

# Public Works *Digest*

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## **Master Planning and Military Construction — the New Landscape**





# Vicenza plans for plus-up of Airborne Brigade Combat Team

by Sean McDonald

In December 2003, Installation Management Command-Europe Region was told to start preparing for an increase in population within the Vicenza, Italy, military community. From this simple warning order would evolve a comprehensive master plan for the garrison that was the product of a multitude of people working towards a common goal — supporting Soldiers, civilians and family members during a time of changing force structure. Working on this effort was a diverse group of individuals and organizations, including IMCOM-Europe, U.S. Army Europe, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Naval Facilities Engineering Command (NAVFAC) and planning firms from private industry.

As Al West, a NAVFAC planner brought on to the team early in the process, frequently quoted, “Begin with the end in mind.” With that thought as the guide, planners focused on providing facilities and community support for a population that would increase from about 2,600 to 4,300 Soldiers. The primary reason for this increase was the transformation of the 173rd Airborne Brigade from two-plus battalions to a standard six-battalion Airborne



Brigade Combat Team (ABCT). In addition, the rest of the community would also be in transition, requiring planners to look at the entire community as a whole and plan accordantly.

Vicenza is a northern Italian city located 45 miles west of Venice and 15 miles south of the Italian Alps. The military community consists of two main installations, Ederle Caserma and Villaggio Housing Area, along with a number of smaller support and stor-

age sites. The first impression that strikes most visitors is the compact nature of the community and the lack of open space for expansion. Because the installations are surrounded by the city of Vicenza, expansion of the existing perimeters is not feasible. Obviously, if the community population was going to almost double in size, additional land would be required.

Working with the Italian hosts, planners identified a suitable candidate for ➤

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a recreational facility, which make every Army community home.

In July, a master planning charrette was held to propose locations for the facilities and roads.

The scope for Phase I of the Urlas project provides 132 townhouses with six senior-officer, single-family, detached units, said Michael Hogg, district project manager. Phases II and III, if commenced, are estimated to be much bigger, resulting in an end state of 530 homes.

“And when you add to that a shopping center, theater, chapel, and a host of other community facilities, we’re really

planning for an entire new town,” Hogg said. “There will be plenty of green space, walking and biking paths, and other amenities that make it pleasant and livable.”

All these housing projects have been carefully monitored and championed by the watchful eye of the Pentagon and by an even closer source at Patch Barracks, in Stuttgart, Germany, home to the commander, U.S. European Command and the supreme allied commander, Europe. In July 2005, Patch Barracks saw the completion of a \$17.5 million WNR project for 110 military families.

“The well-being of our military families is linked to readiness, retention, reinforcement of our core values and mission

accomplishment,” Marine Gen. James Jones, who was then the commander, said. “These families are an absolutely integral part of our team.” Continuing to provide adequate housing for Soldiers and their families is critical to ensuring combat readiness and quality of life.

“The challenge before us now is to ... resource and execute this transformation,” Jones said.

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the expansion needs, Dal Molin Airfield, a small Italian airbase about seven miles away. The Italian Air Force is in the process of vacating the site and had offered the U.S. Forces use of the land. The installation is divided into two halves, with a built-up military area on one side of the central runway and a small commercial aviation operation and large open area on the other side.

After visiting Dal Molin, planners determined that, although the existing facilities would not meet our needs, the land could be used for military construction projects.

Once the mission was understood and a potential site identified for expansion, the next step in the process was to put together a planning team. A decision, made early on, was to include NAVFAC planners. Unlike most Army MILCON projects where the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is the construction agent, in Italy, NAVFAC is the lead agency. As a result, NAVFAC was included in the planning process so that they would understand the program and have an appreciation of why particular facility decisions were made. One of the guiding principles throughout the process has been to ensure that all team members understand the big picture. That way, everyone involved knows the goals and desired outcome of the process.

A big challenge early on was identifying unit facility requirements. Because of the evolving nature of the unit force structure, planners worked hard to identify facility requirements in a dynamic environment. As a result of the changes, planners were often forced to redo the requirements calculations and go back to units for additional information. The important lesson learned from these exercises was to build in as much flexibility as possible, because the unit you plan and build for is not necessarily the unit that will occupy the finished product.

Another lesson learned during the requirements analysis phase is that planners need to understand unit and organization mission requirements so that they can clearly articulate requirements to decision makers and provide a facility that meets the unit's true needs.

Once the requirements were documented and the facility and service shortfalls identified, it was time to start working courses of action and attach price tags to the program. In keeping with a holistic community approach, planners decided early to designate Dal Molin as an operational site and place any other needed community support facilities at the existing installations, maximizing use of those facilities.

As a result, when completed, Dal Molin will house the 173rd ABCT Headquarters and four battalions, with the remaining two battalions located at Ederle Caserma along with other units stationed in Vicenza. New facilities to be constructed under this program include: barracks, motor pools, headquarters and operational facilities, a physical fitness center and fields, a dining facility and troop support facilities at Dal Molin; elementary, middle and high schools, and child and youth service facilities at Villaggio Housing Area; and a medical/dental clinic on Ederle Caserma.

In addition to the facilities that are directly related to the community expansion, a long-term recapitalization plan, called Vicenza 2020, was also produced. While the 173rd ABCT transformation requirements are identified and programmed at about \$500 million, the long-term requirements in Vicenza 2020 are not fully programmed at this time.

While developing the site plan for the facilities at Dal Molin, the key word used was flexibility. Although the Italian Air Force is vacating the site, Dal Molin's small commercial aviation operation would remain, and the Army's plans could not hinder civilian airfield operations. Because of this and changing Italian military requirements, the site plan went through a number of iterations before settling into its current configuration. The current plan addresses force protection requirements, is harmonized with commercial aviation operations and airfield setbacks, and fully meets unit facility requirements and operational needs.

To meet all of these various parameters and locate the facilities within the particular site geometry, the planning team came

up with a number of interesting solutions. Using, among other things, NAVFAC's lessons learned from a Navy facility in Naples, the Dal Molin plan incorporates centralized parking structures, pedestrian malls, multi-function facilities and functional zoning for greater site efficiency. The final layout, having been honed through its various versions, places all of the facility requirements into one compact, efficient package.

The last step in the planning process is to get the plan approved. Part of the success of the program was being able to effectively communicate to a wide range of audiences what was needed to make the transition of the 173rd ABCT possible. A useful tool in this process was 3D computer graphics to show what the finished product would look like.

Throughout the process, planners included unit representation and continually solicited senior level command input. Working hand in hand with the operators from the beginning, listening to the customers, understanding their needs and involving them in the process made it relatively easy to get final approvals from the senior mission commanders and decision makers.

In the same vein, the planners worked closely with their Italian counterparts throughout the planning process. When seeking community planning approval, the team made successful presentations that were well received.

Through the hard work and dedication of a large group of individuals working as a team, today Vicenza has a fully documented and approved plan to support its transformation. Upon completion of its MILCON program, Vicenza will have facilities available for its Soldiers, civilians and family members, along with a power projection platform that fully supports the Army's requirements.

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