

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

## **BACKGROUND**

The US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) proposes several upgrades to Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), located in Walla Walla, Washington. The VAMC facility currently provides a multitude of services for veterans living in the surrounding area within multiple buildings located throughout the 88-acre campus. Several of the existing buildings are outdated and are not adequately designed to provide state-of-the-art medical services required by the VA. In addition, several building interiors have a dilapidated aesthetic appearance and are not seismically sound, resulting in a significant risk of collapse during a seismic event, and possibly a significant loss of life. Therefore, there is a need for a new purpose-built facility that will eliminate the listed deficiencies and enhance the overall quality of medical services provided at the VAMC campus.

Consolidation and realignment of clinical and administrative functions onto the west end of the campus will allow the remainder of the campus (approximately 64 acres) and the buildings and structures contained within, to be reused via Enhanced Use Lease(s) or to be demolished in the future if necessary and / or warranted.

An Environmental Assessment (EA) was prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the Council on Environmental Quality regulations implementing NEPA (40 CFR Parts 1500 through 1508), and Title 38, Part 26.4(a), *Environmental Effects of VA Actions*, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to evaluate and document the potential environmental effects associated with this proposed action.

## **SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED ACTION**

The VA is proposing construction of a new Outpatient Clinic (OPC) Building (approximately 67,000 square-foot), campus wide updates to antiquated utility distribution systems and addition of approximately 175 parking spaces in order to address the above purpose and need.

## **DETERMINATION**

The proposed OPC building and associated utility upgrades would occur on the existing VAMC facility with no new property acquisition. Considered and eliminated alternatives to the above project elements were based on impacts to the social, natural, and physical environment and the ability of the alternatives to satisfy the purpose and need of the project. The project would result in temporary benefits to the local labor force during construction. The medical facility upgrades would provide long-term benefits to the veterans it would serve. The additional parking spaces would have a beneficial long-term effect by providing patients, visitors, and staff with improved direct access to the hospital facilities and enhancing the overall patient and visitor experience. Impacts to the environment are minor and the proposed project phases are within the existing VA property in an urban setting. There are no natural systems on site and there would be no adverse direct impacts to the surrounding communities. The VAMC facility is located within the Fort Walla Walla Historic District, with existing buildings listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The VAMC entered into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) dated December 16, 2010 with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), the Washington Department of

Historic Preservation (DAHP) and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). The MOA stipulates actions the VA will take to mitigate the impacts to a level of non-significance.

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This FONSI is based on the attached EA. The analysis performed in the EA concludes that implementation of the proposed project as described would not constitute a major Federal action that would have significant impact upon the quality of the human environment within the meaning of Section 102(2)(C) of NEPA of 1969. Accordingly, the preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed action is not required.

  
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27 APR 2011  
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4/28/11  
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