

3 Alternatives

The Army has identified three alternatives for its proposed RCI action at Fort Belvoir, in addition to a no action alternative. These alternatives are presented below. Two of these three alternatives were considered but not carried forward for analysis in this EA, for the reasons discussed. In addition, this section presents the process that was used to screen the potential sites proposed for “swing space” housing and temporary construction support facilities.

3.1 Preferred Alternative - Privatization

Implementation of the proposed RCI action, as described in Section 2.2, is the Army’s preferred alternative. Use of various MHPI authorities, identified in the CDMP, would achieve the purpose of and need for the proposed action as described in Section 1.2.

Implementation of the CDMP will address urgent deficiencies in the condition and configuration of family housing and will improve the quality of life for military service members and their families living on Fort Belvoir. Accordingly, this alternative of privatizing the existing housing inventory at Fort Belvoir is evaluated in detail in Section 4.0 of this document.

3.1.1 Siting

Because of cost, financial, environmental, or other reasons, certain choices such as alternative housing sites, housing densities, housing formats (high-rise vs. low-rise), types of ancillary supporting facilities and timing of specific FBRC actions, were eliminated from further consideration during CDMP negotiations.

The following is a summary of the screening process that was followed to select the parcels proposed for “swing space” housing, a new Recreation Center and temporary construction support facilities.

Land use planning principles at Fort Belvoir include “Smart Growth” principles that include:

- Focusing new development on previously disturbed areas
- Consolidating development to provide opportunities for mass transit and economy in infrastructure improvements
- Conserving land and preserving environmentally sensitive zones and other natural resources of significant value
- Emphasizing pedestrian access in facility siting by locating housing, services and employment centers close together

Selection of the 77-acre parcel for New South Post Village adheres to these principles by siting the new village on land that was disturbed (roughly two-thirds of it) by prior

development and is close to the South Post's community facilities, including the Home and Garden Center, PX gas station, car and truck rentals, credit union, and various retail facilities, as well as the post library, chapels, child development center, field house, hospital and other support activities. Siting the new Recreation Center on the adjacent 5-acre parcel, which was previously disturbed, will provide yet another community facility in this area that residents can walk to.

A parcel near Pence Gate was initially considered for "swing space" but was removed from further consideration in this EA, because it does not provide enough land for the number of housing units that need to be relocated from existing villages and also because it was being considered as a possible site for the Army Museum.

Other parcels on the North Post that were initially considered are closer to the Commissary, PX and Fort Belvoir Elementary School, but had considerably more potential for adverse environmental consequences than the proposed New South Post Village parcel.

The Engineer Proving Ground (EPG), a separate parcel of land located about 2 miles northwest of the Main Post (across I-95) that Fort Belvoir exercises responsibility for, was rejected early in the planning process as an unsuitable location for new housing. EPG is too far away from the employment centers and community services on Main Post, which would be inconvenient for residents, diminish their sense of community, and would require additional force protection measures for their safety and security. Additionally, EPG is not currently available to Fort Belvoir for family housing. If the Department of the Army determines that there is no future operational need for this land, the Army has legislative authority to dispose of EPG in three parcels: the Army may convey about 135 acres to Fairfax County as parkland, may convey about 170 acres to the Commonwealth of Virginia to complete the Fairfax County Parkway, and could sell or dispose of the remaining 515 acres under other conditions.

The temporary construction support sites shown on Figure 2-1 were selected from a number of potential sites, in an iterative screening process that considered environmental concerns, transportation, proximity to Route 1, adjacent operations, proximity to residential areas and the Accotink Bay Wildlife Refuge, historic viewshed, permitting requirements, potential for conflicting future operational needs and the existing infrastructure needed to support the operations.

3.2 Partial Privatization Alternative

Under this alternative, Fort Belvoir would subject only a portion of the installation's family housing to the RCI. Family housing in good condition (not needing demolition or renovation/rehabilitation) would remain subject to Army management for maintenance and operational control.

Privatization of only a portion of Fort Belvoir's family housing inventory would have three substantial drawbacks. First, the condition of the family housing retained by the Army would change over time, resulting in a need for its renovation or replacement and there is no reason to believe that adequate funding would be made available for this work, in view of the history of Army Family Housing funding (RCI, personal communication, May 2003).

Failure to include the entire inventory of housing in the RCI program would only delay action to provide adequate housing for military personnel and their dependents.

Second, two management regimes (the Army's and FBRC's) would not be as cost-efficient as one. Having a single housing program increases opportunities to maximize the cash flow available for construction, maintenance, rehabilitation and operation of the housing and ancillary support facilities desired by the installation. Finally, partial privatization would not fully meet the Army's purpose of and need for the proposed action, as a dual management approach could be perceived as creating inequities among the resident population, which would be counterproductive to the morale-building aspects of RCI.

Together, these factors render consideration of partial privatization at Fort Belvoir not feasible, and therefore such an alternative is not evaluated in detail in this EA.

3.3 Private Sector Reliance Alternative

Under this alternative, the Army would rely solely on the private sector to meet the housing needs of personnel assigned to Fort Belvoir and other service members who are eligible for family housing at Fort Belvoir. The installation would terminate family housing programs at Fort Belvoir, dispose of existing family housing units, and convert the land that now supports housing areas to other uses. This alternative would require approval of the Secretary of the Army.

The alternative is premised, in part, on the view that competitive marketplace forces would lead to the creation of sufficient affordable, quality family housing. Data vary, but in general experience shows that military families living off-post must cover between 15 and 20 percent of their costs out-of-pocket. Moreover, there are several intangible benefits to military personnel and their families living on-post. These include camaraderie and *esprit de corps* among the military personnel, convenient access to military community services, a sense of "family" among dependents (especially during deployments), and service members' comfort level in knowing that their dependents are residing in a safe community while they are deployed or serving on temporary duty at a distant location.

As a practical matter, termination of Fort Belvoir family housing would prove difficult. If on-post housing were to be terminated over a period of years, in the absence of maintenance funding, the existing housing would become unsuitable due to age or necessity of repairs. Residents could then find themselves living in blighted and partially abandoned neighborhoods. If on-post housing were to be terminated all at once, it is unlikely the private sector could provide the requisite amount of affordable, quality housing, as well as schools, shopping, roads, and other support amenities on short notice.

Rehabilitation of many of the historic family housing units at Fort Belvoir is economically sound. In addition, 270 units were extensively renovated over the last several years and, although lacking some of the amenities that new houses will provide, they still have years of useful life left. Termination of family housing programs would involve abandonment of considerable investments in those facilities that were recently renovated. In addition, abandonment of historic houses would result in unacceptable adverse effects to Fort Belvoir's Historic District, while adapting all of these buildings to nonhousing uses would not be practicable or compatible with their original use.

The various consequences of reliance on the private sector and the management difficulties of effecting termination of family housing on post would prove challenging. In light of the aggregate value of family housing units amenable to rehabilitation, termination of a family housing construction and maintenance program would gravely contravene the fiscal responsibilities the Congress expects of the Army. For these reasons, this alternative is not reasonable and is not further evaluated in this EA.

3.4 Leasing Alternative

Statutory authorities exist for Fort Belvoir to ensure availability of adequate, affordable housing through use of long-term leases of housing for military family use. Key aspects of the two laws providing these authorities are summarized below.

- **Long-term leasing of military family housing to be constructed.** Family housing obtained through use of this authority, which appears at 10 U.S.C. 2835, is most often referred to as “Section 801 Housing.” Under this authority, the Army may, through competitive contract procedures, have a developer build or renovate (to residential use) off-post family housing units near an installation. Housing units under this authority must meet DoD specifications. The Army may then lease the units for use as family housing for a period of not more than 20 years. At the end of the lease term, the Army has the option to purchase the housing units from the private developer.
- **Military housing rental guarantee program.** Family housing obtained through use of this authority, which appears at 10 U.S.C. 2836, is most often referred to as “Section 802 Housing.” Under this authority, the Army may award a competitive contract to a private developer or a state or local housing authority to construct or rehabilitate housing on or near an installation having a shortage of housing for personnel with or without accompanying dependents. Under the contract, the Army guarantees occupancy levels of the housing units, at rental rates comparable to those for similar units in the same general market. Housing units under this authority must comply with DoD specifications or, in the discretion of the Service secretary, local building codes. A rental guarantee agreement may not exceed 25 years in duration; it may be renewed only for housing that is located on government owned land. The agreement may provide that utilities, trash collection, snow removal, and entomological services be furnished by the Army at no cost to the occupant to the same extent such services are provided to occupants of post housing.

There has been only limited experience with either of the foregoing authorities. An important drawback affecting both programs concerns what is known as budget “scoring,” the method of accounting for federal government obligations as required by the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990. Scoring ensures that all government obligations are accounted for when long-term liability is incurred (i.e., during the first year of a project). Scoring guidelines issued by the federal Office of Management and Budget require that a project must be fully funded with sufficient budget authority in its first year to cover the government’s long-term commitment. In other words, all potential costs associated with long-term leasing or rental guarantee programs must be recognized in the first year, and they must be considered as part of the Army’s total obligation authority (the total monies appropriated by Congress for use by the Army in a given year). For some privatization

projects, such as military leased housing, the Army's obligations for scoring purposes amount to the net present value of the total rent under the lease. These amounts can be nearly as great as the sums required under traditional military construction financing for Army-initiated construction of similar facilities.

The Section 801 housing program and Section 802 rental guarantee program only partially address the Army's purpose and need for the proposed action. Due to the scoring guidelines, the Army would obtain either very little or no leverage benefit.

Enactment of new authorities in the MHPI suggests Congress's recognition that Section 801's and Section 802's drawbacks outweigh potential benefits to the Army. Although use of either or both of the Section 801 and Section 802 authorities would be possible, their use would not be reasonable when compared to the better flexibility and economic advantages of the new authorities offered by the RCI to the Army and to military families. Accordingly, the off-post-leasing alternative is not further evaluated in this EA.

3.5 No Action Alternative

Inclusion of the no action alternative is prescribed by CEQ regulations. Although the no action alternative does not satisfy the purpose and need for the proposed action, it serves as a baseline against which the impacts of the proposed action and alternatives can be evaluated.

Under the no action alternative, Fort Belvoir would not implement the proposed action, but would continue to provide for the family housing needs of its personnel through use of traditional military maintenance and construction procedures. Fort Belvoir would continue to obtain funding for family housing through the Congressional authorization and appropriations process. Based on historical trends, it is assumed that the amount of Congressional funding for family housing would not increase and that the number of units in critical need of renovation would continue to grow. Any major changes to or construction of new housing in the future would require that appropriate NEPA analyses be completed before implementing such actions.