

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

Recommendation 14-01A: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs not sign a successor Master Plan by year's end because doing so would not afford adequate opportunity for Veteran input and public comment prior to understanding VA's strategic vision for the 388-acre campus.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs (SECVA) has committed to a 60-day review period of the Master Plan 2022 draft to ensure an opportunity for Veterans to comment on the draft plan. Current schedule for submission of the final document for VA concurrence and Secretary's signature is estimated to be no earlier than January 7, 2022.

Background:

VA West Los Angeles (West LA) Campus Draft Master Plan (DMP) was developed in 2015 with significant participation and collaboration on concepts from various stakeholders including: Veterans Service Organizations (VSO); Veterans; former plaintiffs of the lawsuit brought forth by various stakeholders, including descendants of relatives of the original land donors, challenging the government's use of the West LA Campus; local community entities and individuals; charitable and philanthropic entities; elected officials; state and local authorities; and many other stakeholders. More than 1,000 public comments were received on the preliminary draft via working sessions, multiple surveys and a public comment period. SECVA signed the DMP in January 2016, expressing VA's commitment to the DMP.

The DMP establishes a framework to assist VA in determining and implementing the most effective use of the West LA Campus for Veterans. It states the guidelines and principles for development and reinvestment, and it offers broad concept recommendations for improvement. Some of the key elements of the DMP include:

- Providing appropriate levels of supportive housing on the West LA Campus tailored to the needs of vulnerable Veteran sub-populations (e.g., chronically homeless, severely disabled, aging Veterans with disabilities, female Veterans with dependents);
- Optimizing formerly leased properties, underutilized buildings and vacant land on the West LA Campus to better serve the Veteran community;
- Providing opportunities for Veterans to interact and receive other non-medical support services and benefits, such as education and employment training and legal services; and

- Modernizing and reorganizing uses and functions of the West LA Campus to provide for ease of access and improved efficiency.

The full DMP and additional information can be found at <https://westladraftmasterplan.org/>.

The DMP contemplated a revision or revisiting every three to five years. It is anticipated that as various elements of the DMP are implemented and the needs of the West LA Campus and the Veteran population it serves change, the DMP will be revised accordingly. VA intends to produce an updated Master Plan (Master Plan 2022), which will include both North and South Campus development. Throughout this update, VA is closely collaborating with other VA offices, Veteran groups, community partners and stakeholders to ensure Master Plan 2022 progressively meets the needs of Veterans.

Master Plan 2022 will serve as a refinement to the 2016 DMP and will guide VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System's (VAGLAHS) decade-long effort to reshape its facilities and capital assets, covering a variety of construction; redevelopment; and leasing activities related to VA's master planning process for one of VA's largest and most complex integrated health care systems. Master Plan 2022 will move beyond the draft and framework concepts to solidify what has been accomplished, identify the central focus that exists today for a community plan and provide a path forward.

Soliciting Internal/External Audience Feedback:

To kick off the Master Plan 2022 project effort, VAGLAHS West LA Campus released emails to all stakeholders, posted to its social media channels and posted fliers in the West LA VA Medical Center announcing the project and inviting stakeholders to participate in upcoming virtual townhall events to learn about the project as well as provide feedback. From the start of the project, stakeholders have been directed to the Master Plan website at <https://westladraftmasterplan.org/p/masterplanupdate> which includes critical project documents that provide context, as well as an online survey for stakeholder input.

The following phased approach is being implemented to collect feedback from key external stakeholder groups (VSOs, VCOEB, elected officials and the general public). Throughout the course of the stakeholder engagement process, each group has been provided updates on the following areas that they specifically identified for prioritizing services and amenities on the West LA North Campus under the DMP:

- Types of special Veteran housing and timing of that development (62+, female, handicapped, etc.);
- Housing services;
- Walking, jogging and bicycling facilities;
- Health and wellness for Veterans and their families;
- Green spaces for wellness;
- Playground for children;

- Sports (tennis and basketball courts, baseball and soccer fields);
- Transportation to and from the West LA Campus;
- Food options on the West LA Campus;
- Job training to include types of job training;
- In-class educational programs;
- Entertainment; and
- Religious services.

Between September 20, 2021 and September 29, 2021, the project team collected in-person survey responses from Veterans on the WLA Campus using iPads. These survey responses were collected in addition to the survey responses captured from the public on the Master Plan website at <https://westladraftmasterplan.org/p/masterplanupdate>.

VA conducted Master Plan Town Hall Engagements on the following dates: August 29, 2021; September 9, 2021; September 30, 2021; October 28, 2021; and November 18, 2021. These Master Plan Engagements were a series of virtual town hall meetings with a first session held for VSOs from 4:00–5:15 p.m. Pacific Daylight Time (PDT) followed by a second session for elected officials and the public from 6:00–7:15 p.m. PDT. The Master Plan Engagements were used to present the draft of the Master Plan 2022 work to date to all stakeholders and address stakeholder feedback and questions. Stakeholders were directed to the Federal Register to review the Master Plan 2022 draft at their own pace and leave final suggestions and feedback for a 60-day period between the second full week October 2021 through the second full week of December 2021.

In addition to the Master Plan Town Hall Engagements, 63 separate 90-minute forums were offered to VSOs between October 18, 2021 and December 15, 2021, to present the Master Plan 2022 draft and invite their feedback. Five total sessions were scheduled by stakeholders.

VA also presented Master Plan 2022 updates on monthly calls between September 2021 and December 2021 for VSOs, VAGLAHS employees, elected officials and Veterans. The calls were scheduled on Thursdays at noon, PDT. Finally, VA presented a Master Plan 2022 briefing to the VCOEB on their September 29, 2021 and December 2, 2021, Quarterly Federal Advisory Committee meetings.

Recommendation 14-01B: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs direct VAGLAHS leadership to develop a preliminary draft of the successor Master Plan and post it to Regulations.gov on December 1, 2021, permitting the month of December to review its contents.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

As described in VA's response to Recommendation 14-01A above, the Master Plan 2022 draft has been posted for a full 60-day comment period, from October 18, 2021 through December 17, 2021. Stakeholder outreach has been proactive and wide-ranging.

Recommendation 14-01C: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs mandates that VAGLAHS leadership execute a comprehensive communications plan to inform Veterans, their families and the community about the contents of a successor Master Plan and begin soliciting their feedback in January 2022.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

As described in VA's response to Recommendation 14-01A above, stakeholder outreach has been proactive, consistent and wide-ranging. VAGLAHS has an enduring communications plan that continues with stakeholder engagement opportunities throughout the months of October, November and early December. This includes town halls and opportunities for individual organizational-level briefings with question-and-answer periods.

Recommendation 14-01D: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs formalize Memorandums of Agreement (MOA) with Veteran and community-based organizations to enhance outreach and conduct joint virtual town hall events. The purpose of these events will be to educate the public about the successor Master Plan and differences between the Draft Master Plan and the new plan, and to provide an opportunity to ask questions and solicit feedback into the public comment record. At a minimum, this outreach should include "The Big Six" Veteran Service Organizations but should also include smaller groups advocating for the needs of homeless, female, ethnic minority and/or LGBTQIA+ Veterans. VCOEB encourages VA to begin this planning process immediately and include MOAs in the successor Master Plan to provide a historical record of collaboration with Veteran groups, community partners and stakeholders.

VA Response: Concur in Principle.

As described in VA's responses to Recommendation 14-01A and 14-01C above, stakeholder outreach has been proactive, consistent, wide-ranging and inclusive of all interested parties. VAGLAHS will continue to reach out to and engage with the entities listed in this recommendation; however, MOAs are not required for informational engagements. All engagement activity will be documented in the final Master Plan 2022.

Recommendation 14-01E: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs perform a site visit to VA West Los Angeles for the purpose of signing a successor Master Plan.

VA Response: Non-Concur.

On October 6 – 7, 2021, SECVA visited VAGLAHS. During his visit, Secretary McDonough met with Veterans and recognized a few of the VAGLAHS staff who serve them. The Secretary also met with VCOEB members, elected officials and a Veteran Outreach Coordinator from American Veterans to gain a first-hand perspective of Veterans experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles. This visit included a comprehensive and thorough tour of VAGLAHS facilities.

Recommendation 14-01F: Recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs adopt a successor Master Plan for VA West Los Angeles by March 31, 2022.

VA Response: Concur.

The current timeline for submitting the Master Plan 2022 document for concurrence and SECVA signature is expected to begin no later than January 10, 2022.