

News Release

**For Immediate Release
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Fayetteville Area begins planning for BRAC growth; Area firm selected to develop the Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan

The Base Realignment and Closure Regional Task Force (BRAC RTF) board of directors awarded the Laurinburg, North Carolina firm of Training & Development Associates (TDA) the \$1.1 million contract to oversee the development of the Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan. The Plan will be a roadmap for sustainable growth in southeast North Carolina as the region absorbs the 25,000 to 40,000 new residents who will move here as a result of BRAC. The anticipated growth will make Fort Bragg the largest Army post in the country.

"The start-up of the Regional Growth Plan is a huge step forward for this region" said Tim McNeill, Chairman of the BRAC RTF. "This may be the largest and most comprehensive regional impact study that has ever been attempted in North Carolina."

The projected growth will have a significant impact on local communities and calls for a broad study of all the potential changes. To produce the Plan, TDA has assembled a large cohort of experts, each presiding over a particular task and guiding the development of one of the Plan's sections.

"TDA has assembled experts who are intimately familiar with this region and the State of North Carolina," McNeill said. "Our Board of Directors reviewed several proposals from some of the best-known global companies in consulting field, and TDA's was by far the best. The fact that TDA is based in our region and 90 percent of their team works in North Carolina is a definite plus. These folks live and work in the region, and they are eager and excited about this important work."

TDA's work will begin with a socio-economic impact assessment, demographic analyses, and a labor market and wage survey of the area. Then, with these data in hand, the consultants can set to work on their tasks, including developing sections on education, medical services and emergency response, transportation, infrastructure planning, housing, workforce and labor, conventions and travel, special activities, military and community land planning, and regional engagement.

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The Plan will not grow in a vacuum. The involvement of the 73 municipalities within the BRAC RTF region and the input of local organizations, such as Sustainable Sandhills and the Regional Land Use Advisory Commission, are key elements of this Plan.

“Combined with the participation and commitment that already exists from local, regional and state entities,” said Paul Dordal, executive director of BRAC RTF, “this effort will help to identify problem areas that could have a negative impact and to determine ways to avoid or solve these problems before they occur. The end result will be to take better care and improve the quality of life for our local communities and for our military members and their families.”

The Plan’s development is being funded through a Department of Defense grant for the benefit of communities that are affected by the changes at Ft. Bragg. Ultimately it will provide data and guidance to the private sector so that businesses, public entities, and individuals can make decisions based on what Fayetteville and the surrounding 11 counties will be like in 2012 and beyond. Housing and commercial developers, health care providers, school systems, and public entities are some of the groups that may turn to the Plan for information and guidance.

TDA team members have already met in person and via conference calls; they will gather with volunteers in working groups on Tuesday, June 26 at Fort Bragg to begin drafting the Plan’s sections. The working groups, made up of volunteer advisers from the 11-county area around Fort Bragg, will provide insight and local expertise that cover the spectrum of economic, community, social, and cultural activity. Their input on public safety, health and social services, business and economic development, the arts, parks and recreation, tourism, and agriculture, among other topics, will be the backbone of each of the Plan’s sections.

“Through these partnerships,” said Don Belk, planner for the RTF, “we can ensure that the Plan provides the tools and direction for transforming our regional economy and workforce, creating new industries and jobs, and preserving the unique natural and cultural heritage of southeastern North Carolina.”

Each task and its corresponding section in the Plan could be a stand-alone document; however, the Plan will be greater than the sum of its parts. “The tasks will be linked in terms of implementing corrective measures or new strategies to enable sustainable growth for the region,” said Belk. “The Plan is intended to complement, not supplant, existing local and state plans and develop a unified, regional approach to BRAC-related growth issues that supersede political boundaries.”

BRAC RTF, funded through a \$1.9 million grant from the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment, was formed last year as a partnership of the 11 counties and municipalities in this region to unify the planning effort and adequately prepare for the impact on our communities