



## Memorandum

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Date: March 16, 2017

To: Bill Adamson, Program Manager, SSMCP

From: Julia Walton, Principal, 3 Square Blocks

Re: Summary of North Clear Zone Open House for Property & Business Owners

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### **Overview**

The South Sound Military and Communities Partnership (SSMCP) held an open house on Friday, March 10, 2017 from 9-10am at Tactical Tailor to share information about the North Clear Zone Action & Implementation Plan and to gather public comment. Bill Adamson, SSMCP Program Manager, presented an overview of the draft Action Plan, including proposed methods and phasing for property acquisition and business relocation. Following the presentation there was a question and answer period. SSMCP and City of Lakewood staff offered to meet individually with property and business owners following the open house, and invited participants to reach out to them to set up meetings. Staff from Pierce County and Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) were also in attendance and helped answer participant questions.

There were approximately 25 attendees not including project staff. Many learned about the meeting through a letter mailed by the SSMCP or from phone calls from project staff. Of the participants, 2 identified themselves as property owners, 7 as business owners, 10 as both property and business owner, and others were assumed to be some form of representative of an owner.

### North Clear Zone

The North Clear Zone is a federally-designated, 3,000-by-3,000-foot safety area adjacent to the north end of the McChord Field runway. This area has a high statistical possibility of aircraft accidents, based on Air Force data on past accidents. For this reason federal safety guidelines call for the North Clear Zone to be clear of buildings, businesses, people or flight obstructions. The North Clear Zone does not currently meet these guidelines and as such poses public and flight safety risks as well as challenges for the ability of JBLM to carry out its missions. At the same time, existing property owners and businesses in the North Clear Zone are an important part of the local economy and the Lakewood community.

## Questions & Comments

Questions and comments from the open house are summarized below.

### Runway Operational Changes

- Questions were asked about the potential to move the McChord Field runway south by 130' and thereby reduce the need for property acquisition and business relocation. (Response: This has been considered but is not cost effective and would involve shutting down the McChord Field runway for an extended period of time.)
- Was an engineering assessment done on the potential to move the runway, and was a report produced? (Response: Yes, the Air Force did this internally.)
- Could the runway be moved all the way onto JBLM? (Response: No, in addition to the reasons mentioned earlier, moving the runway this far south is not feasible due to the location of training areas and wetlands.)

### Street Access

- What will be done with 112<sup>th</sup> Street and access to buildings as properties are purchased? (Response: Federal safety guidelines call for limited vehicle access in Clear Zones, but 112<sup>th</sup> Street is a major road and at this point the plan is for it to remain open.)

### Property Valuations

- Are the property valuations that were completed for SSMCP in 2016 by Montro & Johnston accessible to owners? (Note: The response given during the open house was no, however following the open house SSMCP staff determined that these can be made available.)
- One participant mentioned that her business was not contacted during the appraisal process, and she would have like to be contacted.
- Questions about the accuracy of the property valuations were raised.
- Current appraisals will need to be done at the time of sales. The 2016 property valuations will be used by the SSMCP and its partners to request funding for property acquisition and business relocation.

### Acquisition & Relocation Process

- There were several questions about how the property acquisition process would work, including how the process would get started and who would be leading it. (Response: These details are still being sorted out, however owner's initial point of contact would likely be Becky Newton, Economic Development Manager with the City of Lakewood.)
- SSMCP and the City of Lakewood recognize that each property and business owner has individual needs and plans to work with them on a case by case basis.
- Questions were asked about whether and how use of eminent domain is intended. For instance, eminent domain is identified as a tool of last resort in the draft Action Plan,

but if owners aren't willing to sell could it be used earlier? (Response: Use of eminent domain is possible but use of other methods is preferred. For instance, two properties in the North Clear Zone were for sale in the last year and SSMCP partners could have purchased them if opportunity funds had been available at the time. As described in the open house materials, under the draft Action Plan eminent domain would only be used in the long-term if necessary.)

- If a property owner chooses to sell, does that mean that the business owners who lease space from the property owner would not receive relocation money? (Response: No, it doesn't necessarily mean that.)
- The City of Lakewood plans to help identify properties in Lakewood or the immediate area that are appropriate for business relocation.

#### Property & Business Value

- The North Clear Zone project and discussions like the one at the open house have the potential to decrease property values and discourage tenants.
- The DoD does important work and it is nice that the DoD and SSMCP are being transparent about their plans, but this will have an impact on property owners and businesses. Many have been here for many years and selling or relocating would pose significant challenges.

#### Purpose & Need of the North Clear Zone Project

- This issue was known in 1979 and the County has been purchasing properties since then. So why were new buildings allowed to be built in the North Clear Zone after that? (Response: We can't undo decisions made in the past and would like to focus on moving forward. Improving public safety and the safety of military air operations are the primary reasons for clearing the North Clear Zone. There is a need to start making incremental progress towards compliance with Federal regulations. In addition to safety risks, not addressing the North Clear Zone issue could impact DoD decisions about how to use JBLM, which could in turn have negative impacts on the local economy.)



*Photos from the Open House*