



U.S. Department
of Veterans Affairs

Office of Construction &
Facilities Management

Office of Facilities Planning
Facilities Standards Service

DESIGN ALERT

SEPTEMBER 1, 2016
003C2B-DA-147

VA Project Design Principles – Foundation of Design (VAIQ 7657742)

ISSUE: In all VA planning, design and construction it is imperative that all parties acknowledge Veterans and taxpayers as the ultimate customer and avoid spectacle, branding, and unwarranted customizations which result in elaborate, complex, and expensive building elements. All parties in the planning, design, and construction process must embrace the foundation principles set forth herein as fundamental in providing optimum environments for Veterans care and services in fulfilling VA's mission.

BACKGROUND: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) design and construction program is an essential element of commitment to effectively and efficiently accomplish VA's missions. VA is entrusted with extraordinary taxpayer resources and designers and constructors are obligated to not only our Nation's Veterans but also the Nation's taxpayers to make the most effective and efficient use of these resources.

DISCUSSION: The Office of Construction and Facilities Management supports the Department's mission through disciplined planning, design and construction of VA facilities. Following the *VA Foundation of Design* principles throughout all projects will ensure VA provides high quality, high performance, flexible facilities within scope, on budget, and on time.

REQUIREMENT: The attached memoranda define the *Foundation of Design* and the mission, values and obligations upon which our project designs must be grounded. All parties in the design and construction process must follow the *Foundation of Design* and *VA Project Design Principles* as fundamental in all VA planning, design and construction.

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**Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Memorandum

Date: **JAN 18 2016**

From: Executive Director, Office of Construction & Facilities Management (003C)

Subj: Implementation of Project Design Principles (VAIQ 7665375)

To: Under Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and Other Key Staff Officials

1. This is to share my recent memorandum on project design (attached). Building on the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Deputy Secretary's memorandum, VA Major Construction Policy – Roles and Responsibilities, dated September 2, 2015, the Office of Construction & Facilities Management seeks to support the Department's mission through disciplined planning, design and construction of VA facilities projects. The attached memorandum defines the mission, values and obligations upon which our project designs must be grounded.

2. VA is entrusted with extraordinary taxpayer resources and designers and constructors are obligated to not only our Nation's Veterans but also the Nation's taxpayers to make the most effective and efficient use of these resources. Following these VA foundation principles throughout all projects will ensure VA provides high quality, high performance, flexible facilities within scope, on budget, and on time.

3. It is imperative that all parties acknowledge Veterans and taxpayers as the ultimate customer and avoid spectacle, branding, and unwarranted customizations which result in elaborate, complex, and expensive building elements. All parties in the design and construction process must embrace the foundation principles as fundamental in providing optimum environments for Veteran care and services in fulfilling VA's mission.



Stella S. Fiotes, AIA

Attachment

cc: CFM Staff

Date: **NOV 24 2015**

From: Executive Director, Office of Construction & Facilities Management (003C)

Subj: Foundation of Project Design (VAIQ 7657742)

To: Office of Construction & Facilities Management Staff

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) design and construction program is an essential element of commitment to effectively and efficiently accomplish VA's missions. This memorandum outlines the required basic principles to follow in the design of VA projects. These principles reinforce what is expected and required of VA staff and consulting architects and engineers.

2. VA's prime mission is to fulfill President Lincoln's promise "To care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan" by serving and honoring the men and women who are America's Veterans. VA accomplishes this mission by following VA's principles of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence (I-CARE).

3. The Office of Construction & Facilities Management (CFM) mission supports our Nation's Veterans by planning, designing, constructing, and acquiring facilities; setting effective life cycle design and construction standards; and being trusted leaders in delivering health care facilities and other facilities.

4. VA is entrusted with extraordinary taxpayer resources to accomplish its mission. There is a fundamental obligation to Veterans and the public trust for the most effective and efficient use of resources. This obligation requires that every dollar be used to its maximum benefit. VA facilities must deliver exceptional value by producing high quality, high performance and flexible facilities, on budget and on time. CFM's Technical Information Library (TIL) publishes the standards established to help achieve these attributes.

5. Architectural form and style must be firmly grounded on function, technology, and context. Designs must embody contemporary American architectural thought and technology, consider local context and regional architectural traditions, and provide a safe and healthy environment. Designs should avoid architectural and engineering exhibitionism and spectacle; fleeting style, trends, and fashion; firm-branded features; elaborate, complex, difficult, and expensive to construct and maintain building elements such as curved facades and rooflines; monumental interior and exterior features; unduly expansive atriums; and other superfluous architectural finishes and details. Constructability, flexibility, security, sustainability, durability, maintenance, and life cycle cost shall be carefully integrated for maximum value.

Page 2.

Subj: Foundation of Project Design (VAIQ 7657742)

6. In summary, VA staff and consulting architects and engineers must help realize the VA missions through design and construction that honors and serves our Nation's Veterans by providing world class health care, benefits, and memorial facilities that embody optimum performance in functionality, flexibility, quality, safety, security, accessibility, wayfinding, resilience, sustainability, maintainability, and economy.



Stella S. Fiotes, AIA