

TOPEKA, KANSAS

In April 1973, the Department of Defense announced the closure of Forbes Air Force Base, located six miles south of Topeka and 65 miles east of Kansas City, Kansas. The closure action resulted in the net reduction of 1,241 military and 83 civilians which represented the second largest employer (\$39 million annual payroll) in the community. The base actually closed in September 1974 in terms of basic Air Force activities. On November 22, 1974, the Air Force also announced that the SAC satellite B-52 and tanker mission would also be relocated from Forbes.

Mayor William McCormick and the city leaders have organized an effective base re-use and industrial development program. The Topeka Airport Authority has been formed (January 1975) to operate the new municipal airport at Forbes and the existing Philip-Billard airport. The Forbes airport facilities will be conveyed to the city by the Federal Aviation Administration on or about July 1, 1975. Air Force support will continue for the operation of the airfield under civilian control. To date, the Airport Authority has already attracted 300 new civilian jobs to the former Forbes complex.

The military housing (1,054) at Cullen Village has been placed under a Protection and Maintenance contract with the city whereby the city operates the housing for low and moderate income families on a no loss guarantee from the Air Force. The City already has 400 of the units occupied and is scheduled to purchase the Cullen Village project from the General Services Administration in May 1975.

The base hospital will be transferred ^{Topeka} to the community without cost. Likewise, the community plans to acquire the golf course and other recreational activities without cost from the Bureau of Outdoor Recreation. Facilities for a drug abuse and dental training program will likewise be made available without cost to the local community.

The Forbes conversion has represented a difficult task for the Topeka community but the program to date has been successful. With the creation of the Airport Authority industrial development effort in January 1975, it is expected that Topeka will be able to secure full use of the airport and related industrial facilities with new civilian employment well beyond even the current 300 job level on the base.