

## **DRAFT**

### **FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT (FONSI) / FINDING OF NO PRACTICAL ALTERNATIVE (FONPA)**

Environmental Assessment:

Access Roads and an Associated Interior Road, Centennial Estates Lease, Ellsworth AFB, SD

#### **Name of the Proposed Action**

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and Alternatives for development of access roads and an associated interior road at Ellsworth Air Force Base (EAFB) in South Dakota.

Hunt Development proposes to construct new access roads and an associated interior road that would provide off-base access to former base housing as per the requirement of the Ground Lease between Hunt Development and EAFB. The proposed access roads and the associated interior road will provide access to the former base housing known as Centennial Estates. Two access points are requested by the City of Box Elder due to the size of the Centennial Estates development. Currently, 283 military housing units are present at EAFB. Current plans indicate that the new access points and roads for Centennial Estates housing allow base personnel and their families access without passing through base security points.

Centennial Estates was constructed during the early 1990s as part of a lease agreement with Hunt Development and the United States Air Force under the auspices of Public Law 98-115, Section 801, and Public Law 99-167. Eight hundred twenty-eight (828) military housing units were constructed for occupation by active duty military members and their dependents. Military family housing units replaced Korean War era units that did not meet existing Air Force standards. Hunt Development was granted a 40-year lease to construct 828 units. The first twenty years of the 40-year lease required the units to be leased to the Air Force for use as military family housing. During the second twenty years, Hunt Development has the option of operating Centennial Estates as residential units. The lease requires that Hunt Development separate Centennial Estates from EAFB by constructing a fence, obtaining utilities from off-base providers and accessing Centennial Estates from off-base. The initial 20-year lease expired on August 1, 2011.

#### **Purpose and Need of the Proposed Action**

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to meet the lease requirements of separating Centennial Estates from EAFB by providing two access points to the former on-base housing development without the necessity of entering secure areas of EAFB. In addition, the separation would require a change in the existing security fence boundary as well as the implementation of a security fence and providing utilities to Centennial Estates from off-base commercial providers.

The need for the Proposed Action will be accomplished through the development of access roads and an associated interior road, a re-routing and implementation of a perimeter fence and as well as typical underground and overhead utilities. As per the lease agreement between Hunt Development and EAFB, Hunt Development is allowed to lease the residences to the public. Therefore, the implementation of a

security fence would assure that residents would have an alternative access to Centennial Estates without accessing secure areas of EAFB.

On February 4, 2009, House Bill Number 1301 was enacted by the legislature of the State of South Dakota, creating the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority (EDA). The South Dakota EDA seeks to address a number of issues concerning the future of the installation and compatible civilian development around EAFB.

## **Description of the Proposed Action and Alternatives**

### **Proposed Action:**

Prior to the construction of the access road, an easement through the eastern portion of Tract 308 will be granted. In addition, a utility easement along the access road will be granted for the installation of public utilities to supply natural gas, electric, and water services to Centennial Estates. When the access road meets with 224<sup>th</sup> Place (also known as At County Highway Mc-2), 224<sup>th</sup> Place will continue to the west onto EAFB property and connect to both Centennial Drive and Dakota Drive.

A new perimeter security fence will also be installed to separate Centennial Estates from EAFB. Interior roads into Centennial Estates will be constructed which will also include the development of utility easements along the access and interior roads. Typical underground utilities and easements as well as standard street lights will also be included with the development of the access road and associated interior roads.

An additional interior road will also be constructed on the northwestern portion of Centennial Estates. The interior road will connect Desmet Court and Verendrye Court. This interior road will also be equipped with typical underground utilities, easements and standard street lights.

This EA has been prepared to facilitate planning, evaluate and determine if there are any potentially significant cumulative impacts, and to clearly communicate to the public the analysis of individual and cumulative impacts. Consistent with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Air Force regulations, notice of the availability of this document will be published in the local newspaper, be made available at the local library, and published on the EAFB's website. The EA evaluates the Proposed Action, an alternative action, as well as the no action alternative which are included below:

1. The construction of the access road in its proposed location (the Preferred Alternative),
2. The construction of the access road farther to the east and to the north of the proposed location,
3. The No Action Alternative.

### **Alternative 2:**

An alternative to the Proposed Action (the preferred alternative) consisted of the extension of Tower Road following the EAFB eastern boundary from 225<sup>th</sup> Street to the north to 224<sup>th</sup> Place. From this point, 224<sup>th</sup> Place will continue to the west and connect to both Centennial Drive and Dakota Drive. From the intersection of 224<sup>th</sup> Place and Tower Road, Tower Road will be extended and will end approximately 1,950 feet to the north. The road will continue approximately 3,000 feet to the west to EAFB. This alternative will cross over private land and will require condemnation from the private landowners.

### **No Action Alternative:**

The No Action Alternative represents baseline conditions. Under the No Action Alternative, an easement through the eastern portion of EAFB Tract 308 would not be granted for the construction of Tower Road or the construction of Legion Boulevard. The No Action Alternative would also look at impacts of not extending 224<sup>th</sup> Place, not constructing the connector road between Verendrye Court and Desmet Court, and not relocating the perimeter fence line. This alternative would not be in compliance of the 40-year Centennial Estates lease and the lease would need to be renegotiated between Hunt Development and EAFB.

### **Mitigation Measures**

In accordance with 32 CFR Part 989.22, the Air Force must indicate if any mitigation measures would be needed to implement the proposed action at EAFB. For purposes of this EA, to construct access roads and an associated interior road on EAFB, no mitigation measures would be needed to arrive at a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

### **Summary of Environmental Effects**

The public and regulatory agency scoping process focused on the analysis on the following environmental resources: land use, infrastructure, noise, air quality, safety and occupational health, geologic resources, water resources, biological resources, cultural resources, and hazardous materials and waste management. Airfield operations and airspace as well as socioeconomics and environmental justice were evaluated and were determined not to be affected by the Proposed Action. Details of the environmental consequences can be found in the EA, which is hereby incorporated by reference. A summary of the analyses is presented in the Executive Summary of the EA.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the description of the Proposed Action as set forth in the EA, all activities were found to comply with the criteria or standards of environmental quality and coordinated with the appropriate Federal, State and local agencies. The attached EA and FONSI/FONPA will be made available to the public for a 30-day review period. Agencies were coordinated with throughout the EA process and their comments were incorporated into the analysis of potential environmental impacts performed as part of the EA.

### **Notice of Floodplain Involvement**

Flood potential is evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which defines the 100-year floodplain as an area within which there is a one (1) percent chance of inundation by a flood event in a given year. Federal, state, and local regulations often limit floodplain development to passive uses, such as recreational and preservation activities, to reduce the risks to human health and safety. Floodplain management requires Federal agencies to determine whether a Proposed Action would occur within a floodplain. This determination typically involves consultation of FEMA Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs), which contain enough general information to determine the relationship of the project area to nearby floodplains.

According to a 1996 floodplain study, 262 acres of EAFB property are within a 100-year floodplain. Floodplains lie along the main installation drainage, and along several of the creek drainages on the

northern and southern portion of the installation. The proposed roads, Legion Boulevard and 224<sup>th</sup> Place, are located within the 100-year floodplain (USAF-ACC, 2011).

Per FEMA requirements, Meade County Ordinance No. 9, *Regulations for Flood Damage Prevention*, and City of Box Elder Ordinance No. 491, *Flood Damage Prevention Regulations*, any structures must be constructed at least one (1) foot above the base flood elevation in accordance with FEMA standard requirements.

Other alternatives were reviewed during the EA development process under the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), but were eliminated from further detailed analysis in the EA because they did not meet the stated purpose and need for the action, were not practicable, or would have led to greater overall environmental impact. The only practicable alternative is described in the "Description of the Proposed Action" section above. For the reasons stated in the EA, the dismissed alternatives are not practicable alternatives to avoiding the potential floodplain impacts.

**Finding of No Significant Impact/Finding of No Practicable Alternatives**

Based on the information and analysis presented in the EA conducted in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations, implementing regulations set forth in 32 Code of Federal Regulations 989 (*Environmental Impact Analysis Process*), as amended, and review of agency comments, we conclude that the environmental effects of activities contributing to the development of an access and associated roads at Ellsworth AFB are not significant, that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary, and that a FONSI/FONPA is appropriate. Taking the above information into account, we find that there is no practicable alternative to this action and that the Proposed Action and alternatives include all practicable measures to minimize hazards to floodplain environments.

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