



United States Department of Agriculture
Rural Development

USDA - Fort Riley Regional Initiative



At left, Gen. Dennis Hardy; 1st District Congressman Jerry Moran; USDA Rural Development Undersecretary Gil Gonzales; U.S. Senator Pat Roberts; and USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks pose following the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding to pledge full cooperation to assist Soldiers and civilian families moving into the Fort Riley area.

Center: Community leaders attend a USDA Rural Development sponsored meeting to learn about programs to assist homebuyers and communities that will be affected by the personnel expansion at Fort Riley.

At right, Cathryn, Ethan, and Shane Warren cut the ribbon to open the USDA Rural Development Fort Riley Office as 1st District U.S. Congressman Jerry Moran, Major General Dennis E. Hardy, Commanding General 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) and USDA Rural Development State Director Chuck Banks look on.

The USDA Fort Riley Regional Initiative (FRRI)

In 2005, the U.S. Department of Defense announced that Fort Riley would gain approximately 3,400 military and 1,200 civilian personnel during Fiscal Year 2006. Since then, the announcement of additional military personnel and the return of the Army's 1st Division ("The Big Red One") translates into approximately 10,000 Soldiers and their families moving into the area. Expanded Civil Service employment and other private sector jobs will also occur. Officials believe that the area surrounding Fort Riley will experience a total population growth exceeding 30,000 over the next several years.

The area of Kansas directly impacted by Fort Riley's personnel expansion consists primarily of rural communities, some which are not adequately equipped to meet the demands created by the increased population. USDA Rural Development stands ready to assist the communities and the new personnel that will be arriving to Kansas. Agency programs are designed to help meet many of the opportunities posed by growing communities and families moving into the area.

USDA Rural Development loan and grant funds are available to:

- Purchase affordable single family housing
- Develop and construct multi-family housing
- Improve building sites, including new streets and utilities
- Finance community needs such as daycare centers, medical clinics, fire stations, etc.
- Finance infrastructure to support water and waste systems
- Expand and develop new and existing businesses

FRRI Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Signed

On June 27, 2005, U.S. Senator Pat Roberts announced a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the 24th Infantry Division (Mechanized) / Fort Riley and USDA Rural Development. The MOU pledges both Federal departments to cooperate fully in assisting Soldiers, their families and civilian personnel who are re-locating to the region. Since the agreement was signed, USDA Rural Development has:

- Secured \$25 million in additional GRH funding (Fiscal Year 2006)
- Held 6 regional meetings to inform the public about Agency loan and grant programs
- Granted 'Preferred Lender' status to designated financial institutions in the Fort Riley Regional Initiative Area
- Enhanced web site development to incorporate Agency information and Fort Riley housing information into both departments' home pages.
- Opened a new USDA housing office at Fort Riley
- Sponsored community development training for area leaders

FRRI \$25 Million Additional GRH Funds

During the MOU signing event in June, 2005, U.S. Senator Pat Roberts announced a special FY2006 allotment of \$25 million for the Agency's *Guaranteed Rural Housing Program* in Kansas.

FRRI Regional Meetings (August 2005)

USDA Rural Development in Kansas has taken the lead role to prepare communities for the unprecedented growth that will occur with the personnel expansion of Fort Riley. Four meetings were held to inform groups about building standards and other Agency requirements for various programs. USDA staff was also available to help assess community needs. Round table discussions were held for:

- Lenders/Realtors
- Builder/Contractors
- Multi-Family Housing Developers
- Business and Community Development Programs
- Federal Home Loan Bank Programs

FRRI Preferred Lenders:

Area lenders are certified as Preferred Lenders for the FRRI once they have completed special USDA training. Preferred Lenders have demonstrated a commitment to USDA Rural Development's programs.

The designation as a 'Preferred Lender' is in addition to regular USDA approved lender status which is required to participate in the Agency's *Guaranteed Rural Housing Program*. Once a lender is certified, their company name and information is added to the Agency's website and to special FRRI promotional materials. The 'Preferred Lender' program is open to additional financial institutions who wish to fully support the Initiative.



Lenders are pictured at a GRH training session to become USDA 'Preferred Lenders'.

FRRRI Web Site Enhancements

As an outgrowth of the MOU, Fort Riley has incorporated USDA Rural Development links into their websites. The links provide information about Agency programs for home ownership, Preferred Lenders, a Pre-Qualification Worksheet, cities, income limits, etc. etc.

USDA Rural Development website: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/ks/>

Fort Riley website: <http://www.riley.army.mil/>

USDA Rural Development Office Opened at Fort Riley

December, 2005 marked the opening of USDA Rural Development's housing office on-post at Fort Riley. The Agency's Fort Riley Office has helped position USDA Rural Development to better assist Soldier and civilian homebuyers with their off-post housing needs. Services include: pre-qualifications, homebuyer counseling, and a general review of financing options for anyone planning to purchase a home.

2006 FRRRI Regional Meetings

Additional outreach meetings have provided USDA Rural Development stakeholders the opportunity to receive updated FRRRI program information. Faith-based partners and other community non-profit groups were also invited to learn more about federal grant and loan making opportunities. The Agency assessed the progress communities have made since last years' meetings and their future plans for development.

FRRRI Community Development Training (September-October, 2006)

USDA Rural Development; FHLBank Topeka; KSU Cooperative Extension Service; the Kansas Rural Development Foundation; and the Kansas Farm Bureau hosted community development training for civic leaders in the fall of 2006. The training provided attendees the opportunity to learn about community and economic development strategies to be used in their local areas.

FRRRI: A Chance to Enhance Kansas Communities

Ongoing population declines in rural Kansas counties, originating in the 1800s, have resulted in a negative economic impact for a large area of Kansas. The expansion of Fort Riley provides a golden opportunity to grow our State. By working together, Kansans can reverse the negative population and economic trends and create positive growth in many areas. The population growth created by this expansion provides a genuine opportunity to enhance Kansas' communities in terms of population, services, and quality of life.

USDA Rural Development has taken the lead role of Federal agencies to inform the public about the numerous programs available through USDA to prepare for the expected population growth. The Agency is eager to provide financing options to purchase homes; improve infrastructure; install waste and water systems; expand business opportunities; and provide other basic community needs.

USDA Rural Development in Kansas remains committed to helping rural communities grow and to improve their way of life. The staff of USDA Rural Development sincerely believes the Agency can provide every opportunity to assist communities in meeting the challenges that lie ahead to make Kansas a better place to live for everyone.

Contact Information

To learn more information about USDA Rural Development programs, please contact:

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Fort Riley Regional Initiative Area Counties

