

Holyoke Soldiers' Home Building Capital Project Overview

July 2020

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is dedicated to providing *care with honor and dignity* to the veterans at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke. The devastating impact of COVID-19 required a rapid response to stabilize staffing, enhance infection control, and address significant physical plant issues including an immediate outlay of \$6 million to upgrade the units and replace furnishings of the building to address priority infection control and resident safety needs and care. Renovation work has commenced, ensuring the veterans currently residing at the Holyoke Medical Center can safely return to the Home this fall.



There is no question that significant changes and updates are required to the building structure to safely meet the needs of the veteran residents. The Commonwealth is committed to making the capital investments required to support the right, necessary facility improvements for the Home, both for immediate fixes and long-term changes. This work must be done expeditiously, and most importantly, it must be done correctly.

The 2012 proposal is an 8-year-old conceptual design that by itself is not an appropriate or sufficient option. It offers some ideas that can likely be utilized, but must also be evaluated from a clinical, infection control, veteran demographic, architectural perspective. The longer-term plan for the building must include:

- Building changes that support critical **infection control protocols and requirements**, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the ability to ensure sufficient space between veterans, care unit layouts and structures that allow for infection control cohorting as needed, and congregate dining and recreational spaces that support safe communal interactions.
- Evaluating **the needs of both current and future veterans** as the demographic of veterans and their preferences are rapidly changing, including what today's veterans require in a long-term care residential setting as well as how that differs for our next generation of veterans and their unique needs.
- **Best practice, up to date care for clinical needs** such as dementia and hospice care.
- **Updated building code and VA requirements which have changed significantly from 2012.**

Moving Forward

Given the circumstances, **the Commonwealth has initiated an expedited, complete Capital Project process managed by the Division of Capital Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM)**. Our objective is to develop the *right* longer-term option for the Home to meet the needs of current area Veterans, and the evolving needs of those in the future. This will include a submission for the VA State Home Construction Grant program for the April 15, 2021 deadline. Stakeholders, including the Legislature, the community, veterans, veteran families, and our federal partners will be engaged in this effort, along with the Holyoke Board of Trustees and staff.

We must ensure that the following key components are met:

- **All options must be on the table and rapidly evaluated**, including renovations of existing structures, new building structures, and hybrid approaches.
- The work must be done **in compliance with the statutorily required process** for capital projects of this size and scope, as outlined under Massachusetts law.¹
- This includes the **statutory requirement to procure a designer through the State's Designer Selection Board and to complete a Certified Study**, which must include a **formal needs assessment** for the Home, **evaluation of available options, recommendation of a selected option, current cost estimates and project schedule and certification** that the Commonwealth has the capital funding for the selected option and that it meets the identified needs and can be completed in the timeframes and for the cost outlined in the study.

As a note, the 2012 conceptual design and proposal to the VA, as is, do not meet the statutory requirements for the Certified Study because it would still require designer procurement, lacks the design specificity and development, has outdated cost estimates, and would not meet current VA standards, nor current building codes.

1. See MGL Ch. 7 S. 1; MGL ch. 7C s.44-58.

Immediate Timelines and Next Steps

*June - Fall
2020*

Rapid planning phase

- Complete a Needs Assessment that includes the demographics, preferences, and needs of both current and future veterans, whose experience, age, gender, and expectations for long term care supports are evolving. The Needs Assessment will also include a clinical element to identify an up to date and forward looking set of clinical services and supports required to best support the care, independence and resiliency of veterans.
- Prepare an expedited project plan which will include evaluation of all options for the building, recommendation of an option and preliminary scope of work, and a preliminary estimate of timelines and cost. This plan will facilitate critical strategic decision making about the future of the Home.
- Note: the above work will require engaging professional services, including an architecture and engineering team and clinical experts
- Engage stakeholders and the community (veterans and their families, Legislators, Board of Trustees, other community members) for input on the needs of the Home.
- Conduct a Designer procurement through the State Designer Selection Board based on the needs assessment results, and preliminary project scope.

Fall 2020

Design Phase

- Selected Designer develops, refines and confirms project scope, budget, schedule, timelines, and regulatory roadmap
- The Design Phase will include a deliverable in Q1 of CY2021 to submit for the VA Grant Program April 15 deadline. The Design Phase will include further work beyond April 15, 2021 and will coordinate with feedback from the VA Grant application and approval process.

*April 15,
2021*

VA State Home Grant application submission

Note: timelines for a procurement/ bids for a Construction vendor – and timelines for the actual construction and work – would be determined through the Certified Study and Design Phase.

Additional Background Information

2012 Proposal - Key Facts

- The 2012 proposal provides helpful ideas but is not sufficient for moving forward. It is an outdated conceptual design document that does not reflect updated VA facility/community living standards and other building code requirements, does not include an assessment of the current or future needs of veterans, lacks current cost estimates, and most importantly, has not been vetted with the lens of critical infection control requirements.
- The 2012 proposal includes options to renovate the current building and add existing structures on the campus. Some of the options have merit – including some that would impact clinical services such as hospice. In addition, there are concerns about the clinical and patient flow outlined in the proposal as well as the appropriate acuity and census of veterans for the Home.
- While the 2012 proposal to the VA is still on the VA's list of pending applications, being on the list does not mean the proposal has been approved. The VA has expressed support to collaborate to meet the needs of area veterans.
- Any state funding for a capital project of this scope comes with the need for a statutorily required Certified Study, which has not been done for a Soldiers' Home in Holyoke capital project of this size.

Long-term investments and improvements to the facility at the Soldiers' Home in Holyoke are needed to provide care and support to the veteran residents of today and tomorrow at the Home.