

# Planning for the Flint Hills

BNIM Architects



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“It is but to paint the splendid panorama of a world entirely different from anything seen or painted before; with its thousands of miles, and tens of thousands of grassy hills and dales, where naught but silence reigns, and where the soul of a contemplative mould is seemingly lifted up to its Creator.”

GEORGE CATLIN, 1832



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## our fragile resource

At one time, the Tallgrass Prairie was North America's largest continuous ecosystem, covering 140 million acres from the Canadian border south into Oklahoma. As the pioneers laid claim to the soil in the middle of the 19th century, the natural balance of the prairie began to shift. Today, only 4% of that once vast resource remains and Kansas has a larger portion of the ecosystem than all other prairie states combined. Kansans and would-be tourists around the country are waking up to what some Flint Hills residents have known for quite some time: the subtle beauty and natural complexity of the Tallgrass Prairie is one of the most pristine and important national treasures remaining in our rapidly urbanizing world.

There is a strong new interest in the Flint Hills. The Nature Conservancy's larger presence, the controversy of a possible wind farm and an increase in second home buyers have pushed the Flint Hills into the forefront of regional consciousness. The Kansas City Symphony's performance at the Tallgrass Preserve in June 2007 is another promising event that will raise the visibility of the region and honor the beauty of the prairie landscape. With increased visibility comes opportunity but also urgency.

While the inability to productively farm the Flint Hills has protected the native grass from the plow, a variety of development pressures and economic hardships are beginning to mount. Considering the increasing visibility of the region and the economic realities of many of its residents, a regional strategy is needed to ensure that the local residents, the native prairie and the interested tourist can coexist. There are hundreds of organizations and individual champions

dedicating time and support to aspects of the Tallgrass Prairie. Their collective work has laid the groundwork for a coordinated planning effort. A Flint Hills Regional Plan will create a road map that supporters can rely on to help coordinate efforts and accomplish meaningful gains. The Plan will identify and prioritize attainable opportunities and galvanize long-term investments of time and energy. Most importantly, the Plan would illustrate the logistics behind the dream we all share for the future of the Flint Hills.



“There are some things you learn best in calm,  
and some in storm.”

WILLA CATHER, 1915







## threats

The Kansas Fish and Wildlife Service has identified many existing threats to the already vulnerable Tallgrass Prairie. These threats include habitat fragmentation through fencing and development, the profligacy of invasive species, the negative profitability of the agricultural sector, the lack of incentives to implement sustainable ranching techniques and the destruction of native species currently facing extinction. Additionally, as the wider public has realized the beauty of the area, the relatively new threat of development pressure needs to be better understood. Because of topography and the inability to use trees as screening, the prairie landscape is especially vulnerable to unplanned development. One inappropriate development or a single poorly sited new home can damage views for miles and disrupt the contiguous ecosystem.

Another commonly overlooked threat is the region's economic fragility. Some of the poorest counties in the state are in the Flint Hills, and wages in rural communities continue to fall further behind their urban neighbors. A Regional Plan will highlight the opportunities for economic development for all residents. To be successful, a Regional Plan for the Flint Hills must demonstrate a brighter economic future that is directly tied to the protection and promotion of the region.



The Tallgrass Prairie once consumed 400,000 square miles of the American landscape and is now one of the fastest disappearing ecosystems in the world.











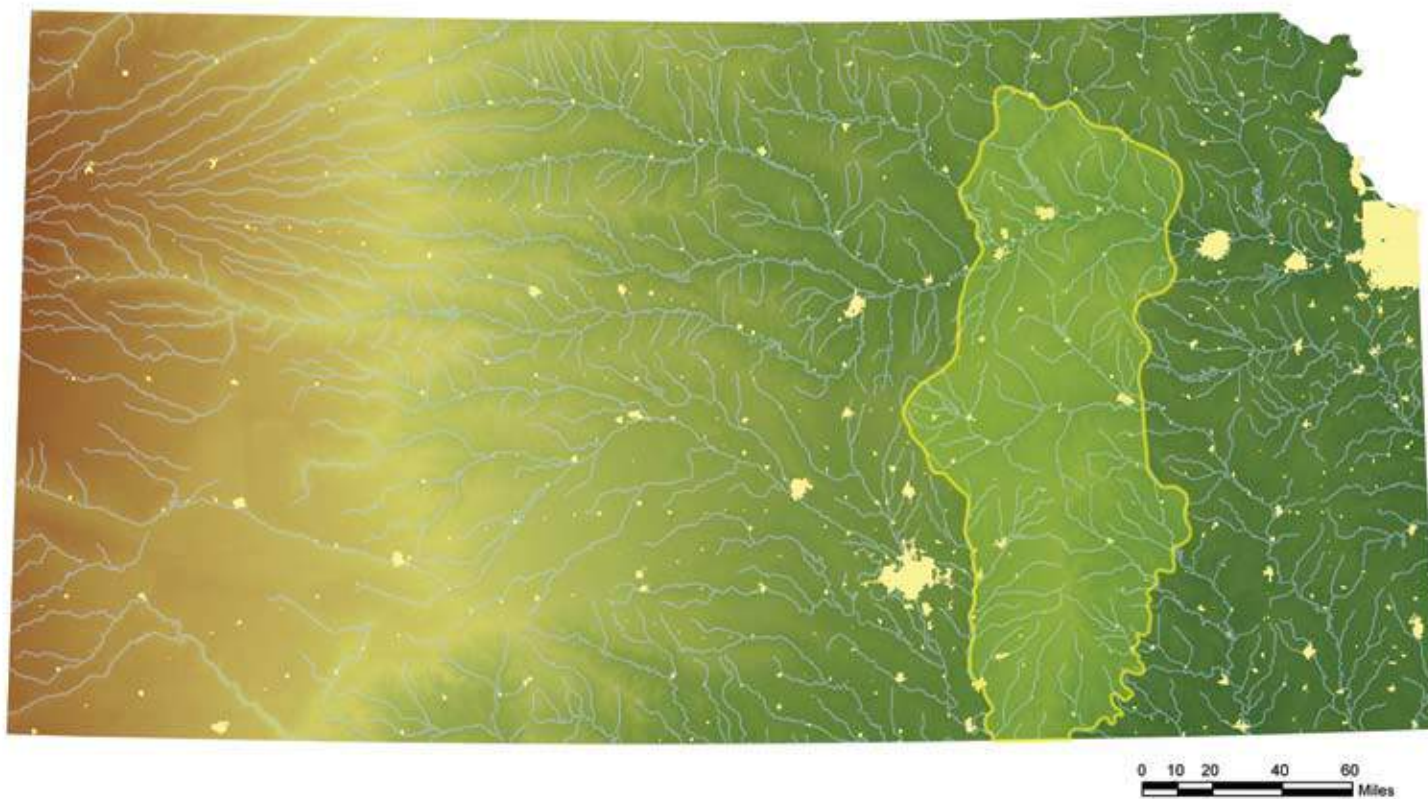
## a plan for the future

Recognizing that the Flint Hills Tallgrass Prairie is a precious resource that is increasingly threatened, that the region is simultaneously faced with economic challenges and new opportunities, and that there is a mounting interest in protecting the region, the time is right for the creation of a plan that outlines an integrated, sustainable and equitable future.

The act of planning is a communal agreement to work toward a better future. The Flint Hills is not a venue for a top-down plan that prescribes answers in a tidy “genius” document. A successful plan will be built around a consensus vision, from the ground up. The consensus plan reveals itself through casual discussions, expert interviews and community dialogue. While a document is necessary to memorialize the consensus planning effort, the process leading to the final product is more revelatory than any plan. Things that seem impossible at the outset of a consensus planning project are often achievable once the process is allowed to run its course. At each step of the process, goals become clearer and the vision more communal. The consensus plan is always smarter than any one person, and while it may take longer to construct, it has a much greater chance for long-term success.

This Regional Plan will promote a grassroots strategy of coordination and collaboration. Just as the deep roots of the prairie grasses knit together the soil, when done in a collaborative manner, the planning process nurtures relationships and builds the constructive energy required to facilitate the Plan. Area chambers of commerce will begin to work with researchers; tourism advocates will discuss issues with ranchers; local artisans will partner with shops across the state. The scale of this work and the disorganized visions for the Flint Hills make a Regional Plan difficult but critical. The planning team will build partnerships and develop a dialogue in throughout the region, and by the time the Plan is produced, the foundation for action will already be in place.

There are hundreds of intelligent and creative people already working for the betterment of the Flint Hills. A plan that could establish a framework for collaboration between these resources would be a guaranteed success. This framework would be based in market realities and guided by a unified vision and smart physical planning. By establishing a defined set of goals and guidelines, this plan has the potential to change the region and become a model for projects across the country. By bringing the many stakeholders together and maintaining a steadfast commitment to the triple bottom line of people, prosperity and planet, it is possible to focus a wealth of good intentions on a Plan that leads to common goals. BNIM Architects and the project team are committed to providing a strategy that will protect the Flint Hills, encourage economic development and enhance existing communities, and we invite you to join us in this commitment.



Flint Hills Ecoregion  
Cities

High : 4039 ft.  
Low : 679 ft.

## project goals

### UNDERSTANDING THE OPPORTUNITIES

While there are many ideas about the best way to serve the needs of the Flint Hills region, the first priority will be to get a better grasp on exactly what the community living in the Flint Hills sees as the most pressing issues. A variety of community workshops, stakeholder interviews and surveys will establish the opportunities for growth on which a consensus can be built.

### GATHERING FACTS

By incorporating GIS technology (a powerful data and mapping analysis tool) and a variety of other software applications, a sophisticated planning analysis can be conducted and readily distilled. This strategy works particularly well on a regional scale, where layers of geographic, demographic and cultural information can be layered over one another creating a mosaic of existing opportunities and constraints. Smart planning decisions rely on accurate and comprehensive information, and advancements in mapping technology allow for information-rich decision-making.

### BUILDING CONSENSUS

The protection of the Tallgrass Prairie National Preserve, contemporary conservation efforts and the concern about a possible wind farm have made strange bedfellows of many organizations with a shared interest in the Flint Hills. The Flint Hills Regional Plan intends to take into account all viewpoints and build an actionable consensus. By starting from a point of common understanding, it will be possible to build a consensus that supports the overall project goals.

The largest tracts of native Tallgrass Prairie left in North-America are the 770,000 acres of grazing lands in the Flint Hills.











#### EMPOWERING LEADERS

The planning process often reveals a network of community leaders ready to promote good ideas. A series of leadership workshops will provide these natural leaders with the information they need to promote the goals of the Plan and bring more skeptical citizens into the fold. These leaders will be implementing the Plan long after the planning team has finished their work.

#### PROMOTING LIVABLE COMMUNITIES

At the heart of the Flint Hills vitality is the health of the area's rural communities. These communities have suffered from population decline and economic struggle. The long-term success of the small prairie town is intimately tied to the health of the Tallgrass Prairie. Fortunately, technological innovations and an increasing respect for the natural beauty in the Flint Hills have improved the outlook and opportunities for many small communities. The Regional Plan will establish a strategy to ensure that rural communities capitalize on every new opportunity. By maximizing the use of existing infrastructure, improving the telecommunications network and promoting smart development decisions, the Plan will provide a course of action for communities ready to take advantage of the region's momentum.

#### ENHANCING CONSERVATION

The natural resources in the Flint Hills are the underpinning of any economic or cultural revitalization effort. The beauty of the Flint Hills is unquestionably unique, and its protection is critical to the well-being of every resident. Additionally, the international significance of the Tallgrass Prairie ecosystem has attracted attention from a wide variety of interest groups. Unlike many western states where the federal government owns up to 70% of the total land area, only 3% of Kansas lands are under federal oversight. This statistic highlights the importance of private conservation efforts in the state and the need for a concerted strategy enumerated in a Regional Plan.

## MEASURING SUCCESS

The measure of success for any plan is in its implementation. There are many techniques that can be used to facilitate implementation, and, of course, community support is at the top of that list. A clearly defined list of priorities and a set of performance benchmarks that can be used to evaluate successes and identify failures are also important. The Regional Plan will clearly identify the necessary steps to complete the project tasks and create a road map of the most effective way to accomplish the project goals.

## ENABLING MARKET-DRIVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The economic viability of the Flint Hills is crucial to the long-term success of the region. By definition, economic development should attempt to raise the fortunes of all residents. The Regional Plan would be market-based and market-driven. By establishing a consistent strategy that addresses many segments of the market and identifies the attainable improvement opportunities, it is possible to realize substantial gains in the region. Four of the major economic thrusts that will be pursued are:

- Tourism (Eco/Agro/Recreational/Historical/etc.)

The Flint Hills has a developing tourist industry, and there is a wealth of untapped possibilities in this area. The Regional Plan will provide an inventory of tourist attractions, initiate the expansion of creative tourist industries, establish priority areas and develop a cohesive network of amenities that capitalizes on tourism dollars. This work will be done in collaboration with the tourism consulting work already completed.

- Business Opportunities

As technological innovations continue to shrink the distance between home and office, the feasibility of a dispersed business model is on the rise. It is now possible for someone to live in the Flint Hills and participate in a global economy. The Regional Plan will assess the infrastructure needs and opportunities of an enhanced technological backbone and identify the tasks that will enable young entrepreneurs

to live and work in the Flint Hills. It is our belief that the ability of the Flint Hills region to retain and attract a young workforce is critical to the health of the local economy and culture.

- Sustainable Ranching

Many of the local ranchers have been living in the Flint Hills for decades and even generations. They, rightfully so, consider themselves the stewards of the land for the last 150 years. Incentives and educational programs or research initiatives that will help ranchers maintain their industry and improve the habitat will be explored and championed in the Regional Plan.

- Conservation Development

The possibility exists for new development projects in the Flint Hills that tread lightly on the land and protect hundreds or thousands of prairie acres in perpetuity through conservation easements. These developments will meet rigorous qualifications and satisfy metrics for sustainability and impact abatement. The appropriate location of these developments can be explored in the Regional Plan.



“I saw that a little height on the prairie was enough to look like much more — every detail as to height becoming intensely significant, breadth all falling short.”

FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT









## scope

BNIM Architects will coordinate the creation of a Flint Hills Regional Plan. The Plan will memorialize the steps involved in establishing a shared strategy for the future of the Flint Hills, display a natural and cultural inventory, clarify the results of an extensive stakeholder analysis, build consensus among parties interested in the future of the Flint Hills, develop a regional economic development strategy, make policy recommendations, identify next steps and catalyst projects and relate the communal vision for a Flint Hills region that is ready to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the coming decade. To accomplish this, BNIM would incorporate the dozens of educational, governmental, non-profit and advocacy groups that are already working for the Flint Hills. Their knowledge base is crucial to understanding the complexities of the larger planning problem, and their collective thought is the foundation for an interdisciplinary strategy. By coordinating the effort and brain power of these organizations, it will be possible to bring about significant change.











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## the planning team

Founded in 1970, BNIM Architects is proud of its history as a national leader in planning and design. At BNIM, our practice is predicated on several tenets: community-building, design excellence and the pursuit of a collective vision as a foundation for strengthening each project. Through close community collaboration and in-depth contextual research, we strive to bring to light commonly overlooked symbolic and regionally significant constraints and opportunities. We are committed to becoming agents of change in any community we are involved with through close collaboration with all stakeholders - from end users to local agencies to neighborhood groups. We excel at bringing all “voices” together, implementing a rigorous approach that empowers the overall process. By exploring issues of environment, function, context and community, BNIM Architects fosters a discovery process that advances the expectations for both the client and the community.

## collaboration + process

At the heart of our planning process is a belief in collaboration. We believe in a participatory process that is inclusive of the various planning disciplines. Through a series of charrettes, calls, design meetings and community workshops, we work as a team to dream, plan and build together. The end product is inevitably something that is greater than any of us could achieve independently. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate and understand that there is much to learn from every expert and each community member.



creating environments that enrich us all

Planning is an act of optimism. It is an opportunity to be better as a community and a region. BNIM strives to shape places that build community interaction and stir the users' imaginations while reconnecting them experientially to their innate knowledge of the living world. Making informed decisions is at the heart of good planning. Our planning and design process is inclusive and instructive. The education of the team and the general public is an integral part of the planning progression. This cumulative process elicits elegant solutions appropriate to each project setting.

unveiling new thresholds and reordering priorities

BNIM has made sustainability a way of life. We understand the implications of today's choices on future generations, and it is our mission to use planning and design as a tool to renew communities and provoke healthy living and a healthy environment. At the root of our dedication to sustainability is our sincere belief that informed decisions are economically beneficial, socially responsible and environmentally sound.







## case study

BNIM crafts plans for diverse public and private clients in the region and throughout the country. The Flint Hills Regional Plan is an opportunity to bring our considerable experience to bear on the part of the country we hold most dear. Some of the recent planning work that is most relevant to this proposal is the work we have done with the National Park Service and the Master Plan for the community of Noisette in North Charleston, South Carolina.

BNIM has worked for more than a decade helping the National Park Service plan sustainable communities that compliment the goals of the National Park System. This work began with the development of sustainable design and development guidelines for the National Park System in the early 90s and continued with a series of regional master plans created to improve visitor experience and increase the efficiency and sustainability of the parks. Specific master plans were developed for the Grand Canyon, Yellowstone, and Zion National Parks that included creating or strengthening partnerships with the surrounding communities that improved the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the park regions. In each case, the plans highlighted the distinct strengths of the community and the park. By recognizing the role of each, it was possible to create a synergistic relationship between community and national park that strengthened the vitality of both.

More recently, BNIM crafted a Community Master Plan for the city of Noisette, North Charleston, South Carolina. In response to the dismal news that the city was going to lose its naval base, the City of Noisette made a pledge to its citizens. This pledge laid out a set of principles underpinning a future of prosperity, opportunity, social harmony, educational excellence, and ecological restoration. BNIM Architects and Burt Hill Associates were hired by the Noisette Company to implement the pledge and plan for a dramatically different future for the economically depressed community. The Noisette Community Master Plan

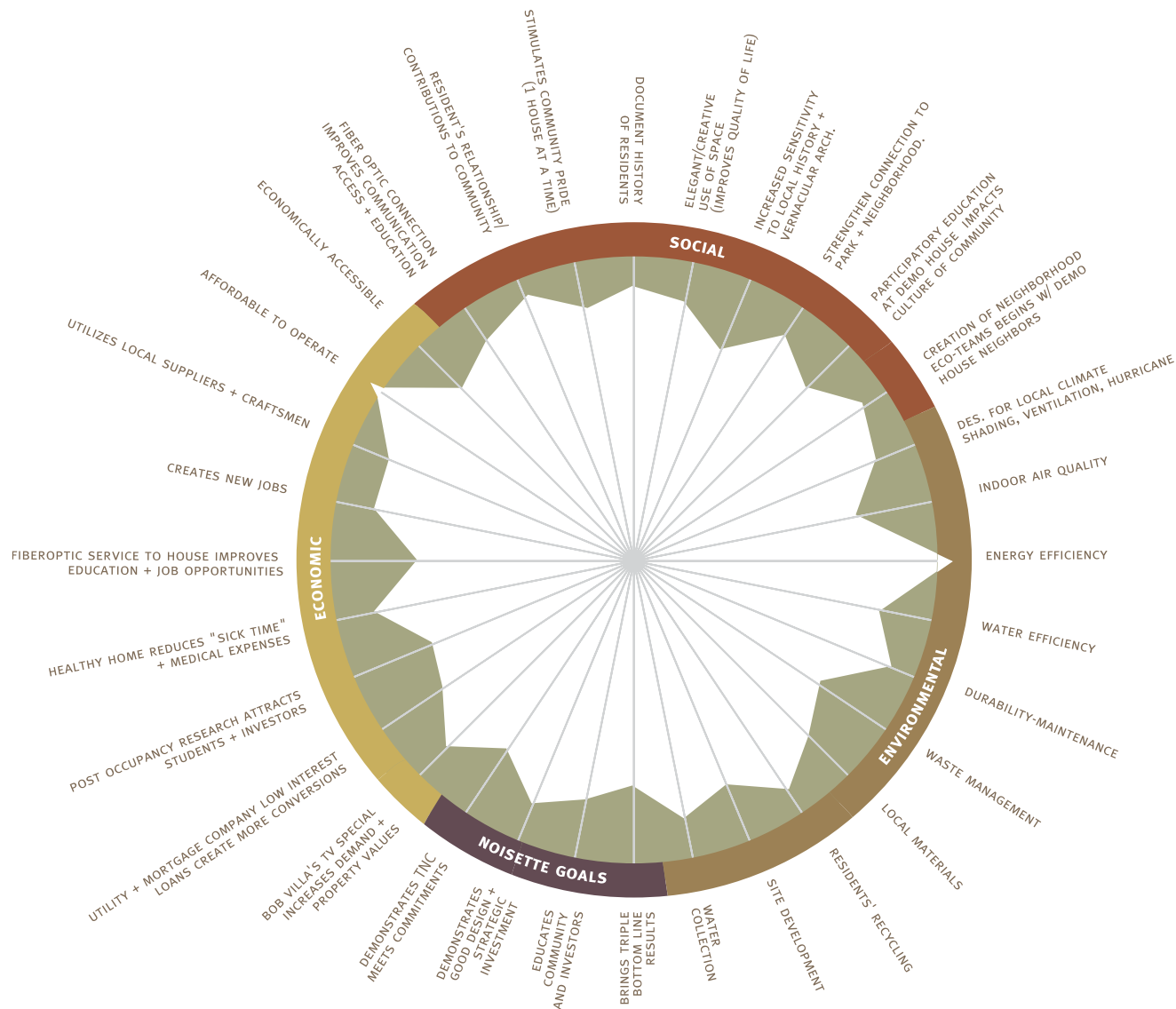
began with the establishment of a vision for the New American City based on the concept of a Triple Bottom Line – a balance among people, planet, and prosperity – that embodies the belief that sustainable cities must be equally responsive to social needs, environmental responsibility, and economic vitality. Noisette would become a vibrant, healthy city that embraced its heritage and celebrated its role as community, ecosystem, and marketplace.

Today we are starting to see the benefits of this planning effort. “Economic gloom and doom pervaded Charleston, S.C. in 1993 when the Defense Department announced the closure of the naval base there. The 12,000 sailors and 5,400 civilian workers...were viewed as an irreplaceable leg of the area’s economy. But the naval base’s 1,400 acres along the Cooper River proved to be economic jewels...” (USA Today, May 13, 2005). The naval base is now the centerpiece of an unprecedented redevelopment effort. Currently, BNIM and Burt Hill are writing the design guidelines for development at the Navy Yard. These guidelines will ensure that development at the Navy Yards proceeds according to the principles identified in the Master Plan.

In July of 2005, the American Society of Landscape Architects selected the Noisette Community Master Plan for its highest honor, an Award of Excellence, in the Analysis and Planning category. The plan was selected from a pool of 520 entrants.

# noisette rose

Project Evaluation Tool







TRANSECT ZONES

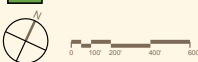
- T6 - URBAN CORE
- T5 - URBAN CENTER
- T4B - GENERAL URBAN - GREEN
- T4A - GENERAL URBAN - GREEN
- T1 - PROTECTED AREA

CIVIC RESERVATIONS

- CU - CIVIC USE
- CS - CIVIC SPACE
- HB - HISTORIC BUILDING

DISTRICTS

- SD1 - INDUSTRIAL (EXISTING)
- SD2 - SHIP YARD
- SD3 - HISTORIC RESIDENTIAL AREA



# river center at noisette

transect plan

BNIM / BHKR

THE NOISETTE COMPANY

## additional planning members

BNIM has a long-standing relationship with a variety of consultants and advisors that may be required to complete a Regional Plan for the Flint Hills. When the funding, schedule and project implementation tasks are finalized, the full team can be selected. Below are some of the roles we believe will be needed. Specific firms can be chosen based on the ultimate direction of the work.

### **Advisory Board -**

An advisory board will be a critical component of the planning team. The board will be carefully selected at the beginning of the project and will be tailored to represent a wide variety of disciplines. As an example, it could be composed of economists, conservationists, historians, sociologists, business leaders, artists and other cultural leaders. These individuals will bring their considerable and diverse knowledge base to bear on iterations of the Plan. The board will have a working knowledge of the process, the progress and the goals of the Plan and will act to infuse creativity and demand rigor.

### **Community Surveyor -**

A community surveyor will create a survey to assess the thoughts and hopes of the larger public. The survey will serve many purposes. It will foster community involvement and establish the idea that all viewpoints are welcome and that input and feedback are important parts of the Plan. The survey will also help to establish a foundation on which to build. Where consensus is identified, it can be used as a common ground to investigate more challenging aspects of the Plan. Finally, by compiling the feedback from the survey, the planning process is elevated above any one person. This is an important step because it engenders regional analysis that goes beyond a concern for what happens in a particular person's back yard.

"The only thing we've got going for us is that it's [the prairie] not quite as spectacular as Wyoming, Montana, New Mexico, it's different. It may be people won't get it, and that's the best thing we have going for us, but I'm afraid they will get it, and they will want to come here. I think staying a secret was the best protection for the prairie. There are just so darned many people in the world, and they have so much money."

FLINT HILLS RESIDENT





#### **Economic Analysts -**

A critical part of the planning process will be the economic analysis. The analysts will oversee the entire process and ensure that every recommendation is based in the reality of the market. The analysts will do research into the most compelling economic opportunities and report on the feasibility of a variety of programmatic scenarios. This team can be augmented by the expertise at the local universities, and will provide the numbers behind economic development opportunities. The economic analysts will also be responsible for generating innovative funding strategies, prioritizing opportunities according to effectiveness and monitoring implementation schedules.

#### **Photographer -**

The beauty of the Flint Hills is an undeniable driver behind the plan for the region. The final Regional Plan has to be able to tell a visual story as well as make recommendations. The photographer will contribute imagery and will be responsible for documenting the process of the Regional Plan. To properly tell the story of the Tallgrass Prairie, it is important to capture the public meetings, stakeholder groups and citizen interactions that have shaped the Plan. Over the course of the project, the photographer will create a human mosaic that represents the many voices of the Flint Hills.

#### **Web Designer -**

The internet is increasingly important to communication and economic development in rural areas. The Plan will address the opportunities presented by technological advancements, and the web designer will be responsible for creating a web site for the project. The web site will support many of the project goals. It will provide a place to collect feedback, post public announcements, advertise for events and share lessons learned. The web site will serve as a transparent communication tool for the life of the project and will provide an interactive opportunity to educate anyone interested in the project or the region.

The Tallgrass Preserve in Chase County is the nation's smallest preserve at 11,000 acres. The average National Preserve size is 410,000 acres.















## costs, time frame + products

We understand the realities of fund-raising for a project like this. We also recognize the critical need for the Regional Plan. Keeping these factors in mind, we have developed three different scenarios that address the issues outlined in this proposal: Small, Medium and Large. Each scenario will significantly advance the project goals and knit together the efforts of the diverse stakeholders. The size of each scenario is proportionate to the depth of resources and the level of understanding and community buy-in that could be accomplished. We firmly believe in the planning process as a tool to facilitate, educate and innovate. Furthermore, comprehensive planning necessarily requires thorough analysis and broad participation. Each successive scenario engages a larger audience and allows for a more evolved final product.

### small

This scenario will happen on a rapid time line. Stakeholders will be interviewed, existing data will be mined, and a small advisory committee will be engaged. Citizen participation will be limited to two regional forums. The team will focus on identifying a long-term goal and prioritizing the immediate next steps. A rural economic development consultant with a specialty in natural resource management will be engaged, and the existing expertise at state universities will be incorporated. The advisory board will be interviewed and provide feedback on the Plan. Our findings will be synthesized with existing GIS data to create a visual map of the recommendations. The economic findings will be seamlessly incorporated and a planning document will be created to memorialize the findings. This scenario will take seven months and cost \$250,000.

“Our ability to perceive quality in nature begins, as in art, with the pretty. It expands through successive stages of the beautiful to values as yet uncaptured by language.”

ALDO LEOPOLD

### medium

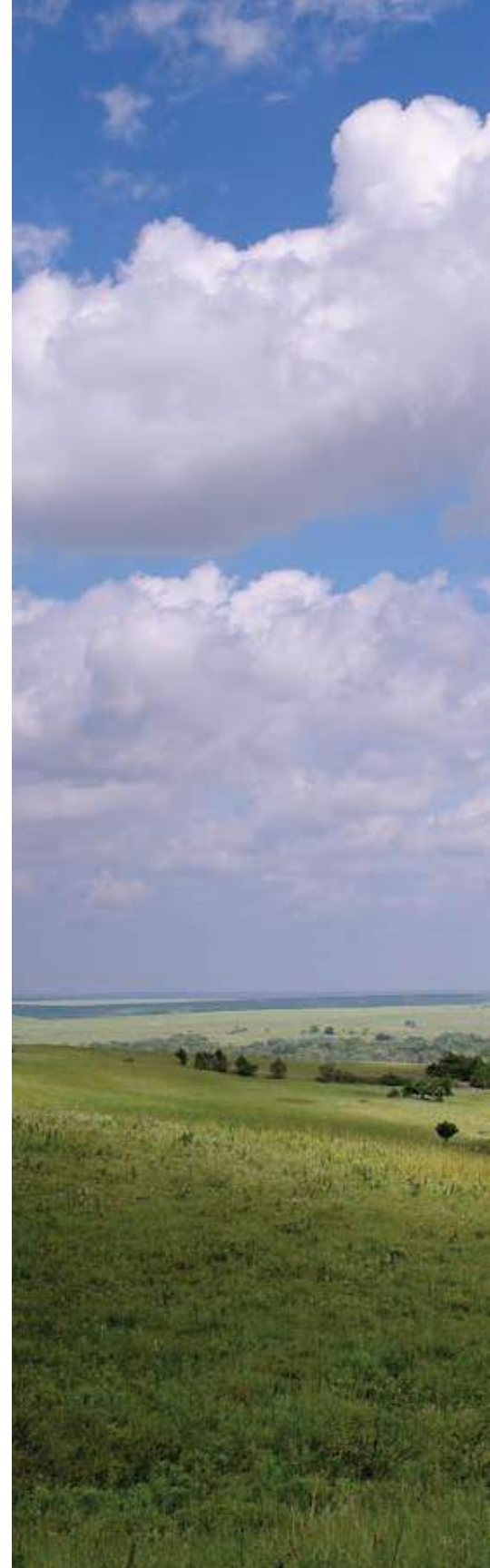
In addition to the work done in the Small scenario, the Medium scenario allows for a comprehensive stakeholder investigation and a significant level of community involvement. A variety of community meetings will foster a broader regional dialogue. An expanded advisory board will play a larger role and have quarterly board meetings to provide insight and deep review of the Plan and its progression. In addition to the economic consultant, the planning team will also engage a community surveyor and a web site designer. The web site will function as an interactive teaching tool as well as a communal message board. This scenario will take one year and cost \$470,000.

### large

The Large scenario will provide the time frame and funding level to accomplish all of our ambitious goals. This scenario provides a Regional Plan of the highest quality and represents the opportunity to set the tone for a dramatically different future in the Flint Hills. In addition to the work offered in the Small and Medium scenarios, the Large scenario includes original research and a thorough investigation into the more creative implementation opportunities. This scenario promotes a level of innovation that can only be achieved over a longer time frame and with the widest possible network of supporters. The planning team will incorporate a photographer into the project team listed above. The Large scenario nurtures the synergies created through the interaction of the community, the experts and the planning team and allows an evolution from a team focused on the production of a plan into a community working toward a common goal. This scenario will take eighteen months and cost \$700,000.

The Tallgrass Prairie has an amazing biological diversity. It is home to 31 species of mammals, 39 reptiles and amphibians, 150 birds, and 400 plant species with roots that can reach fourteen feet into the topsoil.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE







## products

In addition to the final Regional Plan for the Flint Hills, there are many possible companion products that would help to accomplish the goals of this Regional Plan. The final list will be lengthy and will evolve, but some of the possibilities include:

### **The Flint Hills Atlas (and GIS Database) –**

The atlas will be a series of maps representing spatial information from many different sources. There are hundreds of layers of information that describe the characteristics of the Flint Hills. These layers include infrastructure, population demographics, natural characteristics, cultural resources, tourist attractions and scientific research. By overlaying these interrelated types of data, it is possible to make smart planning decisions and clearly demonstrate the reasoning for land-use recommendations.

### **Treasures of the Flint Hills –**

The Flint Hills are full of scattered jewels and possible tourist attractions. These attractions require unique marketing strategies and an explicit network of sites and resources within the tourist industry. With proper guidance, planning and implementation, these attractions will reaffirm the identity of the Flint Hills. A thematic map linked to the web site will provide a legible patchwork of the region's tourist opportunities. Additionally, this product will provide suggestions for alternative transportation solutions that allow for the enjoyment of the Flint Hills at a variety of paces.

### **The Innovator's Toolbox –**

One of the most important contributions of a Regional Plan is the promotion of effective tools to achieve the broader vision. After we identify the most difficult obstacles to progress, it is possible to create tools to overcome existing limitations. These tools are most effective when used by a large and informed audience. The innovator's

toolbox will provide a variety of techniques that are applicable to many diverse situations. Examples of these tools include development guidelines, view easements and transferable development rights. Another tool will be a Best Management Practices Pocket Guide. This guide will illustrate practical strategies to advance the management of a variety of industries. Many topics will be covered but some relevant topics include storm water management, grazing practices, sustainable building techniques and tourism development.

### **Legislative Action Plan –**



"The prairie sings to me in the forenoon and  
I know in the night I rest easy in the prairie  
arms, on the prairie heart."

CARL SANDBURG









Some problems cannot be corrected without legislative support. This action plan will highlight any necessary changes and proactively address their implementation. Some examples of legislative adjustments could include regional tax-base sharing, development review procedures and inter-jurisdictional agreements.

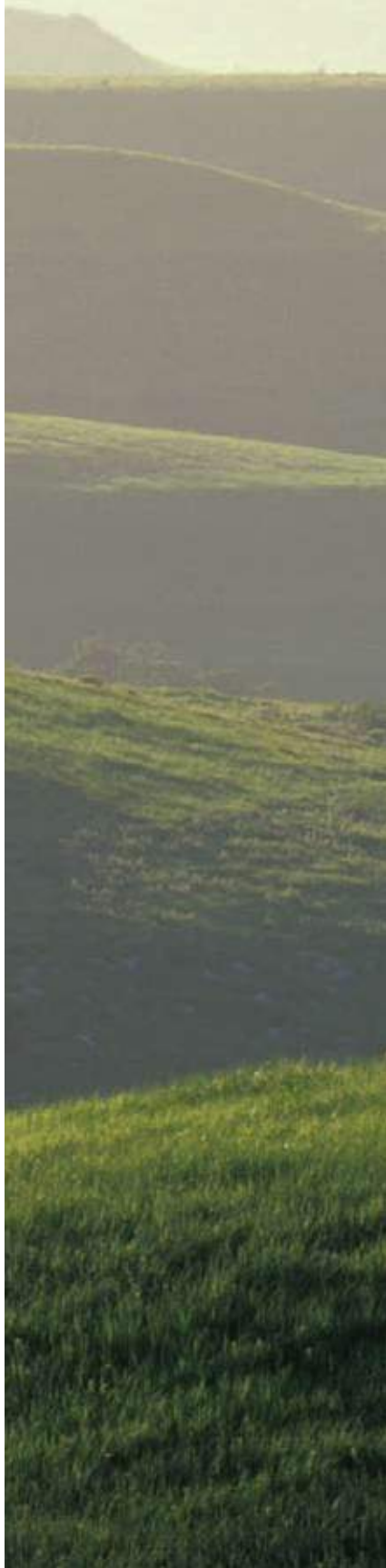
**[www.flinthillsplan.org](http://www.flinthillsplan.org) -**

As previously described, a web site for the Plan will serve as an important tool to help the team to communicate with residents and with each other. The web site will provide a message board and chat room to facilitate regional dialogue. The site will also provide a valuable educational resource for distributing findings and explaining the things everyone can do to improve the region.

**Traveling Storefront -**

The traveling storefront is a concept that physically puts the planning team in residence. A member of the team will travel through a variety of communities, briefly occupying a space in each community's downtown. Walk-ins will be encouraged, and the storefront will be a gathering place for discussions about the future of the region. The community can ask questions, provide input and pick up informative planning materials. This strategy fosters a strong relationship between the team and the community and breaks down the boundaries between outsider and insider, professional and resident.





The prominent grasses of the Tallgrass Prairie — Big Bluestem, Prairie Cordgrass, Indian Grass, and Switchgrass — reach an average height of six to eight feet, but can grow as tall as ten feet.







**The Flint Hills of Kansas are a national treasure.**

There is a real opportunity in the Flint Hills to craft a significant decision-making tool. The Flint Hills Regional Plan will promote economic development, protect natural resources and strengthen the many communities that call the Flint Hills home. The Regional Plan has the potential to dramatically influence the future of the state. As we have learned, the prairie, its inhabitants and larger economic forces are all part of the same system. The interconnected elements of the prairie serve as a model for a holistic planning effort that will never dichotomize environment and market. This approach will secure the work of the people that live in the Flint Hills while expanding a variety of tourism opportunities - and it will be done by caring for the ecosystem that nourishes the opportunity.

The scenic beauty, biological diversity, historical value, and cultural significance of the region are unparalleled. There is significant work already being done in the Flint Hills by a wide variety of artists, thinkers, conservationists, community activists and business leaders. A coordinated Regional Plan will bring these great minds together and establish a list of tasks and techniques to accomplish our goals. This project has the potential to dramatically improve the way we live in the region and care for the rural landscape, and we hope you will join us in this effort.











To make a prairie it takes a clover and one bee, —  
One clover, and a bee,  
And revery.  
The revery alone will do  
If bees are few.

EMILY DICKINSON

**BNIM**

ARCHITECTS







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