

# THE BIG TABLE: GREATER PEORIA

2021-2025 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY



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*Developed and designed by*  
Greater Peoria Economic Development Council  
[www.greaterpeoriaedc.org](http://www.greaterpeoriaedc.org)

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The Big Table: Greater Peoria initiative is organized by the CEO Council along with numerous regional partners:

Black Business Alliance Peoria Chapter, East Peoria Chamber of Commerce, Enjoy Peoria, Greater Peoria EDC, LGBT Chamber of Commerce of Illinois, Pekin Area Chamber of Commerce, Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, Peoria Heights Chamber of Commerce, Peoria Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Morton Chamber of Commerce, Morton Economic Development Council, Washington Chamber of Commerce.

[www.bigtablegp.com](http://www.bigtablegp.com)



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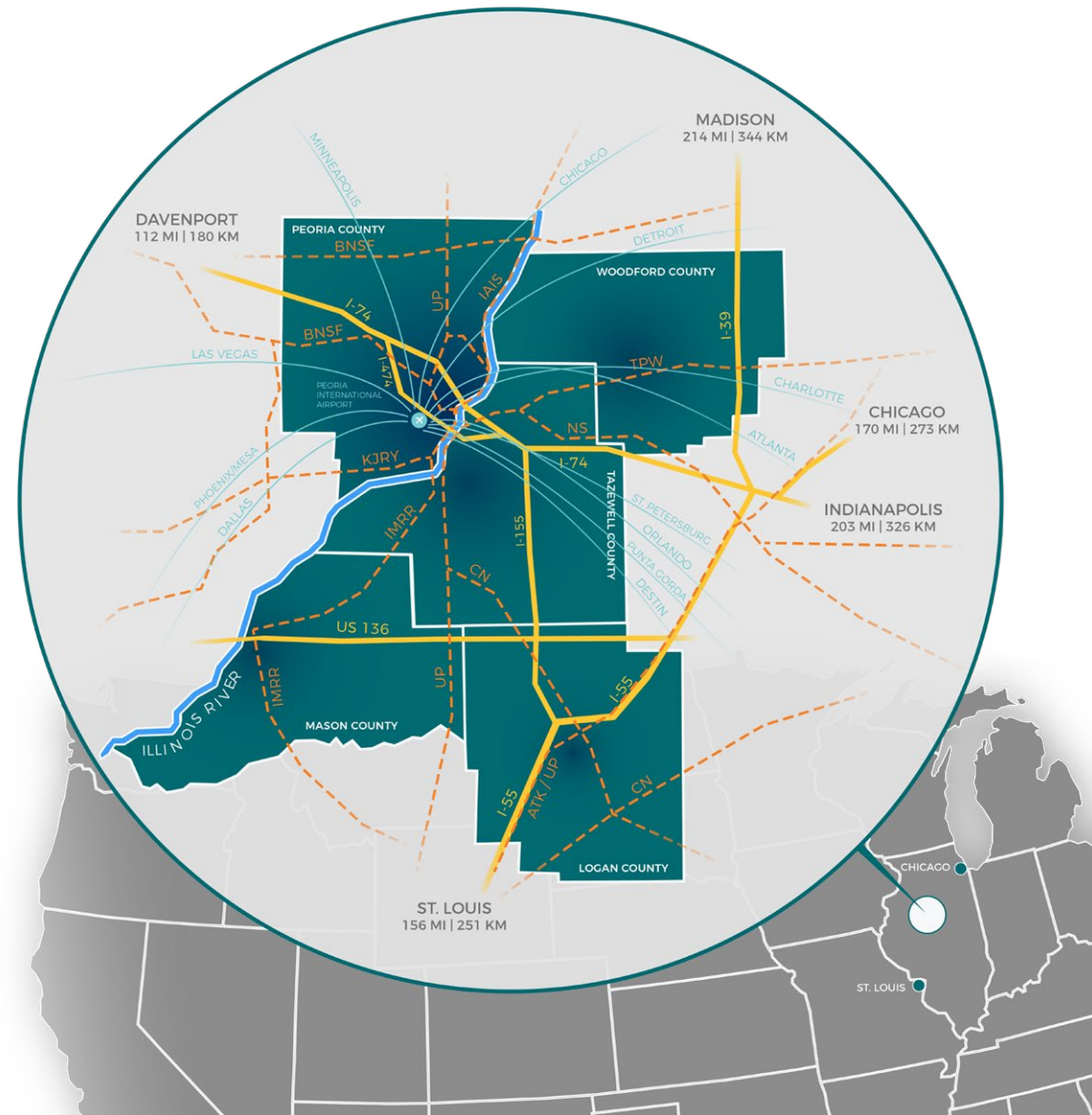
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# INTRODUCTION: THE BIG TABLE

## MANY VOICES, ONE VISION.

*The Big Table: Greater Peoria* started as a daylong regional community building event in Fall 2019. It brought together community members to exchange ideas and to discuss common challenges and opportunities for making the Greater Peoria region a better place to live, work and play.

Most importantly, the event created a platform for new connections among community members, providing an opportunity to discuss important issues—together.

In the 12 months following that first gathering, a dozen more *Big Table: Greater Peoria* events were held in all five of our region's counties—**Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford**.

These gatherings, both in person and virtual, covered a range of topics such as business and workforce development, innovation, racial justice, rural development and quality of life.

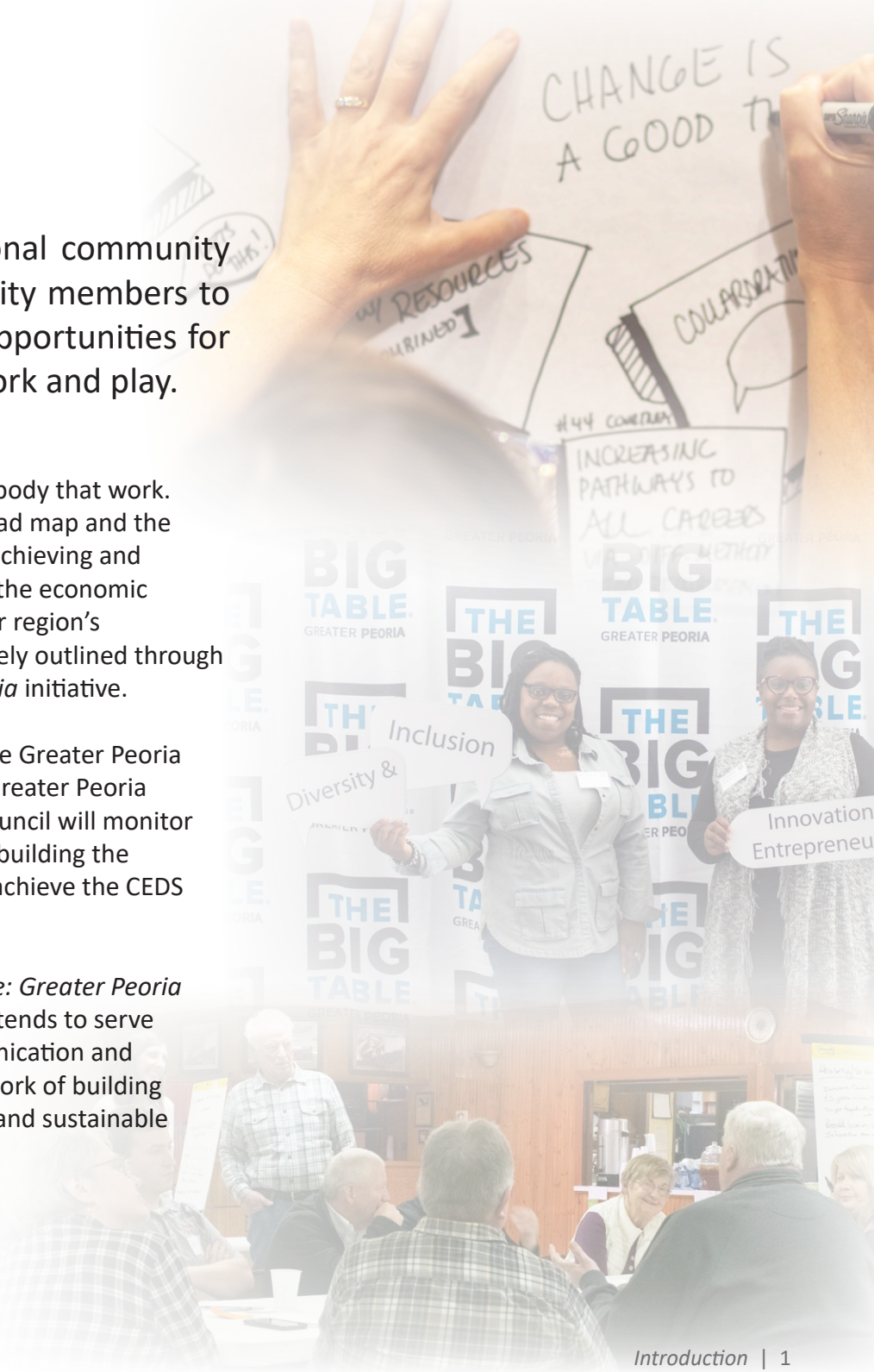
Collectively, these events drew an attendance of 1,500 of the region's residents who represented a wide spectrum of voices among our diverse communities.

With the table set and a growing number of regional stakeholders finding their seats, it became clear that the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development

Strategy (CEDS) should embody that work. This CEDS will act as the road map and the evaluation framework for achieving and assessing progress toward the economic development goals that our region's stakeholders have collectively outlined through the *Big Table: Greater Peoria* initiative.

Over the next five years, the Greater Peoria CEDS Committee and the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council will monitor the progress and continue building the partnerships necessary to achieve the CEDS goals.

In the spirit of the *Big Table: Greater Peoria* initiative, this document intends to serve as a tool for better communication and collaboration toward the work of building a more thriving, equitable and sustainable regional economy.





# WHAT IS A CEDS?

The CEDS is a tool for organizing and coordinating a region’s economic development goals and an official document that increases access to critical funding resources.

**The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is a regional planning document** required by the U.S. Economic Development Administration (U.S. EDA) for any federally designated Economic Development District (EDD).

The EDA recognizes the counties of Logan, Mason, Peoria, Tazewell and Woodford (Greater Peoria) as a federally designated EDD.

The CEDS is **created through an inclusive, analytical and reflective planning process** and results in a measurable road map to regional economic prosperity.<sup>1</sup>

The CEDS also allows a region to engage with the U.S. EDA and other federal partners to receive infrastructure and technical assistance grants.

## WHAT’S IN IT?

This CEDS document contains the boiled-down components of a months-long planning process that took place between 2019 and 2020.

The **Economic Resilience** section identifies the region’s key vulnerabilities and outlines existing and needed resilience-building measures for

avoiding or rapidly recovering from shocks to the regional economy.

The **Summary Background** was developed by collecting and analyzing a variety of data that provide a quantitative understanding of the region’s economy and establishes a baseline for the key indicators that will be used to measure future progress.

The **SWOT Analysis** is an aggregation of the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats facing our economy that were identified through a combination of public meetings and economic development professional working groups.

The **Goals, Strategies and Tactics** section is built on findings from the summary background and the SWOT analysis. It also embodies numerous plans of partner agencies with the aim of establishing “umbrella” goals that foster collective impact.

The **Evaluation Framework** establishes the key indicators that allow for measuring progress toward the CEDS goals and identifies the various stakeholders involved in implementing specific strategies and tactics and for collecting and sharing the data necessary for evaluation.



# ECONOMIC RESILIENCE

Resilience is the ability to effectively recover from hardship. Never before has it been so important to strengthen our regional bonds and embrace a culture of diversification, innovation and collaboration.

The CEDS provides our region a road map to move as a collective unit toward economic inclusivity, sustainability and prosperity. It supports efforts to effectively weather shocks to our regional economy. It provides the basis for developing a proactive approach to development that places resilience at its core.

Economic resilience can not rest on one industry, business or person alone. Fortunately, numerous stakeholders in the Greater Peoria community already embrace this idea. In the years since the previous CEDS update, numerous efforts launched and grew toward that goal of resilience, including diversification initiatives, foundation building for an entrepreneurial ecosystem, and an increasing attention to inclusivity.

There is always more work to do. That is especially true for the people and places historically underrepresented in regional development plans: from the majority Black neighborhoods in Peoria where generational poverty must be overcome, to the rural communities where industry and infrastructure must be restored.

The 2021-2025 CEDS aims to amplify and build on previous initiatives, adapt the work

to a rapidly changing world, and build new initiatives to commit focus on issues and communities previously ignored.

## INDUSTRY DIVERSIFICATION

Diversification efforts outlined and successfully launched from the previous CEDS should build on their momentum and continue to evolve to meet the needs of the region's business community.

The Greater Peoria Manufacturing Network, Illinois Defense Network, Startup Greater Peoria, Peoria Innovation Alliance and the Small Business Development Center at Bradley University are just a few examples of initiatives and organizations that aim to develop a culture of diversification, collaboration and support. They work together to retain existing businesses, foster new businesses and encourage businesses to diversify their operations.

Over the next five years, as existing diversification tools continue to evolve, new focus should be given to agricultural diversification. Climate change, depression of farm incomes and commodity price shocks can all be highly destructive to this industry without intentional work toward resilience.





Farm diversification and conservation programs have shown to mitigate climate change, build soil health and expand revenue possibilities. These benefits make diversification a promising endeavor worthy of investment. Beyond product diversification, exciting opportunities exist in the development and manufacturing of advanced farm and food technologies.

The Illinois River holds great potential as an economic development asset. Efforts are ongoing to reinvigorate the port district in the Peoria area. This can increase commercial activity along the river. Business opportunities in conservation continue to expand. In particular, Asian carp population reduction and silt removal. The Mahomet and Sankoty aquifers, vital sources of freshwater for the region, must also be diligently monitored to maintain their role as a reliable resource for agriculture and other industries.

## INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Farming and food systems are just a couple areas in which our region's innovators and entrepreneurs are poised to excel. Smart mobility systems and healthcare delivery to vulnerable populations are two other key areas of innovation well underway. These areas of innovation form the foundation of Distillery Labs in Peoria's newly designated Innovation District.

This new innovation center, set to open in 2021, is Greater Peoria's contribution to the Illinois Innovation Network, a statewide economic development initiative of which our

region was an early supporter and adopter. This initiative demonstrates the commitment and investment of numerous partners toward the region's economic resilience.

## RURAL-URBAN COLLABORATION

The size of the Greater Peoria region with our mix of metro, non-metro, urban and rural communities means economic resilience strategies must apply to a spectrum of community needs.

From urban to rural, the participants in the Greater Peoria CEDS have a broad variety of challenges that benefit from a regional view and inclusive solutions. Some of our region's rural areas are experiencing unsustainable levels of outmigration and employment loss. Communities outside the cities of Peoria and East Peoria are often overlooked in discussions concerning business attraction, entrepreneurship, or innovation. Additionally, municipal budgets often make it difficult to maintain local economic development capacity.

Greater coordination of development plans can increase rural-urban collaboration. Municipal comprehensive plans are great development and planning tools at the local level. They provide an opportunity for cities to coordinate with broader regional plans (such as this CEDS). For example, the Greater Peoria EDC, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission and Farnsworth Group partnered for the 2020 update to the El Paso, IL comprehensive plan. This plan coupled local needs and character with regional goals, strategies and resources.

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Achieving regional economic resilience also relies on addressing issues related to persistent poverty and economic inequity for the region's Black population. The region cannot claim to be resilient or prosperous when wealth creation disproportionately and persistently evades groups of people based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability. The concentration of poverty and the underinvestment in areas such as Peoria's 61605 zip code have resulted in a high Social Vulnerability Index ranking. This indicates that the area is extremely disadvantaged in the face of a natural or economic disaster.

Regional stakeholders can get involved by joining an existing initiative such as the *Big Table: Greater Peoria* and the Peoria City-County Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity; or partnering with the Minority Business Development Center, the Black Chamber of Commerce, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, or other organizations leading the push to elevate the economic development needs of the historically underserved business community.





# SUMMARY BACKGROUND

## HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Ever since the last glacier retreated north from the area we now call Greater Peoria, an indisputable fact has remained: this is a place of great natural abundance.

That glacier left behind the fertile land that established a dense and diverse tallgrass prairie teeming with life. Animals, plants and soil mingled in a symbiotic and cooperative existence. That retreating glacier also set the stage for a cataclysmic event, the Kankakee Torrent, that cut the Illinois River valley, a natural centerpiece of this part of the state. The Greater Peoria we call home today is rooted in a phenomenal natural history.

It was this natural abundance that first attracted people to this place over 10,000 years ago. And so, just as the tallgrass prairie, the diverse roots of human history and community also run deep here. A multitude of Native American tribes traversed and settled in the area for thousands of years—from the Peoria, Woodford and Tazewell County shores of Peoria Lake (once called Pimiteoui, meaning a place of “fat” and abundance), to the mound builders along Mason County’s banks of the Illinois River, to the Kickapoo village at Elkhart Hill in Logan County.

A storied history exists between those first inhabitants and today—from the arrival of French colonialists to the inclusion of the Illinois Country into the rapidly expanding United States, to the towns born of pioneer farmers, to the Black southern migrants seeking refuge from slavery, to the hometowns and stomping grounds of U.S Presidents, to the birthplace of numerous inventions and businesses both small and large, local and global.

Today our five-county region is called home by some 392,411 people living in over 65 cities and villages and scattered throughout the fertile farmland that once grew those tallgrass prairies. From urban-industrial Peoria to rural-agricultural Mt. Pulaski, this region is vast and varied. But throughout time and place, the shared goal of this region’s people remains the same: to know prosperity, attain a quality living for ourselves and our families and to sustain our abundant nature.



## GEOGRAPHY & NATURAL RESOURCES

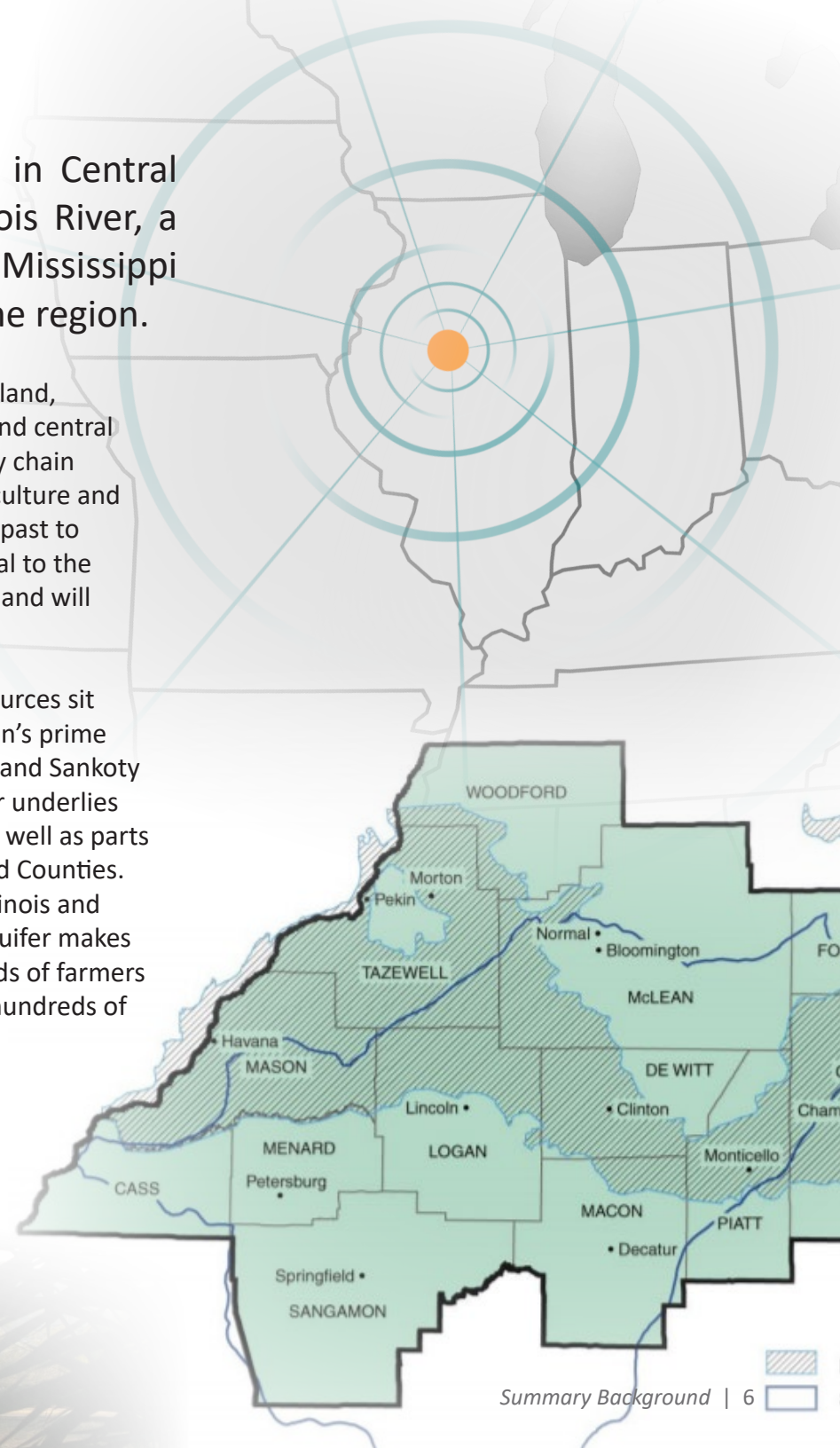
Greater Peoria sits at a geographically optimal location in Central Illinois and within the Midwest United States. The Illinois River, a critical inland waterway connecting the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and ultimately to the Gulf of Mexico, runs through the region.

One of the major benefits of the rich, diverse tallgrass prairie of the past to the region's economy since the 19th century is the fertile soils and flat terrain. From this soil in our part of Central Illinois sprang modern industrial agriculture. From the formative days of the nation's livestock industry to a modern leader of corn and soybean production, large scale agriculture has played a role in the region's economy for over a century.

The resources of the Illinois River enabled a robust commercial fishing industry up until the mid 20th century. A lack of modern infrastructure has reduced that industry to a trickle. But the emergence of the invasive species Asian carp in the river has renewed interest in commercial fishing opportunities. A network of conservation areas also line portions of the region along the Illinois River. Banner Marsh State Park, Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, Jake Wolf Memorial Fish Hatchery and the Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge are centers of both critical ecological research and natural recreation.

Greater Peoria's fertile flat farmland, prominent resources rich river and central location provided optimal supply chain logistics which enabled the agriculture and manufacturing industries of our past to flourish. These industries are vital to the region's economic sustainability and will remain so far into the future.

Massive yet unseen natural resources sit beneath the surface of our region's prime agricultural land: The Mahomet and Sankoty Aquifers. The Mahomet Aquifer underlies the entirety of Mason County as well as parts of Tazewell, Logan and Woodford Counties. Extending throughout Central Illinois and into neighboring Indiana, the aquifer makes agriculture possible for thousands of farmers and provides drinking water to hundreds of thousands more.





## INDUSTRY SECTORS

Greater Peoria is a famed industrial area, a major regional healthcare hub and an emerging innovation center, surrounded by some of the best agricultural land in the world. The area is served by a major waterway, an international airport, an extensive rail system and a first class road network providing optimal logistics.

Throughout the 20th century the region developed a robust manufacturing supply chain. The early industries of the region also included casting foundries, carriage factories, pottery makers, glucose factories, furniture makers, distilleries and ice harvesters.

Today, the region continues to expand its economy with healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture, and logistics and transportation as leading industries and Caterpillar and OSF St. Francis Medical Center as top employers. The region also has a micro-cluster of large employers in the insurance industry.

### HEALTHCARE

At the heart of Greater Peoria is a thriving healthcare industry that is anchored by established institutions and supported by innovative startups and research. Greater Peoria is home to 708 healthcare establishments that employ 29,731 people. This proportion of jobs in the region is 25% above the national average. This cluster is responsible for 16% of Greater Peoria jobs.<sup>2</sup>

Industry leaders include OSF Healthcare and UnityPoint Health with critical industry

research and development taking place at Jump Simulation and the University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria.

### MANUFACTURING

Greater Peoria has an extensive history in heavy manufacturing. The manufacturing industry employs around 24,000 people in the region. The regional proportion of jobs is 54% higher than the national average. This region is home to 356 manufacturing locations over 21 different NAICS classifications. Peoria was the top machinery manufacturing exporter in the U.S. in 2018 with \$6.3 billion in machinery exports.<sup>3</sup>

Companies in this sector include Caterpillar, Komatsu, Case New Holland, Superior Industries, Inc., Philippi-Hagenbuch Inc. and Kress Corporation.

A number of food and chemical manufacturers also play a role in the region's manufacturing industry profile including ADM, Corteva, Eaton, Evonik, Ingredion, Nestle/Libby, ADM, Pacific Ethanol and PMP.





## AGRICULTURE

With a long history as a leader in corn and soybean production, the Central Illinois region remains a leader in the agriculture industry. Holding an estimated 1.5 million acres used for farming, the market value of the region's agricultural products was \$1 billion in 2017, 6% of the Illinois total.<sup>4</sup>

Greater Peoria also leads the state in pumpkin production, driving Illinois' rank as top producer in the nation of pumpkins for canning. A variety of specialty crops and market crops are grown and Woodford County has the most organic farm operations in Illinois (primarily organic grains and soybeans) followed by Tazewell. There are two large medical cannabis cultivation facilities in the region and businesses are exploring industrial uses of the cannabis plant such as hemp fiber production and processing.

Although fewer jobs are associated with agriculture than other leading industries, it will continue to play a major role in the regional economy. The future of food, fiber and fuel production holds potential for business and job creation.

## LOGISTICS AND TRANSPORTATION

Greater Peoria is accessible to the world via a mix of transportation infrastructure—air, rail, river and road. Peoria, IL ranked in the top 100 list in the Best Cities “2020 America's Best Small Cities” report with particularly high scores in infrastructure and connectivity, and

as a meeting place, ranking #7 in the nation for convention center space.<sup>5</sup>

Logistics companies are aware of the region's prime location. The region has its own terminal and switching railroad, as well as four regional rail carriers. It is home to Peoria International Airport, a U.S. Customs Port of Entry for air cargo. The Illinois River, with Peoria as the largest city on its banks, remains at the heart of the nation's inland waterway system. U.S. Interstates 74, 39 and 55 connect the region to metropolitan areas such as Chicago, St. Louis, Indianapolis and Des Moines. Amtrak stations in Lincoln, Normal and Galesburg provide passenger rail access to portions of the region.

Transportation companies operating facilities and fleets in the region include G&D Integrated, Cox Transfer, United Facilities, Risinger and Trigo SCSl.

## HUMAN SERVICES

With half a billion dollars in economic output each year, and employing over 4,800 people in 2018, the Greater Peoria's human services sector is collectively, the region's fifth-largest employer. This robust network of organizations bring around \$100 million into the local economy each year.

Moreover, the variety of services provided by the region's robust network of human service organizations greatly increase the quality of life for residents. Human service agencies contribute to the development of a stronger workforce and healthier communities.

Top employers in human services includes Children's Home, Easterseals of Central Illinois, Heartland Health Services, Center for the Prevention of Abuse, Hult Center and PCCEO.

## INSURANCE

Although not technically an industry cluster, our region is home to a notable number of insurance companies and people employed in the insurance industry.

RLI, Pekin Insurance, Pearl and Illinois Mutual are located here, and State Farm, headquartered in nearby Bloomington, employs a number of the region's residents.



# ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Understanding key economic performance indicators such as demographics, educational attainment, labor force participation, jobs, median income, housing and poverty levels show where we stand today and help set the stage for tracking future progress.

## POPULATION

The region enjoyed steady growth from 1940 to 1980 when it hit a peak population of 417,158. After a sharp decline through 1990 the region experienced a steady climb back to a population of 405,997. Recent Census Bureau estimates show a decline in the last five years to the current estimated population of 397,289 in 2019.<sup>6</sup>

Although the region as a whole has experienced a decline in the decades since the 1980 peak, population trends vary greatly among the five counties. Of particular note is the difference between Woodford and Mason counties. Contrary to the region as a whole, Woodford County's population has increased by more than 15% since 1980, peaking most recently in 2015. On the other hand, Mason County has experienced a 31% population decline over the same period.

Additionally, the population in Illinois decreased by 1% between 2014-2019. The Greater Peoria population is projected to continue declining around 1.7% over the next five years.<sup>7</sup>

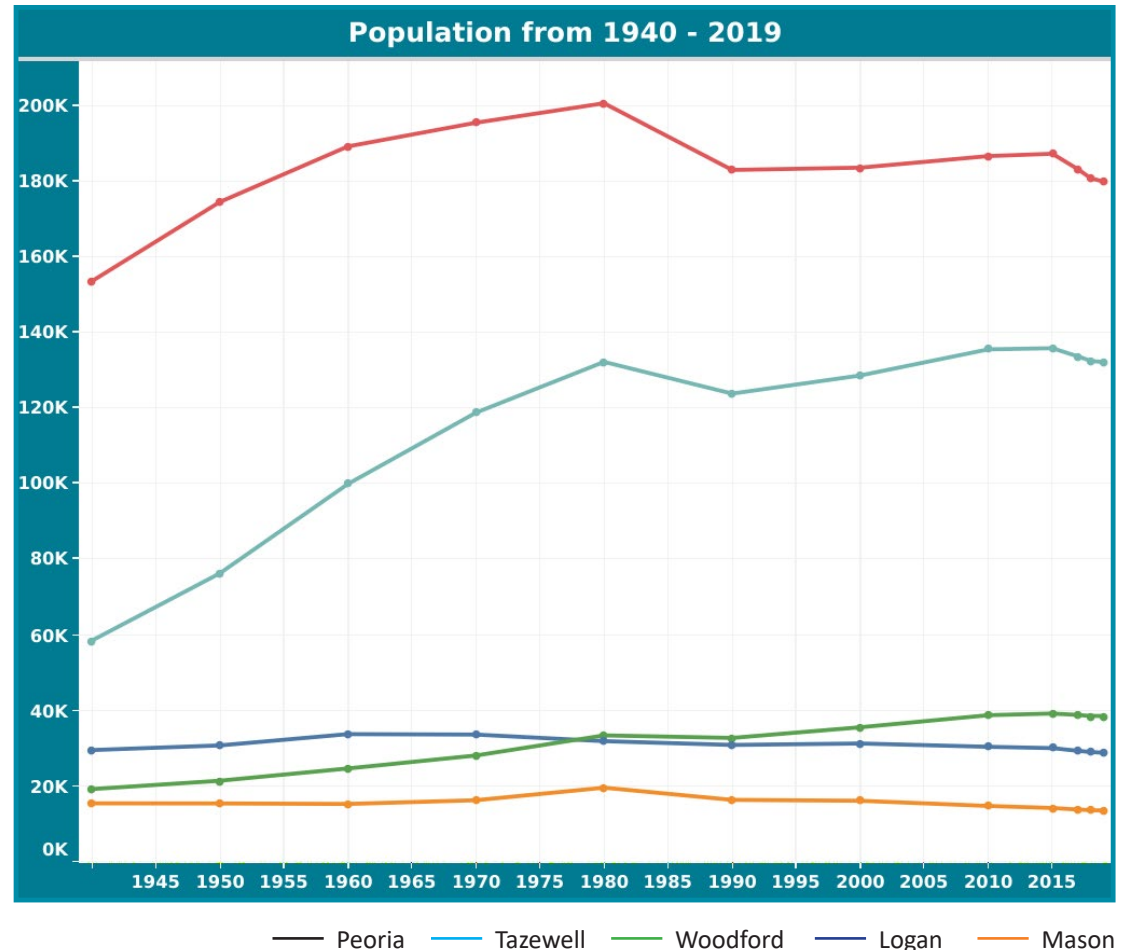


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## RACE & ETHNICITY

In 2019, among the region's residents, 85.3% were White, 9.9% were Black or African American, 2.0% were of two or more races, 2.5% were Asian, 0.04% were Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, and 0.2% were American Indian alone.

In contrast, the population in non-metro Mason County was less than 1% Black while the population of the City of Peoria was 27% Black. Of the entire region's Black population, 77% live in the City of Peoria.

The fastest growing populations between 2001-2019 were Hispanic and Asian Non-Hispanic, both with an increase of 10%. The only declining population over that same period was White/Non-Hispanic, with a 6% decline.<sup>8</sup>

## AGE & GENDER

In 2017, the median age for all counties in the region aside from Peoria County was higher than the national median age of 37.8 years. The median age for Logan County was 40.6; Mason, 45.5; Peoria, 37.0; Tazewell, 40.8; Woodford, 39.9.

In the past five years, the age cohorts with the largest estimated increases were 70 to 74 years (19%) and 65 to 69 years (12%).<sup>9</sup>

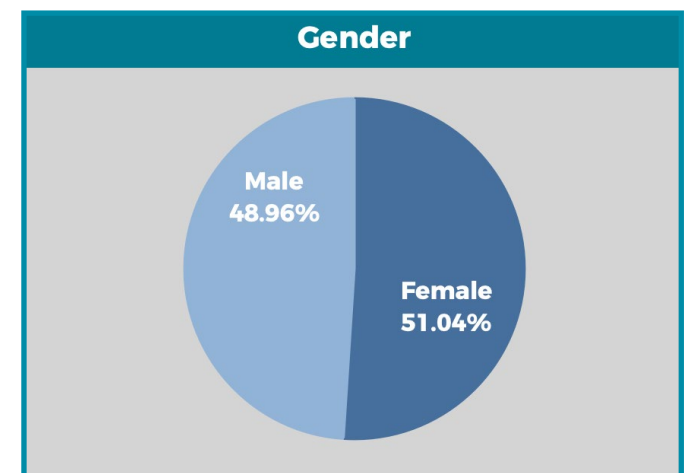
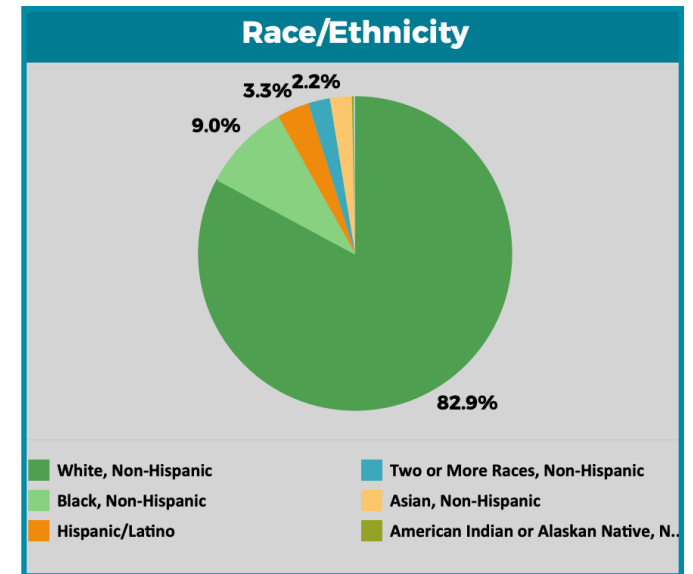
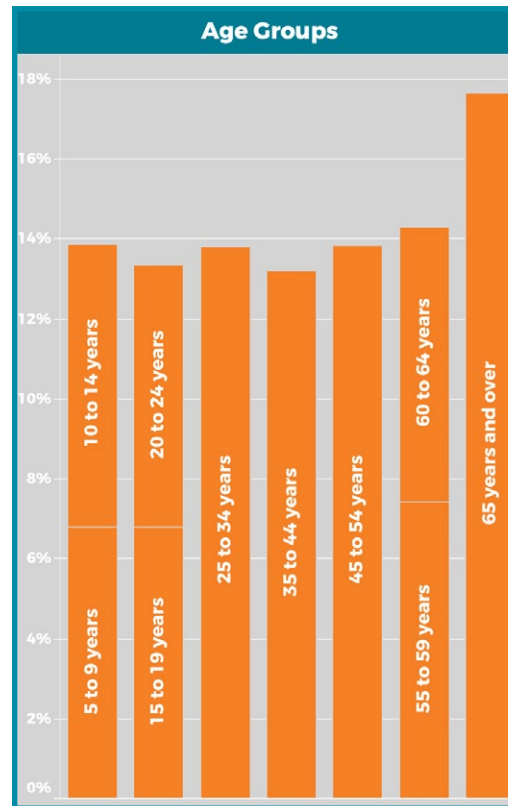


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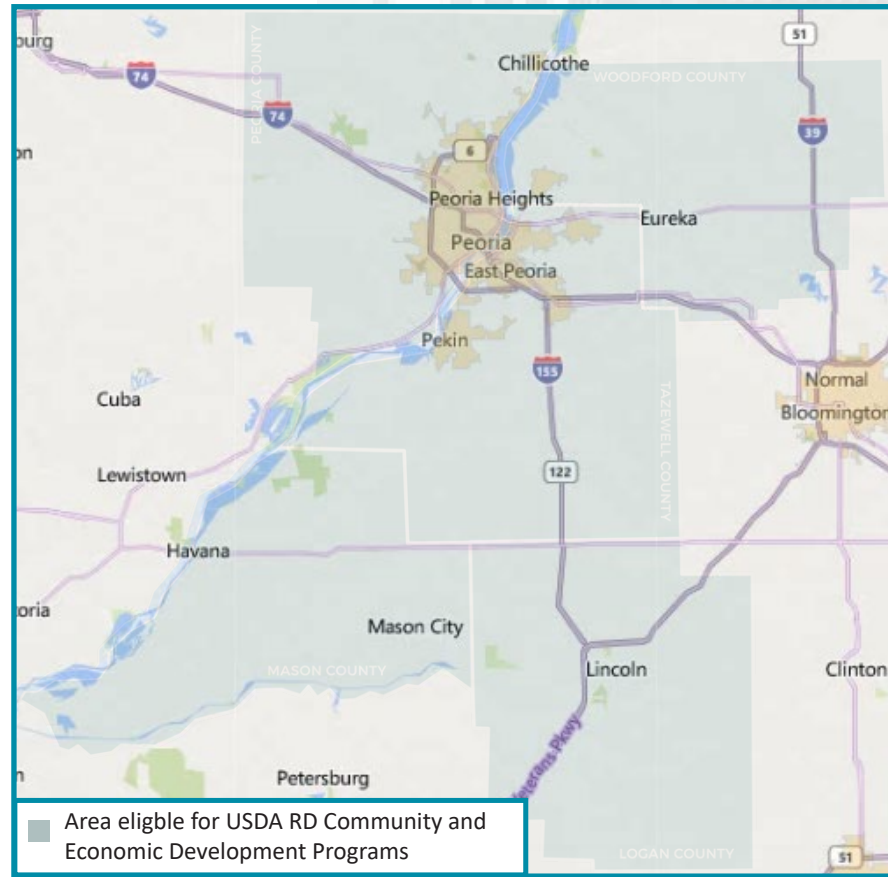


## RURAL & URBAN

The Greater Peoria region has a mix of rural and urban places. Heading in any direction out of the urbanized areas of Peoria, East Peoria or Pekin one will find vast stretches of commercial agriculture that connect numerous outlying suburbs and small towns.

The economic concept states that metro counties include a city with a large amount of economic activity and high population density (Peoria). Additionally, counties adjacent to a metro county (Tazewell, Woodford) may also be metro. Non-metro counties (Logan and Mason) are considered “rural” by lacking either a city with sufficient population density or close proximity to a metro county.<sup>10</sup>

The non-metro population nationally was at 14% in 2017.<sup>11</sup> In Greater Peoria, 11% of the population resides in a non-metro county and 89% in a metro county. But a number of communities inside metro counties may consider themselves rural for a variety of intents and purposes. A GPEDC analysis that included all areas eligible for economic development programs through USDA Rural Development brought the region’s rural population closer to 20%.



Source: USDA Rural Development, <https://eligibility.sc.egov.usda.gov/>

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

In Greater Peoria, 2019 estimates from Emsi show that the number of people with a high school diploma (31%), some college (23%), or an associates degree (10%) is above both Illinois and U.S. averages. But the numbers of people with a bachelor's degree (18%) or advanced degree (9%) are below that of state and national averages.<sup>12</sup>

Workforce development initiatives in Greater Peoria stress above all the importance of any type of postsecondary credential, whether technical certification or advanced academic study. Current state strategies aim to have 60% of the 25-60 year old population credentialed by the year 2025. Currently, 47.7% of 25-60 year olds hold any such credential in Greater Peoria.<sup>13</sup>

Data from Emsi showed 4,603 program completions in 2018 across 47 instructional programs.<sup>14</sup> The highest share of program completions was in the field of Health Professions and Related Programs. Those programs were followed in a number of completions by Liberal Arts and Sciences, Business Management and Marketing, Engineering, Computer and Information Sciences, Repair Technicians, Communications and Journalism, Education, Agriculture, and Social Sciences.

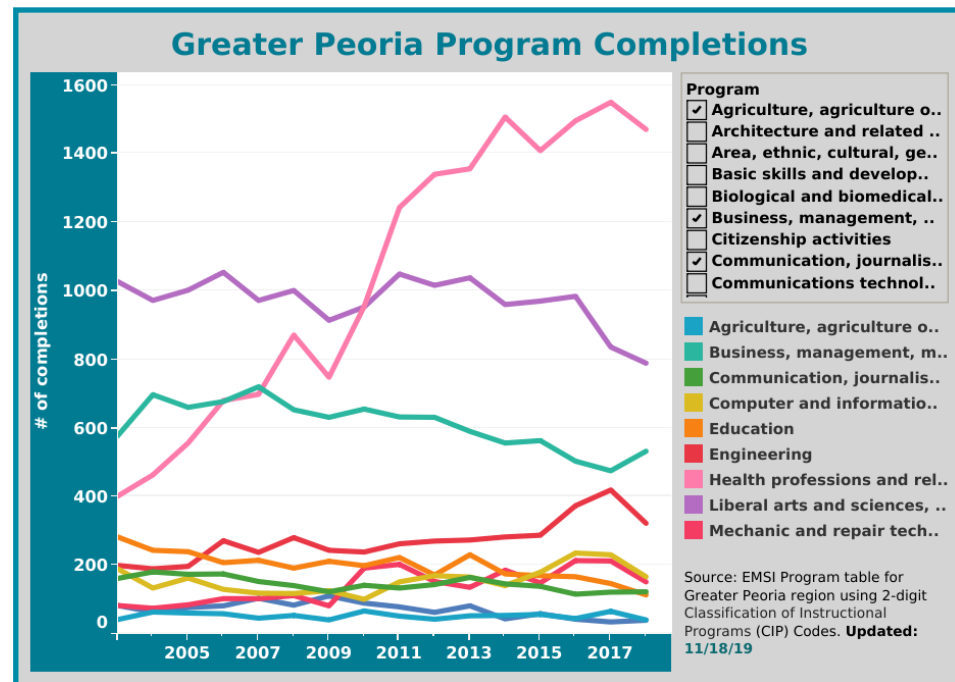
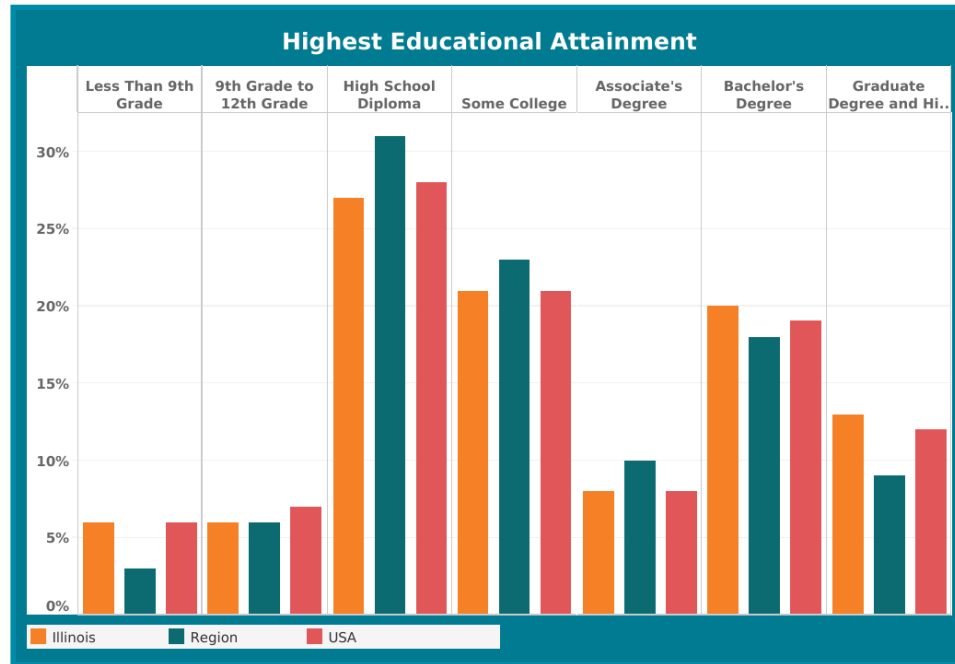


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## JOBS

Greater Peoria's largest employment sector is healthcare. It is home to 708 healthcare establishments that employ 29,731 people. This proportion of jobs in the region is 25% above the national average. This cluster is responsible for 16% of Greater Peoria jobs.<sup>15</sup>

24,000 people in the regional workforce are employed in the manufacturing industry. The regional proportion of jobs is 54% higher than the national average.<sup>16</sup>

From 2014 to 2019, jobs declined by 3.4% in the region from 195,928 to 189,181. This change fell short of the national growth rate of 6.9% by 10.3 percentage points. Emsi predicts jobs to grow by 4,226 over the next 5 years.<sup>16</sup>

The top occupations include office and administrative support, sales, food preparation, healthcare practitioners and technicians, management, production, transportation and material moving and education.

Analysis from Emsi predicts a strong need for occupations including production, management, nurses, nursing assistants and customer service representatives from 2020 to 2025.

The top regional employers are Caterpillar, OSF St. Francis Medical Center and UnityPoint Health. The health and human services sector collectively employed 4,874 people in 2018. A mix of education, healthcare, manufacturing and public administration are also top employers and.<sup>17</sup>



Company	Employees	Industry
OSF Healthcare	13,500	Healthcare
Caterpillar	12,000	Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
Peoria Public Schools	2,891	Education
Illinois Central College	1,650	Education
Bradley University	1,300	Education
Advanced Technology Services	1,073	Industrial Machinery Repair and Maintenance
Keystone Steel & Wire	912	Metal Products Manufacturing
City of Peoria	888	Public Administration
CEFCU	842	Banking
County of Peoria	831	Public Administration
Pekin Insurance	750	Insurance
Komatsu American Corp	700	Machinery and Equipment Manufacturing
Morton Industries	685	Metal Products Manufacturing

Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>



## BUSINESS ESTABLISHMENTS

In 2018, an estimated 8,785 business establishments called Greater Peoria home and employed 168,211 people.<sup>18</sup>

Small businesses comprise the majority of businesses in the region. 63.2% of businesses employ fewer than 10 workers, compared to the state of Illinois average of 60%. Also, 85.5% of businesses in the region employ fewer than 20 workers.<sup>19</sup>

Nationally, the bulk of job creation comes from small businesses which accounted for 61.8% of net new jobs between 1993 and 2016 and produced 46% of private nonfarm GDP in 2008.<sup>20</sup>



Image Source: Emsi, [www.economicmodeling.com](http://www.economicmodeling.com)

## GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT

Gross regional product (GRP) can also be referred to as the regional Gross Domestic Product (GDP). It is defined as the market value of all goods and services produced in a particular region over a specific period of time. It is a good measure of the size, income and productivity of a regional economy.

In 2019, Peoria County ranked 8th in Illinois with a GRP of \$12.3 billion. The combined GRP of all five Greater Peoria counties that same year was \$20.5 billion,<sup>21</sup> a per capita GRP of \$51,593.

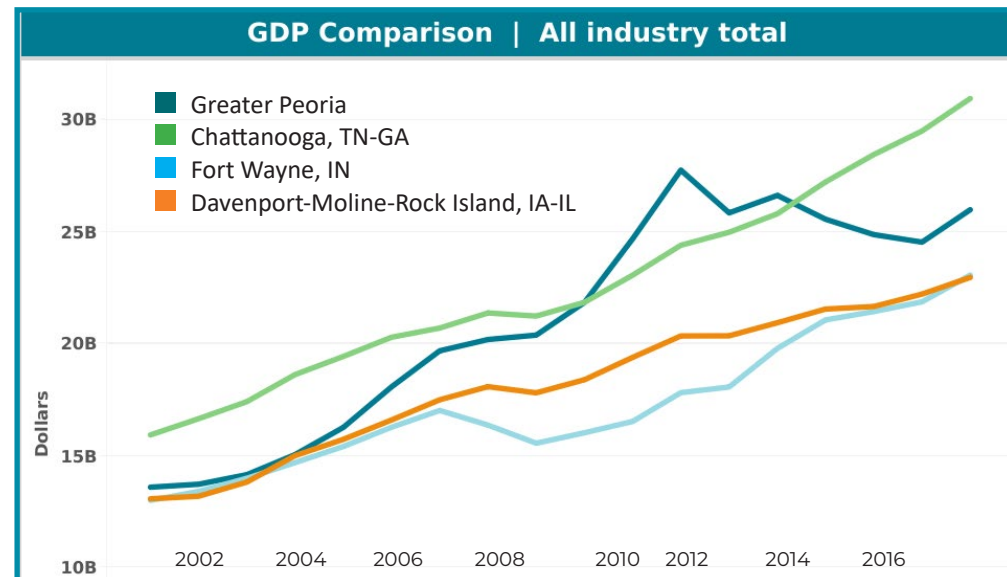


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## LABOR FORCE

As of October 2020, Greater Peoria had a labor force of 182,142. The labor force participation rate is the percentage of the civilian, noninstitutional population 16 years and older that is working or actively looking for work.

As of August 2020, the labor participation rate in the Peoria MSA was 59%, down from 60.7% in August 2019.<sup>22</sup>

The Greater Peoria labor force has declined over the last decade. This decrease is attributable to factors such as outmigration and the aging population leaving the workforce.

## UNEMPLOYMENT/EMPLOYMENT

In March of 2019, unemployment in the Peoria MSA stood at 3.8%, a rate not seen in the region since May 2007 at the onset of the 2007-2009 recession.

From July 2009 to March 2020, the unemployment rate fell steadily by 9.3 points.

In April 2020, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, unemployment rose sharply to 17.7%. At the time of the writing of this document, the unemployment rate of the Peoria MSA sat at 5.4% in October 2020.<sup>23</sup>

As of October 2020, 172,227 people living in Greater Peoria were employed.

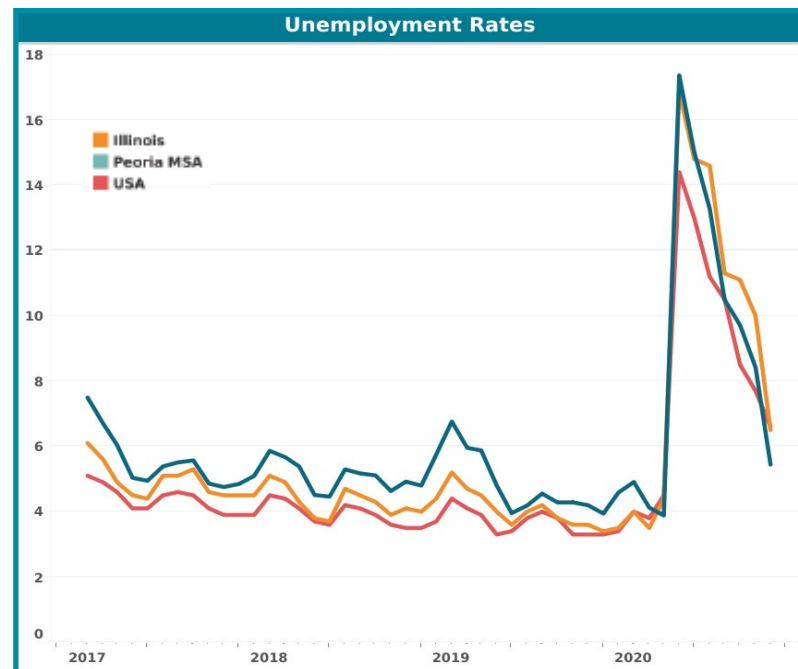
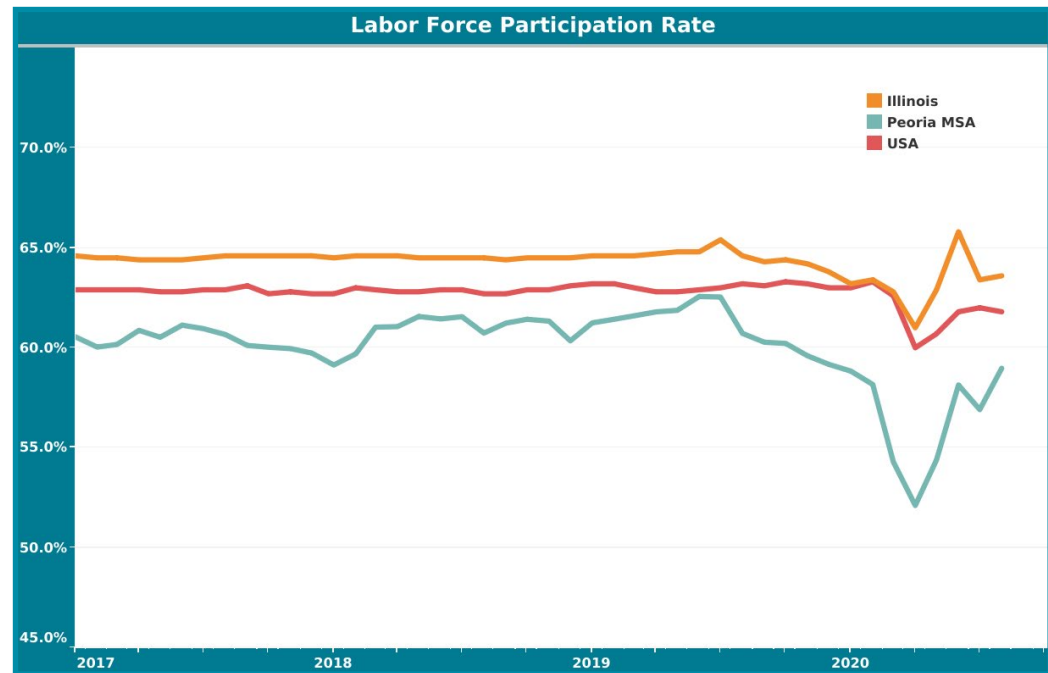


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## MEDIAN INCOME

In 2018 the median income in Greater Peoria was \$57,282. The county with the highest median household income was Woodford County at \$69,507. The county with the lowest median household income was Mason County at \$44,695. Comparatively, the median household income for the state of Illinois in 2017 was \$61,229 while the national median household income was \$57,652.<sup>24</sup>

The income category that had the most households in all five counties was \$50,000 to \$75,999. The household income distribution for the region had 19.5% of households in the \$50,000 to \$75,999 income bracket—consistent with the national statistics.

## HOUSING

Many government agencies define excessive or unaffordable housing as costs that exceed 30% of monthly household income.

In the period 2013-2017, owner-occupied households where less than 30% of household income was spent on mortgage costs was 21.6% in Woodford County, 21.5% Peoria County and 21.3% in Mason County. Logan county had the lowest at 15.0%.

Peoria County had a rate of 42.9% of renter-occupied households where less than 30% of household income was spent on gross rent, the highest in the region.<sup>25</sup>

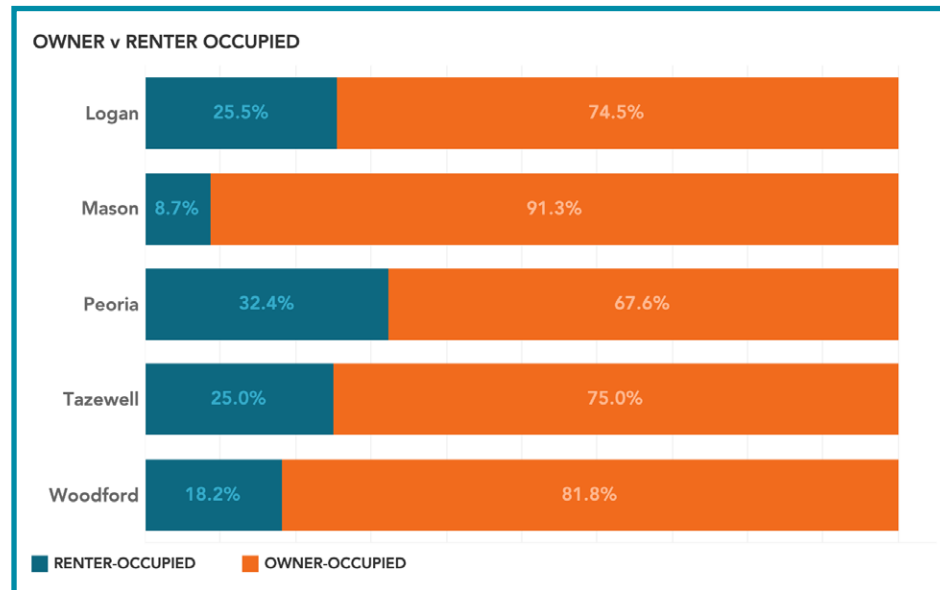
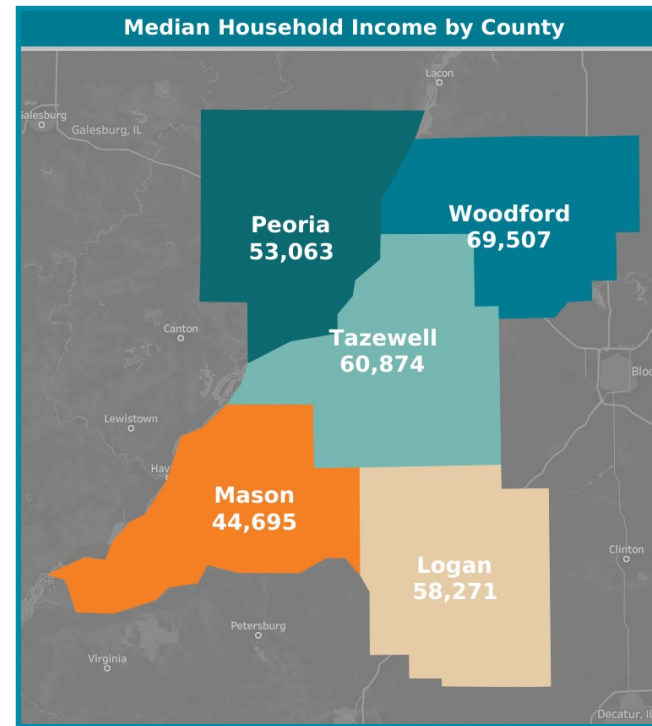


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>



## POVERTY

According to 2013 to 2017 Census data, in aggregate, the five-county region had lower percentages of individuals (11.9%) and families (8.3%) below the poverty line than the national averages of 14.6% and 10.5% respectively.

In this period, Peoria County had the highest estimated percent of individuals living below the poverty line (15.9%) and Woodford County had the lowest (7.4%). Peoria County also had the highest estimated percent of families living in poverty (11.3%) and Logan County had the lowest (5.4%). Illinois had an estimated 13.5% of individuals living in poverty and 9.8% of families living in poverty.<sup>26</sup>

But poverty varies greatly in certain places throughout the region. Poverty levels in Woodford County are well below national averages, whereas Peoria County stands above national averages, with poverty concentrated in the 61605 and 61603 zip codes. Over 20% of persons in the City of Peoria live in poverty. That poverty is concentrated in the city's predominantly Black zip codes.<sup>27</sup>

Pockets of poverty also exist in rural Mason County, where median incomes are also lowest among the five counties. The county profiles later in this section provide county-level income and poverty data.

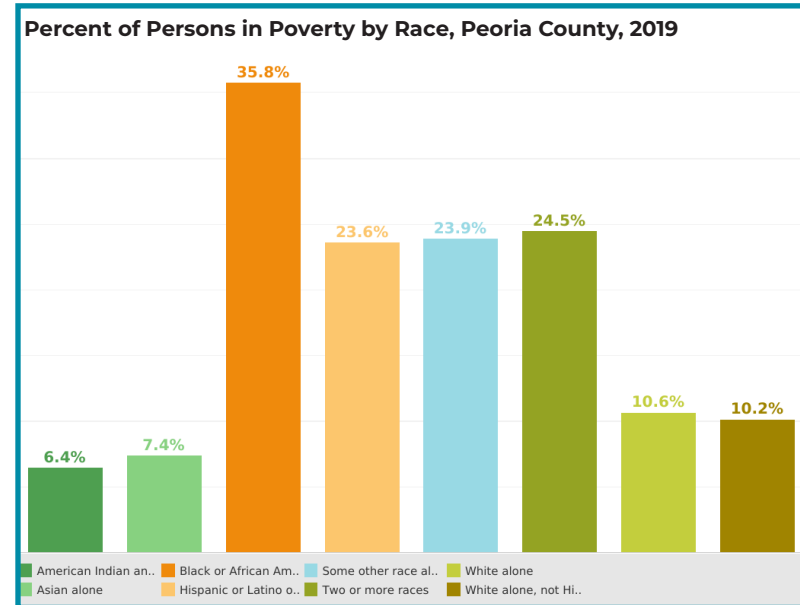
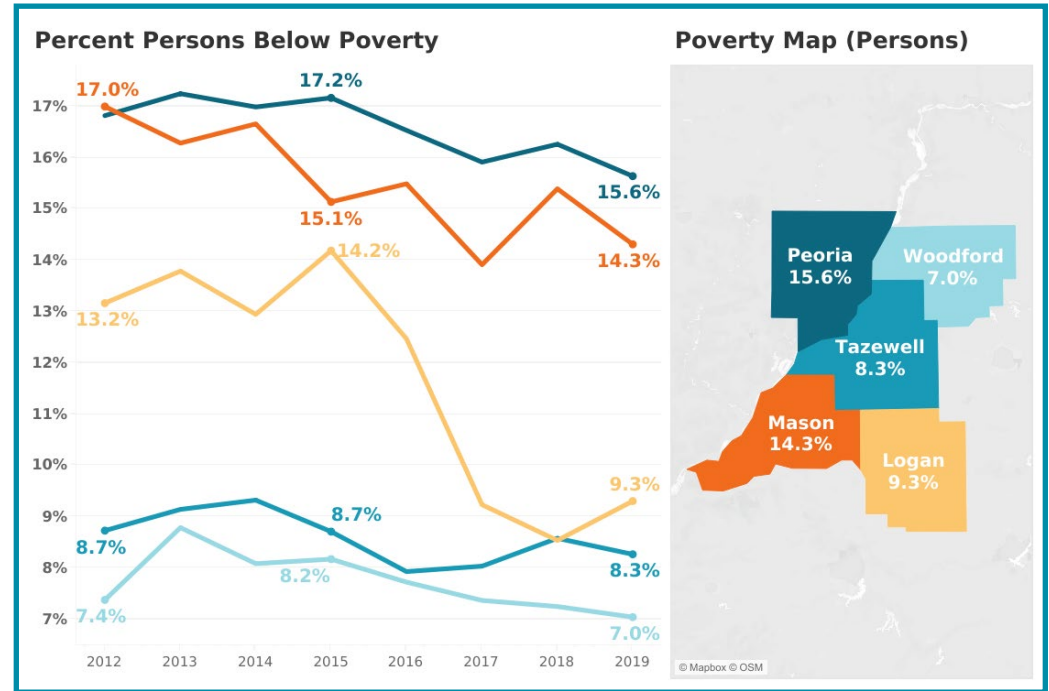


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## BROADBAND ACCESS

A wide broadband access and affordability disparity exists within the region. Generally, fixed (wired) connections of over 25 megabits per second (mpbs) are considered broadband. Wireless options such as satellite and cellular networks are available in more areas but are not considered reliable or cost effective for economic development purposes.

According to FCC data and standards, broadband speeds are available to 99.5% of Peoria residents, 95.1% of Tazewell residents and 92.5% of Woodford residents. In Mason County, broadband availability of 67.4% falls far behind the tri-county area. Logan County also falls short at 79.3%.<sup>28</sup>

It is important to note that the FCC is believed to vastly overestimate access due to their broad definition of availability based on ISP self-reporting.<sup>29</sup>

Beyond the rural disparity shown in FCC reports, a digital divide also exists within Peoria County. 18.4% of Peoria County Households have no internet access, 13.2% of Peoria County Households have no computer, and 13.4% of Peoria County Households only have cellular access to the internet. This digital divide falls along racial lines, with the predominantly Black 61605 zip code having the highest overlap in the Peoria area of those households with both no internet access and no computer.<sup>30</sup>

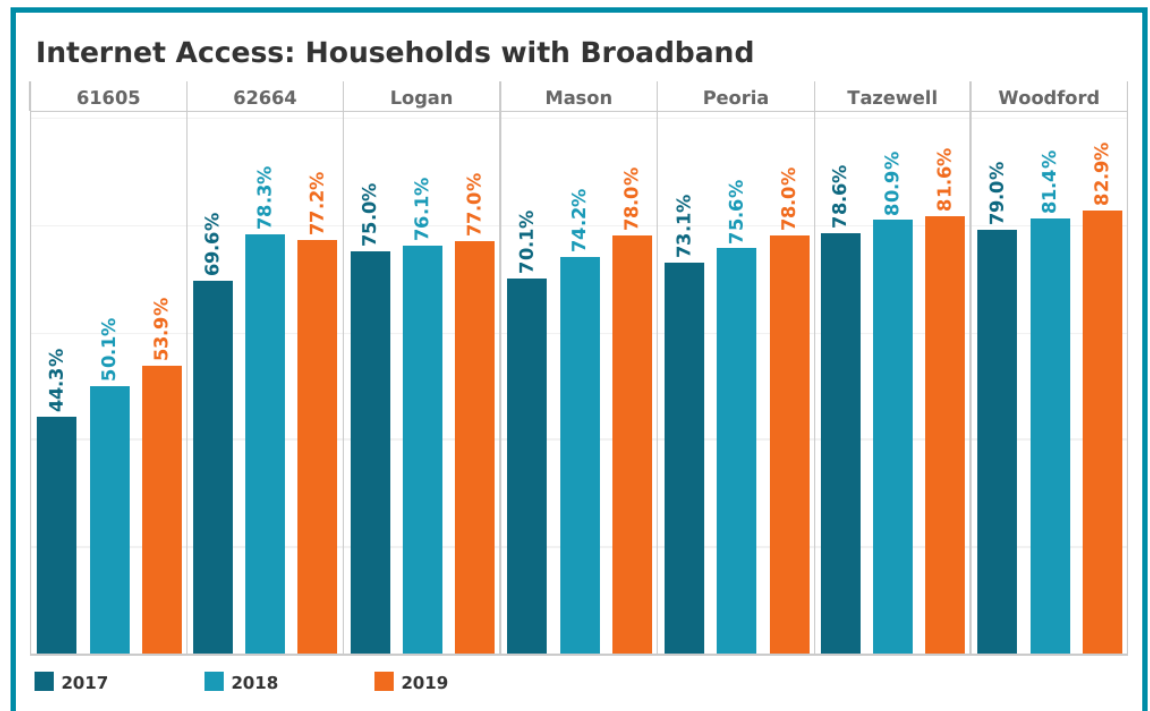
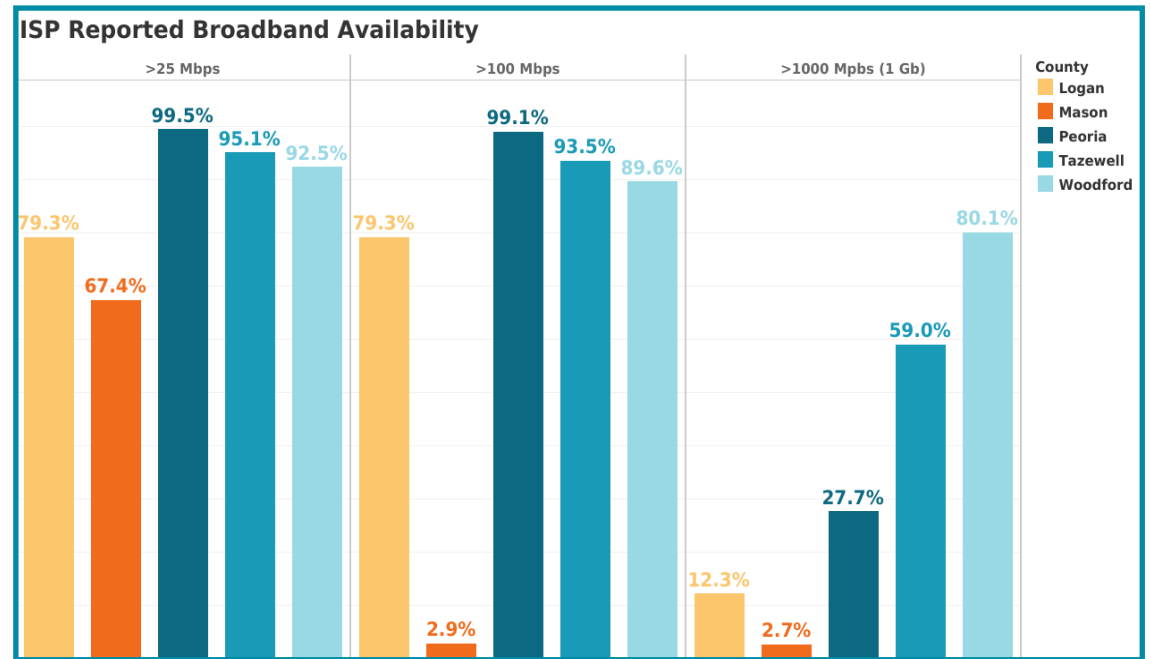


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

## AGRICULTURE

In 2017 the region sold \$481M in corn and \$342M in soybean. These two staple commodities were followed by hogs with \$91M in sales and vegetables at \$20M.

From 2007-2017 the number of farms in the five-county region declined by 1.8%, while the average number of acres farmed grew by 1.6%.

However, the number of farms in Mason County grew by 22.6% and the average size declined by 7%. While in Logan County the number of farms fell by 14.1% and average acreage grew by 14.9%

A notable segment of farmers in Woodford and Tazewell County have been transitioning land for organic production. Between 2012 and 2017 Tazewell County increased the number of USDA certified organic farm operations by 58%, followed by Woodford with an increase of 39%. Woodford County leads the state of Illinois in organic operations, followed by Tazewell.<sup>31</sup>

Cover crop adoption increased nearly 100% in Illinois between 2017-2019. Cover crops provide numerous benefits for producers including soil conservation, nutrient loss reduction and potential revenue sources.<sup>32</sup>

The average net income of Illinois grain farms has been in decline since 2012 with 2020 incomes expected to land between \$44,330 and -\$25,033 for a 1600-acre farm.<sup>33</sup>

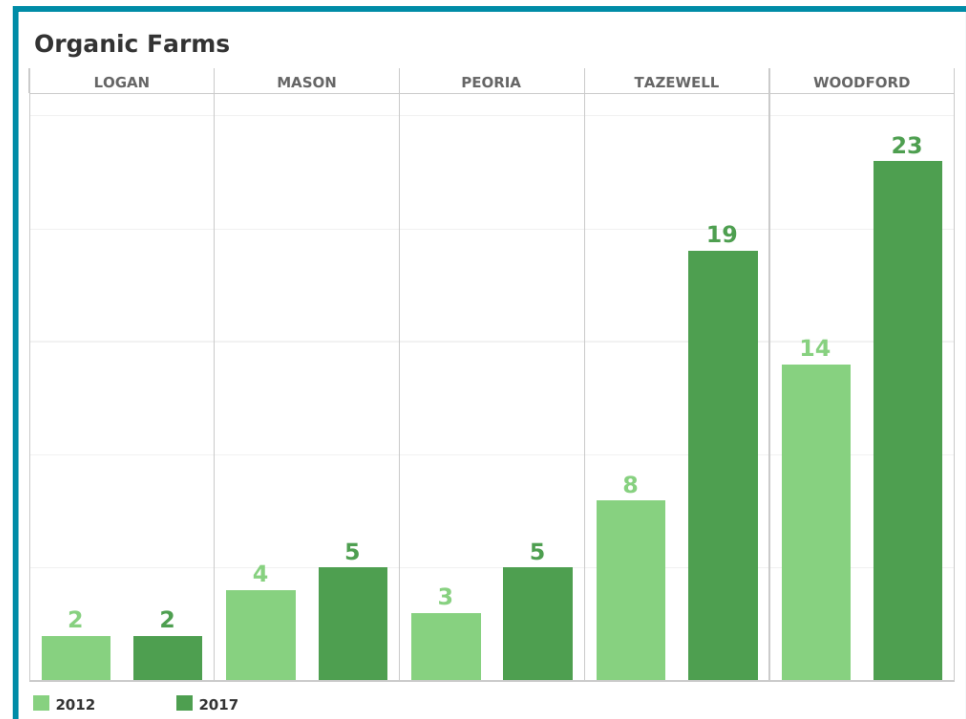
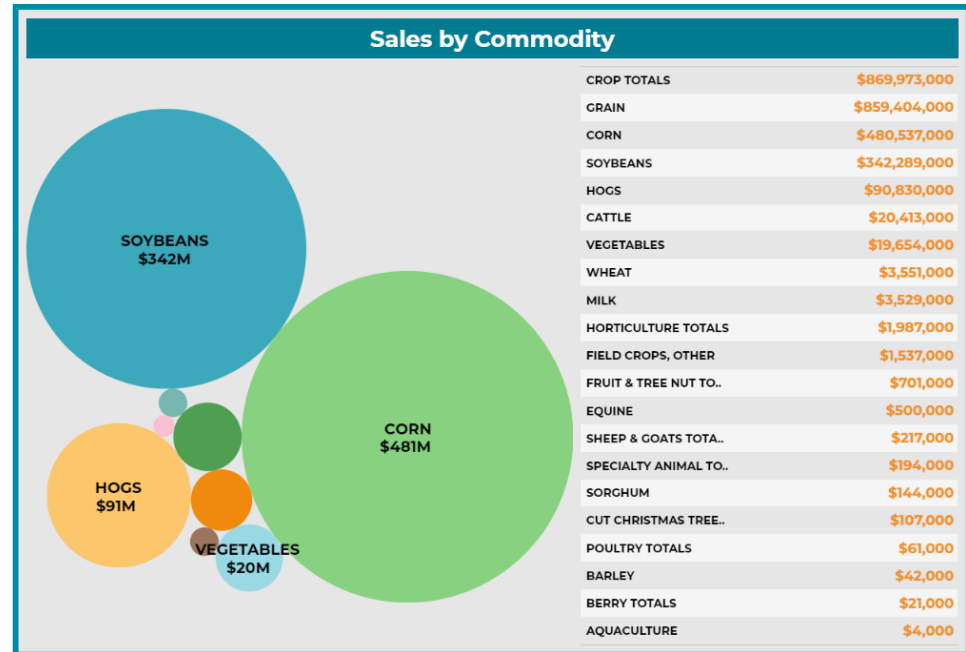


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>



## WATER RESOURCES

Each year more than 13 million tons of cargo pass through the Heart of Illinois Regional Port District in Peoria, IL.<sup>34</sup>

The stretch of the Illinois River through Greater Peoria contains an established population of the invasive Asian carp species. It is estimated that 9 out of 10 fish in the Illinois and Mississippi Rivers are Asian carp species.<sup>35</sup> These fish threaten the sustainability of the Illinois River ecosystem and impact recreation and tourism opportunities.

Excess nutrient loss from agricultural runoff, point source effluent and urban stormwater can cause downstream water quality issues. Illinois is a significant contributor of nitrogen and total phosphorus that reach the Gulf of Mexico and contribute to the Hypoxic Zone, or Dead Zone, an area of low oxygen that threatens marine life.<sup>36</sup>

The Mahomet Aquifer is one of Illinois' most important groundwater resources, serving as the primary source of drinking water for more than 500,000 people in 15 Illinois counties and providing an estimated 220 million gallons of water per day to communities, agriculture, industry and rural wells.<sup>37</sup>

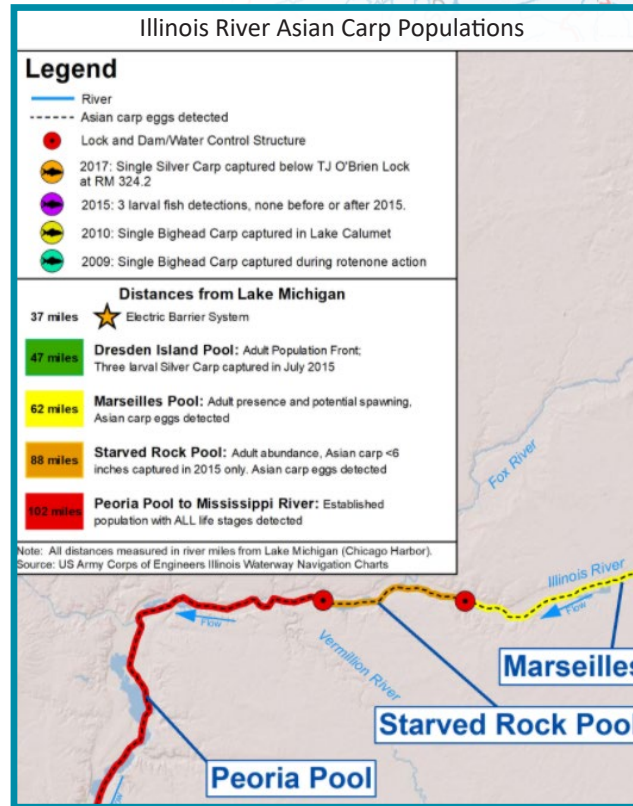
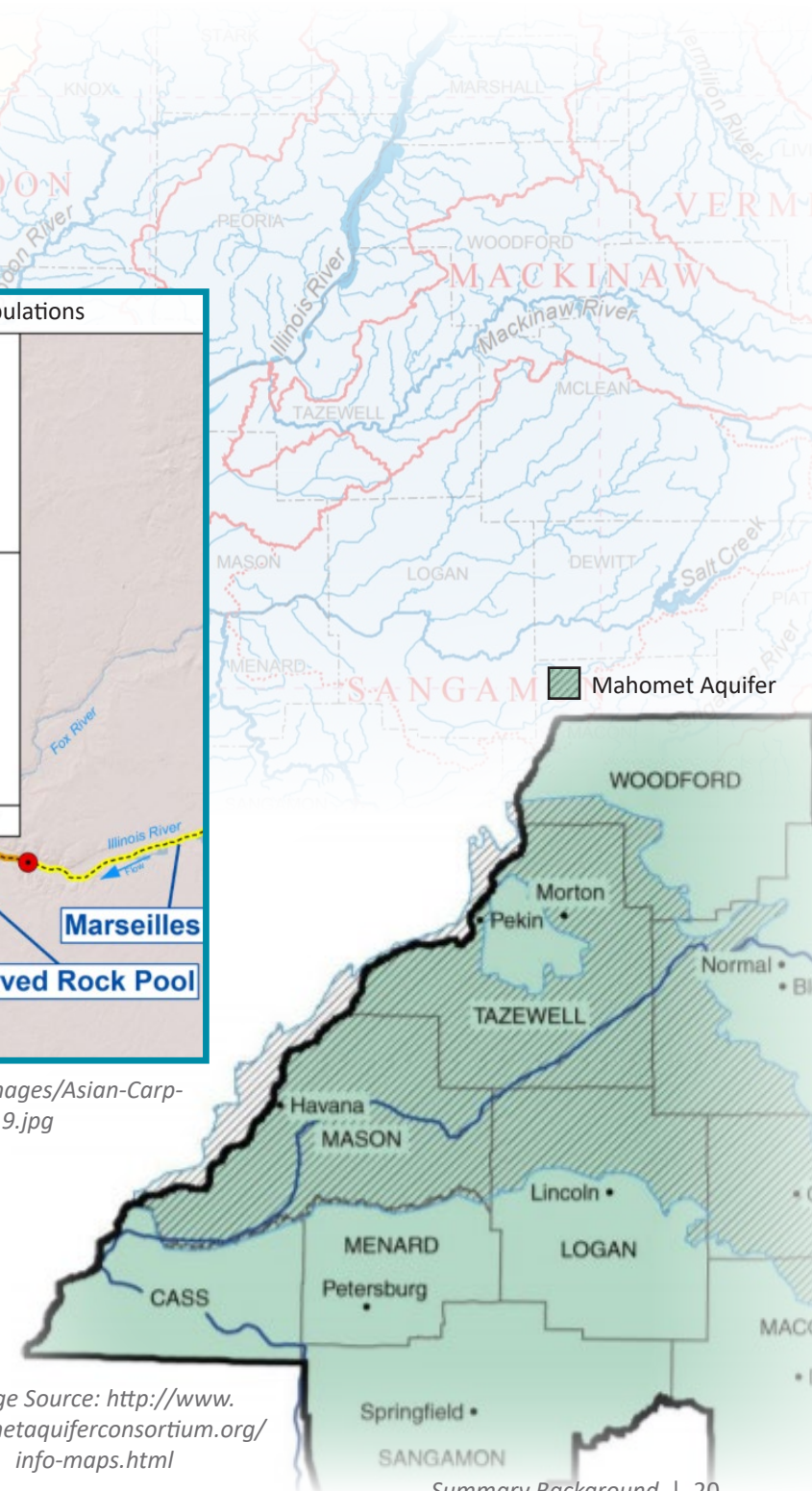


Image Source: <http://asiancarp.us/Images/Asian-Carp-Status-Map-October-2019.jpg>

Image Source: <http://www.mahometaquiferconsortium.org/info-maps.html>



## RACE & EQUITY<sup>38</sup>

Racial, ethnic and gender inequities exist across the economic system in the United States and disproportionately impact people of color. The inequities in Peoria mirror those nationwide, but in many cases the disparity far exceeds the national average.

Over 80% of the region's Black population live in the City of Peoria and smaller communities immediately adjacent. The following pages review the acute disparity that Blacks experience in Peoria as evidenced in the data. Moreover, the data show that the disparities experienced by Blacks in Peoria consistently surpass national averages on multiple measures.

### INCOME

Median annual household income for black families in the United States is 62% of the median annual household income of white families. The median annual household income of Black families in Peoria is \$28,019, nearly 46% of White families.

The census tracts of the Southside neighborhood of Peoria have a median family income that is less than 50% that of the City of Peoria.

### POVERTY

Black residents account for 27% of the City of Peoria's population, but they represent over 50% of those living in the city in poverty.

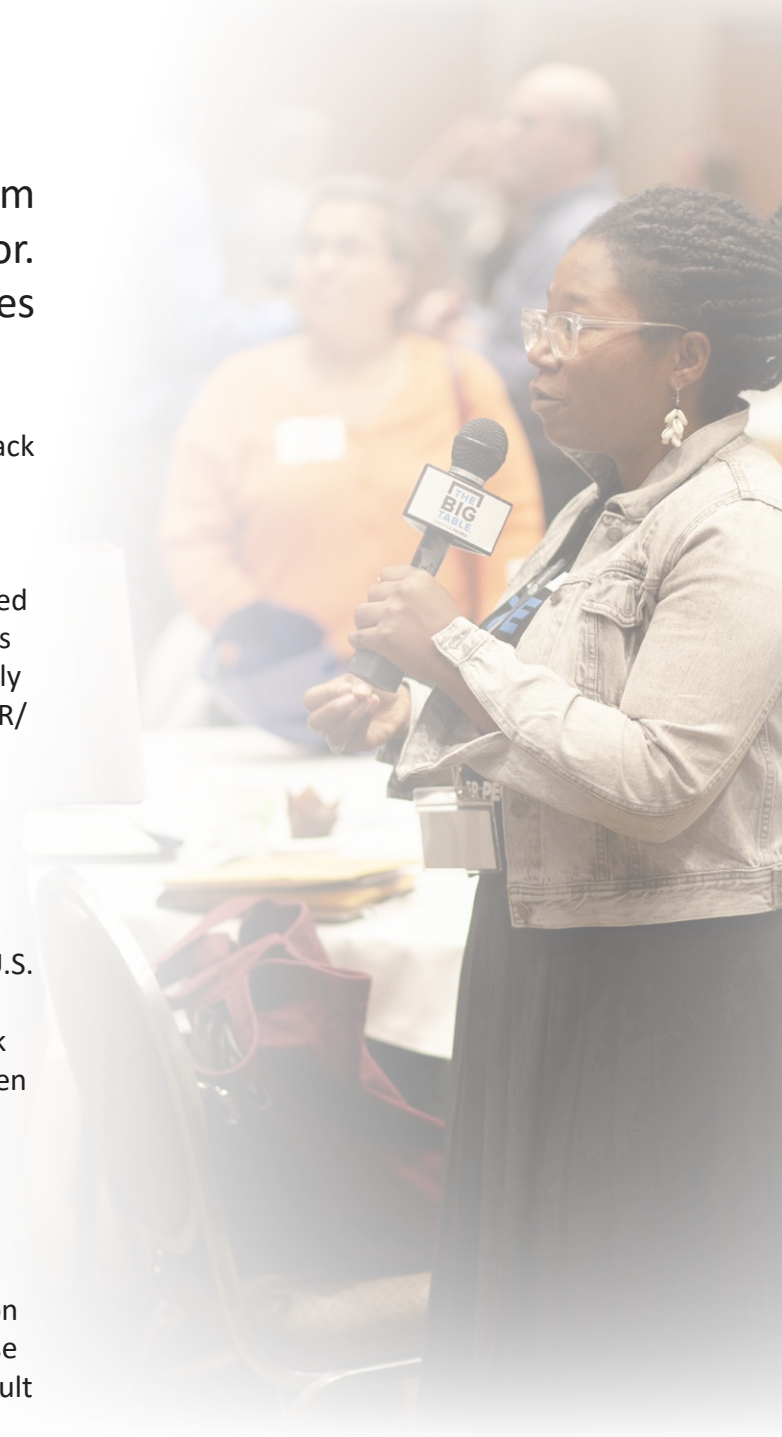
Another way to look at it is that 36% of all Black people in Peoria live in poverty.

The Southside neighborhood of Peoria (zip code 61605) is 65% Black and is a concentrated area of poverty, with over 90% of its residents living in poverty. This has earned it the Racially or Ethnically Concentrated Areas of Poverty (R/ECAP) distinction by the federal government which identifies the nations highest concentrations of poverty along racial lines.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

Black American unemployment rates in the U.S. have remained close to double that of White Americans for the past several decades. Black Peorians experience unemployment at an even higher rate than the national average.

The unemployment rate in Peoria (pre-pandemic) was 7.2% for White Peorians and 16.2% for Black Peorians. Additionally, in Peoria County, Black citizens are sent to prison at a rate three times that of Whites, and those with a criminal record also have a more difficult time finding employment that pays a living wage.





## HOUSING

Home ownership is one way many Americans build long term wealth and escape the cycle of poverty. Despite relatively affordable housing, in Peoria, just 32.6% of Black households own their homes. This is less than half the 76.1% White home ownership rate. Also, 36% of the Peoria Housing Authority’s units are in the Southside and most Public housing residents in Peoria are Black.

There is little to no market demand for the housing stock and land in Peoria’s Southside, resulting in significant blight, abandonment and disinvestment in the area. Residents express feelings of geographic and social isolation from employment and retail districts of Peoria. A recent analysis by the University of Richmond correlated the 20th Century practice of “redlining” (excluded predominantly Black communities from conventional mortgage lending) with a high Social Vulnerability Index on Peoria’s Southside.<sup>39</sup> The Social Vulnerability Index is widely used to assess a community’s capacity to prepare for, respond to, and recover from human and natural disasters.

## EDUCATION

In Peoria, 79.6% of Blacks have a high school diploma, well below the 92.9% attainment rate for Whites. This attainment gap is one of the largest in the country. Since 1970, the student population of Peoria Public Schools has fallen from 25,000 to 13,300, resulting in reduced funding and educational offerings. Peoria

Public Schools has a student body of 75.9% non-White students, which does not reflect the city population. One cause has been a steady exodus of wealthier families from Peoria Public Schools to private schools and nearby suburban school districts.

In addition to white-flight, the school system itself suffers from structural challenges. A recent analysis in the online publication Governing showed that the Peoria metro area had the most segregated schools of any area nationally, regardless of metro size.<sup>40</sup>

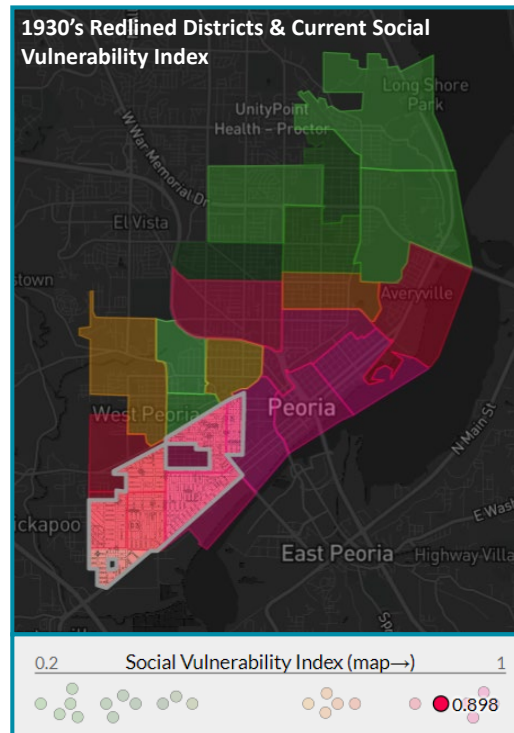
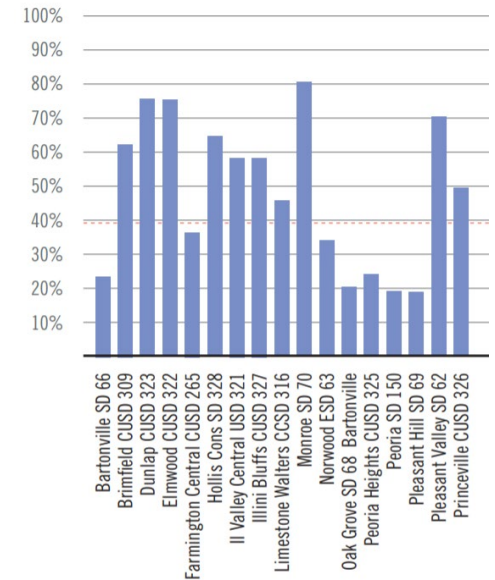


Image Source: <https://dsl.richmond.edu/socialvulnerability/>

## 8th Grade Language Arts Proficiency 2018-2019 Peoria County



## Chronic Truancy 2018-2019, Peoria County

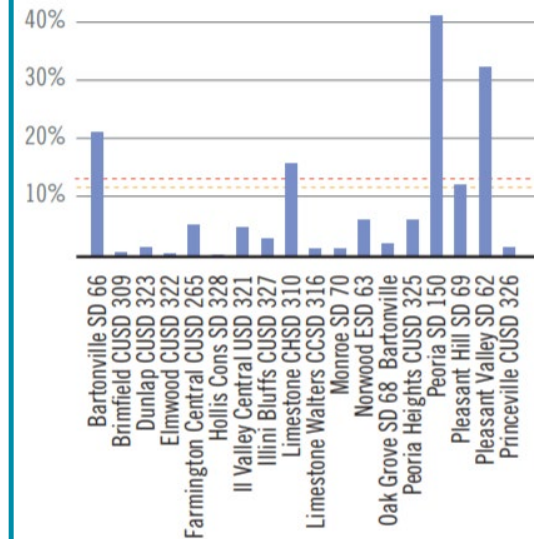


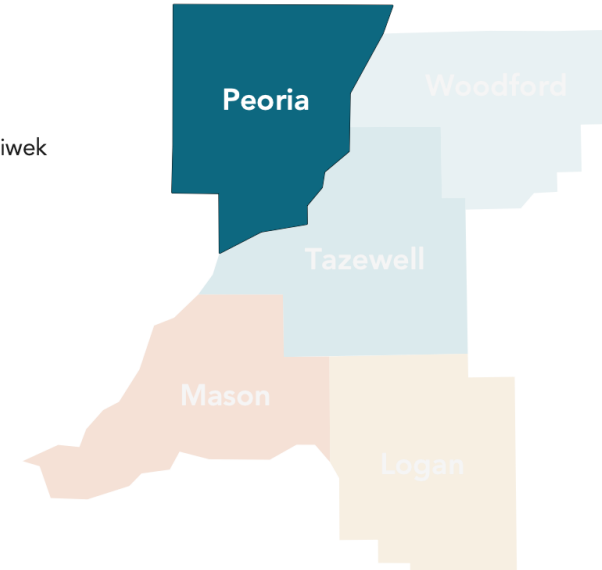
Image Source: <https://www.hoiunitedway.org/wp-content/uploads/2020-Heart-of-Illinois-United-Way-Community-Assessment.pdf>



# COUNTY PROFILES

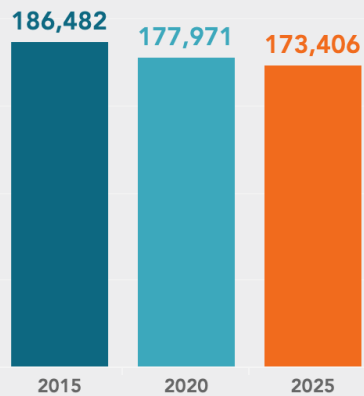
## PEORIA COUNTY

Peoria County was formed in 1825 out of Fulton County. It was named for the Peoria tribe, an Illiniwek people who lived there. Home to the metropolitan center of our region, Peoria boasts the largest population and represents a diverse set of communities.



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### POPULATION



### GENDER



### RACE



### MEDIAN AGE

37.0

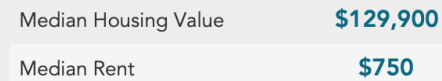
### TOP EMPLOYERS



### TOP INDUSTRIES by job



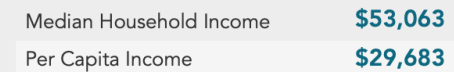
### HOUSING



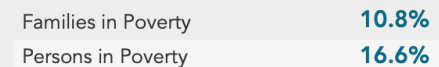
### OWNER v RENTER OCCUPIED



### INCOME



### POVERTY

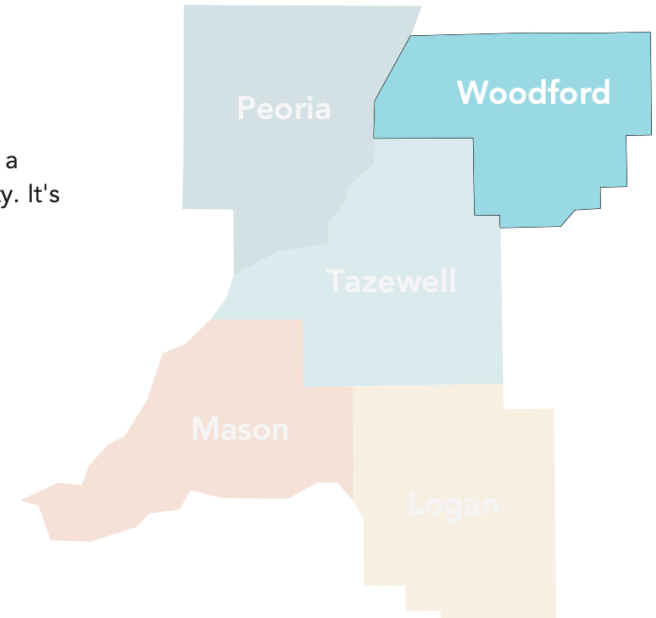


### FOOD INSECURITY

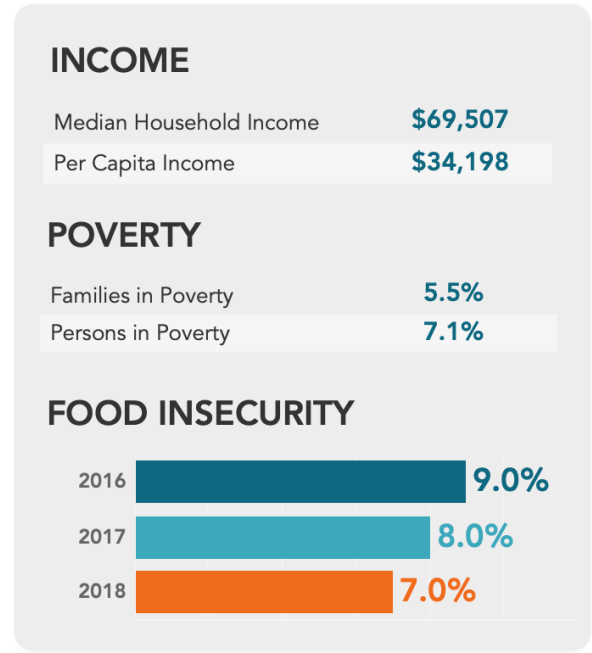
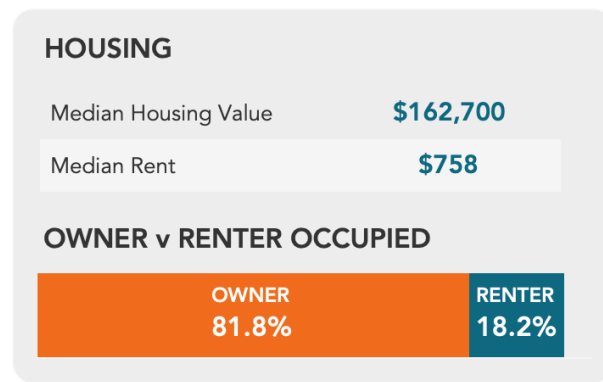
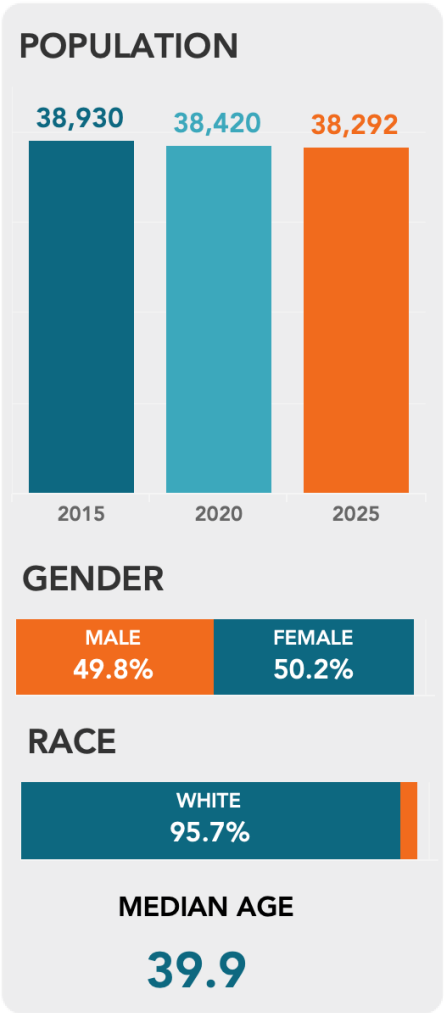


# WOODFORD COUNTY

Woodford County was formed in 1841 and ranks 3rd in population in Greater Peoria. Woodford is a largely rural county with a strong agricultural foundation and a growing organic farming community. It's largest city and county seat is Eureka.

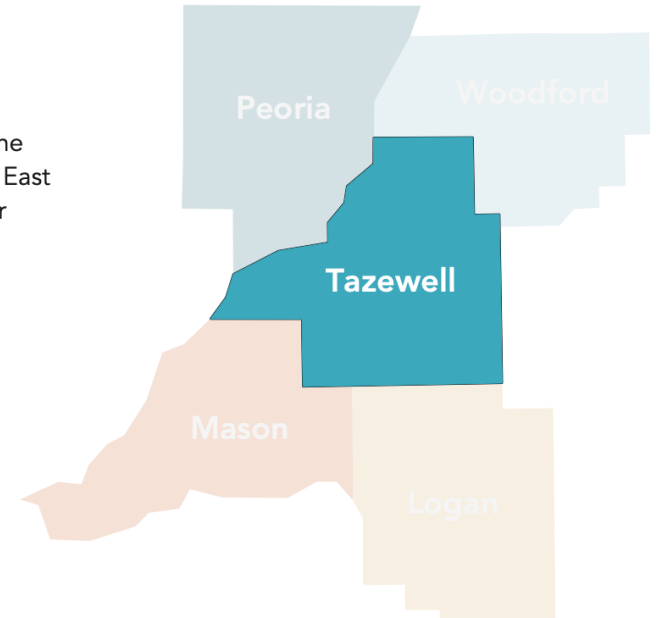


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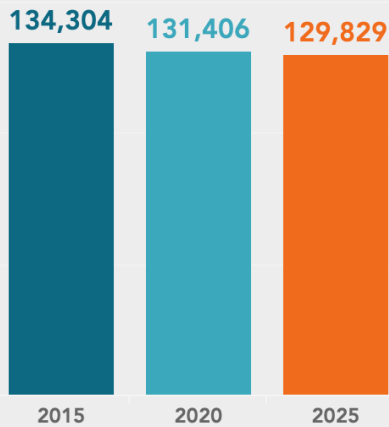
# TAZEWELL COUNTY

Tazewell County was formed out of Peoria County in 1827 and has the 2nd largest population in the region. It boasts a strong agricultural and manufacturing economy spread throughout the cities of East Peoria, Morton, Pekin, Washington, and beyond. It is also home to Illinois Central College, a major driver in workforce development in our region.



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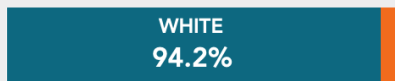
## POPULATION



## GENDER



## RACE



## MEDIAN AGE

40.8

## TOP EMPLOYERS

Caterpillar
Morton Industries LLC
Pekin Insurance
UnityPoint - Pekin
G&D Integrated

## TOP INDUSTRIES by job

Retail Trade
Manufacturing
Accommodation and Food Services

## HOUSING

Median Housing Value	\$139,700
Median Rent	\$718

## OWNER v RENTER OCCUPIED



## INCOME

Median Household Income	\$60,874
Per Capita Income	\$32,082

## POVERTY

Families in Poverty	5.6%
Persons in Poverty	9.6%

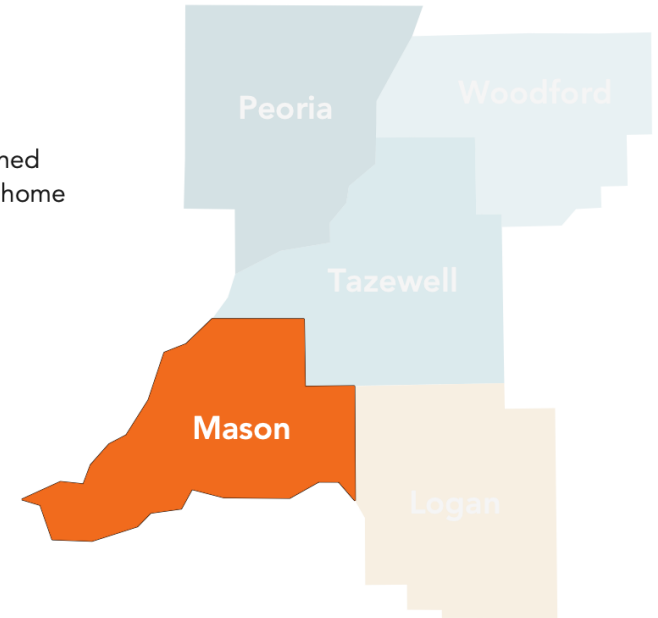
## FOOD INSECURITY





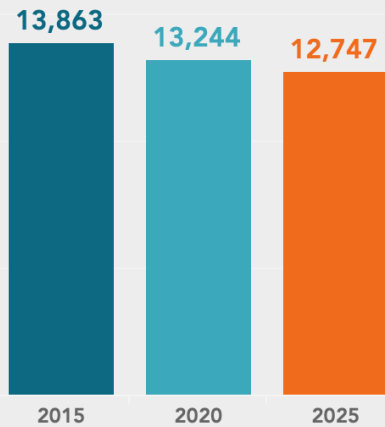
# MASON COUNTY

Mason County was created in 1841 out of portions of Tazewell and Menard counties. It is renowned for its sandy soil that produces bountiful specialty crops, such as popcorn and pumpkins. It is also home to a beautiful state park system rich with native wildlife.



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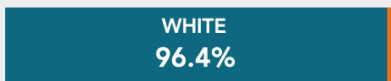
## POPULATION



## GENDER



## RACE



## MEDIAN AGE

45.5

## TOP EMPLOYERS

Mason District Hospital
Heritage Enterprises, Inc.
Petersen Health Care, Inc.
Sunrise Ag
Bayer

## TOP INDUSTRIES by job

Retail Trade
Healthcare
Accommodation and Food Services

## HOUSING

Median Housing Value	\$79,600
Median Rent	\$559

## OWNER v RENTER OCCUPIED



## INCOME

Median Household Income	\$44,695
Per Capita Income	\$25,952

## POVERTY

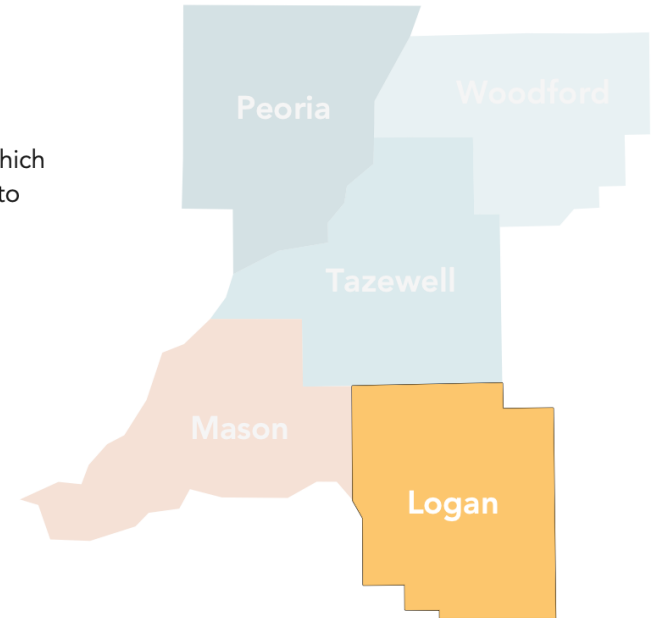
Families in Poverty	11.7%
Persons in Poverty	14.6%

## FOOD INSECURITY



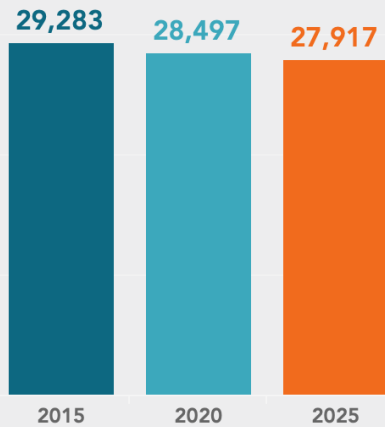
# LOGAN COUNTY

Established in 1839, Logan County is home anchored by its largest city and county seat Lincoln, which was named after President Abraham Lincoln. It boasts a robust agricultural economy and is home to several communities located on Historic Route 66.



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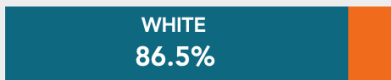
## POPULATION



## GENDER



## RACE



## MEDIAN AGE

40.6

## TOP EMPLOYERS

Eaton
Memorial Health System
Lincoln College
Precision Products, Inc.
Cresco Labs

## TOP INDUSTRIES by job

Manufacturing
Healthcare
Accommodation and Food Services

## HOUSING

Median Housing Value	\$102,900
Median Rent	\$568

## OWNER v RENTER OCCUPIED



## INCOME

Median Household Income	\$58,271
Per Capita Income	\$26,479

## POVERTY

Families in Poverty	5.6%
Persons in Poverty	10.9%

## FOOD INSECURITY



# OPPORTUNITY ZONES

In December of 2017, congress passed the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. This bill created a tax break for investors through a new program known as Opportunity Zones. It provided a variety of tax incentives for reinvesting capital gains in Opportunity Funds that direct investments into development projects and businesses located in census tracts designated as Opportunity Zones.

Greater Peoria has eight census tracts in three counties designated as Opportunity Zones.

## PEORIA

Five census tracts in the City of Peoria are designated as Opportunity Zones. These zones include Downtown, the Warehouse District and the Southside neighborhood where targeted commercial corridor planning is underway.

## PEKIN

The Opportunity Zone in Pekin is largely residential and includes a stretch of commercially zoned properties along one of the city's arterial roads.

## LOGAN COUNTY/LINCOLN

This zone contains a large agricultural area as well as commercial property near the convergence of Interstates 55 and 155.

## HAVANA

Havana has a logistically ideal rural Opportunity Zone for developments seeking access to river transport. Havana also has a newly developed Historic Downtown District steadily gaining popularity as a tourist destination.

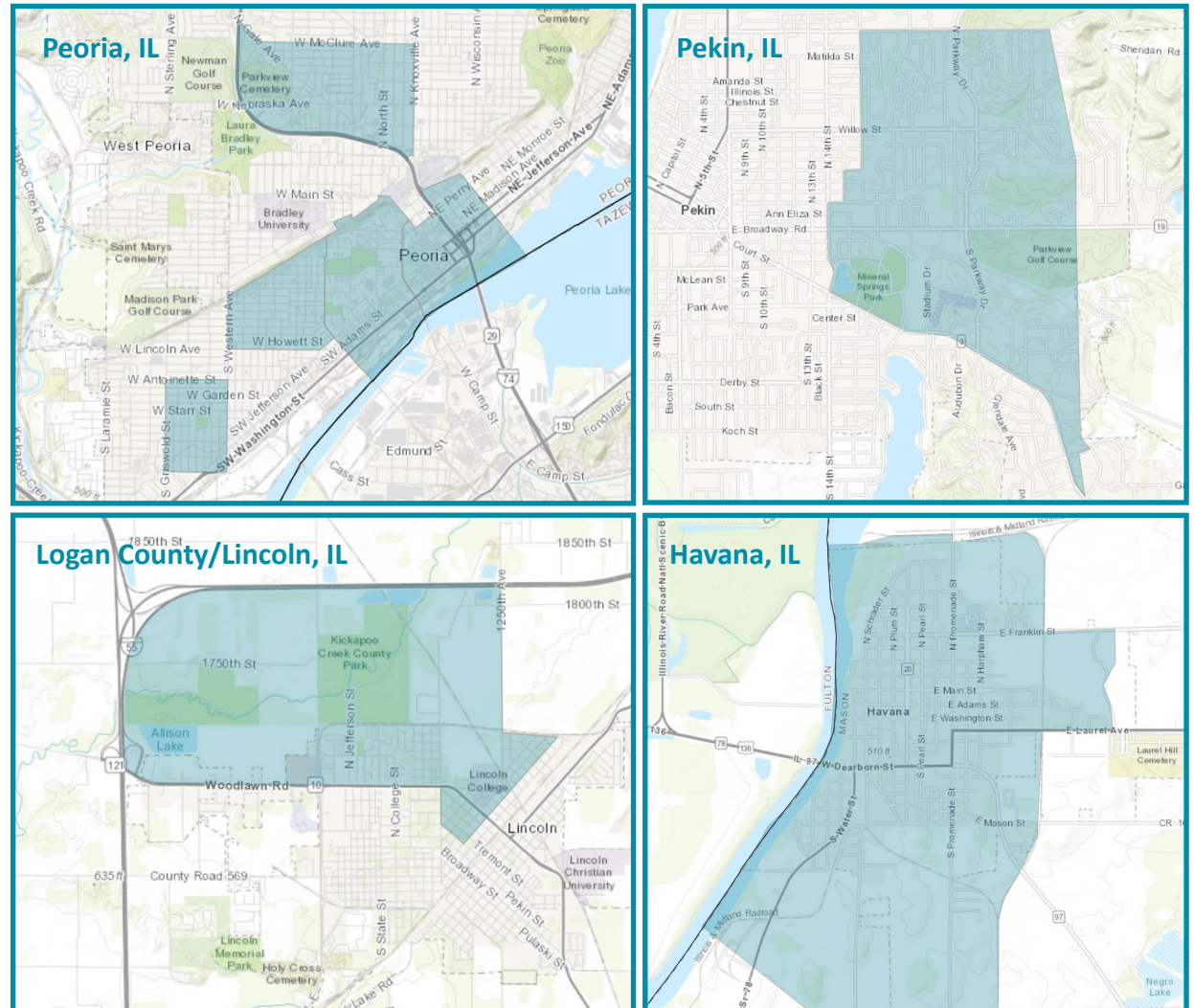


Image Source: Greater Peoria DataHub, <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>



# SWOT ANALYSIS

## A COLLECTIVE SELF-REFLECTION

This analysis combines the region's economic Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats identified through a combination of public meetings and economic development professional working groups.

The strategic direction outlined in this CEDS should be rooted in a collective self-reflection.

Alongside the data and quantitative analysis captured in the previous chapter, this analysis helps to broaden the snapshot of our region.

### THE BIG TABLE: GREATER PEORIA

Nearly 700 residents from around the region participated in the inaugural Big Table event in October 2019. Their discussions focused on four major areas: workforce development, diversity and inclusion, innovation and entrepreneurship, and quality of life and place.

Between December 2019 and February 2020, five additional "Rural Matters" events were held, one in each of the Greater Peoria Economic Development District counties. A total of 240 residents participated. Shared themes surfaced at all five events such as quality of life, small business development, broadband access, education, historic preservation and agriculture.

Between June and September 2020, three virtual events focused on racial and criminal

justice and organizational policies. In October 2020 the second annual regional event was held virtually where 748 participants expanded the discussion around the previous year's themes.

### CEDS COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUPS

In a series of meetings in late 2019 with established working groups, the region's professionals in the fields economic development, government administration, community development, health and social services and leaders from the private business community conducted a SWOT analysis.

The Greater Peoria CEDS Committee initiated the exercise followed by input from the Technical Working Group, a monthly gathering coordinated by the GPEDC with participation from economic development practitioners, city and county administrators, mayors and business leaders.

The following pages contain the consensus from these regionwide discussions.

# THE BIG TABLE: GREATER PEORIA

Through a series of events designed to foster community conversations, a diversity of regional stakeholders identified a range of common views and barriers for enhancing the quality of life in Greater Peoria. The insights uncovered at those events will inform the plans of numerous regional organizations, including economic development organizations.

Following the first two annual Big Table events in October of 2019 and 2020, the CEO Council produced reports outlining the priorities discussed by the 1400+ participants. In February 2020, the Greater Peoria EDC produced a report from the five Rural Matters events that drew an additional 200+ participants. This summary pulls highlights from those reports.

## WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

### Common Views

- The key is removing financial and resource barriers
- Schools, businesses and families must play an active role in preparing youth with career preparation.
- Regional Workforce Alliance is dismantling the barriers of social injustice in the region
- Teaching basic computer skills can upskill older generations
- Interpersonal skills are key to career development
- The working alliance organizations need to understand the post-pandemic “new normal”
- Remote working as a result of COVID-19 is changing professional expectations

### Barriers

- Reliable and convenient transportation
- Lack of opportunities with professional mentors
- Having a record of substance abuse or minor crimes
- Little or no access to broadband in certain homes
- Some students are not connecting to career pathways early enough for future careers

## INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

### Common Views

- Pride in our region’s history of innovation and the need to sustain current innovation activities.
- The importance of applying and commercializing new technologies to generate business opportunities, boost economic growth and retain local talent.
- Emphasis should be on small businesses as a key driver of economic recovery and growth
- A sustainable region for small businesses to survive and thrive allows for a sustainable long term growth
- Innovations in agriculture, manufacturing and healthcare are key to boosting economic growth
- Small business can work with bigger businesses to help foster new ideas

### Barriers

- Lack of training to fill certain workforce gaps
- Retaining small businesses through COVID-19
- Lack of recognition of small businesses, especially minority-owned businesses
- Lack of young entrepreneurs/students engaged in growing and testing their ideas in the region





## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

### Common Views

- There is significant segregation amongst the communities of the Greater Peoria region.
- When any of our communities or neighborhoods struggle, it impacts everyone.
- We are seeing action being taken
- Organizations are doing Diversity & Inclusion trainings for their employees
- Now more than ever more individuals are open to learning from each other's experiences
- There is a need to discuss the difference between diversity and inclusion

### Barriers

- Food insecurities (especially related to COVID-19)
- Access to funds and services
- Keeping facilities healthy for the aging community
- Limited access to transportation and childcare
- Establishing a vision with next steps laid out
- Ensuring equity for people with disabilities

## QUALITY OF LIFE & PLACE

### Common Views

- Greater Peoria has a lot to offer, including affordable housing, strong human services, good school districts, family-friendly activities and a wealth of natural recreation
- There are significant challenges from major businesses moving out of town to safety issues in some communities.
- COVID-19 has brought an outpouring of community support
- Lack of big city congestion is an asset for our region
- Our region offers rural, urban and suburban lifestyles, all 15-20 minutes away from everything
- Our region has a rich history that is celebrated by the Peoria Riverfront Museum and other institutions
- We are a friendly, welcoming community with values
- The art community is a growing asset in our region

### Barriers

- Connecting those suffering from poverty, homelessness and substance abuse with appropriate resources

- Outdoor spaces are not promoted adequately
- "Food deserts" are growing
- Transportation needs improvement
- Community events need to be more inclusive

## RURAL MATTERS

At each of the five *Big Table: Rural Matters* events (held in Lincoln, Brimfield, Havana, Metamora and Delavan). Although each meeting had a unique set of discussions, common views and barriers existed.

### Common Views

- The numerous small towns of Greater Peoria offer a wide variety of interesting and unique places to live for those seeking small town and rural lifestyles
- There are many local tourism assets that need more promotion
- Small Businesses are critical to Main Street districts and community vitality
- Small town school districts are an asset
- Historic Preservation is important to many communities
- Agriculture & Agtech opportunities abound

### Barriers

- Small cities and villages lack the resources for implementing local economic development plans
- Grocery store closings are exacerbating food access issues and quality of life in many communities
- Infrastructure & Broadband improvements are needed in many areas
- Regional Business Attraction and innovation/ entrepreneurship initiatives must be more inclusive of areas outside the urban centers
- Some expressed a lack of clear communication between county and municipal governments and local residents regarding development, regulations and resource allotment.
- Lack of housing for the aging and for young families
- Closing of coal power plant in Havana and the disruption to the tax base



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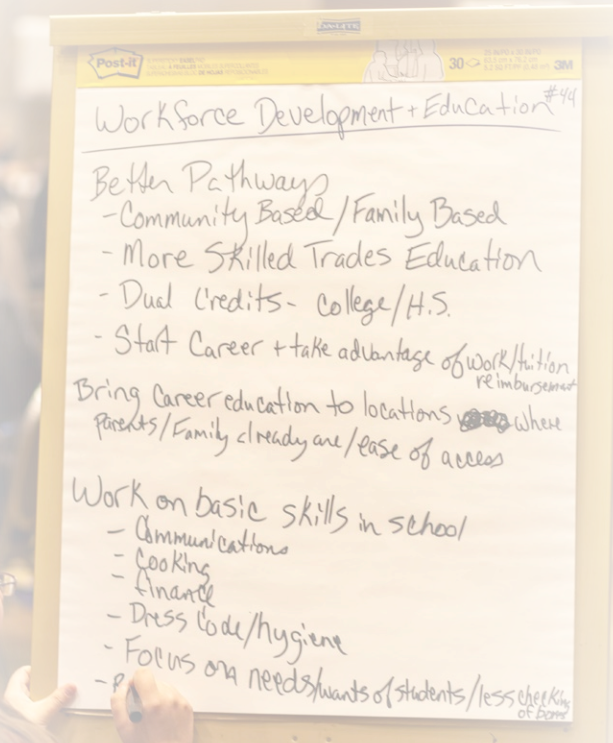
# CEDS COMMITTEE & WORKING GROUPS

In a series of meetings in late 2019 with established working groups, the region’s professionals in the fields economic development, government, community development, health and social services and leaders from the private business community conducted a SWOT analysis.

The Greater Peoria CEDS Committee initiated the exercise followed by input from the Technical Working Group, a monthly gathering of economic development practitioners, city and county administrators and mayors coordinated by the GPEDC.

These lists describe the essence of the common views discussed by the participants throughout extended conversations. The next few pages provide additional explanation and clarification of each point.

<p><b>STRENGTHS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key assets for developing an ecosystem for innovation</li> <li>• Geographic and Logistic advantages</li> <li>• Established industry clusters</li> <li>• Strong educational institutions</li> <li>• Low costs of living and doing business and a robust network of human services</li> <li>• Diversity of people, places and lifestyles</li> <li>• Agricultural and natural resource assets</li> </ul>	<p><b>WEAKNESSES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dependence on large employers</li> <li>• Pockets of persistent poverty</li> <li>• Racial economic inequality</li> <li>• Auto-centric transportation system</li> <li>• Lack of postsecondary credential/degree</li> <li>• Pessimistic self-image</li> <li>• Lack of early stage capital for startups</li> <li>• Lack of agricultural diversity</li> <li>• Minimal rural economic development capacity</li> </ul>
<p><b>OPPORTUNITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand research, development and innovation around Healthcare Delivery, Smart Mobility, and Food and Farming Systems</li> <li>• Retention and expansion of existing businesses</li> <li>• Opportunity Zone investments</li> <li>• Capitalize on river and other natural resources</li> <li>• Develop live here/work anywhere culture</li> <li>• Retain and Attract retirees</li> <li>• Economic and climate migration from metro, coastal areas</li> </ul>	<p><b>THREATS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continued population loss</li> <li>• Challenges of Illinois business climate</li> <li>• Shrinkage of dominant employers</li> <li>• Aging population</li> <li>• Disruptions to the retail landscape</li> <li>• Rural migration and business continuity</li> <li>• Climate change and natural resource degradation</li> <li>• Disruptions to tax base (such as the Havana coal plant closure)</li> </ul>



# STRENGTHS

## INNOVATION ASSETS

Greater Peoria is home to nationally recognized public and private research and development facilities for agriculture, healthcare, manufacturing and autonomous mobility. The USDA NCAUR, OSF Jump Simulation Center, Caterpillar, Bradley University, Illinois Central College, Natural Fiber Welding and AutonomouStuff are all leaders in R&D for our region's top industries.

These organizations are resources for our region's existing businesses, entrepreneurs and innovators. They also bring outside businesses, institutions and individuals into our region, which creates an opportunity for business and talent attraction. Peoria's participation in the Illinois Innovation Network connects the region to a statewide coordinated effort to retain and attract innovative entrepreneurs and businesses.

## LOGISTIC ADVANTAGES

The region is strategically located for economic development. The leading natural feature is the Illinois River, connecting the Great Lakes to the Mississippi River and ultimately the Gulf of Mexico. Multiple interstates connect the region to numerous major Midwest cities within a day's drive. An airport serves residents and businesses and is an international port of entry for freight.

Amtrak stations in Lincoln, Normal and Galesburg provide passenger rail options.

These factors make for a strategic hub of economic activity as well as a convenient location for people desiring a lower cost of living with relatively easy access to major cities for additional business and recreation activities.

## ESTABLISHED INDUSTRY CLUSTERS

The healthcare, manufacturing, agriculture and human service sectors are well established in the region. This opens the window for increased business development in those industries and their supply chains. This foundation of traditional industries sets a foundation for innovation in areas such as agtech and diversified agriculture systems, food manufacturing, autonomous mobility systems, sustainable textiles and building materials, Industry 4.0 engineering and manufacturing, healthcare delivery and medical devices.

## STRONG EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Opportunities for quality postsecondary education abound: Illinois Central College, Bradley University, Eureka College, Methodist College, St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, University of Illinois College of Medicine Peoria, Lincoln College, Heartland Community College, Spoon River College.

The region also has highly ranked public schools in Dunlap, Metamora and Washington and career and technical programs at Peoria and Pekin public schools.

## LOW COSTS OF LIVING & DOING BUSINESS

With lower costs of living and business operations, budgets go further here. People spend less time and money commuting. The low cost of living to income ratio means people can more easily achieve the quality of life and lifestyle they seek. A robust network of human services increases quality of life and opportunities for residents.

## AGRICULTURE & NATURAL RESOURCES

An estimated 1.5 million acres of the region's land is used for agriculture production. Much of this land is positioned over the Mahomet and Sankoty Aquifers, which provide essential water resources. The Illinois River valley provides not only aesthetic variety, but also holds numerous resources that enhance both the economy and quality of life—from national conservation areas utilized for research to tourism and recreation opportunities including, boating, hiking, camping, hunting and fishing.

## DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE, PLACES & LIFESTYLES

Positioned around the mid-size city of Peoria, the Greater Peoria region contains a diversity of amenities and lifestyle opportunities—urban to rural. From the loft-style apartment and condo options of Peoria's Warehouse District, to the suburban living in Germantown Hills, to the historic riverside Main Street community of Havana, there are many choices for where and how to live. A diversity of people, cultures and histories also exist.

# WEAKNESSES

## DEPENDENCE ON LARGE EMPLOYERS

Our region must continue to mitigate our lack of industrial diversity by focusing time, energy and investment in building up industries and businesses beyond heavy manufacturing and healthcare. This does not mean we ignore or take for granted those industries, but rather find ways to build complementary industries.

## POCKETS OF PERSISTENT POVERTY

The aggregate five-county regional data can mislead conversation concerning poverty. Much nuance exists, especially in numerous census tracts in the City of Peoria and in rural areas such as Mason County. If we do not adequately address the root causes of these rural and urban pockets of persistent poverty, all other economic development goals may prove futile. Strategies and action plans must place equity at the top of the priority list. Until all people, regardless of race or geography, are able to actively participate and have equity in our economy, community and economic sustainability and resilience will elude us.

## AUTO-CENTRIC TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

Connectivity within and among a region's cities and connection to larger metropolitan areas are critical to both commerce and quality of life. Our region relies on automobile transportation and cities like Peoria have been designed to prioritize automobiles over people and quality communities. As we continue into the 21st century, we must diversify

transportation options, create walkable, bikeable communities augmented with appropriate public transportation options and create more sustainable ways to conveniently move people and goods in and out of our region.

## LACK OF POSTSECONDARY CREDENTIAL

The lack of a postsecondary credential (whether it be a professional certification, a two or four year degree, or an advanced degree) stymies one's ability to pursue economic opportunities and achieve the quality of life to which all are entitled. When entire communities lack access to economic opportunity because of a lack of access to education and training opportunities, the entire economic trajectory of a region falters. The lack of a sufficient percentage of postsecondary credentials throughout the region weakens our ability to achieve our community and economic development goals.

## PESSIMISTIC SELF-IMAGE

The grass is always greener on the other side. Residents of the Greater Peoria region, especially those born and raised here, tend to diminish the assets and opportunities that exist and disregard the rich history of the area. There remains a general sense of pessimism about the ability of the region to find sustainable success and to be viewed, both internally and externally, as a place where good things happen. Part of this pessimism arises

from real and unaddressed issues. There are serious concerns about racial and geographic economic disparities. But these issues can be solved more rapidly and with greater success with a collective can-do spirit. That spirit could be more fully realized by embracing the region's strengths and a more honest and transparent public discussion of the region's weaknesses.

## LACK OF EARLY STAGE STARTUP CAPITAL

To diversify the economy of the region, there must be a concerted effort to develop new business startups that in turn create jobs and increase the overall wealth of the region. Entrepreneurs in Greater Peoria find it difficult to secure the critical early-stage startup capital necessary to launch new business ventures. There is a level of risk aversion within the local-regional investment community, and from outside investors, that inhibits the development of a critical mass of business startups that could generate meaningful, sustainable economic activity.



# OPPORTUNITIES

## INNOVATION: HEALTHCARE, FOOD AND FARMING SYSTEMS & SMART MOBILITY

As a member of the Illinois Innovation Network (a statewide initiative led by the University of Illinois Discovery Partners Institute) Greater Peoria can position itself as an active innovation leader of in Central Illinois. The development of Distillery Labs will enable entrepreneurs, corporate partners, students and research organizations to more effectively and efficiently collaborate. This collaboration will accelerate economic development in the areas of healthcare delivery, food and farming systems, and smart mobility systems. Beyond the downtown Peoria facility, additional facilities and programming can extend throughout the region to create an innovation ecosystem inclusive of areas such as underserved urban and rural communities.

## OPPORTUNITY ZONE INVESTMENTS

With eight designated Opportunity Zones in the Greater Peoria region, a potential for private investment exists for developers, existing businesses and startups. The Opportunity Zones in the region contain a mix of industrial, commercial, residential and agricultural properties, opening the region to a diversity of investments. Combined with existing development efforts such as Peoria's Warehouse district and Havana's Historic Main Street, these zones have the potential to increase the momentum of revitalization and redevelopment initiatives. Opportunity

Zones can also be utilized as an incentive to attract businesses, especially startups seeking Opportunity Fund investors. Emerging opportunities exist in agriculture as well, from alternative crops such as industrial hemp and agroforestry products, to Controlled Environment Agriculture facilities.

## CAPITALIZE ON WATER RESOURCES

The Illinois River is one of our region's greatest natural assets, providing opportunities for commerce, recreation and conservation. It is the connection between the Great Lakes and the Mississippi River. Beyond the typical commercial transportation opportunities provided by a river, unique opportunities exist, such as capitalizing on the mitigation of Asian carp, an invasive species. A revitalized port district and Port Statistical Area designation could increase commercial activity and provide regional businesses more opportunity to export and import goods. Improving the health of the river through greater conservation efforts could increase the utilization of the river for recreational activities and tourism.

## LIVE HERE/WORK ANYWHERE CULTURE

As technology continues to impact the nature of jobs, Greater Peoria can position itself as a hub for remote and contract workers. With a focus on quality of life and access to amenities such as high-speed internet and affordable housing, Greater Peoria could retain and attract individuals and families desiring a lower cost of living without sacrificing lifestyle preferences.

## RETAIN AND ATTRACT RETIREES

With a low cost of living, abundant healthcare options, an array of amenities, and easy travel options, Greater Peoria could be marketed as an ideal location for retirement. Both retaining the region's retirees and promoting our region outwardly to retirees looking to relocate could benefit the region. Keeping the region's retirees participating in the economy and continuing to invest numerous forms of capital (financial, social, political, knowledge) is important to building resiliency. Attracting new residents to the area is important across all age groups, but attracting retirees may be an overlooked opportunity as they bring with them great value (spending and investing locally, volunteering, etc).

## LARGE METRO AND COASTAL OUTMIGRATION

Reports in recent years have predicted that the growing climate crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic and inflated housing markets may be causing residents of larger metropolitan areas and coastal areas to grow increasingly wary (and weary) of the future livability of those places. As a centrally located region with a moderate climate and low population density, Greater Peoria is a prime location for those seeking escape from large or coastal cities.

# THREATS

## CONTINUED POPULATION LOSS

Despite predictions of migration from large metros to smaller ones, the last decade has in reality been the opposite. Greater Peoria continues to experience overall outmigration. If we can not retain or attract residents to the region, the reduced population will continue to ripple throughout the economy resulting in reduced workforce, vacant properties, reduced tax base and deteriorating infrastructure.

## THE ILLINOIS BUSINESS CLIMATE

The Illinois regulatory burden is perceived to be higher than other states, especially in the area of worker's compensation. Corporate tax rates are relatively low, but property taxes are very high. The state is perceived as having a "high cost of doing business" but that is due largely to Chicago and not downstate. The state's looming pension crisis also creates business uncertainty.

## SHRINKAGE OF DOMINANT EMPLOYERS

The company towns of yesteryear can no longer sustain themselves or take for granted the presence and good will of a dominant employer. Monocultures cannot be sustainably maintained on an indefinite scale. Economic diversity is mandatory to weather downturns of any one business or industry.

## AGING POPULATION

As the Baby Boomer generation continues to age out of the workforce, there is a greater need to retain and attract people to the region to maintain the workforce needs of employers and to create the next generation of businesses located here. Until recently, Baby Boomers were the largest generation and will continue to require an unprecedented level of senior health and housing needs in the years ahead. As stated in the opportunities section, retirees and the aging population can be a great asset to a region. But we must ensure a quality of life and the ability for more residents to age in place.

## SHIFT IN RETAIL INDUSTRY

The traditional brick-and-mortar retail industry continues to experience a great upheaval in the face of e-commerce. Nationally, chain establishments are increasingly facing bankruptcies and store closures. Locally owned retail businesses have shuttered or limped along in recent decades under the pressure of large retailers with whom they have not been able to compete. Box stores have decimated local retailers and are now prey to e-commerce giants. The dwindling supply of brick-and-mortar retail in the region's commercial districts threatens both the economy and quality of life.

## RURAL MIGRATION AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Beyond the general outmigration from the region as a whole, our region's rural communities continue to lose residents and businesses. Due to the lack of interest from family or local entrepreneurs to assume ownership and operations, the remaining businesses find it difficult to develop and execute succession plans. This leads to additional business closures. Succession planning is also an issue for farm families and can lead to further consolidation of land, making it more difficult for beginning farmers to acquire land for small farm businesses.

## CLIMATE CHANGE & NATURAL RESOURCE DEGRADATION

Climate change is expected to increase variability in crop and agriculture production by detrimentally impacting water resources. The combined effects of climate change, land use change and invasive species growth alter the Midwest's natural ecosystems. Precipitation in the Midwest is expected to become more intense and lead to increased flood damage, strained drainage systems and reduced drinking water availability.<sup>41</sup>

# GOALS, STRATEGIES & TACTICS

## COLLECTIVE KNOWLEDGE IN ACTION

The goal areas of the CEDS emerged from the findings of the summary background and the SWOT analysis. It also reflects numerous existing plans of partner agencies with the aim of establishing “umbrella” goals that foster collective impact.

This section provides a rallying point for the diversity of stakeholders that the CEDS represents. Everyone should find a sense of ownership in the CEDS within this section and see where they can best contribute to the collective effort toward economic sustainability and prosperity for all.

### GOAL AREAS

The various goals have been organized into four general areas: **Economy, Workforce, Quality of Life and Natural Resources.**

For each goal area, working groups determined strategies and tactics that could lead to tangible and measurable progress over this five-year CEDS period.

### DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

An additional dimension of **Diversity and Inclusion** will also be infused throughout all goal areas with the aim of addressing systemic barriers to wealth creation for historically underserved racial and ethnic groups, women,

the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities, and rural communities. Developing an intentional practice of reducing economic barriers will advance the overarching goal of creating a more equitable regional economy.

Beyond the need to view all goals through an equity lens, additional objectives and tactics are provided based on strategies arising from a variety of activities and groups currently focused on this critical issue.

### INNOVATION & ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship also energizes every goal area. Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities for sustainable and scalable solutions that generate economic activity.

Entrepreneurs exist in every corner of this region, ready to build on our existing industries or spark our capabilities in new ones. A diverse economy will rely on their engagement, participation and retention in our region.





## GOAL AREA 1: ECONOMY

Promote adaptive economic development that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, supports existing businesses, and attracts new employers.

### STRATEGY 1

Support economic innovation and digitization for the full range of businesses, from startups to legacy corporations.

#### Objectives

- Increase the number of small business starts and scaling activities
- Increase venture investment in regional startups
- Increase awareness and adoption of new technologies and innovation in existing companies

#### Key Tactics

- Grow and support the community of entrepreneurs in both urban and rural areas
- Position Distillery Labs as the center of the region's innovation ecosystem
- Develop funding mechanisms to address financing gaps for entrepreneurs (innovation seed fund, revolving loan fund, etc.) particularly for historically disadvantaged populations
- Design programs that support entrepreneurship and small business creation
- Research gaps and opportunities, leverage technology to digitally transform and reposition existing businesses for the digital economy

### STRATEGY 2

Develop real estate and infrastructure to make it attractive for investment.

#### Objectives

- Increase private investment
- Increase property value and Equalized Assessed Value (EAV)

#### Key Tactics

- Identify key public infrastructure projects that promote investment and business growth
- Seek funding from local, state and federal sources to address infrastructure needs
- Maximize investment in the region's underdeveloped/underutilized areas (e.g. Enterprise Zones, Opportunity Zones, etc.)
- Maintain and promote up-to-date directory of public and private incentives to drive business growth and community vitality
- Create and execute plans to repurpose shuttered facilities, particularly coal power plants such as in Havana, IL

### STRATEGY 3

Grow existing businesses with a focus on ones that provide goods and services beyond the region.

#### Objectives

- Increase investment and job growth
- Increase in regional GDP
- Increase business-to-business (B2B) purchasing within the region

#### Key Tactics

- Support and market key industry clusters (manufacturing, logistics, healthcare and agriculture)
- Increase export activities and volume (regional, national and international)
- Develop and expand tools that support business growth (i.e. Foreign Trade Zone, Enterprise Zones, Revolving Loan Fund, Opportunity Zones)
- Increase customer and market diversity of existing businesses, particularly small and mid-size manufacturing enterprises
- Develop supply chain systems that facilitate the commerce between businesses in the region
- Capitalize on emerging clusters, especially textiles, insurance and biomedical manufacturing

### STRATEGY 4

Attract investments to the region from national and international companies that lead to job growth.

#### Objectives

- Increase foreign direct investment
- Increase the number of out-of-state and foreign-based firms in the region
- Increase job growth from outside investment

#### Key Tactics

- Identify, develop and market key properties within the region, especially those in low income areas
- Build relationships with site selectors, consultants and foreign consulates
- Develop and market the Greater Peoria DataHub and the resources within

## GOAL AREA 2: WORKFORCE

Develop a more resilient, robust and equitable talent pipeline in Greater Peoria.

### STRATEGY 1

Remove barriers that prevent people from connecting to family-sustaining employment.

#### Objectives

- Decrease the number of families living in poverty
- Lower unemployment in key demographics
- Increase workplace diversity with a focus on historically underrepresented populations (low-income, racial minorities, 'returning' citizens, disability, etc.)
- Increase percentage of the population with a postsecondary credential

#### Key Tactics

- Support expansion of "earn and learn" programs to retain, retrain and empower the workforce with a focus on Qualified Census Tracts and historically disadvantaged individuals
- Establish cross-sector pathways responsive to an individual's unique needs
- Develop incentives for local employers to implement more inclusive hiring practices
- Implement a shared intake, assessment, support and outcome tracking system

### STRATEGY 2

Develop opportunities and mechanisms to provide citizens with the skills they need to be gainfully employed.

#### Objectives

- Decrease the number of families living in poverty
- Increase percentage of working age population with a postsecondary credential

#### Key Tactics

- Launch and utilize a system to track employability credentials and essential skills (i.e. GPEAK)
- Develop standard curriculum for essential skills to be used by educational and social service institutions
- Ensure credentialing programs are available and align with workforce gaps
- Increase the percentage of regional baccalaureate completers in targeted workforce gap positions who remain in the region
- Recruit, credential and place uncredentialed working adults into full-time workforce gap jobs paying at least 30% over living wage
- Drive a regional shift in business culture from expecting a workforce with available skill sets to investing in the workforce pipeline creation to develop skills in high demand sectors

### STRATEGY 3

Increase the graduation rate for regional high schools and assist schools in meeting college and career expectations.

#### Objectives

- Increase number of high school students with early college credit
- Increase percentage of students that obtain a postsecondary credential
- Increase youth labor force participation
- Increase number of students participating in career events

#### Key Tactics

- Leverage local, state and national resources within the community to develop career pathways endorsements
- Coordinate and align career exploration strategies for regional middle schoolers
- Support schools in meeting PaCE standards.
- Build and sequence additional career pathways at regional schools
- Identify and coordinate workplace based experiences for high schoolers

### STRATEGY 4

Address talent gaps and population loss by positioning Greater Peoria as a desirable place for people to relocate.

#### Objectives

- Increase population of 25-44 year olds

#### Key Tactics

- Establish a comprehensive, closed-loop system between employers, educational institutions and economic development organizations
- Segment audiences, develop messaging and execute campaigns to promote Greater Peoria
- Develop mechanisms that support current and attract more remote workers
- Explore and develop financial incentives to attract people to move to the region

## GOAL AREA 3: QUALITY OF PLACE

Foster diverse and inclusive communities where all residents and visitors enjoy active, secure, healthy and fulfilled lives.

### STRATEGY 1

Foster and facilitate healthy lifestyle choices for improved health outcomes and individual prosperity.

#### Objectives

- Increase health insurance coverage
- Improve connections for active transportation
- Increase physical activity levels
- Increase nutrition security
- Decrease obesity, food insecurity, suicide, depression rates and substance abuse

#### Key Tactics

- Implement preventative strategies and increase access to mental health services
- Reduce substance abuse to protect health, safety, employability and quality of life
- Promote healthy eating and active living to decrease chronic illness and food insecurity as outlined by the Partnership for Healthy Community
- Evaluate transportation options and recognize safe and active transportation options as a component of healthy living in the region
- Implement a regional food systems strategy as outlined by the Regional Food Council of Central Illinois

### STRATEGY 2

Increase investment in the region's town centers.

#### Objectives

- Increase private investment in town centers
- Decrease in property vacancy
- Increase in business starts in town centers

#### Key Tactics

- Develop wayfinding resources to and from areas of interest
- Expand Illinois Main Street Program throughout the region
- Increase transportation options in and out of the region's town centers and primary retail corridors
- Develop a directory of public and private financing options and provide training and resources to local governments

### STRATEGY 3

Actively promote the region's assets to residents to improve perceptions of quality of life in the region.

#### Objectives

- Increase percentage of people with positive perception of Greater Peoria

#### Key Tactics

- Utilize the Big Table platform to drive the conversation on regional strengths
- Create digital campaigns to capture human interest stories and business success
- Develop, support and promote a campaign for residents to become local "tourists"
- Engage social media influencers in celebrating the region's assets
- Recognize transportation options and accessibility as an asset to recognize, celebrate and build out

### STRATEGY 4

Provide high-speed internet to every home, business and institution.

#### Objectives

- Increase the number of households served by and able to access broadband

#### Key Tactics

- Identify underserved areas for broadband service
- Address barriers to connectivity to existing broadband service
- Investigate and apply for funding to address gaps
- Engage municipalities about broadband coverage solutions

### STRATEGY 5

Ensure residents have quality, income-appropriate housing choices.

#### Objectives

- Decrease in housing instability and homelessness
- Increase housing starts across all income brackets

#### Key Tactics

- Develop regional capacity to educate policymakers regarding effective and equitable housing policies
- Assess housing availability and determine gaps for every income level
- Develop local solutions for homelessness
- Facilitate the creation of nonprofit housing development corporations
- Evaluate transportation options between housing choices and well-paying jobs



## GOAL AREA 4: NATURAL RESOURCES

Sustain and expand the economic value of the region's natural resources.

### STRATEGY 1

Develop a supportive and equitable business development environment for beginning farmers and other enterprises sustainably utilizing or enhancing the region's agricultural, water, or other natural resources.

#### Objectives

- Increase the number of small and midsize farming operations
- Increase the number of value-added food business startups
- Increase the number and diversity of students in postsecondary programs such as agriculture, horticulture and agtech programs

#### Key Tactics

- Establish small farm incubators and/or other farm business development infrastructure for beginning farmers
- Connect students and entrepreneurs to farming and food production opportunities
- Formalize a regional food council to support farm and food entrepreneurs
- Found the Distillery Labs food and farm innovation programming with a mission to develop an ecologically sustainable and socially equitable farm and food economy
- Develop youth/secondary education and training program(s) for farming, food production and agtech
- Partner with Illinois Agri-Food Alliance to implement the *FARM Illinois* plan

### STRATEGY 2

Implement existing conservation and sustainability plans for the region's key natural resources to maintain their availability for responsible economic development uses.

#### Objectives

- Protect and improve water resources, soil health and natural habitats

#### Key Tactics

- Promote cover cropping and other regenerative practices to farmers
- Promote recommendations from the IEPA *Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy*
- Implement next steps outlined in the *Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan* (i.e. reduce Asian carp population, reduce sediment, improve habitat, etc.)
- Promote ongoing agriculture resource management research of key institutions such as ICC and assist in securing funding to expand the work
- Implement actions in the *Mahomet Aquifer Protection Task Force: Findings & Recommendations* and *Middle Illinois Basin Water Supply Planning Report*

### STRATEGY 3

Support the development of new businesses and markets for a diversity of products derived from agricultural and water resource conservation activity.

#### Objectives

- Increase the number of businesses that sustainably utilize soil and water resources

#### Key Tactics

- Support the infrastructure development needed to scale commercial uses for invasive Asian carp species
- Promote and incubate industrial hemp (fiber) production and processing models
- Utilize dredged river sedimentation to create business opportunities
- Support and attract scalable startup food and fiber manufacturers that utilize regional agricultural products
- Support regional supply chain development for the nascent organic agriculture sector
- Establish a port district and obtain designation as a Port Statistical Area

### STRATEGY 4

Create and promote commercial opportunities and experiences connected to the region's natural assets that are valued and used both by residents and visitors.

#### Objectives

- Increase number of visits to natural resource amenities and outdoor recreation

#### Key Tactics

- Develop marketing campaigns promoting outdoor recreation sites to visitors within a four-hour drive
- Facilitate the development of businesses connected to recreation along the Illinois River or other natural areas
- Maintain a natural resource working group to coordinate marketing and PR for the region's wildlife and ecosystem conservation areas

## DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

**Diversity, equity and inclusion** will be infused throughout all goal areas with the aim of addressing systemic barriers to wealth creation and quality of life based on race, gender, sexual orientation, or disability.

To achieve sustained economic growth, economic opportunities and wealth creation must be accessible to all people and communities in Greater Peoria. Inequality among racial and ethnic groups, women, the LGBTQ community and people with disabilities hinders regional prosperity. Systemic and structural inequities in the economy have kept certain groups from achieving economic independence and quality of life. Building an inclusive economy requires a systems approach and relies on government, businesses, and communities working together. The CEDS plays a role in rallying those regional stakeholders.

The topic of diversity, equity and inclusion was one central discussion theme at *Big Table: Greater Peoria* events between 2019-2020. Also in 2020, the City of Peoria and Peoria County governments formed a joint commission to improve areas of racial justice and equity within the community.

The following goal, objectives and key tactics are adapted from both the Big Table reports and the preliminary goals outlined by a newly formed joint commission. The ideas and goals will be incorporated across the previous CEDS goals so that regional economic development

strategies address multi-generational poverty and persistent inequalities.

Additionally, **the four strategic Goal Areas will be viewed through an equity lens** to foster a more inclusive approach to economic development.

As is the case with all areas of this CEDS, the goals, objectives and tactics for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion will be updated as strategies evolve over the coming months and years.

### DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION GOAL

Accelerate efforts to increase business and workforce diversity and inclusion and economic equity for historically disadvantaged people.

#### Objectives

- Establish more diverse and inclusive leadership in government and business
- Keep equity issues at the forefront of public dialogue
- Create policies and programs to address equity issues
- Develop models that promote and champion equitable practices at all levels

#### Key Tactics

- Promote regional discussions on racial equity
- Form working groups for policies and practices that increase economic equity
- Create a diversity, equity and inclusion strategic plan
- Develop metrics used to evaluate specific outcomes of a plan
- Deliver annual and periodic progress reports
- Develop a more representative workforce



# EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

The Evaluation Framework establishes the key indicators that measure progress toward the CEDS goals. This section identifies the various collaborators involved in implementing specific strategies, and collecting and analyzing the data necessary for reliable evaluation.

## HOW WE MEASURE PROGRESS

Future CEDS updates will rely on this framework to know which strategies are working and which are not. By agreeing upon a set of clear and meaningful indicators and adjusting strategies and tactics when necessary, collaborating stakeholders can create a culture of continuous improvement. Throughout this CEDS period, the **Greater Peoria DataHub** will be utilized to track these key indicators.



Find interactive economic data and CEDS tracking at <https://data.greaterpeoria.us>

	KEY INDICATORS	2021*	2025	GOAL AREA COLLABORATORS
GOAL AREA 1: ECONOMY	Number of Jobs (Peoria MSA)	154,800	↗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Banks and Credit Unions</li> <li>• Business and property owners</li> <li>• Central Illinois Angels</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Distillery Labs</li> <li>• Downtown Development Corporation</li> <li>• Greater Peoria EDC</li> <li>• Illinois Manufacturing Excellence Center</li> <li>• Local economic development offices</li> <li>• Minority Business Development Center</li> <li>• Peoria Area Association of Realtors</li> <li>• Peoria Innovation Alliance</li> <li>• Public administration</li> <li>• Small Business Development Center</li> <li>• Tri-County Regional Planning Commission</li> <li>• Utility companies</li> <li>• World Affairs Council</li> </ul>
	Gross Regional Product (per capita)	\$58,619	↗	
	Number of business establishments	8,785	↗	
	Property Value: Equalized Assessed Value (industrial, commercial, residential)	varies	↗	
	Median household income (region)	\$57,282	↗	
	Percentage of families living in poverty (county level)	See "County Profiles" on page 23	↘	

\*2021 key indicators represent data from latest year available and varies per indicator



	KEY INDICATORS	2021*	2025	GOAL AREA COLLABORATORS
GOAL AREA 2: WORKFORCE	Number of people employed	172,227	↗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CareerLink</li> <li>• CEO Council</li> <li>• Chambers of commerce</li> <li>• College alumni associations</li> <li>• Colleges and universities</li> <li>• Distillery Labs</li> <li>• Employers</li> <li>• Greater Peoria EDC</li> <li>• Illinois Central College</li> <li>• Illinois Dept. of Employment Security</li> <li>• Junior Achievement</li> <li>• Local K-12 schools</li> <li>• Peoria Area Association of Realtors</li> <li>• Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau</li> <li>• Peoria Innovation Alliance</li> <li>• Regional offices of education</li> <li>• Regional Workforce Alliance</li> <li>• Trade unions</li> <li>• Young Professionals of Greater Peoria</li> </ul>
	Number of people in the labor force	182,142	↗	
	Percentage of people with a postsecondary credential	47.5%	↗	
	Total regional population	392,411	↗	
	Percentage of individuals living in poverty	See "County Profiles" on page 23	↘	

	KEY INDICATORS	2021*	2025	GOAL AREA COLLABORATORS
GOAL AREA 3: QUALITY OF PLACE	Total regional population	392,411	↗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Table Greater Peoria Partners</li> <li>• Broadband providers</li> <li>• CEO Council</li> <li>• Central Illinois Regional Food Council</li> <li>• Community-based organizations</li> <li>• Community Foundation of Central Illinois</li> <li>• Destination Logan County</li> <li>• Downtown Development Corporation</li> <li>• Greater Peoria EDC</li> <li>• Health departments</li> <li>• Housing authorities</li> <li>• LISC</li> <li>• Local K-12 schools</li> <li>• Municipal governments</li> <li>• OSF Healthcare</li> <li>• Partnership for a Healthy Community</li> <li>• Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau</li> <li>• Peoria Opportunities Foundation</li> <li>• Tri-County Regional Planning Commission</li> <li>• UnityPoint Health</li> <li>• USDA Rural Development</li> </ul>
	Percent of region served by high speed internet	pending DCEO Connect Illinois data	↗	
	Percent nutrition secure	See CHIP/IPHI	↗	
	Percent of homeownership	See "County Profiles" on page 23	↗	
	Social determinants of health barriers	See Tri-County CHIP	↘	

\*2021 key indicators represent data from latest year available and varies per indicator

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	KEY INDICATORS	2021*	2025	MONITORS/COLLABORATORS
GOAL AREA 4: NATURAL RESOURCES	Agricultural diversification (organic, specialty, tree crops, conservation practices)	<i>varies by crop</i>	↗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Army Corps of Engineers</li> <li>• Central Illinois Regional Food Council</li> <li>• Chambers of Commerce</li> <li>• Distillery Labs</li> <li>• Emiquon Partnership</li> <li>• Future Farmers of America</li> <li>• Greater Peoria EDC</li> <li>• Illinois Central College</li> <li>• Illinois Dept. of Agriculture</li> <li>• Illinois Dept. of Natural Resources</li> <li>• Illinois Farm Bureau &amp; County Farm Bureaus</li> <li>• Illinois Hemp Growers Association</li> <li>• Illinois Specialty Growers Association</li> <li>• Illinois Stewardship Alliance</li> <li>• Local K-12 Schools</li> <li>• Mahomet Aquifer Consortium</li> <li>• Minority Business Development Center</li> <li>• Partnership for a Healthy Community</li> <li>• Peoria Area Convention and Visitors Bureau</li> <li>• Savanna Institute</li> <li>• Small Business Development Center</li> <li>• Tri-County Regional Planning Commission</li> <li>• UIUC College of ACES</li> <li>• University of Illinois Extension</li> <li>• USDA NCAUR (“The Ag Lab”)</li> <li>• Woodruff Career and Technical Center</li> </ul>
	Number of small commercial farm operations (\$10k-\$99K in sales)	884	↗	
	Number of <i>Asian Carp Enhanced Contract Removal Program</i> contracts in the region (2019)	19	↗	
	Number of businesses (good and services) utilizing Asian carp or dredged river material	2	↗	
	Number of visitors/users of parks & conservation areas	<i>metric in development</i>	↗	
	Nitrogen and phosphorus levels in the Illinois River	<i>varies, see Illinois NLRS</i>	↘	

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	KEY INDICATORS	2021*	2025	MONITORS/COLLABORATORS
DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	Opportunity Zone development/investment	<i>metric in development</i>	↗	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big Table Greater Peoria Partners</li> <li>• Black Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Community Action Agencies</li> <li>• Community-based organizations</li> <li>• Greater Peoria EDC</li> <li>• Hispanic Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Illinois Central College</li> <li>• LGBT Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• LISC</li> <li>• Minority Business Development Center</li> <li>• Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce</li> <li>• Peoria Public Schools</li> <li>• Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity</li> <li>• Regional Workforce Alliance</li> <li>• Social service organizations</li> <li>• Small Business Development Center</li> </ul>
	Percent of minority members/businessses utilizing Distillery Labs	<i>Opening 2021</i>	↗	
	Median household income for Black residents	\$28, 019	↗	
	Percent “high school graduate or higher” for Black population in Peoria County	81.4%	↗	
	Poverty rate of Black persons in Peoria County	35.8%	↘	

\*2021 key indicators represent data from latest year available and varies per indicator

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# ADDITIONAL MATERIALS & LINKS

The creation of this document relied primarily on reports produced between 2019-2020 by the [Greater Peoria Economic Development Council](#) with assistance from [University of Illinois Extension](#), the *Big Table: Greater Peoria* lead organization the [CEO Council](#), and [Illinois Central College](#):

- [The Big Table: Greater Peoria - 2019 Report](#)
- [The Big Table: Greater Peoria - 2020 Report](#)
- [The Big Table: Rural Matters Report](#)
- [“Greater Peoria Economic Analysis”](#) by Arum Lee, Graduate Candidate, University of Illinois, Department of Urban & Regional Planning
- Greater Peoria EDC [“Greater Peoria DataHub”](#) Website
- “Peoria County Racial Disparities Data for African Americans/Black,” by Charity A. Gunn, Racial Justice and Equity Coordinator, Illinois Central College

This CEDS serves as a general umbrella to for the numerous specialized strategies and action plans of the region’s many partners involved in economic development of the Greater Peoria region. Implementation of this CEDS relies on implementing and measuring those plans. This list will grow as regional partners continue to share local and organizational plans to link to the 2021-2025 CEDS:

- [2020 Regional Food System Strategy](#)
- [2020-2022 Community Health Improvement Plan](#)
- [A Plan to Revitalize the Illinois Economy and Build the Workforce of the Future](#)
- [Asian Carp Action Plan](#)
- [City of Peoria Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [City of Washington: Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [City of West Peoria Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Delavan Commercial Corridor Plan](#)
- [FARM Illinois Plan](#)
- [Germantown Hills Comprehensive Plan](#)
- [Illinois County Behavioral Risk Factor Surveys Round 6](#)
- [Mahoment Aquifer Protection Task Force: Findings & Recommendations](#)
- [Morton Momentum](#)
- [Nature Conservancy reThink Soil](#)
- [Nutrient Loss Reduction Strategy](#)
- [Peoria City/County Health Dept. Strategic Plan](#)
- [Peoria County Comprehensive Land Use Plan](#)
- [Peoria Lakes Comprehensive Conservation Plan](#)
- [Tazewell County Comprehensive Land Use Plan](#)
- [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Regional/Local Plan](#)

**COMING SPRING 2021**



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# THE BIG TABLE: GREATER PEORIA

2021-2025 COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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