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"FOR OVER 130 YEARS, FORT BLISS AND EL PASO HAVE GROWN TOGETHER, EACH EXPERIENCING DRAMATIC CHANGES RESULTING FROM CHANGES TO MILITARY MISSION REQUIREMENTS, BUT NONE THAT WILL RIVAL THOSE ANTICIPATED OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS."

- EL PASO REGIONAL GROWTH
MANAGEMENT PLAN

CURRENT CONDITIONS

INTRODUCTION

A key factor in El Paso's continuing economic vibrancy is Fort Bliss. Some parts of this Army installation are actually within the city limits while vast training areas and base camps extend north to and across the New Mexico state line, over a million acres deep into neighboring Doña Ana and Otero Counties.

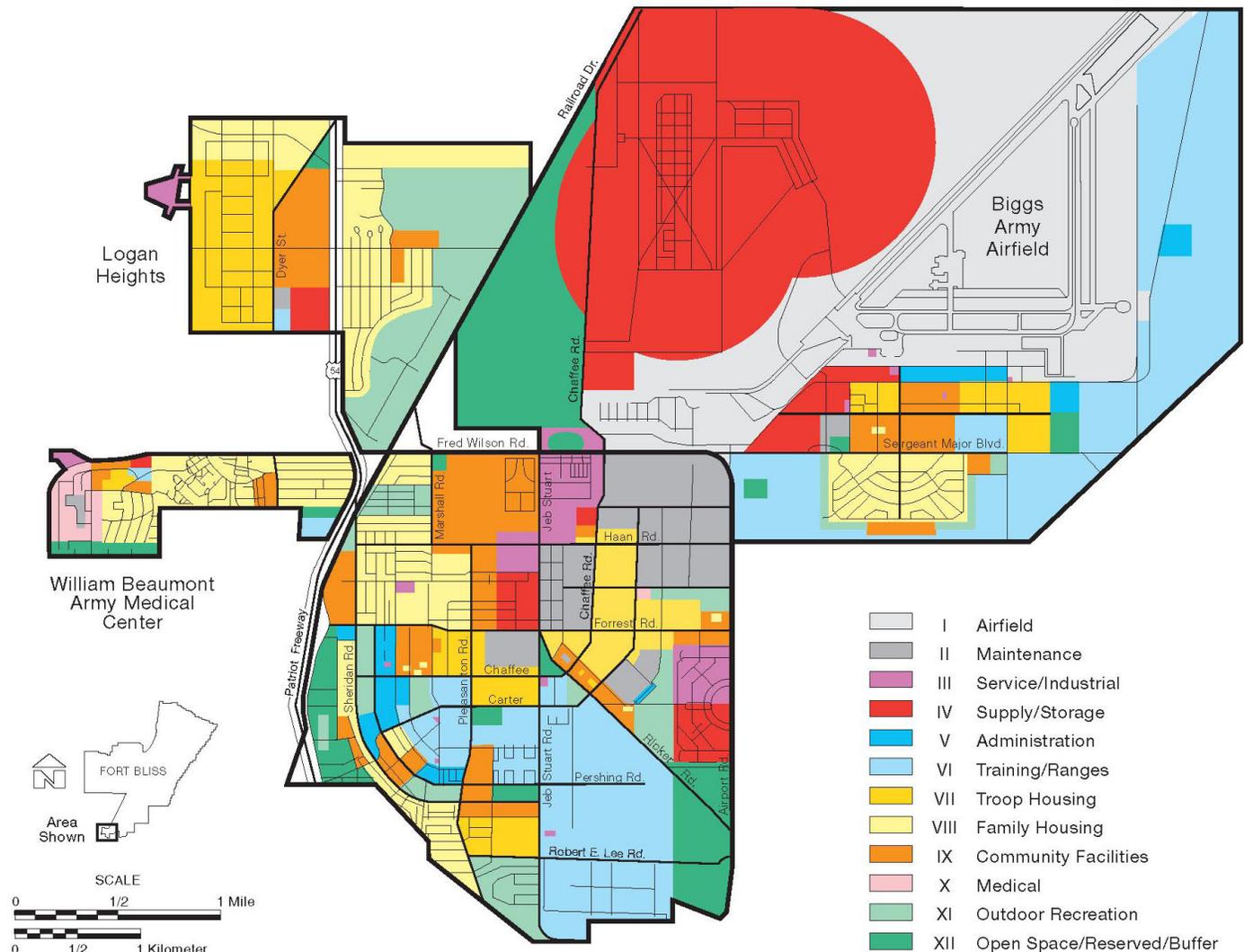
The effects of Fort Bliss extend well beyond its boundaries. In addition to nearly 3,500 units of on-post housing in fifteen neighborhoods, a large proportion of military housing is located off-post throughout the community. The current population at Fort Bliss includes 30,800 active-duty soldiers, 2,100 reservists, 38,150 family members, and 7,950 civilians. The post is so large that it contains three elementary schools and a high school, all operated by the El Paso Independent School District.

Fort Bliss was originally located near downtown El Paso and later at several other locations within today's City limits. In

1893 the post was moved to the main post of today's Fort Bliss, just west of the El Paso International Airport.

Fort Bliss became a major military training center as the onset of World War II triggered a boom in El Paso's economy. By 1942 Fort Bliss was the largest Army base in the nation. After the war, Biggs Air Force Base established itself as an important military post in the region. Biggs was closed in 1966 and reactivated as Biggs Army Airfield in 1973. Fort Bliss is currently the largest air defense center in the world.

Fort Bliss is now immersed in its largest transformation ever, with an anticipated tripling of population between 2005 and 2012 to accommodate units being relocated from other bases in the United States and from Germany and Korea. The Army is investing \$5 billion in the construction of new facilities, much of it to the east of Biggs Army Airfield where most soldiers will be stationed.



Land uses at Fort Bliss prior to current expansion.

PHYSICAL COMPONENTS OF FORT BLISS

Main Post

There are several adjoining components that make up today's Fort Bliss. The main post is located north of Interstate 10 between US Highway 54 (Patriot Freeway) and the International Airport.

The main post currently houses the headquarters, garrison command, classrooms, administrative space, barracks, and family housing. The main post no longer houses the Air Defense Artillery functions which have been relocated to Fort Sill near Lawton, Oklahoma. The main post also includes historic areas, parade grounds, and the Fort Bliss National Cemetery. The main post even contains its own shopping center, Freedom Crossing, with major retailers and a movie theater.

Biggs Army Airfield

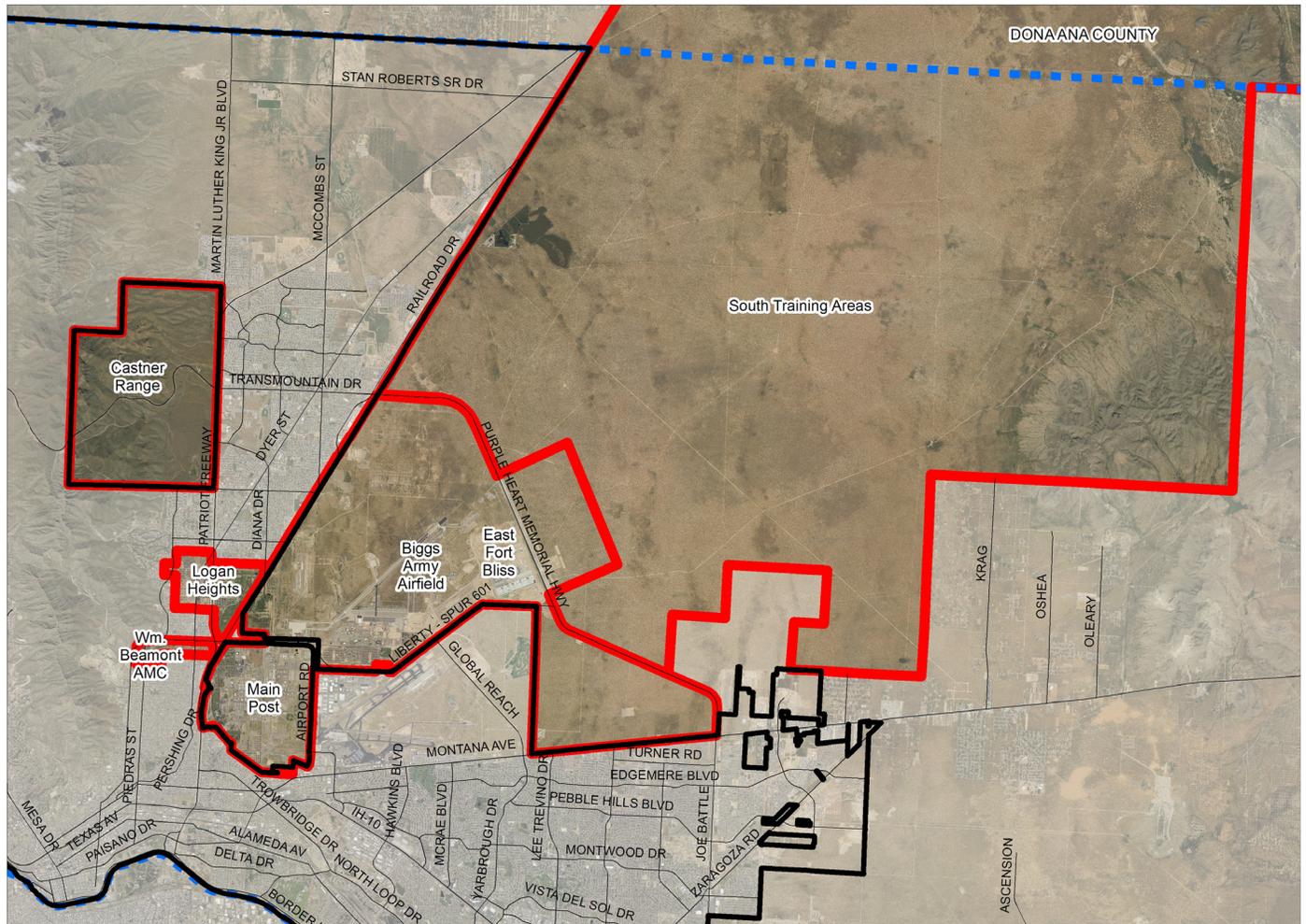
Biggs is dominated by the airfield and aviation facilities but also includes munitions storage and some family housing. A new rail terminal has been constructed to the northwest of the runway. About 500 acres between Biggs and the International Airport

have been redeveloped to support a heavy brigade combat team.

East Fort Bliss

To the north and east of Biggs Army Airfield is the rapidly expanding portion of post that will eventually contain at least two-thirds of the soldiers stationed at Fort Bliss. About 4,000 acres of land has been experiencing some level of development or redevelopment, with 2,100 acres being converted from open space into developed land. New uses include administrative, barracks/housing, troop training, industrial, commercial, and community functions. Permanent facilities for new brigade combat teams have been constructed between Biggs and Loop 375. Further expansion has begun to the east of Loop 375.

East Fort Bliss is accessible via Sergeant Major Boulevard, from the new Liberty Expressway (Spur 601), or from Loop 375. There is a shuttle bus on base for commuting throughout the installation, but due to the expansiveness of Fort Bliss, most travel is by private vehicle.



Map of major physical components at Fort Bliss.

Logan Heights

Logan Heights, separated from the main post by US 54 and the railroad, is primarily used for family housing and for community facilities and recreation. Most of the old substandard troop housing on the west side of Dyer Street has been demolished. The north end of this area has new family housing. The eastern portion of Logan Heights has two golf courses and family housing. Many older housing units have been renovated or replaced.

William Beaumont Army Medical Center

William Beaumont provides a 364-bed medical center for military personnel, retirees, and dependents. Adjoining uses include a large VA ambulatory care center and family housing on the eastern most parcel. About 90 acres may be leased in the future for commercial (offices and retail) and residential uses, including preservation of historic buildings.

South Training Areas

Most of the remainder of Fort Bliss in El Paso County is designated by the Army as its south training area, which is used primarily for on- and off-road vehicle maneuvers and for training of soldiers on foot. The main military use is tracked vehicle maneuvers because this training area is easily accessible from East Fort Bliss. There is a designated drop zone for paratroopers and portions of the south training areas support weapons firing.

Training is conducted at Fort Bliss by active, reserve, and National Guard units; other military services; and law enforcement agencies.

Certain non-military uses are permitted in the south training area. These include public recreational uses near residential areas of El Paso and a large brackish-water desalination plant.

Castner Range

This 7,081-acre parcel continues to be largely unused except for a new Border Patrol facility off Hondo Pass Drive. Previous use for extensive military training resulted in an accumulation of unexploded ordnance throughout portions of the range. Currently, the Army has no plans for future use or disposition of Castner Range; the obstacle to disposition is the high cost of removing the unexploded ordnance.



The main post is the historic heart of Fort Bliss, with administrative offices, training fields, and officer housing arranged in a campus setting that dates from the late 1800s.



Freedom Crossing on the main post is Fort Bliss' new shopping and entertainment center, which features street-oriented buildings along a landscaped street, with the intent of creating a gathering place for soldiers and their families.



New barracks at East Fort Bliss are LEED-certified, however they are located in the center of large parking lots and disconnected from other uses, requiring that all soldiers own a car and drive for nearly all of their daily trips.

COMMUNITY CONCERNS

The expansion of Fort Bliss has been widely supported in the El Paso community. This support has included expensive infrastructure improvements not funded by the military including:

- Construction of an inner loop, known initially as Spur 601 and now as the Liberty Expressway, a 9.5-mile route beginning at the junction of US 54 at Fred Wilson Avenue and extending Fred Wilson Avenue east to terminate at Loop 375.
- Realignment and extension of Global Reach Drive from Montana Avenue to the Liberty Expressway.
- Construction of full interchanges along Liberty Expressway at Global Reach Drive, Loop 375, and Sergeant Major Boulevard.
- Fort Bliss entered into a partnership with El Paso Water Utilities to construct the world's largest inland desalination plant north of Montana Avenue, which produces 27.5 million gallons of fresh water daily. The plant draws previously unusable brackish groundwater and treats it with a reverse osmosis process.

In addition to these efforts, there remain numerous planning issues that are of concern to El Paso residents and landowners.

HOUSING

The important issue of additional housing for military personnel has not been fully resolved. The Army has entered into a long-term exclusive contract with Balfour Beatty Communities LLC for on-post housing, which is scattered across approximately 500 acres in different areas of Fort Bliss. Balfour Beatty manages the pre-existing housing (not including barracks) and has a 50-year land lease on which they can rehabilitate and build new housing for military personnel.

This housing contract implements the Fort Bliss "residential community initiative" (RCI) which set out to demolish 1,215 sub-standard housing units, build 1,850 new homes, rehabilitate 206 historical homes, and renovate 1,331 other existing homes for military families. New swimming pools, community centers, parks, trails, and playgrounds are integrated with residential areas.

There is currently a waiting list for the 3,500 dwellings now managed by Balfour Beatty, which includes about 1,000 dwellings that have been constructed recently. Although there had been plans for a total of 4,000 to 7,000 units on-post, further construction by Balfour Beatty is unlikely. Military personnel who qualify and can find a unit in the RCI inventory pay just their basic allowance for housing, which can be as low as \$930/month for rent and utilities.

A detailed housing market analysis for 2008-2013 was published in 2009 and is included as Appendix B of the Regional Growth Management Plan (see next page).

REGIONAL LAND USE PATTERNS

The Army has extremely ambitious energy conservation and environmental goals for Fort Bliss. Bike paths and electric vehicles are being introduced and 20,000 trees are being planted. Fort Bliss is one of two Army bases in the nation with a goal to produce more energy than it consumes by 2015.

Ironically, several aspects of the Fort Bliss expansion run directly counter to those philosophies. Placement of the new combat brigade teams to the east of Biggs Army Airfield was logical due to the availability of space there and its proximity to military training areas. However, other facilities are being moved to the far east and southeast without compelling reasons. For example, the new William Beaumont Army Medical Center, a \$1 billion construction project that will open in 2016, is being built in the southwest quadrant of Loop 375 and the Liberty Expressway. Without convenient access to public transit, hospital staff and visitors will have to make long drives essentially forever, wasting energy far beyond what will be saved with the latest building technologies.

Another example is the site proposed for a new El Paso Community College campus immediately south of the new hospital. Although this site will be convenient for military personnel stationed at East Fort Bliss, its accessibility is poor for faculty and for all other students.

The new hospital and college campus would be placed on very large and physically separated sites, forcing nearly all access to be by private car and eliminating opportunities for nearby housing and commercial services.

FUTURE BASE EXPANSION AND CONTRACTION

The expansion of Fort Bliss has been underway since Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) decisions in 2005 and is still not complete. The new hospital is just one example of ongoing projects. An additional brigade combat team could be relocated from Germany to Fort Bliss by 2015, which could add 3,500 to the 3,800 additional soldiers.

Less discussed is the potential for future contraction of Fort Bliss should the nation's military presence be reduced. The effects of contraction on El Paso could be enormous, given the recent investment in roads, utilities, schools, and health care to accommodate the expansion. Another aspect of contraction would be the potential for re-use of military facilities such as housing, schools, and medical facilities. If these facilities are designed and constructed with this possibility in mind, they will continue to serve the community when they are no longer needed for military purposes.

STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING COMMUNITY CONCERNS
REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN

To address the local impacts of the expansion of Fort Bliss, a Regional Growth Management Plan was prepared in 2008 and 2009. This plan compared the previously anticipated growth in El Paso to three growth scenarios for Fort Bliss, looking at economic development, land use, transportation, utilities, housing, education, health and social services, public safety, quality of life, and fiscal structure.

The three most urgent priorities identified in this plan were:

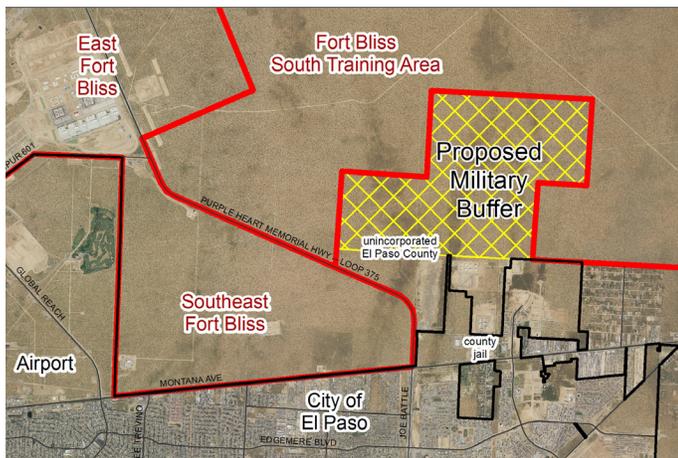
- Housing – a potential shortfall of 13,000 units by 2012.
- Education – the need for new schools and personnel (most likely 2,200 teachers and 2,100 support personnel by 2025).
- Health Care – the need for as many as 5,100 additional provider personnel by 2025.

The Regional Growth Management Plan has provided excellent guidance to community leaders since its publication in October 2009. As an example, City officials have since instituted a program to offer financial incentives to encourage developers to build privately funded housing suitable for military personnel. Many aspects of this Comprehensive Plan implement recommendations of the Regional Growth Management Plan.

MILITARY BUFFER

Approximately 2,800 acres of non-federal land northeast of Loop 375 is surrounded on three sides by Fort Bliss training areas (see yellow crossed-hatching on the map below). Future development on this tract could severely restrict military training activities and/or cause continuing noise and dust impacts on civilian uses. Fort Bliss officials would like to acquire this tract to avoid either outcome; one possibility is a swap for land just inside Loop 375.

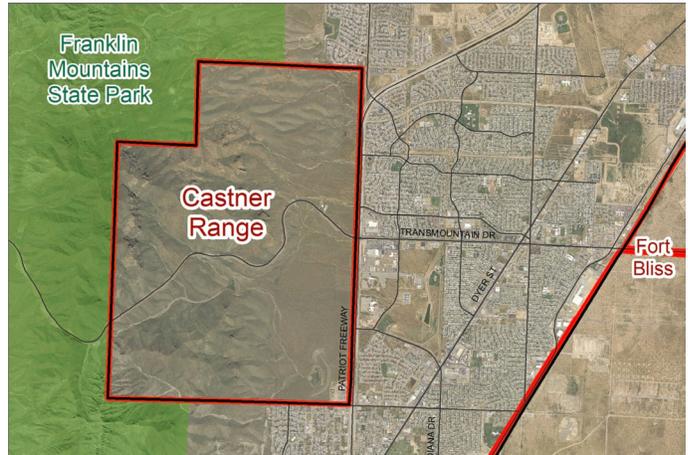
To discourage civilian development of this tract, El Paso officials are designating this tract as a “proposed military buffer” on the Future Land Use Map (see Regional Land Use Patterns element).



Proposed military buffer northeast of Loop 375

CASTNER RANGE

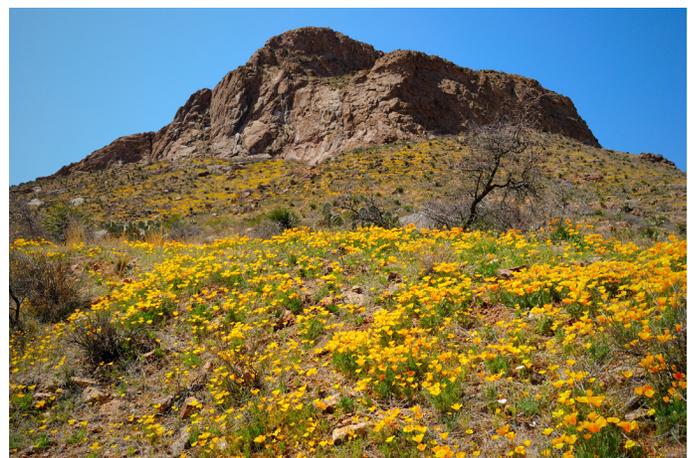
Castner Range in northeast El Paso was used for small arms and artillery training between 1926 and 1966. A portion of the range east of US 54 is now a campus for El Paso Community College. The remaining 7,081 acres between US 54 and the Franklin Mountains State Park have been untouched since 1966.



Location of Castner Range in northeast El Paso

Castner Range contains some of the most geologically complex and visually striking parts of the Franklin Mountains and is prized for its wild gold poppies and concentration of springs. The Franklin Mountains State Park surrounds much of Castner Range; the park’s management plan envisions a network of trails in the range’s canyons and lower elevations.

The Army has no plans for future use of Castner Range. City, county, and state officials have strongly supported the transfer of the entire range to the state park system. An ideal interim step would be a conservation conveyance to the non-profit Frontera Land Alliance, which would ensure the ultimate transfer of the range to the state park system once military officials are able to remove unexploded ordnance and make the land safe for public use.



Blooming poppies accentuate the breathtaking beauty of Castner Range

SOUTHEAST FORT BLISS

Fort Bliss includes about 4,170 acres of undeveloped land east of the El Paso International Airport and south of the Liberty Expressway and Loop 375. This land, although little used today, had been considered part of the Fort Bliss training areas, but it is no longer designated as such by the Army.

In recent years, the Texas Army National Guard has moved to a new facility on Montana Avenue, and the El Paso Water Utilities operates a desalination plant that provides drinking water to by the City residents and Fort Bliss.

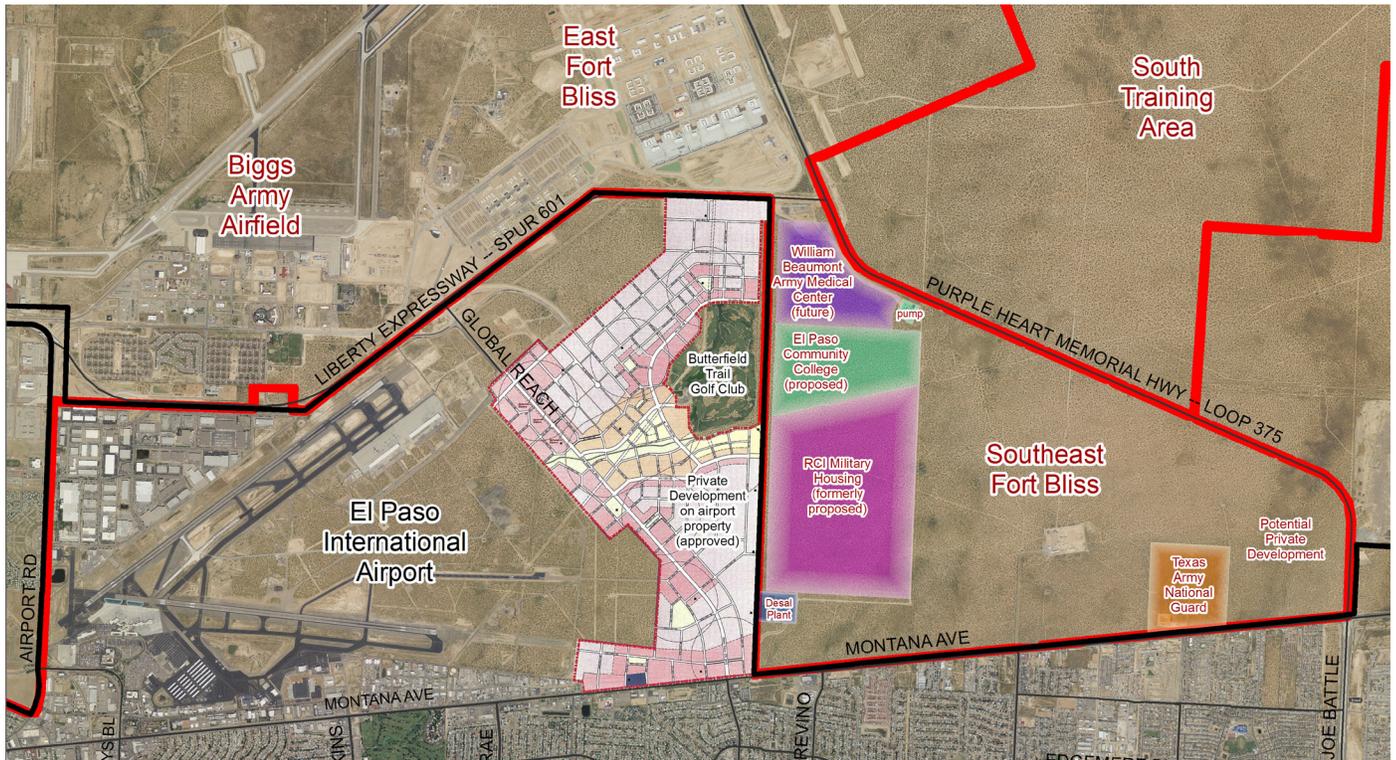
By 2016, the Army plans to relocate the William Beaumont Army Medical Center onto 200 acres in the northwest corner of this land. El Paso Community College hopes to build a new campus on 200 leased acres immediately to the south of the hospital. To the south of the college, the Army had designated 675 acres for future military housing under the RCI program, as described earlier. In early 2011, Army officials sought interest by developers to use some of the remaining uncommitted 1,800 acres; land would be sold to developers for mixed commercial and residential development, but instead of paying cash for the land, developers would be required to invest that money in housing for military personnel in the same general area.

Clearly the 4,170 acres, sometimes called Southeast Fort Bliss, will have a very different character than the developed military portions of the base or the vast training areas that extend into New Mexico.

Several planning issues are immediately apparent:

- How can future development of Southeast Fort Bliss be physically integrated with adjoining development planned at the International Airport?
- How will El Paso’s transportation systems respond to this unanticipated development?
- How should municipal services be provided to non-military development? Fort Bliss has its own water utility but it seems an unlikely long-term provider to non-military uses.
- How will non-military municipal services be funded? Sales taxes, property taxes, and impact fees will not be paid if this land remains outside the City limits of El Paso.

If the Army would require that all new development on Southeast Fort Bliss meet the “LEED for Neighborhood Development” smart location standards contained in the Urban Design element of this Comprehensive Plan, that development would be essentially compatible with El Paso’s smart growth planning strategies. Non-military development could then be made eligible for annexation into the City of El Paso, with all service and taxation issues resolved in the same manner as for all other annexed land. As a commitment to this arrangement, this land is being designated as Fort Bliss Mixed Use (G-8) on the Future Land Use Map (see Policies I.10.3, I.11.4, and I.11.5).



Potential development at El Paso International Airport and Southeast Fort Bliss

GOALS & POLICIES

GOAL 11.1: The City of El Paso is proud to be the home of Fort Bliss and holds its soldiers, past and present, in the highest esteem. The City will continue to cooperate with Fort Bliss officials to provide essential services and to integrate non-military functions of the base into the City.

Policy 11.1.1: The City of El Paso will continue to use the 2009 Regional Growth Management Plan as guidance for accommodating the expansion of Fort Bliss.

Policy 11.1.2: To protect the viability of future training operations at Fort Bliss, the City of El Paso is designating approximately 2,800 acres north of the Sanchez State Jail as a Military Buffer on the Future Land Use Map to discourage civilian development that is incompatible with training operations on nearby land (see Policy 1.10.4).

Policy 11.1.3: The City of El Paso strongly supports the transfer of the entire Castner Range to the Franklin Mountains State Park. The City supports the interim step of a conservation conveyance to the Frontera Land Alliance, which would ensure the ultimate transfer of the range to the park once military officials are able to remove unexploded ordnance and make the land safe for public use.

Policy 11.1.4: The City of El Paso supports the development of surplus land in Southeast Fort Bliss for compact, complete, and connected communities that meet the "LEED for Neighborhood Development" smart location standards contained in the Urban Design element of this Comprehensive Plan.

a. These new communities should have multiple neighborhoods, each with an identifiable center and edge and designed for the pedestrian and transit as well as the car. Neighborhoods should be compact, pedestrian friendly, and mixed-use, with a broad range of housing types and price levels. Interconnected networks of streets will encourage walking, reduce the number and length of automobile trips, and conserve energy. Denser areas should be within walking distance of transit stops. Districts that emphasize a special single use such as a hospital or college should follow the same principles whenever possible rather than being isolated in single-use complexes.

b. Land that is developed in accordance with these principles will be eligible for annexation into the City of El Paso.

Policy 11.1.5: Fort Bliss land is being designated in the following manner on the City's Future Land Use Map (see Goal 1.10):

a. O-2 Natural: Castner Range

b. O-4 Military Reserve: South training areas in El Paso County

c. G-8 Fort Bliss Mixed Use: Southeast Fort Bliss, Logan Heights, and the existing William Beaumont Army Medical Center.

d. G-9 Fort Bliss Military: The main cantonment, Biggs Army Airfield, and East Fort Bliss.

Policy 11.1.6: The City of El Paso encourages Fort Bliss officials to reconsider its decision to relocate the William Beaumont Army Medical Center from its current location to the northern edge of Southeast Fort Bliss. This important facility would be better placed closer to El Paso's urban heart where it can be easily reached by its staff, suppliers, and visitors without excessive travel by private automobile.

Policy 11.1.7: Fort Bliss is strongly encouraged to consider the long-term potential of military contraction when planning and constructing facilities. If housing, schools, and medical facilities are designed with this possibility in mind, they can continue in service after they are no longer needed for military purposes.