

# Housing and Transportation Forum

## March 4, 2011

### Forum Overview

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments (PPACG) hosted a Fort Carson Regional Growth Plan - Phase III Housing and Transportation Forum on Friday, March 4, 2011. The theme of the event was "Everyone's Home: Preparing for the Day When All Fort Carson Soldiers Have Returned." Approximately twenty-five people attended the event.

A panel of housing and transportation experts addressed housing, land use, and transportation issues, both on- and off-post, associated with the eventuality of all Soldiers returning to Fort Carson. The panelists were Dean Quaranta, Chief of Housing at Fort Carson; Rick Orphan, head of the Traffic Planning and Operations Section at the Directorate of Public Works at Fort Carson; Craig Casper, Transportation Director at PPACG; and Laura Russmann, Executive Director of the Apartment Association of Southern Colorado.

PPACG Military Impact Planning (MIP) Program staff presented updated maps illustrating the regional geographies being used for the analysis of housing and transportation data related to Fort Carson growth. Maps depicting the 20-minute peak and off-peak travel times to Fort Carson were also presented, as well as updates to Soldier and family projections, based on ongoing deployments.

Highlights of the panelist presentations included the following:

- Fort Carson on-post housing data, including the number of barracks and current and planned family housing units;
- Fourth quarter 2010 apartment vacancy data for the Colorado Springs Metro area and anticipated trends for the remainder of 2011;
- Updates on Fort Carson traffic projections, including an overview of recently-completed roadway improvements near the post and discussion of current and future traffic-related challenges; and
- A discussion of the increasingly challenging dynamic of housing affordability related to increasing transportation costs.

Attendees, including real estate and home-building professionals, transportation planners, Fort Carson representatives, and others, participated in a roundtable discussion to identify short- and long-term challenges based on the housing and transportation trends they were currently observing. Challenges discussed included

- lack of available financing for single family homes and apartment buildings;
- ongoing uncertainties of deployments;
- increased transportation costs, including gas prices and longer commutes; and
- limited transit options.

The participants also worked together to brainstorm ideas on how to address these challenges. Potential solutions and partnerships discussed included

- educating Soldiers and families on the impact of transportation costs on overall housing affordability;
- developers, apartment complexes, and/or transit companies providing shuttles to work destinations on-post;
- utilizing smaller buses or vans and providing gear storage on transit; and
- continuing pursuit of transit-oriented development (TOD) and “complete neighborhoods” near Fort Carson.

Finally, participants suggested an ongoing role for PPACG to continue communication and coordination, including regular updates of demographic information and deployment cycles, increased communication with the Pikes Peak Rural Transportation Authority, and communication with elected officials.

More details on the roundtable and brainstorming discussion are provided below.

## Roundtable Discussions

Attendees had an opportunity to participate in roundtable discussions to identify short- and long-term challenges based on the housing and transportation trends they were currently observing. The participants, which were divided into two groups, also worked together to brainstorm ideas on strategies to address these challenges and to identify the roles potential partners could play in helping to maintain upward trends or reverse downward trends.

Each roundtable group member was asked to provide answers to the following questions:

- 1A. *What steps need to be taken to address the **short-term challenges** inherent in the trends identified by your group? 1B. **Long-term challenges**?*  
(Note: Challenges include maintaining upward trends or reversing downward trends)
2. *How can the **transportation professionals assist the housing professionals** in addressing these challenges?*
3. *How can the **housing professionals assist the transportation professionals** in addressing these challenges?*
4. ***What role can PPACG and other partners play** in helping to address these challenges?*  
(Examples: data collection and dissemination; outreach)

Below are the combined responses to the above questions from the two groups:

### 1A) Short-term challenges:

- Many Fort Carson buyers unable to qualify for home loans
- Banks are not lending (to home builders or apartment builders)
- There are too many uncertainties for military families (i.e., future deployments or change of station, ability to sell home, etc.)

- Lack of funding or unstable funding for public transportation/transit
- Federal Budget continuing resolution implications
- Projected increase of gas prices
  - o Threat of possible of \$5 gallon gas prices
- The demand exceeds supply for housing, especially for 3-5 bedroom affordable houses
- Increasing interest rates for homes
- No financing for apartments
- Shortage of single family homes
- Housing values remain flat
- "Fear of the market"
  - o Existing & new home sales are flat
- Area [could have] a reputation of not having enough affordable housing
  - o Could cause some re-stationing of military families to other more affordable base communities.
- Crowding in smaller homes [because of the shortage of affordable 3-5 bedroom homes]
  - o Causes increases in family stress and social challenges, especially in Fountain
- Soldiers are having trouble selling homes
- Poor apartment quality in some areas
- Lower rental vacancy rates/higher rental rates
- Soldiers migration to north-eastern part of Colorado Springs in search of better quality homes/apartments
- Soldiers are not investing wisely
  - o Many are purchasing cars and substandard apartments

### **1B) Long-term challenges**

- Overall increase of gas prices
- Gas taxes haven't kept up with rise in transportation infrastructure costs
- Transportation costs for families are cutting into their budgets
  - o Approx. 20-25% of income spent on transportation
- Long-term Inflation
- Crumbling infrastructure
- Current tax structure
- Demographic shifts (Baby boomers)
- Limited transit opportunities

### **2.) Transportation professionals assisting housing professionals**

- Creative solutions to address housing (gap-financing)
  - o Funds, grants
- Build on successes of programs like "Safe Routes to School"
- Quality and affordable housing accommodations for Soldiers (including single GI)
- Shuttles into post, placed in strategic locations
  - o Reduction in [single occupancy vehicle] transportation
- Installation of big gear storage on transit
- The opening of Gate 19
  - o Possibly helps Pueblo
- Safe lanes for bike/pedestrians on and off-post
- Promotion and implementation of the joint transportation (travel-time) housing index

- Xpress transportation
  - o Frequent transit /quick routes
  - o Smaller buses

**3.) Housing professionals assisting transportation professionals**

- More quality/affordable housing near installation
- Encourage shift in development patterns to “Complete Neighborhoods”
  - o Mixed-use/walkable neighborhoods
  - o Promote land use/transportation connection
  - o “Maintaining sprawl isn’t sustainable”
- Transit-oriented developments
  - o Possibly outside of Gate 20
- Creating partnerships
  - o e.g. non-profits, American Institute of Architects, developers,
- Developers providing shuttle service
- Housing professionals educating Soldiers about transportation and housing costs [when selling a home to Soldiers]
  - o More education among housing professionals/real estate agents
- Regional Housing Coalition
  - o Sustainably funded

**4.) What role can PPACG and other partners play?**

- Promote coordination/cooperation in region
- Good dissemination of data
  - o Demographic data
- Include PPRTA in the discussion of housing/transportation costs
- Regional transit system
- Breaking barriers for Vets/disabled to get on and off-post
- Educating public officials
- Take advantage of elected official’s relative accessibility
- Encourage HBA to work with Fort Carson
- Encourage communication (beyond Chamber group) with command structure at Fort Carson

**Attendees**

|                     |                         |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Bruce Martin        | Aspen View Homes        |
| Kim Headley         | Pueblo County           |
| Michael Lozano      | Fort Carson             |
| Marla Novak         | Colorado Springs HBA    |
| Doug Carter         | Apartment Insights      |
| Melanie Dubois      | Sentinel Corp.          |
| Lee Wolf            |                         |
| John Olson          | Olson Planning          |
| Jackie Chester      | ERA Shields             |
| Christopher Juniper | Fort Carson             |
| Joe Vaccaro         | Community Intersections |
| Larry Belkin        | Image Panorama          |
| Mark Bussone        | Capital Pacific Homes   |
| Bill Moore          | City of Pueblo          |

Rachel Crowley  
Rachel Bessette  
Lisa Thomas  
Angela Rogers  
John Gaston  
Dave Smedsrud  
Travis Waldrip

Bridge Property Management  
Bridge Property Mangement  
PPACG AAA  
Fort Carson

City of Fountain  
CDOT

## **Panelists**

Laura Russman  
Rick Orphan  
Dean Quaranta  
Craig Casper

Apartment Association of Southern Colorado  
Fort Carson  
Fort Carson  
PPACG

## **PPACG Staff**

Rob MacDonald  
Kate Hatten  
Joe Hanke  
Sarah White  
Tom Miller