



ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

IDAHO STATE VETERANS HOME BOISE

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This environmental assessment (EA), identifies, analyzes, and documents the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the demolition of the existing facility and construction of a new State Veteran Home by the Idaho Division of Veterans Services (IDVS) in Boise, Idaho. The proposed project sits on 4.950 acres located at 320 North Collins Road in Boise, Ada County, Idaho. The nursing home bed replacement program will include a total replacement bed count of 122; total square footage will be approximately 150,797 SF. The four-story facility will house neighborhoods on floors 2 to 4. These neighborhoods will hold either 19 or 22 beds therein. The decision to house 19 or 22 beds has yet to be determined by IDVS. Each floor will contain a caregiver's area, offices, support kitchen, medication room, conference area and support program areas.

The purpose of this Proposed Action is to provide Veteran with a home like feeling that is comfortable, inviting, and encourages well-being. The philosophy of the interior design will emphasize strong connections to nature and a simplicity of form to create tranquil settings for meaningful life. The color palette and finish materials would reflect the natural environment through earth tones and rich accents.

The Proposed Action is needed to address the age of the existing building infrastructure, its split-level design and limited resident amenities. This bed replacement project is also in response to the growing need to provide substantial mitigation and preventive measures for infection control to decrease the possibility of spreading viruses during a pandemic. The bed replacement will consist of only private occupancy rooms for the distancing necessity that COVID-19 has shown us as necessary for the health and well-being of the Veterans as well as the need to provide additional space for PPE storage and to provide for a more homelike environment with amenities for our residents that are person-centered.

Two alternatives are analyzed in this EA:

- The Proposed Action is for the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to award a grant providing partial funding to the State of Idaho to build a new State Veterans Home for Veterans in Boise, Idaho
- The No Action Alternative is for VA to not award the federal grant, which would prevent the state from proceeding to build the new home. This alternative would negatively impact our Veterans in Boise, as they will continue to be cared for in an aging building with limited amenities.

The potential environmental impacts of the Proposed Action and No Action Alternative are summarized in the following Table:

Table 1: Summary of Impact Analysis

Resource	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
Meets purpose and need for action	Yes	No
Aesthetics	Minor temporary impact from presence of heavy equipment and unfinished work during construction. The appearance of the new Veterans Home facility would fit within local norms and comply with ordinances.	None
Air Quality	Particulate emissions during demolition and construction would cause short-term impacts to air quality. Mitigation measures such as application of suppressants of dust control and ensuring construction equipment is operated and maintained in accordance with federal and state air quality requirements.	None
Cultural and Historic Resources	According to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, the Proposed Action of construction of a new State Veterans Home-Boise will have an adverse effect on historic properties, specifically the integrity of the Fort Boise Historic District and the building within. However, as part of the NHPA Section 106 consultation, it was agreed by all consulting parties that the mitigation measures will be taken to resolve the adverse effects.	None
Geology and Soil	Minor short-term potential for erosion and sedimentation during construction; impacts would be minimized through best management practices and conformance with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements.	None
Hydrology and Water Quality	Minor short-term potential for erosion and sedimentation during construction; impacts would be minimized through best management practices and conformance with National	None

Resource	Proposed Action	No Action Alternative
	Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit requirements and a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.	
Wildlife and Habitat	The Proposed Action will not adversely affect protected species.	None
Noise	Minor short-term impacts from noise during construction will follow all local noise ordinances to minimize potential impacts to local area. Equipment will meet all federal, state, and local noise regulations and machines will be shut off while not in use.	None
Land Use	No adverse impacts.	None
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Management	Part of the project area is located in FEMA Zone AO. Mitigation measurements are required. It is recommended that the building be raised to 2745.5 feet. IDVS is currently working with FEMA to rezone the project area.	None
Socioeconomics and Environmental Justice	No adverse impacts. Short-term beneficial impact to local economy by employment during construction as well as employment opportunities following the completion of the Proposed Action.	None
Community Services	No adverse impact.	None
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	Waste generated as part of demolition and construction activities would be properly managed and disposed of according to federal, state, and local regulations.	None
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	Short-term impacts from construction traffic. Impacts will be less than significant.	None
Utilities	No adverse impacts.	None

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INTRODUCTION

The Idaho Division of Veterans Services (the “IDVS”) is dedicated to serving Idaho’s Veterans and their families by delivering superior long-term care and enhanced quality of life for residents in its State Veterans Homes. Residency in the Idaho State Veterans Homes is available to honorably discharged Idaho Veterans and their spouses. Skilled nursing care is available to Idaho Veterans, and their spouses, who are certified as needing such care by a licensed physician. The Homes are certified for Medicare, Medicaid, and VA Service-Connected programs.

The site is located in Boise, Idaho in a commercial area within the Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) and has easy access to Interstate 184 and U.S. Route 26. Figure 1 and 1.1 reflect the general location and site boundary for the Boise property to be used for this Proposed Action.

In this Environmental Assessment (EA), IDVS identifies, analyzes, and documents the potential physical, environmental, cultural, and socioeconomic impacts associated with the VA awarding a grant to support the demolition and construction of the new State Veterans Home in Boise, Idaho. This project is located on approximately 4.950 acres located on North Collins Street in Boise, Ada County, Idaho. The new Veterans Home will be a four-story skilled nursing facility grossing approximately 150,797 square feet. Floor 2 through 4 will house residents and represent a neighborhood with two households and either 19 or 22 beds therein.

This EA has been prepared, as required, in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 ([NEPA]; 42 US Code 4321 et seq.), the President’s Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) Regulations Implementing the Procedural Provisions of NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] 1500-1508), Environmental Effects of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Actions (38 CFR Part 26), and in accordance with relevant guidance of VA’s NEPA Interim Guidance for Projects (VA, 2010). These requirements specify that VA must evaluate the potential environmental impacts of VA facilities, operations, and related funding decisions prior to undertaking a proposed action. An EA provides sufficient evidence and analysis for determining whether an action would cause significant environmental impacts (requiring an EIS) or the agency can issue a finding of no significant impact (FONSI) (40 CFR 1508.9). A FONSI is a decision document that briefly presents the reasons why an action would not have a significant effect on the human environment (40 CFR 1508.13). As required by NEPA and the implementing regulations from CEQ and VA, the alternative of taking no action is evaluated, providing a baseline for comparison of potential impacts from the action alternatives.

1.1 Background

The current State Veterans Home in Boise is an existing two-story skilled nursing facility with 158 beds (122 skilled nursing and 36 domiciliary beds) provided in predominately double-occupancy resident rooms. The current facility is approximately a 100,237 square feet building comprised of 4 units, the 122 skilled nursing beds are subdivided between 3 units including 17 beds in a memory care space and the 36 domiciliary beds in the 4th unit. The current State Veterans Home represents a traditional style nursing home design with double occupancy rooms where 4 beds

share a Jack-and-Jill style bathroom. The current facility provides a physical therapy room, large central kitchen, dining hall, small library, chapel, and a canteen.

Figure 1. Site Vicinity Map

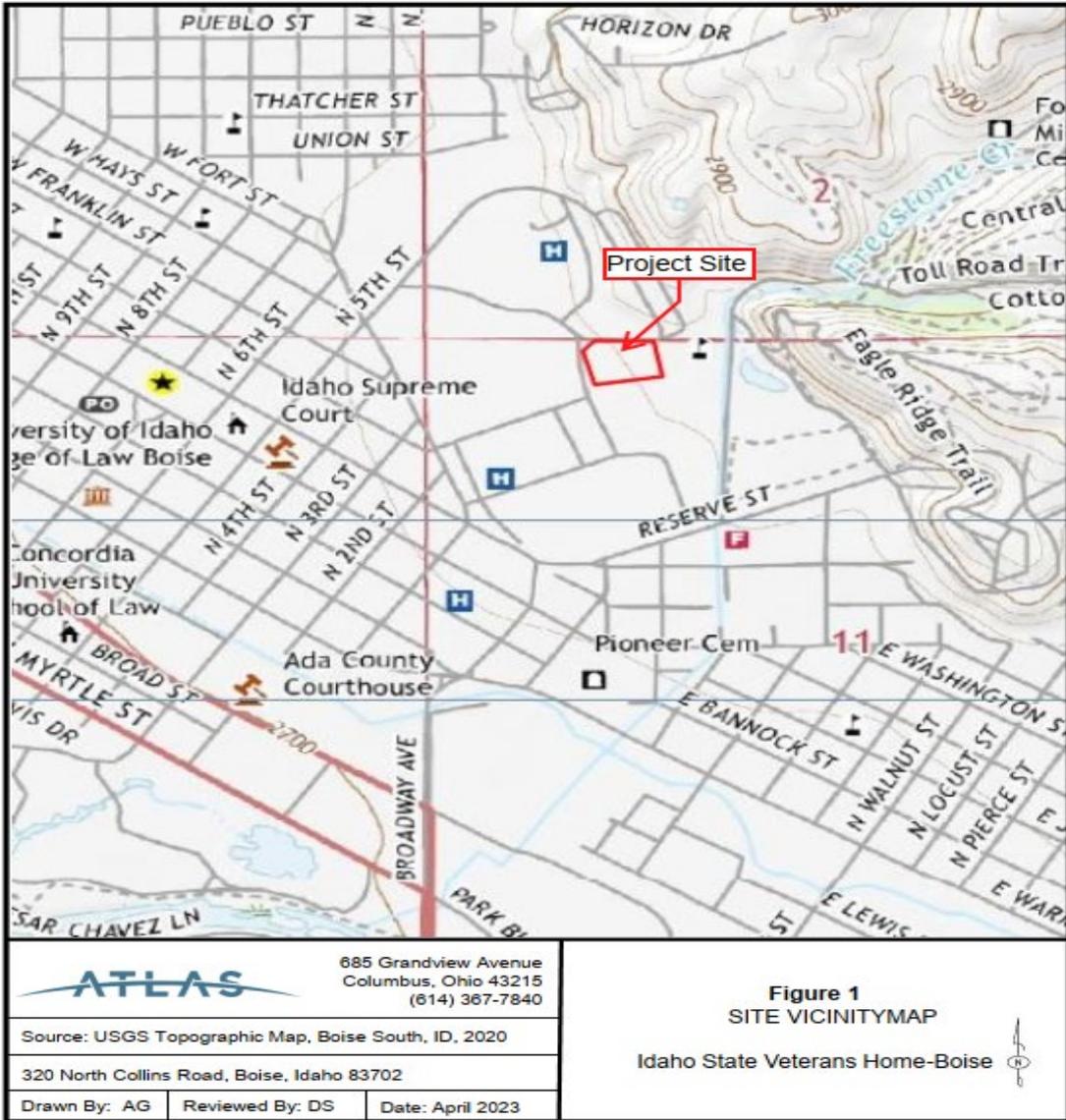
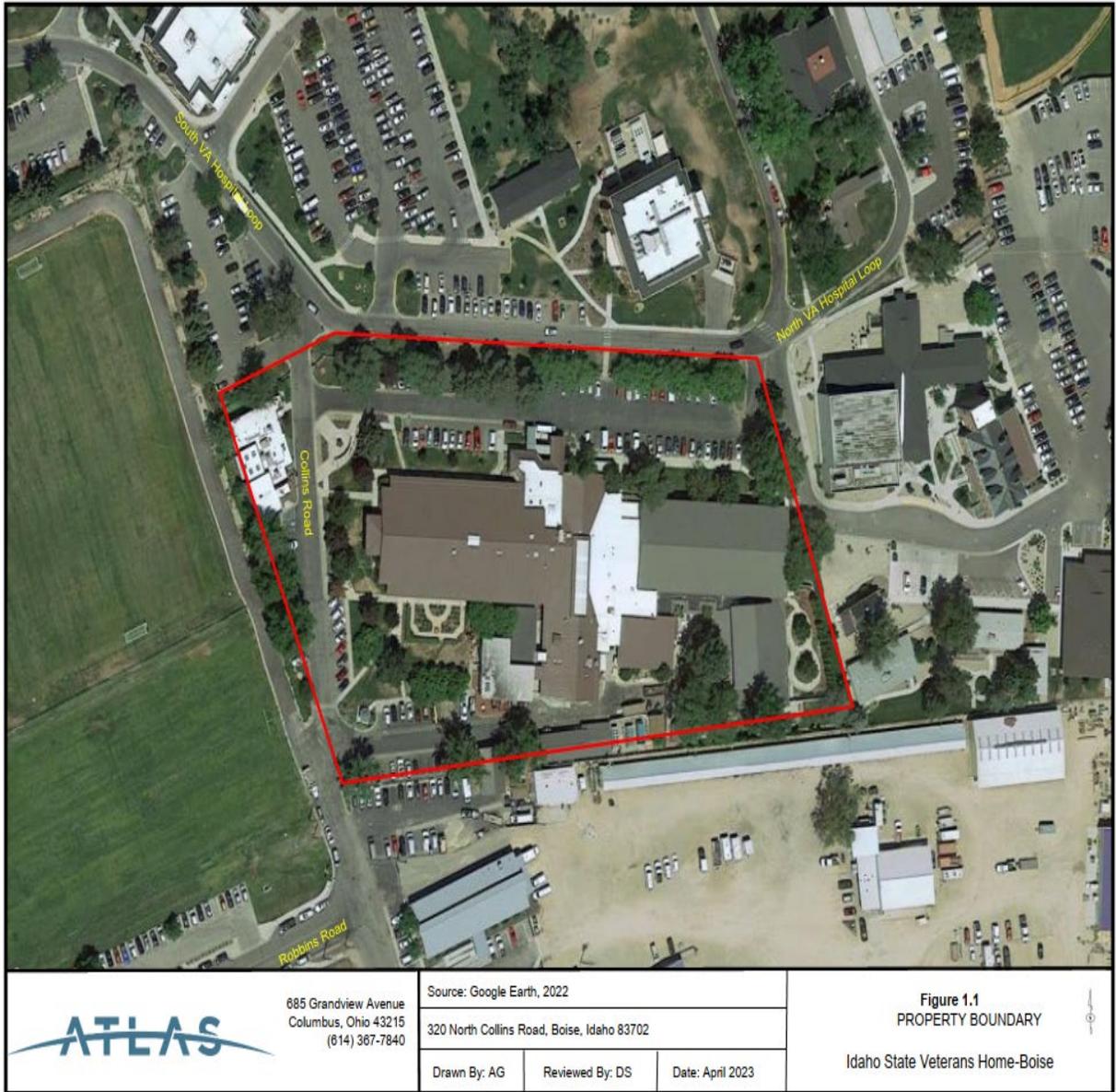


Figure 1.1. Property Boundary



1.2 Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Action is to improve the quality of life for Veterans by providing a resident-centered atmosphere with the privacy of single occupancy rooms and creating a home-like feeling that is comfortable, inviting, and encourages well-being as opposed to the existing traditional institutional environment.

The IDVS has continually invested in the existing structure by remodeling over the past 58 years. The Proposed Action is needed due to the limited expected useful life of the building. The Proposed Action is needed to address deteriorating infrastructure, and aging mechanical systems and utilities.

The Proposed Action is also needed to provide substantial mitigation and preventative measures for infectious disease control to decrease the possibility of spreading viruses during a pandemic. The bed replacement program will consist of only private occupancy rooms for necessary distancing that current events have shown as necessary for the health of Veterans and needed additional space for PPE storage. As part of the IDVS infection prevention and control measures, high touch surface areas will incorporate non-porous, durable, and washable materials that can be safely maintained with proper frequent cleaning.

2. ALTERNATIVES

This section described the proposed action and alternatives considered, including those alternatives eliminated from further analysis. NEPA and VA regulations for implementing NEPA require reasonable alternative to be explored and objectively evaluated.

2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, VA would award a grant to Idaho Division of Veterans Services (IDVS) to construct a 150,797 gross square foot facility, four-story, 122-bed skilled nursing facility. As part of the Proposed Action, the IDVS will discontinue their domiciliary program, which consists of decertifying and removing the 36 beds. The new facility will include amenities such as community center program areas, offices, and support program on the ground floor. Ground floor residential amenities include a sports bar, canteen, multipurpose recreation, barber/beauty salon, theater, chapel, and therapy. The facility will also include an outdoor therapy garden and large terrace for community-wide gatherings during holidays. Outdoor staff courtyards will also be provided adjacent to staff breakrooms. 150 parking stalls are proposed to support the replacement facility.

Residential households will be located on floors 2 through 4. Each floor will represent a neighborhood with two households and either 19 or 22 beds therein. Each household will feature a dedicated dining area, living room, den/conservatory, outdoor secure terrace and 19 or 22 private residential suites each will full bathroom. Each floor will also have a centrally located caregiver work area, offices, support kitchen, medication room, conference area and support program areas. A large naturally-lighted lobby on each floor serves four resident/public elevators to provide efficient and quick transfer from the neighborhoods down to the community center on the ground floor.

The current facility will be demolished under the Proposed Action. A partial demolition phase will be required to make room on the site for the new facility. Nursing home residents will not be displaced during the demolition and construction. The east portion of the existing building will be demolished first, reducing the bed count to 88 beds. Temporary relocation of residents to other Veterans home in the state will be necessary. Idaho Division of Veterans Services will work with the VA Office of Geriatrics & Extended Care to create a transition plan. IDVS will also work with VA to create a placement and transitionary plan for the current domiciliary residents.

Figure 2. Proposed Floor Plan

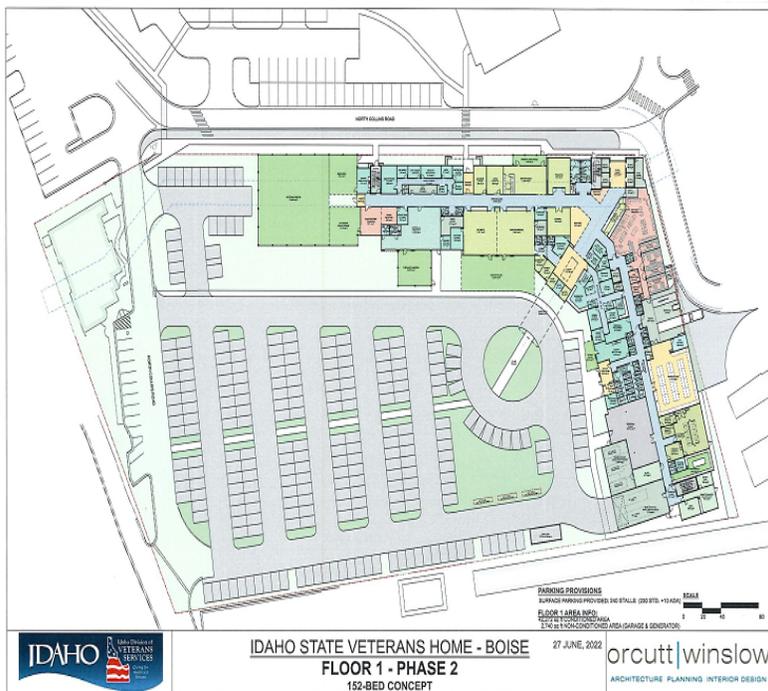
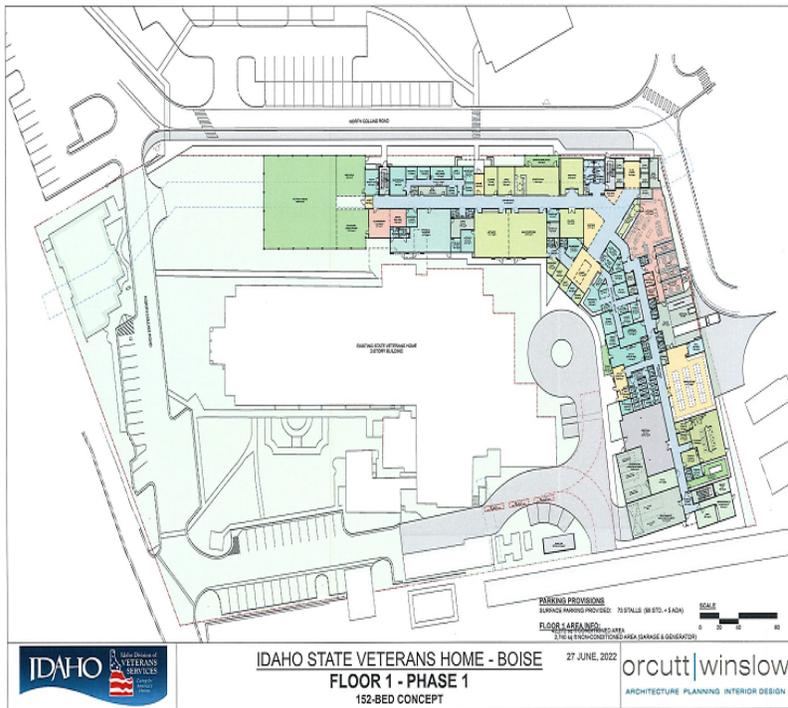


Figure 2.1. Proposed Development Plan

Proposed Development Plan
Schematic Building 3D Views



View looking east

2.2 No Action Alternative

For this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the replacement State Veterans Home in Boise, Idaho and continued use of the existing facility. The No Action alternative would negatively impact the continuance of quality care to Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho, and thus does not meet the purpose and need of the project.

2.3 Alternatives Eliminated from Further Consideration

An alternative site location was considered on a 24.058 acre property located at 5601 North Five Mile Road, Boise, Idaho. This location, however, would have created a long-term monetary impact on the Idaho Division of Veterans Services in terms of the actions needed to finance the purchase of this property. In addition, this property is not in close proximity to freeway access. When compared to the existing property, the alternative site would have resulted in prolonged emergency transportation to the local VA Medical Center, as well as it would have created challenges for visiting Veterans' families and friends. The existing Proposed Action property has no financial impact on the agency since it currently deeded to the State on behalf of the Idaho Division of Veterans Services. The existing property is also located adjacent to the VA Medical Center. Based on this information, it was determined that the Proposed Action would be in the best interest of our Veterans and their families and the alternative site was eliminated from further consideration.

3. AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

This section provides a description of the environmental resources that could potentially be impacted as a result of the Proposed Action and the No Action Alternative. It serves as a baseline from which to identify and evaluate potential impacts. Resources considered in this EA are aesthetics; air quality; cultural and historic resources; geology and soil; hydrology and water quality; wildlife and habitat; noise; land use; floodplains, wetlands, and coastal management; socioeconomics; community services; solid waste and hazardous materials; traffic, transportation, and parking; utilities; and environmental justice.

The existing conditions provide a baseline for analyzing potential impacts. Impacts are identified as either significant or less than significant. Where possible, impacts are identified as short-term, temporary, or long-term in relation to the length of the effect of the impact.

3.1 Aesthetics

The term aesthetic refers to the subjective visual perception of an area's natural beauty based on some qualitative scenic qualities. Factors typically included in a determination of aesthetic values include site characteristics such as topographic relief, prominence of water in the viewscape, type of vegetation present; diversity of scenery, level of human development or disturbance in the area, and presence or absence of any unique scenic features compared with surrounding land. Typically landscapes with greater diversity of features are considered to be of higher scenic quality.

3.1.1 Affected Environment

The current State Veterans Home is located in an urban setting near the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center. The current facility is abutting North Collins Road to the north, ingress and egress to the VA Gym and the VA Women's Clinic to the east, and Collins Road to the west. The project site is visible to drivers from each of these roads.

Buildings surrounding the skilled nursing facility include the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Research Laboratory to the north, VA Gym and VA Boise Women's Clinic to the east, U.S. Geological Survey Idaho Water Science Center and other commercial facilities to the south, and Longfellow Elementary School and Boise High Athletic Complex to the east. Natural hills are present in the distance to the northeast.

3.1.2 Environmental Consequences

3.1.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction would occur in an already developed area. Construction activities would include demolition, site preparation, grading, excavation, and vehicle traffic, movement of heavy equipment, and paving roadways and parking areas. Heavy equipment for demolition and construction activities would be required.

These activities would have short-term and minor impacts on aesthetics. Although these activities may not be aesthetically consistent with the surrounding area and would change over the course

of construction, they would end once construction is complete. Demolition and construction activities would be limited to daylight hours to minimize impact from equipment lights. Areas used for staging and other disturbed areas will be restored to their pre-existing conditions.

The appearance of the new Veterans Home facility would fit within local norms and comply with local ordinances. Landscaping would be aesthetically attractive and be compatible with surrounding properties and land use. The new facility would create a minor noticeable long-term difference in aesthetics as it would be two stories taller than the current building, but care will be taken to ensure building design is consistent with surrounding properties. The new State Veterans Home is not anticipated to result in significant adverse changes to the aesthetics.

3.1.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to aesthetics would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain unchanged. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.2 Air Quality

The Clean Air Act (CAA), as amended in 1990, requires the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) to set National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for six common criteria air pollutants. The EPA designates areas that are meeting (attainment) or not meeting (non-attainment) the NAAQS. Areas are often divided by county or Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). Areas not meeting NAAQS are designated non-attainment for the specific pollutant. Each state is required to demonstrate compliance with NAAQS and other components of the CAA through a State Implementation Plan (SIP). Air quality standards are currently in place for six "criteria" pollutants: carbon monoxide (CO), nitrogen dioxide (NO₂), ozone (O₃), sulfur oxides (SO_x, measured as sulfur dioxide [SO₂]), lead (Pb), and particulate matter with an aerodynamic diameter less than or equal to 10 micrometers (PM₁₀).

3.2.1 Affected Environment

According to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) Idaho Nonattainment / Maintenance Status for Each County by Year for All Criteria Pollutants, Green Book, US EPA, the project is located in a carbon monoxide and PM-10 (particulate matter) maintenance areas of Ada County.

According to the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality, the maximum threshold in tons per year for PM-10 in Idaho is 15. The maximum threshold for carbon monoxide in tons per year is 100. Consideration will be taken during construction to minimize these types of pollutants.

3.2.2 Environmental Consequences

3.2.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities and emissions from construction vehicles would have the potential for short-term and minor impacts to air quality. Construction activities such as site preparation, demolition, grading, and movement of heavy equipment could generate fugitive dust. There could be short-term health effects and nuisances such as reduced visibility. The amount of fugitive dust would depend on the soil type, wind speed, size, and intensity of the activity, and the type of dust suppression measure implemented. These measures could include applying suppressants or palliatives such as water, clay additives, or polymers, stabilizing disturbed areas with vegetation or mulch or limiting earth moving construction activities during high wind conditions.

Short-term air quality emissions from the use of gasoline and diesel fueled construction vehicles and power tools would be expected for short durations during use. Examples of construction equipment that may be used include excavators, bulldozers, backhoes, graders, front-end loaders, dump trucks, roller compactors, water trucks, pump trucks, cranes, paving machines, concrete mixer trucks. Ensuring that construction equipment is operated and maintained in accordance with federal and state air quality requirements and using newer equipment with emissions controls and reducing idling of construction equipment would minimize emissions. The limited-use of construction equipment during the construction period is not expected to pose a significant impact to the attribution of air emissions to the NAAQS. No long-term adverse impacts in regard to air-quality from the construction or operation are expected.

Operation of the new skilled nursing facility would not impact air quality. Since the site is developed and use HVAC systems, the Idaho Division of Veterans Services already has requirements in place for protection of air resources that include compliance with federal and state air quality regulations and standards. Idaho Division of Veterans Services will comply with the Northern Ada County PM₁₀ State Implementation Plan Maintenance Plan Ten-Year Update and the Northern Ada County Carbon Monoxide Limited Maintenance Plan Revision dated November 2022.

Short-term air quality impact from construction and operation of the skilled nursing care facility would result in less than significant impact under the Proposed Action.

3.2.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to the air quality would occur, as the current building would remain unchanged. Traffic volumes and air quality would continue at current levels. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.3 Cultural and Historic Resources

Cultural resources include both historic and prehistoric archaeological resources, as well as, historic properties in the built environment. Cultural resources are protected through several federal laws and associated regulations, including the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Archaeological and Historic Preservation Act of 1974, the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, the Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990.

The NHPA established the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), which is a list of all historic properties of the Nation that are worthy of preservation. Historic properties can include buildings, boundary markers, roads, shipwrecks, trolley cars, battlefields, and landscapes. The Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is responsible for state level programs and regulations for Idaho.

Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations, 36 CFR Part 800, requires an assessment of the potential impact of an undertaking on historical properties that are within the proposed project's area of potential effect (APE), which is defined as the geographic area "within which an undertaking may directly or indirectly cause alternations in the character or use of historic properties, if any such properties exist."

3.3.1 Affected Environment

The current Boise State Veterans Home at 320 North Collins Road, Boise, Idaho, is located in the National Register of Historic Places Fort Boise Historic District.

In a letter dated June 23, 2022, the Idaho State Historical Preservation Office (SHPO) identified that the then new five-story skilled nursing facility would have an adverse effect on historic properties, specifically to the aspects of the integrity of setting and feeling of the National Register-listed Fort Boise Historic District and the federal VA buildings 4, 6, and 33, and 42 within the district. On December 5, 2022, the Idaho Division of Veterans Services (IDVS) provided SHPO with a technical memorandum dated November 22, 2022, which served as a response to SHPO's finding of adverse effect, stating that modern intrusions around identified building 6, and 33 have already diminished the integrity of the historic viewshed adjacent to the proposed project location. SHPO responded, on December 20, 2022, by identifying that they had worked IDVS and their architects to avoid the finding of adverse effect by making changes to the design which would move the volume of the new building to a new location and from the contributing properties within the historic district, but due to property restraint and resident care needs this was not possible. SHPO further identified that since the plans had not changed since their initial review, their determination continued to be that the proposed project will have adverse effect on historic properties.

SHPO consulted with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) on March 7, 2023 and included IDVS, SHPO, and the VA Historic Preservation Office (HPO). Through consultation, VA determined that the implementation of this state project resulted in adverse effect to the National Register-listed Fort Boise Historic District.

Based on this decision, on or before March 31, 2023, VA and IDVS proceeded with the Section 106 mitigation consultation process in order to avoid, minimize or mitigate these adverse effects by initiating further consultation with SHPO, the ACHP, and other consulting parties (to include the VA Medical Center, the North End Neighborhood Association, the East End Neighborhood Association, Preservation Idaho, and the City of Boise Historic Preservation Commission). All of these consulting parties participated in consultation related to the matter. The VA also identified and invited the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation in Oregon and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes as consulting parties and none have chosen to participate in the consultation.

IDVS officially responded to SHPO on April 19, 2023 identifying that they had all worked in good faith with their partners to address the SHPO concerns regarding adverse effects which resulted in agreed upon mitigation measures to resolve the adverse effects. On June 6, 2023, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was signed to resolve the adverse effects.

3.3.2 Environmental Consequences

3.3.2.1 Proposed Action

As described in Section 3.3.1., according to the Idaho State Historic Preservation Office, construction of the new replacement State Veterans Home in Boise will have an adverse effect on historic properties, specifically to the aspects of the integrity of setting and feeling of the National Register-listed Fort Boise Historic District and the federal VA buildings 4, 6, and 33, and 42 within the district. Through, NHPA Section 106 consultation, on June 6, 2023 VA, SHPO, ACHP, and IDVS entered into a MOA to resolve the adverse effects. The MOA includes mitigation measures that IDVS will incorporate into the project, including 1) educational interpretive signage, 2) a walk of honor and appreciation (with memorial and appreciation bricks), 3) ample landscaping (with emphasis on trees), and 4) a picnic area.

If IDVS determines that the mitigation undertaking must be modified, it will notify VA and the VA and IDVS will consult with SHPO to determine the effect of such modifications. If the modifications result in additional adverse effects to historic properties, additional mitigation to resolve adverse effects shall be determined in consultation with the SHPO.

In addition, as part of the draft Environmental Assessment, the information provided above about this project and its effects on historic properties is being provided for public comment and input. Should any member of the public raise a timely and substantive objection pertaining to the manner in which the terms of the agreement with the VA and SHPO are carried out, IDVS shall notify the VA and in coordination with VA take the objection into account by consulting with the objector to resolve this objection.

Should a cultural material be inadvertently encountered during this project, or if an unanticipated effect to a known historic property result from the project, the construction contractor would immediately cease work in the area of the discovery until appropriate and IDVS shall inform VA and will halt activities in the vicinity of the resource. VA shall follow the post-review discoveries provision of the MOA.

3.3.2.2. No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to cultural and historic resources would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain unchanged. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.4 Geology and Soils

The geology of an area refers specifically to the surface and near-surface materials of the earth and to how those materials were formed. These resources are typically described in terms of regional or local geology, including mineral resources, earth materials, soil resources, and topography.

3.4.1 Affected Environment

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) Web Soil Survey soils in the project area are listed as Urban land, 0 to 1 percent slopes (9000), and Urban land-Flofeather complex, 1 to 3 percent slopes (9006). Urban land is described as areas covered by buildings, pavement or other man-made surfaces. Urban land is not classified as prime or unique farmland.

A Geotechnical Evaluation Report was completed on August 17, 2022. The conclusion of this report states: "Based on field exploration, laboratory testing and engineering analysis, the subject site is suited for development from a geotechnical engineering viewpoint. The recommendations presented in the report should be incorporated into the final design, grading, and construction phases of development." (Appendix C).

The report recommends all grading activities should conform to International Building Codes (IBC) and the requirements of the City of Boise. During the earthwork phase of construction all removals, drain systems, slopes, and the general grading procedures of the contractor should be observed and the fill material selectively tested. If contaminated materials are discovered during construction, work would stop and appropriate procedures would be implemented as discussed in Section 4.0.

3.4.2 Environmental Consequence

3.4.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities would cause short-term impacts on soils due to removal or pavement, site leveling and regrading. Grading and site leveling would also cause minor changes to site topography. Disturbed and exposed soils would be prone to erosion by wind and stormwater. Wind erosion could temporarily increase airborne particulate matter in the area resulting in short-term air quality, health, visibility, and aesthetics impacts. Potential adverse effects from erosion or sedimentation would be mitigated through best practice management practices (BMPs) from the site specific design development Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan

(SWPPP) Site Plan (C-150, C-151, and C-155) (Appendix A) referenced from the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and adherence to a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. Demolition and construction of a new State Veterans Home would not adversely affect the geology or soils under the Proposed Action.

3.4.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to geology or soils would occur due to IDVS' actions, as the current building would remain unchanged. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.5 Hydrology and Water Quality

Numerous laws and regulations protect both hydrology and water quality on the federal level and on the state and regional levels. On the federal level, the primary law protecting the “chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation’s waters” is the Clean Water Act (CWA). Section 104 certifications issued by states protect water quality, and Section 404 permits certifications issued by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (US ACE) protects waters of the U.S., including wetlands (EO 11990).

3.5.1 Affected Environment

The property is currently developed as a skilled nursing facility. Stormwater utility is administered by the City of Boise. Onsite stormwater is managed by several subsurface retention basins located throughout the parking lot that are connected to subsurface seepage beds. No surface water, retention basins, or detention ponds are location on the property.

3.5.2 Environmental Consequence

3.5.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities occur primarily within pre-disturbed areas that are adjacent to existing commercial structures. Construction activities such as demolition, site preparation, grading, movement of heavy equipment, and paving of parking areas could temporarily increase sedimentation and surface runoff. Potential impacts would be minimized with the implantation of a SWPPP and associated erosion and sediment control BMPs as stated in the design development plan (C-150) and referenced from the Idaho DEQ BMP for soil stabilization. (Appendix A). The SWPPP identifies potential Stormwater contaminants and addresses how to minimize Stormwater pollution. The SWPPP would specify BMPs designs to prevent Stormwater pollution such as temporary construction entrances, silt fences, inlet protection, ditch checks, slope protection, and sediment barriers.

The amount of impervious and hardened surfaces such as parking areas and other paved areas will be similar to current conditions and therefore not cause an increase in surface runoff. However, landscaping, vegetation cover and a SWPPP are included in the design of the facilities

to reduce these effects. Landscaping and vegetation cover would stabilize soil and prevent erosion and sedimentation. Approximately 32 percent of the property will be pervious and 68 percent of the property will be impervious. Under the Proposed Action, the construction of the new State Veterans Home-Boise would not adversely affect the hydrology or water quality.

3.5.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to hydrology and water quality would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain unchanged. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.6 Wildlife and Habitat

The Endangered Species Act establishes a national program for the conservation of threatened and endangered species of fish, wildlife, and plants, and the ecosystem upon which they depend. It is administered by the Department of Interior's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS).

Under the Endangered Species Act, species may be listed as either "endangered" or "threatened." Endangered mean a species is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. Threatened means a species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

3.6.1 Affected Environment

The project was assessed using the USFWS Information for Planning and Consultation (IPaC) system which identifies Federally-protected wildlife species with the potential to occur in the project area. Three species were identified: the Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Monarch Butterfly, and Slickspot Peppergrass.

Table 2: Summary of Listed Threatened/Endangered Species for Boise County, Idaho

Group	Species	Listing Status	Critical Habitat
Birds	Yellow-billed Cuckoo <i>Coccyzus americanus</i>	Threatened	There is final critical habitat for this species. Location of critical habitat is not available.
Insects	Monarch Butterfly <i>Danaus plexippus</i>	Candidate	No critical habitat has been designated for this species.
Flowering Plants	Slickspot Peppergrass <i>Lepidius papilliferum</i>	Threatened	There is proposed critical habitat for this species. The location of critical habitat is not available.

The project site includes no critical habitat for any of the species. The project site is a developed area with no appropriate habitat. Therefore, no further investigation of wildlife or habitat is warranted.

3.6.2 Environmental Consequence

3.6.2.1 Proposed Action

The demolition and construction of a new State Veterans Home is expected to have less than significant adverse impacts to wildlife and habitat. Under the Proposed Action, 49 trees will be removed during construction and 101 deciduous and coniferous trees are proposed. Seventeen different tree species have been specified to help introduce plant diversity to the site. Trees on the property will be replaced using criteria mentioned in the design development plan (C-110): existing trees 1"-6" caliper will be replaced with two times the caliper of tree removed, existing trees 6"-12" caliper will be replaced with 1.5 times the caliper of tree removed, and existing trees greater than 12" diameter will be replaced with same caliper of tree removed. Under the Proposed Action, demolition and construction activities will not adversely affect wildlife and habitat.

3.6.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to wildlife and habitat would occur due to IDVS's actions, as there would be no demolition and the current building would remain. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.7 Noise

The Noise Control Act of 1972 (42 USC 4901 et seq.) directs federal agencies to comply with applicable federal, state, interstate, and local noise control regulations. Noise is defined as unwanted sound that interferes with normal human activities or wildlife behavior or may otherwise diminish environmental quality.

Environmental noise is measured in decibels (dB) on the A-weighted scale (dBA), which is the scale most similar to the range of sound that the human ear can hear. The day-night average sound level is the average measure of sound that is accepted by federal agencies as a standard for estimating sound impacts and guidelines for land uses. The EPA recommends an average 24-hour exposure limit of 55 dBA to protect the public from all adverse effects on health and welfare in sensitive receptor areas. Receptors can include hospitals, schools, parks, playgrounds, libraries and residences.

3.7.1 Affected Environment

The current State Veterans Home-Boise is located within the VA Medical Campus, a developed area. The skilled nursing facility is bordered by two roads, to the north and west. Commercial properties are located to the north, east, and south of the current facility. The main source of noise at the project site is from vehicular traffic.

Potential sensitive receptors were reviewed within a 1-mile radius of the project area. Roosevelt Elementary School is located approximately 3,076 feet to the southeast. Longfellow Elementary

School is located approximately 713 feet to the west. North Junior High School is located approximately 4,506 feet to the northwest.

3.7.2 Environmental Consequences

3.7.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction of the new State Veterans Home would increase ambient noise in the area surrounding the property, however, impacts would be short-term and only during demolition and construction. Increase in noise level will occur primarily from heavy equipment associated with construction and demolition such as those in Table 2. The intermittent increase in noise would likely be an annoyance but would not exceed typical noise thresholds; thus impacts would not be significant. No long-term impacts due to noise are expected as operation of the new facility will be substantially the same as the operation of the current facility.

Table 3: Construction Equipment Noise Levels

Equipment	Typical Noise Level 50 Feet from Source (dBA)
Air Compressor	80
Backhoe	80
Concrete Pump	82
Dozer	85
Generator	82
Grader	85
Loader	80
Paver	85
Pneumatic Tool	85
Pump	77
Roller	85

Equipment	Typical Noise Level 50 Feet from Source (dBA)
Saw	85
Scraper	85
Truck	84

(Federal Highway Administration, 2017)

To mitigate noise levels, all work will strictly follow local noise ordinances to minimize potential impacts to local area. Work activities will not occur between 10pm and 7am, work may begin at 6am in July and August due to extreme heat (Ada County, Idaho, Code of Ordinances, Chapter 13 Noise). Equipment will meet all federal, state, and local noise regulations. Machines will be shut off while not in use to limit idling noise.

3.7.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to noise would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.8 Land Use

Land use is described by land activities, ownership, and the governing entities' management plans. Local zoning defines land use types and regulated development patterns.

3.8.1 Affected Environment

The project area is located on 4.950 acres of land within the VA Medical Campus and houses the current two-story facility. The project site is bounded by two roads: North U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Hospital Loop to the north, and North Collins Road to the west. Surrounding properties include Veterans Affairs Research Laboratory, VA Gym, VA Women's Clinic, USGS Idaho Water Science Center Consolidation, Idaho Division of Veterans Services, Longfellow Elementary School, and Boise High Athletic Complex that includes sports fields.

3.8.2 Environmental Consequences

3.8.2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action is consistent with the intended long-term use of the property and has been designed to fit with the existing campus. The Proposed Action activities would be considered consistent with the existing and proposed land use in the area.

3.8.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to land use would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.9 Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Management

The CWA (33 U.S.C. §1251 et seq.), as amended in 1977, established the basic framework for regulating discharges of pollutants into the waters of the United States (WOUS). The CWA National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (33 U.S.C. §1342) requires permits for stormwater discharges associated with construction activities. EO 11990 Protection of Wetlands requires Federal agencies to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on wetlands. EO 11988 Floodplain Management requires Federal agencies to avoid direct or indirect support of development within the 100-year floodplain whenever there is a practicable alternative. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) uses Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRMs) to identify the regulatory 100-year floodplain for the National Flood Insurance Program.

3.9.1 Affected Environment

A review of FEMA FIRM panel numbers 16001C0277J and 16001C0281J (dated 6/19/2010) (Appendix G) indicates a portion of the southeastern corner of the Property to be located in a Special Flood Hazard Area, Zone AO with a depth of 1 foot and a velocity of 4 feet per second. The area has a 1% chance of shallow flooding each year, usually in the form of sheet flow, with an average depth of one foot. The remainder of the property is not within a floodplain. IDVS is working with FEMA to remap/rezone the project area.

The USFWS National Wetland Inventory (NWI) Mapper indicated that no inventoried wetlands are located on the Site and surrounding properties. In addition, no evidence of on-site wetlands was identified on available topographic maps and aerials photographs, and no evidence of wetlands was observed during a reconnaissance of the Site.

According to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration US Coastal Zone Management Act Boundary Map, the project area is not within the coastal zone.

3.9.2 Environmental Consequences

3.9.2.1 Proposed Action

The facility will be raised 3'-0" above the highest adjacent grade to meet the Critical Care Facility requirement. The northeast corner being the highest, the finish floor for the building is thus set 3'-0" above the northeast corner grade. As the grade drops, the building is app. 9'-0" to 10'-0" above the adjacent road/sidewalk at the west end.

Based on previous studies, the chances of the project site being flooded are high only if the dam upstream fails. With this information available, and understanding the accessible, visual and

economic challenges the site will face with the current flood zone classification, the decision was made to remap the site to determine if the site could be reclassified to a less restrictive flood zone (Zone X) or if the site can be removed from the flood plain altogether with the purpose of lowering the building elevation.

This decision was based on a worst-case scenario study on the site that considered frozen ground conditions and possibility of the Mountain Cove Road flooding. Per the simulation model, under the worst-case scenario, the site will not flood more than 1'-0 depth. This study further confirms the reasoning behind changing the building elevation.

A Conditional Letter of Map Revision (CLOMR) review has been submitted to FEMA and expected to be approved by the end of June. Once the CLOMR is approved, and the subgrades are built to the proposed elevation, a Letter of Map Revision (LOMR) will be submitted.

The Proposed Action will not impact wetland, stream features, or US coastal zones. Construction efforts will employ sediment erosion control efforts as required by local and state requirements to reduce sediment runoff during construction efforts as discussed in Section 3.4.

3.9.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to floodplains, wetlands, and coastal management would occur due to IDVS's actions. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.10 Socioeconomics

Federal agencies are required to address local economic and social conditions of federal actions. Socioeconomic indicators, such as population, housing, and regional economic activity inform the assessment of socioeconomics and are utilized to understand the community potentially affected by the proposed action.

3.10.1 Affected Environment

According to the U.S. Census for 2022, 20 percent of the Boise population are persons under 18 years old, 15 percent of the population are persons 65 years and over. 50 percent of the population are female persons. The Idaho poverty rate is 11.6 percent.

The Point-in-Time count conducted in 2022 by Our Path Home, a public-private partnership working to end homelessness in Ada County found 1,998 unhoused individuals in Idaho, this includes 620 in Ada County. Health and medical programs for homeless Veterans in Ada County is provided by the Terry Reilly Health Care for the Homeless Project.

Idaho has approximately 115, 549 Veterans, and 14,928 of those Veterans are located in Boise. The current facility offers a 36 bed domiciliary unit, and a 122 bed skilled nursing care unit including a 17 bed special care unit for Veterans with Alzheimer's disease or related condition.

3.10.2 Environmental Consequences

3.10.2.1 Proposed Action

The implementation of the Proposed Action would result in beneficial impacts to Veterans requiring nursing care. Under the Proposed Action, instead of double occupancy room sharing one bathroom, Veterans will have their own rooms and bathrooms improving quality of life. Other benefits include amenities that aren't currently provided, such as a barber/beauty shop, a sports bar, multipurpose and recreation rooms, a theater, an outdoor therapy garden, and a large terrace for community-wide gatherings. The Proposed Action would also benefit local contractors that perform site work along with the possible use of local construction materials and supplies.

3.10.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No Action alternative, no impacts to socioeconomics would occur due to IDVS's actions, as the current building would remain. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.11 Community Services

Community services include fire and police protection, emergency medical services, schools, and recreational areas.

3.11.1 Affected Environment

Community services at the project area are provided by the City of Boise fire department, City of Boise police department, and Ada County emergency services.

Recreational areas around the project area include Cottonwood Creek and Ridgecrest Trailheads are located less than a mile to the east, Fort Boise Dog Park and Boise Bike Park are located approximately 800 feet to the southeast, Fort Boise Park and Jack Acre Legion Field is located less than a half mile to the south, and Longfellow Elementary School is located over 700 feet to the west.

3.11.2 Environmental Consequences

3.11.2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Plan would slightly increase the demand for fire protection, police services, and emergency medical services, however this increase would be short-term and only during the construction phase. During construction, there is the potential for an increase in workplace accidents related to construction activities. The implementation of best construction practices and health and safety procedures by the construction and work crew would minimize such hazards.

3.11.2.2. No Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no impact to community services would occur as a result of any actions. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to

construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.12 Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials

Hazardous substances are defined as any solid, liquid, contained gaseous, or semi-solid waste, or any combination of wastes that pose a substantial present or potential hazard to human health and the environment. Hazardous substances are primarily generated by industries, hospitals, research facilities, and the government. Improper management and disposal of hazardous substances can lead to pollution of groundwater or other drinking water supplies, and the contamination of surface water and soil. The primary Federal regulations for the management and disposal of hazardous substances are the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act (CERCLA) and the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA; 42 USC sections 6901 et seq.).

3.12.1 Affected Environment

The Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ) is responsible for meeting Idaho's federal obligations under the RCRA and CERCLA. The IDEQ also administers those laws and regulations governing Petroleum Storage Tanks, including Aboveground Storage Tanks and Underground Storage Tanks. Solid wastes generated during the Proposed Action would be regulated by IDEQ.

Affected Environment

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment of the project site was completed October 20, 2023 in accordance with ASTM Standard Practice E1527-21. The results of the Phase I Environmental Site Assessment did not identify any existing "recognized environmental conditions" (RECs)

A NESHAP Asbestos Inspection dated April 6, 2023 was performed to identify if regulated asbestos containing materials (ACM) were present of the property buildings. The report concluded that seven tested materials were identified as ACM. Removal of all regulated ACM by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor will occur prior to demolition.

3.12.2 Environmental Consequences

3.12.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, construction activities would result in short-term adverse impacts due to the increased use of petroleum and hazardous substances (such as oil, gasoline, solvents, paints, etc.). Proper handling and storage of hazardous materials would minimize the risk of impacts from a spill. Solid wastes generated as part of demolition and construction activities would be properly managed and disposed of according to federal, state, and local regulations. Solid waste containers will be located in designated waste storage containment area. Waste disposal dumpsters will have lids or provide cover of a similarly effective means to minimize discharge of pollutants. Waste container lids will be closed when not in use and at the end of each business day. Construction waste will be disposed of at a frequency according to container size as stated

in the design development SWPPP (C-150). The SWPPP will be followed for spill prevention and control measures to minimize potential adverse impacts. (Appendix A).

Operations of the skilled nursing home facility would generate similar solid waste, hazardous materials, and medical wastes as the current operating facility. Waste generation activities at the proposed facility including handling, storage, and disposal, would be managed and disposed of in compliance with federal, state, and local regulations as they are in the existing facility. The wastes would be collected and properly disposed of by approved waste disposal companies at approved disposal facilities.

3.12.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no change in the generation of solid and hazardous waste material at the project site. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.13 Traffic, Transportation, and Parking

Transportation networks provide the means for moving throughout a community. This network includes major roadways such as freeways and highways, as well as local roads in neighborhoods. Analysis of transportation includes traffic and parking. Other factors that can be considered in an analysis are public transportation and pedestrian routes, which often alleviate impacts on roads from automobiles through providing alternative means of moving around an area.

3.13.1 Affected Environment

The current nursing care facility can be accessed by North Collins Road which forms the western site boundary, and South VA Loop Road which forms the northern site boundary. Vehicle traffic along these roads is associated with travel to and around the VA Medical Campus which includes staff and visitors to these facilities as well as the State Veterans Home Boise. North Collins Road also provides access to the United State Department of Agriculture and Geological Survey offices. South VA Loop Road is also the access road for the Department of Veterans Affairs Medical Center.

The IDVS has proposed a total of 150 parking spaces for the new State Veterans Home compared to the current 88 parking spots. The 150 parking spots include 5 ADA stalls. The parking will be used primarily for visitors and staff. Signs for parking and pedestrian crosswalk will be included in the design to help direct traffic. Public bus transportation is provided to the VA Medical Campus by Valley Regional Transportation.

3.13.2 Environmental Consequences

3.13.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, a short-term impact to the transportation network in the surrounding project area would occur during construction. Construction activities would increase vehicle traffic, including trucks and work crew. Construction activities could be scheduled to avoid peak travel times. The Proposed Action also includes a total of 150 surface parking stalls to support the replacement facility. Widening and repaving will be required on the adjacent roadway along the northern boundary to support delivery vehicles. IDVS will implement mitigation measures such as appropriate signage and safety measures for construction areas and possible lane closures. Temporary measures will also be taken for alternative parking for staff and visitors of the Veterans Home during construction.

Operations of the new skilled nursing facility will cause a slight increase in traffic due to increased staff, visitors, delivery vehicles, and ambulances, but will not have a negative impact as the project area is already developed and operating as a skilled nursing facility.

3.13.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no impact to traffic, transportation, and parking would occur as a result of any actions. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.14 Utilities

Utilities include municipal water, sanitary sewer, electricity, gas, stormwater, and telecommunication services. Utilities may be provided by public utilities or private service providers.

3.14.1 Affected Environment

The property area is developed as a two-story skilled nursing facility. The City of Boise provides municipal sanitary and storm sewer utilities. Electrical utility is provided to the current State Veterans Home by the Idaho Power Company and Intermountain Gas Company provides natural gas. The current facility is serviced by Veolia Municipal Water Division. Locations of existing utility connections are demarcated on the design development plan (C-110 and C-111) (Appendix A).

3.14.2 Environmental Consequences

3.14.2.1 Proposed Action

Under the Proposed Action, there would be no impact to utilities. According to the design development plan (C-110 and C-111) (Appendix A), demolition of the facility will necessitate the removal of some utility lines, however, essential connections to utility lines are being preserved and connected to the new facility.

The operation of the new State Veterans Home will not result in an increase of consumption of public utilities.

3.14.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no impact to utilities would occur as a result of any actions. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.15 Environmental Justice

The goal of environmental justice review from a Federal perspective is to ensure fair treatment of people of all race, cultures, and economic situations with regard to the implementation and enforcement of environmental laws and regulations, and federal policies and programs. EO 12898 Federal Action to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations (and the February 11, 1994, Presidential Memorandum providing additional guidance for this EO) requires Federal agencies to develop strategies for protecting minority and low-income populations from disproportionate and adverse effects of Federal programs and activities. The EO is “intended to promote non-discrimination in Federal programs substantially affecting human health and the environment.”

3.15.1 Affected Environment

According to the U.S. Census for 2022, 86.4 percent of the Boise population are white alone, 1.7 percent is black or African American alone, 0.7 percent are American Indian and Alaska Native alone, 3.4 percent are Asian alone, 0.3 are Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander alone, 5.5 percent are two or more races, 8.8 percent are Hispanic or Latino. The Idaho poverty rate is 11.6 percent.

The Point-in-Time count conducted in 2022 found 1,998 unhoused individuals in Idaho, and this includes 620 in Ada County.

3.15.2 Environmental Consequence

3.15.2.1 Proposed Action

The Proposed Action Alternative has the potential to result in less-than-significant beneficial impact to EJ populations. The project will not displace low-income minority populations. The construction of the new facility would not reduce the availability of affordable housing options or the number of jobs in the area. On the contrary, the construction of the new facility has the potential to provide new jobs to the area which could potentially result in positive impacts to low-income populations in the area. Therefore, there would be no disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects to the EJ populations.

3.15.2.2 No Action Alternative

Under the No-Action Alternative, no impact to environmental justice would occur as a result of any actions. However, for this project, No Action is defined as VA not awarding the grant for IDVS to construct the State Veterans Home in northern Idaho. As such, IDVS would not construct the needed replacement Veterans Home in Boise which would negatively impact the care and quality of life IDVS can provide Idaho's Veterans in southwest Idaho communities.

3.16 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative impacts are the incremental impacts of the proposed action when added to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions (40 CFR 1508.7). This EA considered those past, present, and reasonable foreseeable short-term and long-term future effect from the implementation of the Proposed Action. The project area is situated in the VA Medical Campus, and is surrounded by VA associated buildings to the north and east, the United State Department of Agriculture with offices for the Bureau of Land Management and the United State Geological Survey to the south and Longfellow Elementary School and Boise High Athletic Complex to the west. Potential actions that could contribute to cumulative impacts would primarily be redevelopment or rehabilitation of existing structures. These cumulative impacts would not be considered significant.

- **Aesthetics:** The new State Veterans Home is being designed to reflect the surrounding vernacular of the Boise VA Medical Center Campus depicting a modern interpretation of the 1920's art deco. Proposed landscaping, paving, and exterior lighting will be similar to current site and surrounding conditions and designs. Under the Proposed Action, there will be no cumulative impacts as the project area is currently developed as a skilled nursing care facility and located in a developed area.
- **Air Quality:** An increase of air pollutants under the Proposed Action would be short-term in length and only associated with construction activities. The project area is located in the carbon monoxide and PM10 maintenance areas. Compliance with state and federal permitting and regulation requirements would ensure these pollutants do not exceed the thresholds. Any future redevelopments or major rehabilitation in the area would also have to abide by state and federal regulations, therefore, no significant cumulative impacts on air quality are expected.
- **Cultural and Historic Resources:** Under the Proposed Action, NHPA Section 106 mitigation measures will be taken to address the adverse effect per the pending MOA.
- **Geology and Soils:** Ground disturbing activities during construction of the Proposed Action would result in short-term impacts on soils from removal of paving, site grading and leveling. Best Management Practices (BMPs) during construction as well as an erosion and sediment control plans will decrease the likelihood of cumulative effects being adverse and significant.

- Hydrology and Water Quality: Construction activities such as demolition, site preparation, grading, leveling and movement of heavy equipment would increase sedimentation and surface runoff. With the implementation of construction, stormwater management, the SWPPP, and BMPs from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality there would be no adverse impacts on offsite water quality and quantity from stormwater runoff, and no cumulative impacts to surface water would be anticipated.
- Wildlife and Habitat: Construction activities as a result of the Proposed Action do not have the likelihood of impacting wildlife and habitat. Due to the project area being located in a developed area, an area that is already paved or supports structures, the only vegetation is limited to frequent mowed grass and conventional landscaping and trees, furthermore, trees and vegetation will be replanted and grown. No cumulative impacts are expected as a result of the Proposed Action.
- Noise: Currently, the project area is developed as a two-story skilled nursing facility. The project area is bounded by two roadways, North VA Hospital Loop to the north and Collins Road to the west. These roadways provide access and connections throughout the VA Medical Campus. Under the Proposed Action, traffic patterns will not increase more than they are currently and will not have a significant cumulative impacts on local noise environment.
- Land Use: The parcel that the project area is located on is owned by the State of Idaho and does not have to comply with city or county zoning. The construction of a new State Veterans Home will be consistent with the current development use, therefore, no adverse cumulative impacts would occur.
- Socioeconomics: During construction, the Proposed Action would have a slight contribution to the local economy by using local contraction labor and through the possible use of local construction materials and supplies. Operations of the four-story facility would result in indirect and beneficial impact to local businesses which may result in minor beneficial cumulative impacts in the surrounding communities.
- Transportation: The proposed project is not anticipated to produce impacts that would adversely impact the adjoining transportation systems including bus routes and stops. Widening and repaving of the adjacent North VA Hospital Loop roadway will have minor and short-term impacts to traffic flow but will be negligible once it is finished. IDVS would implement mitigation measures such as putting up signs and possible lane closures to manage these effects. Possible redevelopment and rehabilitation in the area is likely to occur at different times. No long-term impacts are expected under the Proposed Action that would cumulatively adversely affect the local traffic conditions.

Based on the above analysis, cumulative impacts attributable to the Proposed Action in combination with potential foreseeable actions would not be significant. Idaho Division of Veterans Services would ensure that the Proposed Action follows the permits and regulations required by the federal, state, and local governments.

4. MITIGATION AND MINIMIZATION MEASURES

Table 3 summarizes the mitigation and minimization measures identified in Section 3.0. Mitigation measures are typically project specific requirements, not routinely implemented as part of a development project, that are necessary to reduce potentially adverse environmental impacts.

The table includes BMPs that are regularly implemented as part of proposed activities, impact minimization techniques, and monitoring opportunities to maintain impacts of the Proposed Action. In addition, regulatory compliance is not considered mitigation, but generally greatly contributes to reducing or preventing environmental impacts.

Table 4. Mitigation Measures by Resource

Resource	Description
Aesthetics	Short-term impacts from demolition and construction activities would be limited to daylight hours to minimize impact from equipment lights. Areas used for staging and other disturbed areas will be restored to their pre-existing conditions.
Air Quality	Short-term air quality impacts could be mitigated through application of suppressants or palliatives such as water, clay additives, or polymers, stabilizing disturbed areas with vegetation or mulch or limiting earth moving construction activities during high wind conditions.
Cultural and Historic Resources	<p>To mitigate the adverse effect to the identified historic properties within Fort Boise Historic District, IDVS entered into a MOA with the VA, SHPO, and ACHP on June 6, 2023. The MOA includes specific mitigation measures agreed upon as part of the NHPA Section 106 consultation with the consulting parties. If IDVS determines that the Undertaking must be modified, it will notify the VA, and VA and IDVS will consult with the SHPO to determine the effect of such modifications. If the modifications result in additional adverse effects to historic properties, IDVS will notify VA, will participate in additional consultation with SHPO to resolve the new adverse effects, and will work with VA and SHPO to execute an amendment to the MOA.</p> <p>Should cultural materials be inadvertently encountered during this project, or if an unanticipated effect to a known</p>

Resource	Description
	historic property results from the project, IDVS will immediately cease work in the area and follow the post-review discovery provisions of the MOA.
Geology and Soils	As indicated on the Site Plans, short-term erosion and sedimentation impacts would be mitigated through BMPs as referenced from the Idaho Division of Environmental Quality and adherence to a SWPPP, and NPDES permits.
Hydrology and Water Quality	Short-term erosion and sedimentation impacts would be mitigated by the implementation of the SWPPP and associated erosion and sediment control BMPs for soil stabilization from the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. Landscaping and vegetation cover will be included in the design of the facilities to reduce irrigation requirements. Spill and leak prevention and response procedures will be implemented during construction to reduce releases of vehicle fluids.
Noise	All work will strictly follow local noise ordinances to minimize potential impacts to local area. Work activities will not occur between 10pm and 7am, work may begin at 6am in July and August due to extreme heat. Construction machinery will be shut off while not in use to limit idling noise.
Floodplains, Wetlands, and Coastal Zone Management	The new State Veterans Home will be raised three feet above the highest adjacent grade to meet the Critical Care Facility requirement. A CLOMR review to FEMA is currently submitted. Once the CLOMR is approved, a LOMR will be submitted once the subgrades are built to the proposed elevation.
Solid Waste and Hazardous Materials	All asbestos containing materials will be removed by a licensed asbestos abatement contractor prior to demolition.

Resource	Description
	<p>Proper vehicle maintenance and inspections will be up to date to reduce the potential for accidental releases of vehicle fluid.</p> <p>Wastes generated as part of demolition and construction activities would be properly managed and disposed of according to federal, state, and local regulations. Wastes would be collected and properly disposed of by waste disposal companies at an approved disposal facility.</p>
Traffic, Transportation, and Parking	<p>Short-term traffic and transportation impacts under the Proposed Action include widening and repaving of the adjacent North VA Hospital Loop roadway. IDVS would implement mitigation measures such as putting up signs and possible lane closures to manage these effects. Construction activities will be scheduled to avoid peak traffic times.</p>

5. AGENCY COORDINATION AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

5.1 Agency Coordination

IDVS coordinated with the following agencies to request review and provide comments on the Proposed Action.

State Agencies

- Idaho State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO)
- Idaho Department of Environmental Quality (IDEQ)
- City of Boise
- Ada County Health Department

Federal Agencies

- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (automated reply from IPAC system)

5.2 Native American Consultation

In March 2023, VA initiated consultation with federally recognized Native American Tribes with interest in Ada County, Idaho. The VA Senior Historic Preservation Specialist notified the Confederated Tribes of the Warm Springs Reservation of Oregon and the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Reservation and invited them to attend a meeting or provide feedback related to the SHPO mitigation process on March 31, 2023. As of August 1, 2023, VA has not received a response from either tribe.

5.3 Public and Agency Review

The Idaho Division of Veterans Services will publish and distribute the Draft EA for a 30-day public comment period as announced by a Notice of Availability published online and emailed to Idaho Veterans Affairs Commission, to Boise officials, and to local citizens and businesses. Draft EA will be made available online at www.Veterans.idaho.gov and in print at the Boise Community Library Network located at 715 South Capitol Boulevard, Boise, Idaho 83702.

6. REFERENCE CITED

City of Boise Zoning Map, Dated August 22, 2022

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Map Service Center website, msc.fema.gov.

Federal Highway Administration. (2017, August). *Construction Noise Handbook*. Retrieved October 2021, from Chapter 9 Construction Equipment Noise Levels and Ranges: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/Environment/noise/construction_noise/handbook/handbook09.cfm

Koordinates, US Coastal Zone Management Act Boundary Map, website (<https://koordinates.com/layer/20522-us-coastal-zone-management-act-boundary/>).

United States Department of Agriculture, National Resources Conservation Service, Web Soil Survey website: (<http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/>).

United States Department of Environmental Protection, Idaho Nonattainment/Maintenance Status for Each Count by Year for All Criteria Pollutants, website: (https://www3.epa.gov/airquality/greenbook/anayo_id.html).

United States Department of Environmental Protection, EJSCREEN: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool, website (<https://ejscreen.epa.gov/mapper/>).

USEPA, National Environmental Policy Act, <https://www.epa.gov/nepa>

United States Fish & Wildlife Service (USFWS) National Wetlands Inventory Wetlands Online Mapper website, (<http://wetlandswfs.er.usgs.gov/>.)

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Conservation Online System, *Species by County Report* (<https://ecos.fws.gov/ecp0/reports/species-by-current-range-county?fips=12055>).

[USGS, National Map Viewer, https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/advanced-viewer/](https://viewer.nationalmap.gov/advanced-viewer/)

7. GLOSSARY

Aesthetics — Pertaining to the quality of human perception of natural beauty.

Ambient Air Quality Standards — Those standards established according to the Clean Air Act to protect health and welfare.

Attainment Area — Region that meets the National Ambient Air Quality Standard (NAAQS) for a criteria pollutant under the Clean Air Act.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) — Methods, measures, or practices to prevent or reduce environmental impacts.

Contaminants — Any physical, chemical, biological, or radiological substances that have an adverse effect on air, water, or soil.

Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) — An agency in the Executive Office of the President composed of three members appointed by the President, subject to approval by the Senate. Each member shall be exceptionally qualified to analyze and interpret environmental trends, and to appraise programs and activities of the federal government. Members are to be conscious of and responsive to the scientific, economic, social, aesthetic, and cultural needs of the Nation; and to formulate and recommend national policies to promote the improvement of the quality of the environment. Develop and issue guidance for implementing the National Environmental Policy Act.

Cultural and Historic Resources — The physical evidence of our Nation's heritage. Includes archaeological sites; historic buildings, structures, and districts; and localities with social significance to the human community. Cultural resources are defined by VA Handbook 7545 as "all aspects of the human environment that have historical, architectural, archaeological, or cultural significance, including, but not limited to, historic properties, archaeological resources and data, Native American ancestral remains and cultural items, religious places and practices, historical objects and artifacts, historical documents, and community identity."

Cumulative Impact — The impact on the environment that results from the incremental impact of the action when added to the other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions regardless of what agency (federal or non-federal) or person undertakes such other actions. Cumulative impacts can result from individually minor but collectively significant actions taking place over a period of time.

Decibel (dB) — A unit of measurement of sound pressure level.

Direct Impact — A direct impact is caused by a proposed action and occurs at the same time and place.

Emission — A release of a pollutant.

Endangered Species — Any species that is in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Environmental Assessment (EA) — A concise public document prepared by a federal agency to aid an agency's compliance with NEPA and support its determination of whether to prepare an environmental impact statement or a finding of no significant impact.

Erosion — The wearing away of the land surface by detachment and movement of soil and rock fragments through the action of moving water and geological agents.

Floodplain —The relatively flat area or lowlands adjoining a river, stream, ocean, lake, or other body of water that is susceptible to being inundated by floodwaters.

Fugitive Dust — Particles light enough to be suspended in air, but not captured by a filtering system. For this document, this refers to particles put in the air by moving vehicles and air movement over disturbed soils at construction sites.

Geology — Science that deals with the physical history of the earth, the rocks of which it is composed, and physical changes in the earth.

Groundwater — Water found below the ground surface. Groundwater may be geologic in origin and as pristine as it was when it was entrapped by the surrounding rock or it may be subject to daily or seasonal effects depending on the local hydrologic cycle. Groundwater may be pumped from wells and used for drinking water, irrigation, and other purposes. It is recharged by precipitation or irrigation water soaking into the ground. Thus, any contaminant in precipitation or irrigation water may be carried into groundwater.

Hazardous Materials — Defined within several laws and regulations to have certain meanings. For this document, a hazardous material is any one of the following:

Any substance designated pursuant to section 311 (b)(2)(A) of the Clean Water Act.

Any element, compound, mixture, solution, or substance designated pursuant to Section 102 of the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act, as listed in 40CFR 302.4.

Any hazardous substance as defined under the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act.

Any toxic pollutant listed under TSCA.

Any hazardous air pollutant listed under Section 112 of the Clean Air Act.

Any imminently hazardous chemical substance or mixture with respect to which the USEPA Administrator has taken action pursuant to Subsection 7 of TSCA.

The term does not include: 1) Petroleum, including crude oil or any thereof, which is not otherwise specifically listed or designated as a hazardous substance in a above. 2) Natural gas, natural gas liquids, liquefied natural gas, or synthetic gas usable for fuel (or mixtures of natural gas and such synthetic gas).

Indirect Impact — An indirect impact occurs later in time or farther removed in distance from the action causing it but is still reasonably foreseeable. Indirect impacts may include induced changes in the pattern of land use, population density or growth rate, and related effects on air, water, and other natural and social systems.

Listed Species — Any plant or animal designated by a state or the federal government as a threatened, endangered.

Mitigation — Program-or project-specific measures taken to reduce adverse impacts on the environment.

National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) — Nationwide standards set up by the USEPA for widespread air pollutants, as required by Section 109 of the Clean Air Act. Currently, six pollutants are regulated by primary and secondary NAAQS: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulate matter, and sulfur dioxide.

Non-attainment Area — An area that has been designated by the USEPA or the authorized state air quality agency as exceeding one or more national or state ambient air quality standards.

Parcel — A plot of land, usually a division of a larger area.

Sensitive Receptors — Include, but are not limited to children, and the elderly, as well as specific facilities, such as long-term health care facilities, rehabilitation centers, convalescent centers, retirement homes, residences, schools, playgrounds, and childcare centers.

Soil — The mixture of altered mineral and organic material at the earth's surface that supports plant life.

Solid Waste — Any discarded material that is not excluded by 40 CFR 261.4(a) or that is not excluded by variance granted under 40 CFR 260.30 and 40 CFR 260.31.

Threatened Species — Any species that is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range.

Topography — The relief features or surface configuration of an area.

Watershed — The region draining into a particular stream, river, or entire river system.

Wetlands — Areas that are regularly saturated by surface or groundwater and, thus, are characterized by a prevalence of vegetation that is adapted for life in saturated soil conditions. Examples include swamps, bogs, fens, marshes, and estuaries.

Wildlife Habitat — Set of living communities in which a wildlife population lives.

**APPENDIX I
SITE PLAN**

**APPENDIX II
RESEARCH ATTACHMENTS**