FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center

Amarillo, Texas

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Construction and Facilities Management
425 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

May 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) proposed expansion and improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) at 6100 W. Amarillo Blvd., Amarillo, Texas.

This EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA; 42 United States Code 4321 et seq.), the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions (38 CFR Part 26), and relevant guidance from VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (VA, 2010).

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase capacity for expansion and enhancement of Veteran health care services and provide improved facilities and infrastructure at the Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus that comply with current VA design standards.

This project is needed to address capacity constraints to meet the growing Veteran needs for health care services in the region and to resolve parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies at the VAMC. As the Thomas E. Creek VAMC has continued to expand its facilities and services, it has started to face physical constraints. At the same time, VA design standards concerning parking, accessibility, and physical security have evolved, and the current VAMC configuration does not meet current VA requirements. Addressing these deficiencies, as well as any significant future horizontal construction on campus, is not feasible without additional land for expansion.

Proposed Action and Alternatives

This EA examines in-depth two alternatives, the Proposed Action Alternative and the No Action Alternative, defined as follows:

- **Proposed Action Alternative:** VA would acquire approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC for facility expansion. This acquisition will facilitate implementation of improvements at the medical center to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition.
- **No Action Alternative:** VA would not acquire the approximately 17.4 acres of land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC, leaving the VAMC unable to conduct any significant new

construction projects in the future. In addition, VA would not implement any of the proposed improvements to roads and parking areas at the VAMC. Veterans with mobility concerns would continue to face challenges when parking at the VAMC, and physical security deficiencies would remain unaddressed.

Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences

The EA describes the baseline physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic conditions at the Project Site and the general vicinity. Table ES-1 summarizes the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the Proposed Action or the No Action alternative.

Table ES-1. Summary of Impact Analysis

Resource Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Aesthetics	Negligible impacts anticipated due to changes to the site, but the site will remain visually similar and consistent with the surrounding area.	No impacts anticipated
Air Quality	Short-term, minor impacts from criteria pollutant and greenhouse gas emissions expected during construction. Once planned improvements are constructed, operational emissions are expected to be similar to present.	No impacts anticipated
Cultural and Historic Resources	No adverse impacts to historic properties. Existing historic resources at the VAMC will not be affected visually by projects occurring on the west end of the campus.	No impacts anticipated
Geology and Soils	Short-term, negligible impact due to potential for erosion of soil exposed during construction, which would be managed with appropriate stormwater pollution control. No impact during operation, as excavated soils would be revegetated to prevent and avoid erosion.	No impacts anticipated
Hydrology and Water Quality	Short-term, minor adverse impact from construction activity that would be managed with appropriate stormwater pollution control. Operational impacts managed by designing and implementing effective stormwater management that preserves the predevelopment hydrology of the Project Site.	No impacts anticipated
Wildlife and Habitat	Potential adverse effects to the Texas horned lizard (state-protected species) and migratory birds during construction, which would be managed by conducting pre-construction surveys to identify the presence of these species at the Project Site.	No impacts anticipated

Resource Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Noise	Short-term, moderate noise impacts from construction equipment would be expected. The closest noise-sensitive receptor is the VAMC Hospital. Compliance with hours restrictions and engineering controls will help mitigate construction noise. Once planned improvements are constructed, operational noise levels are expected to be similar to present.	No impacts anticipated
Land Use	No impacts anticipated. The proposed use of the Project Site is allowable under current zoning and is consistent with the current medical uses that are prevalent in the surrounding area.	No impacts anticipated
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management	No impacts anticipated. The Project Site contains no wetlands and is outside of floodplains and the Coastal Zone Management Zone.	No impacts anticipated
Community Services	No impacts anticipated. The expansion of the VAMC will not increase demand for community services.	No impacts anticipated
Solid and Hazardous Materials	Short-term, negligible adverse impacts from construction from generation of solid wastes and construction/demolition debris. Volumes generated would be anticipated to make a negligible contribution to the overall solid waste volume generated and disposed of in the area. Construction contractors would be required to develop and implement a construction and demolition debris recycling plan. Solid waste and hazardous materials from operations will be managed in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and are not anticipated to result in significant impacts.	No impacts anticipated
Transportation and Parking	Short-term, negligible adverse impacts from construction traffic. Once implemented, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in traffic impacts. The volume of Veterans and visitors is not expected to increase significantly following the Proposed Action. Parking conditions within the expanded campus are expected to improve with implementation of the Proposed Action.	No impacts anticipated
Utilities	Long-term, negligible adverse impacts due to potential increased utilization of utilities at the Project Site, particularly increased water demand.	No impacts anticipated
Socioeconomics	Short-term, negligible beneficial impact on the local economy from construction employment and material purchases. Long-term beneficial impacts to regional Veteran population from improved and modernized health care facilities.	No impacts anticipated

Resource Area	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Environmental Justice	Located in an area with a higher percentage of low-income population. Short-term, negligible adverse impact on area residents during construction (e.g., noise, dust), which would be managed through implementation of best management practice (BMPs). Long-term benefits for low-income and minority Veterans from improved and modernized health care facilities.	No impacts anticipated
Cumulative Effects	The Proposed Action, with the implementation of the BMPs; minimization and avoidance measures; and regulatory compliance measures specified in this EA, would not result in significant adverse cumulative impacts to the human environment.	No impacts anticipated
Potential for Generating Substantial Public Controversy	No controversial issues were identified during the scoping process.	No impacts anticipated

Agency Coordination and Public Involvement

During preparation of the draft EA, VA reached out to selected federal, state, and local agencies, Native American Tribes, and elected officials for early input on the Proposed Action and environmental concerns to be addressed in the draft EA. A scoping notice was also published in the *Amarillo Globe-News* on January 6 and 8, 2023, to announce VA's intent to develop an EA and to solicit input from interested stakeholders. Copies of correspondence, newspaper notices, and scoping comments received, are provided in Appendix B.

VA published and distributed the draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in the *Amarillo Globe-News* on April 21 and 23, 2023. A copy of the draft EA was also made available for public review at the Amarillo Northwest Public Library, 6100 W 9th St., Amarillo, TX 79106 and on the VA website at: https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp. VA received four agency comments regarding the draft EA. Copies of notices and comments received are provided in Appendix B.

Conclusions

The analysis performed in this EA concludes there would be no significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, to the local environment or quality of life associated with the Proposed Action, provided the minimization and management measures and regulatory compliance measures described in this EA are implemented. This EA's analysis determines, therefore, that an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is unnecessary for implementation of the Proposed Action, and that a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) is appropriate.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BMP	Best management practices
CEQ	Council on Environmental Quality
CFM	Office of Construction and Facilities Management
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
dB	decibel
dBA	A-weighted decibels
EA	Environmental assessment
ft	feet
FONSI	Finding of no significant impact
gal	gallon
ICRIP	Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction
IPaC	Information for Planning and Consultation
MBTU	Million British Thermal Units
NAAQS	National ambient air quality standards
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
NPDES	National pollutant discharge elimination system
NRCS	Natural Resources Conservation Service
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
PBR	Permit by rule
PM_{10}	Suspended particulate matter less than or equal to 10 micrometers
$PM_{2.5}$	Fine particulate matter less than or equal to 2.5 micrometers
SF	Square feet
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer
SL	State loop
SWPPP	Stormwater pollution prevention plan
TAC	Texas Administrative Code
TCEQ	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
THC	Texas Historical Commission
TxDOT	Texas Department of Transportation
TPWD	Texas Parks and Wildlife Department
U.S.	United States
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
UST	Underground storage tank
USEPA	U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
USFWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USGS	U.S. Geological Survey
VA	Department of Veterans Affairs
VAMC	Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center
VHA	Veterans Health Administration

1 INTRODUCTION

This EA has been prepared by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), acting as lead agency, in accordance with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 4321 et seq.); the President's Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Parts 1500–1508); Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs Actions (38 CFR Part 26); and relevant guidance from VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (VA, 2010).

This EA identifies, analyzes, and documents the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with VA's proposed expansion and improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) in Amarillo, Texas.

In accordance with the cited regulations, this EA allows for public input into the federal decision-making process, provides federal decision-makers with an understanding of potential environmental effects of their decisions before making these decisions, identifies the measures the federal decision-maker could implement to reduce potential environmental effects, and documents the NEPA process.

1.1 Background

The Amarillo VA Health Care System, a division of the VA Heart of Texas Health Care Network (VISN 17), provides primary, specialty, and extended care of the highest quality to Veterans in northern Texas and eastern New Mexico. Approximately 25,000 patients are treated annually at its main facility, the Thomas E. Creek VAMC, and four community-based outpatient clinics in Clovis, New Mexico, and Childress, Dalhart, and Lubbock, Texas.

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC is located in the northwestern quadrant of the city of Amarillo, Texas (Potter County) at 6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard (Figure 1). The VAMC campus encompasses approximately 38.6 acres and is surrounded primarily by institutional and commercial uses, including Texas A&M University research facilities, the Amarillo College West Campus, and various medical buildings. The campus is bordered to the north by SW 9th St., to the east and south by W. Amarillo Blvd. (U.S. Route 66), and to the west by undeveloped land. The campus is located on sloping caprock near the edge of a small canyon to the north, resulting in sloping to the north-northwest.

The majority of the VAMC campus is densely populated with medical buildings, parking lots, and supporting infrastructure. Initially constructed in 1939, the Thomas E. Creek VAMC has grown to serve the growing medical needs of Veterans in the area. The original 152,000-square foot (SF) hospital was expanded in 1987 to 360,000 SF with the construction of a clinical addition. Construction of a 120-bed Community Living Center (nursing home) followed in 1990, and the

Medical Arts Building was added in 1996. An eight-room Hospitality House for Veterans and/or family members was built in 1997 through the combined efforts of the Health Care System and volunteers.

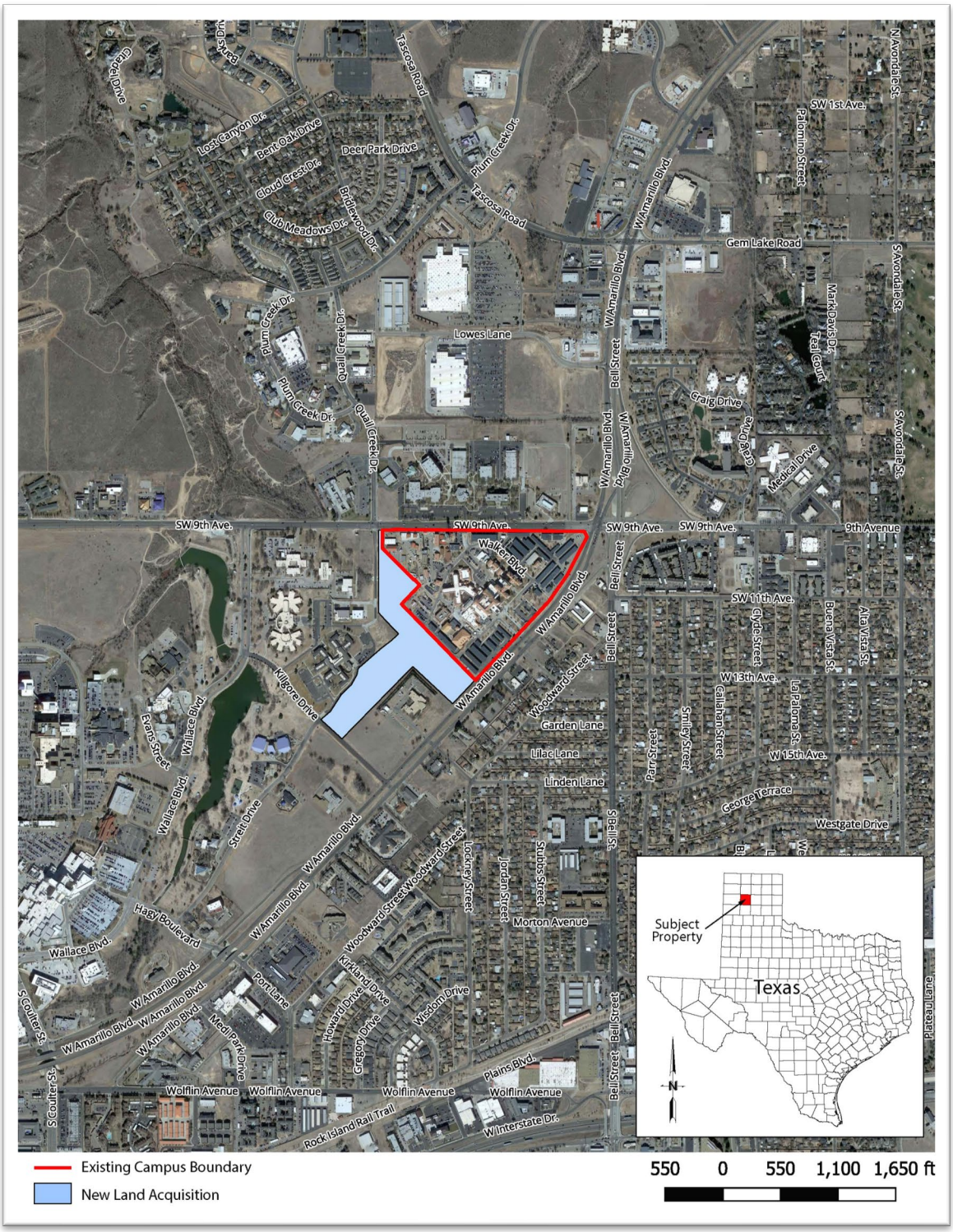


Figure 1. Site Location

In 2012, a 21,000-SF, two-story building dedicated to mental health, the Center for Therapy and Recovery, was opened. The following year, another two-story building was opened for Specialty Clinics to offer a Veteran-Centered, healing environment. In 2018, VA opened a new 20,500-SF Primary Care building. A new rehabilitation and prosthetics building and an 11,800-SF hospice care facility were opened in 2020.

1.2 Purpose and Need

As the Thomas E. Creek VAMC has continued to expand its facilities and services, it has started to face physical constraints. At the same time, VA design standards concerning parking, accessibility, and physical security have evolved, and the current VAMC configuration does not meet current VA requirements. In particular, Parking Lots N and M serving the hospital and various clinical buildings on the west side of the campus are not at grade with the buildings they serve and are significantly sloped, limiting the provision of handicapped accessible (i.e., ADA) parking. In addition, VA physical security standards necessitate the closure of an internal road, which will also result in the loss of ADA parking. Replacement of lost ADA parking spaces, as well as any significant future horizontal construction on campus, is not feasible without additional land for expansion.

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to increase capacity for expansion and enhancement of Veteran health care services and provide improved facilities and infrastructure at the Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus that comply with current VA design standards. The Proposed Action is needed to address capacity constraints to meet the growing Veteran needs for health care services in the region and to resolve parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies at the VAMC.

1.3 Decision-Making

This EA has been prepared to identify, analyze, and document the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects associated with VA's proposed expansion and improvements to the Thomas E. Creek VAMC.

VA, as a Federal agency, is required to incorporate environmental considerations into their decision-making process for the actions they propose to undertake. This is done in accordance with the regulations identified in Section 1.1. In accordance with the NEPA regulations previously described this EA: allows for public input into the Federal decision-making process; provides Federal decision-makers with an understanding of potential environmental effects of their decisions, before making these decisions; identifies measures the Federal decision-maker could implement to reduce potential adverse environmental effects; and documents the NEPA process.

Ultimately, VA will decide, in part based on the analysis presented in this EA and after having taken potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic effects into account, whether VA should implement the Proposed Action, and, as appropriate, carry out management, avoidance, and mitigation (if necessary) measures to reduce effects to the environment.

2 ALTERNATIVES

This section describes the proposed action and alternatives considered by VA, including those alternatives eliminated from further analysis. NEPA, CEQ regulations, and VA NEPA regulations require that all reasonable alternatives be rigorously explored and objectively evaluated. For the purposes of this analysis, an alternative was considered "reasonable" only if it would enable VA to accomplish the purpose of, and need for, the Proposed Action as described in Section 1.2. Aside from the Proposed Action and the No Action alternative, no other reasonable alternatives meeting the purpose and need for action were identified.

2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action involves the acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC for facility expansion. This acquisition will facilitate implementation of various improvements at the existing VAMC campus to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies, including:

- Closure to public traffic of the road between the Hospital (Buildings 28 and 33) and clinical buildings west of the hospital (Buildings 44, 46, and 48) and elimination of public parking spaces along the east side of Buildings 46 and 48.
- Regrading of Parking Lots N and M to reduce sloping and provide a more level surface for ADA parking. Lot N (main parking) would be graded to improve ADA accessibility to Buildings 28, 33, and the upper level of Building 48, and Lot M would be made ADA accessible to the lower levels of Building 44, 46 and 48.
- Construction of other necessary accessibility and internal circulation improvements, including walkways from new and refurbished parking lots to various buildings, an accessible walkway between Buildings 33, 48, 46, 44 and 53, and new or reconfigured sidewalks.

The land acquisition area will provide space for construction of additional parking areas to replace lost parking and potentially expand parking capacity, including a new surface lot to serve Buildings 44, 46, and 48. Additional projects for the proposed acquired land potentially include:

- Reconfiguration of the warehouse area (Buildings 47 and 49) to include a new driveway and a laydown area for use by construction contractors.
- Construction of a new multi-purpose building approximately 2,000 SF to function as meeting and event space.
- Construction of a therapeutic walking path to offer Veterans the opportunity for outdoor exercise in a healing environment.
- Installation of other supporting infrastructure as needed, including roads, driveways, utilities, and stormwater management features.

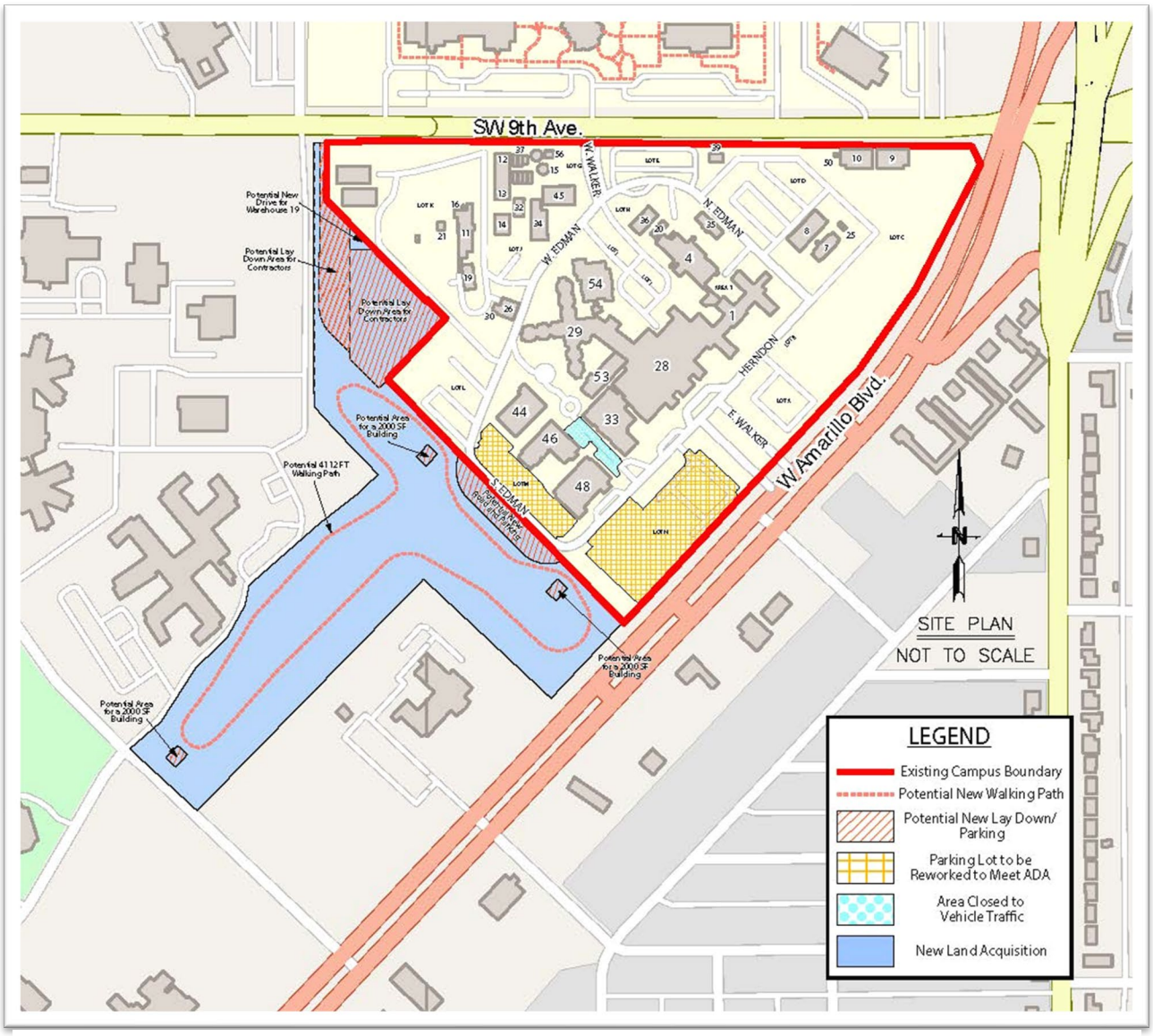


Figure 2. Proposed Action Concept

VA anticipates that construction activities could begin as early as 2024 and be completed in approximately 36 months.

2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, VA would not acquire the approximately 17.4 acres of land west of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC, leaving the VAMC unable to conduct any significant new construction projects in the future. In addition, VA would not implement any of the proposed improvements to roads and parking areas at the VAMC. Veterans with mobility concerns would continue to face challenges when parking at the VAMC, and physical security deficiencies would

remain unaddressed. Therefore, the No Action Alternative would not meet the stated purpose and need for the action.

The No Action Alternative is carried forward for analysis to reflect the status quo and serves as a benchmark against which the effects of the Proposed Action can be evaluated.

3 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section describes the existing conditions at the Project Site (inclusive of both the existing Thomas E. Creek VAMC and the land acquisition area) and presents an analysis of the potential consequences of implementing the Proposed Action or the No Action alternative. Each alternative was evaluated for its potential impacts on physical, biological, and socioeconomic resources in accordance with CEQ guidelines at 40 CFR 1508.8.

The environmental impacts (or effects) of implementing each alternative were identified for each resource area and described in terms of significance. The significance of an action is measured in terms of its context and intensity, including duration, magnitude of the impact, and whether the impact is adverse or beneficial, as described in the following paragraphs:

- **Short-term or long-term.** In general, 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 impacts are those that are more likely to be persistent and chronic.
- **Less-than-significant (negligible, minor, moderate) or significant (major)**. These relative terms are used to characterize the magnitude or intensity of an impact. Negligible impacts are generally those that might be perceptible but are at the lower level of detection. A minor impact is slight, but detectable. A moderate impact is readily apparent. Significant impacts are those that, in their context and due to their magnitude (severity), have the potential to meet the thresholds for significance set forth in CEQ regulations (40 CFR 1508.27) and, thus, warrant heightened attention and examination for potential means for mitigation.
- **Adverse or beneficial.** An adverse impact is one having unfavorable or undesirable outcomes on the man-made or natural environment. A beneficial impact is one having positive outcomes on the man-made or natural environment.

This EA follows CEQ guidelines and regulations that encourage agencies to streamline environmental analyses in their EAs by focusing on significant issues and discussing insignificant issues only briefly; discussing impacts in proportion to their significance; and incorporating by reference other environmental analyses (CEQ, 2012).

3.1 Aesthetics

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The Project Site is located in the northwestern quadrant of the city of Amarillo, Texas. The area is characterized by institutional and commercial uses, including Texas A&M University research facilities, the Amarillo College West Campus, and various other medical services buildings.

The existing VAMC campus encompasses approximately 38.6 acres and is bordered to the north by SW 9th St., to the east and south by W. Amarillo Blvd. (U.S. Route 66), and to the west by undeveloped land. The campus is located on sloping caprock near the edge of a small canyon to the north, resulting in sloping to the north-northwest. The majority of the VAMC campus is densely populated with medical buildings, parking lots, and supporting infrastructure. Campus buildings range in height from one to five stories above grade. The central portion of the campus contains the original hospital building (Building 1), a 1930s Spanish Colonial Revival style building with red roof tiles and pale color stucco that is imitated in many of the other buildings on campus.

The land acquisition area is comprised of approximately 17.4 undeveloped acres adjacent to the VAMC to the west. There are no buildings in the land acquisition area, and infrastructure is limited to an access road from SW 9th St., a stormwater retention pond, and a catchment basin that directs water flow under the access road to a stormwater culvert to the west.

3.1.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, development on the Project Site would produce some visual changes on currently undeveloped land west of the VAMC, including the potential addition of parking lots, a small (2,000 SF) building, a walking path, and supporting infrastructure. The Proposed Action would also change the grade of existing parking lots on the southwestern end of the VAMC campus. These changes, however, would not result in an abrupt change to the aesthetics of the area, as the development would be of a similar scale and visually consistent with the existing VAMC and surrounding developed properties.

3.1.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would retain the land acquisition parcel in its current undeveloped state and therefore would not result in aesthetic impacts.

3.2 Air Quality

3.2.1 Affected Environment

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) and the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) regulate air quality in Texas. These agencies develop rules, regulations, and policies for regulating air quality in accordance with applicable legislation. USEPA regulations may not be superseded; however, state and local regulations may be more stringent.

3.2.1.1 Air Quality Standards

The Clean Air Act of 1970 (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.), as amended, authorizes the USEPA to establish primary and secondary National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) (40 CFR Part 50) that set acceptable upper concentration limits for the following criteria pollutants: suspended particulate matter less than or equal to 10 micrometers (PM10), fine particulate matter less than or equal to 2.5 micrometers (PM2.5), sulfur dioxide, carbon monoxide, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, and lead.

Areas that violate a NAAQS are designated as nonattainment areas; areas with levels below NAAQS are designated as attainment areas. An area may also be classified as a maintenance area if it was once classified as nonattainment but has since reached attainment for a probationary period through implementation of a maintenance plan. The Project Site is located in Potter County, which is an attainment/unclassified area for all criteria pollutants (USEPA, 2022). As such, the federal general conformity rule requirements in 40 CFR Parts 51 and 93 do not apply.

3.2.1.2 Site Conditions

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC currently operates various stationary sources of air emissions under Texas Administrative Code (TAC) Title 30, Part 1, Chapter 106 (Permits by Rule or PBR), where the TCEQ provides state authorization for activities that produce more than a *de minimis* level of emissions, but less than other New Source Review permitting options. Stationary sources of emissions on the campus include:

- Three (3) 8,000 million British Thermal Unit (MBTU) steam boilers and one (1) 4,312 MBTU steam boiler (normally operating with natural gas with diesel fuel backup)
- Seven (7) emergency generators with ratings ranging from 155 Kw to 750 Kw that operate with diesel fuel
- One (1) drum-mounted fluorescent bulb crusher.

There are no stationary sources of air emissions currently on the land acquisition area.

CEQ's NEPA regulations require evaluation of the degree to which a Proposed Action affects public health. Children, elderly people, and people with illnesses are especially sensitive to the effects of air pollutants; therefore, hospitals, schools, convalescent facilities, and residential areas are sensitive receptors for air quality impacts. The sensitive receptors near the Project Site include the VAMC medical facilities and temporary lodging buildings within the existing campus, the Amarillo Northwest Library to the north of the VAMC, and residences to the south of the VAMC fronting W. Amarillo Blvd.

3.2.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

While a construction schedule has yet to be developed for the Proposed Action, for purposes of evaluating air emission impacts, construction activities are assumed to require approximately 36 months of site preparation and construction activities such as grading, digging, roadwork, temporary stockpiling of soils, paving, and building construction.

Construction activities will generate criteria pollutants, including particulate matter in the form of fugitive dust emissions. Criteria pollutant emissions could cause minor, localized, short-term impacts on air quality and create minor, temporary nuisance concerns for sensitive receptors near the site. Implementing best management practices (BMPs) for dust control will substantially reduce emissions from construction. Construction-related emissions also include the exhaust from the operation of construction equipment, including diesel particulate matter. The use of newer

construction equipment with emissions controls and minimizing the time that the equipment is idling reduces construction equipment exhaust emissions. Implementation of these BMPs, as discussed in Section 4, would minimize these anticipated, short-term, less-than-significant impacts.

Once construction activities from the Proposed Action are completed, operational air emissions are expected to return to levels similar to those of existing conditions at the Project Site. The Proposed Action is not expected to add new stationary sources of air emissions. However, if during project design it is determined that additional equipment or modification to existing equipment is required, VA would comply with TCEQ PBR requirements, including equipment registration if needed.

The Proposed Action is also not expected to increase the volume of visitor traffic to the campus and would not result in increased vehicle emissions. There could be a small increase in the use of maintenance equipment (e.g., mowers) for maintenance of the additional acquired land, but associated increase in criteria pollutant emissions would be negligible.

3.2.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no air quality impacts associated with VA's Proposed Action would result. There would be no construction executed in either the land acquisition parcel or the existing VAMC campus.

3.3 Cultural and Historic Resources

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The Amarillo VA Hospital was constructed in 1939 and dedicated on May 12, 1940. When originally constructed, the VA Hospital site was on approximately 360 acres of farm and ranchland and was self-sufficient. Cattle were raised and gardens maintained to feed Veteran patients. As expansion plans for the facility were not realized, most of the land was eventually returned to the U.S. General Services Administration and subsequently Potter County. In 1960, Potter County conveyed the land to what is now known as the Don and Sybil Harrington Regional Medical Center. This area includes Northwest Texas Health Care System, Baptist St. Anthony's Health Care System, Harrington Cancer Center, Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center, and other health related organizations (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., 2012). This formerly VA-owned land includes the land acquisition area that is part of the Project Site.

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus, currently on approximately 38 acres of land, exhibits many of the characteristics of a "Second Generation" hospital, such as a monumental main hospital building ornamented in Spanish Colonial Revival, a nationally popular architectural style of the South and Southwest, surrounded by less ornamented buildings, all organized by function. In 1980, VA, in conjunction with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) determined that the VAMC was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) under Criterion C, for its significant Spanish Colonial Revival Architecture. The determination did not indicate the level of significance

or integrity. However, neither the VAMC nor any of its buildings were included as NRHP properties in the National Park Service records or THC's Texas Historic Sites Atlas, either as individual properties or a historic district (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., 2012).

In 2012, the campus was evaluated for inclusion in the NRHP as a historic district under the Second Generation Veterans Hospitals historic context. At that time, it was determined not to be eligible for the NRHP as a district due to the loss of integrity caused by intrusions, recent construction, and additions to the campus, specifically to the main hospital building (Building #1) (Cultural Resource Analysts, Inc., 2012). A subsequent evaluation was completed in 2014 for potential eligibility of individual buildings to be listed to the NRHP; this evaluation did not result in any recommendations for individual listings due to similar reasons regarding lack of integrity (R. Christopher Goodwin & Associates, Inc., 2014). Subsequent correspondence between VA and THC from 2017-2018 indicated Building #1 was considered individually eligible for NRHP listing.

An Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction (ICRIP) of the Project Site was completed in February 2023. The ICRIP included a records and literature search of THC files and NRHP data, and a pedestrian survey by an architectural historian. No historic resources on or near the Project Site (other than Building #1 at the VAMC), including archeological resources, were identified through this research (ERG, 2023).

3.3.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

During the scoping process for the Proposed Action, VA reached out to the following federally and state-recognized Native American Tribes with cultural ties to the Project Site and other stakeholders listed below to request early input on the Proposed Action, including information about the Project Site. None of the listed stakeholders provided scoping comments.

- Texas Historical Commission
- Apache Tribe of Oklahoma
- Comanche Nation, Oklahoma
- Jicarilla Apache Nation, New Mexico
- Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma
- Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie), Oklahoma
- Amarillo Historical Museum
- Amarillo Railroad Museum
- Old Route 66 Association of Texas
- Amarillo Genealogical Society

VA also submitted a formal Invitation for NHPA Section 106 Consultation regarding the Proposed Action to the previously listed parties on April 12, 2023. In its NHPA consultation, VA asserted a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties, as the only historic property in the Area of Potential Effects, VAMC Building 1, will not be physically affected nor will its viewshed be impaired by the action (see Appendix B). Two of the parties invited, the Amarillo Railroad Museum and the

Comanche Nation, Oklahoma, responded confirming that they had no resources of interest in the project area. THC concurred with VA's finding of no adverse effect to historic properties on May 12, 2023 (see Appendix B for copy of response).

Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during project construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work in the area until qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior standards properly identifies and appropriately treats discovered items in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.

3.3.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative would result in no cultural resource impacts, as no VAMC expansion or improvements would be executed.

3.4 Geology and Soils

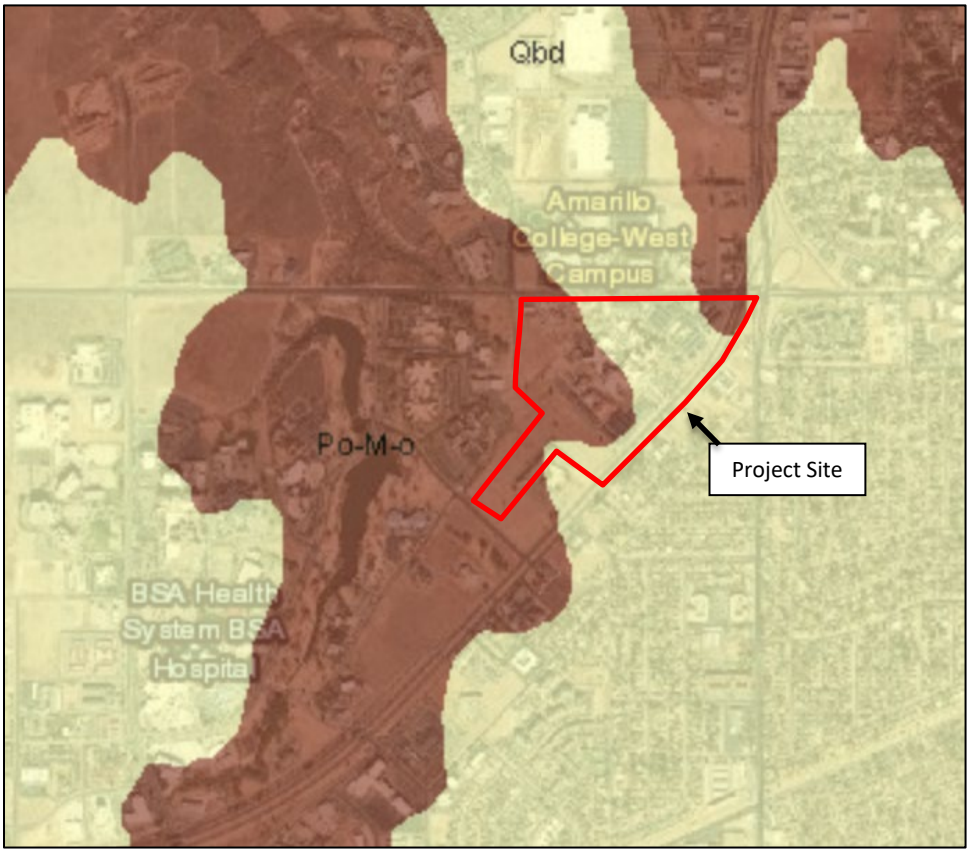
3.4.1 Affected Environment

According to the *Physiographic Map of Texas*, the Project Site is located in the Central High Plains province, and the geomorphology is characterized by flat prairies underlain by Eolian silts and fine sands. Two distinct units form the underlying surface geology of the Project Site: Blackwater Draw Formation (Qbd) and Ogallala Formation (Po-M-o).

Unit Qbd underlies most of the eastern half of the VAMC campus and the southern end of the land acquisition parcel. This layer is characterized by sand, fine- to medium-grained quartz, silty, calcareous, locally clayey soils with caliche nodules, in thickness as much as 25 ft. Unit Po-M-o underlies most of the land acquisition area and the western half of the VAMC campus. This layer is characterized by sand, silt, clay, gravel, and caliche cemented locally by calcite and by silica, locally crossbedded, that forms ledges and caprock, with a maximum thickness of 550 ft. (Bureau of Economic Geology, 1996).

Based on the United States Geological Survey (USGS) 7.5-Minute Series Amarillo West Topographic Quadrangle Map, dated 2019, the VAMC generally slopes to the northwest with a surface elevation that ranges from about 3,700 ft at the highest point to of approximately 3,660 ft at the lowest point (USGS, 2019). The land acquisition area also slopes to the northwest, with a depression at its center that serves as a stormwater retention basin.

No faults are known to be present in the vicinity of the Project Site, and according to VA Seismic Risk Definitions, the Project Site is in an area of low seismicity (VA, 2022). The Project Site is located outside of Texas's karst regions that are susceptible to sinkholes (Texas Speleological Survey, 2007).



Source: USGS - Pocket Texas Geology

Figure 3. Project Site Geology

A review of information provided by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey indicated that the soils at the existing VAMC campus are primarily Pep urban land complex soils, while the soils in the land acquisition area are primarily Plemons loam (Pnd) and Pep clay loam (PnC) (Figure 4). PnC soils are classified as farmland of statewide importance (USDA, 2023). However, the Project Site is located in an area identified by the U.S. Census Bureau as an "urbanized area," and therefore exempt from the Farmland Protection Policy Act (7 U.S.C. 4201 et seq.).

3.4.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Construction activities associated with the Proposed Action are anticipated to have minor impacts on site geology and soils. Cutting and filling may be required to establish a new grade for existing Parking Lots N and M to reduce sloping and provide a more level surface for ADA parking. Similar grading may also be needed for new parking and staging areas that are proposed on the land acquisition area, which is at a lower elevation than the existing campus. These changes in grade will affect site topography and drainage patterns. Excavation of site soils will be required for the

proposed construction of the new multi-purpose building and walking path, as well as for extending utilities into the land acquisition area.

As part of design activities yet to be conducted, geotechnical studies will be completed to determine the requirements for depth of excavations, site preparation, and foundation design. Design and construction activities would be executed in accordance with the *VA Site Design Manual*, sound engineering practices, and applicable building codes.

Construction activities would also disturb the soil surface and compact the soil. The soil could then be susceptible to erosion by wind and surface runoff. Exposure of soils during construction also has the potential to result in increased sedimentation to existing stormwater management systems and offsite discharges of sediment-laden runoff. To minimize the potential adverse impacts caused by construction activities, the construction contractor would be required to obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit and develop and implement a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). Construction contractors would also be required to comply with the requirements of VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, for the protection of erodible soils, including the installation of erosion and sedimentation control devices such as berms, dikes, drains, sedimentation basins, grassing, and mulching.

Once construction is completed, any soil erosion impacts would be managed by maintaining appropriately designed stormwater management features associated with the proposed development.

3.4.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no construction at the site, and therefore no impacts to geology and soils.

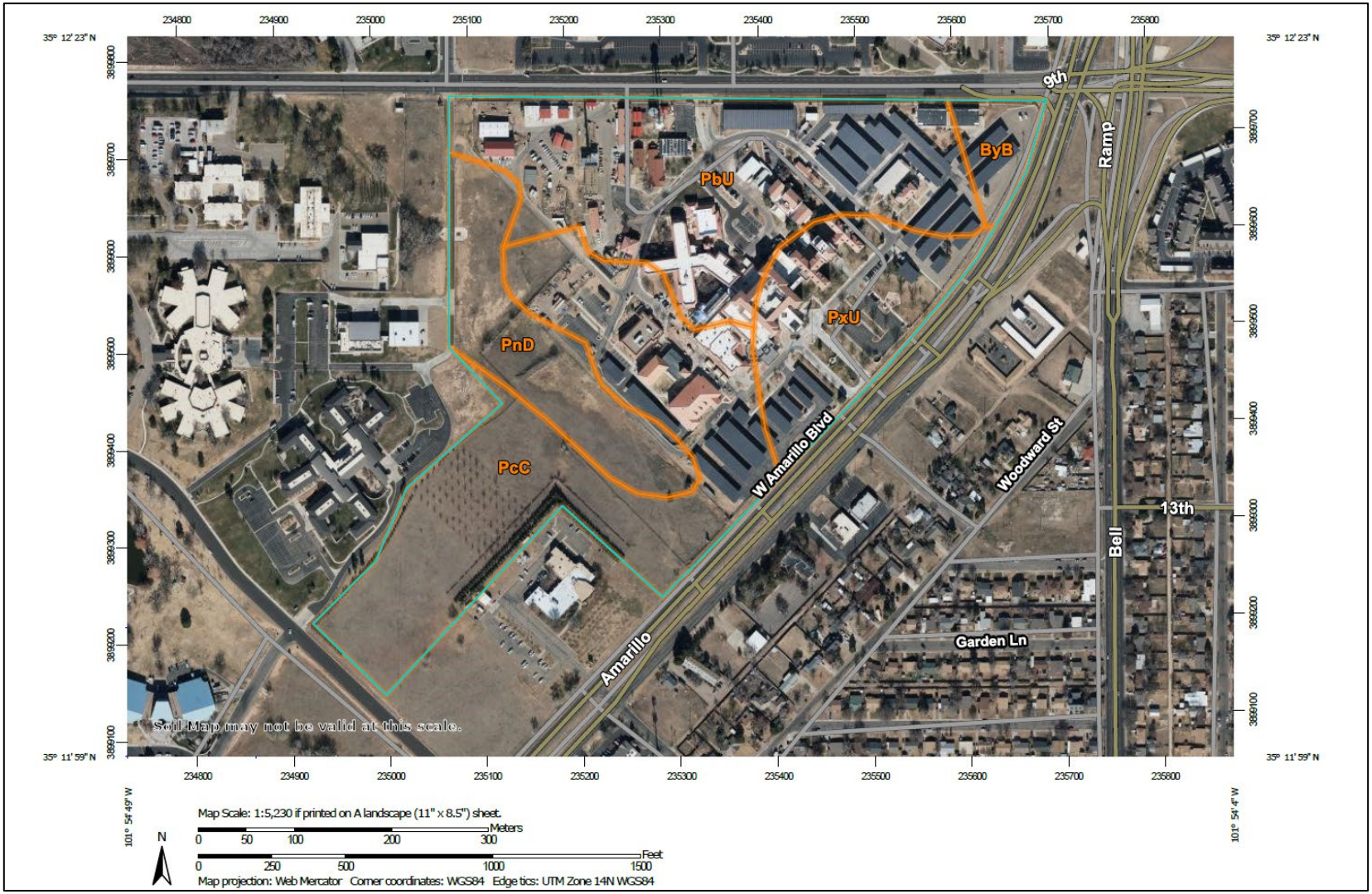


Figure 4. USDA NRCS Soil Survey

3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

3.5.1 Affected Environment

The Project Site is in the Upper West Amarillo Creek watershed (HUC12 Watershed ID 110901050308), which flows to the Canadian River and Lake Meredith. There are no permanent or intermittent surface waters at the Project Site (ERG, 2022).

Because much of the VAMC consists of impervious surfaces (e.g., buildings, roads, paved parking), stormwater from the VAMC generally flows into a storm drain network that is tied to the City of Amarillo stormwater system. Based on site topography, some of the stormwater runoff also flows over land west-northwest toward the land acquisition area.

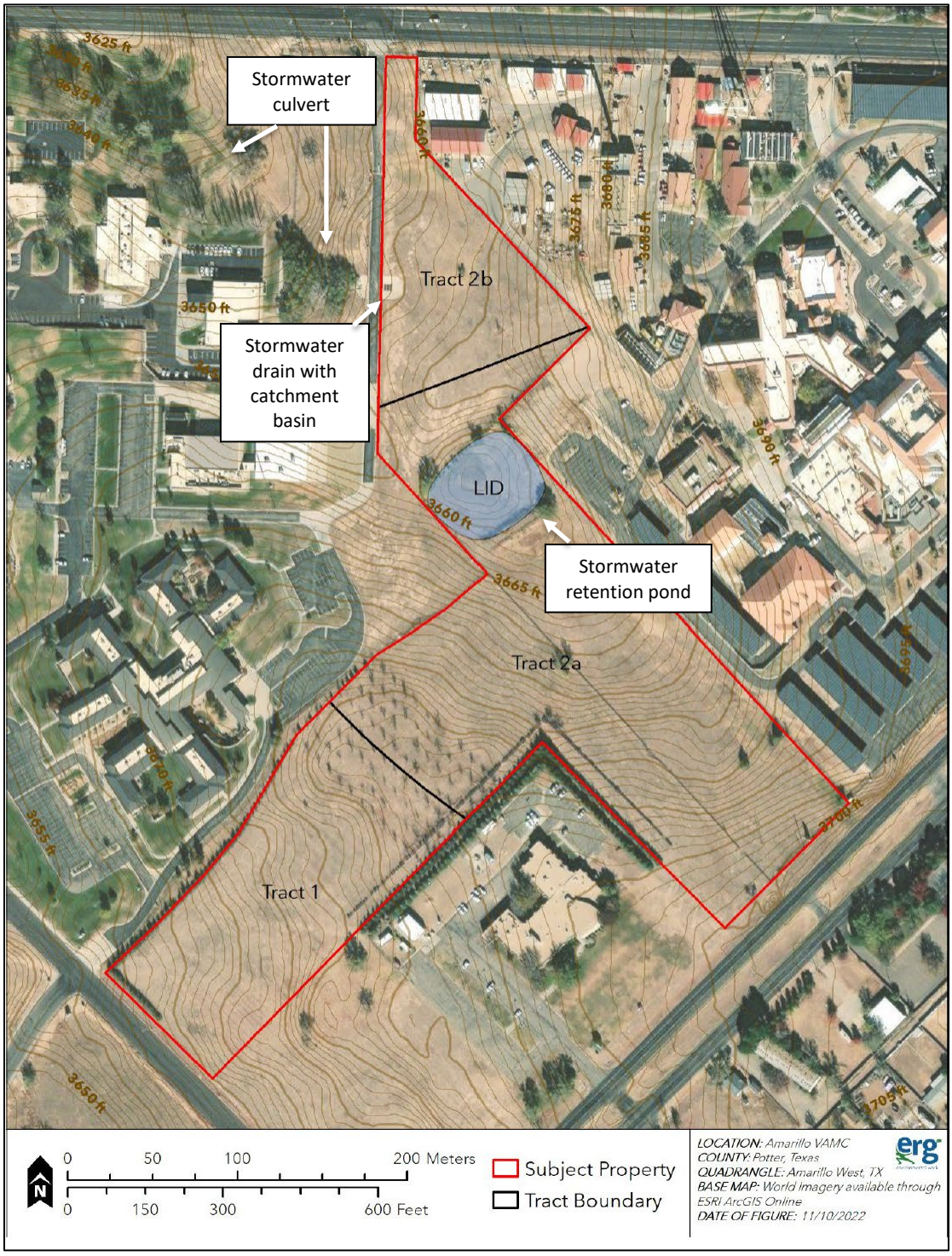
The land acquisition area consists mostly of undeveloped pervious surfaces, and much of the stormwater generated from the property and the VAMC runoff infiltrates across the expanse of the property. The land acquisition area also has two hydrological features that provide stormwater management. There is an unlined stormwater retention pond that is bermed; no outfalls from this pond were observed during site reconnaissance, and therefore, it appears to operate as an infiltration or evaporation structure. There is also a storm drain with a concrete catchment basin that connects to a culvert directing stormwater west-northwest across Quail Creek Drive on the western property boundary (ERG, 2022). The southwestern end of the land acquisition area (identified as "Tract 1" in Figure 4) drains towards Kilgore Dr.

As there is no stormwater infrastructure along Kilgore Dr., stormwater runoff that does not infiltrate generally flows overland toward existing off-site ponds approximately 1,000 ft to the west.

3.5.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is anticipated to result in minor impacts to hydrology and water quality. As certain parking lots at the VAMC are regraded to provide improved accessibility to the medical buildings, their drainage patterns could change, possibly redirecting stormwater. There would also be an increase in impervious surfaces, as some of the land acquisition area is developed with buildings, surface parking, road access, and other infrastructure.

Design plans have yet to be developed, but the surface area affected by the project is expected to exceed 5,000 square feet. Federal projects at or above this threshold are required under Section 438 of the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 to maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the project site. As such, VA will incorporate in its development plans the provision of suitable, on-site, properly engineered and designed stormwater management features to retain stormwater within the land acquisition parcel and adequately address the stormwater management needs for the expanded VAMC.



Source: Adapted from (ERG, 2022)

Figure 5. Hydrology of the Land Acquisition Area

Also, as indicated in Section 3.4, because the area of disturbance is expected to exceed one acre, the construction contractor would be required to obtain a NPDES Construction General Permit and develop and implement a site-specific SWPPP.

3.5.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, existing hydrology and water quality would remain unchanged. This alternative would not involve any of the proposed development activities, as such, no impacts are anticipated.

3.6 Wildlife and Habitat

3.6.1 Affected Environment

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC is densely developed with buildings and impervious surfaces, and there is a high level of human activity (pedestrians, vehicle traffic) that is not conducive to maintaining wildlife populations. The land acquisition area west of the VAMC is undeveloped and most of it is high plains shortgrass prairie. As discussed in section 3.5, there are no permanent or intermittent surface waters at the Project Site; the nearest surface waters are off-site ponds approximately 1,000 ft to the west.

An official list of threatened and endangered species with potential to occur at the Project Site was obtained through the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system (Project Code: 2023-0022385) (USFWS, 2022). Information on state protected species was obtained from the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD, 2023). Table 1 lists federal and state protected species and their potential to occur at the Project Site. In addition, USFWS and TPWD data identify the potential presence of birds that are protected under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act in the area of the Project Site at certain times of year.

3.6.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Based on site conditions, no federally endangered or threatened species or critical habitat are expected to occur on the Project Site, and therefore “no effect” is anticipated from implementation of the Proposed Action. As a result, no formal consultation under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act was deemed necessary for the Proposed Action.

The state-threatened Texas horned lizard is the only protected species with probability to occur at the Project Site, specifically in the land acquisition area. Habitat in the land acquisition area is suitable for the species, though potential to occur is decreased by the surrounding urban environment and habitat fragmentation. There have been no sightings of Texas horned lizard at or near the Project Site documented in the Texas Natural Diversity Database (TPWD, 2023).

To minimize potential adverse effects to the Texas horned lizard and migratory birds, prior to conducting any construction activities in the land acquisition area between mid-March through

September, VA construction contractors will be required to conduct a pre-construction biological survey of the project area. The biological survey will help identify potential Texas horned lizard activity at the site as well as any breeding migratory birds during the general bird nesting season.

As an additional measure to minimize adverse effects to resident and migrant bird species, VA will also make all required nighttime lighting full cutoff, consistent with the requirements of the *VA Lighting Design Manual*.

3.6.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no change in the existing wildlife and habitat. Therefore, no significant impacts would occur.

Table 1. Protected Species Potential Occurrence Determination

Common Name (*Scientific Name*) Federal/State Listing Status	**General Habitat Description**	**Potential to Occur at the Project Site**
Fish		
Arkansas River Shiner *Notropis girardi* **FT, ST**	Typically found in turbid water over mostly silt and shifting sand substrates. Generally inhabits shallow water; found in slower currents in areas having high conductivity and low turbidity.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Peppered Chub *Macrhybopsis tetranema* **FE, ST**	Historically found throughout Arkansas River basin but is now found only in portions of the upper South Canadian River upstream of Lake Meredith.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Birds		
Piping Plover *Charadrius melodus* **FT**	Sandy upper beaches, especially where scattered grass tufts are present, and sparsely vegetated shores and islands of shallow lakes, ponds, rivers, and impoundments.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Red Knot *Calidris canutus rufa* **FT**	Seacoasts on tidal flats and beaches, less frequently in marshes and flooded fields.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
White-faced ibis *Plegadis chihi* **ST**	Prefers freshwater marshes, sloughs, and irrigated rice fields, but will attend brackish and saltwater habitats; currently confined to near-coastal rookeries in so-called hog-wallow prairies. Nests in marshes, in low trees, on the ground in bulrushes or reeds, or on floating mats.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Black rail *Laterallus jamaicensis* **ST**	Salt, brackish, and freshwater marshes, pond borders, wet meadows, and grassy swamps; nests in or along edge of marsh, sometimes on damp ground, but usually on mat of previous years dead grasses.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Mammals		
Tricolored Bat *Perimyotis subflavus* **FPE**	Forest, woodland and riparian areas are important. Caves are very important to this species.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.

Common Name (*Scientific Name*) Federal/State Listing Status	**General Habitat Description**	**Potential to Occur at the Project Site**
Palo duro mouse *Peromyscus truei comanche* **ST**	Rocky, juniper-mesquite-covered slopes of steep-walled canyons on the eastern edge of the Llano Estacado. Also described as - escarpment of the Llano Estacado; rocky slopes with juniper, brush, and shortgrasses.	**Not anticipated to occur.** The project study area lacks suitable habitat to support this species.
Reptiles		
Texas horned lizard *Phrynosoma cornutum* **ST**	Open habitats with sparse vegetation, including grass, prairie, cactus, scattered brush or scrubby trees; soil may vary in texture from sandy to rocky; burrows into soil, enters rodent burrows, or hides under rock when inactive. Occurs to 6,000 feet, but largely limited below the pinyon-juniper zone on mountains in the Big Bend area.	**Low potential to occur**. Habitat in the land acquisition area is suitable for the species, though potential to occur is decreased by the surrounding urban environment and habitat fragmentation.
Insects		
Monarch Butterfly *Danaus plexippus* **FC**	Roosts located in wind-protected areas with abundant milkweed, flowering plants, and water sources.	**Not anticipated to occur**. There is very minimal cover of nectar-producing forbs within the project study area. Lack of milkweed, a plant that provides forage for the Monarch butterfly, make it an unlikely habitat for that species.

Federal/State Designations Key: FE = federal endangered; FT = federal threatened; FPE = federal proposed endangered; FC = federal candidate; SE = state endangered; ST = state threatened

3.7 Noise

3.7.1 Affected Environment

The existing noise environment at the Thomas E. Creek VAMC and adjacent land acquisition area is dominated by vehicle traffic/parking, delivery/service trucks, mechanical equipment, and routine landscaping and maintenance at the VAMC and the properties surrounding the land acquisition area. Off-site sources of noise also include vehicle traffic along local roads, primarily W. Amarillo Blvd. immediately south of the Project Site. No other notable noise-generating sources are present in the immediate vicinity of the site. Noise levels are typical of those of urban areas.

Noise-sensitive receptors include those land uses or populations where activities or people may be subject to stress or considerable interference from noise. Such locations or facilities include residences, hospitals, nursing homes, educational facilities, libraries, and recreational sites. Noise-sensitive receptors on or near the Project Site include VAMC medical facilities and temporary lodging buildings within the existing campus, the Amarillo Northwest Library to the north of the VAMC, and residences to the south of the VAMC fronting W. Amarillo Blvd.

3.7.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Construction activities generate noise by their very nature and are highly variable, depending on the type, number, and operating schedules of equipment. Construction projects are usually executed in stages, each having its own combination of equipment and noise characteristics and magnitudes. Table 2 shows estimated construction noise levels by phase at 50 feet. For each doubling of distance from a point source, the sound pressure level decreases by approximately 6 dB.

Table 2. Estimated Outdoor Construction Noise Levels

Construction Phase	Noise Level (dBA Leq)	
	at 50 feet (dBA)	at 50 feet with mufflers (dBA)
Ground Clearing	84	82
Excavation, Grading	89	86
Foundations	78	77
Structural	85	83
Finishing	89	86

(USEPA, 1971)

Noise-producing activities at the Project Site will primarily occur on the west side of the campus (e.g., Parking Lots N and M, Warehouse Area) and the vacant land to the west. The closest noise-sensitive receptor to the project activity area is the Hospital (Building 28), which is only 100 ft from Parking Lot N. During the loudest phases of construction, noise-sensitive populations could potentially be exposed to estimated noise levels of 83 dBA assuming no attenuation, and about 80 dBA with mufflers. However, these short-term, intermittent, moderate effects would cease once construction was complete. All other identified noise-sensitive receptors are likely to experience negligible, if any, increases in noise during construction activities due to distance from work areas.

The construction contractor would be responsible for complying with noise-control measures outlined in VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, which limits repetitive impact noise to daytime hours and requires providing sound-deadening devices on equipment, using shields or other physical barriers to restrict noise transmission, and providing sound-proof housings or enclosures for noise-producing machinery.

Once operational, noise levels are expected to return to levels similar to existing conditions, as the Proposed Action is not planned to install any additional routine noise sources.

3.7.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented at the project site. The noise environment would be consistent with noise levels described under the existing conditions. No significant impacts on the noise environment would occur.

3.8 Land Use

3.8.1 Affected Environment

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC has been owned and operated by VA since 1939. The VAMC campus encompasses approximately 38.6 acres and is densely populated with medical buildings, parking lots, and supporting infrastructure. The campus is bordered to the north by SW 9th St., to the east and south by W. Amarillo Blvd. (U.S. Route 66), and to the west by undeveloped land. Surrounding uses are primarily institutional and commercial, and include Texas A&M University research facilities, the Amarillo College West Campus, and various medical buildings. The VAMC parcel is zoned as "O-2 Office District 2". This zoning designation allows for a broad range of uses that includes hospitals (Amarillo City Commission, 2014).

The land acquisition area is currently undeveloped and consists of portions of four tax parcels as detailed in Table 3.

Table 3. Land Acquisition Parcel Information

Parcel Tax ID	Owner	Estimated Parcel Size	Estimated VA Acquisition Size
R-370-0260-4020.0	MARY E BIVINS FOUNDATION	6.58 acres	3.86 acres (partial acquisition)
R-001-0750-1200.0	MARY E BIVINS FOUNDATION	4.89 acres	4.89 acres (full acquisition)
R-001-0750-1210.0	TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM	2.16 acres	1.08 acres (partial acquisition)
R-001-0750-1230.0	TEXAS A & M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM	11.44 acres	7.55 acres (partial acquisition)
Total estimated size of land acquisition area			**17.38 acres**

The parcels owned by the Mary E. Bivins Foundation are zoned "O-2 Office District 2", and the parcels owned by the Texas A & M University System are zoned "PD Planned Development District". Both of these designations allow for hospital and other clinical/medical uses (Amarillo City Commission, 2014).

3.8.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would not result in land use effects. Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek VAMC would serve to enhance the services provided but would not change the overall use of the campus. The land acquisition area, currently undeveloped, would become part of the VAMC and would be developed to expand services on the campus; proposed uses include parking, construction laydown areas, a meeting/conference building, and a therapeutic walking path. These uses are consistent with the current zoning of the parcels and with the surrounding land uses.

As a Federal agency, VA is not subject to local zoning regulations; however, reasonable compatibility with existing and future land use designations and zoning ordinances in the project area must be considered (40 U.S.C. § 619(b)). The Proposed Action projects would be designed and implemented in consonance with local development standards, to the extent practicable, to ensure they are consistent with the VAMC campus and the surrounding area.

3.8.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to land uses would occur, and therefore, there would be no land use impacts.

3.9 Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management

3.9.1 Affected Environment

A review of the Flood Insurance Rate Maps indicates that the Project Site is in Zone X (unshaded) outside of the nearest floodplain. Zone X (unshaded) describes areas that are not subject to inundation by the 1-percent or 2-percent-annual chance flood events.

The USFWS National Wetland Inventory Mapper indicates an unnamed stream feature on the land acquisition area (USFWS, 2022). However, a wetlands survey conducted in November 2022 found no evidence of wetland hydrology at the site. No soil saturation, evidence of hydric soil, or wetland vegetation were observed (ERG, 2022).

The proposed project is not within a Coastal Zone Management Area, and therefore this is not a consideration for the Proposed Action (The Texas General Land Office, 2022).

3.9.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Because the Project Site is not located within a floodplain or designated coastal zone and has no wetlands at or near the site, the Proposed Action would have no effect on these resources.

3.9.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Because the Project Site is not located within a floodplain or designated coastal zone and has no wetlands at or near the site, the No Action Alternative would have no effect on these resources.

3.10 Community Services

3.10.1 Affected Environment

The Project Site is located within the Amarillo Independent School District. Because the area surrounding the Thomas E. Creek VAMC is mostly institutional and commercial rather than residential, there are few schools in the vicinity. Only Avondale Elementary School is within one mile of the VAMC. The Amarillo West College Campus is located adjacent to the VAMC to the north.

The City of Amarillo Police and Fire Departments provide police and fire protection and emergency medical services to the campus and its vicinity. There are numerous medical facilities near the VAMC that serve the general public, including the Northwest Texas Healthcare System, BSA Hospital, and Quail Creek Surgical Hospital, all within one mile from the VAMC.

The City of Amarillo Public Works Department and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) provide maintenance to roads in the vicinity of the VAMC. Amarillo City Transit offers public transportation options that serve the VAMC (see section 3.12 for more information).

The Amarillo Botanic Gardens are located approximately 0.3 miles west of the VAMC, and the Amarillo Country Club is approximately 0.6 miles to the east. The Amarillo Northwest Public Library is located immediately to the north of the VAMC on SW 9th St.

3.10.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is not anticipated to generate an increase in staff working at the VAMC and living nearby nor increase the number of Veterans and visitors accessing the campus. Therefore, implementing the Proposed Action would not result in additional load to the local school system, fire or police departments, or any other community services. The Proposed Action is not anticipated to have community services impacts.

3.10.3 Effect of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the lack of VAMC expansion and improvements would have no community services impacts.

3.11 Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials

3.11.1 Affected Environment

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC is a small quantity generator of hazardous waste (EPA ID #TX7360010238), primarily generating hazardous waste pharmaceuticals, laboratory wastes, and facility maintenance waste streams. The hazardous waste accumulation point for the campus is in a standalone storage building located near the government vehicle parking lot. No releases of hazardous waste or hazardous materials to the environment have been documented.

Six oil underground storage tanks were historically present at the campus and have been removed (Table 4). There are no ongoing corrective action activities concerning these removed tanks. There are currently eight bulk oil aboveground storage tanks throughout the campus (Table 5). Locations of additional oil storage equipment, such as belly tanks, transformers, and drum storage, are depicted in Figure 6.

Table 4. Removed Underground Storage Tanks

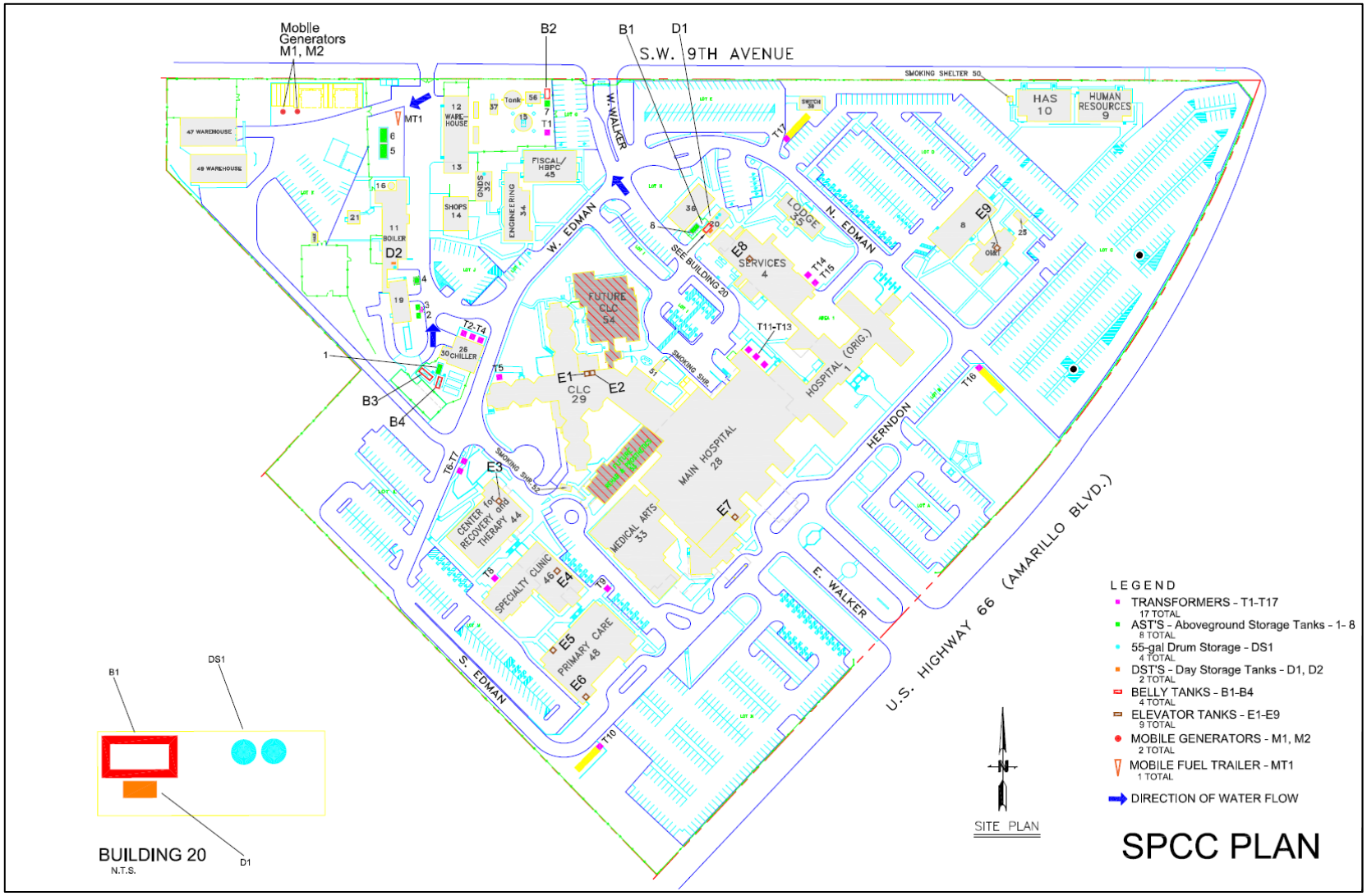
Tank ID	Tank Description	Tank Contents	Installation Date	Removal Date
1	3000-gal double walled fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP)	Diesel	05/01/1990	11/21/2013
1A	275-gal steel	Diesel	01/01/1971	09/29/1991
2	1000-gal steel	Gasoline	01/01/1971	09/30/1991
3	2000-gal single-walled steel	Diesel	01/01/1979	04/08/1992
4	2000-gal single-walled steel	Diesel	01/01/1982	11/01/1995
5	3000-gal double walled FRP	Diesel	05/01/1987	11/01/1995

Source: (TCEQ, 2023)

Table 5. Existing Aboveground Storage Tanks

Tank ID	Tank Capacity	Tank Type	Tank Contents	Location	Purpose
1	6,000	Concrete/Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 26	Chiller Plant Generator/ Nursing Home
2	500	Steel Double Walled	Gasoline	Building 19	Water Treatment Building Generator
3	500	Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 19	Water Treatment Building Generator
4	3,000	Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 11	Boiler Plant Generator
5	8,000	Concrete/Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 11	Boiler Plant Emergency Fuel
6	8,000	Concrete/Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 11	Boiler Plant Emergency Fuel
7	500	Concrete/Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 56	Water Tower Generator
8	2,000	Steel Double Walled	Diesel	Building 20	Generator Building

Source: (Talon/LPE, 2019)



Source: (Talon/LPE, 2019)

Figure 6. VAMC Oil Storage Locations

There have been two recorded incidents of oil releases to the environment at the VAMC. On March 28, 2011, approximately 125 gallons (gal) of fuel leaked from the Chiller Plant emergency generator and onto and around the concrete pad near the Chiller Plant. Impacted soil was removed, except on the downgradient side where there was a concern the removing soil would compromise the integrity of the concrete pad. Hydrogen peroxide was used to treat the remaining soil in-situ. Additionally, on August 30, 2018, approximately 40 gal of fuel leaked from an emergency generator on the driveway behind Building 26 onto the concrete and blacktop in the area. Absorbent and spill pads were used to soak up the spilled fuel (Talon/LPE, 2019). There are no ongoing corrective action activities concerning these releases.

The land acquisition area was part of the original 1940s VA hospital complex. The land was later deeded to Potter County, who in turn conveyed the land to what is now known as the Don and Sybil Harrington Regional Medical Center for development of healthcare facilities. However, the land was never developed. A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of the land acquisition area did not identify any recognized environmental conditions for the property (Awen Solutions Group, 2022).

3.11.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

Construction of the Proposed Action would generate solid waste consisting of cleared vegetation, excess soil, excess construction materials, and demolition debris from existing infrastructure (e.g., pavement). The nature of the solid wastes generated during construction of the Proposed Action would be similar to a typical construction project, and the volumes generated would be anticipated to make a negligible contribution to the overall solid waste volume generated and disposed of in the Amarillo area. Construction contractors would be required to develop and implement a construction and demolition debris recycling plan in accordance with VA specification 01 74 19, Construction Waste Management, and otherwise use approved disposal facilities for any waste that is not recycled.

Operation of the expanded campus under the Proposed Action is expected to have negligible long-term effects on solid waste and hazardous materials management. A small increase in the volume of solid waste is expected from operation of new facilities on the land acquisition area, such as a new multi-purpose building. Solid waste would be collected and transferred by a private contractor to an appropriate off-site municipal solid waste landfill. Landscape maintenance for the land acquisition area is expected to be more intensive than the current minimally maintained grounds. However, only approved herbicides, pesticides, and fertilizers will be applied according to the manufacturers' labeled instructions. All onsite hazardous materials storage would be provided in accordance with VA and VHA directives and procedures.

Similarly, if fuel storage tanks are included in the final design, for example to support new emergency generators, VA will comply with all applicable federal (40 CFR Part 280), state and local requirement for their design, installation, and operation. See Appendix A for more information on potential permit requirements.

3.11.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, no changes to the generation of solid waste or use or storage of hazardous materials is anticipated. Therefore, no impacts are anticipated.

3.12 Traffic, Transportation and Parking

3.12.1 Affected Environment

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC is located in an institutional/commercial area of northwestern Amarillo. The campus is bordered to the north by SW 9th St., to the east and south by W. Amarillo Blvd. (U.S. Route 66), and to the west by undeveloped land. The primary entrance/vehicular access point to the VAMC is on W. Amarillo Blvd., with a secondary entrance on SW 9th St. The land acquisition area adjacent to the VAMC to the west has an access road off SW 9th St. In addition to W. Amarillo Blvd., major roads providing regional access to the VAMC include I-40 approximately 0. 85 miles south, and State Route 335 approximately 1. 7 miles west of the site.

Mobility in the Amarillo metropolitan area is currently considered to be very good, with only few areas of the city experiencing intermittent congestion and travel delay at peak hour times. In 2017, most commuters (approximately 86%) traveled between 5 and 29 minutes to their jobs. The majority of the workforce traveled between 15 and 19 minutes. Relatively few workers travel more than 30 minutes. This trend has remained relatively stable over the past decade (Amarillo Metropolitan Planning Organization, 2019).

While most Veterans and visitors to the VAMC are likely to travel by personal vehicle, the VAMC is served by two local bus lines. Amarillo City Transit route 11 provides east-west connections between downtown and Westgate Mall with stops on SW 9th St.; this service is provided weekdays and Saturdays. Amarillo City Transit also has an on-call service (Route 13) serving the entire hospital district including the VAMC on weekdays.

3.12.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

During the construction period, short-term, negligible adverse effects on traffic would be expected. The initial delivery of various construction vehicles and equipment, as well as daily passenger vehicles for construction workers, the delivery of construction materials, and the removal of construction debris, have the potential to affect local traffic. Construction-generated traffic would be temporary and would not result in any long-term degradation of operating conditions on any roadways. Construction traffic would be dispersed throughout the day and would not be expected to result in significant impacts on traffic near the Project Site during peak construction periods. Adjustments may be needed at facility entrance/access points and internal circulation roads during different phases of construction to accommodate construction activities.

Once implemented, the Proposed Action is not anticipated to result in traffic impacts. The volume of Veterans and visitors is not expected to increase significantly following acquisition of the area west of the VAMC and the planned corrections to address to parking and security deficiencies.

Parking conditions within the expanded campus are expected to improve with implementation of the Proposed Action. Existing Parking Lots N and M will be regraded, resulting in improved accessibility for Veterans and visitors with mobility challenges, and the potential lots to be constructed in the land acquisition area would provide additional parking capacity.

3.12.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented at the Project Site, therefore transportation and parking environment would remain similar to what was described under the existing conditions.

3.13 Utilities

3.13.1 Affected Environment

The Thomas E. Creek VAMC has the following utilities provided by public and private providers:

- Water – City of Amarillo
- Sewage – City of Amarillo
- Electrical – Xcel Energy
- Gas – Atmos Energy

There are no known service deficiencies or capacity constraints for any of the existing services. The VAMC is not required by the City of Amarillo to operate under a sewer discharge permit.

3.13.2 Effects of the Proposed Action

The Proposed Action would result in a small increase in the consumption of utilities, including electricity, natural gas, potable water, and sanitary sewer discharges for future services in the land acquisition area (e.g., new multi-purpose building, walking path). Utility connection options exist either from the VAMC campus or from existing utility mains along SW 9th St. and W. Amarillo Blvd (City of Amarillo, 2022). Each utility provider would require a review of detailed design drawings to determine the connection and service requirements. The Proposed Action is not anticipated to require capacity expansion for existing utility mains or affect off-site utility consumers. Proposed Action utility impacts would be negligible.

3.13.3 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, changes in utility needs are not expected to occur. The land acquisition area would remain undeveloped and would not require utility services.

3.14 Socioeconomics

This section identifies and describes the socioeconomic environment of the City of Amarillo and the State of Texas. With 201,234 individuals, Amarillo is the 16th most populated city in the state of Texas. Age distribution and high school graduation rates for the City of Amarillo are generally similar to those of the State of Texas. The percentage of minority population for the City of Amarillo is lower than for the State of Texas as a whole. Details on minority population rates are discussed in Section 3.15 (Environmental Justice).

Table 6. Demographic Data for the City of Amarillo and the State of Texas

Area	All Individuals	Population Under 18 Age Years	Population Over 65 Age Years	Minority[a]	High School Graduates	Veterans
Texas	29,527,941	25.3%	13.1%	59.7%	84.8%	1,426,641
City of Amarillo	201,234	27.1%	13.7%	47.5%	85.4%	11,949

[a] Includes all races and ethnicities except for "white, non-Hispanic"
(U.S. Census Bureau, 2022)

The City of Amarillo has a slightly lower median household income and a higher population below the poverty line than the State of Texas (Table 7). The unemployment rate in the City of Amarillo is lower than the state as a whole. Incomes specific to the Project Site area are further discussed in Section 3.15.

Table 7. Economic Data for the City of Amarillo and the State of Texas

Area	Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 2021 (millions of current dollars)[a]	Median Household Income[b]	Persons in Poverty[b]	Unemployment Rate, Oct 2022[c]
Texas	$2,051,768.6	$67,321	14.2%	4.0%
City of Amarillo	$16,313.3	$55,174	15.8%	2.8%

Note: GDP data incudes Amarillo Metropolitan Statistical Area
[a] (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022) ; [b] (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022); [c] (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2022)

3.14.1 Effects of the Proposed Action

Construction at the Project Site would require temporary employment of skilled laborers by the construction contractor. Additionally, construction supplies and materials may be purchased from local and regional vendors. Thus, the temporary increase in employment and spending on materials would have a short-term, negligible beneficial impact on the local economy. However, based on the scale of economic activity in the Amarillo area (Table 7), construction would not

result in a significant impact on income or employment rates in the area nor change the underlying demographic or socioeconomic profile of the community.

3.14.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, the Proposed Action would not be implemented, and benefits to local construction companies and suppliers would not be realized. Baseline conditions would remain.

3.15 Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" was enacted in 1994 to focus federal agencies attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority communities and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice. Under this order, federal agencies must identify and address disproportionate high and adverse effects to human health and the environment of its actions on minority and low-income populations.

For this analysis, data for minority and low-income populations were obtained for the area within a three-mile radius of the Project Site, the state of Texas, and the United States using the U.S. EPA-developed EJSCREEN tool. EJSCREEN is an environmental justice mapping and screening internet application that combines demographic data from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 2016 – 2020 estimates and environmental indicators. According to these data, the area within a three-mile radius of the Project Site has a lower minority population than the state of Texas and the United States as a whole. The area within a three-mile radius of the Project Site has a slightly higher percentage of low-income population than the state of Texas and the United States (defined as the percent of individuals whose ratio of household income to poverty level in the past 12 months was less than 2).

Table 8. Environmental Justice Indicators

Area	Minority Population	Low-Income Population
Three-mile radius of Project Site	35%	37%
State of Texas	59%	33%
United States	40%	30%

(USEPA, 2023)

3.15.1 Effects of the Proposed Action

The Project Site is located in an area with minority populations at lower percentages than that of the state and the country. Therefore, effects of the Proposed Action would not disproportionally affect minority populations. Although the Project Site is located in an area with a higher percentage of low-income population compared to the state and the country, the Proposed Action would not have a high and adverse effect to low-income residents in the area. The Proposed Action has no reasonable mechanisms to cause changes in population, income levels, housing,

local tax revenues, or community services. During construction, effects on nearby residents, such as noise, dust, and traffic, would be minor and controlled through BMPs described in Section 5, thereby minimizing adverse effects. Once operational, the upgraded and expanded medical center would provide minor beneficial effects to local Veteran minority and low-income populations who would have access to improved services. Therefore, the Proposed Action would have less-than-significant environmental justice effects.

3.15.2 Effects of the No Action Alternative

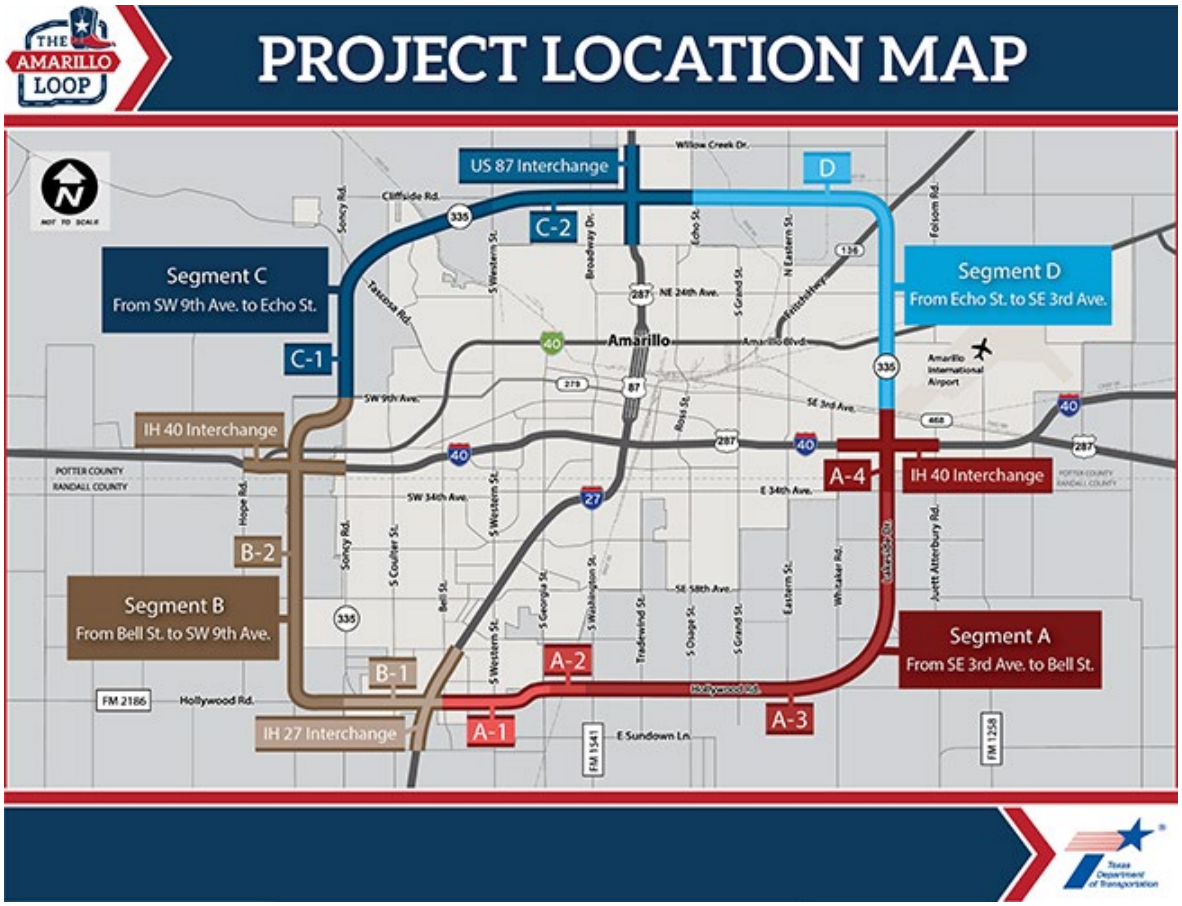
No changes at the Project Site would occur under the No Action alternative, and therefore, no impacts to environmental justice conditions would occur in the short term. However, VA would not secure land necessary to meet its expansion needs, which could have a disproportionate, albeit minor, adverse effect on local minority and low-income Veteran populations in the long term.

3.16 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are those impacts on the environment that result from the incremental impact of the action when added to other past, present, and reasonably 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). This EA considers past, present, and reasonably foreseeable short-term and long-term future effects from implementing the Proposed Action and other projects (not part of this action) that coincide with the location and timetable of the Proposed Action.

The 38.6-acre Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus is located in an area of primarily institutional and commercial uses in the northwest quadrant of the city of Amarillo. Medical facilities dominate the area, including the Northwest Texas Healthcare System, BSA Health System, and many other healthcare clinics. While there is abundant developable land near the Project Site, particularly to the north and west, no specific development plans were identified in the vicinity of the site through case file information from the City of Amarillo Planning Department.

A reasonably foreseeable action in the area is the upgrade of State Loop (SL) 335 around the city of Amarillo. TxDOT has identified the need to upgrade the entire loop to a controlled-access roadway consisting of main lanes, ramps, one-way frontage roads with bicycle and pedestrian accommodations, and four multi-level interchanges (I-40 east, I-40 west, I-27 south and US 87 north). As the Project Site is located within less than two miles from the SL 335 and I-40 west interchange, traffic impacts during the construction period are possible. As illustrated in Figure 7, segments B-2 and C, the closest to the Project Site, are scheduled to start in the summer of 2023 or later as project phases receive funding (SL 335 (txdot.gov)).



Source: SL 335 (txdot.gov)

Figure 7. SL 335 Project Phasing

As noted in Section 1.1, several past construction projects have been completed at the Thomas E. Creek VAMC over the past 15 years, including the new 21,000-SF Center for Therapy and Recovery in 2012, the new Specialty Clinics Building in 2013, the new 20,500-SF Primary Care building in 2018, and a new rehabilitation and prosthetics building and an 11,800-SF hospice care facility in 2020.

3.16.1 Environmental Consequences of Cumulative Actions under the Proposed Action

No significant cumulative adverse effects would be anticipated from implementation of the Proposed Action. The Proposed Action would result in the effects identified throughout Chapter 3 of this EA. These include potential minor to moderate adverse short-term effects on air quality, geology and soils, wildlife and habitat, hydrology and water quality, and noise. These potential effects would be minimized or avoided through implementation of the measures identified in Appendix A. The Proposed Action's is not expected to contribute to cumulative effects on aesthetics, cultural resources, land use, floodplains, wetlands, coastal zone management, community services, solid waste and hazardous materials, transportation and parking, and utilities.

There would be negligible or minor net beneficial effects on the local socioeconomic and environmental justice from increased employment opportunities during construction as well as availability of Veteran healthcare services to local Veteran populations.

Given the nature of the Proposed Action and the limited anticipated development actions in the surrounding area, no significant cumulative adverse impacts to any of these resource areas are anticipated. Other potential off-campus development in the area of the VAMC would be subject to zoning requirements and site plan approval by the City of Amarillo and other appropriate state and federal agencies, which would serve to maintain and control regional, potentially cumulative impacts.

Close coordination between the agencies listed in Chapter 7 of this EA, coupled with enforcement of applicable current and future regulations, ordinances, and laws, and application of BMPs identified in Chapter 4, would serve to manage and control cumulative effects.

3.16.2 Environmental Consequences of Cumulative Actions under the No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the land adjacent to the VAMC would not be acquired and developed by VA, as such, there would be no contributions to cumulative impacts.

3.17 Potential for Generating Substantial Public Controversy

As discussed in Chapter 5 of this EA, VA solicited scoping input from various federal, state, and local government agencies, Indian tribes, and interested stakeholders regarding the Proposed Action. Several of these entities provided input, but none of the input identified opposition or controversy related to the Proposed Action.

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period; during this time, there was additional opportunity for stakeholders to identify any issues of controversy. Four comments were provided during the public comment period (comments are included in Appendix B). Based on the significant positive effects of the Proposed Action, the findings of this EA (no significant adverse environmental impact), and limited public comments received, it is not anticipated that there will be substantial public controversy regarding the Proposed Action.

4 MANAGEMENT AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

This chapter summarizes the minimization and management measures identified in Chapter 3 that are proposed to avoid or minimize potential adverse effects of the Proposed Action. Implementation of the minimization and management measures identified in Table 9 will maintain potential impacts at less-than-significant levels for all resource areas.

Table 9. Management and Minimization Measures Incorporated into the Proposed Action

Technical Resource Area	Management and Minimization Measures (including Best Management Practices)
Air Quality (Section 3.2)	Use appropriate dust suppression methods (such as the use of water, dust, palliative, covers, and suspension of earth moving in high wind conditions) during onsite construction activities.
	Implement measures to reduce diesel particulate matter emissions from construction equipment, such as reducing idling time and using newer equipment with emissions controls.
Cultural and Historic Resources (Section 3.3)	Should potentially historic or culturally significant items be discovered during project construction, the construction contractor would immediately cease work in the area until qualified archaeologist meeting the Secretary of Interior standards properly identifies and appropriately treats discovered items in accordance with applicable state and federal laws.
Geology and Soils (Section 3.4)	Obtain a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Construction General Permit and develop and implement a site-specific Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP)
	Comply with the requirements of VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, for the protection of erodible soils, including the installation of erosion and sedimentation control devices such as berms, dikes, drains, sedimentation basins, grassing, and mulching
Hydrology and Water Resources (Section 3.5)	Maintain or restore, to the maximum extent technically feasible, the predevelopment hydrology of the project site (EISA 438)
Wildlife and Habitat (Section 3.6)	Prior to conducting any construction activities in the land acquisition area between mid-March through September, conduct a pre-construction biological survey of the project area to identify potential Texas horned lizard activity at the site as well as any breeding migratory birds during the general bird nesting season
	Make all required nighttime lighting full cutoff, consistent with the requirements of the *VA Lighting Design Manual*
Noise (Section 3.7)	Implement noise control as outlined in VA specification 01 57 19, Temporary Environmental Controls, which limits repetitive impact noise to daytime hours and requires providing sound-deadening devices on equipment, using shields or other physical barriers to restrict noise transmission, and providing sound-proof housings or enclosures for noise-producing machinery.

Technical Resource Area	Management and Minimization Measures (including Best Management Practices)
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials (Section 3.11)	Develop and implement a construction and demolition debris recycling plan in accordance with VA specification 01 74 19, Construction Waste Management
Utilities (Section 3.13)	Submit design plans to each utility provider to determine the specific connection/extension requirements and implement the necessary requirements

5 AGENCY AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

VA invites public participation in decision-making on new proposals through the NEPA process. Public participation with respect to decision-making on the Proposed Action is guided by the VA NEPA regulations (38 CFR Part 26). Additional guidance is provided in VA's *NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects* (VA, 2010). Consideration of the views and information of all interested persons promotes open communication and enables better decision-making. Agencies, organizations, and members of the public with a potential interest in the Proposed Action are urged to participate. A record of agency coordination and public involvement associated with this EA is provided in Appendix B.

5.1 Scoping

VA initiated the public scoping process for the Proposed Action with publication of a notice in the *Amarillo Globe-News* announcing the opportunity to provide early input on the Proposed Action. The notice was published on January 6 and 8, 2023. No comments from the public were received.

A notice requesting early input was also emailed to stakeholders who may have interest in the Proposed Action, including federal, state, and local elected officials; federal, state, and local regulatory agencies; Native American Tribes; and other potential stakeholders. A list of agencies and individuals notified, a copy of the notice, and responses received are provided in Appendix B.

5.2 Draft EA

VA published and distributed the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period, as announced by a Notice of Availability (NOA) published in the *Amarillo Globe-News* on Arpil 21 and 23, 2023. The NOA was also mailed be to selected federal, state, and local agencies, elected officials, and Native American Tribes, to inform them of the 30-day review and comment period. The Draft EA was made available for review in print at the Amarillo Northwest Public Library, 6100 W 9th St., Amarillo, TX 79106, and available for electronic download from the VA website: https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp. VA received two comments during the comment period (see Appendix B).

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8 GLOSSARY

Aesthetics – Pertaining to the quality of human perception of natural beauty. Ambient - The environment as it exists around people, plants, and structures.

Asbestos - Incombustible, chemical-resistant, fibrous mineral forms of impure magnesium silicate used for fireproofing, electrical insulation, building materials, brake linings, and chemical filters. Asbestos is a carcinogenic substance.

Attainment Area - Region that meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for a criteria pollutant under the CAA.

Bedrock - The solid rock that underlies all soil, sand, clay, gravel and loose material on the earth's surface.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) - Methods, measures, or practices to prevent or reduce the contributions of pollutants to U.S. waters. Best management practices may be imposed in addition to, or in the absence of, effluent limitations, standards, or prohibitions.

Commercial land use – Land use that includes private and public businesses (retail, wholesale, etc.), institutions (schools, churches, etc.), health services (hospitals, clinics, etc.), and military buildings and installations.

Compaction - The packing of soil together into a firmer, denser mass, generally caused by the pressure of great weight.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) - An Executive Office of the President composed of three members appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Senate. Each member shall be exceptionally qualified to analyze and interpret environmental trends, and to appraise programs and activities of the Federal Government. Members are to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs of the Nation; and to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment.

Criteria Pollutants - The CAA of 1970 required the USEPA to set air quality standards for common and widespread pollutants in order to protect human health and welfare. There are six "criteria pollutants": ozone (O3), carbon monoxide (CO), sulfur dioxide (SO2), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), and particulate matter.

Cultural Resources - The physical evidence of our Nation's heritage. Included are archaeological sites; historic buildings, structures, and districts; and localities with social significance to the human community.

Decibel (dB) - A unit of measurement of sound pressure level.

Effects or impacts - changes to the human environment from the proposed action or alternatives that are reasonably foreseeable and include the following:

1) Direct effects, which are caused by the action and occur at the same time and place.

2) Indirect effects, which are caused by the action and are later in time or farther removed in distance, but are still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect effects may include growth inducing effects and other effects related to induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air and water and other natural systems, including ecosystems.
3) Cumulative effects, which are effects on the environment that result from the incremental effects of the action when added to the effects of other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable actions regardless of what agency (Federal or non-Federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative effects can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.
4) Effects include 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. Effects may also include those resulting from actions which may have both beneficial and detrimental effects, even if on balance the agency believes that the effects will be beneficial.

Emission - A release of a pollutant.

Endangered Species - Any species which is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Environmental Assessment (EA) - An EA is a publication that provides sufficient evidence and analyses to show whether a proposed system will adversely affect the environment or be environmentally controversial.

Erosion - The wearing away of the land surface by detachment and movement of soil and rock fragments through the action of moving water and other geological agents.

Floodplain - The relatively flat area or lowlands adjoining a river, stream, ocean, lake, or other body of water that is susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

FONSI - Finding of No Significant Impact, a NEPA document.

Fugitive Dust - Particles light enough to be suspended in air, but not captured by a filtering system. For this document, this refers to particles put in the air by moving vehicles and air movement over disturbed soils at construction sites.

Geology - Science which deals with the physical history of the earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and physical changes in the earth.

Groundwater - Water found below the ground surface. Groundwater may be geologic in origin and as pristine as it was when it was entrapped by the surrounding rock, or it may be subject to daily or seasonal effects depending on the local hydrologic cycle. Groundwater may be pumped from wells and used for drinking water, irrigation, and other purposes. It is recharged by precipitation or irrigation water soaking into the ground. Thus, any contaminant in precipitation or irrigation water may be carried into groundwater.

Hazardous Substance - Hazardous materials are defined within several laws and regulations to have certain meanings. For this document, a hazardous material is any one of the following: Any substance designated pursuant to section 311 (b)(2)(A) of the Clean Water Act. Any element, compound, mixture, solution, or substance designated pursuant to Section 102 of Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA). Any hazardous substance as defined under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). Any toxic pollutant listed under TSCA. Any hazardous air pollutant listed under Section 112 of CAA. Any imminently hazardous chemical substance or mixture with respect to which the EPA Administrator has taken action pursuant to Subsection 7 of TSCA. The term does not include: 1) Petroleum, including crude oil or any thereof, which is not otherwise specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance; 2) Natural gas, natural gas liquids, liquefied natural gas, or synthetic gas usable for fuel (or mixtures of natural gas and such synthetic gas). A list of hazardous substances is found in 40 CFR Part 302.4.

Hazardous Waste - A solid waste which, when improperly treated, stored, transported, or disposed of, poses a substantial hazard to human health or the environment. Hazardous wastes are identified in 40 CFR Part 261.3 or applicable foreign law, rule, or regulation.

Impacts – see Effects

Industrial Land Use – Land uses of a relatively higher intensity that are generally not compatible with residential development. Examples include light and heavy manufacturing, mining, and chemical refining.

Listed Species - Any plant or animal designated as a State or Federal threatened, endangered, special concern, or candidate species.

Low-income population - individuals whose ratio of household income to poverty level in the past 12 months was less than 2

Minority population - individuals who list their racial status as a race other than white alone and/or list their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino. That is, all people other than non-Hispanic white-alone individuals. The word "alone" in this case indicates that the person is of a single race, not multiracial.

Mitigation - Measures taken to reduce adverse impacts on the environment.

Mobile Sources - Vehicles, aircraft, watercraft, construction equipment, and other equipment that use internal combustion engines for energy sources.

Monitoring - A process of inspecting and recording the progress of mitigation measures implemented.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) - Nationwide standards set up by the USEPA for widespread air pollutants, as required by Section 109 of the Clean Air Act (CAA). Currently, six pollutants are regulated by primary and secondary NAAQS: carbon monoxide (CO), lead (Pb), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), ozone (O3), particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide (SO2). National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) - U.S. statute that requires all Federal agencies to consider the potential effects of Proposed Actions on the human and natural environment.

Non-attainment Area - An area that has been designated by the EPA or the appropriate State air quality agency as exceeding one or more National or State ambient air quality standards. Parcel - A plot of land, usually a division of a larger area.

Particulates or Particulate Matter - Fine liquid or solid particles such as dust, smoke, mist, fumes, or smog found in air.

Pollutant - A substance introduced into the environment that adversely affects the usefulness of a resource.

Potable Water - Water which is suitable for drinking.

Sensitive Receptors - Include, but are not limited to, asthmatics, children, and the elderly, as well as specific facilities, such as long-term health care facilities, rehabilitation centers, convalescent centers, retirement homes, residences, schools, playgrounds, and childcare centers.

Significant Impact - According to 40 CFR Part 1508.27, "significance" as used in NEPA requires consideration of both context and intensity. Context. The significance of an action must be analyzed in several contexts such as society as a whole (human, national), the affected region, the affected interests, and the locality. Significance varies with the setting of the Proposed Action. For instance, in the case of a site-specific action, significance would usually depend upon the effects in the locale rather than in the world as a whole. Both short- and long-term effects are relevant. Intensity. This refers to the severity of impact. Responsible officials must bear in mind that more than one agency may make decisions about partial aspects of a major action.

Solid Waste - Any discarded material that is not excluded by section 261.4(a) or that is not excluded by variance granted under sections 260.30 and 260.31.

Threatened species - Any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Topography - The relief features or surface configuration of an area.

Toxic Substance - A harmful substance which includes elements, compounds, mixtures, and materials of complex composition.

Wetlands - Areas that are regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and, thus, are characterized by a prevalence of vegetation that is adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Examples include swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and estuaries.

Wildlife Habitat - Set of living communities in which a wildlife population live.

APPENDIX A. PERMITS

This appendix lists environmental permits, licenses, or other agreements that may need to be obtained by VA or its contractors to implement the Proposed Action. Key federal, state, or local requirements are identified for both construction and operation.

Agency	**Permit/Requirement**	**Need/Basis**
TCEQ Air Permits Division	Permit by Rule (30 TAC §106.4)	Required for construction or modification of stationary sources of air emissions eligible for permit by rule.
TCEQ Water Quality Division	Storm Water – Construction General Permit	Projects disturbing one or more acres of soil must obtain coverage under the General Permit for Discharges of Storm Water Associated with Construction Activities (TXR150000). The Construction General Permit requires submittal of a Notice of Intent (NOI) and development of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP).
TCEQ Water Quality Division	Small municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit	Applicable for facilities in "urbanized areas" as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau with separate stormwater management systems.
TCEQ Water Quality Division	Aboveground storage tank registration	If included in final project design, regulated ASTs that contain or have contained a regulated substance as defined in 30 TAC 334.2(96) must be registered with TCEQ unless otherwise exempted or excluded
City of Amarillo Department of Building Safety	Miscellaneous construction permits	Permits of building construction, mechanical, plumbing, and electrical required for new construction
City of Amarillo Department of Building Safety	Commercial/Industrial driveway permit	Required for construction of new driveways

APPENDIX B. AGENCY CONSULTATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Amarillo Globe-News **Scoping Notice Affidavit**

LOCALiQ

Austin American-Statesman
Amarillo Globe-News
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

PO Box 631667 Cincinnati, OH 45263-1667

PROOF OF PUBLICATION

Lorena Alvarez
Awen Solutions Group
4196 Merchant PLZ # 711
Woodbridge VA 22192-5085

STATE OF WISCONSIN, COUNTY OF BROWN

The Amarillo Globe-News is a daily newspaper of general circulation, printed and published in Amarillo, Potter County, Texas; that the publication, a copy of which is attached hereto, was published in the said newspaper in the issues dated:

01/06/2023, 01/08/2023

Sworn to and subscribed before on 01/08/2023

Legal Clerk

Notary, State of WI, County of Brown

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RYAN SPELLER
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

Notice of Intent to Prepare an Environmental Assessment

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts associated with the proposed acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to the Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center located at 6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard in Amarillo, TX to implement improvements at the medical center to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition.

VA requests input on the scope of issues for analysis, input on potential alternatives, or information/analyses relevant to the Proposed Action. Scoping comments will be accepted through February 5, 2023. Comments may be submitted via email to vacoenvironment@va.gov with the subject line "Amarillo VAMC EA".

For additional information or questions, please contact Jason Sturm at jason.sturm@va.gov.

#8274034

Page 1 of 1

Valued Stakeholder Letter

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Office of Construction & Facilities Management
Washington DC 20420

January 3, 2023

SUBJECT: **Notice of Scoping for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Amarillo, TX**

Dear Valued Stakeholder:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposes to acquire approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land west of the Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center located at 6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard in Amarillo, TX (Figures 1 and 2) to implement improvements at the medical center to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition.

This scoping notice is also being published in the *Amarillo Globe News* to inform and solicit input from the public and will be made available on the VA website at https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental.

VA is preparing an environmental assessment (EA) in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) to evaluate the potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action. VA will prepare the EA according to the regulations for the implementation of the procedural provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (42 U.S. Code 4321-4370h), as implemented by the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), and VA Implementing Regulations (38 CFR Part 26).

If you have comments on the scope of issues for analysis, or input on potential alternatives or information/analyses relevant to the Proposed Action, please submit your comments via email to vacoenvironment@va.gov with the subject line "Amarillo VAMC EA" within 30 days of receipt of this notice.

VA will address and incorporate relevant scoping comments in the Draft EA. Once VA completes the Draft EA, it will be published and made available for a 30-day public review and comment period. VA will notify stakeholders via email/mail and publish a notice of availability (NOA) of the Draft EA in the *Amarillo Globe News*.

For additional information or questions, please contact Jason Sturm at jason.sturm@va.gov with the subject line "Amarillo VAMC EA".

Respectfully,

GLENN ELLIOTT Digitally signed by GLENN ELLIOTT
Date: 2023.01.03 10:17:12 -05'00'

Glenn Elliott
Director, Environmental Program Office
Office of Construction and Facilities Management

Figure 1. Site Location

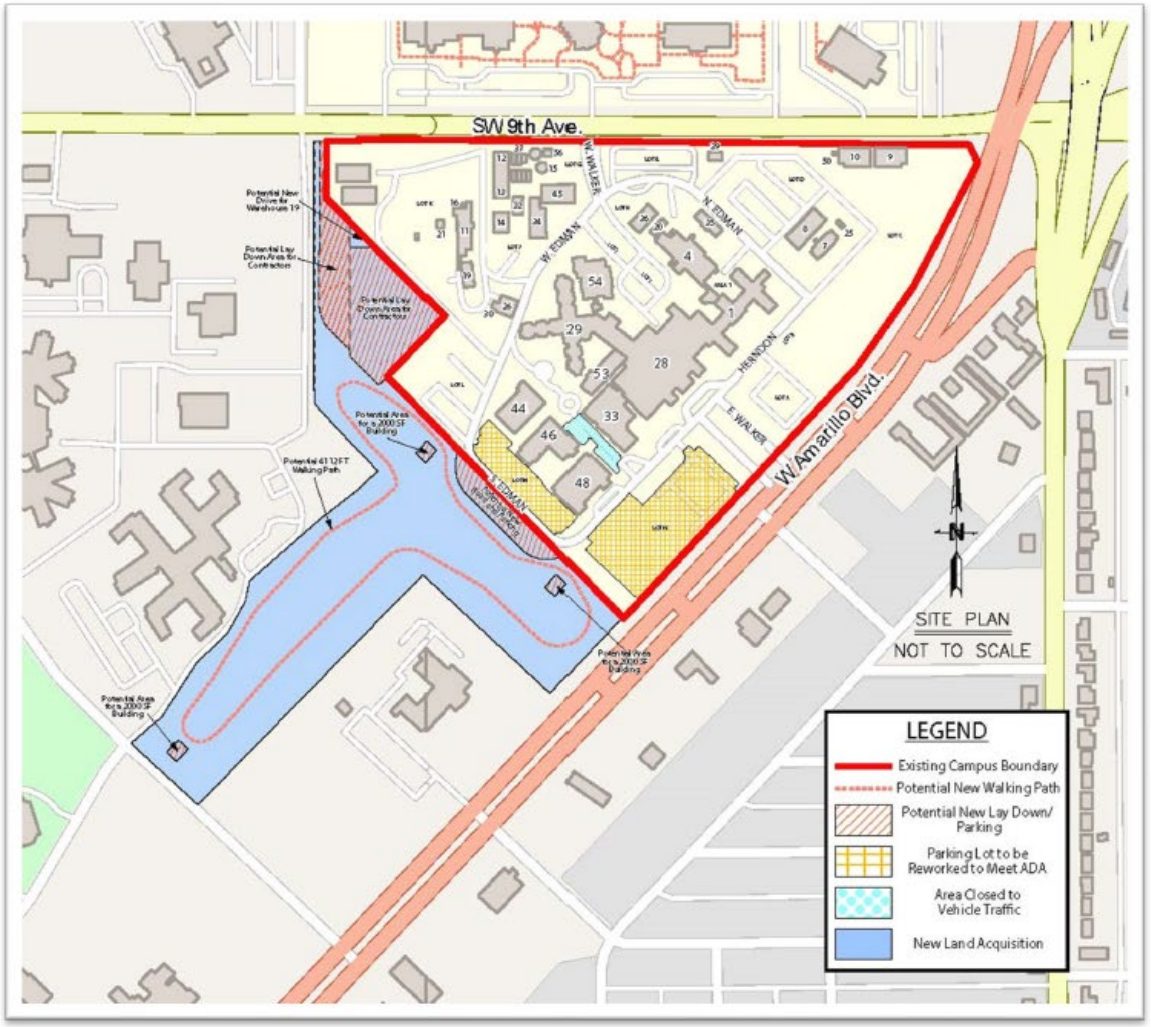

Figure 2. Proposed Action Concept

Scoping Distribution List

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFO	EMAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Federal/State Elected Officials			
U.S. Senator John Cornyn	Chief of Staff Drew Brandewie	senator@cornyn.senate.gov drew_brandewie@cornyn.senate.gov	517 Hart Senate Office Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20510
U.S. Senator Ted Cruz	Chief of Staff Steve Chartan	senator@cruz.senate.gov steve_chartan@cruz.senate.gov	127A Russell Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510
U.S. Representative Ronny Jackson (TX-13 Congressional District)	Chief of Staff Jeff Billman	ronny.jackson@mail.house.gov jeff.billman@mail.house.gov	118 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515
Texas State Senator Kel Seliger (District 31)	N/A	kel.seliger@senate.texas.gov	P.O. Box 12068 Capitol Station Austin, Texas 78711
Texas State Representative Walter Thomas (Four) Price (District 87)	N/A	four.price@house.texas.gov	P.O. Box 2910 Austin, Texas 78768
Local Elected Officials			
Mayor Ginger Nelson	N/A	ginger.nelson@amarillo.gov	601 South Buchanan Street Amarillo, TX 79101
Potter County Commissioner Alphonso Vaughn (Precinct Four)	N/A	AlphonsoVaughn@co.potter.tx.us	500 South Fillmore, Suite 124 Amarillo, TX 79101
Federal Agencies			
U.S. EPA Region 6	Robert Houston, Staff Director, Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment	houston.robert@epa.gov	N/A
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Austin Ecological Services Field Office	Christina Williams, Section 7 Consultations and HCPs	christina_williams@fws.gov	N/A
State of Texas Agencies			
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	N/A	NEPA@tceq.texas.gov	National Environmental Policy Act, MC-118 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality PO Box 13087 Austin, TX 78711-3087
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	David Yoskowitz, Executive Director	David.yoskowitz@tpwd.texas.gov	4200 Smith School Road Austin, TX 78744

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFO	EMAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	Rex Isom, Executive Director	risom@tsswcb.texas.gov	1497 Country View Lane Temple, TX 76504
Texas Department of Transportation	Doug Booher, Director Environmental Affairs Division	doug.booher@txdot.gov	6230 E Stassney Lane Austin, TX 78744
Texas Historical Commission	Mark S. Wolfe, SHPO	Mark.wolfe@thc.texas.gov	P.O. Box 12276 Austin, TX 78711
Regional Agencies			
Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC)	Dustin Meyer, Executive Director	dmeyer@theprpc.org	P.O. Box 9257 Amarillo, TX 79105-9257
County/Local Agencies			
City of Amarillo Department of Public Works	Donny Hooper, Director	COAPublicWorks@amarillo.gov	808 S. Buchanan St., 2nd Floor Amarillo, TX 79105-1971
City of Amarillo Planning Department	Cris Valverde, Director of Planning	cityplanning@amarillo.gov	P.O. Box 1971 Amarillo, TX 79105-1971
Federally Recognized Tribes			
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma	Bobby Komardley, Chairman	bkomardley@outlook.com	PO Box 1330 Anadarko, OK 73005
Comanche Nation, Oklahoma	Mark Woommavovah, Chairman Martina Minthorn, THPO	Jennifer.rodriguez@comanchenation.com martina.minthorn@comanchenation.com	PO Box 908 Lawton, OK 73502
Jicarilla Apache Nation, New Mexico	Wainwright Velarde, President Jeffrey Blythe, THPO	janthpo@gmail.com	PO Box 507 Dulce, NM 87528- 0507
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	Russell Martin, President Lauren Norman-Brown, THPO	Rmartin@tonkawatribe.com lbrown@tonkawatribe.com	1 Rush Buffalo Road Tonkawa, OK 74653
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie), Oklahoma	Terri Parton, President Gary McAdams, THPO	Terri.parton@wichitatribe.com Gary.mcadams@wichitatribe.com	PO Box 729 Anadarko, OK 73005

Scoping Comments

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Protecting Texas by Reducing and Preventing Pollution

January 17, 2023

Jason Sturm
Environmental Engineer
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington DC 20420

Via: **E-mail**

Re: **TCEQ NEPA Request #2022-001. Notice of Scoping for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Potter County.**

Dear Mr. Sturm,

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has reviewed the above-referenced project and offers the following comments:

The proposed action is located in Potter County, which is currently designated attainment/unclassifiable for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for all six criteria air pollutants. Federal Clean Air Act, §176(c) general conformity requirements do not apply for this action.

We recommend the environmental assessment address actions that will be taken to prevent surface and groundwater contamination.

Any debris or waste disposal should be at an appropriately authorized disposal facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please contact the agency NEPA coordinator at (512) 239-2619 or NEPA@tceq.texas.gov

Sincerely,

Ryan Vise,
Division Director
External Relations

TEXAS PARKS & WILDLIFE

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January 23, 2023

Mr. Glenn Elliott
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Construction and Facilities Management
Washington DC 20420

RE: Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Amarillo, Texas

Dear Mr. Elliott:

Texas Parks and Wildlife Department (TPWD) has received the scoping notice regarding the proposed project listed above. TPWD staff has reviewed the information provided and offers the following comments concerning this project.

In addition to state and federally protected species, TPWD tracks species considered to be Species of Greatest Conservation Need (SGCN) that, due to limited distributions or declining populations, face threat of extirpation or extinction but currently lack the legal protections given to threatened or endangered species. Special landscape features, natural plant communities, and SGCN are rare resources for which TPWD actively promotes conservation, and TPWD considers it important to minimize impacts to such resources to reduce the likelihood of endangerment and preclude the need to list SGCN as threatened or endangered in the future. These species and communities are tracked in the Texas Natural Diversity Database (TXNDD). The most current and accurate rare and protected species data for Potter County can be requested from the TXNDD website.

Please note that the absence of TXNDD information in the proximity does not imply that a species is absent from that area. Given the small proportion of public versus private land in Texas, the TXNDD does not include a representative inventory of rare resources in the state. Although it is based on the best data available to TPWD regarding rare and protected species, data from the TXNDD does not provide a definitive statement as to the presence, absence or condition of special species, natural communities, or other significant features within a project area. These data are not inclusive and cannot be used as presence/absence data or be substituted for on the ground surveys.

If suitable habitat is available, rare and protected species could be present in the project area. Please review the TPWD county list for Potter County which can be found on the Rare, Threatened, and Endangered Species of Texas website.

The TPWD Landscape Ecology Program has developed an interactive mapping application, the Texas Ecosystem Analytical Mapper (TEAM), to assist wildlife biologists, land managers, naturalists, planners, and conservationists in

4200 SMITH SCHOOL ROAD
AUSTIN, TEXAS 78744-3291
512.389.4800
www.tpwd.texas.gov

understanding Texas habitats and to integrate vegetation data with land management and resource planning of all types. For more information on TEAM please visit the TPWD Landscape Ecology Program website.

Future correspondence regarding this project can be submitted to WHAB@tpwd.texas.gov. Please contact me at Richard.Hanson@tpwd.texas.gov or (806) 761-4930 ext. 4936 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Rick Hanson

Rick Hanson
Ecological and Environmental Planning Program
Wildlife Division

RH: 49842

NHPA Section 106 Consultation Letter to SHPO

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Office of Construction & Facilities Management
Washington DC 20420

April 11, 2023

Texas Historical Commission
Arlo McKee
1511 Colorado Street
Austin, TX 78701

Katharine Sheldon
1511 Colorado Street
Austin, TX 78701

RE: Initiation of Section 106 Consultation for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Amarillo VA Medical Center in Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Dear Mr. McKee and Ms. Sheldon:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is initiating consultation pursuant to Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended (54 USC 306108) (NHPA), with the Texas Historical Commission (THC) for the above-referenced project in Potter County, Texas.

The NHPA requires federal agencies to consider the effects of their undertakings on historic properties both individually and cumulatively. VA conducted an Initial Cultural Resources Impact Prediction (ICRIP) that is enclosed with this letter to assist in identifying historic properties at the sites and to document the general character of the area.

Undertaking

VA is proposing to acquire approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped property adjacent to the Thomas E. Creek Amarillo VAMC campus at 6010 Amarillo Boulevard, West in Amarillo, Texas for expansion and improvements to the campus (Figure 1). The project will implement improvements at the medical center to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition.

Property Description

This property acquisition consists of four contiguous parcels located within the City of Amarillo, Texas, and identified by the Potter County Tax Assessors Office as Parcel Nos. R-370-0260-4020.0, R-001-0750-1200.0, R-001-0750-1210.0, and R-001-0750-1230.0. The northern portion of this property abuts SW 9th Ave. and it is bound to the east, south, and west by the Amarillo VAMC campus, W. Amarillo Blvd., and Kilgore Dr. respectively. The land parcels proposed to be acquired consist of vacant arid brushland with small portions of concrete and one area of agricultural trees. The adjacent 38.6-acre Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus is fully developed. Together, the existing campus and the land acquisition parcels measure approximately 56 acres.

Figure 1. Site Location Showing Existing VAMC Boundary and New Land Acquisition.

Area of Potential Effects

The Area of Potential Effects (APE) is the geographic area or areas within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alterations in the character or use of historic properties. The project site for this Undertaking is the land acquisition area and western portions of the existing VAMC. The proposed APE encompasses the acquisition parcel for site development as well as the entire Thomas E. Creek VAMC campus (Figure 2).

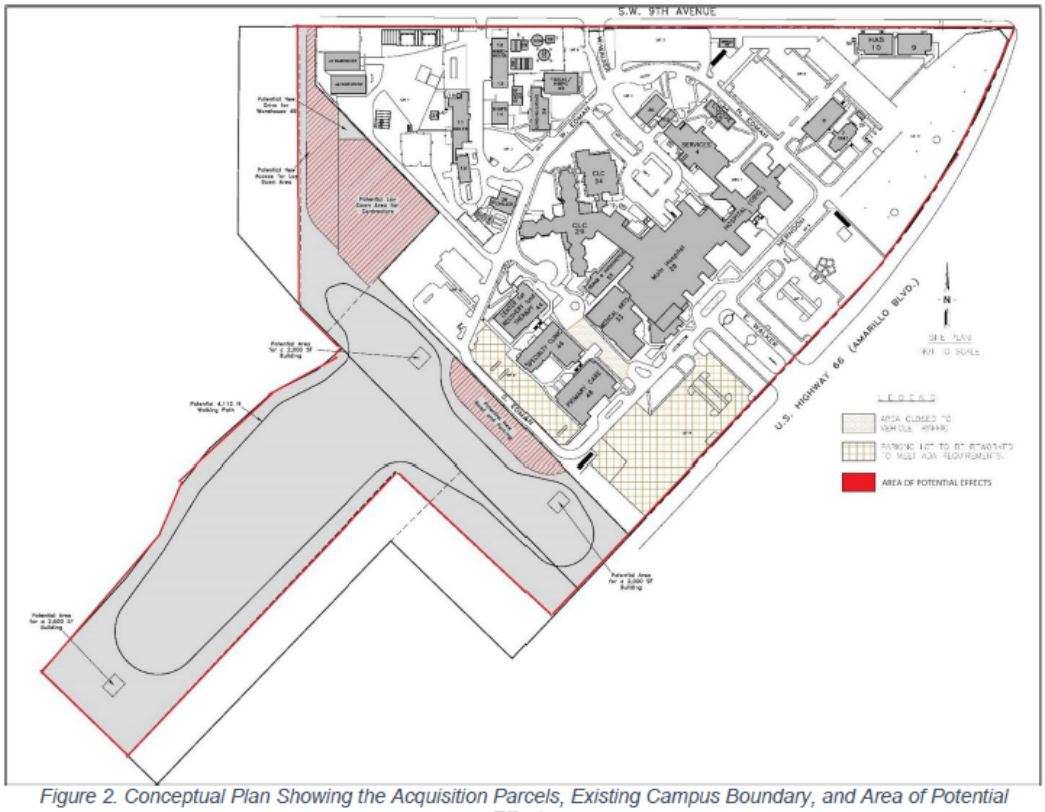

Figure 2. Conceptual Plan Showing the Acquisition Parcels, Existing Campus Boundary, and Area of Potential Effects.

Identification of Historic Properties

VA reviewed the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), THC, and other resources to identify historic properties within and near the APE. USGS Topographic Maps and other information regarding the physical setting of this project parcel were reviewed to assist with the interpretation of subsurface water movement near the property and the potential for archeological resources.

Built Resources

Our review of this data confirmed that the only built resource eligible for listing on the NRHP located within the APE is Building 1 of the Thomas E. Creek VAMC. However, that portion of the campus will not be physically or visually affected by the Undertaking. No NRHP-listed historic districts, multiple property listings, or individually listed historic buildings or structures are in the APE.

The closest cultural resources in a one-mile radius but outside of the APE are the Smith-Rogers House, a registered Texas Historical Landmark, and the Helium Time Columns Monument and Museum, which has a historical marker but is not a registered landmark. These resources will not be affected by activities conducted within the APE.

Archeological Resources

Our review of THC data confirms that there are no previously identified archeological sites either within one mile of the proposed construction or within the APE. The new acquisition parcels are currently vacant. Based upon review of historical aerial photographs, this land area has been heavily altered by ground clearance, blading, contouring, and emplacement of stormwater infrastructure.

Historic Landscapes

No identified historic landscapes are located on or within a one-mile radius of the APE.

Traditional Cultural Properties

Our review of THC site files indicates there are no Traditional Cultural Properties within one mile nor within the APE.

Effects and Determination

Only one known historic property (Building 1) falls within the APE, but Building 1 will not be physically or visually affected by the Undertaking. Based on a review of previous archeological surveys as well as soils and land use data, it is likely that sufficient disturbance has occurred across the proposed acquisition parcels, as well as the existing VAMC campus, to render any archeological sites, if present, out of context and thus ineligible for listing to the NRHP. Therefore, VA asserts a finding of no adverse effect to historic properties pursuant to 36 CFR §800.5(b).

VA requests the THC's concurrence on the agency's finding per 36 CFR Part 800. Should you require further information, please contact me at Anthony.campbell1@va.gov. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

ANTHONY CAMPBELL Digitally signed by ANTHONY CAMPBELL Date: 2023.04.11 11:58:05 -04'00'

Anthony Campbell
VA Project Manager

Attachment

SHPO Response/Concurrence

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
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Re: Project Review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
THC Tracking #202307088
Date: 05/12/2023
Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Amarillo VA Medical Center in Amarillo
6010 Amarillo Boulevard
Amarillo,TX

Description: Initiation of Section 106 Consultation for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Amarillo VA Medical Center in Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Dear Aaron Norment:
Thank you for your submittal regarding the above-referenced project. This response represents the comments of the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), pursuant to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The review staff, led by Brad Jones, Caitlin Brashear and Katharine Sheldon, has completed its review and has made the following determinations based on the information submitted for review:

Above-Ground Resources

- Property/properties are eligible for listing or already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- No adverse effects on historic properties.
- THC/SHPO concurs with information provided.

Archeology Comments

- No adverse effects on historic properties.

We have the following comments: The History Programs Division review staff, led by Caitlin Brashear, has determined that there are known historic resources in the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed project including the Amarillo Veterans Administration Medical Center (Building 1), which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2016. The Division of Architecture review staff, led by Katharine Sheldon, concurs that the proposed scope of work will have no adverse effect, either physical or visual, on the NRHP eligible Amarillo Veterans Administration Medical Center (Building 1).

We look forward to further consultation with your office and hope to maintain a partnership that will foster effective historic preservation. Thank you for your cooperation in this review process, and for your efforts to preserve the irreplaceable heritage of Texas. If the project changes, or if new historic properties are found, please contact the review staff. If you have any questions concerning our review or if we can be of further assistance, please email the following reviewers: brad.jones@thc.texas.gov, caitlin.brashear@thc.texas.gov, Katharine.Sheldon@thc.texas.gov.

This response has been sent through the electronic THC review and compliance system (eTRAC). Submitting your project via eTRAC eliminates mailing delays and allows you to check the status of the review, receive an

electronic response, and generate reports on your submissions. For more information, visit http://thc.texas.gov/etrac-system.

Sincerely,

Brad Jones,
Archeology Division Director

for Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Executive Director, Texas Historical Commission

Please do not respond to this email.

Amarillo Globe-News NOA Affidavit

LOCALiQ

Austin American-Statesman
Amarillo Globe-News
Lubbock Avalanche-Journal

PO Box 631667 Cincinnati, OH 45263-1667

PROOF OF PUBLICATION

Awen Solutions Group
4196 Merchant PLZ # 711
Woodbridge VA 22192-5085

STATE OF WISCONSIN, COUNTY OF BROWN

The Amarillo Globe-News is a daily newspaper of general circulation, printed and published in Amarillo, Potter County, Texas; that the publication, a copy of which is attached hereto, was published in the said newspaper in the issues dated:

04/21/2023, 04/23/2023

Sworn to and subscribed before on 04/23/2023

Legal Clerk

Notary, State of WI, County of Brown
3/7/27

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KAITLYN FELTY
Notary Public
State of Wisconsin

Notice of Availability of Draft Environmental Assessment

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announces the availability of a Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the proposed acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land adjacent to the Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center located at 6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard in Amarillo, TX to implement improvements at the medical center to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. The Draft EA has been prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality regulations (40 CFR Part 1500) and VA's NEPA regulations (38 CFR Part 26).

The Draft EA is available at https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp and at the Amarillo Northwest Public Library, 6100 W 9th St., Amarillo, TX 79106. Please submit comments to vacoenvironment@va.gov with the subject line "Amarillo VAMC EA". Comments must be received by May 22, 2023.

Page 1 of 1

Stakeholder NOA Letter

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Office of Construction & Facilities Management
Washington DC 20420

April 14, 2023

SUBJECT: Notice of Availability of the Draft Environmental Assessment for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Amarillo, TX

Dear Valued Stakeholder:

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announces the availability of a draft environmental assessment (Draft EA) for public review and comment. The Draft EA evaluates the potential environmental impacts of the proposed acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land west of the Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center located at 6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard in Amarillo, TX (Figure 1).

The purpose of this acquisition is to facilitate implementation of various improvements at the existing VAMC campus to address parking, accessibility, and physical security deficiencies. Additional infrastructure such as new parking lots, a small multi-purpose building, and a walking path are also being contemplated following the acquisition (Figure 2).

The Draft EA is available for review at https://www.cfm.va.gov/environmental/index.asp. A hard copy for review is also on file at the Amarillo Northwest Public Library, 6100 W. 9th St., Amarillo, TX 79106. Comments will be accepted for a 30-day period closing on May 22, 2023. Please address all comments to vacoenvironment@va.gov and include the subject line "Amarillo VAMC EA" in the correspondence.

VA will prepare and publish a Final EA following the 30-day comment period. The Final EA will summarize and address comments received on the Draft EA. For additional information or questions, please contact Jason Sturm at jason.sturm@va.gov. Reference "Amarillo VAMC EA" in your correspondence.

Respectfully,

PATRICK READ Digitally signed by PATRICK READ Date: 2023.04.14 13:01:18 -04'00'

Patrick Read
Acting Director, Environmental Program Office
Office of Construction and Facilities Management

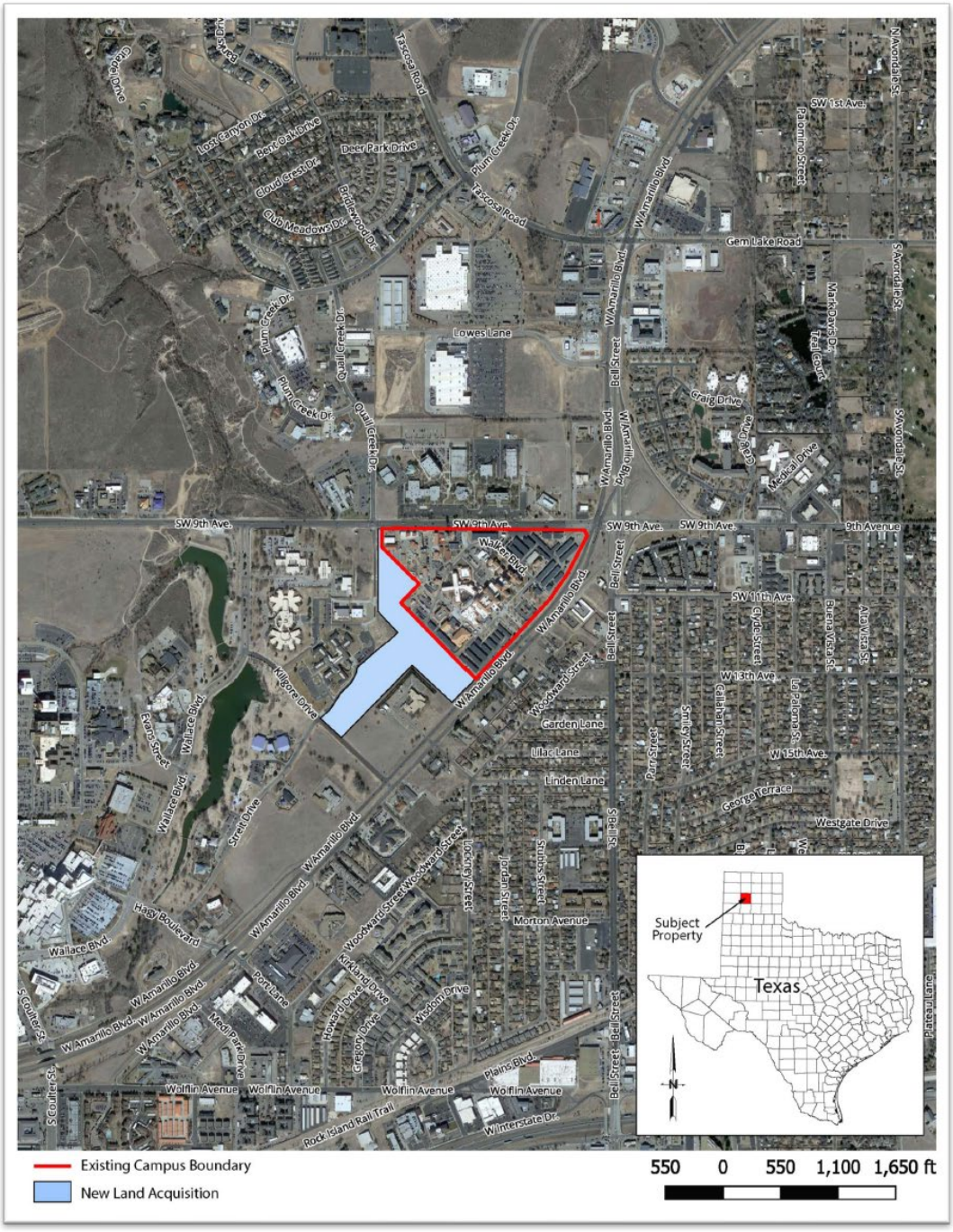

Figure 1. Site Location

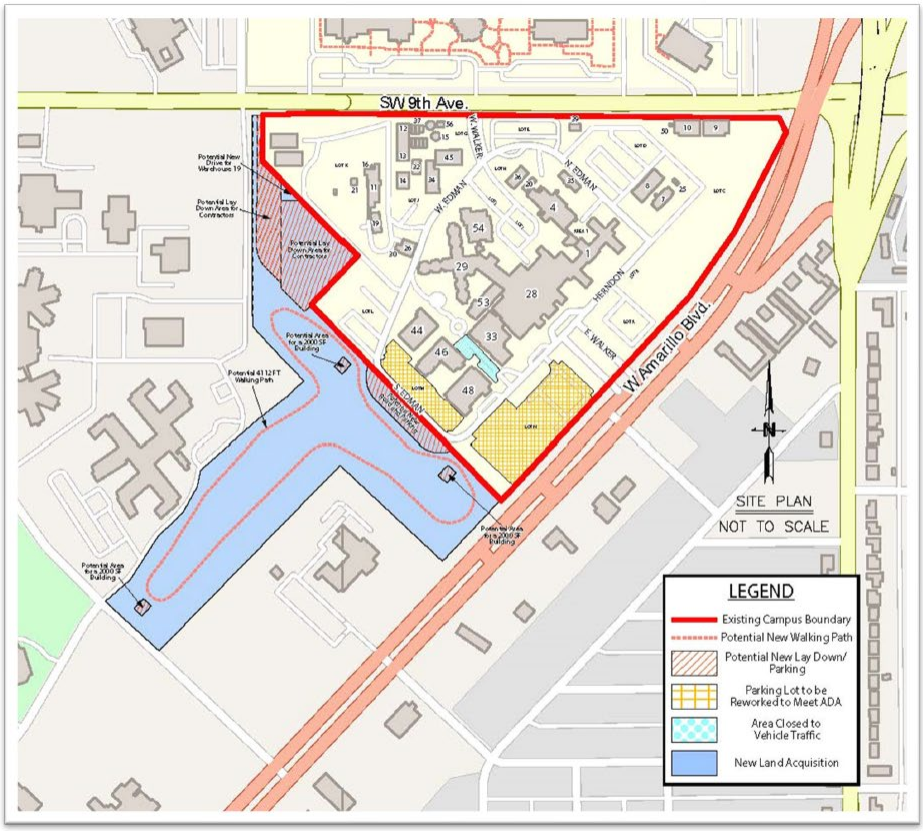

Figure 2. Proposed Action Concept

Draft EA NOA Distribution List

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFO	EMAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Federal/State Elected Officials			
U.S. Senator John Cornyn	Chief of Staff Drew Brandewie	senator@cornyn.senate.gov drew_brandewie@cornyn.senate.gov	517 Hart Senate Office Bldg. Washington, D.C. 20510
U.S. Senator Ted Cruz	Chief of Staff Steve Chartan	senator@cruz.senate.gov steve_chartan@cruz.senate.gov	127A Russell Senate Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20510
U.S. Representative Ronny Jackson (TX-13 Congressional District)	Chief of Staff Jeff Billman	ronny.jackson@mail.house.gov jeff.billman@mail.house.gov	118 Cannon House Office Bldg. Washington, DC 20515
Texas State Senator Kel Seliger (District 31)	N/A	kel.seliger@senate.texas.gov	P.O. Box 12068 Capitol Station Austin, Texas 78711
Texas State Representative Walter Thomas (Four) Price (District 87)	N/A	four.price@house.texas.gov	P.O. Box 2910 Austin, Texas 78768
Local Elected Officials			
Mayor Ginger Nelson	N/A	ginger.nelson@amarillo.gov	601 South Buchanan Street Amarillo, TX 79101
Potter County Commissioner Warren Coble (Precinct Four)	N/A	warrencoble@co.potter.tx.us	500 South Fillmore, Suite 124 Amarillo, TX 79101
Federal Agencies			
U.S. EPA Region 6	Robert Houston, Staff Director, Communities, Tribes and Environmental Assessment	houston.robert@epa.gov	N/A
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Austin Ecological Services Field Office	Christina Williams, Section 7 Consultations and HCPs	christina_williams@fws.gov	N/A
State of Texas Agencies			
Texas Commission on Environmental Quality	N/A	NEPA@tceq.texas.gov	National Environmental Policy Act, MC-118 Texas Commission on Environmental Quality PO Box 13087 Austin, TX 78711-3087
Texas Parks and Wildlife Department	David Yoskowitz, Executive Director	David.yoskowitz@tpwd.texas.gov	4200 Smith School Road Austin, TX 78744

AGENCY/ORGANIZATION	CONTACT INFO	EMAIL	MAILING ADDRESS
Texas State Soil and Water Conservation Board	Rex Isom, Executive Director	risom@tsswcb.texas.gov	1497 Country View Lane Temple, TX 76504
Texas Department of Transportation	Doug Booher, Director Environmental Affairs Division	doug.booher@txdot.gov	6230 E Stassney Lane Austin, TX 78744
Texas Historical Commission	Mark S. Wolfe, SHPO	Mark.wolfe@thc.texas.gov	P.O. Box 12276 Austin, TX 78711
Regional Agencies			
Panhandle Regional Planning Commission (PRPC)	Dustin Meyer, Executive Director	dmeyer@theprpc.org	P.O. Box 9257 Amarillo, TX 79105-9257
County/Local Agencies			
City of Amarillo Department of Public Works	Donny Hooper, Director	COAPublicWorks@amarillo.gov	808 S. Buchanan St., 2nd Floor Amarillo, TX 79105-1971
City of Amarillo Planning Department	Cris Valverde, Director of Planning	cityplanning@amarillo.gov	P.O. Box 1971 Amarillo, TX 79105-1971
Federally Recognized Tribes			
Apache Tribe of Oklahoma	Bobby Komardley, Chairman	bkomardley@outlook.com	PO Box 1330 Anadarko, OK 73005
Comanche Nation, Oklahoma	Mark Woommavovah, Chairman Martina Minthorn, THPO	Jennifer.rodriguez@comanchenation.com martina.minthorn@comanchenation.com	PO Box 908 Lawton, OK 73502
Jicarilla Apache Nation, New Mexico	Wainwright Velarde, President Jeffrey Blythe, THPO	janthpo@gmail.com	PO Box 507 Dulce, NM 87528- 0507
Tonkawa Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma	Russell Martin, President Lauren Norman-Brown, THPO	Rmartin@tonkawatribe.com lbrown@tonkawatribe.com	1 Rush Buffalo Road Tonkawa, OK 74653
Wichita and Affiliated Tribes (Wichita, Keechi, Waco & Tawakonie), Oklahoma	Terri Parton, President Gary McAdams, THPO	Terri.parton@wichitatribe.com Gary.mcadams@wichitatribe.com	PO Box 729 Anadarko, OK 73005

Draft EA Public Comments

Comment date	Commenter	Section/Topic	Comment	VA Response
5/3/23	TCEQ	General	*[excerpted from attached comment letter]* We are in support of the project. The environmental assessment addresses issues related to surface and groundwater quality.	No response required
5/8/2023	Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	3.3 Cultural and Historic Resources	*[excerpted from attached comment letter]* We have no comments pursuant to NEPA at this time… If you determine, through consultation with the consulting parties, that the undertaking will adversely affect historic properties, or that the development of a Section 106 agreement document (Agreement) is necessary, VA must notify the ACHP and provide the documentation detailed at 36 CFR § 800.11(e).	The undertaking was determined to have no adverse effect on historic properties. THC provided concurrence with this finding of effect on 5/12/2023. No Indian Tribes or other consulting parties contacted expressed interest in consultation.
5/12/2023	TPWD	3.6 Wildlife and Habitat	Thank you for submitting the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for the Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Amarillo, Texas for review. Based on review of the documentation and description provided and with implementation of the minimization measures described in Section 3.6.2 of the EA, the Environmental Review Team does not anticipate significant adverse impacts to rare, threatened, or endangered species, or other fish and wildlife resources.	No response required
5/19/2023	THC	3.3 Cultural and Historic Resources	*[excerpted from attached comment email]* The History Programs Division review staff, led by Caitlin Brashear, has determined that there are known historic resources in the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed project including the Amarillo Veterans Administration Medical Center (Building 1), which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2016. The Division of Architecture review staff, led by Katharine Sheldon, has determined that the proposed scope of work will have no adverse effect on any historic resources within the APE.	No response required

TEXAS COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Protecting Texas by Reducing and Preventing Pollution

May 3, 2023

Jason Sturm
Environmental Engineer
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of Construction and Facilities Management

Via: **E-mail**

Re: **TCEQ NEPA Request #2023-079. Proposed Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. Potter County.**

Dear Mr. Sturm,

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) has reviewed the above-referenced project and offers the following comments:

The proposed action is located in Potter County, which is currently designated attainment/unclassifiable for the National Ambient Air Quality Standards for all six criteria air pollutants. Federal Clean Air Act, §176(c) general conformity requirements do not apply for this action.

We are in support of the project. The environmental assessment addresses issues related to surface and groundwater quality.

Any debris or waste disposal should be at an appropriately authorized disposal facility.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this project. If you have any questions, please contact the agency NEPA coordinator at (512) 239-2619 or NEPA@tceq.texas.gov

Sincerely,

Ryan Vise,
Division Director
External Relations

May 8, 2023

Dr. Rodney Gonzalez
Director
Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center
6010 W. Amarillo Blvd
Amarillo, Texas 79106

Ref: *Expansion and Improvements to the Thomas E. Creek Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center (Amarillo VAMC EA)*
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas
ACHP Project Number: 019493

Dear Dr. Gonzalez:

On April 20, 2023, the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) received your notification for the proposed development of an Environmental Assessment for the referenced project. Our comments were requested regarding the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. We have no comments pursuant to NEPA at this time.

In order to ensure compliance with Section 106, the ACHP encourages the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to initiate the Section 106 process by notifying, at your earliest convenience, the Texas State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO), Indian tribes, and other consulting parties pursuant to 36 CFR § 800.3 to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and its implementing regulations, "Protection of Historic Properties" (36 CFR Part 800). Through early consultation, your agency will be able to determine the appropriate strategy to ensure Section 106 compliance for this project. The regulations (at 36 CFR § 800.3(b)) specifically encourage federal agencies to coordinate their Section 106 review with other required environmental reviews, such as NEPA, in order to reduce duplicative analyses and overlapping review periods.

VA should continue consultation with the Texas SHPO, Indian tribes, and other consulting parties to identify and evaluate historic properties and to assess any potential adverse effects on those historic properties. If you determine, through consultation with the consulting parties, that the undertaking will adversely affect historic properties, or that the development of a Section 106 agreement document (Agreement) is necessary, VA must notify the ACHP and provide the documentation detailed at 36 CFR § 800.11(e). In the event that this undertaking is covered under the terms of an existing Agreement, you should follow the process set forth in the applicable Agreement.

Should you have any questions or require additional assistance, please contact Vanessa Hanvey at

ADVISORY COUNCIL ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

401 F Street NW, Suite 308 ▯ Washington, DC 20001-2637
Phone: 202-517-0200 ▯ Fax: 202-517-6381 ▯ achp@achp.gov ▯ www.achp.gov

2

(202) 517-0224 or by e-mail at vhanvey@achp.gov and reference the ACHP Project Number above.

Sincerely,

Christopher Koeppel
Assistant Director
Office of Federal Agency Programs
Federal Property Management Section

Re: Project Review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act
THC Tracking #202307732
Date: 05/19/2023
Thomas E. Creek VA Medical Center
6010 W. Amarillo Boulevard
Amarillo,TX

Description: Proposed expansion and improvements. Acquisition of approximately 17.4 acres of undeveloped land.

Dear Jason Sturm:
Thank you for your submittal regarding the above-referenced project. This response represents the comments of the State Historic Preservation Officer, the Executive Director of the Texas Historical Commission (THC), pursuant to review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act.

The review staff, led by Brad Jones, Caitlin Brashear and Katharine Sheldon, has completed its review and has made the following determinations based on the information submitted for review:

Above-Ground Resources

- Property/properties are eligible for listing or already listed in the National Register of Historic Places.
- No adverse effects on historic properties.
- THC/SHPO concurs with information provided.

Archeology Comments

- No historic properties affected. However, if cultural materials are encountered during construction or disturbance activities, work should cease in the immediate area; work can continue where no cultural materials are present. Please contact the THC's Archeology Division at 512-463-6096 to consult on further actions that may be necessary to protect the cultural remains.

We have the following comments: The History Programs Division review staff, led by Caitlin Brashear, has determined that there are known historic resources in the Area of Potential Effect (APE) for the proposed project including the Amarillo Veterans Administration Medical Center (Building 1), which was determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) in 2016. The Division of Architecture review staff, led by Katharine Sheldon, has determined that the proposed scope of work will have no adverse effect on any historic resources within the APE.

We look forward to further consultation with your office and hope to maintain a partnership that will foster effective historic preservation. Thank you for your cooperation in this review process, and for your efforts to preserve the irreplaceable heritage of Texas. If the project changes, or if new historic properties are found, please contact the review staff. If you have any questions concerning our review or if we can be of further assistance, please email the following reviewers: brad.jones@thc.texas.gov, caitlin.brashear@thc.texas.gov, Katharine.Sheldon@thc.texas.gov.