

Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan



Executive Summary

April 2009



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORT BENNING REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

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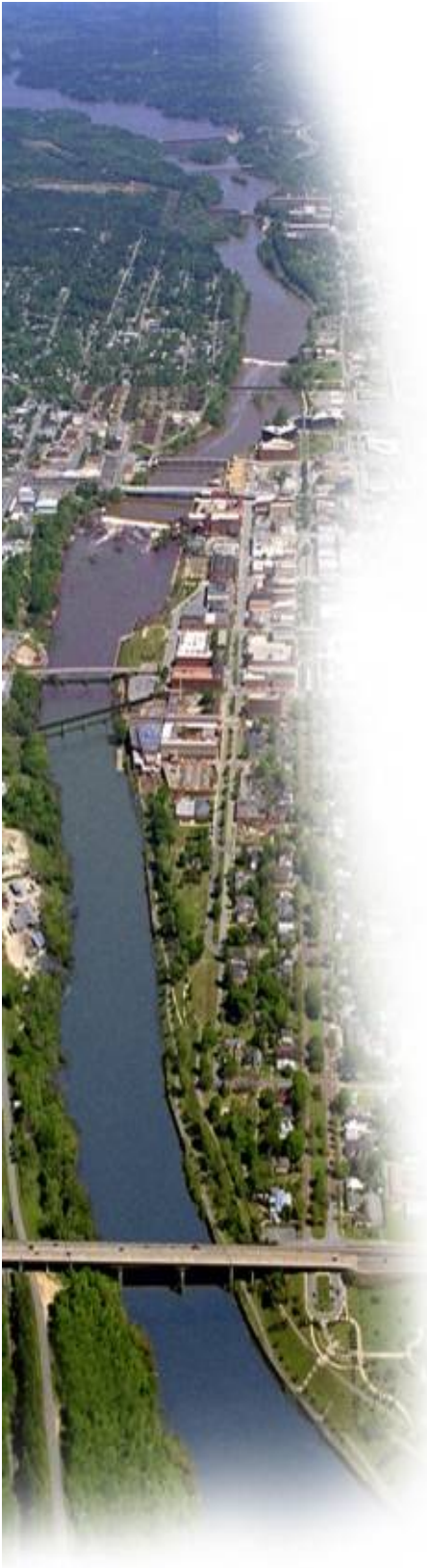
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Introduction

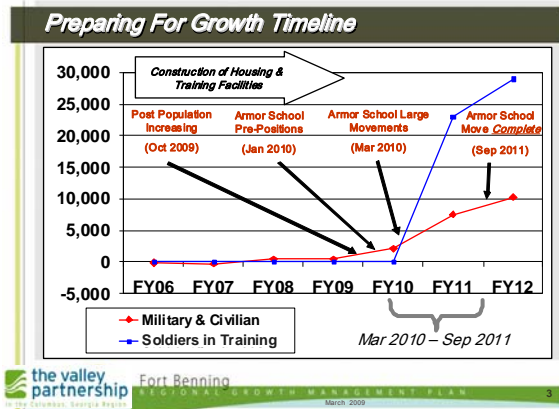
The Chattahoochee Valley region is a rare and beautiful landscape, nestled on the fall line—the area of transition between the foothills of the Piedmont and the lower and flatter Coastal Plain—and blessed with distinct communities, rich history, abundant natural resources, strong educational institution, and one of America’s premier military installations in Fort Benning. Typical of areas with a dominant economic engine, the Chattahoochee Valley has long expanded and contracted in relation to activity on the post. Upcoming military expansions along with other significant economic development initiatives in the region combine to welcome in an era of growth and prosperity for years to come.

The convergence of several Department of Defense initiatives has accelerated the region’s historic rate of growth.

Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), Army Modular Force, the Global War on Terrorism and Global Defense Posture Realignment 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 brigade combat teams. As a result of these



activities, Fort Benning will gain approximately 5,000 active military personnel and nearly 2,000 new civilian employees by 2012. Including additional defense contractors and families, growth in the region as a result of Fort Benning's transformation will have a direct impact of nearly 30,000 people. In 2008, Fort Benning trained over 115,000 Soldiers. When the Armor Center and School relocates from Fort Knox to Fort Benning beginning in October 2009, the post will train an additional 30,000 Soldiers every year. Construction of the Kia automotive plant, the expansion of Aflac, and other economic development will further bring growth to the region.



Preparation for this growth on the installation and in the surrounding areas has been an ongoing process beginning in December of 2005 with the formal report of the BRAC Commission. Emphasizing a regional approach, stakeholders of the **Valley Partnership Joint Development Authority (VPJDA)** formulated an economic development strategy and successfully applied for grants from the Department of Defense and the Department of Labor to conduct advanced planning for the affected local communities around Fort Benning. The **Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP)** is the second of two major planning efforts undertaken by the region; the first was the **Joint Land Use Study (JLUS)**, a cooperative land use planning effort between Fort Benning and the surrounding communities promoting community and economic growth that supports military training and operational missions. Another major component of the economic development strategy for the Chattahoochee Valley Region involves **Workforce Training and Development**. Although the VPJDA has historically been active in this area, efforts have been accelerated in light of the anticipated demand created by growth related to Fort Benning and Kia.

In conjunction with area secondary and post-secondary schools, the VPJDA will oversee a \$3 million dollar federal grant (referred to as the BRAC Workforce Grant) that will facilitate a comprehensive program of job profiling and worker assessment intended to identify strengths and gaps in the region's workforce skills. Funding will also be available for expanding training programs





Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan

in area schools. The key job focus areas of this grant include advanced manufacturing, the aerospace and automotive industries, industrial construction, and advanced information and communications technology. Activities under the grant will be completed in two years (2011).

Major construction projects are in progress at Fort Benning. Three and a half billion dollars (\$3.5B) in new construction has been programmed to transform Fort Benning into the Maneuver Center of Excellence providing a significant increase to the region's employment opportunities. Please note: When the original projections for this study were done, the cut-off date was June 2008. At that juncture estimated construction expenditures on Fort Benning were projected to be \$2.76 billion dollars. This figure has now been updated to \$3.5 billion dollars with new and expanded projects such as the replacement facility for Martin Army Community Hospital.

As growth becomes reality, the Valley region will see a surge in the number of visitors and new residents to the area. The National Infantry Museum (NIM), to be completed in the summer of 2009, is expected to receive approximately 300,000 visitors annually. The National Armor & Cavalry Museum will be co-located with the NIM, both adjacent to Fort Benning. When the latter museum is completed, it is expected the two facilities will draw over a half million visitors every year.

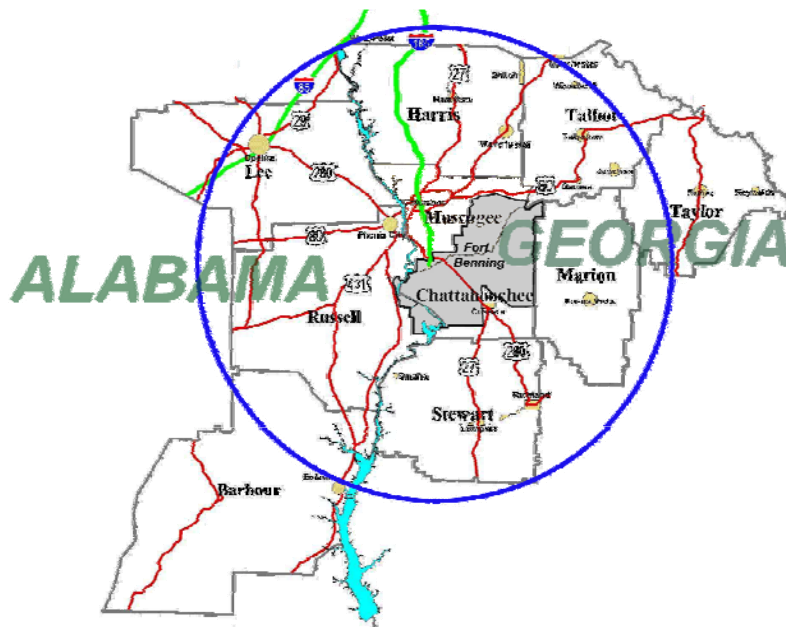




Purpose of the Fort Benning Regional Growth Management Plan

The purpose of the Fort Benning RGMP is to enable local communities and service providers to coordinate the foundational steps necessary to absorb significant population and economic growth over the next five years. To inform decision-makers, the plan assesses current conditions, determines the future needs of an increased population, identifies short term and long-term priorities, and establishes a clear set of action steps for regional stakeholders. The plan seeks to address such questions as:

- What growth is expected to occur?
- Where is the future growth going?
- What are the potential impacts to community facilities and services within the Study Area resulting from the expected growth?
- What physical improvements or organizational actions are necessary to maintain desired levels of service?



The RGMP focuses on growth in the ten county Study Area that includes Barbour, Lee and Russell Counties in Alabama; and Cusseta-Chattahoochee, Harris, Marion, Columbus-Muscogee, Stewart, Talbot and Taylor Counties in Georgia.

Planning Process

The RGMP was awarded to SAIC and their partners by the VPJDA, with the contract implementation from December 1, 2007 through April 2009. A planning team was formed consisting of the VPJDA; **SAIC**, a leading systems, solutions and technical services company that recently supported EDAW's work on the Valley Partnership's 2007 Fort Benning Joint land Use Study; **EDAW**, an AECOM company that specializes



in the broad and increasingly complex issues of land use planning and design and that was the primary contractor for the 2007 Fort Benning Joint Land Use study; **Market Street Services**, a national economic and community development consulting firm based in Atlanta; and **RKG Associates**, a multi-discipline economic, planning and real estate consulting firm.

The planning team worked closely with regional advisory bodies throughout the study process. Over 450 individuals representing the 10 counties in the RGMP study area volunteered their time as task force members over the past year.

Members of the planning team met individually with local officials and service

providers to assess needs and to determine priorities. Recognizing that adequate growth preparations require coordinated action across public, private and non-profit sectors, the team held a series of work sessions with regional task force representatives from the resource areas examined. These sessions were held to gather additional input about plan recommendations and to discuss regional coordination activities.

The planning team conducted two rounds of public meetings in each RGMP county to gather feedback from the communities and to refine recommendations. The first round of public meetings was held to describe the planning process. This round included interactive exercises to gather feedback on community issues. The second round of public meetings was held to review findings and recommendations. Websites, press releases and newsletters have also assisted in the public involvement process.

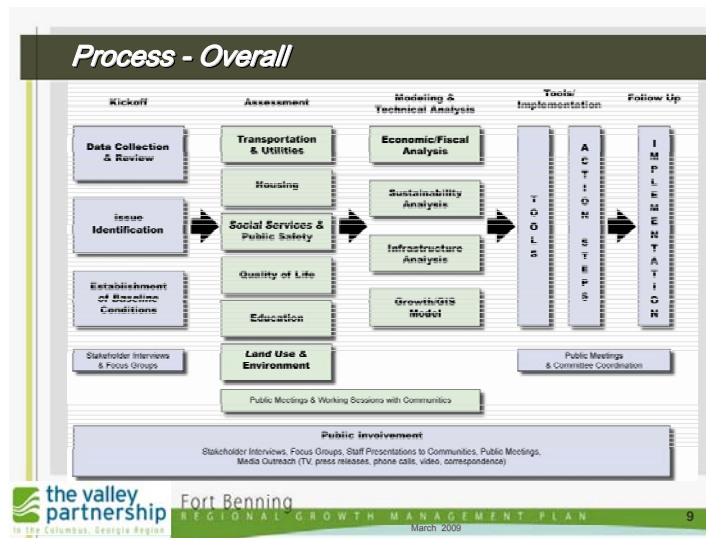


Figure 1 Regional Growth Management Plan Process





How to Use this Report

The RGMP divides findings and recommendations into separate sections representing the major resource areas examined:

1. Growth Forecasting and Modeling
2. Economic Impact and Analysis
3. Transportation
4. Public and Private Utilities and Infrastructure
5. Housing Market Analysis
6. Education
7. Sustainable Land Use Planning
8. Environmental Impacts
9. Health Care
10. Social Services
11. Public Safety and Emergency Services
12. Quality of Life
13. Fiscal Analysis and Sustainability
14. Implementation and Follow Up



Report Organization

Given the volume of findings generated for each section, the report organizes material into three tiers with increasing levels of detail:

The Executive Summary features an overview of study results, including overall recommendations for all resource areas.

The Regional Growth Plan contains more detail and information on the resource areas examined and provides the additional technical information used to develop recommendations, including supporting tables, graphics and analysis.

The County Growth Plans contain more detail and information on the resource areas in the counties and communities in the Study Area, including county specific recommendations and supporting data.

The Fort Benning RGMP has projected growth for 20 years in five-year increments, while considering the baseline regional growth and including Fort Benning, Kia, and Aflac growth impacts. The Regional Economic Models Policy Insight (REMI) model was used to identify demographic and economic impacts. The model provided a baseline analysis (control forecast) that was then compared to an alternative forecast (based on the Fort Benning expansion and other key growth characteristics) with data available as of June 2008. It should be noted that these impact projections (forecasts) are based on economic and demographic information as of that date and are subject to change over time. Consequently, projected impacts should be examined on a yearly basis in order to determine possible changes in the implementation of recommended growth management strategies.

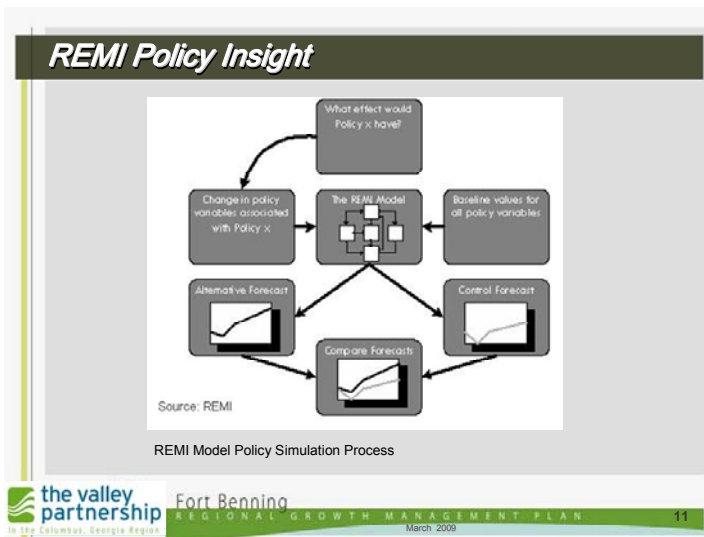


Figure 2 REMI Model Forecasts for Population, Employment and Labor Force Impacts



Key Model Inputs

Estimated Future Construction Expenditures at Fort Benning

In the REMI model, using June 2008 as its cutoff date, investment in military construction on Fort Benning to provide the facilities and training areas required to support anticipated growth was projected to be \$2.1 billion dollars. Investment in replacement or renovation of existing family housing units on Fort Benning was projected at \$660 million dollars, giving a total of \$2.76 billion dollars. New and expanded projects, however, have increased this total to \$3.5 billion dollars from FY 06 through FY 15.

Estimated Increase in Military Personnel and Dependents

The estimated increase in Fort Benning military personnel is 4,766 Soldiers. The total projected military and dependent population growth due to the expansion of Fort Benning (using standard ratios for projecting spouses and children) is as follows:

Military	Spouses	Children	School Age Children	Total Military, Spouses and Children
4,766	2,764	4,432	2,812	11,962
Ratio	.58	.93	.59	1.51

Table 1 Projected Military and Dependent Population Increase

Based on current military planning, relocated military personnel and families will arrive at Fort Benning during the Fiscal Years (FY) noted below:

Fiscal Year	Per Fixed Year	Total (cum)
FY 08	982	982
FY 09	1,081	2,063
FY 10	2,649	4,712
FY 11	7,947	11,962

Table 2 Military Personnel and Families Arrival Schedule

Military Pay Impact

The following estimate is based on projected growth, MCOE Table of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) and the existing Regular Military Compensation (RMC) calculation provided by the Department of Defense. The RMC includes Base Pay by grade and years of service; Base Allowance for Housing (BAH); Base Allowance for Subsistence (BAS); and Tax Advantages based on non-taxable allowances. This equates to an average of \$53,863 per Soldier. For the 4,766 permanent party military personnel



currently estimated to be relocated to Fort Benning, the total annual compensation is therefore projected to be \$256,711,058.

Military Students and Trainees

Based on current military planning, the number of students or trainees will be relocated to Fort Benning for training.

	FY 10	FY 11	Total Per Year
Students	7,250	29,000	29,000

Table 3 Increase in Student Trainees Projected for Fort Benning

Based on the average estimated daily load (students at one time) increase of about 8,700, and an average annual salary of \$33,104 (E1-E2 living on base), the total increase in annual military student/trainee estimated salary is \$288,004,800 (\$33,104/year x 8,700 students = \$288,004,800).

Civilians and Contract Employees

Original estimates indicated 1,658 civilian employees would relocate to Fort Benning and that an additional 3,500 employees would be required as defense contractors or for construction related activities. This included personnel assigned to the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and Installation Management Command (IMCOM). Based on the revised Program Objective Memorandum (POM), the estimate now indicates the following growth of civilian and contract employees by Fiscal Year.

	FY10	FY 11	Total
TRADOC Civilian Employees	206	619	825
TRADOC Contractor Employees	250	750	1,000
IMCOM Civilian Employees	213	357	570
IMCOM Contractor Employees	38	3006	3,044
ECS Civilian Employees*	0	0	85
Total Civilian Employees	707	4,732	5,524

* Note: Equipment Concentration Site (ECS) facilities are not projected to be complete until FY12, but their employees are shown and included in the overall total.

Table 4: Projected Increase in Civilian and Contract Employees by Fiscal Year

Civilian Pay Impacts

Estimated average civilian pay for the range of civilian employee growth at Fort Benning is \$46,125. Comparable information for employees of private contractors is not currently available. Based on the current projected number of civilian and contractor employees



shown in Table 5 below, total annual civilian/contractor salary is estimated for the following two fiscal years:

Civilian and Contractor Employees		
	FY 10	FY 11
Number of additional employees	707	5,524
Estimated Salary	\$32,610,375	\$254,794,500

Table 5 Total Annual Civilian/Contractor Salary Estimates

While there is a difference in REMI Model Numbers and U.S. Army approved numbers in this Executive Summary, readers are reminded that the input data for the RGMP’s REMI Model was as of June 2008, while the U. S. Army Approved Growth Estimates were as of 28 October 2008. Again, projections will change over time as numbers are updated.

REMI model inputs (June 2008) used previous Army numbers of 11,962 Army personnel and family members and 13,811 civilian government employees/contractors with families’ members, totaling 25,773 people. The revised Army numbers, (October 2008) total 11,831 for Army personnel and family members and 16,257 for civilian government employees/contractors and families. Thus, the total revised number Army number is 28,088 people. The RGMP data closely approximates the Army numbers for military and military dependents, differing only by +131, but is significantly lower when approximating the number of civilian/contractors, showing 2,466 fewer people. In total RGMP/REMI model input is therefore 2,315 lower than the later, revised Army growth estimate.

Key Findings and Recommendations

The Regional Report will serve as a guide for the coming years, providing a road map for counties, municipalities and citizens alike. Among the recommendations for the Chattahoochee Valley Region, with the pertinent task force area identified, are the following:

Growth Forecasting and Modeling: Based on the impacts assessment it is projected that the regional study area would, between 2008 and 2028, experience a population growth related to the expansion of Fort Benning and other key economic changes of almost 34,000 residents. Both the gross regional product and personal income would increase during the period from 2008 to 2028. The labor force within the regional study would increase significantly from 2008 to 2028.

Economic Impact and Analysis: The expansion and transformation of Fort Benning will increase permanent party military, federal civilian employees and contract



employees by an estimated 10,290 through 2012. Construction of a new Kia automotive plant in Troup County will employ approximately 2,800 workers. Expected construction of five supply plants throughout the region to support this facility may employ an additional 2,050 workers. The expansion of Aflac in Columbus will employ approximately 2,000 additional workers by 2011 and involve construction of a 100,000 SF building.

Transportation: There is a need to strengthen bi-partisan state coordination between Alabama and Georgia by establishing a regional authority to enhance public transportation systems.

Public and Private Utilities & Infrastructure: The Potable Water and Sewer services throughout the region need to be expanded and coordinated.

Housing Market Analysis: The advisory role of municipal agencies e.g., infrastructure, public safety, education in the approval process for new development should be enhanced and strengthened.

Education: Participation in the Chattahoochee Valley Schools project, which aims at securing federal financial assistance for public schools in the Regional Growth Management area, should be supported.

Sustainable Land Use Planning: Overlay zoning districts for Targeted Redevelopment areas should be created and should include development incentives and infill development standards.

Environmental Impacts: Protection of the RGMP area's open spaces should be fostered by working in conjunction with The Nature Conservancy and other environmental advocacy groups.

Health Care: A bi-state commission tasked with addressing the health care manpower needs of the RGMP area should be established.

Social Services: Service strategies specifically geared toward rural counties, such as use of the Web, telephones and home visits, should be implemented.

Public Safety and Emergency Services: A region-wide 800 MHz communications infrastructure should be adopted to facilitate interagency coordination and communication.

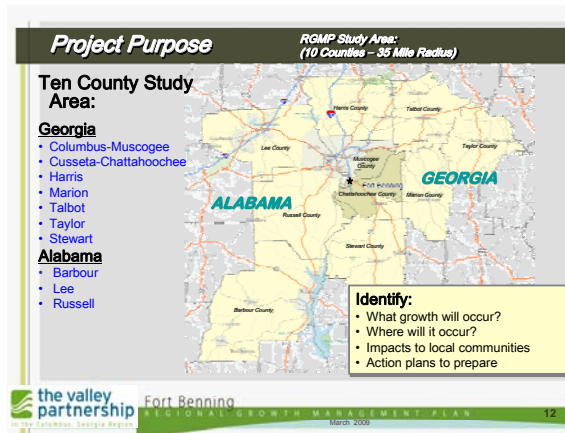


Quality of Life: Satellite programs from the region’s arts centers should be designed to extend easy access to the arts throughout the region.

Fiscal Analysis and Sustainability: Long-Term Capital Planning should be instituted and coordinated throughout the region.

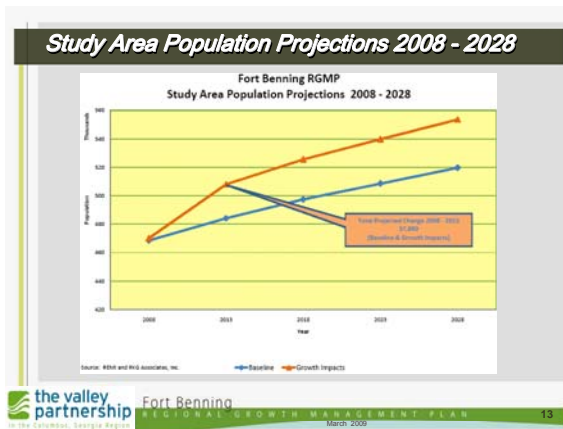
Implementation and Follow Up: RGMP communities and Fort Benning leaders should maintain consistent communication while planning, implementing and monitoring recommended growth management actions.

These and other recommendations are presented in the pages, which follow. It should be noted that the recommendations above are merely representative of extensive analysis, which formed the basis for the reports in this study. Each area is presented in great depth and specific detail, to be read carefully by those interested in the future of the Chattahoochee Valley Region.



Growth Is Coming to the Region!

The projected growth spike in 2013 includes military, Department of the Army civilians, defense contractors, Kia Motors, Aflac and other economic job growth. The remaining growth is a combination of the normal (expected) growth rate in the region, with second and third order effects as the economy adjusts to the impact of the initial growth period. This on-going effect accounts for the growth in service providers and their contribution to the regional economy thereafter.





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The projected growth for the Chattahoochee Region can be seen in the following charts:

REGIONAL STUDY AREA 2008-2028		
Year	Projected Population	Change
2008	470,137	--
2009	475,478	5,341
2010	484,469	8,991
2011	497,653	13,184
2012	503,195	5,542
2013	508,019	4,824
2018	525,566	17,547
2023	539,758	14,192
2028	553,601	13,843

Source: REMI Note: 2018, 2023 & 2028 represent 5 year changes

Note: The growth increases through 2013 are based on yearly increments, while the last three iterations are based on five-year spans.

Table 6 Projected Population Growth – Baseline and Fort Benning Expansion

Again, it should be noted that these population projections are based upon June 2008 data.

The following table provides insight to the projected labor force for the Chattahoochee Valley Region up to 2028. Again, there are variations in the time intervals analyzed.

REGIONAL STUDY AREA 2008-2028		
Year	Labor Force	Change
2008	219,004	--
2009	223,551	4,547
2010	228,007	4,456
2011	232,690	4,683
2012	234,699	2,009
2013	235,999	1,300
2018	237,150	3,151
2023	240,740	1,590
2028	243,075	2,335

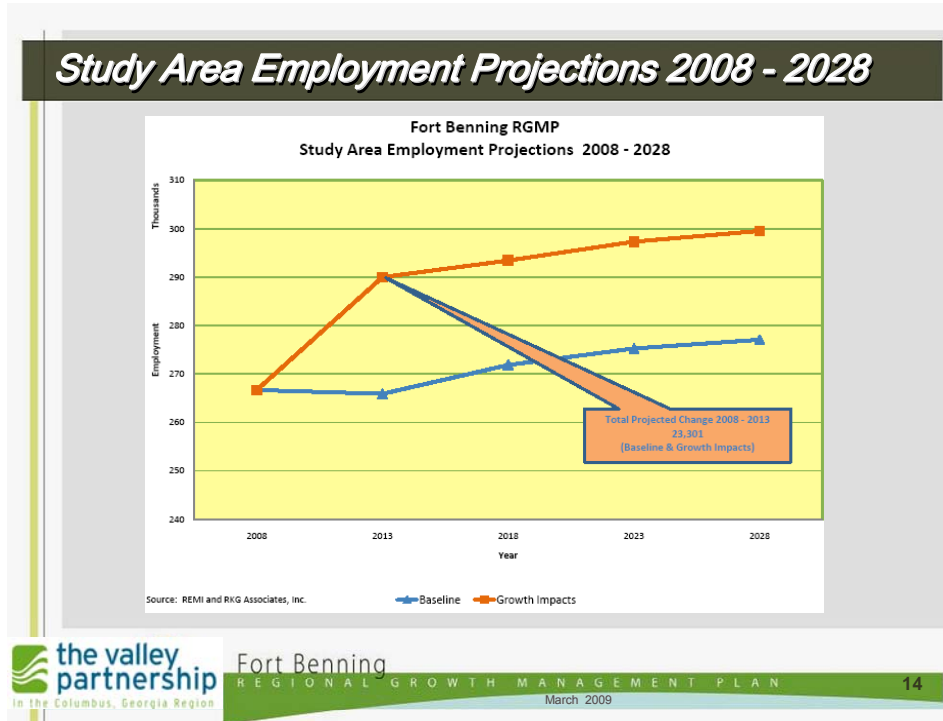
Source: REMI Note: 2018, 2023 & 2028 represent 5 year changes

Table 7 Projected Chattahoochee Valley Labor Force 2008 - 2028

The spike in growth for 2013 includes military, DA Civilians, Defense Contractors, Kia Motors, Aflac, and other economic development job growth in the region. The growth is projected to be in excess of 23,000 jobs. The distribution of these jobs is forecast for the



Chattahoochee Valley Region in Table 8. As with the tables immediately above, please note that the time increments vary from annual to five-year spans.





Projected Employment – Fort Benning Expansion Study Area	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2018	2023	2028
Employment Impacts									
Private Industries	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Forestry, Fishing, Other	2	7	7	6	4	2	-2	-1	-1
Mining	0	0	0	0	-1	-1	-1	-1	0
Utilities	5	20	26	32	31	29	28	30	31
Construction	686	4,066	5,623	5,952	4,794	2,991	784	685	657
Manufacturing	167	407	449	425	382	343	301	322	339
Wholesale Trade	32	120	145	154	139	119	95	97	97
Retail Trade	270	1,246	1,541	1,754	1,649	1,455	1,189	1,177	1,154
Transp. Warehousing	9	25	32	32	28	23	18	19	21
Information	33	142	156	161	145	128	111	121	128
Finance, Insurance	663	1,306	1,796	2,271	2,463	2,537	2,512	2,558	2,582
Real Estate, Rental, Leasing	67	299	342	368	334	291	212	208	212
Profess, Tech Services	404	4,575	4,652	4,677	4,630	4,565	4,503	4,530	4,552
Mngmt of Co, Enter	13	41	46	46	40	33	25	27	28
Admin, Waste Services	158	929	1,045	1,125	1,079	1,005	937	980	1,016
Educational Services	10	42	47	50	46	41	38	46	53
Health Care, Social Asst	135	596	751	943	941	915	1,002	1,172	1,324
Arts, Enter, Rec	100	209	228	241	231	215	199	201	200
Accom, Food Services	269	849	957	1,025	964	878	793	823	838
Other Services (excl Gov)	113	466	569	661	637	594	568	604	633
Subtotal Private Industries	3,134	15,328	18,385	19,896	18,514	16,145	13,303	13,586	13,851
State & Local Government	117	384	756	1,410	1,561	1,670	1,993	2,196	2,352
Farm Employment	419	1,498	1,510	1,505	1,505	1,499	1,493	1,491	1,491
Subtotal Gov't, Private, Farm	3,669	17,209	20,651	22,811	21,580	19,314	16,789	17,273	17,694
Military	391	822	1,877	4,766	4,766	4,766	4,766	4,766	4,766
Total Employment	4,060	18,031	22,528	27,577	26,346	24,080	21,556	22,040	22,460

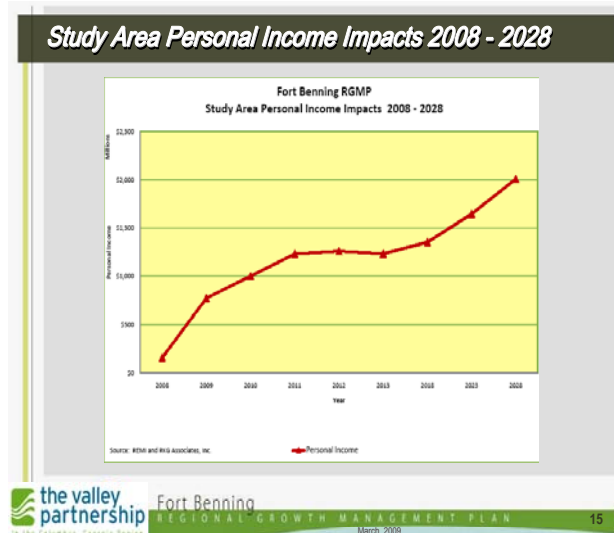
Source: REMI

Table 8 Chattanooga Valley Job Distributions 2008 - 2028



Personal Income in the region continues a positive trajectory, leveling during the construction period of 2009 – 2016 then continues to grow due to economic activity.

Finally, it is instructive to consider the projected enrollments of the Chattahoochee Region Schools. It should be noted again that these projections grow out of a June, 2008 cut-off. Ensuing economic events, such as the stress on the economy, were not considered. It is important to note that these numbers are cumulative. Individual school systems will continue to evaluate and



Total Change In Student Enrollment (K-12)	2009		Percent Allocation of Students				Percent Allocation of Students	
	2009	2013	2013	2018	2023	2028	2028	
Alabama LEAs								
Barbour County Schools	(206)	(498)	-7.2%	(683)	(808)	(659)	-3.3%	
Eufaula City Schools	(106)	(257)	-3.7%	(352)	(416)	(340)	-1.7%	
Lee County Schools	162	1,094	15.7%	2,338	3,446	3,645	18.4%	
Phenix City Public Schools	158	922	13.2%	1,687	2,466	2,760	13.9%	
Russell County School District	95	463	6.6%	642	921	1,159	5.9%	
Subtotal, Alabama LEAs	102	1,724	24.8%	3,632	5,609	6,565	33.2%	
Georgia LEAs								
Chattahoochee County Schools	47	377	5.4%	544	969	1,007	5.1%	
Harris County Schools	204	730	10.5%	1,424	2,105	2,564	12.9%	
Muscogee County School District	1,020	4,381	63.0%	7,136	8,797	9,499	48.0%	
Marion County Schools	(15)	15	0.2%	56	80	89	0.5%	
Stewart County School District	(48)	(35)	-0.5%	76	135	138	0.7%	
Talbot County Schools	(57)	(104)	-1.5%	(89)	(50)	(26)	-0.1%	
Taylor County School System	(70)	(128)	-1.8%	(109)	(62)	(33)	-0.2%	
Subtotal, Georgia LEAs	1,082	5,235	75.2%	9,038	11,974	13,238	66.8%	
Total	1,184	6,959	100.0%	12,670	17,583	19,803	100.0%	

Source: REMI, RKG Associates, inc.

All enrollment numbers represent growth from baseline growth, Fort Benning Expansion, and other economic expansion.

update these numbers annually.

Table 9 Projected Student Enrollment K-12 through 2028



Economic Impact

Key Findings

The review of previously prepared plans, along with personal interviews which were conducted, revealed what appears to be a considerable disparity, or variation, in the preparedness of the various study area communities in their ability to accommodate the potential growth associated with expansion of Fort Benning. The most significant risks to effective planning for economic development in the region are:

Lack of Specific Forecasting Data in Plans

Most of the region's community plans do not incorporate population and employment projections that reflect the latest military induced growth. It is critical that communities begin to track household growth on a small area basis.

The Competitive Disadvantage of Rural Areas

Rural portions of the study area are at a competitive disadvantage for attracting economic development, due to their smaller population bases, lack of extensive infrastructure, insufficient availability of development-ready industrial land, limited housing supply and financial capacity, including lack of robust tax bases. This suggests that these communities are more likely to absorb residential growth, as opposed to business growth, as a result of Fort Benning's expansion, at least in the near term.

Labor Supply

Economic expansion is being hampered to some degree by the lack of a sufficient labor supply, both skilled and unskilled. These conditions are likely to be exacerbated by economic growth related to expansion at Fort Benning, as well as other expanding industry sectors (e.g. automotive, financial, and aerospace). Furthermore, low population growth in Columbus-Muscogee County, as well as in some rural portions of the study area, will necessitate attracting prospective members of the future labor force from a broader geographic area.



Transportation

Key findings

Congestion along Corridors

Fortunately, the region has basic highway configurations that can meet the challenges presented by the expected population surge. However, many intersections will still need improvements to allow for safe and efficient flow along corridors. The need for corridor improvements will be better defined as ongoing studies are completed.



Funding Remains a Challenge

Improvements needed in road construction and expansion, both on post and in the immediate areas surrounding Fort Benning, have been identified in current planning. Major improvements to Interstate Highway 185 and the interchange with US Highway 27 going into Fort Benning are underway and will be complete before the projected growth in traffic arrives. However, funding for the desired improvements, both on and off post, will remain a challenge.



Short Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Improve intersections by adding exclusive turn lanes, improved turning radii, sight distance and signalization improvements, etc.
- Modify design speeds along major arterials to improve capacity
- Modify signal phasing and timing to prioritize through-movement along major arterials

Long Term Recommendations - Indirect or induced Impact (10-15-20 year) recommendations

- Establish new METRA routes to the neighboring counties within the RGMP Ten County Region



- Strengthen and expand bi-partisan state coordination between Alabama and Georgia and establish an authority to enhance in the development of a better coordinated public transportation system
- Consider “Share the Road” and on-road bike lanes in the future planning process to enhance multimodal and environmental friendly way of transportation.
- Complete the existing gaps in the downtown area pedestrian sidewalk network by providing safe and convenient linkages between schools, neighborhoods and communities
- Increase interchange capacity between freeway-to-freeway and freeway-to-arterial locations to avoid interchange bottlenecks for trucks
- Conduct detailed crash analysis and prioritization for safety by ranking the high crash locations throughout the County

Utilities & Infrastructure

Key Findings

- In the short term (5-year horizon), the counties in the Fort Benning RGMP focus area all have access to adequate utility resources based on ample supplies available from public and private purveyors in the region. However, there are both short term and long term limitations in the localized distribution and collection networks for many counties in the region that would be stressed by rapid growth focused in any one area.



Short Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Evaluate the needs and drivers for water system infrastructure upgrades in southern Harris County (GA), Phenix City and Fort Mitchell areas in Russell County (AL), Smiths Station in Lee County (AL), southwest Talbot County (GA), and northwest Stewart County (GA). Design and construct those systems which are determined most needed by the region and respective localities.
- Evaluate the needs and drivers for sewer system infrastructure upgrades in southern Harris County (GA), Phenix City and Fort Mitchell areas in Russell County (AL), Smiths Station in Lee County (AL), southwest Talbot County (GA),



and northwest Stewart County (GA). Design and construct those systems which are determined most needed by the region and respective localities.

- Enforce local building and health department codes regarding on-site treatment of wastewater.
- Evaluate the needs and drivers for solid waste collection and transfer station infrastructure upgrades in southern Harris County (GA), Phenix City and Fort Mitchell areas in Russell County (AL), Smiths Station in Lee County (AL), southwest Talbot County (GA), and northwest Stewart County (GA). Implement those improvements which are determined most needed by the region and respective localities.

Long Term Recommendations - Indirect or induced Impact (10-15-20 year) recommendations

- Evaluate potential policy changes associated with water quantity management (e.g. conservation, water reuse, water return) may impact development options in currently rural areas on the verge of development regarding on-site (septic) wastewater treatment.
- Evaluate potential policy changes associated with water supply reservoirs, intrabasin and interbasin transfers coupled with regional supply and demand drivers may impact local hydroelectric power plants and should be further evaluated with respect to both states' energy plans and the potential impact on local electricity rates.
- Evaluate potential policy changes associated with water demand management and use of reclaimed water may open investment opportunities for offsetting consumptive water uses from irrigation and industrial water consumers currently using drinking water supplies.

Long term energy concerns could be addressed over time through demand reduction initiatives such as the incorporation of LEED™ energy efficiency requirements (or other similar green building initiative) into the local building codes for both residential and commercial buildings.



Housing

Key Findings

Demand for Housing

In the region's core, urban counties, there will be a significant need for additional single-family and multi-family housing development in anticipation of large growth impacts from BRAC actions. The region's outlying and more rural counties possess relatively high vacancy rates, and existing vacancy should accommodate the relatively small population impacts projected in these counties. The greatest need for these counties is the rehabilitation and repair of the existing housing stock. Individual reports provide estimates of the number of new units that will be needed to accommodate growth in each county.



Affordability of Housing

Across the study area, single-family housing is generally more affordable than the state averages of Alabama and Georgia, as well as that of the nation. However, housing prices vary tremendously throughout the region, with Harris County, Columbus-Muscogee and Lee County possessing the most expensive housing stock at the median. Homeownership at the median price in these counties may be a challenge for some lower-grade enlisted Soldiers. Enlisted Soldiers who are seeking single-family ownership will likely need to search for housing options below the median price in these markets or search for options in the more rural counties where housing is more affordable. These same individuals may face some challenges finding affordable rental units with multiple bedrooms to accommodate a family in the core counties. Civilian employees in pay grades 1 and 2 without an income-earning spouse will face the greatest difficulty finding affordable housing options in the study area, while others in pay grades 3 and 4 will likely be unable to afford three and four-bedroom rental units in the core counties. Individual reports provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of affordability within each county.



Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Enhance the advisory role of municipal agencies during the approval process for new housing development.
- Local governments and their planning departments, in cooperation with local nonprofit housing agencies and authorities, including the Columbus Housing Authority and Columbus NeighborWorks, should work together to develop a technical-assistance program for developers to identify available federal, state and local housing incentives and subsidies.
- Establish sub-municipal advisory committees, comprised of the generally recognized neighborhoods located within each county, to ensure that property owners and neighborhood associations can provide input regarding the appropriateness of proposed new large-scale developments.
- Identify areas where increased population density may be achieved and facilitate fast-track development in these areas.
- Measure public costs of new development and determine the best method to reduce public costs with consideration for taxpayer interests.
- Help ensure that lower-income homeowners have access to non-predatory loans and technical assistance to support home repair and rehabilitation projects.
- Enhance code-enforcement measures to ensure that residential structures are of minimally acceptable quality. For current structures that do not meet code, local governments should negotiate with landlords to agree on measures for rehabilitation of the property in lieu of civic penalties.
- Consider incentivizing the rehabilitation of housing units by property owners, including property tax abatements as one such incentive.

Long Term Recommendations - Indirect or induced Impact (10-15-20 year) recommendations

- Promote housing development for lower-middle income households using “incentive zoning.”
- Track vacant and underused lots and the number and location of building permits issued to assist with targeted development efforts.
- Develop displacement-management plans for renters in transitioning and redeveloping neighborhoods to ensure that any potential harm to existing residents is minimized.



Education

Key Findings

Growth of School Age Enrollment is Significant

The latest projections for school age children have been made in conjunction with Fort Benning staff, local education leaders, BRAC personnel and other stakeholders. An estimated 7,133 new students will be added to the LEAs from Fort Benning and Department of Defense (DoD) actions over the next four years. Approximately 3,000 students will arrive as dependents of military personnel and approximately 4,000 from government civilians and contractors.



K-12 School Construction Critical

Based on current K-12 school capacity in the region and the projected increase in school age children resulting from Fort Benning growth alone, additional school construction requirements total 6.9 schools at an estimated cost of \$133.2 million. Over 50% of new students are expected to attend the Muscogee County School District. The LEAs in the region expect total enrollment from 2008-2013 to grow by 16,118 students.

Teacher Recruitment Challenge

Staff increases required to meet the anticipated growth in student enrollment will also be significant.

Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Continue active and strong participation in and support of the Chattahoochee Valley Project to secure federal assistance for housing students who have come to the region due to federal actions.

Long Term Recommendations - Indirect or induced Impact (10-15-20 year) recommendations

- Maintain interdistrict, LEA supported cooperation to address educational issues such as facilities and workforce development on a regional basis.



Land Use & Planning

Key Findings

Overall, local communities lack the tools to shape desirable growth patterns throughout the region. The most significant risks to effective planning and the efficient use of land in the region are:



- **Lack of Specific Forecasting Data in Plans.** Most of the region's community plans do not incorporate population and employment projections that reflect the latest military induced growth. It is critical that communities begin to track household growth on a small area basis.
- **Ongoing Risk of Military Encroachment.** The communities participating in the 2007 Joint Land Use Study promoting land use compatibility around Fort Benning have not formally incorporated recommended encroachment reduction measures, such as real estate disclosure and specialized overlay districts, into community plans and zoning ordinances.
- **Corridors Vulnerable to Strip Development.** As indicated in the results of the Sustainable Land Use section, much of the region's residential and commercial growth will continue to spread along its major arterial corridors, unless active measures are adopted to encourage Smart Growth development
- **Need for Form Based and District Planning.** Much of the planning in the region continues to address land use issues through generically defined zoning districts. To protect the distinct and localized identities of the region, communities should evolve toward form based planning and zoning that seeks to control the scale, appearance and overall compatibility of new development.
- **Increase in Edge Residential Areas.** The market will naturally seek out undeveloped land as more cost-effective development sites that can satisfy emerging housing demand. The inherent risk of such growth on the periphery of urban cores is that large concentrations of housing can strain existing infrastructure, increase the public cost of utility service delivery and create unbalanced residential enclaves lacking convenient access to retail, community facilities and other amenities.
- **Erosion of Rural Character and the Agricultural Base.** Sprawling residential development, even at low densities, can disrupt the viewsheds, fragment wildlife habitat, stress resource lands and interfere with farming and ranching operations. Local governments currently do not have the latest tools in rural land



stewardship, exclusive agricultural zoning and conservation subdivision design to direct growth to more compact and less sensitive development footprints within the counties.

- Inadequate Environmental Protection. The region's land use regulations contain some basic environmental protections, but generally lack more advanced best management practices for maintaining natural resource integrity. In particular, restrictions on development in flood prone areas remain weak.
- Lack of Building Codes in Counties. Lee, Russell and Barbour Counties currently do not require housing to conform to building codes. These codes are essential for establishing acceptable levels of quality and protecting the health, safety, property and general welfare of the community.

Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Sharpen the distinction between urban and rural by preserving the rural landscape and directing development into urban cores
- Increase the use of regional and inter-local service planning to address impacts across jurisdictions
- Adopt land use compatibility measures around Fort Benning and incorporate the recommendations of the Joint Land Use Study with a particular emphasis on noise disclosure and reduced residential densities in high operational impact areas to the north and east of the post
- Continue the emphasis on downtown revitalization
- Adopt corridor based plans that include access management, physical design and site planning to manage the risk of strip commercial growth

Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- Enhance plans, zoning, and subdivision regulations to include growth management and context sensitive design
- Adopt a rural land use process, agricultural zoning, and/or conservation-based subdivision codes for rural areas of the counties and in new neighborhoods on the urban fringe



- Greenprint the region by identifying critical open space resources, including productive farming and ranching lands, trails, parks, river corridors and viewsheds

Environment

Key Findings

- Noise Impacts to North and East of Post. Adoption of the recommendations of the 2007 Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) are critical to avoiding future exacerbating effects in the area of noise impact. The increased training mission, which drives the majority of the growth expected at Fort Benning, will result in expansion of existing noise impacts to the immediate north and east of the post boundary. Residents in this area will experience an increased level of volume and consistency in the noise generated by small arms and tank gunnery ranges used for training.
- Adoption of Smart Growth Principles to Protect Greenspace
- Potential Impacts to Air Quality
- Potential Impacts to Water Quality



Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year)/Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- In general terms, Fort Benning RGMP study area is fairly well prepared to manage anticipated growth and development resulting from the Fort Benning BRAC actions, Kia Plant developments, and related workforce changes through 2028 in an environmentally sustainable manner. Recommendations that address strategies to reduce the risk of encroachment near Fort Benning, to protect the character of rural areas and open spaces and to minimize public infrastructure costs are summarized below and presented in detail in the sections that follow. These considerations are presented for both the short term (5-year) and longer term horizons.



- For Alabama counties of Russell, Lee, and Barbour: Establish home rule and to adopt a Unified Development Code with associated county commissions and comprehensive plans in order to more effectively manage anticipated growth and development (if possible, short term).
- Review staffing levels for the applicable offices within Georgia EPD, Alabama DEM, Georgia TDH, Alabama DPH CEP, Alabama DECA OWR, and the local county health departments in both states to assure enforcement of existing rules related to sensitive natural resource protection can be maintained during periods of high growth (on-going concern during rapid growth).
- Enforce on-site treatment requirements for septic systems and invest in appropriate infrastructure (sewer collection and treatment) for denser development areas (on-going concern during rapid growth).
- Evaluate opportunities for greenspace preservation within existing or newly developed Conservation Subdivision Codes, Zoning Ordinances related to Overlay Districts and Capital Improvements Plans (longer term).
- Evaluate opportunities for coordination with conservation groups and other entities in the purchase and preservation of recreational, scenic, and environmentally valuable lands (longer term).
- Implement LEED™ or other green building programs by incorporating green building initiatives into local subdivision and zoning requirements related to energy and water resource conservation and watershed protection (if possible, short term).



Health Care

Key Findings

Capacity Sufficient for Initial Demands

Currently the health care infrastructure of the region satisfies existing needs, yet continued growth will strain current health care infrastructure, services and personnel over the next five to six years.



Shortages in Specialty Areas

Forecasts indicate that the most severe shortages will occur in those highly specialized service lines that are the most difficult positions for hospitals to fill (e.g. Diagnostic Radiology, Anesthesia/Pain Management and Gynecological Surgery). There will be a regional need to recruit physicians to the Chattahoochee Valley that will require leaders to rethink their current strategies and work to improve coordination through a regional health organization.

Impact to TRICARE in the Region

Evaluation of TRICARE acceptance levels among health care providers in the region, along with opportunities to increase acceptance levels for TRICARE, is key.

Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Form a regional health care coordination body to promote the attraction and retention of health care professionals to the region.
- Engage in regional planning to ensure that region residents are no more than 30 minutes away from needed facilities in emergencies.
- Work with national Congressional leaders and Senators to promote better TRICARE payment levels.

Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- Continue to monitor TRICARE payment levels and promote adjustment of those levels, as health care costs rise.



Social Services

Key Findings

There is a marked disparity in the ability to access needed social support services between the region's urban areas and the more remote, rural sections of the Chattahoochee Valley. Additionally, some counties have at-risk indicators (teen pregnancy, child abuse, homelessness) which exceed the average of either Georgia or Alabama. The level of services provided varies throughout the region.



Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Develop alternate methods of communicating with those in need of services, including home visits, via telephone and by the Web.
- Coordinate the delivery of services across county and state lines.
- Work with federal/military personnel to secure greater support from the Combined Federal Campaign.

Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- Work across county and state lines to plan for the expanding aging population and its needs.
- Ensure that each county has a “one-stop” center for the provision of needed services.



Public Safety & Emergency Services

Key Findings

Phase I Counties

The more populous regional counties – on the whole – face fewer capacity issues related to ensuring residents are provided effective public safety and emergency services support. Population growth has elevated tax revenue to the extent that Phase I counties have generally been able to source the funding needed to upgrade communications and equipment capacity and maintain appropriate staffing levels. Grant awards and public funding referenda have further bolstered fiscal capacity related to public safety and emergency services operations. Thus, both in the short and long-terms, Phase I regional counties are well-positioned to address the public safety challenges of projected growth.



Phase II Counties

There is only one career fire department (Eufaula) in all the Phase II regional counties. This is typical of the existing state of public safety and emergency services operations in these counties. Volunteer fire departments handle nearly all response calls. A handful of the Phase II counties either contract for local ambulance service or rely on Phase I counties to provide this service. Communications frequencies and equipment is generally outdated; more proactive Phase II counties rely on bridging equipment to tap into the advanced 800 megahertz frequency considered to be a best-practice. Courts, prisons and jails typically handle light case loads and house few suspects in custody. Funding for public safety and emergency services is a constant challenge for the Phase II counties. Some have passed local-option taxes to support these operations, but others feature bare-bones operations. Volunteer fire departments have key equipment and personnel needs that are wanting for lack of funding. Thus, Phase II counties face numerous existing challenges in addition to accommodating future growth. However, as has been projected in the RGMP study, negligible projected growth in these counties means that public safety capacity will likely be sufficient if certain present funding challenges can be addressed.



Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Improve coordination of communication, incident-response and personnel between large and small regional counties and Fort Benning.
- Ensure that all department staffing is maintained at levels deemed to be national standards.
- Shore up any short-term capacity needs related to providing public-safety services in high-growth areas of Phase I counties.
- Address critical funding, equipment and training needs in Phase II county volunteer fire departments.
- Ensure that all Phase II county public and private developments and roads are inputted into public-safety databases.

Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- Bring all regional counties up to standard 800 megahertz communications systems.
- Ensure all components of public safety and emergency services capacity are maintained at levels necessary to accommodate the demands of local growth.
- Develop and construct new fire, EMS, police and sheriff's stations as needed across the region and work with local, state and federal partners to fund and develop new judicial and correctional-facility capacity as demanded by growth.



Quality of Life

Key findings

The Chattahoochee Valley region currently enjoys a high standard for quality of life. Columbus was ranked fourth in the United States as a place to live and raise a family in the June 2008 edition of *Best Life* Magazine. Amenities such as parks and recreation, good schools, a healthy environment, affordable housing, low crime and accessibility to cultural amenities further strengthen the region's appeal. As in other high quality of life areas around the United States, many of these elements are inter-connected and dependent upon each other for continued success.



Current measures indicate the following regional challenges and areas are in need of improvement to maintain this level of quality of life for residents:

- The inconsistent adoption of best practices for planning and growth management, such as rural stewardship, agricultural zoning and conservation subdivision design
- The need to increase parklands and recreational facilities to maintain level of service as the population expands
- The need to inventory and promote the region's existing system of recreational trails and to continue planning for improved connectivity within protected open spaces
- The need to further efforts for historical preservation, especially in the more rural areas
- The need to extend high speed Broadband Internet access throughout the region



Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

- Canvass all historical markers to ensure markers are still upright and in good repair
- Form a regional Arts Alliance, with accompanying website, to coordinate information regarding performances, outreach opportunities and funding sources
- Plan a regional “Welcome” Fair at which religious denominations can greet newcomers and introduce their churches, temples and synagogues
- Plan for the regional extension of bike trails

Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

- Secure funding to preserve endangered structures and sites such as Columbus’s Spencer House, Stewart County’s Fort McCreary and Marion County’s Fort Perry site.
- Extend public transportation into rural areas for better service to seniors
- Extend Broadband access to all households in the region

Fiscal Sustainability

Key Findings

The Growth Plan examines several specific areas that will be influenced by the expansion of Fort Benning. These areas were studied in terms of estimated fiscal implications for major Capital Investment areas in the States of Alabama and Georgia.

The fiscal section presents a summary of fiscal implications, the action and benefit from the recommendations, the proposed funding approach, cost estimations, a listing of whether recommendations will require capital funding or operational funding, and additional steps.

Many of the capital projects identified for the RGMP region will require large-scale investments that are likely to be funded over a number of years and make use of multiple financing sources. These capital expenditures may also be accompanied by an increase in operational costs that are related to growth, inflation, and other unforeseen requirements. To some degree, financing these increased capital and operating costs can be accommodated through the current budget policies that rely on traditional



revenue sources such as taxes or user fees. However, in some counties, the capital costs are likely to exceed the acceptable financial carrying capacity available through these sources, particularly if their rates of growth slow for some period due to current economic conditions. Furthermore, some capital projects will be regional in nature, both in terms of their physical location and their benefits. This may require more creative approaches to financing.

Short-Term Recommendations - Direct – Impact (5 year) recommendations.

It is extremely important that counties within the study area monitor growth and development within the region, especially during the next five to ten years, in order to anticipate changes in service demands. Both operating costs and revenues should be tracked in order to determine both short- and long-term financial implications.

In addition to yearly changes in operating costs and revenues, counties within the region will need to prepare realistic long-term capital improvement plans (CIP). Planning for capital improvements should be tied to the counties' continuing development and growth in population, number of households and businesses. Land use comprehensive plans and sector plans should also anticipate the need for roads, schools and other facilities required by new or changing population growth. Efforts should also be initiated and expanded to link county planning activities with the CIP and the operating budget.

Prior to considering specific projects for inclusion in the CIP, projections should be prepared of total resources available to the county as outlined below:

- **Economic Assumptions** – Revenue projections depend largely on assumptions regarding economic activity, including employment, income, inflation, interest rates, construction, home sales and other economic conditions.
- **Demographic Assumptions** – The CIP should be based on demographic assumptions as well as anticipated population changes and forecasts.
- **Debt Capacity** – Standards, based on state requirements, as well as other criteria established by the county, such as a proportional relationship to the operating budget.



Long Term Recommendations (Indirect or Induced Impact – 10 to 20 years)

Creating an environment conducive to fiscal sustainability must focus on wide range of financial conditions. A key element of this effort should include the establishment of a Comprehensive Financial Trend Monitoring System that continually assesses financial conditions and provides early warnings related to possible negative trends. This monitoring system should also provide an analysis of the local and regional economy (this could involve continued use of the REMI model) in order to gauge impacts on governmental revenues and expenditures. Key factors that should be part of the monitoring system include the following:

- Assessment of Current Financial Conditions.
 - Fund balance/working capital
 - Key unfunded liabilities (pension, retirement, health care, etc.)
 - Status of planning for capital assets and infrastructure improvements
- Preparation of Five-Year Financial Forecast
 - Annual fund balance/working capital projects
 - Key revenues
 - Comprehensive expenditures
 - Fiscal indicators
 - Long-range planning horizon
- Evaluation of Potential Additional Revenue Opportunities
- Evaluation of Potential General Cost Reduction Opportunities
- Identifying Regional Cost/Service Sharing
- Long-Term Capital Planning
 - It is important to plan large capital purchases at least five years out
 - Provide a roadmap of anticipated stress on future spending
- Examine Opportunities for Local Government Collaboration
 - Reduces duplication of effort
 - Improved service levels and/or avoidance of eliminating municipal services



- Cost savings through economies of scale
- Improved work relationships among counties

A number of counties and local governments will confront a variety of challenges relating to the expansion of Fort Benning and other economic changes within the region. Identifying those needs early and establishing a system to maintain and plan for these financial challenges offers a practical and realistic opportunity for adapting to the fiscal changes that will confront them.

Implementation

Public Engagement and Communications

The primary purpose of the Ft. Benning Regional Growth Management Plan is to prepare our region for one of the most significant mission transformations in the United States. Understanding that local ownership of the RGMP was vital to the plan's success the Planning Team developed and implemented a strategic communications plan that has at its core community-based participation.

The Strategic Communications Plan was implemented to identify key stakeholders, community leaders and develop local ownership and region-wide collaboration and coordination. Twenty town-hall style public meetings were conducted to receive input and present findings of the RGMP. An operational website was established to develop and use effective communications tools to keep all stakeholders informed of RGMP process and to share and manage information more effectively. Printed presentation materials, including brochures, fact sheets and regional maps were used by the Program Manager and staff to keep the public informed of the RGMP planning process, activities and outcomes. News media coverage about upcoming public meetings and subsequent stories on the status of the RGMP as well coverage during public meetings were part of the strategic actions taken.

The Planning Team conducted an outreach campaign to influence the military, DA Civilians and contractors of the Armor School in Fort Knox, Kentucky to move to Fort Benning, Georgia. A successful town hall meeting was held at Fort Knox with a large contingent from Columbus in attendance.



RGMP Implementation Team

An Implementation Team is needed to provide the expertise necessary to coordinate implementation of the RGMP with the Regional Development Centers and the Alabama Council of Governments. The Project Team should be accountable to the VPJDA for the timely completion of the activities and deliverables identified in this study and should have Strategic Communications, Education, Transportation, Public Utilities and Infrastructure expertise.

Implementation Strategies

The Planning Team created a set of realistic, clear and prioritized action steps that local government officials, area service providers, and other stakeholders can follow to enhance physical capacity, organizational capabilities and access to resources. Detailed matrices are provided for each county containing objectives, time span, source of funds and costs of projects.

The Chattahoochee Valley Region has a once-in-a-decade opportunity to continue to prosper because of the new growth coming as a result of BRAC, Kia, Aflac and other economical development. The Region must seize the opportunity to manage the new growth by continuing to interface and coordinate with the VPJDA to further enhance and facilitate regional and county economic and job growth opportunities, continue to enhance quality of life issues as they directly impact economic growth and continue to participate in workforce development opportunities to further serve the requirements of Fort Benning, Kia, Aflac and general economic growth demands. Finally, all are called to take care of the Soldiers and their families who live in our region; they serve to protect the freedom we enjoy.



CAVEAT

This report is intended as an aid to planners, managers, elected officials, and other decision makers in the RGMP study that encompasses portions of ten counties along the state border between Georgia and Alabama.

The recommendations presented in this report are suggestions for how the region could work towards those goals and objectives, based on best available information and current understandings. The information, projections and estimates in this report are based upon publicly available data at the time of this report and have been prepared using generally accepted methodologies and formulas. Actual results and needs may differ significantly from the projections of this report due to inaccuracy of available data, and/or evolving factors and conditions.

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