

# NOTICE OF AVAILABILITY

## DRAFT SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

### U.S. DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

#### **Modifications to Proposed VA Medical Center North Las Vegas, Nevada**

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) announces the preparation and availability of a Draft Supplemental Environmental Assessment for modifications to the proposed VA Medical Center, North Las Vegas, Clark County, Nevada. In July 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Proposed VA Medical Center, Clark County, Nevada* (2006 EA). The purpose of the 2006 EA was to determine the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of constructing and operating a new VA Medical Center in the City of North Las Vegas, Nevada. The 2006 EA concluded that no significant impacts to the human environment would result, and the VA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Construction of the VA Medical Center is presently underway. Since completing the 2006 EA, the VA has proposed modifications to the original project scope. Changes include: (1) adding a new 80,000 square feet administration and training building, and (2) installing a 3.3 megawatt photovoltaic solar panel array. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the VA prepared a Supplemental EA to examine the potential for environmental impacts from the proposed changes to the original project scope. The VA intends to issue a FONSI following a fifteen (15) day comment period in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality Regulations for Implementing NEPA, Section 1508.13 providing there are no substantive comments which warrant further evaluation.

You may view the Draft Supplemental EA beginning April 16, 2011, at <http://www.lasvegas.va.gov>, or request a copy from the address below. Copies will also be available for review at the Aliante Library, Reference Department, 2400 W. Deer Springs Way, North Las Vegas, NV 89084. Please provide any comments by April 30, 2011, to:

**Mr. George Karaboyias**  
**Project Executive**  
**VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System**  
**PO Box 360001**  
**North Las Vegas, NV 89036**  
**For further information, contact Mr. Karaboyias at (702) 834-8104**

*Draft*  
*Supplemental Environmental Assessment*  
*for the*

**Proposed VA Medical Center**  
**Clark County, Nevada**

Prepared By:

Department of Veterans Affairs  
Office of Construction and Facilities Management  
Regional Office - West  
1175 Nimitz Avenue, Suite 200  
Vallejo, CA 94592-1003

April 2011

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**  
**Department of Veterans Affairs**  
**Modifications to Proposed VA Medical Center**  
**North Las Vegas, Nevada**

In July 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Proposed VA Medical Center, Clark County, Nevada* (2006 EA). The purpose of the 2006 EA was to determine the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of constructing and operating a new VA Medical Center in the City of North Las Vegas, Nevada. The 2006 EA concluded that no significant impacts to the human environment would result, and the VA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Construction of the VA Medical Center is presently underway. Since completing the 2006 EA, the VA has proposed modifications to the original project scope. Changes include: (1) adding a new 80,000 square feet administration and training building, and (2) installing a 3.3 megawatt photovoltaic solar panel array. In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the VA prepared the attached Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) to examine the potential for environmental impacts from the proposed changes to the original project scope.

This FONSI is based on the attached SEA. The analysis performed in the SEA concludes that there would be no significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, to the human environment, provided mitigation measures and commitments consisting of best management practices and regulatory compliance measures described in the 2006 EA are fully implemented. Therefore, this FONSI is appropriate and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

---

Leonardo Flor  
Director, Office of Construction and Facilities Management  
Regional Office West

---

Date

---

John B. Bright  
Director, VA Medical Center Las Vegas

---

Date

*This FONSI will become final 15 days after publication of its Notice of Availability provided that no information leading to a contrary finding is received or comes to light during the 15-day review period.*

# Table of Contents

	Page
1.0 Introduction .....	1
1.1 Background .....	1
1.2 Purpose and Need for Proposed Action .....	1
1.3 Scope of Analysis .....	1
1.4 Public Scoping and Agency Consultation .....	1
2.0 Description of Changes to Original Project Scope .....	2
2.1 Add New 80,000 Square Feet Administration and Training Building .....	2
2.2 Install New 3.3 Megawatt Photovoltaic Solar Panel Array .....	2
3.0 Affected Environment .....	2
4.0 Environmental Consequences .....	4
4.1 Add New 80,000 Square Feet Administration and Training Building .....	4
4.2 Install 3.3 Megawatt Photovoltaic Solar Panel Array .....	5
4.2.1 Aesthetics .....	5
4.2.2 Air Quality .....	6
4.2.3 Cultural Resources .....	6
4.2.4 Utilities .....	7
4.3 Compliance with Mitigation Measures and Commitments Stipulated in 2006 EA .....	7
5.0 Conclusion .....	7
6.0 References .....	7
Appendix: Section 106 Consultation Documents .....	8

## **1.0 Introduction**

### **1.1 Background**

In July 2006, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) completed an Environmental Assessment (EA) for the *Proposed VA Medical Center, Clark County, Nevada* (2006 EA) (Reference a). The purpose of the 2006 EA was to determine the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts of constructing and operating a new VA Medical Center in the City of North Las Vegas, Nevada. The 2006 EA concluded that no significant impacts to the human environment would result, and the VA issued a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). Construction of the VA Medical Center is presently underway. Since completing the 2006 EA, the VA has proposed modifications to the original project scope. Changes include: (1) adding a new 80,000 square foot administration and training building, and (2) installing a 3.3 megawatt photovoltaic solar panel array. To comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the VA prepared this Supplemental Environmental Assessment (SEA) to examine the potential for environmental impacts from the proposed changes to the original project scope.

### **1.2 Purpose and Need for Proposed Action**

The purpose and need for the original Proposed Action (i.e., construct and operate a VA Medical Center) have not changed from the 2006 EA: provide adequate facilities to supply health care services to the growing demands among southern Nevada veterans. The 2004 Capital Asset Realignment for Enhanced Services Commission report confirmed growing demands for health care among southern Nevada veterans, and made a recommendation for constructing a new VA hospital in the Las Vegas Valley.

The purpose and need for the proposed changes are to: (1) provide a separate facility for administration and training space to allow for expansion of clinical space at the main hospital building; and (2) produce and utilize renewable energy to reduce demand from non-renewable energy resources as mandated by recent federal laws and executive orders.

### **1.3 Scope of Analysis**

This SEA examines the potential environmental and socioeconomic impacts that would result from the proposed changes to the original project scope. This SEA considers the same No Action Alternative as the 2006 EA, the potential impacts that would occur if the proposed administration/training building and photovoltaic system were not built and operated. Since the modifications to the Proposed Action would not change the analysis of the No Action Alternative, the No Action Alternative is not discussed further in this SEA. The reader is directed to the 2006 EA for a description of the No Action Alternative and discussion of its potential impacts.

### **1.4 Public Scoping and Agency Consultation**

This SEA will be available for public review and comment for at least 15 days. VA will publish a Notice of Availability (NOA) in the local newspaper and send this draft SEA to agencies consulted in the 2006 EA. VA will take into account any comments received from agencies and interested parties and modify this SEA, if warranted.

## **2.0 Description of Proposed Changes to Original Project Scope**

Because NEPA encourages completion of environmental analysis early in the project process, it is not unusual for a project scope to change from the original scope analyzed in the EA, resulting in the need for additional analysis. Please note that the 2006 EA study area encompassed only the 70-acre Medical Center development of the 170-acre VA property. The following describe the proposed modifications to the Medical Center facility.

### **2.1 Add New 80,000 Square Feet Administration and Training Building**

The main hospital building was originally designed to incorporate 40,000 square feet of general office space in various locations throughout the building. Due to construction funding constraints anticipated during design, administrative space at the main hospital building was reduced and replaced with clinical space. With some relief in funding, and continuing need to provide space for these functions, VA is proposing to expand the main hospital building by adding a separate 80,000 square feet administration and training building. As shown in Figure 1, the building will be sited within the original 70-acre Medical Center footprint analyzed in the 2006 EA. The proposed building will consist of a 3-story administration building connected to a 1-story training building. It would not be taller than the main hospital building and will be separated from the main hospital building by a connecting walkway on all three levels of the administration building. The completed building would blend with the overall setting of the Medical Center facility.

### **2.2 Install New 3.3 Megawatt Photovoltaic Solar Panel Array**

VA is proposing to install a 3.3 megawatt photovoltaic system in accordance with a series of recent laws and Executive Orders. These include: Energy Policy Act of 2005, Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, Executive Order 13423, and Executive Order 13514, all of which incorporate mandates for federal agencies to produce and utilize renewable energy. As shown in Figure 1, about half of the solar panels will be placed at four distinct parking lot locations within the original 70-acre project footprint analyzed in the 2006 EA. The remainder of the solar panels will be placed at a "solar farm" outside of the original 70-acre project footprint but within the 170-acre VA property. At the parking lot locations, the solar panels will be of the flat-plate fixed-array type; the panels will be mounted on trusses at a height about 14 feet above ground surface creating "carport" canopies over the parking spaces. At the solar farm, the panels will be of the flat-plate sun-tracking design; the panels will be mounted on individual metal columns at a height of about 5 feet above ground surface.

## **3.0 Affected Environment**

There have been no known changes in the Affected Environment as described in the 2006 EA; the reader is directed to the 2006 EA for a detailed discussion.



**Figure 1: Modified Medical Center Site Plan**

#### 4.0 Environmental Consequences

The following sections discuss changes to the potential impacts that may result from implementing the modifications to the original project scope. The basis for evaluating potential impacts will be the same criteria applied in the 2006 EA. Table 1 presents a summary of changes to potential impacts.

**Table 1: Summary of Changes to Potential Impacts**

<b>Environmental Resource</b>	<b>Add New 80,000 Square Feet Administration and Training Building (See Section 4.1)</b>	<b>Install New 3.3 Megawatt Photovoltaic Solar Panel Array (See Section 4.2)</b>
Aesthetics	No substantial change	See Section 4.2.1
Noise	No substantial change	No substantial change
Air Quality	No substantial change	See Section 4.2.2
Transportation & Traffic	No substantial change	No substantial change
Biological Resources	No substantial change	No substantial change
Water Resources	No substantial change	No substantial change
Hazardous Materials	No substantial change	No substantial change
Socioeconomics	No substantial change	No substantial change
Cultural Resources	No substantial change	See Section 4.2.3
Land Use	No substantial change	No substantial change
Utilities	No substantial change	See Section 4.2.4
Geology & Soils	No substantial change	No substantial change

#### 4.1 Add New 80,000 Square Feet Administration and Training Building

Because construction methods and mitigation measures will be similar to construction of the main hospital building and other parts of the Medical Center facility, construction activity would not cause a substantial change on impacts to aesthetics, noise, air quality, transportation & traffic, biological resources, water resources, hazardous materials, socioeconomics, cultural resources, land use, utilities, and geology & soils. In general, construction activity would have the same impact to environmental resources as in the 2006 EA.

Upon completion and during normal operations of the building, as part of the overall Medical Center facility, the building would not cause a substantial change on impacts to aesthetics, noise, air quality, transportation and traffic, biological resources, water resources, hazardous materials, socioeconomics, cultural resources, land use, utilities, and geology & soils. The Medical Center facility will become part of the overall planned urban development of the North Las Vegas Valley. In general, normal operations of the building and overall facility would have the same impact to environmental resources as in the 2006 EA.

Therefore, based on discussion above, there would be no change to the original finding of no significant impact due to the addition of the administration and training building.

#### 4.2 Install 3.3 Megawatt Photovoltaic Solar Panel Array

Because construction methods and mitigation measures will be similar to construction of the main hospital building and other parts of the Medical Center facility, construction activity would not cause a substantial change on impacts to aesthetics, noise, air quality, transportation & traffic, biological resources, water resources, hazardous materials, socioeconomics, land use, utilities, and geology & soils. However, with regard to cultural resources, construction activity of the solar farm will be examined further in this SEA because the solar farm will be located outside the original area of potential effect (APE) analyzed in the 2006 EA.

Upon completion and during normal operations of the photovoltaic system, as part of the overall Medical Center facility it would have no substantial change on impacts to noise, transportation & traffic, biological resources, water resources, hazardous materials, socioeconomics, land use, and geology and soils. This is because the facility will become part of the overall planned urban development of the North Las Vegas Valley. With regard to aesthetics, the proposed photovoltaic system will be examined further in this SEA with respect to visual effects due to glint and glare. Also, with regard to air quality, the photovoltaic system will be examined further in terms of its impact attributed to fugitive dust from inspection and maintenance activities, and its positive impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Last, with regard to utilities, the photovoltaic system will be examined further in terms of its positive impact on reducing demand on the local energy grid.

##### 4.2.1 Aesthetics

In terms of glint and glare, unlike other solar energy systems utilizing concentrating mirrors such as parabolic trough and dish engine, photovoltaic solar panels are designed to absorb sunlight and convert it directly to electricity. Nevertheless, the panels may reflect light and could distract motorists passing through the area on adjacent roadways; likewise, it could also distract pilots approaching or taking off at nearby military and civilian airfields. However, results of a study to quantify glare at a similar larger photovoltaic project at nearby Nellis Air Force Base indicated that solar panels have little reflectivity (Reference b). The study found that flat plate solar panels reflect less sunlight than weathered white concrete and snow. There are many examples of photovoltaic systems having been built at or near airport facilities around the world (e.g., Denver International Airport; San Francisco International Airport; Fresno International Airport; San Jose International Airport; Oakland International Airport; Boston Logan Airport; Nellis Air Force Base; Buckley Air Force Base; Luke Air Force Base; Munich Airport, Germany; Zurich Airport, Switzerland; and Changi Airport, Singapore). As such, it is reasonable to conclude that the proposed photovoltaic system will not cause unacceptable glint and glare. Therefore, there would be no change to the original finding of no significant impact to aesthetics.

#### 4.2.2 Air Quality

Emissions from the completed photovoltaic system at the solar farm would include fugitive dust associated with regular site inspections and infrequent maintenance activities, and wind erosion from bare grounds and access roads. This would be similar to those during construction, but the amounts would be small and insignificant. Dust control mitigation measures that were used to limit fugitive dust emissions during the construction phase would be implemented to minimize fugitive dust emissions during the operations phase. Paving would not be justifiable for the low-volume traffic within and around the solar farm; instead, gravel would be used to reduce fugitive dust from the access roads.

The use of solar panels to generate electricity reduces dependence on fossil fuels that emit greenhouse gases. The photovoltaic system will provide long-term beneficial impact on local air quality and greenhouse gas emissions. In the long term, the photovoltaic system would reduce the amount of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) released by 4,578 tons per year (tpy) (see Table 2). This would be equivalent to annual greenhouse gas emissions from 816 passenger vehicles, or the annual consumption of 9,678 barrels of oil (Reference c).

**Table 2: Long-term Reduction in Carbon Dioxide**

Photovoltaic Systems	Number of Sites	System Size (MW)	Estimated Annual Power Production (kWh)	Carbon Dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) Equivalents (tpy)
4 Parking Lots 1 Solar Farm	5	3.3	6,022,500	4,578

Therefore, based on discussion above, there would be no change to the original finding of no significant impact to air quality.

#### 4.2.3 Cultural Resources

In May 2006, the Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) concurred with the VA's finding that no historic properties will be affected by the undertaking described in the original EA. As mentioned in Section 2.0 above, the 2006 EA study area encompassed only the 70-acre Medical Center development of the 170-acre VA property. However, about half of the proposed photovoltaic panels will be placed at a solar farm outside the original 70-acre project footprint. Thus, it will be outside the APE originally evaluated by the SHPO. To comply with Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, the VA consulted with the SHPO on the revised undertaking. In response, the SHPO concurred with the VA's updated finding that no historic properties will be affected by the proposed photovoltaic system undertaking (see Appendix). Therefore, there would be no change to the original finding of no significant impact to cultural resources.

#### 4.2.4 Utilities

By decreasing the facility's reliance on the existing electrical grid, the photovoltaic system would result in long-term minor beneficial impact on local utilities. Therefore, there would be no change to the original finding of no significant impact to utilities.

#### 4.3 Compliance with Mitigation Measures and Commitments Stipulated in 2006 EA

Table ES-1 in the 2006 EA outlines the mitigation measures and commitments that the VA will follow during construction so that adverse effects from construction activity will not exceed the threshold for significance. A review of the mitigation measures and commitments against construction activity that is presently underway with the main hospital building and other parts of the Medical Center facility indicates VA has complied with all the stipulations. VA will continue to implement the mitigation measures and commitments stipulated in the 2006 EA with respect to construction of the proposed administration/training building and photovoltaic system.

### 5.0 Conclusion

The analysis performed in this SEA concludes that there would be no significant adverse impact, either individually or cumulatively, to the human environment, provided mitigation measures and commitments consisting of best management practices and regulatory compliance measures described in the 2006 EA are fully implemented. Therefore, this SEA concludes that a Finding of No Significant Impact is appropriate, and that an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

### 6.0 References

- (a) Department of Veterans Affairs. *Environmental Assessment for the Department of Veterans Affairs – Proposed VA Medical Center, Clark County, Nevada*. July 2006
- (b) U.S. Air Force. *Draft Environmental Assessment – Outgrant for Construction and Operation of a Solar Photovoltaic System in Area I, Nellis Air Force Base, Clark County, Nevada*. October 2010.
- (c) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. *Greenhouse Gas Equivalencies Calculator*. Accessed March 31, 2011 at <http://www.epa.gov/cleanenergy/energy-resources/calculator.html>

# Appendix



STATE OF NEVADA  
DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

RECEIVED  
RECEIVED OFFICE  
APR 13 10:01  
State Historic Preservation Office  
100 N. Stewart Street  
Carson City, Nevada 89701  
(775) 684-3448 • Fax (775) 684-3442  
www.nvshpo.org

MICHAEL E. FISCHER  
Department Director

RONALD M. JAMES  
State Historic Preservation Officer

April 8, 2011

George Karaboyias  
Project Executive  
Department of Veterans Affairs  
VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System  
PO Box 360001  
North Las Vegas NV 89036

RE: Photovoltaic Panels on the New Medical Center, 6900 North Pecos Road, Las Vegas, Clark County (Undertaking #2011-1510).

Dear Mr. Karaboyias:

The Nevada State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) reviewed the subject undertaking. A cultural resource inventory report was previously prepared following an intensive archaeological and historic inventory of the project area. The SHPO concurs with the Department of Veterans Affairs' determination that no historic properties are located within the area of potential effects (APE) for the subject undertaking.

If you have any questions concerning this correspondence, please feel free to contact me at (775) 684-3443 or by e-mail at [Rebecca.Palmer@nevadaculture.org](mailto:Rebecca.Palmer@nevadaculture.org).

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Rebecca Lynn Palmer in cursive script.  
Rebecca Lynn Palmer, Deputy  
State Historic Preservation Officer



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System

P.O. Box 360001

North Las Vegas, Nevada 89036

March 7, 2011

Mr. Ronald James, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Nevada Historic Preservation Office  
100 North Stewart Street  
Carson City, NV 89701-4285

Dear Mr. James:

The United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is considering the addition of photovoltaic panels to our new medical center nearing completion at 6900 N. Pecos Road, Las Vegas in Clark County, Nevada. Back in 2006, we consulted with your office about the medical center under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, determining that no historic properties would be affected by its construction. This determination, in which you concurred, was based on the cultural resources inventory prepared for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as part of its Las Vegas Valley Land Disposal Environmental Impact Statement and filed with your office, which found no historic properties in the vicinity of our project.

Attached for your reference and use are a current project description, site plan, and a copy of your office's previous letter concurring in VA's determination that no historic properties would be affected by construction of our medical center.

Although adding the photovoltaic power system changes the scope of our project somewhat, and expands its footprint somewhat to the east, we do not believe that it justifies a change in our determination. About half the photovoltaic panels will be placed within the original 70-acre project footprint; the remainder will be outside the original footprint but still within the 170 acre project site south of Interstate 215. As noted in your letter of May 22, 2006, a cultural resources inventory prepared for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) as part of its Las Vegas Valley Land Disposal Environmental Impact Statement and filed with your office, found no historic properties in our project area. Our consultants have examined the BLM's inventory report on file at the Harry Reid Center, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and report that one 20<sup>th</sup>-century site determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places -- 26CK6351 -- lies north of our project area on the opposite side of Interstate 215. The BLM report indicates no historic properties within or near either our original project footprint or the somewhat expanded footprint that includes the now-proposed photovoltaic panels. We have no reason to think that our project will have any effect on 26CK6351.

Accordingly, we do not believe that we need to amend our previous determination that no historic properties will be affected by the medical center construction project, including the photovoltaic system. As you recommended in your May 22, 2006 letter, we will ensure that if any archaeological sites or other cultural materials are encountered during construction, work will be halted in its vicinity pending compliance with 36 CFR 800.13(b)(3).

In accordance with 36 CFR 800.4(d)(1)(i), we would appreciate receiving any comments in response to this letter within thirty (30) days. If you need more time please let us know. If there are any questions or other matters to discuss, please contact George Karaboyias at 702-834-8104 or [george.karaboyias@va.gov](mailto:george.karaboyias@va.gov) . Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

  
~~George Karaboyias~~  
Project Executive

Enclosures:  
Vicinity Map  
PV System Site Plan  
Project Scope  
SHPO Letter dated 5/22/2006