

Marble Falls designated as newest Micropolitan Statistical Area

Regions in Central Texas are getting a makeover courtesy of the federal [Office of Management and Budget \(OMB\)](#). OMB has recognized Burnet County as having the criteria necessary to form a Micropolitan Statistical Area, which is defined as having at least one urban cluster of at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 population, plus adjacent territory with a high degree of social and economic integration. This new area, called the Marble Falls Micropolitan Statistical Area, but encompassing all of Burnet County, will also result in a new Austin- Round Rock- Marble Falls Combined Statistical Area, allowing data users to analyze the entire six-county region, including the existing five-county Austin metro area and the new Marble Falls area.

OMB now lists 374 metropolitan and 576 micropolitan areas in the US with the only other new region added being Weatherford, OK. These areas are used as a basis to compare regions across the country. Imagine trying to compare Austin and Raleigh based solely on what's inside the Austin and Raleigh city limits. Both cities have a number of surrounding communities and municipalities providing economic contributions that need to be considered in the analysis. Having these areas defined, makes it a lot easier to gather data to do such a comparison. Now, Marble Falls and Burnet County will be "on the list" of small urban areas that researchers and companies can select for comparison.

The criteria used in forming a statistical area are both population and density. There needs to be at least 10,000 but less than 50,000 people within an urban area to warrant formation of a micropolitan area, and 50,000 or more for a metropolitan area. Boundaries are set using counties as the building blocks, so the smallest that a statistical area could be is one county called the central county. If surrounding counties have sufficient economic ties, at least 25% of the county's employed residents commuting to the central county, then those counties would also be included in that statistical area. For Burnet County, qualifying to be its own micropolitan area shows that it is growing and still somewhat independent of the Austin metro region. However, because there are clear ties between the two areas, OMB also formed the Austin-Round Rock-Marble Falls Combined Statistical Area, joining a list of 127 others.