



Aberdeen Proves Value of Regional Approach to BRAC Growth

by Tovah Rom

As communities across the Fifth District respond to the 2005 round of BRAC changes, one county in northern Maryland discovered the benefits of a strong local effort combined with regional cooperation. The outcome, a regional initiative that includes multiple jurisdictions within seven counties in Maryland, Delaware, and Pennsylvania, offers a case study of how a regional approach works to the advantage of all its participants.

Harford County is home to Aberdeen Proving Ground (APG), a base included on the 2005 BRAC round of expansions. Key communication and high-technology now carried out at Fort Monmouth in New Jersey will move to APG. The influx of workers from Fort Monmouth is expected to exceed 5,400 core employees, not including support personnel and the contractors who will follow. Other employees have been assigned to APG from military facilities in Ohio and Virginia.

The impact of thousands of new workers at APG will be felt most strongly outside of the base. The workers making the move are civilians who will live, shop, play and send their

children to school in the surrounding communities. In planning for the influx, Harford County realized that the region, not just the county, would feel the impact. Their realization fueled the regional initiative now heralded as a model for other communities.

The Planning Process: Think Locally, Act Regionally

In response to the 2005 BRAC announcements, Harford County applied for funds from the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA) to examine the potential impact of growth at APG. The county established an advisory committee that produced a BRAC Action Plan containing 72 recommendations that covered transportation, housing, infrastructure, land use, workforce, education and public health. The committee's discussions reinforced that all of these policy areas affect one another. More residents mean more demand for housing and more water and sewer usage; more cars mean more emissions.

The committee soon learned too that many issues transcended jurisdictional boundaries. As the process unfolded, "it became very apparent that you couldn't do these things in isolation," says Karen Holt, regional BRAC manager. The group grew to include the economic development directors of Baltimore and Cecil counties.

The growing team of leaders chose not simply to continue the land use, environmental and transportation planning begun by the advisory committee, but to wage a full-scale marketing campaign. Eager to capitalize on the high-technology resources in Maryland, they founded the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor (CSSC). Harford County remains the lead agency coordinating with OEA, but CSSC is now the face of the transition. The APG team has applied for and received \$1.7 million from OEA to fund the effort.

Expanding the Circle

CSSC staff determined that a 40-mile radius around APG would approximate a 45-minute commute and expanded the collaborative to include all the jurisdictions in that ring (See map on page 18). Many APG employees already travel the 40 miles from surrounding counties and Delaware and Pennsylvania. This commute resembles the trip that was common for workers in New Jersey commuting to Fort Monmouth.

Within the 40-mile radius are dense urban neighborhoods, rolling pastures, and much of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, not to mention two metropolitan planning councils (in Baltimore and Wilmington). The growing planning effort includes land use planners, zoning officials, transportation engineers, water scientists, educators, economic development experts and more. With such diversity, communication is key.

"There is an ongoing need to educate" across professional specialties, says Nicole Katsikides, BRAC coordinator for the CSSC. Citing the differences in approach and methods between

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As operations from Fort Monmouth, New Jersey move to Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland, multiple states and localities are working together to address transportation, infrastructure, and other challenges.

land use planners and economic developers as an example, she says "we all need to be talking to each other and need to be sensitive to each other." The same flexibility comes into play in working across state lines. Teacher certification, school district boundaries and spray irrigation are just some of the policies that differ in each state yet affect each other in a regional scope, Katsikides says.

Greater Than the Sum of Its Parts

Regional cooperation has become the hallmark of the APG BRAC effort. "Regionalism in central Maryland is in my opinion at an all-time high," says David S. Iannucci, executive director of the Baltimore County Department of Economic Development. "We used to compete with each other. That's a thing of the past. We're all tied to the I-95 corridor and our growth patterns all affect each other."

Holt and Iannucci see APG growth as key to economic development on an even larger scale. "This fills in the technology corridor between Richmond and Boston," Holt says. In a global economy where high-skilled workers are in demand, "we don't believe we compete with Chicago or San Diego or Philadelphia," Iannucci says. "We're competing with Bangalore and Shanghai." The skilled workers coming to APG will enhance what is already a strong technology sector in Maryland, he believes.

The state will need to grow its infrastructure as its workforce grows. Iannucci cites mass transportation, particularly commuter rail, as vital to serve BRAC growth. Along with transportation and infrastructure, CSSC leaders point to water and competing demands for state and federal funds as primary challenges.

The regional, collaborative APG effort is being touted as a model for BRAC planning for the state of Maryland and its counties. "The most rewarding piece for me is seeing the relationships being forged across aisles and offices," Holt says. "You can't go it alone." For more information on CSSC, call Holt at 410.273.5708 or visit www.apg-cssc.com.

