

Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan for the Fort Bragg Region

Assessment and Recommendations



Chapter 16 Richmond County

September 2008

Submitted to the:

FORT BRAGG AND POPE AFB BRAC REGIONAL TASK FORCE

www.bracrftf.com

Developed by:



www.tdainc.org

In Partnership with:

Corporation for a Skilled Workforce (Workforce)

Developmental Associates, LLP (Public Safety)

ERISS Corporation (Workforce)

The e-NC Authority (Information & Communication Technologies)

Health Planning Source, Inc (Health Care)

Hobbs, Upchurch & Associates (Water and Wastewater)

Kathi Beratan, PhD & James Helgeson, PhD (Editors)

Kenan Institute for Private Enterprise, UNC-Chapel Hill (Air Travel)

ICF International (Economic Modeling & Transportation)

Martin/Alexiou/Bryson, PLLC (Transportation)

Operations Research/Education Lab, N.C. State University (Education k-12)

PKF Consulting (Hospitality and Cultural Resources)

Richardson Smith Gardner & Associates (Solid Waste)

DISCLAIMER

This report is intended as an aid to planners, managers, elected officials, and other decision makers in the Fort Bragg region. Our aim is not to dictate what should be done, but to assist in ongoing efforts to achieve goals and objectives identified and valued by the residents of the region. The recommendations presented in this report are suggestions for how the region could work towards those goals and objectives, based on best available information and current understandings.

The information, projections and estimates in this report are based upon publicly available data and have been prepared using generally accepted methodologies and formulas. The projections and needs presented in this report are based upon best estimates using the available data. It is important to note that currently available information and understandings are incomplete and cannot account for the inevitable, but unpredictable, impacts of unexpected global, national, state, and/or local events. Actual results and needs may differ significantly from the projections of this report due to such unforeseen factors and conditions, as well as inaccuracy of available data, and/or factors and conditions not within the scope of this project. Persons using this information to make business and financial decisions are cautioned to examine the available data for themselves and not to rely solely on this report.

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Chapter 16: Richmond County

A. Introduction

This report presents the results of a thorough assessment of the impact of the expansion at Fort Bragg and identifies action items that need to be taken to prepare for this growth. The assessment process included dozens of individual interviews and working group meetings attended by a diverse group of planners and engineers, elected officials, city and county employees, representatives of chambers of commerce, and other stakeholders. Their insights guided teams of experts in their information gathering and analysis. Following the sustainability guidelines described in the introduction to the full report, the information presented here is intended to support proactive, integrated, regional planning through which the region's communities can develop innovative and effective responses to potential as well as already existing problems.

This section, which identifies issues facing Richmond County and presents strategies for accommodating the impact of military-related growth, can be read

either independently or as part of the larger Growth Management Plan. It includes an assessment of the following topics:

- Economic Impact
- Education (K-12)
- Housing
- Information and Communication Technologies
- Water, Sewer, & Solid Waste
- Health Care
- Hospitality and Cultural Resources

Richmond County, which encompasses approximately 474 square miles, includes several incorporated municipalities: the cities of Rockingham and Hamlet; the towns of Dobbins Heights, Ellerbe, Hoffman, and Norman; and several small unincorporated communities and villages (**Figure 1**).

Figure 1. Map of Richmond County

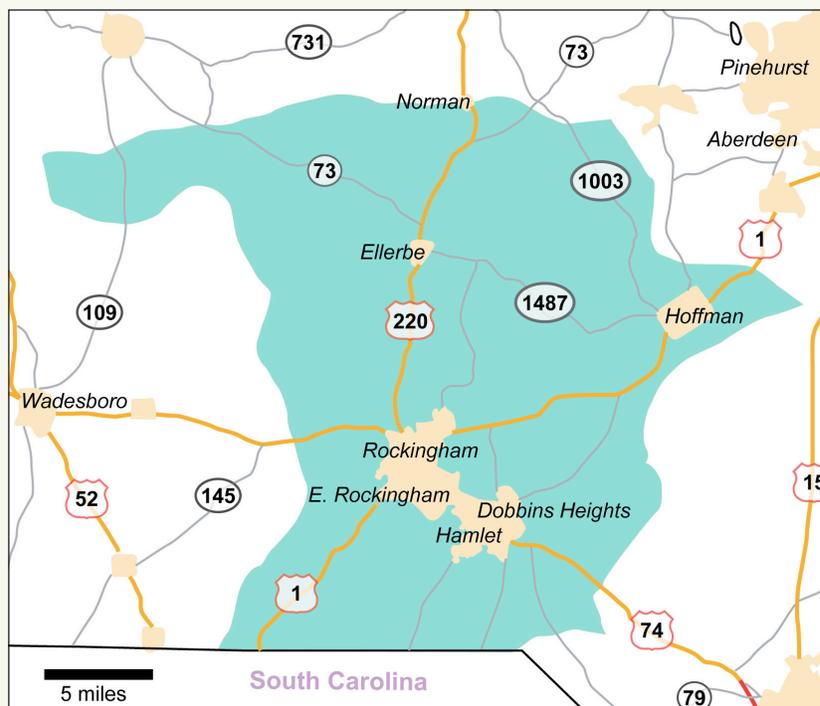


Table 1: Expected Number of Additional Military-Related Personnel

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	Totals
Active-Duty Army	2,242	129	1854	1,310	477	-700	153	143	5,608
Active-Duty Air Force	-309	-1088	-786	-579	-460	70	155	50	-3,247
Army Civilians	393	102	149	216	17	1,072	0	0	1,949
Air Force Civilians	23	257	-19	-85	-31	-3	0	0	142
Defense Contractors	1274	632	253	120	120	1,226	504	-27	4,102
Totals	3,623	32	1,451	982	123	1,615	762	116	8,704

1. Growth Scenarios Used in This Report

The terms “normal growth” and “expected growth” figure prominently in the following discussion. “Normal”—that is, natural—growth refers to the changes in local population and other economic factors that would be affecting housing markets and school systems even if there were no military expansion at Fort Bragg. “Expected growth” refers to the additional growth that will occur as a result of the planned expansion at Fort Bragg.

The number of additional military-related personnel expected to relocate to the region from 2006 through 2013 is shown in **Table 1**.

In addition, the expected growth scenario includes expected construction expenditures for military projects managed by the Army Corps of Engineers, as well as privatized military housing projects managed by Picerne Housing. Military construction expenditures total \$1.3 billion¹ between 2006 and 2013, and privatized military housing construction totals \$336 million² between 2006 and 2013. For a complete discussion of the economic modeling and associated assumptions developed for this project, refer to the regional economic impact chapter.

2. Recommended Actions

The “Recommended Actions” section located at the end of each section lists specific actions suggested as responses to the challenges identified in the chapter. All of the recommended actions are important for the region as a whole; each recommended action is

classified as being either “critical” or “important” based on the relevance of the action to the mission of Fort Bragg. Critical actions are urgent actions; failure to implement them could jeopardize the base’s mission. Important actions represent a less urgent “best practice” of more general value to the region, in that failure to implement an important action could adversely affect community planning but would not jeopardize Fort Bragg’s mission.

B. Economic Impact of Military Growth

The infusion of military, civilian, and supporting contractors, together with the concomitant investments needed for construction and related activities, is expected to provide a boost to the Richmond County economy and to lead to a more than \$51 million increase in Gross Regional Product by 2013.

In order to understand how a community is going to change, it is necessary to identify where that community currently stands. When considering the growth of an entire county, broad demographics that show population, income, employment, and commuting trends can provide a reliable snapshot of where the county is now and where it is headed.

1. Estimates provided by Glenn Prillaman, Fort Bragg Directorate of Public Works

2. Estimates provided by Gary Knight, Picerne Housing

Table 2. Population Growth in Richmond County, 2000-2006

Municipality	April 2000 Population	July 2006 Population	Change (number)	Change (%)
Dobbins Heights	936	891	-45	-4.81
Ellerbe	1,021	986	-35	-3.43
Hamlet	6,018	5,829	-189	-3.14
Hoffman	624	670	46	7.37
Norman	72	74	2	2.78
Rockingham	9,672	9,463	-209	-2.16
Unincorporated Area	28,208	28,787	579	2.05
Richmond County Total	46,551	46,700	149	0.32

1. Population

The population of Richmond County increased by 0.32% between 2000 and 2006. According to North Carolina State Data Center (SDC) estimates, the population increased from 46,551 in April of 2000 to 46,700 in July of 2006, the most recent date for which data are available. That 0.32% population increase was lower than the average statewide increase for the period. Between April 2000 and July 2006, municipalities in Richmond County grew in population as shown in **Table 2**.

As of July 2006, Rockingham had the 79th largest population and Hamlet the 109th largest population of the 541 North Carolina municipalities. The majority of this growth has occurred in the unincorporated portions of the county.

At the completion of the expansion at Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base in 2013, Richmond County’s total population is expected to have grown to approximately 47,500, corresponding to an increase of 400 attributable to military expansion.

C. Income, Gross Regional Product (GRP), Output, and Demand

In 2013, the Fort Bragg expansion is expected to account for an additional \$67 million in personal income, \$58 million in disposable income, \$51 million in Gross Regional Product, \$40 million in output (sales), and \$78 million in demand (2013).

At the completion of the Fort Bragg expansion in 2013, disposable income³ in Richmond County will have grown from \$1.52 billion to \$1.57 billion—that is, by \$58 million (**Table 3**). Similar to the trends seen in other variables, income changes in the regional economy spike at the peak of the military expansion in 2011, then settle to a more gradual increase over the long run as the regional economy absorbs the expansion. Gross regional product (GRP), the most commonly used metric for measuring value added to the regional economy, is analogous to the gross domestic product used for benchmarking activities in the national economy. While it was thought that the local economy would

3. Disposable income is defined as the portion of personal income that is available for consumers to spend. Disposable income equals personal income, less taxes and social security contributions, plus dividends, rents, and transfer payments (REMI Model Documentation Version 9.5).

Table 3. Economic Impact of Military Growth (excludes normal growth)

	2013 (millions)
Personal Income	+ \$67
Disposable Income	+ \$58
Gross Regional Product	+ \$51
Total Sales (output)	+ \$40
Total Demand	+ \$78

grow at a fair pace without the military expansion (that is, normal growth), the infusion of military, civilian, and supporting contractors, together with the concomitant investments needed for construction and related activities, is expected to provide a further boost to the Richmond County economy and lead to a GRP increase of \$51 million in 2013. Total sales of local businesses (output) are affected by changes in industry demand, the local region's share of each market, and international exports from the local region. Total sales are expected to increase to \$40 million by 2013. Total demand is defined as the amount of goods and services demanded by the local region; it includes both imports and local supply. Under the Fort Bragg expansion, total demand for Richmond County is expected to grow by about \$78 million by 2013 (from about \$2.36 billion to \$2.44 billion).

D. K-12 Education

Richmond County schools, which had a 2007-2008 Month 2 K-12 enrollment of 7,961, will experience military-related growth estimated at 75 students between the 2006-2007 and 2013-2014 school years. The expected impact will be concentrated in the northern and eastern areas of the county, where there is currently a surplus of school capacity at all school levels. Military-related growth is not expected to produce a capacity gap.

School systems nationwide are facing difficult planning challenges arising from increasing student populations, aging school infrastructures, and increasing complexity in pupil assignment. These challenges are shared by Richmond County, which must fund building and renovation projects based not only on normal population growth but also on the growth that is expected to occur as a result of the military expansion at Fort Bragg.

1. Current Conditions

Richmond County schools, which had a 2007-08 K-12 enrollment of 7,961,⁴ comprise the forty-ninth largest school district in North Carolina. Other

4. North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2007-2008 Average Daily Membership (ADM), Month-Two Report.

characteristics of the district include:

- Eight elementary schools, four junior high schools, one high school, and three alternative schools
- One thousand and ninety-six employees, including 46 administrators, 550 teachers, 196 teacher assistants, and 204 support staff⁵
- Elementary school students account for 47% of the student population, with middle school and high school students making up 24.9% and 28.1% respectively.

The Richmond County school system, which is in the process of reorganizing building usage on the K-8 grade campuses, does not have any capacity gaps.

a. Facility Needs

At the time of this assessment, school capacity information was not available. As a result, a detailed out-of-capacity analysis of each school in the district was not completed.

b. Historical Growth

Although live births have been decreasing over the last ten years in Richmond County, there has been a slight increase since 2002 (**Figure 2**).⁶

The six-year trend in Average Daily Membership for Month 2 is decreasing overall, with a marked decline since the 2005-06 school year (**Figure 3**).

5. "EAC Education Site Visit, September 9, 2008, Fort Bragg, North Carolina" presented by Dr. Dan Honeycutt, Superintendent, Harnett County Schools.

6. North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

Figure 2. The number of live births to residents of Richmond County per school year.

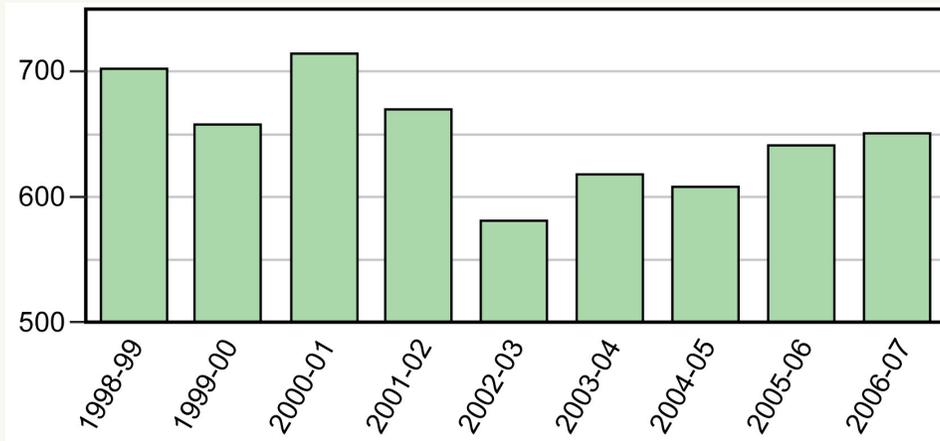
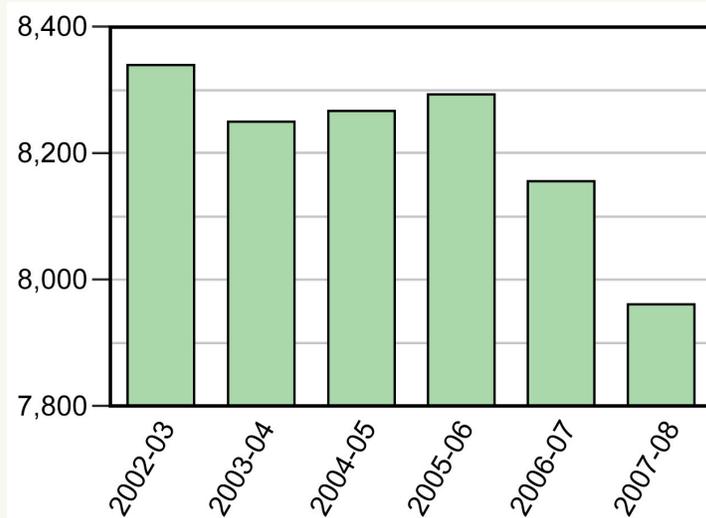
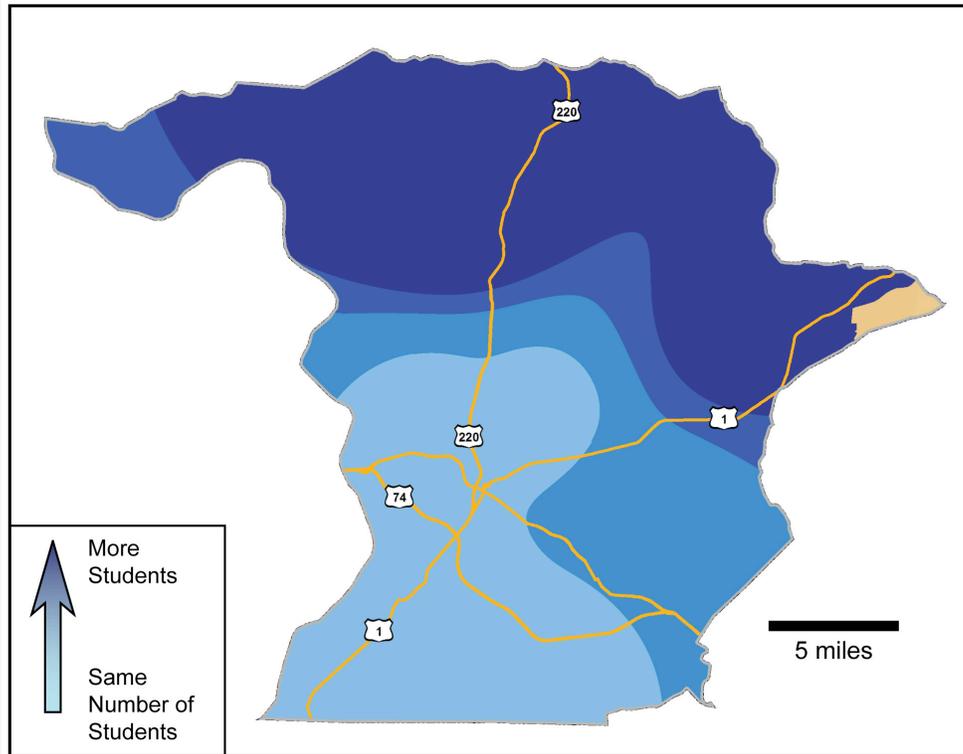


Figure 3. Average Daily Membership (ADM) for Month 2 in Richmond County schools.¹



1. ADM is the sum for all students of the total number of school days during the second month of the school year that the student's name is on the class roll divided by the number of school days in that month. ADC provides a more accurate count of the number of students in school than does enrollment.

Figure 4. Growth potential for K-12 student population in Richmond County. Darker blue indicates areas where the number of school-aged children is expected to grow the most



2. Future Needs

a. Geographic Distribution of Growth

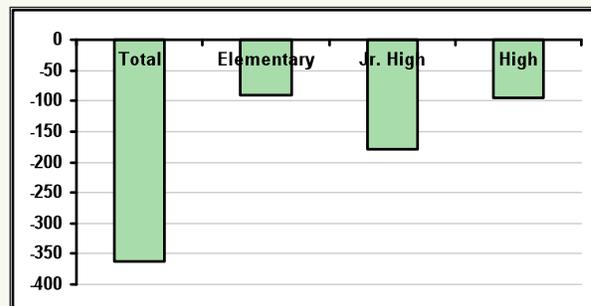
Richmond County schools experienced a five-year (2002-03 to 2007-08) average annual growth rate of -0.92%, with yearly student population growth rates averaging between -2.39% and 0.03%. The projected normal growth rate for Richmond County schools is expected to average 0.49% per year. Military-related growth is expected to add between fifty and sixty-five school-aged children to the county’s schools between the 2008-09 and 2013-14 school years.

Figure 4 shows how the expected growth in the K-12 student population will be distributed throughout the county. This map is derived from a combination of GIS analyses—of where current students live, where military personnel live, and where land parcels available for development are located—and interviews about land use conducted with a wide range of knowledgeable stakeholders. Both information sources are important; strong residential growth does not necessarily correlate with increasing

student population, and expert local knowledge is required to identify likely patterns. The resultant map reveals growth potential in the northern and eastern portions of the county.

The enrollment projections displayed in **Figure 5** are based on school enrollment records and available data about the number of newborn babies in each school district. The analysis used cohort survival ratios, which indicate the proportion of students enrolled

Figure 5. Projected Growth in Student Enrollment by School Level (2008-09 to 2013-14)



in one grade in a specific school year relative to the number of students enrolled in the next grade level and school year.

In order to assess the impact of pending school construction projects on capacity gaps and to provide guidance on the siting of future schools, identification of military-impacted school clusters are needed. Clusters include the individual school attendance areas - at the elementary, middle and high school levels - expected to receive the largest military impact. Required information to conduct this assessment was not available at the time of the publication of this plan.

3. Gaps

Currently, Richmond County schools are experiencing a system-wide capacity surplus, and the expansion at Fort Bragg is not expected to produce any capacity gaps.

4. Recommended Actions

Important Action 1: Promote local government and school system collaboration in locating schools, houses, and neighborhoods.

Description: Although there is no projected school capacity gap in Richmond County, efficient use of limited capital improvement funds will require strategic distribution of new facilities as future needs dictate. Where practical, Richmond County Schools and local governments should consider adopting the Smart Growth principles whereby school facility planning and local government planning efforts are integrated so as to reach multiple community goals: educational, economic, social, and fiscal. Collaborative decisions regarding the location of schools, houses, and neighborhoods will promote policies that are consistent across governmental and functional boundaries. The availability and price of land is obviously an important factor in siting schools. GIS-driven technology is available that will assist in correlating school decision-making with projected land use trends.

Responsible Parties: The integration of a collaborative model of decision making is recommended for all counties in the region. The BRAC Regional Task Force is well positioned to provide regional access to expert technologies and organizations.

E. Housing

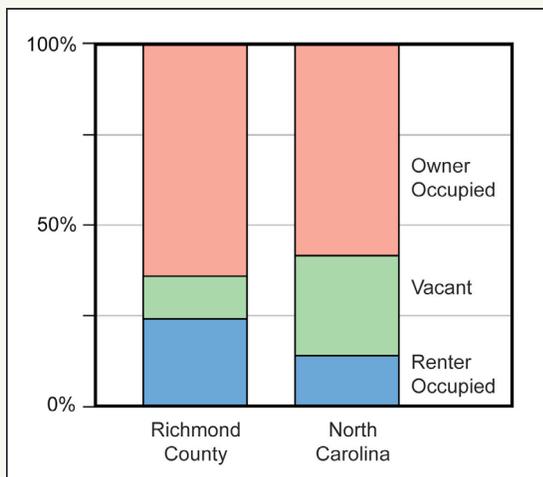
The Richmond County for-sale housing market is less robust than the national and regional housing markets. Housing in the area is substantially more affordable than in most parts of the United States. Although in the last eighteen months the local market has begun to slow, negative impacts to the local economy are being offset somewhat by military spending at Fort Bragg. Richmond County offers its present and future residents a wide variety of housing choices, ranging from smaller homes for less than \$100,000 to larger estate homes for \$350,000 plus.

1. Current Conditions

a. Housing Characteristics

The number of housing units in Richmond County in 2007 is estimated to have been 20,928. Up from 19,986 housing units in 2000, this total indicates an average annual growth rate of 0.7% for the last seven years. Approximately 2,805 (13.4%) of these housing units are vacant, compared to a statewide vacancy rate of 14.2%. Approximately 52.5% of the units in the county are owner-occupied, while approximately 34.1% are renter-occupied (**Figure 6**). The statewide rates for owner-occupied units and renter-occupied units are 59.6% and 27.9%, respectively.

Figure 6. Housing occupancy by type in Richmond County in 2007, compared with the statewide average



b. For-Sale Housing

The average price for a single-family home in Richmond County increased from \$86,933 in 2002 to \$93,478 in 2007, for an average annual increase of 1.1% annually (**Figure 7**). The overall market for single-family homes has outperformed the national housing market. From 2002 through 2006, total sales of local homes steadily increased. The local market for existing homes has slowed, however, with the total number of single-family home sales in February 2008 declining by 15% when compared to February 2007. Nationally, existing single-family home sales declined by 23.8% over the same period. Overall, there is nearly a twenty-month inventory of existing homes on the market, compared to a national inventory of approximately nine months. As of March 2008, the available inventory of existing houses consisted of 204 single-family units on the market, with an average price of \$112,751.⁷

The following affordability analyses measure whether a typical homebuyer could qualify for a mortgage loan on a typical new home in Richmond County.⁸ Factors that determine whether the typical homebuyer can qualify for a mortgage on a typical home include:

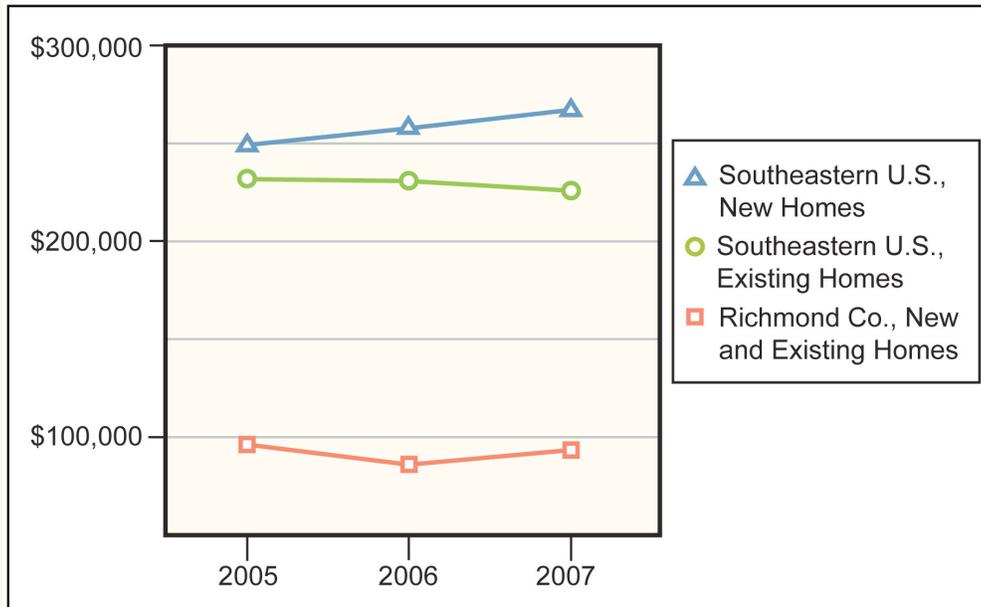
- The average price for a typical three-bedroom, two-bathroom new home that contains approximately 1,400 square feet is \$93,478.
- A minimum down payment of 5% of the purchase price is required.
- Mortgage principal and interest cannot exceed 28% of the median monthly income.
- The prevailing mortgage interest rate is assumed to be 6.5%.

Affordability analyses are commonly based on index values. An index value of 100 means that a homebuyer has exactly enough income to qualify for a mortgage on a typical, median-priced new home. An index value above 100 signifies that a homebuyer earning the median income has more than enough

7. MLS Data Provided By Richmond County Board of Realtors, P.O. Box 1229, Ellerbe, NC 28338 (910) 652-5982 Contact: Brandi Heath

8. According to the Fort Bragg Community Impact Assessment (page 17), 71% of the military families coming into the area will be pay grades E3 through E5 and 10% will be pay grades O1 through O3

Figure 7. Average sales price for single-family homes in Richmond County in 2007, compared with averages for existing and new homes in the region



income to qualify for a mortgage loan on a median-priced new home. For example, an affordability index of 120 means that a homebuyer has 120% of the income needed to qualify for a loan covering 95% of a median-priced, new single-family home. An increase in the index shows that this homebuyer is more able to afford the typical median priced new home.

Single, active-duty military personnel have affordability indices ranging from 130 for a junior enlisted (E2) to 437 for a company grade officer (O5). This suggests that the typical three-bedroom, two-bathroom new home would be affordable for junior enlisted personnel. These affordability indices are based on single-earner families. Many families have two or more incomes.

In terms of housing production, single-family housing permits increased consistently between 2003 and 2005, with the greatest number of permits, 392, being issued in 2005. The number of permits issued dropped substantially in 2006 and in 2007. Thirty-four permits were issued between January and March of 2008—24% fewer than during the same period in 2007.

c. Rental Housing

The price of rental housing typically averages from \$468 a month for a one-bedroom unit to \$652 a month for a three-bedroom unit. In general, incoming military families at all pay grades and civilian families with incomes at or below 84% of median income should be able to find homes and pay rents and utilities in Richmond County.

Rental affordability depends on both affordable monthly rent rates and the availability of units having such rates. Under U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) guidelines, a family should spend no more than 30% of its income on rent and utilities. To assess the affordability of housing for military personnel, military income is defined as base pay, subsistence allowance, and housing allowance. Representative pay grades at the lowest number of service years are used when determining the floor necessary to achieve affordability for military families. HUD defines a Fair Market Rent as the average rent in the county, by unit size.

Table 4 provides an analysis of the ability of military families at various military income levels to pay the fair market rent.

Table 4. Rental Affordability in Richmond County

Two Person Household						
Rank	E2	E6	W2	W4	O3	O5
Annual Income	\$31,377	\$51,322	\$68,454	\$91,588	\$71,553	\$105,225
Monthly Housing Expense @ 30% of Annual Income	\$784	\$1,283	\$1,711	\$2,290	\$1,789	\$2,631
Fair Market Rent (1-bedroom)	\$468	\$468	\$468	\$468	\$468	\$468
Affordability Gap	\$316	\$815	\$1,243	\$1,822	\$1,321	\$2,163
Fair Market Rent (2-bedroom)	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519
Affordability Gap	\$265	\$764	\$1,192	\$1,771	\$1,270	\$2,112
Three- and Four-Person Household						
Rank	E2	E6	W2	W4	O3	O5
Annual Income	\$31,377	\$51,322	\$68,454	\$91,588	\$71,553	\$105,225
Monthly Housing Expense @ 30% of Annual Income	\$784	\$1,283	\$1,711	\$2,290	\$1,789	\$2,631
Fair Market Rent (2-bedroom)	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519	\$519
Affordability Gap	\$265	\$764	\$1,192	\$1,771	\$1,270	\$2,112
Fair Market Rent (3-bedroom)	\$652	\$652	\$652	\$652	\$652	\$652
Affordability Gap	\$132	\$631	\$1,059	\$1,638	\$1,137	\$1,979

In terms of multi-family housing production, the number of permits issued peaked in 2005 at 107 units and then dropped to sixty units in 2007. Ten permits were issued between January and March of 2008; this number is substantially lower than the number of permits issued for the same period in 2007.

2. Future Needs

a. Anticipated For-Sale Housing Demand

Table 5 indicates the county’s projected population growth (both normal and military-related) between 2007 and 2013 and the number of single-family homes it will take to accommodate this growth.⁹

The table shows that there will be need for 149 owner-occupied homes in Richmond County between 2008 and 2013; most of which are available in the existing inventory of for-sale homes. The majority of these units will be needed for the population associated with the military growth at Fort Bragg; the remainder reflects normal growth, and thus would have been needed even without the base expansion. It

9. As a result of comments received at the June 17 2008 community meeting, this demand analysis is being updated to reflect an increased rate of homeownership and to show Army housing separately.

should be noted that this is an estimate of homebuyer requirements and should be relied upon only as a guideline.

b. Anticipated Rental Housing Demand

Table 6 indicates the county’s projected population growth (both normal and military-related) between 2007 and 2013 and the number of rental homes it will take to accommodate this growth. There will be need for fifty-six rental homes in Richmond County between 2008 and 2013. The majority of these units will be needed for the population associated with the military growth at Fort Bragg; the remainder reflects normal growth, and thus would have been needed even without the base expansion. It should be noted that this is an estimate of rental requirements and should be relied upon only as a guideline.

3. Gaps

There are several housing-related challenges that continue to face the region and the county. The inventory of for-sale properties remains high, credit standards are tightening, availability of future affordable rental housing is unclear, and green

Table 5. Projected Demand for Homes Resulting from Military-Related Growth

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Population								
Normal Growth	46,823	46,971	47,033	47,048	47,048	47,054	47,058	
Expected Growth	128	216	259	270	323	363	399	
Total	46,951	47,187	47,292	47,318	47,371	47,417	47,457	
Total Households								
Normal Growth	18,957	19,017	19,042	19,048	19,048	19,050	19,052	
Expected Growth	52	87	105	109	131	147	162	
Total	19,009	19,104	19,147	19,157	19,179	19,197	19,213	
Homeowner Households								
Normal Growth	13,782	13,825	13,843	13,848	13,848	13,849	13,851	
Expected Growth	38	64	76	79	95	107	117	
Total	13,819	13,889	13,920	13,927	13,943	13,956	13,968	
For-Sale Housing Units	--	44	18	4	0	2	1	69
Normal Growth	--	26	13	3	16	12	11	80
Expected Growth	--	69	31	8	16	14	12	149
Total								

building efforts require additional emphasis. These gaps are discussed in this section.

The number of homes listed for sale has recently declined in many markets throughout the country. One factor contributing to reduced inventories is that potential sellers are not listing their homes because they do not want to compete with builders and banks that have been cutting prices in order to reduce their inventories of new or foreclosed homes. Although the supply of for-sale housing is no longer rapidly increasing, the inventories remain abundant. Until the for-sale inventories return to a six month supply, local marketing efforts should continue and those interested in constructing additional new for-sale housing should be cautious.

Credit standards have been getting tighter all year, reducing the number of people who qualify for loans. However, many potential homebuyers can still qualify for a loan. Qualified borrowers should have little difficulty finding conforming and FHA-insured mortgages. Given the present “buyer’s housing

market”, it may be time to accelerate homebuyer financing and counseling efforts. Of course, the continued increase in foreclosures nationally should give caution to any agency considering such an initiative. Many families may not be ready to purchase a home. The number one barrier to buying a home is poor credit. In addition, some families simply cannot afford a down payment. Buyer investment in the home is important for the long-term sustainability of home ownership. For those families that are ready, homebuyer education and counseling that provides both pre-purchase and post-purchase counseling is essential. Such counseling and education will promote awareness of the home-buying process, educate homebuyers on financing alternatives, and provide information necessary to sustain homeownership—information, for example, on home maintenance and budgeting.

Green building is another consideration. Green building is “the practice of creating structures and using processes that are environmentally responsible

Table 6. Projected Demand for Homes Resulting from Military-Related Growth

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	
Population								
Normal Growth	46,823	46,971	47,033	47,048	47,048	47,054	47,058	
Expected Growth	128	216	259	270	323	363	399	
Total	46,951	47,187	47,292	47,318	47,371	47,417	47,457	
Total Households								
Normal Growth	18,957	19,017	19,042	19,048	19,048	19,050	19,052	
Expected Growth	52	87	105	109	131	147	162	
Total	19,009	19,104	19,147	19,157	19,179	19,197	19,213	
Renter Households								
Normal Growth	5,175	5,192	5,198	5,200	5,200	5,201	5,201	
Expected Growth	14	24	29	30	36	40	44	
Total	5,189	5,215	5,227	5,230	5,236	5,241	5,245	
For-Rent Housing Units								
Normal Growth	--	16	7	2	0	1	0	26
Expected Growth	--	10	5	1	6	4	4	30
Total	--	26	12	3	6	5	4	56

and resource-efficient throughout a building’s life-cycle from siting to design, construction, operation, maintenance, renovation and deconstruction”¹⁰. Green buildings reduce the overall impact of the built environment on human health and the natural environment by more efficiently using energy and other natural resources and reducing waste, pollution, etc. As mentioned, caution should be exercised in the construction of new housing, particularly for-sale housing. However, when new construction or rehabilitation is needed the integration of green building standards is encouraged.

The availability of affordable rental housing for lower income households is essential to the success of local community and economic development efforts. To date, fair market rents have been affordable to the majority of households in the county. Recent trends suggest that the rental housing market is tightening. More families are opting to rent instead of buy a

home and more lower-income households are moving to the area. The rental market should continue to be assessed to ensure that new rental developments not only provide market-rate housing, but also provide affordable opportunities for lower-income households.

10. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (<http://www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/pubs/about.htm>)

4. Recommended Actions

Important Action 1: Secure state and Federal funds to provide homebuyer financing, counseling, and education for potential homebuyers.

Description: Given the present “buyer’s housing market” in Richmond County, it may be time to accelerate homebuyer financing and counseling efforts. Of course, the continued increase in foreclosures nationally should give caution to any agency considering such an initiative. Many families may not be ready to purchase a home. The number one barrier to buying a home is poor credit. In addition, some families simply cannot afford a down payment. Buyer investment in the home is important for the long-term sustainability of home ownership. For those families that are ready, homebuyer education and counseling that provides both pre-purchase and post-purchase counseling is essential. Such counseling and education will promote awareness of the home-buying process, educate homebuyers on financing alternatives, and provide information necessary to sustain homeownership—information, for example, on home maintenance and budgeting.

Responsible Parties: Local realtors, homebuilders, Richmond County, financing institutions, and local HUD-approved counseling agencies¹¹ should coordinate the promotion of marketing and outreach; the BRAC Regional Task Force could lend a hand in this effort. The Community Development Departments of the city and the county are also well positioned to take the lead.

Important Action 2: Participate in FORSCOM Housing Fairs and other events organized by the Army and the BRAC Regional Task Force.

Description: The Fort Bragg region offers a wide variety of home-buying opportunities. There is a substantial housing inventory, especially in the new home market. Personnel relocating from Atlanta with FORSCOM are of particular interest. A recent survey confirms that the income of these individuals is high and that they have a desire for larger-estate homes in secure communities. This group is also highly reliant on the Internet, in both their homes and their offices. Participation in homebuyer fairs at FORSCOM in Atlanta and participation in a regional website designed for the FORSCOM and defense contractor audiences are recommended. These efforts, coupled with normal demand for local housing, should reduce the existing inventory of available homes, resulting in a significant increase in new home production levels by late 2009 or 2010.

11. <http://www.hud.gov/offices/hsg/sfh/hcc/hcs.cfm>

Responsible Parties: The BRAC Regional Task Force has asked Richmond County to take the lead in developing a booth for display at any upcoming Atlanta housing fairs held for the benefit of FORSCOM personnel. County officials should coordinate closely with local realtors, homebuilders, and other real estate professionals to ensure that Richmond County is well represented. The BRAC Regional Task Force could also take a coordinating role in the development of a comprehensive website specifically designed with FORSCOM and defense contractor personnel in mind. This site should be a one-stop shop for everything in the region—from health care and education to housing and leisure activities—with all counties in the region well represented. The website recommendation is described in greater detail in the regional portion of the Comprehensive Regional Growth Plan.

Important Action 3: Promote sustainability through the use of “green building” technologies.

Description: Green building practices offer an opportunity to create environmentally sound and resource-efficient buildings by using an integrated approach to design. Green buildings promote resource conservation, including energy efficiency, renewable energy, and water conservation features; consider environmental impacts and waste minimization and help create a healthy and comfortable environment.¹² One example of an approach to “green building” is The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System™ which advocates sustainability in the home building industry.

Responsible Parties: Richmond County and its municipalities can support the construction of sustainable housing in a number of ways. The county could adopt “green building” standards for private sector construction, incorporate sustainability checklists in rezoning and permitting processes, implement a fast-track building permit process for “green building”, provide financial incentives to build sustainable housing, and support statewide legislation to promote the construction of sustainable housing.

12. www.hud.gov

F. Water, Wastewater, and Solid Waste

As a result of expansion at Fort Bragg, Richmond County is expected to grow by approximately 399 people (2013). This growth could add 60,000 gallons per day (GPD) to the county's peak water and sewer demand. Meeting projected total demand through 2030 will cost the county approximately \$21 million for water and \$11.4 million for wastewater. An additional \$299,000 for water and \$599,000 for wastewater costs will be attributable to military-related growth.

1. Current Conditions

There are several water and wastewater systems located in Richmond County. Each of these systems are briefly described in this section.

a. Water

Richmond County: Richmond County runs its own public water system. Most of the county is located in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin; a small part of the northeast side of the county is located in the Lumber River Basin. The Richmond County water system serves a population of 16,175 and has an average daily demand of 3.273. Total water use is divided as follows: 98% residential, 1% commercial, 0.5% industrial, and 0.5% institutional. The Richmond system obtains its water from a withdrawal at Blewett Falls Lake as well as through purchases from the Anson County Water System and the city of Hamlet. The county operates a surface water treatment plant with a permitted capacity of 6.70 MGD. The system's finished water storage capacity is 4.750 MGD.

Town of Ellerbe: Ellerbe owns and operates its own water system. Ellerbe, which is located in the north central portion of the county, is in the Yadkin Pee-Dee River Basin. The town purchases its water from Richmond County. The system has approximately twenty miles of water distribution lines that serve a population of 1,010. The average daily demand is 0.088 MGD. Total water use is divided as follows: 96% residential, 2 % commercial, 1% industrial, and 1% institutional.

City of Hamlet: Hamlet owns and operates its own water system. Hamlet, which is located in southeastern Richmond County, is in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. The system has approximately eighty-six miles of water distribution lines that serve a population of 11,500. The average daily demand is 1.468 MGD. Total water use is divided as follows: 92% residential, 4% commercial, 1% industrial, and 3% institutional. Hamlet obtains its water from City Water Lake and has a surface water treatment plant permitted at 3.0 MGD. The system also has an emergency connection to the Richmond County water system. Hamlet's finished water storage capacity is 1.125 MGD.

City of Rockingham: Rockingham owns and operates its own water system. Rockingham, which is located in south central Richmond County, just northwest of Hamlet, is in the Yadkin-Pee Dee River Basin. The system has approximately eighty-four miles of water distribution lines that serve a population of 9,672. The average daily demand is 2.588 MGD. Total water use is divided as follows: 84% residential, 15% institutional and 1% industrial. Rockingham obtains its water from withdrawals in City Pond and Roberdel Lake and has a surface water treatment plant permitted capacity of 3.0 MGD. The city system is also able to purchase water from Richmond County and Hamlet. Rockingham's finished water storage capacity is 1.775 MGD.

b. Wastewater

Richmond County: Richmond County provides limited sewer service within some unincorporated areas. The wastewater is treated by the City of Rockingham's treatment plant.

Town of Ellerbe: Ellerbe has one wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) with a permitted capacity of 0.180 MGD and an average daily flow of 0.100 MGD. The plant discharges into Tom's Branch. The Ellerbe system has 535 sewer connections.

City of Hamlet: Hamlet has one WWTP with a permitted capacity of 1.0 MGD and an average daily flow of 0.80 MGD. The plant discharges into Mark's Creek.

City of Rockingham: Rockingham has one WWTP with a permitted capacity of 9.0 MGD and an average daily flow of 4.3 MGD. The plant discharges into the Pee Dee River.

c. Solid Waste

There are six governmental bodies in Richmond County that have solid-waste management programs. These include the county itself, the cities of Hamlet and Rockingham, and the towns of Dobbins Heights, Ellerbe, and Hoffman. Residents in the town of Norman use the county’s facilities.

Solid-Waste Collection. Richmond County operates ten staffed convenience centers for the collection of residential waste and recyclables. The county transfers waste collected at each convenience center to the Richmond County Transfer Station in Rockingham. Each of the county’s convenience centers is fenced for security and, in order to limit the number of trips for transfer vehicles, is equipped with a stationary compactor for residential waste.

Dobbins Heights, Ellerbe, Hamlet, and Hoffman each offer weekly residential curbside waste collection using city/town staff. Rockingham offers weekly, residential, rear-yard waste collection using city staff. In Dobbins Heights, Ellerbe, and Rockingham waste is collected twice each week. With the exception of Hoffman, each municipality also collects commercial waste.

Most of the waste collected in Richmond County is taken to one of the following facilities:

The Richmond County Transfer Station in Rockingham, which is owned by the county and operated by Republic Services (Uwharrie Environmental) under State Permit No. 77-03T. In FY 2005-06, 43,332 tons of waste were handled at the transfer station.

The Chambers Development - Anson Waste Management MSW Landfill in Polkton (Anson County), which is owned and operated by Chambers Development under State Permit No. 04-03.

Recycling. The county provides recycling at each of its convenience centers. Ellerbe provides curbside collection of recyclables and also has one staffed convenience center for recyclables. The other municipalities do not offer recycling services. Richmond County does allow residents of municipalities to use its convenience centers for the drop-off of recyclables.

Waste collected at the Richmond County transfer station is sent to the Uwharrie Environmental Material Recovery Facility, where recyclables are separated through mixed-waste processing.

Special Waste Management. Richmond County collects used oil and pesticide containers. None of the municipalities currently provides collection of special wastes.

Yard-Waste Handling. Yard wastes in Richmond County are collected and mulched/composted at the county’s yard-waste facility or disposed of in Hamlet’s land-clearing and inert-debris (LCID) landfill. Each municipality provides curbside collection of yard wastes.

Solid-Waste Disposal. Municipal solid-waste collected at the Richmond County Transfer Station is hauled by the county to the Uwharrie Environmental Materials Recovery Facility in Mt. Gilead (State Permit No. 62-02MRF). After processing, the remaining waste is disposed of in the Uwharrie Regional Landfill (State Permit No. 62-04). The county’s contract for disposal will expire in 2011. The county currently charges a \$39.67/ton tipping fee at their transfer station.

Program Costs and Funding. Richmond County’s solid-waste program is funded primarily by household fees and property tax revenues/general fund. The county’s program is operated as an enterprise fund¹³.

13. An enterprise fund for governmental activities is a self-sustaining cost center that operates in a manner similar to private business operations. Many local governments have shifted solid waste management services from the General Fund to an enterprise fund. This means that local governments have started viewing solid waste management services as a separate cost center with its own capital program and system of fees and charges so that it can operate on a stand-alone basis.

Table 7. Analysis of General Obligation Debt

	Ratings		Ratio of Total General Obligation Debt	
	Moody's	S&P	Property Valuation (%)	Per Capita (\$)
Cumberland County	AA3	AA-	1.050	537
Counties (250,000 pop. and over)			2.179 (avg.)	2,063 (avg.)
City of Fayetteville	AA3	AA-	.448	255
Municipalities (100,000 pop. and over)			1.457 (avg.)	1,335 (avg.)

The solid-waste programs for Dobbins Heights, Ellerbe, Hamlet, Hoffman, and Rockingham are funded by household fees and/or property tax revenues/general fund.

2. Future Needs and Gaps

Maintaining safe drinking water and environmentally sound sewer services is one of the most important responsibilities of any local government. As it becomes increasingly expensive to provide water and sewer services, local governments will need to balance their obligation to provide these fundamental services at affordable prices against the equally compelling need to manage their programs in a financially sustainable manner. While there are many financial and revenue strategies that are designed with local conditions and objectives in mind, managing water and sewer services inevitably involves asking customers to pay more for the services. Leaders should never forget that the failure to fund these services sufficiently would inevitably expose their communities to health and environmental hazards.

Although the expected military-related growth in Richmond County is limited and will not significantly impact water and sewer needs, existing needs exist. Specifically, the projected demand through 2030 will cost the county approximately \$20.7 million for water and \$11.4 million for sewer.¹⁴ Additionally, military-related population growth is expected to have little or no effect on county or municipal solid-waste programs.

14. Water, Sewer and Stormwater Capital Needs 2030, N.C. Rural Center

This section describes major financing alternatives available to local governments, including bonds, grants and loans, local rates, tap and impact fees, and special assessments. Such alternatives should be considered as alternatives to funding future water, sewer, and solid waste improvements.

General Obligation Bonds. Private market lenders, who are the primary source of water and sewer financing, account for 70% of the total financing for such projects. Because of low bond ratings, approximately 60% of the state's local governments cannot qualify for most infrastructure lending programs. Cumberland County and the City of Fayetteville, however, have solid ratings. They also have considerably more conservative general-obligation debt ratios (ratios, that is, that are calculated by comparing the governmental entity's total indebtedness with its appraised property valuation and its population) (**Table 7**).¹⁵

Revenue Bonds and Installment Financing. Revenue bonds can be offered publicly with a typical 25-year term. The debt is secured by the net revenues of the project, and no voter approval is required. However, specific financial tests must be met and specific covenants are required. Alternatively, installment financing can be provided without voter approval with a typical 20-year term. The security for installment financing is a pledge to appropriate funding for debt service and a lien on the financed asset. However, there are challenges putting liens on utility assets¹⁶.

15. Analysis of Debt at 6-30-2007. Department of State Treasurer, Division of State and Local Government Finance.

16. Presentation entitled "Utility Financing Alternatives and The Financing Team" by Rebecca B. Joyner, Attorney with Parker Poe Adams & Bernstein, LLP. January 22, 2008.

Grants and Loans. The federal role in financing water and wastewater projects has declined in recent years. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have significantly reduced the grant funds available for water and sewer improvements.¹⁷ Nonetheless, several sources of potential financing for water and wastewater projects remain, particularly at the state level. The following agencies have grant and/or loan programs available. Specific program guidelines and contact information are provided in the Appendix.

- Appalachian Regional Commission
- Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Division of Water Quality
- N.C. Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Public Water Supply Section
- N.C. Department of Commerce, Division of Community Assistance
- N.C. Department of Commerce, Commerce Finance Center
- N.C. Clean Water Management Trust Fund

N.C. Rural Economic Development Center

17. N.C. Rural Economic Development Center, Water 2030 Executive Summary.

Tap Fees, Impact Fees, and Special Assessments. In general, utilities charge three types of fees in North Carolina: tap fees, impact fees, and special assessments. Tap fees are designed to recover all or a portion of the cost (materials and labor) of water or sewer service line installation; impact fees are associated with system-capacity development. Because individual utilities have great flexibility in setting tap and impact fees, these fees can vary widely from one locale to another. Special assessments, on the other hand, are strictly defined in the NC General Statutes and may only be assessed by utilities (municipalities, counties, and authorities) under specific circumstances defined by the authorizing statute (§162A-216, §153A-185 and §162A-6, respectively)¹⁸.

18. One-time Fees for Residential Water and Sewer Connections in North Carolina. A publication of the Environmental Finance Center at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Report by: Andrew Westbrook, westbrok@sog.unc.edu. 3/27/06.

3. Recommended Actions

Important Action 1: Proactively plan water and sewer projects in conjunction with development activities.

Description: Because water and sewer services are such crucial components of any community's utility infrastructure, it is important that planning for their construction and maintenance be done with the utmost care and professionalism. The City of Fayetteville/Cumberland County 2030 Vision Plan recommends several principles that planners in general, and those in the Fort Bragg region in particular, should observe. General principles include:

- The placement of water and sewer lines should determine where development is done, rather than the other way around.
- Development density should be determined by the availability of infrastructure.
- Generally, infrastructure with excess capacity should be utilized first before additional monies are spent to install and maintain new infrastructure elsewhere.
- Adequate utilities infrastructure (water supply, sewage collection and treatment capacity, stormwater management, etc.) must be in place before the new development it serves is occupied

Responsible Parties: Municipal and county public works and planning directors, local elected officials, and planning commissions should work collaboratively to share best practices and implement new policies as necessary. The BRAC Regional Task Force could facilitate such regional collaboration.

Important Action 2: Coordinate local water and wastewater planning with the Fort Bragg Garrison.

Description: New infrastructure should not be placed in areas where it would encourage development incompatible with the mission of the Fort Bragg/Pope military complex. Fort Bragg should be included in all major local infrastructure planning. This will be especially important as Fort Bragg and surrounding local communities seek mutually beneficial opportunities to enhance services.

Responsible Parties: Municipal and county public works and planning directors, local elected officials, and planning commissions should work

collaboratively to share best practices and implement new policies as necessary. The BRAC Regional Task Force could facilitate such regional collaboration.

Important Action 3: Update financial plans for capital water and sewer improvements.

Description: The county and its municipalities should ensure that their estimates regarding both the quantity and the condition of their physical assets are up to date and accurate. It is important that local governments have reliable estimates as to how many and what kind of new water and wastewater facilities will be needed over the next five years. One set of estimates will target those new water and wastewater facilities that are used to expand capacity or address environmental health concerns. A separate set of estimates will be needed for those assets used for rehabilitation or for the replacement of existing infrastructure.

Careful consideration should be given to the identification of funding sources and to determining what percentage of total funding will come from each source (grants, debt, capital reserves, user rates, tap and impact fees, and special assessments). Local Capital Improvement Plans should be updated as necessary.

Responsible Parties: Municipal and county managers and local elected officials should work collaboratively to share best practices and identify funding sources as necessary.

Important Action 4: Work collaboratively with regional suppliers of water and sewer services.

Description: Counties and local governments in the region should collaborate in the attempt to identify and better understand the resources available to them in the region. Together the region's local governments should promote a regional approach to ensuring water quality (and thus the public health) and should support one another, where feasible, by buying and selling water and sewer services across municipal and county lines.

Responsible Parties: Municipal and county managers, local elected officials and other clean water stakeholders should work collaboratively to share best practices and implement new regional policies as necessary. The BRAC Regional Task Force could facilitate such regional collaboration.

G. Information and Communication Technology

High-speed Internet access is available for purchase at 85.7% of Richmond County households. This is the fourth-highest availability percentage in the seven-county Fort Bragg region and is slightly above the state average of 83.54%. High-speed access varies widely across the county, with high accessibility rates in the northern part of the county and much lower rates in the rest of the county. Richmond County has been working to equip all public safety and emergency response personnel to be part of the state’s VIPER first-response communication network. High-speed connectivity to all K-12 schools is in place. Richmond County school network technicians are the most over-extended in the Fort Bragg region, serving almost eight schools each. In the higher-education arena, relevant degree programs need to be expanded to increase throughput of certified graduates to support the growing demand for network specialist in the region. There are two videoconferencing facilities that support distance education and training in a group setting in Richmond County; the northern half of the county lacks ready access to videoconferencing facilities. The county’s website is marginally interactive and lacks transactional functions.

1. Current Conditions

a. Internet Access Status

Richmond County ranks second among Tier I counties in the Fort Bragg region with respect to broadband Internet access. Broadband access is available for purchase at 85.7% of households in the county. Access in Richmond County is provided primarily by cable-based services and Digital Subscriber Line (DSL) services, which are transmitted via telephone lines (**Table 8**). Some communities have access to

both types of service; some have only one of them, and some have neither.

Accessibility coverage estimates are self-reported by the provider companies. The ways that providers define service coverage are not wholly reliable, however, which means that their figures may not reflect the actual percentage of households that can obtain broadband access. For example, cable companies may designate a given zip code area as “covered”, when in fact all locations having that zip code may not be served by the cable companies. Thus, the 85.7% composite figure undoubtedly overstates the level of access available in large portions of the county.

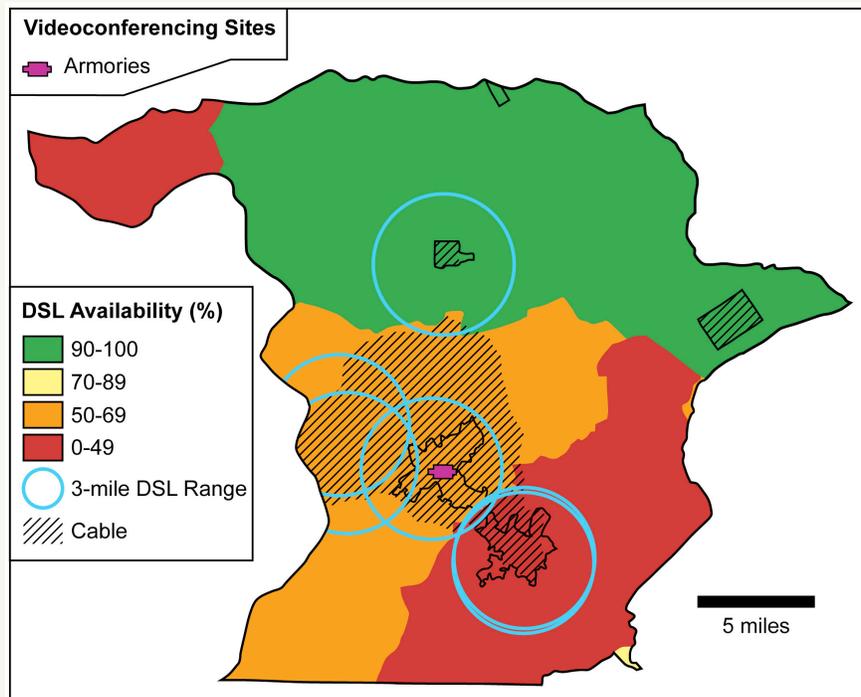
The estimated extent of Internet availability for Richmond County is shown in Figure 8. Each of the blue-ringed circles on the map represents a DSL service area called a wirecenter. Within each of these there is a central office that supports the wirecenter’s services. DSL service extends to areas within three miles of these central offices. As **Figure 8** indicates, the high-speed access rate estimates for Richmond County significantly overstate the actual level of access available in large parts of the county.

In addition to the serious localized problems of inadequate access, there is the more generalized issue of inadequate speed and bandwidth. As already mentioned, broadband access in Richmond County is largely accomplished through cable modem and DSL-level access speeds. The speeds and bandwidth supported by these types of technologies will be increasingly inadequate as a growing number of voice, data, and video applications use Internet Protocols (IP) for service delivery.

Table 8. Providers of available Internet connections in Richmond County

Cable	Time Warner
Telcos	Bellsouth, Embarq, Ellerbe Telephone Company, and Windstream
Satellite	Richmond County customers with a clear view of the southern sky have access to Direcway & Starband high-speed Internet Service.
Wireless	No wireless high-speed Internet access providers in Richmond County have registered with the e-NC Authority

Figure 8. Average availability of DSL service and location of videoconferencing sites in Richmond County



b. Sector-Specific Connectivity Issues

Efforts are already underway in Richmond County to improve ICT and broadband access. These efforts provide a base upon which the county can build, as these technologies serve as a core element in economic and community development plans. Existing efforts in different sectors are described below.

Public Safety: Richmond County is working to fully equip all public safety and emergency response personnel to be part of the Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders (VIPER) first-responder communication network that is managed by the Sate Highway Patrol.¹⁹ Partial implementation of this network has been funded through grants made to North Carolina by the U.S. Homeland Security Agency. A combination of local and federal funds is expected to cover the remaining costs of fully implementing this program. At present, the county has one VIPER transmission tower, sited at Ellerbe, on the air and operational. An additional 314 radios with a total cost of \$1,017,250 are needed to complete the Richmond VIPER network. The number of radios

19. More information about the VIPER program is available at <http://www.nccrimecontrol.org/Index2.cfm?a=000001,001148>

required by specific sectors of Richmond County’s first responders is shown in **Table 9**.

Education: Richmond County Schools, like school systems nationwide, is facing difficult challenges arising from increasing student populations, inadequate school infrastructure, increasing use of technology in the development and delivery of instructional content, and the need to support “anytime, anywhere” instruction through distance learning programs. Richmond County already has a rapidly growing demand for broadband Internet access to support the educational and training needs of students in K-12, professional development, and training programs. Several existing statewide initiatives will significantly improve the network through which web-based resources are delivered to the county’s schools.²⁰ Availability of these programs

20. Web-based resources available to the county’s schools include distance-learning programs originating with the military and National Guard and designed for their personnel; implementation of the Business Education Technology Alliance (BETA) study and state investment in regional education networks; implementation of the N.C. School Connectivity Initiative to support K-20 virtual-learning programs and its requirement for the state’s schools and connectivity to the home; the N.C. School of Science and Mathematics Distance-Learning courses; NC Wise; AMDG; OSU; North Carolina Virtual Public Schools; the Learn and Earn

Table 9. Richmond County VIPER implementation status-Emergency radio requirement for Richmond County

Agency	Number of Radios
Law Enforcement (1 Per Sworn + 1 Per 1/3 Civilian not VIPER Compatible)	134
Fire Department not currently VIPER Compatible	168
Rescue Squad not currently VIPER Compatible	12
TOTAL Radios for Emergency Responders	314

to Richmond County students will depend on the presence of robust high-speed connectivity.

High-speed broadband connectivity to all public schools that are elements of the Richmond County Local Education Agency (LEA) is fully funded by a combination of federal e-Rate dollars, which cover 73% of connectivity costs, and the N.C. School Connectivity Initiative, which covers the remaining 27% of costs. Windstream Communications provides fiber-based service to the LEA Central Office. A Wide-Area Network (WAN) connects all schools in the system to the LEA at speeds up to 100 Mbps. Through the LEA, all schools are linked to a statewide education network, managed by the North Carolina Research and Education Network (NCREN). This network links schools to all of the state’s on-line education resources, to the public Internet, and to the higher level Internet-2 research network. At this point, the county’s primary responsibility for ensuring ongoing access to the schools consists of regular and timely filing of its annual e-Rate application.

Hardware and Software: Establishing connectivity is only one of the ICT issues facing public schools in Richmond County. There is a continual need for upgrading of the hardware and software that is required by the BETA project, Earn and Learn, Learn NC, and Impact projects. Even End-of-the-Year testing requires up-to-date computers and software. Schools cannot just use donated or other outdated equipment and software but must make ICT equipment a fixture in their annual budgets.

Impact of Connectivity on School Infrastructure: Enhanced access affects other areas of county school

Initiative’s requirement for online college courses; Two-plus-Two programs that integrate community college curricula with university degree programs; UNC-Greensboro iSchool courses; the UNC Tomorrow program, and even the pioneering web academies.

planning. Changes in the construction codes for schools and other public sector buildings are required to ensure that the building codes support the wiring and HVAC needs for additional ICT equipment. During a recent BRAC ICT focus group meeting, for example, representatives of the region’s public schools cited the lack of sufficient electrical outlets in classrooms as a serious challenge to delivering web-assisted instruction.

Impact of Connectivity on School Human-Resource Needs: A shortage of skilled network management technicians may emerge as one of the most critical impediments to meeting the demands created by growth in Richmond County and the region. Additional ICT personnel at the professional and certificate level will be needed to support higher requirements for ICT infrastructure in the schools and other public settings. Schools in the Fort Bragg region were surveyed regarding the numbers and types of ICT-support personnel they employed. Results varied widely and did not allow for a qualitative statement of the level of actual training or expertise held by the ICT technicians in the various counties. The data are none-the-less revealing and raise issues of concern. Each ICT technician in Richmond County serves an average 7.7 schools, the highest among the region’s Tier I counties. (Region-wide, this statistic ranges between 2.2 and 7.7.)

Higher Education/Adult Learning: Richmond Community College in Richmond County offers the ICT-related education and training programs necessary to provide the skilled technicians and professionals needed to meet the growing demand for ICT services in the county and the region. Training and educational opportunities are augmented by strong programs at Fayetteville Technical Community College and other colleges and universities in the region.

Infrastructure Issues: Videoconferencing facilities provide an efficient approach to delivering distance-education programs to multiple students. Such facilities are particularly important in the Fort Bragg region, where they are used to support the on-going training needs of military and National Guard personnel. The National Guard supports two controlled-access networks (Guard Net II and Guard Net 132) with access at the National Guard Armory near Sanford. In addition, the National Guard is paying to build computer labs at nearby Fayetteville Technical Community College where Guard members can take non-credit, continuing-education courses. The Guard's community college-based facilities are also available for use by civilians. An additional N.C. Information Highway site at Richmond Community College high schools makes central Richmond County comparatively well-supplied with videoconference centers as shown in Figure 8.

Government: Movement of government services to an electronic platform ("e-government") allows for cost-effective delivery, improved responsiveness, and increased transparency. E-Government is proving to be particularly important in that it allows military personnel to access local government services while deployed.

Richmond County has made significant strides in developing a website that is useful to existing citizens and businesses. Richmond County's e-government website has been evaluated on the basis of content and usability against best practice models in Northwest Florida (<http://www.welcometonorthwestflorida.com/index1.html>) and Havelock, NC, (<http://www.cityofhavelock.com/>). Results of the analysis are summarized in **Table 10**. In general, the site is well designed and useful; however, it is only marginally interactive and lacks transactional functions.

Impact of Connectivity on County Government

Human-Resource Needs: A shortage of skilled network management technicians may emerge as one of the most critical impediments to meeting the demands of growth in Richmond County and the region. Additional ICT personnel at the professional and certificate level will be needed to support the growing number of web-based government services.

2. Future Needs

Information and communication technologies (ICT), especially those supporting high-speed broadband Internet uses, are becoming increasingly critical to local, state, and national economic and community development, with real and measurable impacts in employment, the number of businesses overall, and the number of businesses in ICT-intensive sectors. Many of the military personnel being transferred to Fort Bragg are technologically adept and will expect to have immediate and sophisticated access to ICT functions such as e-government, e-learning, e-health, and e-commerce. If they are to establish immediate professional and personal connections with the community, these personnel will need access to a high-speed, broadband Internet connection, both on- and off-base. As bandwidth needs increase for base operations, new applications will continue to be developed and will create further connectivity challenges for the region.

As part of its overall effort to support the incoming FORSCOM and US Army Reserve Command (USARC), and to sustain the incumbent military units as a vital economic engine for the region, Richmond County would greatly benefit from upgrading its telecommunications capacity. The county's ability to attract and support a diverse and growing economy beyond the military will also be inextricably tied to the quality, speed, and ubiquity of high-speed broadband Internet connectivity.

The level of broadband access that will be needed to accommodate the area's military-related growth is suggested by the results of a November, 2007 survey conducted among FORSCOM personnel in the Atlanta region. Ninety-seven percent of the respondents have and use broadband access at home. This percentage is higher than the percentage of home Internet connections available in Richmond County. Sixty-one percent of the FORSCOM personnel use DSL to access the Internet, 36% use cable, and only 4% rely on dial-up modem connections. As shown in **Table 11**, the survey respondents and their families use the Internet at home for a wide range of tasks. It is highly likely, therefore, that the influx of FORSCOM personnel will increase the demand for high-quality broadband availability and web-based services in Richmond County.

Table 10. Richmond County Website Analysis

Website Address	www.richmondcountync.org
Preliminary Questions	Observations
Links to Local Government?	YES
Links to BRAC-RTF?	NO
General Items	Observations
Website Appearance	Professional appearance
Usability	Easy to navigate
Site Structure	Some areas of the website are still under construction and not yet populated (e.g. County Statistics, Online Forms)
Audio/Visual Capabilities	NONE
External Web links	Links to local and state information
Contact Information	Contact information on every page
Employee Directory	Department contacts listed
Calendar	Upcoming Events Calendar, but no events displayed
Searchable Databases	NONE
Forms, Applications, & Permits	Forms Online link, but no forms currently available
Scheduling System	NONE
Transactional Capabilities	NONE
BRAC Information	NONE
GIS	GIS Mapping
Newcomer's Guide	Available via Richmond County Chamber of Commerce website link
Listing of Property for Sale	NONE
Tax Information	Contact information for Tax Administrator and Tax Collector
Employment Opportunities	FAQ page refers visitors to the Employment Security Commission and offers telephone number for Richmond County Human Resources Office.
Library Link	NONE
Website's Capacity to Facilitate Citizen Involvement	Information available regarding procedure for appearing before Board of Commissioners
Feedback Form	Feedback Form
Alert Mechanisms	NONE
Translation of Content	NONE
Intranet	NONE
Content Copyright	Copyright protection where applicable
Frequency of Updates	Does not have a last-updated date

3. Gaps

This assessment revealed several specific ICT-related gaps that need additional attention.

Internet Access: Access exceeds 90% only in the northern portion of the county. The situation in the northwestern and southern portions of the Richmond County is quite different. For more than half of the county broadband access is less than 70%. Many

of the county’s largest communities, including Rockingham, may be islands of high average availability surrounded by under-served regions.

Public Safety: At present, the county has one VIPER transmission tower that is operational. An additional 314 radios are also needed to complete the Richmond

Table 11. Routine uses of the Internet at home by FORSCOM personnel and their families

Check mail	98%
Educational (research, course, or Army on-line training)	52%
General Information searches (news, weather, sports)	86%
Work, professional information searches (government, business)	72%
Pay utility bills	74%
Pay taxes	33%
Search for medical information	73%
Do job-related tasks	43%
Search for jobs	47%
Commercial activities (shop, pay bills, etc.)	83%

VIPER network. This is a critical missing component in the regional emergency preparedness strategy.

Government: None of the five technical service personnel employed by Richmond County reported being certified in the LAN/WAN technology that serves as the backbone connecting each school to the central office. It is clear that more technical support personnel with higher levels of certification are needed to manage the growing ICT needs of Richmond County schools. This need for more skilled technicians should be factored into plans for expanding ICT-relevant programs and degree offerings at the region’s community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities.

Web Presence: While smaller towns and communities would benefit from having an attractive website populated with current content, most of them lack the means to develop and maintain such a site. Montgomery County provides a model that Richmond might consider. Montgomery provides a common template that its smaller municipalities can populate with current information, and the county then maintains the site for the municipalities. This approach leverages ICT resources to better serve all of its citizens and to support balanced growth across the county.

4. Recommended Actions

Critical Action 1: Fully equip public safety and emergency personnel to participate in North Carolina's VIPER first-responder network.

Description: The Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders (VIPER) System being implemented by the NC Highway Patrol will enable public safety officials at all levels to communicate directly with one another over a secure and reliable network without having to relay messages through a communications center. The value of this capability in times of emergency is becoming more important as the influx of military personnel into the Fort Bragg region significantly raises the threat profile of the region. Richmond County can reach compliance with the new VIPER standard with the purchase of 314 communications radios.

Responsible Parties: Local, state and federal government partnering to fully implement and equip the network. A request for federal support to equip the Fort Bragg region has been developed by the e-NC Authority for the BRAC Regional Task Force; prospects for federal funding are not certain at this time.

Important Action 2: Improve ICT infrastructure throughout the county to have high-speed access available at 95% of households.

Description: Updated and new network technology needs to be implemented in underserved areas of the county to make high-speed access (defined as >200 kilobits per second) available to 95% of households.

Responsible Parties: A partnership of public (federal, state, and local) and private (corporate and foundation) organizations will be necessary to meet this goal.

Important Action 3: Participate in formation of Regional K-20 Education Connectivity Task Force and Planning Group.

Description: Strong potential exists to achieve greater returns on investment by utilizing regional strategies for developing and supporting the K-20 school connectivity infrastructure, by sponsoring professional development opportunities in instructional technology, and by increasing throughput of certified and trained network and communications specialists from higher-education and technical training programs in the region.

Responsible Parties: Leaders from county government and education leaders from public and private schools K-16 in the Fort Bragg region, in collaboration with state BETA and e-learning commission

Important Action 4: Make connectivity a strategic focus for the county and a springboard for regional planning and economic and community development efforts.

Description: Richmond County should partner with counties in the region to develop a regional ICT Council comprised of a Chief Information/Technology Officer from each county in the Fort Bragg region and Fort Bragg to guide development and use of connectivity. Outcomes will include collaborative learning, cost efficiencies realized through joint purchasing agreements and regional software licenses, and more competitive bids for federal and state program support.

Responsible Parties: CIOs/CTOs for each county and Fort Bragg are in the best position to lead this effort.

Important Action 5: Champion effort to define and establish a Regional Health ICT Network.

Description: Richmond County should work with the N.C. Telemedicine Network to extend to the region efforts funded by the Federal Communications Commission to extend connectivity and champion their use of the network by appropriate health and medical institutions, including the public health department and public and private health clinics.

Responsible Parties: County government and health leaders in collaboration with the N.C. Telemedicine Network, the e-NC Authority, and NCHICA

Important Action 6: Establish Richmond County as a best-practice e-government model.

Description: Richmond County should re-engineer its website to best-practice status for delivering to private and corporate citizens information and government services, and for extending to municipalities in the county electronic platforms, hosting services, and training needed to make Richmond an e-county of e-communities.

Responsible Parties: Richmond County CIO/CTO, local government IT directors, the e-NC Authority, the N.C. League of Municipalities, and the Center for Public Technology at the UNC School of Government at UNC-CH.

H. Health Care

Richmond County has two community hospitals that provide mainly primary and secondary services. The expansion of Fort Bragg will have little effect on the need for health services in Richmond County. However, health-care leaders in the county should take advantage of the region’s growth to establish specialty services closer to Richmond County residents.

1. Current Conditions

Richmond County has two community hospitals that provide primary and secondary services, and the majority of physicians in the county are primary-care physicians. Richmond County does not have inpatient rehabilitation beds, but it does provide twenty-two adult inpatient psychiatric and substance abuse beds.

a. Health-Care Provider Supply

Even though it has two hospitals, relatively few health-care providers are based full-time in Richmond County. Richmond shares many of its providers, especially its medical and surgical specialists, with surrounding counties such as Moore and Scotland. The county has approximately 3.2 FTE medical specialists, 9.8 FTE surgical specialists, 3.3 behavioral health practitioners, and twelve dentists.

b. Inpatient Bed Supply

Inpatient services in Richmond County are provided by two acute-care hospitals: FirstHealth Richmond Memorial Hospital (FHRMH) and Sandhills Regional Medical Center (SRMC). FHRMH is owned by FirstHealth of the Carolinas, a private, non-profit health-care network that includes two other acute-care facilities in the Fort Bragg region.²¹ SRMC is owned by Health Management Associates, Inc. (HMA), which owns three additional facilities in North Carolina and approximately fifty-nine hospitals throughout the United States.²² **Table 12** details inpatient bed capacity at FirstHealth Richmond

21. FirstHealth Moore Regional is located in Moore County and FirstHealth Montgomery Memorial Hospital is located in Montgomery County.

22. HMA owns Davis Regional Medical Center (Statesville), Franklin Regional Medical Center (Louisburg), and Lake Norman Regional Medical Center (Mooresville).

Memorial Hospital and Sandhills Regional Medical Center.

In fiscal year 2007, FHRMH’s and SRMC’s acute care beds operated at 39% and 67% occupancy respectively, for a combined occupancy of approximately 49% occupancy.²³ Therefore, there is capacity in the county for inpatient acute care growth.

Neither facility in Richmond County provides comprehensive cardiac or oncology services. However, both facilities do provide mobile cardiac catheterization services one to two days a week. In addition, both facilities provide diagnostic imaging services,²⁴ including mobile MRI.

c. Comprehensive Outpatient Services

All outpatient services, including diagnostic imaging and outpatient surgery are provided at the acute care facilities in Richmond County and at physician offices. There are no urgent care centers in the county, and the majority of people who need this service either leave the county or are handled in the emergency department.

23. FHRMH occupancy based on information provided on the facility’s 2008 Hospital License Renewal Application. SRMC did not submit volume information on its 2008 Hospital License Renewal Application. Volume is based on the Thomson Healthcare data in the Draft 2009 State Medical Facilities Plan.

24. Includes CT, mammography, general radiology and SPECT. Neither facility provides PET services.

Table 12. Inpatient Bed Capacity at FirstHealth Richmond Memorial Hospital and Sandhills Regional Medical Center

Bed Type	FHRMC	SRMC	Total
General Acute Care			
Medical/Surgical	55	48	103
Pediatric	12	0	12
Obstetrics	20	0	20
ICU	12	6	18
Total General Acute Care	99	54	153
Specialty Beds			
Psychiatric	0	10	10
Skilled Nursing	51	0	51

d. Home Health

Home-health services are provided in the home to individuals who are confined to the home. Such services are offered to individuals who do not need hospitalization but who need nursing services or therapy, medical supplies, or special outpatient services. FirstHealth Home Care-Richmond is the only home-health agency in Richmond County. Currently there is no need for additional home-health agencies in the county. Furthermore, the military expansion at Fort Bragg is expected to have a minimal impact on the short-term need for such services.

e. Emergency Medical Services

Emergency Medical Services in Richmond County are provided by FirstHealth of the Carolinas.

f. Behavioral Health

Richmond County’s behavioral-health services are managed by the Sandhills Center for MH/DD/SAS.²⁵ The Sandhills Center administers and, in some cases provides, the following services:

- Outpatient therapy
- Psychiatric services
- Case management
- Residential services
- Day services
- Twenty-four-hour inpatient services
- Periodic services
- Emergency services

Access to these services is provided through the Richmond County access unit located on South Lawrence Street in Rockingham.

Sandhills Regional Medical Center currently has ten adult inpatient psychiatric beds and operated at 77% occupancy in fiscal year 2006.²⁶ In addition, Samaritan Colony in Rockingham provides twelve adult detoxification and substance-abuse treatment beds.

2. Future Needs

The expansion of Fort Bragg will have little effect on the need for health services in Richmond County. However, health care leaders in the county should leverage growth in the region to meet existing needs for specialty physicians and dentists.

a. Physician Needs

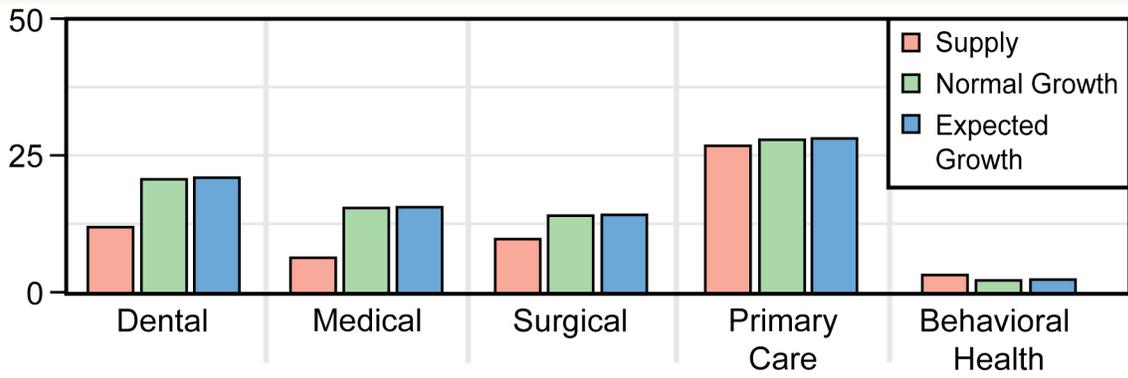
Existing physician needs in Richmond County will not be impacted by the expansion of Fort Bragg, as shown in **Figure 9**.

Despite having two acute-care facilities, Richmond County lacks a sufficient supply of medical and surgical specialists. This is probably due in part to the comparative proximity of facilities in other counties. However, facilities in Richmond County may choose to leverage growth in the region to support the development of specialty services closer to Richmond County residents.

25. A common abbreviation used by state agencies meaning Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services.

26. SRMC did not publicly report FY 2007 volume information.

Figure 9. Projected number of health care professionals needed in Richmond County in 2013 compared to the estimated supply



As with many other counties in the region, Richmond County has both an existing and a projected shortage of dentists.

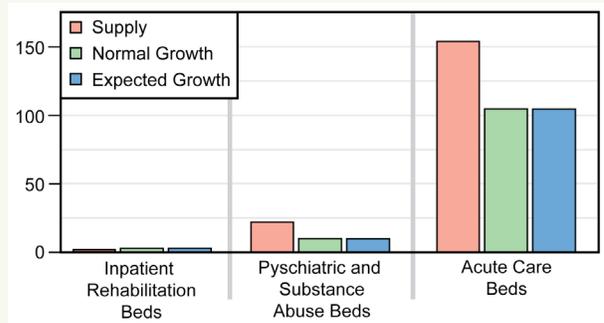
b. Inpatient Bed Need

Richmond County’s existing inpatient bed supply is sufficient to meet the needs of county residents, as shown in **Figure 10**.

Richmond County has a surplus of acute-care and inpatient psychiatric and substance-abuse beds. Due to their distance from Fort Bragg, however, Richmond County providers will probably not be called upon to assist with any of Cumberland County’s overflow-generated, acute-care needs.

There is no need for inpatient rehabilitation beds in Richmond County. All inpatient rehabilitation demand can be met by referral facilities in neighboring counties. These patients can be effectively treated at Moore and Cumberland County regional referral centers that have inpatient rehabilitation programs. According to the 2008 State Medical Facilities Plan, each of these programs has the capacity to accept additional patients.

Figure 10. Projected need for inpatient beds in Richmond County in 2013 compared to the estimated supply



3. Recommended Action

Important Action: Monitor the need to develop specialty services in Richmond County.

Description: The major future health-care need in Richmond County (under both normal and military-related population growth conditions) is for medical and surgical specialists. It is suggested that strategic service line plans and medical staff plans be developed or updated.

Responsible Party: FHRMH and SRMC leadership with the support of BRAC Regional Task Force representatives

I. Hospitality and Cultural Resources

Lodging and food and beverage establishments are limited in Richmond County. Most such businesses that do exist are located in and around the community of Rockingham. Meeting space is also limited throughout the county. There is very little meeting space that is co-located with area hotels, and only a few suitable freestanding facilities are suitable for such purposes. Although a modest array of parks, recreation, and cultural programs are offered in the county, residents generally rely on the programs and facilities in neighboring Moore and Scotland Counties for major events. The wildlife refuge and Speedway are important recreational offerings that are open to local residents and visitors alike. Funding for culture and the arts continues to be a challenge.

1. Current Conditions

a. Lodging

As indicated in **Table 13** accommodations in Richmond County tend to be budget and economy in nature. Accommodations tend to be of an older and non-branded nature. Within the eleven-county area surrounding Fort Bragg, more appropriate accommodations are available to the northeast of Fort Bragg in Moore County and, to a lesser extent, to the southeast in Scotland County.

b. Meeting Space

Table 14 lists the Richmond County facilities that have available meeting space.

Table 14. Meeting Facilities - Richmond County

Name of Establishment	City
Richmond Community Theatre	Rockingham
Richmond Pines Country Club	Rockingham
Robert and Elizabeth Cole Auditorium	Rockingham
Rockingham Dragway	Rockingham

The largest meeting space in the county is housed at the Robert L. & Elizabeth S. Cole Auditorium and Community Center, which is located on the Richmond Community College campus in Hamlet. The center’s three banquet rooms contain approximately 3,600 sq. ft. of available space, and its auditorium seats 968 people. Other, much less accommodating meeting facilities are available at Richmond Community Theatre and the Rockingham Dragway.

c. Parks and Recreation

Richmond County is an ideal location for outdoor recreation and sports like hunting, fishing, golf, bird watching, and cycling. The county offers considerable outdoor recreational space, most notably the Pee Dee National Wildlife Refuge, which is shared with Anson County. The refuge contains 8,843 acres of accessible conservation land. Like most counties its size, Richmond also offers an array of youth sports programs.

The North Carolina Speedway, located northeast of Rockingham, is an especially interesting and

Table 13. Accommodations in Richmond County

Name of Establishment	City	Rooms
Economy Inn	Rockingham	50
Sunset Motel	Rockingham	26
Holiday Inn Express Hotel Rockingham	Rockingham	50
Royal Plaza Motel	Rockingham	44
Comfort Suites Rockingham	Rockingham	64
Budget Inn	Rockingham	66
Days Inn Rockingham	Rockingham	50
Murray Hill Motel	Rockingham	49
Chek Inn	Rockingham	27
Sandman Motel	Rockingham	50

popular attraction. In use full time until its last major NASCAR event in late 2004, the track recently came under new ownership and has begun to host a number of smaller events—such as drag racing and NASCAR testing—and has even served as a movie set. The Rockingham Dragway, which hosts professional events throughout the year, operates as a separate entity from the speedway. The dragway, or “The Rock”, hosts International Hot Rod Association races, motorbike events, and other types of races.

d. Culture and Arts

Richmond County offers a variety of arts and cultural events and venues, including

- Museums: National Railroad Museum and Hall, Rankin Museum
- Theatre: Richmond Community Theatre, Cole Auditorium
- Concerts: The Plaza James concerts held, on a seasonal basis, adjacent to the Rockingham City Hall

2. Future Needs

Lee County offers ample hospitality and cultural opportunities for its residents; lodging, restaurants, meeting space, parks and recreational facilities, and cultural activities are generally only a short drive away. Overall, the expected military expansion is not expected to significantly impact most of these resources.

A limited supply of lodging and food and beverage establishments are available in Richmond County. Since there is no direct, high-speed mode of access between Rockingham and Fort Bragg, increased growth in the immediate Fort Bragg area is not likely to have much effect on the city’s lodging market. Additionally, what little meeting space there is in Richmond County is located almost exclusively in Rockingham. There are no hotels with adequate meeting space.

3. Gaps

The planned development of Interstate 74, a divided highway passing through Richmond County to the North Carolina beaches, may bring additional lodging demand to Richmond County. However, there is very little current military-related use of lodging and meeting facilities in Richmond County, and the expansion at Fort Bragg is not expected to generate much more. The same is true of parks, recreation, and cultural resources; parks and recreation programs however struggle to maintain adequate operating funds for their existing programs.

Important Action 1: Plan for the I-74 expansion.

Description: In all likelihood, the expansion at Fort Bragg will have little effect on Richmond county’s lodging and meeting space markets. If there is to be growth in these areas, it is more likely to be driven by the development of I-74 and the increased traffic this may bring to the community. Local hotel developers/operators should work with economic development officials to study this potential increase in through-traveler traffic and determine whether there is need for more overnight accommodations.

Responsible Party: Local hotel developers and county economic development officials

Important Action 2: Solicit additional operational funds for county parks, recreation, and cultural resources organizations.

Description: While the analysis of the current situation within county parks, recreation, and cultural resources organizations did not reveal any need for additional facilities, it was recognized that funding for existing operations continues to be a pressing problem, one that will be increased, however minimally, by the incoming population associated with the military-related growth. Additional funding sources, available from the entities established to assist communities impacted by the expansion at Fort Bragg, should be explored.

Responsible party: Richmond County Parks and Recreation Department