

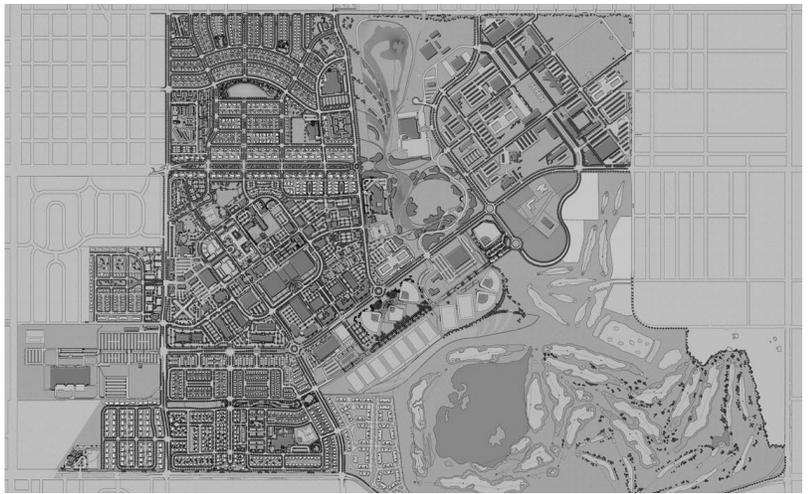


**infobrief**

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# The Role of the Private Sector in **Base Redevelopment**

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 ASSOCIATION OF  
**DEFENSE  
COMMUNITIES**  
FORMERLY NAID

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## About the Association of Defense Communities

The Association of Defense Communities (ADC), formerly NAID, is the nation's leading membership organization supporting communities with active, closed and closing defense installations. Our 1,200 members unite the diverse interests of communities, the private sector and the military on issues of mission enhancement/realignment, community-base partnerships, privatization and closure/redevelopment.

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## Cover Images

(LEFT) Lowry — the development built at the site of the former Lowry Air Force Base in east Denver — is a mixed-use community with homes, businesses, schools and amenities within walking distance of each other. Shown here is the Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum located inside a former Air Force hangar, along with new homes and office buildings.

(RIGHT) Lowry's illustrative plan shows a mixed-use, master planned community where citizens can live, learn, work and play for generations to come.

*(Images courtesy of the Lowry Redevelopment Authority)*

## The Role of the Private Sector in Base Redevelopment

### Purpose

This Infobrief is meant to provide an overview of the different ways in which private sector firms can collaborate with local redevelopment authorities (LRAs) to support base redevelopment. This report explores the experiences of communities affected by the Base Closure & Realignment (BRAC) process in 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995, and offers suggestions to local officials working in communities affected by the 2005 BRAC round.

### Introduction

As the entity primarily affected by military base closures, local governments have a central role in the reuse of property being disposed of by the Department of Defense (DOD). The extent to which a local government — via an LRA — remains involved in planning and implementing a military base reuse plan varies based on a number of factors.

Based on the experiences of local redevelopment authorities at bases that were closed or realigned in the 1988, 1991, 1993 and 1995 BRAC rounds, this Infobrief looks at how LRA decisions about the role played by private developers and consultants in base development were influenced.

LRA officials who responded to an online survey and answered followup questions for this report offered many recommendations specific to different parts of the redevelopment process. There also was one message that came up throughout discussions of all aspects of the reuse process. Simply stated, communities facing military base reuse projects as a result of the 2005 BRAC round must recognize that they are not alone, nor are they blazing new trails. Dozens and dozens of reuse plans have been written for prior closures. Redevelopment teams of all types have been assembled in urban, suburban and rural communities. Newly formed LRAs should take advantage of the knowledge base that exists among their predecessors so they can avoid the headaches and pitfalls of those that came before them. There are many ways to capture this experience: meet with other LRA directors at conferences; call them with questions; visit their facilities and meet with their staffs; and invite them to your sites and get their observations.

### Assembling the Redevelopment Team

Nearly every redevelopment team will involve these three elements:

1. The Local Redevelopment Authority
2. Developers
3. Consultants, including attorneys, grant writers, planners, engineers and market analysts

There are exceptions in which one of these elements would not necessarily be present. When the Defense Department sells property directly to the private sector, an LRA would not play the same central role in the reuse process that it otherwise would. This outcome was demonstrated by the closure and redevelopment of the Cameron Station facility in Alexandria, Va.<sup>1</sup> Cameron Station was announced for closure in 1988. Alexandria became the LRA and formed a committee of elected and appointed government leaders, the general public and business leaders to help the city determine reuse options.<sup>2</sup> The panel wrote a master plan that was adopted by the city council. The city then rezoned the base property to comport with the master plan. Consultants helped the city, which was not interested in acquiring the property, create a competitive process for selecting a developer. The Army sold 101 of the 165 excess acres directly to a developer, who built more than 2,000 housing units, recreational facilities and commercial space. The Army transferred about 50 acres of the site to the city via a public benefit conveyance to preserve open space and create a park.

DOD is expected to sell property from BRAC 2005 closure sites directly to the private sector more frequently than it has in the past. During the recent BRAC round, Pentagon officials repeatedly said that they would employ a “mixed toolkit” approach toward property disposition, which could include direct sales and auctions to the private sector.<sup>3</sup> As a result, some 2005 BRAC communities are concerned that DOD will ignore their wishes and deal directly with private developers.<sup>4</sup>

In cases where an LRA decides to become the master developer, private developers play a smaller role, including that of adviser. In a larger community where an LRA is closely integrated with the local government, the authority may lean more heavily on readily available government staff for such tasks as planning, rather than hiring consultants.

### Key Factors When Considering How Much of a Role the Private Sector Will Play in a Base Redevelopment Effort

- Complexity of Project
- Preference for Local Control
- Financial Capacity
- Staff Expertise
- Staff Availability

Assembling the redevelopment team starts with the LRA staff itself. The executive director fills the appropriate positions to support the LRA's mission. “I had a scope of work, looked at the type of people we needed, wrote job descriptions for those tasks, then procured people to fill those positions,” explained Marc Elliott, executive director of the River Ridge Development Authority in Jeffersonville, Ind. “Then I looked

at what we didn't think we'd have the day-to-day responsibilities to carry out, and contracted that out.” The work that Elliott contracted out to advance the reuse of the former Indiana Army Ammunition Plant included legal assistance, land use planning and engineering.

Regardless of the types of consultants an LRA uses, the authority first should take stock of the situation. “First, set up a work program and determine what needs to be accomplished and when,” Elliott suggested. “Then you can see what skills you need at various points in time. That dictates when you fill in these resources. You don't want to hire the resources and have them define the work.”

But in cases when all three elements described above come into play, is there some formula, some template for how to assemble a redevelopment team? As with other broad questions about military base reuse, the answer is: it depends. No two military bases are the same, but many LRA officials identified similarities in when they hired consultants.

Often, planners and analysts are brought in early by an LRA to determine the potential market value and reuse possibilities for the site. Once these issues are fleshed out, engineers come in and take a closer look at the condition of the site infrastructure and characterize the extent of environmental contamination present. The findings of these initial consultants tend to drive much of the reuse strategy.

How and when other members of the redevelopment team are brought in depends on several factors. Base reuse plan writers are among the early consultants hired by an LRA to establish a timetable and potential courses of action. Attorneys who are brought in to negotiate property transfers may not be required until a couple years after closure is announced and the LRA has been established. Other consultants common to base redevelopment teams are grant writers (hired early to identify and secure state and federal funds to assist the reuse effort) and environmental cleanup contractors (brought in later once environmental conditions have been characterized).

Business relationships with private sector firms that begin with the best intentions can fail. LRAs are advised to have an exit strategy with any consultant or development contract because poor performance by a development partner can cause project delays; and project delays can lead to problems with other development partners and the community. Advice offered by LRA officials included:

- Include termination provisions in contracts to protect the LRA should its partners fail to fulfill the terms of their arrangements.
- Require partners to file regular status reports, which can signal potential problems before they become major headaches.
- Use short-term contracts, where possible, to ensure that a poorly performing partner does not last long.
- "Audition" a partner with a smaller project agreement as a way to determine if a longer commitment for a larger effort would work out.

## Development Approaches

Development strategies fall into three broad categories<sup>5</sup>:

1. LRA as Developer
2. Joint Venture with Private Developer
3. Private Developer as Master Developer

Decisions about which development strategy to pursue generally are influenced by five criteria:<sup>6</sup>

- **Complexity of Project**, involving factors such as the size of the base, extent of environmental contamination and quality of the base infrastructure.
- **Preference for Local Control**, often affected by the depth of a community's experience with economic development projects.

- **Financial Capacity**, which is affected by the availability of resources such as federal and state grants, loans, or the local government's budget.
- **Staff Expertise**, a broad range of which is required for base redevelopment.
- **Staff Availability**, or the adequacy of the existing staffing level.

As you will read later in this report, these criteria also influence decisions about which consultants an LRA may hire to implement their vision of base reuse.

**LRA as Developer.** When the LRA undertakes the role of master developer, it oversees every aspect of the development process using internal staff. This approach is most common when the community desires greater control over a site, the LRA is well-funded and there is a staff experienced in economic development and real estate projects.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Lowry Redevelopment Authority is the master developer of the former Lowry Air Force Base in Denver. The preference for local control, the expertise of the LRA staff and the complexity of the project contributed to the decision to oversee development of the 1,866-acre site. The authority is responsible for zoning, improving the infrastructure and selling real estate to developers. The authority's plan has been to create a mixed-use, master-planned community. Eighty percent of the site has been developed so far. In the 10 years after the base closed (from 1994 to 2003), the reuse generated a \$4 billion economic impact for the Denver metropolitan area.
- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Indiana Army Ammunition Plant was active from 1940 to 1946 and was reactivated for the Korean and Vietnam wars. After it was deactivated in 1972, the Army hired private firms to manage the plant. The local community did not always perceive that the private managers were accomplishing what the community wanted. For one thing, the site contributed little to the local tax base. In 1998, Congress passed – with the community's support – special legislation to close the site. The community concurrently established the River Ridge Development Authority to oversee the future of the 4,390-acre site just 12 miles from Louisville, Ky. As master developer, the authority first bought a section of the site from the Army in April 2005, with a second purchase following the next month. The LRA is offering parcels for development via long-term lease. The site is home to 47 tenants employing 864 workers and paying a cumulative \$1.8 million in annual rent.

**Joint Venture with Private Developer.** This hybrid approach can range from using a developer as an adviser on the process to signing a partnership agreement that spreads the financial liability between the LRA and developer.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Fort Harrison Reuse Authority in Lawrence, Ind., manages a former Army base as the master developer with assistance from a development consultant, whose experience and knowledge of the local development community helps the authority complete complex land sales. The preference for local control most influenced the authority's development approach. More than 80

companies are located at the site, employing more than 1,900 workers. The former base generates about \$3 million in annual property tax revenue.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Fitzsimons Redevelopment Authority in Aurora, Colo., is in the process of negotiating an agreement with a private developer through which the developer will have the right to develop the majority of the site, taking down land on a parcel-by-parcel basis via long-term ground leases. The authority will retain title to the land and the ground leases will have restrictions on the development. This approach retains local control but is broad enough to make the project attractive to developers. To date, about 230 acres of the former base have been redeveloped, yielding 6,300 new jobs. The authority also is the master developer and manager of the 160-acre research park component at Fitzsimons, known as the Colorado Bioscience Park Aurora.

**Private Developer as Master Developer.** Turning a redevelopment project over to a private entity occurs at highly complex project sites and when site preparation costs (infrastructure, most notably) might overwhelm an LRA. Closing bases located in attractive real estate markets will be most desired by private developers, especially if they can control the entire site as a master developer. Well-heeled developers have the resources and the willingness to take on the risk when the potential for success is high.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** Sacramento County, Calif., sought a measure of local control after McClellan Air Force Base was slated for closure. The county set forth a vision and guidelines by which a private developer would carry out that vision. Before the developer came on board, the county annexed the base into the adjoining municipalities, zoned the land and formed a team of local, state and federal representatives to create a reuse vision for the site. The developer has followed the county's plan and created McClellan Business Park, home today to 140 businesses with 10,000 employees.
- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Alameda (Calif.) Reuse & Redevelopment Authority created a base reuse plan for the former Alameda Naval Air Station in 1996, one year before the site actually closed. The authority selected a master developer in August 2001 that would build 1,600 housing units, devote 4.6 million square feet to commercial development and set aside 110,000 square feet for retail development.<sup>7</sup> To aid implementation of the plan in 2002, the city adopted a set of general policies that ensures the redevelopment is consistent with the reuse plan.

Whether seeking a private developer as an adviser or master developer, the LRA should first establish a vision for the project. "Lay

out your goals and objectives," said Jill Sikora Farnham, acting executive director at Fitzsimons. "It's wise to have at least some level of planning in place before you talk to the private sector. Know what's important to your community first; then find a partner who believes in that vision.

"The flipside of this is, you don't want to be so far down the path that a partner wouldn't have input," she added. "Partners want flexibility. Have a basic level of planning first, then engage the private sector, if that's your approach." The financial resources brought to a project by a private developer can give an LRA flexibility in other aspects of base reuse. "Remember that you are the owner and responsible for implementing the highest and best use," said Ehren Bingaman, executive director of the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority. "Don't put all of your cards on the table at once. If you can get partners to contribute to the deal, you can save your resources for other priorities."

An LRA brings high expectations into its relationship with a developer. The authority expects the developer to share the risks and rewards of the project while bringing financial resources to bear. An LRA can secure outside financial backing while protecting the community's vision for the site by spelling it out in the base reuse plan and demanding complete support from the developer. Of course, given the dynamic nature of redevelopment, market conditions can change and require the LRA to adjust its expectations of the developer.

## Consultants

Most LRAs do not have the staff to perform every task necessary to carry out a base redevelopment project, and so must hire specialized consultants, such as civil engineers. It also is not practical in some cases for an LRA to hire such staff for short-term, highly specialized jobs.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** Sacramento County, Calif., hired consultants to advocate for the county at the federal level, focusing primarily on stabilizing the funding and schedules of Air Force environmental restoration activities at the former McClellan Air Force Base. The consultants worked with county staff to formulate strategies that complemented the efforts of the county's congressional delegation.

- **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The city of Austin, Texas, hired marketing analysts and finance specialists to lead its issuance of \$400 million in bonds for the redevelopment of Bergstrom Air Force Base as Austin-Bergstrom International Airport. Development of the new civilian airport was supported by a planning consultant that prepared an airport master plan. The airport opened in May 1999 and boasts more than 7 million passengers annually.

## What Kinds of Consultants Do LRAs Hire?

Portion of local redevelopment authorities that used the following types of consultants (based on an ADC online survey):

- Attorneys: 89%
- Environmental Cleanup/Remediation Contractors: 95%
- Environmental Engineers: 74%
- Environmental Insurance Company: 58%
- Finance Specialists: 42%
- Grant Writers: 21%
- Marketing Analysts: 74%
- Planning Consultants: 95%

■ **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Blytheville-Gosnell (Ark.) Regional Airport Authority hired a consultant to conduct a comprehensive economic, real estate, financial and land use analysis of the former Eaker Air Force Base. The firm managed the process for gathering community input on the base reuse plan, which it also wrote. The reuse plan was approved locally before the base closed in 1992. This factor has been credited with easing the property disposal process between the federal government and the LRA. The site, now known as the Arkansas Aeroplex, has five distinct reuse areas: office park, distribution center, aviation park, industrial park and the Arkansas International Airport. Eighty-five percent of the former base (3,201 out of 3,771 acres) has been developed.

■ **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Fort Ord Reuse Authority on California's Monterey Peninsula hired attorneys to create a special tax district so that the agency could collect fees to cover some of its basewide obligations, such as fire protection and habitat conservation. Consulting attorneys also advised the base on the acquisition of pollution and legal liability insurance for base cleanup projects and the negotiation of a pending early transfer and environmental services cooperative agreement (ESCA) with the Army. Recognizing that grants could support its job creation mission, the authority hired grant writers to secure funds that helped establish a center for training local contractors to become more competitive in future building contract offers at the base.

■ **APPROACH IN ACTION:** The Bayonne (N.J.) Local Redevelopment Authority hired grant writers who secured state and federal funds that financed infrastructure, engineering and planning costs of the former Bayonne Military Ocean Terminal, now called the Peninsula at Bayonne Harbor. Consulting engineers assessed site conditions and identified the costs for improving the conditions for redevelopment.

A serious consideration when selecting consultants is whether to select a local firm or hire a national firm with broader experience in BRAC

redevelopment. The pros and cons of each option should be considered carefully. Advantages of hiring a local consultant include: a ready knowledge of the local area, ability to visit the project site and attend meetings on a moment's notice, and the added boost it gives to the local economy. There can be a flipside to these advantages, though. For example, the ready knowledge of an area can lead to fixed ideas about how a site can be reused.

Consultants from outside the local area can bring a wealth of experience accumulated at base reuse sites from around the country. Working against non-local consultants is their perceived inability to relate to local situations and the fact that they must travel long distances simply to attend meetings and get to the site.

"Hiring local consultants depends on the type of work that needs to be accomplished," said Jim Covington, director of the Memphis (Tenn.) Depot Redevelopment Corp. "If it is brick-and-mortar design or the examination of the local market, then it can probably be done just as well locally as anywhere else. If it is something that needs special experience or is going to give an unpopular solution, an outside expert may be a good resource and can bring an unbiased look and national experience to the problem." Candidly, Covington added: "Outside consultants also have the luxury of leaving town when the project is over and the locals can blame them for the unpopular solution."

Bingaman, of the Fort Harrison Reuse Authority, agreed there can be both advantages and disadvantages to using a nearby firm: "Local consultants can bring preconceived notions based on their own personal experience. But there are also benefits to their proximity, costs, keeping dollars in state and knowledge of local partners.

"Most local elected officials hate out-of-towners," he added, "but if they're the best talent, hire them. The lack of local understanding of people, places and things can be an obstacle, but the fresh ideas and perspectives of other areas is typically an asset. It forces stakeholders to challenge themselves and look for new ideas and innovations."

Joe Gurley, president of the Blytheville-Gosnell Regional Airport Authority, said one advantage of hiring local talent is their "ability to relate to local

## Where to Find Consultants?

One source of consultants and contractors specializing in fields related to base redevelopment is the Association of Defense Community's Private Sector Services Directory. The searchable directory contains descriptions and contact information for more than 150 companies supporting defense communities. The directory is divided into 10 categories to help local governments quickly locate suitable companies:

- Attorney/Legal Services/Transaction Negotiation
- Community Representation/Advocacy
- Economic/Planning and Analysis
- Environmental Assessment and/or Insurance
- Environmental Engineering/Cleanup/Compliance/Construction
- Land Use Planning/Design
- Marketing/Business Development/Business Planning
- Military Privatization/Enhanced Use Leasing/Housing/Utilities
- Real Estate Development/Planning/Financing/Facilities Planning
- Strategic Planning and/or Project Management

To access the directory, go to [www.defensecommunities.org](http://www.defensecommunities.org), and select "360 Marketplace" from the "ADC Programs and Services" menu on the left-hand side of the page.

groups and individuals to elicit and convey ideas and how best to gain acceptance of those ideas.”

Covington offered a compromise on melding local and non-local consultants into a redevelopment team. “Usually the complaint is that local tax money is being spent on consultants from outside the region,” he said. “Often requiring a local partner on the consultant team softens the objections to outside consultants.”

The decision to select a local or non-local consultant also is affected by the location of the base. Larger urban and suburban areas frequently have a wealth of able local firms from which to choose, while smaller rural communities tend to have fewer firms with the experience and resources necessary to serve on a redevelopment team.

## The Selection Process

Due to procurement guidelines, many LRAs must conduct a competitive selection process for consultants and developers that begins with the issuance of a request for proposals (RFP). Since an RFP is the tool that initially brings partners to an LRA, it is important that these solicitations clearly define the services being sought. Put another way, mean what you write and write what you mean.

Effective RFPs are, first and foremost, specific about what the LRA is seeking. They should describe the outcomes and outputs being sought, as well as the deadline for completing the work. The length of an RFP varies with the type of service being sought. Solicitations for legal or planning services, for example, tend to be much shorter than RFPs for master developers, which can run for 50 pages or more.

Similarly, the level of specificity contained in an RFP will vary. When the Fort Ord Reuse Authority sought a cleanup contractor, the agency knew there were several experienced firms who were likely to bid. This knowledge influenced how the authority worded the solicitation. “We were careful at that time to not give too much information up front, but to allow the contractors to make presentations to us about how they could help us with our negotiations with the Army,” explained Jonathan Garcia, an associate planner with the LRA.

It can be useful to tell potential bidders what the budget for a particular task is. “You don’t want to ask for proposals and find out you can’t afford to do the work,” Elliott said. “Most communities are going to have a finite budget. ... All that information is public information, so it’s not a secret. It saves time by defining the financial scope of work as well as the content of work that you expect.”

Is there such a thing as putting too much or too little information in an RFP? “When you start to tell people how to do the work you are soliciting, it’s officially too much,” Bingaman said. “If people making proposals don’t know what the end product is, there’s too little information.”

Packing an RFP with too many specifics can stifle bidders’ creativity. “You have to have some wiggle room within the scope of work for things that a consultant might recognize about a property that you’re not aware of,” Elliott

said. “There needs to be tight control over the work, but also some room within it to allow the consultant to have a vision of things you were blind to.”

Elliott added that keeping an RFP basic can be helpful to the LRA. “You have to know what you want done, first,” he said. “If you don’t know, you can leave it general and let consultants help define the work. It depends on what you know about the property. It depends on what your staff can do.”

When writing an RFP, there is no substitute for experience. If an LRA staff does not have much experience writing solicitations, it is recommended that they review RFPs issued by other LRAs or municipal governments. Even though projects and services vary, there are many approaches that can be adapted to most situations.

## What to Keep in Mind When Preparing RFPs

### DO:

- Review RFPs from other LRAs and government agencies as models.
- Understand your project and its needs.
- Be precise as to the scope of work to be accomplished, when it is to be accomplished and at what price.
- Include evaluation criteria.
- Set a strict timeline for submissions and interviews.
- Widely distribute the RFP to qualified firms.
- View the RFP as a marketing tool to attract high-quality candidates and thorough responses.

### DON'T:

- Detail how the company should accomplish the job; simply state the expected result.
- Be afraid to be flexible so that bidders have the ability within the job specifications to adapt to unexpected circumstances that often arise.
- Only rely on a company’s references; confirm the quality of the firm’s work by contacting communities from projects for which references were not provided.
- Assume the lowest bidder will provide the best value.
- Allow consultants to rely on senior officials at the selection interview that won’t be part of the project team.

## Conclusion

Local redevelopment authorities are entrusted with converting closing military bases into economically productive parts of their communities. This responsibility often is one that is shared with a development team comprising LRA staff, private developers and consultants. As communities affected by the 2005 BRAC round organize to face this daunting task, they should formulate a development strategy that combines an assessment of local conditions and needs with elements of successful base reuse projects from prior BRAC rounds. This way, communities and the private sector can work toward a common vision of community prosperity.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> "Office of Economic Adjustment and Community Base Reuse FAQs," Office of Economic Adjustment, [http://www.oea.gov/OEAWeb.nsf/E8B4D59FD6943A1D852570B5005200F7/\\$File/Revised%20FAQs%2011-9.pdf](http://www.oea.gov/OEAWeb.nsf/E8B4D59FD6943A1D852570B5005200F7/$File/Revised%20FAQs%2011-9.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> "Cleaning Up After the Cold War: The Role of Local Governments in the Environmental Cleanup and Reuse of Federal Facilities," International City/County Management Association and Energy Communities Alliance, 1996, pp. 43-46.

<sup>3</sup> The "mixed toolkit" approach was cited several times prior to the release of the Defense Department's 2005 BRAC recommendations and during the BRAC Commission's deliberations. Examples of such statements include: Testimony by Philip Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, before the Senate Appropriations Military Construction & Veterans Affairs Subcommittee, March 8, 2005; and Testimony by Philip Grone, deputy undersecretary of defense for installations and environment, before the Defense Base Closure & Realignment Commission, Hearing on Defense Department BRAC Recommendations, May 16, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> "Government eyes transfer of Brunswick base property," by Associated Press, via Portsmouth (N.H.) Herald, September 30, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> "The Community Base Reuse Planning Process: A Layman's Guide," National Association of Installation Developers, John Lynch, editor, February 2004, p. 8.

<sup>6</sup> "Use of Master Developers in Implementing Military Base Reuse Plans," Economic & Planning Systems Inc., March 1999, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> "Alameda Point Community Partners wins 775-acre development project," East Bay Business Times, August 10, 2001, <http://www.bizjournals.com/eastbay/stories/2001/08/06/daily57.html>.



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