

PERU

IMPERUING AS ONE

PERU

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS SUMMARY

DRAFT – NOVEMBER 9, 2018



Peru Conversations
Summary Report

In 2018, the community of Peru embarked on a process to engage its citizens and stakeholders in discussion and planning for the future of Peru. Initial steps included organizing a working group with representatives from business, education, local government and organizations and hiring a team from the University of Nebraska to facilitate the process. A community-wide survey was conducted in September with follow-up community conversations held in October. The results of the conversations is detailed in this report.

During the week of October 21st, four community conversations were held with 35 individuals attending who represented the citizens of Peru and the surrounding area and Peru State College employees and students. Sessions were led by Marilyn Schlake and Charlotte Narjes from the University of Nebraska Extension.

As determined by the Peru working group, the objectives of the conversations were to:

- 1) Have in-depth discussions with targeted groups to obtain insights into the opportunities/issues identified in the survey.
- 2) Create opportunity for open discussion across the community sectors.
- 3) Create greater interest/excitement about Peru, the College and their combined future.

NOTE: Individual names and attributes are removed from this report. The comments are not verbatim, but represent thoughts provided by the individuals and approved through visual affirmation.

Summary

A total of 35 individuals participated in the Peru Community Conversations between Oct 21st and Oct 26th. Individuals were asked to first identify their connection with Peru and answer why they are willing to participate in the conversations. This information is not shared in this report.

Individuals first responded to questions to help determine their perceptions of Peru community values and strengths. These are assets that the community can build upon to help grow the community. The combine **Values** and **Strengths** responses are located on pages 8-10. Each person was then asked to envision Peru in 15-25 years and write down how they would like to see Peru. Their ideas were captured on flipchart paper and each session group identified major themes around these ideas. The themes and general areas for action are listed in the chart below.

To further support action planning, each individual was asked to identify initial steps that could be implement in the next 2-5 years to further Im**PERU**ing as **oNE** activities. These are listed on page 5.

Areas for Potential Actions

	Session 1 Themes	Session 2 Themes	Session 3 Themes	Session 4 Themes
Infrastructure Issues	Infrastructure Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sidewalks ○ Curbs ○ Lighting ○ Streets (no pot holes) ○ Parking 	Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water – two conditions • Roads • Sidewalks 	Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lights and Sidewalks installed – ADA, too many children and adult alike use the streets. • Infrastructure – include water concerns, water drainage. Piping for drinking water, although has gotten so much better over the last 9 years. 	Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City is working on water. • Sidewalk, lighting and street plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Generally the street has plan ○ Sidewalks are up to homeowner.
Housing Issues	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More housing – more homes for families, updated, safe homes, legal oversight of building • More owner – occupied property. • Increase housing – we cannot grow until we have houses. • Explore all options Housing 	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student/residential • Clean-up – • College-owned apartments – students cannot just leave. (Oakhill) – many are very run-down. • 	Housing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New housing for families, not just student housing. • Landlord association – can help with summer clean up, etc. 	
Relationships	Closer Relationships between PSC/Peru/Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More Faculty and Staff that work here living in town • College host more activities in the community – rather than hold on campus – hold off campus. • Consistently come up with items that tie the college and the community together. • Items that happen that tie together 		Peru United <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College and city collaboration on activities – events planning. • Peru to be united, not just the college, not just the town, but just Peru. 	Connectedness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hub for communication – beneficial for a one-stop shop <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Flyers, notification. For everyone to look at for community and college. ○ Social media ○ Gathering spot (i.e., coffee shop, etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Example – benches that were donated – person noted. 			
Economics/Business Development	<p>Economics – Business Supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Successful Business District <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Business Growth ○ Support Local, shopping local 	<p>Business Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment Opportunities <p>Downtown</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaner, vibrant downtown. • Including the museum 	<p>Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Development –more thriving downtown businesses, more opportunities for students to work, to intern there. • Infrastructure & economic development – cleaning up local businesses, need a gathering place downtown...i.e. coffee shop. • Clean updated grocery store – or dollar general type business that provides daily necessities. Cat cave sells stuff, but is expensive. Stuff students need. • A family restaurant, or something to get away, similar to coffee shop. 	<p>Business/Economic Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to identify space for a business to open – need location. • Downtown beautification plan – including businesses. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Explore ways/options, learn from others. • Make more attractive for businesses. •
Amenities/Services	<p>Values Played out (split to fit category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working Elementary School • Winter activities for youth – youth use gym for basketball, etc. Community area. • Splash Pad or other activity on South end of community 	<p>Recreation facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clean up all the current recreation facilities • Build new as needed. <p>Community wide clean up</p>	<p>Services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daycare already at college – need a pre-school that would be attractive to families. <p>Beautification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing – cleaning it up, curb appeal of the housing, Community is kept clean – brushy – roving goats, something to clean it up. City can enforce. <p>Tourism (split to fit category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peru be known for many things that Brownville, Nebraska City is known for – become a weekend tourist destination. • Recreation - Tennis courts, indoor swimming pool, rec center. • Housing – B&B stops attractive to visitors, quaint. A central point for all different activities in area. There is one B&B in town. Would create jobs to help maintain. 	<p>Attraction & Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using the facilities that are available for leagues. • Identify things that families with children would be interested to stay. • Volleyball court – city rec. • Fun community ideas.

Messaging/Communications	<p>Values Played out (split to fit category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open, friendly communication – waves and smiles...still happening. • Living with respect for everyone – working together • Resources available for mental health, substance abuse, depression, etc. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Community is actively involved – continuous offerings. 		<p>Tourism (split to fit category)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peru be known for many things that Brownville, Nebraska City is known for – become a weekend tourist destination. 	<p>Change of Message – Positivity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First start internally. Once we as a community change perspective then we will leak the positivity out to others. • Promotion/marketing – positive exposure • Cross – promotional message - The more the message can be combined it will be better. The more interaction that can be that help inform and promote it will be better experience for everyone. • College is our business – a good place. Have connection between town and college. The college can do something good for the town.
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Group responses - Initial steps that could be implement in the next 2-5 years:

Infrastructure –

- *Go to city council – share concerns*
- *Prioritize*
- *Incentive program to police their own areas – take care of their own property*
- *Information/history of infrastructure – more aware of what we have. Understand and take an assessment. FYI, 2 fiber lines available – can use.*
- *Roads are fixed in Peru. – Community used to let people know when roads, etc., were being fixed that homeowners could also contact.*
- *New Sidewalks and lights – a priority –*
 - *#1 downtown sidelights.*
- *Grants*
- *Water – is being worked on. Let people know what is being done. Bill – updating plan and should have notification of community meetings – encourage people to attend.*

Housing

- *Legal repercussions for not following laws*
- *City may need to forgive value of tearing down property.*
 - *There is a \$12,000 tag to build – promise to build.*
- *Getting rid of homes that are currently not occupied. Some of homes that are occupied are not safe. Need to have houses condemned that are not safe.*
- *Offer \$incentives to improve homes.*
- *Laws/Ordinates on house usage (get rid of slum lords).*
- *Renovate Oak Hill – each year they have been working on improving dorms. Approximately 16 apartments.*
- *Tax incentives if build a house in town*

- *Incentives for landlords to maintain property, or landlord fee if not keeping up property.*
- *Landlord association –*
- *Inspector to review housing – if unsafe close down. i.e. Omaha*
- *Grants*
- *Bidding en mass for contractors to paint multiple homes*
- *Yard of the month competition*

Closer Relationship with College and Community

- *Requirement for faculty to live in community – not living as there was not adequate housing.*
- *City Celebrations – River Days – first Saturday in June. Start doing something that connects.*
 - *PCIG is starting to look at a fall festival.*
 - *Events that people want to attend/go to.*
- *Community reaching out to College*
- *Communication – notify the community of what is going on – for example that can see a Physician. Reverse – put community information in the college newsletter.*
 - *Initial step could use the bobcat app – can see the variety of opportunities (i.e., chili, etc.) Bob Cat Life App.*
- *Newsletter*
- *Sidewalks can connect people*
- *Combined events – Getting to know the community, mixer school and community*
- *A community newsletter, calendar*

Values – Played out

- *Something done every day - comment values play out when there is an emotional event. What can we do on a regular basis to draw attention to the values?*
- *Communication*
- *PSC Parents – parents in community helped to sponsor students – students – support. Students –previously done.*
- *Mentoring group – mentoring youth in the community and opposite that college student gets connected with a family as well.*
 - *i.e., Fellowship of Christian Athletes – at a parsonage.*
- *Night out – make an effort to meet everyone on your block.*
- *Civic/Service organizations – would like to see organizations renewed.*

Economics/Business Support

- *Small Business Loans – build awareness of opportunities – people do not know how to get started.*
- *What businesses do we want? What will be supported?*
- *Re-enforcing to shop local...get info to students – get students off campus.*
- *Brownville example – encourages all businesses to stay open in community and weekend.*
- *Forming investment groups for economic groups that can help with downtown*
 - *TIF, Investment Groups, etc.*
- *Alum for Peru that owns and business that would open – coffee house.*
- *What ideas to bring others to community to see the scenery. Once duck creek – need to be a pull.*
 - *More advertising.*
 - *Beautiful cemetery – carved Jeannie*
- *Take down buildings that are no longer usable.*

- *City build buildings...rent*
- *Fire department – spray the buildings down and get volunteers to repaint.*
- *Community repairs (gave an example of community working together to renovate the President’s office).*
- *Forming investment groups for economic groups that can help with downtown*
 - *TIF, Investment Groups, etc.*
- *Alum for Peru that owns and business that would open – coffee house.*
- *Ties with all other areas, about bringing jobs to Peru.*
- *Research what companies go into small towns. i.e. telemarketing, dollar general store,*
- *Grocery store - no longer doing ads, rotating stock, not as much options. Students have had negative experiences.*
- *Encourage people to start business, tax incentives, seek people who may be interested. Sell on the student population as well.*

Recreation facilities

- *Put a nice restroom in at the splash pad*
- *Baseball field restrooms used to be done. But are not helped.*
- *Committee for softball --- start putting tether...the committee has been established...committee start putting plans together.*

Beautification –

- *Grants*
- *College students volunteer/people who will volunteer for students (feed then)*
- *Paint exchange*
- *Community days*
- *Plant exchange*
- *Community Pride issue – peer pressure*
- *Encourage people to clean up*
- *Older people, help them*
- *Yard of the month competition*
- *Community wide clean up*

Tourism –

- *Marketing*
- *Historic housing status*
- *Walking tour of historical homes, link with cemetery*
- *State recognized arboretum*
- *Create a tourism flyer*
- *Wrangler ranch –*
- *Work with county tourism*

Peru Community Values (things that are important to Peru) – Perspectives from the Community Conversations

Session 1

- *Love/hate relationship – everyone knows everybody. Can care.*
- *Valuing that we have this unique experience with the college. Peru is not necessarily struggling and college has something to do with that.*
- *Size – for most part – relative safety. Can let kids be kids...walk to the park and come up to campus. Raising kids with a small campus. The kids love the campus as much as the kids.*
- *College kids are neighbors. The kids are raised with the fact that education is valued. Culture is being brought in...and see education is important.*
- *Connections that are made are life time connections. People support the youth in the community and activities of the kids whether related or not.*
- *People care about each other. If you know someone's dog is out, you take it home. A lot of caring people in the community. If something happens, the community rallies. Example: When Ty disappeared...the town rallied to help find. We know we need help – supporting everyone. **Core Values** – community service organizations have gone down but people are still there to help.*

Session 2

- *History – live in acreage. Important aspect of college and community. History of college, etc.*
- *College – one of reasons for history of Peru. Brings the community together in some ways. Ability for fine arts, sports that we would not have without college. Option for jobs. Small town atmosphere. Everyone knows business but if something happens, the community will take care of you. Safe place in comparison to world.*
- *Scenery. People love the view on campus. The campus is breathtaking.*
- *Loyalty. We have been a part of the community since 1991. Very loyal community base. If community succeeds, we also succeed.*
- *Like the fact that there is quite a bit for a family to do...Frisbee golf course, trail with all the different carvings (Sherman). Nice that have outdoor activities. People were friendly in the community.*
- *Family things to do and library and a gym that often do not get in small town.*
- *Small town atmosphere. Husband is in a nursing home. Two things that were catastrophe and neighbors helped.*
- *Small town feel. He has asked people for help and like.*
- *People, friendly, out-going, supportive, opinionated.*
- *The college and community are one --- the city needs to do somethings – do not know answer. People come to college for small town atmosphere – smaller classes, etc.*

Session 3

- *The history of the community. Through the Alumni, see the history, hear the memories, shows the connections. The cemetery, the housing...draws people back.*
- *Impressed with the Steamboat Trace Trail, the college trail, the beauty of the trees, old nature, beautiful town*
- *People – past, present. I love the children – would be the future. Small town values as well.*
- *Small town values – opportunity that this town brings. Make close connections with professors, get to know the area. The connections can get you further in life. Other students understand the benefits of small town life, but don't know what they can do.*
- *This is my home away from home. See people from the community, may not know them, but know about them.*
- *History – the house – Sherman and the carving. The people/community – they care even if they don't know you. Biggest Value is the people*
- *Didn't like history until moved here. Bought a 140 year old house. Did research, now value it. The college is a huge value because it brings people in. Like the hometown values. We are right in the center of everything. Can get anywhere in a little time. Brownville, PSC has concerts, just need to know where to find them. The carving path, Indian Cave State Park – so interesting.*
- *Friendships – met husband, other friends from school still visit with. New friendships being on the foundation board. Connection of people.*
- *Connections with people – when here that people remember, the stories, Peru creates memories and friendships.*
- *Felt like home, everyone is welcoming. Students would be matched with Peru moms, still keep in touch. It's a safe community. Take kids to college events, a great mix.*
- *Small town feel atmosphere.*

Session 4

- *Small towns in general. Grew up in a small town different state. Value small town experience. We have that and while there is some negativity there is a lot of good neighbors. People watch out for each other. If something happens, they work on it. For example, if there is a nuisance, they work together to get it done. With the college aspect, I value the people and students that get to work with every day. Makes it easier to go to work.*
- *Grew up in a small town in a different state – smaller than Peru. They were bustling. I like the small town. I like the people. I value the college, the events and particular for taking the kids...i.e., homecoming. Value the core people that are trying hard to keep everything going--- Easter egg hunt. Value the effort.*
- *Grew up in North Omaha – in a very rough area. I have always liked how small community gets together. I always want to help I like how close the community can be together. I would love to see the community succeed. There are a lot of businesses...I think it can be better.*
- *Small town – living my freshman year, it is like a second home to me. I value that we are trying to connect the community and college. I am a student seeing that there is a disconnect they see that others in the college have same opinion. Would like to see strengthen relationships.*
- *Love the beauty of the town. We live just outside of town.....I love that people look out for each other. Love the college and appreciate the college. There have been attempts to bring the college together. I used to be more engaged. Very passionate about trying to improve the town. Love the hustle and bustle and also love the quietness when they are not there. Wish we could bring some new life to downtown. Make it so that people in town would attend. New passion.*
- *Value a lot – I really like it here. Value people at Peru in community and college. College give many opportunities as they can. People in the community --- once you get exposed they are very welcoming and guide you through. They are there if you need them. Appreciate the general environment that is created when people get together on both sides. We do not see it on both sides of people getting together.*
- *History of the town and history of the college. Beauty...love the hills and countryside and the trees. Value that.*
- *Value that the community affords me the opportunity to work here. This is not the first small community. There are similarities in that deterioration of commerce. I would like to see the commerce improve and stabilize. I value the people I have met...the history and the scenic qualities of the area.*
- *Husband is Mr. Peru --- anytime we travel anything that has Peru on...can always meet someone that meet or had a relative – we instantly bond.*
- *Value the city wide clean up*

Peru Community Strengths (things that are available to help Peru grow) – Perspectives from the Community Conversations

Session 1

- *Financially strong -- Believe there is enough money in city to continue the current services. Sales tax helps (i.e., to make sure roads can be cleaned).*
- *Caring Community – Community is supportive and will help.*
- *College/Community relationship. Community service– strength – college students have hours to help --- for example, a city wide clean-up, cleaning up community.*
- *Diversity because of students. Internationally as well as nationwide (i.e., Croatia, etc.). Youth can experience other cultures. Global. A Peru to Peru. With students living in rentals. College students are from all over.*
- *Peru State College – it depends on the version of what people see.*
- *Two churches*
- *Long history...P.O.W.*
 - *Huge houses –a re ascetically pleasing.*
- *Peru is not just Peru – the farms, acreages to the river. Community events--- healthier events that do truck or treat.*
- *Resources available for mental health, substance abuse, depression, etc.*
 - *Community is actively involved – continuous offerings.*

Session 2

- *Strong sense of community – comradery. Lending a hand, just waiving.*
- *Lot of people that are invested in the town and want to see growth **
 - *A desire to improve.*
- *Bank*
- *College*

- *Post Office*
- *Grocery Store*
- *Beauty of the area – river, hills, and trees – the four seasons.*
- *History – town has always fought for Peru from sandbagging, keeping the college in town.*
- *Duck Creek, River --- Recreation*
 - *Used to be a color drive – where followed the fall foliage.*
- *Zac’s Bar & Grill Restaurant and Casey’s*

Session 3

- *Affordable living, economic factor is low. From real estate, if willing to remodel, can make it work.*
- *Location*
- *The people*
- *Have what people need. We have a bank, beauty shop, Casey’s, library, fitness center, athletics...a lot of stuff other small towns don’t have.*
- *Collaboration with college*
- *Safety*
- *Things that are unique that draw people, within 10-15 miles, that people come to visit. Carving, Duck Creek, hills – NE’s toughest mile*
- *Beauty – nature*
- *Diverse population – college brings a lot of diversity, education levels,*
- *College activities, sports, music, take a class up the hill*
- *PSC is a strength*
- *Uniqueness of housing, all different*
- *Nice park with splashpad, draws families, little kids – that was a pretty big accomplishment for Peru.*

Session 4

- *People know each other and watching out for each other and hopefully want the best for each other.*
- *Small group of women that try to put on events are a strength.*
- *Industry – the College*
- *Willingness of the college to be involved in the overall community.*
- *Location – strength. Middle of everywhere. Within an hour of major populations.*
 - *Can go both ways...can be isolated.*
- *Businesses that are here – it is tough having a business here. It takes a lot of determination and sacrifice.*

**This Community Conversations Summary Report is a product of
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