

# INSTALLATION MISSION GROWTH

## Community Profile

November 2009

### Fort Drum, New York

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#### Community at a Glance:

##### Growth Management Organization (GMO):

Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization (FDRLO)

##### Geographic area affected by military installation growth:

Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties

##### Regional Population of affected area: U.S Census 2000

Jefferson County: 111,738 covering 1,272 square miles

Lewis County: 26,944, covering 1,275 square miles

St. Lawrence County: 111,931 covering 2,685 sq. mi.

##### Top 1-5 growth challenges:

- Housing
- Medical Services (retention/recruitment)
- Work Force (spousal employment opportunities)
- Quality of Life (public transportation, recreation, connectivity)
- Schools (appropriate classroom locations)

##### Outstanding requirements in support of mission growth:

Project Category	# of Projects	Sum of Project Cost	Sum of Funding Gap
Medical (Education)	1	\$14,000,000	\$12,500,000

#### Mission Growth at a Glance

**Growth Action:** Army Modular Force and Grow the Army

##### Personnel Baseline and Growth Projection:

	Baseline (January 2005)	Build-out Projection (2012)
Military Personnel	14,055	19,218
Dependents	14,695	20,093
Civilian Personnel	2,060	3,043
Contractors	990	1,353

Sources: Fort Drum Economic Impact Statement, Niehaus Housing Survey, and Army Stationing and Installation Plan, April 2009

**Growth Factors affecting community planning:** High deployment levels affect accompaniment rates, making planning for housing and education more difficult. There is a significant increase in demand for medical services, but recruitment of physicians to northern rural areas is difficult.

## Background

### The Region

Fort Drum is located approximately 75 miles due north of Syracuse, and it is approximately 25 miles south of the Thousand Islands Bridge, a major entry point crossing into Canada. Toward the east is the six million acre Adirondack Park and to the west are Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River. The installation is 107,000 acres, with 10,000 of those acres making up the cantonment area and Wheeler-Sack Army Airfield. For the most part the boundary around the post is unencroached. Fort Drum itself encompasses parts of Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties; however, the primary area of population growth is centered on the cantonment area, which primarily impacts Jefferson County. Still, range impacts resulting from mission growth and training procedures impact all three counties. The region is primarily rural, both agrarian and forested. The primary population centers experiencing population growth are the City of Watertown, Town of LeRay (immediately outside the main gate), and the Town of Champion, including the Villages of Carthage and West Carthage, and Town of Watertown. To a lesser degree growth impacts are felt in other communities that had former 801 housing. These impacts may be felt as either growth (Clayton or Sackets Harbor) or negative impacts caused by a tightening of the distance from base that is found acceptable to soldiers and their families (Gouverneur, Lowville, and Copenhagen).

The military's local economic impact to the area is \$1.64 billion for FY 2008, and estimated at \$2.2 billion when considering indirect and induced impacts. Fort Drum is by far the largest employer in the greater upstate New York area, and is the major driver in the local economy. There is no other institution or enterprise in central New York State, much less the tri-county area, which comes close to that kind of impact.

### The First Round of Growth 1985 - 1990

Fort Drum experienced significant growth in the middle to the end of the 1980's when the United States Army 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division was reactivated and Fort Drum was designated as its home installation. At that time, military personnel increased from less than 200 soldiers to 10,500 military personnel. To respond to that growth, the State asked the citizens of the tri-county northern New York region to form the Fort Drum Steering Council. The primary purpose of the Council was to be the initial point of contact between the military and civilian communities and to assist those communities in expediting those issues that would delay the rate of expansion. Many of the decisions made at that time, in particular those related to rental housing locations, medical services, and schools, would have significant impacts on future growth.

The Steering Council was funded through the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) and sponsoring local agencies. The Council was scheduled to disband in 1990 when it was thought its planning role would no longer be necessary. Once in place, however, the civilian and military communities in the Fort Drum area felt that a follow-on organization was necessary to keep the lines of communication open. Consequently, FDRLO was officially formed to continue to foster strong positive communications that enhance the interrelationships between the military and civilian communities within the Fort Drum Region.

FDRLO, the point organization or GMO, is a not-for-profit membership-based organization (501(C) 4); the board consists of key leaders in the community including representation from each county and city, and representation from the installation. In addition, representatives from other agencies and community groups (listed below) are active at the Board level and on Task Forces: Growth Management, Housing, Economic Development, and DrumCountry (promotional, issue specific, and quality of life.)

- Development Authority of the North Country (DANC)
- Empire State Development Corporation (ESDC) (state economic development arm)
- Three county-level Industrial Development Agencies
- Three county-level Planning Offices and town and village planners
- The local offices of:
  - New York State Department of Labor
  - New York State Department of Transportation

- New York State Department of Education
- Tug Hill Commission (a state support agency for very sparsely populated towns)
- Workforce Development Board
- Chamber of Commerce
- Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization (FDRHPO)

The Development Authority of the North Country (DANC), also formed at the time of the Steering Council, is a business entity of the State of New York. Its purpose is to plan and implement needed infrastructure requirements, such as water and sewer, solid waste management, telecommunications, and housing. Like most Authorities in New York, this is a permanently established State agency that serves as a not-for-profit state corporation to serve regional needs.

FDRHPO was formed in October 2007. This organization, a 501(C) 3, is a “sister” organization to FDRLO, focusing on the unique relationship between on post and off post medical services and on the general availability and enhancement of community medical service. Further explanation is provided on page 5.

### BRAC 2005 Growth

In May 2004, preceding any BRAC 2005 decisions, DoD announced that 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division (Light Infantry) would add two Brigades, one each at Fort Drum and Fort Polk. Thus began, with the creation of the newly formed brigades, the process of “transformation” at Fort Drum. New soldiers began arriving by the end of the month. Early Garrison predictions indicated total growth at Fort Drum would be in the range of 5,000 more soldiers and perhaps 400 to 500 civilians by 2011-2013. By June 2009, the Soldier population significantly exceeded those estimates with more still to come (Table 1).

	May 2004		June 2009		Projected 2013	
Soldiers	10,729	<i>Actual</i>	17,977	<i>Actual</i>	19,218	<i>Niehaus projection</i>
Spouses	5,043	<i>Actual</i>	7,838	<i>Calculated</i>	8,379	<i>Calculated</i>
Dependents	5,547	<i>Actual</i>	10,957	<i>Calculated</i>	11,714	<i>Calculated</i>
Total	21,319		36,772		39,311	

**Table 1: Population<sup>1</sup>**

Projecting the numbers of soldiers and family members is very much a moving target, but clearly the trend is upward.

## Implementation and Partnering Strategies

Several significant factors impacted the way the area responded to the BRAC 2005 growth. These factors include:

- **Significant deployment of Fort Drum troops:** The 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division is one of the most deployed units within the Army. As such, the community must incorporate major fluctuations of personnel into their planning assumptions and, during war time, off-post planning for military dependents becomes even more uncertain as families reexamine decisions about where they will live during periods of extended deployments.
- **“Home Rule” authority:** The “home rule” authority in New York means each individual town, village, etc. has its own authority for zoning and land use control. Most boards in the smaller municipalities are volunteer and are not equipped or trained to evaluate and respond quickly to major development requests rising from the current demand to develop more housing.
- **Legacy decisions made during the 1985 growth round:** Some of the key decisions made during the 1980’s growth continue to affect planning decisions today. These impacts are evident in relation to housing, schools, and both medical facilities and services. All are discussed in more detail below.

<sup>1</sup> Source: May 2004 and June 2009, Garrison Housing; Projection 2013, Niehaus (Army) Housing Projection made as of Sept 2008

## Housing

At the time of the 1985 expansion, a significant housing deficit existed throughout the region known today as Drum Country. The solution of the day was twofold: military construction (milcon) funded construction of 2,200 units on-post and, under an Army 801 Plan, private development of 2,000 additional units off-post with an Army guarantee to lease for 20 years. Those 2,000 units, built to Army specifications, were 50 percent of the Army-wide inventories of 801 housing units in the continental U.S. These units were built at 11 different sites in eight different communities in the tri-county region. Some of the units were within a mile of a Fort Drum gate; 400 others were 20 to 35 miles from the gates. The largest concentrations, 600 units, were on three different sites in the City of Watertown (approximately six to eight miles from the gates).

Prior to May 2004, virtually all soldiers and their dependents who came to Fort Drum lived in government-controlled housing, either on- or off-post. Area rents and housing prices which were far lower than most markets in the state remained low from 1985 to 2004. The Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) rates were accordingly low. The tri-county area saw little interest from developers to build single-family housing or rental projects beyond the Army's 801 projects.

With BRAC 2005 growth, the advent of a new Residential Communities Initiative (RCI) addition to the housing stock on-post, and the 801's due to become market-available housing between December 2008 and January 2010, the Army's stated goal was to achieve a ratio of 30:70, where 30 percent of the military population was on base, and 70 percent was living in and on the community. This is a ratio similar to Army-wide averages. The Army estimated the need for 2,060 additional housing units. Much of the older stock, including some 801 stock, was labeled as deficient because of age, bedroom count, distance, etc. At the time, the community had no verifiable figures on how many single-family "for sale" units or rental units might be needed.

The first challenge for FDRLO (and its main housing partner DANC) was to do an independent survey of the housing need based on real market conditions. That survey resulted in a lower estimated need. Both the Army's survey and FDRLO's independent survey were adjusted as market conditions became clearer and the ultimate end strength of soldiers assigned became better known. Conditions changed frequently as proposed development projects surfaced in the area. Significant shifts in the on-post RCI construction plans added to the need for revised figures.

Independent of the housing surveys, FDRLO conducted a consumer preference assessment of soldiers to determine the physical amenities and housing choice factors that were important to military families in terms of housing selections.

FDRLO began to notice that the accompaniment rate was far less than had been anticipated. An independent survey determined the actual rate and reasons why families were not accompanying their soldiers. Predictably, "deployments" was the most significant reason. Other significant reasons included lack of available jobs for the spouse, an inability to get out from a housing situation somewhere else, and a myth that there were only two seasons in DrumCountry, winter and "getting ready for winter."

A variety of housing strategies was developed to support the creation of various housing options. Independent contractors, primarily local, quickly addressed single "for sale" housing. In Jefferson County where new home production had previously produced barely 100 units per year, production quickly quadrupled. Few of these new homes were built in development tracts. They were scattered throughout the county.

Production of new rental units did not occur in the same fashion. The cost of construction versus viable rents drew little interest from developers. The early uncertainty associated with the scope of the RCI build also discouraged interest. In response to this lack of interest from private investors, FDRLO and DANC developed a model and strategies to encourage and assist with affordable rental unit development.

The effective strategies included:

- Hiring one staff person to monitor housing activity (with financial assistance from OEA) and serve as a liaison to the Post's housing office

- Conducting frequent independent market assessments
- Working diligently to reconcile differing numbers between the Army housing studies and independent studies

With State, county, and DANC support, a revolving loan fund was established to provide additional capital to projects judged most desirable. Similarly, Federal and State tax credits were used to encourage selected development. Development was encouraged in areas with existing infrastructure and the capacity to support development. Whenever possible, a process of gaining site control or using lands owned by a local government entity was used to reduce land costs.

The effective use of Federal and State tax credits has had limits during the recent market decline, but it is recovering as a viable tool. Unfortunately, as soldier "salary" increased, due mostly to rapidly increasing BAH, fewer soldiers income qualify for tax credit housing based on their income.

Still in progress, the Figure 1 below summarizes over time what actually has been accomplished:

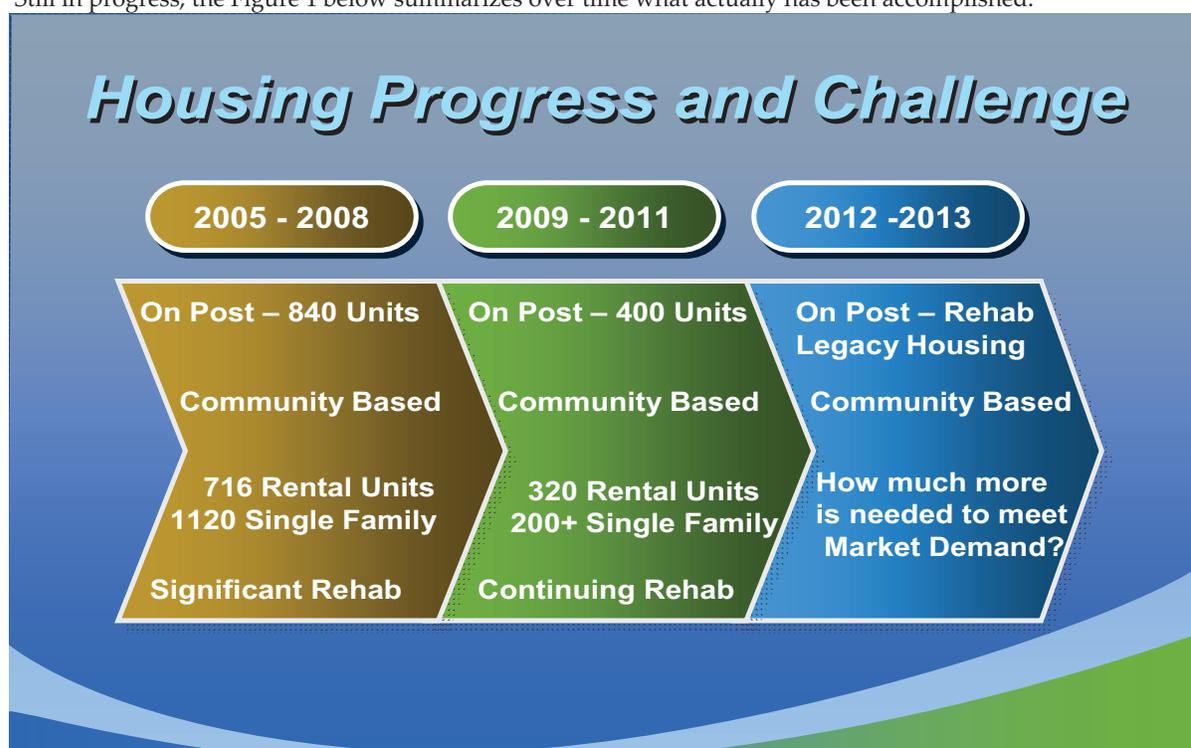


Figure 1: Housing Progress and Challenge

## Medical Services

During the 1985 expansion, a decision was made to use the excess capacity of the 5 community hospitals within the 30 mile radius of Fort Drum and where much of the 80" housing was being built. Consequently Fort Drum was built with no on-post hospital. A large outpatient clinic was built on post but 94 percent of hospital services needed by the Army are handled in the five area facilities. (Most of the remaining six percent of service required is provided at State University of New York (SUNY) Upstate in Syracuse, a teaching hospital.)

The BRAC 2005 expansion caused all of the region's medical facilities to project and work to provide for future needs. The three largest of the five area hospitals all have had expansion projects. Samaritan Medical Center in Watertown, by far the largest hospital, is currently engaged in a \$60 million project to expand and meet both military and community needs.

This rapid surge in soldier and dependent population and a commitment to continued use of community services resulted in the establishment of FDRHPO.

FDRHPO was formed specifically to coordinate and address regional health related issues. FDRLO both supported the formation of this organization and provided monies for its initial project – a study to determine the gaps, needs, and focus areas for the delivery of health services.

The findings of that study include:

- Gaps
  - Behavioral Health Services
  - Recruitment and Retention of Clinical Specialists
  - Community Supportive Services
- Needs:
  - Comprehensive EMS System Assessment
- Focus Areas:
  - Quality Measures
  - Access to Services
  - Information Sharing and Technology
  - Recruitment and Training

This situation is unique in the Army for a post of this size. Figure 2 delineates FDRHPO's accomplishments in just three years.



**Figure 2: Accomplishments**

Of the items above, recruitment and retention of medical personnel will be the most difficult to accomplish. Other military communities will surely relate to the significance of this problem. The long-term solution to this problem is the focus of an effort to establish a branch campus of SUNY Upstate in Watertown. A retention rate of six percent can be improved to 50 percent if the region can “grow our own.” SUNY Upstate has already accomplished this kind of success

in another part of the state and, together with SUNY Upstate, community leaders including FDRLO are committed to replicating that project in DrumCountry.

## Economic Development

The rural nature of the tri-county region in northern New York cannot be overstated. This “ruralness” is positive in many ways. It provides for an unencroached Fort Drum; the area is safe; there is no traffic congestion; property costs are reasonable if not downright “cheap”; and the natural surroundings make this a four season tourist destination. But aside from government work, education, or the medical professions, there is little else other than service jobs available. This frustration is often expressed as “we school our children well and they become our best export.” Fort Drum, as the major economic engine in the area, brings with it with an incredibly talented pool of available workers. The region has not been able to provide substantial, rewarding jobs or positions in which to use these new residents

Many different approaches have been developed in an effort to create and attract business interest and new job opportunities to DrumCountry:

- An OEA-funded Gap Analysis examined existing products and services available in the region that could be used to supply or produce new goods and services, which in turn would be sold to Fort Drum or another governmental agency (State or Federal) thus utilizing available workforce and natural resources. This effort continues to grow. A Request for Proposal (RFP) was recently released seeking proposals for development of a community and work force profile. FDRLO and a consortium of the tri-county economic development agencies has begun a marketing campaign based on the theme “You see a soldier, we see a Work Force,” a business branding campaign based on FDRLO’s welcoming Web site, DrumCountry.com.
- In addition, another partnership can successfully boast of the second year of a three-year project to develop a fully-functioning Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC), housed in the Chamber of Commerce. FDRLO partnered with the Chamber, Small Business Development, Empire State Development Commission (ESDC), and New York State Business Development, and is pleased with this endeavor. Tri-county businesses interested in doing business with government can now utilize local PTAC staff for help as they search the government database for contract opportunities.

## Quality of Life:

Many different projects fall under this umbrella: public transportation, child care, recreation, introduction and welcoming, and promotion. Of primary importance here are the first and last items listed:

**Transportation:** DrumCountry is a huge geographic expanse largely defined by the area and communities in which the original 801 housing was developed. For 20 years, the Army treated these outlying areas as extensions of the post and provided “public” transportation to and from the post. The change in the units’ status from government housing to open market housing occurred as commuting costs were escalating. With very limited public transportation available beyond the Watertown City limits, a real need exists to provide linkage from the outlying areas to the post and in turn to the City where so many services are clustered and to commercial areas that continue to grow on the edge of the City. While travel in DrumCountry is not onerous, distance and the cost of transportation can be burdensome.

In its master planning Fort Drum has provided superbly for on-post child care and recreation venues in its phase of expansion. Similar expansion of these services outside the gate has not occurred. It remains a challenge, particularly in the City of Watertown, where demand is increasing.

In the Army community, assignment to Fort Drum sometimes comes with associated myths.

- One is about deployment, and, to be sure, if you are part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division, you are likely going to see a deployment in your tour here. The local DrumCountry residents are Army-friendly and do support military families, especially during deployments.
- The other myth is about the weather. Most people do not know until they arrive that the weather and the natural resources of the region make northern New York a four season tourist destination for those who like to

be in the woods, on the water, or play in the snow. And for those who are not into the “great outdoors”, it is only two hours to the capital of a foreign country (Canada), three hours from the largest French-speaking and European-style city outside of France (Montreal), and in five hours driving time one can be in Central Park in New York City.

Promoting the opportunities and overcoming the myths remains a challenge.

## Education

One year ago a concern about the schools would not have been on anyone’s priority list. Three school districts service 75 percent of military-related children in the area. The cantonment area is geographically divided between two of those districts. Within the three districts there exists classroom capacity to take many more students. The problem is the capacity is not necessarily at the building closest to the new housing clusters, whether on-post or off. In fact, in some cases, classrooms are as far away as 18 miles from the new housing.

The quality of education is not an issue; in fact it is a plus with all of the districts. And it is not for lack of preparation or having the where with all to build to enrollment needs. Both districts splitting the cantonment area have reconfigured grades and built new facilities to meet growth needs. When need for additional capacity is demonstrated, the State of New York aids those districts at the 95 percent level for the cost of construction.

The problem is that with grade configurations of primary schools changed over time from kindergarten through sixth grade to kindergarten through third grade, creating much more capacity but not necessarily in the right locations. Coupled with the constant churn of military comings and goings, the command team at both garrison and division levels has a constant problem with newly-arriving parents looking for the “neighborhood school.”

This problem is exacerbated by the local residents who have always experienced significant distance and school busing as a part of their daily lives, who do not perceive of this as a problem. For local residents, the distances are part of the “ruralness” of the area.

This is a new problem, and a new priority. There is no simple solution even if the money was readily available (and it is not) to construct new buildings, since it is also a local political problem.

## Successes/Lessons Learned

- Open and transparent communication with Garrison is critical. We might not agree, but through it all we have managed to make and keep friendships with the Garrison team. (The experience has been so positive that the past three Garrison Commanders have chosen to retire here.)
- Community understanding of the military mission and what goes on behind the gate is also important. FDRLO constantly is sharing the Fort Drum story with the community. Both the Commanding General and Garrison Commander share regular updates with FDRLO leadership and the community.
- Keep close track of the numbers: they are an ever-moving target. The decisions and responses to growth is easier when driven by accurate data.
- Take pride in being a Defense Community.