



**Department of  
Veterans Affairs**

**Office of Public Affairs  
Media Relations**

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# **News Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
August 21, 2007

## **VA Moves Closer to Major Improvements in Los Angeles *New Facilities for Health Care and Homeless, Plus Columbarium Studied***

LOS ANGELES -- Modern facilities for the future health care needs of Los Angeles veterans, new services for local homeless veterans, a columbarium and a regional office for the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) are all closer to becoming reality.

“These new facilities and programs show VA’s commitment to provide world-class care for veterans and other benefits for Los Angeles area veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

Nicholson’s announcement came as a VA contractor completed its study of the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center under the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) review process, which began in 2004 to upgrade VA health care facilities across the country.

The study’s conclusions will be presented to the public and to a Local Advisory Panel appointed by VA to help the Department with its capital master plan. That meeting is scheduled for September 6 from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. at the Wadsworth Theater on the campus of the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center at 11301 Wilshire Boulevard.

Nicholson also announced his decision to designate buildings 205, 208 and 209 available for homeless veterans programs.

“Our goal is to help these veterans return to their communities as solid citizens, gainfully employed, living independently with restored dignity,” Nicholson said.

Plans to build a VA columbarium and relocate the VA regional office to the site are also included in all the options. The new columbarium will provide critically needed space for the cremated remains of veterans. Relocating the regional office, which handles claims for disability pay and other VA benefits, from the Los Angeles Federal Building

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to the medical center campus will provide more convenient services for veterans who need to coordinate medical care with benefits claims processing.

Agreement has been reached with the Veterans Park Conservancy to designate 16 acres of land for use on the West Los Angeles campus. All improvements and any changes will first be approved by VA. The designation will be considered as part of any final CARES decision.

At the Local Advisory Panel meeting, the consultant who prepared the study for VA will present a detailed analysis of the modernization options for VA to consider as the Department prepares to meet the future needs of southern California veterans. These options include:

- Constructing a new VA hospital;
- Renovating the existing hospital;
- Building a new VA nursing home;
- Modernizing the hospital's inpatient and outpatient mental health facilities.

The meeting is the third public forum the Local Advisory Panel has held since the beginning of the CARES process. Time will be set aside for questions, and for community members to provide VA with their input on the proposed modernization plans.

All options will take into account land already set aside for a new California state nursing home for veterans.

"It is important we receive the thoughts of the Los Angeles community before proceeding with a final plan," said Nicholson. The recommendations of the Local Advisory Panel and community feedback will be submitted to VA with the final report.

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# News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 27, 2007

## **VA Selects Modernization Plan for West Los Angeles Campus and Continues Master Planning Process for Unused Portions of the Campus**

LOS ANGELES – To ensure the future needs of Los Angeles veterans are met the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announces a Master Plan for modernization of inpatient and outpatient mental health services and a new state-of-the-art acute care patient tower and nursing home.

Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson announced today the current acute inpatient facility will be completely modernized for outpatient services, according to the strategic plan for the West Los Angeles campus. Additionally, a new VA columbarium and a new facility for the Veterans Benefits Administration Regional Office will be housed on campus.

“I have accepted the planning option #3 recommended by the Local Advisory Panel (LAP). This concludes the work of the panel. I want to thank the Panel for its guidance in making this decision. These new facilities and programs demonstrate VA’s commitment to provide world-class care and other benefits for Los Angeles area veterans,” said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicholson.

Nicholson’s announcement came after the Panel, appointed by VA to help the Department with its Capital Master Plan, met on September 6 on the campus of the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center. “In implementing these modernizations the community can be assured VA will follow all National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requirements as recommended by the LAP” Nicholson said.

As part of the plan, Nicholson also indicated VA will move as quickly as possible to develop three buildings, previously designated on campus, available for homeless veterans programs.

“Our goal is to help these veterans return to their communities as solid citizens, gainfully employed, living independently with restored dignity,” Nicholson said.

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These VA facility modernization decisions along with the agreement with the Veterans Park Conservancy to designate 16 acres of land for the Veterans Memorial Park, the Fisher House, and the buildings designated for transitional housing for the homeless represent a major portion of the Master Plan for the VA campus. VA is committed to a public process with community input to complete the Master Plan for the VA campus as soon as possible.

This decision concludes the Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services (CARES) review process for West Los Angeles, which began in 2004 as part of an effort to upgrade VA health care facilities across the country.

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