

The Fayetteville Observer

Vision laid out for Fayetteville's future

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By Andrew Barksdale

An ambitious plan was unveiled Tuesday to make Fayetteville one of the 10 best places to live in the Southeast.

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

The plan, called Greater Fayetteville Futures II, was unveiled by elected officials, business leaders, military brass and community organizers. It follows a similar effort eight years ago to revamp the city's image and unify programs that promote economic development.

This time, Cumberland County is facing a coming wave of soldiers, families and new jobs tied to growth at Fort Bragg. BRAC is expected to bring by 2013 almost 41,000 additional residents to communities surrounding Fort Bragg, according to a recent report.

The goal is to attract most of those new people 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, should be complete by 2011 with the construction of the \$288.5 million Forces Command and Army Reserve Command headquarters on Fort Bragg.

Tuesday's announcement at the Fayetteville-Cumberland County Chamber of Commerce was short on details and budget figures. Officials plan to seek corporate, private and public support. They also hope 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 community action meeting March 28, when more information will be presented.

Kirk deViere, the strategic planner for the Greater Fayetteville Futures II team, said 20 to 25 initiatives will be launched to help achieve the 10 broad goals, which set a roadmap of where Fayetteville should be in three to five years. The group plans to have a 100-day progress report.

The key, he said, is collaboration and corroboration.

“Most of the time, communities work in silos,” he said. “Our goal is to work in a horizontal manner.”

Tuesday’s news conference gave a picture of what kind of cooperation the effort will entail. The leaders of Fayetteville State University and Fayetteville Technical Community College both spoke, along with Lacy Wilson, chairman of the Public Works Commission; Mary Holmes, executive director of the Cumberland Community Foundation; Gary Cooper, chief of staff for the chamber; and Lt. Col. Joseph Staton, deputy garrison commander for transformation at Fort Bragg.

Staton said Fort Bragg already has achieved “somewhere over half” of the BRAC-related growth that is expected to occur in the next few years. He said 80 percent of the Fort Bragg families live off post, and nearly every soldier has a car to travel into town.

“Fort Bragg can no longer be considered an island by itself,” he said. “Their security and their well-being is only partially provided by Fort Bragg. The rest is provided by you, and the community they love and enjoy.”

Mayor Tony Chavonne said BRAC is expected to attract to the Fayetteville area 25,000 new residents, 19,000 jobs and the infusion of an extra \$1 billion to the local economy each year.

Borrowing a military analogy, he said the community is poised to go to battle with overwhelming force to capture that economic growth through Greater Fayetteville Futures II.

Chavonne called it the single biggest initiative the community has ever undertaken.

“It’s not just about BRAC,” he said. “It’s about change that is coming for our children, and our children’s children.

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