

The Liaison

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Housing - Top Priority of North Country Families

In 2003 the Army announced its intention to build several hundred additional housing units on post as part of a privatization initiative. No significant increase in soldier population was anticipated at that time. The Army's focus was to improve the overall quality of housing for soldiers and their families.

At that time the overall vacancy rates on market housing here in the North Country were at the 14% level and expected to rise. Average rent for a two bedroom unit was \$400 - \$450 per month.




After the announcement of the total increase in soldiers at Fort Drum, things began to change quickly. The vacancy rate began to diminish. Rents started to increase. "For Sale" housing prices also began to rise. Rehabilitation of older units became very visible in North Country communities.

The FDRLO's housing study, released in February 2005,

indicated the need for housing within a 30 mile radius of Fort Drum to be between 1400 - 1800 housing units.

About 45% of that demand had household incomes of 60 to 90% of the area's Median Household Income (MHI).

The housing study estimated:

-  15% of the demand could be met by new single family housing
-  55% of the demand could be met by new multi-family housing
-  30% of demand could be met through rehabilitation of substandard housing.

This chart reflects housing demand by income:

Up to 60% of MHI	75 units
60% - 90% of MHI	650 units
above 90% MHI (Market)	675 units



The initial reaction from private sector developers was to propose development of hundreds of units of single family housing well in excess of market demand analysis. There was little interest in multi-family housing due to the high cost of construction and lagging rental rates. In general most developers showed little interest in the concept of long term managed housing.

So where are we now? Occupancy rates for all levels of housing are nearing 100%. The number of soldiers living in the Syracuse area is now between 120-130. Rates for an average 2-bedroom apartment is \$600-650 per month. Feasible rates for an average 2-bedroom

(Continued on page 5)

HEALTH PLANNING FOCUS OF NEW GROUP

Soldiers consider two things uppermost for their families when they are stationed. The first is housing. The second is the health care services available to them. This opinion was expressed by COL John Wempe, Commander of the Fort Drum Medical Department Activity (MEDDAC) at the inaugural meeting of the board

of the Fort Drum Regional Health Planning Organization. (FDRHPO)

Congressman John M. McHugh has long recognized the importance of these issues for members of the military community. Mr. McHugh successfully introduced and

steered legislation through Congress to create a Department of Defense pilot program for health care delivery in communities impacted by military installations. The pilot was planned as a way to test initiatives that build cooperative

(Continued on page 4)

Inside this issue:

Deans Calls for Continued Action 2

Supporters Thanked 3

Drum 2020 refocuses energy 5

ED's Perspective 6

Economic Dev Task Force hard at work 7

Strategic Plan Update adopted 8



John W. Deans, Chair

“the expansion Fort Drum is experiencing presents what is undoubtedly, the greatest single opportunity this generation will see.”



AUSA & FDRLO shared a post-BRAC celebratory cake on September 23rd.

Chair's Comments: A Call For Continued Action

FDRLO, Fort Drum and our community have had, and will continue to have, a full plate. The agenda and the comments of those who spoke at our most recent Board of Directors and General Membership meeting made that reality crystal clear.

At our late September gathering, we did, quite appropriately, set aside a little time to celebrate the successful conclusion of the BRAC 2005 round. We acknowledged the labors of some of those including Drum 2020 Co-chairs Keith Caughlin and Beth Fipps who over the past few years worked so hard to ensure that Fort Drum and its soldiers and family members remain an integral part of the North Country we all call home. At the meeting's conclusion, we joined with our sister organization, the Northern NY-Fort Drum Chapter of AUSA and shared in a little celebratory cake.

We also welcomed MG Benjamin Freakley, Commanding General, Fort Drum and the 10th Mt Division. Gen Freakley has hit the ground running and those who heard him at our FDRLO meeting, know he is a leader who “tells it like it is”, whether he is describing the war on terror or the struggle for housing for Fort Drum soldiers and families. We were also delighted that Congressman John McHugh was with us. As always, we can look to Congressman McHugh for continued leadership on all things Fort Drum! Senator James Wright who secured dollars critical to FDRLO's defense for Fort Drum during the

recent BRAC round, outlined additional State-supported initiatives including funding for “in-fill” housing. And importantly, a revised FDRLO strategic plan which will set the stage for addressing both the challenges and opportunities that lie before Fort Drum and the North Country was adopted.

There are two important messages that, as Chair, I hope we will each take from our meeting.

- First, thanks to the labors of many, BRAC is successfully behind us, at least for the time being.
- Second, the expansion Fort Drum is experiencing presents what is undoubtedly, the greatest single opportunity this generation will see. Fort Drum's growth represents an unparalleled opportunity for a robust economy and an improved quality of life for our community and our state.

Now is the time for all of us to step to the plate and insure that the real challenges which accompany this unparalleled opportunity are met. Since 1990, FDRLO and this community have been equal to the task. Never has continued commitment to the FDRLO mission been more important. By working together and remaining fully engaged, we can ensure an even stronger future for Fort Drum and the North Country.

State DOT Projects Move Forward

PUBLIC HEARING

Fort Drum Connector Project
 The New York State Department of Transportation is pursuing a project to improve the transportation link between Interstate 81 and Route 11.

November 9th
 Calcium Primary School

Times are 4:30-6:30 & 7:00-9:00 PM.

Both sessions will be identical with short presentations and town hall style Q&A, one-on-one with folks who have specific questions, etc.

Fort Drum Railroad Sidings - \$2.57 million in IAP funds provided for the Jefferson County Industrial Development Agency (JCIDA) to finance two new railroad storage tracks adjacent to the existing Fort Drum Rail line in Jefferson County. The tracks will provide adequate storage capacity to handle up to 100 rail cars that will improve operational efficiency at Fort Drum during deployment activities. Construction began on September 20.

The clearing and grubbing of vegetation is complete. The grading is underway from the east end of project area. The first turnout for the east end of the two siding tracks is under construction.

The two rail sidings are expected to be completed this year, pending weather conditions



Above - grading at construction site on post (6 Oct)
 Below - start of construction of the first turnout/switch (12 Oct)



Special Thanks to Special Supporters

As Congressman John McHugh completed his remarks at the September FDRLO meeting, Dr. John Deans stepped forward. On behalf of the FDRLO, the DRUM 2020 Task Force and for all the citizens of the North Country, he presented five plaques—simple, small symbols that represent our sincere thanks for untiring support.

encouragement and leadership during the 2005 BRAC round.

Each recipient made contributions that represent an invaluable contribution to the mission of the FDRLO.

In addition to Congressman John McHugh, plaques were presented to Anne LeMay, Congressional Staff Member Extraordinaire, Keith

Caughlin and Elizabeth Fipps, co-chairs of the Drum 2020 Task Force and to Jefferson County.

Accepting on behalf of the County were Robert Thomas, Chair of the County Board of Legislators, and Robert Hagemann, Jefferson County Administrator and FDRLO Board member.

Each recipient has made contributions that represent an invaluable contribution to the mission of the FDRLO

County's Support Invaluable

On behalf of the Fort Drum Regional Liaison Organization, a sincere thank you to
 Jefferson County

The financial commitment of the County of Jefferson represents an invaluable contribution to the mission of the FDRLO and to its efforts to ensure a strong Fort Drum in our North Country's future. Jefferson County's leadership level of support has allowed the FDRLO to help shape effective responses to both the challenges of the 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Round and the opportunities presented by Fort Drum's expansion.



FDRHPO formalizes collaborative venture



"This pilot program will strengthen the health care network within the Fort Drum community ..."

John M. McHugh



(Continued from page 1)
health care arrangements and agreements between military installations and local and regional non-military health care systems. FDRHPO will carry out the pilot program's regional health care approach to meet the needs of the expanding military population, building on existing relationships between Fort Drum and the local community.

As one of very few military installations without its own hospital, Fort Drum relies on the local health care system for the medical needs of its soldiers and their families. For more than a year, officials from Fort Drum's MEDDAC, Samaritan Medical Center, and Carthage Area Hospital have been meeting on a regular basis to ensure that the needs of the current and expanding Fort Drum community are met. FDRHPO formalizes this relationship, brings in other key players in the health care system, and ensures collaboration among all parties.

Dr. John Deans, President of the FDRLO, has asked Kevin T. Mastellon, an FDRLO Board member, to represent the Organization on this new health planning Board. Mastellon is a former Chairman of the Boards of Samaritan Medical Center, E.J. Noble Hospital, Alexandria Bay (now River Hospital) and Samaritan-Keep Home.

In addition to the two major health services providers and FDRLO, the other organizations represented on the new Health Planning Organization Board are the Samaritan and Carthage Area Hospital Medical Staffs, the Jefferson Physicians' Organization, the Northern New York Rural Healthcare Alliance, the Jefferson County Community Services Board, the Jefferson County Office of Emergency Management and the other, smaller hospitals located in the region impacted by Fort Drum.

COL Wempe and other representatives from MEDDAC will serve as ex-officio members of the Board.

"The significant expansion of Fort Drum will have a tremendous impact on our community, including impacts on the economy, education, and health care," stated Thomas H. Carman, President and CEO of Samaritan Medical Center. "FDRHPO has been formed to ensure that the local health care system plans for and implements services and programs to address the needs of our growing population. Not only does the military community benefit from the efforts of this group, our civilian community benefits through expanded and enhanced services, collaboration among health care providers, and our ability to identify and address gaps in the health care system - all of which this new corporation has set out to accomplish."

"Every member of the Board of Directors, as well as all staff members and physicians providing health care services in the North Country, considers it a privilege to serve those who serve our country," added Walter Becker, Administrator of Carthage Area Hospital. "Through the efforts of the FDRHPO and with the Congressman's support, not only will we continue to serve the health care needs of our military and civilian communities, we will develop plans and relationships that will strengthen the entire North Country health care system."

"The permanent addition of the third brigade at Fort Drum has brought with it thousands of additional soldiers and families in need of health care services," Congressman McHugh said. "This pilot program will strengthen the health care network within the Fort Drum community and could provide a basis upon which other military installations can model their health care delivery."



Drum 2020 Team Focus Turns to Growth Response

So many people through the last four years have assured me, "Drum has nothing to worry about. They won't close it." Today, I can thankfully say to all of them, "By gosh, you were right. What was I thinking?"

Beth Fipps and I will wind up the Drum 2020 Task Force business, the mission and goals fold back into the FDRLO proper, and are highlighted by the First Point in the Strategic Plan, "Ensure the long-term viability of Fort Drum".

With the help of the directors and interested members, especially the financial support

of the Four Star Leaders, Jefferson County and New York State, we have done just that.

We need to thank the committee chairs, RuthEllen Blodgett, Rich Babbitt and Don Alexander and Gary Derouin for their commitment and hard work. With out them and their committee members, and the invaluable efforts of the Executive Committee, we would not have been prepared and would not have been able to tell the story of Fort Drum.

Lastly, as you all know, we have paid for good advice and counsel from experts and we

got it - Kathy Mastellon, Carl McLaughlin , Chris Lehman, Ad Workshops, Lawson Magruder and Matt Behrmann were a great team. Thanks to all of them.

We look forward to a BRAC-free America, or at least a BRAC-less America. We intend to keep up our end of this partnership to prepare for that time when the command, the soldiers and the families of the 10th Mountain Division are all in one place, at one time.

Keith B. Caughlin
Drum 2020co-chair



Housing Needs & Issues

(Continued from page 1)

apartment for new construction are over \$800 per month. There is increasing speculation that many North Country tenants are being displaced because they cannot afford increased housing costs. It is expected that over 900 more soldiers with families will arrive by March 2006.

How do we best meet this demand? A comprehensive approach is needed, which includes new construction and rehabilitation of single and multi-family housing units. Both affordable and market rate housing units must be targeted. This includes:

- 🏠 Single family development using affordable designs and clustered housing in order to minimize overall costs – priced below \$175,000. On going housing rehabilitation using existing affordable programs to target substandard units.
- 🏠 Multi-family housing development which incorporates mixed income units to serve a broad population. In fill development, to minimize infrastructure costs, where ever possible.

Thanks to Kevin Jordan, of the FDRLO Housing Task Force, for compiling the information for this article as part of a presentation for the recent Local Government Conference Day sponsored by SUNY Potsdam's Merwin Institute.

Fort Drum BAH Table		
Grade	Married BAH	Single BAH
E1-E4	\$735	Barracks
E5	\$830	Barracks
E6	\$1,024	\$701
E7	\$1,082	\$738
E8	\$1,145	\$858
E9	\$1,195	\$903
O1-O2	\$1,018	\$793
O3	\$1,182	\$935
O4	\$1,223	\$1,088
O5	\$1,250	\$1,126
O6	\$1,260	\$1,185
O7	\$1,275	\$1,209
W1-W2	\$1,108	\$858
W3	\$1,185	\$909
W4	\$1,199	\$1,038
W5	\$1,216	\$1,096



Example of new in-fill single family home being developed by DANC and WLDC

“Those new studies concluded, depending on how one accounts for the RCI project, that there was a significant need for additional units of housing.”



Site work at FDMCH Crescent Woods, a new RCI neighborhood on Fort Drum

For more information about FDMCH, please contact their main office at 315.955.6800. For information about submitting proposals, call 315.775.4040.

Carl's Perspective

May 3, 2004 was a great day for me as I started my new job as Executive Director of the FDRLO. I joined a team already deeply engaged in the BRAC campaign and I was quickly immersed in the work on the campaign media message. In those first days, there was a wave of new information to be absorbed. One of the documents on the shelf, and not read as yet, was a less than one year old housing study, referred to as the GAR report. Its authors had concluded that the tri-county impact area had a surplus of housing in general and that this posed a real problem. Some of it had to be “excessed.” Part of this surplus was caused by an ambitious federal government program known as Residential Communities Initiative. But the month was young and there was a lot more to learn.

On May 8th, Congressman McHugh announced the Army's plans to form a 3rd Brigade for the 10th Mountain Division (LI). Roughly 3500 new soldiers were expected and some would arrive within weeks. Before month's end, reports

changed and it wasn't just a brigade but a BCT (or is it a UeX or what - new Army acronyms to learn) and it would be larger than originally thought. As a matter of fact, the whole Division was about to “transform” into modular BCTs. The total number of new soldiers for the transformed division was now estimated at 5,900 (later revised again upwards to approximately 6,400.) That took care of the excess housing problem.

Within days, Robert Juravich and members of the Housing Task Force would again talk with the authors of the original housing report. The message was clear: “The parameters have changed and we need to take a closer look.” FDRLO authorized a new housing study, and as part of a national effort, so did the Army.

Those new studies concluded, depending on how one accounts for the RCI project, that there was a significant need for additional units of housing.

With all the flurry of activity,

one could almost forget we were in the midst of a BRAC round that according to Department of Defense estimates would close as much as 20 to 25% of the military's excess capacity in military facilities.

Almost immediately after the BCT announcement, housing developers began descending on the North Country. Since then, there has been a lot of speculation, and if we relied purely on the announced plans of developers, there would be no housing problem. The total proposed units is somewhere between 2500 to 3000 units of new housing.

The reality is that, almost 18 months later, we've seen a fair amount of local development of single unit housing. In fact, more than 180 individual units have received certificates of occupancy since January 2005. Also moving forward is a significant infill project at the Cloverdale site in the City of Watertown. It will bring 99 units of housing on line within a year. And on post, new construction and renovation is underway as the RCI project proceeds. But the RCI units were already factored in. We've seen an incredible rehabilitation effort of existing units of housing though no one seems able to quantify this.

Between the local effort and the fact that many soon-to-be deploying soldiers opted not to bring their family members to the North Country at this time, we have managed to house our increased population. But we're still expecting 1900 more soldiers by the end of March 2006. And those deployments will end in 12 to 18 months.

There is still much work to be done!
Carl A. McLaughlin

FDMCH—Progress Report

Fort Drum Mountain Community Homes (FDMCH) has nearly completed the site work on the first master planned community Crescent Woods. Roads, curbing and gutter installations are underway and 60 pads are ready for foundations. 113 renovations have been completed on the existing homes and air conditioning units have been installed in over 200 homes.

Development, construction and day to day operations means over \$7.8 Million or 88% of

executed contracts has been exercised with local businesses and about \$7.7 Million of that went to small and disadvantaged businesses.

In addition to the 112 new jobs FDMCH created, over 120 new jobs for sub contractors have been created. Some of the largest contracts have gone to Tug Hill Construction, DealMaker Seaway Chevrolet, Ferguson Enterprises, Omega QSE, Inc. and ConTech Building Systems Incorporated.

Economic Development Task Force Update

As you read this, a military family member is probably registering with the Employment Readiness Program at Clark Hall, and a retiring soldier may be transitioning to employment in the private sector with the assistance of the Army Career and Alumni Program. What is also happening as a result of these activities is that these individuals are becoming enrolled (at their option) in the One-Stop Operating System administered by the State Department of Labor. This means that the skills, abilities and availability of these job seekers can easily be considered by area employers seeking people to fill job openings. Through the efforts of the Workforce Subcommittee of the Economic Development Task Force, an electronic bridge between Fort Drum family members and retirees and local employers is being constructed. The key to this connection is the One Stop System. It will also allow the subcommittee the means to analyze in aggregate the collec-

tive talents and abilities of this population and tout the fact that this unique talent pool is available here in the North Country.

The Contracting Subcommittee is in the process of developing a survey of the local business community concerning their experiences with contracting at Fort Drum. The Fort Drum Directorate of Contracting reports that approximately 50% of the dollar value of contracts at the post is awarded to businesses in the 3 county area. While this statistic is an excellent indication of success, it does provide room for improvement. With the results of the survey in hand the subcommittee can develop a proactive program of education and outreach in concert with partners such as the Small Business Development Center and the Greater Watertown North Country Chamber of Commerce that will help an even greater number of local firms do business with Fort Drum.

Lastly, ideas are just beginning to form concerning a Fort Drum Economic Gap Analysis. It is not difficult to understand that of all of the goods and services purchased by Fort Drum sources, only a portion are provided by local companies. The gap between what Fort Drum demands in the way of goods and services and what is provided locally represents an economic opportunity with two dimensions. First, perhaps a local firm could develop the capacity to fill that gap, and even put a few more people to work in the process. Second, perhaps the gap will provide the impetus for attracting a new employer to the area. Identifying these opportunities will be the focus of the Gap Analysis. At present a Request for Proposals document is being assembled with the help of area economic development professionals.

Contact Douglas Schelleng at 315-785-7932 for more on EDTF activities.



“an electronic bridge between Fort Drum family members and retirees and local employers is being constructed”

Go, Santa, Go - Get Packages Sent on Time Show Your Support for Our Troops

A brief visit to the United States Postal Service web site proved very interesting.

Under the Support Our Troops link, we found military address tips, recommended mail dates for military mail to specific APO/FPO addresses, packaging hints and details on mailing restrictions for specific international destinations.

Click on Other Ways to Support Our Troops for additional links to Operation Dear Abby, the Any Service Member email program. Post an Online Thank You note.

Learn how you can support troops by a blood donation. Or stop by the Department of Defense site: America Supports You for even more ideas on how you can show support for our men and women in the military and their families.



<http://www.usps.com/supportingourtroops/>

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Strategic Action Plan Update Adopted by BOD

In October 2001, FDRLO board members and key Fort Drum team members participated in the first strategic action-planning workshop that produced the initial FDRLO Strategic Plan. Over the past several months, a series of steps produced an update of that plan. On September 23rd, the Board of Directors officially approved and adopted this update, formally setting the direction for FDRLO for the immediate future.

While there were no changes made to the mission or vision statements, the strategic direction has been expanded to include Oswego, Oneida and Onondaga Counties in addition to the original tri-county region of Jefferson, Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties.

If you don't know
where you are going,
any road will take you there.



The update process validated our five goals. Each goal has established measurable objectives to allow us to examine our progress towards our goals. A series of key actions linked to the goals and related objectives define what must be done, by whom and at what expected cost. Copies of the complete document are available at the office.

The updated Strategic Action Plan, when implemented, will transform our organization. Achieving the desired end state, our vision, will take time, resources and management.

"The challenges and opportunities that face our community as we continue to move into the 21st century demand the innovative and forward thinking embodied in this plan. I congratulate those who developed and updated it and ask each of you for your commitment to its successful implementation. "

Dr. John Deans

We're on the Web!
www.fdrlo.org