

## **Section 1:**

### **Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan Overview**

#### ***Background***

Because of Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and other Department of Defense (DoD) initiatives, 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 rapid population increase and ongoing fluctuations (because of deployments) in numbers of troops, their families and other personnel present unique opportunities and challenges for the region.

The Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan (Growth Plan) is a comprehensive regional planning effort designed to help the Pikes Peak region, which for purposes of this study include El Paso, Teller, Fremont and Pueblo counties, prepare for rapid military growth and deployments at Fort Carson. The Growth Plan addresses the impacts that this growth will have on surrounding communities. The plan seeks to anticipate the effects of military growth and deployments, manage resources, and coordinate regional services efficiently and effectively.

#### **Phase I**

Phase I of the Growth Plan was completed in June 2008. The initial phase provided a high-level analysis at the issues facing the Pikes Peak region in anticipation of military population increases. It also included recommendations for further research and action steps to meet Fort Carson growth-related needs. This report is available on PPACG's website:

<http://www.ppacg.org/military-impact/fort-carson-regional-growth-plan-intro/project-materials/growth-plan-documents>.

#### **Phase II**

The Phase II Growth Plan analysis was completed in July 2010. This phase analyzed in greater detail the growth at Fort Carson and quantified the effects on communities in El Paso, Fremont, Pueblo and Teller Counties. Phase II also included the development of a demographic model (the Fort Carson Demographic Model or FCDM) to provide more detailed projections regarding Soldier and family demographics and preferences, taking into account factors such as deployments and variations in ages of children based on rank and other factors. The Phase II report is available on PPACG's website: <http://www.ppacg.org/military-impact/fort-carson-regional-growth-plan-intro/project-materials/growth-plan-documents>.

### ***Phase III***

The Phase III Growth Plan is focused on monitoring and updating assessments of key impact areas, maintaining and enhancing communication and coordination between Fort Carson and the region, and implementing the recommendations of the Growth Plan.

### **Updated Assessments of Impact Areas**

PPACG continues to work with Fort Carson, local, regional, state and federal officials, as well as local businesses and community-based organizations to gather data in order to assess changing conditions across key issue areas. This analysis includes obtaining data from federal (including Fort Carson), state and local sources, as well as surveys of Fort Carson Soldiers and family members and input from community-based providers who participate in the Growth Plan partnership groups. Key issue areas addressed in Phase III include the following:

- Childcare/Early Care and Education
- Economic Development and Workforce
- K-12 Education
- Housing
- Medical, Behavioral Health & Social Services
- Regional Sustainability
- Transportation, Land Use & Compatibility

These updated assessments are addressed in the report sections that follow this overview.

### ***Data Analysis & GIS Mapping***

A critical component of the ongoing analysis and assessments includes mapping of key data to help keep Fort Carson and the public better informed about ongoing trends and impacts, and to assist in local planning efforts as conditions change. With the assistance of partnership groups and other stakeholders, PPACG continues to collect regional data, including: economic information; housing data; roadway and transit information; Soldier and family demographics (from survey data, non-personally identifiable Defense Eligibility Enrollment Reporting System (DEERS) data, and other sources); child care data; and other information to develop maps and other document to assist local governments and service providers in adjusting to changing conditions and planning for additional Fort Carson Soldiers and families. The results of these analyses and map products will be discussed in later sections of this report. A list of map products is also available in Appendix A.

### **Regional Communication and Coordination**

PPACG works with Fort Carson and off-post entities to maintain and enhance regional communication between Fort Carson and the surrounding communities, as well as between local governments, businesses, and nonprofit organizations that serve the military community. This regional communication and coordination includes a multi-tiered approach to include Fort Carson and key stakeholders, as well as the public, in understanding the impacts of Fort Carson

Growth and deployments and developing and implementing strategies to accommodate these changes.

### *Colorado Defense Mission Coalition (CDMC) and Partnership Groups*

The main avenues for key stakeholder communication and coordination remain the Growth Plan steering committee – the Colorado Defense Mission Coalition (CDMC) – and partnership groups. Growth Plan partnership groups consist of Fort Carson representatives; federal, state, and local officials; community-based providers, and other subject matter experts. The groups address key impact areas to assist PPACG in obtaining information and input regarding changing trends and conditions and impacts to key providers and/or sectors as Fort Carson continues to grow and deployments continue to affect Soldiers, family members, and the regional as a whole. The CDMC provides a forum for partnership group representatives, military installations, and community and business leaders to discuss cross-cutting and overlapping trends and challenges, as well as identify collaborative strategies to mitigate negative impacts and pursue opportunities associated with Fort Carson growth. The Growth Plan Executive Committee continues to provide overall policy oversight for the Growth Plan effort.

### *Public Outreach*

PPACG keeps the larger region informed regarding changes at Fort Carson and community impacts through PPACG's website (<http://www.ppacg.org/military-impact/fort-carson-regional-growth-plan-intro>) and publication of a quarterly e-newsletter. Copies of these newsletters are located in Appendix B.

PPACG has also worked with Fort Carson to inform the public and engage the community regarding Fort Carson growth and deployments through periodic public forums and town hall events. These events enable members of the public to ask questions to and hear from Fort Carson officials regarding on-post activities and services.

### *Community Provider Trainings*

As identified in the Phase II report, many community-based providers serve Fort Carson Soldiers and family members but do not have detailed knowledge or background of military culture and the stresses and challenges faced by Fort Carson families, particularly in relation to deployments. PPACG works with Fort Carson representatives to conduct quarterly trainings for service providers, including behavioral health officials, social services and child care providers, educators, and others to provide a better understanding of the dynamics of deployment cycles, resiliency, and services available on-post, including therapy treatments for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury.

As part of PPACG's efforts to maintain and enhance regional communication and coordination, PPACG staff members also participate in a myriad of meetings throughout the region in order to learn about other related efforts and inform stakeholders serving Fort Carson Soldiers and family members in the community regarding Growth Plan activities. A list of all CDMC and partnership group meetings, community provider trainings, public forums, and other regional efforts is provided in Appendix C.

## **Implementation**

PPACG continues to work with Fort Carson and other federal, state, and local entities to implement the recommendations of the Growth Plan. The Growth Plan's priority actions are summarized in a table of recommendations to provide a snapshot of key findings and recommendations, lead implementation and partner agencies, costs (where possible), and implementation status of the key recommendations. As the Growth Plan effort has progressed, some of the recommended actions have been completed; some actions are in progress or are part of ongoing efforts; others have been determined not to be high priorities as conditions have changed; and other recommended actions currently lack funding or other resources to progress at this point in time. This summary table of recommendations is provided in Appendix I.

## **Ongoing Actions and Implementation**

The status of Fort Carson growth continues to remain fluid, as large units continue to deploy to war zones and additional units are assigned to the installation. Because the addition of a newly created combat aviation brigade will bring an estimated 2,700 new troops to the region, additional data analysis and coordination with Fort Carson and off-post organizations remains critical. PPACG will continue to provide detailed Soldier and family demographics and other information to assist the housing industry, schools, child care providers, social services and behavioral health agencies, and others in meeting the increased demand for services. The actions and recommendations identified in Phase II should, therefore, remain ongoing. Specifically, there is a need for the following:

1. Continued data gathering and analysis related to Soldier and family demographics to assist the region in planning for housing, school, child care, and other services.
2. Continued regional communication and coordination to help Fort Carson and the region meet Soldier and family needs for housing, schools, child care, medical, behavioral health, and social services, transportation, and other needs.
3. Continued efforts to “hand off” coordination to other existing (or newly created) entities, as appropriate