COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

FLINT HILLS ECONOMIC DISTRICT
The economics of regionalism, culture, and landscape.
Enhancing the region’s diverse strengths, workforce, economy, lifestyle, and integrity while maintaining the rich tradition, culture, and landscape of the Flint Hills.

THE FLINT HILLS.
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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

To collect citizen input to assemble this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, the Flint Hills Regional Council assembled a citizen strategy committee of 21 representatives from the 7-county area. The committee members came from various backgrounds, including business owners, chamber of commerce directors, economic development entities as well as community college and university representatives.

The committee met once a month between May 2018 and November 2018 to determine focus areas for the economic development of the 7-county area. They reviewed data on the region, created a vision statement, assessed the area’s strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, formed focus areas around sectors of the economy, and identified a vision and regional goals.

On March 15, 2019, the Flint Hills Regional Council Board voted to approve the Flint Hills Regional Economic Development District CEDS of 2019.
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Hon. Richard Weixelman | President City of Wamego

Hon. Dee McKee | Vice President Pottawatomie County

Hon. Pam Bales | Secretary City of Alma

Hon. Linda Morris | Treasurer City of Manhattan

Honorable Sharon Haun | At-Large City of Council Grove

Honorable Tim Brown | At-Large City of Junction City

Hon. Ben Bennett | Past President Geary County

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

City of Alta Vista
  Hon. Ryan Armbrust

City of Chapman
  Hon. Lee Wolf

City of Clay Center
  Hon. Jimmy Thatcher

City of Council Grove
  Hon. Sharon Haun

City of Dwight
  Hon. Galen Johnson

City of Junction City
  Hon. Tim Brown

City of Leonardville
  Hon. Darci Pottroff

City of Manhattan
  Hon. Linda Morse

City of Ogden
  Hon. Eladio Reid

City of Onaga
  Hon. Dale Renfro

City of Reading
  Hon. Todd Hensley

City of Riley
  Hon. Darci Pottorf

City of Westmoreland
  Hon. Jeff Rosell

City of White City
  Susan McKenzie

City of Woodbine
  Hon. MarySue Roller

Morris County
  Hon. David Fox

Riley County
  Hon. Marvin Rodriguez

Wabaunsee County
  Hon. Joel Fager

STAFF

Gary Stith | Director

Janna Williams | Regional Planner

Amber Berg | Regional Planning Intern

Emma-Quin Smith | Regional Planning Intern

Abigail Mason | Regional Planning Intern

Photos Credit: Brad Mangas, Janna Williams, Amber Berg, Logan Wassall

Emporia State University
  Dr. Ed Bashaw, Dean of the School of Business

Kansas State University
  Linda Cook, Chief of Staff/Director of Community Relations
CITIZEN STRATEGY
COMMITTEE MEMBERS

City of Manhattan
Jared Wasinger

Chase County
Suzan Barnes

Chase County
Jennifer Laird

Geary County
Mickey Dean

Lyon County
Kent Heermann

Morris County
Kay Hutchinson

Morris County
Wayne Kohler

Morris County
Tim Tyner

Pottawatomie County
Dee McKee

Pottawatomie County
Jack Allston

Pottawatomie County
Jim Moore

Pottawatomie County
Jo Brunner

Riley County
Bob Issac

Riley County
Randall Anderes

Riley County
Matt Bulk

Riley County
John Jobe

Riley County
Jamie Sheik

Riley County
Ben Wilson

Wabaunsee County
Abby Amick

Wabaunsee County
Lori Daniel

Wabaunsee County
Tracy Henry
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Flint Hills region is known for its people, collaboration and landscape. The historical and future institutions will create a diverse economy that supports entrepreneurship, small business, and our workforce. This is an exciting and promising time for the Flint Hills region and the State of Kansas.

Industries | Three industries have been and will always be central to this region since its settlement and continue to be the drivers of our economy currently:

- Beef Cattle
- Education
- Military

Beef cattle are the primary industry in Chase, Morris, and Wabaunsee counties. The Flint Hills are ideal grazing for cattle.

The education sector is dominated by Kansas State University (Manhattan) and Emporia State University (Emporia). Additionally, the technical and community colleges fill an ever-expanding niche for the regional workforce.

The military cluster is rooted in Fort Riley, north of Junction City. The fort is one of the main economic engines for the Flint Hills, with an economic impact upwards of $2 billion per year. Ft. Riley is the second largest employer in the state of Kansas.

Due to the large percentage of government and quasi-governmental organizations, economic diversification is crucial to the region.

New industries in the region are:
- Tourism
- Retirement Destination
- Manufacturing
- High-Tech Agriculture

These emerging industries connect with our existing strengths: agriculture and our nationally significant history draw tourists; retirees are attracted by the opportunities created through the presence of local institutions and the quality of life; manufacturing is diversifying and developing new niches, and high-tech agriculture is developing around the construction of the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility at Kansas State University.

Distressed Areas | Based on trends in population change, median income and housing affordability, we have identified areas of distress in the region. The rural parts of the region are also experiencing an aging population leading to depopulation as residents need to move closer to rural communities. Additionally, our growing urban areas face housing affordability issues and workforce deficiencies.

Action Plan | Our primary strengths include the unique landscape, social connections and intellectual knowledge. The most significant threats continue to be: the region’s dependence on external institutions, particularly public sector employment in urban areas and Social Security in rural areas, the aging and declining population in the rural parts of the region, and the growing urban-rural divide in workforce.

In our tradition of collaboration, eleven actions are proposed over the course of the coming five years to move us towards the regional vision:

- Collaborate between governments
- Identify workforce training needs
- Create regional marketing plan of tourism and branding
- Businesses retain and expand
- Promote better educated trained workforce
- Create a marketing program specific to the region and Kansas
- Establish entrepreneurship programs
- Improve regional broadband access
- Recruit physicians and medical personnel to region
- Improve childcare facilities and rural access
- Create a Flint Hills Regional leadership training program
CHAPTER 1

Regional Background
OVERVIEW OF THE FLINT HILLS REGION

The Flint Hills Economic Development District (FHEDD) is a diverse economic region that relies on diversity in both industry and population to thrive.

Each county in the region has a unique identity that contributes to the overall vitality of the region. The southern portion of the region is comprised primarily of rural, agricultural communities that are built on the fabric of traditional midwestern values. The northern portion of the region is bolstered by the educational and military institutions in the region.

The region is in close proximity to large urban areas including Wichita, KS and Kansas City, KS/MO. Several major highways crisscrossing through the region making it a highly accessible place for potential development. An increasingly diverse populace should provide ample workforce for the region for generations to come.

Finally, the abundant water resources of the FHEDD provides land use flexibility that not all regions of the state or country can provide.
Grasslands dominate the landscape of the Flint Hills Economic Development District. These grasslands include Kansas cattle country, tallgrass prairie, and the unique Flint Hills ecosystem. The Flint Hills region contains the most dense and preserved prairie in North America as well as fossil-rich limestone that is useful for construction, but difficult for the growth of vegetation.

The Flint Hills Region, once the bed of the shallow Permian Sea, now holds only a few dominant bodies of water in Riley and Geary county including Tuttle Creek and Milford Lake. The dominant Manhattan-Junction City consolidated statistical area (CSA) in Riley and Geary counties exists in close proximity to these bodies of water.

The MSA contains a historical army base, one of the largest research universities in the region, and soon a national facility for Bio and Agro-defense. Thus, while the tallgrass prairies are central to the region’s vitality, the Flint Hills ecosystem is socially and economically diverse beyond its Western Expansion roots.

https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/flint-hills/17172
THE PEOPLE

The Flint Hills Region was first home to the Kaw people who established villages west of the Missouri River in the late 1600s after the Kansas-Nebraska Act opened up the region to settlement Fort Riley, founded in 1852 along the Santa Fe Trail, protected settlers and travelers moving west. Several years later, Kansas State University and Emporia State University were established in 1863.

Due to the large number of people attending or working at Kansas State University, the city of Manhattan in Riley County is the largest city in the district. Manhattan, with a population of 55,909 is the center of the Manhattan-Junction City MSA, an area in which 57 percent of the 183,513 people within the FHEDD reside. Many people living in the Manhattan-Junction City area attend or work at Kansas State University or Fort Riley.

On the southern end of the region is the Emporia Micropolitan Statistical Area in Lyon and Chase counties. Emporia, home to Emporia State University, contains 33,401 people. Thus, while the FHEDD began as a trading stop along the Santa Fe Trail, the region now holds a population seeking education or employment.

https://www.kshs.org/kansapedia/kaws-or-kanzas-kansas/17371
The Flint Hills Economic Development District, historically unified by economic activity associated with the Santa Fe trail, currently experiences unity from the residents’ mobility. Now connected by state highway, many residents within the seven-county region commute for work, education, and military service.

Higher education and military industries largely support the region. Material, machinery, and food manufacturing industries are also key to the FHEDD’s economy. Thus, employment in Education and Construction and Specialized Mechanical fields are higher than the national average.

Kansas State University and Emporia State University dominate the region’s education sector and have inspired excellence in other levels of education. Fort Riley, located north of Junction City in Geary and Riley counties, establishes the military sector and is an economic driver for the region.

While the counties within the FHEDD are interdependent in their workforce, management programs, and technical resources, there is a divide between the more rural counties of Chase, Lyon, Morris, and Wabaunsee and the more urban counties of Geary, Pottawatomie, and Riley.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counties</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>% Chng.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>2,694</td>
<td>2,790</td>
<td>-3.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geary</td>
<td>36,818</td>
<td>34,362</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>33,401</td>
<td>33,690</td>
<td>-0.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>5,694</td>
<td>5,923</td>
<td>-3.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottawatomie</td>
<td>22,920</td>
<td>21,604</td>
<td>6.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley</td>
<td>75,026</td>
<td>71,115</td>
<td>5.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wabaunsee</td>
<td>6,960</td>
<td>7,053</td>
<td>-1.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHK Metropolitan Area*</td>
<td>97,946</td>
<td>127,081</td>
<td>-22.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MHK MSA + Geary County</td>
<td>134,764</td>
<td>127,081</td>
<td>6.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction City Micropolitan Area</td>
<td>36,818</td>
<td>34,362</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSA</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>% Chng.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emporia Micropolitan Area</td>
<td>33,401</td>
<td>36,480</td>
<td>-8.4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood Falls</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>903</td>
<td>-0.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction City</td>
<td>25,016</td>
<td>23,353</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emporia</td>
<td>24,707</td>
<td>24,916</td>
<td>-0.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Grove</td>
<td>2,337</td>
<td>2,182</td>
<td>7.1 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamego</td>
<td>5,522</td>
<td>4,372</td>
<td>26.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>55,909</td>
<td>52,281</td>
<td>6.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>1,066</td>
<td>832</td>
<td>28.1 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Manhattan MSA redefined in 2011 to exclude Geary County.

Source: US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2016 5-yr estimates, table S0101
A majority of the counties within the Flint Hills Economic Development Districts experienced a slight decline in labor force participation from 2010 to 2016. Chase, Lyon, Morris Potawatomie, and Wabaunsee counties are more rural regions and suffered a decline in labor force participation.

The more urban counties, Geary and Riley, in contrast, experienced slight growth in labor force participation. Overall, the median labor force participation rate for the seven-county region is below the statewide average.

This decline in labor force participation may be due to an aging population in rural areas. Young professionals, college students, and military personnel moving into the more urban Geary and Riley counties may stimulate the increase in labor force participation.

Factors affecting labor force participation

- Urban/rural age differences
- Rural population decline
- Government employment
- Food manufacturing decline
Overall, the population throughout the Flint Hills region has stayed fairly consistent. Decline in population is mostly concentrated in the southernmost counties of the FHEDD. Linear projections indicate that the population of Chase, Morris, and Wabaunsee counties are expected to experience very little growth over the next 50 years.

The three northern counties in the FHEDD, Riley, Pottawatomie, and Geary are expected to grow much more rapidly. The opening of the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) is expected to create an influx in population around the years 2022-23 and beyond. NBAF should serve as a sustainable source of employment and population for the Manhattan-Junction City CSA and spur private sector growth in bioscience related fields over the course of the next decade.
MANHATTAN-JUNCTION CITY
COMBINED STATISTICAL AREA

Projections show that the Manhattan-Junction City Combined Statistical Area is expected to experience increases in diversity of both the age and race of their population. The population is projected to continue to grow well into the future, reaching over 255,000 by 2066.

This growth however, is almost entirely contingent upon enrollment rates at Kansas State University and troop levels at Fort Riley. Recently, both entities have seen decreased populations. The opening of the National Bio- and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) is expected to create an influx in population around the year 2020. NBAF should serve as a sustainable source of employment and population for the Manhattan-Junction City CSA.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population Projections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan-Junction City Combined Statistical Area, 2016-2066</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 14 &amp; Under</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 15-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 25-64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 65 &amp; Over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Center for Economic Development and Business Research at Wichita State University
**POPULATION PROJECTION: Race**

As the population of the Flint Hills Economic District increases, the percentage of Black, Hispanic, and other races are expected to increase more rapidly than the percentage of the white population. This type of predicted growth is positive for a largely white, rural population.

Changing demographics also calls for the development of new programs and services to cater toward an increasingly diverse population.

*Source: Center for Economic Development and Business Research at Wichita State University*
The proportions of the population aged 14 and under, 15-24 years and aged 65 and over are projected to remain fairly constant. The proportion of individuals 25-64 years of age, however, are expected to increase.

The projected growth of the population of children can be attributed to growth of young families in cities while the growing population over 65 suggests an aging rural population. In this way, the divide between rural and urban populations is expected to increase.
The Flint Hills Economic District has pursued unity through ecological preservation efforts and cooperative planning. These efforts connect public and private concerns and leverage the region’s rich natural, agricultural, manufacturing, and cultural legacy.

With ecological efforts, the Tallgrass Legacy Alliance unifies local ranchers, conservation organizations, and state and federal agencies toward conservation of the Tallgrass Prairie Preserve. The Konza Prairie Biological Station, a portion of the preserve that is owned by The Nature Conservatory and Kansas State University, as well as the Flint Hills Nature Trail and the Flint Hills Discovery Center allow research and experience of the landscape.

The Flint Hills Tourism Coalition unites Flint Hills Counties with plans and activities that bridge the gap between preservation and economic development.

In planning efforts, the Flint Hills Regional Council serves as a leader for enhancing economic viability, quality of life, and collaboration throughout the region. The Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization also promotes cooperation through transportation efforts.

A new initiative, Region Reimagined, is focused on regional economic development in the three counties of Geary, Riley, and Pottawatomie Counties.
REGIONAL MOBILITY

Residents within the FHEDD region often do not live in the same city or even the same county in which they work. The presence of higher education institutions and Fort Riley bring in students and workers from around the world. While some of these workers remain in the area, others move after their Flint Hills stay.

Manhattan, for example, home to Kansas State University, experiences an inflow of students and faculty workers approximately two and a half times higher than their outflow. Most other cities in the region, however, experience a fairly equal inflow and outflow rate. Rural counties as whole, experience workforce outflow significantly greater than their inflow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Counties</th>
<th>Inflow</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Outflow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chase</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geary</td>
<td>4,356</td>
<td>5,152</td>
<td>4,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lyon</td>
<td>4,571</td>
<td>9,443</td>
<td>6,261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morris</td>
<td>430</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pottawatomie</td>
<td>5,606</td>
<td>3,890</td>
<td>6,166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riley</td>
<td>13,179</td>
<td>14,219</td>
<td>9,339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wabaunsee</td>
<td>527</td>
<td>590</td>
<td>2,642</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MSA</th>
<th>Inflow</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Outflow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan MSA</td>
<td>13,323</td>
<td>23,571</td>
<td>10,043</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction City MSA</td>
<td>4,356</td>
<td>5,152</td>
<td>4,927</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emporia MSA</td>
<td>4,571</td>
<td>9,443</td>
<td>6,261</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Largest Cities</th>
<th>Inflow</th>
<th>Internal</th>
<th>Outflow</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alma</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cottonwood Falls</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Grove</td>
<td>515</td>
<td>402</td>
<td>485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emporia</td>
<td>6,306</td>
<td>6,953</td>
<td>4,465</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junction City</td>
<td>4,511</td>
<td>3,316</td>
<td>4,260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manhattan</td>
<td>15,972</td>
<td>11,988</td>
<td>6,468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wamego</td>
<td>1,867</td>
<td>628</td>
<td>1,623</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

WORKFORCE FLOW

The divide between more rural counties of Chase, Morris, and Wabaunsee and the more urban counties of Geary, Pottawatomie, Lyon, and Riley becomes clear when examining workforce inflow and outflow. In these counties, as agriculture becomes increasingly mechanized, there is need for fewer employees in the major rural industries.

In the urban areas of the counties, the younger population is largely associated with the region’s universities and Fort Riley. However, for many, when they graduate from university or are discharged from the military, they often hold a set of skills that can draw them away from the agriculture and manufacturing-dominated region. Retaining this potential workforce is critical to future growth.

EMPLOYMENT DYNAMICS

The employment dynamics of the FHEDD are unique due to the amount of personal income that comes from local, state, or federal government. Despite the continued dominance of university and military employment, the number of federal military and civilian employees has decreased within the past 45 years. The percentage of private employees has increased since the 1970s and 1980s but has remained fairly stable within recent years.

Many leaders have goals to diversify the economy because, due to the large number of individuals receiving their wages from the government, university and military policies and employment currently have a large impact on the economy.

The FHEDD’s industry clusters by employment reveals the dominance of Education and Agribusiness Industries. These two industries are nearly twice as concentrated in the FHEDD region than in the rest of the nation. The composition of Business and Financial services is also notable for its low locational quotient. Development of the region’s business industry may increase economic diversity.

Although Life Sciences is the top employer in the FHEDD, the region’s 7,428 medical employees form a concentration similar to the national average.

### Top 5 Industry Clusters by Employment in the FHEDD

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry Cluster</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
<th>Location Quotient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Biomedical/Biotechnical (Life Sciences)</td>
<td>7,428</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Education &amp; Knowledge Creation</td>
<td>5,163</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Defense &amp; Security</td>
<td>3,466</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Agribusiness, Food Processing &amp; Technology</td>
<td>3,445</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Business &amp; Financial Services</td>
<td>2,901</td>
<td>0.46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Bureau of Economic Analysis, Local Area Personal Income and Employment, Tables CA25 & CA25N
INDUSTRY DYNAMICS

Although Machinery Manufacturing, Mining, and Forest and Wood Products are not large employers for the FHEDD region, the concentration of these industries is unusually high when compared to the national distribution. Thus, even though the economy does not depend on these three industries for employment, they are crucial to the identity of the region.

Surprisingly, the concentration of military employment in the FHEDD is not unusual when compared to the national distribution. The highly concentrated and high employing Agribusiness and Education industries, however, truly make the region’s economy unique.

Top 5 Industry Clusters by Location Quotient

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location Quotient</th>
<th>Total Employed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Machinery Manufacturing</td>
<td>4.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Mining</td>
<td>3.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Agribusiness, Food Processing &amp; Technology</td>
<td>2.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Education &amp; Knowledge Creation</td>
<td>1.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Forest &amp; Wood Products</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INCOME DYNAMICS

While the Flint Hills Economic Development District experiences unity in many ways, income is not evenly distributed around the region. Some communities experience lower median household incomes and less housing affordability. Other communities see plentiful financial investment and opportunities.

Median income is the highest in the northwest quadrant of the FHEDD region. Regions in this northwest quadrant with median household incomes above $60,000 include Riley County and parts of Pottawatomie and Geary counties. The largest municipality in the district, Manhattan, also falls within this high income region.

However, where the eastern portion of Geary experiences high median household income, the western portion of the county falls within the lowest income category, with median household incomes below $50,000. All of Chase county also falls into this low median household income category.

Source: American Community Survey 2016 5-year estimates, table B19013
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Throughout the FHEDD region, when examining the ratio of median of rent as the percent of monthly paycheck, renting is least affordable in urban areas, specifically Manhattan and Emporia. The region as a whole, however, experiences relatively high home rental affordability.

The cost of homeownership, when examined through the ratio of median home value to median household income, is least affordable in urban areas. The cost of homeownership, however varies more throughout the region more than rental affordability. Home ownership is least affordable in the area around the Manhattan-Junction City metropolis.

Source: American Community Survey 2016 5-year estimates, tables DP04 & B19013

Affordability is expressed as a ratio of home cost to income. Ownership affordability is the ratio of median home value to median household income. Rental affordability is the ratio of median contract rent to 1/12 median household income or rent as the percent of a monthly paycheck.
CHAPTER 2
Stakeholder Input
INPUT COLLECTION PROCESS

To ensure that the strategies and actions proposed by the CEDS would be effective and meaningful for the communities of the Flint Hills Region, a series of SWOT analyses were conducted in each county. SWOT analyses are an evaluation of the economy and community with regard to their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. Participants are asked to identify as many of each of these they can think of that apply to their town, their county, and the region as a whole.

**STRENGTHS** are a region’s relative competitive advantages and are often internal in nature. Examples include industry supply chains and specialized workforce skills.

**WEAKNESSES** are a region’s relative competitive disadvantages and are also often internal in nature. Examples include a risk-adverse or a change-resistant culture.

**OPPORTUNITIES** are chances or occasions for regional improvement or progress and are often external in nature. Some possible opportunities include an expansion of a biosciences research lab in the region.

**THREATS** are chances or occasions for negative impacts on the region or regional decline, which are also often external in nature. These would include regional companies moving to lower-cost areas of the state.

These components answer the question Where are we now? and help identify resources to leverage in the future.
SWOT analyses are conducted in a group setting, either by inviting the public to a series of open houses or through intensive meetings with community stakeholders. For the 2019 CEDS, stakeholders from each FHEDD county came together to provide input.

The results of each SWOT were analyzed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of each county, the northern portion of the FHEDD, the southern portion of the FHEDD, and the region as a whole. The results assessed the north and south portions of the region separately because of their differing characteristics; this includes the north being much more urban and the benefit the north has of direct access to Interstate 70, both of which the southern FHEDD counties lack.

Cumulative findings from the SWOT are used to build the strategic direction and action plan, as described in the next section. The following pages list and describe the SWOT results for the entire region, the northern and southern portions, and each county.
REGION SUMMARY

REGION STRENGTHS

The region’s strengths lie primarily in its people, geography, rural character, natural landscape, and educational institutions. The Flint Hills Region is centrally located within the nation and within close proximity to major cities like Kansas City and Wichita. It also benefits from Interstate 70 running through it, which connects travelers, tourists, and distributors to the region from places like St. Louis, Kansas City, and Denver.

The region is also home to the Flint Hills that it is named after. This amenity provides a natural character to the region, as well as limestone that can be found throughout the region for fencing, buildings, and other significant structures. The region is also home to much of the nation’s last tallgrass prairie, which provides cultural character, environmental opportunities, and grazing for cattle.

Finally, major educational institutions are situated in the Flint Hills. This includes Kansas State University and Manhattan Area Technical College in Riley County, Manhattan Christian College as well as Emporia State University and Flint Hills Technical College in Lyon County. There is also a Butler Community College satellite location in Morris County and Cloud County Community College satellite location in Geary County.

Identified Regional Strengths

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Strengths</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Educational opportunities &amp; capacity: KSU, ESU, MATC, FHTC, MCC</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central location, interstate access, &amp; highway system</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of life, low crime</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism, marketing, trails &amp; outdoor recreation, lakes</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-added agriculture, national &amp; regional agricultural outreach</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fort Riley</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flint Hills &amp; its unique landscape</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing cluster: Onyx plant, Fox Tile, Quality Cabinetry, Caterpillar</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong work ethic</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History and tradition</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOP STRENGTHS

- Educational opportunities
- Central location & I-70 access
- Quality of life & low crime
Like many of the nation’s rural areas, the FHEDD suffers from a declining and aging population. Many communities in the region are aging, with few young adults and growing families. While the Flint Hills benefits from area colleges drawing in young adults, much of this population leaves the region after graduating for opportunities elsewhere.

There are jobs that need to be filled in the region. The unemployment rate is very low. According to the Kansas Department of Labor, the unemployment rate for the FHEDD is 3.1%. The issue is workforce. Retaining graduates from the education institutions and separating and retiring soldiers should be the answer. The issue is quality of life and quality of place that makes workers want to stay in the region to fill the jobs. Availability of affordable housing and daycare are also issues that must be addressed.

Further, many communities have infrastructure and abandoned buildings that need to be replaced. The capacity and quality of sewer and water lines tend to be some of the biggest infrastructure concerns, although some communities lack adequate roads and utility lines as well. The region also lacks quality broadband access in many locations, which comes as a hindrance to the operations of many regional businesses.

Abandoned or dilapidated buildings are another major concern, which detracts from attractive Main Streets and housing stock.

**Identified Regional Weaknesses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Weaknesses</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Declining rural/urban population, aging population</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job availability, mismatch of skills to job openings</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aging infrastructure, abandoned buildings</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State funding impacts, lack of state leadership support</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficiency of health care and mental health care in rural areas</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion that Kansas is a fly-over state</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of broadband service in rural areas</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of work force</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependence on government jobs</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of available low-cost housing</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Little education funding</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation &amp; road maintenance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of day care</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism amongst communities</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Much of the region’s opportunities rely on the existing industries in the region as well as the area’s needs. This includes the culture as a part of the region’s natural resources, higher education, agriculture, and Fort Riley.

There exists some cultural and historical tourism opportunities in the region, such as the two Council Grove Lakes, the Council Grove historic district and Paxico’s antique shopping district. However, the region needs to leverage these significant resources more and increase their marketing.

The region’s agriculture can be used to create opportunities as well, especially since agriculture is so significant to the Flint Hills and Kansas State University, a land grant institution.

The educational institutions provide opportunities to develop a skilled workforce, as long as the region can leverage opportunities to grow jobs that fit their skills and degrees to retain these populations.

The Flint Hills Region has been identified by stakeholders as a “great place to raise children,” because of the K-12 schools, parks, and traditional values of the communities. The cost of living is also cheaper in rural areas, making it more feasible to raise a family in this area while still being close to employment centers like Manhattan, Junction City, Fort Riley, and Topeka.

There exists some capital for economic development in the region that has yet to be fully leveraged.

### Identified Regional Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Opportunities</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marketing travel &amp; tourism: historical and cultural, increase cultural and recreational activities</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grow own labor force through K-12 technical education; Higher education graduates — Opportunities to grow the skilled workforce</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry growth, business development</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal health corridor</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military relations &amp; supply needs</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives to bring qualified medical professional people to rural &amp; less dense areas</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Identified Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Opportunities</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Great area to raise children</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility — supply &amp; demands</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More interface between agriculture and industry for growth</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity to interstate system</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affordable housing &amp; living in rural areas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation industries looking for hub</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some capital available for economic development</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Develop more retention at universities &amp; Fort Riley for entrepreneurial growth</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TOP OPPORTUNITIES

- Travel & tourism
- Skilled workforce
- Industry growth & business development
The Flint Hills Region identified key threats to its vitality. These include issues that were present amongst its identified weaknesses in addition to beliefs of area residents and a lack of support and resources from the state government.

Some of these issues are cyclical: For example, a population loss leads to a lower tax base, which results in reduced funding and resources, and therefore infrastructure goes unfunded, which makes these communities less desirable to live in, which furthers its population decline.

There are external threats as well, which include a reduction of the military stationed at Fort Riley and universities attracting college students from rural areas of the State. Area communities will have to take advantage of their identified opportunities and strengths to pull out of these cycles and sustain themselves.

Identified Regional Threats

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Threats</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housing affordability, lack of affordable housing</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural population declining, loss of population overall</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of labor force</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluctuation &amp; reduction of military (Fort Riley)</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heavy dependence on government employers vs. local employers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of direction or support from state government</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduced state &amp; federal funding</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro areas attracting young people away from rural areas</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Threats</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Close mindedness</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability and diversity in job opportunities</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of creativity &amp; vision</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in the agriculture economy</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death of brick &amp; mortar businesses</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High taxes (property county)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of inclusion</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of local schools</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor roads &amp; infrastructure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weather - no predictability for economic, tourism impacts</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Threats</th>
<th>Mentions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High debt ratios, lower education regarding personal finance</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complacency</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal agendas in communities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Down economy</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism in communities</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing beyond sacred landscape &amp; culture</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People who don’t like change</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuttle Creek Dam is on a fault</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro areas (Kansas City, Topeka)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apathy in communities</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being left behind/forgotten</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## NORTH & SOUTH ASSESSMENT

### Northern FHEDD
(Riley, Geary, Pottawatomie Counties)

#### Strengths
- Educational opportunities
- Location
- Economic development

#### Weaknesses
- High taxes/cost of living
- Lack of financial resources
- Lack of mental health care availability

#### Opportunities
- Industrial development
- Improving transportation systems
- Entrepreneurial spirit

#### Threats
- Declining enrollment at Kansas State University
- Funding cuts at state level
- Reductions at Fort Riley

### Southern FHEDD
(Chase, Lyon, Morris, Wabaunsee Counties)

#### Strengths
- Location
- History and culture
- Quality of life & safety
- Educational opportunities

#### Weaknesses
- Limited workforce
- Population decline
- Infrastructure
- High taxes

#### Opportunities
- Economic development
- Retirement communities
- Housing development

#### Threats
- Population decline
- Decreased educational opportunities/funding
- Deteriorating infrastructure
- Lack of jobs
# SWOT BY COUNTY

## Riley

### Strengths
- Educational opportunities
- Growing communities
- Manhattan Regional Airport
- Agricultural resources
- Animal health corridor
- Fort Riley

### Weaknesses
- Cost of living
- Lack of job market diversity
- High housing costs
- Tourism and events
- Next generation of leadership

### Opportunities
- Tourism
- Diversify private industry
- Retaining retirees, soldiers & grads
- Public transportation
- Research
- Entrepreneurship
- NBAF

### Threats
- Fort Riley cuts
- Decline in higher Ed enrollment
- Higher Ed funding cuts
- Floodplains
- Lack of interest in living in KS

## Geary

### Strengths
- Highway & Interstate access
- Land available for development
- Rail availability
- Workforce growth
- City leadership
- Proximity to KC Metro

### Weaknesses
- Lack of vision
- Closed mindedness
- Individualism
- Financial resources
- Self-image

### Opportunities
- Marketing assets
- Leadership
- Entrepreneurial development
- Build on regional strengths
- Age of the community

### Threats
- State leadership and support
- Downsizing at Ft. Riley & KSU
- Internal agencies
- Losing people to other metros

## Pottawatomie

### Strengths
- Proximity to KSU
- Regional partnerships
- Land development
- Small business lending
- Business retention
- WorkKeys education

### Weaknesses
- Infrastructure capacity
- Increasing price of land
- Rural housing
- Attracting medical professionals

### Opportunities
- NBAF & KBED opportunities
- USDA funding
- Strong sense of entrepreneurship
- New industrial area
- Excellent roads
- State-funded WorkKeys

### Threats
- Fort Riley reduction
- KSU enrollment decline
## SWOT BY COUNTY

### Lyon

**Strengths**
- Location
- Proximity to BNSF lines
- Proximity to multiple metro areas
- Value added ag. production cluster
- Startups
- Water quality and supply

**Weaknesses**
- Work force is short term
- Gap in skills
- Housing shortage
- Interest tax
- Low growth

**Opportunities**
- Continued industrial/business growth
- Job creation
- Housing development
- Promoting skilled labor opportunities

**Threats**
- Change in eco. devo. attitudes
- Declining population
- Changes in post-secondary education

### Chase

**Strengths**
- Quality of life
- Low crime
- Flint Hills landscape
- Education
- Work ethic
- Artistic influence & cowboy culture

**Weaknesses**
- High taxes
- Population decline & aging population
- Lack of support for local businesses
- Brain drain
- Lack of broadband access
- Lack of affordable housing

**Opportunities**
- Youth engagement
- Cultivating entrepreneurship
- Community development plan
- Eco. devo. support for new business
- Flint Hills conservation plan

**Threats**
- Over-development
- Changes in land valuation
- Increased taxes
- Decreased funding for education
- Lack of vision
- Droughts

### Morris

**Strengths**
- Central location
- History & charm
- Buried fiber optic system
- Developable land available
- Good schools, community college & hospital
- Increase in young families
- High quality general aviation airport and industrial park

**Weaknesses**
- Limited work force
- Population growth slow
- Lack of rail service
- Limited job market
- Infrastructure capacity

**Opportunities**
- Economic development & two industrial parks
- Retirement
- Affordable housing
- Recreation trails & lakes

**Threats**
- Lack of jobs to retain population
- Population growth slow & declining in rural areas

### Wabaunsee

**Strengths**
- Proximity to larger cities
- Low crime
- Low housing cost
- Traditions & culture
- Tourism & historic assets
- Recreational opportunities

**Weaknesses**
- Availability of medical care
- Internet & cell service
- Unwillingness to accept change
- Social cliques
- Bedroom community
- Lack of new businesses

**Opportunities**
- Calm lifestyle
- Community leadership involvement
- Tourism
- High-end retirement living
- Growth along existing infrastructure

**Threats**
- Mobile population
- Housing availability
- Job availability
- Increased weekend/vacation homes
CHAPTER 3

Strategic Direction and Action Plan
GOALS

From the Strategy Committee meetings a vision for the FHEDD was created. The committee processed several drafts to embody an updated vision that represents the region’s values and goals. From the vision and the findings from the SWOT, the following goals were developed:

- Collaborate and communicate with governments, regional institutions and other Flint Hills organizations.
- Develop a robust regional workforce.
- Create regional branding for regional tourism.
- Promote business retention and expansion within the region.
- Education: promote better educated, trained workforce.
- Population retention and attraction.
- Improve Broadband
- Improve Childcare access.
- Improve Medical care access.
- Provide Leadership Training.

From these goals, associated action steps were formulated to guide the region in accomplishing these goals within 3-5 years. The actions build upon the region’s strengths and opportunities to resolve weaknesses and threats facing the region. They describe steps to achieve the above goals and identify responsible parties to carry out those steps. These actions are laid out in the following pages.
PROPOSED ACTIONS

Action 1
Collaboration

Create collaboration between governments, new agreements between jurisdictions or public/private.

- Creation of an FHEDD website for information
- Identify opportunities for intergovernmental agreements for services and joint purchasing.

Collaborators:

- Regional institutions, governments and other organizations
- Economic Development Organizations
- Educational and private partnerships
- Flint Hills Regional Council
- Community colleges
- Region Reimagined
- Flint Hills Leadership
- Chambers
- Private businesses
- GMEP

Action 2
Workforce

Develop a robust regional workforce.

- Identify workforce training needs.
- Bring together, at least annually, businesses and institutions with a stake in the quality of the workforce or involved in career transition points to identify links between organizations (Cooperation can bring to light gaps in training resources and can proactively track trends in regionally in-demand skill sets)
- Communication strategy & players. K-12 high schools, all tech colleges
- Institutions linked with local communities and businesses to fill jobs.
- Return to the Flint Hills
- Ft. Riley retiree retention program
- Collect number of new hires
- Collect real time dashboard data on hiring
- Create metrics

Collaborators:

- Private industry
- Universities
- Community and technical colleges
- High schools
- Non-profit organizations
- Chambers of commerce
- KansasWorks
- Manhattan Workforce Alliance
- Flint Hills Regional Council
**Action 3**

**Branding & Tourism**

Create regional marketing plan of tourism and branding

- Convene a task force of people and organizations that have a stake in the image the Flint Hills is projecting in the region, across the country and at home.

  The task force will:
  - Bring an analytical eye to current branding efforts
  - Unify and collaborate on the content of communication
  - Produce a report on the current marketing efforts underway and a plan for how to further develop the effort.

- Marketing Strategy
  - Support and enhance the existing Flint Hills Tourism Coalition marketing efforts.
  - Support marketing strategies of the member Economic Development Organizations (EDO’s).
  - Develop plans to utilize and staff the existing rest areas on I-70 east and west of exit 313 for a Welcome Center

**Collaborators:**
- Region Reimagined
- Flint Hills Tourism Coalition
- Flint Hills Regional Council-regional arts assets
- Flint Hills Discovery Center
- Flint Hills Working Group
- Local governments
- Chambers of Commerce
- Convention and Visitors Bureaus
- Community members
- Kansas Department of Commerce

---

**Action 4**

**Business Retention & Expansion**

Improve business retention and expansion within the region.

- Continue site selection tool efforts.
- Support the business retention, expansion, and recruitment goals of the member Economic Development Organizations (EDO’s)
- Use the existing Location ONE buildings, and sites database for business retention, expansion, and recruitment in the four southern counties.

**Collaborators:**
- Zoom Prospector, LOIS.
- Collaborative effort between COC’s.
- GMEP formal agreement
- Flint Hills Regional Council
**Action 5**

**Education**

Promote better educated trained workforce.
- Continue entrepreneurial programs in schools.
- Communicate workforce needs with educational entities, softskills and hardskills.
- Encourage the use of ACT Work Ready program in the schools and by businesses in their hiring practices.

Collaborators:
- School entrepreneurial programs
- Region Reimagined
- Encourage participation ACT Work Ready program
- Emporia state business development.
- Manufacturers Council
- Advisory Panel made of industry professionals

Measurement: Unemployment numbers metrics for the region.

---

**Action 6**

**Population Attraction & Retention**

Create a marketing program specific to the Flint Hills Region and Kansas.
- Provide more affordable housing

Collaborators:
- Communities to Call Home
- Return to the Flint Hills Program-MHK Chamber
- Region Reimagined
- Concierge tours of communities for new residents

---

**Action 7**

**Entrepreneurship**

Establish entrepreneurship programs and competitions for Junior & Senior High School students in the Flint Hills region.

Collaborators:
- Kansas State University
- Emporia State University
- SBDC
- Economic Development Organizations
- School Districts
- Other partners to implement these programs.
Action 8

Broadband

Work with small communities and rural areas of the region to find opportunities for developing and expand broadband services to under served areas.

Collaborators:
- Small communities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Rural school districts
- Regional telecommunication and broadband service providers.
- Kansas Department of Commerce

Measurement:
Increase in areas covered by improved broadband service.

Action 9

Medical Care

Recruit physicians and medical personnel to region

- Work with regional hospitals and medical associations to identify needs for medical personnel and specializations.
- Expand nurse training programs in the region.
- Develop nurse scholarship programs by businesses that need trained nursing personnel.

Collaborators
- Hospitals in the region
- Regional Medical Associations
- Regional nursing homes and assisted living units
- Regional marketing efforts by Chambers and Region Reimagined
- Kansas Department of Commerce

Action 10

Childcare

Expand childcare opportunities throughout the region.

- Encourage business support for childcare facilities and programs.
- Replicate the childcare study in Pottawatomie County for other parts of the region.
- Prepare inventory and analysis of needs in community/counties.

Collaborators
- Kansas State University Extension
- Economic Development Organizations

Action 11

Leadership Training

Develop leadership skills in the small communities and rural areas of the region through training programs.

Collaborators:
- Flint Hills Regional Institute
- Flint Hills Regional Leadership Program
- Kansas Leadership
- Chambers
- Economic Development Organizations
- KSU Leadership Studies Program
CHAPTER 4
Performance Measurement
OVERVIEW

Used to evaluate the organization’s implementation of the CEDS and its impact on the regional economy

The goal of the plan is to improve the Flint Hills economy. The vision that was created includes action items that will achieve that vision. This section will outline the performance measurement of the vision as it is completed over the next five years and evaluated yearly.

Education
- Graduation rates in high schools
- SAT Scores in the region.
- Enrollment in Technical Colleges, Community Colleges, and Universities in the region

Workforce
- Workforce participation rates
- ACT participation in the schools and in business hiring.
- Unemployment rate
- Number of unfilled jobs in the region

Tourism
- Attendance at iconic tourist attractions in the region.
- Survey results by Convention and Visitors Bureaus
- Survey of number of conferences and attendance in region.

Quality of Life
- Changes in population
- Retention of young adults
- Participation in recreation programs
- Health indicators from the Kansas Health Foundation
PERFORMANCE METRICS

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY

1. Staff will visit each FHEDD jurisdiction each year with CEDS update and review.

2. Staff will assist and support the development of a FHEDD website for regional economic communication.

3. Staff will assist and support the development of a regional economic development partnership focused on private-led partnerships.

4. Staff will assist in the creation of a regional workforce development partnership.

5. Staff will support regional partners to have regional students certified WorkReady by ACT.

6. Staff will support regional partners to have regional communities certified WorkReady by ACT.

7. Staff will build upon the relationships of current regional economic development organizations and coordinate activities to increase new business starts in the region by 5%.

8. Staff will work with regional housing and development organizations to assure that 30% of new housing starts will remain affordable under HUD guidelines.
PERFORMANCE MEASURES

1. **Number of Jobs Created After Implementation of the CEDS**
   - Total Employment in Initial Year
   - Total Employment in Subsequent Years

2. **Number and Types of Public Sector Investments Undertaken in the Region**
   - EDA Sponsored Investments
   - Significant State and Local Investments

3. **Number of Jobs Retained in the Region**
   - Number of Jobs Retained as a Result of Federal Investments
   - Number of Jobs Retained as a Result of Select State and Local Investments

4. **Private Sector Investment in the Region After Implementation of the CEDS**

5. **Changes in the Economic Environment of the Region**
   - Changes to Taxes
   - Fees
   - New Incentive Programs

INDICATORS

1. **Talent Supply & Education**
   - Average Annual Wage
   - High School Graduation Rates
   - 8th Grade Math Performance
   - % of Higher Education Attainment

2. **Innovation & Economic Development**
   - Gross Domestic Product
   - Bed Tax Collections
   - Trade Exports and Imports

3. **Infrastructure & Growth Leadership**
   - Population Counts, Estimates and Projections
   - Building Permits

4. **Business Climate & Competitiveness**
   - Average Annual Unemployment Rates
   - Employment by Industry
   - Wages by Industry

5. **Performance Measures and Indicators**
   - Registered Nonprofit Organizations
   - Voter Participation

6. **Quality of Life & Quality Places**
   - Per Capita Income
   - House Purchase Price and Cost of Living Index
   - Persons Living in Poverty
CHAPTER 5
Economic Resilience
OVERVIEW

Economic resilience includes three major attributes: the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether.

The CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience (i.e., the ability to avoid, withstand, and recover from economic shifts, natural disasters, the impacts of climate change, etc.).

Three significant risks remain unchanged to the Flint Hills Region have been identified. These risks impact the regional economy, environment and society.
PLANNING FOR RESILIENCE

One of the most critical goals for the FHEDD and this document is to plan for and ensure the resilience of the Flint Hills region. Resilience is the ability of a region to be sustainable. That is, to withstand disasters and drawbacks, but also bounce back and continue to support itself after catastrophe strikes.

Resilience involves the strength of a community’s **ECONOMY**, **SOCIETY**, and **ENVIRONMENT**, as well as an ability to withstand economic, social, and environmental threats. At times, these three tiers intersect, and some threats cause stress to both the society and the environment of a region, for example. At other times, threats can affect all three tiers, and therefore the region’s sustainability. This section will inventory what existing entities and trends threaten the resilience of the Flint Hills region.

*Specific threats continued on the next page.*
Economy
- Inadequate work force
- Decline in K-State enrollment
- Reduction in forces at Fort Riley
- Loss of rural jobs
- Loss of local businesses
- Lack of state funding, support
- Inadequate infrastructure

Society
- Lack of diversity
- Aging population
- Low retention of young adults
- Urban-Rural divide
- Insufficient or lack of healthcare and mental healthcare facilities
- Loss of local grocery stores and services
- Negative image of Kansas e.g. flat, ugly, and conservative

Environment
- Climate change impacts
- Flooding and storm water management, water quality
- Droughts, dry-weather seasons
- Energy generation, political influences, disruptions to the natural landscape
- Threats of wildfires, tornados, destructive storms.

Sustainability
ECONOMIC RISK

While the region enjoys the unique relationship we share with Ft. Riley, the potential downsizing is always present. With over a third the region’s jobs and nearly half of the region’s economy coming from Ft. Riley, it is only prudent to prepare for any shift in Ft. Riley from a Base Realignment and Closure or BRAC. Ft. Riley has an annual payroll of $1.2 billion and a $4.5 billion impact on the regional economy.

In addition, Kansas State University continues to see budget reductions. K-State is the region’s second largest employer and is reporting a reduced enrollment in 2018 by 984. The need to diversify the employment base in the region continues to be a top priority and strategy for the region. A successful plan for resilience is crucial to mitigate the impact of reduction in the public sector employers in the region.

Mitigation of Economic Risk

Diversifying the regional economy focusing on the clusters identified in this CEDS, manufacturing, high tech agriculture, and tourism will over time reduce the dependence on governmental employment. The Flint Hills Economic Development District will work with regional Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Organizations to create a regional economic development partnership. This has been started in our partnership with the newly created Greater Manhattan Economic Partnership which currently includes Pottawatomie and Riley Counties. We will work to expand this to the entire region.
SOCIETAL RISK

The region continues to work hand in hand with Ft. Riley and the surrounding communities to share resources and work together. Maintaining the quality of life for soldiers and their families, and providing employment opportunities for spouses and military retirees has always been important. The Flint Hills Regional Council has completed a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) that will be used to protect the Fort from encroachment from surrounding development and protect sensitive areas on and around Fort Riley.

Societal Risks

The growing rural urban divide of rural population loss and urban growth in the Flint Hills Region is creating an inequity in the regional economy that could result in the loss of an important way of life and the decline in an important sector of the regional economy, cattle and agriculture. The population of Chase, Morris, and Wabaunsee Counties has declined between 2010 and 2017. In addition to a decline in rural population, it is also aging. The median age in Kansas in 2010 was 35.2 years while in the rural areas of the Flint Hills Region the median age was over 45 years. This aging population puts a burden on medical and social services. Loss of population reduces the market to support other community services such as grocery stores and household maintenance services. Small towns and rural communities find it more difficult to provide public services and to maintain public infrastructure as population of the communities decline. In addition, as the population ages, there will be increasing reliance on non-wage sources of income such as transfers and investments.

Mitigation of Societal Risks

Efforts to mitigate these trends and the impacts they have on rural communities include succession planning as well as economic development efforts. Focusing on agri-tourism, and high tech agriculture building on our regional cattle culture, linking research and development at the two universities, and other institutions in the Animal Health Corridor and, in the future, at the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan, Kansas will create opportunities for rural areas of the Flint Hills. Expanding transportation options will improve access for seniors to critical resources including medical and other services.
Environmental Risks

Climate change will have a significant impact as weather events become more severe, causing damage from tornados and flooding. Drought can also have a considerable impact on the regional economy as it affects the productivity of agriculture. Fort Riley has taken the lead in organizing disaster response for the region. The installation regularly carries out simulations to practice responses to different disasters and to identify areas for future improvement and cooperation. Exercise scenarios have included a helicopter crash followed by a wildfire outbreak on the prairie, and a tornado touchdown in Junction City and Ogden/Camp Funston. Fort Riley emergency managers coordinate with almost 20 organizations in the Flint Hills region to carry out hands-on exercises. The Kansas Division of Emergency Management (KDEM) plays a critical role in the first response to disasters. They also provide training for local officials and assist in the development of local Hazard Mitigation Plans at the county level.

Extreme weather is a real threat to the Flint Hills region. There was significant damage to property from flooding of the Wildcat Creek in Manhattan in 2018. The 99 square mile water shed includes two cities, Riley County and about a third of the water shed is in Fort Riley Military Base. The mitigation of this flooding will require the participation and coordination of all these entities.
Environmental Risk Mitigation

The Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC) and the Flint Hill Economic Development District can provide assistance to its members and other communities within the Flint Hills region.

• The contacts between member communities will help with a quick response and mutual aid.
• The FHRC and FHEDD can assist with coordination of the response to a disaster.
• The FHRC and the FHEDD can also provide assistance with federal agencies and administration of the federal aid.
• The FHRC can also help with communications in the form of daily community newsletters which are sometimes necessary when telecommunications are down.
• The FHRC and the FHEDD will also assist in the development of the regional Hazard Mitigation Plan for the area that includes some of our member communities. This effort will be initiated by KDEM in the spring of 2020.

The FHEDD will focus on the long-term recovery efforts such as rebuilding businesses and continuity planning. The FHEDD will also focus more on the Societal and Economic risks to the Flint Hills region through the implementation of the action items outlined in this CEDS and monitoring the performance measures that have been identified to ensure that resources are being directed in an efficient and effective way.
CHAPTER 6
Supporting Material
APPENDIX

Flint Hills Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
RESOLUTION NO. 031519

A RESOLUTION adopting the Flint Hills Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy and
Amending (CEDS) supporting the Flint Hills Economic Development District

WHEREAS, the Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC) desired to enhance the economic development
and stability of the region through the establishment of the Flint Hills Economic Development District
(FHEDD) which includes Chase County, Chautauqua County, Lyon County, Morris County, Potawatomi
County, Riley County, and Waubonnee County in the State of Kansas; and

WHEREAS, a Community Strategy Committee with representation from these seven counties was
created to ensure community and private sector participation in the process for creating a
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy; and

WHEREAS, the Community Strategy Committee identified stakeholders representing various
economic sectors to identify opportunities and priorities for economic development in the region;
and

WHEREAS, the CEDS includes a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT)
Analysis of the region’s economy, an analysis of the region’s economy, assets, goals, an action
plan for the region, and a plan for disaster response and recovery and economic resiliency that
will guide efforts to enhance the regional economy; and

WHEREAS, the CEDS has been reviewed by the FHRC, the public, and business organizations across
the region and submitted to the CEDS to the Federal Economic Development Administration for the
designation of the Flint Hills Economic Development District by the Economic Development
Administration.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE FLINT HILLS REGIONAL COUNCIL GOVERNING BOARD

THAT:

1. The 2019 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Flint Hills region is
   adopted as a guide for efforts to enhance and improve the economic opportunities across
   the Flint Hills region and the member counties.

2. The Flint Hills Regional Council submits the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy to
   the Economic Development Administration for the purpose of Designating the Flint Hills Economic
   Development District.

This resolution is adopted by the Flint Hills Economic Development District Governing Board this 15th
city of March, 2019.

[Signature]
Richard Welden, President Flint
Hills Regional Council
CITATIONS

GIS DATA SOURCES


STATISTICAL DATA SOURCES


Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2016). Local Area Personal Income and Employment, Table CA25N.


