

Community Narratives Heard Through Pikes Peak United Way Community Conversations

THREE MAJOR COMMUNITY CONDITIONS WERE IDENTIFIED THAT NEED TO BE STRENGTHENED TO SUPPORT CHANGE:

CONNECTIVITY

People want to live in a connected community with a diversity of cultures, lifestyles and careers but with much more collaboration and engagement. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there are too many silos, stereotypes of communities which segments our region, isolated individuals, and leadership with personalized agendas (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about a lack of knowledge about and access to resources, events, and activities available, need/reason to cross paths with individuals in different neighborhoods, the closing of community centers, lack of accurate media coverage and an increase in leadership showing division. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on awareness/communication of existing resources and coordinated services and the development of more public spaces to gather, more neighborhood events that represent culture and diversity and a pipeline for college students to connect to local businesses. (actions)

And if colleges, nonprofits (Pikes Peak United Way), military, community leadership, community centers, and large employers (groups) played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward.

TRUST

People want a community where there is trust and respect for everyone, with less focus on personal agendas and more on the community's interests. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there are too many proposed solutions without understanding, and political leadership's words and actions don't align. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about political leadership's personalized agendas, the impact of political leadership's decisions which shows a disconnect between the needs of those in poverty and the decisions that are made, and that leadership avoids the responsibility of educating our youth by point to others to solve the problem. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on collaborations and common ground, asking those in poverty or who are homeless what they want in their quality of life and then making decisions based on that information, align words with actions, and focusing on fixing existing infrastructure and quality of life before creating new things that generate money with no sense of priority. (actions)

And if media and political and community leaders (groups) played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward.

COMMUNITY IDENTITY

People say that the identity of the community is important and that they want to live in a welcoming, innovative, and lively community where people stay or come back to raise their families. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that the military presence breeds federal jobs and a transient community, the political leadership is unwilling to accept that the Colorado Springs area is a metro (city) and not a small town, and that the number of faith-based headquarters distorts the reality and perception of those who are welcomed here. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about the different perceptions held by residence versus those who live elsewhere, the inability to attract business headquarters, and the mass exodus of young professionals. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on integrating and embracing the military, embracing the reality that Colorado Springs is a metro area, unified goals around the cities identity, reputation and brand, and to focus on the creation of a unified vision. (actions)

And if community leaders, Convention & Visitors Bureau, civic leadership, innovative individuals and other businesses, faith-based, and military groups played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

SIX MAJOR THEMES EMERGED AS ISSUES / AREAS OF CONCERN:

JOBS AND WORKFORCE EDUCATION / TRAINING

People want jobs at all levels of the community. But its not just about creating jobs, people talk about the need for workforce education/training, and pipelines of opportunity. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there is a lack of job-readiness/necessary education as well as opportunities for work. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about limited job opportunities (like just call centers) in our region or the lack of qualified/educated workers or the exodus of young professionals in our community. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on pipelines to opportunities and awareness/communication of existing resources and opportunities. (actions)

And if colleges, high schools, military, workforce center, and large employers played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

People say that kids need opportunities to safely try new things so they can grow/develop into productive and engaged young people and leaders. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there are limited safe, affordable and educational places and opportunities for youth (and their families) to go and do things. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about afterschool programs, transportation, and exposure to things outside their specific neighborhood. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on awareness/communication of existing resources and opportunities and develop new ones in areas which lack them all-together. (actions)

And if families, schools (teachers and counselors), libraries, community centers, successful afterschool programs, and businesses played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

HOUSING

People said that there is a need for more affordable and permanent housing for people of all income-levels. There is especially the need to have housing and/or shelter for homeless individuals and families. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there is an increase in corrupt landlords, building in less dense areas, and lack of shelter space. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about limited housing opportunities for homeless and individuals with criminal records or a judgment toward people who live in certain areas of the community (south side). (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on creating neighborhoods, more homeless shelters and increase awareness/communication of existing resources and opportunities. (actions)

And if landlords, shelters, community resources agencies, and government played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort / the step forward. (groups)

MENTAL HEALTH

People said that access to quality mental health care would help individuals but also strengthen families, schools, and whole neighborhoods. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there is limited access and availability of mental health service providers. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about impact of PTSD & TBI on individuals/community in terms of safety and stability, suicide rates in the region, and the lack of local providers who take Medicaid. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on awareness/communication of existing resources and opportunities and development and coordination of more services, support groups and health care providers. (actions)

And if military, hospitals, police departments, mental health providers, and homeless service providers, played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

TRANSPORTATION

People talked about the need for transportation to get them to jobs, services and bring people together. They see its availability and access as an opportunity to strengthen the economy of the whole region. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that the limited hours and stops of the public transportation system make the option/need to commute via public transportation an ineffective and inefficient experience. Another concern expressed is the lack of current trail lighting and accessibility. (main concerns)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about their inability to participate in community events, entertainment, school, work, or health visits beyond its limited hours of operation and that a roundtrip experience may take more than two hours of commute time. (specific issues)

They say that we need to focus on investing in safe, accessible and efficient public transportation for all, educating the community on its positive environmental impact, and making the outdoors accessible to seniors and people with disabilities. (actions)

And if the mayor, city council, community agencies, PPACG-mobility coalition, and investors played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

SAFETY

People want safe neighborhoods where children, seniors, families and individuals can feel secure and healthy as they come and go to work, school, or engage with friends and community opportunities. (aspirations)

But they are concerned that there is an increase in sprawl that diminishes the response time of police, an increase in the homeless population which is expanding beyond the downtown area and into neighborhoods, and the lack of lighting on roads, in neighborhoods and on trails. (main concern)

As people talk more about these concerns, they talk about the discomfort of military police patrolling the downtown area or the need to carry weapons in order to protect their family or the concern for an increase in drug related crimes and safety issues due to new marijuana law that passed, and the increase in mental health issues in our region that go unattended. (*specific issues*)

They say that we need to focus on creating more neighborhood watch programs, freeing up the ER from nonemergency patients, getting to know our neighbors and positioning police stations in high crime areas. (*actions*)

And if police, neighborhood watch programs, military, and government played a part in those actions, folks would be more likely to trust the effort and the step forward. (groups)

Questions? Contact Carrie McKee Cramm, VP of Community Impact
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