



**THE SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON**

March 19, 2019

**Lieutenant General John D. Hopper, Jr., USAF (Retired)
Chairman
Veterans and Community Oversight and
Engagement Board Advisory Committee
241 18th Street South, Suite 202
Arlington, VA 22202**

Dear General Hopper:

Thank you for your letter that was included as part of the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's recommendations. I was pleased to review the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) responses to your current recommendations on the key issues identified from the June 2018 meeting in Los Angeles, California. Enclosed are VA's responses to the Committee's recommendations.

I sincerely appreciate your leadership and the efforts of the Committee. The Committee has made valuable contributions including identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnerships; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Servicemembers, and the families of Veterans and Servicemembers; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

More specifically, I appreciate the recommendations formulated at your June 2018 meeting. Those recommendations resulted in refinements to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) VA issued to solicit a Principal Developer team to expedite and integrate the development of supportive housing and related services on the West Los Angeles (West LA) Campus of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System. The refined RFQ resulted in the recent selection of the West LA Veterans Collaborative to serve as Principal Developer for the West LA Campus. This is a tremendously positive development that will significantly improve VA's ability to serve homeless and other vulnerable Veterans and their families throughout the Los Angeles area.

If additional information is needed, please contact Mr. Eugene W. Skinner, Jr., Designated Federal Officer, at (202) 631-7645 or by email at Eugene.Skinner@va.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure



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March 19, 2019

**The Honorable Mark Takano
Chairman
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515**

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's recommendations. The recommendations reflect the Committee's meeting conducted in June 2018, and the Department's responses to these recommendations. The Committee's recommendations contribute to identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnerships; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Servicemembers, and families of Veterans and Servicemembers; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

Thank you for your continuing support of our mission. A copy of the recommendations has been sent to other leaders of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure



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WASHINGTON

March 19, 2019

The Honorable David P. Roe, M.D.
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Congressman Roe:

Enclosed are the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's recommendations. The recommendations reflect the Committee's meeting conducted in June 2018, and the Department's responses to these recommendations. The Committee's recommendations contribute to identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnerships; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Servicemembers, and families of Veterans and Servicemembers; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

Thank you for your continuing support of our mission. A copy of the recommendations has been sent to other leaders of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure



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March 19, 2019

**The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Committee on Veterans' Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510**

Dear Senator Tester:

Enclosed are the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's recommendations. The recommendations reflect the Committee's meeting conducted in June 2018, and the Department's responses to these recommendations. The Committee's recommendations contribute to identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnerships; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Servicemembers, and families of Veterans and Servicemembers; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

Thank you for your continuing support of our mission. A copy of the recommendations has been sent to other leaders of the House and Senate Committees on Veterans' Affairs.

Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure



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WASHINGTON

March 19, 2019

The Honorable Johnny Isakson
Chairman
Committee on Veterans Affairs
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed are the Veterans and Community Oversight and Engagement Board's recommendations. The recommendations reflect the Committee's meeting conducted in June 2018, and the Department's responses to these recommendations. The Committee's recommendations contribute to identifying the goals of the community and Veteran partnerships; improving services and outcomes for Veterans, Servicemembers, and families of Veterans and Servicemembers; and implementing the Draft Master Plan.

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Sincerely,

/s/ Robert L. Wilkie

Robert L. Wilkie

Enclosure

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

DISCUSSION: The Board has been working since December 2017 in helping VA return all of VA's West Los Angeles (West LA) Campus to its intended purpose of supporting our Veterans and, in particular, our homeless veterans. The Board has had extensive discussions with VA staff, and they believe they are at a critical point in the process (i.e., selecting a Principal Developer). The Board has identified the necessity to separate the two processes of selecting a builder/contractor for the 50 units in Building 207 and selecting a Principal (Master) Developer to revise and implement the Draft Master Plan and associated considerations. The two projects require significantly different experience and qualification requirements, and the Board does not believe VA will find professional excellence for both skill sets in one entity. The Board believes the Principal Developer should have successfully demonstrated the expertise needed to explore development alternatives, determine the common infrastructure required for the north/south campus, and evaluate financial and funding considerations. In the final analysis, the selected Principal Developer will be charged with transforming a Draft Master Plan into a working Master Plan that can deliver at least 1,200, and possibly as many as 3,200, units of permanent supportive housing.

The Board is concerned the selection process for a Principal Developer is starting with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ). Unless the RFQ contains the required elements of a Request for Proposals (RFP), VA runs the risk of needlessly delaying the selection and the project. Key pre-award activities should include further defining the proposed scope of work and time line.

BOARD RECOMMENDATIONS:

Recommendation #1: Separate the solicitation for an Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) for Building 207 from the solicitation for a Principal Developer to expedite completion of the renovation of Building 207 into permanent supportive housing.

Recommendation #2: If the RFQ for a Principal Developer will not incorporate the substance of an RFP as defined in VA policy, then issue a separate RFP to those qualified developers who are identified through the RFQ.

BACKGROUND: The Board has completed three full Board meetings (December 2017, March 2018, and June 2018). The full Board, or our Master Plan Subcommittee, has participated in several conference calls with VA staff to include bi-monthly updates/discussions with the West LA Integrated Process Team (IPT). These exchanges were very useful as we tried to leverage the very extensive experience of our Board members to understand VA's process.

Because of this engagement, careful evaluation of the available information and our experience with large multi-faceted developments, the Board does not believe the current VA strategy can meet Government or community expectations for timeliness or excellence. The Board offers two recommendations we believe to be essential in delivering a quality product on time.

VA Response: VA deeply appreciates the Board members' professional expertise and personal commitment to Veterans and VA's plan to redevelop the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System's West LA campus for the benefit of Veterans and their families.

VA also appreciates the considerable time, thought, and effort that went into the development of the Board's recommendations that VA separate its solicitation for a Principal Developer from the solicitation for an EUL to renovate Building 207 into permanent supportive housing and that a separate RFP be issued after qualified developers are identified through an RFQ.

Please be assured that the Department fully expects that developers who may be interested in serving as Principal Developer for the overall campus development will team with other entities, to include developers who specialize in supportive housing, to ensure they have the capability and expertise to carry out all activities outlined in the RFQ. For that reason, we do not believe it is in VA's or the Veterans' best interest to separate the Principal Developer RFQ from a solicitation to renovate Building 207 under an EUL.

We look forward to sharing with you the outcome of the ongoing solicitation process and to working closely with you to implement the Draft Master Plan for the benefit of deserving Veterans and their families who reside in Los Angeles.

Department of Veterans Affairs
March 2019