

AN ADVISORY SERVICES PANEL REPORT

Soesterberg Airbase Utrecht, The Netherlands



Urban Land
Institute

Soesterberg Airbase Utrecht, The Netherlands

An Approach to Reuse and Revitalization

September 24–27, 2007
An Advisory Services Panel Report

ULI—the Urban Land Institute
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About ULI—the Urban Land Institute

The mission of the Urban Land Institute is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land and in creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide. ULI is committed to

- Bringing together leaders from across the fields of real estate and land use policy to exchange best practices and serve community needs;
- Fostering collaboration within and beyond ULI's membership through mentoring, dialogue, and problem solving;
- Exploring issues of urbanization, conservation, regeneration, land use, capital formation, and sustainable development;
- Advancing land use policies and design practices that respect the uniqueness of both built and natural environments;
- Sharing knowledge through education, applied research, publishing, and electronic media; and

- Sustaining a diverse global network of local practice and advisory efforts that address current and future challenges.

Established in 1936, the Institute today has more than 38,000 members from 90 countries, representing the entire spectrum of the land use and development disciplines. Professionals represented include developers, builders, property owners, investors, architects, public officials, planners, real estate brokers, appraisers, attorneys, engineers, financiers, academics, students, and librarians. ULI relies heavily on the experience of its members. It is through member involvement and information resources that ULI has been able to set standards of excellence in development practice. The Institute has long been recognized as one of the world's most respected and widely quoted sources of objective information on urban planning, growth, and development.

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About ULI Advisory Services

The goal of ULI's Advisory Services Program is to bring the finest expertise in the real estate field to bear on complex land use planning and development projects, programs, and policies. Since 1947, this program has assembled well over 400 ULI-member teams to help sponsors find creative, practical solutions for issues such as downtown redevelopment, land management strategies, evaluation of development potential, growth management, community revitalization, brownfields redevelopment, military base reuse, provision of low-cost and affordable housing, and asset management strategies, among other matters. A wide variety of public, private, and nonprofit organizations have contracted for ULI's Advisory Services.

Each panel team is composed of highly qualified professionals who volunteer their time to ULI. They are chosen for their knowledge of the panel topic and screened to ensure their objectivity. ULI's interdisciplinary panel teams provide a holistic look at development problems. A respected ULI member who has previous panel experience chairs each panel.

The agenda for a panel assignment is intensive. It includes an in-depth briefing day composed of a tour of the site and meetings with sponsor representatives; interviews with key community representatives; and formulation of recommendations. Long nights of discussion precede the panel's conclusions. On the final day on site, the panel makes an oral presentation of its findings and conclusions to the sponsor. A written report is prepared and published.

Because the sponsoring entities are responsible for significant preparation before the panel's visit, including sending extensive briefing materials to each member and arranging for the panel to meet with key local community members and stakeholders in the project under consideration, participants in ULI's panel assignments are able to make

accurate assessments of a sponsor's issues and to provide recommendations in a compressed amount of time.

A major strength of the program is ULI's unique ability to draw on the knowledge and expertise of its members, including land developers and owners, public officials, academics, representatives of financial institutions, and others. In fulfillment of the mission of the Urban Land Institute, this Advisory Services panel report is intended to provide objective advice that will promote the responsible use of land to enhance the environment.

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Other individuals supporting the panel process included Mr. H. H. Sietsma, managing director of the province of Utrecht; Mr. A. Noordergraaf, mayor of Soest; Mrs. S. Teelen; Mr. H. Sol; Mrs. V. Erdtsieck; Mr. R. Jonge Poerink; Mr. H. D. Gommer; and Mr. A. van Dongen.

Although many individuals from the municipalities and the province helped prepare for the panel's visit, Mrs. C. Schippers and especially Mrs. K. de Haan from the Hart van de Heuvelrug Program Office were indispensable in the lead-up to the panel and incredibly helpful while the panel was on site. With their involvement, the panel feels the future of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug is in good hands.

Last, the panel wishes to thank the hundreds of individuals who participated in the interviews and workshops and who attended the final presentation. The ultimate success of ULI panel depends upon their continued involvement in the land-planning process.

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Foreword: The Panel's Assignment

The Soesterberg Airbase is a 546-hectare (1,350-acre) military reservation located in the province of Utrecht, in central Netherlands. The base has been integral to the Royal Netherlands Air Force and in 1913 was the site of the founding of the Army Aviation Group, the Luchtvaartafdeeling, the predecessor of the Dutch air force.

The majority of this base will close as a military reservation in January 2009. Two parts will stay at the Ministry of Defence: the Camp New Amsterdam area and the future Museum District. The future use of the airbase has been the subject of a major cooperative effort by the province, local governments, and other entities since mid-2005. (The Hart van de Heuvelrug program started officially in 2004; the airbase project started in 2005.)

The Utrechtse Heuvelrug (which translates as the “back of the sandy hillock”) is a slightly hilly area that forms a unique natural area within the Netherlands, a country with limited green space and even more-limited locations with hills. In essence, the Utrechtse Heuvelrug is a national treasure, and the airbase forms the heart (*hart*) of that national treasure. The Utrechtse Heuvelrug stretches from the River Neder Rijn near Rhenen to the Gooimeer.

In cooperation with 17 local entities, the province has organized an initiative to connect, reestablish, link, and market this national treasure. Known as the Hart van de Heuvelrug, this initiative is a prominent and important part of the overall future spatial plan for the province. As part of the Hart van de Heuvelrug program, the province of Utrecht and the municipalities of Zeist and Soest have been working on various plans and initiatives. The Soesterberg Airbase is located right in the center of the Heuvelrug. The recent announcement of the closure of the base has granted the Hart van de Heuvelrug an unequalled opportunity



to reopen the base to the public while meeting the vision and goals of the initiative.

Regional map.

Soesterberg Airbase

Soesterberg Airbase harkens back to the beginning of aviation in Europe. The open fields first saw flying activity as early as 1911. During World War I, the base was a prime location for observation planes enforcing neutral Netherlands airspace.

During World War II, the base was used by the German Luftwaffe and the area was heavily

bombed. During the Cold War, it became a NATO base housing a variety of Dutch and American forces. A strategic location for fighters, it was considered crucial to NATO's Cold War strategy of providing air superiority in northern Europe. The 32nd Fighter Interceptor and later the 32nd Tactical Fighter Squadrons of the U.S. Air Force were based in Soesterberg.

The American part of Soesterberg was returned to the Netherlands' government in 1994. Soesterberg then became a Royal Netherlands Air Force transport helicopter base at which the 289 Squadron and 300 Squadron were stationed. It continues as an active base today with a military mission on the Camp New Amsterdam portion of the property.

Like many military facilities around the world, because for many years access to the base has been restricted, this base has become a haven for numerous threatened rare and endangered species of flora and fauna. Even with the military activity on the site, the underused portions of the base have provided habitats for these species. Thus, this base has become an integral part of the area's ecological framework.

Surrounding Municipalities and Communities

The surrounding municipalities of Soest, to the east and south, and Zeist, to the south and west, have been closely involved with the airbase since its inception. On the western side of the base, 132

hectares are located within the underlying jurisdiction Zeist. The remaining 374 hectares are located within the municipality of Soest, including the town of Soesterberg located immediately south of the base. In 2001, the town of Soesterberg had 5,798 inhabitants. The built-up area of the town was 1.31 square kilometers and contained 2,503 residences.

The Panel's Assignment

The sponsor asked the following questions of the ULI panel:

- What is the vision for and what story should be told at this location?
- How do we balance the competing goals of economic development and preservation?
- How do we create the physical cohesion between uses on the airbase and the adjacent communities (industrial area of Soesterberg Noord, town center of Soesterberg, and the rest of Soest and Zeist)?
- What is a broad outline of the proposed of land use that can achieve this vision?
- Is this physical plan financially feasible?
- What market opportunities may exist for the reuse of buildings for envisioned functions?



The ULI advisory panel, sponsor group, and military representatives in front of "Zulu" Hangar.

- What are the steps to achieve the vision in terms of the political, administrative, and public context?

Summary of Recommendations

Because the present airbase use will be ending, the panel was asked to recommend a vision for a new land use. The vision offered here takes into consideration the opinions the panel heard in discussions with citizens and representatives of Soest, Zeist, and the province of Utrecht and national officials, as well as the panel's own evaluation of the site. The panel was especially sensitive to the historical significance of the airbase as well as its ecological value.

The panel recommends that the former Soesterberg Airbase be converted to a National Peace Park and Defence Museum. The present airbase would revert almost entirely to "green" uses and a natural environment, except for the limited "red" areas already contemplated for conversion to museum use and the area intended for continuing administrative use by the Ministry of Defence. The museum use will be confined to a "Museum District" that will contain all of the active uses, including display areas and any supporting administrative, educational, retail, and restaurant and lodging services. All objects not being used for these purposes should be removed, unless of value for green purposes.

The result will be a museum of national defence heritage in company with an extensive natural park dedicated to peace. The area already is home to three significant monuments and would be suitable for future monuments. The park, of course, will offer passive recreation opportunities and permanent open spaces of public importance as well as an area for the preservation of threatened rare and endangered species.

A key element of this plan is the integrated recommendation for revitalizing the Soesterberg area at its connection to the park. Soesterberg has been isolated because the airbase was a restricted-access facility. This redevelopment is an opportunity to open the new park area to the village, with associated development opportunities.

The panel believes that the whole redevelopment is appropriately a national undertaking and thus should be funded primarily on a national basis. A Peace Park and Defence Museum is clearly of national character and importance, but the creation of the park is also in the national interest because open space is limited in the Netherlands and everyone should enjoy it. Certainly, specific local benefits accrue for Soest, Zeist, and the province of Utrecht, and therefore those governments should contribute to the funding needs.

Market Considerations

The Urban Land Institute's Advisory Panel process always considers and incorporates issues of the local real estate market as part of its analysis. This market consideration is often the aspect of the ULI process that distinguishes it from other "planning" processes concerned more specifically with design factors or political situations.

Positive Market Considerations

What happens in the Hart van de Heuvelrug will have a major effect on the environment, lifestyle, and prosperity of the Netherlands as a whole, the Utrecht region, the communities of Soest and Zeist, and the Heuvelrug itself. The Heuvelrug is a unique and irreplaceable amenity in one of the most highly desirable parts of the country.

The area has a central location in the Netherlands that is easily accessible by good train and freeway links, and it enjoys a strong local economy with low unemployment and a healthy fiscal environ-

ment. The communities and neighborhoods that surround the Hart are especially beautiful, with a mix of handsome and elegant homes, lush landscaping, and a forested topography. Although not accessible to the general public, the Soesterberg Airbase has provided a parklike green space at the center of the area. All of these characteristics support an enviable quality of life. The closing of the airbase is not expected to affect the economy negatively. On the contrary, the closing will open new economic opportunities and enhance land values and real estate development opportunities.

In spite of the community's advantages and opportunities, the area around the airbase has not grown because of the limitations imposed by the base. The panel estimates that pent-up demand exists over the next ten years for at least 1,500 housing units priced in the 300,000 to 1 million euro range. These houses would occupy about 40 hectares at a medium density of 25 to 50 homes per hectare. Demand also exists for up to 12 hectares of land for office and industrial use, for leisure and recreational facilities, and for passive green spaces. There is a shortage of facilities for wellness care, elder care, and psychiatric patients.

Current Market Limitations

Currently, market limitations are restraining the Soest and Zeist communities from enhancing their quality of life and their community sustainability. Most important, airbase operations and the security fence will continue to exist until January 1, 2009. However, as the report later points out, planning for development after the base closes should intensify immediately so that the stakeholders are ready to act the moment the park opens—and to act together.

The most critical limitation to the successful implementation of the panel's recommended plan, however, is the existence of the Tammer plant, a

The housing adjacent to the airbase is one of the most desirable locations within the entire province of Utrecht.



paving materials recycling facility, and other environmentally incompatible industrial uses in Soesterberg Noord. The panel understands that some discussions have taken place concerning a better location for this use, but the panel believes that as the base closure gets closer, those efforts should intensify. Until these industrial facilities are relocated, the redevelopment of Soesterberg and the successful integration of Soesterberg and the new Peace Park cannot occur because these industries are the ugly face of the community. The panel believes that Soesterberg must present its beautiful face to enjoy the benefits that the redeveloped park can offer.

The degraded condition of Soesterberg Village limits the community's ability to serve its residents adequately, and this area simply will not draw visitors from the National Peace Park and Defence Museum in its current condition. In addition, the links are poor within Soesterberg from Soesterberg Noord to the area south of N237.

Development, Planning, and Design Strategies

The ULI panel suggests four major development concepts for the Soesterberg Airbase area. Each concept applies concrete redevelopment tactics to a specific geographic area.

- First is the redevelopment of Soesterberg, with a focus on the realignment and reintegration of uses in the Soesterberg Noord area.
- Second is the strengthening of existing connections and establishment of new links and gateways to the site.
- Third is the creation of the Peace Park that preserves the unique nature of the Heuvelrug, sustaining the axiom of no new red areas within the former base.
- Fourth is the establishment of the Museum District that concentrates new development in specific areas, currently defined as red, to the financial benefit of the green park surrounding it.

Redevelopment of Rademakerstraat in Soesterberg should be one of the goals targeted by the airbase redevelopment.



Each of these actions individually and together will transform the site into a nationally recognized destination while supporting the physical and economic improvement of the adjacent municipalities and allowing the base to fulfill its role as the heart of the Hart van de Heuvelrug.

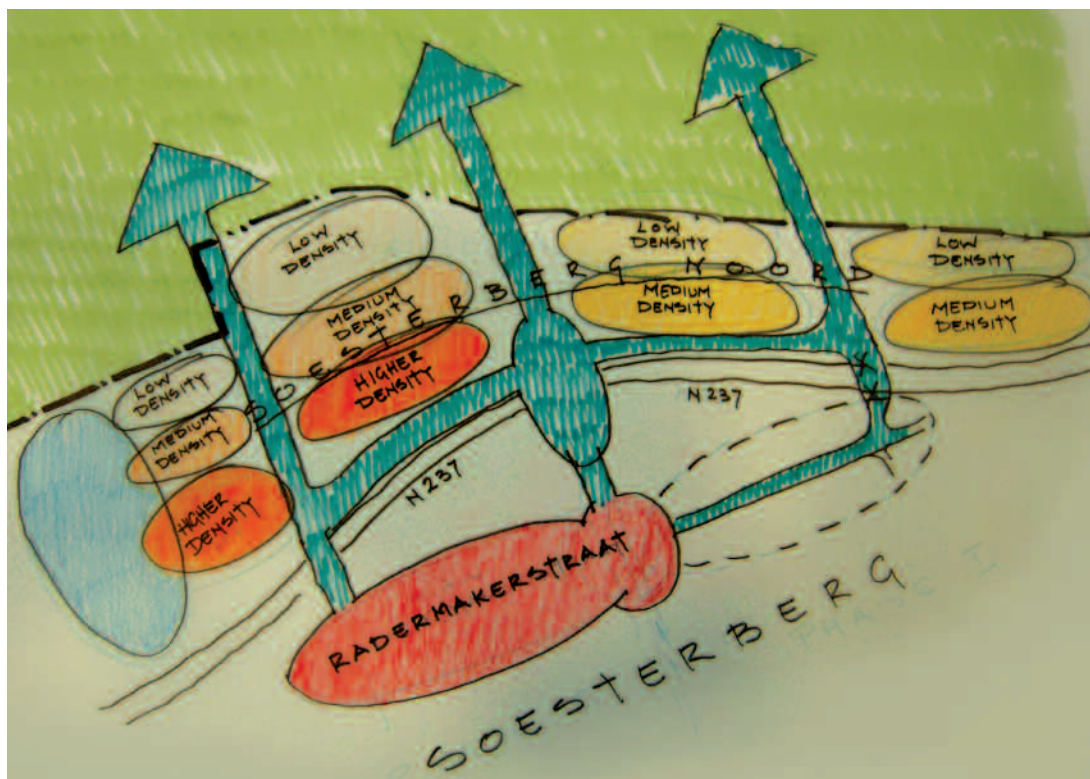
Redevelopment of Soesterberg

The panel believes strongly that what happens in Soesterberg—and how it happens—should be an integral part of the airbase redevelopment plan. The successful reintegration of the Soesterberg Airbase into the surrounding communities requires a strong link to Soesterberg. This link is more than a pedestrian/bicycle connection. In the panel's view, it requires the revitalization of Soesterberg and the extension of the Soesterberg residential community to the edge of the base to form a seamless connection between the green spaces that will soon be open to the public and the residents who will use those green spaces.

Revitalizing Rademakerstraat

The revitalization of the community and the extension of its residential neighborhoods will be a challenging undertaking. It will involve three distinct but related public/private collaborations. The first collaboration will be to plan and carry out the revitalization of Rademakerstraat, Soesterberg's main shopping street. This street has suffered for years because of the development limitations related to airbase operations and nearby environmental restrictions. When these limitations disappear, the larger community has a great opportunity and obligation to return this area to economic health, to provide the retail services that the community lacks, and to create an enjoyable environment for shopping that will draw both residents and visitors.

A master-planning and market study needs to be undertaken to identify not only the physical na-



Conceptual Redevelopment Plan for Soesterberg

The panel recommends the redevelopment of both the commercial portions of town along Rademakerstraat and the industrial portions of the town north of N287. In Soesterberg Noord, the arrangement of residential units in a manner that minimizes densities near the airbase is essential to protect the “green” character of the site. The visual site lines and prohibition of automobile access into the former airbase (blue arrows) are essential to the larger concept of helping economic development in the town by establishing a connection to the planned activities of the museum and Peace Park.

ture of the redevelopment but also the type of retail goods and services that can be supported and a strategy for implementing and paying for the redevelopment. The panel believes that the retail along Rademakerstraat should be compatible with—but not competitive with—the retailing environment in the Museum District.

Relinking Soesterberg and Soesterberg Noord

The second initiative needed is to relink Soesterberg and Soesterberg Noord, which are separated by N237, a street that is difficult and dangerous for pedestrians and bicyclists to cross. A traffic/pedestrian study needs to be undertaken to identify the costs and benefits of alternatives, such as a depressed N237, traffic calming, and enhanced signalization and pedestrian amenities at crossing points. A funding plan for the selected option then needs to be devised.

Soesterberg Noord

The third initiative is needed to redevelop the multiuse industrial areas of Soesterberg Noord as an enhanced and expanded residential neighborhood. Without this redevelopment, the residential

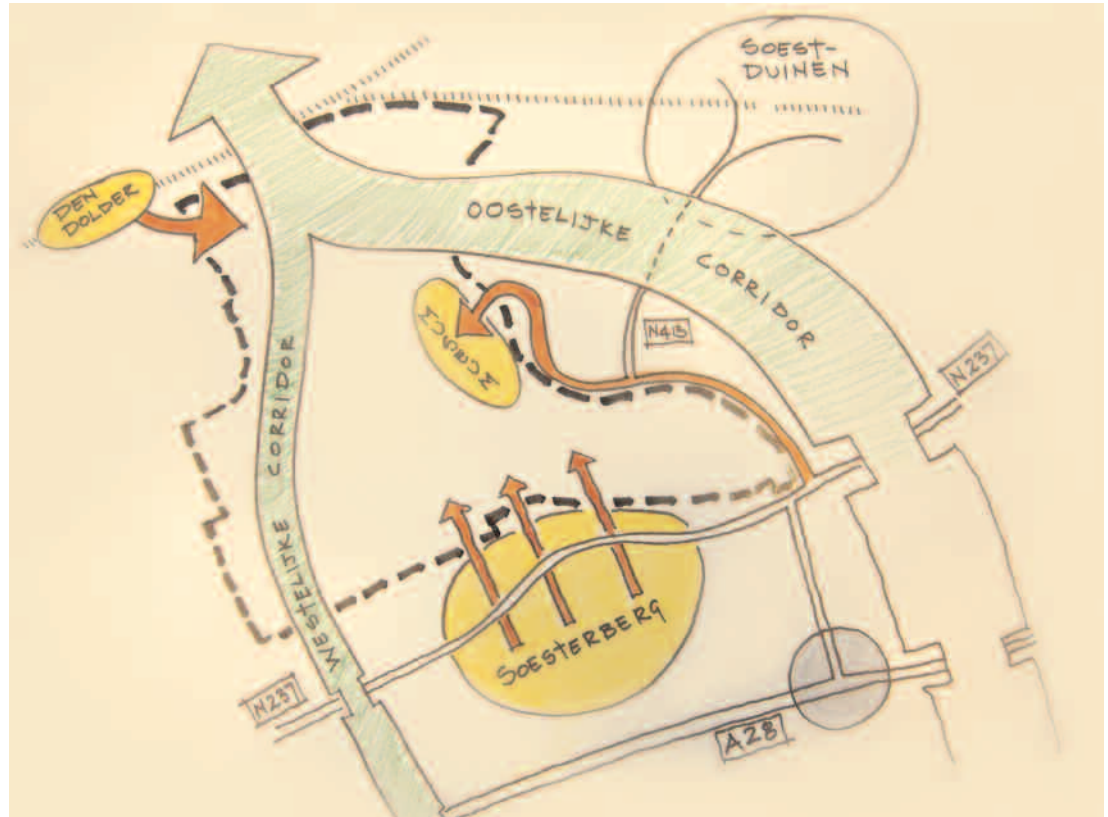
community cannot be linked to the Hart van de Heuvelrug and the airbase.

Phase 1 of this initiative is to master plan the new residential area, including subdivision plans with street pattern, lot sizes, house types, price points, and pedestrian/bicycle trails into the Hart van de Heuvelrug and Soesterberg Village. Phase 2 requires the relocation of the Tammer facility. Until that happens, no redevelopment can occur because of environmental restrictions. Together with Tammer, the larger community will need to identify a new site.

Phase 3 will begin with development of new housing from east to west on the former Tammer site. Phase 4 will include the relocation over five years of the other industrial uses in Soesterberg Noord. The owners of these properties will need to work with the Soest authorities to find new locations for incompatible uses such as the Tammer plant. A public/private collaboration will be required to facilitate these relocations. Phase 5 will include the development of new infill housing in the western part of Soesterberg Noord.

Gateway and Links

Access to the site should be provided from a number of different locations (orange arrows). All access should respect the larger ecological main structure of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, particularly the wildlife corridors (green arrows) that envelop the site.



As a result of the redevelopment of Soesterberg, the least-valuable parts will become the most valuable.

Links and Gateways

As a national asset, the National Peace Park and Defence Museum requires connections through many transportation modes to make it accessible to residents of the surrounding communities of Zeist, Soest (including Soesterberg), the residents of Utrecht Province, the Dutch people as a whole, and interested world visitors. Visitors will want to arrive by train, in motorized vehicles, on bicycles, and on foot. Maintaining control, ensuring sustainability of flora and fauna, and ensuring security require limiting access to strategic points. The panel believes these objectives can be achieved by creating three gateways:

- Museum District—sole access for motorized vehicles via the existing roadways (N237 and N413) with the only major parking area;

- Den Dolder—train station; and
- Soesterberg and Rademakerstraat—pedestrian and bicycle access only.

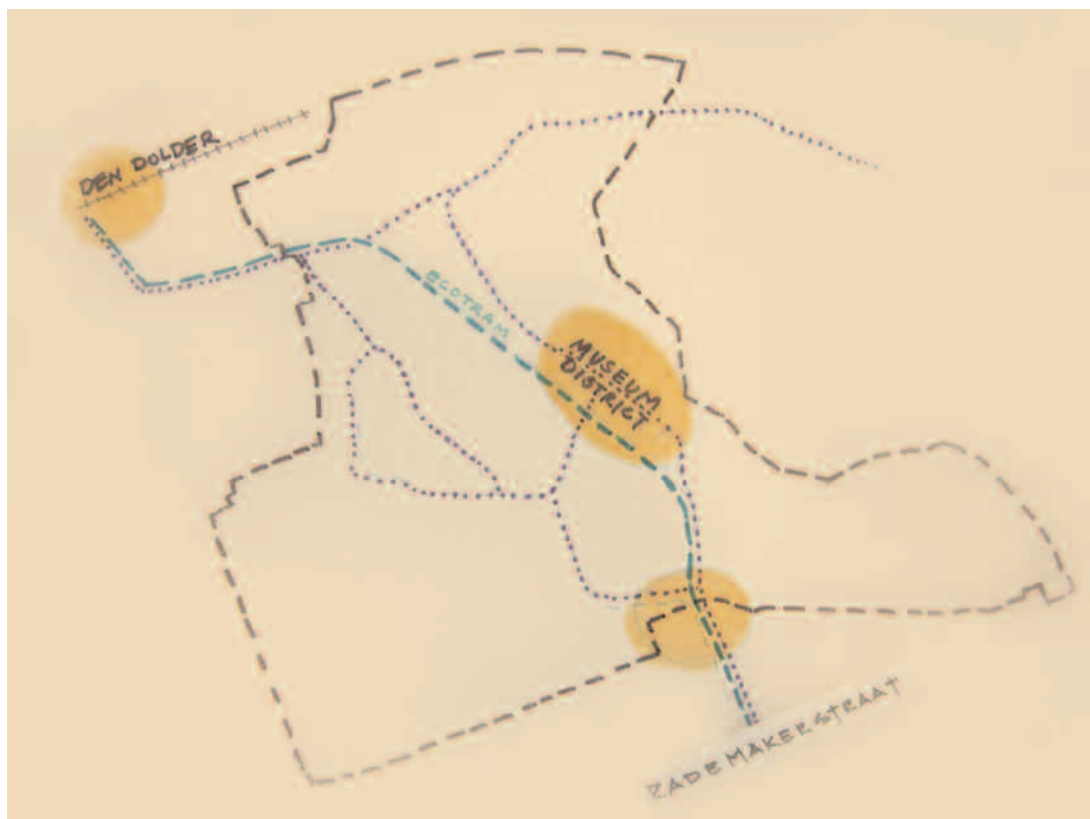
Access from Gateways

An eco-tram system should connect all three gateways. The panel envisions the eco-tram as an automated people mover with technology that highlights the green nature of the Peace Park and the sensitive nature of the landscape of the former base.

Local roads leading to the gateways connect to the major national motorway network (A-28) at the Soesterberg and Den Dolder exits. Bicycles and pedestrians can use any of the gateways, and some could access the area from the continuous Heuvelrug National Park pathway system (Oostelijke and Westelijke corridors).

Circulation with Links

Internal circulation to the Museum District and principal natural, cultural, and memorial sites



Internal circulation should be accommodated by pathways/bikeways (dotted line) and eco-tram (blue dashed line).

could be enhanced for people with limited mobility by providing zero-emission vehicle links from the three major gateways. This proposal would require a study to determine the type of vehicle that would minimize impact on the natural areas. As noted previously, the eco-tram will be a zero-emission form of transport that would provide initial access into the park and then allow visitors to switch to other modes of transportation, such as bicycles, Segways, and shuttles. The panel also envisions that walking trails form the primary mode after visitors have entered the park.

Some of the existing internal roadways could be retained; however, the roads should be made narrower to suit the needs of pedestrian, bicycle, and internal circulation vehicular movement.

Den Dolder

The Den Dolder train station is a key new access point. This area needs careful study to ensure easy access for pedestrians and bicyclists, to afford opportunities for overnight accommodations and food service, and to create an attractive and

inviting entrance to the National Peace Park and Defence Museum. The existing northern industrial and business park should be studied for relocation or redevelopment to complement the natural character of the park and enhance the gateway experience and links. The train station should be renamed to identify it with the Hart van de Heuvelrug.

The other new gateway is at Soesterberg Noord, which, as previously noted, creates an impetus and opportunity for redevelopment of this area for compatible uses and a direct link to Rademakersstraat, Soesterberg's main commercial street.

Peace Park

Whereas the Museum District provides the area necessary for historical displays and memorials, the panel envisions the natural or green portion of the Peace Park as the *heart* of the Hart van de Heuvelrug, fulfilling its role as part of the Ecological Main Structure (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur) and a place of natural beauty and preservation.



Bicycles are an important transportation mode in the Netherlands. The redevelopment of the base should include bicycle facilities such as pathways and bicycle racks.

Providing the Ecological Main Structure with a continuous network of wildlife pathways and preserving, to the extent possible, the existing habitat are two overarching goals of this strategy. The panel also envisions management of the green network and the individual habitats as a means to educate people about and support the larger mission.

An International Issue

The opportunity at Soesterberg Airbase must be seen in the local, national, and European context. This approach will give the Netherlands the opportunity to become part of the wider trans-European park system and reinforce the importance of the park as a link in the national parks system in Holland at the heart of the Heuvelrug. The land planning, operational planning, marketing, and funding for the Peace Park should be approached from the perspective that this park will appeal to international patrons as well as the Dutch people.

Ecology and Open Space

The park is of significant ecological importance, currently supporting a broad range of rare, sensitive, and endangered species in a very natural but vulnerable landscape. Any proposals for its redevelopment must be addressed in a correspondingly sensitive and responsible manner. The sheer size of the park provides a variety of habitat types, from heavily wooded forest to grasslands.

These habitats are home to endangered species, such as bats, lizards, butterflies, and plants. As on most military bases in Europe and America, the space needed to provide the military with training space, clear zones, noise zones, and security has inadvertently made these areas the home of many species fleeing the urban development of nearby populated areas.

A Unique Context

As the birthplace of the Royal Netherlands Air Force, the base has been regarded with pride both locally and nationally for its strong military heritage. Local communities have viewed the base as a positive factor. Nevertheless, the airbase has effectively acted as an impenetrable barrier between the surrounding communities and as a constraint to their integration and future development. Any development of the park must be carried out in the context of the site's unique natural, historical, and cultural nature.

The fundamental aim of development should be to support and enhance the existing biodiversity present on the site and actively to encourage new types of wildlife and plants to make the Peace Park their home.

Planning

To achieve this development successfully, combining restoration of the area as public open space with a continued military presence on the site will require careful planning and should address the following factors.

Protection of Existing Structures. Existing structures that have been successfully assimilated over time into the natural habitat, such as those occupied by bats and certain types of fungi, should be protected. A full audit of these structures should be carried out, including a plan and estimated costs for their preservation and maintenance.

Wherever possible, consideration should be given to preservation of existing structures that could actively enhance the quality of the park—that is, those that could act as new habitats for wildlife. A list of these structures should be compiled, including a plan and estimated costs for their restoration and maintenance. Structures that do not have museum or cultural uses or that cannot be success-

fully absorbed into the park ecosystem should be removed.

Cultural and Historical Issues. Wherever possible, the cultural and historical uses of the site should be acknowledged in developing the park. A master landscape plan needs to be prepared and should address the following issues in particular:

- Existing and future memorials;
- Reuse of existing structures; and
- Creative uses of the runways.

Design guidelines need to be prepared to ensure thematic continuity—from new buildings to signage and wayfinding.

Environmental Footprint Reduction. The new park should reduce the environmental footprint, improve natural pathways, and enhance the biodiversity of the site. Action to achieve these goals should include controlling all movement within the old confines of the airbase. This will require restricting motorized vehicular routes to the Museum District, carefully defined cycling routes, footpaths, and the electric tram system. The existing roads should be narrowed to reduce speed and noise and to increase natural site coverage.

Sustainability

A sustainable approach is key to the success of the Peace Park. All aspects of the development should embody the principles of sustainable development, which will be achieved only by balancing and integrating the social, economic, and environmental components of the adjacent communities; meeting the needs of future generations; and respecting the needs of other communities locally, in the wider region, and internationally to make their own communities sustainable. The panel recommends taking the following steps:

- A small, focused steering group should be formed to ensure a representative, accountable governance system that facilitates strategic, visionary leadership and enables inclusive and effective participation by individuals and organizations on a local, provincial, and national level.
- All new development on the site should be integrated sensitively and set an example as a sus-



The Den Dolder train station will act as an important gateway into the former airbase.

tainability showcase. To ensure that this approach is adhered to, the steering committee should develop guidelines that include the following:

- Carbon-neutral targets;
 - Low-energy policy;
 - Requirements for sustainable materials;
 - Requirements for recycled materials; and
 - Requirements for renewable sources.
- The park should include a research and educational facility with a year-round educational program that is aimed at all ages and levels of accessibility. These should typically include the following:
 - School trips;
 - Ranger tours;
 - Lecture series;
 - Research; and
 - Collaboration with universities and other educational establishments.

Management

For the park to remain as a sustainable asset to the community now and for generations to come, it must be nurtured and managed carefully. Meeting this goal will require a strong and effective engagement with government, local communities, and businesses with the aim of creating a sense of

civic value, responsibility, and pride. The panel recommends the establishment of an integrated management and park-ranger system made up of members of the local communities and the voluntary sector. The aim of this organization is to

- Successfully conserve the Peace Park's biodiversity and maintain the ecosystem and the natural landscape;
- Conserve features and landscapes of both natural and cultural value;
- Protect the ecological integrity of the ecosystem for present and future generations;
- Promote appreciation and understanding of the park's natural and cultural values;
- Encourage and support sustainable visitor use and enjoyment that is compatible with conservation of the natural and cultural values of the park; and
- Provide for appropriate research, monitoring, and educational outreach to visitors.

Security

The panel recommends that, for the security of the park and the wildlife within it, the perimeter fence should remain in place until all the park's works are finished. Moreover, security should be provided to all the existing structures until they have been removed or are actively being reused.

Museum District

The panel has suggested a dramatic and appropriate approach to the reuse of the Soesterberg Airbase. The Museum District will provide a defined location to realize the two major land uses for the airbase: a National Defence Museum and a center of activity for the Peace Park.

Background

The National Peace Park and Defence Museum is an attempt to celebrate the connected roles of peacekeeping and national defence while introducing citizens to the contrasting character of the open space of the Hart van de Heuvelrug. This concept should be used to provide the Dutch peo-

ple with a connection to the heritage of the Dutch Defence Forces and peacekeeping.

The Dutch military has a long and distinguished heritage. Although the major actions of the Dutch Defence Forces since the founding of the republic are too numerous to speak to in this report, that history is a stirring and compelling story. For example, the heroic actions of the army, air force, and later the resistance to the Nazis during World War II are just one of the many actions that this site could commemorate, display, and research. The Royal Netherlands Air Force, although hopelessly outclassed by German planes, did succeed in shooting down more than 300 enemy aircraft in the short time before the Dutch surrender in May 1940. Some of these planes and heroes were based at Soesterberg. Later, the base was taken over by the Germans and was repeatedly bombed by the Allies.

The peace missions of the Dutch Defence Forces have also been impressive, operating throughout the world in places like Afghanistan, Bosnia, Lebanon, and Sudan. The Ministry of Defence also operates the School for Peace Operations (SPO).

The SPO has a long history in training for peace operations. The school annually trains up to 6,000 students in a variety of courses. The SPO trains individuals for peace operations, provides mission-oriented information, trains the trainer, and can provide observers and trainers to look at SPO skills at any level of a unit. Possibly, some of the programs associated with the SPO could use this site as an introduction for those not versed in peacekeeping operations.

As noted in the preceding Peace Park section, the planners should view this museum as a national institution not just another local attraction.

The Museum District Concept

The museum should preserve and exhibit the material history of the Dutch Defence Forces; honor the commitment, accomplishments, and sacrifices of members of the Dutch Defence Forces and citizens who have contributed to peacekeeping operations and the national defence; support recruitment, training, education, and retention of peacekeepers; and provide the public with a readily



The proposed Museum District centers on the existing hangar structures northeast of the runways. Aircraft shelters west of the runways should be limited to uses that further the park or museum mission.

accessible platform for the exploration of Dutch defence history.

An overarching concept for achieving the National Peace Park and Defence Museum vision is the establishment of a Museum District. The Museum District is predicated upon ensuring that no additional red development intrudes into the green areas of the park. At the same time, the district provides the museum with a sustainable location for red development to support the museum and park missions and to support the service needs of the museum and park.

Only those uses that further the educational, cultural, historical, or memorial mission are permitted in the Museum District. Use criteria for being located within the Museum District are limited to the following:

- Museum uses;
- Park uses;
- Educational uses;

- Cultural uses;
- Historical uses;
- Memorial uses; and
- Support uses for the museum and park, such as office, administrative, and maintenance facilities, as well as lodging, retail and food establishments, and automobile parking.

The primary area for the museum is the aircraft hangars located on the eastern side of the runways (614, 615, 616, 617, 618, 619, 620, and 621). This area will include the main exhibits, welcome center, and appurtenant services such as gift shops and food service. The panel suggests that the hangars be renovated and used for the chronological interpretation of Dutch military history, with each hangar covering a specific period. These structures are large enough to house full-size exhibits, including tanks, bridge-building equipment, medical equipment, aircraft, interactive maps, dioramas, and exhibits that use yet-to-be-developed technology. Use of these buildings will require re-



The Fallen Comrades Memorial is one of three monuments currently existing on the airbase. The Peace Park suggested by the panel should include the possibility for additional monuments for both the Dutch Defence Forces and peacekeeping operations.

habilitation and reconstruction, but only to the extent necessary so the shelters can be occupied without creating any further red areas.

Other areas could include a heritage walk with access to the Fallen Comrades Memorial, the Dutch Flyers Memorial, and the Soesterberg 33 Memorial as well as memorials commemorating other defence and peace missions for which the Dutch people have sacrificed. This area would also house the artifact expositions, preservation facilities, theaters, archives, other back-of-house operations, and management offices. Parking lots for cars will also be located in this area; they are shared facilities with parking for the nature/green components of the former base.

Another, separate use in this area should be the primary visitors and interpretative center for the Hart van de Heuvelrug. Related uses, such as lodging, conference centers, hostels, supporting retail, and nonprofits' administrative offices for ecotourism and ecological education, would also be located here.

Those shelters not needed by the museum or park should be removed if their demolition does not degrade the environmental quality of the area.

Memorials

In the panel's opinion, the base could provide an excellent venue for buildings, monuments, statues, or other edifices to celebrate or commemorate important events. Three major memorials are already on the base: the Fallen Comrades Memorial, the Dutch Flyers Memorial (Monument voor Gevallen Vliegers), and the Soesterberg 33 Memorial. This last is both sublime and haunting, having a deep and sobering effect on some of the ULI panel members during the base tour.

During World War II, the German army secretly executed 33 resistance fighters in the woods north of the main hangar complex. The fighters were part of several resistance groups who had been sabotaging Nazi installations in the Utrecht area. Although the execution was held in secret, there were rumors about it, and after the war, the base was minutely searched. Family members of some of those executed found the gravesite. The panel thought that a variety of memorials could be placed on the base, adding to the understanding and experience of both museum and park visitors.

Museum Planning Initiative

A museum planning initiative should be undertaken as soon as possible that attempts to define, lay out, and implement the museum program. It should include plans for placement of new buildings, conversion of existing buildings, and managing operations for the entire facility. Other issues to be addressed in the initiative are a series of operational plans that address museum programming, security, use policies, public safety, maintenance, and transportation.

Branding

Commercial product branding has evolved over the last 200 years to a fine art. Everyone knows the Coca-Cola or Nike brand. Community branding is analogous to product branding as a process of creating the perception in the minds of the public that a product, or in this case the community, is the best to serve a specific need and desires of an individual or group. The goal is to evoke instant recognition of the benefits of the community in the public eye.

The branding process must differentiate Soesterberg from every other location in the area. The concept of having the National Peace Park and Defence Museum in Soesterberg, functioning as the heart of the Hart van de Heuvelrug, should be promoted to demonstrate its uniqueness as a national, not just local, attraction. The appropriate time for this exercise is after the initial vision for the park is completed. It should not wait until all land use and redevelopment schemes have been determined because branding needs to be integral to the planning and design process.

Unique Meaning

The ULI panel's concept for Soesterberg is that it must be viewed as unique. It tells a story that is different in a variety of ways. Soesterberg has at least three stories to tell, each demonstrating that reality consists of two basic juxtaposed elements:

- A story both national and local: being in the midst of nature, as part of one of the most interesting national parks (Utrechtse Heuvelrug) among the 19 other national parks in the Netherlands;
- A story of defence and nature: the collaboration of the city of Soest, the city of Zeist, the Ministry of Defence, the Utrechts Landschap, and the Hart van de Heuvelrug; and
- A story of a location with significance that is not only historical but also highlights the new role of the Dutch Defence Forces (peacekeeping missions and nature preservation).

Smart branding must be used to promote this location. Smart branding means more visitors, more indirect revenue, and more than one reason to visit the area. In other words, the closure of the airbase becomes an opportunity to boost the existing local economy, to reposition (or strengthen) the image of the adjacent communities, and most of all, to deepen the experience and make visitors want to return.

How Is Branding Done?

The panel suggests focusing on branding the larger Heuvelrug area, specifically developing the National Peace Park and Defence Museum as a “product” or “brand” of the larger area.

Design Standards

Design standards have to be met: consistency with the brand, contextual building design, trail standards, and a lighting plan need to conform to those standards. Landscaping, more specifically by means of a Master Landscaping Plan, needs to be “the architecture of the future” for the site and should guarantee the needed visual upgrading.

Logo

The authorities should start by identifying how they want to brand the site. Should the National Peace Park and Defence Museum only (as main attraction) be advanced, or should the geographic location (Hart van de Heuvelrug) be emphasized? The panel's advice is to put forward the museum and peace park as the main attraction but within the framework of the Heuvelrug area. This strategy means branding and promoting a much larger area (Utrechtse Heuvelrug) with clearly identified signage.

Gateway Marketing

Promoting such a large area requires identifying certain gateways. Gateways need to have distinct signage indication, specially designed for the larger Heuvelrug area. Gateways need to be well indicated so that clear mobility streams are created that do not negatively affect the environment. Again, the panel has selected the following gateways as the most important to serve the site:

- Northwest: Den Dolder train station;
- South: Soesterberg Village entrance (only pedestrians and cyclists); and
- Soesterberg exit (A28) toward North Defence Museum entrance (only entrance for cars).

Consistent Positioning

The site needs to be positioned constantly and consistently within the many mediums available to it, including the following:

- As part of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug Ecological Main Structure (Ecologische Hoofdstructuur), a national network of natural areas: This status, of course, needs to be respected. In fact, it is a welcome element for demonstrating the centrality of the former airbase site, not only as the heart of the Heuvelrug but also as the heart of the future ecological connections.
- As part of the Netherlands national park system: The panel even foresees the site's role as host to the administrative and office components of the Central National Park Authority of all the national parks in the Netherlands.
- As part of Soesterberg: In the past, the airbase was perhaps not the most attractive part of the Utrechtse Heuvelrug, but it can now reclaim its role as the main gateway to the Heuvelrug National Park with the visitors center and supporting facilities.

Original Concepts

Determine whether local flora can act as a natural symbol of the National Peace Park, such as the following possibilities:

- If nature takes over the airbase, it will evolve into wild natural area. Do something with it; do not let nature take over completely. Manage it.
- Consider creating a Peace Park Trust (with reference to the famous “poppies” used when commemorating the U.K. war casualties) to which corporations and individuals can donate.
- Make the airstrip or replanting of it a special component of the Master Landscaping Plan, perhaps with the notion that it will become an attraction on its own.
- Establish a “Friends of the Peace Park” conservancy that will allow users to donate time and sweat equity to preserve the natural landscaping of the National Peace Park, now turned into a key natural landmark.

Tourist Accommodations

Consider a master plan that includes services for visitors, including the following:

- Lodging, bed and breakfast, and food services: Quick research by the panel concludes that bed and breakfast facilities are sparse in this area. They could be a tremendous untapped resource that allows visitors to visit multiple sites in a single area and provide a diverse set of options for visitors. This “cluster” effect could be marketed, encouraging visitors to see the Peace Park one day, downtown Soest and Zeist the next, the museum the third day, and the larger Heuvelrug the next. Each time, visitors would use restaurant and food services in the local area, improving the local economy.
- Wellness and outdoor activities: Hiking, biking, outdoor activities, Nordic walking, kite flying, and camping should be considered. Again, the cluster approach to marketing can be used.

World Wildlife Fund

The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is an international environmental organization dedicated to conserving the world's biological diversity. Recently, WWF moved its headquarters to Zeist, where it constructed Europe's first zero-carbon-dioxide-emissions office building. The airbase is home to a number of rare, threatened, and endangered species. As part of the branding initiative, a

partnership with WWF should be established to provide a local venue to publicize the mission of biodiversity and its practical application in northern Europe.

Peace Park Rangers

Leaving the former airbase all green requires clever maintenance and operational organization. As in other nature parks, rangers should be installed who can take care of the hospitality management of the site and inform visitors about its natural treasures and its military and peacekeeping history. A diverse ranger team should be assembled, composed of people from the Dutch Defence Forces, Utrecht's Landschap, WWF, Zeist, and Soest. An original ranger uniform would provide a chance to establish an explicit symbol of the Peace Park, calling attention to its special features and emphasizing the brand.

Sustainable Means of Transportation

Having an eco-approach toward the former airbase requires sustainable development as well as sustainable means of transportation. The principle should be to permit only zero-emission means of transportation (apart from the parking lot at the sole entrance to the Museum District). The Netherlands, as the world capital of cycling, cannot ignore bicycles. Numerous locations around the world use distinctly colored bikes to communicate a sense of brand and character. The panel suggests the use of "green bikes" especially designed for the National Peace Park and Defence Museum. The bikes can be stored at a number of locations near the gateways into the park, so visitors can easily use and return them.

Implementation

Implementation of the ULI panel's suggestions will require a concerted effort on the part of all involved in the Hart van de Heuvelrug. While in the Netherlands, the panel was impressed with the excellent cooperation among the municipalities, the province, and other entities interested in the future of the airbase. The momentum of earlier plans and the incorporation of the ULI panel's recommendations should be pursued without delay.

After stakeholders agree on the suggested vision and the goals, two major planning efforts must begin:

- Formulate Master Plans for the redevelopment of Soesterberg, the Museum District, and the Peace Park.
- Formulate Operational Plans for the Museum and Peace Park, including maintenance, security, use policies, museum programming, transportation, and wildlife management.

Although the province and the cities of Soest and Zeist will continue to take leadership roles, the province must elevate the concept of a Peace Park and Defence Museum to the national level. The panel believes that it is the province's role to promulgate and advance this component of the recommendations.

The redevelopment of Soesterberg Noord and the revitalization of Rademakerstraat should be a primary focus of Soest, while Zeist should take on the role of supporting planning and reconstitution of the Den Dolder area to accommodate and act as the northern gateway to the Soesterberg Airbase area. This initiative should be the shared responsibility of the two cities, the Ministry of Defence, and the various private commercial entities in the area.

Conclusion

Soesterberg and the surrounding communities have a national treasure in the Soesterberg Airbase. The panel recommends a bold and challenging program that requires cooperation and initiative at the highest levels of the provincial and municipal governments. The Hart van de Heuvelrug program provides an excellent springboard to achieve the National Peace Park and Defence Museum.

Bold does not mean trying to achieve everything in the panel's program immediately. Nor does it mean achieving unconditional consensus for each initiative or individual development proposal. Leaders in the community must listen to a diverse set of stakeholders and formulate actions that are in the best interest of the community. Routine moves are also important. The day-to-day details of effective, responsive collaboration by city and

provincial governments must be part of the solution. The redevelopment of Soesterberg Noord and the revitalization of Rademakerstraat are essential to the community of Soest and are examples of just such a routine move.

Finally, the panel stresses that the airbase must be a national, not just a local, priority. All involved must be able to present a concise, sober vision for the future of the base and demand that the national government and provincial leadership take an interest in this project.

About the Panel

James M. DeFrancia

Panel Chair
Aspen, Colorado

DeFrancia is president of Lowe Enterprises Community Development, Inc., which provides development management and advisory services for planned communities throughout the United States and abroad. DeFrancia is engaged in residential, commercial, and resort development. He has been involved in real estate development for more than 25 years; prior to that, he served as an officer in the U.S. Navy.

DeFrancia is a trustee of the Urban Land Institute where he has participated in or chaired more than 20 Advisory Service Panels, helping communities and organizations address strategic issues of land use, development, and revitalization. He is a member of the Northern Virginia Building Industries Association, past national director of National Association of Home Builders, a former Virginia representative to the Southern Growth Policies Boards, and a former member of the board of the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. He has been a guest lecturer and panelist for the Bank Lending Institute; the Lincoln Institute of Land Policy; the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University; George Mason University; and George Washington University.

DeFrancia is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy, with postgraduate studies in business and finance at the University of Michigan.

Michael D. Beyard

Washington, D.C.

Beyard is an urban planner and economist with more than 20 years' experience in the related fields of real estate development, land use planning, and economic development. In both the

United States and Europe, his experience focused on commercial and retail development, shopping centers, e-commerce, location-based entertainment, and downtown revitalization.

At the Urban Land Institute, Beyard is Senior Resident Fellow for Retail and Entertainment Development. He is the author or project director of numerous books, including *Developing Urban Entertainment Centers*, *Shopping Center Development Handbook*, the *Dollars & Cents of Shopping Centers* series, *Value by Design*, *Developing Power Centers*, *Downtown Development Handbook*, *The Retailing Revolution*, *Ten Principles for Reinventing Suburban Strips*, and *Business and Industrial Park Development Handbook*. He created and directs ULI's International Conference on Urban Entertainment Development and its technology and retail real estate forum. He also created *ULI on the Future*, ULI's annual publication devoted to emerging land use and development trends and issues, and the *Entertainment Zone*.

In his role as Senior Resident Fellow, Beyard is a featured speaker in the United States, Europe, and South America on retail, entertainment, and downtown development issues, and he is a widely quoted expert in national and international media, including the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN, CBS News, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Chicago Tribune* as well as American and European planning and real estate journals.

Before his current position, Beyard was vice president of strategic development and responsible for ULI's research, data collection, books, and conferences in the commercial development field as well as its new strategic initiatives. He created ULI's program in the retail entertainment field, including international conferences, books, *Urban Land* magazine supplements, and strategic partnerships with other organizations. In addition, he is the

past director of ULI's advisory work in Central Europe under the auspices of the U.S. Agency for International Development and the coordinator of program activities for ULI-Europe.

Before coming to ULI, Beyard was a senior consultant in the fields of urban planning and real estate development. He spent ten years at Booz Allen & Hamilton, Planning Research Corporation, and Gladstone Associates, advising both public and private clients on market analysis, feasibility, and development planning. Beyard has been honored with membership in Lambda Alpha, the International Land Economics Honorary Society, and was an appointed member of the Mayor's Interactive Downtown Task Force in Washington, D.C. He holds a BA in international economics with honors from Rutgers College and a master's in urban planning and development from Cornell University, where he was elected to Phi Kappa Phi.

David A. MacKinnon

Washington, D.C.

MacKinnon is an associate director of the Office of Economic Adjustment (OEA), which reports to the Office of the Deputy Under Secretary of Defense (Installations & Environment). He manages the OEA international and base realignment and closure (BRAC) programs and is a project manager for major community economic adjustment and urban encroachment prevention projects.

Since 1991, his international activities have included programs in the former Soviet republics of Russia, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine; southeastern European countries (the Balkans); the Baltics; and numerous other nations. This assistance provides advice to national and local leaders in those countries on defense conversion and military base redevelopment processes and techniques. MacKinnon also speaks at NATO seminars; served as the U.S. member of a NATO expert team providing

base conversion advice to Romania, Bulgaria, and Croatia; and is an expert consultant to the RACVIAC, Base Conversion Working Group of the Stability Pact.

MacKinnon joined OEA in 1973 after having worked at the National Capital Planning Commission, a federal government agency responsible for federal facility master plan and building plan approval in the National Capital Region. He has held many increasingly responsible positions since joining OEA, including BRAC implementation policy guidance. He also oversees the development of OEA publications and has written numerous community guides that may be viewed on the OEA website (www.oea.gov).

MacKinnon holds an undergraduate degree in architecture from Cornell University and a graduate degree in regional planning from the University of North Carolina. He is also a graduate of the Economic Development Institute, University of Oklahoma. MacKinnon is a member of the American Planning Association.

Kwesi Marles

London, United Kingdom

As joint founder of Community Healthcare Investments (CHI; a subsidiary of London & Regional Properties), with over 15 years' experience in the real estate and property development industries, Marles is responsible for the company's investment acquisitions and property development projects in the United Kingdom and across Europe. He has a particular interest in the development of integrated health and social care projects within larger mixed-use projects and the development of "care villages" providing a continuum of care for older people.

Immediately prior to founding CHI, he was vice president of GE Capital's European corporate real estate group (GMH Capital Partners) and

was responsible for its business integration strategy, the delivery of new development projects, and asset management of GE Capital's 2,500 European locations.

Marles has previously worked in senior positions with two of the world's largest architectural practices, RTKL and SOM, where he was responsible for mixed-use developments across Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Over this period, he developed a particular expertise in urban design, master planning, and resort development projects. At Equinox (the development advisory group), Marles was vice president responsible for creating development strategies with blue-chip companies such as Granada, the World Trade Organization, and Lend-Lease to maximize the release of latent value in their property portfolios.

A ULI member, Marles has served on the Education and Research Committee in London. He is a member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and an International Associate of the American Institute of Architects. He has been a visiting tutor at Liverpool University, Edinburgh University, and the Bartlett School of Architecture.

He is a graduate of the Oxford Brookes School of Architecture, with postgraduate studies in urban design and property finance at the University of Virginia and the Robert Gordon University, Scotland, respectively.

David Winkles

Maasmechelen, Belgium

Winkels is community relations and development manager of Value Retail Management Belgium NV in Maasmechelen, directly reporting to Brian Garrison, group development director. Winkels acts as a "community ambassador" for Maasmechelen Village and interacts with individuals and organizations to generate a positive environment in which Maasmechelen Village can operate with confidence that it has the respect and support of the local, regional, and national community. Winkels is the local interface and leader for any existing or future developments and is responsible for dealing with any political or development issues.

Before his involvement with Value Retail, Winkels worked as a lawyer at Maes and Favoreel law office in Hasselt and at Marx Van Ranst Vermeersch & Partners in Brussels. After finishing his three-year lawyer's traineeship, Winkels worked for MCI/WorldCom with regional and group commercial responsibilities for Belgium. Prior to his involvement with Value Retail, he also worked for Banksys, where he was responsible for its development efforts in setting up a third-party sales channel in Belgium.

Winkels is a law graduate of the University of Antwerp and is a Master in Business Law.



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