

October 30, 2008

FACT SHEET

Enhanced Sharing Agreement with Veterans Park Conservancy

When did the VA enter into an agreement with Veterans Park Conservancy?

In August 2007, the Veterans Park Conservancy (VPC) entered into a long-term agreement with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to develop a memorial park to honor the Nation's veterans. Both parties are dedicated to the establishment of a National Veterans Park which will serve the needs of veterans and residents alike, emphasizing for generations to come, the indomitable values of our shared American heritage.

How much land was set aside for the project and how long will the agreement last?

The agreement involves approximately 16 acres of property that is located on the north side of the West Los Angeles VA Medical Center (WLA) campus. The Enhanced Sharing Agreement (ESA) is a 20-year contract with a 10-year option, whereby, the VA allows VPC to make specific landscaping improvements to WLA land on the corner of Wilshire Boulevard and Federal/San Vicente Boulevards for the purposes of creating a veterans memorial park and complementing the therapeutic purposes of the Medical Center.

Does VPC control the park design and how it is used?

During the management of this agreement, all concepts, contemplated improvements and designs for the site must be submitted to VA for review and approval prior to beginning work. The VA contracting office will manage the contract to ensure full compliance with the agreement. The VA maintains control and authority over the improvements, both during construction and upon completion. The projected \$7 to \$10 million in improvements made by VPC becomes the property of VA once completed.

How will access be controlled and is it open to the public?

The ESA allows for restricted public access, and that "access" will fall under the authority and control of VA. The public access provision is consistent with other agreements on the WLA campus (e.g., Barrington Park, Golf Course, Wadsworth and Brentwood Theatres, MacArthur Field, etc.) The restricted-access provision has been confirmed by VPC.

What benefit do the veterans receive from the park?

The park will remain consistent with the mission of the VA Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System (GLA) and will complement the therapeutic purposes of the Medical Center. In addition, VPC has agreed to partner with WLA and utilize its Compensated Work Therapy program, as well as other programs, to integrate local veterans into the design, construction and maintenance of the land improvements.

There have been a number of statements made regarding the project being designed along the lines of a park such as New York's Central Park. Is that an approved design?

All designs and project materials must be approved by VA prior to any work beginning. At this time, the VA has received one concept description for improvements to the WLA Rose Garden as part of the park. Any concepts, ideas, literature, or pamphlets created by the VPC prior to the signing of the ESA were not approved by the VA as part of this sharing agreement or projected design. Those will be presented by VPC as the project moves forward. As stated in the letter of support from Mr. Thomas Mayfield, Director of the Los Angeles County Council Service Department, the reference to Central Park in New York was used to describe the "an oasis amongst towering pillars of concrete."

Is it true the VA donated \$1 million to the VPC's fence project on the WLA property?

No. The facility director had already made a determination that the fence line north of Wilshire Boulevard was in need of replacement and planned to use appropriated funds to accomplish the replacement. The VPC offered matching funds in order to replace the chain link fence with a more permanent and longer lasting fence that would also help restore the property. The VA agreed to build approximately half of the fence with the funds it set aside and the VPC completed the project. GLA was able to obtain approval for end of year funding from the Desert Pacific Healthcare Network (VISN 22), therefore no money was used from the local budget.

Who is the VPC?

Veterans Park Conservancy was established in 1986 with a board comprised of veterans and community members in an attempt to protect and enhance the land and WLA property. They have assisted in restoring the Veterans National Cemetery. Three quarters of the board membership is comprised of veterans. A prominent member is Mrs. Carolina Winston Barrie, a descendant of Arcadia Bandini DeBaker, who along with Senator John Percival Jones, gifted the property to the federal government in 1888.

"Three generations of my family have fought to maintain the healing mission of the original gift (which became the VA hospital and recreational facilities)."

CAROLINA WINSTON BARRIE