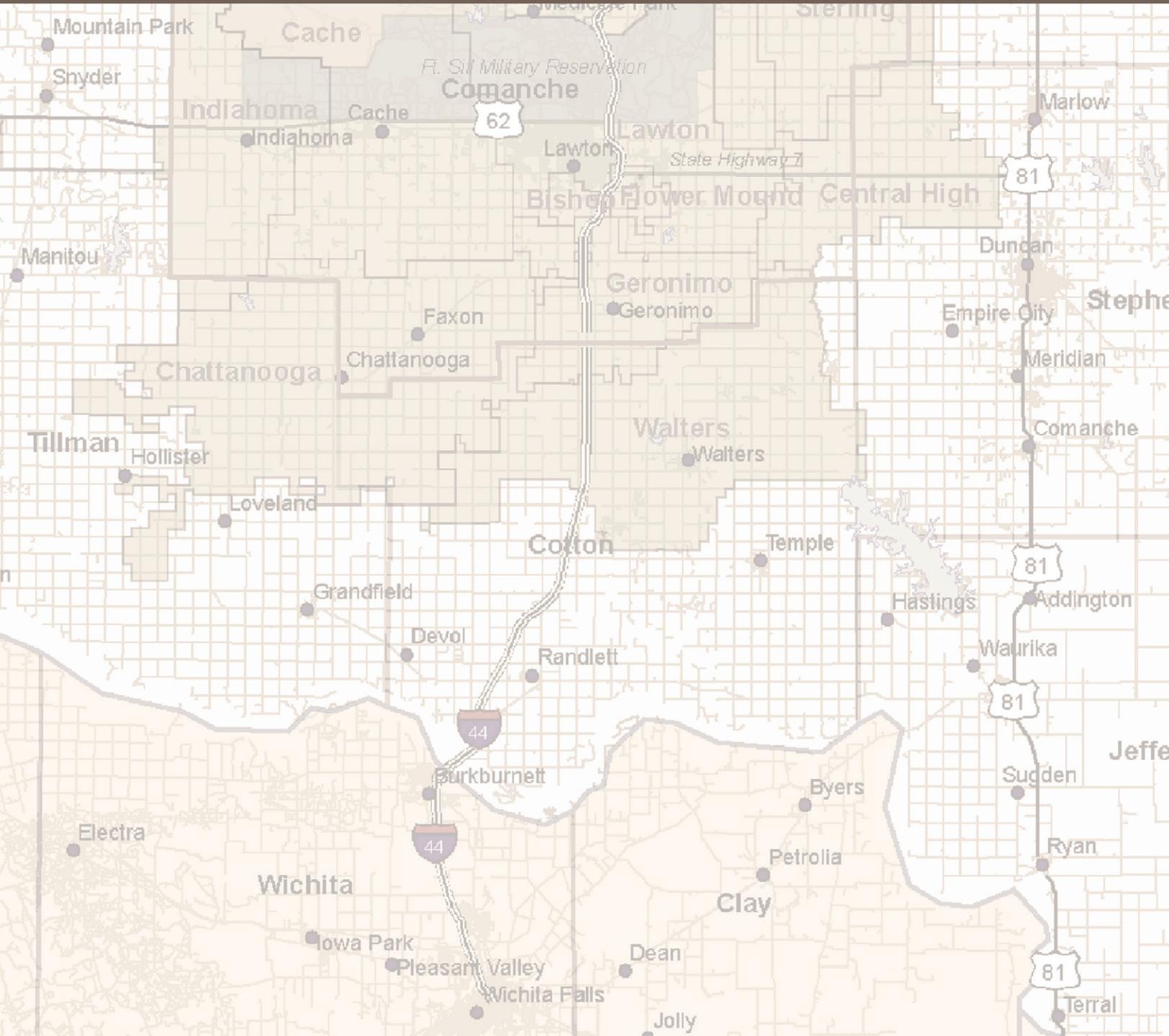


# CHAPTER 2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY







## CHAPTER 2

### Introduction

*Established by the Buffalo Soldiers of the 10th U.S. Cavalry in 1869, Fort Sill was a critical outpost for our frontier Army and soon spawned a small local economy with the city of Lawton at its core. As the state became settled and the fertile lands of the region began to produce agricultural exports, southwest Oklahoma's economy expanded and its reliance on Fort Sill, while still strong, lessened and overall became more diversified. By the end of the twentieth century, however, employment and population growth in the region had ceased, and Fort Sill's impact on the region's economy was as significant as ever.*

The 2005 Base Realignment and Closure Commission (BRAC) mandate provided the opportunity for new vitality and growth at Fort Sill and Southwest Oklahoma. For over 100 years, Fort Sill has been widely recognized as the “Home of the Field Artillery,” and as a result of BRAC, it will soon serve as headquarters to a fifth branch of artillery defense, Air Defense Artillery. The ADA school, along with an expanded FIRES Center of Excellence, will usher in a new era of growth for the post, and with it, new challenges and opportunities for the local communities in and around Lawton.

In recognition of the challenges that would result from the proposed BRAC Plan, the City of Lawton, in partnership with several surrounding communities and counties, launched a regional planning effort to prepare the southwest Oklahoma region for the growth and impacts that will occur due to the BRAC changes anticipated at Fort Sill Military Reservation. Preliminary research indicated that an influx of over 20,000 new persons into the region could be anticipated and that the cities of Cache, Elgin and Lawton were particularly situated to attract new BRAC growth and households. There was an equally important realization that major

portions of these communities lacked the infrastructure to accommodate this growth. It was critical to the future vitality of these communities that these issues were addressed and a coordinated strategy to implement a plan of action for the needed improvements be developed.

### Purpose of the Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan

The purpose of the Growth Management Plan is to identify and assess the physical, social and economic infrastructure systems that exist within the region available to support the BRAC development and associated growth within the region and at Fort Sill, and then develop a coordinated, comprehensive and “actionable” Plan for dealing with these issues. To that end, the Plan attempts to provide recommendations and strategies that:

#### **Purpose of Growth Management Plan**

- + Develop a coordinated set of actions that allow impacted communities to accommodate anticipated growth demands;
- + Develop an organizational framework for the region that can provide sustained and consistent support and advocacy for the Plan and its implementation; and
- + Support the broader economic development objectives for the region that are based on the strength of Fort Sill's mission and the “spin off” opportunities that may result.



- The *City of Lawton Technical Staff and Project Manager* which provided invaluable mapping and data resources and contacts for the team, as well as providing “first line” input, advice and counsel to the planning team on sensitive recommendations and/or subjects.

In addition to the work with these groups, the planning team held numerous informal meetings and work sessions with local service providers and officials (public and private, non-profit entities) to assess potential needs and growth infrastructure shortcomings. These meetings were particularly beneficial in determining the details of possible needs and potential solutions.

Finally, the team also conducted several public meetings and open houses during the planning period to gain input from the general public in regards to their concerns, ideas and hopes for the plan’s recommendations and the impacts of BRAC on their community. Eight meetings were held in five different locations (Lawton, Elgin, Cache, Fort Sill, and Walters communities) over the course of 10 months, and the focus of each meeting was to provide information related to the anticipated impacts of BRAC, gauge public sentiment regarding their community’s ability to handle anticipated growth and brainstorm ideas for strategies and action plans for their communities as they prepare for BRAC growth.



## Organization of the Report

The Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan is organized to permit stakeholders to utilize the report, its findings and its recommendations according to their particular area of interest. The Plan is segmented into fourteen (14) different chapters, with the first several chapters providing a background and baseline discussion of the Plan, as well as this Executive Summary of the entire report for those who desire an overarching examination of the critical findings and recommendations.

The ensuing Executive Summary provides a summary review of the major technical issues or resource areas that will be impacted by BRAC growth at Fort Sill and the recommendations and strategies proposed to address the region’s concerns. The following major issue areas are presented within the Plan:

- Baseline Conditions & Projected Socioeconomic Impacts
- Land Use and Planning
- Housing
- Public Utilities and Infrastructure
- Transportation
- Public Safety & Emergency Services
- Education
- Health Care and Mental Health
- Social Services
- Quality of Life
- Implementation Strategies for Regional Coordination and Collaboration

## Baseline Conditions & Projected Socioeconomic Impacts

*The primary purpose of this section is to present an evaluation of direct and indirect economic changes associated with the increase in the number of military personnel, as well as other related changes in Comanche County, Oklahoma. The baseline conditions within the region indicate that there are certain "structural" issues present within the region that warrant particular attention. The issues of minimal economic and population growth in the region and the inflexibility of municipal finance regulations pose significant challenges to the region as it seeks to define and manage its future, even before the impacts of BRAC are estimated and accounted for by each community.*

### How Much Growth is Anticipated?

In order to estimate the overall impact of BRAC-related events on the region, the REMI economic and population forecasting model was used. The model's methodology consisted of "direct" inputs (i.e. new military and civilian employment and wages at Fort Sill, military construction projects at Fort Sill, etc.) into a sophisticated economic formula. The output provided decision-makers with reasonable estimates of population gains, increased economic activity due to the "multiplier" effect that new wages and spending has on the local economy and potential new revenue streams that would result from increased retail sales, wages and construction activities.

Based on the data provided by the Department of Defense and Fort Sill, the "direct" impacts expected at Fort Sill are shown in *Figure 2-1*. It is important to note that these numbers indicate authorized positions at the post through 2012. This table represents the best available data at this time and is subject to change due to potential deployment rotations, evolving trends in civilian workforces replacing military positions and other force-related initiatives ongoing within the Army.

Direct Impacts due to BRAC						
	Original Estimates			Revised Estimates		
	2005	2011	Change	2011	Change from 2005	Net Change from original estimates
<b>Direct Impacts</b>						
Soldiers	10,039	12,000	1,961	12,635	2,596	635
Military Students	4,643	9,000	4,357	6,143	1,500	(2,857)
Military Family Members	13,553	17,000	3,447	18,391	4,838	1,391
DA Civilian Employees	2,458	2,800	342	2,504	46	(296)
NAF Employees	856	1,000	144	856	0	(144)
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>31,549</b>	<b>41,800</b>	<b>10,251</b>	<b>40,529</b>	<b>8,980</b>	<b>(1,271)</b>

Source: Fort Sill; RKG Associates, Inc.  
**Note** - Revised 2011 DA Employees excludes family members. An additional 87 persons are estimated.

**Figure 2-1: Direct Impacts**

Utilizing the “direct inputs” provided in Figure 2-1, the REMI model estimated the population, employment, and economic growth and activity that would be generated in the region. Figure 2-2 provides a summary examination of the population and employment impacts anticipated with the BRAC changes. This data is based on the REMI modeling completed for the project and uses the 2007 data as the baseline year for comparison purposes.

Population/Employment Summary						
	2000 Census	REMI Baseline 2007	2008	2010	2015	2020
Population of Study Area (inclusive of Comanche County)	125,200	126,130	129,800	135,600	142,500	149,110
Population - Comanche Co.	114,996	114,732	116,816	117,357	123,551	127,600
Employment @ Fort Sill	13,434	14,701	14,870	17,761	17,881	17,881
Employment - Comanche Co.	53,243	67,031	68,800	73,097	74,104	73,753
<b>NOTES:</b> 1) Primary Impact Area population increases at an average rate of 1% per year. 2) Military employment averages 18.2% of total employment over planning period. 3) Total employment peaks in 2013 and increases 0.8% per year on average.						
<b>Sources: REMI, Department of Defense, RKG Associates, Jacobs Carter Burgess</b>						

Figure 2-2: Population/Employment Summary

In addition to these population and employment increases, BRAC improvements and changes will impact the local economy as indicated in the accompanying box. These impacts will create jobs, incomes and new tax revenue sources for all of Comanche County and its associated governments.

### Overall BRAC Impacts per REMI Model

- + add 10,200 persons to Comanche County over and above the increase in the baseline population, including 2,600 direct military personnel and 7,600 other new residents throughout the county.
- + add approximately 6,100 new jobs, including 3,500 that are non-military
- + create a cumulative BRAC impact of \$4.4 billion in additional economic activity over the planning period
- + add an average annual increase in wages and salaries from BRAC impacts of \$58 million which create potential cumulative income tax revenues to State of Oklahoma ranging from \$30 million to \$37 million over the planning period
- + generate an cumulative \$940 million increase in retail spending over the planning period that translates into an increased retail demand capable of supporting approximately 150,000 square feet of retail space
- + generates potential cumulative additional sales tax receipts (constant dollars) to the following entities:
  - \$21.2 million to State of Oklahoma
  - \$12.2 million to City of Lawton
  - \$1.8 million to Comanche County



## Where Will Growth Occur?

Figure 2-3 graphically displays the anticipated geographical proportioning of the new residents to the Lawton area due to BRAC-related growth. These growth forecasts were based on a review of existing and soon-to-be-available housing stock, review of school enrollment trends in area school districts for military and non-military families, and background interviews with local housing and real estate leaders. Based on the research, the cities of Lawton, Elgin and Cache are expected to gain the significant majority of new residents to the area once BRAC transformation efforts are complete. Cache and Elgin are increasingly viewed as premier “family-oriented” communities with good schools and quality of life amenities. Lawton, by the sheer size of their market supply and proximity to the Fort, will likely attract the overwhelming majority of newcomers that are renting, thus their share of the overall increase is tremendous. The remainder of the new residents will be residing in the more rural areas of the region based on their particular demands for lifestyle, spouse employment proximity and/or housing affordability.

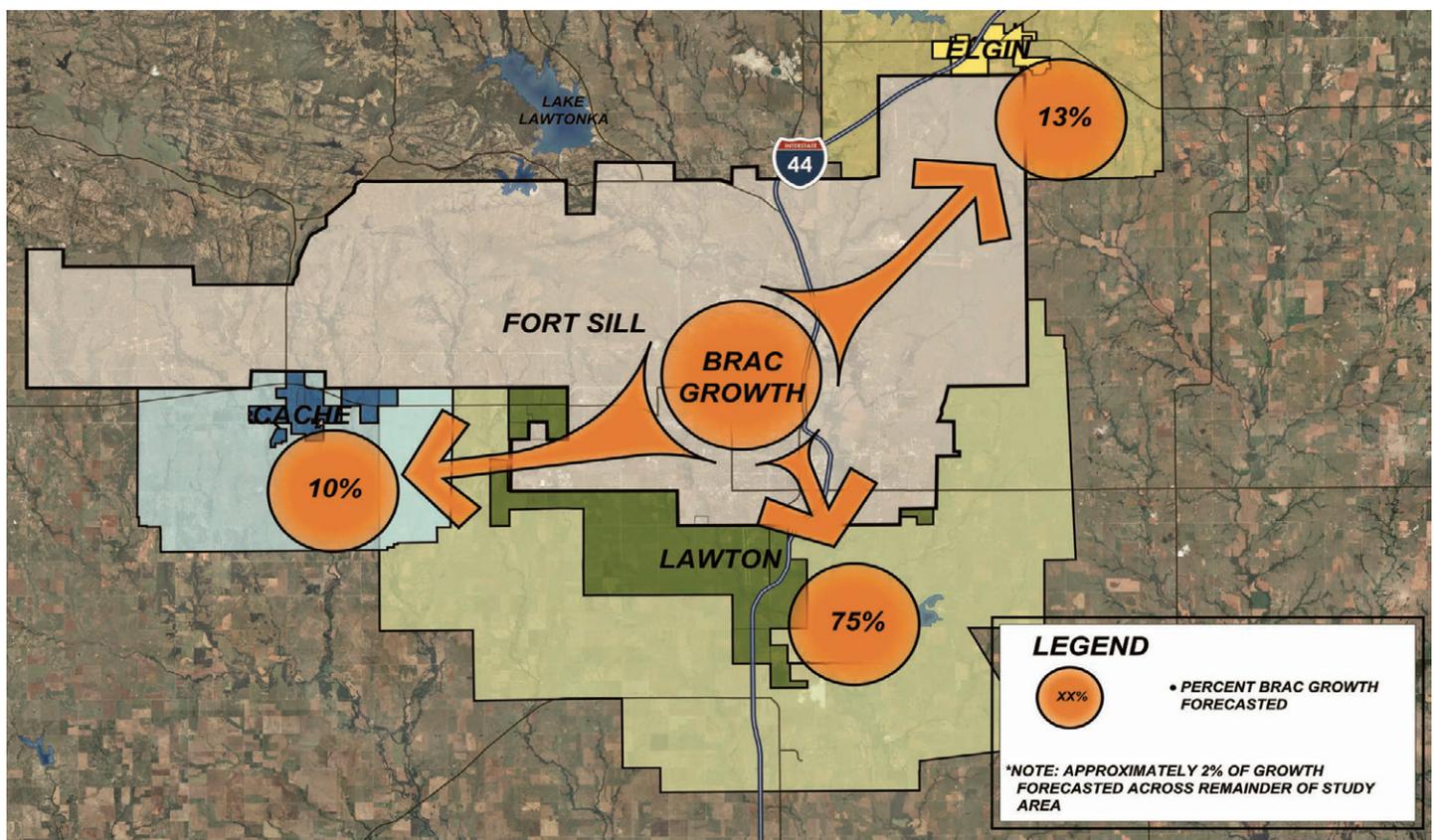


Figure 2-3: Growth Allocation Model

## Key Findings and Recommendations

### *Structural Economic and Demographic Issues*

As the population and employment data suggests, the “growth” within the study area (population, economic and otherwise) over the last 10-15 years has been anemic and warrants particular attention. Without the infusion of new payrolls and capital construction associated with BRAC, the regional growth scenario was very limited, with the energy and gaming sectors providing most of the employment and income opportunities. Fort Sill remains the dominant economic engine for the region, but the area’s reliance on and exploiting of this critical employment and income generator may require a broader, consensus-based “regional” approach to economic development and growth strategies.

### *Inflexibility of Municipal Financing Structure*

An important finding in our review of baseline conditions within the study area was the recognition of the fundamental ability (or lack thereof) of the municipalities in the region to raise adequate revenues to offset the existing and anticipated costs of future growth. Current state laws and restrictions on a municipality’s ability to fund government operations is the primary reason for the difficult finance model that is required of the region’s municipal areas. Cities are left with the annual struggle to “hope” for strong retail tax collections and/or the possibility of raising other utility rates or fees (bus rates, park user fees, etc.) to balance their budgets.

### *Potential Revenue Sources Available (if revenue sharing model can be created)*

Much of the study documents the dramatic and pressing capital needs present within the three cities in the primary impact area, Lawton, Cache and Elgin and the cities relative inability to finance these needs through ad valorem tax revenues or additional consumption taxes or fees. It is important to note that with the onset of BRAC in the Lawton region, an additional infusion of over \$4 billion of economic activity will be created, yet the cities have little ability to tap many of the additional tax revenues that will be generated by this activity. While the state legislature has provided some assistance to affected communities in the form of interest free loans for capital projects, these programs only partially address these funding needs and fully miss the desperate need for “start up” capital for infrastructure demands. *Figure 2-4* provides an estimate of the potential increased tax revenues created for the various levels of government due to the economic engine that is BRAC. The addition of almost 7,000 new jobs and \$4.4 billion in overall economic activity will generate over \$80 million in new tax revenues for other government entities, while at the same time, generate huge infrastructure and growth management costs to the local communities experiencing this growth. Perhaps a revenue sharing model can be created that will enable those that stand to gain much share with those who have limited ability to give in support of this significant economic development opportunity in southwest Oklahoma.

<b>Potential Revenues Sources to Manage Growth</b>					
<b>Revenue Source</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010-13</b>	<b>2014-20</b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
State Income Tax	\$2,817,339	\$2,888,133	\$12,560,254	\$20,164,928	<b>\$38,430,654</b>
Residential Ad Valorem Tax Revenue Increase (Comanche)	\$36,394	\$65,510	\$2,522,645	\$13,277,685	<b>\$15,902,234</b>
Sales Tax Revenues Increase					
State of Oklahoma	\$149,476	\$164,692	\$6,911,395	\$13,920,653	<b>\$21,146,216</b>
BRAC Construction Activity (sales tax revenues increase)	\$1,266,107	\$677,857	\$2,913,904	\$200,432	<b>\$5,058,300</b>
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$4,269,316</b>	<b>\$3,796,192</b>	<b>\$24,908,198</b>	<b>\$47,563,698</b>	<b>\$80,537,404</b>

**Sources: REMI, RKG Associates, Jacobs Carter Burgess**

**Figure 2-4: Potential Revenue Sources to Manage Growth**

## Workforce Studies

A consortium of regional workforce organizations (ASCOG, SOIC, and SCOWIB) initiated a three phase program of studying the workforce impacts and needs of the Lawton region as the BRAC legislation was being debated, finalized and now implemented. A comprehensive survey of the training and education needs of potential Army personnel who would relocate to Fort Sill, a survey and study of Business Needs in the region, and a comprehensive review of Education and Training Curriculum Needs were the focal points of this research.

To meet the needs of the future residents and workforce of the region, the development and implementation of a comprehensive and coordinated workforce development program has been initiated by the SCOWIB and SOIC. These agencies, along with major support provided by Cameron University and Great Plains Technology Center, must be prepared to be flexible in their offerings and willing to commit time and money to the development of the identified, high demand career paths and/or education majors. Appropriate student advisement, through the Army Education Center or through on-campus personnel, is imperative to adequately identify and meet the changing education needs and desires of the military personnel in the community. Additionally, the WIRED Initiative must constantly monitor and respond to the potential changing needs of potential defense contractors to ensure that a competent and competitive local labor market is available. Finally, while these studies and preparations have permitted the region to gain a strong foothold on the anticipated workforce issues, additional longitudinal data, collected continuously over the relocation time period, will permit the community to continuously monitor and prepare for the influx of personnel and industry and insure a smooth transition and prepared labor pool.

## Land Use & Planning

*The introduction of approximately 23,000 new residents and upwards of 6,700 new jobs into the region over the next 10-15 years will have significant impacts on the land use patterns in the study area. This section summarizes the key findings and overall assessment of the area's ability to manage and accommodate this anticipated growth and the changes it will bring about in the local landscape.*

In addition to determining the forecasted pattern and extent of future growth and development related to BRAC, the planning team also evaluated the policies, regulations, codes and other standards that are in place or being utilized on a "de facto" basis by the communities poised to receive this growth. The primary purpose of this investigation was to determine if these subject communities had the necessary "tools" to effectively manage and direct the anticipated growth in a manner that would promote quality development and provide a net benefit or increase in the quality of life within each city and the overall area.

Our research indicated, that, with the exception of the City of Lawton, the communities within the area are deficient in terms of their understanding and use of growth management, comprehensive planning, and land use regulations and tools.



## Key Findings

Based on our review of current data and plans, talking with local leaders and conducting visioning sessions within each of the primary impact area communities, the following items emerged as critical planning and land use issues in the region.

- “Push to the Fringe” Development Patterns and Philosophy** - Developers increasingly are exploring new rural sites at the edge of urban areas in search of cheaper land and more favorable or permissive building regulations. The lack of infrastructure in these areas and the lack of building codes in the counties surrounding Lawton compromise “smart growth” initiatives by requiring extensive and expensive utility extensions by financially-strapped cities, the development of “disconnected” residential areas, and the probable construction of new housing and subdivisions that would not meet minimum municipal building standards.
- Threat of conflicting land uses in the Army Compatible Use Buffer Zone** - There is no greater threat to the economic viability of this region than a diminished or constrained operational capacity at Fort Sill, and those operations can be severely limited by conflicting land uses or activities on private properties at the post’s boundaries.
- Lack of Comprehensive Planning** - Most of the region’s communities do not have an active planning staff in place that would enable them to respond to potential land use conflicts or devise comprehensive strategies for the development of their community. With the exception of the Planning Department’s at the City of Lawton and Fort Sill, most communities react to development proposals on ad hoc and sometimes arbitrary basis.
- Lack of protection from (and design standards for) Strip Commercial land uses along major growth corridors** - Commercial land uses along major roadways is the land use reality for the communities of southwest Oklahoma. The issues that must be addressed in the Plan is whether these corridors can be designed and developed in such a way that they do not negatively impact the carrying capacity of the adjacent roadways and increase the level of aesthetics and development quality within these growth areas that contributes to overall property values within the region.
- Lack of Building Codes and Environmental Protection Measures Across the Region** - Comanche County’s current land use and building regulations are minimal and may not offer the full measure of adequate protection to future homeowners and business developers. These requirements are crucial in light of the current trends of developing new County subdivisions outside of current municipal boundaries and the reach of urban services (i.e. fire, police, sanitation, etc.).
- Vulnerability of Downtown Districts (particularly in Primary Impact Area communities)** - Over the past twenty years, however, the main focus of these communities has been the development of new residential and commercial areas at their urban fringes, and the downtown districts began a slow but precipitous decline in terms of value, significance and overall quality.



## General Recommendations

In order to address the key land use and planning issues affecting the study area, the following three general recommendations are proposed.

***Increase the Use of and Enhance Land Use Planning Efforts at all levels within the Region*** - The following specific strategies are proposed:

- Develop, Adopt and Implement Community Master Plans for the Primary Impact Area
- Incorporate the provisions of the ACUB Plan into all Local/Regional Plans
- Develop, Adopt and Implement Neighborhood and Subarea Plans for high growth locations within Lawton

***Develop and Adopt a comprehensive set of policies and regulations to reduce or eliminate urban “sprawl” development and its impact on the region’s environment*** - The following specific strategies are proposed:

- Develop, Adopt and Implement an Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) and Extraterritorial Planning Jurisdiction (ETJ) for Lawton, Cache and Elgin
- Develop and Adopt a Regional Land Use and Infrastructure Master Plan and Create a Regional Plan Commission
- Investigate the Use of Development Impact Fees for properties in the ETJ
- Investigate the Use of Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for properties in the ETJ
- Develop and Adopt Rural Development and Design Standards for Comanche County

***Develop a comprehensive “Toolkit” of Growth Management Policies and Regulations-*** The following specific strategies are proposed:

- Adopt consistent building codes for all communities in the Primary Impact Area
- Develop, adopt and implement new form-based and place-based, mixed use design and zoning regulations and subdivision standards
- Develop and adopt revised land use and zoning restrictions and standards for ACUB buffer properties which are consistent with current ACUB Plans
- Develop, adopt and implement new “corridor planning and design standards” for critical transportation routes within the primary impact area



## Housing

*This section of the report presents an overview of residential development trends and the current and future availability of for sale and rental housing, measured through building permit activity, within the three primary impact area communities and Comanche County.*

According to the population forecasts generated by the REMI model, the estimated increase in population over the 2007 to 2020 time-period, with the BRAC impacts, is nearly 23,000 persons. Assuming an average household size of 2.4 persons per unit (the average for Lawton), there is the potential demand for 6,800 housing units ( $16,300 \div 2.4 = 6,800$ ) as a direct result of BRAC induced population growth.

### Key Findings

Based on our research of MLS listings, planned and/or approved development proposals in high growth areas and the proposed changes in on-post housing, there is an ample supply of single-family housing to accommodate anticipated demand related to BRAC and induced growth. Couple this single family housing supply with the 1,649 units of rental housing planned for the area and the existing and planned off-post rental housing market appears adequate to accommodate anticipated BRAC and induced growth demand.

Finally, it is likely that there could be a large influx of off-post renters, rather than owners, and as such smart growth development is encouraged. This would include infill and rehabilitation potential for existing locations throughout Lawton, capitalizing on existing infrastructure and the capacity to encourage spin-off retail and service business growth.

## General Recommendations

In order to address the key housing issues, affecting the study area, the following recommendations are proposed.

**Encourage the provision of higher density, off-post rental housing in a mixed-use development model (preferably in the Downtown Lawton Redevelopment District area).**

Given the general preference for off-post rental units, (estimated to be 900 to 925 units as tied to incoming BRAC personnel), this concentration of potential renter-occupied housing affords an opportunity to encourage mixed-use development (commercial on the ground level and residential above) within the targeted downtown redevelopment district of Lawton.

**Establish a housing information and resource “gatekeeper” entity for all housing related issues in the region, with particular emphasis in the primary impact areas of Lawton, Cache and Elgin.**

Conversations with representatives of Fort Sill housing, as well as individuals real estate professional active in the market, indicate that there is an information and referral system place to assist military personnel in their search for off-post housing (both rental and owner). However, this system may be somewhat fragmented among the various real estate entities and may not totally serve as a timely and complete information and referral system that is needed and desired by incoming personnel.

A more centralized “gatekeeper” may be helpful to accomplish the following:

- Acquire and disseminate timely information on housing, availability, pricing and all other aspects, working as a conduit between the broker community and the military community.
- Serve as a facilitator for the application and permitting process in order to streamline residential (and perhaps commercial) development for the private-sector, particularly as growth may be targeted (as in the Lawton downtown district).
- Serve as facilitator and disseminator of current rental housing market information such as available units, rates, vacancy locations, etc.



## Transportation

*Adequate transportation facilities are vital to promote growth, manage the effects of development and protect and improve the Lawton/Fort Sill area's quality of life. Mobility needs must take into account all modes of transportation from pedestrians, bicycles, public transportation, streets and highways, railroads and airports.*

The Lawton Metropolitan Planning Organization (LMPO) serves as the primary transportation planning organization for the City of Lawton, and since its inception, LMPO has enabled the greater Lawton area gain a better understanding of the critical transportation issues and needs facing the community. The LMPO's Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) holds regular meetings to discuss transportation issues, solutions and forecasted needs for the area, and includes representatives of the City, Comanche County, Lawton Fort Sill Regional Airport, Fort Sill, Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), and other related agencies. The transportation planning efforts in the remainder of the Growth Management Plan study area are relatively sparse and inconsistent in their approach and comprehensiveness. The smaller communities within the region rely upon ODOT to provide direction and funding for any needed improvements.

### Regional Roadways

The Lawton region and its inhabitants use private vehicles as their primary mode of transportation. In the year 2000, the total number of vehicles within Comanche County was 67,643 or 1.70 vehicles per occupied dwelling unit. Because of this reliance on private vehicles, the growth and development patterns within the area have remained low density in nature, with the employment centers and the residential areas generally separated by significant distances. These development patterns have strained existing roadways throughout the community.

### Sidewalks / Bikeways

The City of Lawton has several miles of existing sidewalks throughout the community, and the majority of the sidewalks have been installed by developers in subdivisions constructed after 1992. In general, these pedestrian facilities provide good walking access throughout the community. In terms of bicycling as an alternative transportation mode, all of the primary impact areas are deficient in the provision

of such facilities and the capacity and configuration of their existing roadways to accommodate this mode. Lawton, however, has developed a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that identifies priority projects for the community, and the City is currently planning the design and construction for their first project.

### Area Transit

The Lawton Area Transit System (LATS) provides city bus transit service to the majority of areas within the Lawton community. A network of five fixed routes and ten buses comprise the fixed route bus service. Demand Responsive Paratransit service is provided 3-4 vehicles per day.

### Rail Service

Southwest Oklahoma is served by a network of regional, shorthaul, Class III railroad lines that provide intraregional connectivity, as well as connection to the two Class I rail lines operated in the state by Burlington Northern San Francisco (BNSF) and Union Pacific (UP). For the Comanche County area, the Stillwater Central Railroad provides rail service and has approximately 14 miles of track in the region for the primary purposes of providing commercial freight service to the industrial areas of Lawton.

### Airline Service

The Lawton – Fort Sill Regional Airport is located in south Lawton and provides commercial air service and an intermodal freight service to the region. This facility is critical to the overall transportation network due to its primary role as a provider of air transportation for military families and its increasing role as a primary provider and location of an expanded Air Mobility Complex for the Department of Defense.

## Key Findings

Analysis of current and projected capacity and levels of service on the major roadway segments within the primary impact area indicated that there are several growth nodes within Lawton, Cache and Elgin that when fully developed will require significant upgrades to the roadway network in these areas.



### Cache and Elgin Roadway Needs

The major roadways into these communities already are stressed at peak periods during the day, and the forecasted BRAC growth will compound this peak period demand and strain the limited road capacity. The main roadways, Old Cache Road and Eighth Avenue (SH 115) in Cache and U.S. Highway 277 and SH 17 in Elgin will experience capacity and turning movement restrictions. Trail Road, like Old Cache Road, is a critical “rural connector” for the eastern portion of the primary impact area.

### City of Lawton Roadway Needs

The high growth areas of west, southwest and east Lawton have already begun to strain the limited laneage available in the area roadways.

#### Southwest and West Lawton Roadways

- 67th Street (selected segments from Rogers Lane to Bishop Road – 5 lanes): to serve the high growth areas of southwest Lawton and connect them to Interstate 44 via U.S. 62 and Lee Blvd.
- 52nd Street (selected segments from Gore Blvd. to south of Bishop Road – 5 lanes): to serve the high growth areas of southwest Lawton and connect them to Interstate 44 via U.S. 62 and Lee Blvd.
- 38th Street (selected segments from U.S. 62 to Lee Blvd. – 5 lanes): to serve the high growth areas of southwest Lawton
- Gore Boulevard (from 67th to 82nd Street – 5 lanes): to serve as parallel reliever to Cache Road and Lee Blvd.

#### East Lawton Roadways

- Rogers Lane (east of I-44 to Flower Mound Road – 5 lanes)
- 45th Street (Gore Blvd. to Lee Blvd – 5 lanes)
- Future arterials/collectors in the Nine Mile Creek sewer basin development area - 60th Street to Trail Road (east/west) and Gore Blvd to Bishop Road (north/south)

### Fort Sill and Rogers Lane (west of I-44)

Proposed changes to on-post circulation routes, the alignment and geometry of Rogers Lane gates, and the proposed access limitation measures at Key Gate on Interstate 44 at Fort Sill have created the need for an expanded Rogers Lane network in north Lawton. Key needs are:

- Rogers Lane (U.S. 62) interchange improvements at Sheridan Road and Fort Sill Boulevard to accommodate increased traffic due to BRAC and future limitations at Key Gate
- Additional ramp capacity for north bound traffic on Interstate 44 onto Rogers Lane to accommodate increased traffic due to BRAC and closure of Key Gate

### Lawton Area Freight Route

The recently adopted Long Range Transportation Plan for the Lawton MPO identifies a proposed freight route for the area generally consisting of a large loop connecting the western industrial areas to Interstate 44 via Rogers Lane, 97th & 82nd streets, Lee Blvd. and State Highway 36 back to Interstate 44.

## General Recommendations

The following recommendations are provided for the region, and they are segmented into three primary categories (Roadway Network Enhancements, Roadway/ Corridor Design Standards, and Miscellaneous Transportation Improvements).

### Roadway Network Enhancements

#### City of Cache, Roadway Improvements:

The following roadway improvements are recommended for the Cache area.

- Old Cache Road (eastern City limits to Eighth Avenue)
- Eighth Avenue (Old Cache Road to U.S. 62)
- New Collector street in central Cache

#### City of Elgin, Oklahoma Roadway Improvements:

The following roadway improvements are recommended for the Elgin area.

- U.S. 277 (Interstate 44 to Railroad to city limits)
- State Highway 17 (railroad to Trail Road)
- New Minor Arterial street
- Trail Road (Elgin to east Lawton)



**City of Lawton Roadway Improvements:**

Lawton has developed a foundation of area roads that serves the existing community well. The following roadway improvements are targeted in areas expected to experience the strongest growth and development pressures.

Southwest and West Lawton areas :

- Widen 67th Street from Cache Road to Rogers Lane
- Widen Gore Boulevard from 67th Street to 82nd Street
- Widen 52nd Street from Gore Blvd. to Bishop Road
- Widen 38th Street from Cache Road to Bishop Road
- Development of a designated truck/freight route in West Lawton from U.S. 62 to industrial areas

East Lawton area:

- Completion of a circumferential connector system in NE Lawton by Widening Rogers Lane from Interstate 44 to Flower Mound Road (5 lanes) and then to Trail Road
- Widen 45th Street from Gore Blvd. to Lee Blvd.
- Designate and widen future arterial roadways in the developing areas contained in the Nine Mile Creek sewer basin

Rogers Lane intersections at Fort Sill gate locations:

- Geometric and roadway improvements at Sheridan Road and Rogers Lane
- Geometric and roadway improvements at Fort Sill Blvd. and Rogers Lane
- Geometric and roadway improvements at Interstate 44 and Rogers Lane

**Signal Timing and Coordination Improvements and Studies for Lawton:**

As the local community develops new travel patterns based on the increased congestion on Rogers Lane, the remaining east-west arterials within the City that provide parallel relief to Rogers Lane (i.e. Cache Road, Gore Boulevard, Lee Blvd.) will likely experience increased local traffic. As such the following recommendations are offered:

- Review, revise and implement enhanced signal timing and coordination programs along Gore Blvd. and Cache Road
- Complete comprehensive analysis of the proposed Key Gate interchange modifications and its impacts.

*Roadway/Corridor Design Standards*

The development of new and expanded roadway facilities can be undermined by ineffective traffic and access management along these corridors. Also, a street that does not sufficiently address the pedestrian and bicyclist fails to provide the maximum potential for mobility throughout the community. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered.

**Corridor Planning and Design Standards****Studies:**

A comprehensive corridor study (traffic, access management policies, multi-modal design, and streetscape aesthetics, etc.) should be developed in the short term for the following critical gateways into the primary impact area communities.

- U.S. Highway 277 in Elgin (both east and west of I-44 to the railroad)
- Old Cache Road in Cache (8th Avenue to eastern city limits)
- Lee Boulevard in SW Lawton (38th Street to 67th Street)
- Gore Boulevard in east Lawton (45th Street to Trail Road)

**“Complete Streets” Design Standards:**

Multi-modal transportation along major roadways is an important element in the overall quality of life for a community and the concept of planning and design of “Complete Streets” will become increasingly popular and funded by federal and state transportation agencies.

**Streetscape Enhancement Program:**

While these projects do not necessarily improve overall network operations or efficiencies, they do improve the aesthetic quality of the corridors and increase the quality of life for the community. The Plan recommends that the following corridors be included (or continue to be included) in the overall streetscape enhancement program:

- 2nd Street (from Elmer Thomas Park to Downtown)
- 11th Street (from the airport to Downtown to Fort Sill gate)
- Gore Boulevard (from NW 67th Street to Downtown to Trail Road)
- 38th, 52nd, and 67th Street (from Rogers Lane to Gore Blvd.)



### Miscellaneous Transportation Improvements

#### Lawton – Fort Sill Regional Airport:

A critical short term need for the airport and the resultant recommendation for this Plan is to develop an adequate air transport infrastructure at the Airport that can support the landing/takeoff requirements of an ARC D-IV aircraft and that the requisite approaches, taxiways, apron parking and terminal building facilities be developed in support of the anticipated travel demands forecasted in the Airport Master Plan.

#### Public Transit (LATS) Enhancements:

While this study did not provide an in-depth analysis of the LATS program and/or capital budgets, the Plan does recommend the following concepts be studied and evaluated as potential system enhancements:

- Commuter Route and Park-n-Ride Location in Elgin, Oklahoma

#### Bikeways and Pedestrian Routes:

This Plan recommends that the major findings and recommendations of the Plan be incorporated into future roadway widening projects and that the City (with assistance provided by LMPO) begin pursuit of unique and sufficient funding of the short term priority projects included in the Plan, specifically the Cameron University connector and the Elmer Thomas connector.



## Utility Infrastructure

*Adequate utility infrastructure is a crucial element in a community's ability to promote future development and growth, and sound and coordinated infrastructure policies and regulations are critical in managing the anticipated growth. The Fort Sill region has struggled with finding the balance between providing adequate water, wastewater and other utilities to all the "suburbanizing" areas of its communities, while at the same time, promoting smart growth initiatives and responsible infrastructure policies that help the municipal entities provide these services in a cost effective and efficient manner.*

### Key Findings

Based on this analysis, with a few exceptions, the communities within the primary impact area and the secondary impact area have sufficient utility infrastructure networks and systems in place to handle the near term impacts of growth associated with BRAC, but in order to handle the long term opportunities and impacts, significant infrastructure upgrades are needed. Private utility providers of natural gas, electric and telecommunications are equally prepared to meet short term demands, and they have the necessary resources and planning programs to identify and meet long term demands also.

#### Lawton Utility Needs

While the advance planning studies and analysis completed by the city of Lawton have prepared them particularly well for the growth, their current policies and patterns of growth will place an unusually high burden of future distribution needs upon them. Based on the City's prior commitments to expand the current network of infrastructure, the following list highlights the some of the major gaps in their current infrastructure network to accommodate anticipated growth, including:

- Development of sanitary sewer trunk lines in the West Wolf Creek basin (north of Gore Blvd. and east of 75th Street to Cache Road) to service the proposed developments occurring in this northwestern portion of the community;

- Development and Upsizing of sanitary sewer trunk lines in the South Wolf Creek basin (from just east of Railroad Road at I-44 west to the Lee Blvd. areas of west Lawton) to service the proposed developments occurring in the southwestern portion of the city.

### *Cache and Elgin Utility Needs*

The current utility infrastructure in both areas is older, deteriorating and contributing to a decrease in capacity and capabilities of the overall water and sewer system because of their condition. Although recent upgrades in both communities have increased service capabilities and thus their ability to provide adequate infrastructure for short term growth, the long term needs are significant and will be inhibitors to future development opportunities. Finally, the lack of formal land use and infrastructure policies based on smart growth initiatives within these growth communities threatens the long term quality of life and viability of the community's infrastructure systems. The size and financial capacity of these communities is insufficient to sustain a growth policy that subsidizes new development with rate increases.

### *Regional Infrastructure Issues*

The recent drought conditions in the area in 2005-2007 and the predatory actions of north Texas communities on the waters of the Red River may provide sufficient reason for the Lawton region to begin to evaluate the need for a regional water approach.

## **Recommendations**

### *Lawton Infrastructure Recommendations*

The Lawton area is projected to see significant new residential and commercial development and growth associated with the BRAC deployment. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1. Develop a Smart Growth Plan and Policies for limiting the sprawl pattern of development and infrastructure extensions in the City**
- 2. Plan, Design and Implement a coordinated set of Utility Capital Improvement projects that provide the necessary services to high growth areas**  
The following major capital improvement projects should be undertaken:
  - *Sanitary Sewer Trunk Line – East Lawton:* Nine Mile Creek Sewer Trunk Main
  - *Sanitary Sewer Trunk Line – Northwest Lawton:* West Wolf Creek Sewer Trunk Main
  - *Sanitary Sewer Trunk Line – Southwest Lawton:* South Wolf Creek Sewer Trunk Main
  - *Water Transmission Line – Southeast Water Treatment Plant to central Lawton distribution system:* Southeast Water Transmission Line
- 3. Organize and Convene a Regional Water Summit and Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a Coordinated Regional Water Plan and Supplier**

### *Cache Infrastructure Recommendations*

Private real estate developers and the City have already planned, designed or permitted over 300 new residential units in the City, and accordingly, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1. Develop a Smart Growth Plan and Policies for limiting the sprawl pattern of development**
- 2. Develop a detailed and coordinated Utility Infrastructure Master Plan and Capital Improvements Plan for the City:** The City should seek funding assistance to procure technical support to develop a long term strategy of key improvements and capital budgeting that is coordinated with other regional providers to ensure cost effective solutions.
- 3. Develop and Implement a Stormwater Management Ordinance for new developments**
- 4. Participate in a Regional Water Summit to Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a Coordinated Regional Water Plan and Supplier**



### *Elgin Infrastructure Recommendations*

Elgin's recent success in developing new water and sewer upgrades for the proposed BAE Systems plant in their industrial park has permitted the City to provide services to the near term growth they are experiencing, but the long term growth projections of 500 – 1,000 homes will strain their upgraded system beyond its capacity. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered:

- 1. Develop a Smart Growth Plan and Policies for limiting the sprawl pattern of development**
- 2. Develop a detailed and coordinated Utility Infrastructure Master Plan and Capital Improvements Plan for the City:** The City should seek funding assistance to procure technical support to develop a long term strategy of key improvements and capital budgeting that is coordinated with other regional providers to ensure cost effective solutions.
- 3. Develop and Implement a Stormwater Management Ordinance for new developments**
- 4. Participate in a Regional Water Summit to Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a Coordinated Regional Water Plan and Supplier**

### *Miscellaneous Area-wide Utility Infrastructure Recommendations*

Although each of these communities presently can provide sufficient service to their existing customers, the sources and capacities of raw water in the region are likely to become dramatically impacted by future growth. Accordingly, a Regional Water Supply Summit is proposed to develop a coordinated strategy for providing raw water supplies for these communities and to determine if a regional approach to this issue is warranted. A Regional Water Study should be initiated and this proposed study would investigate the overall future demand for water treatment, distribution, etc. and determine if a regional approach would be more efficient in the long run.

## Public Safety

*To most of the new residents in the Lawton Fort Sill region, the provision of adequate public safety services and infrastructure in their new communities is a given. Fire, police and ambulance services are fundamental components of the overall quality of life in the community that they rarely think about, but when these services are needed, it can become a matter of life and death for some families.*

### Key Findings

Our findings indicate that the public safety services within the communities of the Fort Sill region will be significantly impacted over the long term. In the short term, the formal and informal network of mutual aid agreements among the various communities will assist each community in bridging the service gaps that might exist on a day-to-day basis. However, the need for additional overall institutional capacity to handle new growth in the long term will not and can not be overcome by the current additional capacity that results from the organizational/operational efficiencies gained through the mutual aid network.

### *Region-wide Organizational Assessment*

Due to the Lawton's Fire and Police Departments having the most complete, organized and trained staff and their facilities and equipment being the most advanced in the region, these departments contribute significantly to the mutual aid network of services in the region. However, with BRAC growth starting to occur in Lawton, these public safety resources will be strained and Lawton's ability to provide additional support and mutual aid will be more limited.

Effective and timely communication of emergency situations and call for responders is a critical element in the overall public safety infrastructure. The new E-911 call center being constructed in Lawton will assist in providing, but there is some evidence that the smaller communities in the region have not coordinated their E-911 services with this facility and organization.



### *Community Public Safety Needs*

The following needs were identified in each of the separate primary impact area communities and the smaller communities in the broader Comanche County area.

#### **Lawton Public Safety Assessment Needs**

Based on a review of overall response times and current levels of service, the primary gaps in Lawton's public safety infrastructure are the following:

- Fire Suppression and EMS Services in Southwest growth areas
- Police Services in east Lawton growth areas
- Fire Suppression Services and EMS in east Lawton growth areas
- Additional Staff

#### **Elgin Public Safety Assessment Needs**

Current population and growth estimates for the City project a doubling of the City's population over the next 10 years and this increase will generate the need for additional fire and police services. Based on the projected development patterns in the city and an assumption that the fire department will transition to a full time operation in the next 2-3 years, the following needs have been identified:

- Fire and Police Service Facility Upgrade (east of railroad)
- Fire Station (west of railroad)

#### **Cache Public Safety Assessment Needs**

Based on the anticipated growth trends and the assumption that the City will pursue annexation of large residential areas east of town thus requiring a full time firefighting staff, the following needs are identified:

- Fire and Police Facility Upgrade

#### **Comanche County Volunteer Fire Departments**

An increase in the number of available tankers and associated fire apparatus across the county could improve the response time and effectiveness of the firefighting teams.

## **Recommendations**

The growth anticipated with BRAC deployment at Fort Sill will create significant impacts for the communities of Lawton, Elgin and Cache, and to a lesser extent, for the smaller communities in and around Comanche County. As such, the following recommendations are proposed.

### *Organizational Recommendations*

The following recommendations are offered for regional and specific community action.

#### **Establish and Maintain Current Levels of Service as Growth Occurs**

The communities within the primary impact area (i.e. Lawton, Cache and Elgin) should undertake an examination of their current levels of service and establish this level as a future standard during their growth period.

#### **Create Comprehensive Regional Public Safety Plan with Accompanying Interlocal Agreements**

The effectiveness of the existing mutual aid network will be strained and possibly overloaded with the initiation of the new BRAC growth in the anticipated development areas. More formal alliances and agreements are needed to enhance the communication efforts (E-911 services and radio communications), mutual aid agreements and the potential labor shortage issues in the public safety field. The Comanche County Emergency Management Office is a logical administrator and coordinator of these efforts.

### *Capital Improvements Recommendations*

The following capital improvements are recommended to meet the anticipated needs in each of the primary impact area communities. These improvements should be timed to meet the demands coincident with new growth and the exact nature of the improvements should be linked to the specific needs and levels of service established in the community.



**City of Lawton Fire and Police Services**

- New Fire Station in southwest Lawton
- Upgraded Fire Station No. 5 in east Lawton
- New Lawton Police Department substation in east Lawton

**City of Elgin Fire and Police Services**

- New consolidated Public Safety Facility in central Elgin
- New Fire station at the Interstate 44 and Highway 277 area

**City of Cache Fire and Police Services**

- New consolidated Public Safety Facility in central Cache

**Comanche County Volunteer Fire Departments via Comanche County Emergency Management office**

The purchase and placement of large tankers in centralized locations within the County is recommended.

*Funding and Operations Recommendations***Operational and Staffing Additions in Primary Impact Areas Communities**

The following staffing additions for Police and Fire departments in Lawton, Cache and Elgin are based on current levels of services within each community and the assumption that Elgin and Cache transition into full time firefighting departments.

- City of Lawton Police Department Staff Additions (15-22 officers)
- City of Lawton Fire Department (40-50 Firefighters)
- City of Elgin Police and Fire Departments (5 Officers and 10 Firefighters)
- City of Cache Police and Fire Departments (5 Officers and 8 Firefighters)

**Investigate the Use of Impact Fees, Facilities Taxes, and Fire Protection Districts as Means to Fund Public Safety Infrastructure Capital Improvements**

Growth communities should investigate impact fees, facilities taxes, and/or fire protection districts as means to raise the necessary funds.

## Education

*Perhaps the single most immediate and critical impact in the region, due to this addition of almost 9,000 persons in the community over the next 3 years, will be felt in the local school districts. Although many of the most impacted districts have just completed major facility upgrades and additions, these improvements may still be insufficient to handle the new schoolage children moving into their communities.*

### Key Findings

Based on current plans for BRAC deployment and transformation efforts at Fort Sill, almost 2,600 new students are forecasted to enter regional school districts by the fall 2012, with the majority of these students (over 2,300 students) entering the Elgin, Cache and Lawton (including Flower Mound and Bishop districts) districts. By 2020, over almost 4,550 new students are projected for the area.

For many of the more rural and outlying school districts, the BRAC growth will likely help to reverse the current trends of declining enrollment in their districts. Data in this chapter will indicate that most of these districts have the capacity to accommodate new growth because their student roles have been decreasing over the last ten years, but the age and nature of their current facilities may present different “capacity” challenges for these communities as they seek to provide learning environments that can meet the needs of the 21st century students.

In general, the school districts’ leaders and boards of education have been proactive in their preparations for the anticipated BRAC growth. While some of the capital improvements in particular districts were completed prior to the BRAC announcement, almost \$70 million in capital improvements and physical facilities have been funded and completed in the last 5 years in districts all over the region. In the rural districts, much of this funding was related to updating of facilities and new classrooms to accommodate the technology and interactive needs of the modern K-12 education programs.

In the primary impact districts of Cache, Elgin and Lawton, most of the money related to expanding and improving the capacity of their systems to handle new students and the growth anticipated from BRAC. Outlined below is a summary description of the efforts undertaken or ongoing in Lawton, Cache and Elgin schools.

## Recommendations

While the most impacted districts have prepared well for BRAC deployment and the growth it will create, the “multiplier” growth impacts will likely strain the capacity of their systems beyond reasonable levels and require significant new capital and operational improvements. Furthermore, a significant amount of capital funding will be required to accommodate this growth in enrollments, and concerted and focused public relations campaigns will be needed from the Districts to educate their voters as to the growth and its impacts on their respective districts and the need for additional facilities and improvements to meet the coming needs. Education leaders must identify their priority needs, coordinate an overall strategy to meet these needs in a fiscally-responsible manner, and then engage directly in a process of lobbying their state and federal representatives for greater access to capital funding sources at these government levels. Due to state restrictions on bonding capacity for school initiatives, local funding of these needs may not be enough to adequately address the needs in a timely fashion. An overall strategy for funding should be created by the districts that also include state and federal funding mechanisms that can offset or bridge the funding gaps that might exist at the local level.

To this end, the following recommendations are offered for each district in the primary impact area communities.

*Recommendations for Lawton School District*  
BRAC growth and the resulting multiplier impacts are expected to generate approximately 2,300 new students for the Lawton Public Schools over the planning period. The following recommendations are offered to meet the anticipated needs.

### **New Facilities and Classrooms**

- New, Relocated Sheridan Elementary School
- New Elementary School for Southwest Lawton
- Additional Classrooms in East Lawton and Northwest Lawton growth areas: Based on the projected enrollment increases, an additional 100 classrooms will be needed across the district.
- Ancillary Facilities and Equipment: Additional locations and students will require additional support and ancillary facilities and transportation from the District.

### **New Classroom Teachers and Support Staff**

Based on the overall projected enrollment increases of 2,300 students, approximately 100 new teachers will be needed within the District to provide educational instruction.

### *Recommendations for Cache School District*

Recent improvements within the District have created additional capacity, but BRAC growth and the resulting multiplier impacts are expected to generate approximately 635 new students for Cache schools over the planning period. The following recommendations are offered to meet these anticipated needs.

### **New Facilities and Classrooms**

- New Elementary School for eastern portion of District
- Additional Classrooms within existing or expanded facilities: Based on the projected enrollment increases, additional 35-40 classrooms will be needed across the district.
- Ancillary Facilities and Equipment: Additional locations and students will require additional support and ancillary facilities and transportation from the District.



### **New Classroom Teachers and Support Staff**

Based on the overall projected enrollment increases of 635 students, approximately 35 new teachers will be needed within the District to provide educational instruction.

## **Recommendations for Elgin School District**

Recent improvements within the District have created additional capacity, but BRAC growth and the resulting multiplier impacts are expected to double the existing student enrollment figures over the planning period. In order to meet the needs of almost 1,100 new students, the following recommendations are offered to meet these anticipated needs.

### **New Facilities and Classrooms**

- New Elementary School/Junior High School campus
- Additional Classrooms within existing or expanded facilities: Based on the projected enrollment increases, an additional 65 classrooms will be needed across the district.
- Ancillary Facilities and Equipment: Additional locations and students will require additional support and ancillary facilities and transportation from the District.

### **New Classroom Teachers and Support Staff**

Based on the overall projected enrollment increases of 1,100 students, approximately 65 new teachers will be needed within the District to provide educational instruction.

### *Recommendations for Teacher Training and Recruiting*

The training and recruiting of new teachers for these new students also poses a formidable task for the school systems. In order to provide a coordinated strategy for the region in this effort, it is recommended that an Educational Council be formed that is tasked with developing strategies to identify, recruit and train new teachers for the region. The Council should include educational leaders from Lawton, Cache and Elgin and representatives from other area school districts, as well as political and business leaders, that can affect local educational and legislative policy decisions in a way

that supports a regional approach to providing quality teachers for their school systems.

### *Recommendations for Enhanced Communications with Fort Sill*

It is strongly recommended that the Elgin, Cache and Lawton Districts form a consortium of educational organizations that seeks input from Fort Sill. This consortium of Districts, who are critically dependent and impacted by Fort Sill personnel, should coordinate direct and consistent communications with the Post leadership to keep advised of short and long term movements of military personnel. These enhanced communications will assist the Districts' long term capital and operations planning efforts.



## Quality of Life

*This section identifies and assesses the culture and recreation assets of the community to determine their adequacy in providing for a strong and vital quality of life in the Fort Sill region. Traditionally, planners and economic development specialists have emphasized a region's employment and educational opportunities and its overall low cost of living as the factors that contribute significantly to a region's growth rate. Increasingly, however, family connections and quality of life factors within a region are of particular concern to potential job seekers.*

### Key Findings

Overall, the Comanche County area (including the cities of Lawton, Cache and Elgin) is an area possessing a wide array of cultural activities and facilities and an abundance of parks and recreation opportunities. The unique landscape of the region provides a natural setting for outdoor activities and the rich history of land settlement and Native American heritage provides a multi-cultural palette of activities and events for these communities.

#### *Parklands and Facilities in Lawton*

With almost 1,400 acres of developed parkland currently in the City, the City is generally meeting the established demand for park facilities. The demand for these areas, however, will outstrip the supply of park acreage in the near future with the anticipated growth from BRAC.

#### *Parkland and Facilities in Cache and Elgin*

The cities of Cache and Elgin demonstrate a strong level of service for their community. Cache has almost 10 acres per 1,000 residents and Elgin's ratio is over 13 acres per 1,000 residents. When compared to a commonly accepted standard of approximately 10 acres (combined total of all types and nature of park lands and facilities) per 1,000 residents used across the U.S., Cache and Elgin compare favorably but are somewhat lower than the national average.

#### *Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge*

The WMWR has an extensive system of nature trails that serve as excellent physical fitness adventures and/or educational opportunities for the local communities and region.

#### *Cultural Facilities in Primary Impact Area Communities*

Due to its rich history as one of the original outposts of the American frontier and the continuing rich heritage of the Native American people from the region, the Lawton/Fort Sill community continues to place a strong emphasis on culture and arts in their community. Not only does the City of Lawton have numerous events, activities and facilities that encourage and support the arts, most of the smaller communities within the study area have their own festivals and programs that provide a strong and enduring cultural impact on their respective communities.

While there are a number of venues and facilities across the region, the majority of the major cultural facilities are within the city of Lawton and Lawton serves as the cultural center of the region.

### Needs Assessment

To a large degree, the cities of Lawton, Cache and Elgin have prepared their community with adequate and well maintained parks and recreation facilities, and with the addition of the outdoor activity areas and trails located within the Wichita Mountains Wildlife Refuge, the region is well-served with parks, recreation and arts/cultural facilities and opportunities.

#### *Lawton Parks/Recreation Needs*

Overall, the city's network of neighborhood parks is more than adequate to service the existing and forecasted population. The high growth areas of southwest Lawton, northwest Lawton and east Lawton will likely need community park facilities to address new population centers.

The City of Lawton also is deficient in comprehensive, indoor recreation center spaces to accommodate their user groups requiring these type facilities.



## Cache Parks/Recreation Needs

The analysis indicated that the current facilities in Cache are sufficient in terms of their quantity, but our investigations revealed that their condition and scope of park features was insufficient to meet future needs.

## Elgin Parks/Recreation Needs

The City of Elgin's current park inventory results in a good geographic and functional coverage for the City. With the anticipated BRAC growth in Elgin, the most pressing parks/recreation needs for the City will be the development of neighborhood park facilities (i.e. playgrounds, basketball, tennis, walking/jogging trails) in the newly-developing areas.

## Recommendations

The population growth that is anticipated to occur as a result of the BRAC deployments and improvements will generate additional demands for park facilities and areas in these primary impact area communities. Outlined below are recommendations regarding capital needs and potential operational/funding strategies that are needed in each community to maintain the levels of service currently provided in their City.

### Lawton Parks and Recreation

The City, at full build-out, could add 13,000 – 17,500 potential new park users in the City of Lawton. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Develop an Updated Ten Year Strategic Plan for the Parks and Recreation Department**
- **Plan, Design and Implement a coordinated set of Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement projects that provide the necessary services to high growth areas**
  1. *New Community Park and Community Center – Southwest Lawton*
  2. *New Community Park - Northwest Lawton*
  3. *New or Expanded Eastside Community Park and Community Center – East Lawton*
- **Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a separate Park Impact Fee or “In lieu of” park dedication provision for developments in the high growth areas of Lawton**

## Cache Parks and Recreation

Private real estate developers and the City have already planned, designed or permitted over 300 new residential units in the City, and accordingly, the following recommendations for future parks and recreation improvements are offered:

- **Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a Park Impact Fee or “In lieu of” park dedication provision for developments in the City**
- **Plan, Design and Implement a coordinated set of Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement projects that provide the necessary services to future residents**
  1. *New Community Park*
  2. *New Connectivity Improvements - Citywide*

### Elgin Parks and Recreation

Elgin's growth potential is significant with long term growth projections of 500 – 1,000 homes estimated. This growth will strain the current parks and recreation facilities beyond their capacity. Accordingly, the following recommendations are offered:

- **Develop a Parks and Recreation Master Plan**
- **Evaluate/Investigate the need for an Indoor Recreation Facility (long term need) in coordination with Elgin Public Schools**
- **Plan, Design and Implement a coordinated set of Parks and Recreation Capital Improvement projects that provide the necessary services to high growth areas**
  1. *New Neighborhood Parks*
  2. *New or Expanded Community Park – Interstate 44 area*
  3. *New Connectivity Improvements - Citywide*
- **Investigate/Evaluate the Benefits of Developing a Park Impact Fee or “In lieu of” park dedication provision for developments in the City**



## Healthcare

*The importance of adequate health care facilities and capabilities for new residents of the Fort Sill region can not be underestimated. Availability, capability and affordability of health care providers and services are critical concerns for new military families, as well as the new employers and employees that will enter the Lawton marketplace as direct or indirect impacts of BRAC growth.*

### Key Findings

The healthcare infrastructure in the Lawton/Fort Sill area is generally robust and has the unique ability to adapt to the changing healthcare needs of its population base. Reynolds Army Community Hospital (RACH) serves the Fort Sill population and it is a dynamic facility with a progressive, forward leaning command staff who closely monitor and adjust resources to meet the healthcare needs of the Army population. Recent expansions and facility improvements (i.e. new OB/GYN birthing unit and beds) enables RACH to meet the projected needs of it's military population.

On the private sector side, Comanche County Memorial Hospital (CCMH), and Southwestern Medical Center (SWMC) both have seasoned executive staffs who have solid histories of providing services in changing healthcare environments. Because of the competitive nature of both CCMH and SWMC, the Lawton/Fort Sill area is in a position to better accommodate any increase in population related to the BRAC realignment than many other areas in the country. Their recent expansions and established network of care providers (i.e. teleradiology) provide the necessary capacity and availability of critical care services to meet forecasted demand.

The anticipated regional population growth of 10 percent over the next five to six years, and the "multiplier" population growth associated with BRAC of another 13,000 persons by 2020, will not likely strain the current health care infrastructure as it exists today. While the current shortfall of primary care physicians are a concern for healthcare leaders, this will not tend to become more acute with the estimated population expansion due to current and future physician recruiting efforts of both Comanche Memorial and Southwestern Medical Center.

Inpatient beds at both facilities have periodically reached capacity which resulted in a need to divert at various times. However, this is not expected to be an issue going forward as planned services grow over the next few years. Inpatient mental health services are currently in short supply in the area. However, SWMC is currently working to establish an inpatient mental health program which includes inpatient acute mental health beds, thus increasing overall capacity.

### Physician Supply

While Lawton/Fort Sill has fewer physicians per 1000 population, the access to healthcare of its citizens is greater in the Lawton/Fort Sill this area than in large metropolitan areas. Research suggests that the discrepancy in physician distributions may have more to do with an oversupply in large metropolitan areas rather than a shortage in rural regional areas such as Lawton/Fort Sill.

### Tri-Care Coverage

In examining the total population of physicians who accept Tri-Care including RACH physicians, the total percent is increased to 96%. Our findings indicate that the major healthcare institutions require new and existing physicians to accept Tri-Care, thus our conclusion is that Tri-Care is one of the dominant insurance providers in the area as evidence by the saturation in the Lawton/Fort Sill market.

### Dental Services

Given the expansion of dental facilities on Fort Sill, we anticipate more robust dental services provided to soldiers and families in the future. Given the projected increase in civilian population in the community, we anticipate this will have minimal impact on the civilian dental services.



### Mental Health Services

Our research indicates that there is a surplus of service providers in the Lawton/Fort Sill area to handle the current population. Acute Inpatient Mental Health beds are currently in short supply, but SWMC is currently developing an General Adult Inpatient Behavioral Health program unit in its behavioral health facility. SWMC's administration indicated a 10 bed unit opening in late 2009.

Finally, access to mental health services for service members and their families is primarily through Reynolds Army Community Hospital or an affiliated agent of the hospital such as RACH's Outreach Program with most being walk-ins or referrals. We estimate that, given the Army's current operational tempo and the estimated growth of the post, there will be an increase use of the available mental health services.

## Recommendations

The overall health care infrastructure of the region satisfies existing needs and, the increase in population in the Lawton/Fort Sill area will not significantly challenge the ability of local providers to meet future demand. The principal recommendations for the health care network in the Lawton/Fort Sill area include:

### 1. Establish a Lawton/Fort Sill Area Healthcare

**Council.** Its purposes should be the following areas:

- Collecting and disseminating regional health care data;
- Identifying areas and opportunities for collaboration in recruiting physicians, nurses, and other health care workers to the Lawton/Fort Sill area;
- Establish a formalized discussion forum between Reynolds Army Medical Center and the local hospitals to ensure that adequate health care resources are available to military personnel and their families.
- Facilitate discussion with key healthcare service providers to including mental and behavioral health services, to ensure mental health delivery systems in the community can keep up with prospective demand and any potential abnormal influx of mental health patients.
- This organized Health Care Council group can also serve as the coordination organization to ensure seamless patient care across military civilian lines.

## Social Services

*As one technical committee member remarked during the planning process, the study area can be characterized as "the region operates like a big city and suburbs where Lawton is the big city..." (and serves as the economic engine and social service provider for the region), "...but the newcomers to the area are viewing the Elgin and Cache as the suburbs and as the places they want to live and raise their children." This viewpoint is particularly troublesome for the City of Lawton since the underlying reality to this perception is that Lawton will increasingly serve as the home of the more indigent, more service-needy population of the region, thus creating a stronger perception of "being the big city." Furthermore, since these "suburbs" of Elgin, Cache, Geronimo, etc. are of such a small size to begin with, their ability to provide the critical social service needs for their current and future populations will be stretched, thus requiring assistance from Lawton to meet these needs.*

## Key Findings

There are many public and non-profit, charitable organizations and agencies operating in the Lawton/Fort Sill area to assist local residents in their everyday lives, ranging from day-to-day living support to emergency disaster relief.

### Existing Inventory of Child Care Providers

Currently, there are 147 private, licensed child care providers in Comanche County. Figure 13-4 (below) indicates that the licensed capacity for all providers combined is almost 5,000 slots, but the provider-desired capacity or "staffed" capacity is estimated to be approximately 4,900 slots in these facilities. Furthermore, examining the data provided by the providers more closely revealed that there are almost 400 vacancies or 8.0% of the total licensed slots (8.1% of the staffed slots) available for occupancy within this network of facilities.

On the other hand, Fort Sill's childcare position is much better than the local private network of facilities. Fort Sill reports that there are a total of 475 slots between their Child Development Center (CDC), School Age Program (SAP) and Youth Center (see Figure 13-5). The current reported utilization and occupancy of these programs is about 86% for the CDC, 69% for the SAP, and 60% for the YC. Additionally, Fort Sill is scheduled to open two more

Child Development Centers and a second Youth Center over the next two years. This will add an additional 356 Child Development age slots and 150 Youth Age slots for a total increase in overall child care capacity of 506 slots or 107% over current total slots.

Without factoring in any increased capacity at the privately-licensed facilities within the area over the next three years and only factoring into the overall supply of child care slots those new facilities planned at Fort Sill, then the total supply (5,933 slots) will meet and exceed the estimated demand (5,470 kids needing slots at the ratio of 7.5 kids per slot) in 2012.

Given the total estimated increase of soldiers transitioning to Fort Sill through the BRAC migration, we anticipate that Fort Sill's childcare capacity will not only handle this soldier population needs but also draw from the current soldiers who are utilizing civilian based childcare services. There is a strong potential to reduce the stress on the current civilian childcare system and make resources available to others in the community, particularly in the 0-12 month old infant brackets. However, given a potential draw down of operations in the CENTCOM AOR and a subsequent increase of units returning to Fort Sill, the overall utilization projections and availability of child care slots should be closely monitored.

## Needs Assessment

In general, the planning team discovered that a relatively strong and interconnected group of service providers exist within the Lawton / Fort Sill region to meet the needs of the economically-disadvantaged within the community. This network of public agencies and non-profit, charitable and faith-based organizations adequately deliver the critical services needed by their constituencies, and except for the ongoing difficulties and challenges related to adequate funding levels, these organizations have sufficient physical capacity and operational breadth to accommodate current and future needs.

### *Transportation Needs in Areas Outside Of Lawton*

The Lawton Area Transit System (LATS) provides

comprehensive fixed route bus service within the urbanized areas of Lawton and many low income residents of the area utilize these services.

Demand-response transportation services are available within the region, but the capacity of this system may be overextended in the future if the projected growth of the Elgin, Cache and smaller communities in the region is realized.

### *Perception of a Growing Incidence of Homelessness in Lawton*

While the community has several facilities that provide needed shelter and care for this population group, the research team encountered several community leaders concerned that this issue remains a central concern, particularly in the downtown Lawton area.

### *Duplication of Services*

When reviewing the inventory of available services in the area, the Lawton/Fort Sill area has a variety of government-funded, charitable, faith-based and non-profit organizations and agencies that provide multiple and overlapping services to clients. Duplication of services by agencies also poses an issue where providers within the region, in some cases, have to compete for scarce resources.

## Recommendations

While the research indicated that, on the whole, the system and network of public and privately-operated social and child care providers are adequate to meet the capacity needs of the region over the foreseeable future, there were several related issues and gaps that require attention.

### *Perform an Updated Community Needs Assessment*

This updated assessment should be conducted near the end of the BRAC deployment to insure that the latest and most critical issues are identified.

### *Develop a Stronger Partnership Alliance of Social and Child Care Providers*

A Regional Social Services Council or Alliance should be formed to facilitate information sharing, resource sharing



and operational and mission effectiveness across the full spectrum of social and child care issues within the region. The following strategies and recommendations could represent major initiatives for this regional alliance:

1. **Convene a Community Services Partnership Day at Fort Sill**
2. **Develop an Information Sharing and Awareness Clearinghouse**
3. **Develop a Comprehensive Funding Strategy**
4. **Encourage Use of Technical Assistance Programs offered by Fort Sill**

### *Develop Transit Options*

The region should explore additional transit options, such as shuttles from rural areas to the post or urban centers.



## Regional Coordination & Implementation

*When multiple communities come together for a common goal, all will gain much more than if they went at it alone. This statement formed the basis for the entire planning effort associated with this Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan, and it should also constitute the basic foundation for the implementation and action strategies recommended in this Plan. Many of the issues and challenges associated with the Fort Sill BRAC deployment transcend the political and municipal boundaries that currently exist within the region. These overarching challenges will require a transformative approach for the region as it prepares for the BRAC changes and seeks to capitalize on this unique growth opportunity by enhancing the quality of life for its citizens.*

### Key Findings

#### *Capacity of Existing Regional Organizations to Assist in Implementation*

The planning team reviewed the core missions of the respective agencies, their funding capacity and technical capabilities to assist in key issue areas, and their geographic coverage and mandate that could possibly lead to a dilution of their efforts on behalf of the governments and communities contained within the Fort Sill Regional Growth Management Plan study area.

Five (5) organizations that could possibly provide a “high” level of assistance to the implementation efforts of this Plan when the factors of mission-appropriateness, technical capabilities and resources and geographic coverage were reviewed.

- *Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG)*
- *Southwest Impact Coalition (SOIC) and South Central Workforce Investment Board (SCWIB)*
- *Southwest Oklahoma Rural Development Corporation (SORDC)*
- *Lawton Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (LMPO)*

### *Summary Conclusions*

While there are several existing regional partnerships and councils in the area that can assist in implementing the major recommendations of this Plan, there is no single agency or model that combines the integrated, comprehensive technical skills and capabilities with a mandated geographic focus for the Lawton/Fort Sill area to adequately provide continuing and effective leadership and structure to the implementation efforts. Furthermore, although there are several identified federal and state funding opportunities for the implementation efforts, the participating governments must recognize that the long term funding and success of any regional organization will depend on local funding. While there are potential funding sources for the start-up of the organization, the region must act in a coordinated manner to be successful in applying for and obtaining these funds.

## Recommendations

This Plan recommends that the participating governments in this study effort begin the process of defining, organizing, establishing and funding a Fort Sill Regional Coalition (“Coalition”) for the purposes of implementing the major strategies included in this Plan. The Coalition would be empowered by its participating local governments, and the following steps toward organizing and establishing this Coalition are as follows:

### *Develop an Intergovernmental Agreement to Establish the Coalition*

The following precepts could serve as a starting point in forming the basis of the intergovernmental agreement:

- An explicit understanding and acknowledgement that all participating entities have come together out of a common purpose and mission to prepare the region to accommodate the growth resulting from BRAC in a manner and method that provides the greatest benefit for the entire region;
- The organization to be formed must be sustainable and long term in its focus, structure and funding;
- Membership is voluntary and flows from the consent of participating local governments;
- Membership should include all key entities in the region, including high level participation from Fort Sill;

- The actions of the group should not detract from or dilute local governmental authorities except when a broader, regional perspective and policy demands a regional approach that may be in conflict with local government desires;
- The organization must demonstrate their effectiveness and value in achieving the broader regional goals and this value should be expressed in measurable outcomes on an annual basis.

### *Develop an Organizational Structure for the Coalition*

Because the development of this Coalition would represent a ground-breaking step in the region’s history of the governing, planning and developing a regional approach to key issues and challenges, the intergovernmental agreement should be used as the foundation for developing a detailed organizational structure for the Coalition. This organizational structure should clearly define the following aspects of the organization:

- The overall mission and scope of the Coalition’s efforts and services to its member organizations and affiliated groups (i.e. ASCOG, SOIC, and other regional and local partnerships);
- The nature and scope of representation on the Coalition, in terms of a member’s term limits, voting rights, funding levels, etc. should be established in the organizational makeup in order that all participants understand their role and impact on Coalition actions; and
- The anticipated short and long term staffing levels and strategies for the Coalition and if (or how) this staff might be shared with other agencies or local governments.

### *Develop a Start-Up Funding and Operational Strategy*

The Oklahoma Department of Commerce and the Department of Defense’s Office of Economic Adjustment represent the most viable funding and technical assistance options for the Coalition. The Coalition, with the assistance of the planning team, should develop the narratives and information necessary to pursue start-up funding by these agencies.

