



## Fort Ord Reuse Authority

# MEDIA RELEASE

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### **A Look at the Fort Ord Recovery Roller Coaster *Creating Jobs in an Ever-Changing Economic Climate***

In 1991, the US Department of Defense announced that the Fort Ord Military Reservation would be closed. At that time, the Army base was home to well over 30,000 people with approximately 14,000 – 15,000 military personnel, several thousand civilian employees, and their 16,000 – 18,000 family members. Between 1991 and 1995, the cities of Marina and Seaside lost an estimated 18,700 residents. Between 1992 and 1995, 13,500 active duty military personnel jobs were lost. Between 1994 and 1995, approximately 18,000 additional jobs were lost in this region.

The reuse of Fort Ord might be compared to a roller coaster ride. From the very beginning, the impacts of closure presented major challenges, while the recovery program presented many promises and opportunities. When the base was formally closed (1994), the Fort Ord Reuse Authority (FORA) was created as the base reuse oversight agency. The reuse roller coaster ride was just getting started. Shortly thereafter, CSUMB opened, Bureau of Land Management transfers occurred, the Seaside Highlands housing was constructed and most in the region were excited about these events as jobs were being restored through development. Communities began to see what redevelopment of the base could do for the region's economy.

Then, after two years of planning and FORA Board approval of its legally required Base Reuse Plan, in 1997, the Ventana Chapter of the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit challenging the associated environmental documents. That suit delayed several projects while issues were worked to settlement in 1998. When the lawsuit was settled, FORA's land use jurisdictions began moving forward with plans for redeveloping their portions of the former Fort Ord.

The reuse roller coaster began gaining momentum with the approval of housing and retail developments in the Marina and County portions of the former Fort Ord. De-construction of some World War II era buildings was begun to remove contaminants and to make way for development. Construction began on some of the developments with the installation of new roadways and other infrastructure. Construction on the Marina Dunes project started with the Dunes retail center. In other cases, abandoned buildings were rehabilitated for new uses, including the Veterans Transition Center, Goodwill Industries, the Bridge Center, and several churches. The roller coaster ride seemed headed upward.

When the housing crisis struck the nation in the middle of the last decade, the roller coaster raced downhill. Redevelopment plans and programs, for the most part, came to a

halt. Some developers were forced into bankruptcy, could not meet time lines, and/or sold out their interests. People began wondering what is going to happen at Fort Ord?

Over the last few years, the momentum of redevelopment has slowly been picking back up. New projects have been, or are being built on the former Fort Ord, including the state-of-the-art Wellness Center and Community Hospital facilities, Monterey Peninsula College satellite campus, an affordable apartment complex, Ord Military Community replacement housing, and several roadways. Plans for the new Veteran's Clinic and a movie theater will be realized within a year. The roller coaster is slowly and cautiously starting back up an economic incline; however, that progress has been made slower by the State of California's decision to eliminate key financing mechanisms for the cities and the county.

Although reuse activity over the last 18 years has had its ups and downs, the overall impact on job creation has been positive. A recent employment survey estimates that **3,305** full-time and **1,591** part-time permanent jobs have been created or retained on the former Fort Ord. Additionally, construction projects have generated upwards of **2,700** skilled, well-paying short term jobs. FORA's own construction projects have employed approximately 75% local contracting professionals, who in turn sub-contracted with about 15% disadvantaged business enterprises (women, minority, and veteran have owned). These jobs are an important piece of former Fort Ord reuse. As redevelopment continues, the employment figures will rise, helping the region in its continuing efforts to recover from the devastating effects of base closure.