



Ensuring land use development and military installation compatibility

Local Government Division, Growth Management Services

The United States military is a vital component of the Washington state economy. The protection of military installations from incompatible development of adjacent land is essential to the mission of each military installation, and benefits the health of Washington's economy and quality of life. To that end, the state language provides that a comprehensive plan, amendment to a plan, a development regulation, or amendment to a development regulation should not allow development in the vicinity of a military installation that is incompatible with the mission requirements of the installation.

Background

In 2002, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced Base Realignment and Closure 2005 as part of the overall strategy to transform U.S. military branches through realignments and closures to maximize military infrastructure and tactical capabilities and efficiencies.

In 2003, the U.S. Department of Defense released policies, responsibilities, and procedures for military base realignments and closures. In 2004, the Department of Defense released a statement of need and selection criteria for base closures and realignment to Congress. Concurrently, states, communities, and national associations began mobilizing efforts to identify and address issues that may affect base operations.

An issue topic that rose to the forefront was encroachment of residential and commercial uses on military installations. Such encroachment threatens not only the viability of installations but also the health and safety of the non-military activities that surround them on land and water and in the air.

In 2004, with strong support from Governor Gary Locke, the Washington State Legislature enacted RCW 36.70A.530 out of recognition that military installations are of particular importance to the economic health of the state, and it is a priority of the state to protect the land surrounding the military installations from incompatible development. Today, local base retention efforts are underway for bases in Island, Pierce, Kitsap, Snohomish, Spokane, and Yakima counties.

Program Overview

RCW 36.70A.530 applies to those cities and counties planning under RCW 36.70A.040 that have federal military installations, other than reserve centers, that employ 100 or more personnel and are operated by the Department of Defense within or adjacent to their borders.

The legislation requires that these counties and cities consult with commanders of military installations when amending comprehensive plans and development regulations. Local governments are to request written recommendations and supporting facts related to the use of land being considered from the commanders of the military installations during the 60-day public comment period. This is to ensure that proposed plan or development regulation amendments will not have any adverse effect on the operations of the installations.

Key Initiatives

RCW 36.70A.530 is part of a state strategy to retain and enhance the military presence in the state. Complementary efforts by the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) include:

- Providing pass-through grants (through a new appropriation to the Economic Development Division) to affected local communities so that they may identify and present the competitive advantages each base offers.
- Participating in an intergovernmental base realignment response team headed by the Governor's Office.
- Providing financial assistance from existing resources to communities addressing specific infrastructure and land use encroachment issues, when appropriate.

An example of the latter is a \$10,000 Emerging Issues Grant from Growth Management Services to the City of Lakewood to provide the data and information to the city, state, and Department of Defense necessary to develop a mechanism to ensure that the land use in the clear zone is compatible with the uses of McChord Air Force Base. The project will provide much-needed data and information on land values in the "clear zone" enabling future dialogue and progress on preventing the location of, or promoting the removal of, incompatible uses in the McChord Clear Zone. Another example is an \$8,100 grant from the Economic Development Division to the City of Oak Harbor for improvements at the Whidbey Island Naval Air Station entrance to the Seaplane Base. This project improves the safety at a key intersection between the air station, weapons depot, and housing for service members.

Next Steps

CTED will conduct regional forums with military base personnel and neighboring cities and counties regarding the implementation of RCW.36.70A.530.

For More Information

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**Military Installations in Washington State:
RCW 36.70A.530 - Notification Required**

