

## **Flint Hills Regional Planning Organization Project**

### **Stakeholder Suggestions**

#### **Key Characteristics of the Flint Hills Regional Planning Organization**

Flint Hills stakeholders -- community leaders and citizens -- have made suggestions for the key characteristics of the Flint Hills regional planning organization in their interviews with the BWR team. Some suggested that these are the characteristics -- the terms of the deal -- that need to be considered by RPO Project Steering Committee and Technical Management Team in designing the RPO.

The suggested characteristics, again in the words of interviewees, fall into various categories. The categories are presented in the order of frequency of being mentioned by interviewees:

- Adds value to members; controlled by all, dominated by none
  - Assure partners still in control, large partners do not overwhelm small ones
  - Manhattan/Riley County can't always be the winner; Manhattan 800# gorilla, needs to use discretion, make sure communities that are only a "dime in the regional dollar" receive value; outlying communities can't just get castoffs, crumbs
  - No binding powers, fear that businesses want group that can make binding decisions
  - Don't create another level of government
  - Responds to locals, not feds (Big Lakes Regional Council problem)
  - Locate office neutrally and conveniently
  - Neutral except supporting region, provide expertise/resources, avoid duplication
  - Can't look expensive, or usurp local powers
  - Every entity sees results, can't revolve around Manhattan, truly regional
  - Everyone knows that everyone gains, all have voice/influence, what benefits Junction City/Manhattan also benefits Wamego
  - Divvy up funds/resources equitably
  - Make areas of differences, distinctions, that become food for cooperation, not competition
  - Includes interested, but not necessarily all local governments, in particular activities
  
- Help community leaders and public to design action strategies to address common challenges

- RPO has capacity to sort out opinions, guide members to common strategy
  - Get people to think regionally, get over petty issues
  - Bring in outside perspective, to prevent becoming parochial
  - Bring continuity to planning
  - Get beyond ad hoc regional cooperation
  - Broader agenda than Fort Riley (KSU, others)
  - Assure that RPO builds on regional efforts of past 20 years
  - One organization promoting region without arbitrary territorial boundaries, place to have open discussions without binders, focus on best interests of region
  - Access to other approaches being used to foster regional cooperation
  - Help local governments make decisions, educate
  - Educate but don't dictate
  - Help region to assess impact of Fort Riley, such as health care, child care, transportation, housing, schools, ecological sustainability, and quality of life, and take collective actions to address with limited resources
  - Help local governments partner with KDOT and other state agencies
- Launches successful projects, some with early tangible accomplishments
    - Successful project in first six months, early victories
    - Address a couple of issues, but don't take on too much
    - Develop regional transit system based on Fort Riley, now only demand driven rural transit; possible mini-bus program
    - Tap into best recycling system at Fort Riley, maybe even sewer and water
    - Support regional industrial park(s)
    - Produce tangible benefits
    - Quality effort, do right, produce best product possible
    - Convince public, improve tax base, attract jobs
    - Rename airport regionally
    - Train members and public on regional cooperation, problems with jargon, consider newly elected officials training
    - Adds diversity to local/regional economies
    - True economic benefits, attract funding, distribute equitably
    - Advance regional economic development, transportation efforts, plans for both
    - Build RPO/Fort Riley/K-state "regional extension" partnership (KSU learning lab, regional person at K-State and Fort Riley, regional extension person in each county)(2)
    - Explore ecological challenges (building on K-State efforts, such as wind and limestone deposit studies, eco-region cuts across state boundaries, Fall 2009 Design Workshop)
    - Address water challenges (recharging, storage, flooding issues)
    - Explore climate change challenges (more concentrated rainfall, low reservoir levels)

- Develop business incubators (NISTAC)
- Develop regional transit system that reduces demand for fossil fuels
- Provides key services to local governments, other stakeholders, and public
  - Maintain/build data base -- Housing data, Fort Riley data base, working on census together, regional geographic information system (GIS)
  - Need regional vision, goals, objectives for growth, not just Manhattan but entire region, counties wrestling with zoning (size of parcels and development options, need to be in parallel)
  - Prepare/maintain regional growth plan, Flint Hills growth plan first step
  - Respond to businesses who want uniform policies across region
  - Work with builders so do not overbuild
  - Help local governments to build on cooperative activities, such as Geary County/Junction City or Riley County/Manhattan/Pottawatomie joint activities
  - Assist in K-State/Fort Riley memorandum of understanding
  - Assist K-State/regional relationships (student financial aid, border development, student housing, student off-campus/community activities, student transportation, etc.)
  - Explore entrepreneurial staff arrangements (ala NISTAC)
- Supports other regional organizations
  - Single point of contact for Fort Riley, provide clearinghouse to help manage relationships with local governments, voice for raising encroachment issues, even protecting Ft. Riley from encroachment, need RPO to address range of needs, such as help remove blight and provide housing and services, required to grow Fort Riley (2)
  - Help sustain Fort Riley community partnership council
  - Don't threaten area wide agency on aging, 22 county convention/visitors effort
  - Clarify relationship of RPO to other organizations, such as Flint Hills Regional Task Force
  - Help develop K-State Flint Hills Ecological System (building on Long Term Ecological Preserve for Flint Hills prairie); K-State also assists in updating ecological components of local government comprehensive plans (Dickenson/Abilene, Riley County 2020)
- Represents Flint Hills interests with state and national governments and others
  - Increase clout in DC and Topeka; all six jurisdictions took regional growth plan transportation projects to hearing in Topeka, first example of joint lobbying; prepare regional legislative agenda; share lobbyist
  - Work together to secure federal funding
  - Can build support with members of Congress

- Has predictable financial resources for first three to five years
  - Can see financially secure future
  
- Is accountable to community leaders and public
  - Need capacity to monitor project
  
- Requires leap of faith
  - Share best RPO examples from other places to deal with doubters