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## Growth and opportunities

### Report: Cyber relocation brings huge changes to area

BY ELIZABETH HUSTAD  
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How big is Fort Gordon?  
How big is Fort Gordon going to get?  
The military base is already the region's largest employer and generates an estimated total annual economic impact of \$2.4 billion to \$2.7 billion.

The U.S. Army's consolidation of its entire Cyber Command from eight separate facilities in Virginia, Maryland and Washington, D.C., to the single installation in Augusta will only grow that impact.

Most of the personnel build-up at Fort Gordon has already occurred. The installation added nearly 8,500 service members since 2012, and the Army's projected stationing plan shows that this build-up will top out by the end of this year.

But the \$2 billion federal investment into some 80 construction and renovation projects at the base will still be coming into Fort Gordon over the next 10 years, and that will leave its mark on the area as the direct impact ripples out to schools, healthcare providers, housing developers and commercial and industrial enterprise; and as it induces sustained economic activity: more workers spending more paychecks, more governments investing in more institutions.

So, how big is Fort Gordon going to get? Or rather, how big is its near-term reach?

Big enough that the immediate seven-county area around Fort Gordon will in the next handful of years require another full-size hospital, several new schools (including a few in Aiken County) and more than 26,000 additional homes. Also needed



STAFF FILE PHOTO BY BILL BENGTON

**Fort Gordon in Augusta is already the region's largest employer. The U.S. Army's relocation of its Cyber Command there is expected to have huge impacts on the area's economy, from healthcare and housing to education and e-commerce.**

will be billions of dollars invested into public infrastructure to ease congestion on the highways and bulk up the power grid.

So says a new report from the CSRA Regional Commission.

#### About the report

The CSRA Regional Commission released in early June the final sections to its 410-page draft of the Fort Gordon Regional Growth Management Plan (GMP), begun in the spring last year. A finalized version of the report is expected to come out next month.

Statistical data in the GMP measured the growth and impact of Fort Gordon since 2012, when the personnel build-up began in anticipation of the incoming Cyber Command.

That information was then used to project what the future impact might be on the seven counties that surround the base: Richmond, Columbia, Burke, Lincoln and McDuffie counties in Georgia; and Aiken and Edgefield counties in South Carolina.

Beyond the direct impact of the Fort Gordon expansion, the report also estimates the

installation's indirect and induced impacts: the ripple effect through changes in supply chains and the eventual boost that more paychecks in the region will give to businesses.

To orient us, the report shows that total population in the seven-county study area grew by just over 54,000 people between 2010 and 2020 and that it is expected to grow by an almost equal number by the year 2030: a projected growth rate of 8.85%.

And the population, demographic and economic changes that Fort Gordon is driving in these counties are quickly altering the area's housing picture, its education and healthcare needs and the makeup of its workforce, the GMP shows.

Here's a look at the points likely to impact North Augusta and Aiken County most.

#### Business and industry: ripple effects of cyber

Tom Clark, executive director at the Alliance for Fort Gordon, has called the base

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## Highland Springs development changes OK'd

BY ELIZABETH HUSTAD  
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The single largest tract of undeveloped land in North Augusta received solid backing Monday night for its development as a mixed-use project of up to 5,000 residential units and some 300 acres of commercial spaces.



Brooks

North Augusta City Council on July 18 unanimously approved a slate of changes to the 20-year-old Highland Springs Planned Development that stretches for 1,368 acres along Palmetto Parkway, from Old Sudlow Lake Road to the U.S. 25 connector and Ascauga Lake Road.

Pending final approval on second reading, the changes approved for the planned development include allowances for a one-third to one-half reduction in perimeter buffering requirements and a 20% reduction in the setbacks for the proposed single-family homes.

Reductions were also made in the total number of allowable residential units from the 7,900 permitted under the original 2001 planned development to 5,000 units under the new arrangement. The new arrangement also caps the number of rental units at 1,000 instead of 1,189.

Those units, both rental and owner-occupied, will primarily be built on the southern portion of the property, near where the Highland Springs middle and elementary schools are going up.

James Dean, who was speaking on behalf of the developer July 18, said the rental units would likely be split across two or

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### Inside

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#### STATE

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