

**Housing Partnership Group
Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan
February 17, 2009, 11:00 a.m.**

Meeting Summary

Attendees:

- Carmen Azzopardi – Griffis/Blessing
- Emilia Carangelo – Creekstone Homes
- Kevin Donovan – Jimmy Camp Development
- Branson A. Haney – Pueblo Association of Home Builders
- Kate Hatten – Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments
- Chris Jenkins – Jenkins Homes/Fremont Homebuilders Association
- Richard Ker – Aspenview Homes
- Tony Koren – The Northstone Group
- Marla Novak – Colorado Springs Housing & Building Association
- Dean Quaranta – Fort Carson
- Laura Russmann – Apartment Association of Southern Colorado
- Frank Stampf – Partners in Housing
- Rachel Thompson – BBC
- Lisa Westerbeck – Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments

Phase 2 Update/Status

Following introductions, Kate Hatten provided a brief overview of the Phase 2 status. She provided a copy of the scope of work to be conducted by BBC Research & Consulting, which will include more detailed demographic information on soldiers and families and how those demographics will affect a variety of issue areas to be assessed, including housing. A copy of the scope of work can be obtained via PPACG's website (http://www.ppacg.org/cms/images/stories/pdf_files/bbc_scope_of_services.pdf).

Rachel Thompson provided background on BBC Research & Consulting, noting BBC's experience, such as conducting a statewide housing assessment and other local projects. She noted that the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan will be more dynamic than other projects, based on the dynamic nature of Fort Carson growth. She provided an overview of the housing tasks and deliverables, including a housing affordability calculator, which will include addressing debt load issues, a review of supply/inventory for rental and for sale housing, assessment of housing demand, and conducting a housing forum, the details of which are to be determined.

It was noted that surveying soldiers may be challenging. Dean Quaranta indicated that Fort Carson is currently working to survey soldiers who will be relocating here regarding their housing needs. He will provide the information to BBC. Additional information from Fort Carson's recent housing market analysis and survey will also be utilized by BBC.

Concerns were also raised regarding the need to provide rental housing information to incoming soldiers and the perception that information regarding single-family home purchasing is easier for soldiers to obtain. Mr. Quaranta indicated that the Fort Carson housing office has staff members with expertise in rental issues, but that Fort Carson relies more on the community to

provide information for those seeking to buy houses and utilizes volunteer realtors to provide information to soldiers interested in purchasing homes.

Apartment representatives indicated that the turnover in Fort Carson leadership remains challenging and requires continued information-sharing to ensure that Fort Carson commanders and NCO's are informed regarding programs such as the Community Housing Initiative Program (CHIP). Programs such as CHIP rely on unit commanders to help inform soldiers regarding rental housing programs, as well as enforce non-payment of rent, etc. It was suggested that there needs to be a way to institutionalize such programs to limit problems with changes in leadership.

It was noted that Phase 1 of the Growth Plan provided static information for an end-state and did not take into account the dynamic nature of Fort Carson growth, including deployments and other factors. The group emphasized that BBC's work should result in dynamic features that will be easily updatable to allow the region to adjust to changing conditions. It was also noted that the deliverables should be actionable for the community. Having reliable, quantifiable, and updatable data is key to helping providers obtain the resources needed to meet the needs of soldiers and families. The group suggested that, in addition to soldier and family demographics and the calculator, data regarding renting vs. owning preferences, as well as desires and length of time to convert from renting to owning would be helpful information to obtain. Continued information-sharing with Fort Carson will be important in order to maintain this effort.

Affordability was raised as a key issue. Frank Stampf noted that Partners in Housing and other organizations conduct workshops to educate first-time homebuyers on a range of issues. He suggested that Fort Carson should encourage soldiers to attend such workshops. The question of the definition of affordability was also raised, particularly because a soldier's Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) can affect his/her ability to qualify for subsidized housing, despite other factors that may make him/her eligible. It was noted that BAH is designed to assist soldiers in meeting their housing needs and that those who qualify for subsidized housing may be a small portion of soldiers; however, these issues should still be addressed and the Army and the community should work cooperatively and creatively to address the needs of this subset.

The group also made suggestions regarding the affordability calculator, noting that it should be a tool that could be used by other entities, such as the Apartment Association or realtors. It was suggested that the template may be updated quarterly to keep current. It was also suggested that the calculator be linked geographically to available housing within the soldiers' affordability range.

The need for information regarding incoming soldiers was also emphasized, with apartment representatives indicating that, as the 3rd BCT has begun to return from deployment, units near Fort Carson are at or near capacity. Significant increases in soldiers seeking apartments will affect future capacity and timely information is critical.

Additional factors affecting the housing industry include foreclosure issues and criminal backgrounds of some soldiers. Concerns were raised that there is a growing number of soldiers with prior criminal backgrounds which limits their ability to qualify for housing. Apartment providers want to welcome and accommodate soldiers and their families, but are sometimes

hindered by these issues. Additionally, soldiers may then be forced to rent substandard housing because of background issues. Again, there is a need to work cooperatively and creatively with the Army to address these concerns.

OEA Project Needs Assessment

Last spring, OEA asked PPACG for a list of projects that were needed but unfunded or only partially funded and in need of federal funding assistance. OEA refers to this request as a “Project Needs Assessment”. At the time, several entities involved in the Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan submitted various projects for consideration. The intent was to provide these projects to various federal agencies as they went through their budget process to make the projects priorities in the funding cycle. Of the projects submitted, OEA initially determined that 18 met their criteria (specifically related to military growth, validated cost estimates, critical to accommodate military growth, etc.). Other growth communities also submitted projects.

While the projects submitted have not yet been funded, OEA is still seeking to keep these projects high on federal funding priority lists (including and beyond any stimulus funding). OEA has asked PPACG to review the originally-accepted projects and revise them based on any funding changes, cost estimate revisions, etc. OEA is currently seeking just to update the currently-accepted list of projects and will then schedule follow-up visits to each community. There may also be an opportunity to add projects, based on changed conditions/information. The timing for adding new projects is not clear, but PPACG wants the partnership group members to be aware of that opportunity so that additional projects can be submitted to OEA when appropriate. This may be an opportunity to submit revised requests that were not originally accepted by OEA, as well as new projects that have been or are being developed, based on new information and conditions.

Those entities with projects currently on OEA’s list are being asked to review the projects and make any necessary revisions. PPACG will inform entities regarding any follow-up or meetings, as needed.

Fort Carson Town Hall Recap

One of the key issues noted at the Town Hall was the need for timely data that are not static, but dynamic. Understanding the accompaniment rate of soldiers is important, particularly for the housing industry, because whether the soldier’s family accompanies him/her will have an impact on the number of people moving to the region and the type of housing they will require. Because deployments affect whether a family stays in the region, it was suggested that programs be developed to provide additional support for spouses to help keep families in the region during deployments.

Next steps

The group decided to meet every other month on the 4th Tuesday. The next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday, April 28 3:00-4:30.

The meeting adjourned at 12:35pm.