

Jean,

We recommend revising the definition of the word “near” relating to housing developments within a certain distance of military installations, as outlined by the Corporation in the 1/18/24 Conceptual Workshop.

Upon reviewing the suggested criteria for proximity to military installations, it is our belief that the term "near" should be defined more expansively. While the current suggestion is for developments to be within 5 miles of a military installation, we propose that "near" should be interpreted as within 15 miles of the main public gated entrance to a military installation. We believe this modification will better align with the realities of the surrounding communities and the needs of servicemembers and their families.

Here are several reasons supporting our proposal:

1. **Accessibility and Convenience:** Military installations often serve as hubs for various services and amenities that are crucial for servicemembers and their families. By extending the distance to 15 miles, we ensure that a larger population has convenient access to these resources while still maintaining proximity to the installation.
2. **Community Integration:** Many servicemembers and veterans choose to reside slightly further from military installations to integrate into civilian communities. Extending the distance to 15 miles allows for greater flexibility in housing options while still fostering a sense of community among military and civilian residents.
3. **Scope of Impact:** A 15-mile distance encompasses a wider area, potentially accommodating more diverse populations and addressing the housing needs of a broader range of individuals associated with the military installation.
4. **Infrastructure and Development Opportunities:** Increasing the distance to 15 miles may incentivize development in areas that are currently underserved, leading to economic growth and infrastructure improvements in these communities.
5. **Remoteness:** Often due to security reasons, many military installations are located in remote areas which are often numerous miles away from the nearest town or city. For example, Camp Blanding is located 10+ miles from the nearest city, Middleburg (population +/-13,000). By revising the distance to 15 miles, it helps account for this remoteness.
6. **Price-Gouging:** There are very few properties for sale within 5 miles from a military installation so expanding that distance out to 15 miles offers more options and opportunities for developers, including preventing price gouging by land owners who are aware of the new interest as we have already begun to see first-hand these effects by developers pursuing the same entitled land which is resulting in surging land prices.
7. **Proximity to Services:** While the RFA does not have a proximity eligibility requirement, the preference included in this RFA of funding applications with strong proximity to public transportation and other community services further illustrates the Corporation’s goals and policies to support in developing projects that are located in close proximity to these essential services. By increasing the distance to 15 miles, there will be more applications that will meet this preference which will be a net benefit to future residents.

We believe that this adjustment to the definition of "near" will better serve the goals outlined in the RFA, including providing housing options that incorporate critical services for servicemembers, their families, and veterans. It will also ensure that the developments funded through this initiative effectively meet the needs of the military community in Florida.

Respectfully,



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