

**Department of Veterans Affairs (VA)  
Response to Veterans and Community Oversight  
and Engagement Board (VCOEB)  
January 2020 Recommendations**

***Recommendation 8\_1: Endorsement of capital contribution to provide extraordinary infrastructure associated with housing delivery at VA West Los Angeles.***

VCOEB commends VA Office of Asset Enterprise Management's (OAEM) actions to address funding gaps for extraordinary infrastructure projects necessary to execute "Alternative D" for the proposed improvements and reconfiguration of the West Los Angeles Medical Center Campus<sup>1</sup>.

VCOEB was pleased to learn that OAEM and the West LA Veterans Collective (Principal Developer) are currently discussing a potential capital contribution for the "Bonsall Utility Backbone" which will provide electrical, gas and telecommunication services to the north campus. While the scope, costs and schedule are subject to further review by VA and local authorities, we emphatically support the Department's resolve to address critical infrastructure projects on campus.

VCOEB recommends that OAEM and West Los Angeles Veterans Collective finalize a capital contribution agreement and establish a mutually agreeable contribution schedule that aligns extraordinary infrastructure funding with critical phases of construction.<sup>2</sup>

This recommendation seeks to reduce potential delays in infrastructure financing which could adversely impact the tempo of construction and housing availability on campus.

**VA Response: Concur**

OAEM and West LA Veterans Collective (Principal Developer) are in the process of negotiating and finalizing a capital contribution agreement for the "Bonsall Utility Backbone" that will provide electrical, gas and telecommunication services to VA's West Los Angeles north campus for the supportive housing projects for Veterans which are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. This agreement is anticipated to be executed at approximately the same time as the B207 Enhanced Use Lease in the fourth quarter (Q) of fiscal year (FY) 2020 or Q1 FY 2021. Any further capital contributions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>1</sup> Record of Decision West Los Angeles Medical Center Campus Proposed Master Plan for Improvements and Reconfiguration: Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement and Section 106 Consultation (Page 8).

<sup>2</sup> Exhibit A: January 15, 2020 Draft Community Plan Presentation - Composite Slide (Page 9).

**Recommendation 8\_2: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of Veterans Affairs instruct the appropriate office to announce the award resulting from the Request for Lease Proposal 1 concerning the Historic Wadsworth Chapel located at VA West Los Angeles.**

**VA Response: Concur**

An Intent to Award Notification Letter was issued on March 27, 2020, to the successful offeror. The successful offeror submitted the only proposal received. Prior to issuance of the Intent to Award Notification, this information was considered procurement sensitive and would not have been available. Final award of the lease is pending receipt and acceptance of documentation requested in the Intent to Award Notification.

VA contracting staff continues to work with the party involved to secure a signature on the lease. It is expected that the lease will be signed by the end of October and the announcement of the awardee can be made at that time.

**Recommendation 8\_3: VCOEB recommends that the Secretary of the VA work with the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development to provide funding for stabilization and transitional housing services for homeless veterans in Los Angeles.**

VCOEB places a high priority on autonomy and self-determination for all Veterans. There is a little evidence to support that homeless adults who are coerced into transitional housing or substance use treatment have positive long-term health outcomes.<sup>3</sup> The recent decision by the 9<sup>th</sup> U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in *Boise vs. Martin*<sup>4</sup> prohibits local law enforcement from criminalizing homeless adults for sitting, lying or sleeping on public property if there is no adequate shelter alternative. VCOEB recognizes that Assertive Community Treatment is the evidence-based intervention to serve homeless adults with severe and persistent illness<sup>5</sup>. VCOEB strongly supports offering crisis and transitional housing to Veterans as an alternative to sleeping on the streets. Additionally, VCOEB strongly supports working in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and proposes that any joint VA-HUD collaboration honor the Veterans' autonomy without the threat of criminalization to coerce Veterans into these services. VCOEB supports expanding crisis intervention services at the West Los Angeles VA campus.

**VA Response: Concur in principle**

VA appreciates VCOEB's support for expanding evidence-based interventions, including emergency and transitional housing, for homeless Los Angeles-area Veterans. VA also appreciates and acknowledges VCOEB's recommendation that VA partner with HUD to fund such expansion. While VCOEB's recommendation is framed in terms of

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<sup>3</sup> <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2010-20229-001>

<sup>4</sup> <https://nlchp.org/supreme-court-martin-v-boise/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://ebmh.bmj.com/content/1/4/115>

interventions to support positive long-term health outcomes rather than to mitigate emergent public health risks, the emergent need to protect homeless Veterans from exposure to COVID-19 has led VA's Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (VAGLAHS) to significantly expand emergency treatment and shelter options on the West Los Angeles Campus. This expansion included three distinct programs.

On April 1, 2020, VAGLAHS opened 138 beds in building 214 as a portion of the VAGLAHS Domiciliary to provide shelter and health care for the following groups:

- Veterans who need to self-isolate due to a medical condition that increases susceptibility to COVID-19, or due to known contact with someone who has the disease;
- Veterans who are presumed to have the infection and are awaiting test results; and
- Veterans who are positive and need to remain isolated for a 14-day period.

On April 4, 2020, VAGLAHS opened the "A Bridge Home" structure provided through collaboration with VAGLAHS, the City and County of Los Angeles and with the VAGLAHS-funded service provider, Carlos Lopez and Associates. Although originally designed to house 100 homeless Veterans moving through transitional housing, it is currently being used as a 50-bed facility for non-symptomatic homeless Veterans in order to maintain social distancing measures. When the public health guidelines allow and VAGLAHS has made a clinical decision to do so, we will work with the contracted service provider to expand the facility's capacity to 100 Veterans as originally planned.

Finally, on April 6, 2020, VAGLAHS initiated Care, Treatment and Rehabilitation Services (CTRS) on the West Los Angeles Campus for homeless Veterans living on the streets. CTRS is designed to provide Veterans with services such as clinical care, social work and transitional housing assistance while also providing them a clean environment with monitored social distancing requirements, in a designated area on campus. This program initially opened with 25 spaces for high-risk homeless Veterans to come onto the campus with their personal tents. On May 6, 2020, the program expanded to a second location that accommodated an additional 20 Veterans. VAGLAHS has received donations to make showers available to CTRS participants, and community partners are providing hot meals.

With respect to VCOEB's recommendation for expanded VA-HUD collaboration, VA continues to pursue options to expand the number, value and flexibility of HUD-VA Supportive Housing vouchers at the national and local levels. VA remains committed to strong and innovative partnerships with other Federal agencies, such as HUD, and with municipal entities like the City and County of Los Angeles, for the benefit of Los Angeles' homeless Veterans and their families.



THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
WASHINGTON

October 20, 2020

Lieutenant General (Retired) John D. Hopper Jr.  
Chairman  
Veterans and Community Oversight and  
Engagement Board  
241 18<sup>th</sup> Street South, Suite 202  
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Thank you for your recent letter submitted as part of the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's (the Board) recommendations. I was pleased to review the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) responses to your current recommendations on the key issues identified from the January 2019 meeting in Los Angeles, California. VA's responses to the Board's recommendations are enclosed.

I sincerely appreciate your leadership and the Board's efforts. The Board has made valuable contributions: identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnership; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Service members and their families; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

If you require additional information, please contact your Committee Designated Federal Officer, Mr. Eugene W. Skinner Jr., at [Eugene.Skinner@va.gov](mailto:Eugene.Skinner@va.gov) or 202-631-7645.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure