

DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Palo Alto Health Care System
3801 Miranda Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94304



SEP 03 2022

**Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI)
Enhanced-Use Lease Veteran Housing
Palo Alto Health Care System
Menlo Park District, Menlo Park, California**

The U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) is proposing the development of supportive housing for homeless and at-risk of homeless Veterans, and their families at the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS), Menlo Park Division (MPD) Campus located in the City of Menlo Park, California (Proposed Action). The Proposed Action requires the VA to enter into an Enhanced Use Lease (EUL) agreement with a private entity, MidPen Housing Corporation (MidPen), and grant MidPen the rights to finance, design, construct, operate and maintain the proposed veteran housing development at the MPD Campus.

BACKGROUND

The Proposed Action is subject to the procedural requirements of the *National Environmental Policy Act of 1969* (NEPA) (42 U.S. Code 4321 et seq.). NEPA requires federal agencies to consider environmental consequences in their decision-making process. The Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) issued regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500-1508) to implement NEPA that include provisions for both the content and procedural aspects of the required environmental analysis. The VA complies with NEPA and CEQ implementing regulations in accordance with 38 CFR Part 26 (51 FR 37182, Oct. 20, 1986).

In accordance with the above regulations, the VA has prepared an Environmental Assessment (EA) to provide the necessary information to make an informed decision regarding the Proposed Action. This study was performed to analyze potential direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts associated with the Proposed Action. For purposes of comparison, the EA also evaluated the impacts associated with alternatives to the Proposed Action, including a No Action Alternative. The EA, entitled "National Environmental Policy Act, Environmental assessment, Enhanced-Use Lease Veteran Housing, Department of Veterans Affairs, Palo Alto Health Care System, Menlo Park District, Menlo Park, California, Jan 2022" is incorporated by reference in its entirety into this FONSI.

PROPOSED ACTION

The Proposed Action is comprised of a new 3-story supportive housing development with 61 residential units. The proposed EUL parcel for the Proposed Action is previously developed and disturbed land located within the southeast quadrant of the MPD Campus along Willow Road. The approximate 2.1-acre parcel is comprised of a paved parking lot for 100 vehicles, a grass covered auxiliary parking area, managed lawns and landscaping with irrigation, sidewalks, fencing, and below-ground utilities.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to construct, operate and maintain supportive housing for homeless and at-risk of homeless Veterans, and their families. The Proposed Action is needed to best reuse underutilized land at the MPD Campus to create, safe, affordable, supportive housing for Veterans and their families. The Proposed Action also helps to avoid ongoing operating costs to the VA and taxpayers, associated with the upkeep of underutilized assets, while providing aid to select Veterans.

This EA also analyzes the No Action alternative that serves as a benchmark against which the effects of the Proposed Action can be evaluated.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

An EA was prepared in accordance with NEPA and VA implementing regulations to evaluate the potential human and environmental impacts related to the Proposed Action. It was assumed for the purposes of this study that the operation of the Proposed Action will be consistent with all relevant laws and regulations; accordingly, the EA did not provide an analysis of the implications of these other compliance requirements. However, to the extent that these other laws, regulations and guidelines impose a specific environmental standard which may impact or influence the outcome of the Proposed Action, these requirements were considered in the final analysis.

For the EA, potential impacts included ecological (such as the effects on natural resources and on the components, structures, and functioning of affected ecosystems), aesthetic, historic, cultural, economic, social, or health, whether direct, indirect, or cumulative. Impacts may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects; even if on balance the agency believes that the effect will be beneficial (40 CFR 1508.8). The EA methodology used the following terms in assessing environmental impacts:

- **Short-term Impact:** Short-term impacts are those that would occur only with respect to a particular activity, for a finite period, or only during the time required for construction or installation activities.
- **Long-term Impact:** Impacts that are more likely to be persistent and chronic.
- **Direct Impact:** A direct impact is caused by an action and occurs around the same time at or near the location of the action.
- **Indirect Impact:** An impact caused by an action that may occur later in time or be farther removed in distance but still be a reasonably foreseeable outcome of the action.
- **Beneficial-and-not-significant:** This impact represents an improvement in existing conditions and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not required.
- **None-to-negligible:** A potential impact of this severity would be barely detectable and an EIS is not required for this impact.
- **Minimal-to-moderate:** A potential impact that is less-than-significant and would not require specific mitigation measures, other than those dictated by regulatory and permitting requirements and an EIS is not required for this impact.
- **Significant-but-mitigated:** A potential impact of this severity would require specific mitigation measures beyond those associated with permit requirements but an EIS is not required for this effect.
- **Significant:** A potential impact of this severity would have to be evaluated in an EIS.

Environmental impacts may be either significant or not significant impacts. The following environmental impacts are not significant environmental impacts because an Environmental Impact Statement is not required for these findings:

- Beneficial-and-not-significant
- None-to-negligible
- Minimal-to-moderate
- Significant-but-mitigated

Summary of Environmental Impacts

The following table summarizes the potential impacts of the Proposed Action in comparison to the No Action Alternative on the resources and attributes of the human environment at the subject property and within the local community.

Resource/Attribute	Proposed Action Impacts	No Action Impacts
Meets Purpose of and Need for Action	Yes	No
Aesthetics	Negligible, short-term impact from heavy equipment during construction. Negligible impact during operation. The Proposed Action will not alter any aesthetically sensitive locations within the MPD Campus, or produce any related impacts for the local neighborhood.	None
Air Quality	Negligible, short-term impact from construction equipment emissions, which are below the <i>De Minimis</i> threshold level. Negligible impact during operation due to new emissions sources, and increase vehicle traffic associated with operation of the Proposed Action.	None
Cultural Resources	Contributing resources of the National Historic Preservation Act (NRHP) eligible " <u>Personnel Quarters Historic District</u> " are located immediately north and south of the proposed EUL parcel. These sites are considered moderately sensitive for both historic and pre-historic cultural remains. As required per Section 106 of the NHPA, effects to historic resources must be considered in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer.	None
Geology and Soils	Negligible short-term impact during Construction. Impacts would be minimized through Best Management Practices (BMPs) and conformance with construction-related permit requirements from the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) and the local requirements of the City of Menlo Park Building Division, including Menlo Park Stormwater Management program and the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agency Association.	None

Resource/Attribute	Proposed Action Impacts	No Action Impacts
Hydrology and Surface Water Quality	<p>Negligible short-term impact during construction and operation. Construction impacts would be minimized through BMPs and conformance with construction-related permit requirements from NPDES and the local requirements of the Menlo Park Stormwater Management program and the Bay Area Stormwater Management Agencies Association (BASMAA).</p> <p>Overall design will comply with Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act (EISA) to ensure similar pre- and post-development hydrology.</p>	None
Wildlife and Habitat	<p>Negligible short-term impact to vegetation and local wildlife resources during construction, but the Proposed Action would not impact listed T&E species per VA's Effect Determination prepared in accordance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.</p>	None
Noise	<p>Negligible short-term impact from construction and operation. Bordering vegetation between EUL site and potential receptors would be maintained to further attenuate potential noise impacts.</p>	None
Land Use	<p>Minimal short-term impacts are expected from the construction of the proposed Veteran Housing complex. Proposed Action is consistent and compatible with prior, current, and anticipated future land use at the site and surrounding area.</p>	None
Floodplains and Wetlands	<p>The Proposed Action is not located within or near any floodplains, wetlands or coastal zone management areas. There is no impact expected from the Proposed Action.</p>	None
Socioeconomics	<p>Negligible short-term benefit during construction due to hiring local construction workers, and long-term benefit from facility operations due to hiring of needed staff.</p>	No benefit from local hiring for facility construction and/or operations.
Community Services	<p>The Proposed Action will have no net increased demand for community services (e.g., emergency, fire, and police services; schools; libraries; churches etc.).</p> <p>Long-term, beneficial impact on health care services and increase in affordable permanent housing stock.</p>	Long-term adverse impact, no increase in affordable permanent housing.
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	<p>Negligible, short-term impact during construction. Identified regulated building materials would be handled and disposed of in accordance with local, state, and federal regulations. Negligible impact during operation from minor increase in solid wastes.</p>	None

Resource/Attribute	Proposed Action Impacts	No Action Impacts
Transportation and Parking	<p>The existing facility is vehicle accessible with adequate extended roadways, parking lots, and walkways to support the added vehicle and pedestrian traffic from facility operations.</p> <p>Negligible, short-term impact during construction due to construction equipment entering and leaving site and construction of the new parking lot and access. Minor beneficial long-term impact during operation from improved traffic flow in the area.</p> <p>Long-term benefit on local traffic with the new access road to Building 324 that bypasses Lot 2.</p>	No long-term improvements associated with improved traffic flow.
Utilities	Negligible short-term impact during construction and operation. New connections and overall utilization will not interrupt or reduce utility services to current or future utility suppliers or users.	None
Environmental Justice	No impact during construction. Long-term beneficial impact on low-income populations through the provision of affordable permanent housing.	Long-term impact due to absence of permanent affordable housing.
Potential for Generating Substantial Controversy	No controversy currently expressed and no future opposition anticipated. The VA received no comments during the public review process.	Controversy could arise if Veteran Housing is not implemented.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The Federal Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA define cumulative effects as "the impact on the environment which results from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonable foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions.

Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time" (40 CFR 1508.7). Based on available information and the absence of any comments during the public review period, no cumulative significant adverse effects to any resources are anticipated from the Proposed Action.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

In accordance with CEQ NEPA regulations (40 CFR Section 1506.6, Public Involvement), the Draft EA was been made available to agencies and the public for a 30-day comment period. This review period provided the opportunity for the public to be involved in the preparation of this assessment. No comments were received on the Draft EA.

DETERMINATION

The VA has selected Alternate No. 1 (Proposed Action). The environmental assessment of all project attributes considered did not result in "Significant impact" during construction and/or operation of the Proposed Action. Also, the environmental assessment of all project attributes considered did not result in "significant-if-not-mitigated impacts" during construction and operations.

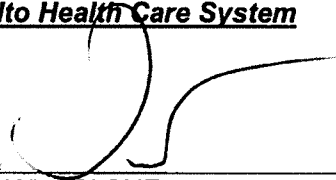
The construction and operation under the Proposed Action will not result in any adverse impacts on the natural or human environments that would require mitigation to reduce impacts to less than significant, nor preclude the issuance of a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI).

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

This FONSI has been prepared from the EA based on a determination that the implementation of the Proposed Action would not constitute a major Federal action that would have significant impact upon the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA of 1969. Based on the VA final determination, it has been concluded that a FONSI is appropriate for this project, and that preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed action is not required. This FONSI becomes a federal decision document when evaluated and signed by the responsible VA official(s).

SIGNATORY APPROVAL

VA Palo Alto Health Care System



Drew A. DeWitt, FACHE
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