

From the desk of
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Letter to the Editor for Immediate Release

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EXCITING PROGRESS AT FORT MONMOUTH

Amidst a summer awash in bad news, there is a very good news story I'm pleased to share regarding the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth; a topic I am asked about frequently. Since the fort was closed by the U.S. Army in 2005, I have been a member of both public-private agencies, led by the state, that first planned, and is now executing plans to transform the fort into a hub of recreation, commerce, technology, innovation, education, residential and retail use. Tangible results emerged last year and continue to increase this year. More are on the near horizon, bringing jobs, ratables and opportunities for the public to enjoy new open spaces and recreational options within the borders of Eatontown, Oceanport and Tinton Falls.

As the county's representative, first on the Fort Monmouth Economic Redevelopment Planning Authority (FMERPA) and currently on the Fort Monmouth Economic Revitalization Authority (FMERA), I identified certain facilities and spaces for county use early on. Last year, the Monmouth County Department of Public Works and Engineering took over, refurbished and is now utilizing the fort's former motor pool, bringing critical services including snow and storm damage removal closer to that region. The county Park System now runs the former teen center and pool, a beautiful facility. Programs initiated there last year have been well-attended and growing. This year, we opened the pool for classes. The reception and attendance have been outstanding. We hope to increase programs at the pool next summer. That's just the beginning...

- The fort's marina has been leased by a private firm and opened for boating. A year 'round public restaurant there is being refurbished after Superstorm Sandy damage.
- The Sun Eagles Golf Course is operating while being upgraded and better maintained.
- A new, state-of-the-art headquarters for the CommVault data firm is nearing completion, bringing thousands of jobs.
- AcuteCare is renovating the former Patterson Clinic into a healthcare facility.
- Tinton Falls will convert the former Child Development Center into a school.
- Princeton University wants to create a driverless car testing facility on the fort.

Other firms are negotiating contracts or in talks for facilities including Russell Hall, the fabrication units, the chapel, the firing range, officers housing and more. We are working

diligently to create a full-service veteran's community on fort property and are committed to that goal. About 850 acres of the 1,128-acre fort have not yet been placed under contract.

As the U.S. Army still technically owns the fort, all transactions must follow stringent, lengthy procedures and regulations subject to Army approval. Signing of final transfer papers between the Army and New Jersey is expected later this year. To hasten and streamline the redevelopment of Fort Monmouth, I recently proposed Monmouth County purchase the remaining fort property through the Monmouth County Improvement Authority (MCIA). Representatives from the state Economic Development Authority (EDA), FMERA, the county and the MCIA are actively pursuing the idea. Time is of the essence regarding prospective future fort tenants. A county-state purchase of the property would eliminate time-consuming bureaucratic obstacles to redevelopment and see the fort occupied and bustling with jobs and activity once again. To keep abreast of FMERA progress and activities, visit *fortmonmouthredevelopment.com*.

Lillian G. Burry

Director, Monmouth County Board of Chosen Freeholders.