Comprehensive Land Use Plan

August 2026

Peoria County, Illinois

Peoria County 200+

TOGETHER WE PLAN.
TOGETHER WE GROW.

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Special Thanks To

Brimfield Library

Distillery Labs

Lillie M. Evans Library District

Morrison and Mary Wiley Library

Peoria County Farm Bureau

Peoria Public Library

Peoria Riverfront Museum

Resolution of Adoption

TO THE HONORABLE COUNTY BOARD)
)
COUNTY OF PEORIA, ILLINOIS)

Your Land Use Committee does hereby recommend passage of the following Resolution:

RE: Adoption of Peoria County 200+, Peoria County's Comprehensive Plan

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, a Comprehensive Plan is a document that outlines a community's vision for its future development, including goals, strategies, and land use regulations, and;

WHEREAS, Peoria County adopted it current Comprehensive Land Use Plan in August 2009, and;

WHEREAS, Peoria County entered into an agreement with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) in order to compose a new Comprehensive Plan by administering and managing the process for a consultant-led planning process, and;

WHEREAS, a Planning Commission was appointed by the Peoria County Board to guide the growth and development of the Plan.

WHEREAS, from October 2025 to August 2026, Peoria County Planning and Zoning, TCRPC, and the Planning Commission worked with Planning Next, Inc., to gain community input, host community engagement events, conduct stakeholder interviews, and review drafts of the new comprehensive plan, and;

WHEREAS, your Committee met on August 24, 2026 to consider Peoria County 200+, and voted to adopt this document as its Comprehensive Plan.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, by the County Board of Peoria County, Illinois, that Peoria County 200+ be adopted as the effective comprehensive plan for Peoria County.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED,
LAND USE COMMITTEE

Letter to the Community

Peoria County is at a defining moment. The world around us is changing rapidly, demographically, economically, and technologically, and the decisions we make today will shape Peoria County for decades to come. Recognizing that opportunity, Peoria County, in collaboration with the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, undertook an ambitious, countywide planning process to chart a course for our future: Peoria County 200+.

Peoria County 200+ addresses the full range of forces shaping the County's future. It confronts real challenges: a changing economy, shifting demographics, aging infrastructure, and the need to preserve irreplaceable agricultural and natural assets. But it also builds on remarkable strengths, a productive agricultural landscape, growing opportunities to capitalize on assets, a collection of trails and natural areas, and communities with deep roots and a strong sense of place. The plan establishes a shared vision for the County's future and lays out a clear, actionable roadmap for getting there.

The recommendations in this plan address the issues that matter most to Peoria County: supporting smart, infrastructure-guided growth near existing village centers; conserving farmland and rural character; investing in broadband, water, sewer, and transportation; protecting environmental corridors, parks, and natural areas; and positioning the County to attract investment and create jobs. These are not aspirations. They are commitments, accompanied by specific actions, identified responsibilities, and a framework for measuring progress.

Planning is only meaningful if it leads to action. Peoria County is committed to putting this plan to work, updating zoning, pursuing partnerships, securing resources, and working with municipalities, agencies, landowners, and residents to bring these recommendations to life.

This plan was shaped in part by community input gathered through public workshops, online engagement, and meetings held throughout the County. We are grateful to everyone who took the time to participate, and to the residents, stakeholders, and partners whose knowledge of this community informed every recommendation. We look forward to seeing Peoria County build the future this community deserves.

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1. Introduction

Peoria County sits at the center of a diverse region along the Illinois River, home to more than 180,000 residents and a mix of farmland, industry, and urban centers. For generations, the region has been a center of agriculture and manufacturing. As growth in healthcare, education, and green energy creates new opportunities, the County used its 2025 bicentennial as a moment to reflect on its history and future, underscoring the need for thoughtful land-use decisions amid economic and population change. In the summer of 2025, Peoria County initiated Peoria County 200+, a process to develop a new Comprehensive Land Use Plan to provide a clear framework for guiding growth, 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 for preparing for change and 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 new Comprehensive Land Use Plan?

Since adoption of the County's previous 2009 plan, the community is experiencing meaningful demographic shifts and changes in development patterns that are reshaping how and where growth occurs. The previous plan reached the end of its intended lifespan and no longer fully reflected current conditions. Updating the Comprehensive Land Use Plan provides an opportunity to align community priorities with a shared vision for the future of the County, building on the changes that occurred throughout the 2010s and 2020s.

Who was involved?

Peoria County 200+ represents the community's collective vision. Throughout its development, community members actively engaged and contributed ideas and insight, which were instrumental in shaping the plan's recommendations. Below is a summary of the participants involved in this collaborative process.

Planning Commission

The Planning Commission was a diverse group of community members that met regularly throughout the planning process. These community members provided guidance on the process and substance of the plan, served as community liaisons, and will serve as stewards of the completed plan.

Stakeholders

In addition to input from the general public, meetings and interviews were conducted with a range of stakeholders to better understand the needs of specific groups within the community. This included local experts in agriculture, employment, open space, and conservation.

Public

Meaningful public involvement from all geographies and perspectives in the County was vital to the success of this planning effort.

Elected Officials

Comprehensive plans must be formally adopted by the County Board, which has a central role in implementation. County officials monitored the progress of the plan.

Staff

Staff at Peoria County Planning and Zoning and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission supported and helped to coordinate the planning effort, while also contributing local knowledge and expertise.

Consultants

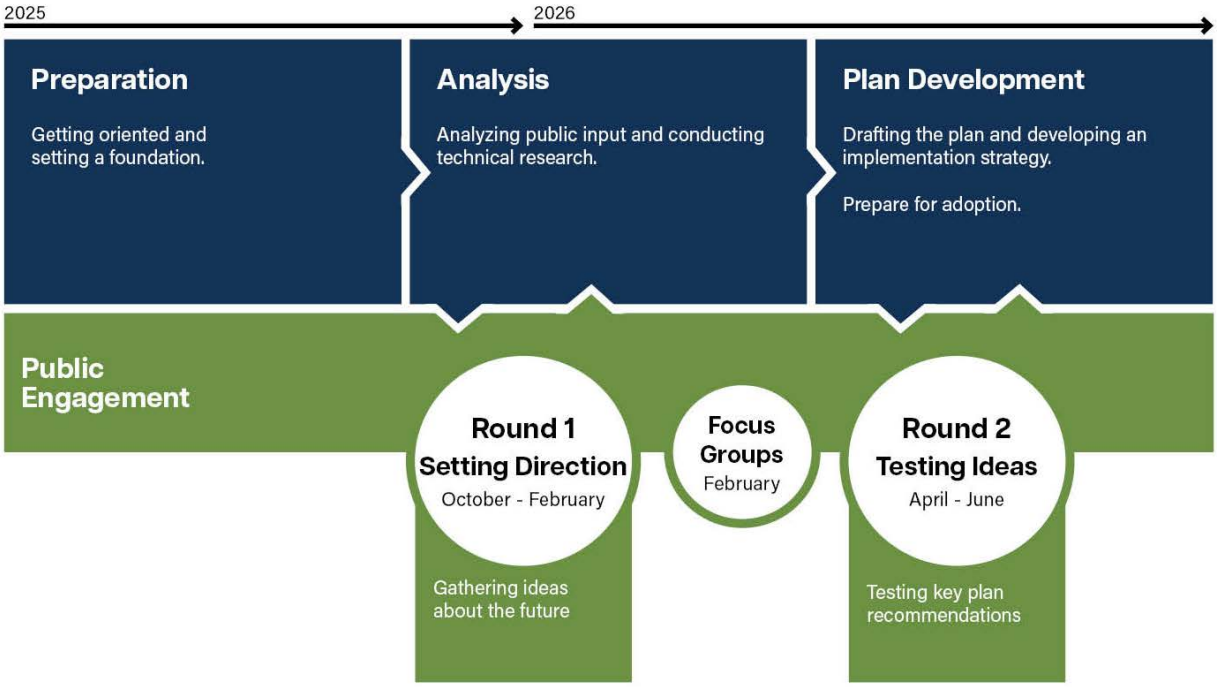
A consultant team worked closely with the Planning Commission and staff to facilitate the process, conduct technical analysis, and manage public engagement.

What is the Greater Peoria Economic Development Strategy, and how does it relate to this plan?

Peoria County, in collaboration with the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council (GPEDC), initiated the development of a comprehensive and actionable Economic Development Strategy (EDS) in Fall 2025. This forward-looking strategy will serve as a foundational framework guiding the County's economic growth and resilience over the next five to ten years. The Comprehensive Land Use Plan and EDS processes occurred concurrently to ensure that economic initiatives are thoughtfully integrated with land-use planning, infrastructure investment, and community development priorities. It is anticipated that the EDS will be completed within a similar timeframe as the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

Process

Peoria County 200+ was a thirteen-month process to create a new comprehensive land use plan for unincorporated Peoria County. The planning process included both community engagement and technical analysis, which helped shape the plan's direction.



Community members share their insight in Round 1 of engagement (left). Stakeholders provide input on the draft Character and Land Use Map (right).

Community Engagement

The planning process included two rounds of community engagement. Each engagement round helped shape the plan's direction and actions. The goal was to involve everyone who lived, worked, or spent time in the County. To achieve this, a multifaceted approach was employed to spread the word, including email campaigns, distribution of project business cards and promotional materials, coverage in print and radio media, and social media posts.

Round 1: Setting Direction

The first round of engagement for Peoria County 200+ was conducted from October 2025 to February 2026 and focused on gathering community insights to help shape the direction of the plan. A variety of engagement formats were used to reach a broad audience in the community, including small group discussions, pop-ups at community events, and an online survey. These approaches allowed residents, stakeholders, and other interested participants to share their insight in ways that were accessible and convenient. The following questions were asked in the first round of engagement:

1. When you think about the future of Peoria County, what makes you optimistic? What makes you concerned?
2. Identify three asset and three opportunity areas on a map of Peoria County. As a group, discuss why these areas were chosen. (An asset place is a place that should be protected, conserved, or that the participant would like to see more of. An area for improvement is a place that needs to be changed or otherwise improved.)
3. What outcomes would you like to see from this planning process?

Members of the Planning Commission complete small group discussions to prepare for Round 1 of engagement.

What was learned in Round 1?

Results from the first round of engagement showed a community that is optimistic about Peoria County's future while recognizing its challenges. Respondents highlighted strengths such as the low cost of living, access to healthcare, cultural and recreational amenities, fertile farmland, and regional transportation assets. Participants identified challenges such as economic stagnation, population decline, housing and infrastructure conditions, environmental stewardship, and the loss of prime agricultural land. They emphasized the need for coordinated leadership, protection of environmental and agricultural resources, and business and talent attraction.

Focus Groups

Between the first and second rounds of community engagement, a series of focus groups was conducted to gather input on the draft Future Character and Land Use Map from key sectors of the community. These focus groups included professionals representing a range of perspectives from across the County, including agriculture, environment and open space, and employment-related fields. The sessions allowed participants with subject-matter expertise to share insights on how proposed land use patterns could support economic vitality, resource stewardship, and long-term community goals.

Round 2: Testing Ideas

The second round of engagement took place from April through June 2026 and focused on gathering feedback on key draft recommendations for the plan. This was done through a series of open houses held at locations throughout the community, including local libraries and the Peoria Riverfront Museum. Participants reviewed the draft materials and provided input to help refine the plan's direction. Following some of the open houses, the engagement materials remained on display for several days in a roadshow format, allowing additional community members to view the information and provide input at times that were convenient for them. An online survey mimicking the open house activities was also available on the project webpage.

Community members participate in Round 2 of engagement.

What was learned in Round 2?

Results from the second round of engagement confirmed the direction of the plan with the vision and goals ranking high across the board.

The community highlighted the importance of investment in outdoor public spaces and the prioritization of sustainability initiatives. Participants also noted the opportunity of highlighting arts and culture as useful placemaking initiatives to drive resident connection, leading to the addition of action 1.G.

Outreach

To ensure this plan reflects the community's needs and values, the public was consistently informed through a multi-sourced outreach campaign.

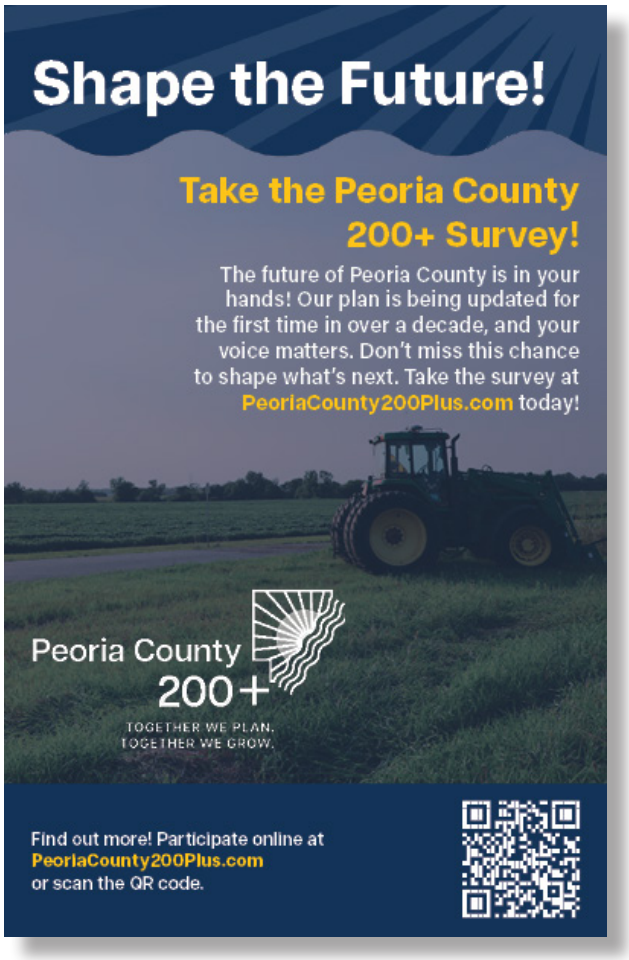
Peoria County 200+ used a multifaceted outreach strategy to spread the word about opportunities to participate. Efforts included targeted email campaigns, rack card distribution, interactive pop-up events, social media, local radio, and news feature for broad visibility.

Through the multiple rounds of engagement, over 116 community organizations were directly reached out to including but not limited to:

- Agricultural Focus Groups
- Cultural and Arts Organizations
- Environmental Community Groups
- Faith Communities
- Local Businesses
- Local Schools and Colleges
- Media
- Social Services
- Transportation Utilities and Services
- Villages and Townships
- And many others!

116+ Community Organizations

469+ Email Subscribers



Peoria County 200+

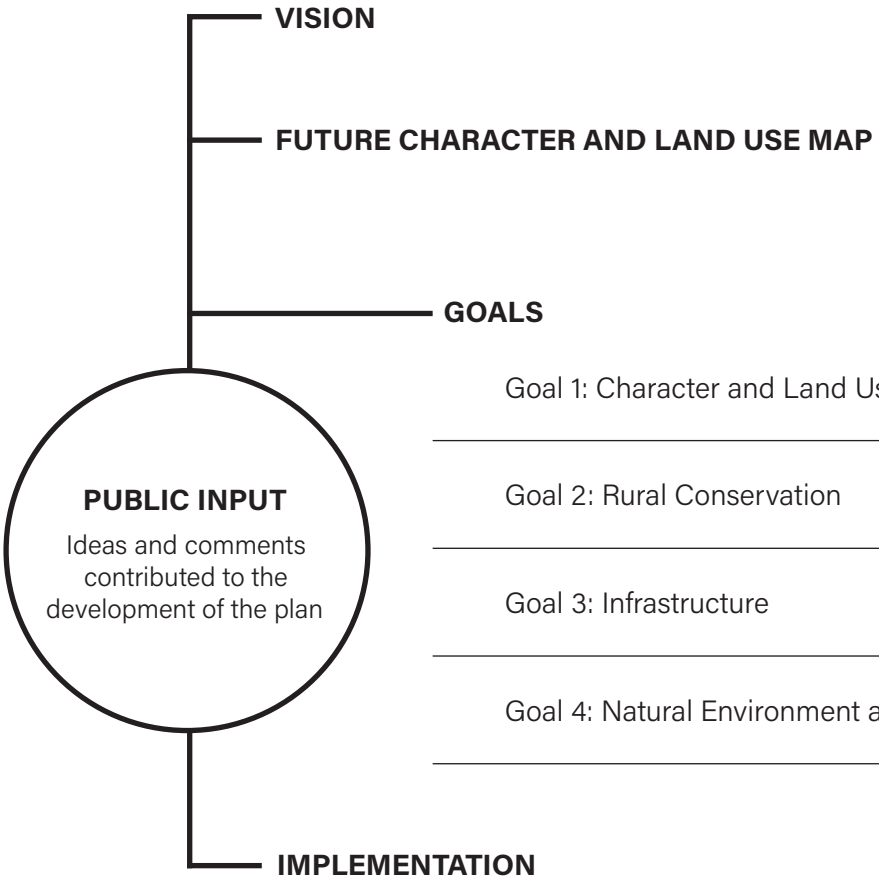
TOGETHER WE PLAN.
TOGETHER WE GROW.

Shape the Future of Peoria County!

Get involved in the Peoria County Comprehensive Land Use Plan today.
PeoriaCounty200Plus.com

Plan Framework Summary

The plan contains 19 actions organized under four goals.



GOALS	ACTIONS
Goal 1: Character and Land Use	6
Goal 2: Rural Conservation	4
Goal 3: Infrastructure	4
Goal 4: Natural Environment and Open Space	5

Future Character and Land Use Map

The Future Character and Land Use Map is located within Chapter 3. It 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. The map is not intended to be or replace zoning, but to help inform it, as well as other potential regulations and policies.

Implementation

The plan includes guidance on implementation, outlining how recommended actions can be carried out over the short and long term and identifying leadership and partner roles to support progress. To support this effort, an implementation matrix is included to organize actions, timelines, and responsibilities in a clear and accessible format.

Vision

The vision captures the highest-level aspirational view for the future of Peoria County and provides the overall direction 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

Actions are implementable policies, programs, and projects.

Goals

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.

Infrastructure

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

Rural Conservation

Rural landscapes and agricultural lands are productive and valued as assets.

Natural Environment and Open Space

Environmental and recreational assets are prioritized for conservation, accessibility, well-connectedness for the overall enrichment of daily life.

2. Peoria County Today

Peoria County is located in central Illinois along the Illinois River and serves as a hub within the broader Peoria metropolitan region. Positioned roughly midway between Chicago and St. Louis, the County encompasses 629 square miles and connects rural communities, small towns, and the City of Peoria, the region's largest urban center. Its geography includes productive agricultural land, river corridors, neighborhoods, industrial areas, and regional transportation assets that link the County to statewide and national markets. Over time, the County has experienced notable shifts related to people, prosperity, and place. This chapter describes existing conditions in the County and provides a foundation for the plan's goals and actions.

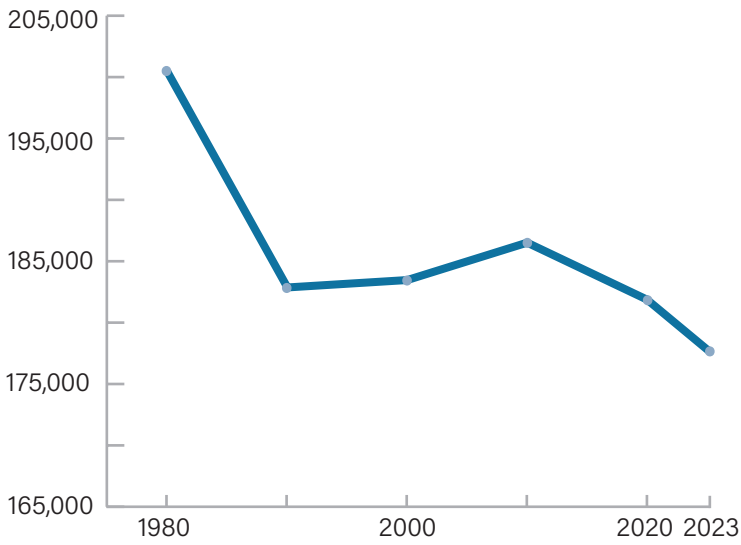
People

Demographic conditions related to population, household makeup, age, and diversity.

Population has declined

Peoria County's population has fluctuated over the past several decades but has declined overall since its peak in 1980. The County's population remained relatively stable from 1990 through the early 2000s, and experienced modest growth leading up to 2010. Since 2010, however, the population has steadily declined, falling from 186,494 to an estimated 177,513 in 2023. Continued population decline is expected and may contribute to a reduced tax base, labor shortages, and challenges in sustaining services, amenities, and infrastructure.

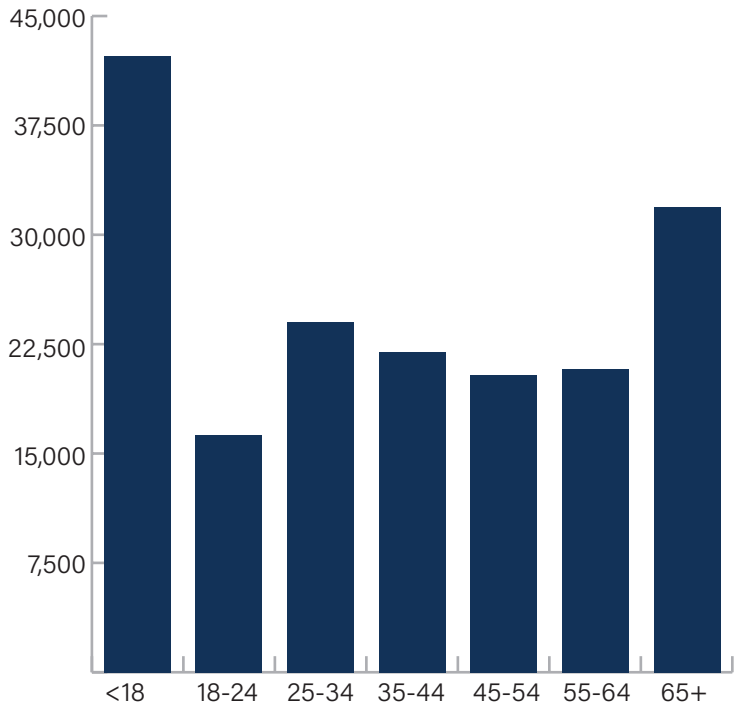
Population Change, 1980-2023



Younger and older age cohorts are growing

The County's age distribution has shifted over the past decade. Between 2010 and 2023, the number of residents under age 18 and those age 65 and older increased. At the same time, declines occurred across the 18 to 64 age groups, contributing to a smaller labor force and reduced tax base. These trends are reflected in the County's rising median age, which increased from 36.5 years in 2010 to 38.1 years in 2023. These shifts highlight the need for services tailored to both younger and older residents and highlight the importance of retaining and attracting working-age residents to support long-term economic success.

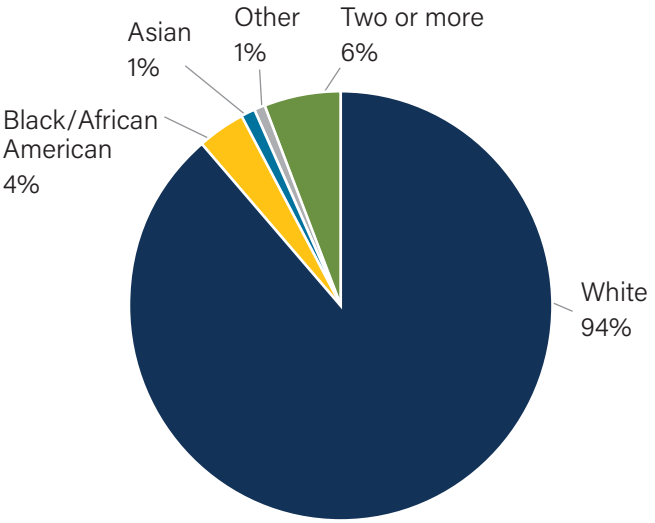
Age of Population, 2023



The racial composition has remained relatively stable over time

Peoria County's population remains predominantly white, though racial diversity has increased modestly over the past decade. In 2020, approximately 94% of residents identified as White alone, compared to 98% in 2010. The Black or African American population increased between 2010 and 2020, from 3% to 4%, while smaller increases were also observed among residents identifying as Some Other Race and those identifying with two or more races. While overall racial diversity remains limited at the countywide level, these trends highlight gradual change and underscore the importance of inclusive planning and equitable access to housing, services, and opportunities across communities.

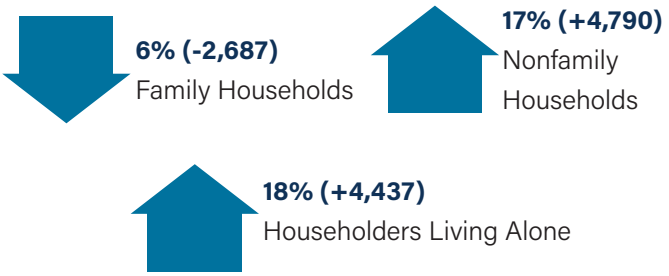
Race Classification, 2020



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

The number of households in Peoria County declined by approximately 3% between 2010 and 2023. This decline mirrors broader population trends and may also be influenced by factors such as housing quality, availability, and changing household preferences. While family households continue to make up the majority of households (about 57% in 2023), their number has decreased over time, while non-family households and householders living alone have increased. In particular, the number of individuals living alone grew from 24,004 in 2010 to 28,440 in 2023, including an increase among those age 65 and older. These shifts suggest growing demand for a wider range of housing types and sizes, including options that better serve smaller households and aging residents.

Household Change, 2010-2020



What is a household?

The following definitions are used by the U.S. Census Bureau in relation to households.

A **household** consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit.

A **family household** includes the householder and all other people in the living quarters who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption.

A **nonfamily household** consists of a householder living alone (a one-person household) or where the householder shares the home exclusively with people to whom they are not related.

Place

Characteristics of the physical environment.

Existing Land Use

The Existing Land Use Map illustrates the location and extent of various land uses, including residential, commercial, parks, and agriculture. This map serves as a valuable tool for inventorying the community, learning from it, and making informed decisions about future land uses. The existing land use designations are defined below.

Agriculture. Land used for the production of animal or plant life, cultivation, livestock, and pastures that can range in lot size across the County.

Single-Family. Land used for an individual detached, residential dwelling unit on a single parcel that can range in lot size across the County.

Parks, Recreation, and Open Space. Land used for public parks, protected conservation areas, cemeteries, designated open spaces within neighborhoods, and private or semi-public recreational areas such as golf courses.

Industrial. Land used for light to moderate manufacturing, warehousing, research and development, logistics uses, and other similar uses.

Commercial. Land used for retail, restaurants, shopping centers, auto-oriented businesses, mixed-use developments, and other similar uses.

Institutional. Land used for government buildings, schools, universities, churches, community organizations, non-government community uses, and other similar uses.

Vacant. Land that is currently undeveloped, without a predominant use or primary building.

Multi-Family. Land used for residential areas with two or more dwelling units on a single parcel. This include everything from duplex and townhome dwelling units to multi-unit apartment buildings.

Airport. Land used for actual or foreseeable aeronautical purposes, including uses directly related to operations, such as warehousing or retail operations serving commercial passengers. Uses may not conflict with existing or foreseeable aeronautical needs or demands.

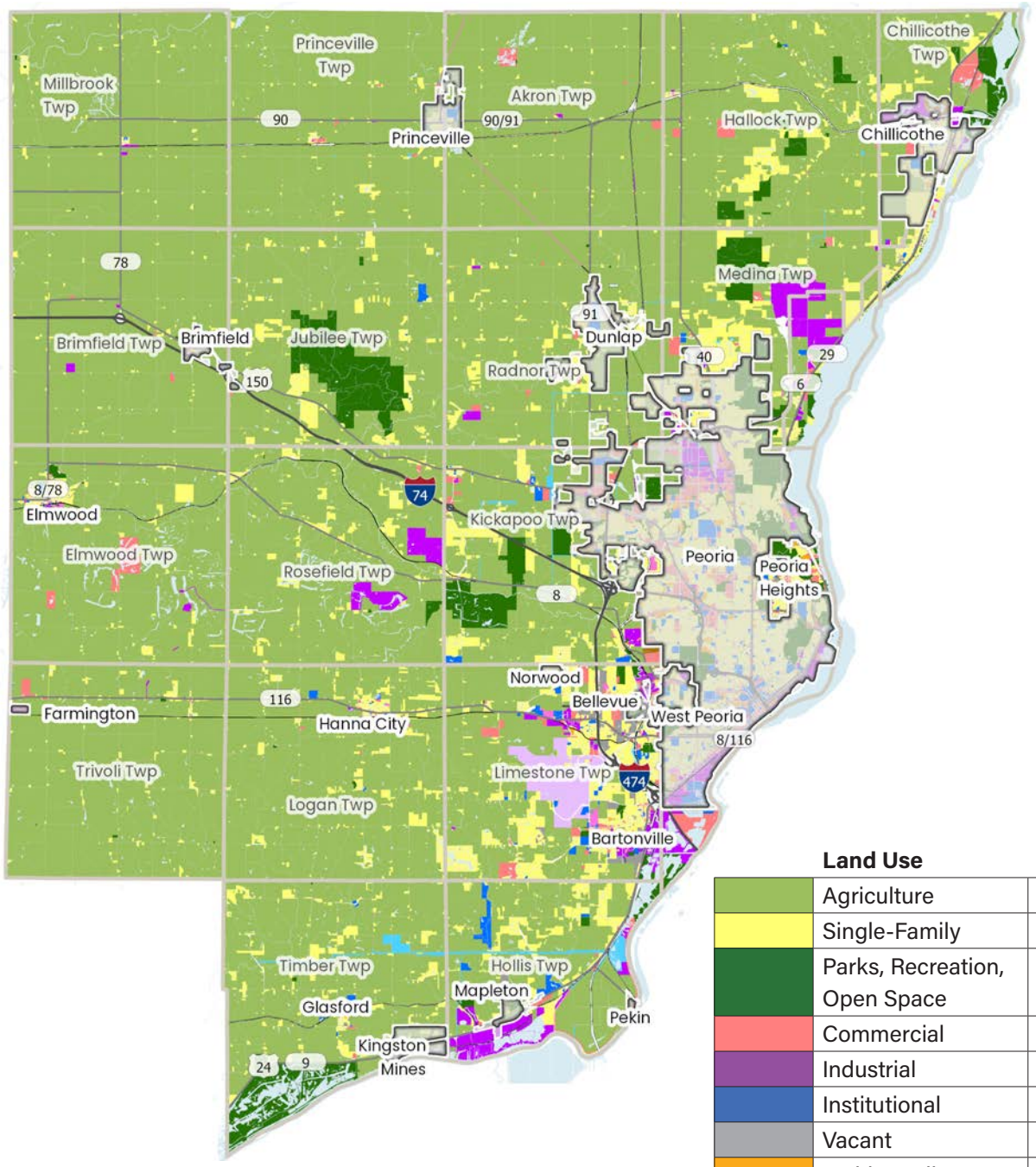
Right-of-way (ROW). Land used for actual or foreseeable aeronautical purposes, including uses directly related to operations, such as warehousing or retail operations serving commercial passengers. Uses may not conflict with existing or foreseeable aeronautical needs or demands.

Other. Land that is exempt or not categorized.

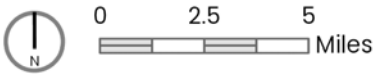
Utility. Land used for infrastructure and facilities that provide public services, including water and wastewater treatment, stormwater facilities, energy generation, telecommunications, and other similar utility uses.

Mobile Home. Land used for mobile homes on individual parcels or clustered together in "mobile home parks" on a single parcel.

Existing Land Use



	Land Use	Acreage	Percent
	Agriculture	299,611	73%
	Single-Family	43,117	10%
	Parks, Recreation, Open Space	23,558	6%
	Commercial	16,809	4%
	Industrial	10,434	3%
	Institutional	5,234	1%
	Vacant	2,960	<1%
	Multi-Family	2,632	<1%
	Airport	2,534	<1%
	Right of Way	2,402	<1%
	Other	1,409	<1%
	Utility	1,206	<1%
	Mobile Home	558	<1%
	Total	**412,462**	**100%**



Agriculture is the predominant land use

Agriculture is the predominant land use in Peoria County and has continued to grow since 2017, according to data from the Census of Agriculture conducted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In 2022, farmland accounted for approximately 278,241 acres countywide, with cropland comprising the vast majority at 226,052 acres, followed by woodland, pastureland, and other agricultural uses. Between 2017 and 2022, the number of farms in the County increased by 12%, while the average number of acres per farm declined slightly.

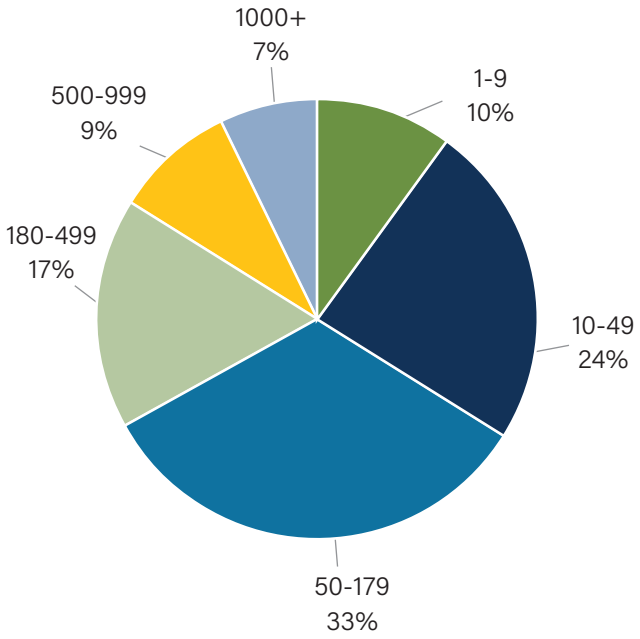
Key economic indicators also point to strong agricultural output during this period. The market value of agricultural products sold increased by 72%, from $145 million to nearly $250 million. However, farm production expenses rose by 45% in the same period.

Overall, the County experienced growth in the agricultural sector between 2017 and 2022. However, broader statewide and national trends point to ongoing challenges, including market volatility, rising input costs, and long-term industry uncertainty. These conditions show the importance of supporting agriculture as an integral part of the local economy and planning for resilience amid changing economic and environmental factors.

Changes in Agriculture, 2017 -2022

	2017	2022	Percent Change
Total Land in Farms (Acres)	250,070	278,241	+11%
Total Cropland (Acres)	216,260	226,052	+5%
Harvested Cropland (Acres)	203,636	214,201	+5%
Number of Farms	884	989	+12%
Average Size of Farms (Acres)	283	281	-1%

Farm Size (Acres), 2022



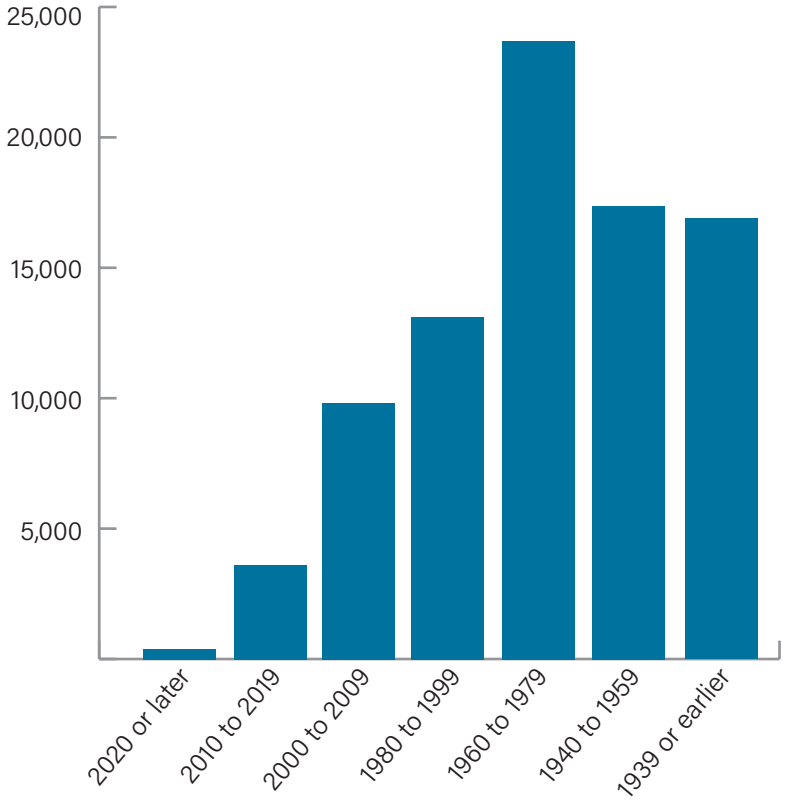
Most housing is in the city

There are approximately 86,000 housing units across the county. Sixty-four percent are located in the city of Peoria. Twenty-nine percent sit within the towns and villages across the county. The rural areas represent less than 10%.

The housing stock is aging

The County's housing stock is relatively old, with approximately seventy percent of homes built before 1980. Much of the County's housing was constructed between 1960 and 1979, followed closely by homes built before 1940 and those built between 1940 and 1959, reflecting decades of earlier growth and development. More recent construction has occurred at a slower pace, with comparatively few homes built since 2000 and limited new housing added since 2020. An aging housing stock can present challenges related to maintenance, energy efficiency, and accessibility, while also influencing housing choice and affordability. These conditions highlight the importance of reinvestment, rehabilitation, and new development in appropriate locations to ensure the County's housing supply continues to meet the needs of current and future residents.

Year Housing Built



The majority of the housing in the County is single-family

The housing stock across the county is predominately single family detached. There are approximately 15,000 units located in buildings with 5 or more units. Ninety-one percent are in the city of Peoria with the balance primarily in Peoria Heights and East Peoria. In other words, apartment options are limited outside of the city. In contrast, more than 51% of mobile homes are located across the unincorporated areas of the county.

Types of Housing in Peoria County

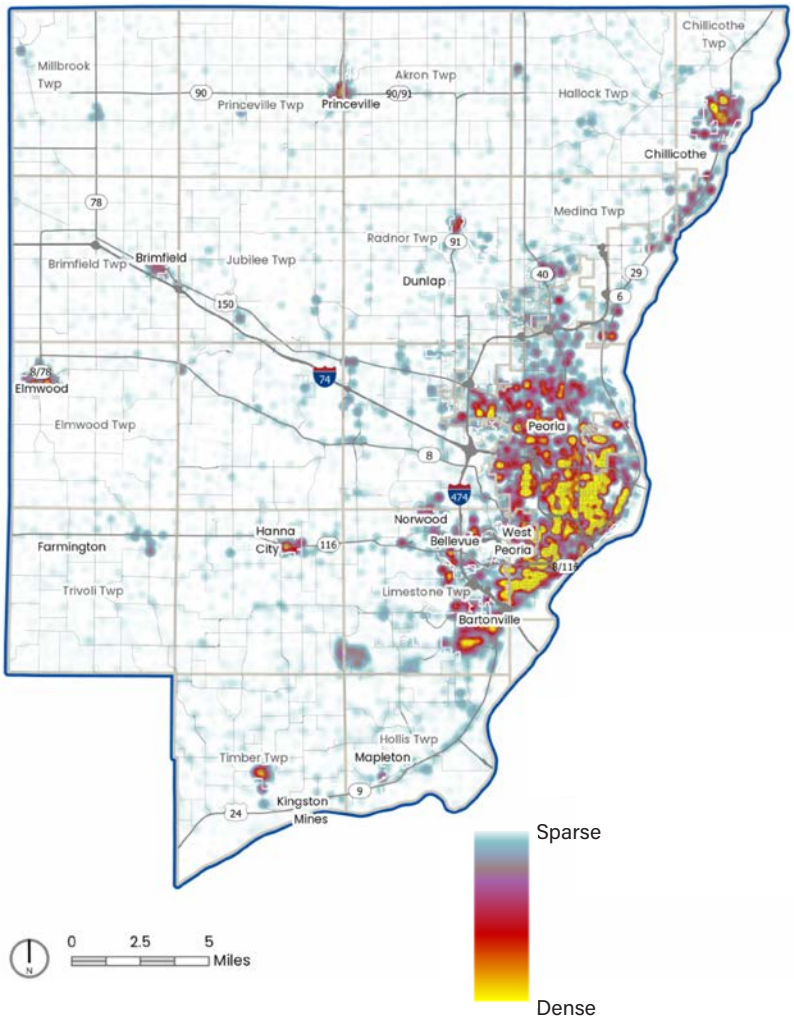
Type of Structure	Number of Units
1, detached	61,158
1, attached	3,470
2	2,511
3 or 4	1,642
5 to 9	4,646
10 to 19	4,079
20 to 49	3,338
50 or more	3,135
Mobile home	950
Boat, RV, Van, etc.	1

Source: Calculations based on American Community Survey 2024 5-year estimates

Homes built before 1980

The housing stock across the county is old. Seventy percent was built before 1980. Most of this older housing is not in the city of Peoria (44% of housing built before 1980), but in the other communities and the unincorporated areas of the county. Seventy-one percent of housing in the rest of the county was built before 1980.

The multi-family housing stock is not as old as the single-family housing stock across the county. Forty-five percent of buildings with 5 or more units were built before 1980.



Substantial changes in the housing market are predicted

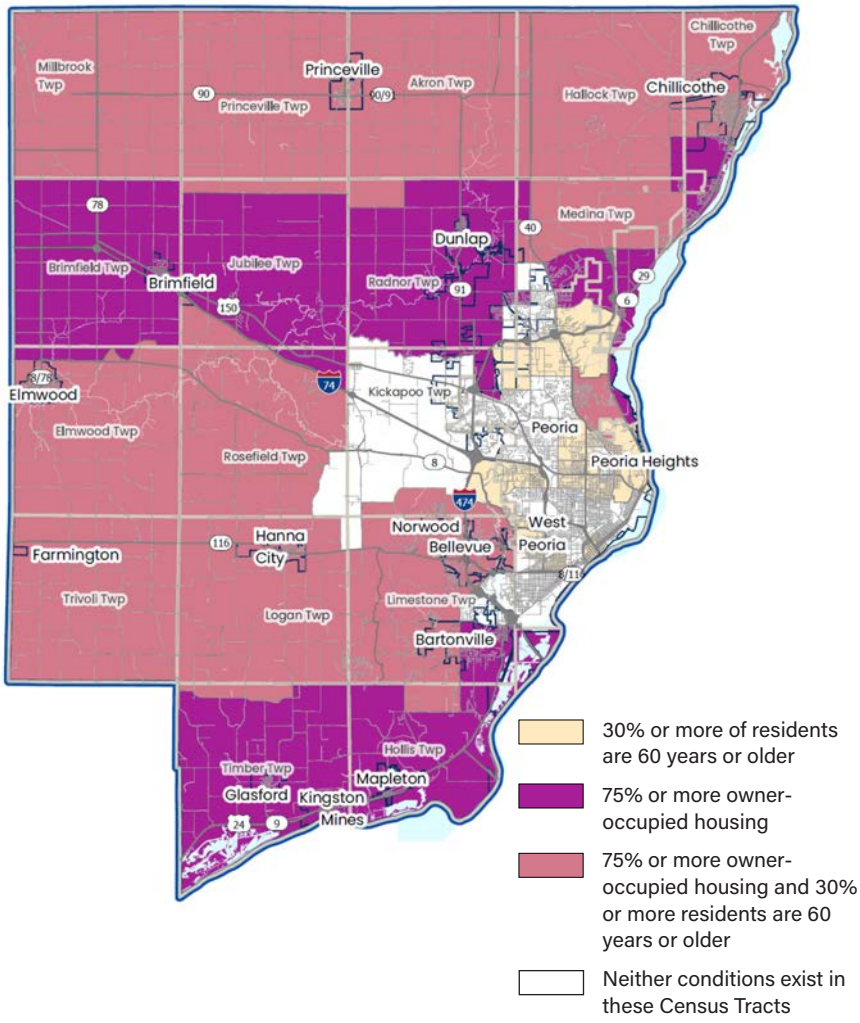
Demographics are an important consideration when reviewing ownership and rental status. There are 11,000 renters between the ages of 25 and 44. These are key years for family formation.

There are also 27,000 homeowners over the age of 55. Approximately 17,000 homeowners are over the age of 65, approximately 7,600 are outside of the city of Peoria. This suggests that over the next 20 years there will likely be substantial change in the housing market in terms of different types of housing required, and increased availability of housing.

The map to the right identifies where this may occur based on local demographics.

Homeownership Across Jurisdictions

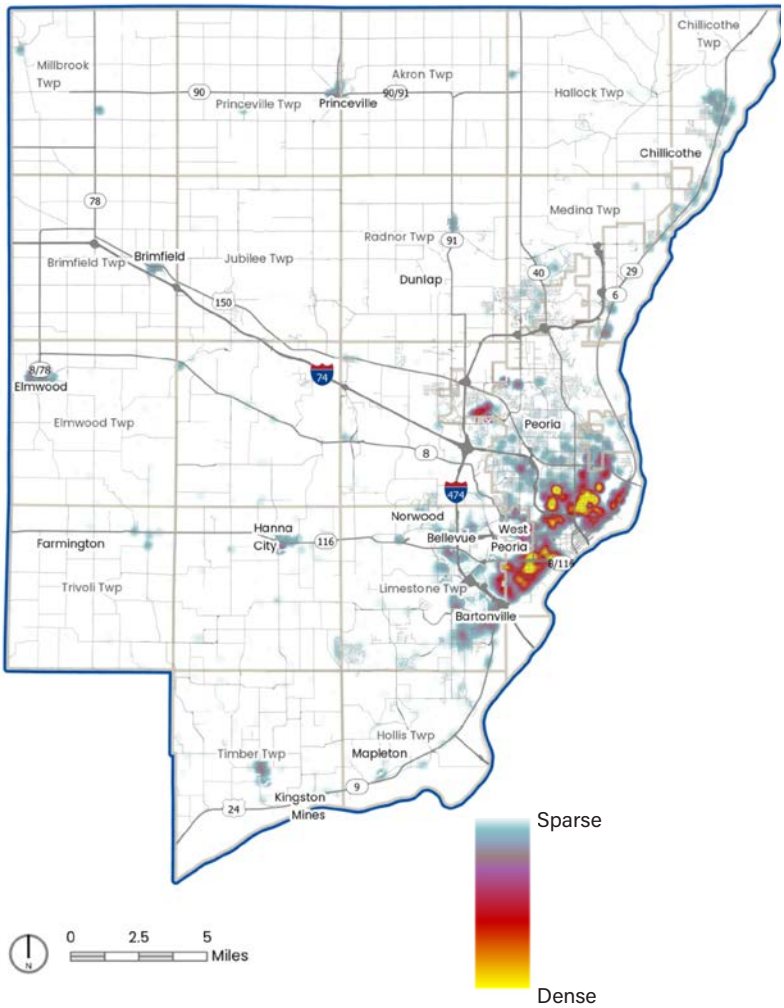
	Unincorporated Peoria County	City of Peoria	Whole County
Own	82%	58%	67%
Rent	18%	42%	33%



There are pockets of poor housing conditions in the County

One of the key considerations as this demographic shift takes place is the potential dual dilemmas of aging housing stock and older homeowners. Specifically, what it means for the quality of the housing stock and how much rehabilitation and updating it may need. The map below shows where the housing that is rated fair or poor by the Assessor's office resides across the county as a potential indicator. While the city of Peoria has the highest concentration of this rated housing situation, there are pockets throughout the county.

The map to the right shows where the concentration of homes in fair or worse condition are located.



Affordability varies by age, income, and tenure

Affordability is measured as 30% or more of income on housing costs. It is the federal benchmark that indicates housing stress where housing costs begin displacing spending on other needed items such as food. Across Peoria County, 27% or almost 21k county householders pay more than 30% of their income toward housing.

However, there is a wide discrepancy based on household tenure. Forty five percent of renters pay at least 30% of their income toward housing costs. Comparatively, 18% of homeowners meet that threshold.

84% of county renters with affordability issues live in the City of Peoria. However, 38% of county homeowners with affordability issues live outside of the city.

Cost burdened residents vary across age, income and tenure. For example, low incomes are the largest determinant of housing stress regardless of tenure. Under $35,000 of annual income is the largest group with affordability issues regardless of owing or renting.

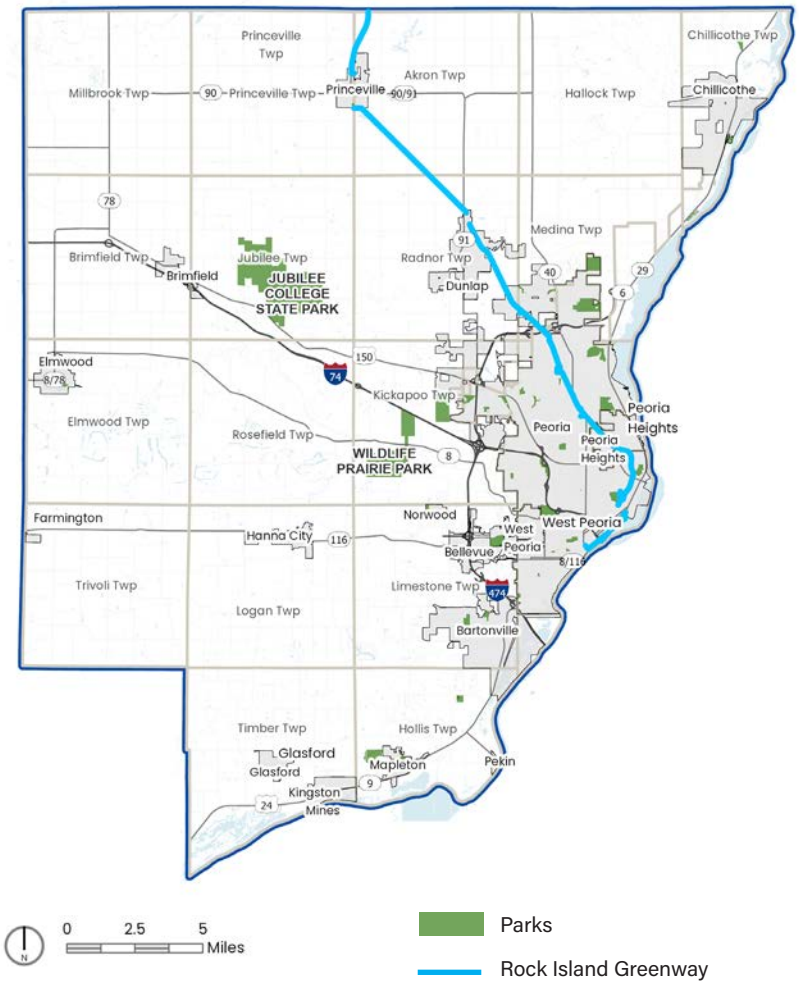
Viewing this issue through age provides a different perspective. 65+ age group is highly impacted by the cost of housing particularly as it relates to ownership.

Additional housing cost information can be found in the appendix.

The County lacks a connected park and trail system

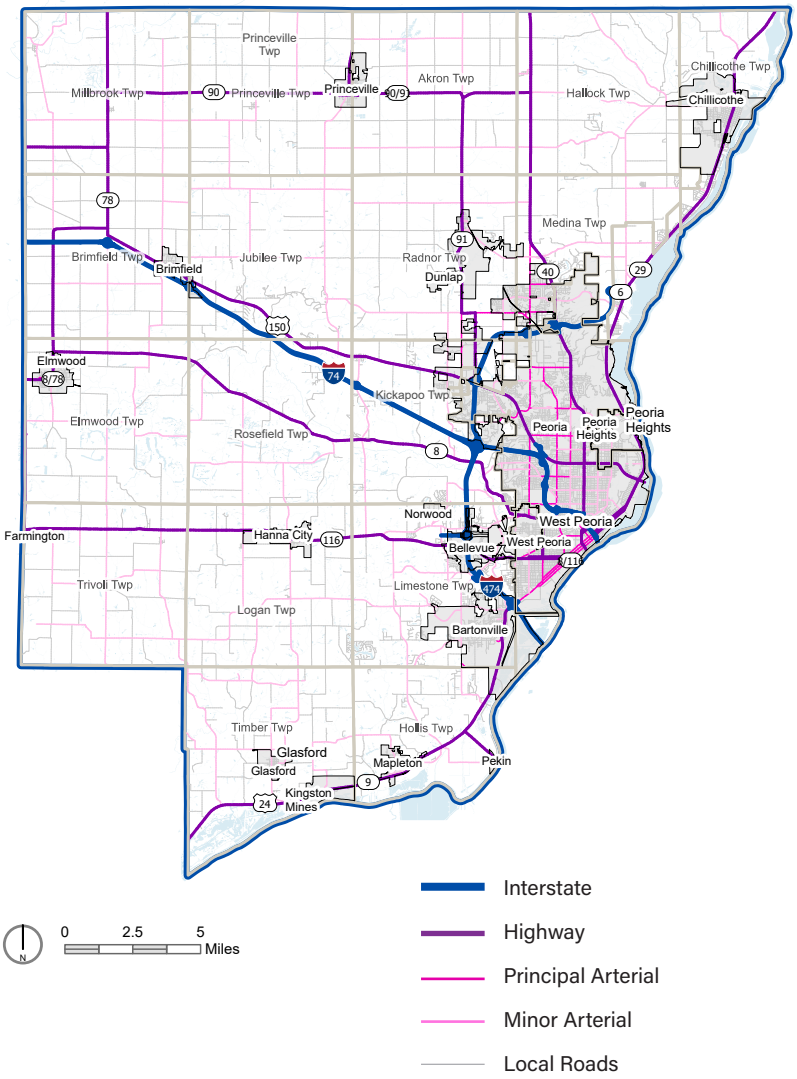
While Peoria County includes several important park and open space assets, the overall system lacks connectivity and leaves many areas underserved. Parks, open spaces, and trailways play a critical role in supporting quality of life, providing recreational opportunities, conserving natural resources, and contributing to economic vitality.

The County has approximately 8,500 acres of parkland, though most parks are located within incorporated areas, with a significant concentration in the eastern portion of the County. Outside of these areas, access to parks and recreational facilities is more limited, particularly in unincorporated and rural communities. The County's trail network is also limited, consisting primarily of the Rock Island Greenway, a 25 mile trail that stretches from the City of Peoria to the County line in the north. The lack of a connected, countywide park and trail system highlights opportunities to improve access, enhance connectivity, and better link communities to recreational and natural resources.



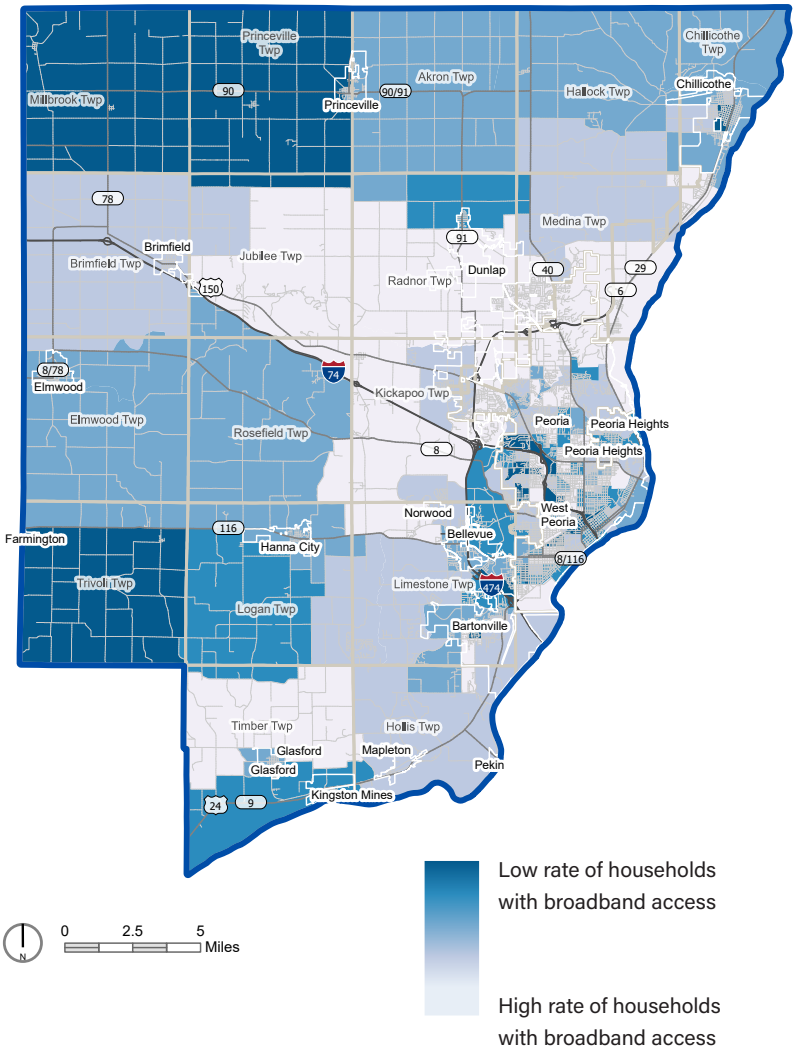
Road connectivity is strong but transit is limited

Peoria County benefits from strong regional roadway connectivity, supported by major corridors such as Interstates 74 and 474 and multiple state routes that link the County to surrounding communities and employment centers. These roadway connections play an important role in supporting economic activity, freight movement, and access to regional destinations. However, public transit options within the County are limited, and gaps remain in multimodal connectivity, including pedestrian, bicycle, and trail networks. As a result, mobility can be constrained for residents without access to a personal vehicle, potentially limiting access to jobs, services, healthcare, and educational opportunities. Addressing these gaps presents an opportunity to improve mobility, equity, and access across the County.



Broadband connectivity is limited in unincorporated areas

Peoria County benefits from broadband infrastructure in many incorporated areas, particularly around the City of Peoria and other population centers, where access supports education, healthcare, employment, and business activity. However, broadband availability is more limited in rural and outlying parts of the County, creating gaps in digital connectivity. These disparities can constrain access to remote work, online learning, telehealth services, and digital resources for residents and businesses without reliable high-speed internet. As a result, uneven broadband access may limit economic opportunity and service access in some communities.



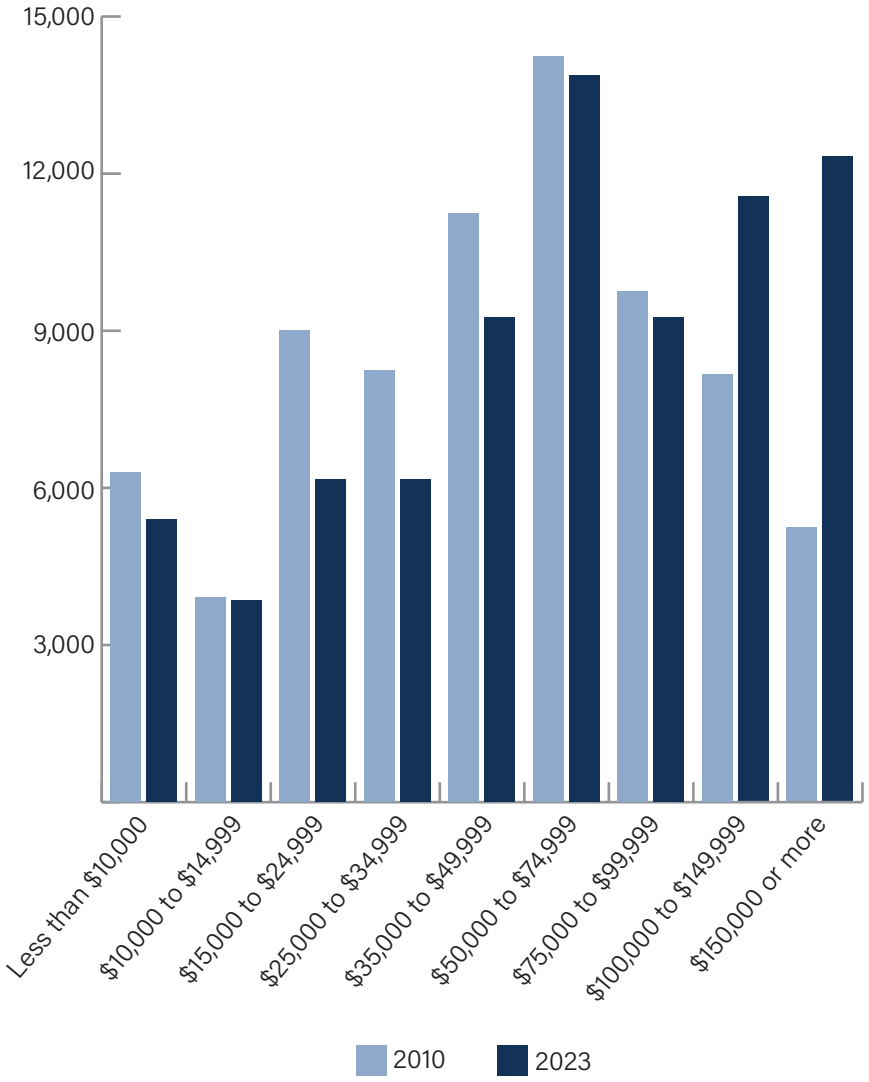
Prosperity

Conditions related to economy, employment, housing, and well-being.

Median household income is rising

Median household income in Peoria County increased between 2010 and 2023, rising from $49,747 to $64,938, indicating overall income growth over the past decade. The household income distribution shifted during this period, with a declining share of households earning below $50,000 and notable growth among higher-income households, particularly those earning $100,000 or more. Despite these gains, Peoria County's median household income remains below the statewide median of $81,702. During the same period, the share of families living below the poverty line remained relatively stable, suggesting that income gains were not evenly experienced across all household types. Together, these trends highlight ongoing economic disparities and the importance of policies that support economic mobility, workforce development, and access to affordable housing and essential services.

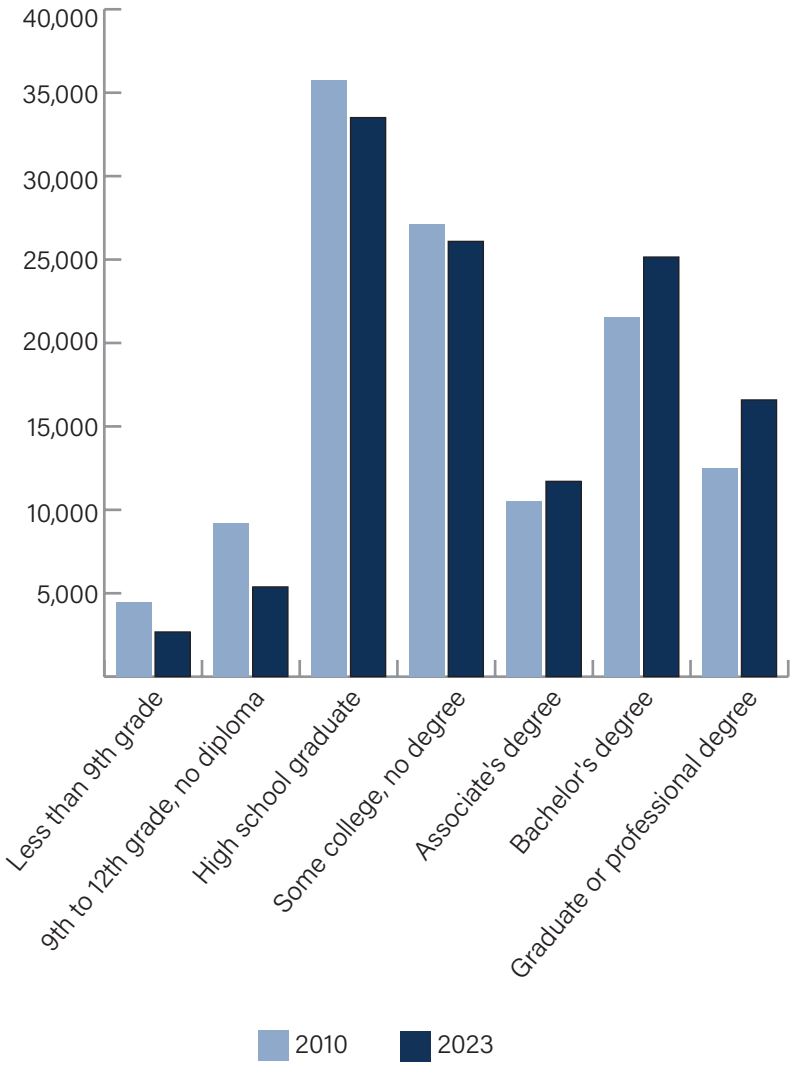
Household Income, 2010-2023



Educational attainment is increasing

Educational attainment in Peoria County has increased steadily since 2010. The percentage of residents age 25 and over with a high school diploma or higher increased from 88.7% in 2010 to 93.4% in 2023, a 5% increase. Gains were more pronounced at higher education levels, with the share of residents holding a bachelor's degree or higher rising 23%, and those with a graduate or professional degree increasing 33%. At the same time, the share of residents without a high school diploma declined, indicating overall progress in educational outcomes. Higher levels of educational attainment contribute to a more skilled workforce, which can support economic development, attract employers, and strengthen long-term regional competitiveness.

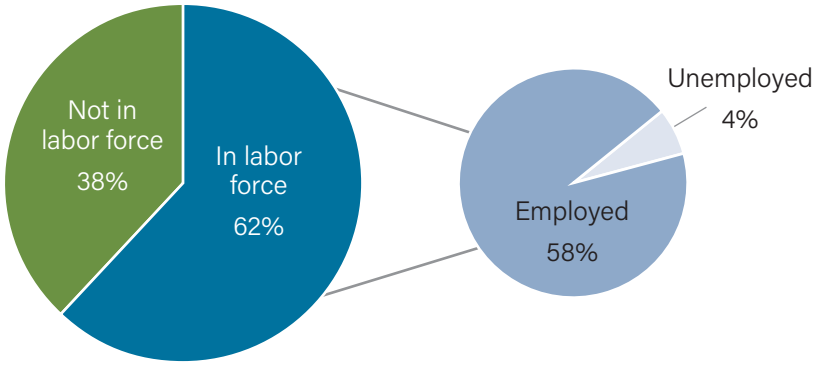
Educational Attainment, 2010-2023



The labor force has decreased

Employment patterns in Peoria County reflect a gradual shift in labor force participation over time. The labor force includes residents age 16 and over who are either employed or actively seeking employment. Between 2010 and 2023, the number of residents in the labor force decreased by approximately 7%. Employment and unemployment rates have remained relatively stable. At the same time, the number of residents not in the labor force increased, reflecting changes related in part to an aging population.

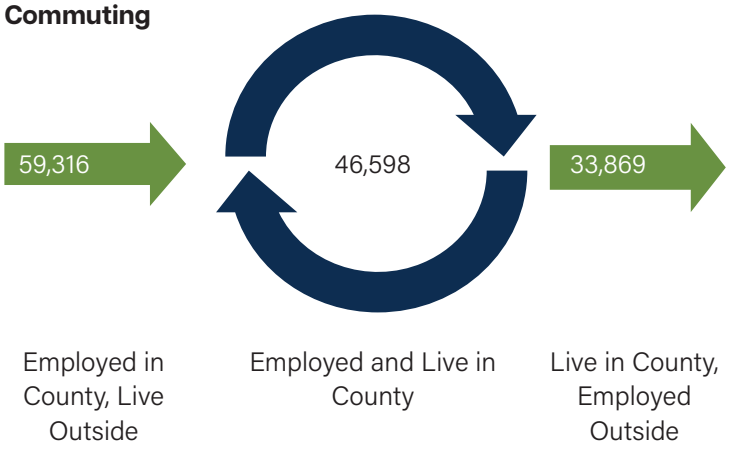
Employment Status



Most employees commute into the County for work

Peoria County functions as an employment center within the region, with most people commuting into the County for work. The mean travel time to work is approximately 19 minutes. Together, these trends point to a tightening labor pool and highlight the importance of workforce attraction, retention, and accessible transportation options to support economic vitality.

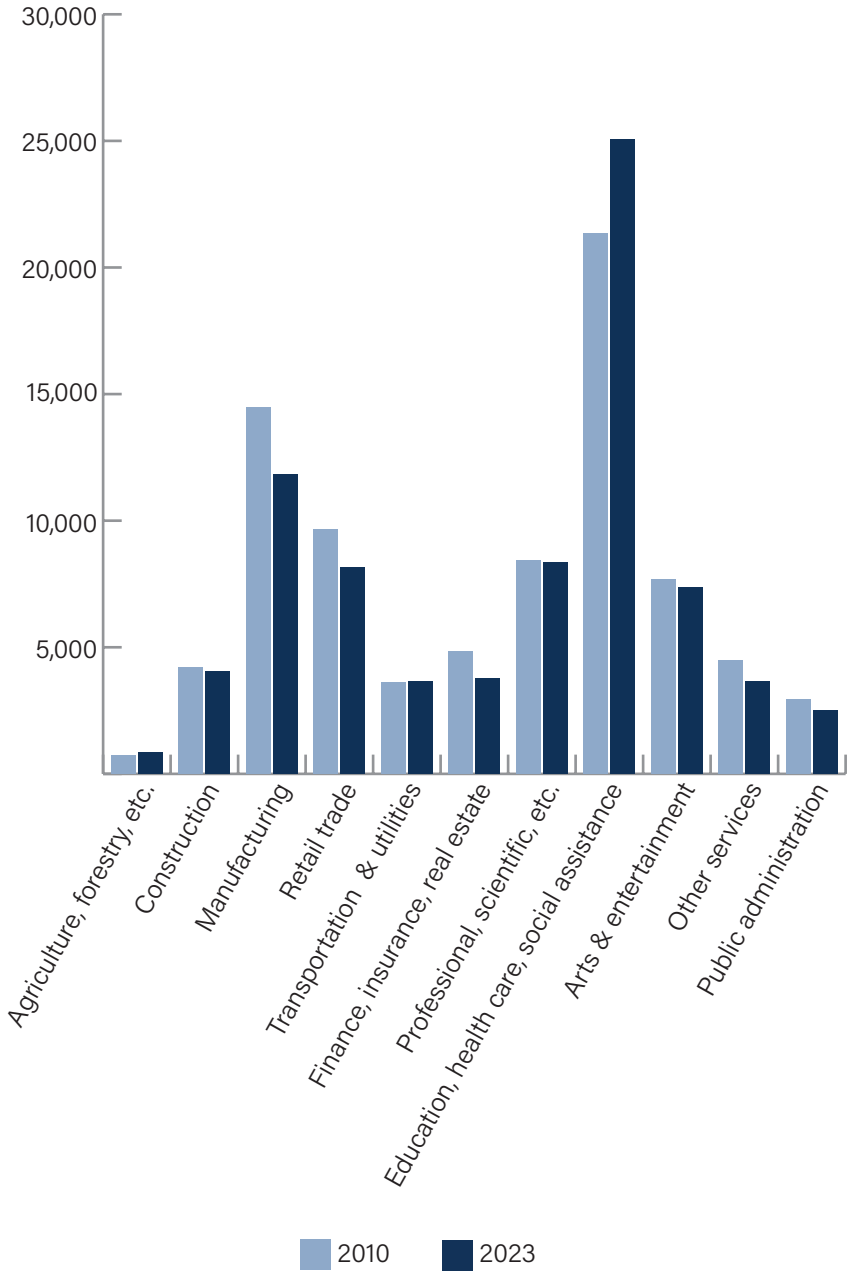
Commuting



Educational services, health care, and social assistance remains the largest employment sector for residents

The County's employment base has shifted, reflecting broader economic and industry trends. Educational services, health care, and social assistance was the County's largest employment sector between 2010 and 2023, accounting for approximately 31% of all jobs in 2023. Manufacturing remains a major employer but declined during this period, both in total employment and as a share of the workforce. Retail trade, finance and real estate, and other services also experienced declines, indicating continued restructuring across traditional industries. Professional, scientific, and management services remained relatively stable, while agriculture and transportation-related employment saw modest growth. These trends highlight a shift toward service-based employment, particularly in healthcare and education, alongside ongoing challenges in sustaining employment in manufacturing and other sectors.

Employment by Sector, 2010-2023

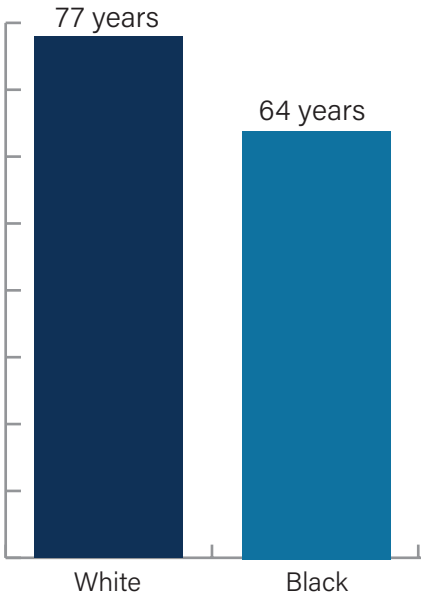


Racial and social inequalities persist

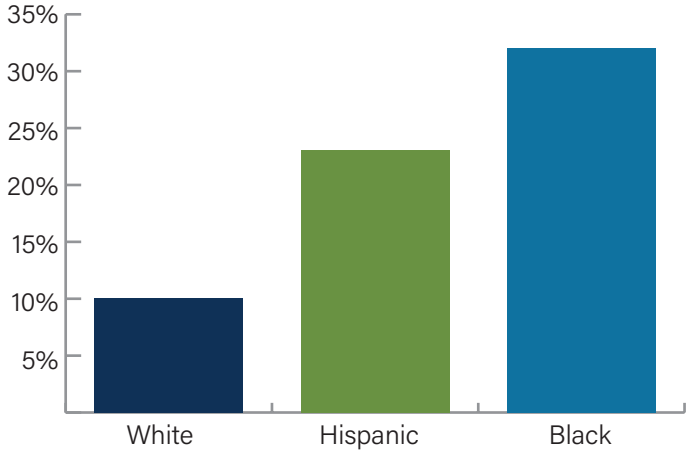
Community data and prior equity reports show that racial and social inequities persist in Peoria County, with measurable disparities across income, poverty, homeownership, educational attainment, and health outcomes. Black and Hispanic residents experience higher poverty rates, lower median incomes, lower homeownership rates, and shorter life expectancy compared to White residents. These inequities are shaped by broader social determinants of health, including access to education, employment, affordable housing, healthy food, transportation, and healthcare. Indicators such as housing cost burden, food insecurity, uninsured rates, and educational outcomes highlight how economic and social conditions are interconnected and reinforce disparities over time.

In response, the Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity has led community-driven efforts to address these challenges through initiatives focused on employment access, digital equity, community engagement in economic development, and improved outcomes in the juvenile justice system.

Life Expectancy



Poverty Rates



3. Character and Land Use

The Future Character and Land Use Map expresses the intent for how Peoria County's land resources should be used and managed over time. Rather than prescribing specific development outcomes parcel by parcel, the map illustrates the desired future character of different areas of the county, reflecting community values and long-term goals. The Character Types that accompany the map describe both the types of land uses that may occur and the broader qualities that shape how places function and are experienced, including scale, development patterns, street networks, and the relationship between buildings, open space, and the surrounding landscape. Together, the map and Character Types provide a framework to guide land use decisions while balancing growth and change across Peoria County.

Benefits of a Character-Based Approach

This plan takes a character-based approach to shaping the county's future land use pattern. While the Future Character and Land Use Map includes both primary and secondary land uses in each character type, it also shows the built form that is desired in each area.

There are several advantages to this enhanced approach, including the following:

- It describes an overall intent for each character type, which helps staff, the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, elected officials, developers/builders, and the public understand whether a particular development or project fits the spirit of the character type;
- It sets clearer expectations about the physical characteristics of development in an easy-to-understand format, which conveys standards for new development that can be used to assess how well a development aligns with community character; and
- It establishes a foundation for zoning code updates and other regulations, especially form-based standards.

The Future Character and Land Use Map was developed based on the input and analysis conducted during this planning process.

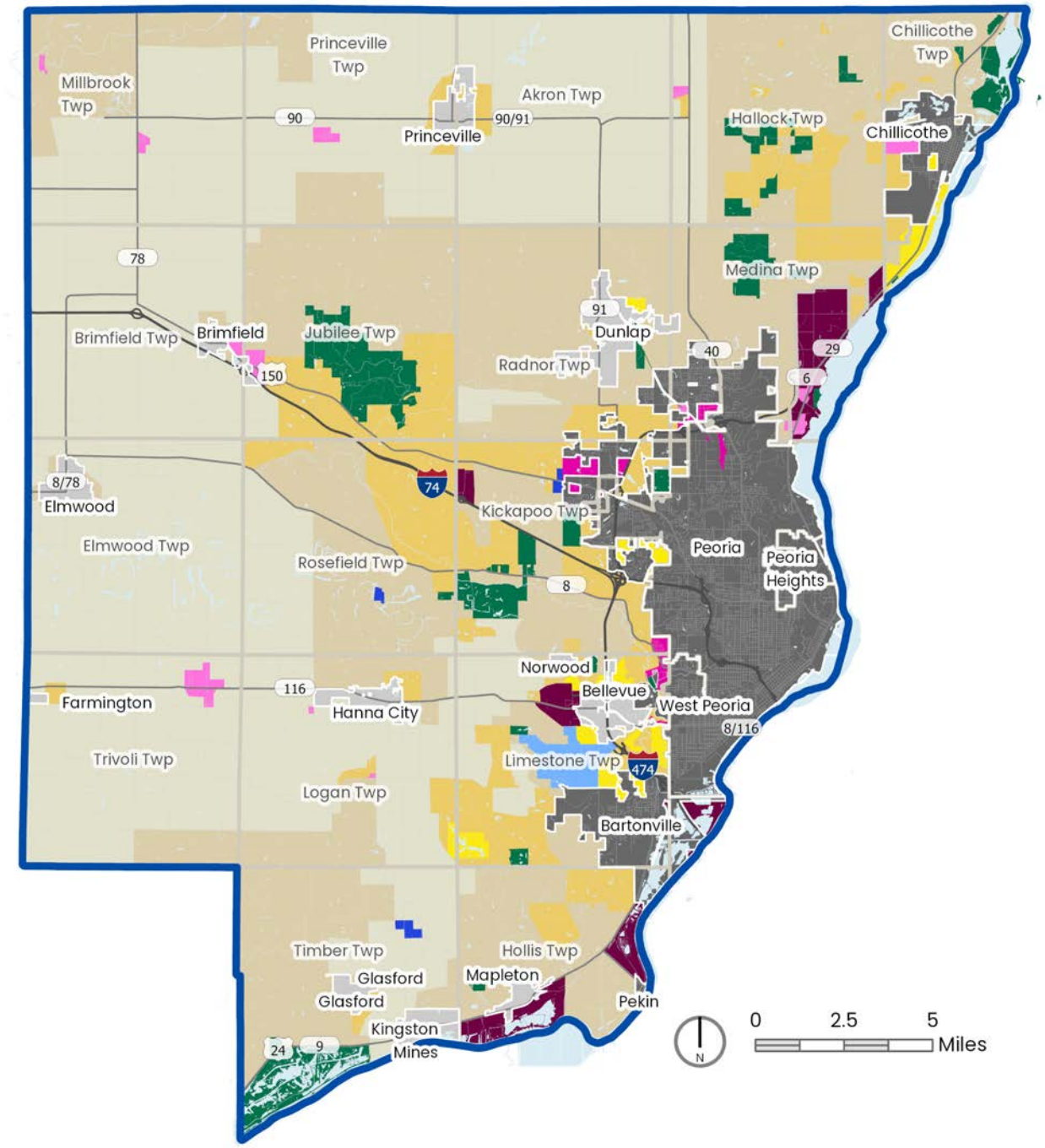
Implementing the Future Character and Land Use Map

The Future Character and Land Use Map depicts appropriate future land use patterns throughout the county. It reinforces existing patterns in some areas and supports changes in other areas. This element of the comprehensive land use plan is implemented through county zoning regulations.

Zoning is a legal tool that regulates land use, including types of structures that may be built, how they are to be built, where they are to be built, and how they may be used. The Peoria County zoning regulations govern land use in the unincorporated portions of the county. Cities and villages also have zoning regulations. Each property is assigned to a zone. There may be more than one appropriate zone for a particular future character type. For example, there is one employment center type, but there may be two or three commercial or industrial zones to account for various intensities, activities, and contexts. The Future Character and Land Use Map is implemented over time through many distinct public and private development decisions.

Future Character and Land Use Map	Zoning Ordinance
Describes intended future land use and development characteristics	Defines land uses and development characteristics allowed on a piece of land today
Defines land uses and development characteristics generally (a policy guide)	More specific and detailed than the plan
Future Land Use and Character Map is not parcel specific	Zoning map is parcel specific
Not legally binding, but zoning changes should be “in accordance with” the plan	Zoning ordinances are local laws that regulate how land is used and developed. Departure from the zoning ordinance requires either a rezoning (legislative process) or a variance (a quasi-judicial process)

Future Character and Land Use Map



Open Space and Conservation	Village	Airport
Production Agriculture	Rural Center	Public Infrastructure
Mixed Agriculture	Urban	Village Municipal Limits
Rural	Employment Center	Urban Municipal Limits

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.

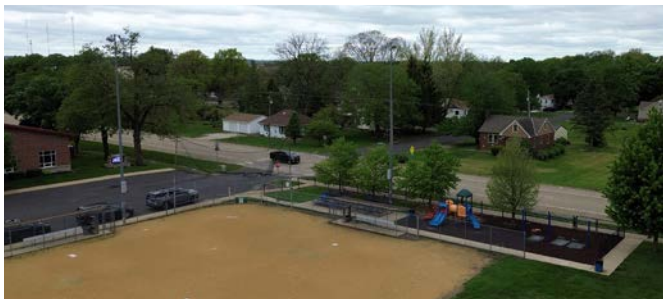
INTENT

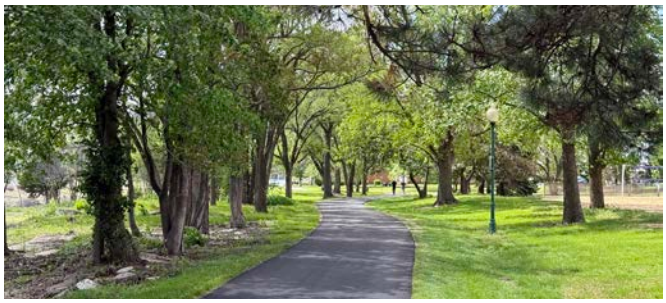
- Protect the scenic areas that contribute to the County's rural character.
- To generate economic diversity by encouraging sustainable ecotourism and improve property values, quality of life, and resilience to natural disasters.

LAND USE MIX

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

EXAMPLE CHARACTER





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.

INTENT

» Conserve the most productive farmlands in the county for production agriculture and related uses, establishing a buffer between these and more intense uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Agriculture

Secondary Uses

Single-family

Vacant

Renewable Energy Production and Storage

Parks

Recreation

Open Space

Encourage Agrivoltaics and Agro Wind where feasible

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height

1-2 Stories, accessory agriculture structures may exceed

Density

> 1 du/40 acres

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk, Bike, Farm Equipment

Parking

Private off-street (individual driveways)

Streets

Primarily automobile access. Each lot may have direct access to a corridor.

Open Space

Agricultural fields, natural conservation areas, passive open space, neighborhood parks, and private yards.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

INTENT

- Conserve family farms and natural features.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Agriculture

Secondary Uses

Single-family

Commercial

Industrial

Renewable Energy Production and Storage

Recreation

Open Space

Encourage Agrivoltaics and Agro Wind where feasible

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height

1-2 Stories, accessory agriculture structures may exceed

Density

> 1 du/25 acres

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk, Bike, Farm Equipment

Parking

Private off-street (individual driveways)

Streets

Primarily automobile access. Each lot may have direct access to a corridor.

Open Space

Agricultural fields, natural conservation areas, passive open space, neighborhood parks, and private yards.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

INTENT

- Maintain a transition between urban or suburban development and agriculture/open space.
- Manage low-intensity development without municipal or public utilities.

LAND USE MIX

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

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height

1-2 Stories, accessory agriculture structures may exceed

Density

> 1 du/2 acres

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk, Bike, Farm Equipment

Parking

Private off-street (individual driveways)

Streets

Primarily automobile access. Each lot may have direct access to a corridor.

Open Space

Agricultural fields, natural conservation areas, passive open space, neighborhood parks, and private yards.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

INTENT

- Provide housing options in unincorporated areas of the county near goods and services.
- Provide housing and limited services between more developed areas and rural agriculture and residential uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Single-family

Secondary Uses

Institutional

Commercial

Mobile Home

Parks

Recreation

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height

1-3 Stories

Density

2-10 du/acre

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk, Bike

Parking

On-street and private off street; individual drives from street

Streets

Culs-de-sac should be limited while dead-end streets are restricted unless for future planned street connections

Open Space

Neighborhood and community parks, pocket parks, and preserved passive open space. Some residential areas could include shared access to private open space

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

INTENT

» Align new housing or commercial development with the scale and pattern of historic development to preserve the feel of village living even as the communities evolve.

LAND USE MIX

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

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height	*Density*
1-3 Stories	1 du/2 acres - 5 du/acre

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)	*Secondary Mode(s)*
Walk, Bike	Automobile

Parking	*Streets*
On-street, shared structures or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings	Streets should promote a walkable setting with short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and street trees

Open Space

Community and neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plazas, trails, green infrastructure, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) act as open space.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

INTENT

- Urban areas provide everyday goods and services to nearby residents and to the rural residential areas throughout the county.
- Mixed-use development should encourage multi-stop trips with pedestrian accessibility, but should have sufficient parking and road connectivity to bring visitors throughout the region.

LAND USE MIX

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

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height	*Density*
1-4 Stories	Varies

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)	*Secondary Mode(s)*
Walk, Bike	Automobile

Parking

On-street, shared structures, or shared surface lots located to the side or rear of buildings

Streets

Streets should promote a walkable setting with short block lengths, wide sidewalks, and street trees.

Open Space

Community and neighborhood parks, pocket parks, plazas, trails, green infrastructure, and public realm (spaces between buildings and the street) act as open space.

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.

INTENT

» Employment Centers accommodate larger scale development for regional employment and economic activity that is buffered from residential uses.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Industrial

Institutional

Secondary Uses

Commercial

Data Centers

Renewable Energy Storage

FORM ATTRIBUTES

Building Form

Height

1-4 Stories

Transportation

Primary Mode(s)

Automobile

Secondary Mode(s)

Walk, Bike

Parking

Surface lots

Streets

Primarily automobile oriented development and may include accommodation for large trucks. Site design and block length should accommodate biking and other transportation alternatives.

Open Space

Trail connections, passive preserved land, and landscaped setback areas; generally private.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

INTENT

- The Airport character area maintains sufficient building height restrictions and other operational requirements to encourage the continued use or expansion of the airport.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses	*Secondary Uses*
Airport	Civic/Institutional
Airport-related Commercial Uses	Industrial

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.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

INTENT

- These areas support vital services to the community and the region.
- There should be sufficient buffering between these areas and residential uses to ensure that there is not conflict or exposure to noise, smell, or other pollutants.

LAND USE MIX

Primary Uses

Public Infrastructure

Utilities

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.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

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.

EXAMPLE CHARACTER

4. Goals and Actions

Goals are desired outcomes expressed in simple terms. The plan's goals help to organize the document. The Goals (e.g. Goal 1), will be supported by more specific Objectives (e.g. 1.A), which are supported by implementable Actions (e.g. 1.A.1).

This symbol indicates that there is additional information within the Peoria County Economic Development Strategy.

Goal 1: Character and Land Use

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. Update 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.

Use tax revenue from renewable energy projects to **support placemaking initiatives.**

Placemaking

Placemaking is a process intending on creating places where people want to gather, linger, and engage. Successful placemaking initiatives drive foot traffic to businesses and encourages outdoor activity, walkability and overall mental wellbeing.

1.B Assist individual jurisdictions in planning growth strategically within or near existing villages. 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.
- Coordinate with **villages on their economic development** initiatives.

1.C Prepare employment centers for investment. To foster economic growth and private investment, 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:

- 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.

Enterprise Zones (EZs)

An enterprise zone is a specific geographical area that has been designated by a governmental authority, in this case Peoria County. Businesses within the enterprise zone are entitled to receive various types of financial aid. These can include tax benefits, special financing and other incentives designed to encourage businesses to establish and maintain a presence within the specified zone. Peoria County currently has two different types of Enterprise Zones, the Peoria Urban Enterprise Zone and the Peoria Rural Enterprise Zone.

- 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.

- Support the newly formed **port authority** by providing coordination assistance, advocating for state and federal funding on its behalf, and aligning County infrastructure investments with the authority's development priorities. Engage as a committed partner to ensure its success.

1.D Direct the development of quality subdivisions near villages. Encourage the development of quality residential subdivisions in and around its villages by promoting design standards that reflect the character of existing communities, ensuring adequate infrastructure is in place, and coordinating with village governments on land use decisions that affect shared boundaries and service areas.

Peoria County Government Assistance Program (GAP)

Peoria County offers financial assistance to entrepreneurs and business owners seeking to start or expand a business through its Government Assistance Program. The Government Assistance Program, or GAP, is a revolving loan program that helps "fill the GAP" between traditional private financing and a project's cost by offering low-interest loans. Funding for the program is provided through the State of Illinois with Community Development Assistance Program grant funds.

1.E Provide support for the development of small area plans in neighborhoods throughout the County. Provide grants and technical assistance to help communities develop small area plans for neighborhoods, ensuring locally-driven planning efforts have the resources needed to move from vision to implementation.

1.F Create a task force to establish a development entity for missing middle and affordable housing and select economic development projects. By securing a seat at the table alongside municipal, nonprofit, and private housing development partners, the County can help shape project selection, align investments with the comprehensive plan, and advocate for equitable development outcomes across the region.

1.G Elevate arts and culture as a driver of community identity and economic vitality. To attract and retain residents and support local economies, explicitly recognize arts and culture as core components of its community development strategy, ensuring they are embedded in planning decisions, public investments, and economic development efforts. Specifically:

- Incorporate arts and cultural programming into the design and activation of publicly owned civic spaces, drawing on examples like the recent Peoria County Courthouse courtyard renovation.
- Promote arts and culture as explicit factors in business attraction and retention strategies, recognizing the role that a strong cultural scene plays in workforce recruitment and quality of life.
- Identify opportunities to integrate public art, cultural events, and creative placemaking into redevelopment initiatives across the County.

"The Pioneers" located in the City of Elmwood.

Missing Middle

The term "Missing Middle" was coined by Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design. Missing middle housing is "a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units—compatible in scale and form with detached single-family homes..." Many communities throughout the country have recognized that providing more missing middle housing can assist in meeting increased demands for housing that is in a walkable environment and serves shifting demographics, including both younger and older populations seeking less maintenance and access to amenities.

Goal 2: Rural Conservation

Rural landscapes and agricultural lands are productive and valued as assets.

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

Clustering Provisions

Clustering provisions allow developers to group homes more closely together on a portion of a site in exchange for preserving the remaining land be conserved as open space, a community green space, agricultural land, or environmentally sensitive area. The gross density of the site is comparable as if the site were divided into traditional lots. These developments lower the construction cost for infrastructure while simultaneous helping communities protect natural habitats.

Flag Lots

A flag lot is a parcel of land located behind another property that connects to the main road via a long, narrow strip of land. From an aerial view, this layout resembles a flag on a flagpole. The pole is the driveway, and the flag is where the house is located.

Depth-to-width Ratio

A depth-to-width ratio regulates the proportions of a parcel of land. It ensures lots are appropriately shaped for development and prevents the creation of unusable, or overly narrow parcels.

2.B Review and revise the zoning code to support agritourism. The County's existing assets, including apple orchards, pumpkin patches, corn mazes, sunflower fields, and Christmas tree farms, provide a strong foundation for a growing agritourism economy. 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 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.

Support the **Agricultural Development Fund** in coordination with the Economic Development Strategy.

Agritourism

The term "agritourism" refers to the crossroads of tourism and agriculture, where any form of commercial enterprise linked to agricultural production and/or processing aims to attract tourists. This could include agritourism activities on a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business for the purposes of entertaining and/or educating visitors and generating income for the general operation. Agritourism is an increasingly popular, and economically viable, opportunity in rural counties with abundant agricultural resources and close proximity to major metropolitan areas.

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

Support the **Agricultural Development Fund** in coordination with the Economic Development Strategy.

2.D Provide support for the Peoria County Farm Bureau's sustainable agricultural practices programming. Peoria County benefits from a strong network of sustainable agriculture resources, including the Farm Bureau, the Peoria County Soil and Water Conservation District, the County's Sustainability Department, and the Master Gardeners program. Stay actively engaged in the future of agriculture by strengthening these existing partnerships. Leverage and promote existing County assets, including the Sustainability Department's composting education programming, the Master Gardeners program, and Farm Bureau workshops, field days, and seminars, to expand public awareness of and participation in sustainable agricultural practices.

Prime Farmland is a USDA designation based on soil properties that naturally sustain high crop yields with minimal energy and damage.

Productive Soils refer to the actual crop yield potential of those soils, measured numerically using the University of Illinois' Soil Productivity Index (PI).

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. 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.
- Ensure **construction management best practices** to minimize disruption for system expansion.

3.B 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. 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.

3.C 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.D 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. 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.

Demand Response

Demand response transportation (DRT) is a flexible transit service where vehicles operate on dynamic, real-time routes or schedules based on passenger bookings rather than fixed stops. This type of transportation is ideal for low-density suburbs, rural areas, and individuals with disabilities.

Fixed Route Transportation Services

Fixed-route transportation includes buses, vans, rail, or other vehicles that serve the public on a predetermined route and schedule.

Grey Area Study

In early 2020, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, with funding from IDOT's Statewide Planning and Research grant and coordination from its partner agency Greater Peoria Mass Transit District conducted a Mobility Enhancement and Expansion Study for the "Grey Area." The purpose of the study was to outline mobility solutions specific to this geographic area based on transit needs and funding analysis. The study outlines the goals and objectives for service enhancement and expansion, identifies and recommends transit service solutions, prioritizes the potential funding mechanisms, and advises on effective implementation strategies.

Goal 4: Natural Environment and Open Space

Environmental and recreational assets are prioritized for conservation, accessibility, well-connectedness for the overall enrichment of daily life.

4.A 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.
- Connect residential development through **multi-use trails** where appropriate.
- Prioritize **riverfront public access**.

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

Buffers

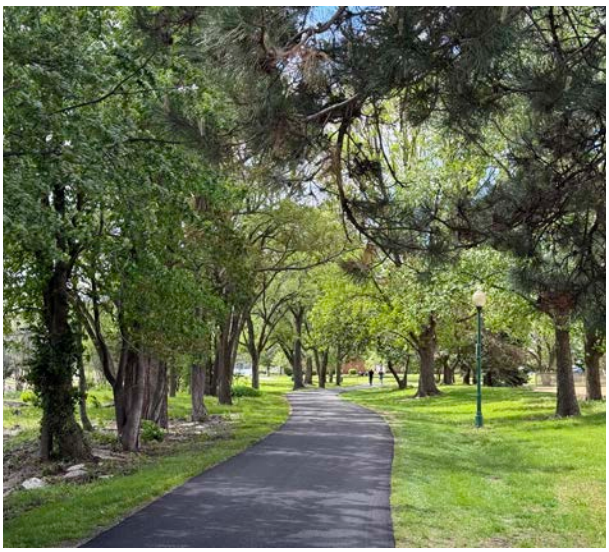
Buffers reduce noise, pollution, habitat disruption, and visual impacts from nearby development while protecting the integrity of parks, trails, and natural areas.

4.C Facilitate coordination among local jurisdictions regarding parks and recreation planning. While Peoria County does not have a countywide parks district, increased coordination between the County and local jurisdictions can help to support improvements to access to parks, trails, and open spaces for all residents. Jurisdictions should coordinate to identify gaps, link parks and open spaces to schools and neighborhoods, and jointly pursue funding 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.D 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 **conservation organizations** to support land stewardship, habitat restoration, and stormwater management projects on acquired properties.



Density Bonuses

Density Bonuses are incentives given to projects to promote infill on vacant or underutilized land and the number of affordable housing units. Developers provide public amenities in exchange for greater density level than regular zoning allows.

4.E 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.

Brownfield

According to the Illinois Environmental protection Agency brownfields are an, "abandoned or under-utilized industrial or commercial property with actual or perceived contamination and an active potential for redevelopment." The Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Remedial Project Management Section (RPMS) manages Brownfield loan programs and offers technical support to communities in ways of managing these challenging sites.

5. Implementation

Peoria County 200+ is a long-term guide for the community that outlines a variety of actions. Implementation of this comprehensive land use plan will involve local governments, non-profit organizations, local businesses, and residents. This chapter provides guidance for managing and using the Plan. These actions represent a foundation for the county and opportunities to pursue other actions that align with the vision and goals should be encouraged.

Promoting Collaboration

The Peoria County 200+ Comprehensive Plan will necessitate collaboration among individuals and organizations from diverse geographies, backgrounds, industries, and communities within Peoria County. Active community involvement is crucial to ensure that actions are aligned with the community's interests. It is especially critical that the county coordinate closing with the city and other local jurisdictions. This comprehensive plan is a dynamic document, serving as a foundation for Peoria County to realize its unified vision for the future.

County Economic Development Strategy

The Peoria County 200+ Comprehensive Plan was created alongside a County Economic Development Strategy. This economic strategy will serve as a guiding framework for the County's economic growth initiatives over the next five to ten years, fostering a vibrant and resilient local economy that benefits all residents and businesses. Notably, the Economic Development Strategy covers all incorporated areas of the County, whereas the Comprehensive Plan's planning area includes only the unincorporated County. The strategy identifies strategic opportunities and challenges facing the County. As indicated by a symbol within Chapter 4, many actions within the Comprehensive Plan have additional information within the Economic Development Strategy.

How to Use the Plan

Peoria County 200+ is intended to be used on a daily basis for both public and private decisions. It should be considered regarding development proposals, capital improvements, economic incentives, and other matters pertaining to the future of Peoria County and its communities. The following is a summary of how decisions and processes should align with the vision and goals of this plan.

Capital Improvements

Capital Improvement Programs (CIPs) for the County, City, and Villages should be consistent with the plan's goals and actions. This includes decisions about the provision of utilities, as this plan encourages development where utilities already exist or are easily accessible.

Economic Incentives

Economic incentives should be considered and prioritized relative to their consistency with the plan's actions and areas of growth or investment identified.

Private Development Decisions

Property owners and developers should align their plans with the vision and goals of the plan. Public decision makers can use it to assess if private development meets the County's needs and aspirations.

Development Approvals

Administrative and legislative approvals for development proposals should be used as a means of implementing the plan. Decisions made by the County should reference relevant comprehensive plan actions as well as future conservation, character and development and character type recommendations.

Annual Work Programs

Individual departments, administrators, boards, and commissions should be aware of the goals and actions of the plan when preparing annual work programs and budgets. It is recommended that progress on implementation of the plan be shared with the community.

Updating and Tracking

Implementation and maintenance of the Comprehensive Plan are important to its success. The plan should be assessed for progress and effectiveness. If changes or opportunities arise, those should be integrated into the plan as it evolves.

Monitoring

The plan should be monitored on a regular basis for implementation, effectiveness, and relevancy. It should be referenced annually in the development of departmental work programs, budgets, and capital improvements planning. A formal review of the plan's accomplishments and relevancy should occur within five-year intervals.

Updating

In general, an update of the plan should be considered at least every ten years. In the interim, key milestones may be reached which necessitate an update sooner than a ten-year cycle. Such milestones should be considered on a case-by-case basis. There may be circumstances that warrant formal amendment of the plan. Amendments to the plan should be made only with careful consideration and compelling justification.

Implementation Matrix

The following table organizes the actions under all of the plan's goals. The table indicates the timeframe, lead, and support for each action. The timeframes are defined by the following:

Timeframe	Length
Ongoing	Current and continuing
Short	0-2 years
Medium	3-5 years
Long	6-10+ years

Action		Timeframe	Lead	Support
Goal 1: Character and Land Use				
1.A	Update zoning to establish clear guidance for emerging land uses.	Medium	P&Z	PCB
1.B	Assist individual jurisdictions in planning growth strategically within or near existing villages.	Ongoing	P&Z, TRP	PCB
1.C	Prepare employment centers for investment.	Ongoing	P&Z, CEn, GPEDC	PCB
1.D	Direct the development of quality subdivisions near villages.	Ongoing	P&Z	PCB
1.E	Provide support for the development of small area plans in neighborhoods throughout the County.	Ongoing	P&Z, TRP	PCB
1.F	Create a task force to establish a development entity for missing middle and affordable housing and select economic development projects.	Short	P&Z	TRP, CoP
1.G	Elevate arts and culture as a driver of community identity and economic vitality.	Ongoing	GPEDC	PAA, CoP
Goal 2: Rural Conservation				
2.A	Review and revise subdivision regulations to help conserve agricultural land while still supporting housing development in desired locations.	Short	P&Z	TRP
2.B	Review and revise the zoning code to support agritourism.	Medium	P&Z	PCB

Action		Timeframe	Lead	Support
2.C	Regularly reassess the farmland most susceptible to development and identify updated priority agricultural areas.	Short	P&Z	GIS, TRP
2.D	Provide support for the Peoria County Farm Bureau's sustainable agricultural practices programming.	Ongoing	GPEDC	PFB, P&Z
Goal 3: Infrastructure				
3.A	Expand water and sewer capacity in locations where development is desired as per the Future Character and Land Use Map.	Ongoing	P&Z, GPSD	
3.B	Advocate to secure funding for passenger rail service between Chicago and the City of Peoria.	Medium	GPEDC, CAd, CoP	TRP, P&Z
3.C	Coordinate with utility providers to expand broadband and fiber-optic infrastructure.	Short	PSP, GPEDC	CEn, P&Z
3.D	Expand demand-response and fixed route transportation services to increase efficiency and performance.	Ongoing	PMT	TRP, P&Z, CoP
Goal 4: Natural Environment and Open Space				
4.A	Update the environmental corridor map and amend the comprehensive plan with updated information.	Long	P&Z, TRP	PPD
4.B	Adopt buffering guidelines for projects adjacent to parks, trails, waterways, and natural areas.	Medium	P&Z	TRP
4.C	Facilitate coordination among local jurisdictions regarding parks and recreation planning.	Medium	P&Z, PPD	TRP
4.D	Identify funding mechanisms for long-term maintenance of acquired natural areas, particularly properties located in floodplains.	Ongoing	P&Z	TRP, PPD
4.E	Launch a litter prevention and recycling campaign.	Medium	S&R	P&Z

Abbreviations

CAd - County Administration

CEn - County Engineer

CoP - City of Peoria

GIS - GIS Department

GPEDC - Greater Peoria Economic Development Council

GPSD - Greater Peoria Sanitary District

PAA - Public Arts Advisory

PCB - Peoria County Board

PFB - Peoria County Farm Bureau

PMT - Greater Peoria Mass

PPD - Peoria Parks District

PSP - Private Service Providers

Transit District

P&Z - Planning & Zoning

S&R - Sustainability and Resource Conservation Office

TRP - Tri-County Regional Planning Comission

Appendix

The appendix includes plans, studies and public engagement documentation have helped to inform the Comprehensive Land Use Plan.

A. Peoria County Agriculture Notes

B. Additional Housing Analysis

Appendix A: Peoria County Agriculture Notes

The change to the Future Land Use and Character Map adds a considerable amount of Agriculture (Production Agriculture, Mixed Agriculture, and Rural). A large portion of the increase came from the reclassification of the Environmental Corridors. Regardless of the environmental corridors, there was an increase in acreage that falls within the "Rural" Classification.

The majority of the areas that saw a change between the 2009 plan and the update are shown in the map on the following page Note that many of these places have been changed from an Agricultural designation to a Rural Center. Other significant changes are around municipal areas where land has been annexed (Dunlap and Hanna), the airport, large parks (including Jubilee and Wildlife Prairie Park), finally some existing development has also been reflected in areas that were previously designated as agriculture (Lake Camelot) and County utilities including Amren facilities that have also already been developed.

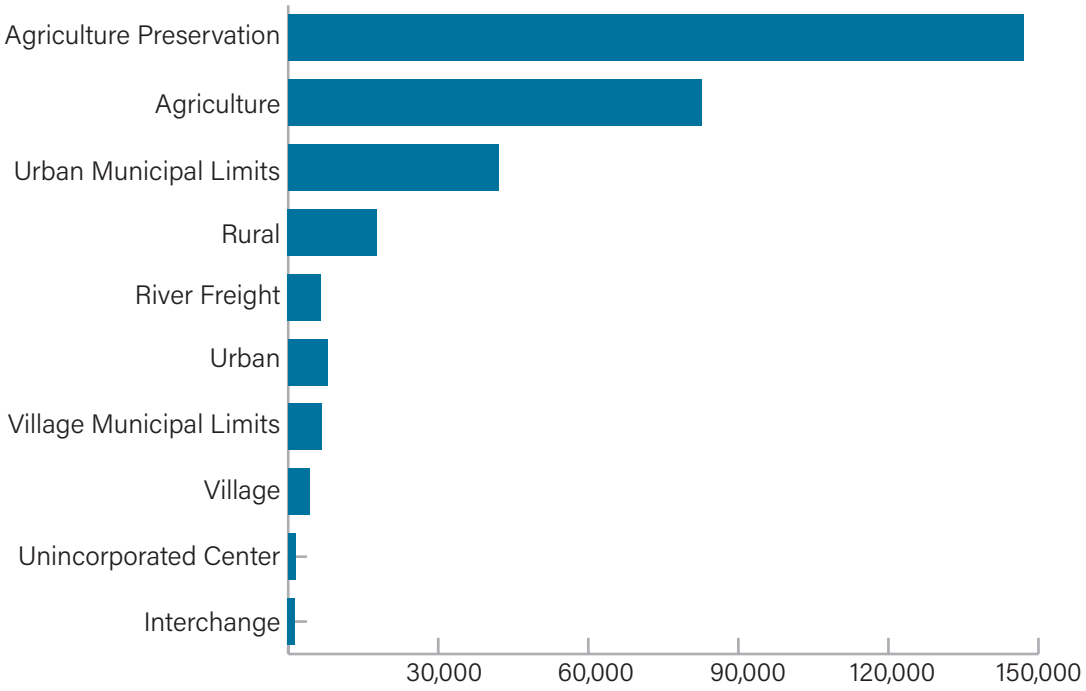
Land Use	Additional Acres
Production Agriculture (from Agriculture Preservation)	11,258.20
Mixed Agriculture (from Agriculture)	41,802.89
Rural	19,596.03

The Future Character and Land Use Designations also highlight that the Rural Centers have Agricultural Land Use as a secondary use.

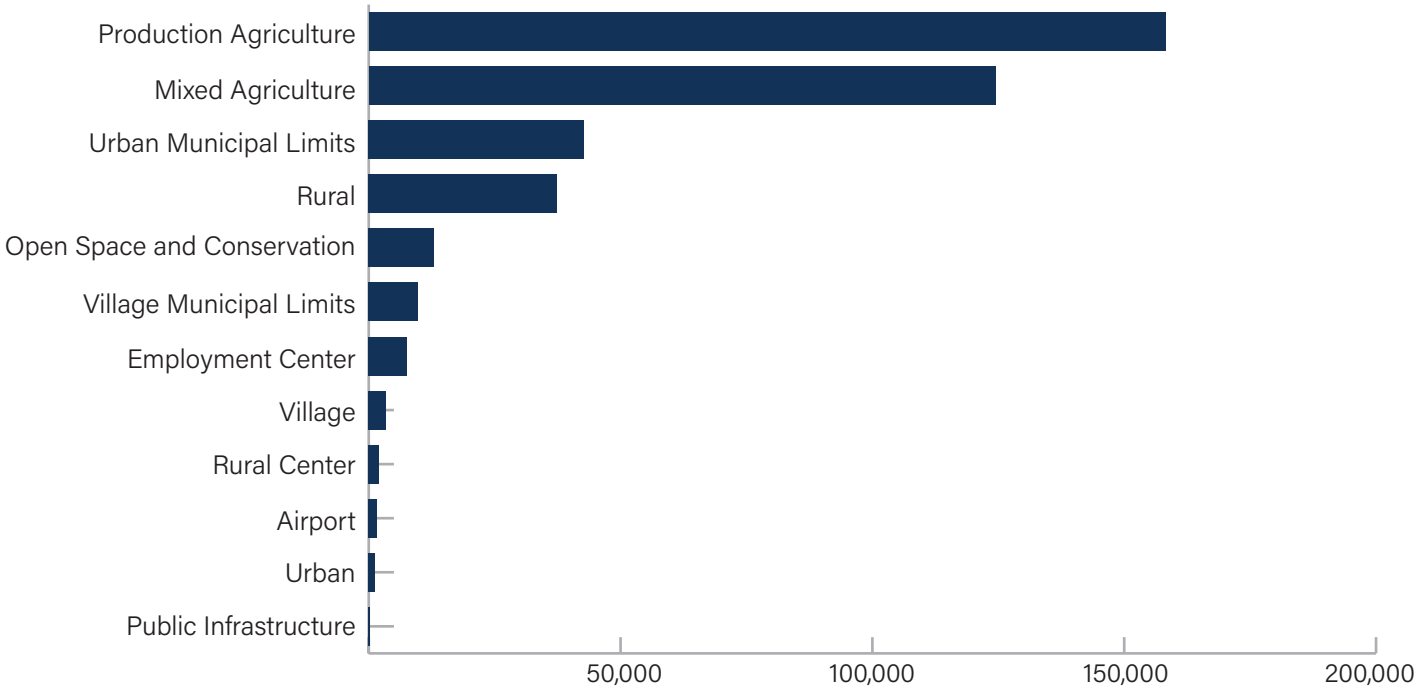
Ag Census Data was used as a benchmark for the land use data that was used in the project (this is only available until 2022). The census identified this breakdown of Ag lands in 2022:

- Cropland 226,052
- Pastureland 12,873
- Woodland 27,709
- Other 11,607

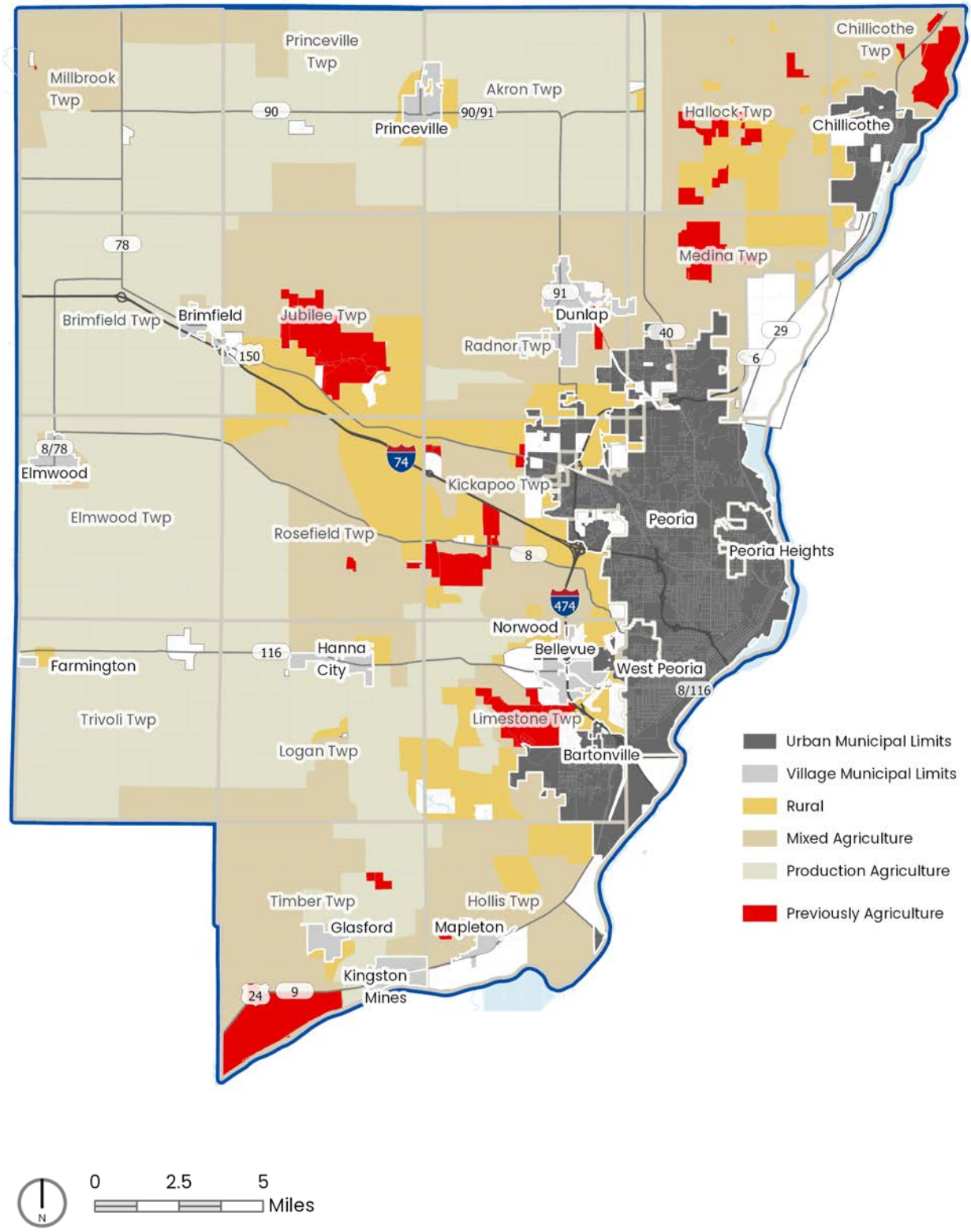
Total Acreage, 2009



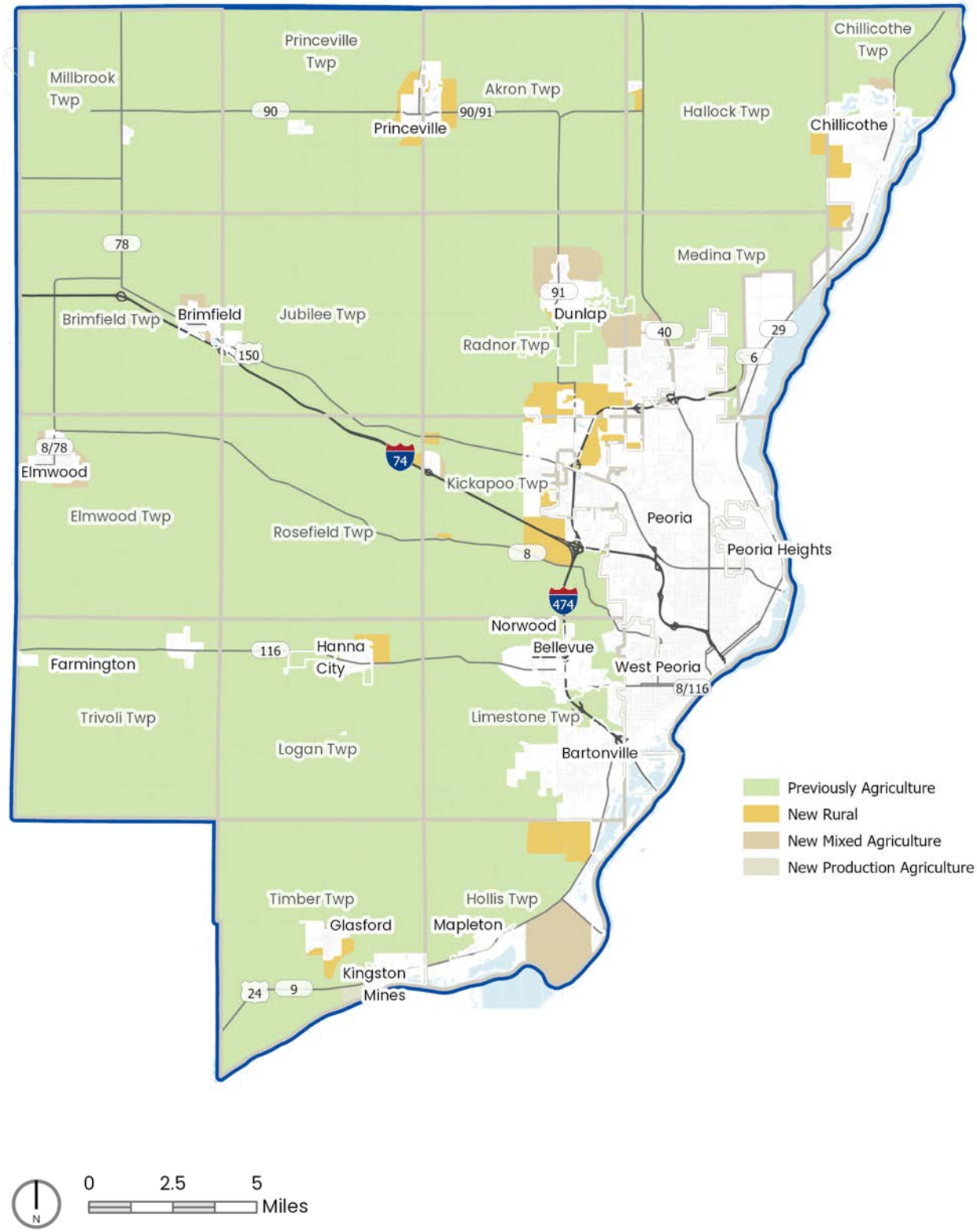
Total Acreage, 2026



Previously Agriculture Land



New Agriculture Land



Appendix B: Additional Housing Analysis

This appendix supplements the housing findings presented in the Peoria County 200+ Comprehensive Land Use Plan (August 2026).

This appendix presents supplementary housing data developed during the Peoria County 200+ planning process. It is intended to expand on, rather than repeat, the housing findings summarized in the Comprehensive Land Use Plan, offering additional detail on housing age and structure type by jurisdiction, regional housing cost trends, and cost burden by household income and age. This information is provided for reference and to support future housing policy discussions.

Housing Occupancy

The county contains approximately 77,000 occupied housing units, and homeowners make up the majority of households across the county.

Age and Type of Housing by Jurisdiction

Table B1 provides a detailed breakdown of housing units by structure type and year built, comparing the county as a whole, the City of Peoria, and the rest of the county.

Year Built and Structure Type	County	Peoria City	Additional Acres
Built 2020 or later	**383**	**302**	**81**
1, detached or attached	289	218	71
2 to 4	0	0	0
5 to 19	53	53	0
20 to 49	9	9	0
50 or more	22	22	0
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	10	0	10
Built since 2012	**12,225**	**8,254**	**3,971**
1, detached or attached	8,659	5,043	3,616
2 to 4	262	246	16
5 to 19	1,754	1,620	134
20 to 49	851	796	55
50 or more	586	544	42
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	113	5	108
Built 1980 to 1999	**11,334**	**7,195**	**4,139**
1, detached or attached	6,838	3,360	3,478
2 to 4	525	388	137
5 to 19	1,937	1,769	168
20 to 49	784	715	69
50 or more	905	844	61
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	345	119	226
Built 1960 to 1979	**23,090**	**13,871**	**9,219**
1, detached or attached	16,809	8,761	8,048
2 to 4	1,501	1,146	355
5 to 19	2,940	2,476	464
20 to 49	929	771	158
50 or more	742	702	40
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	169	15	154

Built 1940 to 1959	**16,915**	**10,419**	**6,496**
1, detached or attached	15,294	9,024	6,270
2 to 4	502	398	104
5 to 19	731	631	100
20 to 49	128	107	21
50 or more	259	259	0
Mobile home, boat, RV, van, etc.	1	0	1
Built 1939 or earlier	**14,191**	**8,996**	**5,195**
1, detached or attached	12,463	7,451	5,012
2 to 4	582	446	136
5 to 19	669	662	7
20 or more	477	437	40

Table B1. Age and type of housing by jurisdiction. Source: NP calculations based on American Community Survey 2024 5-year estimates.

Housing Cost Trends

Peoria County notes housing affordability as one of its strengths. The Federal Housing Finance Agency maintains an index that examines mortgages, appraisals, repeat sales, and other items to create its single-family housing price index. Based on this index, Peoria County is more affordable than the metro area in terms of current values. However, the county has kept pace with the metro area over the past decade, with both increasing by 43 percent. Housing prices based on this index fell for several years prior to COVID before recovering in 2021, and nearly all the acceleration in housing prices has come since 2021.

Other data sources show a similar pattern. Zillow sales data, which allows for a review of city-level trends, shows that housing prices in the City of Peoria did not recover from the Great Recession of 2008 to 2010 until 2021 before increasing rapidly. Housing prices in the rest of the county following the Great Recession were essentially flat before also beginning to accelerate in 2021.

Source: NP analysis of Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis FRED data series and Zillow sales data.

Cost Burden by Household Income

While countywide housing values remain relatively affordable, cost burden is not evenly distributed. Cost-burdened residents vary across age, income, and tenure, and low incomes are the largest determinant of housing cost burden regardless of whether a household owns or rents. Households earning under $35,000 annually make up the largest group with affordability issues, whether they own or rent.

Household Income	Renters	Renters, 30%+ of Income on Housing	Owners	Owners, 30%+ of Income on Housing
Less than $20,000	5,386	49%	3,266	33%
$20,000 to $34,999	3,265	30%	2,187	22%
$35,000 to $49,999	1,888	17%	1,831	19%
$50,000 to $74,999	389	4%	1,541	16%
$75,000 or more	91	1%	954	10%

Table B2. Housing cost burden by household income. Source: NP calculations based on American Community Survey 2024 5-year estimates.

Cost Burden by Age Group

Viewing cost burden through the lens of age provides a different perspective. Residents age 65 and older are highly affected by the cost of housing, particularly as it relates to homeownership.

Age Group	Renters	Renters, 30%+ of Income on Housing	Owners	Owners, 30%+ of Income on Housing
15 to 24	2,091	19%	458	5%
25 to 34	2,405	22%	1,255	13%
35 to 64	4,315	39%	4,230	43%
65 or older	2,208	20%	3,836	39%

Table B3. Housing cost burden by age group. Source: NP calculations based on American Community Survey 2024 5-year estimates.

Housing Cost Burden Among Older Residents

There are approximately 23,000 households age 65 and older across the county. Forty-three percent of these households live outside the City of Peoria. Approximately 30 percent of this age group has an income under $35,000, which is the likely contributor to their housing cost burden. While the majority of these households live in the City of Peoria, nearly one-third live in the rest of the county.