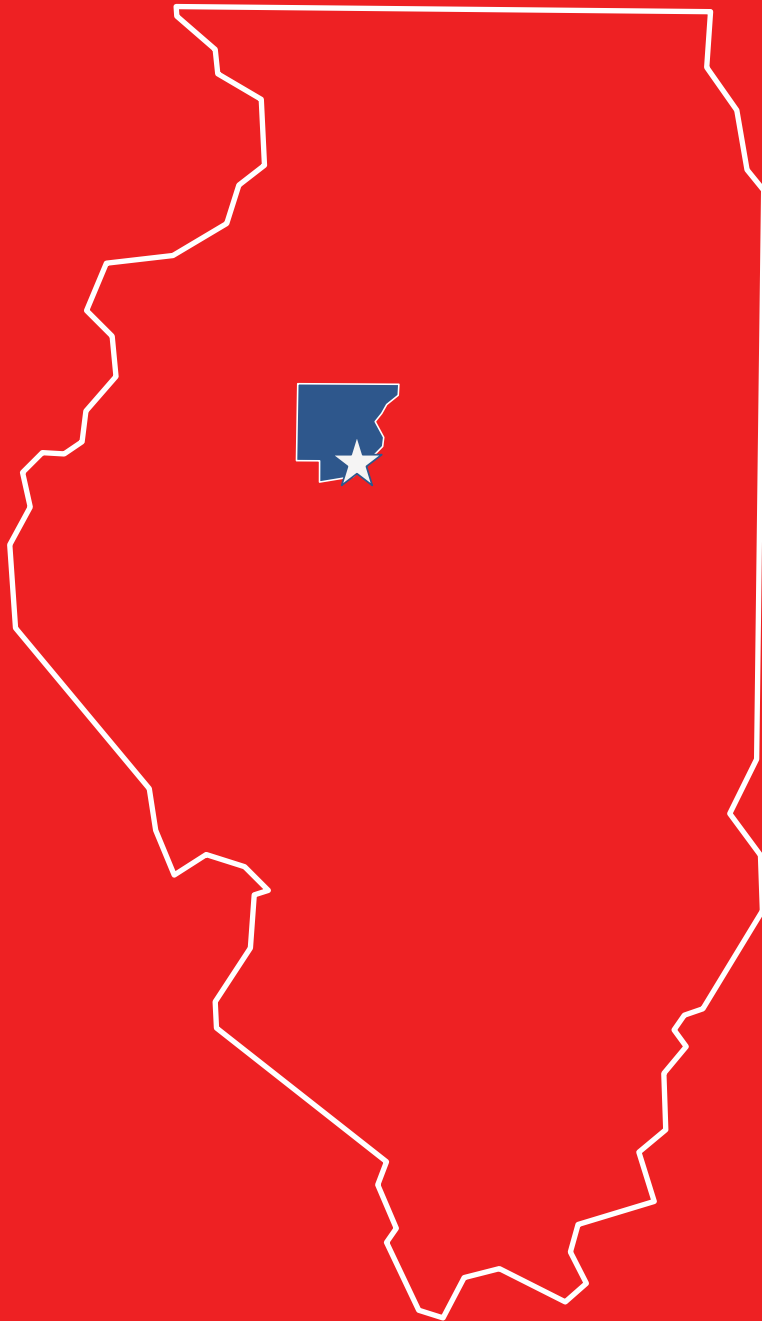


2022

Annual Report



City of Peoria and Peoria County
Joint Commission on Racial Justice & Equity

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Dear Friends,

Our community, like all communities in our country, struggles with the legacy of slavery and prejudice. That legacy is harmful not just to people of color, but to all our community members and jeopardizes the future successes of our community. We are committed to changing the impact of that legacy.

On July 15, 2021, the City of Peoria and the County of Peoria launched the Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity (RJE). Rather than hire outside consultants, our governing bodies decided to assemble a racially diverse group of over 160 Peoria City and County residents to investigate and propose action plans on issues related to racial justice and equity. Because these issues are complex and often interconnected, the Commission was divided into a Steering Committee and eight sub-committees:

- Child & Youth Development
- Economic Development & Jobs
- Environment & Climate
- Health & Human Services
- Housing
- Information & Technology
- Justice System
- Transportation & Mobility

Each sub-committee is led by racially diverse co-chairs and tasked with developing data sources, gathering community input, collaborating with community partners, and suggesting action plans going forward.

This 2022 Annual Report is the first major output of the Commission and is intended to establish a baseline for racial inequities in the City and County of Peoria. This is an important first step in a multi-year, fact-driven effort to make Peoria a more livable and equitable community for all its residents. The Commission will next move to the creation of strategic plans which address racial justice and equity.

Many thanks to RJE Co-Chairs Mary Peterson and Tim Bertschy, the various sub-committee chairs, and all the participants engaged in this important effort. Your dedication truly stands out. We invite all to join in this effort. This is our moment to ensure that our community's promise for racial justice and equity can be truly enjoyed by all our fellow residents.

Sincerely,


Rita Ali
Peoria Mayor


Jimmy Dillon
Peoria County Board Chairman

Peoria County's population of about 182,000 people is racially diverse: about two thirds White, 15% Black, 5% Hispanic and 5% Asian. Peoria, like our country, has made progress on racial issues. The City of Peoria has a Black mayor, a Black state legislator, a Black leader of Peoria Public Schools, and a Hispanic Chief of Police, among other leaders and prominent residents. Peoria is an attractive place to live for many of our residents, with good jobs, low cost of living, little traffic congestion, and access to plentiful water. A closer look reveals there are still significant inequities among racial groups in Peoria County.

Peoria, like many communities, saw protests, both peaceful and violent, after the police-involved deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and other Black people in 2020. In 2021, the City and County of Peoria launched the Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity (RJE), with the vision to "End racism in City and County government and to achieve racial equity and justice across our community." The commission is required to produce a written outline, and this document is the first of those reports. This report will lay out the baseline situation – to outline the size and scope of the problem of racial inequity in Peoria – and will discuss some broad areas of focus going forward.

The disparities by race in educational achievement, in many aspects of health, and in almost all economic measures are striking, especially for our Black population. Those disparities manifest themselves early in life and continue to resound, even in mortality statistics. The average life span of a White person in Peoria County is 78 years. The average life span of a Black person is 64 years. That is a significant difference, but the data also show that Black life is not only shorter, but less healthy, less wealthy, and often more troubled. Perhaps even more shocking is a comparison of age of death due to injury or accident – which is 59.5 years old for Whites, and 28 years old for Blacks.

Infant mortality is over three times higher for Blacks compared to Whites. In the Peoria Public School District, Black children have about half the kindergarten readiness rates of White children, while academic achievement shows very significant gaps in math and reading starting in third grade. These gaps do not improve for the remainder of their school careers. Peoria's Black residents have lower high school graduation rates, lower college graduation rates, more unemployment, and less net worth.

Wherever possible, we have included data related to the Hispanic/Latinx population. However, this data was not available for all of the categories cited in this report.

The facts in this report reveal undeniable racial inequities. The lives of most of our Black residents and other residents of color are dramatically different than those of our White residents. While some argue the question of whether racism is "systemic," the sheer uniformity, severity, and persistence of these disparities strongly suggests that they are not incidental. It is the job of this Commission to educate our community on these inequities, to promote discussions about them, and to develop policies, procedures, and systems to change them.

JOINT COMMISSION ON RACIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY OVERVIEW

Following the civil unrest in Peoria after the killing of George Floyd and others, a racial justice and equity coalition was convened that included City officials, County officials, State officials, interested residents, business, education and community leaders and other key stakeholders. The purpose of the coalition was to identify recommendations to improve areas of racial justice and equity within our community and to establish a structure that would transition into a collective impact model that would engage the community and address issues for racial justice and equity. The Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity was duly and officially established by joint resolution of the City of Peoria and Peoria County with the following goals, mission and vision.

GOALS

1. To establish racially inclusive leadership
2. Promotion of focused discussions on racial equity
3. Creation of a racial justice and equity strategic plan
4. Formation of focused work groups that advance pro-equity policies, procedures, and systems in various areas where racial inequities exist (including, but not limited to, the justice system, housing, economic development and jobs, child and youth development, health and human services, information technology, mobility and transportation, environment and climate)
5. Delivery of annual and periodic progress reports

MISSION

To accelerate efforts to institutionalize racial justice and equity within County and City government and to advance its adoption throughout the region.

VISION

To end racism in City and County government and to achieve racial equity and justice across our community.

This is only a synopsis of the history of racism in the City and County of Peoria. The full story of racism in our community could only be fairly told in a space much longer than what is available to us here.

Peoria is the oldest non-native settlement in Illinois, established in 1691 by French explorers. The first documented Black person to live in Peoria was Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a French-speaking settler from Santo Domingo, Haiti. He purchased land in Peoria and resided here for four years before he moved north and famously became the first “permanent” resident of Chicago.

THE FIGHT AGAINST SLAVERY

When Illinois entered the Union in 1818, slavery had already existed in the state for over a century. Despite Illinois’ “free state” status, the institution continued under increasing restrictions until 1845. Enslaved persons could legally be brought into Illinois from slave-holding states for one-year renewable “work contracts.” Under the 1829 law known as “the Black Codes,” Blacks entering Peoria County were required to post a \$1,000 bond to ensure they would not become “a charge to the county” or violate any laws. If Blacks wanted to stay here, they also had to deposit money at the County Courthouse.

Nevertheless, there was also organized resistance to slavery among some residents, and Peoria became a major stop on the Underground Railroad. The Main Street Presbyterian Church openly agitated against slavery in the 1840s, led by Moses Pettengill, an abolitionist who is credited as the founder of Peoria’s Underground Railroad. Like abolitionists elsewhere, their fight was against federal and state laws, the

courts, precedent, expediency, and prejudice. The vast majority of Whites blamed abolitionists for stirring up trouble. When Peoria’s abolitionists held their first anti-slavery meeting, around 200 people gathered outside, threatened violence and even vandalized the speaker’s carriage. Moses Pettengill was later arrested for being a conductor on the Underground Railroad.

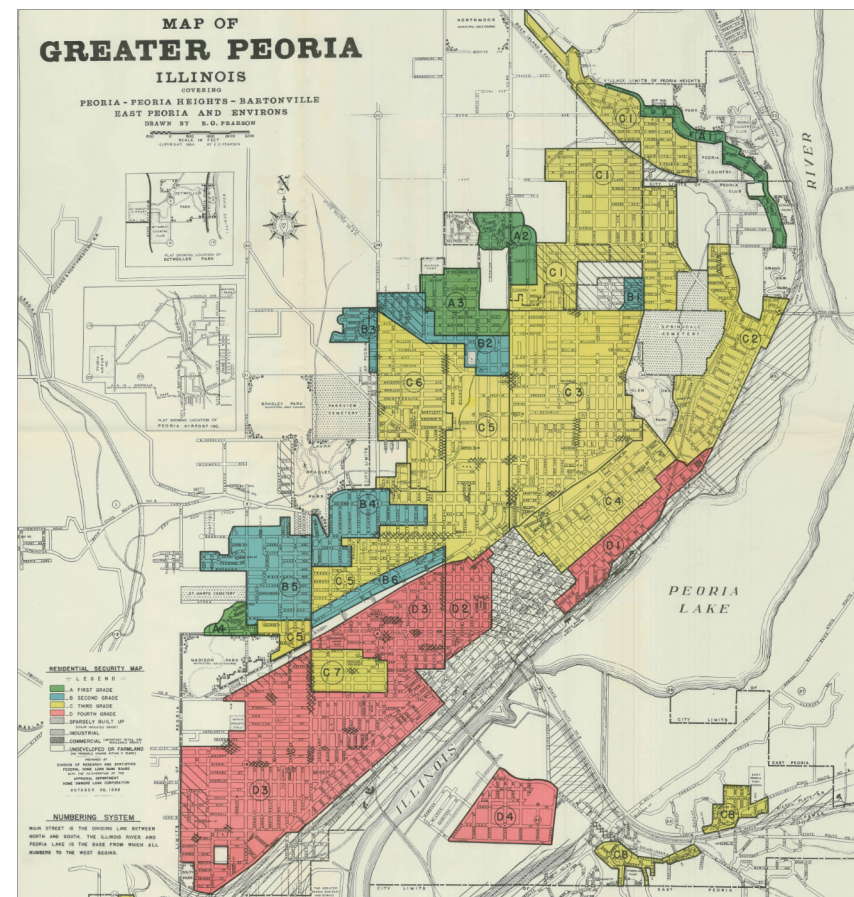
In 1841, Nance Legins-Costley of Pekin became the first enslaved person legally freed through the efforts of Abraham Lincoln – long before he became President and more than 20 years before the Emancipation Proclamation. She died on April 6, 1892, and was buried in Peoria. It is noteworthy that Lincoln, despite being an Illinoisan and visiting Peoria 17 times, did not win the vote in Peoria County in either the 1860 and 1864 presidential election. Lincoln’s ideas on race and slavery were not universally popular in Peoria, whose residents held divided views on the topic.

SUNDOWN TOWNS

Like other regions across the country, central Illinois' racial history following the Civil War is not a proud one, as generational prejudice and bias continued to be manifested in many ways. A number of communities in Peoria County and adjacent areas became known as "Sundown Towns" that were hostile to black people being there after dark. The term started as a way to prevent freed Blacks from taking White jobs – by not allowing them to work late or walk around the neighborhood after dark – and extended to housing policies and policing practices. These unwritten rules were often enforced by police or vigilante neighbors without consequences.

REDLINING AND INSTITUTIONAL BIAS

Another example of bias suffered by the Black community was the difficulty of finding decent housing. The practice of "redlining" started in the early 1930s as Black families were systematically denied the right to purchase homes and live where they wanted. Neighborhoods in Peoria and across the nation were color-coded to depict designated areas: Green = "Best." Blue = "Still Desirable." Yellow = "Definitely Declining." Red = "Hazardous." White landowners historically lived in the Bluffs overlooking the Valley where most working-class people lived. In the 1930s and '40s, the majority of Peoria's Black community was confined to substandard housing in the vice district of North Washington Street and a second neighborhood southwest of downtown near what is now the Carver Center. Black people were allowed to eat in just two downtown restaurants and could not stay in hotels outside of the red-light district. Movie theaters were segregated, and public city swimming pools admitted Blacks just one day per week. Symbolic racial borders were codified in numerous "official" ways, such as by zip code, by installing railway lines, and by highway construction. The historic map of redlined areas in Peoria eerily mimics the same areas that are experiencing the most severe blight and social problems today.



The areas in red shown on this 1938 map of the City of Peoria are still experiencing the effects of redlining to this day.

RACISM IN EDUCATION

Discrimination within this community has not disappeared over time. Education is just one example. In 1977, a staff report from the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights reported on the Peoria school district's desegregation plan, which was developed in 1968:

"Student enrollments over the 10-year period from 1966 to 1976 indicated that Peoria's schools were actually becoming resegregated... the Illinois Office of Education assigned a consultant to review the school district's desegregation plan. The consultant recommended the closing of the five remaining predominantly black inner-city schools and the busing of students from these schools to largely white schools. These recommendations were forwarded to the Peoria school district for its consideration and response. The district held public meetings on the proposed closing and found that the community response was overwhelmingly negative. On January 3, 1977, the school board unanimously rejected the State's recommendations."

The "separate but equal" mentality, combined with the exodus of White families to the north of the city and across the river, materially changed the demographics of Peoria's schools and essentially resegregated the school district.

ORGANIZING AGAINST RACISM

Peorians also have a history of fighting racism which dates back to the anti-slavery movement. Peoria's first civil rights group, the Afro-American League of Peoria, was founded in 1895 to fight for voting rights, equal public accommodations, and anti-lynching laws. The Colored Women's Aid Club was formed in 1899, and Peoria's NAACP chapter was founded in 1915 by both Black and White civic leaders. In addition to supporting anti-lynching legislation and organizing educational programs, the group expanded its focus on civil rights and employment. In 1925 the NAACP challenged the lack of Black facilities at the Peoria Municipal Tuberculosis Sanitarium. The Peoria City Council voted the following year to require rooms for Blacks at the hospital.

***“ PREJUDICE IS A BURDEN THAT CONFUSES THE PAST, THREATENS THE FUTURE,
AND RENDERS THE PRESENT INACCESSIBLE. ” - MAYA ANGELOU***

In 1940, the NAACP's first survey of Peoria's Black community found living conditions not unlike those in the South: 40% were unemployed; 32% worked part-time or held jobs through the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The few Black workers at major employers were relegated to menial jobs as janitors, domestics, porters, garbage collectors, and meatpackers. Nine out of ten reported being denied employment because of their race, while 67% reported instances of police injustice or brutality.

The Peoria NAACP grew in the 1940s and '50s and led nonviolent demonstrations at Peoria's segregated restaurants, hotels, and lunch counters. Bishop's Cafeteria, a popular downtown restaurant, was desegregated after a year of protests, which led other businesses in the community to desegregate as well. Starting in 1962, the NAACP, under the leadership of John Gwynn, Jr., set its sights on equal employment opportunities with significant community employers.

THE FIGHT CONTINUES

Today, the Peoria NAACP and other like-minded organizations continue to play a leading role in addressing the legacy and ongoing practice of racism. Both the City of Peoria and Peoria County have hired full-time Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) officers, while businesses and professional organizations have adopted programs to address diversity concerns.

Despite these good-faith efforts, racism and its effects on our country, state, and community have endured, creating very different lives for Peorians based on the color of their skin. It is the focus of this Commission to develop initiatives which will accelerate efforts to end racism and achieve racial equity in our community.

Special thanks to the Peoria Journal Star, WCBU - Peoria Public Radio and Peoria Public Library for serving as sources incorporated in the above narrative.

WORK TO DATE

The Steering Committee is responsible for governing the process and progress of the Peoria City/County Joint Commission on Racial Justice and Equity. Commencing our work in late summer 2021, we were immediately met with challenges:

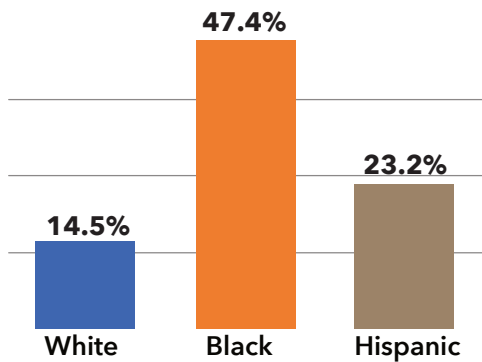
- **We faced starting an organization from the ground up.** Our members had little history working with one another and the Commission had no staff and no established practices or policies. Moreover, our members were volunteers with jobs and families requiring their primary attention.
- **We had no work plan to guide us.** While we had a mission, goals, and a vision, we were given no specific design to achieve our work. That gave us freedom, but it also required time to develop a process that would allow for collective achievement by a diverse group of sub-committees.
- **We were dealing with the most intractable social problem facing our country** – how to address centuries of racism which impacted every aspect of our society and continues to be a flashpoint between many of our citizens.
- **We were starting in the midst of the most severe pandemic in national history.** This created novel challenges to meeting in person in order to carry out our work.

At the same time, there were circumstances which assisted us:

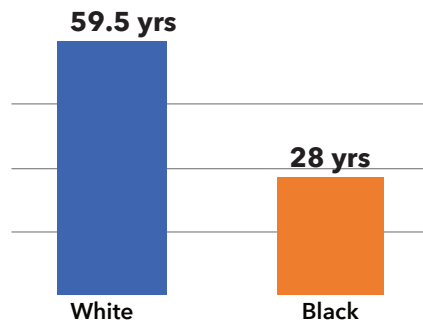
- A national discussion on racism which was occurring after a series of horrific and highly profiled killings of Black Americans.
- The experience of other cities and counties which made progress in this area that we could draw upon for our work.
- The growth of national organizations which can act as resources for best practices.
- Our city, county and community that were willing to embrace change.

As we began our work, other communities we interviewed uniformly told us two things: (1) Be patient and keep the faith. Organizing this work takes time, and there will be ups and downs as progress is made; and (2) Be data-driven. Anecdotal evidence is critical and helps drive plan development, but in the end, solid data is the best measure of success.

HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING FOOD ASSISTANCE

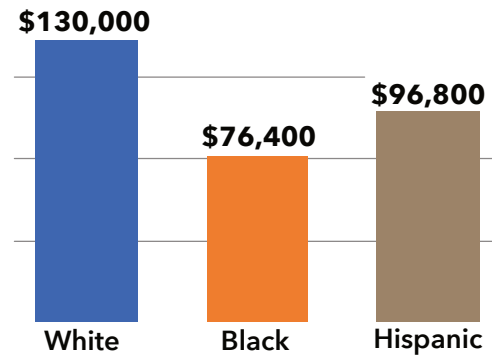


MEDIAN AGE FOR ACCIDENT, INJURY, OR DEATH

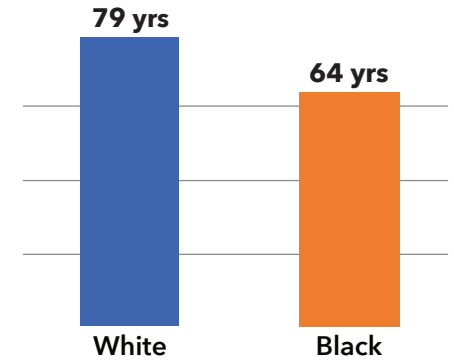


Examples of Racial Disparity in Peoria County

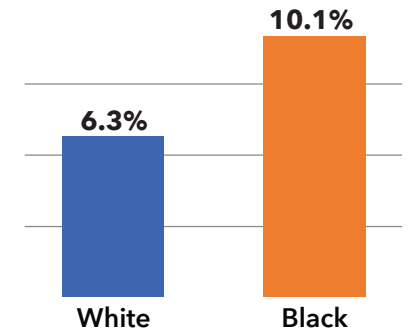
MEDIAN HOUSE VALUE



OVERALL LIFE EXPECTANCY



ELEVATED LEAD LEVELS IN CHILDREN



The Steering Committee then established a four-stage work plan for the Commission:

- Identification by each sub-committee of key indicators in their subject area that establish the baseline of racial disparity in our community.
- Development of strategic plans and processes that will improve racial justice and equity.
- Creation of implementation processes for the strategic plans.
- Monitoring implementation and modifying as required.

NEXT STEPS

As we write this first annual report, the Commission has finished the first stage of its work plan. The results of these efforts by each subcommittee, as well as their next planned steps, are discussed in the following pages. The Steering Committee will continue to guide this process. In 2023, the Steering Committee, among other activities, will also work on completing the buildout of its website and continue its efforts to see that Racial Equity Impact Assessment (REIA) ordinances are passed by our local governmental bodies.

WORK TO DATE

The Child & Youth Development Sub-Committee has done a great deal of work to determine its baseline data and chart a course forward to reduce racial disparities. The Sub-Committee decided to focus its efforts on education, a vital component of child and youth development. In addition to reviewing the equity report from King County, Washington, and the 2020 Heart of Illinois United Way Community Assessment, the Sub-Committee obtained data for Peoria Public Schools District 150 from the Illinois State Board of Education Report Card. The results show stark and dramatic racial disparities in Peoria – especially between the White and Black student populations.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

The Sub-Committee's key indicators demonstrate that students from different racial backgrounds do not have the same educational experience within similar educational settings. In every category across the board, the Black and Hispanic populations rank far beneath their White peers. These academic disparities lead to lower high school graduation rates and present barriers to obtaining higher education and successful careers.

Adults without a high school diploma are more likely to struggle financially. In Peoria, there is a gap between White and Black adults who have obtained a high school diploma. This disparity contributes to the poverty rate of Black Peoria residents, which is nearly four times the poverty rate of White residents.

NEXT STEPS

The Child & Youth Development Sub-Committee has identified three primary focus areas for its work in 2023:

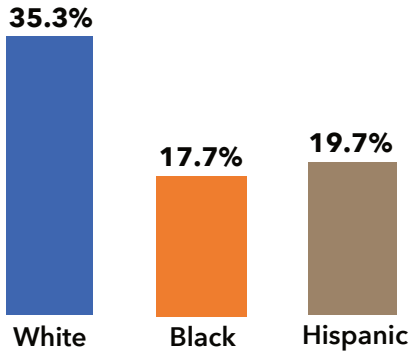
- 1) Increasing the availability of community resources for families
- 2) Increasing the percentage of students achieving benchmark goals
- 3) Improving parent engagement

To aid in its work, the Sub-Committee hopes to engage key community partners such as the Heart of Illinois United Way, Peoria Public Schools District 150, Peoria Friendship House of Christian Service, and school PTO organizations.

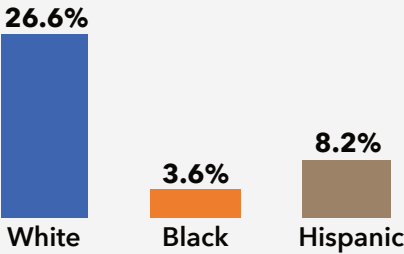
Peoria Public Schools District 150

KINDERGARTEN READINESS

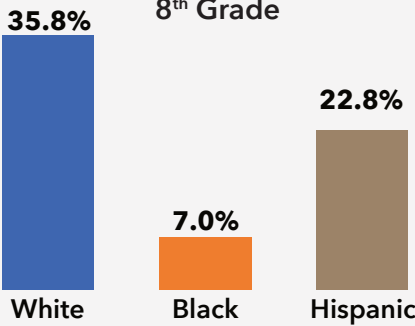
Kindergarten readiness measures developmental attributes and skills that children should know when they start school.



3rd Grade



8th Grade

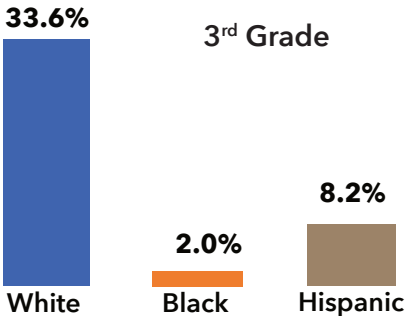


ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

A child's reading proficiency at the end of third grade is considered a benchmark for success in middle school and beyond. Students should be proficient in eighth grade reading, writing and speaking skills before entering high school.

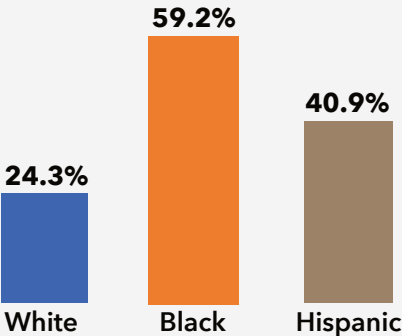
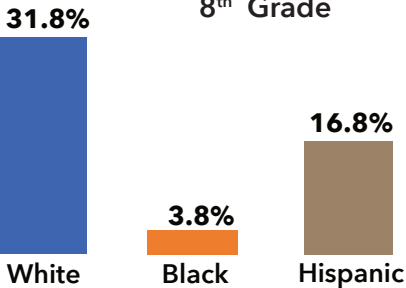
MATH PROFICIENCY

An understanding of mathematics is a strong indicator of overall academic success. Math proficiency in middle school is vital to graduating high school on time and is an indicator of success in future careers.



3rd Grade

8th Grade



HIGH SCHOOL TRUANCY

Chronic truancy often leads to academic decline and failure to graduate from high school.

WORK TO DATE

In order to determine its baseline data and explore ways to reduce racial disparities, the Economic Development & Jobs Sub-Committee reviewed the Equity & Social Justice Strategic Plan for King County, Washington, a leading community in racial equity. The Sub-Committee also examined data from the 2022 Peoria City/County Racial Disparities Report and met with Peoria City Manager Patrick Urich to discuss past efforts to address community issues. To identify obstacles and determine where gaps can be filled or current efforts accelerated, the Sub-Committee met with 14 community-based organizations, the Regional Workforce Alliance, the Minority Business Development Center, and the City of Peoria. They also researched potential metrics in U.S. Census data that could be used to illustrate equity gaps in the area.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

Measures of income, poverty and employment are among the most significant indicators of racial inequities in our community.

Without a job that pays a living wage, it's nearly impossible to sustain a household and provide a stable living environment in which children can learn, build intergenerational wealth or save for children's college education.

The inequitable distribution of resources and economic opportunity across racial lines contributes to disparities in practically every other aspect of life, including, education, employment, housing, mobility, health, and more.

NEXT STEPS

In 2023, the Economic Development and Jobs Sub-Committee will focus on three areas to develop strategies that can impact racial equity: 1) workforce training that leads to family-sustaining jobs; 2) minority business development; and 3) increasing economic activity in marginalized neighborhoods.

A pilot with ICC's Workforce Equity Initiative is being explored to address transportation barriers that make it hard to get from distressed neighborhoods to job locations. Minority businesses need coaching in business plan development, access to professional expertise in finance and marketing, and startup credit assistance. Solutions to these obstacles will be explored – particularly where they can leverage City infrastructure and safety improvements in marginalized neighborhoods. Racial Equity Impact Assessment methodology will be used to assess the cost and benefits of strategy alternatives.

\$63,100



White

\$30,400



Black

\$42,700



Hispanic

MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Median household income encompasses the head of household and all individuals in the household 15 years and older, whether related or not. White residents of Peoria County have substantially higher household incomes than Black and Hispanic residents.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

In Peoria, Black and Hispanic residents experience unemployment at a substantially higher rate than the national average – and nearly triple that of their White counterparts.

4.9%



White

15.6%



Black

15.7%



Hispanic

40.3%



Black

20.3%



Hispanic

11.0%



White

POVERTY

The Census Bureau uses income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family's total income is less than the threshold, that family and all individuals within it are considered in poverty. The official poverty definition does not include capital gains or non-cash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid and SNAP benefits).

WORK TO DATE

The Environment & Climate Sub-Committee reviewed Peoria's cumulative negative environmental impacts, which represent numerous potential health effects felt by an individual or community, as well as the various social, environmental, and economic factors that contribute to them. Unlike the data for some of the other areas studied, most environmental data is not broken down by race, but rather by geography.

Environmental Justice (EJ) communities are areas that bear the disproportionate weight of pollution and its toxic effects via spatial proximity to industrial or left-behind contamination. Over the years, zoning laws and policies have tended to corral pollution into neighborhoods that were historically denied political power – specifically in racially and ethnically marginalized and lower-income communities.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

Parts of Peoria are designated as Environmental Justice Areas, having two nearby coal-fired electric plants; numerous large industrial manufacturing clusters; and as many as 20 chemical facilities. A significantly higher proportion of people of color and those living in poverty reside near the most hazardous of these facilities. A large and growing body of research has found that this proximity exposes those residents to higher levels of environmental pollution than people who do not live near these facilities.

The Sub-Committee chose to use the Environmental Justice (EJ) Index from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as our key indicator of racial disparity. The EJ Index delivers a single score for each community so that public health officials can identify and map areas most at risk for the health impacts of environmental burden. Within the City of Peoria, the 61602, 61603, and 61605 zip codes in particular show extreme levels of environmental justice inequity. About two thirds of the population of these areas are people of color.

U.S. EPA ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE INDEX

Peoria Zip Code	61605	61614
People of Color	66%	34%
Particulate Matter 2.5	93	71
Ozone	93	71
Diesel Particulate Matter	87	61
Air Toxins Cancer Risk	89	30
Air Toxins Respiratory HI	77	44
Traffic Proximity	80	58
Lead Paint	93	57
Superfund Proximity	35	17
RMP Facility Proximity	94	43
Hazardous Waste Proximity	92	64
Underground Storage Tanks	89	69
Wastewater Discharge	92	N/A

The higher the index score, the worse the situation is in that area.

Zip codes 61602, 61603, and 61605 show most of the 12 EJ Indexes at or near the national 90th percentile or higher. The percentage of people of color in those three zip codes is significantly higher than the rest of the county. The table on the left compares the results for zip code 61605, which is primarily populated by people of color, to zip code 61614, which is primarily White. Primarily White zip codes in Peoria County have few EJ categories above the 75th percentile nationally.

NEXT STEPS The Sub-Committee will consider the following key focus areas in 2023:

- 1) Working with local, state, and federal governments to create legislation that mandates comprehensive, community-oriented cumulative impact assessments and gives permitting authorities at all levels the power to deny any permits that will add to the disproportionate pollution burdens suffered by the affected communities.
- 2) Bolstering and expanding current asthma prevention, treatment, and awareness programs.
- 3) Partnering with the EPA to offer environmental training and assessment.

WORK TO DATE

The Health & Human Services Sub-Committee has made significant progress since we convened monthly meetings beginning in July 2021. In the process of establishing baseline data, Sub-Committee members initially compiled a list of over 25 health-related disparities. This list was then prioritized and condensed to the top four themes which would be the focus of our Sub-Committee's efforts. Those themes include: Preventive Care, Access to Care (including follow-up care), Patient & Provider Education, and Health Literacy. Trust and implicit bias were also identified as one of the top themes, but the Sub-Committee decided that those are fundamental when understanding and addressing all the aforementioned health disparity themes and therefore would not be their own separate focus but rather should be integrated into all work to reduce race-based health inequities.

As the H&H Subcommittee began its work, the tri-county Partnership for a Healthy Community (PFHC) was concurrently conducting the Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) and Community Health Implementation Plan (CHIP) process. PFHC is a community-driven partnership of public and private partners working together to address priority health issues in Peoria, Tazewell, and Woodford Counties of Illinois whose vision is to foster a thriving community that is inclusive, diverse, and sustainable to ensure health equity and opportunity for well-being for all. The CHNA/CHIP process is conducted every three years to assess priority community health issues and support the identification and implementation of evidence-based interventions.

The co-chairs met with Monica Hendrickson, Peoria City County Health Department (PCCHD) Administrator, to discuss a collaborative model that would enhance the CHIP process by adding an additional level of assessment through the use of a racial equity impact assessment/review tool when implementing all evidence-based interventions. H&H Sub-Committee members would review proposed interventions through the lens of the four identified disparity themes previously mentioned and provide feedback/recommendations to PCCHD. Similar models have been adopted in other cities/municipalities, i.e. Seattle, St. Louis, to address racial justice and equity.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

Race-related health inequities in Peoria County are abundant and complex. Multiple external factors have been identified to impact health; i.e., social determinants of health. Examples of key indicators of racial health disparities in Peoria County include:

- An average Peoria County White person will live 79 years compared to 64 years for a Black person.
- The Black infant mortality rate is 3.25 times higher than for White infants.
- Teen birth rates for Blacks is 4.7 times that for Whites.
- Blacks also have higher death rates from cancer and cardiovascular disease.
- Blacks live with sexually transmitted diseases at rates over ten times that of Whites.

The question of how to address these complex issues is key. The causes are many-faceted, historic, and intertwined. To assert that there is a quick remedy or that these numbers could be materially changed in a year would be disingenuous and discouraging to those who are working on the issues. However, we believe that there are answers.

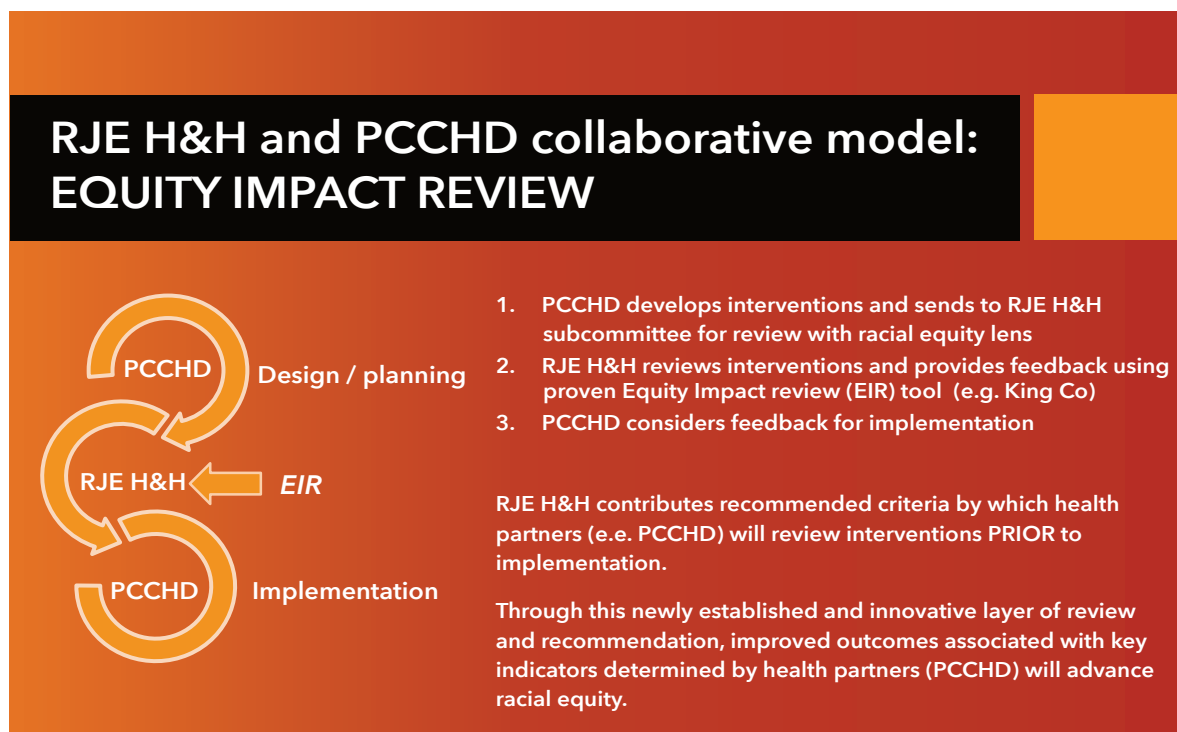
The Sub-Committee has examined how to address these issues from many different angles and with a long-term strategic approach. The Sub-Committee concludes that the proposed approach centered around the CHNA/CHIP process shows the most promise to demonstrate measurable progress in the health arena in the near future and to most effectively utilize existing resources and community partnerships. Most importantly, this approach creates a template for the longer-term efforts which will be required to impact the disparities noted above. Consequently, our yearly indicators now and in the future will be developed around and be consistent with the CHNA/CHIP processes, but with a REIA focus.

NEXT STEPS

The comprehensive nature of the CHNA and CHIP processes have resulted in a tri-county perspective that will be foundational in the strategic implementation of health care practices for the next three years.

The three priority areas identified by the CHNA are: mental health, obesity, and healthy eating/active living. Each clearly plays a role in the disparities identified above.

Through a collaborative process (see figure on right), we will work with PCCHD to foster an integrated focus on racial equity into the CHNA/CHIP implementation process in Peoria City/County.



WORK TO DATE

The Housing Sub-Committee began its work with discussions grounded in the questions brought by its members, who already had experience and expertise in this focus area. As this work progressed, we were able to identify and track common themes. We then began to gather housing data for the City of Peoria and Peoria County, while deepening our understanding of existing policies that have contributed to the continued gaps in wealth and homeownership.

The Sub-Committee has begun to identify vast disparities in this data – especially between White and Black residents. While not as much data is available, we are also noting significant disparities between White and Hispanic residents. In addition, the Sub-Committee has heard from commissions in other regions of the U.S. that have investigated similar inequities and are learning of their positive results.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

Quality housing is fundamental to human well-being. It has the potential to impact every other measure of our lives. Yet it is difficult to learn if a child is insecurely or poorly housed. It is difficult to maintain a healthy environment if the housing quality is poor or threatened by other community health vectors. Obtaining and keeping a job is more difficult if the worker is housing-insecure. Quality housing lies at the foundation of these basic building blocks for a healthy and safe life.

These indicators are at the heart of our work. They point to a lengthy history of racially determined policies and behaviors which have made it difficult for people of color to attain quality housing—including redlining by banks, insurance companies and governmental bodies; neighborhood covenants disallowing sales of property to Black people; and individual discrimination enacted by realtors, bankers, property managers and landlords.

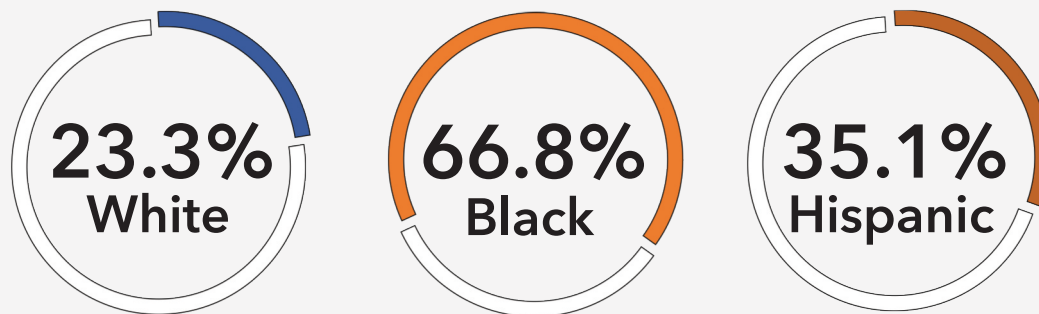
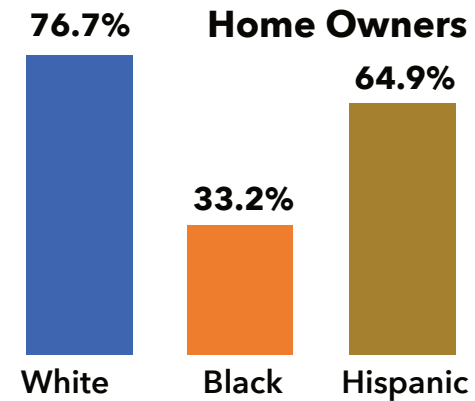
NEXT STEPS

In 2023, the Housing Sub-Committee plans to analyze geographic and demographic data (by census tract / zip code / zone) in the areas of home ownership, renting vs. homeownership, barriers to home ownership, quality of housing, and the unhoused population. We will seek to identify gaps in data; deepen understanding of existing policies; propose policy and program solutions; and understand Peoria's place in the larger state and national picture. As we work to identify and engage community partners, we will move our analysis in the direction of solutions, utilizing partnerships at both the organizational and governmental levels.

HOME OWNERSHIP RATES

Peoria's White residents are more than twice as likely to own their homes than Black residents.

Home ownership among Peoria's Black residents lags significantly behind the national data of 43.4%, even as home ownership among White residents exceeds the national mark of 72.1%.



RENTERSHIP RATES

The percentage of Peoria's Black residents who rent their homes is also higher than the national rate for Black households of approximately 58%.

GROSS RENT TO INCOME RATIO

A rent burden greater than 30% of their income for Black renters is higher than the national average of approximately 50%.

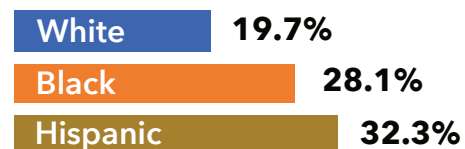
Both Hispanic and Black renters are substantially more likely to carry this burden than White renters.

The percentage of Black and Hispanic renters in Peoria carrying a rent burden greater than 50% of their income is substantially higher than of White renters.

> 30%



> 50%



WORK TO DATE

The Information & Technology (IT) Sub-Committee is charged with identifying racial inequities related to internet and technology access in the City and County of Peoria. We examined equity plans for King County, Washington, and the City of Philadelphia; researched digital equity plans for similar-sized cities; and reviewed “Digital Inclusion for the Greater Peoria Region,” a presentation from an American Connection Corps Fellow with the Greater Peoria Economic Development Council. We also met with representatives from the Purdue University Center for Regional Development and the Illinois Office of Broadband for advice on the best data sources to illustrate racial inequities and created a list of trusted community organizations to discuss future outreach and collaboration.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

The late Congressman John Lewis referred to internet access as “THE Civil Rights issue of the 21st century.” The lack of internet access limits opportunities in employment and careers, impedes interaction with educational and health resources, and inhibits the ability to retrieve vital community news and information. However, reliable data for IT racial disparities is often difficult to find. The Sub-Committee utilized the Microsoft Digital Equity Dashboard, which pulls together key information by census tract to calculate a digital equity score.

NEXT STEPS

The IT Sub-Committee plans to investigate ways to expand affordable and reliable internet access into homes as well as utilizing public spaces to expand wi-fi and hotspot access points for area residents. We hope to partner with organizations such as PCs for People to provide free or low-cost computers. An initial focus on digital literacy programs for adults may be the best first step toward building more widespread proficiency in underserved populations. We also need to employ alternate avenues for disseminating information to community members who lack connectivity through direct mail, flyers, event boards, church bulletins, and targeted, geo-located texts.

The Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Program, funded through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, is providing nearly \$1 billion to the State of Illinois to achieve broadband access for unserved and underserved populations. The Connect Illinois broadband investment package contains nearly \$400 million in matching grants dedicated to achieving broadband equity throughout the state. These are the largest and most targeted efforts to date to make broadband ubiquitous across the state. We hope to support and participate in grant writing to obtain some of those funds.

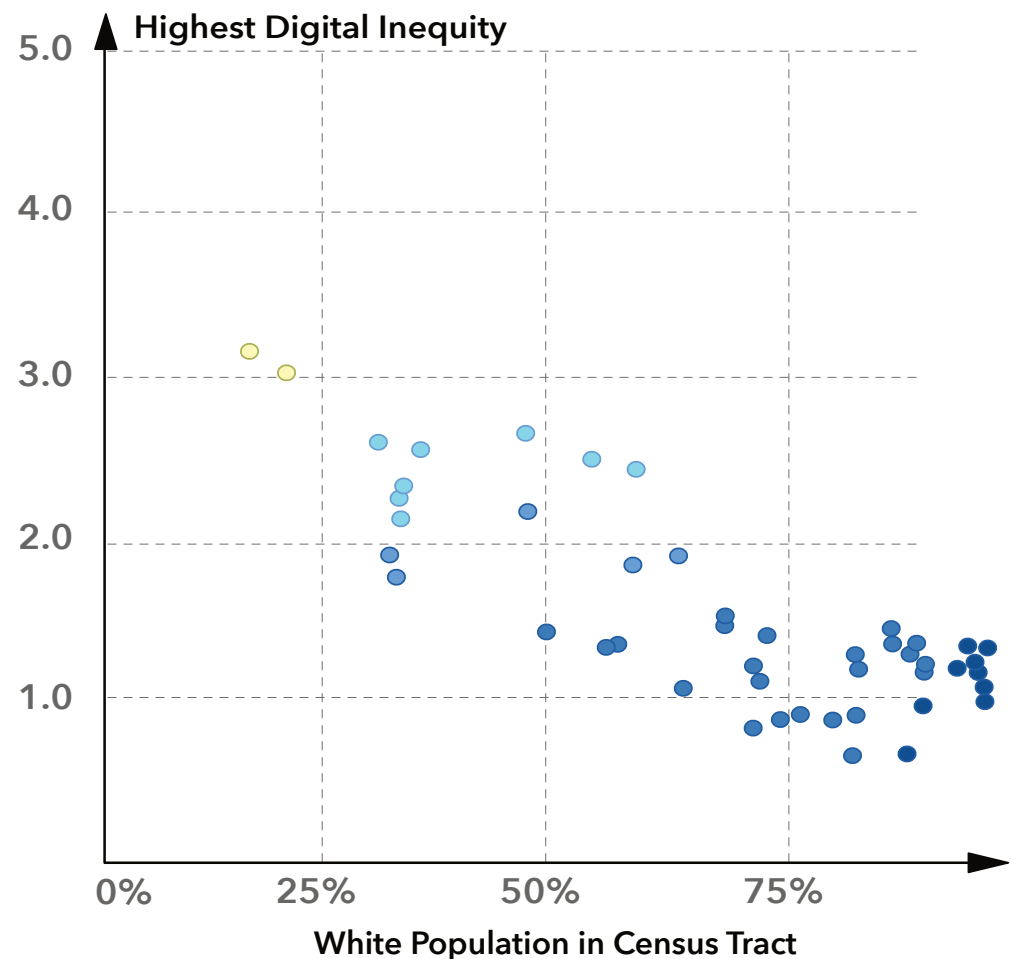
DIGITAL EQUITY BY CENSUS TRACT

Each census tract in Peoria County was assessed a digital equity score based on the following inputs:

- 25 years old + without a high school diploma
- Households without a desktop or laptop
- Households without an internet subscription or broadband
- % of people not using internet at broadband speed
- % of annual median income spent on broadband

The digital equity score for each census tract is represented on the vertical axis, while the horizontal axis represents the percentage of the White population within each census tract. As the scores increase, so does digital inequity. Census tracts with the lowest digital inequity appear in dark blue and are predominately White, while tracts with the highest digital inequity appear in yellow and are predominately Black. Tracts with higher digital inequity have a greater percentage of their population without desktops, laptops, broadband internet access, and the digital literacy needed to be successful in our society.

As the chart makes clear, there is a strong correlation of increased digital inequity among census tracts with higher populations of people of color.



WORK TO DATE

Based on materials from King County, Washington, and other sources, the Justice System Sub-Committee initially discussed potential areas within the City and County of Peoria where racial inequities may exist. Juvenile justice, bonding and incarceration, and causes of violence were the first three areas to be studied. However, it has been difficult to obtain quantitative data with the necessary racial breakdowns. In addition, there is not an integrated system for data related to arrests, detentions, charges and convictions, which is a significant problem. Due to the need for data, the following areas await investigation on racial inequities: firearm-related offenses, juveniles charges and convictions, County Jail incarceration rates, murders, and domestic violence.

Using data from the 2020 Census and Peoria Public Schools District 150, the Sub-Committee found numerous potential contributing factors to justice-related issues in the Black community, including lack of structure at home, low literacy rates, poverty, easy access to firearms, and social media. Without addressing these underlying social issues, it will be very difficult to achieve racial equity in Peoria County justice systems.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

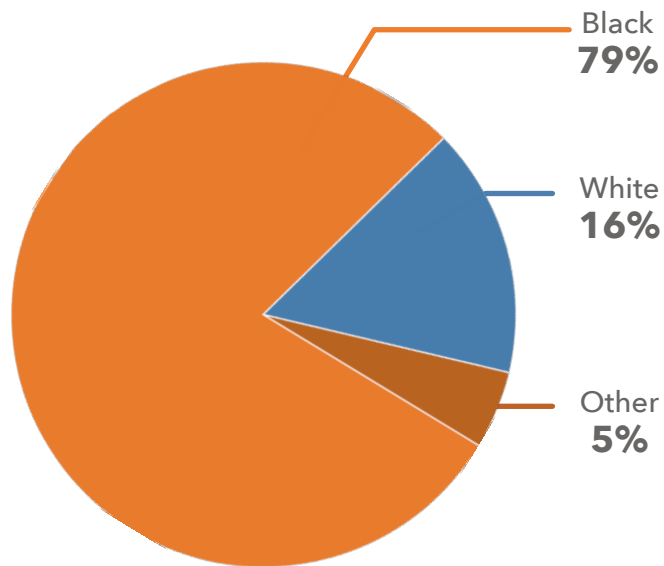
Data from the Peoria County Juvenile Probation Office (JPO) and Peoria Police Department (PPD) revealed that juvenile detentions, juvenile arrests and traffic stops are vastly and disproportionately of Black individuals. Both the JPO and PPD referred to the aforementioned underlying social issues as primary drivers of these inequities.

NEXT STEPS

In addition to monitoring the ongoing results of the three current indicators, the Sub-Committee will seek the voice of the community for a better understanding of the issues related to reaching racial equity within the justice systems of Peoria County. We will continue to work with governmental bodies to gather data and pursue working relationships with the other sub-committees and community partners to improve the key indicators. With new relevant data, additional indicators will be added.

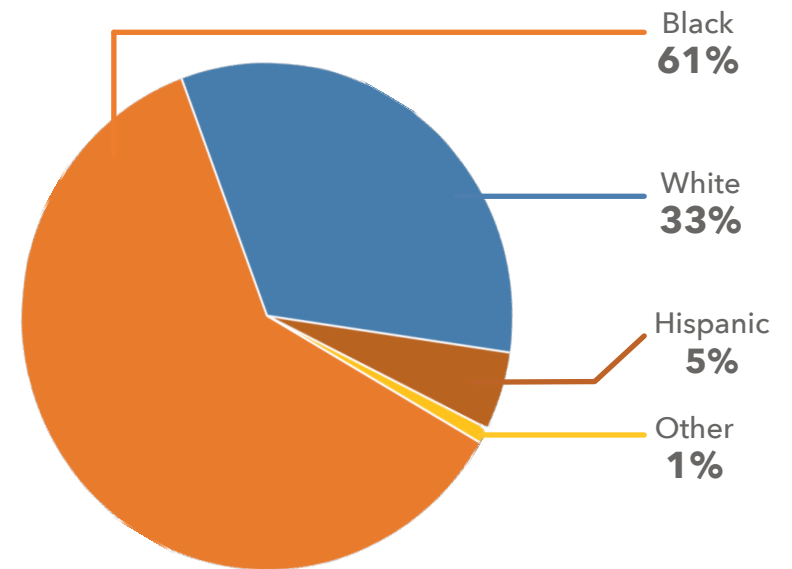
JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER POPULATION

The population of the Peoria County Juvenile Detention Center in both 2020 and 2021 was vastly and disproportionately Black.



TOTAL TRAFFIC STOPS

Black drivers comprised nearly two thirds of all traffic stops within the City of Peoria in 2021, despite accounting for less than 27% of the city population.



NUMBER OF JUVENILE ARRESTS

Juvenile arrests recorded by the Peoria Police Department in 2021 were vastly and disproportionately Black. Black juveniles were 11 times more likely to be arrested than White juveniles.



WORK TO DATE

The Transportation and Mobility Sub-Committee has sought to understand the key hindrances to mobility in Peoria's underserved and disadvantaged areas. With that understanding, we are committed to enhancing the transportation infrastructure of our region in order to attract prospective businesses, match residents with available job openings, and bring prosperity to everyone. The Sub-Committee started its work by reviewing the available data regarding transportation disparities among Peoria citizens, noting serious issues with car ownership in an area that is heavily dependent on personal vehicle transportation.

INDICATORS OF RACIAL DISPARITY

Transportation is a critical factor in accessing education, jobs and services that allow all residents to fulfill their potential. Peoria's prosperity depends upon the ability of residents to travel to their places of work and of freight to move freely throughout the region.

PROXIMITY TO CRITICAL SERVICES

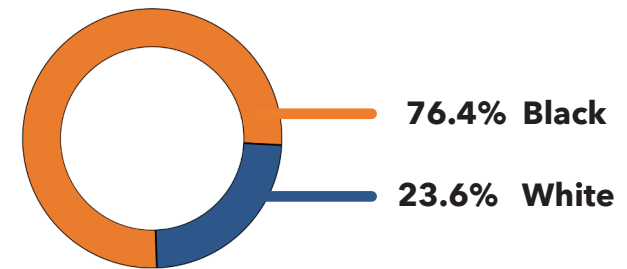
This map from the Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (GPMTD) Microtransit Study of 2021 confirms that areas of Peoria that are populated by a majority of people of color (zip codes 61602, 61603, and 61605) are food deserts, lacking any grocery stores that sell fresh produce, meat, and fish. These areas are well served by public transportation (city buses) during the weekdays, but less so in the evenings and on weekends. Yet even with bus stops within a half mile of your residence, it's difficult to buy a week's worth of groceries when you are depending on a city bus as your primary means of transport.



DEPENDENCE ON PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

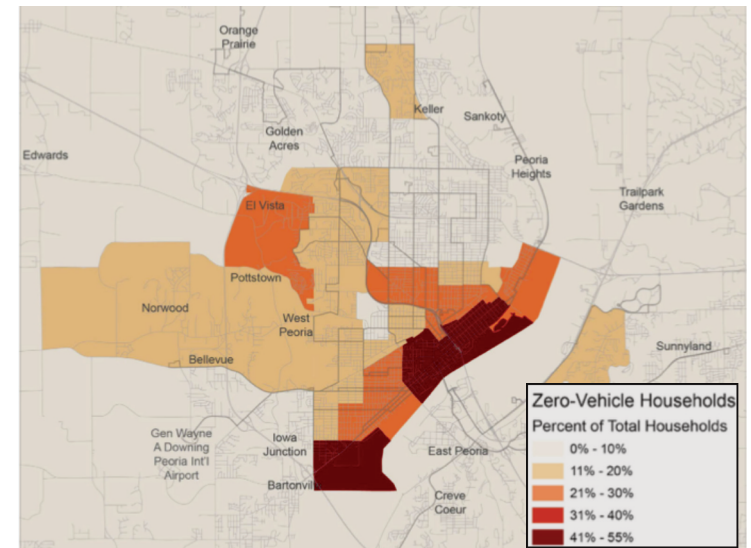
Not only are Black people much more likely to use a city bus to get to and from work, they are about six times more likely than Whites to rely on public transportation in general.

More than three quarters of commuters who depend on public transportation to get to work are Black.



ZERO-VEHICLE HOUSEHOLDS

Peoria residents, like those of many mid-sized cities, depend on having a reliable car to travel to work, to shop, and to go nearly everywhere. About 15% of Peoria households do not own an automobile. The areas with the highest incidence of households without cars are shown in this graphic, also from the GPMTD Microtransit Study. The most problematic areas are again those areas with a higher population of people of color. Not coincidentally, there is a significant overlap between households without a car and the food desert areas. This places citizens in very difficult situations just to meet their basic daily needs.



NEXT STEPS

Our Sub-Committee will be working with like-minded local agencies to develop solutions to the identified problems. We have identified several local organizations to partner with on this initiative including Peoria County, Central Illinois Agency on Aging, Illinois Pupil Transportation Advisory Committee, Illinois Central College, Peoria Area Chamber of Commerce, Greater Peoria Economic Development Council, Tri-County Regional Planning Commission, Greater Peoria Mass Transit District (CityLink/ CityLift), and private organizations like Support A Friend Transportation.

The intent of this report is to establish a baseline for racial inequities in the City of Peoria and Peoria County. Within every category studied, the data clearly show stark inequities along racial lines.

Although we have made significant progress regarding racial equity in our country, we have a lot of work still to do. We must remember that we are coming from the lowest possible base – the institution of slavery – where the majority of our Black population were treated not as humans with inalienable rights, but as property.

This institution became a powerful economic driver across much of the country. Laws and customs were developed attempting to morally justify and legally maintain slavery and the separation of races. Contrary to popular opinion, Illinois was not always a free state. Slavery and indentured servitude were allowed from the early 1700s until 1863. The structural racism used to perpetuate slavery has lingered here. Elements of the racism intended to justify slavery have also been applied to other people of color – any shade of beige, black, brown – anyone different.

Humans share approximately 99.9% of our genetic code with each other. These sprawling inequities are therefore not inherent in the color of one's skin. The only way to explain the inequities in this report is the well-documented legacy of structural racism. Decades of Jim Crow laws,

redlining, segregation, job and housing discrimination have conspired to create a Black underclass that often lives in environmentally compromised areas, quickly falls behind in school, and is limited to low-paying jobs that do not allow them to pursue a middle-class life.

This commission encompasses eight sub-committees which are collectively documenting the astonishing scope, depth and prevalence of these issues. Many of the racial equity problems in our society cross multiple categories. Widespread poverty and the lack of educational opportunities are common denominators of many of these societal issues. Although primarily documented in the lives of Black people, prejudice has also materially impacted the lives of other people of color. The Commission's work will ultimately benefit all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender identity.

As our commission moves forward, we will investigate the root causes of these inequities and seek solutions alongside partners within our community. If societal norms resulted in creating these racial inequities, then new societal norms can help remedy them. Being fully aware of our current situation is an important first step in the process of resolving racial inequity.

With the support of our community, we are optimistic that our work will create real and sustainable change.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions pertain to the Commission, its activities, and the awareness of racial justice and equity within our community:

COMMISSION	The Joint Committee on Racial Justice and Equity consisting of members.
EQUITY	Fair and just opportunities and outcomes for all people.
EQUITY ASSESSMENT	A systematic process of identifying policies and practices that may be implemented to identify and redress disparate outcomes on the basis of race or social justice issues.
INDIVIDUAL RACISM	Explicit or implicit pre-judgment bias or discrimination by an individual based on race.
INEQUITY	Systematic and patterned differences in well-being that disadvantage one group in favor of another caused by past and current decisions, systems of power and privilege, and policies.
INSTITUTIONAL RACISM	Policies, practices, and procedures that work better for some members of a community than others based on race.
RACE	A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (including color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic and political needs of a society at a given period.
RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY	Changes in policy, practice and allocation of resources so that race or social justice constructs do not predict one's success, while also improving opportunities and outcomes for all people.
RACIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY IMPACT	An estimate of changes in racial equity and social justice attributable to a change in City and County practices, ordinances, or legal construct.
SOCIAL JUSTICE	Everyone deserves to benefit from the same economic, political and social rights and opportunities, free from health disparities, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, age, sex – including on the basis of gender identity, orientation, religion, disability, or other characteristics.
STRUCTURAL RACISM	The history and current reality of institutional racism across public and private institutions which combine to create a system that negatively impacts certain groups based on race.

Indicator	White	Black	Hispanic	Data Source
Kindergarten Readiness	35.3%	17.7%	19.7%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
3rd Grade English Language Proficiency (IAR Readiness)	26.6%	3.6%	8.2%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
3rd Grade Math Proficiency	33.6%	2.0%	8.2%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
8th Grade English Language Proficiency	35.8%	7.0%	22.8%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
8th Grade Math Proficiency	31.8%	3.8%	16.8%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
High School Truancy	24.3%	59.2%	40.9%	ISBE RC Public Data District 150
Median Household Income by Race	\$63.1K	\$30.4K	\$42.7K	2021 ACS - B19013 Peoria County
Poverty Rate by Race	11.0%	40.3%	20.3%	2021 ACS - B17001 Peoria County
Unemployment Rate by Race	4.9%	15.6%	15.7%	2021 ACS - S2301 5 year average Peoria County
Households Receiving Food Stamps	14.5%	47.4%	23.2%	2021 ACS - 822005
Overall Life Expectancy, Years	79	64	N/A	Peoria County Health Department, 2020 Mortality Report
Median Age In Years for Accident, Injury or Death	59.5	28.0	N/A	Peoria County Health Department, 2020 Mortality Report
Elevated Lead Levels in Children	6.3%	10.1%	N/A	2019 - 2021 Illinois Department of Public Data
Infant Mortality (Deaths <1Year Old per 100K Live Births)	446	1454	N/A	UICOMP Report data from 2016-2020
Homicide Death Rate, Age 15-24, per 100K People	6.8	161.9	N/A	Peoria County Health Department, 2020 Mortality Report
Teen Birth Rate per 1000 People	16.0	74.8	N/A	Peoria County Health Department, 2020 Mortality Report
Gonorrhea Infection Cases	216	796	N/A	Peoria County Health Department, 2021 STI Report
Median House Value	\$130,000	\$76,400	\$96,800	2015 Five Year ACS - B25077 basic races alone, all available Hispanic
Home Ownership by Race	76.7%	33.2%	64.9%	2021 ACS - B25003
Rentership by Race	23.3%	66.8%	35.1%	2021 ACS - B25003
Gross Rent > than 30% of Income	38.2%	56.2%	52.8%	2015 Five Year ACS - B25070 basic races alone, all available Hispanic
Gross Rent > than 50% of Income	19.7%	28.1%	32.3%	2015 Five Year ACS - B25070 basic races alone, all available Hispanic
Juvenile Arrests	35	387	N/A	Peoria Police Department 2021 data
Juvenile Detention Center Population	16%	79%	N/A	Juvenile Probation Office 2021 data
Traffic Stops - % of Total Traffic Stops	33%	61%	5%	Juvenile Probation Department Office 2021 data
Commuters Who Use Public Transport to Get to Work	23.6%	76.4%	N/A	2021 ACS - 50804

SUB-COMMITTEE	CHAIRS	MEMBERS
STEERING COMMITTEE	Tim Bertschy Mary Peterson	Angela Bolden, Charles Brown, Mary Chapai, Robert Dunigan, Raeann Garza Whitby, Angela Green, Joshua Gunn, Julia Issa-Ghantous, Jim Johnson, Micah Lavender, Chuck Mitchell, Mike Murphy, Rasheedah Na'Allah, Pam Orear, Abrain Robinson, Jonathan Wright, Bradley Wright-Hulett, Angela Young. <i>Ex-officio</i> : Patrick Urich, Melodi Green, Scott Sorrel. <i>City liaison</i> : Andre Allen. <i>County liaison</i> : Brandy Bryant.
CHILD & YOUTH DEVELOPMENT	Courtney Lee Anu Uddavolu	Tonya Fant, Cassadie Gonzalez, Charles Miner, Dawn Parker-Frakes, Terry Rainey, Nikki Romain, Ashley Whitlach. <i>Former members</i> : Stephanie Bragg, Krishan Bedi, Nikole Henry, Christian Lee, Anni Reinking.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & JOBS	Eric Burns Tom Pelger	Erik Christian, Nia McFarland-Dye, Patresse Moore, Paula Nachtrieb, Kimberly Richardson, Mike Seghetti, Chris Setti, Jackie Watkins, Janice Zagardo. <i>Former members</i> : Shawn Allen, Jonathan Jenkins, Ronald Ruffin, Monica Smith-Wallace, Marilyn Woods.
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HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES	Dr. Francesca Armmer Nicole Robertson	Tamia Banks, Ethan Carnes, La'Shay Carter, Terry Cassiday, Shacorra Evans, Mariama Ford, Bernice Gordon-Young, Rachel Hearn, Mike Kennedy, Tristan Mackey, Dr. Kamlesh Macwan, Anne Morrow, Shanta Murthy, Jaclyn Shallat, Crystal Slaughter, Barbara Smith, Chris Wade. <i>Former members</i> : Carla Sewell, Linda Wilson.
HOUSING	Debra Avery Marcus Peoples	Alicia Harris, Donny Henry, Adam Hopkins, Irene Lewis-Wimbley, Fai Lowe, Shataqua Poindexter, Jericka Rencher, Krista Wreskinski. <i>Former co-chair</i> : Andres Diaz. <i>Former members</i> : Latoya Brown, Roberta Parks, DezMonique Robertson, Valerie Timmes.
INFORMATION & TECHNOLOGY	Daniel McCloud Lisamarie Schultz	Jessica Bastian, Shawn Johnson, Jessica McKean, Sunny Pearson, Datikka Peebles, Jennifer Replogle. <i>Former co-chairs</i> : Jamiel Shelton, Syamala Srinivasan. <i>Former members</i> : Kim Connor, Sean Couch, Sean Garrett, Thomas Higgins, Geoffrey Landrum, Rodney Lorenz, Robert Ramoska, Brooke Sommerville, Aishi Tulasaku, Nyrobi Wheeler.
JUSTICE SYSTEM	Peter Barclay Jennifer Welch-Farrell	Donna Crowder, Emily Gill, Barb Katz, Jennifer Morris, Marcola Owens, Rebecca Runyon, Marc Weinmann. <i>Former co-chairs</i> : LaVetta Aguilera, Susan O'Neal, Derrick Parker. <i>Former members</i> : Pachaunce Allen-Walker, M Catherine Godhigh, Jennifer Keffler, Omar Malcolm.
TRANSPORTATION & MOBILITY	Ron Rasberry Ursula Towne	Antwaun Banks, Tina Foley, Lorene King, Catherine Lawless, Brinda Mehta, Anshuman Reddy. <i>Former co-chair</i> : Peter Kobak. <i>Former member</i> : Gloria Clark, Dan Elliot, Latareus Horton, Douglas Troop.

Special thanks to Peter Avery for helping create this report.

" INJUSTICE ANYWHERE IS A THREAT TO JUSTICE EVERYWHERE "
- MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.



Peoria County

Joint Commission on Racial Justice & Equity



City of Peoria

To learn more about joining RJE:

