

Suitability Analysis for New Cracker Barrel Locations in Illinois

Michael Minn

Department of Geography and Geographic Information Science, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Illinois

RESEARCH QUESTION

- What counties would be most suitable for new Cracker Barrel restaurant locations in Illinois?

LITERATURE REVIEW

- Cracker Barrel is a full-service restaurant chain specializing in southern US cuisine at 660 locations in 43 states (CBOCS 2025a).
- Cracker Barrel is a publicly-traded company that operates within a highly competitive environment where growth is expected (DeMicco 2015).
- Cracker Barrel locations are typically placed near interstates and are uniformly themed to generate a distinct sense of rural American history and nostalgia for home (Gregory and Finlayson 2019).
- Older Americans stereotypically associated with Cracker Barrel typically base identity in terms of dwelling and prior experience with place (Cuba and Hummon 1993).

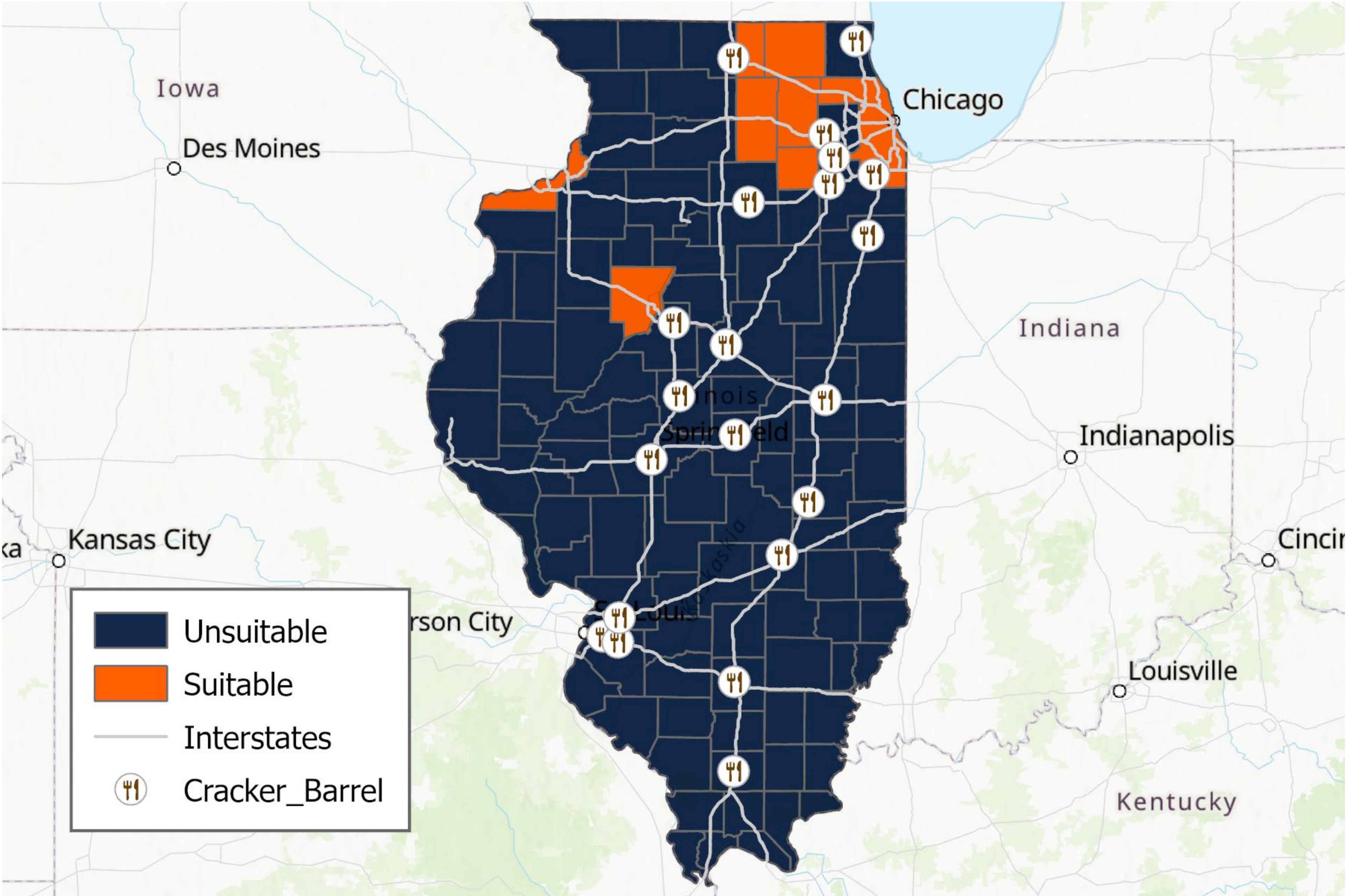
METHODS AND DATA SOURCES

- ArcGIS Pro 3.3.1
- Suitability analysis
- Cracker Barrel locations from the Cracker Barrel Old Country Store Properties, Inc.
- Interstate highways from the US Census Bureau's TIGER/Line shapefiles
- Demographic data from the US Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates (median age, population density)



Cracker Barrel country fried steak (Minn 2024)

SUITABILITY ANALYSIS



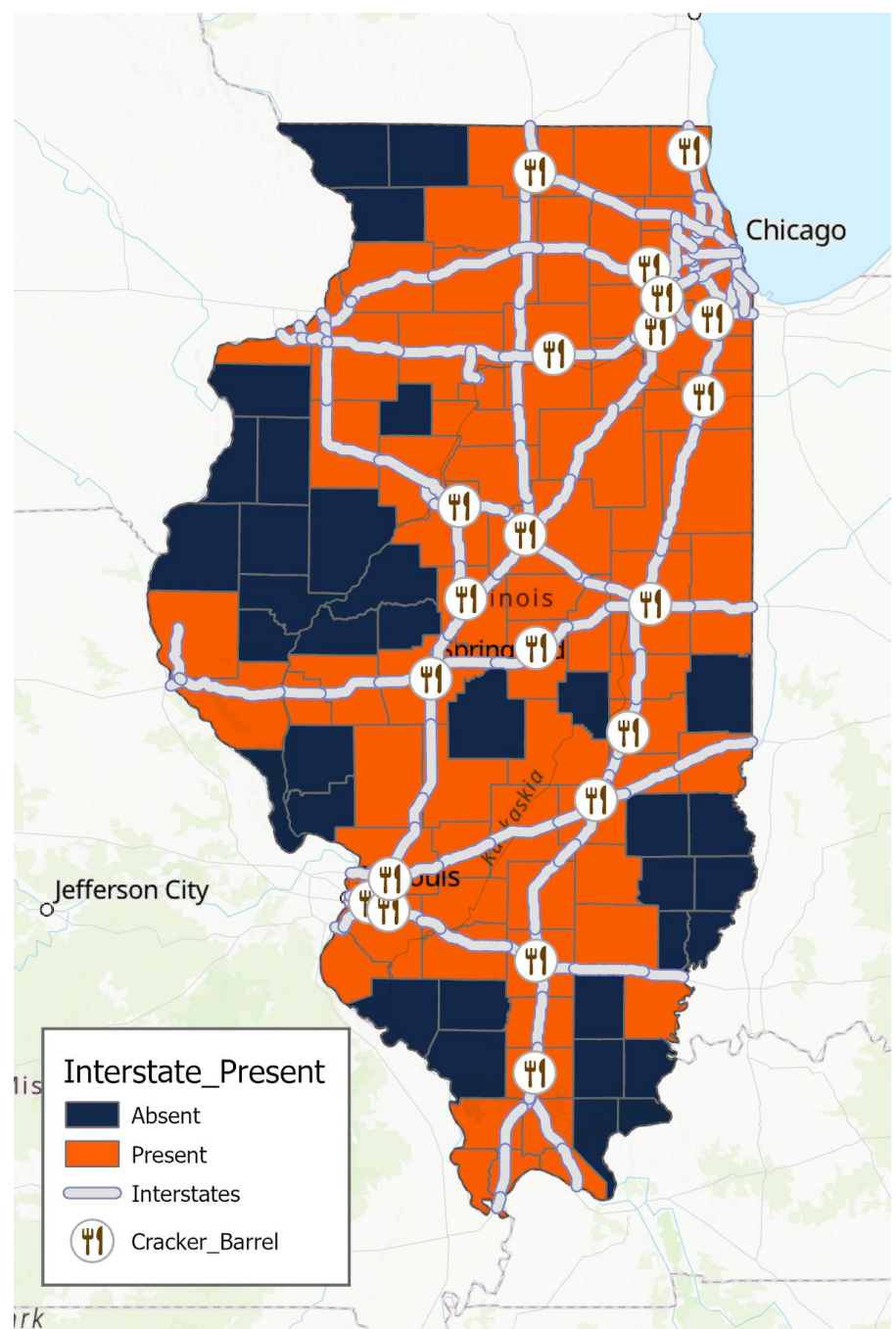
CONCLUSIONS

- DeKalb, Kane, McHenry, and Kendall Counties in the Chicago metropolitan area appear to have the adequate demographics and infrastructure to support new Cracker Barrel restaurants.
- Rock Island, Peoria, and Boone Counties may also be appropriate, although locations in adjacent counties may be adequate to meet demand.
- Cook County (Chicago) is underserved, but may be less suitable due to traffic congestion that limits restaurant accessibility.
- The limited number of additional suitable counties is consistent with possible market saturation in a competitive environment mentioned in the literature.
- Use of a multi-state data set and proximity analysis (near tool) might improve selectivity.

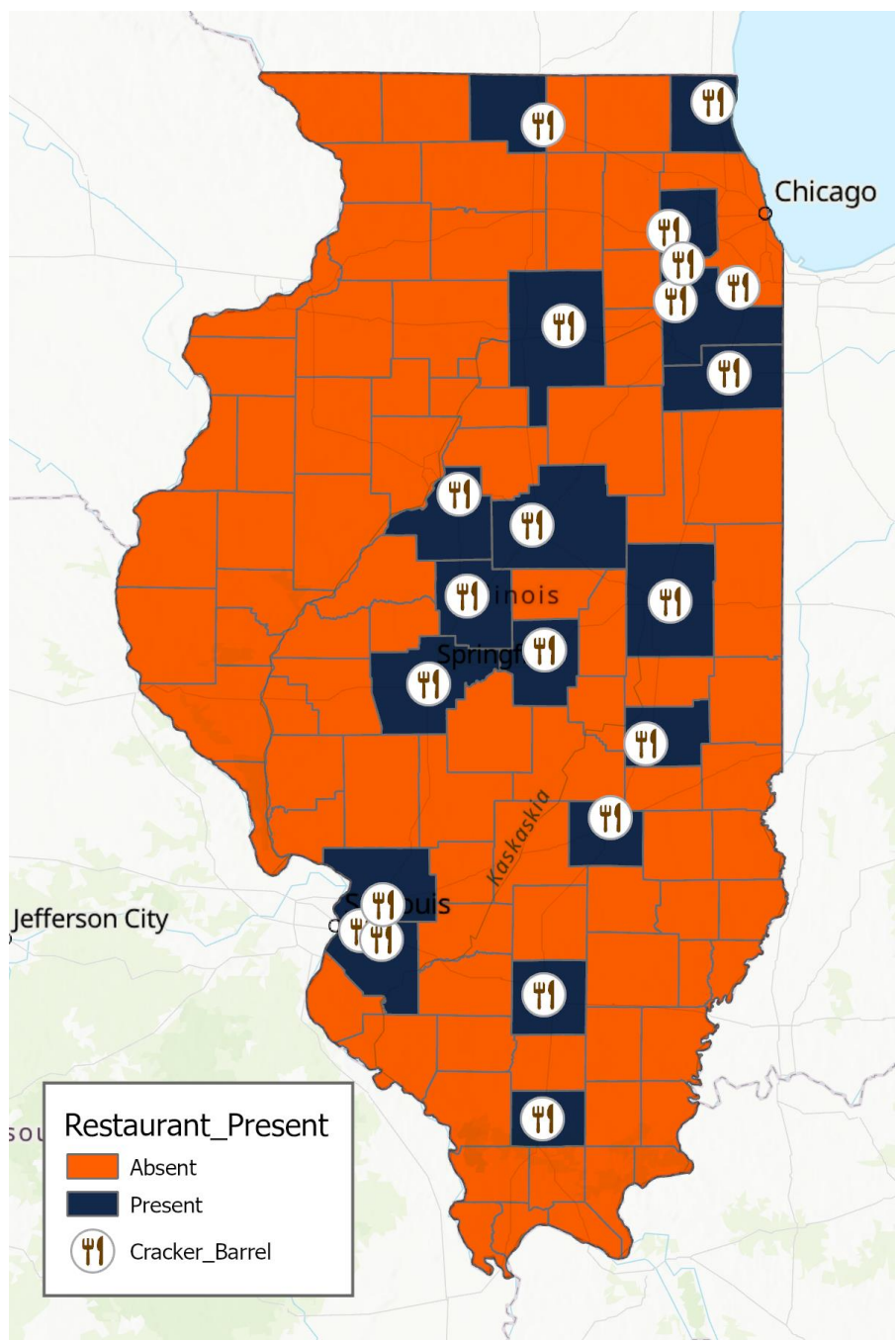


Visiting Cracker Barrel (Minn 2025)

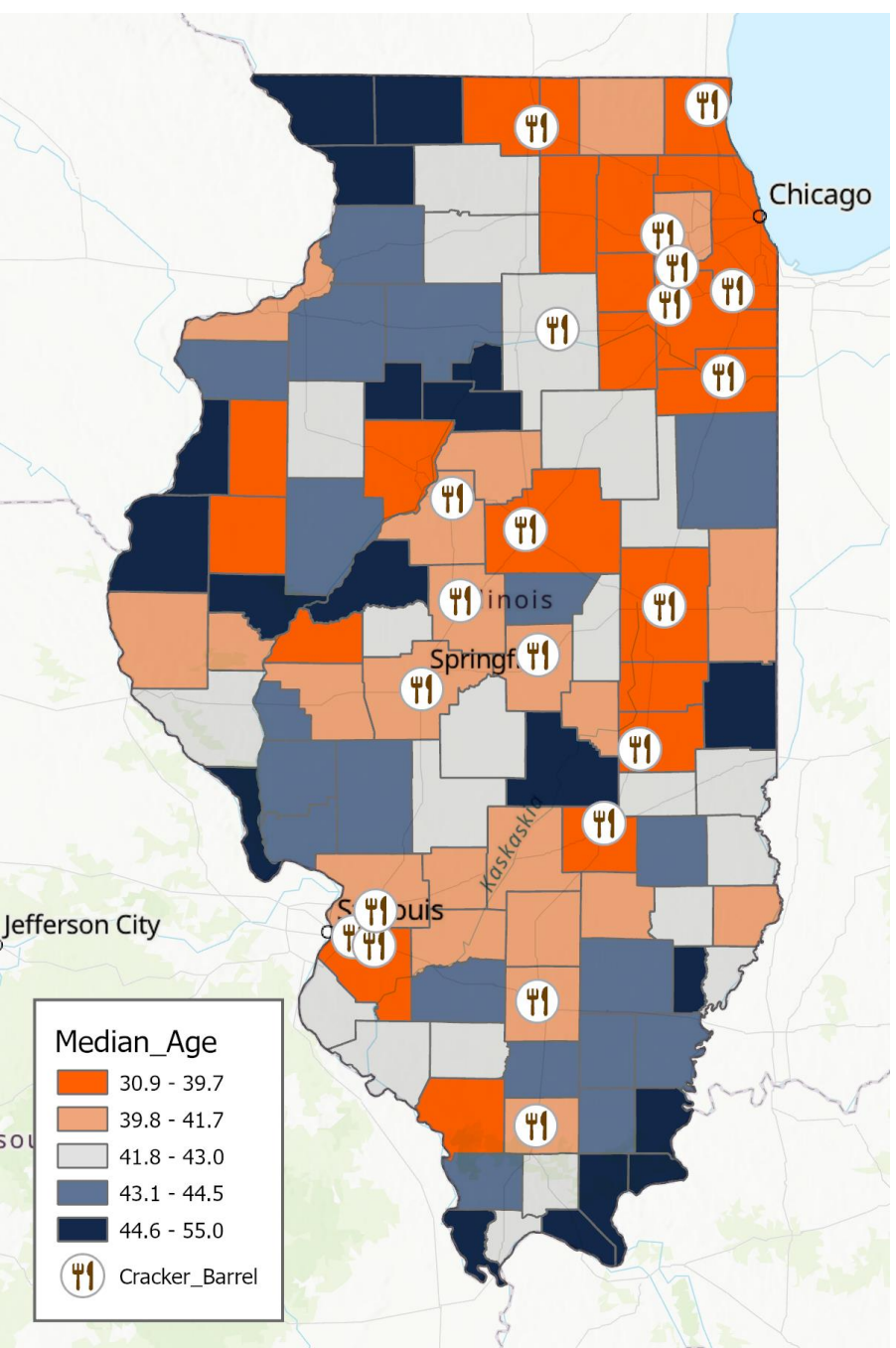
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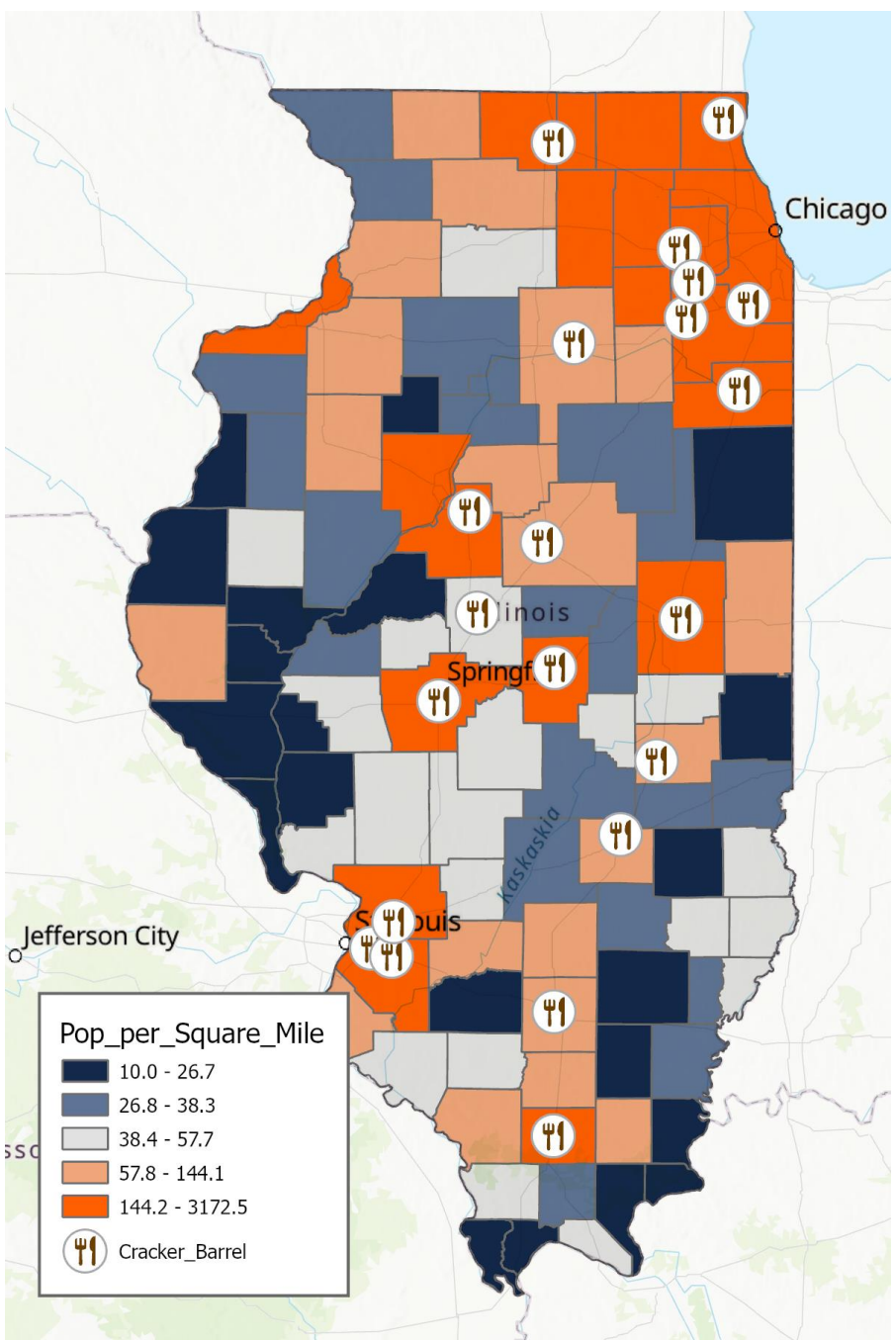
Cracker Barrel restaurants are located next to interstate highways (CBOCS 2025b, USCB 2024).



New Cracker Barrel restaurants should be in unserved counties (CBOCS 2025b).



Cracker Barrel restaurants should be located in counties with a median age less than 43 years (USCB n.d.).



Cracker Barrel restaurants should be located in counties with a population density > 140 / sq mi. (USCB n.d.).

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