

Businesses outside Columbus look to take advantage of BRAC boom

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Companies outside Columbus also are searching for business opportunities from the Base Realignment and Closure process at Fort Benning.

Northwest Exterminating, a Marietta, Ga.-based company, plans to open an office this month on 54th Street in Columbus, more than six months before the Armor School completes its move from Fort Knox, Ky., to Fort Benning.

“We don’t open our office until we can show it can be self sustainable,” said Gail Jones, supervisor of Realtor Relations and Market Development for Northwest Exterminating. “I’m sure that BRAC and Fort Benning have a lot to do with that.”

Jones and the company owner, L.A. Phillips, were among 50 other small business owners, employees and residents at the National Infantry Museum & Soldier Center earlier this week for an update on the Base Realignment and Closure process creating the Maneuver Center of Excellence. By Sept. 15, the total assigned personnel to the Armor School will be 7,500. The expansion is expected to bring about 28,000 people to the Chattahoochee Valley, including soldiers, civilian workers, contractors and family members.

The location of the exterminating business and recent announcements of new restaurants are a trend in general growth, said Gary Jones, executive vice president of Economic Development and Military Affairs at the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce.

“What we are seeing is general growth that you associate with an influx of people that are primarily going to be in need of the service sector,” Gary Jones said.

The area can anticipate some growth in the service sector along with growth at Fort Benning, Gary Jones said.

“I think we can anticipate either expansion of existing or growth of new service sector business that will parallel the increase we expect from Base Realignment and Closure and general growth at Fort Benning,” he said.

Gail Jones said the company will open its 16th location on 54th Street this month after serving the city from its LaGrange, Ga., location for the last two years. Celebrating its 60th anniversary this year, the company specializes in pretreatment for new residential home construction.

Working out of his car, Phillips formed the company in 1951, shortly after serving in World War II in the Navy. Over the years, the company has grown from two employees to 345 and has about 240 trucks on the roads serving customers.

Northwest was among the first pest control companies focusing on green solutions.

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“We focus on building healthier living environments for our clients,” Gail Jones said. “That is our motto. The way we want to do that is actually approach everything going green.”

Before deciding on an office in Columbus, she said an expansion team visited the area and determined whether the area would be viable and profitable.

The company already has worked with the majority of area builders on a number of projects.

John Allen, owner of Pesty John’s Pest Control in Columbus, said he’s familiar with Northwest Exterminating and said everybody is feeding off the development in Fort Mitchell, Ala., an area that has attracted many soldiers and families.

“That company you are talking about is doing a lot of work in Fort Mitchell,” Allen said. “They are actually picked up by a contractor who builds a lot of homes here in town.”

More soldiers in need of a home could be on their way after May, Command Sgt. Mark Horsley said during the briefing. As commander of the Henry Caro Noncommissioned Officer Academy, Horsley said the last Armor course at Fort Knox will graduate in May and all the trainers will move to the area to start a new course at Fort Benning in August.