



Wyandotte County is unique to the state of Kansas in many ways. It is the only majority-minority county in the state; it is a largely urban county, situated in one of the largest metropolitan areas in the country; and it's history is rich with tales of freedom, hope, and resiliency, but also destruction, oppression, and neglect.

In the mid-1800s, Kansas City, KS was a safe haven for slaves who had escaped across the river from the slave state of Missouri, aided by the indigenous people who populated the area at the time. The decades that followed saw a robust community emerge, complete with BIPOC-owned businesses, restaurants, and grocery stores. But by the mid-1900s, redlining, White Flight, and other discriminatory policies had destroyed the once-vibrant community, leaving in its wake a neglected and impoverished population.

We wish we were coming to the redistricting committee with a message of hope. We wish we could say the misdeeds of history are now behind us. But the stark reality is that things are getting worse for the most vulnerable people in Wyandotte County. The average life expectancy continues to drop, and low-income Black populations are now living an average of 24 years less than middle-income white populations a few miles away. Housing is becoming less and less affordable, and homelessness is visibly on the rise. Parks are neglected, deteriorating, and being decommissioned. The only swimming pool in the eastern half of Wyandotte County was shuttered this year. Food deserts are vast, stretching for miles, and are concentrated in the same areas where auto ownership is sparse and job opportunities are few and far between. Lead is estimated to be in 50% of the homes where we are raising our children, air pollution has been measured at dangerous levels in several parts of town, and environmental racism has placed industrial polluters at the fencelines of our neighborhoods.

Racist government policies of the past destroyed the livelihood of a once thriving community. Redrawing districts in a way that takes power away from that same community will ensure that our people remain desperate and impoverished. Decision makers who push for such redistricting maps will be remembered by history for upholding the a system of white supremacy, much like we remember George Wallace today. We have an opportunity to honor the same traditions that Wyandotte County was founded on, when it was a stop on the Underground Railroad and a mecca of freedom for those escaping slavery.

As it stands today, the population of the 3rd district is 779,860. The next closest district in population, the 4th, has a population of 723,075, which is 56,785 less than the 3rd. The 2nd district, directly adjacent to the 3rd, has a population of only 715,881, nearly 64,000 less than the 3rd district. To make the districts closer in population, the northeast corner of Miami County should be incorporated into the 2nd district. The areas around Bucyrus and Louisburg are 92% white, rural, and have very little in common, culturally or economically, with the rest of the congressional district. If all of Miami County were to be incorporated into the 2nd District, it would leave only the urban and suburban portions of the Kansas City

metropolitan area in District 3, creating a more cohesive community of interest, and it would help to create a more equitable system of representation.

Equity is the core mission of our organization, and it is a principle that reverberates throughout Wyandotte County. Equity is not the same thing as equality. Equity is based on justice, and it means recognizing that we do not all start from the same place and must acknowledge and make adjustments to imbalances. For Wyandotte County, equity means increasing funding for things like healthcare, education, and housing. It means funding parks, arts, and infrastructure projects and paying the residents of our county a thriving wage to see those projects come to fruition. It means new and innovative approaches to fighting food insecurity, like incentivizing cooperative community grocers. It means providing whatever funding is necessary to lift our residents out of poverty and to undo the damage that inequitable government policies of the past caused to our community. And it means ensuring the voters of Wyandotte County are given more robust and equitable influence in choosing who will represent them in Congress. We have an opportunity to practice equity in a way that the founders of our county would be proud of. Make sure Wyandotte County voters' voices matter over the coming decade, and help make our community thrive again.



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