road or street feature.
- May not have the same name as an adjacent or nearby incorporated place. Adding a directional to the name to differentiate it is not acceptable if that name is not in local use.
- Can have a name change from 2010 Census if the new name provides a better identification of the community.
- Boundaries of a pre-existing CDP can be adjusted or a CDP can be deleted if it is no longer relevant.

Refer to the Respondent Guide for complete instructions.

¹ The criteria outlined herein apply to the United States, including American Indian reservations and off-reservation trust lands.