



FORT DRUM REGIONAL LIAISON ORGANIZATION

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FDRLO to Promote Growth Management Tools

New York is a “home rule” state. Individual cities, towns and villages make the day-to-day decisions that affect growth and development in the region. Within the Tri-County Fort Drum impact area, there are nearly 30 municipalities with over 300 elected and appointed officials on town and village boards, planning boards and zoning boards. If effective planning and growth management is to take place, this is the level at which it appropriately must happen.

Some communities adjacent to Fort Drum and along major transportation routes to the base are experiencing significant growth. Left unmanaged, certain incompatible land use activities could encroach upon the military operations and expose people and communities to irritating noise and accident potential. Similarly, if left unchecked, such growth could have a profound and lasting effect on community character and quality of life for residents of the region. Conversely, if well planned and managed, this growth could have a tremendously positive benefit for communities and the long term economic viability of one of the most economically challenged regions of Northern New York.

To provide the information and training to enhance local decision-making capacity, FDRLO obtained a \$240,000 grant from the Department of Defense Office of Economic Adjustment’s Community Growth Management Program. This program provides funding and technical support to assist communities significantly affected by military mission growth.

***Well - received and attended
Workshop series continues***

The training element of this project, supporting a series of planning and zoning workshops at Jefferson Community College in Watertown, began this past spring and will continue through June 2008. JCC’s Center for Community Studies is organizing the sessions with input from local planning agencies. The training sessions address such topics as site plan review, zoning enforcement, reviewing maps and project plans, and the State Environmental Quality Review Act. To-date, workshop attendance has ranged from 80 to over 100 per session.

Behan Planning Associates

While skill training is important, communities can benefit from growth information, and a “toolbox” of recommended strategies. To that end, FDRLO is using the balance of the funds to contract with Behan Planning Associates (in partnership with EDAW, Inc.) to develop a Fort Drum Area Growth Management Strategy. The overall purpose of the project is to better coordinate on-base and off-base growth and development in order to minimize land use conflicts (see ACUB article below) while ensuring that our communities become even more desirable places in which to live and do business.

Most news about recent changes and the build-up at Fort Drum has occurred incrementally and is generally treated as individual events. However, in order to plan for a more proactive long-term community response, local officials need a more comprehensive understanding of the magnitude and breadth of Fort Drum’s continuing evolution.

Therefore, Behan Planning’s first task is to package the “Fort Drum Story” in a way that portrays the significance, size, and scope of the base’s transformation (population trends, housing impacts, military training operations, encroachment concerns); projects off-base commercial and residential development patterns spurred by Fort Drum-related growth; estimates the impact on existing infrastructure (sewer, water, highways) and the need for new investments; and suggests growth scenarios that could be triggered by future operational changes that would further expand community impacts and opportunities.

Secondly, the consultants will share the “Fort Drum Story” with the local communities in the three county area and engage residents in discussing alternative development scenarios that illustrate the range of possible growth results. The intent of this phase is to build awareness on how local planning and zoning actions can impact the quality and types of future community development.

Ultimately, the consultants will produce a strategic action plan to assist with management of Fort Drum related growth. The final document will:

- Identify overall goals and alternatives for controlling encroachment and encouraging managed growth that ensures a high quality of life for local communities and military families.
- Identify high priority geographic areas that likely offer future, long-term development potential and require focused attention and specific actions.
- Incorporate agricultural land and open space conservation measures as well as the Army Compatible Use Buffer (ACUB) program
- Identify and design tools and strategies to implement actions. Examples include:
 - * Community initiatives to enhance quality of life;
 - * In concert with Fort Drum and GIS coordinators, produce maps for public distribution showing areas of activity and off-base impacts;
 - * Identify steps Fort Drum can take to limit encroachment conflicts;
 - * Define future Fort Drum staff participation in local community planning efforts;
 - * Suggest needed municipal land use controls/amendments to improve future compatibility;
 - * Engage local realtors and lending institutions in developing awareness of sensitive development areas and evaluate property disclosure policies;

- * Site specific recommendations for minimizing sprawl and traffic congestion;
- * Develop design guidelines and materials to enhance community development.

These recommendations can help to streamline local planning efforts; provide communities with a “road map” for local action; and identify common issues that might benefit through inter-municipal cooperation and coordination. At the same time, the project will help to ensure a regional response that contributes to the long-term viability of Fort Drum as a good neighbor and as the North Country’s most significant economic engine.

The newly appointed Fort Drum Growth Management Task Force will oversee the project, co-chaired by David Zembiec of the NYS Tug Hill Commission and Don Canfield from the Jefferson County Planning Department.

FDRLO Fort Drum Growth Management Project

SYNOPSIS

Purpose: To provide local officials with information, training, and an action plan that they and other stakeholders can follow to ensure balanced and sustainable growth that serves the complementary needs of Fort Drum and its surrounding communities.

Growth Management Training Series

(Feb. 2007 – May 2008)

- A series of 11 planning and zoning workshops hosted by Jefferson Community College and the Center for Community Studies
- Seven sessions held through Nov. 2007 (Total attendance: 584).

Growth Management Strategy

(Nov. 2007 – Oct. 2008)

- *Task 1: The Fort Drum Story.* Comprehensive summary of current and projected base activities and potential impact on land use and community development. Target completion Feb. 2008.
- *Task 2: Reality Check.* Identification of alternative development scenarios and decision points for local officials. Target completion May 2008.
- *Task 3: Public Engagement.* Meetings and workshops involving local officials and the general public in identifying community vision and preferred development scenarios. Target completion July/August 2008.
- *Task 4: Strategic Action Plan.* Provide a set of clear, realistic, and prioritized action steps to achieve desired future. Target completion October 2008.

Community Benefits

- Maintain open space and the region's essential rural character (quality of life)
- Channel growth and development toward the revitalization of our community centers.
- Enhance economic opportunity for local residents.
- Builds local capacity to manage growth and anticipate infrastructure needs.

Benefits to Fort Drum

- Prevents encroachment on base activities and minimizes the potential for conflicts between the base and its surrounding civilian communities.
- Creating viable communities with a high quality of life makes the region a more desirable place to live for the troops and their families.

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