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## Moore County pitches its positives to the Army

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Staff photo by Hilary Kraus

Ray Ogden, executive director for Moore County Partners in Progress, is promoting the Southern Pines Corporate Park to potential businesses connected to BRAC.

**SOUTHERN PINES** — A growing number of business parks are in the works to lure defense contractors expected to move to the area because of base realignment.

Moore County officials believe they have a slight edge when it comes to pushing a site near Southern Pines. The Southern Pines Corporate Park and Nature Preserve near U.S. 1 has a spec building, utilities and is zoned industrial.

“My understanding is we’re well ahead in the game compared to anyone else,” Southern Pines City Manager Reagan Parsons said. “The utilities are in, the roadway is ready to go.”

Forces Command and U.S. Army Reserve Command headquarters are moving to Fort Bragg from Atlanta. Thousands of new soldiers, civilian Department of Defense employees and residents are expected to move to the region as a result.

The move also is expected to bring thousands of additional military contracting jobs.

Developers and municipalities are hoping to tap into that potential with military business parks.

In Fayetteville, the All American Business Center is being developed off Santa Fe Drive near Fort Bragg.

Earlier this month, a Triangle developer announced plans for the Freedom Center business park in Spring Lake. The 36-acre business park will go up on East Manchester Road, about 1 miles east of Bragg Boulevard.

The Southern Pines Corporate Park sits on 105 acres. Ground was broken for the project in December 2006. Plans to develop the park became feasible about two years ago when Southern Pines was awarded a \$50,000 state grant to develop water and sewer systems on the property.

The corporate park, which will be laid out in a campus-like setting, could potentially be used by 1,300 to 2,000 workers, said Ray Odgen, executive director of Moore County Partners in Progress.

An abandoned building on the property has been converted into a shell building. It is divided into 5,000-square-foot sections and is ready for tenants. The site, which is zoned industrial, has 64 acres of buildable land. It is owned by Robert Baillie of RAB Investments of Aberdeen.

Odgen said some of Moore County's selling points are its close proximity to Fort Bragg and its lifestyle. The tax rate also is lower compared with some of the neighboring cities and counties, he said.

"We have a great word-of-mouth network going on," Odgen said. "From folks who have been in the military and been at Fort Bragg, one way or another, they have discovered Moore County is the place to live."

## **Commute**

The future Forces Command headquarters will open in 2011.

The commute from the Southern Pines Corporate Park to the future Forces Command headquarters is 27.4 miles. The drive on Manchester Road through the Longstreet Road gate takes less than 35 minutes. It is mostly on back roads with few traffic lights.

Odgen recently drove retired Gen. Paul Dordal, executive director of the BRAC Regional Task Force, and Mary Lilley, economic development project manager for the BRAC Regional Task Force, from the corporate park to the site of the new Forces Command building. The drive took 34 minutes.

Lilley said she understands Moore County's appeal to some potential newcomers, but she doesn't know to what degree.

"Moore County is very recognizable as the home of Pinehurst," Lilley said. "I don't know yet if the interest is in working there or if it's where people want to live."

Lilley said she has talked with more than 100 BRAC-related businesses over the past two years in an effort to provide decision-making information on business relocations.

"Some companies want to locate within a certain proximity of the base. They can be in any county ... they just have a number they pulled out that's important to them," Lilley said.

"Sometimes they think they know what they want and when they get in, they realize, 'Shoot, if we were in a county to the west, perhaps we can serve the Charlotte market and Fort Bragg. If we're to the east, perhaps we can serve Fort Bragg and Camp Lejeune.'"

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