

# Part 1

## Introduction to the Regional Growth Plan



Communities in El Paso, Fremont, and Pueblo counties have had a long relationship with the military. The area is home to five separate installations, as well as a thriving defense industry and a robust military retiree population. Recently, several Department of Defense (DoD) initiatives have accelerated the pace of growth in the region. Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), Army Modular Force (AMF), the Global War on Terrorism (GWOT), and Global Defense Posture Realignment (GDPR) are rapidly transforming the military missions of installations around the country, increasing the end strength of the U.S. Army and building more nimble units of action in the form of brigades. As a result of these activities, communities in the region will see additional military-related increases in an already historic growth area.

As described in the next section, the implementation of the 2005 federal Base Realignment and Closure Act and other DoD initiatives dictates that the population of the largest military installation in the region, Fort Carson, will nearly double by the year 2011. The

rapid increase in troops, combined with their family members and other personnel, presents unique opportunities and challenges for Fort Carson and the surrounding communities.

Troop increases at Fort Carson represent an extraordinary economic opportunity for the surrounding area. At the same time, accelerated rates of development and socioeconomic change pose daunting challenges for any community. In 2005, the Colorado Defense Mission Coalition (CDMC) recognized a community-wide need to prepare the region for rapid military growth and approached the Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) to develop a proposal for the Office of Economic Adjustment at the Department of Defense that would support a multi-discipline regional planning effort. In August 2006 the Department of Defense awarded a \$518,000 grant to PPACG to launch the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan (the Plan), an 18-month initiative addressing housing, education, transportation, health and social services, the economy and other growth impact areas. The project focuses on the three counties that host Fort Carson's primary operations: El Paso County, Fremont County, and Pueblo County (see Figure 1.1).

The demographic and troop forecast information in this Plan was developed in September 2007 based on FY 2006 data and serves as the basis for assumptions, projections, and recommendations throughout the study. While the forecasted impacts were based on the best available information at the time, they are subject to change as the growth at Fort Carson and its surrounding communities unfolds in real time. Regular updates to the forecasted impacts will be needed as part of the ongoing monitoring and implementation of the Plan. In December 2007, the Army announced the Grow the Army initiative, which will bring an additional brigade to Fort Carson by FY 2013. The increase of approximately 4,900 troops and 8,000 to 9,000 dependents in the region was not included in the calculations for this

document. The general issues of rapid growth related to Fort Carson will remain, such as the need for major transportation improvements, coordination and communication of troop arrivals to assist the housing community in planning for growth, additional health care, behavioral health and social services, and other capacity and service enhancements. However, key capacity projections, particularly for school districts, child care providers, and other services may be underestimated in this plan. Therefore, PPACG will continue to work with Fort Carson, school districts, service providers, and other stakeholders to update data in order to provide more up-to-date projections of capacity, supply, and demand to meet the needs of Fort Carson soldiers, their families, and the communities. These updates will be provided through the web-based version of this Plan as the data become available. Updates can be obtained via PPACG's Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan Web site (<http://www.ppacg.org/military> impact).

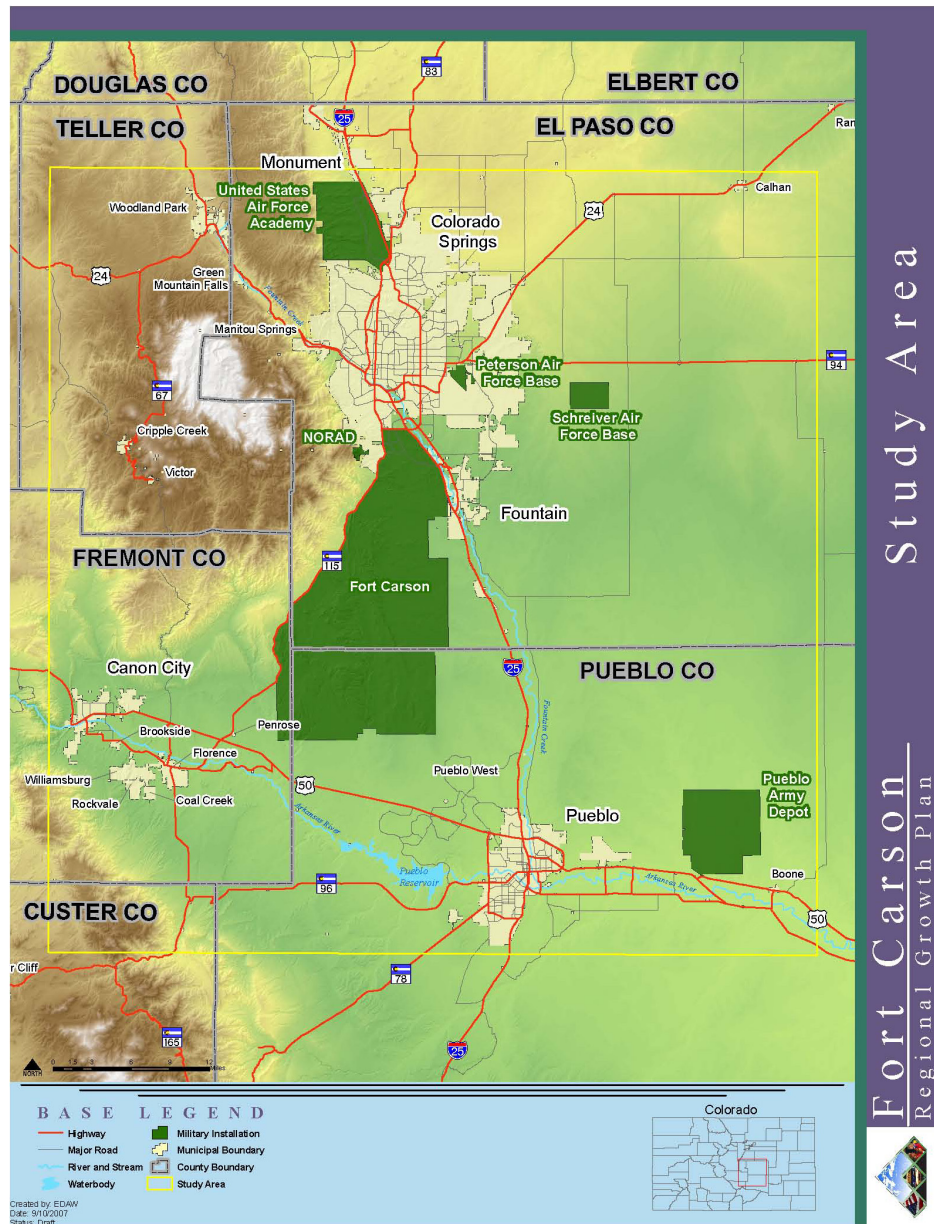
**TROOP FORECAST**

New troops, civilians, and dependents have already begun arriving at Fort Carson. An estimated 12,600 military personnel were authorized for Fort Carson at the end of FY 2006, with an estimated 23,000 dependents living within the region. Thus, the population of the Fort Carson community at the beginning of FY 2007 was approximately 36,000 persons.

To initiate the planning effort, an estimate for the projected increase in military personnel was established, referred to as the "Expected Growth Scenario". The "Expected Growth Scenario" assumed 11,400 additional troops will be assigned to Fort Carson. The "Expected Growth Scenario"

was based on information provided by officials at Fort Carson and functions in this document as the projected total number of troops that will be authorized for the installation through FY 2011. Thus, total population growth associated with the troop increase at Fort Carson was expected to be roughly 33,800, consisting of approximately 11,400 newly authorized troops, 21,300 military dependents, 430 civilians, and 690 civilian dependents.

Population growth associated with the forecast troop increases (including military



**Figure 1.1 - Regional Growth Plan Study Area**

personnel, civilians, and all dependents) will add approximately 33,800 new persons to the study area population. The Fort Carson-related population will make up over 8 percent of the total study area population by 2011.

These new residents will impact all aspects of the regional community, including the housing market, local school systems, state and local municipal services, and quality of life.

## PURPOSE OF THE FORT CARSON REGIONAL GROWTH PLAN

The purpose of the Plan is to develop a coordinated regional approach to address the impacts of rapid growth at Fort Carson in order to ensure efficient and effective use of community resources to meet the growth needs of the installation. Fort Carson growth impacts will present both opportunities and challenges. While Fort Carson reviewed environmental impacts related to installation growth in the Fort Carson Transformation Environmental Impact Statement (June 2007), this Plan is intended to be used as a tool by local communities and service providers to coordinate the actions necessary to absorb significant population and economic growth over the next five years. The Plan assesses current conditions, determines future needs of an increased population, identifies short term and long term priorities, and establishes a clear set of action steps for all regional stakeholders. The specific objectives of this Plan are to:

- Make growth work for the region
- Develop an overarching approach to coordinate efforts
- Forecast the effects of growth for twelve resource (or impact) areas
- Capitalize on regional diversity and choice
- Integrate local and regional problem-solving
- Provide coordinated action plans

## Planning Process and Stakeholder Involvement

Preparation for the magnitude of growth related to Fort Carson will continue to be an ongoing process, requiring highly coordinated actions



across a wide range of public, private, and non-profit sectors. It has been critical to bring together representatives from a wide variety of disciplines and backgrounds. Stakeholders, such as agency heads, business leaders, nonprofit groups and elected officials have come together with the community to talk about the steps needed to effectively prepare for the growth that will result from the large and rapid increases in population. Stakeholders are those companies, agencies, organizations, institutions, and individuals who represent the greater tri-county region and who will be greatly influenced by troop increases at Fort Carson.

In order to ensure effective communication across the entire region, a Policy Oversight Committee (POC) comprised of elected officials from El Paso, Pueblo and Fremont counties was formed to oversee and promote the Plan. In addition to the POC, the planning team, consisting of PPACG staff and consultants, also worked closely with the CDMC, which served as the project's Steering Committee. The CDMC is comprised of senior administrative officials, including agency heads, business leaders, non-profit stakeholders and representatives of Fort Carson. Partnership groups (discussed below) served as technical subcommittees for the CDMC, providing valuable information throughout the process.

In addition to regular meetings of the three primary working groups, the region's stakeholders were informed and participated through stakeholder interviews, Town Hall meetings, partnership groups, Web sites, press releases and newsletters, as described in the next section. Members of the planning team met regularly through joint and individual meetings with local officials and service providers to assess needs and determine plan priorities. The team also held a

series of work sessions with representatives from each of the resource areas. Findings from various meetings and work sessions with stakeholders from around the region form the foundation of the analyses and recommendations in this report.

### **Stakeholder Interviews**

Stakeholder interviews provided initial feedback on each of the twelve resource areas. The stakeholder involvement process for the Plan began with the publication of the February 2007 newsletter that was distributed by project staff. The newsletter requested that anyone interested in one-on-one interviews should contact PPACG. A list of stakeholders was also requested from members of the CDMC and PPACG at several meetings. As a result, over 100 stakeholders were contacted to solicit one-on-one, focus group, phone, or email feedback by PPACG staff and the consultant team of EDAAW.

Interviewing the stakeholders helped to identify emerging issues, build a cohesive network of supporting relationships, and pool ideas and solutions.

Interviewees from the Colorado Springs, Pueblo, and Cañon City area included:

- PPACG staff
- Fort Carson
- Local school districts
- Colleges and universities, such as University of Colorado at Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak Community College
- Hospitals and medical providers, such as Evans Army Community Hospital and Memorial Hospital
- Local chambers of commerce
- County and municipal staff from the cities of Fountain, Colorado Springs, Pueblo, Cañon City, and El Paso, Pueblo and Fremont Counties.
- Developers and homebuilders, such as Oakwood Homes, KB Homes, Pulte Homes, Beazer Homes, and New Generation Homes
- Real estate agents and banks, such as Pikes Peak Association of Realtors, First Property Management, and CBT Mortgage

- Colorado Housing and Finance Authority
- Housing Authority of the City of Colorado Springs
- Non-profit groups, such as TESSA, CASA, and Pikes Peak United Way

The genuine perceptions, concerns, and ideas from stakeholders were then summarized in a Stakeholder Interview Report in June of 2007. Key issues for each resource area were as follows:

#### **Housing and Economic Impact:**

- Requests for Demographic Data
- General Health of the Building Community
- Direction of Growth
- On-Post Housing Supply
- High Multi-Family Vacancy Rates
- Housing Quality
- Housing Affordability

#### **Education:**

- District Capacity
- Labor Resources
- Timing of Student Arrivals
- Distribution of New Students
- Wait-and-See Philosophy
- Funding Quality Programs
- Traffic Congestion

#### **Health and Behavioral Health Care:**

- Labor Resources
- Service Capacity
- Communication
- Behavioral Health Care
- Payment

#### **Child Care and Development:**

- Capacity
- Adequate staffing
- Serving children with special needs

**Social Services:**

- Service capacity
- Coordination of services and information-sharing
- Labor resources
- Adequate funding

**Transportation**

- Capacity and safety improvements on state highways and access roads
- Non-motorized transportation needs
- Transit services
- Travel demand management
- Coordination between on- and off-post services

**Public Safety and Emergency Services**

- Adequate funding and resources, including staffing needs
- Coordination and communication between the installation and local agencies
- Military-specific law enforcement issues

**Public Utilities and Infrastructure**

- Information-sharing and coordination with Fort Carson
- Implementation of sustainability initiatives to reduce utility usage

**Planning and Zoning**

- Redevelopment planning and affordable housing
- Cooperative planning for transportation corridors
- Planning for new higher quality multi-family housing
- Including Fort Carson in comprehensive and sub-area plans
- Information-sharing and coordination

**Compatibility and Installation Operations**

- Continued partnerships to implement Fort Carson buffer zone

- Noise impacts outside the post's boundaries
- Light pollution that impacts training operations
- Future impacts (such as frequency and air space)

**Town Hall Meetings**

The planning team conducted a series of Town Hall meetings to gather feedback from the communities and to refine recommendations. Four Town Hall meetings were held, starting with Colorado Springs in November 2006, and followed by Pueblo in April 2007; Cañon City in July 2007; and again in Colorado Springs in January 2008. The meetings provided a forum to educate the business community, stakeholders, and the general public regarding Fort Carson growth and the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan. Each of the meetings was a success, with hundreds of people attending and sharing their views, providing input, and gathering information on the Plan. Web sites, press releases, and newsletters have also assisted in the public involvement process.

**Partnership Groups**

Partnership groups were created for each resource area of the Plan. These groups served as technical subcommittees for the CDMC. Partnership group meetings with key stakeholders and subject matter experts were held to obtain input in the development of the technical reports that are the foundation of this Plan. Partnership group members provided critical input and review that led to the development of key findings and actions to implement recommendations addressing Fort Carson's growth impacts.

**Public Communication**

Public awareness, outreach and input are an integral component of this Plan. The planning team went to great lengths to ensure that public input and opinions were gathered and reflected. Stakeholders were considered vital partners in this planning effort, and an open invitation was extended to individuals and groups to participate in the process. Throughout the planning process, four project newsletters were mailed out in the three-county study region and posted on the PPACG Web site to inform residents of the purpose of the Plan, the process, critical elements, progress, and important dates. A dedicated Web page housed on the PPACG Web site was

created to provide timely, up-to-date information to the public. And as described above, four Town Hall meetings were held throughout the process to gather input on the Plan and for planning team members to answer questions. The Draft Plan was also made available for a 30-day public comment period to allow members of the public to read and comment on the Plan. Information was made available through local newspaper and television media, as well as through PPACG's Web site. Through various public meetings, copies of the Plan were also made available to local elected officials, Fort Carson officials, community and business leaders, members of the Policy Oversight Committee, CDMC, PPACG Board, Partnership Groups and other stakeholders. Public comments were submitted electronically via PPACG's Web site or e-mail, as well as at scheduled public meetings, including meetings of the CDMC, PPACG's Community Advisory Committee, and the PPACG Board of Directors.

### **How Public Comment Was Incorporated**

Drafts of the technical reports for each subject area were provided to members of the POC, CDMC, partnership groups, and the public at CDMC, partnership group, and Town Hall meetings, as well as via PPACG's Web site. Comments obtained verbally and electronically, as well as from comment sheets provided at Town Hall and other meetings were collected and compiled by PPACG staff. Comments were incorporated into the draft technical reports and compiled as part of the Draft Plan. Additional comments solicited through the Plan public comment period have been incorporated in the final Plan.

### **Plan Accountability and Monitoring**

PPACG staff and the consultant, with CDMC, partnership group, and public input, have developed action/implementation tables for each resource area. These tables identify action items and steps needed to implement the Plan recommendations. These action items have been prioritized into short- and longer-term implementation timeframes. Plan recommendations and actions were also reviewed concurrently during the comment period of the Plan. PPACG staff continues to monitor key issues and recommendations and has begun implementation of key action items, including on-going communication and coordination with Fort Carson, partnership groups, the CDMC and

other community leaders and elected officials in the region.

### **How This Plan is Organized**

Findings and recommendations in the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan are divided into twelve separate sections representing major resource areas:

1. Economic Impacts
2. Housing
3. Education
4. Transportation
5. Public Utilities and Infrastructure
6. Health and Behavioral Health Care
7. Social Services
8. Child Care and Development
9. Public Safety and Emergency Services
10. Planning and Zoning
11. Compatibility and Installation Operations
12. Quality of Life

In order to display the analyses and findings in an easily readable format, this report is organized into four primary parts in two volumes:

#### **Part 1: Introduction**

The introduction discusses the background and purpose of the planning effort, illustrates the planning process, describes how to use the report, and discusses overall plan accountability and future monitoring efforts.

#### **Part 2: Demographic Projections**

This section provides detailed analysis and discussion of the anticipated growth in the region and specific demographics relevant to the Plan, installation, and surrounding region.

#### **Part 3: Summary of Findings and Implementation Actions**

This section includes an executive summary of each resource topic area providing an overview of issues and methodology, key findings, and a summary of recommendations.

#### **Volume 2: Appendices**

The appendix provides a technical report for each resource area detailing each resource area's methodology for analysis, findings, conclusions and recommendations, as well as supporting tables, graphics, and maps. Also included in the Appendix for reference are the Stakeholder Report and the project newsletters.