Sites and site selection process

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What is the latest information on site selection? (Updated April 10, 2008)
As of April 10, 2008, the site selection team has viewed additional sites for the Armed Forces Reserve Center. The selection team viewed nine sites. Sites included suggested sites from community members. The sites are being compiled in a report under review by the Army Reserve and Base Realignment and Closure offices. The review is expected to be complete in late April or early May. When the review is complete and a site selected, the Army will host a public meeting to discuss the report.

Has the Army purchased property for the reserve center?
No, property has not been purchased because a site has not been selected.

What is the acreage required?
31 to 45 acres

What is the site selection process?
To identify sites, the Corps of Engineers advertises in newspapers, contacts with local realtors and the local and government agencies and congressional interests.
The Corps is looking for sites which have these attributes:

- No environmental problems
- Close to utilities
- Good vehicles access and visibility
- Buildable; geotechnical investigations and environmental studies

- Within budget
- Selection made with representatives from the Army Reserve, the Army Reserve National Guard and the Corps
- Property appraisal through negotiations and possible options to purchase
- Final site selection is made by BRACD (Base Realignment and Closure Division)

What sites were considered?
The Army is working with a local broker, and the Middletown Economic Development Office to locate additional suitable sites. Although the Freeman site discussed at the public meeting was the preferred site, this did not mean all other sites would not be suitable. The site selection process continues and the following items are considered:

- Topography – Can the site accommodate the more than 31 acres for the reserve center? Are there bluffs, hills or features, such as wetlands, which would prohibit the construction of the facility?
- Existing buildings—Are there existing buildings and can these be removed or renovated meeting budget limitations?
- Environmental concerns—Will the site meet National Environmental Policy Act requirements? Will the site have a FONSI – a finding of no significant impact? Are there endangered species on the site? Will an Environmental Assessment find there will be insurmountable impacts to human life or the environment? Will an EA find the project will bring air, water and soil pollution and traffic effects too extreme for the site? The site also includes proximity to the interstate which will help against traffic concerns.
- Time constraints – Can the project be built in the time required by BRAC (September 2011)
- The reference to "acquire land suitable" refers to land which meets the operational requirements for the reserve and meets or exceeds strict environmental guidelines to protect humans and the environment. This process includes a site selection following the National Environmental Policy Act. The Army is looking for a site which has no environmental problems or problems which can be mitigated; has access and visibility for vehicles; utilities; and is a site which can accommodate the project

To date, these sites have been considered. There are some reservations with sites and the Army is reviewing to see if there are alternatives or ways to reduce impacts.

Two sites on Freeman Road:
The site at Exit 10 off Route 9 meets the criteria. The other site on Freeman Road has terrain which would not accommodate the facility.

Three sites at United Technology:
Two sites on the West side of Aircraft Road has topography which will not accommodate the facility.
The third site on the East side of Aircraft Road has environmental concerns.

The Middle and Bell street site:

This 41.6 acre site includes 8 acres of wetlands and a stream on the property; Army is reviewing if the remaining area is large enough to accommodate the at least 31 acres required for the project.

Army's former facility in Middletown, the 1205th Transportation Railway Operating Battalion facility
This site was not under consideration for the new reserve center. The government only owns 23.7 acres of land in fee on this site so it did not meet the minimum acreage requirements. In addition, this site is scheduled to be closed under the BRAC Law.

Other sites will be reviewed as received from the Middletown community and the Middletown Economic Development Office.

What about the Juvenile Center site?
The Juvenile Center property was considered. The building would require renovation or removal which would exceed the current budgeted amount.

Was the current reserve center considered and if so, why was it rejected as a site?
The current reserve center was considered but did not meet the acreage requirement for the new center. The site has easements which are not owned by the federal government and cannot be used for acreage needed for the building.

Are Brownfield sites considered?
Yes, Brownfield sites – sites which have been used as industrial centers or business – can be considered and could be a viable site if costs for contamination clean up or removal of existing buildings does not exceed the budgeted amount for the project.

Can it be located near bus, train or transit terminals?
Yes, if a project site meets the project requirements, a site could be selected near transportation and be included as a site for selection.

What about local zoning laws?
The federal government is not required to follow local zoning laws, but the zoning laws are considered during placement of the projects.

Will you condemn the property or go through eminent domain process? If not, what are the options?
No, the Army will not condemn or use the eminent domain process to gain a site. The Army would look for another site as an option.

Can the Army build on formerly-used land or is undeveloped land required?
Being environmentally and fiscally responsible are priorities for the Army. The Army may build on previously used property including property with existing buildings or contamination. The decision on building at a specific site depends on the cost of removing buildings and the cost and the amount of time it will take to complete the environmental cleanup For example, one Middletown site was not considered because it

had a significant number of buildings on the property and the assessed value exceeded $70 million. In addition to the purchase cost, the buildings would need to be removed or renovated at additional costs which would exceed the programmed amount.

Why not renovate or tear down buildings on existing properties?
Renovation is more expensive. These options can be used if the cost does not exceed budget.

Will there be public participation in this project?
The Army wants to keep the community informed about the project. Different means of communication and feedback include public meetings, meeting with community leaders and mailing lists. The Army will conduct environmental assessments following the National Environmental Policy Act. This process requires interaction with the public if there are environmental impacts and methods of minimizing those impacts. We want the facility to be welcomed and we want to be good neighbors. Open communication is just one way to be a good neighbor.

How has the Army worked with Middletown's elected and appointed officials?
The Base Realignment and Closure became law Nov. 9, 2005. This started the process for BRAC and made it law that reserve centers would be consolidated and an Armed Forces Reserve Center would be built in Middletown, CT. The Army started its initial response to BRAC to prepare for the transition. Contact with the Middletown Mayor's office began in late 2006 concerning property. In late November 2006, the Army posted a newspaper advertisement in the Hartford Courant. The Army contacted Middletown officials and state officials via letters in early December 2006. In addition, the Army Real Estate Division contacted local real estate brokers to search for sites throughout Middletown.

The Army traditionally works with the local and state officials to find eligible sites and then presents the sites to the community for feedback and comments. In the Middletown project, the public interface was unfortunately delayed from the original public meeting in late 2007 to January 2008 due to weather conditions. The Middletown Council very graciously contacted the Army team to the next council meeting, the Jan. 24th date, for travel safety concerns.

What about information to the public? Were they informed and how will they be informed?
The public and official contact is an important part of the selection process. The feedback from the public such as at the public meeting Jan. 24, 2008, gives the Army time to provide information, but more importantly, hear questions and comments from the community. Traditionally, public meetings are held in the latter part of the process when environmental assessments are done and the site selection has been made. When the Middletown Council informed the Army of community reaction to our site selection process, the Army wanted to meet with the community to hear concerns.

This information assists the Army in making a decision meeting the Reserve requirements which can be supported by the majority of the community. We are early in the selection process and only a preferred site has been selected.

Community feedback and input is important and can affect where a federal project is located. For a reserve project in Cleveland, Ohio, the community preferred businesses to build on the selected site rather than the reserve. The Army chose another site and built in the region. For Middletown, we must build in the city limits to meet BRAC Law, and we are working with a local broker, and the Middletown Director of Planning to try and locate alternative suitable sites.