

ZCTAs™
ZIP Code Tabulation Areas
for Census Data Products

1999



USCENSUSBUREAU
Helping You Make Informed Decisions



What Are ZCTAs™?

ZIP Code Tabulation Areas (ZCTAs™) are a new statistical entity developed by the U.S. Census Bureau for tabulating summary statistics from Census 2000. ZCTAs are generalized area representations of U.S. Postal Service (USPS) ZIP Code service areas. They represent either USPS five- or three-digit ZIP Code areas. ZCTAs will give the data user another tool for using Census 2000 data.

ZCTAs are created based on the following criteria:

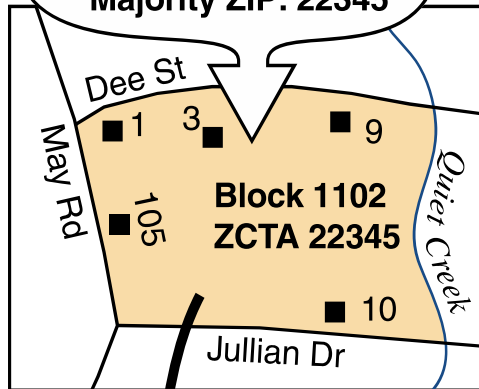
- ZCTAs follow census block boundaries. The ZCTA code for each census block represents the majority ZIP Code for addresses within that census block.
- ZCTAs codes are assigned to all land and water areas.
- ZCTAs **exclude** unique, single delivery point ZIP Codes for firms and organizations, but they **include** dedicated post office box ZIP Codes where a main post office has only post office box deliveries.
- ZCTAs are assigned in a fully automated process.
- ZCTAs are distinct from other census statistical areas, such as census tracts, because they are not stable over time and are computer-delineated based on addresses at the time of the census rather than manually delineated by local program participants or Census Bureau staff before the census.
- ZCTAs are distinct from other representations of ZIP Codes because they are based on actual address information and ZIP Codes collected or verified during Census 2000 operations.

ZCTA is a trademark of the U.S. Census Bureau.

How ZCTAs Are Created

Census Tract 12–Block 1102		
Street Address		ZIP Code
1	Dee St	22345
3	Dee St	22345
9	Dee St	22345
10	Jullian Dr	22345
105	May Rd	22346

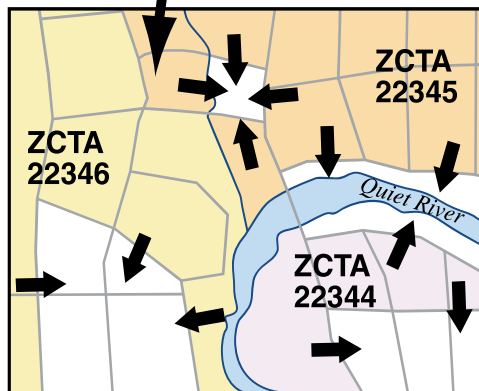
Majority ZIP: 22345



1. Determine the majority ZIP Code for each census block with addresses.

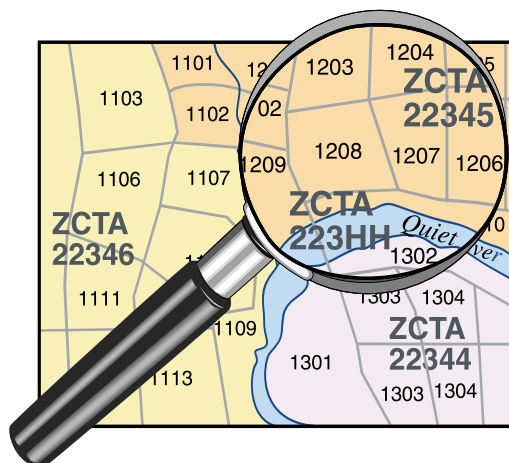
ZIP Codes are verified to ensure valid USPS values for each county. The majority ZIP Code is based on residential and commercial addresses and non-city-style addresses.

2. Assign a ZCTA code to every census block that contains addresses with ZIP Codes.



3. Extend ZCTA coverage to adjacent census blocks not assigned a ZCTA code.

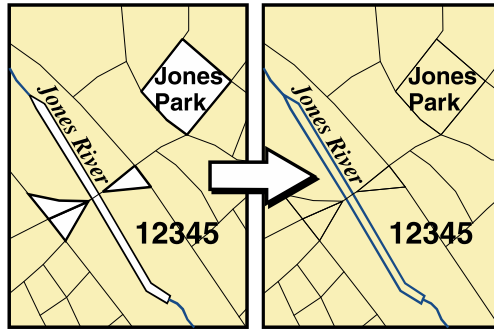
See “Extending ZCTA Coverage” for map examples.



4. Run edits and review results of the process.

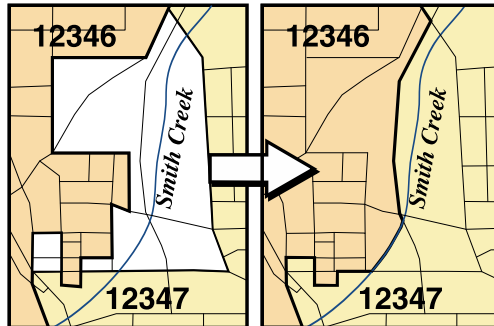
Edits set ZCTA codes assigned to water blocks and ensure ZCTAs are consistent with Census 2000 tabulation blocks.

Extending ZCTA Coverage



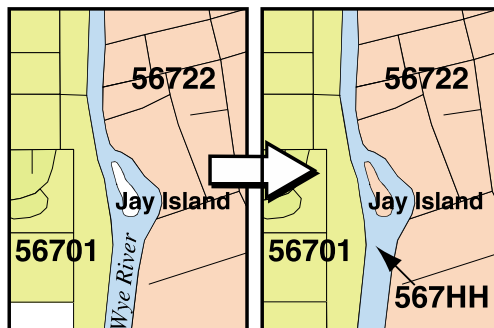
Fill holes within a ZCTA coverage

“Holes” (census blocks with no addresses) are assigned the ZCTA code of surrounding blocks.



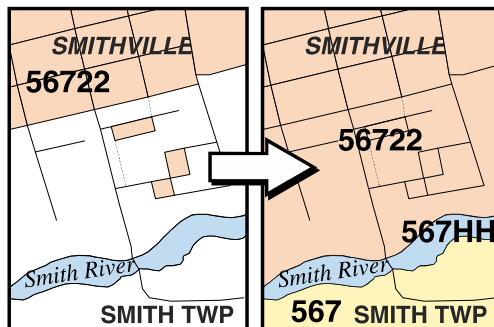
Fill gaps between ZCTAs

Each ZCTA grows outward to fill adjacent blocks until all gaps between ZCTAs are assigned a ZCTA code.



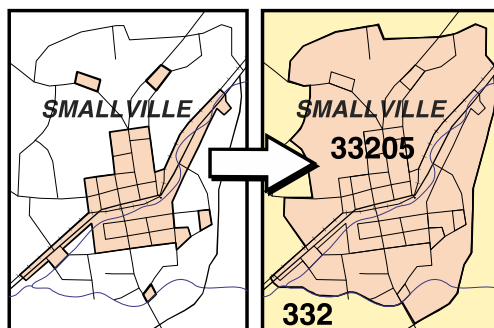
Assign ZCTAs to islands and water features

Islands are filled with the ZCTA code of nearby land blocks. Water blocks get a special ZCTA code (three-digit ZIP Code + “HH”).



Assign ZCTAs to fringe areas

Unassigned blocks on the edge of a ZCTA are filled with the adjacent ZCTA code. Large undeveloped areas are assigned the three-digit ZIP Code.

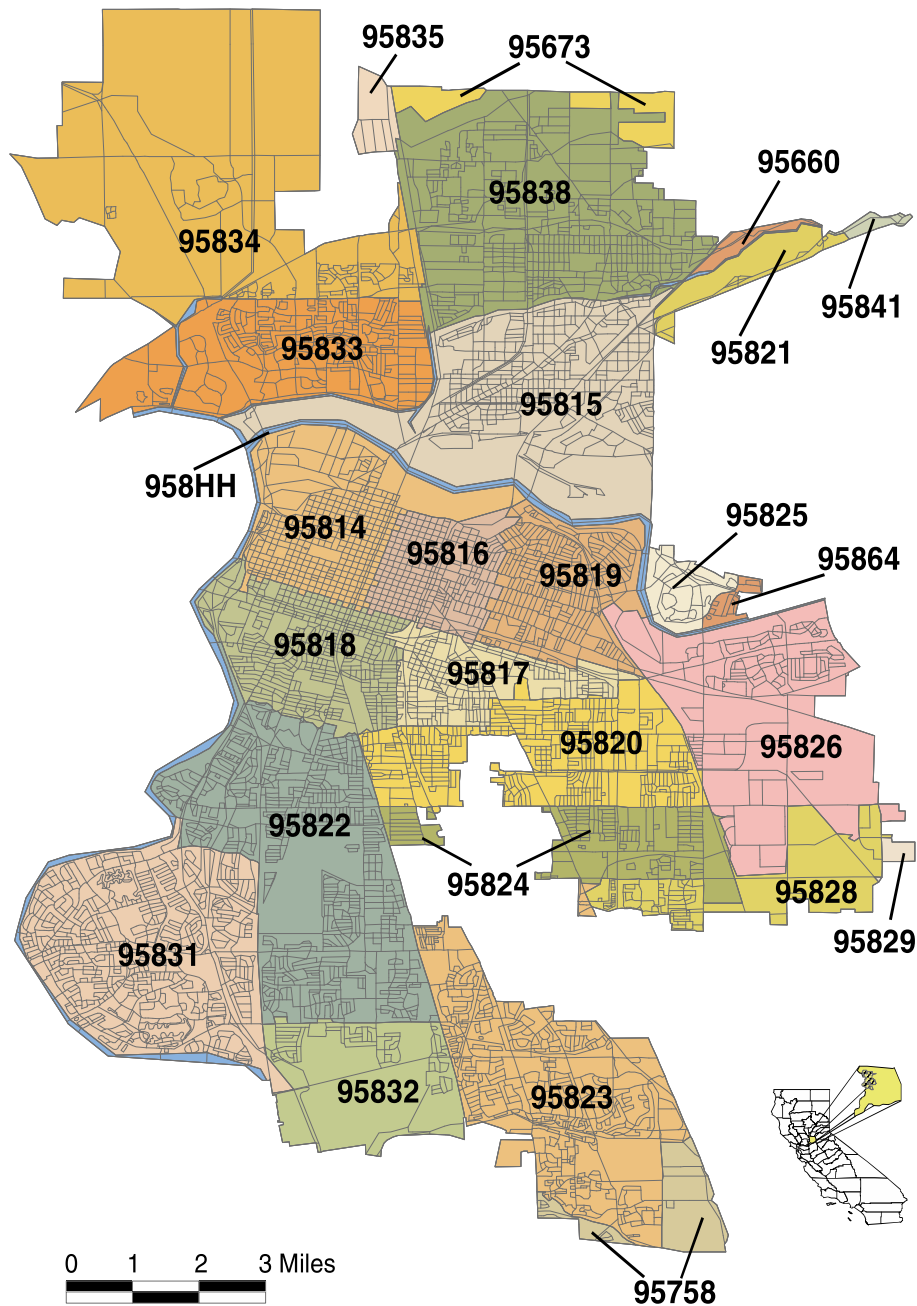


Assign ZCTAs to sparsely settled areas

“Windows” that include the ZCTA “fragments” are assigned to one ZCTA. The rest of the area is assigned the three-digit ZIP Code.

ZCTA Example

Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal ZCTAs Sacramento, CA



Obtaining ZCTAs

ZCTAs appear in the Census 2000 Dress Rehearsal TIGER/Line® files that became available for purchase in April 1999. These TIGER/Line files cover only the three Dress Rehearsal sites: Sacramento, CA; 11 counties in the Columbia, SC area; and Menominee County, WI. ZCTAs for the entire United States will be available in the Census 2000 TIGER/Line files.

ZCTAs are stored in Record Type S of the TIGER/Line files. This record type stores additional geographic codes linked to polygons (Record Type I provides the link between feature chains and polygons).

Users also will be able to plot ZCTA maps and create tables showing census data tabulated by ZCTAs, using the American FactFinder Internet site.

TIGER/Line is a registered trademark of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Ordering & Product Information

Order Census products

Customer Services

Phone: 301-457-4100

Fax: 888-249-7295 (fax orders only)

E-mail: orders@census.gov

Internet: <http://www.census.gov/mp/www/censtore.html>

Obtain ZCTA product information

Products and Services Staff

Phone: 301-457-1128

Fax: 301-457-4710

E-mail: zcta@geo.census.gov

Internet: <http://www.census.gov/geo/ZCTA/zcta.html>

TIGER/Line files

<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger>

American FactFinder

<http://factfinder.census.gov/>