

106 SUCCESS STORY

Capehart Wherry Housing Challenge Spurred Innovative Solution

Nationwide



“We estimate that we will save \$80 million to \$90 million in compliance costs through the utilization of that one programmatic treatment.”

Philip W. Grone, Deputy Under Secretary for Installations and Environment, Office of the Secretary of Defense, March 8, 2006

THE STORY

The beginning of the Cold War in the late 1940s led to sizable increases in the nation's military. Housing soldiers and their families exacerbated a national housing shortage that had grown steadily between 1926 and 1948. The 1949 Wherry Act and the 1955 Capehart Act (named after their sponsors, Senator Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska and Senator Homer Capehart of Indiana) addressed the issue by providing innovative legislation for the construction of family housing “on or around military installations.” The programs utilized private industry to construct the housing. Relying on federal financial incentives and using the services of architectural and planning firms, many of national note, private developers eventually built nearly 250,000 units of Wherry and Capehart housing for the military at installations across the country.

THE PROJECT

At the end of 1994, some 175,000 Capehart and Wherry housing units were inventoried on active military installations. In early 2001, the Military Construction Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee met to discuss historic properties within the Department of Defense (DoD). Among the concerns expressed by the services was the large number of military housing units that would soon be 50 years old and thus potentially eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The Wherry and Capehart-era buildings and neighborhoods provide a collection of mid-century suburban design but failed to meet the needs of modern military families who desired more contemporary housing. Army planners needed to decide whether to demolish or renovate the structures. As a result, the Army approached the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and together they agreed to pursue a programmatic solution to reduce compliance costs for Capehart and Wherry housing as the planning continued.

Photos: Above, Fort Huachuca, Arizona;
Right: Fort Belvoir, Virginia

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THE 106 PROCESS

Section 106 requires each federal agency to identify and assess the effects of projects it carries out, funds, or permits on historic properties, in consultation with the appropriate State or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer. Under Section 106, agencies consult with various parties, including applicants, local governments, and organizations that have a demonstrated interest in the historic property to identify ways to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse effects.

Recognizing the inefficiencies in considering effects to individual housing units built to almost identical design standards through the traditional Section 106 approach of developing a Memorandum of Agreement for each undertaking, the Army requested the ACHP issue a program comment to cover Capehart and Wherry-era properties as a group. A program comment allows for this process to be completed through the issuance of comment from the ACHP on the class of undertakings. Following consultation with stakeholders and a public comment period, the ACHP issued the Program Comment on June 7, 2002. It enables DoD to proceed programmatically instead of case by case, allowing DoD to perform maintenance and repair, renovation, demolition and replacement, and transfer out of federal control while managing the housing in an efficient and effective way. It further required "treatment measures," which include an expanded historic context, Neighborhood Design Guidelines, and video documentation. The context identified potential properties of particular importance, which were then used as the focus of the video documentation. These products collectively provide a historical record of these housing development programs, the soldiers and sailors whose families occupied them, and the design of thousands of military housing units.

Following issuance of the Program Comment for the Army properties, other DoD branches expressed the desire to manage properties constructed through the Capehart and Wherry funding programs. As a result, the ACHP issued a subsequent Program Comment in 2004 that applies to Capehart and Wherry housing units on Navy and Air Force installations.

THE SUCCESS

This first ACHP Program Comment demonstrates the value of using a nationwide comment on a series of actions that preserves important historic information without encumbering the agency with repetitive and predictable compliance actions that would unnecessarily impede the progress of an agency initiative. In this case, appropriate measures were put in place that preserved important historic resources and saved an estimated \$80 million in compliance costs.



Fort Bliss, Texas

Consulting Parties:

- Army
- Navy
- Air Force
- ACHP
- National Park Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Army Corps of Engineers
- National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers

For more about Section 106 and the ACHP go to www.achp.gov

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 803, Washington DC 20004
Phone: 202-606-8503 • Fax: 202-606-8647 • achp@achp.gov • www.achp.gov



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