

The Fayetteville Observer

Opportunities lie ahead

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Success is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.

Fayetteville and Cumberland County have been preparing for years and have seen success in several important areas. We have been blessed with significant economic opportunities that could change our community for the better for future generations. The military expansion is federal law and must be completed by September 2011. It will be accompanied by a defense industry buildup here. The communities that win will be the ones that are prepared. It is now time for action.

Thankfully, we have a roadmap to follow. The BRAC Regional Task Force recently issued a growth-management plan that spells out specific steps Fayetteville and Cumberland County need to take to prepare for these opportunities. In addition, we have the results of the Pathways to Possibilities report commissioned by the Chamber of Commerce to improve our economy. Hundreds of Cumberland County residents provided input into these studies and plans. Now is the time to take action.

We've modeled our community approach on a previous successful community effort we followed several years ago. The Greater Fayetteville Futures project that the community used in 2001 resulted in hundreds of community residents coming together in an inclusive and open process to identify the major goals of improving our image, developing a unified economic vision for the community and leveraging the military for economic opportunities in the area. Using an engaged community in an open and inclusive process resulted in tremendous success in all three areas.

We'll use that same approach as we organize ourselves to work every action item identified in the multiple studies completed in anticipation of BRAC. Greater Fayetteville Futures II has engaged broad-based representatives from all segments of the community, including city and county government, the military, local health care systems, educational institutions, business and cultural organizations. The effort is committed to an open process facilitated in a professional manner that will help ensure success. It will include dozens of community action groups working the important issues for our community.

This effort is about much more than important infrastructure needs like schools and roads. It is the opportunity to change a community in several important areas, including public safety, education and work force development, transportation, health care, cultural opportunities and the environment. This effort gives us the opportunity to change a community for generations to come.

Greater Fayetteville Futures II will sponsor a community meeting Saturday from 9:30 a.m. to noon at the Crown Coliseum Ballroom. This is your opportunity to get involved in this community action plan to prepare for BRAC and to improve our community. We encourage you to attend and to get involved. The opportunities we face come along once in a generation. They are too important to miss.

It is our time. Please join with us as we transform this community for BRAC and beyond.

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