

# FLINT HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL (FHRC)

## FUTURE POTENTIAL SCENARIOS - THINK-TANK REPORT

FLINT HILLS REGION, KANSAS, USA

FEBRUARY 2023







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This report summarizes the outcomes of the Future Scenarios Think-Tank held on December 2, 2022, and January 20, 2023. Over 50 stakeholders participated in the Think-Tank and developed the scenarios presented in this report. This report has been produced as part of the Flint Hills Regional Council Sustainability Plan and Roadmap project which aims to provide a 5-year Sustainability Plan to ensure the continuation and expansion of the Flint Hills Regional Council.

This report and the associated data analysis are available on the project portal:  
[lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/](https://lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/)

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REGION**





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# 1.0 | INTRODUCTION

The Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC) has been embarking on a planning process through late 2022 and into early 2023 to produce a 5-year Sustainability Plan to ensure the continuation and expansion of FHRC. However, the backdrop is also the future of the Flint Hills region.

This planning process has been funded by the Dept. of Defense (DoD) Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC). This planning work intends to strengthen and enhance FHRC's ability to support the Ft. Riley US Army Base's military mission, the soldiers and their families and the surrounding communities.

The outcome of the project will be the FHRC 5-year Sustainability Plan which will assess the operation and administration of FHRC and prioritize services that FHRC should retain and add that will result in an ongoing and effective partnership with the Ft. Riley US Army Military Base and promote the quality of life and economic progress of the communities, businesses and citizens of the Flint Hills, Kansas.

This report looks at both the future of the Flint Hills region and the continued efficiency of FHRC in ensuring that the Flint Hills region is a place which will retain and grow its population and workforce.

This scenario-based Think-Tank report summarizes the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap Think-Tank workshops that took place on December 2, 2022, and January 20, 2023. The Think-Tank workshops were well attended with larger participation numbers at the January 2023 workshop. The components of the planning work to date have comprised of:



## LISTENING SESSIONS

One on one/group listening sessions were held with key stakeholders across the Flint Hills region to ascertain the issues that the region is facing, but also the opportunities that the region offers.



## BRANDING

Future iQ worked with the core FHRC team to produce branding specific to the purpose of reinventing the region and FHRC in relation to the region.



## DEC 2022 RETREAT/THINK TANK #1

The first part of the Think-Tank was held during the FHRC December 2022 Retreat.



## JAN 2023 THINK-TANK #2

The second part of the Think-Tank was held in mid-January 2023.



## THINK-TANK PARTICIPANT HEATMAPS

Think-Tank participants completed heatmaps at the end of the Think-Tank to express their Expected and Preferred future scenarios, looking out to 2030. The results are examined in this report.

The FHRC Sustainability Plan and Road Map Think-Tank was an opportunity for stakeholders to take a 'deep dive' into the future of the Flint Hills region and the future of FHRC through an inclusive and transparent scenario-planning process. This was just one step in the extensive planning process.





## 2.0 | HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

This report lays out the findings from the Think-Tank workshop, however more details about the overall planning process can be viewed at the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap portal <https://lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/>.

The FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap planning process started with background exploration and analysis, through to building a range of future possible directions for the future of the Flint Hills region and FHRC. Initial stakeholder listening sessions were important to ascertain the current situation in the Flint Hills region and why the 5-year Sustainability Plan is important for the FHRC. The planning process then moved into building plausible scenarios for the future of the Flint Hills region. This work represents robust 'future thinking' where stakeholders considered possible directions and the impacts and consequences of those directions. The process will then drill down deeper into what people saw as the optimal or preferred future during the Focus Group sessions. This understanding helps lay the groundwork for ascertaining 'how we get there'. The FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap will be delivered in April 2023, after the process of in-depth focus groups, FHRC board meeting presentations/interviews, Stakeholder surveys and a Future Summit.

The importance of collaboration, equity, and planning for the future have been highlighted as critically important to building resiliency for the Flint Hills communities as they look to the grand challenges ahead.

### FHRC SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND ROADMAP

#### Steps in the process

Information gathered from the Stakeholder Survey #1

Introduce the Think-Tank process and the goals for the process.

Identify macro trends shaping the future of the Flint Hills region

Identify key drivers and clusters of drivers shaping the future of the Flint Hills region

Create plausible future scenarios for the Flint Hills region

Identify Expected, Least Desired and Preferred Futures for the Flint Hills region. Identification of the next steps in the planning process

#### Sections of the report

Brief discussion on the Stakeholder Survey #1 (Chapter 3)

Think-Tank Workshop (Chapter 4)

Forces Shaping the Future – Macro Trends (Chapter 5)

Key Drivers Identification and Identifying Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers; Cluster Map Development (Chapters 6 - 8)

Creating the Scenario Framework (Chapter 9)

Expected, Least Desired, and Preferred Futures (Chapter 10-11)



## 3.0 | STAKEHOLDER SURVEY #1 RESULTS

Stakeholder survey #1 was conducted to gather insights into the stakeholders' perceptions of the Flint Hills region. Approximately 180 people responded to this first survey, which was promoted on the project portal, FHRC Social Media and in the local press.

The survey ran December 2022 through to the end of January 2023. The survey was hosted on the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap portal at [lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap](https://lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap).

Stakeholders were asked standard profiling questions; however open-ended questions were also used to enable individuals to give their full thoughts on the future of the Flint Hills Region. These open-ended questions probed stakeholders about what the best thing was about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region, what changes should be made to improve living and/or working in the region, what are the most exciting future opportunities for the region and which institutions/organizations were seen as the leaders in the region. Further questions were asked about the importance of a shared vision and shared values to the future of the Flint Hills region as well as the current direction and speed of change in the region. The survey responses can be filtered by age, zip code, county, ethnicity, and length of time living and working in the region.

Responses from the Stakeholder Survey #1 were fascinating. All of the almost 180 respondents took time and energy to give their thoughts to the myriad of open-ended questions. This enabled the respondents to give their views in an unhindered manner.







## 3.1 | IMPORTANCE OF A SHARED VISION AND SHARED VALUES

Survey respondents were asked how important it is to have a shared vision and shared values for the future of the Flint Hills region. They were asked:

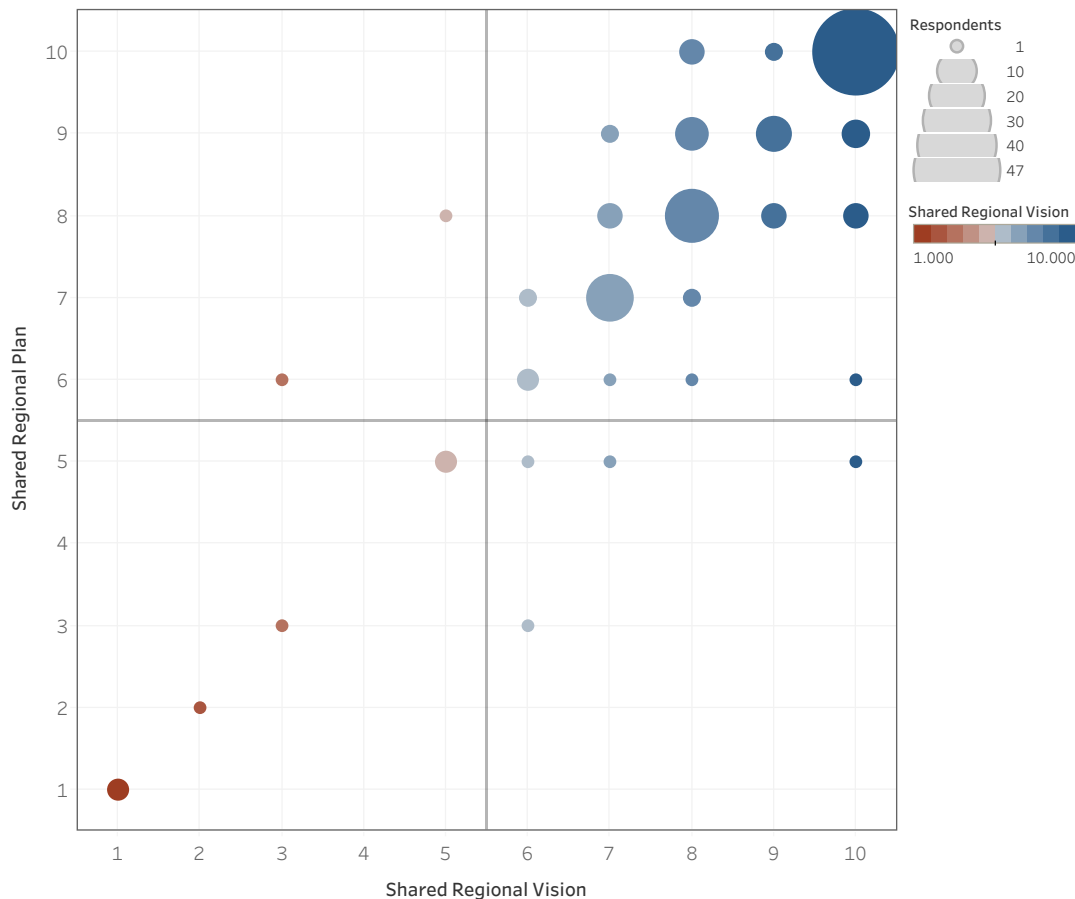
How important is it to have a SHARED REGIONAL VISION for the future of the Flint Hills region?

Scale 1 = Not at all important; 10 = Extremely important

How important do you think it is to identify SHARED REGIONAL VALUES for Flint Hills region?

Scale 1 = Not at all important; 10 = Extremely important

The results to these questions were combined to produce the following chart:



DataInsight

- The size of the circle denotes the popularity of response. The chart shows that respondents felt that both a Shared Regional Vision and Shared Regional Values were highly important as this was the largest circle at 10 on both axes.
- These results can be filtered on the portal according to age, zip code, county, ethnicity, and length of time living and working in the Flint Hills region.

## 3.2 | CURRENT DIRECTION AND RELATIVE PERFORMANCE IN THE FLINT HILLS REGION

Survey respondents were asked how satisfied or concerned they were about the current direction and relative performance of the Flint Hills region. They were asked:

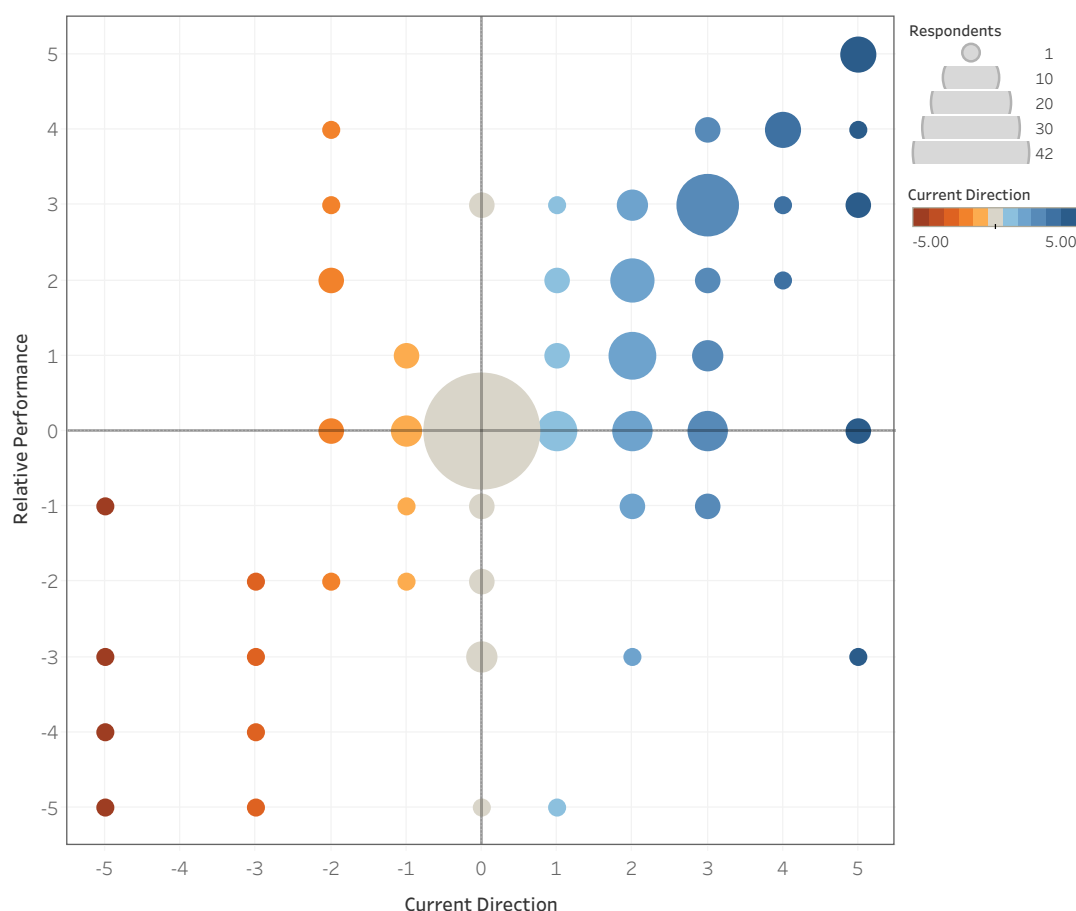
How satisfied or concerned are you about the way the region is changing and the overall current direction of the Flint Hills region?

Scale: -5=Very Concerned; 0=Neutral; +5=Very Satisfied

How satisfied or concerned are you about the current relative performance of the Flint Hills region, compared to other regional areas?

Scale: -5=Very Concerned; 0=Neutral; +5=Very Satisfied

The results to these questions were combined to produce the following chart:



DataInsight

| VISUALISE |

- The size of the circle denotes the popularity of response. The chart shows a wide spread of responses from concern about the direction and current relative performance in the lower left of the chart through to satisfaction in the top right of the chart. However the medium (largest circle) was at 0 – Neutral.
- These results can be filtered on the portal according to age, zip code, county, ethnicity, and length of time living and working in the Flint Hills region.



## 3.3 | SATISFACTION AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES IN THE FLINT HILLS REGION

Survey respondents were asked how satisfied they were about living and working in the Flint Hills region and their thoughts on future opportunities in the Flint Hills region. They were asked:

How satisfied are you about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region?

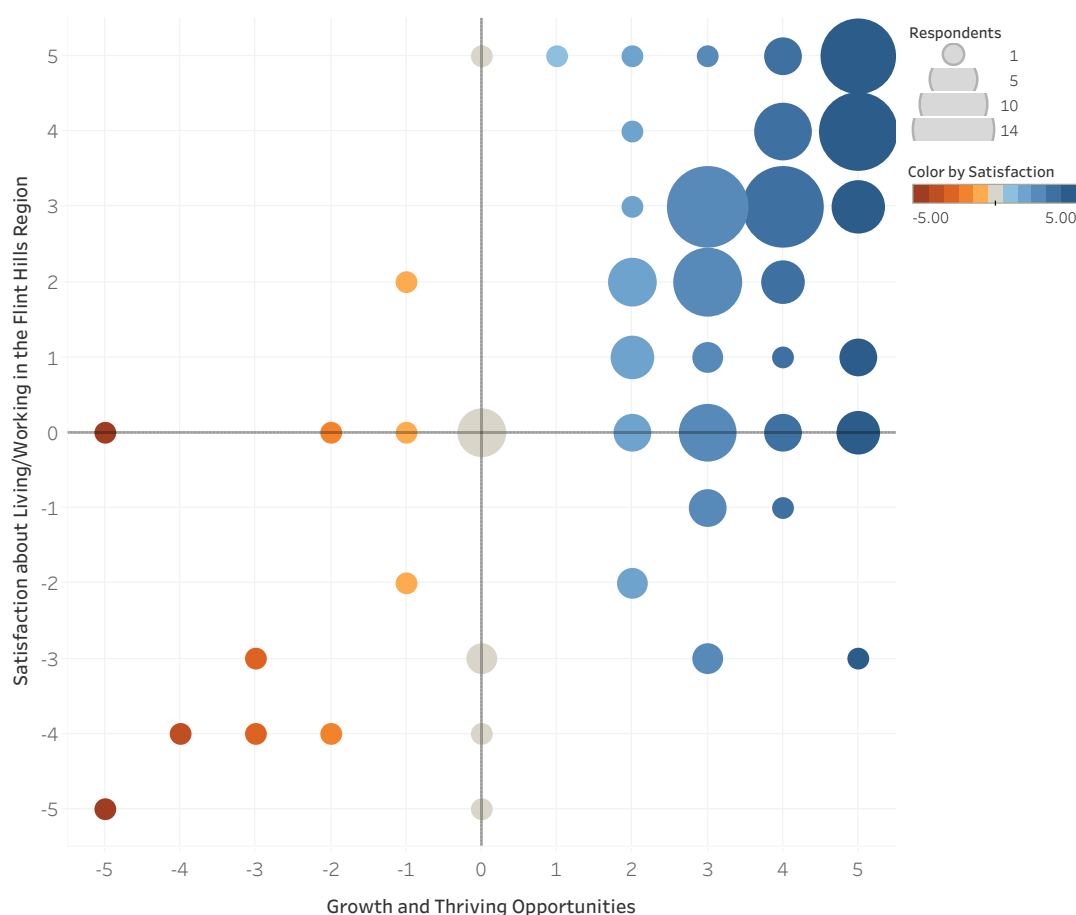
Scale: 1=Very Unsatisfied; 3=Neutral; 5=Very Satisfied

Do you think this region offers you future opportunities to grow and thrive, in your life, interests, career and/or business?

Scale: 1 = Very little future opportunity;

0=Neutral; 10 = Fantastic future opportunity

The results to these questions were combined to produce the following chart:



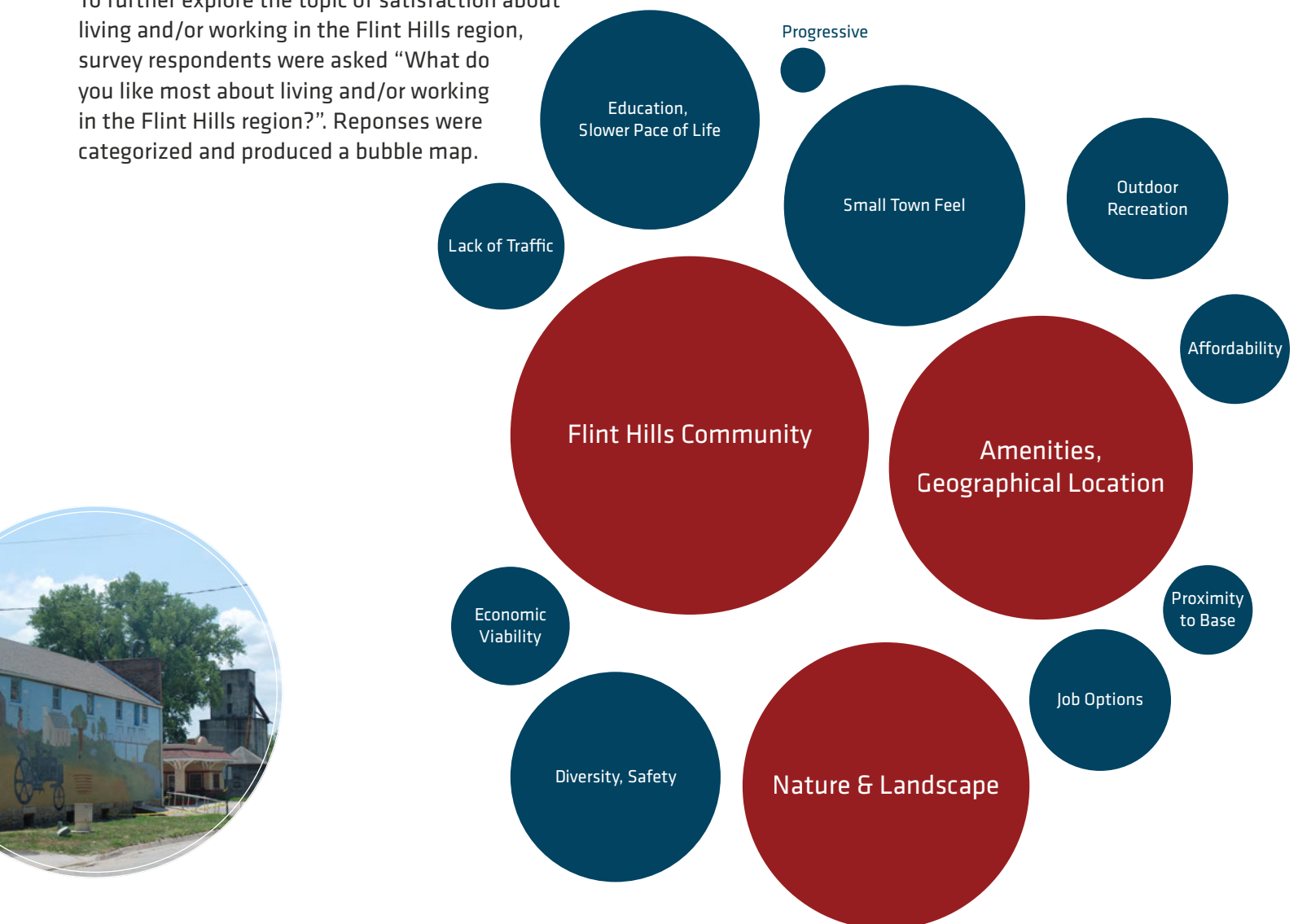
DataInsight

- The size of the circle denotes the popularity of response. The largest circle was in the upper right of the chart. This shows that the majority of respondents felt very positive regarding satisfaction at living/working in the Flint Hills region and future growth opportunities in the region.
- These results can be filtered on the portal according to age, zip code, county, ethnicity, and length of time living and working in the Flint Hills region.



## 3.4 | THE BEST THING ABOUT LIVING AND/OR WORKING IN THE FLINT HILLS REGION

To further explore the topic of satisfaction about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region, survey respondents were asked “What do you like most about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region?”. Responses were categorized and produced a bubble map.



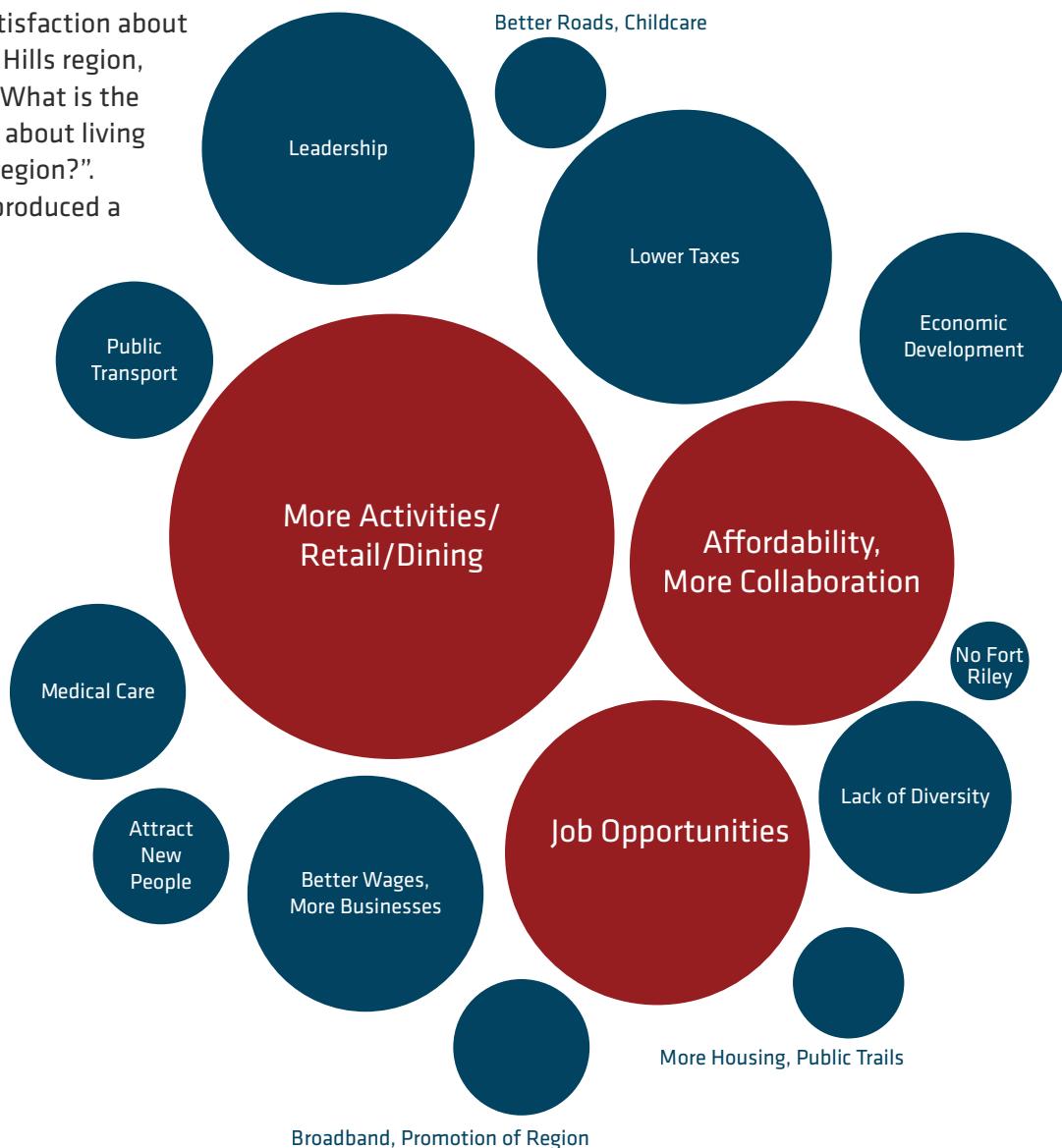
DataInsight

- The open-ended responses were categorized to key themes and the size of the circle denotes the popularity of the key theme.
- The Flint Hills Community, Amenities, Geographical Location and Nature and Landscape were seen as the best things about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region.



## 3.5 | THE ONE THING YOU WOULD CHANGE ABOUT LIVING AND/OR WORKING IN THE FLINT HILLS REGION

To further explore the topic of satisfaction about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region, survey respondents were asked “What is the one thing that you would change about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region?”. Responses were categorized and produced a bubble map.



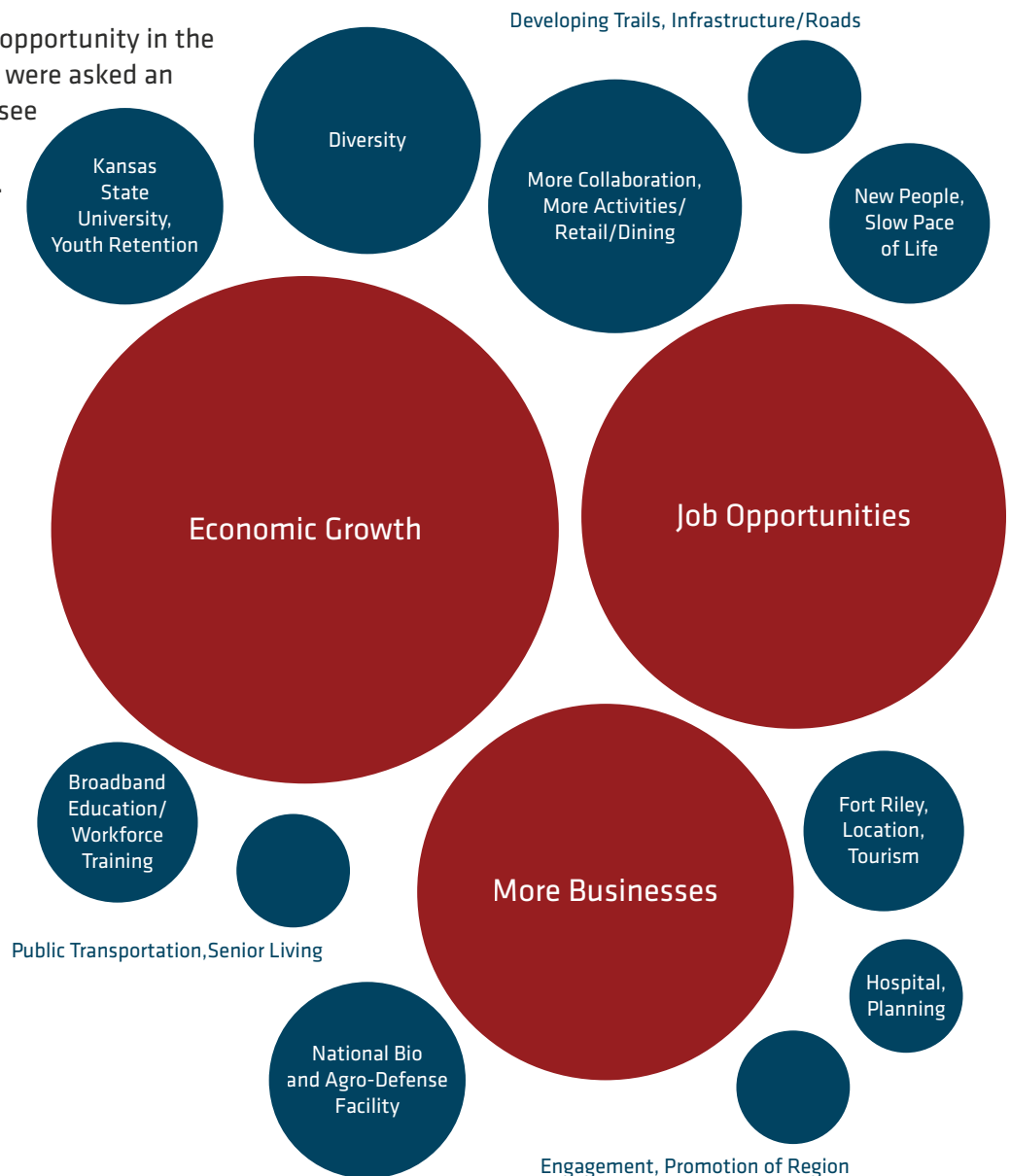
DataInsight

- The open-ended responses were categorized to key themes and the size of the circle denotes the popularity of the key theme.
- More Activities/Retail and Dining along with More Collaboration and Affordability were seen as the key things that people would change about living and/or working in the Flint Hills region, followed by Job Opportunities.



## 3.6 | THE GREATEST FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES WHEN LIVING IN THE FLINT HILLS REGION

To further explore the topic of future opportunity in the Flint Hills region, survey respondents were asked an open-ended question, “What do you see as the greatest future opportunities about living in the Flint Hills region?”. Responses were categorized and produced a bubble map.



DataInsight

- The open-ended responses were categorized to key themes and the size of the circle denotes the popularity of the key theme.
- Economic Growth, Job Opportunities and More Businesses were seen as the greatest future opportunities when living in the Flint Hills region.





Scenario planning provides a way to explore various plausible futures and considers the implications and consequences of different future pathways. This adds a richness and depth to the discussions about the preferred future, and a consideration of the intended and unintended consequences.

## 4.0 | THINK-TANK WORKSHOP

The FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap Think-Tank Workshop was held over two afternoons on December 2, 2022, and January 20, 2023. The scenario-based Think-Tank was a tool to gain a better understanding of priorities and goals that will contribute to the creation of effective strategies and actions. The goal of the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap project is to assess the value proposition that the FHRC provides and increase its strategies to enhance and stabilize the organization and the messaging of the impacts and contributions that FHRC makes to the Flint Hills region. The Think-Tank consisted of:

- A review of global trends and emergent issues and the connection to the Flint Hills region
- Identification of the top 20 key drivers shaping the future of the Flint Hills region
- Ranking of the key drivers (from 1 - 20 in importance to the Flint Hills region)
- Formulation of the different plausible scenario 'spaces' and development of detailed narratives and descriptions of each scenario
- Identification of the preferred and expected futures via Plausibility Mapping

The Think-Tank began with an in-depth presentation on future trends and global conditions before moving on to conduct scenario planning for the Flint Hills region and the role of the FHRC. Future IQ's scenario planning process provides a methodology from which to explore plausible futures and takes into consideration the implications of various future scenarios. The process aimed to:

- Deepen the understanding and examination of how external events and local conditions could shape decision-making
- Identify and understand the key influences, trends, and dynamics that will shape the Flint Hills region and the FHRC looking out to 2030
- Create and describe four plausible long-term scenarios for the Flint Hills region and the FHRC
- Begin exploring alignment around a shared future vision

The scenarios developed during the Think-Tank workshop and outlined in this report are important to provide a framework to discuss future possible outcomes and implications for the Flint Hills region and the FHRC. Workshop deliberations can assist in identifying key actions for the region and how various groups might best contribute to future developments.





## »»»» 5.0 | FORCES SHAPING THE FUTURE – MACRO TRENDS

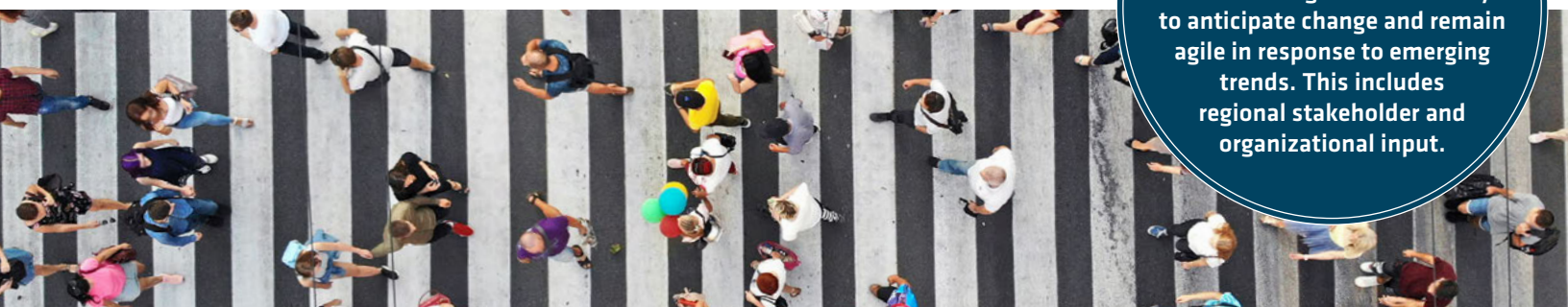
At the Think-Tank, participants explored the forces of change shaping the future of the Midwest and the Flint Hills region, including three key areas of emerging macro trends and forces of change. Perceptions around the nature of the impact of these trends, both in terms of size and timing of impact, were examined to ascertain how important the participants consider the trends. Participants discussed the emerging trends on global, regional and local scales, and related them directly to the Flint Hills region in terms of how well prepared they considered themselves.

Specifically, the key trend areas included:

- Demographics, population and mass urbanization
- Energy, food, water and climate change
- Technology and the speed of change



In the face of accelerating speed of change, the key to the long-term resiliency of the Flint Hills region is the ability to anticipate change and remain agile in response to emerging trends. This includes regional stakeholder and organizational input.







## 6.0 | KEY DRIVERS IDENTIFICATION

With the background of external trends, the Think-Tank participants produced drivers that they considered most likely to shape the future of the Flint Hills region. The drivers had been discussed at a group level and then at the wider workshop level. The scope of each driver was clarified, and any similar drivers were grouped, and new drivers added, until a list eighteen unique key drivers were identified.

### KEY DRIVERS SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE FLINT HILLS REGION, AS IDENTIFIED BY THINK-TANK PARTICIPANTS:

- Willingness for Collaboration
- Future-Orientated Education and Vocation Training
- Leveraging Fort Riley
- Leveraging Emerging Technological Cluster
- Retaining and Returning Population
- Lack of Housing Options, including affordability
- Viability of KSU
- Capturing New Talent
- Availability of Affordable Childcare
- Regional Broadband Network
- Shovel Ready Industrial Land
- Energy Transition
- Changes in Agriculture
- Narrative and Reputation of Region
- Ageing Infrastructure
- Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem
- Alignment of Education System
- Over-Reliance on Public Sector

Drivers are events, trends, developments, catalysts, or forces that actively influence or cause change. The top 18 drivers for the Flint Hills region are seen to shape the region's future.

*Please note that these drivers are not in any particular order.*



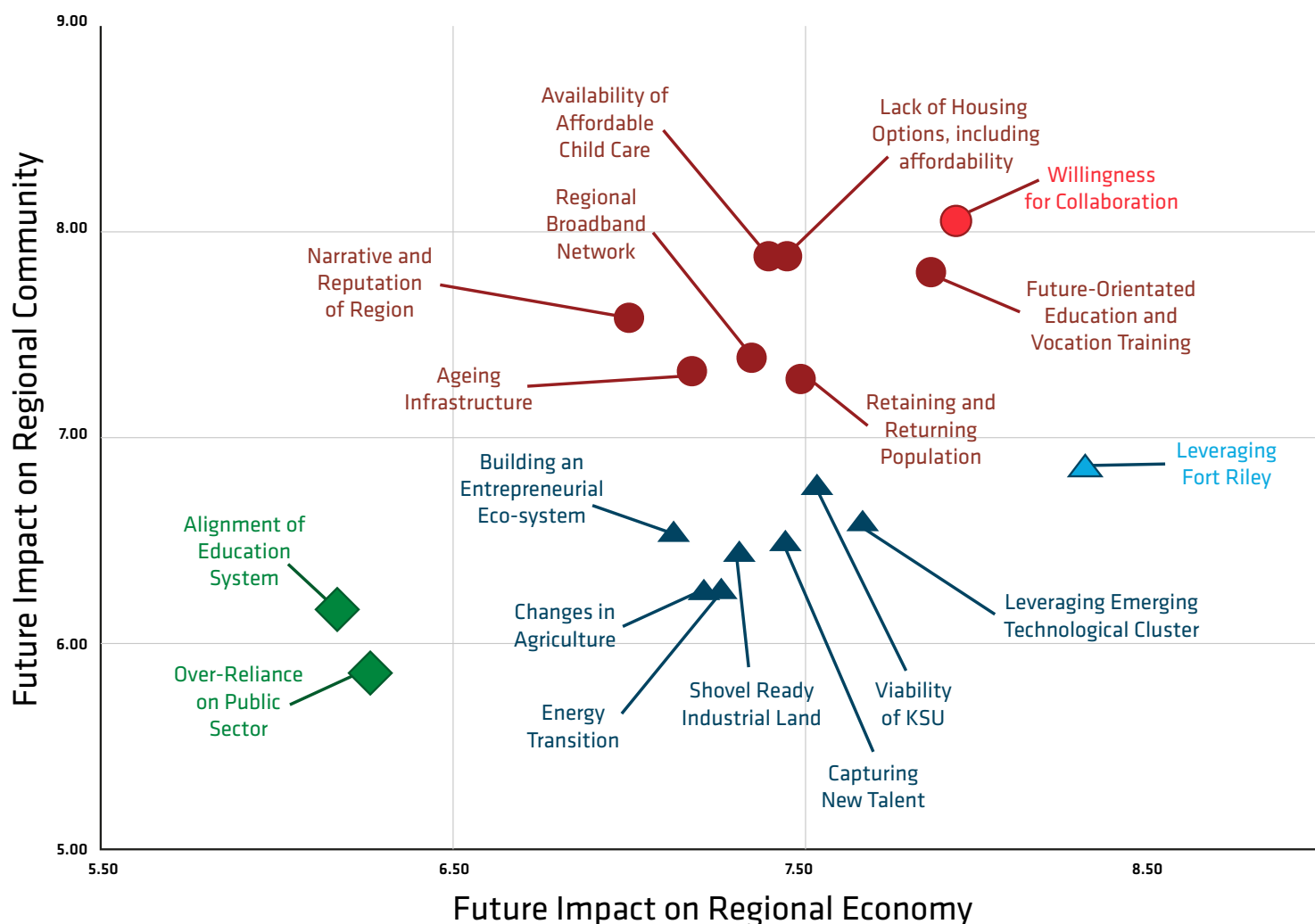


## 7.0 | IDENTIFYING SCENARIO SHAPING CLUSTERS OF DRIVERS

The scatter diagram identifies the clusters of drivers considered most critical in shaping the future of the Flint Hills region, looking out to 2030.

After agreement on the drivers, the Think-Tank participants rated each of the 18 key drivers on its size of impact on the Flint Hills region. The scale used was 1 – 10 (1 = small impact; 10 = very large impact). The size of impact refers to how significant the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of the Flint Hills region. The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants.

Then, a scatter diagram of the drivers, based on size of impact was developed. The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact. This process illustrates the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future – these clusters are termed ‘Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers.’



DataInsight

- The identified drivers were clustered around two prominent themes: Future Impact on Regional Economy and Future Impact on Regional Community.
- The drivers identified as having the highest impact on the Regional Economy were Leveraging Fort Riley, Willingness to Collaborate and Future-Orientated Education and Vocation Training. The drivers identified as having the highest impact on the Regional Community were Lack of Housing Options, including affordability, Availability of Affordable Childcare and Narrative and Reputation of Region.



The two axes of the scenario matrix were developed through the thematic clustering of the key drivers identified by Think-Tank participants.

## 8.0 | CLUSTER MAP DEVELOPMENT AND SCENARIO AXIS

After agreement on the drivers, the Think-Tank participants rated each of the 18 key drivers on its size of impact on the Flint Hills region. The scale used was 1 – 10 (1 = small impact; 10 = very large impact). The size of impact refers to how significant the participant considers the driver will be in shaping the future of the Flint Hills region. The individual ratings by each participant were pooled and averaged, providing an overall rating for each driver by the entire group of participants.

Then, a scatter diagram of the drivers, based on size of impact was developed. The scatter diagram allows the identification of clusters which are relatively high in impact. This process illustrates the clusters of drivers that were seen as most critical in shaping the future – these clusters are termed ‘Scenario Shaping Clusters of Drivers.’

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOCUS

- Leveraging Fort Riley
- Leveraging Emerging Technological Cluster
- Viability of KSU
- Capturing New Talent
- Shovel Ready Land
- Energy Transition
- Changes in Agriculture
- Building an Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

### COLLABORATION FOCUS

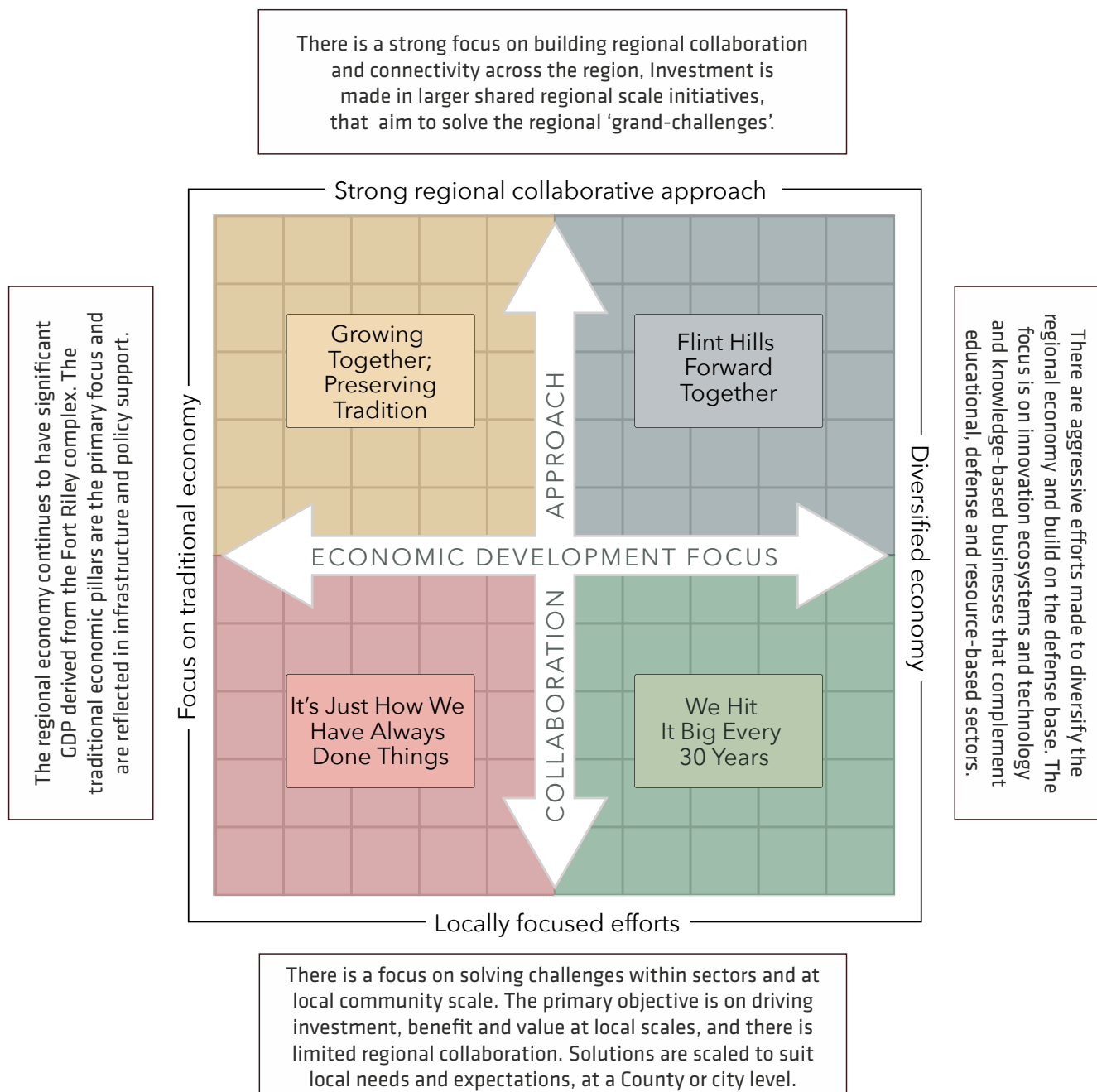
- Willingness for Collaboration
- Future-Orientated Education and Vocation Training
- Lack of Housing Options, including affordability
- Availability of Affordable Childcare
- Regional Broadband Network
- Narrative and Reputation of Region
- Ageing Infrastructure
- Retaining and Returning Population



# 9.0 | CREATING THE SCENARIO FRAMEWORK

On the second afternoon of the Think-Tank participants were presented with the scenario matrix, defined by the two major axes generated through the cluster development of the key drivers. Brief descriptions were also attached to the end points of each driver axes. Participants were divided into four groups to develop a narrative for each scenario. Each group was asked to describe the characteristics of the Flint Hills region in 2030 under the conditions of the scenario quadrant that they had been given. After the characteristics were established, Think-Tank participants were asked to devise major events or headlines of how the scenario occurred using the years 2023, 2025, and 2030, and to give their scenario a descriptive name. The name is intended to represent the description of the scenario in the form of a short title. Narratives, descriptions, and names of each scenario as developed by the workshop participants are included in the following sections.

This scenario-planning process provided a way to tease out plausible future scenarios and examine them from a speculative standpoint. They represent different possibilities for the future of the Flint Hills Region, looking out to 2030.



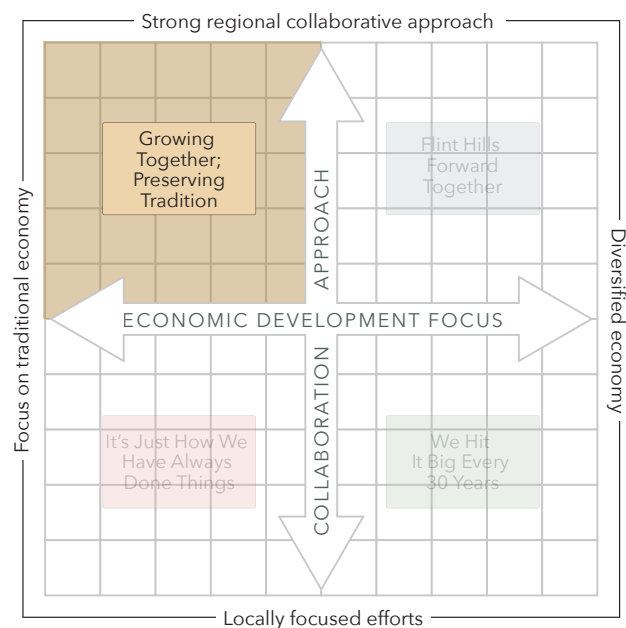




## 9.1 | SCENARIO A: GROWING TOGETHER, PRESERVING TRADITION

This scenario forecasts a future where there is a strong focus on building regional collaboration and connectivity across the Flint Hills region.

Individual counties are connected to the overall Flint Hills region and benefit from shared opportunities, resources, and information which comes from a regional perspective. As a result, economic growth across the region has steadily increased in agriculture, education, and government over the past 7 years. Investment has been made in larger regional scale initiatives which aim to solve the previous Flint Hills regional issues and challenges. The FHRC is still strong and meaningful across the region as it builds on regional collaboration. There is also a defined focus on the traditional Flint Hills regional economy which continues to have significant GDP derived from the Fort Riley base. These traditional economic pillars are the primary focus for the future of the region and are reflected in infrastructure and policy support. As a result, the Flint Hills region experiences moderate but planned population growth and grows its brand from the livability and natural landscape of the region. The focus on building regional collaboration has created coordinated support from Fort Riley and this has strengthened Fort Riley's position in the defense sector.



The 'Growing Together; Preserving Tradition' scenario conveys a future where there is a strong emphasis on tradition as well as building regional collaboration across the Flint Hills region.

# SCENARIO A CHARACTERISTICS: GROWING TOGETHER, PRESERVING TRADITION IN 2030

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Individual counties are connected to the region and benefit from shared opportunities, resources and information
- Flint Hills economic growth has steady increase in agriculture, education and government sectors over 7 years

## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Flint Hills experiences modest and planned population growth
- Flint Hills attracts professionals who are retiring
- The local and shared love of the Flint Hills region becomes its brand identification

## REGIONAL STRATEGIC POSITIONING CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Regional collaboration creates coordinated support of Fort Riley that strengthens its position in the Army as a long term strategy
- The tallgrass prairie reaches long term preservation goals

### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"US News identifies Flint Hills Region in Kansas as number 1 region for small business prosperity and success"



### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"FHRC launches multi-county housing cooperative"



### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Ft. Riley announces plans for third brigade and protection from future BRAC risk"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Kansas governor announces FHRC to receive national model of collaborative economic award and funding"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Flint Hills region achieves 80% housing occupation"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Kansas award 4 million to FHRC to invest in childcare initiative."



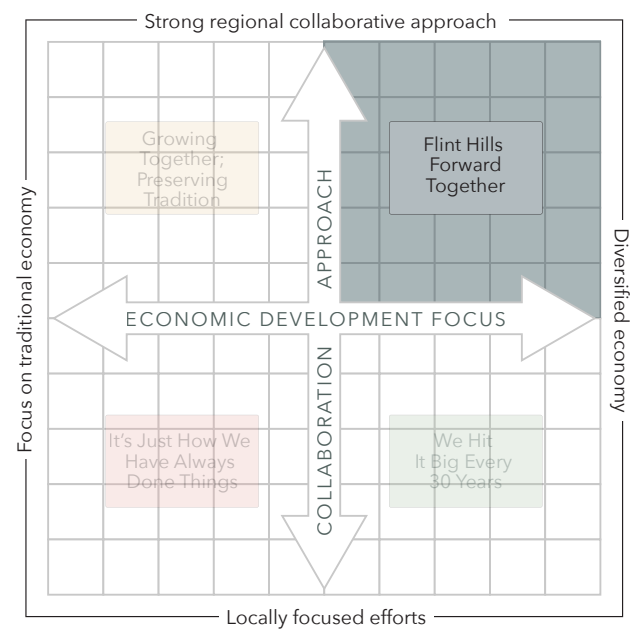




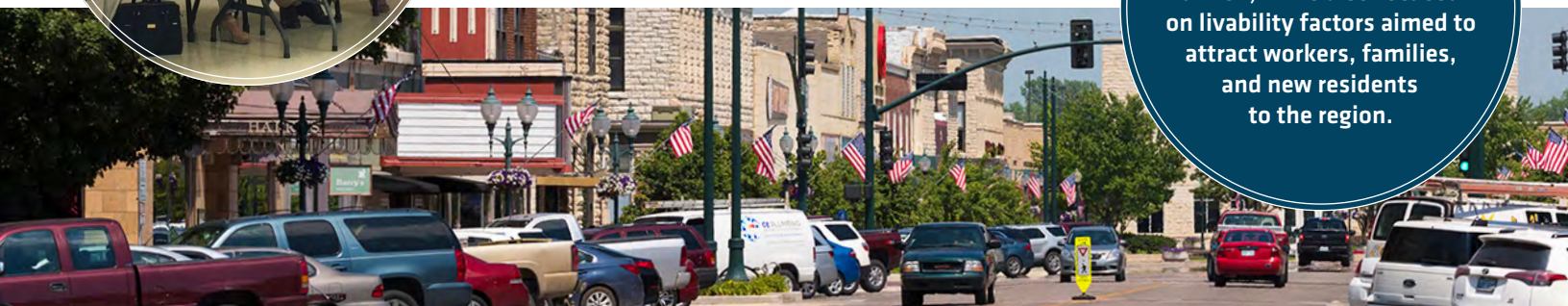
## 9.2 | SCENARIO B: FLINT HILLS FORWARD TOGETHER

This scenario forecasts a future typified by intentional efforts to diversify the regional economy but also build on the current defense and industrial base.

The FHRC has a key role in this scenario, due to its role in building economic vibrancy in the region and enhancing the quality of life for the Flint Hills residents. The focus is on balanced development, innovation ecosystems and knowledge-based businesses that complement educational and resource-based sectors. The attraction of smaller industry and businesses accompany the drive to build on the current industrial base. This contributes to efforts made to nurture the current workforce, retain youth and graduates, and build a community fabric which is appealing to attract workforce, new families, and residents. The branding of the Flint Hills region expands to emphasize the Midwest values of the region and provide enhanced livability factors such as affordable childcare, greater amenities, and activities to make the Flint Hills region a desirable region. There is also a sharp focus on a more regional collaborative and connected region where investment aims to solve the previous challenges that the region faced.



The 'Flint Hills Forward Together' conveys a future which is economically driven, while also focused on livability factors aimed to attract workers, families, and new residents to the region.





# SCENARIO B CHARACTERISTICS: FLINT HILLS FORWARD TOGETHER IN 2030

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- NBAF has increased in economic impact with added cottage industries such as Scorpion
- Industries and Agencies that benefit the region are highly recruited
- Leveraging educational institutions to partner with private industry – i.e. Manhattan Area Technical College
- Balanced development
- Nurturing workforce - childcare and worker retention
- Economy less dependent on tradition economic drivers
- Existing economic engines are still strong - Fort Riley, KSU, Agriculture and Caterpillar

## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Regional efforts and programs to assist young professionals
- Transportation
- Attracting and retaining working age population
- Marketing and emphasizing the Midwest values of the Flint Hills region

## REGIONAL STRATEGIC POSITIONING CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- The Flint Hills regions is aggressively marketed as a tourism attraction as an outdoor great living area
- Defense Industry is courted and recruited i.e. Defense Corridor
- FHRC evaluates next phase of vacation rentals needed in Flint Hills

### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"400 attended the Flint Hills Regional Conference"

"Scorpion ribbing cutting - 500 jobs"



### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"FHRC hires tourism coordinator"

"Country Stamped returns to Flint Hills"



### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Flint Hills Region names among the best short term vacation destinations"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Local sales in Flint Hills Region exceeds Amazon sales"

"Major regional employer breaks ground"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Flint Hills region maintains strong ecosystem"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Flint Hills announces AI sub clusters amount higher education entities."

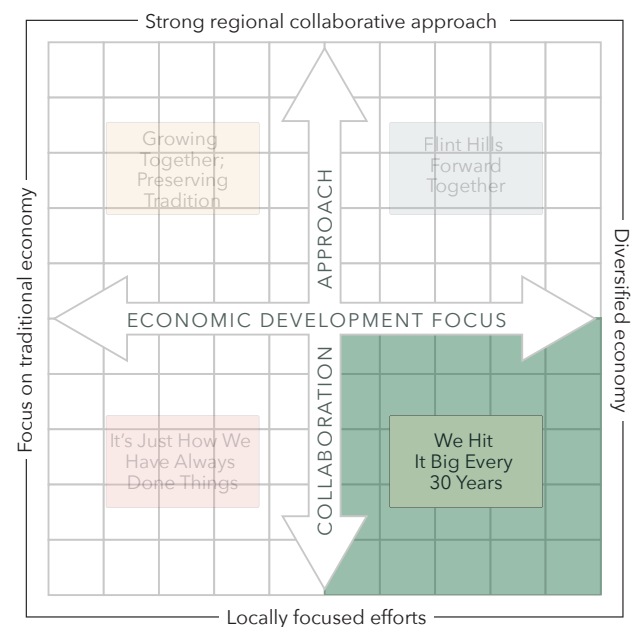




## 9.3 | SCENARIO C: WE HIT IT BIG EVERY 30 YEARS

This scenario forecasts a future which includes a strong focus on a more diversified economy, built on the current defense base and with attention on innovative ecosystems and businesses which complement educational and resource-based sectors.

The focus is also on the 'local' and solving challenges within sectors at the local level. This includes driving investment, benefit, and value at the local scale with limited regional collaboration. There are pockets of economic growth, but these are created in the larger populated areas of the region and are aimed at the more traditional industries and workforce. There is a concern that the region may not be able to support the military personnel as they leave Fort Riley and that they may move away. Poverty rates increase due to the lack of attention on livability and collaboration and the focus on economic pockets in the larger populated areas. The community fabric of the region is reduced with a lack of affordable childcare for workers, a lack of attainable and affordable housing and an overall decrease in the livability of residents in the region. The role of the FHRC is lessened due to the decrease of 'Quality of Life' aspects that the region now offers.



The “We hit it big every 30 years’ scenario conveys a future which isn’t as future orientated as needed to retain and attract workforce, families, and new residents.

# SCENARIO C CHARACTERISTICS: WE HIT IT BIG EVERY 30 YEARS IN 2030

## REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Pockets of economic growth (innovations and investments) are created in larger populated areas – connected to traditional workforce
- If region can't support Fort Riley personnel leaving military service, they will move away
- Lack of collaboration causes poverty rates to increase

### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Cost of remote working causes unemployment of graduates"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Pottawatomie County loses out on 100m grant"



## REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Population explosion in pockets
- Childcare may only be in larger populated cities
- Housing quality will not improve
- Less diversity, fewer resources available and programs
- Decrease in liveability and quality of life

### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Areas schools have highest percentage ever of low income students"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Enrolment hits all time low"



## REGIONAL STRATEGIC POSITIONING CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- FHRC is no more – no need for it
- More competition
- We would regress – fall behind within Kansas and the Mid West

### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Riley County beings ferry services across the river"



### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"FHRC no longer needed"



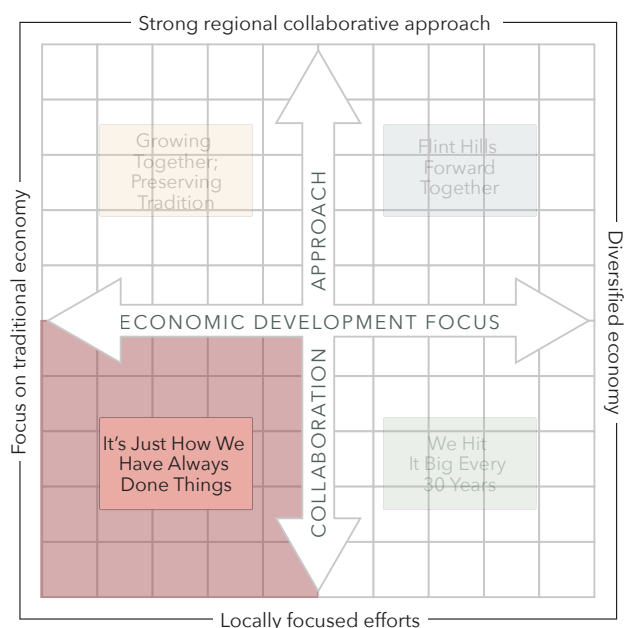




## »»»»» 9.4 | SCENARIO D: IT'S JUST THE WAY WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE THINGS

This scenario forecasts a future that focuses on just the local and traditional.

While there are efforts to solve challenges within sectors, these are conducted at a local/city scale where the main objective is driving local investment, benefit, and value. There are very limited attempts to collaborate at a regional level. The role of the FHRC is almost redundant as the population declines and migrates. In addition, the FHRC focus on regional collaboration has almost been eradicated. Attention is placed on the traditional Flint Hills economy and deriving benefit from the Fort Riley base. This is at the cost of why people wish to live in and move to the Flint Hills region as the overall conservation and attractiveness of the region declines. Livability factors decline as does the population.



The 'That's how we have always done things' scenario conveys a future where the local and traditional economies are emphasized, to the detriment of the quality of life of residents and the lack of appeal for new residents and workforce to move to the region.





## SCENARIO D CHARACTERISTICS: IT'S JUST THE WAY WE HAVE ALWAYS DONE THINGS IN 2030

### REGIONAL ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Repeat of efforts and businesses
- Entrepreneurship resources go stagnant
- Increase in tourism dollars/sales tax

### REGIONAL COMMUNITY AND SOCIETAL CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- Limited growth for Arts
- Population declines and begin to migrate
- Workforce continues to decline

### REGIONAL STRATEGIC POSITIONING CHARACTERISTICS IN 2030



- There is no need for the FHRC
- The overall conservation and attractiveness of the region declines
- The Flint Hills still draw people in from all over

#### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Two local bike shops close in the rural area"



#### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Childcare no longer an issue in the Flint Hills"



#### 2025 HEADLINE NEWS:

"Flint Hills Region misses out on multi million project due to lack of community collaboration"



#### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"First Infantry Division returns to Germany"



#### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"One hospital remains open in the seven-county region"



#### 2030 HEADLINE NEWS:

"FHRCI disbands"



# 10.0 | LEAST DESIRED, EXPECTED, AND PREFERRED FUTURES

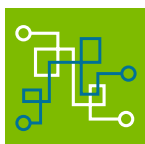
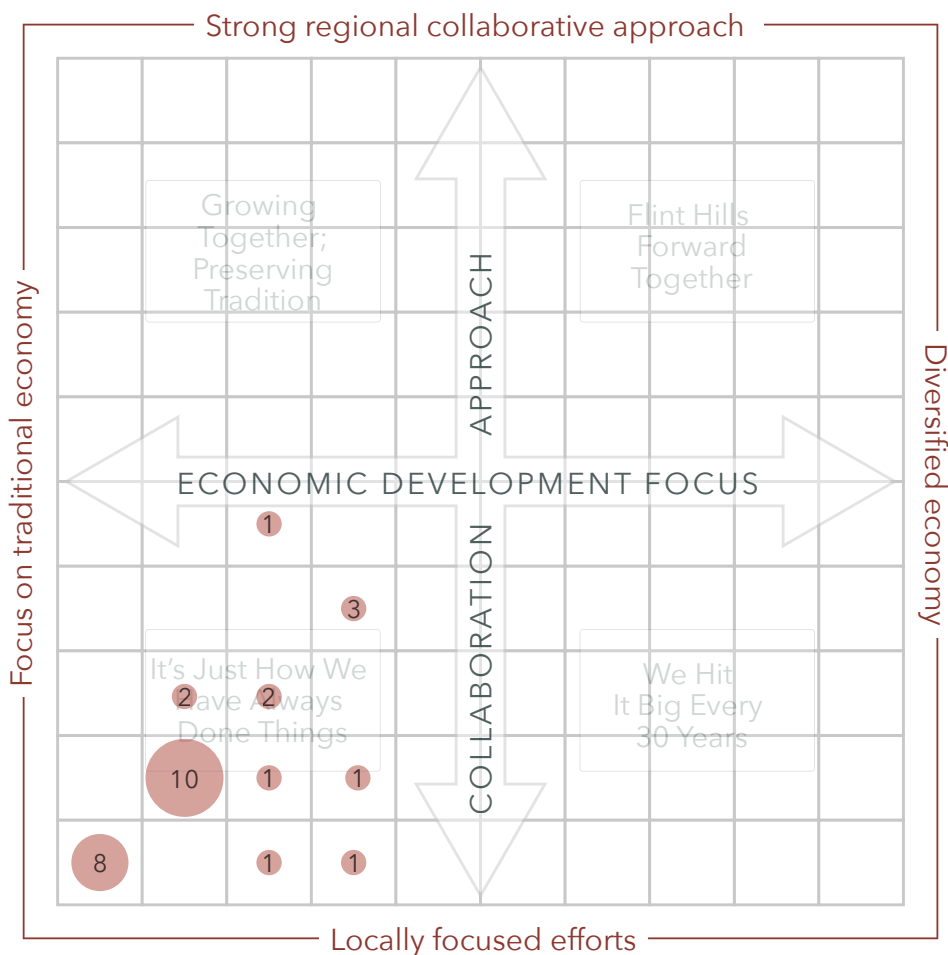
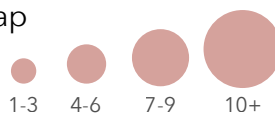
## 10.1 | LEAST DESIRED FUTURE

The Least Desirable Future is defined as the future that the participants think will be most undesirable (or least optimal or least desired) for the future of the Flint Hills region in 2030. Think Tank participants most definitely considered Scenario D, 'It's just the way that we have always done things,' to be the Least Desired Future for the Flint Hills region.

The least desired future is one where community members have said, 'We don't want that.' This provides leadership a mandate to change the trajectory of the community to avoid this avoidable scenario.



### Least Desirable Future 2030 FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap



FutureInsight

- The data of the least desired future shows a strong concentration along the bottom quadrant of Scenario D, 'It's just the way we have always done things.' This indicates a strong desire to not remain on that same trajectory.
- This least desired future depicts the comfortable case that 'It's just how we have always done things' may just not be what people want, looking out to 2030.



## 10.2 | EXPECTED FUTURE

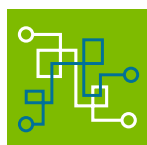
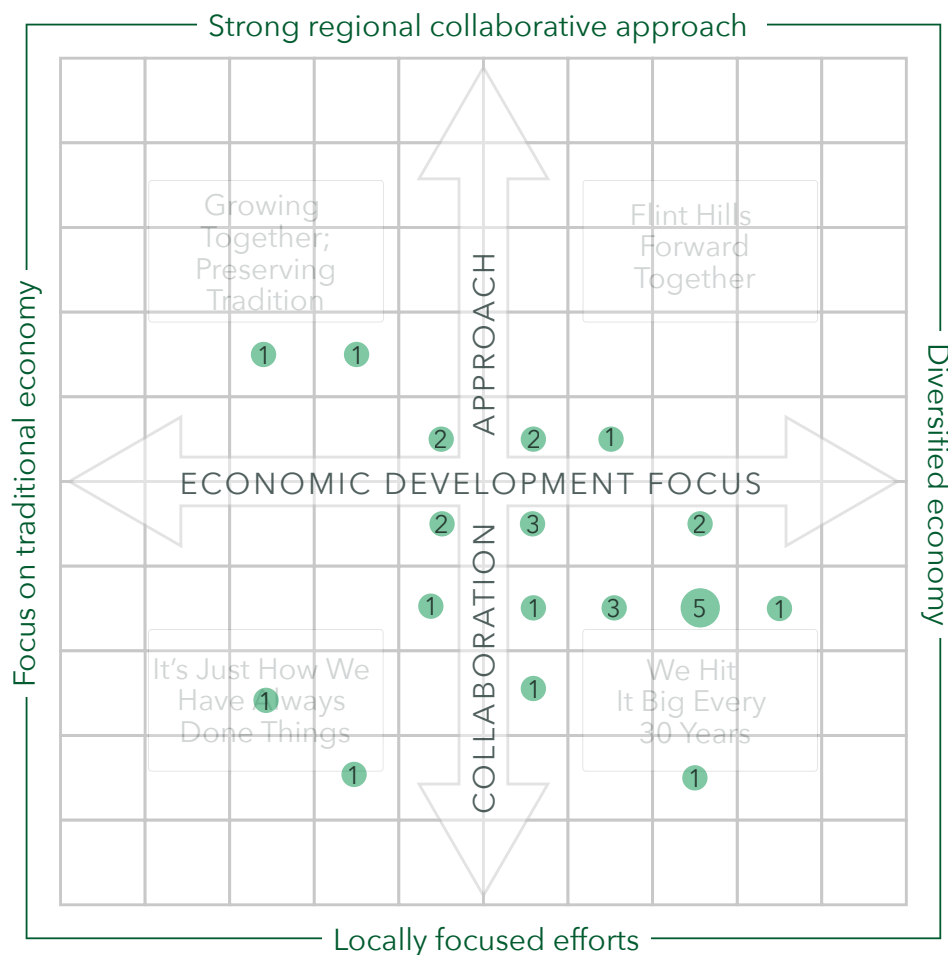
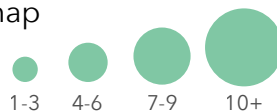
The expected future is one deemed most likely to happen if there is no change in the current trajectory of the Flint Hills region. Workshop participants generally indicated that Scenario C, “We Hit it Big Every 30 Years” is the scenario they believed most represented the expected future for the Flint Hills region looking out to 2030.

The Expected Future represents the future that is most likely to happen if the Flint Hills cities and region do nothing to change direction or trajectory.



### Expected Future 2030

FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap



FutureInsight

- The expected future may be familiar and comfortable, but Think-Tank participants have shown a clear desire to move away from the status quo to the preferred future.
- The expected future as seen by Think-Tank participants will not see significant evolution of an Economic Development focus in the Flint Hills region.

# 10.3 | PREFERRED FUTURE - SCENARIO B - FLINT HILLS FORWARD TOGETHER

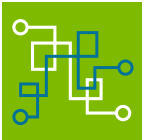
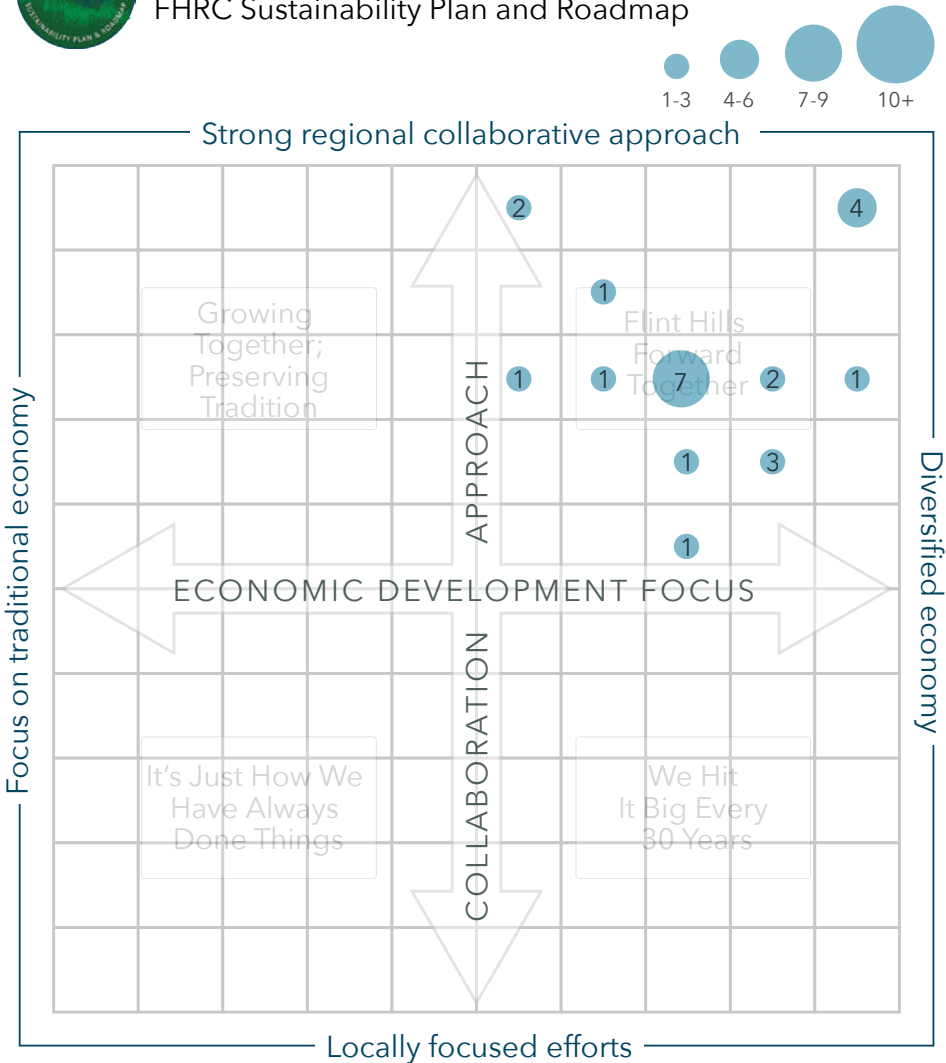
Think-Tank participants expressed an overwhelming preference for Scenario B, ‘Flint Hills Forward Together’ as the Preferred Future for the Flint Hills region in 2030. This future combines a strong regional collaboration approach as well as enhanced and continued livability factors that will attract and retain workforce, families, and residents to the Flint Hills region. In this preferred scenario, the FHRC continues to play a strong role and may have a stronger role going forward into the future.

Working towards a combination of a regional approach, diversified economy and enhanced liveability for residents is the preferred future for the Flint Hills region.



## Preferred Future 2030

FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap



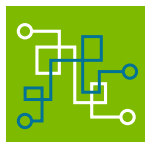
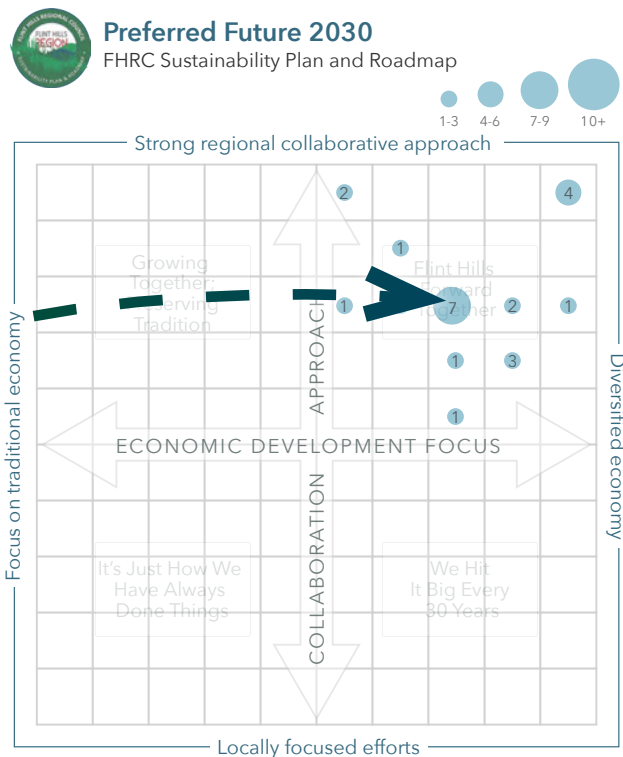
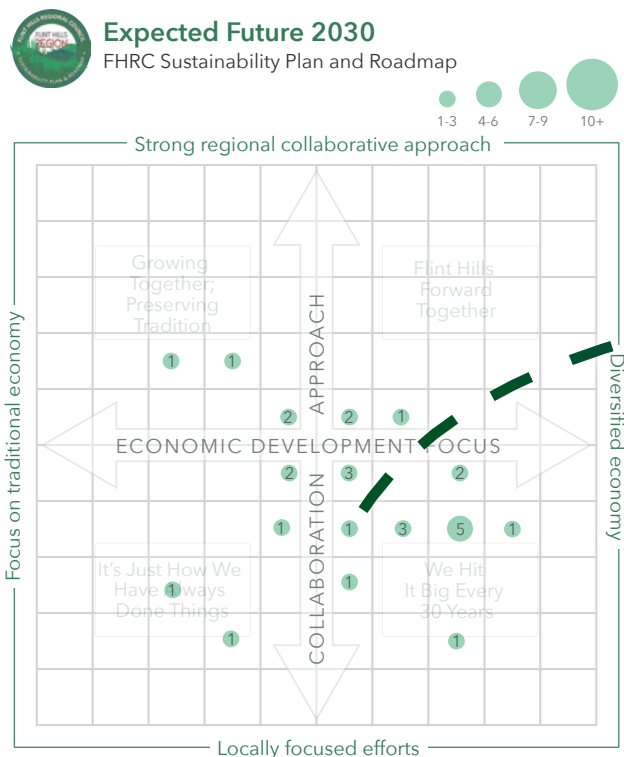
FutureInsight

- The data of the Preferred future shows unanimous desire for change.

# 10.4 | GETTING TO THE PREFERRED FUTURE

There was overwhelming alignment among Think-Tank participants that Scenario B, “Flint Hills Forward Together” represented the preferred 2030 future for the Flint Hills region, and also for the FHRC. The wishes of the Flint Hills community have been heard via the Stakeholder Survey #1 and Think-Tank participation.

Because of the long-term nature of the Scenario Planning methodology, stakeholders often see the ‘distant future vision (2030)’ as unattainable and unrealistic. However, this underestimates the progress that can be made during the next 7 years, and the cumulative positive impacts of change.



Future**Insight**

- Arriving at a point of consensus amongst stakeholders is very important to the planning process as it serves to provide a sense of cohesion and balanced solutions going forward.

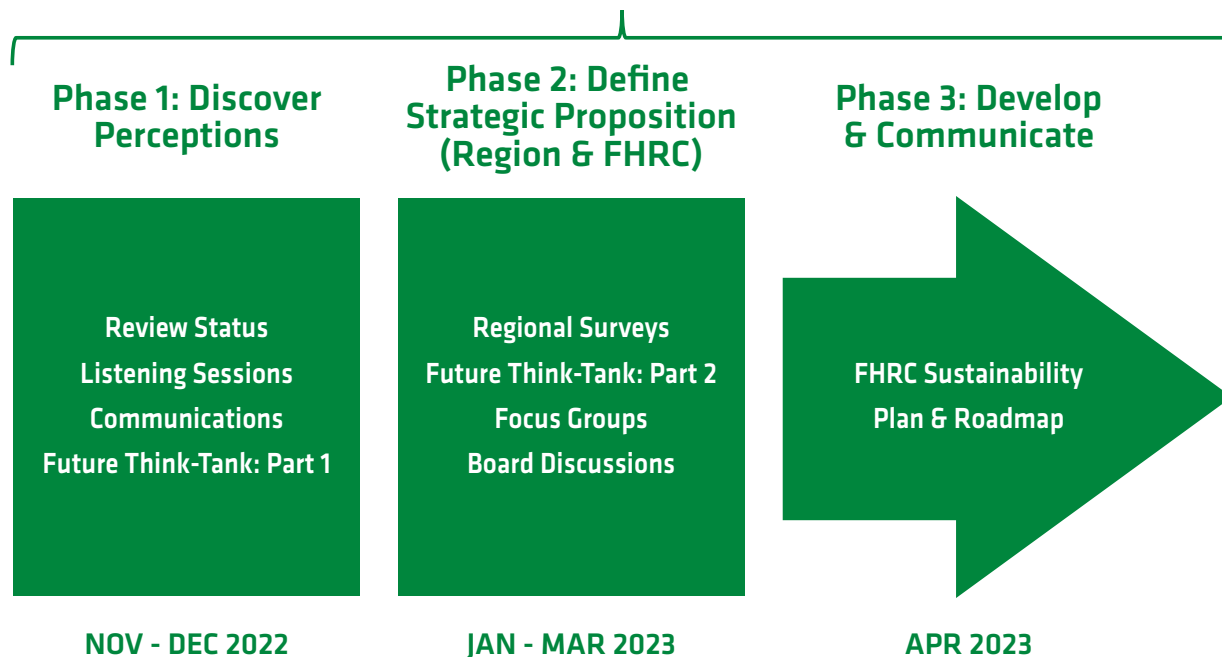


# 11.0 | NEXT STEPS IN THE FHRC SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND ROADMAP PROCESS

The Stakeholder Survey #1 and the results from the two afternoon Think-Tank workshops have informed this process. Focus Group sessions held late February and early March and the Stakeholder Survey #2 will also input into the final FHRC Sustainability and Roadmap.

Please stay connected to the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap process at [lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/](https://lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/).

## FHRC SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND ROADMAP PROCESS



## NEXT STEPS

- February 17 – March 2 2023 - Focus Groups sessions will be held in areas which will inform the ultimate Strategic Pillars for the final FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap
- March 20 -22 - individual discussion with Board members to help frame the Sustainability plan
- April 21, 2023 - the final FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap report will be presented to FHRC





## »»»» 12.0 | ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Future iQ acknowledges the substantial work and on the ground support from the FHRC team of Jerry Lonergan (Executive Director), Janna Williams (Regional Planner) and Holly Boise (Grant Specialist).

Future iQ would also like to acknowledge the support of the FHRC.

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Fort Riley

**Perry Wiggins**  
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Future iQ also would like to acknowledge the participation of the individuals who took part in the Think-Tank workshop. Taking part in two sessions was a commitment regarding time, energy and intellect. Thank you to the Think-Tank participants.



## »»»» 13.0 | CONTACT DETAILS

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## »»»» 14.0 | ABOUT FUTURE IQ

Future iQ specializes in applying innovative tools and approaches to assist municipalities, organizations, regions and industries shape their economic and community futures. With over two decades of experience, the company has a global clientele spanning three continents. To learn more about Future iQ, and our recent projects visit [www.future-iq.com](http://www.future-iq.com) or by email at [info@future-iq.com](mailto:info@future-iq.com).



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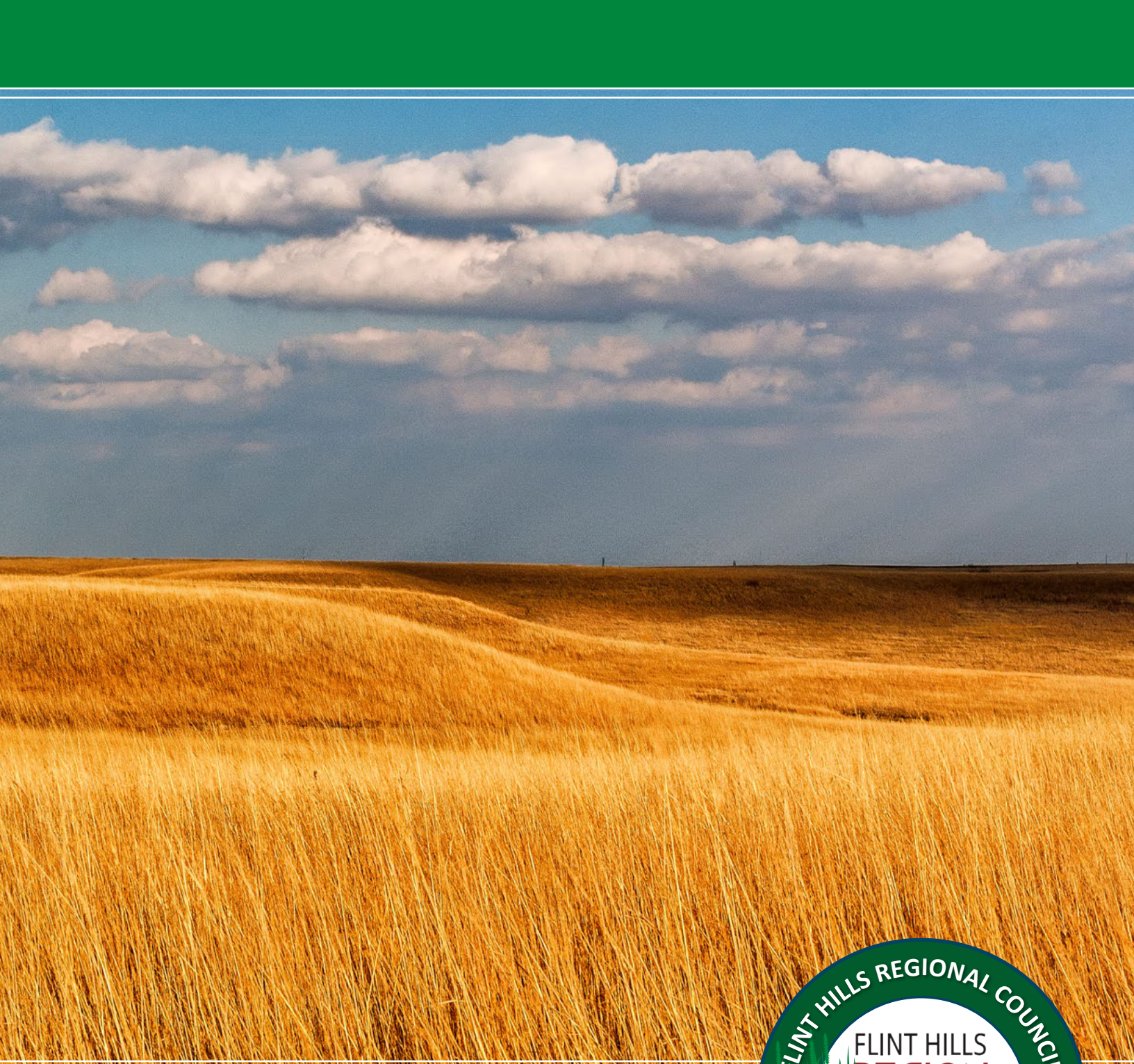


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# FLINT HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL (FHRC)

## FUTURE POTENTIAL SCENARIOS - THINK-TANK REPORT

FLINT HILLS REGION, KANSAS, USA

FEBRUARY 2023

