

**Census in Brief**

**The census: A tool for  
planning at the local level**

**Population and dwelling counts,  
2011 Census**



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### The census: A tool for planning at the local level

Census results are an important tool for a wide array of users for a variety of reasons. In particular, they are an essential source of information for developing municipal planning strategies at the local level.

Municipal planners can use census information on population counts, rates of growth and density to create a broad profile of their entire municipality. The census also provides the same indicators at the local level within individual municipalities.

One of the tools planners have is the 'census tract.' Census tracts are geographic areas that usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000. Census data on this smaller level of geography are available for all 33 census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and 15 census agglomerations (CAs) in Canada with a core population of 50,000 or more. (See Box 1 for definitions of the geographic terms used in this document.)

Using census data, municipal planners can analyze which local areas within their municipality have experienced the fastest population growth, and which local areas have in fact declined in population, thereby allowing for service delivery to be adjusted according to population changes. This information helps decision-makers to meet the various challenges of managing municipalities, including building infrastructure and housing, as well as improving transportation links, public services and the environment.

#### Box 1 Definitions

**Census tracts (CTs)** are small, relatively stable geographic areas that usually have a population between 2,500 and 8,000 persons. They are located in **census metropolitan areas (CMAs)** and in **census agglomerations (CAs)** with a core population of 50,000 or more.

A **census metropolitan area (CMA) or census agglomeration (CA)** is an area consisting of one or more neighbouring municipalities situated around a core. A census metropolitan area must have a total population of at least 100,000 of which 50,000 or more live in the core. A census agglomeration must have a core population of at least 10,000.

A **census subdivision (CSD)** is an area that is a municipality or an area that is deemed to be equivalent to a municipality for statistical reporting purposes (e.g., as an Indian reserve or an unorganized territory). Municipal status is defined by laws in effect in each province and territory in Canada.

The central municipality (**census subdivision**) of a CMA or CA is the one that tends to lend its name to the CMA and the CA. For example in the Montréal census metropolitan area, the central municipality is the City of Montréal. All other municipalities within the boundaries of the CMA or CA are considered peripheral to the central municipality.

Maps showing increases or decreases in the rate of population growth at the census tract level can be used to show urban spread in Canada's major census metropolitan areas (CMAs) and how it has evolved over time. (See maps at the end of this document.)

In the CMA of both Calgary and Edmonton, for example, almost all census tracts located close to the boundary of the central municipality (City of Calgary and City of Edmonton) experienced high rates of population growth between 2006 and 2011. In contrast, many census tracts located in the centre of the central municipality had low or negative growth between 2006 and 2011.

### **Toronto CMA**

The phenomenon of urban spread was also apparent in Canada's three largest CMAs. In the Toronto CMA, population growth was concentrated in the census tracts of the northern parts of municipalities adjacent to the City of Toronto, for example in Ajax, Markham, Richmond Hill, Vaughan and Brampton, as well as in parts of Milton.

Nevertheless, some census tracts within the City of Toronto, experienced strong population growth between 2006 and 2011. This was particularly the case for some downtown Toronto census tracts, especially those along the shore of Lake Ontario.

Maps from the 2006 and 2011 censuses can be used to show shifts over time in population growth within a census metropolitan area, from one municipality to another, or from one local area (census tract) to another. For example, population growth within the Toronto CMA as shown in the 2006 map was often high in many census tracts of municipalities located most northerly from the central municipality (City of Toronto), specifically in Georgina, Newmarket, King and New Tecumseh. The 2011 Census map shows a slightly different picture as the rate of population growth decreased in many of these areas, while the rate of population growth remained high in municipalities directly surrounding the central municipality such as Markham and Richmond Hill.

### **Montréal CMA**

Urban spread in the Montréal CMA was distinguished by the fact that the central municipality, the City of Montréal, is located on an island. In general, the census tracts of the municipalities on the South Shore and the North Shore grew more rapidly than those in the central municipality.

Nevertheless, some census tracts in the City of Montréal had strong growth between 2006 and 2011. This was the case in the Ville-Marie, Vieux-Port and Île-des-Soeurs areas, as well as in some census tracts in the western portion of the City of Montréal, including the Ville-Saint-Laurent area.

Maps from the 2006 Census showed that many census tracts along the St. Lawrence River on the South Shore and along the Rivière-des-Mille-Îles on the North Shore had experienced a high rate of population growth between 2001 and 2006. Maps from the 2011 Census, on the other hand, show that population growth slowed in many of these census tracts. This indicates that population growth is becoming more concentrated in the municipalities outside the Montréal and Jésus (City of Laval) islands and located closest to the edge of the CMA.

### **Vancouver CMA**

In the Vancouver CMA, most census tracts in the City of Vancouver experienced low or negative population growth between 2006 and 2011. The few census tracts with rapid population growth were located near the centre of the City of Vancouver in the downtown, Mount Pleasant and Fairview areas.

Outside of the City of Vancouver, most census tracts in the surrounding municipalities of Coquitlam, Maple Ridge and Surrey posted strong population growth between 2006 and 2011.

For data at a local level refer to the *Census Profile*, Catalogue no. 98-316-X, and *Highlight Tables*, Catalogue no. 98-310-X2011002.

### Note to reader

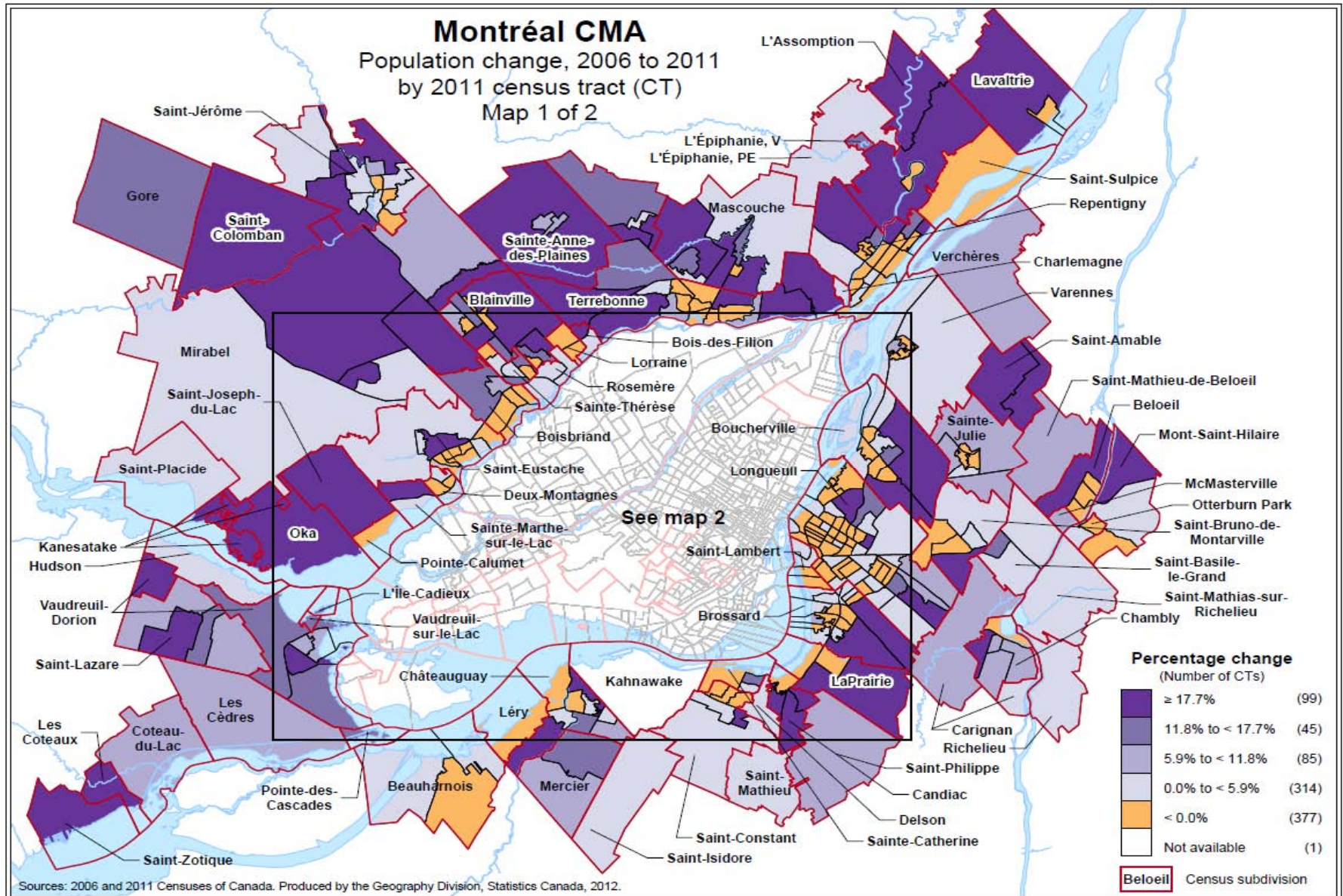
To obtain a copy of all the thematic maps accompanying this document, refer to the following link:  
<http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/as-sa/98-310-x/98-310-x2011001-eng.cfm>.

### Acknowledgments

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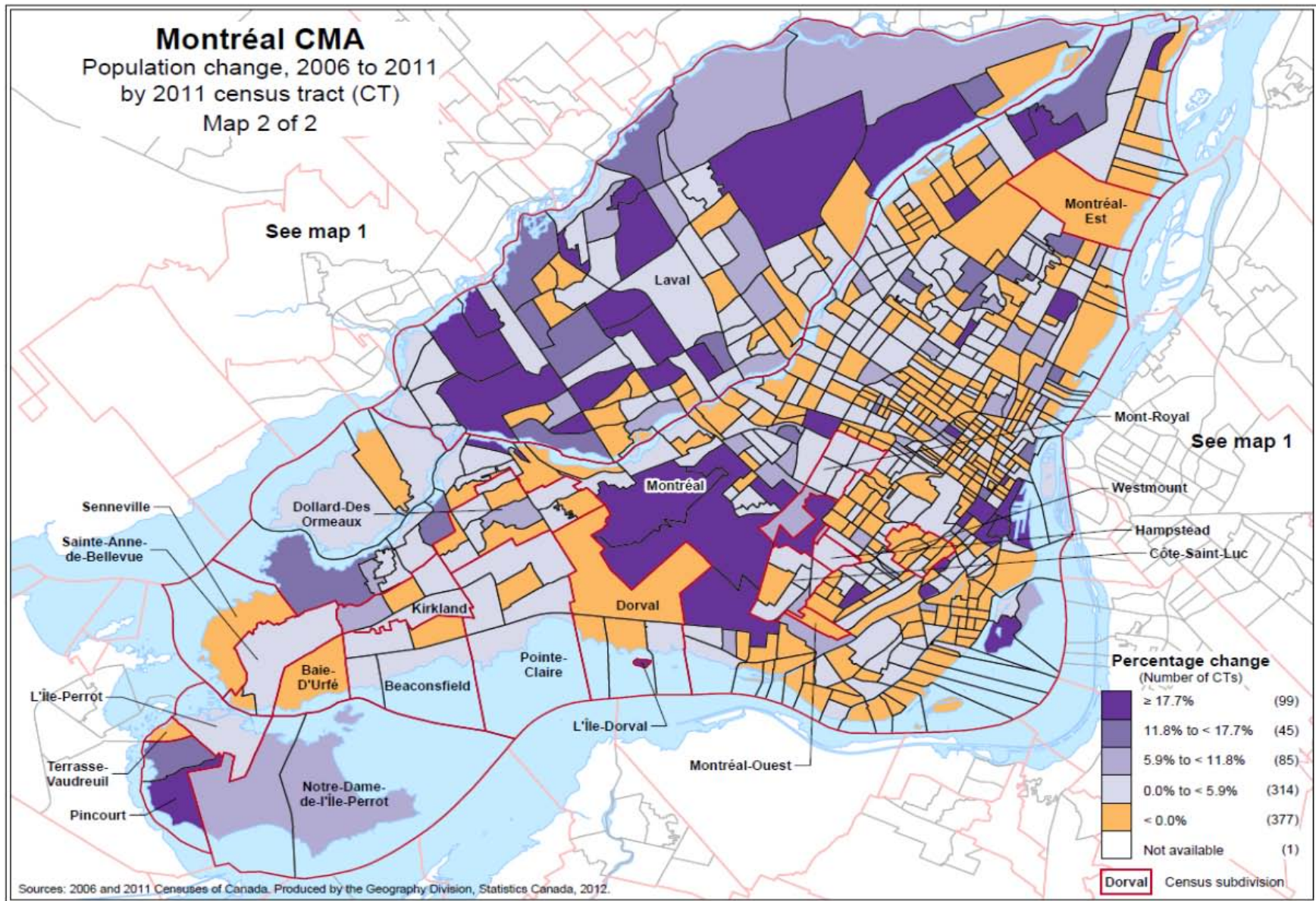


Map 1



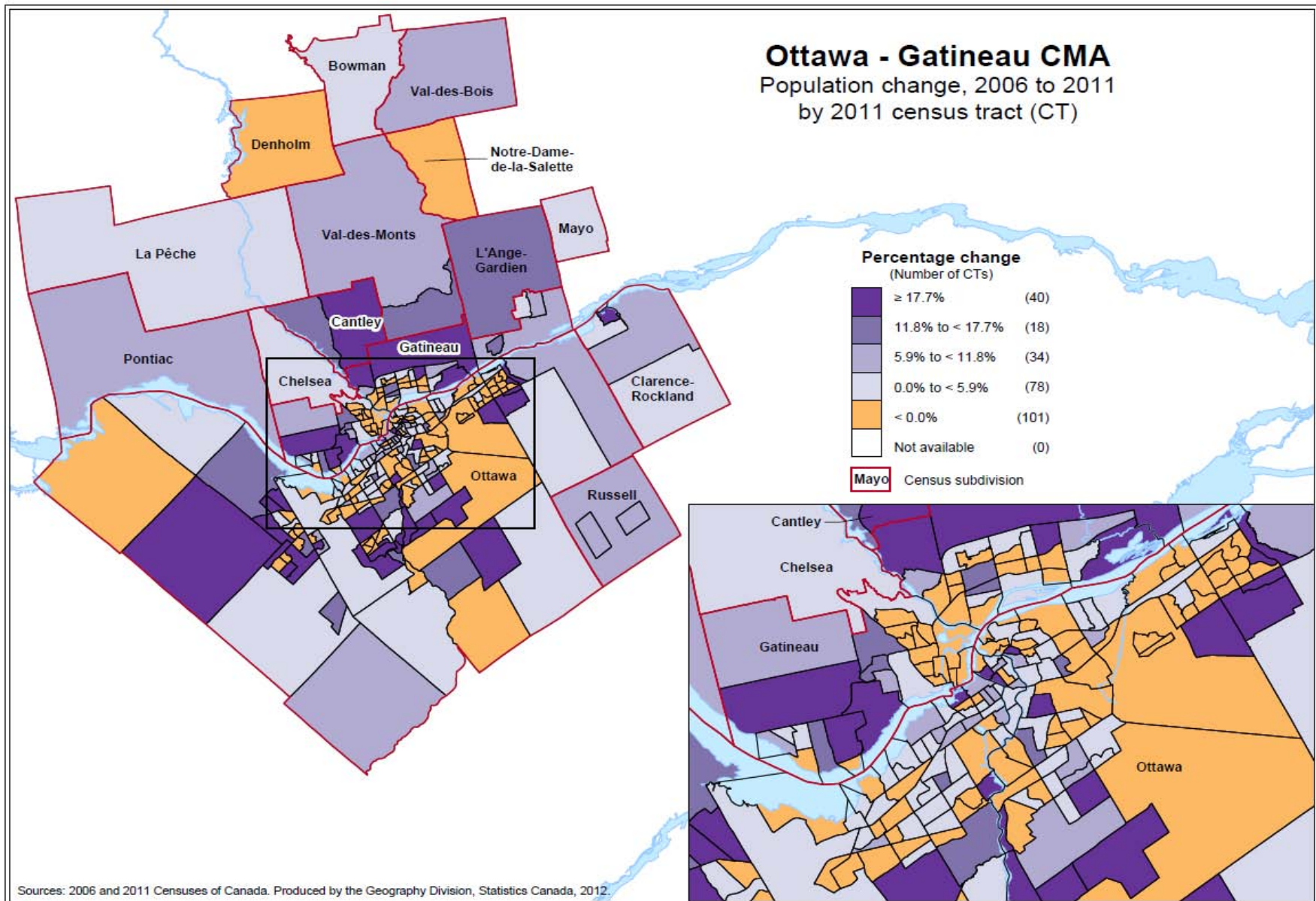


# Map 2

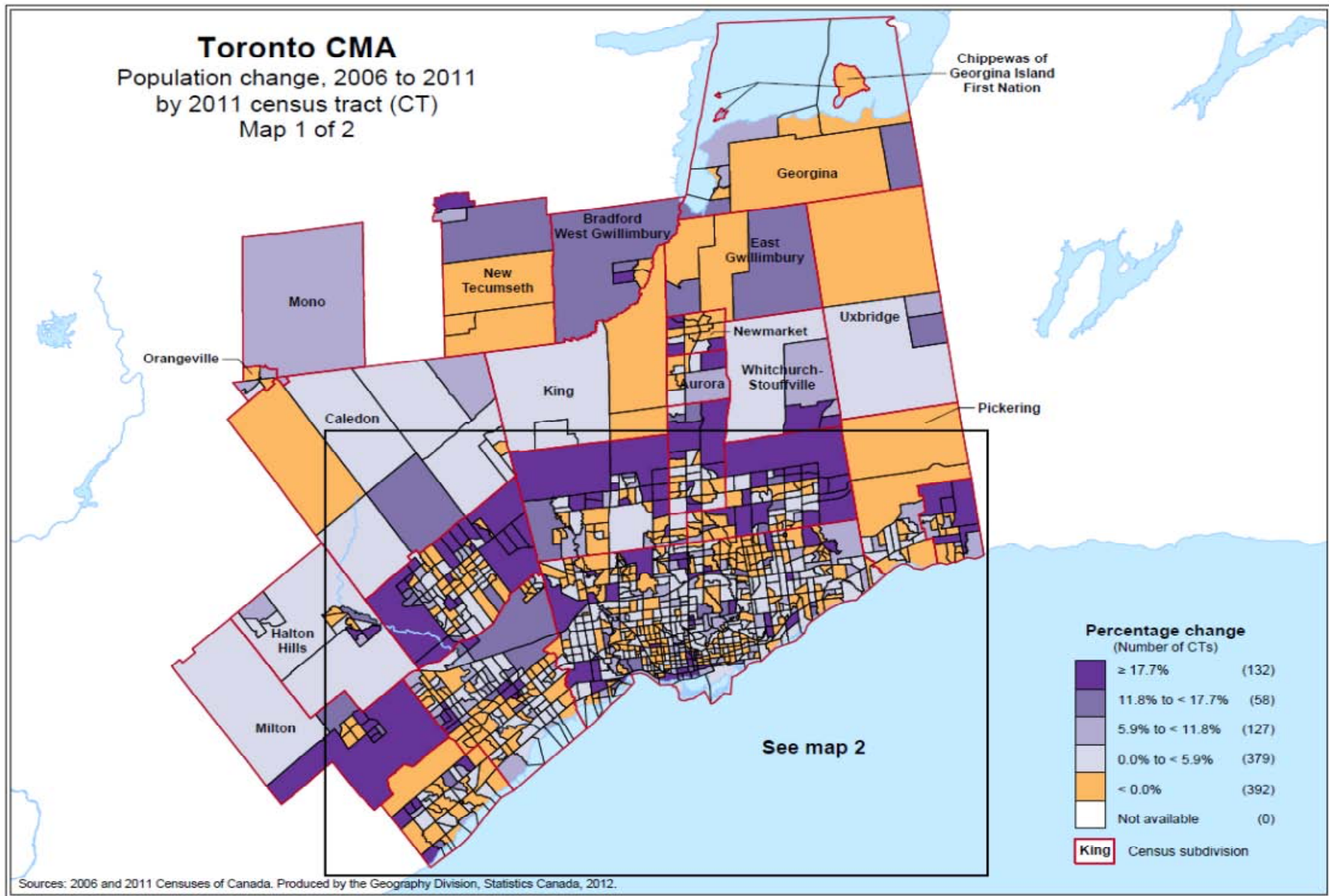




Map 3

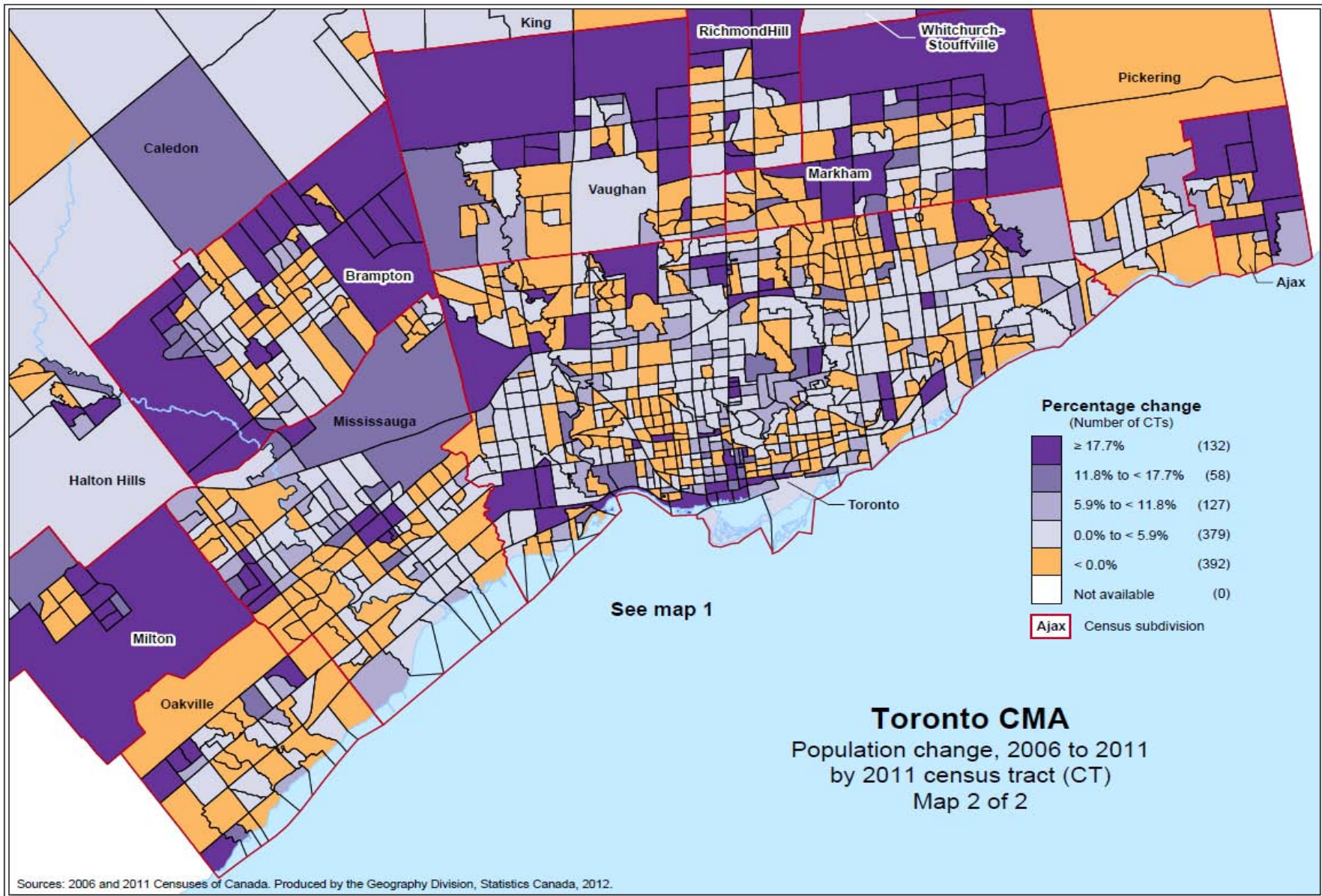


Map 4

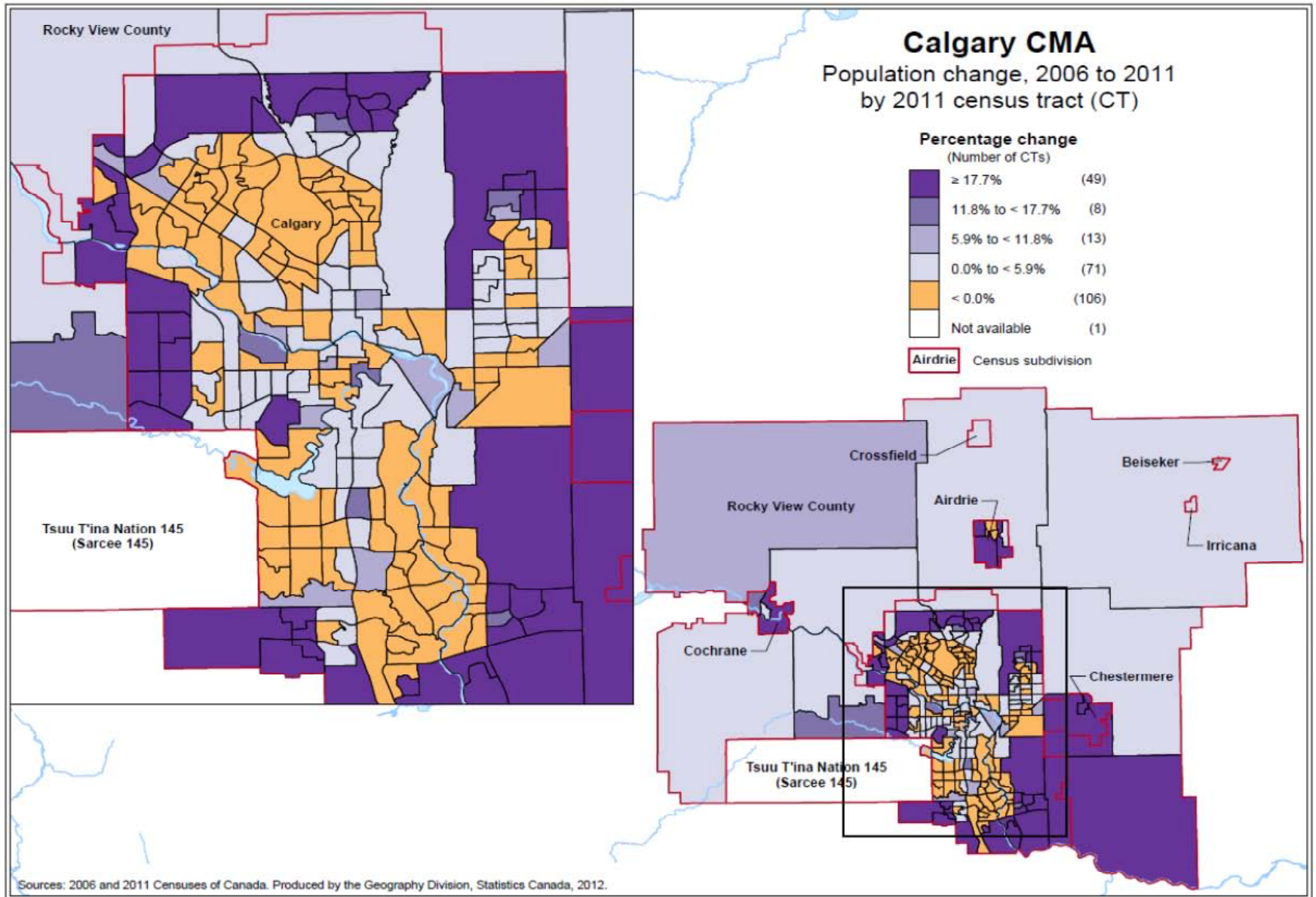




Map 5

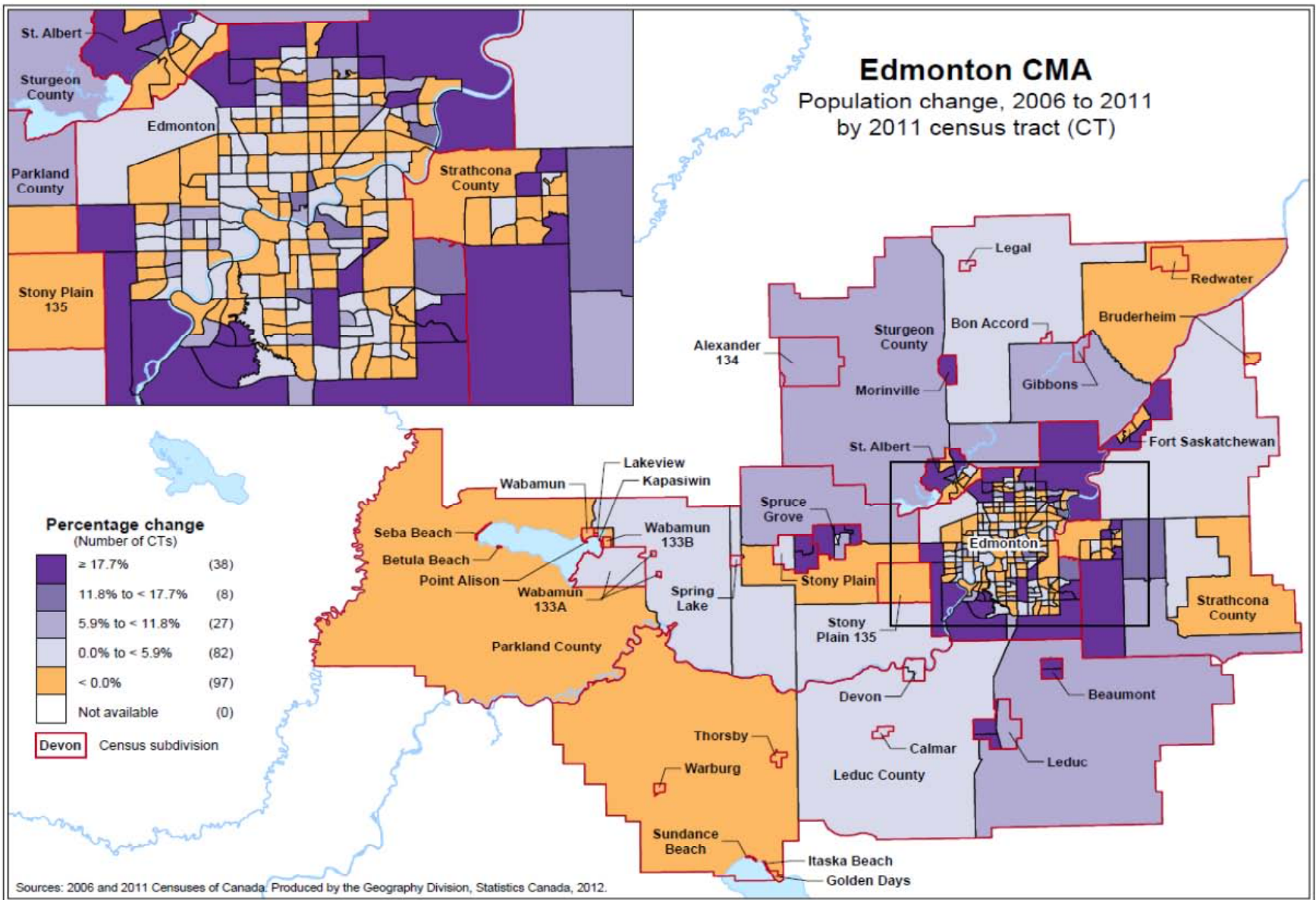


Map 6



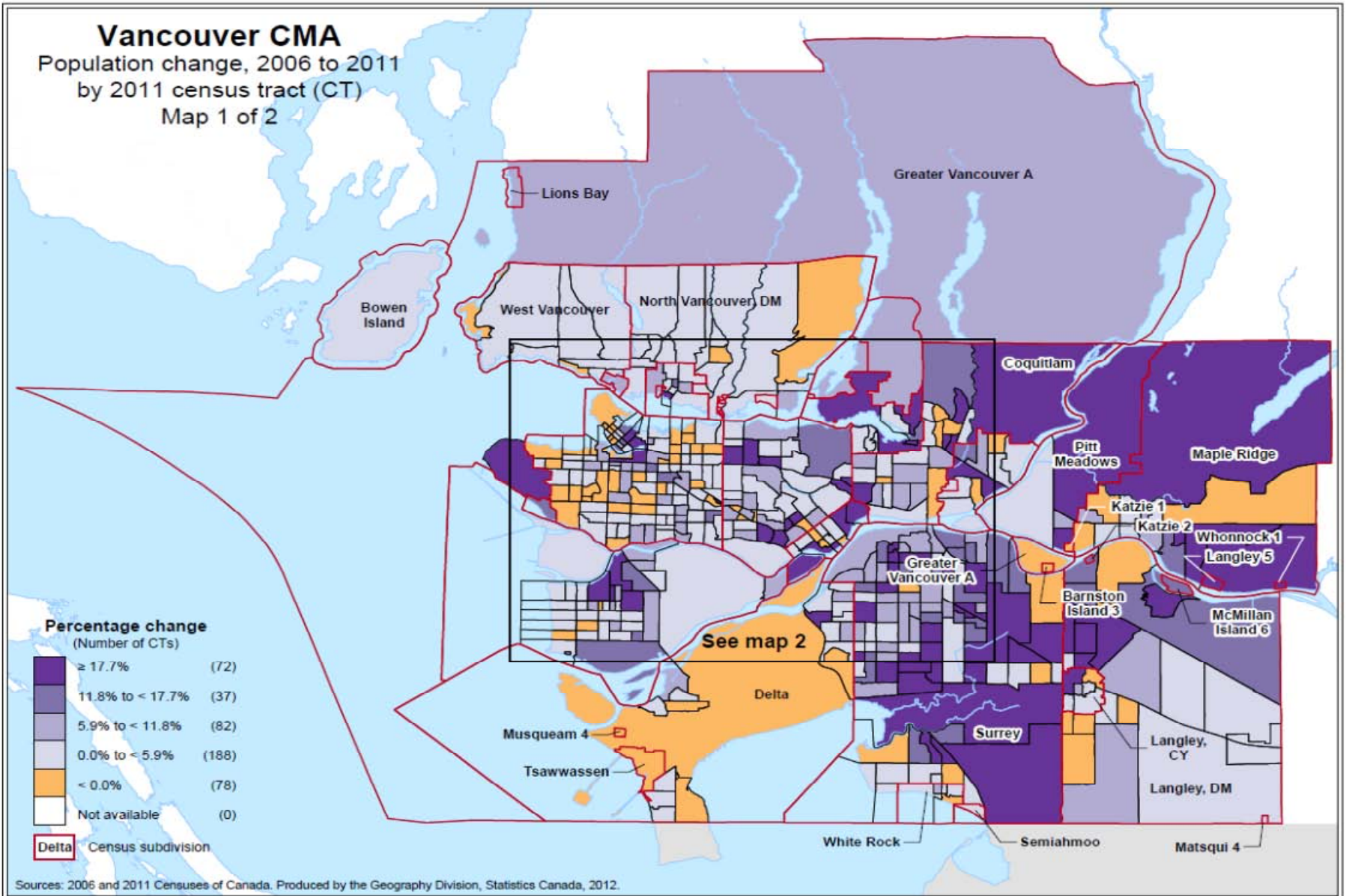


# Map 7

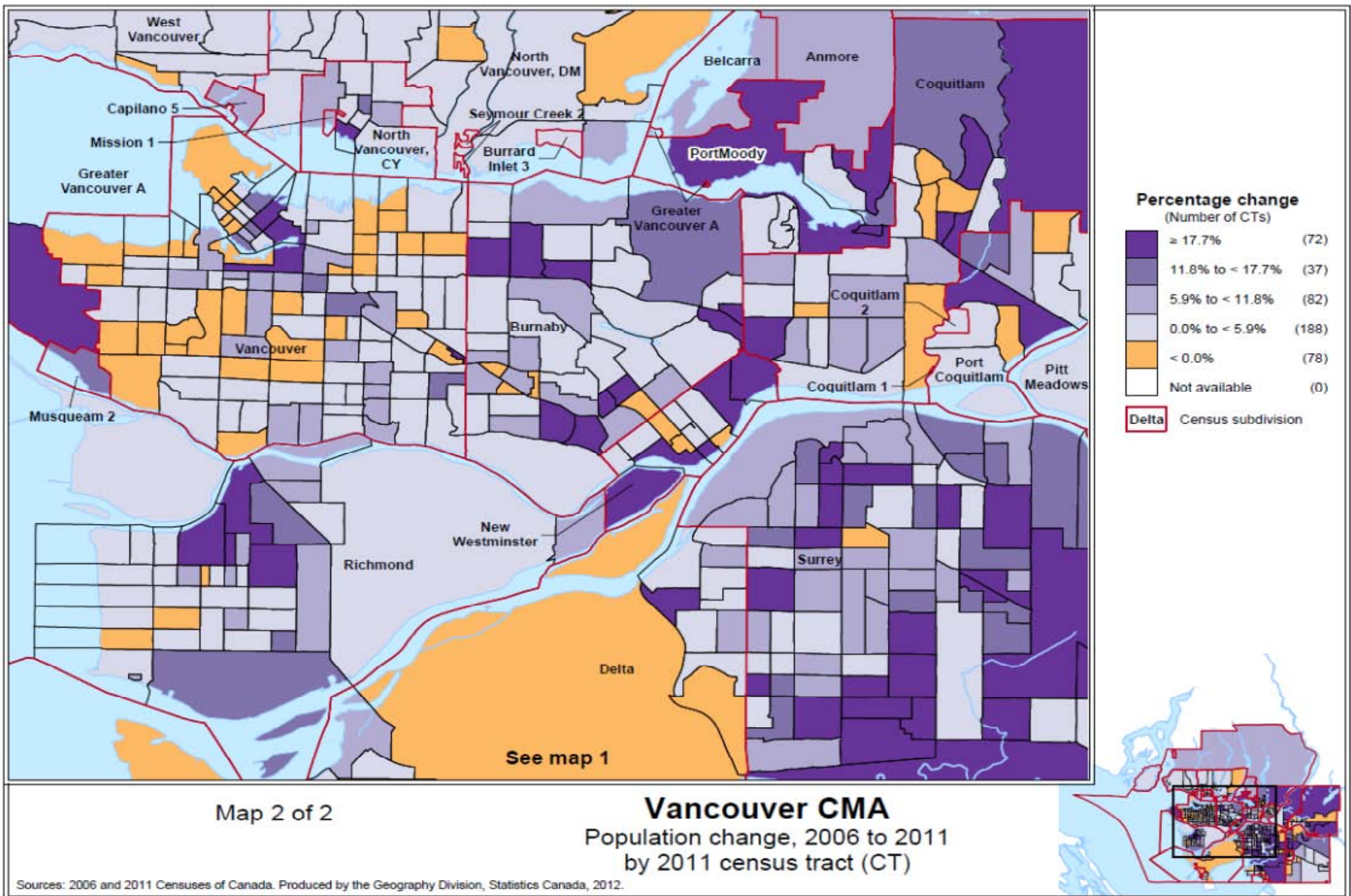




Map 8



Map 9



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Fax line	1-877-287-4369

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Inquiries line	1-613-951-8116
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