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Celeste Werner and Mike Hrapia, two vice presidents from Matrix Design Group, the consultant for the Fort Sill Regional Joint Land Use Study, stand before a map of U.S. installations that have already done joint land use studies as Werner shows one of the keypads Matrix uses to conduct informal polls.

## Leaders From Fort Sill, Area Communities Beginning Process Of Joint Land Use Study

Fri, 01/06/2017 - 2:33am Mitch Meador



Civic planners from Fort Sill and neighboring communities used hand-held devices to respond to an informal survey held as part of Thursday's kickoff for a regional Joint Land Use Study.

Matrix Design Group has been hired as consultant for the project, according to Steve Kelly, community and economic development planner for the Association of South Central Oklahoma Governments (ASCOG), the agency spearheading the study committee.

Two Matrix vice presidents, Celeste Werner of Phoenix and Mike Hrapia of Crofton, Md., were here to explain what a Joint Land Use Study is and is not. With them was Army Col. Doug Brown from the Department of Defense's Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), the same office that provided funding to build Freedom Elementary School.

"We're hoping that at the end of this the collective group will have identified some potential points for implementation that benefit both the installation and the community in the future so that both can continue to do what they need to do," Brown said. "It's called a joint land use study, but it's about compatible uses."

Joint land use studies were initiated by the OEA in 1985, and more than 140 have been done nationwide, Werner said. She anticipates this one will take a year and a half to complete.



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Brown said this is one of OEA's more proactive programs, as opposed to Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC), which is more reactive in nature.

The purpose of the federally funded study is to promote community development that is compatible with Fort Sill's military training, testing and operational missions and to seek ways to reduce operational impacts on adjacent lands.

A joint land use study is not a regulatory document or enforceable action, Werner said. Rather, it's a set of recommendations. It ends up being a collaborative process, a body of information that assists in making informed decisions. It is a set of recognized strategies and actions to mitigate or prevent incompatible development. Recommendations are tailored to each jurisdiction or agency.

If things go according to plan, study participants will end up becoming better neighbors, Werner predicts.

Hrapia said that for purposes of the study weapon systems of today will be de-emphasized. It will instead look at the potential of ranges, their capability and capacity for development in the future ,as well as the potential for surrounding communities.

Werner gave a rundown on lessons Matrix has learned from past studies: Current data are crucial to a good study, the committee needs to be inclusive and committee members need to keep the public informed about what is happening.

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