

INSTALLATION MISSION GROWTH

Community Profile

November 2009

Fort Polk, Louisiana

Community Contact:

Mayor Betty Westerchil
City of Leesville
101 West Lee Street
Leesville, LA 71446
337-239-2444
westerchil@bellsouth.net
www.leesvillela.net

Installation Contact:

Col. Francis B. Burns
Garrison Commander
Joint Reserve Training Center and
Fort Polk, LA
6661 Warrior Trail
Building 350
Fort Polk, LA 71459
337-531-1606
francis-burns@us.army.mil
www.jrtc-polk.army.mil

State Contact:

Paul Sawyer
Director, Federal Programs
Louisiana Economic Development
1051 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802
225-342-5443
psawyer@la.gov
www.louisianaeconomicdevelopment.com

Community at a Glance

Growth Management Organization (GMO):

Vernon/Fort Polk Regional Growth Management Team

Geographic area affected by military installation growth:

Vernon Parish

Regional Population of affected area:

Year 2000 - 52,531

Top growth challenges:

- Housing
- Infrastructure (sewer, water)
- Economic Diversity
- Education
- Transportation

Outstanding requirements in support of mission growth:

Not yet determined

Mission Growth at a Glance

Growth Action:

Grow the Army (GTA)

Personnel Baseline and Growth Projection:

| | Baseline (FY 2008) | Build-out Projection (FY 2013) |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Military Personnel | 9,058 | 11,092 |
| Dependents | 19,506 | 23,797 |
| Civilian Personnel | 1,351 | 1606 |
| Contractors | 4,078 | 4078 |

Source: Army Stationing and Installation Plan and G8

Growth Factors affecting community planning:

Not yet determined

Background

Fort Polk is located in west-central Louisiana, in Vernon Parish. Bordering Fort Polk to the south is the Vernon Unit of Kisatchie National Forest. Alexandria (approximate population - 46,000) is 50 miles to the northeast and Baton Rouge (approximate population - 230,000) is 180 miles to the southeast.

Due to the recent GTA initiative, Fort Polk is expected to gain an additional 2,442 soldiers through FY 2013. They will be accompanied by an estimated 6,398 family members. Additionally, these Army units will generate the need for additional contractors and construction (Source: Army Stationing Installation Plan). The community and installation are working closely to identify and mitigate the impacts resulting from the growth. This migration will not only impact Fort Polk and Leesville, but the effects will also be felt throughout Vernon Parish, and other bordering parishes. Aside from Leesville (approximate population - 6,817), the following towns will be affected by the growth:

Anacoco—866 (17 minutes from Base)

- Hornbeck—435 (24 minutes from Base)
- New Llano—2,415 (6 minutes from Base)
- Rosepine—1,397 (13 minutes from Base)
- Simpson—584 (27 minutes from Base)

Vernon Parish's current population is 52,531, and with anticipated Army growth, population is projected to be 61,371. By 2013, the parish population is shown to increase by approximately 8,840.

The early stage of planning for community response to military growth was initiated by several community leaders in Vernon Parish. The Vernon/Fort Polk Regional Growth Management Team was formed as the decision-making body on growth-related issues. Members of the Management Team include the Mayor of Leesville (parish seat); the president of the Vernon Parish Police Jury (parish government); the local state representative and state senator; the mayor from an outlying community within the parish; the school superintendent; the president of Fort Polk Progress; and the Garrison Commander of Fort Polk.

The Management Team is in the process of hiring a Regional Growth Management Coordinator whose purpose will be to:

- Undertake planning and coordination activities from the "Grow the Army" initiative and the additional anticipated growth at Fort Polk, Louisiana.
- Provide overall and staff assistance to a new city, parish, and regional planning effort.
- Provide a variety of routine and complex technical and professional work in the current and/or long range planning of the city/parish and surrounding areas in the development and implementation of land use and related policies and regulations.

Implementation and Partnering Strategies

Housing

The lack of affordable/quality housing is a challenge within Vernon Parish. Zoning issues within the parish need to be addressed to protect the character and established pattern of desirable development, prevent land use incompatibilities, and maintain property values. There is also a shortage of hotel rooms in Vernon Parish, including short-to-long term (30-90 days) for those who may be in transition to the area.

Education

Increased student enrollment will also increase the need for certified teachers for all grade levels. This is an overall problem and concern in the state of Louisiana that is not limited to Vernon Parish. A new high school (grades 9 to 12) is needed in the Leesville community. The current high school is 50 years old and in need of major renovations or new construction. The bonding capacity of the school district is approximately \$28 million. The approximate cost of a new high school would be about \$60 million. If other funding sources are not available, strong consideration is being given

to a large remodeling project. Fort Polk has offered four plots of land, 40 acres each, to choose from as a possible site for the new high school. There is also a need for renovations to South Polk Elementary School, located on Fort Polk.

Infrastructure

Funding for additional water and sewer service within the parish is a challenge, as new subdivisions are built to accommodate the increase in the number of troops and their families, as well as the increase in the number of contractors and their families. An improved infrastructure system will help facilitate community development and economic diversity.

Transportation

Traffic congestion on U.S. Highway 171, the main corridor through Vernon Parish, is a challenge. The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development has installed new traffic signals to help improve traffic flow. They are also funding a transportation study to examine possible solutions to remedy congestion, including the feasibility of constructing a bypass. A number of other roads within the parish are also in need improvement.

Economic Diversification

The local economy is primarily based on service-related industries that support Fort Polk. There is a strong desire to attract more diverse businesses that will provide quality labor opportunities for the local market as well as for military spouses. Workforce training is also an issue that needs to be addressed to meet the needs of local businesses and to encourage future economic growth.

Successes/Lessons Learned

The Vernon/Fort Polk Regional Growth Management Task Force is in the beginning stages and can therefore offer little in the way of lessons learned or a progress report. The Office of Economic Adjustment has provided helpful information about how to create a Task Force and seek federal assistance to study and address growth impacts to the region.