



The Program Plan

This Program Plan is a narrative outline of the activities that the Discovery Center will undertake in order to serve its audiences and achieve its mission. The Program Plan describes the Discovery Center's mission, vision, and audiences. These then inform the interpretive plan, exhibit designs, space plan, architectural design, operating budget, and capital budget.

The Program Plan presented here incorporates information from interviews with Steering Committee members, City of Manhattan Commission members and staff, interested citizens, discussions with other consulting team members, and our experience in developing master plans for other new museums.

The Flint Hills Discovery Center, as envisioned, includes the following program components:

- Core Exhibits
- Temporary Exhibits
- Educational and other Public Programming
- Visitor and Community Services and Special Events

These activities will appeal to a number of people including:

- Flint Hills Tourists
- Flint Hills Residents
- Children in Groups
- Short-term Residents
- The Owner's and Stewards of the Story

It is important to remember that the Discovery Center's Program Plan will always be a work in progress. As with any institution serving multiple communities, the Discovery Center's programs and activities will continue to evolve even after it is open. It will be important to maintain a level of flexibility in the facility and the management structure to accommodate these changing programmatic needs.





Mission

The following mission statement was developed in discussion with community members and the steering committee. This mission statement is very broadly defined and allows the Discovery Center to address a wide range of subjects and audiences.

The Flint Hills Discovery Center inspires people to celebrate, explore, and care for the Flint Hills.

Vision

The vision is what the community would like to see the Discovery Center accomplish. Based on the input and feedback from the initial interviews and Project Concept Workshop, the community would like the Flint Hills Discovery Center to be a place that:

- Responds to public needs and recognizes the Discovery Center as a living, growing, evolving institution.
- Celebrates the diversity and depth of people's experiences in the region and reaches out to and welcomes every member of the community.
- Fulfills long-term sustainability goals of the building, as well as the community and region.
- Inspires in community members a sense of ownership, belonging, pride, and stewardship.
- Helps the Flint Hills region to establish a community identity that is grounded in the ecology, history, and culture of the region.
- Generates enough earned and donated revenue to minimize the need for taxpayer support.
- Attracts visitors to the region.
- Changes the way people see, understand, and connect to the Flint Hills.
- Serves as a landmark and center of community life with a wide variety of programming.
- Develops exhibits and programs that are authentic, exciting, surprising, and of interest to a wide variety of audiences.
- Develops continuously changing exhibits and programs that are based on the latest and best scholarship and research.

Vision continues on next page

Program Plan



- Has engaging activities that encourage local people, especially families, to return frequently.
- Serves as a gathering place for community events.
- Inspires people to experience the ever-changing beauty of the Flint Hills.
- Promotes inter-generational and life-long learning.
- Engages in active, ongoing partnerships with schools, universities, and other institutions, organizations, and destinations throughout the Flint Hills.
- Supports the cultural and economic revitalization of Manhattan's south end.

Audiences

The Discovery Center will have four primary audience groups: Flint Hills Tourists; Flint Hills Residents; Children in Groups; and Short-term Residents. The Discovery Center's programs will address the needs of each of these groups. The primary audience groups include:



- Flint Hills Tourists who come to learn about the Flint Hills and are looking for an unusual experience.
- Flint Hills Residents who have many motivations for coming to the Discovery Center and will appreciate a wide range of programming.
- Children in Groups who enjoy programs that combine fun and learning.
- Short-term Residents who will use the Discovery Center as a way to discover and connect with the local community.

Flint Hills Tourists

Tourists to the Flint Hills will include:

- Families.
- Special-interest tourists (ecological, heritage, spiritual, other).
- Bus tours.
- Conventioneers.
- K-State students' families.
- Athletic event attendees.

Flint Hills tourists are likely to come to the Discovery Center as one stop on their trip to the area. Ideally, it will be their first stop. These visitors are interested in learning about the history and ecology of the Flint Hills and about other area attractions. They expect an engaging, unusual, and high-quality experience.

Outcomes: The Discovery Center's programs will have a variety of outcomes for these visitors, including a clear understanding of the ways that the Flint Hills are unique and special, an understanding of their ecology and cultural history, and, perhaps most important, inspiration for further exploration and return visits to the area.

For the Discovery Center itself, the principal impact of these tourist-focused programs will be to generate earned revenue.



Flint Hills Residents

Residents of the Flint Hills will include:

- Families with children.
- Young adults.
- Older adults.

The Discovery Center's programs should appeal to a broad range of Flint Hills residents who have varied motivations for visiting and supporting the Discovery Center. Most important, residents need to feel that this is *their* Discovery Center. It should be a place that kids can enjoy with family members, and where they can combine fun with learning. Flint Hills residents would also like it to be a place with a variety of unusual, high-quality experiences where they can take (or send) out-of-town visitors to introduce them to the region, its ecology, history, and range of attractions. It should also be a place where residents can come together for special events, both public and private, and where community gatherings can take place.

Outcomes: Most importantly, the Discovery Center will be a significant new asset for Flint Hills residents, providing programs and activities not available elsewhere in the Flint Hills. It will also help to assert a clear sense of identity for the City of Manhattan as the "capital" of the Flint Hills. A richer understanding of the Flint Hills ecology may also inspire community members to care for the Flint Hills environment.

For the Discovery Center, the impact of community-focused programs will be broad-based community support through memberships, donations, volunteerism, and funding from special-event rentals and program fees.

Children in Groups

Children in Groups will include:

- Local school children.
- Home-schooled children.
- Youth groups such as the Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts.
- Children after school.
- Summer camp children/young adults.

Children in groups are interested in programs that combine fun and learning. Teachers will want to know how programs can support state educational standards.

Outcomes: The Discovery Center's programs will provide high-quality educational experiences that give children an in-depth understanding of the ecology and history of the Flint Hills and their role in shaping the community. The programs will inspire them to learn more about ecology and history and help them to value themselves, the land they live on, and their community.

Short-term Residents

Short-term Residents will include:

- Students at K-State and other post-secondary institutions.
- Soldiers stationed at Fort Riley.
- Other short-term residents.

For short-term residents, the Discovery Center will offer a way to connect with the local community by participating in the Center's programs and community activities.

Outcomes: Short-term residents will become educated and inspired ambassadors for the Flint Hills and for Kansas.

The Owners and Stewards of the Story

When looking at audiences, it is important to think about the "Owners and Stewards of the Story," the people who know the Flint Hills best and who can attest to the authenticity of the experiences that the Discovery Center provides. Because the Flint Hills are a large and diverse place that extends through the region and many counties, this conceivably includes all of the people of the Flint Hills, past and present.

A more focused group might include people actively engaged in understanding the Flint Hills, such as:

- Scholars and other researchers.
- Preservationists.
- Ranchers.
- Environmentalists.
- Artists.
- Others with an active engagement with the ecology, history, and culture of the region.

Visitors, Community Members, Children, Temporary Residents, and Owners of the Story: each of these groups is important to the long-term success and sustainability of the Discovery Center. The Center's programming will be planned to meet the unique and shared needs of each group.



Program Components

The Flint Hills Discovery Center will offer a wide range of programming designed to meet the needs and expectations of each of its potential audiences.

1. Core Exhibitions

The Discovery Center's Core Exhibitions, as developed in concept by Hilferty and Associates, will be at the heart of the Discovery Center experience. The core exhibitions will instill a strong sense of place to connect visitors with the physical environment of the Flint Hills. They will explore the geological, ecological, and ethnological history of the people and land of the Flint Hills. The Core Exhibits will have four primary components: the Exploring the Flint Hills; the Flint Hills Story; the Prairie Winds Immersive Experience; and the Prairie Winds Gallery.

Core Exhibitions
Exploring the Flint Hills
The Flint Hills Story
Immersive Experience
Prairie Winds Gallery

2. Temporary Exhibitions

The Discovery Center will host a wide variety of changing and temporary exhibitions created by Discovery Center staff and/or drawn from museums in the Flint Hills, other regional and national sources, and the Smithsonian. These exhibits will cover a range of environmental, ecological, and cultural topics. They will delve further into the stories of the Flint Hills and will also explore broader related issues.

Temporary Exhibitions
Cultural, aesthetic, ecological, historical, and other topics

3. Educational and other Public Programming

The Discovery Center will develop educational programming for students and the general public, including school-group programs, lectures, workshops, performances, and other programs designed to reach out to a wide range of interests.

Educational and Public Programming
Lectures, workshops, camps, after-school programs, performances, community events, etc.

4. Visitor and Community Services and Special Events

The Discovery Center Store will have a rich array of merchandise related to the Flint Hills Region, items related to ecology and environmental science, and other unique specialty items not available elsewhere. The Discovery Center will have quick-serve food service with cafe tables, beverages, and snacks. The Discovery Center will be able to host special events for large and small groups. Special interest group meetings, fundraising events, corporate receptions, and private parties will be held at the Center.

Visitor and Community Services
Museum store, food services, and special events

Note: *The Discovery Center will not have a formal curatorial division. It will collect Flint Hills specimens and artifacts only as needed to support its exhibitions and education programs. Whenever possible, it will draw on the collections and expertise at Kansas State University and other regional institutions. This expertise will serve as the curatorial grounding for the Discovery Center.*



Although the Discovery Center will attract a range of audiences, each program component will cater to the interests of specific Discovery Center audiences. Flint Hills Tourists will primarily be interested in the Core Exhibitions, while Flint Hills Residents will be more prone to participate in Educational and Public Programming activities, and explore the Temporary Exhibitions in addition to the Core Exhibitions. With their knowledge of the Flint Hills, the Stewards provide the foundation for all of the Discovery Center’s programming.

The relationship of each of these program areas to the Discovery Center’s audiences is illustrated in the table below.



Audience	Interests	Programs	Outcomes
Flint Hills Tourists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experience and learn • Get orientated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core exhibits • FH Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation and understanding of the FH • Earned revenue
Flint Hills Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An interesting outing • A good place for visitors • A good place for kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A variety of programs and activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community identity and pride • Ongoing support
Children in Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A fun place • Curriculum-based learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core exhibits • School and other programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of FH ecology and history • Inspiration to learn more
Short-term Residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A connection to the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core exhibits • Events and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassadors to the world
Stewards of the Flint Hills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preserve the Flint Hills’ history, culture, and ecology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships • Education • Outreach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appreciation and Preservation of the FH • Authenticity and integrity • Ongoing support



1. Core Exhibitions



Visitors are introduced to the Flint Hills in the Entrance Lobby where they can use an interactive kiosk and take a ride up a glass enclosed elevator to the Observation Deck.

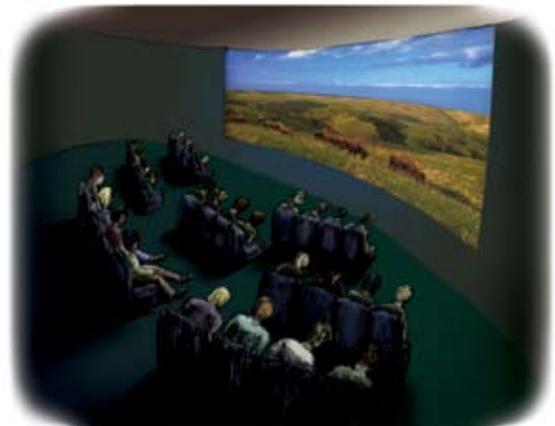
The Core Exhibitions will tell the story of the Flint Hills through the lenses of ecology, history, and culture. The Core Exhibitions will include:

Exploring the Flint Hills: Visitors will be welcomed to the Discovery Center in the lobby where an Exploring the Flint Hills interactive kiosk will invite visitors to see what's going on at the Center today, investigate upcoming special programs, and to discovery regional destinations that may be of interest to them. The kiosk will show visitors how they can experience the Flint Hills directly and learn about ways to gain a deeper experience of the Flint Hills. The exhibit area will be more than a "visitor center," as it will include interactive maps and guides designed to connect visitors with activities, events, and experiences (including those hosted by the Discovery Center itself) that uniquely fit their interests, needs, schedules, and resources. The goal will be to provide a concierge level of service so that visitors are inspired to explore the Flint Hills.

The Flint Hills Story: This overview exhibition will trace the story of the Flint Hills as seen from multiple perspectives with an emphasis on the unique environment of the region. It will use artifacts, documents, video, and multimedia to develop a multi-layered understanding of the ecology, history, and natural beauty of the Flint Hills region, starting with geologic time and concluding in the present.

Immersive Experience: The Flint Hills story will also be told in a multi-sensory immersive experience where visitors can see, hear, and feel the power and beauty of the Flint Hills. This multimedia experience will transport visitors to the breathtaking vistas, powerful forces, hidden complexities, and timeless beauty of the Flint Hills tallgrass prairie. Surround sound systems, multiple side or front projection screens, iconic objects, floor subwoofers, and light effects will help recreate the kinds of intense experiences that happen in the Flint Hills, including thunder storms, prairie fires, floods, tornados, and stampedes. These intense experiences will be put into their environmental context and balanced with aesthetic and, perhaps, spiritual experiences.

Prairie Winds Gallery: The largest of the Core Exhibits, the Prairie Winds area will have a wide variety of engaging exhibits and activities that help visitors to explore the ecology,



The Immersive Experience transports visitors to the breathtaking vistas, powerful forces, hidden complexity, and timeless beauty of the Flint Hills Tallgrass Prairie.



"The Flint Hills Story" exhibition reveals geologic, natural, geographic, and cultural elements of the Flint Hills in a multi-story, domed space adjacent to the Lobby.

environment, and natural and physical science of the Flint Hills. The exhibits will be topical in nature, will be updated regularly to reflect new research, and will encourage individual and group exploration, discovery and learning. Exhibits may include small animals, water activities, and many simple, mechanical interactives. This area will be designed for all ages, with provision for a variety of learning styles and a special focus on inter-generational social activities. The Prairie Winds Gallery may include a special space for young children, with play spaces designed to be both fun and educational.

Audiences Served

The Core Exhibitions will have appeal across the Discovery Center's audiences, as they will be a touchstone for the owners and stewards of the story, a resource for kids in groups, an interesting place for

families, an inspiration for Flint Hills Residents, and a must-see for visitors to the Flint Hills.

It is essential that the "owners and stewards of the story" be closely involved in developing the core exhibitions to ensure that they convey an authentic experience and understanding of the Flint Hills.

2. Temporary Exhibitions

The Discovery Center will host a wide variety of changing and temporary exhibitions created by Discovery Center staff and/or drawn from museums in the Flint Hills, other regional and national sources, and the Smithsonian. These exhibits will cover a range of environmental, ecological, and cultural topics.

The temporary exhibitions will allow the Discovery Center to address a broad range of subjects, help drive repeat visits from community members, and generate positive publicity for the Center.

Temporary exhibits might include:

- Traveling exhibits from the Smithsonian and other services on a wide variety of topics including the environment, music, mapping, immigration, etc. (These exhibitions would be enhanced with local programming that tied into their themes and showed the relationship to the Flint Hills.)
- Flint Hills related research being done at the University.
- Local artists.
- Native Americans.
- Recent archeological discoveries.
- Contemporary cowboys.
- A history of Kansas River flooding.



Audiences Served

The Temporary Exhibitions will appeal primarily to the Discovery Center's Community and Short-Term Resident audience groups, but will also help to build attendance by Flint Hills Tourists by generating ongoing positive publicity about the Discovery Center.

3. Educational and Public Programming

The Discovery Center will develop educational programming for students and the general public, including school group programs, lectures, workshops, performances, and other programming designed to reach out to a wide range of interests.

Programs for School-Age Children: The Discovery Center will engage school-aged children through:

- Curriculum-focused tours of the core and changing exhibits with the option of participating in hands-on activities led by museum staff and volunteers.
- In-School programs led by Discovery Center teachers.
- Weekly school-time programs for groups of home-schooled children led by museum staff.
- After-school and summer programs for various age groups, focusing on many different topics potentially ranging from environmental preservation of the prairie and its flora and fauna to cowboy culture.
- After-school programs developed in conjunction with local schools and tied directly to specific learning objectives for the students.

Programs for Adults and Families: The Discovery Center will host a variety of activities for other community members, with a particular focus on younger and older community members.

- Formal lecture and/or demonstration series tied to current exhibitions, screenings, or other special programs.
- Informal "happy hour" discussions on current issues.
- Programs for families where parents work alongside children as they participate in role-playing activities such as organizing a homestead.
- Meetings and events that relate to current issues facing community members, such as environmental concerns over water quality and preserving the prairie.
- Classes and workshops that teach specific skills related to the history or ecology of the Flint Hills.
- Conferences, formal workshops, and seminars on specialized topics for adults, academics, and other related groups. These will be designed for those with a focused interest in a certain subject.
- Special holiday themed programs.
- Outreach programs to nursing homes, veterans' homes, and local civic and service organizations.



The Discovery Center will welcome visitors to Manhattan as they approach the city from Highway 177. The undulating green roof forms mimic the natural landscape of the prairie and lead to an outdoor exhibit space where visitors get a close-up view of large scale bison sculptures.

Festivals, Performances, and Other Public Events:

The Discovery Center will be a natural locus for community-wide events with performances, demonstrations, and activities that encourage families to visit Manhattan and the Discovery Center. Discovery Center-sponsored events will include:

- Community Festivals and other gatherings (“Flint Hills Days”?).
- Outdoor music performances.
- Incoming K-State student activities.
- K-State Reunions.

Outdoor Activities: In order to encourage environmental awareness, the Discovery Center will sponsor a variety of outdoor programs and activities.

These will include canoe trips on the river, perhaps in conjunction with a riverfront auxiliary site, bicycle tours, hikes and walking tours, overnight experiences on the prairie for families, etc.

Online Activities: The Museum will host a website with information about the ecology, history, and culture of the Flint Hills in cooperation with other Flint Hills organizations. The focus of this website will be to add depth of content to other online resources which are about the Flint Hills.

Audiences Served

Educational and Public Programming will primarily benefit Flint Hills Residents and Children in Groups, who will have more opportunities to participate in activities that occur only at certain times or seasons. These kinds of programs help to build strong community support for the Discovery Center and generate ongoing publicity.

4. Visitor and Community Services and Special Events

While Visitor and Community Services and Special Events will generate revenue for the Discovery Center, they are also important in fulfilling the Center’s mission since they can attract people who might not otherwise visit the Discovery Center.

Discovery Center Store: The Discovery Center Store will have a rich array of merchandise related to the Flint Hills region, items related to ecology and environmental science, and other unique specialty items not available elsewhere.



Food Services: Food services at the Discovery Center will focus on refueling visitors so that they can enjoy a longer visit. Food will be prepared off-site. In summer, the Discovery Center might host an outdoor cafe.

Special Events: The Discovery Center will be a natural place to host events of all kinds. Special Events at the Discovery Center might include, but are not limited to:

- Industry and corporate meetings and events, especially those related to the Conference Center.
- Community celebrations.
- Receptions associated with special programs.
- Birthday parties.
- Musical performances.
- Art demonstrations.