

ECONOMIC ADJUSTMENT TECHNICAL BULLETIN 3

CHANGES AT MILITARY BASES A Community Planning Challenge

Office of Economic Adjustment
Department of Defense

This Bulletin gives an overview of the second critical base closure adjustment phase--**planning for the civilian use of a former military base.**

A closed military base is often the single greatest economic development asset to befall a community. Suddenly a major airfield, port facility, or commercial and industrial space becomes available, with built-in support infrastructure. Base land and buildings also offer an opportunity to satisfy unmet requirements for affordable housing, community facilities, and services. Most major bases have a variety of housing units, recreation, health care, and education facilities that could be used to establish or expand these services in the area affected by base closure. In short, a closing military base presents a menu of opportunities from which to select that can have a major positive effect on the future of the community surrounding the closing base.

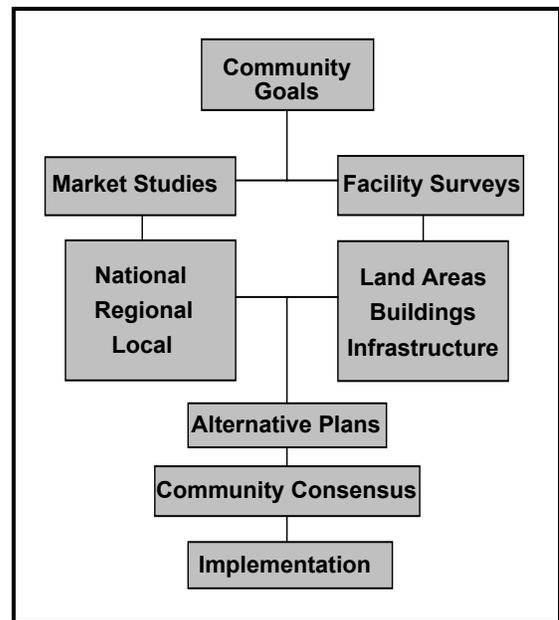
The planning challenge is to assess the redevelopment potential offered by the base, in the context of ongoing local development (community and economic) efforts, and to integrate the base property and facilities with the surrounding community. This is often an immense task that must be undertaken in a short time frame.

For example, Pease Air Force Base (AFB) was announced for closure in December 1988. The base actually closed in March 1991. Pease AFB comprised about 4,300 acres of land adjacent to a national estuarine reserve. Half the base was in the City of Portsmouth and the other half in the Town of Newington. One half of Newington's land area is within the base, as is one fifth of Portsmouth's. The 11,300 foot runway is the longest in the Northeast offering an unparalleled transportation opportunity previously unavailable in the state. A comprehensive planning process had to be launched so a base redevelopment plan would be ready before Pease closed to direct the development of new job producing activities.

The Pease closure was considered accelerated, although subsequent base closures have trimmed the time to 18 months from announcement to closure at some bases. The Base Closure Community Redevelopment and Homeless Assistance Act of 1994 has further truncated the planning period, while empowering local economic adjustment organizations (LRA's) to negotiate decisions on homeless provider use as well as other Federal public benefit property conveyance programs. This negotiation period will begin 15 months after the Secretary announces his recommendations for closures by May 2005. Community organizations will need to have a preliminary reuse plan by summer 2006 as a framework for redevelopment decisions.

The planning process is complex, as the canvas is not clean; the specialized security access, utility and infrastructure requirements, and layout designed for military use must be modified for civilian use. Often the infrastructure is old, access is limited (for security), and there is no parcelization of the property. Utilities follow the shortest path, roadways may not meet commercial and industrial standards, and of course, there is only one meter--*at the main gate.*

The planning challenge demands a rigorous approach that starts with overall community goals and ends in the implementation of a plan broadly conceived, finely honed and supported by consensus. The following diagram shows the sequential phases.



GOAL FORMULATION

Each base must be treated individually, with each community focusing on certain aspects of the planning process, depending on the redevelopment context. The first step entails the determination of overall goals and objectives to guide the planning process. These should emanate from the economic adjustment organization established during the organization phase of the adjustment process. The goals are a part of the overall economic recovery strategy developed by the organization. This strategy helps restore private sector confidence and promotes renewed business investment.

Usually a major goal is job creation. Others might include economic feasibility of redevelopment, tax base expansion, diversification of the local economy, maintenance of a certain environmental quality, meeting affordable housing needs, or to create a certain redevelopment theme.

OBJECTIVES

The planning process also needs more specific site development objectives to guide planning. These usually include:

- Civilian job replacement
- Public use of portions of the site
- Highest and best use of land and facilities
- Phased development to meet short-term goals, but not preclude longer range goals
- Expanded site access (roads, rail and water)
- Quality appearance
- Compatibility with existing and planned off-site development
- Image change from military to civilian
- Minimal public cost

ANALYSIS

Once the guiding goals and objectives have been adopted, considerable baseline data collection and contextual analysis needs to be completed that will allow the rational development and evaluation of feasible reuse alternatives for the base. Engineering drawings and information on the base operations are a crucial source of information. This is available from the base engineer. Unique buildings, physical features, or other major assets should be identified, as they

may provide a marketing theme for the converted base.

Redevelopment might fit neatly into an existing economic development strategy for the area, however, it is more likely that the base and its buildings bring a new competitive element to the area, a new marketing angle. This requires a fresh look at area development assets, analysis of feasible business opportunities, and a revision of the area economic development strategy. The competitive niche must be identified.

A base like Pease may have extensive runway and ramp space, a strategic location, proximity to a major deep water port and interstate highway systems, collectively making it feasible as an international transportation hub and trade center, linked to expanding international markets. Extensive military training facilities at another may suggest that the local strategy should include marketing the base as a major business or industry training center. And sometimes a particular building or group of buildings can become the centerpiece for new development. Each base has some unique facilities or capacities that can expand local economic development horizons. In all places it is critical that community leaders have vision when they plan for base redevelopment.

USES

The redevelopment experience of communities that successfully converted former military bases to productive civilian uses shows common threads.

- Industrial and office parks are located on more than 75% of these bases
- Educational institutions are on 60%
- Public airports are located on 40%
- Public recreation facilities are on 30%
- Health related activities are on 20%

Potential public and private uses are as broad as local imagination, practicality, and economic feasibility permit. Typical categories include: aviation, commerce, industry, education, health, recreation, prisons, housing, and public administration. Facility surveys and market analysis will reveal which uses are possible. Public input through the subcommittee structure of the economic adjustment organization will also help to identify potential public and private uses.

ALTERNATIVES

A range of feasible, alternative concepts should be developed and evaluated, using the goals and objectives as a measuring stick. Based on market potential and community needs, numerous concepts should be evaluated, each focusing on a development theme. These concepts are then reviewed in the context of community goals and objectives and ranked for more detailed evaluation. A preferred redevelopment concept can then be selected. Throughout the development and analysis of alternatives, public participation is essential to help arrive at a consensus on the development concept.

An important ingredient to this part of the planning process is knowledge of the land acquisition choices. If one of the major objectives is to minimize public costs, a balance of public benefit (no cost) acquisition and private sector redevelopment is a wise pursuit. Public or nonprofit use of portions of the base for aviation, education, recreation, wildlife conservation, seaports, and health purposes (including homeless use) are generally at no cost. However, there will be public costs to redevelop and operate the facilities for public uses, with little or no tax revenues generated. Also, public benefit acquisitions have "strings attached." They must continue to be used for these public purposes, constraining long-range development flexibility.

DETAILED PLANNING

After a consensus is reached on the overall redevelopment plan, and the Federal disposal agent (usually a Military Department) agrees with the acquisition proposals to implement the plan, work can begin on the details of site layout, parcelization, phased redevelopment, design controls, and property management considerations. It will be important to establish the "new civilian look" for the base early in the conversion process. This may include the creation of a new entrance, demolition of obsolete buildings, and landscaping to achieve the desired image. Local comprehensive plans and zoning must be updated and adopted to reflect the base reuse plan. It is imperative that these decisions be made **before** the disposal of property by the Federal Govern-

ment, particularly those portions of the base that will be purchased by the private sector.

WHO PLANS?

The planning task can be accomplished using existing local planning staff or a collaboration of state and local entities involved in planning and economic development. Augmentation of staff resources may be required. More often consultants are hired, as the magnitude of the task is beyond normal staff capacities. In either case, the economic adjustment organization should set the policy framework and be used to arrive at a consensus throughout the process.

HELP

Most base reuse planning is accomplished with a combination of Federal, state and local resources. Technical and financial assistance are available from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) to undertake planning activities (Community Planning Assistance Program). Certain statutory requirements must be met to qualify. OEA can be reached at (703) 604-6020 or visit www.oea.gov.

How to manuals are available from the OEA to help structure an appropriate planning program: "*Civilian Reuse of Former Military Bases, 1988-1999*," and "*Planning Civilian Reuse of Former Military Bases*." Additional guidance is available from members of the National Association of Installation Developers (NAID) a network of former military base owners and operators which sponsors annual conferences on planning, redevelopment and management issues. NAID can be reached on (202) 822-5256 or visit www.naid.org.

The reuse of former Defense facilities and land offers an unprecedented opportunity to change course and influence future community land use and development.

**MILITARY BASE REUSE PLANNING
(Basic Generic Scope)**

- I Area Socioeconomic Setting**
- II Community Vision or Redevelopment Strategy for Base**
- III Base Land & Facilities Overview**
- IV Base Redevelopment Potential (Market/Community Needs)**
- V Alternative Reuse Assessments**
- VI Recommended Base Reuse Plan**
- VII Base Reuse Plan Implementation Strategy**