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Key Takeaways from the February 14, 2025 Economic Development Merger Committee meeting

Landing Page Under Development

The Communications Subcommittee recommended and the Economic Development Merger Committee agreed to develop a landing page to support the merger effort. The page will serve as a repository of information and a destination to send those with interest and questions.

The committee will secure a domain name and update the page. It will not be under the ownership of any individual organization within the ecosystem or the City of Brookings. Members of the Communications Subcommittee are finalizing the initial page now and uploading content. When the page is ready for viewing, the link will be shared with staff, stakeholders, and the general public.

Ideally, the page will serve as a central hub and will replace any existing merger related pages on stand alone sites.

The landing page can be found at **www.growtogetherbrookings.com**.

It should be noted that the name "Grow Together Brookings" is only the name of the landing page and is not the name of the future merged organization.

Director and Staff Meetings Ongoing

As was discussed at the January 31 meeting, members of the merger committee will engage directors and staff in small group meetings over the next few weeks. The effort is being led by committee member Jamison Lamp and relies on a consistent set of questions and topics.

As of February 14, the director meetings have all taken place and all staff meetings will be completed by February 20. Staff meetings will be conducted by two members of the staff's corresponding board. The goals of these meetings include gathering feedback from staff and providing progress reports to staff. Thus far, committee members have reported productive and mostly optimistic interactions. Staff have continued to advocate for the important elements of their current work and the missions of their organizations.

Implementation Plan and Timeline Document Developed

The committee reviewed a document that includes updated details related to the content of the eventual implementation plan and identifies new milestones on the merger timeline (through Fall 2025).

The draft document is currently being reviewed by members of the committee and is designed to serve as a more comprehensive update and potential FAQ. Upon completion, it will be posted on the committee's landing page and shared directly with the organizations.



The takeaways identified in this document were reviewed by the committee at the close of the February 14th meeting. This document is designed for public consumption and can be shared.

Initial Report from Peer Community Analysis

The Organizational and Board Structure Subcommittee has identified and begun interviews with a number of merged organizations in peer communities throughout the region.

The updated list of peer communities includes:

- **Ames** | Daniel, Nick, Tom
- **Burlington (IA)** | Laci, Paul, Nick
- **Laramie** | Tom, Laci, Angie
- **Mankato** | Laci, Paul, Nick
- **Rapid City** | Tom, Paul, Michael
- **Yankton** | Tom, Angie, Michael

Thus far, committee members have met with leaders from Laramie, Mankato, Rapid City, and Yankton. Meetings with Ames and Burlington are being scheduled and will occur in the coming weeks. More than a dozen mid-sized (20,000+ population) throughout Iowa have transitioned to merged “partner organizations” over the past 20 years.

Through the peer community analysis, common themes have emerged. In particular, committee members have recognized at least two different models by which “partner organizations” operate:

Centralized

- Description | In the centralized model, all components of the organization report to the CEO under one unified brand and most and/or all staff serve the central function of the organization.
- Examples | Laramie, Rapid City, Yankton

Pillars

- Description | In the pillars model, all components of the organization report to the CEO, but distinct pillars or business units remain. Some general staff serve across all units (i.e. marketing, finance, HR).
- Examples | Ames, Burlington, Mankato

In addition to the interviews, subcommittee members are gathering relevant materials and documents from the peer community organizations.

Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Friday, February 28, 2025 at 7:00am**. Discussion topics will include additional updates on the merger timeline, public and staff engagement, and proposed operating models.

Meeting Attendance

Committee members in attendance at this meeting were Wayne Avery, Angela Boersma, Tom Fishback, Andi Fouberg, Paul Gilk, Marcus Heemstra, Jamison Lamp, Jacob Meshke, Michael Schulte, Laci Thompson, Holly Tilton Byrne, Mike Turnwall, and Nick Wendell.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any **questions or comments**, please reach out to committee co-chairs, **Nick** (wendellnick@gmail.com, 605-830-5446) or **Tom** (tom.fishback@bankeasy.com, 605-695-2585).