COMMUNITY QUESTIONS

To add a unique twist to networking, individuals from communities of place or interest were invited to pose challenging questions concerning the future of their place. On Monday evening these questions will be showcased alongside the academic posters for the premiere “mash-up” social event of the conference. Experience the influx of ideas that these questions spark and help the Rural Futures Institute facilitate new, action-oriented partnerships that tap the potential of collaboration between communities and student interns, graduate students, faculty, and partners.

COMMUNITIES OF INTEREST

How can communities plan for livestock production so that it has a positive impact on the community as a whole? The Nebraska Pork Producers Association is a grassroots, incorporated, non-profit organization established in 1961. It was developed to promote the pork industry through the enhancement of consumer demand, producer education, and research.

Representing the community: Kyla Wize, Ali Steuer and Willow Holoubek

Rural communities depend on a sense of place to provide cohesion between generations and across cultures. How we can provide experiences with art that preserve and acknowledge a community’s existing cultural heritage and at the same time integrate new cultures?
The University of Nebraska–Lincoln Department of Art and Art History is forming a partnership with the Biological Station at Cedar Point with the following goals: to consider possibilities for growth and understanding, broaden our perceptions of the natural world and rural communities, strengthen our work to build networks for future recruitment of students and engagement with diverse communities. These benefits are long-term, both as we become cultural interpreters of where we live and as teachers who hope to share values about art and humanities with a broad audience.

Representing the community: Sandra Williams, Wendy Katz and Sara McDonald

How can we encourage greater awareness of personal health in rural communities?
Valley County Health System is a critical access hospital located in Ord, Nebraska that has been providing access and availability of healthcare services to Central Nebraskans for more than 45 years. The health system also maintains three satellite clinics, which offer an extensive range of healthcare services not often found in a rural hospital.

Representing the community: Becky Ries and Tracy Reiner
How do communities balance opposing interests between livestock producers and residents living in the community?
The Nebraska Pork Producers Association is a grassroots, incorporated, non-profit organization established in 1961. It was developed to promote the pork industry through the enhancement of consumer demand, producer education and research.

Representing the community: Larry Sitzman, Al Stephens and Leanna Gubbels

COMMUNITIES OF PLACE

How can we ensure essential community infrastructure needs are met while also providing quality of life amenities?
Macy, Nebraska a reservation town with a population of 1,200 is in need of a grocery store and healthy water supply which is something that neighboring town Santee has, along with a quasi-grocery store. Bancroft is a town of 500 people with some operational businesses; however it is lacking a grocery store. The communities are close in proximity but are lacking some of the essential life elements.

Representing the community: Michael Oltrogge and Jeff Hart

How can rural communities preserve their historical roots while also fulfilling the needs of future generations?
Larned, Kansas is a town with a population of 4,000 in central Kansas. Due to its location, it has always been an agricultural community, but the state facility located outside of town makes it a medical hub also.

Representing the community: Lauren Long, Lindsay Long and Allison Bentley

How can a community embrace technology to generate higher paying, higher skilled jobs, strengthen the local economy, and attract younger professionals?
Scottsbluff, Nebraska is the largest city in Western Nebraska. It has a population of 15,000 and is adjacent to Gering with a population of approximately 8,000, making it a retail hub. Its largest employer is Regional West Medical Center. Minorities make up 30 percent of the population, primarily Hispanic and the overall median income is $35,000 annually.

Representing the community: Marcy Mendez, Jessie Lopez and Eli Aguilar

What are best practices for integration of digital technology in a rural business community?
Cozad, Nebraska is a community of about 4,000 with access to technology from Cozad Telephone Company. The community will soon have fiber to every residence and business within the city and community residents would like to see maximum utilization and integration of the fiber.

Representing the community: Robyn Geiser, Judy Eggleston and Lindsay Erickson
What unique social/economic incentives or opportunities can aging rural communities use to successfully attract the younger generations?
Thayer County, Nebraska is a rural region with approximately 5,200 people living in 11 communities. The population has been consistently declining in all but one of these communities for the past 20 years. As business owners age and near retirement, there is an enormous opportunity for new entrepreneurs and young leaders.

Representing the community: Jeremy Voss, Deb Craig and Jeannine Voss

How can people involved in rural development programs avoid duplication of effort?
Valley County Nebraska is a progressive community that is passionate about the development of a sustainable future for the area. Residents are aggressively involved in every aspect of rural development including business development, access to higher education, youth retention and workforce development.

Representing the community: Trevor Lee and Bob Stowell

How can communities capitalize on civic celebrations as a way to build a sense of community pride, honor the past, and capture the future?
McCook, Nebraska is a service center for Southwest Nebraska and Northwest Kansas. With a population of nearly 8,000 it is everything you could hope for in a community. Friendly people, well-kept city parks, plenty of outdoor recreation, community events throughout the year, excellent educational and medical services — it all combines into a great place to live and work.

Representing the community: Cloyd Clark, Rex Nelson and Maggie Repass

How can a progressive community with ample skilled and professional workforce opportunities establish partnerships to aggressively recruit new talent and provide rural relocation incentives?
Valley County, Nebraska is a progressive community that is passionate about the development of a sustainable future for the area. They are aggressively involved in every aspect of rural development including business development, access to higher education, youth retention and workforce development.

Representing the community: Kristina Foth, Crystal Ramm and Joel Kokes

How do small communities deal with problems associated with dilapidated housing?
Fillmore County Nebraska has a population of 5,771 and the median resident age is 46.8. The county has three quality K-12 schools and an array of businesses and industries that offer a variety of opportunities for its citizens. U.S. Highway 81 runs through Fillmore County and is located south of the interstate allowing for quick access and transport.

Representing the community: Eric Kamler, Christin Lovegrove and Patt Lentfer
What financial and other resources exist for the demolition, disposal, or rehabilitation of vacant homes and lots in rural communities?
Bassett, Nebraska, the county seat of Rock County, is located in north central Nebraska and is framed by the unique and majestic Sandhills and lies in one of the most scenic areas of Nebraska, the Niobrara Valley. Bassett is 43 miles from the South Dakota border and is prime country for agriculture.

Representing the community: Kristine Gale and Homer Buell

How do we create or build a sense of belonging in our rural communities that will engage all ages, income levels, races and religions?
Gage County, Nebraska is located south of Lincoln. With a population of approximately 23,500 the community is standing strong with little population change in the last 50 years. Like the majority of rural communities, the largest employers are agriculture and health care.

Representing the community: Christina Lyons, Jane Esau and Nicole Stoner

How can agricultural-based communities partner with the RFI to better identify and promote entrepreneurial opportunities that target young farmers/ranchers who have a need for additional resources and a desire to farm/ranch?
Valley County, Nebraska is a progressive community that is passionate about the development of a sustainable future for the area. Residents are aggressively involved in every aspect of rural development including business development, access to higher education, youth retention and workforce development.

Representing the community: Bryant Foth and Luke Kovarik

How do you ensure that all new young professionals feel welcome and integrated in your community? Are there different strategies for recruiting alumni versus non-alumni to your community?
West Point, Nebraska located in the northeast is home to approximately 3,600 residents. It has seen an influx of alumni returning into the community. Although the community relies heavily on agricultural resources, it also has a diverse industry sector including manufacturing, healthcare and education making it an ideal place to live and work.

Representing the community: Tina Bitegh Bi Ndong, Sheena Kampschneider and Chris Kreikemeier

How do small communities transition from older housing and get developers and investors to build affordable single-family and multi-family housing so they can grow?
Sidney, Nebraska is a fast growing community with over $300 million in new economic development projects completed over the past 15 years. Sidney is in western Nebraska, with four major highways and three railroads, and is nine miles from Colorado and 59 miles from Wyoming. With more jobs than people, the town is growing in population, particularly in young singles and young families.

Representing the community: Connie Hancock
How do you structure a sustainable regional development effort so that all communities and their diverse members and partners share in the benefits?
Columbus, Nebraska is a regional trade center with a population of 22,000. The community has some 6,000 manufacturing jobs requiring a growing regional labor pool. The region has a rapidly growing immigrant population which has provided opportunities and challenges.

Representing the community: K.C. Belitz, David Bell, Allan Vyhnalek and Dee Hanson

How can rural communities facilitate partnerships that empower and encourage sustainable local funding mechanisms to support local growth and development?
Valley County, Nebraska is a progressive community that is passionate about the development of a sustainable future for the area. Residents are aggressively involved in every aspect of rural development including business development, access to higher education, youth retention and workforce development.

Representing the community: Dahn Hagge, Heidi Proskocil and Jean Stowell