About UsIn late 2007, the U.S. Congress mandated an increase of 28,000 personnel to the US Marine Corps' active duty end strength in response to the deployment demands of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Eastern North Carolina's share of that growth was projected to be approximately 11,477 new jobs at its Marine Corps installations. In addition to the planned Marine Corps growth, Seymour Johnson Air Force Base received BRAC-directed growth of about 1,200 personnel--a near 25% increase in that installation's workforce.As a result of both of these actions, job growth within the Eastern Region have been close to 17,000 new positions. This represents the largest single job growth event in North Carolina since World War II.The direct job growth, coupled with the relocation of family members and service sector workers relocating to the region, have combined to result in a population increase of approximately 55,000 new residents.Reacting to the announcement, North Carolina's Eastern Region - in partnership with the nine surrounding counties that would be most affected by the impacts - formed the Military Growth Task Force (MGTF). The task force consists of representatives from Carteret, Craven, Duplin, Jones, Lenoir, Onslow, Pamlico, Pender and Wayne counties.The mission of the MGTF is to comprehensively analyze community impacts from the sudden and unanticipated growth event and to develop regional responses to those impacts.Beginning in 2008, the MGTF formed working groups of subject matter experts in several functional areas. This "all-volunteer army" of 250 stakeholders conducted hundreds of workshops around the region and completed data-driven reports that inventoried impacts and recommended mitigating actions for the affected communities.The cumulative report

is entitled the Regional Growth Management Plan (RGMP). The comprehensive 800-page plan is broken down into the functional areas of Housing, Transportation, Infrastructure, Health Care, Education, Quality of Life, Emergency Services and Workforce Development. The first section provides a broad regional overview and the second section consists of follow-on county (local) modules. The RGMP can be downloaded by module from this website. Following the release of this final report in late 2009, the MGTF set its sights on the plan's implementation. Of the 467 recommendations for mitigation of the growth impacts, about 10% offer solutions to correct shortfalls with one particular action. For example, the highway accident rate in Jacksonville, NC, can be immediately reduced through the implementation of a $1.5 million intelligent traffic system around Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune's main gate. The remaining 90% or so of the recommendations are vastly more complex and require regional collaboration. Because there is no existing regional entity configured to tackle this latter category of tasks, the MGTF decided in early 2010 to create a forum to do just that. The resulting Task Force Objective is to coalesce existing regional organizations and subject matter experts from across the planning spectrum into one unified regional planning partnership. This forum is now known as PlanIt EAST.PlanIt EAST is comprised of four delegates from each of the region's nine member-counties, as well as four members representing U.S. military bases in the region and two members from the Eastern Carolina Council of Governments. The 42 delegates are supported by the MGTF staff and equally represent the views of local governments, developers, environmental and conservation

groups, agriculture and the U.S. military of eastern NC. More information about PlanIt EAST

is available here.The MGTF continues to advocate for the implementation of the project-specific

recommendations, and has championed many of these through

completion. Concurrently with those actions, the creation, stewardship and ultimate

institutionalization of PlanIt EAST and concurrent regional planning have become our primary

focus areas. Once these have been accomplished, the work of the task force will be

complete.   &n

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