



Urban Blight: The Modern Miasma

Max Michael

The background is a faded, grayscale image of a dilapidated interior. It shows a wall with significant peeling paint and a wire clothes hanger hanging from a horizontal bar. A roll of paper or a small table is positioned below the hanger. The overall atmosphere is one of neglect and decay.

DEFINITIONS

Urban Blight

The process whereby a previously functioning city, or part of a city, falls into disrepair and decrepitude. It may feature deindustrialization, depopulation or changing population, restructuring, abandoned buildings, high local unemployment, fragmented families, political disenfranchisement, crime, and a desolate, inhospitable city landscape.

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Modern Miasma

Miasma comes from the Greek meaning pollution and was a theory that disease was caused by foul smelling air.

Modern miasma refers to a condition responsible for an extensive cascade of other biologic, social, and economic consequences that may ultimately alter the genome through epigenetic effects which become heritable across generations.

The Modern Miasma

Urban Blight: The Modern Miasma

- Disrupted neighborhoods
- Loss of property values
- Social Disintegration

Health Consequences

- ↑ chronic disease burden
- ↑ infant mortality
- ↓ life expectancy

Economic Consequences

- Poverty
- Unemployment

Social Consequences

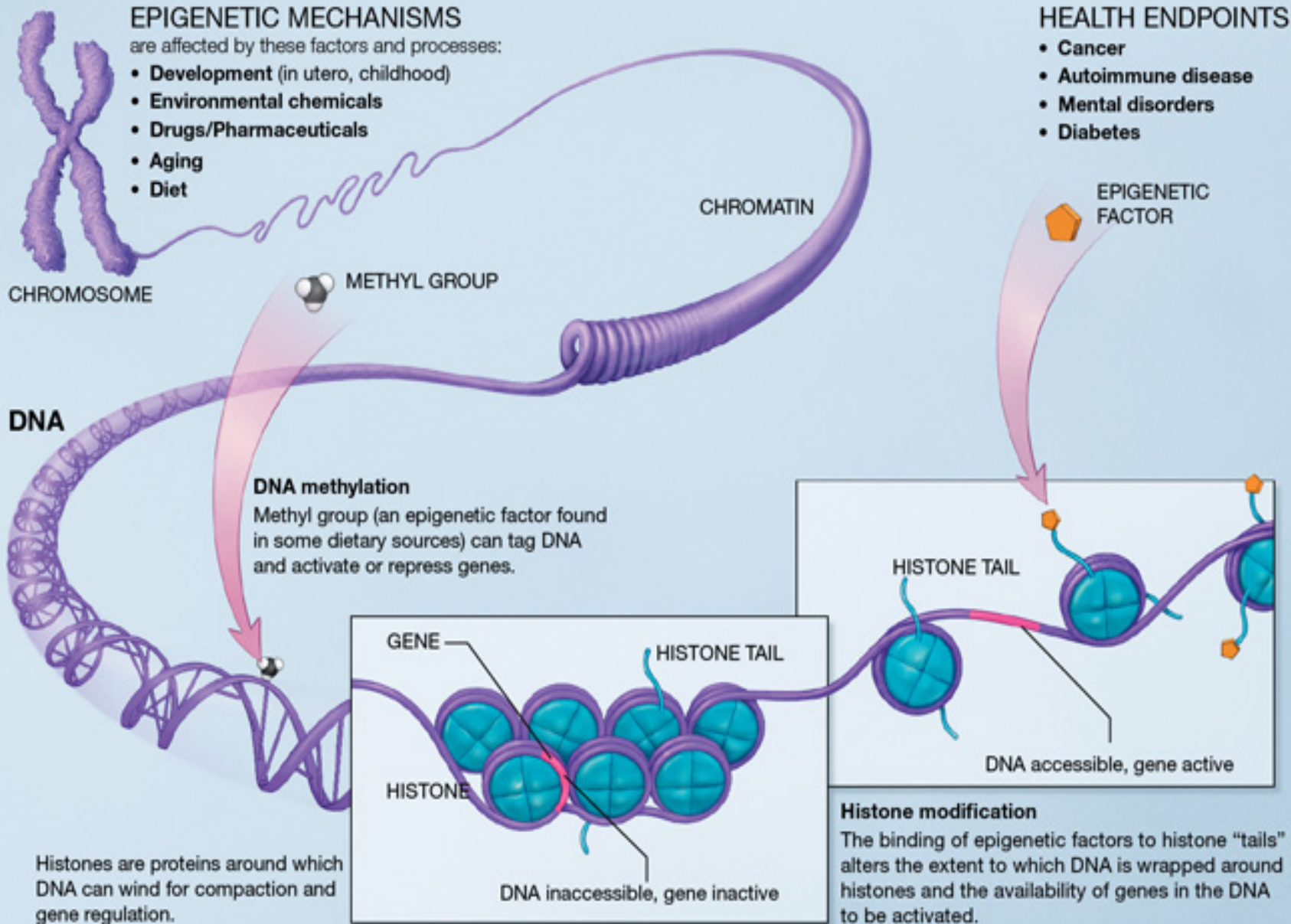
- ↑ Violence/incarceration
- ↓ educational status
- Single parent families

Impacts on Self-Identity

- Fear and Loathing
- Stress
- Hopelessness

Epigenomic Changes

- Nucleic acid methylation
- Histone modification
- Nucleosome positioning



A photograph of a dilapidated room with peeling paint and a wire clothes hanger holding a blank scroll. The scene is dimly lit, with shadows cast across the floor and walls. The overall tone is somber and evocative, suggesting a story of neglect and decay.

A STORY

Urban Blight.The Modern Miasma

Neighborhood Leaders Survey

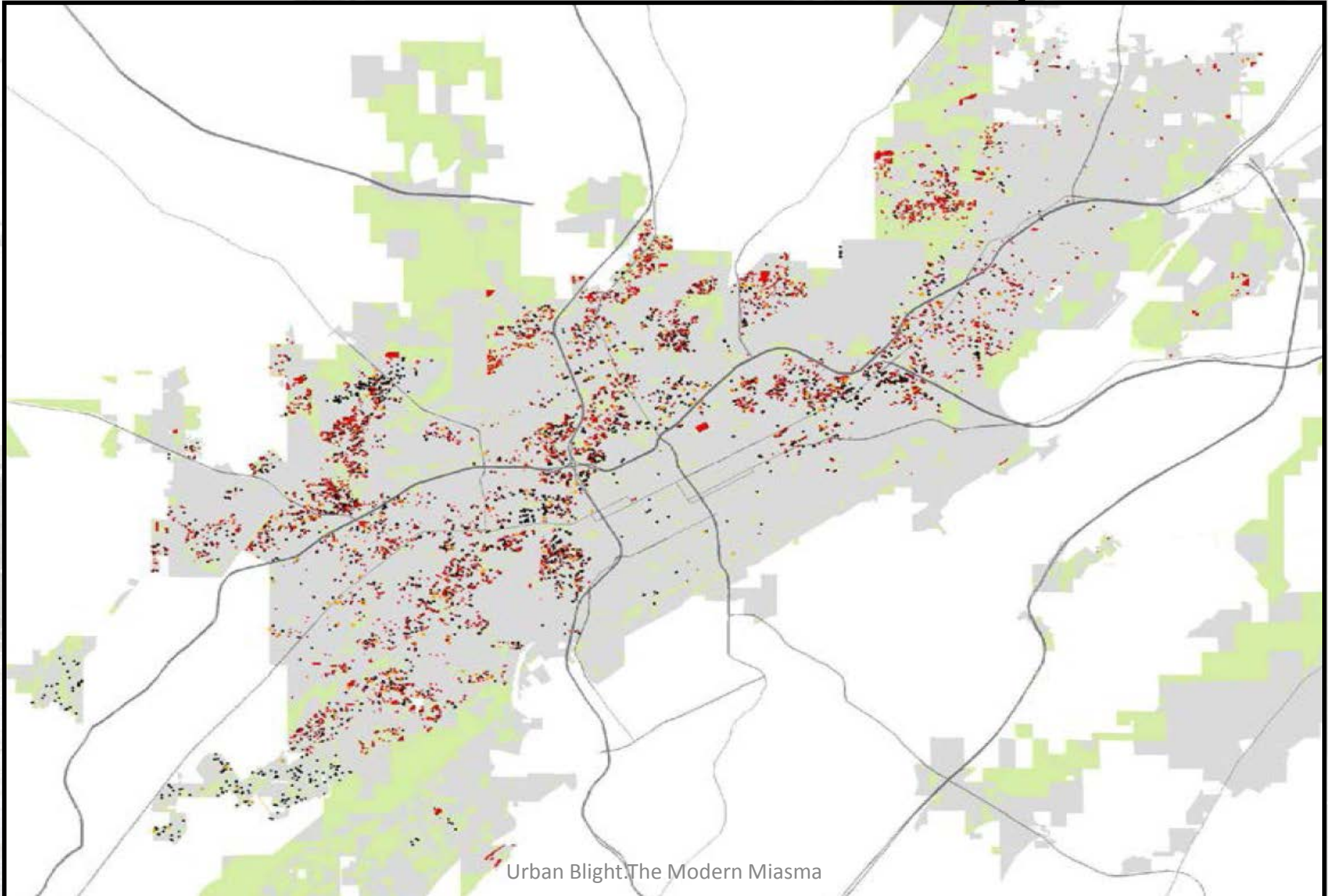
Results

1. Empty lots and abandoned homes
2. Diabetes
3. High school dropout rates
4. High blood pressure
5. Lack of sidewalks, walking trails and clean parks

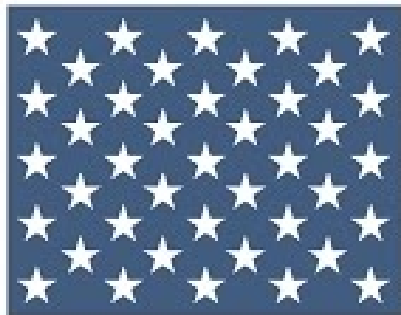


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Abandoned and Vacant Properties



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THE METROPOLITAN REVOLUTION

How Cities and Metros
are Fixing our Broken
Politics and Fragile Economy

Thomas Jefferson Hotel: last rooftop zeppelin mooring mast in the world



Birmingham's Wake-up Call

- 49th largest metropolitan region in US
- Global investors don't know Birmingham
- Major academic health center and university essentially downtown
- Innovation Depot and nascent innovation district
- Downtown buildings
- Neighborhoods



ORIGINS OF URBAN BLIGHT IN BIRMINGHAM



Urban Blight. The Modern Miasma



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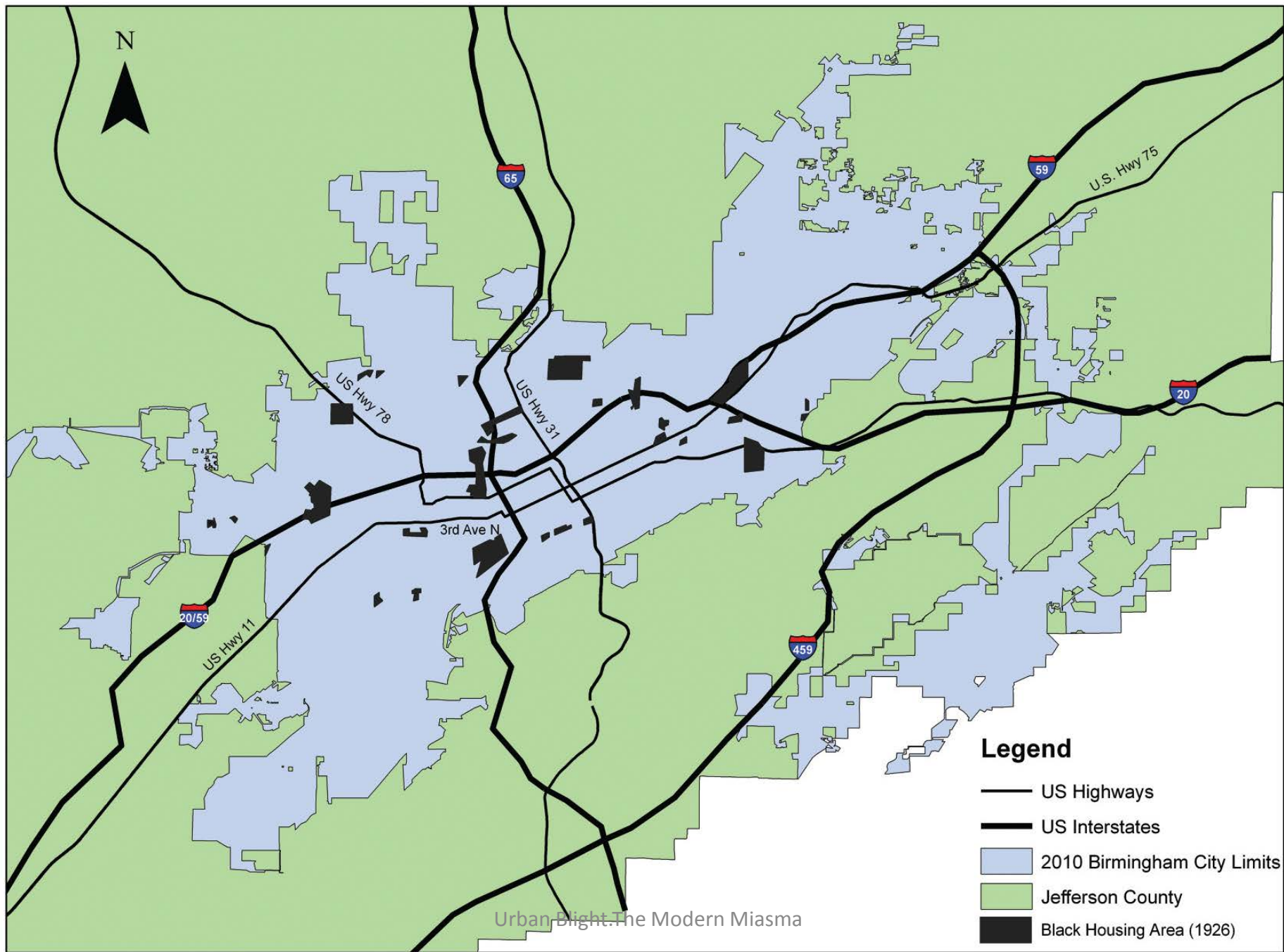
1905 Chain Gang in South

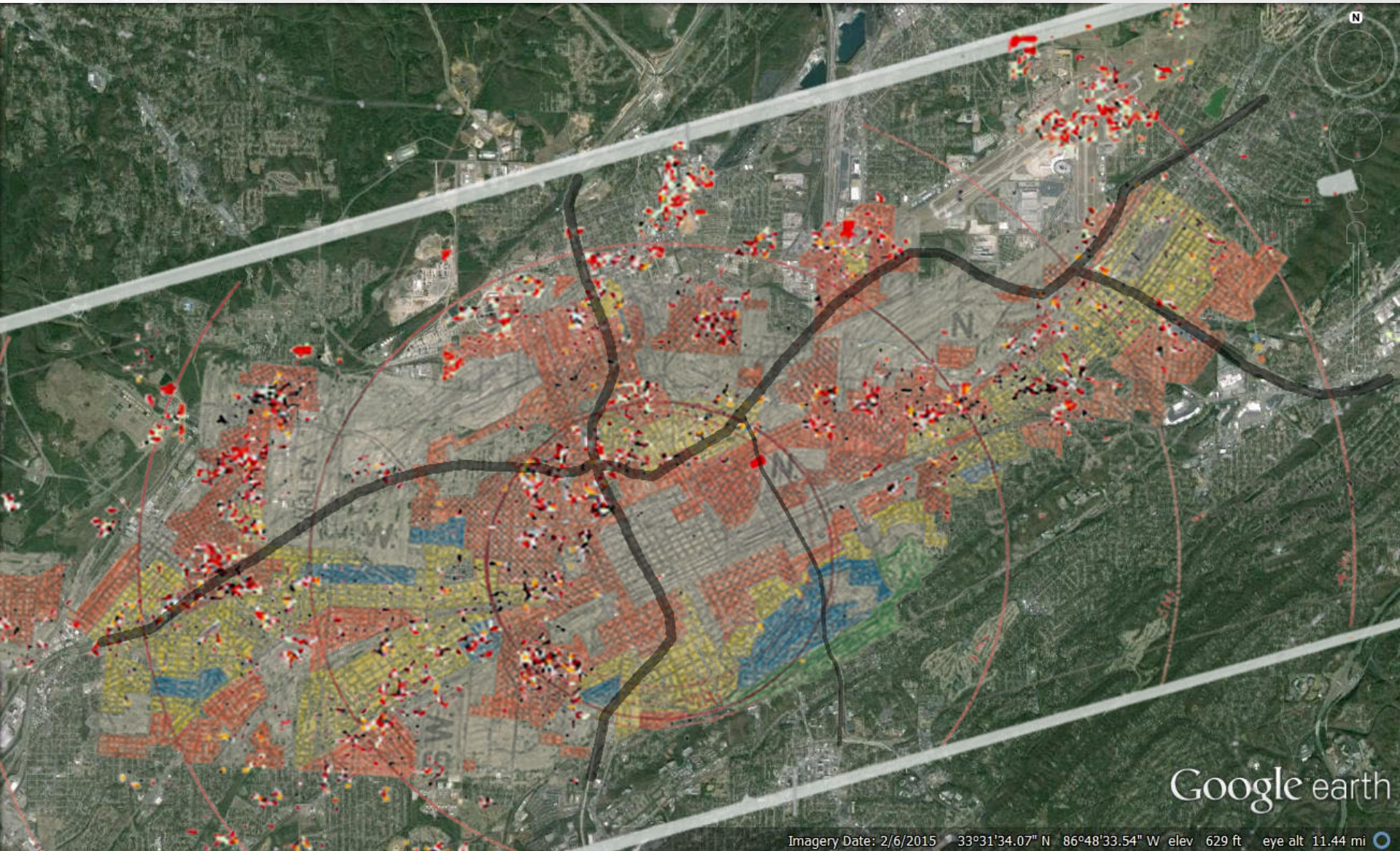
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Urban Blight. The Modern Miasma

Areas Zoned for Black Households in Birmingham in 1926 (Reproduced)





Imagery Date: 2/6/2015 33°31'34.07" N 86°48'33.54" W elev 629 ft eye alt 11.44 mi

Urban Blight.The Modern Miasma



Urban Blight.The Modern Miasma

A photograph of a dilapidated room with peeling paint and a wire clothesline hanging from the ceiling. The scene is dimly lit, with a window in the background showing a view of a city street. The overall atmosphere is one of neglect and decay.

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Social Consequences

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- Single parent families

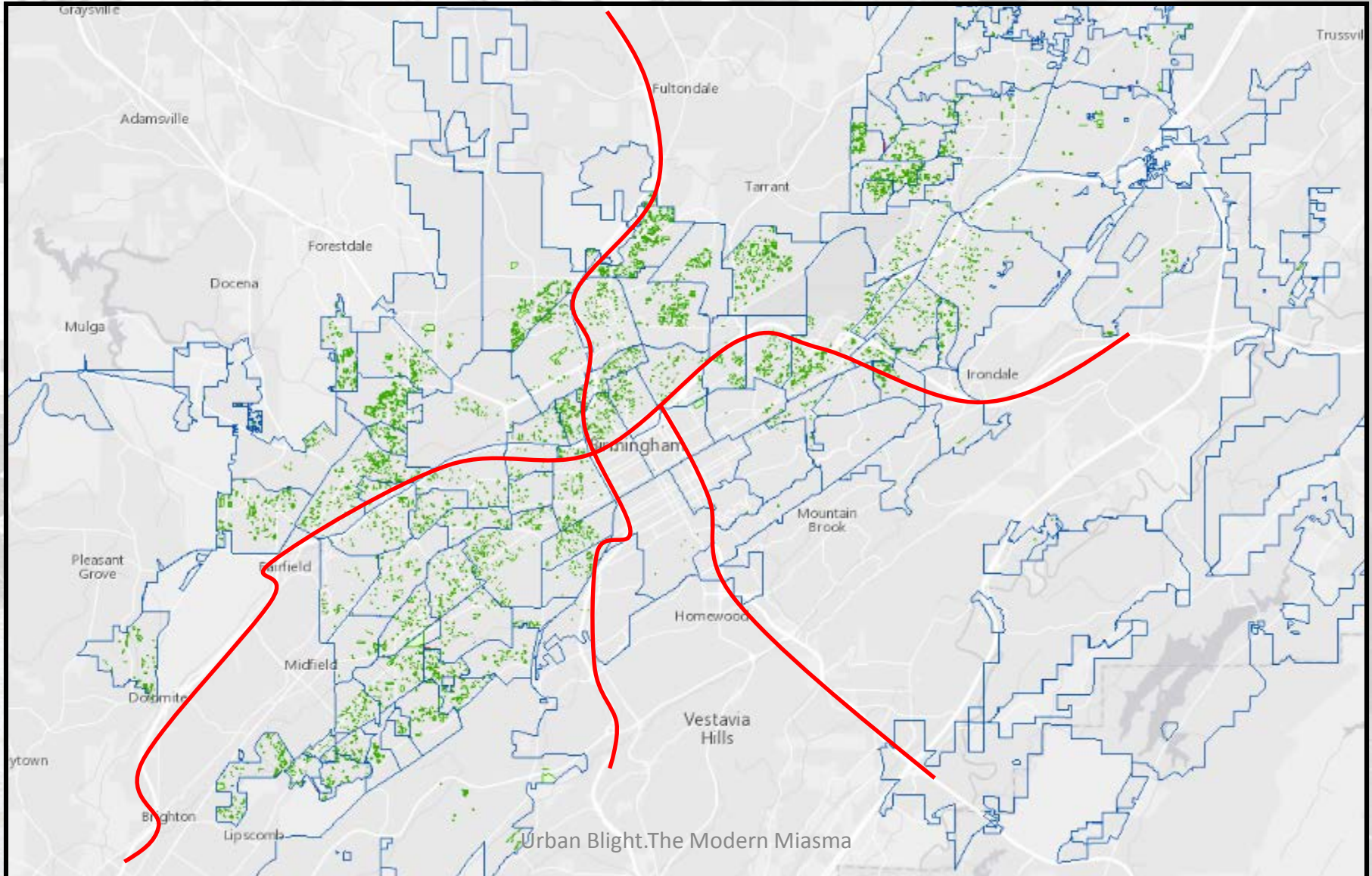
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Abandoned and Vacant Properties



Jefferson County Racial and Ethnic Distribution by Census Tract (2010)

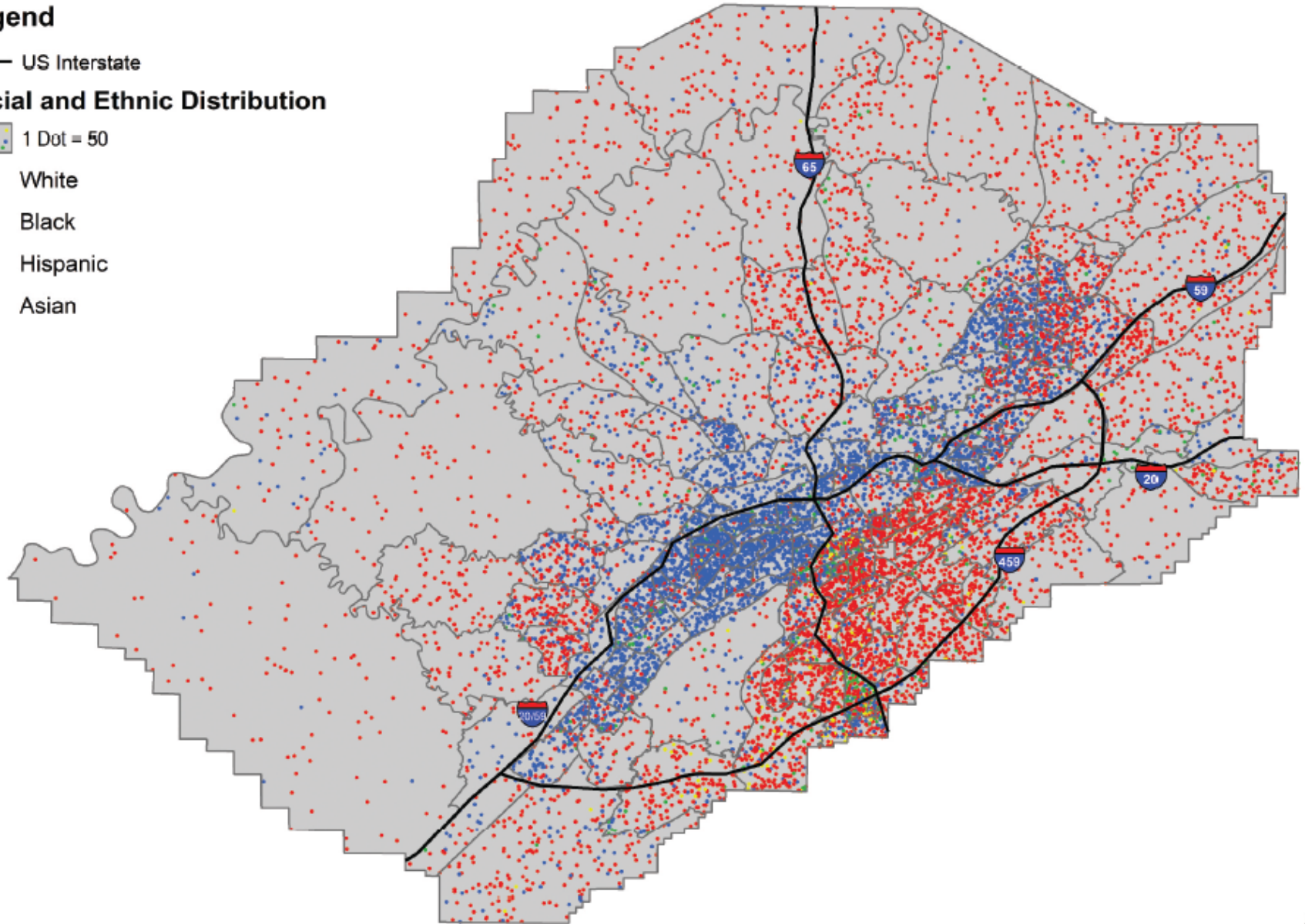
Legend

— US Interstate

Racial and Ethnic Distribution

1 Dot = 50

- White
- Black
- Hispanic
- Asian



0 5 10

20 Miles

Urban Blight. The Modern Miasma

Source: Jefferson County Department of Health

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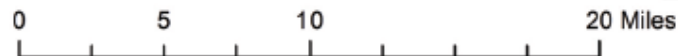
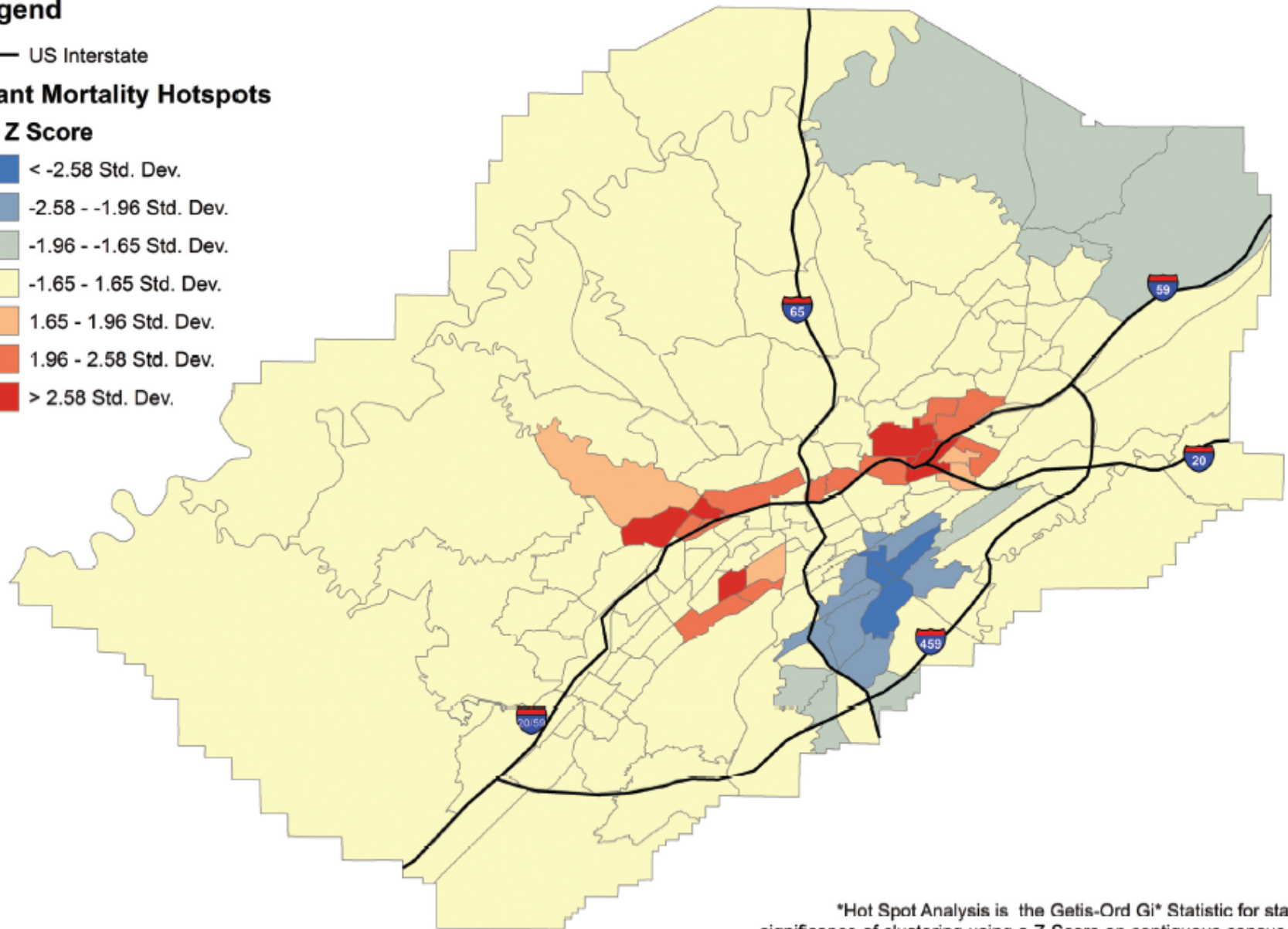
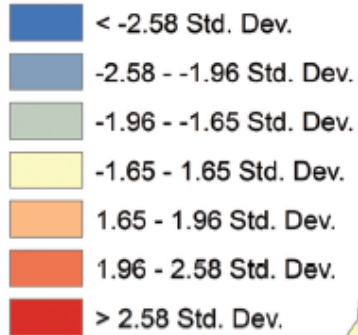
Hot Spot Analysis* Infant Mortality Rate per 1,000 births, Jefferson County (2005-2009)

Legend

— US Interstate

Infant Mortality Hotspots

Gi* Z Score



Hot Spot Analysis is the Getis-Ord Gi Statistic for statistical significance of clustering using a Z-Score on contiguous census tracts.

Source: Jefferson County Vital Events Database
Map Producer: Jefferson County Department of Health

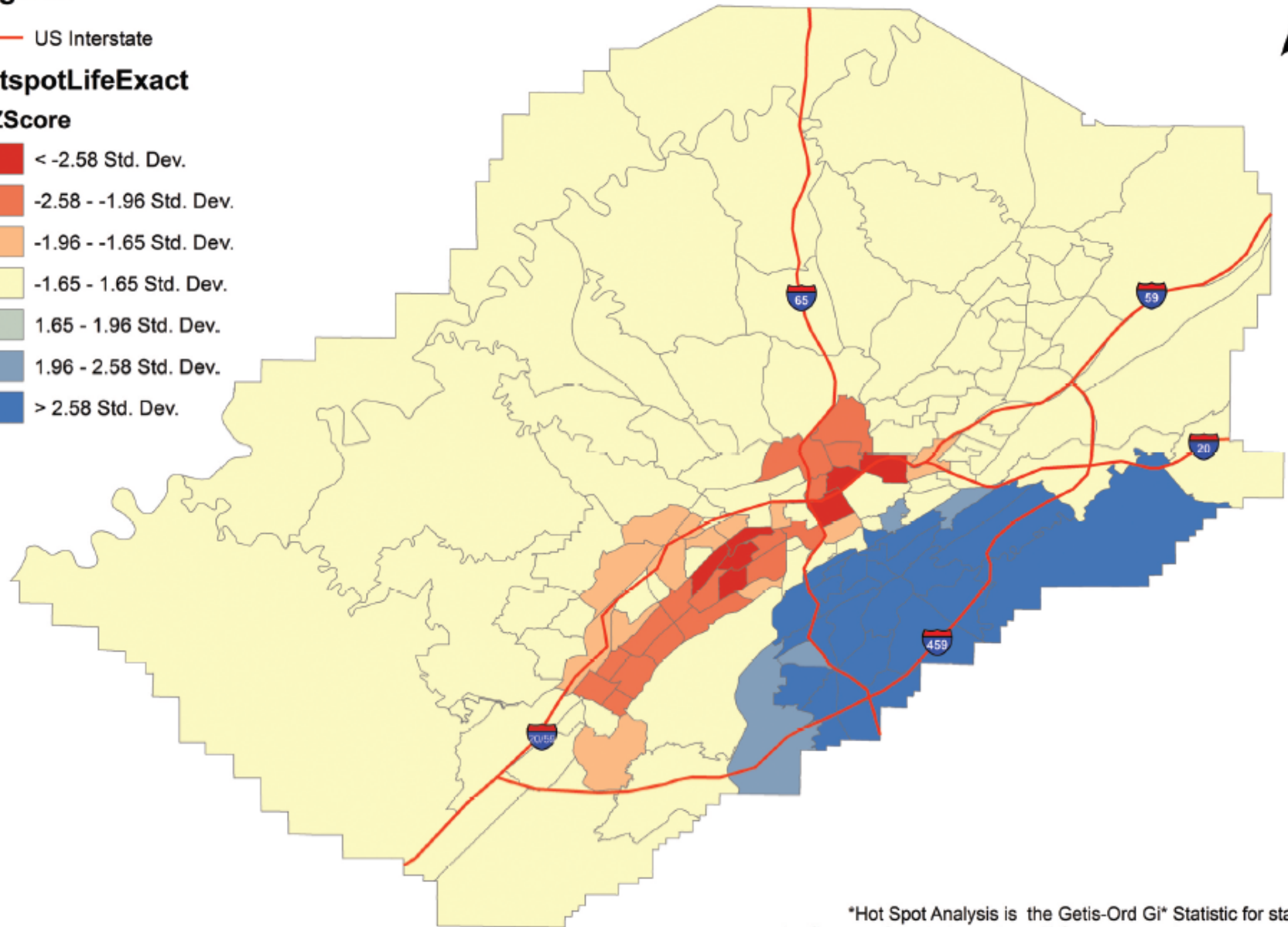
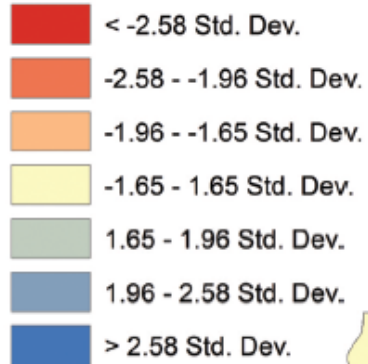
Hot Spot Analysis* Life Expectancy by Census Tract, Jefferson County (2005-2009)

Legend

— US Interstate

HotspotLifeExact

GiZScore

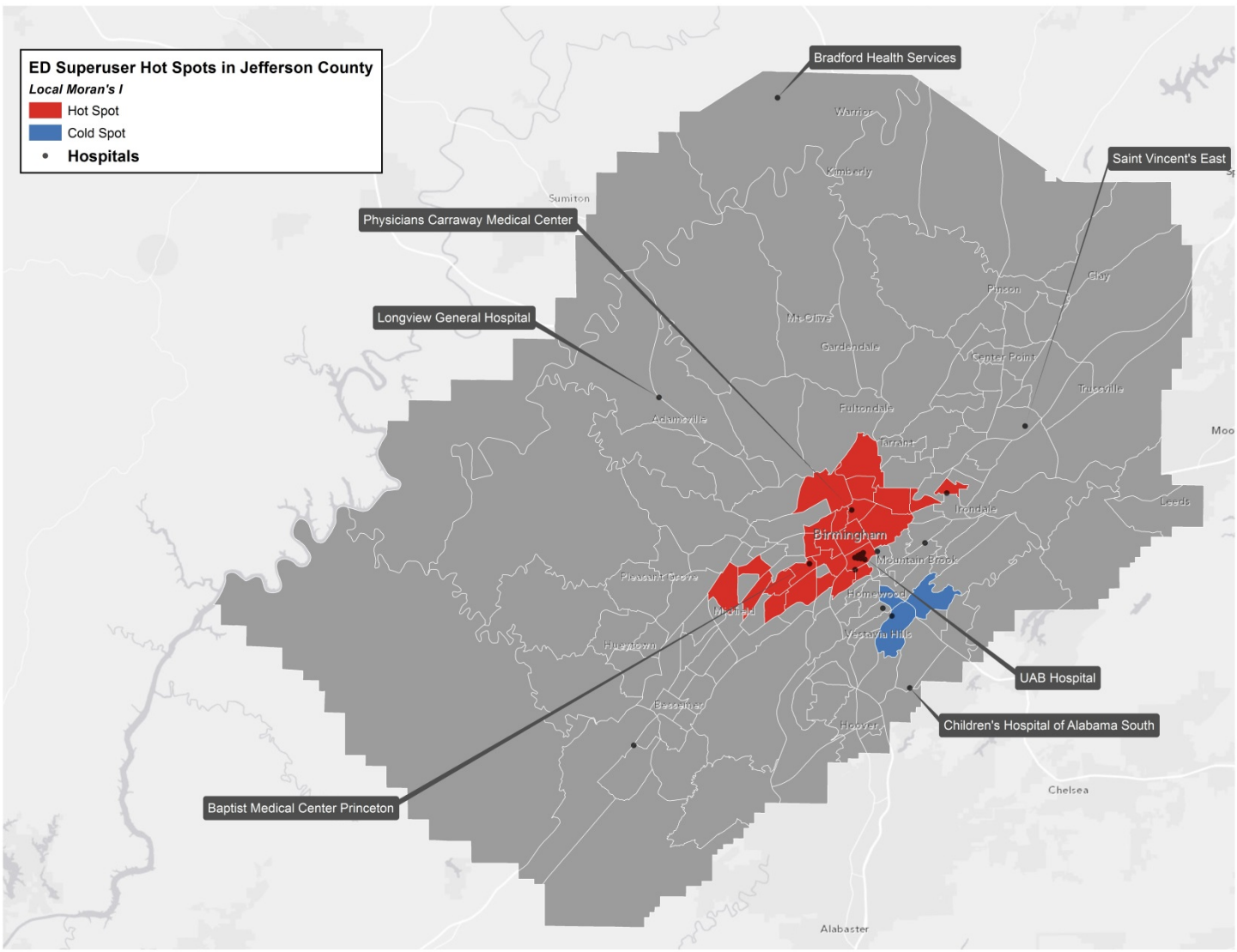


0 5 10 20 Miles

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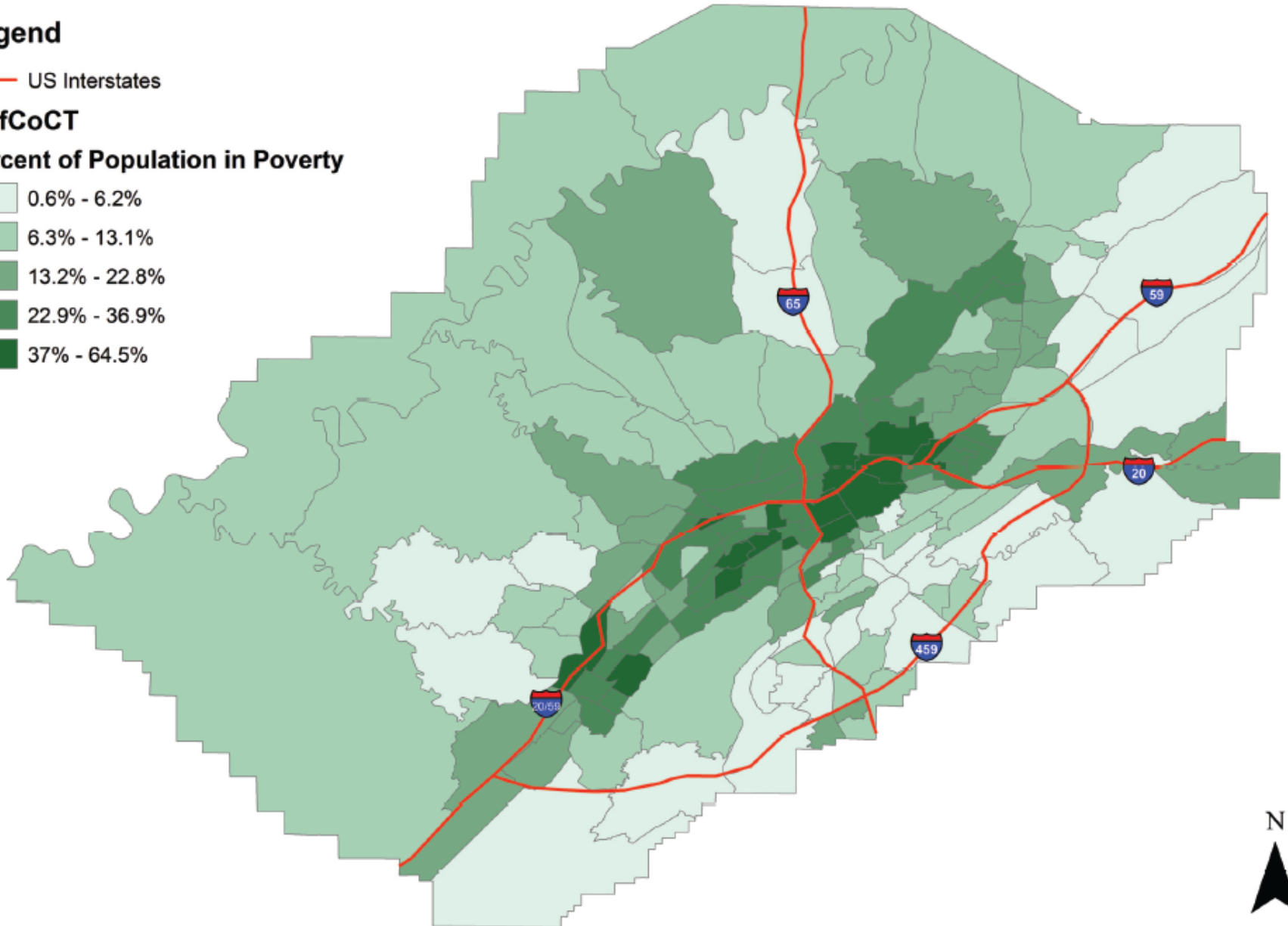
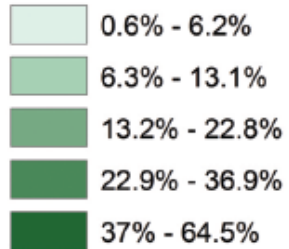
Percent of Population in Poverty, Jefferson County (2010)

Legend

— US Interstates

JeffCoCT

Percent of Population in Poverty



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Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Decennial Census 2010
Map Producer: Jefferson County Department of Health

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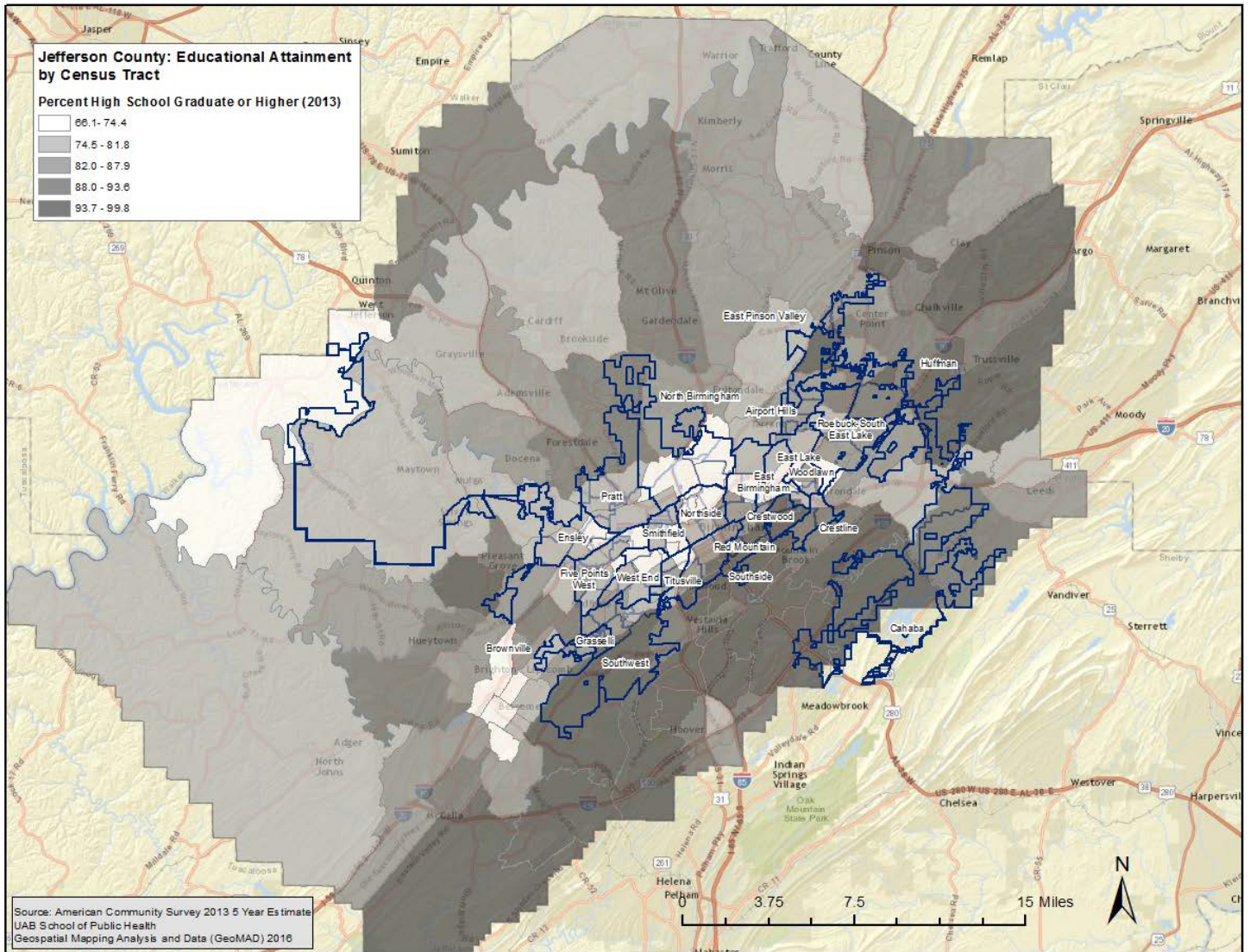
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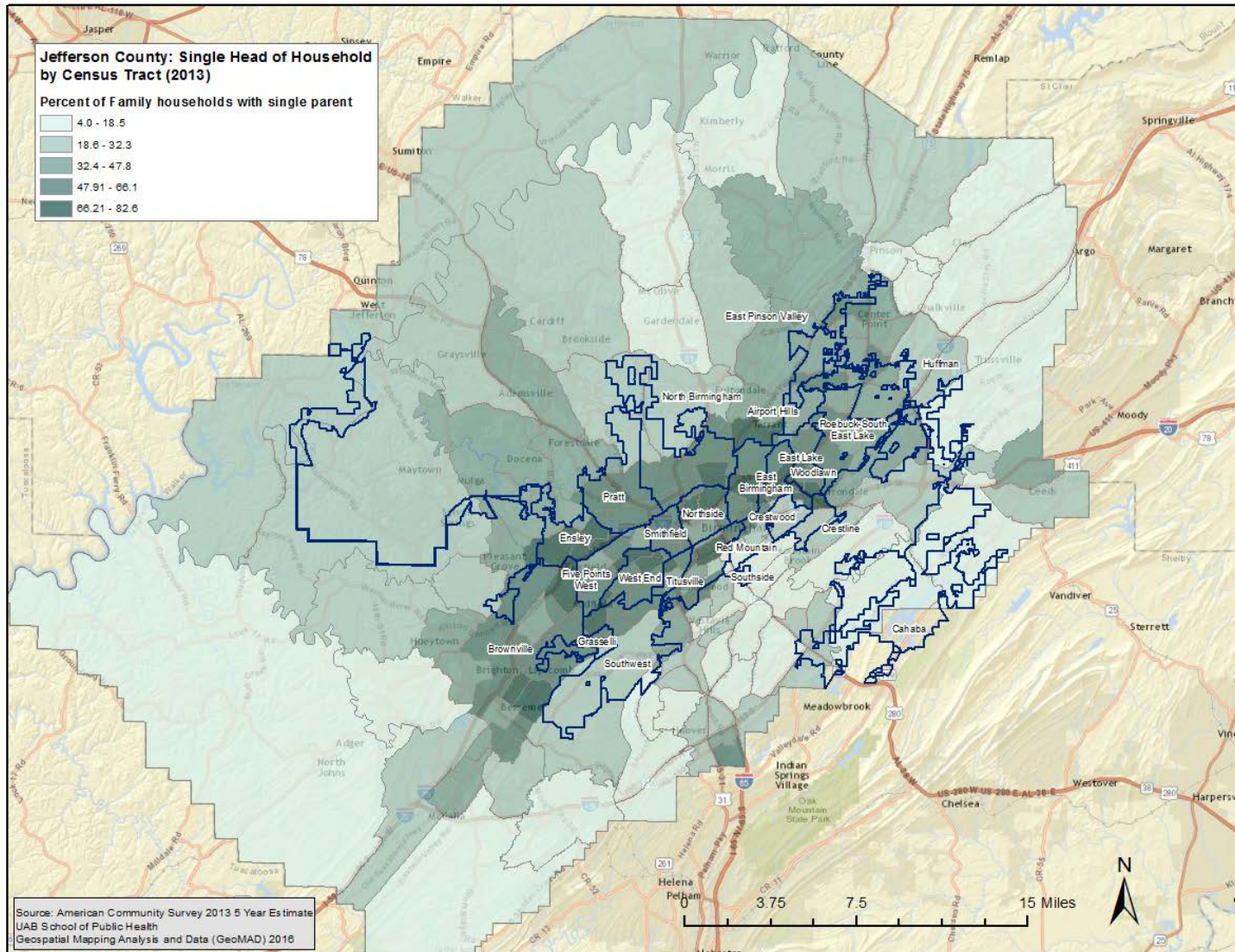
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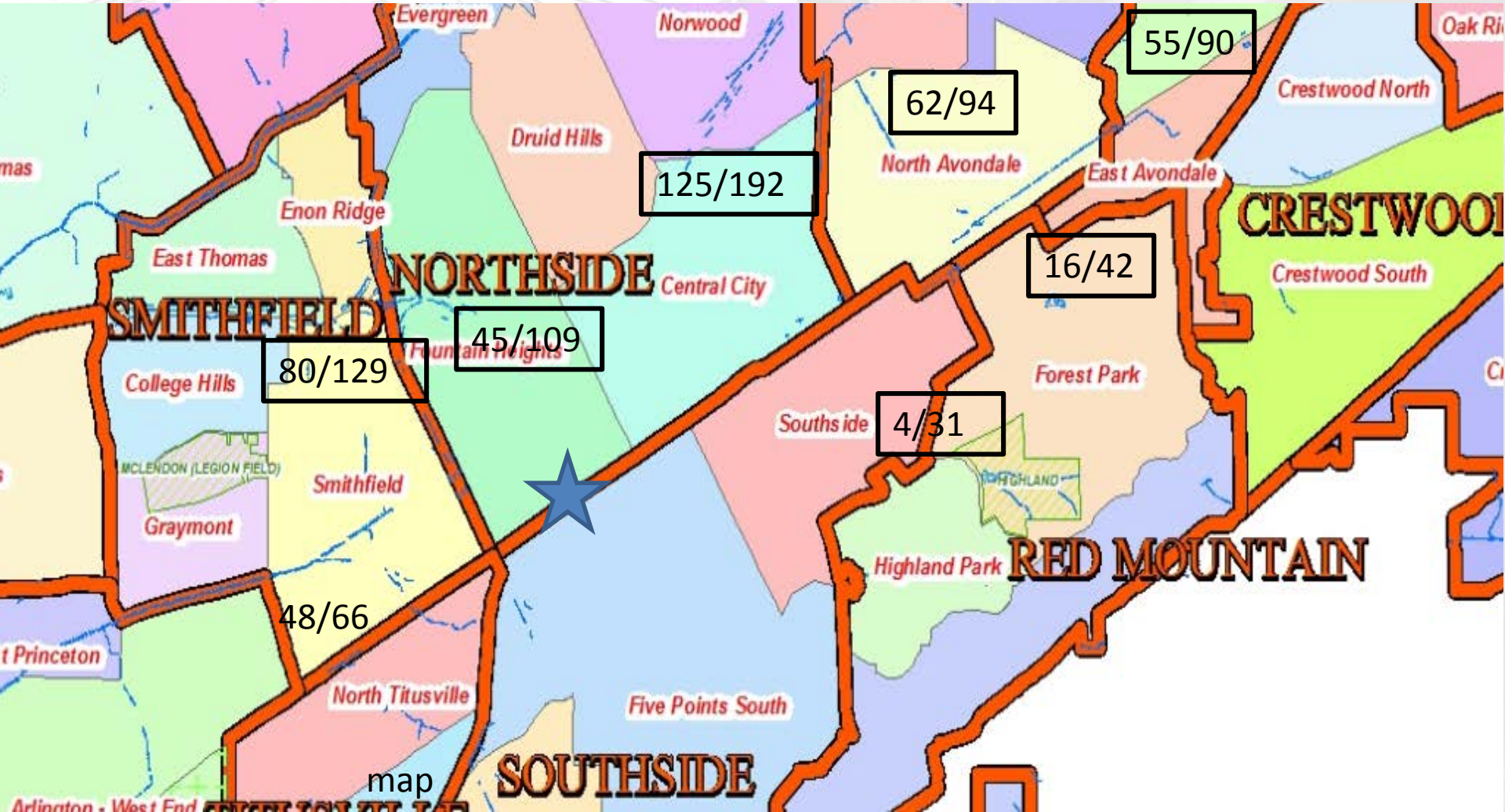
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Personal and Property Crime Rates



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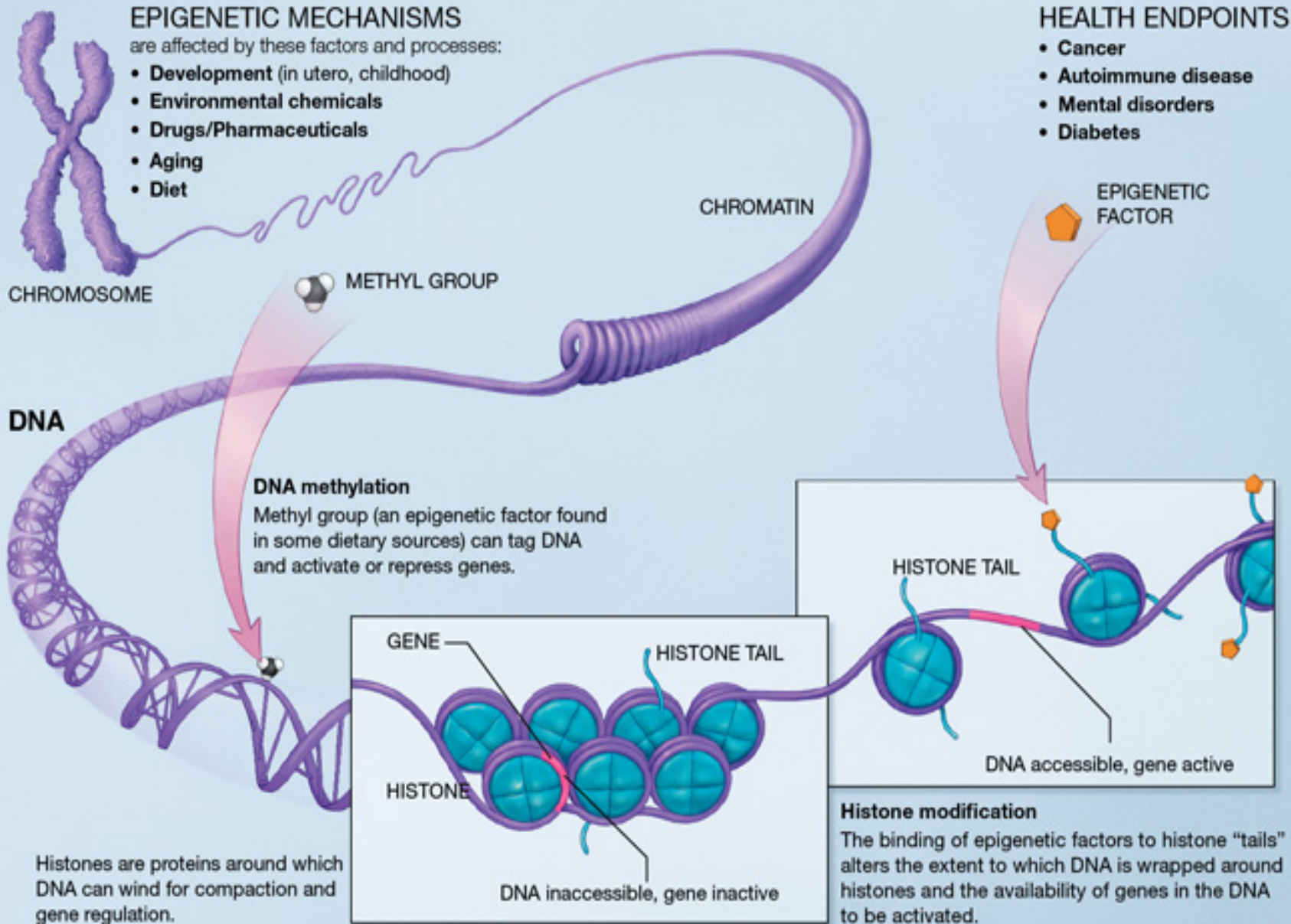
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Genetics and Urban Blight

Considerable epidemiological and experimental evidence in model organisms and, to a lesser extent, in humans show that the consequences of environmental exposures and genetic variants can be transmitted for at least several generations after exposure. Under these conditions, establishing the origins of disease resulting from the action of genetic variants in ancestral generations would be difficult to detect among affected individuals in a traditional genome-wide linkage and association study. In addition to contributing to hypertension risk, heritable epigenetic changes may accumulate across generations and could account for the dramatic increase in hypertension, obesity, and related metabolic conditions.

Fear and Loathing

“To be black in the Baltimore of my youth was to be naked before the elements of the world, before all the guns, fists, knives, crack, rape, and disease. The nakedness is not an error, nor pathology. The nakedness is the correct and intended result of policy, the predictable upshot of people forced for centuries to live under fear.”

Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*

Hopelessness

“The forgetting is habit, is yet another necessary component of the Dream. They have forgotten the scale of theft that enriched them in slavery; the terror that allowed them, for a century, to pilfer the vote; the segregationist policy that gave them their suburbs. They have forgotten, because to remember would tumble them out of the beautiful Dream and force them to live down here with us, down here in the world. I am convinced that the Dreamers, at least the Dreamers of today, would rather live white than live free. ... To awaken them is to reveal that they are an empire of humans and, like all empires of humans, are built on the destruction of the body. It is to stain their nobility, to make them vulnerable, fallible, breakable humans.”

Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*

Stress

“But all our phrasing—race relations, racial chasm, racial justice, racial profiling, white privilege, even white supremacy—serves to obscure that racism is a visceral experience, that it dislodges brains, blocks airways, rips muscle, extracts organs, cracks bones, breaks teeth. You must never look away from this. You must always remember that the sociology, the history, the economics, the graphs, the charts, the regressions all land, with great violence, upon the body.”

Ta-Nehisi Coates. *Between the World and Me*

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