

The Fayetteville Observer

Ambitious plan aims to make Fayetteville top place to live

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By Andrew Barksdale

An ambitious plan to better prepare Cumberland County for the coming wave of soldiers, families and new jobs tied to BRAC kicked off today.

The goal is nothing less than making Fayetteville one of the 10 best places to live in the Southeast.

Ten broad goals were laid out today that cover everything from expanding recreation and access to health care to lowering crime and educating workers for defense-related jobs.

Elected officials, business leaders, military brass and community organizers held a news conference to announce they are calling their endeavor Greater Fayetteville Futures II, after a similar effort eight years ago to improve the city's image and unify programs that promote economic development.

Driving the new plan, they said, was BRAC, which is expected to bring by 2013 almost 41,000 additional residents to communities surrounding Fort Bragg. The goal is to attract much of influx of population to the Fayetteville area.

"As far as communities go, we've won the lottery," Cumberland County Commissioner Jimmy Keefe said.

The base-realignment process, approved by Congress in 2005, is scheduled to be complete by 2011 with the construction of the \$288.5 million Forces Command and Army Reserve Command headquarters on Fort Bragg.

Today's news conference at the Fayetteville-Cumberland County Chamber of Commerce was short on details and budget figures. But officials said they hoped to start seeing results for some of their initiatives within 30 to 60 days.

Officials want the public's involvement, too. They are holding a "call to action" meeting from 9:30 a.m. to noon March 28 at the Crown Coliseum ballroom, where more information will be presented. The event will include a free continental breakfast.

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