

Landguth: Partnering proves beneficial to all

Scott Landguth Executive Director South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority Aug 25, 2019

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Around the clock, more than 3,000 Airmen from the 28th Bomb Wing provide airpower. In order for the Air Force to conduct its mission at Ellsworth Air Force Base, there needs to be a supportive community behind them. The South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority, created by the state legislature in 2009, collaborates with state and municipal governments, business leaders and base officials on projects mutually beneficial to Ellsworth and the local community. The organization focuses on providing resources for Ellsworth, and for the Airmen and women and their families serving there, ensuring the base continues to be a viable center of national defense and regional economic benefit for the future.

One collaborative project between the Authority, the City of Box Elder and Ellsworth was the creation of a \$24 million wastewater treatment plant to service both the base and the City of Box Elder. The wastewater treatment plant was the most cost-effective approach to meeting the base and Box Elder's sewage treatment needs. By building one plant, the partnership resulted in millions of dollars in construction savings for both parties. In addition, it continues to provide savings by both parties sharing the operating costs. The new plant provides for growth for Ellsworth and Box Elder for decades to come.

Through community collaboration, the Ellsworth Development Authority works to ensure a safe area for those living and working in and around Ellsworth. The Authority facilitates the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration program. This Department of Defense and State of South Dakota funded initiative ensures that Ellsworth has a safe buffer around the base in which to operate. The Authority works with property owners, ranchers and community leaders to ensure operations at Ellsworth can be conducted in a safe manner for both the Airmen and those living near or around the base. These partnerships are critical to the base's success. By keeping the land surrounding the installation compatible with Air Force guidelines, Ellsworth remains a thriving base and a significant economic benefit for the region. Due to the partnership between Ellsworth and the Ellsworth Development Authority, the land surrounding the base is now 99 percent compatible with Air Force guidelines.

The Ellsworth Development Authority also advocates for programs that benefit Ellsworth airmen and women and their families. With land obtained from the Air Force, the authority was able to work with the Douglas School District to donate land for a new elementary school. Working with the private sector and the city of Box Elder, the Authority continues to work on bringing additional housing and commercial and retail opportunities on Authority land near the base.

As Ellsworth grows in the coming years, the opportunities for partnering and collaborating on projects that are mutually beneficial for Ellsworth and South Dakota will only increase. Seizing on these opportunities will maximize the benefits and positive impacts for all parties.

Scott Landguth is the Executive Director of the South Dakota Ellsworth Development Authority. The Authority's mission is to ensure that South Dakota and the Black Hills are a great place for the Air Force to conduct its mission.