

Executive Summary

The communities of the Pikes Peak Region have seen significant military-related population increases in recent years, as Fort Carson's troop numbers have nearly doubled between 2006 and 2011. Additional growth is anticipated with the Army's decision to station a new combat aviation brigade (CAB) at Fort Carson, beginning in FY 2013. The Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan is a comprehensive regional planning effort designed to help the Pikes Peak region prepare for ongoing military growth and deployments at Fort Carson.

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) initiated the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan (Growth Plan) in late 2006 and has completed two phases to identify and quantify the impacts of growth and deployments on the four-county region surrounding Fort Carson – El Paso, Teller, Fremont and Pueblo. The purpose of the current phase of the planning process is to maintain regional communication and coordination between Fort Carson and the community, conduct ongoing data-gathering and analysis in order to monitor trends in the region, update Soldier and family demographics and needs for off-post services, and work with Fort Carson and entities in the region to implement the actions recommended in the Growth Plan.

Through coordination of the Growth Plan steering committee, the Colorado Defense Mission Coalition (CDMC), and partnership groups, as well as participation in other efforts addressing military issues in the region, PPACG continues to work with a broad range of stakeholders to monitor and assess ongoing opportunities and challenges related to Fort Carson growth. The following sections provide an overview of the issue areas originally addressed in the Growth Plan and updates regarding the implementation status of key recommendations of the Growth Plan.

Fort Carson Demographic Model & Analysis

The Fort Carson Demographic Model (FCDM), developed in Phase II of the Growth Plan, provides projections of the Fort Carson-related populations through FY 2014 and includes preliminary information on the stationing of the CAB, which will bring an additional 2,700 Soldiers and nearly 4,000 family members to the region. By FY 2014, Fort Carson will have nearly 30,000 Soldiers assigned to the post with approximately 15,000 spouses and more than 21,000 children present in the region. However, as deployments continue, the number of Soldiers and family members present in the region continues to fluctuate. The number of family members is expected to increase once deployments end and all Soldiers return to Fort Carson. Ongoing growth and deployments will continue to impact off-post services for the foreseeable future.

PPACG has also conducted a geographic analysis of where Soldier and family members reside. This analysis indicates that the majority of Soldiers and family members living in relatively close proximity to the installation, primarily in El Paso County and northern Pueblo County. Maps provided in Section 2 (Fort Carson Demographic Model &

Analysis) provide the geographic boundaries of the Growth Plan Micro and Macro Regions, indicating the primary impact areas of Fort Carson in the four-county region. PPACG continues to conduct geographic information system (GIS) analysis to provide more detailed mapping regarding Soldier and family locations by zip code to better assess needs for housing, schools, child care, transportation, and other services. Additional maps are provided in Appendix A.

PPACG also conducted a survey of Fort Carson Soldiers and families to help inform the Growth Plan demographic analysis and identify ongoing and changing Soldier and family housing preferences and need for off-post services. Additional information on the surveys is available in Section 2 of this report and in Appendix D.

Economic & Housing Impacts

As identified in the Phase II Growth Plan report, Fort Carson has a significant impact on the regional economy and housing market. Fort Carson's direct economic impact in the region is approximately \$2.1 billion for FY 2010, based on payroll, military construction, TRICARE payments, General Purchase Card, tuition, and other spending. This economic stimulus has been important for the Pikes Peak region which is continuing a slow recovery from the recession.

The regional housing market has also been severely affected by national and local economic issues and housing conditions. PPACG's analysis of the housing impacts of Fort Carson indicates an ongoing correlation between deployments and multi-family vacancy rates. The region's housing and rental sectors were able to absorb recent Fort Carson growth, including the move of the 4th Infantry Division Headquarters and 1st Brigade Combat Team from Fort Hood in 2009. However, recent decreases in apartment vacancy rates and lack of financing for home building and multi-family construction may pose upcoming challenges to the region in meeting the off-post housing needs of Fort Carson Soldiers and families once all Soldiers return from deployments. PPACG will continue to work with Fort Carson and the regional housing industry to monitor financing issues and the need for multi-family construction to address these challenges.

Education & Child Development

Local school districts saw large increases in Fort Carson student enrollments between 2008 and 2010, including significant increases in the numbers of students with special needs. In the 2010-2011 school year, the increase in Fort Carson students was less dramatic; however, school count and impact aid numbers reflect significant shifting of Fort Carson students between districts. Factors affecting these shifts include the opening of a new elementary school on Fort Carson and Fort Carson Soldiers with school-aged children finding more "permanent" off-post housing.

Early care and education providers have also seen increased demand from Fort Carson families and as a result have experienced ongoing capacity challenges, particularly for infant and toddler care. Fort Carson is constructing additional child care centers on-post

to help meet capacity demands, and off-post providers are working to increase capacity, primarily through family child care homes; however, the increase in facilities on-post also exacerbates challenges in finding qualified staff for off-post providers.

Additional challenges for K-12 schools and child care providers include drastically decreased state and local budgets, as well as increased demands to address behavioral health issues and children with special needs. As Fort Carson families face many stresses related to deployments and other factors, schools and child care providers continue to seek funding to meet operational needs to accommodate increased and fluctuating demand, as well as qualified staff and additional training to assist children and families. PPACG continues to work with schools and child care providers to update Soldier and family demographics, monitor school enrollments and child care demand, and provide GIS mapping analysis to help local providers identify gaps and service needs within the region.

Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services

Fort Carson growth and deployments have also led to increased demand for behavioral health and social services. Fort Carson has expanded Evans Army Community Hospital and drastically increased the number of behavioral health providers on-post, as well as implemented a school-based behavioral health program and a Child and Family Assistance Center. Off-post providers, particularly those that provide services that are not reimbursable under TRICARE, continue to struggle to meet Fort Carson-related demand for services. Again, ongoing state and local funding decreases exacerbate the fiscal challenges of community-based providers.

However, several efforts remain ongoing to address the on- and off-post needs behavioral health and social service needs of military families. For example, PPACG recently launched the Network of Care, a web-based resource to provide information and resources to military families. This website implements a primary recommendation of the Phase II Growth Plan to develop a primary point of entry for information and assistance for behavioral health and social services. The Network of Care not only assists Soldiers and family members seeking services, but also helps service providers in referring clients to other services. Community-based providers are also working with Fort Carson, the VA, and others to develop a military system of care to better serve the off-post needs of Fort Carson Soldiers and family members. A strategic planning effort has been initiated to assist providers in developing this system of care and coordinate on- and off-post services.

Regional Sustainability

Fort Carson is recognized as a leader in sustainable practices among military installations and has recently been designated as a net-zero installation for energy, water, and waste by 2020. Based on the recommendations of the Phase II Growth Plan, PPACG is facilitating the Pikes Peak Regional Sustainability Project which will result in the development of a long-term regional sustainability plan that will coordinate local sustainability efforts and

assist Fort Carson in meeting its long-term sustainability and net-zero goals. To-date, the regional sustainability project has identified 20-year stretch goals for energy; water; materials management and procurement; built and natural environment; transportation; economic development; health; education; and arts and culture for Teller and El Paso counties. Currently, regional stakeholders are conducting research to develop baseline data, indicators, benchmarks, and strategies to measure progress toward achieving the goals. Next steps will include the development of an implementation plan. The development of the plan will assist Fort Carson and the surrounding communities in meeting identified sustainability goals and enhancing the quality of life for Fort Carson Soldiers and families and the region as a whole.

Transportation, Infrastructure & Compatibility

The transportation section highlights several recently-completed and ongoing roadway infrastructure improvements to mitigate traffic congestion related to Fort Carson growth. PPACG's transportation update includes peak and off-peak travel time analysis, as well as an overview of ongoing transportation planning efforts and studies to address regional transportation needs, including PPACG's 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan Update, the South Academy Boulevard Great Streets Initiative, and the Future of Regional Transit (FoRT) study.

Fort Carson anticipates increased gate queuing and on-post traffic challenges, particularly under a no-deployments scenario when all Soldiers are present in the region. Further, current regional transit network cutbacks limit the post's ability to minimize traffic impacts on-post. Fort Carson is working to add access control points at Gates 6 and 19 to help mitigate on- and off-post traffic issues. PPACG is continuing to work with Fort Carson, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT), local governments and other stakeholders to address ongoing transportation challenges, including those issues that may arise related to longer commutes because of the limited availability of affordable housing (particularly multi-family) near the installation.

Implementation Status of Growth Plan Recommendations

This interim implementation report also includes a summary table of the recommendations and actions developed through all phases of the Growth Plan. This table provides a snapshot of the Growth Plan recommendations by issue area in order to provide an updated status of the actions identified throughout the growth planning process. PPACG continues to work with Fort Carson and regional stakeholders to implement key actions and update and re-prioritize recommendations as regional conditions change. The summary table listing the implementation status of the Growth Plan recommendations is provided in Appendix I.