Is Gentrification Occurring in Greenville?
An Analysis of Home Values and Neighborhood Race Composition

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Abstract

The purpose of this project was to analyze values from sold homes and population demographics of neighborhoods as indicators of gentrification in the City of Greenville and surrounding areas within Greenville County. The home value analysis included data from 2009 to 2014 and resulted in seven maps: one map shows the density of sold homes, indicating where the highest amount of selling is occurring. The remaining six maps analyze the distribution of values and the clustering of significant values for median income by block, average list price for sold home by block, and average seller monetary contribution (renovations to home) for sold home by block. A population map shows the number of individuals in each census block using data from the 2009-2013 5 year American Community Survey by census block. This map is not normalized for block area because the population density of all of the blocks is considerably low (less than 5 percent). The racial composition analysis shows current population dot density of Black, Hispanic, and White populations using data from the 2009-2013 5 year American Community Survey by census block group.

The research question was: Is gentrification occurring in Greenville? The research objective was to find a correlation between home value and racial composition of neighborhoods.

Introduction

Gentrification can be defined as displacement of longtime residents due to revitalization driving up the cost of living and therefore making it financially untenable for longtime renters to stay in their homes. Although many factors contribute to gentrification, race and changes in racial composition of neighborhoods have been well documented as a major factor for gentrification in American cities such as New Orleans and Oakland. In these cases, the cost of living goes up when young white professionals move in to traditionally minority neighborhoods because of cheaper housing prices, renovate, and increase individual home value. Gentrification on a noticeable scale occurs when many young professionals move in to the neighborhood and begin supplanting the original residents. Alternatively, gentrification can occur with broader revitalization projects, such as those implemented by city planning officials or local governments.

Greenville, South Carolina is a good case study for gentrification because it is a rapidly expanding city undergoing many revitalization projects in its downtown area. Additionally, anecdotal evidence of gentrification in West Greenville appear as early as 2010 in the form of articles from The Greenville News and the agency's extended project #UnseenGreenville as well as in city planning documents indicating homeowner associations' concerns.

Methods
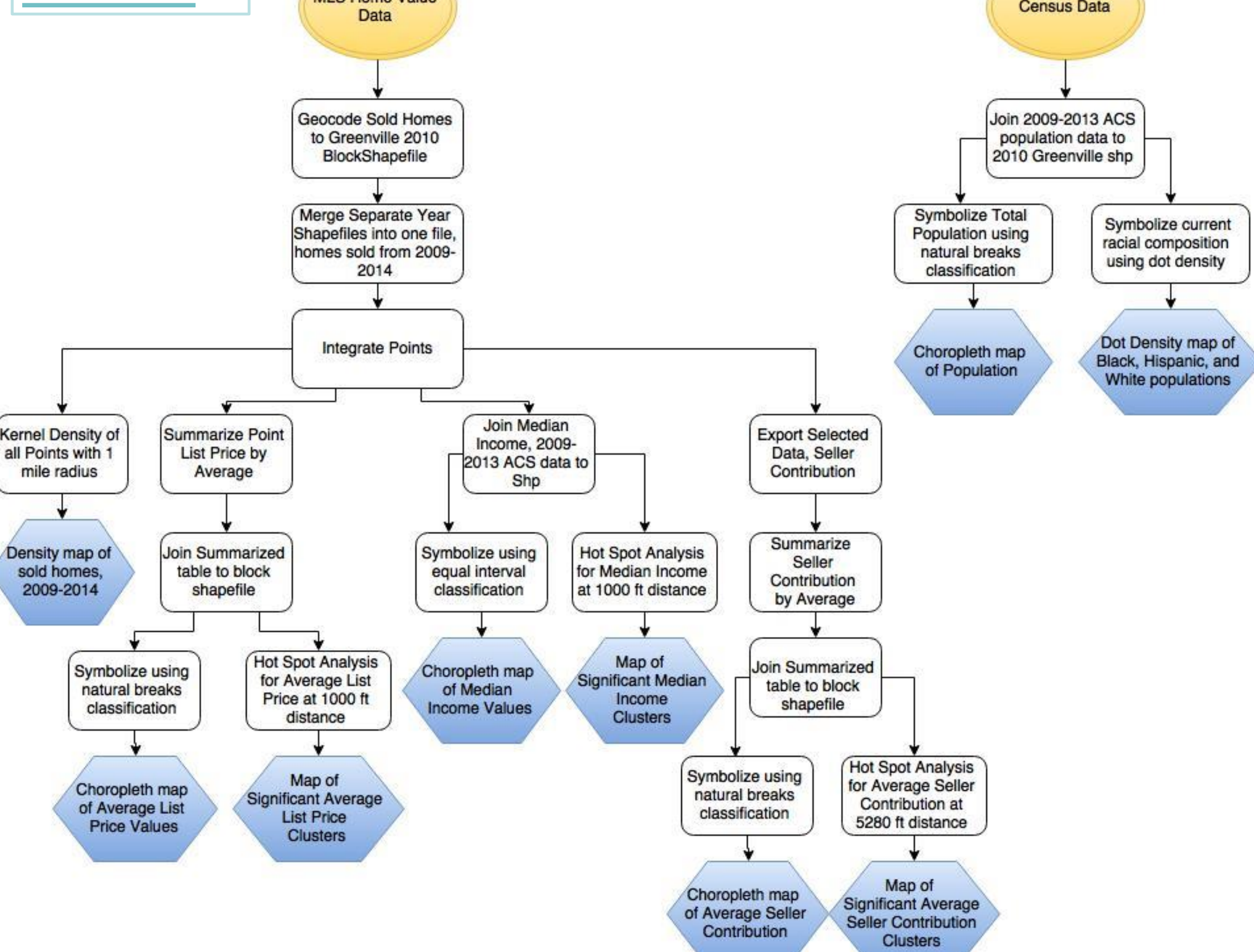
Conclusion

In conclusion, there is a correlation between median income, list price, and race in Greenville, although it does not necessarily demonstrate gentrification. Areas that are potentially at risk of gentrification include areas outside the city limits as Greenville expands and neighborhoods in the central portion within the current city limits.

Results
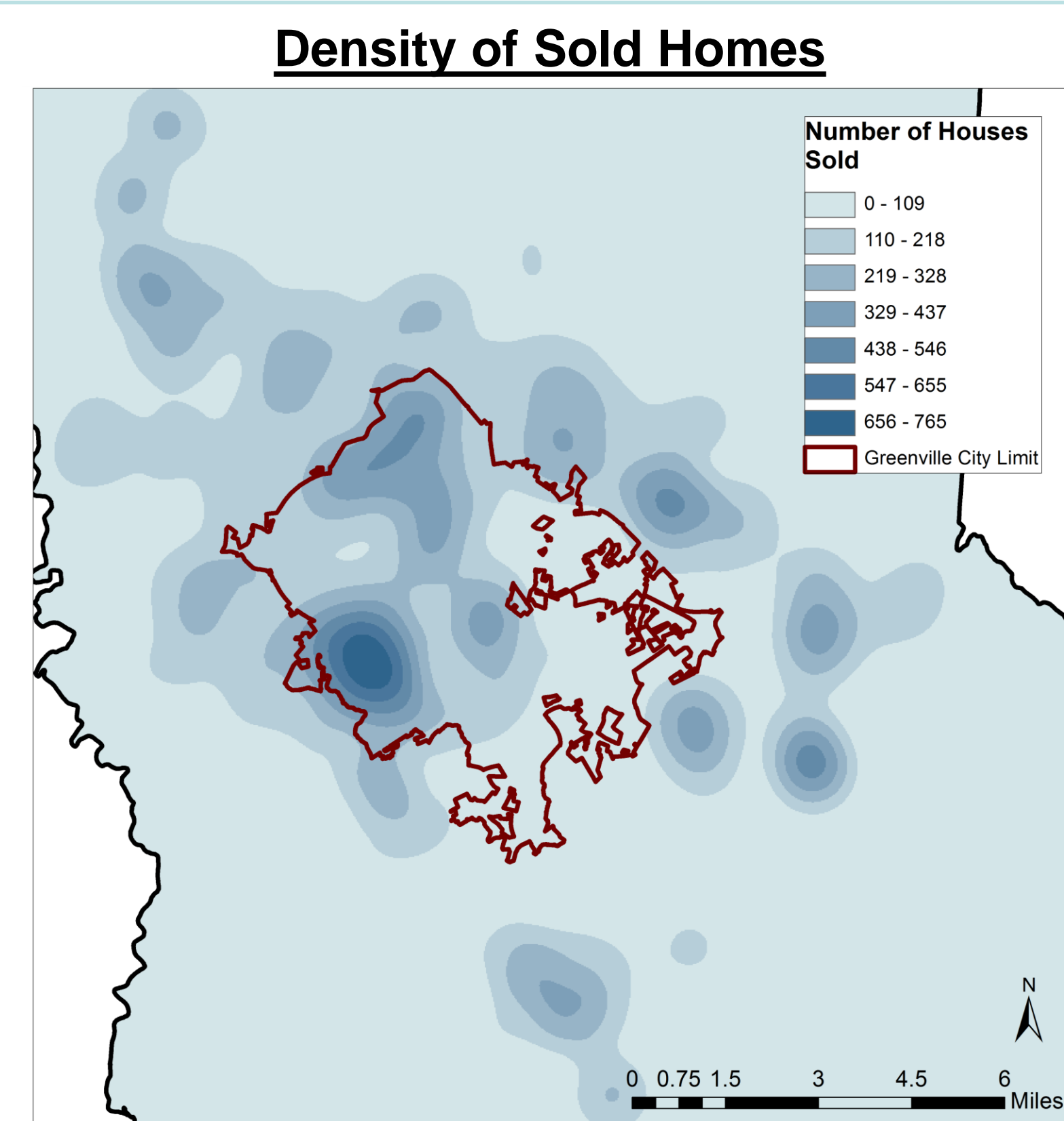
Population and Demographics

Density of Sold Homes
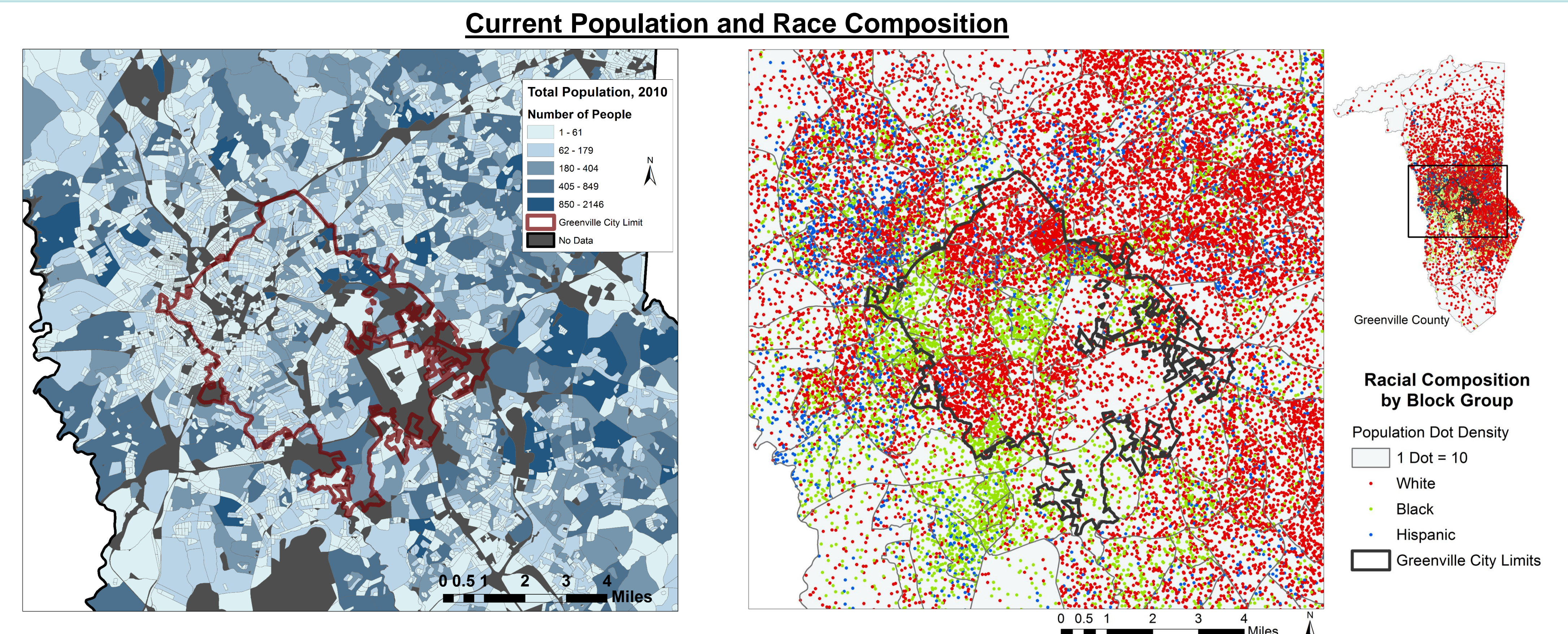
Current Population and Race Composition

Fig.1-3: Density of Sold Homes from 2009-2014; Population by Block, from 2009-2013 ACS data; and Racial Composition of Black (Green), Hispanic (Blue), and White (Red) Populations by dot density where one dot=10 individuals, from the 2009-2013 ACS data. The highest density of sold homes are within the city limits in small census blocks with predominantly white populations.

Home Value and Median Income
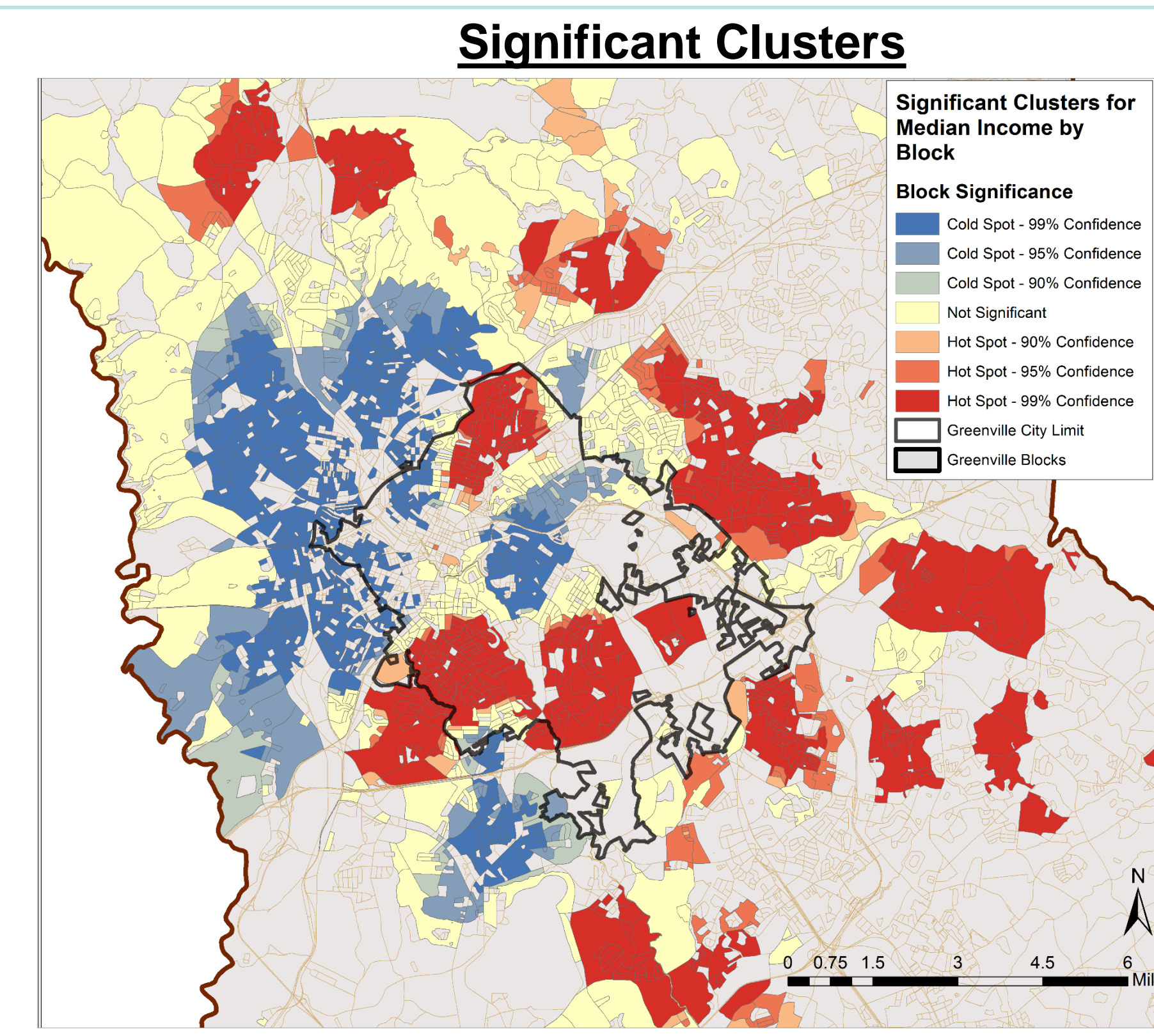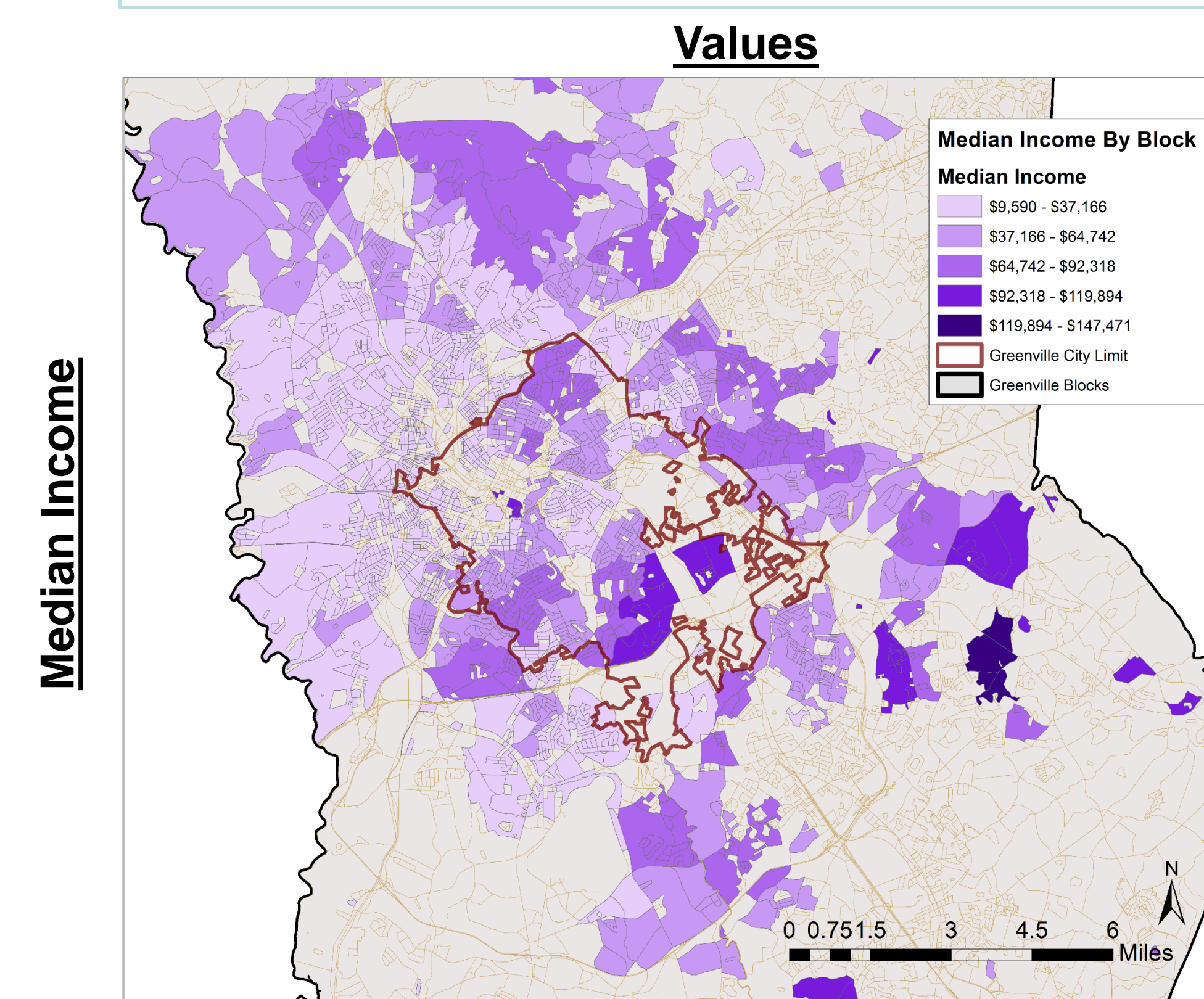
Values
Significant Clusters

Fig. 4-5: Median Income. There are statistically significant neighborhoods showing where high and low median income blocks cluster. Immediately west of the city limits and in the very center have lower median income, whereas areas in the north and south central city and east of the city limits have high median income. The Hot Spot clustering analysis was set at a distance of 1000 feet between neighbors.
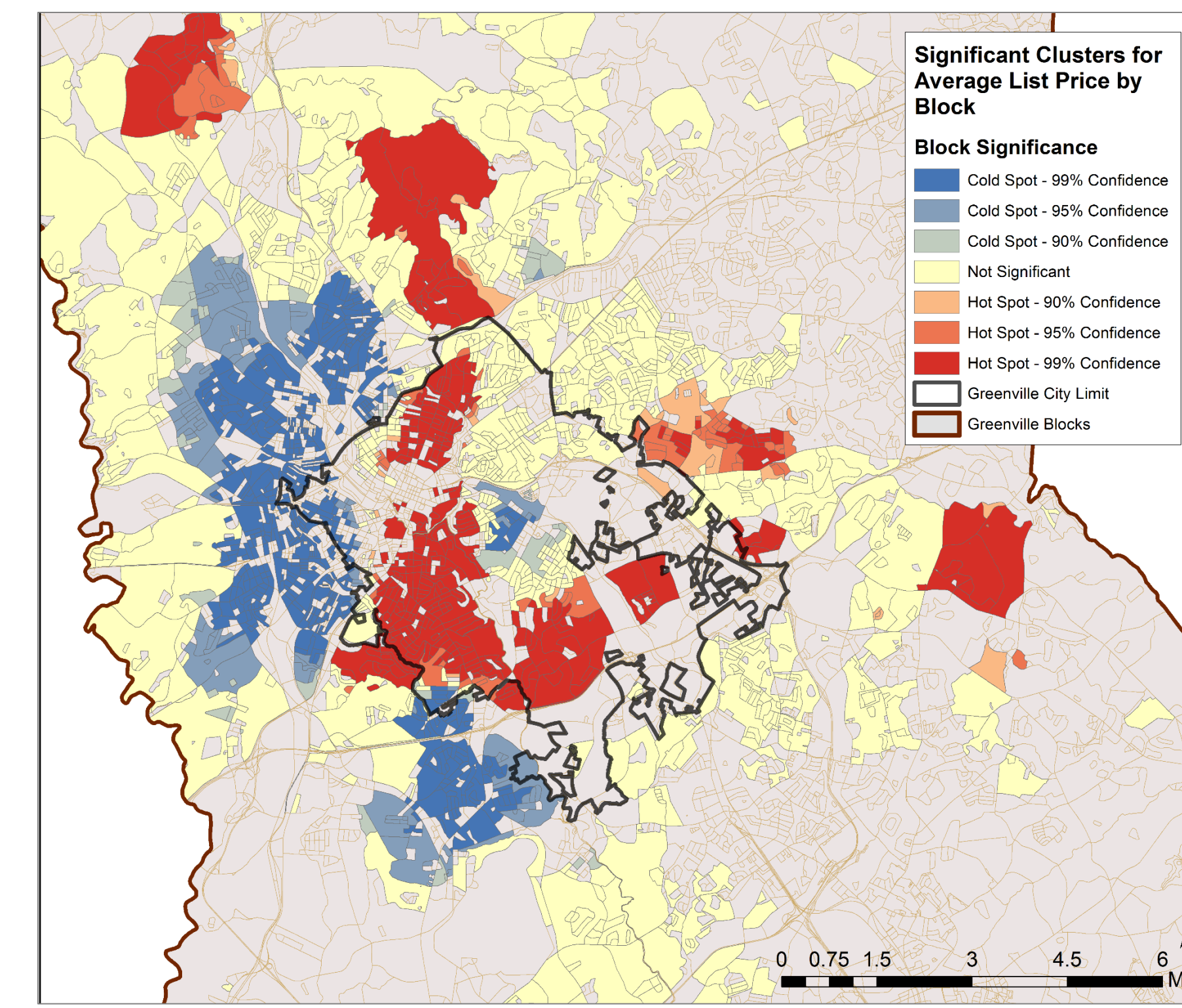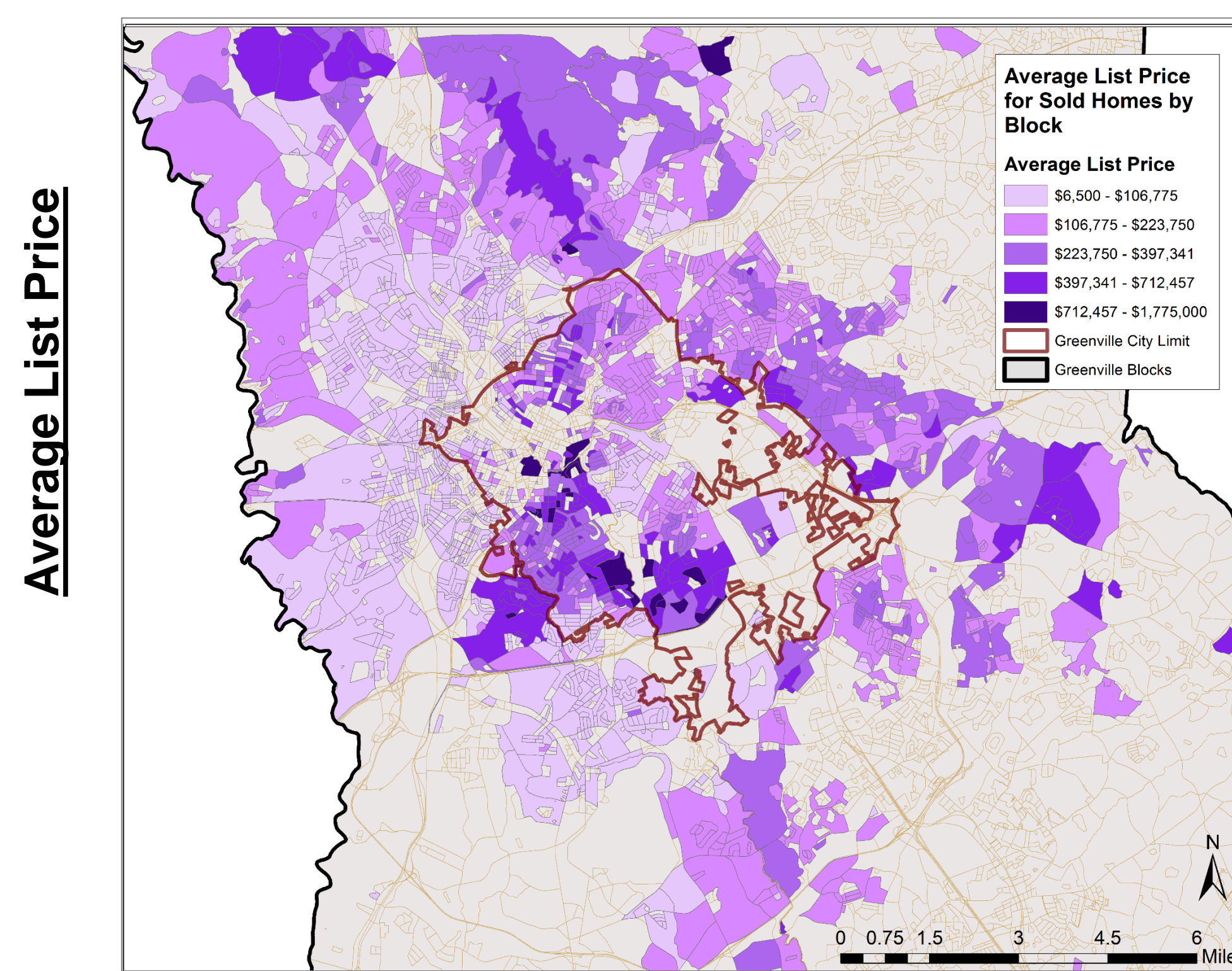
Fig. 6-7: Average List Price. The average price for which homes were sold in the blocks in the south of the city and north and east of the city limits are statistically high. Areas immediately west and south of the city limits are low. The Hot Spot clustering analysis was set at a distance of 1000 feet between neighbors.
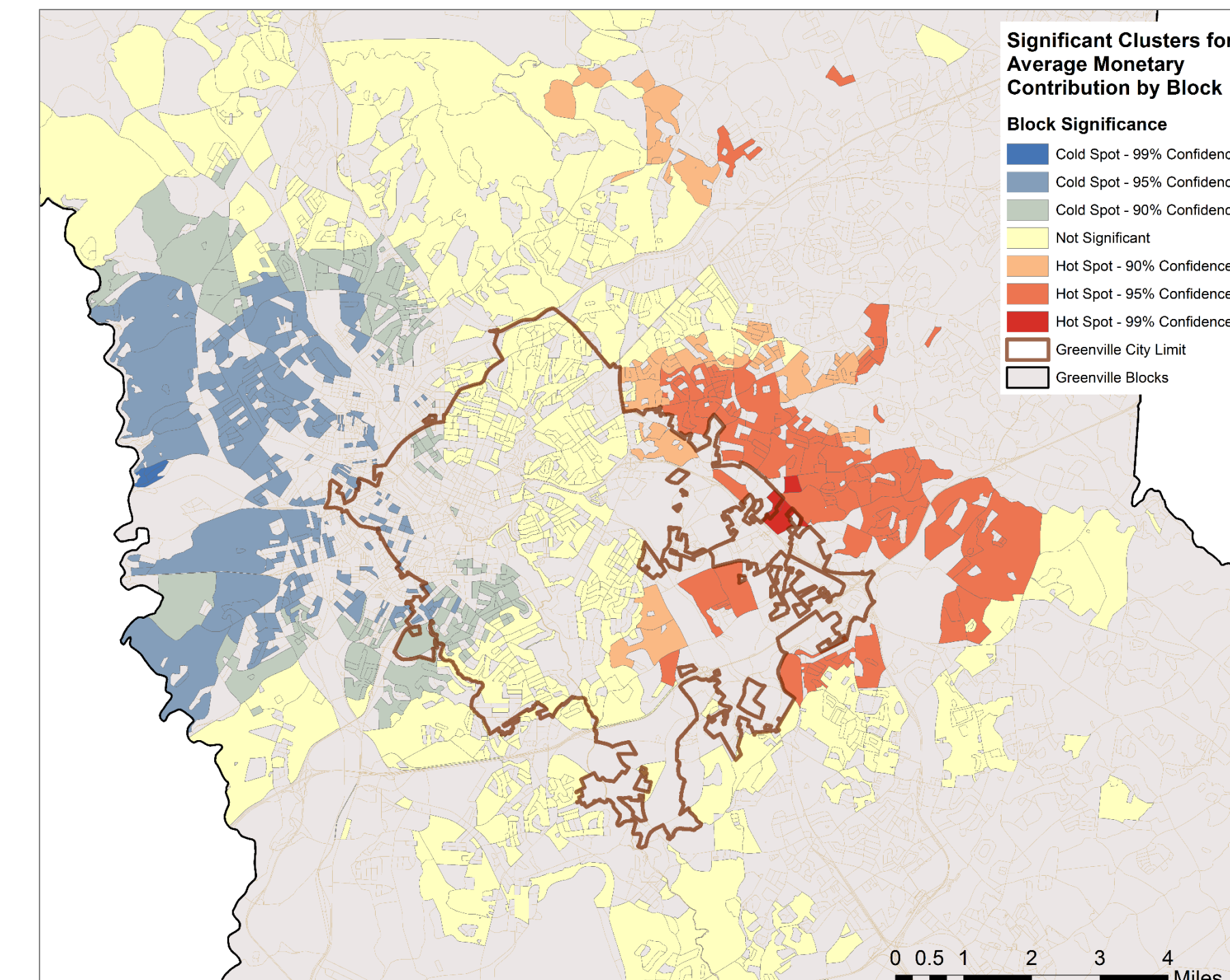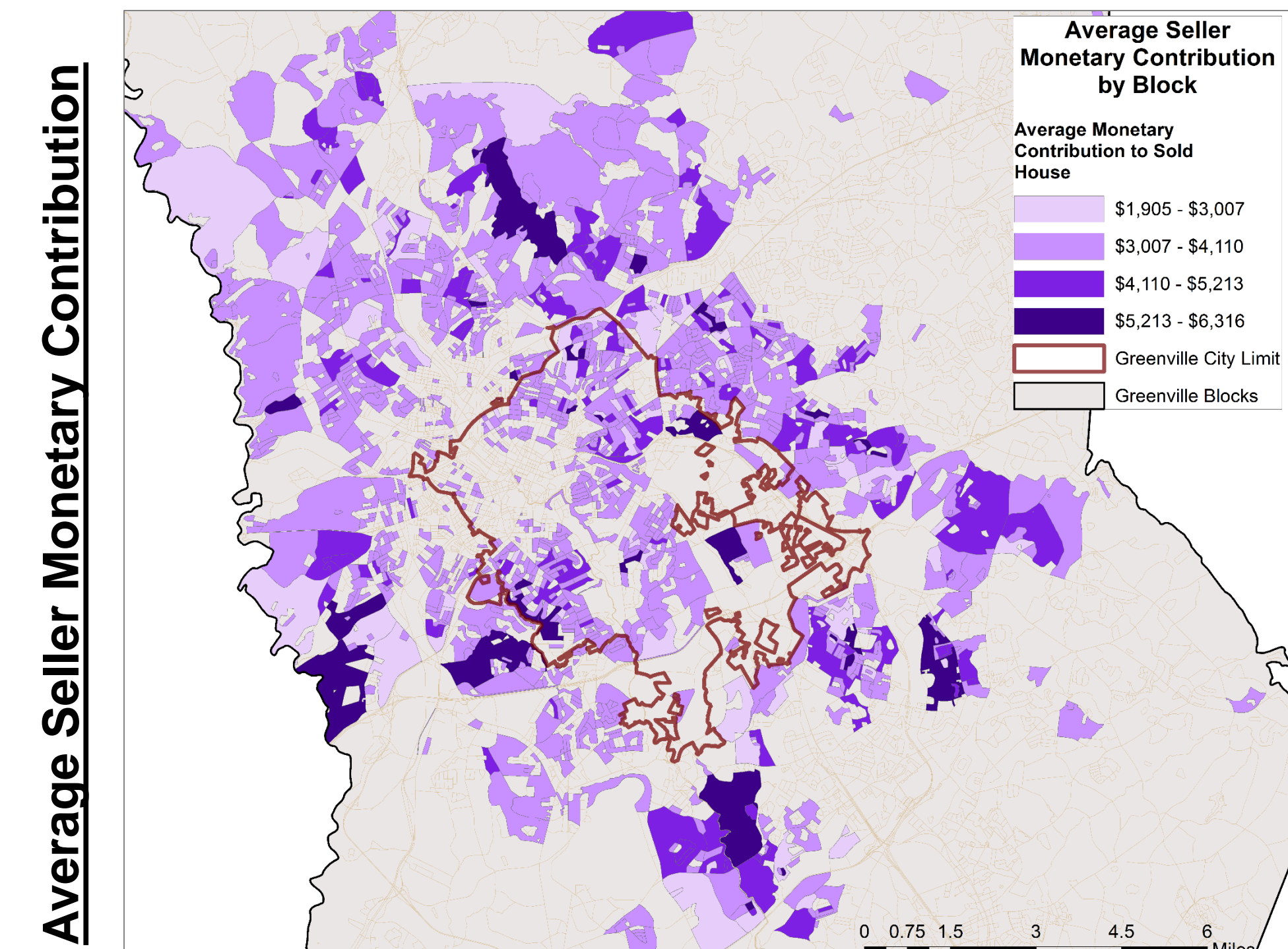
Fig. 8-9: Average Seller Contribution to Home Value. The average additional monetary resources contributed by sellers to their home value on the real estate market. There is not as clear of a clustering pattern here, but some blocks show large contributions surrounded by blocks with lower contributions. The Hot Spot clustering analysis was set at a distance of 5280 feet between neighbors.

References and Data Sources

- *The Greenville News*, "#UnseenGreenville" investigative series
- Connections for Sustainability, Greenville West Side Comprehensive Plan
- Jackson, J., Forest, B., & Sengupta, R. (2008). Agent-Based Simulation of Urban Residential Dynamics and Land Rent Change in a Gentrifying Area of Boston. *Transactions in GIS, 12*(4), 475-491.
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- Home Value Data: MLS Data from 2009 to 2014, Dr. Peterson in Furman Economics Department
- Racial Composition Data: NHGIS census ACS and decennial long form