

# Village of Peoria Heights Vision Document

April 2009

Prepared by the Peoria Heights Neighborhood Impact Partnership  
Technical support from Tri-County Regional Planning Commission

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## INTRODUCTION

In May 2008, the Village of Peoria Heights received \$15,000 from the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) to strengthen older neighborhoods in Peoria Heights and help develop a Comprehensive Plan for the Village. The plan will emphasize the relationship between schools and neighborhoods and is intended to help strengthen the neighborhoods and schools.

Since May 2008, TCRPC has provided an inventory and analysis of existing conditions in Peoria Heights, including Current land use, population and demographics, housing, community facilities and infrastructure, transportation, economic development, education, and natural resources.

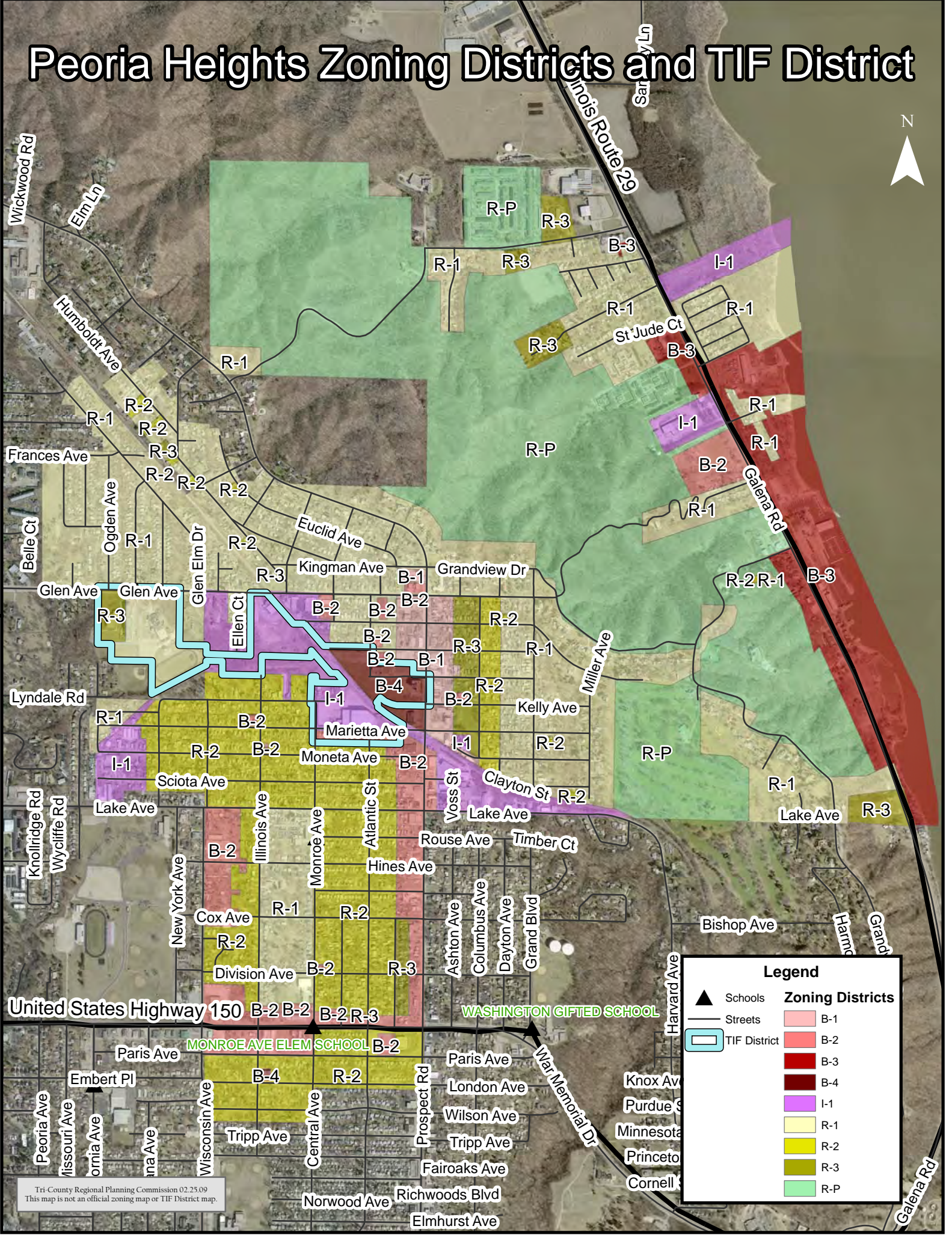
In the summer of 2008, a survey was sent to residents of Peoria Heights to get public input about what issues are most important. 466 responses were received and analyzed.

A committee of Peoria Heights residents and TCRPC staff have used the survey results to highlight the most important issues, create a vision for Peoria Heights, and define goals. This committee, called the “Peoria Heights Neighborhood Impact Partnership,” includes:

- Mark Allen, Mayor
- Roger Bergia, Superintendent of Peoria Heights Public School District
- Don Gorman, Peoria Heights School Board President
- Tom Horstmann, Village Administrator
- Shauna Musselman, Village Clerk
- Mike Phelan, Richwoods Township and Peoria County Board member

A vision statement, goals, strategies, and action steps have been developed based on the key conclusions and the input from the public.

# Peoria Heights Zoning Districts and TIF District



**Legend**

- ▲ Schools
- Streets
- TIF District

**Zoning Districts**

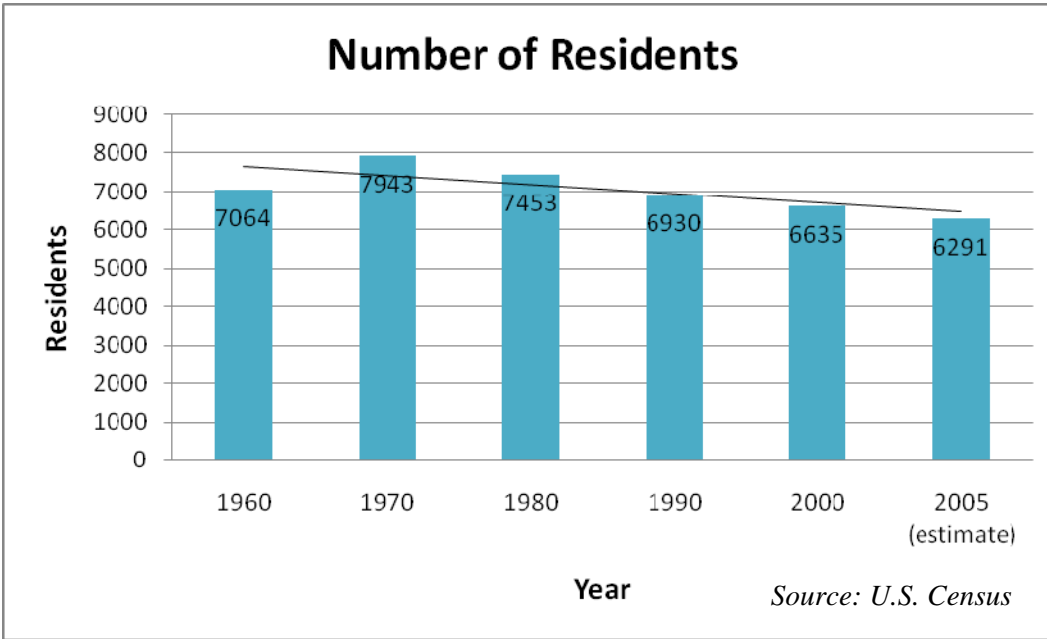
- B-1
- B-2
- B-3
- B-4
- I-1
- R-1
- R-2
- R-3
- R-P

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission 02.25.09  
 This map is not an official zoning map or TIF District map.

## COMMUNITY PROFILE

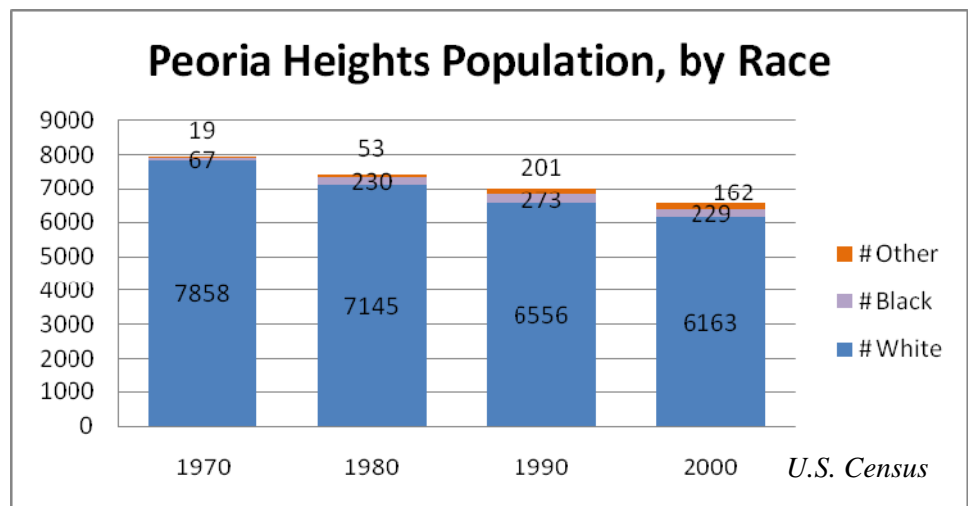
Peoria Heights is surrounded on the south, west, and north by the City of Peoria, and the Illinois River borders the Village on the east. All opportunities for growth are in its current boundaries; the Village cannot expand further into Peoria County. Population data and information on the community were gathered to show historical patterns and possible ways that the community might continue to change.

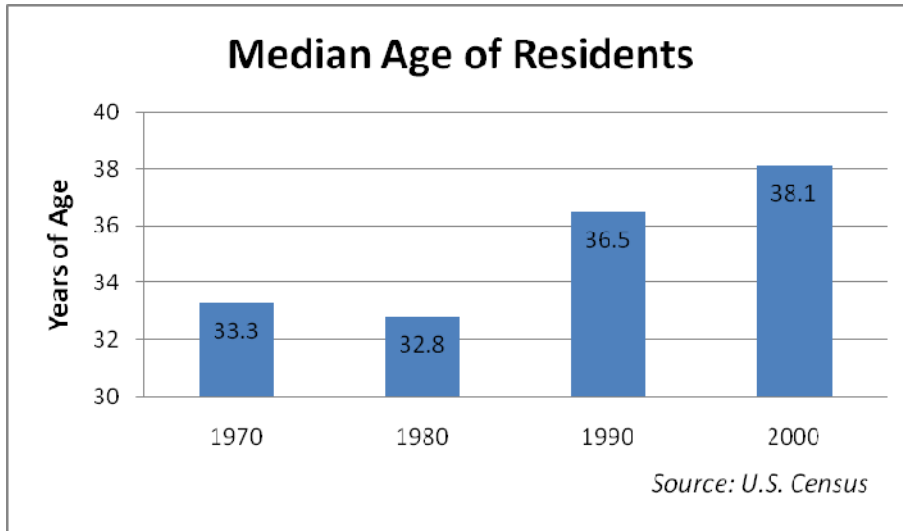
## POPULATION



In 2000, 6,635 people lived in Peoria Heights. The chart to the left shows the population in Peoria Heights from the U.S. census from 1960 to 2005. Population has been decreasing by four to seven percent per decade since the 1970s.

Peoria Heights is becoming more racially diverse and a higher percentage of the population is non-white. In 2000, ninety-four percent of residents were white, four percent were black, and the remaining two percent were of other races.



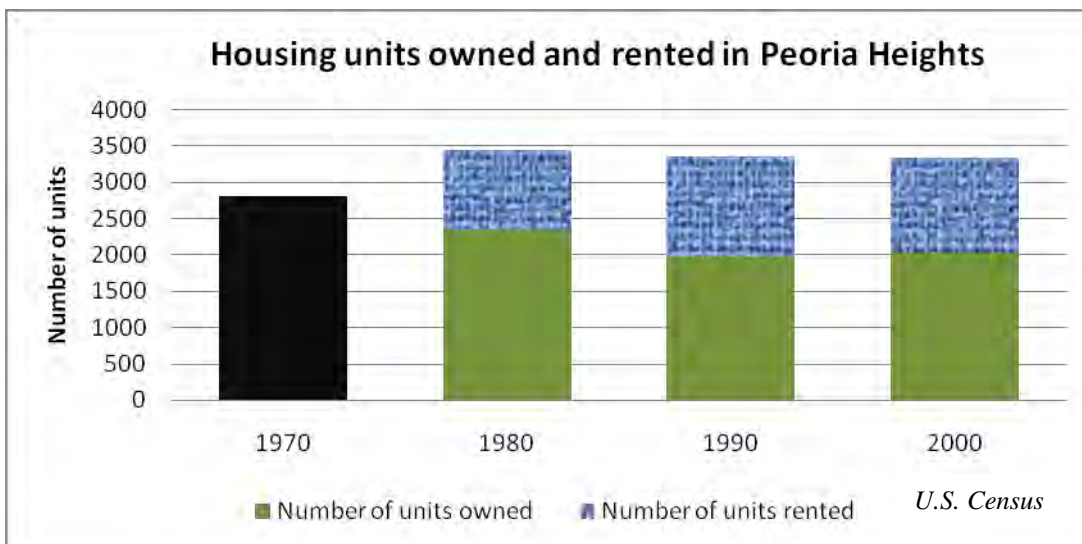


The median age of Peoria Heights residents has been rising since 1980. The median age of a resident is now 38 years. The aging of the population could be due to more older residents moving into the village, younger residents moving away, fewer babies being born, or a combination of the factors.

## NUMBERS AND OWNERSHIP OF HOUSING UNITS

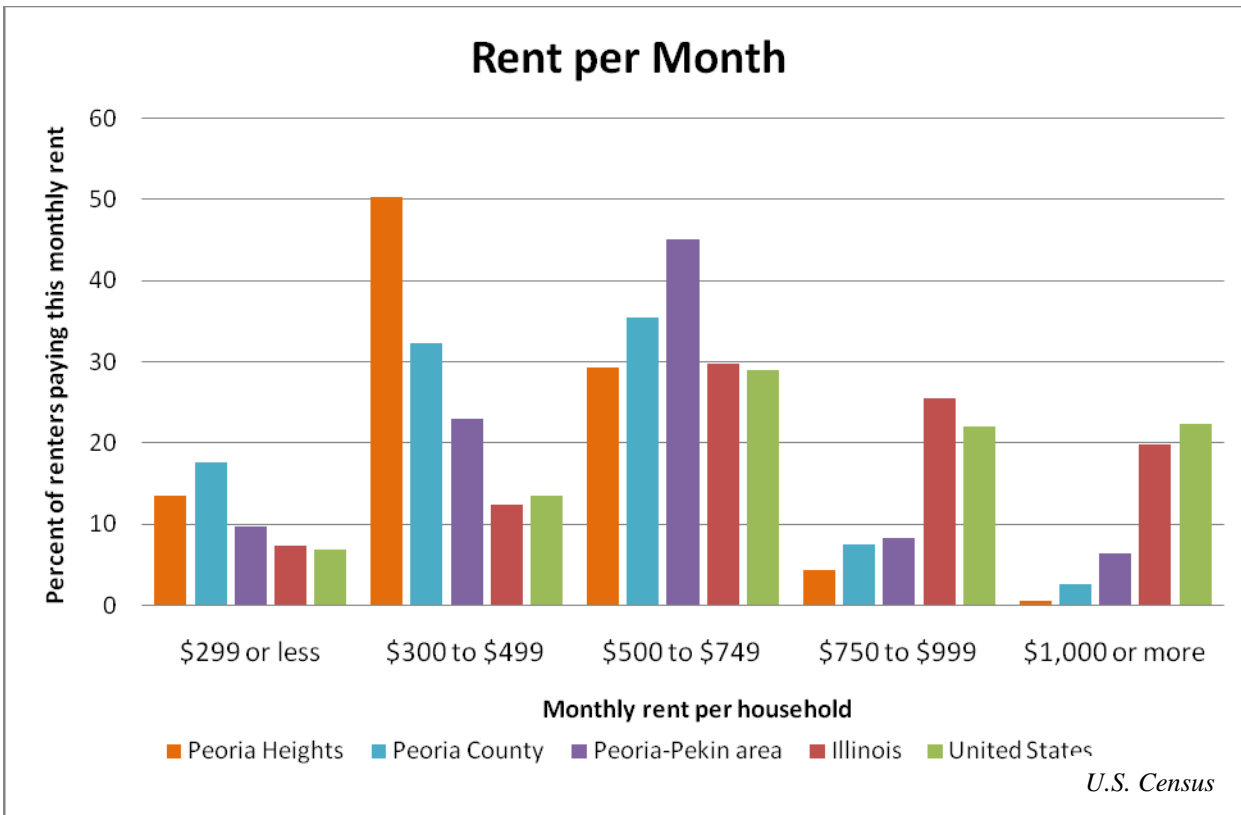
In 2000, there were 3,331 housing units in Peoria Heights. Approximately six of ten (61%) homes are owner-occupied, while the rest (39%) are occupied by renters. The poverty rate is 8.8%, which means that nearly nine of every 100 households have incomes below the poverty level. For comparison, the 2003 poverty rate for all of Peoria County was 13.4%.

The following table shows how many housing units are renter-occupied and owner-occupied. Number of units that were rented and owner-occupied was not available for 1970; the black bar shows the total number of housing units. For the other three decades, blue indicates the number of units that are occupied by renters while green represents owner-occupied units. The percentage of units that are renter-occupied increased between 1980 and 1990 but remained nearly the same for the next decade.



## MONTHLY RENT

The below table compares monthly rent in Peoria Heights with rents in Peoria County, the larger Peoria-Pekin area, Illinois, and the United States. The height of the columns shows what percent of housing units are rented at that price. Nearly half of renters in Peoria Heights pay between \$300 and \$499 per month. Rents in Peoria Heights are generally lower than in the other areas.

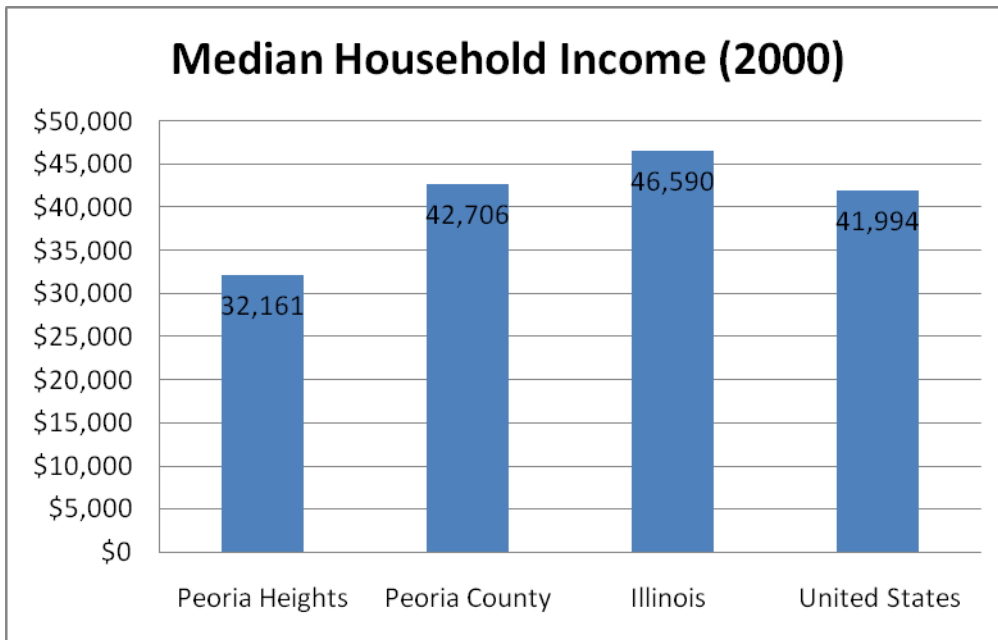


## BUILDING AND DEMOLITION PERMITS

Permits for new construction made up a small percentage of all building permits issued in the Village. More buildings are being demolished than are being built. From January 1997 to May 2002, thirty-four buildings were demolished for an average of six buildings being demolished per year. In the same five-year period, twenty homes or commercial buildings were built, indicating an average of three to four new buildings per year.

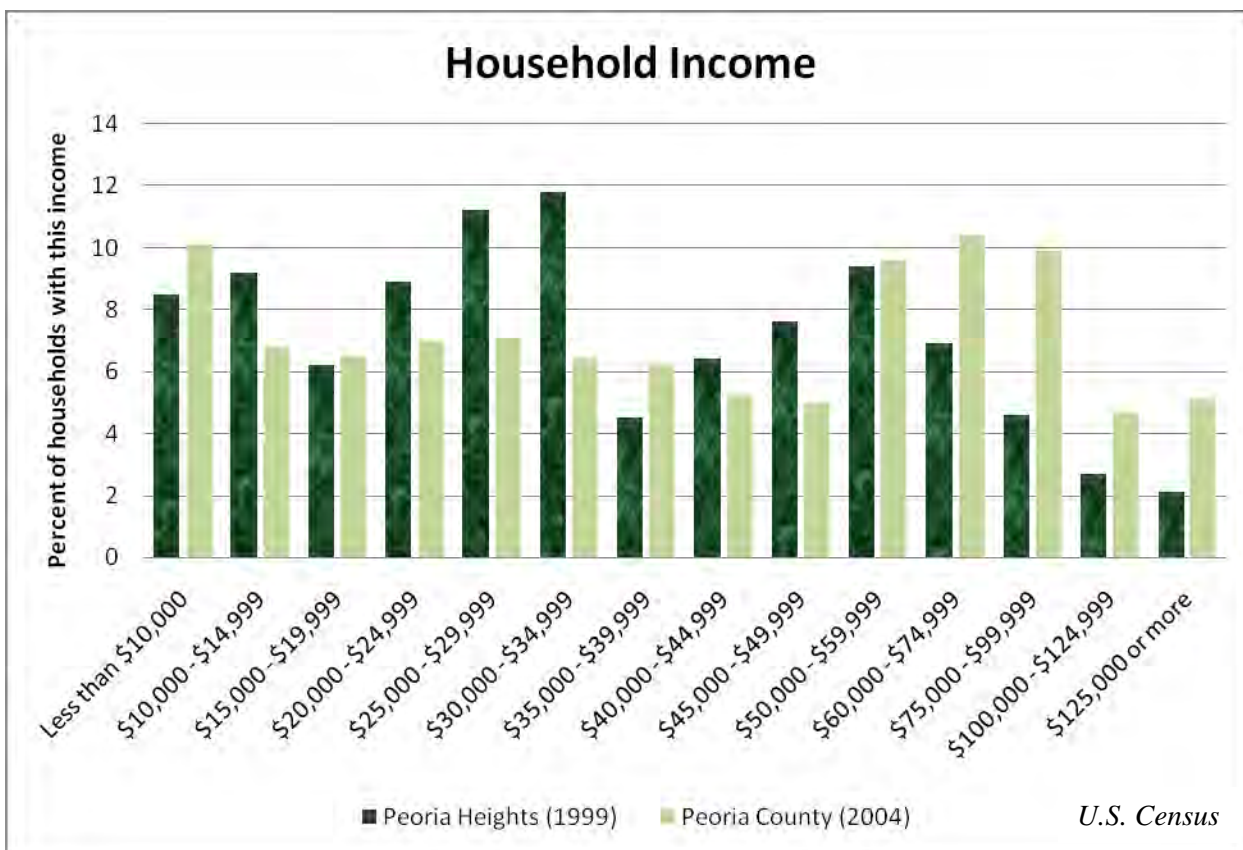
Many new housing units were built between 1970 and 1980. The number of units has steadily declined since then, indicating demolition of housing units, conversion of multiple units into single-family units, or a combination of the two factors. (*Source: Village of Peoria Heights*)

## INCOME



Median household income for Peoria Heights is compared with Peoria County, Illinois, and United States median income. The median household income is lower in Peoria Heights than in the other areas shown.

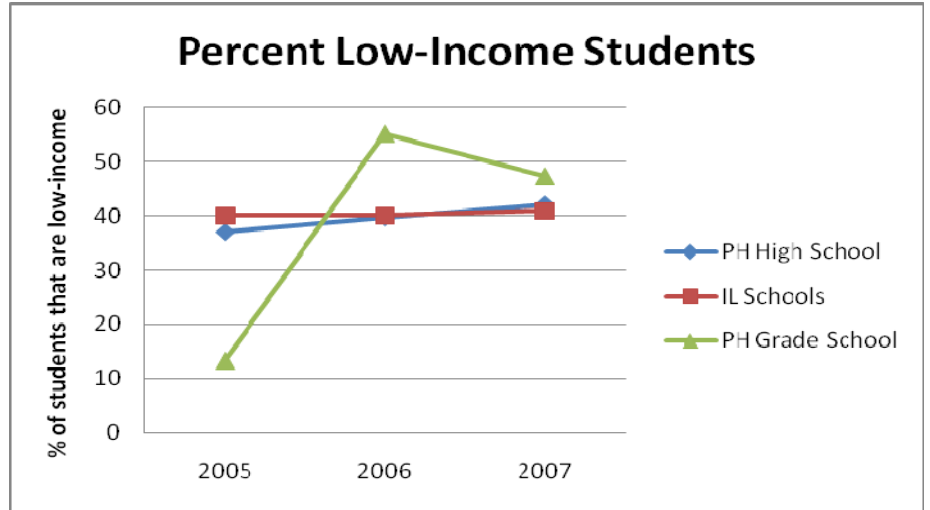
Compared with Peoria County, a higher percentage of households in Peoria Heights has incomes in the lower income brackets.



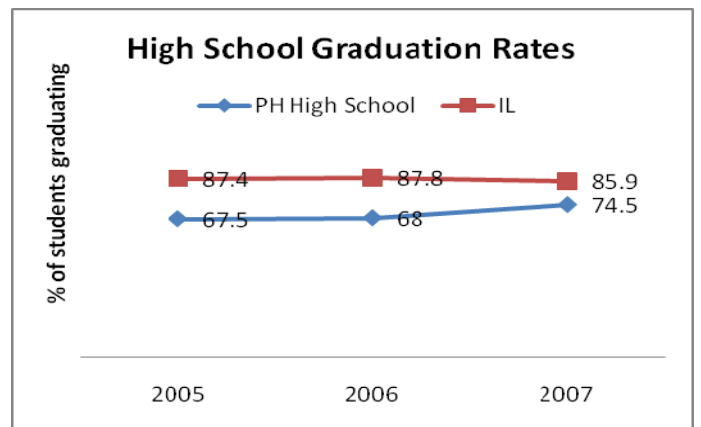


PEORIA HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT #325

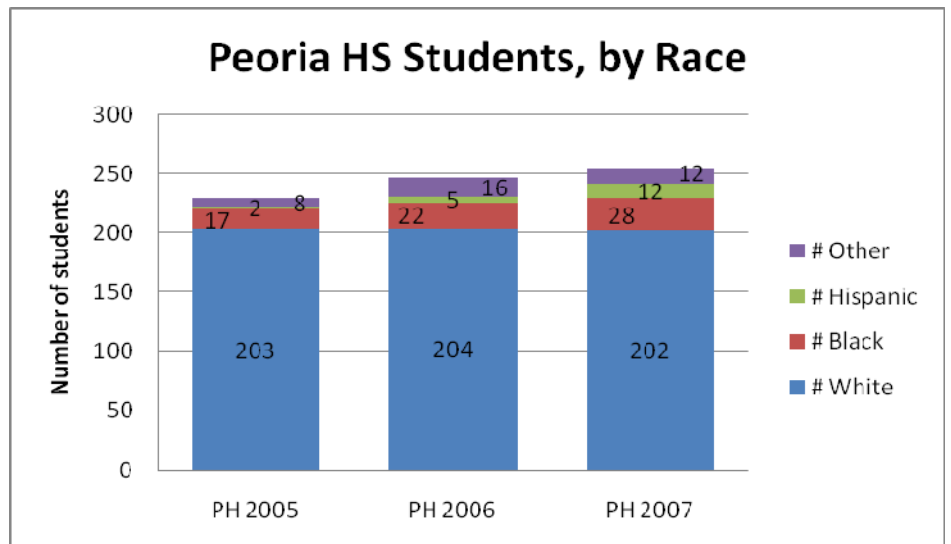
About 40 percent of Illinois students are from low-income families. That percentage is nearly the same in Peoria Heights High School. The percentage of low-income students in Peoria Heights Grade School has greatly fluctuated from 2005 to 2007 and now is slightly higher than the Peoria Heights High School and Illinois percentages.



The graduation rate of Peoria Heights High School students is lower than the overall rate for Illinois high school students, although the gap has gotten smaller from 2005 to 2007.



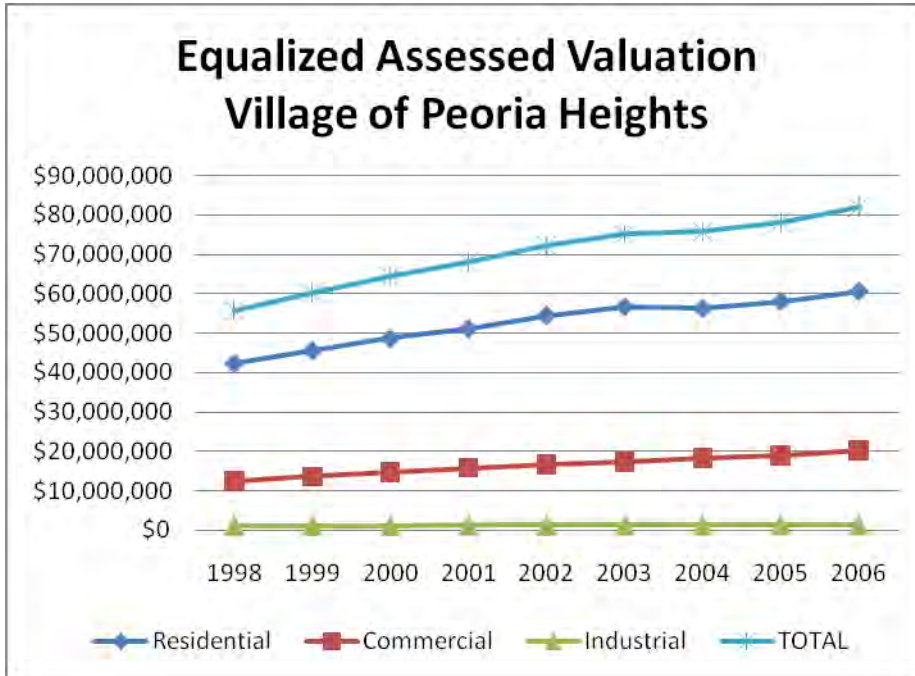
The racial makeup of a school does not always mirror the racial makeup of the community. Approximately eighty percent of Peoria Heights High School identify themselves as white, while nearly ninety-five percent of Peoria Heights residents identify themselves as white. In both the school and the community, the percentage of people who identify themselves as black, Hispanic, or another race is steadily increasing.



Source: Illinois State Board of Education

## ASSESSED VALUATION

The assessed valuation of properties in Peoria Heights has steadily risen in the last decade. The chart below illustrates that most of the value is from residential properties, with commercial and then industrial properties contributing the rest of the value. (Source: Village of Peoria Heights)



## SOURCES

<http://www.peoriaheights.org/community.html>

<http://www.phcusd325.net/>

<http://www.heartlandalliance.org/maip/documents/Povertyreport2006lr.pdf>

## PEORIA HEIGHTS SWOT ANALYSIS AND MAJOR TOPICS

The Partnership's "SWOT" analysis looks at the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats of Peoria Heights. We can use a SWOT analysis to gather the views of everyone on the committee and to help define goals and strategies for the planning process.

### **Strengths include:**

- Beautiful Area: Illinois River, Grand View Drive, Business Area, Tower Park
- Intergovernmental Partnerships
- Schools
- Library
- Police Department
- Fire Department
- Public Works Department
- Ambulance Service
- Walkability of downtown area

### **Weaknesses include:**

- Many Rental Properties
- Mobility Rate
- Parent/student apathy
- Many Low Income Families
- Deteriorating Neighborhoods

### **Threats include:**

- Old houses are deteriorating
- High turnover of students
- Increasing poverty level of students
- Limited housing stock, small lots
- Infrastructure is lacking. No sidewalks or curb and gutter many places.
- Identity of Peoria Heights. It is becoming a small town with inner city problems that is less geographically distinct as it used to be.
- How does the village balance a focus on the shops that draw outsiders and help create identity but provide little tax revenue with the larger stores that provide residents with goods and services and provide more tax revenue but do not contribute to its identity?
- Any commercial development probably means loss of residential areas. This means loss of students to schools, which is a threat to school district.
- Increase in crime and drugs (or at least the perception of these)

### **Opportunities include:**

- Cohen's building redevelopment
- Ed Zosky development on War Memorial Drive
- Possible Kellar Trail
- Increased walkability and more cohesive neighborhoods

## COMMUNITY SURVEY RESULTS

In the summer of 2008, a community survey was distributed to residents. In an effort to reach all residents, surveys were mailed to residences and placed in apartment buildings for residents to return. 466 surveys were completed and returned. TCRPC staff compiled each survey, and the Partnership analyzed the results.

Respondents were asked several closed-ended questions where they checked the appropriate box. To determine what residents and non-residents shop for in the Heights, respondents were asked to describe their purchasing habits. To determine transportation patterns, residents were asked their commute length and how they commute (bus, personal vehicle, etc.). Respondents rated the quality of services offered in Peoria Heights (schools, library, road maintenance, etc.). They were asked what priority should be given to the development of several types of businesses as well as their opinion of proposed changes to Galena Road. Also requested was demographic information such as the age group of respondent, number of children or youth in the home, length of time living in the Heights, and whether the respondent owns a business in or outside of the Heights. Survey results are included at the end of this document.

Three open-ended questions gave respondents opportunities to share their opinions on what features of Peoria Heights make it an attractive place to live, what serious problems face the community, and any other comments.

These are the most common responses to the question, “What are the features of Peoria Heights that make it an attractive place to live?” (At least twenty people wrote a response that falls into each category.)

- Small town / small town feel
- Good shopping district / interesting shops
- Close to amenities or Peoria / everything is accessible / central location
- Good school system
- Grandview Drive / scenery of Grandview Drive
- Low crime rate / feel safe
- Tower Park
- Quiet / peaceful
- Friendly people / good neighbors
- Variety of restaurants / upscale dining
- Scenic / pretty
- Good police / responsive police force
- Parks
- Good neighborhoods / personal feel
- Low / reasonable taxes
- Good public works / streets / snow clearing
- Good fire department
- Clean

Below are the most common responses to the question, “What are the most serious problems facing our community?” (At least twenty people wrote a response in each category.)

- Unkempt properties
- Too many rental properties/ too many becoming rental
- Crime / vandalism / theft
- Schools
- Ordinances / code enforcement
- Rental houses not being maintained
- Not enough for kids to do / unsupervised youth
- More street maintenance / sidewalks
- High taxes
- Drugs

## MAJOR DISCUSSION TOPICS

The committee has discussed the following topics and ideas. Individuals might agree or disagree with these. Many of these have become goals or strategies of the community’s plan.

### **Neighborhoods**

- Place less emphasis on more housing and more emphasis on quality housing
- Redevelopment funding...perhaps a grant with a revolving fund to assist homeowners in fixing up substandard properties.
- Promote owner-occupied housing.

### **Schools**

- Family assistance projects; strong family units lead to better graduation rates, more pride in the community, safer community.
- Competitiveness in education
- Promote “our three fine schools” in the same way Peoria promotes its three fine hospitals.

### **Village Services and Infrastructure**

- Continuous Public Works upgrades - streets, sidewalks, utility service
- Fire/ambulance service upgrades
- Law enforcement upgrades
- Code enforcement monitoring

### **Transportation, Recreation, Parks**

- Explore a way to link our parks. Possibly a trail, gondola, or trolley from Bielfeldt Park to Grandview Drive.
- Kellar Branch Railroad - rail into trail
- Galena Road issues - speed limit reduction, economic development
- A 'walkable' community with trails (not just the Kellar trail), neighborhood parks, better sidewalks, etc.

## **Community Involvement**

- Promote the Village in a positive manner.
- Develop active neighborhood associations.
- Recycle - promote a "green" Village.
- A 'well' community that takes responsibility in its health...more people out walking, etc.
- An organic market on Prospect Road.

## **Tourism**

- Market the Heights and its attributes.
- Explore ways to capture and promote eco-tourism.
- Promote Peoria Heights as bed and breakfast area for one and two day getaways.

## **Diversity of Residents**

- Senior activities.
- Work to keep senior and retired citizens in the village through more senior housing.

## **Development Ideas**

- Economic development of affordable restaurants, such as a family diner within walking distance of downtown
- Brainstorm with developers and investors to investigate the housing challenges.
- Look at creating a district that might attract artists and unique concepts.
- Overall economic development/innovation for attracting commercial enterprise
- Further develop the TIF; components will make people want to live close by.
- Attract artists and artisans to some of the houses right off of Prospect.
- Renovate Prospect Road from Marietta to War Memorial with green spaces, brownstone properties, landscaping, etc.
- Create an atmosphere for the concept of “new urbanism” to flourish.

## VISION FOR PEORIA HEIGHTS

Using the information shown on previous pages of this document, the Partnership verbalized a vision for Peoria Heights. The ideas complement the Village's existing slogan of "City Convenience, Village Charm." Members then categorized the input and ideas into goals, strategies, and action steps. Each sentence of the vision statement is followed by goals and action steps, shown on the following pages. Ideas and partnerships will continue to develop and be added to the chart and plan.

- Peoria Heights is an independent, geographically cohesive community of choice with a distinct identity and high quality of life.
- Residents take pride in their safe community, are able to walk to many destinations, and enjoy the beautiful scenery and well-maintained neighborhoods.
- Business, tourism, and recreational opportunities are located along the Illinois River, Prospect Avenue, and Galena Road.
- Its businesses serve residents' daily needs as well as shopping attractions for tourists.
- It has a cultural area that helps promote arts, sciences, and vocational training.

## Peoria Heights Vision with Action Steps

<i>Goal: relevant part of vision statement</i>	<i>objectives</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>
<p>Peoria Heights is an independent, geographically cohesive community of choice with a distinct identity and high quality of life.</p>		
<p>Peoria Heights has a <b>distinct identity.</b></p>	Promote a “green” village through recycling and other environmentally responsible activities.	Send a press release with statistics of energy savings through recycling program.
	Reach goal of 70% of households participating in recycling program.	
	Create an atmosphere for the concept of “new urbanism” to flourish.	
	Become a community that takes responsibility in its health.	Investigate beginning an organic market on Prospect Road or in Cohen's building.
	Cooperate with other governmental groups to have a unified voice.	Work together to keep taxes low and avoid duplication of services.
<p>Peoria Heights has a <b>high quality of life.</b></p>	Encourage more activities for senior citizens.	
	Work to keep senior and retired citizens in the village through more senior housing.	
	Make frequent Public Works upgrades to streets, sidewalks, and utility services.	Investigate bonds to fund sidewalks and curbs; create a five-year capital plan.
	Increase competitiveness and quality of local schools through family involvement in school activities and promotion in the community.	Investigate ways to encourage family assistance projects.  Promote “our three fine schools” in the same way Peoria promotes its three fine hospitals.
<p>Residents take pride in their safe community, are able to walk to many destinations, and enjoy the beautiful scenery and well-maintained neighborhoods.</p>		
<p>Residents... are able to walk to many destinations and enjoy the beautiful scenery and well-maintained neighborhoods.</p>	Convert the Kellar Branch Railroad into a trail.	Continue to send a consistent message to Surface Transportation Board.
<p>Residents are able to <b>walk to many destinations.</b></p>	Link the community’s parks.	Investigate possibilities of a trail, gondola, or trolley from Bielfeldt Park to Grandview Drive.
	Add sidewalks along all streets.	
	Add curb and gutter to all streets.	



## Peoria Heights Vision with Action Steps

<i>Goal: relevant part of vision statement</i>	<i>objectives</i>	<i>Action Steps</i>
<b>Residents take pride in their safe community.</b>	Promote the Village in a positive manner within the Village.	Create and regularly distribute Village newsletters or a newspaper.
	Develop active neighborhood associations.	
	Maintain fire and ambulance service.	Upgrade ambulance to paramedic service.
	Upgrade law enforcement.	Relocate police department.
<b>Residents enjoy the well-maintained neighborhoods.</b>	Monitor code enforcement more closely.	Investigate landlord registration or accountability process.
	Maintain quality housing while encouraging further investment in housing stock.	Brainstorm with developers and investors to investigate the housing challenges.
	Emphasize quality of housing more than quantity of housing.	Renovate Prospect Road from Marietta to War Memorial with green spaces, brownstone properties, and landscaping.
	Promote owner-occupied housing.	Establish a source of redevelopment funding (such as a grant with a revolving fund to help homeowners improve substandard properties). Investigate HUD block grants.
<b>Business, tourism, and recreational opportunities are located along the Illinois River, Prospect Avenue, and Galena Road.</b>		
<b>Business, tourism, and recreational opportunities are located along the Illinois River, Prospect Avenue, and Galena Road.</b>	Market the Heights and its attributes.	Explore ways to capture and promote eco-tourism.
		Promote Peoria Heights as bed and breakfast area for one and two day getaways.
<b>Its businesses serve residents' daily needs as well as shopping attractions for tourists.</b>		
<b>Its businesses serve residents' daily needs as well as shopping attractions for tourists.</b>	Improve overall economic development and innovation for attracting commercial enterprise.	Encourage affordable restaurants, such as a family diner, to locate within walking distance of downtown.
	Promote the TIF to draw residents to the area.	Market TIF to developers.
<b>It has a cultural area that helps promote arts, sciences, and vocational training.</b>		
<b>It has a cultural area that helps promote arts, sciences, and vocational training.</b>	Attract artists and artisans to some of the houses right off of Prospect.	Look at creating a district that might attract artists and unique concepts.
		Investigate creating a revolving loan fund for the future cultural district.

# ANSWER SHEET

## PEORIA HEIGHTS COMMUNITY SURVEY

1. How long is the usual **one-way trip** between home and work for members of your household? If there is more than one worker in your home, please check all that apply. (For example, if you work three blocks from home and your spouse travels eight miles to work, check the “Shorter than one mile” box and the “Five to ten miles” box.)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p><b>[4% ]</b> I work at home</p> <p><b>[5% ]</b> Shorter than one mile</p> <p><b>[7% ]</b> One to two miles</p> <p><b>[6% ]</b> Two to three miles</p> <p><b>[19%]</b> Three to five miles</p> <p><b>[23%]</b> Five to ten miles</p> | <p><b>[11% ]</b> Ten to twenty miles</p> <p><b>[6% ]</b> Twenty or more miles</p> <p><b>[15% ]</b> Retired/Not Working</p> <p><b>[2% ]</b> Other: _____</p> |
|--|---|

2. Please rate the quality of the following services in Peoria Heights:

	<b>Good</b>	<b>Fair</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
Police Protection	<b>[71% ]</b>	<b>[18% ]</b>	<b>[5% ]</b>	<b>[6% ]</b>
Ambulance Service	<b>[58% ]</b>	<b>[13% ]</b>	<b>[ 3% ]</b>	<b>[26% ]</b>
Fire Protection	<b>[64% ]</b>	<b>[12% ]</b>	<b>[3% ]</b>	<b>[20% ]</b>
City Water	<b>[68% ]</b>	<b>[18% ]</b>	<b>[11% ]</b>	<b>[4% ]</b>
Garbage Collection and Yard Waste Pick-Up	<b>[85% ]</b>	<b>[8% ]</b>	<b>[2% ]</b>	<b>[4% ]</b>
Library	<b>[74% ]</b>	<b>[9% ]</b>	<b>[1% ]</b>	<b>[15% ]</b>
Parks & Recreation	<b>[ 59%]</b>	<b>[24% ]</b>	<b>[3% ]</b>	<b>[14% ]</b>
Road Maintenance	<b>[ 45%]</b>	<b>[39% ]</b>	<b>[13% ]</b>	<b>[3% ]</b>
Schools	<b>[46% ]</b>	<b>[22% ]</b>	<b>[7% ]</b>	<b>[25% ]</b>
Village Government	<b>[48% ]</b>	<b>[31% ]</b>	<b>[4% ]</b>	<b>[17% ]</b>
Public Works	<b>[61% ]</b>	<b>[23% ]</b>	<b>[2% ]</b>	<b>[14% ]</b>

3. How much of your purchasing for the following is done in Peoria Heights?

	<b>Almost None (0 to 10%)</b>	<b>Some (11% to 50%)</b>	<b>Most (51% to 100%)</b>
Groceries	[48% ]	[40% ]	[11% ]
Gasoline	[15% ]	[27% ]	[58% ]
Auto Repair	[74% ]	[14% ]	[12% ]
Banking	[ 66%]	[18% ]	[16% ]
Medical/Pharmacy	[34% ]	[22% ]	[44% ]
Hardware	[73% ]	[23% ]	[4% ]
Appliances	[98% ]	[2% ]	[1% ]
Full Service Dining	[62% ]	[33% ]	[5% ]
Casual Dining/Fast Food	[39% ]	[54% ]	[ 7% ]
Specialty Items/Home Decor	[87% ]	[12% ]	[2% ]
Home Maintenance and Remodeling Contractors	[81% ]	[14% ]	[5% ]

4. What priority should be given to the development of the following?

	<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>No Opinion</b>
Professional Offices	[13% ]	[36% ]	[26% ]	[24% ]
Retail Stores	[40% ]	[38% ]	[11% ]	[11% ]
Supermarkets	[52% ]	[26% ]	[14% ]	[8% ]
Retirement Homes	[30% ]	[31% ]	[23% ]	[17% ]
Affordable Housing	[35% ]	[29% ]	[21% ]	[14% ]
Rental Housing	[12% ]	[15% ]	[55% ]	[18% ]
Home Ownership	[68% ]	[16% ]	[2% ]	[14% ]
Additional Recreational Facilities	[32% ]	[37% ]	[15% ]	[16% ]
Kellar Branch conversion to trail	[34% ]	[21% ]	[28% ]	[17% ]
Sidewalks	[47% ]	[32% ]	[11% ]	[10% ]
Increased Police Protection	[35% ]	[36% ]	[17% ]	[12% ]

Pre-Schools/Daycare	[15% ]	[29% ]	[22% ]	[35% ]
Volunteer Services for People in Need	[36% ]	[34% ]	[13% ]	[17% ]
Changes to Galena Road	[26% ]	[23% ]	[25% ]	[27% ]
Neighborhood Associations	[28% ]	[34% ]	[18% ]	[20% ]
Recycling	[55% ]	[24% ]	[11% ]	[10% ]
Alternative Energy Sources such as Wind Farms or Solar	[40% ]	[23% ]	[20% ]	[17% ]

5. There has been discussion about making changes to Galena Road. What is your opinion of the following ideas?

	For	Against	No Opinion
Lower the speed limit	[30% ]	[37% ]	[33% ]
Widen the road	[34% ]	[30% ]	[36% ]
Make a center turn lane (without widening road)	[45% ]	[21% ]	[35% ]
Add stop lights	[35% ]	[31% ]	[34% ]

6. How often do you use the following ways to get to and from work?

	Usually	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Drive alone	[87% ]	[4% ]	[2% ]	[7% ]
Carpool	[2% ]	[4% ]	[10% ]	[84% ]
Motorcycle	[2% ]	[5% ]	[3% ]	[90% ]
Bicycle	[1% ]	[6% ]	[5% ]	[88% ]
CityLink bus	[5% ]	[ 5% ]	[6% ]	[84% ]
Walk	[5% ]	[ 10%]	[8% ]	[78% ]
Other: _____	[1% ]	[0% ]	[0% ]	[98% ]

7. What age group are you in? *Percentages in italics are from 2000 Census*

[1% ]	Under 21	[36% ]	51 to 65 ( <i>21%</i> )
[9% ]	21 to 35 ( <i>30%</i> )	[18% ]	66 to 75 ( <i>10%</i> )
[22% ]	36 to 50 ( <i>29%</i> )	[14% ]	Over 75 ( <i>11%</i> )

8. How many people under the age of 18 live in your home? \_\_\_\_\_

- [80% ]** None
- [9% ]** One
- [8% ]** Two
- [2% ]** Three
- [1% ]** Four or more

9. How long have you lived in Peoria Heights? \_\_\_\_\_

- [16% ]** Up to 5 years
- [12% ]** 6 to 10 years
- [16% ]** 11 to 20 years
- [16% ]** 21 to 30 years
- [15% ]** 31 to 40 years
- [11% ]** 41 to 50 years
- [14% ]** Over 50 years

10. Where do you live?

- [53% ]** Above the bluff, west of Prospect Road (closer to Knoxville)
- [22% ]** Above the bluff, east of Prospect Road (closer to the river)
- [19% ]** Below the bluff
- [6% ]** Other: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Do you own a business in Peoria Heights?

- [92% ]** No
- [3% ]** Yes – it is in my home
- [3% ]** Yes – it is in the downtown area (on or near Prospect Road, between Glen Avenue and Marietta Avenue)
- [2% ]** Yes – it is not in my home and it is outside of downtown area