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FEMA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
OPTIONS BUILDING RELOCATION AND RECONSTRUCTION DRAFT
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
LINN COUNTY, IOWA
FEMA-1763-DR-IA

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is working with local, state and other federal agencies to coordinate the response to the Midwest storms of 2008, a federally declared disaster in Iowa. As a result of the June 2008 storms, the Linn County Options Building was inundated with flood water. Due to the extent and depth of flood waters in and around the facility, it was not possible to bring equipment to pump out standing water for three days. As a result, standing water remained in parts of the facility for a period of three days. Flood water permeated every section of the 50,322 square foot facility.

Heavy rainfall combined with flooded stream water carried pollutants from damaged sewage treatment plants, animal wastes storage, and underground gasoline and oil storage tanks among other sources of toxic fluids and materials into the facility. This mixture of contaminants is hazardous to public health and destructive to standing structures and their contents. Due to the extended duration of standing water, the Options Building was red tagged as uninhabitable by the Linn County Environmental Health Department. Standing water created mold throughout the structure. Public access to the facility was prohibited. Once flood waters receded, the FEMA damage assessment teams examined each of the building's operating systems in addition to the structural integrity of the facility itself.

Standing water destroyed the building's heating and cooling systems, in addition to its external and internal electrical terminals and connections. Office equipment, supplies, and computers also were lost. FEMA's assessment teams determined that the Options Building was damaged in excess of 50 percent of its value. As a result, Linn County has applied through the Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division and FEMA Region VII Public Assistance Program for funding to relocate and reconstruct the Options Building.

FEMA was authorized under Presidential Disaster Declaration, FEMA-DR-1763-IA, to provide federal disaster assistance to Linn County, Iowa, as a result of damages during the incident period beginning May 25, 2008 and ending August 13, 2008. (Section 408 of the Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, 42 USC 5121-5206, as amended (Stafford Act, Public Law 93-288). The National Environmental Policy Act

(NEPA) requires that FEMA evaluate the potential environmental effects of the agency's proposed and alternative actions prior to obligating disaster assistance funds. The President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) has developed a series of regulations for implementing the NEPA. These regulations are included in Title 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Parts 1500–1508. The Code of Federal Regulations requires that an Environmental Assessment (EA) include an evaluation of alternative means of addressing damages caused in declared disasters, and a discussion of the potential environmental effects of the proposed Federal Action. An EA provides the evidence and analysis to determine whether a Federal Action will have long-term significant or adverse effects to the human environment and natural resources.

An EA prepared by FEMA must be consistent with requirements contained in the Federal Stafford Act and its regulations implementing NEPA at 44 CFR, Part 10. This section of the Federal Code requires that FEMA take environmental considerations into account when authorizing funding or approving actions. This EA was prepared in accordance with both CEQ and FEMA regulations for the NEPA to serve as a vehicle to document compliance with applicable state and federal laws and regulations, and to determine whether the potential effects of the Proposed Action will require preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement or a Finding of No Significant Impact.

The principal criterion guiding the site relocation process was finding a parcel outside the designated floodplain. Equally important was a site easily accessible to citizens. The Proposed Action is to relocate the 50,322 square foot one story Options Building at a 7.74 to 8.75 acre parcel within the proposed 42.53 acre Prairie Ridge Business Park, located on the corner of 12th Street and 26th Avenue is classified by the National Flood Insurance Program as a Zone C, an area determined to be outside the 100- and 500-year floodplains. The site is an undeveloped vegetated tree and grass covered parcel located on former agricultural lands at the western edge of Cedar Rapids. New development within the city is planned in this area, because it is outside the floodplain of the Cedar River and areas flooded in the June 2008 floods.

The EA contains an evaluation of the potential impacts associated with relocating and reconstructing the Options Building at its new location. This includes a discussion of potential impacts to resource topics such as noise, air quality, land use, biological resources, cultural resources, floodplain management, wetlands, in addition to potential effects on minority and low income populations.

CONDITIONS

The Proposed Action would not result in long-term adverse effects either to the human environment or natural resources. Linn County (the applicant) will be required to coordinate and/or implement the following conditions:

1. Apply and receive a building permit from the Linn County Zoning Department.
2. Monitor for compliance the following discovery clause addressing historic and archaeological finds during construction: In the event that archaeological deposits (soils, features, artifacts), or other remnants of human activity are uncovered, or if archaeological deposits are found during project construction, the project would be halted and the applicant

would stop all work immediately in the vicinity of the discovery, and take reasonable measures to avoid or minimize harm to the finds. The applicant will inform Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management Division (IHSEMD), will secure all archaeological findings and restrict access to the area. IHSEMD shall notify FEMA and FEMA will consult with SHPO and the Iowa Archaeologist. Work in sensitive areas may not resume until consultations are completed or until an archaeologist who meets the Secretary of the Interior's professional qualification standards determines the extent and historical significance of the discovery. Work may not resume at or around the delineated archaeological deposit until the applicant is notified by IHSEMD

FINDING

FEMA makes the following determinations from the information contained in the EA for the relocation and reconstruction of the Options Building: The Proposed Action will not result in any long-term adverse impacts related to air quality, noise, land use, traffic and circulation, floodplain management, public safety, biological and cultural resources, in addition to potential effects on minority or low income groups. The Proposed Action has been reviewed and to the best of our knowledge, does not have the potential for significant cumulative effects when combined with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions in accordance with 44 CFR Part 10.8 (d)(3)(x). As a result of the information and analysis contained in the environmental assessment, a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) has been prepared. An Environmental Impact Statement will not, therefore, be prepared based on the fact that there will be no long-term adverse impacts on the natural or human environment as a result of this project.

Kenneth Sessa
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