

Little Rock Air Force Base Compatible Use Study

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Chapter 1: Purpose and Process

This study is the result of a fifteen-month planning process, led by the City of Jacksonville, evaluating the role Little Rock Air Force Base plays within roughly a 50-mile radius of the base. The base’s primary role, of course, is military readiness and security; a role in which it has been serving proudly since 1955.

The base is not only a source of national pride, it also is an important part of this community’s history and an integral part of its long-term vision and outlook on the future. By undertaking this study, the community has shown its commitment to the continued vitality of the base, as well as the base’s commitment to the success of its civilian neighbors and local government partners.

In short, the Compatible Use Study is a “deep dive” into the nature of this relationship and a recommendation for how to protect it over the long-term by making sure on-base land uses and off-base land uses work in conjunction with and not in opposition to one another. Some base operations create impacts that may not be compatible with off-base civilian land uses – housing, for example. Conversely, civilian land uses, depending on location, can negatively impact or limit military operations – tall structures being an obvious example.

It is for this reason that communities like this one initiate Compatible Use Studies: to be deliberate in mutual land use planning and operational activities and to maintain an open dialogue of coordination and transparency.

This Chapter gives important background as to the purpose of the Compatible Use Study and process the community has undertaken to accomplish it.

I. What is a Compatible Use Study?

The Compatible Use Study (CUS) is a valuable tool to help military installations and their communities understand the impacts they have on each other and to develop collaborative solutions that respond to various land use challenges and opportunities.

The goal of the Little Rock Air Force Base (AFB) CUS is to identify means of promoting responsible land use, accommodating compatible growth and economic development, protecting public safety and quality of life, and sustaining the mission of the Air Force in the region for the long-term. The Little Rock AFB CUS is a cooperative planning effort between Little Rock AFB and the following municipalities:

- White County
- Pulaski County
- Lonoke County
- City of Cabot
- City of Sherwood
- City of Jacksonville
- City of Lonoke
- City of Maumelle
- City of North Little Rock

In addition to Little Rock AFB, the Study also includes important training areas such as the All-American Landing Zone at Camp Robinson, managed by the Arkansas National Guard, and the Blackjack Drop Zone, managed by Little Rock AFB.

The study is administered by the Jacksonville Economic Development and Cultural Alliance and co-funded through a grant from the Department of Defense (DOD), Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA). The Jacksonville Economic Development and Cultural Alliance selected White & Smith Planning and Law Group, along with its subcontractors Marstel-Day, LLC and Benchmark CMR, Inc. to complete the study. The Alliance appointed two steering committees, a Policy Committee and a Technical Advisory Committee, to guide the CUS, with input from the general public.

Figure 1-1: Little Rock AFB Main Gate Entrance



The CUS, formerly known as a Joint Land Use Study (JLUS), is a planning tool and cooperative effort between the military and the surrounding communities to plan and execute strategies promoting compatible development. OEA provides technical and financial assistance to state and local governments to undertake the study. Since the community initiates and administers the CUS through collaboration with the military, the process promotes continuous dialogue and sharing of information in order to achieve long-term sustainability and protection for the military missions. The DOD initiated the

community compatibility program in 1985, and more than 150 “joint land use” or “compatible use” studies have been completed for military base communities across the country. Although Little Rock AFB has enjoyed decades of robust community partnerships and support, this is the first compatible use study completed for Little Rock AFB and surrounding communities.

The Little Rock AFB CUS can benefit both the Air Force and the surrounding region by:

- preserving long-term land use compatibility between Little Rock AFB and the surrounding communities;
- sustaining the operational mission of the Air Force in central Arkansas while protecting the quality of life of nearby residents and businesses;
- enhancing communication and coordination among local and regional stakeholders; and
- integrating the growth plans of the communities in the region with Air Force plans and mission operations.

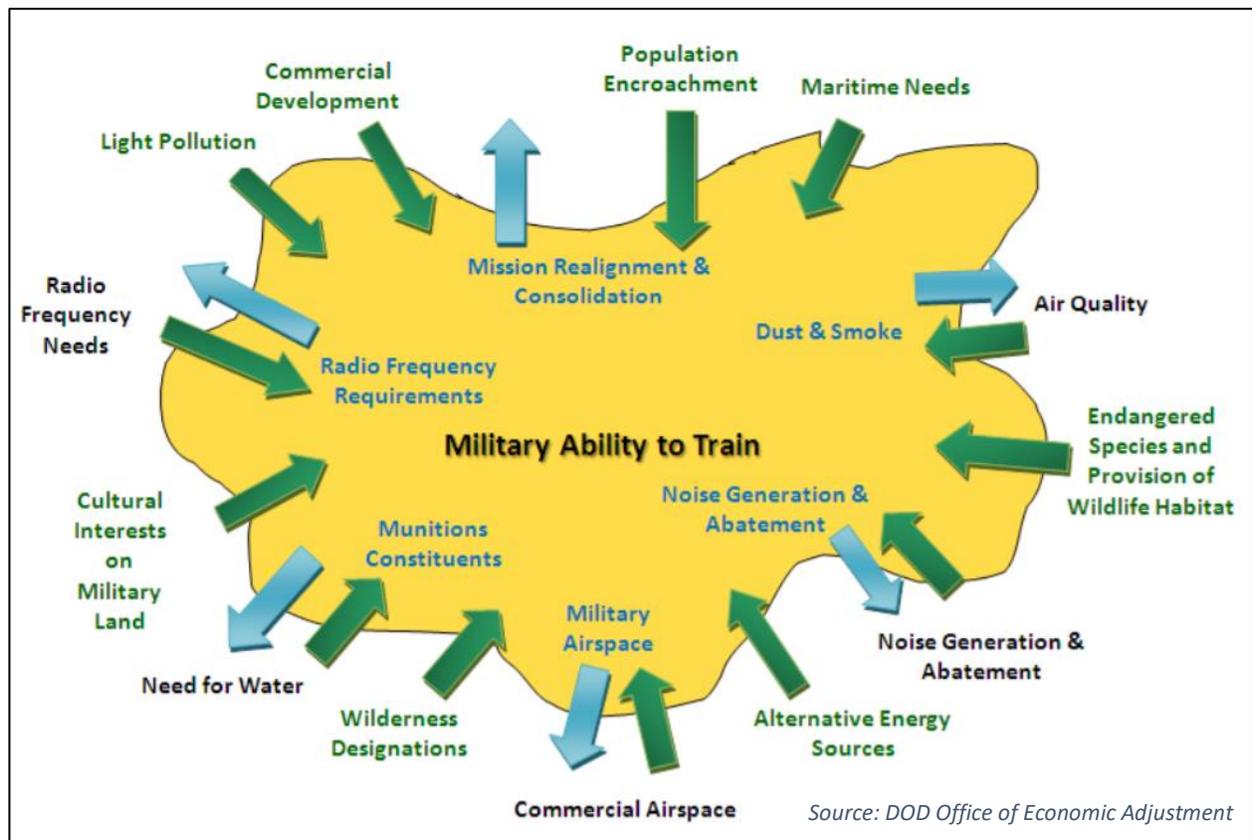
Compatibility is assessed by identifying the current and potential encroachment issues in the region, including noise, endangered species/critical habitat, safety/security, air and water quality, regional airspace management, energy development, and frequency spectrum interference, among other potential issues (see Figure 1-2). Incompatible development and land uses can affect the military’s ability to conduct training and operations. These issues were evaluated during the study by the consultant team and the Policy Committee’s resulting findings are set out in Chapter 3.

Some examples of these impacts on military training and operations can include:

- Reduced usage days
- Prohibited operational, training, and testing events
- Reduced range access
- Segmented training and reduced realism
- Limited use of new technologies
- Restricted flight altitudes
- Inhibited new tactics development
- Reduced live fire proficiency
- Interference with night and all-weather operations and training
- Increased personnel tempo
- Increased costs or risks

The CUS process creates a framework for the military and local communities to collectively work toward pursuing long-term viability that supports the mission of the military installation and facilitates compatible growth and quality of life for the entire community.

Figure 1-2: Shared Compatibility



The Little Rock AFB CUS will provide:

- an assessment of existing land use conditions near Little Rock AFB, to include any potential incompatible land uses;
- an assessment of potential future civilian and military land use conditions, to include any projected incompatible land uses; and
- strategies to promote compatible land use planning around Little Rock AFB, Blackjack Drop Zone, and the All-American Landing Zone at Camp Robinson.

As shown in Table 1-1 below, the CUS represents the first phase in the overall CUS process. The CUS provides recommendations based on a compatibility analysis designed to balance the needs of the military operational and training areas and the community needs. Once complete, the CUS provides a foundation for pursuing compatible land use, allowing local governments to then move into a second phase of implementation. Implementation actions could include comprehensive and general plan updates, zoning and general code provisions, subdivision regulations, and notices to property owners and occupants. Implementation also includes collaborative efforts for interagency cooperation and public outreach and communication. The third phase represents the continual nature of compatible land use planning, where tools to address incompatibilities are adopted and amended over time as community and military needs shift and evolve.

Table 1-1: Compatible Use Study and Implementation Process

	Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
	CUS	CUS Implementation	Strategy Adoption
Phase Objective	Needs Assessment Tools Identification	Tools Development	Tools Adopted, Effective, Amended as Needed
Oversight	Policy Committee and Technical Working Group	CUS Implementation	Military Planning & Coordination Committee (MPC)
Funding Eligibility	OEA-eligible	OEA-eligible	Local Funding, as needed

II. Study Goals and Objectives

The primary goal of the CUS is to preserve and enhance long-term land use compatibility between Little Rock AFB and the surrounding communities. This serves to both protect the mission of the installation and to ensure the installation’s impacts on the surrounding communities are as minimal as possible. While the CUS planning process is tailored to the needs of the local community, the primary objective of each CUS is to:

A. Increase Awareness

The Compatible Use Study will increase the community’s awareness of the Air Force’s operations here, and also increase base understanding of land use trends and planning needs in neighboring communities.

B. Encourage Collaboration

The collaboration facilitated by the CUS enables military officials, local governments, and other community members to better understand the needs of each other and enhances mutual long-term planning efforts.

C. Maintain Land Use Compatibility

The CUS provides a set of recommendations and tools to maintain land use compatibility that protects the Air Force mission and the quality of life of the local community. The CUS itself does not result in changes to land use, zoning rules, or how property owners may use their property, though it may identify regulatory changes for the community to consider after the CUS is completed. These recommendations are set forth in full in Chapter 7 and overviews are included in the Executive Summary, as well as in Appendix *<to be finalized>*.

Figure 1-3: Team Little Rock performs America Strong Salute to Heroes



III. Little Rock AFB and Central Arkansas Community Context

Little Rock AFB is comprised of approximately 6,217 acres of land in the City of Jacksonville and Pulaski County, and is located roughly 15 miles north of the City of Little Rock. Construction of the base began in November 1953, after more than 6,100 acres of land was purchased by the community and donated to the Air Force. Little Rock AFB opened its gates on October 9, 1955, and over the years has had diverse missions with bombers, reconnaissance, missiles, and cargo having called Little Rock AFB home. While the mission of Team Little Rock has changed over the years, the community partnerships have remained strong. Today, Little Rock AFB's host unit is the 19th Airlift Wing, which provides the Department of Defense mission-ready Airmen and supports the largest C-130 fleet in the world.

Located 19 miles northeast of Little Rock AFB in White County, Blackjack Drop Zone is a 300-acre training area owned by Little Rock AFB to provide airdrop training. The mission of the 19th Airlift Wing, 314th Airlift Wing, and 189th Airlift Wing at Little Rock AFB is to provide air transportation for airborne forces, their equipment, and supplies with delivery by airdrop, airland, or extraction. Blackjack Drop Zone was established in the early 1990s, and additional land was acquired in 1996 to provide a buffer zone. Although not owned by Little Rock AFB, the 19th Airlift Wing and tenant units utilize a 471-acre site known as the All-American Drop/Landing Zone at Camp Robinson, approximately five miles west of Little Rock AFB.

When military bases in the U.S. were originally constructed, the majority were located in rural areas away from urban centers. As a result, land use compatibility in the early years was virtually a non-issue for a military base. As populations and economies grew over time and urban and semi-urban areas expanded, new land use issues began to emerge. Development often clustered directly outside the gates and around the bases in order for businesses to serve the military community. Military bases became magnets for economic development, with communities surrounding military bases typically experiencing greater economic growth. As weapons systems, aircraft, and other technologies have modernized, training needs have shifted. In order to meet rapid deployment requirements, training tempo may increase. Realistic training environments and exercises are required to ensure success during combat. More training space is required to accommodate weapons systems and technologies that require larger noise and safety zones.

Aircraft traffic has potential impacts on the community, such as noise and accident potential, but much of the land uses surrounding Little Rock AFB and their training areas are rural, low-density, or undeveloped uses. Although there is a high degree of current compatibility with the existing land use patterns, there is a lack of full coverage of compatible use zoning in alignment with Air Force guidance. A detailed analysis of the land use compatibility with the current operational and training missions can be found in Chapter 3. The analysis also assesses future land use compatibility based on future land use plans for the jurisdictions within the Study Area.

The Central Arkansas region continues to experience population and economic growth, which enhances the vitality and quality of life for its community members. Little Rock AFB serves as a major piece of the region's economic engine, as the fifth largest employer in the state with a local economic impact of over \$782 million. The Compatible Use Study is designed as a proactive planning effort to ensure that communities surrounding military bases can achieve community growth and development that also enables the base to accomplish its missions and operations into the future. The CUS builds on the existing partnerships between the installation and local communities and identifies additional tools and

methods to address incompatible land uses and development and further protect the Little Rock AFB mission.

IV. CUS Participants

The Little Rock AFB Compatible Use Study was conducted between October 2019 and December 2020. Two steering committees guided the planning process, including a Policy Committee and a Technical Committee, that each provided valuable feedback, local knowledge, and policy direction to the CUS Team. The committees met on the following dates:

- October 8, 2019
- April 16, 2020
- July 9, 2020
- August 25, 2020
- November 20, 2020

The CUS Policy Committee was comprised of local elected officials, the Little Rock AFB Installation Commander, and other senior representatives from local organizations. The Policy Committee was responsible for guiding the direction of the CUS and for managing implementation actions.

The CUS Technical Committee was comprised of senior municipal and county staff members, the Little Rock AFB Community Planner and other specialized staff, and representatives from the local business community. The Technical Committee identified and addressed local land use matters, provided feedback on documents prepared by the consultants, and assisted the Policy Committee in the development and evaluation of implementation strategies and tools.

There were also several opportunities for public input throughout the process, including Town Hall meetings and a public survey described further below. The success of compatible land use planning efforts depends on open communication and engagement with stakeholders from the military installation and communities. CUS participants included:

- Air Force leadership and personnel
- Federal and state government agencies
- Landowners and affected residents
- Business and economic development organizations and chambers of commerce
- Local and regional government agencies
- Public utilities and other service providers
- Conservation and economic organizations
- Schools, colleges and universities, and other educational organizations

V. CUS Study Area

The CUS Study Area includes the cities of Jacksonville, Sherwood, Cabot, North Little Rock, Lonoke, Ward, Austin, and Maumelle and the counties of Pulaski, Lonoke, and White. These jurisdictions are considered the most likely to experience impacts from Little Rock AFB’s military operations and most likely to create impacts on Little Rock AFB due to incompatible growth and development.

The Little Rock AFB CUS also considered lands associated with Ranges, Military Training Routes, Special Use Airspace, and Military Operating Areas used by Little Rock AFB, as applicable. Blackjack Drop Zone and All-American Landing Zone, important locations for Little Rock AFB training and operations, are specifically included in the analysis. The study area, shown in Figure 1-5, broadly includes a 50-mile radius from Little Rock AFB, as well as smaller land use Focus Areas extending 5 miles from the base, All-American Landing Zone, and Blackjack Drop Zone (see Figure 1-6). The impacts to these lands are detailed in Chapter 3, “Compatibility Analysis,” and are based on a range of operational and training impacts, including aircraft accident potential, aviation noise, obstructions to aerial navigation, and related issues that can impair military readiness, endanger aviators or civilians in their communities, or impact the quality of life of residents.

Figure 1-4: 19th Operations Support Squadron Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Specialist Prepares to Land at Blackjack Drop Zone



Figure 1-5: CUS Study Area

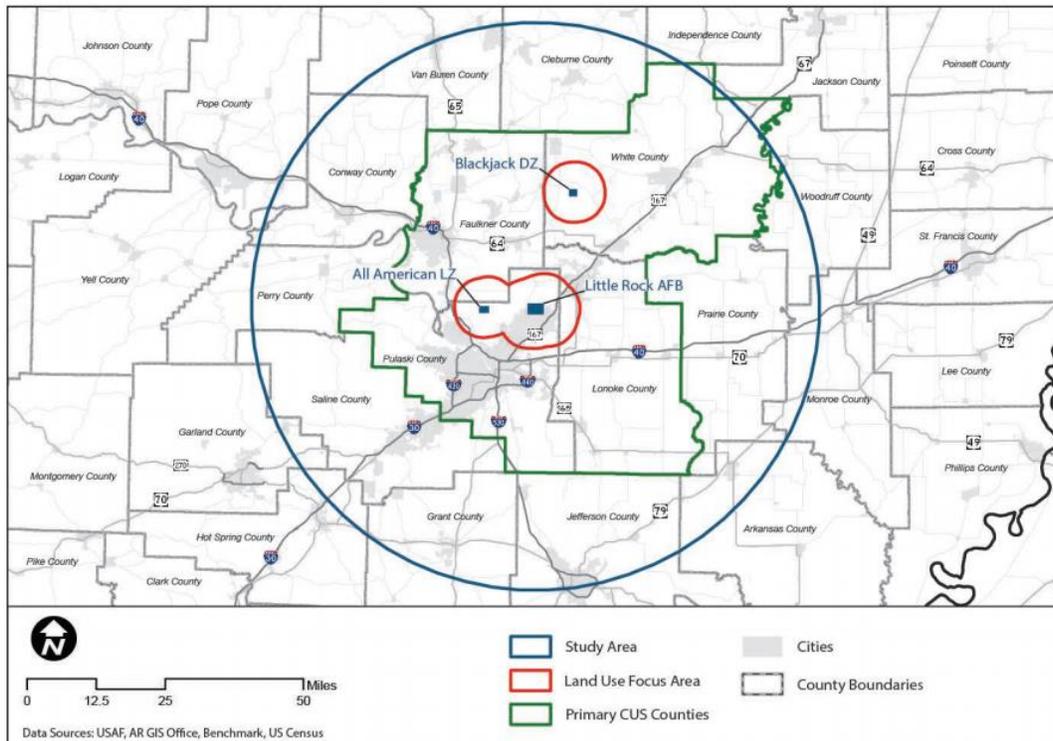
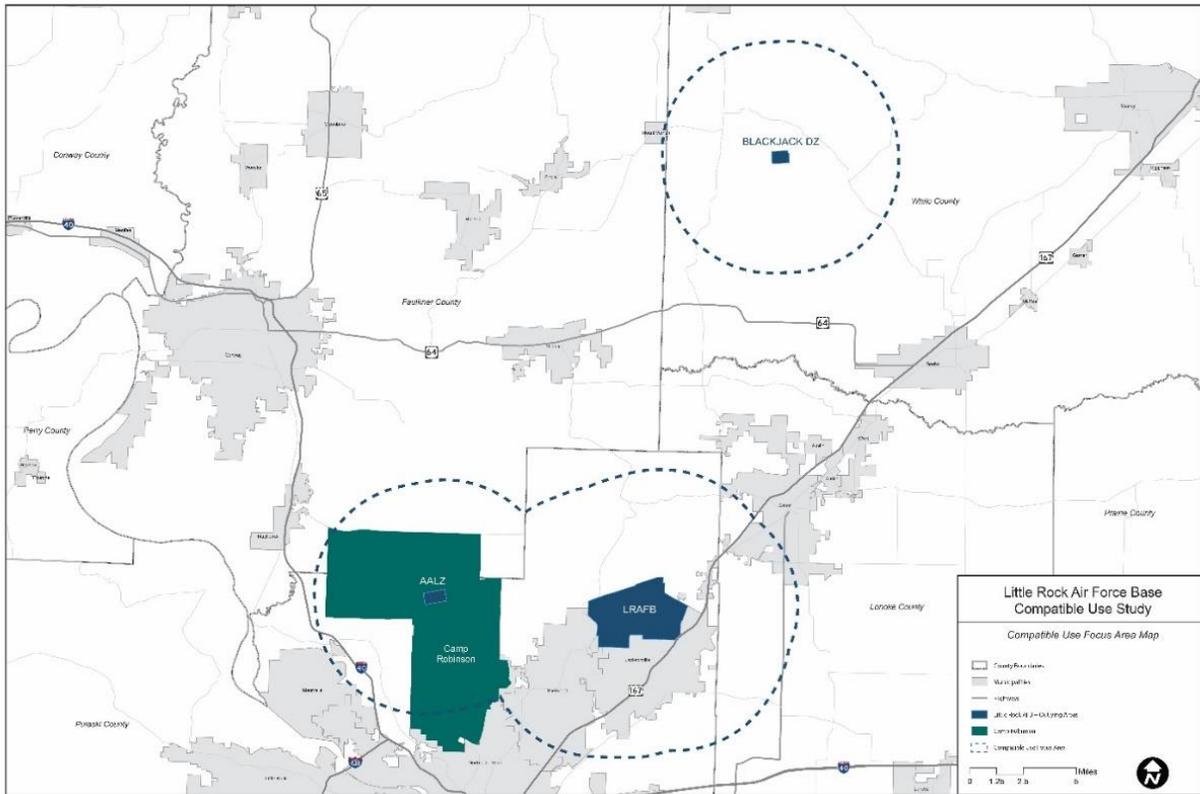


Figure 1-6: CUS Study Focus Areas



VI. The CUS Process

The CUS process consists of three main phases:

1. Evaluation of existing conditions
2. Land use compatibility assessment
3. Implementation options

Evaluation of Existing Conditions

The first main step in the CUS process includes an evaluation of the existing conditions, including a review of background documents on the installation and community, comprehensive plans, and regulations, as well as meetings with the public and key stakeholders identified by the CUS Policy and Technical Committees.

Focused interviews with military personnel and local government stakeholders early in the CUS process provided critical information and facilitated meaningful engagement throughout the process. The Little Rock AFB interviews enabled base personnel to discuss existing installation plans and processes, provide insight into how the installation communicates and collaborates with the community, and identify current and future encroachment impacts.

Stakeholder sessions were conducted on January 7 and 8, 2020. Stakeholders interviewed included the following municipalities and organizations:

- Lonoke County

- Pulaski County
- White County
- City of Cabot
- City of Jacksonville
- City of Sherwood
- Arkansas Department of Transportation
- Arkansas Economic Development Commission

A public survey provided additional information about existing conditions and relationships. The general public was invited to participate in a live CUS survey held during stakeholder meetings on January 7 and 8, 2020. An online version of the survey was available from January 7 through March 6, 2020. Hard copies were also made available for community members who preferred to submit a response in writing. Public survey results aided the CUS team in developing a clear picture of the existing military/community relationship. An overview of the survey is summarized below and full survey results are provided in Appendix <*to be finalized*>.

Land Use Compatibility Assessment

As part of the CUS process, an analysis was performed for the unique impacts associated with Little Rock AFB, All-American Landing Zone, and Blackjack Drop Zone. The CUS Team assessed both current and future operational impacts and also compared current and future compatibility concerns. The identified areas of potential incompatibility are related to aircraft noise, aircraft accident potential, tall structures / obstructions to aerial navigation, and other documented military training and operational impacts. The scope of the analysis includes current land use and development patterns, the current regulatory environment, and local government plans for future growth and development. The CUS also includes detailed descriptions of how the current and future land uses and zoning are controlled at the state and local levels; the impacts of Little Rock AFB on local jurisdictions; and federal land use requirements, opportunities, and programs that influence state and local zoning requirements.

Implementation Options

Using the background information and land use compatibility analysis prepared in the first two phases of the CUS process, implementation options were presented to the CUS Policy Committee and community for consideration. The finalized implementation options are provided as recommendations in the CUS report with responsible parties, steps, and an anticipated implementation timeframe.

VII. Public Awareness Campaign

Public input is critical to the Compatible Use Study process. The CUS Team conducted a public awareness campaign using a variety of communication and engagement tools to reach members of the community, relevant industries, landowners, the media, and other CUS project stakeholders within the CUS Study Area.

About six months into the project, the COVID-19 pandemic required severe limitations on in-person meetings for the Policy and Technical Committees and with the public. Like so many during this time, the CUS Team and participants adjusted quickly and were able to rely on virtual platforms and meetings to keep the project on its original schedule.

Informational Brochures

The CUS Project Team produced two information brochures, one introducing the project and another summarizing the public awareness campaign. The brochures were posted on the project website. Contact information to provide public input was provided on both of the brochures to encourage communication and knowledge sharing throughout the CUS process.

Project Website

The CUS project website provided a wealth of information about the CUS planning process, including:

- A detailed overview of the CUS process;
- Notification of upcoming events;
- Project materials, including meeting agendas, presentations, informational brochures, CUS Study Area information, and draft CUS documents;
- Links to the Public Survey and its results;
- Information about Little Rock AFB; and
- Frequently Asked Questions.

Figure 1-7: CUS Public Awareness Campaign Brochure



Figure 1-8: Little Rock AFB CUS Website



Event announcements and other project notifications were posted on the project website, as well as the project Facebook page. The Request for Proposal from City of Jacksonville for the CUS, as well as the Statement of Qualifications from the selected consultant team, could also be found on the website.

Facebook Page

The Facebook page allowed visitors to post comments and questions, allowing direct communication between stakeholders and the CUS Project Team.

Meeting information was also provided through the Facebook page including notices for meetings and live streaming of meetings as they occurred.

Public Survey

As described above, a public survey provided information about existing conditions and relationships and meaningful insight into the views of the community regarding LRAFB. The survey consisted of 35 questions, divided into six main categories:

- General Demographics
- Connection and Familiarity with Little Rock AFB
- Communications Between Little Rock AFB and the Community
- Perceptions of Little Rock AFB in the Community
- Impacts of Little Rock AFB in the Community
- Safety at Little Rock AFB, Camp Robinson, and the Blackjack Drop Zone

A total of 270 survey responses were completed and collected – 260 online surveys and 10 paper copies were received. Survey participants were also given the opportunity to provide general comments, questions, or other statements regarding Little Rock AFB at the end of the survey. A report containing the survey results, including general summaries, charts, graphs, and raw data, was posted to the website and presented at a Town Hall meeting to the public and, of course, to the Policy and Technical Committees.

Figure 1-9: Little Rock AFB CUS Facebook Page



Virtual Town Halls and Public Meetings

The first round of public Town Hall meetings occurred in-person on January 7 and 8, 2020. Due to the ongoing public health concerns related to the COVID-19 virus, Central Arkansas residents were invited to participate in subsequent Virtual Town Halls, rather than in-person meetings, for the remainder of the project.

The first round of Town Hall meetings introduced the public to the Little Rock AFB CUS and received initial input on the CUS process, issues associated with Little Rock AFB, and policy direction. The second Town Hall meeting provided the results of the public survey, draft land use compatibility analyses, and the next steps of the process. The third Town Hall meeting included overviews of the draft chapters and described the draft recommendations.

Local media, such as the Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Arkansas Leader, and KLRT Fox 16, published stories regarding the Little Rock AFB CUS throughout the process, including to announce town halls and other public meetings.

Virtual Town Halls were streamed live on Zoom and Facebook Live. Members of the public were able to interact with the presenters via the Zoom platform or to simply watch via Facebook feed. Following each Town Hall, the recording of the meeting remained on Facebook and was also posted to the project website for the duration of the study.

VIII. CUS Report Overview

The CUS report consists of six chapters detailing portions of the planning process. A brief description of each of the chapters of the report that follow Chapter 1 is provided below. More details are provided in the respective chapters. The Appendices provide several additional important documents.

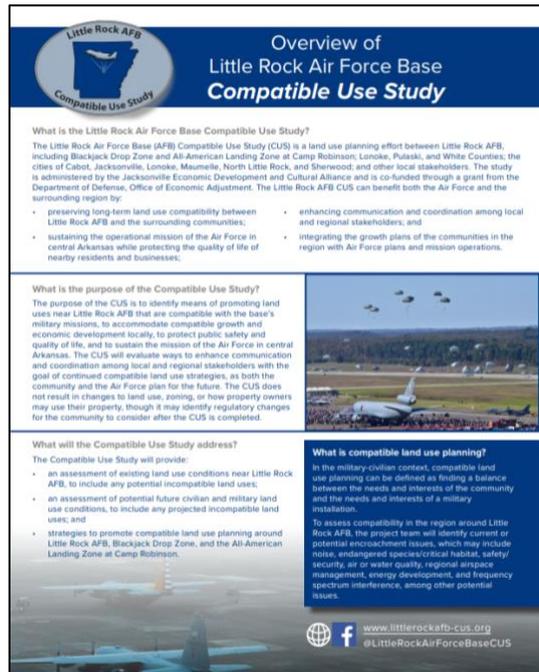
Chapter 2: Community Profile

Chapter 2 provides background information on Little Rock AFB and its operations, as well its effects on the community and partnerships and collaboration between the installation and the community. The chapter also includes a demographic and economic profile of the community, identifies growth and development trends, describes the local infrastructure context, assesses areas of potential conflict, and summarizes the environmental resources programs and management at Little Rock AFB.

Chapter 3: Compatibility Analysis

This chapter provides a review of current and future land uses, identifies potential areas of incompatibility between the installation and community, and assesses potential conflicts between military operations and the lands within the Study Area. Current land uses within the CUS Study Area are compared to the noise contours and accident potential zones described in the 2011 Little Rock AFB Air Installation Compatible Use Zone (AICUZ) Study. Aircraft noise and safety concerns related to military

Figure 1-10: Little Rock AFB CUS Informational Brochure



aircraft operations are the most significant potential impacts to the community and are the primary focus for the compatibility analysis.

Chapter 4: State of Arkansas Planning and Land Use Framework

Chapter 4 describes the planning and land use framework at the state level and includes a discussion of the state statutes, commissions, and departments related to development and land use compatibility. There are several state government organizations responsible for promoting and providing funding support for compatible land use and economic development projects, which can be leveraged when implementing military compatibility policies and regulations.

Importantly, in 1995, the Arkansas Legislature adopted A.C.A. § 14-56-426 requiring local governments in proximity to Little Rock AFB to adopt ordinances governing land uses near the installation. This statute is detailed in Chapter 4 and, in Chapter 7, is the subject of several key CUS recommendations.

Chapter 5: Local Government Zoning and Land Use Authority

The relationship between Little Rock AFB's operational impacts and the local planning and zoning ordinances of the local jurisdictions within the Study Area are explained in Chapter 5. Five of the CUS jurisdictions have jurisdiction-wide zoning ordinances as a tool to regulate land uses, and two, Jacksonville and Sherwood, have adopted overlay zoning districts related to military land use compatibility. Pulaski County has adopted limited zoning within the Lake Maumelle Watershed, which is unrelated to military land uses.

Arkansas law enables municipal planning commissions to exercise with 1- or 2-mile planning and subdivision jurisdiction beyond their corporate limits. And, as noted above, Arkansas law grants five miles of extraterritorial jurisdiction to first class cities within five miles of an active military base. Chapter 5 provides a summary of these powers relative to the military operational impacts experienced within the jurisdictions most impacted by or likely to impact Little Rock AFB ("jurisdictions of primary concern"), as well as those further away but still within the CUS Study Area.

Chapter 6: Federal Land Use Requirements and Opportunities

Chapter 6 discusses the federal land use requirements and programs associated with active military installations that affect and influence land use and zoning requirements at the state and local levels. Chapter 6 includes a description of several federal land use programs that offer grants and other financial assistance to public and private entities to promote land uses compatible with military operations and to support the conversion of noncompliant land into compatible uses.

Chapter 7: Compatible Use Study Recommendations

This chapter provides the recommendations of the Policy Committee to achieve and maintain land use compatibility near Little Rock AFB and its outlying facilities. These recommendations are intended to help protect the military mission and the public health, safety, and welfare of the surrounding community. Recommendations include land use or zoning regulations, such as overlay districts; policy changes or updates; and public outreach and communication strategies. CUS recommendations range from regulatory to more informal cooperative efforts, but all proposed actions focus on improvements with mutual benefits for the Air Force and the community here.

Chapter 7 includes a detailed discussion of each recommendation and prioritizes those most critical in the near term. Several of the high priority recommendations are linked to an initial effort to clarify and

reach agreement on the scope of several statutory authorizations related to local government powers and military land use regulations, specifically.

The CUS Recommendation Overview in Appendix <*to be finalized*>, summarizes the implementation plan in Chapter 7 and includes a list of specific actions organized by their scheduled execution date (short-term, medium-term, and long-term). Implementation of any actions recommended in the CUS, should the community wish to take that step, would only follow community-wide consideration and input and action by local decision-makers.

Appendices

This report contains several appendices, which include the results of the public survey; tables summarizing the local regulatory environment, the military impacts experienced in the CUS Jurisdictions, and the CUS recommendations; key state statutes; and local military-related overlay zoning district regulations.