

RETHINKING THE COMPATIBLE USE PLAN

Aberdeen Proving Ground & Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor, Maryland

by Randy Ford

The service members, civilians and contractors at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., are testing some of the most innovative and important military technologies.

"If a soldier uses a piece of technology for protection, intelligence, to shoot, to move or to communicate, chances are it was developed, tested and fielded by an APG organization," the installation boasts on its website.

The northern area of the sprawling installation is focused largely on equipment testing. Miles away at the base's southern tip are labs focused on biochemical testing and public health. Harford County and other surrounding communities make up the Chesapeake Science and Security Corridor, which was named a Great American Defense Community in 2018.

AN INNOVATIVE USE PLAN

It is no surprise that a community with a forward-looking military mission found innovative ways to conduct a joint land use study beyond how many communities use such a process.

"We didn't have encroachment issues, but we found out that we needed to work on communications and transportation," said Karen Holt, the federal installation administrator for the Harford County Office of Community & Economic Development. "We thought this was a creative way to use a joint land use study."

The study, which started in 2015, focused on areas such as communications, transportation infrastructure, public engagement, military-community coordination and emerging threats. APG Garrison Commander Col. Timothy Druell said the study and resulting compatible use plan have been successful.

"It has established a roadmap, integrating the Army mission with surrounding counties' development which aids in cooperative long-term strategic planning and budgeting," he said. The process has led to a Memorandum of Understanding about cooperation across the fence, formalizing the long-standing relationship between the installation and community leaders, which provides additional continuity when leadership changes at the base or in a local community.

THE COMPATIBILITY USE PLAN

The study resulted in a playbook with recommendations in 10 areas: communication and coordination, frequency spectrum, housing, land use, climate adaptation, noise, roadway capacity, safety, vertical obstructions and water.

2018 Best Warrior Competition - MDNG Photo by Senior Airman Enjoli Saunders





The community created a web site, apg-chesapeakejulus.com, to house information about the compatible use plan, including a series of videos that help communities understand the process, what it means to live in a defense community and Aberdeen Proving Ground's "legacy of innovation."

Leaders wanted "people to come and look at the process we've gone through and how we did this study for little to no cost, as well as the successes we've had," according to John Fink, the deputy director at the installation's Directorate of Public Works.

THE PLAYBOOK IN ACTION

Since BRAC 2005, the DOD Office of Economic Adjustment has provided the CSSC region with \$11 million to help with infrastructure planning, and the community has stepped up its efforts to keep local residents informed about what's happening at the base.

The U.S. Army Futures Command Network Cross-Functional Team, a recent addition to Aberdeen Proving Ground, now staffs an outreach office at the Harford Business Innovation Center, which is also home to a new coworking lab operated by the Harford County Office of Community and Economic Development. The unit functions as an "offsite HQ for industry engagement," as Holt described it.

"We're going to modernize the Army in a big way, and it's extremely important that we do it together," Maj. Gen. Peter Gallagher, who leads the cross-functional team, said when he helped open the center in December. "Co-location and the presence and power of positive relationships is key to our approach."

Photo by GroundFloor
Harford