



OFFICIAL PARTNER OF  
**AMERICA'S GREAT DEFENSE COMMUNITIES**

# **GUIDE TO THE GREAT AMERICAN DEFENSE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM**

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**FEBRUARY 2026**

# BACKGROUND

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When a community is recognized as a Great American Defense Community (GADC), they are a GADC community for life. But the year of the recognition is a crucial opportunity to embark on a year-long PR campaign to spread the word about how your community supports its local installation and military personnel.

This guide will help communities understand what it means to be a Great American Defense Community and the expectations ADC has for a successful year of elevating community stories.

## **Use the recognition as a chance to:**

- Highlight people and programs in your community who are making a difference in the lives of service members and their families.
- Tell the story of partnership between your installation(s) and the broader community—the benefits for military personnel when they are stationed in your town and the opportunities that having a military base nearby bring to civilians who live in the region.
- Spread awareness about the role defense communities play in our national defense. Civilians in your town may not realize the importance and uniqueness of being a ‘military town’—talk to them about it and invite the public to GADC-related events.
- Conduct media outreach and share the news via social, digital, print, and radio media.

# PROGRAM COMPONENTS

## Community Visit



GADC communities must be prepared to support an ADC delegation visit to your community in the late spring, summer, or early fall. The delegation will include 1-3 ADC board or staff members and 1-2 USAA representatives. The visit should consist of a welcome dinner, community/venue/program tours, roundtable discussions, and a GADC ceremony or event. The visit length is typically one-day, with the delegation flying in the day before.

## Media Coverage



ADC will provide press releases that can be customized and distributed locally to regional media contacts. It is also encouraged to set up interaction with media or installation PAO (if applicable) during the delegation visit to garner coverage of the visit and the community recognition.

## GADC Recognition Ceremony



The GADC recognition ceremony should take place during the community visit. Each community will be presented with the GADC flag as part of the ceremony. Communities have done recognition ceremonies at NFL games, minor league baseball games, military picnic lunches, community fairs, and more.



## Filming in your Community

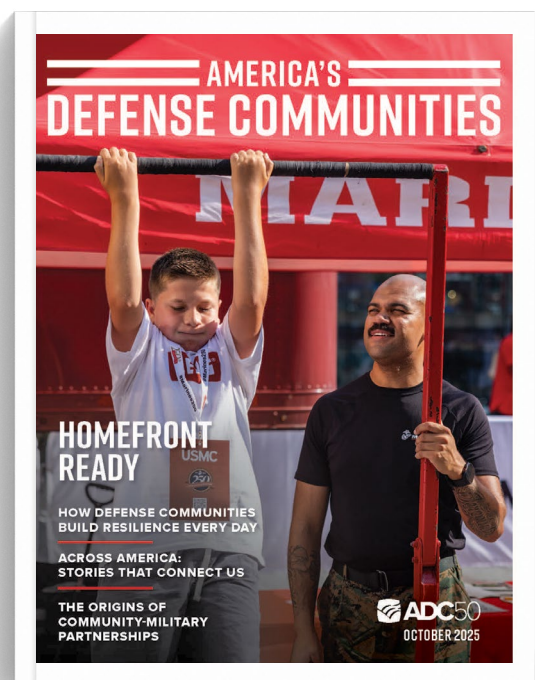
ADC will work with your community to identify a theme or a program that will be the focus of a 4–6-minute community video. Your community will work with ADC to help identify interview subjects and filming locations. Each video is 1-1.5-day shoot. Film shoots will take place in the late spring, summer, or early fall.

The videos will premiere in front of ADC's conference audience at Installation Innovation Forum.

## America's Defense Communities Magazine

Pitch us! ADC publishes an annual magazine and our editors prioritize including articles about Great American Defense Communities. Our editors are looking for interesting stories of military life and programs, people, and partnership that support the quality of life for service members and their families.

\*Inclusion in the magazine is not guaranteed.



## Reception at Installation Innovation Forum

ADC hosts an evening GADC-themed session at our fall event. GADC communities are expected to coordinate a delegation (4 or more people) to attend IIF from your community. The food and drink at the reception will be inspired by the GADC communities. Communities are expected to bring giveaways to the reception and will be given an area of the reception that is themed by their community.

## Participate in a Session at IIF

GADC communities are encouraged to lead a breakout session at the IIF and members of your community may be asked to participate in a general session.

\*Inclusion in a general session is not guaranteed.



For more information about the Great American Defense Communities program, contact Mark Parrott at [mparrott@defensecommunities.org](mailto:mparrott@defensecommunities.org).

# TIMELINE

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- FEBRUARY 25** ■ Program nomination period opens.
- MARCH 4** ■ GADC informational webinar held on Zoom.
- MARCH 16** ■ Program nomination period closes.
- LATE MARCH** ■ Communities are selected and notified.
- MID-APRIL** ■ Press releases are distributed to communities, outreach to local and national media in anticipation of 2026 Defense Communities National Summit.
- MAY 11- MAY 13** ■ 2026 Class of Great American Defense Communities announced at the Defense Communities National Summit.
- MAY - SEPTEMBER** ■ Coordinate delegation visits and GADC ceremonies in each community. Coordinate GADC video shoots with each community.
- OCTOBER 26-28** ■ Great American Defense Communities are honored throughout the 2026 Installation Innovation Forum in Tampa, FL.