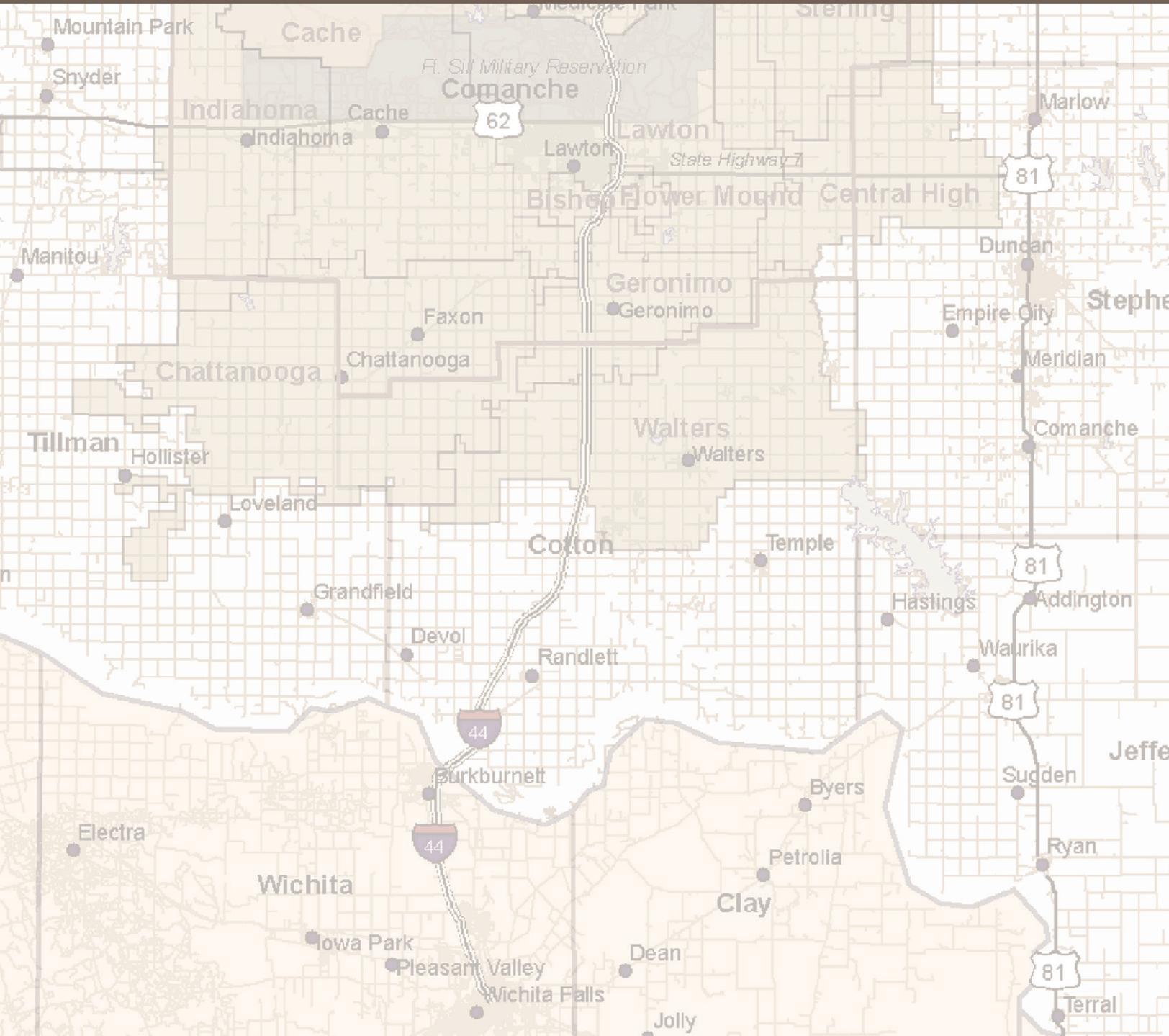
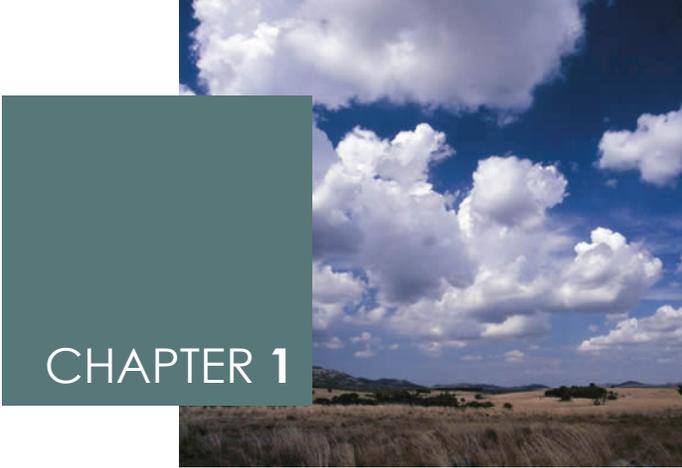


# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION







## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

*Established by the Buffalo Soldiers of the 10th U.S. Cavalry in 1869, Fort Sill was a critical outpost for our frontier Army and soon spawned a small local economy with the city of Lawton at its core. As the state became settled and the fertile lands of the region began to produce agricultural exports, southwest Oklahoma's economy expanded and its reliance on Fort Sill, while still strong, lessened and overall became more diversified. By the end of the twentieth century, however, employment and population growth in the region had ceased, and Fort Sill's impact on the region's economy was as significant as ever.*

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) mandate provided the opportunity for new vitality and growth at Fort Sill and Southwest Oklahoma. For over 100 years, Fort Sill has been widely recognized as the "Home of the Field Artillery," and as a result of BRAC, it will soon serve as headquarters to a fifth branch of artillery defense, Air Defense Artillery. The ADA school, along with an expanded FIRES Center of Excellence, will usher in a new era of growth for the post, and with it, new challenges and opportunities for the local communities in and around Lawton.

In recognition of the challenges that would result from the proposed BRAC Plan, the City of Lawton, in partnership with several surrounding communities and counties, launched a regional planning effort to prepare the southwest Oklahoma region for the growth and impacts that will occur due to the BRAC changes anticipated at Fort Sill Military Reservation. Preliminary research indicated that an influx of over 20,000 new persons into the region could be anticipated and that the cities of Cache, Elgin and Lawton were particularly situated to attract new BRAC growth and households. There was an equally important realization that major portions of these communities lacked the infrastructure to accommodate this growth. It was critical to the future

vitality of these communities that these issues were addressed and a coordinated strategy to implement a plan of action for the needed improvements be developed.

Early in the planning process, the City of Lawton initiated a "regional" approach to understanding and managing the impact of BRAC on the entire community. A BRAC Coordination Committee, consisting of community leaders from the region, was formed to formulate an overall strategy to address the potential problems related to population growth. Their strategy initially centered on three key elements that would assist them in the development of their plan.

One, they developed Technical Subcommittees, chaired by members of the BRAC Coordination Committee, whose primary purpose was to provide substantive review and evaluation of key issues and opportunities on the critical subject matters (i.e. housing, education, utilities and infrastructure, transportation, public safety and emergency services) and serve as a generator of potential policy solutions and action items for the overall plan. Involving these "front line" service providers in the analysis and development of the Plan was a crucial strategy because it helped to ensure their understanding and support for the Plan's recommendations.

The second key element in developing a coordinated strategy was the City's request for funding from the Office of Economic Adjustment (Department of Defense) to further develop their resources (staffing) and to begin the research, evaluation and planning tasks that could provide recommendations about the growth-related problems and opportunities associated with the changes occurring at Fort Sill and

their impact on the broader regional economy. Based on preliminary estimates, BRAC-related events would create over 3,500 new, permanent jobs and over \$950 million of capital investment at Fort Sill and an additional 3,200 spin-off private sector jobs and over \$4.4 billion in cumulative “multiplier” economic impacts to the local economy over the next 15 years. Clearly, a coordinated Plan to address these impacts was needed, and in the spring of 2007, funding from the OEA was approved to develop the regional growth management plan.

Three, an equally important element in the overall strategy was the City’s hiring of a Growth Management Plan Manager. This staff person was tasked with working closely with community stakeholders to educate them on the regional nature of the problems to be faced and the need for concerted, coordinated and comprehensive action on the part of all local communities to meet these challenges and opportunities. With this City liaison in place and new regional relationships being formed, the City hired Jacobs Carter Burgess, with major support provided by RKG Associates, to begin the process of developing a Growth Management Plan for the Fort Sill/Lawton region. The momentum of this planning effort also helped the regional planning organization, Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG), pursue and win a work force development and training grant from the Department of Labor for the purpose of studying the qualities, nature and capacity of the complementary labor force that will enter the Lawton region as new BRAC-related growth measures are instituted and new spouses and workers are attracted to the area.

## Purpose of the Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan

The purpose of the Growth Management Plan is to identify and assess the physical, social and economic infrastructure systems that exist within the region available to support the BRAC development and associated growth within the region and at Fort Sill, and then develop a coordinated, comprehensive and “actionable” Plan for dealing with these issues. To that end, the Plan attempts to provide recommendations and strategies that:

### **Purpose of Growth Management Plan**

- + *Develop a coordinated set of actions that allow impacted communities to accommodate anticipated growth demands;*
- + *Develop an organizational framework for the region that can provide sustained and consistent support and advocacy for the Plan and its implementation; and*
- + *Support the broader economic development objectives for the region that are based on the strength of Fort Sill’s mission and the “spin off” opportunities that may result.*

Because the Plan is regional in nature, the Plan will also identify the organizational makeup and structure that may be needed to effectively implement the more “regional” aspects of the Plan recommendations.

Additionally, the severity and overall importance of the particular need or infrastructure shortcoming may dictate the detail of the proposed strategies to address these needs. For example, if the growth projections indicate a future demand for 1,000 more hospital beds in the community and the need for 2 more acres of public parks, the Plan will provide more in depth analysis and recommendations to the hospital service issue rather than the park service issue.

Finally, based on the research findings, the Plan's recommendations concerning land use, transportation and infrastructure will focus on the "primary impact areas" located within the broader study area. Cache, Elgin and Lawton are clearly most impacted by the BRAC influx, but there will still be impacts in Chattanooga, Walters, Apache, and the other smaller communities within the region. The delineation of a primary impact area is not intended to dismiss the regional nature of the Plan, but instead, focus the efforts and resources to affecting positive change in the region to those areas most impacted and in most need.

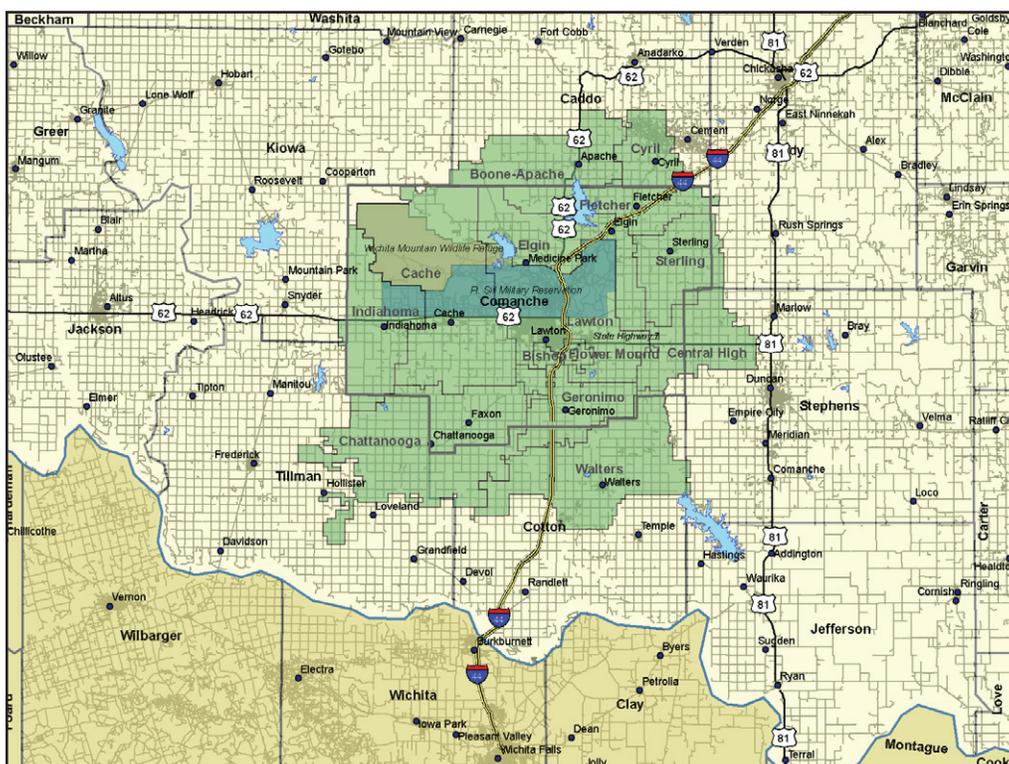
## Definition of the Study Area

The geographic limits of the planning study area are illustrated below and further depicted in *Exhibit 1.1*. The area encompasses over 1.34 million acres in southwest Oklahoma, including all or portions of six (6) counties (Caddo, Comanche, Cotton, Kiowa, Stephens, and Tillman), fourteen (14) municipalities (Lawton, Cache, Indianahoma, Medicine Park, Apache, Elgin, Fletcher, Cyril, Sterling, Central High, Geronimo, Walters, Faxon, and Chattanooga) and fourteen school districts (Lawton, Cache, Bishop, Boone-Apache, Cyril, Elgin, Fletcher,

Sterling, Central High, Flower Mound, Geronimo, Walters, Chattanooga, and Indianahoma).

The study area measures roughly 48.5 miles north to south with H.E. Bailey Turnpike/Interstate 44 providing the primary north-south transportation route. From east to west, the study area is approximately 43.5 miles wide with US Highway 62 and Oklahoma State Route 7 serving as the major roadway connectors through the study area. Major metropolitan areas near the study area include Oklahoma City, OK (85 miles northeast), Wichita Falls, Texas (45 miles south) and the Dallas/Fort Worth metro area which is approximately 180 miles southeast of Lawton.

Finally, as *Exhibit 1.2* illustrates, there are three military installations within 100 miles of the study area, each of which exerts an additional strong influence on the Lawton area and Oklahoma's economy. Tinker Air Force Base is located near Oklahoma City, OK. Altus Air Force Base is located approximately 55 miles west of Lawton on U.S. Highway 62, and Sheppard Air Force Base is located in Wichita Falls, TX, just 45 minutes down Interstate 44 from the Key Gate at Fort Sill.



Study Area



**Exhibit 1.1 Map  
(School, city, county, etc)**

**Exhibit 1.2 Map  
(School, city, county, etc)**

The limits of the study area were selected by the planning team based on their review of three critical factors affecting how BRAC growth would take place in the Lawton area. First, the planning team (City of Lawton technical staff, OEA staff, and the planning consultants) identified the areas that they felt were most likely to be strongly impacted by the BRAC growth. For most team members, all of Comanche County (particularly the cities of Lawton, Cache and Elgin) represented the most suitable communities to accommodate and attract the residential and commercial growth opportunities that resulted from BRAC. Accordingly, these communities and the geographic boundaries of Comanche County became the “core” of the potential study area, based purely on their history and their continued importance as “communities of choice” (as one member stated) for military families.

#### **Factors which Shaped the Study Area Limits**

- + *Historical pattern of development in Comanche Co. as a result of Fort Sill-based jobs and opportunities*
- + *Implied desire of soldiers/civilians that may relocate from Fort Bliss that their Fort Sill commute be no greater than their current commute average of 25 minutes (home to nearest gate)*
- + *Desire to include all school districts that are located (wholly or partially) within the 25 minute “commute” area*

Second, understanding that much of Fort Sill’s growth will be associated with the relocated Air Defense Artillery school currently situated at Fort Bliss (El Paso, TX), the planning team researched the commuting patterns and housing location determinants expressed by Fort Bliss personnel, particularly those involved with the ADA school. A recent survey of these soldiers and their civilian counterparts indicated that their current average commute time was approximately 25 minutes to the nearest Fort Bliss gate. Based on the investigations completed by the team, this survey statistic provided the best metric for evaluating the potential geographic span of likely relocating military and civilian families to Fort Sill, thus it became the a critical factor in the study area definition.

Finally, another indicator of possible locational choice in the Fort Bliss survey results was the availability and location of high quality education opportunities for children from military families. Based on our review of similar planning and research efforts, “living in the right school district” is one of the most consistent and crucial factors in deciding final housing choices for most families with children. Consequently, the study area’s perimeter boundaries were created to align and conform with the adjacent school district boundaries. Additionally, this method of defining the study area limits was utilized based on the planning team’s belief that the growth associated with BRAC and the influx of new military families into the region would pose significant impacts for the local school districts. Accordingly, these district boundaries constituted a logical defining line for possible growth and likely impacts due to BRAC and the study area limits should also conform to these district boundaries as well.



ADA School at Fort Sill

## The Planning Process

The consulting planning team worked closely with three groups of local leaders and technical advisors in the creation of the plan, including:

- The **BRAC Coordination Committee** which consisted of local, regional and state political, community and business leaders that acted as the guiding force for the plan and its recommendations. This committee's membership was broad-based in terms of its geographic limits and its technical knowledge base and served as a de facto Executive Committee for the entire region.
- The **BRAC Technical Subcommittees** (Housing, Utilities and Infrastructure, Public Safety and Emergency Services, Education, and Transportation) consisting primarily of local business leaders from related fields and technical staff from the local communities. These committees provided excellent background information related to the key factors and impact areas to be evaluated in the plan, as well as providing feedback and input on the plan's alternative and final recommendations.
- The **City of Lawton Technical Staff and Project Manager** which provided invaluable mapping and data resources and contacts for the team, as well as providing "first line" input, advice and counsel to the planning team on sensitive recommendations and/or subjects.

In addition to the work with these groups, the planning team held numerous informal meetings and work sessions with local service providers and officials (public and private, non-profit entities) to assess potential needs and growth infrastructure shortcomings. These meetings were particularly beneficial in determining the details of possible needs and potential solutions.

Finally, the team also conducted several public meetings and open houses during the planning period to gain input from the general public in regards to their concerns, ideas and hopes for the plan's recommendations and the impacts of BRAC on their community. Eight meetings were held in five different locations (Lawton, Elgin, Cache, Fort Sill, and Walters communities) over the course of 10 months, and the

focus of each meeting was to provide information related to the anticipated impacts of BRAC, gauge public sentiment regarding their community's ability to handle anticipated growth and brainstorm ideas for strategies and action plans for their communities as they prepare for BRAC growth. An interactive website and strategic press releases were also utilized to inform the public and solicit their comments, and an on-going series of newsletters will be created during the implementation phase of the study period (12 month period after planning study is released) to assist participants in gaining insights into BRAC preparations, action plan implementation and additional information related to their community's response to BRAC.



Public Meeting Discussion

In the end, these meetings, whether informal or formal in nature, provided significant information for the planning team and proved that the process was as important to the overall plan as the final planning product (i.e. planning report) will be. Key community leaders and political officials are now empowered with information and insights into the real impacts of BRAC on their community and they are now better situated to seek support and assistance from other partners (state and federal governments) during this growth period.

## Organization of this Report

The Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan is organized to permit stakeholders to utilize the report, its findings and its recommendations according to their particular area of interest. The Plan is segmented into fourteen (14) different chapters, with the first several chapters providing a background and baseline discussion of the Plan, as well as an Executive Summary of the entire report for those who desire an overarching examination of the critical findings and recommendations.

The ensuing chapters of the report are devoted to the major technical issues or resource areas that will be impacted by BRAC growth at Fort Sill. The following major issue areas are presented within the Plan:

- Review of Baseline Conditions
- Projected Socioeconomic Impacts
- Land Use and Planning
- Housing
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Public Safety & Emergency Services
- Education
- Health Care and Mental Health
- Social Services
- Quality of Life
- Implementation Strategies for Regional Coordination and Collaboration

