



Military Encroachment and Base Reuse

Military bases are like cities within cities. Both provide similar services, experience many of the same problems, and share the residential and working population of a region. Both occupy a limited footprint, while also creating impacts on land and other resources beyond their boundaries. Aligned interests around using limited space most efficiently and effectively create a natural opportunity for these communities—military and civilian—to partner on smart growth strategies. Through careful planning, active military bases can address concerns about urban encroachment, and communities can protect public safety and quality of life. Even when military bases close, communities may have unique opportunities to pursue smart growth goals, whether by planning a new community or enhancing an existing one.

Community Encroachment Near Military Bases

The military can have both a symbiotic and a conflicting relationship with the community that supports it. The presence of a military base assists the community by attracting jobs and workers. Growth in the number of workers, in turn, increases the demand for housing, public services, and infrastructure. As communities develop and expand, however, they often move closer to military land, challenging civilian safety and military security. This increasing proximity, with its related negative impacts on the military’s ability to perform missions, is known as encroachment.

Encroachment can inhibit the military’s ability to carry out missions, such as conducting realistic training and testing. For example, urban lights may make it difficult to practice flying in darker conditions. Or, if new housing developments are built along a flight path that is used for routine training, residents may suffer from the noise, spurring nuisance complaints and concerns about public health and safety.

In order to sustain or improve both the community’s quality of life and the ability of the military to perform its mission, local government and military officials must communicate and coordinate land use planning efforts. Smart growth strategies provide a useful and increasingly popular framework for facilitating such collaboration. The military’s ability to remain effective in preventing encroachment and achieving its mission will be a heavily weighted criterion in determining which military bases will be named in the base realignment and closure (BRAC) round in 2005. (See sidebar for more information.)

Strategies for Collaboration

As cities adjacent to military bases attract new residents and workers, these new residents often suffer from noise, dust, threat of accidents, and other environmental impacts caused by aircraft, artillery, and the maneuvering of equipment and personnel. Local government and military planners are finding that by preserving a buffer of open space around the base while pursuing infill and mixed use, compact development, they can direct growth into areas not critical to military operations and keep a base functioning effectively. Buffers can provide open space for recreation, habitat conservation, natural vistas, and/or agricultural uses.

Ongoing communication and participation in joint land use studies and local, regional, and military planning facilitates the sharing of community and military needs. For example, Shaw Air Force Base and the city, county, and city-county planning commission of Sumter, South Carolina, established communication protocols and points of contact to exchange relevant land use information. Communities can also take advantage of the Army’s growing effort to institute sustainable development at installations. Although all the services are examining sustainable installation options, the Army’s vision of sustainable planning

Facts of military land use

- Many of the Army’s active installations are in areas experiencing regional growth rates at five to ten times the national average.
- In just in the past 10 years, the land use requirements for a modern Army to house and train one soldier have changed from 80 meters × 80 meters to 100 meters × 160 meters.

most clearly articulates a balance of fiscal, environmental, and social equity. Because installation commanders are interested in reducing competition for energy, clean air, clean water, and usable space, their goals are compatible with communities' desires to manage growth, reduce traffic congestion, and maintain open space.

Tools and Strategies to Consider:

- Use Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) resources to develop plans, codes, and ordinances for effective encroachment prevention measures.
- Contact the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to learn how urban encroachment constrains missions at specific Army bases.
- Pool city and base electric power needs and explore options for sharing renewable energy sources at market rates and creating greater economies of scale.
- Plan to extend mass transit routes to the base from off-base housing areas occupied by military personnel, and ensure that the base is accessible by bicycle and pedestrian routes.
- Ensure that local ordinances specify as “allowable uses” those functions required by the military.
- Develop a joint community/base conservation partnership program to establish buffer zones for public and open space uses.
- Share the community's expertise in transportation management and mixed-use, compact-building design and infill development practices with appropriate base personnel, such as those on the base commander's staff. This information has the potential to help the military develop similar expertise and even limit land use near the fence line.
- Seek authority to implement environmental LUCs. These legal tools can encourage infill development by allowing safer redevelopment at sites that are too expensive to remediate fully.
- Communicate local housing forecasts and development plans proactively with MPHPI managers, who are typically civilian personnel at the military service headquarters level. Although the primary goal of the MHPI is to improve housing conditions of service personnel and their families, civilians are considered for occupancy if vacancies remain. Likewise, if military populations grow, off-base, nonmilitary residential units may be needed.

Examples

Land use solutions that prevent encroachment often support environmental protection. Here are several examples:

- The U.S. Department of Defense, the state of Florida, and The Nature Conservancy have partnered since

Useful Acronyms and Definitions

BRAC—Base Realignment and Closure - is the process by which the Department of Defense eliminates excess physical capacity. Military bases periodically undergo this federally authorized process, whereby Department of Defense installations are partially or wholly closed. For more information, see www.defenselink.mil/brac/index.html.

JLUS—Joint Land Use Study - is a cooperative land use planning effort among a base and local jurisdictions, with technical and financial assistance provided by federal agencies. Together, they develop plans, codes, and ordinances for effective encroachment prevention measures. The purpose of this effort between a base and surrounding cities and counties is to promote community development and growth that is compatible with the military mission and to prevent future problems. A JLUS process also enhances communication between the military and the community and promotes awareness of the strong economic and physical relationship between the base and its neighbors. For additional information see [http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/gmw/2003/military%20base%20\(stitt\)/jlus.ppt](http://www.dca.state.fl.us/fdcp/DCP/gmw/2003/military%20base%20(stitt)/jlus.ppt).

LUCs—Land use controls, or institutional controls, limit human exposure to risk-based cleanups by restricting activity, use, and access to properties with residual contamination. LUCs protect human health and the environment by preventing people, water, and soil from coming into contact with contamination. Examples of LUCs include: notices and advisories, permits, zoning, overlay zoning, and siting restrictions. For more information, see www.lucs.org.

MHPI—Military Housing Privatization Initiative - The MHPI contains provisions that enable all services to update aging military housing through privatization and commercial market investment. Public-private ventures under the auspices of the MHPI improve military housing in addition to offering benefits to local communities, regardless of the future of the base. The MHPI is the responsibility of DoD Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations and Environment) Housing & Competitive Sourcing Office, accessible at (703) 607-3207. For more information, see www.acq.osd.mil/housing/mhpi.htm.

OEA—the Defense Department's Office of Economic Adjustment - assists communities that are adversely impacted by Defense program changes, including base closures or realignments, base expansions, and contract or program cancellations. More information is available at www.oea.gov.

2003 in an initiative to reduce military encroachment by preserving habitat. As of early 2005, the Northwest Florida Greenway spans six counties, and is over 67,000 acres, or roughly 10 miles wide by 100 miles long. Stretching from the Apalachicola National Forest to Eglin Air Force Base—two large, protected areas—the Greenway creates a buffer along the flight path of military aircraft on training and testing exercises. The region is home to five U.S. Air Force and Navy instal-

lations. It is also a critical environmental area, supporting black bear habitat, estuarine tidal marshes and floodplain swamps.¹

- In 2004, after more than a year of engaging intensively in cooperative local planning efforts, the Navy partnered with Escambia County, Florida, to restrict the use of land adjoining the airfield of the Pensacola Naval Air Station. Developers had been planning to turn the land, which is less than a mile from the base's runways and control tower, into a subdivision. Instead, Escambia County purchased the land for a park.
- In early 2005, the California Coastal Commission announced that it would purchase 276 acres at Ormond Beach, which borders the Naval Air Weapons Station at Point Mugu, now part of the Naval Base Ventura County. By creating a larger buffer, this purchase will assist in protecting both the security and the safety of the military base and the biodiversity that inhabits the Ormond Beach wetlands from human encroachment.

Resources

Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) provides information, technical assistance, and funding to plan for compatible development around military bases. 703/604-6020, www.oea.gov.

Proactive Options with Neighbors for Defense-installation Sustainability (PONDS) is a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Research and Development Center Web site dedicated to understanding land use conflicts in the effort to avoid constraints to the military mission and disruption to local communities. 217/352-6511, <https://ff.cecer.army.mil/ponds/home.htm>.

Additional information about the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) is available at www.usace.army.mil.

Regional Shore Infrastructure Plan (RSIP) of the U.S. Navy seeks consolidation and development opportunities to incorporate innovative planning concepts from the nonmilitary planning community. Commander, Navy Installations, 202/433-0525, www.cni.navy.mil.

Reusing Military Bases

The 2005 BRAC round is likely to be 25 percent larger than all four previous rounds. To date, 71 military bases have been closed or partially closed (realigned). In the upcoming round, which is scheduled for presidential confirmation in September 2005, approximately 90 bases could be closed.

Strategies for Smart Base Reuse

After closure, properties are transferred to a local redevelopment authority (LRA). It is the LRA's job to plan for the reuse of the former military property. The LRA typi-

cally is convened by the local government and comprises business interests and local citizens who are concerned about the reuse of the base that is closing. The success of the reuse plan depends on the public's coordinated input into the reuse vision. LRAs at some sites have incorporated smart growth strategies into the local reuse vision.

Often the urgent need to replace lost jobs and revive the local economic base competes with community and LRA efforts to either create a new sense of place or preserve a community's character. Reuse options, such as industrial and office parks, may generate job opportunities in the near term because those types of reuse often do not require extensive environmental cleanup and, therefore, readily attract private interests. On the other hand, LRAs also recognize that creating a sense of place can improve long-term job creation prospects.

Closed military bases can leave large, contaminated footprints that require massive environmental and economic restoration either in the midst of urban areas or in less-populated, rural settings. The presence of dilapidated structures and infrastructure such as water, sewer, and roads-in various states of repair-only adds to the challenges of redevelopment. However, the large scale of such sites provides opportunities for communities to develop comprehensive projects, in much the same way that decommissioned airports and "greyfield" malls have been redeveloped into new infill neighborhoods. These bases, for example, provide real estate already equipped with infrastructure, to alleviate the pressure on greenfields. Officers' quarters and barracks can be redeveloped into a range of residential areas within walking distance of jobs, recreation, and retail spaces that were once educational facilities, administrative offices, and parade grounds.

LRA leadership, bolstered by local stakeholder input, can consider the following ideas:

- Communicate with the commanding officer to request inventories and maintenance schedules for real property. Ask for statements of activity on transferring land in order to obtain a baseline assessment of the environmental and physical condition of the property.
- Evaluate the most recent local and regional master plans for congruencies and overlaps in utilities, sewage, transportation, and open spaces.
- Involve an array of stakeholders, including developers, community organizations, and regional groups, in the development of reuse-plan options.
- Understand the military services' obligations and methods for facilitating base property transfer and cleanup. Expectations for reuse should meet goals of efficiency and practicality.
- Create and implement a reuse vision, looking for opportunities to integrate smart growth concepts into the plan.

- Ensure that zoning and other local regulations support reuse plan goals.

San Diego Naval Training Center, California

The city of San Diego is leading the reuse of the former Naval Training Center (NTC), which was closed in 1993, into a mixed-use site called Liberty Station.² The redevelopment project, approved in 1998, calls for the North Bay site to be integrated with downtown San Diego, about three miles away. The project was designed using principles of traditional neighborhood design and incorporates such elements as pedestrian-friendly streetscapes, access to public transit, and regional architectural styles. It was developed with extensive public involvement.

Plans for the former base include recreation, parks, cultural activities, a public elementary school, a community center, and retail. Adjacent to the redevelopment project, a navy exchange will serve as a corner grocery store. Finally, an extensive military- and civilian-oriented housing project on 50 acres of the former base completes the neighborhood. Known as the Village at NTC, the housing project within Liberty Station will include for-sale and rental units, including 500 affordable rental housing units.³

The Village is a result of a unique, collaborative partnership between the private sector, the city of San Diego (as the LRA), and the Department of the Navy Southwest Division Naval Facilities Engineering Command. After approval of the reuse plan, and early in the design-build process, building inspectors communicated with developers to ensure conformity with local regulations. This was important to help the military avoid costly delays and put more military families in quality housing faster. While the military thus benefits, the city of San Diego is gaining a new economic corridor that will attract new business and will also gain attractive development that will blend with the existing community. In addition, better and more affordable housing for military service personnel can free up scarce housing units for nonmilitary residents of the city.

Resources

The International City/County Management Association (ICMA) pursues the mission of enhancing the quality of local government through professional management. ICMA's Military Programs assist communities with closed bases and support those with active installations by working to strengthen the relationship and promote information sharing between federal and local entities. Information on ICMA Military Programs can be found at <http://icma.org/military>.

The Department of the Army Base Realignment and Closure Office (BRACO) closes and realigns all BRAC installations and transfers property as quickly, cheaply, and safely as possible. For additional information, see www.hqda.army.mil/acsimweb/brac/default.htm.

The Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) manages the planning, design, and development of capital improvements, environmental projects, real estate, public works, base development, and contingency engineering. For details, see www.navfac.navy.mil.

The Air Force Real Property Agency (AFRPA) acquires and disposes of all Air Force-controlled real property worldwide and executes environmental programs and real and personal property conversion. Information is available at www.afarpa.hq.af.mil.

1 See fact sheet at: http://www.dep.state.fl.us/secretary/news/2003/nov/pdf/nwflgw_fact_sheet.pdf

2 For additional information, see www.libertystation.com.

3 The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency awarded the Village at NTC a Smart Growth Award for Built Projects.

