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**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT
(FONSI)**

U. S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Community-Based Outpatient Clinic in Southern Alameda County,
California

July 28, 2011

Background

The veterans in Southern Alameda County currently are required to travel to the Livermore VA Medical Center (VAMC) for care. The Livermore campus was originally constructed in the 1920's and its aging infrastructure requires constant care and maintenance which uses VA financial resources that could otherwise be used to provide better quality care for veterans.

After consideration of several other alternatives of how to provide care for Veterans, such as continuing operations at the Livermore VAMC, leasing space, renovating existing facilities, and contracting out services, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) determined that the best option was the purchase of property and construction of a new Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC). Through a competitive market survey process, the VA identified two possible locations for the proposed CBOC: the Technology Court site and the South Grimmer Boulevard site. Both sites are located in the City of Fremont within about one mile of each other.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508) and VA Regulations (38 CFR Section 26.4(a)). The VA assessed the potential impacts of the short-term construction and long-term operation of the proposed CBOC to serve the veterans in Southern Alameda County.

Summary of the Proposed Action

The CBOC would be a approximately 84,000 square-feet. This CBOC would provide primary care and mental health services, and would include medical/surgical sub-specialty clinics, audiology and speech pathology facilities, an eye clinic, basic blood laboratory, basic pharmacy, physical medicine and rehabilitation facilities, prosthetics services, and radiology (general X-ray) services. The CBOC would not include an emergency room, urgent care, or outpatient surgery services. Parking for approximately 420 vehicles would be provided on site for Veterans, visitors and employees. The CBOC would employ approximately 100 medical and administrative staff.

The CBOC would be LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver Certified in accordance with the April 2010 Sustainable Design and Energy Reduction Guide. Construction of the new facility is dependent upon receiving additional major construction funding. Construction is tentatively anticipated to begin in 2014/2015 and would take approximately three years. Operation of the CBOC is anticipated to begin in late 2017 or 2018.

Consideration of Alternatives

The VA considered the following five alternative scenarios:

- No Action
- Leasing Space
- Renovation
- Contracting Out
- New Construction

The No Action alternative was determined to potentially expose veterans to reduced quality of care and an inefficient use of VA resources. This alternative was the least preferred alternative.

Based on a cost effectiveness analysis the Leasing Space alternative was determined not to be feasible because it would be more expensive over a 20-year full service lease than new construction. In addition, the likelihood was low of finding space that suited the needs of the VA in the geographic area best situated to serve the veterans in the Southern Alameda County area.

The Renovation alternative was not considered feasible because using the existing facility would not provide a CBOC in proximity to where veterans live, and temporary facilities would have to be found while areas of the existing facility were renovated.

The contracting out alternative was determined to be cost prohibitive because according to the VA's workload projections approximately 30,000 outpatient visits would be contracted to community providers annually.

The new construction alternative was determined to be the preferred alternative because it would replace outdated facilities with state-of-the-art facilities and locate the ambulatory care services closer to where veterans reside. The new facilities would also attract a highly qualified and innovative workforce who would provide better quality care for veterans.

To implement this alternative, the VA looked at two alternative site locations for the proposed CBOC to serve veterans in Southern Alameda County:

- *Alternative 1—Technology Court Site:* located at 4100-4149 Technology Drive, Fremont
- *Alternative 2—South Grimmer Boulevard Site:* located at the intersection of Grimmer Boulevard and Old Warm Springs Boulevard, Fremont

Summary of Environmental Consequences

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared to evaluate the two alternative site locations. The EA analysis indicates that the two sites have equal merit. The proposed action at either of the proposed site locations would not result in short-term, long-term, or cumulative impacts related to the following topics: land use, floodplains, socioeconomics, community services, utilities, and environmental justice.

Ground disturbing activities during construction also have the potential to result in the discovery of human remains or to damage archaeological resources. As outlined in Chapter 5, Mitigation / Management Measures, of the EA, if cultural artifacts are uncovered, all activity in the vicinity of the find would be stopped until a qualified archaeologist determines the significance of the find. If human remains are uncovered, all activity in the vicinity of the find would be stopped and the Alameda County coroner would evaluate the remains and follow the appropriate procedures and protocols.

Construction activities also have the potential to disturb nesting birds and roosting bats. As outlined in Chapter 5 of the EA, by scheduling construction around the bird nesting period and avoiding the removal of trees, these potentially adverse effects would be avoided.

The South Grimmer Boulevard site would require soil sampling and sealing of unused groundwater wells at the site. With implementation of the management measures outlined in Chapter 5 of the EA, these potential adverse effects would not be significant. No significant adverse long term effects from operation of the proposed CBOC were identified at either of the proposed sites.

In conclusion, the proposed action at either site would not result in significant adverse effects on the human environment or natural resources executed at either of the proposed sites. The proposed action would provide a positive long term effect by providing new jobs, while achieving the objectives of the VA to provide quality care to veterans in closer proximity to their places of residence.

Public Review

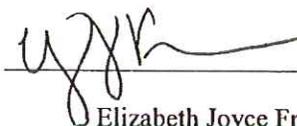
The Draft EA was circulated for a 30-day public comment period extending from February 24, 2011 to March 25, 2011. A notice of availability for the Draft EA was published in the *Fremont Argus* on Monday and Tuesday, February 21 and 22, 2011, and Sunday, February 27, 2011. Copies of the Draft EA were mailed to the State Clearinghouse for distribution to State agencies. Copies were made available at the Fremont Main library and the Niles Library.

The Draft EA comment period was extended an additional two weeks through April 8, 2011. Notice of the extension was published in the *Fremont Argus* on Monday and Tuesday, March 31 and April 1, 2011, and Sunday, April 3, 2011.

All comments were responded to in Chapter 10, Responses to Comments, in the Final EA, and where appropriate, the Final EA was revised to address the comments. The Final EA was completed on June 17, 2011 and is attached to this FONSI.

Decision

As a result of the analysis of impacts of the proposed action contained in the EA, it is the VA's conclusion that, with the implementation of best management practices, compliance with regulatory requirements, and implementation of the management measures outlined in the EA, the proposed action would not have a significant environmental impact, therefore, an environmental impact statement would not be prepared. VA has determined that selection of the Technology Court site would best serve the veterans in Southern Alameda County, California.



Elizabeth Joyce Freeman
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U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Attachment: Final Environmental Assessment, *Proposed Community Based Outpatient Clinic in Southern Alameda County, California*