

# MEDDAC Soldiers' new barracks provide creature comfort in a eco-friendly way

By Susan C. Galentine

Medical Department Activity Soldiers traded up when they moved in to new “green” digs co-located with Evans Army Community Hospital the beginning of December. Their new home boasts a scenic view of the Rocky Mountains, day lighting to spare and many other amenities.

The new barracks, which can accommodate 112 single Soldiers, incorporates eco-friendly features and is a part of the U.S. Army and Fort Carson’s efforts to construct barracks and facilities that are more sustainable and resource efficient. This new approach to construction also includes the philosophy of ensuring the well-being of the Soldiers and staff that live and work in them.

The building currently has 57 residents, but occupancy is growing, said Sgt. James Lane, the MEDDAC Barracks sergeant. The barracks is anticipated to be full by March.

The exterior is a far cry from the era of long, rectangular barracks buildings and resemble more a modern apartment complex. The interior is even painted in warmer earth tones, an improvement over the stark white paint traditionally used in barracks. When the Soldiers moved in to their new home, said Lane, it was like living in luxury compared to their old barracks in Bldg. 1013, which had two bathroom facilities on each floor, smaller rooms and wall lockers for belongings. He said they couldn’t believe they were going to be living there.

The positive sentiments regarding the barracks were echoed by Capt. Kristi Andrews the MEDDAC Medical Company commander who said she has been getting extremely positive feedback from Soldiers. “In fact, we are seeing many Soldiers who are eligible to live in the barracks moving back in – rather than payout of pocket for a place off post,” she said. “They seem to really enjoy the apartment-style rooms, rather than traditional barracks rooms.”

The co-ed MEDDAC barracks noncommissioned officers have single occupancy rooms with a kitchenette, common area and bathroom. Lower ranking enlisted housed in the barracks live two per unit, with each person having an individual bedroom and sharing a common area, bathroom and kitchenette with the other occupant. Each bedroom has a spacious walk-in closet. Safety features such as sprinkler systems and smoke alarms are in the hallways and in each individual room. The barracks is also supplied with environmentally-preferable, less toxic cleaning products.

Other primary sustainable elements incorporated in the barracks:

- The barracks is located next to Evans Army Community Hospital, allowing residents to walk to work while saving on vehicle fuel.
- A Metro bus stop is located at the Evans Army Community Hospital providing residents with the availability of public transportation.

- Bicycle Racks were installed to provide other means of transportation than the use of privately owned vehicles.
- Energy efficient Energy Star-rated appliances, including microwaves, refrigerators, washers and dryers are installed in the barracks. Energy-efficient compact fluorescent bulbs are used for lighting.
- Rooms have individual heat and air conditioning controls for increased comfort.
- The building is oriented to maximize solar gain throughout the day that reduces energy needed for heating of the building. Individual rooms have more windows for day lighting than previous barracks designs.
- Exterior shading devices are on south and west facing windows to reduce the need for cooling during summer months.
- Water use at the barracks is reduced through the use of low-flow water fixtures, drip irrigation and by xeriscaping (using native plants, rock and bark) of the landscaping. The use of ultra-low flow fixtures in the sinks and showers is estimated to reduce water use by up to 20 percent.
- Additional exterior wall/roof insulation keeps the building cooler in the summer and warmer in the winter.
- The paint and adhesives used and carpeting installed in the building were specifically selected to give off low or no toxic fumes.
- The buildings air is monitored for potentially lethal carbon dioxide. If the CO2 level is too high, more fresh air is allowed in to keep the CO2 levels down.

The barracks meets the Army's Sustainable Project Rating Tool Gold rating level with is equivalent to the Silver Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design rating criteria for new construction and major renovation projects. These ratings are significant to architects, engineers and developers of these buildings. For occupants of barracks and facilities designed with these elements in mind, meeting LEED – Silver means that this facility is built in such a way that there is an improved quality of life for those who live and work in the building.

Platinum is the highest rating achievable. Fort Carson is targeting Silver LEED ratings with all new construction and is also incorporating more sustainable features in existing buildings during renovations. Sustainable facilities are designed to incorporate features and appliances that reduce water and energy use, reduce the amount of land disturbed by construction, use recycled and rapidly renewable materials in their construction and improve indoor environmental quality for occupants. Ultimately, reduced costs to operate facilities in the future can help to ensure that more funds are available for Army mission requirements.

Constructing sustainable facilities is one of the 12 sustainability goals Fort Carson established in 2002.

For more information on Fort Carson's sustainability program, call the sustainability consultant at 526-6210.

Barracks cutline: *Photos by Susan C. Galentine. The new, sustainably-designed MEDDAC barracks opened its doors in December.*