

# Appendix A: Regional Profile

## Table of Contents

Population & Demographic Profile	2
Age Distribution	6
Employment & Economic Conditions	10
Income & Payroll	14
Major Employment Clusters	18
Future Employment Growth	19
Commuting Characteristics	23
Equitable Growth in the MAPA Region	25
Population with a Disability	27
Population Living in Poverty	28
Zero Vehicle Households	29
Race and Ethnicity	32
Natural Environment	35
Climate	35
Air Quality	38
Soil characteristics	40
Long Range Planning and the NEPA Process	42



## Population & Demographic Profile

Population and employment in the MAPA TMA region has grown steadily since 1970, (as seen below). Continued growth is expected to steadily occur through 2050. Significant changes to the composition of the region’s population will take place that will play an important role in the transportation system and its ability to meet future demands. MAPA has relied on data sources from the US Census, the State Data Centers of Nebraska and Iowa, Woods & Poole, and MAPA’s own land use forecasts to guide discussion of population characteristics in the sections that follow.

According to the 2020 US Census (Figure 1), the MAPA TMA was home to nearly 870,000 residents. Since the last Census, the region’s population is estimated to have grown by almost 100,000 additional residents. The Omaha-Council Bluffs region is the largest metropolitan area in Nebraska and Iowa, and an important economic center in the Midwestern region of the United States. The total Census population has increased over 60% from 1970, when the population was an estimated 542,646. This population growth has not been shared equally between the counties. The population of Sarpy County has increased rapidly since 1970, averaging over 20% growth each decade, while Douglas County’s population has tracked closely with the MAPA total, ranging between 5 and 13 percent growth per decade. Pottawattamie County saw a population decline during the 1970s and 1980s, but rebounded back to consistent growth from the 1990s through the 2020 census.

Figure 1 - Historic Population Trends in the MAPA TMA

County	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020
<b>Douglas</b>	389,455	397,038	416,444	463,585	517,110	584,526
<b>Sarpy</b>	66,200	86,015	102,583	122,595	158,840	190,604
<b>Pottawattamie</b>	86,991	86,561	82,628	87,803	93,158	93,667
<b>MAPA TMA Total</b>	<b>542,646</b>	<b>569,614</b>	<b>601,655</b>	<b>673,983</b>	<b>769,108</b>	<b>868,797</b>

The population declines and slowing growth that occurred in the 1970s and 1980s was largely due to shifts in domestic migration. Figure 2 below shows the trends in net migration from 1970 to 2020. Following a half century of industrial growth driven by industries such as the stockyards and railroads, many people left the region for other areas of the country, including the “sun belt”. Since 1990, the overall trend of net migration has largely reversed. Between 2010 and 2020, more than 36,000 new people migrated to the MAPA TMA.



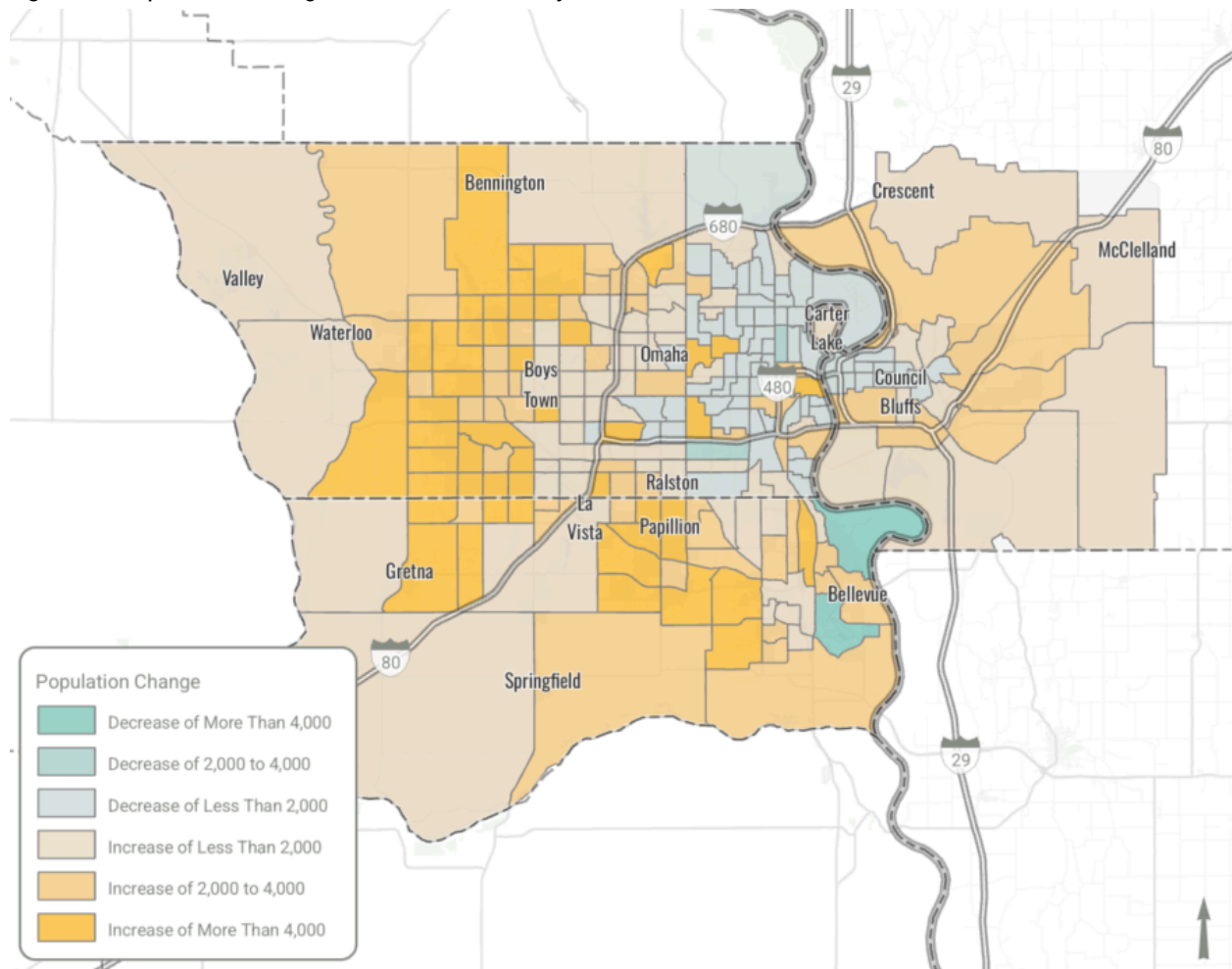
Figure 2 - Total Net Migrants by Decade, 1950 to 2020

	1970s	1980s	1990s	2000s	2010s
<b>Douglas</b>	-33,721	-14,883	6,020	8,116	22,869
<b>Sarpy</b>	7,024	2,516	3,112	18,553	15,705
<b>Pottawattamie</b>	-8,203	-9,274	-248	1,887	-1,753
<b>MAPA TMA</b>	<b>-34,900</b>	<b>-21,641</b>	<b>8,884</b>	<b>28,556</b>	<b>36,821</b>

The majority of the population growth occurred along the southern, western, and eastern areas of the TMA, while population declines took place in the central areas of the TMA between 1970 and 2020. Figure 3 (next page) illustrates change in population by Census Tract between 1970 and 2020. Note the yellow-colored tracts in the suburban portion of the metro area showing increased population and blue tracts show no growth or population decrease. On balance, many more tracts experienced population growth during this period than population decline.



Figure 3 - Population Change in the MAPA TMA by Census Tract, 1970-2020



Population change within the Omaha-Council Bluffs TMA has seen a large population increase in suburban and exurban areas, while seeing a sizable population decline and disinvestment in many urban neighborhoods over the last 50 years. Redevelopment activity has increased in many communities, notably within the City of Omaha. The 2018 Building and Development Summary, a report on building permit activity, noted that an equal number of housing units were permitted inside the urban area bound by I-680 and I-80 as there were outside that “loop”. This marked the first time in 30 years that there was parity between the urban and suburban tracts of the city in terms of housing unit development. Omaha, Council Bluffs, and Bellevue each have major corridors in which targeted redevelopment activities are occurring to reverse these trends—notably along the 1st Avenue Corridor in Council Bluffs and along Fort Crook Road in Bellevue. MAPA’s [Regional Development Report](#) provides a summary of residential and commercial permit activity in the MAPA region and provides additional analysis of these trends since 2010.



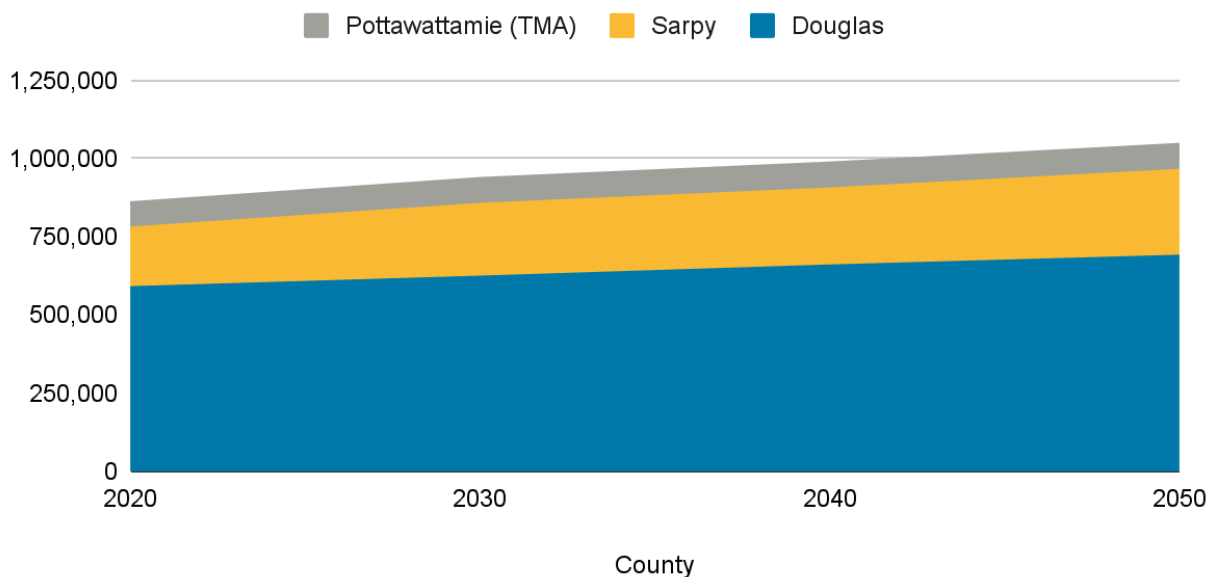
For the 2050 MTP, MAPA used data and forecasts developed by Woods and Poole, a firm specializing in long-term demographics estimates, to inform our understanding of regional growth. These results are summarized in Figure 4.

Figure 4 - Forecasted Population Growth in the MAPA Region, 2020 to 2050<sup>2</sup>

County	2020	2030	2040	2050
Douglas	585,431	619,169	654,833	686,125
Sarpy	190,604	232,732	246,268	274,512
Pottawattamie (TMA)	80,770	82,489	82,756	82,957
<b>TMA Total</b>	<b>856,805</b>	<b>934,390</b>	<b>983,857</b>	<b>1,043,594</b>

Figure 5 - Forecasted Population Growth in the MAPA Region, 2020 to 2050

## Forecasted Population Growth in the MAPA Region, 2020 to 2050



The majority of future population growth is anticipated to continue along the suburban periphery of the metropolitan area. New residential development in the region's urban core, such as Downtown/Midtown Omaha and the west end of Council Bluffs, is expected to increase over the planning horizon based on more recent trends. Many elected officials and policymakers within the area and other leaders view improving existing developed areas as a key goal for the region, as noted in the Heartland 2050 vision. These shifts in



development patterns are characterized in changes to local comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances, guiding growth to existing areas of development.

## Age Distribution

The average age of residents living in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area is increasing. The large baby-boom generation has now largely entered into retirement years, resulting in older persons constituting a greater share of the total population. People aged 65 and older constitute about 14% of the metro area’s population, according to the 2020 Census. By 2050, persons older than 65 years of age will comprise at least 16% of the region’s population. As a result, a smaller percentage of the total future population will be in the workforce, even though all age ranges are expected to increase in population by 2050.

Figure 6 - Age Distribution of the MAPA TMA, 2020 vs 2050

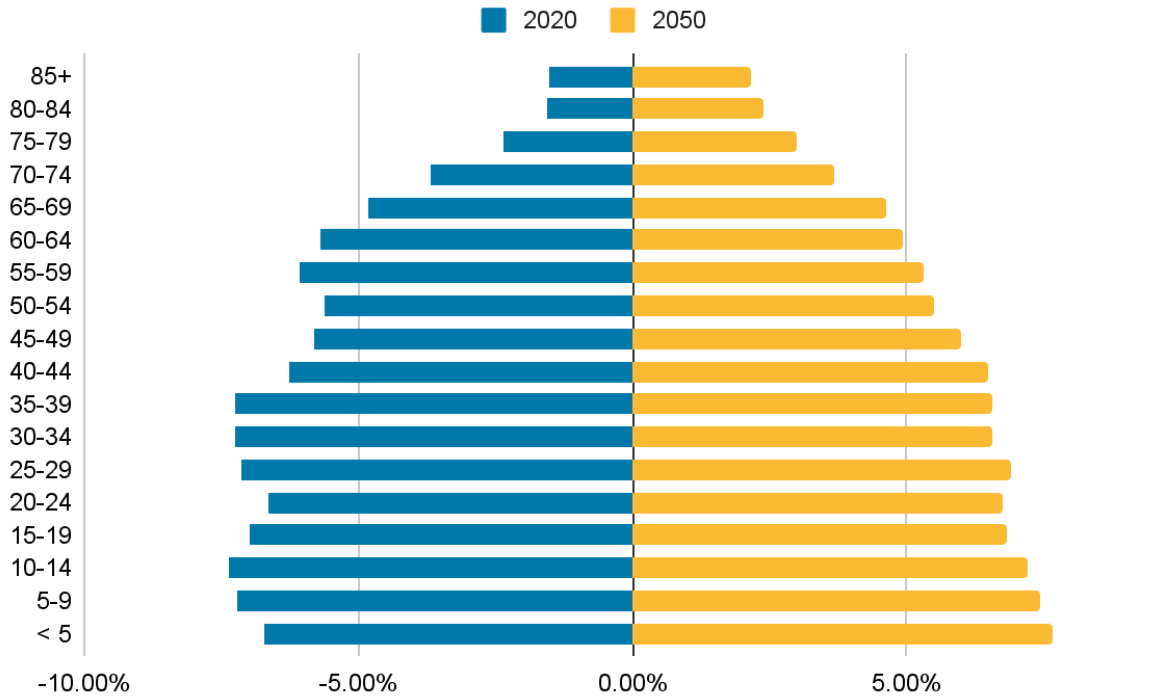
Age Group	2020	2025	2050
0 - 14	21.33%	20.68%	22.34%
15 - 64	64.77%	<b>63.94%</b>	61.83%
65+	13.90%	15.38%	15.83%

As the region ages, driving habits will shift. Older adults, lower-income, and minority residents tend to drive less—often outside of rush hour—so traffic volumes may not rise as fast as the predicted population growth. In 2020, about 14% of people in the region were over 65 years old and largely concentrated in areas outside of the urban core. This increased by about 4% over the last five years, but the growth of this group compared to the rest of the population is not expected to continue based on available data.

At present, there are limited transportation options that are readily able, safe, and reliable to serve seniors. As the population ages, many may keep working part-time or from home, but without better planning, older residents may face isolation or be forced to leave their homes, especially in rural and suburban areas where transportation options are even more limited.



Figure 7 - Population Pyramids for the MAPA TMA, 2020 to 2050



Population forecasts are allocated into different housing types as seen in Figures 9 and 10. Areas for single-family growth are primarily west and south in areas predominated by greenfield development opportunities. Multi-family housing growth is forecasted to be highest in areas of the urban core in Omaha and in and along major arterial corridors—guided by local comprehensive plans oriented around nodal development.



Figure 9 - Single Family Housing Growth, 2015-2050

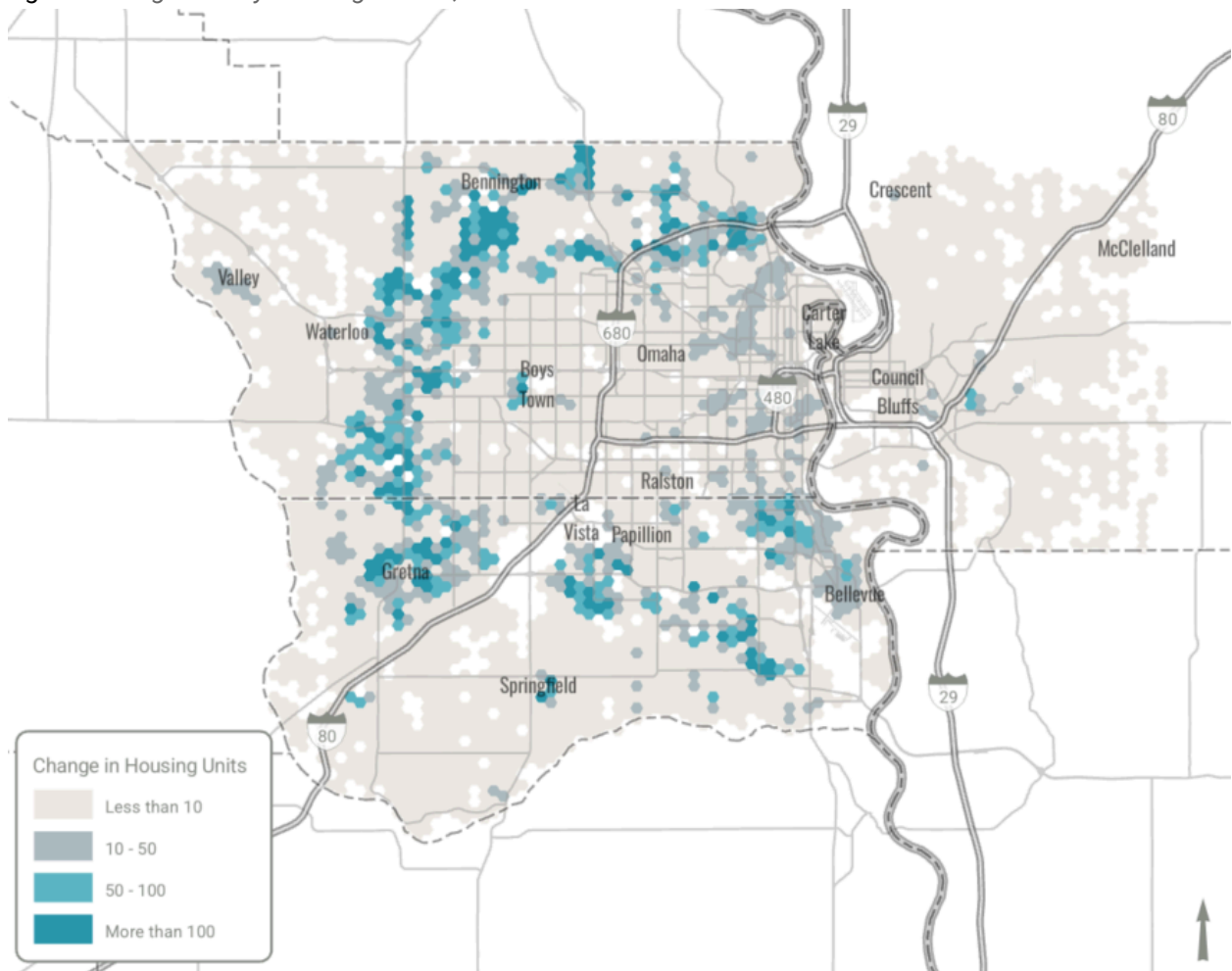
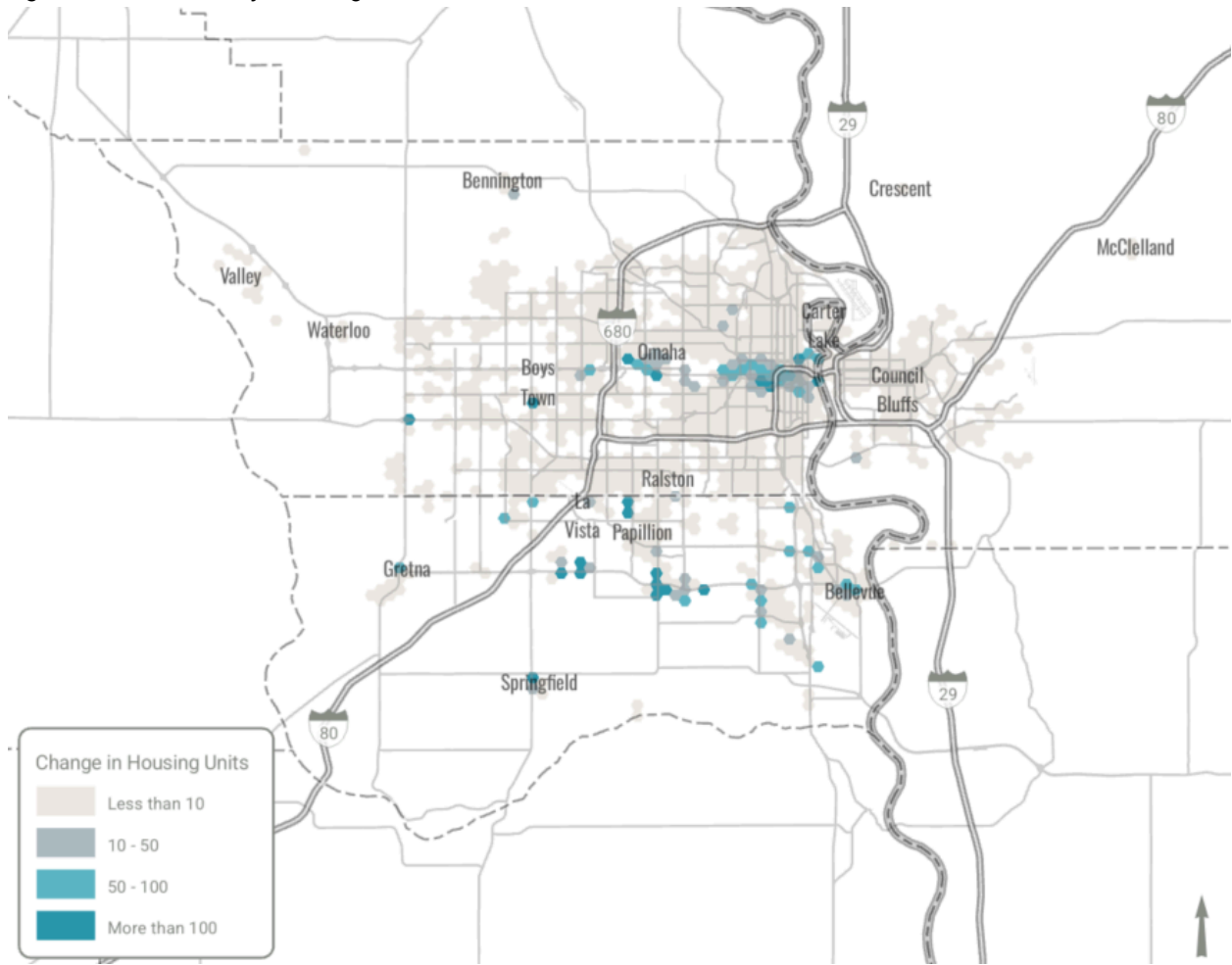


Figure 10 - Multi-family Housing Growth, 2015-2050



## Employment & Economic Conditions

The MAPA region is home to a broad array of businesses and industries. Key sectors of the economy include communications, technology, defense, insurance, finance, health care, gaming, professional trades and services, and agriculture among others. According to the 2018 American Community Survey, more than 450,000 people in the region are participating in the workforce—a number that has grown along with the region’s population.

The Omaha-Council Bluffs region has experienced a consistently low unemployment rate and a stable economy over the past decade, coming out of the economic downturn of 2008. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area decreased in 2019 to 2.9% by December, 2019. Since that time, the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the region’s economy and unemployment rates have increased significantly as communities weather the present economic downturn.

Some jobs were shed during the recession that began in 2008, but new jobs have also been created since that time. Overall, the region’s strong economic position has allowed it to weather economic turmoil relatively well and offers many signs that the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro Area will continue to demonstrate stable growth over the next 30 years.

### Major Employers in the Region

#### 7,500+ Employees

Offutt Air Force Base

CHI Health System

Omaha Public Schools

#### 5,000-7,499 Employees

Methodist Health System

Nebraska Medicine

#### 2,500-4,999 Employees

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Children's Hospital & Medical Center

First Data Corp

Union Pacific

Hy-Vee

First National Bank of Nebraska

West Corporation

Walmart

Mutual of Omaha

Creighton University

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Millard Public Schools

City of Omaha

Paypal

Valmont



Figure 11 - Workforce in the MAPA TMA, 2020

Workforce by Industry (Ages 16+)	Douglas	Sarpy	Pottawattamie	Total
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	1,842	844	1,185	3,871
Construction	19,786	6,578	3,556	29,920
Manufacturing	23,473	6,221	4,889	34,583
Wholesale trade	7,230	3,145	1,451	11,826
Retail trade	33,532	10,436	6,288	50,256
Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	15,367	5,251	3,912	24,530
Information	6,776	2,044	804	9,624
Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	30,975	8,916	3,612	43,503
Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	35,118	10,988	3,166	49,272
Educational services, and health care and social assistance	69,180	23,301	10,929	103,410



<b>Workforce by Industry (Ages 16+)</b>	<b>Douglas</b>	<b>Sarpy</b>	<b>Pottawattamie</b>	<b>Total</b>
Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	25,311	6,810	3,885	36,006
Other services, except public administration	12,457	3,633	1,776	17,866
Public administration	7,837	5,756	1,773	15,366
<b>Total Employed Population</b>	<b>288,884</b>	<b>93,923</b>	<b>47,226</b>	<b>430,033</b>

The largest sectors of labor by industry are in the educational and healthcare sectors, followed by retail, finance and professional/scientific. By 2050, a large transition away from retail trade in particular poses one of the largest economic shifts to the Omaha - Council Bluffs region, as for the rest of the country. Manufacturing currently maintains a large number of jobs within the region, which has been in decline nationally as automation of industries continues to progress.

### **Underemployment & Labor Availability**

Unemployment being at record lows has been a very positive trend for the Omaha - Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area. However, the prevalence of underemployment has been very prominent in the region, and nationally. Many people either lack the skills for higher-paying jobs, or have the skills or degree necessary but simply cannot find a job within that career path. The Prosper 2.0 initiative by the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce has made underemployment a key priority in business development within the metropolitan area. Prioritized initiatives to alleviate the existence of underemployment in the region include skill training, continuing education, and recruitment of new businesses to the region.

However, demand for persons employed in highly-skilled positions has increased in order to retain these employees in their current roles. In a timeframe of 2014-17, private employers in the Omaha area were reported to have increased wages by upward of 14%,



which was a higher rate than cities including Des Moines, Nashville and Austin. Many employers cited that talent retention was this number one factor. Filling these roles as aging boomer generation workers retire will be crucial in retaining the economic vitality of the region.

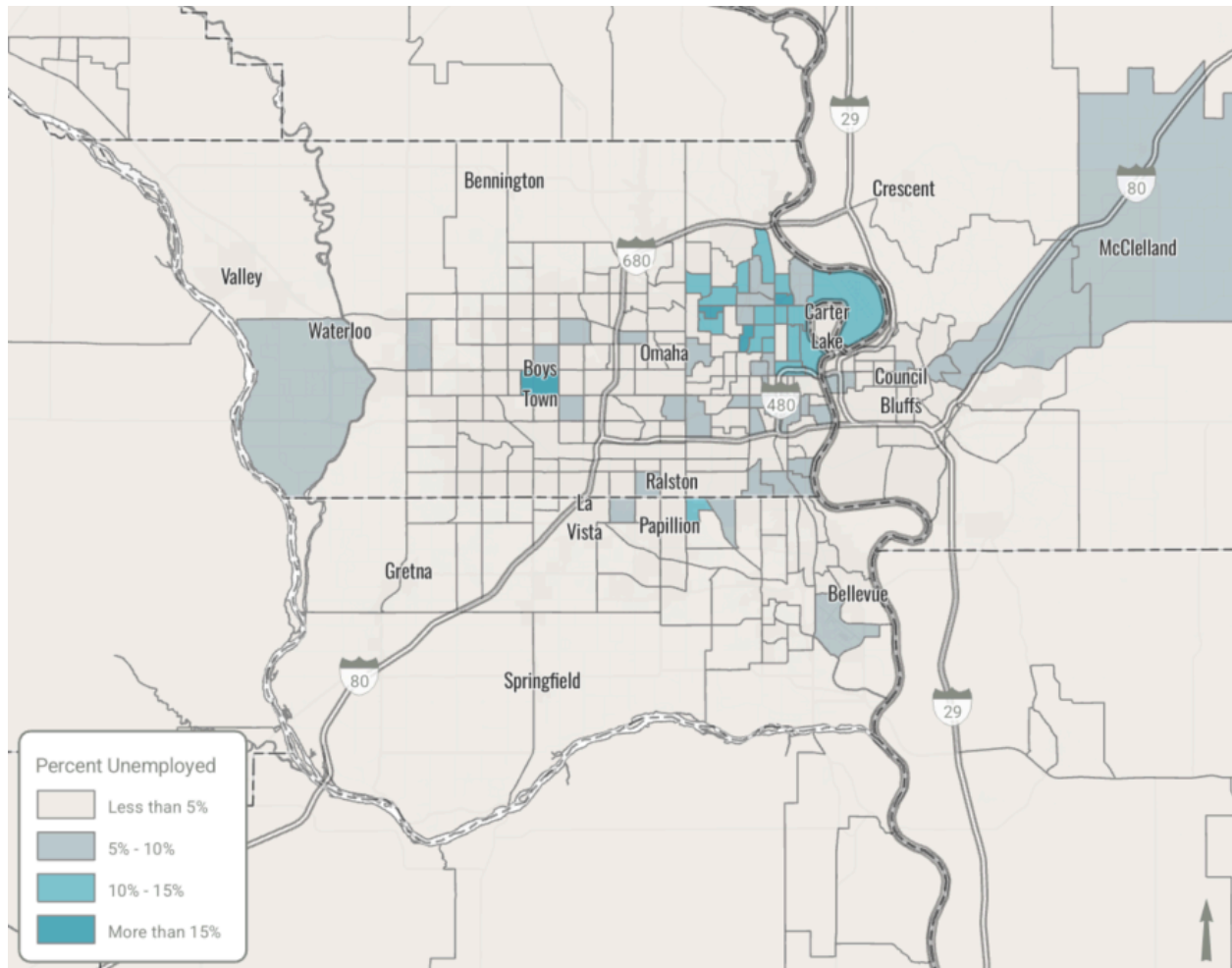
The COVID-19 pandemic has increased unemployment to record levels as shut-downs and social distancing have impacted the economy. It is currently unclear how long-lasting the effects of the recession will be on the economy of the Omaha-Council Bluffs region.

Many people experiencing unemployment struggle to pay for crucial needs like rent and utilities, causing ripple effects through the economy. While the region has weathered past economic crises better than the control as a whole, the level of uncertainty around COVID-19 makes it impossible to cumulative impacts of the present crisis.

Challenges to finding employment are very common in certain areas of the region even during periods of economic growth, most notably North Omaha, South Omaha and in an area just west of Downtown Council Bluffs. While the regional unemployment is normally quite stable and low, particular Census tracts have rates of unemployment over 20%. Figure 12 illustrates the distribution of unemployment in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region in December of 2019. Numerous transportation hurdles occur for persons living in these neighborhoods, many of which do not have regular access to a vehicle, or cannot find work within the existing transit service area which can provide them transportation to-and-from work. These barriers to transportation have been identified in numerous planning efforts, including MAPA's Fair Housing Equity Assessment, the Equitable Growth Profile, and the regional Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) efforts between the Cities of Omaha, Council Bluffs and Bellevue.



Figure 12 - Distribution of Unemployment in Omaha-Council Bluffs region, ACS 2023 5-Year Estimate



## Income & Payroll

Omaha’s regional economy is relatively strong and resilient: unemployment is low and job growth is steady (though slower than it was before the recession). Although the region is experiencing rising inequality, when it comes to other measures of economic health –such as a shrinking middle class and a growing number of low-paying jobs–most of these issues are less severe in the region than they are in other metros or in the nation as a whole. This overall positive economic outlook, however, masks growing inequalities for the region’s communities of color and less-educated residents, and these inequities put the region’s economic future at risk.

Of the estimated 318,000 households in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region, 17% of households make 25,000 of income or less and are considered to be experiencing poverty.



Another 27,000 make between \$25,000-\$34,999. Figure 13 shows the distribution of household income. The rising inequality in our region and its racial gaps in income, wages, education, and poverty are not only bad for communities of color but also hinder the whole region's economic growth and prosperity. According to our analysis, if there were no racial disparities in income, the region's GDP would have been \$4.8 billion higher in 2015. Unless racial gaps are closed, the cost will grow as the Omaha-Council Bluffs region becomes more diverse.

Figure 13 - *Distribution of Household Income in MAPA TMA*

Household Income	Douglas	Sarpy	Pottawattamie	MAPA TMA
Less than \$10,000	14,673	1,780	2,127	18,580
\$10,000 to \$14,999	9,813	1,580	2,020	13,413
\$15,000 to \$19,999	10,209	1,587	1,725	13,521
\$20,000 to \$24,999	11,268	2,090	1,908	15,266
\$25,000 to \$29,999	10,262	2,280	1,929	14,471
\$30,000 to \$34,999	10,464	3,135	2,257	15,856
\$35,000 to \$39,999	9,633	2,616	1,892	14,141
\$40,000 to \$44,999	9,707	2,779	2,159	14,645
\$45,000 to \$49,999	9,376	2,682	1,561	13,619
\$50,000 to \$59,999	17,018	5,293	2,943	25,254
\$60,000 to \$74,999	20,944	7,201	4,438	32,583
\$75,000 to \$99,999	25,903	10,138	5,295	41,336



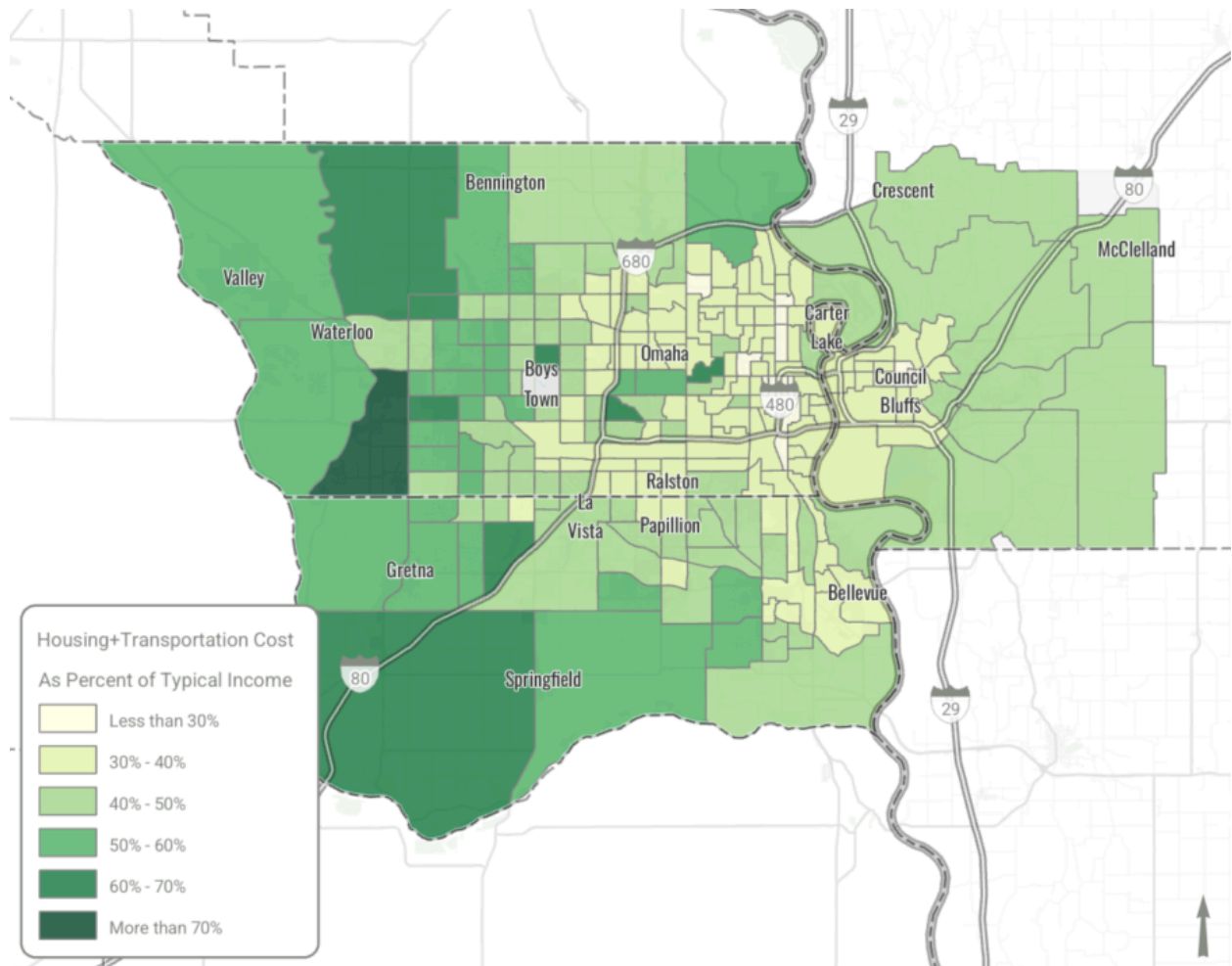
Household Income	Douglas	Sarpy	Pottawattamie	MAPA TMA
\$100,000 to \$124,999	18,682	7,402	2,604	28,688
\$125,000 to \$149,999	10,373	4,675	1,529	16,577
\$150,000 to \$199,999	10,154	4,253	1,240	15,647
\$200,000 or more	10,062	2,492	1,056	13,610
<b>Total</b>	<b>208,541</b>	<b>61,983</b>	<b>36,683</b>	<b>307,207</b>

**Cost of Living in the MAPA Region**

Earnings and personal income are closely tied to the ability of people to pay for essential needs such as housing and transportation. The Midwest region of the United States is often known for its affordable cost of living. While this generally remains true in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area, some areas remain unaffordable for persons to live, especially if immobility requires them to live near where they work. As the urban area of Omaha and Council Bluffs redevelop, concerns of gentrification and persons being forced to relocate due to housing costs becomes a major concern. Many efforts, including the Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing (AFFH) work in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region, have sought to continue increasing the availability of affordable housing throughout the region.



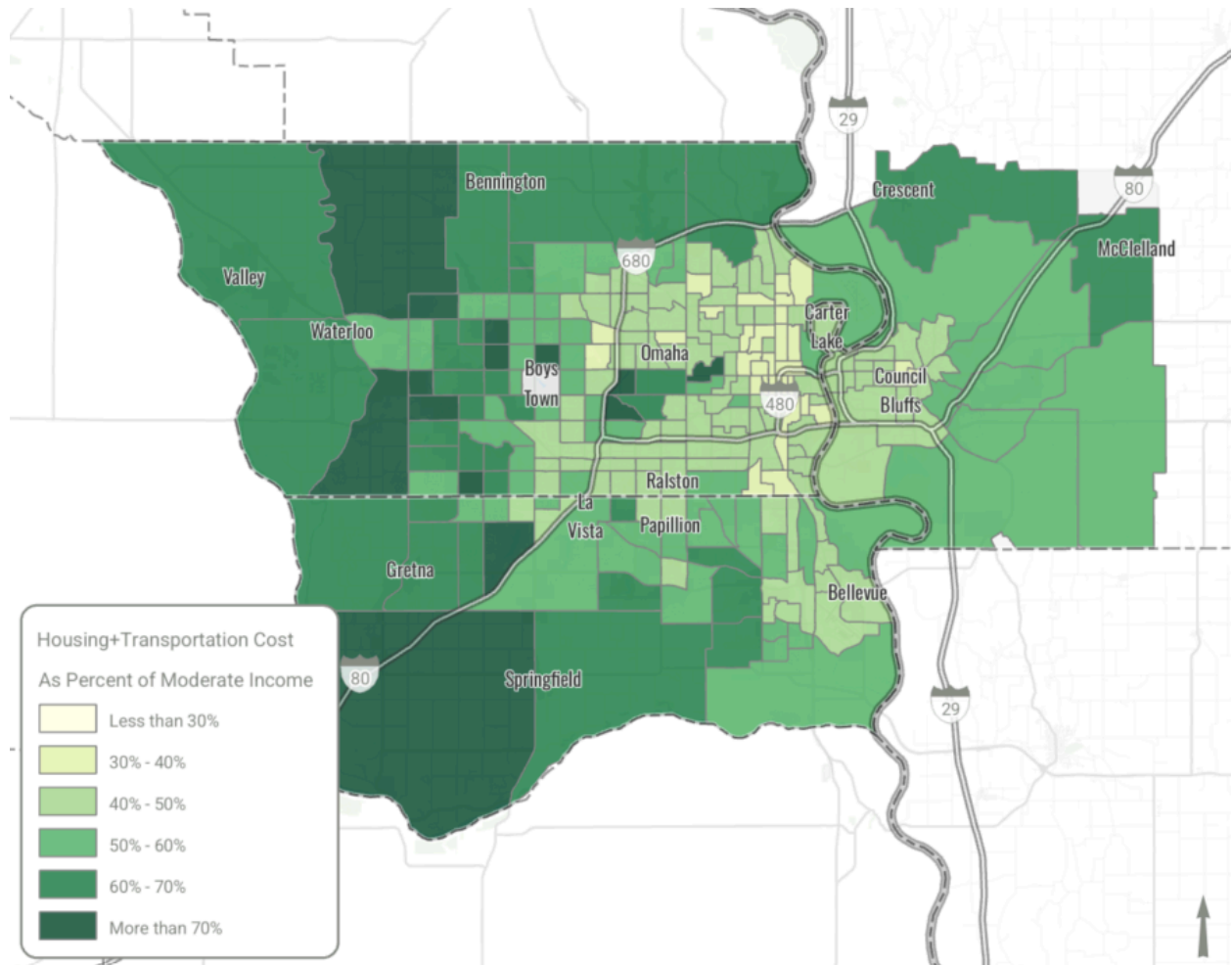
Figure 14 - Housing and Transportation Costs as a Share of a Typical Income



Figures 14 and 15 show how housing and transportation costs affect households across the region. For many low- to moderate-income families, these costs take up more than half their income. Figure 14 highlights how limited affordable housing in fast-growing areas keeps moderate-income families out. While urban areas can be costly, rural and exurban residents often spend an even larger share of their income on housing and transportation compared to those living closer to jobs.



Figure 15 - Housing and Transportation Costs as a Share of a Moderate Income



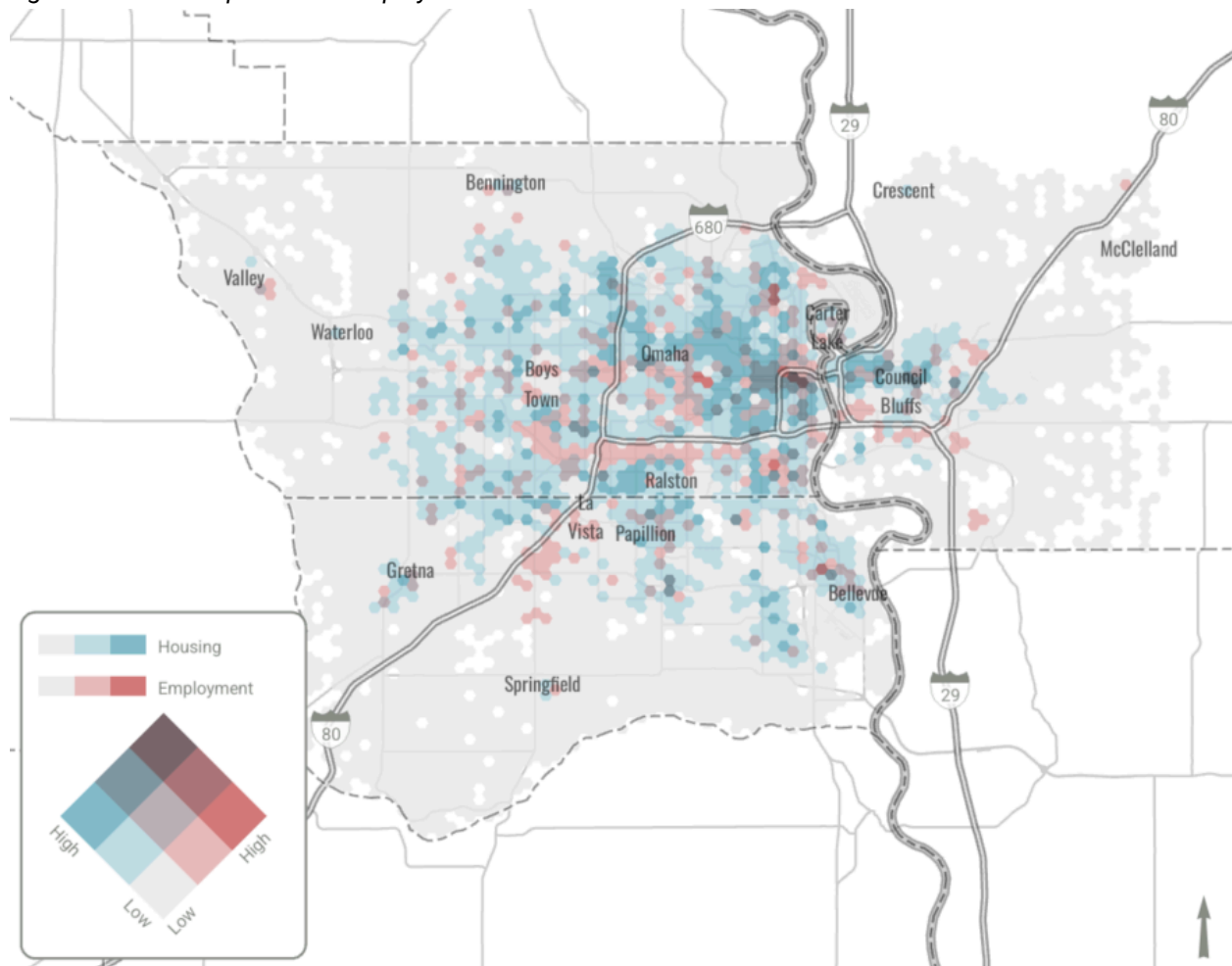
### Major Employment Clusters

The Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area consists of many different clustered areas of employment. Like much of the region's housing growth, jobs in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region have become much more decentralized over the last 50 years. This pattern is one in which jobs and employment options are moving from an urban core to suburban locations. Downtown and Central Omaha remain the highest concentration of employment in the region, while other corridors (notably the I-680) corridor have a similar level of total employment but at a much lower density. Significant employment centers include the Old Mill and Miracle Hills Business Parks, which are located to the north and south of West Dodge Road between 120th Street and I-680 in Omaha. Established areas such as the area north of L Street in Omaha, North Omaha and corridors along I-80 in Council Bluffs have remained important industrial clusters. Many new industries and



businesses have located in La Vista near I-80 and West Giles Road. Figure 16 shows the distribution of population and employment throughout the region.

Figure 16 - Total Population & Employment in the MAPA TMA.



## Future Employment Growth

The total number of jobs in the MAPA region is expected to grow to over 603,000 by 2050. This represents an increase of about 40% from 2020, which is nearly double the rate of total anticipated population growth. The majority of these job increases will likely be in Douglas County, although Sarpy County will likely gain an increasing share as it continues to grow over the next 25 years. The total employment in Sarpy County is forecasted to grow by 38%, from over 93,923 jobs in 2020 to close to 151,031 in 2050. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, "Greater Omaha" region experienced 3.1% job growth annually, while unemployment remained steady at 2.9%.



These forecasts are derived from a methodology that begins with the total future population by age cohort. Historical trends and anticipated factors are then applied to forecast future labor participation rates for each employment type by age cohort, which results in the employment forecasts. Furthermore, during the development of the Heartland 2050 Vision, local counties and municipalities participated in community mapping meetings to determine the predicted land use and economic growth. Local comprehensive plans, community expertise, and data from the US Census were incorporated into Envision Tomorrow software to help determine the future land use and employment growth projections used to develop the original Heartland 2050 Vision. In 2018, MAPA staff updated the base year of these projections to 2015 to support the ongoing development of its travel demand model. Input was solicited from community leaders to refine the Heartland 2050 Vision scenario and two additional scenarios including a lower-density "sprawl" scenario and a more focused "transit-oriented development" scenario to support the transportation planning process.

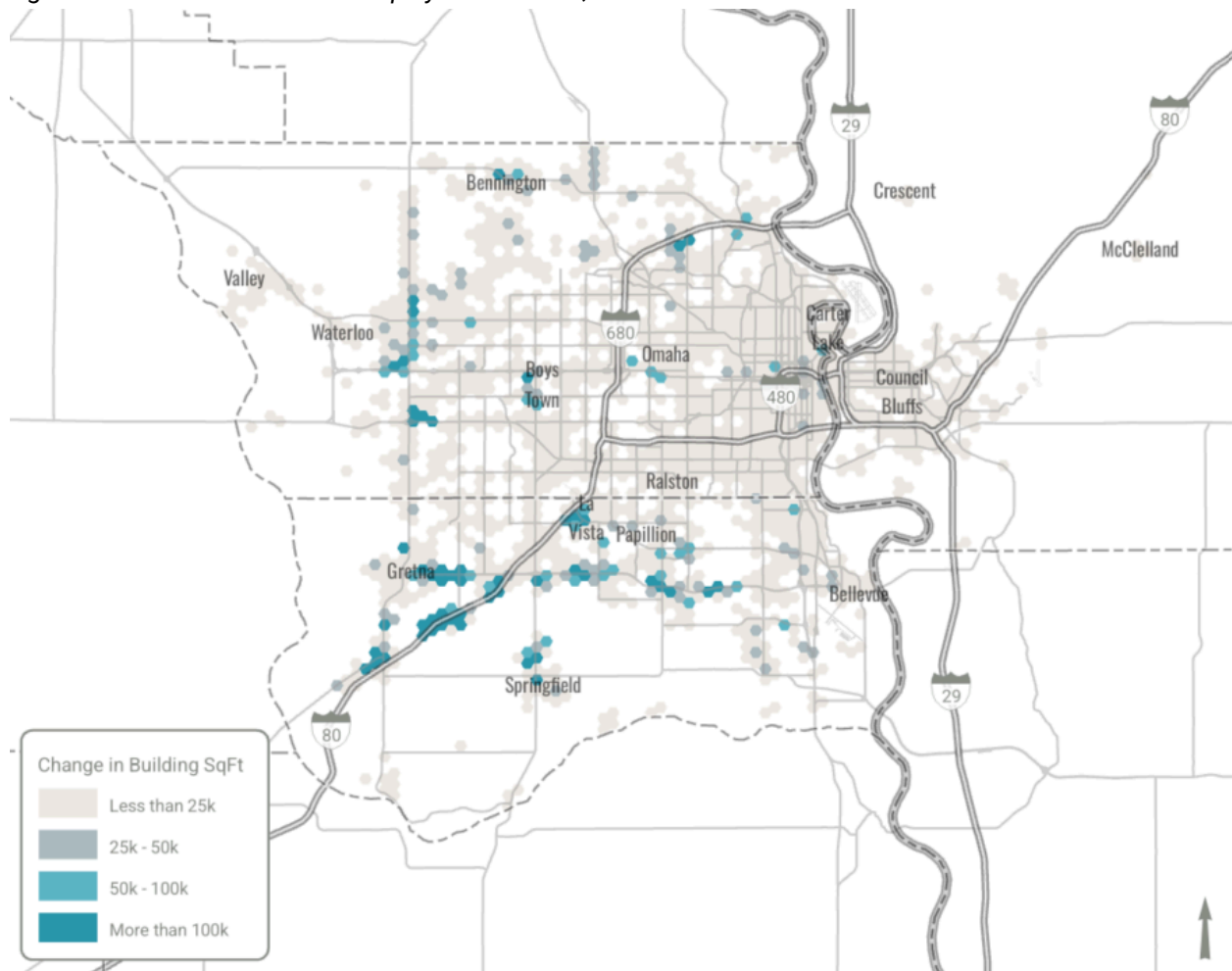
The maps that follow illustrate the distribution of various employment categories of the Heartland 2050 Vision scenario that serves as the socioeconomic data utilized in MAPA's Travel Demand Model. These maps are also instructive of how current land use plans will distribute future employment based on existing zoning requirements and anticipated patterns of development.

### **Commercial Employment Growth**

Anticipated future commercial employment growth is identified in Figure 17 , this anticipated growth is derived from local input and coordination with communities on future growth patterns and where they anticipate this growth to happen. Growth is likely to be well distributed, with clusters of future development in North Omaha, West Maple Road, West Dodge Road, and West Center Road corridors in Douglas County. Heavy growth in Sarpy County is anticipated near the current and proposed I-80 interchanges, Highway 370, 144th Street (N-50), as well as significant new development in the Cities of Bellevue, La Vista, and Papillion. Continued commercial growth is anticipated along the I-80 and Veteran's Memorial Highway in Council Bluffs as well.



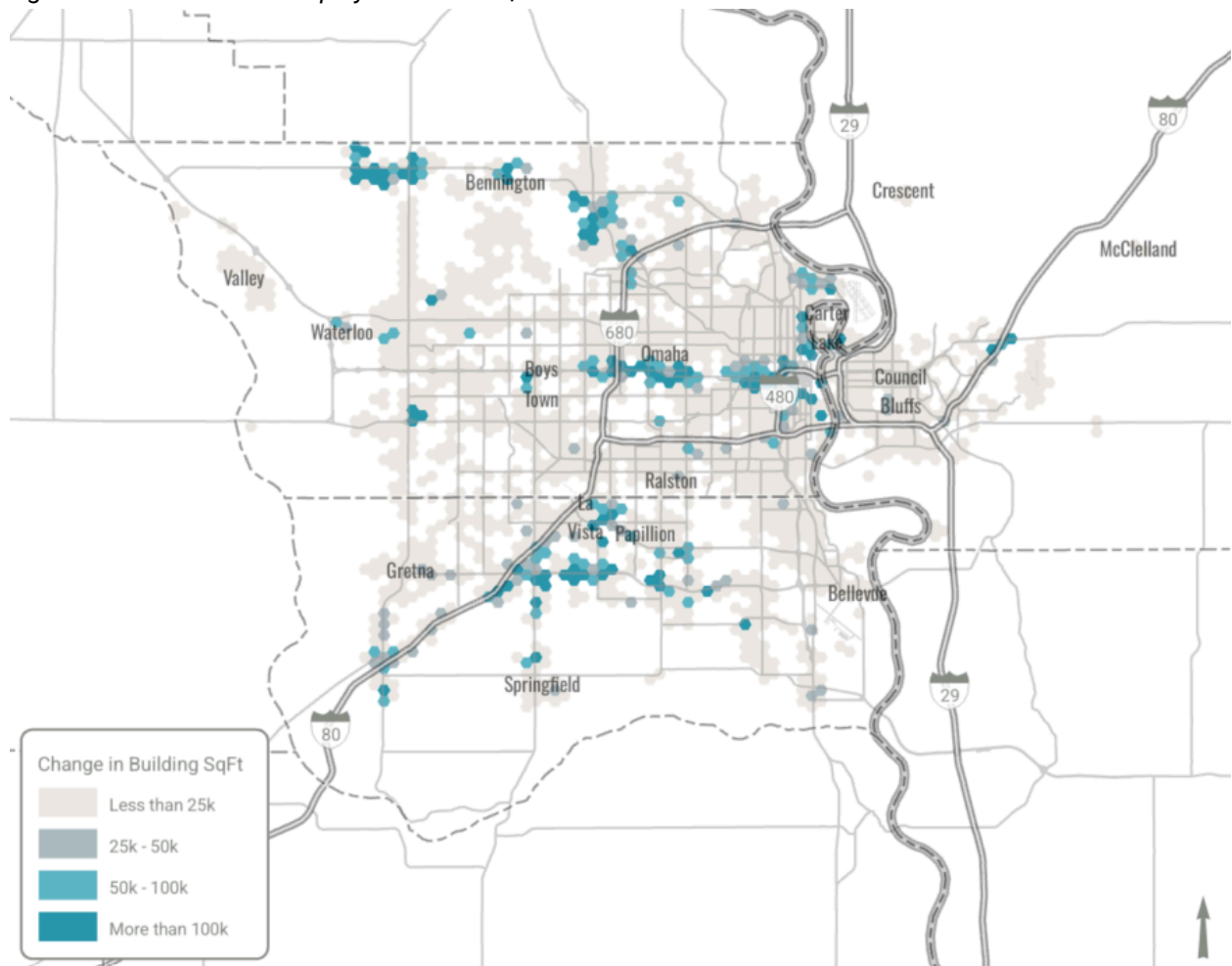
Figure 17 - Future Commercial Employment Growth, 2015 to 2050



Growth in office employment is forecasted adjacent to primary transportation arterials (see Figure 18) based on local comprehensive plans. These include the West Dodge Road and West Maple Road corridors, Highway 6/31 in Douglas County, along 72nd Street in far north Omaha, and near the I-80 interchanges in Sarpy County. Smaller areas of office development are also expected in Bellevue, Papillion, Council Bluffs, and developed portions of Omaha. While increases in office employment are anticipated in areas of new growth, redevelopment activities in North and South Omaha and Bellevue are anticipated to increase office growth as well.



Figure 18 - Future Office Employment Growth, 2015 to 2050



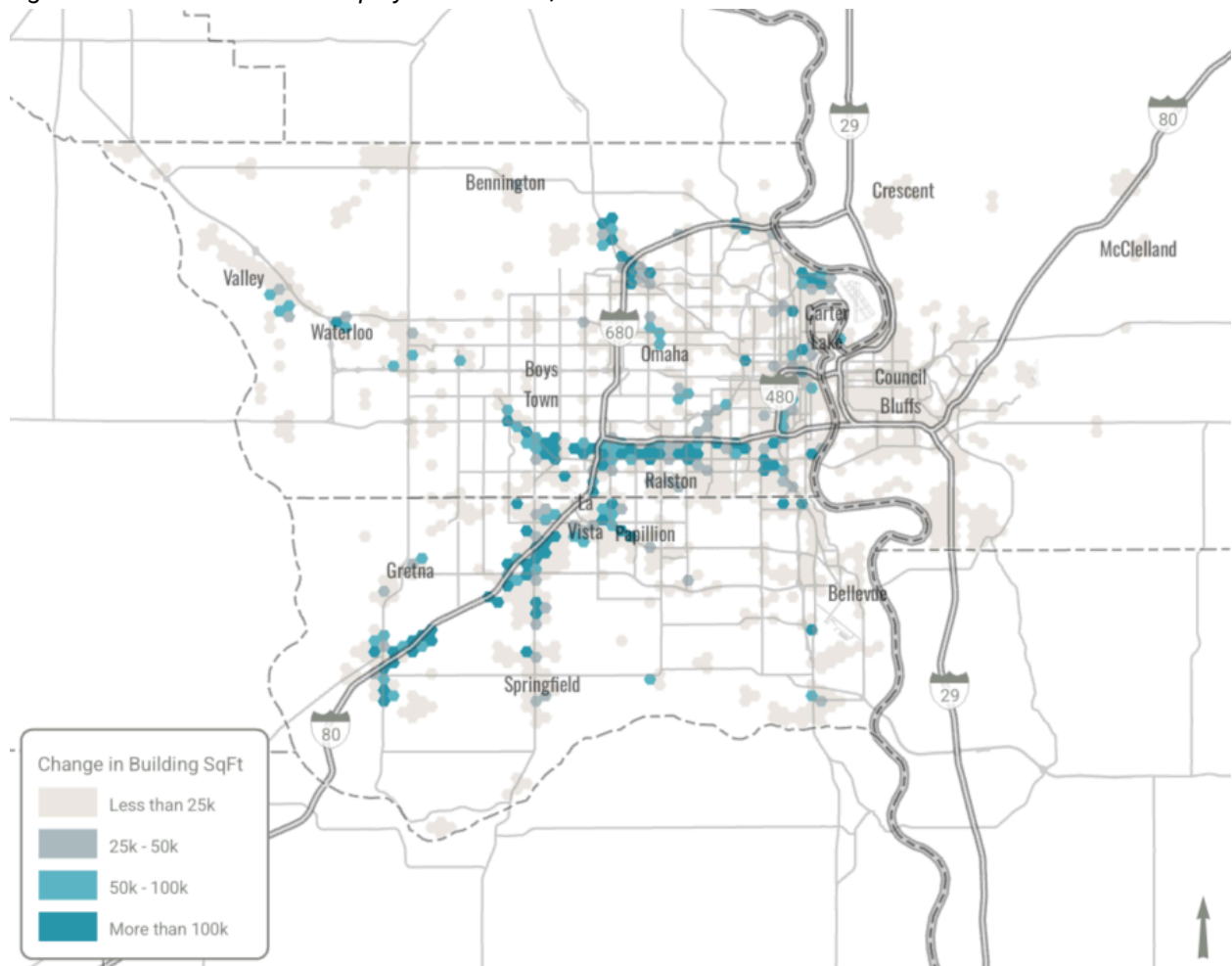
### Future Industrial Growth

Industrial growth within the region is located in far more specific locations than commercial and office growth, based on the unique set of needs industrial sites need to be economically viable. Industrial centers are often located in places where access to trucking routes and rail corridors is optimal.

Similar to other growth patterns, large amounts of growth will be located south and west within the region, most notably in Sarpy County in the vicinity of Springfield and Gretna (along Highways 31, 50 and 370) where greenfield development sites are located. Other potential sites include Council Bluffs along Interstate 29, along Highway 133 between Omaha and Bennington, and in Bellevue near and adjacent to the new Highway 34 bridge.



Figure 19 - Future Industrial Employment Growth, 2015 to 2050

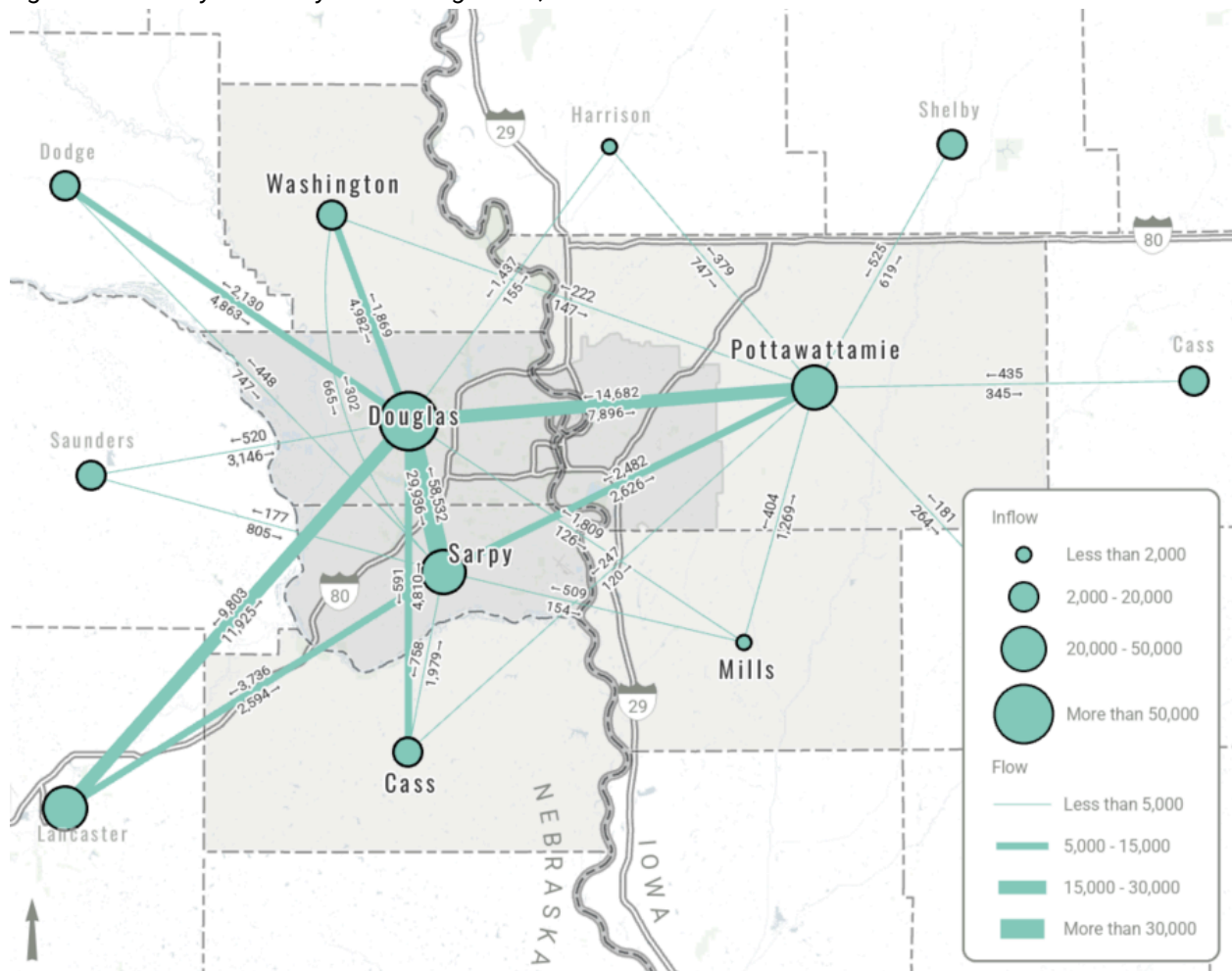


### Commuting Characteristics

The urbanized area of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area represents the largest regional draw for jobs. Douglas County, in particular, represents over 75% of the region's GDP and has a significant draw for employees from across the larger region. Figure 20 illustrates the county-to-county commuter flows for the MAPA TMA. Douglas County represents the largest share of jobs in the region and has the largest in-flows of commuters on a daily basis. These flows demonstrate the potential not only for a focus on employment accessibility, but also opportunities for strategies such as intercity buses and vanpool programs at the regional level.



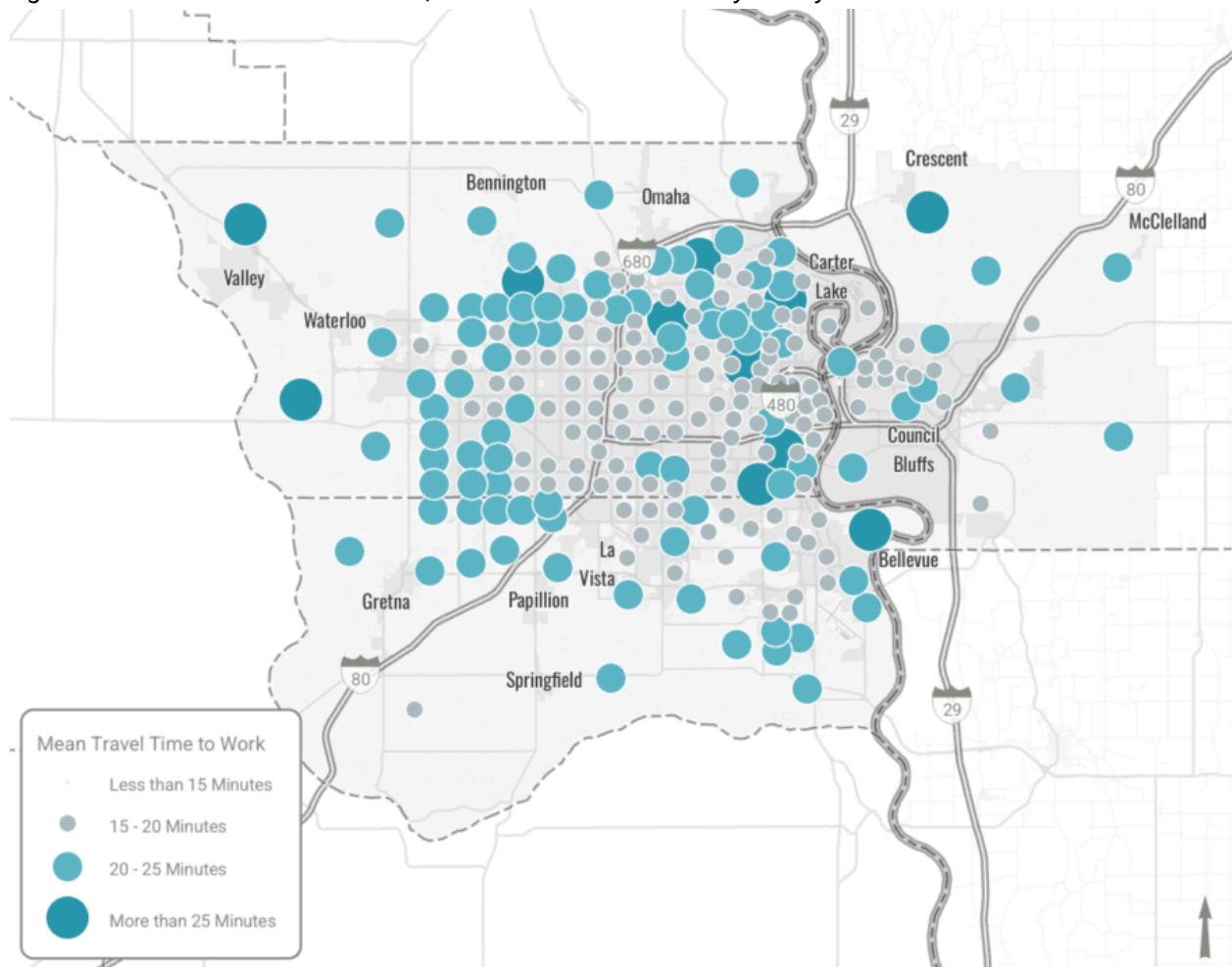
Figure 20 - County-to-County Commuting Flows, Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro



Likewise, the Census Bureau collects journey-to-work data, including average travel times for work. Overall, the average travel time for commuters in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region is 20.3 minutes—a figure well below the national average. As the region has grown outward, travel times to major clusters of employment have increased. Additionally, pockets of the urban core (North Omaha and Bellevue) experience longer than average travel time due to westward employment growth, high concentrations of zero vehicle households and reliance on a limited transit network for additional accessibility. Figure 21 illustrates the overall travel times for workers in the MAPA TMA.



Figure 21 - Mean Travel Time to Work, 2018 American Community Survey



## Equitable Growth in the MAPA Region

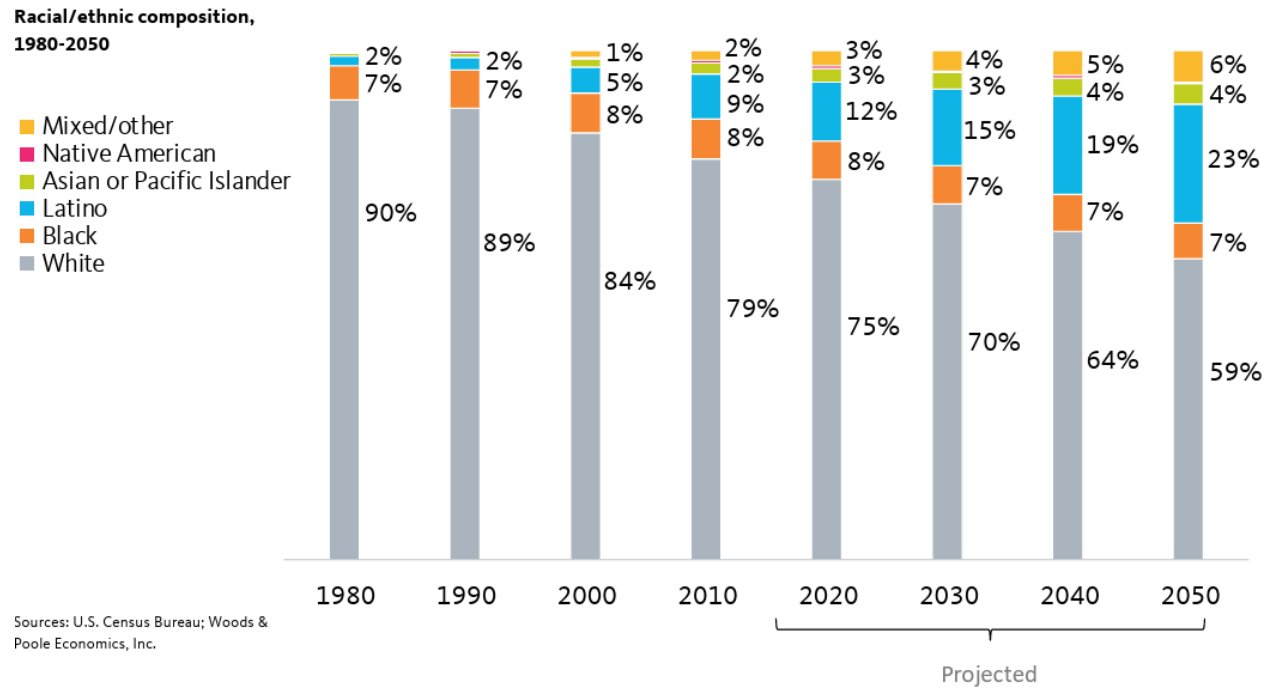
In 1980, 90% of the 650,000 residents in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area were White, and the remaining 10% were predominantly Black. By 2010, the share of the population that was people of color had more than doubled, rising to 21% of the region's 865,000 residents, and a more diverse mix. In the growing region, nearly all racial/ethnic groups are growing in absolute numbers, including the White population, but it is communities of color – particularly Latinos but also Asians, people of Mixed/other backgrounds, and Blacks – who are driving the region's population growth and change. Communities of color contributed 59% of net growth between 2000 and 2015 and accounted for most new residents in five of the region's eight counties. Between 2000 and 2010, the Latino share of the population increased from 5% to 9%.

Immigrants are also contributing to growth, with 23% of the growth in the region between



2000 and 2015 coming from immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom are immigrants of color. This demographic shift is projected to continue, and, by 2050, 41% of the region's residents will be people of color. Nearly one in four of the region's residents will be Latino and the Black population will remain at about 7% of the total. While the Asian or Pacific Islander and Mixed/other populations will also grow, the White population share will decline.

Figure 22 - Racial and Ethnic Composition of the MAPA Region, 1980 to 2050

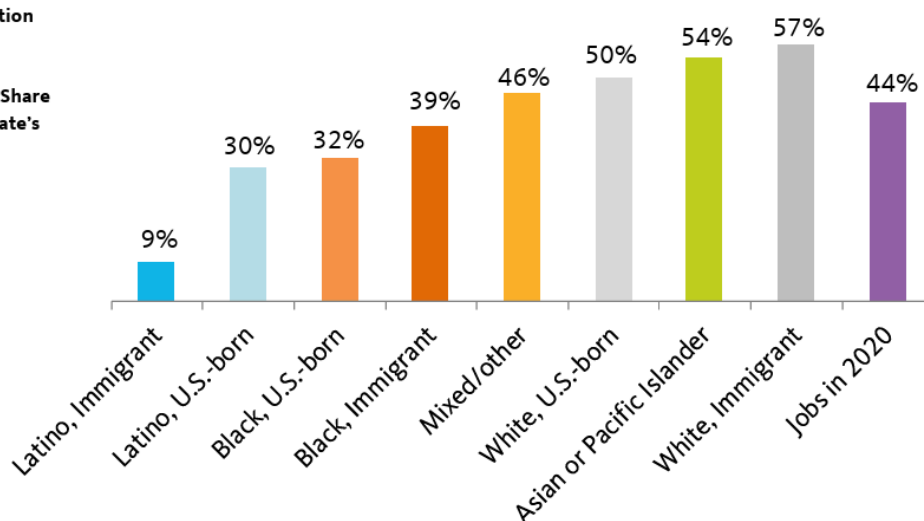


According to the Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce, an estimated 44% of jobs in the area will require an associate's degree or higher in 2020. Today, only 32% of the region's U.S.-born Black workers and 30% of its U.S.-born Latino workers possess that level of education. This figure is even lower for Latino immigrants, at 9 percent.



Figure 23 - Working Age Population with Associate's Degree or Higher, by Race & Ethnicity

Share of Working-Age Population with an Associate's Degree or Higher by Race/Ethnicity and Nativity, 2015, and Projected Share of Jobs that Require an Associate's Degree or Higher, 2020



Sources: Georgetown Center for Education and the Workforce; IPUMS. Universe for education levels of workers includes all persons ages 25 through 64. Note: Data for 2015 by race/ethnicity/nativity represents a 2011 through 2015 average and is at the regional level; data on jobs in 2020 represents a regional job-weighted average of state-level projections for Nebraska and Iowa.

While unemployment in the region was low and falling 2.9% in 2019, Black workers continue to face recession-level unemployment rates (9.4%), and unemployment remains very high for White workers without a high school diploma (12%). The region's Black workers are more likely to be unemployed than their White and Latino counterparts at every level of education except for those with a bachelor's degree or higher (Latino residents had the highest unemployment rate at this level of education at 6%). As was discussed previously, the COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically increased unemployment in the region and deepened existing racial inequities.

For the typical worker in the Omaha-Council Bluffs region wages have been stagnant (at \$19.90/hour) since 2000. Wage growth was stagnant for White workers (median wage of \$20.50/hour), and just barely increased for Black workers (from \$16.30 to \$16.70/hour), while wages decreased for Latino workers (from \$15.00 to \$13.80/hour), and increased substantially for Asian or Pacific Islander workers (from \$18.50 to \$21.20/hour). Similar to unemployment, wages tend to increase with education, but racial gaps remain even among workers with similar education levels. People of color with a bachelor's degree or higher earn \$3 less per hour than their White counterparts, which adds up to about \$6,000 less per year. Within the region, racial economic gaps remain even after controlling for education reveals the persistence of racial barriers to economic opportunity – including overt discrimination as well as more subtle forms of exclusion that are embedded into institutions and systems.

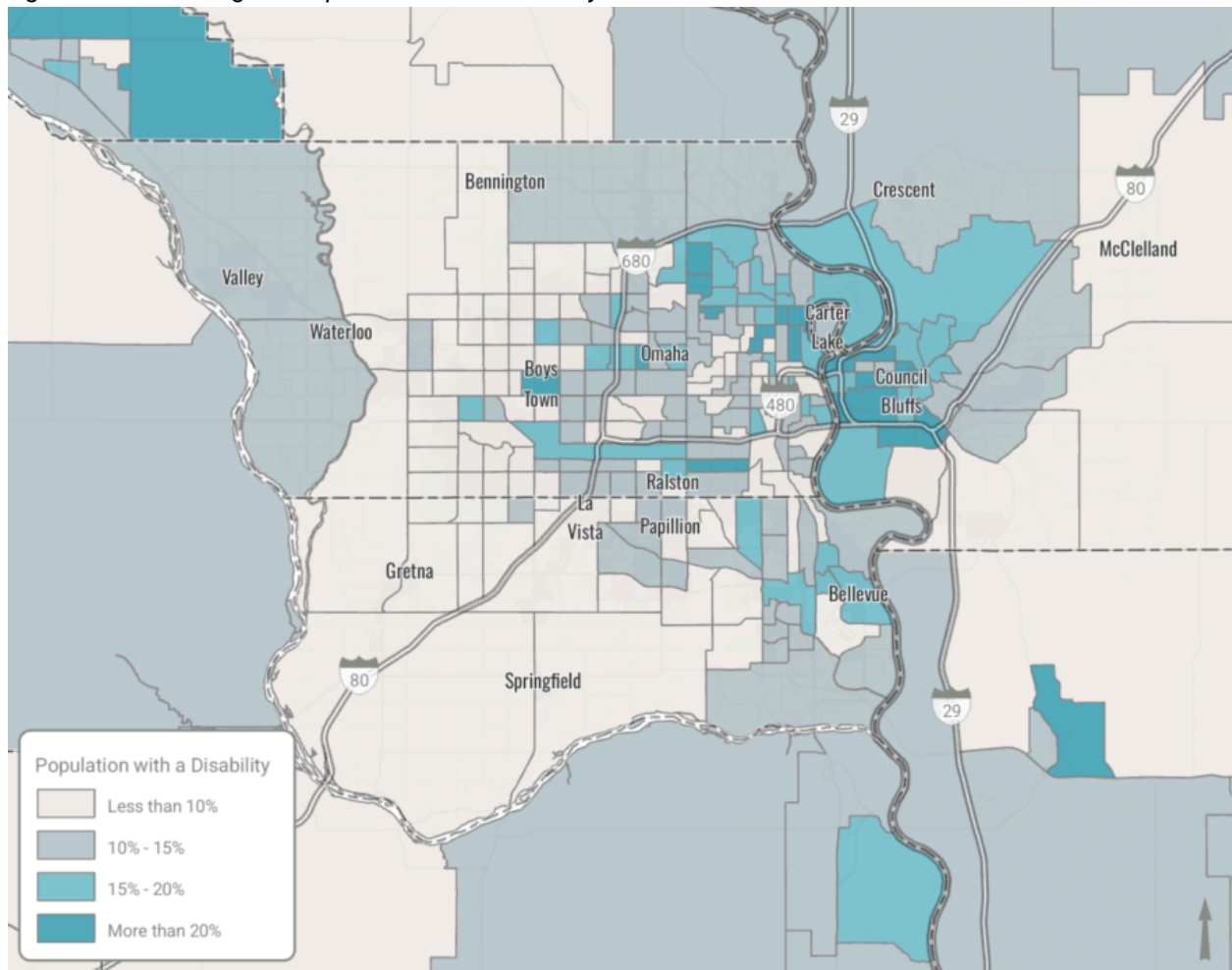
## Population with a Disability

Figure 24 provides a summary of the disabled population in the Omaha-Council Bluffs



Metro Area. Based on American Community Survey data, there are approximately 86,000 people who are considered disabled, most of these people are concentrated in the North Eastern section of Omaha city and throughout the City of Council Bluffs– particularly near downtown Council Bluffs. Northeastern Omaha is well served by Metro Transit’s fixed route service presently and is within the ¾ mile buffer of fixed route service in which Metro’s MOBY demand response paratransit service operates. Council Bluffs Special Transportation Services provides demand response trips throughout the entire City of Council Bluffs. Additionally, MAPA’s Coordinated Transit Committee continues to work with local stakeholders and non-profit transit providers to expand the mobility of elderly and disabled populations with paratransit services.

Figure 24 - Percentage of Population with a Disability



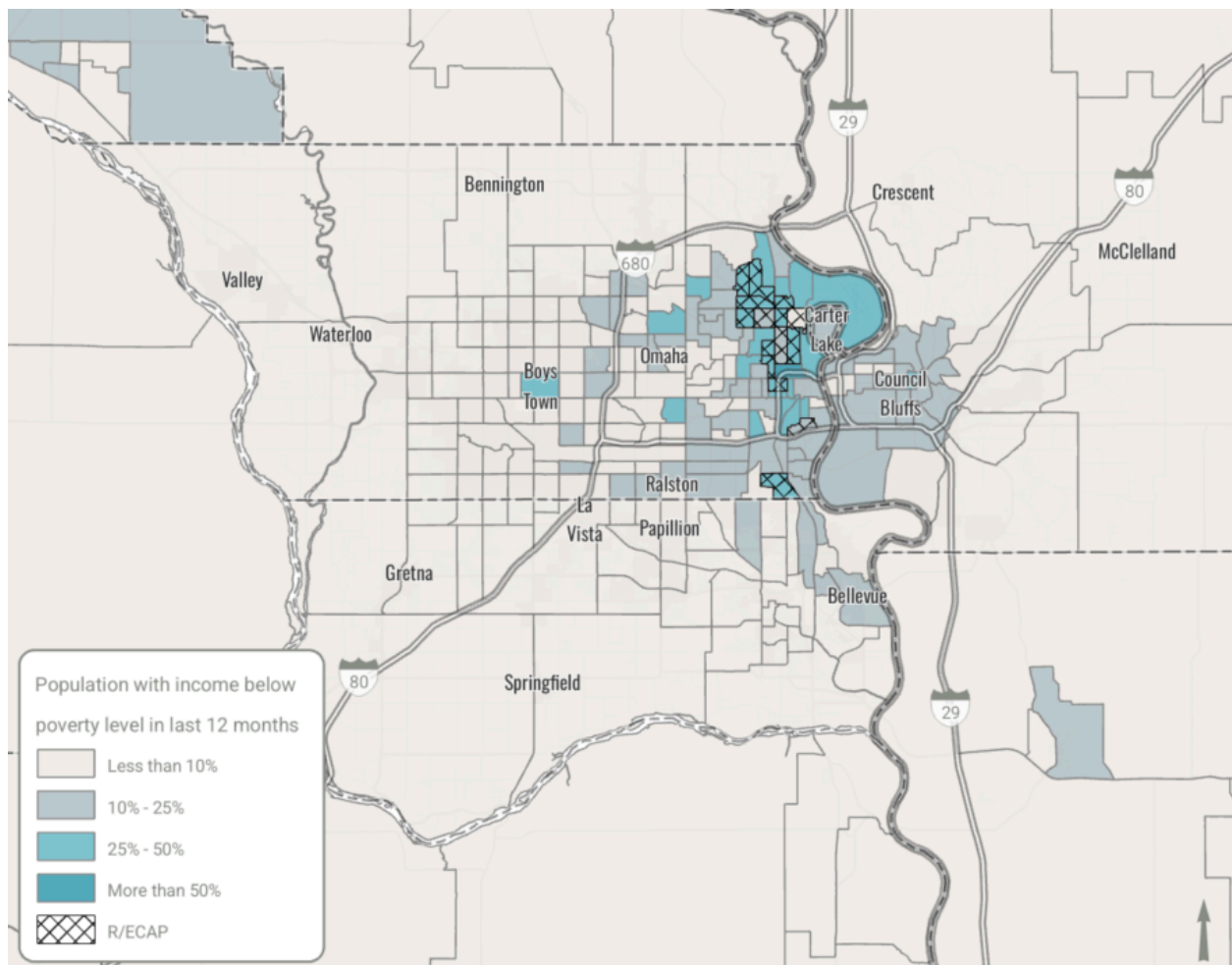
### Population Living in Poverty

There are approximately 93,000 people living at or below the poverty line, representing



approximately 10.3% of the population. The highest concentrations of these low-income individuals are found within Northeastern Omaha. Figure 25 illustrates HUD’s Poverty index, which captures the depth and intensity of poverty in a given neighborhood. The index uses both family poverty rates and public assistance receipt, in the form of cash-welfare, such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). For populations in poverty in Omaha, access to job centers is a critical need. The area of Northeast Omaha that has the highest concentration of poverty is very well-served by transit at present. Additionally, high poverty areas of south Omaha and Council Bluffs have low to moderate levels of transit accessibility, limiting the access populations in those areas have to jobs and educational opportunities.

Figure 25 - Population Living in Poverty



### Zero Vehicle Households

Approximately, 22,000 households in the MAPA region do not have access to a personal



automobile, representing roughly 6.3% of households in the region. Much like the poverty statistics discussed previously, the highest concentrations of zero vehicle households are found in eastern Omaha within the city's urban core. The absence of an automobile in a household can create serious limitations on the mobility of residents. While the areas of the MAPA region with the highest concentrations of zero-vehicle households have the highest levels of transit service, the existing transit service only provides access to a small proportion of the total jobs in the region—with less than 30% of the region's jobs accessible via transit from any location in the metro. Figure 26 illustrates the distribution of zero-vehicle households throughout the MAPA region, and Figure 27 illustrates the accessibility of jobs via a 45 minute transit trip in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area.



Figure 26 - Zero Vehicle Households in the MAPA TMA, 2018

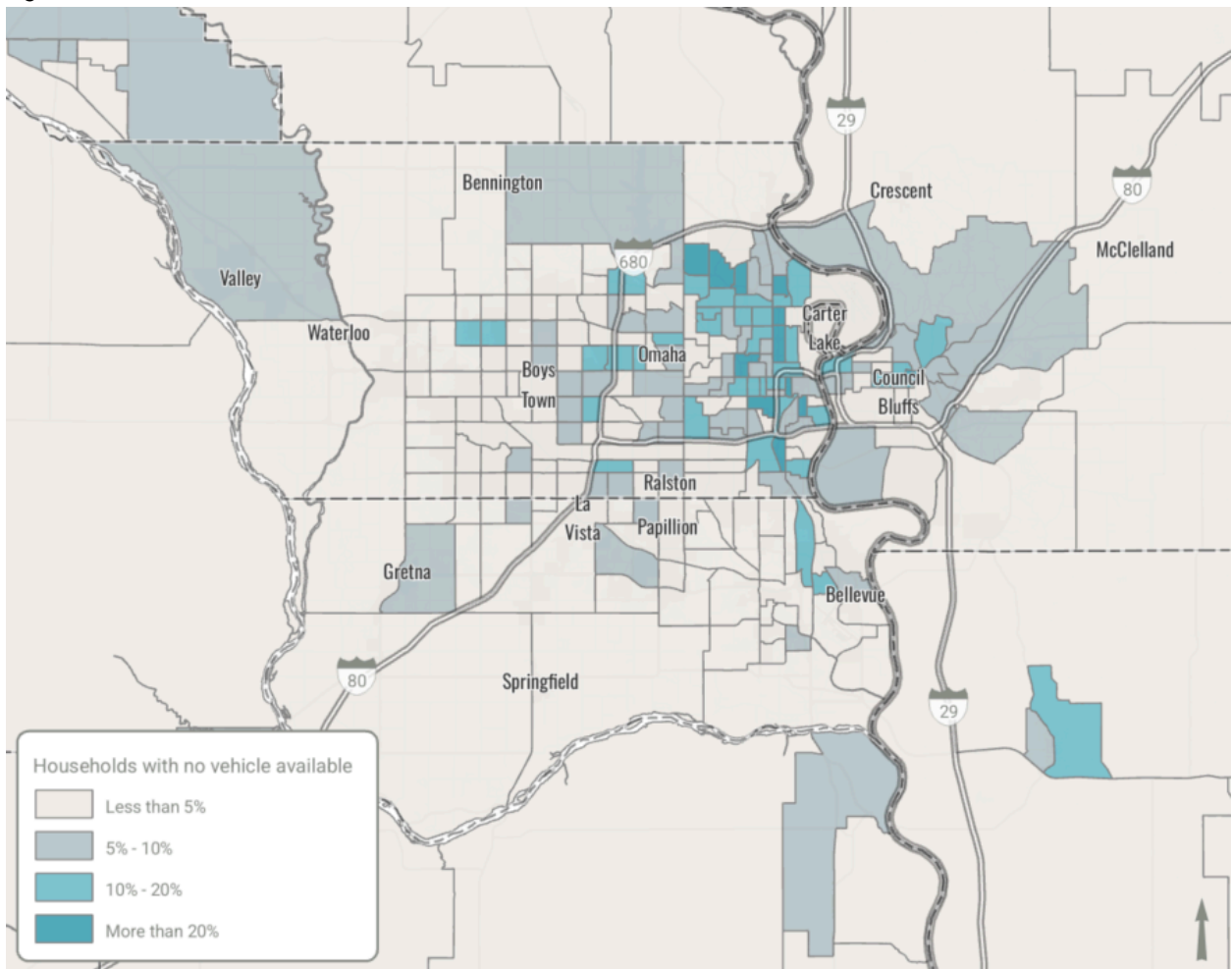
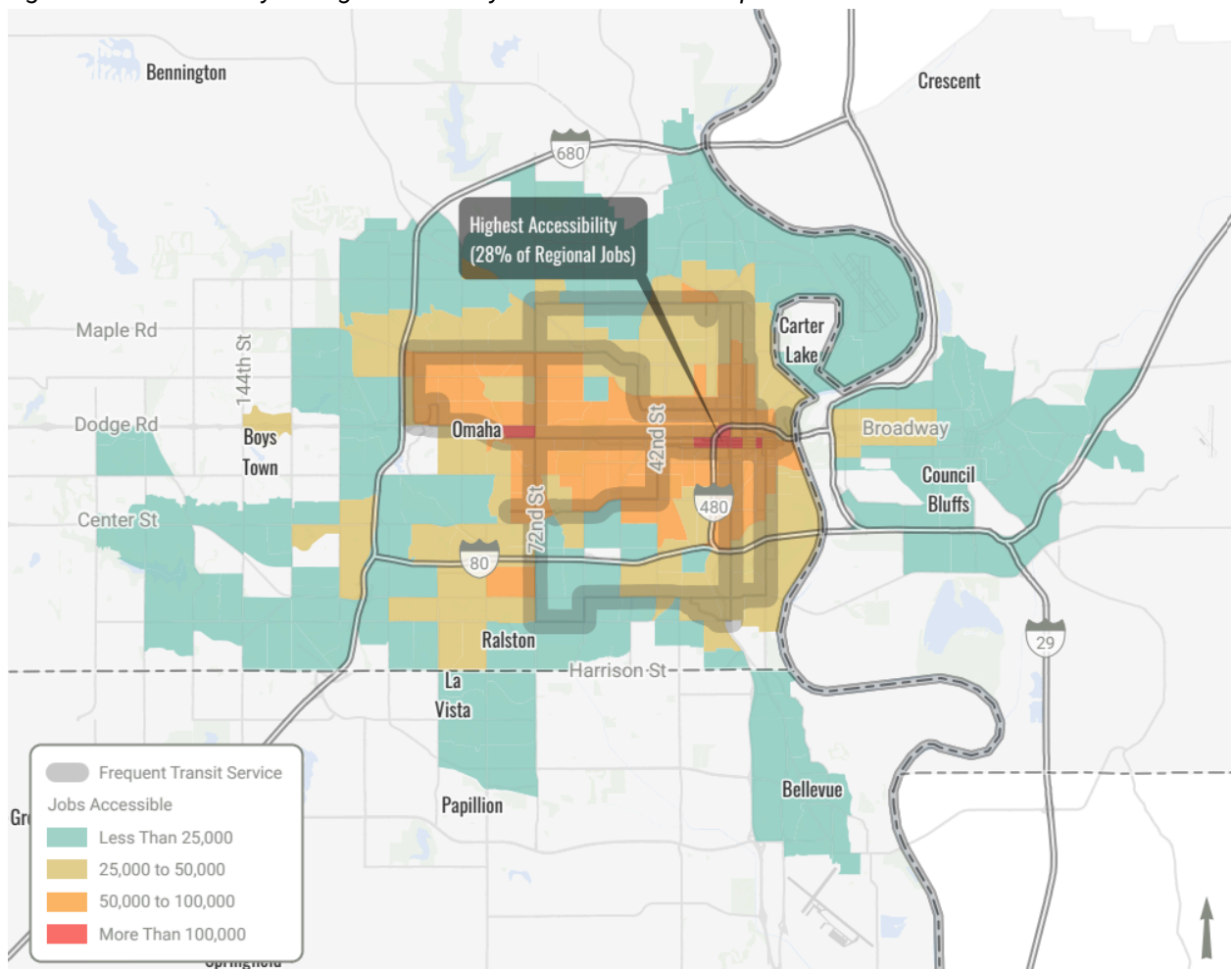


Figure 27 - Accessibility of Regional Jobs by 45 Minute Transit Trip



## Race and Ethnicity

Figure 28 shows the number of people of color in the Omaha area by geographic concentration. The highest concentrations of minority populations are found in the urban core of the City of Omaha. In general, the Black population in the region is concentrated north of Dodge Street and east of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street, while the Hispanic/Latino populations are concentrated south of Dodge and east of 42<sup>nd</sup> Street.

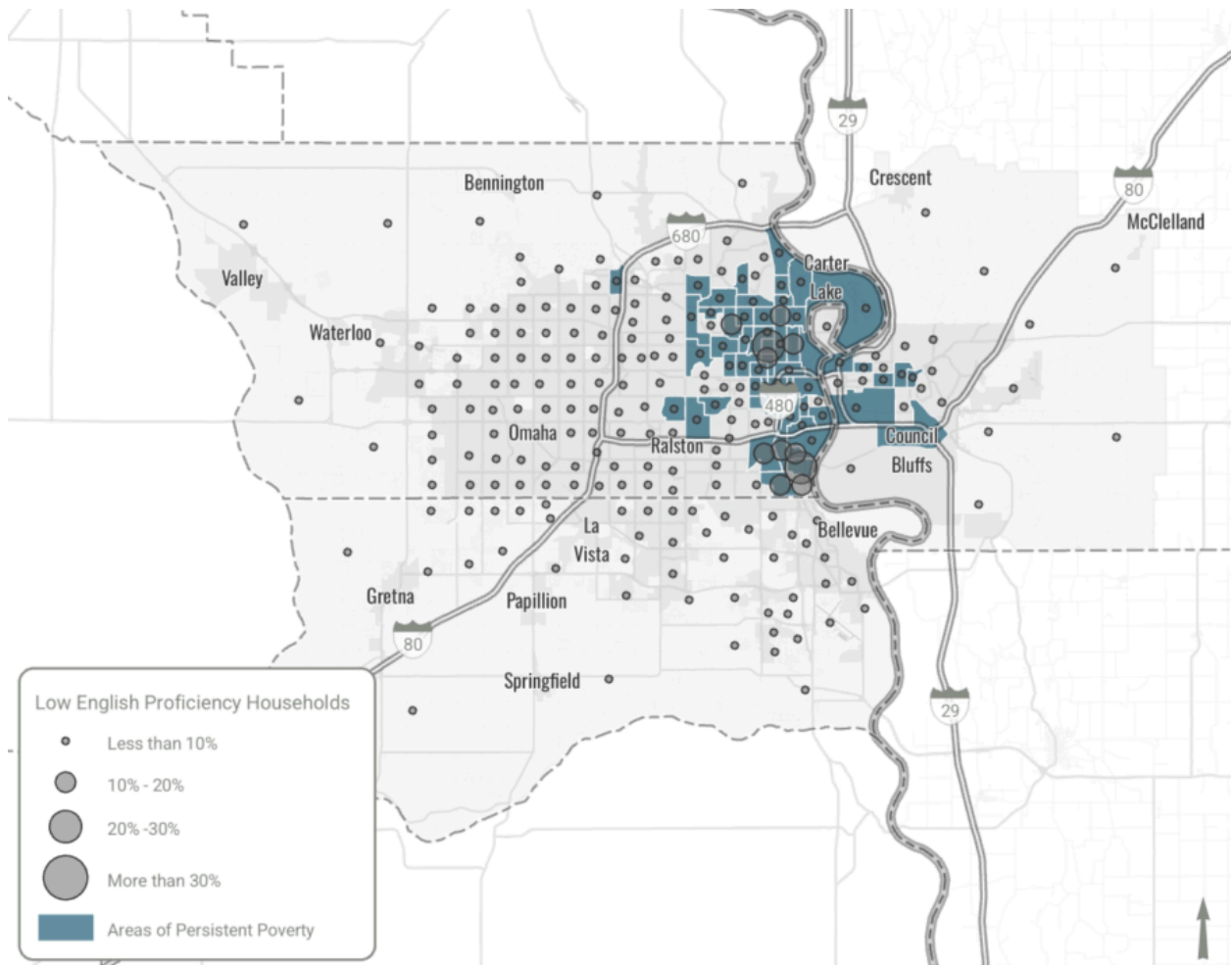
Figure 28 - Race and Ethnicity in the MAPA Region, 2018

Race	Total	Percent
White	632,280	70.42%
Black	74,069	8.25%
Hispanic/Latino	102,415	11.41%
Other	89,157	9.93%



An analysis conducted by PolicyLink in MAPA's Equitable Growth Profile noted that communities of color have been and will continue to drive population growth within the MAPA region. This analysis found it is critical that these communities are able to participate fully in the planning and decision-making about transportation investments within the MAPA region. The analysis and accommodation strategies detailed in this chapter reflect MAPA's commitment to ensuring that these communities have full access to the transportation planning process and services.

Figure 29 - Areas of Persistent Poverty and Areas with Limited English Proficiency



Within the MAPA region, most of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population is concentrated in areas of persistent poverty. Figure 29 illustrates areas in which a disproportionately high number of LEP speakers are concentrated in a particular census tract. These population centers are concentrated largely in the core of the region, with



areas in Douglas, Sarpy and Pottawattamie Counties. To quantify the needs of LEP persons within the Omaha-Council Bluffs region, MAPA staff conducted a demographic analysis of American Community Survey (ACS) data to assess the number and proportion of LEP residents. A summary of this analysis is included in Figure 30.

Figure 30 - Limited English Proficiency in the MAPA TMA, 2020

Subset	Population	Total Percentage
TMA Population (5 Years and Older)	872,662	–
Speak only English at Home	774,742	88.80%
Language Other than English Spoken at Home	97,920	11.20%
Persons who Speak English Less than "Very Well"	31,416	3.60%

Generally, the vast majority of residents in the MAPA region live in English-only households (88.8%). However, of the households that speak a language other than English at home, nearly one third of these residents speak English proficiently. Thus, while most people who are likely to be impacted by MAPA’s planning activities or services speak English, those who speak a different language at home are much more likely to have difficulty understanding oral or written information provided by MAPA in English. As such, this need is an important consideration of accommodation strategies discussed later in this chapter.



## Natural Environment

### Climate

The MAPA region is located in the interior plains of North America and is within a transitional area between a generally humid climate to the east and an arid climate to the west. The area is not directly influenced by the presence of mountains, oceans, or large inland bodies of water that serve as climatic buffers. This combination of transitional location and lack of climatic buffers result in the region's large range of climatic extremes and rapid changes in weather conditions. The unimpeded invasion of large air masses of differing character is commonplace and often causes extreme weather events.

The MAPA region has a continental climate with relatively warm, humid summers and cold, dry winters. Most precipitation occurs between April through September in the form of showers or thunderstorms. Average annual rainfall is 31.05 inches and average annual snowfall is 26.9 inches. Average monthly climate data for the region are provided in Figure 31.

Figure 31 - Average Monthly Climate Data 1981-2020 Normals (Omaha Eppley Airfield)

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Avg Temp	24	28	40.4	52	62.9	73.3	77.2	75	66.9	53.7	39.5	27.3
Min Temp	-6	-4	10	24	38	50	56	53	40	26	13	-2
Max Temp	56	62	76	86	90	96	99	97	93	85	71	58
Precip (In)	0.7	0.86	2.06	3.04	4.6	4.15	3.61	4.11	2.88	2.29	1.43	1.19

Adopted in 2024, [Omaha's Climate Action and Resiliency Plan](#) lays out long-term strategies to cut emissions, adapt to climate impacts, and remove carbon from the atmosphere. A regional climate vulnerability assessment highlights growing risks from extreme heat, flooding, and severe weather. These changes pose challenges for all communities, with especially significant impacts on vulnerable populations.

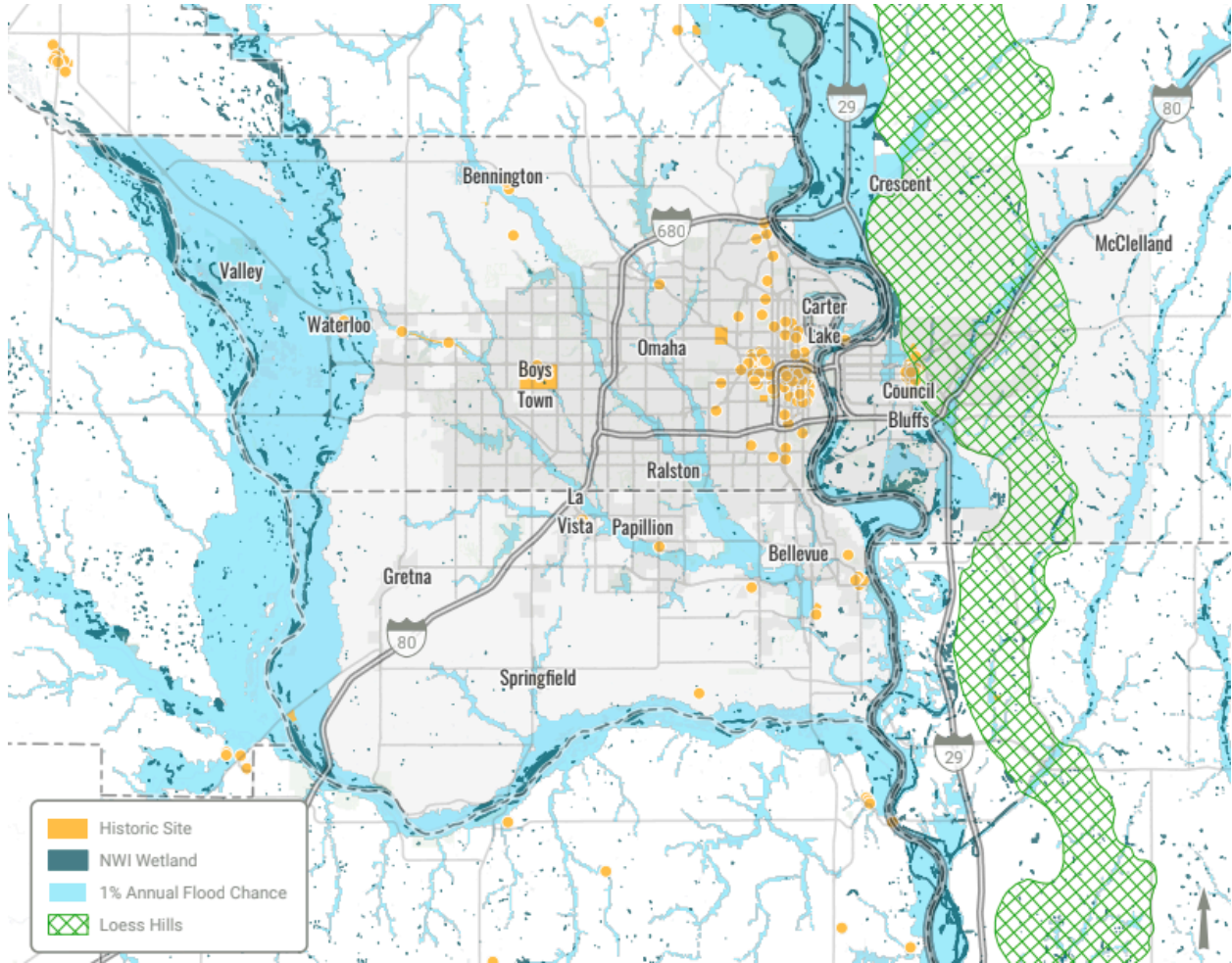
### Water Resources

Water sources exist in the MAPA region in the forms of major rivers, lakes, and streams. The Missouri River is the region's largest and most heavily used water resource, both commercially and recreationally. The Elkhorn, Nishnabotna and Platte rivers also traverse the region. Carter



Lake and Lake Manawa are the region's two largest lakes, both formed by separate Missouri River floods that occurred in the late 1800s. There are also several key inland wetlands and floodplains in the area which must be considered when building or expanding local infrastructure projects. Figure 32 below shows these key water resources for the region as well as flood plains, historic properties, and the Loess Hills conservation district.

Figure 32 - Flood Zones, Wetlands, Conservation Areas and Historic Sites



### Climate Challenges: Flooding

The Papio-Missouri River Natural Resources District in Nebraska and Golden Hills Resource Conservation and Development in Iowa work to conserve, manage, and enhance the natural resources in the region, including land that is located in flood hazard areas. Flood hazard mitigation is accomplished in different ways, including channelization and dam rehabilitation projects, and by the purchase of properties located in the floodplain. Acquisition programs allow local jurisdictions to acquire properties in flood hazard areas and remove or demolish any structural properties. Once properties are acquired and



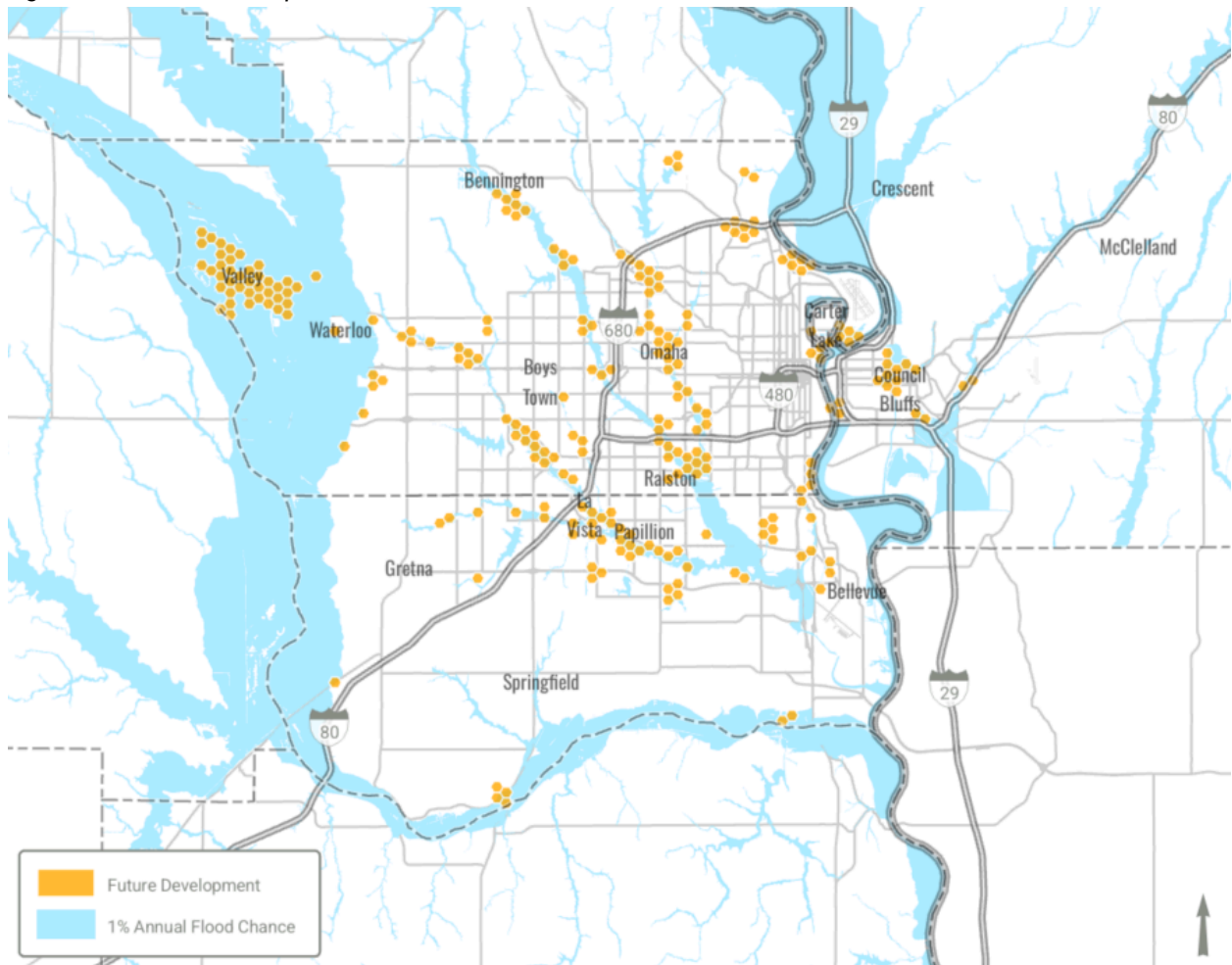
structures are removed, land is restored to green space with restrictions on development put in place. Buyout programs were implemented with FEMA assistance as a result of Missouri River floods in 1993, 2011 and 2019. Programs as a result of the 2019 flood are currently in progress in Pottawattamie and Sarpy counties.

MAPA's regional development report includes a brief analysis of the impact that recurrent flooding will have on property and infrastructure in the region. Figure 33 shows areas of 1% annual chance of flooding and potential development sites. These sites are derived from local comprehensive plans. Within the metro area MAPA estimates that approximately \$3.3 billion in property value is at risk of flooding. Industrial land uses in particular are often at odds with flood risk. Many communities will identify industrial sites in areas where other land uses may not be suitable but the risk to potential future industrial development remains.

In 2024 Iowa DOT developed a [Resiliency Improvement Plan \(RIP\)](#) that outlines the vulnerabilities that transportation systems will face in light of extreme weather events. The most likely and impactful are flooding within the region. The plan outlines resiliency measures including closures and operational mitigations to respond to flooding events. This includes measures to mitigate flooding through additional detention, adding planting, elevating embankments to ensure proper coordination, emergency routes remain open, and policies are in place to clean-up and open structures as quickly as possible.



Figure 33 - Future Development and Flood Risk



## Air Quality

The Clean Air Act, as amended in 1990, requires the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for pollutants deemed harmful to humans and the environment. Air quality sensors in both Nebraska and Iowa continuously monitor the levels of harmful gasses, particulates, and elements contained in the ambient air of the MAPA TMA.

As of January 1, 2016, the entire MAPA TMA is in attainment for EPA air quality standards. Figure 34 shows the current allowable levels of ground ozone and the Omaha-Council Bluffs levels. MAPA's "Little Steps, Cleaner" was designed to educate residents of the region about air quality issues and actions they can take to improve air quality. Since 2012,



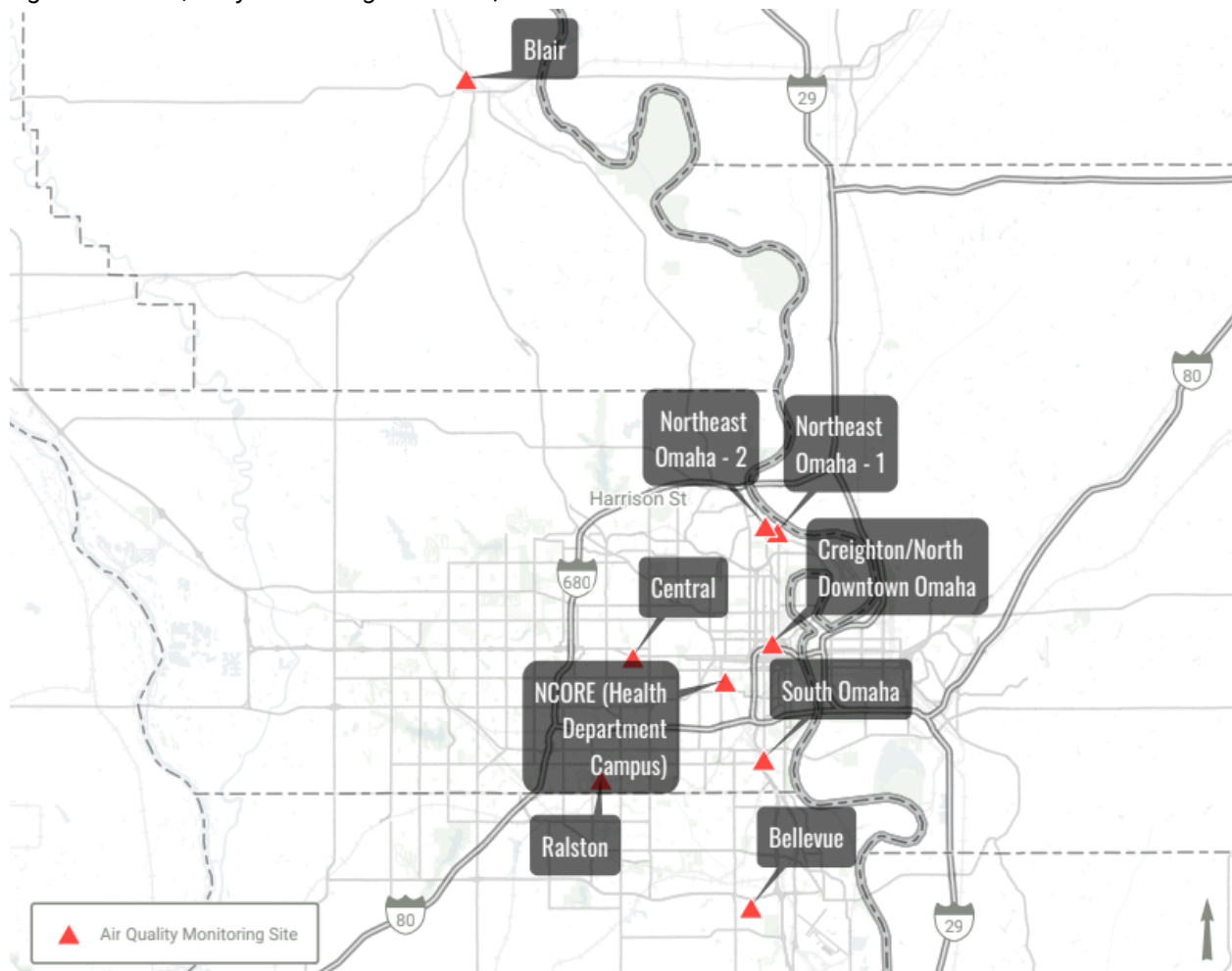
this program has been funded with support from both the Nebraska Department of Transportation and Iowa Department of Transportation with Congestion Management & Air Quality (CMAQ) funding. In recent years the region’s design value for ground-level ozone has remained below the standard, but future regulatory changes related to the NAAQS could result in non-attainment for the region. This designation would have significant impacts on the transportation planning process. Hotter summer weather and increases in transportation emissions could threaten our ability to maintain non-attainment status. Figure 35 shows the locations of air quality monitors throughout the region.

Figure 34 - Omaha-Council Bluffs Ground-Level Ozone Values, 2020-2024 (EPA Air Quality Summary Reports)

County	Allowable	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
O3 1-hr 2nd Max	0.120	0.070	0.080	0.080	0.090	0.080
O3 8-hr 4th Max	0.070	0.061	0.066	0.063	0.082	0.064



Figure 35 - Air Quality Monitoring Locations, Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro



## Soil characteristics

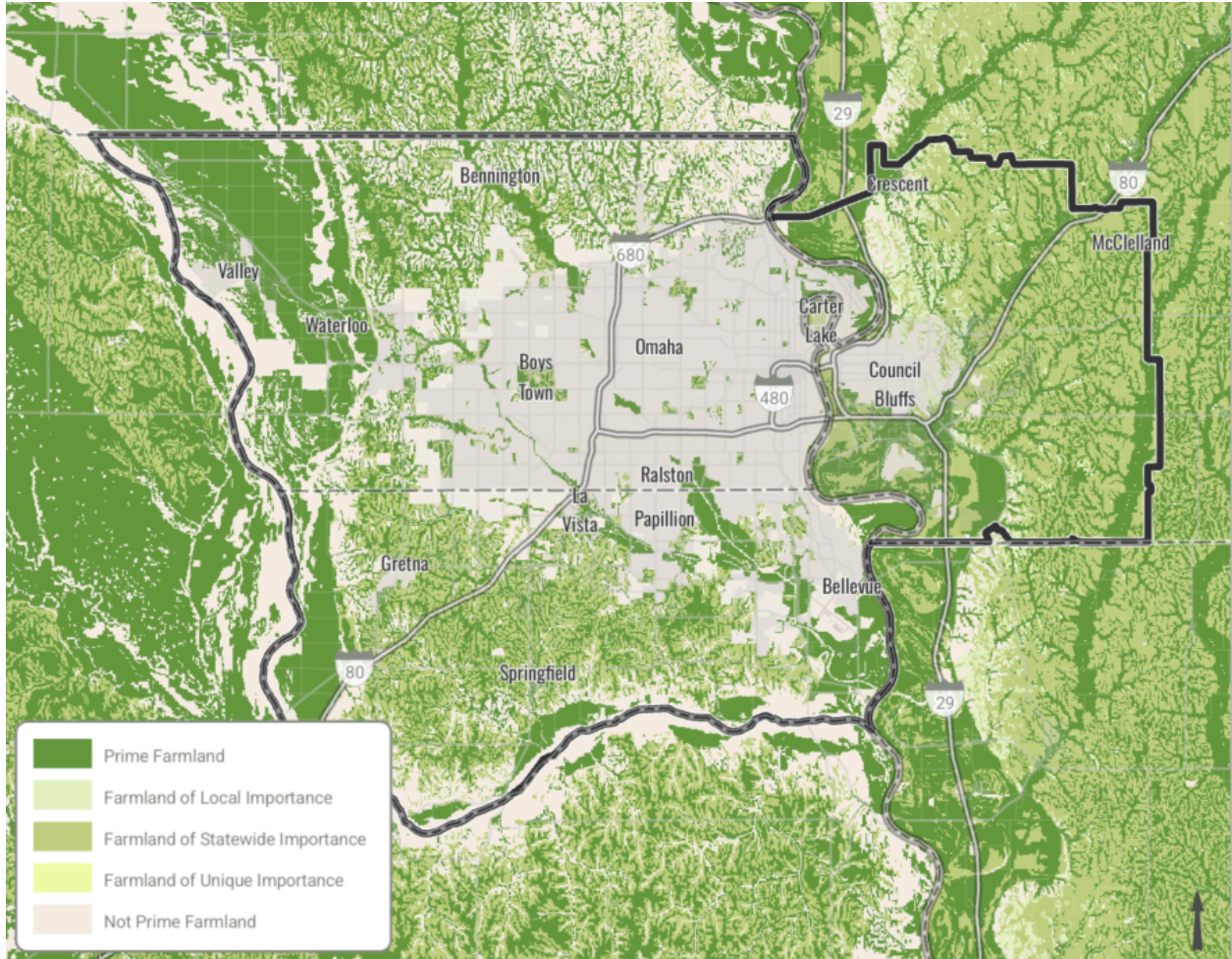
The MAPA region is in the Great Plains region of the United States. The soils of the region have developed on the rolling hills of eastern Nebraska and western Iowa and formed in three kinds of parent material: Peoria Loess and younger loess, glacial till, and alluvium. The soils on the bottom land in the valleys of the Elkhorn, Missouri, and Platte rivers formed in alluvium. This alluvium ranges from clay to sand and is commonly stratified. The composition of soils in the MAPA region—and the Midwest in general—is highly conducive to agriculture. The USDA classifies land by soil type through their Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS). Using soil composition, slope, and the presence of flooding they rate agricultural acres across the country to identify areas that are highly suitable for farming. These areas are referred to as Prime Farmland. Figure 36 illustrates the intersection of Prime Farmlands and flood zones in the Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area. Much of the metro area once represented some of the most suitable farmland in the country. These conditions still exist in greenfield areas and



when drained, in flood prone areas. In developable areas prime farmland conditions exist in:

- 49% of Douglas County greenfield acres
- 65% of Sarpy County greenfield acres
- 82% of Pottawattamie County greenfield acres

Figure 36 - Prime Farmland in the Region



Soil in the urbanized portion of the MAPA region has endured contamination resulting from heavy industry. From the 1870s until the late 1990s, the lead-refining plant Asarco operated on 23 acres along the Missouri River near downtown Omaha. Lead and other heavy metals were emitted into the air and deposited on the ground surface during the plant's operation.

In 1998 the Omaha City Council solicited assistance from EPA to address problems with lead contamination. Soil testing of approximately 22,000 residential properties revealed widespread lead contamination over eastern Omaha. Lead is classified by EPA as a probable human carcinogen and is a cumulative toxicant. The contamination area was added to the National Priorities List by EPA in 2003. The Omaha Lead Site is the area of eastern Omaha where there



are many yards that have unsafe levels of lead in them that came from historic industrial air emissions. Lead in yards might have also come from loose and flaking lead-based house paint, auto exhaust and industrial emissions. The lead was blown in many directions by the wind and fell to the ground in the area which was the Omaha Lead Site. Houses, apartments, child care centers, schools, parks and other residential properties are in the site. The impacted area covers approximately 17,921 acres, or 27.0 square miles. Cleanup is still underway and there is currently no fixed end date for remediation. In December 2015, EPA completed the EPA-lead action at the site. Between 1998 and 2015 EPA collected soil samples from 42,047 residential properties.

## **Long Range Planning and the NEPA Process**

The MTP offers a coordinated effort to support the protection and enhancement of the environment and a streamlined process to achieve the environmental review set forth by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Integration of the planning and development process will vary for projects included in the MTP. All efforts should be made to initiate the environmental assessment and to avoid, minimize, and mitigate possible environmental impacts as early in the project developmental phase as possible. The early integration of the planning and the environmental review and approval improves the likelihood that transportation projects and services can be implemented in a timely and environmentally sensitive manner.

MAPA encourages the avoidance, minimization, and mitigation of environmental impacts. These are discussed below, as are the currently used mitigation practices.

### **Avoidance Minimization and Mitigation**

During the planning process, environmental impacts can be reduced by avoiding or minimizing areas of potential environmental impacts.

Where possible MAPA seeks to avoid potential environmental impacts when planning federal infrastructure projects. Examples of possible avoidance activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Alignment Shifts- where possible the alignment of a proposed improvement can be shifted to eliminate possible impacts on protected areas.
  - Example: In the planning stages, wetlands are located adjacent to a proposed alignment. The design team is informed and the wetlands are found to be in a cut area. The alignment can be shifted slightly to avoid impacting this protected area.
  
- Grade Shifts- where possible the grade of a proposed improvement can be raised or lowered in order to eliminate possible impacts on protected areas.
  - Example: A significant archeological site is identified that warrants preservation in place. During project design it is determined that the



entire area can be bridged; impacts are avoided by building the new roadway above the site, preserving it in place.

Minimization practices involve the creation or implementation of measures to reduce potential impacts to a protected area or resource. Examples of potential minimization practices could include but are not limited to the following:

- Alignment shifts Commitment to off-season construction to avoid habitat used by threatened and endangered species during breeding season
- Incorporation of drainage structures to prevent or control the release of excess runoff into protected water resources
- Construction of sound walls or depressing a section of roadway to minimize noise impacts where justified
- Create landscaping options that serve as a visual screen
- Limiting access to an expressway or interstate facility in order to minimize incompatible development

Mitigation practices include compensation and enhancement measures. Compensation measures make an effort to replace land or facilities to offset damages or displacements due to construction. Examples of compensation activities include but are not limited to the following:

- Adding area to a public park or recreation area to replace lost facilities
- Providing off-site compensation (replacement) for lost wetlands
- Enhancement measures add attractive, desirable features to allow a project to blend into the surrounding environment.
- Enhancements can occur when a project's impact cannot be avoided or minimized.

Examples of enhancement measures include but are not limited to the following:

- Developing bicycle and pedestrian trails or paths adjacent to roadways
- Creation of a landscaped gateway boulevard into a community
- Including artistic works (i.e. sculpture, painting, etc.) on an overpass or adjacent to a roadway that requires widening
- Providing signage to recognize specific cultural, scenic, or historical resources
- Naturalizing the look of retaining walls to mimic stone outcroppings
- Creating wildlife overpasses or underpasses

### **Commonly Used Minimization and Mitigation Strategies**

In the MAPA region, the most common type of environmental mitigation revolves around wetlands mitigation. The MAPA TMA is divided and bordered by the Missouri, Platte, and Elkhorn Rivers. In addition to these major waterways, the MAPA Region has an abundance of creeks, streams, lakes and ponds.

These water resources are sometimes unavoidably impacted by transportation activities. The Nebraska Natural Resources District and the Iowa Department of Natural Resources



both maintain wetlands mitigation banks that offer areas for mitigation activities to occur.

General wetlands mitigation banking practices allow for the constructing jurisdiction to add to an existing mitigation bank, restore a previously-existing wetland, or create a new wetland. Wetlands are often mitigated for in-excess of the impacted on-project wetland. This means that if one acre of existing wetland is destroyed through construction, wetlands mitigation would result in the creation, enhancement or restoration of a total more than one acre. Generally, when projects impact wetlands the constructing jurisdiction approaches willing landowners in order to purchase land to construct isolated wetland mitigation banks. Wetlands banks are located in both Iowa and Nebraska but are usually near to a past or current roadway construction project.

Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) are defined by the FHWA as a collaborative, interdisciplinary approach that involves all stakeholders in providing a transportation facility that fits its setting. This approach leads to preserving and enhancing scenic, aesthetic, historic, community, and environmental resources, while improving or maintaining safety, mobility, and infrastructure conditions.

CSS is based upon four key principles, which shape the way that projects should be developed with respect to their surrounding environment. The key principles factor in during the planning process, determine outcomes and are key factors in decision making.

1. Strive towards a shared stakeholder vision to provide a basis for decisions
2. Demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of contexts
3. Foster continuing communication and collaboration to achieve consensus
4. Exercise flexibility and creativity to shape effective transportation solutions, while preserving and enhancing community and natural environments.

The use of CSS results in a windfall of benefits in overall project performance. MAPA promotes the use of CSS and Complete Streets throughout the planning and design process for infrastructure projects inside the region. Some of these potential benefits include:

- improved predictability in project delivery
- the ability to scope and budget the project
- environmental stewardship
- improved public/stakeholder feedback
- increased partnering opportunities
- improved opportunities for economic development

For a complete breakdown of Context Sensitive Solutions including NCHRP



Report 642-Quantifying the Benefits of Context Sensitive Solutions, please visit: [http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_642.pdf](http://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_642.pdf)

