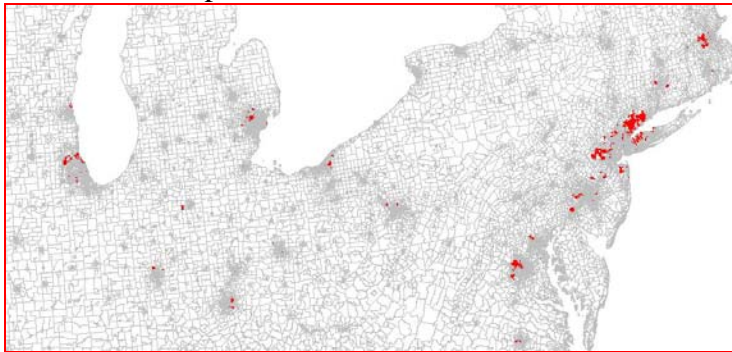


## PROPOSAL: EXPLORING HYPER-AFFLUENT NEIGHBORHOODS

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I am beginning a book-length project which extends some aspects of *City: Urbanism and its End* (2003) from local to national scale. In particular, I propose to analyze the economic hierarchies which have grown up in and around central cities in the U.S. The SRO fellow's work would concentrate on the top 1% of census tracts, ranked by mean earned income among households with earned incomes (census 2000, with 2006 estimates from Geolytics). Unlike most census income variables, this one reports results above \$200,000. It also focuses on earned incomes, presumably having organic connections to the present economy, as opposed to what one author calls "Trustifarian" incomes based on hereditary relationships to past economic arrangements. Those top 1% tracts which fall in the northeast quadrant of the country are shown in red in the map below.



The initial task will be to describe systematic differences between these populations and those inhabiting less affluent neighborhoods in the same MSAs. Among the dimensions to be considered are: race, nationality, language, age, education, occupational sector, home ownership, use rates for public transportation, mobility of residence, proximity to low-income areas, and barriers to new construction (zoning, environmental, and others) .

The working hypotheses are four: 1. that regulatory restriction of supply in a given area drives up housing prices, hence makes elite status more likely (e.g. Ed Glaeser's recent work), 2. that *commuting proximity* to major business service centers (measured in time and convenience), both now and in the past, advantages a given neighborhood within its region, 3. that *perceptual or symbolic distance* from those centers, controlling for (2) above, also advantages a neighborhood within its region, and 4. that the elite neighborhoods are largely concentrated in the ten mega-regions of the U.S. economy (Brookings, RPA of New York).

A set of case-study neighborhoods will then be selected for more intensive investigation, including field work and interviews. These interviews will focus on elected officials, municipal administrators, developers, real-estate professionals, and civic notables. These will include people engaged with affluent neighborhoods from within, and also people who look at such neighborhoods from the perspective of less fortunate areas and central cities. During the summer

effort, I will concentrate on places in Fairfield County, Westchester County, Bergen County, and Manhattan.

The learning opportunity here has to do with application of economic ideas, and interpretation of social institutions to which they relate. I will take time to work directly with the student selected, and to teach as we work.

In this work, command of Excel is essential. Willingness to use Stata and basic GIS (geographic information system) software is also needed, although no elaborate prior training is presumed.