

# Welcome! Start Here.



**Peoria County 200+** is a process to create a comprehensive land use plan for the future of our community. This plan will define a vision for Peoria County and will set the direction for the County's development, investment, and change.

## What is a Comprehensive Land Use Plan?

A comprehensive land use plan is a long-term guide that expresses the values and aspirations of a community. It is the broadest public policy document a community can create for future physical development considering the input of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders. The plan is a tool to prepare for change and acts as a guidebook for decision-makers. Although not a legally binding document, it can serve as a foundation for budgeting decisions, zoning ordinances, land development regulations, sustainable practices, and more.

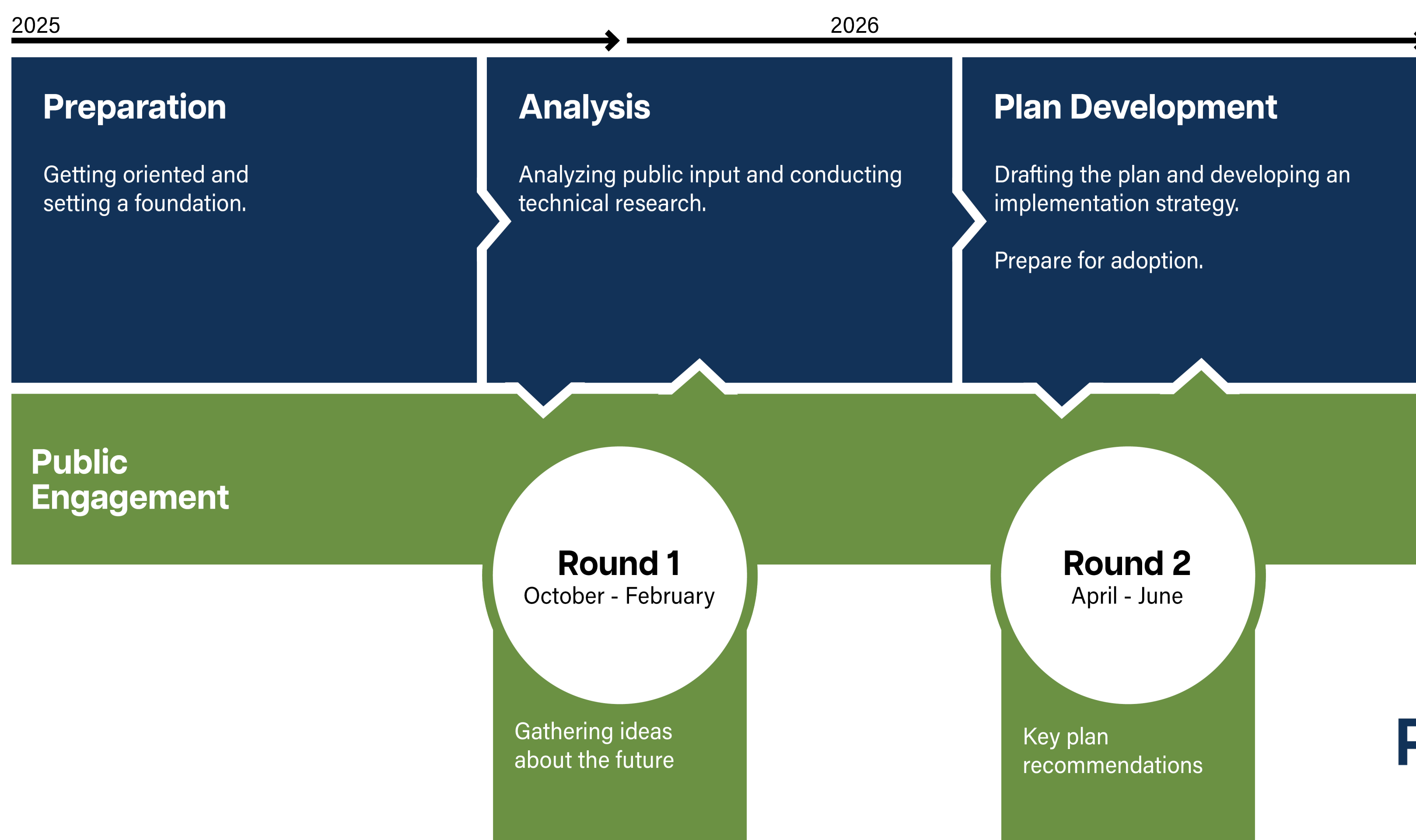
## Why does Peoria County need a Comprehensive Land Use Plan?

Since adoption of the 2009 plan, the community has experienced meaningful demographic shifts and changes in development patterns that are reshaping how and where growth occurs. The previous plan is reaching the end of its intended lifespan and no longer fully reflects current demographics, market conditions, or land use trends. Updating the comprehensive plan provides an opportunity to align community priorities with a shared vision for the future of the County, building on the changes that have occurred throughout the 2010s and 2020s.



## Process

The plan update has been shaped by input from the community and technical research. The first round of engagement was conducted in Fall 2025 and Winter 2026. The second round of engagement is taking place April through June. The process is expected to be completed in Fall 2026.



# Conditions and Trends



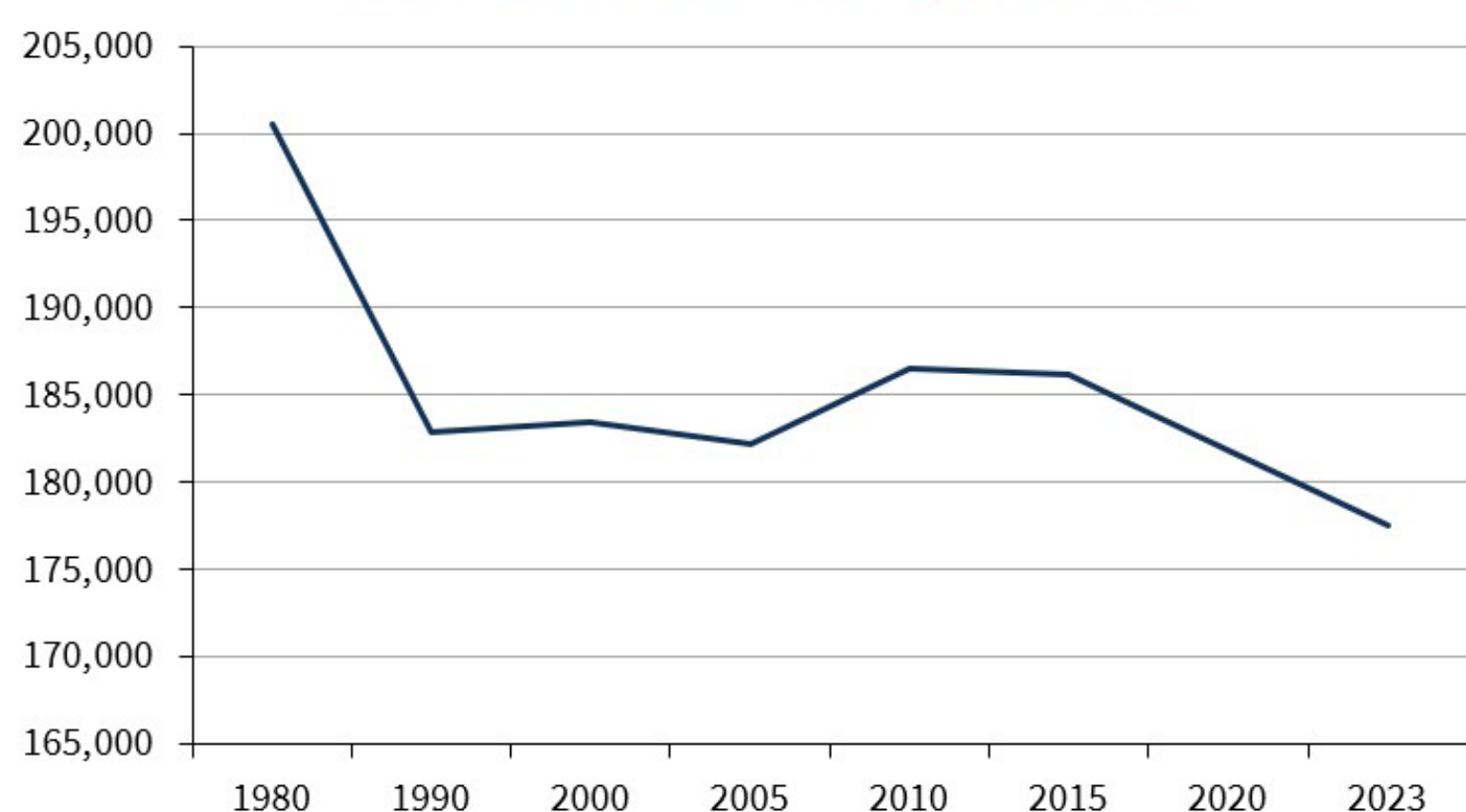
The following information provides context about the County that has informed the planning work. It is organized into three topics: people, place and prosperity.

## People

### Population, Demographics, Households

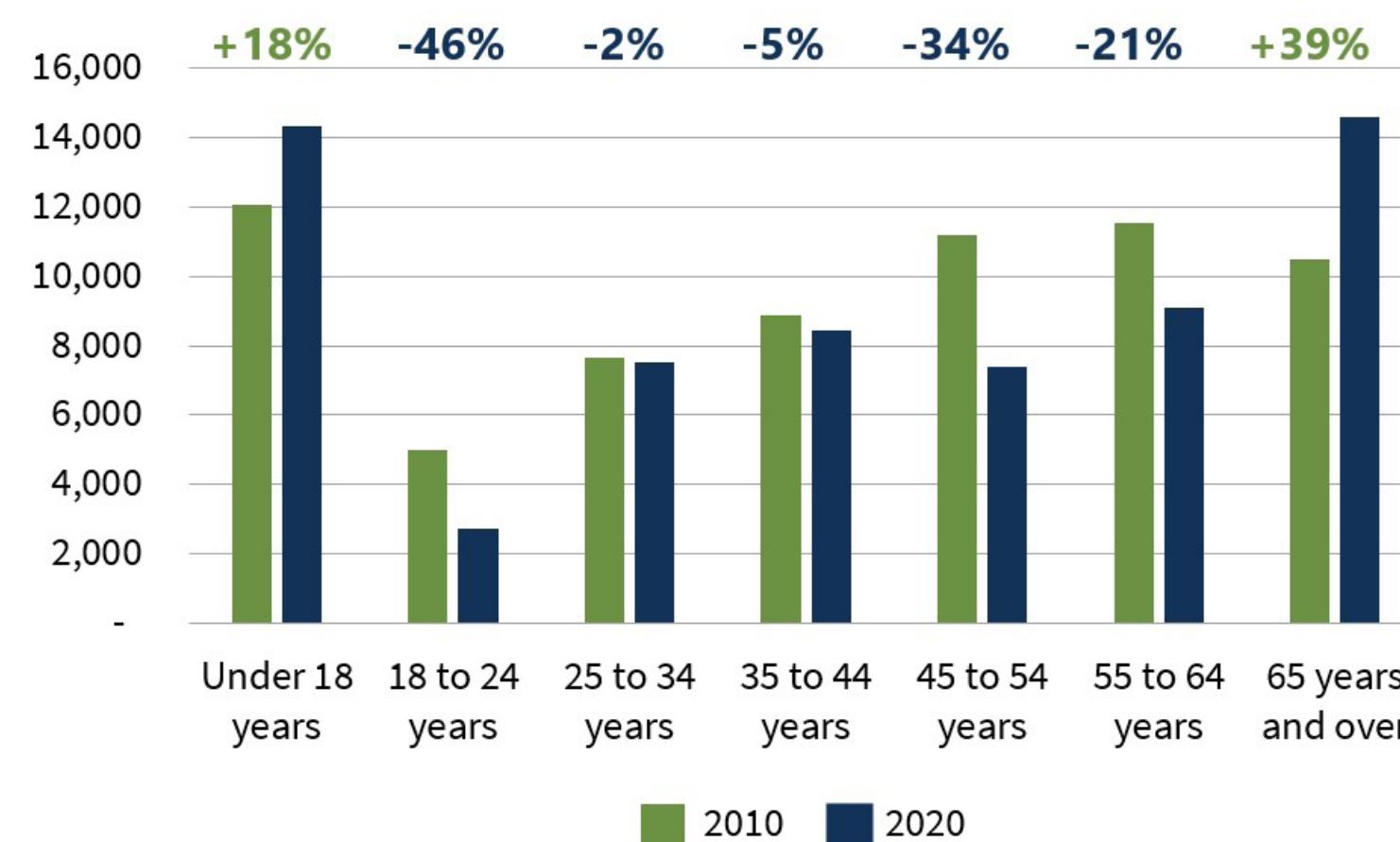
#### Population has declined in the County

The population in Peoria has fluctuated but has declined overall since 2010. Population decline is expected to continue and can contribute to a loss of tax base, labor shortages, loss of services and amenities, and other impacts.



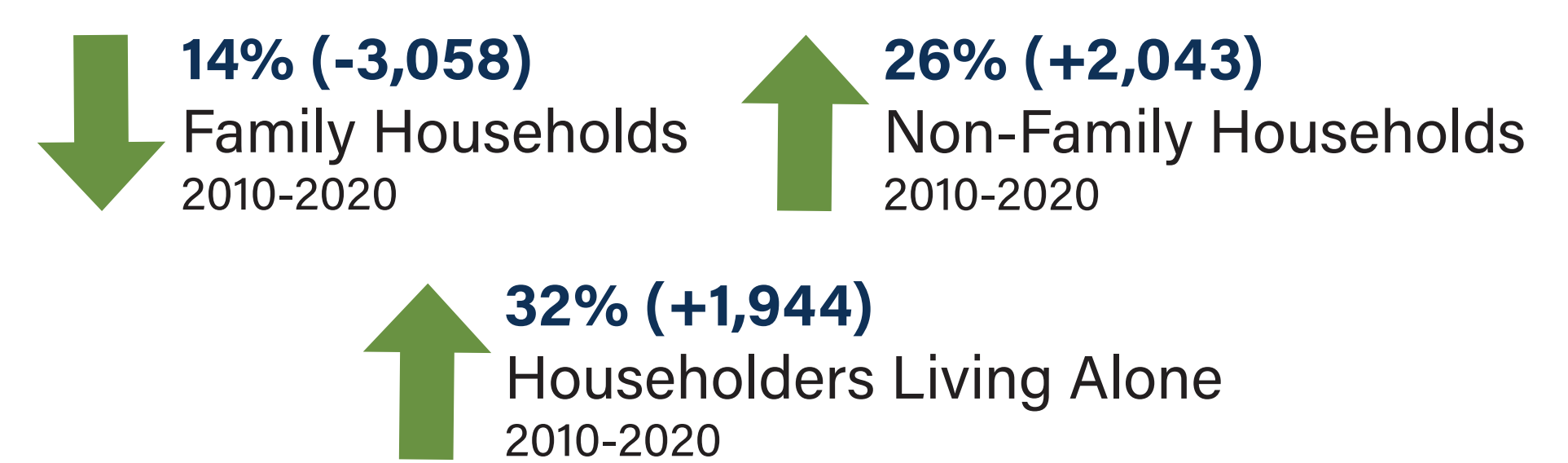
#### Younger and older age cohorts are growing

The number of residents under 17 and over 65 grew while the other cohorts shrank. This requires tailored services to meet their needs; losing working-aged residents further shrinks the workforce and the tax base.



#### The number of households has decreased and more people are living alone

The number of households has decreased by 4% since 2010. A loss of households may be correlated to population decline or connected to factors such as housing quality and availability. 65% of households are made up of families, but there is an increase in the number of householders who live alone. More non-family households and people living alone might present different housing type needs.



## Place

### Physical Environment, Transportation, Parks and Open Space

#### Agricultural Land Use

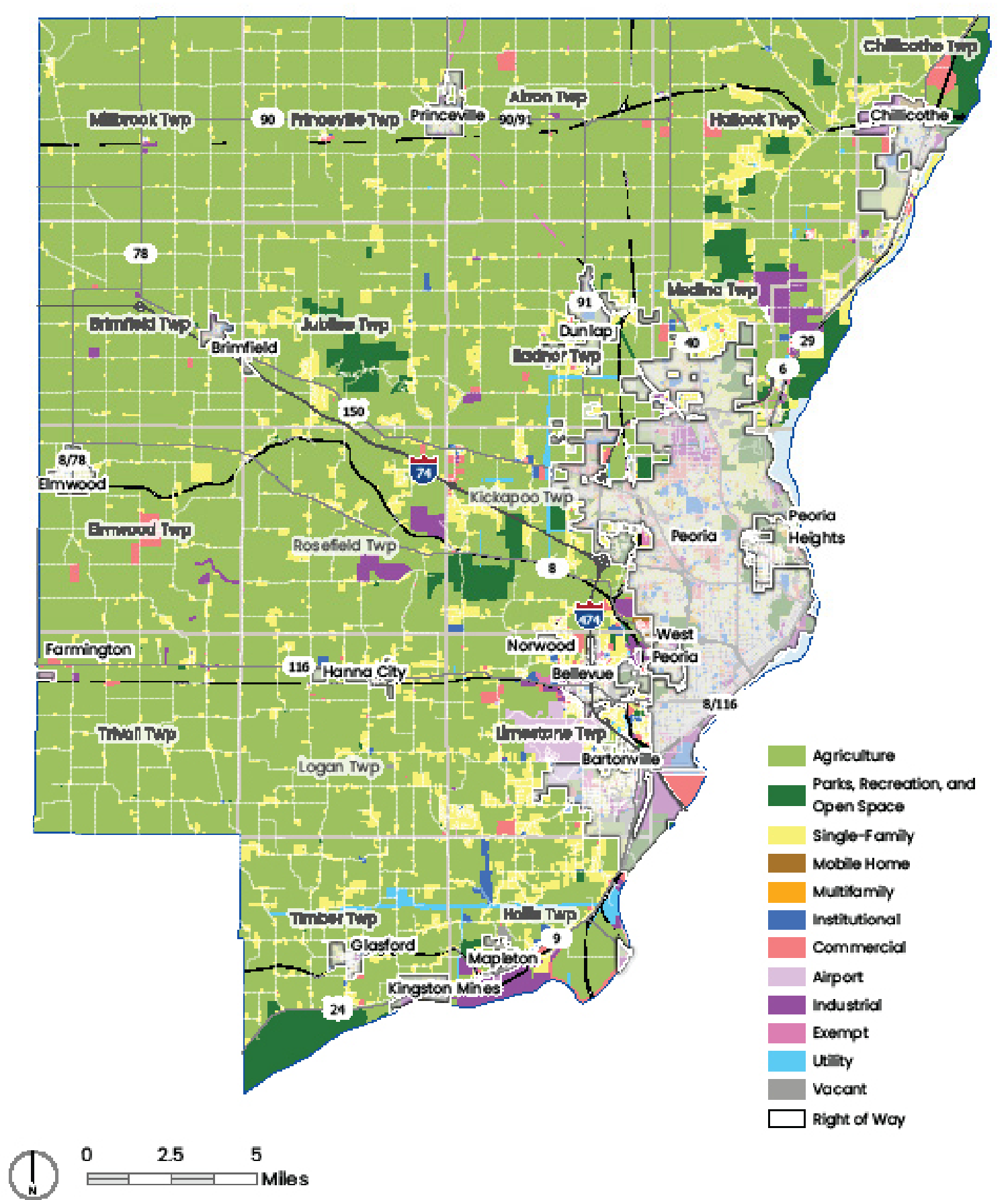
Cropland is the predominant farmland use in the county. The number of farms in the County grew by 12% between 2017-2022, but the number of acres per farm decreased by 1%. The County saw growth in the agricultural sector overall from 2017-2022. However, there are signs of challenges statewide and nationally that impact the County. There is instability in the agricultural industry that impacts the local economy.

#### Connectivity is strong, but transit is limited

Major roadways include Interstates 74 and 474 and multiple State Routes. Roadway connections support economic activity and employment-generating uses; they provide access to other urban areas. However, limited transit options and gaps in multimodal connectivity can constrain mobility for residents without access to a personal vehicle and may limit access to jobs, services, and regional destinations.

#### Peoria County lacks a connected parks and trail system

While the County has important park spaces, many areas are underserved. Parks, open spaces, and trailways contribute to quality of life, provide recreational opportunities, support natural resource conservation, and have a positive economic impact.



## Prosperity

### Economy, Employment, Housing, Well-Being

#### The median household income is lower and poverty rates higher than surrounding counties

The number of people living below the poverty line has increased from 2010-2021. A low median household income can limit opportunities for and the quality of life of residents.

#### Educational attainment is increasing and higher than that of the surrounding counties

High School or higher has remained level since 2010 (-1%), Bachelor's Degree or higher is up 19%, and Graduate Degree or higher is up 30%. Educational attainment relates to a skilled workforce, which can attract business and foster economic development.

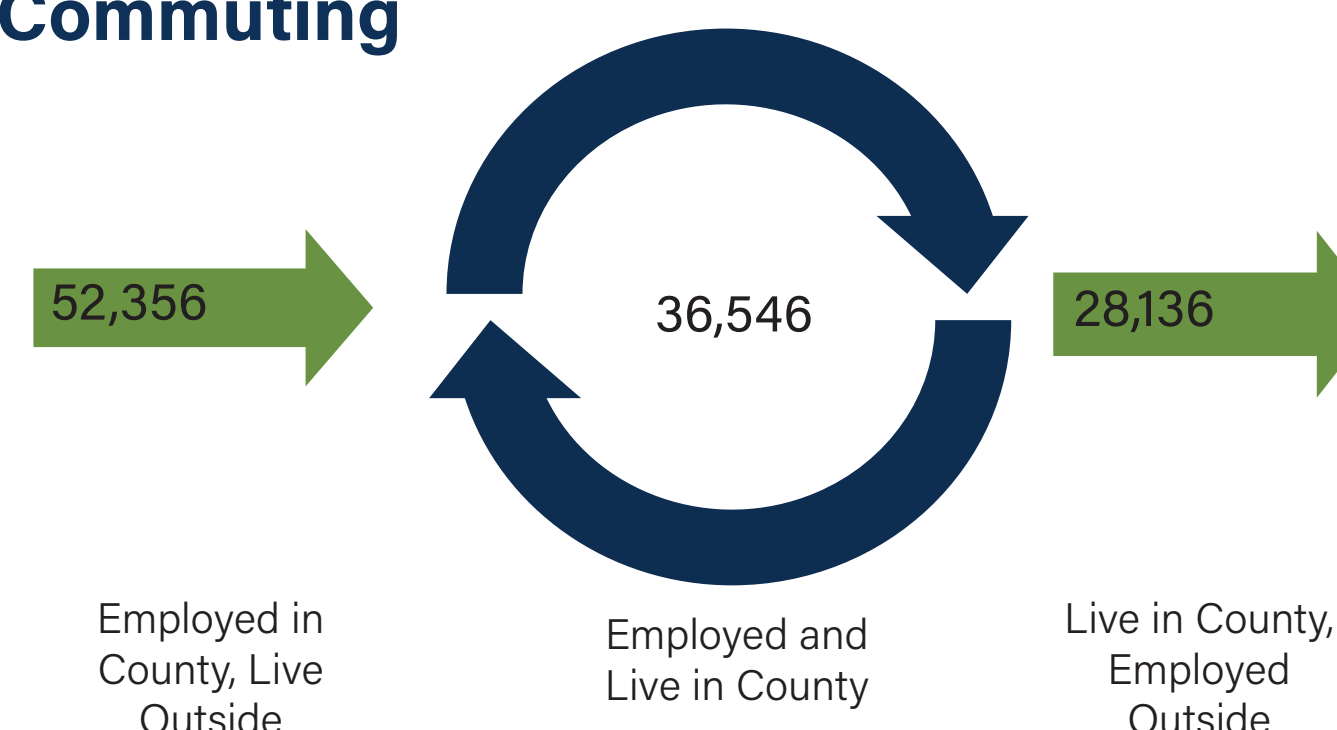
#### The majority of employees commute into the County to work

Encouraging living, working, and playing in the County minimizes commuting times and supports a more "complete community"

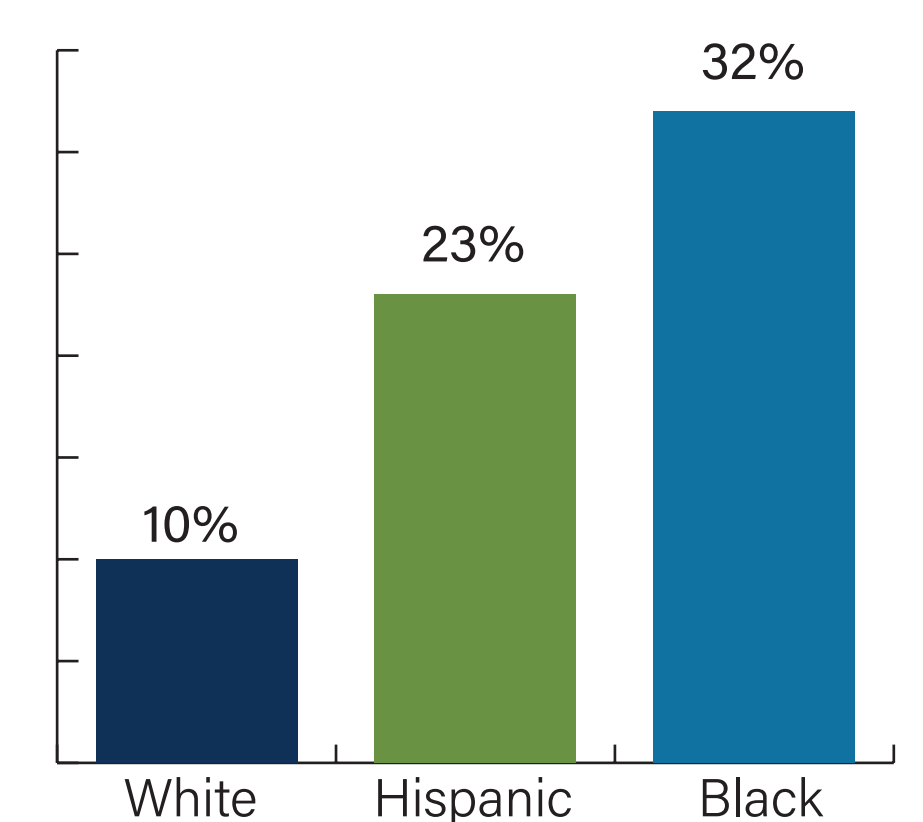
#### Racial Inequities Persist

Previous Annual Reports on Equity have highlighted significant disparities in life expectancy, health, employment, income, housing, and educational achievement between racial groups in the area.

#### Commuting



#### Poverty Rates



# Vision and Goals



## VISION

The vision captures the highest-level aspirational view for the future of Peoria County and provides the overall direction for the plan. Following is a draft vision for the plan:

***Peoria County is a community committed to strengthening its economy, elevating its agricultural and environmental assets, and fostering a place where residents enjoy a high quality of life.***

## GOALS

The goals capture desired outcomes in simple terms. Actions are implementable policies, programs, and projects. Following are draft goals for the plan:

### 1. Land Use and Character

Strategic land use policies create places that attract and retain residents, support the local economy, conserve important assets, and foster a desired mix of uses and activities.

### 3. Infrastructure

Reliable, well-maintained infrastructure supports safety, connectivity, and desired land uses and activities.

### 2. Rural Conservation

Rural landscapes and agricultural lands are economically productive and contribute positively to the community.

### 4. Natural Environment and Open Space

Environmental and recreational assets are prioritized for conservation, enrich daily life, and are accessible and well-connected.

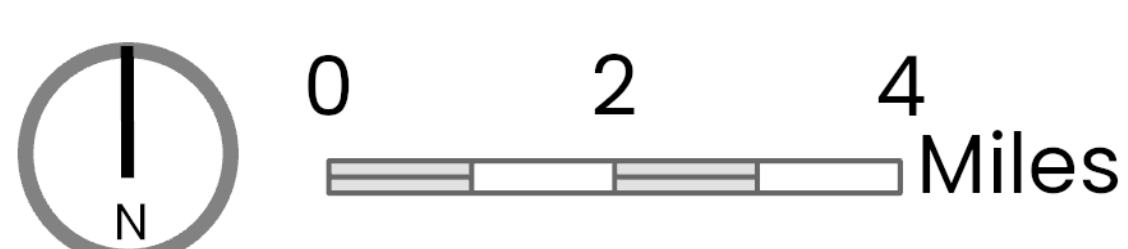
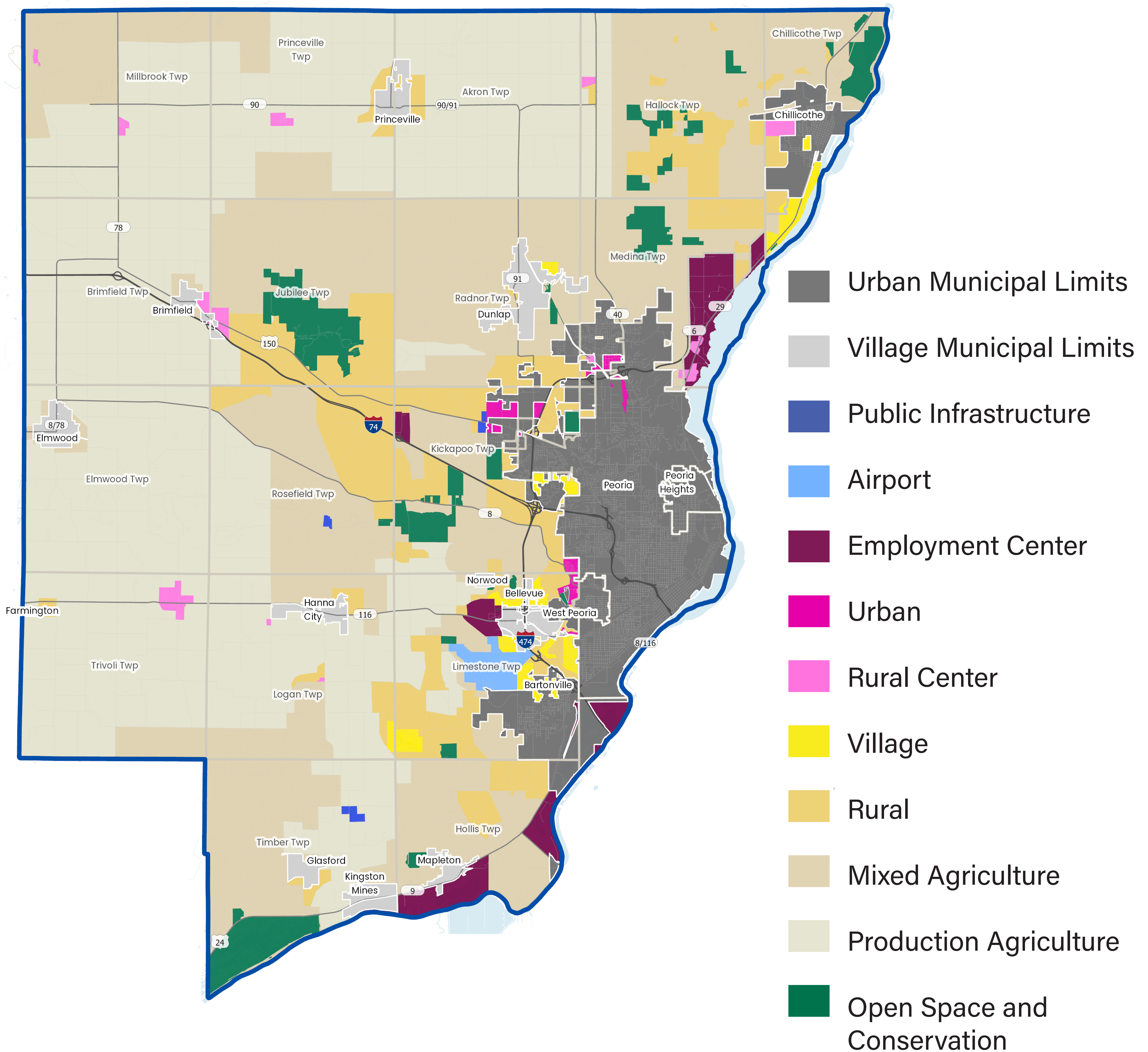


Concurrently along with the comprehensive land use plan, Peoria County and the City of Peoria are pursuing an economic development strategy. This plan will broadly lay a foundation for more specific economic development recommendations that will be put forth in that plan.

# Future Character and Land Use Map



The Future Character and Land Use Map expresses the intent for how Peoria County should use its land resources in the future. It will be implemented over time through many distinct public and private decisions.



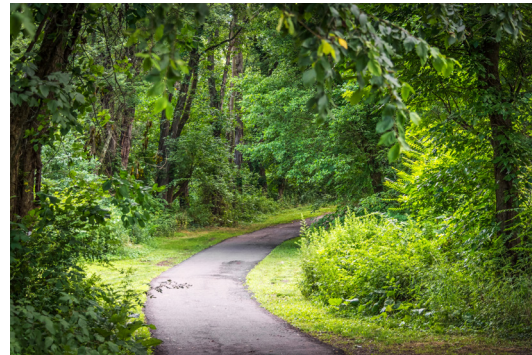
# Character Types



The Future Character and Land Use Map identifies 12 Character Areas, which are types of places that share attributes of urban and rural form and function, as well as land uses or types of development. The Character Types are defined below.

## Open Space and Conservation

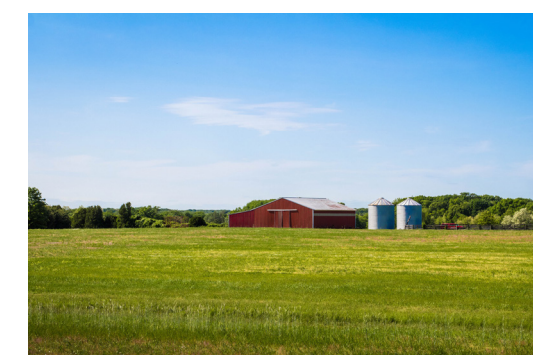
These areas are protected or have very low-impact development. Open space and conservation areas often have unique natural features that may include heavily wooded areas, steep slopes, floodways, and riparian corridors, and space set aside for recreation. These tend to be in agricultural or rural areas, but may also intersect urban, village, and other more developed places in the County. These spaces are unique because of their natural features or protected status.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Woodland	ROW
Parks	Vacant
Recreation	Agriculture
Open Space	

## Production Agriculture

These areas are primarily large-scale row crop, livestock, or timber production and may also include wind and solar energy facilities. Rural residential uses and agriculture-related commercial or industrial operations may be present but are not the predominant land uses. Lots are typically very large, supporting expansive crop fields or energy installations, with supporting buildings spaced far apart.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Agriculture	Single-family
	Vacant
	Renewable Energy Production and Storage
	Parks
	Recreation
	Open Space

## Mixed Agriculture

These smaller agricultural lots support a wider variety of production which is generally smaller scale and uses a smaller portion of the lot. While there are some row crops, agricultural land in this character type more frequently supports diverse farming, single family residential, and open space around steep slopes, waterways, and other natural features.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Agriculture	Single-family
	Commercial
	Industrial
	Renewable Energy Production and Storage
	Recreation
	Open Space

## Rural

Rural areas primarily support single-family residential and agricultural uses, including agriculture-related buildings, and supporting retail, like farm stores. Buildings generally have wide setbacks from the roadway on large lots (over two acres). Traditional agricultural aesthetics are maintained even in residential areas. Municipal water and sewer utilities generally do not serve these areas.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Agriculture	Commercial
Single-family	Parks
	Recreation
	Open Space

## Village

These areas are primarily single-family homes arranged along curvilinear streets with few intersections along long blocks. Housing in these areas has limited connectivity to major roads or commercial uses. Land may either 'front' or be adjacent to shared natural areas. Building and lot sizes may range in size and density. These areas are characterized by their proximity to rural residential and more densely populated areas, creating a seamless transition. They are generally served by community sewer and water.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Single-family	Institutional
	Commercial
	Mobile Home
	Parks
	Recreation

## Rural Center

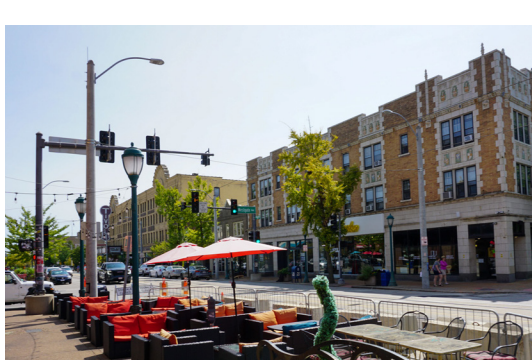
Rural Centers are a blend of agriculture, residential, commercial, and light industrial development. These centers encourage pedestrian activity with smaller lot sizes and smaller front yard setbacks. These village centers are often older communities that developed along rail corridors or near historic employers, such as mines or factories. Although these historic features are no longer present, the signature compact street grid is an enduring characteristic of most of these areas.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Single-family	Agriculture
	Institutional
	Commercial
	Light Industrial
	Mobile Home
	Parks
	Recreation

## Urban

These areas are characterized by a mix of commercial, institutional, office, and higher-density residential uses near incorporated urban areas. Generally, buildings are set closer to the road on smaller lots, but setbacks and lot size may vary. Streets accommodate moderate to high traffic volumes and may include on-street parking and amenities for pedestrians and cyclists, such as wide sidewalks, street trees, benches, multi-use trails, and bike racks.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Single-family	Mobile Home
Multi-family	Industrial
Commercial	Parks
Institutional	Recreation

## Employment Center

Employment centers include commercial, industrial and logistics, office, and civic uses that are easily accessible from major transportation corridors. These serve a regional market and are anchored by major employers. Buffering provides separation between the more intense development within these centers and the surrounding residential and rural character areas. Natural features, especially waterways, wetlands, and woodlands, are protected wherever possible.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Industrial	Commercial
Institutional	Data Centers
	Renewable Energy Storage

## Public Infrastructure

The county depends on public and semi-public utilities and infrastructure for transportation, waste management, and energy generation. While these areas vary in their size and function, they are often industrial in nature and require unique access ways for employees and members of the public.



Primary Uses
Public Infrastructure
Utilities

## Airport

This area accommodates the Peoria International Airport and the necessary expansion of the airport in the future. Facilitate safe development near the airport that supports commercial and industrial uses that are linked to the airport and transition safety between the airport and surrounding areas pursuant to FAA regulations.



Primary Uses	Secondary Uses
Airport	Institutional
Airport Related Commercial Uses	Industrial

## Village Municipal Limits\*

These areas are subject to the land use regulations established by the municipality in their respective comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Cooperation between jurisdictions is important to ensure compatibility and facilitate annexations and intergovernmental agreements.



\* These character areas are not subject to the comprehensive land use plan.

## Urban Municipal Limits\*

These areas are subject to the land use regulations established by the municipality in their respective comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances. Cooperation between jurisdictions is important to ensure compatibility and facilitate annexations and intergovernmental agreements.



# Goal 1: Land Use and Character



Strategic land use policies create places that attract and retain residents, support the local economy, conserve important assets, and foster a desired mix of uses and activities.

## 1.A Update zoning to establish clear guidance for emerging land uses.

The County should update its zoning regulations to establish clear and forward-looking guidance for emerging land uses, including data centers and energy storage facilities. Zoning updates should balance technological and economic growth with environmental and community considerations.

- Designate **data centers and energy storage** as secondary uses within appropriate character areas only, as identified on the Future Character and Land Use Map; data centers within Employment Centers, and energy storage within Production and Mixed Agriculture areas and Employment Centers.
- Establish **siting, design, and buffering standards** for emerging land uses, including requirements for the management of energy and water demands to minimize potential negative impacts.
- Require **noise mitigation and compatibility standards** to ensure emerging uses integrate appropriately with surrounding land uses and existing infrastructure capacity.

## 1.B Assist individual jurisdictions in planning growth strategically within or near existing villages.

The County should actively assist individual jurisdictions in directing growth within or near existing village centers, recognizing that coordinated planning between incorporated village centers and their peripheral village areas is essential to sustainable development. By aligning inter-jurisdictional planning efforts and reinforcing infrastructure-based growth boundaries, the county can protect rural character while fostering well-organized, efficient development patterns.

- Identify communities with existing plans and **prioritize technical assistance** for those requiring updates within the next ten years, coordinating through Tri-County planning resources.
- Ensure new plans for incorporated areas also consider **unincorporated village areas**, as identified on the Future Character and Land Use Map.
- Restrict **subdivision development to locations served by public infrastructure**, ensuring new growth is supported by adequate services and utilities, with limited exceptions granted only under clearly defined circumstances.

## 1.C Prepare employment centers for investment.

To foster economic growth and private investment, the County should take proactive steps to prepare areas designated as Employment Centers on the Future Character and Land Use Map for development, ensuring these locations are site-ready and positioned to attract businesses through strategic land use policies and financial incentives. Specifically, the County should:

- Pursue the expansion of **Enterprise Zone designations** within and adjacent to identified Employment Centers, providing businesses with meaningful relief from taxes and creating a competitive environment that encourages new investment, job creation, and the retention of existing employers.
- Leverage **county-owned land** within Employment Centers by extending public infrastructure to these sites and making them available for development under favorable terms that reduce barriers to entry for prospective developers.
- Offer **strategic variances** for development within Employment Centers, including flexibility on building height, landscaping requirements, and parking standards where alternative stormwater management solutions such as parking island bioretention are incorporated into site design, along with fee reductions for targeted use types that align with employment goals.
- Actively educate small business owners and developers about available **financial tools**, including Peoria County's Government Assistance Program (GAP) and its small business loan offerings, ensuring that potential investors are aware of and can access the full range of public support available to them.



# Goal 2: Rural Conservation



Rural landscapes and agricultural lands are economically productive and contribute positively to the community.

## 2.A Review and revise subdivision regulations to help conserve agricultural land while still supporting housing development in desired locations.

The County should undertake a comprehensive review and revision of its subdivision regulations to conserve agricultural land while still supporting housing development in appropriate locations. A key concern is the incremental subdivision of larger agricultural parcels, which erodes the County's working agricultural land base over time.

- Define clear objectives and incorporate **clustering provisions and density requirements** that protect prime agricultural soils, stream corridors, wetlands, steep slopes, and wildlife habitats.
- Lead the revision through **Planning and Zoning in coordination with Environmental Health**, given the significant role of private wells and onsite sewage disposal systems in determining where subdivision development can feasibly occur.
- Revisit and actively enforce existing provisions related to **flag lots and excessive depth-to-width ratios** as additional tools to discourage fragmentation of agricultural land.

## 2.B Review and revise the zoning code to support agritourism.

The County's existing assets, including apple orchards, pumpkin patches, hay mazes, sunflower fields, and Christmas tree farms, provide a strong foundation for a growing agritourism economy. The County should identify appropriate locations for agricultural tourism uses and revise the zoning code to clearly define and accommodate them.

- Address ambiguities around **commercial kitchen requirements, cottage food operations, and roadside stands**, ensuring regulations are tailored to the practical realities of farm-based enterprises rather than standard commercial requirements.
- Evaluate Chapter 10 of the Peoria County Food Safety Code for **appropriateness for farm-based enterprises**.
- Consider farm-to-table restaurants and dining experiences in village areas adjacent to agricultural areas.
- Work proactively with local farmers, entrepreneurs, and economic development partners to provide guidance on permissible uses and promote agritourism as part of a cohesive countywide agricultural economy strategy.

## 2.C Regularly reassess the farmland most susceptible to development and identify updated priority agricultural areas.

The County should regularly reassess farmland most susceptible to development pressures and maintain an updated identification of priority agricultural areas, ensuring land use policies reflect current conditions rather than relying solely on designations established at plan adoption.

- Tie reassessments to **periodic reviews of the Future Character and Land Use Map**, using findings to inform targeted map and policy amendments.
- Complete regular soil analysis to **identify and map prime and productive agricultural soils**.
- Use findings to **preserve high-value farmland and limit outward expansion** into productive agricultural areas.



# Goal 3: Infrastructure



Reliable, well-maintained infrastructure supports safety, connectivity, and desired land uses and activities.

## 3.A Expand water and sewer capacity in locations where development is desired as per the Future Character and Land Use Map.

Adequate water and sewer capacity is a prerequisite for the type of growth Peoria County wants to attract and sustain. Without proactive investment in water and wastewater infrastructure, both residential neighborhoods and employment-generating businesses can be constrained in their ability to expand or locate in desired areas. The County should work collaboratively with utility providers to align infrastructure investment with adopted growth policies.

- Coordinate planning efforts with **water and sewer providers** to encourage system expansion that is consistent with and guided by adopted growth policies and the Future Character and Land Use Map.
- Prioritize water and sewer expansion in areas designated for **residential growth**, ensuring that new housing can be served by public infrastructure and that development is not constrained by inadequate water or wastewater capacity.
- Ensure capacity is sufficient to support **employment-generating commercial and industrial development** in Employment Centers and other designated growth areas, removing infrastructure constraints that would otherwise prevent businesses from expanding or locating in the County.

## 3.B Coordinate with utility providers to expand broadband and fiber-optic infrastructure.

Reliable high-speed internet access is essential for economic competitiveness, remote work, education, and quality of life. Peoria County should take an active role in identifying gaps in broadband coverage and working with a range of providers to close them, with particular attention to areas that major carriers have not reached.

- Identify and map **underserved and unserved areas** to establish a clear picture of where investment is most needed and to support applications for state and federal broadband funding.
- Coordinate with **major and emerging providers**, including fixed wireless and satellite options, to supplement coverage in locations that larger carriers are unlikely to serve, ensuring all residents and businesses have access to reliable connectivity.

## 3.C Expand demand-response and fixed route transportation services to increase efficiency and performance.

Access to reliable local transportation is critical for residents who cannot or do not drive, especially seniors, people with disabilities, and those in lower-income households. The County should work with regional partners to meaningfully expand the reach, frequency, and quality of demand-response and fixed-route services.

- Acknowledge and build on **recent progress and action steps already taken** to improve transit service, framing expansion as a continuation of existing momentum rather than a new initiative.
- Strengthen coordination between the **Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, IDOT, and the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (CityLink)** to align planning, funding, and service delivery across the region.
- Support the **Grey Area Study** to identify and address gaps in CityLink bus and paratransit coverage in urbanized areas currently without service, such as Mossville, as well as opportunities to extend fixed-route service into underserved communities like Bartonville and other areas with limited service that would benefit from more regular transit options.

## 3.D Advocate to secure funding for passenger rail service between Chicago and the City of Peoria.

Improved passenger rail connectivity between Chicago and Peoria would strengthen the regional economy by expanding access to employment, talent, and business opportunities, and would make Peoria County a more desirable place to live by offering residents a convenient, stress-free travel option to one of the nation's largest metropolitan areas. The County should take an active role in building partnerships and pursuing funding to advance this service, while positioning itself to benefit from state and federal transportation investment.

- Prioritize **fast, frequent, and high-quality service** that offers a compelling alternative to driving, including comfortable amenities and competitive travel times to make rail an attractive option for commuters, business travelers, and visitors.
- Collaborate with the **City of Peoria, Peoria County Economic Development, and major employers** to build a unified regional voice in support of passenger rail investment, demonstrating demand and economic benefit to state and federal decision-makers.
- Actively pursue **state and federal funding opportunities**, including grants through IDOT and federal transportation programs, to advance planning and capital investment for the Chicago–Peoria corridor. Monitor the Peoria–Bloomington feasibility study being conducted through the BUILD grant to ensure coordination and avoid duplication of effort.

# Goal 4: Natural Environment



Environmental and recreational assets are prioritized for conservation, enrich daily life, and are accessible, and well-connected.

## 4.A Prepare a parks and recreation master plan for the County.

A county-wide parks and recreation master plan would provide a strategic framework for improving access to parks, trails, and open spaces for all residents. The plan should identify gaps, link parks and open spaces to schools and neighborhoods, and recommend funding mechanisms for desired improvements.

- Include strategies for setting aside **rights-of-way and easements for future trails** as development is planned, ensuring trail networks can be expanded over time without gaps.
- Identify **brownfield sites** that can be remediated and transformed into trails, parks, and open spaces.
- Address **recreational needs including playing fields and water-related amenities** such as access points along Kickapoo Creek and the Spoon River.

## 4.B Adopt buffering guidelines for projects adjacent to parks, trails, waterways, and natural areas.

Buffers can reduce noise, pollution, habitat disruption, and visual impacts from nearby development while protecting the integrity of parks, trails, and natural areas. The County should establish clear guidelines and provide practical tools that developers and property owners can apply when projects are proposed adjacent to these sensitive areas.

- Offer **incentives such as density bonuses** and encourage voluntary conservation agreements, design guidelines, and public-private partnerships as tools to implement buffering guidelines.
- Promote **site design practices (building orientation, lighting controls, and stormwater management)** that protect park users and sensitive natural features.
- Require development proposals adjacent to these areas to demonstrate how the project **maintains trail access, ecological function, and compatibility** with nearby public open space.

## 4.C Identify funding mechanisms for long-term maintenance of acquired natural areas, particularly properties located in floodplains.

As the County acquires natural areas, particularly floodplain properties, ongoing maintenance costs become a significant responsibility. Sustainable funding strategies are needed to ensure these lands remain well-managed and accessible over time.

- Explore **community gardens, adopt-a-lot programs, and public-private partnerships**—including with anchor institutions such as hospitals—as models for shared stewardship of open spaces and natural areas.
- Partner with the **Audubon Society and other conservation organizations** to support land stewardship, habitat restoration, and stormwater management projects on acquired properties.

## 4.D Launch a litter prevention and recycling campaign.

Litter and inadequate recycling access detract from the quality of Peoria County's natural environment and public spaces. A countywide campaign can raise awareness, change behavior, and connect residents with recycling services, particularly in areas where access is currently limited.

- Design the campaign to **engage young people** through schools, youth programs, and community events, building environmental stewardship habits early.
- Incorporate **sustainability messaging** that connects litter prevention and recycling to broader environmental goals, framing participation as a meaningful contribution to the health of the county's natural environment.
- Address **gaps in recycling access** for residents who currently lack curbside or convenient drop-off options, identifying ways to expand service availability across the county.

## 4.E Update the environmental corridor map and amend the comprehensive plan with updated information.

The Peoria Area Environmental Corridor study was completed around 2006 and is overdue for an update. Refreshing the corridor map with current data will ensure the comprehensive plan reflects existing ecological conditions and emerging conservation priorities, including the relationship between corridors and opportunities for ecotourism.

- Develop a methodology for updating the **GIS data** that may include consideration of ecosystem continuity, novel ecosystems, and other relevant ecological criteria.
- Review updated corridors relative to the **Future Character and Land Use Map and comprehensive plan recommendations** and amend the plan accordingly.