

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)
Response to Veterans and Community Oversight
and Engagement Board (VCOEB)
June 2021 Recommendations**

Recommendation 13-01: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs instruct VAGLAHS leadership to develop at least 50 shelter beds for female veterans, with or without dependents. These 50 beds can be made up of a combination of traditional HCHV beds and/or innovative options such as tiny homes as determined by VAGLAHS, in consultation with the City of Los Angeles, LAHSA, VCOEB and community input.

VA Response: Concur. Currently, the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) is developing 25 transitional housing beds for homeless female Veterans. VAGLAHS is finalizing the contract and the remaining repairs in the building with an expected operational date no later than March 31, 2022. The Mental Health Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (or Domiciliary) has 18 female Veteran treatment beds available. Female Veterans are welcome in the Care, Treatment and Rehabilitative Services initiative encampment, and there are about 50 female Veteran beds available in community transitional housing programs. Currently, VAGLAHS has 93 beds available and estimates there are 191 homeless female Veterans in the Greater Los Angeles area.

Recommendation 13-02: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs formally commit clinical staff and VA Police resources to the establishment and ongoing programming of Veteran Mental Evaluation Teams (VMET) at VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) in partnership with local law enforcement by January 31, 2022. And further recommend that the VAGLAHS Medical Director enter into an MOU with the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and appropriate city enforcement agencies to formalize the partnership to include and not be limited to information and aggregated data sharing.

VA Response: Concur. The VAGLAHS Police Department is familiar with the VA pilot program at the VA Long Beach Healthcare System, that began in September 2018, is referred to as the Veterans Mental Evaluation Team (VMET). VA Police has had a Crisis Intervention Program since 2014, which evolved into VMET. Given the success of these programs, VAGLAHS will continue with its Crisis Intervention Program and concurs with formally committing clinical staff and VA Police resources, along with dedicated personnel and Full-Time Employees Equivalents, to the establishment and ongoing programming of VMET at VAGLAHS in partnership with local law enforcement by August 1, 2022.

Since 2020, VMET at the VAGLAHS West Los Angeles (WLA) Campus has saved the lives of 11 Veterans who were actively attempting, or who stated they were likely to

commit suicide; successfully de-escalated a situation on the WLA Campus involving a trans Veteran who had become violent and barricaded herself in a room and was subsequently transported to WLA's psychiatric emergency room for treatment; and de-escalated, evaluated and transported approximately 65 mentally ill Veterans to WLA's psychiatric emergency room without resorting to the use of force.

Recommendation 13-03: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs reopen the “West Los Angeles, CA - Seismic Corrections to 12 Buildings” Major Construction program and include seismic corrections to all buildings slated for permanent supportive housing in the FY 2023 VA Budget Submission and ensure that costs associated with doing so are reflected in the total estimated project cost. Furthermore, VCOEB recommends that VA explore utilizing the capital contribution mechanism in order to expedite coordination and implementation of seismic retrofitting for permanent supportive housing on campus.

VA Response: Non-concur. The “West Los Angeles, CA – Seismic Corrections to 12 Buildings” project would have retrofitted structural and non-structural systems in Buildings 156, 157, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 212, 222, 257, 258 and 300 at the WLA Campus to address seismic, life-safety and Facility Condition Assessment deficiencies. Seismic funding is intended for mission-critical facilities.

VA Handbook 18-8 Seismic Design Requirements defines mission critical facilities below in Table 4:

Table 4. Critical Facilities¹

Occupancy Sub-name
Acute Care [Acute Beds] - inpatient medical/surgical beds
Acute Care (Acute Beds) – outpatient ²
Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation - inpatient
Emergency Command Center
Fire Station, Police Station
Hazardous Material Storage
Hospital
Imaging Center - inpatient
Medical Records - standalone central storage
Mental Health/Psychiatric Care - inpatient
National Continuity of Operation Center
OI&T - Core Data Center (CDC)
Polytrauma - inpatient
Research - Animal Facility
Research Facility w/ Wet Labs
Security & Law Enforcement

Notes:

1) Deviations from default FOCs shall be submitted to the VA Seismic Safety Coordinator for coordination of review by pertinent VA administrations/offices.

2) Includes urgent care (not 24/7) and Emergency Department.

3) The purpose of the facility is serving inpatient and food production, not administrative office space.

VA Handbook 18-8 Seismic Design Requirements defines essential facilities below in Table 5:

Table 5. Essential Facilities¹

Occupancy Sub-name	Notes:
Community Living Center (CLC) (LTC, ECRC, ECU)	1) Deviations from default FOCs shall be submitted to the VA Seismic Safety Coordinator for coordination of review by pertinent VA administrations/offices.
Dietetics (serving inpatient/food production) ³	2) Includes urgent care (not 24/7) and Emergency Department.
Domiciliary/MH RRTP	3) The purpose of the facility is serving inpatient and food production, not administrative office space.
Imaging Center - outpatient	

In order to operationalize the WLA Draft Master Plan, VA removed buildings 156, 157, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209 and 257 from the scope of the major construction project, "West Los Angeles, CA – Seismic Corrections to 12 Buildings." All Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) buildings must be designed and constructed in compliance with the earthquake-resistant design provisions of the International Building Code (IBC) or the International Residential Code, nationally-recognized building codes promulgated by the International Code Council or equivalent codes. As part of the 12 Buildings project, these buildings were previously categorized as mission critical or essential due to their operations which have additional requirements to continue operations after a seismic event. However, when the above-listed buildings were identified as future EULs for housing, these more stringent standards no longer apply, and therefore do not shift an undue burden of seismic correction to the Principal Developer. The ancillary facility category, which requires compliance with minimum IBC provisions for seismic safety is commensurate with the residential function which the EULs will provide.

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VA Handbook 18-8 Seismic Design Requirements defines ancillary facilities below in Table 6:

Table 6. Ancillary Facilities¹

Occupancy	Sub-name
Accessory Non-Building Structure	Outbuilding (General Use)
Canteen-Retail Store	Polytrauma - outpatient
Chapel (standalone building)	Post Office
Child Care	Quarters (Residential)
Connecting Corridor-Concourse, and Bridge	Recreational
Credit Union	Rehabilitation Medicine - outpatient
Drug/Alcohol Rehabilitation - outpatient	Research Facility w/ Dry Labs only
Greenhouse (Freestanding)	Spinal Cord Injury/Disorders Center (SCID Center) - outpatient
Library/Museum	Student Housing
Maintenance Facility (Shops)	Temporary Building
Maintenance Storage (Non-biomedical Equipment)	Toilets (Outhouse)
Mental Health/Psychiatric Care - Outpatient	Training, Education
Office (e.g., Clinical Administrative, General Administrative, etc.)	Veterans Services
OIT - National Call Center	Waste Management (Incinerator & Recycle)
OIT - Network Support Center (NSC)	Waste Storage (Non-hazardous)
Parking Garage	

Regarding Building 212, seismic renovation will utilize funds appropriated in Fiscal Year (FY) 2016 and will be renovated for sub-acute rehabilitation beds. The Building 212 renovation closes this project.

In November 2017, VA notified Congress that the highest priority need is to address Building 300, the Regional Food Services Facility, which is critical for providing quality service to vulnerable inpatient Veterans. Renovation of Building 300 was originally included in the scope of the 12 Buildings major project, and VA determined that new construction would be more cost effective than the originally-planned renovation. VA then determined Building 300 could be utilized to support the Draft Master Plan.

EUL developers are responsible for securing financing to design and develop the permanent supportive housing planned for the North Campus. Subject to the availability of minor construction funding, VA is open to exploring the feasibility of using capital contributions for certain extraordinary seismic retrofit costs with the EUL developers.

Recommendation 13-04: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs reassess the current “hand off” strategy for addressing infrastructure deficiencies on North Campus and implement a rapid two-phased comprehensive approach which will address both wet utility and transportation upgrades for each phase concurrently.

VA Response: Concur-in-Principle. Offices across VA have been coordinating to develop a strategy to address infrastructure deficiencies on the North Campus. In support, FY 2021 money has been allocated for infrastructure projects associated with the EUL developments. VAGLAHS has developed and submitted infrastructure projects for solicitation, including design build proposals for both an immediate and permanent solution for wet utilities.

VAGLAHS continues to coordinate with the Principal Developer team to develop a strategy for transportation upgrades and will work with Veterans Integrated Service Network 22 for potential sources of funding.

Recommendation 13-05: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs prioritize the Master Plan at VA West Los Angeles as a target for potential gains in both major and minor construction appropriations, including American Jobs Plan spending, which will fully fund seismic corrections, infrastructure improvements and environmental remediation to federally owned facilities required for the development of affordable housing on campus.

VA Response: Concur. VA supports the Administration's current initiatives and looks forward to implementing the programs at a local level.

Recommendation 13-06: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs request that the Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs name the interior thoroughfare entering the Los Angeles National Cemetery Columbarium “Littlestone Drive” in memory of Colonel Dick Littlestone (USA, Ret).

VA Response: Non-concur. The National Cemetery Administration (NCA) has responded to a Congressional request regarding support for naming the new interior road of the Los Angeles National Cemetery Columbarium in honor of Colonel Richard (“Dick”) Littlestone. Please see the attached letters that were dispatched in August 2021. NCA disagrees with what is written in VCOEB Recommendation 6 and the incoming signed cover letter.

Department of Veterans Affairs
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