

Executive Summary

Looking for the Suburbs: A Pilot Study of the Ottawa Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area

The purpose of this pilot project was to use information gathered through the identification and testing of practical suburban definitions to determine the proportion of the population that live in suburban developments within the Ottawa Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area. Historical trends associated with the prevalence of suburban development were also examined, in order to determine if and when the Ottawa Gatineau CMA became primarily suburban.

Method

In order to effectively identify the proportion of people living in suburban development, as well as the historical point at which the shift to a suburban dominant metropolitan was made, it was necessary to use GIS mapping techniques applied to Canadian census data, and local air photos or satellite imagery. The method used for this study required an iterative process that examines several sets of neighbourhood classification results, which were analyzed for effectiveness in identifying suburban development.

Analysis

In order to facilitate comparison of the various classification schemes a fundamental understanding of suburban development within the CMA was established using an air photo interpretation of typical suburban characteristics. The results of these comparisons reveal that the Revised classification scheme provides a more accurate and intuitive representation of typical post war suburban development.

Findings

The research presented here suggested that the most effective way of classifying suburban census tracts is done by using the Revised classification scheme.

		Inclusion/ Exclusion
Inner City	CT pre 1946 housing stock greater than CMA average	Exclusion
Rural	Less than or equal to 105 people per sq km	Exclusion
Unit Mix Ratio (Incl. Attached)	66 100% of a CT's dwellings is singles, semis, and attached.	Inclusion
Post WWII (1946) Ratio	25% or greater of a CT's dwellings are built post 1946	Inclusion
Ownership Ratio	55% or greater of a CT's dwellings are owned	Inclusion

Limitations & Future Considerations

The results of this pilot project show some promise for application on a larger scale, and to be used to enhance the definition of inner city and rural zones, however, the some aspects of the classification criteria may only be relevant to the nature of postwar suburban housing in the OttawaGatineau CMA.

The use of town home and row home data was essential to the Revised classification, however, due to the lack of historical data for that particular characteristic, it was difficult to address any of the historical research questions cited at the beginning of the study.

The revised classification scheme made good use of Prof. David Ley's definition of "inner city". This exclusion criterion proved to be an essential component of suburban classification, and should be considered as a foundation for any further related research.

The exclusion of rural like census tracts was an essential component of the Revised classification scheme, as it identified that many of the larger census tracts located on the periphery of the CMA exhibited similar characteristics to the rural areas.

The rural and inner city exclusion criteria left a ring of undesignated census tracts located between the edge of the inner city and the boundary of the rural areas. The census tracts contained within this region

Study Implications

Given