

# **Property Revitalization – Lessons Learned from BRAC and Brownfields**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On November 9, 2005, the Base Realignment and Closure Commission's recommendations for the closure and/or realignment of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) facilities throughout the United States became law. Known as Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), these recommendations are intended to reduce duplication in military operations, improve efficiency and operational capabilities, and therefore yield cost savings to the federal government. The 2005 BRAC recommendations represent the most aggressive BRAC round ever proposed and will affect more than 800 installations. Of the 800 installations affected, the Commission recommended 22 major installation closures. As a result of this law, DoD has until September 15, 2007 to begin closing and realigning the installations (Miles 2005). The BRAC process must be completed by September 15, 2011.

Since 1988, more than 387 installations nationwide have been closed or realigned, with an estimated \$6 billion being spent on the cleanup of these sites. Some of these properties have been redeveloped into viable industrial, commercial or residential developments. Still many remain undeveloped. The primary impediment to transferring the remaining property involves environmental cleanup (GAO 2005).

Many parties are affected when a BRAC installation is closed. Certainly, there are the military and civilian personnel who face the loss or relocation of jobs. The communities in which BRAC installations are located face equal and in some cases more serious challenges. The loss of military personnel and supportive local industries can lead to a drain on the local economy. In addition, the negotiation of land transfer, cleanup, and redevelopment of these properties can be a foreign process to communities who once thrived due to the installations' existence.

Brownfield sites also pose challenges to communities. Brownfields are defined as abandoned or underutilized industrial and commercial facilities where expansion or reuse is complicated by suspected or known environmental contamination. Typical brownfield sites include former industrial properties, old gasoline and service stations, vacant warehouses, dry cleaning facilities, landfills, scrap yards, and other properties that may have been impacted by hazardous substances, hazardous wastes, or petroleum products. Brownfield sites may have negative impacts on a community by reducing local property values, decreasing tax revenue and impeding economic development. The presence of a brownfield site can erode a community's image. In turn, this stigma can discourage developers, businesses, and homeowners from investing in the community.

The closure of a military base requires the implementation of distinct processes that involve many stakeholders, including federal, state, tribal, and local government regulators and officials, as well as the local community in which the base is located. Similarly, the cleanup and revitalization of a brownfield site requires the implementation of processes that may involve subsets of the same stakeholders. While the processes may differ from one another, they share the same goal of cleaning up sites so that they are safe for human health and the environment and to return these properties to productive reuse.

With regard to BRAC and brownfield programs and processes, many site cleanup and revitalization issues are similar. Most notably, both types of properties may be contaminated with similar substances, whose cleanup requires similar solutions. In many cases federal and/or state oversight is required for cleanups to ensure the protection of human health and the environment.

The revitalization of BRAC installations and brownfield sites can help a community to experience an economic resurgence, providing a range of housing, commercial, industrial, and transportation options that can help to reduce or eliminate the ongoing trends of blight. Accordingly, BRAC and brownfield case studies are included throughout this document to demonstrate revitalization successes due to partnerships, interparty communication efforts, and available financial incentives.

This document provides the following:

- an overview of the BRAC process;
- an overview of the brownfield program and associated incentives;
- an overview of the redevelopment process and property constraints;
- a discussion of environmental considerations and cleanup processes;
- an evaluation of competing interests between economic, environmental, and social impacts when analyzing reuse options; and
- a discussion of the various solutions and techniques available for the cleanup and reuse efforts.