Us Peoria Walkthrough

We'll look at sources from Peoria, Illinois, and use five questions to get to know the community. You can work through them on your own or with a group. Keep notes on paper or on your own device if you like. You choose what to keep and what to share.

Take a little time to look or think before talking. If you want a way in, try the short prompt beside the source.

MOVEMENT 1 OF 5

Where are we?

Follow the water

Start with Ruger's 1867 drawing, then look at the city's district map adopted in 2022. Look for the water and a way across it in each. The drawing gives a view from the far bank. The district map covers a larger area, so use its inset to take a closer look at the river bend.

Look at what was numbered

After the two maps, turn to the enlarged key for Ruger's drawing. Have a look at what he chose to number. Keep one detail from the maps or key in mind as we move from the place to the people.

Where are we?

Find the Illinois River and a way across it. What else do you notice along the water?



Source: Albert Ruger, Peoria, Illinois 1867. Library of Congress, digital ID g4104p.pm001780.

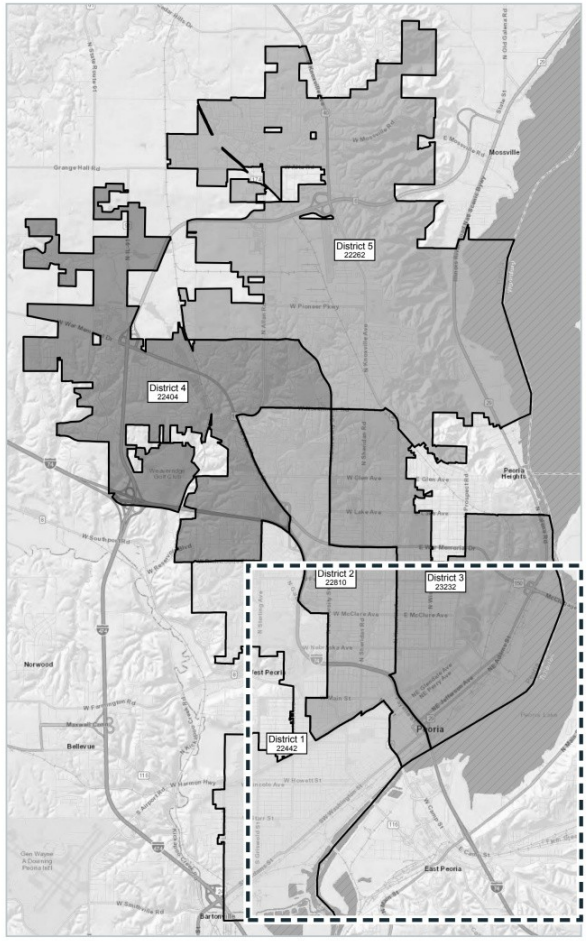
If you're still looking. Pick a route on one bank and follow it with your finger. What do you notice along it? · Library of Congress panorama

Where are we?

Find the water marked Peoria Lake. Where does I-74 cross the water?

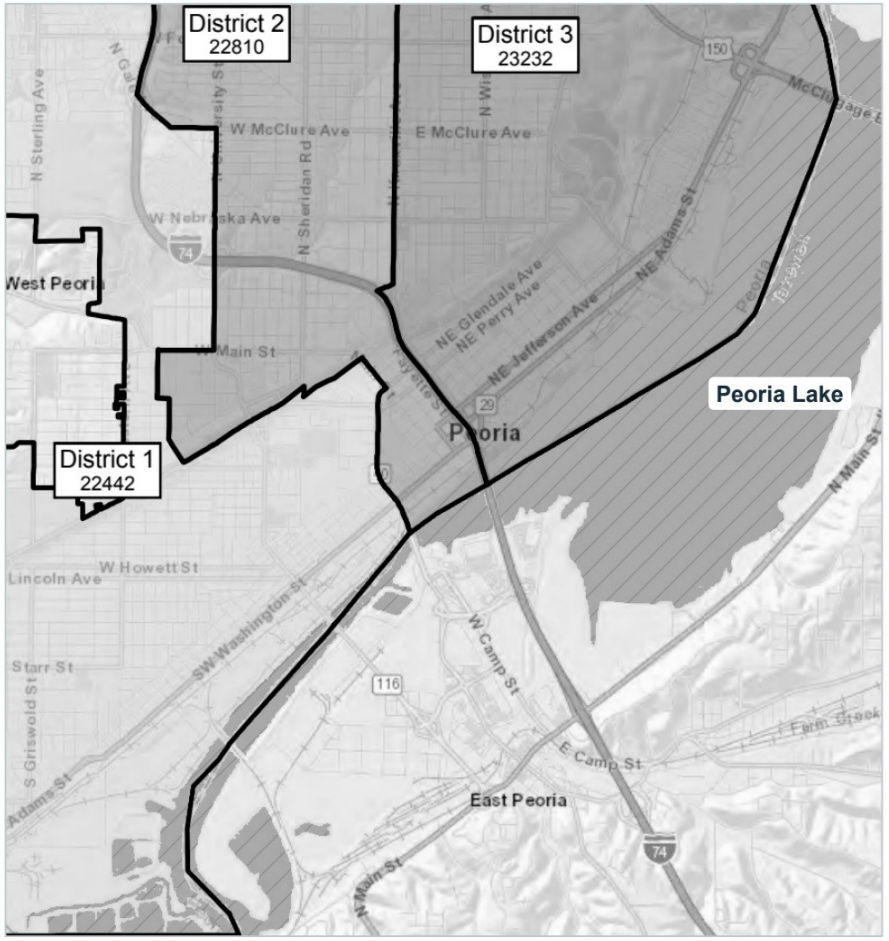
Full district map

The dashed box shows the area enlarged on the right.



River bend, enlarged

Hatching shows the water.



Source: City of Peoria council district map, adopted 2022, Exhibit A (PDF page 6).

BLACK-AND-WHITE

Compare. What crossed the water in 1867? What crossings can you find on this map? If you need a starting point, find either I-74 shield and follow the road. · City district map

Where are we?

What did the mapmaker think was worth numbering?

Peoria in 1867

The dashed box marks the numbered key.



Numbered key, enlarged

The original columns run from top to bottom here.

1 COURT HOUSE.
2 SCHOOL HOUSES.
3 1ST METHODIST.
4 GERMAN METHODIST.
5 PERRY STREET METHODIST. } CHURCHES
6 NEW JERUSALEM
7 UNIVERSALIST

8 1ST PRESBYTERIAN
9 2ST PRESBYTERIAN
10 CUMBERLAND PRESBYTERIAN
11 NEW SCHOOL PRESBYTERIAN } CHURCHES
12 CONGREGATIONAL
13 EPISCOPAL
14 CHISTIAN

15 1ST BAPTIST.
16 ADAMS STREET BAPTIST
17 GERMAN BAPTIST.
18 ST PAUL } LUTHERAN } CHURCHES
19 TRINITY
20 EVANGELICAL
21 HEBREW

22 ST MARY'S.
23 ST PATRICK. } CATHOLIC CHURCHES.
24 ST JOSEPH.
25 C & R.I.R.R. DEPOT.
26 T P & W.R.R. DEPOT.
27 GAS WORKS.
28 ILLINOIS RIVER PACKET CO.

Source: Albert Ruger, Peoria, Illinois 1867. Library of Congress, digital ID g4104p.pm001780.

If you're still looking. Find a word or a kind of place that repeats. What can you see in the drawing that has no number? · Library of Congress panorama

MOVEMENT 2 OF 5

Who are we?

The maps gave us a place and showed what someone thought was worth marking. Now look at two moments in that same city.

Look at two photographs



Outside a Peoria feed store, 1938

Arthur Rothstein · Library of Congress



Glen Oak Park, July 2025

Matt Dayhoff · Photographer's caption

Take a quiet look first. What are people doing in each picture? Where are they, and who are they with? Point to something you can see.

If you're still looking. Look at what people are doing with their hands, or notice how close together they are.

Check the captions after you've looked. The Library of Congress identifies the 1938 scene as people waiting for a bus. Dayhoff describes children playing Ring Around the Rosie while waiting in line at a back-to-school fair.

Before we go on

What did a photograph help you notice about who is here? Whose experience would you like to hear in their own words?

Keep a note if you like

A detail from the maps or photos I want to carry forward

Read a city snapshot

Think back to what Ruger numbered. Now look at what the Census Bureau measures for Peoria city.

- 110,920 estimated city residents on July 1, 2025.
- 12.8% of people age five or older spoke a language other than English at home, 2020–2024.
- 11.1% of people under 65 had a disability, 2020–2024.

U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts for Peoria city

Each figure answers a different question. The language figure leaves open which languages people use and how they use them. The disability figure covers people under 65 and leaves open what makes a particular place accessible.

The Indo-American Society of Peoria's 2025 India Fest page describes music, dance, food, and other traditions shared at the riverfront. The organizers said part of the ticket proceeds would support a local organization serving blind and visually impaired people.

India Fest in the organizers' words

Try both views. The Census figures describe Peoria city using defined groups and measures. India Fest gives us one organization's account of what it chose to share and support.

If you're still looking. Choose one percentage. Who is included in that figure?

Before we go on

Name one thing the figures helped you notice and one thing you learned from the organizers. What would you want to hear directly from a Peoria resident?

Keep a note if you like

A person, group, or contribution I might have overlooked

MOVEMENT 3 OF 5

What do we carry?

Look at the whole mural



Look before reading on. What do you notice people doing? What detail led you there?

If you're still looking. Follow the rope to the lower edge, then look for the stairs on the left.

In Clarence Shivers's 1949 Carver Center mural, two people pull a rope. The person in a white T-shirt and jeans appears younger than the woman in red. One hand and part of a forearm are visible at the lower edge. On the left, people gather at the foot of a staircase.

Now read Carver's motto, "Lifting As We Climb." Which part of the mural helps you make sense of it? What else do you notice after hearing the motto?

Pursuit of Freedom mural archive · Carver Center's centennial account

Return to the river

The Peoria Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma traces its roots to the Illinois River. In 1818, under pressure from the U.S. government, Peoria leaders signed a treaty giving up their remaining Illinois homelands for a small area in present-day Missouri. Today the Tribe teaches Peewaaliaataweenki, the Peoria language. What might someone receive when a language is taught to them? What helps them pass it on?

Tribe history · Tribe treaty timeline · Tribe language program

Before we go on. Name something one person or generation can pass to another. Point to a detail that helps you see the work it takes to carry it forward.

Keep a note if you like

Something people have kept alive and how they did it

MOVEMENT 4 OF 5

What do we need from one another?

Picture one block after it snows

Think back to something you noticed at the rope. In this next account, look for who counts on whom in an everyday place.

Listen to the short WCBU interview or read the account here. Peoria neighborhood association leader Linda Butler describes getting to know neighbors well enough to notice when someone needs help clearing a walk. Peoria Public Works asks residents and property owners to clear sidewalks and points out that children rely on them to get to and from school.

WCBU audio and article · Peoria winter sidewalk guidance

Follow the sidewalk

Imagine that one stretch on a child's route to school stays covered. Who is counting on it being clear? Who might be expected to clear it and also need a hand? What could someone who uses the route every day tell us about it?

If you're still looking. Picture the child at that spot. What would help them keep going?

Before we go on

Name someone who counts on that sidewalk, what they might need, and something they might know that the rest of us need to hear.

Keep a note if you like

A connection I noticed between someone's daily life and what others do

MOVEMENT 5 OF 5

What becomes possible when we see one another?

Read about the West Thrush Avenue lawn crew

We've talked about who might need a hand. Now look for what became possible when people noticed what their neighbors needed and what young people could offer.

Three brothers asked for help finding a way to earn money over the summer. A neighborhood project connected teens with older and disabled neighbors who needed lawn care. A city mini-grant helped buy the crew's first mower. The Community House Network later reported that the crew provided free lawn care to neighbors who couldn't afford it.

How the lawn crew started · Peoria's mini-grant project list · The year-end account

If you're still looking. Start with what the brothers asked for. What else had to come together for the crew to get going?

Before we finish

Name one connection that made something possible. Then look back at any note you kept. What do you see differently now? What photo, story, place, or local connection would you add to help someone understand this community?

Keep a note if you like

What I want to take with me about my own community

Keep your own notes. If you'd like to share something, choose what to send and who to send it to.