

Highlights Of Written Responses (616 returned surveys or 25%)

8. Which best describes how Peru has changed since you moved here?

Please explain why you believe this way:

People

Responding _____ Comment

- 44 - Increase in overall (business) services offered & available in town
- 37 - Like the small town atmosphere, scenic
- 35 - High property & school taxes
- 30 - Quality of school district, Good (17)/ Poor (13)
- 29 - Pace of growth has been good
- 21 - Too much residential development/ Undesired growth/ Undesirable businesses
- 20 - Good, friendly people
- 17 - Loss of farmland & open space & habitat/ Loss of small town appeal
- 15 - Number of quality homes built in recent years, population increase - positive
- 14 - Quality of life/ Great neighborhoods/ Safe, clean, friendly
- 11 - Safety concerns/ Increase in crime/ Vandalism
- 10 - What has changed was done in a way that is not noticeable
- 7 - Property values, structures deteriorating
- 7 - Town government - Does not care/ Have failed in duties (5)/ Doing a good job (2)
- 7 - Increased traffic, trucks & speeding
- 6 - The town does not attract many new businesses (uncertain zoning & application)
- 5 - Nothing to keep people here/ Need more jobs, town functions, culture, recreation
- 5 - Regulations have increased - negative

Summary: People responding to the survey see both positive and negative changes taking place in Peru. On the positive side, a lot of people liked more services and businesses in town and continue to like the small town atmosphere, and the pace of growth. Others feel property and school taxes have increased, that there is too much growth, and that there has been a loss of farmland, open space, and small town appeal. Some feel there are now safety concerns.

9. What do you like least about the Town of Peru?

People

Responding _____ Comment

- 122 - High taxes (water & sewer - 14)
- 30 - Traffic flow/ Trucking traffic through village/ Traffic increase/ Lack of traffic lights/ Speeding/ The 35 mph speed zone by the school/ Stop light was added
- 29 - Sprawl/ Loss of open space/ Too much development
- 26 - Not enough businesses (including restaurants), no jobs
- 24 - Need a youth, teen activity center
- 22 - Lack of law enforcement/ Vandalism - drugs - delinquent youth/ Need curfew
- 19 - The politics, unresponsive town officials

- 18 - Poor water quality, service (no town water or sewer in some areas)
- 16 - Village center lacks character, uniqueness, attractions or actual center
- 16 - Lack of zoning enforcement/ Noise ordinance needed (5)
- 16 - Mobile homes/ Trailers/ Double-wides (location)
- 15 - Manure smell & pollution, run-off from the large farming operations
- 13 - School district needs improvement
- 13 - Deterioration of properties (and abandoned vehicles)
- 12 - Too much regulation/ Zoning/ Not home business friendly
- 11 - Lack of attention to road maintenance, tree damage by crews
- 11 - Ugly commercial development (Bear Swamp Road)/ Too much commercial building in what used to be residential area
- 8 - Nothing to do/ Need more culture, activities
- 8 - Need sidewalks & streetlights
- 8 - Animal concerns - (Dogs run loose/ Rat problem - 1)
- 7 - Sidewalks impassable in winter/ Snow plow fills driveways, hits mailbox (2)
- 7 - Lack of recreation
- 5 - Loss of small town character/ Lack of vision, planning (look at Burlington)
- 5 - Poor town services/ No Christmas tree pick-up/ Trees need to be cut back
- 5 - Population increase/ People, unfriendliness
- 5 - Weather (Still evidence of ice storm damage)

Summary: Almost 20% of respondents feel that high taxes are a feature least liked about the town. This was by far, the most common response. Other common responses include traffic problems, sprawl, lack of services and businesses, lack of teen recreational opportunities, safety issues, politics, poor water quality, lack of character and attractions in the village center, enforcement issues, mobile homes, and impact from large farm operations.

10. What do you like most about the Town of Peru?

People

Responding _____ Comment

- 215 - Small town atmosphere - rural setting - quiet - scenic - Lake
- 150 - People - friendly, caring, community oriented, close-knit
- 56- Location
- 39- Needs for daily living are met (churches, park, library, businesses & services)
- 31 - Safety, low crime
- 29 - Quality of life/ Good place to live
- 27 - Good schools
- 18 - Open space/ Wildlife & access to State land
- 12 - Road maintenance
- 11 - Fire department personnel, good emergency response
- 11 - Youth commission
- 7 - Town representation/ Progressive looking future/ Good town leadership
- 5 - Religious institutions

Summary: The top characteristics that people liked the most about Peru were the small town character and rural setting (35%) and the caring and friendly community (24%). Location, proximity to services that meet daily needs, a safe area, quality of life and good schools were other top responses to this question.

11. Are you serviced by public water?

Please explain any concerns with your water:

People

Responding _____ Comment

39 - Poor water quality/ Not healthy to drink/ Tastes bad/ Smell

14 - Water tax very high

10 - Color/ Brown water in spring/ Not clear water/ Yellow

8 - Agricultural run-off/ Pesticides, cow manure

8 - Hard with organic infiltration

8- Iron content

7 - Concerns over boil water orders (frequency & not issued in a timely manner)

6 - Low pressure

5 - Chlorine levels

Summary: For those who are served by public water, the concerns were poor water quality, high water taxes, concerns about agricultural run-off influencing water quality, hard water, iron content, low pressure and chlorine levels.

Are you concerned with water quality generally in the Town?

If yes – what is your concern?

People

Responding _____ Comment

46 - Maintain water quality/ Agricultural run-off, Orchard residue, Manure spreaders/
Keep pollutants out/ Septic/ Groundwater contamination/ Ausable dump

45- Fishing - an adequate pH for fish life

16 - More growth/ Can infrastructure maintain continued growth (who pays for it)?

15 - Lake & tributaries, Mussels, Mercury/ Phosphates & sewage in river/ Shoreline erosion

8 - Color of tap water

4 - Too much chlorine

5 - Road salt

Summary: For those participants that answered yes to the question about whether they were concerned with water quality generally in the town, the two most prevalent concerns were the need to maintain water quality and concerns about contamination from farms, septic, and the Ausable dump. People were also concerned that the pH was dangerous for fish life. Other concerns included lake pollution, color of water, and chlorine and road salt contamination.

12. The Town must, by law, allow for adult use entertainment businesses through our zoning ordinance. Given this fact, where do you believe is the most appropriate area or areas in the Town for these types of businesses?

People

Responding _____ Comment

196 – Nowhere/ Disapprove of this type of business open any/ Change the zoning ordinance! Do not allow any of these types of businesses to exist by law/ There is no appropriate place

113 - Outside town center (downtown)/ Away from schools & churches/ Sufficient distance from most of population/ Outlying, remote, commercially zoned areas

52 - Bear Swamp Road

24 – Downtown, center of village where commercial growth already exists

21 - Route 9

19 - Near Northway

16 - Route 22 (22B – 2)

14 – East lake area/ Lakeshore with other businesses

10 – Anywhere zoned for business

7 - North of village

Summary: About 32% of respondents indicated that this type of land use should not be allowed at all anywhere. Other suggestions were offered including locations outside the town center and areas of denser population and away from schools and churches (18%). Bear Swamp Road (because there are already businesses there) was favored by about 8% of respondents. Some feel the opposite and indicated locations such as where commercial growth already exists in the hamlet. Route 9, near the Northway, along Route 22, along with other lakeshore businesses, anywhere zoned for business and north of the village as appropriate.

13. The Town owns the old stone structure (Heyworth building) and surrounding lands along the Little Ausable River below the bridge in the Town Center. Please provide below ideas you have on how the building could be used.

People

Responding _____ Comment

136 – Historical museum

101 - Community center with youth (teen) center

79 – Park & Recreation (walking & biking/baseball/ pavilion/ playground/ fishing)

48 - Flood zone concerns noted, questioning usability

32 – Cultural/ Art exhibits (Co-op for artists)/ Theater

21 - Senior citizen center

21 - Town hall & offices

17 - Demolish the buildings

17 – Apartments/ Low income & senior housing

- 16 – Offices/ businesses
- 13 - Restaurant
- 12 – Boutiques/ Department store (1)
- 8 – Preserve
- 8 - Sell it
- 7 - Farmers market
- 7 – Educational nature center
- 7 - Visitor’s center
- 7 – Meeting/ banquet hall

Summary: A historical museum to highlight town history or a community center with teen recreational opportunities were a favored use of this structure. Other recreational activities were also suggested. About 8% of participants questioned whether anything should be done with it due to flooding issues. There were a wide range of other suggestions for this building including town uses (town offices) and commercial activities such as restaurant, farmers market, nature center, etc. Eight people indicated it should be preserved and another eight felt the building should be sold.

Please provide any ideas for how the large area of land behind this building, also owned by the Town, could be used.

People

Responding Comment

- 185 – Park/ Picnic area/ Pavilion
- 119 - Recreational area (hiking/ biking/ roller blade/ tennis/ pool/ basketball/ volleyball/ batting cages/ softball fields/ horseshoe)
- 33– Ice skating – skate boarding (11)
- 23- Leave it wild/ Natural area/ Fishing access
- 20 - Flood zone concerns noted
- 20 – Expand playground
- 15 - Farmers market/ Craft shows, flea markets
- 14 - Community garden
- 9 - Senior citizen housing or center
- 8 –Expand - Footbridge/ Connect by a walkway under the bridge - more park space
- 8 – Youth, teen oriented
- 7 – Concerts, plays, cultural events
- 7 - Sell it

Summary: Most people responded that this land is suitable for a variety of recreational activities. Park, picnic area, playground, active recreational activities, garden, cultural events, and teen oriented events were all suggestions for use of this land. As before, there are still some people concerned about flooding issues, and a small number desire to sell the land.

18. In what ways do you believe the Town can better utilize the Little Ausable Park (sometimes referred to as the “Gazebo Park”)?

People

Responding _____ Comment

46 – Activities, events/ Lunches, barbeque, chili cook-off / Entertainment/ Town Day/ Dancing/ Plays/ Fair/ Informational speakers/ Summer reading fest/ Annual function to honor youth & seniors/ Culture/ Ice cream social

42- More concerts

39 – Better ice skating (warming hut, sledding – need straw bales)

26 – Landscaping/ Lighting/ Fish pond, park benches & trees/ Walkway – path, trail

25 – Expand - to land on other side of the bridge – to Heyworth area

20 – Improve Picnic area (Town picnic)

10 – Expand & improve playground equipment

10 - Rent out (Build a hall)

9 - Skateboard park

7 - Farmers market/ Flea market

7 –Recreation – swimming/ Walking & cross country ski

6 – Fishing (Stock pond with trout – 3)

5 - Keep it clean & well maintained

Summary: Participants had a variety of ideas on how to better utilize this park. About 7% said more activities and events while another 7% said hold concerts there. Improved ice skating, better landscaping and walking paths, expansion to the other side of the road to the Heyworth building and improved picnic areas were also common suggestions.

22. For which of the following services would you be willing to pay additional property taxes or user fees?

People

Responding _____ Comment

29 – None – taxes are high enough

13 – Support increase in services but not in taxes

9 – Secure state & federal funds, grants

8 - With what we are paying in taxes now, the town should be able to spend some of the money on these needs.

7 - User fees are fine

- 8 - Citizen involvement with government/ Communication between town board & residents/ Encourage participation – this survey
- 7 - Pursue grants & funding
- 7 - More restaurants
- 7 - Get rid of smell & run-off generated by liquid manure usage
- 6 - Keep mobile homes in trailer parks – more consideration when re-zoning
- 6 – Cultural events/ Museum/ Places to display local talent, art works
- 6 – Another grocery store
- 5 - Finish installing gas lines/ Access to natural gas
- 5 - Safety for pedestrians/ Sidewalks/ New shoulders on town roads

Summary: The top response to the question of what important opportunities can be taken advantage of in the Town of Peru was to bring in more business. Comments centered around encouraging clean industry and retail, cottage industry and home occupations, niche markets and boutiques, and to bring employment opportunities (17%). Also of great importance to 16% of those responding is the need to develop a recreational area for outside sports and activities. Thirteen percent feel it is important to save farmland and open space (including scenic and environmental assets) to preserve the town’s rural character. Others have very different views. Fifty-seven or 9%) desired controlled growth and development, use of design guidelines and a comprehensive plan. Another 45 people felt that the town should work on aesthetics and beautification. Forty persons wished to keep taxes under control and increase the tax base. The need for a youth/ teen activity center, a community center, the need to maintain water quality and steadily upgrade the supply, the desire to design a unique, functional town center and the need to expand the commercial district and give incentives were each noted by many people as important opportunities. Others also wished to increase the population with quality residential housing.

24. Please list the three most important threats that you feel face the town of Peru in the next ten years. (Threats are factors or situations that can affect the Town in a negative way and prevent you from reaching your goals.)

People

<u>Responding</u>	<u>Comment</u>
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119	Sprawl - commercial & residential/ Over development & over population/ uncontrolled growth
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106	High taxes
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63	Lack of police presence/ Controlling delinquents, vandalism (speeding, drugs)
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47	Loss of farmland, orchards, open space, woodlands, lakeshore, wetlands
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33	Lack of business/ Economy/ Federal & State fiscal crisis/ Loss of jobs
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33	Adult use entertainment
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29	Expansion beyond capabilities of utilities - Maintain water quality
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28	Loss of historic & small town character/ Aesthetics - Becoming too commercial looking/ Maintain village setting/ Historic preservation (Peru Hardware)
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- 27- Too many mobile home trailers & doublewides
- 23 – Traffic issues/ Truck traffic/ Speed limits
- 23 – Road maintenance & plowing, poor
- 22 – Pollution, contamination from farms/ Liquid cow manure/ Smell/ Factory farms
- 21 - Lack of youth (teen) facilities & services
- 21 – Not improving school system
- 20 - Deterioration of homes & properties (also commercial), junk cars
- 18 - Large industry not needed
- 18 - Zoning & enforcement needed
- 17 - Too much regulation/ Zoning laws (ordinances) too strict
- 13 – Town Politics/ Unresponsive officials
- 13 - Lack of a long-range building & growth plan, Not implementing this comprehensive plan
- 12- Town unfriendly to small businesses/ Lack of commercial development
- 12 – Lack of recreation
- 10 - Franchises
- 9 – Town spending too much money (reduce # of water & sewer dept. employees)
- 7- Too many businesses (especially Bear Swamp Rd, consider wetlands & Route 22)
- 6 – Need affordable housing/ No place to rent
- 6 – Maintain community spirit & support/ Underutilization of community facilities
- 6 – No regulations for new buildings & subdivisions
- 5 – Animal concerns – Loose dogs/ Rat situation on North Bend (1)
- 5 - Lack of senior center & housing, services
- 5 - Big box stores

Summary: There were two common responses to this question: About 19% feel that the number one threat is over-development, namely residential and commercial sprawl and another 17% feel increased tax burdens are the most important threat. Concern for a lack of police presence, loss of farmland, orchards, open space, woodlands, lakeshore and wetlands, lack of business jobs and a poor economy, and the possible entrance of adult entertainment into the town were other major concerns. Other common perceived threats included expansion beyond the capabilities of existing utilities and compromising water quality, loss of historic and small town character, too many mobile home trailers and double-wides located in town, traffic issues and the increase in trucking traffic through town, road maintenance and plowing services, pollution specific to large farms, lack of youth facilities and services, not improving the school system and deterioration of homes and properties (including commercial properties).

There were 144 Additional Comments (See full accounting of responses, attached).