

III. Stakeholder Engagement

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A. Methodology

Introduction

To engage the Veteran community and other stakeholders integral to ongoing master planning process, VA and partners created and developed numerous options through which stakeholders could participate. Recognizing the need to accommodate the variety of stakeholder situations and schedules, the team provided opportunities for input that included day time meetings, evening meetings, participation in Veteran community events, briefings with key stakeholders and stakeholder groups, and use of multiple online platforms to enable participation from home. There was also a 45 day public comment period, where more than 1,000 comments were provided by various stakeholders and the greater Los Angeles community. The comments in part regarded ways to transform the campus into a safe, inviting, and welcoming 21st Century VA facility, which includes supportive housing for Veterans, particularly for homeless, severely disabled, aging, and female Veterans. This objective will enable VA to help end Veteran homelessness in Greater Los Angeles, and represent a state-of-the-art facility that serves as a model for revitalizing other facilities in the VA network.

Methods of stakeholder engagement included a wide variety of strategies such as individual, small group, and large group outreach meetings in settings to ensure, support and encourage meaningful dialogue, and garner thoughtful input from participants. These strategies were implemented through face-to-face individual meetings and conversations; and small group advisory councils and stakeholder interest groups; as well as large group brainstorming, town halls, and public meetings.

Materials and information were also provided and shared through a multitude of platforms including video conferencing, telephone calls, an interactive website, fliers, printed fact sheets, document sharing and review, illustrative project boards, and presentations. During community meetings, large scale site maps on which stakeholders could write comments were employed to allow in-person brainstorming and provided an effective means to collect hand-written stakeholder input by Veterans and community members in attendance.

Goals

- Ensure as many stakeholders as possible receive information related to the master planning process
- Address myths and misinformation
- Provide documentation that demonstrates a comprehensive and thorough outreach effort
- Push information from master plan team to the public
- Receive stakeholder's concerns and ideas

Approach

- Provide multiple avenues for community participation, not just via meetings.
- Recruit stakeholders to assist in “peer-to-peer” engagement by reaching out to their stakeholders to cover the expansive stakeholder audience.
- Initiate and maintain regular and ongoing contact and collaboration with the decision-maker(s).
- Coordinate closely with the project team including client, architects, entitlement and environmental consultants, attorney, etc.
- Provide timely and proactive communication with stakeholders regarding project milestones.
- The activities, materials and tools were employed to support the goals of the Stakeholder Engagement process and to ensure broad-based participation.

B. Data Collection

User Friendly Types of Communication

In recognition of the need to offer a variety of platforms for participation, the team employed channels and content to engage with the public.

- Help House LA Vets Website - www.helphouselavets.com included the following sections:
 - o Learn More:
 - Project Overview
 - Frequently Asked Questions
 - Project Timeline
 - o Take Action:
 - Spread the Word: share page
 - Outreach Toolkit: downloadable content for sharing
 - Leaderboard: gamification of stakeholder participation, points awarded to stakeholders who engaged the most with the program.
 - o Share Your Vision: Online Comments
 - o The Latest: Blog updated with milestone announcements and news
 - o Events and Meetings: Online calendar with map and RSVP section
- Community Information Hotline - (310) 879-5773 was available for stakeholder calls responded to by the outreach team.
- Email Address - hello@helphouselavets.com was available for stakeholder emails.
- Email Campaign - 11 emails were sent
- "Are you helping? Let's Help House LA Vets"
 - o 7/31/15
 - o "#HelpHouseLAVets - Social Media Day - August 4th" - 7/31/15
 - o REMINDER: #HelpHouseLAVets - Social Media Day - August 4th - 8/3/15
 - o "Design Open Houses Every Tuesday in August" - 8/7/15
 - o "Web Stream This Week's Design Open House!" - 8/11/15
 - o Reminder: Next Week's Outreach Events" - 8/14/15
 - o "Reminder: Next Week's Outreach Events" - 8/21/15
 - o "Attend an Event and Comment Online!" - 9/4/15
 - o "We're Headed to Long Beach This Week" - 9/14/15
 - o "We want to hear from you!" - 9/18/15
 - o "Attend Master Plan Town Hall in West LA (Oct. 7)" - 9/24/15
- Community Mailing: to Stakeholder Database and Occupants within 1000 feet radius of the Campus (5,000 contacts)
- Print Advertisements:
 - o LA Weekly 8/20/15 - 8/27/15
 - o Brentwood News 8/21/15 - 9/21/15
 - o Santa Monica Mirror 8/21/15 - 9/21/15
- Public Information Materials:
 - o Fact Sheet
 - o Frequently Asked Questions
 - o PowerPoint Presentation
 - o Outreach Timeline



Avenues and Activities for Community Participation

This list includes activities from June 20, 2015 through September 24, 2015.

To accommodate the diversity of audiences that must be reached on this issue, the outreach team offered stakeholders a variety of options for participation, via day time meetings, evening meetings, participation in Veteran community events, and briefings at key stakeholder groups to online platforms to enable participation from home.

Attendance figures are provided in Appendix F.

Pop-Up Workshops (6)

Stakeholders were engaged in a visual and interactive format to weigh in on the Draft Master Plan. Large-scale boards were provided to enable participants to engage in two activities to provide feedback. A board was populated with 30 photos representing a range of activities and uses and stakeholders could place a marker next to the ones they thought should be included. To gather open-ended comments a post-it board was used to enable participants to add in their own suggestions. These were conversations starters that led to stakeholder completing a hard-copy comment form as an option. Stakeholders were informed of the pop-up workshops via e-blasts, social media posts and the website.

- 5th Annual Vietnam Veterans Celebration and Picnic (August 1, 2015)
- West Los Angeles VA's Farmers Market (August 5, 2015)
- GLA Campus Farmers Market (August 19, 2015)
- Veterans Homeless Town Hall Co-Hosted by the Honorable Hilda Solis (August 20, 2015)
- Women's Warrior Fest (September 11, 2015)
- Long Beach Homeless Veteran Town Hall (September 17, 2015)

Weekly Design Open Houses (6)

The master plan team opened its doors at the Welcome Center of the GLA Campus to the public to collaborate and gather feedback on the Preliminary Draft Master Plan. The workshops were held during evenings and weekdays on the following dates. Stakeholders were informed of the open houses via e-blasts, newspaper advertisements, social media posts, mailings, flyer distributions on the GLA Campus, outreach calls, and the website. Open houses, with VA staff in attendance, took place on the following dates:

- July 21, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m.
- July 28, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m.
- August 4, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m.
- August 11, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m. (afternoon session) 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. (evening session)
- August 18, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m.
- August 25, 2015 - 1:30 to 4 p.m. (afternoon session) 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. (evening session)

Updates at the Monthly Homeless Veterans Town Hall Meetings and Neighborhood Community Meetings (12)

The master planning team provided status updates on master plan progress at five monthly gatherings organized by VA regarding its Homeless Strategy. The master planning team also presented and collected feedback as guests at seven Neighborhood Council meetings. During these meetings outreach team staff was on hand to gather contact information and comment sheets from stakeholders. The workshops were held during evenings and weekdays on the following dates. Stakeholders were informed of the updates via e-blasts, newspaper advertisements, social media posts, mailings, flyer distributions on the GLA Campus, outreach

calls and the website. Town Hall and Neighborhood Community Meetings took place on the following dates.

- Town Hall #1 at GLA Campus (June 23, 2015)
- Westwood Community Meeting (July 21, 2015)
- West Los Angeles Community Meeting (July 22, 2015)
- Town Hall #2 at Sepulveda Ambulatory Care Center (July 23, 2015)
- Pacific Palisades Community Meeting (July 23, 2015)
- Brentwood Community Meeting (July 28, 2015)
- Santa Monica Community Meeting (July 28, 2015)
- Town Hall #3 at Grace Black Auditorium, San Gabriel Valley (August 20, 2015)
- Venice Forward Community Meeting, (September 10, 2015)
- Town Hall #4 at Century Villages at Cabrillo, Long Beach (September 17, 2015)
- South Los Angeles Community Meeting (October 6, 2015)
- Town Hall #5 at GLA Campus (October 7, 2015)



Key Stakeholder Group Briefings (35+)

Stakeholder groups that represent constituencies throughout Greater Los Angeles were briefed by the master planning team.

- Office of US Senator Barbara Boxer
- Office of US Senator Diane Feinstein
- Office of US Congressman Ted Lieu
- Office of County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl
- Office of County Supervisor Don Knabe
- Office of County Supervisor Hilda Solis
- Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti, City of Los Angeles
- Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Mike Bonin, District 11
- Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Koretz, District 5
- Office of US Congresswoman Judy Chu
- Office of State Senator Ben Allen, District 26
- Office of State Assembly, District 54 Sebastian Ridley-Thomas
- Office of State Assembly, District 50 Richard Bloom
- Office of US Congressman Xavier Becerra
- Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember David Ryu, District 4

- Office of State Senator Holly Mitchell
- Office of State Assemblymember David Hadley
- Office of State Senator Tony Cardenas
- Office of US Congressman Adam Schiff
- Office of Los Angeles City Councilmember Paul Krekorian
- Office of State Senator Ed Hernandez
- Office of US Congresswoman Karen Bass
- Office of State Assemblymember Autumn Burke
- Office of US Congresswoman Norma Torres
- Office of US Congressman Kevin McCarthy
- Office of US Congresswoman Maxine Waters
- Office of US Congressman Ed Royce
- Office of State Assemblymember Miguel Santiago
- Affordable Housing Government Stakeholder Focus Group with PHAs and HCID
- LA Veterans Collaborative Meeting USC Collaborative
- Military Veterans Advisory Council, City Hall
- VSO Coalition
- VA Homeless Programs Summit
- Impact Hub Los Angeles - Housing LA's Homeless
- VA Staff and User Group Meetings

Spreading Information through Peer-to-Peer Engagement

Stakeholders were encouraged to help spread the word by sharing master planning information with their networks.

Social Media Posts and Engagement – facebook.com/VAWestLAMasterPlan

- Organic Reach: 15,769
- Paid Reach: 133,371
- Twitter @VAMasterPlanLA
 - Followers: 85 total Twitter Followers to date
 - Retweets: 118 @VAMasterPlanLA tweets were reposted
 - @Mentions: The @VAMasterPlanLA Twitter feed received 19 mention
 - Favorites: 22 @VAMasterPlanLA tweets were marked as a favorite
 - Tweets posted by account: 65



Social Media Day

To raise awareness about ways Los Angeles area stakeholders can provide input on the Draft Master Plan, the outreach team placed calls to government offices and organizations to share via social media channels the helpouselavets.org website with a post encouraging stakeholders to take our online questionnaire to share their vision for the Draft Master Plan. The Social Media Day was held August 4, 2015, and engagement with stakeholders continued throughout the project via:

- Calls to 332 Veterans service organizations
- Calls to 35 elected official offices
- Calls to 98 community stakeholders who voiced an interest in getting involved

Survey Outreach

In an effort to further engage Veterans that may not have access to traditional forms of outreach, the team collaborated with partner Vets Advocacy, Inc. as well as other VSOs to distribute and collect surveys on future services and features of the GLA Campus. The team and its partners disseminated the surveys by online, print and telephone to accumulate over 1,200 responses.

The following services and features were identified by Veterans taking the surveys as priorities for the campus.

- Veterans Benefits Assistance
- Permanent Housing Options
- Employment Assistance Programs and Training
- Enhanced Mental Health Services
- Legal Services
- Gym/Fitness Center
- Computer Lab
- Child care



The entire survey results are included in Appendix F.

C. Initial Outcome in Metrics

On October 16, 2015, VA met the deadline outlined in the Principles Agreement by submitting a Preliminary Draft Master Plan to the Secretary for review. The plan was informed by the data collected from stakeholder outreach over the four month period leading up to the 16th. The following list includes outreach activities and associated metrics during the Preliminary Draft Master Plan outreach period (June 23, 2015 through October 16, 2015).

- Stakeholders were encouraged at events and via the website to provide feedback on the master planning effort. (720 comments received)
- Build and maintain website with online calendar, blog, outreach toolkit, fact sheet, presentations and other resources - 12,085 page views to date
- Build and maintain Facebook page, Twitter account, information hotline and email address
 - Followers: 1,852 total Facebook page likes to date
 - Engagement: Through our 25 wall posts and content shared, we received a total of 14,094 clicks, likes, comments, and shares on our Facebook posts.
 - Total Reach: 145,827 (the number of people who were served any activity from the Facebook page including our posts, posts to our Facebook page by other people, Facebook page like ads, mentions and check-ins)
- Calls and emails to 332 Veterans Service Organizations to provide information and encourage information sharing with their networks
- Build database with 2,165 email or mailing addresses
- Conducted briefings with 37 elected officials, neighborhood groups, and Veterans organizations
- Hosted 6 Design Open Houses, 4 Town Hall Meetings, and 6 Pop-Up Workshops
- Sent 15 email updates to database

D. Initial Recommendations

Feedback from the stakeholders meetings, surveys, and Town Halls consistently focused on the need to engage, connect, rebuild, restructure, realign, and reform. During the 120 day data gathering aspect of the Master Planning process period, Stakeholders frequently requested VA to provide more individualized care and timely access to healthcare and benefits in more modern, dignified buildings. They requested that services be reorganized in a manner where Veterans could receive like care in close proximity, and that the campus have better signs and directions to help navigate the campus, and locate where facilities and services are located. They also requested greater transparency and accountability regarding the budget and revenues being generated for the campus, third party lease agreements on the campus, oversight of non-profits providing housing and services to Veterans.

In surveys and in community meetings, Veterans consistently discussed permanent supportive housing options that serve a wide range of Veteran's needs, Veteran benefits assistance, employment assistance programs and training, improved mental health and addiction services, peer support programs, services related to traumatic brain injury, services that specifically address trauma, legal and mediation services, a gym/fitness center, computer lab, improved safety and security on campus, enhanced arts programs, cultural change that puts Veterans first, family services, an enhanced arts program, female Veteran services, restoration of the Wadsworth Chapel, greater communication from GLA medical center leadership, and better signage and accessibility as priorities for the campus.

Beyond suggesting ideas of what the campus should be, a resounding comment from Veterans was to lend input as to how the GLA campus should function, develop, and change. The idea for continued Veteran collaboration with GLA and VISN leadership stood out as a conclusive suggestion from Veterans. The stakeholders requested the continued focus on cultural and management changes to promote the Veteran's voice in decision making regarding the campus, including through more regular meetings with Veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, congressional staff, and other stakeholders. Feedback from GLA staff noted the need for VA to continue transforming the work culture, into an environment where expressing ideas, concerns, and ways to improve the operations, care, and services on campus, is truly encouraged.

E. Public Comment Period

Following the Secretary's review of the Preliminary Draft Master Plan, VA chose to provide additional opportunities for Veterans and other stakeholders to review the Preliminary Draft, follow up on initial feedback provided, and continue to participate in the planning efforts for the GLA campus. The Preliminary Draft Master Plan was published onto the Federal Register for 45 days, beginning on October 22, 2015. VA provided online links to the plan as well as hard copies at local libraries throughout the Greater Los Angeles area in an effort to encourage Veterans, members of the public and other interested parties to review and comment on the plan.

Additionally VA continued to engage the public through a series of presentations and focus groups with Veterans, elected officials and other community stakeholders.

Veteran Stakeholder Meetings during the Public Comment Period (20+)

- Brentwood Community Meeting (November 3, 2015)

- VSO Focus Group (November 5, 2015)
- Meeting with LAHSA, United Way and Mayor’s Office (November 5, 2015)
- Veteran Patient Advisory Council (November 10, 2015)
- Hawthorne Community Meeting (November 11, 2015)
- Oxnard Community Meeting (November 11, 2015)
- LA Veterans Collaborative Meeting USC Collaborative (November 11, 2015)
- Meeting with Public Housing Authorities (November 17, 2015)
- Westwood Community Meeting (November 17, 2015)
- VA Homeless Programs Summit (November 18, 2015)
- Meeting with Councilmember Bonin (November 18, 2015)
- Venice Forward Community Meeting (November 19, 2015)
- Meeting with Downtown Women’s Center (November 23, 2015)
- Elected Officials Council on Veterans (November 23, 2015)
- Vets Advocacy Family Wellness Center Focus Group (November 23, 2015)
- Ventura County Community Meeting (November 24, 2015)
- Meeting with LA County 211 (December 1, 2015)
- Meeting with LA Daily (December 1, 2015)
- Meeting with GLA Staff (December 2, 2015)
- Santa Monica Community Meeting (December 2, 2015)
- Meeting with Veterans Living in Transitional Housing on Campus (December 3, 2015)
- Meeting with Veterans in Community Living Center (December 3, 2015)
- Santa Ana Community Meeting (December 3, 2015)



Federal Register Comments

In a notice published on October 22, 2015, VA presented its Preliminary Draft Master Plan for

the GLA campus and solicited public comment on the plan for a period of 45 days. Following the completion of the 45 day public comment period on December 8, 2015, VA had received a record 1,002 comments in the Federal Register.

The majority of comments included one or more of the following topics: Arts, Recreation & Entertainment; Campus Circulation; Clinical; Connectivity; Housing & Campus Restoration; Land Use Agreements; Parking; Transparency & Accountability; and Veteran Access. Approximately 60% of the 1002 total comments fell within the scope of a master plan, while the remaining 40% addressed topics that are outside the scope of a master plan. VA addressed all comments, both within and outside the scope of a master plan, in the Federal Register Response Document.

For additional information on the Federal Register process, comment categories and responses please refer to the Federal Register Response Document.

MyVA Communities and Continued Stakeholder Engagement

To improve transparency and accountability, GLA leadership will continue to hold VSO and congressional meetings and Town Halls to provide stakeholder updates. The first such meeting will be targeted to be held within 90 days after the VA Secretary adopts the Draft Master Plan. GLA and VISN 22 leadership will also collaborate with community partners in conjunction with the MyVA Communities model. MyVA Communities are a collaborative network of Veterans, advocates, resources, and other stakeholders who organize through community Veteran Engagement Boards, to improve outcomes for Veterans, and their communities. The MyVA Communities model enables Veteran advocates, service providers, Veterans, and stakeholders to have a voice in providing input and feedback to VA, and identifying their goals and ways to engage and improve service delivery for Veterans and their families.

By adhering to the following core tenets, the GLA MyVA Community will enable Veterans and other stakeholders to easily identify and reach resources available to them, voice their opinions, and provide valuable feedback.

Inclusive

- Open to all Veterans, stakeholders, resources, advocates and existing community engagements/efforts.
- Establish a collaborative network within the community and provide the opportunity to connect with other MyVA Communities.

Accessible

- Conduct public forums to provide open lines of communication and opportunities to collaborate.
- Public forums will be held in geographically diverse locations to encourage broad participation.

Community-driven

- Focused on local issues identified by the community.
- Guided by a community Veteran engagement board that understand the issues and is actively engaged in them.

Flexible

- Chartered by communities to reflect their unique characteristics and populations.

- Allow for customization to meet local needs.

Integrated

- Connecting and leveraging local resources and capabilities to maximize impact and improve Veteran outcomes.
- VA provides an integrated presence with representation from all three administrations, with enhanced coordination with other key stakeholders including Federal, State, and local authorities, the former Plaintiffs in the *Valentini* litigation, legislators, Veteran Service Organizations, Veterans, philanthropic entities, and local community.
- Leverage outside contractor support and private sector expertise when needed for services and supplies to help carry out the master planning process or to further revitalize the campus, in accordance with applicable law and regulation, including the Federal Acquisition Regulation (48 C.F.R. Chapter 1) and the Competition in Contracting Act (41 U.S.C. §§ 3301-3312).

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