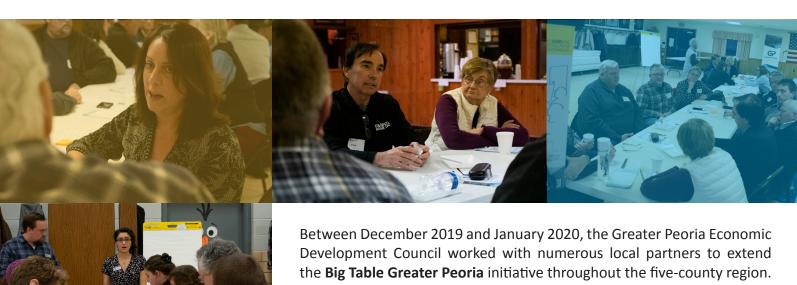
THE RURAL BIG MATTERS

Five counties. Five conversations. One region working together.



Development Council worked with numerous local partners to extend the **Big Table Greater Peoria** initiative throughout the five-county region. Neighbors joined together to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing rural and small town communities in Greater Peoria. Each meeting was open to the public as a place to openly discuss issues and propose strategies that support community and economic development.





240
Participants

from

Zip codes



Survey Results

Response rate 38.33% | Male 51.09% | Female 48.91%

97% white | 2% African American or Black | 1% Latinx or Hispanic

Survey participants rated **rural development** on the following factors using a five-point scale where **1** = "strongly disagree" and **5** = "strongly agree."

There is a significant need to improve rural communities and development for the future success of the Greater Peoria Region.

4.7

There are opportunities for improving rural communities in the Greater Peoria region.

4.4

Demands have changed significantly for rural communities and economic development in the last decade.

4.4

A Variety of Topics

The event participants identified the discussion topics important to their communities. After creating a list of topics, table were designated for each discussion and participants chose which table(s) to join. Over the five events, a range of issues were discussed and many were **recurring topics**:

- Natural Resources
- Local Assets & Tourism
- Job Retention & Creation
- Small Business Development
- Education

Strengths

- Industrial Hemp
- Infrastructure & Broadband
- Quality of Life
- Focusing Business Attraction
- Childcare
- Grocery Stores
- Entrepreneurship
- Senior Housing
- Local Foods Infrastructure
- Improving Quality of Life
- Historic Preservation
- Agriculture & Agtech
- Youth Engagement & Mentorship
- Senior Food Security
- Bike and pedestrian transportation
- Improving Communication with Government

	Weakiresses
Affordable places to live and do business	Broadband still lacking in certain areas
Many exceptional school districts	Closures of grocery stores and other local businesses
Premium agricultural assets	Lack of startup and small business support and resources
Tourism assets (natural resources and historic places)	Small town economic development capacity
Community spirit and close relationships	Pockets of persistent poverty
Opportunities	Threats
Opportunities Business attraction: agriculture and logistics	Threats Outmigration of residents, especially youth
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Business attraction: agriculture and logistics	Outmigration of residents, especially youth Aging population and workforce
Business attraction: agriculture and logistics Retain and attract retirees	Outmigration of residents, especially youth Aging population and workforce

Weaknesses

What's next?

The Greater Peoria EDC is incorporating all the input gathered at at Big Table Greater Peoria events into the **2020 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**. The CEDS provides our region with a road map to improving the regional economy. It also serves as a line of communication to resource partners and funding bodies. Learn more about the CEDS process and document at **www.cedscentral.com**. Additional outreach will continue with all participants and regional community and economic development partners to build on the momentum created through the Big Table Greater Peoria initiative.

