



FLINT HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL (FHRC) SUSTAINABILITY PLAN AND ROADMAP

FINAL REPORT: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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FLINT HILLS REGION, KANSAS, USA
MAY 2023

FLINT HILLS
REGION





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This report summarizes the outcomes from the Flint Hills Regional Council Sustainability Plan and Roadmap planning process, that ran from November 2022 until April 2023. Approximately 300 regional stakeholders have participated in this planning work. This report aims to provide a 5-year Sustainability Plan to ensure the continuation and expansion of Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC).

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More information and the associated data analysis are available on the project portal:
lab2.future-iq.com/fhrc-sustainability-plan-and-roadmap/



1.0 | SNAPSHOT - REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

This report lays out the findings and recommendations from the planning work to develop the Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC) Sustainability and Roadmap. This report covers the identified future role of the FHRC, suggested key strategic steps, proposed membership and board model, and some organizational strategy. Overall, this work has identified the key strategic actions and approaches needed to achieve the preferred regional future. This report should be read in conjunction with other project reports and survey results.

Key Insights from this Report



Significant Desire to Build Collaboration and Diversify the Regional Economy

The planning work has highlighted a strong desire of regional stakeholders to build a collaborative approach, and work together across the region to tackle the big challenges and opportunities. There is a recognition that economic diversification is important, and that the region has the capacity to expand some industry clusters, especially in the realms of education, biotechnology, defense, and tourism.



Desire to Take an Ambitious View of the Future

There is a clear willingness to think boldly and take an ambitious view of the future. Regional stakeholders perceive the region is well placed to play an important role in the State and National economy and landscape. This is reinforced by the presence of important research institutions, national facilities and a significant strategic military base.



Desire to Expand the Role of the FHRC

The FHRC is seen as having a unique and important role as a regional convener and advocate. This role is well supported and regarded as a priority function. It also has a critical role to deliver services and bring in funding to address regional needs and opportunities. This approach will also provide a pathway to expand the future revenue and funding streams for the organization.



Recognition of the Importance of Supporting Fort Riley

Building and maintaining support for Fort Riley is deemed to be a critical role of the FHRC. This includes the understanding of its role in the regional economy and advocating for the sustainment of the Fort's presence in the region.



Strong Educational and Regional Assets

There is a recognition that the region has strong existing educational assets. This includes the primary Kansas State University campus, and other entities such as the Manhattan Area Technical College and local schools. This is complemented by other regional assets such as a commercial airport, transportation corridors, tourism amenities and engaging main street experiences.

2.0 | KEY INSIGHTS FROM STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the planning process, stakeholders were asked to explore the future potential of the region, and what they saw as the optimal role of the FHRC. Key insights that were gathered include:

Stakeholders reinforced the value of having a staff with deep expertise, and the ability to provide a support role in funding and regional approaches.



The region has something special to offer

There was a consistent view that the Flint Hills region has 'something special' to offer, and has the hallmarks of a renowned region. This was both at the level of a value proposition, where the region has a significant role to play at a State and national level, and as a unique destination that would be appealing to tourists and visitors. This deep affinity with the region, and the sense of significance, underpins the view that the region has something special to offer.



There is an opportunity to build and diversify the economy

There is an opportunity to build and diversify the regional economy around technology, defense, agriculture, education, and tourism. There was a recognized potential to build strong focused economic and industry clusters. There was also a desire to see the Flint Hills region be part of larger initiatives and decision-making ecosystems.



People and organizations want to be part of the FHRC

Institutions and communities consistently expressed a desire to part of the FHRC and are willing to come to the table with initiatives and ideas. Examples include:

- KSU - Laboratory of learning, helping local experimentation and creative solutions
- Fort Riley - Institutional support; Intergovernmental support agreements
- Eco.Dev ecosystem - Co-ordinated regional economic development
- Local Communities - Co-ordinated community development work



There is a desire to strengthen the regional fabric and connectivity

Building and maintaining support for Fort Riley is deemed to be a critical role of the FHRC. This includes the understanding of its role in the regional economy and advocating for the sustainment of the Fort's presence in the region.





3.0 | FUTURE ROLE OF THE FHRC

Exploring models for the FHRC must be grounded in the desired future distilled through the surveys, Think-Tank workshops, focus groups and stakeholder discussions. Through those processes, key priorities were identified for the role of FHRC:



Regional Convener

There is a potential role as a convener of stakeholders and organizations across the region and to help facilitate collaborative solutions to the region's 'grand challenges'. These include common issues such as housing, childcare, broadband, workforce attraction and retention, infrastructure and regional marketing.



Regional Advocate

There is the potential to work as an advocate for the region to outside interests such as State legislature and national organizations. This would include promoting the region, ensuring the regional issues and needs are understood by funders and key organizations, and helping connect the region to larger collaborations and initiatives.



Maintain and Boost Support for Fort Riley

Fort Riley represents a significant portion of GDP impact, and employment. There is a clear role and mandate for the FHRC to maintain and boost regional leadership support for the presence and operation of Fort Riley.



Attract Funding for Regional Opportunities

The FHRC can act as a 'funding funnel, and help attract external funding, support and resources for region-wide opportunities and initiatives.



Deliver Specialized Services to Regional Members

The FHRC can develop and deliver specialized services to regional members. This could include grant writing, community and economic development planning, collective procurement services and community betterment.





»»»» 4.0 | FUTURE FHRC MEMBERSHIP AND BOARD MODEL - KEY INTENTIONS

During the stakeholder and Board discussions held in March 2023, perspectives were explored about the future direction in membership and Board structure. This input was coupled with the research scan that looked at the various alternative models in other Regional Planning Organizations.

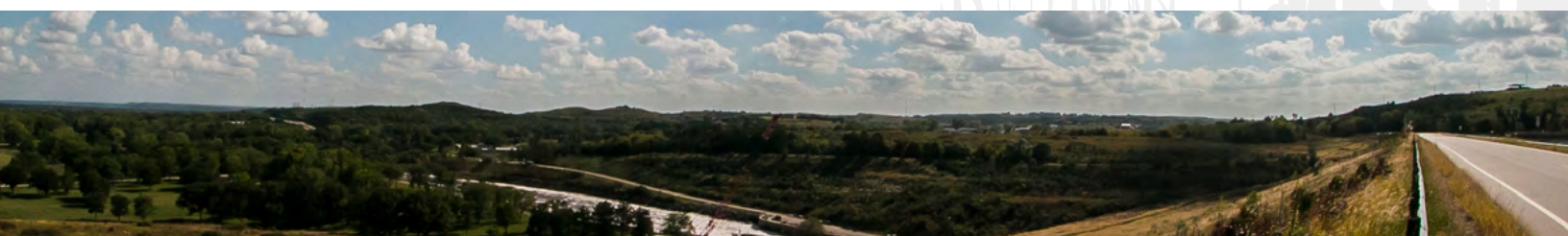
The discussions with the existing Board focused on the key intentions and outcomes, that what would be optimal in a future membership and Board model.

FHRC MEMBERSHIP – KEY INTENTIONS INCLUDE:

- **Create a bigger membership tent:** The desire is to open the membership model, to allow more organizations, groups, professions, and institutions to be part of the FHRC. This is responding to the very clear interest of other groups to be at the table and involved in these important regional conversations.
- **Bring in new expertise and perspectives:** It was recognized that a lot of new expertise and thinking could be brought to the table. This especially relates to the emerging generations, and the smaller outlying communities in the region. Also, there is some considerable experience and expertise in professional groups involved in economic development and community development work that could help provide important thought-leadership.
- **Shared strategic decision-making:** There is a clear desire to facilitate larger shared regional decision-making, tapping into a broader membership. This will help formulate robust strategic approaches, which build stakeholder alignment and support, and creates enthusiasm and momentum in the region.

FHRC BOARD - KEY INTENTIONS INCLUDE:

- **Build ‘bench-depth’ of talent:** There is a need to build a deeper pool of Board candidates who are passionate about the mission of FHRC. This could be accomplished by allowing nominees and alternates or expanding the Board structure to include key groups such as Eco.Dev and Community Development.
- **Purpose-driven approach:** There is a desire to have a Board that is focused on delivering on the newly expanded role of the FHRC and is adept at building collaboration and economic diversification.
- **Adapt a skills-based approach:** The FHRC mission and direction will require significant skills and experience. Part of the Board makeup could be a consideration of having a matching skills base, where the expertise is drawn in from Board members, the membership or core stakeholder groups.



5.0 | CONTACT DETAILS

For more information about the FHRC Sustainability Plan and Roadmap process please contact:

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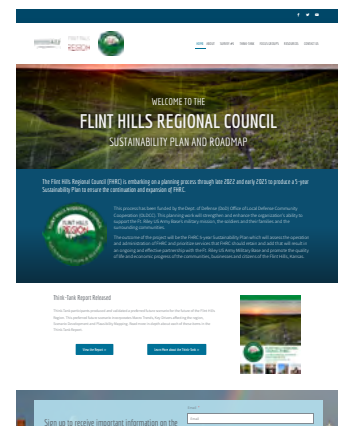
Flint Hills Regional Council Sustainability Plan and Roadmap - Workshops, Data Visualization and Reports Prepared by Future iQ



**FHRC Think-Tank
Report**



**FHRC Final Report: Key
Findings & Recommendations**



**FHRC Project
Portal**

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