



A Salute to the Armed Forces in Fayetteville



The Airborne and Special Operations Museum.

Fayetteville, NC

With Fort Bragg and Pope Air Force Base just outside of the city, the United States Armed Forces are an important part of the community in Fayetteville, North Carolina. As part of a comprehensive redevelopment vision, the City of Fayetteville has worked with its citizens, as well as with state and federal partners, to leverage millions toward revitalizing the area while at the same time paying tribute to the military.

In the 1970s, Fayetteville fell victim to the growing trend of urban and suburban sprawl, with businesses, manufacturers, and residents moving further and further outside the city's core. Downtown Fayetteville continued to deteriorate until it lay virtually abandoned. Vacant car lots, gas stations, and empty, decaying buildings created eyesores while a former manufactured gas plant site was left vacant and environmentally contaminated. By the early 1990s, the city's future looked grim, with little hope for economic or aesthetic revitalization.

In 1997, EPA awarded Fayetteville a Brownfields Assessment Pilot grant of \$200,000 to help determine the extent of contamination at the city's idle and underused properties, known as "brownfields." The Assessment Pilot funded a site inventory effort that identified an area of former car lots and gas stations as a brownfield with redevelopment potential. The city then purchased the site for \$2 million as the location of a new Airborne and Special Operations Museum (ASOM). An environmental assessment of the area revealed hydrocarbons, petroleum, and asbestos, and several underground storage tanks were identified. The ASOM Foundation provided the \$500,000 necessary for cleanup, and the site was restored to a condition safe on which to rebuild.

Prior to the city's purchase of the site, the Airborne and Special Operations Museum had been planned to be built at Fort Bragg. But as Craig Hampton, Brownfields Coordinator for the Fayetteville Pilot, explained, "Diligent work by the City Manager and the City Council—in cooperation with government agencies and individual citizens—moved [the museum] downtown." Funding for the \$22.5 million museum began to accumulate back in 1992, when Congress awarded a \$4 million grant to the ASOM Foundation. The State of North Carolina and the City of Fayetteville followed, with the state contributing \$4 million and the city contributing a \$3 million grant and a \$4.5 million loan to the

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JUST THE FACTS:

- The Fayetteville Pilot funded a site inventory effort that identified an area of former car lots and gas stations as a brownfield with redevelopment potential.
- After the city purchased the site as the location of the new Airborne and Special Operations Museum (ASOM), the ASOM Foundation provided the necessary cleanup funding.
- Contributions from hundreds of thousands of private citizens, businesses and military association, the North Carolina General Assembly, and Cumberland County helped fund the museum project.
- Approximately 500,000 people have visited the museum since its opening in August 2000, and more than 300,000 visitors are expected annually.

Fayetteville built the Airborne and Special Operations Museum on a former brownfield to help revitalize its downtown area while paying tribute to the military that has been an integral part of the community.

Foundation. Staff support for the ASOM effort was partially funded by the Brownfields Assessment Pilot, while additional funding for the museum was donated in large part by hundreds of thousands of private citizens, businesses and military associations, the North Carolina General Assembly, and Cumberland County.

After more than 10 years since the project's inception, and hundreds of dedicated volunteers working thousands of hours, the museum opened on August 16, 2000. Part of the U.S. Army's museum system, the five-story, 59,000-square-foot Airborne and Special Operations Museum is dedicated to honoring Army airborne and special operations units dating back to 1940 and to educating the public about these special forces. The museum has attracted approximately

500,000 people visiting from every state and as many as 70 foreign countries, and more than 300,000 visitors are expected to come each

year. The museum employs 17 people and supports nearly 100 volunteers. Exhibits range from

clothing and gear worn and used by soldiers to a wall lined with plaques for Congressional Medal of Honor recipients who were assigned to airborne or special operations units. Also featured is a motion-simulating theater that gives visitors a more realistic sense of the sights, sounds, and movements that the special forces encounter during combat.



Fayetteville brownfield prior to construction of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum.

The Airborne and Special Operations Museum project is just one part of Fayetteville's "Renaissance Plan," a comprehensive redevelopment plan that will provide a foundation for growth and development throughout the city. The Plan's other projects include a linear park along Cross Creek with pathways and bike trails connecting throughout the city, a performing arts complex, and a new amphitheater. The amphitheater will be built on part of the former manufactured gas plant site, which was purchased by the city in the 1980s to build a parking facility. Initially, the site's environmental contamination halted construction plans. Two of the former owners of the property, Carolina Power & Light, and North Carolina Natural Gas, paid close to \$3 million for the site's cleanup. In addition, the two companies together are providing \$2.5 million that the city will use to develop the amphitheater. The structure is projected to be complete in the summer of 2004.

Through its redevelopment efforts, the City of Fayetteville has successfully honored the country's military forces while creating cooperative partnerships among its citizens, businesses, and government agencies of all levels. As Craig Hampton proudly states, the various projects and successful efforts "speak to the spirit of all the people involved."

The city's collaborative revitalization efforts resulted in Fayetteville's designation by the National Civic League as "An All-American City" in 2001.

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Or visit EPA's Brownfields Web site at:
<http://www.epa.gov/brownfields/>



Aerial view of the Airborne and Special Operations Museum.