



OFFICE OF LOCAL DEFENSE COMMUNITY COOPERATION

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Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation Finding of No Significant Impact for the

Liberty Center Phase I, Ellsworth Air Force Base Recreation and Wellness Center
South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority, City of Box Elder, South Dakota

Pursuant to the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508) implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (OLDCC) gives notice that an Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared and an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for the construction of a recreation and wellness center, Liberty Phase I (Liberty Center), City of Box Elder, South Dakota. As the Federal granting agency for the project, OLDCC is responsible for implementing the procedural provisions of NEPA for this project. The OLDCC coordinated the NEPA process with the grantee, the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority (SDEDA), and the associated military installation, Ellsworth Air Force Base (AFB), to ensure that relevant, site specific environmental information was identified, analyzed, and considered during the decision making process.

Purpose and Need: Due to mission growth at Ellsworth AFB, the current fitness facility that supports required Air Force fitness testing, youth and adult sports, home school programs, unit physical training, personal training, and many large social and recreational events, is projected to be repurposed in 2021. There are 7,763 members of the Ellsworth AFB community and estimated use for the current facility is approximately 43,800 customer visits per year, which includes active duty, and DoD civilians and family members. The proposed Liberty Center would improve the quality of life and resiliency for military families and local civilians. The OLDCC grant will enable the SDEDA to construct the Liberty Center, per the Defense Community Infrastructure Pilot Program, 10 USC §2391(d). The proposed Liberty Center will provide access to year-round fitness activities such as training, testing, and sports for the military and local communities.

Proposed Action: The Proposed Action is to construct a multi-use recreation and wellness center facility just outside the gates of Ellsworth AFB, serving the base and the community of Box Elder. The Liberty Center will serve as a training facility for the Air Force and a venue for military ceremonies, while the surrounding community will also be able to use the facility as a wellness center. The facility will house a track, classrooms, multi-use space, locker rooms, day care, and other areas to assist the Air Force in meeting physical training requirements. This action will be implemented as described in chapter 1 and throughout the EA. Ellsworth AFB Environmental and NEPA subject matter experts, and legal counsel reviewed the EA and provided no substantive comments, finding no reason for the project not to proceed. The EA and supporting documentation are attached.

Alternatives Considered: The EA analyzes the potential environmental impacts of two alternatives: The Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative. Under the No-Action Alternative, the proposed Liberty Center would not be built and would leave no place for the

Air Force to train or hold formal ceremonies. Members of both the military and local community would not have access to a recreation facility in close proximity to the base where many live and work. The No-Action Alternative would not meet the purpose and need previously described for the project but it serves as a baseline point of comparison for the potential impacts of the Proposed Action throughout the EA. The EA documents that SDEDA reviewed all reasonable alternatives, with consideration given to planning constraints, existing infrastructure capacity, sustainability, and OLDCC grant requirements and found only one alternative would meet the purpose and need. Therefore no additional alternatives, beside the Proposed Action and the No-Action Alternative, were carried forward for analysis.

Environmental Effects: No significant direct, indirect, or cumulative environmental impacts would occur from implementing the Proposed Action. Certain environmental resources (coastal zone management, geological resources, environmental justice/protection of children, socioeconomics, and visual resources) were not analyzed in detail in this EA because the Proposed Action would not likely result in any potential environmental impacts on these resources, or impacts would be negligible. Potential environmental impacts on noise, air quality, land use, topography and soils, water resources, biological resources, safety and occupational health, utilities and infrastructure, hazardous materials and wastes, and cultural resources are documented in chapter 4 of the EA.

Anticipated Environmental Effects: OLDCC assessed potential impacts of the No-Action Alternative and the Proposed Action in the City of Box Elder and around Ellsworth AFB. Environmental consequences from the Proposed Action, including discussions concerning best construction practices, are detailed in chapter 4 of the EA. Minor, temporary impacts during construction may occur due to the operation of construction equipment and disturbance of soil and vegetation. These potential impacts will be minimized through the use of standard construction practices, best management practices (BMPs), and compliance with applicable permit requirements. Construction noise will be a short-term impact that will be controlled by BMPs and will be mitigated to the greatest extent feasible. Construction noise will not exceed applicable codes and noise impacts should not be significant. Temporary, adverse impacts to air quality by emitting criteria pollutants from vehicles and equipment, and fugitive dust from ground-disturbing and construction-related activities would generate emissions below de minimis levels. Therefore, construction activities associated with the Proposed Action would not result in significant impacts on air quality. Minor adverse impacts to soils at the site can be expected for construction, but impacts will not be significant because the soils were previously disturbed and the soil types found on the project area are not unique or rare. Further, construction BMPs and a stormwater pollution prevention plan will be implemented during construction, and an approved stormwater management plan would address site runoff and sediment discharges from the site. The site will also adhere to the South Dakota Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources' General Construction Stormwater Permit requirements, as well as the City of Box Elder's Stormwater Rules and Regulations. The OLDCC grantee is required to obtain any necessary state or local permits prior to any construction activities commencing.

There are no wetlands on or around the Proposed Action site and the BMPs outlined in chapter 4.6.3 in the attached EA are incorporated by reference here and should be implemented to the extent practicable. Impacts to surface waters will not be significant because of the considerable distance

between the proposed site and potential receiving waters, and potential impacts will be lessened by following the plans and permit requirements mentioned above. Most of the project site is located in a minimal flood hazard zone; however, a narrow linear strip of the site lies within the 100-year floodplain, is associated with an ephemeral tributary of Box Elder creek, and does not carry high volume flows. To maintain the functionality of this floodplain, a permit was obtained from the City of Box Elder to re-route the floodplain into a channelized drainage approximately 400 feet to the west of the Proposed Action site and a regional retention pond will also be installed. The grantee will follow the permit and BMPs so both volume and flow direction in the floodplain will be maintained and the Proposed Action will have no adverse effect on floodplains.

Required consultation was conducted with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) and tribes; the SHPO agreed there were no historic properties affected. A Lakota tribal liaison participated in the cultural resources review that found no tribal artifacts during the survey, and no other cultural or sacred sites were identified by tribes or the contractor's survey. If human remains, funerary objects, cultural items, or artifacts are encountered during excavation, work will cease immediately and tribes and the SHPO will be contacted for additional guidance. Consultation with the US Fish & Wildlife Service was not required because no federally-listed threatened or endangered species are likely to occur within the project area and there will be no significant impacts to other wildlife or vegetation.

Public Outreach: The SDEDA published a public notice announcing the availability of the Draft EA for public review in the Rapid City Journal on June 12, 2021, Black Hills Pioneer on June 14, 2021, and Native Sun News on June 17 and June 24, 2021. The draft and final EA was placed on the SDEDA website and a hard copy was made available at the Rapid City Public Library.

Finding: Based on the analysis presented in the EA, supporting documentation and review provided by Ellsworth AFB, review by the OLDCC NEPA Coordinator, and review by the DoD Office of General Counsel, OLDCC finds that implementation of the Proposed Action will not significantly impact the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared. The EA has been developed in accordance with the requirements of NEPA and 40 CFR Parts 1500–1508, and in coordination with Federal, state, and local agencies as described above and in the EA.

Electronic copies of this EA and Finding of No Significant Impact may be obtained by written request to: Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation, 2231 Crystal Drive, Suite 520 Arlington, VA 22202.

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Patrick J. O'Brien
Director

Attachments:

Exhibit A: Environmental Assessment for the Liberty Center Phase I,
Ellsworth AFB Recreation and Wellness Center, June 11, 2021

Exhibit B: Ellsworth AFB NEPA Review Letter, signed by Mr. Glenn Meyer,
Deputy Base Civil Engineer, 28th Civil Engineer Squadron, June 8, 2021