



## Strengthening Rural-Urban Connections to Support Competitive Regions

Omaha, Nebraska ~ May 15-16, 2014

Sustainable Communities  
Learning Network

NADO  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF DEVELOPMENT ENGINEERS  
RESEARCH FOUNDATION

NACO  
National Association of Counties



# Background Information & Event Materials

## Welcome

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Thank you for joining us in Omaha! This workshop is designed to build the capacity of HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Planning and Community Challenge grantees to develop plans and partnerships to bolster their communities' economic competitiveness and quality-of-life by engaging in place-based strategies that strengthen connections between cities and the surrounding countryside. Presentations and other event materials, as well as reports, case studies, and additional resources related to planning, economic development, transportation, and sustainable development can be accessed at [www.NADO.org](http://www.NADO.org) and [www.SCLearningNetwork.org](http://www.SCLearningNetwork.org). At the conclusion of the workshop, please be sure to fill out an evaluation form to assist us in planning future events.

## About the Sustainable Communities Capacity Building Program

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Through a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, the NADO Research Foundation is one of 11 teams providing capacity building and technical assistance to HUD and EPA sustainable communities award recipients through the Sustainable Communities Learning Network. The capacity building teams are forming networks among the grantees to exchange ideas on successful strategies, lessons learned, and emerging tools. This work will strengthen the capacity of grantee communities to create more housing choices, make transportation more efficient and reliable, invest more effectively in water and wastewater infrastructure, and build vibrant, healthy, and economically prosperous neighborhoods. Grantees and their partners can access resources, network with their peers, and find information about upcoming events on the SC Learning Network, available at <http://SCLearningNetwork.org/>.

This program is a component of the *Partnership for Sustainable Communities*, an innovative interagency collaboration launched by President Obama in June 2009 between HUD, EPA, and DOT to lay the foundation for a 21st century economy by creating more financially, environmentally, and socially sustainable communities. More information about the Partnership and additional resources can be found at <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>.

## Sponsors

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This workshop was coordinated by the NADO Research Foundation as part of the Sustainable Communities Learning Network through cooperative agreements with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed at this event do not necessarily reflect the views of HUD or EPA. Thank you to the National Association of Counties and the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency for their support in planning this event. A special thanks to all speakers and presenters for their expertise and time.



## About NADO and the NADO Research Foundation

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The National Association of Development Organizations (NADO) is a national membership organization for the nation's 500+ regional planning and development organizations focused on strengthening local governments, communities, and economies. Regional planning and development organizations—known locally as regional planning commissions, councils of governments, area development districts, or similar names—play a key role in regional and community economic development, business development finance, technology and telecommunications, transportation planning, workforce development, GIS analysis, disaster preparedness, and a variety of other types of services and support for member local governments.

Founded in 1988, the NADO Research Foundation is the nonprofit research affiliate of NADO. The NADO Research Foundation identifies, studies, and promotes regional solutions and approaches to improving local prosperity and services through the nationwide network of regional planning and development organizations. The Research Foundation shares best practices and offers professional development training, analyzes the impact of federal policies and programs on RDOs, and examines the latest developments and trends in small metropolitan and rural America. Most importantly, the Research Foundation is helping bridge the communication gap among practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.



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# Rural-Urban Connections Workshop Agenda

Hilton Omaha  
Hill Meeting Room (Second Floor)

## THURSDAY, MAY 15

- 8:30 a.m.**      **Registration and Networking Breakfast**  
*Coffee and breakfast*
- 9:00 a.m.**      **Welcome and Introductions**
- 9:15 a.m.**      **Morning Keynote: Strengthening Rural-Urban Connections to Support Competitive Regions**  
*Brian Dabson - Associate Dean & Research Professor and Director, Institute of Public Policy, Harry S. Truman School of Public Affairs, University of Missouri*
- 10:15 a.m.**      **Break**
- 10:30 a.m.**      **Grantee Success Stories: Sharing What's Working (5x5 Presentations)**  
*Grantees will each have five minutes and five PowerPoint slides to highlight one key success story from their project in this fast-paced series of short presentations followed by Q&A*
- 12:00 p.m.**      **Luncheon Presentation: Heartland 2050**  
Learn more about Heartland 2050, a 2-state, 8-county regional planning process (HUD 2011 Regional Planning Grant) in the Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area and the efforts underway to guide the project towards implementation.  
*Greg Youell, Executive Director, Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA)*
- 1:30 p.m.**      **Afternoon Keynote – Heartland 2050: A County Perspective**  
*Mary Ann Borgeson, Commissioner, Douglas County, Nebraska*
- 2:15 p.m.**      **Break and Meet Outside Hotel to Board Bus for Downtown Tour**
- 2:30 p.m.**      **Omaha Tour**  
*Tour downtown Omaha and visit the organizations No More Empty Pots and Whispering Roots to learn about food systems, economic development, workforce, and sustainability projects underway in the city.*
- 5:15 p.m.**      **Adjourn Day 1**

## FRIDAY, MAY 16

- 8:15 a.m.**      **Breakfast on Your Own in Hotel Restaurant (with voucher)**  
*Make sure to receive your meal voucher from NADO staff on Thursday*
- 9:00 a.m.**      **Meet Outside Hotel to Board Bus for Regional Tour**
- 9:15 a.m.**      **Regional Tour / Lunch**  
*Travel outside of Omaha into Iowa to visit the small communities of Crescent, Oakland, and Macedonia to learn about food systems, prairie restoration, flood recovery, economic development, and other issues in the region. Melvyn Houser of the Pottawattamie County Board of Supervisors will be our guide. The tour will include lunch in Council Bluffs, Iowa.*
- 2:00 p.m.**      **(On bus) Key Takeaways / Next Steps**  
*Addressing both short-term and long-term goals*
- 2:30 p.m.**      **Return to Hotel; Adjourn**

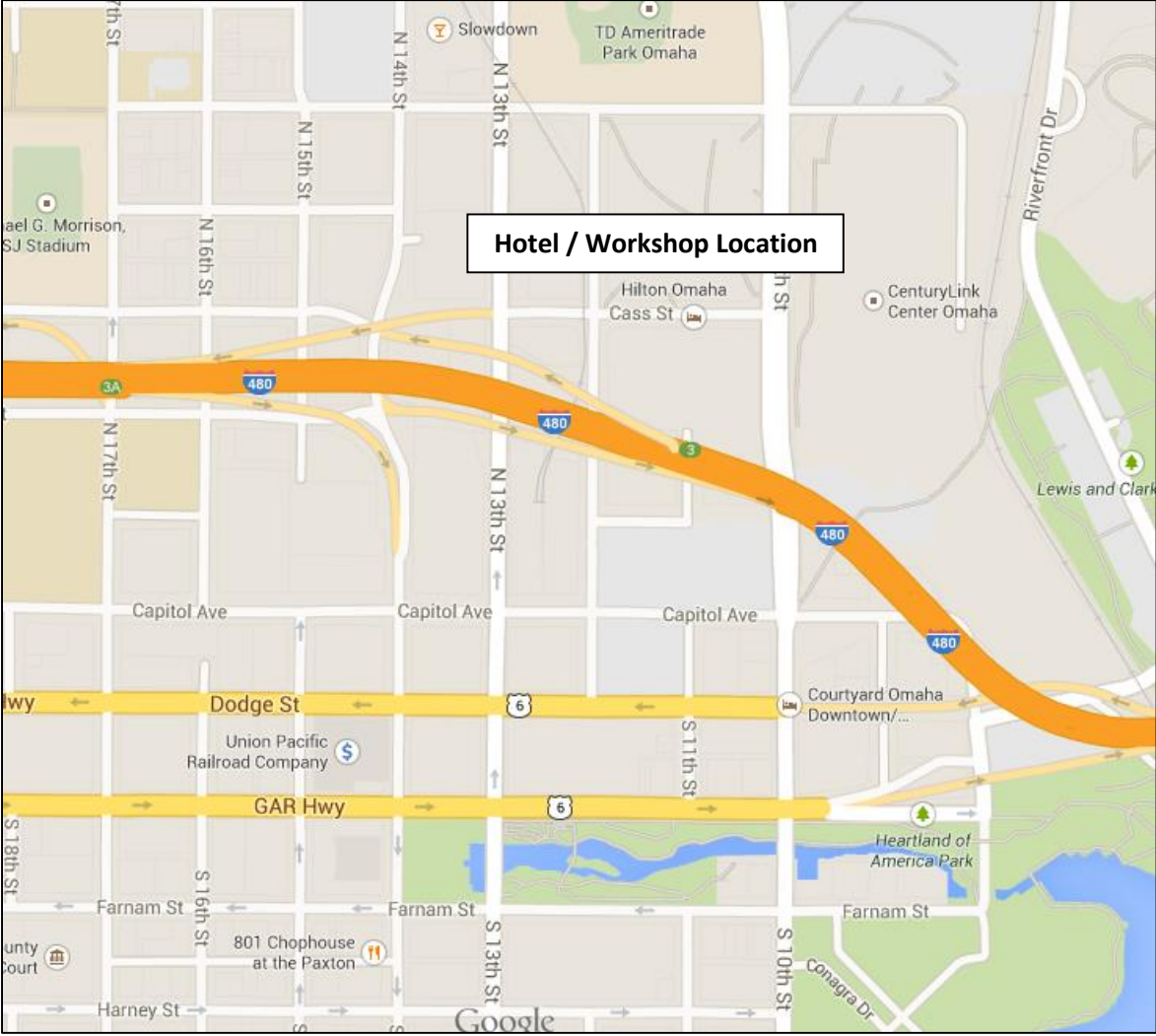
*Special thanks to the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) and the National Association of Counties (NACo) for their support in organizing the tours*

# Location Information

**Accommodations:** **Hilton Omaha**  
1001 Cass St.  
Omaha, NE, 68102  
(402) 998-3400

**Meeting Space:** Hill Meeting Room (Second Floor)

**Attire:** Business Casual (don't forget comfortable shoes for the tours!)



# Project Profiles

## SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA REGIONAL PROSPERITY PLAN

**LOCATION:** 9-County San Francisco Bay Area

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Metropolitan Transportation Commission

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** Association of Bay Area Governments

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 101 cities and 9 counties

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 7 million

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2011 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** The primary objective of the program is to address inequities experienced by low-income and minority populations in the region, as they relate to access to housing and economic opportunities. The program will develop a Regional Economic Prosperity Strategy to expand mobility and opportunity for low- and moderate-income workers; tools and resources to promote the production and preservation of affordable housing near transit; and policies to address neighborhood stabilization in communities at risk of displacement. The program has also allocated \$3 million for pass-through sub-grants to fund pilot projects at the local level that implement priority strategies, while building capacity in those communities to engage with local and regional decision-making processes. The program is currently in its second year of implementation.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** The region has many rural communities. Many of these communities provide products and services to urban communities. The most direct link between the urban and rural communities has been through support for open space and local farming. While the Central Valley produces agricultural products that are shipped across the country, local farms provide fresh fruits and vegetables to the Bay Area. The region has also protected a significant amount of land outside the urban areas as open space.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** This program is addressing the following four priority issues: funding for the production and preservation of affordable housing; risk of displacement of low-income residents living in high-opportunity transit served areas; access to, and availability of, middle-income jobs for low- and moderate-income workers; and capacity of community members and groups to represent their perspectives and priorities in local and regional decision-making processes.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** While the project is still in the second year of implementation, the Prosperity Plan is supporting the development of tools and resources that can be used by local jurisdictions, community organizations, and workforce training agencies, among others to advance a regional approach to many of the local issues. This work is being funded through a sub-grant program that has awarded almost \$3.5 million of the \$5 million available through the HUD grant to more than 45 projects at the local level.

### **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT:**

**Vikrant Sood**

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# FLINT HILLS FRONTIERS

**LOCATION:** Flint Hills, KS and OK

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Flint Hills Regional Council (FHRC)

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** 21 local jurisdictions, including Manhattan, KS; Kansas State University; Fort Riley, US Army; KS Dept. of Agriculture; Wildlife Parks & Tourism; Cooperative Research & Extension, among others

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 19 counties in KS and OK

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 400,000+

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2011 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** The Flint Hills is the last remaining stand of tallgrass prairie. A vast ecosystem that once covered the greater part of North America now consists of only 4% of that historical reach of which the Flint Hills holds 75%. This ecosystem forms the cornerstone of the cattle culture that anchors the region's economy, and yet the exploding population boom surrounding the Manhattan metropolitan area and the Junction City micropolitan area brings three frontiers of concern: first, the urban boom continues to put pressure on Fort Riley and their mission of National Defense by encroaching on vital habitat; second, the amazing growth also puts pressure on our natural and cultural resources; and third, the urban boom is in strict contrast to the surrounding rural areas, which continue a century-long decline, where rural and small town economies seek viability and sustainability for an uncertain future.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** We have formed the Flint Hills Economic Development District, increasing the reach of the FHRC into surrounding rural areas and incorporating these areas in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) and bringing our region together to discuss economic, workforce, and industry planning and support. During the Frontiers project the FHRC has also helped form the Flint Hills Metropolitan Planning Organization, becoming the transportation planning arm for the greater Manhattan area. The Frontiers project has also collaborated with the Kaw and Osage Nations, many agricultural and ranching partner agencies, and NGOs to further urban and rural connections.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** The region continues to face struggling rural economies and depleted populations. The greater Manhattan area is one of the ten fastest growing Metro areas and with that, transportation, housing, and land use face increased pressures.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** We are working towards developing a Community Toolbox for our regional partners to help facilitate implementation. We have just finished another round of community outreach and will begin drafting our regional plan. We are also working with our state extension agencies to educate and raise awareness of the tools available to local communities.

## **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT:**

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# REGIONAL ECONOMIC AREA PARTNERSHIP – PROSPERITY INITIATIVE

**LOCATION:** South Central Kansas- Wichita

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Regional Economic Area Partnership (REAP)

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** Consortium Partners: Sedgwick County; City of Wichita; City of Wellington; City of El Dorado; Harvey County; City of Newton; Reno County; City of Hutchinson; Wichita Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (WAMPO); Wichita State University’s Hugo Wall School of Public Affairs and Center for Community Support and Research (CCSR); Visioneering Wichita; Wichita Downtown Development Corporation; United Way; Kansas Health Foundation; Wichita Independent Neighborhood (WIN); Independent Living Resource Center (ILRC); and the University of Kansas School of Medicine-Wichita

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** Planning area includes 5 counties and 66 incorporated cities (not all of which are REAP members or planning partners)

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 687,572

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2011 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** South Central Kansas is competing globally and in order to be successful, we must develop a coordinated plan to foster long-term job creation with adequate infrastructure to affordably access employment and services. The plan will provide the region with a framework to address economic competitiveness, social equality, public health, and the environment in a cooperative manner and develop integrated policy that addresses housing, land use, economic and workforce development, transportation, and infrastructure investments. The planning effort focuses on six key areas: workforce and business development; built environment; transportation; water; natural resources; and healthy community design. The goal of the plan is to make long-term decisions together that:

- Use limited public funds more efficiently;
- Connect people with quality jobs through coordinated workforce development;
- Align regional housing, transportation, and infrastructure investments;
- Protect important resources such as water, air, and farmland;
- Build safe, healthy, and attractive neighborhoods; and create lasting value for our local communities and economies.

The plan will provide an overall vision for sustainability in the region by developing goals, strategies, and action steps to support that vision. Specifically the plan will create a regional integrated plan involving regional partners and stakeholders. The plan will focus on engagement processes that will bring together stakeholders from public, private, and non-profit organizations. Resources are dedicated to engage populations that are typically under-represented in the planning process, including a focus on youth engagement and education. In order to utilize the good planning work already completed or underway, the plan will support already-developed regional strategies by reviewing existing plans and then assessing information and data to identify the opportunities/gaps in the region. A “preferred future” scenario will be developed to provide a lens in which to make decisions around resource allocation and projects. Through continued engagement and the development of a strong implementation strategy, the regional plan will be adopted by the REAP organization, Consortium Leadership Team, and member consortium partners. Moving forward the plan will set forth policy direction, alternative strategies, and action steps to coordinate future planning and project implementation by individual entities, thus allowing for and acknowledging local autonomy. As a method of tracking regional

sustainability progress, measures and indicators will be included to track and assess progress towards the achievement of regional sustainability in the five-county region.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** The City of Wichita is the largest city in the state and makes up close to 400,000 of the 687,000+ population in the 5-county area. Outside of Wichita, the region contains 66 incorporated cities and several more unincorporated cities. These 66 incorporated cities are predominately rural communities that are concerned about their future sustainability and the rural exodus they are experiencing. Part of the concern about coming together as a region involves competition and concern that they will lose their identity, resources, and population to the larger cities. The project has involved representatives from across the region to equally engage and provide input into the regional plan. Issues and strategies developed over the last two years are applicable to any size community. The planning process has intentionally included all parts of the region in stakeholder interviews, community engagement, and elected officials feedback sessions. This feedback has greatly shaped the regional plan and the rural communities have been strong partners through this process. Being included in the discussion along with the urban cities has provided a platform to assist in making decisions and to highlight the great work occurring in their communities.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** There is great concern about the “take over” from the large city in the region- Wichita. Rural communities have traditionally felt excluded from regional discussions which caused them to compete rather than cooperate. The larger cities also have not traditionally reached out to be inclusive about regional issues. What has resulted is an atmosphere of individual communities competing against one another. In addition, there continues to be a fear around the grant itself and what it may represent. There has also traditionally been a lack of community engagement so citizen participation is difficult to obtain, but slowly improving. There is great concern about giving up autonomy and some adversity in general to planning. In general, we are a strong manufacturing region that has seen a decline in jobs in that area. The challenge is to determine what we do well and then identify gaps that we need to fill, such as diversifying our economy, preparing for the needs and wants of the older and younger generations, ensuring a strong workforce to fill jobs, retaining our young people, ensuring a future water supply, and maintaining our infrastructure.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** We continue to provide data and information around the importance of thinking regionally. The development of existing conditions and county profile reports has helped tell the story about where the region is and where it needs to be. Extensive community engagement has provided valuable feedback and information to elected officials in the region about needs and elements they want in the future. By and large, citizens are concerned about the planning topics and are supportive of the strategies being developed. Fully developing strategies and providing for demonstration/pilot projects will produce a “toolkit” that can show value around the project and encourage implementation across the region. The plan will highlight sustainability efforts already occurring in the region and show how those efforts will improve the quality-of-life and economic competitiveness of the region. The plan will develop a return on investment tool that will make the case for why sustainability strategies will benefit each individual community and the region as a whole.

**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANT:**

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# PARKVIEW GARDENS: A SUSTAINABLE AND ACCESSIBLE NEIGHBORHOOD

**LOCATION:** University City, MO (Inner-Ring Suburb in St. Louis Metropolitan Area)

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** City of University City

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** City of University City; Washington University in St Louis; Parkview Gardens Association; Great Rivers Greenway District; Trailnet; Regional Housing and Community Development Alliance; Arcturis; St. Louis Regional Arts Commission; City of St. Louis. Advisors - Gateway Foundation (Christy Fox, Executive Director); Metro; University City Arts and Letters Commission; University City Parks Commission

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** One urban neighborhood

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 3,300

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2010 – Community Challenge

**PROJECT SCOPE:** To create a sustainable redevelopment plan for Parkview Gardens, an urban neighborhood located in the easternmost part of University City, an inner-ring suburb which abuts the City of St. Louis. Planning issues in the planning area include: lack of neighborhood connectivity, need for additional affordable housing, and a need to improve the quality of existing open spaces. In addition, connecting residents to existing transit bus routes and light rail system and the planned Loop Trolley are included in the study. The Loop Trolley will run along a section of Delmar Blvd., a major entertainment and cultural business corridor (Delmar Loop) which is the southern border of the Parkview Gardens neighborhood.

## **RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:**

1) Support re-opening and expansion of the Farmers Market in The Delmar Loop.

2) The 2.2 mile Loop Trolley project has received FTA funding and is undergoing a construction bidding process with construction commencement anticipated later in 2014. The trolley system would provide connection and easier access for the public to the regional light rail system and the public transit.

3) A super high-speed internet project (gigabit wireless and supporting fiber optic network) has been proposed along the alignment of the Loop Trolley by a private entity. When completed, the virtual linkage between our urban neighborhood planning area and the rural areas (with internet access) will be incredible.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** For some of the commercial property owners/business owners to recognize the benefits and positive outcome the long-term vision of a neighborhood sustainable redevelopment plan could bring for the future of the business district.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** Apply for grants or other sources of funding. Collaborate with partners who share similar goals and visions for lessons learned and resources. Research on issues/topics that would provide the basis and background information on appropriate regulatory changes.

Launching of the City's Comprehensive Plan Update project which will include further exploration of some of the issues discussed in the neighborhood plan.

**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:**

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# HEARTLAND 2050

**LOCATION:** Omaha-Council Bluffs Metro Area (NE/IA)

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Omaha-Council Bluffs Metropolitan Area Planning Agency

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** US Housing and Urban Development; Environmental Protection Agency; Department of Transportation; local foundations; Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce; Fregonese & Associates

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 8 counties & 50 cities

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 850,000

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2011 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** Heartland 2050 is an unprecedented effort to develop a long-term vision for the future of the greater Omaha-Council Bluffs metropolitan area that is based on the core values of area residents. This vision will guide community leaders, giving them a roadmap to our common future while identifying a long-term strategy to maximize public investments, promote economic growth and help everyone prosper well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The project encompasses eight counties: Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, Saunders, and Washington counties in Nebraska; Harrison, Mills, and Pottawattamie counties in Iowa.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** When putting together research teams based on Steering Committee members, we assembled the research teams in a way that brought experts in each topic area (housing, agriculture, education, etc.) together so that urban and rural communities had to work together to gather their research and present it to our larger Steering Committee. ECONorthwest (a consultant for Heartland 2050) helped conduct a SWOT analysis with the Omaha Chamber of Commerce that brought together urban and rural economic development representatives. We have also had several elected leaders from rural communities attend our scenario planning workshops held in urban areas, and urban leaders attend scenario planning workshops in rural areas to begin a dialogue intended to spark collaboration, and raise awareness of regional issues.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** There is a perception that the issue of poverty is only a race or geographic problem. Poverty and workforce needs are in all parts of our region. Getting people to identify that poverty exists in both urban and rural areas has been difficult. This is our most significant challenge because it poses the greatest opportunity for collaboration between municipalities to address this issue.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** Currently, we are developing the vision and goals. We have reorganized our steering committee to vision committees with equity and stakeholder members addressing rural and urban. Connecting urban and rural leaders has led to more ownership and support of a few of the pilot projects and recommendations that will come out of the Heartland 2050 project.

## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

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# PIEDMONT TOGETHER

**LOCATION:** Piedmont Triad, North Carolina

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART) and Piedmont Triad Regional Council (PTRC)

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** 60 partners

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 12 Counties

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 1.6 Million

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2010 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** Piedmont Together's plan focuses on housing, transportation, jobs, places and spaces, and health. While the plan will be a regional development plan, Piedmont Together believes in hearing the concerns, wants, and needs of the Piedmont Triad at the community level. The proposed regional solutions will be based on the voices of community members heard through more than 20 civic forums, surveys, and an annual regional summit. The Piedmont Together project team has also completed 16 reports and studies. Through our research we have learned key facts about the potential of our region's future, including:

- Nearly 350,000 new economy jobs requiring higher education will be added to the region by 2040.
- \$2.1 billion could be pumped back into the local economy with a 5% reduction in transportation cost for residents.
- Our region's population is set to grow to 2 million people by 2040.

For nearly three years, the Piedmont Together team has been working with such data to develop a comprehensive plan that will better the future for all residents of the Piedmont Triad region. Our project began in October 2010 when the US Department of Housing and Urban Development awarded the Piedmont Triad a \$1.6 million grant to aid in the development of a Regional Sustainable Communities Plan.

Our region is undergoing great change and growth. Without a collaborative planning effort, the Piedmont Triad Region will not meet the future housing, transportation, or job needs of our communities. Because the project is inclusive of both rural and urban counties, the plan works to address changes across both types of communities. For example, our plan recognizes that low employment opportunity causes the tax burden to shift to property owners, particularly in rural communities. This is why our focus areas are carefully chosen to address issues applicable to all communities in our region and that touch all key factors of development. But we can't accomplish our goals alone.

The Piedmont Together project joins hundreds of residents and consortium members throughout the region that are working together to develop solutions and create a stronger local economy. The project works to serve the best interests of all 12 counties in the Piedmont Triad region.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** Piedmont Together was formerly known as the Piedmont Triad Sustainable Communities Planning Project, a three-year planning project that kicked off in May 2011. The first year of planning included discovering our region's strengths and challenges while working to include the feedback of residents in Piedmont Triad communities. Public engagement increased over time with civic forums, a regional summit, and an agreement with a growing list of Consortium Members.

Work groups formed to focus on eight topics, including support systems, healthy communities, development patterns, housing, mobility systems, economic and workforce development, climate adaptation and energy, and green infrastructure. As community feedback and work group research continues, Piedmont Together incorporated these topics into our current five focus areas: Housing, Transportation, Jobs, Places and Spaces, and Healthy Communities. To date, Piedmont Together has compiled 16 reports on various development issues in our region, and we continue to document and find local examples of best practices to illustrate our plan elements.

30% of Piedmont Triad workers travel to another county for their job. The percent is highest in rural counties where as many of 50% travel to into the urban centers. Reducing the cost of associated with regional commuting is addressed by encouraging a modest level of economic development in each community and by providing more transportation choices by enhancing public transit options.

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** Housing affordability, transportation access, job creation and acquisition, health, chronic poverty, and food deserts are some of the issues the Piedmont Triad currently faces.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** Piedmont Together is a project that while being focused on creating the deliverable of a regional economic development plan for the Piedmont Triad realized the plan must be animated through implementation to positively affect the region. While the project has yielded 16 reports and studies, it has seeded and nurtured collaboration from multiple partners that will be necessary to bring the regional plan to life. Here a few of the ways it has done this:

- Civic Forums
- Surveys
- Annual Regional Summits
- Creation of a Piedmont Together Consortium (Municipalities, Businesses, Counties, & Non-Profits)

## **WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS**

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# PLAN EAST TENNESSEE

**LOCATION:** Knoxville, Tennessee MSA

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** City of Knoxville

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** 52 partners

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 19 municipalities and 5 counties

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 696,030

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2010 – Regional Planning Grant

**PROJECT SCOPE:** PlanET was a planning process which was designed to foster ongoing citizen involvement in the region's future, develop a regional framework that would enable the sharing of regional strategies and encourage action on a local level, and increase local capacity for implementation. The project was divided into 3 phases: Phase 1- Establish a shared identity and vision; Phase 2- Engage, educate, and develop a shared direction; Phase 3- PlanET Report and implementation activities. Other components included capacity building projects, demonstration projects, and the use of new public outreach methods.

**RURAL-URBAN LINKAGES:** As a region, the project included both rural and non-rural communities. It was essential that all areas were equally represented in the decision making. When the guiding body was seated, each county was given an equal number of seats at the table. The decisions from this group were then approved by an executive board of mayors. The consensus was that the project was not to be one city (Knoxville) centric. As the work progressed, each step included input from the rural and urban communities. Data was analyzed through the filter of our equity team who was sensitive to demographics, thus ensuring that the demographic breakdown of comments reflected the regional demographics. Through data analysis, public meetings, working group meetings, and events, the identification of shared goals of the region strongly reinforced the interdependency that already exists, while the networking began strengthening those linkages. The new message brand is that we are "Stronger Together."

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** The biggest challenges in our region are consistent across the five counties and require the most leadership. *Jobs and Workforce Development:* In general, Tennessee schools are not competitive on a national basis and this region has a low rate of educational achievement. This can have a direct impact on recruiting industry and jobs to the region and most job growth is in low skill/ low paying jobs. *Environmental Concerns:* There is pressure on the region to balance development (economic growth) versus the desire to protect the area's beauty and heritage. Air quality is of extreme importance. The region has a nickname of "Asthma Capital" which is reflected in health metrics. Air quality is also of concern to economic developers because of EPA standards and the impact on industry recruitment. *Infrastructure:* Rising transportation costs and the significant commute rate in the region has a deleterious effect on quality-of-life and economic prosperity. There is a perfect storm of conditions in the region including a lack of regional public transportation, lack of broadband (especially in the rural communities negating opportunities for telecommuting), lack of jobs in rural communities leading to long commute rates, lack of competitive industrial sites in rural communities, and parochial attitudes of elected leadership- "compete not cooperate" is the norm. *Expanding choices:* The development trend in the region of extremely low density residential and leap-frog commercial development has been demonstrated to be costly and energy consuming. Residents of the region expressed a desire to expand transportation and housing options in accord with data from national surveys: people are expressing a desire to live closer to where they work, shop, play, and go to school and they want to live in more walkable communities.

**MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:** Relationships have been established with organizations that already exist in the region and have a shared interest in taking action to continue the work that has been completed to up this point. Those involved throughout the PlanET process continue to provide information and seek assistance from these other groups who can take on the responsibility of fostering community involvement, act on the regional playbook and facilitate implementation strategies, and continue to increase capacity building.

**WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:**

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# HEART OF TEXAS EFFICIENT TOWNS AND COUNTIES CO-OP

**LOCATION:** Heart of Texas Region Rural Counties: Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill and Limestone Counties

**LEAD GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:** Heart of Texas Council of Governments

**PROJECT PARTNERS:** Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone Counties; 37 cities within these counties; educational institutions; and 13 other agencies and organizations in the region.

**COUNTIES/MUNICIPALITIES SERVED:** 5 counties: Bosque, Falls, Freestone, Hill, and Limestone Counties; 37 cities within these counties.

**PROJECT POPULATION AREA:** 150,000

**GRANT TYPE AND YEAR AWARDED:** FY2011 – Regional Planning

**PROJECT SCOPE:** OVERALL: Create Recommendations, Tools, and Information our cities and counties can use:

- To be more efficient
- To be more effective
- To meet their citizens' needs
- To prepare for the future
- Community Development work
  - GIS Mapping of water, sewer, streets
  - Infrastructure studies & recommendations
  - Long-term community involvement studies & recommendations
  - Housing needs assessment
  - Water plan review & recommendations
  - Transportation plan review & recommendations
  - Purpose and Goals of Grant
- Environmental Development work
  - Solid Waste studies & management plan
  - Air Quality studies & recommendations
  - Drought studies & recommendations
- Economic Development work
  - Entrepreneurship tools
  - Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)

**COMMUNITY CHALLENGES:** Aging infrastructure, high poverty, workforce challenges, lack of community plans, low levels of civic engagement in communities (but not with our project)

## MOVING TOWARDS IMPLEMENTATION:

- Implementing recommendation that came from a Baylor graduate student project on community engagement: Heart of Texas Community Council and Junior Heart of Texas Community Council;
- Everything else is still in data-gathering and community-input mode

## WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS:

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# Tour Site Visit Information

## Thursday, May 15

### **No More Empty Pots:**

Established in 2010, *No More Empty Pots* is a grassroots non-profit corporation that works to connect individuals and groups to promote local, sustainable businesses that improve self-sufficiency and regional food security through advocacy and action. No More Empty Pots collaborates with a coalition of over 15 active public and private partners and implements programs to bring fresh food and nutrition education to under-resourced communities while connecting urban and rural growers in an effort to make these communities more food secure and self-sustaining through teamwork, education, stewardship, and sustainability.

### **Whispering Roots:**

According to Feeding America, 34,570 children in the Omaha metropolitan area are “Food Insecure.” In addition, 40% of all children living in North Omaha are “Food Insecure.” Live Well Omaha states that over half of all children in the affected areas reported “rarely” eating fresh fruits and vegetables. The goal of *Whispering Roots*, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, is to provide fresh, locally grown, healthy food for socially and economically disadvantaged communities by using Aquaponics, Hydroponics, and Urban Farming. Their re-circulating systems use 90% less water than traditional farming to grow pesticide free, naturally grown produce. In addition, Whispering Roots’ cutting edge school programs teach the principles of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (S.T.E.M.) by using “Hands On” learning.

## Friday, May 16

### **Crescent, Iowa:**

The small community of Crescent, Iowa is located minutes northeast of the Omaha-Council Bluffs metro area. Established in the 1850s, Crescent is located in Pottawattamie County and, as of the 2010 census, is home to just over 600 people. The City of Crescent enjoys several local and regional attractions. Located in the middle of the Loess Hills, and just a short drive from the Ski Hills, Missouri River, Carter Lake, and Lake Manawa there's always an outdoor adventure within reach. Crescent is also just a few minutes from downtown Omaha's Old Market and Eppley Airport.

### **Oakland, Iowa:**

Oakland, Iowa is located along the west side of the Nishnabotna River in Pottawattamie County and is home to 1,527 people as of the 2010 census. Formerly named Big Grove, the City was established in 1880 due to its proximity to the river and the construction of the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroad throughout the local area. In 1975 the local historical society purchased a dry goods and grocery store that had been built in 1905 and turned it into the Nishna Heritage Museum. The museum is a focal point of the small town where visitors can learn about all aspects of southwest Iowa's history.

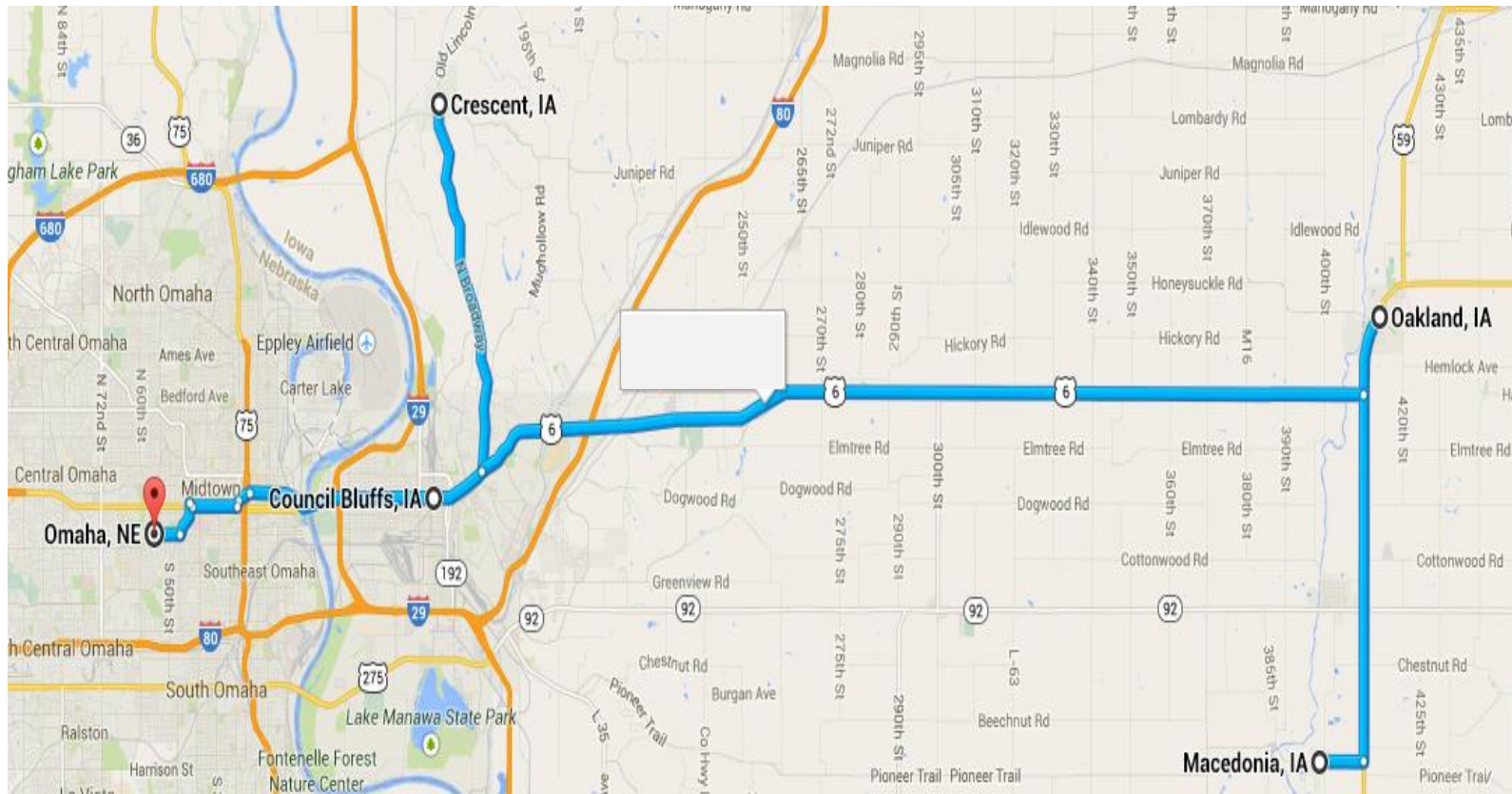
### **Macedonia, Iowa:**

One of the oldest and most historic towns in Southwest Iowa, Macedonia was founded in 1846 on the east side of the Nishnabotna River. With the motto “Small in Size, Large in Heart,” Macedonia offers its estimated 245 residents small-town family life with the heart of an old-fashioned village. The town's amenities include the Olde Town Riverfront Park, a walking trail, and a covered stadium, one of only two remaining in Iowa. The

community is very active and hosts events such as Grist Mill theatre productions and art shows, community dinners, and the annual Nishnabotna River Rubber Ducky Race.

**Council Bluffs, Iowa:**

The history of Council Bluffs glitters with a parade of famous western explorers, fur traders, military figures, engineers, and great Indian nations. Lewis and Clark’s historic council in the bluffs with Missouri and Otoe Indians ten miles north of Omaha provided the model for future meetings with Indians and the name of the City. Abraham Lincoln had the foresight to realize Council Bluffs should be the eastern terminus of the transcontinental railroad, leading to the City’s title of “Gateway of the American West.” By the 1930s, Council Bluffs had grown into the country's fifth largest rail center. The railroads helped the City become a center for grain storage and massive grain elevators still mark the city's skyline today. Restructuring of the railroad industry caused the loss of many jobs after the mid-20th century. By the late 20th century Council Bluffs was suffering from economic stagnation and a declining population, as it struggled to develop a new economy. Today, as home to over 62,000 residents, many innovative and impactful projects have been undertaken – including the revitalization of the downtown core – to create a new future while emphasizing the strengths of Council Bluff’s heritage.



# Rural-Urban Connections Workshop Participant List

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